

Old Moor: Explorer Zone

The current site and future vision

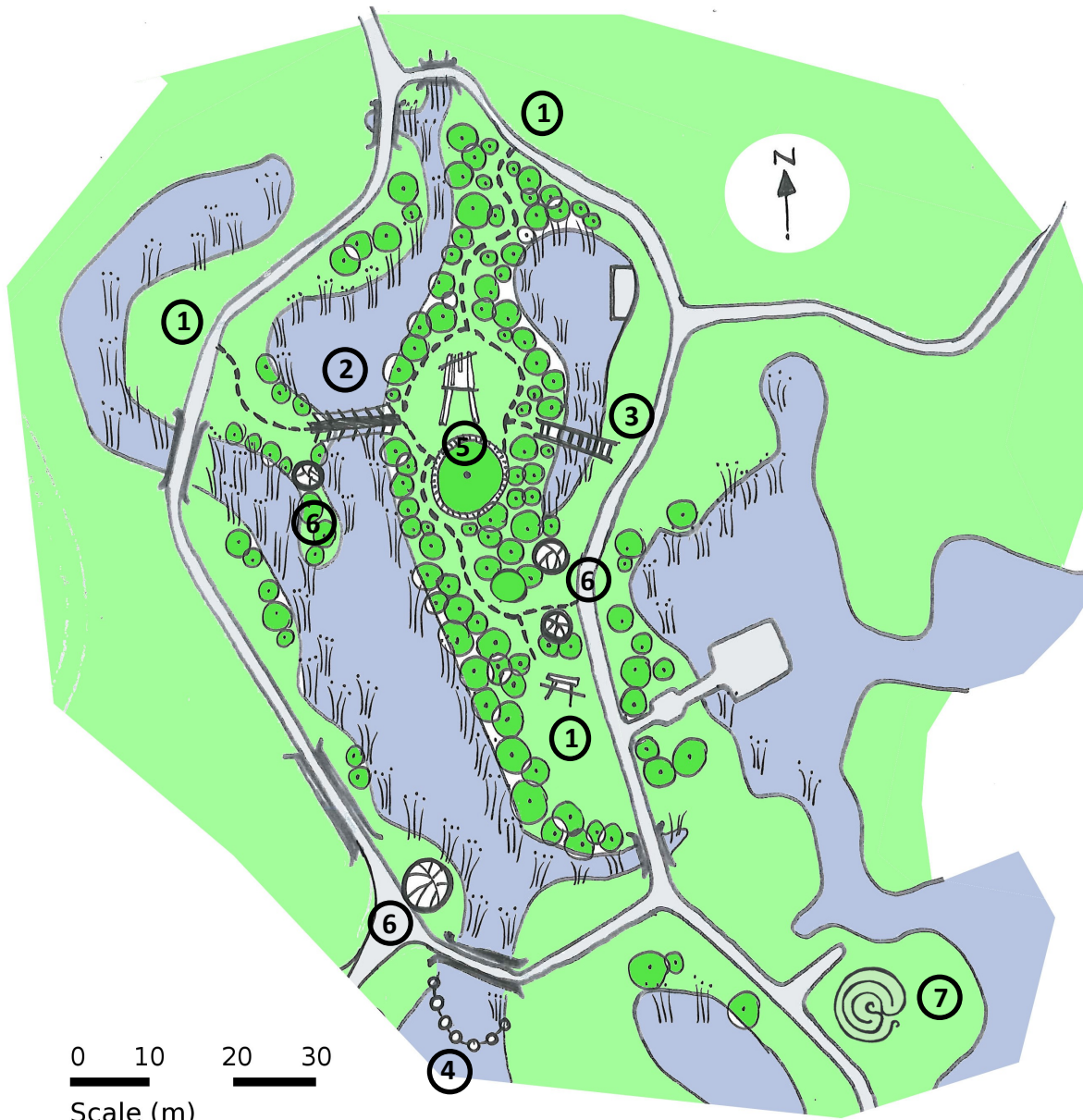
The site here is currently a network of small wildlife ponds, viewed from a circular path. Thickets, reeds and waterways are all 'off-limits' currently. To create a wild, secluded Explorer Zone, we will thread child-sized paths through the wooded areas, that open into a secret glade with an exciting lookout treehouse. For younger children, we will create a barefoot trail in the shape of a labyrinth. Willow dwellings will be scattered across the area to encourage exploration and creative play. New ways of bridging the ponds will be built—stepping stones, a floating rope bridge and a wobbly wooden bridge.

Play elements

- Play element 1: Pathways and clearings
- Play element 2: Floating rope bridge
- Play element 3: Wobbly wooden bridge
- Play element 4: Boulder stepping stones
- Play element 5: Lookout treehouse
- Play element 6: Willow dwellings
- Play element 7: Barefoot labyrinth

Construction overview

Clear narrow pathways into the central point of the 'island'; make a clearing and erect a tall timber lookout structure, with bark chipping safety surface. Paths connect to two new bridges across the ponds. Access to any deep water prevented by leaving thick scrub and where this is not sufficient, installing brash fencing or using hedge laying techniques. Paths to be formed naturally by footfall. Create barefoot trail labyrinth filled with variety of sensory materials.



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Play element 1: Pathways and clearings

Concept

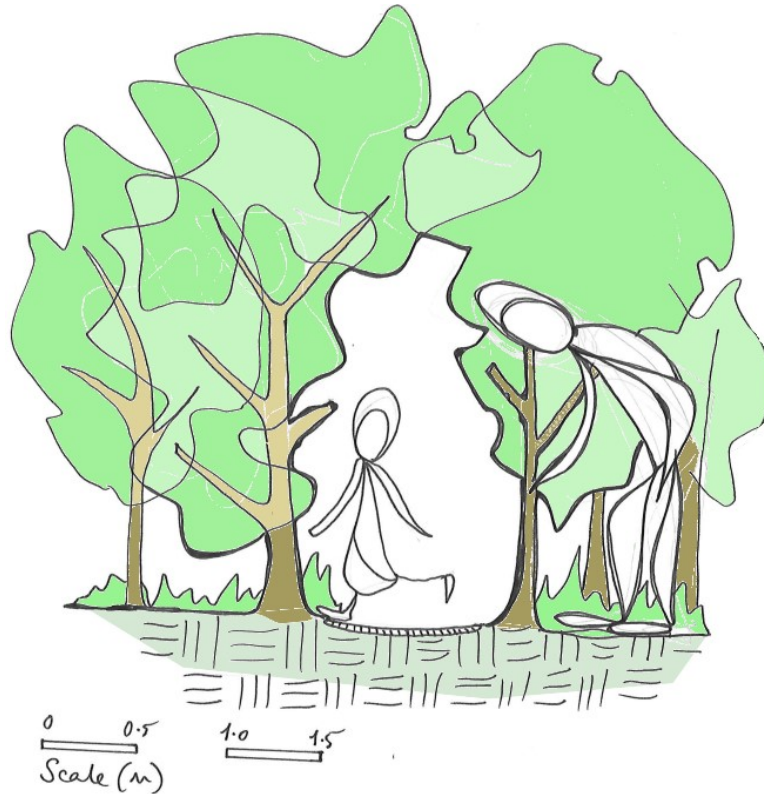
In key areas across the Explorer Zone we would work to open up existing thickets to become rich playscapes. Currently thickets are dense and prickly – making them inhospitable. We shall create ribbons of child-sized informal paths through them, that end in secret glades. Trees will be thinned to enable children to adventure through and openings created for den building. Areas which boarder onto deep water will be preserved and further work undertaken to lay hedges here or fill gaps with brash fences.

Construction

Remove saplings and young trees where required to form a narrow (approx 0.8m wide) pathway through the thickets. Trim back overhanging branches at a height of approx 1.5m. Pathway surface to be compacted and tamped manually where trees have been removed, the intent is for the path to be formed naturally by footfall rather than laying artificial surface. Create a central clearing by removing 6m diameter of scrub. In order to prevent access to ponds some hedge laying and brash fencing will be undertaken by the RSPB team where required.

Play value

Woodlands are a rich landscape. Woodland 'litter' provides the materials for imaginative shops and cafes. The changing foliage helps children to explore colours and textures. Their rich eco-systems allow children direct access wildlife. Fallen logs and branches stimulate jumping, clambering, running – all essential in the development of gross motor skills. In these wooded areas children will be able to play hide and seek, find quiet places to be alone, and wild areas in which to build dens.



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Construction notes for clearings and pathways:

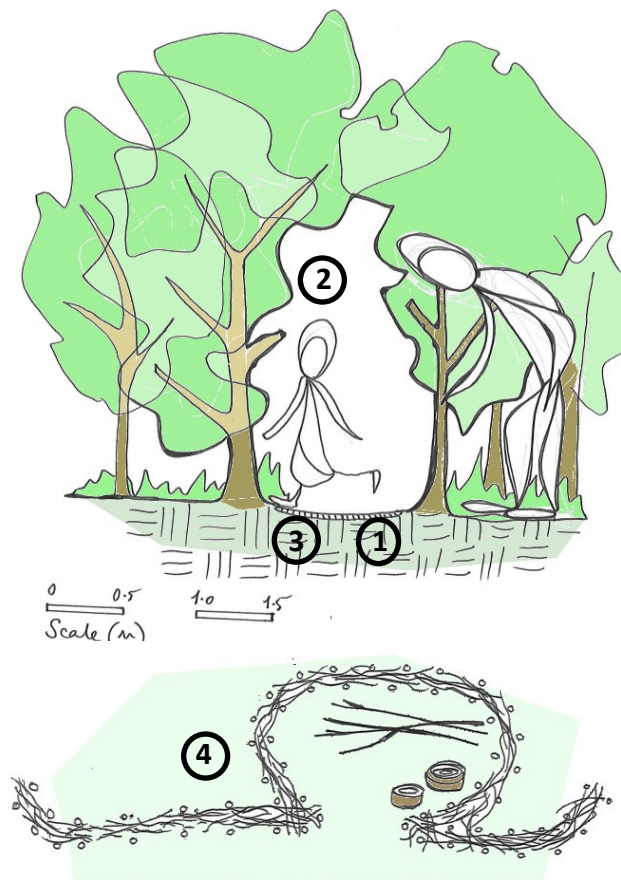
Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Pathways through thickets	Remove saplings and young trees where required to form a narrow (approx 0.8m wide) pathway through the thickets. Create a central clearing by removing 6m diameter of scrub.	
2.	Overhanging branches	Trim back overhanging branches at a height of approx 1.5m.	
3.	Pathways surface	Pathway surface to be compacted and tamped manually where trees have been removed	
4.	Brash fencing	75mm round tanalised fence posts. Driven 750mm into ground, in pairs 400mm apart, at 1m spacings. Posts pairs staggered in their rows. In filled with brash from site	

Management and maintenance notes for clearings and pathways:

Item	Description	Method/Frequency	Quantity/notes
A.	Clear pathway	Clear pathways manually of new growth, overhanging branches, litter, newly grown trip hazards. Monthly	
B.	Check fencing is sufficient to prevent access to ponds	Repair fencing, lay new hedging, refill brash. Monthly	



Play element 1: Pathways and clearings



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Play element 2: floating rope bridge

Concept

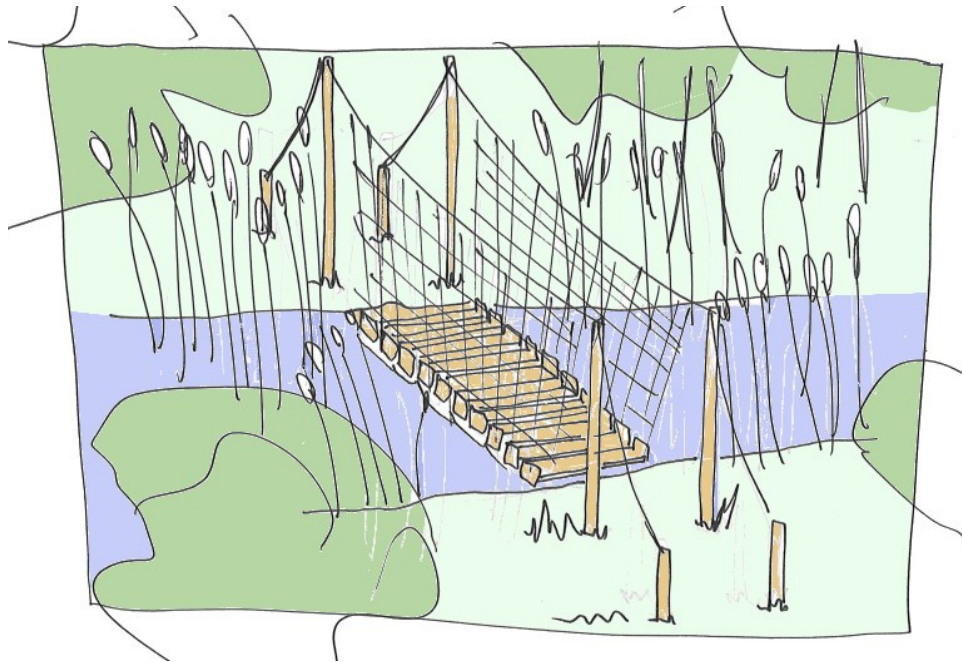
We will create a range of adventurous routes by which children can cross some of the water ways in the Explorer Zone. These will be both physical and metaphorical bridges into the more secret, children's areas of the site. Drawing inspiration from the bridges children might expect to find in a daring adventure story, we will create a floating rope bridge. Oak boards secured to an underwater pontoon will give movement and excitement—whilst the cargo net sides will provide safety and options for support.

Construction

2.5m long bridge, consisting of five Versadock pontoon floats linked together in a row. Each corner attached by stainless steel chain and 200mm ring to base of four 150mm square oak uprights driven into the ground (min 0.8m) protruding 1.2m in height. A 16mm hand rope will be attached from four oak anchor posts (driven min 0.8m into ground protruding 0.4m from base), over the taller uprights, crossing the water, and attached to similar uprights on the other side. Cargo net from hand rope attached between hand rope top and side of floats creates side of bridge. Deck created on top of pontoon floats with 10 no. 500mm wide 205x32mm oak boards with 20 mm black non slip strips every other board. 150mm 205x20mm uprights on each end attached by 50mm Timbalock structural woodscrews, attached to two 32x15 2.5m long lathes to create flexible wooden walkway, similar screws. Black geotextile material between floats and deck to conceal the grey plastic.

Play value

Bridges are crucial for allowing imaginative and real crossings into new worlds. Floating bridges will give a sense of being on the water and amongst the reeds.



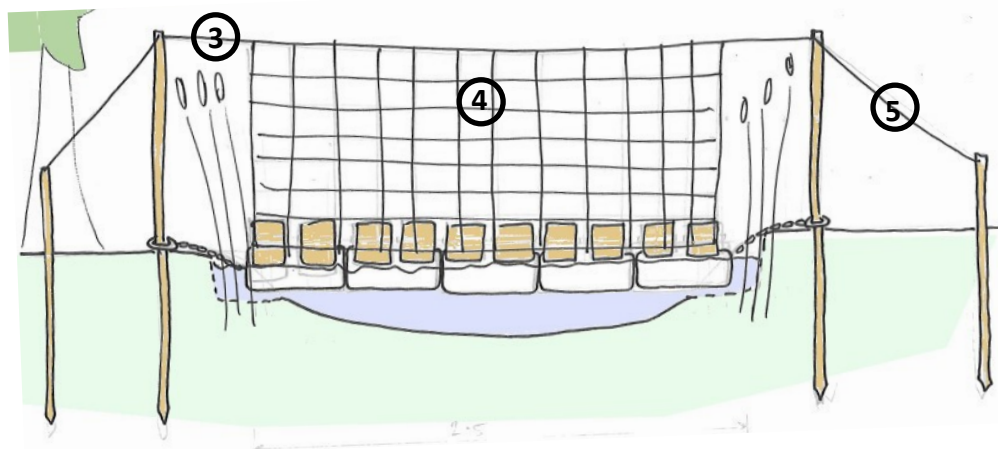
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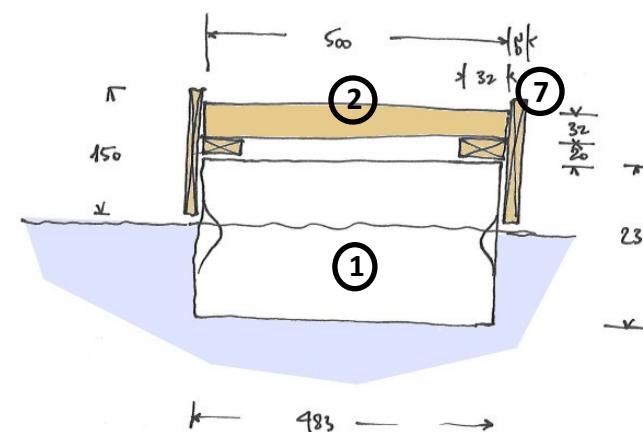
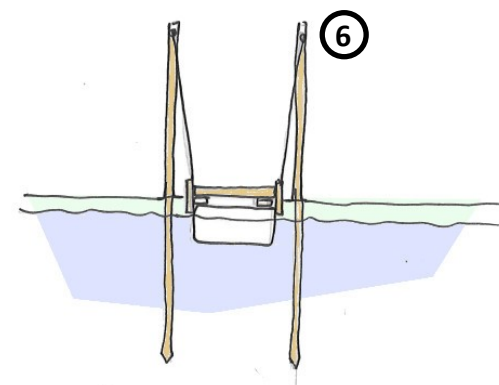
Construction notes for floating rope bridges:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity/notes
1	483mm square Versadock low float pontoon floats	Attach together with supplied fixings to create floating base for bridge	2 double floats; 1 single floats
2	Treads	500x205x32 oak boards	32 no.
3	Handrope	16mm synthetic hemp https://www.ropeandnetplay.com/polyhemp_rope_10m.html	12m running
4	Cargo nets	16mm Polyhemp Climbing Nets https://www.ropeandnetplay.com/16mm_polyhemp_climbing_nets.html	2 no. 900x2.5m
5	SS chain and hoop	For fixing pontoon to posts	4 no.
6	Oak posts	150mm square 2m oak posts	6 no.
7	Timbalock structural woodscrew	120mm Timbalock hex head timber fixings https://www.fastenmaster.com/products/timberlok-heavy-duty-wood-screw.html	100 no.
8	Non-slip strips	Every other tread	16 no.



Play element 2: floating rope bridge

0 0.5 1 1.5
Scale (m)



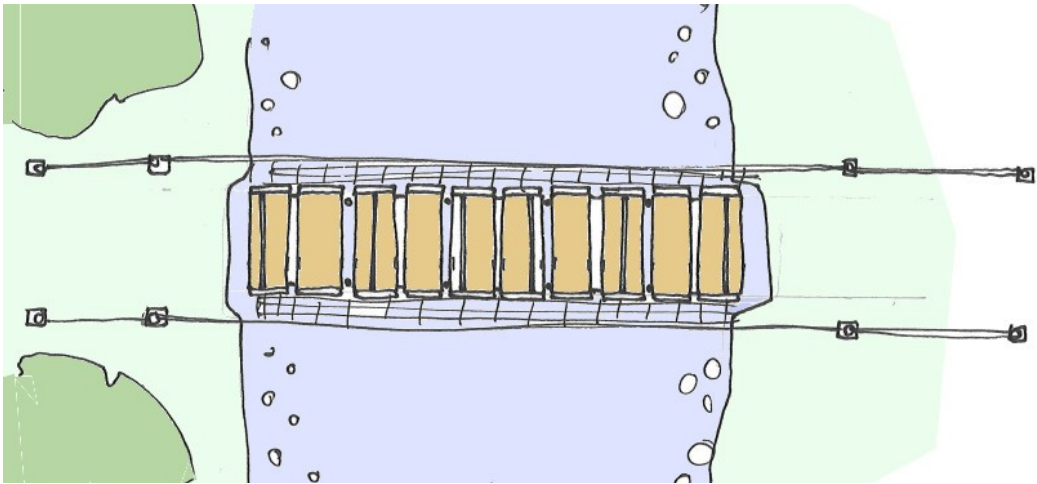
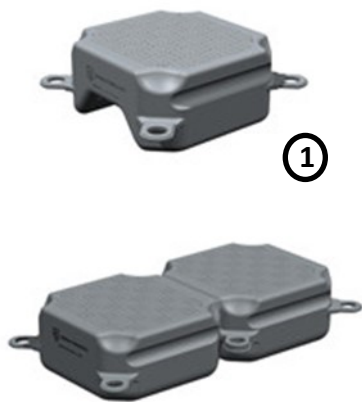
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Play element 2: floating rope bridge

Management and maintenance notes for floating rope bridge:

Item	Description	Method/Frequency	Quantity/notes
A.	Check pontoon ends are fixed to posts	Manual check. Monthly	
B.	Treads	Not slippery, loose; check non-slip strips are fixed. Monthly	
C.	Rope handrail	Rope securely attached to post ends; posts securely in ground. Monthly	
D.	Cargo net fixed to rope hand rail and to timber treads	Monthly	
E.	Versadocks are bouyant	Annually	



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Play element 3: wobbly wooden bridge

Concept

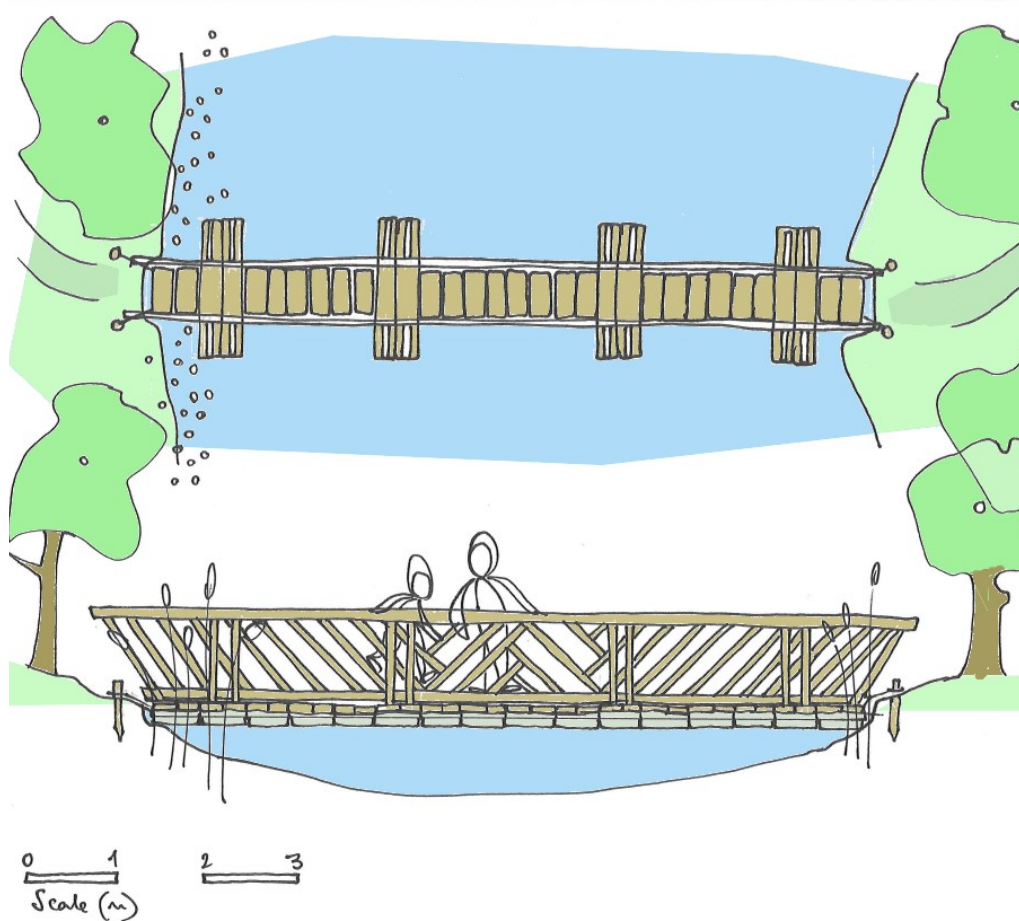
Spanning a wide channel in the Explorer Zone, we will create a bridge route to the lookout treehouse. Seemingly a normal wooden bridge, this will be a bridge with a difference. Built over a floating pontoon, the bridge will skim the surface of the water and will wobble and rock as children cross it. There will be a sense of a being on the deck of a large ship—and it will signal the beginning of exploration and discovery. The length of the bridge will allow children to 'stand' right in the middle of channel, with a 'birds eye' view of the reeds and water lapping at their wellies.

Construction

A 8m long floating wooden bridge. Versadock floating pontoon bases connected together in a line, four stabilisation points at equidistant spacings where the pontoon bases branch out at either side forming a base for diagonal supports for handrail. Continuous timber handrail formed from sections of approx. 3m long 70x45mm tanalised timber. Pontoon bases attached at each end to 100mm diameter timber posts with stainless steel hoop and chain. Structure fixed together using Timbalock structural woodscrews and stainless steel M10 bolts.

Play value

Being on the water in this way will bring the sensory nature of the site up close for children. Along with the other ways for crossing the water in this playable landscape, the bridges will act as markers on an exploratory journey – creating destinations and marking the entrance ways to adventure.



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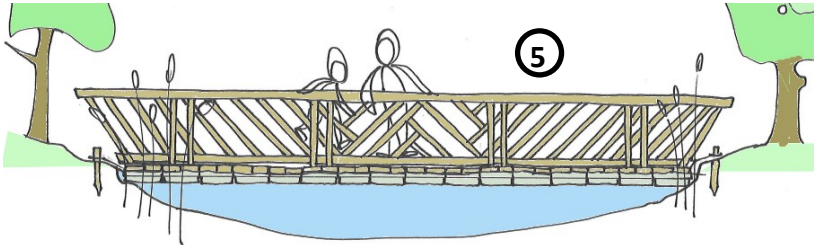
Play element 3: wobbly wooden bridge

Construction notes for wobbly wooden bridges:

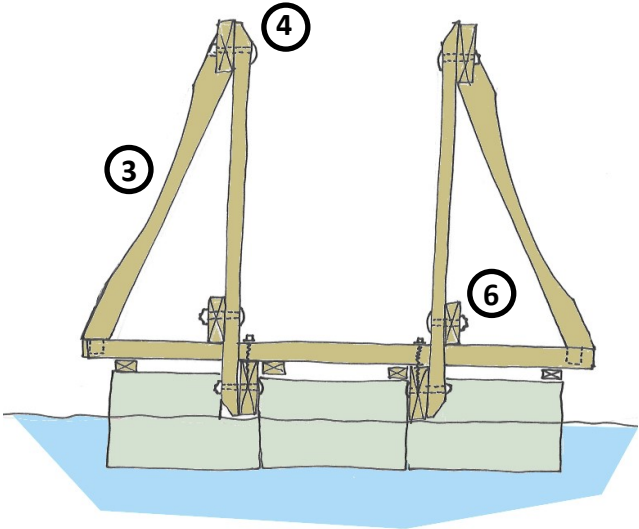
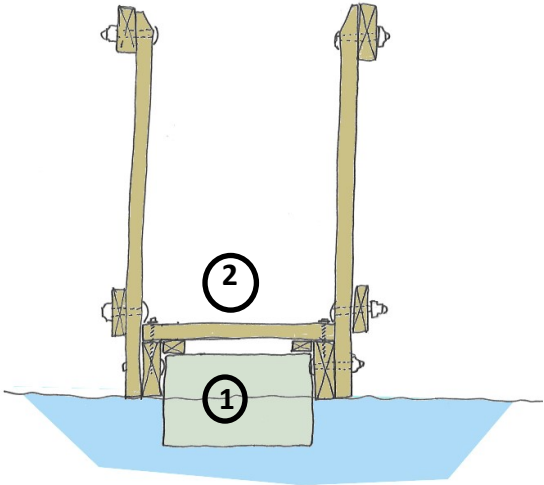
Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity/notes
1	Versadock low float pontoon dock	Attach together with supplied fixings to create floating base for bridge	4 double floats; 8 single floats
2	Treads and non -slip strips	500x205x32 oak boards Non stick treads every other tread	32 no. 16 no.
3	Lateral supports	3000x70x32 tanalised	12 no.
4	Vertical infill posts	900x100x21 tanalised	120 no.
5	Handrail	3000x70x45 oak	6 no.
6	Fixtures and fittings	SS bolts 150mm Chain and hoop for fixing pontoon to posts 1.2m 100xx diameter tanalised post 120mm Timbalock hex head timber fixings	36 no. 4 no. 4 no. 200 no.

Maintenance and management for wobbly wooden bridges: :

Item	Description	Method/Frequency	Quantity/notes
A.	Check pontoon ends are fixed to posts	Manual check. Repair as needed. Monthly.	
B.	Treads	Check these are not slippery or loose; check non-slip strips are fixed. Repair as needed. Monthly.	
C.	Handrail and uprights	Check these are not slippery or loose. Repair as needed. Monthly.	



0 1 2 3
Scale (m)



0 0.25 0.5 0.75
Scale (m)

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Play element 4: boulder stepping stones

Concept

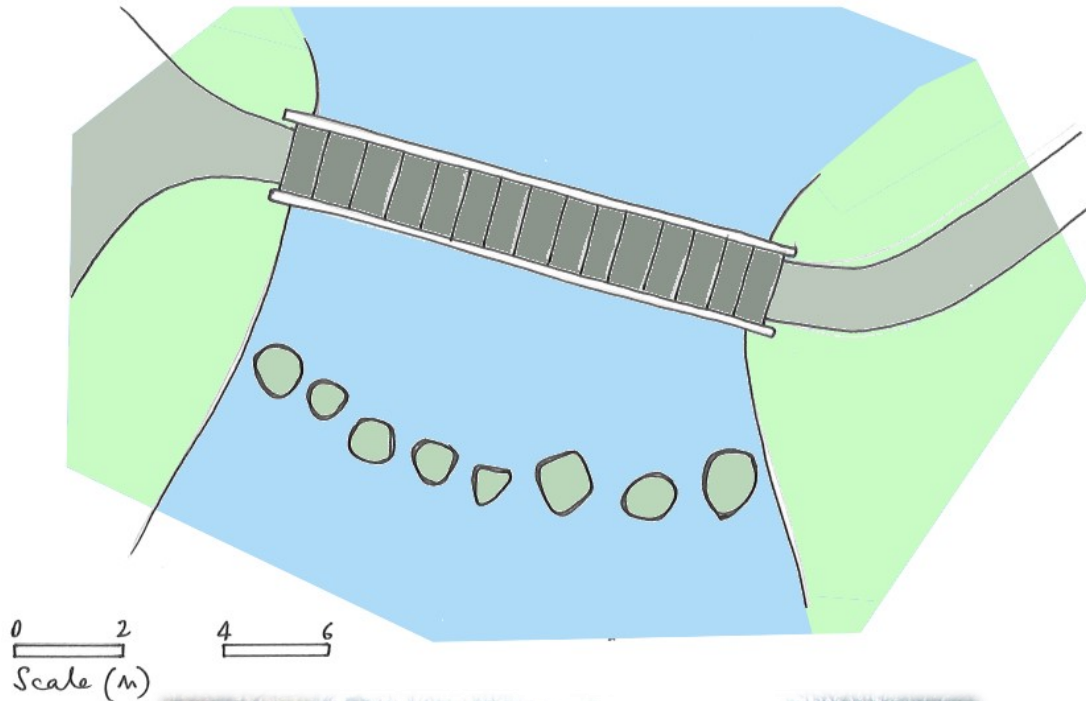
Developing the theme of adventurous water crossings on the site, we will add boulder stepping stones as an alternative to a wide walkway crossing the swampy area at the southern end of the Explorer Zone. This channel is ideal for stepping stones as the water is very shallow here—so children will be safe whether on or off the stepping stones!

Construction

Approx 8-10 flat topped boulders approx 0.8x0.6x0.5m laid roughly 300mm apart on 300mm compacted hardcore base protruding 400mm from base of pond.

Play value

Stepping stones provide a close up experience of crossing water—and one which balances challenge with safety in a stimulating way. The stones invite physicality—children will need to balance, stretch out, reach and jump as they cross the channel —so developing gross motor skills. The stones will also invite games , conversations and joy.



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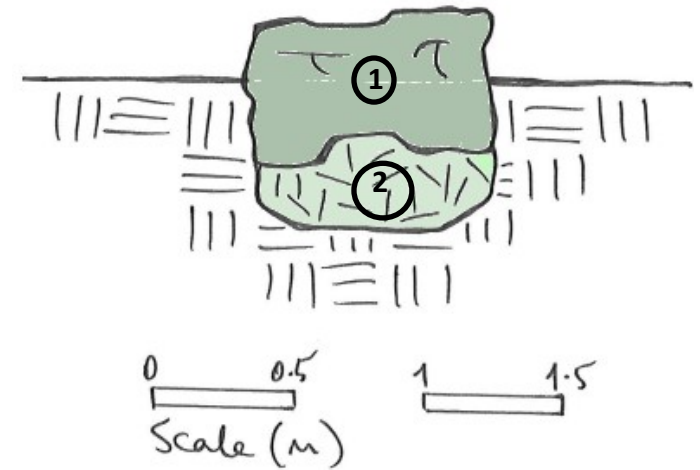
Play element 4: **boulder stepping stones**

Construction notes for stepping stones:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Boulder	0.8x0.6x0.5m flat top boulder stepping stone. No sharp edges.	10 no.
2.	Hardcore/MOT	MOT, 300mm depth, compacted manually	0.5T

Management and maintenance notes for stepping stones:

Item	Action	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Check for wobbly boulders	Rebed where necessary. Monthly.	



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Play element 5: lookout treehouse

Concept

As children follow ribboned paths through the thickets, a central glade will open up revealing a tall treehouse-like dwelling. This tall structure will be the focal point of 'island' in the Explorer Zone and has two platforms, a ladder and a bucket and pulley. Echoing both nests and bird hides, the structure will give an opportunity for children to create a lookout point in the landscape and get views over the wider reserve.

Construction

The tall treehouse is aimed for older and more adventurous children. Ladders give access to the first floor and a scramble hole access to the top floor. A natural fork frames the entrance and a bucket and hoist is attached at the rear. The sides are enclosed with cleft palings, gaps allowing for light and viewing at from both floors. Made by coppice worker and craftsman Mike Craswell, he will use traditional greenwood working techniques which uses the natural forms and strengths of the wood. Components will be cleft from the log and hand finished. circular shape for lookout tower. Dig shallow dish shape and fill with 300mm bark chippings as safety surface for tower

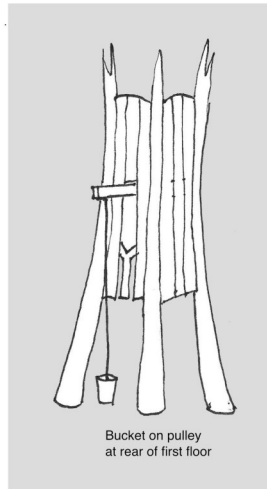
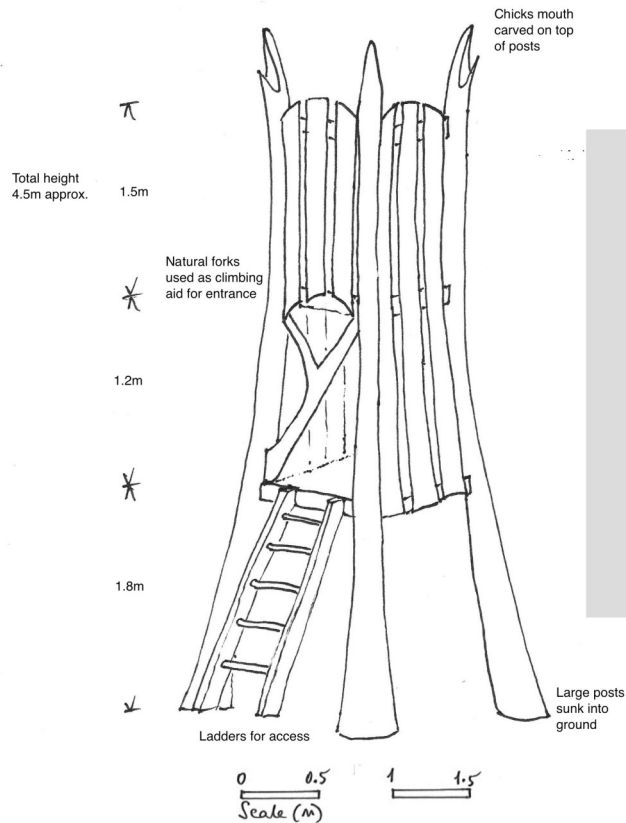
Play value

In a flat landscape, structures raised off the ground give height and the opportunity for views. Mimicking birds nesting in trees, children can enjoy the sensation of being above, stretching out over the water, being air borne and surrounded by leaves. Along with other dwellings placed strategically around the site, they also form the basis for imaginary games such as storming a castle, Vikings invasion, outlaws and pirates, marooned on a island, taming your dragon.

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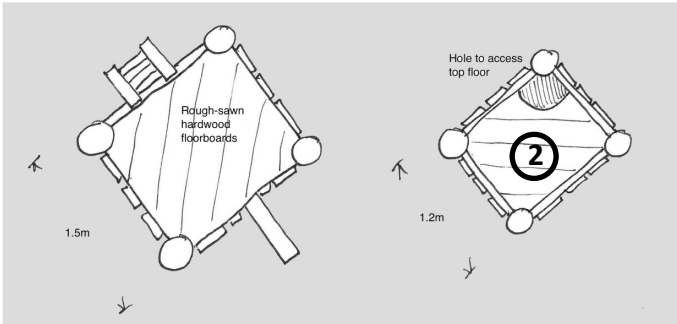
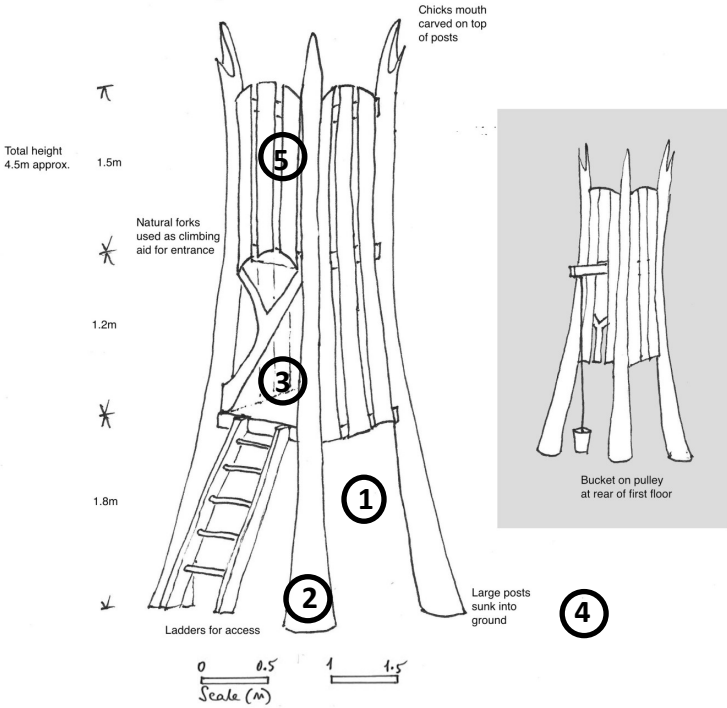
Play element 5: lookout treehouse

Construction notes for lookout treehouse:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	The entire structure will be made from either Oak or Sweet Chestnut or a combination of both.	Traditional timber-framing techniques will ensure stability and durability, with appropriate bracing, joints and stainless steel fixings used throughout. All gaps between components and potential fall-heights will be within Rospa guidelines. Rough-sawn floorboards provide grip where necessary and all other surfaces will be smooth and snag-free.	
2.	Four main posts	The posts will be tamped into the ground using natural stone to a depth of approximately 1m and are expected to last well beyond 20 years.	4
3.	Safety features	Ladders allow access to the first floor but are designed to exclude children under 3 years old due to potential fall-height (following Rospa guidelines). A natural fork doubles as both a structural brace and a hand-hold to aid with climbing.	
4.	Safety surface	A safety surface of 300mm bark chippings is installed in a 5m diameter circular area around the treehouse. FSC approved source	3 no. 1000l bag
5.	Sides	The sides are enclosed with cleft palings, gaps between each paling allow for light and viewing at from both floors.	

Maintenance and management lookout treehouse:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Check for loose timbers	Monthly. Repair or replace as necessary.	
B.	Check for slip, poke and trip hazards	Seasonal—Spring and Autumn. Check for leaf deposits (slips) or tree growth that might trip or poke. Remove.	
C.	Check safety surface	Check and refill safety surface with bark chippings or sand. Annually.	



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Play element 6: willow dwellings

Concept

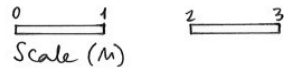
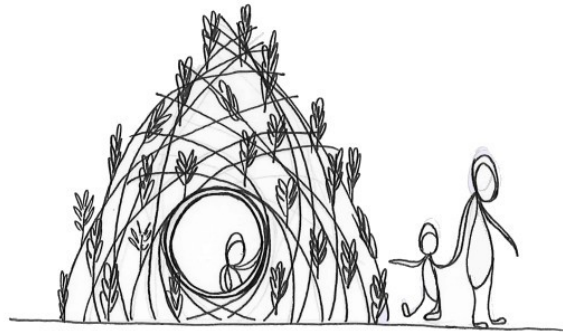
Threaded through the site, a skilled willow weaver, Joe Gregory from Creative with Nature, will create a scattered hamlet of 'houses'. Each dwelling will be different – but made from willow they will echo and draw inspiration from surrounding watery landscape. Some might emulate tepees, the homes of the Marsh Arab homes, nests, dreys or dens. They will allow children to inhabit the reserve—nestling amongst the thickets and reeds. In most cases they won't look like formal structures at all – but will signal to children that they can investigate these things and belong in this wild place.

Construction

Three live willow 'dwellings' will be woven, ready to be discovered in the Explorer Zone and one more created in the Secret Water zone. A stick nest will also greet visitors at the entrance to the reserve. Viminalis and Flanders Red willow will be used—giving variety through their graduated colourings of yellow, green and burnished red. Both species are robust and grow very long. Inspired in particular by the weaver bird nests, with organic round shapes, one or two openings and some with different chambers.

Play value

Structures that work as play houses give a clear play invitation to children around imaginative games and give chances to gain height, views, hide and to 'nest'. In conjunction with other play features, they act as markers on an exploratory journey around the site – creating as they go maps and routes to retrace again and again. They stimulate games and storytelling: homemaking, hideaway, reed dwellers, pixies.



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Play element 6: willow dwellings

Construction notes for willow dwellings:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Viminalis and Flanders Red willow 	The living individual willow rods will be pushed into the ground to a depth of 1ft - 2ft and carefully woven together so as not to kink and kill the rods. To make sure the structures can cope with heavy usage and to stop the willow coming undone, ties will be used to securely bind the structures at key points. These will need removing and possibly new ones adding as the willow grows. Special tree planting spades will be used to plant the willow.	200-300 willow rods per structure.

Maintenance and management notes for willow dwellings:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Willow is a tree and without regular management it will revert to a tree again fairly quickly.	The living willow nests will need pruning and re-weaving every winter or every two winters. Very long, thick rods will need pruning, some or all of the others can be woven into the structures, taking care not to kink the willow! The structures will really come alive with a couple of years retraining new growth. They will become more enclosed and hidden as the willow fills out.	
B.	Ties holding willow together	Consider taking ties off to let the willow expand as it matures and adding new ones at key points of structural integrity.	



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Play element 7: barefoot labyrinth

Concept

Barefoot trails are paths designed for walking or playing on in bare feet. These specially created footpaths give people of all ages the opportunity to feel the ground beneath their feet, covered in a range of tactile materials. On the Old Moor barefoot trail, feet will be able to experience a range of textures including smooth slate, tickly fir cones, rough bark and soft sand. Making it extra special, the trail will be formed in the shape of a labyrinth. In Europe, the Celts revered labyrinths and frequently built them in natural settings. Sacred dances would be performed in them to celebrate key points in the annual natural cycle of seasons, solstices and equinoxes. Many traditions see walking or dancing on a labyrinth as a chance to give thanks, make a wish, and reflect on our connection with the natural world.

Construction

6m wide circle marked out as the labyrinth. 0.5m deep by 0.3m wide trench dug, reclaimed stone roofing slates laid in concrete to mark out the maze, 300mm proud of surrounding levels. Maze filled with a variety of tactile surfaces, including rounded bark topped timber. 5 of 120mm square timber posts to various heights between 0.5-1m heights driven 0.8m into ground mark the entrance, wall ends and centre.

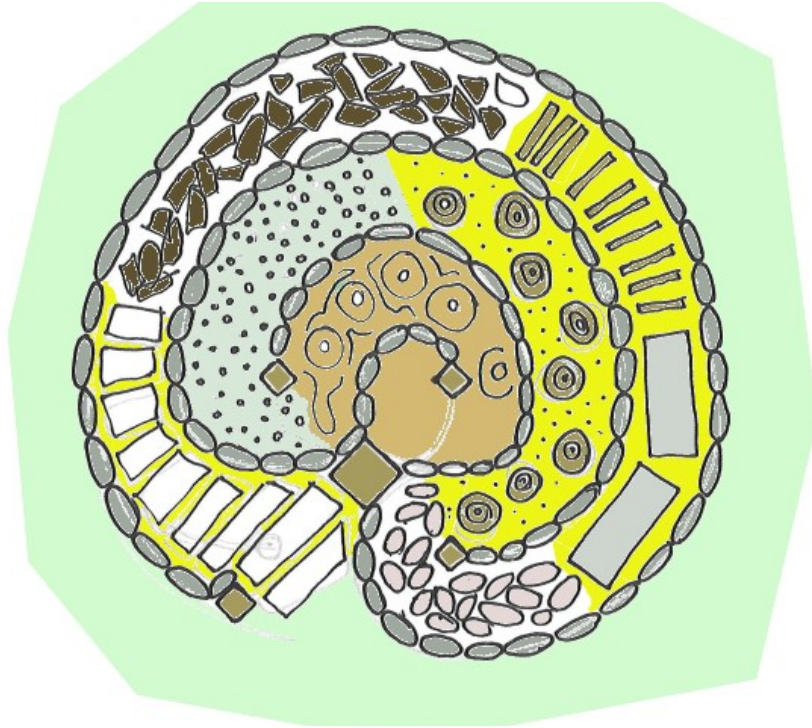
Play value

Walking barefoot, sometimes called earthing, is the process of walking on natural substances like grass, sand and mud. Walking and engaging in light athletic activities with bare soles

Old Moor Family Meadow Zone

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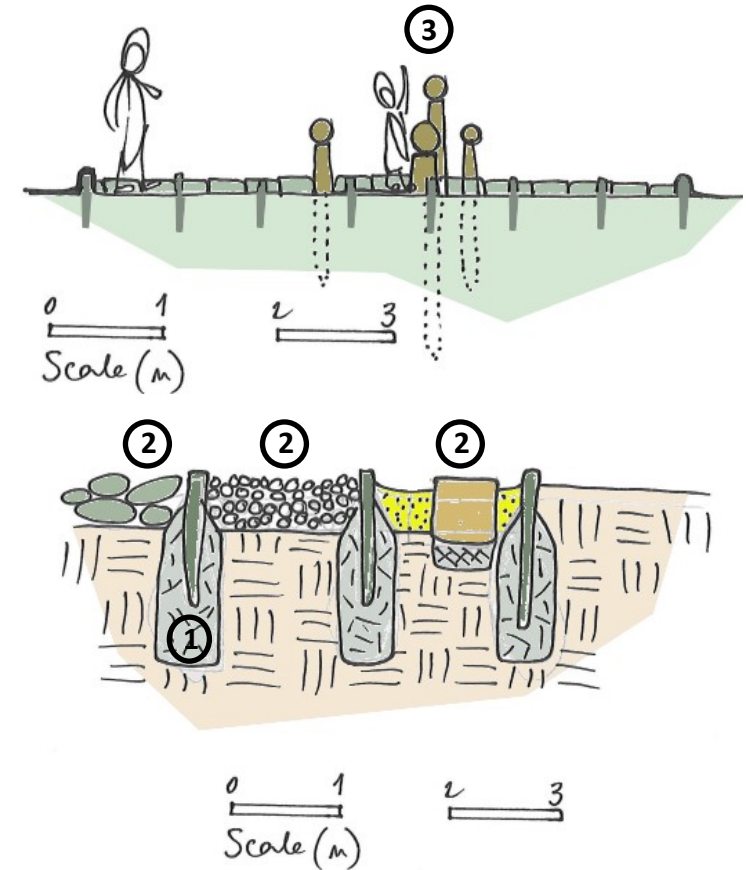
Play element 7: barefoot labyrinth

Construction notes for barefoot labyrinth:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Reclaimed stone roofing slates	Approx 0.8	100 no.
2.	Infill to create barefoot experience	Fill with a variety of sensory pathing materials: sand, bark chippings, pea gravel, mud, timber log rounds.	Various
3.	Posts to mark entrance and exit and centre point	120mm square oak 2m long	5 no.

Management and maintenance notes for barefoot labyrinth:

Item	Action	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Stone edgings and posts	Check they are firmly embedded, not wobbling. Monthly.	
B.	Rounded bark timber	Check for splinters, sharp edgings. Refill sand.	
C.	Clean whole site of litter	Daily.	
D.	Infill	Refill as required.	



Old Moor Family Meadow Zone

Client: RSPB Old Moor Date: 06/11/2018 Drawing No: XXX
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