



Newham London

# Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide





## Foreword

This design guide is intended to support the effective planning, implementation and management of high quality environmental improvement projects. It will be used to inform the renewal and refurbishment of key parks and open spaces throughout the borough which have been selected on the basis of their current condition, and their potential to benefit local communities and contribute to the improvement of the borough's environmental quality.

This guide will help Newham Council to deliver a step change improvement of its parks and open spaces and ensure that the quality of the environment is central to the intended infrastructure improvements in the lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games and beyond.

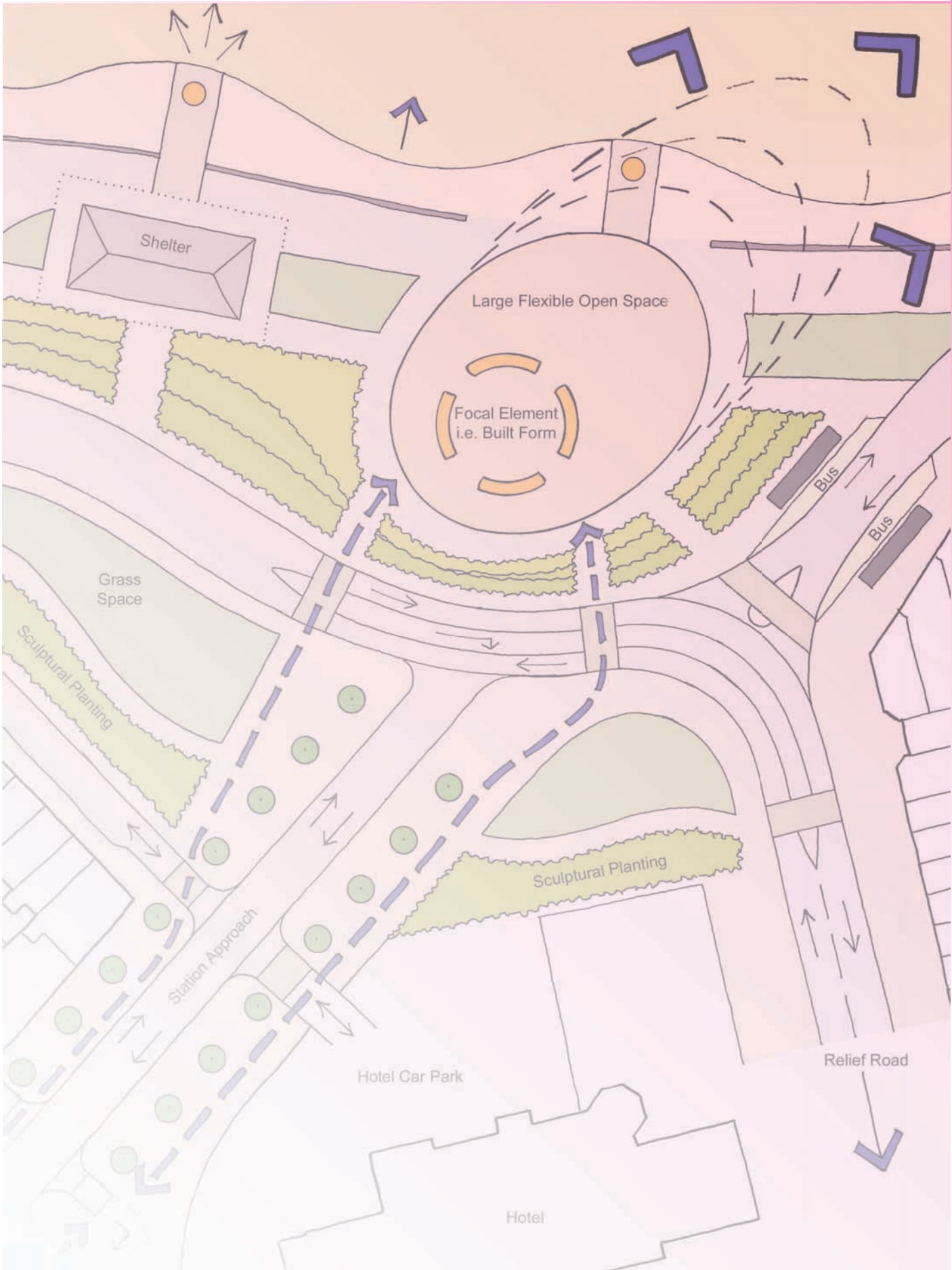


*Central Park Improvement Masterplan. Central Park is one of the Newham parks and open spaces identified for major improvement*





# Introduction



## Introduction

This guide is intended for all those directly or indirectly involved with the planning, design and implementation of physical change within our parks and open spaces as well as their long term management. It will be used by council officers to inform the improvement of sites, features and facilities and ensure that the quality of parks and open spaces is central to the Council's intended public realm infrastructure improvements in the lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games.

It will:

- Set high design standards for all improvement works and enable a co-ordinated approach to be achieved across all parks and open spaces
- Inform all officers acting as clients about design considerations to be incorporated in a brief and throughout the design process
- Guide design teams engaged to design integrated schemes for the refurbishment or renewal of existing parks and open spaces
- Enable those responsible for parks and open spaces management to appreciate how design should contribute to raising quality whilst being realistic about future maintenance provision
- Enable local people and stakeholders to appreciate considerations associated with the design of parks and open spaces
- Enable decision-makers to appreciate the factors that must come together to achieve best design practice
- Increase awareness, of long-term design and management considerations, with a specific view to their sustainability



*Recent landscape improvements at Newham's Memorial Recreation Ground*

# Introduction

## Design Guide Structure

Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide consists of a suite of three complimentary guidance documents which cover different aspects of park and open space renewal and refurbishment.

## Masterplanning

Design guidance for major and whole site renewal of Newham's parks and open spaces.



**Design Guidance - Master Planning**  
Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

## Play and Youth

Design guidance for the creation of children's play spaces and outdoor recreational spaces for young people within Newham.



**Design Guidance - Play & Youth Space**  
Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

## Neighbourhood Greens

Design guidance for the improvement of open spaces between 0.5Ha and 1.0Ha across Newham, with an emphasis placed on serving the immediate community.

The three documents can be read collectively as one whole guide, or used as individual stand alone reference documents.



**Design Guidance - Neighbourhood Greens**  
Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

## References

The reference section contains details of useful reference documents and web sites to aid the design and refurbishment of parks and open spaces.



## Introduction

The London Borough of Newham lies 3 miles from the City of London just north of the River Thames in the heart of East London. It is one of London's best connected boroughs and lies at the centre of London's plans for the 2012 Olympic Games.

### Present Newham

Newham has one of the lowest total amounts of public open space of all London boroughs for the size of its population and has significantly higher population density than comparable local authorities. The borough also has high unemployment, poverty and mortality rates. Newham has a rich cultural diversity and a higher proportion of children than any other authority in the country. These statistics offer a clear statement of the extraordinary level of

social need in the borough and confirm the many aspects of local people's lives which can be improved by enhancement of our parks and open spaces.

### Future Newham

Newham will be a major focus for regeneration and development over the next 20-30 years. The Government has designated huge growth areas in the 'Thames Gateway' which will see a concentrated provision of new housing, supporting transport and community infrastructure, and jobs. As a host borough for the 2012 Olympic Games and the principal location for the Olympic Park we have a unique opportunity to improve the provision of outdoor facilities to support increased participation in sports and cultural activities leading up to and beyond the 2012 Games.



*Stratford's recently opened Multi Use Games Area is one of the boroughs many sports and open space improvement projects in the lead up to the 2012 games*

## Introduction

### Newham's Parks and Open Spaces

Achievement of a high quality environment is a priority for Newham Council and its partners within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and is reflected in Newham's Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. Improving the quality of parks and open spaces will be a key contributor to meeting the National Indicator targets set out in the LAA. The achievement of the associated priorities set out by the LSP in Newham's Sustainable Communities Strategy is also in part dependent on best design and site planning practice being implemented whenever improvements are proposed.

Our parks and open spaces can contribute significantly to a neighbourhood's overall character and when well-designed, should be influential in establishing a positive image for the locality, and reinforcing community identity and self esteem. They should also contribute to an area's attractiveness to people considering relocation as well as to investors.

Like most borough's Newham has a legacy of Victorian and Edwardian parks. They are an important but vulnerable part of our local heritage and a source of civic pride and public enjoyment. They also have special aesthetic qualities, high relative quality and are sensitive to change.

In recent decades the development of many of these older parks has not been the subject of a conscious, overall design process. Typically, these sites have suffered from incremental or ad hoc changes, with little or no holistic design consideration. In resolving these issues and developing a consistent approach to the improvement of all our parks and open spaces the emphasis must be placed on best design practice side by side with effective long term planning and management.

The importance of best design practice in creating high quality parks and open spaces is widely recognised and promoted by national organisations such as CABI Space and the Landscape Institute.

### Five Gold Standards for Great Public Space – CABI 2008

- 1 An inclusive space:** does everyone feel welcome and safe?
- 2 A distinctive space:** does the space contribute to local character?
- 3 A healthy space:** does the space encourage active lifestyles where even the unathletic can be inspired to try for a personal best?
- 4 A sustainable place:** is there a long term plan for effective management and maintenance?
- 5 A green place:** softer, greener, natural surfaces will adapt much better to climate change.

# Introduction

## Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan (2009 - 2014)

It is clear from assessments of the existing parks and open spaces portfolio that quality is variable across the borough. The Parks & Open Spaces Development Plan (2009-14) was approved by Cabinet in June 2009 and establishes a vision that, **by 2014 every resident will have access to high quality, safe and sustainable parks and open spaces.**

The Plan sets out a programme of investment, based upon a strategic assessment of the borough's parks and open spaces, which aims to deliver this vision. The aim is for every park and open space to have new or improved landscape features, play areas and other facilities that reflect local needs and encourage an increase in use.

The Plan prioritises improvements in the areas of greatest need that have been identified through an assessment of parks and open spaces following Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17): Planning Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The assessment indicates a hierarchy of parks and open spaces which is shown below and confirms a concentration of poorer quality parks in the south west of the borough. The Plan also proposes that nine principal open spaces are improved through provision of new play and landscape features to create additional, small scale 'neighbourhood greens'.

The Plan is supported by borough-wide consultation that has identified the concerns and needs of local residents, their reasons for visiting and the barriers that can prevent them from accessing parks and open spaces.

Upper Tier Parks	Middle Tier Parks	Lower Tier Parks	Neighbourhood Greens
Beckton District Park	Barking Road Recreation Ground	Canning Town Recreation Ground	Abbey Lane Open Space
Central Park	Brampton Park	Cundy Park	Chandos Road Amenity Area
Forest Lane Park	Hermit Road Recreation Ground	Gooseley Playing Fields	Hathaway Crescent Open Space
Little Ilford Park	Lyle Park	Kier Hardie Recreation Ground	May Green
Royal Victoria Gardens	New Beckton Park	King George V Park	Odessa Road Open Space
Stratford Park	Plaistow Park	Lister Gardens	Pier Road Open Space
	Plashet Park	Star Park	Sandal Street Amenity Area
	Priory Park		Valetta Grove Open Space
	Memorial Recreation Ground		New City Green



## Introduction

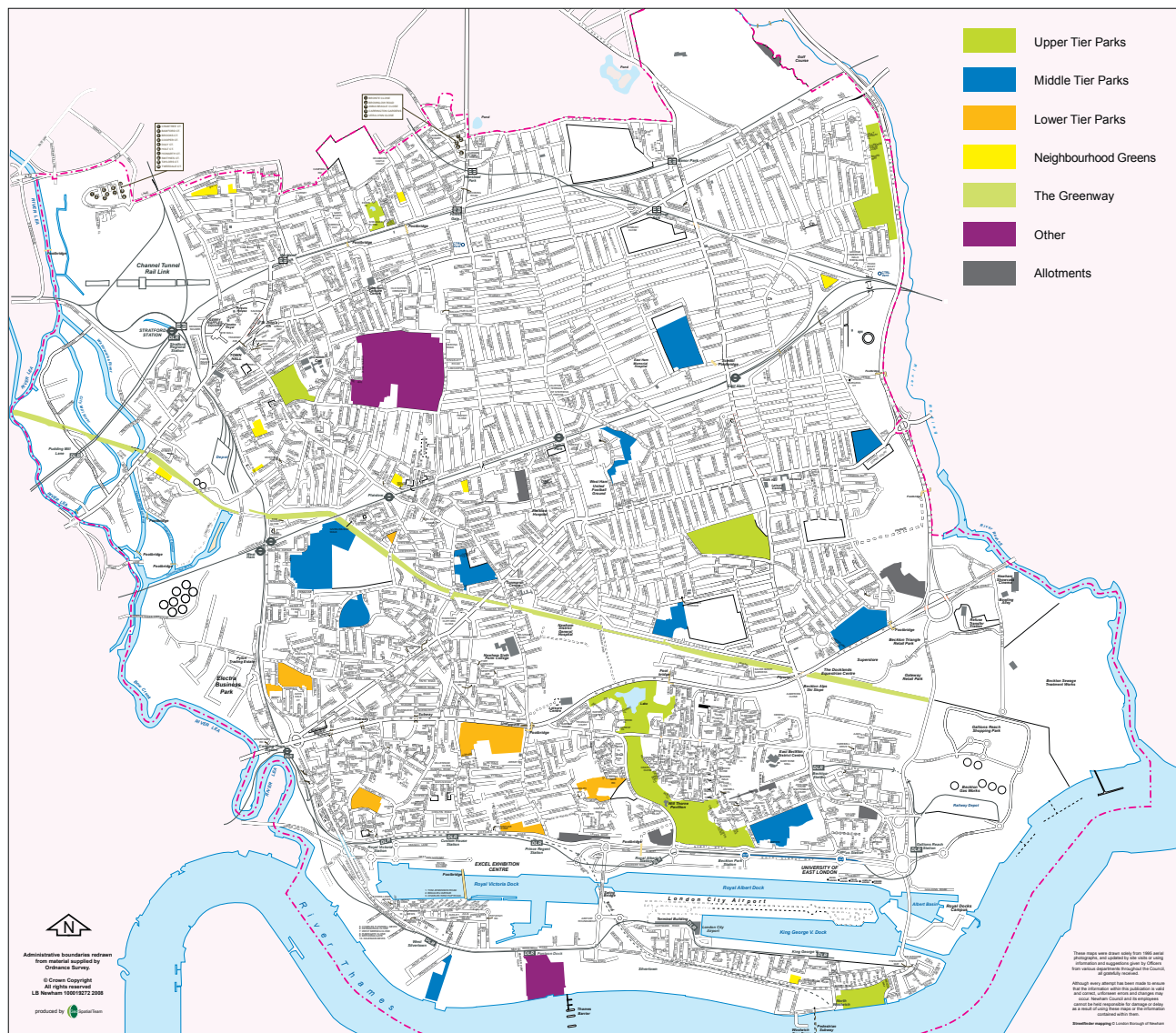
The Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan proposes a whole-site 'master planning' approach to address the improvement of those parks where quality is poorest. These master plans will be informed by site specific local consultation, reflecting the vision for the local neighbourhood and linking closely to the local leadership agenda. They will address issues of repair and refurbishment as well as the development of new features and facilities which will be determined through consultation with local residents. As well as meeting key council and resident objectives the master plans will also contribute to cross-cutting strategies for health, play and place-shaping.

The Council will promote a holistic approach to park and open space improvements wherever possible. Ensuring that all elements are renewed at the same time, thereby avoiding repeated disruption and the need to effect further repairs during the design lifetime.



*Extract from a Conceptual Master Plan developed with community groups for the whole site renewal of a park*

# Introduction



Map to show Borough Hierarchy of Parks and Open Spaces



## Introduction

### Meeting Community Needs

Early engagement of local people and stakeholders is crucial to the design process if the outcome is to respond to local needs and aspirations, and be 'owned' locally in the longer term.

Although professional advice will need to apply throughout, local participation in decision-making will enable local people to have a stake in the outcome of the design process. This early involvement of the local community will help encourage a shared desire to actively engage in protecting, nurturing and improving parks and open spaces in the longer term.

An inclusive approach to the design process is essential, enabling sites to be accessed and enjoyed by all by embracing the fullest range of diverse needs. Community involvement should therefore be genuinely inclusive, ensuring that all interests are fully represented and that no groups are disadvantaged.

The best outcome will sustain community self esteem through providing parks and open spaces that contribute to a positive local image and identity. An inherent sense of 'ownership' by the community will contribute to safeguarding an environment that will be popular, feel safe and generate local pride.



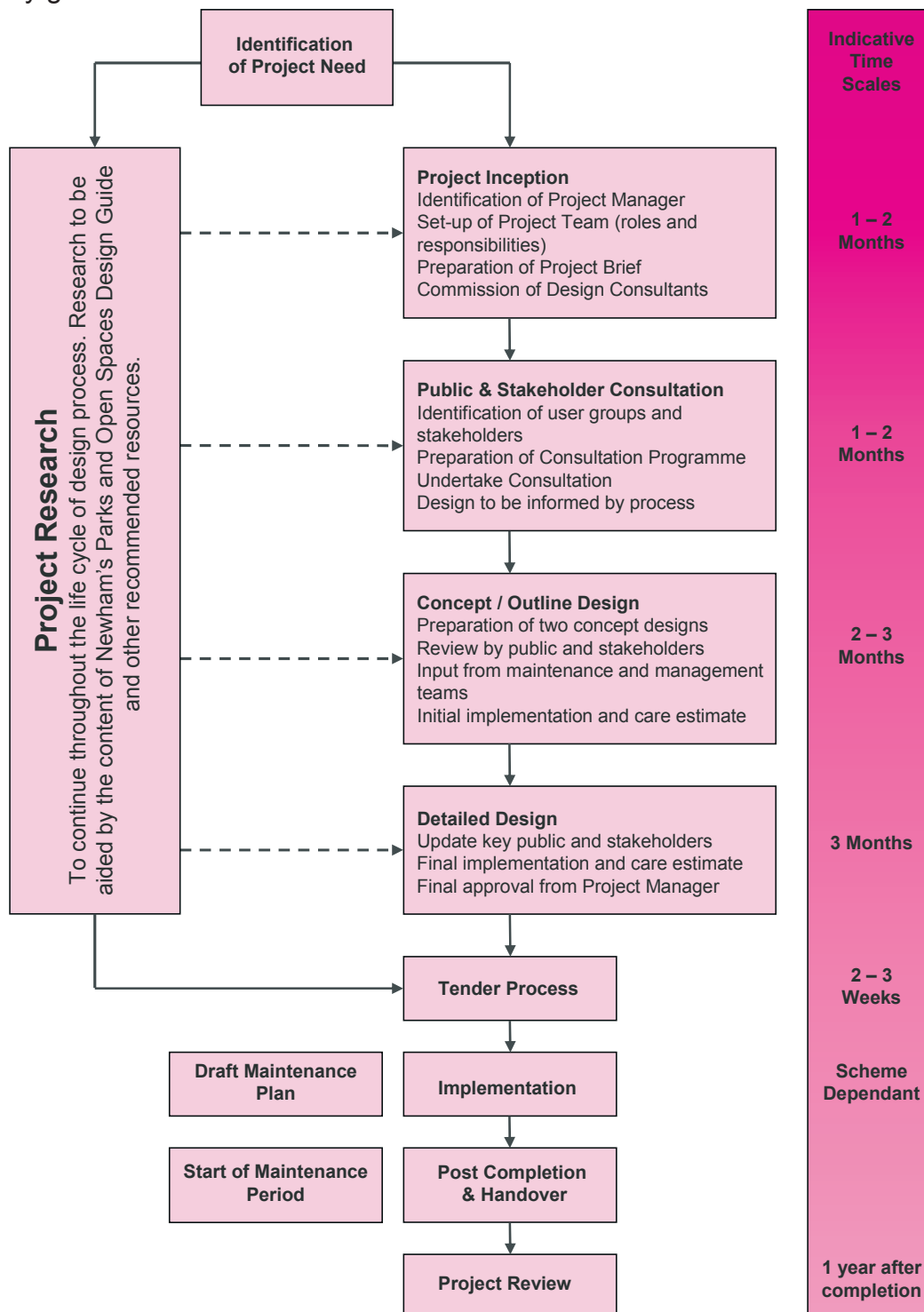
*A Newham Open Space Community Engagement Event*



# Introduction

## Small Project Life Cycle

The below diagram demonstrates a typical life cycle for the design and delivery of a small park or open space improvement project i.e. delivery of a new small childrens play space or community garden.

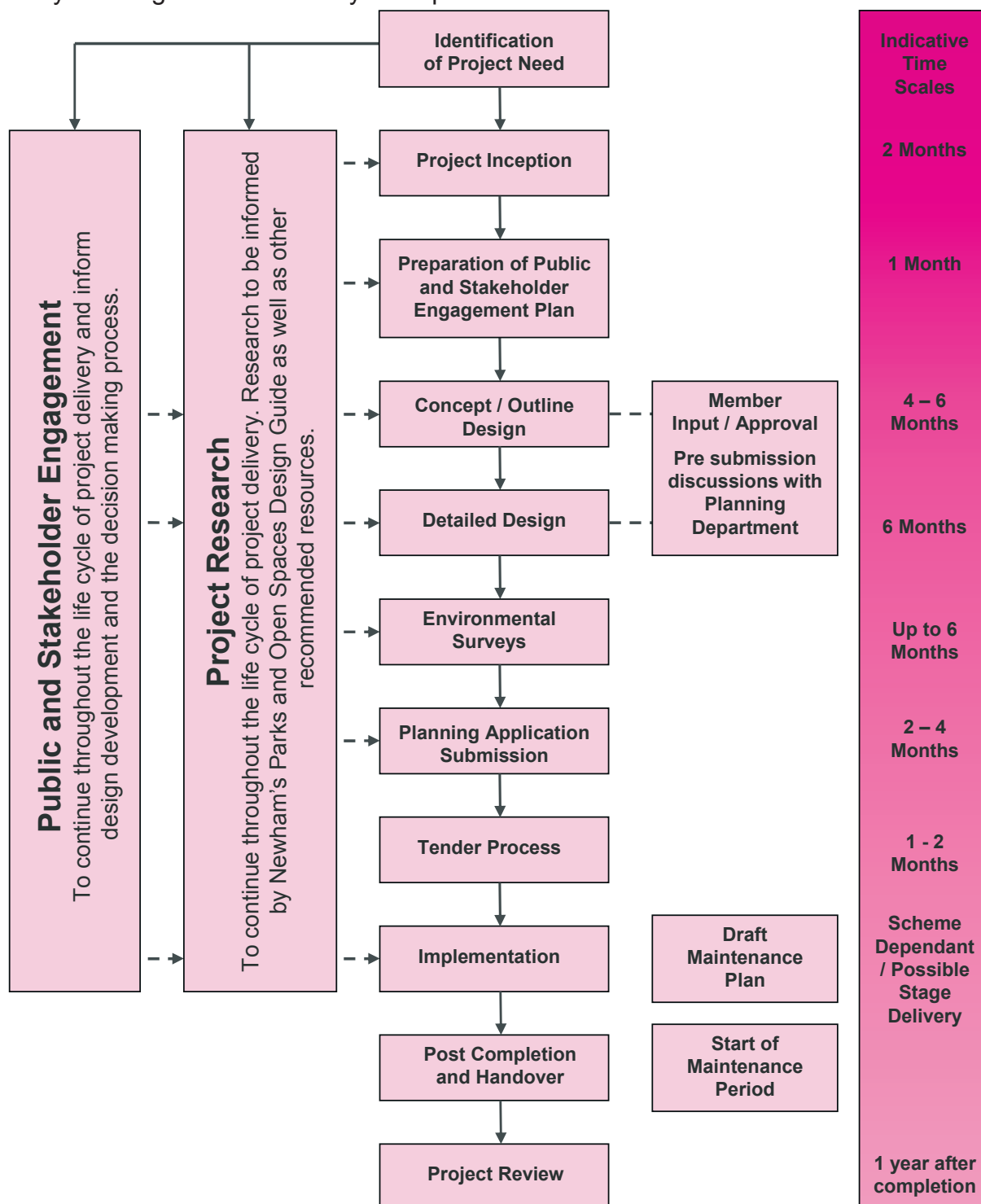


The timescales provided are indicative and provided to assist project teams in preparing realistic project programmes and managing public and stakeholder expectations effectively.

# Introduction

## Large Project Life Cycle

The below diagram demonstrates a typical life cycle for the design and delivery of a large park or open space improvement project i.e. the creation of a new neighbourhood green or delivery of a large childrens and youth space.



The timescales provided are indicative and provided to assist project teams in preparing realistic project programmes and managing public and stakeholder expectations effectively.





# References



## References

### British Standards

BS7044 Artificial Sports Surfaces  
 BS4428 Code of Practice for General Landscape Operations  
 BS7370 Part 1-4 Grounds Maintenance  
 BS3936 Nursery Stock Specification for Trees & Shrubs  
 BSEN1176 & BSEN1177 Play Areas  
 BS5837 Trees in Relation to Construction  
 BS4043 Tree Supply & Maintenance  
 BS3998 Tree Work

### Access and Disability

#### **Access For All Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 2**

London Borough of Newham  
[www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk)

#### **Access to and use of Buildings – Approved Document M (2004 Edition)**

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
[www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

#### **Easy Access to Historic Landscapes**

English Heritage  
[www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/publications](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/publications)

#### **Making Connections: A Guide To Accessible Green Spaces (2006)**

Sensory Trust  
[www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/publications](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/publications)

### Environmental

#### **Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities (2004)**

Town and Country Planning Association  
[www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)

### Parks and Public Open Spaces (General)

#### **Living with Risk: Promoting Better Public Space Design (2007)**

CABESpace  
[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/living-with-risk](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/living-with-risk)

### Play and Youth

#### **Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (2008)**

Play England / Department for Children, Schools and Families / Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>

#### **Every Child's Play Matters: Newham Play Plan (2007)**

London Borough of Newham  
[www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk)

#### **Fair Play: A Strategy (2008)**

Department for Children, Schools and Families  
<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>

## References

### **Inclusion by Design: A guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments**

Department for Children, Schools and Families

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>

### **Managing Risk In Play Provision: Implementation Guide (2008)**

Play England / Department for Children, Schools and Families / Department for Culture, Media and Sport

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>

### **Public Space Lessons: Designing & Planning for Play (2008)**

CABESpace

[www.cabe.org.uk/publications/designing-and-planning-for-play](http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/designing-and-planning-for-play)

### **Organisations**

CABE Space [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)

Play England [www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk)

Sport England [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

Rospa [www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)

Sensory Trust [www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk)

Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors [www.idgo.ac.uk](http://www.idgo.ac.uk)







## Design Guidance - Master Planning

Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

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### 3.3 Ensure Distinctive Character

- Design Considerations
- Design Rationales and Concepts
- Interpretation of Design Concepts

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- Design Considerations

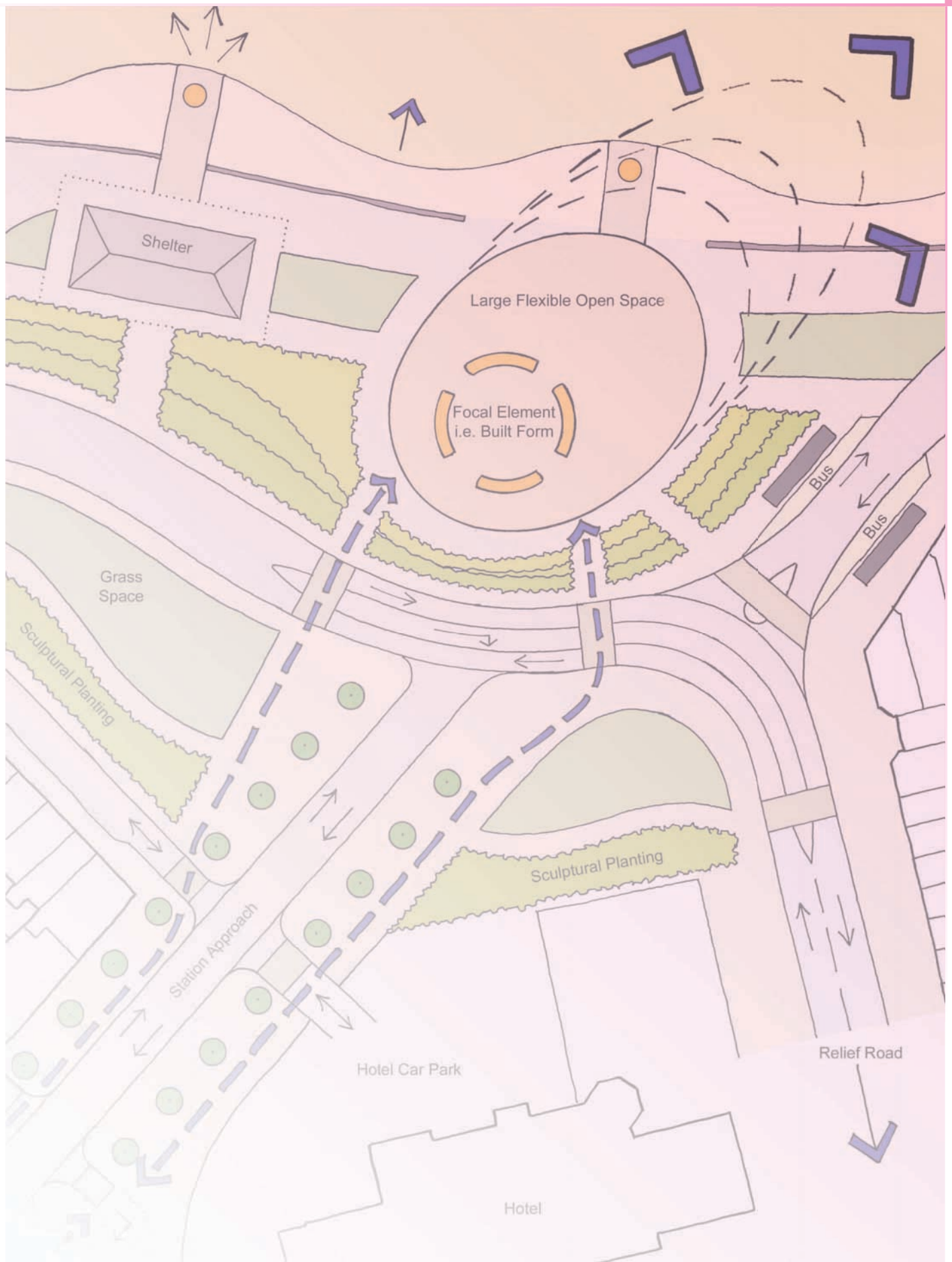
### 3.5 Deliver Environmental Excellence

- Planting and Soft Landscape
- Design Considerations for Planting and Soft Landscape
- Sustainability
- Design Considerations for Sustainability
- Biodiversity
- Design Considerations for Biodiversity
- Maintenance
- Design Considerations for Maintenance

### 3.6 Design in Safety and Security

- Design Considerations
- Lighting and CCTV
- Case Study - Star Park, Park Improvement Masterplan

# 1. Introduction





## 1.1 Master Planning for Whole Site Improvement of Parks and Open Spaces

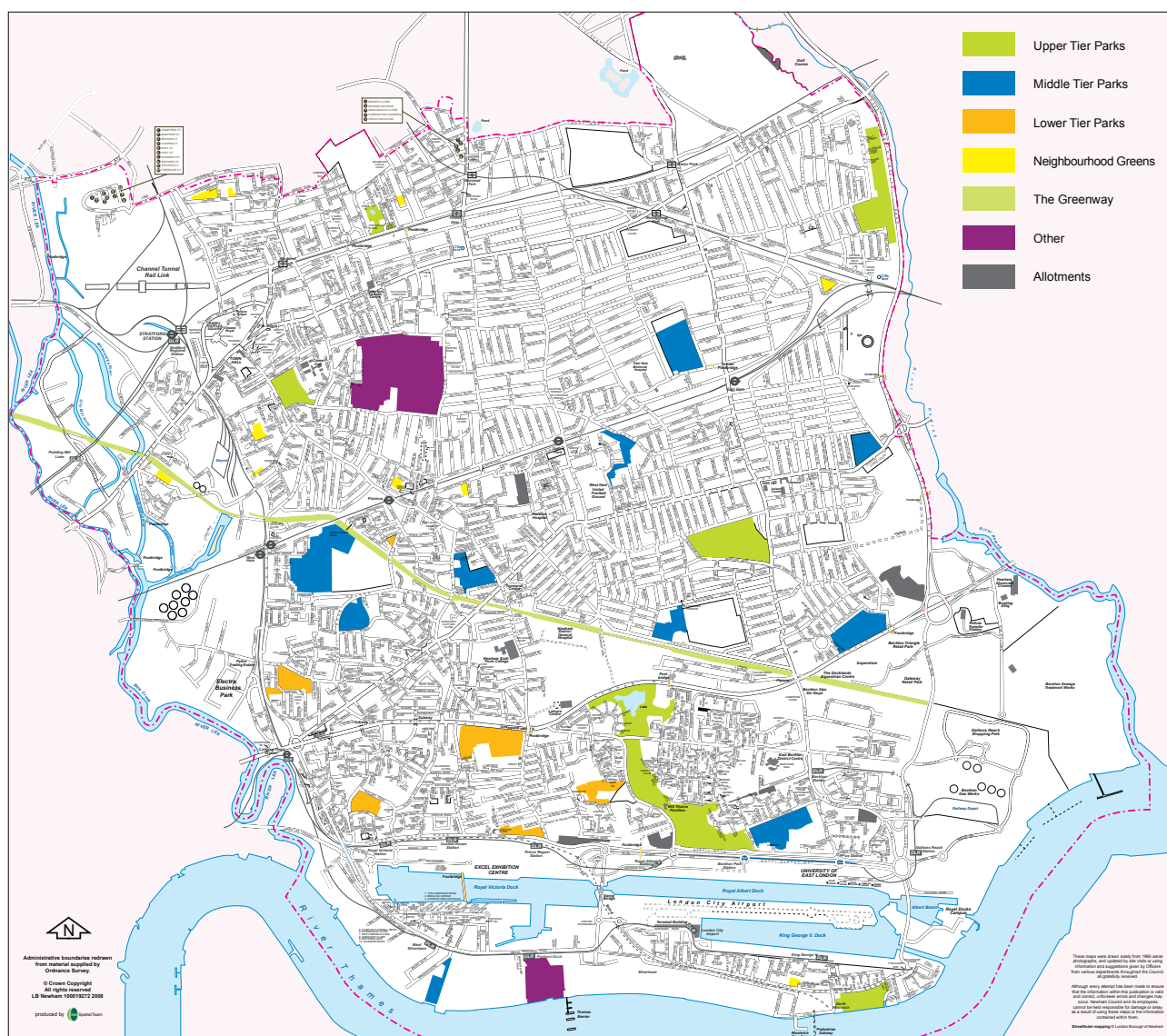
Newham Council understands the importance of providing high quality public open space and the benefits that access to such space can bring to people's quality of life. Many of Newham's parks and open spaces are in need of major improvement and refurbishment. A strategic assessment of all parks, amenity areas and open spaces under Council management has formed the basis for a hierarchy of parks that are to be renewed in relation to their support for the achievement of council objectives to improve health, well-being and environmental quality.

This hierarchy is illustrated over the page and identifies the baseline for assessment of future improvements and development. The Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan identifies the parks and open spaces that are to undergo 'whole-site' renewal subject to the future availability of funding.

Renewal of these key parks and open spaces will support the achievement of the vision that *'every resident will have access to high quality, safe and sustainable parks and open spaces by 2014'*



# 1.1 Master Planning for Whole Site Improvement of Parks and Open Spaces



Map to show Borough Hierarchy of Parks and Open Spaces



## 1.1 Master Planning for Whole Site Improvement of Parks and Open Spaces

Newham requires the 'whole site' renewal of key parks and open spaces to be informed by the production of a carefully considered master plan.

Effective master planning will enable Newham to :-

- Create parks and open spaces with a strong sense of identity
- Ensure maximum return from its investment
- Deliver the greatest recreational value for its residents from each space
- Provide consistent access to quality spaces
- Improve the ability to cater for future recreational demand
- Provide effective solutions to existing on site issues
- Ensure planning and design of improvements is carried out to the highest standards

Newham also recognises the benefits of following a considered master planning process when planning smaller projects and encourages design teams to acknowledge the guidance outlined within this section when delivering smaller scale improvement projects.



*Thames Barrier Park, located in Newham is an example of a major park which has been developed as the result of a master planning process*



## 1.2 Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Master Plans

Newham requires park and open space master plans to be delivered as the result of a well planned and managed design process co-ordinated by an allocated project manager.

An approach that combines both traditional and innovative processes and techniques to effectively deliver master plans is welcomed.

Prior to the preparation of a park or open space master plan, it might be appropriate to undertake a Scoping or Feasibility Study. The undertaking of such a study for smaller sites can normally be undertaken solely by a Landscape Architect or Landscape Manager. However larger sites or sites with complex environmental issues may require the involvement of an environmental scientist, an ecologist and possibly an arboriculturalist.

Undertaking such a study will identify:-

- Potential project risks
- Environmental factors which are likely to need mitigation
- Land, habitats and existing site features which are protected or designated as being of special interest
- Additional studies and surveys to be undertaken to mobilise a project
- Disciplines required to deliver a project
- The long and short term financial feasibility of pursuing a project proposal
- The likely cost of delivering the master plan and 'on the ground' scheme
- Feasible site uses and master plan contents

Identification of the above will assist project managers to:-

- Prepare site specific project briefs and objectives
- Better manage project programme
- Have an improved understanding of potential project costs
- Avoid pursuing whole projects or project elements which are likely to be unachievable or problematic to undertake

### Site Specific Project Brief and Objectives

- The requirements of every park and open space are different, it is therefore essential to develop a site specific brief at the start of each master planning project
- The brief should consist of a list of site specific objectives and aspirations
- Objectives and aspirations can be material i.e. improved play facilities and new park buildings
- Or non material i.e. meeting green flag criteria or increasing user numbers
- The creation of project specific objectives should always be informed by initial stakeholder and community engagement
- Once prepared, the aims and objectives contained in the brief should be agreed by all major project stakeholders before the master planning process evolves any further
- The content of the brief should be in keeping with the sites typology and should always highlight any proposed change in function or on site management
- The brief will inform the whole of the master planning process, however it can change and evolve throughout the master planning process
- Care should be taken to ensure that the project brief is realistic in terms of budget and programme

## 1.2 Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Master Plans

### Site Analysis

The development of every master plan should be informed by a systematic and site specific analysis.

- Analysis is key in establishing how a space currently functions, which elements should be retained or enhanced and which should be replaced or re-designed
- Analysis should be informed by first hand experience of the space and acknowledge the space's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement
- Design work should not commence until the site analysis process is complete
- Analysis should be presented as a suite of analytical scaled drawings which cover the following subject areas as a minimum:-

**Social and Cultural** – to outline the surrounding demographic in terms of age, number of families, culture, interests, levels of employment and any other people based

factors which may affect the master plan process.

**Existing layout** – to show the existing site layout, boundaries, features and levels; always informed by a topographical survey.

**Technical Constraints** – to highlight technical constraints such as services and facilities owned or managed by statutory service providers.

**Access, Movement and Circulation** – to include pedestrian, cycle and where appropriate vehicle movement patterns. Key access barriers identified.

**Hard Landscape** – to summarise presence and condition of existing hard landscape features (paths, hard surfaces, boundaries etc), built elements and site furniture.

**Views** – to highlight existing positive and negative views both into, within and out of the space, as well as landmarks, focal points and visual quality.



Example of a hand drawn analysis diagram to show existing views in and around a site



## 1.2 Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Master Plans

**Soft Landscape** – to summarise existing location, type and value of existing vegetation.

**Environmental** – to indicate existing elements of value in terms of ecology, biodiversity and sustainability.

**Geographical** – to outline the geological and hydrological make up of a site, as well as summarising its drainage characteristics.

**Heritage** – to summarise the site's historic background in terms of origins, development over time and historic uses. Must highlight any structures, relics or landscape features of historic or conservation interest which need to be retained or treated in a specific manner. Include a statement of significance for all existing heritage features.

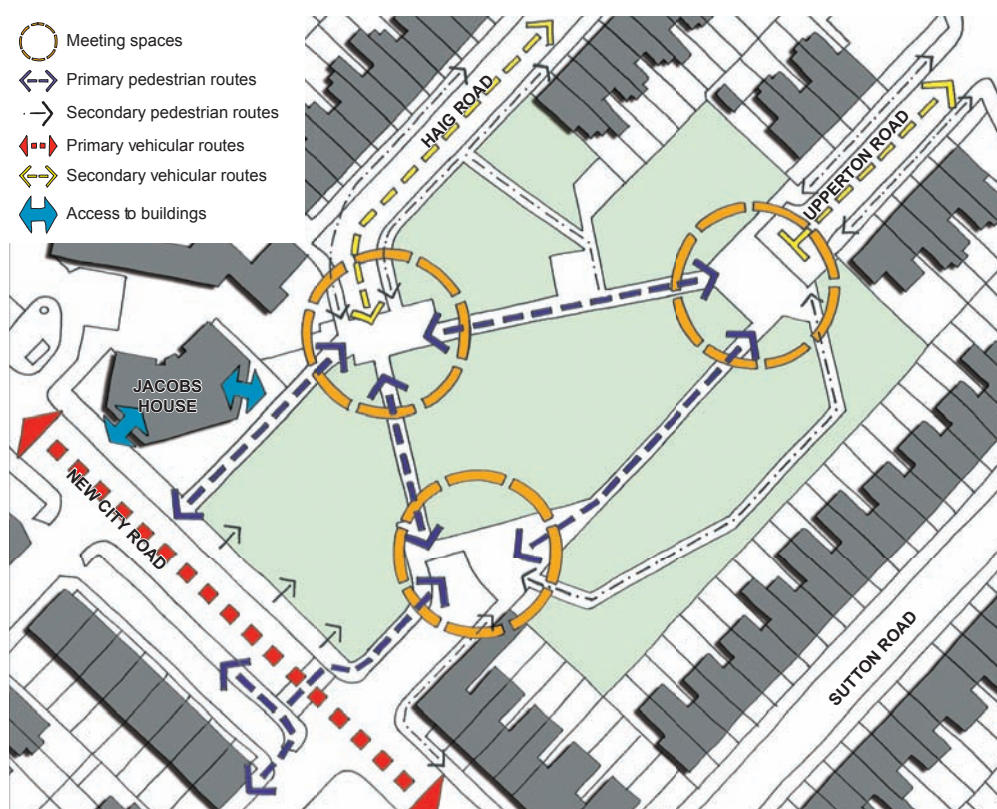
**Function and Usage** – to identify the existing site usage, main patterns of use and public perceptions of issues.

**Character and Context** – to summarise the findings of townscape and landscape character assessment of the site and surrounding

neighbourhood. Highlight links to other green or recreational spaces, relevant amenities, sites of interest and other external influences. Should also include a graphical representation of the distribution of key local amenities and services including open space, schools, youth provision, transport connections and community centres.

**SWOT** – a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats exercise is also a useful tool to gain an understanding of a site's potential and constraints. As an exercise it is particularly effective when engaging with communities and stakeholders. SWOT elements should be clearly identified within each of the subject areas above.

The completed site analysis will remain an essential tool throughout the master planning process and can be added to and updated by design teams as necessary. Design teams are encouraged to identify the inter relationship between the various subject areas and ensure that the master planning process does not concentrate wholly on one subject area to the detriment of the wider proposal.



Example of a hand drawn analysis diagram to show existing movement and circulation in and around a site





## Master Planning Assessment and Supporting Strategies

## 2.1 Assessment and Supporting Strategies

- To ensure that master plan proposals are effective and relevant, design teams are encouraged to self assess and challenge their own proposals
- Proposals should be assessed in line with the requirements of the known or predicted site users
- The assessment process may benefit from the involvement of an independent third party, such as Newham's Design Review Panel or a Design Advisor
- Completed master plans should be supported by relevant design strategies, which provide a light touch indication as to how the master plan proposal will be developed
- When assessing master plans and preparing supporting strategies design teams should place an emphasis on demonstrating how the master plan will deliver spatial and structural objectives, before focusing on more decorative elements



Example of a hand drawn diagram to show proposed land usage



## 2.1 Assessment and Supporting Strategies

- Strategies are preferably presented graphically as a suite of strategy drawings which cover the following subject areas as a minimum
  - Function and Character Strategy
  - Environmental Strategy
  - Historical Strategy
  - Views Strategy
  - Tree Strategy
  - Movement Strategy
  - Surfaces Strategy
  - Furniture Strategy
  - Planting Strategy

Completed park and open space master plans should be supported by a Maintenance Strategy. Once the master plan is implemented on the ground the strategy should influence the development of a full Management Plan for the site. Refer to Master Planning Design Principle 3.5



Example of a hand drawn diagram to show proposed planting strategy



## 2.2 Implementation

- Design teams should be aware that funding will not always be available to deliver the full content of an improvement master plan in a single phase
- Master plans are often likely to be delivered in phases, sometimes over a period as long as 5 to 10 years
- The way in which phased delivery is managed is commonly determined by availability and applicability of funding
- Phased delivery can also be influenced by local community interests, political interests and external developments
- Design teams should give careful consideration to the effect which phased delivery will have on the completed master plan and how these effects can be mitigated. This may include effects on design concept, access and circulation routes, and key vistas
- Design teams may be requested to provide a supporting strategy to demonstrate the most effective way of delivering the master plan in phases
- This strategy may be required to outline:-
  - The extent of site preparation works i.e. clearance or ground works
  - Elements considered to be fundamental to the success of the master plan or a catalyst to the renewal of the site
  - Delivery of major scheme components i.e. play spaces, games areas, gardens
  - Built elements requiring planning applications i.e. pavilions
  - Supporting infrastructure i.e. pathways, new sites entrances
  - Non essential elements



*Expensive built elements such as bespoke pavilions and park buildings may have to be delivered separately to the main scheme*

## 2.3 Cost Estimates

### Implementation Cost Estimate

- Design teams will be provided with an indicative scheme budget at the outset of the master planning process
- Design teams should take care to ensure that master plan proposals stay within indicative scheme budgets by undertaking cost estimates at key stages throughout the design process
- Final park and open space master plans should always be supported by a cost estimate to inform funding applications and budget planning
- Cost estimates should allow for contractor costs, project management and professional services to manage the detailed design and specification process as well as adequate contingency and inflation allowances

### Maintenance Cost Estimate

- Newham recognises the importance of maintaining its parks and open spaces to the highest standard. In response design teams are required to consider the potential cost to maintain master plan proposals, by preparing a maintenance estimate at key points throughout the master planning process
- Maintenance estimates should outline maintenance tasks and costs throughout the establishment period (i.e. years 1 – 3)
- Existing Newham contract rates may be attributable for certain routine maintenance tasks
- The availability of maintenance cost estimates will provide certainty that the scheme is sustainable and where necessary provide the information required to support additional funding bids



*Pathways and site entrances provide a framework in which to plan the delivery of a master plan, and therefore are best delivered first*



## 2.4 Final master plan drawings

- Newham requires final master plan drawings to be both attractive and informative, and provide a synthesis of the various design strategies
- Drawings should be readable by both members of the public and professionals who have experience of working with plan material
- The graphic presentation of master plans should wherever possible reduce the need for large amounts of text and reinforce the master plan design concept
- Master plans should have a light touch approach to annotation and avoid the use of technical language or jargon
- Master plans for larger sites can be supported by graphic materials such as sketches, sections and image boards, but should always be legible as stand alone drawings
- Design teams should ensure that material produced is legible both in paper and electronic format



Central Park Improvement Master Plan

### 3. Master Planning Principles





### 3.0 Master Planning Principles

Newham's parks and open space master plans should be informed by engagement and be prepared to fully reflect local need and aspiration. Master plans should best locate landscape elements and associated facilities to maximise usage, interest and benefit within an attractive, accessible and safe environment.

To achieve this, master plans should be prepared in accordance with the following Design Principles.

- **Informed by Engagement**
- **Deliver Appropriate and Locally Relevant Solutions**
- **Ensure Distinctive Character**
- **Ensure Access for All**
- **Deliver Environmental Excellence**
- **Design in Safety and Security**

These design principles are intended to facilitate the production of master plans which meet the specific needs of Newham's Parks and Open Spaces, and meet with the Five Gold Standards for Great Public Spaces, as set out by CABE in 2008.



*Avenue of established tree planting makes a strong contribution to the character of Central Park, Newham*

## 3.1 Informed by Engagement

- Master plans should always respond to the needs and aspirations of the local community as identified through community and stakeholder engagement running throughout the design process
- Engagement should continue through the detailed design process and on site delivery and preferably be sustained through involvement in the management of the space
- A well planned and managed programme of engagement benefits the master plan process in the following ways:-
  - Helps to generate original design ideas and concepts which relate directly to the community and local context
  - Ensures proposals meet the current needs of users and the community
  - Secures public interest and support for the developing proposals
- The six design principles for successful master planning of parks and open spaces can be used to define the terms of engagement
- Prior to planning an engagement programme, project teams are advised to research the social make up of the surrounding area. This may inform the engagement methods used and benefit the wider design process
- Detailed demographic breakdowns can be provided by Newham at project inception



*Interactive image exercises can be used to enhance the engagement process*

### Engagement Considerations

- Engagement programmes should be planned and managed by those qualified and experienced in public engagement
- Engagement programmes should be planned at inception and be fully integrated within the main project programme
- The programme should accommodate ample opportunity for the results of the engagement to directly influence the developing proposals
- Every effort should be made to make contact with those sections of the community identified by social research as being hard to reach i.e. youth, elderly and minority groups
- A range of interactive, hands on and enjoyable techniques should be used to empower participants and stimulate meaningful and productive engagement
- Engagement activity should be balanced with the use of less interactive or personal methods of engagement to ensure the broadest possible audience is targeted
- Results of engagement activity should be well publicised and developing proposals regularly displayed to sustain engagement and demonstrate how community feedback is being incorporated into the design process



## 3.1 Informed by Engagement

### Managing Public Expectations

Care must be taken to manage the expectations of members of the community and other stakeholders in order to ensure an understanding of:-

- Realistic outcomes from the master planning process
- Existing funding status of the project
- Current stage of the master plan proposal
- Potential length of time before works start
- Potential phasing of project implementation

### Political Engagement

- Park and open space master plans will normally require an element of political approval and design teams will be advised on the level of political approval required at project inception
- The level of political approval required will be influenced by the importance of the project, its value and location
- Design teams are advised to make efforts to engage with and update members and key council stakeholders throughout the design processes
- Project managers should build the necessary engagement and approval process into master plan project programmes



*Workshop sessions with stakeholders are best managed by experienced facilitators*



## 3.2 Deliver Appropriate and Locally Relevant Solutions

Master plan proposals should cater for both existing and potential users, whose requirements may not currently be fulfilled by current layout and content.

Responding to the needs of the borough's residents will help to ensure that Newham's parks and open spaces deliver maximum benefits to local communities.

A comprehensive process of analysis carried out by the design team will assist in identifying areas of need and opportunities which may not be identified by the public.

Design teams are required to clearly demonstrate that they have addressed the findings of SWOT analysis, in particular the 'opportunities and weaknesses'.

### Design Considerations

- Design teams should develop creative and innovative methods of releasing the potential of the space, as identified through the engagement and analysis process
- Design proposals can be used as a catalyst for enabling communities to re discover a park or open space
- Striving to create design solutions which deliver the very best combination of recreational, social and environmental improvement will enable best value to be achieved from the space
- Design teams can make the most of the park or open space asset by using the results of the engagement and analysis process to identify ways of adding value to both the local and wider community
- Maximising opportunities for future usage will assist in creating park and open spaces which will 'work hard' for Newham's communities
- Results of the engagement and analysis process should be used to balance the appropriate delivery of active and passive recreation
- Recognising and enhancing local character and heritage will contribute towards a strong sense of place and ensure that solutions appear visually relevant within the space



*Models can be used as an effective method of demonstrating the potential of a site*

### 3.3 Ensure Distinctive Character

Every park and open space should have its own distinct visual appearance and character reflecting and enhancing that of the local area whilst at the same time being recognisable as a Newham Council managed site.

Retention and enhancement of existing site character is preferred wherever possible.

The visual appearance, character and facilities provided should enable the site to maintain user interest and sustain repeat visits.

#### Design Considerations

- Character and identity can be created and enhanced through appropriate selection of hard landscape materials, in particular selection of design elements such as paving, entry gates, site buildings and focal points
- The use of soft landscape, in particular tree planting can provide an affordable way of creating and enhancing character and identity
- Visually apparent functions of site usage, in particular sports activities, can make a substantial contribution to site character and identity i.e. cricket pitches, boating lakes, putting greens
- Existing elements within a site identified as having conservation or heritage status should be retained
- Design teams should refer to the character summary and recommendations of any local townscape or landscape character assessment at the start of the master planning process
- The townscape or landscape character assessment carried out as part of the site appraisal process, should be used to inform the selection of hard and soft landscape elements
- In areas of significant architectural, heritage or conservation interest the Borough's Planning Team should be consulted when preparing material palettes



*Historical and listed elements such as entrance gates and memorials should always be protected*



### 3.3 Ensure Distinctive Character

#### Design Rationales and Concepts

- Master plans should be supported by strong design rationales and their development influenced by inspirational design concepts
- Design rationales should document and justify the design decisions made by the design team
- Design concepts should be identified at the outset and should influence master plan development from inception to completion
- Concepts may evolve from a variety of sources including local architectural context, local heritage, previous land usage, or landscape character
- On larger sites where there may be several distinct characters, it may be appropriate to use more than one design concept to inform the development of the master plan

#### Interpretation of Design Concepts

- An effective way of strengthening character and identity is to ensure that the design concept is well interpreted by the implemented scheme
- Representation of design concepts can be subtly delivered through the detailed design of scheme elements and features; or outlined through the use of clear visual representation such as explanatory signage and bold use of pattern or sculptural elements
- Design teams are encouraged to work with visual or public realm artists to develop innovative means to translate the design concept
- Larger park and open space master plans may benefit from the development of an art strategy to clearly outline how creativity will be used to reinforce the design concept and character of the site both in the implemented scheme and beyond, by using temporary and community outreach projects



*Contemporary design features can be used to introduce a sense of character*



## 3.4 Ensure Access for All

Parks and open space master plans should be designed to enable access for all with ease and where ever possible without the assistance of others.

In particular care should be taken to ensure that sites can be enjoyed by sections of the community who at present may be unable to access and enjoy parks and open spaces i.e. the elderly, disabled.

Implemented schemes should avoid making individuals with special requirements feel any different to other people using the site.

Design teams are encouraged to use the engagement process as a way of ascertaining the access requirements of both existing and potential site users.

### Design Considerations

- Design teams should ensure that proposals can be detailed to conform with the requirements of the Disabilities Discrimination Act and refer to Document M, published by the ODPM for specific guidance on built elements
- Where ever possible site entrances should be planned to be level, wide and clearly visible with the actual point of access set away from sections of busy highway but located to connect with popular external desire lines and well used facilities including shopping areas, leisure centres and schools
- Site entrances should also be designed to enable users to easily access the site from existing public transport links
- Larger sites may be able to sustain site specific vehicular drop off points for use by organised groups and carers
- On larger sites where parking is provided, disabled parking spaces should be provided in close proximity to the site entrance
- Careful consideration should be given to potential for mis-use and enforcement before introducing disabled only parking
- Where possible layouts should avoid the need for over complicated step and ramp arrangements
- Care should be taken to ensure that a balance is achieved between providing interesting landform and topography and avoiding restricting individuals ability to move around the site
- Careful consideration should be given to specific user group requirements when determining the location and layout of park and open space facilities
- Layouts should wherever possible be free from internal boundary treatments and internal path networks should be designed to correlate with both existing and proposed desire lines
- Regular formal and informal opportunities for sitting and resting should be provided throughout the path network

## 3.5 Deliver Environmental Excellence

Newham's renewed and refurbished parks and open spaces should be designed, delivered and managed to the highest environmental standards.

Master plans should play a key role in delivering environmental standards and set the tone for the future environmental status of the space. They should demonstrate high standards of soft landscape design, sustainability, design for biodiversity and future maintenance consideration.

### Planting and Soft Landscape

- Parks and open spaces provide an important opportunity for people to come into contact with plant material and soft landscape. These elements can have a positive influence on the way people feel about a space
- The approach to soft landscape design and management has a profound impact on the environmental quality of a space and therefore Newham expects design teams to give careful consideration to the planning of soft landscape as part of the master planning process

**Park and open space master plans should be accompanied by a planting strategy drawing, with an outline of soft landscape proposals, an indicative planting palette and details of future maintenance requirements.**



*Planting can be used to provide seasonal interest and variation*

### Design Considerations for Planting and Soft Landscape

- Planting and soft landscape should be explored as means of reinforcing existing character, referencing historic context and implementing the master plan design concept
- Planting should be designed to be visually attractive, as well as stimulating to other senses and provide seasonal interest and variation
- Planting and soft landscape can be used to serve practical and physical functions, to enclose and define spaces and to encourage or restrict movement and views
- Planting and soft landscape should be explored as a mean of involving the local community in the implementation of a scheme thereby reinforcing a sense of community ownership
- On larger sites designers should explore creative and alternative approaches to grass management as a means of adding interest i.e. creation of meadow areas, meadow mazes
- Planting should be selected to cope with the predicted effects of climate change and should not rely on irrigation beyond initial establishment

## 3.5 Deliver Environmental Excellence

### Sustainability

- Sustainability should be addressed as a key element of the master planning process and proposals should be designed to be sustainable to implement and use
- Sustainability can, in itself, be used as a master planning design concept
- Design teams are encouraged to research the latest developments in sustainable technology and construction methods and take every opportunity to integrate their findings into their master plan proposals

**Master plan proposals should be supported by a sustainability statement and action plan to be followed during on site implementation and when the site is in use.**

**Statements and action plans should give special consideration to the carbon foot print during implementation of the scheme as well as the energy requirements of the completed scheme.**



*New buildings should be designed to be as sustainable as possible i.e. Shorne Country Park, Shorne, Kent*



### 3. Master Planning Principles

#### Design considerations for Sustainability

- Where possible the range of facilities provided should be sufficient to meet residents recreational needs, and reduce the need to travel away from the local area by car for recreation
- Master plans should encourage access by sustainable means
- Master plans should include cycle storage facilities and on larger sites accommodate internal cycle routes
- Where possible soft and hard landscape materials should be readily sourced from local suppliers, both during the implementation stage and when maintaining the completed scheme
- Care should be taken to propose materials which have a low associated carbon foot print
- The inclusion of sustainable urban drainage techniques should be explored as part of the master planning process i.e. use of permeable surfacing materials, swales etc
- Grey water storage systems and bore holes can be used to top up water features and assist with irrigation
- Careful consideration should be given to the environmental impact of proposed major hard landscape works i.e. environmental impact of the use of heavy machinery and installation of large areas of hard landscape materials such as concrete and macadam
- Designers should aspire to use sustainable construction methods and include sustainable design features when planning on site buildings i.e. sustainable timber construction, grass roofs, solar panels, low reliance electric lighting, effective insulation



*Solar panels integrated into the design of the Grass Roots building at Memorial Recreation Ground, Newham*

- The creative and imaginative use of recycled materials is encouraged as an effective way of increasing and promoting sustainability.
- The reuse of materials found on site can :-
  - Reduce a scheme's carbon footprint
  - Reduce cost of scheme delivery
  - Reduce goods and delivery vehicles using local roads
  - Promote recycling to the immediate community
  - Reinforce local character through retention of local materials i.e. stone, decorative metal work, wood work
  - Offer opportunities for local community involvement

## 3.5 Deliver Environmental Excellence

### Biodiversity

- Master plans should promote and enhance biodiversity in accordance with the objectives of the emerging Newham Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)
- Opportunities for the enhancement of existing habitats or the creation of new target habitats identified through the BAP should be explored

**All parks and open space master plans should be supported by a biodiversity statement and action plan.**

### Design Considerations for Biodiversity

- On smaller sites biodiversity can be improved through the inclusion of a few small elements such as:-
  - Pockets of native tree and shrub planting
  - Plant material with fruits and seeds to encourage wildlife
  - Small areas of long grass to develop into pockets of native meadow grass
- Introduction of bird, bat and hedgehog boxes
- Retention of cut down and standing tree material, carefully secured and finished
- Elements should be well promoted through the use of signage where appropriate
- Larger sites may be able to sustain the inclusion of larger scheme elements to improve biodiversity
  - Wider areas of long grass, left to develop into wild flower meadow
  - Use of broad mixed native hedgerows
  - Areas of shallow water to encourage wetland based species
  - Small areas of mixed native woodland
- Existing wildlife corridors such as waterways and established hedgerows should be identified by an ecologist and protected where ever possible
- Design elements such as tree and hedge planting, linear areas of native grassland and water courses can be used to replace corridors disturbed by previous or proposed redevelopment.



*Areas of wetland, meadow and native planting can be used to enhance bio diversity on larger sites*

## 3.5 Deliver Environmental Excellence

### Maintenance

- Master plans should give careful consideration to future maintenance requirements
- Newham's renewed and refurbished parks and open spaces should be financially and environmentally sustainable to maintain
- The challenge of current maintenance practices are welcomed and maintenance considerations should not unduly constrain the design process

**Completed park and open space master plans should be supported by a Maintenance Strategy. Once the master plan is implemented on the ground the strategy should influence the development of a full Management Plan for the site. Strategies and Management Plans should be accompanied by indicative costs.**

### Design Considerations for Maintenance

- Master plan elements should be carefully selected so that the completed scheme can be appropriately maintained
- Engagement with maintenance teams should take place at an early stage to establish the appropriate level of maintenance for the site and its features and to identify any existing on site maintenance issues which can be resolved through the master planning process
- Dialogue with the maintenance team should be maintained throughout the master planning process
- Careful consideration and client approval should be given before including any scheme elements which require maintenance by specialist or external parties
- Master plans should accommodate safe and direct access for maintenance vehicles and on larger sites space for temporary storage of equipment may be necessary
- The inclusion of elements which can be maintained by the local community and user groups is encouraged in the interests of enhancing a sense of local ownership and supporting volunteer activity
- Opportunities to accommodate facilities for recycling of maintenance waste and composting of plant material should be explored



*Larger sites may be able to accommodate facilities to make compost and recycle waste created as a result of maintenance works*



## 3.6 Design in Safety and Security

The perception of safety is almost as important as the actual safety of a space, master plans offer a real opportunity to positively influence public perceptions and make tangible improvement to the safety and security of a space.

The engagement process should establish both the perceived and actual safety and security issues which exist within the space.

**Close liaison with local Crime Prevention Officers and Design Advisors throughout the design process is encouraged.**

### Design Considerations

- Master plan proposals should deliver an improved sense of safety by creating layouts which are legible and enable people to easily and comfortably orientate themselves within the space
- Clear sightlines will enhance perceived and actual security, by enabling users to see what is ahead and around them
- Physical access should be maximized by providing users with a choice of legible routes to and from areas
- Layouts should avoid the creation of dead ends and hiding spaces and enclosed spaces should preferably have more than one entry/exit point to allow options for escape
- Unauthorised vehicle and motorcycle access should be deterred in an appropriate manner



*Contemporary and robust approach to fencing at Thames Barrier Park*

- Layouts should benefit from as much natural surveillance as possible and boundary treatments should be selected to allow adequate views in and out of the site
- Natural surveillance is of particular importance around site entrances and seating areas
- Knowledge of patterns of use and areas known to attract anti-social behaviour can be used to positively reduce fear of crime, by locating new site elements that promote legitimate activity and surveillance
- Tree and shrub material should be carefully selected and located so not to limit views in or out of the space and internal views within smaller spaces
- Particular consideration should be given to maintaining clear site lines between tree canopies and ground cover planting



*Traditional style railings secure boundaries whilst allowing a good level of visibility*

### Lighting and CCTV

- Lighting design is of key importance to the perceived and actual safety of a space and special consideration should be given to site entrances and key pedestrian routes
- Where appropriate lighting should be used to increase legitimate evening activity, footfall and natural surveillance
- The use of CCTV within parks and open spaces is expensive to implement and manage, and should not be relied upon to make a park or open space safer but may be appropriate as part of a wider range of measures

# CASE STUDY

## Masterplanning

### Star Park – Park Improvement Masterplan

Location: Canning Town, Newham  
Client: London Borough of Newham working with West Ham and Plaistow New Deal for Communities  
Design Team: Planet Earth Consultancy  
Description: Master plan for the large scale improvement of an existing park.

Star Park is a large open space, surrounded by residential property in Canning Town. At present the park consists of large areas of grass, a simple network of pathways and tree planting. The space is uninspiring and is therefore under utilised by the local community.

Design consultants Planet Earth were commissioned to prepare a master plan to outline large scale improvement of the park. The master planning process involved plenty of opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement. The completed master plan includes a varied range of elements including a Natural Playground, Traditional Playground, Picnic Area, Football Pitches, Rose Garden, Festival Space and a generous provision of New Tree Planting.

#### **Learning points:**

- Selected design consultants skills in participatory design enabled results of the engagement process to directly feed into the production of the master plan.
- Family fun day used to encourage residents to visit the park, visualise potential improvements and complete a resident survey.

- Design team carried out research at an early stage in the design process to understand the social make up of the surrounding communities.
- Strong 'star themed' overarching design concept, with individual spaces within the master plan to have their own distinct character.
- Varied range of elements contained within the completed master plan will enable the park to appeal to a wider section of the community.
- Youth space, including a MUGA and Kick About / Skateboard Area is located at the heart of the park and not marginalised.
- Strong pedestrian path network running throughout the park, caters for pedestrian desire lines and connects with key road junctions and pedestrian points of access.
- Generous provision of new tree planting running throughout the site accentuates pedestrian path network and provides structure and character.
- Wide open entrance spaces with feature vegetation and lighting improve the link between the park and the wider residential area.
- Careful consideration given to how the different site uses overlap with one another, informing the layout of the final master plan.
- Master plan drawing supported by clear 3D visualisations and a series of design strategy drawings.
- Layout of completed master plan successfully lends itself to being delivered in stages, should this approach be required.



# CASE STUDY

## Masterplanning

### Star Park Masterplan Final V.3



Star Park Masterplan Final V.3

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FINAL APPROVED

Client: West Ham and Pleslow NCC  
Project: Star Park  
Masterplan Final V.3  
Masterplan Final V.3



Art & Architecture, Ecology, Play, Participatory Design

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Star Park master plan prepared by Planet Earth Design Consultants





Newham London

# Design Guidance - Play & Youth Space

Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

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## 1. Introduction





## 1.1 Vision for Play and Youth provision

The importance of childhood and the opportunity to play and enter into the life of the community is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*‘Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’.*

In the UK the government has introduced the Every Child Matters programme for change and in Newham, the Children and Young People’s Plan 2006 - 12 provides the local framework for achieving this change. The Plan states:

*‘We are committed to making sure all Newham’s children and young people can fulfil their potential in every aspect of their lives. We will work together with children, young people, families and Newham’s communities to achieve this.’*

The Newham Play Plan ‘Every Child’s Play Matters’ adopts this overarching vision and sets out four key principles which underpin the development of play opportunities;

- ‘Play is an activity which has a value in its own right. It is about the fun and satisfaction of the participant and the benefits it brings to children, young people, families and communities
- Every child and young person in Newham should be able to access play opportunities, play activities and play spaces relevant to their needs and play aspirations

- Children and young people in Newham have the right to a hazard free play environment and to lead active, healthy lives
- Children and young people should be involved in the design of the environment in which they play. Their views, opinions and experiences should be taken into account in the development of policies and strategies and the decision making processes which impact upon their lives’

The Play Plan aims to improve the opportunities for play for Newham’s children and young people and sets the following objectives;

- Improve information
- Improve participation
- Improve access to free play
- Improve quantity of provision of play spaces
- Improve the quality of play
- Provide quality training opportunities for the play work force and improve the understanding and value of play

## 1.2 Objectives for Play and Youth Spaces

The Newham Parks and Open Spaces Development Plan 2009 – 2014 acknowledges the importance of play:

***‘Children’s play is an essential component of the wider recreational offer that parks and green open spaces provide. User surveys confirm that ‘taking children to play’ remains the single most popular reason for visiting parks and that residents consistently place improvements to play in the top five most important issues for parks and open spaces.’***

The key objectives identified to achieve high quality outdoor play and youth spaces within Newham are:

- **Challenging and multifunctional**, providing a wide range of experiences
- **Inclusive and well located**, offering social hubs for children, parents and carers
- **Innovative and distinctive**, utilising a wide range of materials and design ideas
- **Integrated and sensitive**, to the local townscape and park surroundings
- **Safe and sustainable**, promoting safe, secure and healthy activity







## 2. Existing Play Spaces



## 2.1 Existing Resource and Condition

Current play provision in Newham's parks and open spaces generally caters for the needs of children up to the age of 12 and comprises:

- 35 equipped unsupervised play spaces managed by Newham Council
- 2 supervised adventure play spaces managed by a local charity
- 2 equipped unsupervised play spaces managed by other organisations

There are a number of play spaces located in school grounds and on housing estates across Newham. Secured community use of school facilities may in future help to address local play deficiency. Housing estate provision typically takes the form of 'doorstep' play space. It is generally in very poor condition and is not currently considered to be a significant supplement to parks and open space provision.

Robust systems of inspection and repair are in place to ensure user safety but limited revenue and capital funding have meant that the quality and play value of existing parks play spaces varies considerably from site to site. A number of Newham's play spaces have been renewed in recent years using external funding and, although not developed in line with current play design principles, they provide a popular play experience for local children and young people. However a significant number of sites remain in urgent need of refurbishment and renewal if Newham's overall aspirations for parks and open spaces are to be realised.

Key issues relating to existing play spaces can be summarised as:

- Inequality of access to high quality play spaces across the borough
- Local deficiencies in provision of play facilities
- Ensuring play spaces meet the requirements of different age groups
- Ensuring play spaces provide a wide range of challenging play experiences
- Ensuring adequate provision for maintenance and ongoing refurbishment/renewal
- Developing local involvement and 'ownership'

## 2.1 Existing Resource and Condition



Map to show existing play space provision



## 2.2 Customer Perspective and Consultation

User surveys have confirmed that 'taking children to play' is consistently the most popular reason for visiting parks and that improved play spaces are of major importance to local communities.

*(Source: Parks User Surveys 2002-2006, Liveability Survey 2008)*

62% of respondents rate play spaces in parks as good or better but only 3% consider provision to be excellent. Borough-wide statistics tend to mask local deficiencies in access to high quality play opportunities and 38% consider provision to be no better than fair.

*(Source: Liveability Survey 2008)*

The very localised pattern of use for parks and open spaces in Newham (over 80% of users visit on foot and use their nearest park) underlines the importance of ensuring that play spaces respond to the needs of the local population, taking account of particular local interests or activities and the quality and quantity of existing play opportunities.

Feedback during development of the Newham Play Plan comprised a wide-ranging demand for more and improved play facilities. No significant differences between the needs of children and their carers were identified with both groups seeking a range of improvements including;

- Environmental play
- Adventure play
- Supervised play
- Improved cleanliness and maintenance standards



*Large bland areas of hard paving and grass scattered with uninspiring items of play equipment are no longer acceptable in Newham*

## 2.3 Future Provision

Improvements to play spaces will be co-ordinated with development and delivery of local park master plans and Neighbourhood Green proposals where appropriate to ensure a 'whole site' approach to improvements. A number of parks have also been identified as potential 'destination play spaces' where very high quality provision will attract users from outside the immediate locality for visits of extended duration.

The Parks & Open Spaces Development Plan seeks to ensure that play spaces of all sizes should make up an exciting and diverse, well distributed and locally important resource for, and involving, local communities.

Key to achieving this is:

- Refurbishment or renewal of all play space not invested in since 2002
- Completion of minor adjustment and access improvements at targeted sites
- Development of 4 'destination' play spaces in key locations
- Meeting local neighbourhood aspirations and needs identified through direct engagement
- Provision to reflect the specific circumstances in Newham i.e 40% of population is under 25, with the highest percentage of children 0 – 4 and 5 – 9 in England and Wales and the highest proportion of households with dependent children in the country



*A more creative and where suitable naturalistic approach shall be taken when creating new and refurbishing existing play space in Newham. Example Shown - Spa Fields, Islington*





### 3. Design for Play Principles



### 3.1 Design for Play Principles

Design of children's and young people's play spaces in Newham should follow the guidance set out by Play England's Guide 'Design for Play - A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces' (DCSF / DCMS / CABE).

The guidance is endorsed by both the Health & Safety Executive and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and sets out ten principles for designing successful play spaces which are encapsulated in one golden rule:

***"A successful space is a place in its own right, specifically designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible."***

Each of the ten design principles are explored within this section of the guide.

- **Bespoke design**
- **Make use of natural materials**
- **Well located play spaces**
- **Provide a wide range of play experiences**
- **Encourages children of mixed abilities to play together**
- **Meeting community needs**
- **Allow children of different ages to play together**
- **Build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge**
- **Sustainable and Appropriately Maintainable**
- **Allow for change and evolution**





## 3.2 Bespoke Design

### Characteristics

- Site Specific
- Fits with and enhances local surroundings
- Responds to local wishes and requirements
- Early and ongoing involvement of artists, creative professionals and members of the community
- Attractive and interesting to all ages
- Artworks or one off items of play equipment, seating, boundaries or other elements

### Design Considerations

- Responds to context and needs of the local community
- Well written brief that allows the design team freedom to be imaginative, innovative and take advantage of existing site features
- Contributes to the character and distinctiveness of locality to become an integrated part of the wider park and local streetscape
- Use of artists in community collaboration early in the design process to develop local ideas and a sense of community ownership
- Appropriate bespoke elements including fences, walls, existing site features or buildings, water features, entrances, seating, interactive artworks, platforms/stages and pergola's
- Inclusion of multifunctional elements, to enable children to get the very most out their play experience



*Imaginative bespoke timber play structures at Arc in the Park, Newham*



# CASE STUDY

## Bespoke Design

### Spa Fields Play Space

Location: Islington, North London  
Client: London Borough of Islington  
Design Team: Parklife  
Description: Neighbourhood play space

Spa Fields is a 19th Century Park in Islington. Until recently this valuable park was in poor condition, underused and thought to be an unsafe place to go. In 2004 an Improvement Framework Plan was put together to regenerate the park. It is now a well used and much loved public open space which includes a highly creative bespoke play space.

#### Learning Points:

- Early user engagement led to a good understanding of onsite issues and user requirements. Good understanding of issues and requirements allowed the design team to develop informed creative and innovation design solutions
- Engagement approach has led to the play spaces various bespoke elements being much loved by regular users
- Imaginative and innovative use of materials, some not normally found in children's play spaces
- Bespoke play elements used to create opportunities for water and adventure play
- Larger bespoke play structures give the space a strong, memorable identity and strengthen local character
- Planting used as a bespoke medium, with clever use of species to provide all year round interest, shape, colour, texture and scent.
- Site specific landscape elements i.e. planting, seating walls, timber work and topography, help to visually embed play space into the park
- Play space informally breaks down into a 'play scape' type environment, before merging into the surrounding park



*Imaginative land form created using boulders and rubber crumb safety surfacing*



*Raised seating allows children to observe others at play*



*Large bespoke play structure acts as a focal feature for the site, as well as incorporating opportunities for children to shelter, climb and slide*



*Stone setts used to create an informal path network which meanders through the play space*



### 3.3 Make Use of Natural Materials

#### Characteristics

Play spaces that incorporate loose material, sand, gravel, bark; that use rocks, boulders timber and water in combination with topography and planting to create a 'playscape' environment with or without formal play structures.

#### Design Considerations

- Provide elements that contribute towards creative play, imagination, exploration and self expression and encourage interaction with the environment and between individuals
- Take advantage of existing site topography or any potential change to increase play value
- Consider combinations of materials (including modern construction materials) and tactile experiences to broaden knowledge and present an element of surprise
- Impose changes in topography where necessary and appropriate
- Use interesting structural forms informed by modern sculpture and architecture to increase spatial awareness
- Create opportunities for trails in and around features and places of 'quietness' as well as activity
- Use a variety of seats, perching places and tables at strategic points to encourage natural surveillance, social interaction and games
- Choose and manage planting to provide a variety of shapes, enclosures and open spaces. Planting provides sensory experiences such as sound, colour, movement, smell and texture
- Use of loose material should be carefully considered. When such an approach is used, measures should be taken to ensure protection from dog fouling



*Timber pieces used creatively to create play structures*



*Interactive water play facility*



*Large stones set within topography to create a playscape*



*Child height paths through woven willow structures*

# CASE STUDY

## *Make Use of Natural Elements*

### **Stirling Council, Play Landscapes**

Location: Stirling, Scotland  
Client: Stirling Council  
Design Team: Play Space Designer Judi Legg,  
Landscape Architect Mike Hyatt /  
Page and Parks Architects various  
artists and sculptors  
Description: A series of new and refurbished  
play landscapes

Stirling Council has over 90 public play spaces, which range from small, local play areas, to major neighbourhood parks. The council believes that these play spaces provide a vital opportunity for children to use their imagination and experience challenge and risk.

In recent years the council has adopted a play landscape approach to the design and refurbishment of both new and existing play spaces.

This approach encourages designers to draw on the local natural and social characteristics of the area, utilising context and setting as an integral aspect of the play space. The approach also encourages the inclusion of non-prescriptive play materials and features, including planting.

Stirlings Play Services Playgrounds Team looks after the management, maintenance and inspection of the play landscapes, and works closely with Stirling's Play Programmes and Crèches team to involve children and communities in aspects of construction and planting and to organise events and activities at the completed schemes.

Since adopting this approach Stirling Council has delivered numerous play landscape schemes which are widely celebrated as examples of best practice. Two such projects are Darnley Park Play Space and Balmaha Play Landscape.

### **Balmaha**

The Balmaha play landscape was completed in May 2004. The main concept of its design is the connection between land and water, and the way that people through history have lived in the local environment.

The successful implementation of this project has been the result of partnership working between the Buchanan Community Partnership, the National Park, and Stirling Council.

#### ***Learning Points:***

- Imaginative and legible interpretation of design concept. An area of rock and sand represents a beach, where water meets land and where historically boats were hewn from mature trees and launched to fish plentiful waters. A stilted structure sits along side the beach to represent the ancient crannogs, which were once built out in the water as living spaces where families, livestock and belongings could be easily defended.



*Area of rock and sand represents a beach with stilted structures*

- Reconnects children with the Natural Environment. Balmaha sits in an area of beautiful and bio diverse countryside yet children's access to the natural landscape is often restricted. The play landscape is therefore designed to be an integral part of the landscape with trees, plants, boulders and pathways allowing children to experience and enjoy the natural environment.
- Avoids the use of standard and prescriptive play equipment.
- Strong use of mounds, dips, copses, wetland, and special places as a move to provide opportunities for children to operate in a more authentic 'natural' environment.



# CASE STUDY

## *Making Use of Natural Elements*

- Natural materials and undulating surfaces used to provide a stimulating landscape, where children can experience the irregularity of life, and develop real skills and abilities to assess risk.
- Creates a landscape that adults will enjoy sharing with their children.

### **Darnley Park**

Darley Park was created on a formerly neglected city centre site. With dramatic views over Stirling to the River Forth and the Ochil Hills, it forms a serene and interesting space for people living in the immediate area of high density housing, for the many visitors to Stirling's historic Old Town, and for those using it as a through route between the upper and lower parts of the town.

In developing this space, the main aim was to create a space that encouraged imaginative and child directed play, in a landscape that held local significance and meaning.

The finished park is well used by both local people and visitors, and is attracting children and young people of all ages.

### **Learning Points:**

- Use of grit and sand to act as a safety surface, providing a good play material at the same time.



*Swing seat over sand*

- Play structures and equipment (for climbing, sliding, balancing, swinging, ball games and much else besides) built or chosen specifically for the site, to integrate with, complement and enhance the landscape.

- Natural wooded areas and embankments managed to appear wild whilst allowing children the opportunity to meander and explore
- Local children worked with play workers, an artist and a sculptor to design and make site specific boulder features and to form a drum band to perform at the opening event.
- Local residents who originally raised the need for the scheme visited the site regularly throughout scheme implementation, to observe the works as they developed and to take part in progress meetings.
- Friends of Darnley Park group formed to help look after and develop the space once completed.
- Upon completion police statistics recorded a dramatic fall in complaints, call outs and incidents involving children and young people that previously characterised the area.



*Interactive and water play opportunities*

## 3.4 Well Located Play Spaces

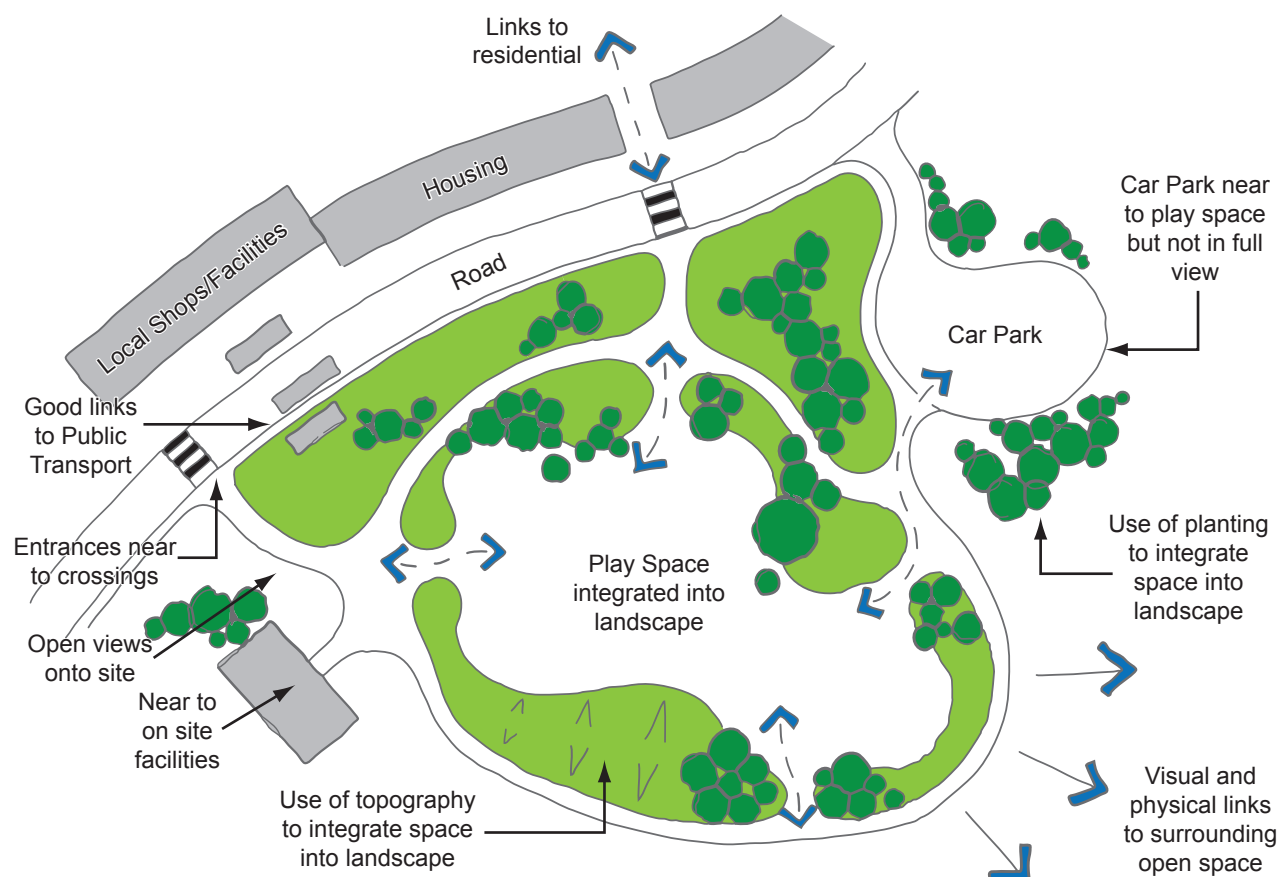
### Characteristics

- Easily accessible and in safe locations where children have reason to be i.e. close to existing amenities, local centres, routes to school and parks
- Visually open and attractive but with a degree of seclusion and shelter and a good sense of place where the imagination can roam
- In keeping with character of the surrounding landscape or townscape
- Well used by local community

### Design Considerations

When locating a new play space the following should be taken into consideration:

- Sites where children already like to play
- Available natural surveillance
- Topography and aspect
- Light, shade and shelter
- Local links and connections to residential streets, schools, shops, public transport etc.
- Hazards, risks, safety and security
- Proximity to local amenities
- Site context, appropriate materials and equipment
- Increased opportunities resulting from topography, existing features and setting



*Simple points to be taken into consideration when locating a play space*

### 3.5 Provide a Wide Range of Play Experiences

#### Characteristics

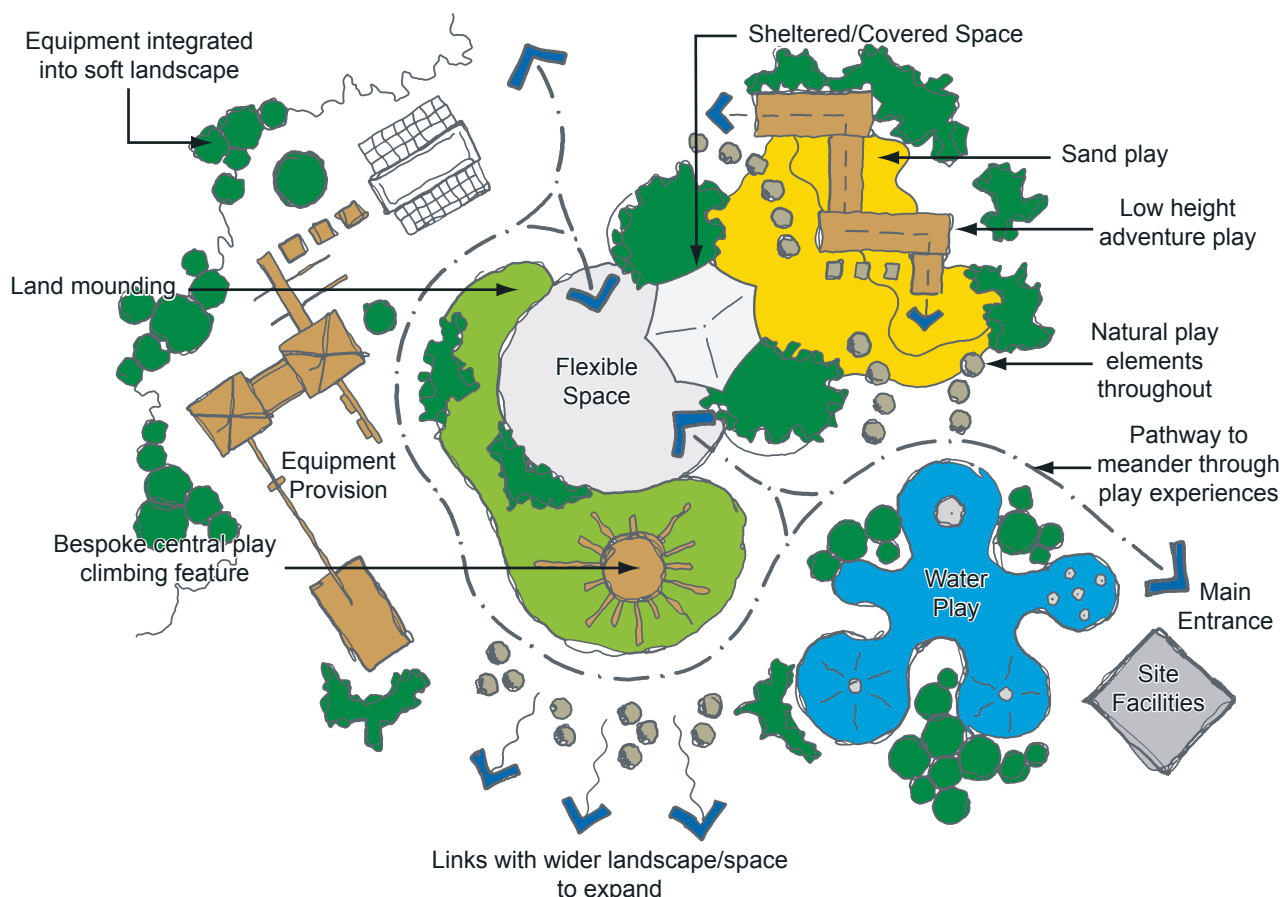
These may include:

- Platforms, stages or steps and meeting areas
- Encourages both mental and physical stimulation
- Mix of surfaces, objects, equipment and varied topography
- Climbing elements and equipment for swinging, jumping, sliding, turning, rocking, wobbling, spinning and balancing
- Diverse and varied paths with potential circuits
- Natural and loose objects to construct with

#### Design Considerations

Provide opportunities for different types of play activity including:

- Creative and natural play
- Active and physically challenging play
- Reflective and quiet play
- Social play and self expression
- Imagination and role play
- Diverse and varied paths and circuits, which vary in width, surface and topography



*Play spaces should provide as wide a range of play experiences as possible*



# CASE STUDY

## *Provide a Wide Range of Play Experiences*

### **Diana Memorial Playground, Kensington Gardens**

Location: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Client: Royal Parks  
Design Team: Land Use Consultants  
Cost: £1.2m (approx)  
Description: Secure fenced children's play area

The Diana Memorial Playground is located in Kensington Gardens. The playground is free for children to use and is supervised at all times. The site attracts thousands of visitors every year and has a large timber Pirates Ship as its centre piece. The design of the playground makes good use of various natural elements.

#### ***Learning points:***

- Provides opportunities for contact with various natural elements i.e. sand, water, stone and timber
- Modified topography creates a varied and interesting play environment
- Natural materials are used to reinforce play themes
- Artworks created using natural materials are incorporated into playground
- Plant material used to provide screening, seasonal interest, texture, colour and scent
- Use of natural materials creates an organic and welcoming environment



*Generous water and sand play*



*Elevated play structures and shock absorbing natural surfacing material for jumping or falling*



*Wet play accommodation in smooth moulded concrete and boulder area*



*Borehole provides intimate water play opportunities*

## 3.6 Encourages Children of Mixed Abilities to Play Together

### Characteristics

- Easy access to site amenities and facilities i.e. cafe, toilets and kiosks
- Equipment designed to be 'inclusive' and suitable for a wide range of ages and abilities
- Sensory gardens, tactile surfaces, visual and aural features
- Loose objects to construct with

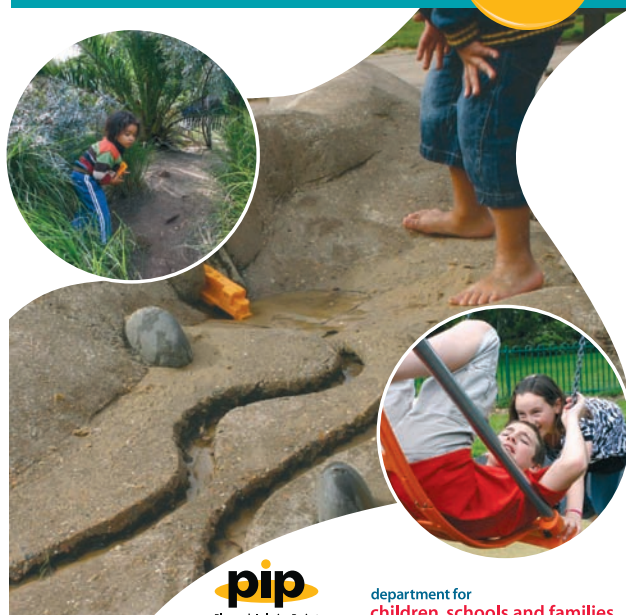
Designers should refer to 'Inclusion by Design' published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, for further guidance on creating inclusive children's play spaces

### Inclusion by Design

A guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments

PIP Guidelines Series No. 3

Kids



### Design Considerations

- Local and National Disability Discrimination Act Guidance
- Selection of equipment to provide support and sufficient room to allow child to be accompanied e.g. wide slides and see saws, back and neck supported and bird nest type swings



Wheel chair access incorporated into adventure play structure at Arc in the Park, Newham



Play equipment suitable for both disabled and non disabled children encourages physical and social interaction

- Stimulation and use of all senses to maximise value of play experience
- Located in an attractive setting within reach of or associated with other recreational activity areas to provide a focus as a meeting area, increase the length of stay and number of people visiting



## 3.7 Meeting Community Needs

### Characteristics

- Visible evidence of community involvement
- High user numbers
- Good levels of repeat visits
- Reflects the requirements and preferences of the community
- Strong sense of 'Community Ownership'
- Informal community surveillance and protection as a result of 'Community Ownership'
- Reduced levels of vandalism

### Design Considerations

- Project brief developed with direct input from local community and stakeholders
- Use of design consultants with proven experience of working on community led design projects
- Well planned community and stakeholder engagement programme
- Use of community and user group design workshops

- Use of fun, interactive and on-site consultation methods at workshops and engagement events
- Involvement of local schools, playgroups, parent groups and Newham's children's and youth council
- Results of engagement process fed directly into scheme design
- Ongoing feedback and approval from community and stakeholders throughout design process
- Creative ways of marking the start and completion of 'on the ground works'
- Engagement process should be tailored to challenge a communities perception of play
- Play spaces should be designed to enable them to continuously evolve and reflect the changing needs of the community



Results of design workshops held with local school children can positively influence design process



# CASE STUDY

## Meeting Community Needs

### Forest Lane Park

Location: Forest Lane Park, Newham  
 Client: London Borough of Newham  
 Design Team: Farrer Huxley Associates and Newham Council Leisure Services  
 Description: Neighbourhood play space

#### Learning points:

- Well planned and advertised engagement process
- Major stakeholders and local councillors actively engaged in consultation programme
- On site 'walkabouts' carried out with children from local schools. Children identified how they played in the park, used the space and explained what they liked and disliked

- On site drop in sessions organised at an on site location, to allow teachers and pupils from nearby schools, local park users and residents to view and comment on initial proposals
- Effective use of interactive and fun, self managing consultation techniques at drop in sessions i.e. images, dot votes and playground drawing exercises
- On site play day to engage with young people, specifically informing the design of a trim trail
- Engagement material directly fed into design proposals



Forest Lane concept design material

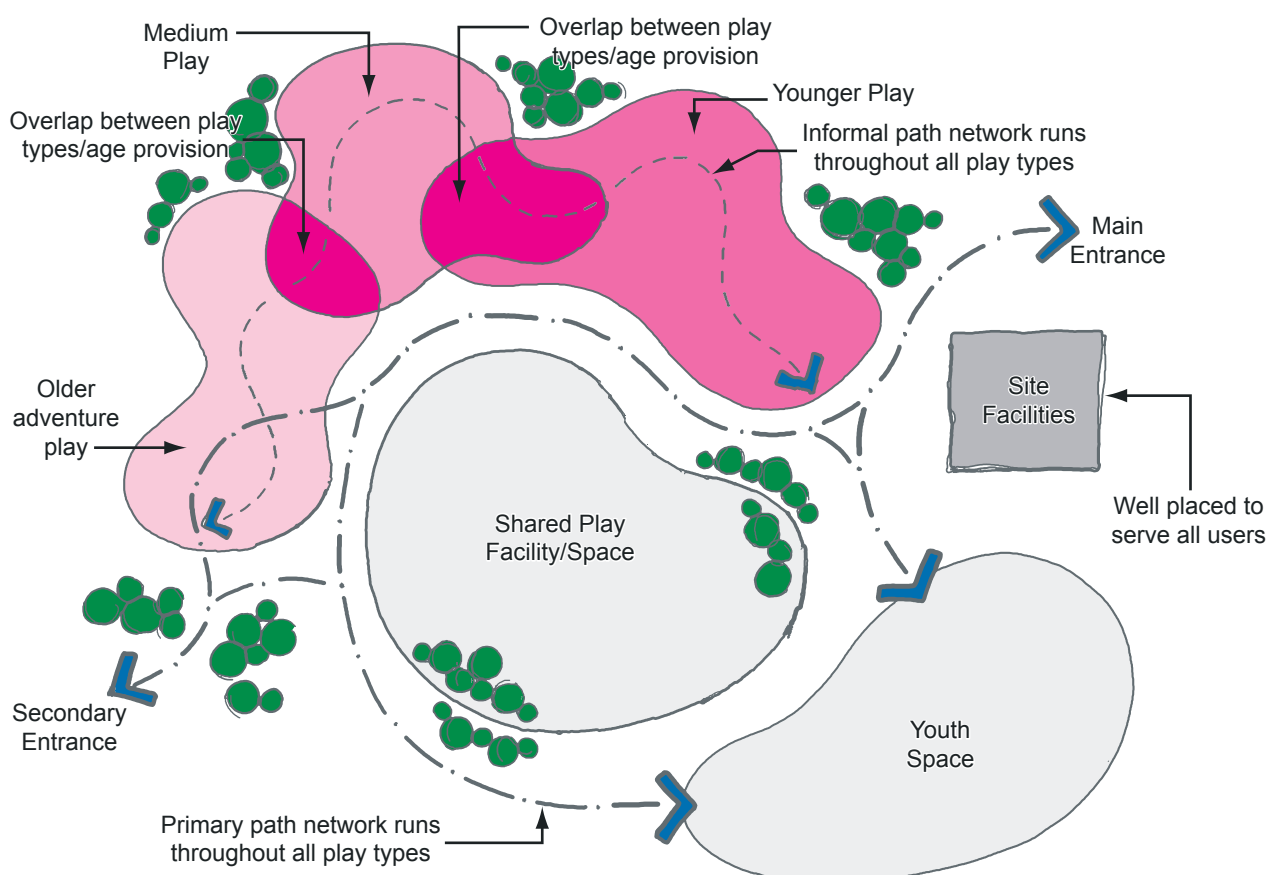
## 3.8 Allow Children of Different Ages to Play Together

### Characteristics

- A range of different equipment types selected to appeal to a range of different age groups
- Creative use of non equipment based play elements
- Able to accommodate different patterns of play i.e. very young pre-school during the day and school age after school and all ages at weekends and holidays
- Encourages social interaction and responsibility between different age groups i.e. large basket swings, where all ages can sit together

### Design Considerations

- Design to be able to maintain interest on repeat visits and as children grow up
- Careful location of site elements to allow maximum use with minimum conflict
- Creative use of natural elements, landscape and topography to appeal to the imagination and widen scope and areas of play
- Layout to allow younger children to observe older children at play and gradually migrate into more challenging activities
- Design to be flexible enough to challenge more confident and able individuals within age groups, allowing them to progress to older equipment or use younger equipment in a riskier way, whilst being in the same space



*Play provision for different age groups should be interlinked and overlap. Play spaces should include facilities which can be shared by different ages. Although separated youth provision should be visually and physically linked*



# CASE STUDY

## *Allow Children of Different Ages to Play Together*

### **Petuelpark, Munich**

Location: Petuelpark, Munich, Germany

Client: Landeshauptstadt Munchen  
Baureferat

Design Team: Landschaftsarchitekten Juhling und  
Bertram

Description: Unfenced play provision for all ages

Petuelpark is a world class contemporary park in Munich, Germany. It has been created over the top of a large road and includes a imaginative playscape which successfully caters for a range of ages.

#### ***Learning points:***

- Well integrated play provision for all ages across the park, youth have not been tucked away in a corner
- No apparent equipment and play area age restrictions

- Young and older play elements intermixed throughout park
- No fences, gates or visually intrusive boundaries allows different age groups to naturally interact with one another
- Provision of flexible open space for play and youth events
- Good use of topography and natural elements provides opportunities for young childrens imaginative play
- Play spaces can be enjoyed by different age groups at different times of the day
- Design maintains interest during repeat visits and as children grow up



*Generous, well designed multifunctional space close to defined play facilities that can be used flexibly for informal play*



## 3.9 Build in Opportunities to Experience Risk and Challenge

### Characteristics

- Designed play equipment using elevated elements and various types of safety surfacing
- Physically challenging terrain for balancing, cycling, skating and climbing



Allowing children the opportunity to jump and land is an effective way of introducing risk in play

- Permits users to learn to manage risk for themselves
- Allows individuals to choose their own level of risk



Challenging climbing opportunities on timber play structure with soft floor to mitigate risk of falling

### Design Considerations

- Safety of children within the designed play space environment
- The importance of 'play value' and 'risk taking' during play
- Can be achieved through the use of both play equipment and more naturalistic play techniques

***'Risk taking is an essential part of play provision. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment'***

Health and Safety Executive SIM 05/2004/1

Designers should refer to 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, for further guidance on building in opportunities to experience risk'



**Managing Risk in Play Provision:**  
Implementation guide

David Bell, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel



# CASE STUDY

## *Build on Opportunities to Experience Risk and Challenge*

### **Arc in the Park, Adventure Playground**

Location: Hermit Road Recreation Ground, Newham  
Client: London Borough of Newham  
Design Team: Design and Build Play  
Description: Adventure playground

Arc in the Park is a free and inclusive adventure playground, which has been designed for children between the ages of 5 and 14, and is located adjacent to the Arc Children's Play Centre. The design of the playground has been heavily influenced by the children who regularly use the centre.



*Design of playground means that children remain above ground for the majority of their play experience*

#### **Learning points:**

- Design has emerged from a thorough and well planned programme of engagement with local children
- Children were taken to visit various, non play space environments for inspiration



*Four raised dens provide children with spaces to hide and provide a space to view over the whole adventure play ground and beyond*

- Children allowed to create their own adventure playground design using model making techniques
- Completed playground is a replica of the children's model

- Local children were given the opportunity to take part in construction works under close supervision
- High involvement of local children has created a strong sense of community ownership
- Design and construction of playground is completely bespoke and provides lots of opportunities for risk and challenge
- Site is staffed for emergencies and security, but direct supervision of children whilst at play is kept to a minimum
- Children are given the freedom to play on equipment how they wish
- Playground provides plenty of opportunity to be above ground, with good provision for jumping and climbing



*Challenging timber rope walk running through bamboo planting leads to a conventional slide*

- Provision of a mud pit provides an opportunity for children to get wet and dirty
- Plant material and tree trunks are dispersed throughout scheme elements
- Spaces for hiding, reflection and quiet play also provided



*Two traditional tree houses are located away from the main adventure playground and provide a quiet space for more reflective play*



## 3.10 Sustainable and Appropriately Maintainable

Sustainability and maintenance are key areas of consideration when creating a new play space.

Sustainability is commonly related to the carbon footprint generated by the construction, manufacture and installation of a scheme. In the interest of economics and practicality it is important that new play spaces are sustainable in terms of scheme longevity, intensity of use and ease of repair and renewal.

### Characteristics

Sustainable and appropriately maintained play spaces:-

- Are well cared for and constructed of simple robust materials which are easy to repair or relocate
- Have a choice of equipment arrived at with involvement of site users and local residents
- Have local resident involvement in maintenance and upkeep
- Contain equipment with few moving parts and have sufficient regular inspections and maintenance operations
- Include robust simple elements or equipment arranged in an imaginative and flexible design
- Have a range of play opportunities that are evenly distributed over and around the entire space



*Use of natural materials to create simple play features*

- May include some items which are short lived but are reusable for another purpose

### Design Considerations

- Choice of materials and equipment affects a schemes carbon footprint and the level of natural resources used



*Tables and chairs constructed from FSC approved timber*

- A few well made, well loved and substantial items of equipment or structures set in a flexible play space and that resonate with the local children and wider community are more likely to survive for longer
- Select equipment that is simple to maintain or has local maintenance requirements
- Static elements are inherently less likely to fail
- Engage with those responsible for ongoing care and maintenance during design stage. Ensure that sufficient resources are available for scheme maintenance requirement as part of the design process
- Regular inspections and maintenance prolong the life of most items of play equipment
- In the interest of maintenance and management, areas of loose fill, sand and water should be set within a dog proof boundary treatment



## 3.11 Allow for Change and Evolution

The requirements of any children's play space can change and evolve over time. For this reason it is important that children's play spaces are designed to be as multi-functional and flexible as possible. The most flexible play spaces are those which are not constrained by equipment, fixed furniture or definite routes, but are those which allow a large amount of interpretation to the child.

### Characteristics

Play spaces which successfully allow for change and evolution:-

- Offer imaginative use of simple 'fixed' site features such as vegetation, different surfaces, undulating or flat topography, vertical features of unusual scale, size, angle and differing materials in various juxtapositions to create a 'playscape' where the imagination can roam, and construct meaning and purpose from the abstract forms
- Enable the child to take ownership of the space, and make them feel they are allowed to be in control
- Allow additional usable space within the original scheme layout, enabling play features to be included in response to local request, fashion, changing demography etc

### Design Considerations

- Children should feel they are allowed to be themselves and to take control of the space using it as they choose rather than being constrained by what is expected of them
- Engagement with children is key when preparing the initial concept design and determining the long term ambition for the space
- A fine balance should be struck between sufficient design input to be interesting but not so much that it 'has all been done' and the space becomes static and lacking in imaginative potential
- Good provision of flexible open space for play events to take place
- Layout to allow for future expansion



*Where possible play spaces shall be designed to allow for future expansion. Conscious decision made by designer not to fence area of sand play, within supervised park environment.*



## 4. Spaces for Youth





## 4.1 Provision for Youth

### Introduction

There are approximately 75,000 young people aged 0-19 living in Newham, almost one third of a total population of 247,000. Newham has a significantly higher proportion of young people (31%) than the London average (24%). As a consequence the Council places great emphasis on youth provision and development across all of its service areas.

Newham's Leisure Services Division supports provision for young people by recognising the importance of establishing a network of outdoor spaces where young people can meet, socialise and be active in a safe and welcoming environment.

Newham's Parks & Open Spaces Development Plan (2009-14) proposes the following;

- Each park will provide a 'core' set of features and facilities including provision for youth activity
- Creation of four 'youth zones' for 12 – 17 year olds at strategic park locations within each of the four Youth Service quadrants

### Design Principles

Newham has developed its own set of design principles to be followed when developing or refurbishing outdoor youth spaces.

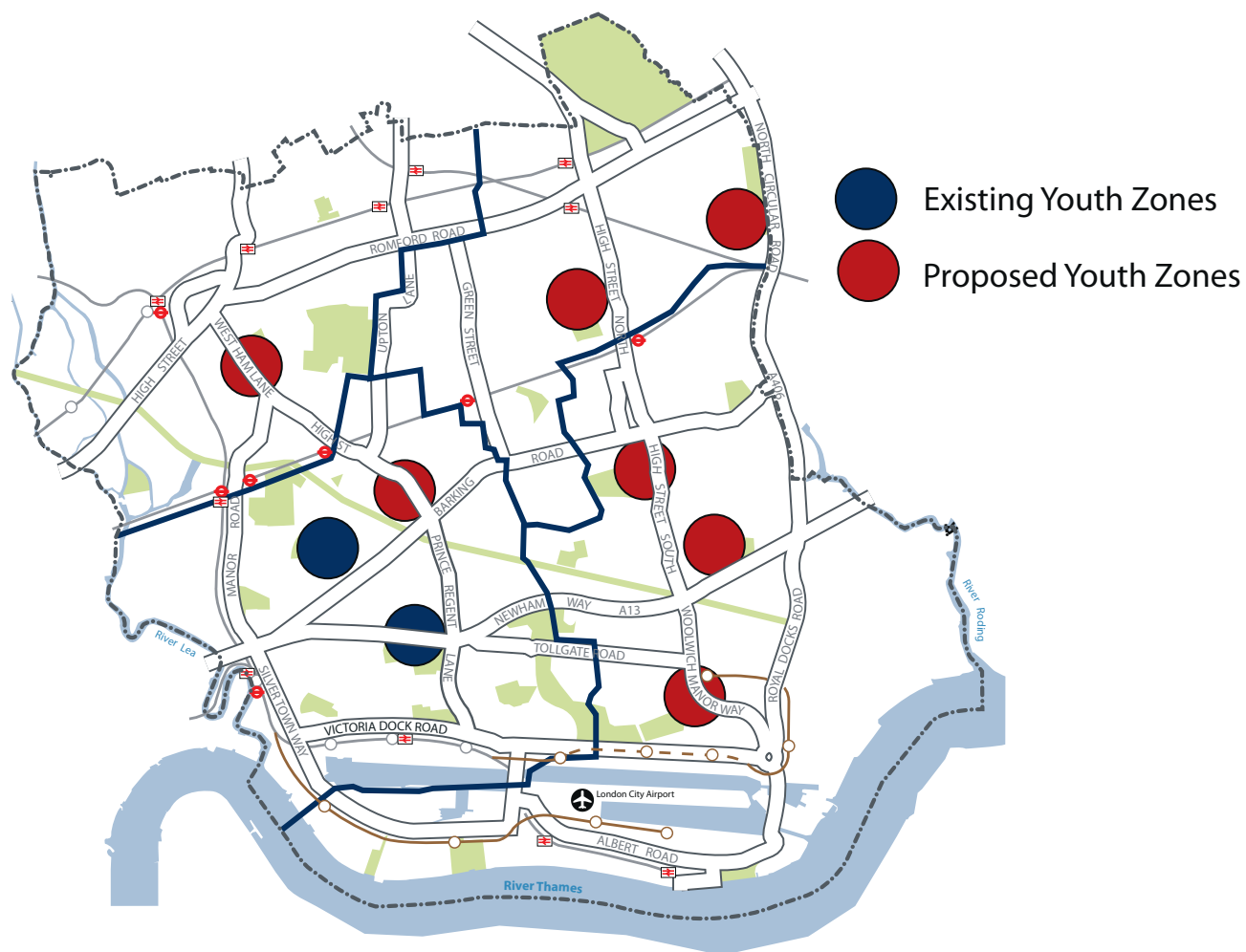
Successful youth spaces;

- **Provide for active and passive recreation**
- **Are flexible and allow young people to define their use**
- **Are secure places that promote a feeling of safety**
- **Reflect the identity of the young people they serve**
- **Are informed by consultation with young people**



*Basic but flexible and effective open space suitable for self defined use by young people. Located near to park facilities complete with lighting, robust seating and a clear view of surrounding sports facilities*

## 4.1 Provision for Youth



Map to show existing and proposed Youth Zones

## 4.2 Provide for active and passive recreation

- Newham's outdoor youth spaces should be designed to provide opportunities for active and passive recreation
- Provision of both active and passive recreational elements should always be inspired by the results of a comprehensive programme of engagement with local young people
- The provision of activity-based elements should always be accompanied by opportunities for passive recreation

### Active Recreation

- The provision of larger recreational elements such as Skate Parks, BMX Pads, Outdoor Gyms and MUGA's are all options for getting youth active through recreation
- Provision for physical activity is an important element of youth recreation and development
- Encouraging young people to take part in physical activity makes an important contribution to their quality of life
- Successfully designed youth spaces enable activity to be enjoyed by both those taking part and watching

**In addition to the outlined youth specific design principles, design teams should refer to Design in Safety and Security Design Principles, outlined in the Master Planning Section of the Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide**

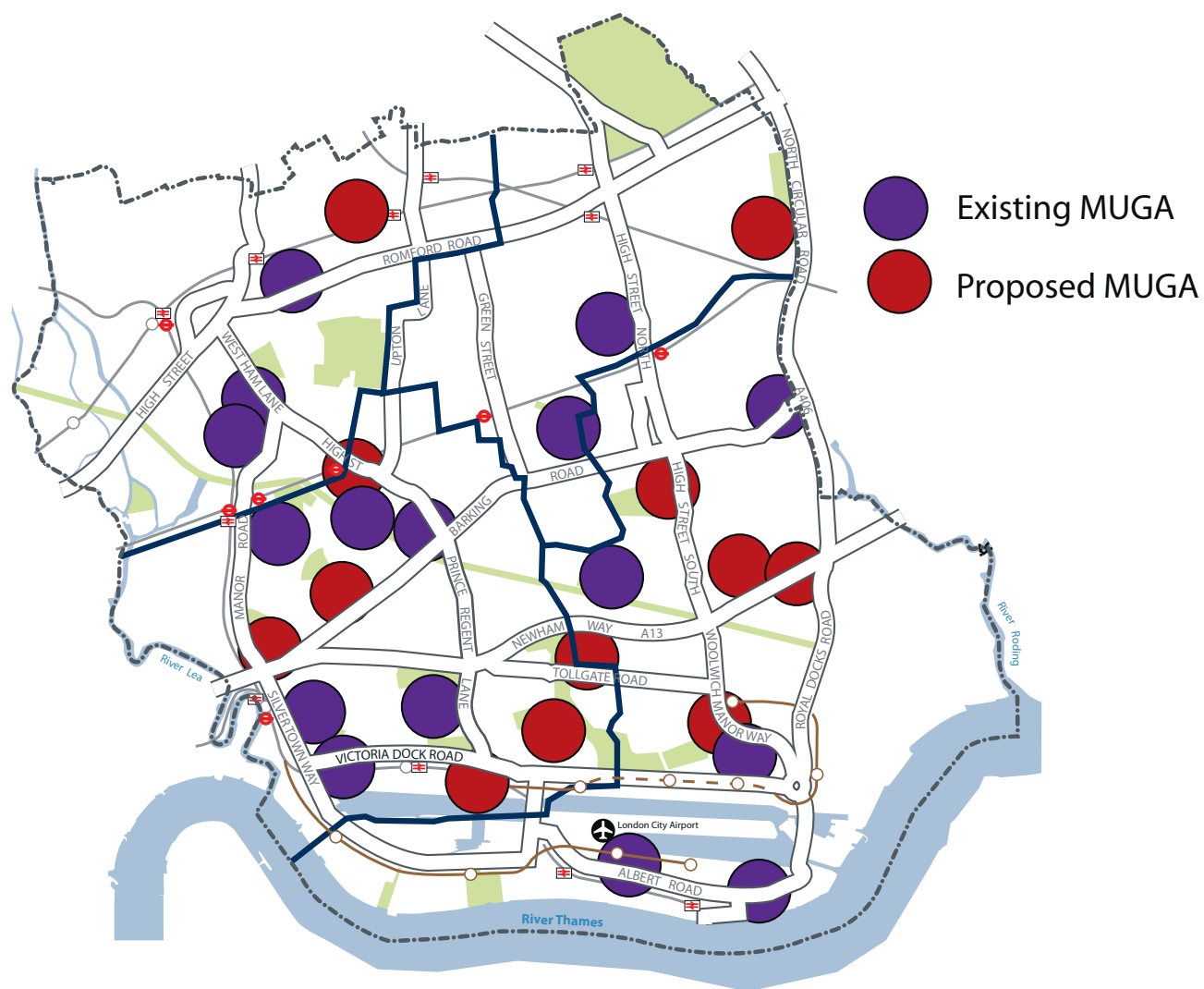
### Design Considerations for Active Recreation

- Evidence of local need based on strategic analysis and community engagement, should always inform the decision to invest in large activity-based facilities
- To allow activity to be enjoyed by spectators, viewing and seating areas should be integrated into the design of large activity-based facilities
- Not all provision for active recreation needs to involve permanent equipment. Youth spaces should provide flexibility to accommodate the installation of temporary equipment e.g. performing arts spaces, climbing walls, inflatable play features and seasonal installations such as ice rinks
- Youth spaces should cater for activity that does not require equipment i.e. classes in dance or drama, organised and supervised outdoor games
- Designers should consider using lateral thinking techniques to identify ways in which activity can be introduced into a space

**Close liaison with local Crime Prevention Officers and Design Advisors throughout the design process is encouraged.**



## 4.2 Provide for active and passive recreation



Map to show existing Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's)

## 4.3 Are flexible and allow young people to define their use

### Flexibility

- Young people require new, exciting activities that will challenge and test them
- Newham's outdoor youth spaces should be designed to be as flexible as possible in order to accommodate a varied programme of organised and spontaneous youth activity
- The ability to accommodate a range of changing activities will sustain repeat visits and maintain the interest of young people
- The design of a space should have the ability to change and evolve, to reflect trends and changes in interests amongst young people

### User-defined usage

- Whatever purpose a space or element is designed for, young people are likely to find their own way of using it
- Newham's outdoor youth spaces should embrace this factor and allow young people the freedom to decide how they want to use the space and its features

### Design Considerations

- Where possible outdoor youth spaces should be located in close proximity to indoor youth attractions (i.e. youth clubs or education centres). In order to develop a relationship between the built and outdoor resources, broaden the appeal of both facilities and increase the value and flexibility of the local youth offer

- The provision of a paved open space that can accommodate a variety of activities is recommended. Such spaces can be used to accommodate events and activities such as performances, dance classes, festivals, moveable climbing walls and competitions. Other possible usages can be identified through the projects engagement process
- Wherever possible internal fencing should be kept to a minimum, to allow greater flexibility of use
- A part-fenced approach to MUGA boundaries can be used to allow alternative use of the hard space i.e. fencing on two or three sides only
- The use of sculptural and abstract, non specific structures, forms and design layouts will encourage users to determine the usage
- Working with artists and other creative professionals will enable design teams to develop designs which creatively encourage user defined usage
- When working with young people during the design stage, artists and creative professionals can provide effective ways of unlocking hidden potential



*Where possible, youth spaces should do be designed to be able to accommodate temporary installation of exciting activities. Activities can be changed throughout the year to maintain interest.*

# CASE STUDY

## Youth Consultation and Design Process

### Plashet Park, Multi Purpose Youth Hub, My Place Funding Bid

Location:	Plashet Park, Newham
Client:	The Sorrell Foundation working with Newham Borough Council
Design Team:	Hawkins\Brown Architectural Consultants, SEA Creative Design Consultancy and William Warren
Description:	Youth informed design process leading to the development of a design for a new multi purpose youth hub

The MyPlace programme aims to deliver world class youth facilities driven by active participation of young people, and their views and needs. In 2008 youth based projects had the opportunity to bid for large sums of funding.

In January 2009 the Sorrell Foundation worked with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and BIG to identify 15 projects to support in their bid for Myplace funding. One of the selected projects was Newham's Plashet Park Youth Hub.



*Young people work with project architects to develop design proposals*

To develop the Newham bid the Sorrell Foundation assigned a creative team and worked with Newham to appoint a young client team. The creative team consisted of high calibre architects, a branding expert, and a world class creative professional. The young client team consisted of 10 local young people and included the Young Mayor of Newham.

The Sorrell Foundation led a series of meetings between the creative team and the young client team. Meetings were designed to develop a close working relationship between the two parties, enable the client team to develop a design brief and to allow the young peoples ideas to be directly incorporated

into designs. The process included inspirational visits and a trip to London for an intensive day of workshops.



*Young people take part in an inspirational visit to the O2 in London*

In response to the young client teams brief, Architects Hawkins/Brown designed a hub divided into three zones. The social zone being for sitting, chatting and relaxing, including a café, games room and offices. The active zone being for play, fitness, dance and climbing, incorporating a dance studio, fitness suite, sports hall and a climbing wall. The calm zone being a place to chill, unwind and contemplate, including a chill out area, a classroom, group working areas and a sensory garden. The design also included external facilities including an allotment area, a bike track and obstacle course.

At the end of the programme the client team took ownership of the project by presenting the final design concepts to Newham's bid team, partners and stakeholders

#### **Learning points:**

- Effective creation of young client team with direct input into design development
- Young client team became authorities on the design of their youth centre, making them an important asset to the ongoing project
- Good relationship formed between the design team and young client team, enabling the concept to effectively reflect the views and needs of young people
- Social, active and calm zones recognise young peoples varied requirements
- Process improved social and potentially vocational skills of young people involved, including their team working, problem solving, communication, negotiation skills, and their confidence and citizenship
- Process gave young people taking part pride in their work and ownership of the proposal



## 4.4 Are places that feel safe and secure

- When creating outdoor youth spaces a careful balance between security and aesthetic quality must be achieved. A space which is safe, secure and robust enough to withstand possible misuse must also appear attractive, inspiring and welcoming to young people
- Every effort should be made to ensure that youth spaces, while safe and secure, do not create the impression of a supervised environment, such as those found at school
- Newham's outdoor youth spaces will normally be unsupervised unless developed as an extension of an indoor youth facility
- Youth spaces should ideally be located to share a park boundary, with a dedicated site entrance direct from the street



*Natural surveillance from near by road and shops makes simple youth provision feel safer for users without the need for formal supervision*

### Design Considerations

- Young people tend to feel safer in busy places, especially when amongst their peers
- Where an outdoor youth space is to be staffed, staff should be located at a distance, where they are not perceived to be controlling site usage, but are within easy reach should their assistance be required
- Where possible youth spaces should be located within easy walking distance from park and open space buildings so that assistance can be sought when required
- Youth based facilities should be located as a key facility and never be marginalised to the rear of a park or open space
- Youth spaces located within parks or open spaces which are locked after dark, may require a site entrance connecting the space with an adjacent off site road or footpath, to allow after hours access
- Spaces should be designed and located to benefit from natural surveillance, however the design of the space should avoid any impression of formal supervision
- Where internal boundary treatments are required, or particular elements require fencing e.g. MUGA's, multiple entry / exits should be provided
- Care should be taken to ensure that boundary treatments are selected so not to appear visually intimidating



*Flexible youth space used for informal sports. Located near to site buildings but not directly supervised*

## 4.4 Are places that feel safe and secure

### Lighting and CCTV Design Considerations

- Youth areas should preferably be lit to extend the length of time the space can be used however the final decision to light a space should be made according to the specific characteristics of the site
- The level and spread of lighting should be ascertained according to specific characteristics of the site and design
- Light levels should allow safe use of the space for passive and active recreation, and ensure the space is safe to use
- Lighting for MUGA's should be designed and specified in accordance with Sport England guidelines
- Different types of light fitting and approaches to lighting design should be explored to avoid the creation of monotonous spaces
- Lighting should be designed by professional lighting designers, and care should be taken to make minimal impact on local residents and businesses
- Light fittings should be selected to be robust, easy to maintain and sustainable
- CCTV is expensive to install and careful consideration should be given before installing it within youth spaces
- CCTV can affect young peoples sense of freedom and deter young people from using the space
- CCTV is at its most effective when monitored by a control room and supported by rangers who can quickly respond to incidents



*Lighting should be robust, easy to maintain and sustainable*



*CCTV can affect young peoples sense of freedom and deter young people from using the space*

## 4.5 Reflect the identity of the young people they serve

- Every space should be designed to have its own distinctive character, yet be visually identifiable as a Newham facility
- The character and visual appearance of the space should reflect that of the youth community which it serves
- The layout of the space should include elements which provide opportunities for young people to personalise the space
- The design of the space should include elements that can evolve to represent the changing identity of the user community, as youth grow up and new users arrive i.e. on a 4-5 year cycle
- Outdoor youth spaces should be designed to have a similar appeal as non-park facilities which are known to be popular with young people
- Outdoor youth spaces should reflect the requirements of both male and female users
- Elements such as planting, temporary artistic interventions, moveable interactive structures, bespoke site furniture and hard landscape elements can all be explored as ways of allowing young people the opportunity to personalise the space
- Designers should draw inspiration from successful non park facilities e.g. London's O2 and South Bank. This can inform the design process with ideas of places that young people find attractive and popular

### Design Considerations

- The inclusion of a community artist or other creative professional within the project team from the early concept design stages of a project can greatly assist in achieving a creative, innovative and Newham-specific design concept
- Collaborative working with local schools and colleges to generate concept design material should also be considered

**Designers should consider the common characteristics of spaces where young people like to be, for example:-**

**Ability to observe activity**

**Opportunity to be observed**

**Hard and clean environments**

**Physical interaction, activity and movement**

**Well populated**

**Offer sensory experiences through visual and audible interaction**

**Access to food and drink**

**Near to schools, leisure centres and other popular youth attractions**



*Designers should look at spaces which are already successful with young people for inspiration i.e. London's South Bank*



## 4.6 Are informed by consultation with young people

- Every new outdoor youth space in Newham should be designed to cater for the needs of the local youth community
- The needs of the local youth community should be established through a thorough and carefully planned programme of engagement, running throughout the life cycle of the project
- A good level of local youth engagement will assist in creating a strong sense of ownership when the project is complete
- Successfully engaging with young people is a specialist task which should always be co-ordinated by a professional with specific experience of working with young people
- A successful youth engagement process is likely to require more time and investment than an engagement process aimed at adults for a scheme of a similar value
- The findings of the engagement process must always feed into the design process, and be visually identifiable in the finished space
- Special attention should always be given to engaging with young people who have disabilities
- Interactive, hands on design workshops can be used as a means of gaining an accurate understanding of young people's requirements
- Artists and creative professionals working as part of the project team will often be able to assist in planning interesting and attractive methods of engagement
- Where possible, project teams should find ways of enabling young people to explore other projects and outdoor environments
- Allowing young people the opportunity to take part in the on site delivery of the project will assist in creating a strong sense of ownership i.e. the creation of bespoke site furniture, artistic elements, supervised construction of basic site elements
- Consideration should be given to setting up a Youth Steering Group, consisting of members of the local youth community, who can take part in the decision making process throughout the design and on site delivery stages of the project
- If successful, the role of Youth Steering Groups can be extended to influence the ongoing management of the space

### Engagement and Design Considerations

- Project teams should always engage with Newham's Youth Service and Youth Council at the outset of the project
- Engagement techniques will need to be tailored to the local youth community, particularly in areas of social deprivation where it is often hard to engage with young people
- Different engagement techniques may have to be used for different age groups, cultural backgrounds, interest groups and levels of education
- Newham's Youth Street Action Team, can assist with engaging with hard to reach young people
- Engagement techniques should be as interactive as possible and be carried out using a variety of different mediums



Young people try out outdoor exercise equipment as part of a Newham engagement event

# CASE STUDY

## Youth Consultation and Design Process

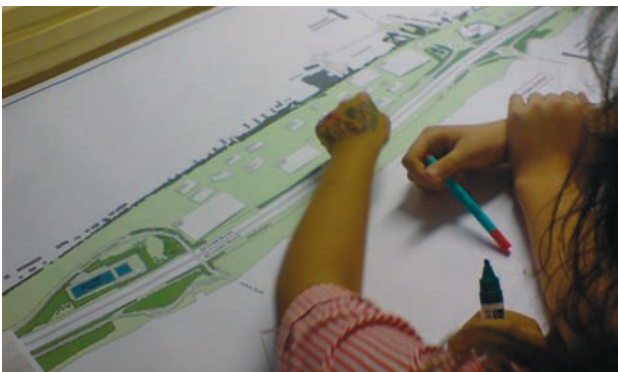
### A2 Activity Park

Location: Gravesend, Kent  
Client: Kent County Council & Kent Thameside Regeneration Board  
Design Team: Landscape & Urban Design Team, Jacobs UK Ltd  
Description: Engagement carried out with local schools and youth groups to inform master plan development

The A2 activity park site is a long and narrow strip of redundant land, sandwiched between the A2 and the urban edge of Gravesend in North Kent. At the start of 2009 a master plan was produced to deliver a world class activity park on the site. The master planning design team ran a structured programme of engagement with local young people to inform the development of the master plan.



*After taking part in structured discussion and brain storming sessions, secondary school children were given the opportunity to have a go at master planning there own park*



### Learning Points:

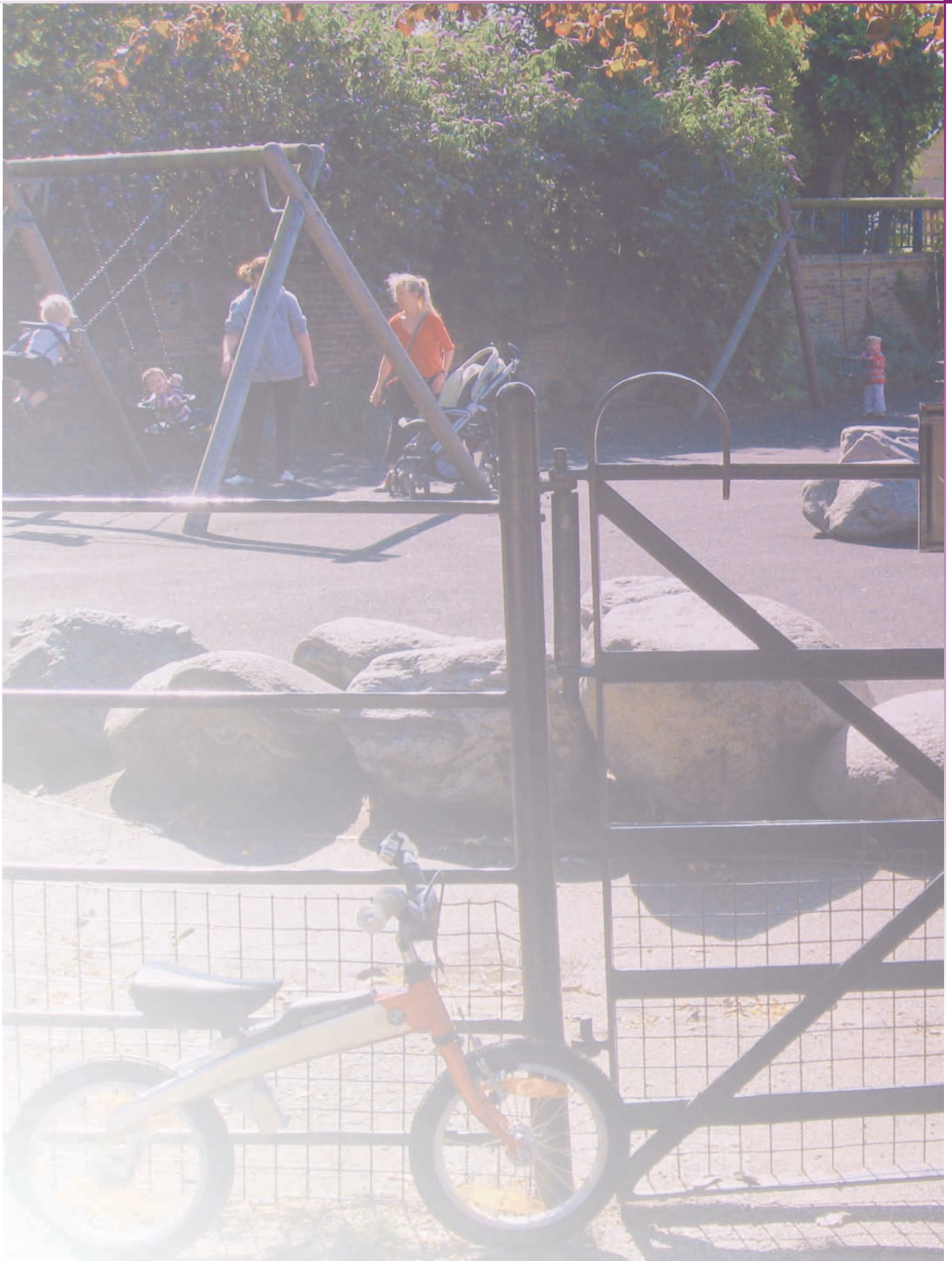


*Sixth form students had the opportunity to review and critique material produced by design teams at follow up workshops*

- Early engagement with a wide range of age groups enabled a better understanding of audience requirements
- Youth User Group set up to establish regular contact with young people
- Master planning workshops carried out with youth user groups, schools and other youth groups to give young people the opportunity to explore different potential uses and facilities
- Young peoples preferences fed directly into master planning process
- Process informed young people about the site restrictions and realistic possibilities in an easy and understandable way
- Master plan development benefited from fresh, young and original ideas
- Process gave young people ownership of proposed youth based facilities including a Youth Hub, Skate Park and BMX track
- Process enabled design team to directly understand which facilities would be popular with youth
- Workshops developed links with schools and youth clubs who are now looking to use the park as a future venue, helping to increase its future popularity and use in the local community



## 5. Safe and Secure Play Spaces





## 5. Safe and Secure Play Spaces

### 5.1 Introduction

The importance of feeling safe and secure within the play environment is a primary consideration and goes hand in hand with preventing anti social behaviour and empowering those who wish to use the space for play. Some design considerations that affect how play spaces are used are described in this section.

### 5.2 Access and Visibility

Designers should aim to achieve clear, obvious, access arrangements which are inviting and well proportioned, to engender a sense of well being and security within the play space.

- Play spaces should be located and designed to benefit from as much natural natural surveillance as possible.
- Entry and exit points should be visible from both within and outside of the play space.
- Narrow paths, pinch points and corners within the play space that can not be seen around should be designed out.
- Play equipment, structures, furniture and other vertical elements should be positioned to allow for comfortable circulation around the play space, and be located in areas where they can be viewed from all angles.
- Seating for parents and carers should be positioned to allow a good level of observation across the site.



*Unobstructed sight lines across play space enable parents and carers to have clear visual contact with their children. Clear lines of vision into play space from pathways, hedge height is appropriate to allow clear views into play space and natural surveillance is designed into this play space at Petuel Park, Munich.*

## 5. Safe and Secure Play Spaces

### 5.3 Boundary Treatments

Play spaces should only be fenced in situations where it is unavoidable to do so.

Alternative types of demarcation or separation such as planting, boulders, log roll, gabions, ha-ha's, and other types of land form should be considered where possible.



*Gabion walling can provide an interesting and robust alternative to traditional boundary treatments*

Designers should be creative in defining what constitutes a boundary and integrate elements to add interest and variety of uses i.e seating with fencing, stepping stones, pergolas, trellises, planters, this encourages use and dispersed surveillance of the whole area.



*Where fencing has to be used, a low level railing style fencing which allows good views in and out of the site is preferred*

### 5.4 Planting

Planting should be positioned to retain good visibility throughout the play space and allow views into and out of the area with particular attention given to points of ingress and egress. At the same time planting should also complement the layout and equipment.



*Hard wearing shrub material*

Consideration should be given to the structure of planting, for example clear stemmed trees underplanted with low shrubs allow views through, defensive prickly planting deters access and sprawling plants close to paths restrict circulation.



*Mixed tree and meadow planting*

Select species and maintenance regimes to allow natural surveillance while retaining the visual amenity and character of the play space. Light dappled shade is more attractive than heavy dark shadows. Plant species used should not be poisonous or hazardous.



## 5. Safe and Secure Play Spaces

### 5.5 Community Involvement

Engagement with the local community, including Crime Prevention Design Advisors, should be carried out at key stages during the design and planning process, to promote a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. Repeat engagement enables design teams to identify local areas of concern and demonstrate that they have been addressed. The design team must be prepared to reach out to specific groups in the community and not rely on them just to attend public events.



*Hand made model made as part of community engagement process for Arc in the Park, Newham*

### 5.6 Maintenance

Consideration should be given to scheme maintenance requirements and implications throughout the design process. Where possible designers should make every effort to design out elements which will be problematic to care for. Consultation should be carried out with maintenance teams at key stages in the detailed design process.

Children's play spaces and play equipment should be regularly inspected by a qualified Landscape Manager or Play Equipment Inspector.

Inspection and maintenance of play equipment should always be carried out in accordance with the manufactures recommendations.



*Play equipment to be inspected and maintained by either a qualified Landscape Manager or Play Equipment Inspector*

Where a naturalistic approach has been taken to play, a slightly more advanced approach to maintenance is required. Maintenance teams can refer to the 'Natural Play Maintenance Guide' published by Play England for guidance on caring for natuaralistic play spaces.

A maintenance manual should be prepared for all new and refurbished play spaces upon completion. This should be issued to the party responsible for maintenance of the completed project.





Newham London

# Design Guidance - Neighbourhood Greens

Parks and Open Spaces Design Guide

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## 1. Introduction





## 1.1 Introduction

Within the Newham open space portfolio there are a number of smaller sites ranging from 0.5 Ha to 1.0 Ha in size whose potential value to local communities is not fully realised.

The majority of these sites are located in densely populated areas and currently lack the range of features and facilities to promote and sustain increased levels of community use. Newham is therefore looking to maximise their potential by developing them as Neighbourhood Greens, which will typically serve a very local catchment of approximately 200m.

Considered in the context of a borough with a relatively low level of public open space provision at 1.1 hectare per 1000 population these sites present an important opportunity to enhance Newham's overall outdoor recreational offer and improve access to open space for local communities.

The development of Neighbourhood Greens will greatly assist in working towards the vision that every resident will have access to high quality, safe and sustainable parks and open spaces by 2014.



Map to show location of proposed Neighbourhood Greens

## 1.1 Introduction

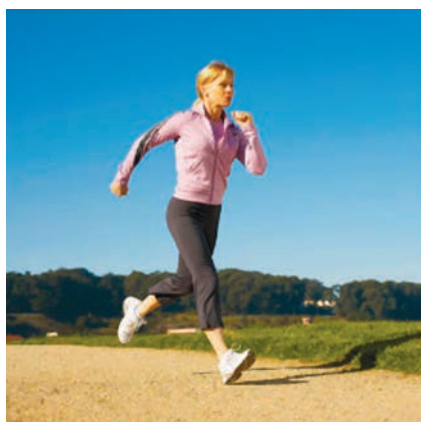
### Objectives

Key objectives of developing Neighbourhood Greens in Newham include:-

- Improving access to open space and environmental quality at the local level
- Creating new opportunities for social interaction within local communities
- Improving health and well-being through convenient contact with the natural environment and opportunities for outdoor recreation

Potential functions and activities include:-

- Community food growing
- Displaying local public art and community visual projects
- Active and passive recreation
- Appreciation of nature and biodiversity
- Informal and formal social contact
- Community meetings, activities, festivals and fetes
- Children's play
- Recreation for youth
- Personal fitness
- Small to medium scale sports provision







## 2. Design Principles



## 2.1 Design Principles

The design and development of Newham's Neighbourhood Greens should be undertaken in accordance with the following Design Principles.

- **Informed by Engagement**
- **Deliver Appropriate and Locally Relevant Solutions**
- **Ensure Distinctive Character**
- **Ensure Access for All**
- **Deliver Environmental Excellence**
- **Design in Safety and Security**

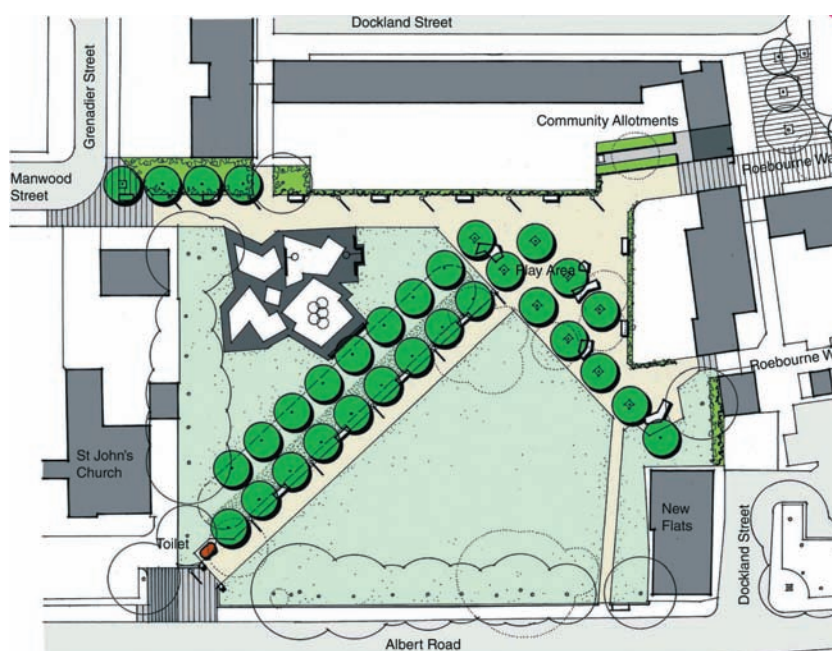
Details of these design principles can be found in Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Design Guidance for Master Planning.

The priority of a Neighbourhood Green is to meet the needs of the local community at a very local level. Therefore in addition to these design principles, the following specific community-based design principles should be followed.

- **Respond to local community needs**
- **Bring communities together**
- **Deliver an appropriate selection of elements**



Before and after images to demonstrate Pier Road Neighbourhood Green proposal



Master plan proposal for Pier Road Neighbourhood Green



## 2.2 Respond to local community needs

The planning and development of Neighbourhood Greens should be focused on meeting the needs of the local community which can be broadly summarised as anyone who lives within 200m or 5 minutes walking distance of the site.



*Not successfully responding to local community needs can lead to a space being under used and in some instances vandalised*

### Characteristics

A Neighbourhood Green which successfully responds to the needs of its community will:-

- Show signs of positive community involvement and ownership
- Be better cared for
- Have higher user numbers
- Be less likely to suffer from vandalism and misuse
- Be a worthwhile investment

### Design Considerations

- A thorough programme of engagement, targeting immediate neighbours and stakeholders should run throughout the design and implementation process
- The engagement programme should be planned and managed in line with recommendations given in Newham's Parks and Open Spaces Design Guidance for Master Planning
- Where possible design teams should work closely with existing park user groups, involving group members in the planning and decision making process



*Project teams can make the most of engagement exercises by displaying design proposals in popular public places*

- Design teams should consider the creation of a project specific community steering group, made up of both existing and potential users
- Design teams should develop efficient and hands on methods of combining engagement and design development



# CASE STUDY

## Neighbourhood Greens

### Abbey Gardens – Harvest Garden

Location: Bakers Row, Stratford  
Client: Initiated by Friends of Abbey Gardens through Modus Operandi for London Borough of Newham  
Description: Temporary Community Harvest Garden Project  
Design Team: Somewhere and Newham Urban Design Group

The Harvest Garden is part of 'What Will the Harvest Be?' A Somewhere project by Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope initiated by the Friends of Abbey Gardens.

The community harvest garden has been created on a protected piece of land in East London, not far from the 2012 Olympic Village. The site contains the remains of a 12th century Cistercian Abbey and is adjacent to a recent extension of the Docklands Light Railway.

The Harvest Garden is envisaged as a three year installation to be replaced by a permanent Neighbourhood Green proposal. The design has been developed through a successful engagement programme.

#### Learning points:

- Successful involvement of 'Friends of Abbey Gardens' group throughout project planning and management.
- Successful partnership approach with other organisations including London Borough of Newham, English Heritage, Modus Operandi, DLR and London Development Agency.

- Effective use of an otherwise derelict space within a densely populated residential part of the borough.
- Plenty of opportunity for residents to take part in organised 'hands on' horticultural activities and community activities.
- The first two growing seasons at Abbey Gardens has seen:
  - Creation of the dramatic Harvest Garden planting scheme
  - One off Urban Seed Day
  - Harvest walk to other local open spaces
  - Community Picnic
- Honesty Stall (informal shop) to provide community access to the gardens produce and wildflower seeds collected and packaged on the site.
- Resident's interest maintained and new skills shared through the running of regular Garden Club sessions.
- Project has been successful at encouraging local residents to show an interest in growing their own food and has promoted healthy eating.
- New name for site 'Abby Gardens' bears an obvious relevance to local history and context
- Design concept clearly inspired by local history i.e. site of Abbey, 'dig for victory' allotments and early 20th century Newham agricultural 'squatters', the Plaistow Landgrabbers.
- Strong design concept and bespoke flavour as a result of artist involvement.



Local residents enjoy a tour of the Harvest Garden



Image of the 'Plaistow Land Grabbers' on the side of a Portacabin reinforces the projects design concept

## 2.3 Bring Communities Together

Neighbourhood Greens lend themselves particularly well to fostering a strong sense of community because of their close proximity to the communities which they serve. The creation of a strong sense of community often relies on the provision of activities which bring people together.



Image provided by Nina Pope © Nina Pope

*Gardening can be used as a means of bringing communities together*

### Characteristics

Newham's Neighbourhood Greens should:-

- Provide opportunities for local people of all ages to come together
- Provide opportunities for local people to meet whilst taking part in active and passive recreation
- Appeal to people of different cultural backgrounds
- Accommodate existing activities already enjoyed by the local community
- Allow for both informal and organised group activity
- Promote different types of use throughout the day and all year round
- Encourage the use of local space for everyday recreation

### Design Considerations

- Design teams should consider selecting plant material which can potentially be managed by local user groups
- Proposals may provide or enhance facilities for existing local community groups to meet informally and use the space



Image provided by Nina Pope © Nina Pope

*Neighbourhood Greens should be designed to accommodate small scale organised events such as neighbourhood fetes*

- The creation of seating areas, small scale ornamental gardens and courtyards can all provide opportunities for people to informally meet and socialise
- The provision of water, power and simple storage facilities can increase the feasibility of running events and activities

- **Small scale organised events such as festivals, fetes and sports days are particularly effective in bringing communities together**
- **Community planting events and gardening days during the implementation phase all help to bring people together and reinforce a sense of local community ownership**



# CASE STUDY

## Neighbourhood Greens

### Abbey Gardens – Permanent Neighbourhood Green/Community Garden

Location:	Bakers Row, Stratford
Client:	Initiated by 'Friends of Abbey Gardens through Modus Operandi for London Borough of Newham
Description:	Creation of a permanent Neighbourhood Green/Community Garden
Design Team:	Somewhere and Newham Urban Design Group

A permanent neighbourhood green/community garden and associated public realm improvements will be created on this previously derelict and protected piece of land, in East London not far from the 2012 Olympic Village. The permanent scheme will be developed as a continuation of 'What will be the Harvest Be?' a temporary project by Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope initiated by the Friends of Abbey Gardens.

#### Learning points:

- Original masterplan for the permanent scheme will be developed to reflect the success of the temporary harvest garden project
- Design concept to be visually apparent in the implemented design.
  - Archaeological display in paving, outlining the footprint of the Cistercian Abbey located on site, beneath the paving surface.
- Fruit tree orchard, to replicate what would have been grown in the garden of the Abbey with links to a community food growing initiative.
- Limited use of boundary fencing and walling. Boundary fencing runs across space, rather than around the space, protecting the community garden area only, and allowing the public open space to stretch out to meet the DLR station forecourt and the fronts of the residential properties.
- Use of shared surface treatment to highway, enabling the scheme to continue beyond the space and out into the wider public realm, encouraging vehicles to drive at slower speeds.
- Good range of functions within a small space, including:-
  - Community garden
  - Growing Beds
  - Amphitheatre
  - Flexible open space
  - Covered Area
- Community garden to integrate sustainable elements such as solar panels, rainwater harvesting, composting areas and a 'wilderness' area.
- Open nature of design creates a good level of natural surveillance from nearby properties and users of the DLR station.
- Creation of Neighbourhood Green near to DLR station will encourage residents from the wider Abbey Road area to use the space en route to and from the station.



Original masterplan for the permanent scheme will be developed to reflect the success of the temporary harvest garden project



## 2.4 Deliver an appropriate Selection of Elements

The content of Newham's Neighbourhood Greens should be designed to accommodate both small and medium scale functions and activities, and should predominantly be designed for the enjoyment of individuals and small groups.

### Characteristics

Appropriate provision of elements will:-

- Generate greater user interest
- Sustain short visits at regular intervals
- Deter large scale formal sports such as football
- Encourage informal recreation and children's play

### Design Considerations

- Informal recreational activities and games such as boules and petanque are common place in European neighbourhood parks and open spaces. The inclusion of similar opportunities should be considered where a need for informal recreation is identified
- Care should be taken to ensure that features and facilities do not duplicate those found in other nearby parks and open spaces
- Careful consideration should be given to the impact on local residents when locating features or facilities which cause a noise or attract larger numbers of people

The selection of Neighbourhood Green elements should be guided by:-

- Findings of engagement with local residents, existing users, community groups and local stakeholders
- Results of a comprehensive site appraisal and SWOT carried out by the design team at the start of the design process and refreshed in light of consultation findings
- Desk top standard feasibility study undertaken by the design team at the start of the design process. This study should provide an indication as to the level of intervention and activity the site can sustain
- Results of research carried out by the London Borough of Newham



Informal recreational activities and games such as boules and petanque can encourage informal activity



Opportunities to integrate childrens play should be taken where ever possible

# CASE STUDY

## Neighbourhood Greens

### New City Green – Neighbourhood Green Master Plan

Location: New City Road, Plaistow, Newham  
Client: London Borough of Newham  
Design Team: Newham Urban Design Group  
Description: Master plan for the development of an existing derelict open space as a Neighbourhood Green

At present New City Green is an area of grass surrounded by residential properties. The space contains a basic network of paths and a limited number of trees. It has little character and is typical of many open spaces found on housing estates in Newham. The space is consequently underused by its local community.

Newham has identified the potential to develop the space into a 'Neighbourhood Green' with new open space facilities which can be enjoyed by the local community. Newham's Urban Design Group have prepared a master plan which outlines how this can be achieved.

#### Learning points:

- Range of open space elements, selected to cater for different members of the community. Special effort made to provide elements to interest a range of age groups and families in response to consultation.

- Inclusion of a good sized grass area provides a flexibility to cater for a range of uses and provides opportunities for informal recreation and small events.
- Design minimises boundary enclosures, with the aim of creating an open and inviting space which benefits from high levels of natural surveillance.
- Toddler and Junior play identified as the primary requirement of the local community and placed at the heart of the space.
- Generous play provision to provide some much needed 'function based character'.
- Play provision accompanied by other scheme elements will help to introduce a stronger sense of identity.
- Raised community garden to encourage members of the community to grow their own food and promote the eating of fruit and vegetables.
- Raised community garden will also enable the community to have a 'hands on' involvement in the implementation and management of the space, helping to create a sense of community ownership.
- Ecological area used to provide access to and promote interest in the natural environment.



Neighbourhood Green master plan prepared by Newham Urban Design Group





