

North Dalton Play Area Survey

1. Introduction

During January/February 2019 members of North Dalton Village Hall Committee carried out a residents' survey to find out what people thought about the play area. The current play area was constructed over 10 years ago and whilst still safe and serviceable, some of the equipment requires some refurbishment. The Village Hall Committee intends to seek funding to update the play area but wants to ensure that any changes are informed by the views of the children and parents/carers who use the facility.

Number of children and young people in the village

According to the most recent census (2011) there are 302 people living in North Dalton within 143 households. 58 are children and young people aged under 18 (15 aged 0-4; 24 aged 5-9; 11 aged 10-14 and 8 aged 15-17). There will have been some change in this profile since 2011 but probably not very much.

About the survey

The survey was available for people to complete in three ways: face to face with a member of the committee who did house to house visits on the weekend of 19/20 Jan; on-line via an e-survey; in paper form at a consultation session held at the village hall on 26th Jan.

The survey asked for information about the number and ages of children in the household, whether they used the play area, and if so, what they thought about it. We also asked whether there was anything that put children and parents off using it and any suggestions for improvements.

Who completed it

Our survey was completed by residents from 19 households. 13 of these have children living in the household. 6 said they had regularly visiting children (e.g. grandchildren). One response came from owners of a holiday cottage which is sometimes let to families.

The 13 households with resident children had 32 children between them, with their ages ranging from just 12 weeks to 17 years:

Under 5's	5-11	12-17
9	14	9

17 households said their children used the play area. Of these 11 said their children used it often, 4 sometimes and 2 occasionally.

2. Views on the play area

What you like about the play area?

According to the responses to this question, the 3 most popular things about the play area at the moment are the football area (5 mentions), the climbing frame (5 mentions) and the swings (4 mentions). The slide got 3 mentions and families with smaller children also mentioned the talking flowers and the seat under the climbing frame.

People also said that their children liked having the space to run around and meet their friends:

Likes having freedom to roam & variety of things

Dog free, space to run about, climbing wall, football net

Hang out with friends, play football & hide & seek

For some families, the fact that the play area is close to their home was something they liked.

One child said they loved all of it.

What do you think about current play equipment?

Several people said that they thought the current play equipment was still good or OK. Others commented on the need for an overall update:

Needs to be updated

Poor repair - needs updating

There were also some comments about particular items of equipment:

Seesaw is too hard for little ones

Climbing frame is a bit high and needs to be made safer - always afraid they're fall off

People wind up the swings & it's hard to unwind them

Cargo net is broken & seating underneath is shabby

You can't use the basketball ring because it needs a hard surface

The need for play equipment for children of all ages was highlighted:

Could do with some equipment for younger children and soft flooring for protection & all year-round use

A lot of equipment is aimed at younger children

The location of the goalposts was mentioned:

Goal posts should be in a different place further away from play equipment

Is there anything that puts you off using it?

Access was an issue for some families. The play area is quite a long way for families at the far end of the village and it means walking along the main with some very high pavements. This reduces the amount of unaccompanied access for children.

The general terrain was mentioned by some families - particularly the bumpy grass surface which isn't good for football or running toddlers, the amount of mud in wetter weather and nettles beneath the play equipment.

Some children said they thought the area was a bit boring with nothing of much interest to older children (e.g. 12-13yr olds).

Ideas for improvement

Children and parents had several ideas for improvements to the play area. With regard to possible new equipment, there were a few popular ideas. The most popular were: a zip wire (6 mentions); more things to climb (6 mentions); a roundabout (4 mentions); monkey bars (3 mentions); a basket swing (3 mentions). Other suggestions (all mentioned by one or two people) were: a log balance beam, a spinning bar, a Wendy house, a sandpit, a swing rope, a long slide, a built-in trampoline, sensory play & willow tunnels, another rocker, skate ramp, bike assault course.

There were also several suggestions for general design improvements e.g. to the football area:

Football - nets, better pitch, nets to prevent ball going into field

Better football goals

Better surfacing was also mentioned:

Better surface, less mud

Anything with soft landings

Anything with soft landings

There were several mentions of other nearby play areas which people thought had some good equipment e.g.

Stamford Bridge puts tubes on the swing frames to stop people winding them up

Climbing net like at North Cave

Skate ramp would be good for getting older kids outside (see Shiptonthorpe)

Climbing towers, bouncy mushrooms (check out Fangfoss)

Imaginative structures (see pirate ship at South Cave primary school)

Pocklington has a park on Victoria Rd which has some great equipment

Zip wire at Dunnington

Some people wanted to see some general repairs - for example to the gate onto the road.

One child said they would *'like a clock so I can get home for tea on time.'*

The point was also made that space for open play was important:

Keep space to run around in - don't clutter up with too much equipment

One parent suggested a light on a sensor so that children could play out later

Another suggestion mentioned by 3 people was to give access to the village hall for indoor games such as table tennis, especially in the winter months. One suggested a kid's club could be run from the hall.

A few people made suggestions for how the area could be improved for teenagers. The most popular suggestion was a covered seating area where young people can hang out.

Suggestions for how the play area could be improved for parents/careers focused almost entirely on the seating. People wanted more seating generally (including for picnics) and wanted it to be located closer to the play equipment so they could keep an eye on their children. Better rubbish collection was also mentioned, and one person suggested a mobile phone hotspot for wifi. One person also thought that there needed to be better signposting to the play area to show visitors that it's there.

3. Conclusions

Overall, people are very positive about the play area and several commented that they thought the residents of North Dalton are lucky to have it. As one parent put it *'It's a wonderful area for the children of the village.'*

Many people also like the rural, village feel of the play area and were modest in their suggestions for improvements. Several commented on the importance of not losing the open space by filling it with too much equipment, and whilst most people feel there is room for improvement and updating there is a lot about the current play area that remains popular.

The main priorities seem to be:

- Improvements to the football area, including finding a way to have the football playing area a safer distance from the play equipment
- Some general maintenance and updating of existing equipment and facilities. Although the equipment is inspected annually by safety inspectors and has been deemed safe, there are clearly some concerns about the climbing frame and swings which need to be addressed
- The gate to the road needs to be replaced
- More seating including bench seating closer to the play equipment

- Some new equipment to make the area more interesting and varied. A zip wire, a roundabout and a basket swing seem to be the most popular suggestions for new items
- Potential access to the village hall itself for indoor play. This is likely to be more complicated than it seems (registration, health & safety etc) and is likely to require some enthusiastic volunteers to come forward

Next steps

Advice is being sought from a play consultancy company (Playdale- the same company who installed the current equipment) who will provide us with some costed design proposals. We can also seek alternative designs from other companies if we wish.

The likely cost of a refurbished play area with a few new items of equipment is likely to be somewhere in the region of 25-30k. We will need to explore grant funding options to raise this either as a single lump sum or incrementally.

Some suggestions for improvement are relatively modest (e.g. gate replacement, more seating and repair to the climbing net) and the committee will consider how to implement these from existing funds/current fundraising.