

MANSEL PARK PLAY AREAS



Children's Playground before the redevelopments



Children's Playground after the redevelopments

CONSULTATION REPORT MAY 2006



PRODUCED BY MANSEL PARK
CONSULTATION GROUP

This is the Second report on Mansel Park produced by the Mansel Park Consultation Group.

OVERALL AIM OF THE WORK:

To continue to develop better and more sustainable play spaces on Mansel Park.

AIM OF THE CONSULTATIONS:

Through the work of a team of local people, to create opportunities to consult with local residents, and involve them in the play area design process.

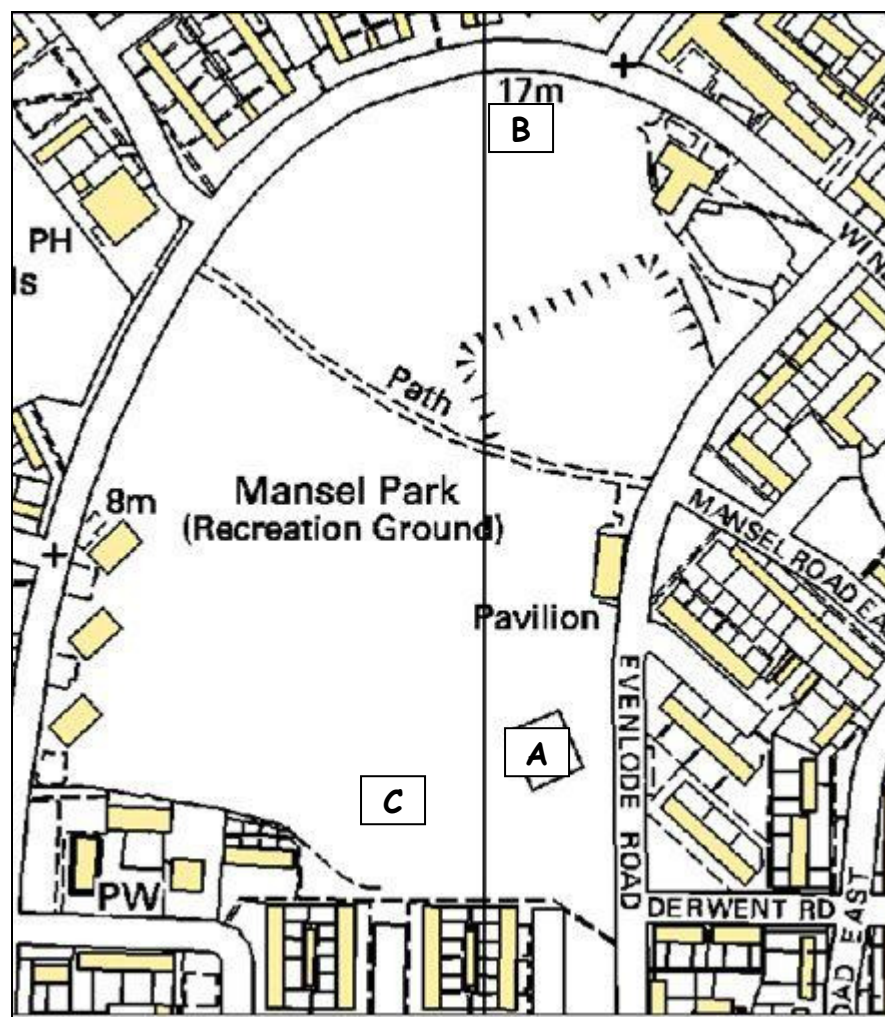
INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

Mansel Park is a large green area in the middle of Millbrook estate in Southampton. Despite its location at the centre of the estate the Park offered few facilities to local people and had the appearance of 'a green desert'. Community consultation for the Outer Shirley Regeneration (OSR) SRB6 bid identified the park as an underused resource with great potential for improvement (Dec 2002). Some local residents have been involved for nearly in decade in working towards getting improvements to the Park, and at last the availability of funding from OSR offered the hope of kick starting improvements.

Consultation work on the Play Areas in 2003/04

Mansel Park Consultation Group consulted with local residents, involving them in helping to produce a design for the redeveloped play area (Area A on *fig 1*). The results of these consultations are recorded in the report "Mansel Park Play Areas" produced in June 2004. This report also produced some initial ideas for areas B and C (*fig 1*).

Fig 1 - Diagram of Mansel Park, showing 3 proposed play areas (A,B,C).



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Action since the first report

The members of Mansel Park Consultation Group formed the Friends of Mansel Park (FOMP), which holds monthly open meetings, advertised throughout the area. We (the Friends of Mansel Park group) liaise regularly with City Council officers about the continued improvements to the Park.

The first 2 phases of the redevelopment of Play Area A (next to Evenlode Road) have now been completed, with phase 1 funded by OSR and phase 2 funded as the result of a successful grant application to Biffaward. This has resulted in a much improved and, therefore, much better used, play space. The new play area is 4 times bigger than the old play area and has a lot more equipment, with a good range, from the challenging to the more gentle, to suit all children.



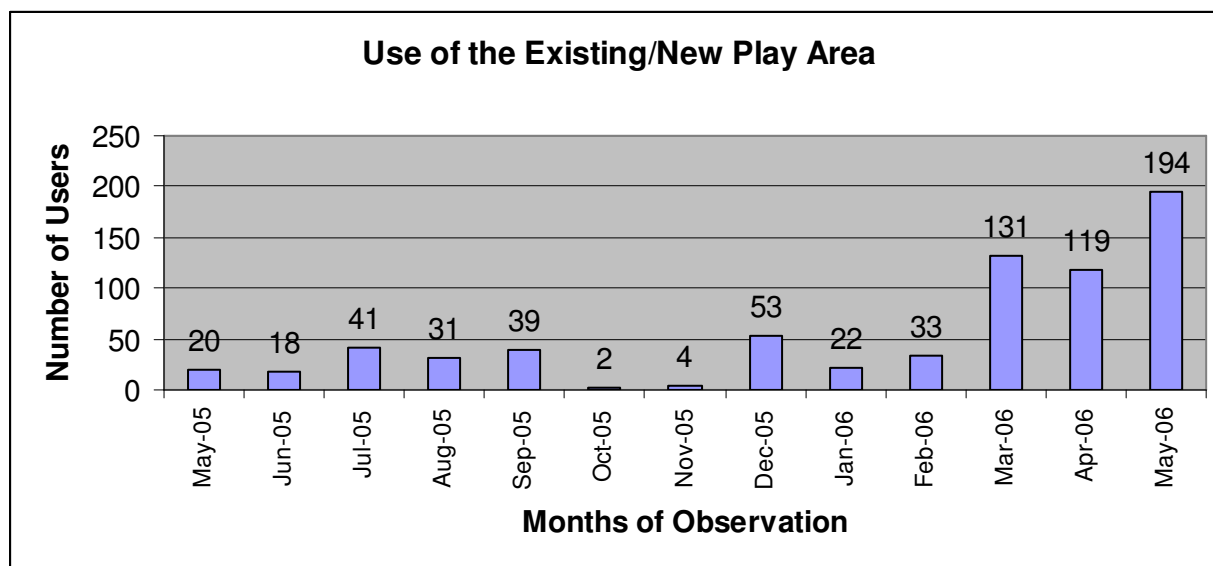
Playground A before the redevelopments



Playground A after the redevelopments

User Surveys

We have monitored the use of Mansel Park since May 2005. The figures dramatically show how the use of the park has increased since the new Evenlode Road play area was installed (May 2006). Feedback from local people is also excellent: "this is the best thing that has happened in this area - and the number of young people hanging outside the shops has gone down a lot". Young People interviewed are also very positive, and the user figures speak for themselves. As you can see from the graph below, the usage of the park has gone up considerably, particularly when comparing the months of May last year with May 2006. More detailed evaluation will be carried out in June 2006.



These figures are the result of sampling usage (ie. 8 visits per month).

Other work: some planting in the play area has been done by junior neighbourhood wardens, and work has started on the environmental area - the old kick wall has been removed and there has been some planting of willow whips and similar native species.

CONSULTATION STEPS SINCE THE 2004 REPORT

SO16 FESTIVAL: August 2005

We had a stall at the SO16 Festival held on Mansel Park on 28th August 2005. This had a display about planned and possible Park improvements. A focus was this sheet of questions about people's priorities for the Park improvements:

"What would be YOUR priorities for improving the Park? There may not be enough money to do everything. Which would be your 'top 4'?" People were given 4 sticky dots to put on their choices. 55 people took part (adults and some teenagers/older children) - all lived in the area near the Park.

The results were:

	Number of dot preferences
Much BETTER PLAYGROUND to replace the one at Evenlode Road	50
A new MULTI-USE GAMES AREA (like the new one on Green Park)	34
A FAMILY AREA and play area for small children, near to Millbrook Towers	33
Upgrading or replacing the YOUTH SHELTER	28
An ENVIRONMENTAL PLAY AREA that makes good use of the boggy part of the park - making it more interesting ,with wooden play sculptures, and by encouraging new plants, attracting butterflies and other wildlife.	24
New FOOTBALL PITCHES	18
A multi-purpose EVENTS SPACE using the steeply sloping part of the park in a creative way	16
New FOOTPATHS: as on the map on the display	9
Landscaping, including planting 70 MORE TREES	7

FOLLOWING UP THESE PRIORITIES

- BETTER PLAYGROUND. The results confirmed that replacing the old Evenlode Road Play Area (Area A) was the right priority.
- The results of the consultation helped establish the priorities for the next phase of work:
 - MULTI-USE GAMES AREA - design already decided (same as Green Park): so the priority was to raise the funds to build this (actioned by SCC in conjunction with Groundwork).
 - FAMILY AREA (area B). No designs existed, so, taking advice from Martin Chase (Southampton City Council) we had a site meeting, and with the help of SCC officers arrived at a list (with pictures) of possible equipment for the family area - and including the ideas from the 2004 consultation for sand and water play.
 - YOUTH SHELTER - We talked about the 'pros' and 'cons' of different features of Youth Shelters, and with the help of Paula Studd (SCC) and Martin Chase chose a number of shelters to take out to the consultations.

We also produced some maps of the areas to help us ask people to choose their preferred location.

- ENVIRONMENTAL PLAY AREA (area C). We held a series of site meetings, and explored a number of options, seeking advice from landscape designers. A largely unsuccessful planting of whips, and trying out a 'mown maze' in the spring and summer of 2005, gave us some feedback on what ideas might work and what might not. Andy Frost produced designs for possible wooden features to go into the area. We visited Knightswood Park in Chandlers Ford to get some ideas. These visits and discussions helped us come up with an overall 'design idea' for the environmental area, which Cliff Brown (SCC) then drew into an outline plan, with computer images of how it might look. This, together with Andy Frost's drawings gave us the material we could take out to the consultations.
- FOOTBALL PITCHES: work has been done to create new and upgraded pitches, and the new pitches will be marked out from autumn 2006.
- EVENTS SPACE: from the result of the consultations we decided that this was not a priority, especially given we do not have the money for everything. We will postpone this until after the priority park improvements are completed.
- New FOOTPATHS. The new path on Green Park was not pursued, but the one on Mansel Park brings with it money from the local transport plan, and now has planning permission: it should be built later in 2006.
- TREES: plans for new planting of trees were scaled down, we decided instead on landscaping linked to each of the various new parts of the park, and renewing the hedges around the perimeter.

CONSULTATIONS February and March 2006

The purpose of these consultations was:

- to keep local people up to date with what is happening about the Park
- to consult on the details of:
 - The Family/Toddler Area
 - The Youth Shelter
 - The Environmental Play area.

We therefore (with help from Paula Studd) made a display of materials to take out to local people - based on pictures of possible equipment and designs. Everyone who came to the consultations was given a set of 'sticky dots' with which to choose and show their preferences.

We took the display out as follows:

- To a 'drop in session' at Millbrook Towers Community Centre held on Wed 1st Feb from 2pm - 8pm. This drop in session was organised jointly with a consultation event for the new Mansel Park pavilion/ community centre, and was widely advertised (everyone in the more than 800 flats and houses around the perimeter of the park had a leaflet through their door; posters were put in shops and on notice boards in blocks of flats, and local organisations and offices; the local schools sent home the leaflet to all their children).

We then took the display and the choices out to some specific groups:

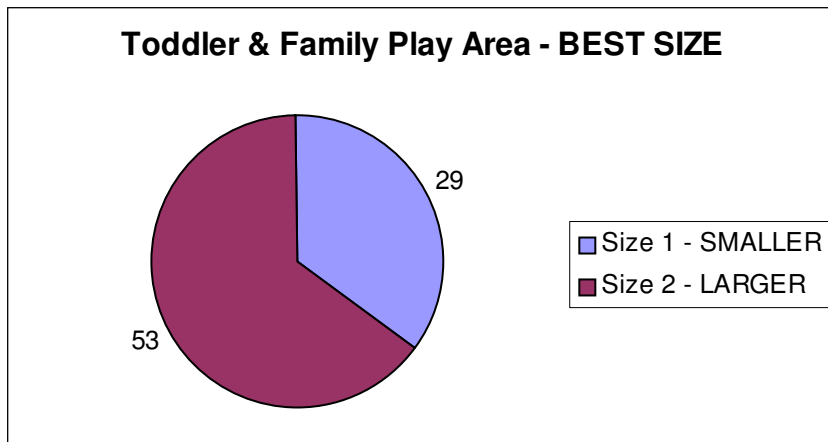
- The Young Women's Group, and the IT and After School Club at the Link, Windrush Road.
- Mansel Junior School 'environmental wardens'
- Millbrook Youth Forum, at the Youth Centre, Millbrook School.
- Sure Start 'Daddy's Cool' group.
- Sure Start - in the waiting area for a baby clinic, at a time when other parents are also coming in to groups, and the Toy Library.

The results from all these consultations have been gathered together as follows (in total more than 120 people took part - but not all answered each question).

RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION March 2006

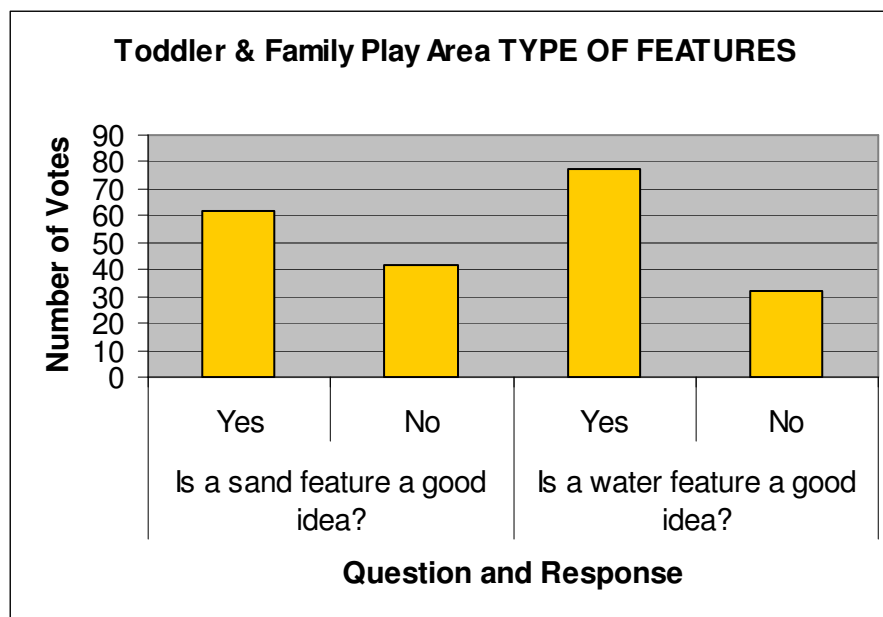
Toddler & Family Play Area (AREA B)

- Which size play area would you prefer?



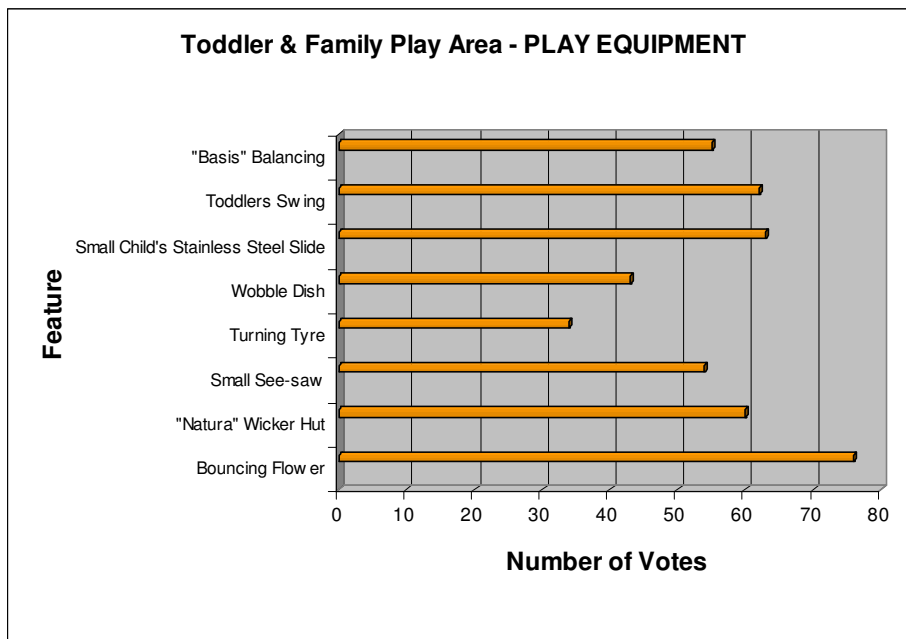
For this question, we asked people to identify which size they thought the toddler and family play area should be, using maps of the park as included in the Appendix of this report. As shown, by the pie chart above, the majority of people preferred the large area, with some commenting that it was better as “kids could run about in it” and the small area would “encourage the use of drink and drugs”. Others felt that the larger area was too close to Millbrook Towers and the roadside.

- Are Sand and Water Features a good idea?



As shown in the Appendices, we used examples of pictures to show people what possible sand and water features could be installed in the park and asked them if they thought that it was a good idea. 60% of people questioned thought that a sand feature would be a good idea and 71% of those questioned thought that a water feature would be good idea. Some were concerned that the features may be vandalised and felt that suitable protection should be installed (ie. a cover for a sand pit).

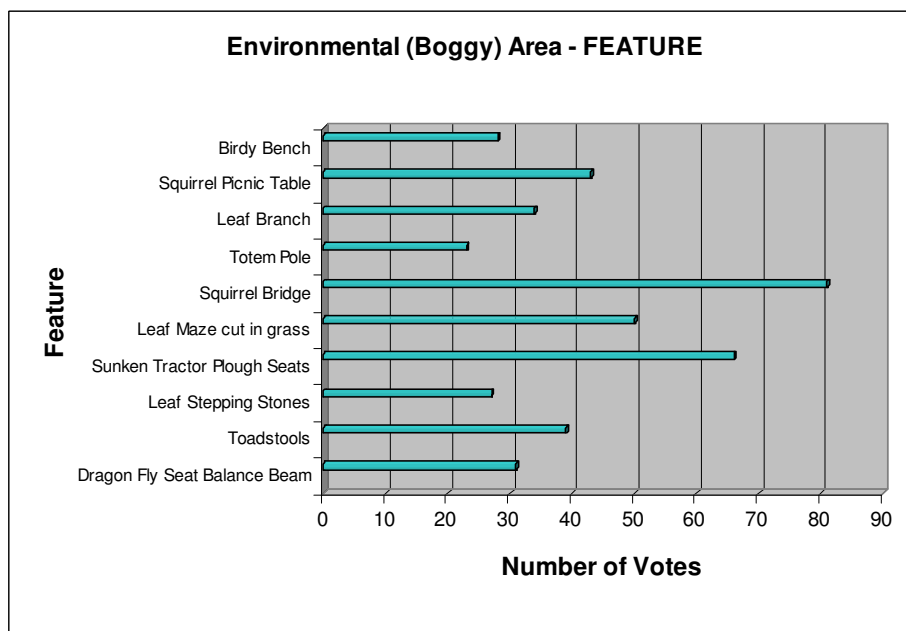
- What pieces of Play Equipment would you like in the Toddler and Family Play Area?



For this question, people were asked to select their preferred four pieces of play equipment out of the examples given. As shown by the results, the bouncing flower was the favourite with 76 votes, followed by the Children's Slide with 63 votes. The toddlers swing was a third favourite, followed by the Wicker hut.

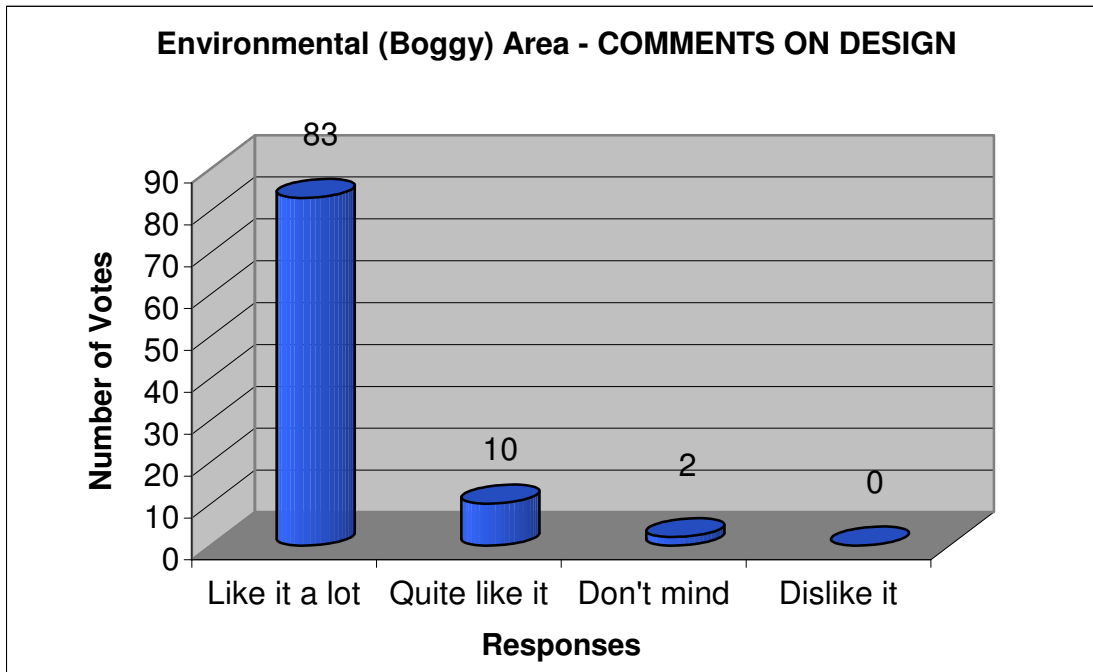
Environment (Boggy) Area (AREA C)

- What pieces of play equipment would you like?



For this question, people had to choose their favourite four pieces of play equipment from the 10 examples given. The squirrel bridge was the favourite with 81 votes, followed by the sunken tractor, with 66 votes. The Leaf maze, cut in the grass, was the third favourite. Some people said that they liked the tractor idea because kids could hide and play in it and that a "bit of everything" would be good.

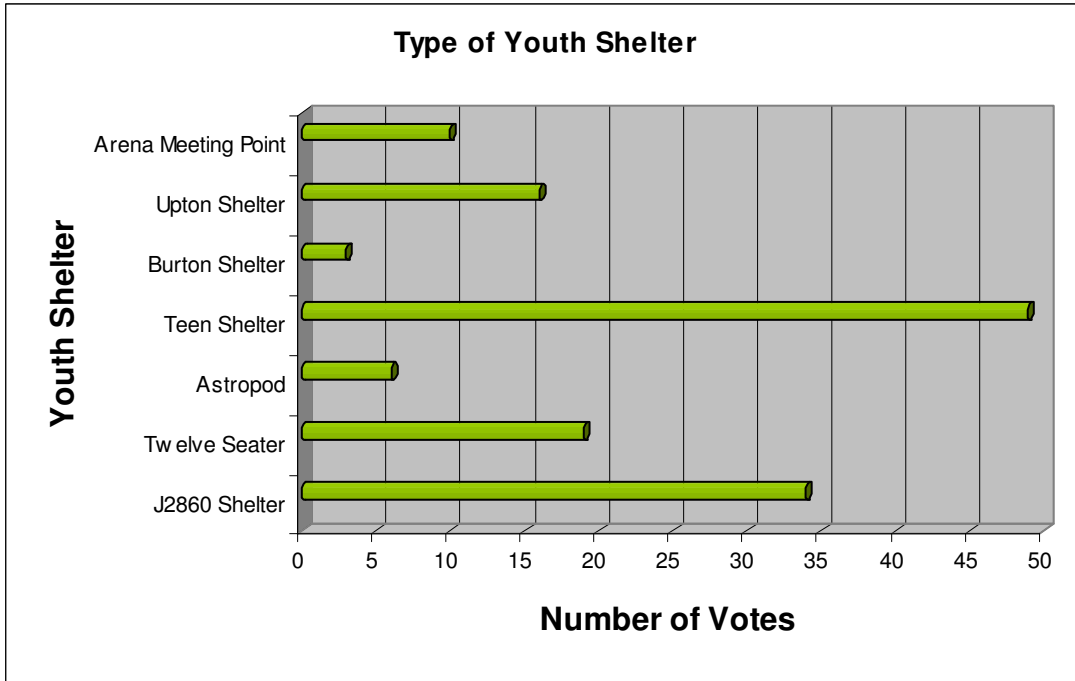
- What do you think about the design of the Boggy Play Area?



The group were pleased to hear that 98% of people liked the design of the boggy play area, with comments such as “20/20” and “Brilliant”. For the majority of the Consultation sessions, we displayed mock up drawings and designs of what the area could look like. Some people thought that there should be a pond with a fence around it.

Youth Shelter

- What type of youth Shelter would you like?



For this question we showed a variety of examples of youth shelters that could be installed on Mansel Park. As shown in the graph above, the majority of people preferred the blue and red “Teen Shelter” as it is big, warm and could offer them more privacy. The “J2860 Shelter” was voted as the second favourite, with people saying that they liked it because it had lots of seats and has a fancy design. The Twelve seater shelter was also popular, because some people said that people could see into it. People also liked the idea of a table being placed in the shelter and wanted the shelter to be able to be lit in the dark. It was also important to them they although they had privacy, they were also kept safe.

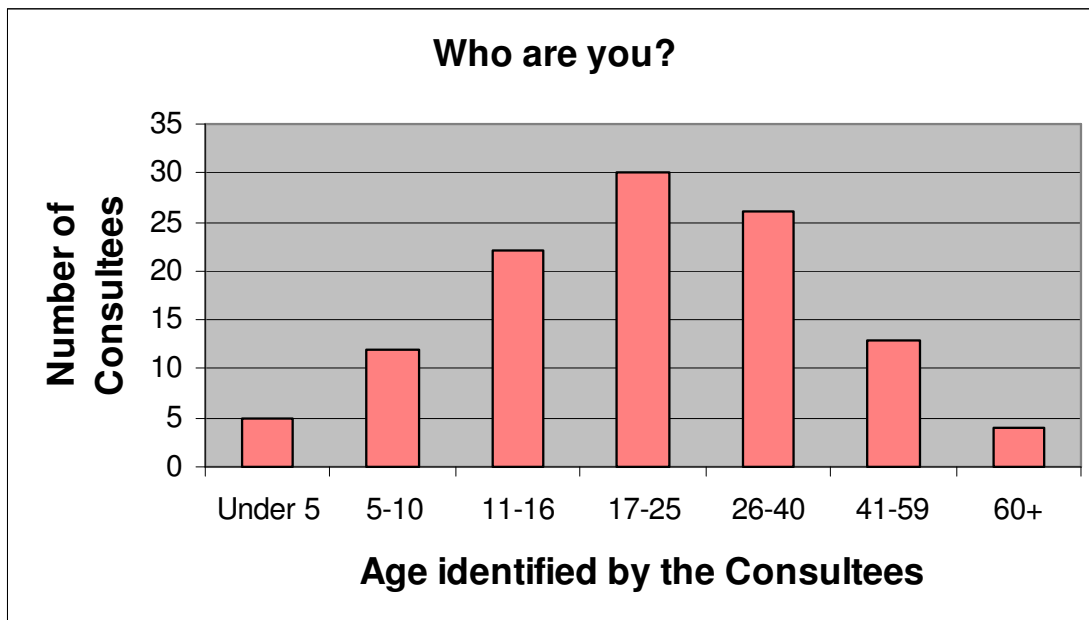
- **Location of Youth Shelter**

For this question we displayed a map of the whole of Mansel Park and asked People to put a dot where they thought the youth shelter should go. From these results it is evident that most people thought that the shelter should not go near the tower or the kids' play area, favouring the area near where the new MUGA and pavilion will be. A plan of the overall results is included in the Appendices.

General Comments:

We made sure that throughout the consultation process we invited general comments about the whole designs. Overall, people were very positive about the designs they had seen and some had further suggestions, such as a sunken ship somewhere on the park to go with “our shipping heritage, historical Link”, using tree trunks as inexpensive play features and providing features for babies. Others were also concerned that the new features should not encourage vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

- **How old are you?**



CONCLUSIONS

FAMILY PLAY AREA.

The availability of initial funds means a start has already been made on this play area, with orders placed for some of the equipment.

Size of the Play Area.

- The larger play area was preferred, along with safety concerns.

Sand and Water Features

- Both sand and water were thought by a majority of people to be a good idea, but there were a lot of reservations expressed, particularly about the sand feature.

Play equipment choices.

- Orders have been placed for equipment based on the preferences given at the consultations. In some cases the exact equipment shown in the consultation is no longer available, so similar items have been chosen. The list of equipment ordered so far is:
 - Small slide
 - Toddler swing
 - Cameleo Playhouse (similar to Natura Wicker Hut)
 - Small see-saw
 - Free standing sand play table
 - Japanese arched bridge (similar to the balance beam)
 - Floating island (a bouncing feature).
 - In addition there are seats and bins already purchased

OTHER ACTIONS:

- The consultation has highlighted the need to work in partnership with SCC to identify the rest of the funding so that the Play Area can be built. Work is also needed on the landscaping, so that the area is a pleasant place for people to sit.

ENVIRONMENTAL (BOGGY) PLAY AREA.

The overall design idea for the Environmental Area was very well received: 98% of people liked the design with 87% "liking it a lot".



Example of the Boggy Play Area- this is what it could look like.

Choice of wooden play features for the Environmental Play Area.

- The Squirrel Bridge, Sunken Tractor and Maze stood out as the favourites. The availability of some funding means it's been possible to order some of the features already. The list of features ordered was chosen to include the favourites, and then a balance of other types of feature. The items ordered are:
 - Squirrel bridge
 - Sunken tractor
 - Dragon fly seat
 - Direction spinners (for the maze)
 - Leaf stepping stones
 - Toadstools
 - Totem pole
 - Bird bench

We hope work will start on the Environmental Play Area later in 2006, with the work to construct the new footpath providing the earth to make the features.

YOUTH SHELTER - Design and Location

From the first round of consultations, the favourite shelter - especially amongst the young people - was the 'Teen Shelter', (an enclosed shelter, with a design not dissimilar to a bus shelter). The next preference was the J2860 shelter (a semi-enclosed shelter).

We sought comments from Martin Chase (SCC Play Services) regarding the choice of the "Teen shelter" and he pointed out some disadvantages - including that the more enclosed shelters tend to be the favourite in winter (our consultation was in an especially cold February), whilst young people can favour more open ones when asked in the summer. The Teen Shelter, with poly-carbonate windows, looks attractive in the catalogue picture, but the windows go misty in time and are particularly vulnerable to damage (eg cigarette burns and graffiti). Opaque windows can then create safety issues for young people.

Because of this, we decided to have a small follow up consultation with young people directly on the park, organised by Claire Townend (The Environment Centre), assisted by local youth workers. The other purpose of the follow -up consultation was to be able to learn the realistic opinions of the young people who actually used the park, as opposed to living near it. We questioned the young people on two things - the design of the youth shelter and where it should go. Having consulted with a wide range of people regarding the "Teen Shelter", including local Neighbourhood wardens, City Safety officers and the manufacturers, we removed the "Teen Shelter" as an option because of Health and Safety concerns. Further purposes of this second visit were to discuss the possibility of renovating and relocating the existing youth shelter, and to keep the young people aware and engaged regarding general park improvements.

The results of the second consultation were as follows:

- Choice of Shelter: "J2860 Shelter"
- Choice of Shelter position: "A", the middle of Mansel Park, besides the trees and facing the small mini soccer pitches.

Please see the appendices for more information.

REVIEWING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2004 REPORT

The 2004 Report contained a number of recommendations. We have reviewed these against progress as follows:

Recommendation in 2004 report	Action taken since June 2004
More design work is needed for areas B and C (see Fig 1)	These 2006 consultations have focussed on the detail of areas B and C
Sure Start MRM should be actively involved in the design of the play area near to Millbrook Towers (Family play area) which will include more toddler play equipment.	Members of Sure Start have been involved in tree planting in the environmental area, and two of the 2006 consultation sessions were held at the Sure Start building.
The residents of Millbrook Towers need to be specifically consulted about the exact location of the Family play area, and to have opportunities to comment or be involved when more detailed proposals for this area are being considered.	Residents of Millbrook Towers and the surrounding area were included in a leaflet drop to inform them of consultation about the location of the toddler play area near to Millbrook Towers, with the consultation event held in Millbrook Towers Community Centre.
Decisions about the Family play area will be influenced by the outcome of consultations about the future of Millbrook Towers Community Centre	The proposed design of the Family play area takes account that the Centre is likely to go (with the Centre being rebuilt as part of the new Pavilion)
Visits to other environmental play areas are needed to generate ideas,	A visit was carried out to an environmental play area in Eastleigh
Work needs to start soon with the improvements to the Evenlode Road play area, so that local residents see that something has come of the consultation work and to benefit children now.	A lot of the work in the Evenlode Road play area has been carried out, and as a result it is now much better used: recent monitoring shows upwards of 20 children there per monitoring visit whilst previously there was never more than a handful.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THESE CONSULTATIONS

These Recommendations follow on from the 'Conclusions' section.

FAMILY PLAY AREA

Size of the Play Area

- To look at where the gates are in the design to address safety concerns surrounding the larger play area.

Sand and Water Features

- To order scaled down sand feature only (sand table), due to the number of concerns expressed.
- To seek advice from Martin Chase (SCC Play Services Officer) on possible designs, cost and maintenance issues of the water feature and to choose an appropriate water feature.

Play Equipment choices

- As conclusion.

Other

- Choose landscaping - the cost of the work will need to be estimated to identify what we need to ask grant funders for.
- Detailed plans should then be drawn up for the Family Play area.

ENVIRONMENTAL (BOGGY) PLAY AREA

- Install wooden play equipment.
- Planting and other landscaping plans to be agreed for the Environmental Area.
- Additional money will need to be found for the landscaping work, including the planting, and internal paths, etc.

YOUTH SHELTER

Our suggested recommendations are to:

- Find out if sufficient funding can be allocated for the youth shelter
- Confirm the location with "professional services" eg. SCC Maintenance and Open Spaces teams, Tree Services
- Investigate the options for the future of the existing shelter.
- Produce a poster to be attached to the old shelter, informing the young people about the changes

OTHER ACTIONS

- Funding will also be needed for Phase 3 of the Evenlode Play area.
- Keep local residents updated with the developments. This should be done through newsletters and presence at local community events such as the SO16 festival.

THE CONSULTATION GROUP WOULD LIKE TO THANK

- All the local residents who came along to consultation events, and took part in consultation activities.
- Mansel Junior School, The Link, Millbrook Youth Centre and Sure Start MRM for hosting consultation events.
- Outer Shirley Regeneration for funding work and improvements to the Park
- Biffaward for their grant for the new Evenlode Road Play Area
- Southampton City Council officers for a variety of invaluable help and assistance, in particular Danielle Friedman, Paula Studd, Martin Chase, Cliff Brown, John Horton, Adrian Cook and Martin Beer.
- Millbrook Christian Centre and Millbrook Towers Community Centre, for use of meeting rooms.
- Claire Townend from the Environment Centre for assistance in the Youth Shelter work.
- The Neighbourhood Wardens and Junior Neighbourhood Wardens for help with shrub planting.

Mansel Park Community Consultants:

Jackie Brackley, Annette Howell and Amanda Radford, with support from Debbie Edwards (SCC Community Involvement) and Barbara Hancock (TWICS).