

# **Playground refurbishment consultation October – November 2018**

## **A programme of refurbishment for Parks and Playgrounds**

Sports, Leisure and Culture have been working on a programme of improvements to parks, playgrounds and sports facilities to be carried out over the next four years. This year (2018-19) we will be upgrading three playgrounds to make them more inclusive. The playgrounds identified for the first work are those that had the lowest rating in our recent annual safety inspection.

We have also identified parks and sports facilities (tennis courts, basketball courts and MUGAs – Multi-Use Games Areas) for ‘facelifts’ and for upgrading. Where a site has been identified for several types of upgrade, we will aim to look at the site as a whole. We do not have funding for a full refurbishment of most sites, but we do want to take a coherent approach.

## **What we did**

Tower Hamlets Parks and Open Spaces Team have consulted children, parents and local residents on the playgrounds at St John’s Park, Stepney Green and Ropemakers Field. The consultation took place over a 4 week period beginning with onsite consultations during the school autumn half term holiday. Over that time we gathered ideas from 215 children and 168 adults.

## **What did people tell us?**

Most people were positive about their local playground, lived 5 to 20 minutes from their playground and used it daily or weekly. Only a very small proportion of children visited without an accompanying adult.

Children and adults came up with useful ideas and suggestions, all of which will help us to improve parks and playgrounds.

## **Key messages**

- Updating all sites and replacing existing play equipment.
- More adventurous equipment: at Ropemakers Fields children like the idea of a large ship theme unit to replace the castle which was removed for safety reasons.
- At St Johns children enjoy the big slide, though all feel it needs replacing. Improvements need to be made to the mound to make it safer.

- The rope swings in St Johns and large spider net at Stepney Green are popular.
- Children of all ages said they still enjoy traditional play and they want more swings, slides, monkey bars and roundabouts, as at busy times there are queues to use them.
- Parents with very young children want more suitable play equipment, including cradle swings and smaller multi use pieces.
- The importance of the playgrounds being accessible to children and adults with disabilities was raised for all sites.
- People want good access to the playgrounds for wheelchair users and fully inclusive play and sensory equipment.
- Good play surfaces are important to children and parents, they want this addressed at all of the playgrounds with attention paid to areas around swings, below climbing equipment and at the bottom of slides.
- Most like separation between areas for older and younger children, but lots of parents said it is important to be able to see their children in both areas at the same time. They suggest layout changes at St John's and cutting back or removal of some hedges at Stepney Green and Ropemakers Fields.
- Site safety is important; at Stepney Green and Ropemakers people are happy about fencing around the playgrounds. At St John's people would like fencing around the whole playground to keep children safe and discourage people with dogs. Parents want better signage giving contact details to report issues or use in case of emergency.
- Improvements are needed around cleaning and maintenance at playgrounds. There are also concerns about anti-social behaviour. There are no simple answers to managing antisocial behaviour, but suggestions made like changing layouts, adding bins and re-siting benches could reduce some of the problems. Parks and Open Spaces continue to work to find more effective ways to tackle ASB.

## **Overview**

Plans for improvements to all three playgrounds were warmly received. Children, parents and teachers are keen to continue being involved with TH Parks and Open Spaces to make their local playground an enjoyable, stimulating and safe place to play.

## **What happens next?**

The results of the consultation will inform the plans to improve all 3 playgrounds. Improvement work on each of the sites will take place between

the end of January and the end of March 2019. We will make sure that playground users are informed of this in advance.

## **St John's Park Playground Consultation**

In total 94 children and 62 adults gave their feedback on the playground: the consultation team spent a day in the park, visited a local community café, heard the views of Cubitt Town School infant and junior pupils, had parents at the school complete questionnaires, and heard feedback from St Johns Tenants and Residents Association.

The information collected showed that 61% of those we spoke to live within 5 mins walk from the playground, 73% visited it daily or weekly and 85% of children only visit with an adult.

### **Feedback shows people like**

- The variety of play equipment
- The size and overall appearance of the space
- Children like the more adventurous equipment, but also still enjoy playing on swings, roundabouts and monkey bars

### **Things that need improvement**

- Fencing to be installed around the play ground
- Replacement of the play surface
- Reorganise the playground layout to make it easier for parents to see their children
- Replacement of the play equipment, including the big slide
- Make improvements to the mound (where the slide is located) by using safety surface on the sides of the mound, and making it easier for all children to use
- Improve cleaning and maintenance

## **Stepney Green Playground Consultation**

The consultation had feedback from 69 children and 56 adults. The team spent a day in Stepney Green, heard from parents and children at Whitehorse Adventure Playground and others visiting Stepney City Farm.

The information collected told us that 66% of those contributing to the consultation live within 5 minutes' walk from the playground, 80% of them visited daily or weekly and 91% of children visited with an adult

### **The feedback showed that**

- Children like the more adventurous play equipment, particularly the large spider net
- People like the variety of different equipment in enclosed separate areas for different age groups
- They also like the playground's size and its attractive surrounding planting

### **Things that need improvement**

- Replacement of play surface
- Replacement of the old play equipment, adding more adventurous equipment like a multi-use unit, more swings for both age groups and more for very young children like cradle swings and sprung equipment
- Improvement to disabled access to the playground and more play equipment suitable for children with disabilities
- Reduce the planting between two play spaces to improve visibility for parents visiting with younger and older children
- Increase number of benches and tables in the playground
- Improve maintenance of planting beds and hedges and include more flowering shrubs

## **Ropemakers Field Playground Consultation**

The consultation heard from 52 children and 50 adults. The team spent a day in Ropemakers Fields playground, heard the views of Cyril Jackson Primary school children and held a feedback session with their parents.

The information showed 54% of those contributing to the consultation live within 5 minutes of the playground, 60% visit daily or weekly and 66% of children always visit with an adult.

### **Feedback shows children and adults like the playground because**

- It's a good size space, with separate areas for younger and older children with pleasant surrounding greenery
- The playground is enclosed and away from roads
- There is play equipment for very young children

### **Things that need improvement**

- Replacement of the old equipment, adding more adventurous equipment for older children and a large multi-use unit to replace the castle that has been removed.
- Improved equipment for younger children
- Replacement of the play surface.
- Create shaded areas and shelter from the sun
- Increase number of benches and tables within the playground
- Improve cleaning of the playground
- Improve maintenance of the area, including management of the planting beds and hedges
- Clearer signage with contact information for reporting problems