

Parklife Croydon

Response to community engagement feedback (Aug – Oct 18)



Introduction

The following information relates to proposals for new, state-of-the-art Football and community facilities on Ashburton Playing Fields and Purley Way Playing Fields through the programme Parklife.

Parklife is a partnership between Croydon Council and a number of sporting agencies to address Croydon's poor quality park-based sporting and community facilities. The following is provided in response to community engagement that has been held with local residents and stakeholders between August and October 2018, as part of the development of a planning submission for the facilities.

Please note that this document is supplementary to a Questions and Answers document already produced, and which is available on the project website at

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/parksandopenspaces/parklife>

Update

Following the engagement period and a recent presentation to Croydon's Planning Committee at pre-application stage, we will be moving forward with a planning application for both sites. We intend to submit the applications before the end of 2018, and will update the website and notify everyone on the mailing list when this is completed.

We would like to thank all residents who have provided feedback both in writing and verbally when attending drop-in sessions or speaking to officers on the doorstep. We have compiled all the feedback received and reviewed it thoroughly. Where possible and appropriate, we have made changes to the schemes and our approach and will be continuing to develop and refine the proposals over the next few weeks.

It is not too late for us to continue to receive feedback, and you can send any follow up queries to residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk

In terms of the planning process, once a formal application is lodged and validated, there will be a 13-week period when Croydon Council, as the Local Planning Authority (LPA), will review the documentation, consult with statutory bodies, and receive the views of residents or anyone wishing to provide formal feedback. During this period residents are able to either provide support for, or object to, the proposals.

After the 13-week period the proposals will be discussed and voted on by Croydon's Planning Committee. For further information on this committee and committee meetings, please see <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/planningcommitteegeneralinformation>

Responses to community engagement

Below we have provided responses to a number of areas we have received feedback on. While we cannot respond to each piece of feedback individually, it is hoped the majority of the feedback will be covered under one of the following areas:

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1. Choice of sites – residents have requested information on how the two sites were selected.

Response:

Both sites are the result of a comprehensive site selection process, with a large number of factors being considered. The process will be fully detailed as planning submission, but for information all public open space sites over 4.9ha were considered, as well as one private site in combination with a park site. Critical factors included the nature of the site (for example overall size, topography, trees and their dispersal, and its importance for nature); any protections to the sites; any covenants or restrictions; location within the borough and local transport connections.

Following this analysis, two other sites were shortlisted for more detailed consideration: Ryelands, (the playing fields adjacent to and behind Croydon Arena), and Duppas Hill.

Ryelands was not selected for a number of reasons, but critically artificial grass pitches require soil of high quality and the history of the site meant this was unachievable.

Duppas Hill was also not selected for a number of reasons, crucially the likely environmental impact on the grassland habitat on the upper tier, and lack of suitable vehicular access.

A number of residents asked whether the fields west of Purley Way were considered as an alternative site. This site, which is part of the former Croydon Aerodrome, has a number of protections, meaning it was dismissed early on in the process.

2. Positioning of the facilities on both sites – residents have requested information on how the position of the facilities has been determined.

Response:

The project team have spent considerable time identifying the most appropriate positioning for these facilities on both sites and have worked through a mixture of technical and planning challenges to develop these schemes.

A critical factor is vehicular access. At both sites various access points were considered:

- At Purley Way Playing Fields, access off Purley Way and through the Colonnades have both been assessed and rejected on the basis of cost and practicality.
- At Ashburton Playing Fields the first scheme developed was proposed with access from Bywood Avenue but this scheme was not supported by the LPA on the basis of impact on designated Metropolitan Open Land. It would have also resulted in the loss of at least two 'Category A' trees lining Bywood Avenue (category A trees are high quality, important trees).

3. Traffic to and from the sites - concerns were raised about the impact of additional traffic on local neighbourhoods.

Response:

For both sites, we are aiming to create a real step change in how people travel to these facilities. We aim to achieve a 25% increase in trips to and from the sites by bike, on foot and by public transport (against predictions based on national travel data).

Both sites have been designed to prioritise access by bicycle and on foot. At Ashburton Playing Fields our proposals sit in tandem with a proposed upgrade of cycle paths including the east-west path to include cycling, and a new dual use path along the western side linking to Bywood Avenue. At Purley Way Playing Fields we proposed to provide a new cycle path that connects the cycle route to Croydon town centre with the Colonnades. Note that these proposals will be subject to statutory consultation on formally introducing cycling at these sites.

In addition to these enhancements, we will provide incentives for those choosing to travel to the sites by public transport, on foot and by bike. For example we will offer discounts for use of the facilities to those travelling by means other than by car. Ashburton Playing Fields are accessible in under 10 minutes walking from Woodside Tram Stop, and the bus stops on Long Lane. Purley Way Playing Fields is accessible by buses travelling along Purley Way, and the 119 bus which links Croydon town centre and the Colonnades.

On the basis of achieving a 25% shift, we predict that during weekday daytime (off peak) the development will result in less than 15 two-way trips per hour, and during peak time an average of 30 two-way trips per hour.

Access to and from the site for emergency vehicles will be subject to statutory review, but advice from our transport consultants is that safe and quick access to both sites will be possible at all times and the facilities have been designed in line with their guidance.

4. Parking surrounding the sites – at both sites residents expressed concerns regarding current parking issues during weekends, and were concerned these issues would be exacerbated.

Response:

It is very important that we strike a balance between the provision of ‘on-site’ car parking and not taking up too much playing field land for this provision. At both sites we are therefore proposing the provision of 30 new spaces, plus four or five disabled parking spaces, and drop off bays. This is based on an anticipation of the 25% shift from journeys to the sites by car to by public transport, walking or cycling, as highlighted above.

For both sites, there is an anticipation that even with more people arriving by public transport, on foot, and by bicycle, there will be overspill into surrounding streets, particularly during evenings and weekends. We anticipate that this will amount to a need for parking of approximately 10-20 cars per hour.

Having undertaken a comprehensive survey of parking in the streets surrounding Ashburton Playing Fields, advice from our transport consultants is that the local highway network has an appropriate amount of free and open parking spaces available to accommodate the additional demand, and we believe use of surrounding streets for ‘overspill’ parking will be manageable with improved marking and enforcement. Similarly, at Purley Way Playing Fields, any extra requirement for parking by users of the new facility at peak times can be accommodated within the surrounding street network. To ensure appropriate parking management, we are investigating additional enforcement activity to address current illegal/‘overparking’ along Waddon Way, on the banks of the playing fields, and at Ashburton Playing Fields at the end of Woodmere Avenue.

At both sites we will ensure through operational management that those using the car parking spaces are doing so legitimately, and in particular that the spaces are not used by people going to the Colonnades leisure complex (at Purley Way) or Shirley Oaks Hospital (at Ashburton Playing Fields).

5. Noise from the facilities – concerns were raised that the development would affect ‘peace and quiet’ in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Response:

A noise assessment is being prepared as part of the planning application, which will provide a full evaluation of the likely noise impact. The project team are working hard to minimise noise resulting from the development. This includes:

- Siting the pitches as far as possible from residential properties, within the physical constraints of each site.
- Deliberate landscaping to reduce noise impact, for example mounding and planting.
- Additional noise-reducing measures such as the use of specialist washers to dampen the noise from balls hitting the pitch fences.

6. Antisocial behaviour – concerns were raised regarding current issues experienced and the potential for these developments to exacerbate these issues.

Response:

We have been in liaison with the Safer Neighbourhoods Officer covering both sites regarding local crime, and have been provided with the crime statistics for each location. We are also talking to officers from the anti-social behaviour team within the council. This information is helping us in designing the facilities.

We believe these developments will help to address the anti-social behaviour that has been highlighted by the local community at both sites. Evidence suggests that facilities such as these, when programmed appropriately, can make a significant difference to local anti-social behaviour levels and patterns. The Sport and Recreation Alliance's 2012 study *Game of Life* provides the core arguments and a number of case studies: <https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/pages/gol-anti-social>

There will be a management presence throughout the day and well into the evening, the areas will be busier, and we will ensure a comprehensive CCTV system is installed. We will also be able to provide opportunities for constructive activity and play for local young people. These developments will transform the local environments and, we predict, engender behaviour change.

7. Existing uses – residents wanted to understand how the pitches would affect the existing activity on the two playing field sites.

Response:

These sites are both large, open fields, and as such this development will not result in loss of any activity that currently take place. Some activity may need to change location on the fields, for example the proposals include moving the children's play area at PWPF to a location closer to the pavilion and away from the road. However, everything possible now will still be possible once the development has been completed. In particular, we have sought to maintain, enhance or create walking, cycling and jogging routes. We have also sought to enhance opportunities for broader community use and access, creating attractive proposals for public picnic areas and children's play.

8. Principle of the developments – residents have suggested these developments are not appropriate and may be a way to start developing the playing fields for residential properties.

Response:

This is absolutely not the case. The nature of the developments are with the core intention to provide better sporting and local facilities for the community, and as such are considered to be an appropriate use for Metropolitan Open Land. There is no intention and no proposals for development of residential properties on either playing field.

9. Other Football sites – residents asked why the developments were needed with other local football facilities available.

Response:

The need for these developments has been comprehensively established through an independent assessment called a Playing Pitch Strategy. This looked at local supply and demand, as well as the quality of existing sites, and the evidence from this work underpins the council's [Sport and Physical Activity Facilities Strategy](#).

The facilities that respondents mentioned are the Goals facilities at Elmers End and the Powerleague facility at Purley Way. It is important to emphasise that the proposed Parklife facilities will provide a very different football offer, fulfilling a different local need. The Parklife programme is fundamentally a community sports offer, primarily targeted at amateur child and youth teams that play competitively in official leagues under the Football Association's national game structure. Private facilities such as those

mentioned above are generally for adults, are commercially-driven and do not support affiliated amateur football.

10. Environmental impact – residents have requested details of the environmental impact of these proposals, particularly the artificial grass pitches, and their associated safety.

Response:

A full assessment of the biodiversity of both sites has been conducted, and has determined that both sites lack significant biodiversity and natural habitats. Our landscape proposals, involving substantial planting, landscaping and enrichment, will create considerable environmental enhancements and create a positive impact on the environment, vastly outweighing the transfer of a relatively small area of low quality grassland to artificial turf.

The artificial turf that will be used is tested to high national safety standards. As such the project partners are assured there is no threat to public health resulting from the artificial turf.

11. Site management and security – residents were interested to know how the sites will be managed, with concerns about existing littering from current football activity and illegal encampments.

Response:

An operator will be responsible for managing the facilities at all times, in the same way that Better (Greenwich Leisure Ltd) manage the borough's leisure centres. Part of this responsibility will be ensuring the sites are kept clean, tidy and safe. The wider playing fields will remain the responsibility of the council.

We are aware both sites have been subject to illegal encampments in recent years and will be working hard to ensure landscape design minimises the risk of illegal access. It should be noted that both sites also fall under a recent high-court injunction preventing any illegal encampment and giving the council greater powers to take immediate action. Details can be viewed here:

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/environment/ehs/illegal-encampment/injunction>

12. Wider non-football provision – residents have asked for other community services beyond football.

Response:

Both proposals include new play areas, hireable community spaces, a café, pathways, and accessible toilets. At Ashburton Playing Fields there will be a small fitness gym included within the new pavilion building. The project team are reviewing all feedback to ensure the new facilities are designed to accommodate wider use beyond the core football offer.

At both sites a review has been undertaken of the existing local sporting offer, and existing local community infrastructure, as we need to ensure we do not duplicate existing activity. At Ashburton Playing Fields for example, the council has invested considerably in facilities at nearby Ashburton Park and it is hoped the two sites will work together to provide a comprehensive multi-sports and fitness offer for the local community. Likewise, Purley Way Playing Fields is close to Waddon Leisure Centre. We will not seek to duplicate a sports or physical activity offer at either of these facilities unless there is clear evidence there will be no impact on existing local provision.

13. Impact of construction – residents have asked what impact the construction of the facilities will have.

Response:

If the schemes go ahead then we will require our build contractor to be a member of the [Considerate Constructors Scheme](#). They will be expected to manage the construction sites appropriately, adhere to all planning requirements and communicate regularly with residents regarding the programme of development works. For example, a typical requirement of planning permission is that works on site take place only between 8am and 6pm on weekdays, and between 8am and 1pm on Saturdays.

A detailed Construction Logistics Plan will be developed and will be made available as a public document once completed, anticipated to be in early 2019.

14. Flooding – residents have expressed concerns about the development being in a flood plain.

Response:

All these proposals are designed appropriately for the local environment, including groundwater level, filtration, and flood risk. We recognise the issue of flood risk, particularly at Ashburton Playing Fields, and measures will be taken to safeguard against flooding impact. We have a team of engineers working on the most appropriate drainage and water management options and the planning application will be subject to statutory consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (Croydon Council), Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

15. Play provision – residents, particularly young people in the communities at both sites, have provided some really thoughtful suggestions for what we should include in the play areas, and associated facilities that would be of interest.

Response:

We are reviewing all the feedback received and will incorporate as many of the ideas and suggestions as possible, and we would like to thank everyone that has made suggestions in this area.

16. Other specific questions – the following answers are to a number of specific questions that have been submitted.

- CCTV will be used to minimise graffiti on the buildings, however the buildings are also being designed to provide ease of cleaning should it occur.
- The planning application will not include an application for a licence to serve alcohol.
- These proposals will not directly result in any changes to council tax, either across the borough or locally.
- The value of local properties or any perceived changes to their value have not been a factor in decision-making on this project, and cannot be a consideration for the Planning Committee.
- 3G artificial surfaces are 'football biased' but can also support sports such as rugby or American football. Multi-sports sessions will also be possible.
- Netting is being considered for use between the two pitches to avoid further hard fencing.
- An informal running track is proposed as part of the Purley Way Playing Fields scheme and enhanced formal pedestrian pathways on Ashburton Playing Fields. Residents will still be able to walk or jog around the perimeter of both sites.
- The proposals are for usage of all facilities until 10pm and not later.
- Both proposals involve the demolition of existing pavilion buildings – the single pavilion at Ashburton Playing Fields, and pavilions one and two (southern end) at Purley Way Playing Fields.
- The fencing surrounding the artificial grass pitches will be black, which is actually less visually intrusive and blends in more with the surrounding landscape than green or grey.

17. Summary

Above we have comprehensively set out our responses to resident feedback received over the last few weeks. As will hopefully be clear, these development proposals are significant projects that are the result of huge amounts of work over the two year lifespan of the project, and the large team developing these proposals are working hard to ensure they are the best facilities they can be for Croydon.

For those residents that have expressed concerns about any area listed above, we do hope that our response provides you with some introductory assurances, and further detail on a number of the areas will be provided as part of the planning submission.

If you do still wish to receive further information, or you have a question that we have not covered, then you can e-mail residentinvolvement@croydon.gov.uk.

We will continue to update the website and use the mailing list for correspondence, so please continue to check www.croydon.gov.uk/parklife.