



Iffley Fields NaturEscape Community Consultation

Survey Report 2025

Overview

Between April and June 2025, a 3-month community consultation was conducted to gather feedback on a proposed transformation of Meadow Lane playground into the Iffley Fields NaturEscape. The survey received responses from 50 individuals, all residents of East Oxford. It offered insights into community preferences, priorities, concerns and suggestions regarding the planned design and additional features.

1. Popular Features in the Proposed Design

(Percentage indicates proportion of respondents who expressed a preference)

Most Favoured Elements (70%):

- Log circle and amphitheater
- New planting (wildflowers and long grasses)
- Planting of fruit trees and hazel coppice
- Additional seating and tables

Well Received (60–66%):

- Removal of hedge/fence behind sandpit and zip line, new hedge around log circle
- Play mounds
- Logs for play
- Community notice board

Moderate Support (54–58%):

- Pond (with child-safe grid)
- Gutter play on mounds
- Boulder in sandpit and decking on rim for seating
- Toolshed, compost area, and water butt
- Community mural along skatepark fence

Lower but Notable Interest (38–44%):

- Accessible pathways
- Sensory sound garden
- Green teepee

2. Preferred Additions to the Playground

(Responders could choose only two features)

Feature	Votes	% of Respondents
Pond	12	26%
Mounds and gutters	10	22%
Logs for play	8	17%
Sensory sound garden	7	15%
Wildflower planting	6	13%
Fence/hedge removal near sandpit	6	13%
Fruit/hazel tree planting	6	13%
Log circle / amphitheater	6	13%
Additional seating/tables	5	11%
Green/woven teepee	3	7%
Accessible pathways	3	7%
Tree platforms near zip line	1	2%

3. Community Suggestions and Priorities

Implementation Strategy

- Focus on 'quick wins' — features that meet at least two out of three criteria: resources (immediate funding available), implementation (can be completed this and next year; if lack of funding it can be done by volunteers) and use (can be used this or next year).

Seating & Shade

- Benches with backs to support parents and caregivers (e.g. breastfeeding).
- Shade structures such as awnings or triangle shades.
- Seasonal considerations for both shading in summer and drainage in winter when playground is waterlogged.

Tree Line and Fencing

- Preserve mature trees by removing fencing and introducing willow tunnels to insulate the tree trunks (with the ingrown bits of fence in them) to ensure children cannot scratch themselves.
- Open up the derelict back area for a 'fairy garden' under a Hazel/willow thicket with shade-loving plants such as wild garlic which is edible and medicinal.

Water Features

- Incorporate water pump or small tap for interactive play.
- Provide drinking water station.

Educational Elements

- Tree identification boards.
- Signage about local flora and fauna, including the edible and medicinal uses of flora.

Play Features (Light-Touch)

- Mud kitchen and living willow tunnel (volunteer-supported).
- Funnel ball
- Log circle to include tree stumps of differing heights to step around
- Sensory path

Play Features (Heavy-Touch)

- Wooden ark
- Toddler-friendly climbing frame
- In-ground trampoline
- Large sea saw
- Tunnels under mounds
- Balance bike pathways using recycled soil as low mounds to cycle over

Community Features

- More bins
- Bike racks nearby to avoid bikes parked along hedge e.g. on way to skatepark for example.
- Tool shed to be extended to include a community loan scheme where local people could borrow equipment to help maintain their garden/houses without having to buy new each time.
- A community sauna to really extend the usage of the area for all ages. Similar CIC's fund them and the health and wellbeing benefits are numerous, including social prescribing (volunteer-supported).
- Public toilet (or a private area for wild wees).
- Space for people without children.

Skatepark Integration

- Better visual and physical integration with main playground.
- Earth bank instead of hard fencing
- Sound-buffering mound in front of skatepark (and hills for kids to run up and down)

4. Key Concerns Raised

(Percentage indicates proportion of respondents who raised concern)

Pond Safety (12%)

- Concern about 24/7 access and child safety despite grids.
- Preference for low-maintenance, perhaps less risky features.

Vandalism (8%)

- Worry about theft or misuse of movable elements (e.g. logs, teepee).
- Importance of durability and supervision.

Tree Preservation (8%)

- Strong objection to removal of mature trees.
- Desire to maintain biodiversity and natural shelter.

Other Concerns

- Boulder in sandpit: Potential risk of injury (4%).
- Sound garden: Potential noise disruption to homes in very close proximity (2%).
- Need to preserve open-ended, unstructured play experience (2%).
- Pathways: Overdesigned paths in a limited space may not align with actual usage (2%).

5. Positive Feedback

- Fabulous ideas! Thank you.
- I love everything you've suggested.
- Brilliant—thank you for transforming this space.
- Love the nature focus, planting, and unstructured play opportunities.
- Great initiatives—well done for your continuous hard work!
- Hope it happens before my kids outgrow the playground.
- Thank you for your efforts!
- They all sound wonderful.
- Really like the natural focus and additional planting.
- This looks brilliant—what a wonderful project, thank you for transforming this key neighbourhood space!
- Pond great. More seating for parents and grandparents and everyone. More opportunities for unstructured play good. The pond makes me very happy. Thank you for this excellent carefully considered future plan!

Conclusion

The community consultation reflects strong support for nature-based play and planting, combined with thoughtful, accessible infrastructure. Concerns focus on safety, vandalism, and preserving mature trees. Many community members offered both suggestions and offers to volunteer, showing high levels of engagement and enthusiasm for the project's future.