

# **CONSULTATION: PROPOSED PLAY PARK FELL VIEW PLAY AREA, CATON**

## **CONSULTATION SUMMARY**

The proposed Play Park design is strongly supported by residents, for visual attractiveness and low profile, for provision for a range of ages especially young children, the quality of play offered by the landscaping, natural features, equipment and surfaces, for family friendly facilities, tree planting scheme and safe approaches.

Residents, including most of those overlooking the proposed Play Park area, want the existing play area renewed, value community play provision there and approve this design in preference to previous alternatives

Specific queries about safety (of new equipment and repairs), insurance; about the equipment, surfaces, features in the Play Park have been addressed by information from the designer and clerk to the Parish Council; a frequently asked question sheet will be sent to all residents

Residents' concerns relating to out-of-hours misuse of the Play Park may be addressed by recommended actions for the Parish Council, notably dusk-to-dawn curfew, CCTV, and lockup of the aerial runway.

Monitoring and maintenance, the consultation suggests, should be accorded a higher priority by the Parish Council for both the existing play area and new Play Park; and the whole 'green'.

Appropriate actions are suggested to address wider issues which residents tend to feel strongly about and may associate with the existing play area or with Fell View as a meeting place for youths; and safety issues associated with speeding motorists.

## THE CONSULTATION

One-to-one consultations were sought with residents in all properties around the whole the 'green' and existing play area of Fell View, and a sample on 'annex' roads. The purpose was:

- a) **To show each what the proposed Play Park would look like on a three dimensional 'fly-around' from a laptop.** (The 3D computer generated fly-around was commissioned through the Play Park designer by Lancashire County Council.)
- b) **To ask for the residents comments, and views on how to address any concerns**

An unstructured approach encouraged each resident to express individual attitudes, feelings and views about the play of children using the park, the visual and other impacts of the design, and the local context. Some responses related to the Play Park; some to wider matters. Adults rather than children were consulted, to complement the separate consultations with children, although a few teenagers and younger children were present.

We consider the evidence in this report to be robust. The consultations were designed and undertaken in a voluntary capacity by a retired Research fellow, all but 3 accompanied by one of two local residents. 42 households were approached, and if the resident was unavailable up to 3 return visits were attempted. 2 households remain to be contacted. 32 households viewed the 3D and gave their views. All were provided with a written record to amend (if not correct) or to add to.

Viewing the 3D proved essential for correcting misconceptions about the play park (footprint, scale of landscaping, tree planting and equipment). Comments about the Play Park, from residents who were unwilling to see the 3D but nevertheless gave their views, are only included if the 3D had already been seen. Of 5 'doorstep' discussions, 3 added to responses about the play area in general or wider views.

### Responses fell into 3 groups according to whether they related to:

- a) **The proposed new play park**
- b) **Any play area on Fell View**
- c) **Wider comments deemed relevant by resident**

Comments under a) tended to be more relevant to planning permission, but also raised queries about specific items of equipment, for the designer to provide information or suggest adjustments (details available in an appendix to the report). Comments under b) and c) raised awareness of issues which the Parish Council, Police, or the community itself may resolve. Recommendations for action are noted.

## OUTCOMES:

### PLAY PARK DESIGN

#### 1. 'For' and 'against' the play park design.

Overall, 29 appeared for, 4 against, the proposal. 9 were unknown.

#### Examples of residents' comments:

##### Design

- ❖ *Design is brilliant*
- ❖ *I think it is 'with it'. My grandchildren live down the ginnel they would like it.*
- ❖ *It is well thought through.*
- ❖ *It is laid out well. Much prefer it (to earlier plans)*
- ❖ *All for it*
- ❖ *(Child) - Its Lovely*
- ❖ *Interesting, I like humps, levels running up and down, tasteful*
- ❖ *Natural look is appropriate. It is not all consuming or taking over the green*
- ❖ *Great ideas*
- ❖ *Wow!*
- ❖ *Really good. Brilliant. Fully in favour*

- ❖ *From the side you can watch children*

## **Looks**

- ❖ *Very pleased that aesthetically better (than previous plans). Definitely compared to what's there at present*
- ❖ *Low profile*
- ❖ *Good looks, I like the look*
- ❖ *Looks good*
- ❖ *It is more spaced out than I thought - pleasant*
- ❖ *Like it*
- ❖ *Love it – good for 2 young girls, it'll brighten up the place*
- ❖ *Play park enhances the area, something for the community to take pride in*
- ❖ *Design is visually great*
- ❖ *Looks very nice*
- ❖ *It looks pretty good.*
- ❖ *Looks good*
- ❖ *Not too bad looks a lot better than previous plan*
- ❖ *Our views of the hills are just as good*
- ❖ *Zip wire – not half as bad as I thought – small and plenty of open space.*

## **Refurbishment**

- ❖ *Should have done this years ago*
- ❖ *Good - About time something was done*
- ❖ *The play area needs a facelift.*
- ❖ *I think it is a good idea and needs doing big time*
- ❖ *Something the kids need*
- ❖ *It needs doing.*
- ❖ *They've got to play - It needs modernising*
- ❖ *Much better, now needs replacing*
- ❖ *Playground needs redeveloping*
- ❖ *Much better, now it needs replacing*
- ❖ *Existing play area is boring*

## **Equipment (comments, not queries!)**

- ❖ *More for them to do than present*
- ❖ *It has a theme walkway on what looks like sand through trees and boulders with all kinds of materials*
- ❖ *Variety there for ages and challenges – or so they can find their own.*
- ❖ *Children will like coloured patterns*
- ❖ *The basketball net will be popular*
- ❖ *Like the 3 gates*
- ❖ *Variation, climbing nets, for older boys.*
- ❖ *Zip wire is the thing for me - my boy (5) loves it. My daughter (10) wants to go on it.*

## **Age range**

- ❖ *We want more for little ones*
- ❖ *We want a toddler area*
- ❖ *There is nothing at present for eight-year-olds.*
- ❖ *Young ones- there is positive scope.*
- ❖ *2 year old would love it and progress from area to area. Pleased it will be in time for my son.*
- ❖ *Need something for younger kids.*
- ❖ *Nothing pleases us more than seeing families together*

Note: Scope for older children under 'equipment'

## **Fruit tree planting**

- ❖ *Fruit trees are fine*
- ❖ *Fruit trees are a better idea (than other species), they could grow to a (suitable) height .*

❖ *Fruit trees – brilliant*

## **Seating**

Residents loved to see families at play, and wanted more seating in the Play Park to encourage this. The Police similarly recommended more family seating. **Recommendation for action:** Seats to be added to Play Park.

## **2. Queries about the play park design**

Residents almost all asked for information about the details of the landscaping, natural features, surfaces, individual items of equipment, fencing, seating and gates. Information was supplied if known, or referred to the designer for feedback. **Recommended action:** a frequently asked question sheet should be provided to all residents

## **3. Queries about surfaces and equipment**

**3i) Cat 'poo'** in the small area of sand in the toddler area was seen as a potential problem (7 residents). The designer had maintained that in other UK play and countries where sand is used extensively in play areas cats using them as giant 'litter trays' does not appear to be a problem. Some residents thought cats would be deterred by the open space. **Recommended action:** that the Parish Council should frequently monitor sand for excrement and if there is a problem, they should put in place appropriate cleansing.

**3ii) Safety of equipment** (3 residents). We informed them that statutory safety standards required of all new play equipment are rigorous; that ongoing safety maintenance would, as now, be ensured by the monthly inspections by City Council inspectors, and the mandatory obligation to undertake repairs listed in the inspection report (both paid for by the Parish Council); that insurance by the Parish Council of the play facility would continue, and this had been checked with the insurer.

**3iii) Basket ball – noise** (4 households – one a property on the south of field near the site). The basket ball net is important for play for older children in the 0-14 spectrum/ balance of design for play. The designer anticipated little noise; most noise associated with balls is caused by echo when balls are thrown against walls or kerbs, unlikely in an open space. The net is away from the centre of the field to conserve the valued football area. One resident asked if the net could be turned round; the designer said it is preferable to face north, away from the sun in summer. **Recommended action:** Designer to investigate possibility / availability / cost of sound absorbent material for the board behind the net.

### **3iv) The aerial runway:**

- ❖ Noise (5 residents). Comparable aerial runways at Hornby and Silverdale (sited very near houses) have been checked and do not appear to cause more noise than other equipment in use; only part of the run is mobile. (Two residents cited memories of larger scale zip wires which may also differ in design).
- ❖ Concern about youths at night (6). Observations of Hornby and Silverdale aerial runways suggest that aerial runways of this size attract older primary children rather than older teens; no problems are reported by Hornby Parish Council. The designer said the wire could probably, if necessary be locked, but this was not standard practice. **Recommended action:** the Parish Council should employ a local person to lock up the aerial runway at night (as for village toilet). Residents approve.
- ❖ Concerns on behalf of frail elderly persons living near the proposed aerial runway were not bourn out by the residents. The elderly resident nearest to (but not opposite) was 'not bothered' by anything except balls going through his window; but was 'for' the Play Park ('you have got to show them that you love kids'). A second, living further up the north side was reassured to see the aerial runway did not 'go right across'; said the design 'looked pretty good' and the area 'needs modernising' but was worried about 'older ones causing trouble'. Elderly residents are less aware of noise than others and responded especially enthusiastically to meeting children's needs

for play. **Recommended action:** Parish Council should plan to lock up the aerial runway at night (see above).

- ❖ Length (2 residents), height (3), safety (2). The designer provided dimensions (height of upper support 3.9m from ground level, less than other equipment; seat to ground does not exceed 1m (to 3m for other equipment). Note: the 3D demonstrated the small size of the aerial runway (not the length of the field as some expected).

Note: The aerial runway is considered an important part of the balance of the design, providing for the age range 0-14. The position, away from the centre of the field, conserves the football area, valued by a high proportion of residents. **Recommended action:** Immobilise out of hours use, addressing outstanding concerns, but retain runway in present position.

## PLAY AREA

### Residents adjacent to play area:

Five houses (included corner property) overlook the play park on the north side, of which 3 strongly supported the Play Park design, but 2 mentioned youth issues at night. Beyond the existing footprint of the play area the aerial runway would be overlooked by 2. One of the latter was unwilling to look at the 3D flyaround and was 'against' any change, fearing trouble; the other was critical of current concepts of 'play' and considered youth, but not noise, a problem. On the east side, 3 households strongly supported the Play Park; one doorstep discussion indicated support for the design but concern about nuisance caused by youths; two were unavailable. On the south side, 4 immediately adjacent households were supportive of the Play park but 2 mentioned youths at night.

### Residents in Fell View area:

The following concerns about the use of the existing play area were noted:

Youths on the play equipment after dark (6 residents)

Drinking by youths at night (6)

Broken glass left in the area, not removed immediately although a menace to children playing (3)

Noise at night sometimes into early hours (3) disturbing people working early the following day

Specific examples were provided. Residents think these problems are not being addressed now and would continue for the new Play Park. Nine residents also suggested that new equipment would be vandalised.

- ❖ **Recommended action:** the introduction of a bye-law by the Parish Council imposing a curfew on the Play Park area, between dusk and dawn.
- ❖ **Recommended action:** Installation of CCTV which can record images at night only on play park area.

Note both overwhelmingly supported by residents, (two residents suggested seeing if there is a problem before such measures are introduced).

- ❖ **Community 'ownership' and responsibility**, involving young people, for the area (2 residents). Note: longer run aim of Play Park Action Group; possible pilot with YMCA.

## WIDER CONCERNS

Many residents responded with wider comments, which do not relate directly to the proposed play park. The value of the 'green' was stressed by 12 residents, said to be used by families and other groups informally for football, cricket, flying kites and other activities. This is accommodated in the design layout, which allows the maximum area of green for such activities, while maintaining the balance of benefit of provision for different age ranges.

- ❖ **Older youths** are seen as an intermittent problem in Fell view (4), some residents seeing similar challenges elsewhere in Caton and Brookhouse (5) although 7 said youths 'had to go somewhere'. Youths were not seen as inherently troublesome, wanting to sit on walls, and where residents had explained for example that noise was disturbing their children, they moved on

without trouble. Others felt intimidated, with a few specific examples, eg of mud thrown at a window. Although this seen as a problem for residents, it is a wider issue, and attractive facilities for youths are under way. Young people already have access to a well equipped meeting place at the police house on Hornby Road. The opening, soon, of a boxing club in Brookhouse is designed to provide an attraction for youths. **Recommended action:** the Parish Council take note and consider how youth activities and better community relations may be generated (see above).

- ❖ **Parking** is considered a potential problem (4 residents) should the Play Park attract additional users. **Recommended action:** there is ample local parking in adjoining streets but the Parish Council should monitor the situation.
- ❖ **Boy racers:** Residents were concerned that Fell View was a popular circuit for 'boy racers' and this posed a problem for children using the play facilities and 'green'. The design has removed the one current entrance from a 'dangerous' corner and positioned 3 new entrances in safer locations. **Recommended action:** that the Parish Council and community consult further about 'self help' traffic calming measures such as planters. The danger from traffic was said to be worse where bushes and trees planted at the corner of the 'green' had not been cleared and cut back (4). **Recommended action:** the Parish Council ensure that this is regularly on the 'to do' list for the lengthsman.

## CONCLUSIONS:

The consultation outcomes support the approval of planning permission for the proposed Play Park on Fell View, Caton.

- ❖ The consultation demonstrated a range of views, but strong support towards the proposed design of the Play Park on Fell View; the play value of the Play Park facilities for all children between ages of 0 and 14; the landscaping, natural features, equipment, age phased areas, surfacing, fruit trees, boundaries, entrances, imaginative and adventurous play potential.
- ❖ Residents appreciated the low profile of the design and height of individual items of equipment, and that valued views of the fells and farmland were unimpaired.
- ❖ The design achieves an appropriate balance between the Play Park layout and maintaining use of the 'green'.
- ❖ Residents concerns relating to out-of-hours misuse of the Play Park may be addressed by recommended actions, notably curfew, CCTV, and lockup of the aerial runway. Monitoring and maintenance, the consultation suggests, should be accorded a higher priority by the Parish Council.
- ❖ Appropriate actions are suggested to address wider issues which residents may associate with the existing play area and Fell View as a meeting place for youths; and safety issues associated with speeding motorists.

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