

Wandsworth Park Playground

Playground Refurbishment
Consultation Feedback
August 2024



Lead: Enable Parks Development



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Project Overview

Wandsworth Council has allocated £241,500 from the Wandsworth Local Fund to refurbish the playground in Wandsworth Park. These funds were specifically allocated for play, and have not diverted resources from other social investments.

The refurbishment is required as the existing items are increasingly requiring extensive repairs to keep them in a safe and useable condition. The playground currently does not allow for enough children to play together at the same time, with queues for many items. The current layout doesn't make the best use of the allocated space. The refurbished play area will allow more children to play together at the same time, and will provide better equity for children with disabilities to play with their friends, meeting the needs of the local community and being resilient for the future.

The project will see a completely new playground for children aged 0-14.



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Consultation details:

The consultation went live online on Friday 3rd May 2024 and closed on Sunday 16th June 2024.

Two on site drop in sessions were held on:

- Wednesday 8th May 2pm - 5pm (afterschool, evening)
- Saturday 11th May 12noon - 3pm (weekend, daytime)

The first round of consultation, held between May and July 2021, provided background information including what local residents thought of the current playground, if and how they used this facility and their suggestions for improvements. Based on the feedback received, three bespoke playground design options were developed for this second phase of consultation.

All of the proposed playground designs included realigned fencing to the west of the existing playground and one option showed one piece of equipment located outside of this new playground fence. Participants were made aware that if this option is preferred this item of equipment will require an additional footprint of 20m x 4m in this part of the park, removing that area from more general uses.

In total, 373 people responded, with 95% of respondents living locally to Wandsworth Park, having a direct and personal stake in the local playground. The views of local organised groups represented 1% of the overall feedback. 16 people specifically mentioned how happy they are about the planned refurbishment of the playground.



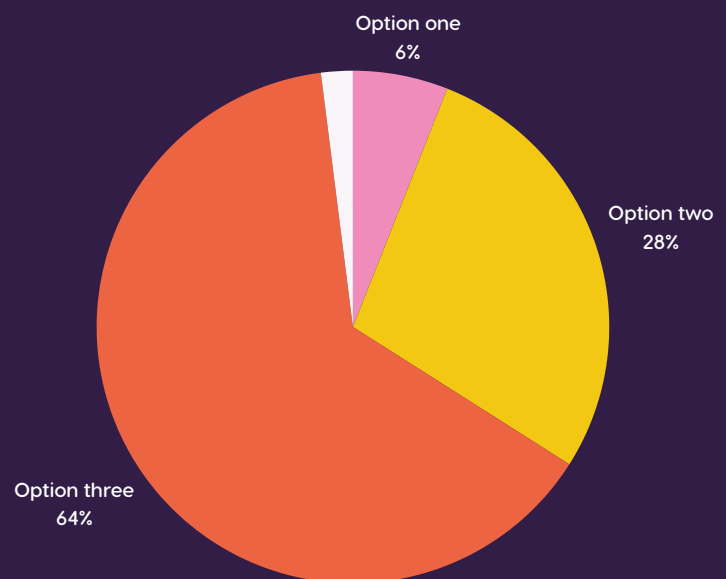
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Design choice

People were asked to rank these three playground designs:



Option 3 was the overall preferred option with 64% of people indicating this as their first choice. Option 2 was the most popular second choice. This diagram shows the breakdown of votes for first choice preferred option. The white colour represents those respondents who did not have an overall preference.

Key findings about play:

Play equipment:

- You said that climbing is very popular and you asked for resting platforms to be included on multi-play structures.
- You asked if a ground trampoline can be included.
- You asked for floor markings to support active play, such as a track for running and scooting, to be included.
- Water play was a common request. However these features have to be turned off for the winter and this would lead to part of the playground being unusable for half of the year. This would mean that the refurbishment would not provide increased year round capacity to reduce queues.

Accessibility and equity:

- You asked for the gates to be much easier easier to use, especially when pushing a buggy or holding the hand of a child.
- You asked for pram, bike and scooter “parking” within or close to the playground.
- You asked for clear information to be made available, on site, about the accessibility of the new play items.
- You asked if a sensory trail can be included within the design.
- You explained that very brightly coloured and contrasting colours are difficult for neurodivergent children to cope with.
- You asked for consideration of older children and adults within physical and learning disabilities and to explore any adaptations to make play items suitable for them to use as well.
- You asked for consideration of parents and carers with disabilities and to ensure that the playground is accessible for them too and that there is appropriate seating you can use.
- You asked for a range of seating including adding more picnic benches.

Concerns raised about play:

Three key concerns about aspects of the proposed playground were mentioned by several people:

Value for money: People expressed a concern that the proposed improvements at Wandsworth Park may not offer good value for money. A comparison was drawn with the newly refurbished playground in Coronation Gardens which people perceived to be a “better offer”. Each playground is designed to meet the specific needs of the local residents and community, based on the feedback from the first phase of consultation. Playgrounds are intentionally varied to provide unique play experiences, ensuring that children who visit multiple playgrounds can enjoy diverse activities. The Wandsworth Park playground proposals show what is possible at this site taking into account the protection of the existing mature trees and meeting the aims of providing better play value and an increased play capacity.



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Concerns raised about play cont:

Swing barriers: The lack of swing barriers in the proposed designs was a concern raised by few respondents. Swing barriers are no longer used due to advancements in playground design and safety standards. Modern playgrounds focus on creating safer environments through better layout and spacing, minimising the risk of collisions and accidents without the need for barriers. Additionally, not having swing barriers opens up the layout enhancing visibility, improving supervision and improving accessibility making it easier for people with mobility difficulties to move around. The open space also encourages free play and interaction among children, making the playground more inviting. Current safety guidelines do not require swing barriers if proper safety zones and fall surfacing are in place. Therefore, the shift away from swing barriers reflects a comprehensive approach to playground safety, accessibility, and aesthetics.



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Concerns raised about play cont:

Zipwire: half of people who responded to the consultation raised concerns about the proposal for a zipwire which was included in option two. People felt that a lot of space was required for an item that could only be used by one child at a time. There was also a concern that it would attract teenagers and young adults which might lead to the exclusion of the younger children that the playground is intended to accommodate. Several people also cited examples of zipwires in other London greenspaces that frequently require repairs making them unusable for long periods of time.

The overall preferred choice for a playground design did not include the zipwire. The multi-play units included within option three provide a good challenge for a range of ages as well as varied slide and swing options throughout the design. A zipwire will therefore not be included within the final design.



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Construction:

You said that you are worried about the length of time the playground will be closed for the refurbishment.

- Current plans aim for the on-site delivery to take place during autumn / winter 2024 rather than in busier summer periods.
- It is anticipated that the playground will need to be closed for 8 -12 weeks for the refurbishment.
- Information will be provided on site to let you know when the playground will close and where the next nearest playgrounds are. There will also be a clear contact number displayed on site during construction so you can raise any concerns immediately.
- Disturbance from noise and dust will be minimised as much as possible so that you can continue to enjoy the rest of the park.
- The contractors (Redlynch) will be expected to work in line with an agreed method statement and risk assessment for the construction of this project.
- All construction vehicles will be expected to use the Northfields entrance, and to have a "banksman" present at all times.



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Safety:

You asked about the safety of new equipment and how it will be looked after:

- Enable's certified Playground Officer undertakes a routine visual check of this playground every two weeks as a minimum. They also undertake maintenance actions to keep all the equipment in good working order.
- Works with the playground maintenance contractor to repair any items as soon as possible when defects are identified.
- Every three months an independent operational playground inspection is undertaken by RPII certified inspectors and findings are acted on.
- Annually, the playground is subject to a further in depth inspection by an alternative independent inspector, also RPII certified. This informs the need for long term investment and actions on any findings that can be resolved immediately.

You asked more generally about safety and security of playground users:

- The Parks Police visit the playground regularly and will follow up on any concerns about anti social behaviour. They can be contacted via their patrolling mobile 07500 959442.



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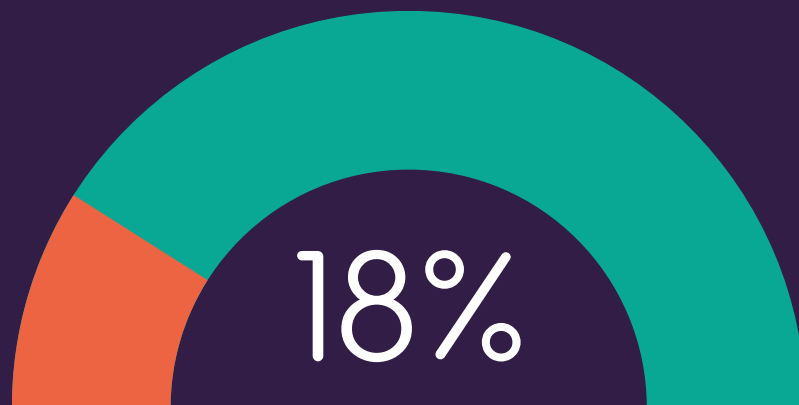
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Negative impacts on the local community

The consultation asked if there was anything in the proposals that hadn't been considered but that may have a negative impact on you or the local community.

The majority of respondents (82%) believe that all relevant concerns have been considered and that there are no additional factors that could negatively impact them or the local community.

A smaller but notable portion of respondents (18%) feel that there may be negative impacts that have not yet been addressed. All the issues raised relate to other features and facilities within Wandsworth Park. On the next page responses are provided to the issues raised.



Drinking fountains: There are currently two water fountains in Wandsworth Park and one is situated just outside of the current playground opposite the gate (next to the pavilion & toilets). Works to improve signage to make these water fountains more visible will be undertaken. Also information on how to report issues will be visible so repairs can be arranged.

Biodiversity: the trees within the playground will be protected during construction. Other work is happening throughout Wandsworth Park to make improvements for biodiversity including the creation of a new grassland habitats and ongoing work to ensure that any new ornamental planting is suitable for pollinators.

Lighting: Wandsworth Park is home to at least 3 species of bat who all require dark skies to thrive. They use the park for foraging, commuting, social activity and breeding as this is the last area of dark sky before central London. In order to protect bats and their activity the riverside path and main grassland area of the park will not be lit. Lit routes are available parallel to the park along Putney Bridge Road

Cycling: there are no current proposals to change the approach to cycling within the park. Cycle paths provide a safe and designated space for cyclists, reducing the risk of accidents and promoting cycling as a healthy and eco-friendly mode of transportation. Non-cycle paths ensure that pedestrians, including children, elderly residents, and those with mobility issues, can enjoy the park without the concern of encountering fast-moving bikes. This separation enhances the overall safety and enjoyment of the park for all users.

Toilets: Since the consultation the maintenance of the toilets has changed in response to your feedback. Signage will continually be improved so that the directions are clear from within the refurbished playground. Further refurbishment of the toilets is beyond the scope of this current playground project.



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Next steps:

The playground designer will now review Option 3 and explore if they can safely include the additional item suggested. They will also make sure that the issues of accessibility have been addressed .



The playground contractor will then place the order for the items to be manufactured.



Once the timetable for delivery is finalised, site signs informing you when the playground will need to close for refurbishment will be put up.



The contractors will take possession of the playground and deliver the improvements.



The playground will re-open once it has passed its post installation safety inspection.