

VICTORIA PARK

Research Report

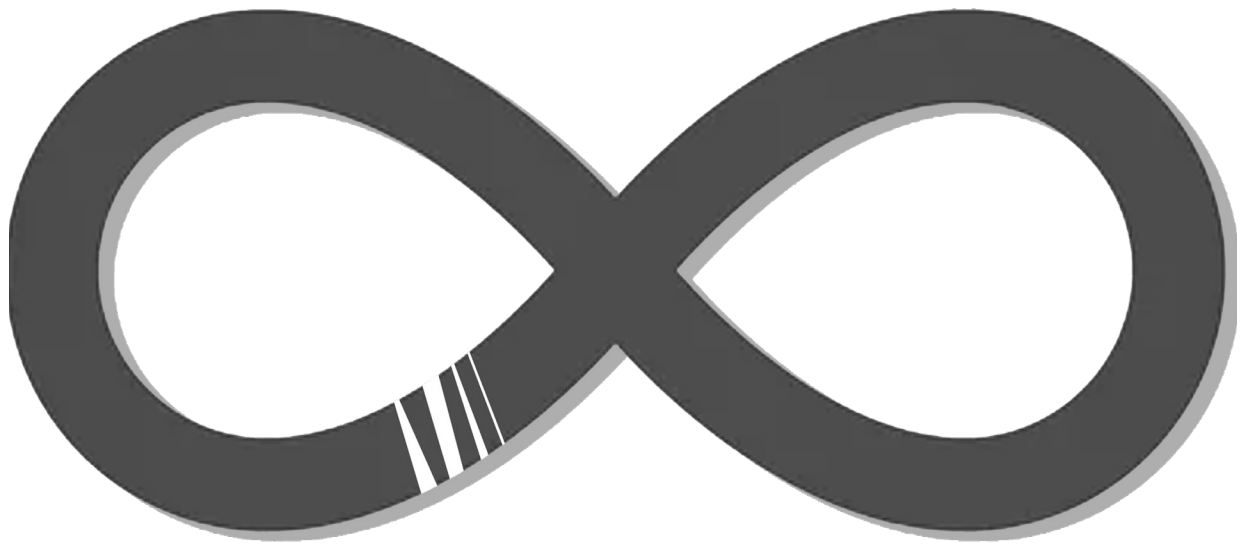


**UWE
Bristol**

University
of the
West of
England

For VPAG Facilitators Kerry Chester
and Emma Blackburn





S T U D I O

In collaboration with



Victoria Park
Action Group

RESEARCH

04

WHO ARE WE?

06

GETTING TO KNOW THE PARK

12

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE WANT?

14

TALKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

22

MEMORIES IN THE PARK

28 DESIGNING WITH THE COMMUNITY
THE PARK

30 DESIGNING WITH THE COMMUNITY
THE PARK LODGE

32 ENVISIONING VICTORIA PARK

40 GOING FORWARD WITH UWE



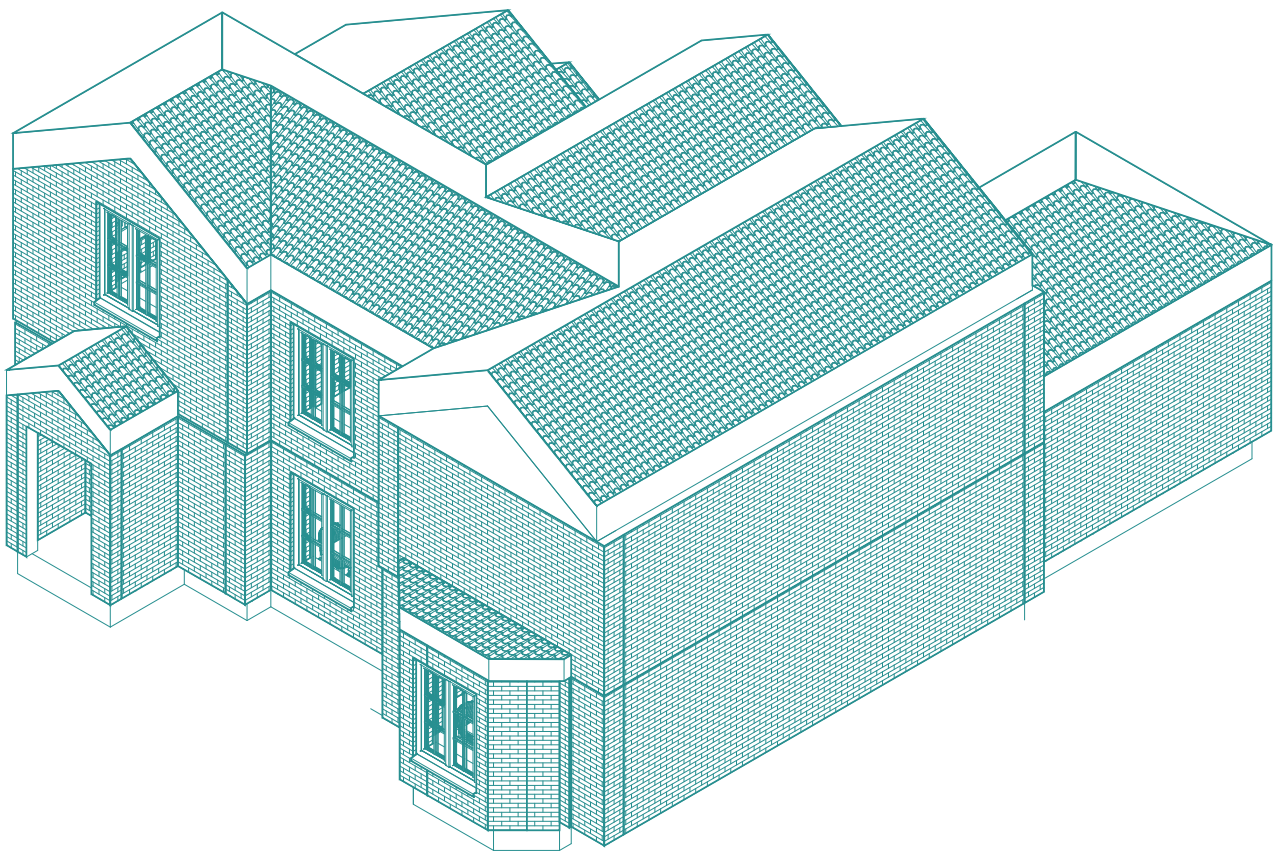
VICTORIA
PARK
R E P O R T

Who we are, what we're doing.

Studio 8 consists of eight **Masters of Architecture Students** from the **University of West of England** currently undertaking a module called **Live Project Studio**. The team have been assigned a project working in **Victoria Park, Bristol**. The task is to collaborate with **Victoria Park Action Group members Kerry Chester and Emma Blackburn** to support the re-design of the **Park Lodge** and master planning of the wider **Park**.

With support of the VPAG Facilitators, Research has been undertaken into the community surrounding Victoria Park to identify valued elements to bring forward in design proposals. The aim of this research is to build up a database to provide to the Facilitators and relevant stakeholders to help support the process of re-design the Park Lodge and development of Victoria Park.

This report is a consolidated collection of the data that has been gained from research and the proposal resulting from this process.





Victoria Park Needs You

Hello,

We are Master of Architecture students from the University of the West of England (UWE) who are working alongside Victoria Park Action Group (VPAG) and Bristol Green Councillors, Ed Plowden and Lisa Stone, to understand what the local community would like to happen to the old park keeper's lodge in Victoria Park.

Park Lodge is the Victorian building on the top of the hill near the Somerset Terrace park entrance.

Our aim is to start a conversation that can be taken forward by local people who would like to create positive change for the Lodge, enabling members of the community to use it in a variety of ways.

If you have a spare moment, we would love to hear your opinion of Park Lodge and any ideas that you feel would be useful for future planning.

At this stage we must stress that there are no immediate plans to make things happen as getting Park Lodge transferred to community ownership and fundraising to enable restoration and change will take a long time.

We appreciate you taking the time to help us with this endeavour.

Thank you

The investigation began with an Online survey using Google Forms to gauge community sentiments and preferences regarding Victoria Park. The survey, featuring various response formats, was distributed through QR codes on posters strategically placed in the park and shared on Facebook and Instagram for broad accessibility among local residents. The aim was to gather a quick and comprehensive overview of public opinions, establishing key themes and points of significance. This survey serves as a foundational step for further in-depth research into the specific needs and desires of the community in relation to Victoria Park.

What worked?

Amount of responses

Outstanding Community Reach

Easily communicated into visual charts

Easily accessible

Responses from Diverse Group

What didn't work?

Impersonal and not engaging

Restricted range of responses due to question design

Purely Quantitative

Does not reach groups who don't interact Online



There is a correlation between proximity to the park and how much it is used by the community. This map also shows how the trunk roads (Wells Road and St Johns Lane) have less engagement than smaller close nit streets.



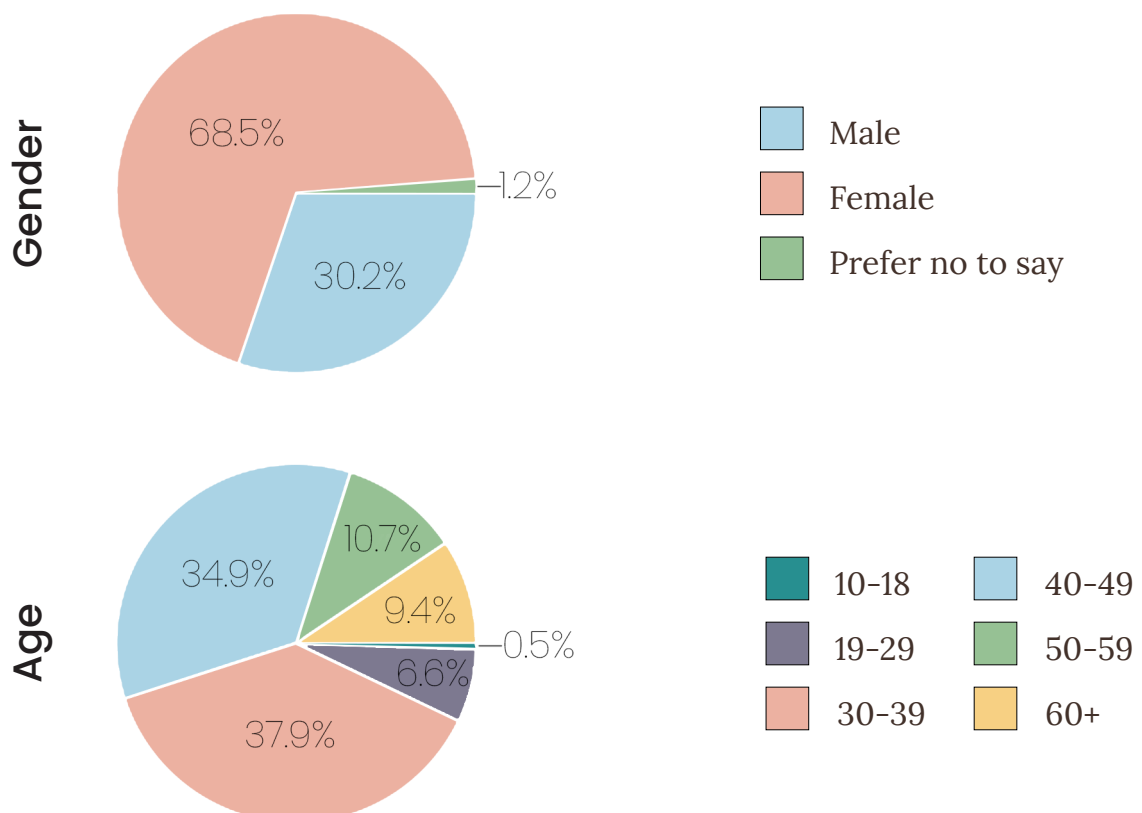
In contrast, activity at night is slightly more equal throughout the local area, with people generally using the park a lot less than they would during the day.

Getting to know the Park



Who responded to us?

The majority of responses received came from the South West corner of the park, with responses decreasing as the distance to the park increases. The map also shows a North South divide, created by the railway, with less people from the north responding to the survey.



Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	46.6%
Disagree	37.9%
Strongly disagree	15.5%

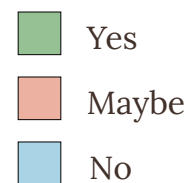


A pie chart illustrating the distribution of responses for the question 'How often do you use the Internet?'. The chart is divided into three segments: a large green segment representing 46.8%, a large yellow segment representing 40.2%, and a small red segment representing 9.7%.

Category	Percentage
Green	46.8%
Yellow	40.2%
Red	9.7%



Frequency	Percentage
Often	46%
Sometimes	30.3%
Rarely	23.7%

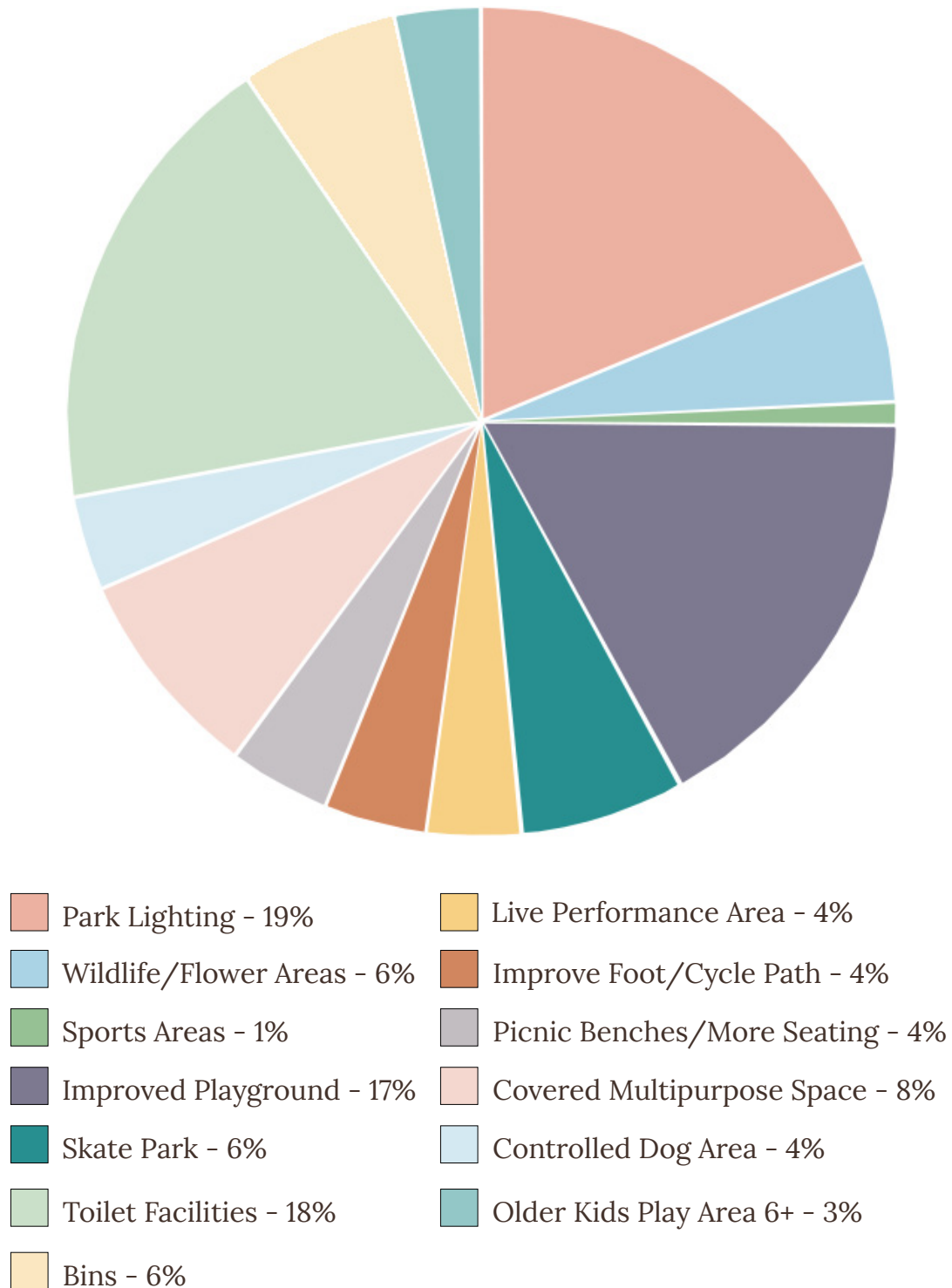


The survey identified any specific skills provided by the community that could be useful to the development of the Lodge in the future, and if they would be willing to support its future transformation.



Getting to know the Park

What do people want?



What was found?

The Survey was a great way to get an overview of what people felt was important for the park. In its time of use, the survey reached close to 400 people, which resulted in lots of engagement from people of all backgrounds to participate, which may not have been possible in person. Although the reach has been brilliant, the personal history of participants is lost due to it being an On line form - which isn't effective for a project that is aiming to bring the community together.

It is key to understand that this data is but a sample of a much wider community and is not entirely representative of the needs or wants of that community. Therefore the survey should then be used in conjunction with other participatory methods and secondary research methods to get a holistic view of the needs and wants for Victoria Park.

Looking back at the survey its main weakness was its lack of flexibility, with questions that are predetermined, leading to responses that in some ways are constrained by the question itself. In addition to this the survey may not reach all demographics, or can simply put people off from engaging with it, as they can't put a face behind what is being discussed.

If this survey were to be conducted again, the implementation of an increased level of interactivity when it comes to gaining responses for the survey would be beneficial. In addition to this, there should be more posters positioned around the neighborhood and not just localised to the park, so that community members that live that little bit further away from the park can have their say as well. These small improvements to the methodology of the Online survey, would yield a wider variety of responses that may have otherwise been forgotten and lost.

Overall the survey was a successful tool for data collection and formed a strong base for more exploration into a new vision for the lodge and wider context of the park.



The insight boxes, resembling red post boxes, were strategically placed around the park outside playground areas. Equipped with small paper sheets and pens, the goal was to collect firsthand feedback from regular park visitors, particularly focusing on engaging younger demographics and individuals who don't typically participate online. This approach aimed to maximize the overall quantity of feedback received.

What worked?

Engaged younger people to respond

Interactive and Fun

Attracted Attention

Gained more responses than expected

What didn't work?

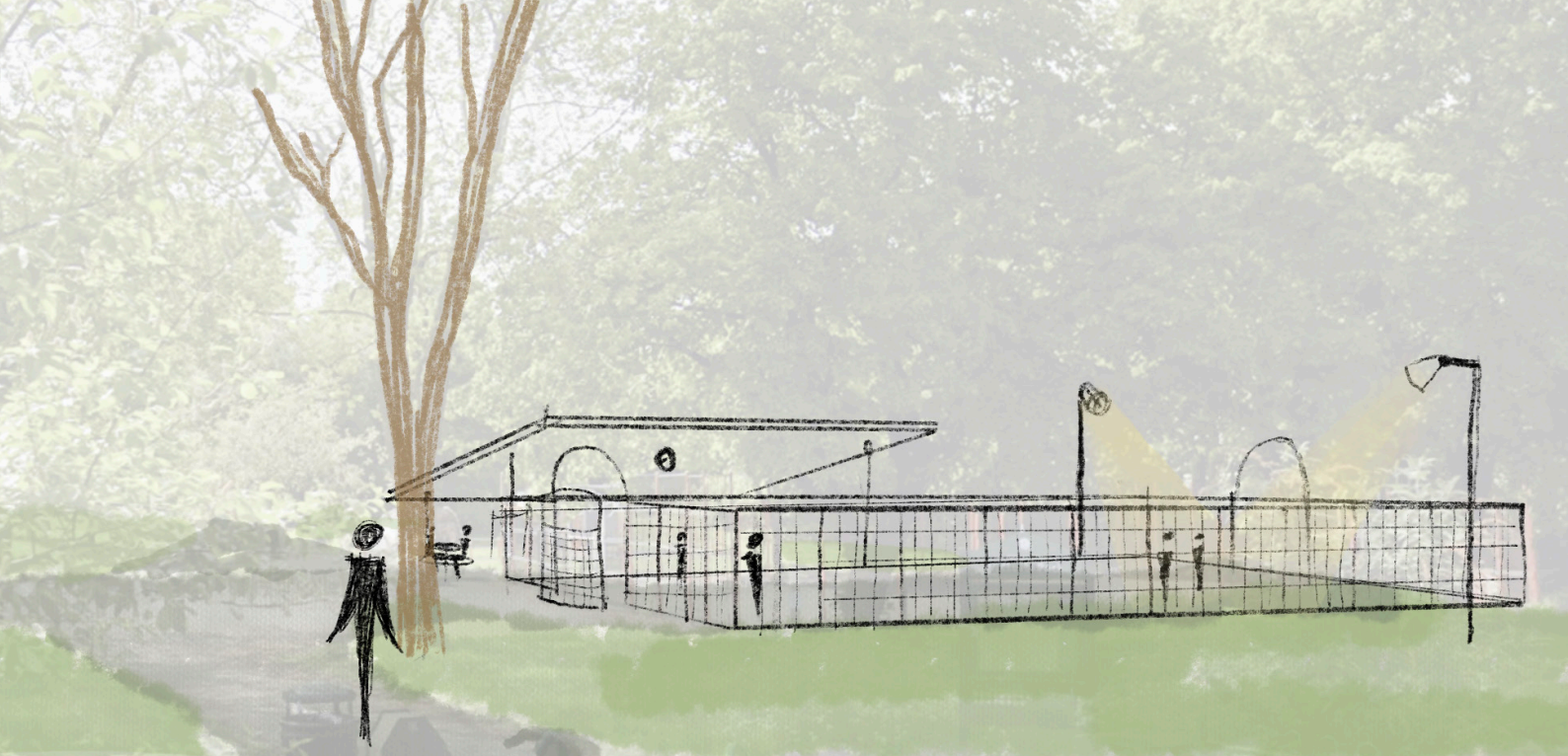
Box Durability depended on Craftsmanship skills.

The boxes required constant maintenance and attention.

Bad weather conditions affected the physical condition of the box.

The boxes are vulnerable to damage when left unattended.

Limited time to how long the box can be left out.



Outdoor Gym Lighting

Rain Shelter

Zebra Crossings

Improved Gates

Playground Lighting

Better Access

Cafe Improved Toilets

Car Boot Sale

Water Fountain

More Entertainment Facilities

Water Features

Water Play Area

Drainage

Swimming Pool Water Slide

What was found?

Interaction with the boxes proved confusing for participants, reflecting a lack of clarity about their origin and purpose. The method's ambiguity underscores the necessity for improved communication regarding its intent. Unfortunately, the fragility of the boxes led to damage, impacting both participation levels and the quantity of gathered feedback. On a positive note, participants appreciated the creative aspect of illustrating their ideas, opinions, and feedback rather than simply responding to questions.

In terms of research outcomes, the majority of data were mainly from children and younger people, who were the intended demographic. While this group demonstrated freedom of expression and creativity, there were instances of non-serious and playful responses. A notable correlation emerged between box placement and feedback content, with a significant focus on playground areas. The data collected via this method related to improvements expressed in other surveys and public engagement, particularly in advocating for playground improvement. The similarities in opinions across methods highlights a consistent community perspective on enhancing playground facilities.



The Public 'Podcast' Consultation was an informal/ casual discussion activity involving setting up playful signage, colourful posters, and a discussion panel to invite the public to discuss aspects of the park they were interested in.

The activity was done to gain first-hand insights from park users and to 'read' the atmosphere surrounding Victoria Park – aiming to help establish an understanding of local community members better through personal experience, insights, and opinions.

What worked?

First hand Community Engagement.

Inviting Set-up.

Transparent Communication.

Facilitated Conversations and discussion.

Playful atmosphere on signage and demeanour.

What didn't work?


Exclusively verbal.

Verbal information is easy to misinterpret through visuals.


Community confusion as to what the research would be used for.

Response rate depends on park usage and weather conditions.


Jo
UWE Librarian + Parent
Age: 42




Activities




Jess
Student
Age: 16




Activities



Frank
Elderly
Age: 68



Activities



What was found?

The time spent at the park highlighted a strong sense of love and passion for the place, as it holds special memories for many visitors. Families and parents played a central role in the interactions, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. Interestingly, people seemed more willing to join in once they saw others participating, fostering a sense of community. What stood out was how quickly conversations started—they kicked off within just 5-10 minutes of our setup and continued consistently for the entire two-hour period. The park's charm attracted a diverse crowd, including both long-time Windmill Hill locals and newcomers to the area, resulting in a lively mix of perspectives and experiences.

People highlighted a need for better toilets and suggested turning the Park Lodge into a café. There was also a push for more activities that encourage creativity, like music lessons, art clubs, and nature programs—a way to bring everyone together. A big focus was on the younger crowd, especially teenagers who currently feel under represented. People wanted a space for them to socialize and hang out. Additionally, there was a call to make the playgrounds more inclusive, supporting exploration and imaginative play. User persona's were created from the insights gained, acting as profiles representing what the community really wants for the park's future.

Jo

Works at UWE Library and has two teenage daughters.

Age: 42



Activities



Wants

"I want a safe space for my child to play – he likes to go around the bushes and imagine as if he's on an adventure. It would be nice to have something that encourages this imaginative type of playing."

Jo needs a space dedicated for parents to supervise children playing. Creating a relationship between the two spaces whilst allowing for programs to happen individually is important in giving parents security over the safety of their children and the freedom for kids to play/ socialise.

Frustrations

"My kids always use the park to meet up with friends and play – it's hard for me to watch over them in a way that isn't intrusive to their activities."

"In the winter, my kids can't, and don't want to, use the playground because it gets so muddy to the point where it's actually a safety concern. The toilets aren't in good condition to be used to clean up after them either."

"I'm concerned about the free roaming of dogs without leashes – whenever I have barbeques I always need to be looking out for dogs finding food and potentially scaring, or hurting, my kid."

Jess

Likes to make Tiktoks and socialise with friends in the Park.

Age: 16



Activities



Wants

"I like to meet up with my friends in the park and chat, sometimes we go on our phones and talk to other people, or make Tiktok with eachother. It's nice to just sit around talking with friends outside."

Jess needs a space aimed for teenagers her age. She wants an area that makes her feel secure and gives privacy to the activities that she likes to do with her friends, such as making Tiktoks. It would be useful to have something that facilitates sitting and socialising, whilst performing functions that support their time within the park, e.g. phone chargers.

Frustrations

"Sometimes I would like to play in the playground, but the swings and climbing frames are too small for teenagers so we can't use them. The only other alternative is the wooden climbing course but it's run-down and there's always wasps around it."

"Whenever im out with friends, my parents are always wondering where I am or when I'm coming home. If I'm hanging out at the water maze - my parents are really far from me. If my phone runs out of battery - then I have to go home, otherwise my parents would get worried."

"Whenever it rains, my friends and I have no shelter to stay dry - there's only a small metal 'hut' near the basketball court, which is always occupied. If we get wet, the toilets aren't in good enough condition to clean ourselves."

Frank

Born and raised in Windmill Hill, enjoys long walks in the Park with his dog.

Age: 68



Activities



Wants

"I want to see the Park Lodge receive some love. It'd be nice to have a renovated cafe that use local produce, and a community space that we can sit and observe the park in or hold events. Living in Windmill Hill for over 30 years, i've seen that Lodge deteriorate over the years - I want to see it renovated to the building that it used to be."

Frank needs a space dedicated for community usage and events, the Park Lodge could contain a Cafe that funds and benefits the facilities of Victoria Park such as the toilets, whilst also being inclusive to different age groups.

Frustrations

"It's difficult for me to access the park near the North entrance where the bridge is. The crossings are not clear and I'm always unsure if there are incoming cars. It's not safe for people my age to be entering the park from this area."

"The bottom of the park is disjointed from the rest - it makes accessing the Park Lodge difficult, and also means that realistically I can only use the area of the Park where the Lodge is."

"Sometimes I see anti-social behaviour within the park - we need an authoritative presence that will help reduce these behaviours, maybe a park ranger?"



Memory mapping is a playful drawing activity involving memory recollection in relation to a specific event. In this case we set up booth at the heart of the park (The playground area) and invited children and adults to draw out their best memories at the park.

It was done to gain memorable stories from children that best resembled the park and where they spent most of their time in the park . It was also done to understand what aspects of the park that is most valued by the users of the park and how it caters to school events.

What worked?

Can be used as a side activity alongside a main one.

Allows for children to express memories in their own way. Often going off-path and drawing other related things.

Gives insight about the activities that children like to do in the park.

What didn't work?

Sometimes hard to interpret drawings done by kids.

Kids sometimes draw things unrelated to the prompt - which may not contribute to interpreting park usage.

Older demographics aren't open to participating - may lack confidence in drawing or see it as a kid's activity.

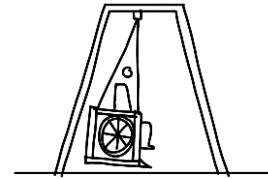
What was found?

Found that parents often guide their kids on what to draw, which provided insights into the activities that were held in the park.

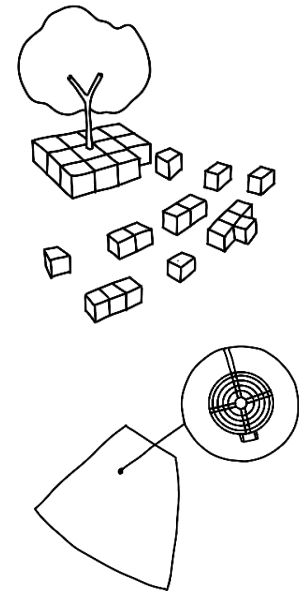
When asking the children what they were drawing, they would go on to talk further about the memories they had about the park that weren't related to the drawing.

The kids that interacted attended the same school. Some of the stories they were telling, related to each other.

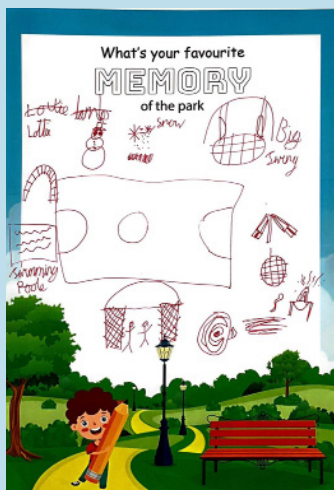
Developed Playgrounds: The drawings often involved the playground or playing of some sort. The existing playground can be developed to **eradicate drainage problems**, such as introducing **bark chippings**. Additionally making more playgrounds that suited a **wider demographic**.



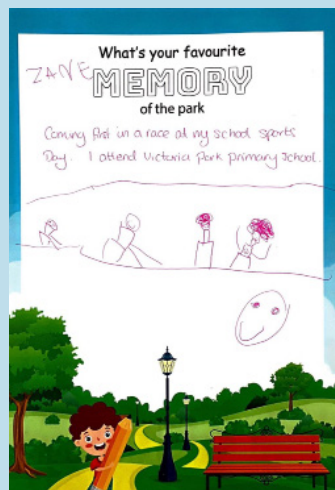
Multi-function Event spaces: Some drawings involved school events held within the park. The park is known to be well integrated with school activities E.g. Forest study, scouting, sports events etc. Dedicated areas of the park can include **adaptable furniture/spaces** that can **accommodate/ rent out to various events**.



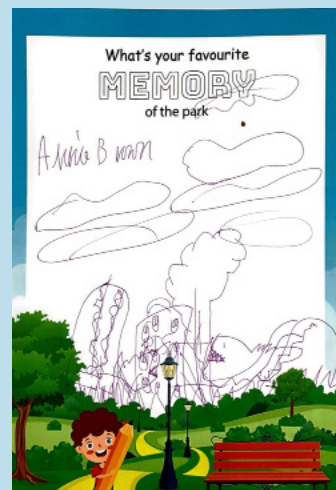
Functional Water maze: The water maze seems to be a fond attraction for the children. Developing it to be more **functional and suitable** for children would create a unique feature that would make **Victoria park standout**.



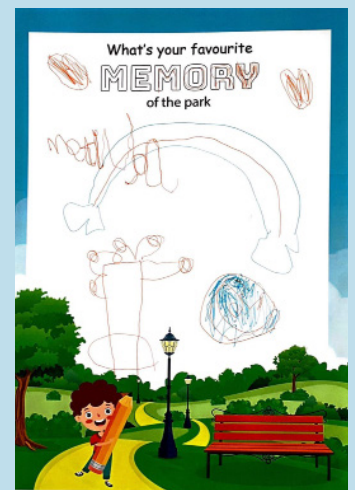
Lottie



Zane

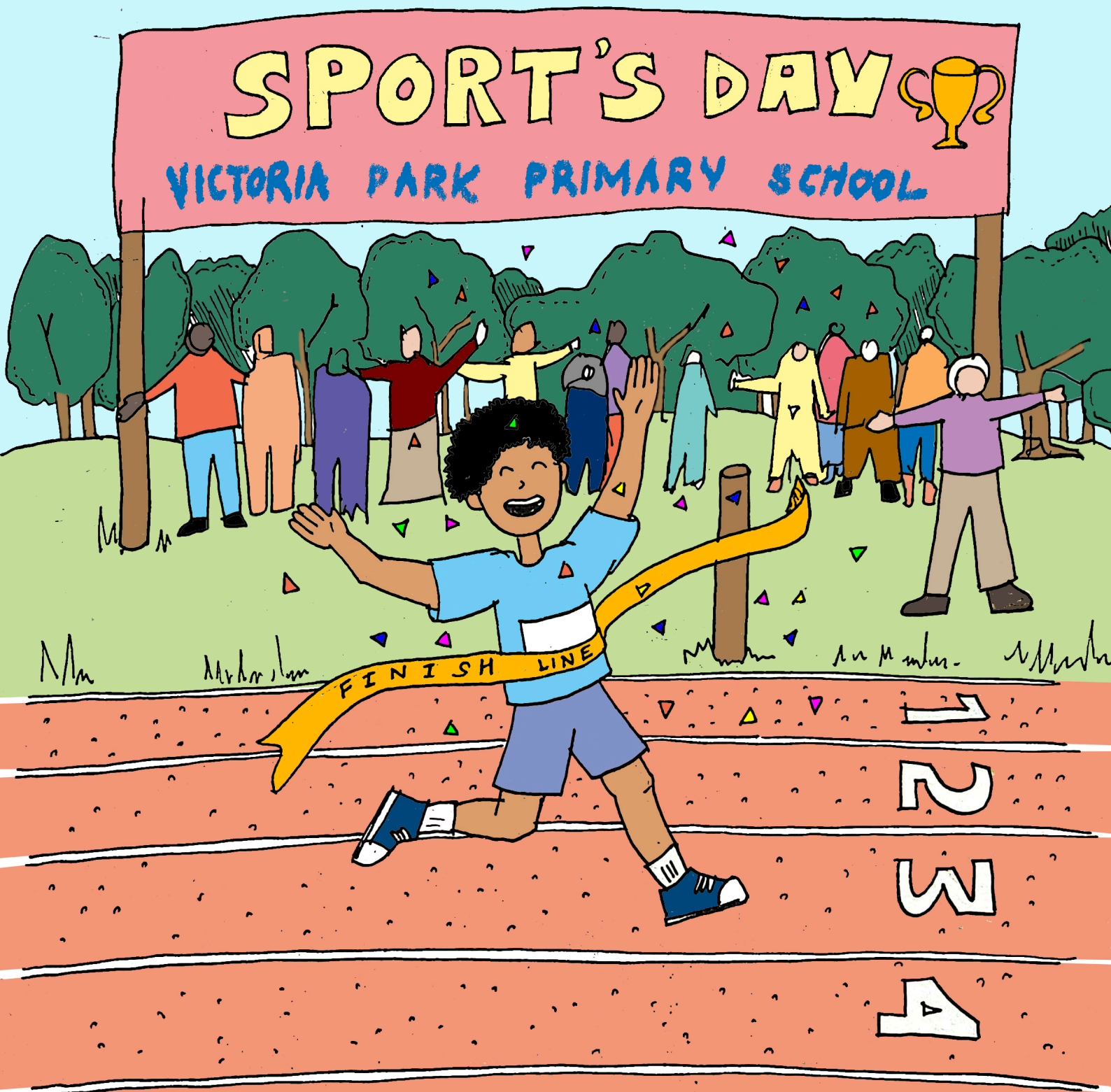


Annie



Matilda







Matilda's Golden vision

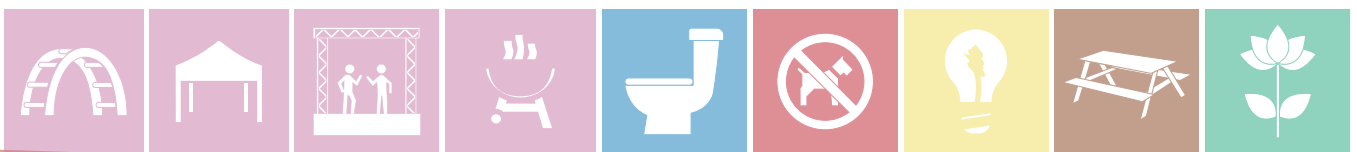


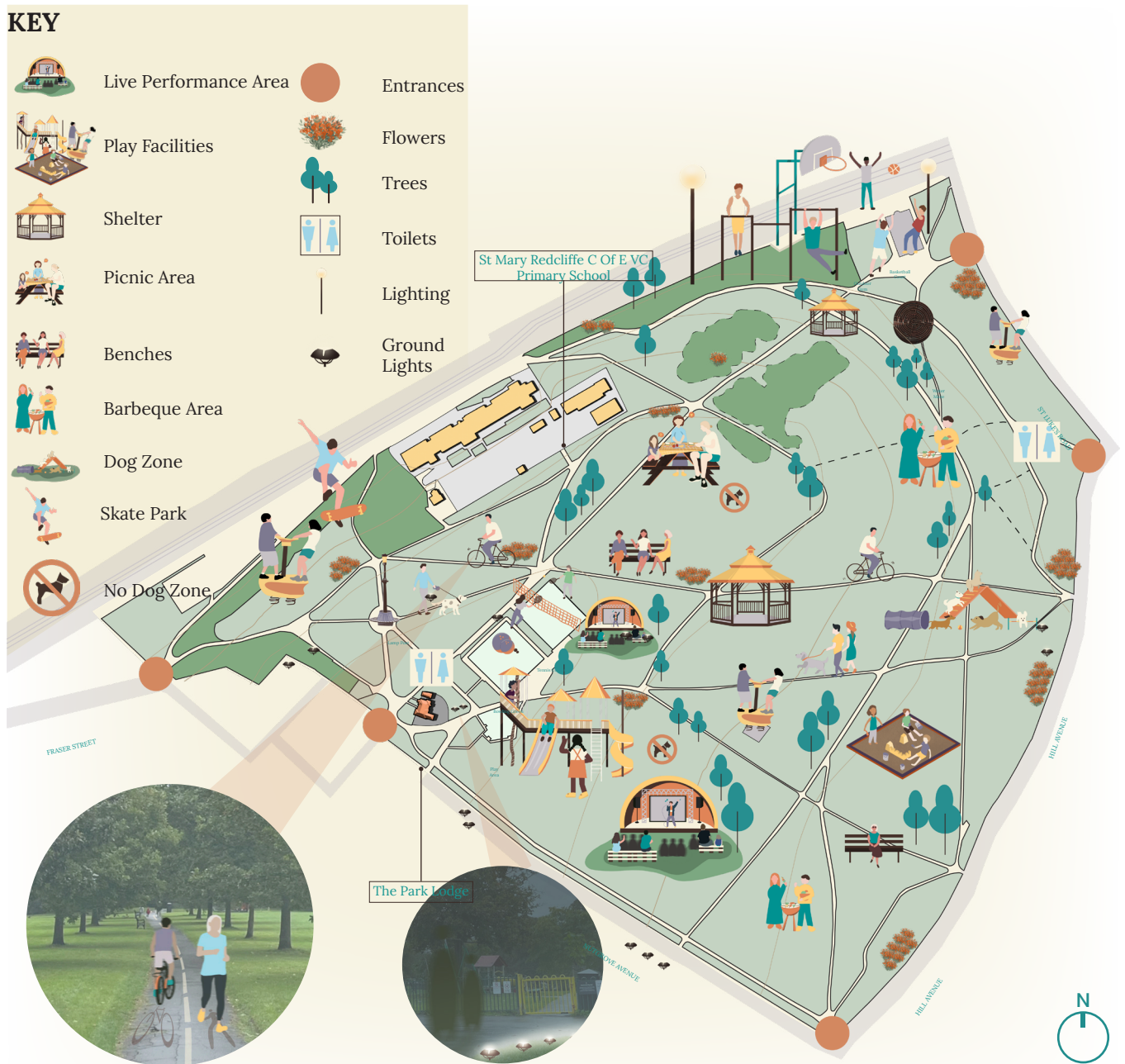
Designing with the Community: The Park



The interactive mapping game involved a laser cut 3D site map of Victoria Park, with participants using 'activity tokens' to place around the model to indicate what they want to see within the park and where.

It was designed to act as a collaborative method of designing the park according to what the community wants to see. The tokens were chosen and designed based off data gained from previous research methods done in the Park.

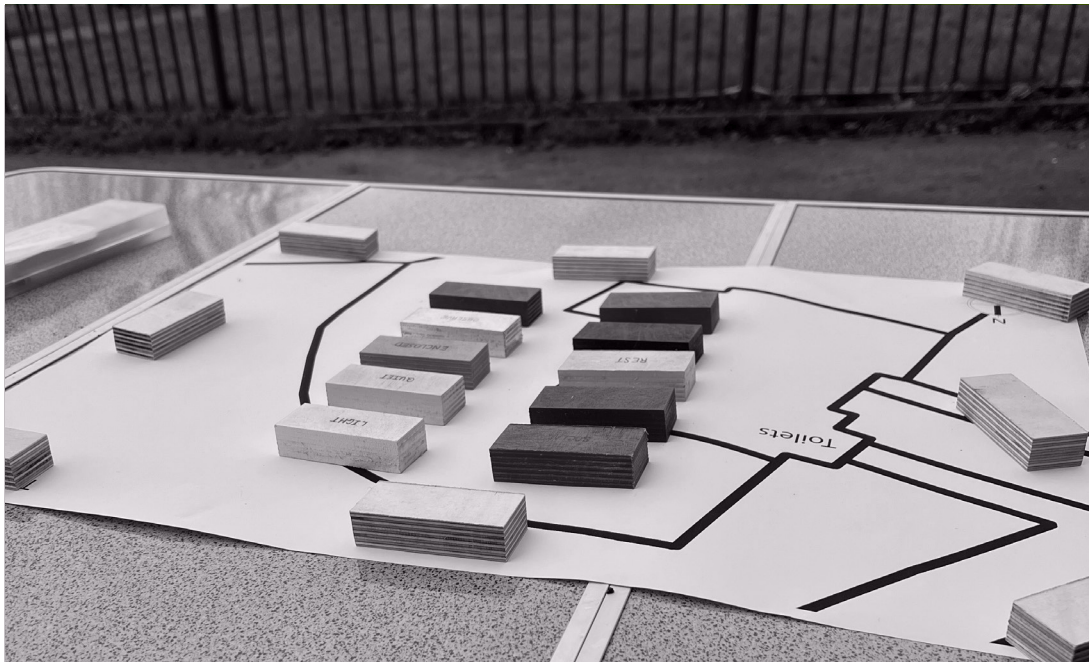




What was found?

The interaction mainly involved parents and dog walkers due to cold weather limiting the activity duration and resulting in a small data pool. Participants favoured verbal communication over gameplay, highlighting a preference for dialogue-driven exchanges. The use of physical 'cards' representing park features facilitated hands-on engagement, fostering collaborative discussions and idea development. This event captured diverse preferences and showcased creative interactions shaping the park's common vision.

Regarding research outcomes, analysis of public comments highlighted a significant demand for more recreational and social spaces. There's a need for additional playgrounds and BBQ areas, especially in the park's lower half, indicating a desire for family-friendly and community spaces. The proposed inclusion of extra event spaces aims to enhance park vibrancy both day and night, fostering community participation. Emphasizing improved lighting and purposeful greenery underscores the importance of creating a welcoming and safe environment. However, there were suggestions to limit dog activities near event spaces



The Lodge 'Building' game used colored blocks with descriptors like 'Loud' and 'Quiet' for participants to represent different atmospheres within the lodge. This interactive method, resulting in a simple map, engaged the public and provided valuable insights into user preferences for specific spaces in the Park Lodge.

What worked?

People expressed curiosity about the game, and the colored blocks attracted attention.

It served as a gateway to conversations about the Lodge and its contextual issues.

Children enjoyed interacting with the blocks.

Provided individuals with an opportunity to influence the Lodge's design by imagining and expressing desired atmospheric qualities.

What didn't work?

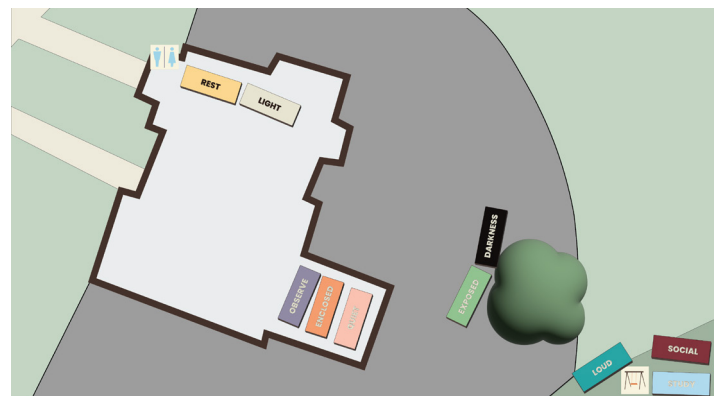
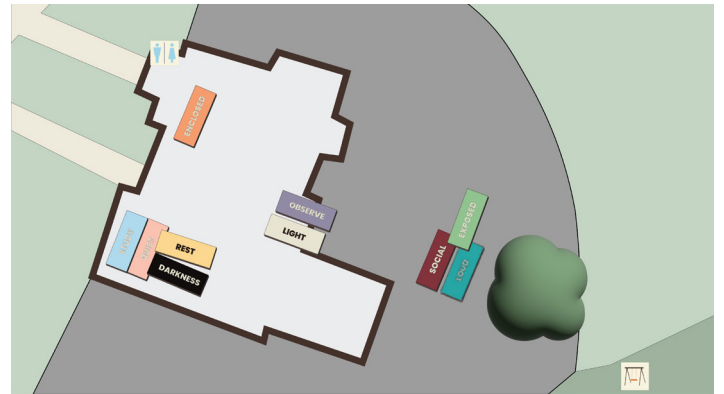
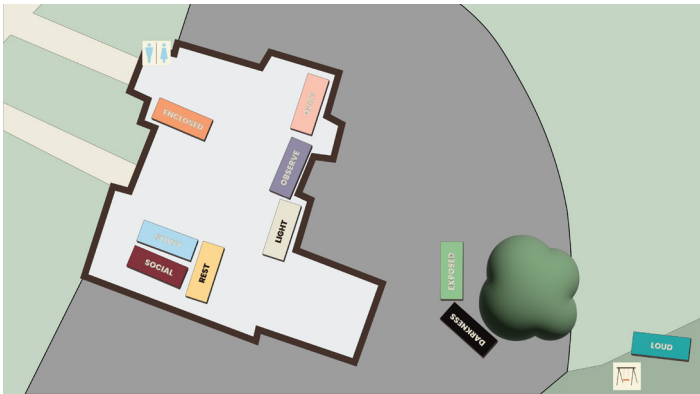
Weather-dependent.

The blocks were based on previous research, potentially limiting the representation of people's preferences.

Initial confusion among users; people didn't know how to use the game without explanation.

Quality of the map influences the readability and effectiveness of the game.

Desire among participants to place the same block in multiple locations.



Observations

The blocking game effectively facilitated discussions, prompting participants, primarily children and parents, to place blocks in locations associated with specific atmospheres. Despite the diverse contributors, each layout differed, showcasing a variety of scenarios. The tangible colored blocks simplified visual communication, sparking insightful discussions about potential uses for different spaces in the lodge.

As discussions progressed, certain themes and trends emerged. Visual connections between the playground and the lodge were emphasized, while areas for socializing leaned towards bright and open settings. Spaces for quiet and restful time tended to gravitate towards the West corner, reflecting user preferences. Notably, participants consistently avoided creating dark spaces. These insights provide a better understanding of lodge orientation and the community's preferences for the location of park activities and spaces.



Daycare



Hospitality + Co





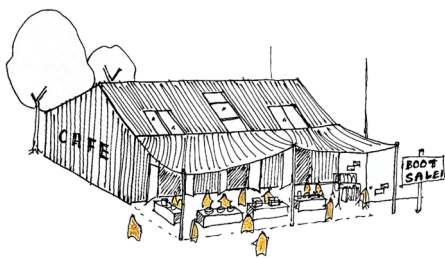
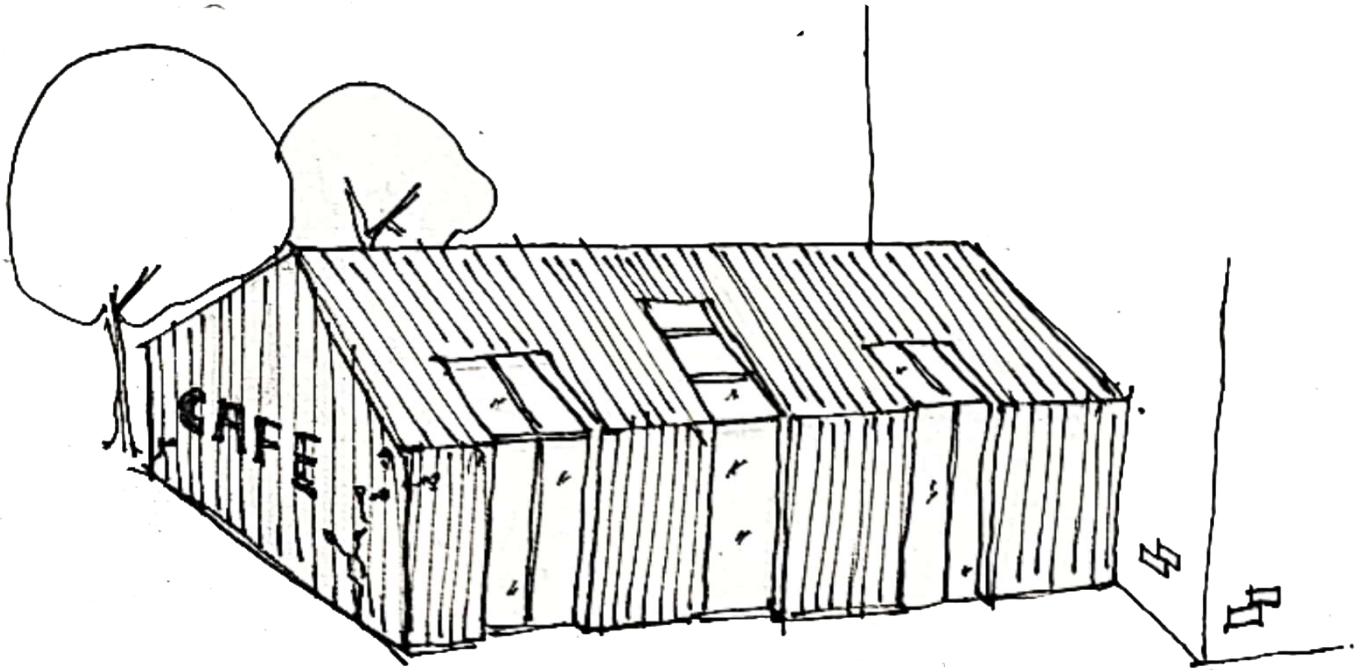
Community Space

Connecting Community

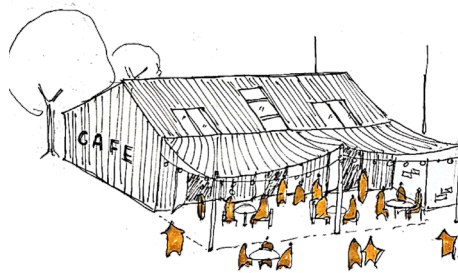


Possibilities of what could be...

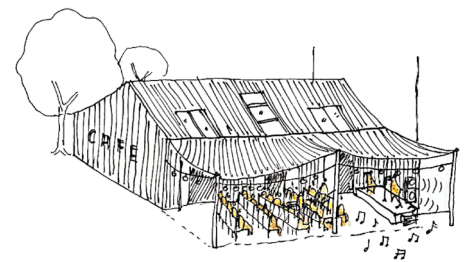
Box Extension



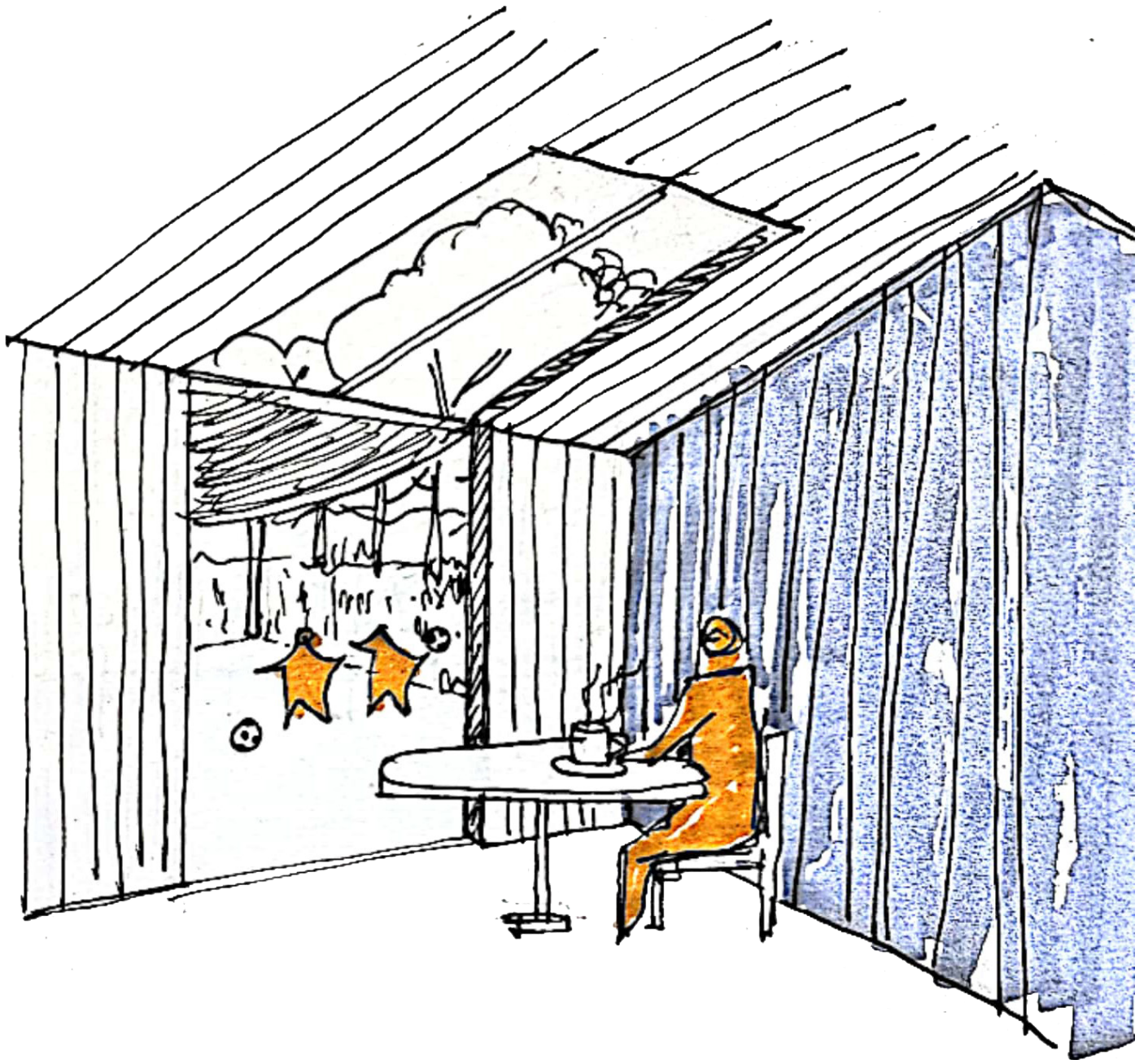
Flea Market



Outdoor Seating



Concerts



Observing

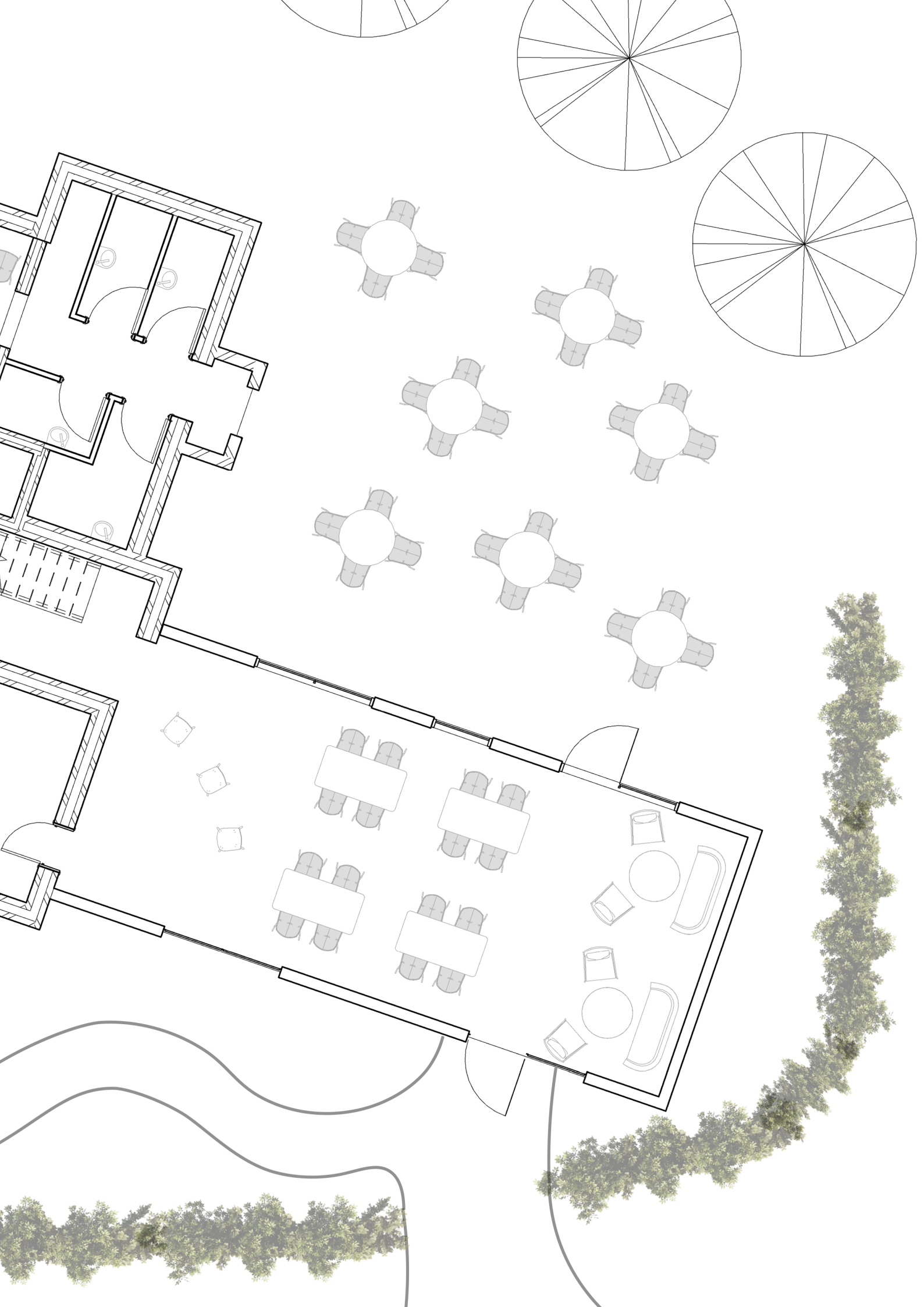












Going Forward with UWE

Agency Project

Forwarding this project onto fourth year Architecture and Planning Students will incredibly increase the scope of the design. This legacy can keep the connection with the university while ensuring outputs for the project are persevered.

How can we take this forward into planning?

Providing the opportunity to continue this project with innovative and creative students allows the design of the lodge to be taken into planning consideration. A more developed design proposal will enable the community to get a wider view of what is being done to the park lodge.

The current community engagement activities can be passed onto the next generation of architecture students, conserving the research to ensure all future design decisions are kept appropriate and sensitive for the community.

Getting Students on board

Involving students in the next stage will continue this projects legacy while enhancing community engagement and enabling for a well thought-through design proposal.

Delving deeper into the details

Looking more into the micro-scale of the project, setting out the details will provide a more convincing proposal that will focus on sustainable and environmentally viable goals.

Special thanks,

Studio 8 extends our heartfelt gratitude to Victoria Park Action Group, the Windmill Hill Community, Councillors Ed Plowden and Lisa Stone, and Sally and Annie whose unwavering guidance and cooperation have been invaluable throughout our Live Project Studio. Their expertise, support, and willingness to share insights have greatly enriched our understanding of the subject matter. The outcome of this project is a testament to the collaborative spirit fostered by your contributions. Your commitment to fostering an environment of integration and collaboration has not only enhanced the quality of our research but has also made the journey more rewarding. Thank you for being instrumental in the success of this endeavor, and for being integral to the growth of our knowledge and skills in working within the Architecture Industry.

On behalf of Studio 8 and The University of the West of England

