

Section 106 Open Space Funding Update

Presented to Witheridge Parish Council on the 1st of May 2025

Overview

The Section 106 (S106) funding is available to the community via the District Council, to be used for enhancing public open spaces in Witheridge. The money has come as a result of the new development, Juniper Way, paid for by the developers. Through negotiation the District Council has received all funds in full at the commencement of the development, instead of what was included in the initial agreement which would see funds released, in tranches, over a longer period, potentially up to 5 years.

It is my responsibility to listen to the community, liaise with local groups and the Parish Council, and ensure that this money is spent in a way that delivers the greatest benefit to the community.

However, it is important to note that the allocations were already outlined in the original S106 agreement, which was signed before my time. This agreement specifies key projects that should be considered, limiting how the money can be used. The S106 agreement includes specific allocations, such as additional play provision at Willow Rise (in addition to the new play park), and funding to purchase new allotment space.

I have spoken to the allotment group, and as they rent the land and currently have plots available, there is no benefit, or possibility, of using the funds for allotments at this time. Regarding the play provision, it has been suggested that, due to the new play area already on site, these funds might be better directed toward other listed projects, such as a multi-wheeled space (e.g., a skate park).

In an unusual but welcome move, the developer and L&G have agreed that the funds previously earmarked for those specific purposes (allotments and play park) can instead be reallocated for general open space projects, as defined in the S106 agreement. This gives us greater flexibility without limiting what must be spent on each project.

The key projects outlined in the S106 agreement include:

- Enhancing the Parish Hall
- Creating a multi-sports area
- Enhancing the Tennis Club facilities
- Provision of a skate park
- Purchasing additional open space land for community use
- The provision of additional play equipment

VAT

To ensure maximum impact, ideally all grants will be awarded without VAT. As the applicant organisations are charities or the Parish Council, appropriate actions should be taken to reclaim any VAT if possible. I'm sure the community will agree—it's important that every pound goes directly toward improving our local area, not back to the taxman.

Ongoing Maintenance

For larger projects, it is essential that proposals clearly outline how ongoing maintenance will be managed, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the investment.

Parish Hall

The Parish Hall has submitted an application for £ 70,693 (£58,991 + VAT) to carry out work, including cladding the existing building and improving insulation, as part of a wider project. It was requested that alternative match funding was also sort but it was advised that this was not possible, however, I do understand existing funds will go towards additional upgrades as part of the wider project. I will recommend the approval of £58,991 for this application. This

does not include the requested amount towards the VAT. The Parish Hall committee should seek to find a means to refund the VAT or look to cover with existing or alternative funds.

Multi-wheeled activity area (e.g. skate park)

The Parish Council working group has been exploring a multi-wheeled activity area (e.g. skate park for skateboards, scooters, bikes, and roller skates). Early conversations with suppliers suggest a total cost of £200,000 is required, with a proposed £100,000 contribution from the S106 funds and the remainder to be raised through grants and other sources. I recommend that £100,000 is ringfenced for this project.

Multi Sports Area

The sports field committee are investigating a multi-sports area, early estimates suggest it could exceed £300,000. Although external funding is currently limited, the group will need to explore options and present a clear plan for both project delivery and future maintenance. I am recommending that a potential allocation of £200,000 is ringfenced from the S106, to help move the project forward. However, funding will only be allocated when a full plan including other grants are provided.

The provision of additional open space land and Enhancing the Tennis Club Facilities

The Parish Council have formed a working group to explore land acquisition. So far with the exception of land in Cannington Road no other sites are available. The community is exploring the option of a community orchard or other community project for this land. No application has been submitted, or intent raised for further provision at the Tennis Club. A reserve of approximately £40,000 remains available for such projects as set out below

A Reserve

Based on the proposed allocations, approximately £40,000 would remain. This could be for additional play provision, to support cost overruns or potentially toward purchasing land should a viable option arise. With the recent opportunity to purchase land at Cannington Road, part of these funds could be used to obtain this land.

Summary

These outline allocations are not guaranteed and are dependent on successful fundraising efforts and robust plans that demonstrate clear community benefit and long-term sustainability.

While there are understandably strong opinions on how this money should be spent, it's important to remember that most decisions were already determined when the S106 agreement was signed. The recommendations I've outlined are based on meeting those requirements. The allocations (with the exception of the Parish Hall) are still flexible, awaiting updates and progress from the respective project groups.

Provisional Outline Allocations of S106 Funding

Total S106 Open Space Money Available £400,678.24		
Project	Provisional Allocation	Estimated Cost of Project
Multi Wheel Facility (Skate Park)	£100,000.00	£ 200,000.00
Village Hall (Will approve on 3/4/25 without VAT costs)	£58,991.00	£ 70,693 Incl VAT
Multi sports pitch	£200,000.00	£300,000.00
Reserves for play area/ land/ additional costs	£41,687.24	Unknown

District Cllr. Peter Jones

1st of May 2025