

# FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY PROJECT

## Development of Fairfield in Castle Cary and Ansford



Painting  
of Fairfield  
in summer by local  
resident Will Vaughan

## Request for funding Fairfield Community Project

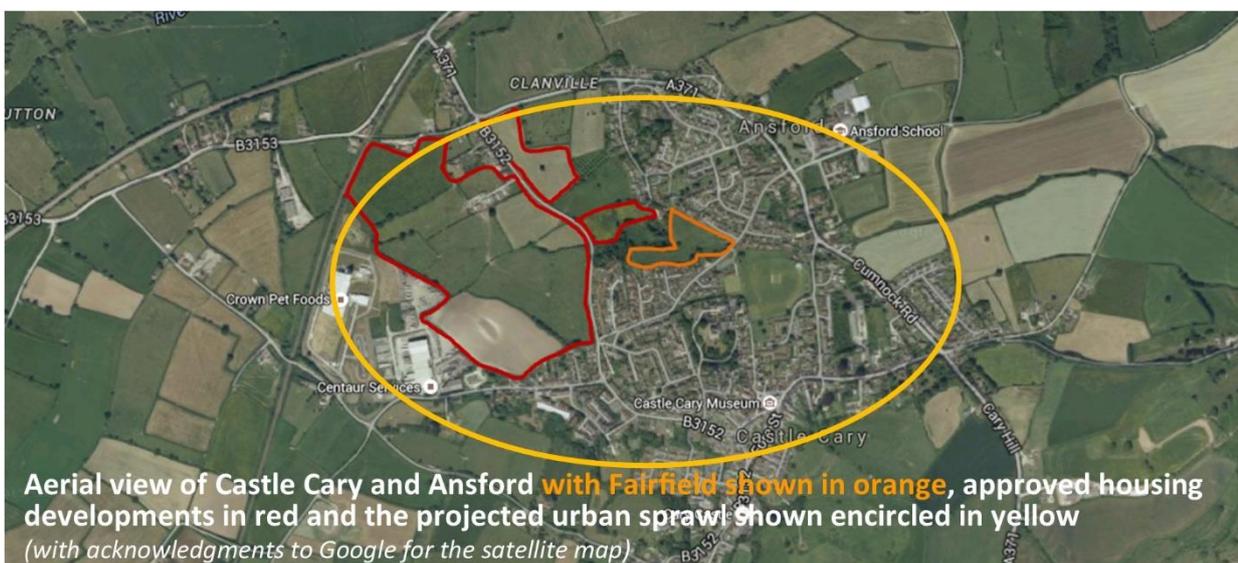
Fairfield is a 4.5 acre field situated in the middle of Castle Cary and Ansford, jointly owned by Castle Cary Town Council and Ansford Parish Council. The Councils wish to develop the field as an open green space, with facilities for all of the community to enjoy, while enhancing the environmentally-friendly character of the field.

Public consultations, planning and initial fund-raising took place during 2015 and 2016, with some elements of this exciting project being completed during the first half of 2017, namely fencing and drainage. A network of hard pathways, suitable for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs, and an outdoor gym, will be constructed in the coming months. A key component of the project, a pump-park, remains to be developed. The quoted cost for the pump-park is £35,000 and the committee have so far managed to raise about £20,000 towards this. A number of funding organisations and local businesses are being approached in an attempt to raise the remaining funds. It is hoped that this money will be committed by the end of this year such that the pump-park can be developed early in 2018.

### Context

Castle Cary and Ansford jointly form a small market town with a combined population of around 3,300 people. A number of housing development proposals have been approved by the planning authorities which will, once constructed, increase this population by between 30 and 40%. As with many such towns, green open spaces are at a premium.

The Councils acquired this 4.5-acre (1.8 ha) field in late 2014. It is situated in the heart of the town and will soon be entirely surrounded by housing estates



The plan is to develop the field as a multiuse community space retaining its green and environmentally-friendly character in the heart of this urban area. Developments will include hard pathways for, amongst others, young families, the elderly, the disabled and partially-sighted, a pump-track, exercise equipment, picnic areas and seating, sensory and wildflower gardens, and areas for community activities such as the annual fair, circus and other similar events. A “natural” area with trees, bushes and a stream is being developed in cooperation with Carymoor Environmental Centre specifically to encourage children to explore nature. Primarily though, the field will be retained as a green space, with natural areas, where young and old can exercise and relax.

## **Background**

Fairfield (as it is now called) came on the market in 2013. Immediately the Councils of Castle Cary and Ansford saw this as an opportunity to acquire the last remaining green space within the confines of the expanding town.

A public consultation was held in April 2014 to garner views on whether this would be a wise use of public funds. Of the 214 people offering opinions, 93% voted in favour of buying the field, including all 24 students consulted at Ansford Academy, 5% were against it and 2% were undecided.

The field was duly bought in late 2014 at a cost of £75,000 and a committee of Cary TC and Ansford PC councillors plus a number of residents, the Fairfield Development and Management Committee, was established to oversee the development of the field and to establish a management plan.

In May 2015 a questionnaire was sent to every house in the town to gather views on the best possible uses for the field. Overwhelming consensus was that the field should remain as a green open space within the heart of Castle Cary and Ansford, incorporating footpaths, space for community events (fairground, circus, etc.), picnic facilities, a skate-board ramp or pump-park, plus wildflower and sensory gardens. Since then the field has been surveyed to produce a topographical plan and a landscape architect has produced draft concept plans (see final page), both funded by the Councils.

In October 2015 these plans were displayed at the Market House, together with information about the various developments being proposed, and residents were invited to comment on them. Over 200 residents visited the exhibition; by far the majority were supportive of the proposal and many passed constructive comments. Only a few expressed concerns and these have mostly been addressed.

The plans, and a Project Management Plan, have been approved by both Councils and the Development and Management Committee was instructed to begin fund-raising to turn these exciting plans into reality.

The Councils have taken responsibility for the day-to-day management of the field, although this will eventually be handed to a residents' committee. Various funding organisations were also approached and despite the current economic climate a significant proportion of the total money required has been raised. In addition, a local fund-raising campaign was started, with over £1,500 raised to date, along with a number of promises and in-kind contributions.

## **Proposed developments**

The project is being developed in three phases and fund-raising has been aligned accordingly.

### ***Phase 1 – The groundworks***

The field was until recently an agricultural field. It was poorly drained with what is in effect a sub-surface spring near the top (east end) of the field culminating in a surface spring and stream at the bottom (west). Before any development of the field could take place a network of drains needed to be installed. This was completed in June 2017.

Around half of the boundary fence was barbed wire which was in a very poor state. This fence was removed by community volunteers and a 3-bar pole and rail fence erected in May 2017.



### ***Phase 2 – major developments***

As the groundworks have now been completed it is possible to start the major developments: the pathways, outdoor gym and pump-park.

It is planned to construct 500 m of hard pathways during the late summer of 2017. In keeping with our ethos of being environmentally-friendly we will be using recycled tarmac on a hard-core base. The path will be suitable for wheelchair users, electric mobility scooters and pushchairs, allowing access to all sectors of the community.

Once the pathways are completed an outdoor gym (or “green gym” as it is sometimes known) will be erected along part of the path. This will consist of eight activity elements and is designed specifically for more mature users, although will hopefully be embraced by all sectors of the community. The



funds for these components have already been raised.

The final “major” development will be a 125 m long pump-park; a hard dirt track of “berms” and “rollers” for cycling. The name comes from the pumping motion used by the cyclist's body as they ride around the track. The purpose is to use this pumping motion to maintain speed around the track without pedalling. This is similar to a BMX track but is much more inclusive of all ages (being suitable for all, from toddlers to pensioners) and is much quieter and therefore suitable for urban areas.



Pump-parks have been installed in a number of Somerset towns in recent years, notably Frome and North Petherton, and have proved to be extremely popular. However there are none near Castle Cary and such a facility has been requested

(some would say pleaded for) by the youth of Castle Cary and Ansford for many years. This was clearly identified in our community consultations, with a BMX track, skate-board ramp or pump-park being by far the most frequently requested facility by the youngsters consulted.

### ***Phase 3 – Minor developments and soft landscaping***

While most of the field will remain as grass, some minor developments and landscaping will be undertaken to improve the environmental aspects of the field. These will be developed during 2018, once all the major developments have been completed.

A series of flower-beds will be created along the footpaths; most will contain native wild-flowers for pollinating insects, while others will be sensory gardens, suitable for those with sensory disabilities to enjoy. It is planned to approach local businesses to fund and manage these flower-beds. A local group of disabled persons has requested to be involved in the construction of these flowerbeds. A number of picnic tables and seats will also be erected; some local residents have already offered to donate these.

An area at the western end of the field will be “managed” as a wildlife-friendly zone. This will require removing some dense thickets of brambles and hence opening up the spring and small stream that flows in the lower part of the field. It is expected that with the increased light wild flowers will naturally emerge. Bird nesting boxes and bat roosting boxes will also be erected. Carymoor Environmental Centre have offered to provide advice and to coordinate this development.

## **Funding**

As noted, many of the funds required for this project have already been raised. Some of the money has come from funding organisations and community fund-raising activities, while the local councils have covered all the costs related to design and planning.

In addition, Castle Cary Town Council, Ansford Parish Council and South Somerset District Council regard this project as so important for the community that they have offered to cover any short-falls in funding (up to approximately £10,000). However, in order not to burden the already cash-strapped Councils, all funding will as far as possible be sourced from funding organisations, local businesses or the community.

## **Long-term management and fund-raising**

While the field will remain the property of the Councils, and they will bear the ultimate responsibility for its management, a Management Committee of local residents will be established to raise funds for management costs and to oversee and coordinate all activities in Fairfield.

## **In conclusion**

The Councils of Castle Cary and Ansford believe that the Fairfield Community Project will be a significant benefit to everyone in the community, creating a green open space in the centre of a rapidly expanding urban area. The development plans for this field have been widely consulted and have strong support throughout the community.

We, the Fairfield Development and Management Committee, are requesting the support of local businesses and funding organisations to help us fund the pump-park, one of the key major development works of this exciting project, thereby helping to create a community space to be enjoyed by all for generations to come.



