Dee Park Open Space: Design & Access Statement

Presented by
HTA Design LLP

May
2025



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1.0

The Site & Project Brief

1.1
Introduction & Project Brief

An upgraded play area for the Dee Park neighbourhood is proposed as part of the Dee Park masterplan. Re-development of this area has been taking place over a number of years, with phase 3 of the masterplan ongoing.

The number of homes in the area has increased as a result of the redevelopment and the upgraded play area will provide an essential resource for both existing and new residents to the area.

As part of the proposals the existing play area and ball court will be removed and a new play space with equipment aimed at 0-11 year olds installed, alongside an upgraded multi-use games area (MUGA).

It is intended that the play space will have a strong relationship with the new community centre and will become the social heart of this community, with space and facilities for people of all ages to enjoy.



Artist's impression of the proposed play area with the community centre in the background

1.2
Wider site context

The site sits at the heart of the Dee Park redevelopment and is an integral part of the plans. The image on the right shows the phases that are now complete, along with the proposed phase 3 plans.



Dee park illustrative plan

1.3
Site context

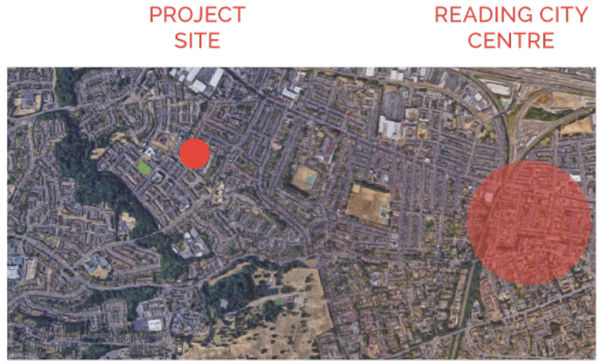
The site is located at the heart of a residential community, surrounded by flats to the north, south, and east, with a new community centre to the west. Additional residential accommodation is proposed to the southwest, which will further enhance natural surveillance of the site.



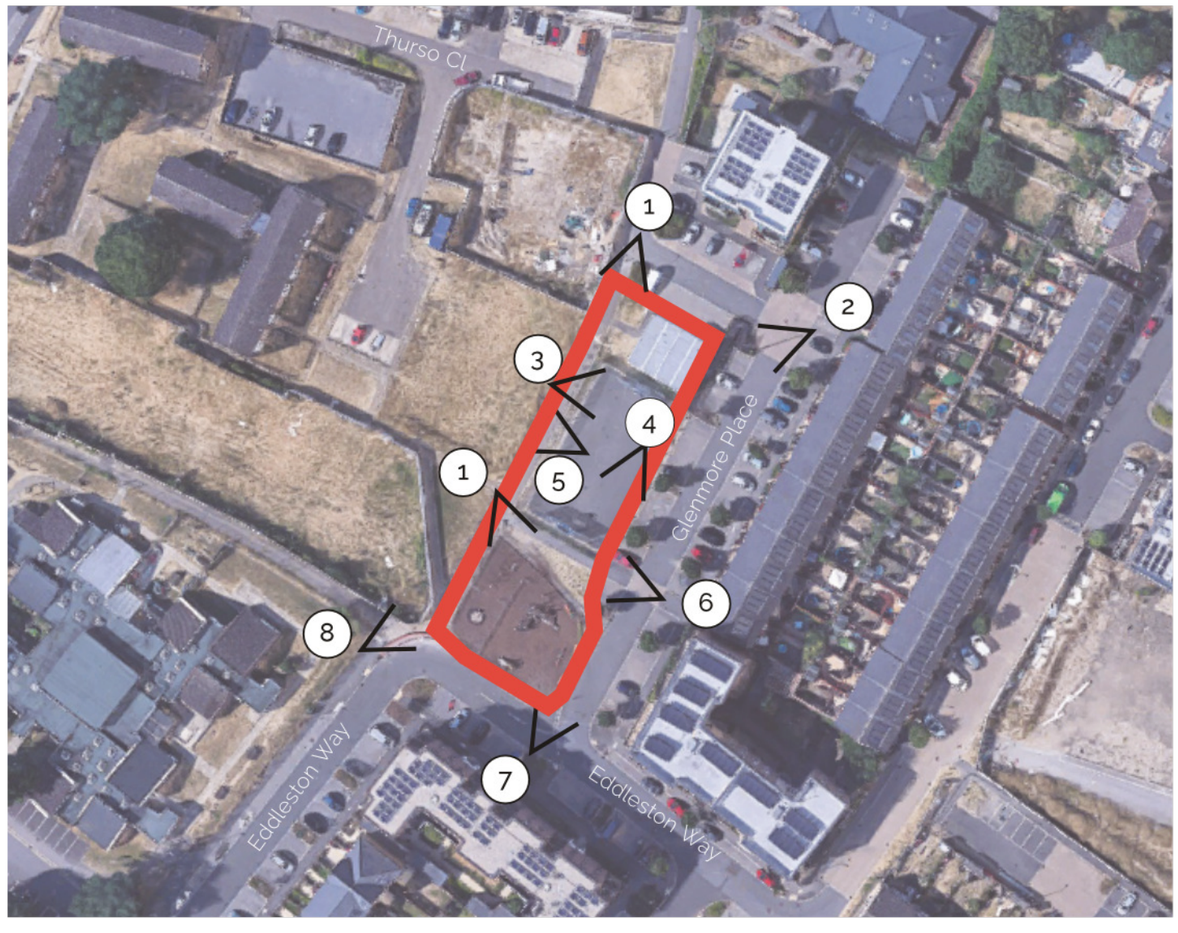
1.4
Existing site photos

This page illustrates the existing site, which primarily consists of hard surfaces with minimal vegetation. A tarmac ball court is located at the centre of the space, with a fenced play area at the southern end.

Although well-used, the facilities are in need of an upgrade.



0 20m













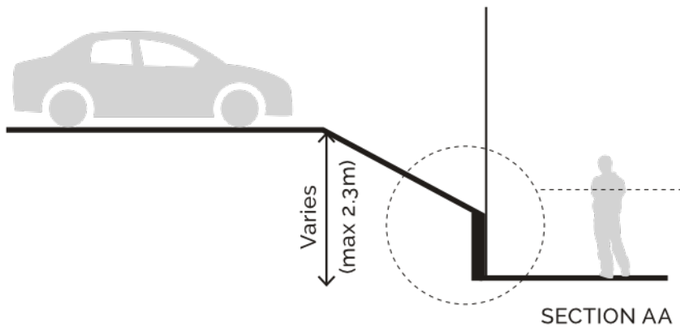






1.5
Levels

A retaining wall currently follows the site boundary along the northern and eastern sides. The level change varies, with a maximum difference of 2.3 meters at the northeastern corner.





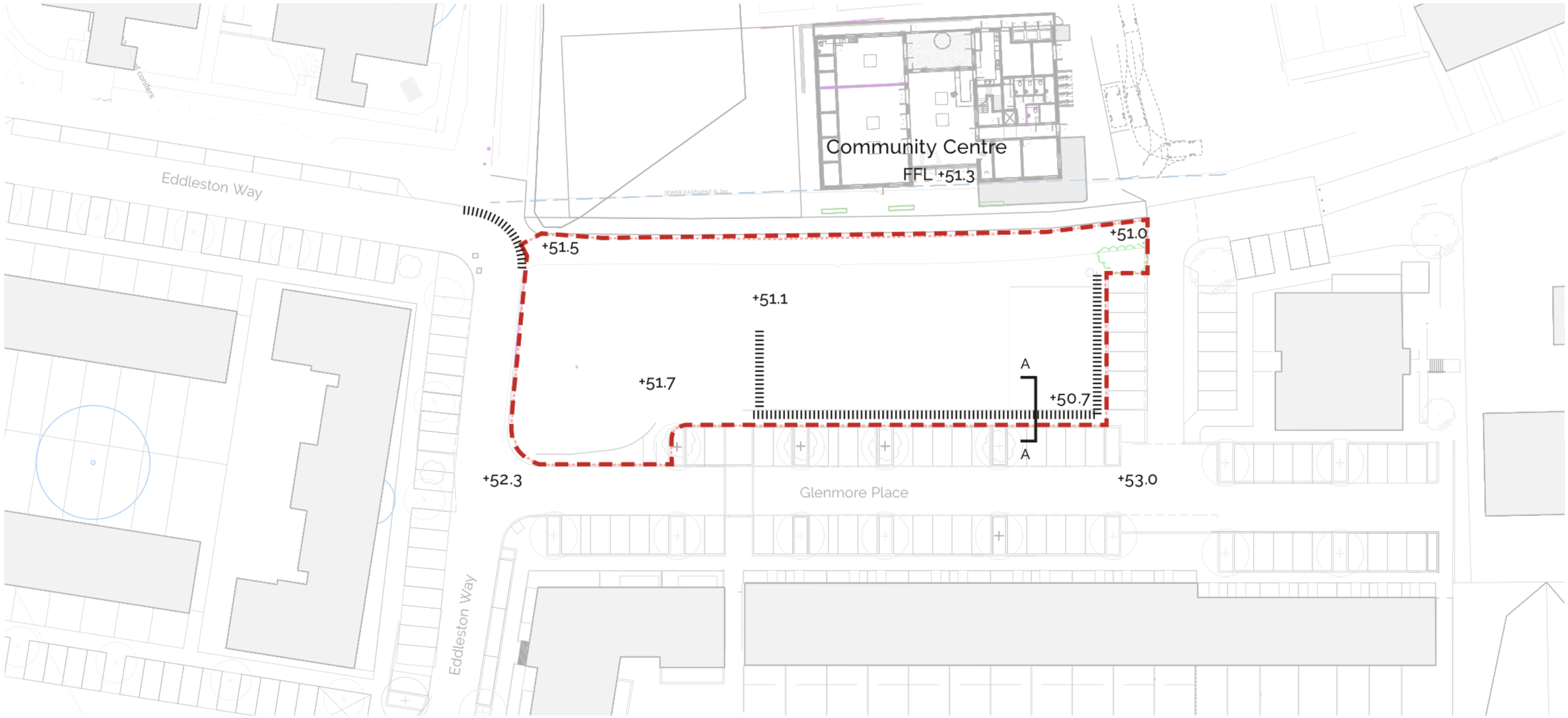
KEY

Site Boundary

+51.0 Existing Level

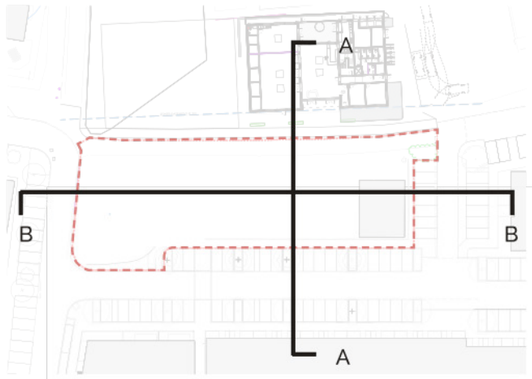
Existing retention

0 10m

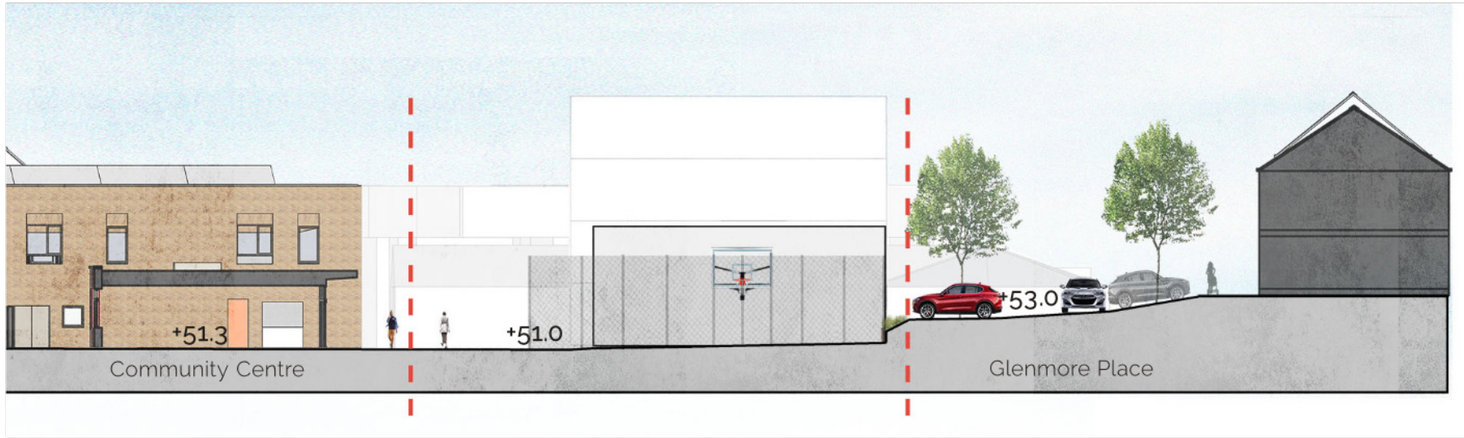


1.6
Existing site sections

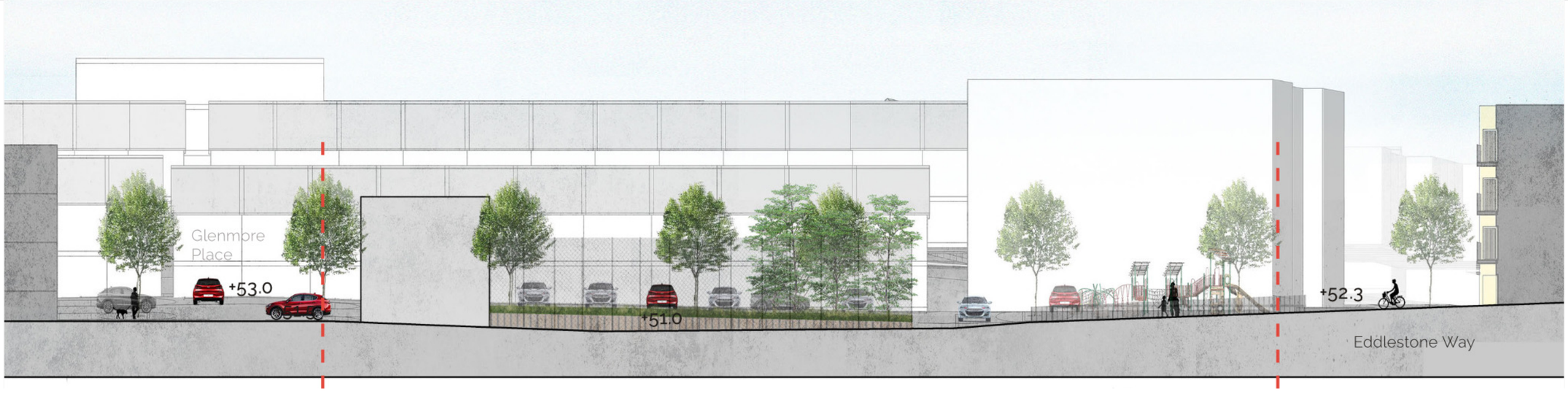
The sections here illustrate the level changes across the site, with the retaining wall along the eastern boundary.



SECTION AA



SECTION BB



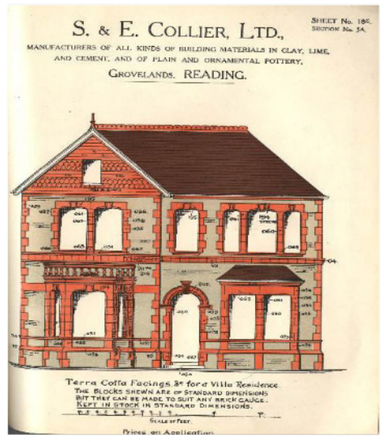
1.7
Historic research

Bricks and tiles have been made in Reading since the medieval period. In 2001, a medieval tile kiln was discovered at Jubilee Square, Silver Street. The name Tilehurst, derived from Old English, means "a wooded hill where tiles were made," indicating the area's early industrial activity.

In the 19th century, clay pits and kilns could be found in Katesgrove, Coley, Caversham, Calcot, and Tilehurst. Thomas Hardy re-christened Reading as "Aldbrickham," meaning "the old brick town," in Jude the Obscure due to the extensive use of locally produced brick, tile, and terracotta in Reading's Georgian and Victorian buildings. The Town Hall and Queen Victoria Street are notable examples.



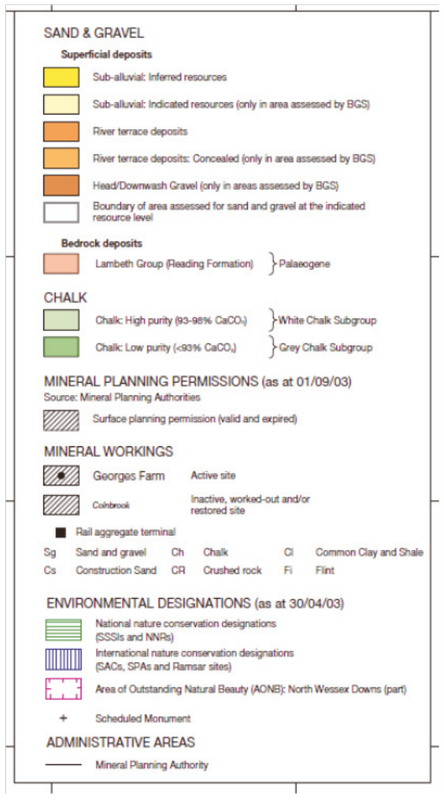
Reading Town Hall

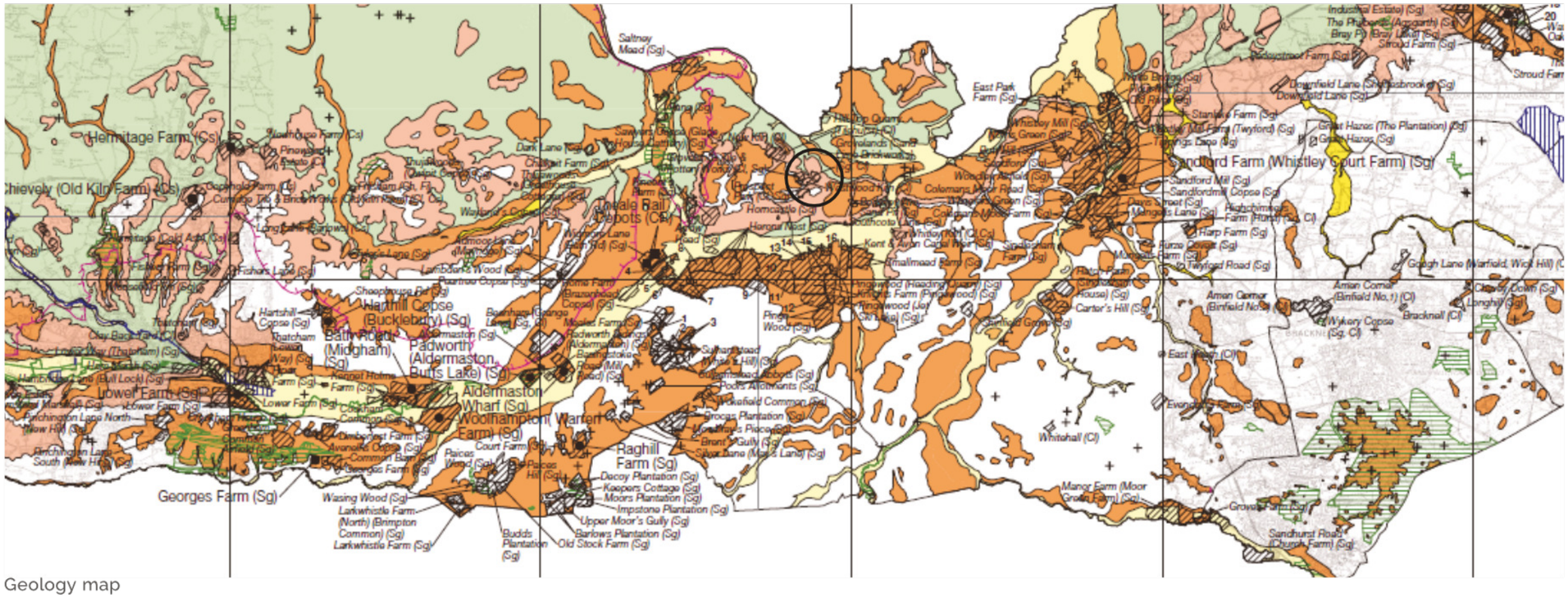


S. & E. Collier catalogue, early 20th century



OS Six Inch 1888-1913





Geology map

1.8
Public art ideas

The site is located near what was once Lyons Square, which featured public art referencing Reading's history as the "Biscuit Town" — including biscuit-shaped seats and a decorative arch.

The arch has been preserved and is currently in storage. The plan is to sandblast the arch, carry out any necessary repairs, and re-spray it for use as a feature in the new play area.

Surface designs could incorporate biscuit tin patterns or a colour palette derived from an historic biscuit tin, offering a playful nod to Reading's history as part of the proposed enhancements.



Lyon square arch and 'biscuit seats'



Lyon square 'biscuit seats'



Lyon square arch and 'biscuit seats'



Lyon square arch



A colour study of a Huntley and Palmers biscuit tin





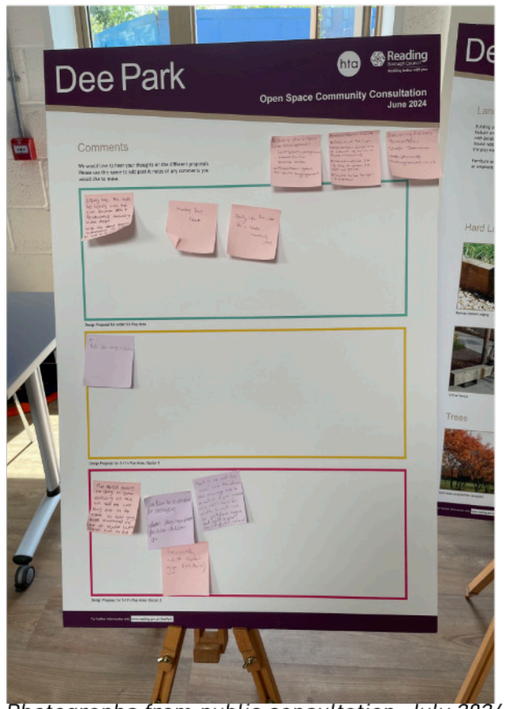
Huntley and Palmers biscuit tins (photos from the Reading Museum)

1.9
Consultation

As part of the design process, we have consulted with RBCs Highways and Parks departments, as well as ROSPA. We have also undertaken three rounds of public consultation, in March 2023, June 2024 and January 2025.

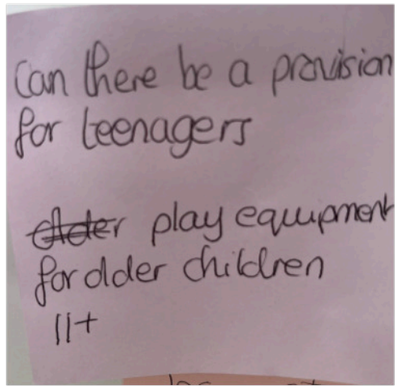
The consultation, both with RBC and the public, provided valuable feedback on the proposed park upgrades. A number of comments were received, and have been addressed where possible as part of the current proposals.

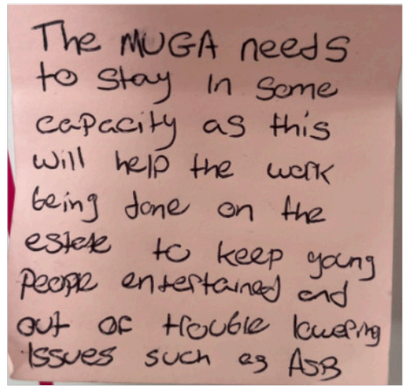
Key comments included the need for robust play equipment for older children and dedicated spaces for teenagers to keep them entertained. There was also support for maintaining a multi-use games area.

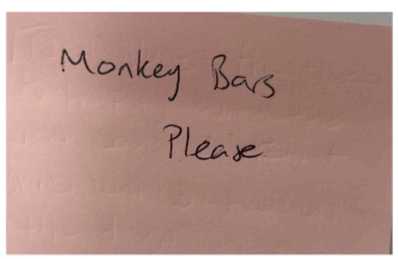


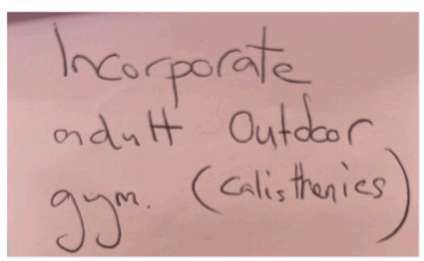


Photographs from public consultation, July 2024









Comments from public consultation



Photographs from public consultation, July 2024



2.0

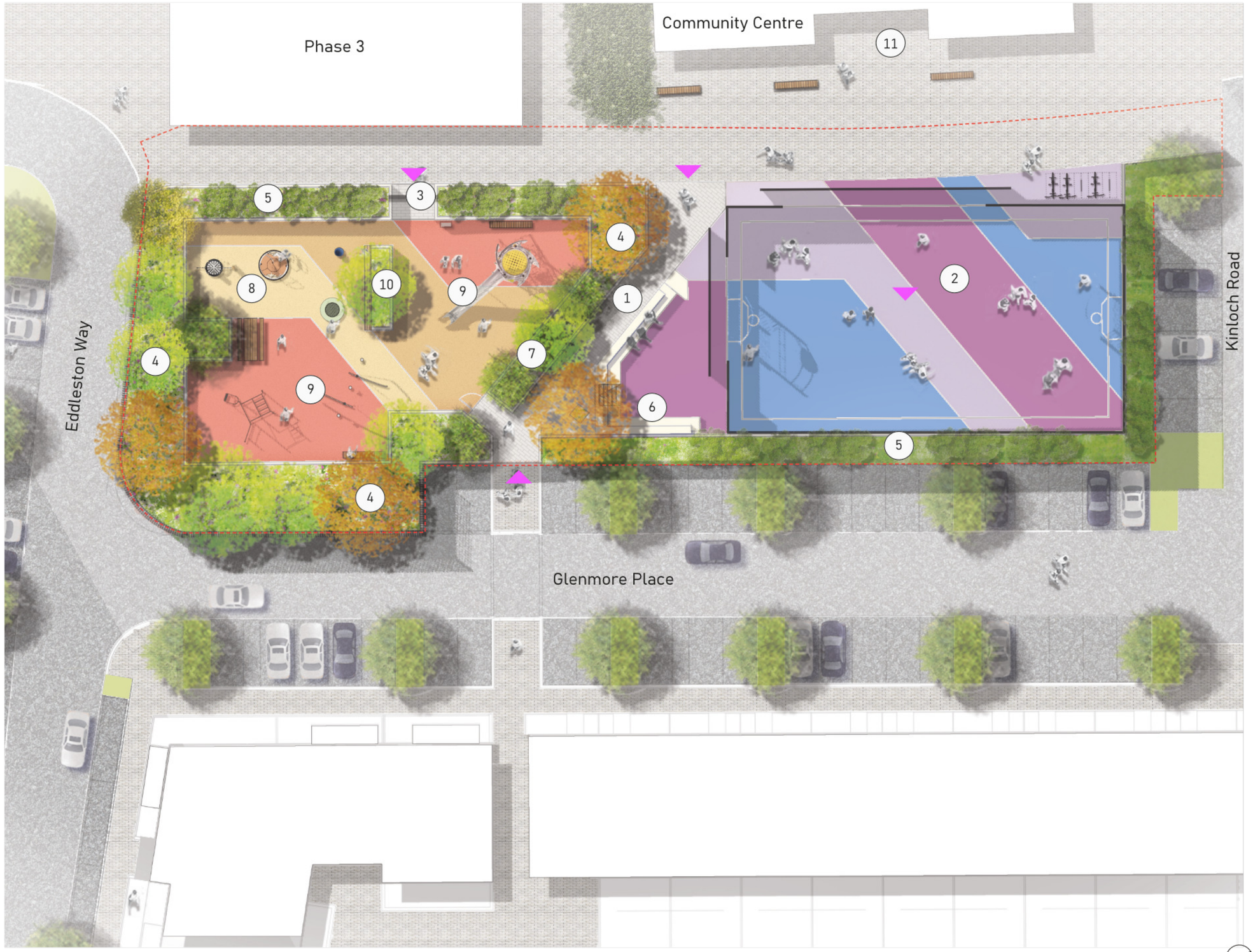
Design Proposal

2.1
Illustrative masterplan

Key

1. Permeable block paving to central route
2. Multi-use games area (MUGA), with potential for bold surface graphics
3. Arch from Lyons square
4. Proposed tree planting
5. Proposed shrub and groundcover planting
6. Proposed seating area
7. Proposed planting between play area and MUGA with link path
8. Proposed play area for under 5's
9. Proposed play area for 5-11's
10. Planter with bench seating
11. Community Centre entrance

▲ Entrance to park



2.2
Spatial strategy

The spatial arrangement of the Dee Park central open space remains largely as existing. The multi-use games area (MUGA) is located to the northern end, and the equipped play area to the south. The path that currently runs east-west dividing the two elements is proposed to be rotated, following a more direct route to the community centre entrance. A secondary route crosses the play area further to the south.

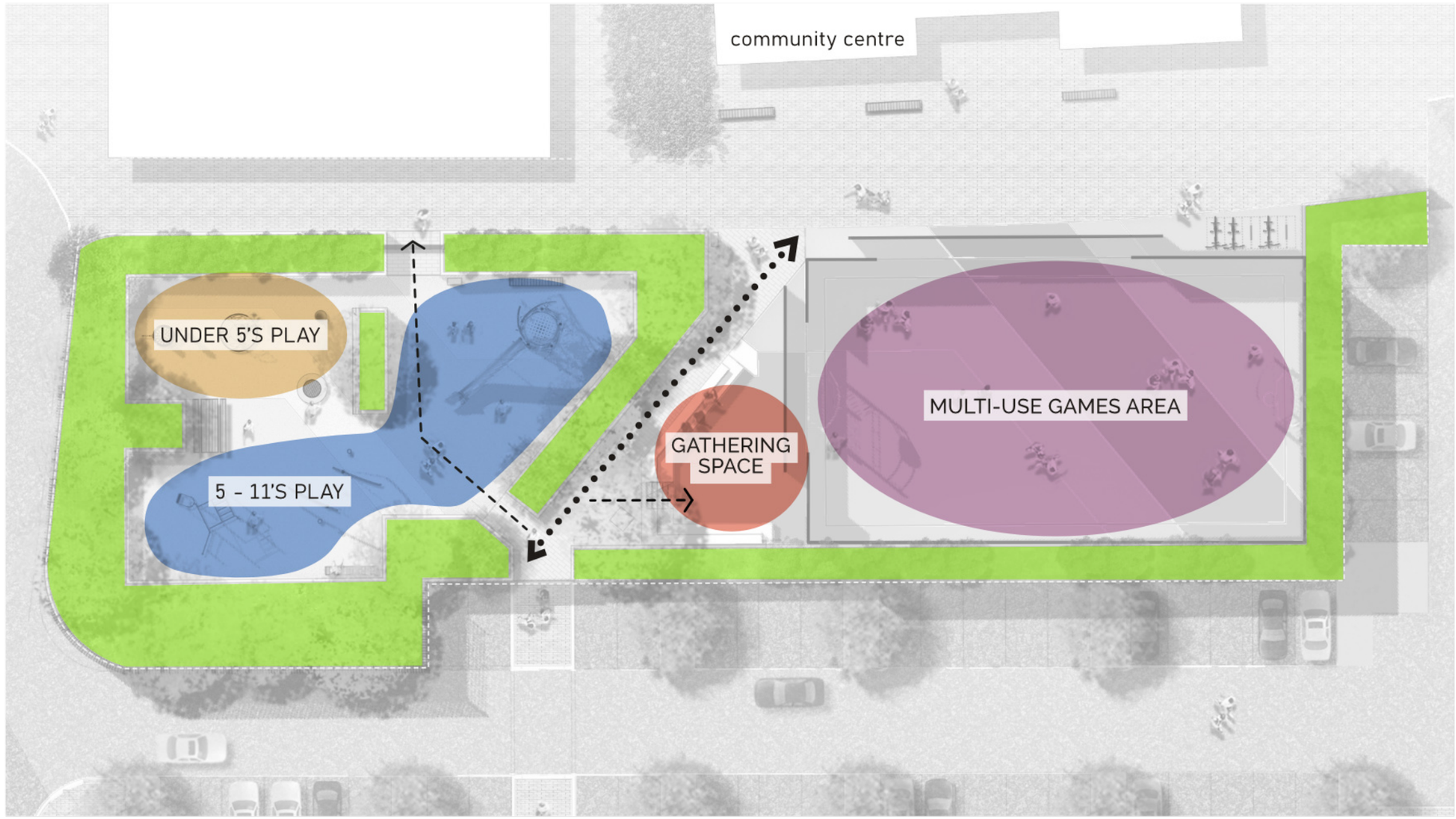
The spatial strategy includes the creation of a green 'buffer' or 'blanket' around the play area, providing seperation, both physical and atmospheric, from the adjacent roads and parking areas. This will help to create a natural and more relaxing environment for play and improve the air quality.

The MUGA is shunted to the northern edge of the site creating an opportunity for a gathering space with seating to the southern edge. This space is intended as a place to watch the activities on the court, and as an informal space for older children to gather. The change in level across the site allows for seating steps in this location.

Within the equipped play area, the under 5's play is subtly separated via planters to the south-western corner. This are will have good natural surveillance from the proposed phase 3 development and the adjacenet path that borders the western side of the site.

The safety of the site has been given careful consideration. The planting buffer around the play space is proposed to have low level/ groundcover plant species, and the proposed trees have 2m clear stems or raised stems to ensure good visibility into the space.

The gathering space is positioned next to the main pathway throught the site, ensuring natural surveillance to discourage anti-social behaviour.

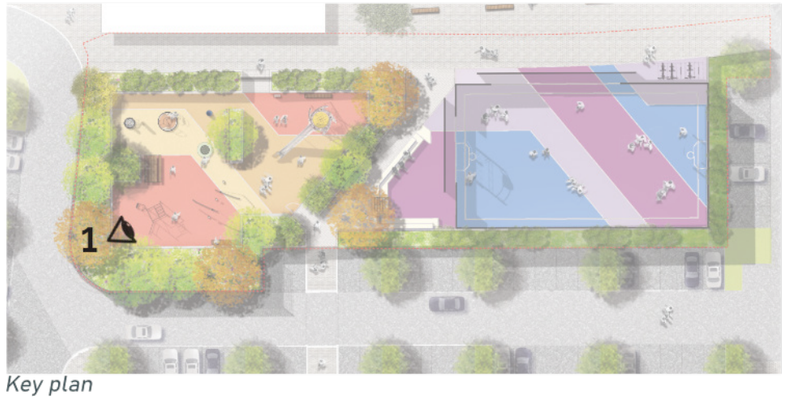


Spatial strategy diagram

2.3
Artist's Impressions



1) Illustrative view of the play area looking north towards the MUGA

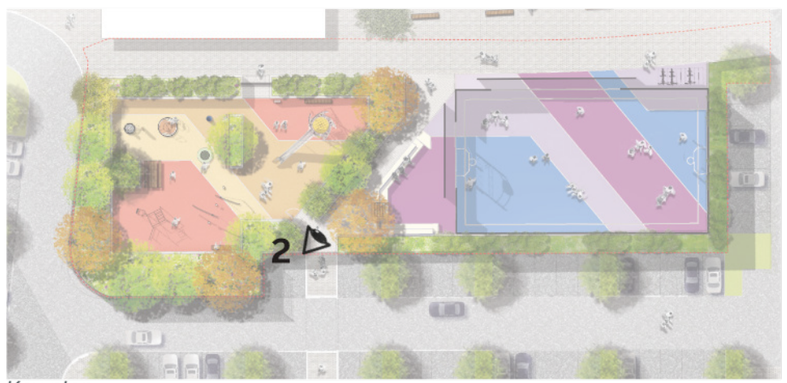


Key plan

2.3
Artist's Impressions



2) Illustrative view of the central route through the play area



Key plan

2.4
Proposed play Equipment

Play equipment that is robust, and well tested within other playgrounds, has been selected, with a range of pieces that cater for the main kinetic actions of climbing, balancing, swinging, spinning and jumping.

The items shown in blue are aimed at children aged under 5, and include a nursery swing, roundabout, spinner (all of which are inclusive) and bouncing facility. The items in yellow are aimed at children aged 5 and above and include an outdoor gym, a trapeze swing, a climbing structure with slide and the MUGA. These items are described and specified as 'or similar', the final design and specification may be subject to minor changes as a result of future coordination, subject to client approval. For example, the bouncing facility is subject to confirmation of suitable ground conditions.

The MUGA is sized in accordance with Sport England guidance to accommodate basketball and football. A seating area is located to the south of the court to allow groups of older children to watch and socialise.

The design of the play area aims to be inclusive to all, with smooth surfaces and level access, pieces that allow use by wheelchair users, quiet corners for those who want to avoid the busier spaces and perhaps sit and talk, and equipment to engage all genders.

The playground design has been assessed by ROSPA and meets with the requirements of the applicable standards and presents a tolerably low risk to users. Relevant checks in relation to fall zones etc. have been carried out As part of the consultation process, discussions have been had with RBC's play officers.

An asterix * denotes inclusive play.



*1. Nursery swing **



*2. Roundabout **



*3. Spinner **



4. Bouncing facility



5. Outdoor gym



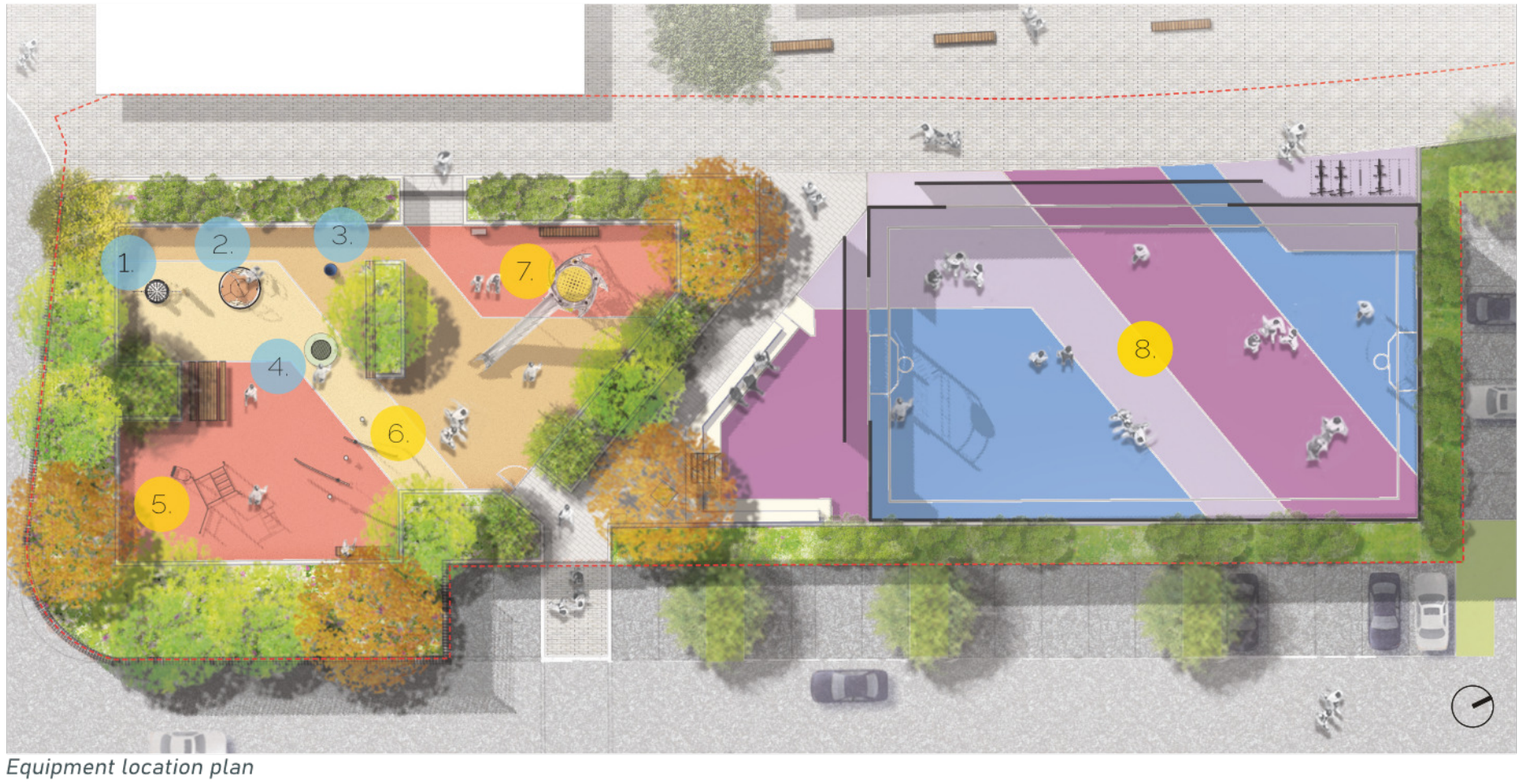
6. Trapeze swing



7. Climbing structure with slide



8. MUGA



Equipment location plan

Key

Under 5's play

5-11's play

2.5
Landscape materials palette - surfaces & furniture

A restrained palette of natural materials creates a warm and welcoming environment for play.

Inspired by a woodland glade, the design incorporates timber to evoke a sense of place. Timber sleeper retaining walls frame the play areas, providing opportunities for informal seating. Robust, chunky timber benches and a picnic set complement the sleeper walls.

Metal and timber play structures are proposed. Any colours used for these will be carefully chosen to ensure they harmonize with the other materials.

Permeable polymeric surfacing, suitable for basketball and football, is proposed for the MUGA. Permeable tigermulch or wetpour is proposed for the play area. Bold, colourful, graphic patterns could be applied to the MUGA and play area surfacing. The patterns and colours would be carefully considered to make reference to Reading's heritage, and aid legibility, complementing the rest of the proposals.

Brick pavers, used outside the adjacent community centre, have a homely aesthetic and reference Reading's brick heritage. Permeable brick surfacing is proposed on the central route that separates the MUGA from the play area.

These items are described and specified as 'or similar', the final design and specification may be subject to minor changes as a result of future coordination, subject to client approval. Materials will be specified to ensure future maintenance compatibility for RBCs highway department.







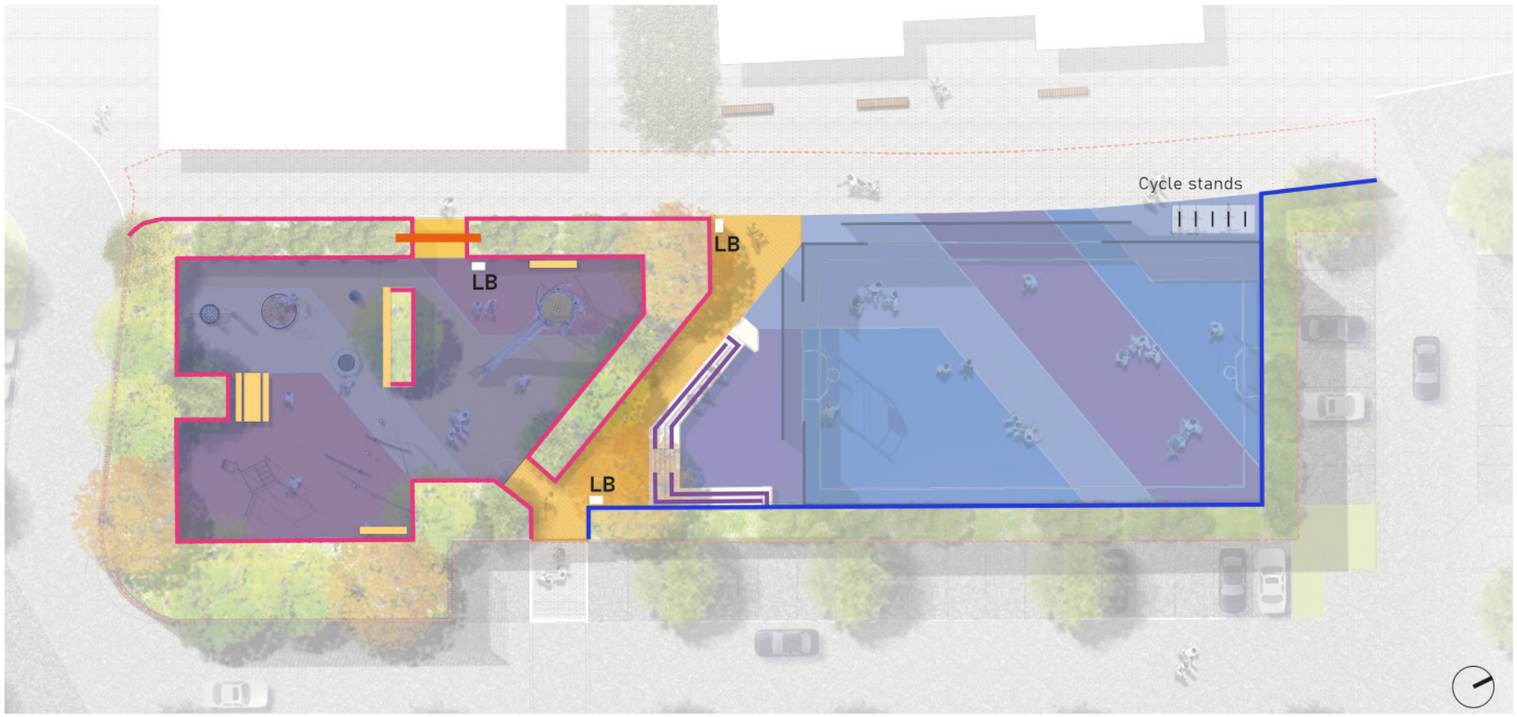






Key

- Wet pour/ tigermulch surface (permeable)
- Permeable brick pavers
- Polymeric surfacing (permeable)
- Timber sleeper retaining walls
- Brick retaining walls
- Picnic set
- Bench
- Seat steps
- Reclaimed arch from Lyons Square
- LB — Litter bin
- Cycle stands



Landscape material and furniture location plan

2.6
Landscape materials palette - Fencing, gates & railings

A timber sleeper wall is proposed around the perimeter of the play area. This wall varies in height. Along the western edge the wall is circa 1.1m high. To the southern and eastern sides, the wall reduces in height to circa 400mm high. In this location, a flat bar metal railing is proposed to the back of the planters to create a safe enclosure. The new railings will be 1100mm high and comply with EN 1176.

A rebound mesh fence is proposed around the ball sports area. The height will be 3m from the playing surface level on the western and southern sides of the ball court, and 4m where the court is adjacent to the road and parking areas. The rebound fence will be staggered to allow ease of access and improve perceived user safety.

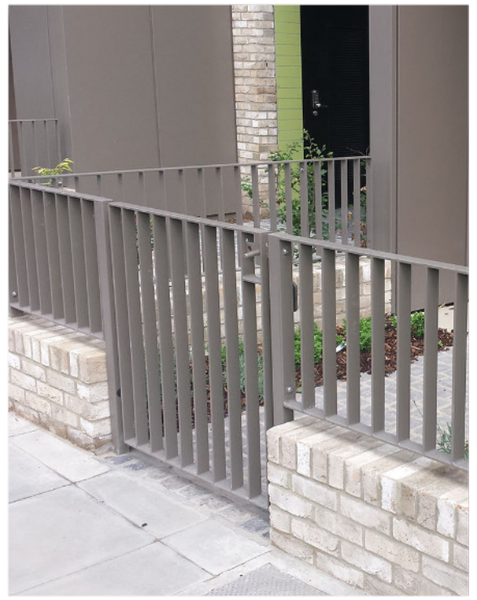
The existing metal railings that run behind the parking bays on Kinloch Road are proposed to be retained (and made good following construction if required). The timber knee rail along Eddleston Way is also proposed to be retained.

Refer to the outline hard landscape schedule for further details of the fencing, gates and railings.

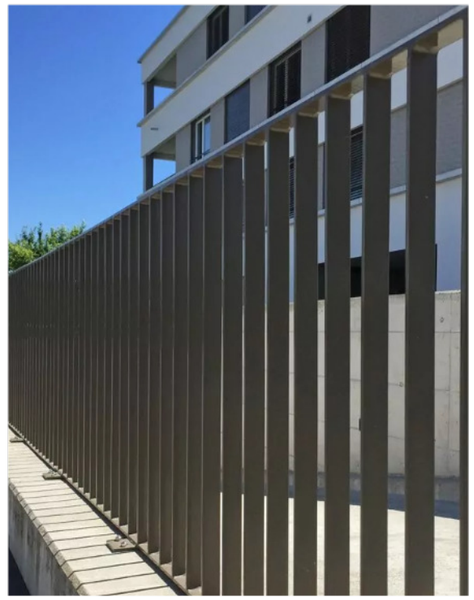




Rebound mesh fence

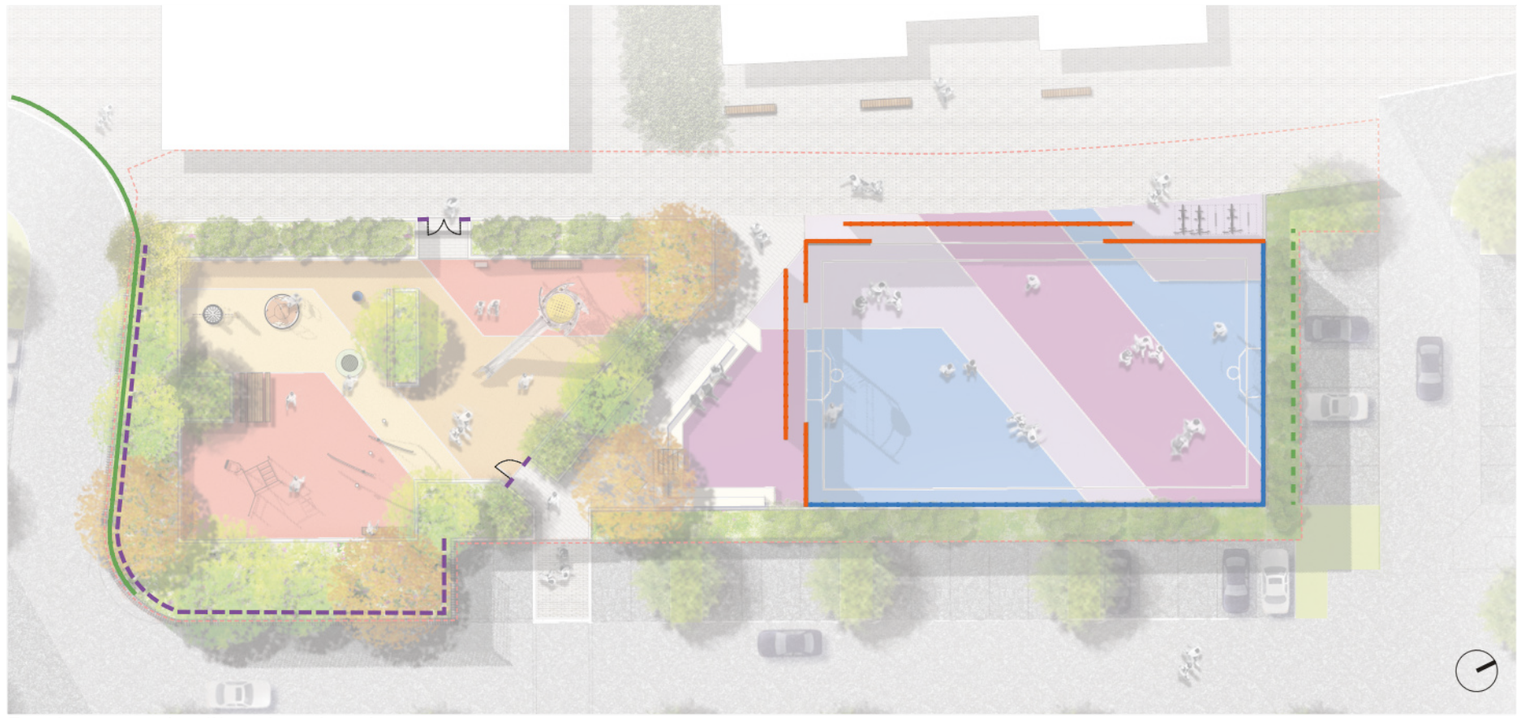


Flat bar railings



Key

- Proposed flat bar railings 1.1m high
- Proposed ball stop fence 3m high
- Proposed ball stop fence 4m high
- Existing knee rail to be retained
- Existing metal railing to be retained
- Proposed double gate (to open inwards)
- Proposed single gate (to open inwards)



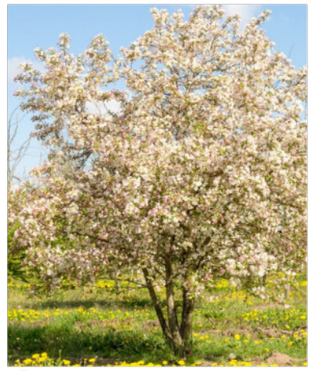
Fencing, gates & railings location plan

2.7
Tree strategy

Trees chosen for the site are either native to the UK or, if non-native, provide value for wildlife and interest throughout the year. Multistem forms (MS) create a woodland atmosphere, while larger feature standard form (SF) trees, such as Liquidambar styraciflua 'Worplesdon' (Sweet Gum), provide shade throughout the space. Trees will have a 2-meter clear stem (or raised stems on the multistem forms) to ensure visibility across the play area.

The mix of tree species has been designed to ensure that there are no more than 30% of trees from one family, no more than 20% of trees from one genus, and no more than 10% of one species, as per Reading Borough Council's guidance.

Refer to the soft landscape schedule for further details of the proposed tree planting.



Malus (MS)



Sorbus aucuparia (MS)



Gleditsia triacanthos inermis (MS)



Liquidambar styraciflua (SF)



Crataegus monogyna (MS)



Cercis siliquastrum (MS)



Cercidiphylum japonicum (MS)



Corylus (MS)

Parrotia persica 'Bella' (MS)

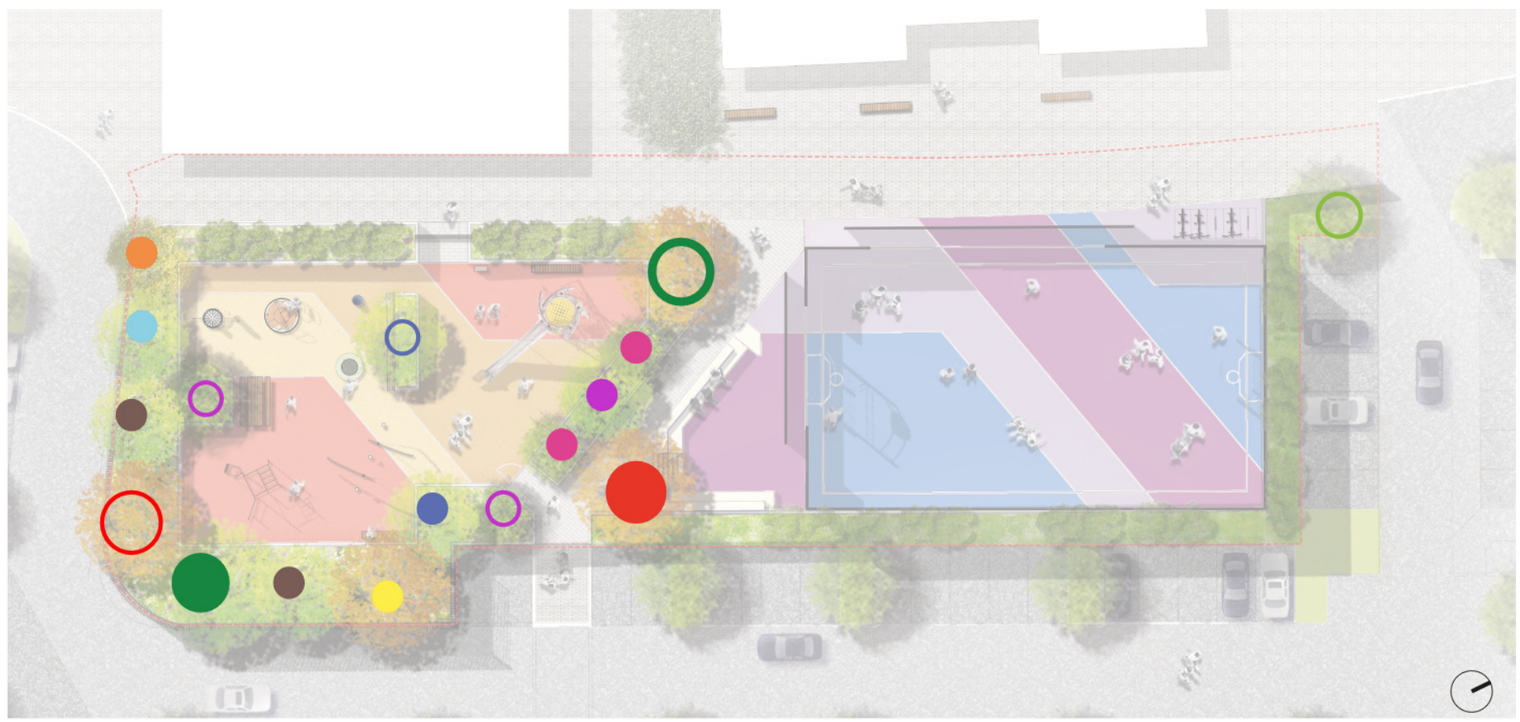
Acer campestre (MS)

Acer griseum (MS)

Crataegus media 'Paul's Scarlet' (SF)

Cornus (MS)

Acer rubrum (MS)



Tree location plan

2.8
Planting strategy

The proposed planting scheme embraces a woodland character, complementing the chosen tree selection. Low-maintenance groundcover plants will be prioritized to create a green 'carpet' beneath the trees. Hardy evergreen plants, such as Pachysandra terminalis, will ensure year-round coverage, while bulbs like native daffodils, snowdrops, and grape hyacinths will provide seasonal interest and colour. Shade tolerant shrubs, such as sarcococca, add height and variation in form.

Refer to the soft landscape schedule for further details of the proposed planting.

Groundcover understorey planting


Lamium naculatum 'White Nancy'


Pachysandra terminalius


Blechnum spicant


Sarcococca hookeriana var. digyna


Brunnera macrophylla 'Jack Frost'

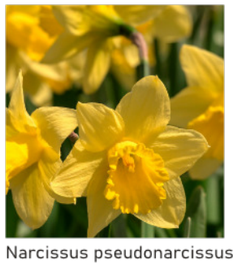

Veronica 'Great Orme'

Bulbs


Anemone 'Wild Swan'


Fritillaria meleagris

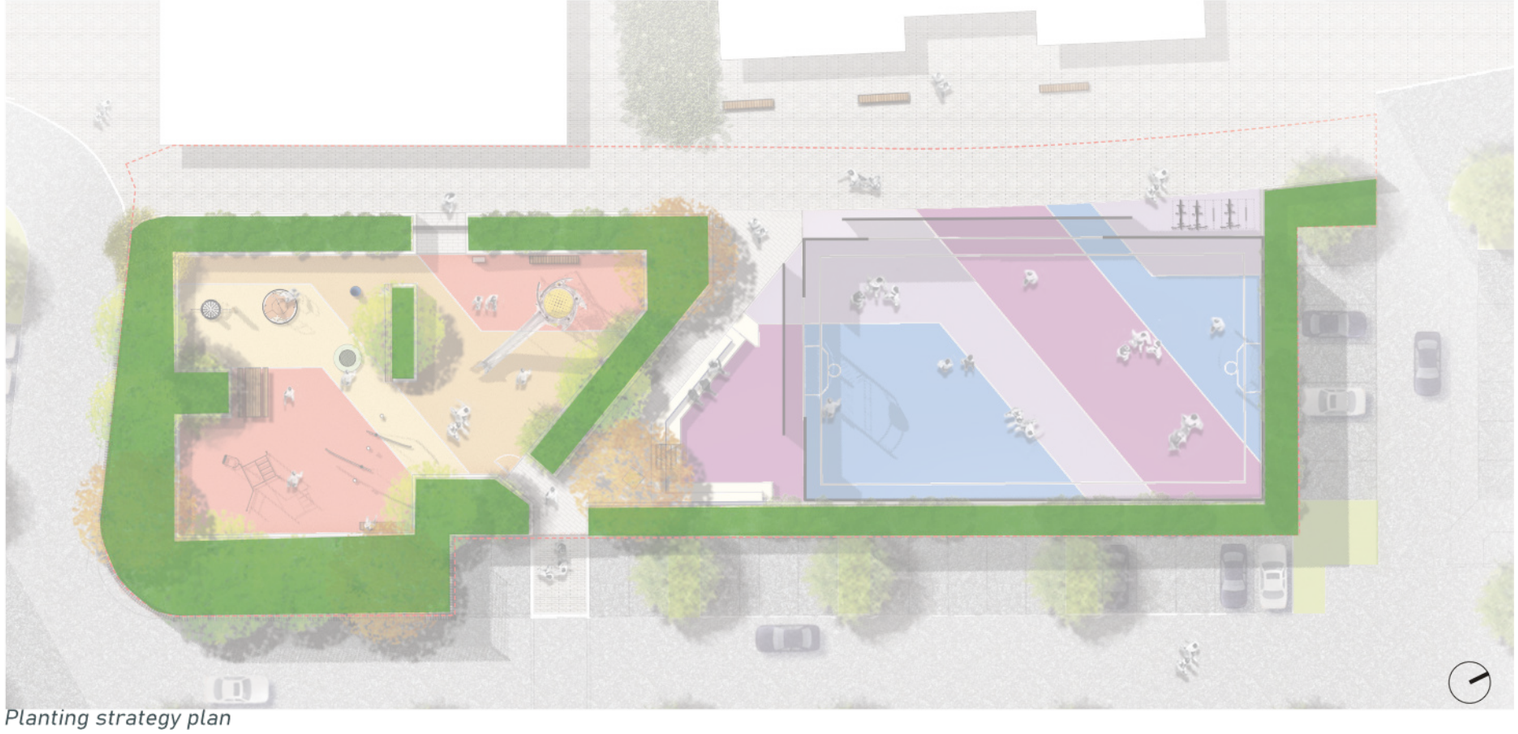

Hyacinthoides non-scripta


Narcissus pseudonarcissus


Galanthus nivalis


Muscari armeniacum

Understorey planting, bulbs



Planting strategy plan

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