



Crown Mill Pre - School Play Garden

Introduction 1

- Details are to enable councillors to decide for themselves whether they wish to support this scheme
- You are aware that MSDC didn't endorse it
- You have heard many arguments from neighbours as to why it shouldn't happen
- You will now hear the arguments as to why you should support the proposal
- It is now for councillors to make up their own minds

Introduction 2

To that end I will:

- Demonstrate the erroneous basis for MSDC's objections
- Answer the concerns advanced by the neighbours
- Demonstrate how we aim to mitigate those concerns which are valid
- Outline our concept for the scheme
- Detail the equipment we wish to purchase
- Outline a potential scheme for further environmental works following the creation of a wildlife haven area
- Outline the next steps to be taken

Issues

I will therefore look in turn at each of the main issues that have been identified:

- Guidance
- Demand
- Funding
- Space
- Site
- Concept
- Equipment

Guidance

This Proposal Meets All Current National Guidance for the Provision of Play Areas

- **Fields in Trust (FiT) – successor organization to NPFA (2007) published guidance dealing with themes/concepts & standards/benchmarks**
- The Six Acre Standard (NPFA) – 1992
- Guidance for Outdoor Sport & Play – 2015
- Fields in Trust Standards – Creating Great Spaces for All – 2024
- **Each New Guidance Supersedes the Previous Versions**
- **Many local authorities (inc. MSDC), equipment manufacturers and Google AI are still using the 2015 version for advice**
- **The 2024 guidance has some significant and highly relevant differences**

Fields in Trust - FiT

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Play spaces should be located at the heart of a development. We have removed reference to requirements for separation buffer zones to avoid any unintended consequences of pushing play spaces to the edge of new developments.

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Only providing standalone equipped play spaces in developments is limiting, the Benchmarks therefore incorporate equipped and informal play quantities.

Fields in Trust Standards Creating great spaces for all



Guidance

All Equipment Will be Provided and Installed in Compliance with Relevant UK Standards

- Rospa
 - Safety standards for equipment, surfaces and installation
 - Grass surface is recommended for equipment with a low fall height
 - Inspection requirements

In our opinion grass is a suitable material for use under and around equipment from which falls of less than 1500mm are possible, although where continued scuffing takes place firm surfaces should be considered.

Demand

- FiT recommends provision of 2.5 sqm of equipped play space and 3 sqm of informal play space per person (child) (p 18)
- These recommendations are accepted and built into plans for all new housing developments
- Elmswell population estimates for mid 2024 totalled 5364 residents
- Elmswell & Woolpit had a 0 – 4 years population of 538, with approx. 400 from Elmswell thus requiring 1000 sqm of equipped play space, less 25% to allow for 0 – 1 age group, so 750 sqm
- Elmswell currently has NO space dedicated solely to pre-school children
- It is totally fallacious to argue that there is no demand. There is and we don't meet it

Funding 1

Total Cost:

- Kompan £25,150
- Connected Ecology £2,100
- Wayne Jarvis £2,410 + £2,500*
- Environmental Plan £2,500

Total: £34,600

* = estimated cost

Funded By:

- £25,000 Amenities Association grant
- £2,500 in grant aid to be requested
- £7,100 from PC reserves

Total: £34,600

Funding 2

Councillors should note that:

- The Amenities Association grant can only be spent on play equipment for pre-school (toddler) play equipment. It is not available for any other use. The Council would either have to return it or request permission for an alternative use should we decide not to provide such equipment
- Council originally identified £8,000 from its reserves towards funding the scheme
- I am confident that a grant for wildlife enhancements would be obtainable

Space

- Fields in Trust now recommend a minimum area of 100 sqm for a Local Area for Play
- The site measures 374 sqm less up to 25% for the wildlife haven leaving 280 sqm for the play garden
- The equipment being specified requires 90 sqm of safe space thus leaving 190 sqm for circulation, planting and informal play
- For comparison, the redeveloped area on Crown Mill is 222 sqm

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A small area of open space specifically designed and primarily laid out for very young children to play close to where they live interwoven within the development. Every home should have access to play space within 100 metres.

p23

It should provide a minimum area of 100 square metres but this can be distributed within a development as part of playable routes.

Siting Considerations

- Is it central/away from main road/owned by Council?
- Is it large enough?
- Can we mitigate any possible nuisance?
- Does it meet current national guidance (FiT)?
- Does it require planning permission/attract a net biodiversity premium(nbp)?
- Can we afford it?

Potential Sites

- The only sites which could be considered to be both central in the village and which are owned by the Council are:
 - the existing Crown Mill play area and adjacent green space
 - The green space on Crown Mill opposite Crabtree Meadow
- The other two Council-owned areas of land, i.e. The Blackbourne and Clayfield are not central and can therefore be ruled out
- No other areas are owned by Elmswell Council
- If we wish to do something NOW these are the only alternatives

Existing Crown Mill Pros & Cons

Pros

- Already own space
- Planning permission not required
- Central site

Cons

- Would take up existing grass space used by older children
- Would require removal of several large trees and incur a nbp
- Would be close to main road and/or railway
- Could lead to supervision issues if parents have children in both new and existing play areas
- Could be expensive to develop

New Crown Mill Site Pros & Cons

Pros

- Owned by Council
- Centrally located on well-used route & away from main road
- Planning consent not needed
- Chance to involve Elmswild in developing wildlife areas to enhance new wildlife haven
- Complies with all latest guidance and standards
- Right size
- Able to mitigate possible nuisances

Cons

- Opposed by neighbours
- MSDC not yet supportive
- Separates different age play areas for parents with children of different age ranges

Site Decision

- New Crown Mill site opposite Crabtree Meadow meets more of our criteria
- Would be cheaper to develop
- Provides a pre-school play facility and an enhanced area for wildlife, both flora and fauna
- Therefore this should be our preferred site

Site Mitigations

- Approx 1/4 of site given over to wildlife haven
- Extensive planting within play area to enhance wildlife (flora and fauna)
- Suggested equipment uses all natural materials
- Low level equipment to remove visual intrusion
- Equipment and scheme chosen to be unattractive to teenagers
- Conforms to latest FiT guidance of which MSDC should take note

Suggested Concept – Local Area for Play (LAP)

- Development of a wildlife garden with play equipment
- Only 32% of available space will be occupied by play equipment
- Equipment aimed solely at 6 months to 4 year olds
- Equipment is low rise and low key, designed to be unattractive to and unusable by older children and to blend into surroundings
- Planting scheme to be commissioned
- Wildlife features to be incorporated
- Fencing to be wooden with single public access gate
- Surface to be grass

Equipment Criteria

- Must fit with theme and be constructed from natural materials
- Must only be suitable for the target age range
- Must be unattractive to older children
- Should be as visually unobtrusive as possible
- Needs to fit around wildlife and landscaping
- Must allow sufficient space for circulation and ambulatory play



Equipment

- 3 Suppliers approached
 - Wickstead
 - Proludic
 - Kompan
- Only Kompan met our criteria

Wooden Equipment Checklist

- Double baby swing
- Bee springer
- Snail springer
- Little hen house
- Suspension bridge
- Play board
- Benches & bins
- Picket fencing inc. chicane to entrance and lockable double gate

Equipment 1



NRO870

Suspension Bridge



£ 1,950 ⓘ

😊 2+ years [] 19.4 m² 👤 2 Users



NRO118

Bee Springer, Oak



£ 2,360 ⓘ

😊 3+ years [] 8.6 m² 👤 1 Users



NRO417

Little Hen's House



£ 11,200 ⓘ

😊 1+ years [] 30.2 m² 👤 12 Users



NRO115

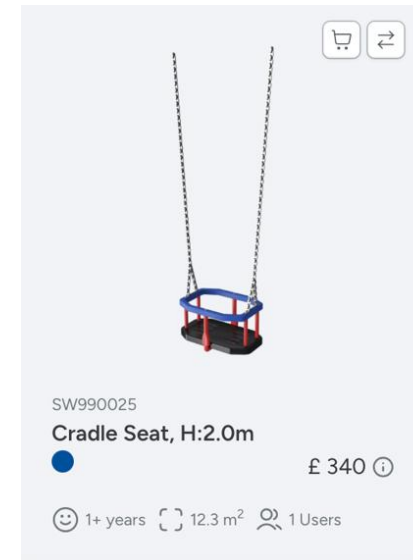
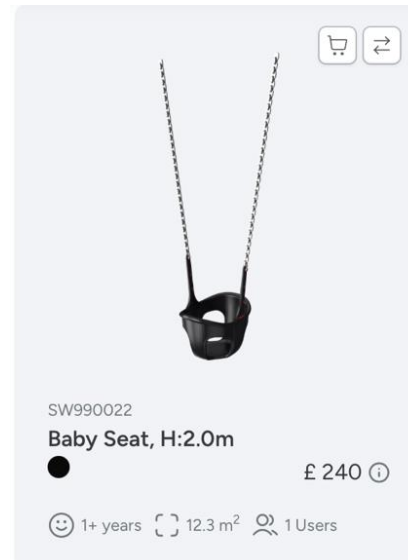
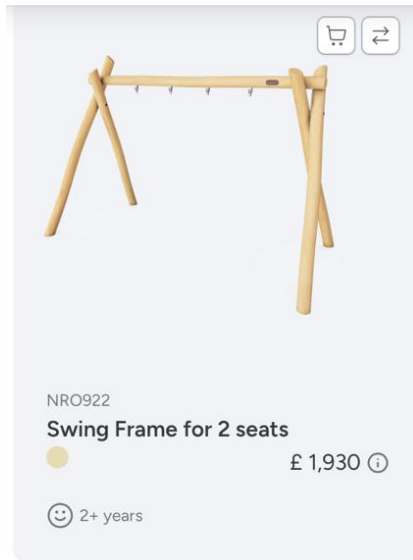
Snail Springer



£ 1,790 ⓘ

😊 3+ years [] 7.8 m² 👤 1 Users

Equipment 2



Environmental Enhancement

Within an overall budget of £2,500 to build on the establishment of the wildlife haven

- Develop plan with Elmswild
- Follow recommendations from Connected Ecology re equipment
- Apply for grant aid from MSDC and other local organisations
- Installation/planting/sowing to commence immediately following installation of play equipment during the optimal autumn planting period

Possible Ideas for Environmental Enhancement – Illustrative Only

- Bird boxes, bat boxes and bug hotels in wildlife haven area
- Wildflower verge between existing shrubbery and newly-installed picket fence
- New shrubs such as lavender planted to extend existing shrub line up to new picket fence parallel with road and behind new fence
- Wildflower beds within grassed play area
- Dwarf fruit trees planted strategically, e.g. apple, pear & cherry

Next Steps

If scheme agreed by Council

- Place orders
- Plan installation and coordinate with fencing
- Develop planting plan with Elmswild
- Submit grant applications
- Install environmental features
- Commence planting after equipment installation