

HOLT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DRAFT v1

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Holt Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

CONTENTS

Vision & Objectives	2
Introduction & Background	3
Section 1 – Housing	5
Section 2 - Traffic, Parking & Transport	8
Section 3 - Commercial & Economic Development	13
Section 4 - Environment, Energy & Green Spaces	15
Section 5 – Community Facilities	18

Vision or “What should Holt be like in twenty years’ time?”

Our aim is to make Holt an even better place to live and work, now and for future generations.

It will be a sustainable, thriving, prosperous place supporting a high quality of life for everyone who lives here.

Objectives

- a) To understand the needs and desires of the people who live in the village
- b) To provide enough suitable homes for a growing and ageing population
- c) To reduce the impact of through traffic and parking on village life
- d) To build on the thriving local economy by encouraging job creation and space for businesses to operate
- e) To ensure high quality standards of design for any new building
- f) To preserve and protect the green spaces within the village and the wider rural environment
- g) To ensure any new development contributes to a sustainable future
- h) To support the existing community spirit of Holt by providing more facilities for village life
- i) To sustain Holt as a vibrant village community

Introduction & Background

Holt village has a history of looking at itself and working out what should change in future.

In 1998, an “Appraisal” of the village was undertaken by a small working party who distributed a questionnaire to every household, achieving a 74% return. Then, as now, the majority valued the rural environment and the community’s spirit, and did not want the essential character of the village to change. Many of the major concerns raised then resonate with today’s issues. The report of the appraisal was widely circulated within the parish and to relevant parts of local and national government.

In 2009, the idea that Holt should produce a Parish Plan, as encouraged by local government guidance, gained acceptance, and two public meetings were held to recruit volunteers who would help to produce this, and to get some idea of what villagers wanted. A Steering Group was set up and in the autumn of 2009, the people of Holt were asked to complete a preliminary questionnaire which asked what they liked most and disliked most about living in the village, and what ideas they had about the future of the village. This produced a comprehensive “wish list” of ideas ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous!

At the time, it was envisaged that a more formal questionnaire covering in depth the topics raised in the original answers would be devised, which would eventually result in a Village Plan for the next five to ten years. This would be used to approach Wiltshire Council and other organisations for help in the implementation of desirable developments.

However, at about that time, the environment in which the project had started changed:

- (i) there was a change of government and different ideas about how local planning should be conducted emerged;
- (ii) locally, as has been long expected, the owners of the old Tannery site decided to develop it. This had been designated as an “area of opportunity” by local authority planners some years ago, meaning that a mixed development of housing, business and commercial premises should be undertaken, and this has been endorsed by the new planning authority, Wiltshire Council.

The second of these issues has loomed large in the discussions of the Parish Council, so that the overall Village Plan was moved to the back burner for some time because of the need to contribute to the planning process for the site. This resulted in the Steering Group concentrating on the production of a questionnaire to gather villagers’ views about the detail of the redevelopment of the site, which resulted in a report published in September 2011. Planning for the site is now proceeding.

Whilst the above was taking place, other important matters became clearer. The government passed the “Localism Act” which simplifies and makes more local the whole spatial planning process, and the new Wiltshire Core Strategy reached its final draft, and it is clear that the production of a “Neighbourhood Plan” within the Act and this Strategy will become very important in ensuring the influence of local people on future planning decisions.

The reconstituted steering group decided that it would build on the previously produced “wish list” and Tannery survey (see above) as the basis for a local plan which, when finalised, will have to be submitted to a village referendum before its acceptance as the way forward for Holt.

[Outline of the process undertaken to reach the Plan – to follow]

SECTION 1 – HOUSING

1.1 WHAT WE HAVE

1.1.1 Current housing stock

Holt is a village with a population of approximately 1,600 with 720 households (ONS predictions for 2011). The housing stock ranges from old stone terraced cottages (the oldest being c.300 years old) to new apartments and large detached houses.

A recent survey conducted in March 2012 by Wiltshire Council to assess the need for affordable housing in the village provides the most up-to-date and accurate picture of the current situation.

- 84% of respondents are owner occupiers (significantly more than the national average)
- 8.9% rent from a social landlord
- 6.6% rent from a private landlord.

In terms of house size:

- 76.3% of respondents live in houses with three or more bedrooms
- 19.4% have two bedrooms
- 4.3% have one bedroom
- 53.6% live in detached properties

This survey also looked at the age distribution of the population – include this here??

1.1.2 Affordable housing

This survey characterised 99 of the houses within the villages as affordable. This is 13.6% of the total housing stock, lower than the Wiltshire average of 19.2%. These are provided by Selwood Housing and are divided between family homes and those for older people. A new development of 12 affordable houses currently being built by Jephson Housing off Station Road.

1.1.3 Recent new builds

Recent new housing in the village has mainly been built on brownfield sites in the Midlands: c.40 (?) units (houses and apartments) forming the Spa, on the site of an old bedding factory; and 14 houses on an old builder's yard, Lion's Orchard. There has been no single major house building development on green sites for some years. The largest is the new development of affordable houses currently being built on fields off Station Road. In addition, there have been a significant number of individual new houses built either on the sites of older

houses which have been demolished, or by sub-dividing gardens. This piecemeal development has led to the loss of green spaces and increased density of housing.

[Wiltshire Core Strategy new housing requirements – to be added]

1.2 WHAT WE WANT

a) The same WCC survey quoted above, asked villagers what type of new housing development they would support. The most popular option was for starter homes for young people (27.6%), with older people's accommodation being the second choice (20%). A small minority (8%) wanted no new housing.

b) The survey conducted by the Steering Group in 2011 asking specifically about options for the Tannery site, also asked several questions about housing. In terms of types of housing, responses were split fairly evenly between:

- Smaller starter homes – 29%
- Family houses - 28%
- Retirement housing – 26%
- Apartments/flats were less popular (17%)

This is broadly in line with the WCC results.

c) Numbers of new houses – in response to this question in the WCC survey, 31.5% voted for between 11-20 new houses; 24% were in favour of 21-40; with the balance wanting fewer than this. All these answers are significantly lower than the number (c.50) being proposed on the Tannery site, details of which were not available at the time of the survey.

d) Affordable housing – there are currently 22 names on the housing register which will leave up to 10 people with Holt connections wanting accommodation after the new houses in Station Road have been occupied.

e) The Tannery survey (Sept 2011) also asked about the type of ownership of new housing on the site. A clear majority (58%) wanted a mix of properties to buy and to rent; 37% would prefer only properties to buy; while only 8% wanted just property to rent.

f) Other clear preferences which emerged from the comments on the Tannery survey were:

- any new housing should be of a high standard of design
- they should be built from materials sympathetic to the local style
- they should be of a scale and size to fit with existing buildings (several mentioned what they consider to be the over-size buildings on the old bedding factory site)

- they should be well-spaced and landscaped and include gardens
- they should include adequate off-street parking.

g) The proposed development of the Tannery site is the single best (only?) opportunity to meet these housing needs for the foreseeable future. Do you feel the proposals as they stand achieve this?

h) No new in-fill housing development.

SECTION 2 - TRAFFIC, PARKING & TRANSPORT

2.1 WHAT WE HAVE

2.1.1 Traffic

The B3107 from Bradford-on-Avon to Melksham runs through Holt from west to east. Within the village, this forms junctions with another ten or so roads. All of these, apart from the one with Leigh Road at the western end of the village, only provide access to areas within the village and are not through roads. The Leigh Road junction is residential at the village end, and then continues on through farmland to Great Chalfield and Bradford Leigh.

The B3107 is a busy road which carries about 8000 vehicles per day, (surveys conducted by the Tannery Development Group and the Parish Council in 2012). In the morning and evening peak hours, the flow is just under 100 vehicles per hour. Of these vehicles, approximately 4% (or c.400 vehicles) are HGVs. Many of these come from the Great Bear distribution centre in Staverton (?). The majority of the HGVs are simply passing through the village, but some are accessing the existing industrial areas within the Midlands and other village-based businesses.

There is some concern that the proposed weight limit on the Cleveland Bridge in Bath (if implemented) may increase the volume of HGVs travelling through Holt as they seek alternative routes and this issue is being monitored. The volume of HGVs (and emergency vehicles) has already increased since the satnav system identified this road as a suitable 'through route' between motorway junctions.

Some traffic calming measures have been introduced at either end of the village – a central island and narrowing at the Melksham end and these features plus a mini-roundabout at the Tollgate junction. This has slowed vehicles entering the village and the on-street parking, which reduces the road to single carriageway in stretches, also keeps speeds down in places. The recently installed zebra crossing near the junction of Station Road, should also slow traffic down, especially when children are going to and from school.

The residential roads within the village, apart from those which provide access to newer developments like Great and Little Parks and Beckerley Lane, are mainly fairly narrow and are often further restricted by on-street parking.

Although the parking at the side of the main road has the benefit of slowing through traffic, it can also lead to queuing as vehicles wait to pass and some mount the pavement (especially by the Recreation Ground) in order to squeeze by. This, coupled with the narrowness of that pavement, poses an obvious risk to pedestrians.

The perception within the village is that traffic flows, especially HGVs, are too high and traffic also travels too fast through the centre of the village.

2.1.2 Parking

Most of the older houses within the village have no facility for off-street parking, so many residents are forced to park on the road. Even for newer houses, which do have parking provision, residents may choose to park on the road either because it's more convenient or they have more cars per household than the parking available. There are currently no restrictions on on-road parking.

There is a car park attached to the Village Hall which has approximately 46 parking spaces, four of which are specifically reserved for users of the Village Hall. Parking for The Courts is permitted here for cars but not for coaches. No charges apply. In the summer months, when The Courts is open, there is simply not enough space for cars and there is a major problem of street parking causing obstructions to traffic and properties, and potentially hazardous situations, especially on the sharp bend at the western end of the Midlands and at the entrance to the Midlands by the Village Hall.

The parking problem becomes even worse when there are events at the Village Hall, sports matches or events on the recreation ground or bowls club, when the parking flows out onto both sides of the main road.

Overflow car parking for visitors to The Courts has recently been opened in the Tannery site and at the Tollgate pub, but it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these spaces as the signage was initially very poor and people do not use them. The Tollgate also seems too far for people to walk

The parking pressures have also recently been increased by the number of visitors to the newly opened Glove Factory and Café site in the Midlands, as there is not enough space for both the workforce and visitors in the on-site car park. Most attempt to use either the Village Hall car park or park on the side of the Midlands. Again, overflow parking has recently been opened in the Tannery site and also on the field to the west of the Glove Factory premises, but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

The Parish Council has an agreement in principle from WCC that the kerbs on the pavement in the Midlands will be raised and double yellow lines will be painted on the most hazardous bend, but there is no date yet for these works to be done. Even when this is done, it may simply move the parking further up the street.

Almost all the main venues which require parking for visitors and events – the Village Hall, the sports grounds, The Courts, the Glove Factory – are concentrated in a relatively small part of the village (at the western end of the Midlands and the junction with the main road) which is why the problem is so acute in this area. The major re-development of the Tannery site (currently under discussion) also falls within this area. This could either add to the problem if those parking needs are not properly assessed and met or, conversely, could contribute to a solution for some of the existing issues.

The other area where parking has been an issue is around the school in the Gravel. This is confined to the morning and afternoon drop-off and collection times during term-times. The recently painted zig-zag lines have alleviated this for residents.

2.1.3 Other Transport

Buses

Public transport services through Holt are relatively limited. There are a number of bus services but many of them only operate once a day (school buses) or on one day of the week. The only service that provides regular buses throughout the day Monday to Friday is the ZIGZAG service. There are 8 buses in each direction that link Trowbridge to Corsham via Bradford on Avon, Holt and Melksham. Occasional buses also extend from Corsham to Chippenham. There are 5 buses in either direction on a Saturday.

Cycling

There are no formal cycle routes or facilities within the village, although Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Melksham are all within a 5 kilometre cycling distance, which means cycling could be an alternative to the car for reaching these towns. However, the existing carriageway widths on some parts of these routes (especially the direct route to Trowbridge via the Tollgate turning and the road to Bradford) are not 'cycle friendly' because of the narrowness of the roads, traffic volumes and speeds.

Trains

The station in Holt was closed back in the 1960s, although the line is still open with a fairly limited service between Melksham and Trowbridge. The nearest stations are at Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge or Melksham.

2.2 WHAT WE WANT

2.2.1 Traffic

- a) Overall reduction in traffic volumes and speed, especially for HGVs.

- b) Volumes of HGVs are unlikely to reduce until the Hilperton relief road is built, currently scheduled for 2014 (?). After this, it may be more realistic to lobby for a weight limit through the village.
- c) There are no simple ways of reducing the flows of other traffic through the village. About 15 years ago, a by-pass was considered (as a quid pro quo for building a new estate of c.230? houses) but was rejected at the time, although village opinion was (and still is?) strongly divided on the issue.
- d) Traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of traffic through the village could include:
 - a. Lowering the limit through the village from 30mph to 20mph
 - b. Erecting speed restriction signs through the village to reinforce this limit
 - c. Increasing the visibility of the 'entrances' to the village to reduce speeds
 - d. Changing junction layouts and road surfaces to reduce speeds
 - e. Creating speed humps or other physical obstructions.
- e) Improving facilities for pedestrians with wider & better surfaced pavements; creating an additional safe crossing point (not necessarily a zebra crossing) between the car park and The Courts.
- f) Specific new measures will need to be agreed to handle the extra traffic generated by the Tannery redevelopment as and when the plans for this become clearer.

2.2.2 Parking

- a) Implementing already agreed restrictions to prevent parking in most dangerous spots e.g. bend in the Midlands.
- b) Creating additional off-street parking for The Courts and The Glove Factory on either a new site(s) or by expanding the current Village Hall car park.
- c) Ensuring there is sufficient on-site parking to meet the needs of any new commercial and housing development in the Tannery.

2.2.3 Other Transport

- a) Better public bus services and services which link more usefully into other services such as trains at Bradford. Maybe the Holt Community Bus could also be used to provide more services for villagers.

- b) Cycle way to connect Holt to the Trowbridge road past the Staverton bridge – but v. expensive because of the cost of creating a new river crossing.
- c) Reopen railway station – but would be expensive and not a short-term option.

SECTION 3 - COMMERCIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 WHAT WE HAVE

Holt has always been a working as well as a residential community. Although two of the largest and most visible employers based in the village – Beaven’s Tannery and the Norian Beds factory – have either scaled back or closed completely, there is still a considerable amount of business and commercial activity within the village. Much is still concentrated in The Midlands, and includes:

- The Midlands Light Industrial Estate – with 20 units, currently housing 10 businesses, including the recently arrived Box Steam Brewery;
- The Beaven’s Tannery site – which includes the remaining Beaven’s business plus small units let out to other enterprises including a stonemason, a joiner, a furniture store and garage;
- The Glove Factory – a newly renovated site which offers office and studio space to about 45 individuals, companies and organisations, mainly involved in the high-tech or creative industries, together with an ancillary cafe.

In addition, there are many smaller hubs of economic activity spread throughout the village, providing both employment opportunities and goods and services to the village. They cover a range of sectors and activities, including:

- Hospitality and tourism – two pubs, three cafes, bed & breakfasts, holiday accommodation, the National Trust Courts Gardens;
- Retail – village shop, post office, farm shop/country store, gift shop, furniture shop;
- Motoring – garage selling cars, garages providing servicing, driving lessons;
- Building services – joiners, builders, stonemasons, plumbers, roofers, electrical contractors, flooring, fireplaces;
- Domestic and gardening services – domestic cleaners, window cleaners, gardeners, tree surgeon, pet services, soft furnishings;
- IT & financial services – website design and development, IT maintenance, financial advice;
- Creatives – designers, artists, printmakers, potters, marketing & communication specialists;
- Education – the village school and pre-school;
- Personal care and services – nursing home for the elderly, sheltered accommodation for learning disabled adults, therapists, hairdressers.

Plus there are a number of other individual and quirky businesses. Indeed the recent 2011 Holt Village Guide identified over 60 businesses within the village and this doesn’t include those who are simply self-employed, working full or part of the time from home offices or

workshops within the village. In the survey conducted last year (on the redevelopment of the Tannery site), 11.6% of respondents identified themselves as working or studying within the village. This is a trend which seems to be increasingly and is slightly higher than the national figures (9.2% according to the 2001 Census). More accurate and up-to-date data should be available when the latest Census figures are released.

3.2 WHAT WE WANT

- a) The same survey showed very clearly that the vast majority of respondents want this mixed residential and commercial environment within the village to continue. When asked specifically about the redevelopment of the Tannery, a clear majority of people wanted to see a roughly 50:50 split between commercial and housing use for this site, which has been designated as an 'area of opportunity' by the Wiltshire planning authority.
- From the responses, the preferred options for commercial development were:
 - Creative/studio space – 64.3%
 - Retail - 62.2%
 - Offices – 61.6%
 - Light industrial – 52.5%
- b) Alongside this, there were strongly expressed views that the infrastructure such as drainage, water, cables, etc should be installed or upgraded simultaneously with any development. The perennial issues of ensuring adequate parking and safe access for transport were also raised.
- c) The redevelopment of the Tannery site (which is already under discussion) provides the obvious area in which to incorporate new business and commercial units or premises. There are no other appropriate sites or existing buildings which would lend themselves to conversion within the village.
- d) Additional improvements which would also contribute to the wider on-going commercial health of the village (including those self-employed and small businesses operating informally) would include:
- (i) Improved broadband and mobile phone signals;
 - (ii) Better transport links to enable people to travel into the village for work using either public transport or low-impact transport such as bikes;
 - (iii) Ensuring any new commercial premises are affordable, to enable existing businesses within the village to expand or relocate without leaving Holt.

SECTION 4 - ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & GREEN SPACES

4.1 WHAT WE HAVE

4.1.1 Environment

Holt is a village with a population of approximately 1,600 with 710 households and covers an area of c. xxxx hectares. It is surrounded by agricultural land with some pedestrian access and is close to the river Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal. There is access to the river but no riverside walk. A proportion of the Village is in a conservation area (see map on pxx) and quite a few individual houses are listed.

The traffic issues caused by the busy B3107 road and the car parking problems in the village have been noted above. Both these impact negatively on the overall environment of the village

The village is close to the Wiltshire cycle network but there are no bespoke cycle ways that avoid busy roads.

Within the village, the large brownfield site that is the old Beaven's Tannery, is currently under active redevelopment. Given its industrial past, there is concern about pollution within the Tannery site and beyond, in an area known as the Pits, situated at the end of the Midlands, behind Hawcroft. These old lagoons have been used for disposal of the waste products from the tanning process (which has latterly focussed on the production of chamois leather), and contain a range of animal, organic and non-organic substances. Concerns about the potential environmental issues were raised by many respondents to the survey on the redevelopment which was carried out in 2011.

4.1.2 Energy

The Wiltshire Council Core strategy states that any new development should contribute towards sustainable constructions and stand-alone renewable energy installations will be encouraged.

It is noticeable that increasing numbers of houses are installing PV panels on roofs. There are, as yet, no larger scale renewable energy systems within Holt. A planning application for a solar panel farm in the fields between the village and Great Chalfield, was submitted but has currently been withdrawn.

The same 2011 survey also asked people about the sustainable energy measure they would like to see in any new development. Energy efficient housing came top with an 89.7% positive

response, followed by solar panels with 76.4%. There was considerably less support for measures such as a combined heat and power plant (34.2%) and wind turbines (27.3%), which may not in any case be practicable.

Better facilities for recycling (which indirectly support energy efficiency) were also strongly supported.

4.1.3 Green Spaces

Within Holt there are a number of valued green spaces:

- the village green;
- the playing fields and children's play area, including the community orchard which has recently been planted with commemorative fruit trees at the western edge of the recreation ground;
- Dawes Pond;
- the fields behind the church and the Courts, enclosed by Station Road, Gaston and The Star;
- the green space at the southern end of Little Parks;
- villagers also have free access to the National Trust gardens at The Courts.

There is a network of footpaths from Holt into the surrounding fields, including pleasant walks to Chalfield Manor to the north of the village. These are very well used and a recent proposal by the owner of Holt Manor to close, reroute and fence in footpaths across his land has been met with much concern.

As noted above in Section 1, there have been a significant numbers of new houses built either on the sites of older houses which have been demolished, or by sub-dividing gardens. This piecemeal development has led to the loss of green spaces and increased density of housing and is another cause of some concern.

4.2 WHAT WE WANT

Previous surveys and questionnaires have shown that people really value the village atmosphere and express concerns that this could be lost if the village population increases too dramatically, or the character of the village changes. To sustain the village atmosphere and make Holt an even better place to live, we would like:

- a) To maintain the existing green spaces within and around the village.
- b) Improvements to paving throughout the village for pedestrians, pushchairs and wheel chairs.
- c) To increase access by foot and cycle to the countryside, river, canal and local towns for both work and recreation.

- d) To plant more trees and generally improve the biodiversity of the existing green spaces.
- e) Provision of allotments for villagers, provided a suitable site can be located and agreed.
- f) Sustainable developments that contribute to climate change issues including renewable energy installations and good use of waste and water.
- g) Sustainable housing and renewable energy systems included in any new developments.
- h) A full and publically disclosed environmental assessment of all the old Tannery sites before any development goes ahead.

SECTION 5 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

5.1 WHAT WE HAVE

5.1.1 Physical amenities

It is very clear from the surveys that have been undertaken, and from the experience of living in the village, that one of the key aspects of village life is that is most valued is the strong sense of community that Holt provides. Indeed in the survey conducted last year, an overwhelming 60% said they did not want the village atmosphere to change. Much of what creates this positive atmosphere may be intangible, but there are many identifiable physical facilities and resources that contribute to this. These include:

- Two community venues – the Village Hall & United Reformed Church Hall
- Two churches - St Katherine's Church & United Reformed Church
- Educational facilities - Holt Primary School, Holt Pre-School & Holt Tiny Tots
- Shopping facilities - Holt Superstore, Holt Post Office, Seasons Country Store, Trust shop
- Public houses and cafés – The Old Ham Tree, The Tollgate Inn & Seasons café, The Glove Factory café, the Courts café
- Sports and recreation facilities – the recreation ground with pavilion, football pitch, tennis & netball courts, children's playground & bowls club
- Retirement and care homes – Firlawn Nursing Home and The Elms
- Gardens and green spaces – the National Trust Courts Garden (to which villagers get free entrance), the countryside and footpaths in and around the village.

5.1.2 Community Clubs, Societies & Activities

It is easy to gauge the importance of these physical facilities by looking at a small snapshot of the social activities they support.

- Community venues – luncheon club, WI, bridge club, flower club, dramatic society, community choir, Moviola screenings, yoga, karate & Tai Chi
- Churches – bellringers, coffee mornings, fellowship meetings, outreach events
- Sports – football & netball clubs, tennis coaching and tournaments, bowls club
- Youth groups – youth club, Brownies, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers, junior church and Sky 1
- Plus many other activities and social groups that are not linked with a specific venue such as the Holt Morris, the British Legion, Holt Walkers, Holt Community Bus.

The Holt Village Guide published in 2011 listed around 30 village clubs and voluntary organisations.

5.2 WHAT WE WANT

5.2.1 Physical Amenities

Although, in comparison with many other similar villages, Holt is already well-provided with community amenities, the recent surveys did throw-up some additional facilities or improvements that would contribute to village life. The most commonly cited were (figures are from the 2011 survey):

- a) Additional facilities for young people, such as a meeting place or skate park - nearly 70% would like to see these, although only 10% would actually use them.
- b) Fitness centre/gym/recreation space/swimming pool - 60% would like to see this and over 45% would use it.
- c) Additional car parking – over 60% would like this but only 15% would use it (so this seems to be to meet the needs of visitors to the village and reflects on-going concerns on this issue).
- d) Café/restaurant - over 50% would like and 45% would use (this was before the two cafes at the Tollgate and the Glove Factory opened).
- e) Community centre – over 40% would like and 35% would use.
- f) Take-away - over 30% would like and use.
- g) Museum – over 30% would like and 28% would use.
- h) Garaging – 30% would like but only 7% would use (see comments above on parking).
- i) Allotments - nearly 25% would use.
- j) Other frequently mentioned facilities include - doctor's surgery/clinic (which there used to be in the Village Hall); additional retail outlets including a butcher, baker and hairdresser (again, these used to be available in the village).
- k) It is also worth noting that there is a current campaign to improve and update the sports pavilion.