

Client:

THE ROYAL PARKS

Project:

OLDER PEOPLE'S PLAY FEASIBILITY STUDY

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CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	Older People's Play – a background	
1.2	Definitions	
1.3	The proposal, and the purpose of the play area	
1.4	Demand and anticipated use	
1.5	Case study 1 Dam Head Park, Manchester	
1.6	Case study 2 Heathfield Recreation Ground, Whitton, and Hampton Common, Hampton, Richmond, London	
2.	The site	11
2.1	Existing facilities and access	
2.2	Options for location of the new facility	
2.3	Chosen location	
3.	The design and setting	15
3.1	Play equipment	
3.2	Signage	
3.3	Surfacing and Installation	
3.4	Access and inclusion	
3.5	The Royal Parks as wider setting	
3.6	Marketing the new facility	
4.	Maintenance and liabilities	27
4.1	Inspections and maintenance of equipment within the Park	
4.2	Liabilities	
4.3	Manufacturers warranties	
4.4	Routine maintenance	

5.	Recommended Equipment	33
6.	Outline costing	35
6.1	Equipment	
6.2	Surfacing/paths	
6.3	Fencing	
6.4	Signage	
6.5	Other costs	
7.	Planning Context	38
7.1	Designations	
7.2	National Planning Policy	
7.3	Regional Planning Policy	
7.4	Local Planning Policy	
7.5	Planning Recommendations	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Older people's play – a background

Play is defined by the Children's Play Council as "freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated", and is recognized as one of the ways in which children learn about the world around them. The benefits of access to high quality playful landscapes are widely acknowledge, and recent research is now highlighting benefits for all stages of life, from childhood through to old age.

We are now living in an increasingly ageing population. In 2006, 20.5 million people were aged over 50, up 690,000 since 2001. By 2040, the number of people over 64 in Britain is expected to rise from 9.5 million to 15 million (Source - Age Concern). Staying actively is recognized as a way of both preventing accidents and illness and promoting longevity.

A study by the University of Pennsylvania in 2008, of people aged over 64 showed that aerobic exercise such as walking can boost maximal oxygen intake by about 25% within 3 months, effectively decreasing the biological age by about 12 years. This could also extend a persons functional independence, which is lost when maximal oxygen intake drops.

Other positive effects of aerobic exercise are reduced risk of disease, faster recovery after illness, reduced risk of falls because of maintenance of muscle power, balance & co-ordination, reduced risk of obesity, onset of diabetes, stroke, several forms of cancer and osteoporosis.(Source - British Journal of Sports Medicine, Dr R Shephard "Maximal oxygen intake and independence in old age". April 2008)

Studies have also highlighted the positive benefits of exercise within a green environment on mental health and well-being. The charity Mind, in association with the University of Essex, ran two studies in 2007, to investigate the benefits of 'Ecotherapy' as a natural, free and accessible option to boost mental health and well-being, and a way of reducing dependency on prescribed medication. The conclusions of the studies

clearly showed a significant benefits in term of mental health and well-being for those people who were actively engaged in some form of outdoor activity, and 'Ecotherapy' is being developed as a clinically valid treatment option and as a core component of an adequate public health strategy for mental health. (Please see www.mind.org.uk/mindweek for further details of the studies and the full report)

The provision of playful landscapes with facilities and access for all is increasingly acknowledged as an essential component in building a social, safe and active community, with benefits for all. The addition of appropriate, playful facilities for 'older peoples play' can establish new meeting places providing opportunities to stop, chat and exercise in a friendly, non-critical and, in the case of Hyde Park, an inspirational historic environment.

1.2 Definitions

Within the scope of this report the term 'play' is used to describe activities for adults aged fifteen and over.

1.3 The proposal, and purpose of the play area

The Royal Parks have been approached by the Knightsbridge Association to provide an 'Older Peoples Play Area' within Hyde Park, London. After much consideration a scoping exercise was undertaken by The Royal Parks and the existing Bowls and Tennis Centre was identified as the most suitable location for such a provision.

The proposal is to provide a range of 'play' opportunities for adults which are not currently provided within Hyde Park.

The purpose of the play area for adults is:

- To provide exercise facilities for adults over the age of fifteen;
- To cater for existing users of the Bowls and Tennis Centre and attract new users;
- To locate the new facility within close proximity to existing facilities such as the Pavilion with its café and toilets;
- To provide a facility that parents and carers of the children using the adjacent toddler's play area can easily use, whilst within sight and sound of their children;
- To respond to the demand expressed by the local communities groups (Please see section 1.4);
- The proposal will add another facility within the Park which will be marketed and promoted to adults and especially to the over 50 age range

1.4 Demand and anticipated use

Within the scope of this report several community groups and stakeholders have been consulted to gauge their opinions and level of anticipated support for the older people's play area. These included:

- The Knightsbridge Association;
- Representatives from the Westminster Ward;
- Voluntary Action Westminster;
- Church St Neighborhood Management;
- The Management Team at The Royal Parks;
- Age Concern London
- Age Concern Westminster;
- Steve Riley, Will to Win

Support for the project has been extremely positive with many community groups expressing both an interest and commitment to use the new facility. This new facility will be unique within the area and has the potential to appeal to visitors beyond the immediate locality, becoming a potential catalyst for older visitors to visit Hyde Park.

Whilst the opinions of those consulted has not included detailed predictions of usage, many positive comments have been received which indicate that this type of facility has been lacking within this area and will be very well attended.

“The O.P. play ground is a wonderful idea, we are an ageing society and I think this should be the 'legacy' of the 'social investment' for the Olympic games, a play ground like this is a need in every deprived area, but having one in Hyde park is at least a very good start !!” Maria Cotrini, Camden Networkers Coordinator.

“Just seen the adult play ground, we all think it is great in our office and we would all use it” Jane Buttigieg, Westminster Council

1.5 Case study 1

Dam Head Park, Blackley, Manchester

Date of Installation: 2008

Contact: Mrs Joan Fitzgerald, Dam Head Residents Association Chair.

T: 0161 795 1085

Cost of Project: £15K excluding groundworks, landscaping etc

The older people's play area installed into Dam Head Park in Blackley, Manchester is a project initiated and achieved by the Dam Head Residents Association. With a lack of facilities in the area for older residents, over two years of consultation with local residents and research culminated in the opening of the play area in January 2008.

Inspired by an article in a newspaper about facilities for older people in Germany, the residents association took their ideas to the councils Parks Department who agreed to oversee the project. Funding was provided by Northwards Housing who were keen to see the benefits of the play area for local communities.

The location for the play area was chosen by the local residents, and the site selected was next to the existing children's play area. Equipment was selected from two manufacturers, Wicksteed and Playworld Systems. The residents chose six pieces of equipment which provided a range of exercise options, all of which were low impact.

Installation of the equipment, including ground preparation was undertaken by the Park's Department and so was not included into the £15K budget.

Over a year on, the scheme continues to be a success with regular users of all ages. Joan Fitzgerald, chair of the residents association feels that one of the reasons for the success is down to the location of the equipment within the park. The site is adjacent to the children's play area and so is available for parents, grandparents and carers to use whilst their children play. There have been no reported vandalism incidents, and Joan

Fitzgerald commented that due to the widespread community consultation and strong community spirit, older children and teenagers use the equipment but respect the older people and make way for them. The older peoples play area has provided cross-over benefits to all ages and all members of the local community. Joan also reports that the equipment has had few technical problems.



1.6 Case Study 2

Heathfield Recreation Ground, Whitton, and Hampton Common, Hampton, London

Date of Installation: January 2008

Contact: Gaye Galvin, Service Development Manager, Richmond Borough Council.

T: 020 8891 7496 E: g.galvin@richmond.gov.uk

Cost of Project: £6 – 7K (reduced cost due to initially trialing the scheme)

A company called Fresh Air Fitness approached Richmond Borough Council to trial older peoples play equipment in two public green spaces within the borough. The company is a supplier of the Wicksteed range of outdoor fitness equipment and in this instance, offered to install the equipment in two particular areas so that they could test strength, usage and wear, and collate feedback. A website link was set up for the public to both download exercise sheets and provide feedback. A notice board was set up in amongst the equipment to offer health advice, suggested work-outs and to ask for feedback.

Both play areas have been an enormous success, and the council decided to buy the equipment so the facility could become permanent.

The equipment was installed directly into the grass and had no boundary fence. It soon became clear that the grass surface was suffering a high degree of wear and tear, both with higher levels of footfall around the equipment, and with the swinging action of some pieces of equipment. Mowing the area soon became an issue, so the grassed surface has now been replaced with a wet-pour safety surface which is far more durable.

Whilst the equipment is designed for all ages to use, the council was particularly keen to investigate the possibilities of giving older children and teenagers some facilities in order to distract them from less favorable activities such as vandalism. This has been a success and the play areas are used by a cross section of ages from the community.

To date, there have been no reported accidents or incidents. Prior to installation, the council consulted their insurers who advised that they provide health and safety information which is displayed clearly, along with advice on sensible usage times and a disclaimer notice about using the equipment 'at your own risk'.

There has been no damage to the equipment, apart from an incident of a dog chewing one of the seats, however, it is still not felt appropriate to fence the area.



2. THE SITE

Please see sheet 361-001 for photographs of the site.

2.1 Existing facilities and access

The preferred location for the older people's play facility is within the Bowls and Tennis Centre in Hyde Park, at the junction between West Carriage Drive and South Carriage Drive. The centre, which is accredited by the Lawn Tennis Association has six all-weather courts which are fully accessible to members of the public. The centre also operates a membership scheme, offering coaching and team and match play throughout the year.

The centre also has a six rink flat green bowling green which is accessible to both the public and members of the centre. A very well maintained putting course is also located within this centre, which is well used, especially throughout the summer months.

The entry point to the centre is located to the southwestern corner, within the Pavilion. A new café facility provides hot and cold drinks along with snacks and toilet facilities are also available. Bookings can be made here for the facilities and lessons can be arranged with approved Tennis Coaches.

The Bowls and Tennis Centre has a small toddler's play area which is popular with families after school and throughout the holidays. The centre's opening hours are seasonal with a 4pm closing time throughout the winter months. A metal fence to a height of approximately 1.5m to 1.8m surrounds the entire site, restricting access when the centre is closed.

The Pavilion and tennis activities are run as a concession by 'Will to Win' under licence with The Royal Parks

2.2 Options for location of the new facility

After an initial scoping exercise carried out by The Royal Parks, the Bowls and Tennis Centre was chosen as the preferred location. Within the scope of this report The Landscape Agency have

considered three potential sites within the fenced boundary of the Bowls and Tennis Centre which can be seen on **Plan 1 – Location Options Plan** (361-D-001).

Location 1 –

The first location considered is sited towards the southern boundary of the centre, immediately to the east of the courtyard area, within an area of shrubs, and adjacent to the boundary fence. Advantages associated with this location are as follows:

- Close to the access point, (Pavilion) and its associated facilities;
- Close to the road and London transport networks;
- Close proximity to the existing children's play area, which has proven to be an advantage at other sites (see section 1 - case studies);
- Good visibility from the road and therefore natural surveillance;
- Natural shade provided from the mature trees to the south;
- Equipment will visually blend into the planting;
- Sight of the equipment from the road will encourage new users to make use of the facilities within the centre;
- Will not block or distract from views to the Albert Memorial, located to the west of the centre; and
- The planting here is failing due to poor soil and drainage conditions, and the installation of the play area therefore provides opportunities for a general refurbishment of planting.

Location 2

The second location to be considered was the grassed area immediately to the east of the tennis courts. This is a relatively small area of lawn enclosed by ornamental planting to the northeast. This area was considered less suitable for the following reasons:

- It is too far away from the access point, (Pavilion) and associated facilities;
- It is screened by the tennis courts and planting and may therefore have security issues;
- Hidden equipment will not attract new users;
- Too much association with the tennis courts and may be perceived as a tennis warm up area; and
- There is no association with children's play, which has proven to be popular at other sites;

Location 3

The third location to be considered was the grassed area to the southeast of the Bowls and Tennis Centre. This lawn area is enclosed by ornamental planting to the east, southeast and south and is adjacent to the boundary fence to the south and east. This area was carefully considered as a possible location as it is located close to the access path which runs around the site and has the benefit of natural shade from the mature trees to the south. However, this location was considered less favorable, as:

- The siting of equipment here would dominate the lawn space and reduce the amount of useable lawn within the centre;
- No association with the children's play area which has proven to be popular at other sites;
- The site is too far away from the centre's access point, (Pavilion) and associated facilities;
- Whilst the location is close to the boundary fence and is visible from South Carriage Drive, the planting here may restrict natural surveillance;

- Marketing opportunities will be reduced if the equipment is not visible from outside the centre; and
- There may be issues with the equipment detracting from views to the Albert Memorial, located to the west of the centre.

2.3 Chosen location

Location 1 is the preferred option for the location of the equipment for adult play. Whilst the existing planting on this site is failing due to poor soil and drainage conditions, it

does form a deep dense (8m+) screen from South Carriage Drive. The Landscape Agency considers that the chosen equipment must be sensitively sited within the context of the historic landscape setting. It is considered that whilst the plant screen will divert and detract views of the equipment, the appreciation of equipment from South Carriage Drive would have positive impacts in terms of marketing and natural surveillance and would be viewed within the context of the health and leisure activities available within the centre.

It is recommended that the equipment is sited within the planting in a trail formation, rather than clustered in a formal arrangement. Seating opportunities should be provided for users to stop, rest and chat whilst enjoying the exercise opportunity.

3. THE DESIGN AND SETTING

3.1 Play equipment

A number of manufacturers and suppliers of play equipment for older people have been identified within the scope of this study. The Landscape Agency (TLA) has considered the appropriate ranges of equipment provided by five of the current manufacturers and suppliers. These are:

- Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH;
- Wicksteed;
- HAGS;
- KOMPAN; and
- Playworld Systems.

In considering the equipment, TLA looked at the ranges of equipment available in relation to the benefits to the users in relation to specific and broad range exercise to warm up, stretch, strengthen and warm down. Maintenance, reliability and installation are considered in section 4.

The Landscape Agency has also considered the available equipment in the context of current British Standards and the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, which is outlined in section 4.

Relevant Standards

Equipment for 'adult play' is manufactured to BS EN 1176, even though it is not deemed to be play equipment. BS EN 1176 is not a legal requirement within the UK although it is seen to be a representation of good practice.

Some of the 'adult play' equipment (KOMPAN, X-ERCISE) is tested and certified by TÜV Product Service GmbH according to test programme 55012 for training equipment placed in public spaces. This testing is based upon BS EN 1176 and EN 957.

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

www.timberplay.com

A new range of exercise equipment designed specifically for older adults is soon to be launched by Richter Spielgeräte GmbH. The range, by the Spanish designer Martin Linacisoro has been created to enhance movement, co-ordination and balance skills for older, less mobile adults.

This range is still in development and is currently manufactured from both timber and steel. All activities are low impact and involve gently movements of the body. The range is designed to be laid out in a trail so that elderly users can gently walk between the individual stations, gaining enhanced health and wellbeing benefits.

Wicksteed

www.wicksteed.co.uk

Wicksteed offers the 'Xerscape' range of equipment which is designed to be used by adults and children over twelve years of age. The range was developed and designed in collaboration with Staffordshire University Centre for Sport and Exercise Research as an

"innovative concept, conceived for use in the great outdoor in order to encourage more and more of us to follow a fitter and healthier lifestyle" (Source Wicksteed).

Xerscape offers a broad range of equipment which offers exercise opportunities to increase heart and lung fitness along with general body flexibility.

There is a range of thirteen pieces of equipment, most of which offer the opportunity for two people to exercise together.

HAGS

www.hags.co.uk

The HAGS Gym range is designed for anyone aged ten and over and is designed to encourage healthy living and to support cross generation fitness provision within public open spaces.

HAGS Gym is a range of eleven individual stations intended to provide exercise opportunities for various parts of the body. The range is developed in partnership with Denfit, a company specialising in the provision of outdoor, unsupervised fitness. HAGS is also working with the Young Offenders Institute to provide unsupervised gym solutions in a number of settings.

The Gym range is manufactured in steel with tamper resistant fixings and is coloured red and beige. Collections are available, which have been devised in collaboration with a physician therapist, to ensure a balanced fitness workout.

KOMPAN

www.kompan.com

KOMPAN offers the X-ERCISE range of equipment which has been developed and designed for anyone over fifteen years of age, although it is especially suitable for older adults. The X-ERCISE range has been developed to offer opportunities to benefit from flexible training of the heart, lungs and muscles in an easy and comfortable way.

The X-ERCISE range offers a series of eight options for cardiovascular and aerobic activity, flexibility and muscular strength which can be combined into units which offer similar or different exercise options or can be individually sited.

The individual pieces of equipment are constructed from powder coated steel posts with rubber urethane coated galvanized steel seats and grips. All coverings are weather tested and are UV stable. The range is available in standard colours of grey and blue

KOMPAN are well known for their range of play equipment and this new X-ERCISE range has been developed to the same rigorous standards with a testing and certification process by TÜV according to test programme 55012, which is the first test programme to be developed specifically for training equipment located in public spaces. The range is based upon BS EV 1176 and EN957.

Playworld Systems

www.playworldsystems.com

Playworld systems offer 'LifeTrail' which is specifically designed to provide older adults with the opportunity to take outdoor exercise with the help of a range of 'wellness stations' which offer opportunities to stretch and strengthen their bodies. This range of equipment is specifically targeted at older adults.

A range of ten wellness stations are available which offer opportunities to exercise the upper and lower body, along with balance and stability exercises. Each wellness station is designed with both lifestyle and age appropriate activities, and most of the stations offer additional levels of exercise for extra challenge. Activity panels are presented in front of the user and give clear instructions with both large text and graphic aids.

The wellness stations stand 2.8m in height and comprise a triangular unit with two exercise opportunities and one information panel. The station is constructed from galvanized, triple coated steel posts with polyester powder coat paint which has been tested for colour and gloss retention in a range of weather conditions. A small roof fits over the posts to shed water and is constructed from 6mm high density polyethylene, which has been UV treated to resist fading. Information panels are constructed with 6mm fiberglass-reinforced plastic which is hard wearing and easy to clean.

Two color schemes are available, deep chocolate or bottle green, which have been designed to complement surrounding landscapes.

Extensive research went into the design and construction of these wellness stations and extensive field testing with focus groups has been undertaken.

Installation can be undertaken by an on-site team or by independent contractors. The wellness stations are surface mounted onto a hard surface and require no groundwork preparation other than the surface treatment. It is recommended that these stations be positioned in a route formation rather than in a group, as walking between the stations is an added benefit of exercise which should be encouraged.

3.2 Signage

There are two important aspects to consider when locating this type of play equipment within the Royal Parks:

- Signage is adequately displayed which explains the correct use of the equipment for maximum health benefit;
- Signage is displayed which offers a disclaimer to the effect that the equipment is specifically designed and provided for the use by people aged fifteen years (or as specified by the manufacturer) and over and should not be considered as play equipment.

The Landscape Agency has considered the way in which the manufacturers and suppliers have approached and provided signage and the method to which this information is displayed.

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

Written and graphic instructions are clearly displayed on the timber equipment supplied by Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH, although the steel equipment currently does not appear to have instructions.

One of the stations is specifically designed for 'brain training' and has changeable puzzles designed to keep older minds active and stimulated.

Wicksteed

Wickseed's Xerscape range offers a range of data sheets which advise on the correct use of each specific piece of equipment and suitable routines to achieve maximum results. It is not clear where these data sheets would be located and the individual pieces of equipment appear to have no user guidance attached or in close proximity.

HAGS

Each piece of the Gym range is provided with a label to advise the correct use and benefits of the equipment. The information label is however very small and attached to an upright steel bar. This information is hard to read and may be inaccessible to some users. There is no specific signage to offer general advice on use or a disclaimer restricting access to people of the appropriate age.

KOMPAN

The X-ERCISE range is specifically developed and designed for people over fifteen years of age and KOMPAN stress that as this is not equipment designed for children's play and that it should not be located in close proximity to other children's play offers

suitable for younger age groups, as such close proximity may encourage children to use the equipment. This disclaimer is displayed on the signage associated with the equipment however, an extra sign at the entrance to the site could also be provided.

Instructions are provided on each piece of equipment in the form of a visual aid although there is no explanatory text available.

Playworld Systems

Playworld System's LifeTrail provides signage which is incorporated into each of its wellness stations. A 'welcome station' is installed close to the entry point into the site which gives the user information on using the equipment and advice on the benefits of exercise.

A risk management disclaimer is positioned on each station and a sample risk assessment is included with the equipment. However, there seem to be no specific signage in relation to recommended ages of user groups however this information could be put in by The Royal Parks.

Please see section 5 for The Landscape Agency's recommendations.

3.3 Surfacing and Installation

This feasibility study has considered the various surface treatments which are recommended by the manufacturers and suppliers of the play equipment. As this type of play equipment is not designed and developed for children, it does not therefore have to conform to rigorous safety standards which are applied to children's play equipment. However, for the purpose of this feasibility study, The Landscape Agency has taken advice from the manufacturers and suppliers of the equipment and also considered the aesthetic impact of various surface treatments within the context of the Royal Parks.

The specific recommendations relating to surface treatments are considered below:

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

The equipment range supplied by Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH is not designed to be high impact and as it is not designed to be used by children is not required to be installed onto safety surfacing. The range can be installed onto any surface, hard or soft although appears to be visually suited to a sand or fine gravel surface.

Wicksteed

Wicksteed recommend that the Xerscape range of equipment is installed into concrete foundations and secured via surface bolts. Once the installation is complete any surface treatment can be applied to the site, depending upon the location, aspect and client choice.

HAGS

The HAGS Gym range is ideally suited to either a grassed or bark surface although wear may restrict the life expectancy of either of these surfaces. The equipment range is successfully installed with a Grassmatt FR safety Surface although HAGS stress that the equipment is not covered by the same safety test requirements as unsupervised outdoor play equipment and therefore does not need to be installed onto a safety surface.

A bitmac surface is not recommended due to the stresses placed on foundations when the equipment is in use.

KOMPAN

KOMPAN have no specific recommendations relating to surface treatment surrounding their equipment as this is not considered to be children's play equipment. Each piece of equipment is installed by KOMPAN approved contractors and has approximate 500mm concrete foundations into which the equipment is secured. There is no surface fixing for this product range.

Playworld Systems

Playworld systems recommend that their wellness stations are installed directly onto a 3.35 m² concrete pad, which gives a turning circle of 1.52m which will allow a wheelchair user to access the stations.

Please see section 5 for The Landscape Agency's recommendations.

3.4 Access and inclusion

TLA have considered via consultation with manufacturers the extent to which the equipment ranges cater for the less able bodied wheelchair users, enabling the new facility to be accessible and inclusive.

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

The equipment is not specifically designed to be accessible for disabled and wheelchair users, although the equipment can be accessed from a wheelchair which is sited alongside. Some of the steel equipment appears to be accessible to wheelchair users although the benefits of use seem uncertain.

Wicksteed

The Xerscape range is not accessible to wheelchair users as it is considered to be for physical activity only.

HAGS

The HAGS Gym range has been designed for able bodied persons only and whilst some pieces may be suitable for the less able bodied, they are not designed for wheelchair users.

KOMPAN

The X-ERCISE range from KOMPAN does not appear to have any equipment which is fully accessible to wheelchair users, although it is possible that such users may be helped onto the equipment.

Playworld Systems

Playworld systems offer five activities on the wellness stations which are fully accessible to wheelchair users.

Whilst the provision of new equipment within the Royal Parks should be fully inclusive and accessible to all, it is clear from the manufactures responses above that this particular equipment is designed and produced for the more able bodied. However, the chosen location within the Bowls and Tennis Centre will be fully accessible to all, with equipment which is sited within a safety surface, flush with the entry path. There will be easy access from the entry point and fully inclusive facilities within the pavilion. A sign should be provided within the equipment which states that the equipment is designed to be used by the able bodied and that everyone uses the equipment at their own risk.

3.5 The Royal Parks as wider setting

The wider landscape setting of the Royal Parks, and Hyde Park especially, have been considered within the scope of this report. Hyde Park, once monastic land in the manor of Hyde, was enclosed by Henry VIII as a deer park and was opened to the public in 1637. Landscaping of the park produced the 'picturesque' setting that we see and enjoy today.

There are recognised key views within Hyde Park and those which are relevant to this report are those to and from the Albert Memorial along with views which appreciate the Great Exhibition Site. Locating the new facility within the existing Bowls and Tennis Centre towards its southern boundary will maintain these important historical views both within the site and within the wider landscape setting.

Those buildings within the Park are predominantly listed as of historic importance. Temporary coffee kiosks blend into the landscape and the few children's play facilities are screened from view with sympathetic planting.

Whilst the majority of Hyde Park is planted in a 'natural' style, the Bowls and Tennis Centre to the south of the park offers a formal planting style which is maintained by one full time gardener.

It is felt that the provision of a play area for older people within the Bowls and Tennis Centre will be the least visually intrusive site and the existing mature planting will provide necessary screening.

3.6 Marketing the new facility

TLA have carefully considered all the equipment ranges outlined in section three and in doing so have come to the conclusion that the marketing of this site must be carefully considered. Some of the equipment ranges are specifically designed for the older age

range and, whilst this facility is aimed at 'older' adults, it will be vital to the success and longevity of the facility that it attracts optimum use. Marketing the facility as an 'older' person's area may naturally discourage younger adults and equally older adults may be discouraged if they feel the facility is specifically designed for younger people.

Historically it appears that there has been poor attendance at facilities designed for older adults within the Bowls and Tennis Centre and access for older people to facilities within the Park as a whole, would benefit from a strategic review. A petanque court in the Bowls and Tennis Centre was less than anticipated, and the decision was made to remove it. However, this facility alone cannot be taken as an indicator of the demand for facilities for older adults. Petanque is a game associated with hot, sunny European weather rather than the typical UK climate and its lack of success should not necessarily influence the development of the proposed play area for older people, subject to appropriate marketing.

It is recommended that the correct terminology for the public naming and description of the play area is arrived at through consultation with community groups and key stakeholders.

TLA feel that it is of vital importance that The Royal Parks and Will to Win collaborate on providing a high profile, media led launch event to both advertise the new facility and raise the profile of exercise opportunities within the Bowls and Tennis Centre in Hyde Park.

4. MAINTENANCE AND LIABILITIES

4.1 Inspections and maintenance of equipment within the Park

On a daily basis, inspections are made of all the play equipment within the Park. This inspection is contracted by The Royal Parks. Depending on the size and amount of equipment included in the older people's play area, an additional charge to The Royal Parks of between £32 and £65 per week would be required.

Monthly inspections of all the play equipment within the Park is carried out by Taylor Woodrow. Annual inspection of all the play equipment within the Park is undertaken by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents) and may be chargeable.

The landscape setting within the Bowls and Tennis Centre is maintained by The Royal Parks Landscape Management Contractors. The existing toddler's play area within the Bowls and Tennis Centre is covered by the inspection regime outlined above.

4.2 Liabilities

The installation of a play area for older people must adhere to and be respectful of the following liabilities:

Occupiers Liability Act 1954

The Occupiers Liability Act imposes a duty of care on occupiers of land and premises to all those who lawfully enter and use those facilities. It is defined as:

“An Act to amend the law of England and Wales as to the liability of occupiers and others for injury or damage resulting to persons or goods lawfully on any land or other property from dangers due to the state of the property or to things done or omitted to be

done there, to make provision as to the operation in relation to the Crown of laws made by the Parliament of Northern Ireland for similar purposes or otherwise amending the law of tort, and for purposes connected therewith”.

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act relates to the responsibilities of employers, employees and the self employed with respect to each other and to third parties and is defined as:

“An Act to make further provision for securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work, for protecting others against risks to health or safety in connection with the activities of persons at work, for controlling the keeping and use and preventing the unlawful acquisition, possession and use of dangerous substances, and for controlling certain emissions into the atmosphere; to make further provision with respect to the employment medical advisory service; to amend the law relating to building regulations, and the Building (Scotland) Act 1959; and for connected purposes” (Health & Safety at Work Act 1974)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Discrimination against disabled persons can happen when a service provider fails to comply with their duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons and cannot justify that failure or when a service provider treats disabled persons less favorably than it treats members of public, because of their disability.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) makes it unlawful for service providers to discriminate against a disabled person by either refusing to provide a service which it provides (or deliberately not providing) to members of the public or by providing a lower standard of service, or by changing the terms on which it provides that service.

The Royal Parks must provide access into the facility for all but users must follow manufacturers instructions when using equipment. Less able bodied visitors use the equipment at their own risk as the majority of the equipment is not designed specifically for their use.

4.3 RoSPA

David Walker, Information Manager of the Water and Leisure Safety Consultancy, RoSPA has been consulted within the scope of this report. He has had some experience with facilities such as those proposed within this report and will supply more detailed information to The Royal Parks about the preparation of a risk assessment and inspections before any planning application is made. Early thoughts are that the proposed equipment should be treated in the same way as children's playground equipment, with the same standard (BS EN 1176) being applied.

Recommendations are that any installer of adult play equipment, along with the Royal Parks must undertake a risk assessment prior to the equipment being installed and used.

4.4 Manufacturers warranties

Manufactures warranties for equipment is in line with other fitness equipment for children's play equipment and is outlined below.

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

As this range has not yet, at the time of writing been launched, warranty information is not available. However, it is assumed that it will be in line with the Richter Spielgeräte GmbH warranties for children's play equipment. Please see www.spielgeraete-richter.de for further details.

Wicksteed

Wicksteed offer a twenty five year warranty on all metal parts of the equipment and a five year corrosion warranty for all paint work.

HAGS

The HAGS Gym range comes with a twelve month warranty on moving parts and a five year warranty which covers the finish of the product. HAGS provide a comprehensive parts support facility from its warehouse in the UK and Sweden.

KOMPAN

KOMPAN offer a five year limited warranty on roto-moulded polyethylene materials electrical galvanized coatings, polyester powder coating finished steel parts, and aluminum castings with powder coated parts. A limited three year warranty is available for polycarbonate sign panels and a limited two year warranty on moving parts. The warranty does not cover general wear and tear, surface corrosion on metal parts, discoloured surfaces or failure due to misuse. Vandalism is also not covered under these warranties.

Playworld Systems

The LifeTrail range of equipment from Playworld Systems carries a lifetime warranty on all steel posts and stainless steel, and ten year warranty on grab bars, seat posts and ancillary steel equipment, rotomoulded plastic components and fibreglass signage. A five year warranty is offered on all moving parts whilst a one year warranty is offered for all other materials.

Spare parts are readily available.

4.5 Routine maintenance

Timberplay in association with Richter Spielgeräte GmbH

As this range has not yet been launched, information regarding maintenance is not available. However, it is assumed that it will be in line with the Richter Spielgeräte GmbH maintenance advice for children's play equipment. At the time of writing no information was available regarding spare parts.

Wicksteed

All spare parts are readily available from the Wicksteed manufacturing site within the UK. No maintenance package is available and Wicksteed recommend that the client is responsible for the regular safety and maintenance checks to the equipment.

HAGS

HAGS are happy to assist in developing suitable maintenance schedules with its clients however stresses that maintenance schedules and inspection procedures form a part of the clients 'duty of care' responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and need to be reflective of the usage.

KOMPAN

KOMPAN advise that regular safety inspections are routinely carried out by grounds staff and that in the first year after installation one of the KOMPAN play consultants would make regular visits to undertake spot checks. A maintenance manual complying with BS EN 1176 standard is supplied with each installation and a maintenance package is available at the time of purchase for an additional cost.

KOMPAN guarantee that original parts for the repair and maintenance of each piece of equipment will be readily available for ten years after that model has been discontinued.

Playworld Systems

Playworld Systems provide a routine maintenance schedule with the LifeTrail equipment; however each wellness station is designed to be maintenance free.

5. RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

TLA have considered each equipment range on aspects such as benefits to health, appeal to a wide audience, materials, maintenance, reliability and ease of installation. The visual impact of the equipment is important and the ease with which the chosen equipment will sit within the historic landscape context of Hyde Park.

TLA considers that the majority of the equipment available for older people to use for exercise is of high visual impact with bright colours and materials which have the potential to contrast with the historic setting of Hyde Park and the Albert Memorial. Two of the equipment ranges, Playworld Systems and Timberplay/Richter are designed specifically for less mobile older adults and it is felt that these ranges will attract the least visitors into the Bowls and Tennis Centre. The HAGS and Wicksteed equipment is in the opinion of TLA, visually dated and has the appearance of children's playground equipment rather than for adult use. Instructional signage on both these ranges consists of a small sticker placed on the equipment which is both hard to find, read and potentially leading to confusion. The similarity to children's playground equipment may give a visually confusing message to the younger, regular users of the Bowls and Tennis Centre who fall below the age permitted to use the equipment.

Use of the equipment within the ranges outlines in this report for disabled and wheelchair users is limited, and the only range to fully cater for wheelchair users is Playworld System's Timbertrail, which has specifically designed stations especially for wheelchair users. TLA gave careful consideration to this feel that whilst there will be access for all into the new facility, the able and less able bodied users may access the equipment at their own risk.

TLA considers that the X-ERCISE range manufactured by KOMPAN is the most suitable, for the proposed play area with more a neutral colour pallet of grey and blue. It is felt that this equipment will appeal to the widest audience range, with exercise opportunities which will cater for a variety of users and abilities. Instruction on the use of this equipment is clearly depicted with a visual aid rather than written instruction, and its reliability and suitability for purpose is backed up by KOMPAN's long history of design,

knowledge of safety, experience in the installation and maintenance of children's playground equipment and other physical activity equipment for public spaces.

The X-ERCISE range includes the following stations which TLA consider appropriate for the setting and provide benefits to a range of areas of the body:

Free Runner – Offers an aerobic workout and fitness training to help to maintain a good overall level of fitness. (KPX 101)

Sit Up Bench – To improve posture and help to prevent back problems. (KPX 102)

Flex Wheel – To improve torso strength and mobility, consequently getting better posture. (KPX 103)

Body Flexer – Promotes core strength, which is related to better body posture and lower back pain prevention. (KPX 104)

Cross Trainer - Improving cardiovascular fitness, to improve body composition, health and overall quality of life. (KPX 106)

Power Bike – This non weight bearing, stationary bike allows effective an warm-up and effective aerobic exercising. (KPX 111)

Please see 361-D-002 for photographs of these stations.

The following cost model is based upon the use of X-ERCISE by KOMPAN

7. PLANNING CONTEXT

7.1 Designations

The Bowls and Tennis Centre lies within Hyde Park which is listed as Grade I on the Register of Historic Park and Gardens.

The Bowls and Tennis Centre also lies within the Royal Parks Conservation Area 41, which was designated in 1990.

7.2 National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation

PPG 17 recommends that *“to ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation it is essential that the needs of local communities are known and that Local authorities should also undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use made of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs (such as charges) and opportunities for new open space and facilities.”*

PPG 17 requires local authorities to consider its recommendations when producing Local Development Frameworks (LDF) and Local Development Plans (LDP).

PPG 17 outlines the role of open space in supporting urban renaissance, promoting social inclusion, enhancing health and well-being and promoting sustainable development.

The following quotes in italics are taken directly from PPG17.

Maintaining An Adequate Supply Of Open Space And Sports And Recreational Facilities

Developments within Open Spaces

16. *“The recreational quality of open spaces can be eroded by insensitive development or incremental loss of the site. In considering planning applications - either within or adjoining open space - local authorities should weigh any benefits being offered to the community against the loss of open space that will occur. Planning authorities may wish to allow small-scale structures where these would support the existing recreational uses (for example, interpretation centres, toilets, and refreshment facilities), or would provide facilities for new recreational uses. They should seek to ensure that all proposed development takes account of, and is sensitive to, the local context”.*

The proposed play area for older adults is considered to be small-scale and will both support existing facilities within the Bowls and Tennis Centre and will also provide unique new facilities, for use by the local and wider communities.

Planning For New Open Space And Sports And Recreational Facilities

General Principles

20. *“In identifying where to locate new areas of open space, sports and recreational facilities; local authorities should:*

- i. promote accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, and ensure that facilities are accessible for people with disabilities;*
- ii. avoid any significant loss of amenity to residents, neighbouring uses or biodiversity;*
- vi. add to and enhance the range and quality of existing facilities;*

- vii. *carefully consider security and personal safety, especially for children;*

- x. *assess the impact of new facilities on social inclusion;”*

As the proposed play area for older people will provide a much needed facility for older adults within the area surrounding Hyde Park, the planning application should be considered within the context of PPG17.

7.3 Regional Planning Policy

The London Plan

The London Plan was published in 2004 as a spatial development strategy for the whole of the Greater London region. It was prepared under the Greater London Authority Act of 1999 and the Local Development Scheme of 2008. The London Plan requires that all Local Development Frameworks (LDF) prepared by Borough Councils must conform to the London Plan.

In relation to open space, The London Plan considers that *“open spaces provide a valuable resource and focus for local communities, can have a positive effect on the image and vitality of areas, and can encourage investment. They provide a respite from the built environment, an opportunity for recreation, and promote health, well-being and quality of life”*.

The Good Practice Guidance accompanying the London Plan has a series of aims to respect the open space within London, and recommends that Local Councils manage open space, and encourages them to prepare open space strategies to identify priorities and opportunities based on local needs.

7.4 Local Planning Policy

Summarised below are the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, appropriate to the provision of a play area for older people, which make up the Local Development Scheme.

City of Westminster Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Local Development Framework is being developed by Westminster City Council as a series of documents which will consider and deliver the spatial strategy for the Borough and to provide a framework within which decisions regarding development can be made. The LDF will eventually replace the UDP.

Unitary Development Plan, 2007-2010

A new Unitary Development Plan (UDP), prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, was adopted in January 2007 which replaced the City of Westminster Unitary Development Plan of 1997. The newly adopted UDP is saved in its entirety until January 2010 and at that point Westminster City Council will apply to the Secretary of State to have UDP policies saved beyond this period.

The UDP will eventually be replaced by the Core Strategy and the City Management Plan. The plan sets out policies and proposals for the use and development of land in the city over the next ten to fifteen years.

The City Council's strategic UDP policy STRA 36 sets out the council's general aims for open space. These are: *"to protect and encourage the enhancement of, public access to and enjoyment of, Metropolitan Open Land; and to protect and enhance the existing provision of open space and to promote its additional provision"*. These aims are reflected in the Strategy.

UDP policy (ENV 14 and 15) *“does not permit development on or under public or private parks, landscaped spaces, or gardens (including open spaces on housing estates). Protection is extended to any open space of amenity, recreational or nature conservation value (unless the development is essential and ancillary to maintaining or enhancing that land as valuable open space).*

Other matters such as protection of historic parks and gardens, protection of green corridors, views, nature conservation and biodiversity, sustainability, and trees are also the subject of UDP policy”.

Whilst UDP policy ENV14 and 15 seeks to protect open spaces, it also seeks to encourage public access and enjoyment of those spaces. The play area for older people can not be considered as a development in the true sense as not built structures are being proposed, and the proposed equipment will be visually well contained within the existing planting.

The important views east-west to and from the Albert Memorial will be protected if the play area is located in the chosen area, which is to the south of the view line.

City Plan

With an aim to ensure that the public spaces within the Borough are attractive, well designed and accessible, the City of Westminster’s City Plan was produced in November 2006. The City Plan considers that access to open space has benefits to both the quality of life for its communities and to regeneration.

City of Westminster Local Development Scheme: 2008 – 2011

The Local Development Scheme was first prepared in March 2005 and revised in March 2007.

Local Authorities are required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to produce and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which will inform a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will replace the UDP and Supplementary Planning Guidance which is currently used as a tool for assessing applications for development within the Borough.

City Management Plan

The City Management Plan will set out criteria against which all planning applications within the Borough will be considered ensuring that all development is considered within the context of objectives set out in the Core Strategy. The City Management Plan will replace most of the policies set out in the UDP

Historic Environment SPD

The Historic Environment SPD will inform policies on aspects of the historic environment such as conservation areas, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, archaeology etc. This document will replace previous separate SPG's and will provide links to the adopted World heritage Site Management Plan and any subsequent reviews.

Royal Parks Conservation Area Audit SPD

The Royal Parks Conservation Area Audit seeks to *“guide the protection, enhancement and management of the Royal Parks Conservation Area, by identifying those features of*

special historic and architectural interest which contribute to the local townscape and which the council will seek to protect. It will also identify negative features, opportunities for enhancement and management proposals to guide future change and development within the area”.

The recommended X-ERCISE equipment range by KOMPAN is of neutral tones and will blend into the existing planting. Its appearance is consistent with the context of the enclosed Bowls and Tennis Area and so will not present a negative feature within the conservation area.

The City of Westminster Open Space Strategy

The Open Space Strategy was produced as a result of an Open Space Study which was carried out throughout 2004 and 2005 and provides a framework to assist Westminster City Council in improving accessibility to, protecting and enhancing the quality of open spaces within its boundaries. The plan also assists in development planning and raising the standards of management. The Open Space Strategy also assists in supporting Westminster City Councils S106 planning obligation policy and guidance. The Westminster City Plan aims to *“improve the environment by becoming a more sustainable, greener city; improve wellbeing and health; and make the city a better place for older people, children and young people”.*

The Open Space Strategy informs the Local Development Framework.

The Open Space Strategy considers both open space provision and need, and, through community consultation and audit, has formulated the following conclusions with respect to specific facilities within the open space:

Play Space

- *“Outdoor play facilities in Westminster are generally located within public parks and spaces, within housing estates, and in private garden squares. A total of 56 playgrounds were identified in the audit, but 28 of these had private access only;*

- *At the time of the audit only two of the 57 play spaces were accessible to, and provide play facilities specifically designed for, disabled people (as opposed to inclusive play equipment, which was not specifically taken account of in the audit). These were in Paddington Recreation Ground and Broadley Street Gardens (both in the northern part of the city)”.*

Sport Facilities

- *“There are 9 indoor sports facilities and 18 sites within Westminster which have sports provision in the form of sports courts or pitches. In addition, there are also 30 kickabout / multi-sports courts on Housing Estate Land;*
- *The eight public sports centres in Westminster supplement outdoor facilities located in the parks, and provide for a variety of sporting activities through facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls. Four of the centres are located in the Maida Vale Forum Area, and two are in Bayswater. The latter two centres are particularly important in supplementing the relatively low number of sports pitches found in this area. There are three sports centres located within open spaces; Paddington;*
- *Recreation Ground Sports Centre, Westbourne Green Sports Complex, and the Hub at Regent’s Park. In addition, Hyde Park provides space for informal sports”.*

Facilities for Young People

- *“Whilst play grounds provide opportunities for young children, there are comparatively few facilities which cater specifically for older children and teenagers;*
- *Provision for sports activities are also important for young people. This can take the form of both formal (in the form of sports centres and pitches) and informal*

provision ('kick-about' areas). The Fourth Feathers Youth Club in NW1 provides sports facilities in addition to other activities”.

The Bowls and Tennis Centre within Hyde Park is adjacent to an area identified within the Open Space Strategy as being deficient in publicly accessible play space. A series of public community consultations concluded that “.....*better play facilities for children with the need for more facilities for older children and teenagers is a priority and More opportunities for active recreation, formal and informal sport and physical activity and Better recognition of needs for those with disabilities (and not just wheelchair users)”*

As a result of the consultation process, a series of priorities were established:

- *“Protection of existing open space;*
- *Actively work towards overcoming deficiencies in open space, play space and wildlife;*
- *Improved access to open space for all (including physical access, information on open space, and opportunities for accessing private space);*
- *Improved management and maintenance, including tackling safety and sustainability issues;*
- *Increase opportunities for community engagement and involvement;*
- *Increase opportunities for activities in open spaces, including active recreation, formal and informal sport, organised walks, talks and community events; and*
- *Improve experience of open spaces, including better facilities, particularly for children, young people, older people and those with disabilities”*

The installation of a play area for older people within the Bowls and Tennis Centre in Hyde Park should be considered within the context of the seven priorities above and within the context of the City of Westminster's vision to promote health, well-being and quality of life.

This new play area for older people is a worthy community project which will raise the profile of both the Bowls and Tennis Centre and the Royal Parks. The facility will raise the awareness of the needs and aspirations of the adults and older members of the local community and will respond to the City of Westminster's vision.

7.5 Planning Recommendations

The Planning Department at the City of Westminster Council have been consulted on the nature and content of a planning application for this play area. The initial response has been positive, with instructions to submit a full planning application, which will be considered as a Minor Application. A fee of £170 will be payable.

The application package is to include a Design and Access Statement, Location Plan, Detailed Layout Drawing and manufacturer's specifications for the equipment. This feasibility study has considered all necessary aspects including the Royal Parks setting, historic significance, Grade I listings, significant view lines within Hyde Park along with specific information regarding the equipment, its design and how it will sit within the Hyde Park setting, maintenance and management of the finished play area.

The Planning Officer consulted commented that any proposed equipment should be chosen to blend into the surrounding landscape, with muted, neutral colours rather than bright colours which may detract from the landscape setting.



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PROJECT INFO

Project: Older People's Play Feasibility Study

Title: Site Images

Client: The Royal Parks

PROJECT INFO

Project No: 361
Drawing No:
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Figure No: 361 001

REVISIONS

Rev:	Date:	Description:



Key:

- A** Access point, Pavilion with cafe & toilet facilities
- B** Bowling green
- C** Toddler's play area
- D** Tennis courts
- E** Courtyard

REVISIONS

Rev:	Date:	Description:

PROJECT INFO

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Location 1

- Close to road & London transport network
- Close to access point, pavilion & associated facilities
- Close proximity to existing toddler's play area
- Good visibility from road & natural surveillance
- Shade provided by mature trees
- Equipment will blend into planting
- Sight of equipment will encourage new users

Location 2

- Site too far from access point, pavilion & associated facilities
- Screening effect of tennis courts & planting from road and park may give rise to security issues
- Hidden equipment may not attract potential users
- Too much association with tennis - may be considered as a tennis players warm up area
- No association with toddler's play area which has proven to be popular in other sites (please refer to case studies)

Location 3

- Siting the equipment here would dominate & reduce the useable lawn space
- No association with toddler's play area with associated facilities
- Site far away from access point, pavilion and facilities.



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NOTES

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