

# Water Rock Linear Park

Part VIII Summary of Design Proposals

JUNE 2023





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# 01

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## Introduction

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# Existing Midleton Area

Cork County Council intend to deliver a new linear park at Water Rock, Midleton, Co. Cork. Malachy Walsh and Partners and BDP (Building Design Partnership) have worked together with Cork County Council to prepare the Preliminary Design for the park. This has been developed in conjunction with Environmental, Archaeological, Flood Design, Health and Safety and Stakeholder requirements.



# 1.1

## Water Rock Linear Park

### Existing Site Context

The proposed Water-Rock Linear Park is located on the Midleton North Relief Road, Midleton, Co. Cork. The coordinates for the site are (ITM 587278, 574457).



# 1.2

## Existing Site

Water-Rock Linear Park is a 10.5 hectare site that is of natural significance locally. The Owenacurra River winds down through the site with wonderful stands of mature vegetation either side. The site is largely flat throughout and rises to meet surrounding areas.

Currently, the park extends along the west of the Willowbank Residential development. There are future plans for new residential development to the west of the park. Large swathes of the park are currently used for agriculture.





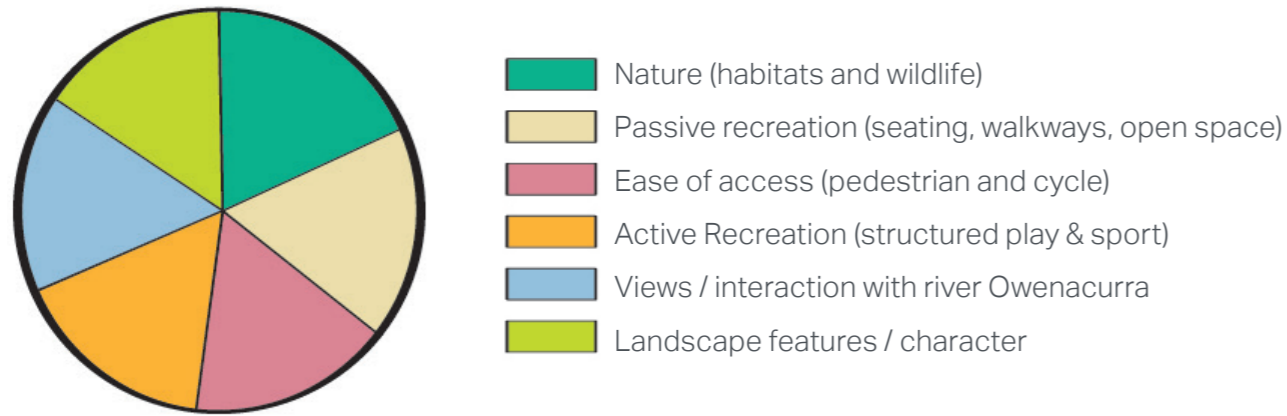
# 1.3

## Water Rock Linear Park Site Pictures



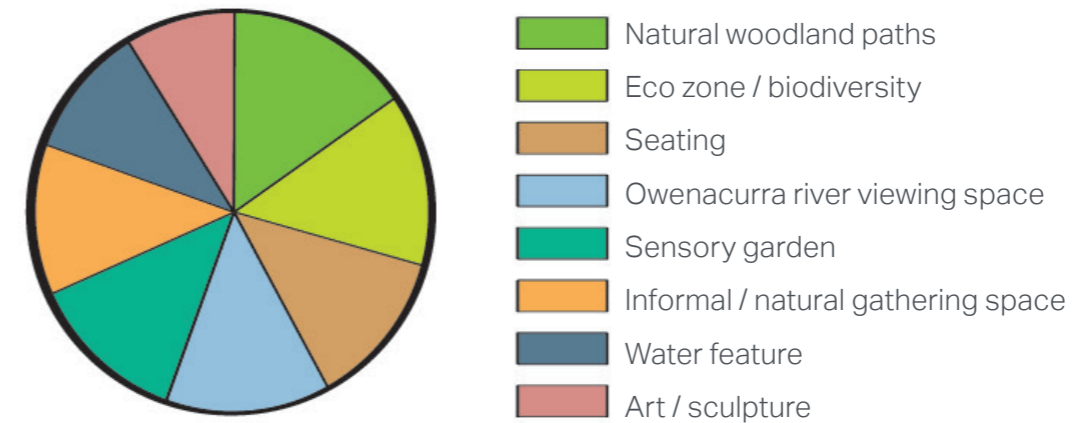
# Public Consultation Findings

**QUESTION 3** | What would you prioritise generally in developing the Water Rock Linear Park?



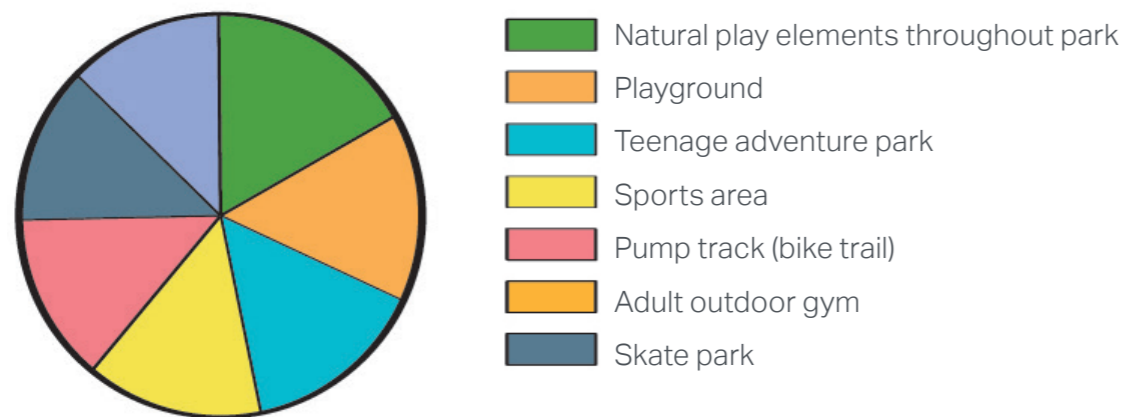
➔ Equal interest for all the proposed elements, the park should offer a mix of all and work hard for the local people

**QUESTION 4** | What passive recreational facilities would you like to see prioritised in the park?



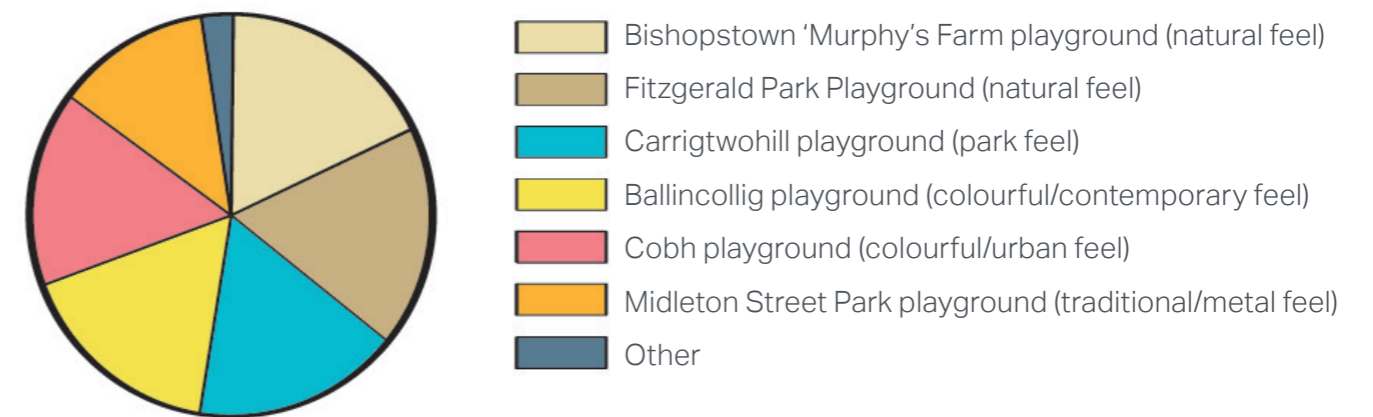
➔ Preference for natural elements and facilities that support a direct interaction with nature, e.g. seating, viewing space, garden space

**QUESTION 5** | What active recreational facilities would you like to see prioritised in the park?



➔ Fairly equal interest for all proposed elements, the active recreational facilities should cater for all age groups, children, teenagers and adults, with an accent on natural elements

**QUESTION 6** | Which is your preferred playground type?



➔ Preference for the two most natural playgrounds, integrated in the surrounding landscape, spacious, not enclosed, using natural materials e.g. timber and colours e.g. buff

Public Consultation Findings

**THE PARK:**

What people have said they want

**A NATURAL PARK**

Focus on wildlife,  
biodiversity & nature  
Native planting  
Natural play elements

**A DESTINATION PARK**

MUGAs & sports areas  
Activities for teenagers  
Playground with lots to do  
Picnic areas

**A FUNCTIONAL PARK**

Paths wide enough to  
cycle, run & walk safely  
Lots of seating, bins  
& lighting  
A simple design

**PLAY FOR ALL**

Good choice of equipment  
Inclusive play  
Broad age spectrum  
Different types of play, e.g.  
imaginative, active,  
Creative

**COMFORTABLE  
PLAY SPACE**

Safe for all, not too close  
from skate park / tracks  
Spacious  
Lots of seating & bins  
Adjacent to family  
spaces

**THE PLAY AREAS:**

What people have said they want

**NATURAL PLAY**

Non invasive & integrated  
Natural materials & colours  
Playground that fits in the  
landscape  
Wood & timber  
Sandpits

**GENERAL CONCERNS**

Security & safety  
Parking issues  
Access from Willowbank Estate  
Access to the park at night-time & antisocial behaviour  
Litter & maintenance, tidiness



# 02

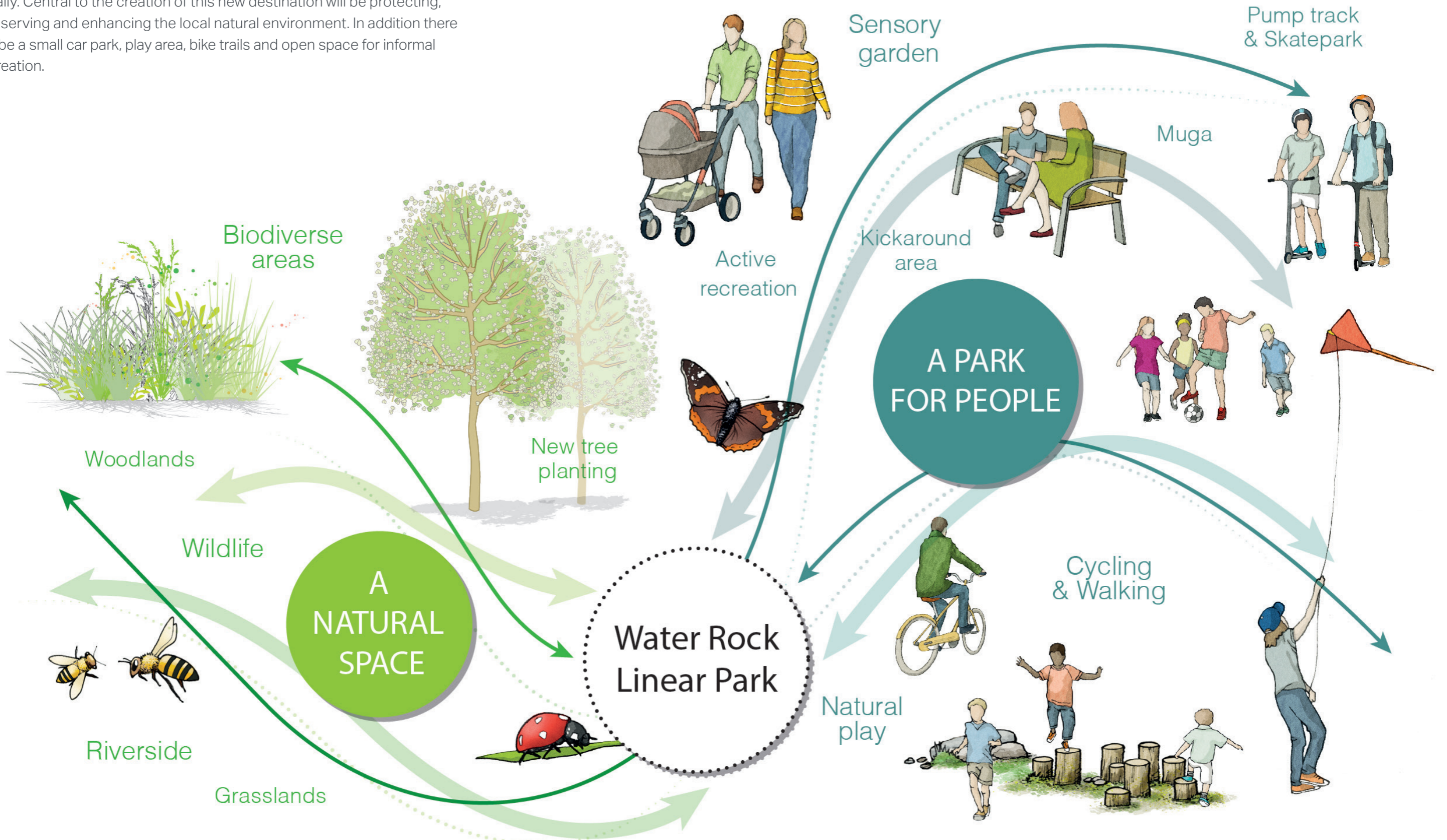
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## Overall Vision for the Park

- 2.0 The vision for Water Rock Linear Park
- 2.1 Conceptual Layout
- 2.2 Design Objectives

# The Vision for Water Rock Linear Park

Water-Rock Linear Park will link people and place by providing new pedestrian and cycle links to accessible open spaces. This new park will provide welcome amenities for both existing and new communities locally. Central to the creation of this new destination will be protecting, conserving and enhancing the local natural environment. In addition there will be a small car park, play area, bike trails and open space for informal recreation.



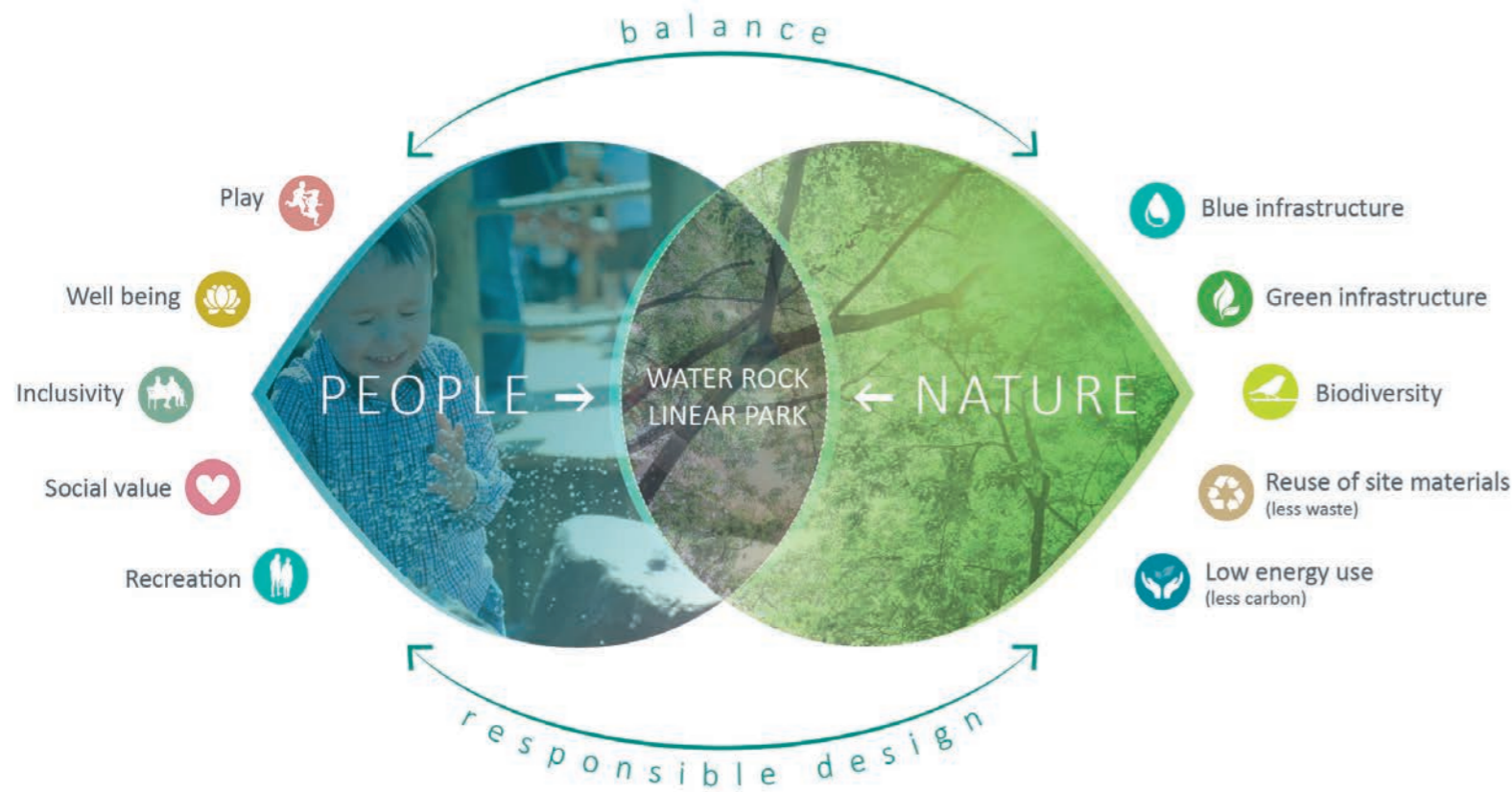
# 2.1

## Conceptual Layout

The conceptual approach to the park layout seeks to reach a balance between people and nature, by providing core amenity areas for people to dwell, meet and play, whilst retaining significant portions of the park as natural landscape, that people can explore via footpaths.

The chosen layout displays four main areas turned towards people and outdoor recreation that include features such as a sensory garden, kick-around areas, play areas and bike trails.

The natural sections of the park provide a green setting for people to wander, as well as for biodiversity and wildlife to thrive. New habitats will be created both along the river course with new woodland planting areas and within the natural grasslands.



Design Objectives

01

Provide a safe and fully accessible combined footpath and cycleway through the park, linking to Midleton town centre and Midleton Urban Expansion Area.



02

Create an enjoyable, usable and natural green corridor for access and recreation along the Owenacurra riverbank, for local communities to enjoy.

03

Connect the linear park to the existing and proposed public footpaths and cycle routes. Creates multiple universally accessible points with signage.



04

Make the linear park a destination space by offering a wide range of activities such as walking, cycling, skating, relaxing, gathering with friends and families, playing, etc.

05

Create extensive biodiversity, woodland and unmown grassland areas, thus providing habitat zones for wildlife and a natural environment for people to enjoy.

07

Create a memorable and enjoyable natural and traditional play hub to the South, offering a wide range of play experiences and catering for all age groups.

08

Open up the Owenacurra river and enable people to interact with it by providing footpaths along the riverbank and accessible viewing platforms onto the water.

09

Provide unique bike trails for teens and toddlers, adjacent to the play hub and multi-use games area, to offer a wide range of outdoor active recreation for young people and families.

06

Retain all existing mature and specimen trees, and enhance the park with additional new tree planting, buffer planting and native vegetation where appropriate.

11

Create the right balance in the park between natural spaces dedicated to biodiversity and wildlife, and spaces dedicated to recreation for local communities.

12

Promote the use of natural and recyclable materials, surfacing and equipment to successfully integrate the design in the natural setting.

10

Make the park functional and safe by providing adequate lighting, access, benches and litter bins throughout.









# 03

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## The Design

- 3.0 Conceptual Layout
- 3.1 Uses & Character Areas
- 3.2 Artist's impression of the Park
- 3.3 Entrances to the Park
- 3.4 Paths Hierarchy
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## Masterplan

The proposed linear park at Water-Rock will provide recreational amenity for both existing residents of Midelton, and future residents of Water-Rock. In accordance with the Water-Rock Framework Masterplan Study 2015, the park will focus on incorporating and developing the river and the surrounding wooded area, and will contain a mix of areas which should provide a pleasant, usable and safe green corridor for access and recreation along the riverbank.

The purpose of the proposed Water-Rock Linear Park is to provide a safe link/pathway that accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists. It is intended to provide cycle and pedestrian link to the UEA, adjoining housing areas, to the linear park zoned land MD-O-08 (along the Owenacurra River) and to the Northern Relief Road (NRR). It will also provide links into adjacent employment area.

BDP is working alongside MWP engineers to interpret the technical requirements related to flooding and ecology, ensuring these become positive additions within the park. This includes new ramps, new ancillary footbridges over the Owenacurra river and creative solutions to get up and over the continuous berm on the eastern edge which contain flood waters.

- ① Play areas
- ② Pump track
- ③ Multi-use games area
- ④ Car park
- ⑤ Primary entrances
- ⑥ Secondary entrances
- ⑦ Primary paths
- ⑧ Secondary paths
- ⑨ Informal paths
- ⑩ Viewing platforms onto the river
- ⑪ Woodland planting
- ⑫ Sensory garden
- ⑬ Kick-around areas
- ⑭ New tree planting
- ⑮ Maintenance / Emergency access
- ⑯ Bridges



# 3.1

## Uses & Character Areas

The park will provide a wide variety of amenity and recreation areas, both passive and active, for people to enjoy the outdoor space and natural setting of the park. These areas include:

- **Sensory garden:** An intimate and contemplative garden space with pockets of seating and meandering paths, where ornamental planting species will provide year round interest, colour and scent.
- **Natural and Wildlife area:** Biodiversity and rich natural environment for wildlife and local ecosystems to thrive.
- **Kick-around areas:** Large areas of mown lawn for people to gather, have a picnic, fly kites or kick a ball. These are well connected to the local residential areas.
- **Woodland areas:** Existing and retained woodland areas as a rich habitat for wildlife.
- **River viewing platforms:** 5 timber platforms located at various points along the Owennacurra River with a central timber bench and handrail. These viewing points give a direct view of the river and allow for resting and contemplation.

The activity hub to the South of the park includes:

- **Play areas:** A generous playground with a mix of traditional and natural play equipments, as well as spaces conducive to play, that cater for all age groups.
- **Bike trails:** BMX, cycle and scooter track and practice areas, coupled with an integrated area dedicated to skating with features such as long benches.
- **Multi-use games area:** Pitch providing for tennis and basketball games.
- **Car park:** Car park with 34 parking spaces, including 2 parking bays for disabled parking, 4 for electrical vehicles and 4 parent and child parking bays.



# 3.1

## Uses & Character Areas

The design of the park aims to create a series of legible, enjoyable and interconnecting spaces which host a range of activities for residents and visitors. It will provide a wide range of character areas and landscape components, the key ones are illustrated below.

BIODIVERSITY AREAS



PLAY AREAS



KICK-AROUND AREA



BIKE TRAILS



SENSORY GARDEN



MULTI-USE GAMES AREA



RIVER PLATFORMS



FOOTPATHS



# 3.2

Water Rock Linear Park

## Artist's Impression of the Park



# 3.3

## Entrances to the Park

The park will be well connected to its surroundings through strategically located entrances. The park level is either lower than the surrounding grounds, or bordered by embankments that protect the residential areas from flooding, meaning that a significant level difference has to be overcome at most of the park entrances. Fully accessible paths with falls no greater than 1:21 and landings where appropriate will be provided to all entrances. The proposal includes 3 primary entrances:

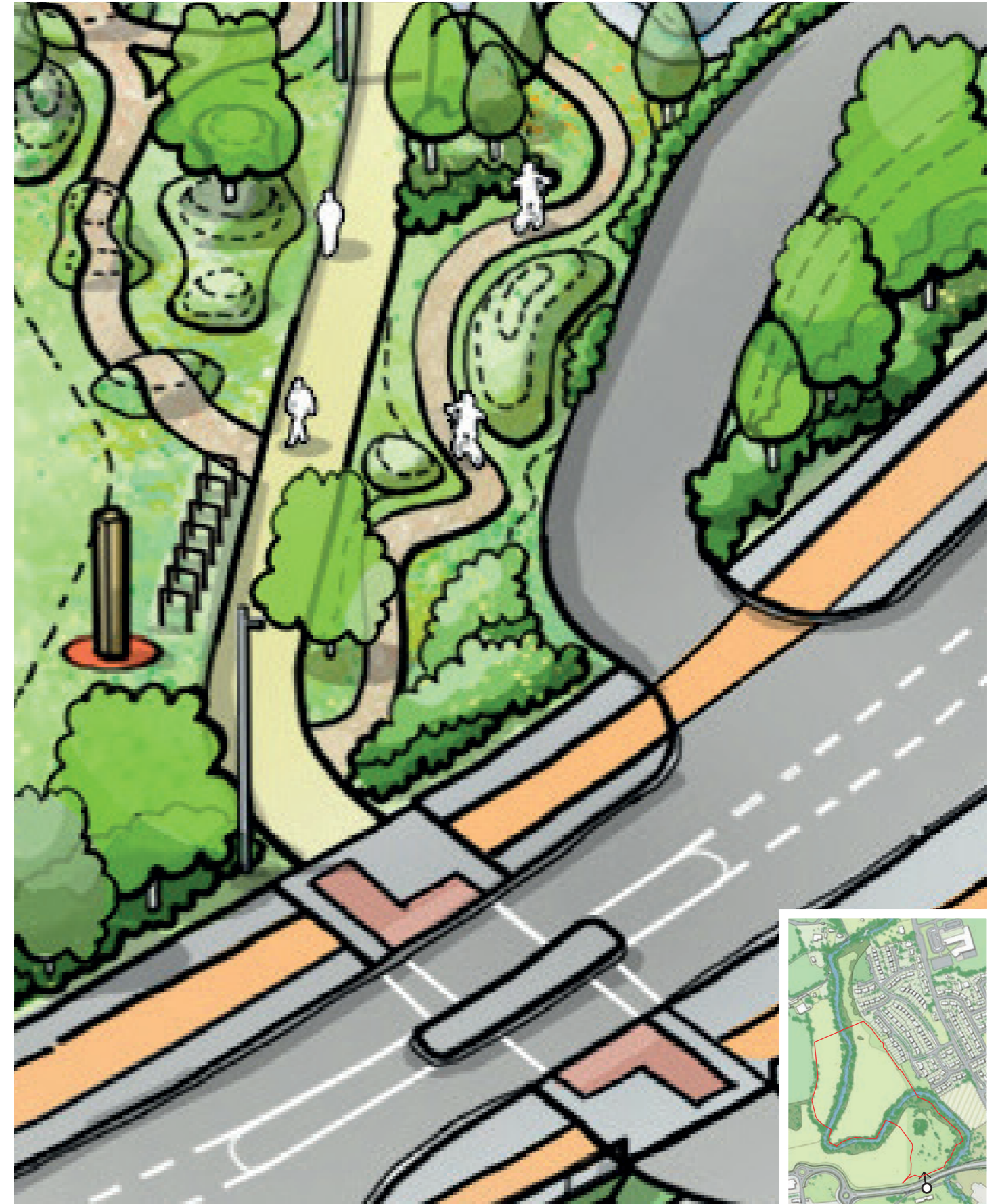
- **Northern Relief Road South Entrance:** will connect the park to the Balinacurra Cycleway and Footpath, vehicular entrance to the Linear Park car park and direct access to the play and active southern hub.
- **Western Primary Entrance:** will connect to the proposed pedestrian avenue as part of the future housing development. It will also provide good access to the park for the future residents of the area. This is a pedestrian and cyclist entrance only.
- **Eastern Maintenance Access:** This access will be for maintenance and emergency vehicles only.





# 3.3

## Artist's Impression of the New Eastern Entrance

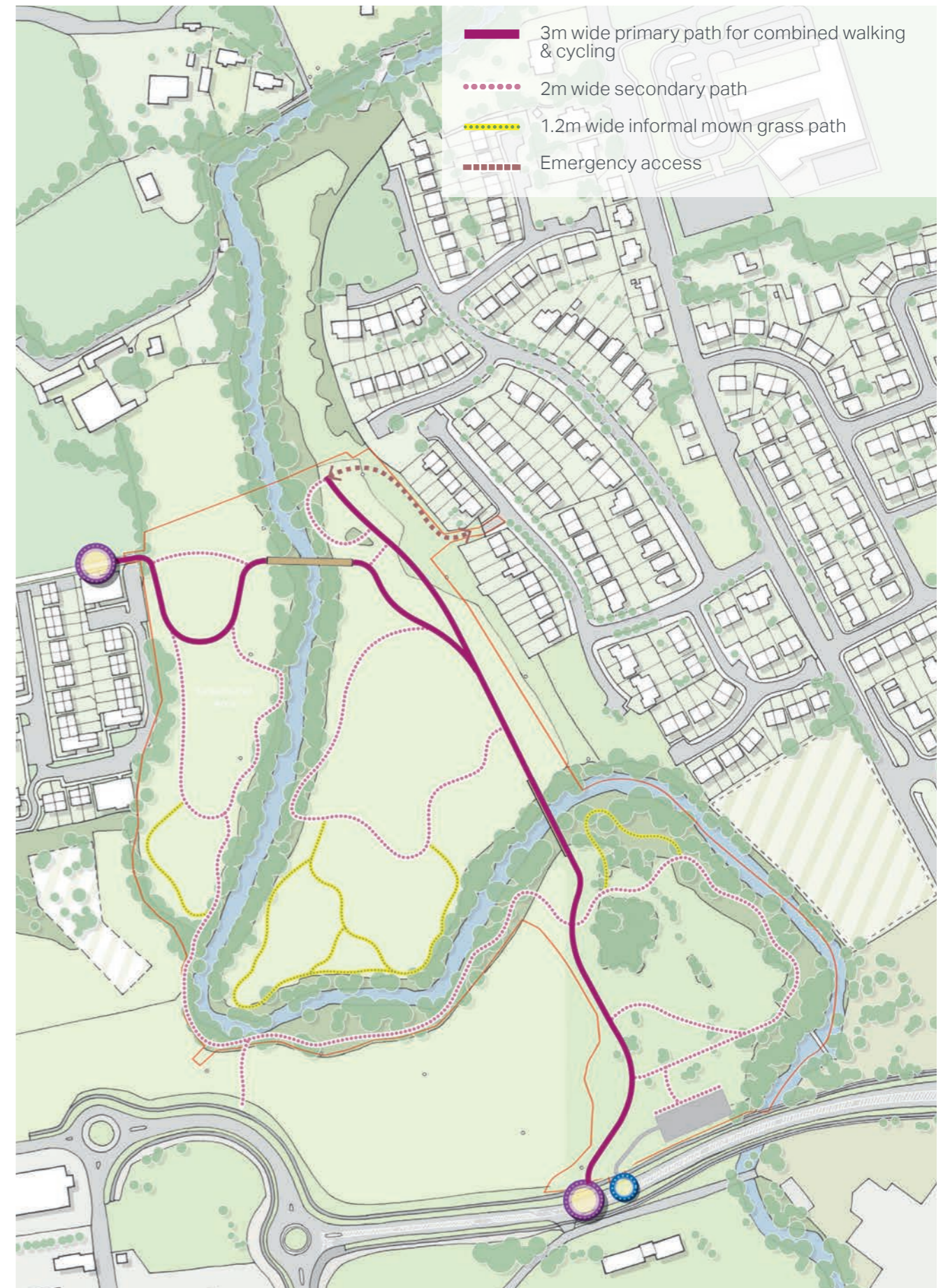


# 3.4

## Paths Hierarchy

The proposal includes a comprehensive network of paths with a straightforward hierarchy that will allow users to experience the park and its landscape in different ways.

- **Primary paths:** 3m wide coloured asphalt path with timber edging. Main combined pedestrian and cycle path, it directly connects the Southern activity hub to the future pedestrian avenue to the East and to the existing residential estates to the West. At the Southern end of the park, it links into the Balinacurra Cycleway, thus giving a continuation to a key long distance cycle and pedestrian link.
- **Secondary paths:** 2m wide hoggin paths with timber edging, these paths move in and out of different grassland types and wooded areas, bring people closer to the river in specific areas and loop around the kick-around areas.
- **Informal paths:** 1.2m mown paths that encourage the exploration and the immersion in the natural areas of the park. The informality and simplicity of these path bring people closer to nature as they wander through the different habitat zones.



PRIMARY PATHS



SECONDARY PATHS



INFORMAL PATHS



# 3.5

## Water Rock Linear Park

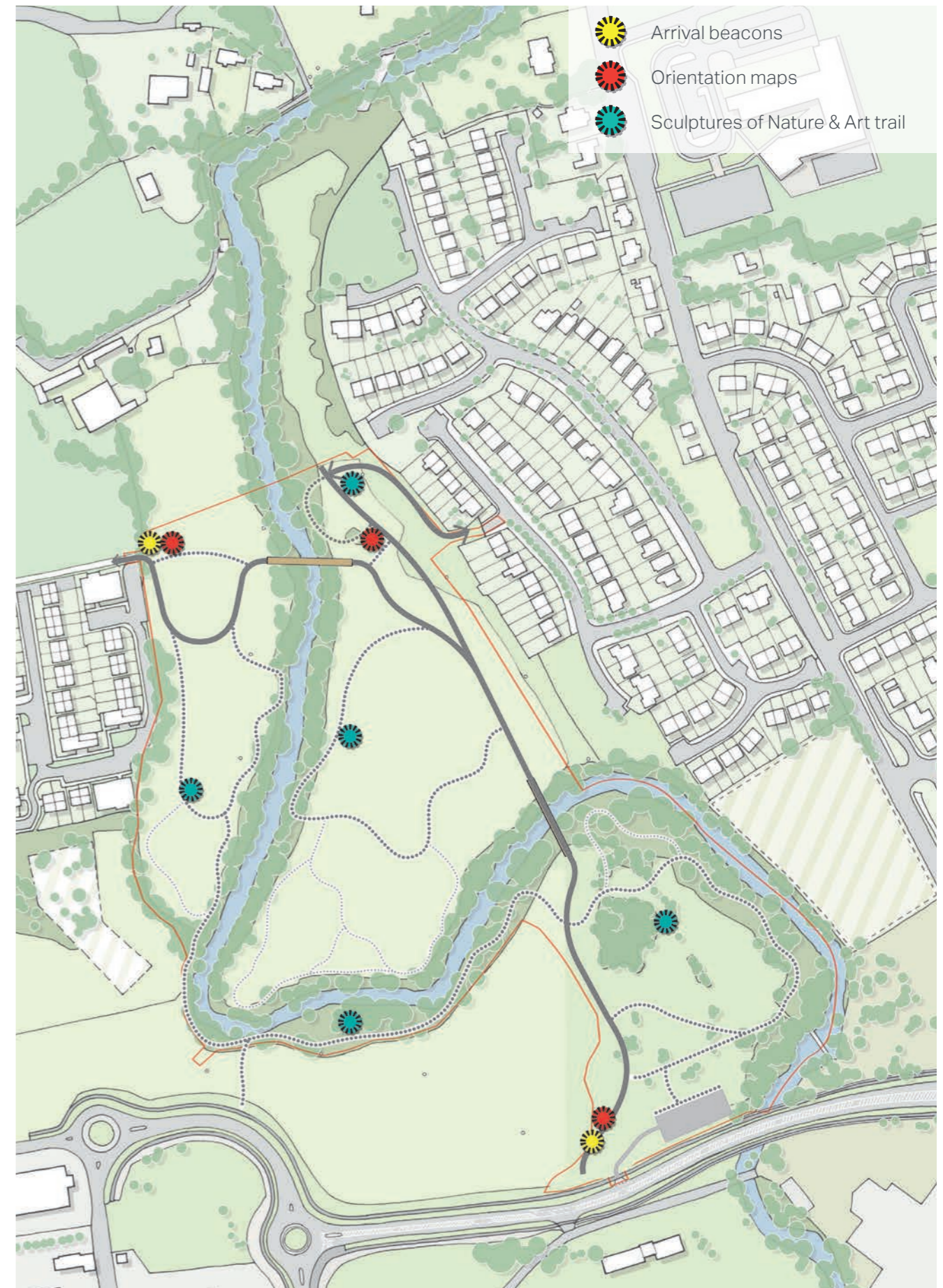
### Art Trail & Wayfinding Strategy

In order to ensure good legibility and visibility of the linear park, an overall strategy for the park signage and trails has been devised. It seeks to address how people arrive to the park from its surroundings and how they move between the proposed destinations.

The proposed signage will comprise the following:

- **Arrival beacons** will be erected at all entrances so they can be visible to people arriving to the park. They will also promote a sense of identity for the park.
- **Orientation maps** that contain a map of the park and its key destinations will be located at all primary entrances.

Additionally, the park will comprise an Art & Nature Trail running through the park for visitors to either follow or simply come across as they wander through the park. This trail will ally interpretation around nature, habitats and climate change along with sculptural art interventions to sparkle the imagination and encourage people to connect with nature by observing it. This trail is an additional feature of the general wayfinding strategy and will promote a sense of identity and place for the park.



# 3.6

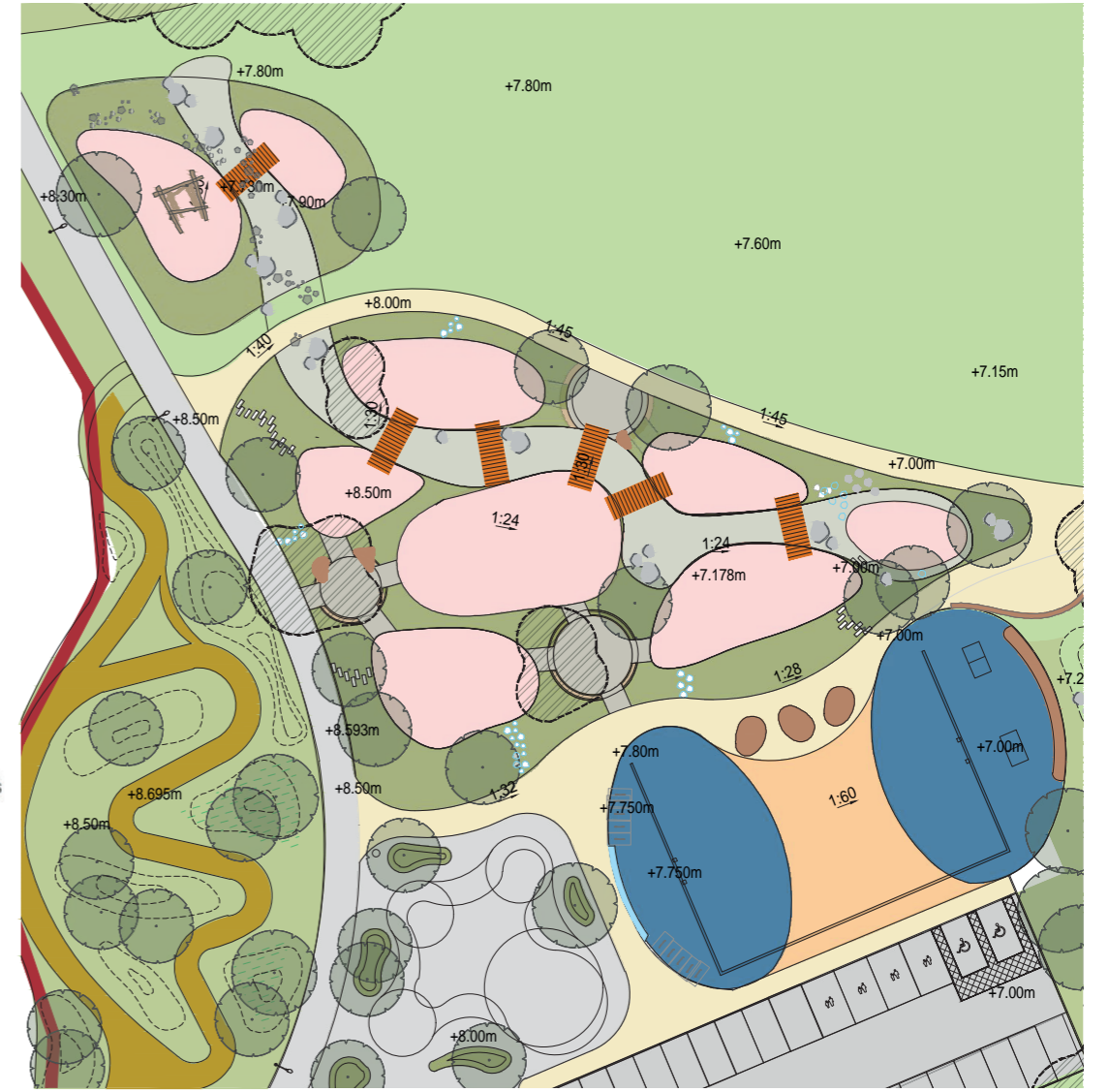
## Water Rock Linear Park

### Play Areas

The play area is located to the South of the park, directly linked to the Ballinacurra to Midleton cycleway and in close proximity to the new car park for ease of access. It has been set back from the entrance and will sit lower than the Northern Relief Road level to ensure all users felt comfortable in the play area, whilst still being fully visible.

The play area has been carefully designed to cater for all ages and will provide an inclusive environment with the main paths meandering through the area. It will hosts a range of facilities that will provide challenge, interest and a rich play experience, including a tennis table, a Teqball table and small climbing wall. Together with the multi-use games area and bike trails, this southern area of the park is viewed as an active hub where toddlers, children, young people, families and adults can interact, play and dwell.

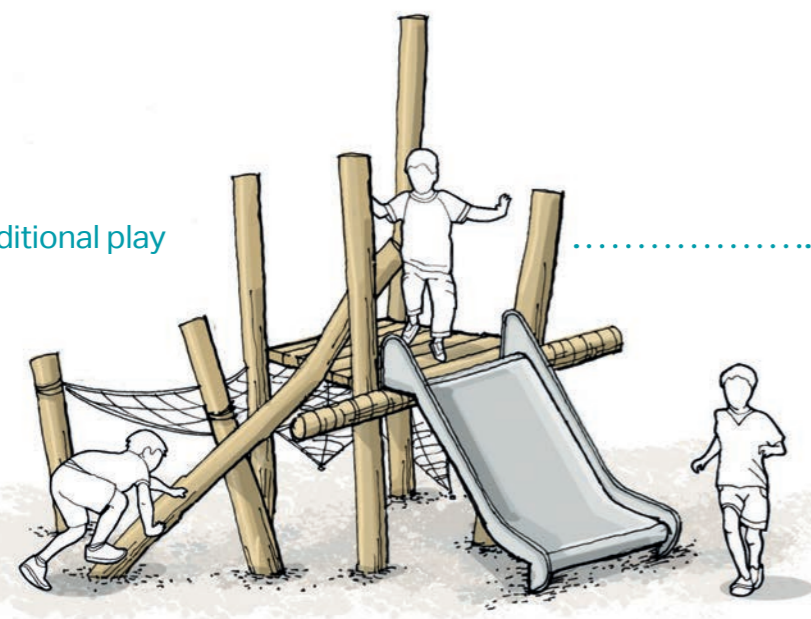
<b>KEY</b>	<b>SOFT LANDSCAPE</b>
Site Boundary	Amenity grassland
<b>HARD SURFACING</b>	Natural unmown grassland
Asphalt road surfacing (Car Park)	Mown Path
Asphalt road to Willowbank (Maintenance and Emergency Use only)	Riparian Planting
Asphalt path 3m	Planted Embankment
Self-binding gravel path 2m	Species Rich Perennials/ Grasses
Play surfacing (Childrens Play)	Sensory Planting
Play surfacing (MUGA)	Ornamental Planting
Pump Track	Dry River
	Hedge
	Existing Trees
	Feature and boulevard trees
	Woodland and buffer tree groups



Traditional play

Spaces inducing to play

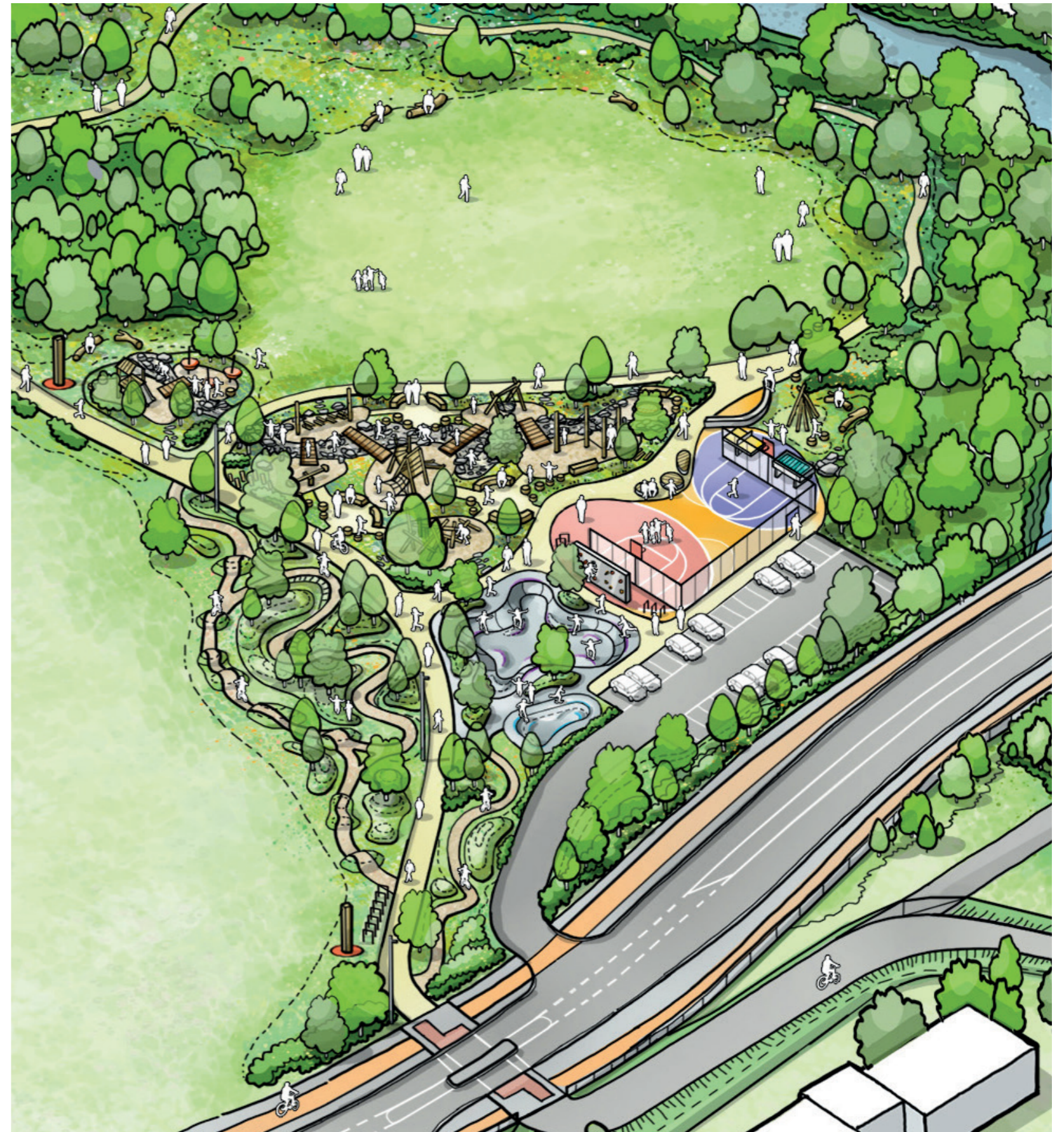
Natural play



### Play Areas

The design combines traditional play equipments such as slides and swings, natural play pieces that explore the use of natural materials such as logs and boulders and spaces that induce play, such as landforms and planted areas. The ambition is to allow free movement, running and jumping, but also to provide a setting that sparkles the imagination and offers a framework for contemplation.

The overall design will allow easy access for parents and carers to safely support children during use of the equipment, as well as areas that include seating and shade for social recreation for the parents/carers whilst the children play.



# 3.7

### Bike trails

A series of sustainable goals have been set for the park, including retaining all excavations on site, which is further demanding given the flood plain status. Excavations taken from new paths and other earthworks on site will be used to create a bike trails in a linear arrangement at the southern most entrance to the park, which is outside the flood zone. There will be two different routes;

- The first for toddlers which is less demanding with less undulation which connects the entrance directly to the play area.
- The second which is more demanding incorporating a circular pump track with more undulations and challenging turns.



CHILDREN & TEEN TRAIL



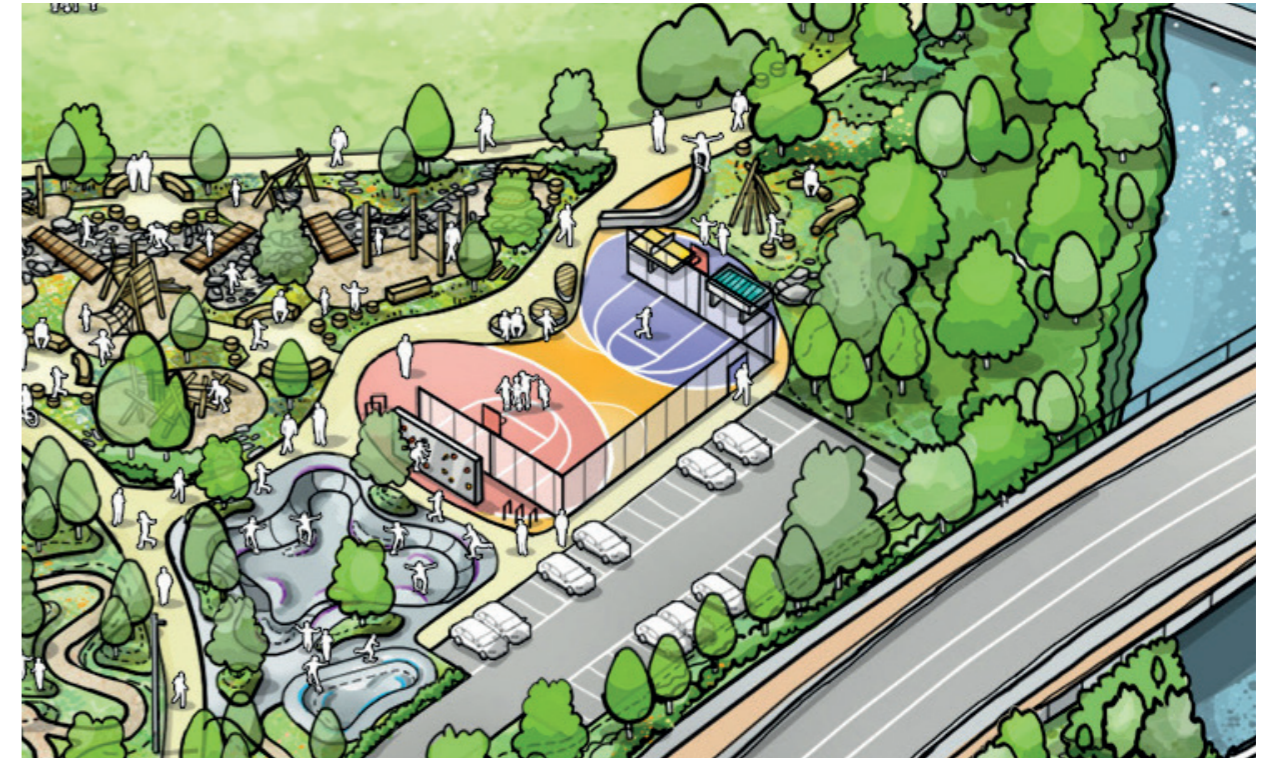
TODDLERS TRAIL



# 3.8

## Multi-use games area (MUGA)

This all weather games area has been designed for informal play. It will have a high fence against the car park and at each end to support goals and basketball hoops. Seating is provided top the MUGA to ensure the space can be enjoyed by both those using and those spectating. Associated with the MUGA will be a small climbing wall and a skateboarding bench to further diversify the activities and cater for all ages.



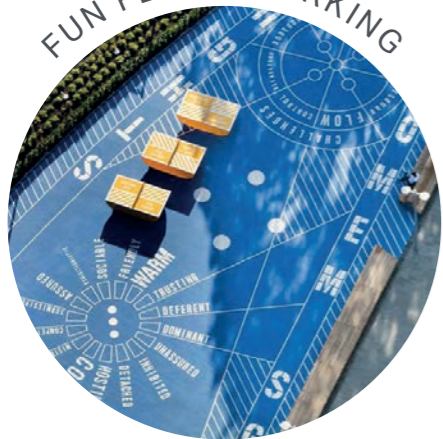
CURVY SHAPE



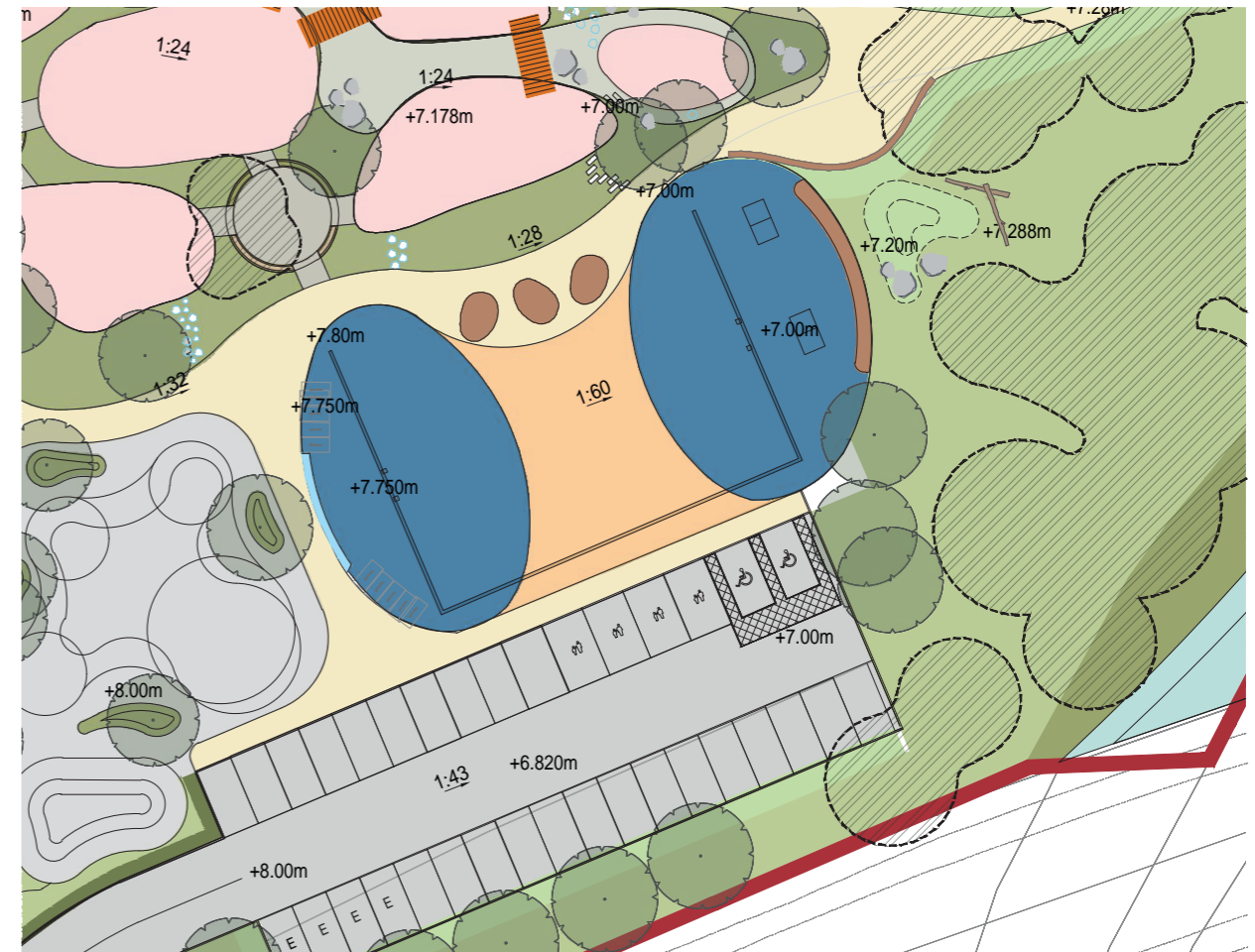
INTEGRATED IN LANDSCAPE



FUN FLOOR MARKING



TENNIS TABLES



# Sensory Garden

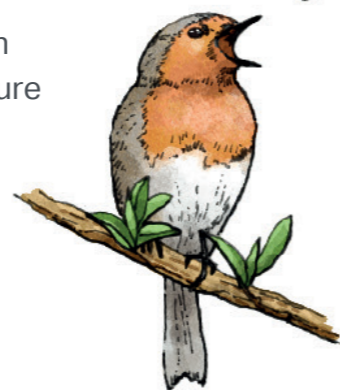
The sensory garden is a quiet destination space that will attract visitors to the North end of the park. Sitting in a curve of the river Owenacurra, surrounded by grasslands and the wooded river bank, it is a pocket garden that encourages contemplation, away from the buzz of the park. Nonetheless it is directly connected to the rest of the park via a three meter wide path.

The sensory garden is an intimate garden space that promotes connecting to nature and plants through observation and peaceful relaxation. It will display an attractive palette of ornamental species attractive to wildlife, colourful and with seasonal interest, that appeal to the senses. The meandering paths encourage the immersion in nature and the seating areas invite to contemplation and reflection. This garden will be centred on the rhythms of nature, the natural cycles of plants and seasons.

Plants with attractive colours, contrasting textures & scents



Quiet contemplation & connection with nature



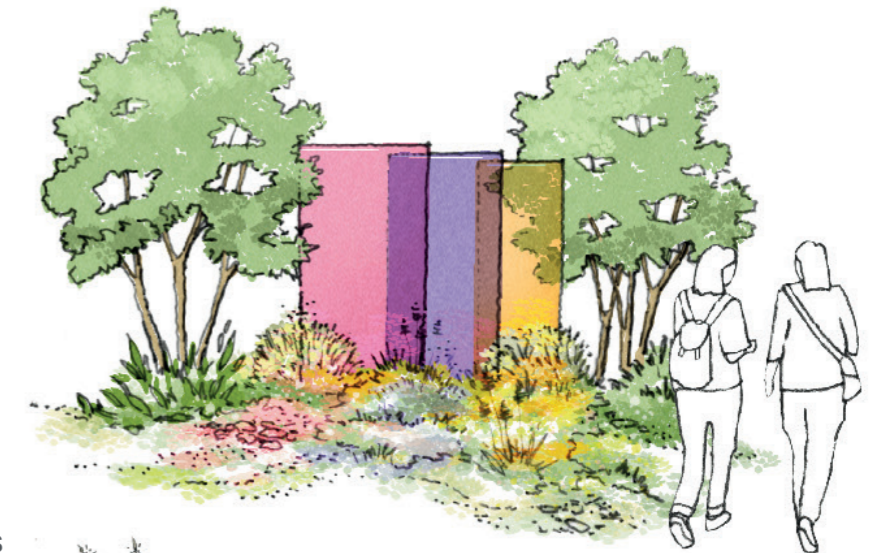
A garden that sparkles the imagination and appeals to the senses in a poetic and playful manner



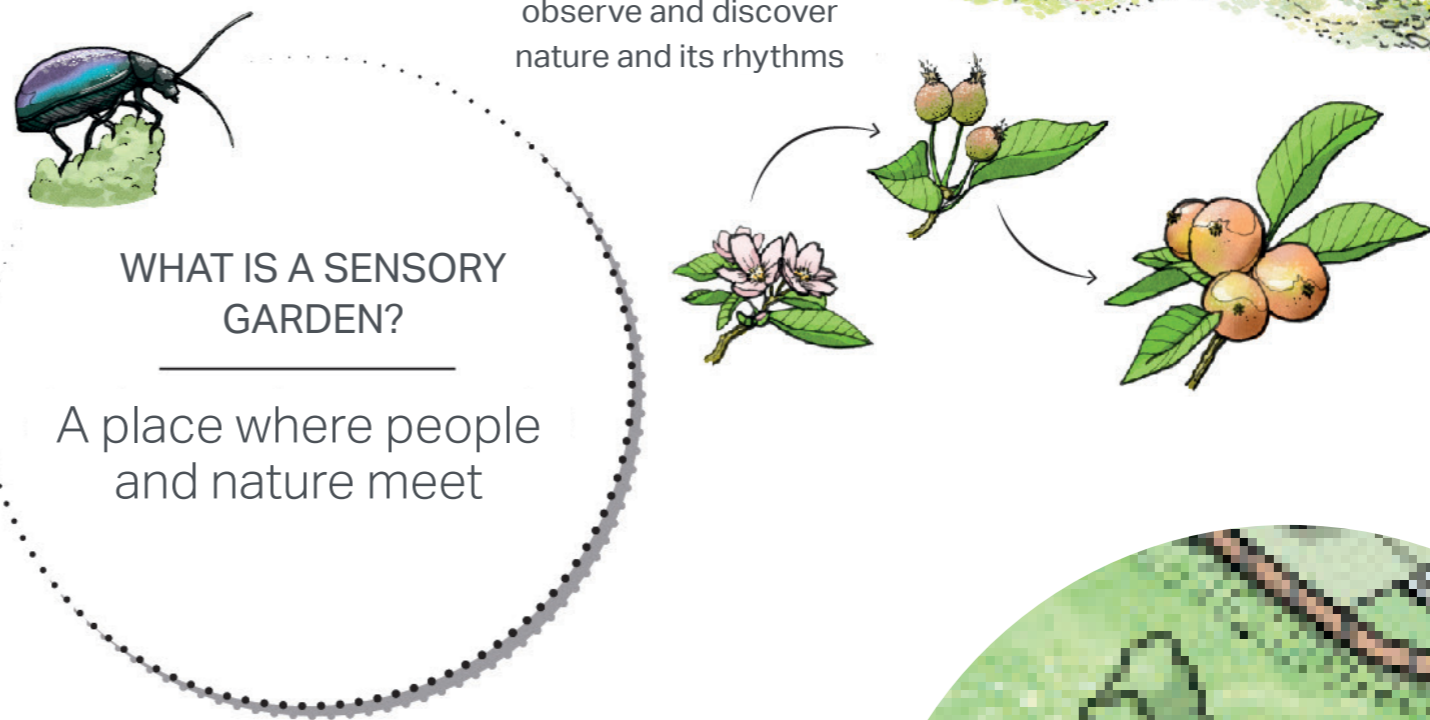
An intimate space to immerse yourself in nature



An opportunity to observe and discover nature and its rhythms



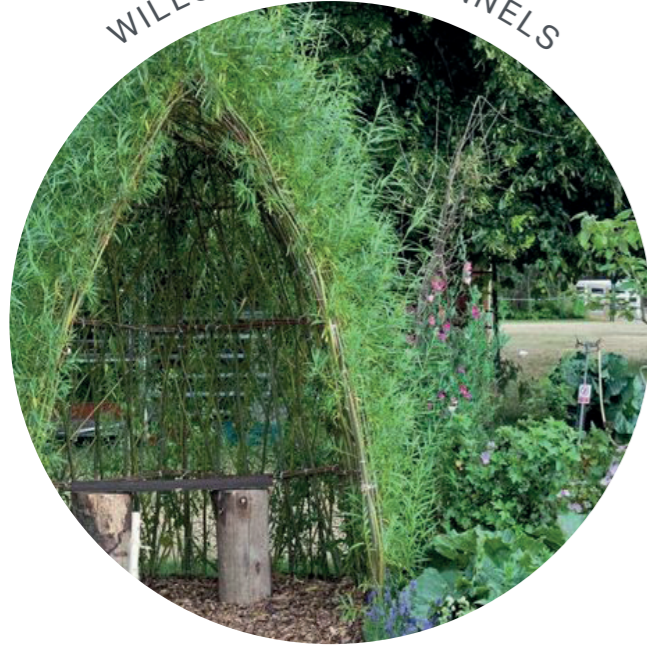
A natural space enhanced by subtle art interventions





The sensory garden is a space that will sparkles the imagination in a poetic and playful way. Below are some of the feature elements it could display, in connection with the senses and nature, to enhance the visitors experience and make it a memorable space.

WILLOW HUTS & TUNNELS



INSECT HOTELS & BIRD BOXES



SCULPTURAL TRAIL & ART



ORNAMENTAL PLANTING



BAREFOOT TRAIL



SKY MIRRORS



EDIBLE PLANTS & FRUIT TREES



FEATURE SEATING

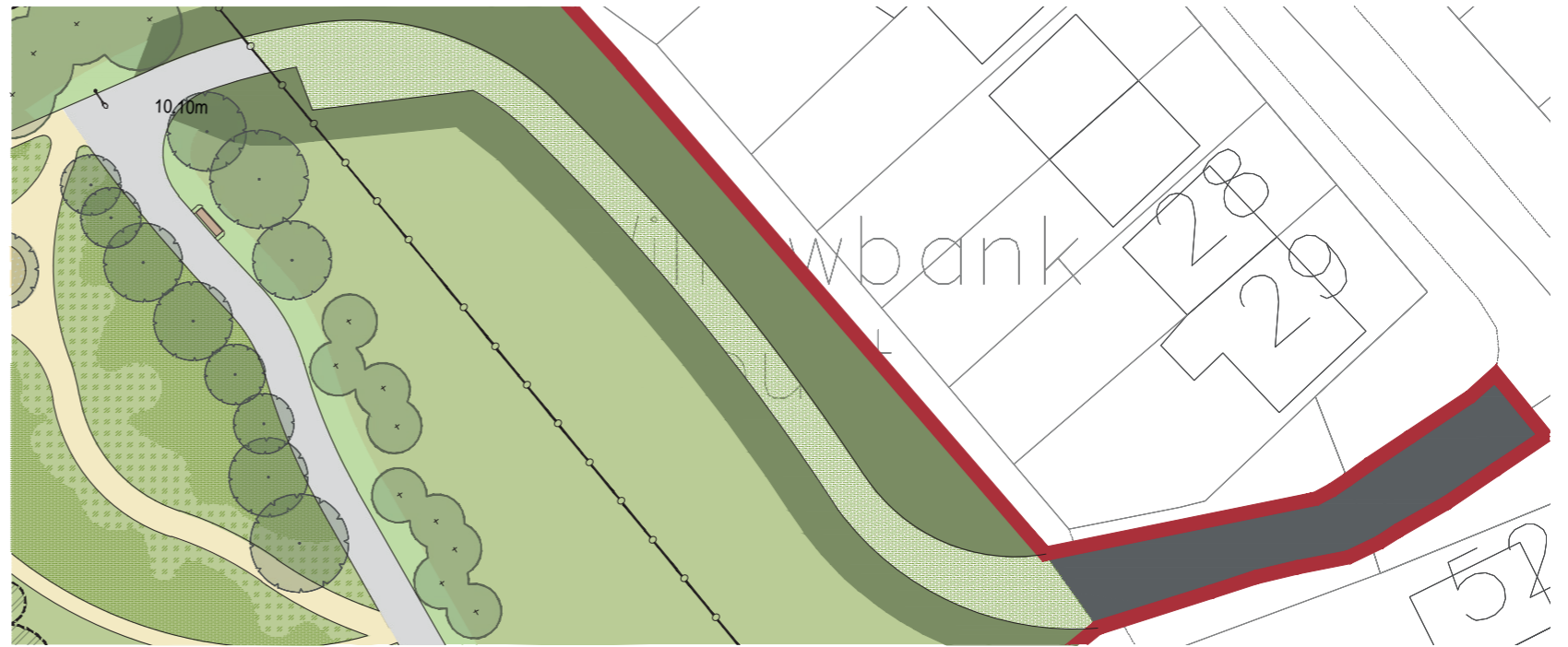


# Car Park and Emergency / Maintenance Access

The new proposed car park sits at the South of the site, with a direct access drive from the Northern Relief road. It has been strategically located to minimise the visual presence of vehicles for users of the park, whilst retaining a close proximity with key components of the park such as the multi-use games area, bike trails and play areas. The main pedestrian and cycle access to the park is segregated from the car park access drive to ensure all users can enter the park safely. A pedestrian path connects the car park area to the park hub.

There is a maintenance and emergency access route for specific vehicles via Willowbank Estate. Grasscrete or similar will be the primary material used for this access route.

The car park has 34 parking bays, including 2 bays for disabled car and 4 bays for electrical vehicles and 4 bays designated for parents and child.



**Willowbank Maintenance and Emergency Access Route. Material: Grasscrete or**



**Main Car Park**

INTEGRATED INTO LANDSCAPE



PERMEABLE SURFACING



## Tree Removal

A number of trees within the project area have been identified as required removal. This is necessary due to a number of constraints and factors. The trees and tree clusters proposed for removal are located to the South of the site, in the area proposed as the active hub that include a kick-around area, play areas, the bike trails, multi-use games area and car park. Whilst wherever possible the existing trees will be integrated in the design proposal and retained, for instance in the play areas, some tree clusters need to be removed to offer an articulate layout for the new park components.

Some tree clusters have dense and low canopies, blocking out views from key pathways and thus creating possible safety and visibility issues. These clusters have been identified as required crown lifting and scrub clearance.

The proposal is to allow for removal where necessary and replanting of the same and more species throughout the park as part of the wider planting strategy.





# 04

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## Materials & Planting

- 4.0 Approach to Planting
- 4.1 Furniture Strategy & Material Palette

## Approach to Planting

Planting and vegetation are key components of the proposals, they will help create a strong sense of place by defining various character areas. The proposal seeks to enhance the biodiversity of the site by proposing a series of natural habitat zones within the park, based on existing ones. The proposals also allow for defined areas where ornamental species will be used.

- **Play area:** The play area will be planted with new specimen trees and joyful low level planting with attractive textures and colours, such as ornamental high grasses and perennials.
- **Sensory garden:** The sensory garden will be planted with new specimen trees, including ornamental multi stem trees, and a range of perennials with contrasting colours and textures.
- **New tree planting:** Specimen trees will be planted at strategic location, such as in the play areas and sensory garden, to provide shadow, structure and seasonal interest. Across the parkland, new trees will be planted as clusters, following a naturalistic approach and preferring native species.
- **Buffer and edge planting:** Native edge mixes will be planted where edges of the park are open such as long Northern Relief Road, around the car park and at the entrances. Buffer planting at the entrance will create a green and dense defensible space to existing houses on Willowbank, preserving their privacy and views into their back gardens from the top of the embankments.
- **Woodland planting:** Within the natural areas the existing woodland habitat will be extended with new tree planting as forestry whips, to create at term an extended tree coverage and provide a rich and diverse habitat for local wildlife.
- **Wild flower grassland:** A mix of native and non-native wild flower species will be locally sourced and sown across the grassland areas, providing pollen and nectar to pollinators such as bees and butterflies.
- **Scrubland:** non planted areas, they will be self-forming across the natural areas and will be managed appropriately throughout the year. Scrub creates nesting and hunting grounds for a variety of birds species.



## Furniture Strategy & Materials Palette

Furniture is an important element in creating a sense of place and a legible public realm. The proposals include a palette of benches, litter bins and signage. The furniture has been selected to ensure a coordinated language of elements is maintained throughout the park, whilst avoiding unnecessary clutter and creating an attractive environment. Generally all items of park furniture will be from a standard palette and neutral in design, with a preference for natural materials such as timber. Careful consideration has been given to the choice of materials, which can withstand flood waters along with ensuring value for money.

- **Bench seating** will be simple, durable and robust but also comfortable. The seats will be located along the key pedestrian routes and will incorporate arm and back rests.
- **Bins** will be located at key junctions and spaced at regular intervals along the park routes. They will be neutral in design and part of a coordinated park furniture palette.
- **Cycle stands** will be located in small clusters where cyclists enter a pedestrian area, such as the play hub and multi-use games area, in visible locations where passive surveillance occur, not impeding circulation.
- **Lighting columns** will be located along the primary combined pedestrian cycle path. Black Philips City Soul LED lantern mounted on 4m-6m tubular columns.
- **Wayfinding elements** like orientation maps and directional signs will be strategically located through the park and in timber.

The hard surfacing materials have been chosen to reflect the type of activity and usage they support.

- **Primary paths:** 3m wide coloured asphalt with timber edging for combined walking and cycling.
- **Secondary paths:** 2m wide hoggin paths with timber edging.
- **Informal paths:** 1.2m wide mown grass paths running through the woodland, grassland and biodiversity areas.

TYPICAL PARK BENCH



VIEWING DECK BENCH



ORIENTATION MAP



LITTER BINS



LIGHTING COLUMNS



CYCLE STANDS



PRIMARY PATHS



SECONDARY PATHS



INFORMAL PATHS





**BDP.**

Produced in April 2023

BDP  
Blackhall Green  
Dublin D07 V0RE  
Ireland