

Green Space



My Ideal Park

Greenspace & Us Part 2:

A community insights co-production project with teenage girls to understand their needs for more inclusive and accessible greenspace.



Background

Young women face a number of barriers which prevent them accessing greenspace, despite its documented importance for their health and wellbeing. They are less physically active than their male counterparts, face significantly greater safety fears accessing the outdoors compared with men, and are at particularly high risk of poor mental health. Greenspace & Us Part 2 builds on previous engagement with teenage girls in East Oxford to understand teenage girls' needs for more inclusive and accessible greenspace. The project consisted of a series of five workshops and public showcase event, whose structure and format were also partly co-designed with the participants.

The sessions revealed how the participants currently felt marginalised within the greenspaces which existed in their local area, specifically around age, gender, ethnicity, and the influences of gentrification. However, they demonstrated that engagement and co-design can produce different options for greenspaces which are more likely to appeal to teenage girls, and how the act of engagement itself resulted in the girls having a greater sense of ownership over the space.



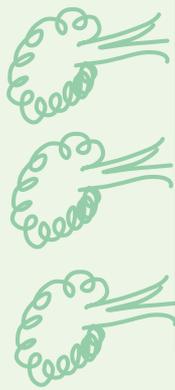
Green space & us





Key Findings

- The young women felt that the urban greenspace provided in their local area was not designed with them in mind.
- A sense of disapproval from other greenspace users was a barrier to access.



- The (sports-oriented) facilities provided were not what they wanted from parks and other greenspace.
- Infrastructure such as lighting, toilets and attractive landscaping were important to them.
- Opportunities to engage with nature and wildlife were very important but not something provided by their local greenspace.

- The shelter built during the Greenspace & Us Part 1 project provided a facility that they wanted to use and gave them a sense of belonging in the space.

- The young women were able to identify and design a wide range of facilities which would encourage them to use greenspace.

WELCOMING
colourful
SPACE



MY PARK

- They created a collaborative design for their local park which included many of these ideas.

- The extended co-design workshop process was an effective way of engaging girls with the issue and giving them space to develop their own ideas and solutions.



Overall, the young women had seven desires they wanted a space design to fulfill:

1 Safe: “We want the park to be safe and hopefully avoid violence, and for people to respect each other. To make people feel comfortable”.

2 Fun: “We want people to enjoy it and have fun”.

3 Different: “We want the park to be outstanding and to be different from any other park”.

4 Welcoming: “We want any gender to access and any age to feel welcome”.

5 Free: “We want it to be free for everyone to use”.

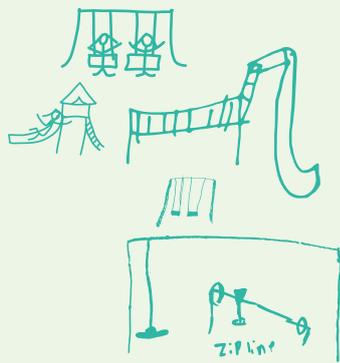
6 Relaxing: “We want people to enjoy it and have fun and feel relaxed and to be at peace”.

7 Friendly: “We want it to be a friendly environment and for everyone to enjoy it and respect one another”.

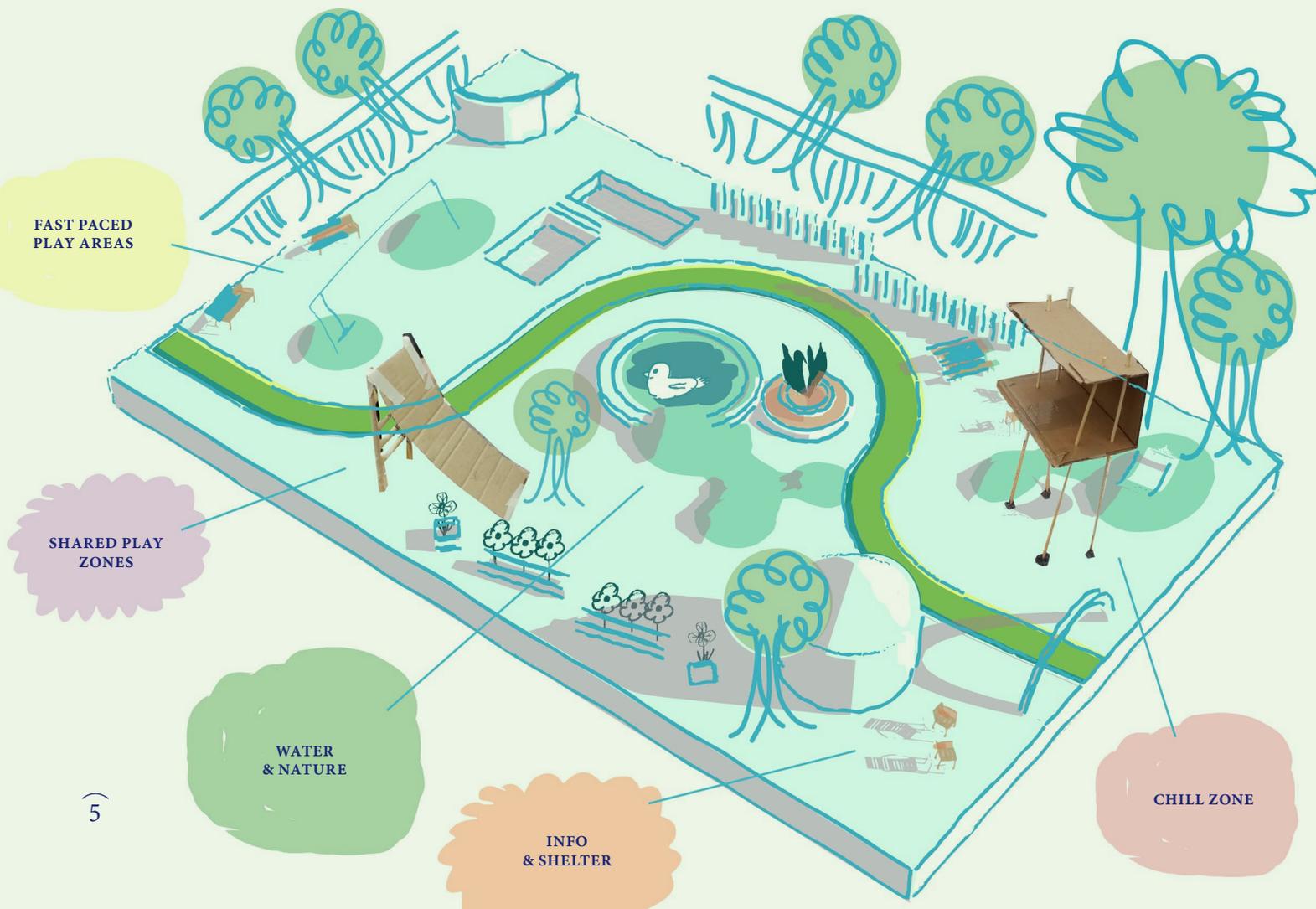


Greenspace design

Given a currently empty tarmac area in their local Cowley Marsh Recreation Ground as a potential site, the young women designed their “ideal park” within the space. It contained five zones, with a meandering path and foliage to separate the spaces:



- 1 Information & refuge zone:** To protect visitors from the elements and encourage social engagement by providing a small social shelter located by the entrance and accessible information to encourage them to explore.
- 2 Chill zone:** A secluded chill zone amongst foliage for visitors who wish to unwind with treehouse and hammocks, and seating for social opportunities.
- 3 Fast-paced play zone:** Play spaces where faster-paced games could be enjoyed, bordered by a permeable boundary wall to be decorated by young people’s graffiti. The zone includes climbing equipment, a zipwire and netting for sitting or jumping on.
- 4 Shared play zones:** A shared basket swing and slide that allows multiple people to play at the same time.
- 5 Water feature area:** A pond with diverse flora and fauna, set amongst naturalistic grassy mounds and trees.



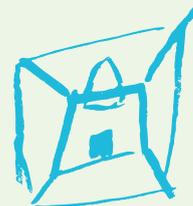
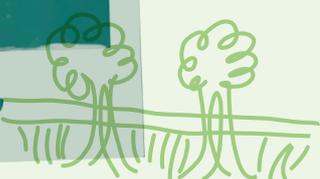
Recommendations

Consider the needs of teenage girls for greenspace.

At present teenage girls do not feel that greenspace is designed with them in mind. Their needs should be recognised in the provision, design and management of parks and other greenspaces and current inequalities in provision acknowledged.

★ Improve access to nature

Teenage girls want more flora and fauna in their greenspaces, including opportunities for play such as tree climbing. They also want more opportunities to engage with nature through signposting, wayfinding and organised visits.

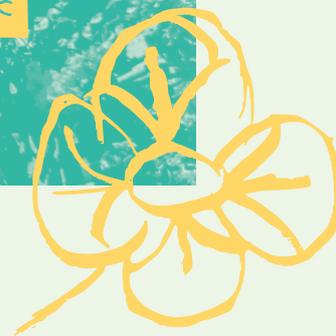
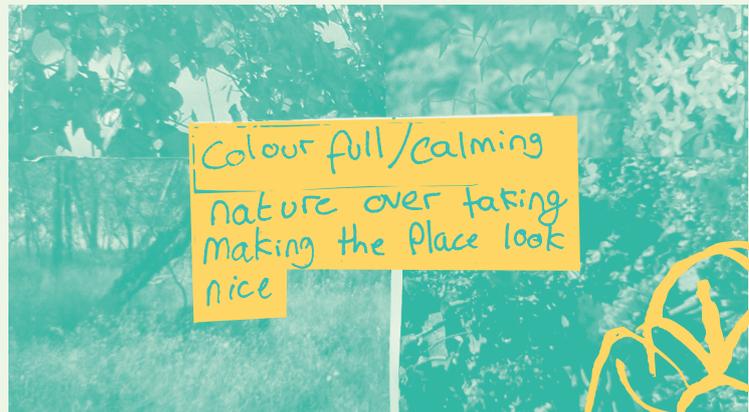


★ Improve safety, facilities and infrastructure

A lack of safety and of facilities such as toilets, lighting and shelter were identified by the young women as barriers which prevented them accessing greenspaces and as priorities for improvement.

Maybe have a private Seating area for Parents who need to feed their babies

Have some Big Trees as shade.



Recommendations

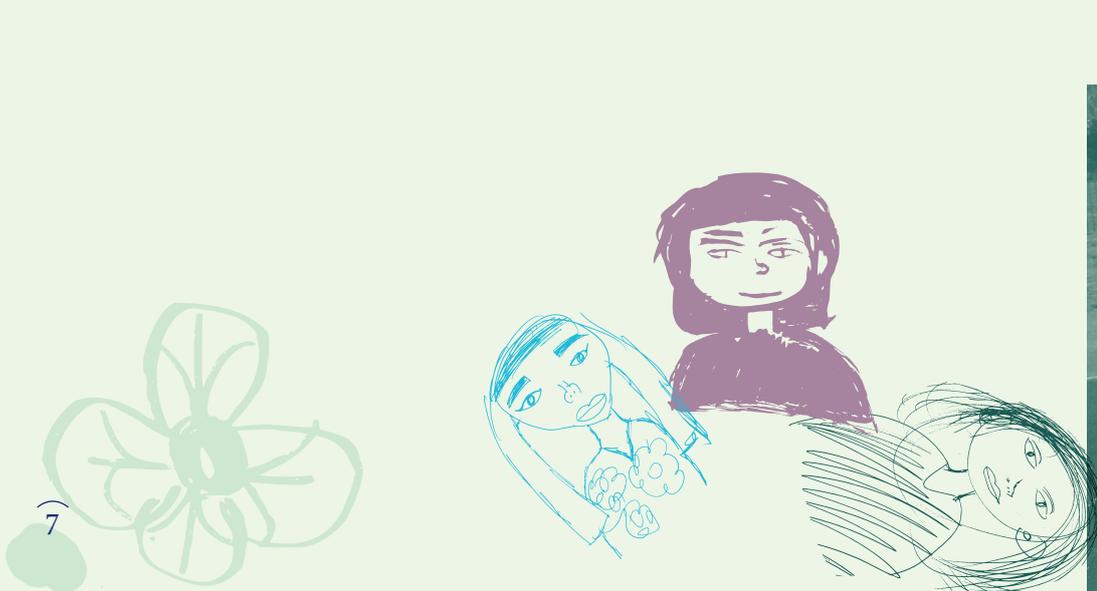
★ Prioritise co-production

It is essential to involve girls and young women in every stage of the development process, from designing and developing to delivering and evaluating space. This will ensure that their voices are heard and that the amenities are tailored to their needs, while also giving them a sense of ownership and belonging in greenspaces.

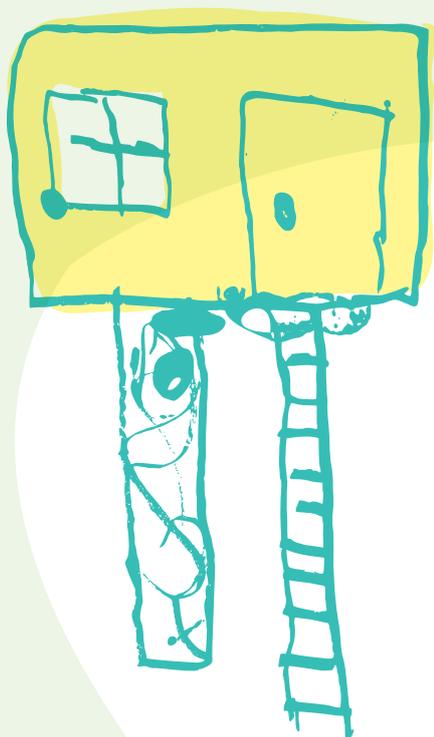


★ Consider intersectionality

Recognising cultural variations and histories that shape a particular group is also crucial. These minor adjustments can make a significant difference when designing a welcoming space.



Next steps



- Providers and stakeholders to assess their greenspace provision through the lens of social constructs, including gender.
- Providers and stakeholders to engage with all young people, not just current park users, to gather their thoughts and opinions on greenspace.
- Engagement and co-production with teenage girls to be undertaken at the start of any new developments to ensure their needs are met.
- Provision for teenagers to be considered in terms of nature and landscaping, not just built facilities.
- A wider range of provision for teenagers should provide opportunities for relaxation and activity other than only sport.
- Park design to be considered in terms of gender equity and subject to a robust Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Safety and access for girls and young women to be considered for all new and existing park facilities and at the start of the design and tendering process.
- Sex-disaggregated data to be gathered for all park facilities used by teenagers.
- Intersectionality and other barriers to be considered at every stage.



For further information and details of the co-production and design process, please see full report:

Walker, S.; Cole, S.; Goodenough, J.; Greenhalgh, N., Hussain, N.; Isa-Daniel, T.; Khan, A.; Montgomery, L. (2023). Greenspace & Us Part 2: A community insights co-production project with teenage girls to understand their needs for more inclusive and accessible greenspace. JP053. Natural England, Make Space for Girls, Name It Youth Project, Oxford Youth Enterprise, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Nor Public Art.