

19 August 2017

Waitakere Ranges Local Board feedback on Tākaro – Investing in Play discussion document

The Waitakere Ranges Local Board provides the following feedback on the 'Tākaro – Investing in Play' discussion document:

Summary

1. Support having a high level document to tell the story of the many different ways we invest in play across Auckland.
2. Support having a design guide or tool kit for play spaces to showcase innovative practice across the region, and capture the range of levels of investment.
3. Don't support having a regional network plan approach for investing in play spaces, given it is a quintessentially local activity. It is about people and place.
4. Agree with the widely held view of other local boards that this process and approach has been wrong. There is now a need to take a step back to look at how to best support:
 - local decision making about how and where we invest in play in local parks and other public places.
 - regional decision making about investing in play in regional parks, where nature play and enjoyment of the wilderness experience may be a big focus.

Waitakere Ranges context

5. A new 'destination' play-ground at Parrs Park is by far the largest investment in play in our area over the past five years. It is well used, and well located in a 25 hectare reserve that attracts people from the surrounding suburbs. The kids' playground is complemented by a basketball court, playing fields, and exercise equipment to support play for different age groups.
6. We have not fared so well at the neighbourhood and doorstep play level. There has been an historic under-investment in smaller neighbourhood parks throughout our urban area of Glen Eden. These parks have no play equipment, and there has been little or no investment in the amenity. A basic service level provision for parks should be an investment priority.

7. There are many natural areas in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area that provide for nature play, including the regional park, local parks, beaches and freshwater swimming spots.
8. There are many small rural communities and villages in our area. A network planning approach that is driven by growth and population density disadvantages rural communities, and in any case it seems the wrong lens to apply for play. Neighbourhood and doorstep play spaces are local community infrastructure so decision making should be ground up. It is not a regional network.

Local decision making

9. In Auckland Council's shared governance model, local boards have governance responsibility for playgrounds in local parks including decision-making on design, oversight and renewals spending. An investment plan endorsed by the Governing Body can guide local board decisions but should not be binding. If an investment plan for play for the region is endorsed, each local board should be supported to develop their own guidelines for investment decisions, using the region-wide plan as a base.
10. If new funds are to be made available for play, it is the governing body's role to allocate these according to strategic priorities. However, once allocated the local boards are the decision-makers with regards to the type of play they wish to support in their local area.

Why does council invest in play/ the benefits of play

11. While we support the rationale for investing in play with its recognition that the largest benefits are for younger children, decisions around the sort of play and the age group provided for should be through a balance of analysis, community engagement, and local decision making.
12. Play provision often arises from engaging with the community on how a particular park will be used to meet a range of community needs through the traditional process of concept and development plans. Decisions around local parks planning and development need to be place and people based, and made from the ground-up rather than a network decision with regional prioritisation criteria.
13. Play for teenagers is a significant provision gap that needs to be addressed. 'There is nothing for older kids to do' is a refrain that is often heard but rarely addressed. A toolkit for developing youth focused play spaces would be invaluable for informing local decisions-makers.
14. The document is very weak on disability play provision so this needs to be strengthened. There is a good example in Long Bay Regional Park that provides play opportunity for the disabled as well as others so it can be used by everybody.
15. The discussion document starts out with a broad definition of what play as long as it is outdoors though tends to default back to talking about play grounds for children. We

support having a broad scope, though think that indoor play should be included to recognise the significant role of council facilities such as libraries and community centres/houses in providing for play.

16. We would like to see an Investing in Play Toolkit that supports provision of play across a broad spectrum of play, including reclaiming streets as open space and nature play. Work is also needed to look at ways to bring down the cost of providing play space, “more for less”. This could include templates for a range of pop up play space and activation.

How does the council invest in play

17. A summary of “Investing in Play” in the Waitakere Ranges Local Board area over the past five years is attached below. As noted earlier a new destination playground has been our major investment. There is currently no money available for developing or upgrading play areas, and little in the way of renewals.
18. We have also renewed playgrounds in Kaurilands, Laingholm, Huia and Piha, which are low density, low growth suburbs or rural communities.
19. The discussion document suggests we need to be more strategic when deciding about whether to renew a playground as it may be better to invest elsewhere where they may be a greater need.
20. Any policy that eventuates needs to strengthen local decision making around renewals to enable strategic decision making. This is a bigger question than just investing in play as it goes across renewals of all assets and the enabling of strategic decision making by local boards so it would be better dealt with through the Governance Framework review and changes to financial policies.
21. The section on how we invest does not seem to cover the provision of nature play which in our area is considerable. Visitor infrastructure such as walking tracks, car parking, toilets, picnic tables are critical for our popular beach and bush destinations. Of even greater importance is investing in environmental protection to preserve the values that draw people to play or relax in our natural spaces.
22. An Investing in Play Plan needs to provide a framework for considering how we invest in our natural play spaces, many of which are in the ‘regional destination’ category of play, so it is weighed on equal terms against investing in traditional play equipment in urban areas.

Current demand for play

23. We would like to see the 2016 audit of council playgrounds in the Waitakere Ranges area to give us an understanding of the use and condition of our play space.
24. We support putting more resource into finding out more about the use of local parks and open spaces, including play spaces. A research programme should be established through engagement with local boards.
25. Observationally, we can see that some of our neighbourhood parks are not well used. We are running summer activation programmes in these parks, and have gathered feedback from those taking part on how we could improve the parks to make them more inviting.

Challenges

Investing in the wrong places

26. Decisions about when and where to retire existing play grounds, or any local community asset, are often contentious and need to be made by the democratically accountable part of council. Any policy around this should be about providing options rather than prescribing a course of action.
27. We agree with the view that disparities are often locked in as service levels have not been addressed. There's a need to lift the service levels of our existing neighbourhood parks by investing in play and, more widely, in the amenity value of our parks so they are providing greater benefit to the community.

We lack policies to support high quality investment; monitoring is lacking

28. The discussion document observes that we are often investing in play in the wrong places although that has not been the LB's experience as far as recent development goes.
29. Neighbourhood and doorstep play are local in nature and do not have the qualities of a network in our view so that is the wrong lens to apply.

Partnering

30. There are a number of pre-schools with community leases on park land in our area. We would like to see open community access to playgrounds in leased areas outside of the operating hours of the pre-schools. This is something that council should be negotiating as a condition of using public land.

Opportunities to deliver a wider range of play

Nature play

31. The nature play section seems old fashioned and sounds urban focused. Nature play is a particular role for regional parks so this should be teased out. Regional parks have always run a range of play and education focused programmes, with school access to regional parks and holiday programmes, and it is disappointing to see these lost through funding changes.
32. Investing in visitor infrastructure such as toilets, car parking, picnic/bbq facilities is critical. Even more important is investing in environmental protection to preserve what we have. Any future policy needs to provide a way of looking at the value of investing in nature play through environmental programmes and visitor infrastructure.
33. The role of nature play and how we invest in it needs to be strengthened.

Play in the public realm

34. We support providing play opportunity in neighbourhoods and town centres to reclaim streets as public places. This would need a shift in thinking both within the council family and in the community.

Sustainable materials and design

35. There should be a sustainability goal for play space materials and design to move away from plastic, or use only recycled plastic. There should be a recycling programme for council play equipment so that if there is still life left in play equipment when it is being upgraded it is reconditioned and used it elsewhere.

Investment criteria

36. We do not support the proposed investment prioritisation criteria. As noted earlier, we anticipate the Investing in Play document will support local decision making by providing options and advice to local boards.

Waitakere Ranges Local Board - play ground development and renewals 2013 - 2018

2013

Sports park horticultural development	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Planting around playground - supply plants, plant, fert tabs, compost/mulch	development	23,631
Sports park horticultural development	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Specimen tree planting 10 x 60lt		4,000
Sports park playspace development	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground development	development	361,222
Sports park playspace development	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Shade sail structure for new playground	development	38,600
Sports park playspace renewals	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground development	development	154,650
Sports park furniture and fixture renewals	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Refurb as part of playground upgade	renewal	31,800
Sports park car park renewals	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground entrance upgrade + minor repairs	renewal	12,000
Sports park car park development	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground entrance upgrade + minor repairs	renewal	36,085
					661,988

2014

Play space and carpark (Parrs Park)	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Renewal of existing playground - Build Stage 2	Renewal	\$208,908
Play space and carpark (Parrs Park)	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Refurbishment with provision of new assets		\$50,000

Play space and carpark (Parrs Park)	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Parrs Park driveway retention	Renewal	\$34,940	
Play space and carpark (Parrs Park)	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Tree planting		\$10,000	
Play space (Les Waygood Park)	Les Waygood Park	Piha	Relocation and Upgrade of existing playground	Renewal	\$8,000	\$40,000
Local park playspace renewals	Les Waygood Park	Piha	Renewal of existing playground - Investigation for new location, Design and Build. Split Dev and Renewal	Renewal	\$8,000	\$30,000
Local park playspace renewals	Huia Domain	Huia	Renewal of skate ramp	Renewal	\$5,000	\$60,000
					\$324,848	\$130,000

2015

Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Development	\$35,129	
Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Development	\$10,000	
Huia Domain Renewal of skate ramp	Huia Domain	Huia	Skate Item - Adjacent Huia Road.	Renewal	\$20,460	
Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Renewal	\$43,776	
Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Renewal	\$20,951	
Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Renewal	\$10,000	

Parrs Park Playground upgrade	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Playground upgrade includes car park upgrade	Renewal	\$10,000
Parrs Park Skate Ramp Renewal	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Renewal of components of the skate ramp	Renewal	\$7,818
					<u>\$158,134</u>

2016

Play	Swanson Station Park	Swanson	Extension of existing skate park with new skate elements to cater for younger users	Growth programme	0
Play	Withers Reserve	Kaurilands	Playground renewal	Renewal	80,741
Play	Takaranga Reserve	Laingholm	Playground renewal	Renewal	28,000
Play	Parrs Park	Glen Eden	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	7,000
Play	Huia Domain	Huia	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	4,000
Play	Swanson Station Park	Swanson	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	3,831
Play	Waima Reserve	Waima	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	3,800
Play	Prospect Park	Glen Eden	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	3,700
Play	Sunvue Park	Glen Eden	Court hoop renewal	Renewal	3,500
					<u>134,572</u>

2017

Nil	Nil				0
-----	-----	--	--	--	---

2018

Play

Glen Eden
Community
House -
renew
matta tiles

The matta tile
surface in the
outdoor play area
is old and requires
replacing.

renewal

20,000