

# Designing with Children

## Wisbech Playground

Snug and Outdoor's work, led by Hattie and Tim Coppard, is primarily focused on 'making creative playgrounds', often carried out via facilitation and mediation for and between clients and architects. The work almost always uses play and embodied design as tools to physically engage children and young people in aspects of spatial design processes. Wisbech Adventure Playground, also known as The Spinney, was completed in 2011. Snug and Outdoor collaborated with Sutcliffe Play in the design process for this Cambridgeshire County Council project.

### Motivation

Snug and Outdoor's ethos is one in which their work with children is seen as: *'creative consultation and design process that opens up new possibilities and leads to original and welcoming play environments'*. Both the Snug and Outdoor team's work and the products they create illustrate that they value the importance and ability of children to have some control over how they shape their play environments; both during a design process and as an on-going state of play. Hattie Coppard of Snug and Outdoor states that their work uses *'a variety of techniques that encourage children to think beyond their initial assumptions and imagine something new. We frequently work with writers and artists and many projects involve the use of large-scale objects, music, physical interventions. The aim is to develop an understanding of what children want in order that something really engaging and exciting can be created'*.

### Children's involvement

Using methods of modelling and poetry workshops, secondary and primary school children (approximately 50 of each) were included in the design of this playground, in roles of creative inspirers, as expert consultants and as placemakers. As placemakers, children in Wisbech are able to be part of an ongoing design process within the playground as they can take parts of the 'self design system' to re-work their lay out and alter structures for different play-uses. In addition, Snug and Outdoor had two meetings with staff and pupils at a local special

#### What

Playground

#### Where

Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom

#### Age

1-18

#### Group Size

200+

#### Project Stage

Design Development, In Use

#### Children's Roles

Clients, Creative Inspirers, Expert Consultants, Placemakers

#### Timescale

6 workshops and a fun day

#### Partners

Hattie Coppard (Designer)  
Tim Coppard (Designer)  
Snug and Outdoor (Playground design)  
Cambridgeshire County Council (Funder)  
Sutcliffe Play (Play equipment manufacturer)  
Children from Wisbech (Participants)

school.

Children were also invited to act in client-roles – outside formal education settings – giving feedback upon designs as they developed. A local family ‘play day’ on the proposed site provided opportunities for hundreds of children, from babies up to 18 year olds, and their families to respond to early designs, through traditional comment upon design drawings and through play activities held outdoors.

## Outputs and outcomes

The playground at Wisbech is also one which affords children opportunities to re-model and re-design aspects of the play area as a grid of wooden posts, interchangeable decks with attachments and Velcro-fastened mesh fabric floors can all be moved about by children on a daily basis.

## Resources

Snug and Outdoor ‘Wisbech Adventure Playground’

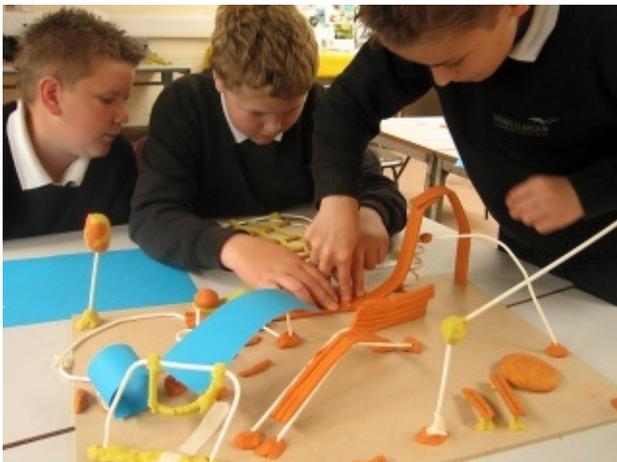
<http://www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk/publicspace/wisbech1.html> (accessed 26 March 2013).

Snug and Outdoor <http://www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk/index.html> (accessed 25 March 2013).

The Spinney ‘Wisbech Adventure Playground Playground’

<http://www.wisbechadventureplay.net/>(accessed 25 March 2013).

Sutcliffe Play <http://www.sutcliffeplay.co.uk/case-study/unique-self-build-system-offers-endless-play-opportunities/> (accessed 25 March 2013).



Children model design possibilities for Wisbech Playground.  
Courtesy of Snug & Outdoor



Wisbech Adventure Playground. Courtesy: Sutcliffe Play  
(main contractor and designer) and Snug & Outdoor  
(additional play and design)





*Children model design possibilities for Wisbech Playground.  
Courtesy: Snug & Outdoor*