



Leicestershire County Council

# SNOXHALL PLAY PARK

The Ethos, Ideas and Choices behind the project

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## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

- The existing Snoxhall play area has served the Cranleigh community well, however it is now in need of improvement. These potential improvements will have to serve the communities needs into the future.
- The confined layout of the existing play ground is impractical to the varying age groups that use the facilities, this is compared to when the facility was first installed some 15 years ago
- Some of the equipment within the area is up to 15 years old, and is in an aged condition. This equipment has proved difficult to maintain & repair.
- Not all age groups are fully catered for in terms of the equipment provided.
- In terms of maintenance requirements the design of the existing area makes any maintenance very labour intensive, and costly for such a small area.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

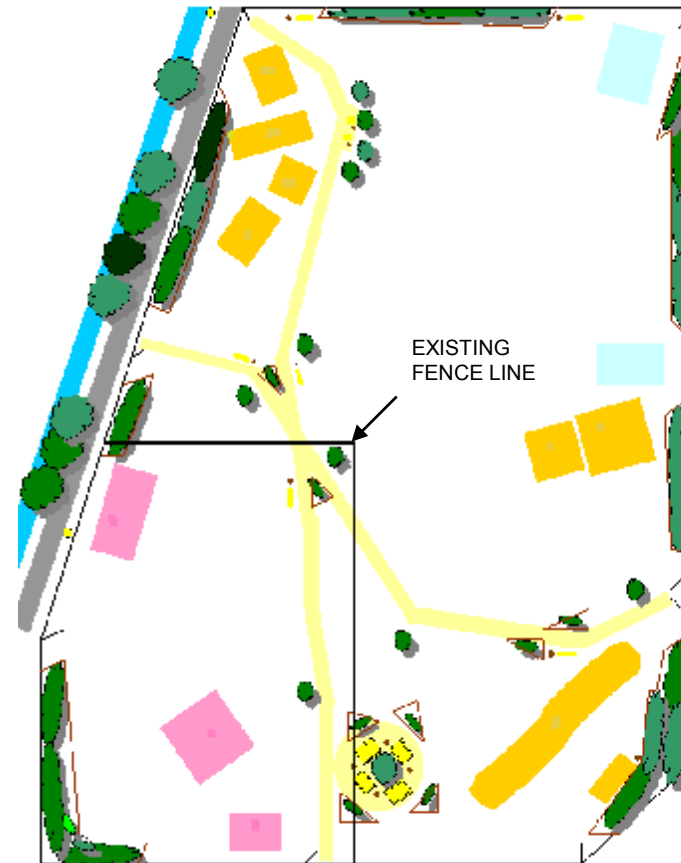
- If we were to improve the existing play facilities for the future, we needed to look at long-term improvements, rather than quick fixes, and these improvements had to meet the needs of the local community in the years to come.
- One issue with the existing play area is the lack of usable play space, the area is very small and the equipment within it is crammed into a very confined space. This gave limited scope for improvements to be made.
- We needed to encourage a more open feel to the available play space, and this needs to be taken into account when decisions are made on the amount of equipment included into the new play park area .
- Encouraging a more social feel by creating picnic areas, communal areas and open spaces will only enhance the play experience for all users of the area, children and adults alike.





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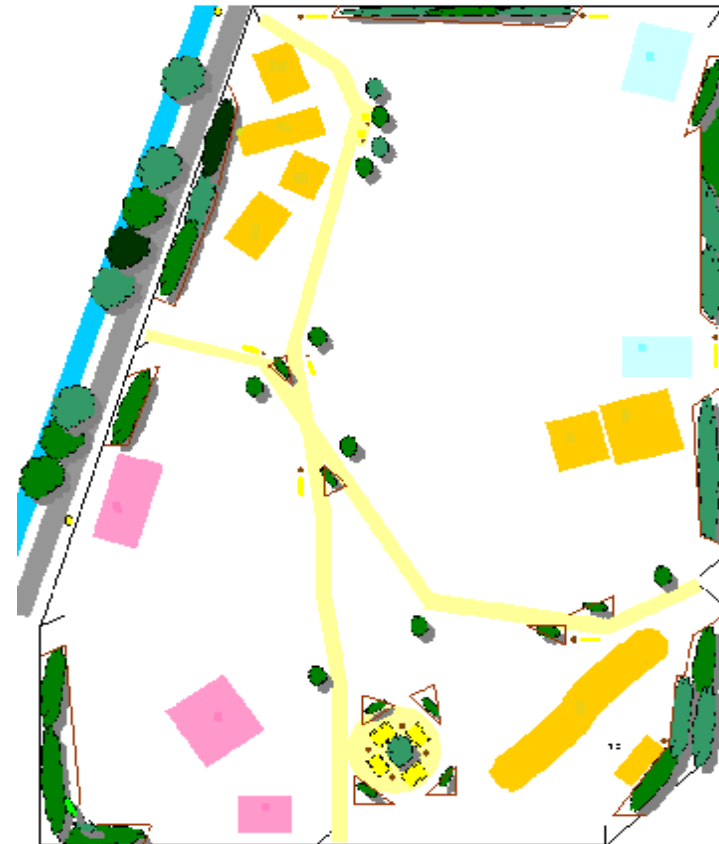
- By extending the existing fencing we have created a much larger play park.
- Installing two interconnecting pathways will create four different play zones that will cater for the differing age groups and abilities of the end users of the play area
- During the past few years, consultation has been conducted by Waverly Borough Council, Cranleigh Parish Council playground steering group, and the Cranleigh Health Check, this included consultation with pre-schools, parents, youth groups, and other youth based sources.
- Off the back of this consultation there is now a wealth of information that has been used along side the Waverley Play Strategy to design an enhanced play park. As each play zone is developed the correct equipment choices can now be made.





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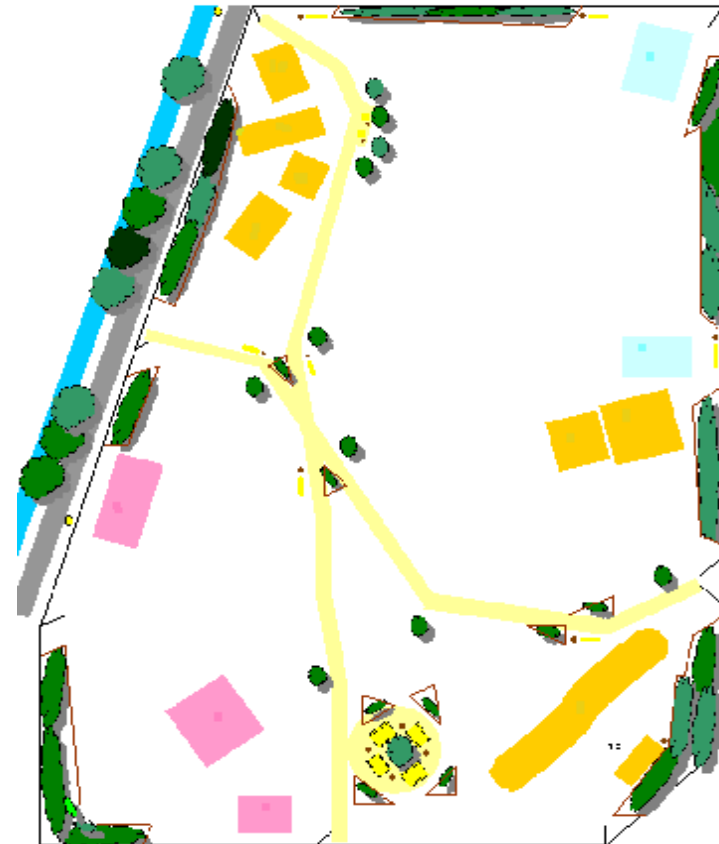
- This suggested design was presented to Cranleigh Parish Council and agreed on in late 2007, this allowed the project to move forward.
- Play area zones were designed into the project, allowing this project to be phased in over a period of time as the funding required for the project may take time to obtain. This will allow each individual play zone to be designed separately to cater for the different age groups and abilities, as well as meeting the requirements that have come out of the different consultation processes.
- The whole ethos of the new play park was that it would not have start and finish points in its build, as it would be a living project that would develop over a period of years, and would evolve as needs and trends changed.





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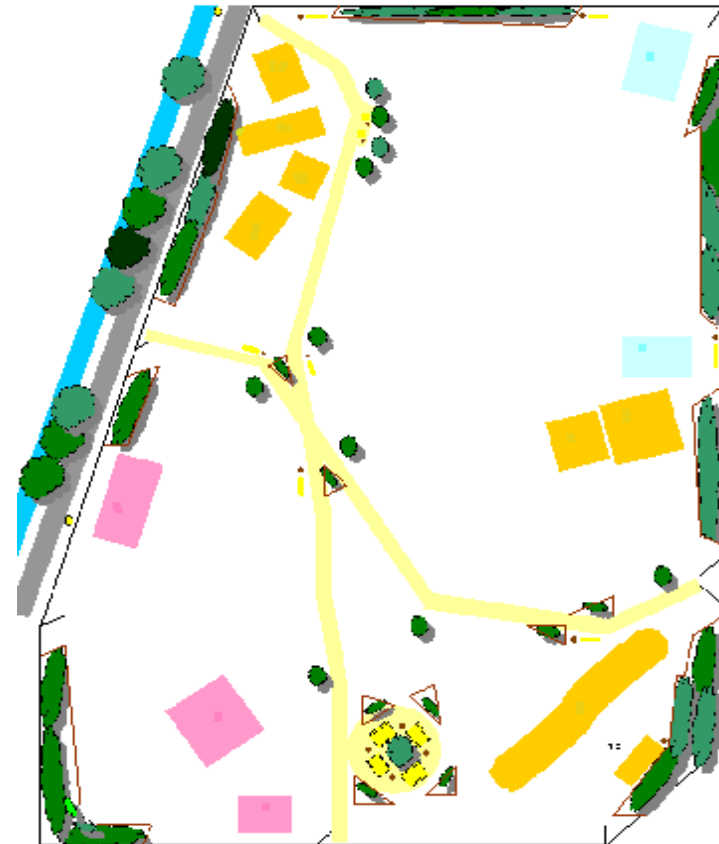
- The design and materials used within the play area will have to take into account the varying abilities and disabilities of the users. Conformity with aspects such as the DDA (disabled discrimination act) will have to be considered, as well as access to the area by older age groups of children and young teenagers.
- Older age groups and teenagers should not be excluded from the play park, but be catered for in some way, and by doing this it is envisaged that some form of ownership is formed and that this will aid in the reduction of vandalism and maintenance costs.
- Aspects of social inclusion should also be considered when choosing types and designs of equipment.
- Considering all the issues, the maintenance of the new play park should be uppermost in our thoughts during all stages of the project as this will play a large part in the life cycle & life costs of any redesigned play-area.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

- The larger area will be much easier to maintain as access gates in the fenced area will allow the ride-on grass cutting equipment access, thus maintenance of the grassed areas will be quicker, more regular and more cost effective. The larger area will also reduce the wear and tear on the grass surface as wear is spread over a much larger area, and with the over sowing of new grasses designed to withstand wear and drought, the condition of the grassed area will be improved.
- The main advantage of a project designed like this is that any improvements can be staged over a longer period of time if finances do become an issue. These improvement works will have little impact on the daily usability of the play park, as each area can be fenced off while any development works take place. This facility was designed into the project to allow constant use of the area after the initial construction stages were completed.
- If the project takes a period of years to progress due to financial restrictions, this should not be seen as a major issue, as by extending the fence lines in the first stages of the project, we will be increasing the available play space, this will be both secure and safe for the users the facility, this issue was raised during our meetings with Play England and was not seen to be an issue.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

- There are sources of funding available for projects like this and again by planning a staged project you can apply for funding towards the project as they become available and if they meet the criteria of the different funding bodies.
- THE BIG LOTTERY FUND had a £155 million allocation of funds that was allocated to Borough Council level authorities country wide, and this was specifically for play initiatives, any application to this fund had to be applied through Waverley Borough Council sources. This process was followed and we were lucky enough to be awarded 50K towards this project, but this money was issued off the back of the design agreed so the principle design cannot be changed.
- 'AWARDS FOR ALL' fund projects of up to £10,000, and this fund can be applied for more than once, they fund projects that bring people together to take part in and enjoy a wide range of community activities, but the specific criteria needs further investigation.
- There are other funding sources available, and new ones are appearing annually, but at times these are only available to certain groups/bodies so an amount of working in partnership during this project will be required.

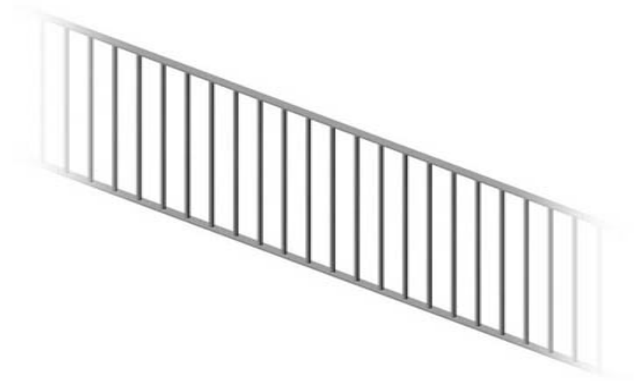




## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ EXTENSION OF FENCING

- The extension of the fencing has used the same flat top fencing that is in place at present around the existing play area. It has been found over a number of years that this is the most suitable for purpose, robust and vandal resistant. Maintenance to the fencing is kept to a minimum by using this choice of material.
- The natural feel we are trying to achieve for the play area has to be measured against the functionality of the material choice. Some sacrifices on aesthetics have to be made in order to have the most suitable material for this site, wooden fences have been used previously and it was found to be an unsuitable choice of material due to vandalism and maintenance issues.
- Access gates have been included to allow entry to maintenance equipment.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ COMMUNAL AREAS AND PATHWAYS

- The communal areas will be heavy use areas, and with this in mind we have to provide a hard wearing but visually soft surface that will be suitable for year round use, that also has to meet DDA requirements
- Bound resin surfaces are used by the national trust, local authorities, and by many national heritage sites. It is hard wearing, and gives a more natural feel to areas it is used.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ LANDSCAPING & PLANTING

- The landscaping of the area has been used to soften the feel of the play space, and by combining different levels a more natural feel to the play area can be achieved. It is envisaged this will change the flat levels of the existing ground into a more contoured undulating area.
- The choice of planting has taken into account soil type, drought resistance, and maintenance issues.
- Inclusion of sensory planting will also meet the criteria of the DDA. Including different heights of plants, colours and textures, as well as differing smells.
- We have worked closely with representatives from Glebelands school to be a part of the schools 50<sup>th</sup> year celebrations, and as part of that a number of trees will be planted into the play park to help mark those celebrations





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ NEW EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS

#### ‘ROCK N CROSS’ (Monster Play)

- An alternative to the traditional see-saw design
- It has the WOW factor that children enjoy
- It is inclusive to differing age groups
- The "Rock n' Cross" combines a multi rider see-saw with a dynamic overhead challenge to create a truly new and exciting activity. The unique design of the Rock n' Cross removes the dangers of sudden stops through the use of an internal spring assisted action and provides children with physical and social development in

a fun and exciting way.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ NEW EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS

#### ‘SUPA NOVA’ (Kompan)

- Alternative concept of a roundabout
- Again has the WOW factor
- Encourages physical activity
- Inclusive to differing age groups
- Encourages social inclusion





# SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

## ■ NEW EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS

### ‘NEST SWING’

- Alternative concept to traditional swing
- Complies with DDA
- Encourages physical activity
- Inclusive to differing age groups
- Encourages social inclusion





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ CATERING FOR YOUTH AND DDA

- The installation of more dynamic pieces of equipment needs to be measured against the requirements of the older youth groups as well as meeting the needs of the DDA, by providing equipment accessible to children with disabilities.
- Not every piece of equipment has to be DDA compliant but this type of inclusion has been encouraged by a number of sources including Play England representatives that we have had meetings with, so needs to be factored into the choices made.
- Some of the more dynamic equipment will not meet the requirements of the DDA but play value should not be sacrificed at the expense of complying. A measured approach should be taken to ensure the varying aspects of the new play park meet the differing requirements of the local community.



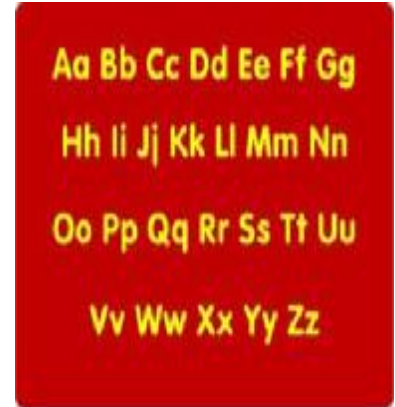
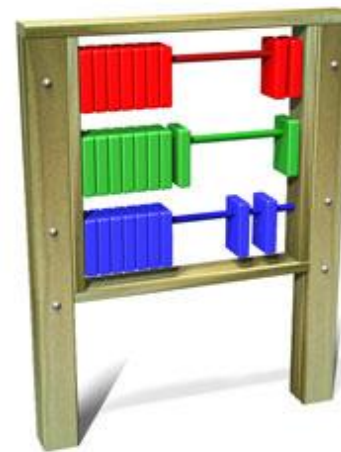


# SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

## ■ ACCESSORIES

- The inclusion of smaller scale pieces of equipment will cater for some of the younger age groups of children, without being exclusive to any particular age group.
- By including different activity panels, educational aspects of play can also be introduced into the play area and this could also be extended into the landscaped and planted areas of the park with nature trails being formed. Information on types of plants used within each area can be displayed alongside. It is also hope that links with local schools can be formed so that they can include the area within and around the park

to be used as a tool in educational terms.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ TABLES & BENCHES

- Within the communal areas good quality, robust seating is a must, and the type of material and design will need to be considered carefully. Wood is a good choice but the type and design must be appropriate to withstand a certain level of abuse.
- The use of raw natural materials such as sleeper benches has also been considered and may be used in some areas to free up more money to be spent on the main communal areas
- Recycled materials that give the appearance of wood are a good choice as they are very robust, and through our own experiences can withstand a high level of abuse.
- The natural feel of the play area should be measured against the functionality of the material choice.





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ NATURAL PLAY

- Within the Snoxhall area there are opportunities to use the natural environment as part of the play facilities, and these areas should not be ignored.
- Areas such as the old stream route beside the existing play area may be able to be utilised in some way to provide natural play opportunities.
- Also now that the youth shelter is back in place this area could be used for such items as a trim-trail which could then flow into the old stream route then on into the area of the new play park. Alternatively more dynamic equipment aimed at the older youth groups could be installed within this area, this could then free up space within the main play park for other equipment choices





## SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

### ■ RISK AND PLAY

- During our own research into the new play park, we discovered a lot of information on this subject, and this information needs to be understood.
- There is a direct correlation between risk and child development.
- What this means is that we need to take a measured approach to the choices made with regard to risk, as child development can be hampered by the introduction of too many safety measures. Children need to be exposed to a degree of risk to help them develop and to make the correct choices with regard to risks. We have attended seminars given by professor David Ball who has written research papers for government on this subject and this information is available in PDF format on request to anyone interested in the subject.





# SNOXHALL PLAY PARK PROJECT

## IN CONCLUSION:

- A large amount of research has been undertaken to date on this project, and this is how the project should continue to be based.
- A measured approach needs to be taken in all areas of the project, decisions that affect material choice, play value, play risks, DDA compliance, and maintenance requirements should all take this measured approach.
- Any decisions or choices made, should be based on evidence, taking into account every aspect of research undertaken, and should never be just based on personal opinions.
- Partnership is key to this project progressing and being a success.
- There is no rush, allow the project to evolve as required and you will end up with an outstanding facility.
- Do not forget the ethos behind the project, it is a living project that should have no end, it should evolve and change as generations grow up, and trends move on.
- Finally lets try and educate and encourage the users to enjoy the new play park, to use it, to have fun in it, and not to abuse it.