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Harbour Fields – Part 8 Application Design Statement.

Date: 19-10-2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 Location

2.2 Context Analysis

2.3 Current Land Use

2.4 Access

2.5 Boundaries

2.6 Topography & Views

2.7 Existing Biodiversity

3.0 Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Public Consultation

4.0 Description of Proposed Development

4.1 Design Strategy

4.2 Play Strategy

4.3 Access and Circulation

4.4 Boundaries

4.5 Soft Landscaping

4.6 Hard Landscaping

5.0 Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

This report supports a Part 8 application for the development of the Harbour Field site in Maynooth as a public park with various play and recreational facilities to serve local community and attract visitors to the town.

Prior to the current planning application Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects have carried out 3 public workshops as part of Maynooth Town Health Check (2018), this work indicated the Harbour Field as the preferred town improvement project from the Maynooth Health Check. In April 2019 COMLA undertook extensive consultation with KCC including an onsite public consultation event, supported by 900 completed surveys ascertaining the public's wishes for the Harbour Fields development.

The Design Team for the proposed development is led by Cathal O'Meara Landscape Architects with input from J M McConville + Associates Arboricultural Consultants.

This document, along with the accompanying presentation drawings, outlines the extent of the proposed development and its governing design strategy.

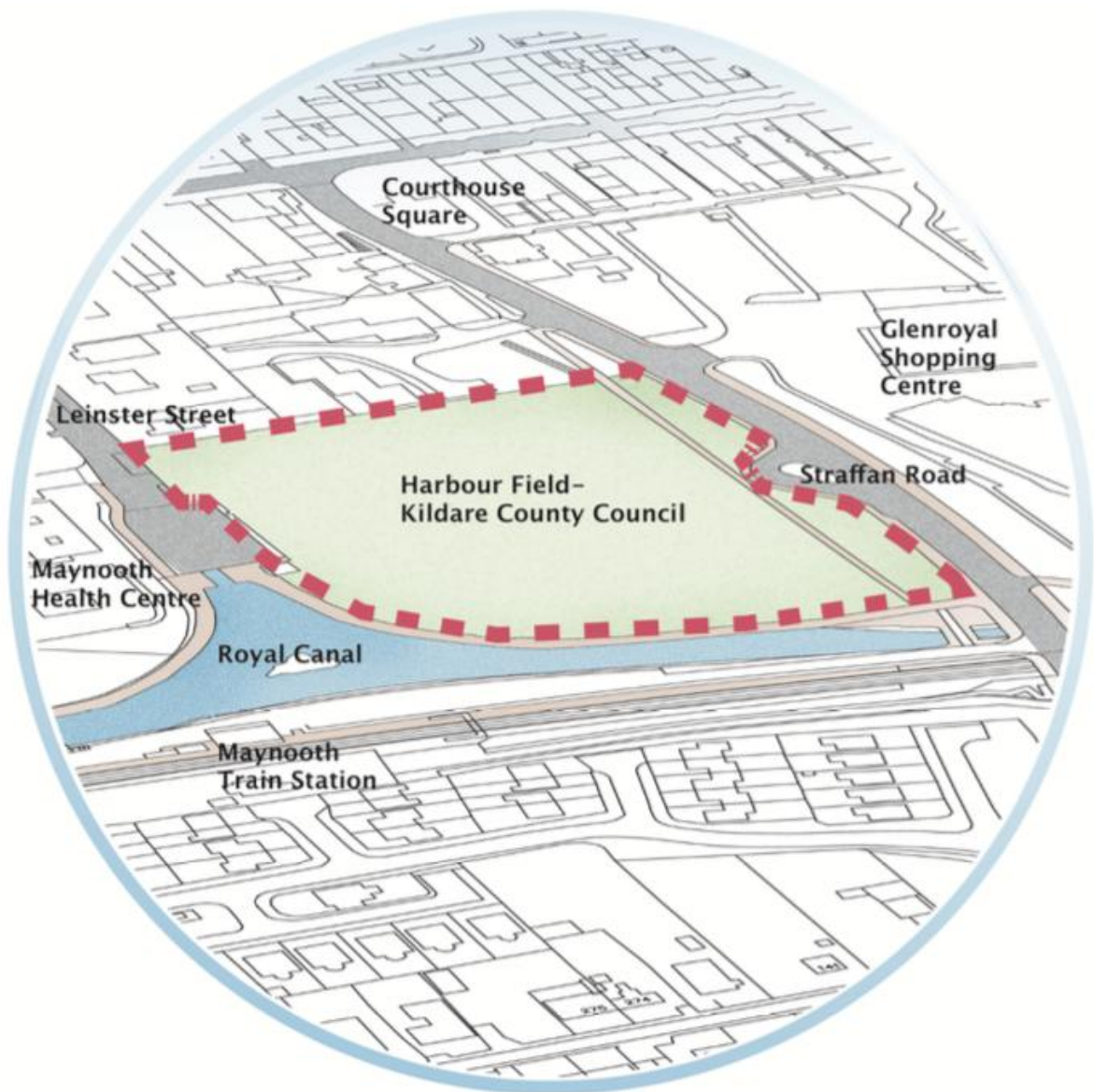
2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 Location

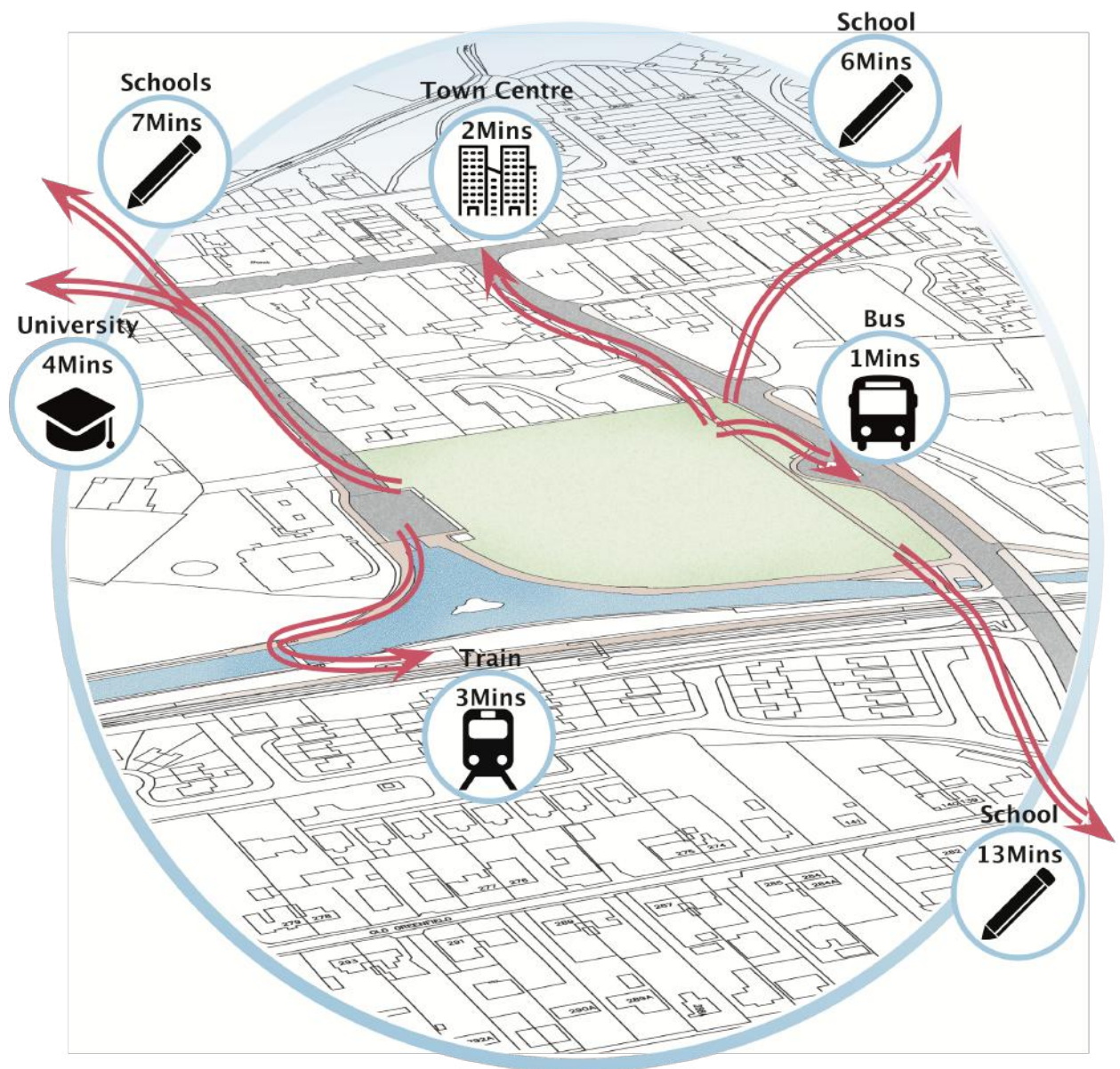
The 2.27-hectare site is located at Maynooth harbour on the Royal Canal. Bounded between the R406 Straffan Road and Leinster Street the park is located on the opposite side of the canal from Maynooth's main train station. A pedestrian bridge connects the station to the harbour and adjoining Leinster street.

Due to its central location there is significant footfall passing the park with the town centre only 2 minutes walk away and the university within a 4-5 Minute walk.

The Park is bordered to the North by a residential development at Court House Square and the grounds of Geradline Hall a community hall and Scout Hut with Maynooth Community Care Unit and the Fire Service located close to the parks western boundary.



Location of the site with respect to adjoining land uses



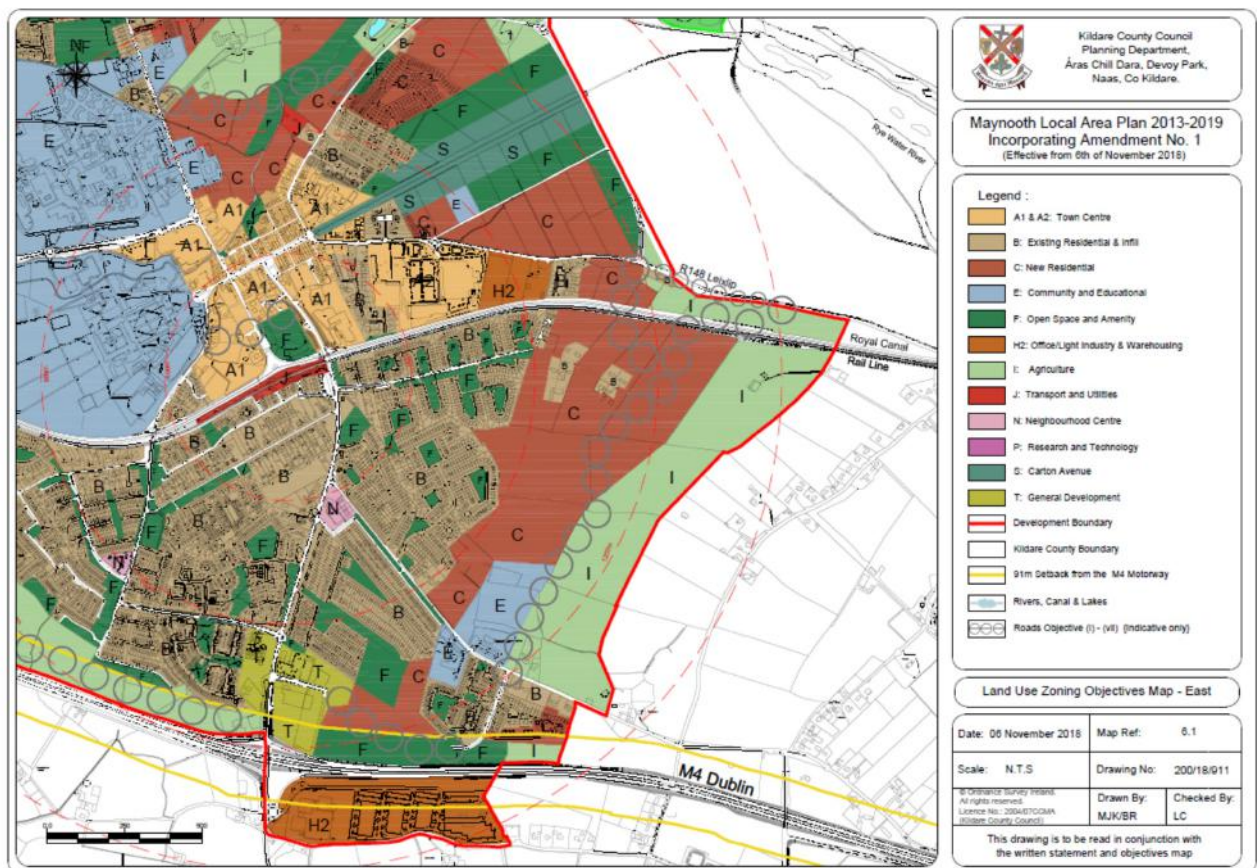
Location of the site with respect to walking distances

2.2 Context Analysis

Within the context of the County Kildare Development Plan 2017-2023, Maynooth is designated as a Primary Economic Growth Town and part of an economic cluster together with Kilcock. However, as Ireland's only University Town Maynooth is unique in that it is home to both the Pontifical University (St Patrick's College Maynooth) and Maynooth University.

Chapter 14 of the current Development Plan, Landscape, Recreation and Amenities of the development plan stipulates that scenic amenity of the river valleys and canal corridors should be preserved and enhanced where possible in the interests of both biodiversity, built and natural heritage and amenity.

The Harbour field site is designated as Open Space and Amenity within the Local Area Plan (2013-2019) where in it states that "the development of the Harbour field as a key piece of green infrastructure in the town centre will greatly benefit the amenity of the town centre as a whole" it is also mentioned in the town's tourism strategy where it is the intention to "promote the use of Harbour field for an appropriate mix of uses including tourism and leisure".



Extract from the Maynooth Local Area Plan 2013-2019 showing the Harbour Field Land Use Zoning – "Open Space and Amenity"

2.3 Current Land Use

The site presently houses the town's main playground catering for children aged 3-16 within 2 fenced compounds and a fenced basketball court. The main grassed body of the site is used as an informal games pitch for kick about and fitness training. Several pieces of outdoor gym equipment are housed in a linear formation along the eastern boundary but these are in poor repair and seldom used.



2.3.1 Existing Conditions

A series of photos of the current condition of Harbour Field Park are included below:



Main body of the site viewed for S.E corner



Main access path across the North of the site



Area of hard standing within park body



Existing canal side path



View along eastern path with existing stone wall



View of eastern wall with missing sections



Existing gate feature along eastern path



Primary park entrance from Straffan Road



Secondary entrance from Straffan Road



Primary park entrance from Leinster Street



Low retaining wall along western boundary



View from main park body to the canal



View to the existing playgrounds



Semi Mature trees within canal embankment

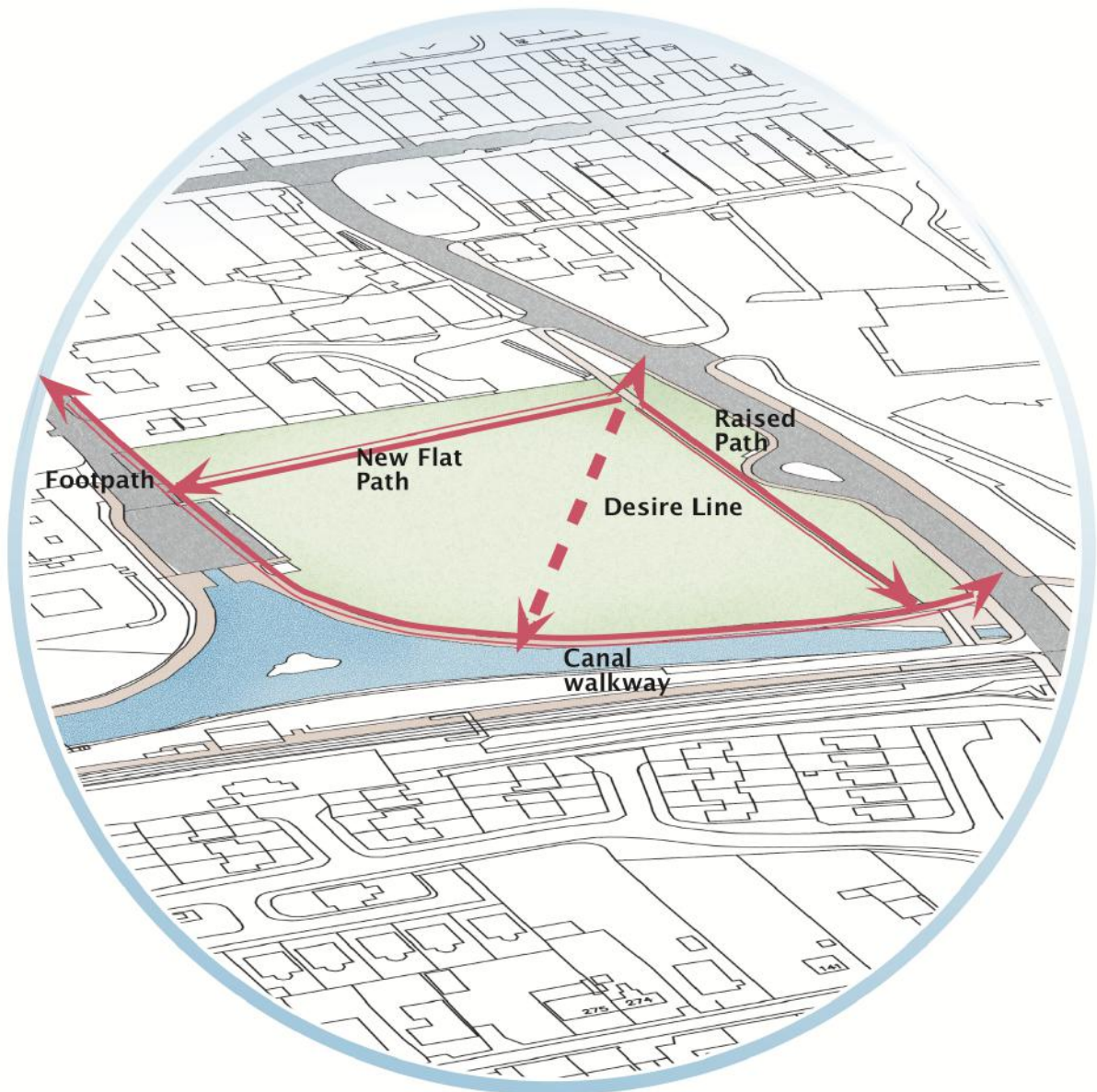


View of existing play parks from the elevated South Eastern corner.

2.4 Access

The site is presently open to the public having no exterior gates and can be accessed from three entry points along the Straffan Road, from the canal side path and from Leinster Street. A main east west access path links the Straffan Road to Leinster Street. This access is largely for pedestrian and cyclist use. It does however also permit emergency and maintenance vehicles to traverse site.

An existing gravelled canal side path flanks the waterfront along the Southern embankment but is largely severed from the park owing to a raised grassed berm. This path varies in width from 2.7-4M, with a single entry point to the park from the canal.



2.5 Boundaries

The park is bounded by an assortment of stone built walls varying in height and condition. The Eastern boundary with Straffan Road is formed by a secure 1.5M high wall which runs the length of the park, turning the corner of the entrance path and continuing to meet the parks southern waterfront boundary. Here the wall gives way to an earthen embankment with a 0.8m high retaining wall, this wall has a central gap allowing access into the park and playgrounds. The embankment terminates at the western boundary leaving a low stone wall elevated above the park body with 2 sets of steps for park access. Where this wall terminates a gap allows level access to the park between it and an existing prefab building which forms the rest of the western boundary. At its corner the building meets a 1.8m high wire steel mesh fence, which forms the start of the northern boundary with the Geraldine Hall. This in turn gives way to a solid 2.0M high wall, which forms the boundary to the neighbouring residential development.

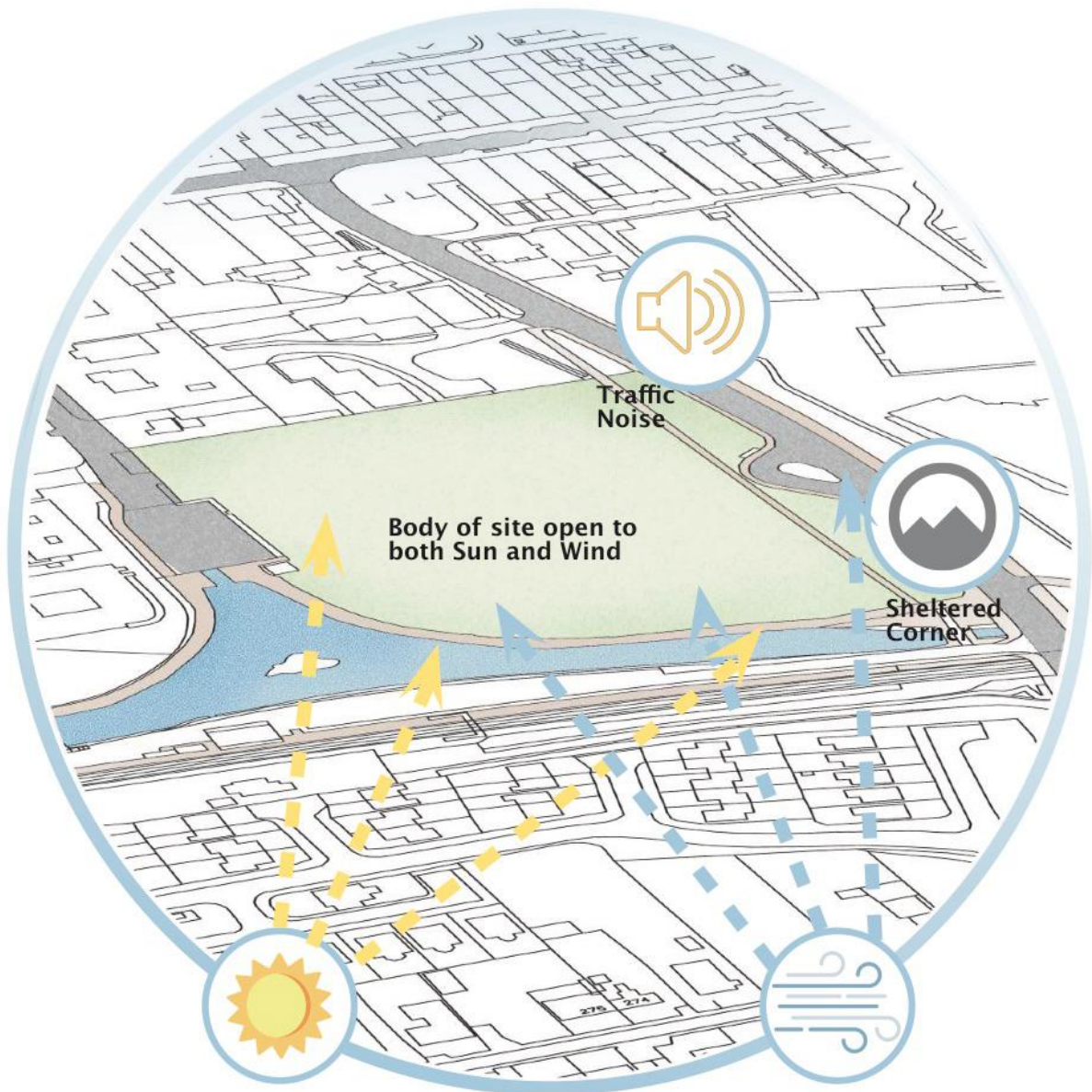
An internal wall parallels the eastern boundary running along an elevated path, this is thought to be the line of the old Straffan road and it connects with the (now pedestrianized) old bridge over the Canal to the south of the site. The primary section of this wall appears stable with some recent building works but large areas are also unstable with several sections having fallen away.

2.6 Topography & Views

The site faces south where it meets the Royal Canal and is largely level with the canal bank and canal harbour with only a 2M level change from North to South. Steep banks are a feature at the Eastern boundary where more recent infrastructure in the form of the R406 Straffan Road and associated bridges rise above the site with planted embankments transitioning the fall which rises to 6M at the highest point.

Views within the Park

Views within the site are largely restricted by its urban situation and associated built structures. The view to the canal from the site is largely restricted owing to a raised earthen bund with tree planting.



View of existing park showing external site conditions

2.7 Existing Biodiversity

Currently limited mature planting is evident within the site, with the main body of the park set as rough grassland. A recent wildflower meadow is contained north of the recently constructed east west axis path and also contains flowering (Rowan, Cherry and Crab Apple) trees.

An early mature screen of trees exists to the east of the site between the site and the Straffan Road. These trees (Rowan, Beech, Lime, Oak, Pine, Hazel, Field maple, Norway maple and Hawthorn) are contained within a raised embankment and were planted to screen the adjacent road.

A further screen of trees (Ash, Field Maple, Scots Pine and Beech) are located within the southern embankment which flanks the canal. These trees were planted into a raised earthen berm and show evidence of stunted growth "Squat trees with no dominant leader"

A further group of Self Seeded Ash and Willow can be found within the south eastern corner as well as some ivy and bramble.

No perennial beds or shrub planting is evident within the site.

Fauna

No survey was commissioned on site. No visual evidence of badgers or other animals (tracks, pathways or burrows) were detected onsite, however bird song was heard within the planted eastern embankment.

3.0 Stakeholder Engagement

COMLA and Kildare County Council carried out an extensive stakeholder engagement in order to gain insights into the site's potential users and their requirements. This included several meetings with Kildare County Council and Waterways Ireland as well as an onsite public consultation event to ascertain the public's views on the developments priorities and desired amenities.

3.1 Public Consultation

The public consultation was promoted via local radio stations, the local newspaper and through the Kildare Public Participation Network (PPN). The event featured entertainment to attract families and school kids while passers-by were greeted by entertainers and representatives at key pedestrian nodes and invited to attend the event. A marquee was erected in the harbour area with mounted presentation boards showing exemplar images of parks, playgrounds and waterfronts.

Attendees were encouraged to answer and submit prepared questionnaires and discuss their ideas for the site with COMLA and Kildare County Council representatives. This questionnaire was also made available online through survey monkey resulting in 900 completed surveys.

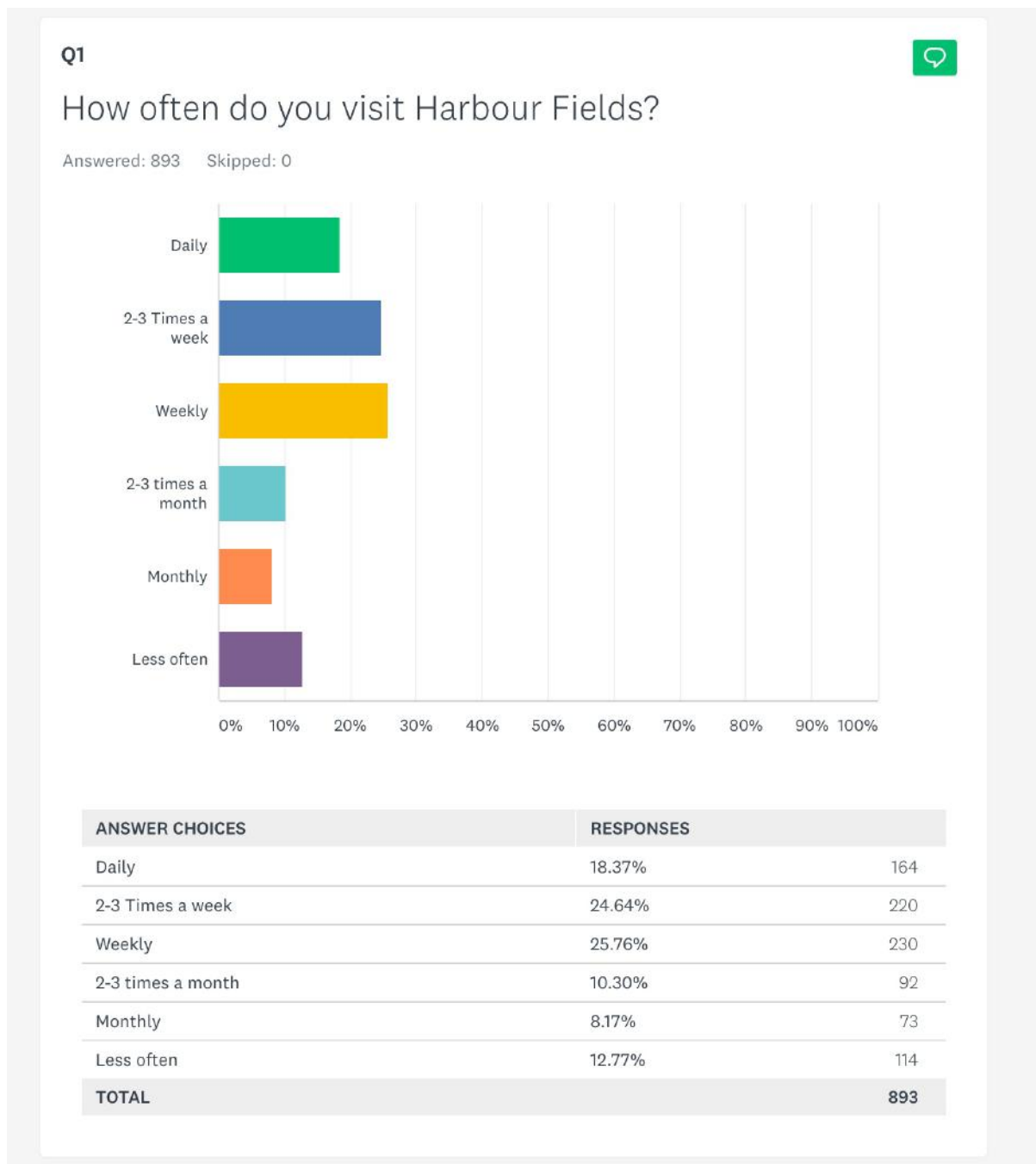
The consultation process enlivened interest in the development and created substantial awareness around the kind of facilities which could be delivered within the site resulting in community members and participants becoming openly excited about the prospect of the parks regeneration.



Photo from Public Consultation event April 2019.

3.1.1 Consultation Results

Tables showing the consultation results are inserted below:

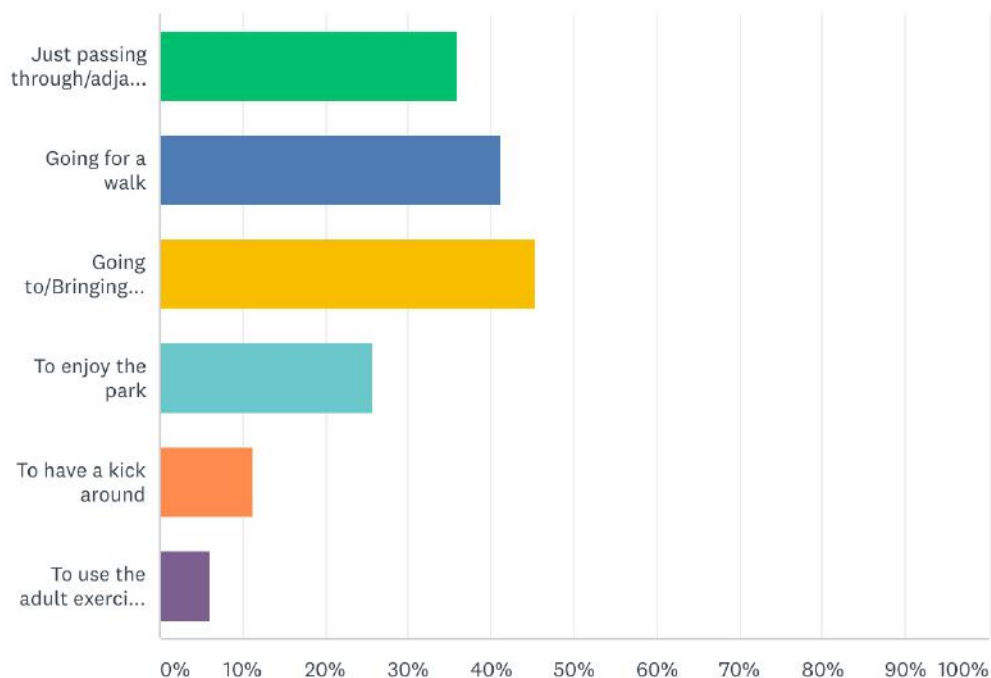


Q2



What brings you to Harbour Fields?

Answered: 883 Skipped: 10



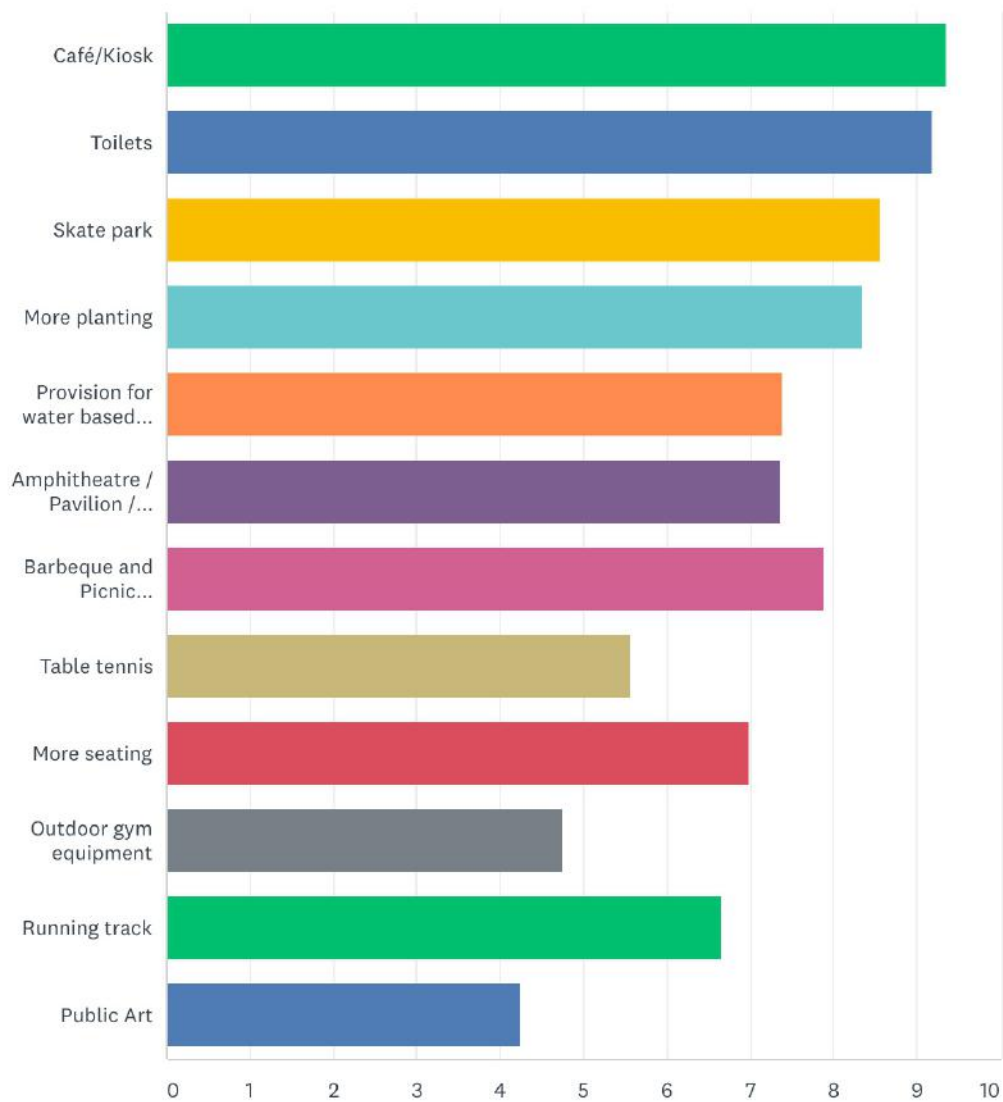
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Just passing through/adjacent to	35.90%	317
Going for a walk	41.22%	364
Going to/Bringing kids to the playground/s	45.41%	401
To enjoy the park	25.82%	228
To have a kick around	11.33%	100
To use the adult exercise equipment	6.12%	54
Total Respondents: 883		

Q3



What facilities would you like to see in the park? Choose your top 4.

Answered: 889 Skipped: 4



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL	SCORE
Café/Kiosk	24.00% 162	20.00% 135	16.00% 108	11.85% 80	9.33% 63	5.04% 34	3.26% 22	2.52% 17	1.19% 8	2.52% 17	1.78% 12	2.52% 17	675	9.35
Toilets	19.91% 136	20.94% 143	16.40% 112	12.59% 86	8.35% 57	7.47% 51	3.22% 22	2.34% 16	2.34% 16	1.46% 10	2.49% 17	2.49% 17	683	9.18
Skate park	31.48% 209	9.64% 64	9.94% 66	8.89% 59	6.63% 44	7.23% 48	4.82% 32	4.97% 33	3.46% 23	2.41% 16	2.71% 18	7.83% 52	664	8.55
More planting	11.70% 75	12.64% 81	11.23% 72	18.72% 120	11.70% 75	10.30% 66	9.05% 58	5.46% 35	3.90% 25	2.34% 15	1.72% 11	1.25% 8	641	8.35
Provision for water based activities	6.17% 38	10.39% 64	10.06% 62	11.85% 73	14.12% 87	11.04% 68	10.71% 66	7.79% 48	5.68% 35	5.36% 33	3.25% 20	3.57% 22	616	7.38
Amphitheatre / Pavilion / shelter	7.46% 46	8.27% 51	10.70% 66	12.16% 75	7.78% 48	15.24% 94	12.64% 78	10.05% 62	6.00% 37	3.40% 21	3.73% 23	2.59% 16	617	7.36
Barbeque and Picnic facilities	6.64% 44	13.57% 90	17.04% 113	11.92% 79	6.79% 45	7.54% 50	15.08% 100	8.45% 56	6.49% 43	3.47% 23	2.56% 17	0.45% 3	663	7.88
Table tennis	2.46% 14	5.61% 32	6.49% 37	5.44% 31	4.39% 25	4.04% 23	8.07% 46	24.21% 138	17.72% 101	9.47% 54	7.89% 45	4.21% 24	570	5.57
More seating	5.53% 36	12.29% 80	13.21% 86	10.29% 67	7.07% 46	5.68% 37	3.84% 25	5.68% 37	19.82% 129	12.44% 81	2.92% 19	1.23% 8	651	6.98
Outdoor gym equipment	4.39% 25	4.74% 27	4.91% 28	5.61% 32	3.68% 21	3.51% 20	3.33% 19	4.74% 27	8.42% 48	31.40% 179	19.12% 109	6.14% 35	570	4.74
Running track	12.00% 78	11.38% 74	9.69% 63	12.77% 83	4.92% 32	3.85% 25	4.00% 26	2.92% 19	2.31% 15	4.46% 29	25.54% 166	6.15% 40	650	6.66
Public Art	3.38% 20	5.24% 31	7.43% 44	7.94% 47	2.70% 16	2.70% 16	4.56% 27	4.39% 26	4.22% 25	4.73% 28	7.09% 42	45.61% 270	592	4.25

Q4



Can you think of any other parks, which you have visited and really liked? (Please list them below)

Answered: 530 Skipped: 363

Castletown House (Celbridge)

4/19/2019 3:48 PM

Marley park Newbridge house and demesne

4/19/2019 8:21 AM

Ones with running tracks

4/19/2019 1:15 AM

Marlay Park Millenium Park Blanchardstown St. Catherines Park Skate park in Newbridge

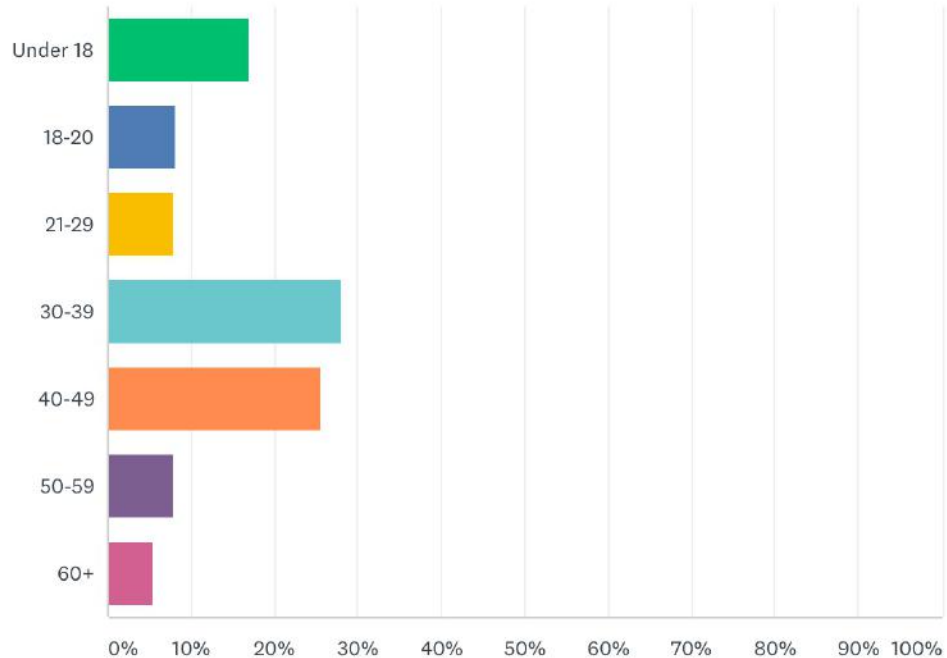
4/18/2019 11:09 PM

Q5



What is your Age group?

Answered: 884 Skipped: 9



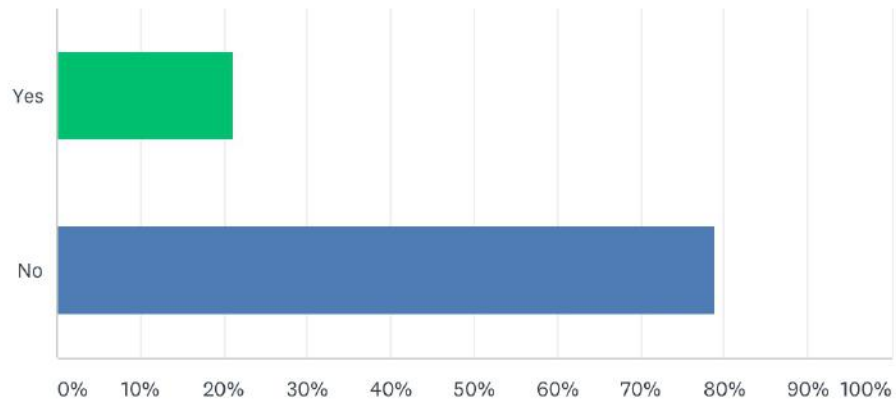
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	16.86%	149
18-20	8.14%	72
21-29	8.03%	71
30-39	28.05%	248
40-49	25.45%	225
50-59	7.92%	70
60+	5.54%	49
TOTAL		884

Q6



Do you think the park makes the best of its waterfront setting?

Answered: 879 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	21.16%	186
No	78.84%	693
TOTAL		879

Q7



Any other comments or suggestions for Harbour fields?

Answered: 516 Skipped: 377

Climbing Frame 6 Super playground 2 Seesaws 3 Cafe 3 Sandpit 3 Baby Slide 1 Waterride 3 Tunnel Slide 3 Trampoline 4 Cube 1 Toilet 1 A rocket 2 Dumper Truck 2 Bouncy Castle 2 Playhouse 3 Fish 1 Swings 1 Animals 4 Diggers 1 Airplane 1 Base 1 More Colours 1 Covered Area 1

4/23/2019 7:57 AM

There's a huge playground but no toilets. Kids go to the nearby trees, and the scene doesn't look nice at all. Look at South Korea, they have fantastically well-kept (and free) public toilets pretty much everywhere - subway stations, parks, etc.

4/19/2019 3:48 PM

A barge cafe

4/19/2019 2:38 PM

Bigger playground with wheelchair friendly equipment. Somewhere for teenagers to hang out as there is no where for them

4.0 Description of Proposed Development

4.1 Design Strategy

The main design considerations were gauged from the findings of the community consultation results. This landscape strategy was driven by 2 key components, the desire to connect the site with the existing canal creating a high quality waterfront and the intention to offer a wider range of uses.

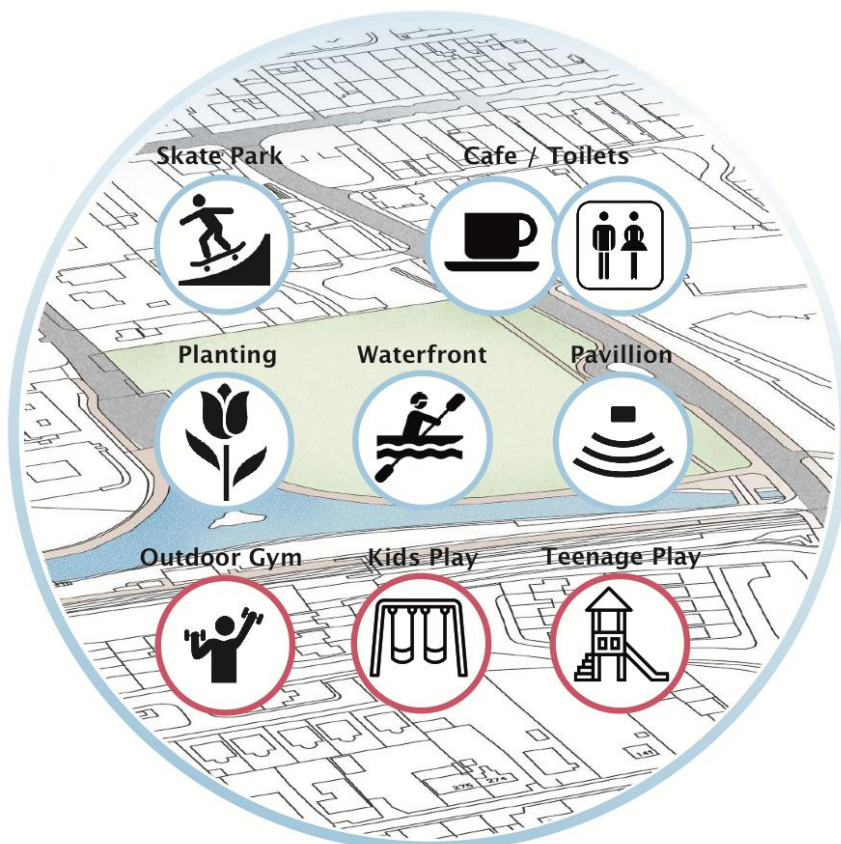
Presently a large earthen embankment screens the canal from the park and severs any connection with the water. In order to establish a connection, the embankment and associated stone retaining wall will be removed allowing the canal and park to function as one.

In addition, a path starting at the Straffan Road entrance will cut diagonally through the site linking this main entrance point to the waterfront. This path widens from its origin, visually drawing the eye to the waterfront and ensuring this areas prominence.

The division created by the diagonal path allows the creation of character areas to either side seeing the formation of designated spaces for play, exercise, wheeled sports and events with secondary spaces including a (potential) café (not part of this planning application), orchards and picnic areas allowing for relaxation.

The existing canal side path owned by Waterways Ireland is soon to be upgraded with an amenity cycle path planned as part the Royal Canal Greenway with the Harbour field area as a junction point between route stages.

It is likely a future park 8 planning application will feature a café, events pavilion and public toilets. However, these are not part of the current planning application.



Results from the public consultation event and questionnaires enabled the design to include the communities top rated facilities

4.2 Play Strategy

Play within the park is split into 3 recognisable sites. A large playground and a skate park cater for a wide range of ages, with a smaller sensory play area for toddlers set close to the Leinster Street.

The main playground features an large feature bespoke play sculpture, brightly coloured it will flow through the landscape. The structure naturally awakens kids curiosity asking them to experiment with the object while climbing, swinging, bouncing and clambering along its structure. The nature of this feature also means it cannot be dominated by one dominant child thus allowing even the most apprehensive child to explore its possibilities. A full spectrum of familiar play equipment will also be provided to cater for kids ages 1-16 including inclusive equipment with disabled access, all of which will be colour co-ordinated with the large sculpture to create an overall fun, cohesive aesthetic. The playground will be secured using a 1M high fence with 4 self closing gates and safety surfacing to relevant fall heights will be used where required.

The Skate park will cater for a diverse range of wheeled sports including skating, bmx's, scooters and rollerblades within a central plaza while a mini pump track allows younger users to experiment away from the main site. Free running, climbing and crossover play options are also provided with the variation in use accommodating all age ranges and aiding passive surveillance in the area. This play zone will be designed using a range of insitu concrete elements, chosen through consultation with local youth and skate groups, these will be branded using the playground colours and softened with large planting beds and clear stemmed trees.



Large multi-use play structure for all age groups



Plaza style 'skate' park for multiple wheeled sports



Mounded play areas with equipment suitable for toddler and young children.

4.3 Access and Circulation

Two primary paths, the diagonal waterfront connection and the East to West link from Straffan Road to Leinster Street allow for controlled vehicular access to the site with a minimum width of 4M. Secondary paths for pedestrian access will vary from a maximum width of 3M to a minimum of 1.8M allowing for adequate access even on subsidiary routes.

All paths will be finished in a buff coloured bound surfacing with nodes of feature paving at entrance points with bespoke gateway features framing the 3 park entrances.

4.4 Boundaries

It is proposed to retain the 1.8M high stone built wall along the northern boundary with the residential Court House Square and build a matching wall along the western extent of this boundary replacing the existing fence. The proposed wall will vary in height from 1.8M to the northeast, falling to 1.2M in front of the Scout hall allowing views to and from the contemporary extension.

Portions of the internal eastern wall are will be removed to enable greater passive surveillance within the site and reduce perceived antisocial behaviour. It is proposed to created terraced seating in this area instead to transition to the higher level.

The removal of the main segment of the Western wall allows level access to the proposed events space (exposed aggregate concrete plinth) and connects the plinth to the existing Harbour area.

4.5 Soft Materials (Planting)

The landscape proposals will see significant gains in diversity with large expanses of wildflower, perennial meadows, ornamental grass blocks and orchard planting creating soft character areas full of texture and colour with winter structure. A central formal lawn will compliment this providing a solid block of green space. Several other mown grass areas provide kick around space or transition zones.

An assortment of trees will be specified ranging from smaller orchard trees (12-14cm girths) planted in grids to mature feature trees (30+ cm girths) at key points. Tree varies will alter with character areas, evergreens *Pinus sylvestris* (native) and *Pinus Nigra* will be paired with *Betula pubescens* (native) and *Betula nigra* within the waterfront and play zones while *Sorbus Aria* (native) will be used as an 'avenue' tree along the central axis path. Ornamental tree varieties will add interest to the sensory garden while small existing willow trees will be relocated here to form a play forest.



4.6 Hard Materials

All paths will be constructed in a bound buff material such as pigmented asphalt or resin bound aggregate to avoid loose gravel carrying to the wheeled sports area. A paved strip will be used to delineate the aggregate paths were required such as along the waterfront while entrance nodes and the café area will be paved in a high quality natural stone. Exposed aggregate concrete will form the events stage as well as the edging/steps for the formal lawn, raised planters and terraced areas.

To the waterfront the canal side path will take the form of timber boardwalk with gripdeck finish. All timber site furniture and cladding on the future buildings or kiosks will match the boardwalks tone. The boardwalk will be separated from the parallel asphalt cycle path by a delineation strip of planting or small sett of flush unit pavers where crossings are required.

Colour co-ordinated steel will be used in feature areas such as entrance signs, buildings and the Pavillion matching with the large play sculpture.



Timber lounger style seating as proposed for the pedestrian boardwalk



Waterfront path with pedestrian and cycle routes divided by planting/cobble strip.

5.0 Conclusion

This report supports a Part 8 application for the Harbour Field within Maynooth town. The scheme will include the following:

- Removal of the existing earthen embankment between the park and the canal walkway to open up views to and from the water.
- Creation of bespoke entrance features at the 3 main gateways into the park and development of a signage and furniture package inline with there aesthetics.
- Construction of a segregated cycle and pedestrian path along the existing canal frontage.
- Construction of a network of internal paths with primary paths allowing controlled vehicular access and secondary linking pathways to access facilities within the site.
- Creation of two large designated play areas namely a playground and a skate park with auxiliary recreation facilities such as an outdoor gym, table tennis and boules area and climbing nodes.
- Construction of a large plinth for use as a stage and a formal lawn which can accommodate crowds during events.
- Enhancement of the areas recreational value by the addition of seating nodes, picnic tables and lounge seats.
- Increase visibility and security within the park by removing sections of an existing high wall and using terracing to link the park body to the existing path.
- Planting of native, ornamental and parkland tree species to support a wide range of biodiversity. Trees will be chosen in relation to there location within the park and used for the creation of a path avenues, strengthening boundaries, softening a play area and creating orchard nodes.
- Expand the parks biodiversity by introducing a palette of low maintenance shrubs, flowering perennials and grasses which will provide year round colour and interest. Planted in large mixed beds or as individual block species the planting will include a large number of pollinator and insect attracting species.
- Identification of locations for a potential café building, events pavillion, a maintenance store and possible future commercial buildings (not park of this planning application).