

## **Crooked Well Meadow, Kington**

### **DESIGN BRIEF 17.07.2009**

#### **Scope**

Crooked Well Meadow is an amazing natural site on the edge of Kington, bounded by a public footpath on its southern side and a brook along its northern boundary.

Members of the Playbuilders delivery group agree that it would be difficult to improve on the natural aspect of the Park, therefore the major requirement of this scheme is to deliver a play experience in harmony with its surroundings, but at the same time offering challenge and excitement to its users.

This project will need to deliver play for all ages as it is a community site led by an active local group (*Friends of Crooked Well Meadow*), as demonstrated by a recently organised WildPlay session which was attended by over 30 local children. Additional funding is available through 106 monies and the group intends to raise further funding in the future to improve the site even more.

The site is an open space for the whole community and it is hoped that it will encourage parents, carers and grandparents to accompany their children and grandchildren, thus providing a natural gathering place for all generations.

Crooked Well Meadow is currently attracting many dog walkers – and will continue to be used by these members of the community.

#### **Aim**

The aim of this project is to increase the quality of the play space in this sector of Kington through the provision of innovative and challenging play, and to make provision for all ages

#### **Design Objectives**

The agreed objectives of the design are as follows:

1. Efforts should be made to mitigate the impact of the regeneration of the site on adjoining residents (i.e. by considering the proximity of any apparatus to houses at Crooked Well and the use of 'natural looking' equipment (timber) wherever possible).
2. The design is expected to balance the use of manufactured play equipment with creating a natural environment for play through the use of hard and soft landscaping.
3. For infants: The play equipment should be kept separate from other equipment but do not feel that any kind of boundary is needed. It is important that natural looking equipment is used. If safety surfacing is required, low

maintenance options that continue to allow the grass to flourish should be considered. Perhaps even sand, where appropriate.

4. For older children: Any play equipment should be reasonably spaced around the remainder of the site, ensuring that any built features blend in with the natural look of the site.
5. The design should also incorporate a small kickabout area, as requested by children. Careful thought needs to be given to its exact location so that it doesn't dominate the site.
6. As requested by children, the design should incorporate a zipwire which is accessible to younger and older children alike.
7. The Designer must produce a design which is both exhilarating for children and acceptable to the needs of the community.
8. The site is bordered by the 'back brook', part of which could be an ideal place for a stony beach feature.
9. Some vegetation should be retained (but reviewed) and then managed to create a 'wild' environment and to attract wildlife.
10. Funding available: We have £40,000 including Design fees for the 8-13 Playbuilder Age Range, plus £32,000 to provide for other age groups. We need to be able to build the new play spaces within these limits. We would like the Designer to incorporate play for the under 8s into the design. Adequate seating should be factored into the design (i.e. allowing adults to engage with their children's play, picnic tables, benches for dog walkers and even a shelter for older children).
11. The design must be achievable within budget and the build of the play space completed and opened by the end of December 2009.
12. Any play equipment incorporated into this design must be sourced from an approved supplier, please discuss with Herefordshire Council's Parks Development Manager.
13. The Designer should consider the environmental impact of all materials and of the impact of moving materials from long distances. We are asking for the incorporation of natural play features, like boulders and local timber that can be sourced locally where possible. The designer will be required to include a brief Environmental Impact Statement with his or her design.
14. The designer must bear in mind the ten principles of designing successful play spaces [from Play England, Design for Play]: Successful play spaces . . .
  - Are bespoke
  - Are well located
  - Make use of natural elements
  - Provide a wide range of play experiences
  - Are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children

- Meet community needs
- Allow children of different ages to play together
- Build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- Are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- Allow for change and evolution

15. We would like this play space to be delivered within the requirements for Permitted Development.

### **Description of Existing Play Facilities**

The site is an old meadow, grass quality is very uneven. Part of the site has been left for wild regeneration and contains a mixture of grasses, cow parsleys and nettles. All the hedges are overgrown and contain trees, some 'secret' areas have been developed in the boundary which are used as meeting places by the young people.

The brook side is not fenced but it is heavily wooded, and there is a drop of around 50cm to the brook's summer level. The brook can flood onto the site in winter.

Caution: There is an overhead electricity cable running the whole length of the site, no structures should be erected within 6m either side of this line.

Home owners along the western boundary are anxious not to have play equipment immediately adjacent to their properties. (Part of this area floods as well).

Many of the boundary trees have low hanging branches, it is the Council's intention to provide 2m clearance over footpaths which are heavily used for dog walking.

### **Process**

The aim of the process is to design a natural play environment that will meet the aspirations of Play England and the local community. The process begins with an analysis of the site in order to understand and utilise its existing assets. An important part of the process has been 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.

Children have been consulted both in the classroom and at a community meeting where parents also gave their views

Once the draft design is agreed by the *Friends of Crooked Well Meadow* group, the proposals will be displayed at an open morning on the site. Any suggested changes to the design will be approved by the project board and the *Friends of Crooked Well Meadow* group before being returned to the designer for the plans to be amended.

### **Themes and Elements Emerging from Consultations & Client Preferences:**

**This Brief should be read in conjunction with the Consultation Report, which explores all the responses received, and provides a clear picture of child preferences in the type of play space and attributes they would like.**