

Proposed Area Improvement

based on

“A vision for the short and long term of Brook Green”

Consultation Document 20th August 2010
BGVG



Halcrow

2011



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Introduction

- Brook Green is a rare island of greenery in an intensively developed area. It is well used by all sections of the Community and is much appreciated.
- In 2010 a Vision Group was formed, supported by the Brook Green Association (“the BGA”) and the Friends of Brook Green (“the Friends), to consider and consult on the future of the Green.
- In summary its recommendations, which were strongly supported by feedback from the Community, were that the Green should remain much as it is today with no significant appropriation of green space for other purposes. Even so opportunities to enhance its amenity value and appearance were identified with particular prioritisation of the Central Area, including the Playground, some of whose key equipment is becoming life expired, the Hut/Loos and the area to the north of the tennis courts.
- Delivery of the Vision on behalf of the Brook Green community in partnership with LBH+F is now being overseen by the Vision Implementation Group (“VIG”) , whose members comprise representatives of the BGA, the Friends and independents.
- To date VIG has:
 - Agreed the recommendations of the Vision Group with LBH+F and critically has successfully lobbied them to find a site just off the Green at which to base the storage and maintenance functions. Less helpfully LBH+F has advised that it can not commit the financial resources to finance even the programme for the Central Area; and that if the investment called for is to be fully achieved; the Community will have to attract funding from additional sources.
 - Enlisted the help of Halcrow Group Limited, a leading engineering company, whose headquarters are at Elms House, 43 Brook Green to comment on the proposed area improvements and to produce graphics and 3-d visuals that better convey these. As a key stakeholder in the community, Halcrow kindly agreed to provide their services on a pro bono basis.
 - Engaged the services of Jon Sheaff, an experienced land/playspace designer, to ensure that we take full advantage of the once in a generation opportunity to upgrade our play area based on ‘best of play concepts.
- In recent weeks the situation has taken on added urgency. Public access to the loos has been closed, the foundations of the main item of play equipment have been found to be rotten (so it will be withdrawn) and, following reseeded, the kick about area will remain off limits throughout this summer.
- So as a Community we have a choice that is now rather starker than it seemed until only recently. We can either commit to preserve and improve the Green for the benefit of the Community or we can stand by and watch the area slowly decline.
- The BGA and the Friends are in no doubt as to the broad community benefits of preserving and enhancing the Green and of promoting its use. We are working jointly to ensure a bright future for the Green. But we will need the Community’s support and help if we are to renew and upgrade the Central Area in a desirable timeframe and to fulfil other elements of the Vision.

This booklet reviews:

1. The recommendations of the Vision Group, what they entail, and Halcrow’s commentary thereon.
2. The benefits to the community.
3. The expected costs of implementation.
4. The intended approach to funding.
5. The involvement of the community.
6. Governance proposals.
7. How you can help.

Proposed Area Improvement Brook Green



The Vision



The Findings and Recommendations of the Vision Review

- The Vision Group considered each area (A-H) of the Green and concluded that a number of small changes could be made to improve the amenities of the Green without impairing its character or environment;
- The Review's principal findings and priority recommendations include

Area E

Findings:

The playground, which caters for the age group up to 11, is severely overcrowded at peak times, most notably immediately after the school day ends. Aside this matter, the existing play facilities are in need of renewal and upgrading.

Area C4

Findings:

The maintenance yard occupies prime space at a high opportunity cost. The existing hut including its toilet facilities is antiquated and attracts vandalism. It urgently needs replacing. There is a need for a proper tennis player reception and a kiosk with limited seating for visitors.

Area C5/E

Findings:

Anti-social behaviour at night on the benches to the north of the tennis courts is a very regular occurrence. Similarly in the warmer months, the playground attracts regular nocturnal misuse resulting in disturbance to residents and damage to play equipment.

Area C2/D/C4

Findings:

The Vision Group considered that the tennis court surface is too uneven for a temporary winter surface to be laid with a view to allowing two of the courts to be used for football. However, the council has since announced an intention to let a 21 year management franchise over the courts. This may present an opportunity to introduce multi-purpose use of the courts in winter.

Area F

Findings:

The kick about area has suffered severely in recent winters and the previous attempts to improve the grass surface failed.

Recommendation:

Additional play capacity should be found sensitively. The age range catered for should not be extended. Optimal plans for regenerating the playground should be developed with the LBHF, though unfortunately their budget of £75,000 will not be sufficient to cover the related cost.

Recommendation:

A suitable site for the yard off the Green has now been found. The area freed up should be converted to a play space for under 5s. The replacement building should be constructed in a similar style. If it were rotated through 90 degrees relative to the existing building, even more space could be made available for the under 5s area. The new hut design should also accommodate requirements for a kiosk and seating and for a tennis player reception. A design of the new hut and playground which would be acceptable to the community should be developed and shared with the Council.

Recommendation:

Remove some of the benches and redesign the area to the north of the courts to discourage anti-social nocturnal behavior. Protect all the play areas with suitable 150-160cms high fencing to discourage night time use of the Playgrounds.

Recommendation:

The intended tennis court franchise agreement should be consistent with the Vision (and in particular should not contemplate a hut facility of greater proportions and commerciality). The possibility of multi-purpose use of the courts in winter should be fully evaluated and local schools, employers and user groups should be consulted. Lighting and fencing requirements should be assessed.

Recommendation:

The lawn should be reseeded (now done) and allowed to become established (in process).

The Findings and Recommendations of the Vision Review

The Vision Implementation Group considers that the priority recommendations should ideally be undertaken in a single phase (the Phase 1 works).

Less urgent proposals and recommendations were suggested for:

- Area A, Little Brook Green, could be used as an outdoor exercise area;
- Area B, the Western Lawn, should continue to be used for recreational purposes by office workers and the general community. Its use in summer could be further encouraged by supplying additional seating on its western edge and there is a significant opportunity for extending the lawn as near to the street on the south side as LBHF's Highways section will agree to. This would create a significantly increased grassed area;
- Areas C1 and C3, the southern and western surrounds of the tennis courts should be retained as a quiet area and the tarmac paved area along the road on the south side should be reincorporated as green area;
- Area F, St Paul's walkway, should be retained as it is, and through the removal of some of the (underused) bicycle hoops, the pathway along the length of the Green should be re-established at this point;
- Area G, the Dog Area, should be returned to grass and dog owners obliged to pick up after their animals.

These works, although desirable, are considered to be less urgent (Phase 2 Works).



Halcrow's summary commentary of The Vision

The approach that is being taken by the Brook Green Vision Group (BGVG), is to provide an overall ambition for the green that is achievable and caters for all members of the community.

The BGVG are aware that cost of implementing their vision will exceed LBHF's budget foreseeable future. They thus accept that the improvements and related capital expenditure will need to be staggered over a period of time (perhaps two years for the Phase I works), and that they will need to seek financial assistance from stakeholders (local businesses, private schools, private trusts, available grant finding, residents and users of Brook Green).

Halcrow is in agreement on the overarching objectives and specific proposals put forward by the BGVG's Vision document. The following is an informal commentary on particular sections of the vision document:

1. **General: Maintaining and enhancing the "green" quality:** The Green is a highly valued 'green lung' within a predominantly built up area which has limited public open space. The green character should be retained and, if possible extended, with hard areas of paving being removed.
2. **General Mitigation by introducing better design:** There are problems with misuse of some of the seating areas and play fields by some people especially during the night. This needs to be addressed through careful and clever design, rather than measures to limit access. There is thus an opportunity to enhance the visual appearance of the green without impinging its existing uses.

3.Focus area for the Phase I works: The Park Centre including the Hut, Tennis Courts and Children's Playground:

The area around the tennis courts, hut and playground are the most popular (and congested) destinations and was seen as a priority by the BGVG. Halcrow have worked closely with the Vision Implementation Group to arrive at a design solution for this central space. The design opportunities for this area are considered in detail on pages 15 – 32 below , but include:

- a) The hut is proposed to be rebuilt with new arrangements for lavatories, a serving counter for light refreshments and a counter to manage access to the tennis courts.
- b) The play area is especially popular at certain times of day. While this should be retained there are opportunities to separate the younger children who can find older children intimidating. This avoids the need to increase the size of the playground significantly which would have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the Green.
- c) The tennis courts are proposed to be resurfaced.
- d) The area north of the tennis courts is proposed to be refurbished with new seating and introduction of low level planting.

Halcrow's summary commentary of The Vision

4. Other Particular Proposals in the BGVG Document:

These are the Phase II works, as set out on page 10 and would seem to constitute a beneficial programme.

- Little Brook Green is underused and it makes sense to obtain funding to improve this area thereby taking some pressure of the remainder of the green.
- The Western Lawn is a pleasant area for sitting especially in the summer and there is little point in overdeveloping it. We agree that surrounding paving areas could be grassed to bring them back into the green.
- We agree with the works being undertaken at present to the kick about area. These works will ensure the establishment of the grass that is able to withstand the high levels of usage.
- St Paul's Walkway is a pleasant meandering space and no fundamental change is required other than a few more benches and removal of some of the cycle stands that are underused and create visual clutter.
- The dog area is unsightly and is an unnecessary hard space on the Green. It should be returned to grass, although this could be expensive. The land here is contaminated due to its use over many years as a dog toilet and cannot be readily incorporated into the body of the Green without being de-contaminated. This is likely to require the removal and replenishment of the soil-which in itself may have an impact on the tree roots.
- We agree that the eastern planted area should be further enhanced with suitable low-level flowering plants, to provide an attractive eastern gateway to the Green

Halcrow's Conclusion

Halcrow consider that each of the Vision Group's recommendations is sensible in its own right and that holistically the 'package' of recommendations should serve to improve the environment and appearance of Brook Green and will provide additional facilities that should enhance users' experience of the Green.

Stage 1 Works to the Central Area



Vision for Play

- To create additional play capacity, the Vision Implementation Group has recommended creating a new under 5s play area currently occupied by maintenance yard. This should extend into the main play area.
- The choice of playground equipment in the existing and new under 5s play area should be of a style suitable to complement the housing surrounding the green which is located within a conservation area. Timber is suggested in the document and brightly coloured or stainless steel equipment would not be suitable.
- The Vision Group also suggested increasing the fence height around the playground to 1.5m metres to deter misuse by older youths. A higher fence than this would be more visually intrusive and could set seen as a challenge to the youths. Traditional style vertical bar railings painted black will help them to blend with the surroundings. Planting along the fence line would further reduce their impact.
- The play area should appear as low key and include as much greenery as possible.
- The incorporation of low level lighting around the play area, possibly incorporated into the fencing, would also act as a deterrent to night time visitors.



D The Playground

Existing Site Photos



Vision for Play

With key items of equipment in the playground becoming life expired, we have a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to enhance the play experience on Brook Green in a way that addresses existing issue and brings the 'best of play' to Brook Green. This means providing play experiences (and thereby landscaping and equipment) which encourage more creative (and less prescriptive) play, where children within the 0 – 11 age range can play safely together, with a design which is natural and complements its surroundings.

As a result of VIG's successful lobbying for the Serco maintenance/storage area to be moved to a site off the Green, we also need to consider how best to take advantage of the consequent increase in the play footprint. To this end the BGA and the Friends on behalf of VIG appointed Jon Sheaff, an independent landscape designer with a play specialism, to prepare designs for the combined play areas.

These master plans are shown overleaf and their key features include:

- A design with four permeable activity zones for users of different ages (0 – 5 in quiet play area by tennis hut, 0-5 at southerly end of the existing playground, 5 – 9 in the centre and 7 – 11 at the northerly end of the existing playground) to help children to play safely in a busy playground
- A design which creates opportunities for imaginative and challenging play using natural materials
- A design which creates a sense of place that locates the playground in the Green proper and is visually permeable both internally and visually accessible from elsewhere on the Green
- A design which builds connections between local children and the playground – through involvement in designing motifs on natural items in the playground – wooden blocks, stone carvings.
- Appropriate security (ie fencing) around the play areas to minimize nocturnal misuse

Points to note in relation to the small play area extension include:

- To maximise its size, part of the tarmacked area on its south side would be incorporated into the new playground.
- Low planting reduces the impact of the railings around the play area.

The designer's perspective:

"The Brook Green playground is an incredibly important resource for the local community and is very popular with children and their parents. Hitherto, the playground has provided a range of equipment for children of different ages and abilities. Most of this equipment has been popular.

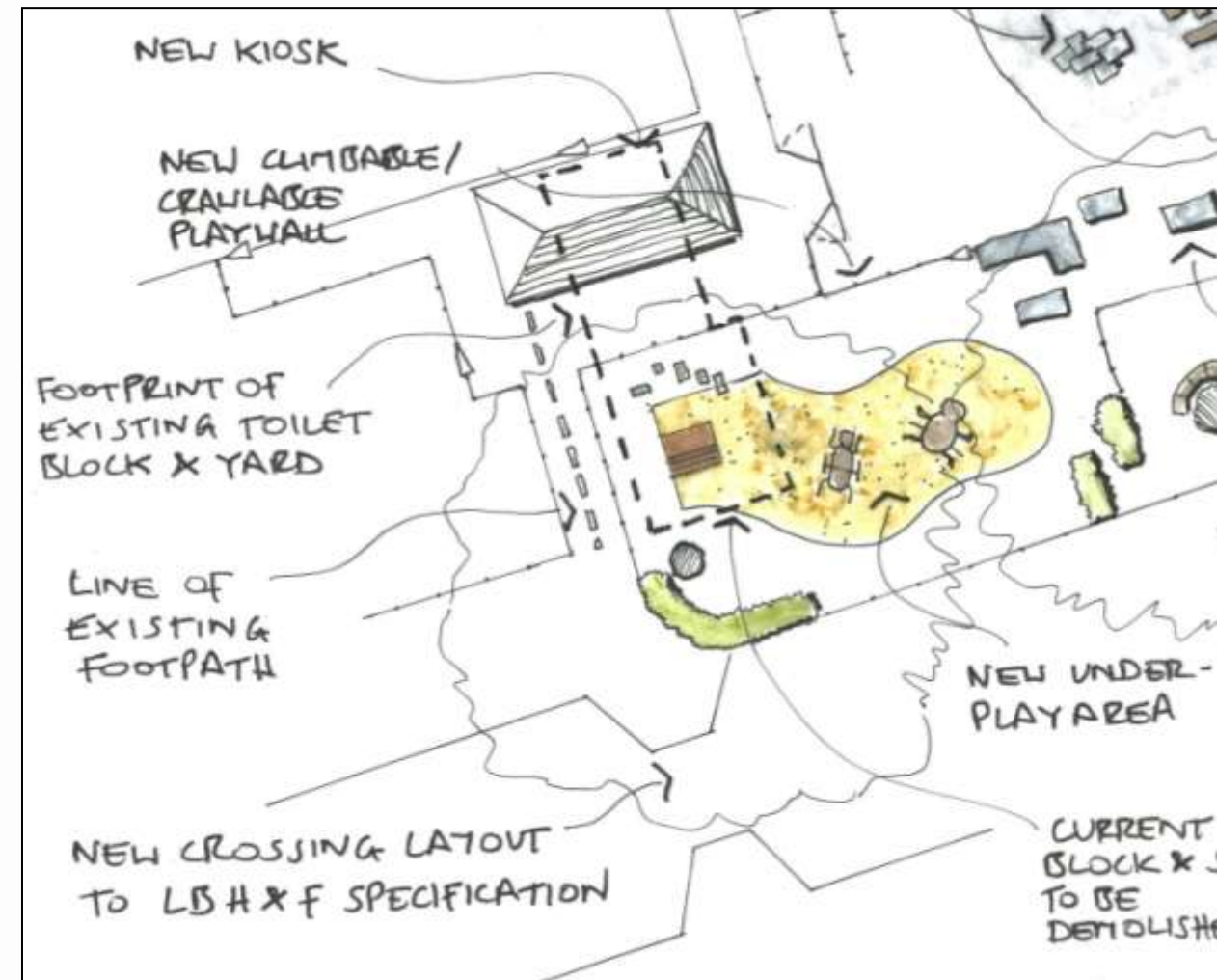
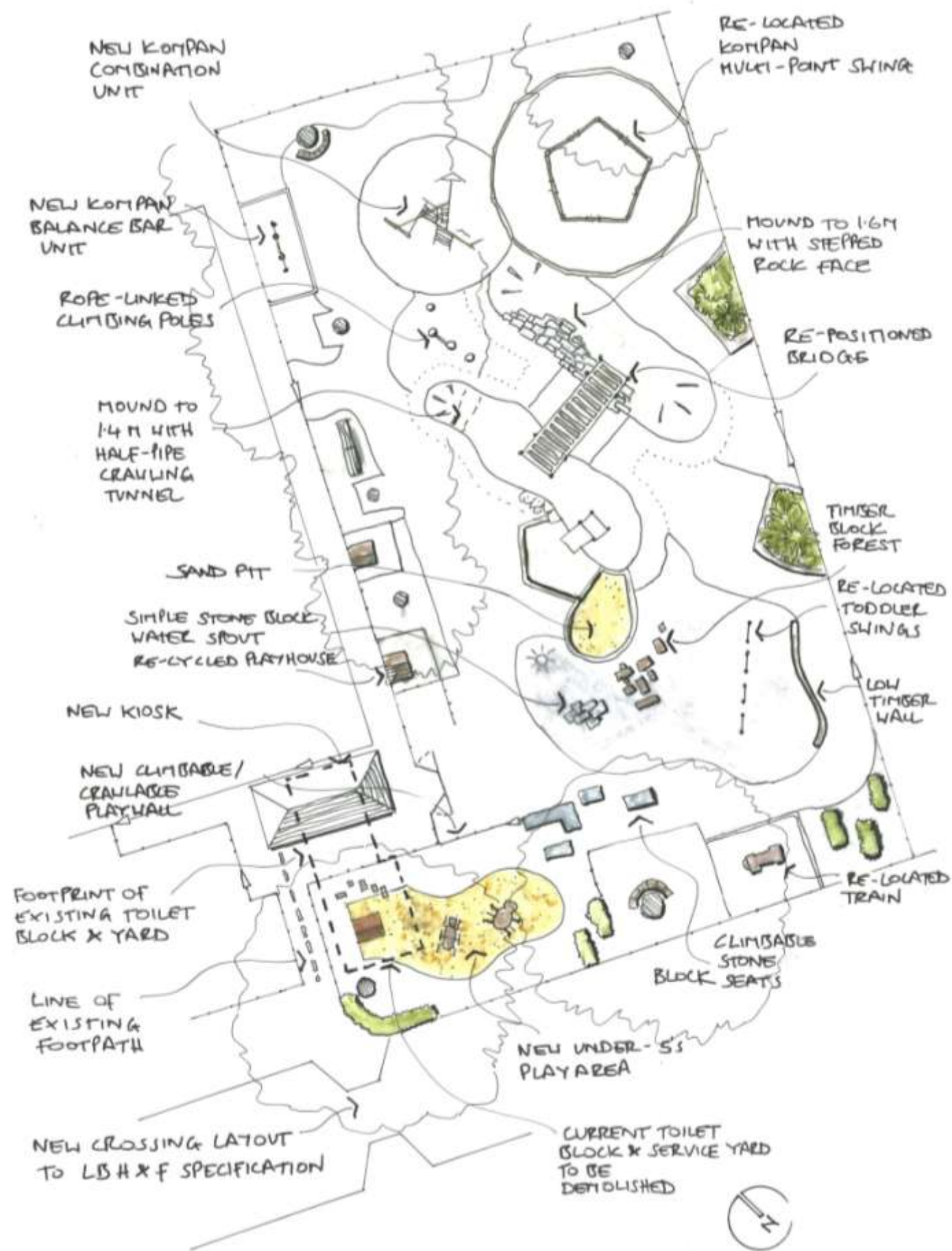
There is currently a move away from playgrounds that are over-dependent on play equipment towards designs that encourage children to take more risks and play creatively and imaginatively. In part this has been because of evidence that children were becoming bored with the same old play equipment. The new Brook Green playground will be less dependent on large play structures and will include opportunities to climb, scramble, balance and crawl and to experience textures like sand, water, rock and wood.

But there will always be a place for swings, so the design will keep all of the best bits of equipment and re-use them in imaginative ways.

Jon Sheaff

May 2011"

Playground Improvement Proposal



Close up on Hut area and under 5's playground

Existing Site Photos

Location

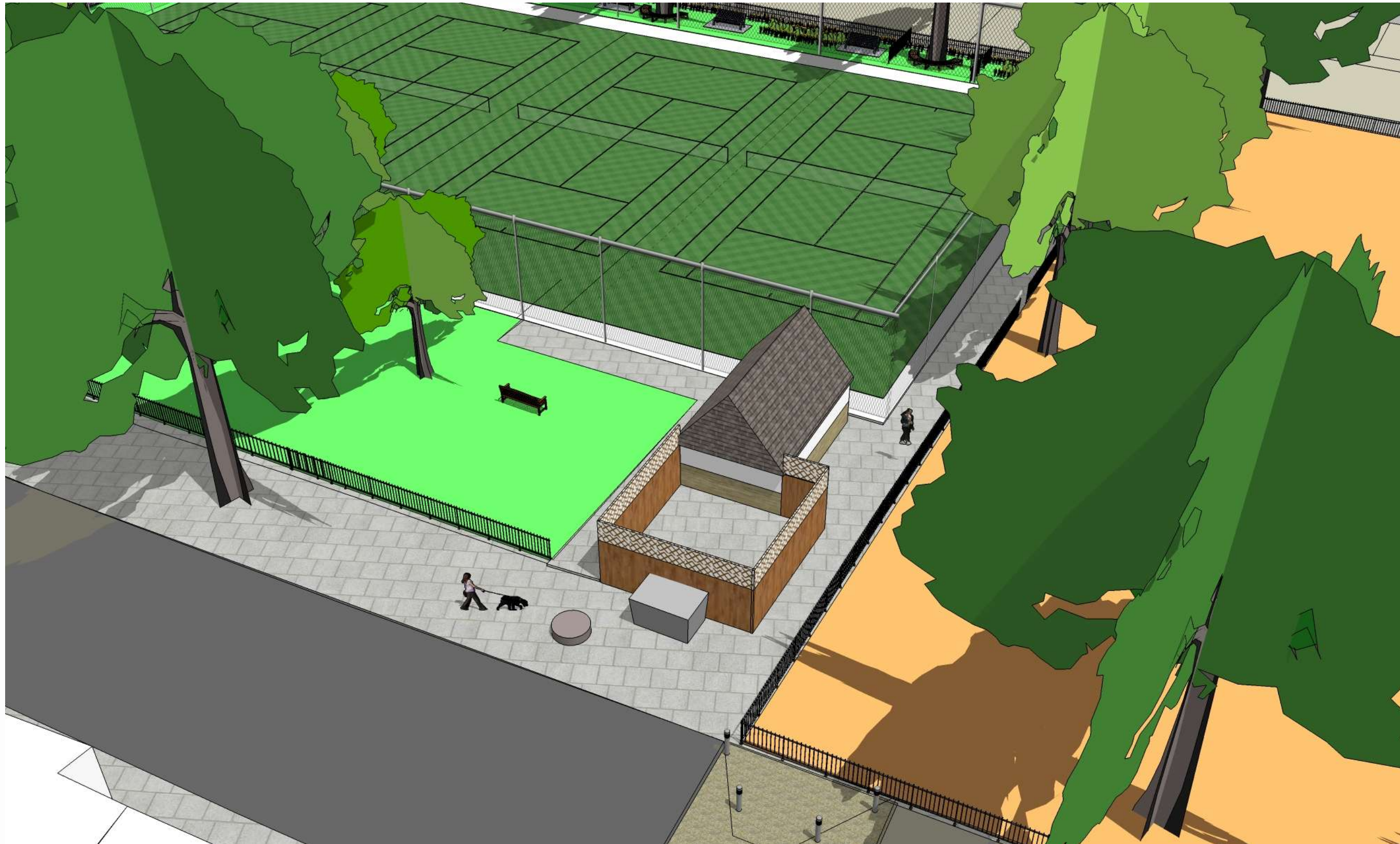


The Hut, Lavatories and Kiosk C4



C4 The Hut, Lavatories and Kiosk

Existing Situation



The hut is slightly larger than the existing hut allowing enough room for a toilet for disabled persons, a baby changing area, another toilet as well as the refreshment kiosk and tennis shop/reception. The internal and external design of the hut is subject to further considerations by VIG.

The Hut, Lavatories and Kiosk Revised Proposal

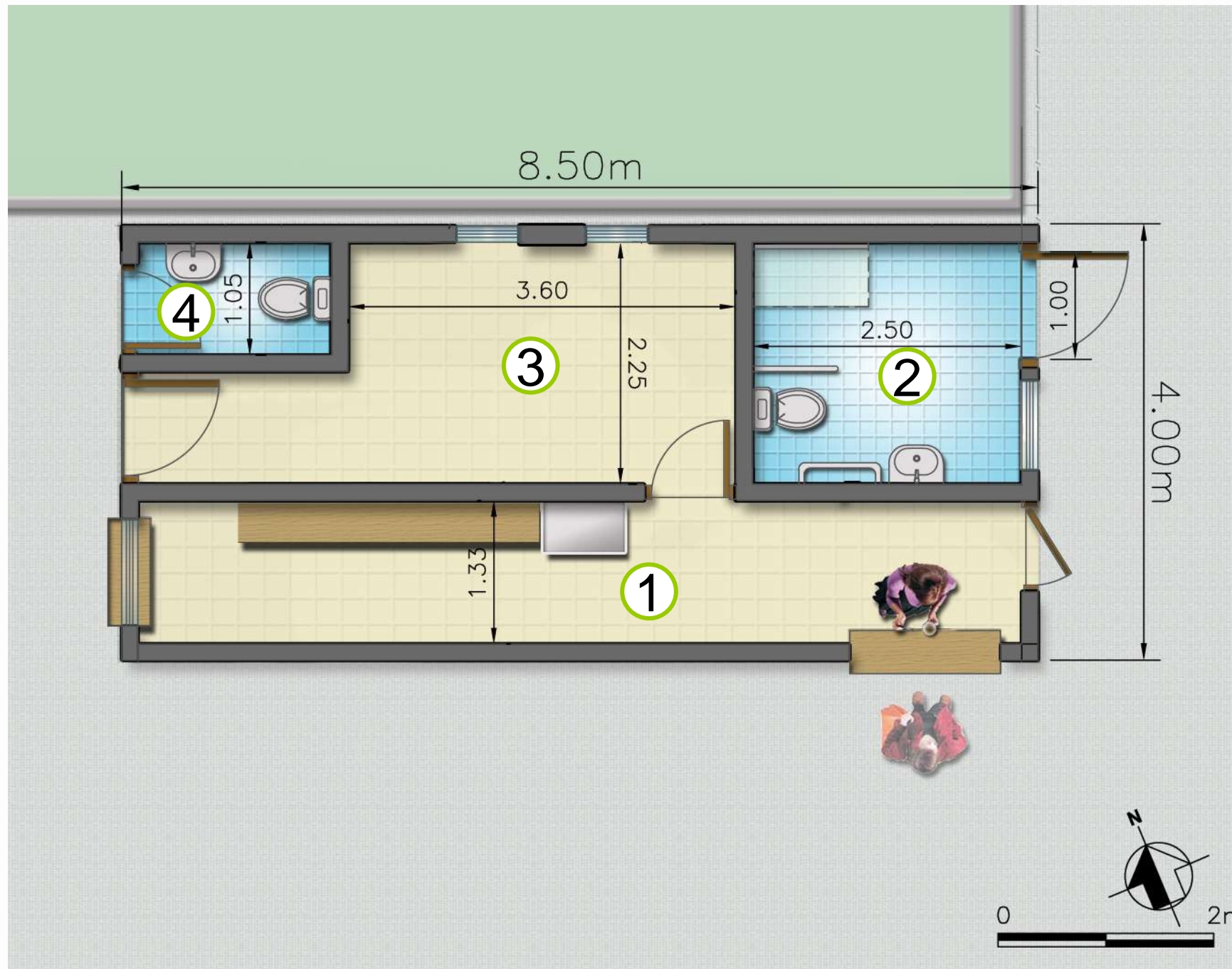
C4



This proposal has been conceived by VIG and it presents a realignment of the existing path across the park. It also proposes re positioning of the pedestrian crossing. This proposal supersedes the earlier Halcrow proposal which retained both the alignment of the path and pedestrian crossing.

C4 The Hut, Lavatories and Kiosk

The Hut Proposed Layout



The above design of the interior of the hut is provisional.



The hut includes:

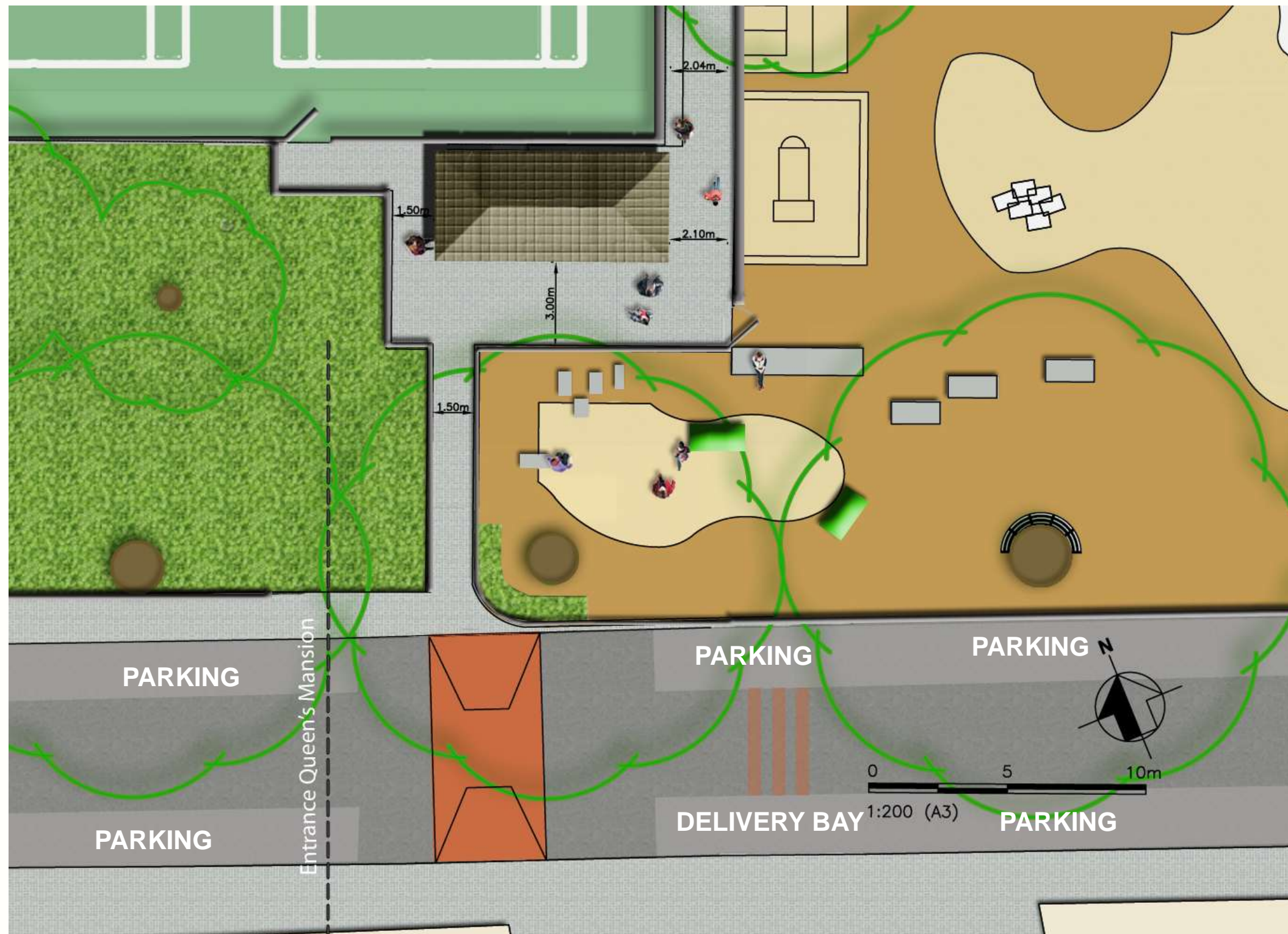
- ① Refreshments and Tennis tickets kiosk
- ② Disabled toilet & Nappy changing
- ③ Storage Area
- ④ Toilet

Improvement Proposal

The Hut, Lavatories and Kiosk

C4

Illustrative Plan



Vision for the northern edge of tennis courts

The Vision Consultation Document refers to residents complaints about this area attracting disturbance at night, with people drinking and sleeping on benches.

Halcrow have proposed redesigning this area in a way that would lift its appearance while discouraging nocturnal misuse. A description and visualisation of the proposal follows.

This proposal envisages three paved areas and with semi circular seats around the plane trees which are divided by areas of planting. The seating areas could be fenced with lockable gates preventing access at night. The seats would have arm rests to help the elderly and deter people from sleeping.

The planted spaces would contain low level shrubs/ground cover plants able to cope with the low light levels and dry soil and provide a soft edge to the green.

There is a range of paving materials that could be used for the seating areas.

Low level up lighting for the plane trees would make this area less attractive to people loitering at night. The provision of lighting could mean that railings are not required.

Paving Options

- The 'Vision Consultation Document' recommends the use of fine/grit gravel to pave this area. While this is attractive in appearance and cheap to install it requires high levels of maintenance and is therefore expensive in the long term.
- Clay brick paving would look attractive, and link in well with the surroundings and is low in maintenance.
- Resin bonded gravel is an expensive option but is attractive having the right feel for a Victorian park. There are products specifically designed for use around trees, allowing water and air to the tree roots while providing a robust surface. This is almost maintenance free and would not have to be replaced for 15 years.
- Tarmac with gravel chippings rolled into the surface is attractive in appearance and relatively robust. The chippings do come loose in time however leaving a tarmac surface.

Existing Site Photos

Location



Northern edge of the
Tennis Courts

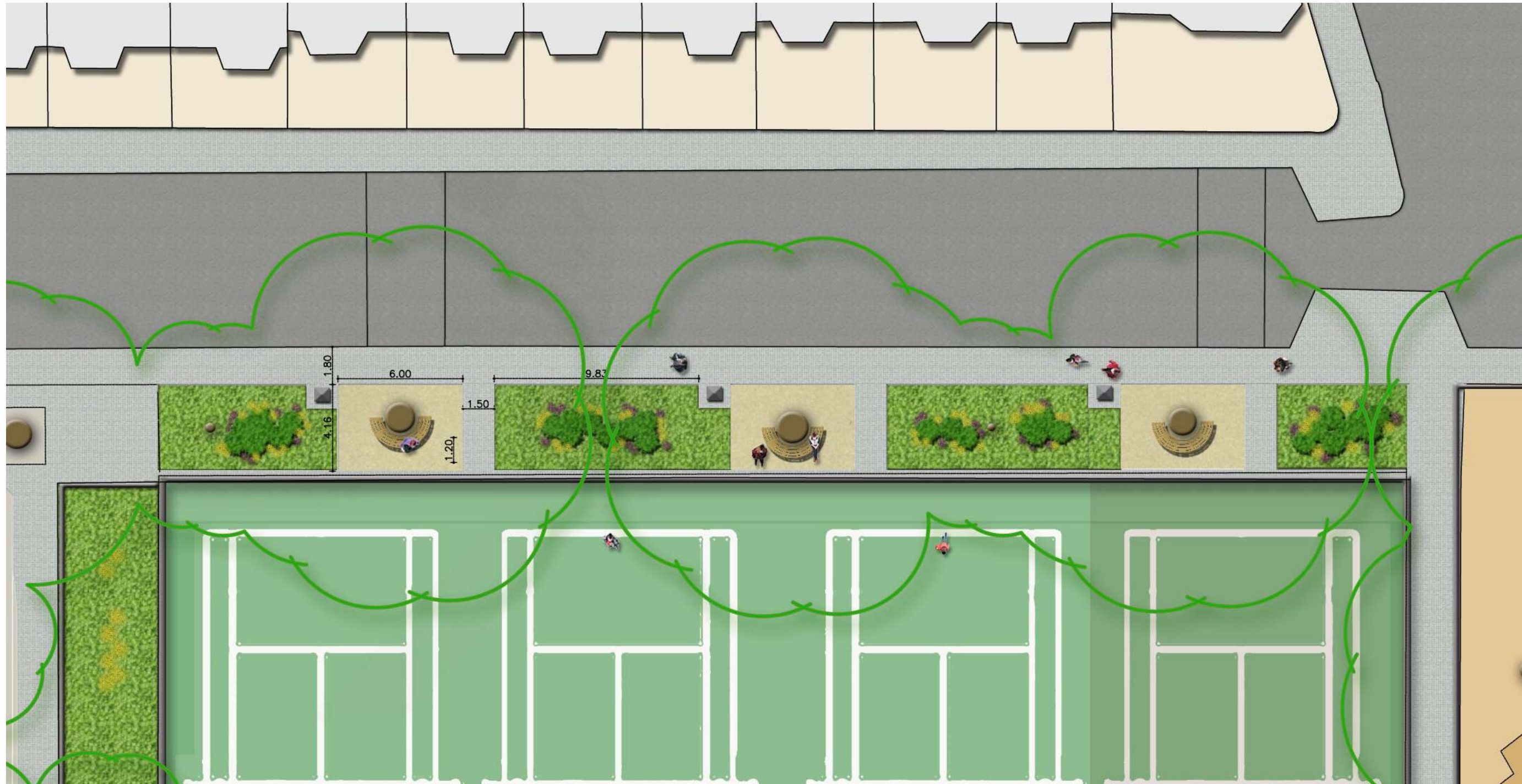
C5







Illustrative Plan



Materials Issue

Tarmac with gravel chippings rolled into the surface is attractive in appearance and relatively robust. The chippings do come loose in time however leaving a tarmac surface.



Crushed Stone



Crushed Stone in 5 years



C5 Northern edge of the Tennis Courts

Possible Materials

Resin bonded gravel is an expensive option but is attractive having the right feel for a Victorian park. There are products specifically designed for use around trees, allowing water and air to the tree roots while providing a robust surface. This is almost maintenance free and would have to be replaced for 15 years.



Resin bonded gravel



Rough&Ready Circular Benches

R&R Curve D500 bench, FSC hardwood / A&B Black

R&R Curve D400 bench, FSC hardwood / A&B Black

R&R Curve D200 bench, FSC hardwood / A&B Black

Our R&R Curve system has three circular configurations: 3, 4 and 5 metres in diameter. These are well-designed benches, ideal for a layout around monumental trees. The curvily placed backrests are optional. The supports and curved frame are made of thermo-galvanized steel.

Delivery time: 10-12 weeks.

IRON-R&R, assembly and R&R benches
IRON-R&R bench, assembly and backrest

Dimensions R&R-Circular Benches

R&R Curve	D200	D400	D500
Outer diameter	2 m	4 m	5 m
Inner diameter	1.2 m	3 m	3.8 m
Seat length	± 9 m	± 12 m	± 15 m
Sitting depth	40 cm	50 cm	60 cm
Sitting height	40 cm	40 cm	40 cm
Number of legs	5	6	7



Benefits

The benefits to the community of the implementation of the Vision are considerable and would deliver:

- Significantly more play capacity delivered by Phase I works.
- An improved experience for parents and others accompanying children to the playgrounds;
- Optional segregation of the under 5s from older children;
- A hut with modern reception, kiosk, loo and storage facilities;
- Attainment of Green Flag status for Brook Green, with attendant long term benefits;
- Improved tennis facilities and potentially new uses (eg for 5 a side football) of half of the tennis court area in winter months (provided it would not cause Brook Green to become a destination recreation facility);
- An improved greener appearance on the north and south sides of the tennis courts, on the south side of the Western lawn and in the dog exercise area.
- Greater discouragement of nocturnal disturbance;
- Significant 'soft' benefits, such as increased individual interest and participation in the affairs of the Green.
- Fostering of sense of Community, by improving the environment of the Green and encouraging its responsible use.

If we do not implement the Vision, the environment of Brook Green will deteriorate with obvious social cost.



Halcrow's summary commentary on Vision costs

The design for and costs of Phase 1 works have still to be worked up. However, in 'ball park' terms, the costs are likely to be in the order of:

The hut, lavatories and adjoining storage area

<u>Hut including fitting out</u>	<u>£95,000</u>
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<u>Play area, paths, planting</u>	<u>£35,000</u>
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Northern edge of tennis courts

<u>Option B within resin bonded gravel</u>	<u>£40,000</u>
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The playground

<u>Equipment and surfacing</u>	<u>£180,000</u>
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<u>Fencing</u>	<u>£20,000</u>
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<u>Contingency</u>	<u>£30,000</u>
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<u>£400,000</u>

Of the Phase I works the Council have said they have an available capital budget of £75k only.

We intend to invite a significant further funding contribution from LBH+F perhaps through an agreement on matched donations. It is however clear the majority of the cost will need to be found from non-traditional sources

The cost of the tennis court's resurfacing and of root protection, consistent with all weather, multi purpose use, if required, are provisionally estimated to be in the order of an additional £150k. We intend to approach the LTA in this regard.

Our strategy is to spread this burden over many shoulders, including: Local employers, charitable foundations; grants for which Brook Green may be eligible from parties such as Sports Associations; Environmental Funds and Green Space charities; Local Schools; Parents Associations; other local community groups; and, most importantly, from Residents and Users of Brook Green.

Though the target is considerable, by spreading the burden widely we believe it is achievable. If our contingency is not needed it would be applied in undertaking the Phase 2 works.

Governance Arrangements

- With significant funding from voluntary donations, we attach utmost importance to the need to ensure that money raised is spent wisely and well.
- Oversight of Phase 1 and Phase 2 development works will be undertaken in partnership between LBH+F and the Vision Implementation Group and by drawing on the expertise and experience of members of the local community..
- The Brook Green Management plan (2011-2021) which VIG is in the process of agreeing with LBH+F also contemplates a new partnership approach aimed at achieving closer and more formal involvement of the Community in the Green's ongoing maintenance requirements and uses of the green.
- Halcrow have kindly undertaken to encourage employee volunteering. Under this arrangement we would expect to derive invaluable professional support and guidance on specific matters which relate to development proposal and the management of maintenance functions.



How can you help?

There are many possibilities!

We welcome feedback - positive or negative - on the Proposed Area Improvements. So **please comment** through our website Forum page or by e-mailing info@friendsofbrookgreen.org

If you would like to be more fully involved in the Implementation of the Proposed Area Improvement programme or in our Fund raising efforts, **please volunteer** by contacting us on the above e-mail address.

When we launch the Appeal of local households and users of the Green **please donate**. If you want to make a donation even at this stage please visit our Donate link (through Just Giving) on our website.

Thank you!