Environment and Resident Experience – Parks & Climate Action
Simon Farrow Head of Parks & Climate Action

via email.

4 December 2025

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Dear Resident,

Overarching response to emails about Belmont Recreation Ground PlayZone

Thank you for your recent email regarding the proposed PlayZone project in Belmont Recreation Ground. A number of people have written to the council raising a variety of questions, some of which are similar in their nature. We have therefore chosen to provide an overarching comprehensive response covering all the areas raised.

Project Rationale

In July 2023 the council agreed its 15-year Parks and Greenspaces Strategy following two years of co-production and borough wide consultation. This strategy set out three key aims: Inclusion and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability and a Quality Service.

The strategy includes an asset management plan which has a recommendation to "*Explore additional hard court sporting facilities to include in parks either directly or in partnership with others*". Furthermore, the extensive community engagement drawn together under the Wood Green Voices (March 2023) project identified ten priorities for improving the Wood Green area which included a priority to "Improve the offer of sport and leisure facilities".

We know that the population in Haringey is predicted to grow by 6.3% between 2021-2031 and that demand for sports like football, basketball and netball is growing in the borough. The council's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy includes an Outdoor Sports and Play Facilities Framework which identities the forward plan of parks sports and play facilities to be improved each year. This plan of works is funding-dependent and recognises that sites may come forward at different times, when external funding becomes available. We do know that there is unmet demand for MUGA's across the borough from adults who want to play football, basketball and netball. Whilst unmet demand by children isn't measured nationally by Sport England, we know Haringey's children aren't moving enough. The borough has a significant issue with both overweight and obese children (38% of year six children), we therefore need to do more to get our children moving more. The PlayZone will deliver new sporting opportunities for children and adults who will be able to be more active more often because the facility is close to home.

Belmont Recreation Ground, at a little over three hectares in size, is considered a local park under the Mayor of London's typology of parks and is expected to serve a catchment area of less than 5 mins walking time. Facilities at Lordship Recreation Ground, Ducketts Common and Downhills Park, do not fulfil this catchment at 10-16 mins walk away from Belmont Recreation Ground.

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The launch of the Football Foundation PlayZone programme presented a new and unexpected funding opportunity for the council to consider in 2022. The Football Foundation set out clear criteria for expected outcomes of the investment including increased physical activity levels in priority groups using PlayZones and behaviour change leading to improved and sustained long-term physical activity habit.

Having assessed these criteria, the council considered the PlayZone investment to be a good fit with its Parks and Greenspaces Strategy aims as it would provide a mixture of both new and refurbished facilities across the Borough. The council was required to set up a consortium of interested parties to represent the Borough, and regular updates were provided to the Friends of Parks Forum and the Cabinet Member. Following the initial work by the consortium, a community engagement exercise was conducted, and a number of locations identified through the engagement were voted upon. Belmont Recreation Ground featured third in the list of sixteen locations where the consultees wanted to see new or refurbished provision to be made.

Funding Application and PlayZone decision

Based on the evidence from the community engagement, the council applied to the Football Foundation for grant funding for five sites to be supported in Haringey. Because of other project timelines the new PlayZone at Wood Green Common was fast-tracked and is now completed. After receiving confirmation that the Football Foundation were prepared to award four more grants; these were not initially accepted as the council needed to provide match funding which it did not have for four more projects. Therefore, the council chose to prioritise the refurbishment at Bruce Castle and Downhills Park as match funding was available through Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy. However, following the reprioritisation of part of the Down Lane Park budget, the council was able to fund a programme of play area improvements and to provide the match funding needed for the Belmont PlayZone. This new funding was announced in February 2025 and in effect confirmed the provision of a MUGA in Belmont Recreation Ground. Match Funding for Hartington Park has been funded through the wider Tottenham regeneration programme.

The council's work since February has been to refine the detail of the scheme to inform the planning application, alongside work to develop the wider park masterplan.

Community Engagement 2023-2025

Community Engagement on the need / demand for a PlayZone programme commenced in 2023. The 2023 engagement process had 3 strands to the engagement. These were:

1. An open-to-all online survey on the Haringey website.
2. Several focus group meetings were held to inform the approach to PlayZones and drew on extracts from relevant meetings held to inform Haringey's Parks and Greenspaces Strategy approved by the council in July 2023. These meetings were at the Friends Forum and targeted sessions with women and girls, young people, members of the LGBTQ community and Disability Action Haringey. There were additional meetings held in 2023 with the Friends of Belmont Rec members.
3. Professional meetings including with:
    - The Haringey PlayZones Consortium,
    - Haringey Sport and Physical activity providers,
    - Haringey Football Forum,

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- Haringey Safer Parks for Women and Girls Network,
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation,
- Streetgames,
- Local clubs and National Governing Bodies of Sport.

The responses across the engagement strands indicated a strong level of support for the inclusion of Belmont Recreation Ground in the PlayZone portfolio. There were of course like any engagement work opposing voices, but the issues raised were taken on board and dealt with in the subsequent engagement process.

Following the confirmation of the project in Feb 2025, further engagement commenced during the spring and summer of this year. The engagement focused on:-

- Developing the masterplan and refining the design and programming of the PlayZone.
- Identifying concerns raised around lighting, ecology, proximity to housing and change of feeling in the park.
- Producing ecological surveys and undertaking an alternative location appraisal within Belmont Rec.
- Community engagement findings resulted in notable changes included the introduction of netball court markings and programming which designated 'open use' time after school and on weekends.
- In addition, the engagement collected project priorities to further shape the masterplan for Belmont Recreation Ground.

Overall, during this period, Parks Officers engaged with different community groups on more than 15 different occasions. Have Your Say Today - Engagement Report - Belmont Recreation Ground Masterplan

Engagement with young people - Concern has also been raised that the council has been talking to school children about the PlayZone. With 21% of the borough aged 0-17 it's important that their voice is heard during the engagement on the project. Especially as they reflect a significant proportion of the PlayZone engagement and programme of use. The Commonplace strand of engagement only managed to reach 1.8% of responses in the 13-21 age range. It shouldn't be for adults who are less likely to use the facility to be heard without hearing the voices of local children and young people.

Impact on the recreation ground – concerns have been raised about the visual impact of the PlayZone on the park. There is some perception that the facility will dominate the park and prevent other activities taking place. As part of the location options appraisal, the current use of the recreation ground has been taken into account and the options put forward would not interfere with any current usage. All school activities, informal sport, desire lines across the park as well as proposals within the Friends masterplan can still be accommodated. It's worth noting that the size of the PlayZone at around 704m2 represents 2.3% of the recreation grounds total area. It's important that there is a range of facilities in the park in order that there are activities for older children and young people to participate in. Local children and young people who want to play basketball or netball or have a dry place to play football in the winter will benefit from the addition of a PlayZone.

Noise – the vast majority of activities in parks create noise; from children playing in a play area, to adults playing football, to rowdy picnickers, to dogs barking etc. The new facility would bring some additional noise to the park but by following the Sport England guidance of placing the

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PlayZone more than 30m from the rear of any homes then this can be minimised. Although it may be noticed initially it will soon fade into the background alongside the road noise, noise from the school playground, emergency services sirens, reversing trucks and all the other combined noise that makes up the rich soundscape of living in the capital.

Lighting – a condition of the grant is that the PlayZone will be floodlight and any floodlight provision will be subject to planning permission. The floodlighting provision isn't particularly bright in comparison with other sport such as tennis, and with modern floodlighting, there is very minimal spill of lighting beyond the edge of the PlayZone itself. Lighting times would be subject to conditions set by the planning committee, however typically in more recent years the council has self-imposed a 9pm cut off time in its planning applications. The floodlighting will be linked to the booking system and therefore lighting will only be on when the PlayZone is in use. Street lighting will also be provided to and from the PlayZone to ensure people can access it safely. The provision of lighting will be subject to a bat survey as part of the planning application. Everything will be done to ensure there is minimal impact on wildlife. The street lighting will go off after 9:30pm each night to return the park to a dark skies state.

ASB – The council operates around 50 other hard-court areas across parks and has done for many years. It isn't the council's experience that these attract anti-social behaviour as a consequence of installing hard court provisions. In fact, many of the courts have a positive impact of providing new diversionary activities which reduce the risk of ASB. This is further supported by the work of the councils Sporting Partner Organisations that will run activation activities which can over time lead to young people gaining coaching and leadership qualifications. With only 13 sets of toilets across 148 Parks and Greenspaces, there is always the risk of people urinating in a park. That risk exists in most parks and other public areas across the borough. However, given this is a local park and it should be attracting people from within a very short distance, they will always have the opportunity to pop home. Adding a PlayZone will not significantly increase the risk of public urination beyond current levels. Public urination is an offence under the council's Public Spaces Protection Orders and therefore people caught urinating can be issued a fixed penalty notice.

Wildlife – The council as part of its aims within the Parks and Greenspaces Strategy is committed to improving the biodiversity of the borough. This is a key consideration in our planning for all projects. An ecology report has been produced for the park and this will shape the planning application process for the floodlighting.

Disruption to the School – It's very unlikely that the PlayZone will disrupt the activities of the school. The school's use of the park has been taken into account in determining suitable locations for the PlayZone. Peak periods of use such as after school, evening and weekends will have no impact on the school as the school will have finished its normal teaching day. Some concern about the school overheating has been raised as an issue because of the hard surface nature of the PlayZone. Given the size of the PlayZone and the distance from the school it isn't considered that the PlayZone would contribute further to the overheating of the school. We are also aware that the school has ambitions to bid for some of the council's Carbon Offset Funding to support their work to deal with the pre-existing overheating of the school. Although the school has indicated that they wouldn't use the PlayZone, they would be free to change their mind at any time.

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Trees - No trees are being removed from the park as a result of the PlayZone. In fact, a number of new trees will be planted this winter as part of the council's wider investment into the park. The Friends will also be undertaking some additional tree planting this winter.

Flooding in the park – The council is aware of the flooding in the park and is working with the Friends and sustainable urban drainage specialists to identify the best approach to work with the current conditions in the park to ensure that park is usable for as much of the year as possible. These works are being developed as part of the master plan and there is a budget allocated this year to commence the prioritised actions from the master plan. The surface of the PlayZone will be fully porous and therefore any water falling on the court will drain through the macadam surface and into the ground.

Funding - The whole PlayZone project is fully funded by external funds and therefore is being provided at no cost to the council. 75% of the cost is being met by the Football Foundation and the remaining 25% is coming from developers' contributions recycled from Tottenham. In terms of ongoing costs, the PlayZone is expected to generate a small amount of money from paid bookings each year. Based on the anticipated maintenance costs this will be sufficient to carry out the necessary maintenance. The council has its own in house play and sport team who will undertake most of the regular maintenance.

Location of the PlayZone within the Recreation Ground.

It was evident from this consultation that there were concerns from some local residents about the proposed location for the PlayZone. Working alongside the local ward councillors, parks officers evaluated several other locations within the park, a number were discounted as they would likely raise similar objections as the original. Following discussion with the Friends of Belmont Recreation Ground, it was agreed to consult again to seek views on a preferred location of three options. I appreciate some people have raised concern that there was not an option to say no to all the options. The reason for this was that the council had already decided back in February that the scheme was proceeding based on previous consultation, the council's wider mandate to improve the quality of its Parks and Greenspace and improving the inclusiveness of the local offer.



Out of 154 votes received through the public vote, we have a clear mandate for option 3, situated close to Downhills Entrance. The votes were as follows:

- **Option 3 – 81 votes (52.6%)**
- Option 1 – 51 votes (33.12%)
- Option 2 – 22 votes (14.29%)

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We are pleased to have been able to offer an alternative location which helps to balance the varying needs of our local community and competing ideas about how Belmont Recreation Ground should feel and function into the future.

The original masterplan architects Merrett Houmøller will now start working on the third draft of the masterplan in line with feedback received across the Spring/Summer captured in the engagement report and the final PlayZone location. Once this design has been developed, we will host a final round of engagement in early 2026 to finalise the masterplan and prioritise project spending for 2025/26.

Next Steps...

- December 2025 – The landscape architects are being briefed and updating the masterplan with the location of the PlayZone.
- January 2026 – In person engagement on the amends to the masterplan and submission of the planning application.
- Early February 2026 – Finalisation of V3 of the Belmont Recreation Ground Masterplan
- Feb/March 2026 – Initial works on site to begin implementing some initial priorities from the masterplan
- April 2026 – Planning outcome known
- April / May 2026 – Mobilisation period for PlayZone works
- June – August 2026 – Construction of PlayZone and launch

Yours sincerely,



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