

Stoops & Hargher Clough – Proposed Recreation Ground Improvements

Consultation Results & Review
(October 2012)



Proffitts
Investing in Communities

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1.0 Introduction

Proffitts – Investing in Communities CIC was approached by Stoops and Hargher Clough Community Association with the aim of providing a better recreational facility on land to the rear of the Community Centre. They wish to make the area more appealing and accessible for all users and local residents who are not currently engaging with the space.

The proposed site has enormous potential to promote healthy lifestyles through the introduction of sports, play and environmental features that maximise benefits to all sections of the community. The project will improve an area of land that is currently underused and uninspiring and in doing so involve and engage the local community in the development and outcome of their immediate environment.

Proffitts' Landscape Architect worked with community group members to produce a sketch drawing detailing possible uses for the area and providing picture examples of similar features in other areas. This was detailed into a plan which formed the basis of the consultation.

2.0 Method

A questionnaire was produced that followed a standard format. We asked whether they, family or friends currently use the site (depicted on map) and if so how why they used the site and how often they used the site. We asked what participants liked about the current site and what they disliked about the current site.

We provided a proposed plan (Appendix I) and example ideas, and asked whether or not, they agreed with a list of intended improvements such as boundary improvements, access improvements, adventure play, central events area, outdoor gym, multi use games area, toddler play area, additional drainage, seating bins. We also wanted to know whether making the intended improvements would mean that they would visit the site more frequently.

Answers were mainly in the form of written answers with some tick boxes, allowing plenty of opportunity to feed in comments and information. Referring to the plan we wanted to know what participants liked about the plans, disliked about the plans and whether they would like to see any changes to the plan.

Five hundred questionnaires were hand delivered to local residents, available from the community centre, local shops and available to download from the Proffitts – Investing In Communities website.

Officers from Proffitts – Investing in Communities also attended 2 community fun days at The Stoops & Hargher Clough Community Centre and at The Fold (Healthy Living centre) to talk to local residents and provide further opportunities for questionnaires to be completed.

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3.0 Results

3.1 Questionnaire Results

There were a total of 88 completed questionnaires returned. 74 participants currently use the site or their friends and family use the site. The main reason given for using the site was to play on the existing play area (33 responses), 10 responses for using the area when they visited the community centre or local nursery, 9 responses for using the grassed area for football, rounders or to have picnics, 3 responses for using the area as a cut through to the local shops or to get to other streets and 1 response for walking. There were 4 responses for not using the area – 1 for only works not lives in area, 1 for doesn't live close enough, 1 for scruffy looking and 1 for all equipment is too high.

60 participants said they or their family and friends used the site as least weekly with 14 participants using the site monthly or less frequently. However 2 participants reported it was very much weather dependent.

When asked what respondents liked about the current site, the majority of responses were for the current play area (27). It is seen to have a good range of equipment and is reported to be 'fun, enjoyable and good to go on'. There were 10 responses for liking the area as it's an open green space where people feel relatively safe. Equally there were 10 responses for liking nothing or not a lot about the site as it stands. 8 participants thought it was in a good location, close and convenient to home, 6 responses for something to do and 2 or less responses each for enjoyment and everything.

The majority of participants (31) dislike the site because they report it as an underused space with a lack of variety, not enough for young children, not enough for teenagers; it's a large park with just a small play area at the top. In the same token there were 11 responses for nothing to do there. There were 14 responses for the area looking scruffy, untidy, neglected and 8 comments for anti social behaviour such as motor bikes, vandalism etc. There were 8 comments for disliking nothing about the current site.

A list of intended improvements was stated (referencing the plan) and participants were asked to circle yes or no to each of the intended improvements.

	Yes	No
Boundary improvements such as fencing / hedging	93.2%	3.4%
Access improvements such as paths and entrance features	87.5%	4.5%
Adventure Play / Trim Trail	93.2%	3.4%
Central are to be used for organised events	93.2%	3.4%
Outdoor gym (pieces of adult gym equipment)	89.8%	8.0%
Multiuse game area – football, netball, cricket, basketball etc	93.2%	2.3%

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Toddler play area / community garden	93.2%	4.5%
Teen-zone activity area	92.0%	4.5%
Additional drainage around site	92.0%	4.5%
Seating / bins	96.6%	2.3%

97.7% (86) of participants indicated that making the intended improvements would mean that they or people in general would use the site more.

Other suggestions for improving the site were:

17 comments for additional flowers / trees / shrubs

8 comments for on-site supervised activities with children (including play / planting / 'looking after' activities)

2 comments for a toddler bike zone (road layout with zebra crossings / road junctions etc)

2 comments for better security / CCTV

1 comment for shop /café

1 comment for dog free zones

Space was provided to comment on what participants like about the proposed design. The majority of comments – 25 were impressed with the design and liked everything about it. There were 18 comments regarding the increased variety shown in the design and reported that this would provide more activities for people of all ages. The zoned areas attracted 6 positive comments.

Space was also provided to comment on what participants dislike about the proposed design. The majority of comments – 30 were for nothing at all. The teen zone being too close to the toddler zone attracted 7 comments and there was 1 comment for too many activities, 1 comment for use of artificial grass and 1 comment for a 4 – 11yr old zone.

Finally, space was provided to state any changes to the design participants would like to see. Again, the majority of comments – 27 were for none or no changes. 4 comments were for moving the teen zone away from the toddler zone, 2 comments for including a BMX or skate park and 1 comment each for the addition of a café / shop and some form of artificial grass to play football, tennis or rounders.

Raw data is available on request.

3.1 Consultation Event Results

Proffitts' staff attended 2 community consultation events in August at Hargher Clough Community Association and at The Fold – Healthy Living Centre. The events were community wide 'fun day' events and attracted a wide audience.

The events provided an opportunity to discuss the proposed plans with local police officers, council officers, park rangers and even the Mayor of Burnley. Police officers were concerned about any introduction of a shelter as this had been tried in other parks / rec. areas and have led to increased antisocial behaviour levels and seem to attract unwanted attention from a wide area. Council

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officers were keen to see a wide variety of fixed play equipment and more trees – but previous trees had been vandalised even when local young people had helped to plant them.

At each event discussions / conversations took place with other 30 children, their parents and carers. The main theme from discussions was the need for increased variety of play equipment such as swings and types of spaces available – for example space to play football, badminton, rounder's or netball. A bike track / skate park (wheeled sports) for older children as well as the possibilities of a bike track for toddlers / younger children. The cheerleading squad were keen to see some kind of performance space that they could utilise. Other mentions were leaving areas of the slope free as it used for sledging when it snows and at least 6 young people raised the possibility of wheeled sport equipment in the area.

4.0 Discussion / Recommendations

The results from the questionnaires and the feedback received from the consultation events are extremely encouraging. The play area within the recreation area is already well used and comments from the consultation show that the local community can see the potential the rest of the rec.area has for further development. It's currently seen as a wide open space with not a lot to do, however the play area at the top of the recreation area is very well thought of and is the main reason why participants go the rec. and what they like most about it.

All the suggested improvements were well received – over 96% were in favour of additional bins and seating, over 93% in favour of boundary improvements (fencing, hedging), adventure play / trim trail area, a central area for organised events, a multi use games area, a toddler play area / community garden, over 92% in favour of an teen zone activity area and additional drainage around the site, over 89% in favour of the outdoor gym and finally over 87% in favour of access improvements (paths / entrance features). These responses are highly in favour of the proposed design and proposed zoned areas and improvements. In addition, participants raised the possibilities of more flowers / shrubs / trees (but not to the extent where they compromise safety), participants recognised the need to engage young people and children with activities after improvements have been made – such as organised sports events, planting days etc. Several comments were made about the proximity of the teen-zone area to the toddler area so it is suggested that this is given careful consideration when further developing the plans.

There is some local concern about anti social behaviour in the area – motor bike riding, broken glass, and youths hanging about, however comments by participants indicate that by providing more activities and things for children / young people to do may lead to less anti social behaviour. Through the course of project it will be important to continue to engage with not just local residents and local communities but statutory organisations (such as the police, local council, social housing landlords), who fed important information into the consultation events. Consideration should be given to the formation of a steering group which includes these representatives as the project moves forward.

The overall consensus from this consultation is that local residents want to see improvements to this space. Zoned areas, providing a variety of activities for different age groups is appealing and comments from participants show they recognise the health benefits that this would bring (increased exercise, running, playing). Activities to engage local communities whilst the plans are ongoing and eventually implemented need to continue as well as supervised activities on the new

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sites when improvements have been made will help to ensure the site is well used and cared for by all.

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Appendix I



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Stoops & Hargher Clough Rec Ground Plan

Stoops and Hargher Clough Community Association want to improve Stoops Recreation Ground and we want to know what you think of the draft master plan.

Please look at the site plan with themed areas on the other side of this survey and complete the short survey below and overleaf. We will then use this information to change and adapt the plans to suit the general needs of local residents and **try to** seek the funding required. **Please note: Funds are not guaranteed.** In completing this survey you will be automatically entered into a prize draw for high street vouchers worth £20 if pass on your details.

1. Do you, your family or friends currently use the site (circle)? Yes No

(Please say what for or if not, why not)

2. If yes, how often do you use the site? (please circle)

 Daily weekly monthly other

3. What do you **like** about the current site?

4. What do you **dislike** about the current site?

5. Please refer to the plan and list of intended improvements below. Please circle yes or no with each of the intended improvements.

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| • Boundary improvements such as fencing / hedging | Yes | No |
| • Access improvements such as paths and entrance features | Yes | No |
| • Adventure Play / Trim Trail | Yes | No |
| • Central area to be used for organised events | Yes | No |
| • Outdoor gym (pieces of adult gym equipment) | Yes | No |
| • Multiuse games area—Football, netball, cricket, basket ball etc | Yes | No |
| • Toddler play area / community garden | Yes | No |
| • Teen zone activity area | Yes | No |
| • Additional drainage around site | Yes | No |
| • Seating / bins | Yes | No |

5. Do you feel in making the intended improvements that you or people generally would use the area more? Yes No

6. Please refer to the design on the other side of this survey Do you have any other suggestions for improving the site, for example planting flowers or trees?