

Friends of Burgess Park

Response to the masterplan March 2015

The Burgess Park masterplan sets out thematically proposals for the next stage of the park revitalisation. All of the themed proposals offer significant changes. All need much more detailed design and further consultation before they take place. The single area which has caused most comment relates to the cycling which culminated in to local petitions in March. The current available council funding for Phase 3 will need prioritisation.

Cycling

Please see the separate response submitted to the draft cycling strategy and the Wells Way green park road document. The key points are:

1. FOBP do not support the proposed Southwark Council spine route cutting directly across Burgess Park. The preferred alternative is to direct cyclists through Wells Way - which FOBP propose as a greenway.
2. Commuter cyclists should be encouraged to use non-park routes, and these routes should be improved.
3. Greater numbers of cycling journeys are part of Southwark Council and Mayor of London's strategy. However, the solution cannot be that Burgess Park is carved up into cycling routes to suit all cyclists' needs or alternatively cycling and non-cycling paths to the detriment of other park users and the park environment itself.
4. The Surrey Canal Walk has become a no-go area for pedestrians including school children at rush hours as numbers of commuting cyclists have increased. The new quiet cycling route using Sumner Road needs developing and commuter cyclists should be discouraged from using the Surrey Canal Walk route by de-designating it as a cycle route.
5. The FOBP is opposed to the proposed closure of the underpass. The underpass has a place as a remnant of the canal system and provides a safe crossing point for all. FOBP also oppose the use of the underpass for cycling only. Features should be introduced at the underpass to improve shared path safety. FOBP do support improved ground-level crossings.
6. Regarding changes to the West End of the park, there should not be an increase in pathways which cut up the park nor segregation of cycles and pedestrians. New Church Road provides a useful, wide cycling route and has historical features as the approach to St George's.
7. Additional cycle parking is needed in the park at all facilities especially at Edward Passmore (Bathhouse/Old Library) and Glengall Wharf Garden.
8. Immediate steps should be taken to establish the correct code of conduct for cyclists - improving no-cycle signage at the bridge across the lake, introducing measures to slow cyclists at entrances, and introducing signage which stresses that pedestrians have right of way and that cyclists should reduce speed.

9. A pro-active approach to responsible cycling behaviour is needed which recognises that the park provides freedom of movement away from roads – an aspect which is essential to all park users.

Lighting

The general approach to focus lighting on areas of activity and buildings is supported. The lit entrances way are not generally supported as they are on lit roads.

Further information on the lighting for cycle routes and Quietways is requested.

The issues related to urban park lighting to get a balance is a difficult dilemma. FOBP would prefer the least amount of light as possible. There is already significant lighting around the park and floodlighting of sports pitches.

What floodlighting is proposed for the increased sports pitches?

There is already lighting on Surrey Canal Walk (which needs renewing) and this does not appear on the plan.

Sports

FOBP are concerned that developments in the park take into account current use for all users of the park. Extending sports' pitches encloses more of the park for exclusive sports' use. The reconfiguration of roads in this area also reroutes access for cars closer to homes and gardens and along what is currently a long-established pedestrian route for school children, their parents and siblings in pushchairs.

Current roads in and around the park provide sources of parking and cycling and access routes. Closing or re-routing roads needs careful planning to consider where parking will be provided for people attending activities occurring at the community sports centre, events lawn, the BMX track or churches. A parking strategy around the park is needed.

Buildings

FOBP would not support overdevelopment of structures in the park where there would be a loss of open space e.g. enlarging the maintenance depot or providing major new sports building extensions or enclosing more land for restricted sports access. We consider that these possibilities could have damaging effects on the extent and quality of open space and have an adverse impact on the openness of MOL. FOBP do support the better use of buildings already in the park rather than new development.

FOBP emphasise a need for proper feasibility studies to be carried out before any major new interventions are planned eg the enlarged depot - the proposal meets needs of sustainability in the park, so perhaps an increase in size is justified, but has to be in the right place. Lesson learned from the BBQ fiasco, where with careful planning prior to

implementation much money and maintenance could have been saved. Due care and attention must be followed at pre planning /design stages.

Heritage

The Friends of Burgess Park would like to see the Passmore Edwards old library / bath / washhouse on Wells Way developed as a flexible space for community use. The building which is of historic interest is in the heart of the park and could support many park-based activities as well as the old library being a large venue for the wider community. We would want this facility to be taken into consideration when planning provision across the wider area.

The building is already used by a church, as is space at two buildings in Chumleigh Gardens. Within a park setting there is need for consideration of the impact of amplified music and speech coming from these buildings into the park and impacting on other park users.

The heritage embellishment to the park as proposed does not convey a strong enough or genuine vision. The preferred approach to heritage would be establish a community approach to develop this. The Cumming museum in the park over the next few years provides an ideal opportunity to develop a more organic approach.

Chumleigh Gardens are also listed buildings and not shown as such on the plans.

The proposed new canal water feature is ambitious. Details on management and maintenance need to be considered carefully. It will substantially change the current character of that area of the park. The current grass is used for family picnics. Implementing this also has an impact on paths and cycling.

Play

More natural play around the park and incidental play is supported. The play strategy completed by Southwark Council before the Revitalisation should be re-visited.

The barge theme play provision near the bridge to nowhere is supported. (Although it is not apparent if this would remain by the bridge if the water/canal feature s introduced.)

The immediate priority should be to increase provision and re-fresh the toddler play area by the café. The number of children in the borough is increasing the play provision is needed now (not in five years time).

FOBP would encourage the council to undertake more detailed consultation on the play provision once the funding is confirmed.

Ecology

FOBP are delighted with the goal to aim to achieve a high level of ecology and ambition to become a Site of Metropolitan Importance.

The plan to raise the standard of ecology in the park requires the appropriate maintenance staff training and strong engagement with the local community through volunteering opportunities, education opportunities and seasonal information. This aspect needs to be developed as a matter of some urgency and external funding should be sought.

The extension of the St George's gardens is not supported. Space is needed at that end of the park for informal play, family picnics, dog walkers etc. The sunken butterfly garden seems to be a design technique to follow the line of the proposed canal rather than reflecting the needs of the park.

Tree planting needs careful consideration to maximise the ecological impact. More recently trees have been planted in rows rather than groups.

The current hedge planting also needs to continue and become a sustained programme to achieve some clear goals ie one mile of new hedging. Likewise other ambitions for wild life need to become tangible.

Old Kent Road/Glengall Road

'Purses' - The choice of the name Purses for the area near Glengall Road and the Old Kent Road is probably meant to be Pursers. This was the name of what was originally a car showroom on the Old Kent Road owned by Mickey Purser. He was a Chairman of Millwall and the showroom windows were occasionally broken by disgruntled Millwall fans after unsatisfactory Millwall games. Pursers was not on the site of the park and has now been redeveloped so this seems a questionable designation for this area.

More consideration is needed for the edge along Old Kent Road which does not seem to provide a visual entrance to the park or recognise the bus stops and particular uses of that area.

The small area of land to the rear of Glengall Terrace/Trafalgar Avenue needs to be included in the plan and some ideas put forward for usage.

These plans need to become well developed quite soon and put forward into the OKR planning process.

Circulation

The proposed meandering paths do not seem to take account of the scrub and woodland walks. Encouraging use of these by dog walkers and runners will help keep these less frequented park areas in the wider vision and provide walks away from heavier traffic.

The Wells Way closure of the underpass is not supported. It could be reconsidered once the Wells Way road improvements have been implemented and seen to work.

The illustration has removed the bus stop and this is likely to be problematic and probably unnecessary.

Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure clear circulation routes throughout park, in particular the more fragmented spaces which need to be read as Burgess Park, and consideration given to how these can be visually linked as well as opened up as through routes.

Additional comments

Design

More effort is needed to bring design and planting motifs such as the butterfly garden to connect different areas of the park together; particularly from one side of a road to the other.

Maintenance

A balance needs to be found with the capacity of quadron / contractor to maintain existing horticulture to a high standard before implementing further areas of high intensity maintenance.

Interpretation

More information needs to be available for clear understanding of types of planting /maintenance / area uses so individuals and groups can more fully appreciate the diverse needs of park users.