

## Proposed Public Play Space Project at Garristown Library Summary Report of Non-Statutory Consultation with Garristown Community Council

The following text is a commentary prepared by Áit Urbanism + Landscape Ltd. design consultants working in collaboration with Fingal County Council (FCC) on the Part 8 design for Garristown Library Garden. The commentary is a response to feedback received from the Garristown Community Council following their meeting with FCC representatives on July 7th 2021.

### Theme 1 – Play Provision

#### Summary of Issues:

Concern about the amount of play equipment proposed.

Suggestion natural play/ unprescribed play provision could be reduced in favour of traditional playground play pieces.

Additional play opportunity needs to be provided for smaller children, toddlers. Water feature, slides and swings.

Suggestion that talk tubes and stepping stones could be provided to south of library building.

Request for zip line to form part of play provision.

Suggestion proposed timber sculpture to be omitted and budget solely reserved for play pieces.

#### Response:

The comments are noted. The proposals for the Garristown Library Garden have sought to strike a balance between the provision of a landscaped space which accommodated a play area while also providing for more open-ended use such as picnic lawn, outdoor class room space and seating. All the while being mindful of the sensitive setting of the historic library building and the existing mature trees on site.

The proposed play area has been located within the available space to the rear and side of the library building. The play pieces have been located amongst the trees and have been positioned with consideration of critical fall or safety zones around the individual play pieces and also affording space for safe circulation around the play area. The layout is felt to have optimised the available space available to place play pieces and offers a range of prescribed, formal play equipment pieces and a measure of less formal, open ended play opportunities. The play area has been designed to offer play opportunities for both older and younger children with also the addition of specifically universally accessible play afforded to those of more limited physical capacity.

If the requirements of the local community should favour more prescriptive, formal play pieces be favoured over open ended, non-prescriptive play, this can be reviewed within the proposals.

The specific request for a zip line play feature is noted. This type of play piece is felt to be inappropriate within this location for a number of reasons. Typically, commercially available zip lines are no shorter than 30m in length, it would be quite a

large spatial constraint within the landscape proposals; there could be for instance no play pieces or other furniture situated within the zip line's critical fall or safety zone therefore reducing the variety of play pieces proposed. In addition, such a structure would no doubt compromise the setting of the historic library building to an unacceptable degree. For at least these two reasons a zip line would not be considered appropriate in this context.

A sculptural timber carving has been included to bring a further dimension of character and sense of place to the play area. The sculptural piece, referencing local folklore and the Battle of Gabhra through its depiction of Oísin son of Fionn McCumhaill, is felt to have a play value and is a worthwhile intervention. There has not been a specific budgetary decision to omit play pieces in lieu of the sculpture and it is not an 'either or' situation.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Review of extents/ location of unprescribed play opportunities contained within the play area plan to be undertaken with a view to increasing the number of formal play pieces included.
- As part of the above process, proposals to seek to include additional play provision for toddlers e.g. talk tubes, springers and stepping stones.
- Retain timber carving within proposals.

## **Theme 2 – Site Area**

### **Summary of Issues:**

Observations on the current extents of the site area and suggestions that it could be expanded e.g. pushing the eastern boundary back and cutting back existing hedge planting along southern boundary to provide more room for play equipment

### **Response:**

The observations and suggestions are noted. As outlined above the landscape design has sought to optimise the play opportunities afforded in the proposals within the available space, being cognisant of the existing site constraints.

**Extending the Eastern boundary:** The landscape proposals are shown within the current library site land ownership. The area beyond the existing green chain link fence (which is not the ownership boundary) is within the profile of the existing hedgerow. Within this zone there is a tighter grouping of mature trees and the under storey of the hedgerow planting which would be prohibitive to placing play equipment.

**Cutting back the existing hedge:** The existing hedge planting along the southern boundary provides a habitat, with roosting and foraging opportunities for wildlife. The hedge also provides an effective screen to the poor visual quality block work wall, palisade fencing and commercial buildings which exist along this boundary. The landscape proposals have allowed for a thinning and reduction of the hedge profile along the southern boundary, the hedge profile has been shown reduced on current plans.

## Recommendations:

Provide additional small play pieces within zone cleared along the profile of the existing southern boundary hedge.

## Theme 3 – Seating

### Summary of Issues:

Request for additional public seating to be provided.

### Response:

The landscape design has included for 2 additional benches to the front of the library building, a newly proposed circular bench beneath the existing cypress tree to the south of the library and a large picnic type table and bench seat. The area directly behind the library has been intentionally left without seating as it is felt that there is poor over looking from the street, as a result seating here may attract anti-social behaviour. There is some space available that could accommodate an additional bench overlooking the play area, south of the library.

### Recommendations:

Include additional bench seating overlooking play area.