1.0 SUMMARY
1.1 This application, by Playlink on behalf of the London Borough of Hounslow is an application for a ballpark and wheel park within Thornbury Playing Fields, which would provide facilities for teenagers in the area. It is to be funded by financial contributions from the nearby 455 London Road development (as agreed by Isleworth and Brentford Area Committee (Monitoring) on 3 June 2010) and from lottery funding.

1.2 A Design and Access Statement accompanies the application along with several computer-generated images (CGI) of the proposed wheel park. There are several planning issues to be assessed. The main issues include the effect on designated Local Open Space and neighbouring amenity (particularly in respect of noise pollution).

1.3 This report is presented for the information of members, and to invite members’ comments on the proposal.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION
2.1 Thornbury Playing Fields are a large local park of some 5.94 hectares on the southern side of London Road. The park has a small frontage with London Road but is otherwise landlocked. Other pedestrian access to the park is possible from the Stanborough Estate and Rennels Way business area, though these entry points are less obvious.

2.2 The side boundaries of the site are stepped, with the park widening from its frontage with London Road to its rear boundary marked by the Hounslow to Isleworth train tracks.

2.3 A number of residential properties sit on the park’s boundaries, including Meon Court, Sidmouth Avenue properties, Stanborough Road, including Greenham House, a depot;
Golden Court and 621 to 639 London Road, through disused tennis courts sit between the last properties (621-639 London Road) and the park.

2.4 The main path through the park enters from London Road and heads into the park before turning southwest and exiting the park in the main northwestern corner between 53 Stanborough Road and Greenham House.

2.5 Currently the park holds an enclosed play area for small children near the London Road entrance (recently refurbished), roughly south of the Meon Court apartments and west of the Sidmouth Avenue cul-de-sac. There is a disused rundown car parking area behind 621-639 London Road and the disused tennis courts (in separate private ownership).

2.6 There are several litterbins (three) and a dog litterbin adjacent to the existing footpath near the children’s play area. There is no seating in the park.

2.7 Other than the features of the park identified above, the park is largely open green space with closely mown grass with some woodland planting, and matures trees on the boundaries, particularly those boundaries near the London Road front of the site.

2.8 The park is underused, restricted to occasional dog walkers; those using it as a through route and those using the small play area. This was confirmed when the Planning Officer undertook a site visit at 8am with the park users being mainly dog walkers and children and teenagers biking through the park from housing estates at the rear of the park to the London Road.

2.9 The park is designated as Local Open Space on the Unitary Development Plan maps.

3.0 HISTORY
There is no planning history for the application site.

4.0 DETAILS

Background

4.1 A need for additional facilities in the local area has been identified and the S106 agreement for the development at 455 London Road (which includes family housing) recognised this and provided the means to meet this need. The Sustainable Development Committee decision to grant planning permission subject to a legal agreement explicitly acknowledged the need for off-site teenager facilities at the Thornbury Playing Fields. At the time this was at an estimated cost of £93,000 (subject to index linking).

4.2 Prior to submitting the planning application the agent, Playlink, undertook consultation with a ‘Design Group’ of local young people visiting wheel and ball parks around London and exploring design opportunities for the facilities proposed for Thornbury Park. Playlink also held two public consultation events with the local community on the design of the proposal. These were held on consecutive weekends at the end of February and beginning of March. These events were publicised to local residents by way of a leaflet drop to residents and posting notices in local schools, community groups and local shops. The details and outcome of this consultation process are attached as an appendix to this report.

4.3 Playlink also met with Mr Paul Maher, Arboricultural Officer, of Hounslow Council.
Proposal Overview

4.4 Given the underused nature of the park, one of the aims of the design of the proposed wheel and ball parks is to increase general usage of the park, in part by ensuring that activity can be seen from a distance. The application states that the principle informing this is that people seeing people engenders a sense of safety and security.

Ball Park

4.5 The ballpark is located within the old car park area behind the disused tennis courts, near the London Road front of the park.

4.6 The proposed ball park or multi purpose games area (MUGA) would have a maximum footprint of 20m wide by 30m long and would have a black bitumen macadam surface. At the goal ends basketball hoops with a back plate are to be erected. A third basketball hoop would be provided at the western end goal for practising.

4.7 The ball park would not be fully enclosed, with fencing at the goal ends only. The fencing would take the form of an 11-metre length of rigid weld-mesh fence with a maximum height of three metres. Posts to the fencing would be galvanised and powder coated dark green. Leaving the long sides of the ball park open is thought to encourage greater ball skills and would make the ball park less visually intrusive and more accessible.

4.8 The ball park is 51 metres from the nearest dwelling, being the Golden Court apartment block. Whilst there are existing mature trees and hedges along the park’s boundaries in this area, a new hedge would be planted along the boundary with Golden Court. National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) guidance advises a buffer zone of at least 35 metres between sports facilities and dwellings.

4.9 To facilitate the MUGA, an existing multi-stemmed poplar tree would be removed from the centre of the car park area.

Wheel Park

4.10 The location of the wheel park has been chosen so as to be visible from the main road whilst at the same time a suitable distance from the nearest dwelling; it is 62m from Meon Court, the nearest dwelling. National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) guidance advises a buffer zone of at least 35 metres between sports facilities and dwellings.

4.11 The wheel park is to be constructed of concrete with a natural (grey) finish. The design has been developed to be suitable for both beginners and more experienced users and can be used by roller blades, skateboards and BMX bicycles.

4.12 The maximum dimensions of the wheel park are 28m long and 8m wide.

4.13 The wheel park would sit in close mown grass with a black bitumen macadam access path on one side. It would be incorporated into the existing slope with mounding at the north end to help it sit better visually within the park. A one-metre wide level area of grass and a five metres wide clear space free from any obstacles would surround it. Safety railings would be required at the highest point of the ramps to protect users and those passing by the wheel park.

4.14 A land drain would take water from the slope along the top edge of the wheel park and would drain to soak-aways at the lowest points of the site.
4.15 New path and seating areas are to be buff coloured self-binding gravel.

4.16 The proposal does not propose any changes to the limited vehicle access to the park or the existing pedestrian access points to the park.

4.17 As part of the proposal, and in response to feedback received during the consultation exercises, it is proposed to provide extra litterbins within the playing fields. The exact number and location are to be agreed with Hounslow Grounds Maintenance.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Neighbouring residents (585 - 671 (odds) London Rd, 1 -12 (Meon Court), 1-45 Golden Court, London Road, 50 + 50 a, b + c + 22 - 50 (consecutive) Sidmouth Ave, Unit 7 Metro Industrial Centre, and 31 - 79 Stanborough Rd) and the Isleworth Society were notified on 20th April 2010.

5.2 Three site notices were erected on 26th April 2010. One on the London Road entrance to the park, and two within the park on trees adjacent to the main path.

5.3 The St John Resident’s Association was notified on 19 May 2010.

5.4 A number of responses have been received, as follows:

Individual Responses:

1. Pleased the area will be put to good use for the community.

   Concerned that the existing playground be maintained or ideally enhanced for the benefit of our younger children and that it be kept separate from the planned concrete wheel park etc. for the enjoyment and safety of the little ones.

2. Lack of parking at the Playing Fields for those travelling by car. Visitors to the park instead use parking spaces at nearby Meon Court.

   Increased litter problem

   Would prefer car park to be upgraded and wheel park to be moved to where old changing rooms used to be.

3. Residents of Golden Court not invited to local community consultation events [n.b. see appendix for details of these].

   In principle we have no strong objections to this proposed scheme but main concerns are the noise and its close proximity to boundary fences, which can be damaged.

   Agree that the Park is used far from its potential, but by placing the Ball Park & Wheel Park in the suggested area it could well dissuade adults without children walking past on the London Road from entering the park. This area could and should be made more inviting by the planting of trees, benches and lighting with the Ball Park & Wheel Park located south of the proposed site or to the west behind the Greenham building.
If the play area was re-sited to one of the areas mentioned this would remove most of the objections raised by residents such as noise, damage to boundary fences and the intrusion of children and youths trying to retrieve balls and suchlike.

Apparent absence of security. Will the Park in its new guise be open 7/24 without supervision?

4. Potential noise during the night if the park is not secured.

5. Object to:
   - The close proximity of the wheel park to residential properties which include Meon Court
   - The noise and disturbance
   - The loss of privacy and being overlooked
   - The visual impact on the park
   - The possible loss of trees
   - Parking problems could arise if visitors to the wheel park use the residents’ parking spaces at Meon Court, causing parking problems for residents.

6. Noise, litter levels

7. Security of the area at night.

8. Proposed amenities should be sited in different locations (unused space in heart of park) so main entrance from London Road feels safe and welcoming to all park users.

   Noise arising from Ballpark adjacent to private amenity space at Golden Court as buffer zone is not adequate.

   Querying amount and location of seating, any provision of disabled parking, hours of opening, would facilities be floodlit?

9. Inappropriate siting and consequent effect on neighbouring residential properties.

   Anti-social behaviour that proposed facilities may attract – Local Authority must consider crime in disorder implications under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Have Police been notified.

Isleworth Society:

1. Welcome the proposal in principle

2. Concerned about failure to consult St Johns RA and the Isleworth Society and the Residents of Golden Court [n.b. See paragraphs 5.1 –5.3 above]. The
Society considers the pre-application consultation to have been limited and partial and question the reporting of the outcome.

3. An ideal opportunity has arisen to improve Thornbury Playing Field for ALL users, but it is regrettable that the current proposal concentrates only on provision of a Wheel-Park and Ball-Park. The society considers that these facilities should be sited differently. The main entrance path from the London Road needs to be safe and welcoming to all park users.

4. The Council’s aim to ensure that its public spaces are places where individual and communities can be at ease with each other is why the ball park and wheel-park should be sited more into the centre of the park. The aim is incompatible with having skaters/bike riders so close to the main and only path leading through the park. This is likely to deter rather than encourage other users and it would also be too close the existing young children’s play area.

5. It is also incompatible to site the ball park immediately adjacent to the ‘quiet garden’ of the Golden Court residential accommodation for the elderly. This land should be a quiet area instead. A buffer zone is required.

6. There is a large amount of unused land in the centre in the park where the facilities would be better sited. Signage could encourage use instead of a prominent location.

7. Lack of details of seating, refuse bins, hours of opening and concern that there might be floodlighting, which could harm neighbours’ living conditions.

St Johns Residents’ Association:

1. Fully support the principle of these much-needed facilities but feel not enough thought has been given to siting and impact on neighbouring residential properties. Cannot support the application as it stands ask that it be deferred so that these important issues can be addressed to ensure that the right decision is made.

2. Appears too close to Golden Court and its quiet garden used by elderly residents and to properties on the south side of London Road

3. Concerned at the impact of Anti-Social behaviour from the proposed facility and the duty of a local authority to consider these implications under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Were the Police were notified of the application and what was their response?

4. We cannot support the application as it stands and would ask that it be deferred so that these important issues can be addressed to ensure that the right decision is made

6.0 POLICY

6.1 Determining applications for full or outline planning permission
When determining applications for planning permission, the authority is required to have regard to the development plan, so far as is material, and to any other material
considerations. In addition, the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 **The Development Plan**  
The Development Plan for the Borough comprises the saved policies in the Council’s Unitary Development Plan (‘UDP’), the Employment Development Plan Document, the Brentford Area Action Plan and the London Plan. The London Plan (Consolidated with alterations since 2004) was adopted in February 2008. The UDP was adopted in December 2003 and was amended and saved as of 28 September 2007 by Direction from the Secretary of State.

6.3 **Unitary Development Plan**  
- **ENV-N.1.11** Protection and improvement of local open space  
- **ENV-B.1.1** All New Development  
- **C.1.4** New Social and Community Facilities  
- **C.4.3** Physical Access to Social and Community Facilities  
- **C.5.3** Outdoor Recreation

7.0 **PLANNING ISSUES**  
7.1 The main planning issues to consider are:  
- The acceptability, in principle, of the application;  
- The effect on the designated local open space;  
- Effect on neighbours; and  
- The ability of the equipment to be utilised by all.  

**Principle**  
7.2 In principle, improvements to local open space are deemed acceptable providing they comply with the relevant UDP Policy.

7.3 Policy ENV-N.1.11 (Protection and Improvement of Local Open Space) notes that Local Open Spaces are public and private open areas outside the Green Belt and MOL which provide essential visual breaks in built up areas, contribute to local amenity, and meet, or are capable of meeting recreational needs. It is important to ensure that opportunities are taken to improve the amenity value. New buildings and extensions are only acceptable for purposes ancillary to open air sport and recreation activities that preserve the predominantly open character of the area and comply with other relevant UDP policies.

7.4 Planning permission will not normally be granted for any development, which would result in the loss of, encroachment upon, or form an intrusive element in the overall open aspects of public open space, including public parks, and playing fields.

7.5 Policy ENV-B.1.1 (New Development) aims to ensure that new development relates well to the site and the character of the area in terms of size, scale, materials and design and does not harm neighbours’ living conditions.

7.6 Policy C.4.3 (Physical Access to Social and Community Facilities) states that in relation to the development of social and community facilities, the Council will ensure facilities
are designed to be accessible to people with physical and sensory disabilities and people with pushchairs. Policy C.5.3 (Outdoor Recreation) notes that the Council will aim to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation for both residents and visitors as part of its Green Strategy.

7.7 The proposal involves new equipment for recreational use and would widen the range of outdoor recreation facilities available in the park. As such the proposal accords with Policy ENV-N.1.11. The equipment is considered to be of an appropriate size, scale and design for the open nature of the park.

7.8 Other than a playground for younger children, the park is not well supplied with play facilities, particularly so for older young people, and, as such, the proposal would fulfil an important local need and enhance the facilities offered by the park.

7.9 Accordingly, officers consider the proposal appropriate in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant UDP policies (see below). However, members’ views are welcome and will be taken into account in any final recommendation to any Sustainable Development Committee report.

The effect on the open space

7.10 The policy background (Policy ENV-N.1.11, Policy C.4.3 (Physical Access to Social and Community Facilities) and Policy C.5.3 (Outdoor Recreation)) to this issue is set out in paragraphs 7.3 and 7.6 above.

7.11 The proposed ball park and wheel parks would be set away from the perimeter of the park. The type of facility involved would be consistent with and complementary to the use of the rest of the park, would promote its use by residents of the Borough and would not conflict with other uses.

7.12 The fencing proposed would not be excessive in scale in its setting and the ball park, in particular, being set at a low level and not widely visible beyond the park (it would be concealed behind the houses on London Road) would not be visually intrusive. On the other hand, it would be widely visible from within the park.

7.13 One mature tree would be lost in creating the ball park, but significant compensatory planting is proposed towards the perimeter of that part of the park.

7.14 The wheel park would be more centrally located and would be visible from London Road, but its scale relative to the whole open space is not great.

7.15 The two facilities would occupy an area of 824 square metres – that is approximately 1.4% of the park’s total area.

7.16 Objections relating to open space matters include:

- Lack of parking (however, the user group is unlikely to be car borne);
- Increased litter (this is a management issue and not a valid planning objection since the objective must be to increase gainful use of the open space, but see paragraph 4.7 above for details of litter bins);
- Alternative locations in the park are preferable (members’ views on this are welcome);
- Apparent absence of security (again, a management issue);
• Levels of seating proposed;
• Security of the facility and anti-social behaviour

7.17 It is not considered that either facility would dominate the open space or, if subject to proper management, give rise to unacceptable problems in the vicinity, but members’ views on the matters raised and the principle of the development are welcome.

**Neighbours**

7.18 The policy background (Policy ENV-B.1.1) to this issue is set out in paragraph 7.5 above.

7.19 Both facilities would be located significantly further away from the nearest residential accommodation than is deemed to be the minimum necessary under NPFA guidelines.

7.20 Objections have been raised by neighbours relating to:
• noise (including night time noise),
• potential damage to fences,
• loss of privacy,
• And anti-social behaviour.

7.21 Members’ views on these issues are invited

**The ability of the equipment to be utilised by all**

7.22 The policy background (Policy ENV-B.1.1, Policy C.4.3 (Physical Access to Social and Community Facilities) and Policy C.5.3 (Outdoor Recreation)) to this issue is set out in paragraphs 7.5 and 7.6 above.

7.23 There are no inherent barriers to the use of the facilities by all sections of the community, but members’ comments are welcome on the subject

8.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 See paragraphs 7.22 and 7.23 above

9.0 **CONCLUSION**

9.1 The proposal is likely to promote more effective use of this local open space and meet a need in the Borough.

9.2 Members’ views on this proposal are welcome, particularly its likely effect on the open space, the wider area and neighbours’ living conditions.

10.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

10.1 It is recommended that Members comment on the application and that Members’ note that their comments will be reported to Sustainable Development Committee if approval is to be recommended. The application will be refused under delegated authority in the alternative.
Appendix

Playlink Report

Thornbury Park – Wheel Park and Ball Games Area
Engagement, Involvement and Consultation