Parkland Walk Co-design – Workshop 2 summary

24th January 2024

This record was written up by the facilitator and comments invited from workshop attendees before it was finalised within a month of the session taking place.

19 representatives from across the following organisations

- Dementia Reference Group
- Friends of Parkland Walk
- Joint Partnership Board
- Ward councillors
- Haringey Cycle Campaign
- Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
- Haringey Council: Nature Conservation Office, Project Manager, Major Projects, Parks
- Sustrans

Apologies

- Haringey Wheelchair User Group
- CAASH Residents Association
- Catherine West - MP
- Haringey Council: Head of Parks and Leisure

We began with the following agenda:

TIME	TOPIC
18.45	**Welcome and introductions:** recap, questions and comments
19.00	**Reviewing the site survey maps:** Sustrans to introduce the maps followed by focused work in groups before we come back together.
20.00	**An initial look at materials and buildability:** Sustrans to introduce potential materials for future resurfacing work, along with examples of other places where they have been used.
20.35	**Wrapping up:** Reflections on the workshop, what people want to pick up next time (7th Feb) and any actions needed in the meantime.
20.45	Finish

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 then provided a brief recap of ground rules agreed at session 1; and background materials requested at session 1 and the status of these.

Questions raised (Q) and responses (R)

Q – What is the mechanism for respecting the original consultation outcomes? Concern that these views will not be considered. Groups represented struggle to access Parkland Walk at certain times of the week due to cyclists.

R – We will go back out to the community with the options developed in the workshops in a second consultation at some point in the Spring

Q – Suggest we use a wider mechanism to ensure wider access to the next consultation phase to ensure it reaches a wide range of people (including younger people, for instance).

R – Agreed. As well as an online survey we envisage drop-in engagement sessions held along the Walk itself, and this group can hopefully play a role in helping us to reach a range of groups in the community for their input.

Q – How many options will be presented at that public consultation phase?

R – It is unclear at this point – that depends on the outcomes of Sustrans' feasibility work and these co-design workshops. Questions and engagement approach will be developed with input from the co-design group.

Q – We need to ensure the questions are more nuanced so that respondents don't jump to conclusions about what is intended.

R – Agreed.

Q – We need to consider safety and enjoyment of all users not just one group of users.

R – Agreed – that is fundamental to this whole process.

Q – One of the things we asked for as a group was to see an overall budget for Parkland Walk projects – why can't this be provided?

R – Sam's email of 19th January provided as much information on this as there is to share. This showed the current Parkland Walk Bridges Budget approved for the 5 year period to 2027-28. From that email: "Funding for path works will come from this budget, alongside other improvement and monitoring works required to bridges along the Walk and will vary year by year, depending on costs of the full package of physical works programmed in each year and project development costs. Hence we cannot specify a budget for this element of work at this time. There will be an opportunity each year to seek additional funding once the scope of path works and the cost of construction is clearer following this co-design project." The group is interested to know as much information as possible about budget and we asked the Council to keep the group updated should the picture become clearer.

TOPIC ONE: REVIEWING THE CONDITIONS SURVEY

Beth Bagnall from Sustrans introduced the focus of the first discussion:

> The condition of the path and how it is used is causing damage to considerable areas of the nature reserve. Getting the path right will help us protect the areas either side.

Beth thanked the Friends of Parkland Walk for the report they had produced. Many of the points made in that report aligned with Sustrans' own interpretation of the challenges and opportunities at the site and potential approaches to making improvements.

Further scene-setting from Sustrans preceded the group discussions:

- **Width:** Reviewing the width of the path through the nature reserve with a view to narrowing it wherever possible (in particular to recover areas currently given over to the widening of the path - particularly in 2021 - that were previously narrower). This includes meanders and the creation of areas to slow people down.
- **Material:** Looking at opportunities to use a path surfacing material that best protects the adjacent land, allowing it to regenerate naturally.
- **Condition:** Improve the condition of the route to contain movement and reduce damage to surrounding areas (this is reviewing the condition survey and seeking agreement on priority areas)
- **Cost:** Want to be clear that we are looking at the path at this stage in the process to understand the cost implications of an improved path material but want to be clear that we are working closely with Haringey nature conservation collegues to ensure any proposals made have a positive impact on the LNR. LBH are currently working on a new management plan to restore and recover the nature reserve after years of neglect.

Introduction to the group discussions:

The Walk has been divided into three segments so we can divide into three groups, with each group having an opportunity to look at each segment. A table facilitator will be assigned to each segment and will capture the points from your discussions.

- What issues do the maps highlight?
- Do they raise any questions?
- Are there observations you would add from your own knowledge?
- Are there issues or places that stand out to you as priorities?

We'll make a start on this today where we can look at the big A1 maps together in the room, then you can think further about the detail after today when we share the maps over email.

Groups spent around 15 minutes discussing each segment of the map before rotating to the next, so that all groups were able to work on all segments. A facilitator remained with each map, building up participants' comments as each group rotated.

Notes from the group discussions

North Section (Highgate Wood to Muswell Hill)

Summary

The discussion around the north section of Parkland Walk predominantly centred around the access points and seating along this section of the route. It was identified that more seating is required along the entire section, particularly along the viaduct lookout point. It was argued that more seating may encourage antisocial behaviour, but the majority agreed that the benefits of additional seating outweighed the negatives. The existing surfacing on the viaduct is also a concern, as loose stones often get thrown into resident gardens.

There was unanimous agreement that the access points need to be improved, however there is hesitation about turning them into ramps as this would require extensive vegetation removal. Instead, it was felt it would be preferable to improve the quality of the existing access points. It was also agreed that there is no need to turn the informal Viaduct access point into a formal access point as this would be expensive and add minimal benefit to the community. The conversation about access points will be developed further at the workshop on 7 February.

Comments in detail

Access points:
Post-it note:
"Adding handrails to access points is not a concern as they do not affect nature"
"Steps are uncomfortable to use so many people use the informal slope"
"Handrails on both sides of steps might limit access for others" - This comment was regarding pushchairs
"Possible slope but would require a lot of vegetation clearance"
Action: *all of the access points will be assessed to determine if it is worthwhile to turn them into step free accesses. The level of vegetation clearance required to do this will be considered very carefully, with the environmental impact of any intervention kept to a minimum.*

Post it note:
"Not beneficial to have Viaduct access point as a formal access point"
"Perhaps leave some accesses alone as they are not compliant, but useful"
Action: *The majority of the group were in agreement that it is not beneficial to improve the Viaduct access point and/or turn it into a formal one, with some not even knowing where it was, as it is not heavily used and there is an accessible way onto Parkland Walk nearby (Muswell Hill entrance). The conversation around access points will be explored in more detail in the engagement event on 6th February.*

Seating:
Post-it note:
"More seating along entire route as some people can not walk between access points without resting"
"Informal seating is an option – trees, bricks"
"More seating with back rests"
"More seating along viaduct"
"More seating along viaduct with option to move it closer to lookout point"

Action: *The introduction of more seating will be considered along the entire route, and a range of different options will be considered, including informal seating, seating with back rests, and/or a mixture of the two.*

Post it notes:
"Seating may encourage antisocial behaviour"
This is possible, but the benefits of adding seating along the route outweigh the negatives, and the majority of residents are in favour of more seating.
Action: *Assess the pros and cons of having more seating along the route.*

Vegetation:
Post-it note:
"More planting and vegetation on viaduct"
Action: *Vegetation enhancement will be encouraged along the entire route. A mixture of wide and narrow sections along the path will support this. The narrow sections allow the land to regenerate, as well as encouraging path users to slow down, while the wider sections give more room for users to enjoy and navigate the space. Planting will not be placed on the viaduct.*

Surfacing:
Post it note:
"Loose stones from surfacing on viaduct get thrown into resident gardens"
Many people in the group said that there is a big issue at the moment with people throwing loose stones from the viaduct into neighbouring gardens below.
Action: *this will be taken into account when making the final decision on the surfacing material to be used on the path, to promoting minimal loose debris from viaduct. Sustrans will work with LBH to ensure the most suitable material is picked.*

Wayfinding:
Post-it note:
"More signage between walk sections"
Action: *more wayfinding will be considered along the entire route to make the route more accessible for users at a later date (LBH Parks to advise)*

Drainage:
Post-it note:
"Possible pond in this area"
One of the residents suggested that a section between the viaduct and Highgate as a possible location for a pond, as this area is prone to flooding.
Action: *several sustainable drainage management options will be considered, and this area will be discussed in greater detail in the engagement event on the 7th Feb.*

Path:
Post-it note:
"Path should meander to avoid puddles and tree roots"
"Addressing trip hazards is a priority"
Action: *the design will incorporate a meandering path, to address trip hazards, protect tree roots, and encourage people using the path to slow down.*

Middle Section (Crouch End to Highgate)

Summary

The discussion revolved around the topics of access for all, permeability, the path width, definition and surface type. This was in the context of the path being in a local nature reserve setting and the need to restore and regenerate the existing nature of the site. The conversations around drainage fed in this with a clear understanding that any changes to the path need to be of benefit to the surrounding environment. There was some mention of the site's heritage and the need to celebrate it further. It was also noted that the safety of users needs to be considered and addressed at all stages in the design.

Comments in detail

Permeability/ Access Points:

Post-It Note:
'Why has the path been blocked off?' – beside the Highgate entrance
Member of the group asked why the top section of the walk (where the walk meets the Highgate access point) doesn't offer a through route to the upper section of the walk and provide a better link with the Muswell Hill section? Also concern that it is an inactive/ not safe space.
Peter from LBH responded that the section of the walk was closed due to vandalism issues. It was also noted that there is a bat colony in that location that needs protection.
Action: *This wasn't explored further but may need a response from LBH to clarify why it is shut off particularly from an environmental local nature reserve perspective.*
Post-It Note:
'Very steep entrance from Highgate' – beside the Highgate entrance
Made a note of this but reiterated that access points would be picked up in the next workshop.
Action: *This can be brought forward to the discussion at the workshop on the 7th Feb.*

Path width/ local nature reserve:

Post-it Notes:
'Used to be approx. 1m wide' – slightly south of Highgate entrance. This note links with:
'Practically (sic – particularly) wide section. Lots of damage'
'Balance out of the lack of tiers of vegetation in response to determining the width of the path'
'Some narrow and wide points mix'
'Meander will create a conflict?'
'What is the duty of care as a Local Nature Reserve'
It was noted by some of the longer term residents/ older members of the group that this section of the route used to be very overgrown with memories of the path being only 1m wide being shared. I think this was back in the 90s/ early 00s. All noted that the middle of this section of the route is where it gets particularly wide. First group which included Annabel agreed with narrowing it to the minimum to allow the adjacent land to recover and regenerate, creating tiers of vegetation, however the second group which included representatives from the mixed ability groups noted that narrow paths would have a negative impact on that user group being able to enjoy the walk as they tend to use it as a group rather than as singles or pairs. There was also a discussion about cycling with everyone agreeing to measures to reduce speed including: the material surface, the introduction of a meandering route and creating pinchpoints where the route narrows. A mix of wider and narrow path widths was agreed as a good thing. There was a question in what was determining the decision to narrow the paths.
Action: *Note that there used to be a much richer spread of vegetation in the past. The likely size of mixed ability groups needs to be explored further versus the requirements by LB Haringey to maintain a local nature reserve.*

Safety:
Post-it Notes:
'Safety in visibility. Clear sightlines'.
'Safety Feeling and good sightlines'
'Low bushes to narrow but don't affect view'.
'Open the canopy to allow the ground to regenerate'.
Wanted to ensure a visitor felt safe on the walk particularly vulnerable individuals on their own. Discussed the height of the planting that is likely to grow in that location once allowed to naturally regenerate and agreed it is likely to still remain relatively low as most of the route is under tree cover.
Action: *Discuss with Annabel the type of species that are likely to regenerate in this location so we can be confident that it's unlikely to grow to a height that would obstruct sightlines.*

Path definition treatment:
Post-it Note:
'Need for edging to stop widening'.
This links in with the discussion above regarding former extensive vegetation and years of erosion/ encroachment/ neglect on the former green areas that now resemble widened paths.
Action: *As above. Must it was also clarified that this would be covered off in the next workshop.*

Path drainage:
Post-it Note:
'Drainage key. Especially if narrowing'.
Action: *Noted this but said that we would pick it up in more detail in the next session while making it clear that any changes to the path must focus on its benefit to the nature reserve.*

Path surfacing type/ accessibility:
Post-it Note:
'Wheelchair use. Bumpy for some'
The table generally agreed with the condition survey's findings. There was a lot of discussion about the most appropriate material needed with a preference expressed for a compacted hoggin. It was noted by the representative (Mary?) from the mixed ability group that that type of bumpy surface is uncomfortable for wheelchair users.
Action*: Find the Hoggin product Islington has laid and is performing well and ensure if laid/ compacted correctly can be wheelchair/ mixed ability friendly. This needs to be weighed up against costs etc.*
'Rest points'
Action*: Introduce more seating along the entire route.*

Heritage:
Post-it Notes:
'Add visual feature of railways on platforms'?
'Tunnels used for heritage interpretation'.
'Vicarage Road brick arches'.
'Existing train platform heritage of the route'
'Pinchpoint created by railway buffer?'
Discussed the wish to highlight the heritage of the walk at specific points, with the existing platforms/ brick arches and tunnels noted as the best existing example of the Walk's heritage. It was also discussed that pinchpoints along the route could be created by suggesting railway buffers.
Action: *Make note of this and discuss further with LBH as to what they want to do.*

Drawing comments
Post-it Note:
'Islington section?'
The group want the Islington section on a plan for reference.
Action: *We can do this by the next workshop*

Drawn on Map: The Crouch End Hill access point
Action: *We can include it on the map.*

South Section (Finsbury Park to Mount Pleasant Villas)

Summary

The discussion focussed on the need to achieve a balance between natural feel with a path of varying widths which can meander, and appropriate minimal path width of 2m to ensure access and enhance the social experience, allowing people to comfortably walk side by side. The area south of Mount Pleasant Villas and west of Upper Tollington Park were identified as problematic regarding drainage, with persistent ponding issues – whether this is due to lack of maintenance or current surface needs to be investigated further. Resting points were mentioned to enhance contemplation and calming experience, and wayfinding can be improved to sign post to areas that are fully accessible along the route. It was noted that the bridges along this section are sparsely planted, mainly due to structural constrains. There are issues of stamping of the meadows located between the Finsbury Park Entrance and Stapleton Hall Road, which could be improved with path edge treatment.

The conversation also included valuable insights on access points, which will be developed further at the workshop on 7 February.

Comments in detail

Entrances/ access points:
Post it note – Blythwood entrance is pretty level – its access could be improved
Post it note: the Finsbury Park entrance gradient could be improved to be more level and accessible
Action: the issues above will be discussed in more depth and detail at the workshop on 7 February

Post it notes – there was a lively discussion around Stapleton Hall Road bridge and access. This was identified as a key corridor to access Crouch End where the access point would much benefit from improvement. The junction and road under the bridge is narrow and undermines active travel as people walking and cycling interact with traffic is a small space. It was also noted that the meandering steps to access Parkland Walk can be improved or come with a ramp, although a new ramp might be very long to comply with shallow gradients required by Part M regulations around accessibility. A question was also raised around the provision of Blue Badge parking on Stapleton Hall Road if access is improved there to access Parkland Walk.
Action: access point will be discussed in more depth and detail at the workshop on 7 February – however other considerations such as the space underneath the bridge sit outside of the scope of this project. ¬

Path:
Post it note – the path would benefit from varying widths and meadows to enhance the natural feel of the park, whilst keeping a minimum width of 2 metres to allow people to walk alongside one

another
Action: set out parametres for minimum path width, which can be drawn from the Paths for all guidance.

Materials:
Post it note – the Islington Hoggin section has a natural feel but it is quite uncomfortable due to cambers
Action: reflect this as a consideration on materials, acknowledging hoggin requires ongoing maintenance to ensure accessibility.

Post it note – it was noted that at bridges there are issues of stones being thrown into gardens and properties, although this was less of an issue for this section of the path.
Action: consider whether bridges along that section need bound materials to address this risk.

Edges:
Post it note - The meadows sections between Upper Tollington Park and Florence Road is trampled by dogs, could fencing be put in place to preserve them?
Action – the workshop on 7 February will discuss edge options, this topic can be discussed in more detail then.

Flooding / ponding:
Post it notes: area of flooding noted west of Mount Pleasant Villas, maintenance issues with reappearing puddles west of Upper Tollington Park.
Action: investigate what can improve drainage at the workshop on 7 February and what maintenance regime is appropriate.

Bridges:
Post it notes: nature and greenery of bridges is sparse, however more provision could impact structural integrity.
Action: consider if any bridges have scope for increased green infrastructure.

General:
Post-it note: wayfinding can be used to sign post areas that are accessible
Action: consider this along the whole stretch of Parkland Walk and at access points

Post-it note: regular resting points such as benches as needed to improve comfort for all users, especially older people, disabled people and children.
Action: consider this along the whole stretch of Parkland Walk

TOPIC TWO: MATERIALS AND BUILDABILITY

Scene-setting

Beth Bagnall from Sustrans introduced the focus of the second discussion. Her presentation introduced a series of surface materials which could be considered appropriate for a setting such as Parkland Walk. Each slide summarised the key characteristics of the material in question, including key factors such as cost, maintenance, permeability, accessibility and expected longevity.

Her final slide included a summary table to allow easier comparison between them, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each. These factors, along with the local residents' inputs and priorities, will be considered when making a final decision of the surface material to be used for the site.

Presentation of materials and questions raised

Self-Binding Gravel

- Breedon – 100% gravel
- Coxwell Gravel – sand and gravel
- One type is 100% stone, the other is a sand/stone mix. Different types have different size of stones. Used in royal palaces etc
- Breedan Gravel laid at Muswell Hill Park

Cedec

- Graded Quartzite and granite.
- Not as environmentally friendly as it is oil-based binding material.

Hoggin – gravel, sand and clay

- Composite of granite dust, clay and gravel.
- Different Higgins have different mixes.
- There is also man-made hoggin – this is what has been used by Islington.
- Hoggin quality varies dramatically, also dependant on how it is laid etc but could be a good material for this environment, esp if using a man-made type as you get continuity.

Resin-bound Rubber/ flexi-pave

- Sample sent was black but it was stressed that Black is not the proposed colour
- Used on bridle/ways
- LBH have trailed this in Partington Park

Resin Bound gravel

- decorative gravel with optimum clear binder
- Very expensive
- Oil-based binding
- Need to consider longevity v capital costs.
- Need to consider construction as well. Resin Bound Gravel will need to sit on a deeper ridged base so more construction requirements

Q – Ease of maintenance needs to be considered, i.e. does it expert installation or general contractors?

R – Buildability assessment considers installation, including ease and expertise required.

Q – As the Parkland Walk is based on a railway line does this not mean the ground is already on a firm base?

R – We might assume that to be the case, but based on experience we can't be sure of that. We will need to create trial holes in due course to understand ground make-up. This may vary along the Walk.

Q – During the previous resurfacing project in 2007 there was a concern regarding acidity and alkalinity of materials and the impact on the nature reserve. Is this being considered?

R – This has been factored into the considerations, yes.

- Permeability and drainage to be considered as water run-off is causing damage to the paths. Where can we capture water to improve ecology and promote additional species/ habitats.
- Need to recognise Parkland Walk as a LNR and need to understand the responsibilities of that designation and the duty of care

Other comments and questions

Q – We have talked today about the idea of narrowing the pathway – what is determining that decision? Is it a foregone conclusion and if so who has made that decision?

R – No, this certainly isn't a foregone conclusion. At this stage it is something to be considered as we look at ways to protect the nature reserve and facilitate positive use of the space by different groups. The discussions today highlight that there are a range of considerations here, though.

R – Legislation defines that we should not change the use of the Walk (e.g. could not include play equipment, for instance). We need to look at what we need to do to safeguard the reserve and its habitat for the longer term.

Q – How do the aspirations/ principles of the nature reserve get shaped into a series of specific interventions? Who do you consult and how is it determined?

ACTION: A further response is required from the nature conservation officer regarding what is considered good practice in terms of path width in this sort of setting.

Comparison sites

Handouts were circulated showing examples of surfacing materials used at comparable sites. The five shown were drawn from a long list and were those judged to share most characteristics with Parkland Walk in terms of

- Being local nature reserves or passing through local nature reserves
- Being former railway lines and / or being of comparable length / scale
- Passing through wooded areas
- Not running alongside streams or rivers
- Having 24-hour access

Q – Are these five thought to be good examples to follow? Some of these could be considered horror shows.

R – No, the purpose of these is not to say 'these are all examples we should want to follow'. It is to illustrate that local authorities in other areas have not taken any single, standard approach to surfacing material in the most comparable environments. As a group we may want to aspire to do something much better than some of these.

Q – Are these all finished schemes?

R – Yes, they are all in place and in use.

Next steps and closing reflections

- Next meeting 7th February, same time and place
- Agenda to be circulated but the plan is to return to the material we looked at today so that participants have an opportunity to think about it some more. We will also look at those topics not covered today, primarily access points.
- Overall, participants were positive about the format of the workshop and it was commented that the session felt productive and inclusive. There was a contrary view against small group working as it doesn't allow everyone to hear all parts of the discussion. The facilitator recognised that this will always be a tension – hence the combination of whole group and small group work – but that overall an element of working in smaller groups means that more people are able to be active in the discussion at any one time and this is important.