

This document provides detail in support of an application entitled “Sladebank Woods pole structure and associated works” It has two components:

1. Proposal to construct an open sided and open roofed wooden structure to facilitate activities/events in the woodland
2. Proposal to install a small lockable storage box for shelter items and construct a small wooden covered structure to accommodate a compost toilet

1. Proposal to construct an open sided and open roofed wooden structure to facilitate activities/events in the woodland

Rationale

It is our understanding that we as landowners have a responsibility to provide shelter and facilities to those taking part in forestry/woodland activities/operations.

We would like to build a structure, that is temporary in its nature, on the lower slopes of the woodland to make it easier and safer to run the Forest School and other woodland-based events that we currently run. This would also increase the range of groups and individuals that could make use of the woodland.

In addition to the sessions we offer directly, we support Forest School leaders other than ourselves to offer Forest School events. This currently depends on rigging up a temporary cover slung between trees. In our British climate this can often prove inadequate especially if it is windy. The open sided and open roofed structure we are proposing would provide an increased level of substance and feeling of safety for participants in woodland events.

In the last year we have run 6 full day Forest School events for primary school children. We are currently experimenting with an after school club. We have also run three open weekends and a morning of singing. Having the proposed structure would enable us to run these events more easily and we would hope to be able to increase the number of group days that we run once the shelter was up. It would be hard to predict what that number would be but we anticipate that it would be no more than a 25% increase over current levels. A schedule of current and proposed activity levels is available.

Construction

- The structure would be 12 sided and approximately 7 metres in diameter; 'floor' area approx. 38 sq. metres
- The roof would be reciprocal i.e. self supporting interlocking rafters
- The posts would be chestnut of approx. 300 mm diameter at the base. They would be placed in holes in the ground and tamped in with stone and earth; no cement will be used. The posts would be approx. 500 mm in the ground to ensure stability. Height from ground level would be maximum 2.5 metres.
- The rafters and roof ring beam will be larch poles of approx. 100 mm diameter at the thickest end. The height of the apex of the roof will be approx. 3.5 metres.
- No trees over 8 years will be removed. A small amount of levelling of the surface would be required; the early stages of this were carried out some time ago.
- The roof will be covered with a made-to-measure tarpaulin when necessary, and the cover removed at the end of an event. There will be a hole in the centre of the tarpaulin to allow smoke out if a fire is made in the middle of the structure space. Tarpaulin type material will also be hung between uprights on occasions when a windbreak would be required.

We feel that the structure will blend well into the woodland setting and look appropriate to the environment whether covered or uncovered. As it is ultimately a temporary structure, being made of biodegradable material we anticipated that we will not need planning permission for this.

Pictures of a similar design, maps and photos are included with this application

2. Proposal to install a small lockable storage box for hand tools and construct a small wooden covered structure to accommodate a compost toilet

Rationale

We currently take in all the resources we need for particular activities and take them all out again. This is a significant impediment to our woodland activities. As previously stated, it is our understanding that we as landowners have a responsibility to provide shelter and facilities to those taking part in forestry/woodland activities/operations.

To meet our responsibilities, we aim to install a small storage box for a small selection of tools, shelter tarpaulins etc., and a small compost toilet. No waste will be stored on site between events.

Construction

We are open to modifications being suggested to this plan. Our main issue is to construct something sufficiently robust to discourage and avoid casual damage. The storage box would be similar to the green 'Sitesafe' metal one that is in the Park Gardens in Stroud; approx 2m x 0.5m x 0.5m. The wooden structure for the toilet will be approximately the scale of a 7' x 5' 'garden shed'. The outside of the structure will be posts and split logs from the woodland. We expect to construct an inner 'cage' that will mean that even if the outer wood is burned or broken the contents can be protected. The proposed locations of the box and the structure are identified on the attached maps.

We feel that the structures will blend well into the woodland setting and look appropriate to the environment. As they are ultimately portable / temporary structures, we anticipated that we would not need planning permission for this.

Context

Since hosting the three open weekends in October 2015, 2016 and 2017, it has become clear to us that there is a significant demand for broadly educational activities in a local woodland that is within easy reach of Stroud.

We have met in 2016 with representatives of Allsorts, Active Impact and Creative Sustainability to explore the possibility of providing activities for people with a wider range of abilities than we can at present. We ran our first mixed ability Forest School in Summer 2017 through the Of Course We Can programme and intend to run two more in Summer 2018. The two main barriers to a wider range of groups would be the availability of shelter and some form of toilet. The shelter issue is covered above. As regards the toilet, we envisage a simple composting toilet system

As outlined in our submission about a structure, we don't envisage a significant increase in the number of participants in the events we offer. As a guide, the open weekends saw 120 adults and 80 children coming to the woods spread over the weekend. Forest School events are normally a maximum of 12 children who are dropped off by their parents.

Parking and access

We imagine that parking and access will be considerations for anyone viewing this application. Apart from on very rare occasions, public events would not run outside a time frame of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. During these times there is usually plenty of space for on street parking in both locations below. We aim a lot of our events at the local community so a good proportion of people coming to the woods will be on foot. There is also a bus service to Summer Crescent Mondays to Saturdays.

Langtoft Road

We have direct access between 91 and 93 Langtoft Road. It is where the farmer used to bring the cows in and is about 4 metres wide, adjoining a turning point in the road. It is fenced, with a locked field gate and a stile.

Summer Crescent

We currently use the tarmac alleyway paths between 22 and 24, and 38 and 40 Summer Crescent for pedestrian access. We also walk up though the Summer Crescent play park; we have access through an informal agreement with the Stroud District (SDC) and Town Councils. We recently met with a representative of SDC to explore improved access through the park for when the ground is wet.

Examples

Below please find two examples of open sided / open roofed structures with a reciprocal roofs. We hope this will give some visual idea of our proposal. As stated there will be no concrete used as suggested by the second picture.

