

Proposed play and urban games facilities for Washington

Resident's update 2

You may recall receiving a resident's update in January 2009, in which we outlined proposals for play and urban games facilities to be located in Glebe Park. We promised we would communicate the outcomes from the consultation and will do so in this newsletter.

A copy of this update is being posted or emailed to all residents who responded to the consultation and provided their contact details. In addition we are delivering a copy to all households who received our first update. Once again, we thank Wessington and St Joseph's Primary Schools who have agreed to distribute copies to residents via their pupils.

The City Council ran an extended consultation exercise and collected resident's feedback on the proposed play and urban games facilities via email, telephone, written letters and forms and at meetings. The views of you, our residents, are of paramount importance to us in planning,

developing and delivering services on your behalf.

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the consultation exercise. The information you provided has been studied and presented to your elected Members. Your Councillors want to ensure that residents are advised of the facts associated with the project and understand the City Council's commitment to providing high quality play and urban games facilities for children and young people and the reasons behind this commitment. This update provides information on our next steps and how you can get involved.



Play Pathfinder programme
funded by
department for
children, schools and families

Overview

Your elected Members have considered the consultation feedback, facts and ideas. The value and need for wheeled sports park facilities in Washington is without doubt and elected Members are committed to providing the young people of Washington with a wheeled sports facility. It is recognised that further consideration and more analysis of potential locations across Washington needs to be undertaken. This will be completed through a consultation process with young people, residents and your elected Members. The process will consider other locations, in addition to Glebe, which conform with required play standards as a minimum. This process must take place within a timescale that ensures the project remains eligible for Play Pathfinder funding, which requires the facility to be built before March 2010.

A number of concerns have been highlighted during the consultation by residents in the Glebe area and we have endeavoured to address these below. We also received plenty of positive feedback and this too is included for your information.

“The development will increase Anti Social Behaviour”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

The Washington Local Multi Agency Partnership (LMAP) brings together key partners including; Northumbria Police, Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue, Youth Offending Service, Gentoo, Sunderland City Council and elected Members. The role of the LMAP is tackling crime, disorder, fear of crime and substance misuse to ensure that local residents are and feel secure. The partnership meets on a regular basis to review community safety within Washington and works to prioritise and agree actions that will both prevent and resolve community safety issues.

...the LMAP is supportive of this development and consider that it is important to provide young people with places to go and things to do...

Feedback received via your LMAP: “Washington Village and Glebe Park do not suffer from a great level of disorder at present and the Police and civic authorities alike have looked favourably on projects and amenities directed at young people. LMAP funding was made available to the Washington Boxing Club project in November 2008 to attract young people from the area, this (play and urban games) project is in the same area, the LMAP has strong bonds with such projects and will continue to support them.”

Residents can be assured that the LMAP, which includes Northumbria Police, understand the concerns and recognise that, while fear of crime may be high, there are low levels of anti-social behaviour. Tackling anti-social behaviour and public perceptions of it are key priorities for Sunderland. The Police consider the open environment and good visibility of the proposed location for the play and urban games development will enhance its safety and security. The LMAP is supportive of this development and consider that it is important to provide young people with places to go and things to do.

In the City Council’s experience, providing young people with somewhere to go and something to do and promoting local ownership results in the facilities being well used by young people and less likely to be targeted by a small number who behave in an anti-social manner. The City Council acknowledge concerns regarding the development being unsupervised, but the evidence drawn from the city’s 100 play and urban games sites tells us any problems are likely to be minor and sporadic. The Play and Urban Games Inspection Team undertake regular site visits to ensure that they are safe, clean and presentable. In addition anyone who wishes to report an issue associated with perceived anti-social behaviour can call the 24 hour Neighbourhood Helpline on 0300 1000 101.

Whilst some residents expressed concerns about anti-social behaviour, others considered that this development was a good idea and would have a positive impact by providing facilities for young people. There was a view that young people in Washington need more facilities, places to go and things to do.

“The development will have a negative impact on the environment”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

Washington conservation area

The proposed development, at its nearest, is approximately 190 metres from the Washington Village conservation boundary; it would be substantially screened from view by

intervening plantations. The development could not, therefore, be said to compromise part of the setting of the conservation area or impact on its character or appearance.

The City Council’s recently adopted Washington Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (2008) acknowledges the open space benefit to the conservation area of Glebe Park, particularly where it sits alongside ‘The Avenue’. The park’s attractive tree belt to the west side of the Avenue provides a highly desirable approach to Washington Village from the south. However, the proposed development will not be visually intrusive to any part of the conservation area, due to its size, position, design and because it will be screened by trees.

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Environmental impact

A few residents have suggested the need to undertake an ‘Environmental Impact Assessment’ (EIA). The City Council has not done this because, under the EIA Regulations 1999, the nature of the development does not require us to do so.

These Regulations have two schedules. Schedule 1 covers major developments such as oil refineries and power stations. Schedule 2 identifies a range of descriptions, each of which has a threshold size and criteria attached. Whilst ‘Tourism and Leisure’ is one category, this refers to large-scale developments including caravan sites, golf courses and holiday villages. The wheeled sports provision is not governed by the descriptions in the Schedule 2 sub group and therefore no reason why the development would require an EIA.

The City Council understands from some residents that a population of bats can be observed in Glebe Park. Bats are protected under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The proposed play and urban games development does not involve the demolition of buildings, removal of trees, or the installation of floodlighting and therefore the work does not contravene any Regulations within the Act.

Even where bats do exist, such works are not prohibited, but care must be taken and special measures considered

“The development will increase road traffic”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

The proposed play and urban games facility is for children and young people living in Washington. There are approximately 2300 children and young people aged 0-19 years living within 1km of Glebe Park. The City Council's experience from other facilities in Sunderland is that during peak periods of use, approximately 40 young people would access the facility at any one time. Many of these young people would arrive at the site either on foot, by bike or public transport. For the small number of young people arriving by car there is designated car parking for Glebe Park, near to the proposed facility.

Safe access from the Glebe estate and the centre of Washington is via footpaths, subways and footbridges. The City Council recognise residents' concerns, particularly regarding the crossing of Parkway and have discussed how to incorporate an improved safe crossing point.

“The proposed development will be an eye-sore”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

Some residents have expressed concerns that the development will be unattractive. The City Council has welcomed suggestions on how to develop the design and this could be achieved through a slight lowering of the development, while creating additional land mounds and tree planting. At the same time care would need to be taken not to restrict the visibility to the extent it would compromise safety and security. It has been suggested that anti-graffiti paint be used on the side panels of the development and inter-generational community arts projects could be considered.

All of these suggestions are very welcome and will be taken into consideration. A drawing that illustrates how a wheeled sports park may look is below.

“The development will be a health and safety risk”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

Play is critical to children and young people's health and development. It contributes to their social, intellectual, emotional and psychological development.

Residents supporting the development considered that there would be a positive impact on the health of young people who would be exercising, participating in sport and undertaking fun, physical activity.

Children and young people need and want to take risks when they play. Play England and the Government's National Play Strategy recognise the need to bring back adventure, challenge and risk into the play environment. The theme of National Play Day 2008 was to encourage the shaking off of the 'cotton wool' culture surrounding attitudes to play.

Obviously it is important that this is balanced with a need to ensure that our young people are safe. All play developments within Sunderland are designed to ensure that they meet the relevant safety standards and are independently RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) checked on completion. Sunderland City Council regularly inspects and checks all play sites to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

“The development will have a negative effect on the economy”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

We know that, for many of our residents, the opportunity to participate in activities at no cost is of very high importance.

A few residents have said that the proposed development will have a negative impact on the local housing market. Residents will be aware that there is a current downturn nationally on house prices, although slower in the North East in comparison with some other regions. Data indicates that selling prices of detached houses in the local area may have increased by 16% in the period Nov 07-Nov 08. The council does not consider that providing enhanced amenities in a local park will negatively impact the local economy, given their appeal to families. It must be noted that a wide number of other factors will influence house prices.

“The project will be funded by developer contribution”

“There is no evidence to suggest it will”

The budget for the wheeled sports park is £131,000. The majority (£90,000) is funded by Government Pathfinder funds – Sunderland City Council was one of only 20 local authorities who successfully bid for this money. A small amount (£12,655) is from City Council play funds. Only £24,395 is from local housing developments, where the developer did not wish to develop play on site but planning conditions remain to ensure provision is improved locally using these funds.

How you can get involved

In the next two weeks a further update will be provided to all residents via the local media and city council website. The update will detail arrangements for the next phase of consultation, where you can nominate additional possible locations for the wheeled sports park.

In the meantime if you have any queries not covered in this update please telephone 0191 561 4590 or email wheeledsportspark@sunderland.gov.uk



Ideas to soften the design of a wheeled sports park

For updates on this and other play and urban games developments please go to
www.sunderland.gov.uk/leisure



If you would like a copy of this leaflet in an alternative language, large text, Braille or audio format, please telephone 0191 561 1235.

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