

Yeovil Flagship Play Area DESIGN BRIEF July 2008

Scope

The Flagship Playspace will be a model of good practice in play design. It will have free open access and will appeal to all ages and abilities. The high profile location in Yeovil Recreation Ground makes the best use of a range of complementary facilities and easy access, including parking, toilets, CCTV, park keeper's office, refreshments and changing.

Aim

The aim of this project is to increase the quality and quantity of play opportunities in South Somerset through the provision of a destination play space.

Design Objectives

The agreed objectives of the design are as follows:

1. The Flagship Playspace is intended to model good practice and incorporate appropriate levels of supervision during peak use times. The key attributes of the playspace will be its free open access status, the high level of accessibility and a creative, sustainable and inclusive design for the entire district.
2. The design must be able to sustain use by up to 60,000 visitors per annum. Aspire to raise awareness and encourage change by practically demonstrating how best play objectives and enriched play environment criteria can be achieved. High quality materials to ensure longevity of the built form will also be utilized.
3. Consistent with SSDC Play Policy, the presumption for age ranges should be in favour of children, young people and adults of all ages having access to a quality play opportunity.
4. The playspace is expected to focus more on use of the natural environment for play with hard and soft landscaping. The use of some catalogue play equipment may be used but this will not be the main focus of the construction.
5. Make best possible use of existing site assets including trees, buildings and infrastructure i.e. the car park for visitors travelling long distances, toilets with baby changing and disabled toilets, CCTV for security and the park keepers office overlooking the proposed playspace for safety.
6. The design must be achievable within budget and the build of the play space completed and opened by the end of June 2009.
7. Produce an exhilarating design inspired by children's drawings with their approval and ensure the approach is sympathetic to the needs of the community.
8. Ensure the scheme is durable from the outset and has a clear maintenance strategy developed in conjunction with SSDC.
9. The design must be consistent with the requirements and constraints set out by the Big Lottery for SSDC Children's Play Programme Grant award.

Process

The aim of the process is to design a natural play environment that will exceed the aspirations of the SSDC Play Strategy and user groups creating a flagship playspace. The process begins with an analysis of the site in order to understand and utilise its existing assets. An important part of the process is the early engagement of local children and young people from local schools and community groups, including children with special needs, to assist with the design concept.

During the initial design workshop with children held at Milford community playgroup, the prominent feedback was to create an adventure landscape in which children can experience a rich diversity of play.

Following the initial workshop, school consultations were undertaken in and around Yeovil at seven schools. We aspired to involve as many schools as possible, first contacting schools who had been involved as stakeholders in SSDC's Play Strategy. 260 pupils were involved in this process, with ages ranging from six to fourteen. An integral aspect in this development is to incorporate children's ideas and drawings directly into the playspace. The pupils were asked to assist in the design process by drawing/describing their ultimate adventure landscape.

The objective was to encourage illustrations of places and scenes rather than drawings of traditional play equipment (to focus more on use of the natural environment). Sketches and support images were presented and used as a starting point. A variety of creative ideas and imaginative play features were created. From the results a general consensus of popular types of play was compiled and presented to the client and public at the user forum annual meeting, which included local residents. An online survey was also undertaken and results from that were incorporated into the theme of the design, a summary of which can be seen below.

Once the design concept is agreed, the sketch proposals will be displayed at a publicly accessible location for comment including consulting other stakeholders. Then detailed drawings will be produced, based on an accurate survey of the site. These drawings will be used for the preparation of working drawings, for statutory approvals and construction.

Themes and Elements Emerging from Consultations & Client Preferences

Schools Consultation

Number consulted: 260 Ages: 6-14

Tree houses, platforms and bridges	Raised walkways
Themed tunnel slides	Tyre Swings
Use of rope, climbing nets	Underground/hidden rooms
Skull, spider, dragon imagery	Monkey bars
Telescope/lookout towers	Swings
Climbing Walls	Use of water
Mazes	

Survey Results

Number consulted: 18 Age: unknown

Use of water, sand and climbing equipment	Scramble nets
Natural play mixed with fixed play equipment	Climbing wall
Seating areas and places to meet and talk	Slides and spinning equipment
Jungle/woodland theme	Hide and seek
Camps & dens	Climbing
Making Dams	
Local characteristics that could be used as an influence: Helicopters, Somerset Levels, Glove Making, Fleet Air Arm, Railways, Ham Stone & Ham Hill, Roman heritage, Gloves, Farming, Willow, Orchards, Yeovil Town Football Club, Barwick Follies and Rope Making.	

Public Meeting Outputs

Number consulted: 17 Age: unknown

Concerns over proximity to Park House and potential for noise nuisance.
Concerns over increased use of access point to the south.

Yeovil Youth Council Feedback

Number consulted: 9 Age: 14-16

Need to create specific area for teenagers
Provision of a managed whitewash wall to help reduce the potential for offensive graffiti on the site
"Random" rather than "uniform" design would make the facility much more attractive and appealing
Some form of perimeter fencing would discourage animals from fouling the area
The incorporation of some form of high ropes activity would improve the attraction of the site for teenagers
The inclusion of water play features would enhance the appeal of the facility
The use of sand could prove to be an attraction provided it was carefully managed in wet weather
A mini-obstacle course could also enhance the appeal of the playspace

Client Preferences

Extensive use of sand	Extensive use of planting
Water play included in the design	Use of Flags to show air movement
Opportunity for Fire Pit	Use of Ham Stone
Jungle Theme	Opportunities for role-play
Use of mounds/bunds to make interesting topography	Cohesive design that has unique selling points.

Further Information

For more information about this project please contact:

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