

OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH SUMMARY | SEPTEMBER 2019

Overview

During August and September 2019, the Soundings team observed activity in the open spaces on York Way Estate for 12 hours in total over varying times and days of the week.

The aim of this was to gain a better understanding of the estate, the spaces where people gather and how these spaces are used.

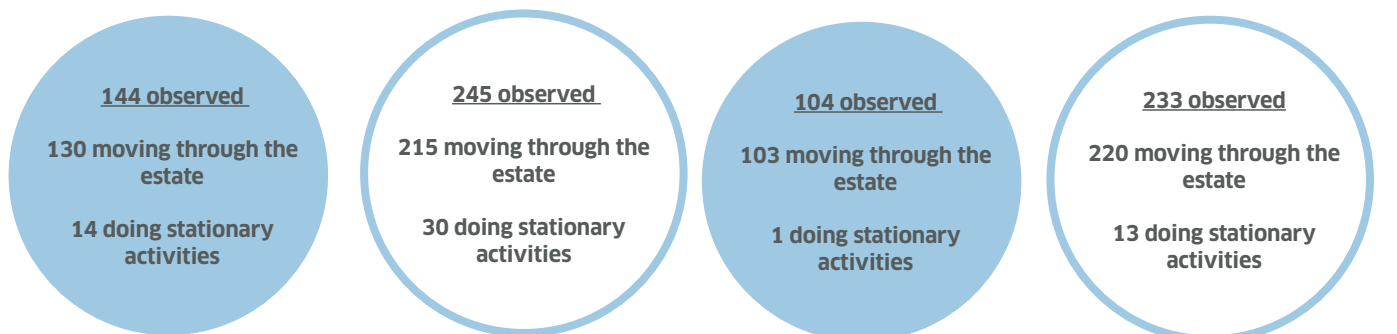
The observations happened on the following dates and times:

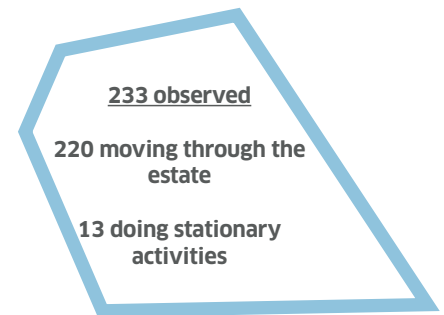
- Session 1** | Thursday 15th August, 12:30pm - 4:30pm
- Session 2** | Friday 16th August, 8:30am - 11:30am
- Session 3** | Thursday 22nd August, 5:00pm - 7:00pm
- Session 4** | Sunday 8th September, 10:00am - 2:00pm

A total number of **726** people were observed across the four observational research sessions. Of this number, **668** were observed whilst moving through the estate and **58** were observed doing stationary activities.

As evidenced by the numbers below, most stationary activity was observed in Space B (the playground and sports court) and the least was observed in Space D between Kinfold House and York Way. A similar amount of stationary activity was observed in spaces A and C.

The detail regarding stationary activities and movement patterns in each space can be found on the following pages. Findings from conversations with young people during the observation are also recorded here.





Shepherd House green (Space A)

Observations

- Children would play in the open area outside of Shepherd House (e.g. hide & seek in the bushes, flipping bottles on railings, running onto the grass) – but this was something they’d briefly stop to do before continuing on their route – it didn’t appear they came to the space primarily for play.
- Some residents from Shepherd House were observed coming out of their flat to use the open space (to smoke or sit down on the bench and read).
- Younger residents were seen walking through the open spaces more often after the summer holidays and during the weekend observation session.
- Residents coming from Kinefold, Penfields and Lambfold walked down the paths to exit the estate onto Market Road and York Way – generally people used these paths, even when walking across the grass would have been a shorter route.
- Elderly woman and a few people with larger buggies were observed having some difficulty walking up the pedestrian path which is on a slight incline and broken up with railings which they needed to weave around.
- People (many who appeared to not be residents) entered the estate from York Way and exited onto Market Road and vice versa.
 - » Cyclists were significantly more present during the evening session and took this route.

Key findings / recommendations

Naturally, the green space was mostly used by residents of Shepherd House. Where people were observed making use of the benches and green area, they were largely residents who had come out of their flat to read, sit in the sun, play etc.

Other residents who used the green area, would do so only briefly to do things like make a phone call, before continuing on their route. However, on a whole, residents walking through this space almost always followed the pedestrian paths, and very rarely stepped out on to the grass.

Seeing as people who stayed in the green area, tended to be those who sat down, providing more benches or even tables could be looked at.

Interestingly, no residents were observed entering the community centre which was closed for most of the time when the research took place. The entrance to the centre could be opened up more so that it appears more inviting.

The pedestrian path by the community centre is on an incline and broken up with railings, issues with accessibility could be addressed here.



Space A - Shepherds House green, York Way Estate



245 observed

215 moving through the estate

30 doing stationary activities

Play Facilities (Space B)

Observations

General

- Children (including toddlers) move between the two caged play spaces.
- Some followed the sun from one space to another.
- Parents close the gates when in the play areas - this would suggest that people are supportive of the gated play areas for safety reasons.
- Parents in Penfields House call down to their children in the play areas.
- Two to three times a week, children with special needs from a local school come to play in the sports court and playground. This was established through the previous estate officer.
- Children play in cliques unsupervised, but all come together to play occasionally and run between the available spaces.
- Kids play hide and seek within and either side of the residential blocks
- Some children use the top of the bins as surfaces for play between Kinefold House and the playground - would suggest that there need to be more tables / raised flat surfaces for play.
- Dogs with owners seen leaving Kinefold House and off of the estate for walks.
- Residents (including children) often move between estate buildings - would suggest that there are close/familial ties on the estate.



Space B - Playground, York Way Estate



Play Facilities (Space B)

Observations

Playground

- Difference of use according to age groups:
 - » Older kids sit and chat on the apparatus
 - » Toddlers play on the apparatus
 - » Older kids play on the apparatus with younger siblings
 - » Older children use the facilities unsupervised
- Three-way seesaw is used by older and younger kids together.
- Often used by mums with children.
- Children rarely use the apparatus in the play park but make believe around the apparatus provided.
- Adults supervising children in the play cage use the benches provided.
- The children would hang off and climb onto poles sticking out of the back wall of the playground.
- The children either huddled together in the miniature houses or climbed on top of them.

Pitch

- Adults join in play in the sports cage.
- Those using the sports cage bring their own balls to play with.
- Sports court used regularly by family opposite to jog and play football.

Key findings / recommendations

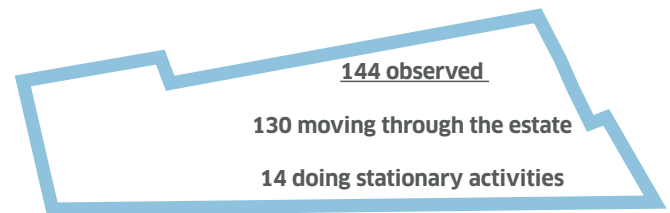
Parents/guardians (mainly mothers and grandmothers) were often observed taking 1 hour out of the day to supervise young children playing in the play facilities on the estate. Male guardians were more often seen taking part in play in the pitch either playing ball games or jogging around the pitch with kids.

The play spaces provided on the estate are predominately used by children unsupervised. The perceived safety of the play spaces is likely to be attributed to the gates on the fenced areas and also the overlooking of the play spaces from the residential blocks.

Younger kids used the apparatus provided in the playground but the apparatus was often not used as it was intended, especially by older children. This would suggest that better play facilities need to be provided for older children. Generally, more climbing facilities could be introduced as children are often seen climbing over anything available to them.



Space B - Pitch, York Way Estate



Lambfold House green (Space C)

Observations

- Short stays in the open green spaces involve:
 - » Pacing up and down the grassy area on the phone
 - » Sitting on the bench for a phone call
 - » Sitting on the bench with a laptop
 - » Leisurely sitting on a bench when it was sunny
- Older kids sit on the bench and hang out together
- People do not tend to walk on the pavement but rather the Service Road.
- Service Road is a popular route for going to/from the Co-Op on North Road and to exit onto York Way Road.
- Accessibility issues from the estate to North Road – the curb seems to be an issue for parents with prams and older people with supported mobility.
- Elderly residents seen pausing on route from North Road along the Service Road – could benefit from benches along route.
- Residents from Lambfold House use the bin store at and talk with neighbours as they do so.

Key findings / recommendations

Most people observed in this space were seen walking along the Service Road. It was very rare that people walked along the path provided or stayed in the green open space.

The paths provided posed some accessibility issues for parents with large buggies and elderly people with supported mobility. More dropped kerbs and more benches along the paths could benefit the situations.

Those that did spend time in the open green space were often stopping on their way home and would sit on the benches provided for no longer than 30 minutes during sunny spells. The exception to this was older kids who would sit on the benches to hang out together.



Space C - Lambfold House Green, York Way Estate



104 observed

103 moving through the estate

1 doing stationary activities

Between Kinfold House and York Way (Space D)

Observations

- People walking through the space behind Kinfold were mainly going to/from the 'Camden Park Road' bus stop.
- A few people also walked across to buy some groceries from the petrol station and came back on the estate soon after.
- Residents from Kinfold House use the bin store at Lambfold House.

Key findings / recommendations

This space was one that people walked through rather than remained in. The paths on either side of Kinfold House are thoroughfares for residents leaving the estate to go to the bin store, the bus stop, the petrol station and other routes off of the estate and also for those entering the estate.



Space D, York Way Estate

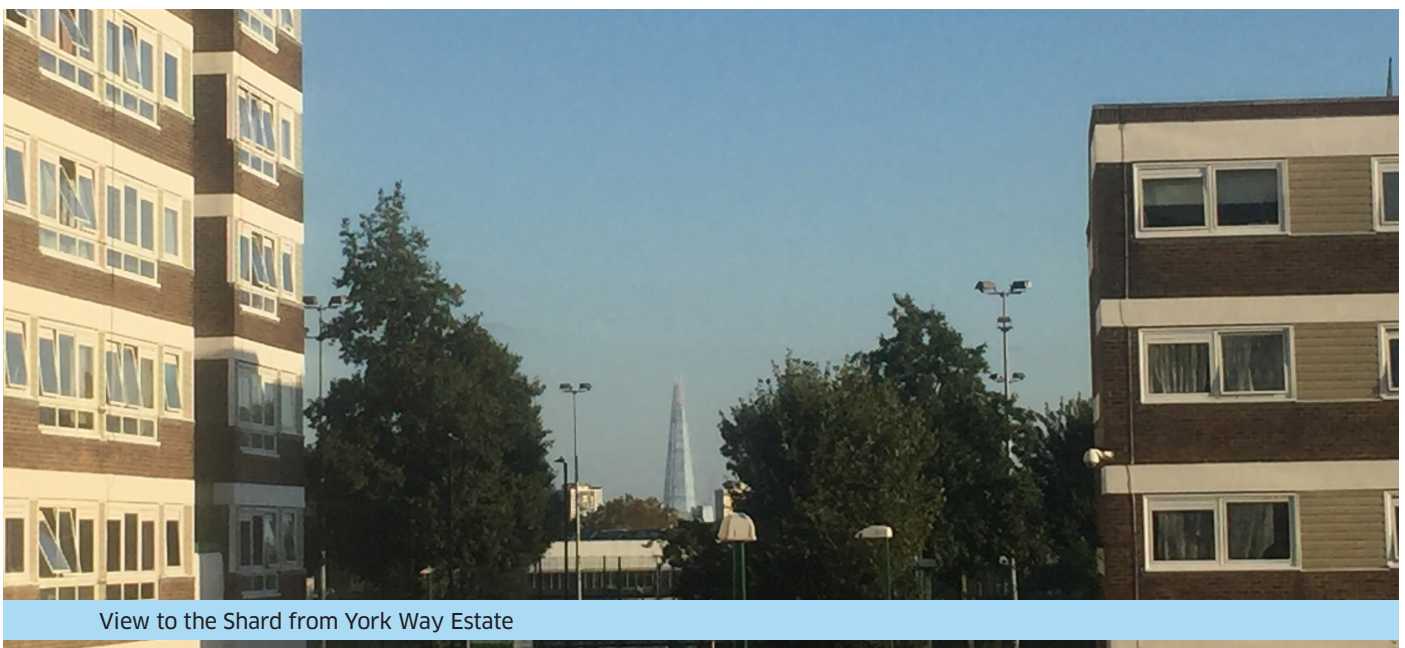


Conversation with young people

- Very sceptical about the current consultation process.
- Seem sure that new buildings will replace open space in front of Lambfold House.
- Concerned that they will lose the open spaces they play in.
- Empty cage referred to as 'pitch'.
- Cage with apparatus referred to as 'park'.
- Would like the heights of the gate on the pitch to be higher to stop them from losing their balls down the back of the building.
- Often climb over locked fence/gate to retrieve balls.
- Concerned that extension on top of existing buildings would make the buildings prone to fire 'like Grenfell'.
- Recommendations to build on the nursery.
- Would like to be able to own dogs rather than just cats.
- Would like estate-wide Wi-Fi.

Next Steps

These findings will inform future discussions about open spaces and their uses.



View to the Shard from York Way Estate

