



WoodvaleHUB

A PARK FOR EVERYONE

A successful park or green space can be the making of a place. An unsuccessful one can help ruin it.

- Start with the Park, Cabe Space, 2005

Woodvale Park is one of the oldest parks in Belfast, and a tremendous natural resource for the Greater Shankill. With its Victorian layout of winding footpaths through mature trees and colourful flowerbeds, the park offers wonderful views of Belfast and the hills that surround it. There are playgrounds for children, comfortable benches overlooking large open spaces, football pitches, comfortable dressing rooms and well-kept bowling greens. Yet the park is perceived by many people as dirty and dangerous. Local residents often express concern about public drinking, drug use, and other "anti-social behaviour" in the park, particularly at night, and council staff wage a constant battle against vandalism and litter.

In response to these concerns, the Friends of Woodvale Park (FWP) has developed a year-round programme of events in the park for people of all ages. Part of a long-term strategy to reclaim the park as a safe, attractive public space for all to use, the programme includes FWP's annual Late Summer Fun Day. This year's Fun Day is planned for Thursday 21st August. A full programme of activities will be advertised as always in the Shankill Mirror closer to the date.

The proposed Woodvale HUB is a key part of FWP's strategy to improve community

safety in Woodvale Park and throughout the Greater Shankill. HUB stands for Hybrid Use Building, meaning a space that can be used in many different ways and by people of all different ages, interests, abilities and backgrounds. Located on the grounds of the disused cinder pitch near Tesco, the HUB would have both indoor and outdoor spaces for a wide range of events and activities relating to both the park and the wider community. With the proper design, such a facility could be open late and on weekends and still provide a safe, welcoming space for people of all ages and backgrounds to socialize.

The project has the support of Belfast City Council, the Department of Social Development and the University of Ulster. Earlier this year, FWP and University of Ulster-based Building Initiative group received funding to develop design proposals through a series of workshops and feedback from this paper. So please read on to find out more about progress to date. If you have any thoughts, concerns, suggestions or comments please fill in the feedback section and post to the address given. Or you can e-mail comments to alternativejcc@yahoo.co.uk. Anyone wishing to contribute an article or include a letter to the editor of the next edition of the Yellow Press due, out in August, is also most welcome to contact us.



Key Aims of the HUB

- Discourage anti-social behaviour in and around Woodvale Park.
- Make Woodvale Park safer, more accessible, and equally welcoming to all users.
- Encourage a sense of ownership amongst local residents, particularly young people.
- Assist the social, physical and economic regeneration of the Woodvale and Greater Shankill.
- Boost community confidence by demonstrating the capacity of local people for innovation, effective partnership and social enterprise.
- Create new opportunities for contact and exchange.

Woodvale Casino



WoodvaleHUB Workshop March 3



Game Scenario with Unlimited Budget.

The aim of the first workshop was to look in a general way at what should be inside the Hybrid-Use Building (HUB), what should be outside it in the Park, and how the two should work together.

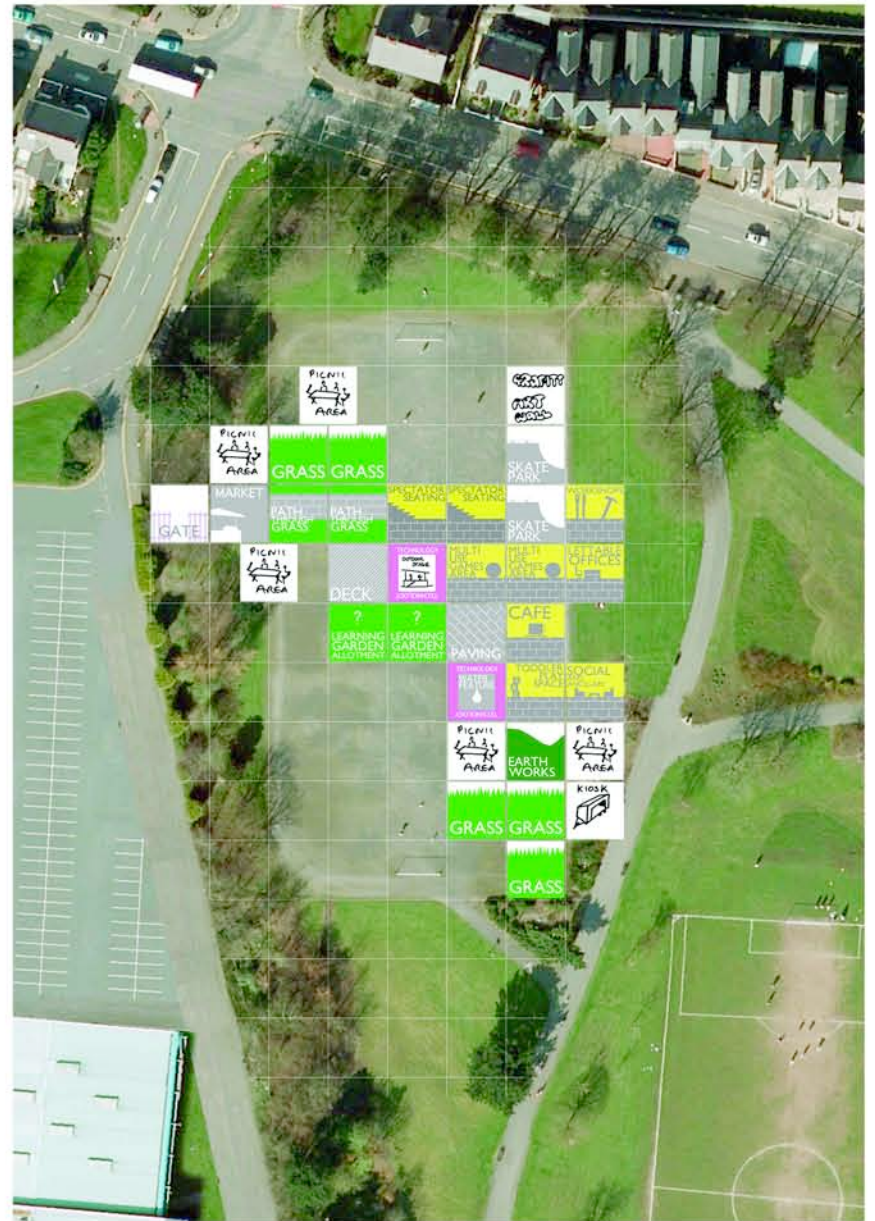
As a way to test out ideas for the HUB, Building Initiative created a strategy board game for the Friends of Woodvale Park as a way to literally 'play out' the different possibilities and priorities for the project. Similar to 'Monopoly' or 'Cluedo', the game used a large playing board made up from an aerial photo of the park. The area in and around the 'cinder pitch' was then marked out on the photo with a grid of 100mx100m squares. This grid matched the size of the playing pieces, which were also 100mx100m squares. The playing pieces came in three different types:

- Building pieces, representing a 100sqm club-room, café, workshop, office, etc.;
- Landscape pieces, representing 100sqm of grass, paving, skateboard park, playground, water feature, etc.; and
- Special pieces, which could be placed on top of other pieces to represent 'high-spec' or 'high-tech'.

Each piece also represented a given value in terms of the cost of construction, maintenance, and, in the case of a café, revenue. The game is played by each player putting one piece down in turn, with a short explanation why. At the end of the game, the cost of the construction is added up, as well as the cost of maintenance, giving a 'ball-park' figure for the whole project.



By the end of the session the room looked like a Las Vegas casino, the table scattered with betting chips – and complete with politicians, clergymen, and photographers!



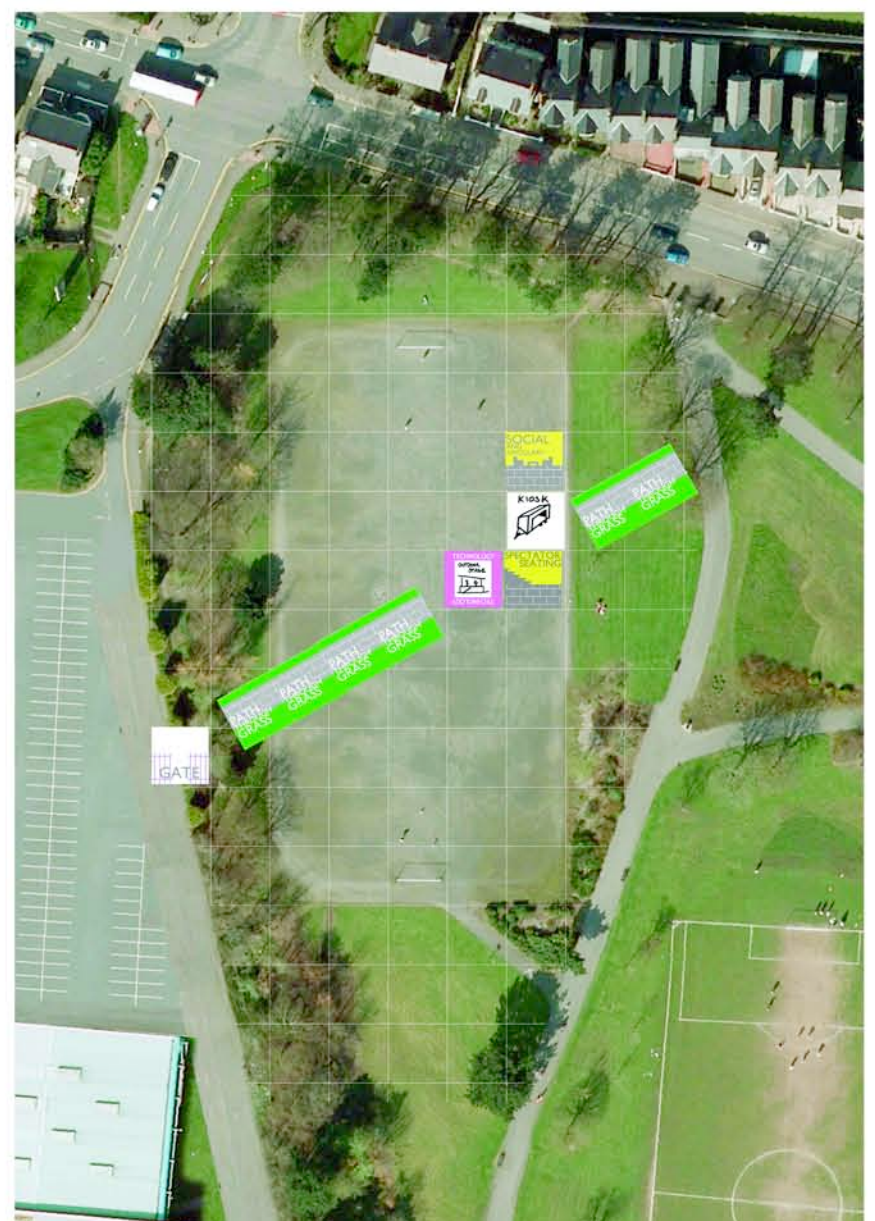
Game Scenario 2 with £750,000

We played the game on a grey Saturday morning in the bowling pavilion, with strong tea and the lights on. There were about twenty of us in all, and no sooner had we explained the rules than people were making up their own ones. We even had to make up some new pieces, including a 'history' piece to represent an information board which could explain the background of the park to visitors. Woodvale Park manager, Stephen Quinn gave a brilliant introduction to recent and planned improvements to the park generally, and then we kicked off the game. By the end of the session the room looked like a Las Vegas casino, the table scattered with betting chips – and complete with politicians, clergymen, and photographers!

The main conclusions of the game were as follows:

1. The HUB should be located on a new path across the corner of the Park giving a short cut to Tesco via a new gate from the park into the carpark, subject to the agreement of all parties;
2. There should be a general separation of areas and activities into "soft landscape" for families/young children and "hard landscape" for young people;
3. Questioning if Multi Surface Games Area is feasible as it replicates others in the area and needs large-scale investment for it to be successful;
4. Other functions suggested included Graffiti wall, Outdoor
5. stage, Historical connection, Picnic areas, kiosk as temporary/ seasonal alternative to café, etc.;
6. Interest in Allotments as an element that the Parks Department has experience with and could contribute to the scheme (could connect old, young, provide produce for market /café, health/education related);
7. Integration into the new path leading from Tesco of a space for an occasional market, or other outdoor activities;
8. Use of existing embankment as part of seating / spectator area overlooking both stage and skate park area;
9. Skate park/Graffiti wall hard landscape as an alternative to BMX track which would otherwise be used by scramblers;
10. Nature/ wild area positioned to south of site to integrate with Parks Department planting of trees in this area; and
11. Integration of building functions within landscape of park, potentially with several smaller 'kiosks' rather than one big building, subject to considerations of cost, security, etc.

These conclusions were then taken forward and developed by the Building Initiative team for discussion in the second workshop....see pages 16+17



Game Scenario 3 with £200,000

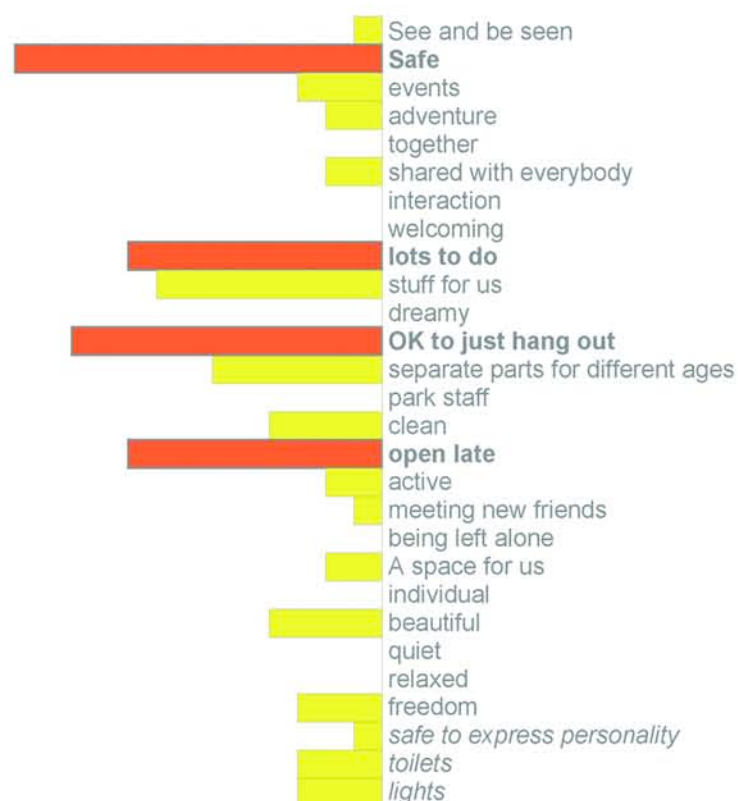
OK TO JUST HANG OUT?

Workshop at the Girls Model School

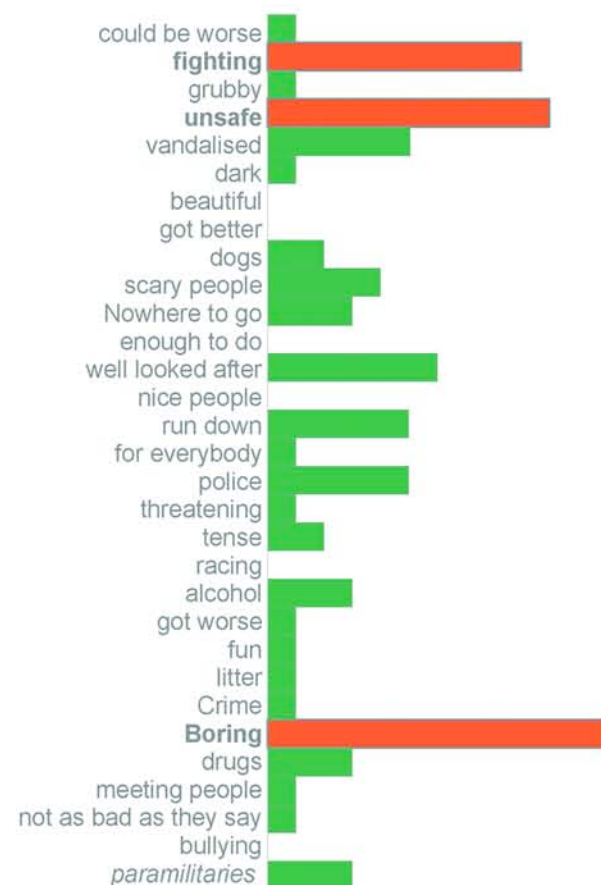
Building Initiative and Friends of Woodvale Park carried out a workshop in the Girls Model School on Tuesday 22nd April.

Firstly, the girls each picked out key words to describe what a park should be like. Then they picked out words to describe the park as it is. The results are shown on the chart.

It is clear that Safety is a top priority for this age-group and gender. Although we didn't get a chance to discuss this issue in greater detail with the group, safety is one of the key aims of the HUB project. As well as better lighting, visibility and access, increasing the activity will bring better informal surveillance - a busier park is a safer park.



What a Park SHOULD be like



text in italics indicates words added to the list by pupils

What Woodvale Park IS like

The girls then played the board game (as described in page 2) and discussed their ideas for the park using some images of what people do in parks. The key findings were:

- There was no interest in a BMX track or Skateboard Park and the majority didn't think an interest in skating would develop if a skate park were introduced. In fact, sports / multi-games areas etc. are a relatively low priority. They mention sport but definitely not their first concern.
- 'Nature' is also low on the list. Not much enthusiasm for a community garden, the girls could not imagine their age-group using it and they would be concerned about vandalism.
- They didn't think one big, shared space for all generations would be attractive to young people. They recognise that a park needs a toddler's play area and areas for elderly. They could imagine sharing some areas but were pretty clear that they needed a space dedicated to their group. Many expressed the view that other groups (eg. young children) were better catered for in the park than their age-group.

What they wanted to have or do:

- A "Squat" or "shelter" i.e. a place to inhabit and personalise away from adults and young children, primarily just to sit away from the rain, but perhaps an indoor space with facilities (music, TV, sofas, computers); with or adjacent to a café and shop. Currently not enough places to sit in the park.
- It should be open late!
- The Squat could also have Snooker table, Dance Classes, Cooking Classes etc.
- More Events to happen in the park – talent shows, School bands, music, dancing, – they say they are happy to help organise events, raves, etc. They liked the idea of a Stage area for events, especially outdoor cinema.
- Café, Kiosk (place to buy snacks) and Picnic areas
- Toilets- but they should be designed to be vandal-proof!
- A gate from Tesco's car-park to make access easier
- A path through the area
- Better lighting
- A Water Feature- but it should be interactive i.e. not just a pond
- Graffiti/Tag wall
- Bouncers and Swings
- Having a Historical Connection (along the path or at the gate entrance)
- Other ideas included: Kids Gym, Workshops for jewellery, Dance Studio, M+Ds fun park, running track, Maze-garden, Food Market



Discussions with Young People in the Park

What Woodvale Park IS like



What a Park SHOULD be like



A series of short interviews were carried out with Young People who hang out in Woodvale in the evenings. They included young people, male and female ranging in age from 12 to 21, some playing and watching football, some drinking on a bench, some just hanging out and talking. These were the results:

- Any proposal for activities meets with great response – for example DJ classes, dancing classes, outdoor films, cooking classes, etc - a stage would be great.
- Again, café and toilets are key.
- Darts, snooker, futsal, table tennis etc would be used. Clearly this needs to be carefully run and managed. Even the drinkers said they'd be happy not to drink there if that was the rules indoors.
- There is no provision for the around 12 age group (this is typical) who therefore use the younger kids's stuff. So, a more challenging (self-built?) set of climbing frames etc. might appeal to them.
- A space to sit, with height differences (kids sit on benches in different ways, they like to sit at different levels, e.g. on bins next to a bench because it is higher), to watch over the park (i.e. podium seating is good)
- Lack of shelter is key problem, nowhere to go when it rains, the bandstand is the only place but will be full, dominated by older age groups, and there's no shelter from wind. They like the idea of an outdoor shelter but with some enclosure from elements, more than just a roof, but not too visually cut off as seeing things is the main fun
- Water features - they would love it, including a swimming pool but if not that then water fountains. Including, in winter, the possibility to ice-skate!

Speaking to detached youth workers, we learned that they are very enthusiastic about idea of a base from which to work – they are now working from a remote site and having a base locally would be great. It could be in multifunctional space shared with others but with secure box for equipment (balls, frisbees etc), a notice board (to announce hiking trips etc) and electricity and water (to heat up hot chocolate on winter nights, or to have DJ or sound equipment on some nights, etc). The space could also be used for focus groups with troubled young people in the evenings - this is something the youth workers already do but having that space would really help. Such a base could be used by other groups during the day.

Although their activities in the park are often negatively perceived, the young people we met evidently had a great attachment to Woodvale Park and they have clear ideas about what would help to improve it – Can this energy and emotion be channelled into bringing about positive change and making a park that is welcoming to everyone?

- These Workshops were carried out by FWP and Building Initiative with Billy Drummond [GSA] and Joost Bundermann of Demos, London.

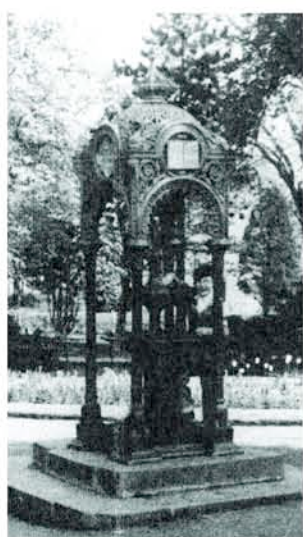
A look back at the history of Woodvale Park



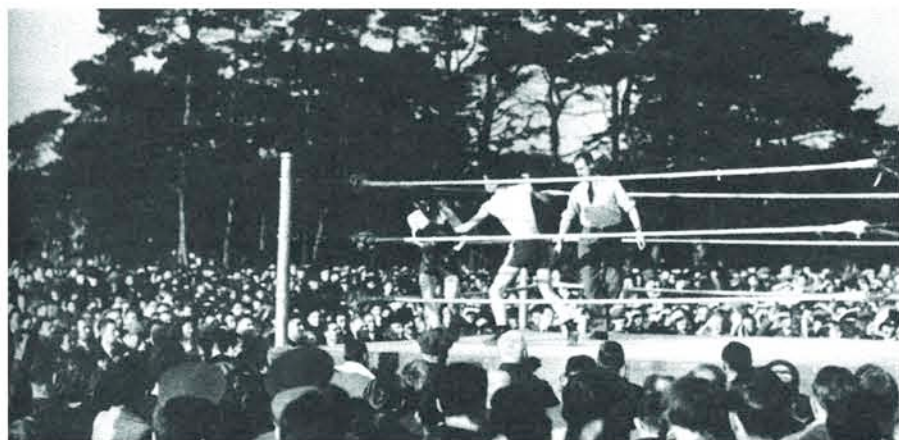
The Pond in Woodvale Park 1900.



The Thrupenny Bit in Woodvale Park 1900.



The Victorian water fountain as it was in 1950's



Open air boxing at Woodvale Park 1950's.

During 1886 the then Corporation made a decision to acquire land for the purpose of a park in the north of the city. The land was duly purchased on 20th August 1887 for £217.13 shillings and tuppence from the Rev. Octavius Glover of Woodvile House. At a cost of £200.00 the feature of a pond was added, with another £295.00 spent on railings, gates and pillars. A Mr Firth of White-rock Bleaching Company presented the park with a swan and other people donated various other birds for the pond.

A statement in an 1888 street directory claimed that the park was too small in relation to the area it had to serve. The Corporation tried to remedy this but could only come up with another quarter acre through an exchange involving a Mrs Quarry of Ballygomartin. New male and female toilets were added- this incidentally was the first time a ladies public toilet was built in the city!

The Park was busy throughout the year, but particularly during the Summer holidays. People could enjoy a drink of cold water from the ornate Victorian water fountain, or a seat in the pavilion, which was fondly known to locals as "the thrupenny bit" due to the shaped sides. The pond was always the centre of attraction for either feeding the birds or sailing model boats. There were little one penny slot machines positioned about the park (Victorian machines for viewing

images).

In winter, the pond took on a new lease of life as people took to ice skating, which proved to be so popular that the corporation employed an extra man to keep the ice in good order. It was 1894 before cricket was permitted on the park, being viewed at first as a possible danger to the public. Woodvale Cricket Club, the only Belfast senior club playing today, started life in the park, and the Forthriver Bowling Club also started life here before each acquired their own grounds. On 8th August 1919, a special tree was planted to commemorate the declaration of peace after World War I and the tree can still be found in the park today. Both people and park returned to the normal struggle of living during the 'twenties and on top of everything else the depression of the thirties.

The Woodvale area suffered during the Second World War, with 86 dead from the Blitz (one of them in the park itself). After the war, the pond said a final farewell and was filled in, partly with some of the knocked down air raid shelters. The fifties saw the park revert to its old role- the pond became a children's playground and remains so to this day. With the arrival of what can be termed as 'modern-day living', with television, indoor leisure centres and such like, it is only on the hottest days that we see something like the crowds of people in the park that years ago were commonplace.

Bobby Foster, Local Historian
(from Away Up Thonder, Published by Fernhill House in association with Belfast City Council)

Woodvale HUB as a Student Project



On Location - Review of Work in Woodvale Park

From January to June 2007, the Woodvale HUB was run as a student design project in the Architecture School at the University of Ulster. This was Co-ordinated by design lecturer Dougal Sheridan, with Jennie Cornell and the Friends of Woodvale Park acting as the "client group", representing the wider community. The students explored many different strategies of how the HUB could work on the Cinder-Pitch site. Gavin Mullan, one of the Architecture students explains here how the project worked and what the students learned:

From the beginning, this project was different! We were asked at the very start, as part of our site analysis, to "create, display, or perform, intervention on the site". This was a unique way in which we could express ourselves as budding artists on the site, and to essentially reveal what our initial findings and interpretations of the site were. I was amused

to be approached by two members of the elderly community who very curiously asked me if I "worked for the forensics", and whether there had been a murder in the park. My group's intervention consisted of a large display of toilet roll, which we wrapped around a series of clustered trees (all of which was carefully removed). The elderly ladies had misinterpreted our "design creation" for a murder scene!

We had a number of reviews of our progress during the course of the project. We pinned up our work in the University and it was reviewed by our tutors, along with members of Friends of Woodvale Park. It was really beneficial for us to have a "real" client to comment on our work.

Although a lot of the design work was carried out in the studio on York Street, my classmates and I visited the site on numerous occasions, to interact with the local residents and Park-users in Woodvale. I was impressed at the level of interest the project attracted from the surrounding hinterland, especially on our final design display date.

Review in the Park

Our tutors decided to have the final display inside a large marquee in the Park. This was anticipated by many of my friends (me included) to be a very dangerous move given our very unpredictable climate. However, the day of our display was the sunniest and warmest day of the year, which in many respects I feel the entire project deserved. The marquee sparked huge interest from by-passers, most of whom stopped and viewed our spectacle, making very positive comments about our work. It was interesting to see the variety of design proposals from my year group and I think the work helped to open up the discussion about what the HUB could be like.

We were very lucky to have such a great site and project. Not only was the Woodvale HUB project an exercise to further increase our design skills but it was, more importantly, an excellent opportunity to study and learn about real issues, a real context and local peoples ambitions to improve their own envi-



Playing Football at Lunch Time

ronment. See the following pages for a selection of our Projects. Good Luck with the HUB from all the UU students!

Gavin Mullan, UU Architecture Student

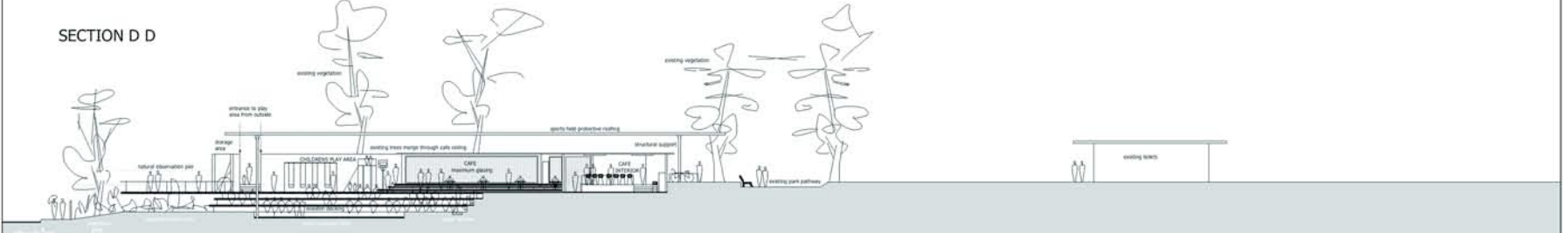
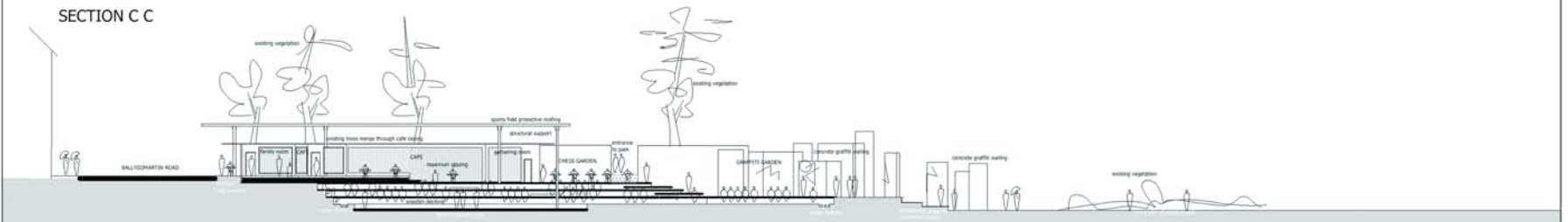
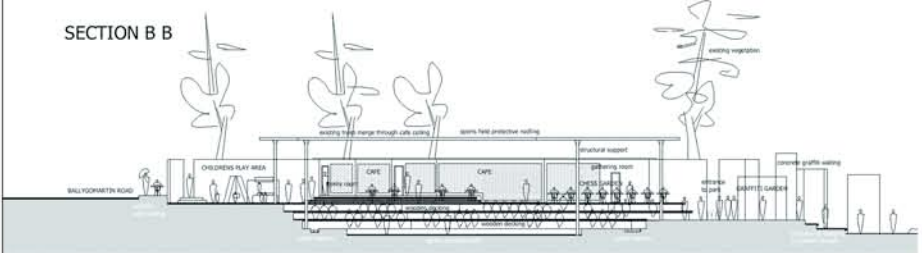
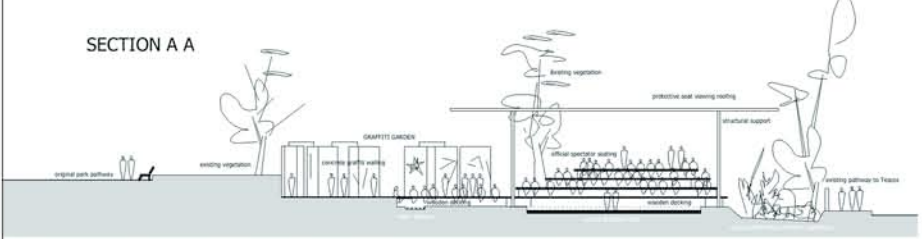
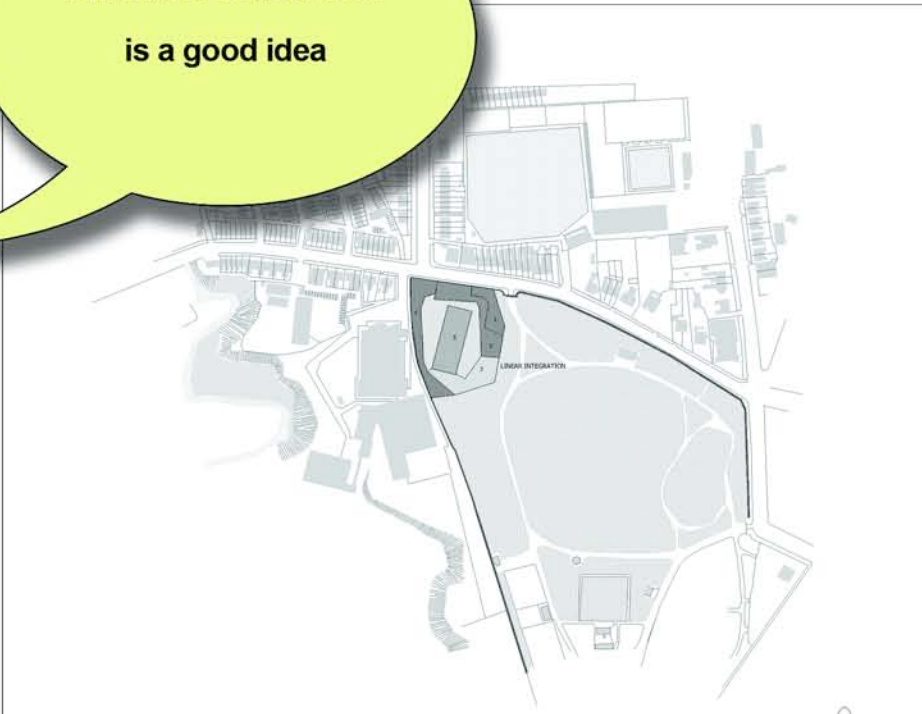


Students Work Exhibited for comment at the Greater Shankill Community Convention, March 6

“COURTYARD”

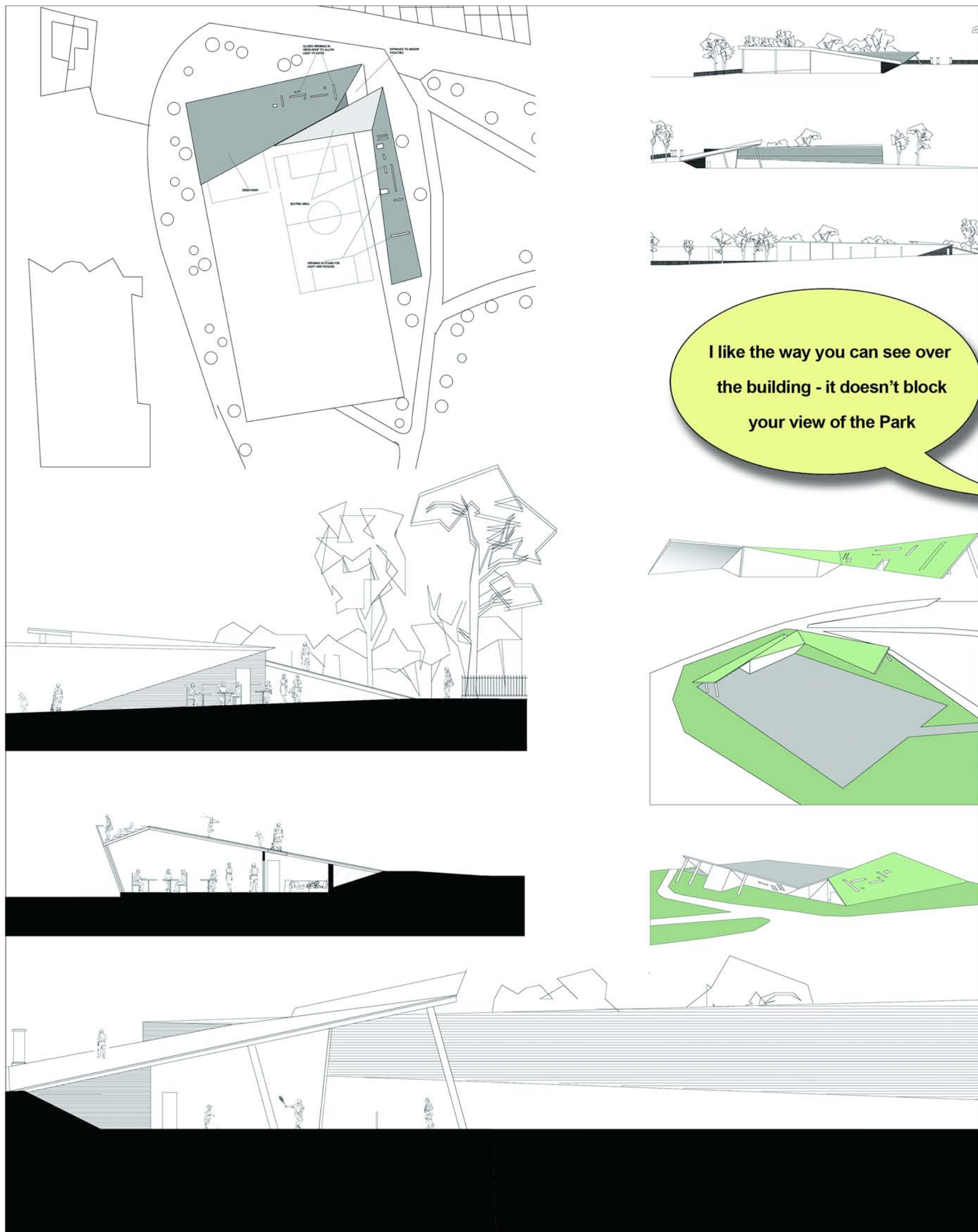
The design organises activities around the playing field to create an activecourtyard that is open to the street

I think the Grafitti Wall is a good idea



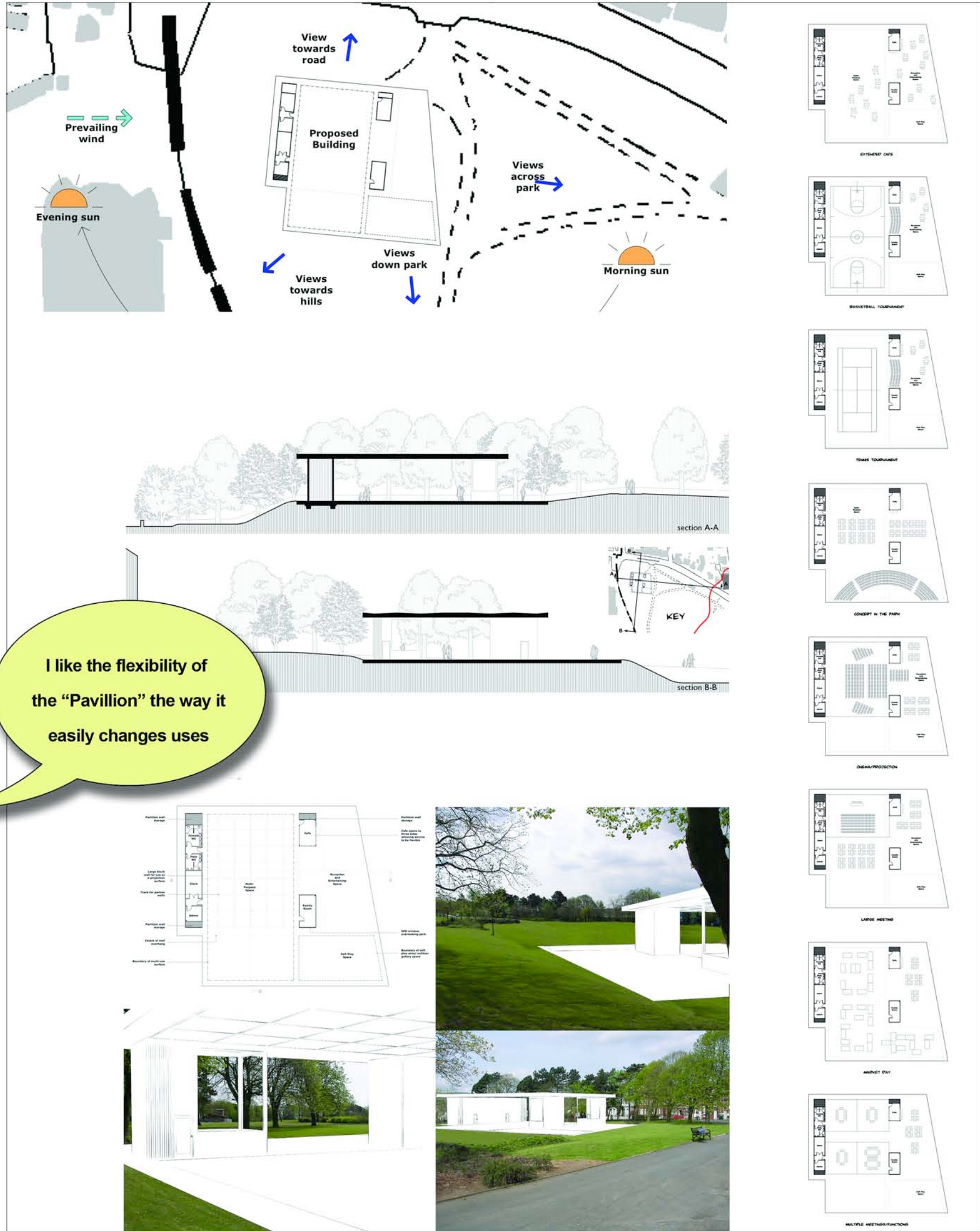
“LANDFORM”

Conceived as a series of folding planes with vegetation roofs, this building aims to subtly integrate with the landscape of the park.



“PAVILION”

This building is designed to provide a flexible space for indoor and outdoor events. It is an open structure that frames views of the park and hills beyond.



I like the flexibility of the “Pavillion” the way it easily changes uses

THE WOODVALE HUB AS A STUDENT PROJECT: DAVID McILROY

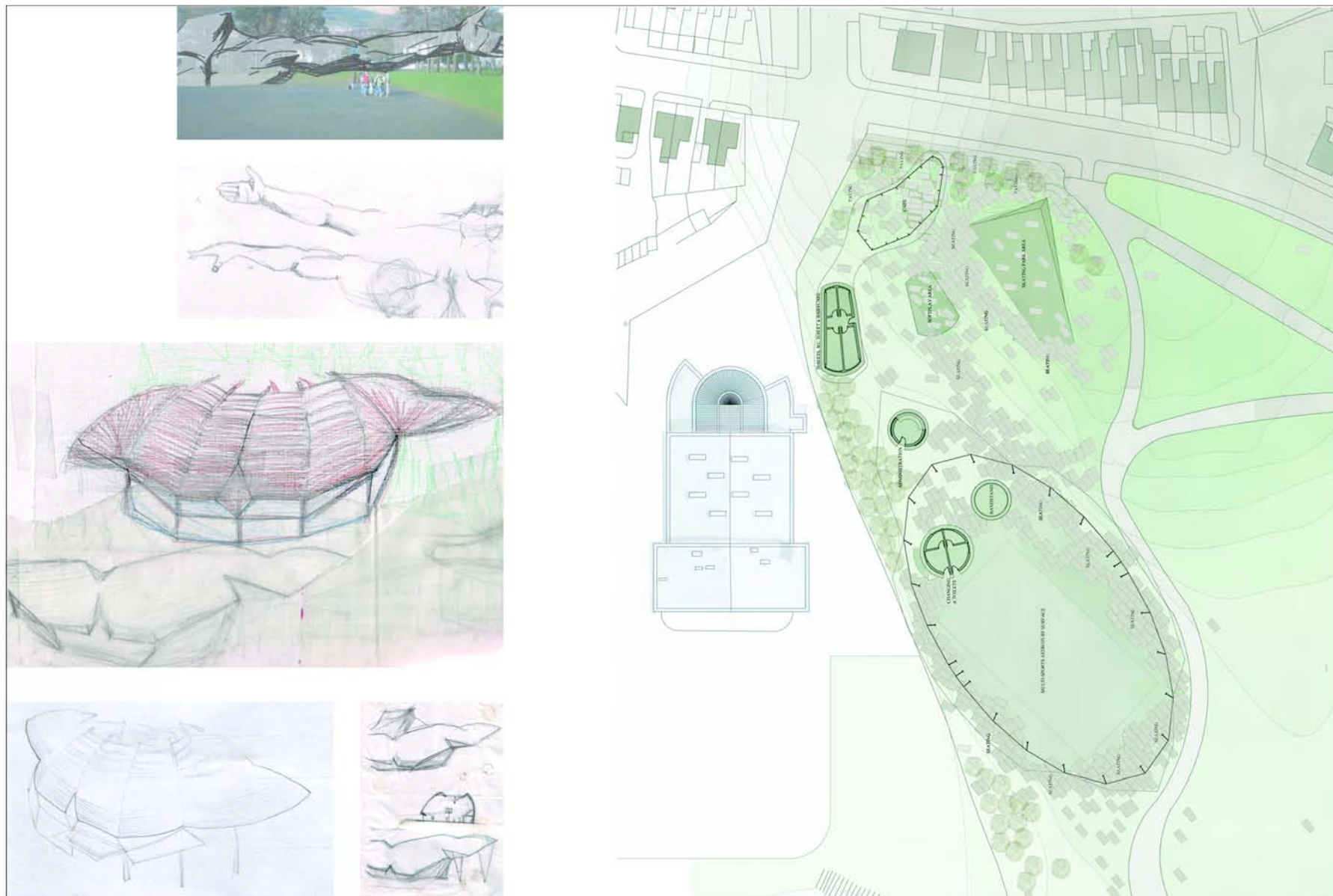
“PATHWAYS”

The buildings volumes and activities are organised around a network of new paths, generating dynamic spaces



“EMBRACING STRUCTURE”

Generated by the idea of a welcoming embrace, the structure of the building is also reminiscent of the arching branches of the trees in the park around it.



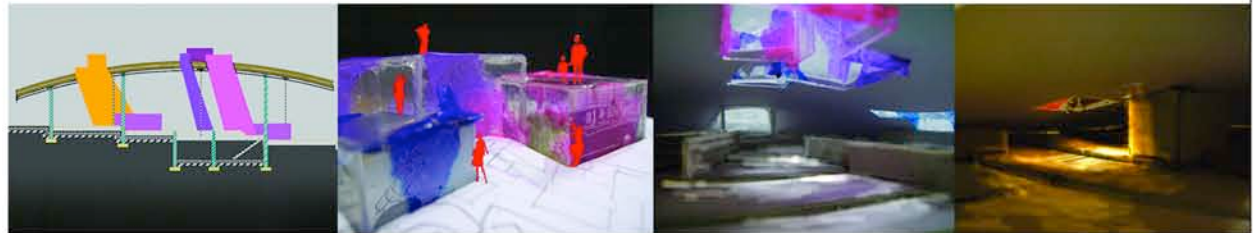
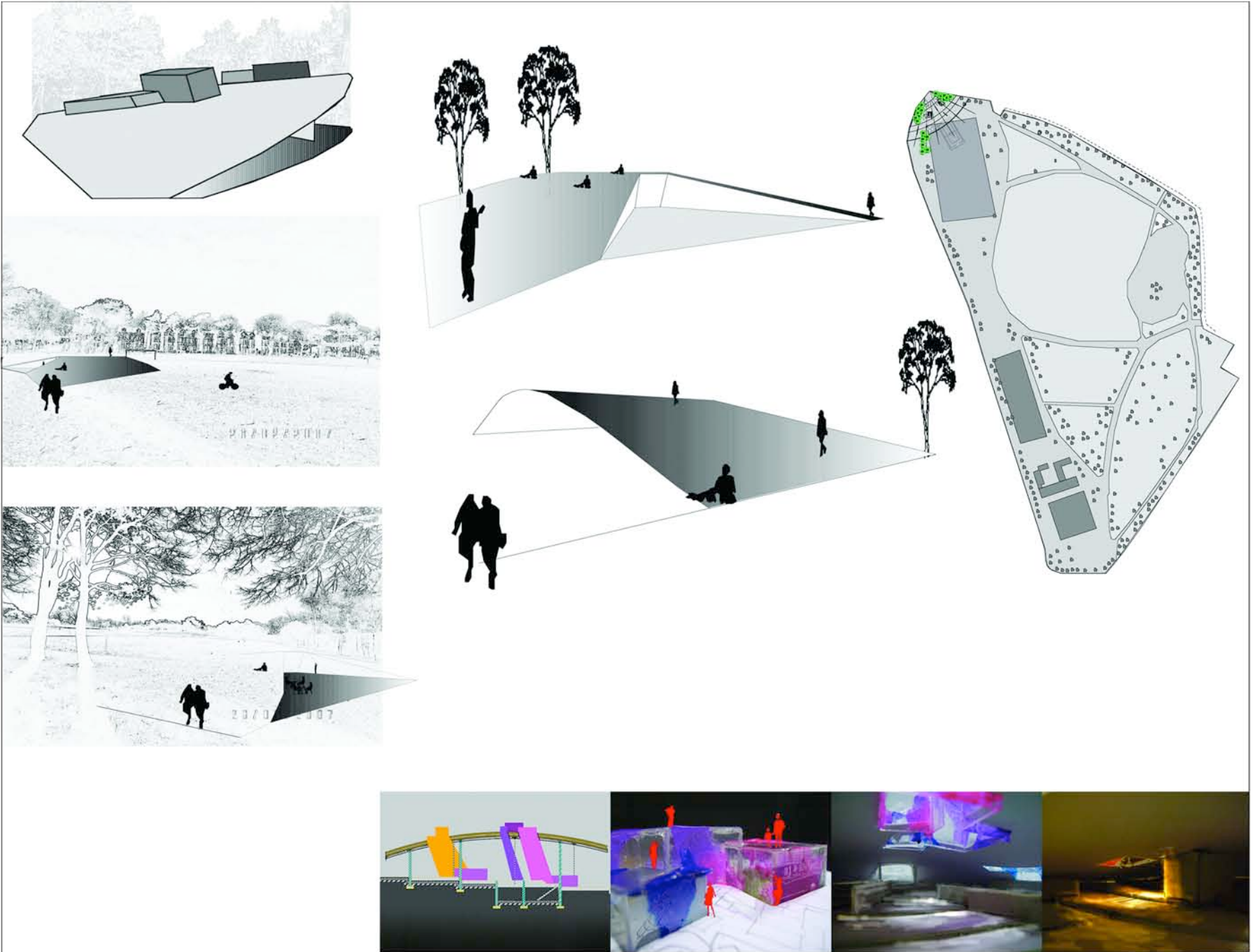
I like the sheltered space we could hang out in



THE WOODVALE HUB AS A STUDENT PROJECT: NEIL O'ROURKE

“RADIATING BUILDING”

The building radiates out from a point at the park edge, forming a gently sloping embankment.

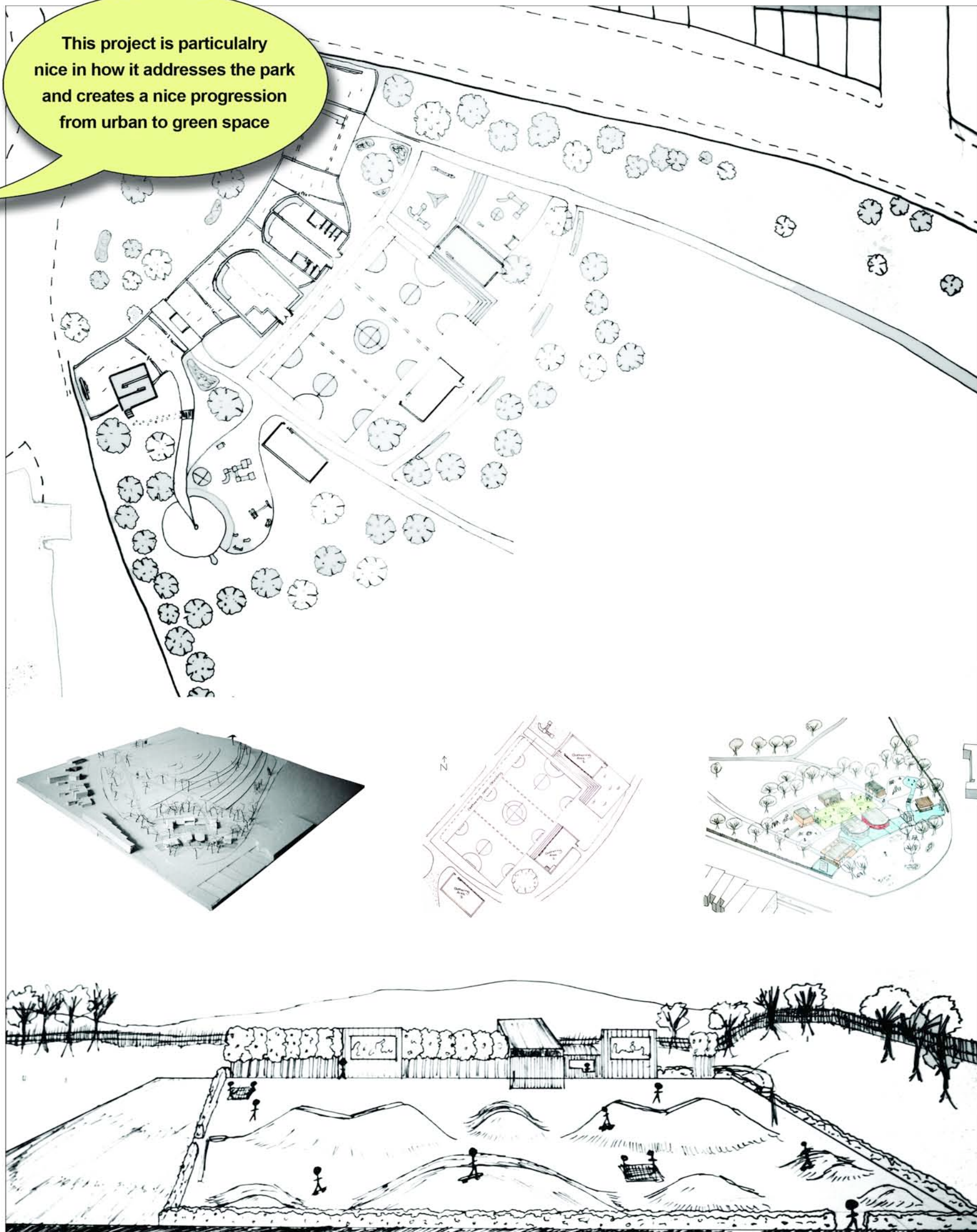


I like the way you can walk on the roof

“PLAZA BUILDING”

The railings are removed and a new park boundary is delineated by a line of trees and building volumes to create a small plaza on the corner of the park. They overlook an adventure play area and sports ground on the park side.

This project is particularly nice in how it addresses the park and creates a nice progression from urban to green space



THE WOODVALE HUB AS A STUDENT PROJECT: CLAIRE HEANEY

Designing a brighter future for Woodvale Park



NOT A MURDER SCENE: Just some trees grouped together to form an exhibition as part of a project being carried out by University of Ulster design students.



FIGHT NIGHT: An open air boxing ring was just one of the ideas cited by the students.

By Louise Murphy

ANYONE in and around the vicinity of Woodvale Park on Monday (26th February) will no doubt have seen various groups of people sealing off parts of the park with white tape.

However, as one woman feared, there had not been a murder! It was in fact the work of some 2nd year design students from the University of Ulster who are carrying out a project to design a hybrid use building for Woodvale Park.

Five groups of students, under the supervision of their lecturer Dougal Sheridan, descended on the park to come up with ideas in the following four areas: Cinema, Exhibitions, Childs Playground, Music and Sports.

The project is in connection with a scheme being proposed by Friends of Woodvale Park, which will hopefully see a multi use facility constructed within the grounds of the park.

Jenny Cornell from Friends of Woodvale Park was on site to hear some of the proposals for the park from the students and was delighted at some of the innovative ideas that they came up with.

Among the ideas was a large cinema screen erected in the corner of the park by Tesco's, grouping together areas of trees for exhibition space, a secret child's

playground and an open-air boxing ring.

The students went away with their research and will now work individually on ideas for the site. They will be tasked with designing some aspects of the centre, if not the whole building and it is envisaged that they will present 3D models of their work to the community in the park again on Thursday May 3rd. Look out for more details in the Shankill Mirror.

Students develop their taste for park life

IN the last edition of the Shankill Mirror we ran the story of a group of students from the University of Ulster who are taking part in a special project on developing Woodvale Park as a multi use facility.

The groups looked at how the park could be developed to include: Cinema, Exhibitions, Playgroun, Childrens Music and Sports.

After spending a day in the park getting to know the layout, the groups then went back to campus where they worked individually on their own plans for the park.

Community workers Kim Feeney, Norma Simpson, Audrey Barr and Jenny Cornell from Friends of Woodvale were invited to



KEEPING UP TO DATE: Friends of Woodvale Park representatives visit the University of Ulster students for an update on how their projects are coming along.

the University recently where they were shown how the plans are developing. The students made a presentation to the representatives who spoke

with them as the client group. Keep checking your Shankill Mirror for further updates as the project progresses.

HOW DOES IT ALL FIT TOGETHER?



One possible Sequence of HUB Development



HUB WORKSHOP APRIL 5

How do the proposed functions all fit together in the park?
How does a design work if it needs to be built in stages?
What would you build first?

These are some of the questions that were explored in the 2nd workshop. We started by looking at the 3 game board outcomes from the previous workshop. All outcomes proposed a new gate between the Park and Tesco's car-park. They also suggested a path across the park to this gate that would allow people to take a short cut through the Park to go shopping. Participants thought that more people travelling through the park would have the positive affect of increasing use of the park and the feeling of safety. In the previous workshop the players had placed the various HUB functions and activities on either side of this path so that the path led you past or through the HUB.

So the Gate and Path seemed like a sensible first step, to which the extra functions of the HUB could be added over time, or as they got funding. Because the path provided a method of organisation, different functions could be added at different times or in different orders and the project would still work! This way, whatever the eventual size and functions of the HUB, it would always be well connected to the existing Park.

We then went through the process of adding the various HUB functions, one step at a time to this path in order of priority. We also discussed exactly where to locate these functions along the path to have the best relationship to the rest of the surroundings.

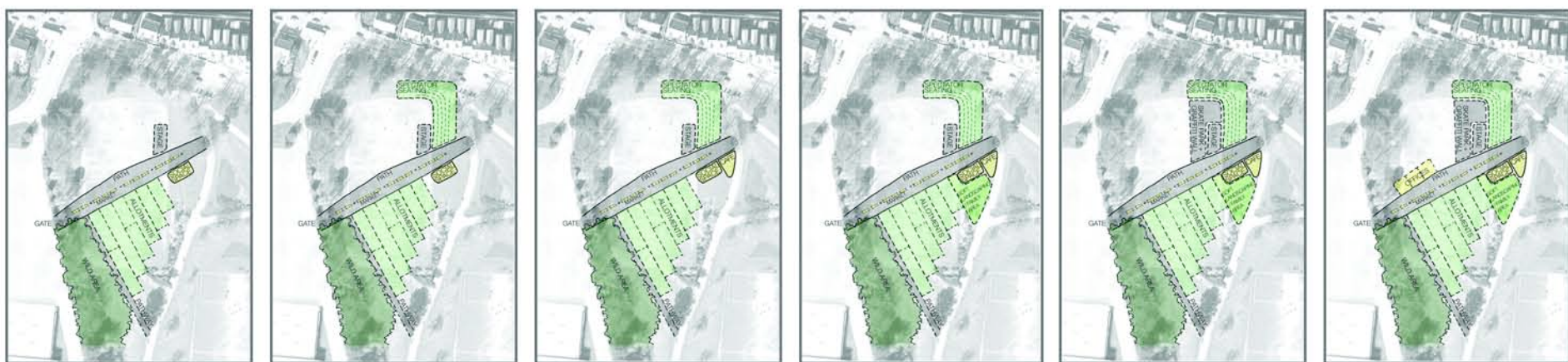
Participants thought the exact sequence could change depending on funding, other stakeholders views etc. But this was the sequence that was discussed in the workshop:

1. Allotments or a Community Garden was suggested first because the Parks Department could help set these up and local people could help make the gardens themselves. This could happen without great expense and get people involved in using that corner of the park quite quickly.
2. A Nature Observation Pier (an area of the park left to grow in a natural way encouraging a more diverse ecosystem, and allowing people to learn about the animals and plants that make up this ecosystem) could be established at the beginning because it ties in with the Parks Departments plans for tree planting in this corner of the park.
3. A Flexible Indoor Gathering Space (or "Social Space") was the next priority, followed by an outdoor stage. These were located near the grass embankment so that it could be used as a natural seating area.
4. A sheltered Soft Play Space for young children and a Hang-Out Area For Young People with a graffiti wall were then added as the next priorities.
5. A café or kiosk was suggested as a next step. It could be used by people shopping in Tesco's as there is no café in the supermarket. It could also provide drinks and snacks to Park-users, in particular people playing sport in the park on Saturday. One advantage of a kiosk instead of a café was that it could be mobile and be located either at the Tescos end or the Playing field end of the path to respond to demand.

"Tesco Car Park is the prime determinant of all movement, vehicular and pedestrian."



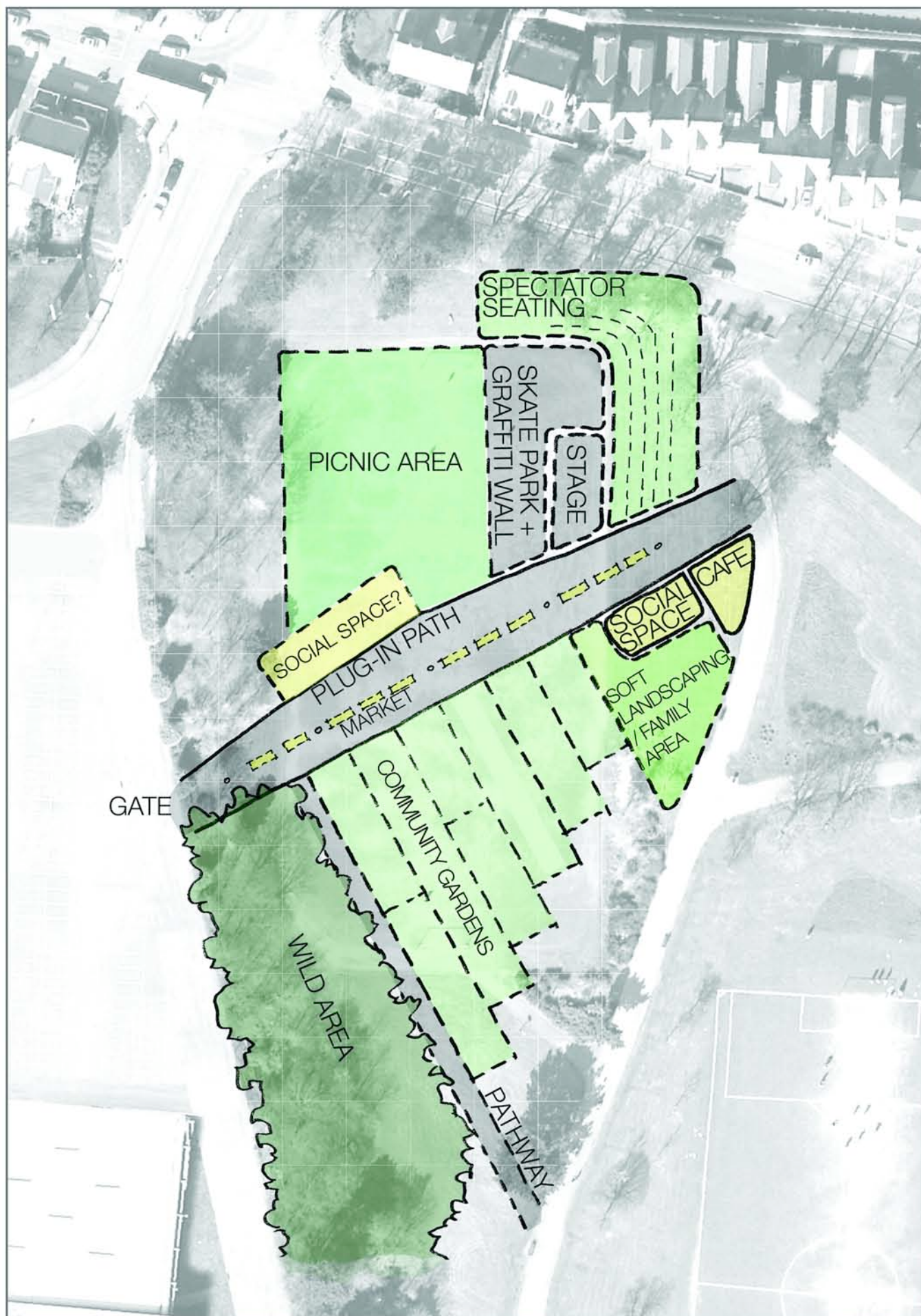
Workshop Participants write their Comments on the various Layouts



The Plug-In Path:

Because the path connects different areas, and is the centre of the HUB activities, it was thought that it should become wide enough to be used as a gathering place as well as a route through. Its surface could contain: Seating, Lighting, Children's Play Equipment, Water Feature, etc. It could have electricity and water points to allow outdoor activities to happen very easily – eg. Fun-day, Outdoor Cinema or TV, Market, etc.

Integrating services and technology into this outdoor surface would allow different temporary functions to just plug in! For example the kiosk could move to different positions. Thus, the idea of an Integrated Service and Technology Surface, a "Plug-In Path" was conceived.....



Schematic Layout of 'PLUG-In PATH'.

A GROWING INTEREST

Why have a Community garden in Woodvale Park?

The idea has been suggested of putting "Allotments" or "Community Gardens" on part of the disused Cinder Pitch in Woodvale Park. This is something the Parks Department might be willing to fund and so it could be a way of bringing some activity to the site without having to raise a lot of money. But why have gardens here? Who would be able to use them? And how would it benefit this community?

An allotment is a small area of land, let out at a nominal yearly rent by local government or independent allotment associations, for individuals to grow their own food. The parcels of land are cultivated individually and the individual size of a parcel ranges between 200 and 400 square meters. Often the plots include a shed for tools and shelter. The land must only be used for gardening (i.e. growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), and not for residential purposes.

The Allotment system has been around for a long time - they were first introduced in the UK in the 1830s after mounting public pressure to provide land for growing food. Growth of allotments happened during the world wars during the dig for victory campaigns. In this time much of the available land in the British Isles was turned over for growing crops.

Belfast City Council currently offers three allotment sites in Belfast. At present, there are no vacant allotment plots. There is a waiting list system with over 2000 names on it, according to Stephen Quinn in the Parks Department. So, they are certainly in demand and there has been a surge in popularity in recently as interest in growing your own food has increased.

"Community Gardens" are slightly different in that they are gardened essentially by the local community. Generally, they tend to be

run by an independent non-profit organisation (usually funded by public money). Some gardens are grown collectively, with everyone working together; others are split into clearly divided plots, each managed by a different gardener (or group or family).

While food production is central to many community and allotment gardens, not all have vegetables as a main focus. Restoration of natural habitats and native plant gardens are also popular, as are "art" gardens. Many gardens have several different planting elements, and combine plots with such projects as small orchards, herbs and butterfly gardens. Individual plots can become virtual backyards, each highly diverse, creating a "quilt" of flowers, vegetables and community art.

Examples in the UK include Islington's Culpeper Community Garden and Camden's Phoenix Garden, both in London. The community gardening movement is more widespread in the US where it prides itself on being "inclusive, diverse, pro-democracy, and supportive of community involvement" (eg. Green Guerrillas of New York City).



Benefits

- They provide a leisure activity for families, for children and adolescents, a place to communicate and learn about nature and growing food,
- For working people relaxation from the stress of work,
- For the unemployed the feeling of being useful and not excluded as well as a supply of fresh vegetables at minimum cost;
- For immigrant families a possibility of communication and better integration in their host country;
- For disabled persons a place enabling them to participate in social life, to establish contacts and overcome loneliness;
- For senior citizens a place of communication with persons having the same interests as well as an opportunity of self-fulfillment during the period of retirement.
- Community Gardens also combat the sense of alienation and isolation that often plagues modern urban life, by bringing urban gardeners closer in touch with the source of their food, and by creating a social community.
- It has also been found that active communities experience less crime and vandalism. (Melville Court, Chatham, Kent, Moiser, Steve, Landscape Design, (Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002))



This is all very well in London and New York, but what about Belfast?
We decided to talk to an allotment-user in Belfast to find out more.

Rachel Williams (36) and her family have an allotment in Dundonald. They got their 12m x 8 m plot two years ago and she goes there most weekends together with her husband Richard (36) and their two children, Peter (4.5) and Louisa (7). Louisa and Peter have their own "mini-plot" in the allotment where they grow spinach, kale, sprouting broccoli, and daffodils. There is a slide and pond on a neighbouring allotment. "Last year we made a river and built some dams", remembers Peter. They get to meet other kids there and also enjoy digging up veggies! "We even came here last Christmas Eve," says Louisa "to collect some stuff for Christmas dinner!"

For Rachel and Richard, it's an ideal pastime to share as a family. "It's physical exercise that's productive-compared to running on a treadmill in a gym! And the mental health benefits of looking after a plant- you can't quantify that. If you live in the city but to have access to a green field, it has a huge psychological effect - it helps you to be calmer." And, as Rachael points out, it has an economic side too: "With rising food prices now, more than ever, it makes sense for families to grow their own. Everything is fresh so the nutritional value is much higher than anything you're buying in the shops. You're getting organic food without organic prices. For example, that perpetual spinach- I paid £1.20 for a packet of 100 seeds. I planted 10 seeds last year and we've had fresh spinach throughout the last year, even over winter. We sometimes swap with our neighbours too, for more variety! You know you're getting quality because you've seen them growing - there are no chemicals here!"

So, could a Community Garden work in Woodvale Park? The garden could be made up of individual plots each of which could be gardened by local groups- for example, a local youth group, a school group, senior citizens group, disabled peoples group, ethnic minority group, as well as some plots for individuals and families. **Could you imagine a new "Woodvale Community Garden"?**

WHAT WOULD YOU “PLUG IN”?



The Plug-in Path is a high-tech surface with integrated seating, lighting, play equipment. It allows events to take place easily - such as Markets, Outdoor Cinema, Concerts, etc.

DRAW IN WHAT YOU THINK SHOULD HAPPEN ALONG THE PLUG-IN PATH
WHAT AMENITY COULD YOU IMAGINE USING HERE?

PLEASE CUT THIS PAGE OUT AND SEND IT TO US AT:

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YellowPress*

*A term applied to newspapers [or their writers] of a recklessly or unscrupulously sensational character. Originates from a picture in the New York World, 1895, with the central figure in a yellow dress.

Building Initiative

Civil Enterprise in the Built Environment

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Next HUB Workshop is Friday May 3 – All are welcome

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Any Comments or Thoughts?

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Thankyou

