

Introduction

Deciding the most appropriate location for a local equipped area of play (LEAP) is far more complicated than it may sound. With developers under pressure to incorporate such facilities within their sites, in place of maybe three or four income-generating units, and some people reluctant to buy houses close to them, they can end up much more costly than just buying and installing a few pieces of play equipment.

David Wilson Homes had received planning permission to build on the last remaining piece of undeveloped land on the Wilby Way Estate near Northampton. With the option on the land about to expire, the pressure was on to sign a Section 106 agreement with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) which would enable David Wilson Homes to begin construction on the site. The main issue holding this process up was that the LPA had stipulated the LEAP (which formed the Section 106 contribution) would have to be squeezed into David Wilson Homes' land unless the developer could prove the presence of local support for the LEAP to be located elsewhere on the estate (which was already desperately underprovided for in terms of this type of facility).



Objective

David Wilson Homes commissioned Mistral to consult with the 500+ residents of the Wilby Way Estate regarding the location of a new play area. To enable the play area to be as accessible as possible by all of the residents of Wilby Way, the LPA agreed that a number of different location options should be put forward for residents to choose from.

Strategy

A questionnaire was devised, together with a covering letter and map detailing the location options, and was copied to the Local Planning Authority prior to being hand-delivered to all households on the Wilby Way Estate. The questionnaires were returned to Mistral where they were logged as they were received. The outcome was summarised in a statement of community involvement which was issued to the local planning authority.

Results

In total, 169 responses were received by Mistral. This 32 per cent consultation response rate was higher than would normally be expected for this type of leaflet-based public consultation programme. Despite a very active and vocal local action group campaigning for the LEAP to be built on the David Wilson site, almost a third of all responses voted for the most central of the six options making this the clear location of choice as far as the public was concerned. The LPA accepted this fact and the Section 106 was duly signed.



Location of an equipped play area on the Wilby Way Estate

