

Our reference: Funding for Community Resource, Provision of 'Wrap-around Daycare' at Colwall Village Primary School.

Dear Madam Chairman,

Further to my presentation of information at the Parish Council meeting on 20th March, this is to confirm a formal request of the Parish Council for financial support for the relocation and development of Bright Sparks Pre-school, on the Colwall Primary School site.

The Parish Council will be aware of the original intention to place a terrapin classroom unit in the Glebe field, in order to meet the needs of local families for extended pre-school facilities and to develop Breakfast and After school Clubs, which are so urgently required in the village (see survey results). We withdrew that application and plan when it was evident that it had not been properly considered or consulted upon.

With the good offices of Paul Chambers, the Primary School Head, and Andrew Baker, Architect, together with advice and guidance from AONB and the donated time and professional guidance of a landscape architect specialising in young children's play space, we now believe we have a proposal that will meet all the requirements of the school, the pre-school, the local Community, the Parish Council, the AONB and the Malvern Hills Conservators. It will mean upheaval for the school in installing a new 'temporary' classroom on the school playground; extending and modifying an existing unit for the Pre-school use and replacing weather proof playground space for the school, and creating access to the Glebe field for the pre-school freeflow play (as required by Ofsted).

Under this project, the Pre-school will continue to operate during term time only for the foreseeable future, so that there will not be inconvenience to local residents during the school holidays. The AONB has kindly offered to fund fruit trees to be planted in the Glebe field nearest Elms Drive, and the field will be dedicated to 'elemental' play, with no tarmac and no commercial play equipment. It is intended that the children play, explore, create and grow things in a natural environment. (See landscape architect's plan. Please note that this plan is in the process of being amended to take account of AONB recommendations. There will be no fence across the centre of the field; the rustic fencing around the field will be renewed where necessary and trees will be planted, as explained above. No trees will need to be removed for the decking and ramp to be put in place.; 4-6 hedge plants will need to be removed for the deck, but will be replaced as screening at the base of the deck as appropriate.)

Roland Close (Herefordshire Council Planning Officer) has kindly commented informally on these plans positively and made no requirements for change of any detail.

I include this information in order for the Parish Council to understand the thought and professional guidance that has been invested in the project.

The benefits for the village are many (see Support for the Planning Application). Every other village in the local area, as well as the town of Ledbury, has Pre-school facilities attached to their Primary Schools, as well as Breakfast Club and After School Clubs, all heavily used. It is a factor for families coming into the village whether the Primary School can offer these facilities as well. The school and pre-school regularly field such enquiries from families. The Pre-school already has close links with the school – 15 of the pre-school children will go on to the Primary School this September. However, the Pre-school is well aware that financially Bright Sparks cannot be sustained in its present state. The situation of physically lifting all the equipment out of store early each weekday morning and returning it at the end of the morning should not continue, but more than that, families who need more flexible provision of extended sessions are going elsewhere. This means that these children invariably transfer to another Primary School. We need this project in the village in order to protect the viability of the school and to meet the needs of village families. The many benefits to the village are included elsewhere (see Support for the Planning application).

In terms of finance, this is a modest plan, using temporary classrooms, on the existing school site. The S.106 funding from the Banner Homes Development, kindly transferred and ring-fenced for the Primary School and the Pre-school by the Parish Council, totals £48,000. This means a shortfall of around £85,000 to undertake this project. (The Pre-school has in train an application to “Awards for All” funding for the play area, so that this has not been included in the costing).

All other possible sources for funding have been explored for the project: including application to Herefordshire Council (sympathy but no funds; the SOS Village Community Lottery (not eligible); the People’s Postcode Lottery (grants only up to £10,000 and not successful); Herefordshire Community Pride Grant Scheme and the Community Project Grant Scheme (Grants frozen as of 12th Sept 2012); and explored via the Herefordshire Project Development Team; with advice also from Community First, Community Building Officer and Helen Tonks of the Community Regeneration Scheme, and referral to the Strategic Asset Manager, Herefordshire Council. We have, we believe, explored every possible avenue for financial support for this project, which is recognised as much needed by the community, essential for the continuing viability of the school and vital for the continuation and development of the village Pre-school.

We would ask that the Parish Council give serious consideration to financial support of £85,000 for this project, possibly through a Public Works Loan, and that the project be included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan as part of investing in the future of the young people and families of Colwall.

Thank you.

Mr C D Walker
Chairman of Governors

Mrs J Bryant
Chairman Bright Sparks Pre School