

Space to play?

Advice Sheet 1

How do I get our community a new play area?

An outside place where children and young people can meet and enjoy themselves in their community is an essential part of life. Many towns and villages contain 'play areas' which are outdated, not fit for purpose and do not offer young people the opportunity for stimulating play. Play and outdoor exercise is now recognised as part of the growing up process and often where young people develop and learn important life skills.

Play equipment has also come on a long way and now offers far more for a greater age range. If this is the situation in your town or village this information sheet has been put together to guide you through a process which may help you to achieve improved facilities for your community.

Where to Start

1. Establish a need / Consultation

The first part of moving forward is establishing that you need a new or improved play area. You will also have to demonstrate this as part of any application for money. Consultation is a really important part of the process of developing a new play area. It gives both you and your community confidence that you are doing the right thing. Talk to immediate neighbours, the Parish Council, children / youths of all ages, all of the other people old and young. It is important to get people's trust and 'buy in' to the scheme sooner rather than later. Good places to start can be local schools, Guides, Scouts, toddler group, sports clubs and local interest groups eg horticultural groups. It would also be worth at this point making contact with others at this stage who can offer you advice on the process and how to go about it (see over page).

2. Thinking about your site

Once you have carried out some consultation you need to establish your objectives and a brief to offer those who can potentially help you go forward with your project. Think about your site, understand the setting of your site and how it works in relation to other facilities. Does it suit your needs and can it fulfil your aims. Some things to think about: the extent of the site and how much of the available space you are intending to use? How will your site be used throughout the year? Do you have vehicular or just pedestrian access? Will parking be an issue? How can you maximise its potential.

You may also want to think about the maintenance liabilities both now and in the future.

About Us

Anthony Stiff Associates is a well established landscape architecture practice based in Oxfordshire. We are registered with the Landscape Institute.

We have designed and implemented play and resource areas for many clients throughout Oxfordshire.

We have a friendly and interactive approach to working with clients and aim to offer innovation and good value for money.

If you are considering using a landscape architect or would just like to talk about your potential play area contact Carolyn Place at Anthony Stiff Associates.

Tel 01235 832800

www.playareadesign.co.uk
carolyn@anthonystiffassociates.co.uk

Step 3. What are you trying to achieve?

In defining your brief you need to clarify your aims and think about what you are trying to achieve. Are you extending your existing play area to more children, renewing equipment or revising an old layout? Do you have the opportunity to add value and make the play area more inclusive to less able or older members of your community? This is an opportunity to make the play area, recreation ground or park more appealing, not just with equipment but with a well thought out landscape scheme.

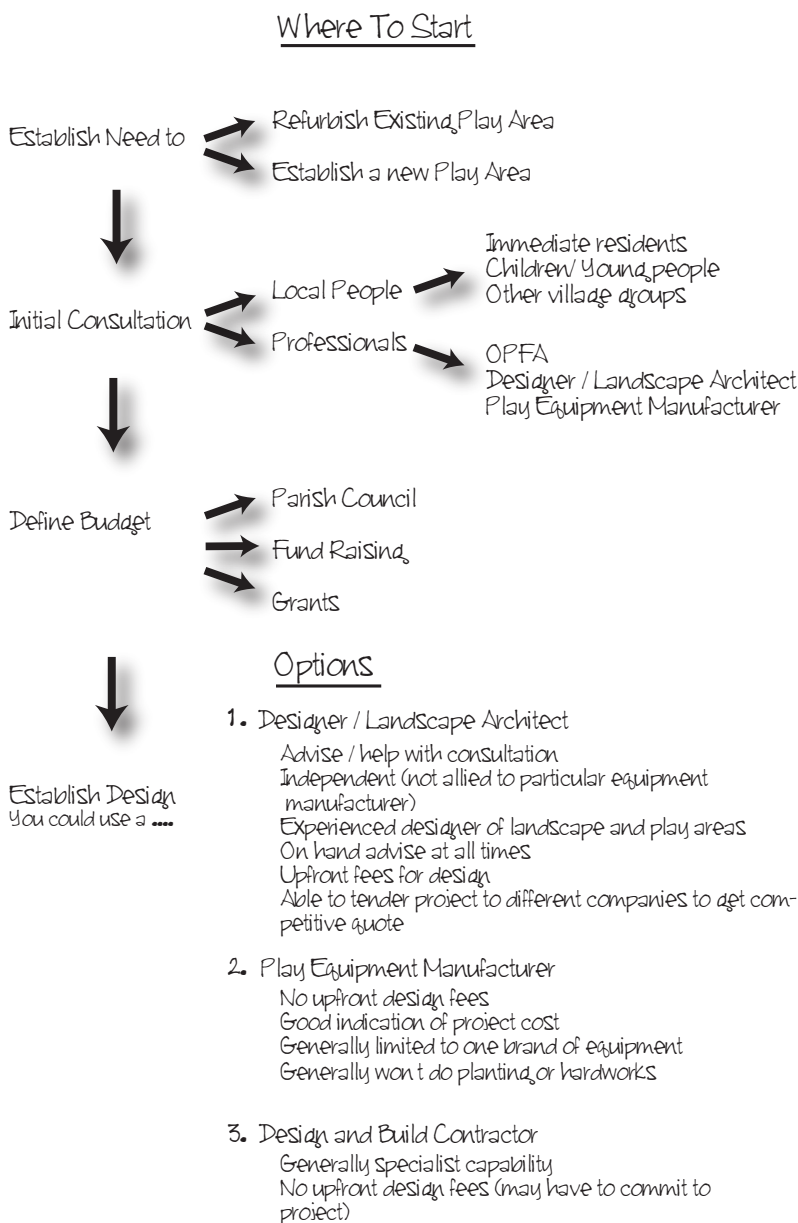
Step 4. Your Budget / Funding

Securing funds for your project is the next step. Fundraising shows your commitment to the scheme and will gain you valuable publicity. Once you have raised some money and perhaps had some success with smaller grant applications, you are much more likely to be successful with other funding bodies. They like supporting good schemes that are likely to succeed and give good publicity. Thinking strategically and about benefits across the community will help to gain “grant brownie points”. Also make sure you also consider the environment! Many grants are available, but they are not easy to get. You have to make sure that your case for getting the monies is better than the next enthusiastic group of grant applicants. A good place to start is with the Parish or Town Council, District or Local County Council. OPFA have an excellent list of funding opportunities.

Step 5 . Establishing a Design

You have three main options for establishing a design, a designer/landscape architect, a play equipment manufacturer or a design and build contractor. All of these options can work but you need to establish which option is best for you.

The figure below is a good guideline to the processes you need to follow to move your project on.



Where should I go from here ?

In the early stages you can contact your local Playing Fields Association they will give you free advice and explain your options and opportunities for gaining funding. Another option is to contact a Landscape Architect who is experienced in play area design and play area funding.

If you are interested in knowing more about Landscape Architects and the advantages of using one for your project please read our Advice Sheet No 2 in this series which is available at www.playareadesign.co.uk

