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FAO The Clerk  
Holford Parish Council

28 November 2019

Dear Hema,

**Re: The playground areas at Portway, Holford.**

It was lovely to meet with you and the Chairman on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the playground area in Portway, Holford, to discuss ideas with regards to the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and the Children's Playground owned by Falcon Rural Housing Limited ("the Association").

The Association (formerly known as West Somerset Rural Housing) provided the MUGA and playground as a planning condition when the 4 social rented homes at Portway were built in 2002.

Unfortunately, in April of this year, the Association was left with no alternative but to close the play areas due to the high level of vandalism, particularly to the children's play area, and the subsequent health and safety risk this could pose to users.

As we discussed on site, the Association does not have the available finances in order to renovate the play area. It has spent a vast sum of money over the years making good the constant damage caused to the fences and equipment and consequently, it is unable and unwilling to do so anymore. The Association is a not-for-profit, registered provider of social housing and does not have extra reserves to spend on projects other than the provision of safe, good quality, truly affordable rented housing in villages, for local people.

I understand from our discussion that you have received very little feedback from village residents about the closure of the play areas. I can confirm that since the closure, the Association has not received any feedback from our tenants, nor the local community about the same.

In view of this, it can only be concluded that there does not appear to be a need for the play areas in Holford.

The Association does not want the play area to remain shut and unsightly and as per our meeting, with the Parish Council's help, wants to explore a cost effective, more appropriate use for the areas in the future. Consequently, the Association would like to propose the following for the Parish Council's discussion and support:

The MUGA

For those who might not be familiar with the MUGA, it is a hard-standing area made of tarmac (originally designed to be used as a netball court) with 4ft boarding all the way around its perimeter. A heavy-duty wire mesh fence on top of the boards brings the total height of the fence to around 12ft. Over the years this fence has been climbed over repeatedly and has been broken in

several places. There are currently no netball hoops in place due to the 5 pairs of previous hoops being stolen (despite various methods of securing them being used).

The proposal for the MUGA is to remove all the fencing and boarding from the perimeter and leave it as a hard-standing area. This means children can continue to play games such as football. A small racing track will be painted onto the tarmac so that smaller children can ride their bikes or scooters around it. It is further proposed to add a picnic table or two to the grassed area next to the tarmac along with a wooden fence which will close off the area from the residents car parking areas and which will prevent other residents living in the vicinity, attempting to use the space as a car park.

#### Children's Playground

Again, for those who may not be familiar with the children's playground, this is a completely fenced area with 2 sets of swings, a small climbing frame and a springy elephant.

It is proposed to completely remove the playground and its associated fencing. Once removed the area will be grassed and made into a picnic area by providing picnic benches. The grass will be fully maintained by the Association as part of the ongoing grounds maintenance contract for the housing scheme.

In the circumstances, I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the Parish Council so that they can discuss these proposals.

Finally, I must make it clear to the Parish Council that the Association is not and will not be in any financial position to renew or reinstate the existing playground provision. It has liaised with various sources of community funding, as well as the Local Authority and unfortunately, there is no external source funding available to aid in the regeneration of the play areas. Consequently, the Association has concluded that it is preferable for something constructive be done with the areas rather than be left how they are.

May I sincerely thank the Parish Council for taking the time to discuss the play areas and I look forward to hearing from you with regards to some feedback.

Yours sincerely,



Samantha Southam  
Managing Director