

YellowPress*

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THE 'HUB' PROGRESSES

Plans have been steadily developing for the Woodvale HUB, a proposed community facility on the site of the disused cinder pitch near Tesco supermarket. The proposal to date has been developed through a series of interactive design workshops with community representatives, park-users of all ages and backgrounds, community workers, government agencies, and other local stakeholders. (Workshop summary see pg6)

The proposed HUB (Hybrid Use Building) would be made up of indoor and outdoor spaces for a wide range of events and activities relating to both the park and the wider neighbourhoods. These could include a new path and gate between the park and Tesco supermarket, community allotment gardens, a sheltered outdoor seating space for events like cinema or concerts, an indoor multi-use space, a multi-purpose sports pitch, and café or kiosk. (See detailed plans pg10 + 11)

The aims of the HUB project are to find a long-term regenerative strategy, and improve community safety in Woodvale Park. The HUB is intended to provide a safe,

welcoming space for people of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and abilities.

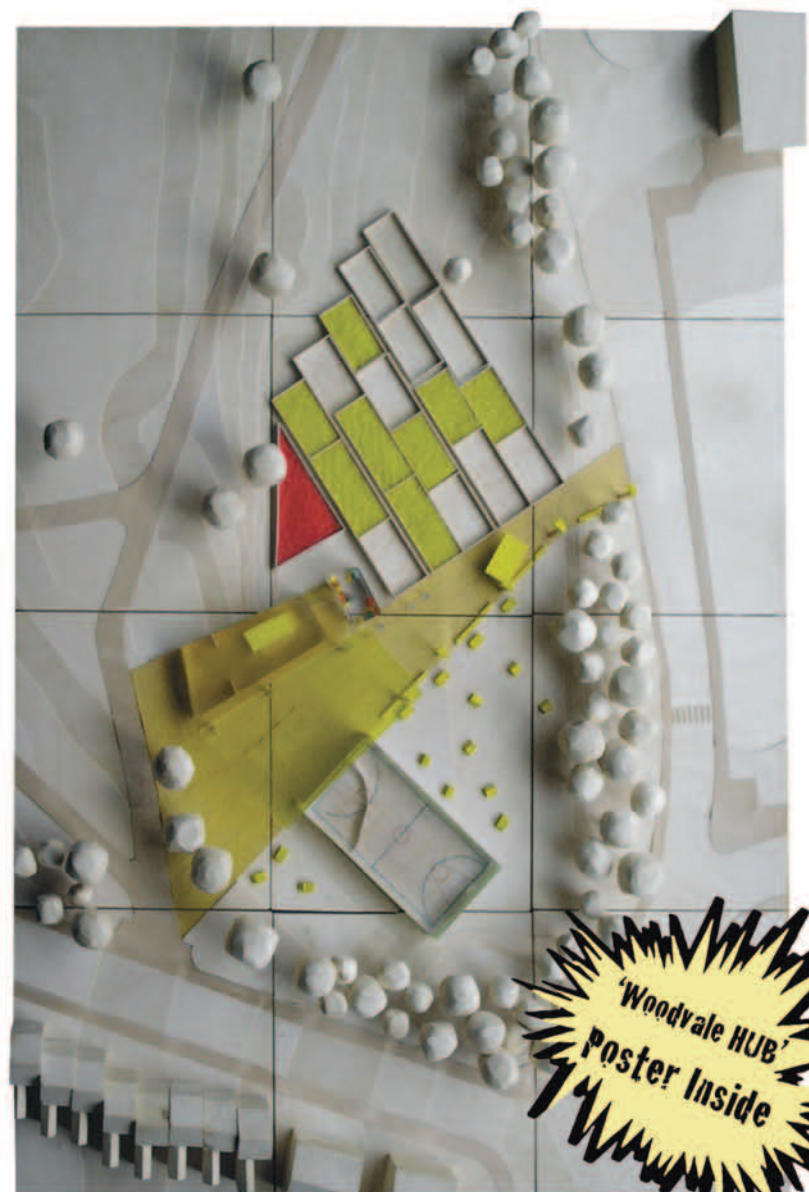
Central to the design is a path that would provide a short cut and direct connection between the park and Tesco shopping centre. By increasing the movement of people through this corner of the park this path would also improve the feeling of safety.

Because it is unlikely that there will be funding to build all the proposed facilities at once, a strategy has been developed so that different parts of the proposal can be added over time. A funding application has been made for community allotment gardens as a first step in the proposal. (See pg3)

With funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Friends of Woodvale Park (FWP) and University of Ulster-based Building Initiative group have been developing these proposals through a series of workshops and the two additions of this paper. So please read on to find out more about progress to date. If you have any thoughts, concerns, suggestions or comments please fill in the feedback section and post or return it to address given.

Or you can e-mail comments to Dougal: d.Sheridan@ulster.ac.uk,

or Jennie: alternativejcc@yahoo.co.uk.



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YOUR TURN TO COMMENT!

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More Than Just A Game?

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The Shankill Summer League in Woodvale Park



Shankill Summer League Games at Woodvale Park

Part of the HUB project is to have a kiosk selling tea, coffee and snacks. This would be particularly useful for events in the park, such as Shankill Summer League. Richard Henderson from the Summer League Committee tells us more about the event.

The Shankill Summer is an annually football competition played in Woodvale Park during late May and early June. The competition regularly attracts more than 7,000 supporters over the 6 week the 24 matches are played. This also includes an 'Old Crocks' match restricted to ex-players over 40 years old and an Under 10s game.

Stories vary on the history of the competition and how it originated, and which teams actually played in the tournament. Everyone does agree that however the competition started it generates tremendous interest in the community. The volume of spectators demonstrates the appeal of the competition across the whole age and community spectrum. Earliest memories from some of the old stalwarts hark back to the early 70s when a group of local players challenged the Army to a match or series of matches over the summer holidays. Others remember matches being played on the cinder pitch adjacent to Tesco where the HUB project is proposed. Others reflect back to when there was an informal Sunday morning league consisting of regulars from certain bars who played for fun or just to get rid of a hangover! During

the 80s the competition had such an impressive reputation that Irish League players were 'knocking on peoples' doors just to get a match. In fact many well known faces in the Irish League fraternity graced Woodvale Park before they went on to play across the water and even for Northern Ireland. The appeal of the competition is that the 'teams' comprise of a range of players from all walks of life. The teams were generally named after bars or clubs like the old Windsor Bar, the Aberdeen Club, N.I. Club or just named after an area e.g. West Belfast Rangers, Lower Shankill, Woodvale Young Men. Nothing much has changed in this respect only the team names have changed to reflect what is current in the area i.e. The Pinky, Heather Street, Shankill Pigeon Club etc.

The competition cuts across all sections of the Greater Shankill which is demonstrated by the volume of people who flock to the Park each night not only to watch the matches but also as part of a wider social network. For example fathers would bring their kids to play in the Park while they watch the matches; girlfriends (or is it WAGS!) of players would bring their friends for company; and the young and the old from 8 to 80 years old. Many people just gather to see what's going on as it is a great excuse for people to get out of their houses and into the fresh air of the Park.

In conclusion with more planning and support the competition could 'move up a league' to showcase the strength and depth of local players. A number of years ago there



2008 League Winners

were tentative contacts to play a cross the border match involving a Shankill Summer League select. This would have been well supported and have the potential to become an annual event.

There have also been approaches to include the competition into some type of festival as it is probably one of the most supported events that happens in the Greater Shankill area. There is merit in this idea with the potential to have the finals more participative for the spectators but additional support would be required to bring these ideas to fruition.

Shankill Summer League Committee

Woodvale Kiosk



The idea of having a mobile structure as part of the HUB proposal came through discussion in the design workshops. The Woodvale Kiosk could sell tea, coffee, juice and snacks, as well as newspapers and confectionery. It is an inexpensive and low-impact way of providing refreshments in the park and generating activity and interest.

Kiosks work well in parks as they can move around and be part of different events- such as the Shankill Summer Football League (see above). In some parks, kiosks are used as exhibition stands or information points, or even to sell tickets for an event. The Woodvale Kiosk could be positioned anywhere on the Plug-in Path, or throughout the park.

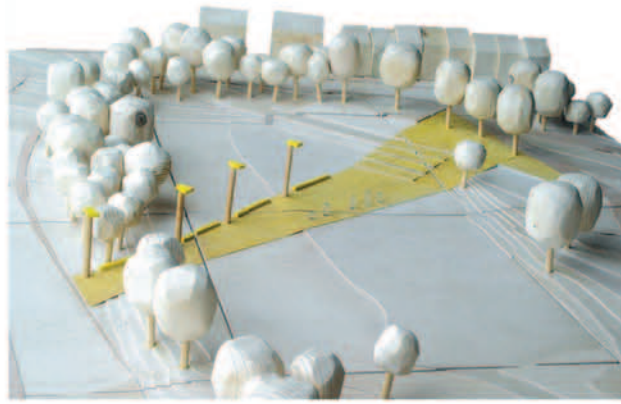


Plugging in The Pieces

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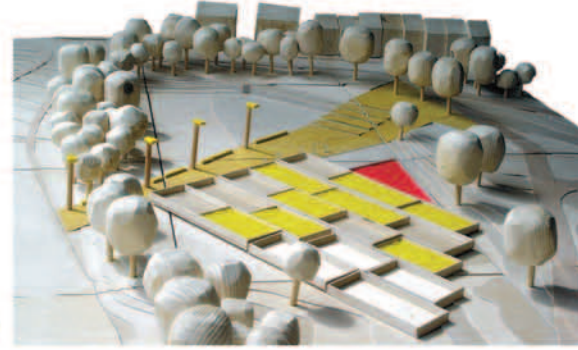
How the Proposal Could be Built up Over Time

1



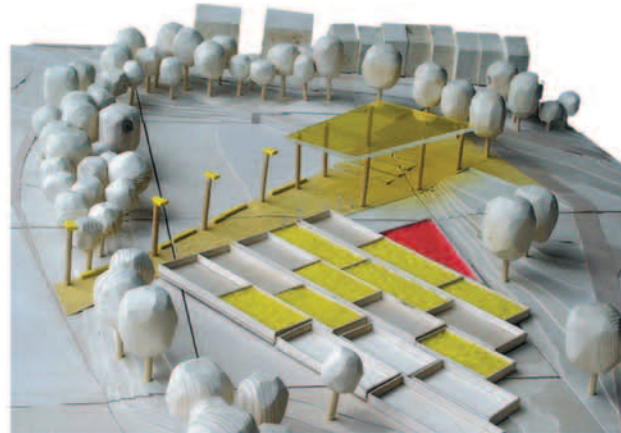
HUB Build-Up: The Plug-In Path

2



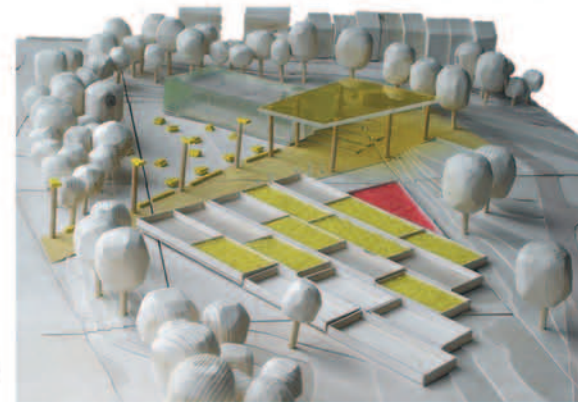
+ Allotments and Toddlers Garden

3



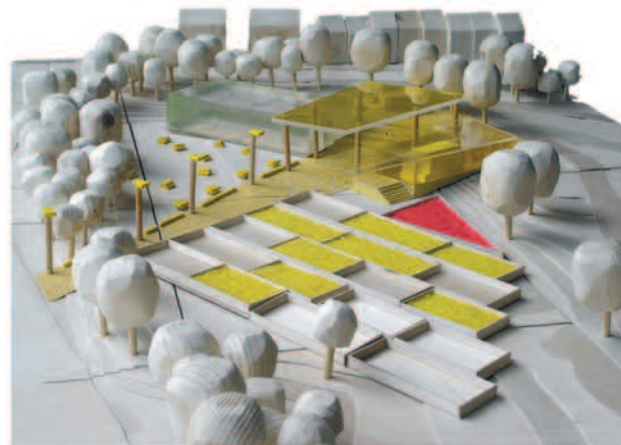
+ The Big Roof

4



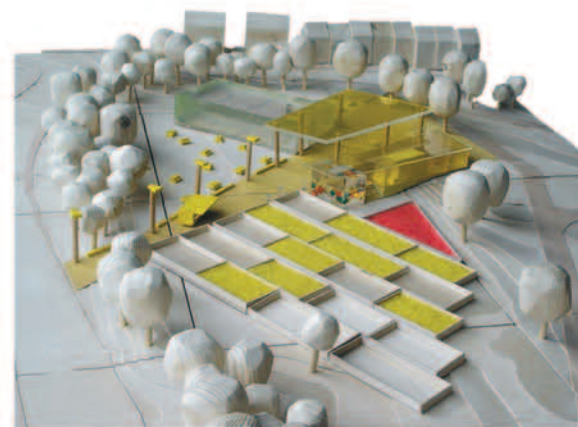
+ Picnic, Table Tennis, Sports Pitch

5



+ Flexible Building, WCs, Kitchen, etc

6



+ Kiosk, Soft-Play Space



The Power of Play

Natural Play-Spaces that Challenge Children



The public playground is an important place for children's development. It is the stage where they rehearse different roles and find their own identities through meeting others and developing their abilities in mind and body. The scenery and properties of the playground can, therefore, have a big influence on the quality of children's play.

Many recently built playgrounds in Northern Ireland seem anything but playful. The equipment is designed not so much to let children have fun as to make sure they don't hurt themselves. The same of-the-shelf climbing structures and swings are often boring for kids because they are not challenged and don't learn anything about their environments. Danish Landscape Architect Helle Nebelong specializes in playground design, including playgrounds for children with disabilities: "Standardisation is dangerous because play becomes simplified and the child does not have to worry about his movements. This does not prepare him for all the knobbly and asymmetrical forms he is likely to be confronted in the world outside and throughout life".

A successful playground cultivates creativity, environmental awareness and social

skills. It provides space for the child to create and imagine their own environment and find their own limits rather than trying to over-determine their activity. By working consciously with natural materials, inner-city children improve their knowledge of them and of nature as a whole.

To compete with computers and television, the environment has to be attractive, well maintained but most importantly, challenging. Children and youngsters do not like bland, risk-free playgrounds. They are longing for natural spaces, where they can meet one another and be challenged physically, psychologically and socially.

As early as 1931 Carl Sorensen, the Danish Landscape Architect, came up with the concept of the adventure playground after observing children play in construction sites and junkyards. The idea of finding alternatives to equipment to dictate childrens play was in Denmark in 1943 as a way of developing childrens social skills like conflict resolution. It migrated to England, where the concept suggested a way to use bombed-out sites during postwar construction. However the UKs culture of litigation has limited its development compared to continental Europe where this type of play-space is widespread and highly successful.



Woodvale HUB by Day – Activities for all the community



Woodvale HUB by Night – Relaxed atmosphere for all the community to enjoy

WOODVALE HUB

The Plan Comes Together

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Plan View of the Model

The Woodvale HUB Project aims to find a long-term regenerative strategy, and improve community safety in Woodvale Park.

The proposal to date has been developed through a series of interactive design workshops with park users of all ages and backgrounds, community workers, government agencies, and other local stakeholders. The HUB is intended to provide a safe, welcoming space for people of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and abilities. Located on the grounds of the disused cinder pitch near Tesco, the HUB would have both indoor and outdoor spaces for a wide range of events and activities relating to both the park and the wider community.

A design strategy called the Plug In Path has been developed which would connect the proposed new areas. This path would provide a short cut and direct connection between the park and Tesco shopping centre. By increasing the movement of people through this corner of the park this path would also improve the feeling of safety.

Because it is unlikely that there will be resources to build all these different areas at once The Plug in Path would allow the different areas to be added incrementally over time. Its surface could contain: Seating, Lighting, Children's Play Equipment, Water Feature, etc. It could have electricity and water points to allow outdoor activities to happen very easily – e.g. Fun-day, Outdoor Cinema or TV, Concert, Market, etc. The other areas that could be added over time include–

- 1 The Plug-In Path, with integrated seating, lighting, and water feature
- 2 Tiered Seating and Performance Area
- 3 Proposed Gate to Tesco Car Park and relocation of Pedestrian Crossing
- 4 The BIG ROOF- shelter for cinema/ concerts/ events
- 5 Small shelters/ squats for young people
- 6 Allotment Gardens and Scarecrow Project
- 7 New Path and Nature Trail through Wild Area
- 8 Toddler's Garden
- 9 Kiosk - selling tea, coffee, snacks
- 10 Picnic Area
- 11 Exercise Track suitable for older people
- 12 Table-Tennis Tables
- 13 Flexible Spaces - for events and gatherings, to contain pool tables etc.
- 14 Family Room - wet area with basins and seating
- 15 Toilets
- 16 Kitchenette
- 17 Terrace adjacent to kitchen - could evolve into cafe
- 18 Soft Play Space - off the terrace for easy supervision of very young children
- 19 Multi- Sports Pitch



Development of the Plan Following Workshop III and IV



An example of an outdoor meeting and event space.
(The 2008 Serpentine Pavilion, designed by Frank O. Gehry)



Youth Workshops

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Young People Have Their Say on the HUB Proposals



On June 24th a number of workshops looking at the HUB design were carried out with students at the Girls Model and with young people in Woodvale Park.

These workshops followed on from previous discussions carried out in April to determine the issues that young people saw as the most important in Woodvale Park (see the Yellow Press April/May issue pg 4 and 5). The ideas and issues raised in these lively discussions have been incorporated as the HUB proposal has developed.

Some of the topics raised included: safety, lighting, having a place to hang out- a 'Squat' providing basic shelter against the elements, somewhere to get snacks- a chippy or café, and toilets. The idea of temporary events, whether film or concerts or 'amusements' like some fairground rides, was popular, while indoor space and additional sports facilities were not so crucial.

The proposal to have more happening in this area of the park was popular and the idea of the new path with lighting, seating, and fountain, was welcomed by everyone. Young people's views varied more on the exact detail of what they would like to do and where they would feel comfortable hanging out in relation to this path.

A Choice of Seating Spaces

One of the main issues discussed was the location of the 'Squat' or the big sheltering roof where they could hang out. Differing views emerged- some young people feel more comfortable being in the heart of this social space, that 'the park is for everybody and we want to be where everyone else is' and 'that's where you meet new friends'. Others favour a degree of separation, especially when asked about whether they want to be near specific groups (such as younger children, adults gardening, or the sport-field). One solution to this might be to have one Big Roof where mingling can occur and where events can take place, as well as a number of smaller more secluded shelters where young people can meet privately but still be connected to or overlooking the activities. This is considered an important detail in achieving an active and well-used space and has become part of the HUB plan.

HUB Benefits to Youth Workers:

Detached youth workers from the Upper Shankill Area project expressed the usefulness of having a small base in the park to store some basic equipment that could be used with young people for sports or focus groups. Youth Worker Deirdre McMahon (Forthspring Community Centre) who helped to organize some of the workshops described the potential of the HUB for youth-work in the community: "The Hybrid Use Building would provide a great focal point for Detached/Outreach youth provision in the park: Youth groups could meet inside if the weather was bad or if there were a lot of distractions to compete with. Young people could engage with youth leaders either to do pieces of work, for informal conversations or to seek advice on where to get information or support."

Future Involvement

Some of the young people we talked to were keen to be involved in the process of making the HUB happen and bringing about a positive change in their community. They could imagine becoming actively involved – talking to their friends about the project, or supporting proposals or presentations to Council.



Shared Space

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Degrees of Separation: The Micro-Story Mixing Ages in the Park



Ooster Park, Amsterdam



City life is about strangers sharing the same space in peaceful coexistence, but a degree of privacy is important lest we all go mad.

Can the young and the old share the same public spaces? With stories about anti-social behaviour and generation conflict dominating many discussions about public spaces, it is sometimes hard to believe they can. That's why perhaps we need to take a closer look at how 'sharing' space works in practice – a particularly important question for Woodvale Park

The great American urbanist Jane Jacobs said it already – "Cities are full of people with whom...a certain degree of contact is useful or enjoyable; but you do not want them in your hair." City life is about strangers sharing the same space in peaceful coexistence, but a degree of privacy is important lest we all go mad. This we found confirmed in our conversations with young people in the Park: when asked, what are

the elements that make a good park, many mentioned that there need to be space for toddlers and older people – no one would want to claim the entire park for themselves. However, what teenagers need, and what they often don't have, is a space that they can genuinely call their own. Where there are no raised eyebrows when they are hanging out with their friends (which is, after all, what young people want and need to do). Where no-one will move them on, where no one will question their right to be there. This is not asking that much – some benches and steps to sit on and watch the rest of the park and a shelter against rain and wind. From this base, where they feel safe and have some ownership, they can enjoy the rest of the park as well.

The real design challenge, then, is not to create a uniform space that works for everyone in the same way, all the time. Those spaces simply don't exist, because

all age groups have different needs and aspirations. The point is to accommodate these in subtly segmented zones within one space – whilst avoiding, however, that we create separate ghettos for different age groups. Therefore what's most important is to articulate the transition zones between these different parts – instead of sharply drawn and secured boundaries, these spaces need to have fluid border zones – visually connected, flexible to change from one moment to the next, and facilitating interaction between at the edges. Successful projects such as Spa Fields in central London, and the Thames Valley Police youth shelter project, have achieved just that: generating trust and confidence for all park users, by recognising that real sharing can start to happen when different people's needs have been acknowledged.

Joost Bundermann, Demos / Building Initiative

New Beginning

A Personal View of Woodvale Park



I guess it's a space in Belfast that has had its fair share of bad press...but it's also a place which is pretty close to my heart.

I first spent time in Woodvale Park six summers ago as part of a PCI (Presbyterian Church of Ireland) youth outreach team. We were based in Woodvale Presbyterian Church but spent much time trying to get to know young people hanging out in the park. I loved it and I loved the kids there. I loved their acceptance of this strange bunch of young people in their territory, I loved having banter with them and I loved how they mostly told you exactly what they thought!

But it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows. It disturbed me to see kids of twelve and under, enveloped in a grey haze as they smoked their lungs out behind a tree. It angered me to see young people try to dull the boredom in their lives by necking alcohol down them in the darkened shadows of a play park.

And yet despite some of the dark activities or episodes that have occurred in Woodvale Park it seems that hope is on the horizon. Last year as I stood in the park during the Community Fun Day that takes place each August, I felt like God was smiling down on us. The place was buzzing with activity and fun, all the while being illuminated in the most beautiful sunshine. That day is just one example of how community activity is on the rise in Woodvale.

A new vision is emerging for the park and for the area. New shared spaces and facilities within the park have the potential to have such a positive impact on the area's young's people - engaging their time and energy while hopefully giving them a renewed sense of pride in their area. And it's exciting to see these plans for a transformed park roll-out, as Woodvale hopefully stands on the brink of a new beginning.

Judith Hill – PCI Youth Outreach Team

Hit The Road HUB

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The HUB Model Goes On Tour

During the summer months (June- August 08) the HUB model has been touring the Shankill area, appearing at various events such as the 11th day party, and in public community locations such as the Spectrum Centre and the local Tesco shopping centre.



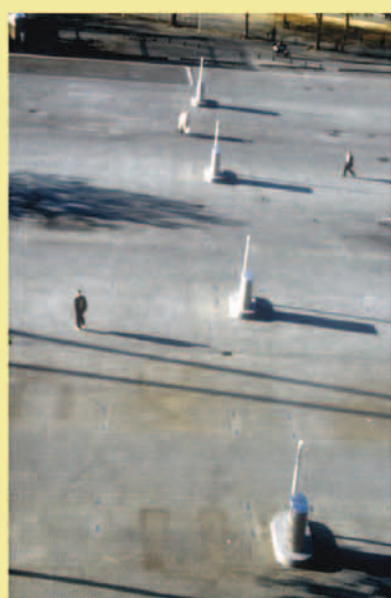
Studying the Progress - HUB at the End of Year Show, Art College University of Ulster



On the Road Again - The Spectrum Centre on the Shankill Road



The Binnerotta in Rotterdam is designed to accommodate a large market at weekends. (Left)



The Market reverts into being a city square during the week. (Right)

Plug-in Path

What do we mean by "Plug in Path"?

The Plug-in Path connects all the HUB facilities- it is the shared surface that is used by everyone, all age-groups.

The Plug-in Path is a programmed surface- i.e. it contains lighting, seating, play equipment, etc as well as an electricity and water supply which can be tapped into as required. It contains everything needed to allow different events to take place. For example, if a group organizes a food market in the park, the stalls can set up on the Plug-in Path and simply connect into the power and water supply and they're ready to go. Likewise, a DJ can plug their decks in for an outdoor disco. This would apply to cinema, theatre, concerts, parties, a fun-fair..... the list is endless! In short it provides the potential for many varied uses- and users!



Sockets can be concealed in robust cabinets so it doesn't interfere with everyday use.



The HUB will continue to tour around and has been invited to the CUBE Gallery in Manchester in October of this year (2008). Here the story can be brought to a wider audience.



Shopping for Ideas - The HUB Arrives at Ballygomartin Tesco



Fun in the Sun - 11th Day Party at the Woodvale Park

The HUB model has a comment slot and here are some comments people have posted:

"Excellent idea! This area has been starved of amenities for it's population, young / old, for years"

"A small golf driving net would not be a bad idea. Kids in park with golf clubs all th time. No where else handy."

"I think it's a good idea but not for around this area. It will be graffitied and ruined within a month. Waste of money and taxes."

"I would like golf and football pitch. I would love bike road and basketball court and maybe a shop for lollies in the summer and maybe crisps"

"24/7 CCTV for the safety of childen playing in the park and also to monitor the destroying of the park due to graffiti. No swings in the baby park."

"The cinema part would do for all ages. My friend and I go to the cinema so it would be handy."

"I think it is a great plan. 'Happy Days'. The entrance through the park to Tesco is 'Brill'."

"Mini Golf! Mini Golf! MINI GOLF! Pleaseeeeeeeee"

"It is wooden, it is gold, it is good. Thank you!"

"Skate-park for bikes and skateboards"

"Great idea. Need more in this area"

"Suggest - First Aid station"

If you would like the HUB to appear in a venue near you, simply contact Kim on 90351548 or Jennie on 90311420

Next Stop – Fun Day 21st
August in Woodvale Park.
ALL WELCOME



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*A term applied to newspapers [or their writers] of a recklessly or unscrupulously sensational character. Originates from a picture in the New York World, 1895, with the central figure in a yellow dress.

Building Initiative

Civil Enterprise in the Built Environment

This document has been produced and edited by Deidre McMenamin, Dougal Sheridan and Roy Fitzpatrick of Building Initiative in collaboration with: Friends of Woodvale Park, and with the support of: The University of Ulster and The Arts Council of Northern Ireland

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The HUB Model will be on display at the Woodvale Park Fun Day on 21st August and some of the designers and participants will be there to discuss the proposals and get your views.

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Any Comments or Thoughts?

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Thankyou

