



Enniskerry Playground

Ecological Impact Assessment

on behalf of Enniskerry Playground Committee

September 202

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Alan Lauder Consulting (ALC) was commissioned by Enniskerry Playground Committee to conduct an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) to inform the permitting process and an application for funding support for construction of a playground in Enniskerry Village, County Wicklow.

1.2 Aims and approach

The overall purpose of this assessment was to detail the status of known or potential ecological constraints to the activities proposed and to identify any mitigation requirements to ensure compliance with relevant local, national and European statutory requirements for ecological protection.

The report provides an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed activities on the ecological environment i.e. flora and fauna, collectively known as biodiversity. This report follows Guidelines for

Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2016), and guidelines for ecological report writing (CIEEM, 2017). This Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) process follows the tasks set out in Table 1.

Table 1 EclA process, as detailed in CIEEM (2016)

Task	Description
Scoping	Determining the matters to be addressed in the EclA, including consultation to ensure the most effective input to defining the scope. Scoping is an ongoing process – the scope of the EclA may be modified following further ecological surveys/research and during impact assessment.
Establishing the baseline	Collecting information and describing the ecological conditions in the absence of the proposed project, to inform the assessment of impacts.
Important ecological features	Identifying important ecological features (habitats and species) that may be affected with reference to a geographical context in which they are considered important.
Impact assessment	An assessment of whether important ecological features may be subject to potential impacts, and characterisation of these impacts and their effects. Assessment of potential residual ecological impacts of the project remaining after mitigation and the significance of their effects, including cumulative effects.
Avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement	Incorporating measures to avoid, reduce and/or compensate potential ecological impacts, and the provision of ecological enhancements.
Monitoring	Monitoring impacts of the development and evaluation of the success of proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures.

1.3 Quality assurance

The fieldwork and reporting for this project has been led by Alan Lauder BSc, Owner/Principal Consultant at *Alan Lauder Consulting (ALCnature)*.

Alan gained an honours degree in Ecology from The University of Stirling in 1989 and is an experienced ecologist, nature conservation and habitat management specialist with over 30 years professional post-graduate experience. His relevant professional experience includes extensive planning related casework for state and non-governmental organisations within Scotland and Ireland, input to and preparation of site designations, Environmental Impact Statements & Assessments. He has extensive knowledge of survey and conservation management of a wide range of habitats and species.

Stephanie is a Graduate Ecologist with ALC Nature since May 2021. She holds an MSc in Wildlife Conservation and Management from University College Dublin.

Alan and all staff at ALC apply the professional standards of the CIEEM including following best practice guidance where it exists, highest standards of professional conduct and the application of suitable systems and procedures including Health and Safety and environmental management systems.

2. Project Description

2.1 Overview

The proposed project consists of construction of an children's amenity playground in Enniskerry Village, County Wicklow. The project is small-scale and not in the immediate vicinity of any designated sites.

The client method statement and site map are contained at Appendix 1.

2.2 Project summary

The proposed project consists of construction of a children's playground in Enniskerry Village, County Wicklow. The site is located next to the Bog Meadow Youth and Sports Centre and is accessible off the L1007 road. Enniskerry is a village located on the eastern side of the Wicklow mountains, easily accessible from the R117 road and the N11 Dual Carriageway. The Glencullen river runs through the village and alongside the proposed project.

The project is being coordinated by Enniskerry Playground residential committee, alongside and partly funded by Wicklow County Council. The primary aim of the project is to provide the local community with a safe place for children to play and develop skills, and is integrated within the Wicklow County Council's local area plan for Enniskerry to enhance play facilities for the community.

The size of the proposed project covers an area of approximately 500m² of improved amenity grassland. The proposed project consists of construction of a playground with four main zones. Zone 1 will be a Zip Wire, Zone 2 a transition area, Zone three the main enclosed playground area and Zone 4 a quiet sensory area. A picnic area and a fitness equipment area are additional features to the project. The materials used will be predominately natural materials.

There will be a focus on biodiversity and pollinators in the theme of the design and construction of the project. Features include bee hotels, bird nest boxes, pollinator-friendly planted areas, information points and interactive play areas.

The project's zone of operation is primarily on a grassy verge of improved amenity grassland.

The timescale of the project is to be confirmed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach to Mapping

Habitats were observed during the site survey visit on 14 September 2021. Detailed habitat mapping was not required, as the project zone of operation lies predominately on amenity improved grassland. The fringes of the site may encroach on taller ruderal vegetation on the edge of planted amenity woodland which itself leads to more natural woodland in the valley bottom.

3.2 Consultation

A telephone conversation with Roisin Briggs with the project lead was held in early September to outline the project aims.

3.3 Desk study

The information collected for this report was based on a desktop study and detailed site inspection.

Information consulted included the following information sources, which included maps and ecological data:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- Online data available on European sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie
- Information gleaned from a method statement and map provided by the client regarding the approach to the operations (Appendices 1 and 2).
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland (National Parks & Wildlife Service)
- Data available in conservation management reports previously provided to Wicklow County Council by ALC.
- Online data available for boundaries of relevant designated sites data

3.4 Field Survey

A site visit was carried out on 14th September 2021, to examine the habitats present and characteristics of the areas to be utilised by the operations and to inspect the areas for the likely presence of key biodiversity, such as EU priority species, protected species, qualifying interests and red listed species, within the footprint of the operation or within areas which could be affected by the operational activities or processes.

3.5 Impact assessment

i. Determining significance

Significance can be determined by a combination of objective (scientific) and subjective (social) considerations. The same geographic 'frame of reference' provided by the NRA (2009a) to value ecological features is used to determine impact significance. A geographic frame of reference is also recommended for EcIA in Ireland and the UK by CIEEM (2016). The geographic frame of reference provides a 'good fit' to assessments of biodiversity impacts because it allows clear judgements to be made about the scale of significance, with reference to published estimates for the population size of a given species at county, national and/or international scales or areas of habitats at such scales. By way of illustration; the proportion of a known feature impacted at county scale (i.e. 1% of the known or estimated population in a given county) is measurably different from that impacted 'at national scale' (i.e. 1% of the known or estimated national population).

ii. Characterising ecological impacts

In accordance with the CIEEM (2016) guidelines, likely potential impacts were characterised by considered shown in Table 2 below.

Potential impacts may occur during construction or operational of a development, and may be indirect as well as direct. Direct impacts are directly attributable to an action associated with a development. Indirect impacts are often produced away from a development, or as a result of other initial impacts.

More than one potential impact acting on a receptor simultaneously may have a cumulative impact that is greater than when the same impacts act in isolation. Cumulative impacts may entail the assessment of all the impacts of the scheme upon a feature (e.g. impacts at the construction and operation stage), or the combined impacts of a number of schemes that would affect the same area. The area affected may vary depending on the receptor being considered.

Table 2. Characteristics of potential impacts (adapted from CIEEM, 2016)

Potential impact parameter	Description
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'Quality' of Effects	Potential impacts can have a positive or negative effect on the environment
Magnitude	Magnitude can be measured in many ways such as the spatial or geographical area over which the impact may occur, or the size of a population impacted
Duration	Effects may be described as temporary, short, medium, long-term or permanent. In this report (following the EPA, 2017) a temporary impact lasts <1 year; short-term impact last 1-7 years, medium-term impacts last 7-15 years, long term impacts last 15-60 years; permanent impacts last >60 years.
Frequency and Timing	The number of times an activity occurs will influence the resulting effect. The timing of an activity or change may result in an impact if it coincides with critical life-stages or seasons e.g. bird nesting season.
Significance	Potential impacts are either significant or non-significant

4. Existing Environment

4.1 Site overview

The site location and extent are indicated on the map at [Figure 1](#).

The project is small-scale with a contained footprint. The project activity is primarily on improved amenity grassland (GA2). There are two old trees in the project's zone of operation. The Glencullen river is adjacent to the project zone of operation. There is a Youth Sports centre and a carpark 20 metres from the proposed zone of operation. The site is accessible via pedestrian pathway and road. A pedestrian concrete path leads down a steep slope to a riparian woodland area and the Glencullen river. [Figure 2](#) illustrates the habitats present in the immediate area of the project.

4.2 Site designated for nature conservation

The zone of operation does not fall within a designated site. The proposed project is in the close vicinity of Knocksink Wood SAC (north-east c 80 metres), an important site for rare invertebrates with Natura Qualifying Interests: Petrifying Springs*, Old Oak Woodlands, and Alluvial Forest*.

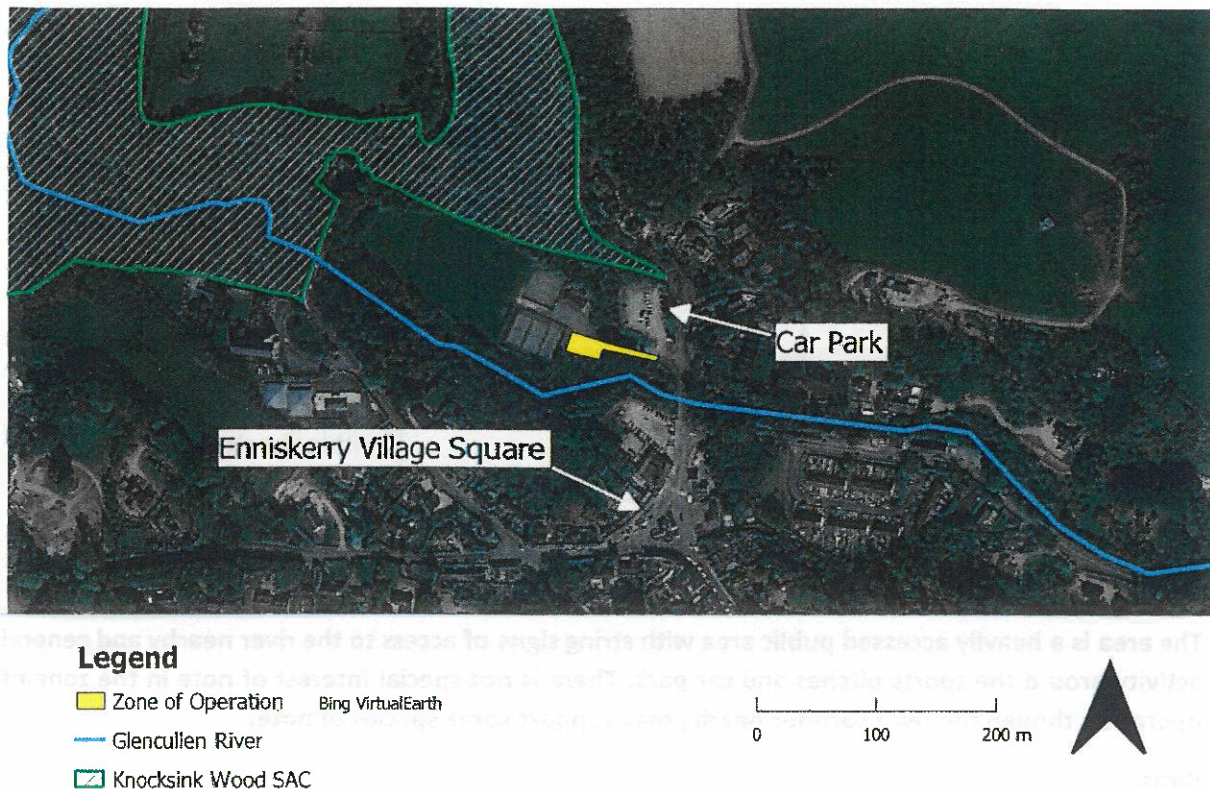


Figure 1 Map of zone of operation in relation to Knocksink Wood SAC and Glencullen River



Figure 2 Images of the zone of operation – amenity grassland, ruderal vegetation at woodland edge and mature non-native conifer trees

4.3 Survey results (habitats and flora)

4.3.1 Habitats and Flora

The presence, absence and extent of habitats were surveyed on a site visit on 14 September 2021. The proposed project site is very small and covers only habitats which are man-made, mapping of the habitats was not practicable given the small extent of the project. Table 3 below indicates the habitats present in the immediate environs of the proposed project.

Table 3 Status and presence/absence of habitats

Feature	Status	Results
Amenity grassland (improved) (GA2)	Non-priority	Present within the site
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	Non-priority	Road and car park adjacent to zone of operation
(Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland WD1 / Riparian woodland (WN5)	Non-priority	Not present in the operational area
Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2)	Non-priority	Adjacent to the site
Scattered trees and parkland WD5	Non priority	Within the site

4.3.2 Fauna

The area is a heavily accessed public area with string signs of access to the river nearby and general activity around the sports pitches and car park. There is not special interest of note in the zone of operation though the river corridor nearby may support some species of note.

Birds

Common woodland, garden and woodland edge species use the woodland edge and grassland areas e.g. Chaffinch, Robin, Jackdaw, Magpie etc.

There may be low numbers of nesting birds in the general area of the woodland edge which may be disturbed if construction proceeds during the spring months. Ecological checks in advance of construction should control for this.

Mammals

Bat use of the trees should be considered and certainly is likely given the mix of habitats in the area. Use of the large trees as a roost site is possible but as the area is already heavily visited additional uses are unlikely to significantly affect this use unless the trees are removed (there are no plans to do so). Should the project proceed, construction periods should be limited to daylight hours to prevent light disturbance to bats and all trees should be retained. Provision of bat boxes would be of potential added value.

Amphibians

NO wetland habitats within the zone of operation so only transient use by amphibians is likely.

Invertebrates

A wide range of invertebrates likely use the site adjacent to the zone of operation. Pollinator activity is expected to increase with specific integration of pollinator planting in the proposed project. Care should be taken to ensure these are well designed and planned with expert advisory input.

5. Impact Assessment

Do nothing scenario

In the absence of construction, there would be continuing moderate and occasionally high low-levels of activity from users of the adjacent sports centre and pathway leading to river.

Potentially significant impacts

None identified – the footprint of the site and the proposed approach to construction is outside any native or semi-natural habitats and thus unlikely to have any significant impacts.

Types of potential impact

The only potential impact identified could be the disturbance to nesting birds and to bats.

Additional considerations are potential soil erosion during construction on the sloping surface and transfer into the river waterbody. Standard silt protection and control measures should be taken

The footprint of the project is small and localised to non-priority habitat.

Cumulative impacts

There are no cumulative impacts identified

6. Summary of Potential Impacts

The only potential impacts identified relate to disturbance to bats (from lights if works occur at night) and nesting birds (if construction during spring). These are unlikely to be significant but deployment of mitigation further can ensure this.

7. Mitigation and Compensation

7.1 Mitigation

Mitigation measures should include:

- Standard controls for silt run off and typical controls of emissions
- detailed construction methods that avoid night-time working with ecology checks prior to work commencing (if in spring) or by avoiding construction during spring.

7.2 Compensation

Not applicable

8. Residual Impacts

After mitigation there would be no identified impacts and no residual impacts

9. Monitoring

An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) should be appointed during construction to advise on an as needed basis to avoid any issues arising and to provide a toolbox talk The site will be visited during and after construction by an ecologist.

10. Limitations

Sources of information are not exhaustive and every effort was made to obtain ecological data in the public domain to inform the baseline and assessment. It is possible that other information not in the public domain and known only to private individuals exists.

11. Concluding Remarks

The proposed project is small with a highly limited footprint, occurring entirely on non-priority habitat. There is no significant disturbance to biodiversity expected due to the small-scale nature of the project but those potential impacts identified can be suitably mitigated as described.

12. References

CIEEM (2016) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, freshwater and coastal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester: UK

CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing, second edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester: UK.

Appendix 1 – CLIENT METHOD STATEMENT/PROJECT BRIEF

Enniskerry needs a playground



Enniskerry Playground Project Plan

Enniskerry is a village in Co. Wicklow and is situated on the Glencullen River in the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, just 5 minutes south of the Dublin border and some 24 km south of Dublin city centre. The R117 road, colloquially known as "The Twenty-One Bends" connects the town to the main N11 road to Dublin. The 185 Go-Ahead Ireland route connects the village hourly to Bray, the nearest large town. The 44 Dublin Bus route connects the village with Dublin City Centre.

The population according to the 2016 census was approximately 1900 people. Since then there has been further development of lands at Parcnasillogue (Sika Woods) which comprises of 47 large homes and Kilgarron Hill (Redwood) with another 8 large homes. There is also currently a large development of lands proposed in Kilmolin/Parcnasillogue comprising of 200 units.

It has been recognised since 2009 by Wicklow County Council in their Local area plan for the village that there was a need for enhancement of play and sports facilities. It was identified that a playground of no less than 400sqm should be provided.

There are three primary schools and three pre-schools in the village which comprises in total of 360 children who mainly live locally, not to mention children younger than three years of age who would also use the playground.

Child development

Playgrounds are a critical component in a child's physical, intellectual, creative, and social development. Through active play, children gain first-hand information about themselves, their bodies, their peers, and their environment. Without it, they are too often stuck indoors with mind-numbing video games and television.

Play also develops increasingly complex behaviors as children grow and socialize, preparing them to function as healthy, confident adults. A community playground also provides a meeting area where parents and other adults can gather to support each other's parenting needs and discuss family issues.

Committee Aim

The Enniskerry Playground committee is a group of residents who have come together to work with Wicklow County council to provide our community with a playground for the children in the area.

The committee endeavors to fundraise €20,000 (currently raised €16,000) of the total budget with match funding coming from Wicklow County Council and the rest of the estimated €200,000 coming from funding streams and grants applied for in the coming months.

This figure is based on the average with the recently installed Roundwood, County Wicklow playground costing €175,000 and Greystones South Beach, Co. Wicklow costing €250,000. The timeframe depends largely on funding but it would be hoped the playground would be completed within the next 18 months.

Site & Equipment

A site has been identified in the Bog Meadow sports and recreation facility in the village of Enniskerry. It will be a community playground in Sylvan Riverside setting where the site is level and slopes down towards the river. The compound enclosure should surround all play equipment and associated works; the design should complement the setting and exploit the topography of the site.

The equipment and other elements and should be robust and rustic in character appropriate to the rural nature of the location. The playground should be totally inclusive, challenging and fun for children of all abilities under the age of 12.



Key elements for playground

- Natural theme and resources to incorporate into the landscape of the area
- Creativity with use of space of playground, the flow of playground space should be enticing for children to explore the next section Inclusivity should be foremost in the design for the playground, we want children under the age of 12 and all abilities to be able to come together and interact in a meaningful way
- Interesting/unusual equipment
- Area for baby and toddler age group
- Wheelchair accessible equipment, where possible all equipment should have some level of accessibility
- Nature obstacle area
- Picnic Table and bench x 1
- Wheelchair accessible gate, self-closing
- The equipment “finishes the loop”, so that children with mobility impairments or wheelchair users finish a play route near to where they began
- Colour contrast is used to distinguish entrances, access onto equipment, steps and areas such as the ends of slides and the position of swings
- At least one each of the main play activities swinging, sliding, rocking, climbing is accessible to children with mobility, learning and sensory

Biodiversity

It is important that nature is at the core of the design, is visually attractive and enhances habitat for native biodiversity. This may include new planting and a diversity of features such as climbing logs and wooden play equipment.

The Bog Meadow is well used by local people in a wide variety of ways as a place to play sports, community games, tennis, rest and relax or enjoy a walk along the river trail and to link over to Knocksink Woods. The Bog Meadow is also richly diverse in its habitats and microhabitats, making it a magnet for birds and insects in particular.

The children's playground will bring vibrancy to the Bog Meadow. The next phase of improvement works to include clearing of scrub waste, new pathway and walking trail leading down to the river and new plantings. (Zones surrounding 3 & 4.



We consider the Bog Meadow as a flagship for Biodiversity. The new planting selected where possible to be 75% pollinator friendly. Pollinators will in turn attract birds. Bird requirements of Food, Shelter, Water and place for Nesting are provided. The planting and design for the planting is considered with the intention to harmonise with the all of the bog meadows user requirements, be they people, birds or pollinating insects.

It is clear from visiting the bog meadow, as it is now, how people, young and old enjoy engaging with and observing the natural habitat on the river trail. The new planting improvements will build on the bog meadows existing diversity, bringing beauty, additional seasonal interest and sustainability. The walk and rest opportunities leading down to the river with new planting surrounding will provide a rich seasonal display which also creates new complementary habitats for water birds and pollinating insects.

Actions for pollinators

Taking actions for pollinators will lead to general biodiversity enhancement.

- Identify and protect existing areas that are good for pollinators
- Ensure flowers bloom between March - October that can provide food for pollinators
- Add bee hotels to the existing bug hotel
- Provide nesting habitats
- Pollinator friendly planted containers
- Reduce use of pesticides



We see a great opportunity to create an educational amenity for local schools in the form nature walks which utilise the existing trails surrounding the bog meadow enriched with biodiversity in the form of native planting encouraging native animals and insects to thrive.



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- Provide nesting habitats
- Pollinator friendly planted containers
- Reduce use of pesticides
- Raise awareness of pollinators in the area
- Put up signage to identify pollinator friendly habitats



- Prioritise native plants

Native plants for pollinators

Example of Trees & Shrubs - Woodland,

Hedgerow

- Crab apple
- Elder
- Hawthorn
- Hazel
- Rowan
- Willow
- Wild Cherry

Example of wild flowers

- Cowslip
- Creeping buttercup
- Dandelion
- Red clover
- Wild strawberry
- Foxglove
- Herb Robert Hogweed
- Lady's Bedstraw
- Ramsons

- Meadow buttercup
- Ox-eye daisy
- Wild carrot
- Wild marjoram
- Yarrow
- Angelica - Wetland areas
- Fleabane
- Purple Loosestrife
- Marsh marigold
- Mint



General Requirements

Clearing of self-seeded scrub woodland. Ground Works - preparations reducing levels, terracing, subsurface drainage works as required i.e. French drains / SUDs type solutions as appropriate.

Surfaces

Surface to be fully accessible with firm surface between and beneath play items and access routes. Rubber poured-in-place is the most accessible and safest playground surface. It absorbs falls from the greatest height and wheelchairs can easily roll over it. Poured-in-place requires little

ongoing maintenance. This can be accompanied by planting and more natural surfaces in the surrounds of the playground.

Proposed Bog Meadow Site Sketch

The most usable area has been split into four zones

(This sizing may increase if additional scrub land was cleared)

These, as a suggestion, could be set out as follows:

Zone (1) : Ideal for Zip Wire (150m²),

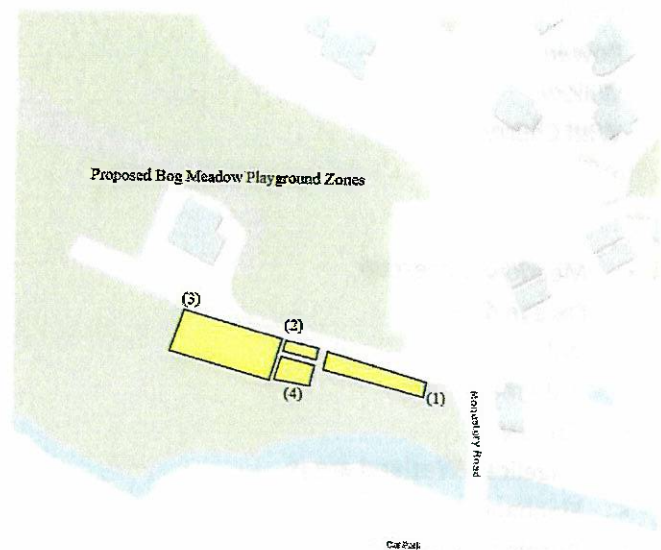
Zone (2) : Could be used for transition area between Zones 1, 3 and 4.

Space could accommodate things like the Bug Hotel, info panels etc. (40m²),

Zone (3) : Main play area (400m²),

Zone (4) : Possible quiet sensory play area (85m²).

All in this would total 675m².



All of Zone (4) will require to be

raised or dropped (whichever is most desirable or required by available funds).



zip line



Swings

Approximately 15% of Zone (B) will require to be raised.

- Basket swing x1
- Inclusive sandpit incorporating wheel
- Carousel

Specific Equipment Wish List • Natural Materials

- Swings x2
- Baby swings
- Monkey Bars
- High slide/activity centre which is a statement piece for the playground to include slide.



basket swing



monkey bars

- Sensory Area or wall
- Toddler activity/slide/ climbing piece



carousel



infant swings

Equipment

Additional to the playground, planting and pathways we would Colourful fitness equipment designed for late teens and adults bars to hold on to for squats or modified wall push-ups; leg press leg, hip, and core muscles; an overhead press to build shoulder

The most obvious benefit of any fitness equipment is also the park gym equipment, you can help to encourage people to live enjoyable, open-air environment.

Outdoor exercise also has various other proven benefits too, in suggested natural environments reduce emotional and physiological providing the health benefits associated with physical exertion light and air. Exposure to sunlight also helps to increase levels of overall wellbeing, and cannot be obtained through indoor exercise

Finally, as well as these various physical and emotional benefits, all of this park gym equipment is fun to use, and most importantly – it's free.



high side climb activity centre



toddler activity / slide



picnic table

