



## Churchill Road Play Area Consultation Full Report

Report written by Sheila Davies

### Background.

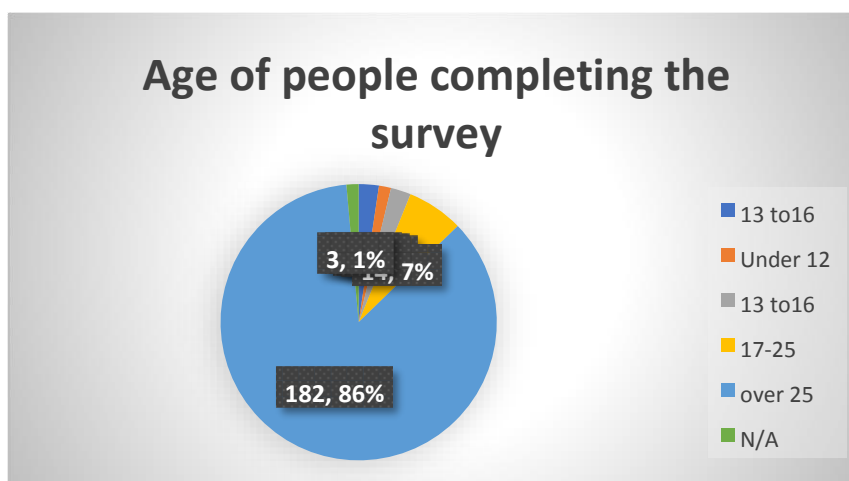
This play equipment is sited on Richard Robinson Field close to Churchill Road. The field was bequeathed to town residents to be used for the recreation of children & young people. The wooden play equipment has proved very popular for children and young people, who often visit the field on their way home from nearby schools. The play equipment has now come to the end of its life and most of it has had to be removed for safety reasons. The field also has football pitches which the Magpie football club use to provide football coaching to children and young people aged up to 18.

The Town Council ran a survey from August to early October 2022 to gather local residents' thoughts on replacing the play equipment. The survey could be filled in online or on paper. Paper copies were made available at the Leisure centre, Library and Town Council offices. The survey was advertised in Focus, (local community magazine), local social media groups, posters around town, through the schools and leaflets were put through the doors of residents living close to the park.

The Town Council has some funding put by to help pay for this new equipment, but substantial fund raising will also be needed to cover the costs of replacing the equipment.

### Who completed the survey.

207 people completed the survey. 86% (182) of these were aged over 25



81% (166) of people responding are parents or grandparents.  
 19% (46) of people responding live close to the recreation field.  
 14 people responding said they are caring for a child living with a disability.

It is unfortunate that so few young people responded to this survey. However, a separate consultation took place earlier in the year at a Family Fun Day with input from children and young people and the results of that consultation is available in a separate report.

### Which age group would most benefit from play equipment?

People were asked which age group they thought would benefit from play equipment and could select more than one age group. There was a lot of support for equipment for Early Years up to age 12 but less support for equipment for children aged 13 plus.

#### Data Table

Age	Number	Percentage
Early years to 7	174	84%
8 to 12	164	79%
13 plus	71	34%
N/A	2	1%

Residents made comments in various parts of the survey about problems with teenagers leaving litter, using bad language, causing vandalism and the need for a separate area for teenagers.

This might explain why there was less support for play equipment for young people aged 13 plus in this area.

#### A Selection of some of the comments made

*There needs to be a separate area for The Teenagers as There is often conflict at the park between parents and teenagers swearing at the kids.'*

*'Smaller equipment for the little ones and maybe a separate area for the older ones'*

*'The young people from the secondary school take over the undercover areas of the park - which they have every right to use don't get me wrong - but on several occasions they are smoking, littering and using abusive language (again they are entitled to do) but not very appropriate when there are young children playing*

*around the area. I have young children and many times they have been put off by using the ladder and slide because the young people are being quite loud and have their music blaring'*

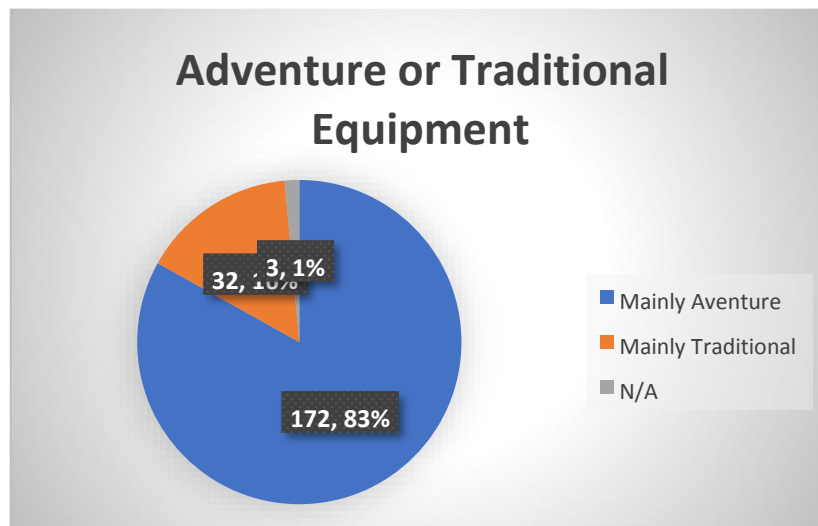
*Somewhere for older kids/teenagers to hang out and recreation for them would be very useful to reduce vandalism due to boredom.'*

*'feel there has been a two tier system in place at this park - youngsters during the day and from tea-time onwards the older children seem to gather and socialize + litter (sorry!)*

*'Teenage shelter together with their own swings - other swings sized for the under 12s. Current issues with the existing play area would be resolved if it were relocated as far from the houses as possible, allowing the residents to enjoy the peace and quiet of their home and gardens.'*

### **Type of Play equipment**

83% of people who responded were in favour of having mainly adventure play equipment which would contrast with the more traditional play equipment that can be found in Sandford Town Recreation Park.



Some people mentioned wanting something different to the play equipment in Sandford Ave Park. The zip wire and basket swings were both frequently mentioned as something children particularly enjoyed. Some people would like to have adult outdoor gym equipment suitable for older children and adults.

### **A Selection of some of the comments made**

*'With Sandford Avenue park having traditional play equipment, this park needs the opposite.'*

*'Swings are available at Town Park. My children all loved the zip wire and large basket swing.'*

*'The basket swing was extremely popular - maybe we could have more than one as the teenagers used to constantly use it when it was on site and the little ones didn't get to have much of a chance to use it'*

*'You have got traditional play equipment already in Church Stretton. Obstacle courses, clamber stack, zip wire, tire swings, slides are very popular here'*

*'The basket swing was extremely popular - maybe we could have more than one as the teenagers used to constantly use it when it was on site and the little ones didn't get to have much of a chance to use it'*

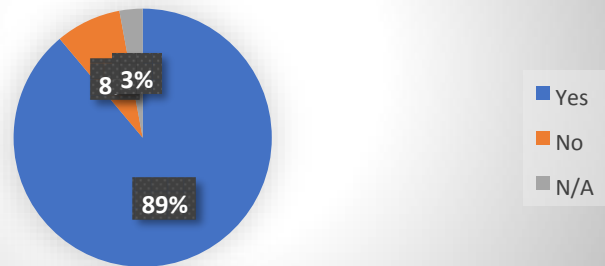
*There is already substantial younger children's play equipment in other park. Older children appreciate something they are more interested in - my children (age 10&12) say they really wouldn't want to lose the climbing logs, the rope bridge or the basket swings and say PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE don't get rid of the zip wire (but if it has to be replaced please replace with a bigger one). They would love a roundabout and monkey bars and a climbing wall, a cargo net and to have the old weighted seesaw swing seat back.*

*The A49 park has traditional play equipment it would be nice to see a variety within the town. It would also be nice to see some gym equipment for adults/teenagers too.*

### **Should some Play Equipment be inclusive?**

Some Play Equipment is more accessible to children living with a disability. This can include roundabouts which can take wheelchairs or buggies, multi play frames with broader ramps and slides, basket swings, sensory & play panels & musical equipment. People were asked if they would like some of the new play equipment to be inclusive.

## Would you like some of the new play equipment to be inclusive?



89% of respondents were in favour of making some of the new play equipment inclusive, so that it would also be accessible to children living with a disability.

Many comments showed how much people supported this, but a few comments expressed concern about musical equipment causing noise which would disturb local residents.

### A Selection of some of the comments made

*'Excellent idea to provide a combination of play equipment'*

*'But not musical equipment as this can drive other park users and neighbours mad..... the noise carries a long way and will result in complaints.'*

*'This should happen anyway, no question needed'*

*'As a mum of child with additional needs .....please do '*

*'I think inclusive equipment is a must. No child should be excluded, even if there's only one child in town it's needed for it's worth it '*

*'Any play equipment that can be shared with those with different needs would be great e.g. broad slide or roundabout with sides, there should be something for everyone.'*

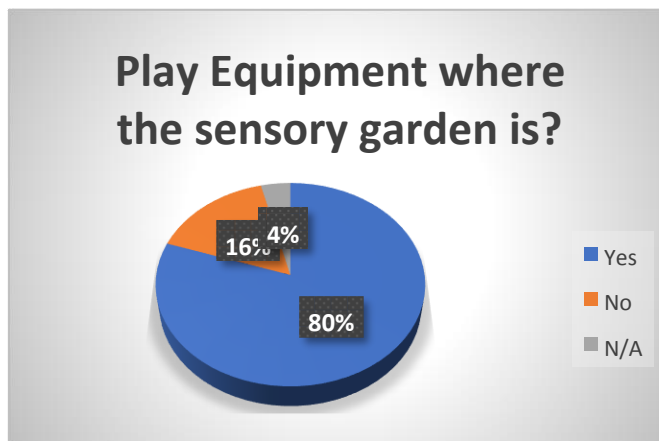
*'Help families and friends to interact together and not section anyone out x'*

### Sensory Garden Area for play equipment?

In 2014 a sensory garden was built and a local group of residents maintained the shrubs. The sensory garden has been neglected of recent years and the wooden edging which contains the beds has rotted and needed to be removed.

Inclusive play equipment would require a buggy / wheelchair friendly path to the play equipment for some disabled children to access it. The cost of laying a path close to the road entrance is cheaper than having a path that went right across the park. Residents were asked their thoughts about moving the play equipment onto this spot of the field where the overgrown sensory garden is sited.

80% of people thought it sensible to put the play equipment where the sensory garden is, to give easy access from the road.



A few people expressed concern that meant inclusive play equipment would be placed in a separate area to the rest of the play equipment. This would prevent disabled children from playing with their peers. This had never been the intention of the town council who recognise the importance of disabled children not being segregated from society,

Some local residents expressed concern that this spot was too close to houses and might generate noise disturbance for residents. One or two people expressed a desire to retain the sensory garden or at least include some planting by the area.

**A Selection of some of the comments made**

*'Yes I agree this would be the best place because it has easy access and the sensory garden is in disrepair'*

*'Probably makes sense that it's closest to entrance/pavement for access?'  
'inclusive needs to be with everything else '*

*'Yes, but with due consideration to houses in close proximity to the area. '*

*'I think this could be the worst place to put it. Nearby residents are already unhappy with the noise generated - especially by secondary school students - on the existing facilities. '*

*'The sensory garden needs upgrading not destroying..... there are many insect and bee friendly plants there. '*

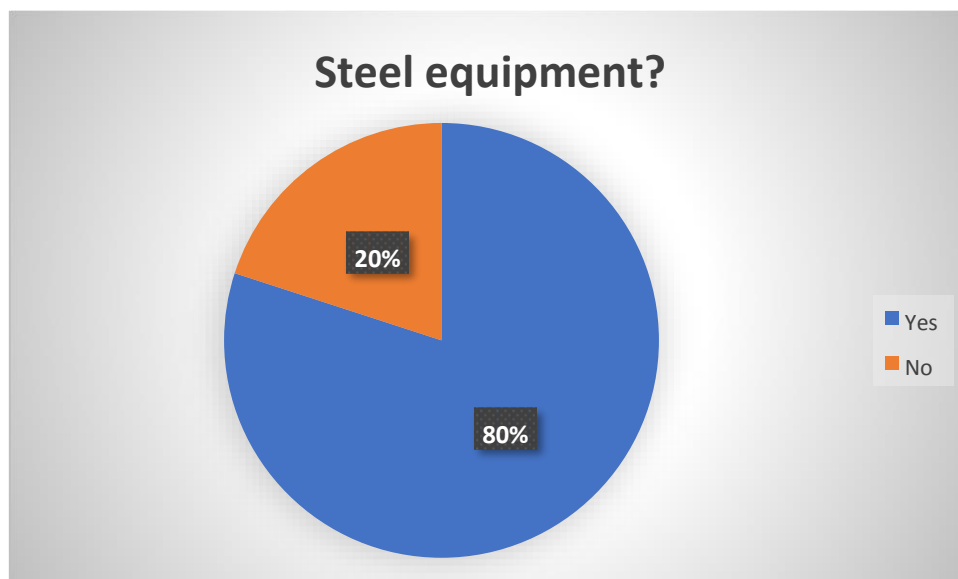
*'Shame to lose the sensory garden but I guess this could be re-sited/reimagined.'*

It is possible that local residents might be happier to have play equipment for younger children in this part of the field if a separate area for teenagers was set further away in the middle of the field. This is something that can be explored further.

### **Steel or wood?**

Wooden play equipment has a lifespan of 10 to 15 years and is relatively high maintenance. Stainless steel play equipment costs similar, comes with a lifetime guarantee, is easy to maintain and largely vandal proof.

Residents were asked if they preferred to have equipment made of steel or wood.



80% of people responding were in favour of using steel.

A few people made comments about

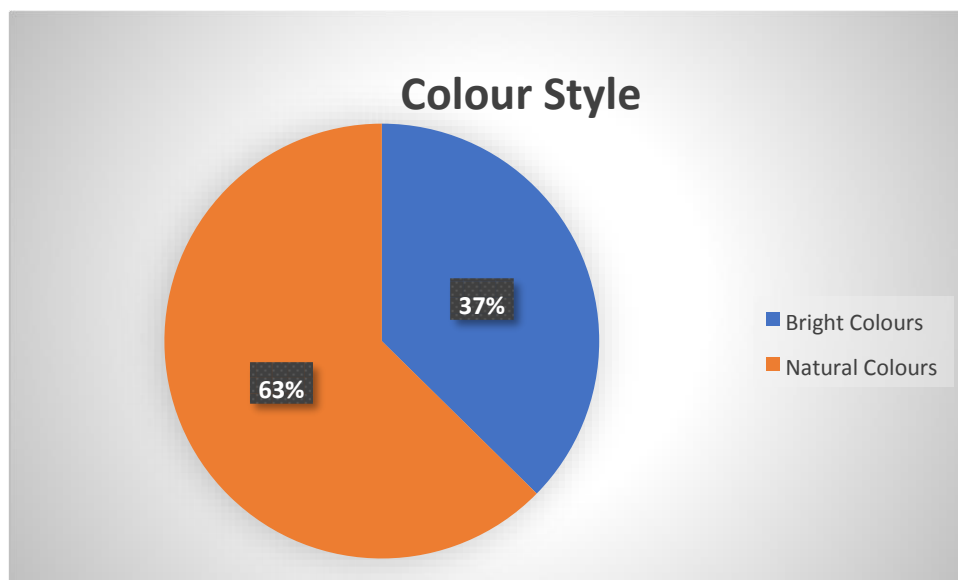
- 1) why we are not repairing the wooden equipment
- 2) what the comparison is regards cost.
- 3) whether slides made of steel would be too hot in the summer'

The current equipment cannot be repaired and most of it has been taken out of use because it had become dangerous. The town council have enquired about the cost different in purchase and though steel is slightly more costly, it will prove less expensive in the long term as it has a lifetime guarantee whereas wood only has a 10 year guarantee. The steel play equipment also requires less regular maintenance than wood.

We have checked with play equipment suppliers regarding using slides in hot temperatures. This can be managed by placing slides facing North and also considering putting shading above the equipment.

### Colour?

Respondents were asked whether they wanted the equipment to be in bright or natural colours. 63% (124) were in favour of natural colours and 37% (74) in favour of bright colours.



### A Selection of some of the comments made



*Given the play parks location, with the Long Mynd as its backdrop, more natural colours would seem appropriate.*

*It needs to be inviting to the young community*

*'Colour is fun, but the other park by the A49 is brightly coloured and so variety would be nice'*

*'The kids will use it, whatever the colour, so something less visually intrusive is better.'*

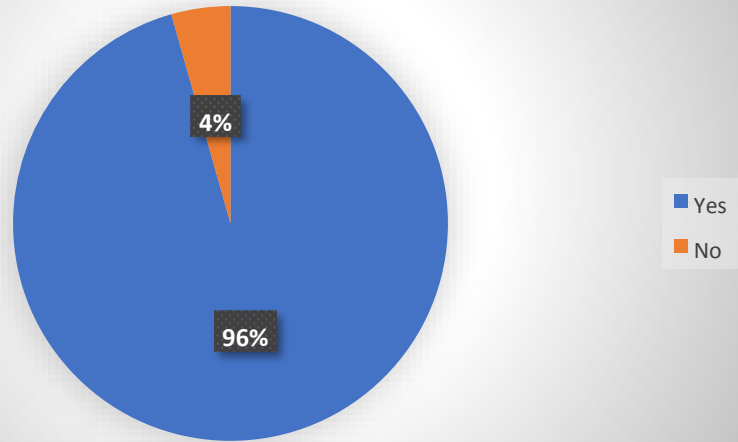
*'natural - as some children with neurodisability are put off by bright colours - also will look better in light of the AONB landscape'*

## **Benches?**

People were asked if they wanted seating near the play equipment and whether they wanted it covered or uncovered.

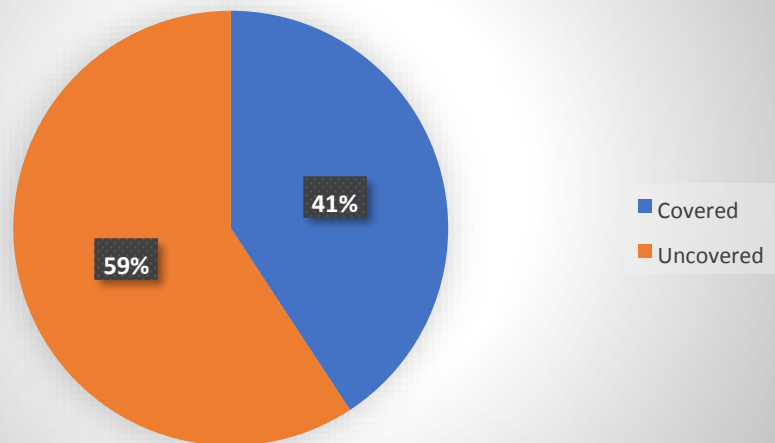
96% (196) respondents were in favour of having benches.

## Benches close to the play equipment



However there more mixed feelings over whether the benches should be covered or uncovered. 41% were in favour of them being covered and 59% were in favour of them not being covered.

## Prefer covered or uncovered ?



There were a lot of comments made in this section of the survey. Many people said they did not want any covered benches as they were concerned about how teenagers would make use of them.

### **A Selection of some of the comments made**

*'Uncovered seating makes people more visible and less likely to abuse the play equipment, i.e. discourage people to 'hand around''*

*Mixed covered/uncovered. More important is (a) to be able to see your children and (b) to be able to avoid direct sunlight, especially on hot days.*

*'Both would be ideal'*

*'You can have picnics and snacks and spend longer there A mix of seating would be best '*

*As the temperatures increase covered seats would afford some shade in the hot sun and also shelter from the rain and winds later in the year.*

*'Shelters tend to draw teenagers. I believe some spread out benches would be fine'*

*'Covered seating does encourage older children to gather in groups, leave litter and play portable music devices as happens with the play equipment built in 'shelter'. Not a good idea. If its a poor weather day then parents will not need a cover and they'll probably not bring children to play.*

*'Covered seating would encourage older children to assemble and cause a nuisance with their loud music. At present the covered boxes at top and bottom of the slide enables them to do this. '*

*'As much as covered seating might be useful in a rain storm, I do believe that this kind of covered area encourages vandalism. We have seen this before in Church Stretton with the shelters around town. '*

*'So long as the covered area is located at a distance from houses as this will be used by young people for social gatherings, these can and do often include loud music from portable speakers.'*

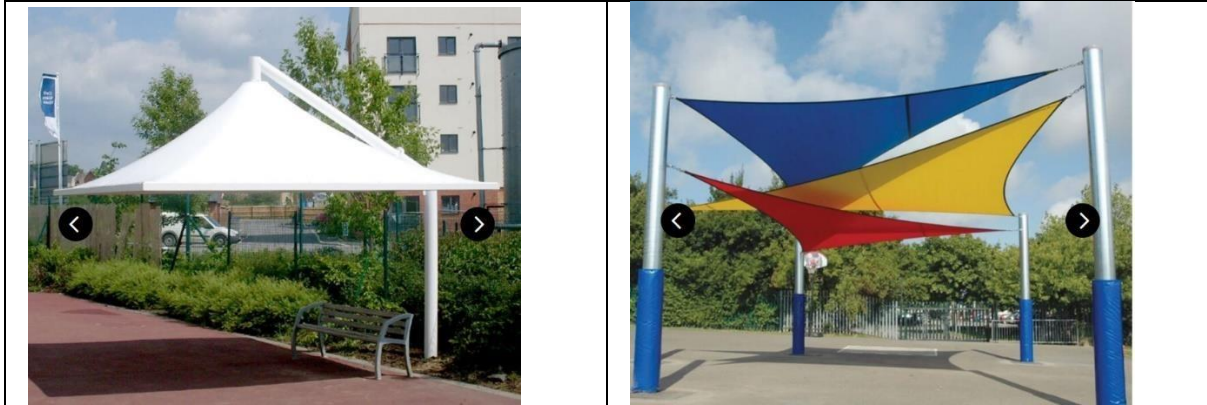
*'Covered areas are a magnet to late night trouble. We severely lack for something like a Youth Shelter, but next door to houses is not the place for it. '*



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**Church Stretton**  
Town Council

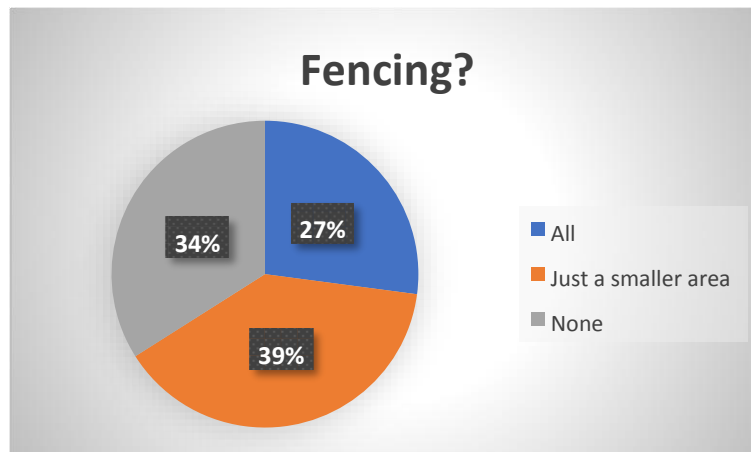
Residents might be more in favour of having some benches covered if they knew about products which provide shelter from rain and sun, while keeping people sitting there visible to all. Some of these might also be useful in keeping steel equipment cooler on hot sunny days.



### Fencing around play equipment?

Residents were asked whether they would like to have all, some or none of the play equipment fenced in.

39% (79) were in favour of fencing in a smaller area, 27% in favour of fencing in all the play area and 34% in favour of no fencing.



The comments made after this question presented different views. There was concern about dogs in the field and some people wanted gates to prevent children running out into the road.

### A Selection of some of the comments made

*'A fenced off area that's safe for little children with soft floors'*

<p><i>'This area is popular with dog walkers and unfortunately some owners do not clear up dog poo, so fencing to keep the dogs out is essential</i></p>
<p><i>'There is a really bad issue with dogs weeing on the play equipment and also poo not being picked up. Although fencing isn't ideal it the safest option.'</i></p> <p><i>"Like dogs but there are more and more that leave mess and aren't always controlled by owners. Would prefer fenced off so parents can actually have a moment to relax. Also helps to keep an eye on where kids are.'</i></p> <p><i>'I use the playground now and have never experienced any issues with dogs. Dogs are part of a family and often included on a walk via the playground. A request that they are on lead would be good.'</i></p> <p><i>The current open-ness of the main play equipment is appealing and makes it look far more accessible, inviting and user-friendly.'</i></p> <p><i>'Let the children play and use the whole area. Gates are pinch points for any one child or group to Harrass others. '</i></p> <p><i>'Footballs regularly end up flying into the fence behind the play area during games and during leisure football knockabout games. A fence would be a nuisance.'</i></p>

Further work is needed to explore the practicality of fencing in all or some of the play equipment and what the cost implications will be. At present dogs are meant to be kept on lead in the field but this is not well signed and often not adhered to.

**What else would people like to see?**

People were asked to prioritise their preference for a teenage shelter, gym style equipment, play tables and more play equipment for children up to 12. This was to be pursued if sufficient funds became available.

**Data Table**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Teenage shelter	81	42	28	39
Gym style equipment or trim trail	50	50	39	34
Play tables	27	50	70	39
more play equipment children up to 12	37	37	40	70

A total score for people preferences was calculated by giving

- priority 1 a score of 3



## Churchill Road Play Area Consultation Full Report

- Church Stretton** • priority 2 a score of 2  
Town Council • priority 3 a score of 1
- priority 4 a score of 0

This showed that a teenage shelter was peoples top priority followed by gym style equipment or a trim trail.

	Weighted Total
Teenage shelter	355
Gym style equipment or trim trail	289
Play tables	251
more play equipment children up to 12	225

Many comments were made though the survey about the need for teenagers to have a separate area away from the younger children play equipment. Other people said they would like to see adult gym equipment similar to that provided in All Stretton.

Developing an area for teenagers away from the rest of the play equipment, with a teenage shelter and some adult equipment is something that could be considered.

### Next Steps

A small Focus group including parents and local residents has been set up to design a specification which will be given to play equipment providers to work up a design from.

As part of this work we will need to consider:

**Play Equipment** – the different types of adventure play equipment available including inclusive play equipment & adult gym equipment

**Musical equipment** – whether this would cause a noise problem in the park?

**Shelters** –gather information on teenage shelters & any evidence supporting their benefits.

**Paths** –likely costs of laying a path in the park for buggies/wheelchairs

**Fences** –likely costs of putting fencing in small area and larger area

The Focus group will also visit the field and to consider which area of the field the play equipment might be sited on the field, bearing in mind residents comments about noise disturbance



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