

ADDRESS: Shoreditch Park, bounded by New North Road, Bridport Place, Grange Street, Rushton Street, Mintern Street and Pitfield Street.	
WARD:	Hoxton East and Shoreditch
REFERENCE NUMBER:	
APPLICANT:	London Borough of Hackney Parks
PROPOSAL: works of alteration and improvement to Shoreditch Park, including new sports and children's play facilities, landscaping, and alterations to boundary treatments	

ANALYSIS INFORMATION

ZONING DESIGNATION	YES	NO
CPZ	X	
CAZ	X	X
Conservation Area		X
City Fringe Opportunity Area	X	
Listed Building (Statutory)		X
Listed Building (Local)		X
Priority Employment Area		X

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Shoreditch Park is one of the largest parks in the south of the borough. As such it plays an important role in providing access to open space for the surrounding community, in an area of the borough which is identified as being deficient in access to open space (LP33 fig.4.10).
- 1.2 The area surrounding the park has experienced a significant amount of new development in recent years including the Colville Estate redevelopment, Britannia Leisure Centre development, and other development within Shoreditch / along City Road. As such improvements to the park have been planned to ensure it can continue to meet the open space, leisure and biodiversity requirements of the surrounding area.
- 1.3 It should be noted that the Shoreditch Park improvement proposals have been developed alongside other improvements to the periphery of Shoreditch Park, as part of the Britannia Leisure Centre Development (see history section). The Britannia development includes new tree planting on the western boundary of the new leisure centre where it adjoins the park, public realm improvements to Grange Street on the north eastern boundary of the park, and a new public square linking the parking with Pitfield Street.
- 1.4 The proposals for improvements to Shoreditch Park have been in development since August 2019 and have been subject to a range of public consultation events, including a full public consultation event in October 2019. A number of focus group events have also been held with pupils of nearby schools, local community, amenity and business groups. The submission of a planning application for the proposed works is anticipated in March / April 2020.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Shoreditch Park is located in the south of the borough, and is one of the largest parks in the borough. The park is identified as Designated Open Space, and a Site of Importance for

Nature Conservation (SINC). The surrounding area is identified within figure 4.10 of the adopted Hackney Local Plan (LP33) as being an area of deficiency with access to open space. The Park is bounded by New North Road to the west, Poole Street and Grange Street to the north, Rushton Street and Mintern Street to the south, and Pitfield Street to the east. Bridport Place runs from north to south through the centre of the park, although the route is accessible to pedestrians and cyclists only within the Park itself. The park is relatively open in character, with an existing play area, beach volleyball court and adventure playground (with its own secure high boundary fence) located along the southern park boundary. The eastern area of the park contains formal sports pitches. Dorothy Thurtle Gardens, a more secluded, formally landscaped area occupies the south east corner of the park.

- 2.2 The north eastern corner of the park is currently undergoing significant change as part of the Britannia Leisure Centre development, which is currently under construction. The eastern boundary of the park adjacent to Pitfield Street previously comprised tennis courts with associated fencing. The old Britannia Leisure Centre also bounded the north eastern corner of the park. However the tennis courts have now been replaced by a new Britannia Leisure Centre building, with courts at roof level. The new leisure centre is due to open in 2021, after which the old leisure centre will be demolished and replaced with a new secondary school and residential development. A new public square is proposed to the north of the new leisure centre, providing a link through to the park from Pitfield Street. The Britannia development also included a part 16, part 6 storey residential building (building H1 and H2) situated at the corner of Penn Street and Bridport Place, facing the northern boundary of the park.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There have been a series of planning applications for environmental improvement works within the park itself including new planting, paving, seating, multisport surfaces between 1998 and 2005. The most significant proposals were for development of new sports complex comprising of single storey changing/club house pavillion for leisure use, installation of artificial sports pitches, erection of 12 x 18m-high and 4 x 15m-high sets of floodlights, erection of two spectator stands to accommodate 280 spectators in total plus two trainers' shelters adjacent to new grass pitch, installation of 3m and 4m-high perimeter fencing plus 2.7m-high wall around compound entrance and new vehicular access onto Grange St (ref: 2001/1853), granted April 2002. However this planning permission was not implemented.
- 3.2 The Britannia Leisure Centre development referred to above (ref: 2018/0926) was granted planning permission on 7th December 2018. The application comprised an outline (hybrid) application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of eight buildings to provide a maximum overall floorspace of up to 83,989m² (GEA), comprising: Up to 481 residential units (use class C3) within 6 separate residential blocks (H1-H6 ranging in height from ground plus 3 to 24 storeys); Up to 400m² (GEA) of flexible commercial floorspace within use classes A1 / A3 / B1; 492 m² GEA use class D1 (Early Years Centre); Secondary School of 15,005m² GEA (use class D1); Leisure Centre of 12,009m² GEA (use class D2). Full details (with no matters reserved) to provide 93 residential units (11,063m² GEA), 492m² GEA of Early Years non-residential floorspace (use class D1), Secondary School of 15,005m² GEA use class D1; Leisure Centre of 12,009m² GEA use class D2 and public realm improvements. Outline details are submitted for site layout, scale and means of vehicular access (with appearance, internal layout and landscaping reserved for later approval) for 388 residential units (up to

45,020m² GEA) and up to 400 m² (GEA) of flexible commercial floorspace (Class A1/A3/B1) and other public realm / communal private space improvements.

4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The latest proposals comprise a new children's play area, with play provision suitable for children aged 0-5 and 6-12. A sports hub area is also proposed with beach volleyball court, Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), outdoor gym, and associated new tree planting and seating. The 'Javelin Thrower' sculpture which was previously located at the entrance to the old Britannia Leisure Centre is to be resited within the Sports Hub area. Other features are also proposed such as a running track around the park periphery, rain gardens, alterations to the adventure play area boundary, and removal of wider sections of the park boundary.

5. KEY MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of improvements to Shoreditch Park, including children's play / sports provision

- 5.1 The park comprises designated open space, and is located within an area of open space deficiency within the borough. As such the park is a very important amenity space for the surrounding community. The majority of homes in the surrounding area do not benefit from the use of private gardens and as such the Shoreditch Park, is a popular and heavily used open space.
- 5.2 Policy LP46 states that designated open space will be protected. *"Small scale ancillary developments which enhance the park and open space offer, such as refreshment facilities, public conveniences, drinking fountains, public art installations or outdoor play and fitness equipment will be permitted provided that they are: i. Of a high standard of design and quality, safe and accessible to all; and ii. Do not have a detrimental impact on nature conservation and biodiversity, and should seek to improve such; and iii. Do not result in the loss of functional open space where possible; and iv. Do not detract from the overall function, character and appearance of the park or open space"*.
- 5.3 Policy LP55 also states that the Council will protect existing play and recreation facilities and support the development of new formal and informal play facilities: *"New play spaces should: i. Be well located and easily accessible by pedestrian, cycling or bus routes, and ii. Be inclusive to all, and iii. Provide a range of different types of play facilities and experiences for children of different abilities, and iv. Be sustainable and easy to maintain"*.
- 5.4 As such the improvements to the park to maximise its value for outdoor relaxation, play and sport, is strongly supported by the above policies, subject to meeting the above criteria.
- 5.5 The proposed children's play area is located in a similar location to the existing facilities and would include new and improved equipment, as well as natural elements which can be used for play. This is supported, although the proposals are encouraged to have regard to the Council's emerging Child Friendly Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.6 It is also noted that the buildings H1 and H2 within the Britannia Leisure Centre development, did not include on site play provision for children aged 0-5, as it was felt that better facilities could be provided in the park itself. As such the planning permission included a financial contribution of £68,095 toward play provision in the park to meet the needs of the development. The proposed location of the play area is still considered easily accessible

from H1/H2 and will include a greater range of facilities / equipment for children, than if located on site / or separate from the main park play provision.

- 5.7 The proposed sports provision would represent a significant improvement over existing facilities. The beach volleyball area will be replaced and the new MUGA, outdoor gym and outdoor table tennis tables would represent new facilities not currently found in the park.
- 5.8 Other planning considerations raised by the proposals, and included in the criteria for policies LP46 and LP55 are considered further below:

Urban Design

- 5.5 Overall the design comes from a successful public consultation exercise where local priorities have shaped the proposals. There is an emphasis on improved ecology, improved play provision, improved accessibility and more opportunities to spend time in the park. Overall the plans show a significant upgrade to the park with many exciting ideas. Remaining questions and unresolved details remain with regard to the following issues.
- 5.6 The proposed removal of railings from large areas of the park boundary goes against the trend in London of replacing park railings which have been removed. Railings around parks can be positive in creating secure spaces which are visually permeable. They also create areas which have low footfall allowing for areas devoted to nature. If the railings are proposed to be removed in the final application, the design statement should provide a number of case studies showing comparable and successful examples of railings being removed, and parks and commons which do not have railings. Without railings could another perimeter or even broken perimeter be considered which might be loosely defined by hedges or clusters of hedge species, low level planting, wildlife enclosures such as the areas in London Fields.
- 5.7 Generally, there seems to be a reduction in the edges and gateways to the park. For example around the north Bridport Place entrance grass would bleed onto pavement and the sense of arrival will not be emphasised. . Officers have doubts around the removal of the extent of gateways, perimeters and enclosure. Although this could create a wilder more naturalistic edge to the park, the concept of making the park more permeable and open might not translate literally into a better park design in practice. Other urban parks benefit from enclosure and gateways, to manage footfall, create security, prevent cars and bikes entering the space and to make the space feel purposeful.
- 5.8 The Sports Hub area appears to feature two of the classic sea containers for depot use. A proper secure building would be preferred: these containers are unsightly. As a minimum landscape proposals should include measures to screen these areas and/or for cladding the containers in timber.
- 5.9 Lighting has been mentioned in the consultation. People will use the park at night given the open perimeter and lighting creates a perception of safety. The lighting strategy should reflect the latest in lighting thinking. It should reduce light pollution to the minimum. The colour temperature of the lighting should not affect circadian rhythm, areas of the park should be allowed to be dark with light being used to direct people along a very limited number of routes. Lighting columns should be attractive and unobtrusive in appearance.

Conservation considerations

5.10 Shoreditch Park is a fairly modern park. The 1893 Ordnance Survey map shows the site of the park occupied by dense terraced housing. The LCC Bomb Maps 1939 to 1945 show some severe bombing of this area in the Blitz between 7 September 1940 and 11 May 1941, including a V1 and V2 rocket strike. The 1951 Ordnance Survey map and contemporary photos show some terraced homes as ruins and many replaced with prefabricated bungalows. The LCC planned the new park from December 1961 but progress was slow. The Shoreditch Park User Group was formed in 1966 to lobby for the implementation of Shoreditch Park and the pre-fabs were finally cleared in the period up to 1973. The Victorian former roads of Wareham, Worgate, Rushton, Northport, Clift, Salisbury and Dorchester Streets were lost. The kerbs from these roads survive in places within the park (an odd arrangement also seen at Burgess Park in Southwark, leaving the streets as a ghost in the park). The park features a line of splendid street lamps along the north south route (formerly part of Bridport Place). These appear to be high quality replicas of an Edwardian design. The retention of these features and incorporation within the proposals is encouraged as part of a comprehensive integrated plan is encouraged. At present the retained features may have an awkward relationship with some of the new proposed features. For instance the historic lighting columns will be isolated between a grass bank and the proposed rain garden.

Trees, Landscape and biodiversity

5.11 LP33 policy LP47 states that *“All development should protect and where possible enhance biodiversity leading to a net gain. B. All development should maximise opportunities to create new or make improvements to existing natural environments, nature conservation areas, habitats or biodiversity features and link into the wider green infrastructure network”*. LP33 policy LP51 states that *“all development proposals must retain trees of amenity value, especially veteran trees, and hedgerows and natural features, and must incorporate high quality landscaping”*.

5.12 As such the provision of new landscaping, tree planting, areas of relaxed mowing, and rain gardens are strongly supported, as they will improve biodiversity and landscape value of the park. The use of wildlife refuge areas, which are protected from human activity is also encouraged. This will help support biodiversity in the park given its SINC designation. Use of native tree species such as Common Lime (*Tilia x europaea*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), English oak (*Quercus robur*) and Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea') of semi mature size are also encouraged. The potential for additional tree planting around park edges should also be explored further. The Ecology / biodiversity report submitted with the application should demonstrate how the SINC designation of the park is protected.

No.	BACKGROUND PAPERS	NAME/DESIGNATION AND TELEPHONE EXTENSION OF ORIGINAL COPY	LOCATION CONTACT OFFICER
1.	Hackney Local Plan LP33 (2020) and the London Plan (2016), Shoreditch Park Design development presentation by LUC (ref: 10769-LD-REP-201119) dated	Steve Fraser-Lim, X 8093	2 Hillman Street, London E8 1FB

	19th November 2020, Shoreditch Park Improvement Project Consultation Report dated Jan 2020 by Hackney Consultation Team.		
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