Parks for London

30 September 2026

Lunch & Learn

WEBINAR



Rethinking park design through what people value

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Parks for London: Lunch & Learn Webinar; 30th September 2026

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Ordnance Survey
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Research Project: (De)constructing health and wellbeing through data Year 2

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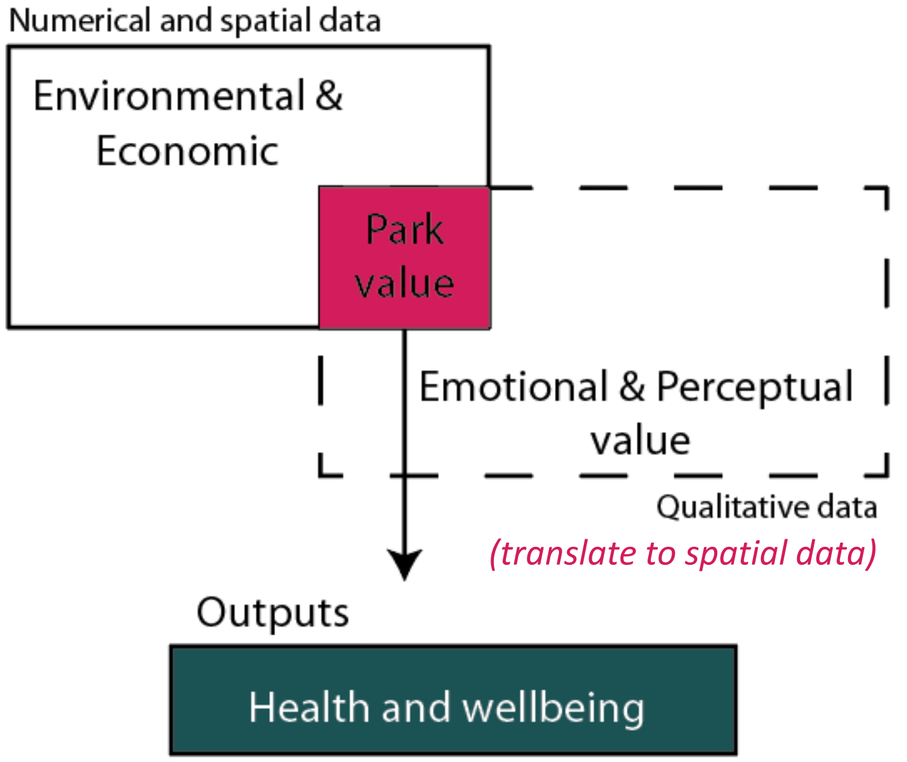


What do people value in parks?

What makes people choose one park over another?

Pilot project context

- **Background**: Strong, growing evidence: nature-based social prescribing improves mental and physical health, and reduces loneliness (NHS England)
- **Gap**: Limited understanding of the local value of parks - beyond environmental and economic value - including perceptual, emotional and social dimensions
- **Aims**: To analyse what locals value in parks, and which park characteristics are most valued in park use, on the assumption that park use has a positive effect on health and wellbeing
- **Framework**: uses the concept of sense of place as an analytical lens (Pretty et al. 2003 and others)
  - *place attachment – reflecting emotional bonding and behavioural commitment.*
  - *place dependence – relating to the quality of an area's available resources and activities, and how these compare with alternative spaces.*
  - *sense of community – reflecting feelings of affiliation and belonging.*
- **Why it matters**: understanding these dimensions is also a key to designing inclusive parks

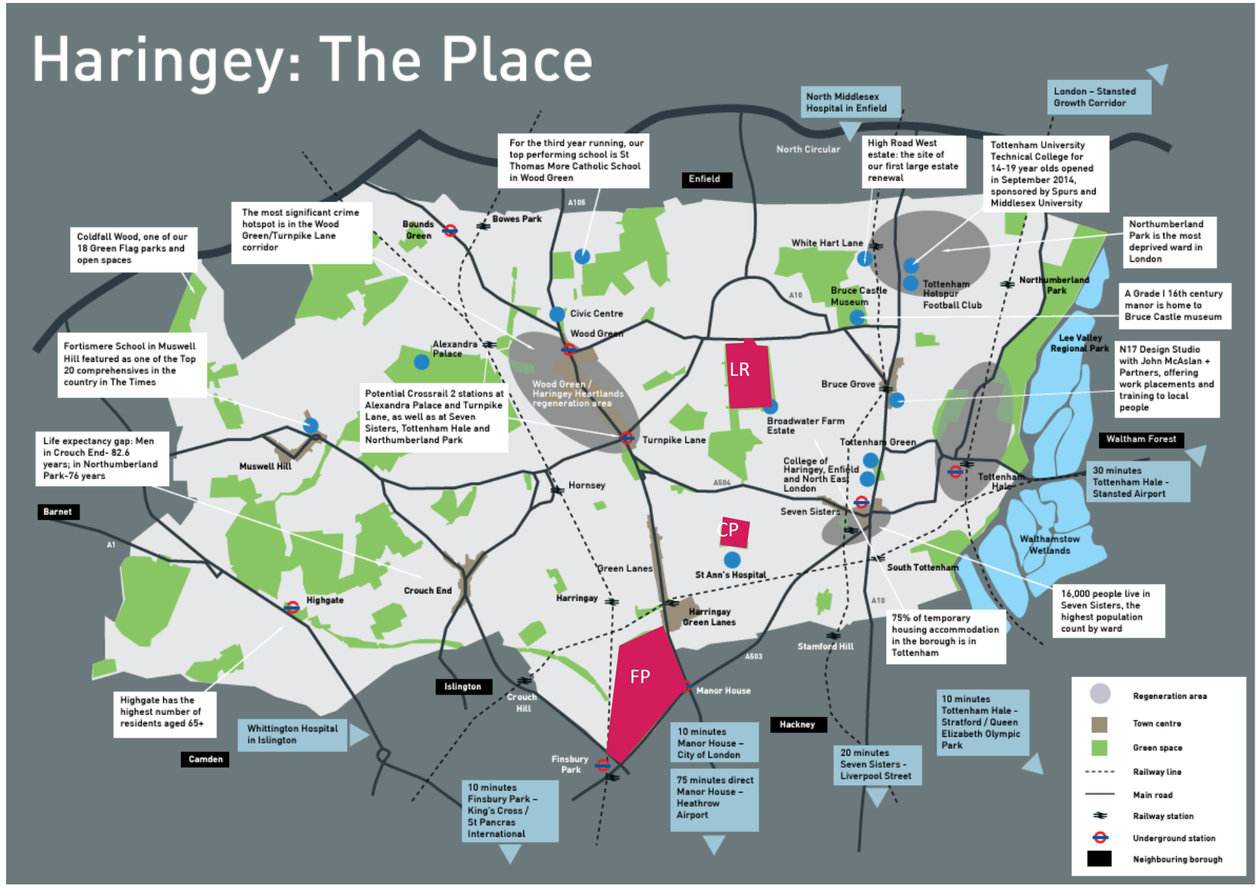


Case studies: Haringey parks (London)

Note: 3 Parks, comprehensive but not a comparative approach



GIGL classification	Size	Community space	Cafe	Facilities	Location
Local Park – (CP) Chestnuts Park	5 ha	Chestnuts Community and Community Arts Centre	☒	8	N15 3AQ
District Park – (LR) (Lordship Rec) Lordship Recreation Ground	20 ha	Lordship Hub	☒	11	N17 6NU
Metropolitan Park – (FB) Finsbury Park	45 ha	Finsbury Park Community Hub	☒	15	N4 1EE



Case study parks

GIGL, Greenspace Information for Greater London: https://www.gigl.org.uk/our-data-holdings/open-spaces/public-open-space-categories/

Chestnuts Park



Chestnuts Community Centre







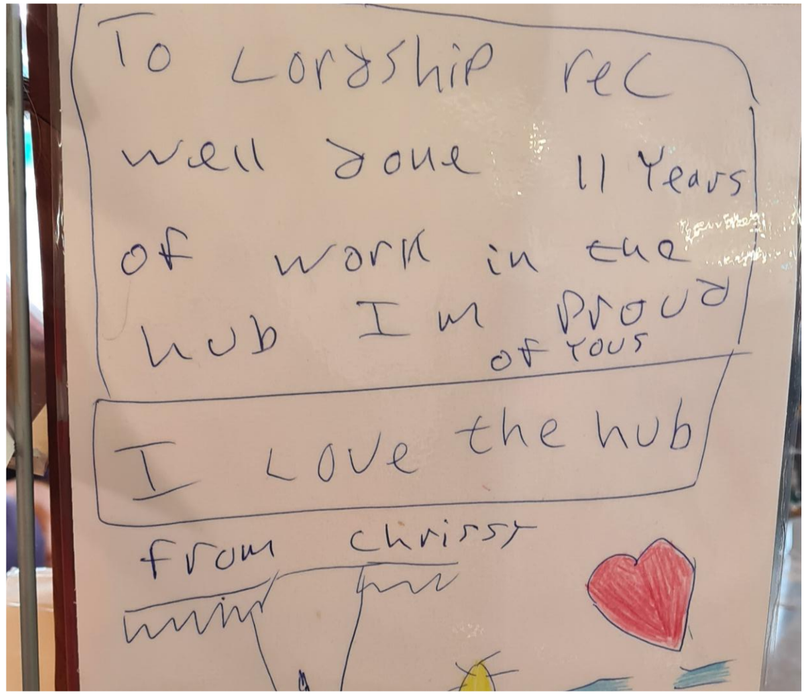
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Lordship Rec Park
People Parks
Women and Girls Need Parks
MAKE SPACE
Report harassment against women & girls
Report to the police via 999 if in an emergency, 101 for all other non-emergencies.
Report any incidents online via True vision
Haringey LONDON



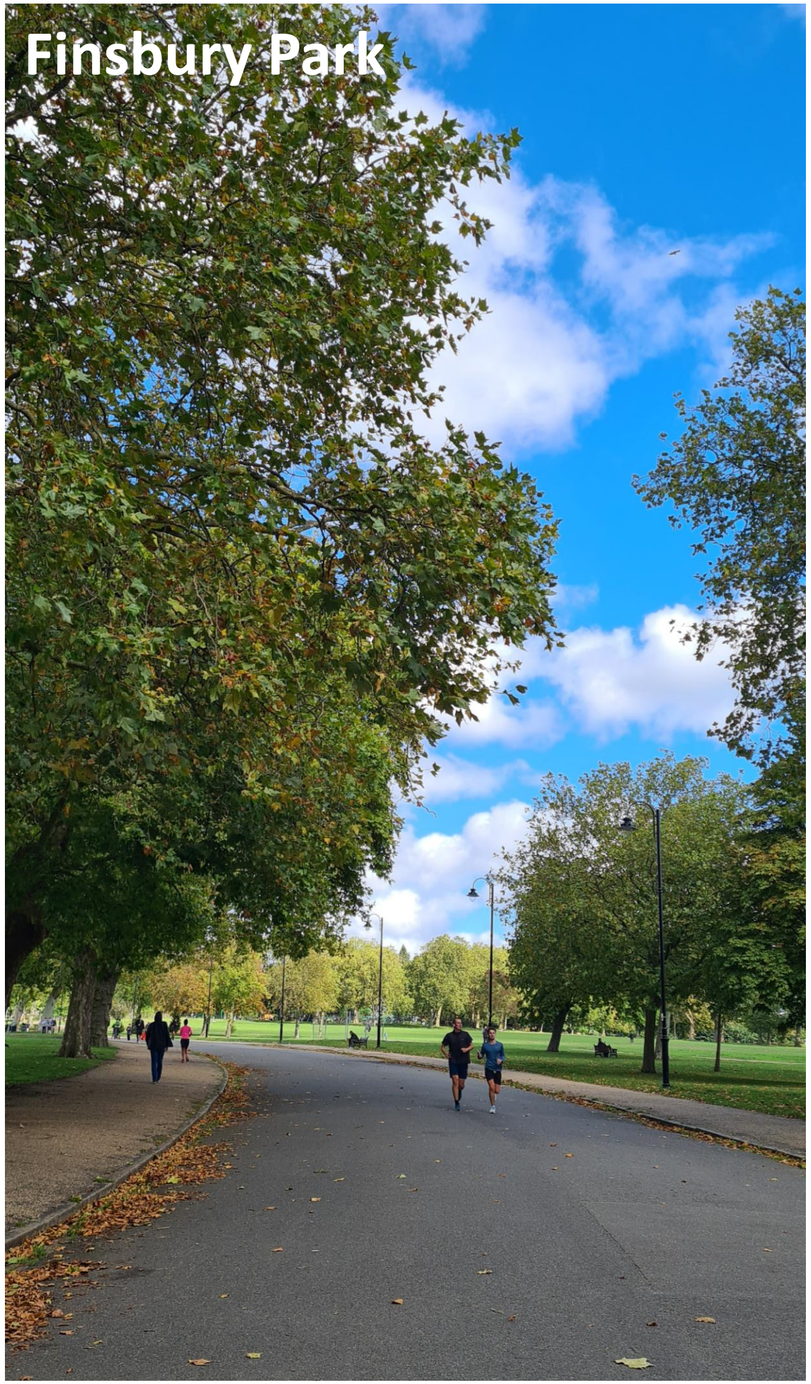

Photos@Alexandra Gomes




To Lordship rec
well done 11 Years
of work in the
hub I m proud
of yous
I Love the hub
from chrisst


Model traffic area

Finsbury Park









Cricket area



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Understanding internal and external dimensions

Online survey (n=80) and local interviews (n=9) - Pilot study, not statistically representative

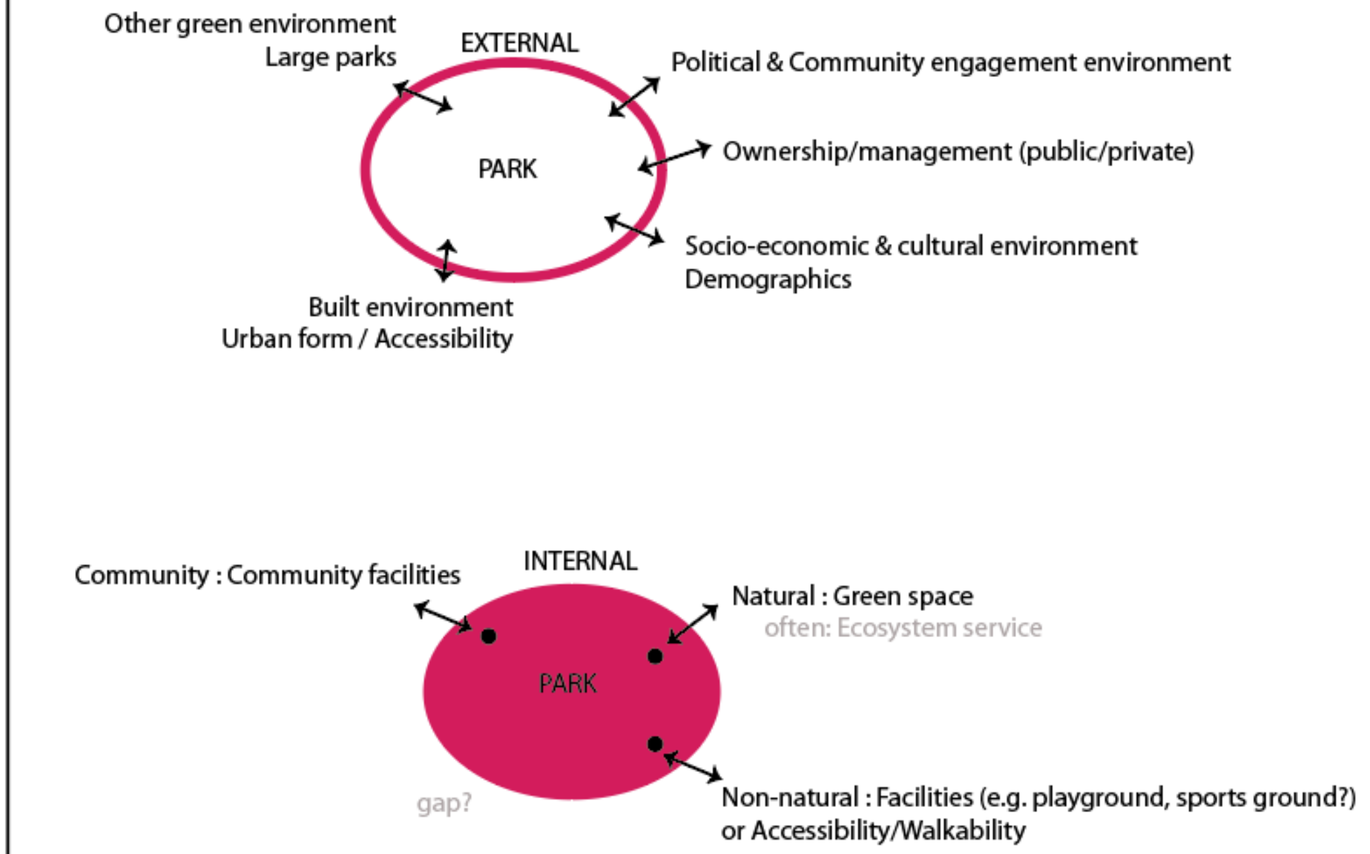
Focusing on space and place

QUESTIONS:

Spatial value:
Do you go to the park? Why?
How do you go?
What do you prefer in the park?

Perceptual value:
What do you feel about the park?
Do you go often? Why?
Do you meet with people there?

Surveys/interviews



Local Park internal and external dimensions

SENSE OF PLACE

PLACE DEPENDENCE
relating to the quality of an area's available resources and activities, and how these compare with alternative spaces

PLACE ATTACHMENT
reflecting emotional bonding and behavioural commitment

SENSE OF COMMUNITY
reflecting feelings of affiliation and belonging

PARK VALUE

Factors
Metrics
Weights

?

AIM:
Prioritising investment
Mapping spatial inequalities

Local value of a Park (comparison/assessment)

Emerging factors and weights

Rank	Factors	Dimension	Weight	Rank	Factors	Dimension	Weight	Rank	Factors	Dimension	Weight
1	Green	UA	17	17	Funding	LE	2.06	33	Routine building	CV	0.83
2	Social facilities	UA	8.19	18	Presence of people	UA	2.03	34	Diversity of communications	CM	0.77
3	Sports facilities	UA	4.99	19	Cycling & walking	UA	1.96	35	Drug use (safety)	SP	0.73
15	Play facilities	UA	4.63	31	Toilets	UA	1.73	47	Decision making (in park)	UE	0.67
4	Litter	UA	4.46	20	Unique features	CS	1.6	36	Active communications	CM	0.53
5	All blue space	UA	3.76	21	Pets	UA	1.56	37	Built weather design	CS	0.53
6	Animals	UA	3.53	22	Maintenance of blue space	UA	1.56	38	Decision making (borough)	LE	0.5
7	Unrestricted access	CV	3.23	23	Peacefulness	CF	1.4	39	Local housing deprivation	DP	0.5
8	Maintenance	CS	2.86	24	Community engagement	UE	1.26	40	Local deprivation general	DP	0.47
9	Composition and people	UA	2.73	25	Access (walking)	CN	1.26	41	Access to animals	UA	0.4
10	General safety	SP	2.63	26	Natural weather design	CF	1.06	42	Shading of pavement	PA	0.3
11	Public events	EV	2.56	27	Private events	EV	1.03	43	Flooding in park	WD	0.3
12	Community feel	UA	2.5	28	Lighting (Safety)	SP	1.03	44	Alcohol use (safety)	SP	0.27
13	Breathability	CF	2.46	29	Smoothness	PA	1.03	45	Unsanitary behaviour (safety)	SP	0.27
14	Convenience (location)	CV	2.43	30	Complexity of access	CN	1	46	Maintenance of animal facilities	UA	0.2
16	Sensory facilities	CF	2.3	32	Free time	CV	0.9				

Place dependence Place attachment Sense of Community

Emerging factors and weights

Space	Sense of Place	Dimension	Weight
Internal	**Place Dependence**	**Uses and Activities (UA)**	**61.23**
Internal	Place Attachment	Comfort (CF)	7.75
Both	**Place Dependence**	**Convenience (CV)**	**7.39**
Internal	Place Attachment	Safety Perception (SP)	4.93
Internal	Place Attachment	Consistency (CS)	4.46
Internal	**Place Dependence**	**Events (EV)**	**3.59**
External	Sense of Community	Local Empowerment (LE)	2.56
External	**Place Dependence**	**Connectivity (CN)**	**2.26**
Internal	Sense of Community	User Empowerment (UE)	1.93
Internal	**Place Dependence**	**Physical Access (PA)**	**1.33**
External	**Place Dependence**	**Communications (CM)**	**1.3**
External	**Place Dependence**	**Deprivation around park (DP)**	**0.97**
Internal	**Place Dependence**	**Weather defences (WD)**	**0.3**

"You've got to remember that someone else is deciding something else
for someone else and for something else" (park user)

Some multifaceted dimensions to consider

When certain factors benefit some but disadvantage others — or have both effects on the same person

POSITIVE

"I got to know a lot of people on dog walks, it's good, it's good."

NEGATIVE

"This park, it's more, it's more a dogwalkers park"

When specific factors have unintended consequences

GOOD & BAD

"That then rubs up against that kind of well, what about the whole dark sky thing? So where we've been introducing lighting, we've not, we're not keeping it on all night for instance"

"Portable barbecues have burnt the wooden benches and tables"

When perception and personal thresholds blur the line between positive and negative.

THRESHOLDS

"Maybe a few lights at night, that's it. Because it's really dark at night (...)"

"Don't find any change. That's why I come, because there's no change. Because how I found it before, it's still the same. If there's a change, maybe I'll go more locally [to where I live]."

When certain factors are inclusive to some, but not all

+ INCLUSIVE

"I think that the park is relatively smooth. It's not too difficult. I've seen people on their mobility scooters around and it's ok"

- INCLUSIVE

"(...) has toilets (...) But there isn't like a changing place, which would make it a lot easier, if you've got a disability (...)"

"I think that gym equipment is (...) for like the elderly."

When certain factors either widen or limit accessibility.

+ ACCESSIBLE

"So vast that you can walk without being surrounded by crowds of people. Large enough to cycle or walk"

- ACCESSIBLE

"You [can play in it], but you have to book your slot though, and it's only open in summer, only in school holidays"

Engagement and impact output (Design Your Own Park – maps by Vickysworld)









- Aimed at families
- 3 maps: seaside, rural and countryside, representing different seasons
- All parks have basic features (e.g. gates) but also features inspired in the project outputs (e.g. information boards, potholes, bandstand (unique feature))
- 25 stickers with drawings; 2 empty stickers and a pen for extra ideas
- Some stickers allow children to place themselves or other people in them (e.g. bike, slide, etc)

Engagement and impact output (Design Your Park event – test with families)





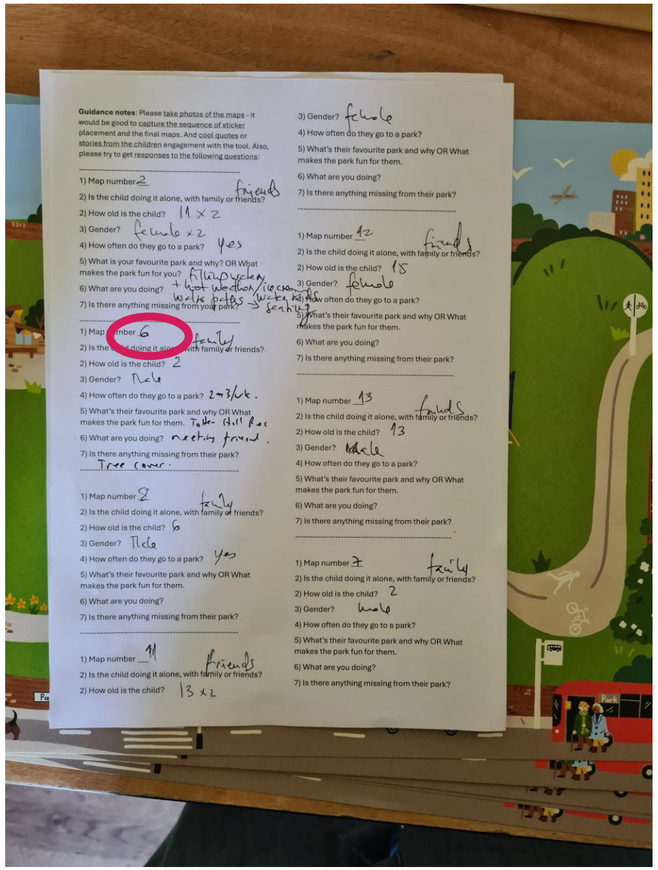


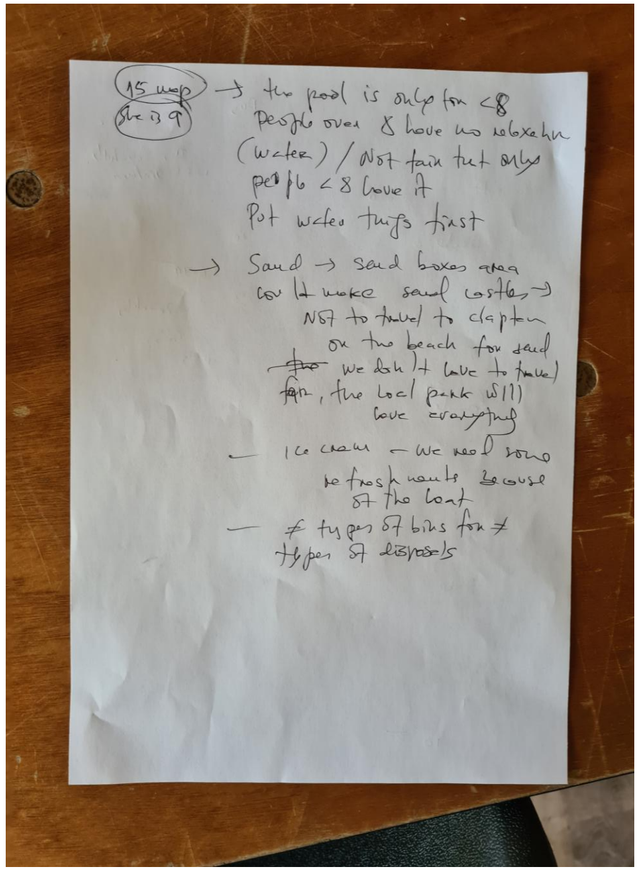


- 19th June 2026
- Lordship Recreational Ground Park (Hub)
- 4-6pm
- 30 degrees Celsius
- Around 20 children (and parents)
- Not all at the same time
- Notes per map: Age, gender, logic in placing stickers

Engagement and impact output (Design Your Park event – test with families)







What do you want to know?

- How often do you go to a park? Why?
- What are you doing now and why?

Quotes:

— *Lollipop man safety for kids*

— *Lights in the winter – night 4pm*

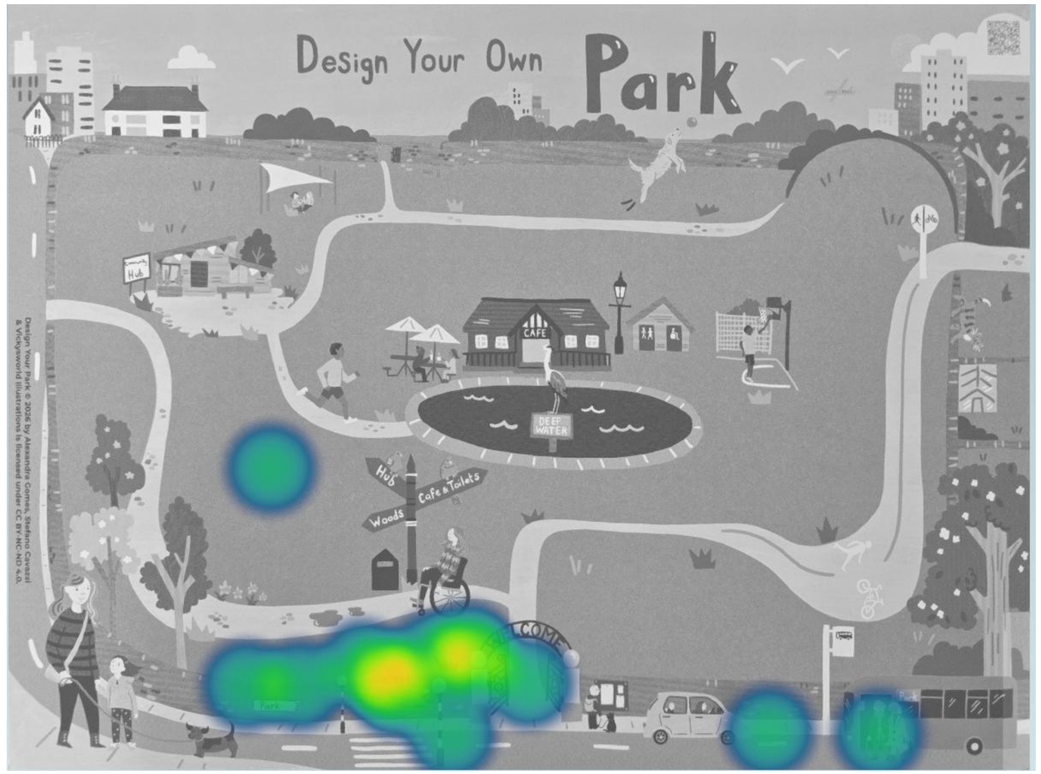
— *Under 8 yrs pool not fair*

— *Sand boxes as there is no beach close by*

— *Ice-cream van, we need refreshments as it is very hot*

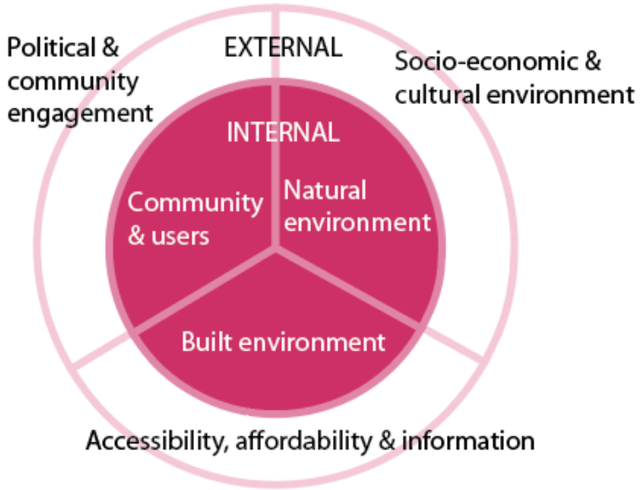
Design Your Park first results

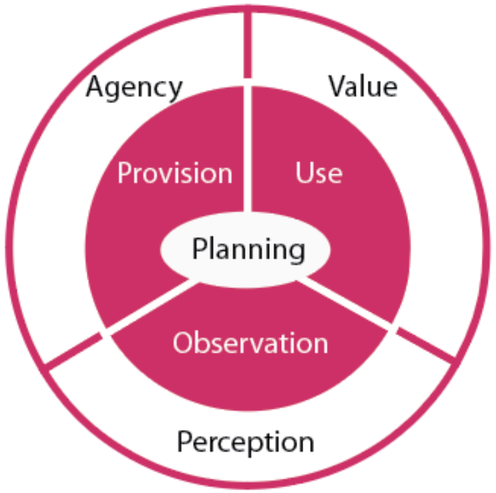
- Most used stickers (table on the right)
- Most paired stickers (“Swings” with “Zip wire / rope play equipment”; “Ducks / pond wildlife” with “Swan pedalo / boat ride”; “bug hotel” with “Wildflower patch / butterfly garden” (distance analysis)
- Heatmap creation (e.g. lollipop man)



Code	Sticker	#	%
1	Ice cream van	15	75%
12	Large tree	14	70%
24	Crossing patrol person / lollipop person	14	70%
25	Splash pad / water play	14	70%
17	Apple tree / fruit tree	13	65%
3	Noticeboard or recycling/community board	12	60%
7	Swings	12	60%
11	Park keeper / maintenance worker	12	60%
14	Bird box	12	60%
15	Sandpit with sandcastle	12	60%
27	Wildflower patch / butterfly garden	12	60%
2	Ducks / pond wildlife	11	55%
18	Bug hotel	11	55%
23	Bench	11	55%
5	Lamppost	10	50%
13	Zip wire / rope play equipment	10	50%
20	Swan pedalo / boat ride	10	50%
4	Slide	9	45%
6	Dog poo / dog fouling	9	45%
10	Stepping stones	9	45%
16	Dog waste bin	9	45%
26	Child holding balloon	9	45%
9	Bicycle	8	40%
19	Squirrel	8	40%
22	Balloon	8	40%
21	Outdoor musical instrument / xylophone	7	35%

Research outcomes and implications





- Relates park value, sense of place and health and wellbeing
- Includes: Parks features, perception, funding and engagement in decision making
- Highlights that value can differ from use and needs, perception may not align with observation, and people want to be involved in decisions about parks and their surroundings
- Identifies key factors that attract people to parks, including both internal features and the surrounding environment
- Recognises the importance of what is not said (methodology)

Rethinking park design through what people value



Photo@Alexandra Gomes

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