| Consulation Responses for Playground Tender | 2 |
|---|----|
| Sandringham Park Consultation Summary Results | 17 |



WETHERBY TOWN COUNCIL

SANDRINGHAM PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT CONSULTATION RESPONSES SEPTEMBER 2023

Contents

| Introduction | 2 |
|-------------------------|----|
| Data | 2 |
| Summary | 2 |
| Playground | 4 |
| General | 4 |
| Age of Users | 4 |
| Accessibility | 6 |
| General Equipment | 8 |
| Fence around playground | 9 |
| Non-Physical Play | |
| Multi-Use Goal End | |
| Discounted ideas | |
| Landscape / Environment | 15 |
| To follow. | |

Introduction

Wetherby Town Council carried out a consultation on the future of Sandringham Park between 15th August and 15th September 2023.

The purpose of the consultation was to seek views in relation to the refurbishment of the playground and gain information to contribute to the future management and maintenance of the site once it returns to being wholly under the Town Council's control early in 2024.

The consultation took the format of:

- A survey available online and in hard format.
- An information display in the Town Hall.
- A drop-in session held at the park on 31st August.
- Focus groups with stakeholders including the Friends of Sandringham Park, neighbouring residents and the parents/carers of SEND users.
- Design activity aimed at children and young people, distributed through youth groups.
- Communications with relevant authorities including Leeds City Council's Access Officer and Anti-Social Behaviour Team.
- A visit to Wharfedale Lawn assisted living accommodation to seek the views of adults with SEND requirements.

The consultation was advertised:

- Via the Town Council's social media channels.
- Online at https://www.wetherby.co.uk/Sandringham Park Project 18238.aspx
- On Tempo FM's Not the Midweek Show.
- Through a banner at the site.
- By hand delivering a letter to neighbouring properties.
- By sending information to local news sources and publications.
- On posters displayed in noticeboards throughout the town.

Data

Views were received in the following formats:

- Quantifiable data downloaded from Microsoft Forms. 135 responses were received to the online survey with 49 narrative comments also made. The results are appended in full to this report.
- In picture format from children who designed their 'perfect parks' using blank paper or maps of the park provided by the Town Council.
- Verbal comments recorded in notes taken by the Town Clerk (e.g. when speaking to park users at the drop-in session on 31st August or at focus group meetings).
- E-mail responses e.g. from Leeds City Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team.
- In photographic format (e.g. from site visits).

All data collected during the consultation is available on request but is summarised with conclusions drawn in this report. Direct comments from consultation responses are shown in quote marks.

Summary

100% of respondents supported the Town Council's mission to enhance Sandringham Park as a safe, peaceful green space which can be enjoyed by all people.

Throughout the consultation it was clear that there are diametrically opposing on views on many subjects, for example:



- Leeds City Council's Access Officer said "don't be afraid of using colour" in the playground as it provides good contrast for visually impaired children, but neighbouring residents asked for muted equipment (e.g. wood / plain metal) so that it is not visually intrusive for them.
- Children and parents requested musical instruments in a sensory area of the playground, but the topography of the former quarry site means that an amphitheatre has been created where sound echoes and amplifies, especially on otherwise peaceful evenings.
- Friends of Sandringham Park have worked hard to create informal walkways and nature areas at the rear of the park, but there is a perception that some of these provide hidden areas where anti-social behaviour occurs.

Any changes made in the park must be carefully considered with a view to achieving a balance and that aim is reflected in the remainder of this report where consultation responses are summarised and recommendations made.



Playground

General

The public survey showed that a significant majority of people visit Sandringham Park to use the children's playground (rather than for other purposes such as exercise or ball games) and there was unanimous support across all stakeholder groups for retaining and improving the playground facility.

This endorses the Town Council's decision to retain and refurbish the playground once control is taken back from Leeds City Council.



Age of Users

Consultation Responses

The majority of nearest residents strongly feel that the playground should cater for younger users only and this is supported to some degree by The Friends of Sandringham Park and the survey results which showed that the main ages of children visiting the site are in the 0-4 and 5-11 years brackets.



This does not mean that only basic, traditional equipment should be provided as even children of 7 and 8 were keen to point out that they like challenge and exciting items when they gave their views at the drop-in session on 31st August.

Whilst some individual comments stated that kids age 12-16 "lack space to hang out" others acknowledged that "there are several activities areas available to older children in less residential areas in Wetherby" (e.g. the skate park at the Ings or the Devil's Toenail bike park).

Consultation responses requested "play equipment for older children" and a group of 13 year old girls who were spoken to at the drop-in session indicated that they do not consider themselves too old to use playgrounds. They said that they like items of equipment which could be used by more than one person at a time e.g. the basket swing. These comments show that older children can still be catered for with equipment that's suitable for all ages.

The public survey showed support for keeping equipment for younger children at one end of the site, graduating towards equipment for older children at the other "so they can explore



safely and freely". This can be extended to non-physical activities at one side, graduating to equipment for younger children through items for mixed ages.

This principle can also be used to address residents' concerns about keeping *potentially* noisier items/activities towards the garage block end of the site.

Recommendation

It is concluded that specific equipment which has been designed *only* for use by older children and teenagers should *not* be included in the design for the refurbished playground at Sandringham Park (e.g. overhead rotators0.



Accessibility

Consultation Responses

"Keeping it as inclusive as possible for everyone with all abilities would be amazing."

There was overwhelming support for making the playground as accessible as possible, with 99.7% of respondents agreeing that there is a need for an inclusive public green space and playground which caters for users of as many different abilities as possible. 81% of respondents agreed that if the Town Council made improvements to Sandringham Park, such as an improved and inclusive playground they would visit the site more.



One of the most emotional moments during the consultation came when speaking to a resident at Wharfedale Lawn assisted living accommodation. Charles explained how he hadn't been able to use playgrounds whilst growing up as a wheelchair user and had only been on a roundabout once in his life. This is Wetherby Town Council's opportunity to ensure that all future Wetherby children have the opportunity to enjoy playgrounds as they grow up.

Information from research (e.g.

https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/inclusive-play https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/lets-play-fair/inclusive-playgrounds-campaigningguide/#Accessible-playgrounds-equipment-and-features) has been treated as relevant to this consultation and recommendations/suggestions from these documents are referred to throughout this document.

Recommendations

Wherever equipment is proposed all efforts must be made to ensure that it also caters for children with SEND requirements as part of the integral design.

• Many children requested that a trampoline be included in the new playground. There are options available for sunken trampolines that are wheelchair accessible.





- 'Climbing' was expressed as a preference by children responding to the consultation. If a climbing unit is included, then it should also include wheelchair access to a section so that these children can be in the heart of the action too. This could be achieved through the use of ramps or ground level gaps with alternative engagement activities such as sensory boards.
- If a slide is to be included, then it should be 'double width' so that a parent or carer can accompany either a young or less physically able child.



- Seating was identified as an important feature in the playground, especially by grandparents caring for their children. The picnic benches in the playground could be replaced by models which have board games on the top to provide less physical engagement. Any new models should make provision for wheelchairs, especially if a circular configuration so that wheelchair users are not kept to one side.
- The design of the playground should take account of the use colour to ensure that whilst it does not become visually intrusive to neighbouring properties, there is sufficient contrast to assist visually impaired users. This may take the format of using coloured patches on the floor surface of the playground as suggested by Grace (9) and Lucy (7):

Wheelchair Swing

Consultation Responses

The only exception to the principle of fully inclusive equipment is the provision of a wheelchair accessible swing.

Preliminary discussions with playground equipment suppliers and Leeds City Council's



Access Officer have confirmed that a swing designed specifically for wheelchair users is not suitable for the Sandringham Park site.

The information received suggests that they are better suited to supervised playgrounds such as education settings or playgrounds at historical properties due to the potential for vandalism. Whilst wishing to make the site at Sandringham Park as inclusive as possible, there are size constraints which mean that the safety zone around a wheelchair swing would take up a disproportionate amount of space.

Recommendation

The design for the playground should include a basket style swing which can be enjoyed by both able-bodied children and those who are physically impaired but who can be lifted into the seat. It also provides an opportunity for both able-bodied and physically impaired children to play together.

If a bay of swings is installed, or the existing equipment repurposed, then other seat options (such as boat seats) should be considered together with more traditional versions such as cradle and flat seat.



General Equipment

Consultation Responses

In terms of equipping the playground, climbing comes out consistently high across all response groups, with swings and slides a close second.

Aggregating all the feedback from the public, youth groups and children's designs produces the following preferences for playground equipment:



Recommendation

That the data above be included in the tender brief and be provided to equipment suppliers to use when proposing equipment for inclusion in the refurbished playground.

That the data above be read in conjunction with the remainder of this report.



Fence around playground.

Consultation Responses

A visit to Stables Lane in Boston Spa prompted the consultation to consider whether the fence around the play equipment should remain, or whether a free flow area should be created.

Verbal feedback from users at the site and the opinion of the Friends of Sandringham Park was that the fence around the playground should be kept, with only 17% of online respondents supporting its removal.



Comments from Leeds City Council's Access Officer and in the online consultation explained how a fence is useful to the parents of children who present a flight risk:

"A fence around the playground is important to not only stop small children running off, but to segregate dogs from children playing."

"If you have don't have a fence between the playground and park then those with autism, who are "runners" won't be able to use it."

"Please fence off the playground as this stops toddler escaping when you have more than one child to look after!"

Recommendations

That a fence be maintained between the playground area and main park site.

That consideration be given to repairing and repainting the existing site, which would be more cost-efficient, or whether a replacement is required.



Non-Physical Play

Consultation Responses

Whilst it was clear from the survey that equipment with traditional purposes (swinging, sliding, rotating etc) remain firm favourites, some of the most insightful comments received related to opportunities for less prescriptive and physical activity giving children "imaginative spaces to play."

Leeds City Council's Access Officer suggested the provision of an "immersive activity that's offset from the main area" and stressed the importance of "sensory play" when catering for children with all levels of physical ability.

A member of the Friends of Sandringham, with recent experience of playground provision in an educational setting, commented on the value of providing natural, open ended play opportunities where children can also climb and develop their motor skills.



During the visit to Wharfedale Lawn a giant game of 'Connect 4' was evident in the garden. Games would provide an opportunity for nonphysical play, building on the existing 'noughts and crosses' unit already at Sandringham Park, and could be incorporated into items such as picnic tables or in a standalone setting for quieter activities.

<u>Track</u>

Several children included 'roads and tracks' in their designs for a new playground. This is a popular idea incorporated in the recently installed playground at the Arium garden centre:







During preliminary meetings with suppliers the Facilities Manager developed the idea of including a track in the new 'wet pour' safety surfacing. This could include inclusive role play elements such as a shop and petrol station and could also be Wetherby themed, for example:

- A bridge over the river that would also be wheelchair accessible.
- A fish and chip shop or market role play area.
- A roundabout with a horse rocker in the middle.

Recommendations

That sensory play opportunities be included in the design for a refurbished play area, possibly in an area offset from the main items of equipment.

That games be included in the refurbished site.

That a Wetherby themed road system be incorporated into the safety surface of the refurbished playground.



Multi-Use Goal End

Consultation Response

There was clear support for the installation of a multi-use goal end outside of the children's equipped playground, with 71% of respondents being in favour.

This level of support was maintained even when the results are analysed to show responses from the nearest neighbours on (Sandringham Road and Grosvenor Terrace).



Support for the features to be included in the wall was less conclusive with an even spread across football, target games, basketball and a climbing wall. A slim majority (23% of respondents) showed support for making the wall as interactive as possible and this is reflected in the recommendation below.

Recommendation

That a multi-use goal end be installed in the northeastern section of the site. The wall should not have solid panels to reduce the sound impact of a ball banging against it but should contain as many features as possible to maximise play value, especially to older children who may not be as well catered for in the formal playground area.





Discounted ideas.

Musical / Noise Based Instruments

Consultation with neighbouring residents emphasised how the bowl shape of the park contributes to noise pollution in homes, commenting that the "echoing effect around the quarry can't be underestimated - it's an arena of sound."

Other residents described the noise from the existing exercise equipment as sounding like a "constant anvil".

Recommendation

Whilst recognising the sensory value of musical items and noting that they were requested in several consultation responses and children's designs, these items have been discounted and should not be included in future designs.

<u>Shelter</u>

Consultation Responses

The view of nearby residents and Leeds City Council anti-social behaviour team that there should not be a dedicated area/shelter provided is supported by the public survey results over fears that it would encourage groups of older children to congregate and lead to a resurgence of anti-social behaviour in the park.

Providing a dedicated area/shelter where young people can meet up received the least support in the options for reducing anti-social behaviour. Indeed, making sure that there are no areas where groups of young people can congregate received strong support.

Several public comments and designs from children included tree houses meeting areas/living rooms etc in their playgrounds designs but it's not felt that this outweighs the concerns and advice from other stakeholders.

The concerns about providing a shelter must be reflected in the design brief for the playground, which should ensure that equipment does not provide opportunities to shelter in the same way as the old climbing unit did. This extends to items that may be primarily aimed at younger children but could be inappropriately used such as tunnel slides or designs which have more than two solid panels.

Recommendation

Equipment must be transparent to maintain visibility and designed to deter covert behaviour, fitting in with requests for net based units from children and survey respondents: "Be lovely to see a spider web like the one down at scor [sic] bank (near the river)."





| <u>Others</u> | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Skate Park/Pump Track | • | There is sufficient provision elsewhere in the town (the Ings, Devil's Toenail, Little Toe). Bike tracks in particular can be accessed by cyclists and distance is not such a barrier. A track within the surface of the playground would cater for younger user who would like to use scooters, balance bikes, trikes etc in Sandringham Park. Facilities like this have the potential to attract anti-social behaviour issues. |
| Hot Tub / Splash Park / Pool | • | Significant maintenance requirements. Potential for damage / vandalism. |
| Sandpit | • | Unacceptable level of risk of harm from anti-social behaviour e.g. sharps left in sand, with survey respondents reporting "I've found multiple needles from drug users!!" in Sandringham Park. Would be located in residential area therefore likely to be high levels of pet cats in vicinity who may use as a litter tray. Facility presents significant maintenance requirements and is perhaps better suited to a manned facility. |



Landscape / Environment

The survey showed that there is general support for best practice, proactive maintenance of trees, hedges and fences around the site.

Boundaries

There is a balance to be struck between:

- Improved visibility into the site to maintain child safety, deter anti-social behaviour and increase the kerb appeal of Sandringham Park.
- The boundary treatments providing a visual and noise barrier for the closest neighbours.
- Biodiversity and wildlife opportunities.

Friends of Sandringham Park have suggested an '<u>incredible edibles</u>1' area scheme and this was supported in comments made online:

"I would love to see a community vegetable planting scheme. It would help the local area and get kids involved with understanding how food is grown."

This could be combined with the provision of planters where the plants/soil are at a height that can be enjoyed and accessed by wheelchair users as proposed by the Access Officer and residents of Wharfedale Lawn. They could be located along the existing path which provides access to the playground.

¹ <u>https://www.incredibleedible.org.uk/</u>



Sandringham Park Consultation



1. Do you support our project mission to enhance Sandringham Park as a safe, peaceful green space which can be enjoyed by all people?



2. Are you:





3. Do you think there is a need for an inclusive public green space and playground which caters for users of as many different abilities as possible?



4. Why do you usually visit Sandringham Park? (Choose all that apply.)



5. How often do you/your family use Sandringham Park at the moment?





6. If the Town Council made improvements to Sandringham Park, such as an improved and inclusive playround or more paths/benches, do you think that you would visit:



7. How old are the people in your family who use Sandringham Park? (Tick all that apply.)



8. If you visit playgrounds with children, what are their preferred activities while they're there? Please rank these activities so that we know what sort of equipment to look at. Put the favourite activity at the top.



9. Should there be a fence between the playground and main park area, or should it be kept as an informal, free flowing area?



10. Should the equipment in the play area cater for mixed ages together, or should we keep the equipment for younger and older children separate?



11. Do you think that we should provide a games wall in Sandringham Park (like the one at Mason Field on Hallfield Lane)?



12. If yes, what features would you like to see on it?





13. Do you support our ambition to reduce anti-social behaviour in Sandringham Park?



14. Reducing the height of the hedge and fence along Sandringham Road to give better visibility into the site.



15. Reducing the height of the hedge and fence along Grosvenor Terrace to give better visibility into the site.

3.77 Average Rating



16. Providing a dedicated area/shelter where young people can meet up.



17. Making sure that there are no areas where groups of young people can congregate.



3.30 Average Rating

18. Installing CCTV as a deterrent (*n.b. it is unlikely that images from this would be used by West Yorkshire Police as evidence if a crime were committed*).



19. Installing low level lighting at key points in the site.



3.98 Average Rating

20. Do you have any other suggestions for reducing anti-social behaviour in Sandringham Park?

| 50 | Latest Responses |
|-----------|--|
| 52 | "closing the park at night preventing entry and use. " |
| Responses | "Anti-social behaviour is a national issue with many levels. Residents l |

O Update



21. What landscaping changes would you like to see in Sandringham Park?



22. What street furniture changes would you like to see in Sandringham Park?



23. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about possible improvements to Sandringham Park?

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16 respondents (34%) answered park for this question. skate park older children young children bigger equip area play equipment space children small children playgrounds park park equipment equipment dogs from children slide needed playground ar fence around the playground children and adults parks are great

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