

## **Friends of Burgess Park**

### **Response to Southwark Cycling Strategy and Quietway proposals**

**January 2015**

The Friends of Burgess Park is very pleased that Southwark Council is in the process of developing a cycle strategy for Southwark with the proposed intention to support cycling development through a mixture of education and enhanced cycling routes.

The Southwark spine should go along Wells Way but in addition to this two other routes are needed which provide north/south routes for cyclists across the park at the Camberwell end and at the Peckham end linking to the Old Kent Road. An alternative high quality cycle route to the Surrey Canal Walk must be established as a matter of priority.

FOBP recognises that parks can provide a safe and enjoyable route for cyclists but this is not the main function of a park. Parks have a wide range of users who use the park for a variety of leisure, health and sport recreational activity.

#### **Summary**

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.

### **Southwark spine proposal**

The Southwark cycle spine is a bold plan to focus resources on a clear route for cyclist through the borough. However, FOBP do not support the proposed route cutting directly across Burgess Park. The preferred alternative is to direct cyclists through Wells Way which already bisects the park.

To make this a viable safe cycling route Wells Way will need to be altered. This can be undertaken in line with FOBP vision for **Wells Way green road** integrating the road more effectively into the park (the equivalent of a home zone for a park). We will be discussing this further at our meeting Tuesday 3 February and put forward some specific proposals.

Focusing cyclists to Wells Way does have implications for the road system taking cyclists to and from that point for crossing Burgess Park.

Whilst the cycle spine will be used extensively by commuter cyclist; it is likely to be less used by local cyclists who will be familiar with the local road/cycle network. FOBP recognise that other routes are necessary to enable cyclist to cross Burgess Park going north/south such as the proposed quietway across the western Camberwell end of the park.

### **Cycling in Burgess Park**

FOBP is generally supportive of cycling in Burgess Park and other parks. However we believe it is essential to make a distinction between cycling for different purposes: commuter cycling, cycling for health, families using bikes to get around, local journeys.

We recognise that a park environment is seen as a safe environment for cycling and for many cyclists the opportunity to cycle through Burgess Park enhances their cycle ride and their journey.

We want the council to take steps to ensure that safety and enjoyment of Burgess Park remain as the priorities for both cyclists and other park users. However to

achieve this there cannot be ever increasing numbers of cyclists using the park as part of their commuter route.

The main cause of cycling related conflict in Burgess Park relates to speed of cyclists and number of cyclists. Both of these issues need to be addressed.

- Reducing the speed of cycling

The official speed limit in a park is 5mph. It is reasonable to expect cyclists to have due care and attention to other park users to ensure safety. In a park this means children, dogs, water fowl around the lake, roller skaters, stray footballs and so on. In reality however cyclists are not generally slowing down or understanding that pedestrians have priority (in terms of giving way etc).

There are currently two official cycle routes going through Burgess Park and the cycling strategy needs to address long term plans for both (see below).

The long term goal must be for commuter cyclists to be encouraged to use non-park routes because the roads are more cycle friendly and safer, through for example, the cycle spine route.

FOBP have proposed that cyclists in parks should be expected to ring their bell and be given permission/encouraged to do so.

- Managing the number of cyclists

The long term strategy of both the Mayor of London and Southwark Council is to increase the number of cyclists and the number of cycling journeys. With only a small percentage increase so far the number of cyclist coming through Burgess Park has increased dramatically (and part of this increase in cycling numbers is probably also due to Revitalisation and the changed layout of the central area of the park).

Longer term the number of cyclists coming through Burgess Park will not be manageable particularly during peak rush hour. In addition the numbers of people living locally are planned to increase meaning more local journeys cutting through the park.

Proposals being developed now need be planned for far greater numbers of cyclists. However, the solution cannot be that Burgess Park is carved up into cycling routes to suit all cyclists' needs and potential journeys; or alternatively cycling and non-cycling paths etc.

The long term goal must be considerate cycling behaviour and developing the cycling culture we want needs to be part of activity now.

- Cycle route Surrey Canal Walk

It is essential that the cycling strategy addresses the already over-crowded cycling activity along the Surrey Canal Walk. Southwark Cyclists have recorded 750 cyclist going through at peak rush-hour in the morning with the effect that no one else uses it. This should be a safe walking route for school children. Southwark Cyclists have also put forward detailed proposals for the alternative Sumner Road route to be upgraded and become the main route.

The Surrey Canal Walk cycle route was established over 20 years ago when cycling numbers were lower and was supposed to be the quiet route. In reality the alternative route along Sumner Road has never been properly sign-posted, is not fit for purpose, most cyclists are not even aware of it.

Developing a route which comes up from Peckham crosses the park north/south at the eastern end and links to Trafalgar Road and/or Old Kent Road, Glengall Road is a priority. This needs a bold vision which can consider the opportunities for closing or changing the road layouts immediately around the park and the removal of cyclists from the busy crossing point at Peckham Square.

The Surrey Canal Walk should be de-designated as a cycle route and not appear on official cycle route maps. It would then continue to be used by local cyclists as a route in the same way as any other pathway.

FOBP expect development of an alternative route to be a priority for Southwark Council.

- The national cycle route (Grand Surrey Canal route)

Similarly this route was designated as part of early initiatives to develop cycling routes. It provides a strong east/west route across the park and through the underpass. The FOBP is opposed to the underpass closing; it has a place as a remnant of the canal system and provides a safe crossing point for all. FOBP also oppose the underpass being for cycling only. It is unrealistic and discriminatory to expect pedestrians to cross Wells Way rather than to use the underpass.

FOBP however want to see improvement for both pedestrian and cyclist opportunities for crossing Wells Way at road level. This should be part of the goal for the changes to the Camberwell southern entrance to rationalise paths; open up the bottleneck of this narrow section of the park and incorporating Wells Way into the park.

Improvements also need to be made to the underpass. Safety (crime and collision) could be improved by making it wider and by making the approaches less steep. This would enable users to have a clear line of sight to the other side of the park and also reduce the need for cyclists to speed up in order to make it up the other side. In the interim, some measure should be introduced – eg an alteration to the surface of the pathway – to encourage cyclists to slow down.

This route must remain as a shared route. Segregated cycle routes are not supported in the park.

If a dedicated east/west cycle route is needed then an alternative route should be considered along the north (Albany Road) or south of the park (St George's Way) running along the park, between the park and the road. This route could be lit and segregated from the pavement and the road.

- Camberwell/southern entrance north/south route

The Parks team have consulted on some options for the Camberwell southern entrance and we are awaiting further details on the response and revised plans. At the same time Southwark is also consulting on the Quietway route from Elephant and Castle to Crystal Palace which sets out the proposed linkage from Portland St north of the park to Edmond Street south of the park.

Further information is requested on the design requirements or standards for Quietways in parks

The proposed Park southern entrance designs do provide options on north/south links could also link the east/west Surrey Canal Route through towards Camberwell along New Church Road. The width of the pathways in the Camberwell end of the park need to be considered. It may be better to have two main pathways rather than increase the width of the main path. It is likely that cyclists would want to avoid Walworth Road.

The route, the most direct way from Southampton Way to the Wells Way underpass, is a popular desire line for local pedestrians and cyclists. The demand for this route will only increase once the Camberwell Fields development is finished.

We support keeping Camberwell New Road in some modified form. It is a very useful route for cyclists. It is also the old approach to St George's. The new proposals are cutting up the park more, which is not the policy of FOBP.

- Cycling on pathways/non-cycling pathways

Currently all the paths in the park are open to cyclists although the paths vary in width. Making some paths non-cycling would be difficult to enforce and cause more frustration and disagreement. However, cyclists could be encouraged to use main routes.

None of the park paths are wide enough for segregation; either a hard raised barrier or splitting the path with a line. Segregating the paths will reduce the sense of responsible cycling. FOBP would not want to see pathways throughout the park increased to accommodate additional cycling or segregated routes.

- Cycle parking

Additional cycle parking is needed in the park at all facilities, but especially at Edward Passmore and the bathhouse/the old library, and Glengall Wharf Garden which currently have none.

### **Cycling education and enforcement**

Southwark Council must establish a management plan for encouraging and educating cycling behaviour in conjunction with others. As many cyclists coming through Southwark will be from outside the borough this has to be done pan-London with clear and consistent messages about behaviour, code of conduct etc.

At the same time and with immediate effect Southwark Parks must establish management plans for tackling poor cycling behaviour in Burgess Park; for example:

- Improve no-cycle signage at the bridge across the lake
- Rumble strips at entrances
- Pedestrians have right of way
- Speed and bell ringing messages

The responsible cycling offer set out in the cycling strategy for consultation (page 13) is inadequate. This is not a policing issue and needs input from a wide range of agencies.

### **Lighting in Burgess Park**

At the moment most of Burgess Park is unlit.

The exceptions are sports pitch lighting, BMX track, some lighting on a path from Albany Road to New Church Road, some street lighting on New Church Road and some lighting around the tennis courts and Addington Square and some at Chumleigh Gardens. The Surrey Canal Walk is lit along the full length up from Peckham Square to Glengall Wharf Garden and the pathway from Trafalgar Avenue to Glengall Road and some lighting in Jowett Street park on the pitch.

There are strong views held for and against lighting and it is a difficult to achieve a compromise on these views. The arguments relate to safety; convenience; ecology and wildlife habitat.

At the moment Burgess Park lighting is a mix of project specific lighting such as sports pitch floodlights and the remnants of street lighting. Much of the park is also adjacent to streets which provide a level of lighting. At the moment whenever a new project is undertaken in the park the lighting issue is debated again.

FOBP would recommend a lighting survey is undertaken across Burgess Park and takes into consideration the surrounding lighting levels from the roads and the impact

of the sports lighting when it is on and off and checks that lights are correctly focused onto the sports area.

FOBP welcome an over-arching discussion and wider public debate about the nature of the park; the style and character; the requirements across the park and relate the lighting issue to the wider master plan. Comments on lighting have been made as part of the cycling consultation and they should help to inform this.

- **Safety**

The safety of park users is always a priority. There have been muggings and assaults of cyclists; often unreported.

### **Cycling route standards and requirements**

The cycling strategy states the vision for “attractive routes away from large vehicles or fast moving traffic”. The proposed vision for Thurlow Street as part of the cycling spine will not deliver this stated goal. This is a busy road with buses and certainly in the immediate future will have additional lorries associated with the Aylesbury building work.

We agree that to make successful cycle routes it is important to look along the full length of the route and the wider transport network. Making one change has implications for linkage further long the cycling spine.

The cycling strategy rightly focuses on road safety; international standards and best practice. However, there seems to be little information generally available about shared cycling space in green areas.

### **From strategy to action**

FOBP would welcome on-going discussion about cycling in Burgess Park to achieve the best mix of physical design to assist cyclists and other park users; a pro-active approach to responsible cycling behaviour which recognises the particular situation in a park where freedom of movement away from roads is essential to park users.

The nature and identity of the park should not be lost as a result of any cycling strategy. Pedestrians – including schoolchildren, people with push-chairs, sports people, and dog-walkers – should be able to enjoy and benefit from their time in the park.