Parkland Walk Co-design – Workshop 5 summary

Wednesday 15th May 2024

This summary report was written-up by the facilitator. This final version has been created following comments on the draft from participants.

Attendees

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

- Friends of Parkland Walk x 2
- Haringey Cycle Campaign
- Dementia Reference Group
- Haringey Wheelchair User Group
- CAASH Residents Association
- Haringey Council ward councillors x 5
- Haringey Council officers x 3 (Head of Parks and Leisure; Principal Parks Development Manager; Project Manager)
- Sustrans x 3

Apologies

- Joint Partnership Board members x 2
- Haringey Council: Nature Conservation
- Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum
- Catherine West – MP

We began with the following agenda:

TIME	SECTION	CONTENT
19.20	Arrival and coffee	People take their seats ready for a prompt start at 19.30
19.30	Welcome	Reminder of who's in the room, the focus for today and where this fits
19.40	Review of path width proposals	Discussion of proposed path width along the Walk based on previous discussions and recent work – does the group agree with this?
20.30	Review of proposed consultation content for June consultation period	Discussion on the draft content circulated – does this cover everything? Does it communicate clearly? Does it include sufficient detail whilst being easily accessible? Are the questions appropriate?
21.20	Wrapping up	Next steps to prepare for public consultation in June
21.30	CLOSE	

1. Topic One: Review of path width proposals

The aim of this discussion was:

- To capture any remaining questions, comments or concerns about path width along Parkland Walk
- To understand the group's views on whether the path width proposals are appropriate.

The group saw illustrations depicting current maximum and minimum path widths, proposed widths and proposed fencing types to protect regenerating areas.

1.1 Notes from the group discussions

1.1.1 Clarifying the approach to path width

Overall, there was broad (though not unanimous) support for narrowing the path at its widest sections so that habitat along the Walk could be restored. The concern most widely expressed by participants was that if a standard 3.5m width were applied *across the length of the Walk*, this would result in the Walk being widened at some points unnecessarily. In relation to this, some made the point that retaining narrower sections could be positive in encouraging cyclists to reduce their speed and in providing variety for users of the Walk.

Less widely expressed was a contrary view that a maximum of 3.5m was too restrictive and that a width of 4m or 5m in places could enhance the experience and comfort of some users without significant loss of habitat.

There followed a discussion about whether there was a defined minimum width for paths like these. A figure of 2m minimum width for pavements was quoted, along with 3m where there is shared use (i.e. cyclists as well as pedestrians). It was noted that these figures related to a Highways context, however, and so in this context they provided useful benchmarks but were not binding. One participant suggested a minimum of 3m should be applied wherever works take place, in order to accommodate different Parkland Walk users comfortably, unless the protection of mature trees in a specific location meant this was not possible.

Simon Farrow clarified that the emphasis would be on reducing path width at the widest sections rather than widening its at its narrowest sections. Whilst there may be some instances of path widening, this would be decided on a case-by-case basis and there would need to be a clear reason to do it.

Taking the views of the group into account and in response to the majority concern about unnecessary path widening, the proposal is therefore to work towards a maximum width of 3.5m but not a standard minimum width. The group thought it would be important to provide this clarification through the Summer consultation as they expected others to share their concern about path widening where it could be considered unnecessary.

1.1.2 Passing places

An exception to the 3.5m maximum path width, it is proposed, would be at passing places. These would measure around 4.5m in width. The group would like guidance on the distribution of passing points to be clear and connected to their exact positioning, rather than being installed at set intervals, for instance. The group wanted to see clear guidance on:

FINAL

- what to do when there is a conflict between existing trees/ habitats and vehicular access on the route
- how to situate passing points

1.1.3 Fencing, log-edging and dead-hedging along the path

It was suggested that the cross-section illustrations of post-and-wire fencing could imply that this will be installed along the entirety of the Walk. The group did not want to see corridors of fencing erected. The Council clarified that the different approaches – log-edging, dead-hedging and post-and-wire – would apply in different contexts and with different aims. The fencing, for instance, would be used to contain specific areas being regenerated, rather than to contain the surface material of the path. It would therefore not be permanent. Dead-hedging and log-edging, on the other hand, would create habitat which once in place would be left. The group wanted the June consultation to communicate this clearly.

Responding to points made about the insufficiency of low-level barriers like log-edging to prevent trampling, Simon from the Friends shared his experience of the recent dead-hedging and log-edging work carried out by TCV. This along with signage had appeared to **encourage positive behaviours** from users with bird activity increasing as a result. It was suggested that this installation be monitored, used as an example of best practice for the rest of the Walk and incorporated into the Management Plan as guidance.

The group asked that as coppiced wood-planting is to be introduced, is there potential for coppiced wood to be used in fencing/ dead-hedging?

The group wanted to see clear guidance on:

- when different types of fencing should be used and how;
- whether dead-hedging can be set back 0.5m from the edge of the path to protect it with log-edging along the side of the path as a deterrent to encroachment;
- whether post-and-wire fencing can be set back 0.5m from the edge of the path, where it is needed to protect areas regenerating.

1.1.4 Further actions for the Nature Conservation Management Plan

A. **Vehicle access:**
    a. Clear guidance on vehicular access to the walk with information about restricting access during the busiest times of day (e.g. between 7-9am and 3-4pm). Clear guidance that the widening of the path to allow for vehicular access should not destroy habitat.
    b. Clear guidance on the type of vehicle to be used in different sections of the path – i.e. need to establish whether a Transit van requires access the full length of the path, noting that in the upper sections of the Walk it is narrower than the 3.5m required for a Transit van. Introduction of a Transit van to sections of the walk narrower than 3.5m would damage the margins of the path, compacting/eroding the soft soil and thus widen the current path, which would not be desirable. We need to clarify whether a golf buggy, as is used at present by the Parks team to maintain the Walk, can be used for the tree works on these narrower sections to prevent further widening of the path.
B. **Policy and legal duties:** Clear guidance on the council's duties and commitments regarding:

FINAL

a. LB Haringey's Parks and Greenspaces Strategy's key aims: 1) Inclusion and wellbeing; 2) Climate change and Sustainability; 3) A quality service
b. Responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021 (cannot remove trees or destroy habitats without good reason)
c. Custodians of a designated Open Space and Local Nature Reserve (access vs nature conservation)
d. Equality Act 2010: all reasonable measures must be taken to enable equal access for all abilities.

2. TOPIC TWO: PROPOSED CONSULTATION MATERIALS

2.1 Notes from the group discussions

2.1.1 Consultation purpose

- The initial consultation in Summer 2023 had provided some very clear messages about the type of surface material that people did and didn't want to see. With that in mind, it will be important to clarify that this second consultation builds on the findings of the first rather than repeating the process.
- As such, this consultation phase needs to both *communicate* the outputs of the co-design process and provide an *opportunity* for people to comment on the resulting proposals so that we can understand whether they reflect people's concerns, priorities and ambitions.
- The topics of access points, edging treatment / fencing and path width did not attract the same level of attention in the first consultation and so this consultation phase is an important opportunity for the public to consider the work of the co-design group and the resulting proposals on these topics. If a large number of respondents disagree with the proposals in spite of the work that has gone into them and the rationale underpinning them, it will be important to hear that and understand why.

2.1.2 Communicating headline messages

It was recognised that some members of the public will want to understand the full background to the work of the co-design group and will read the proposals thoroughly whilst others will want to see the headlines at-a-glance. For that reason the consultation website should include clearly articulated headline messages in addition to the detail on theme-specific pages. It was suggested that the consultation should communicate that:

- That no tarmac will be used for resurfacing works and the only exceptions to hoggin will be resin-bound gravel at access points.
- That any fencing will be temporary and linked to enabling nature recovery in specific areas, and that all decisions on fencing/dead-hedging and log-edging will be made in the context of the Nature Conservation Management Plan.
- That there will be no wholesale works along the Walk but rather works will be incremental and linked to a) works associated with the bridges and b) making the most necessary repairs. As such, the most immediate output of the co-design work will be a Design Guide that informs future works rather than a timetabled and costed plan of works to be delivered in the near future.

FINAL

- That changes to path width will emphasise shrinkage of the path and habitat gain and there will be no blanket approach to path width. Instead, decisions will be made case-by-case as opportunities to undertake work arise.

The group agreed it would be useful to showcase the surface material, 3.5m maximum width and post-and-wire in situ at a specified point on the Walk.

Next steps

- Public consultation exercise to take place during June
- Next meeting (Workshop 6) likely to be July when we will review findings and any implications for the design guidance

POSTSCRIPT: The General Election announcement made since this meeting was held has resulted in the postponement of the next consultation phase until after 4th July. This in turn will delay the date of Workshop 6.

FINAL