Gosford Forest Park Adventure Play

Davies White Landscape Architects

Reconnecting families with nature through play

GERALD DAVIES LTD.
ENGINEERING THE ENVIRONMENT

Design Statement
March 2019

Design Statement

Play Concept.

Todays children and families often have limited opportunities to connect with the natural environment. Modern family life has changed dramatically in the last two decades. Some children spend more time indoors looking at screens than they do being physically active outside and their health and wellbeing are being negatively affected.

In the past decade, the benefits of connecting to nature have been well documented in numerous research studies and publications. Collectively, this body of research shows that children's social, psychological, academic and physical health is positively impacted when they have daily contact with nature, the so called nature connectedness which has a positive impact on us all.

Making a naturalised outdoor multisensory play environment can go some way to encouraging a reconnection with nature, these environments stimulate a diversity of play experiences and contribute to a child's healthy development.

Gosford Forest Park.
Location 1 - Little Explorers.
Easting (X) 296484 Northing (Y) 340666
Average area of development at this location: 1636sq.m.

This space will be focused on younger children and will include a range of play experiences as an introduction to the wider trail. There are opportunities to climb, crawl, slide, swing, discover, and learn. It will encourage children with varying age ranges, skills and abilities to play together. It will encourage social and solitary play, exploration and adventure and introduce reasonable risk where children can explore their imagination and own boundaries.

Location 2 – Giants Home.
Easting (X) 296288 Northing (Y) 340850
Average area of development at this location: 1636sq.m.

Swift visited Gosford and contributed to the layout of the gardens and enjoyed walks in the estates woodlands. This area will reference Gulliver's travels and represent the giant scale experienced by the Lilliputian's. This area includes giant climbing trees with hand grips, these will appeal to older children as they are more challenging. Along with a giant chair that several children can get up into and imagine what it is like to be a Lilliputian.

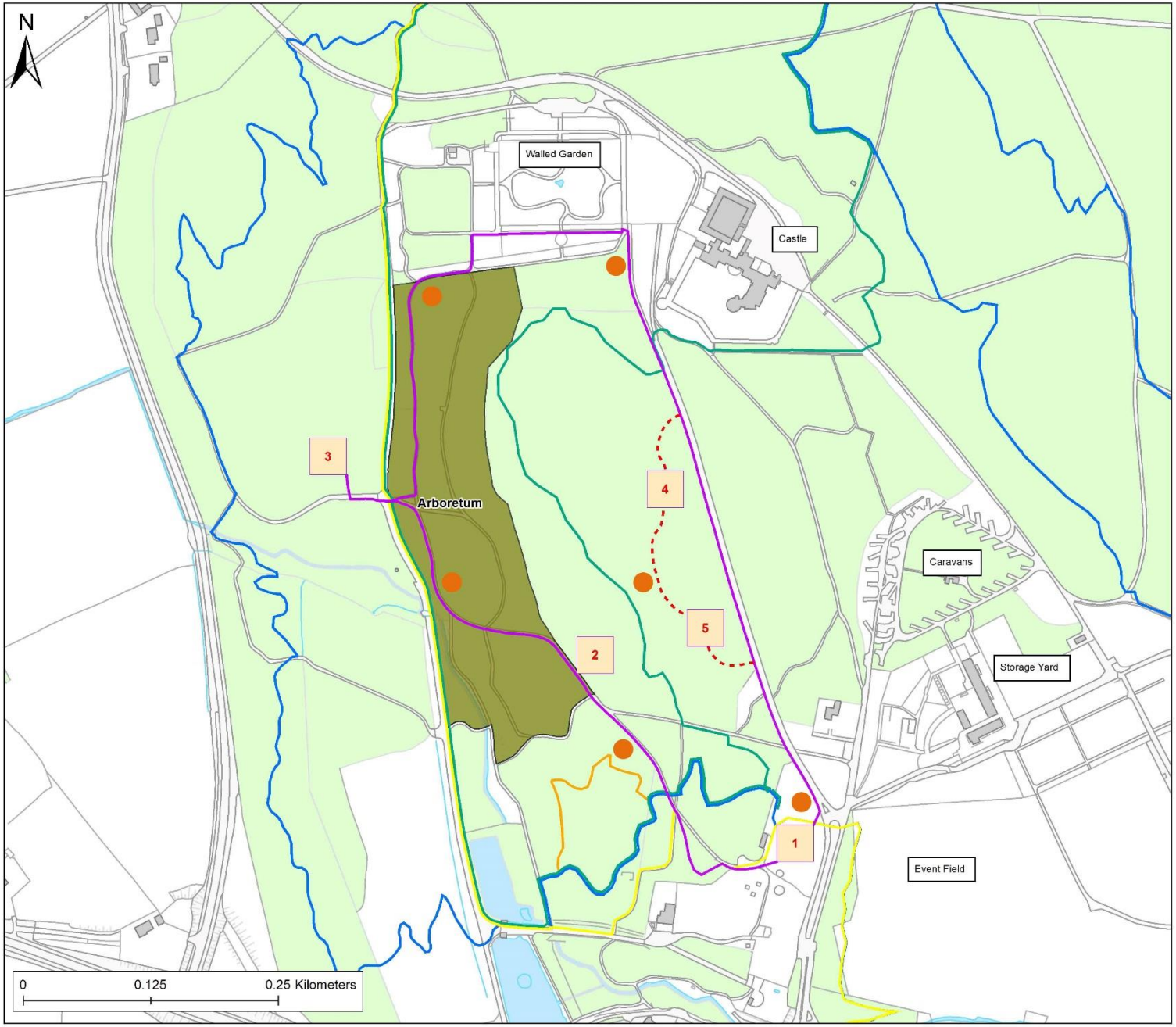
Design Statement continued.

Location 3 – Tree top nests.
Easting (X) 296027 Northing (Y) 341044
Average area of development at this location: 1636sq.m.
These nests are inspired by local wildlife, and look as if a giant bird has made a series of nests in a treetop. They are accessible by a series of platforms and climbing tubes, with various routes to climb up and slide down from the main nest structures. They encourage play by all ages and abilities, the lower levels area accessible to younger children and those with more ability can climb up to the top. The nest structure will be made from oak, larch and Robinia logs.

Location 4 – Tower with zip wire.
Easting (X) 296357 Northing (Y) 341012
Average area of development at this location: 1636sq.m.
This tower structure includes two 30 metre long zip wires, a 10 metre long open tubular slide wrapping around the unpeeled Chestnut clad tower structure. The higher levels of the tower are accessible by a series of platforms and offers shade and shelter inside. For those not able to climb to the top of the tower there is a talking tube so that you can still talk to your friends up in the top of the tower. There is also a periscope so those at ground level get and opportunity to look up and see the view from the top of the tower.

Location 5 – Forestry Log Stacks.
Easting (X) 296396 Northing (Y) 340876
Average area of development at this location: 1636sq.m.
This area is inspired by the local history of the science & craft of creating, managing, using, conserving, and repairing woodlands and forests. The log stack is perfect for climbing with a net structure set inside to climb down a different route. This area will also include a framework for den building, an area where children can test their ingenuity and use found materials within the woodland to build temporary den structures.

Location 6 – Connecting the Trail.
Locations as shown.
Maximum area of development at these locations in total: 1820sq.m.
Set between each of the main play locations are a series of playful markers that help people navigate their way around the trail. These will include seating and a trail of animal sculptures, matched by a brass rubbing plaque on a post of the animals footprint. Children will be able to collect a map at the visitor centre and create a brass rubbing image at each of the locations.



OUTDOOR RECREATION NORTHERN IRELAND

Gosford Forest Play Trail

Revised Locations

1:3,500

Proposed location of brass rubbing posts and /or oak tree seat.

Date: 22/02/19

Key

- DW Play Structures - Revised Locations
- Revised Play Trail Route (Feb 2019)
- Potential_Trail
- Boundary Trail (5.5km)
- Green Mountain Bike Trail (3.5km)
- Blue Mountain Bike Trail (11.5km)
- Skills Loop (0.8km)
- Arboretum

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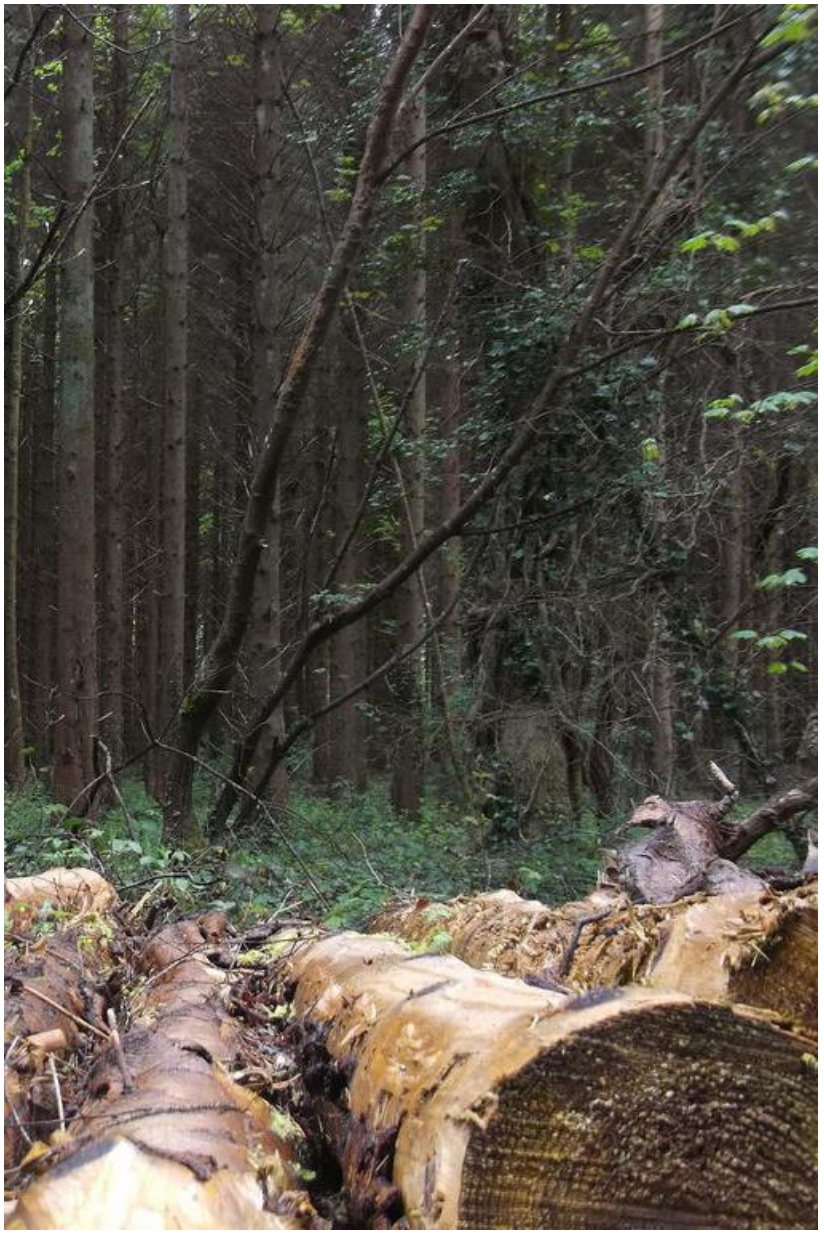
Working with existing trees.

The aim:
The aim is to deliver the new play structures within the existing forest trees to ensure they sit within the landscape and children get the benefit of being able to play in nature.

Development around existing trees.
Prior to works starting on site we will carry out a tree condition survey to establish the quality of the trees within the development areas. Those of good quality will be protected and retained, and the development will work outside the Root Protection Areas of these trees (see below). Where trees need to be removed to accommodate the new structures these will be medium and low quality trees. The tree removal strategy will be agreed in conjunction with the local authority.

Root Protection Areas.
The tree Root Protection Area (RPA) is a layout design tool indicating the area around a tree that, along with the tree stem and branches, must be considered during development. The protection of the roots and soil structure within the RPA should be treated as a priority. The RPA of each tree or group will be marked on a Tree Constraints Plan.



Public engagement

Design engagement activities.
Engaging with the local community and stakeholders is key to making sure the new play trail meets the needs of local people and is an inspiring and welcoming place for all.

School workshops.
We have years of experience working with school and community groups to share our enthusiasm for shaping the local environment.
The views of end users, in this case local children, has an important influence on the final look and feel of a newly designed place.
The workshop helps the children feels like the space belongs to them and they have a stake in looking after it.
For the Gosford Forest project we will to run two hands on design engagement workshops with local schools using the forest setting to inspire a connection with nature and play.
The aim:
To inspire local children to take part in the development of the new play space at Gosford Forest.
To get children to explore their existing play experiences and make an assessment of their value.
To help children imagine what their ideal play space would be like at Gosford Forest.
To participate in a craft project making a model of their imagined play space or feature.

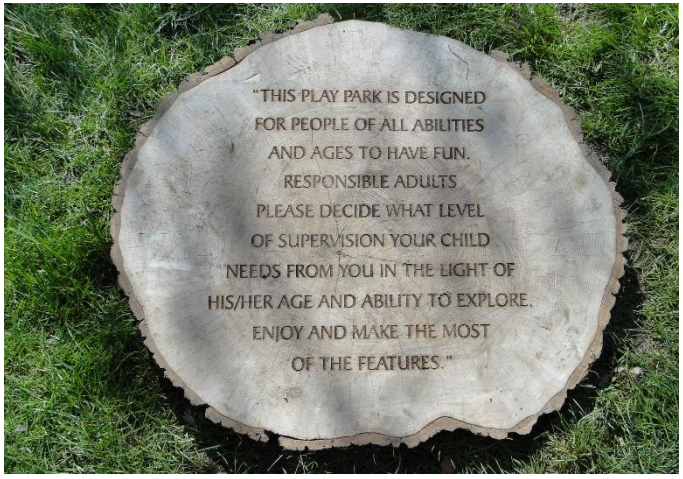
Hands on woodland Workshop.
It is our intention when the project is on site to co-ordinate hands on workshops where the children can learn traditional woodland crafts and help build part of the play space. This will help give those children a sense of achievement and make them feel connected to the new play trail. A good message to share with their friends and families.

Risk Benefit Statement

Davies White offer a thoughtful, **balanced approach to risk**, in recognition of its central role in play. The professional climate around risk and play has been improving for some years, with a resulting freeing up of designs. Parents too are showing greater understanding of the issue. Offering children opportunities to take **acceptable and reasonable risks** in environments that are challenging and stimulating.

However, there is still some public confusion about the topic. We have thorough understanding of the BSEN **1176 and 1177 regulations. Risk-benefit assessments** also help designers to take a more thoughtful, balanced approach to play space design and management.

Throughout the delivery of the project we regularly carry out risk benefit assessments and support the client in learning how to do their own assessments once the play space is open.



Inclusive Play Statement

All children benefit from being outside, interacting with their environment, learning from nature and developing through play. An inclusive approach to play is critical to the success of every play area. By allowing **everyone to socialise and play together,** it creates a greater awareness and understanding of the needs of different people. The importance of play in children's development is much documented.

Our play spaces offer enjoyable play experiences to all and we try to accommodate the many needs of children and young people, including those with physical disabilities and mental health conditions, whilst accepting that not all elements of the play space can be accessible to everyone. Though many other play designers focus on equipment that is wheelchair-accessible, Davies White believe it is important to recognise that there are **many different types of disability and special needs.**

Our 2017 Wild Garden highlighted the beneficial qualities of public spaces for children with various disabilities, in particular **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).**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