Parkland Walk Co-design – Workshop 3 summary

7th February 2024

This draft was written up by the facilitator and comments invited from attendees before this final version was produced.

17 representatives attended from across the following organisations

- Friends of Parkland Walk
- Haringey Cycle Campaign
- Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
- Haringey Wheelchair User Group
- CAASH Residents Association
- Haringey Council: ward councillors x 4
- Haringey Council: Parks and Leisure; Project Manager; Parks
- Sustrans
- Independent facilitator

Apologies

- Dementia Reference Group
- Joint Partnership Board x 2
- Haringey Council: Nature Conservation; Major Projects
- Haringey Council: ward councillor x 1
- 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 and the focus for today
18.50	Potential surface materials revisited	An opportunity to share any further reflections following our initial discussion last time.
19.20	The Conditions Survey maps revisited	An opportunity to share any further reflections following our initial discussion last time.
19.45	Parkland Walk access points, plus edge treatments and drainage	Presentation of key points from Sustrans followed by discussion
20.30	Wrapping up	Reviewing our progress and next steps before next meeting on **6th March**
20.45	CLOSE	

INTRODUCTIONS, RECAP AND QUESTIONS

Participants began by introducing themselves and the organisations they represent as there were some new people in the room.

The facilitator invites participants to raise any further comments on the two main topics from Workshop 2 (the Conditions Survey and surface materials).

Potential surface materials revisited

Questions / points raised (Q) and responses (R)

Q – Concern that the public might perceive some of the resin bound gravel surfacing might be perceived as tarmac so shouldn't take tarmac definition literally necessarily.

R – Perhaps we need to have some information sitting behind the information that goes back out to the community.

R – Perhaps have an event that shows large samples so the community can get a feel for the proposals.

R – Potentially install on the walk itself.

Q – Would welcome narrowing down the options today. Potential for resin bound gravel for steps and ramps as might have specific uses but not all the way along.

R – This is certainly an approach the LBH welcome and to be explored further.

Q – Some materials will bed in so samples may also help understand what it will look like in the longer term.

R – Proposing to undertaking a weighted scoring exercise. Will propose a weighting based on understanding of priorities in the room and in the community consultation. To then be circulated an inputted into by the group.

R – Add in appearance as well and acidity/ alkali.

Conditions survey map revisited

Questions / points raised (Q) and responses (R)

Q – unclear as to how the condition survey fits into the design development.

Q – was felt that the comments regarding access points at St James Lane were not representative of the situation and concerned that the comments might hold more weight than they should.

R – off-line any areas of concern can be raised with Sustrans.

Q – it should be noted that the area beyond Muswell Hill is not the Parkland Walk, it is LBH highway so would need to bring highways department into decision on anything there.

Q – reminder that Flexi-pave has been trialled in Partington Park and Breeden in Muswell Hill Park.

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TOPIC ONE: REVIEWING SUSTRANS' RESPONSE TO THE ACCESS AUDIT

Beth Bagnall from Sustrans introduced the focus of the first discussion. She explained that the maps show the existing access points and give a snapshot on condition. They also pull out the key points made by the Access Audit and Sustran's high level response to these.

Q – Is there a guide for ramp gradient?

R – Sutrans will add reference to national standards here. The point was made that we should be mindful these are DMRB regs for buildings as there isn't anything for nature reserves specifically.

Q – Pick the right place for any additional entrance points, where the gradient is sympathetic.

R – The council agrees that not all entrance points need to be made accessible, but want to look at where we can reasonably improve access.

R – Cost and value for money will also need to be a consideration.

R – Signage will also be important, e.g. indicating the distance to the next accessible point etc.

Notes from the group discussions

North Section (Highgate Wood to Muswell Hill)

Northern Section: Highgate Wood to Muswell Hill

Muswell Hill access point 1

- Land ownership was raised, the Parkland Walk starts to the south of Muswell Hill, the path from the Grove and underpass are not part of the Parkland Walk and are LB Haringey highways land.
- It was noted that while this ramp could be increased in length (possibly by extending length by using grassed area) that the pavement on Muswell Hill is at a steep gradient and unlikely compliant, it was suggested however that people use this access from Muswell Hill road and The Grove, therefore an accessible slope here would be beneficial.
- Graffiti in the underpass was discussed, it has been frequent, costly and cleaning/ repairs have been carried out numerous times in recent years.
- The mud and here was attributed to drainage blocking up, improved drainage was suggested.

Muswell Hill access point 2

- It was noted that this slope feels steeper than on plan, and that it would be worth double checking.

77 Muswell Hill/ Hillfield Park

- Access is via a carpark of a private building, or via an alley way connecting to Hillfield Park.
- Is this official public access?
- Can connect to Muswell Hill Broadway via M&S which has a lift at the rear of the shop.

The Viaduct

- It was noted that this is not designated as an official access point and as such should not be improved.
- The gate at the end of the Viaduct has been locked in the past, however has been broken.

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- It was noted that it is nevertheless used by some people, and stopping up or making an official access point should be addressed as part of public consultation.

St James's Lane

- It was suggested that it would be worthwhile observing use of this access point to see how people use it, how many people use the steps and how many the informal ramp alongside it.
- It was suggested that The stepped ramp could be replaced by a ramp with resting points, incorporating landings where there are accesses to businesses located in the viaduct.
- That it might be useful to have a wheeling ramp to one side of the path possibly on sleepers?
- The pavement on St James's Lane was discussed because it is narrow, and provides little protection from the road for somebody descending the steps. An idea was proposed to buildout the footway at the foot of the steps to widen the pavement. It was noted that a gully was located here, however it was suggested that this could be an opportunity to incorporate SuDS. Narrowing the carriageway here would have an additional benefit in calming traffic on St James's Lane which was noted as problematic.

Cranley Gardens

- It was noted that the steps may need to be improved.

Muswell Hill Road

- The adjacent Cranwood development is to include access improvements which should be checked with LB Haringey planning department. It was highlighted as an opportunity to have an accessible entrance at 1:20.
- Cobbles on this ramp which are often difficult for wheelchair users, this was repeated a number of times by different people, it was also noted that cobbles might help slow cycles down.
- Highways have suggested lighting under the bridge, however parks do not want the route to be lit?

General

- That this section of the Parkland Walk is not long (approximately 740m, and 9-10 minutes walking duration), it has good ramped entrances at both ends which with a small amount of work could be accessible, and that the intermediate points can be accessed via Muswell Hill Broadway and Muswell Hill Road.
- The section of Parkland Walk on the viaduct between Viaduct and St James's lane access points is a site of antisocial behaviour with stones being thrown from the viaduct at houses on Hillfield Park, Muswell Hill Place and the businesses below the viaduct. It was suggested that in not having freely available loose material would mean there was nothing to throw. It was also suggested that surveillance through CCTV may be a deterrent.
- To each of the text boxes for the entrance points it would be useful to have a category for signage, particularly the accessible points at either end of this section.
- That signage in the centre of Muswell Hill directing people toward the Parkland Walk may be beneficial.

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Middle Section (Crouch End to Highgate)

Holmesdale Road access point:

- Consensus that this is a very important entrance and should be made as accessible as possible. Needs to be regraded and resurfaced.
- Residents do not want the nearby tunnel to be affected by works as there are bats living there.

Northwood Road access point:

Noted that this is a popular access point, and steps need to be improved.

Milton Park access point:

- Another popular access point.
- Noted that a lot of users use the timber slope on the side of this access point. There is a preference to keep this, or something similar, and move the existing handrail into the centre of the steps instead of adding an additional handrail on the other side, so as to allow users to wheel bikes/buggies alongside the side. *This was the general consensus for all stepped accesses.*
- Noted that these slopes are also easier for some people to climb than steps, particularly those with hip issues.

Stanhope Road access point:

- This access point was not discussed in detail as this entrance will be upgraded during bridge works.
- However, it is noted by several residents that this is an inappropriate location to have a ramped access and makes more sense to have them in alternative locations as Stanhope Road is on a slope, and so it is unlikely that wheelchair users will be using it.

Crescent Road access point:

- Noted that this is a key access point for people travelling from east and west on buses, and also for users who are visiting the café and shop on Crouch End Hill.
- There are plans to introduce a school street here, and so would be a good location to have an accessible access point.
- Another reason why Crescent Road is a good location for a ramped access is due to its existing long flight of steps, that could be converted into a ramp. There is also already space past the steps to extend the ramp, without damaging the surrounding trees.

Crouch End Hill access point:

- Noted that existing steps are slippery and should be improved/replaced.

Vicarage Path access point:

- Another possible accessible point, as only a minor level of earthworks will need to be undertaken to regrade the slope and remove the step onto the bridge, on the Haslemere Road side. There was no objection to this by residents, as long as there is minimal impact to surrounding trees and vegetation.

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General:

- Noted that using resin bound surfacing for the steps (not for the entire route) will reduce costs of future maintenance.
- Reiterating what was noted for Milton Park access point but apples to all stepped accesses. Some users think some sort of slope adjacent to the steps is beneficial for those who need to wheel up or down the entrance, or for users who find it difficult to use steps.

South Section (Finsbury Park to Mount Pleasant Villas)

Oxford Road:

- The group were keen to see a ramp at this access point rather than steps.
- There was talk of a reconfiguration that could work better than at present which involved a ramp with suitable surfacing and handrails.
- There was particular concern regarding anti-social behaviour taking place.
- It was also noted that residents see that there is a conflict of cycle and pedestrian movement at this point and feel there is not enough signage to forewarn either party.

Upper Tollington Park access point:

- There was particular concern about the sensitive nature of the grassland in this location being eroded by lack of movement restraints.
- Dog walkers throwing balls for their dogs on to the grassland, thus further eroding it, was brought up.
- A timber rail was suggested as a robust deterrent to stop people behaving this way.

Florence Road:

- Improvement in this location could be dealt with through signage.
- Not a priority for major expenditure.

Stapleton Hall Road access point:

- It was generally agreed by each group that investment in the Stapleton Hall access point was a better use of energy and funds.
- The bridge is currently being monitored and accessibility would form part of improvement works
- Action: LBH to give indication of timeline for this.

Lancaster Road access point:

- No comments on this

Mount Pleasant Villas access point:

- No comments on this

Blythewood Road:

- This entrance is in such poor condition because of a water main issue that went on for an extended period of time.
- It was agreed that it needs improvement.
- It was noted that this area can be a potential conflict point between pedestrians and cyclists.

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General:

- The discussion generally revolved around the access points at Stapleton Hall Road and Oxford Road with some mention of Blythewood road. The priority clearly lay with these access points, with the other entrances (Upper Tollington Park, Florence Road, Lancaster Road, Mount Pleasant Villas Road) seen as of secondary importance in improving inclusive access on to the walk. Nobody made positive or negative comments about Lancaster Road or Mount Pleasant Villas.
- There were some issues regarding antisocial behaviour including drug dealing (by Oxford Road access point) and e-motored bikes (along the walk) that will need to be addressed or discussed further with local community support officers.
- It was agreed a clear understanding of the environmentally sensitive areas, the areas of greatest footfall, the conflict points and other planned LBH works programmes were needed to inform the co-design process.
- Be clear about the distances between comfortable accessible routes (accessible entry points) taking into account the Islington section of the Walk.
- E-motorbikes using the path at night time – how to prevent this?
- The upcoming management plan – Need to combine all proposals with the Nature Conservation Plan. (Can use the existing management plan)

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TOPIC TWO: EDGE RESTRAINT, FENCING AND DRAINAGE

Presentation of materials and questions raised

Beth presented slides on the options for these and the extent to which they could be considered appropriate or not for the site.

Edge restraint options

- Sustrans have picked up on suggestions from FoPW and their own experience in pulling together a series of options for the path edge. Beth clarified that there are 2 primary functions of edging: 1) to stop the spread of surface material and give greater stability to the path; and 2) to deter people from walking off the path and trampling the habitat.
- Log edging – feedback from maintenance team suggests that logs can collect litter. This could be a reason to avoid this option, but it was noted that litter collection is undertaken by FoPW and the group felt its volunteers would be able to deal with this should it be an issue.

Q – Is there a consideration of fixing of the edging?

R – Logs are either laid or pinned with posts into the ground so we need to consider which approach we want to take.

R – One consideration may be that unsecured pieces of wood tend to go missing.

R – We also need to consider decay of the material (potentially circa 5 years) in thinking about future maintenance.

Q – Why has metal edging not been considered?

R – Cost considerations, is expensive, also had been focussed on reflecting the natural heritage.

R – Another view was that metal edging along certain sections could be a good way to to reflect the Walk's railway heritage. This being the case – and for the sake of completeness – it was suggested that metal edging be included within the options and no assumptions made about whether or not it would be appropriate.

Q – Do we have an idea of how long an area we want to edge?

R – We need to understand which areas may be most in need of edging and what type based on the SINC.

Q – When will the SINC be completed?

R – It should be fully completed by October.

R – Suggest this group agrees the principles, typology and hierarchy around edging materials so that once the SINC is complete and management plan in place decisions can be informed by what we have agreed as a group.

Q – Need to consider that where you make the pathway narrower there is a risk that edging makes it harder for people to temporarily move to the side – e.g. when a cyclist and wheelchair user pass each other.

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Fencing options

Potentially appropriate options were presented as: hedging / dead-hedging; chestnut pale fence and low post and wire rail. It was noted that chestnut pail fencing can be pushed over easily if the post spacing is not correct. Low post and wire rail has been using in ancient woodland sites within the borough.

Picket fence and low wooden rail were presented as inappropriate options for this location.

Q – Is low post and rail not fragile?

A – It is very robust. Suggest visit to Queen's Wood to see in in situ.

Q – What's the difference between round and rectangular posts?

A – Round are more durable but more expensive.

It was suggested that we create a weighted scoring for edging and fencing as well as for surface material.

Drainage

Whilst the Accessibility Audit proposed SUDs they are not appropriate along the Walk. They potentially could be used at Walk entrances, however.

R – It should be noted that the drainage issue at Blyth Road is atypical on the Walk as it relates to leaking Thames Water pipe.

Need to consider material type and the impact this can have on drainage issues. The Islington section is a good example.

There is potential to protect certain areas prone to water water-logged as ephemeral (i.e. not permanent) wetland habitats.

Path widths

As there was insufficient time to cover this today we are inviting participants to read the information on the slides which build on the discussion from last time and to provide comments over email in advance of the next workshop, when we will return to this topic.

Next steps and closing reflections

- Next meeting 6th March, same time and place
- Sam to check on the restrictions relating to the pre-election period
- Agenda and as much material as possible to be circulated one week in advance

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