

Water Lane, Mayfield Estate, Farnborough

CASE STUDY
Local authorities

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL

KOMPAN playground transforms troubled estate



A KOMPAN playground installed on the Mayfield Estate, Farnborough has helped to transform an open area from a teenage trouble-spot into a place that local children are proud to call their own. By designing a playground that addresses the needs of older children, offering them unusual and demanding physical challenges, KOMPAN has created an environment that has met the needs of an age group that is often considered hard to cater for. The £145,000 playground is the result of an initiative by residents, community groups and Rushmoor Borough Council that has also seen the appointment of a neighbourhood warden, security cameras, landscaping schemes and other measures to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Mayfield Estate has been acknowledged by Rushmoor Council as an area of deprivation. Recently, residents and local organisations have become more active in looking at ways to improve the environment for people living on the estate. A leading light in this has been the Mayfield Partnership, which has brought together residents, ward counsellors, the local housing association, schools, youth workers, council officials, churches, the police and the Rushmoor Healthy Living Partnership. As well as initiating new projects, the

Partnership has sought to co-ordinate previously disparate activities and ensure that any available funding is used to best effect.

One of the recognised problem-spots on the estate was a large open grass area off Water Lane that had been the scene for anti-social teenager behaviour. In order to address this, the Council and the Mayfield Partnership surveyed residents on how the site could be improved.

Children and teenagers were also asked for their input into the debate. The main results from the consultation indicated that people wanted to see security cameras and play facilities for toddlers, children and teenagers.

While developing the playground proposals in the light of the consultation, it became clear that particular emphasis was needed on devising a scheme that would appeal to older children and provide something to counter existing problems. Following an initial invitation to tender from the council, KOMPAN was one of three playground manufacturers asked to put forward detailed schemes for consultation. This was in the form of public displays in the estate community centre and presentations to the Mayfield Partnership.

KOMPAN's design for the site took into account the specific demands of providing play facilities for older children. As Graeme O'Doherty, area manager for KOMPAN explains: "As well as having the council's brief, which set out the requirement to address the needs of older children on the estate, we came and had a close look at the site. During our site survey, we took time out to discuss ideas with local residents and spoke to teenagers there. So while our design for the toddlers' play area takes a traditional approach, the equipment aimed at the older children is much more unusual. We've designed something that offers challenges, appeals to their competitive spirit and provides something they have to think about."

The design incorporates some of the most physically challenging playground equipment from KOMPAN's GALAXY range such as MIRAM, with its skate rails,



and CANOPUS, which has large spinning arms. The layout devised by KOMPAN also takes account of the landscaping and existing shelters at Water Lane.

A large mound in the centre of the site was used as a focal point with pathways up to a large SPINNING NET, which gives children a chance to be seen clearly: as Graeme O'Doherty puts it: "It is a way to signal to friends and say, 'We are here, come and join us!'"



Equipment was also positioned near two existing teen shelters to make better use of these. Graeme again: "This provides opportunities for older children to do one of the things we know they like to do most: show off their skills to each other."

For the younger children and toddler area, an enclosed playground was created closer to the adjacent housing. Although the play themes here are more traditional and designed with younger children in mind, the use of ELEMENTS equipment brings these up-to-date and offers extremely high play value.

The result is a playground that residents and local groups are very pleased with. But more to the point, it is an area that children are adopting as their own and taking a pride in. "The initiatives to improve this area have been very positive and forward looking," says Morray Henderson, Chairman of the Mayfield Partnership. "The site has been transformed from something of a muddy space into a valuable local facility that residents are glad to use. The playground is an integral part of that and gives the estate something really special." Or, as Graeme O'Doherty put it at the opening ceremony: "KOMPAN's claim is that we make unique playgrounds. I hope that's what we have achieved at Water Lane!"