

Play Provision in Brentford

A Walkabout of outdoor recreation facilities for young people in
Brentford
11th December 2006



West Play
West Play



Working together for a safer London

Walkabout of outdoor recreation facilities for young people in Brentford 11th December 2006

Background

Inspector Lindsey Hannigan Sector Inspector for Brentford, raised concerns of the quality of designated play areas for children and young people of Brentford. In particular the concerns were based on the inability of the Police to be able to signpost suitable areas to young people for them to go to. After a meeting with Mandy Smith coordinator of the Brentford Detached and Out Reach Team (DOT) LBH, it was decided to invite key decision makers on a fact finding walkabout of the designated play areas in Brentford. Luke Kirton of West Play was invited to help organise the event. The following people attended the walkabout: Cllr. Phil Andrews, lead member for housing and representing the Syon Ward Cllrs., Cllr. Ruth Cadbury Brentford Ward, Cllr. Andrew Dakers Brentford Ward, Eileen Evans Hounslow Homes, Inspector Lindsey Hannigan Metropolitan Police, Mandy Smith DOT LBH Youth Service and Luke Kirton, West Play. Following are the findings from the walkabout and new statutory duties and Council Policies that will soon come into effect.

New statutory duties and policies

The following outlines three new statutory duties/policies that effect youth and play facilities in England, London and Hounslow:

1. The following act comes into force in January 2007, Education and Inspections Act Section 6,
'Section 507B LEAs in England: functions in respect of leisure-time activities etc for persons aged 13 to 19 and certain persons aged 20 to 23
A local authority in England must, so far as is reasonably practicable, secure for qualifying young persons in the authority's area access to –
 - a) sufficient educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities; and
 - b) sufficient recreational leisure time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities.

2. The following is currently out for public consultation which ends on the 28 February 2007: Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal recreation, The London Plan, (Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London), Draft Supplementary Guidance. A full copy can be found at www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-children-recreation.jsp

3. The following has recently been adopted by the London Borough of Hounslow: The Hounslow Play Policy, details can be found at [\.. \\\$HounslowsPlayPolicy.docA.ps.pdf](#) Or on the LBH website under Executive Meeting on the 17th October agenda item 8.

Walkabout

- Towers Estate, 'The Pit'

The 'Pit' is situated on the Towers estate between Wickstead and Frasier House. It is a designed sunken amphitheatre that is accessed by stairs leading down into it from two different areas and it is also possible to gain access from the car park level.



It contains a Multi-use games area and a youth shelter. Until recently it also had a large single chain swing (removed for safety reasons after it was vandalised).



As you can see from the pictures the condition of the area is very poor. Covered in graffiti and used as a toilet. Dumped bikes and other litter

including drinks cans are scattered about. The equipment although functional is also in a poor condition with the netting for one goal area removed for safety reasons and the other netting very worn.



- Towers Estate, play areas

We visited two of the play areas, the first outside Cornish House. The play area is designed for under 5's. It was surrounded by a fence and included spring chickens, a slide built into the side of a mound together with a climbing rope. On top of the mound is a small multi purpose frame.



The equipment was in good condition if lacking in imagination.

The second area is situated on the raised walkway outside Bolton House. Also designed for the under 5's and surrounded by a fence. It includes a climbing frame and swings. The equipment was in good condition looking hardly used. Insp. Hannigan pointed out that this area is used to hide drugs. As the raised area is no longer an access point into the flats it is unsurprising that the play area is rarely used as it has limited entrance and exit points heightening the feeling of being unsafe

- Haverfield Estate, Tunstall Walk play area

This is a small play area located between houses in Tunstall Walk, Trimmer Walk and Ealing Road. It is a caged in area with two spring chickens swings and a multiuse frame. There is only one entrance/exit and a small amount of graffiti on the equipment and floor.



In this area members of the group were asked to express how they felt about it. This is some of their thoughts, 'It's like being imprisoned' 'I do not feel safe' 'It's like being in Alcatraz'

- Brent Lea, recreation park

This area is located on the right hand side, just before the pedestrian entrance to Syon Park, opposite the Brent Lea housing estate. It only has one entrance/exit and most of the park is hidden from view from the outside. The first thing you notice on entering the park is a pole that was probably once a dog bin. Dog walkers have been making the effort to clear up after their dogs and with no provision to dispose of the waste are hanging it on the pole. Walking past this area you are confronted with derelict buildings that have temporary fencing around them. This is to stop people entering the built up area for safety reasons. Behind the buildings is a multiuse play area that has floodlights, but they are not working. Next to this is a tarmac area with basket

ball hoops that was probably once used as tennis courts. The walls surrounding the park are covered in graffiti. The place has a feeling of dereliction and abandonment.



- Syon Estate, multiuse games area and adjacent play space
This area is located off of Rowan Road at one end and adjacent to the Rose community centre at the other. It is a grass area separated by a path with one side designated for dogs and the other a play area. It has a multiuse games area without floodlights.



The multiuse games area was stacked high with leaves both inside and outside. The play equipment was spread out over the grass area with one swing out on its own. We didn't have a close look at the play equipment but it lacked imagination in both design and location.

- Heston Farm, play area

This area was visited as it was deemed a fairly good play area to be used to contrast what we had seen in Brentford. The area included an under fives play area, landscaped grass mounds, a tarmac area with a youth shelter and basket ball hoops and a caged in multiuse games area. Next to that is an under twelve's fenced in play area. Beyond the designated play area is a small copse of trees used as a den/camp and a large mound with rocks and public art.



The multi use games area had floodlights that can be operated by young people by pressing a button on the side of a lamppost. While on the visit we spoke to a local teenager who told us that her favourite play memories of the area were playing in the den. It was also pointed out that adults would sit on the grass mounds while the children and young people played in and around the site. It was also noted that there was very little anti-social behaviour on the estate.

Conclusions:

The play areas we visited in Brentford were of poor quality, either through poor location, design, maintenance, play value or a combination of some or all of these factors. This compared with the Heston Farm play area that was well maintained, had good but not great play equipment, a natural play environment for the whole community to engage with and a sense of ownership by the children and young people.