

NAME OF PROJECT

Market Place - a new park for East Finchley

WHERE WILL IT TAKE PLACE

Market Place Playground, Park Road, East Finchley, London N2 8DQ

BACKGROUND

- Market Place sits at the historic heart of the old East Finchley and 'The Walks', the route of an ancient driving path which brought livestock to the market, runs alongside. It has been used as a playground since the 1950s¹
- The site is owned and managed by **Barnet Council** and is adjacent to two schools - **Holy Trinity CofE Primary** and **Archer Academy** (secondary) and a short walk to another, **Martin Primary School**.
- It is stated to provide play areas for 2-14 year olds. However the equipment is sparse, dated and broken, the surface is mostly old tarmac or crumbling safety carpet. It attracts litter and dog mess, especially in the small adjacent green space.
- The space has not been updated for many years². In *Barnet's Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2016-2026* it was rated 'low quality/low value' which put it at risk of development into electricity storage or solar panels.³ This prompted a petition to save the playground which was signed by 90 local people.
- Despite its condition, the space is highly valued by the local population who live in nearby high-density high and low rise housing with few gardens and limited access to outside space. This is underlined by responses to our first survey⁴:

"This tiny playground has kept me and my family sane in this last lockdown... We affectionately call it the POBD (playground of broken dreams) but we'd be lost without it."

¹ Memories of Market Place Playground through the years

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/finchleymemories/permalink/5034942989918449>

² History of playground updates in Finchley & Golders Area Committee minutes 8 April 2021

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DE8JpsZiOrTzQJcut1UPk2CqcvfqlS1y/view?usp=sharing>

³ Barnet Council, *Parks and Open Spaces - Our Strategy for Barnet 2016-2026*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wRB8gJRVUSMPnUcmjgOMV1vtXMzPhepk/view?usp=sharing>

⁴ Market Place Playground 2021 survey <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I-pKcqBQ7DmHBv-7EiyJTbjdkwNC9mQa/edit?usp=sharing&oid=100286114384213121983&rtpof=true&sd=true>

WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO DO

Our ambition is to turn Market Place Playground into a park - a green, playable landscape that will act as a hub for the community as well as a place for children's exercise and play. A park is much needed in the area. East Finchley is described as "below the current borough average in terms of parks provision per 1,000 people", "parts ... do not lie within 400m of a local park" and "a particular deficiency in District Park provision".⁵

This vision has evolved over the past 18 months:

- We formed in December 2020 in response to the threat of possible closure of the playground, supported by seed funding from **Grange Big Local**.⁶ Our first aim was simply to ensure it was retained as a play space and to work with the council on tactical improvements.
- However following consultation⁷ with local users in March 2021 we identified three key themes from the responses: more nature and planting, more and better equipment and improved social spaces and our goals evolved into more ambitious and long term ones reflected in our revised mission statement:

"To develop Market Place Playground into a natural, open space benefiting the physical and mental wellbeing of our growing community as well as East Finchley's environment and air quality. We will work with the council to protect and improve facilities and integrate the adjacent green space in order to inspire future generations through play and to create an attractive environment for the use of all local residents many of whom have limited access to outdoor areas."

To deliver this ambition so far we have:

- Engaged all key stakeholders in our ambition: crucially we have a productive and open working relationship with **Barnet Council** (Green Spaces - Phil Hoare and Matthew Gunyon, Strategy - Danusia Brzezicka and East Finchley councillors Alison Moore - now Mayor of Barnet -Arjun Mittra and Claire Farrier) who support us in our aims.
- Applied to **Barnet Council** for Market Place Playground and surrounding spaces to be converted to a park in August 2021 as part of a draft local plan.⁸
- Gained charitable status by working within the umbrella of **East Finchley Community Trust** (Charity Number: 1141564). By doing this, we are sitting within an established organisation of good standing and a track record of effective community work, which will help us with raising funds.
- Raised the rating of the playground from 'low value' to 'good' using Barnet's own metrics.⁹

⁵ *Parks and Open Spaces - Our Strategy for Barnet*

⁶ Grange Big Local (GBL) is a resident-led, lottery funded community project working in East Finchley. <https://www.grangebiglocal.org/>

⁷ Market Place Playground 2021 survey

⁸ New Park for East Finchley <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QOASEPBjMJ1lwVCYErzHuISUfye-Tfu5/view?usp=sharing>

⁹

- Commissioned consultant **Phil Doyle** and Landscape Designer **Aileen Shackell** to develop a concept design. Doyle and Shackell are joint authors of *Design For Play*, the government strategy on developing play spaces¹⁰. Aileen has over 20 years' experience of landscape design and is a chartered landscape architect. Phil's background is predominantly in the play sector, but also management and maintenance of open spaces. They have together worked on play and informal recreation schemes including a wheel park at **Victoria Park** in East London and worked as play design advisors to the new **Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park**.
- Ran an **Engagement Day** for the local community as part of the concept design process with Aileen and Phil to get feedback, ideas and secure buy-in for our vision. A major local advertising drive included but was not limited to schools, nurseries, charities, places of worship, retirement homes, as well as local businesses. Even though the Engagement Day took place as Storm Eunice hit on 19 February, over 80 people ranging in age from 8 weeks to 82 years braved the rain and wind to attend.¹¹
- Gained agreement from **Barnet Council** that they would undertake a topographical survey of the playground and have been requested to deliver structural repairs to ensure the space is ready for redevelopment.

HOW WILL YOUR WORK INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY

Over the past 18 months we have built a strong relationship with local residents and playground users. This includes:

- an initial qualitative survey to determine what users wanted from the space - which received 337 enthusiastic response and initiated an annual usage survey to measure impact of changes¹².
- Developing a strong social media presence with 600+ engaged followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram¹³ and built an email database of 170 local supporters receiving regular updates.
- instituting monthly litter pick which regularly attracts 20+ adults & children and held planting sessions in the green spaces.
- organising and delivering 4 *Summer of Play* play days through August 2021 to benefit the local children recovering from the impact of lockdowns. These supported our plans to elevate and re-brand the playground as an exciting community space with huge potential. In just 6 weeks we enlisted facilitators and volunteers to offer a wealth of activities (music, sport, dance, art, circus skills, theatre, nature, storytelling etc). The days were attended by 400+ residents.¹⁴

¹⁰ Shackell, Butler, Doyle and Ball. *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*. (Department of Culture Media and Sport, 2008) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z-DIoMaQIOke21vq7CWD5KFGaDO7gsgY/view?usp=sharing>

¹¹ Link to consultation document

¹² 2021 survey ibid

¹³ <https://twitter.com/Friendsofmarke1>
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofMarketPlacePlayground>
https://www.instagram.com/market_place_playground/?hl=en

¹⁴ Summer Play Days report in update to Grange Big Local <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z6hpxZ-EfzZYEEYnkQ7MtZR9AzOgMFX5/view?usp=sharing>

“Fantastic day for everyone, a really good use of the space”¹⁵

- providing opportunities to listen to the community, ensuring open dialogue and feedback as we progress: hosting a Meet the Friends session, manning a regular stall at East Finchley Festival and other events and holding parents’ coffee mornings at local schools.

We will continue to involve the community as the project progresses by

- Further community engagement days to secure feedback as the design evolves
- Focus groups and mini-consultations with key user segments - specifically teenagers - especially girls and young women, the elderly and adults and children with disabilities and additional needs. This will be accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure all those with relevant protected characteristics are reflected in the final project.
- Ensure feedback on designs and plans and building schedules is secured at every stage.
- Presence at local events to further promote the redevelopment and invite commentary
- Drive responses via social and other media and building our mailing list

All six Friends of Market Place Playground committee members live within 500 metres of the playground and are regular users as parents and grandparents.

HOW YOUR PROJECT FITS WITH LOCAL ACTIVITIES

- The playground is within 350m of 2 primaries and 1 secondary school - with a combined pupils of 1,700. It is very heavily used by children at the end of school in particular but also at weekends and in school holidays.
- Local nurseries such as **Scribbles** and **Tiddley Tots** use the playground for outings and childminders/nannies are also regular visitors throughout the day. Previously the green space has been used as a location by **Teddy Bears Music** and other toddler groups, particularly during lockdowns.
- Families and school groups also use the green space for small gatherings and picnics and occasionally adults socialise in the evenings at the (dilapidated) picnic tables.
- The space and equipment is used by personal trainers for adult fitness sessions - 121 and groups.¹⁶

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OTIeQ5eA8HoSqK0keys0tW6s08hUupfQr00HVK_wpo4/edit?usp=sharing

¹⁵ Playday feedback forms, August 2021

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OTIeQ5eA8HoSqK0keys0tW6s08hUupfQr00HVK_wpo4/edit?usp=sharing

¹⁶ Fitmylife fitness classes at the playground

https://www.instagram.com/p/CaKBnEdKDSS/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

- The Walks, which runs alongside the playground, is heavily used by commuters as it connects East Finchley's old village residential areas and The Grange estate to the tube station.
- Situated on the former commercial centre of East Finchley, the space has also attracted historical interest with Hendon Archaeological Society organising a dig in July 2021.¹⁷
- Our summer play days in 2021 demonstrated it could serve as a valuable community space for events, small fetes and social occasions, driving community cohesion.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM YOUR PROJECT?

The primary beneficiaries of our project will be the immediate and growing community of families in East Finchley - many of whom live in gardenless homes and who were particularly adversely impacted by the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

The area is densely populated with high, medium and low-rise homes, but over the past 2 years this has increased and there are a growing number of families with no access to private gardens, so improving the provision of Market Place Playground has become all the more important. **Bamford House**, a block of 8 flats was built on the adjacent Norfolk Close in 2020 and within 200 metres, **Gracie House**, a high rise of 50 flats was completed in summer 2021. The local population is growing overall - demand for green spaces and play areas is high.

Market Place Playground serves **The Grange** area, 400m away, which has a high density of social housing and lack of community facilities¹⁸. Its only playground - on **Brownsell Road** is allocated for housing development which will mean that the (largely low income and gardenless) communities in that area will be deprived of any significant play, exercise and outdoor space.¹⁹ Children in urban environments like ours in particular need access to green spaces as outlined Unicef's 2021 report **Necessity of Urban Green Space for Children's Optimal Development**.

"Green views out of school windows correlate with improved academic performance. And children who grow up in greener neighbourhoods are often less depressed, less stressed and generally healthier and happier. Both greener views and surroundings as well as time spent within green spaces offer children numerous mental, physical and social developmental benefits and spur their growth into ecologically aware and responsible citizens. Moreover, when equally accessible, green spaces serve to reduce the health inequities suffered by socio-economically disadvantaged children."

²⁰

As previously mentioned, East Finchley is an area that already is underserved in green spaces and the second lowest satisfaction rating for parks in the LB Barnet at 56% and park

¹⁷ <http://www.the-archer.co.uk/archive/2021/2021July12.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s27708/Appendix%20F%20-%20GBL%20Community%20Profile.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.times-series.co.uk/news/19937298.residents-lose-latest-fight-save-east-finchley-green-spaces/>

²⁰

<https://www.unicef.org/media/102391/file/Necessity%20of%20Urban%20Green%20Space%20for%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Optimal%20Development.pdf>

space below the Barnet average.²¹ Grange Big Local's survey underlined this with residents requesting "play areas - playgrounds, football, ..."more parks with swings and other fun stuff."²²

East Finchley has 29.1% of children living in poverty.²³ Local schools typically have 25% of pupils qualifying for Pupil Premium (in line with national average) but the immediate area is characterised by pockets of deprivation - **Norfolk Close, Prospect Ring and Chapel Court**. Since the start of the pandemic demand for Finchley Foodbank 200m away at St. Mary's Church, High Road has increased by 600%.²⁴

There is a large and ethnically diverse population with many communities speaking English as an additional language. At Martin Primary School for example 54% of children speak English as a second language²⁵. Market Place Playground serves as a much needed social space for the many people in our community who speak English as an additional language.

All three local schools have higher than average cohorts with additional needs.²⁶ Children with additional needs are key users of the playground and need a landscape that will enable them to play, provide various accessible exercise opportunities and quiet areas for calm and reflection.

As well as families, the elderly and other adults with additional needs are also part of the Market Place Community. There is sheltered housing for older residents immediately adjacent to the playground on the south west side run by Finchley Charities who also run several nearby residences. There is also a residential community of adults with additional needs 100m away in Norfolk Close. The revised design focusing on accessibility, integration, nature and community will make the area much better able to serve those residents.

Green spaces planting and trees will offset the impact of air pollution. The playground is less than 1km from the North Circular and sits 200m from the busy A1000 - a main route for traffic into London. Barnet has not seen improvements in air quality over the past five years in other boroughs and in 2019 Barnet had the second highest rate for air pollution related deaths.²⁷

²¹ Barnet Open Spaces Strategy

²² GBL Community Survey (footnote 18)

Additional GBL consultation document:

https://www.grangebiglocal.org/files/ugd/291c2c_1948dd89231a44c9acc5c75c90964576.pdf

²³ Finchley and Golders Green Area Committee Meeting 8 April 2021 minutes

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1HJzlnhAKvfSjdlu9VyuWjjMQ643ZCCu5?ths=true>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/finchleyfoodbank/posts/2052484738251707>

²⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cEC-O_zxksfKxgL-XY2Ha7BQsTRJ-J9u/view?usp=sharing

²⁶ Archer Academy OFSTED report <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50086131>

Martin Primary School OFSTED report <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/936733>

Holy Trinity School OFSTED report <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2476845>

²⁷ <https://www.barnetclimate.org.uk/2021/04/air-quality-concerned/>

HOW HAVE USERS BEEN AFFECTED BY COVID 19? WHAT DIFFERENCE OUR PROJECT WILL MAKE AND HOW WILL IT MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID 19

Our project in part arose out of the adverse impact of the lockdown on our local community, particularly children and young people. Enduring lack of access to outdoor space and fresh air, play and exercise, friendship and social contact, has been devastating for our young people in terms of their development.

During the third lockdown, when playgrounds could open Market Place Playground provided an essential service - even on the coldest days families came for play, exercise, fresh air and community²⁸ - and our survey responses support this:.

“It has a special place in our hearts. We can’t go to Market Place without bumping into friends. It’s been a life line over the last two years for the kids and the parents when life has not exactly been easy.”

“I can’t stress enough how Market Place Park has provided a vital change of scenery, a chance for myself and my toddler to socialise with friends at a distance and I know it’s the same for many others during all lockdown restrictions.”

In terms of lockdown legacy, at the largest local primary school, Martin Primary, the head teacher, Ziz Chater, reported “61% of our children entering the school in Reception in September 2021 were assessed as being at expected attainment in their physical development compared with 74% in September 2019. Similarly 40% of children in Reception in September 2021 were assessed as being at expected attainment for emotional development in September 2021 compared with 56% in 2019.”

This tallies with Ofsted’s national research on the impact of the pandemic on education and young people.

“The negative impact on children’s personal, social and emotional development has also continued, with many lacking confidence in group activities. Children’s social and friendship-building skills have been affected...There continues to be an impact on children’s physical development, including delays in babies learning to crawl and walk. Some providers reported that children had regressed in their independence and self-care skills. As a result, several have increased the amount of time that children spend on physical activities, to develop gross motor skills.”²⁹

The impact on older children was significant as evidenced by the Martin School Covid catch up strategy.

“....Particular focus was given to disadvantaged, SEND and vulnerable pupils, because research has shown that children in those groups have been the most adversely affected.....Y6 less emotionally resilient, more affected by lockdown”

²⁸ Timelapse footage of playground use in January 2021 (lockdown)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16--NUhynnifwZMqgscAIEzLHCRLPAWsJ/view?usp=sharing>

²⁹ <https://ihv.org.uk/news-and-views/news/ofsted-early-years-report-continued-impact-from-pandemic/>

See also:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-children-hardest-hit-by-covid-19-pandemic-are-regressing-in-basic-skills-and-learning>

These groups are currently ill-served by the existing playground with a lack of equipment, activity and space for over-9s and no provision for pupils with additional physical and educational needs.

Recent research has shown that children's activity levels have still not recovered from the pandemic³⁰ and young children's development was particularly adversely affected by lockdown. Research published by the Education Endowment Foundation in May 2022 stated:

*"For many children the experience of lockdown was made harder by cramped living conditions, no access to green spaces, parental mental health difficulties and financial hardship."*³¹

Parks are essential to children's fitness and health. It develops core strength, fine and gross motor skills, balance, speed, movement, teamwork and risk. Coming out of lockdown, it is essential to focus on and offer opportunities for children to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their emotional, social, educational and physical development.

It's not just children. Inequality in adults was exacerbated by the pandemic and access to green spaces is one of the defining factors in levelling up after Covid.

*"The first dynamic driving inequality of access to greenspaces is that the system we have created is incrementally pushing poorer communities away from them. When it comes to greenspaces, living close matters. People who live within a five-minute walk of their local greenspace are significantly more likely (61 per cent) to visit once a week or more often"*³²

A similar report by the National Trust also highlighted that areas like ours, with a high representation of ethnic minorities and low income families have more challenges recovering from the impact of Covid.

"• In areas where over 40 per cent of residents are from ethnic minorities, there is 11 times less public green space than in areas where residents are largely white, and it is also likely to be of poorer quality. Meanwhile, black people are four times less likely than white people to have a private garden.

• Black and Asian people visit natural settings 60 per cent less than white people, despite the fact that ethnic minority communities statistically value parks more than their white counterparts.

*• In the poorest 20 per cent of households, 46 per cent don't have a car, so urban parks and green spaces are their only opportunity to have contact with nature, rural beauty spots are beyond reach."*³³

HOW MUCH MONEY YOU NEED?

£200-250,000

³⁰ <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2022/may/childrens-physical-activity-post-pandemic.htmlthe-guardian.com/education/2022/may/18/younger-children-most-affected-by-covid-lockdowns-new-research-finds>

³¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/may/18/younger-children-most-affected-by-covid-lockdowns-new-research-finds>

³² <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/will-covid-19-make-parks-even-less-accessible/systemic-inequality-and-greenspace/>

³³ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/press-release/new-research-shows-55bn-fund-needed-to-level-up-access-to-urban-green-space-as-part-of-uks-green-recovery>

The design concept will cost £354,000 (exc VAT)

We have already secured the following:

£29,000	Seed funding balance from Grange Big Local
£30,000	Commitment from Barnet Area Committee
TBC	Barnet Green Spaces fund - commitment to be confirmed pending committee meeting on 29 June but we estimate £50-£100,000

WHAT YOU INTEND TO SPEND THE MONEY ON?

Please see full costing in the link below³⁴ and the topline budget here:

Overheads and prelims costs	30k
Demolition and Clearance	30k
Hard works	55k
Soft works	58k
Catalogue play equipment	55k
Impact absorbent surfaces	17k
Site furniture	9k
Bespoke timber and boulders	51k
Provisional sums	7k
Contingencies	10k
Total cost of capital works	<u>322k</u>

Longer term we will need a fundraising strategy in place to support maintenance and engagement.

HOW LONG YOU NEED THE MONEY FOR

We aim to begin the renovation in December 2022/January 2023 and it will take approximately 3 months.

WHAT YOUR ORGANISATION DOES AND WHY YOU'RE BEST PLACED TO DELIVER THE PROJECT?

Friends of Market Place Playground now has an 18 month track record of fundraising, community engagement and delivering regular activities as well as securing charitable status under East Finchley Community Trust. We are the only group taking responsibility for the playground and have built grassroots support and many high profile stakeholder relationships - with the Council, as mentioned, and also:

- Local schools' senior leadership teams' Ziz Chater (Martin Primary School), Roz Kimani (Holy Trinity CofE Primary School) and Joanna Mahoney (Archer Academy) who signed an open letter which includes the following statement:
"Our pupils and their families constitute a sizeable proportion of Market Place Playground's users and we know that it is a much loved and valuable resource for them all. Many of them live in homes with no garden or outdoor space and the playground provides opportunities for physical exertion, building strength and making friends. Outdoor play is crucial, not only to physical health and wellbeing but to educational achievement overall, as it supports teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, motor skills development and independence. Our pupils and their families use the space before and after school and it is a key part of many of our children's daily routine".

³⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/11g6qF41mG_A2zVwviouNITgYB9DWv0Ny/view?usp=sharing

- Relevant local community groups (**Grange Big Local, Young Barnet Foundation, Friends of Child’s Hill Playground, Friends of Long Lane Pasture, Friends of Cherry Tree Woods, London Garden Network** etc), having regular meetings and learning from their experiences and networks.
- Organisations in the play sector (**Playing Out, Make Space for Girls**, etc) - we attended workshops and webinars to enhance our learning and insights, understand best practice and locate fundraising sources.
- **Dr. Tim Gill**, consultant, author (most recently of *Urban Playground: How Child-Friendly Planning and Design Can Save Cities*), former director of **Play England** and an international expert on play, is an advocate for our group. Tim supported us in meetings with Barnet Council’s Green Spaces team and Area Committee stating:

“What excites me about the space is the chance to create somewhere that will be loved, enjoyed and appreciated by young and old and by people from different cultures and backgrounds. A convivial, democratic, flexible place at the heart of the neighbourhood, where friends and neighbours will want to linger and chat, where schoolchildren will find lots to do on their way home, where teenagers will hang out with their mates on a sunny summer evening, where families with young children will want to come and play, and then stay for a weekend picnic, and where older people will sit and watch the world go by. Maybe also a place that can from time-to-time host community events.”
- **Lisa Nandy**, Shadow Secretary for Levelling Up, who we briefed on our work and ambitions - which she shared with her 265,000 social media followers³⁵

We have built our profile locally by securing regular coverage in our local newspaper *The Archer*³⁶ and on East Finchley’s community internet radio station and nationally with a photoshoot and full page coverage in *Waitrose Health*³⁷ magazine promoting our litter pick.

Our committee comprises: **Kathy Batten**, a retired early years advisory teacher; **Giulia Innocenti**, councillor and theatre practitioner; **Hande Kiamil**, secondary school teacher; **Michelle Frith** - a government solicitor; **Roger Chapman**, retired town planner with extensive track record of community and voluntary service and **Samantha Haycock**, writer and marketing consultant. All are parents who live in the N2 area.

Our designers and consultants are high profile and highly experienced.³⁸

Aileen Shackell CMLI has over 20 years’ experience of landscape design and is a Chartered landscape architect. She began her professional life in private practice, focusing on historic landscape restoration and conservation. A spell in community-based urban regeneration working for the national organisation Groundwork was followed by further work on historic landscapes, then setting up her own practice in 2007. Her main specialism is Play Design and she was the main author of ‘Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces’. Aileen would lead on the design process.

³⁵ https://twitter.com/anne_clarke/status/1506421120555266053

³⁶

³⁷ Waitrose Health Magazine, January 2022

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p3dkVcoOT7E9J35OM_q7_uShkSIFY6yH/view?usp=sharing

³⁸ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mixs-XYdi5YtNKYmSthve-fzJe_fWWCe/view?usp=sharing

Phil Doyle has over 30 years' experience working in the public sector for local authorities and a leisure trust and more recently as an independent consultant. Phil's background is predominantly in the play sector, but he also has a good appreciation of design as well as an Aileen and Phil have worked together closely since 2007 and they have extensive experience of designing and overseeing the implementation of play spaces across the full range of age groups, from the smallest, at Wyvis Street in London (£40k) to preliminary design and feasibility work for the more costly scheme at Handyside Park, part of the new regeneration scheme to the north of Kings Cross Station (over £1 million).

Both Aileen and Phil greatly enjoy working with the community on developing good quality schemes that meet people's needs and stand the test of time, without being overly demanding in terms of their maintenance requirements.

Aileen and Phil make a slightly unusual and very successful team. The combination of Aileen sensitive design skills with Phil's understanding of the practicalities of play design and also of the subtleties of child development mean that their schemes are always driven by play value, and they never fall into the trap of either creating lavish and high budget 'design statements' which look great to adults but are low in play value, or resorting to churning out the same design details, over and over again.

With Aileen's background in Groundwork and Phil's, in the public sector, they both have a strong ethos of social responsibility.

ENDS