**Friends of Burgess Park**

**Comments BMX Track Planning Application  11/AP/3764**

The FOBP aspiration for the Burgess Park Revitalisation is for the park to work in an integrated manner; despite the roads running through it. Wells Way splits the park and the road acts as a barrier. Ensuring that lines of sight, pathways and road crossings all enable people to get from one side of the park to the other is essential.

In this wider context of the park functionality the BMX Track must deliver on the potential opportunity to revitalise this area of the park but not at the expense of reducing accessibility and integration to the wider park.

**Comments on the overview/design and access statement**

Not enough has been done to ensure the BMX Track is part of the park. The combination of the Old Library on one side of the road and the BMX track on the other create in effect two impassable spaces.

**The FOBP would like to better movement between the two sides of the park. On the proposed plans the pathway from the Heart of the Park needs to link more closely to the entrance into the park on the other side of the road.**  This could be done by:

* Making the BMX track angled away (so not in parallel with the road) to enable a pathway to link more directly with the Heart of the Park.

Or

* Setting the track further back from the road to allow a wide public path inside the park to run parallel with Wells Way.

All the trees between metal containers and proposed track are to come out, so is the remaining mound so possibly the track could be moved right back to leave wide park strip along Wells Way to take people through the park to existing pelican crossing at Albany Road.

**The FOBP would like to see the BMX track integrated into the park – NOT on a site next to the park.**

New green mesh fence - will it be on top of end berm or at base - what impact on view towards library from lime kiln/path. Impact needs to be completely minimised.

No consideration has been indicated on the impact of the berm in front of the Old Library. The library is a gem in the park, and great expense has just been taken opening up the view to the library from Camberwell/Lyme Kiln. Similarly there is a view from Wells Way across to the Adventure Playground buildings – which were previously completely hidden. This is welcome and the overall impression should be to encourage people in.

**The FOBP would expect priority to be given to keeping the area visually as a park.**

There are no elevations of the proposed track showing it in relation to surrounding landscape, in particular the area in front of the library or even looking through to the containers and existing building and across to the underpass. The Revitalisation of the park is changing the layout and height of land and gradation.

**Comments on specific elements of the scheme**

**BMX Track and facilities**

The application mentions a clubhouse and that bikes can be borrowed but there are no further details, similarly facilities for toilets and changing rooms are not explicitly identified. The Adventure Playground buildings must be utilised. There is no need for expensive additional buildings in the park.

**Lights height/light pollution -** The height of the lighting will have a considerable impact on the park and the neighbouring residential property on Albany Road and St George’s Church. Modern lighting can minimise light pollution and be angled as required. However, they will still be seen from the distance. The lighting designs show lighting columns of 15m height, plus there are two plans with different Lux levels. The minimum light pollution is the preferred option. Considerable shorter columns have been used at the tennis courts. The crossway section diagram shows 8m light columns which would be preferable.

**Closing time -** The draft schedule shows the track opening at 9am and closing at 10.30pm every night. However the track is open access and so will not have opening and closing times or is it open access within those times? What time does astroturf and tennis shut - can timings coincide? What arrangements are there for the track to be opened and shut?

What arrangements are there for lighting for open access sessions? Or will these only be during daylight hours?

Organised events and club nights will be the main users of the lights. Would the lights be on every night of the week?

**Drainage** - more swales / planting for sustainability?

**Fencing** - Further clarification is sought on the fencing. FOBP would not support the green palisade style fencing which is already in place alongside the Go Kart Track/old playground.

**Management and operation -** The FOBP consider an essential requirement of planning permission is the need for the site to continue as an open access facility whilst recognising that at times the site will be restricted access for competitions and training.

The potential 4-6 competitions events each year should be the maximum, any expansion would require further consultation on impact on the local community.

**Connectivity to the play facilities/adventure playground, none indicated on plan**

The basketball/multi-games site appears to have been lost from the site, and is now referred to as hard-standing. This facility should be replaced elsewhere in the park and be open access. Possible locations are as part of the Albany Road/Wells Way youth facilities or close by one of the other sports facilities.

Access to the BMX Track and the other play facilities should be able to take place from within the park ie not only from Albany Road. The facilities would then be more easily accessed by people from the other side of the park and from the underpass; this can be a footpath through the BMX at least.

No detail has been given to circulation amongst the different play elements at this site. Surely they need to encourage use, and not create awkward corners, narrow gates and dead ends. The plan needs to include some indication of how the elements link - from a young person’s point of view, not just security. At present, there is no detail as to how existing resources can be used to support the BMX track -ie being overlooked by existing staff / toilets / changing facilities and informal surveillance by other park users.

**Tree loss**

The FOBP are pleased that the design aims to minimise the impact upon the trees, retaining all the tree around the edge of the site.

However, whilst many of the trees on the site are not considered by the Tree Survey to be category A, they do provide some amenity value and more importantly provide canopy cover.

The tree survey identifies 39 trees as category B and C for removal (but all A category to be retained) and from the detailed tree survey most of the trees have 40+ years.

The FOBP would expect the 69 trees to be used to ensure the scheme is landscaped into the park. In-filling as appropriate the Albany Road/Wells/ Way boundary. The preference is for native species: Scots pine, English oak, holly, beech - but not more birch as they are not that long lived.

The Glade had a unique character in the park - can we create elsewhere a new glade, eg are between astroturf and new mound - plant trees in appropriate pattern to make a leafy green space.

FOBP must emphasise the value of 'category C' trees as providing that middle storey that provides a habitat for invertebrates and cover for feeding birds. Any new development should take account of the impact on wildlife and flora, and where possible, add benefit. This needs to be considered when revitalising the planting around the track. Additional planting if this type must be part of the scheme.

**Comments on connection to the rest of the park/Burgess Park integration**

The FOBP consider that more must be done to ensure the integration of the site development into the park. Particularly the connectivity to the Heart of the Park, better consideration of entranceways to facilitate movement and greater thought about crossing Wells Way.

The area from the BMX Track towards the underpass must be landscaped to integrate the BMX site as part of the park.

The application refers to the green mesh fencing as matching existing. This is temporary fencing and will not be retained. The fencing needs to indicate the Children’s/youth area of the park and be designed as such. This may mean that the fencing changes ie it would be appropriate to be green mesh when it is inside the boundary fencing for Wells Way/Albany Road any fencing and a different type of fencing for the internal boundary on the children/youth site.

Entranceways must be clearly signposted as open access with adequate signage to the range of activities taking place in the children/youth area.

**Transport**

The planning documents identify parking in the park (25 spaces Chumleigh Gardens). There is also already some parking on the Albany Road adventure playground site and this should also be utilised for events.

Public transport provision to Burgess Park/Wells Way is limited to the 42 and 343 buses. There is an on-going community campaign to enhance the 343 bus route so this should not be considered as adequate. But no doubt many of the BMX visitors will be arriving by private vehicle with their bikes.

The Council will need to consider if there is adequate street parking which can be used at the week-ends. The Wells Way already holds two other community venues: Lyn Boxing and the Church (in the Old Library). Parking provision across the three venues needs to be considered.

Southwark Council must develop plans to make Wells Way a green road/park road where it runs through the park.

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Chair

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