ACTIVE WESTMINSTER | City of Westminster

ALFRED ROAD INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND CONSULTATION REPORT



JULY 2024

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AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The Alfred Road Playground project aims to renovate the current playground in order to bring it back to use for the community, promote wellbeing and encourage an active lifestyle.

By liaising with local residents, we aimed to:

- Gather ideas on features which would make the playground more inclusive
- Understand the reasons why the playground is currently underutilised
- Gather ideas on how to maximise usage of the space
- Raise awareness of the redevelopment of the playground
- Garner buy-in to the project from potential user groups

A total of 41 residents took part in the consultation and engagement via a variety of mediums, between January 17th and April 24th. A breakdown of which can be viewed below:

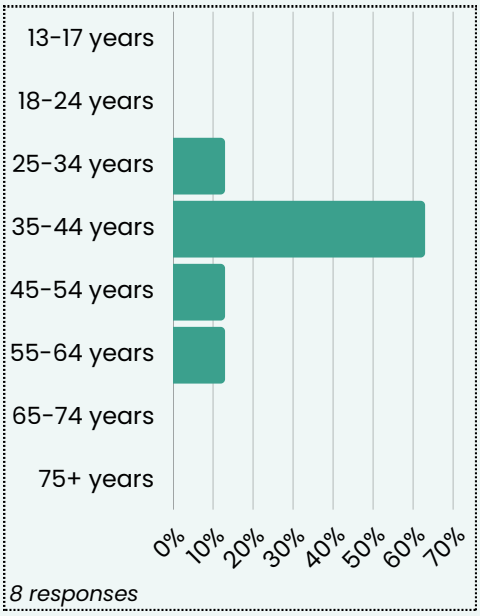
- 17 parents and children from local schools, one of which was a special school, took part in two focus groups
- 16 respondents provided feedback via online and written surveys
- 6 respondents provided feedback via community forums
- 1 resident provided email feedback
- 1 resident provided feedback via our 'Have Your Say Page'



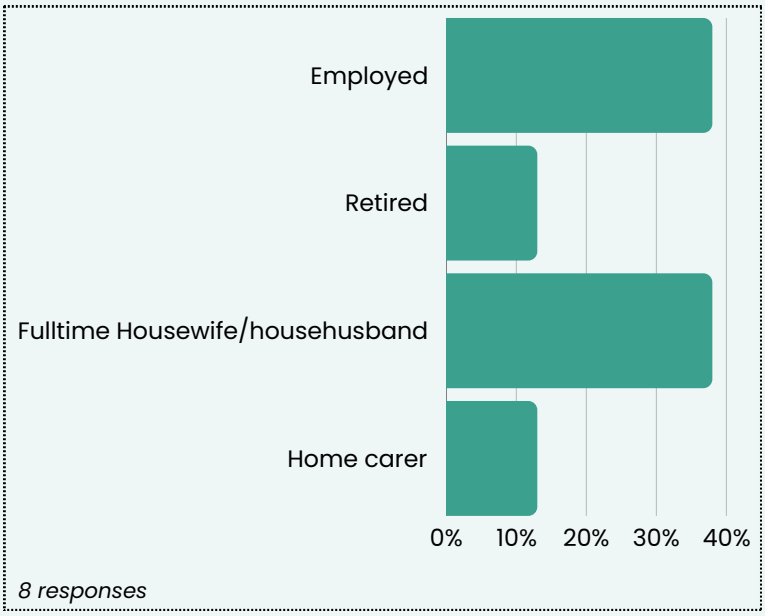
Demographics

Below is a breakdown of all participants who opted to provide their demographic information.

Participant Demography: Age, Employability Status and Dependents



8 responses



8 responses



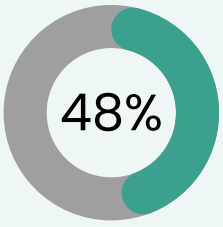
75% had dependents under 18 years old

8 responses

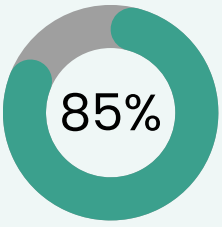
WHY IS THE PLAYGROUND UNDERUTILISED

One of the main aims of gathering feedback was to understand why the Alfred Road playground is currently underutilised and consequently, what can be done to change this. Survey and focus group respondents were asked about their awareness of the Alfred Road playground and if they were aware, how frequently they visited. Results of the focus group and survey (27 participants) show that **48%** of residents were aware of the playgrounds existence, and of those who knew of it, **85%** had never visited.

The most popular reasons given for non-attendance to the playground were related to the appearance and lack of general upkeep to the space. Similarly, comments received through the other feedback channels echoed the same sentiments. Overall, the appearance and lack of general upkeep of the space was mentioned by 26 participants - out of a possible 30. Table 1 provides a summary of reasons grouped in themes, the frequency of the theme and an example quote. Other reasons for non attendance which did not fit into any themes included distance from house, lack of toilet facilities and a preference for other parks.



aware of playground existence



have never visited the playground

Table 1. Reasons For Nonattendance to Alfred Road Playground

Theme	No. of participants contributing (Total = 30)	Quote
Theme 1: Appearance and general upkeep of the space is poor Lack of maintenance Cleanliness Not appealing	26	"I pass by this playground regularly and would not bring children here, it is extremely poorly maintained with overflowing litter bins and rubbish everywhere"
Theme 2: Safety Concerns Antisocial Behaviour Ground protection	22	"Would love a new play area at Alfred road, currently is very dangerous, drinkers and drug users always either in or on the grass outside...It is very undesirable and sometimes broken glass"
Theme 3: Lack of awareness	18	"I was not previously aware of this playground... it can be extremely difficult to find playgrounds locally that are worthwhile for students who use wheelchairs to visit, e.g. where there is accessible equipment"

HOW TO MAXIMISE USAGE

In addition to understanding why the playground was underutilised, we also wanted to find out what would encourage residents to begin using the space more. The top tips provided by residents included:

- Making the playground inclusive and accessible to all
- Ensuring the playground is well maintained in order to keep it inviting, clean and safe
- Ensuring the signage in and around the area clearly shows where the playground is
- Utilising promotional materials to build awareness of the space
- The use of sustainable materials to make the space environment friendly

The lack of signposting to the space was identified as one of the most prominent issues contributing the underutilisation. Of the 27 participants which engaged in the focus group and survey, 19 of them (**70%**) were either **dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the signage in the area**. Multiple respondents noted that poor signage contributed greatly to the low awareness of the space. Additionally, signage inside the playground was identified as a needed to make the space more welcoming, detail who can use the space and when it can be used.

Residents noted that making the playground a 'point of interest' on wayfinding boards and online would be an effective way of increasing awareness. Also, the use of leaflets which provide information about the playground, including descriptions and illustrations about the playground features, would go a long way to adequately inform and raise awareness of the space; subsequently resulting in increased usage.

" I only found out about this project by chance when I saw a poster, and I have spent a lot of time googling accessible playgrounds in the area"

"Spread the word. Make flyers"

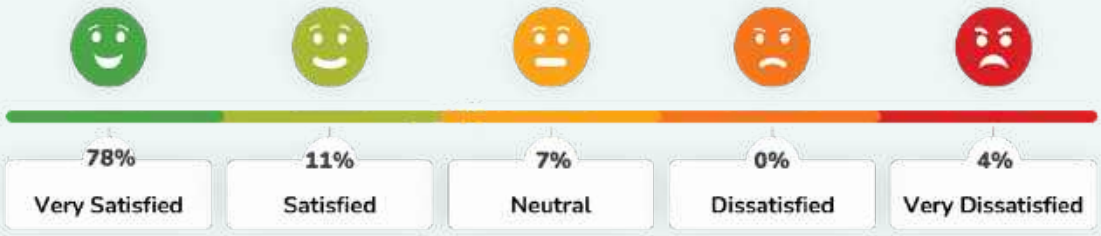
"... tangible descriptions of the types of equipments which come under this heading makes a difference i.e. embedded trampoline which allows a wheelchair user to access. Illustrative language and pictures"

PROPOSAL FEEDBACK

At each engagement, we presented an initial sketch of the proposed changes for the playground. Overall, **89%** of residents were either **satisfied or very satisfied** (24 of 27 participants) **with the proposal**, however, wanted the following features to also be considered:

- Additional seating
- Additional equipment including sand area, see saw, embedded trampoline, basket swing, roundabout
- Interactive floor/pathways
- CCTV
- Toilet facilities
- Quiet/low sensory zone
- Playground cover
- Communication board

Satisfaction with playground designs

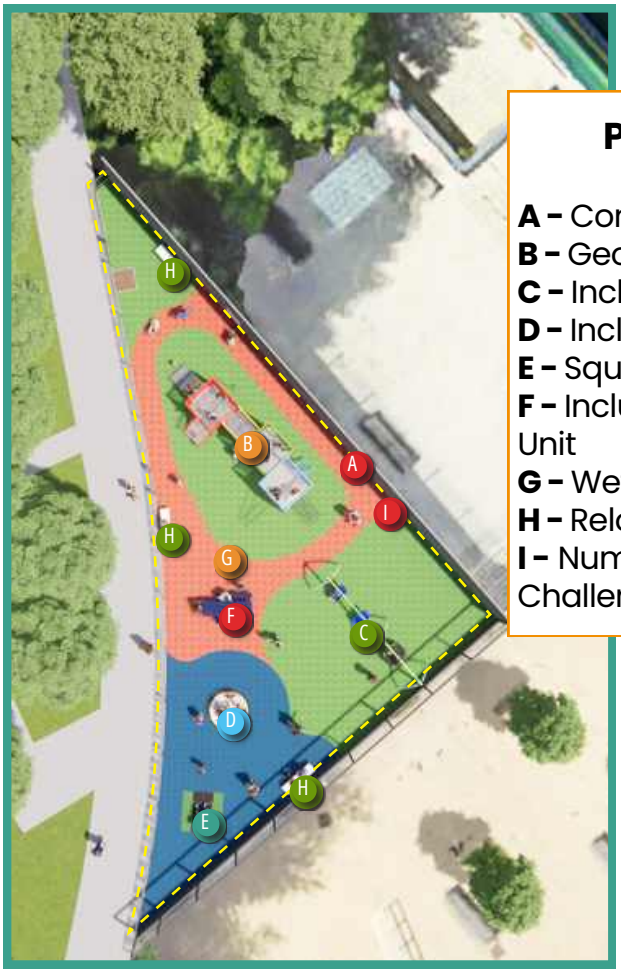


There was 1 participant which was very dissatisfied with the original proposals as they felt this area was an unsuitable location for a children's playground. They believed the site would be more suited to a coffee kiosk with a seating area to leverage the high footfall of the area and provide amenities to the local community.

NEW DESIGNS

The updated features based on feedback can be viewed below and the next page. Unfortunately, not all features could be included due to space and operational constraints, however, new designs are reflective of majority of suggestions made by residents. To assist with making this project as sustainable as possible, we have also tried to preserve and repurpose existing equipment which were in good health - namely the existing geometric towers and seating benches.

We are not able to include toilet facilities, however, we will ensure that any new . Where possible, we will also signpost to the nearest available toilet facilities.



Playground Checklist:

A – Communication Board
B – Geometric Towers
C – Inclusive Triple Swing Set
D – Inclusive Roundabout
E – Square Wheelchair Trampoline
F – Inclusive Wheelchair Access Picnic Unit
G – Wet Pour Rubber Safety Surfacing
H – Relocation of 3 existing benches
I – Number Hunt Interactive Challenge





Inclusive Roundabout



Inclusive Triple Swing Set



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on collected feedback across all engagements and those provided via email, it is recommended that the following actions be taken:

- Raise awareness of the space by adding it as a point of interest online (for example on google maps) and on existing wayfinding signage around the area. Additionally, a new fingerpost sign should also be installed. These additions will provide clear directions and make it easier for visitors to find the playground.
- Provide leaflets and/or online brochures which provide detailed illustrative and tangible descriptions of the inclusive equipment which will be located in the new playground. This will serve to encourage attendance from a diverse range of individuals.
- Include signage on entry to the playground which detail the name of the space, who can use it and when it can be used.
- Ensure installed signage is accessible to all by including braille and easy-read logos where possible.
- Include signage which signposts to local toilet facilities.
- Put a maintenance plan in place which ensures the facilities are regularly cleaned, bins emptied and equipment serviced.
- Investigate the possibility of free Wi-Fi in the playground in order to provide a more connected and enjoyable experience for all visiting the space. This will make it easier for people to share their experiences on social media, stay in touch with friends and family, or even work remotely while taking in some fresh air.
- Explore the possibility of adding CCTV to the playground to ensure safeguarding of participants and discourage antisocial behaviour. We will also ensure the structures installed do not inhibit natural surveillance or create spaces which encourage antisocial behaviour.

“We need these principles applied in more playgrounds“

“It looks wonderful and I'm delighted that there will be more options for our students in the local area”

“Brilliant to see an inclusive, sustainable, green, environmentally friendly, low carbon footprint approach”

CONCLUSION

The Alfred Road playground has been successfully transformed and was officially launched on 5th November 2024, in a fantastic event with local schools, residents, Councillors and Westminster officers. Check out the publication link below to see more about this exciting milestone!

Making Play Inclusive - New Inclusive Alfred Road Playground Officially Open - ActiveWestminster

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