

**Children's
Play
Advisory
Service**

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND

Consultation Report

for

Murray Park

February/March 2014

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MURRAY PARK

Report On Consultation

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This consultation aimed to ensure that the Murray Park playground meets local needs and to involve people, particularly children, in its development. The consultation was devised so that it gave opportunities for all options to be considered without raising expectations beyond what might reasonably be delivered.
- 1.2 The consultation format was prepared in discussion with Yvonne Kelleher and Barbara Gray of London Borough of Richmond. It was designed to include interviews with the public at Murray Park, questionnaires which were delivered to local houses and an on-line questionnaire. The consultation was additionally advertised by way of a notice at Murray Park which was placed just over a week before the on-site consultation was due to take place. It was intended this would pick up users who may have come from further afield.
- 1.3 The on-site consultation was carried out on Saturday 1st February 2014 by Rob Whewey and Josephine Flynn of Children's Play Advisory Service.
- 1.4 The consultation was carried out and the results analysed. This report describes the consultation process and the analysis of the responses.
- 1.5 This report builds on the reports of the Familiarisation Visits of 3rd December 2013 and 2nd January 2014.
- 1.6 Where answers are worded differently but have very similar meanings they have been grouped together in the tables within this report. Responses which only received 1 mention have not been included within the tables as they are not statistically significant. Some will have been included as above.
- 1.7 Where suggestions were made in "Other Comments" but clearly related to other parts of the questionnaire then they were included in the appropriate part. This was only done where the meaning was certain and duplication was also avoided.

2 CHILDREN AND ADULTS CONSULTED AND USE

- 2.1 There were 164 responses broken down as follows:

	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Not Spec.	Totals
Online	0	56	9	5	70
Posted	0	36	14	5	55
Interviewed	18	17	4	0	39
Totals	18	109	27	10	164

- 2.2 Approximately 420 questionnaires were delivered to houses in the neighbourhood, inviting people to the consultation on the playground or to post them back using the return envelopes (post paid) provided, or to complete the questionnaire on-line. The Ward Councillors were sent a copy of the questionnaire.
- 2.3 Questionnaires were delivered to all the houses in the roads surrounding Murray Park.
- 2.4 Of the delivered forms 55 were returned by post. This represents a 13% return rate which is slightly higher than usual for this type of consultation.
- 2.5 The on-site interviews (39) gave a greater opportunity to interview children and get a greater in-depth understanding of the issues people were raising. The numbers were quite good considering the time of year. It was a fairly cool day, though not unpleasant for the time of year.
- 2.6 Not all answers on the form were completed; consequently total responses in this report are often less than number of forms. For technical reasons which were not able to be resolved, the layout and some questions were different in the 3 forms. Some questions had opportunities for more than one answer so some totals are higher than the actual responses to that question.
- 2.7 The catchment area for Murray Park is quite wide as some people use it as a destination park rather than just a local park.

2.8 Age Category

Responses by age category were:

	Male	Female	Not Spec.	Totals
3	1	0	0	1
4	1	0	0	1
5	1	3	0	4
6	0	0	0	0
7	1	0	0	1
8	1	1	0	2
9	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0
13	2	0	0	2
14	2	0	0	2
15	0	0	0	0
16-18	5	0	0	5
19-24	3	2	0	5
25-34	5	15	0	20
35-44	15	48	1	64
45-54	5	18	0	23
55-64	0	7	0	7
65+	8	12	1	21
Not Spec.	1	4	1	6
Totals	51	110	3	164

The responses are primarily from people in the 25-65+ age range. No children responded to either the on-line or posted questionnaire which emphasises the importance of the on-site interviews.

The number of children interviewed (18) was lower than might be expected at a warmer time of the year. However, it did give insights into children's views. The number of teenagers interviewed (9) does indicate the popularity of the skateboard area in particular but also the MUGA. As this age tends to go to the park unaccompanied they are probably less likely to be put off by the cool weather.

2.9 Gender:

The overall breakdown in gender was as follows:

	Male	Female	Not Spec.	Total
Child	14	4	0	18
Parent/Carer	27	81	1	109
Other Adult	7	20	0	27
Not Spec.	3	5	2	10
Totals	51	110	3	164

The fact that twice as many females as males responded is interesting. It confirms the conventional role still taken within most homes.

The difference in the interviewees (below), however, is marked with the males outnumbering the females. This is, however, accounted for by the teenagers using the skateboard area and the MUGA who were all male. The pre-teen children were almost equal (5 boys 4 girls).

	Male	Female	Total
Child	14	4	18
Parent/Carer	9	8	17
Other Adult	1	3	4
Totals	24	15	39

2.10 Children of Parents Consulted

Parents were asked for the ages of their children. This gives an insight into the views of the children they may well be representing. It also means that there is a feedback about toddlers who would be too young to answer the questionnaire for themselves.

Children's Ages	Numbers
0-4	72
5-7	50
8-11	29
12-13	10
14-15	3
16-17	7
Total	171

The results seem to indicate that there is a predominance of pre-school and infant age children who are likely to desire more challenging equipment over the next few years. This may be a “boom” and as the facility is likely to last many years a reasonable variety of equipment for all ages would still be appropriate.

2.11 Frequency of Visits

The frequency with which visits to Murray Park were made:

	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Not Spec.	Totals
Every Day	4	7	2	4	17
2 or 3 Times a Week	7	32	2	2	43
Once a Week	4	31	1		36
Occasionally	2	32	13	1	48
Rarely	1	4	2	1	8
Never		1	2	1	4
Not Spec.		2	5	1	8
Totals	18	109	27	10	164

Well over half (61%) of those who answered this question visited the area at least once a week, 36% visited occasionally or less often and 2.5% never visited Murray Park.

Children visiting 2 or 3 times a week or more are primarily the teenagers who do not have to rely on their parents to take them to the playground.

Parents tend to state that they take their children more often than the children say they are taken. For parents who may have other pressures on their time it might seem too much whereas for the child for whom it is a treat it might seem too little.

3 CATCHMENT

3.1 Responses came from the following road/areas (all included)

Home Location (all)	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Not Spec.	Total
Not specified		12	4	2	18
Kneller Road		9	4	1	14
Whitton Dene		9	3	2	14
Colonial Avenue	1	9	1	1	12
Prospect Crescent		3	4	1	8
Grasmere Avenue	1	5			6
Nelson Road	2	3			5
Old Manor Drive		2	2	1	5
Hounslow Road		4			4
Millwood Road		4			4
Twickenham	4				4
Constance Road		3			3
Local/very close		3			3
Melrose Avenue		1	1	1	3
Park Road	1	2			3
Priory Road	2	1			3
The Ridge		2	1		3
Warren Road	1	1	1		3
Bramley Close		1	1		2
Cedar Avenue		2			2
Godfrey Avenue		1	1		2
Park Close		1	1		2
Percy Road	1	1			2
Redway Drive		2			2
Roseberry Road		2			2
Shepperton	1	1			2
Teddington		2			2
Whitton Manor Road		1		1	2
Wills Crescent		2			2
Albion Road	1				1
Aylesbury	1				1
Blandford Avenue		1			1
Brannels		1			1
Bridge Way		1			1
Central Avenue		1			1
Derwent Road		1			1
Feltham		1			1
Fulham		1			1
Hall Farm Drive		1			1
Hall Road		1			1
Hamilton Crescent		1			1
Hampton	1				1
Hamworth	1				1
Montrose Avenue		1			1
Murray Avenue		1			1
Park Avenue		1			1
Rodney Road		1			1
Runnymede Road			1		1
Rydal Gardens		1			1
Shirley Drive		1			1
St Vincent Road		1			1
Tranmere		1			1
Wellington Road South		1			1
Whitton			1		1
Whitton Road		1			1
Whitton Way			1		1
Totals	18	109	27	10	164

This indicates that though quite a few come from roads nearby there are also plenty who use it as a “destination” playground. There are some living near Chase Green who use Murray Park in preference.

- 3.2 The interviews on-site pick up people who are there purely by chance rather than having any knowledge of the consultation. This again indicates that the playground is used both by local people and those who are using it as a “destination”.

Home Location (interviewed)	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Total
Nelson Road	2	2		4
Twickenham	4			4
Priory Road	2	1		3
Colonial Avenue	1	1		2
Grasmere Avenue	1	1		2
Park Road	1	1		2
Prospect Crescent			2	2
Roseberry Road		2		2
Shepperton	1	1		2
Albion Road	1			1
Aylesbury	1			1
Cedar Avenue		1		1
Constance Road		1		1
Feltham		1		1
Fulham		1		1
Godfrey Avenue			1	1
Hampton	1			1
Hamworth	1			1
Melrose Avenue			1	1
Millwood Road		1		1
Percy Road	1			1
The Ridge		1		1
Warren Road	1			1
Whitton Dene		1		1
Wills Crescent		1		1
Totals	18	17	4	39

- 3.3 The questionnaire asked for reasons why people did not visit more often or why they did visit regularly. Some gave more than one answer. The main positive reasons were:

Local/nearest park	25
Visit playground with children	22
Walk dog	17
Weather (come more in fine weather)	13
Kids run around/exercise/have fun	11
Walk/exercise	10
Skate area	9
Like it/nice place	8
Short cut/passing through	6
Accessible/easy to get to	3
Bikes/scooters	3
Enclosed	3
Football area (cage)	2
Go to sit	2
Jogging/running	2
Meet friends	2

Proximity to the park is the most important reason given. The playground is obviously popular. It appears parents are aware that their children are kept indoors too much and value the opportunity to let them get out and run around.

Walking the dog is a significant activity.

3.4 There were fewer answers given for not going to the park.

Better facilities elsewhere/other parks	11
Weather	11
Other commitments/too busy/no time	9
Distance (too far)	6
College/school/nursery	5
No toilets	5
Dog mess	4
Equipment not suitable for age	4
Dogs running loose	3
Elderly/OAP	3
Mound/hard to supervise	3
No café	3
Not clean/broken glass	3
Children grown up	2
Homework	2
No children at home	2
No dog	2
Not appealing	2
Not at dark (not safe)	2
Work (parents)	2

The main reason “better facilities at other parks” indicates that people are using the parks as destination locations rather than for children’s every-day play.

Weather is clearly a significant factor at this time of the year.

If “other commitments/too busy/no time” (9) and “work (parents)” (2) are taken together they are as significant as the highest two answers.

This again demonstrates that the playground is regarded more as an occasional treat rather than meeting children’s every-day play needs.

This is not to downgrade its importance as a family facility but is to stress that in terms of play policy it is having a limited effect in meeting children’s every-day play needs.

4 CHILDREN PLAYING OUT

4.1 The questionnaire asked what stops children playing out near their homes.

Busy road/traffic/cars	61
Safety/fear of stranger danger	18
No green space/facilities near enough	10
Age (too young)	8
Teenagers/youths smoking/drinking/swearing	8
Weather	7
Dog mess	6
Cleanliness of streets/facilities	4
Lack of lighting	2
Mum and dad	2
Not enough parks	2
Puddles	2
Uneven roads/pavements	2

Traffic, as with the Chase Green consultation, is much more significant a reason than is “stranger danger”. This is contrary to commonly held beliefs. The amount of traffic is also capable of being changed through environmental modification whereas fear of stranger danger would be much more difficult.

Observational research by this consultant has found that in cul-de-sacs and similar or estates where the design of the roads slows traffic significantly children are much more likely to play out and parents are more likely to talk of “keeping an eye out for each other’s children”.

4.2 People were asked where they/their children play on ordinary days after school.

House/home/indoors	40
Park/playground (non specific)	33
Murray Park (here)	31
Garden	21
Kneller Gardens	17
Other named parks/facilities	12
Back garden	6
Friends house	6
Bushey Park	5
Crane Park	3
Local area/roads	3
After school club	2
Health club/leisure centre	2
Marble Hill Park	2
Redlees Park	2
Richmond Hill Park	2

It is very significant that 67 appear restricted to their home environment (house/garden/back garden) with a further 6 being in a friend’s house.

From our observations at Murray Park and an assessment of wear at the equipment, it would appear that the use of Murray Park is less than indicated in the answers.

It is probable that this reflects the importance people attach to the playground rather than actual usage.

- 4.3 People were asked whether or not their children did go to Murray Park unaccompanied or with a parent.

	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Not Spec.	Totals
Only taken by an adult	6	80	6		92
Only taken by an older child					
Without an adult	4	4		1	9
Not specified	8	25	21	9	63
Totals	18	109	27	10	164

The fact that both parents and children (excluding teenagers) are stating that a very significant majority of children only go to Murray Park if accompanied by a parent tends to confirm that the play area is meeting important family needs rather than children's every-day play needs.

These figures, together with the restrictions (in 4.1), tend to indicate that children's freedom to play out as an unsupervised every-day activity is severely restricted. This is an enormous change in children's lives as for countless previous generations children would have expected to play out every day within sight and sound of home.

- 4.4 People were asked how far children are allowed to travel without an adult:

Sex	Age	Range
g	2	not at all
g	2	back garden
g	2	not at all
g	2	not at all
b	3	not at all
b	3	not at all
g	3	back garden
b	4	not at all
b	5	not at all
b	5	not at all
b	5	not at all
g	5	2 doors down
b	5	1 door down (with friend)
g	6	a few doors down
g	6	back garden
b	7	a few doors down (so I can see him)
b	7	to end of road
g	7	not at all
g	8	2-3 doors down
g	8	3 doors down
b	8	just ahead on way to school
b	8	not at all
b	14	Ladbroke Grove (train)

This question was only asked at the interviews. It clearly indicates that children who are 8 years old and under are not allowed out on their own. This contrasts with the normal experience of children from the start of compulsory schooling until the late 1950s when the majority of children would start to go to school on their own and run errands locally from the age of 5 and upwards.

5 OPTIONS FOR MURRAY PARK

- 5.1 People were asked whether they felt the existing equipment at Murray Park should be re-painted and brightened up. **NB:** For technical reasons this question was omitted from the on-line questionnaire therefore the total respondents for this question were 94.

	Child	Parent/Carer	Other Adult	Not Spec.	Totals
Strongly Agree		21	4	1	26
Agree	2	24	11	2	39
Neither		4	1		5
Disagree		4			4
Strongly Disagree				1	1
Not Spec.	16	0	2	1	19
Totals	18	53	18	5	94

This demonstrates that 86% of people answering value a “good housekeeping” approach by Richmond Borough where best use is made of existing facilities. Only 7% disagreed.

A small number stated that they thought the rubber wet-pour impact absorbing surfacing should be brightened up or replaced and a couple were concerned that the design of the helter skelter meant it was always wet at the top.

- 5.2 People were asked what their 3 favourite items were in the Murray Park playground. Again for technical reasons this question was not asked in the on-line questionnaire:

Zip wire	41
Swings	39
Assault course/balance trail	22
Slide	20
Skate park	10
Multi-play (not specific)	7
Large multi-play	6
Small multi-play	6
Climbing apparatus	5
See saw	5
Roundabout	4
Climb net	3
Cradle swings	3
Spiral slide (helter skelter)	3
MUGA	2

The cable runway (or zip wire) is clearly the most popular item. Swings and slides are always popular however the assault course/balance trail is more popular than might be expected from other consultations. For some reason it is perhaps a better design than other assault courses found in playgrounds.

5.3 People were asked for 3 suggestions for “additional play equipment or something else that would make play better”.

Roundabout (better/bigger)	25	Spacenet	5
Café	22	Bigger variety of equipment/more	4
Slides (better/larger/more)	21	Supervision/warden	4
Seating/picnic tables	20	Wooden fort	4
Toilets	20	Zip wire (better/more)	4
Multi-play (better/larger)	15	Climbing wall	3
Lighting	14	Goals on grass	3
Toddler equipment	13	Ground graphics (games)	3
Hammock swing	12	Adventure play	2
Skate area (improve/enlarge)	12	Bridge	2
Cradle swings (more)	10	Equipment for older kids	2
Paddling pool/splash zone	10	Extra ball games area	2
Swings (more)	10	Fencing by hall	2
Tennis court(s)	10	Half pipe	2
Gym/exercise equipment	8	Imaginative play	2
Paths (better)	8	Maze	2
Climbing equipment (more)	7	Mini ramp	2
Flowers/planting	7	More challenging equipment for all ages	2
Mound (reduce/level)	7	Rocking horse	2
Sand pit	7	See saw (better/bigger)	2
Surfacing (better/softer)	7	Separate area for under 7s	2
Fencing	6	Shelter	2
Obstacle/assault course	6	Spinning equipment	2
Pirate ship/space ship	6	Trees (cut back/maintain)	2
Redevelop hall for indoor activities	6	Tunnel through mound	2
Repair/refurb existing equipment	6	Willow arches/tunnels	2
Sensory/music equipment	6		
Trampoline(s)	6		
Wooden climbing equipment	6		

This shows a wide variety of suggestions most of which will not be able to be met.

One interesting finding from this is how often people ask for equipment that is “bigger”, “better” or “more challenging” and also ask for the skateboard area to be enlarged. This tends to contradict those who blame parents for being too risk averse and bringing up “cotton wool kids”. On the contrary, it shows parents want their children to have excitement and challenge.

The children who responded were all from the interviews and the answers from them reflect the fact that half those interviewed were teenagers.

Skate area (improve/enlarge)	10
Seating	3
Half pipe	2
Mini ramp	2
Slides (better/larger/more)	2
Cut down trees	1
Lighting	1
Mini half pipe	1
Multi-play (better/larger)	1
Redevelop hall as indoor skate park	1
Rotating net cone	1
Roundabout (better/bigger)	1

The height of the mound within the area was mentioned in answers to this question and other questions. Parents were concerned that it prevented them keeping an eye on their children, particularly if they had more than one child.

6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 This was answered by only a few, however they did make recommendations for improving access:

Improve pathways	6
Easier access gates	5
Equipment suitable for disabled children	3
Keep dogs under control	2
Remove grassy mound to improve sightlines	2
Toilets	2

6.2 Ethnicity

Descriptions of respondents' ethnicity were as follows:

White or White British	133
Asian or Asian British	10
Mixed/Mixed British	5
Black African/Caribbean or Black British	1
Other *	3
Not specified	12
	164
* Other:	
Oriental	2
Italian	1

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Murray Park is an important park located within a large residential area. It contains a play area with a good variety of equipment which is popular both as a local play area and as a destination facility.
- 7.2 The play area is popular with those who use it but does not appear to be quite as popular as some other destination playgrounds. Contributory factors to this might be that there is no toilet or café.

- 7.3 From the consultation it can be seen that a refurbishment of the existing equipment and impact absorbing surfaces would be seen as a cost-effective way of improving the playground.
- 7.4 The current roundabout does not work very well and a bigger and better roundabout would be valued.
- 7.5 There are limited opportunities for toddlers and improvements here would be valued. They might also encourage parents to come with their children as the children become infant or junior age.
- 7.6 The mound in the middle is a disincentive to some people. Reducing its length and height would improve parents' ability to supervise their children and could be achieved without losing land contours altogether.
- 7.7 There is a strong desire from the teenagers that the skateboard area be improved as it is seen to be rather tame at the moment. If a half pipe or similar is added I would recommend it be slightly separate from the existing facility so that younger children could continue using the existing facility and not interfere with older children using the more challenging item(s).
- 7.8 A hammock swing would be popular and would also give inclusive opportunities. Parents with toddlers will often use this type of equipment during the day when older children are at school.
- 7.9 Parents are not risk averse and do not want to bring up "cotton wool kids". When items currently in the playground need to be replaced the opportunity should be taken to install some more challenging exciting items.
- 7.10 Benches/picnic tables would also be popular. These would need to be located where they can be clearly seen from the road and nearby houses so the potential is reduced for inappropriate activity.
- 7.11 Murray Park is an important family facility does not meet the every-day play needs of very many children. In terms of play policy it can be seen that the children living in this area are much more restricted than children previously. For countless generations children played out in front of their house and got plenty of healthy exercise at no cost and without parental supervision. This is no longer the case and would appear to be one of the factors in the increasing obesity problem.
- 7.12 The consultants thank the people of the area around Murray Park, visitors to the park and staff at LB Richmond for their assistance with this consultation.

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3 April 2014