



CORRYBRANNAN PLAYGORUND UPGRADE

Written Statement

Written Statement for the purpose of Part 8 Planning Application

Monaghan County Council
24th of August 2023

Written Statement

Introduction

Local Authorities are a key force behind creating happy, healthy places to live and work. We strive to create the conditions which promote a high quality of life for residents, promoting wellbeing and encouraging community spirit. We also create communities where people and businesses wish to invest, thus securing a positive future for the county.

The quality and quantity of parks and recreational amenities in an area is a key indicator to community wellbeing and a known factor in swaying investment decisions when it comes to business location choice.

It is widely recognised that physical activity has a range of benefits for both individuals and broader society. Benefits to individuals include improved focus and self-confidence, while societal benefits include reduced healthcare costs and less anti-social behaviour.

The latest research in child development and in brain function tells of the importance of play and creativity in both ensuring the brain forms fully and in keeping it healthy into old age. The emotional and physical need for children to play is so profound that it is recognised as a fundamental human right by the UN, and the Irish government have supported this with a National Play Strategy and by giving local authorities the remit and resources to provide public play facilities.

The business sector is investing heavily in training employees in how to apply a 'playful outlook' to problem solving, and to help stay flexible and creative when developing new projects. It turns out that play is not just for the playground!

Corrybrannan

Corrybrannan Park was constructed in the early 90's. It is a council owned housing estate, is located on the Carrickmacross Road out of Ballybay and consists of 46 semi-detached homes. Culbrennan Park is the newer of the housing estates with construction commencing in the late 90's. It consists of 34 homes and both estates are in close proximity to a local grocers and Ballybay Community School.

Both estates are in close proximity to the town centre and has an aged playground that has a minimum amount of play equipment to cater to the needs of the young children and teenagers. The equipment, when it was installed, was intended to be used by the young children and is not appropriate for the teenagers of the nearby secondary school.

The upgrade of the playground will introduce new trees and shrubs to the area and facilitate a greener area. With the advancements and developments in playground equipment recently, it is intended to install a number of items that will not only give the local population a place to enjoy, but to advance their mobility and agility skills to a greater level. In addition, the proposed play equipment has been configured to suit specific needs of all children.

There have been several representations through Local Representatives and calls made to the Ballybay & Clones Municipal District to provide upgraded play equipment as the existing items have become dated and worn. The project would aid the development of the housing estates, green spaces and recreational amenities in town to make it more vibrant for community enjoyment. It would also provide an increase in footfall for local business and promote residential growth in the area.

The Site

The site is located in the Townland of Corrybrannan, between the housing estates Corrybrannan Park and Culbrennan. The estates are accessed off the R180, Ballybay to Carrickmacross Road. The existing playground contains 6 pieces of equipment which have become worn and outdated. The surface of the playground has a total area of 527m², is impermeable and requires upgrading to a more environmentally friendly surface by using natural permeable materials.

The proposed development intends to develop an area of 1750m². As part of the proposal, a Multi-Use-Games-Area will be installed with an impermeable area 260m². The remainder of the site will be developed using equipment manufactured from timber, pathways using natural permeable materials and maintaining the grass areas where possible. The proposal overall will reduce the existing impermeable area, resulting in a positive impact on flooding areas in the vicinity of the area.

The Proposal

The project aims to achieve the following:

- To create an exemplar playground with innovative ideas that will push the boundaries of play opportunities provided for children of all ages and abilities with their parents and carers.
- Demonstrate best practice, provide opportunities for social, creative, and imaginative play, as well as physical activities i.e., swinging and climbing. Provide a rich play environment avoiding a sterile ground environment.
- Cater for a wide range of abilities, age groups and cultures including teenagers, providing opportunities for able and less able-bodied children to play together.
- Increase physical activity in children to combat obesity, through encouraging exploration, movement and increasing length and frequency of visits.
- Maximise the opportunity for community engagement, the play area will respond to local needs and interests: involve a wide range of local residents, build on relationships with people and the Park, build a bank of contacts, solidify relationships, and involve estates and all cultures to create a local play facility. Seek to foster a sense of ownership from local users and build a community.
- Minimise visible boundaries and barriers and connect with the wider park landscape.
- Be designed to be robust, maintainable, safe, challenging, and interactive.
- Use sustainable sources of materials and seek to minimise its carbon footprint.
- Comply with the Health and Safety guidelines and ensure that the playground complies with the appropriate European Standards. Where these standards do not apply ensure the level of risk will be kept to a minimum but will take into account the need to provide a challenging and stimulating play environment.
- Incorporate growing elements, flowering plants and textured and coloured trees and shrubs that will provide shade, a living play space and avoid sterile and uniformity flat surfaces.

There were 2 main strategies utilised at the heart of the design for the Corrybrannan Playground upgrade works and they are as follows:

Sensory Strategy

Sensory elements within play helps stimulate multiple senses, encouraging creative thought and improving fine motor skills. It can also help calm frustrated or anxious child, helping them to self-regulate, to engage and concentrate.

The body's largest organ, the skin, allows detailed information about the shape, size, and texture of objects to be taken in through touch. This sense offers information about the body and the surrounding environment and is critical in development of body awareness and control of actions.

The design incorporates a range of natural and fabricated materials to help stimulate the senses. Timber is used throughout in varying forms, including smooth planed poles, bark mulch, and fallen logs. Hessian rope is used in nets and for pull-up ropes up the mounds.

Stone boulders are incorporated into the sand play area, with crushed stone for the pathways. Surface materials have been selected as appropriate for their setting, such as local gravel for the pathways and mulch for planting areas, bark mulch providing fall height impact absorbency where required. A substantial amount of planting, trees and grass help bed the playground into green space while offering further pattern, texture, and colour.

The finished effect would be a rich and stimulating play environment, offering variety, encouraging exploration, and facilitating cognitive development.

Soft Materials Strategy

The soft landscape design included proposed planting to the edges of the gravel paths only, in order to help define the play space and create a sense of containment. Within the rest of the play spaces, it was proposed to retain the existing grassland, relaxing the mowing regime in some areas to allow the grass to grow longer and help further define the playable spaces whilst cutting mown paths to create paths through. This would significantly add to the area sense of place and special character.

Planting to the pathway edge comprises three different types. Swathes of long ornamental grasses would be mixed with clumps of Rose of Sharon Ground within shadier areas, as well as blocks of scented shrubs and herbaceous flowering plants to provide structure.

Additional tree planting would provide structure and link the to the existing trees to give the play greater connection to the wider landscape and create a natural feel.

The proposed planting would all be low maintenance and largely evergreen to ensure it had a low upkeep and has all year-round interest.

Pre-Planning Consultation

There was a Pre-Planning Consultation carried out through the Part 8 Process. It involved circulating all of the Part 8 Planning Application Documents to the relevant sections within Monaghan County Council. This consultation was carried out on the 10th of August 2023. Any observations that were raised relating to the proposal are listed below and details are provided of the measures being implemented on how to deal with the observations raised.

- **Environmental**

Environment Section of Monaghan County Council recommended the following:

Waste Management

1. A completed Water Protection Checklist should be submitted – **submitted with the Planning Application Documents. There is no drainage plan required for the site as the impermeable surface is being reduced and any surface water infrastructure will remain in their current locations.**
2. That a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) be prepared outlining that the project will be managed in a manner which prevents the discharge of polluting matter to any ground or surface waters taking account of the Guidance produced by Inland Fisheries Ireland titled "Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters 2016" – **As part of the contract, the successful contractor will be requested to provide a CEMP outlining the measures required to mitigate polluting matters to any ground or surface waters.**

3. That a Construction and Demolition and By-Products Waste Management Plan should be developed for the proposed development works. The plan should be prepared using “Best Practice Guidelines for the preparation of resource & waste management plans for construction and demolition projects” – EPA, 2021 – **As part of the contract, the successful contractor will be requested to provide a Waste Management Plan for the proposed works.**

Flooding

There is no evidence of flooding on the existing site and the site is not within an immediate flood zone. There is a stream located approximately 150m to the southwest of the site in between the townlands of Acres, Annaneese and Corrybrannan. The following map indicates the site location marked **X** with the 10 & 100 year Flood Zone A highlighted in blue. With the reduced impermeable area within the proposed development, there will be no additional surface runoff to be managed within the site. Any existing drains within the site will remain in place to maintain the existing surface water drainage flow.



Conclusion

Corrybrannan Playground has been in place for over twenty years and has long been earmarked for an upgrade, as it is too small and features a poor range of equipment. In 2022, funding of €194,570 was secured under the Town & Village to carry out a complete overhaul of the playground. In 2023, an additional €18,000 was approved for accessible items and equipment. With the Council’s match funding contribution, the total budget for the project will come to over €240,000.

Monaghan County Council conducted a consultation with the children and residents of the estate. During the consultation, children were given the opportunity to design their ideal playground and a wish list of items and equipment was compiled. The design has been based around accessibility and all items have all been included in the proposed design.

The Corrybrannan Playground is in much need of upgrading and it has been concluded that the upgrade works will go a long way in providing an excellent amenity and recreational area for, not only Corrybrannan Residents, but all Ballybay Residents and visitors. The Municipal District of Ballybay and Clones are committed to delivering this project and intend to commence works on success of this Planning Application.