

Woodland Play Area Application Supporting Statement

This supporting statement provides further justification for the proposed construction of woodland play area, including provision of new play equipment and associated landscaping and drainage works at Gnoll Estate Country Park, Fairyland, Neath, SA11 3BS which is currently pending determination (Ref: P2024/0502).

Justification is provided below by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Tourism Department:

- The adventure play area is not intended to be a standard playground; it is intended to be a 'destination' play feature which will attract family visitors to come to the Gnoll not just from the local area but from the wider region.
- The destination adventure play offer is crucial in encouraging a longer dwell time in the Park. This results in more secondary spend in the café and car park and helps to reach income targets for the Park.
- During the scoping phase of the project, which included detailed research with the local community resulting in 800 responses, diversification of the play offer was identified as a priority for the future development of the Park. The current play offer includes a toddler/accessible playground and the existing adventure play which is aimed at older children. The new destination adventure play helps to fill a gap in play provision for children between 5-9 years of age.

Justification is provided below by the play equipment provider:

- When we were given the brief we were very aware the play area would be in a woodland environment. We knew the amount of investment the client was looking to spend, so we had to balance the two parameters. With that in mind we felt a pure timber unit would only have a lifespan of maximum 10 years if well maintained (given the expected use). We decided to choose metal structures that were coloured with blended shades and use timber cladding to further soften appearance. We believe Integrating metal materials into a woodland environment for play equipment can be done effectively by considering design, colour, and texture.
- Natural Colours and Finishes – We have chosen materials that can be painted or coated in earthy tones, such as greens, browns, and greys, which mimic the natural colours of the woodland. Using a matte or textured finish instead of shiny or reflective surfaces helps the equipment blend seamlessly with the surroundings.
- Organic Shapes and Forms - We have chosen a design of equipment with curves and forms that mimic natural elements, like tree branches and rocks. This helps it feel more like an extension of the environment rather than a foreign object. This could include twisted slides and some irregular shapes that mirror the unpredictability of nature. Further additions of bird outlines and leaf shapes will support this also.
- Incorporating Wood Elements - We have combined metal with wood to soften the industrial feel of the metal whilst maintaining durability. We have used rope work with natural colouring also to emphasise the natural setting.
- Integration with landscape - We have positioned the units among the trees but not in a way in which they dominate the space. The children will be able to discover challenging play activities whilst being among the current trees also.

- Minimalist Design - Simple, minimalist designs that don't overpower the natural surroundings help the equipment to blend in. We have added a degree of transparency to the equipment also so that the background colours can come through also.
- By thoughtfully incorporating these elements, our metal play equipment can harmonise with a woodland environment, creating a play space that feels like an integral part of the natural landscape.