



Stolen Streets Stolen Childhood

How England's Children were forgotten
through adult indifference to their
essential need to Play

by Jan Cosgrove



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Introduction

This publication starts from a simple premise:

Children in this early 21st Century Britain face a serious crisis affecting their health, development, mortality.

In it, we show that their lives have been deeply and often adversely affected by adult decisions, indifference to their basic play needs being the characteristic feature.

That indifference has been evident in the actions and inactions of adults at all levels -as parents, communities, councils, MPs, Government departments.

To argue that adults have not been aware of the issues for decades is unsustainable - we have known them, accepted them as *normal* and *convenient*, for adults.

Adult society has watched whilst our children's access to their outdoor environment has been so curbed that it might well be termed 'house arrest'.

Did we intend this? No, of course not. Have we let it happen? Yes. Could/Should it have been avoided? Judge for yourself from the following. Can it be changed? Not without major changes, concessions even, from the adult world towards our children.

Does society have to take urgent steps to begin to address the issues? The purpose of this publication is to answer 'Yes we must' and the reader is asked to make a judgement on this issue ... and even more, to become part of the pressure for the necessary change, be you parent, grand-parent, neighbour, councillor, Member of Parliament, Government Minister.

About the author:

Jan Cosgrove is National Secretary of Fair Play for Children, and has been for so long, he's forgotten. He has been active in children's issues, especially Play, for over 30 years, professionally and as a volunteer. He is largely responsible for the content of the Fair Play web site, which is the organisation's main tool for communicating its views and ideas. He pioneered Fair Play as an umbrella body in child protection and criminal records checks, and his most recent publication was *Out with the Bathwater?* (June 2010) which tackled the issues involved in the government's decision to review vetting and barring. He has two grandchildren, Daniel (4) and Sophia (2) who provide him with almost-daily challenges as a house-playworker... thank goodness. He never ever spoils them of course.





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Mapping Exercise

When examining where children play, how they get there, and what factors affect that access, we can first look at **numbers** of children. Throughout this publication, we refer to England in terms of population and communities.

It may often be that when people think about numbers of children, there is an assumption that there are less of them than, say, 50 years ago, or more. Though the child population (aged under 16 years) has declined since the peak of the 1970s, census figures for England from 1901 reveal something rather different:

Census	Population	child % status	Child %	Children u16
1901	38.328 m	Assumed	30%	11.498 m
1911	42,138	Assumed	30%	12641
1921	44,072	Assumed	25%	11018
1931	46,074	Assumed	25%	11519
1941	48,216	Assumed	25%	12054
1951	50,290	Assumed	25%	12573
1961	52,807	Actual	25%	13090
1971	55,928	Actual	25%	14256
1981	56,352	Actual	22%	12543
1991	57,808	Actual	20%	11685
2001	59,009	Actual	20%	11863
2008	62074	Actual	19%	11518
2011	62649	Projected	19%	11622
2016	64773	Projected	18%	11974
2021	66958	Projected	19%	12533
2026	69051	Projected	19%	13046

no census, 1939 figure used

For many, the first surprise may be that in 2011 there are as many children as there were in 1901 and 1931, and that the *number* is indeed rising from now onwards. "But surely there are less children now?" The **proportion** of children in the population has dropped, but the population size keeps growing - equals smaller proportion, same/growing numbers.

What this means is that, in terms of need for outdoor playing space, the need is as great as ever. That the majority of children live in urban, residential roads is a fact, most do not have access to "rural delights" bar on an occasional, usually parent-ferried basis.

To measure that available access to play space, for most children in England we need to look to the urban environment.



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Calculating available play space

During the school/pre-school day, children will be regulated as to what play space they can access and when. Usually this will be school playground space, nursery outdoor space, supplemented by school playing fields.

Out of school, children will have the following play space, though not all children have any or equal access to the various types:

- + own garden
- + gardens of friends
- + fields
- + playing fields
- + public playgrounds
- + commercial outdoor space
- + streets

The access to **garden space** is wholly dependent on family/friends families having such amenity. Many do not. For many children, their preference may well be to play away from home, meet friends on neutral territory etc.

Fields are a matter of location, mostly rural. Even here, property, agricultural and safety issues will restrict access.

Playing fields provide such amenity, and many will have dedicated children's play areas within them. *Fields in Trust* (formerly the National Playing Fields Association) records some 13,000 acres of playing fields nationally. Use by children for play is not recorded. Anecdotally, observation suggests that only small areas of playing fields are used for children's play, the layout of fields is mainly predicated on adult sports requirements, and that play-use is only a very small proportion of space and time use.

Public playgrounds. Most top-tier councils provide and manage play areas in England. Play England surveyed provision two years ago, with a 50% response. This suggested from 28,000 to 30,000 play areas with variation in provision ranging from one site for every 200 children, to one for every 2500. A more recent survey, conducted by Fair Play for Children under Freedom of Information, reduces the number of play areas to 16,135 covering some 14,833 acres run and managed by 92% of top-tier councils plus a further 5,265 other play areas known by these councils to be provided by parish councils, housing associations etc. Fair Play is currently working with the National Association of Local Councils to firm up the parish council provision. If accurate, this would suggest 1 acre of play area per 752 children aged under 16 years.

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.net/survey1.htm>

Commercial outdoor provision is hard to ascertain and can include anything from pub play areas to shopping mall playgrounds etc. Most of it has either to be paid for or can be used only as part of parents etc using paid-for services. <http://www.fairplayforchildren.net/survey1.htm>

There remains **street** space and it is here that the most surprising and serious statistics may be seen to emerge.

Fair Play for Children - for the Child's Right to Play : www.fairplayforchildren.org



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Street Play - a visual survey yesterday to today





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The fact is that where our children used to play years ago has now been taken over, almost entirely, by the car. And not so much the moving car.

The intruder is the parked car. In the 1930's, 1950's even the 1970's children were able to play outside their homes in the street. Mostly residential streets where the moving car, though a real enough safety concern, was not an issue. The photos above show well enough that most residential streets were free of cars, at least for much of the day, and that is why and how children were able to play so close to home.

There were issues - mainly around neighbour disputes about kids playing, balls in front gardens (if they had these), kids getting up to mischief. That play space included the road as well as the pavement, and cars were infrequent enough for kids to avoid in the main in residential streets.

Increasing car ownership brought with it occupation of that play space, not just in the evenings but increasingly with 2-car household and work-related parking situations, throughout the day.

The incursion was not foreseen, nor recognised, nor considered worthy of debate, children certainly were neither considered nor asked (why should we, they're only kids ...?)

Nor were other issues discussed. Of occupation of public space by private objects. (For example, rent a skip and a licence is needed for it to be on-street which incurs a cost.) Of whether streets are solely for cars it was obvious, wasn't it, streets are for cars? But that was **not** why streets were built, cars came along later, much later

This has been the greatest and most unregulated and cost-free privatisation of public space. "I pay my road taxes" etc hardly washes.

Society was carried along by "the car makes us free" dream, it has been an entirely adult vision and agenda, and children have paid a price, of the loss of almost all of their street play space. It can't be argued that we did so by taking a considered, principled decision based on tenets of the public good, balancing of needs and rights. We simply went into it headlong, unthinking.

How serious has been the loss, what is the extent of denial of access to outdoor play by this factor?



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Calculating Street Play Space that was

relies on many factors, not many of them easily tied-down. For a start, there are no records of mileage of residential streets in the UK. We can only rely on more general statistics provided by the government, the most recent being:

<http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/roads/road-lengths/index.html>

The above shows that there are about 168,408 miles of minor urban roads in England, using the statistics in the survey. If we reckon around 40' average width of residential roads, we get the following acreage of minor urban road space: 792,282 acres. How much of that was residential? One would hazard a guess, and it is only that - most of that space is residential.

Another figure we have seen suggests only 76,041 miles of such roads so that would give a much lower acreage.

Whatever the figure, we can show that for most of the time, that space is occupied by the parked car, and that if and when children attempt to use it for play, let alone on safety grounds, they soon find themselves chased off in case they damage parked cars.

If that isn't the case, then a lot of shouting and answering-back has been for some other reasons, the police have been called out on false pretences

The higher-end figures might suggest 1 acre of residential street per 14 children, or 0.07 acre per child.

Road mileage has increased since 1901, of course, but a lot of the gain was not residential street, and in any case, the encroachment of parking has vastly reduced the available street play space to virtually zero across the nation. **That space was the main space for informal play for 11 million children in the past, that has been taken from them by adults.** Nothing adults have done has remotely compensated for the loss of that play space - playing fields, play areas, organised play provision, all these have not ensured that the 11 million children of today have anywhere near adequate space to play in their communities, close to home.





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The consequences of this catastrophic loss of play space

In fact, this is not the place to rehearse what has been recognised in terms of symptoms by many commentators and experts. We can make reference to well-known publications:

One False Move: a Study of Children's Independent Mobility (Meyer Hillman, John Adams and John Whitelegg), Policy Studies Institute, 1991:

<http://john-adams.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/one%20false%20move.pdf>

Children, transport and the quality of urban life (ed. Meyer Hillman), Policy Studies Institute, July 1993

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1290046026.pdf>

What can be said is that there is widespread agreement that lack of active, outdoor play is contributing to serious issues such as:

- + childhood obesity, which is growing at a rapid pace - maybe as a consequence of this, signs that eating disorders are appearing amongst children as young as five more frequently
- + lack of socialisation amongst children which is contributing to behavioural trends
- + over-reliance on occupying children with domestic electronic media, "electronic childminding"
- + increased use of social networking media with both positive and negative aspects including in the latter problems of supervision of contacts made by children.

It is well understood also that the density of traffic, both parked and moving, appears to be correlated to perceptions of neighbourhood safety, ability to supervise and track one's children, a sense of community etc.

The beneficial and superior nature of outdoor play activity is discussed in:

Children's Physical Activity: The Contribution of Playing and Walking (Roger L. Mackett* and James Paskins, Centre for Transport Studies, University College London, London, UK)

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1291334992.pdf>

This publication is of key importance in our view, as it challenges perceptions commonly held that, e.g. school-based sport /physical education is superior in promoting children's fitness and in calorific use. This measured study shows

- * Walking provides much more physical activity than travelling by car.
- * Children who walk to events tend to be much more active than those who travel by car.
- * Playing provides more physical activity than organised clubs.
- * Children tend to walk when they go out to play whereas they tend to be taken to clubs by car.
- * Children are much more active during school breaks than at other times at school, other than in organised PE or games lessons.
- * Children are less active when they are at home than when they are out of it



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It can be concluded that walking to and from school together with the outdoor play that children want and seek after school and in school breaks, holds the best prospect for tackling the issues related above. All are more frequent than organised activity in school or parent-provided, the calorific use is at a premium, children work hardest at what they like, which is to play freely.

Today's experience of childhood is that this vital and health-giving activity has been sidelined to a dangerous extent, the consequences being prolonged childhood disorders and adult ill-health including increased and earlier morbidity.

Whilst we are the first to recognise both real child protection issues and 'stranger danger' fears, we believe there is ample evidence now that the fears may themselves be part of the traffic issue and that traffic, especially in its parked form, has created the crisis identified here.

Is this in turn evidence of an unhealthy attitude towards childhood? Certainly, Fair Play is well enough aware of community hostility towards children being under-reported and of constant concern to many parents - police constantly called out (proximity to parked cars being one strand of complaint), children threatened and pressured "to move on" by neighbours, unwillingness to accept that childhood activity and noise, within reason, are part of living in a community.

Parents, for a variety of reasons, are now often unwilling to allow their children out to play unsupervised which means that their kids are subjected to restricted outdoor play and consequently to being incarcerated in the home for too much of the time. It is claimed that kids want to play on their x-boxes etc. True to an extent, but surveys show often enough that, given the chance, their preference is to be with their friends outside in common playspace. Not always with adults breathing down their necks.

Commentators have blamed everything from indeed x-boxes to television to child protection and safety measures etc for children not being allowed out to play, take risks, be on their own.

These are possibly all factors but they pale into insignificance, in our view, when compared to the effect of the seizure of common playspace used by children for parking of cars owned by adults. The scale of that has been vast, the process relentless.

We ask: when was there ever a debate on this issue, the taking of that space, in terms which involved children's playspace and involved the children themselves? It has not taken place, it still is not happening and in these days when government and councils consult on almost everything (alas maybe too often to beef up their own agendas), it has to be asked, where is the voice of children? Under the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** signed by the UK, Article 12 says that we have a duty to consult children on issues that affect them. That has not happened, it is almost never present in considerations of e.g. legislation, council decision-making, there is scant experience of such processes.



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Starting the search for solutions

There are a wide range of ideas and initiatives which can be considered and tried. We are not looking here for organised activity substitutes, important though these are, be they sport-, play-, activity-based in schools and in communities.

Our approach rests on the premise that we need to restore in ways that are appropriate the ability of children to be able to play outside. We can examine valid and known approaches as well as suggest new ones.

Before listing some ideas let's first take note of key factors, the main one being the extent to which children, under their own motivation, will range to play. Studies show that range experience, which is closely tied to age and level of dependency, has shortened quite dramatically in recent decades so that children are coming to experience levels of play at a later age throughout the age range. Given the levels of access of the past, in traffic-free roads, children had much greater play ranges.

But, from experience of working with kids on a rural council estate with a play bus, geared for 5-14 year olds, and using two public green spaces about half-a-mile from one another with just quiet residential roads between them, with kids who attend the same junior school, it was a fact that when we moved from one site to another, the cross-traffic of kids was negligible.

The visit pattern was such that one site was visited for a period of weeks and the other site was not visited maybe for months, so it was not a case of waiting for the bus to arrive earlier/later in the week at the other site. When we stopped using one site altogether, the children there did not migrate to the other.

Approaches:

Build more public playgrounds

This has its place as a strategy, but it must be limited on cost and practical grounds. In order to arrive at a situation of one acre of playground space for every 100 children, based on the 16000+ and 14000 acres of current playground provision in England, we calculate the need for another 98,000 playgrounds and 88,000 acres of land. At £60,000 per new build, we estimate a total cost of £5.7 billion, plus annual maintenance charges. This is an Aunt Sally figure of course, as the requirement will be to build within access of the children, that is in built-on areas of housing currently existing. Cost and lack of land will relegate such building to minor status.

Open up school playgrounds after school

This might be pioneered but insurance and other issues will surely require both adult supervision and more inspection and maintenance than at present. Again, it could have a part to play but is of minor status.

Encourage more use of playing fields

but this also would require investment to change the character of some of that space towards more informal play use as opposed to organised sport. Again, in our view, minor status.



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Create more Home Zones

Fair Play for Children was an early advocate for such projects and their child-friendly nature has been demonstrated against e.g. simple traffic calming measures in terms of children accessing the space for play purposes. There have been problems, including in this author's local experience the aim of the project being diverted from encouraging outdoor play to property value increase, better parking for residents and, indeed, not being located in the right place where most of the kids lived. However, this will not be a majority situation, many communities are positive about the improved quality of life a Home Zone can bring. They are, of course, expensive to build and slow to roll out. One of our professional members has calculated that, in order to roll out Home Zones to the majority of suitable streets in London at present rates will take 500 years.

More organised play projects

but in order to meet need for informal play this will tend to be open-access (children come and go as they please) and free or at least low-cost, the entrance fee being token (as this seems to encourage better behaviour than free provision). We can think of holiday and half-term playschemes, after-school play projects (using existing community facilities), mobile play (buses, vans etc), and adventure playgrounds. These latter have been highly successful in areas where they exist, about 1-2 acres provides space for a building and outside space with equipment, they will be staffed (2-3 staff) and will require proper and sustained funding. Play centres are another such project. These may constitute forms of child care but should not be conflated with that provision which relies on fees charged. Again, we ask how realistic it is to rely on the growth of such provision. The former Labour Government's play strategy, now apparently abandoned by the present Coalition Government, and replaced with reliance on 'localism', projected 100 new adventure playgrounds to be built.

Even if achieved in full, that hardly makes a scratch on the issues of this publication, valuable though APs have been shown to be in community life. Again, although Fair Play champions organised provision, it is unlikely to be a major player. However, before moving on, we will point out the existence of enabling legislation in the 2006 Education Act where S507 makes it mandatory on Local Education Authorities to make provision for children's physical exercise and sanctioning LEA provision e.g. of play centres. Additionally to co-operate with voluntary bodies as a priority in achieving this. This repeats and strengthens similar previous measures (eg Education Act 1996) but it must be noted that there is no provision in the legislation for LEAs to report their use/non-use of the powers nor to declare expenditure justified under the Section.

General traffic calming measures

These can and do help in providing more space for that informal play children need. Kids do negotiate the issues of traffic that shares the space but it is mainly of value to older kids perhaps where parents are more trusting of their children's ability to judge traffic movement.

Bring back Play Streets?

as suggested recently by a junior Minister? The legislation (for what are properly known as Street Playgrounds) was adopted in the late 1930s and concern then is reflected in media reports of the time:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2011/jun/06/transport-road-transport>

The legislation produced around 700 Play Streets of which 70 remain and new ones have been created recently in London. The legislation has been superseded by measures which enable



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councils to designate such streets without the approval required previously from the transport minister.

Fair Play for Children takes the view that this is a serious contender for a major part of the solution to the play crisis. A Play Street exists for the relevant part of the day, when children are there, they have starting and finishing times which can be altered to meet holiday/half-term issues. But they do need to be daily not just Sundays, and they need to be widespread. Access and egress for residents cars can be accommodated to an extent but that may be its undoing as it was in the past for the number of parked cars in streets undoubtedly hastened the demise of most of the Play Streets that existed.

Fair Play, in its 2010 Manifesto, proposed a right of petition, and assumption to grant, concerning traffic calming of residential streets, an idea supported by around 500 General Election candidates when they were surveyed pre-election:

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1271101351.pdf>

We envisage very inexpensive measures such as bollards, to prevent through traffic, as opposed to costly engineering. We also foresee the possibility that, granted such traffic-calmed status, residents might experiment with types of street furniture (portable) which will enable residents cars to negotiate and allow children to play outside when this is needed.

A combination of such approaches, traffic calming and play street status, could transform whole communities for the better. For children and their play, and for adults.

Our publication **The Half Acre Standard** (*Rob Whewey*) proposes a whole range of imaginative and practical measures:

<http://www.fairplayforchildren.org/pdf/1257477787.pdf>

One of its recommendations is that **we "should aim within 10 years to enable 80% of school-age children to be able to play out in their own street in safety"**.

The issue remaining to be tackled, however, is the one that will cause most dissent, controversy and downright opposition if we are to take the comments of motoring organisations as typical. From the outright hostile to the sympathetic but rather dismissive, that will be the crucial test bed, to see if motorists (adults) in general are willing and prepared to change habits. Ones based on deeply-ingrained attitudes and practice.

Our question to them is 'Do you care enough about children, including your own, to stand back from your personal interest and take a broader view?'

This is part of a much wider debate, for sure, but this issue is too serious to be disregarded whilst the broader concerns continue to be discussed over years and decades to come.

The seriousness of the loss of play space demands urgent response and action.



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Putting the parked car in its place ...

No one can be under the impression that we can wish the car away. It is here, and there is an ongoing debate about its role and place. So far, it has to be said, there is little evidence of any desire to look ahead and to do so holistically. The emphasis remains on providing enough road mileage to accommodate more moving traffic. The parking/ non-use periods of such traffic are 'givens' and it is assumed that society will absorb increase, although how and where is hardly debated.

"I have a car and I have a right to park it, close to home for preference or by right". That's the attitude and most car owners will reject the idea that kids should be able to play close to their vehicles. They also want their cars parked outside their homes and for free.

We need as a society to step back and examine these attitudes and issues in terms of acceptability and sustainability. In any given town, for example, can it be realistic to expect to accommodate every extra car that is required to be parked in the town? Logic responds that, no, at some stage, even if we allow every last space to be used, we will reach saturation point.

Parking space comes in the following types:

- on street, paid for or free
- off-street, in free or paid-for car parks
- off-street on residents own property.

Paid-for on-street residential parking is now perhaps regarded by many motorists as a necessary evil. Fair Play would argue that the day of free on-street residential parking should come to a rapid end and that paid-for street parking be the norm in residential streets. But we'd add that during daytime periods, maybe the resident should be able to benefit financially from use by others such as shoppers and workers. The 'if' is a good principle even if the 'how' is for solution and probably technology.

Then there is the matter of *where* cars are parked in streets. One approach would be to zone a street for parking using herring-bone patterns to increase accommodation density and to enable space for play and amenity. Timing is important - to manage street use so that children can make full use of street space when they need this, and for clear end times for that use.

Parking charges, incidentally, could be used to benefit both car owners in a street, as well as children's safety. If cars can be zoned in one or more areas in the street, owners will be concerned about security. The charges could pay for good quality CCTV which could be linked not only to the local police but also to homes in the street. A simple and powerful enough wi-fi router could beam video to any PC/laptop in the street, a recording could be made, and even a rota devised between neighbours in the street both to view the images regularly and even wander out to check - a five minute job. The same CCTV could be used so parents could keep a broad eye on their kids, again even using rotas for virtual and actual monitoring.

There remains the key challenge of deciding what is the balance between the car and other use of the street.



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Time for a parking audit, UK

It surely must make sense for our society to look ahead and to consider both how much parking can be accommodated and the balance between conflicting/competing requirements and needs. Our Manifesto calls for all local highways authorities to conduct parking audits for the domestic car and street-parked commercial vehicle.

In this, we envisage each council auditing all its residential street mileage and making a calculation of total street mileage, of existing paid and unpaid parking, and thus of used and remaining space. But we also advocate that councils are then mandated to decide balance between usages and that play needs have at least equal priority to parking. We seek not to remove the car but to redress the huge imbalance and loss of what should be and has been primary informal play space in every community.

Going further, it is clear that there has to be a limit to the number of parked cars any town can accommodate. It cannot be allowed that we reach a time when there are more and more cars and the same amount of parking space. The above audit process will indicate the maximum number, based on mileage and balance-of-uses.

How then to use that information to regulate the situation? Fair Play for Children proposes that, having got each transport authority to calculate and decide parking totals, subject to an appeals process (motorists and parents and children could make representations for example), on-street parking approvals could then be issued on application.

The key element of our proposal is radical but we feel sensible and logical and workable: that in order to be able to put one's car on the road, it would be required to show proof of availability of parking space, be it on-street approved, off-street paid-for, or on domestic property. That proof to join MOT certificate, proof of insurance as requirements for vehicle licencing. The outcome would be control of parking requirement. No space no car on the road.

Using this sensible regulatory approach, we can look with some sense of the practical in terms of recovering lost play space.

Will the motorist lose out? Not in terms of having parking secure and close to home. Yes, in terms of simply saying "I have a car and I can park it where I wish when I wish". Yes, s/he will have to pay for residential parking but could benefit by sharing that space when not using it and through CCTV security measures.



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Increasing Playability of a Street

Unfortunately most of our residential streets are no longer playable to any great extent. To help move towards a situation where this changes and play returns to our neighbourhoods so 11 million children do not lose out, Fair Play suggests some approaches children, parents and residents could use:

Organise Street Olympics especially in 2012, where the street is shut for a day, a street committee of kids and adults plans the activities and a street party.

A Street Play Day maybe to coincide with the National Play Day each year.

A Local Play Partnership of children and adults in one or more streets, where you decide what it is you want to see in terms of play opportunity - it could include the above ideas or Activity Weeks where parents take responsibility for different days and activities, and drawing in local shops, businesses, councils, faith and community groups etc. Maybe improve a local play area, or start a dance activity, how about morning Tai Chi in the street to start everyone's day healthily?

Perhaps campaigning activity



The **Red Flag** is an iconic image of the car put in its place. We suggest that parents etc placed at the top end of streets could spend time doing what is shown here, to both slow traffic, allow kids to play and, oh yes, draw public attention. This will mean police turning up, but only once the media are there. Immediate cessation of the red flag activity of course. **But remember, your Council already has the power to create a Play Street,**

NOW!

Street Petition for traffic calming, Play Street status easy to organise, easy to deliver.

Your elected councillors, get them to come to the street, maybe a gathering where they can hear residents' views, make sure the kids get a voice there.

Make sure the issue is discussed at school formally and that any expressions of views get to those who make decisions or who report the news.

Involve Fair Play for Children as well as local organisations. We'll happily work with you to get things shifting.





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Hope and Determination

We hope that no one having tread this will idly dismiss the issues or even our solutions, however radical some may be.

What cannot be avoided is the truth that if we do nothing, whole generations of children will lead blighted lives with unthinkable consequences for society as a whole.

The status quo, of supremacy of adult interests and total ingnoring of children's, is not acceptable and has to be fiercely resisted.

Society CANNOT permit the present situation to continue, children MUST have proper playspace, and the Street is where that must happen.

We need to replace nostalgia for the past, and indifference to the present with hope and determination for the future. This is no unrealistic campaign, it simply HAS TO BE MADE TO SUCCEED.

To do nothing will be to betray children, now and in the future. They have a **Right to Play** and for public action to enable that, we have signed up to that internationally, it is a pledge, an obligation we have to fulfil.

Nor will half-measures do.

On the other hand, to succeed will be not only to benefit our children but also will improve the quality of life for all residents in streets - play is the great improver in communities, and the opportunities are there to change them for the better.



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Fair Play for Children - for the Child's Right to Play : www.fairplayforchildren.org



APPENDIX 1

Enabling street play through Section 106 agreements

"Section 106 Agreements" and "Unilateral Undertakings" are types of Planning Obligation authorised by Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Planning and Compensation Act 1991 Section 12.

Planning Obligations are used following the granting of planning permission (normally major developments) to secure community infrastructure to meet the needs of residents in new developments and/or to mitigate the impact of new developments upon existing community facilities. They can also be used to restrict the development or use of the land in a specified way or require specific operations or activities to be carried out on the land.

Benefits will be secured either in kind or via financial contributions depending on what is required. The commonest issues that arise are explained in, and controlled by our adopted SPD's (explained below). The main topic areas to benefit are Affordable Housing, Primary and Secondary Education, Urban Open Space, Highways Improvements and Healthcare.

The above definitions are taken from information on the Walsall Council web site

Quite often, S106's are used to secure children's playgrounds in new housing developments if it can be shown that there are not adequate such facilities within reach of the development in question. The playground will often be built after the development has been completed and occupied. It is at this stage that, even under the present law, there may be a situation where the S106 facility cannot be realised. There are occasions when the situation could arise that either money held by a council might have to be repaid or the developer could justify not handing it over.

But in such a situation, it could be reasonable to suppose that an alternative facility could be a street playground, i.e. a Play Street. Fair Play believes that it's a perfectly sensible measure to do just that in a Section 106. Now that may not take the capital sum of a playground nor the annual maintenance figure that might be built into a playground S106 over a period of years. We would propose that such a sum could be secured from the developer and used in 2 ways:

- o it is available for residents in the streets concerned to draw down for community purposes focussed on children's play needs, proposed by the residents (who could set up a Street or Streets Association for the purpose) and released by the Council, or given to the Association subject to accountability and reporting measures. This would exhaust after a time but the grants from it would tend to be small in the main, maybe £100-£500 at a time, so such a pot might last a few years, and the Street Association could itself raise funds.

or

- o the sum is put on deposit by the Council and then made available in annual tranches or in small grants to a Street Association for play purposes. At a fairly current typical rate of 3%, that could yield over £2,000 per annum on £70,000, leaving the capital sum intact.

Because the initial outlay for a Play Street can be very low cost - e.g. unlockable bollards, with street keyholder (emergency vehicles carry common key), the above sums could be used for



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e.g. installing street furniture (seating, tables), planting, marking areas for games, activities and special days, street parties the environment created could be very enhancing of play, community cohesion, community safety.

Future changes in S106 law might allow for aggregation of such Play Street agreements funds, held in a number of possible scenarios - local authority, central government, local trusts, national charities etc - but only accessible by street associations and where Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been seriously observed (with safeguards against tokenistic 'consultations'.



APPENDIX 2

Petitions to traffic calm residential streets - legislative proposal

The Fair Play for Children 2010 Manifesto includes a proposal that would enable a right for residents in a residential street to petition their local highways authority for traffic calming measures in their street. The presumption would be, once thresholds had been passed, for approval.

Means: singage, lockable bollards (keys held by highways authority and emergency services) - placed strategically, e.g. in centre of street length producing 2 cul-de-sacs, useful if the problem is 'rat-run' traffic.

Variant: Play Street creation: in this, the issue is timing of street closure and means of securing observance, for cars will need to be excluded from at least part of a street for the appropriate hours, which will change seasonally. Bollards are a solution but as well as highways and emergency services having keys, someone would need to have a set also to lock and unlock at those times. This might be organised by a Street Association similar to the S106 ideas in Appendix 1.

Trigger for holding a Petition: to be set at a reasonable proportion of residents. Maybe 20%? Households might be suggested but as these streets would involve children's interests, we would suggest based on individuals resident and capable of participating - an interesting discussion as to where to fix e.g. a lower age limit, how to "poll" children such an exercise could have other value such as involving children and parents in considering rights (their own and others).

Local highways authority consults to set Petition Subject and to ensure street coverage. Time limits set on holding Petition within specified number of days after trigger, and for the period of the Petition.

Thresholds: The presumption, if a petition has more than 50% (or higher if set) of residents, is for approval but this threshold has realistically to be able to be qualified by others such as:

1. Effect of such measures on other residential streets in terms of e.g. access
2. Patterns of traffic flow in the area
3. Effect on traffic flow in main routes
4. Sorting out parking arrangements and issues

Street Scene: The attraction of simple calming measures, apart from cost, is that in the aftermath of a Petition, street associations might be able to experiment with various forms of street-scene improvement, the exact ideas not being for us to suggest, there will be many ideas. It is suggested, however, that funding for this be made available by local authorities etc for street associations.

It's also important that there is an initial trial period, thresholds for removal/change of status, that street-scene changes are perhaps 'portable' in nature to allow for easier reversion/variation/temporary removal situations.



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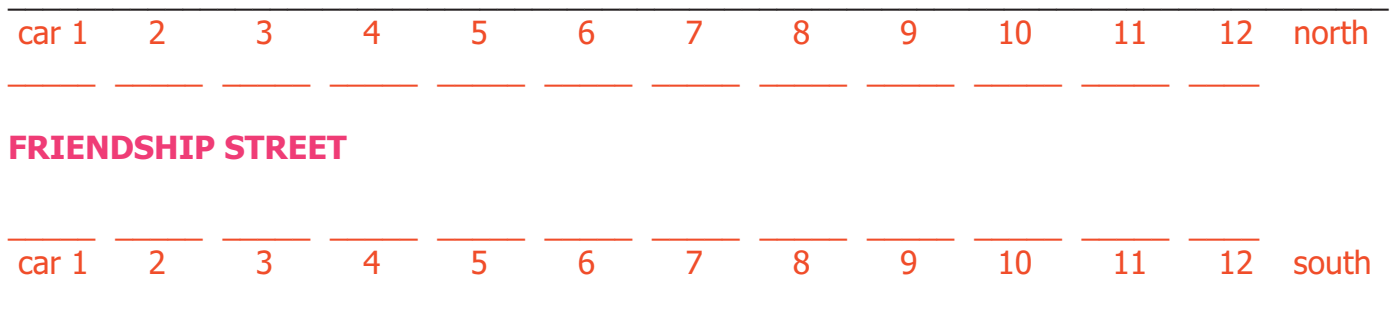
Appendix 3

A Modest Proposal ... for a new approach to residential street parking

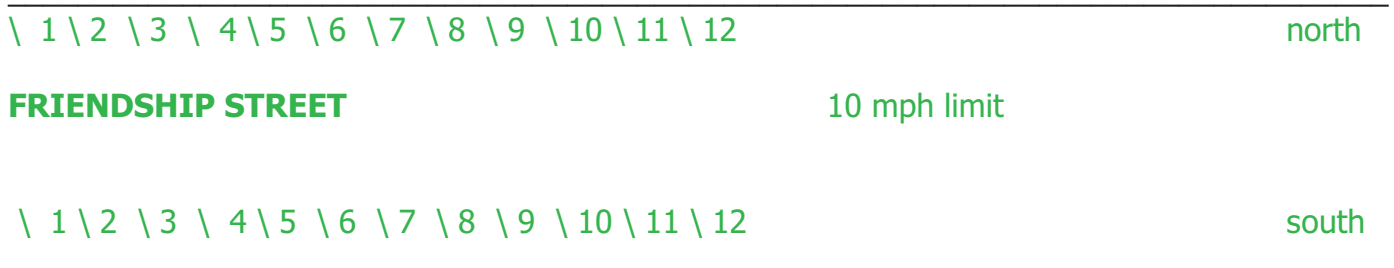
To enable playspace to be created in residential streets, and to make best use of street space in general for more than just the parked car, it's been proposed above that all on-street parking be paid for, also that residents charged for a parking space might well be enabled to re-charge others for use of their space so as to offset their charges.

Use of simple, modern technology could provide a means of achieving this.

Consider current typical on-street residential parking:



replaced by herring bone parking



The potential is to create space for children and accommodate the parked car, and the above assumes worst-case, full-street parking use without any house-based off-road parking space or availability of parking space (off-road private/public car parking).

The above illustrates that even in current situations, play space can be created in many streets and children enabled to play outdoors close to home, even without formal play street designation.

Intelligent planning could enable larger portions of streets to be used part-day.

of course, there would be issues around noise, types of play, tolerance, balancing of rights, but these would be negotiable and solutions achievable. But no society can properly accept "My car first, and I don't want to hear or see kids who live around here". That attitude does exist, and is too prevalent. Doorstep play would enable better parental supervision which would be part of any deal - not breathing down kid's necks to placate the unreasonable neighbour, but ensuring



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that others' rights are balanced.

PARKING - Paying for/being paid:

The following photograph illustrates how parking might be paid for on-street automatically and how residents could have their charges offset when not using the space.



The link image represents a wif-fi device (very simple) - these are shown:

- YELLOW either as house-based or resident's car-based
- GREEN as based in car belonging to authorised other parker
- RED where there is no authorisation, or even device



The cyan-coloured star is a receiver/transmitter for the wi-fi system, with video camera (there may be more than one in a street of this nature). The software, based either at a council or a commercial firm contracted, would enable matching of who had paid, and spotting of who had not



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and the alerting of measures to i/d the car owner - number-plate recognition, warden visit and ticketing etc.

There are other aspects of the simple wi-fi box approach:

- o domestic boxes can be placed inside a house
- o costs would be low
- o the camera pictures could be available to any resident with a PC/laptop and wireless (comes as standard these days) and even if they do not have broadband.

Such a system of street wif-fi points has other potential benefits such as:

- access to council and other websites and services
- community internet radio and tv provision at very low cost
- parental monitoring of children at play enhancing child protection and parental responsibility
- safer neighbourhoods - traffic, crime etc.

Charging would be calculated on share of use, the resident pays or his/her rental and the system then reimburses a proportionate sum based on both authorised paid-for other users charges and fines from unauthorised users.

Note: in the picture above, it is assumed that the occupation is flats, groundfloor and 1st/2nd floor. Ten cars are shown and ten residences but there is also the other side of the street.