

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL
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25 April 2005

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On behalf of DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL I wish to make the following representations on the 3 proposals for children's playgrounds for the Dublin 15 area.

Provisions of children's play areas in the Dublin 15 area.

It is noted by many commentators that Ireland has more golf clubs than children's play areas; this would appear to be the case in the Dublin 15 area, with golf clubs in Elm Park, Hollystown and Luttrellstown castle and one small playground in Riverwood, Diswelstown.

Fingal County Council's current proposals for 3 small local playgrounds that complement the large Millennium Park proposed for the Blanchardstown Road South open space. This is a welcome development that addresses the lack of infrastructure for the children of Dublin 15 and is warmly welcomed by the Dublin 15 Community Council

The scale of these developments proposed appears to be similar to the one provided by Castlethorn in Riverwood. Proposed locations are:

- o Laurel Lodge
- o Pheasants Run, Littlepace
- o Fortlawn

The proposed playgrounds will be welcome by most parents of small children in the Dublin 15 area, however residents living nearby the proposed locations may have concerns that the playgrounds will attract an anti social problems.

It is critical that such concerns are addressed by Fingal County Council to ensure proposals are accepted by people living in the immediate vicinity of the playgrounds.

We make the following recommendations to attempt to address the concerns of nearby residents.

Key recommendations are:

- **Passive supervision**
The playgrounds are designed and constructed to have a high degree of passive supervision, to deter antisocial activities (during daytime and when playground is closed). Passive supervision is both location and lighting levels.
- **Lighting levels**
There is an argument that providing lighting after normal hours encourages anti social activities (i.e. cider parties, drug abuse etc..). However having a playground in darkness will not prevent the anti social activities but will hide the activities. One of the features the success of the Riverwood playground is it's proximity to adjacent street lighting, and the relatively clear view of the playground from the adjacent houses & apartments.
- **Maintenance of playground.**
This is critical to the playground being used by young children. If parents of young children come to a playground that has the debris of cider parties or drug abuse they will consider it an unacceptably high risk for their children, and cease to use the facility. Lack of use by parents will encourage anti social activity leading to a vicious spiral of neglect.
- **Seating**
Provision of seating for parents encourages prolonged use of the facility by young children. It appears successful in the Riverwood playground.
- **Fencing**
A perimeter fence or railing is required to provide a secure play area. Gates into the playground need to be spring loaded to minimize the risk of young children leaving the playground on their own.
- **Soft surfaces**
Soft surfaces prevent injury to children; they also make it difficult to break glass bottles. Two surfaces are in general use in Irish playgrounds; pebbles and a synthetic rubber material. The pebbles are lower cost, however the experience in Riverwood was that anti social elements would throw the pebbles at parents & children. These incidents lead to the playground being closed and it's surface replaced with the synthetic rubber material. We recommend that the synthetic rubber material is used in these 3 proposed playgrounds.
- **Parking**
The playgrounds are designed for young children. The walking range of children is considerably less than adults. Children who live more than 250m away are likely to be brought in buggies, cycle on small bikes or be brought by public or private transport. The Riverwood Park attracts 3-5 cars during opening hours, the proposed locations will need to accommodate on street parking without causing a nuisance to residents.

- Provision of bins
It is important that the provision of bins in the vicinity of the playground (but not within the railings) are provided and regularly cleaned. If parents of young children come to a playground that has excessive litter or the debris of anti social activities, they will consider it an unacceptably high risk for their children, and cease to use the facility
- Park Ranger service
Fingal provide an effective Park Ranger service in their larger playgrounds (for example in Donabate). The scale of the proposed local playgrounds are unlikely to justify a permanent presence, however it is important that a regular presence is maintained to ensure the playground is actively managed to discourage antisocial activities. At a minimum Fingal County Council should arrange to inspect daily and carry out necessary repair or maintenance immediately.
Partnership with local community groups (residents associations, environmental groups and neighborhood watch schemes) will also help alert Fingal County Council officials at an early stage, so that any anti social activities can be addressed in a timely manner.

Summary

Dublin 15 Community Council welcomes and supports the provision of small local playgrounds in residential areas. We note that residents may have concerns that this could encourage anti social activities and requests that Fingal county council design and actively manage the playgrounds to ensure that this antisocial activity does not take place.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran O'Neill,
Chairperson,
Dublin 15 Community Council