Parkland Walk Co-design – Workshop 4 summary

Wednesday 6th March 2024

This summary report was written-up by the facilitator. Comments were invited from attendees before this final version was produced.

Attendees

Independent facilitator plus 13 representatives attended from across the following organisations:

- Friends of Parkland Walk x 2
- Haringey Cycle Campaign
- CAASH Residents Association
- Haringey Council ward councillors x 3
- Haringey Council officers x 3 (Head of Parks and Leisure; Principle Parks Development Manager; Project Manager)
- Sustrans x 3

Apologies

- Dementia Reference Group
- Joint Partnership Board x 2
- Haringey Council: Nature Conservation
- Haringey Council: ward councillors x 2
- Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
- Haringey Wheelchair User Group
- Catherine West – MP

We began with the following agenda:

TIME	SECTION	CONTENT
18.30	Arrival and coffee	People take their seats ready for a prompt start at 18.45
18.45	Welcome	Reminder of who's in the room, the focus for today and where this fits
18.55	Review assessment of access points along the Walk	Discussion of proposed improvements for the various access points along the Walk – does the group agree with these? Can we prioritise? (Using the 3 maps and supporting detail)
19.40	Review of proposed weightings for surface material and edging	Discussion of weightings – is the group happy with these or do we want to propose changes?
20.30	Wrapping up	Next steps before next meeting in mid-May after mayoral/local elections (date TBC) and intended sequence of work thereafter
20.45	CLOSE	

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Topic One: Reviewing assessment of access points along the Walk

The aim of this exercise was:

- to capture any remaining questions, comments or concerns about potential works at the different access points along Parkland Walk
- to understand the group's views on which of these should be prioritised (i.e. actions to take in the short, medium and longer term)

Sustrans introduced three maps illustrating different sections of the nature reserve, annotated to show potential access improvements that could be implemented at different points (based on work undertaken to date, including input from the co-design group at previous workshops).

These potential improvements were colour-coded to indicate whether they were low, medium or high priority. Participants were invited to discuss whether they agreed with the improvements highlighted and their suggested priority level. As a result of these discussions, the maps have been updated – these are provided as separate PDFs as screenshots within this report would not be sufficiently legible.

Notes from the group discussions

North Section (Highgate Wood to Muswell Hill)

Muswell Hill 1:

- Proposal to make access compliant is generally supported.
- It was noted that Muswell Hill is steep here (measured approximately 1:10), and that this is consistent with the access point slope.
- It was also noted that people access the Parkland Walk from The Grove, not necessarily from Muswell Hill.
- It was highlighted that this area is not part of the Parkland Walk and would need collaboration with Highways.
- Also, if the access ramp were widened here further adjustment may be needed to the ramp up to the Grove and consideration made for adjacent entrance to Muswell Hill Primary School.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

Muswell Hill 2:

- It was noted that maintenance vehicles undertaking works to the viaduct above St James's Lane use Hillfield Park and a gap in the trees to access the Parkland Walk. It was suggested that this access point on Muswell Hill could be used as an alternative for vehicle access as it is currently surfaced in a bound material and links directly to the Parkland Walk.
- A ramp would not be compliant as lengthening would take space from heavily vegetated area with many trees.
- Repair ramp, handrails, etc.
- **Outcome:** Change from low to medium priority.

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77 Muswell Hill / Hillfield Park:

- It was agreed that works to this access point were not worth doing unless there was a wider project with Highways to include connection and wayfinding up to Muswell Hill Broadway.
- There are development works to an adjacent building which may impact on this access point.
- It was noted that there were nearby disabled parking bays in the carpark behind M&S, however the route through to the Parkland Walk was not practical or pleasant.
- **Outcome:** Change from medium to low priority.

The Viaduct:

- Some expressed preference for closing and re-vegetating this access point.
- Others suggested to do nothing and use funding for access points with higher priority, revisiting in the future when other improvements have been made.
- **Outcome:** Keep as low priority.

St James's Lane:

- There was general consensus to repair this access point, improving handrails, including a wheeling channel. There was a difference in opinion about the method for this: long steps (similar to existing), or ramp with landings.
- It was noted that different people use it in different ways, and some prefer ramp to steps.
- Suggestion to combine the two design approaches here with steps alongside a ramp with landings.
- It was noted that a compliant ramp here was not possible without significant lengthening and removal of vegetation and trees and it was therefore ruled out.
- Millboard was suggested as a material. (Note: later in the workshop discussion it was highlighted that Millboard is not as environmentally friendly as first appearances with too high a percentage of virgin plastic used in its production. It is therefore not on the LBH's approved materials list and a suitable alternative material will need to be sought.)
- Issues on St James's Lane were highlighted and the very limited landing space / footway at the bottom of the steps. Work could be done with Highways to improve the pavement here, noting that there may be issues with high-sided vehicles passing under the bridge.
- **Outcome:** Keep as medium priority.

Cranley Gardens:

- It was agreed that Cranley Garden could benefit from repair, however due to the close proximity of Muswell Hill Road access ramp this location is not a high priority.
- **Outcome:** Keep as low priority.

Muswell Hill Road:

- Plans and access point improvements should be investigated with LB Haringey Planning as part of the adjacent development.
- It was noted that plans include ramp and steps.
- It was noted that grey wagtails were attracted to this area prior to some changes. Could their habitat be re-introduced?
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

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Middle Section (Highgate to Crouch End)

Holmesdale Road:

- It was noted that any works here must retain access to No.3 Frances Place.
- The route to get to the Holmesdale Road entrance, and the nearby tube station, are not accessible and so perhaps it should not be a high priority location.
- Some of the group agreed that this was their favourite part of Parkland Walk due to the rich vegetation, and so this area should be protected, with minimal vegetation clearance.
- Still need to maintain vehicle access.
- **Outcome:** Change from high to medium priority.

Northwood Road:

- It was noted that this entrance is high cost and so should remain as medium priority.
- **Outcome:** Keep as medium priority.

Milton Park:

- It was noted that the existing timber at this access point needs repairing/replacing, and so this should be done when there is more funding.
- **Outcome:** Keep as low priority.

Stanhope Road:

- Agreed that this outside of scope of project, will be improved as part of separate works and will be access compliant.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

Crescent Road:

- Consensus that this is a high priority access point.
- There are a lot of trees in this area – some of which are non-priority trees in this area – that could be thinned out to make space for an accessible ramp.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

Crouch End Hill:

- This access point has very high footfall and so the steps should be improved.
- **Outcome:** Keep as medium priority.

Vicarage Path:

- It was noted that this access point is used for parents and children going to / from school.
- There needs to be clarity on the exact boundary with Islington as this may affect works, but the general consensus is that the approach to the bridge can be made more accessible by removing the large step up to it. (Note: It was agreed later in the workshop that discussions with LB Islington need to take place about this entrance).
- **Outcome:** Keep as medium priority.

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South Section (Blythwood Road to Finsbury Park)

Blythwood Road:

- The group suggests a hard bound surface at this entrance due to the issues it has had to date with loose stones washing down into the adjacent street.
- Discussion about having a parking spot for site vehicles in this location as it is used by both LB Islington and LB Haringey. Agreed that a discussion needs to be had with LB Islington Nature Conservation Officer about this as well as Annabel Foskett (LBH Nature Conservation Officer) and to use the opportunity to discuss the entrance at Vicarage Road at the same time (see note above).
- It was noted that there are disabled parking bays on Blythwood Road.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

Stapleton Hall Road 1:

- There was concern that the work the contractors undertook previously at this entrance saw the dumping of excess material from other works on to the steps which then washed down on to the nearby Lancaster Road. The group does not want to see a repeat of that scenario.
- The material for the steps, entrances and bridges needs to be agreed.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

Florence Road:

- Main issue at this location is the vegetation from neighbouring properties encroaching on the passageway.
- The group agrees with the repair and prioritisation level for this entrance.
- **Outcome:** Keep as low priority.

Oxford Road

- There was a suggestion that this access point could be closed-up and revegetated due to its very close proximity to Finsbury Park access.
- **Outcome:** Change from medium to low priority.

Finsbury Park:

- General consensus around visibility and accessibility improvements in this location and that this should be a priority.
- It was suggested that there should be a sign which more clearly states 'Cyclists dismount before bridge' as opposed to the existing sign which states 'Pedestrian priority'.
- There is a studio by this entrance where there is unofficial access agreed with the Parks team.
- **Outcome:** Keep as high priority.

There were no further comments about Mount Pleasant Villas, Stapleton Hall Road 2, Lancaster Road, and Upper Tollington Park, and so suggested prioritisations for these remain unchanged.

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TOPIC TWO: PATH SURFACE MATERIAL – WEIGHTING AND SCORING

General:

- Whilst members of the group felt that an argument could be made for adjusting some of the weightings, it was judged that overall the weightings provide a sound basis for determining a materials short list and the resulting assessment reflects the group's priorities.
- There was consensus on hoggin as an appropriate material with a caveat that there will be variation around the bridges, entrances and steps where structures need to be protected and a bound material required.

Durability:

- Suggestion that it is worth noting how projects and sites are funded. There are no lump sum budgets for maintenance. There is also very little recurring revenue funding. With this in mind, it's very important to consider what it will mean for LBH to maintain any of these materials. Their ability to come to the site in future and do small patches of repair work is significant in terms of maintenance cost (see note below).
- Durability is key, as funding likely to be for capital works rather than maintenance.

Maintenance:

- Need to be clear what is meant by maintenance. Suggested it includes frequency, cost, and ease of replacement/repair.
- Ability to patch small sections (hoggin) rather than having to resurface large areas (resin bound materials) is important.
- Ability to match colour of any materials used for maintenance important, noted that this is difficult for resin bound materials.

Sourcing:

- Sourcing material: is man-made hoggin easier to source than natural? Need to review.

Aesthetics:

- The current table doesn't illustrate that this is a short list from an initial more extensive list which looked at a wider range of materials including tarmac and Flexipave. These materials were discounted on aesthetic as well as other criteria, but that information is no longer apparent at this stage in the process. The group discussed the need to communicate this when the information goes out to the public.

Buildability:

- Question about what this means. Does it need specialist machinery? Can it be done in lengths? Can potholes be done in isolation or does a whole section need to be redone?

Other:

- Mentioned that rolled in pebbles on to the Hoggin was the materials that was agreed to previously as an effort to reduce cycle speeds, but the general consensus was that it wasn't very successful and didn't make much difference.

<u>Actions:</u>

- Need to be clear about the materials that were discounted from consideration in the earlier stages (asphalt/ Flexipave) and why.

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- Need to be clear about the weighting decisions and what informs them.
- Need to be clear that bridges, ramps, and steps are going to be a different surfacing material to the main path.
- Need a better image of man-made hoggin and find out the sourcing of the Norfolk material used in the Islington section.
- Need to review how easy it is to source/ replace man-made hoggin.

TOPIC THREE: PATH EDGING – WEIGHTING AND SCORING

General:

- All three materials presented could be appropriate for use on Parkland Walk in different situations – this decision will need to be further informed by the Nature Reserve Management Plan.
- Group noted that photos presented with materials did not necessarily reflect the width of Parkland Walk.
- It was suggested that the weighting is skewed because it only makes comparison between those materials which made it onto the final shortlist. If these materials were weighted against a wider range of options, it was argued, some would score more highly. The group therefore discussed whether it would be worth including the wider range of options previously ruled out (e.g. concrete kerbing as per the Friends of group doc) to give a more balanced view. It was agreed that a more nuanced approach to the timber edging would be a good start, with both treated and untreated timber to be included in the weighted assessment.

Durability:

- Aluminium edging: noted that from a Parks point of view this would be their preferred material but to highlight that it is a material used more frequently in formal municipal park settings rather than a local nature reserve.

Maintenance:

- Noted that timber and metal path edging is used to retain path materials. They slow the rate of path degradation and give it a defined edge for maintenance.

Biodiversity Impact:

- Question about treated vs untreated edging (and fencing), pros and cons of chemicals used for treating leeching to the environment vs increase in durability.
- Need further input from Annabel Foskett about edging types.

Other:

- Trip hazard of log edging highlighted.
- Noted that if logs used then likely another retaining edging may still need to be used.
- Noted that logs may slow cyclists down as it gives the appearance of a narrower path.
- Noted that using aluminium edging could be an appropriate nod to the former railway line.

No specific comments were noted on capital costs, sourcing, aesthetics or buildability.

Actions:

- Need to review which edging treatment is suited to which location along the route in discussion with Annabel Foskett.
- Need to assess where best to place fencing and timber logs along the route with sensitive ecological sites in mind.
- Need to create a wider list of edging restraints including both treated and untreated timber edging to ensure weighting isn't artificially skewed.
- Need to make a note of the wider range of edging materials that were considered at the outset and then discounted and why they were.

Next steps

- Next meeting (Workshop 5) likely to be mid-May – Sam is checking with venue and council officers and will propose a date as soon as possible. When a date for Workshop 5 is proposed we will also communicate a target date for circulating materials for that session.

- Workshop 5 will be used to:
  a. Pick up discussions on path width, building on previous input from the group and further input from colleagues between now and May; and
  b. agree materials for the next stage public consultation.

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