



Executive
26 May 2009

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture**

Ward Affected:
Willesden Green

Petition - Villiers Road Playground

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-08/09-48

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report is in response to a petition presented to Brent Council regarding proposals to develop and improve Villiers Road open space.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the petition submitted by residents objecting to the refurbishment of Villiers Road playground.
- 2.2 Members instruct officers to implement the proposed refurbishment as detailed in this report, including actions designed to reduce the risk of crime and anti-social behaviour

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Villiers Rd Pocket Park is located on the corner of Villiers Rd and Chaplin Rd, NW10. It comprises approx 0.20ha of open space and is in an area of green space deficiency with no playgrounds within easy walking distance of the park. [See attached location map – Appendix 1]. The open space has been 'fenced off' for public use since July 2007 as a result of 'problems' of vandalism and graffiti and because of instances of anti-social behaviour in the area, in particular after dark. These were in part as a result of the poor design and construction of the open space and features contained within it.

- 3.2 Since having to 'close off' the open space in 2007, Officers have been trying to identify funding to refurbish this open space with a view to providing well designed public open space with play provision for under 14 years age group
- 3.3 As part of the Brent Council recent success in attracting funding for children's play through the Governments Playbuilder scheme, Villiers Rd open space was identified as a high priority site suitable for Playbuilder funding. A mapping exercise was undertaken by the Playbuilder co-ordination group which applied the following criteria for use in determining allocation of this funding, the criteria included:
- Play accessibility
 - Age group 8-13 years old
 - Open Space deficiency
 - Children with disabilities
 - Schools
 - Families on family tax credit
 - Lone parenting
 - Toilets
 - Traffic calming
- 3.4 A summary of the Playbuilder project and a summary of the supporting needs analysis and a location map were circulated to all Councillors by the Neighbourhood Working Team in September 2008. At the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 8th September 2008 Councillors noted and endorsed the Playbuilder project plan which involved improvements to play areas around the borough, including Villiers Road.
- 3.5 A budget of £202k has been set aside for the purpose of improving this site as part of the Playbuilder programme. The programme requires consultation with local people to be undertaken on sites receiving funding. As part of the Playbuilder Co-ordinating group's consultation strategy, Groundwork UK [see Appendix 2] have been commissioned to undertake a consultation exercise on behalf of Brent Council to determine the views of local residents, local children and local community groups. The feedback from the consultation will be used to develop an acceptable design brief so that the open space can be re-landscaped, improved and better managed in the future.
- 3.6 Other criteria determined by the Department of Children, Schools & Families to be considered within the Playbuilder scheme includes [See Appendix 3]
- Play for 8-13 age group
 - Inclusive play
 - Natural play
 - Free at the point of use
- 3.7 A petition with over 50 signatures has been received by the Council objecting to the proposed new playground at Villiers Road Open Space. Officers apologise that it has taken so long to report to the Executive but no physical work has yet started on site. The heading of the petition is attached in

[Appendix 4]. The petitioners request that the site is not re-developed as they feel it causes 'disruption and bad behaviour', including:

- anti social behaviour by unruly children, including 'taking drugs, sexual activity and general mischief'
- Graffiti
- A stabbing occurred in Villiers Rd in September 2008 near to the proposed new play ground
- Two social clubs on Villiers Road cause nuisance and inconvenience

3.8 There is a need to provide good quality and well managed public open space in this area and the area is recognised as being deficient in green space. The GIS mapping exercise undertaken by the Playbuilder steering group applying the criteria listed in 3.3 above clearly demonstrate that this part of the Borough has a need for good, well managed open space and children's play facilities

3.9 Groundwork UK are a national, independent and well respected organisation who will undertake extensive independent consultation of local people, residents, children, schools, etc with a view to determining a design and development brief for this site. This work will also identify future management needs, including how to ensure it remains a safe area. This, along with a safe design, will help to address the petitioners concerns.

3.10 Officers believe the issues raised by the petitioners can be addressed as part of the design brief consultation process and in particular in terms of future site management arrangements. For example, a secure boundary fence and gates can be installed which will be locked at dusk as part of the Parks Service Mobile Warden duties. This should ensure that anti social behaviour which occurred on this site previously in the evenings will be discouraged.

3.11 That local residents, including local children, will input into the design brief will ensure that local people will have greater ownership of the site and will be more likely to use the site more frequently. This in turn is likely to result in less anti social behaviours and enviro-crime in the future. Examples of where similar projects by Brent's Parks Service have been undertaken in this way in the past have proven to be very successful at increasing use and minimising anti-social behaviour (for example Gladstone Park and Mapesbury Dell developments).

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The Playbuilder Co-ordination Group has secured an allocation of £202k for improvements to this site. This is an adequate amount for the proposed works and will include costs for consultation, design fees and construction works.

Approximate Breakdown of costs

• Consultation	£8k
• Design & Fees	£35k
• Construction Works	£159k
Total Costs	£202k

- 4.2 The second tranche of the Playbuilder funding scheme will be drawn down during the 2009-10 financial year and works will be completed during this period.
- 4.3 Should Members not support the proposed improvements at Villiers Road Open Space the Playbuilder grant could be used on other locations identified within the programme.
- 4.4 Revenue costs to maintain this site will be met from the additional growth funding provided in the 2009/10 budget for the additional new post of Assets Inspector whose remit will cover any maintenance works required.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has power under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976) to provide facilities for recreation as it thinks fit (including equipment and assistance of any kind)
- 5.2 The Council has a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can, to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are the following diversity implications
- 6.2 The target group for Playbuilder scheme is listed above in 3.2 of this report. The use of Geographic Information systems, consultation and extensive research which formed a robust needs analysis has shown that the provision of play facilities in this location provides us with an opportunity to meet that criteria and provide good facilities in an area of recognized urban green space deficiency.
- 6.3. Groundwork UK are currently undertaking a comprehensive consultation programme with the identified target groups e.g. 8-13 years old in particular young girls and 8-13 year olds with disabilities in the Villiers Road community. Groundwork will ensure that consultation participants will be representative of the Borough's demography. In addition some of the revenue monies will be used to promote access to disabled young people and their families
- 6.4 Whilst there are identified target groups, the Playbuilder Capital Grant aims to assist in the development of play opportunities for all children, young people and their families. The selection of this site will enable the Council to work together to build a safe, inclusive and enjoyable place to work and live.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

7.1 See paragraph 4.4 above

Background Papers

Minutes from the MEETING OF THE COUNCIL of the LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT held at Brent Town Hall Forty Lane, Wembley, Middlesex on Monday, 8th September 2008 at 7.15 pm

Playbuilder Summary – September 2008

Needs Analysis Summary

Contact Officers

Shaun Faulkner
Head of Service
Brent Council Parks Service

660 Harrow Rd
Sudbury,
Middlesex
HA0 2HB

Phone No. 020 8937 5619
Email, shaun.faulkner@brent.gov.uk

Richard Saunders
Director of Environment & Culture

Appendix 1

Site Map Villiers Rd Open Space



Appendix 2

Groundwork Consultation Project Brief

1. Introduction

The Government's policy objectives, set out in their Every Child Matters outcomes framework, prioritises healthy lifestyles as one of the goals of the Children's Plan. Within the framework, 'a range of recreational provision for children and young people' is a key criterion of the 'Enjoy and Achieve outcome'¹. Building on this, the DCSF has a new agenda on Play and has allocated Play Builders Funding towards the regeneration of play areas across the country. As a result of a fully endorsed local Play Strategy, Brent Council has been awarded Play Builders Status and is now looking to renew play areas across the borough. Villiers Road Pocket Park has been prioritised for the 2009/10 funding allocation.

2. Our Understanding of the Brief

Brent Parks Service have asked Groundwork London to undertake a comprehensive consultation process to guide designs for a small park area to be regenerated in the underused green space on the corner of Villiers Road and Dudden Hill Lane (A4088) in Willesden, Brent.

Brent Parks Service's aspirations for the project are that this small green space is made accessible and of some benefit to the local community. It is currently inaccessible due to temporary fencing prohibiting entry and is overgrown and unattractive.

The funding for the project has been secured by Shaun Faulkner, Head of Brent Parks Service.

Groundwork's role will be to carry out a comprehensive consultation in order to provide the opportunity for local residents of all ages and Willesden's ethnically diverse community to engage in the process of creating their new park area.

Groundwork understands that the landowner of the Villiers Road Park is the London Borough of Brent and Brent Parks Service will undertake all landscape design and contract administration work in-house.

3. Groundwork London

Groundwork West London is a well-established environmental organisation, working extensively on regeneration projects in housing estates, schools, parks & open spaces within residential areas in West London. We are part of

¹ Department for Education and Skills - *Every Child Matters: Change For Children* (December 2004)

a national federation of nearly 50 charitable Trusts, each with the mission to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action.

By involving Groundwork in your plans you will be ensuring that the local community and stakeholders in your project will be effectively engaged in the project and consulted with.

Community, Education & Youth Team

Our Community, Education & Youth Team work with local communities and schools as part of our engagement and outreach work to raise awareness of the environment. They also carry out extensive consultation and community engagement on all physical improvement plans so that all stakeholders feel involved and are able to express their opinion on any plans affecting them.

Consultation is integral to the design philosophy at Groundwork London. Our Community & Education Team specialise in consultations which engage and empower the community, using innovative consultation techniques.

Why use Groundwork for consultation?

- **We take an imaginative, creative and inclusive approach** to consultation and use a variety of consultation methods
- **We are independent and are focused on empowering the community** and increasing community inclusion amongst stakeholders
- **We guide the design process, in response to communities' needs**, to sculpt the land and create exciting and fulfilling recreational spaces
- **We have expert knowledge of the design process** and through having both design and consultation expertise in-house, we are able to ensure effective information flow as the project progresses.
- **We encourage sustainable design**

Schools / Environmental Education

In particular our Community and Education Officers have extensive experience of working with school pupils to harness their enthusiasm and channel their ideas into creative and inspiring new designs. We know that when school children see their ideas brought to life in their school grounds or neighbourhood, they feel a greater sense of ownership over their surroundings.

4. Proposed Project Aims

The project aims to engage all the residents of the surrounding area of the pocket park.

Primarily these will be the residents of Villiers Road, Chaplin Road and the more local residents along Dudden Hill Lane.

The findings of the consultation process will be written into a Consultation Report which will be given to Shaun Faulkner.

Community Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1) Local school children will be engaged through a series of informal workshops and site visits to inform them of the local history of the area in question and to gather their views on their aspirations for the future design of the pocket park. School children from the local primary school St Andrew & St Francis Cof E primary school on Belton Road will be invited to join our workshops and contribute to the design of the inspirational play area.
- 4.2) Groundwork hopes to engage the users of local community hubs in the design process with the view that they will use the park in future for meetings and social events. Events will be held in the adjacent community centre and all local residents will be invited to express their perceptions and opinions of the proposed project. This form of consultation is an effective process and the findings will be recorded in the Consultation Report.

5. Outputs

GWL proposes the following outputs on completion of this phase of the project:

Consultation Report, including design brief	1
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Appendix 3

Needs Analysis Rationale

The identification of sites to be developed has been based on a robust needs analysis underpinned by a set of strategic principles.

The needs analysis was developed taking into account information from the Planning Department's survey of play sites and the Parks Service's information about existing sites, including the audit of the condition of sites and proposed developments which will increase and improve play provision.

The needs analysis has been further informed by GIS mapping of the local area including:

- Access – lacking play space provision v child density
- Play accessibility 400m routes
- Population data - population aged 8-13 & relative deprivation
- Play spaces and traffic calming measures
- Play spaces and location of public toilets
- Play spaces and location of schools
- Play spaces and open space deficiency
- Play spaces and working family tax credit
- Play spaces and lone parents
- Play spaces and location of children aged 8-13 with disabilities by ward
- ABS hotspots.

The principles underpinning the selection of the proposed sites were that site development should prioritise sites in areas where there is:

- High population density of children aged 8-13
- High density housing/multiple occupancy
- Open space deficiency
- Proximity to accessible toilet facilities
- Accessibility for children with disabilities
- Proximity to ASB hotspots
- Proximity to schools, Childrens Centres, shopping areas & other venues where children & parents go

Further, the selection of sites should take account of:

- State of repair
- Sites with potential to add value through links to other funding streams
- The potential to add value to existing planned works already scheduled to meet identified needs.
- Considerations of practicalities for the 1st year spend given time constraints and scheduling year 2 & 3 spend.

The list of recommended sites was agreed as a result of mapping the proposed sites against these criteria according to needs criteria, locality criteria and site criteria

Appendix 4

Details of the Petition

Confidential

Page 1

PETITION AGAINST THE PLANS FOR A NEW PLAYGROUND ON VILLIERS ROAD, WILLESDEN, NW2

15/10/2008 RECEIVED

30 OCT 2008

ONE STOP SHOP
BRENT HOUSE

The local residents of Villiers Road and Chaplin Road, Willesden, Brent, hereby protest the proposed redevelopment of the open space on Villiers Road.

At present, the open space causes disruption and bad behaviour, as well as graffiti. This is mainly caused by unruly children, whether local or not who tend to enter the open space to participate in the smoking / taking of drugs, sexual activity and general mischief.

We, the local residents feel strongly about the proposed redevelopment, as although it has been earmarked towards young children and Mothers, we feel that if a park is built it will attract even more young juveniles, out to cause even more disturbance and this is a cause for concern.

We also feel that the distress caused by the two member clubs on Villiers Rd is enough of an inconvenience and, in order to put our point across we present you with this petition. The petition has been signed by the local residents, made up of mostly elderly people who do not wish any further disruption to our lives.

In the early hours of the morning on September 29th 2008, there was a stabbing on Villiers road, just outside the venue for the planned playground. The next incident could be fatal.

We, the local residents do not wish to feel vulnerable or threatened in any way and ask that you: **Please consider the welfare of the residents**

Name:	Address:	Signature:
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