

## Harbour Field Proposal, Part 8 Submission from Maynooth Access Group

### 1.0 Introduction

This is a submission from Maynooth Access Group on the Part 8 public consultation on the proposed development of the Harbour Field, Maynooth.

Maynooth Access Group's purpose is to promote universal accessibility and inclusivity by sharing information, events and campaigns with the wider community and key stakeholders. Maynooth Access Group is part of the County Kildare Access Network, working to make Maynooth inclusive and fully accessible to all.

Maynooth Access Group welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the proposal. We thank the Public Realm Team and Mr. Cathal O'Meara for the proposed design which endeavours to create an inter-generational space which has both the capacity and potential to build a sense of community in our town.

As an access group there are a number of matters we wish to address in this submission. We have attempted to provide a comprehensive and holistic response to the proposal.

### 2.0 Accessibility

*"Ensuring an accessible environment is the key to inclusiveness: remove the barriers and we can all enjoy the outdoors, in the same way as our peers"- Quote from National Online Survey 2017*

*"Access is the gateway to full participation in society for people with disabilities." (National Disability Authority)*

The inability of adults and children with disabilities and elderly residents with reduced mobility to access the park is a major barrier to full participation and enjoyment of the parks facilities and amenities. Maynooth Access Group is of the very strong opinion that accessible parking facilities and hygienic accessible toileting amenities, including a "Changing Places" facility must be provided, within or adjacent to the Harbour Field Development.

Currently there are 5 paid parking spaces available opposite the Health Centre. These are in regular use, moreover, they are too far removed from the proposed Harbour Field Redevelopment for residents with mobility issues and those who are disabled. The nearest available disabled parking bay is located on Leinster St outside the Roost Bar. Parking bays designated for people with reduced mobility should be provided as close as possible to the entrance of the proposed development, with a maximum travel distance of 50m. This particular disabled bay (outside Roost Bar) is not fit for purpose and falls short of the IWA guidance criteria / specifications for disabled bays. The guidance states that where the parking bay is in a parallel position to the footpath, the footpath should be dished along the length of the bay. No dropped kerb running along the length of the bay means that transfer into and out of the car can be difficult if the kerb is high as the person has to raise and lower themselves over a greater height. Transfer for wheelchair users is also more difficult, as it necessitates lifting a wheelchair out of the car up onto the pavement level and then the person raising themselves up onto the wheelchair from the car.

IWA guidance states ([http://www.markaline.ie/images/downloads/additional information /IWA% 20 Guidelines.PDF](http://www.markaline.ie/images/downloads/additional%20information/IWA%20Guidelines.PDF)) that the size of the bay should allow for the safe transfer of a passenger or driver to a wheelchair including a space allowance and accessibility zones to allow a person with mobility issues to move safely around the vehicle and for the use of a transfer hoist or ramp which may be attached to some vehicles.

As can be seen from the photographs attached, this particular disabled bay (outside Roost Bar) has no accessibility zones, which means that there is insufficient space for someone to move freely and safely around or to the rear of the car (where the ramp to the footpath is located) and also means it cannot be used with vehicles with a ramp or transfer hoist.





In summary, Maynooth Access Group are convinced that the only means for disabled people and people with reduced mobility to have access to the proposed development is to be able to avail of accessible parking facilities. Level access from the parking area to the network of path ways within the proposed development and leading to any on-site amenities is essential. The parking facilities should include a set-down area, public accessible toilets (which is covered in another part of this submission), space for one disabled bus bay and an appropriate number of perpendicular disabled bays as per the IWA guidance for both of these facilities. Consideration should also be given to the inclusion of age-friendly bays, parent and toddler bays and invisible disability bays.

## **2.0 Information Display Boards**

Information Display Boards should be placed at each of the main pedestrian access points/ entrances and in the car park to provide visitors to the park with information on facilities and amenities available. The Information Display Board should be reachable and readable from a sitting or standing position. The Display Boards need to be set back from the pathway entrances and should not restrict the width of the paths. Physical accessibility is essential for wheelchair users as well as for people who are visually impaired who may need to get up close to read or touch the board. It's recommended that if Display Boards that are to be read from a short distance they should be sited with the centreline of the sign located 1400mm from ground level.

It is important that the ground surface around the display board is level and well maintained to allow access to wheelchair users and the boards are well lit and the surface materials used is non-reflective. A tipping/guard rail on the ground beneath the Information Display Board should be provided to alert people with vision impairment, who are using a mobility cane, of the presence of the Information Display Board.

## **3.0 Litter Bins**

Litter bins throughout the proposed development need to be suitable for everyone and people should be able to use them with only one hand, for example, open tops, slots and push doors. The use of foot-operated bins should be avoided. Waste bins should be between 1000mm and 1300mm in height, should continue down or close to ground level and be of a rounded design in a colour that contrasts with their surroundings. The bin opening should be approximately 1000mm above ground level. Bins should be positioned on accessible paths and should not be placed within eating areas, instead they should be installed at the exits of each area. Please bear in mind that spaces next to benches may be needed for people using wheelchairs to be close to people on the bench, therefore, do not locate bins in clear spaces next to benches. It is important that bins should be set back from the path and should not encroach onto the pathways.

## **4.0 Picnic and BBQ Area**

The inclusion of a Picnic and Barbeque area within the proposed park is welcome. Accessible picnic elements facilitate the inclusion of park visitors and increase the tourism potential of the park. The location of the picnic and BBQ area should be provided on the information display board at the entrances to the park. Please provide route signage to identify locations of accessible picnic tables in addition to the provision of a smooth transition from the network of paths to the picnicking area. The picnicking area should have a firm, level and non-slip surface. The use of grass, gravel and sand should be avoided.

Picnic tables are great for people to eat, socialise and feel included in the activities. Provide seating and tables in the picnic area that accommodates a wide range of statures, mobility levels and perceptual abilities and leave enough surface area (1,800mm) around the tables for easier manoeuvring around the space. Consideration should be given to locating some of the picnic tables in the shade for people who are photosensitive. If possible, it's always ideal to have accessible picnic tables which have open spaces for wheelchairs that are looking out in different directions. Having benches with space for more

than one wheelchair offers the chance for more people who use wheelchairs to sit comfortably together, as well as offering a choice of where each person can sit. If providing child-sized picnic tables, make sure to include wheelchair places on them as well. The position of wheelchair spaces is key, for example, a space in the middle of the table places a person who uses a wheelchair closer to their friends and family increasing social interactions rather than always having to sit at the end of the table. In addition, for a parent with more than one child, a seat in the middle of the table enables the parent to care for children by sitting between them. The height of picnic tables should be between 750mm-800mm with clear knee space of 700mm beneath. To cater for elderly people and those with reduced mobility/ visual impairment, a mixture of seating options in addition to the traditional picnic benches should be provided some with back rests some with arm rests and some with both. The seat height should be within 460-480mm from the ground and minimum depth of the seat should be 450mm. The back support of the seat should be a minimum 455mm in height. While picnic tables with cantilevers to facilitate wheelchair users are available these are less preferred for the reasons given above.

In the interest of the health and safety of park visitors, powder extinguishers needs to be located at the picnic area to suppress any fires that might originate from the BBQ.

It is important that the waste litter bin is located at the entrance to the picnic area and regular cleaning and maintenance schedule needs to be in place to prevent the accumulation of food debris and pest and rodent infestation.

## **5.0 Boardwalk**

The proposal states that to the waterfront the canal side path will take the form of timber boardwalk with gripdeck finish.

A 4m wide decked boardwalk provides more than adequate room for 2 wheelchair-users and 2 companions to pass each other comfortably. Ensure a smooth transition from the pathway to the boardwalk and, it is important that the deck boards are laid at right angles to the direction of traffic flow (otherwise mobility canes or the front castors of wheelchairs may be caught between boards). It is good practice to lay down decking with very slight gaps between the individual boards. This may also give some extra grip if boards become wet and slippery. The gap should be no greater than 12mm

### *Edge protection*

An upstand such as a raised kerb of at least 150mm in height should be provided on both sides of a boardwalk to stop the castors of a wheelchair from going over the edge and which also acts as a "tapping rail" to assist a person with a visual impairment with wayfinding. Ensure that the boardwalk area is well lit.

### *Seating*

Rest/seating areas should be placed at regular intervals i.e. distances of 100m apart along the boardwalk. Provide a tactile cue, possibly a consistent change of surfacing/colour on the approach to each seating location in order to alert people who have a visual impairment.

Any seating provided adjacent to the boardwalk should be placed back from the main traffic route by at least 600mm to allow others to move freely past the seating area. Ensure that a variety of seating types / styles is available.

Seating for older people and those with reduced mobility should be no lower than 450mm from ground level with a minimum of 450mm seat depth and with a heel space of 100mm to allow for easier rising from the seat. Armrests should be provided as they assist a person to sit into and to rise from the seat. Avoid sharp edges. A clear space of 1400mm in depth and 900mm in width is recommended adjacent to the seating to allow a person using a wheelchair to position alongside.

## Maintenance

Regular upkeep and maintenance will ensure that the boardwalk will remain accessible for all users. Consideration should be given to creating a number of accessible fishing stands along the boardwalk that could significantly enhance the tourism and recreation value of the amenity.

### 6.0 Pathways

The proposal states “*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.*” Ideally, the width of the secondary paths should be 2M to allow two wheelchair users to pass each other safely. A path width of 1.5M accommodates a wheelchair user and another person walking alongside. It is important that pathways are non-slip well-lit and obstacle free. The maintenance of the proposed development should include the provision of fallen leaf collection in the autumn such that fallen leaves do not impede the safe travel over pathways. In addition, vegetation overhanging or overgrowing pathways should be cut back at regular intervals. It is recommended that coloured surfacing is employed on the paths as it diverges in colour from the surrounding landscape and can aid in wayfinding for people who have a visual impairment.

The proposal speaks to the construction of a network of internal paths with primary paths allowing controlled vehicular access and secondary linking pathways to access facilities within the site. It is critical that tactile paving should be used where pathways cross these proposed vehicular routes and cycle paths.

The east-west link from the Straffan Rd and Leinster street should be punctuated with a range of seating types at regular intervals 100 m apart to provide respite / rest areas for disabled and mobility impaired residents (seating specifications as per Section 4.0 Picnic & BBQ Areas above).

We are opposed to the inclusion of the diagonal path as it destroys the amenity value of the park by literally dividing the green space in two. We are also concerned that the diagonal path will be used as a shortcut by cyclists and users of e-scooters to get to the cycleway thereby bringing cyclists, e-scooters and vulnerable pedestrians into conflict and creating potentially hazardous situations. Should the diagonal pathway be ultimately constructed, in spite of the concerns raised here, it is imperative that tactile paving is in place at the intersections of the diagonal pathway with the cycleways. It is unclear from the information provided whether cyclists or e-scooters are permitted to use the east-west link from the Straffan road or the diagonal link to the canal.

### 7.0 Cycle Hub

The Harbour field area as a junction point between route stages along the Royal Canal Greenway makes the ideal location to develop an accessible bike hub. Many people with disabilities may have limited mobility having specific equipment available can ensure their participation in outdoor activities.

To exploit the tourism potential of the Greenway consideration should be given to the development of a bike hub similar to the scheme operated by Dun Laoighre-Rathdown. This facility could give people access to cycling regardless of their age, or ability. The Bike Hub could host a hand-cycle for use by wheelchair users, a tricycle for older people or those who have trouble with their balance and a tandem. The tandem can be used by people with visual impairment who would cycle with a sighted pilot as the front of the pair. The trishaws could be piloted by volunteers from Cycling Without Age who will take up to two passengers out for gentle spin along the Greenway.

The number of nursing homes in the area together with the student population and the civic engagement initiatives could make this proposition a very viable opportunity.

### 8.0 Basketball Court.

Basketball is a welcoming and inclusive sport and can be played by people of all abilities and ages. The existing basketball court is in regular use by our young people and Maynooth Access Group believe that it should be retained.

## 9.0 Bowling Area

Bowling is a low impact, precision sport / activity in which people of all abilities and ages can participate. Health professionals recommend playing bowls, particularly for older people, as it provides a number of health benefits, including, improved fitness, improved coordination and skill development, increased confidence and self-esteem, enhanced mental wellbeing and community connectedness and support.

Maynooth Access Group fully support the inclusion of bowling lanes within the proposed redevelopment.

## 10.0 Skate Park

The play strategy being proposed for the redevelopment for the Harbour Field needs to meet the needs of the expanding youth demographic. While the large playground and the sensory play area, albeit small, are ideal for catering to populations of young children under one facility, teenagers and young adults should not be neglected. The older youth population who do not wish to participate in organised sport, such as GAA, soccer and rugby, have much fewer opportunities to socialise with no recreational space specific to their needs. This issue has been addressed by the provision of a skate park. In several European cities, skate parks became the model solution to providing open recreational space to this particular demographic. It is essential that we consider facilities such as skate parks that are modern, versatile, cost effective and inclusive.

## 11.0 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."*

This part of the submission will focus on the large playground.

The CRPD, Article 30 (5d) specifically makes provision for children with disabilities to have access to play facilities, states: *"Parties shall take appropriate measure to ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities"*.

### 11.1 Accessibility

All gates in the perimeter fence should have a clear opening width of 1m to allow a person using a wheelchair/mobility scooter / double buggy to easily gain entry to the playground. Please provide 500mm clear space on the latch side of any gate. The self-closing two-way gate system should enable the gates to be simply opened in either direction by pedestrians or people using wheelchairs. Latches on gates should be visible, usable from both sides of the gate and as easy as possible to use requiring minimal strength and manual dexterity. Latches should be placed no higher than 1200mm to ensure that people seated in a wheelchair can reach them. An appropriate playground surfacing that meets the EN1176 and EN1177 standards should be chosen. Playground surfaces should be designed with various purposes in mind, including play value, to reduce severity of injury from falls, access and aesthetics.

When designing a playground for children with visual impairment keep in mind that yellow is a colour that can often be seen by those with low vision. Don't use dark colour as a pattern in the surfacing because dark colours can be seen as holes. Consider using high contrast colours between the orientation path and the equipment and avoid shiny and reflective surfaces.

Wide accessible routes throughout the playground should be created to allow wheelchair users, those with mobility aids, parents with prams buggies and/or children who do not like to be touched, enough room to pass each other while using the play space.

To allow users, including wheelchair users and those using mobility aids, to easily transfer to and from the various pieces of play equipment and to allow users to move freely between different areas of the playground ensure that there is a flush transition from one surface to another. Particular attention must



be paid to the surface connections to ensure that the seams are tightly secured with no trip hazards or finger traps. Consideration should be given to the use of transfer platforms to allow a child or adult who is using a mobility aid to transfer to and from that aid independently to the piece of play equipment. This is particularly important at slides.

## 11.2 Play experiences

An inclusive play space is where children of all abilities can play together and offers a rich range of physical, sensory, and social experiences. Each type of play is crucial to a child's development and enjoyment of the playground, therefore, you should try to include a mixture of all three when selecting play equipment and features to create an exciting and more inclusive play space.

Inclusive play is not about meeting "special needs"; it's about meeting all children's needs in the same place and in a variety of different ways. (Pick & Mix: a Selection of Inclusive Games and activities, Di Murray, 2004)

## 11.3 Physical play

### *Spinning*

Spinning activities stimulate different parts of the brain simultaneously creating new and more developed pathways throughout the brain that improve learning potential, balance, muscle control, spatial awareness and gross motor skills.

Different pieces of play equipment that provide children with the ability to sit and spin, stand and spin, and lie and spin should be chosen. This could either be three different pieces, or one single piece could provide the ability to play in different positions, e.g., spinners and inclusive roundabouts and merry-go-rounds (spinners at ground level and centrifugal types with an off centre-seat should be considered for children with a physical impairment). An inclusive roundabout would enable children using wheelchairs to play equally with friends and to experience a motion that stimulates their vestibular system without leaving the chair. Spinners deliver a fantastic vestibular experience for children who have autism, sensory processing disorder or have difficulty with balance.

### *Sliding*

Slides stimulate the child's vestibular system and sense of balance. If possible, slides at different heights should be provided. For children with a physical impairment slides should be double the width of a regular slide, enabling parents/carers to support the child while they go down the slide; these slides should also be equipped with a transfer platform. You can also choose different types of slides, such as, tube, textured, curved, straight, spiral, etc. to provide different experiences.

For a more inclusive playground, have one slide that does not create static electricity for people with a cochlear implant.

### *Swinging*

Swinging helps to develop the large and fine motor skills such as core muscles, hand grip, etc Swinging also helps vestibular co-ordination, proprioception and visual perception. The simple rocking motion of a swing can often soothe and calm an anxious child.

Swings that move in a linear motion and others that moves in a circular motion should be provided. A variety of swings and swing sizes should be considered for eg roll-on wheelchair swing, tango swing, basket swings, flat swings in a variety of widths and inclusive swings, net swings and hammocks so that the playground offers a choice of swings for all abilities. For children who cannot sit up a gentle swing in a net, hammock or cantilever swing basket may be a possibility. Swing sets with seats that incorporate seat belts and lateral supports are great for those with poor balance.

### *Rocking*

Rocking provides children with a fun movement and prompts imaginative play, it also challenges and develops children's vestibular system by moving the body in a rocking motions and can have a soothing and calming effect on an overwhelmed child. At least one piece of equipment that provides a to-and-fro motion and another one that provides side-to-side motion should be included .for eg spring rockers and seesaws. Spring rockers and see-saws with side and back support, broad footrests, and D-shaped handgrips help to stabilise children with poor balance. Rocking and seesawing in a sitting position requires active use of the muscles around the hips. Wide seats and good hand grips are a great help.

### *Climbing and Crawling*

Climbing and crawling activities stimulate and develop a child's proprioceptive system. If climbing activities are selected, include at least two challenge levels. For level 1 consider using climbers with wide platforms, broader stairs, handles, ground level activities and play panels, overhead bars that can be reached from a wheelchair, sloping net climbers, holes in floor for grips. For level 2 consider rock walls with medium-sized boulder with good hand or foot support, a straight up climber with even steps and good hand or foot supports, a curved climber with steps where the entire body can be on it for support.

### *Crawling*

Consider including at least two crawling activities that allow a child to attempt different challenge levels, for example ground or elevated tunnels. Many low-level crawling and climbing nets, tunnels and tubes can be used by children with significant mobility impairments. They find it easier to climb on sloping netting than on vertical netting, which also allows an adult to assist and take part in the activity.

### *Jumping and bouncing*

Jumping and bouncing are great fun activities and give children the feeling of flying in the air .They also help to stimulate and develop a child's vestibular and proprioceptive system. At least one jumping or bouncing activity that can be used while sitting and another that can be used standing should be considered. This could be one single piece of equipment, for example a trampoline.

### *Balancing*

Balancing activities can respond to a child's need for risk and challenge, while increasing their ability to balance on their feet and build core body strength. Balancing activities promote social interaction and pretend play. Equipment at ground level e.g. patterns on the play surface or elevated equipment i.e. balance beams or balance courses should be considered.

## 11.4 Sensory Play

This is play that encourages children to use one or more of the senses, stimulating sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, balance and movement. Sensory play enhances learning through hands-on activities that stimulate a child's senses. It also supports language development, cognitive growth, fine and gross motor skills, problem-solving skills and social interaction. Furthermore it aids in developing and enhancing memory and helps calm an anxious or frustrated child. Sensory play can serve as an outlet to children with sensory processing disorder

### *Auditory*

The development of the auditory system can be assisted by including equipment that creates a sound or enables a child to hear their friend talking from a distance, such as the Talk Tubes. Other ways to help develop the auditory system are with outdoor musical instruments, generating sound by pushing a button in a play equipment, entering an area to create a sound, or walking across an equipment to create sound. Children with sensory processing disorder often like deep tones, rather than ones of high pitch. Some equipment that makes sounds can become boring quite quickly, while other sound equipment is fragile and vulnerable to vandalism. Choose robust items which can be used in more than one way (e.g. tube phones and sound reflectors).

### *Tactile*

Children should be provided with a play experience in which they exercise and develop their sense of touch. The tactile system, the largest sensory system in the body, helps children determine whether something is cold, wet, hot, sharp, etc. It helps the brain organize information for developing the visual and auditory systems.

The playground should offer children the opportunity to feel several of the following textures:

- Smooth e.g. this could be metal poles, metal slides, mirrors, etc.
- Soft – examples of this include grass, rubber, fabric, etc.
- Hard – for example, rocks, metal etc
- Rough – examples include boulders, rocks, rope, etc.
- Grainy – examples include sand, dirt, rocks or boulders, etc.
- Uneven – for example, a slide with bumps built in, textured paths, etc.

Pathways with undulations or a variety of different textures built into them provides a fun wheeled play experience for wheelchair users.

### *Visual*

Play equipment and design features that are visually pleasing to the eye and both delight and surprise can help develop a child's visual system. Colourful educational play panels should be considered. Consider the use of flags, sculptures and the use of contrasting colours and patterns in the surfacing

## 11.5 Social Play

A playground should afford children the opportunity to take part in social play and interact with other children.

### *Cooperative play*

Playgrounds are wonderful places for children to practice social skills that may be difficult for them. Therefore, it is important to include at least one piece of equipment that encourages cooperative play. Play equipment such as seesaws that require two or more children to operate it enable children to experience the social side of playing with others and enjoying the company of new friends, examples might also include a sand pit or a grouped seating area which acts as a meeting point for children to sit and chat.

### *Solitary play*

Play equipment that allows a child play alone should be included. Learning to play alone gives children the time to think and explore how their world operates. It gives them the freedom to use their imagination, to make up their own rules for play and become fully engaged in an activity that interests them.

### *Onlooker play*

Onlooker play – when the child watches others at play but does not engage in it. The child may engage in forms of social interaction, such as conversation about the play, without actually joining in the activity. This type of activity is also more common in younger children. By grouping play equipment, children can watch how others play and join in when they feel comfortable.

### *Parallel play*

Parallel play is when two or more children play near one another or next to one another, but without interacting directly, such as on swings. They will sometimes be observing, listening and even mimicking the other child. Parallel play can help children to learn about relationships and how to behave around others.



### *Associate play*

Children play independently side-by-side with others, engaging each other in conversation at times but not coordinating efforts. Sand pits and pretend play provide opportunities for associate play.

### *Imaginative play*

Dramatic / imaginative play provides children with the opportunity to use their language, cognitive and social skills. A playground should give children the chance to create play “themes” and act them out by taking part in various roles for eg the quiet space under a multiplay structure could be some a secret pirate cave etc This sort of pretend play helps children to see things from another person’s perspective teaching skills such as empathy and understanding. Consider using themed play structures i.e. castles, pirate ships or space ships, a stage, a playhouse, etc.

## 11.6 Other Play Factors that need to be considered

### *Placing equipment and features at varying heights*

Consider placing play panels, water and sand tables, etc. at varying heights to accommodate children who have different reach ranges. It is important that a child who is using a wheelchair can access the play equipment and features by sitting at or under them.

### *Quiet Places*

It is very important to have quiet or resting areas in the playground, which are still within the sightline in which children who are experiencing sensory overload can retreat to regroup and recalibrate but where they don’t have to leave the playground. Anything that provides a shield from stimuli for the child away from the crowd, sound, sun, or noise can act as a quiet space. This could be a tunnel, a shaded bench under a play tower, or perhaps a playhouse where the child feels enclosed but the parent / carer can still see them.

Children with autism spectrum disorder will appreciate quiet spaces where they can rest, hang out or play on their own. Muted colours work best here.

And don’t forget that lots of children have asthma, hayfever and other breathing difficulties. Care should be taken when choosing plants near the playground. Building for Everyone (see page 38 <https://nda.ie/publications/environment-housing/building-for-everyone/>) contains a lists of plants to use or avoid.

*The proposal states “The main playground features and 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 the most apprehensive child to explore its possibilities.”*

Make sure that the main playground feature / activity is accessible and usable for all. Nothing excludes, separates and creates barriers between children more than the “coolest “ most sought after piece of play equipment that everyone wants to play on being inaccessible to some of them.

Playgrounds should engage children of all ages and abilities by providing a full range of equipment with various play values and different levels of challenge. Not every child is going to choose to use every piece of equipment in the playground or have the ability to do so. But, it is imperative that every child has a real choice of what to play on and has access to the social experience of play.

Inclusive play is not about meeting “special needs”; it’s about meeting all children’s needs in the same place and in a variety of different ways. (Pick & Mix: a Selection of Inclusive Games and activities, Di Murray 2004)

## 11.7 Providing supportive infrastructure and amenities can help make your play ground more inclusive.

### *Have a variety of seating types available*

Providing different types of seats allows parents, carers and children of all abilities to sit near one another and to the play space. Seating should be positioned to ensure that children remain within the sightline of parents / carers and can be supervised during play.

Seats should generally be closer to the play areas where younger children will play and a little further back for older children.

Include benches with and without arm rests to allow someone in a wheelchair to transfer to them. Similarly, make sure that there is enough space for a wheelchair to be placed next to a bench.

### *Communication Boards*

Communication and a means to communicate are essential for a people's physical and mental wellbeing. The ability to communicate for a child is vital for their development, health, safety and wellbeing. Playground communication boards support this need in a fun and inclusive way. A communication board is a type of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device that uses photos, symbols or illustrations to help people with limited language skills to express themselves and to make choices, share feelings and ideas during play. They are of particular benefit to children and adults who are either pre-verbal or non-verbal, those who have communication difficulties as well as for children where English is not their first language.

### *Drinking fountains and water refills stations*

Wheelchair Accessible Water Bottle Refill Stations with Drinking Fountains that are operated by a lever rather than a button should be provided.

### *Toilets and Changing facilities*

Suitable toilet and changing facilities allow children, adults and tourists to visit the playground for longer and enjoy their visit with dignity and comfort. Do not underestimate the importance of toilet and changing facilities to the success of an inclusive play space.

### *Changing Places toilets*

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as people with other physical disabilities, often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. These needs are met by Changing Places toilets.

A Changing Places toilet should be included in the proposed development. These toilets are different to standard accessible toilets and if possible should be provided in addition to accessible toilets, this is because standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of everyone.

Changing Places facilities are a real improvement on standard accessible toilets as they provide a larger floor area of 12m<sup>2</sup> and additional equipment such as a height-adjustable adult-sized changing bench, a full room coverage ceiling track hoist system, a centrally located toilet bowl with space either side for transfers/assistants and a safe and clean environment.

### *Allow service and assistance dogs to access the play space*

It is very important that children and adults who have a service or assistance dog can use the playground. Ensure that signage is in place to welcome service and assistance dogs.

Make sure appropriate waste disposal is provided for dog waste and include signs that strongly encourage owners to dispose of dog waste responsibly.

Provide a water trough or basin for service and assistance dogs to use.

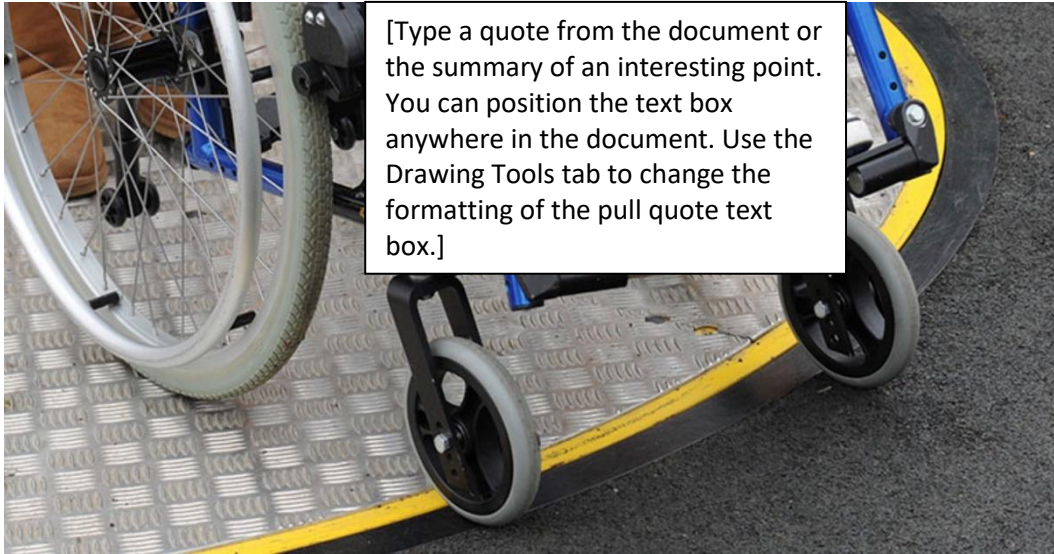




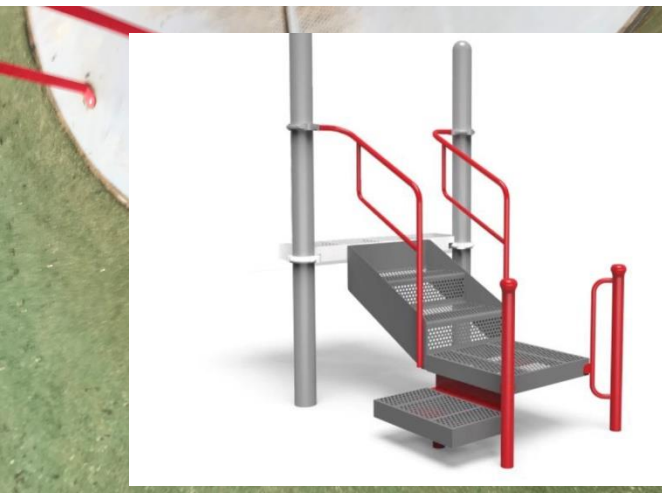
◀ ▶ Steel Wheelchair Accessible Picnic Table ✕







This demonstrates a smooth transition from one play area to the next



This image shows that the seams between two play surfaces are not tightly secured, which could result in a trip hazard or a finger trap

An example of a transfer platform



A playhouse that can be used as a quiet place



The photos show pathways with undulations or a variety of different textures built into them, providing a fun-wheeled tactile play experience



A row of swings including a wheelchair accessible swing



A schematic of an accessible sand pit at South Beach playground Greystones. Note the matting that allows wheelchair access.



Some samples of accessible play equipment





A double-width slide



