

MILLFIELDS PARK PLAY AREA

Our aim for the refurbishment of Millfields Park is to create a playful landscape that will inspire and challenge the local children who use this play space. We hope it will create and enhance a strong community spirit and become the heart of the area for children and their parents or carers. The design inspiration has been framed by the brief and by the guiding principles as laid out in the Hackney Play Strategy 2007 - 2012.

Present Reality

The existing play space is large but has no structure to its layout so when we were on site we observed children playing randomly with no sense of creative or interactive focus with each other or the environment. Parents seemed to 'hover' around as children played not allowing them to be independent or experience self directed play which is so important for the outcomes of play. Our design has introduced zones which are age and ability related which will encourage children to play according to their physical, mental and emotional requirements resulting in an enhanced and beneficial play experience with outcomes that will support the overall development of each child.

Design Aspiration

Our aim has been to maximise the play experience for children by retaining the items of equipment that have good play value and longevity to ensure that the maintenance implications for the council are minimised. The swing sets will be retained with new chains and seats and the frames refurbished to match the new colours on site. When on site we talked to the children to ask what their favourite items were, of the 12 children we spoke to, without exception every child said swings were their favourite play item. The existing Kompan climbing unit has a high play value and creates a good focal play opportunity and was most used by the children on the site, this is to be retained and refurbished. Due to its popularity on site, the train seat will be retained and refurbished as it has been incorporated into the new design.

Referencing Section 1.6 of the Play Strategy 'Guiding principles for play environments', we have used 5 of the key points to frame our design.

Playing with Identity

Millfields Park needs its own identity with enough structure to stimulate play and offer the opportunity for socio-dramatic play. We have created a 'Time Traveller' theme which children of all ages will be able to relate to. The central focus is the all inclusive 'Wheelspin roundabout' set flush into the ground which facilitates access for all. It provides a sensory movement experience a socially interactive opportunity but also serves as a central focus to stimulate creative play.

Time Machine

The roundabout represents the 'time clock' and spins round past the clock numbers leading out to the 'time-machine train'. From there children can then go and explore the six new zones.



Prehistoric zone

A combination of equipment and thermal tarmac graphics create this zone using a trail of Robinia constructed equipment which represent unearthed bones. Also, stone boulders are located adjacent to the undiscovered 'rain forest' where children can follow dinosaur prints play on the dinosaur and climb high across the nets and tree house to follow their own play ideas. The Inclusive Rainwheel provides an added sensory level to the area mimicking rainfall.



Futuristic zone

A more contemporary play zone with different materials and use of stainless steel. The IXO multi unit has height as well as rotational and climbing elements to provide high play quality on a single structure. The 'robot' defines the space and this character could be designed by the children during consultation and used on the final design layout. A space bike and spinning climber complete the zone which targets a mid-range age group.



Medieval zone

Equipment has been laid out to stimulate role play and interaction by the introduction of a number of smaller pieces of equipment set out as a 'jousting scene' complete with drawbridge and themed panels and thermal tarmac graphics. The inclusive oak orb can be moved to produce sound from the internal rolling ball. This area engages with the children's imagination and creativity and themed play panels offer a fun photograph opportunity for all the family.



Story Telling Corner

It is always important in a play space to provide a quiet contemplative play space for children who need time and space to relax, this is especially important for children with ADHD who require 'down time' to avoid over stimulation. We have positioned this in the corner of the site. This has been located adjacent to the existing Kompan unit and linked by graphics. The use of QR codes attached to the seating can provide a link through to the Hackney Library Service to promote reading and story telling.



Turbo Zone

Challenge and risk is important for all children but especially for the pre teen/teen age group. We have created a zone where such challenges have been provided with a sky rail zip. It is a difficult skill to master and will encourage children to return to play competitively or co-cooperatively with their peers.



Overall we have designed a play space to meet the needs of all children. We have taken the key principles of the guiding principles for play environments particularly in relation to:

- Challenge and risk taking
 - Playing with identity
 - Movement
 - Opportunity to play with other children and to explore feelings
- We have included items that are accessible and provide an opportunity for inclusive play via equipment and a design that is not exclusive but inclusive for all children and their families.