

Stratton Bates Recreation Ground

New Play Area Project Summary Report

November 2020





New Alresford Town Council has identified the Stratton Bates play area as being in need of investment. This report tells the story of a project that developed an approach to a new design through close engagement with younger people and families across the town.



Feria Urbanism is a planning and design studio with specialisms in development frameworks, community engagement and urban design. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of planning and design projects across the UK.

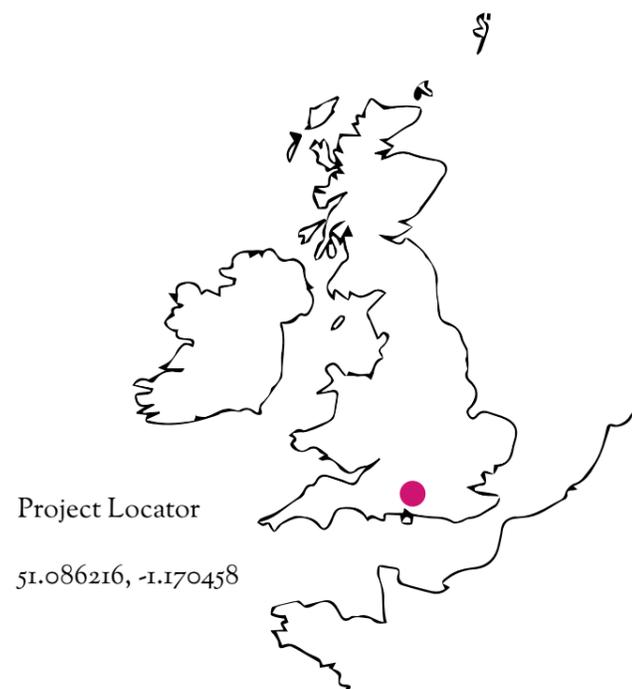
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INDICATIVE SKETCHES ONLY IN THIS REPORT

Sketches shown are preliminary design studies only and are subject to information available at the time. They are not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.



Contents

7	Introduction to Workshops
8	Infant School Results
18	Junior School Results
32	Secondary School Results
37	Workshop Summary
38	Consultation Exhibition
42	Copies of Posters
50	Consultation Results
53	Preferred Scenario
57	Stratton Bates Mile

Three workshops for three different age groups



Introduction to the Workshops

In February 2020, the Feria Urbanism team of Richard Eastham, Henrike Johanssen and Amy Speed and Sarah Johnson (Deputy Clerk) of New Alresford Town Council ran workshops at Sunhill Infant, Sunhill Junior and Perins Secondary School.

The aim and ambition of these engagement events was to work with children local to the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground, gaining their unique perspectives on potential types of new play equipment.

The project team encouraged children from Sunhill to design their own “dream play areas” using plasticine, small wooden sticks and other modelling equipment. The team supported the children in being as creative as possible, recording their thoughts and designs as they created and presented; ensuring every idea was recorded to be collated and analysed.

At Perins Secondary school, the team spoke directly with the students, instigating focus group conversations on their options of existing public spaces, how they use them and how they believe these could be improved.

Each workshop helped the team gain a greater understanding of the various wishes from within different age groups for the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground, but also helped us begin to consider how they ideas could begin to form a singular, integrated park design, appreciated and able to be used by all ages.



The infant school students using plasticine and drawings to sketch out ideas.



The junior school students beginning to build up the landscape background.



The secondary school students organising their individual responses to questions.

Infant School Results

Group One



Headlines

They had an insect/small scale theme where each piece of equipment was designed as a bug or plant e.g. mushroom slide and bee swing.

Equipment

Slides	2
Swings	2
Monkey Bars	2
See-Saw	1
Play Den	2

Landscape Features

Amenities

Water Fountain	2
Gates	1

Types of Play

Jumping	1
Climbing	1
Catching	1
Sliding	1
Eating/ Drinking	2

Infant School Results

Group Two



Headlines

At the beginning this group had an interesting approach to colour, using multiple colours within one piece of equipment to highlight which parts were meant to be touched and which parts were to be avoided.

Equipment

Slides	2
Monkey Bars	1
Trampoline	1
Play Den	1
Sling Shot	1

Landscape Features

Hill	1
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Amenities

Water Fountain	1
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Types of Play

Jumping	2
Running	1
Climbing	1
Catching	1
Sliding	2
Making	1
Slinging	1

Infant School Results

Group Three



Headlines

This design had a much greater emphasis on adventure and challenging play where each piece of equipment is linked to the next piece.

Equipment

Slides	1
Swings	2
Climbing Frame	3
Trampoline	1
Spinning Seats	1
Zip Line	1
Puppet Show/ Stage	1

Landscape Features

Amenities

Types of Play

Jumping	1
Climbing	3
Sliding	1
Spinning	2
Watching	1
Zipping	1
Swinging	1
Swimming	1

Infant School Results

Group Four



Headlines

This group planned out their design well, drawing first on the base to decide where things were going to go and then giving specifics about the differences in similar types of equipment, such as specifying colours and shapes.

Equipment

Slides	6
Climbing Frame	2
Sand Pit	1
Zip Line	1

Landscape Features

Tunnel	1
Water Play Feature	1

Amenities

Types of Play

Jumping	1
Climbing	3
Sliding	5
Spinning	2
Zipping	1
Playing	2
Crawling	1

Infant School Results

Group Five



Headlines

This group started with a water feature in the corner and designed out from there, trying to incorporate and relate everything back to the central water feature.

Equipment

Slides	2
Climbing Frame	1
Play Den	2
Zip Line	1

Landscape Features

Tunnel	1
Water Play Feature	1

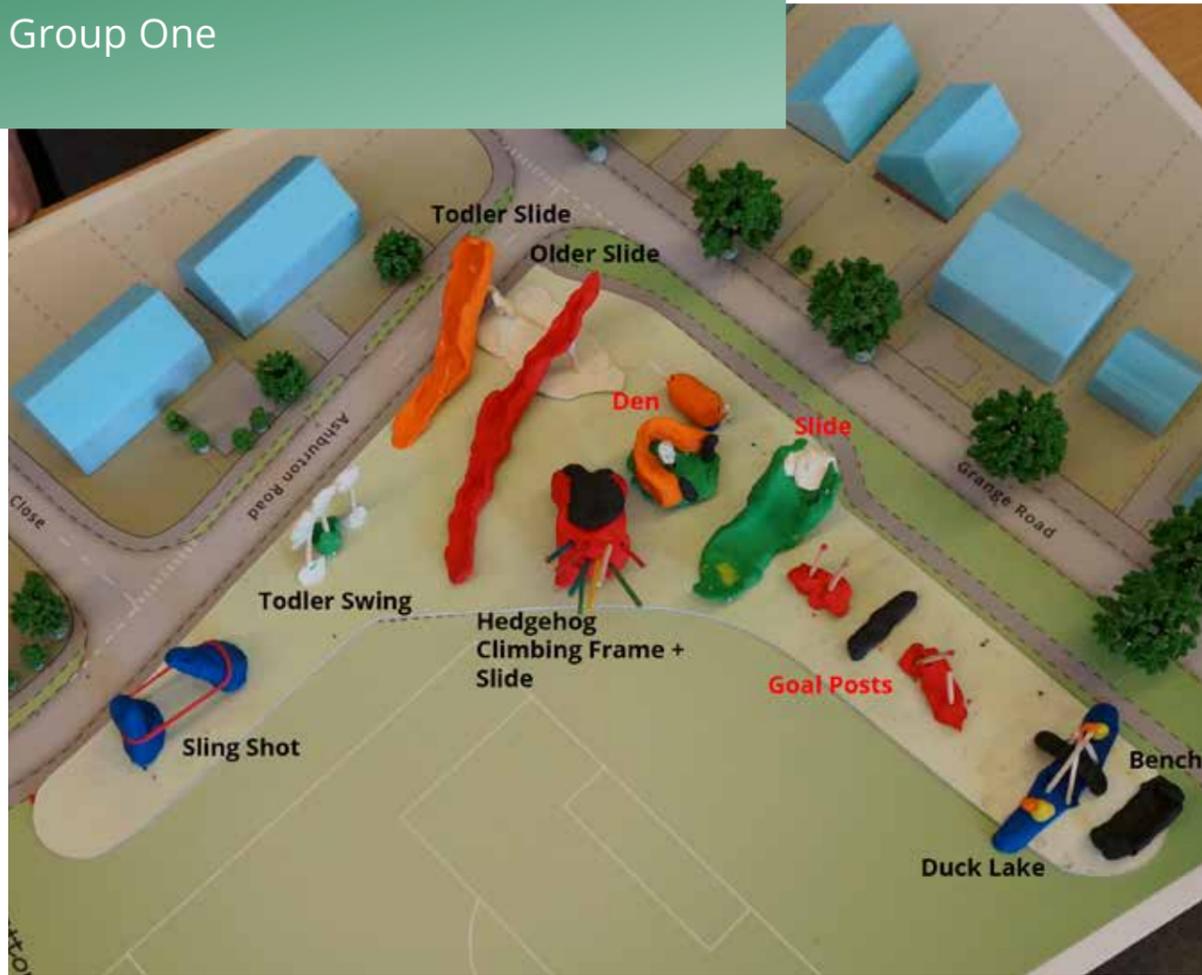
Amenities

Types of Play

Jumping	1
Walking Across	1
Climbing	3
Sliding	3
Zipping	1
Crawling	1

Junior School Results

Group One



Headlines
 Interesting ideas that are trying to connect and integrate with the wider park area.

Equipment	
Slides	4
Swings	1
Climbing Frame	1
Play Den	1
Sling Shot	1
Scaled Football Goals	2

Landscape Features	
Duck Pond	1
Bridge	1

Amenities	
Benches	1

Types of Play	
Sliding	2
Watching	1
Swinging	1

Junior School Results

Group Two



Equipment	
Slides	2
Swings	3
Climbing Frame	3
Play Den	1
Sand Pit	1

Landscape Features	
Duck Pond	1
Viewing Platform	1

Amenities	
Benches	4
Bins	2
Gates	1

Types of Play	
Climbing	2
Sliding	2
Watching	1
Swinging	3
Playing	1
Hanging Out	1



Headlines

Good awareness of the different age groups who use the site and how different pieces of equipment could be individualised for each. The whole design is organised into areas with specific themes or for specific age groups.

Junior School Results

Group Three



Equipment

Slides	3
Climbing Frame	2
Play Den	1
Roundabout	1
Time out zone	1
Swing Ball	1
Football Goals	1

Amenities

Benches	3
Lighting	1
Table	2

Types of Play

Climbing	2
Sliding	3
Resting	1
Swinging	1
Playing	3
Hanging Out	5



Headlines

Different animal themes for different ages groups and more generous with casual seating and tables.

Junior School Results

Group Four



Headlines
 Greater emphasis on equipment with different levels and heights. A green colour scheme to help playground blend in with surroundings.

Equipment

Slides	4
Monkey Bars	1
Climbing Frame	1
Play Den	1

Amenities

Bins	1
Water Fountain	1
Dog Bowl	1

Types of Play

Climbing	2
Sliding	4
Playing	2
Viewing	1

Junior School Results

Group Five



Headlines

A large amount of interactive play or game equipment, rather than static pieces.

Equipment

Climbing Frame	1
Trampoline	1
See-Saw	2
Spinning Seats	1
Zip Line	2
Running Wheel	1
Dart Board	1

Landscape Features

Duck Pond	1
Bridge	1

Amenities

Shelter	1
Dog Bowl	1

Types of Play

Climbing	1
Bouncing	1
Other Play	5
Spinning	2
Exercise	1

Junior School Results

Group Six



Headlines

This group showed an interested in improving existing aspects or reusing pieces of the existing play area and improving them. A lot of the pieces of equipment had a “hiding” quality to them.

Equipment

Slides	4
Swings	1
Climbing Frame	1
Play Den	1
Roundabout	1

Landscape Features

Treehouse/ Viewing	1
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Amenities

Benches	1
Bins	1
Water Fountain	1
Dog Bowl	1

Types of Play

Climbing	1
Swinging	1
Sliding	4
Other Play	2
Spinning	1



Group work at the infant school, with project team and town councillor's observing.



The small group format helped children spark ideas off one another while their models were under construction.



The class teacher was always on hand to help children share their ideas.



Group photo at the end of an intense design session — well done everybody!

Secondary School Results

Question		Group One All Girl Group
1	When you go out to spend time with friends, where to you go in New Alresford?	Alrebury Park Ford Coop Down the dean Ducks
2	When you go out, are you alone or in a group?	Groups
3	If in a group, how large is the group?	2 to 5 people Bigger groups when with family
4	When you all meet up, is your group mixed (e.g. boys and girls) or not?	Just girls (not mixed groups)
5	Are people in your friendship group, all the same sort of age as you?	Yes
6	Do you ever feel unsafe in the places you are expected to hang out? If so, where is this and why?	Yes, if there are groups of older people
7	Are you ever made to feel unwelcome in the places you want to hang out? Can you explain why this is?	Sometimes, if there are younger children its uncomfortable

Group Two One Girl, Two Boys	Group Three One Boy, Two Girls	Group Four All Boy Group
Friend's Houses Walk Around	Alrebury Park The river Shops	Skate park (Alrebury)
Group for socialising Alone for exercise	Group	Group
5/ 6 Could go up to 20	5 to 7 people	3 to 7 people
Sometimes	Mixed Just Boys	Boys (unless larger group)
Yes	Yes (mainly)	Yes
Pressured by younger families Unsafe on rare occasions, feel as though others see them as trouble makers	No	No
Same as above	If there are already a group of people there, they might judge or be rude to you	No

Question		Group One All Girl Group
8	Do you always go to the same hang out space? Or do you have different ones to choose from?	Usually go for the closer places Usually Alrebury Park because it is nearest to school
9	How far from your home do you go?	10 minutes' walk 20 to 30 minutes' cycle 15 minutes' bus ride (friend's house)
10	Do you walk, ride a bike or travel another using another mode?	Weather dependant Walk or parents drive usually Bus to some places
11	What sort of facilities do you want in an area to hang out? Benches, chairs, shelter, social spaces, lighting?	Shelter Lighting More benches Zip wire Swirly slide/ longer ones Swings Roundabout Spinning bowl Pop-up shops
12	Would you go outdoors to meet friends even in wet weather?	Only if there is shelter

Group Two One Girl, Two Boys	Group Three One Boy, Two Girls	Group Four All Boy Group
No	Mainly, sometimes fine new spaces	Varies depending on activity
10/15 minutes' walk As far as Basingstoke (further if driving)	Depends on where friends are, weather and what you want to do	Own villages or outskirts
Walk Bike	Walk Cycle Life in car	Bike mostly
Exercise machines Benches Shelter Café Storage The pavilion could become a place for storage or café	Football pitches Sheltered seating (in social spaces) Swings Zip line Bike rack Round Tables Bigger groups seating	Social spaces (somewhere to chat) Benches/ meeting places Shelter Lighting (able to see but not intense)
No	If there was shelter Depends on what we want to do	

Secondary School Additional Comments

Some groups mentioned that people do not tend to go to Stratton Bates park because at night it is too open, and there are concerns that people can see them and watch without them knowing. Therefore, including better lighting, “breaking up” the area more and including more planting/ sheltered areas, teenage groups might feel safer at Stratton Bates.

Most of the older children said they would rather hang out at friends houses than the parks, so maybe equipment or furniture aimed at older children should prioritise larger groups that would be unable to socialise in somebody’s home.

A few people raised concerns of feeling uncomfortable around younger families in play areas, and maybe this is why a lot of these older children do not use Stratton Bates? As a small enclosed area, primarily designed for younger children this immediately precludes older children. Does this suggest a separate area specifically designed for older children might be more appropriate?

Makins Court Focus Group

Following the workshop with children, a focus group was held with a residents of Makins Court, that is located immediately south of the recreation ground. The results of the children’s workshop were shared and an open discussion then followed. Residents were broadly supportive of the idea of investment in the play area and wanted to see more seating and smoother footpath surfaces.



The teenage engagement was through a focus group format, with groups providing their answers on a printed grid.



The older children were keen to share their views without the need for model-making...



... but the physical 3-D model of the site reminded everybody of the project context.

Makins Court residents described that on occasion, there can be noise disturbance from teenagers gathering in the south west corner of the recreation ground (“right under my window!” said one resident) but these are isolated incidents. They did say that they would like to use the recreation ground more often than they do and new investment should address the needs of all generations.

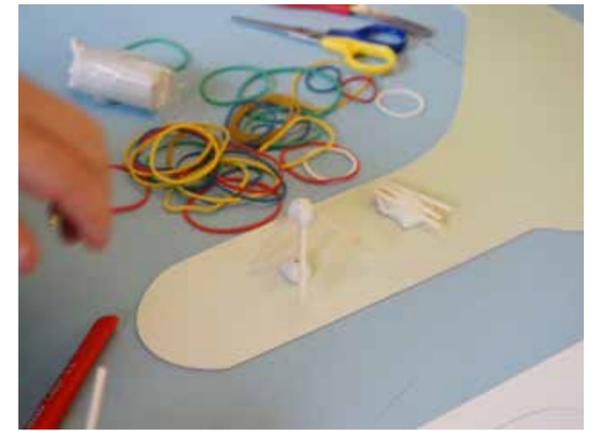
Workshops Summary

Most popular with the children at the infant and junior school was “action play” equipment such as slides, climbing frames and swings. Slides in particular were mentioned by almost every group. Action equipment was often designed in shapes of animals.

Many groups at the junior school included play equipment suitable for different ages and abilities, sometimes all combined into one big structure and sometimes in form of a dedicated zone for toddlers. Most of the junior school groups also mentioned benches, mostly for parents to sit and watch their children play.

Also included in the children’s designs were water features and play dens or other hiding spaces. Features that secondary school students would like to see in an area they would choose to hang out included shelter and seating options for bigger groups as well as lighting, but also play equipment such as swings and a zip line especially designed for their age group. Also mentioned was exercise equipment.

A problem identified with the current design at Stratton Bates is that it is too open therefore hard to know who is watching. This can result in an unsafe feeling.



Children could choose from a variety of crafts materials .



Children that did not want to make plasticine models had the option to draw instead.



Henrike Johannsen of the Feria Urbanism team working with infant school children.

Consultation Event

Thursday 10th September 2020



Despite a strong start in February, the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown that followed in March delayed the next engagement phase of the project until after the summer. However, the project team reviewed all the workshop outcomes to prepare three new distinct scenarios for Stratton Bates.

These three design scenarios presented a different emphasis to the play area, as follows:

- “Wild Adventure Play” — Nature inspired play equipment made with natural materials and colour scheme
- “Big Equipment Play” — One large piece of equipment offering many different play opportunities — this illustrative plan, shows a large castle
- “Colourful Fun Play” — Colourful soft matting underneath play equipment adds splashes of colour

These three scenarios were subject to a simple voting system, with “Like this idea a lot!”, “It’s good, but needs some work” and “Don’t like this!” the choices. Sticky dots were placed on a board to indicate preferences.

Alongside the three play scenarios was the concept of the Stratton Bates Mile. This was inspired by the focus group held with residents of Makins Court. They were broadly supportive new investment in the play area and wanted to see more seating and smoother footpath surfaces. This suggestion led to the idea of a walking or fitness loop around the recreational ground. Surfaces will need to work for those using walking frames or wheelchairs and materials need to work in all weathers and not get muddy in winter months. The design of the path could include artwork to act as distance markers.

The exhibition boards were placed in the town council building for several weeks after the outdoor exhibition and comments continued to be collected over this time. Copies of the posters are on pages 42 — 49 of this report.



Children of all ages were excited to share their thoughts about the new play ideas.



The sticky dot system allowed people to vote for their favourite concept scheme.



Many people wrote more detailed comments and suggestions on the postcards provided.



The different playground concept schemes were presented on exhibition display boards in an outdoor environment due to the restrictions at that time on indoor gatherings.



Social distancing measures such as masks, hand sanitiser and a one-way system were in place to create a Covid-secure environment in accordance with guidance at the time.



The marquee was set up at Stratton Bates Recreation Ground in good weather. It was useful to hold the event so close to the very place that was under discussion.



Many children and their parents stopped by on their way home from school to read with the exhibition boards and engage in conversation with the project team.

Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Schools Consultation



Children could choose from a variety of craft materials



Older children provided their answers on a printed grid



Children that did not want to make plasticine models had the option to draw instead



The older children were keen to share their views without the need for model-making...



Members of the project encouraged the children to be as creative as possible



... but the physical 3-D model of the site reminded everybody of the project context

In February 2020, New Alresford Town Council, working with planning and design practice FERIA Urbanism, ran workshops at Sunhill Infant, Sunhill Junior and Perins Secondary School.

The aim of these events was to work with local children to better understand the potential types of new play equipment that could be introduced to the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground.

The project team encouraged children from Sunhill to design their own "dream play areas" using plasticine and other modelling equipment.



This process helped the design team to better understand the aspirations of the likely user groups of the park area

The results from these workshops have been analysed and used to inform the three scenarios for change that follow...



For more information, please contact Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk,
New Alresford Town Council, Alresford Recreation Centre, The Avenue, SO24 9EP

email — deputyclerk@newalresford-tc.gov.uk

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Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project



Thank you to everybody that took part in the workshops and shared their great ideas with us!



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Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Current Situation



Play equipment randomly arranged on the site without an obvious pattern or structure

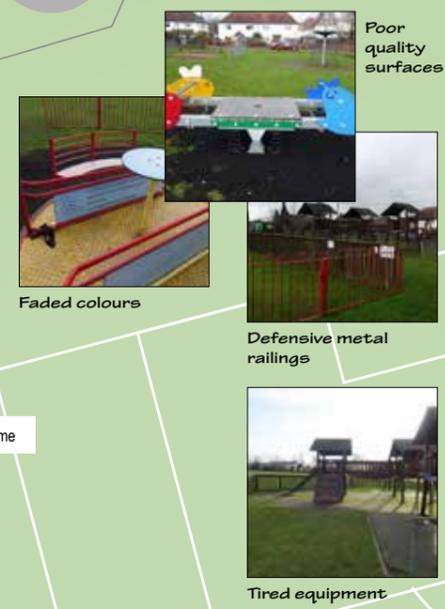
Metal railings around the playground and between play equipment creates a defensive look

Tired and worn out play equipment

No consistency of materials with a mix of wood and metal

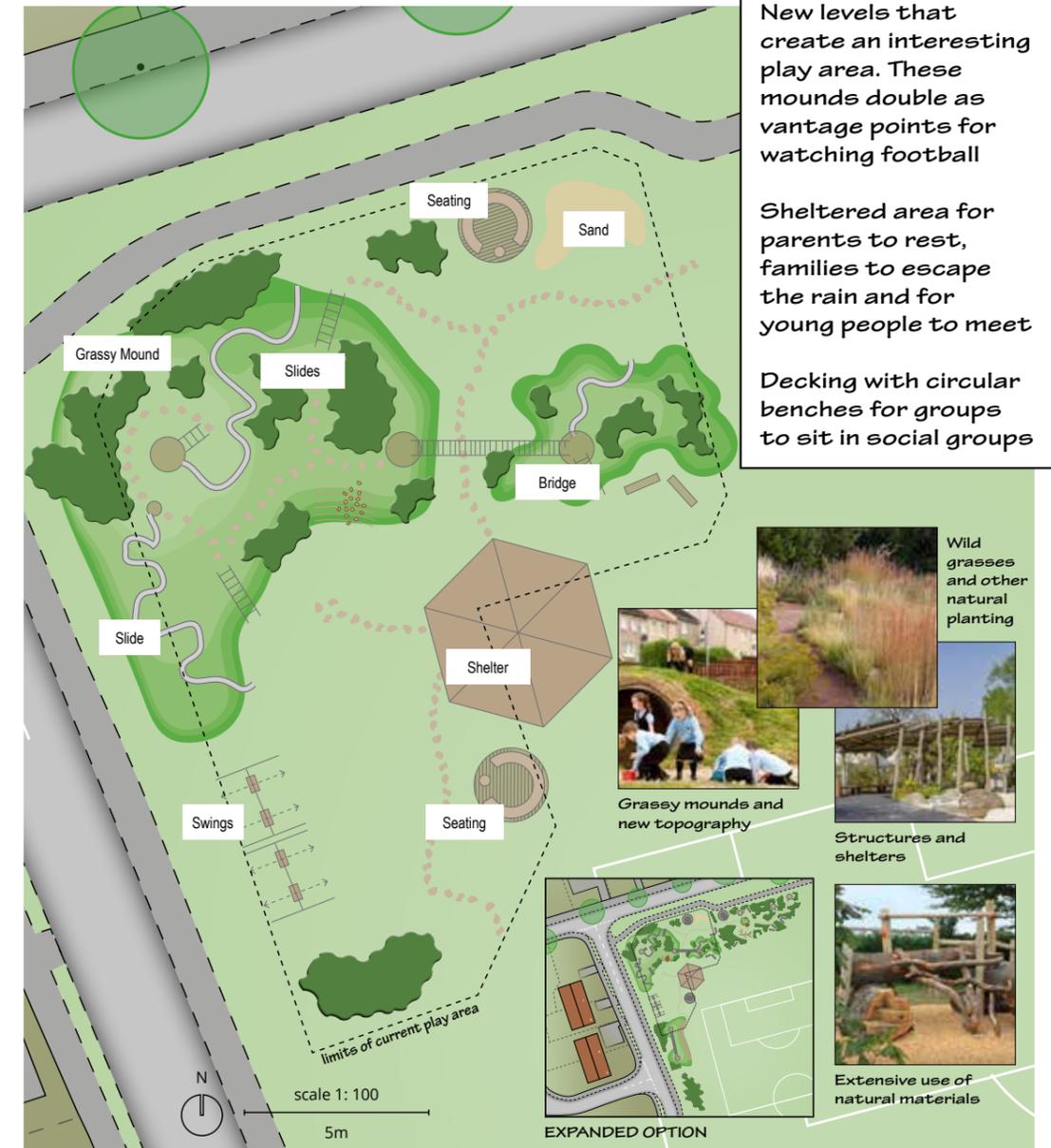
No planting or nice places to sit down

Dark matting and muddy patches on the ground



Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Scenario 01 “Wild Adventure Play”



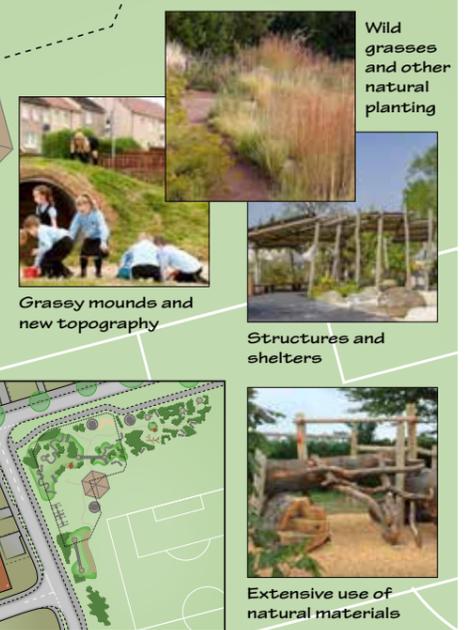
Nature inspired play equipment made with natural materials and colour scheme

Plenty of knee-high planting in between play equipment

New levels that create an interesting play area. These mounds double as vantage points for watching football

Sheltered area for parents to rest, families to escape the rain and for young people to meet

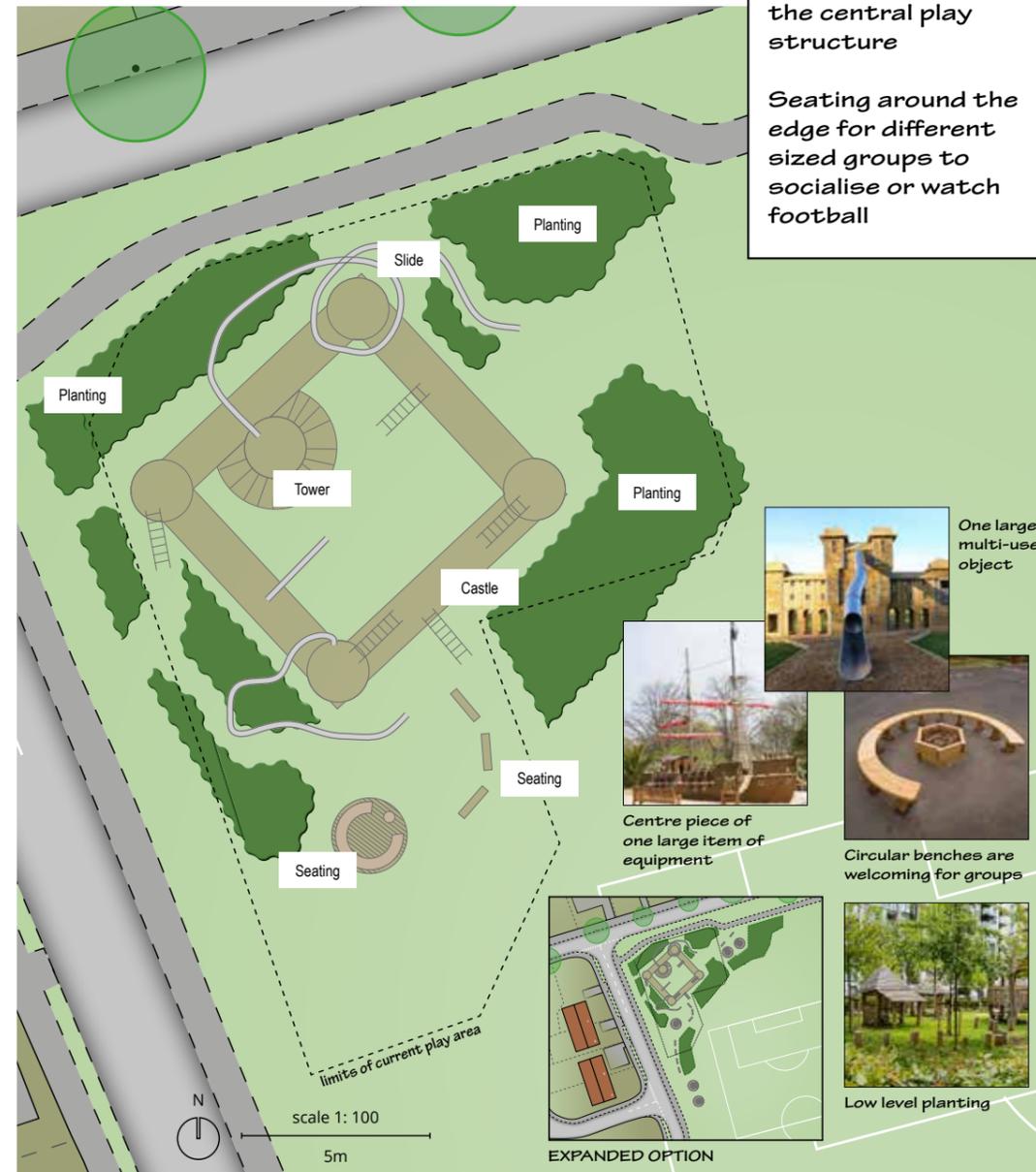
Decking with circular benches for groups to sit in social groups



Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Scenario 02

“Big Equipment Play”

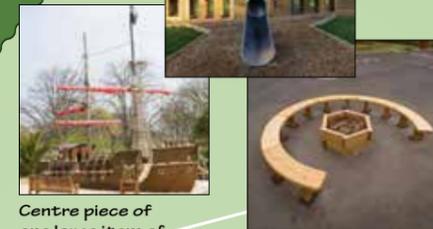


One large piece of equipment offering many different play opportunities — this illustrative plan, shows a large castle

Plenty of knee high planting to frame the central play structure

Seating around the edge for different sized groups to socialise or watch football

One large multi-use object



Centre piece of one large item of equipment

Circular benches are welcoming for groups



Low level planting



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Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Scenario 03

“Colourful Fun Play”



Colourful soft matting underneath play equipment adds splashes of colour

Knee high hedges creating a symmetrical garden landscape

A variety of big independent play structures as focus points

Smaller play opportunities dotted in between hedges

Seating opportunities for different sizes of groups

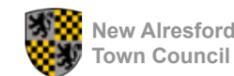


Colourful matting and fun objects

Low level trimmed hedges as a maze



Animal objects



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Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

Optional Extra

“Stratton Bates Mile”

1 loop is 536m = 1/3 mile... so three times around the loop equals one mile!

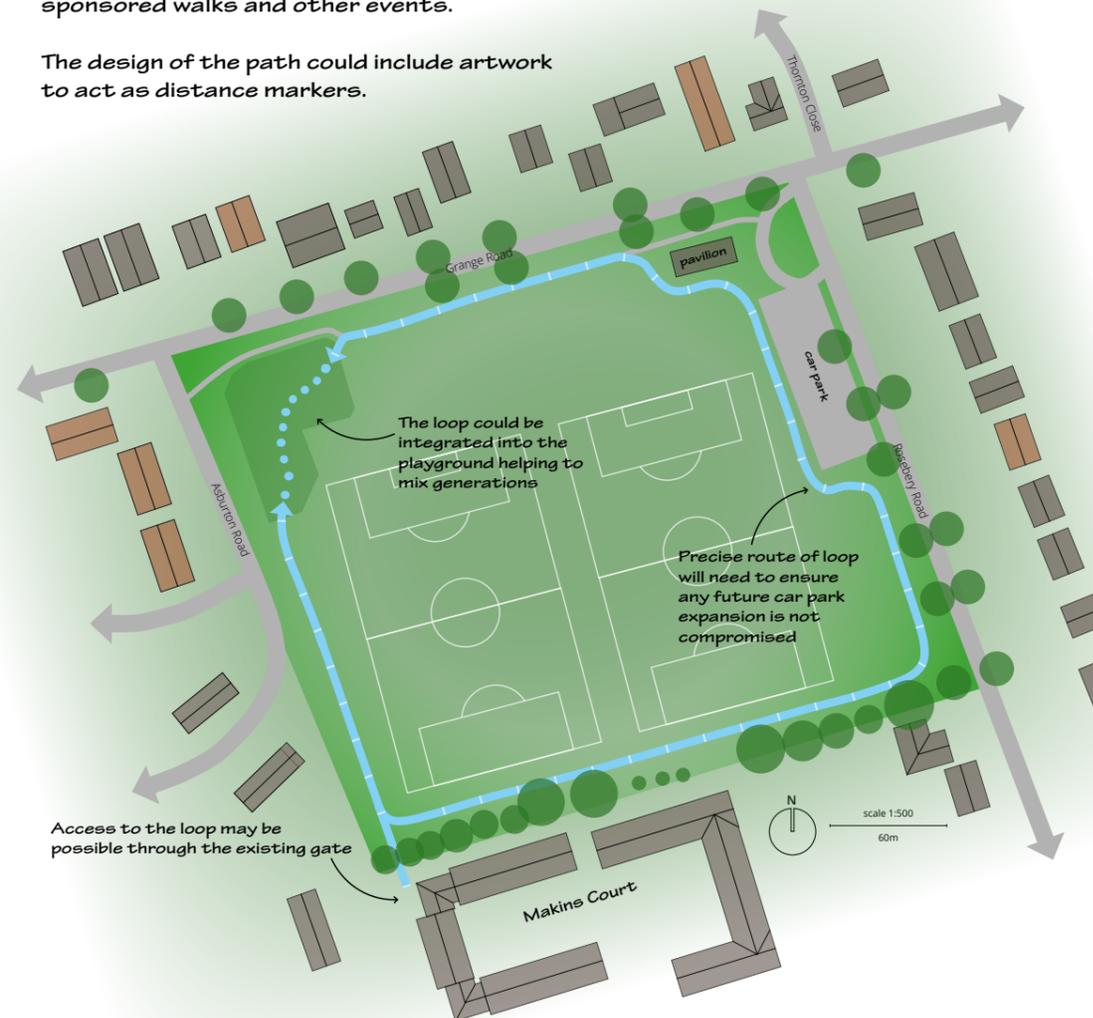
This fitness loop could benefit older people, including residents of Makins Court. It can also be used by schools and youth groups for sponsored walks and other events.

The design of the path could include artwork to act as distance markers.

Creation of a walking or fitness loop around the recreational ground

Surfaces will need to work for those using walking frames or wheelchairs

Materials need to work in all weathers and not get muddy in winter months



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Stratton Bates Recreation Ground New Play Area Project

- Like this idea a lot!
- It's good, but needs some work
- Don't like this!

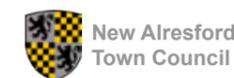
Tell Us What You Think

Wild Adventure Play

Big Equipment Play

Colourful Fun Play

Stratton Bates Mile



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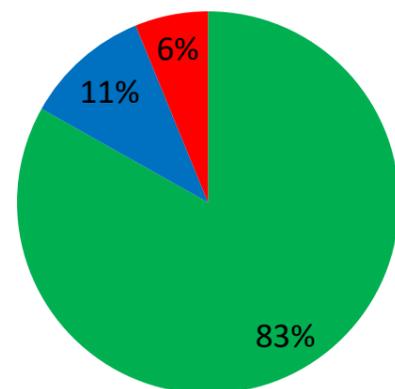
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Consultation Results

Statistics and selected positive and negative quotes

Wild Adventure Play

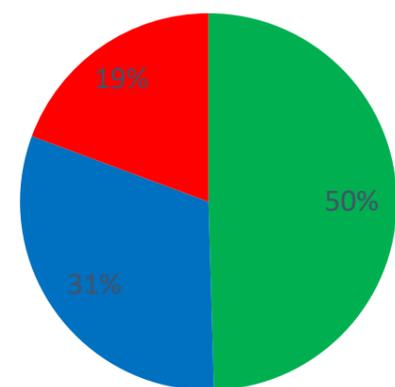


- Like this a lot!
- It's good, but needs some work.
- Don't like this!

POSITIVE: "In this day and age of everything being artificial and plastic I think allowing children to get back to nature and explore natural textures is great."

NEGATIVE: "I think all the options here could benefit from less planting, hedges, group seating areas and more actual good quality play equipment. I certainly don't want to see any less equipment than currently."

Big Equipment Play

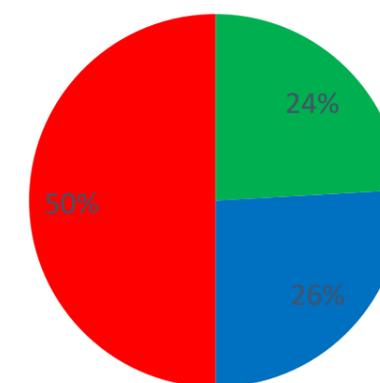


- Like this a lot!
- It's good, but needs some work.
- Don't like this!

POSITIVE: "I like all ideas, but my favourite is probably the second one as it can promote team games such as capture the flag and manhunt."

NEGATIVE: "Could be too bulky and might be a problem if older children make it their place to hang out. This could be intimidating for other children who might not use the equipment at all. Also concerned that the bigger piece of equipment would come at the expense of other features in the park."

Colourful Fun Play

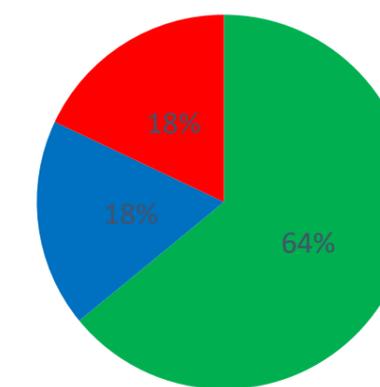


- Like this a lot!
- It's good, but needs some work.
- Don't like this!

POSITIVE: "This would give better visibility to a group or for younger children. If there are lots of different play structures more kids can have fun moving around, and it will be more inclusive for different ages. Swings are a definite requirement though, so few parks have swings now!"

NEGATIVE: "Too man made. Would be an eyesore."

Stratton Bates Mile



- Like this a lot!
- It's good, but needs some work.
- Don't like this!

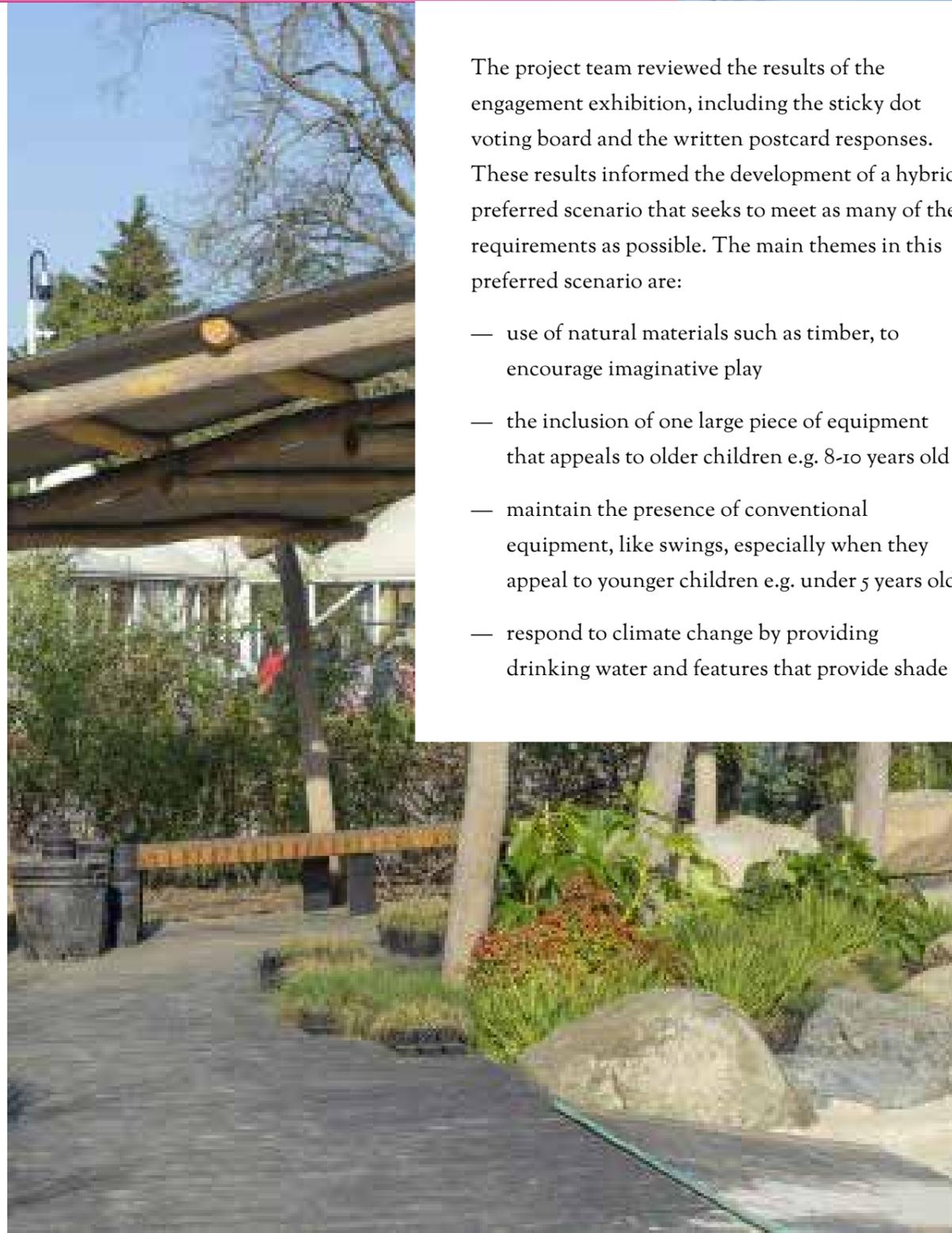
POSITIVE: "Would give me some clear goals — now I know I will walk round it measuring miles anyway! Would be even better if some outdoor 'gym' type equipment could be added or included."

NEGATIVE: "Not keen on the path around the rec — would make it all look more built up — less natural."

Preferred Scenario

The project team reviewed the results of the engagement exhibition, including the sticky dot voting board and the written postcard responses. These results informed the development of a hybrid preferred scenario that seeks to meet as many of the requirements as possible. The main themes in this preferred scenario are:

- use of natural materials such as timber, to encourage imaginative play
- the inclusion of one large piece of equipment that appeals to older children e.g. 8-10 years old
- maintain the presence of conventional equipment, like swings, especially when they appeal to younger children e.g. under 5 years old
- respond to climate change by providing drinking water and features that provide shade



The voting system using coloured sticky dots showed a preference for scenario number one, the wild adventure playground, with natural colours and materials and organic shapes. The second most popular was the big equipment playground. This position was confirmed by the comments that were written on record cards and also in conversations held on the day of the exhibition.

Participants thought that the natural material and colours would create an exciting play area while also not spoiling the look of the park. However, many were very concerned about the idea of sand as this may become unhygienic. Opinions on planting were divided as this may require a lot of maintenance and needs to use robust, hardy species.

The idea of a one big piece of equipment was popular with many, especially the children themselves. Some local residents, however, were concerned that a large vertical structure may spoil their view across the park.

Considering all these responses, the project team has developed a hybrid proposal — one that uses natural materials and colours and includes at least one larger piece of equipment. This needs to be designed and orientated carefully so as to be too visually obtrusive.

Some form of shelter was often mentioned as being a good thing for the new space. While creating a comfortable, shady place for parents and carers to sit and watch their children this would also give teenagers a place to meet in the afternoons and evenings.

The Stratton Bates Mile concept was positively received and needs consideration as part of a wider package of investment in the area.



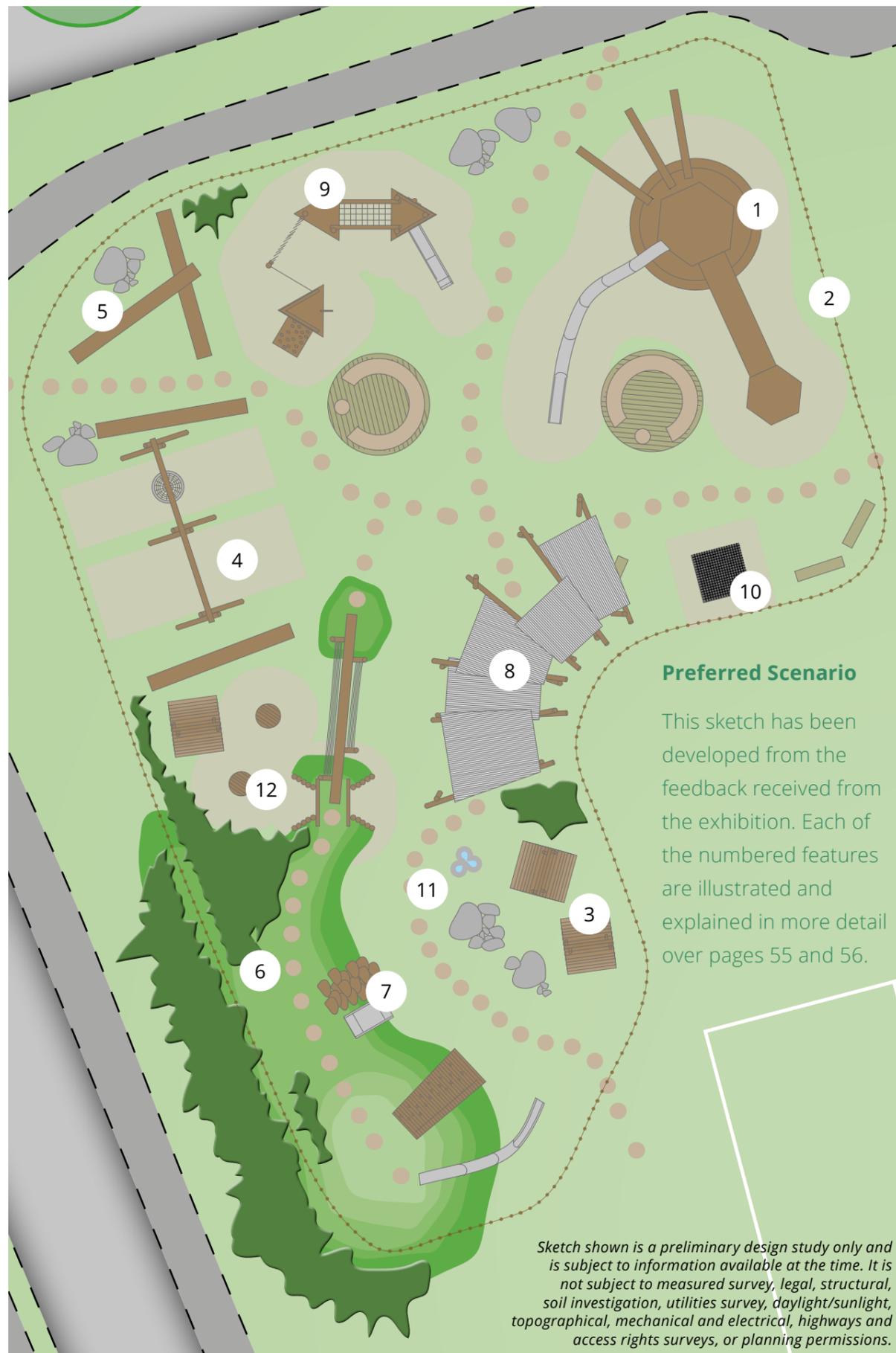
The majority vote was for a scenario that primarily uses natural building materials.



Second preferred scenario was the big equipment play. The preferred hybrid scenario includes an element of this.



Respondents wanted to see conventional equipment, such as swings included in the design. Equipment specifically designed for smaller children needs to be incorporated.



Preferred Scenario

This sketch has been developed from the feedback received from the exhibition. Each of the numbered features are illustrated and explained in more detail over pages 55 and 56.

Sketch shown is a preliminary design study only and is subject to information available at the time. It is not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight/sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys, or planning permissions.



(1) — While many admired the nature-inspired wild adventure playground many also liked the idea of one big piece of equipment. This was appeared popular with boys aged 8-10 years old. A relatively large wooden structure works within the nature theme. Positioning the structure on the flat ground rather than on one of the grass mounds mitigates the worry expressed by some adults that this option may spoil views and not work in the context of Stratton Bates.



(5) — Natural elements such as logs and boulders add interest and structure the playground. They act as natural barriers preventing children from running into the swings and provide additional play and seating opportunities.



(6) — Grassy mounds with tunnels and bridges create an organic landscape with many exciting opportunities to play.



(2) — A perimeter fence is necessary to keep dogs out, a wooden design delivers a less defensive appearance.



(3) — Play huts can encourage imaginative play.



(4) — Swings were often mentioned during the consultation. A basket swing is accessible to many different levels of ability.



(7) — A short slide down a mound is suitable for smaller children.



(8) — Shelter from sun and rain and makes the playground an attractive place for teenagers to meet and offers adults a comfortable place to sit and watch their children. Locating it centrally in the space ensures a good overview of the area. A design that is open to all sides reduces the risk of unsocial behaviour. Natural material and organic shapes go well with the nature-inspired design approach.



(9) — Responding to the request for climbing opportunities that was mentioned by many, a climbing frame offers climbing walls. A design using wood and organic shapes follows the overall favoured approach of a natural looking playground.



(10) — A sunken trampoline was often mentioned. It can be used by all age groups and wheelchair uses.



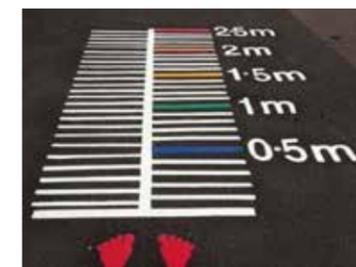
(11) — Drinking water fountain adds interest and can help reduce plastic waste. The fountain can be sculptural in its design.



(12) — Jumping disks are suitable for young children.

Stratton Bates Mile

The multi-generational fitness loop idea, where older folk can exercise and young children can learn to ride a bike, proved popular. The design details of the loop needs to be subtle and unobtrusive, although small splashes of colour could be included.



Simple stencilled artwork around the loop could include distance markers, poetry and motivational text.

Items of outdoor fitness equipment could be positioned along a loop or be integrated into the playground itself. This would further widen the offer of the recreation ground to all ages, from 8 to 80 years old. The design of the equipment could follow the a similar nature-inspired theme as the play equipment and use timber and subtle colours.



