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Wellington City Council
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Re: Draft plan for Wakefield Park Playground, Berhampore

This submission is from the Architectural Centre. We are an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

The Architectural Centre supports a play area in Wakefield Park, but we have the following comments to improve the proposed design:

Informal play and play architectures

We think more work on the design would provide better opportunities for informal and incidental play. As noted in the WCC's Wellington Play Spaces Policy (April 2017)¹ children "now lead more structured and supervised lives with less emphasis on spending time "mucking about"" (p. 8), which suggests to us the importance of "incidental playable space" (p. 7). The design appears to be largely an arrangement of equipment picked from a catalogue rather than site-specific or culturally-specific designs. We understand that this is largely to do with ease of addressing compliance issues rather than what might create the best play areas. We challenge the council to instead be more creative, and achieve spaces for our children which provide a cultural and physical resonance with our island nation.



¹ WCC Wellington Play Spaces Policy (April 2017) <https://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-policies/a-to-z/play-spaces/play-spaces-policy.pdf?la=en>

We note the contrast between the proposed design and the image which brandishes the front of the WCC's policy (see above), which celebrates an idiosyncratic and inventive and versatile idea of play. Complexity and ambiguity are key concepts for stimulating play. We have also heard from children, the target audience for the proposal, that old forts and climbing towers are able to provide for a greater range of ages.



playground, Denmark (Monstrum)

Transport

In our submission on the WCC's Draft Play Area Policy we noted the need to address the high use of private cars as transportation to play areas, including better facilitating connections between play areas and walking, cycling and public transport in order to achieve greater use of active and sustainable modes. In this specific case we strongly recommend explicit connections to be made between the park and the bus stop at the south corner of the park, and for the council to drop the kerb (possibly just north of the pedestrian crossing), and remove a car park to better facilitate cycle access both now and when a proper cycle lane is provided on Adelaide Rd. Footpath marking encouraging children to cycle on adjacent footpaths would also help encourage younger children's cycling.



crooked houses, Brumleby, Copenhagen (Monstrum)

Shade

The provision of "warm shade," (e.g. dappled light via trees, and shelter provided by structures such as large verandahs) is important to keep areas dry and reduce sun-burn, while supporting sufficient sun exposure for vitamin D. We note the inclusion of a Shade Sail (marked "10" on the 1:50 plan) and the good number of trees in close proximity to the play area. The success of the shade sail will depend on its angle, but for the size of the play area, the proposed shade sail appears to us to be inadequate, and we recommend increased provision of warm shade.



Nishi Rokugo Koen (Tire Park)

We also note that most of the trees shown in the plan are existing, but that some new trees will be required. We strongly recommend that all new trees are species which encourage play (e.g. climbing) and provide "seasonal shade" (i.e. shade during summer and allow sun in the winter months). We refer the council to the Cancer Society's Sunsmart Schools "Shade Structures" guide,² with regard to these points.



Lion's Park Playscape, Greensboro, Alabama (Rural Studio)

Wind and Rain

Wellington has a "robust" climate, and we consider that play areas should be viable even when the weather is not a calm, sunny day. Some provision of shelter from wind and rain will be important to ensure this, including shelter for seating. In addition to the need for shelter from the wind and the rain, there is also potential for wind and rain to be a source of play (e.g. Cuba Mall's Bucket Fountain). Selection of planting (e.g. native planting such as flax and tussock) and moving play equipment, which responds to wind and rain, will provide both play and educational opportunities.

² Cancer Society "Shade structures" <http://www.sunsmartschools.co.nz/shadestruc.pdf>

We also note the need for such planting to be well maintained. We have heard of instances in other Wellington play grounds where mounds of tussock in council parks have not been weeded because the council only mows Eurocentric lawns. A maintenance plan for all aspects of the play area is needed to ensure the play area is continued to be well maintained and used.



Big Creek Playground, Poly City, Iowa

Seating

We acknowledge that three new seats have been provided. While we recognise that many parents, especially of younger children, will be actively involved and participating in their children's play, and that older children will likely use the play area without parent supervision, we still consider that this number of seats appears to be less than needed if the playground is operating at full capacity.



seating at Tairei estuary

While playgrounds are primarily envisaged for children, they also play an important socialising role for parents and this aspect of the park appears to be under nourished. The above seats at Tairei estuary appear to us to be a good design for flexible use. Seats with backs are important for longer periods of sitting.



Parklet for Ennis Playground (Michael Clyde Johnson)

Verticality

Finally we note that the drawings provided are only plans. There is no information on the vertical design of the park. Given the ease of providing three dimensional information due to the wide use of computer modelling in design it is difficult to understand why sections and perspectives have not also been provided. Providing this information would especially assist the public in understanding what is envisaged. We can't, for example, tell how steep the angle of the flying fox is. These need a decent pitch to ensure it is flying fox and not crawling one. We understand that the Krull St fox lacks acceleration of any kind. We strongly encourage better visualisation techniques to be used in future consultations on proposed play areas, and a good speed for the proposed flying fox.



Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Draft plan for Wakefield Park Playground, Berhampore. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Christine McCarthy
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