

# Tithebarn new play area

## Survey report

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### 1. Summary

East Devon District Council ran a community survey to inform the design of a new play area at **Tithebarn**, to be delivered by **Persimmon Homes**. Engagement was strong, with respondents clearly identifying which play types and equipment matter most. **Swinging** emerged as the top-priority activity, followed by **climbing** and **sliding**. People showed a clear preference for large, high-play-value equipment, especially **two-tower climbing units** and **swing combinations**.

Overall sentiment toward the proposed options was highly positive, with over **75%** of respondents reporting they were satisfied or happy. Free-text feedback emphasised demand for **zip wires**, **trampolines**, **bigger slides**, and features for **older children and teenagers**, including skate or bike facilities. Respondents also highlighted the importance of **inclusive and accessible design**, **sensory play**, and practical amenities such as **seating**, **shelter**, **bins**, and **all-weather surfacing**.

The report recommends prioritising swinging and climbing, adding more challenging equipment for older users, ensuring accessibility throughout, supporting social/group play, and including essential supporting infrastructure. Persimmon Homes will now refine the design using this feedback to ensure the final scheme reflects community priorities.

## 2. Survey goals and methodology

The purpose of the survey was to gather community input to help inform the development of a new play area to be delivered by Persimmon Homes as part of the Ashworth Place development. The survey aimed to provide residents and stakeholders with an opportunity to suggest what features should be included in the play area and to comment on potential play equipment options.

The survey was delivered by East Devon District Council using an online survey platform. It was open from 6 January closing at 5pm on 3 February, and was accessible to residents, families and other interested parties.

The survey collected both structured responses and free-text comments, allowing participants to provide specific preferences as well as more detailed suggestions. All responses were recorded digitally and collated for review to support the next stages of project development.

## 3. Survey process

The survey was hosted on the online Commonplace platform and promoted through a range of communication channels to maximise participation. These included a direct email issued via Commonplace to subscribers on the mailing list, posts across the Council's social media platforms, and promotion through the community engagement and residents' newsletter.

Following the close of the survey, all submissions were collated and reviewed to support analysis and reporting, enabling the identification of recurring issues and areas raised by respondents.

## 4. Data analysis

The survey received 142 contributions from the public over the survey period. The survey was completed by the public and those in the Tithebarn area.

### 4.1 Please rank the types of play that are most important to you / your child?

There were 134 contributions to this question.

*Table 1. Ranked Play Types – Summary Table*

<b>Play Type</b>	<b>Overall Position in Preferences</b>	<b>Key Rank Peaks (Votes &amp; %)</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Swinging	Clear first choice / top priority	Rank 1: 77 votes (57.5%) • Rank 2: 21 votes (15.7%)	Dominant top-rank choice, far ahead of other play types. Even when not picked first, it is still commonly chosen second, confirming swinging as the core priority.
Climbing	Strong upper-rank preference (2nd tier)	Rank 1: 18 votes (13.4%) • Rank 2: 44 votes (32.8%) • Rank 3: 40 votes (29.9%)	Widely liked and often placed just behind the top choice. Most respondents see it as very important, typically in the top three preferences.
Sliding	Strong upper-rank preference (2nd tier)	Rank 1: 19 votes (14.2%) • Rank 2: 44 votes (32.8%)	Mirrors climbing's pattern – highly valued but more often chosen as a second preference than the single highest priority.
Spinning	Upper-middle of the rankings	Rank 4: 41 votes (30.6%) • Rank 5: 32 votes (23.9%)	Often chosen in the middle of people's lists. Important to many, but typically not a top-three priority.
Hanging	Mixed, mainly middle-ranked	Rank 3: 28 votes (20.9%) • Rank 6: 24 votes (17.9%) • Rank 8: 21 votes (15.7%)	Seen as meaningful by some (with a small peak around Rank 3) but quite scattered across the middle and lower ranks, suggesting it's not a consistent "must have".
Rotating	Lower-middle / supporting feature	Rank 5: 30 votes (22.4%) • Rank 6: 30 votes (22.4%)	Generally pushed towards the lower half of rankings and treated as an add-on rather than a headline feature.
Agility	Clearly low priority	Rank 7: 51 votes (38.1%) • Rank 8: 23 votes (17.2%)	Concentrated near the bottom of the rankings, indicating that compared with other play types, agility

			elements are usually seen as less important.
Balancing	Lowest priority overall	Rank 8: 54 votes (40.3%)	Most frequently ranked last, with the largest single total in the lowest rank. Regularly treated as the least important option.
Other	Minimal demand	Never exceeds 8 votes (6.0%) at any rank	Attracted relatively few selections at any rank, suggesting limited appetite for alternatives outside the main listed play types.

Figure 1 illustrates the play types and which respondents selected as most important.

Overall, the results show a strong top-end preference for swinging, with climbing and sliding consistently occupying the next tier of priority. A second layer of features (notably spinning and hanging) appear to add variety and play value, while agility and balancing were more often positioned towards the bottom of respondents' ranking choices.

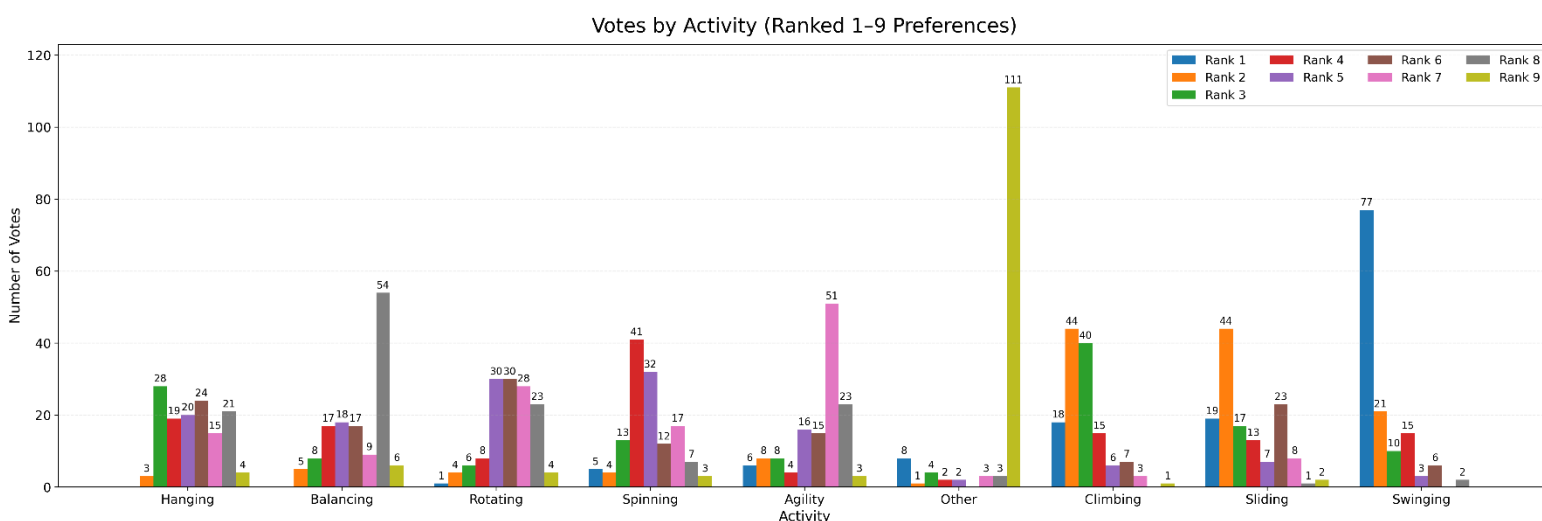


Figure 1: Public opinion on what type of play they or their child most want to be included in the upgraded play area.

Respondents who selected “Other” are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary Table of “Other” Responses by Popularity

Popularity Tier	Theme / Category	Count	Example Mentions
High	Bouncing / trampoline-type activities	7	“Trampoline in the ground”, “bouncing (trampolining)”, “jumping (trampoline)”
High	Zip lines	4	“Zip line” (multiple similar phrasings)

High	Skating / skate park / skate & bike ramps	5	“Skate Park”, “skating-skating park”, “pump track”, “for age 8+ skate ramps”
High	Sports / active games	5	“Basketball hoop”, “sporting cage”, “racket-sport skills”, “football or tennis courts”
Medium	Sensory & exploratory play	4 + 1 sandpit	“Sensory (sand, water)”, “musical or busy boards”, “sensory educational activities”, “sandpit”
Medium	Accessibility / inclusion	2 + 1 all-ages frame	“Accessible equipment for wheelchairs”, “disabled access equipment”, “climbing

## 4.2 What equipment would you like to see in the play area?

There were 142 contributions to this question.

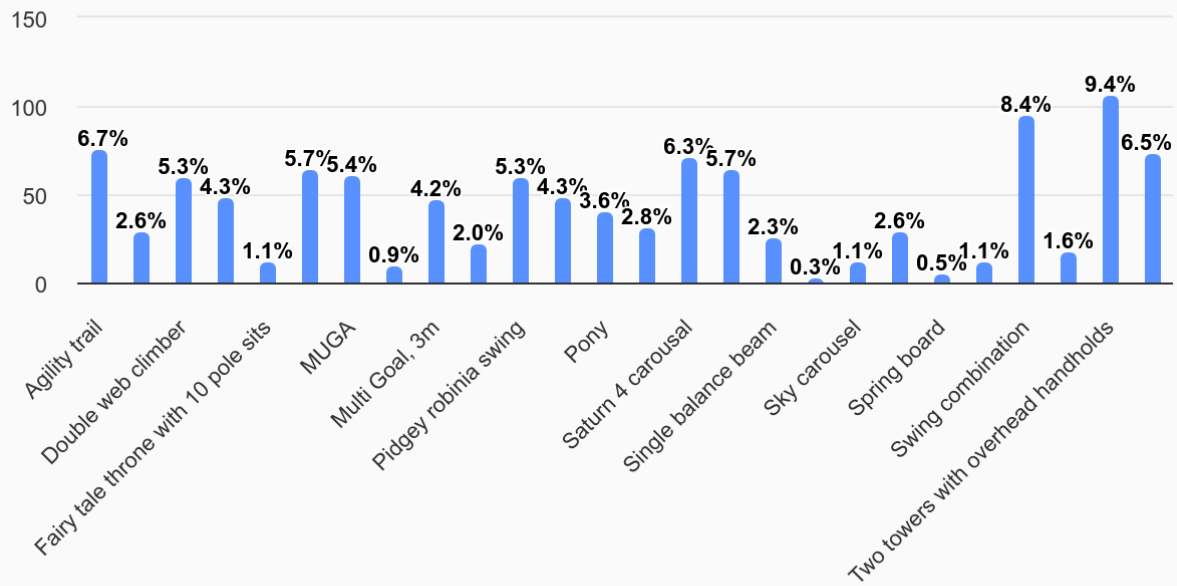
Figure 2 shows what equipment was most popular. Two towers with overhead handholds were the most popular option, receiving 107 selections (9.4%). Swing combination followed closely with 95 selections (8.4%), showing the strongest overall preference was for large, multi-user “destination” equipment.

A second tier of widely supported choices included Agility trail with 76 selections (6.7%), Wheelchair Carousel with 74 selections (6.5%), and Saturn 4 carousel with 72 selections (6.3%), indicating strong demand for a mix of active play and inclusive equipment.

Several further items were consistently selected but at a slightly lower level, including Jigglypuff robinia net climber and Seesaw (2 persons) with 65 selections each (5.7%), plus MUGA with 61 selections (5.4%) and Double web climber and Pidgey robinia swing with 60 selections each (5.3%).

At the lower end, Springboard (6 selections, 0.5%) and Sitting pole (3 selections, 0.3%) were rarely chosen, alongside a small group on 1.1% each (Fairy tale throne with 10 pole sits, Sky carousel, and Surprise Basket, all 12–13 selections), suggesting these features were generally not prioritised within respondents’ top eight.

## 2. What equipment would you like to see in the play area? Select your top 8



All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

Figure 2: Preferred play equipment selections

### 4.3 How do you / your child feel about the equipment selection?

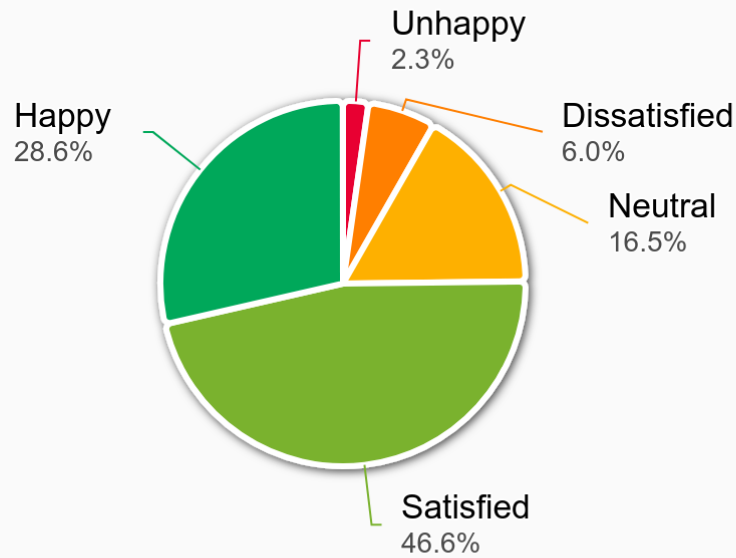
There were 133 contributions to this question.

Figure three represents respondents feeling on the equipment selection provided in the survey. Most respondents felt positively about the proposed equipment selection. Satisfied was the largest response at 46.6%, followed by Happy at 28.6%, meaning 75.2% of respondents expressed a positive view overall.

A further 16.5% selected Neutral, suggesting a smaller group were undecided or felt the selection was acceptable but not a strong preference.

Negative feedback was limited. 6.0% reported being Dissatisfied and 2.3% Unhappy, meaning only 8.3% expressed an unfavourable view of the equipment selection.

### 3. How do you / your child feel about the equipment selection?



All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

Figure 3: Public opinion on the equipment being offered to be installed in the park

#### 4.4 Please suggest any other types of equipment you would like to see in the park?

The free-text responses demonstrate clear and repeated priorities for the type of equipment residents would like to see included in the play area. Many respondents suggested multiple items within a single response.

Table 3. Summary of Free-Text Response Themes and Mentions

Category	Theme / Item	Number of Mentions	Notes / Examples
High-energy equipment	Slides	17	Includes requests for <i>bigger / longer</i> slides
High-energy equipment	Trampolines (incl. in-ground)	17	Repeated calls for in-ground trampolines
High-energy equipment	Zip line / zip wire	15	Often described as missing from local parks
High-energy equipment	Sand pits	5	Part of sensory play requests
High-energy equipment	Water play / splash pad	4	Mentioned alongside sand and sensory features

Older children / wheeled sports	Skate Park / skate ramps	14	Commonly linked to older children & teens
Older children / wheeled sports	Bike / BMX / ramps	12	Often paired with calls for a wheeled-sports area
Older children / wheeled sports	Pump track / pump park	4	Usually mentioned alongside skate/BMX
Inclusive / imaginative / supportive features	Imaginative play (trains, pirate ships, houses, treehouses)	12	Clear desire for themed & creative play
Inclusive features	Accessibility / disability-friendly equipment	6	Includes wheelchair-accessible

## Summary

Respondents most frequently asked for high-energy, high-play-value equipment, with the strongest repeated themes being slides, in-ground trampolines, and a zip line/zip wire. There was also a clear call for facilities for older children and teenagers, particularly a skate park/skate ramps and bike/BMX-style tracks or ramps, often linked to reducing “samey” provision and adding variety compared with nearby parks. Alongside this, respondents highlighted the importance of inclusive and accessible equipment (including disability-friendly provision), plus imaginative and sensory play features (such as themed structures, sensory/musical items, and equipment supporting self-regulation). Practical supporting features such as seating, shelter, and picnic space were also mentioned, suggesting people want a space families can use for longer periods.

## 4.5 Any additional requirements you would like included in the new design?

### All-weather surfacing and comfort features

- Seating and picnic provision was the most consistent design requirement, with 17 mentions calling for benches, picnic tables, covered seating and/or shade so families can stay longer and supervise comfortably.
- All-weather surfacing and “no mud” solutions were raised very frequently (8 mentions), including requests for rubber surfacing, soft/bouncy flooring, improved drainage, and avoiding grass/mud so the park stays usable year-round.
- Bins and waste facilities were a recurring practical request (5 mentions), including calls for recycling/waste bins to keep the site clean and manageable during busy periods.

### Inclusive design and age-appropriate provision

- Provision for different age groups, including older children, appeared strongly (6 mentions), with requests for clear separation or balance between younger and older zones and equipment that supports independent play.
- Accessibility and SEND-friendly design were highlighted repeatedly (3 mentions), including wheelchair-friendly equipment and an accessible changing space with an adult-sized bed and hoist, alongside sensory/quiet space requests.
- Baby/toddler-friendly details were specified (3 mentions), particularly around baby swings (including having more than one) and easier-access features for younger children.

### **Activity mix, safety and supporting facilities**

- Wheeled-sports infrastructure was requested (4 mentions), including skate parks/ramps and pump track/bike track suggestions to broaden appeal for older children and teens.
- Ball-sport and fitness facilities were also raised (4 mentions), including football/basketball (and occasional tennis) provision to add variety and encourage active use.
- Safety and enclosure measures were mentioned (2 mentions), including fencing the whole area and creating safer routes/spaces away from traffic for scooters/trikes and supervised movement.

## **5. Key findings**

1. There is a clear hierarchy of play preferences, with swinging and climbing consistently identified as the most important types of play to be included in the new play area.
2. Respondents showed a strong preference for traditional and shared play equipment, particularly swings, slides and seesaws, supported by complementary features that encourage balance, agility and coordination.
3. Overall views on the proposed equipment selection were broadly positive or neutral, indicating general acceptance of the proposals, alongside an expectation that the final design could be refined further.
4. Free-text feedback highlighted strong demand for more adventurous and physically challenging equipment, particularly zip wires, trampolines, climbing structures and monkey bars, to extend the play value of the site.
5. There was a consistent call for the play area to better cater for older children and teenagers, with requests for facilities such as skate provision, sports features and higher or more challenging equipment.
6. Respondents emphasised the importance of inclusive and accessible design, including provision for disabled children and equipment suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities.
7. Supporting features such as seating, bins, water points and cycle parking were seen as important to encourage longer visits and make the space more usable for families and carers.

## 6. Recommendations

### 1. Provide a balanced range of core play equipment

The play area should prioritise the inclusion of swinging and climbing equipment, reflecting their consistent identification as the most important play types. These elements should form the core of the design, supported by complementary features that encourage balance, agility and coordination.

### 2. Include challenging features for older children

To ensure the play area meets the needs of a wider age range, the design should incorporate more adventurous and physically challenging equipment suitable for older children and teenagers. Features such as zip wires, trampolines, higher climbing structures and, where feasible, skate or sports-related provision should be considered to prevent the space being quickly outgrown.

### 3. Ensure inclusive and accessible design

Accessibility should be embedded throughout the design process, with consideration given to inclusive equipment that can be used by children of different abilities. This includes wheelchair-accessible features, clear access routes and a layout that supports safe and inclusive play for all users.

### 4. Support social and shared play

The inclusion of equipment that encourages social interaction and shared play, such as group swings, seesaws and imaginative play structures, should be prioritised to promote cooperative play and longer engagement. Incorporate supporting infrastructure The final design should include appropriate supporting features such as seating, picnic areas, bins, cycle parking and water points. These elements will help create a comfortable and practical environment for families, carers and visitors, encouraging longer visits and wider community use.

### 5. Allow flexibility for design refinement

Given the broadly positive but partly neutral response to the proposed equipment selection, there is an opportunity to refine and enhance the design as it progresses. Community feedback should continue to inform decisions to ensure the final play area reflects local priorities and delivers a high-quality, long-lasting facility.

## 7. Next steps

The developer will review the feedback received and take it into account when confirming the final proposals. They will consider the community's expressed preferences and the options that attracted the highest levels of support through the survey. To reflect the survey findings, the developer has been advised to proceed with the option that incorporates all the most popular items identified by respondents. This approach best aligns the proposed scheme with community priorities and provides a clear response to the key themes emerging from the survey.