

Appendix 4 (updated August 2018)

## **DICKENS SQUARE PARK REGENERATION PROJECT**

### **SECOND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ANALYSIS**

November 2017 to January 2018

#### **Analysis of community consultation:**

The purpose of the second community consultation was to review possible design options, informed by the first community consultation that took place in July 2017.

The main objective of the second community consultation was to obtain opinions on key elements of the design: see below for the opinions provided on these major issues. The LDA Design document considered was *Dickens Square Park: establishing design principles (November 2017)*. The design options showed these elements for discussion purposes: the final design may be different to any of the options shown. More detailed aspects of the design, such as trees, planting and path surfaces, would be consulted upon at a later stage of design development.

At the meeting held on 27 November 2017, eleven completed feedback forms were provided, from the workshop sessions.

Further feedback was subsequently provided by email, including from the chair of the Trinity Newington Residents' Association (TNRA). The TNRA consists of Trinity Church Square, Merrick Square, Bedford Row and parts of Cole Street, Falmouth Road, Swan Street and Trinity Street. The membership of the TNRA is over 200 households, comprising around 400 individuals.

Online consultation through Southwark Council's website took place from 20 December 2017 to 7 January 2018. Nine responses were received, including from the chair of the TNRA.

All the responses were combined to provide the following analysis of opinions given to questions asked in the consultation (see below). Additional general and unsolicited comments on detailed design issues are recorded at the end.

### **Q1: Dickens Square Road and parking**

Dickens Square is an incongruous remnant left over from an area that formerly had housing round it, resulting in an unattractive area of hard standing that does not relate well to the park. Vehicle access is required to the rear of the mosque, so this will be a requirement of the final design. If the existing park building is retained, which is currently occupied by the Rockingham Estate Play Association (REPA), vehicle access would also be required for that facility. What improvements would you like to see for Dickens Square?

Options could be:

- Retain as parking. Note that designation of parking bays and enforcement of parking is the responsibility of Southwark Council Highways.
- Reduce to an access road only, with the remainder grassed over. This would result in a larger green area, which could improve the appearance of the park.

### **Summary of consultees' opinions**

The strong majority preference was for Dickens Square to be reduced to a small access area only, with the remainder grassed over. This would permit vehicle access to the rear of the mosque for morgue facilities' use only, but not for other mosque attendees. The access road should be reduced to the minimum size possible.

There was significant majority support for the deletion of parking in the square. There was concern about the parking arising from the mosque use, including on Fridays. There was strong opinion that people attending the mosque should not have parking facilities, but should use public transport [as for other places of worship].

It was felt that the loss of a few car parking spaces was not significant and cars should be kept out of the park. The parking area breaks up the park and removing it would improve the appearance significantly. The desire to improve the layout and use of the space in a precious and limited open space in the borough was considered paramount. There is a notable wish for more green space, for the community to use, and to make the park greener.

There was support for removing the hardstanding completely, leaving grasscrete on the reduced access area.

### **Parks & Leisure comment:**

Dickens Square Road will be closed and the site re-landscaped, but the new design will ensure vehicle access for mosque funeral vehicles into the rear entrance of the mosque.

Parking available to mosque visitors has recently been increased by the Highways team in two streets nearby. Resident only bays along Falmouth Road and Rockingham Street have changed to shared pay and display/resident bays. There is the potential to further increase parking in the vicinity by doing the same on Brockham Street, should this become necessary.

The use of grasscrete will be considered.

See Q2 below, regarding the removal of the park building, so vehicle access will no longer be required

### **Q2 Park building**

The current park building is occupied by the Rockingham Estate Play Association (REPA). What is your opinion of the building?

Options could be:

- Retain existing building as a play facility, servicing a playground. This could impact on the location of any new playground.

- If there is no clear use for it, demolish the building and re-landscape the site. This would result in more green and open space.

### **Summary of consultees' opinions**

The overwhelming majority opinion, strongly made, was that the building is poorly sited, badly maintained, is an eyesore, is under-used and attracts anti-social behaviour, causing danger to visitors. There was a strong preference for the area to be re-landscaped, to create more green and open space for everyone in the community to enjoy. Removal of the building and vehicular access to it would significantly open up the park, improving security and sightlines, including to Butterfly Walk.

Various consultees questioned the appropriateness of the use of building. Commercial use should not be allowed in a council-owned building. More information should be obtained about REPA's management, trustees, funding, activities and user numbers. There should be an assessment of what is happening in the building and whether it is positively serving the community and youngsters.

There was some support to use the vacant site for a new dedicated play area, or an open green area to use for general recreation purposes, such as to kick a ball around in. It was clearly felt that there is no need for supervised play, with limited access and requiring staffing. See further points in question 3.

There was some support for demolishing and rebuilding, or using the building for more extensive community use, including a café, or conversion for squash courts (one response).

There was extensive consideration of where any existing community use of the building could be relocated to, so as not to have an adverse impact on the children presently using it. It was noted that REPA is currently targeted at children on the Rockingham Estate, whereas the Rockingham Community Centre (located on the Rockingham Estate) is intended more for adult use. It was noted that both facilities are under-used, with future funding an issue.

It was suggested that the Rockingham Community Centre be used for both children and adults. It would be preferable to have activities in a single building, properly maintained and funded, as opposed to two buildings, under-used and struggling for resources.

### **Parks & Leisure comment:**

The current use and condition of the building are a real concern to residents and the council. The council does not have the resources to directly manage a refurbished building and playground.

After careful consideration, it has been decided to develop a design with the building removed. This will mean an increase in public green space that can be enjoyed by the whole community.

The council has invested in improving the facilities at the nearby Rockingham Community Centre, which includes a large hall available for hire.

### **Q3: Playground**

The existing playground is managed by the Rockingham Estate Play Association (REPA), not Southwark Council. The play equipment is in poor condition and failed a 2017 inspection, so cannot be used at present. It will need to be permanently decommissioned and replaced.

Options could be:

- Retain the supervised playground on the existing footprint and replace the equipment.
- Create a new supervised playground at another location within the park. Please suggest a location.

Note: Supervised playground indicates a fenced facility, which would be open at restricted hours and require staff supervision when in use.

- Have a playground with ordinary railings that is open and available for use throughout the day.

## **Summary of consultees' opinions**

Majority strong preference for a playground with ordinary railings and a gate that is open and available for use throughout the day. Also, several comments that the existing playground be demolished and replaced, so it is modern and safe.

It was extensively felt that there is no requirement for limited use, supervised play, and this would create a dead zone in the park.

Majority, strong preference for play to be located in one area, and not dispersed, so as to facilitate parental/carer supervision.

Request for space for older kids/teenagers and a separate enclosed toddlers' play area.

Some respondees were unsure about a location, whereas several suggested the present building's location. One suggestion was at the front in the surgery car park: however, this area falls outside the park and belongs to the adjacent surgery.

There was a notable request to concentrate resources on the existing public play area in nearby Newington Gardens and have no more than a toddlers' area in Dickens Square Park. It was observed there are also many other play areas in the vicinity.

### **Parks & Leisure comment:**

Feedback from the consultation shows a clear preference for removing the existing playground, which is much degraded and has restricted access.

The opportunity exists to create a new playground to meet modern standards, in a suitable location, for the whole community to enjoy. The aspiration is to provide play facilities for all ages of children might include a separate toddlers' playground.

#### **Q4: Butterfly Walk**

The existing Butterfly Walk is an important site for ecology, including for birds and other fauna. We would like to see this part of the park improved by careful clearance of some overgrown areas and increasing its ecological purpose, together with an enhanced educational function.

- One option would be to extend the area of the Butterfly Walk into the park. What do you think of this idea?
- How would you like to see the Butterfly Walk improved?

#### **Summary of consultees' opinions**

There was majority, strong, support for extending the Butterfly Walk, which is a small space, although some felt this was not necessary. Many felt that it was important to tidy up the area in a limited, careful, way, but not to excessively clear or 'prettify' it. It should be sensitively maintained in future. The area behind the mosque should also be treated according to these views.

It was considered important to retain the existing, natural, character and to provide a suitable environment for birds, bats and other fauna, who like overgrown vegetation. This requires specialist assessment, in order to protect the area's wildlife habitat, which there is a strong desire to retain and protect. Dogs and other animals should be kept out of the area.

There were requests for a focus on appropriate planting. More flowers should be planted, of suitable species, to attract bees.

Several respondees would like to see an educational purpose for the Butterfly Walk, including possible involvement of the local school. There should be an information board identifying the fauna that uses it. The Butterfly Walk should become a special feature of the park. **Parks & Leisure comment:** We support these aspirations.

There was strong support for opening up the wall to Brockham Street, which is considered to be a major problem. Several consultees raised significant concerns that because of the wall, the area behind it in the park is extensively used as a public toilet. This activity forms part of the

antisocial behaviour problems in the park that generally worry the community and why people avoid walking through the Butterfly Walk.

There was very strong concern about the problematic lack of safety in the Butterfly Walk, which is dark, threatening and enclosed, so is often avoided, by adults and also those with children. There was a request to keep it locked at night, but this would require railings and a gate at each end.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

For the refurbished park, we do not propose that the park will be locked. There was a request for lighting in this area, but the council has concerns about the impact on wildlife and that lighting can create a false impression that this secluded walkway is a safe night-time pedestrian route.

Given the risk to public safety caused by the existing wall, it is recognised that demolition of part of the wall would not resolve this key concern. The solution would be to have railings and a gate at the Brockham Street entrance, to allow views through, and so nobody could hide behind a wall.

There was a suggestion to create a community garden space and perhaps a community orchard. We acknowledge that community gardens are popular facilities, in the right place. Dickens Square Park is too small for either and so there is no plan to create such facilities.

It should be noted that there are allotments and community gardens in other parks, such as Burgess Park, which is much larger and can accommodate these facilities. There were requests for bee hives, but the same principle applies.

**Q5: Improve entrances and footpaths. Fencing to Harper Road and Falmouth Road.**

We would like to install a network of footpaths, to improve access and circulation within the park. A circular path within the park would permit the community to use it for strolling, walking or running within the park,



to improve its environmental amenity. At present the park is mostly used as a through route and has limited paths, some in poor condition.

We would like to improve the entrances, too. What improvements would you like to see?

Options could be:

- Improvement of entrances: what do you suggest, including new entrances?
- Retaining or removing the boundary fencing to Harper Road and Falmouth Road.
- On the Falmouth Road side of the park, pedestrian access is problematic due to the narrow pavement and mature street trees moving the boundary of the park back. What do you think of this idea? Where would you like the paths to be?

### **Summary of consultees' opinions**

There was no group response on behalf of the TNRA, although there was one individual member's comment, so the opinions of a smaller number of responders have been analysed for this question.

As a general principle, consultees have a strong preference for wider entrances that are not hidden and with no blind spots, providing good visibility, to improve safety, views into and out of the park and encourage visitors into the park. There are general existing concerns about hidden areas and public safety being harmed by them. Antisocial behaviour (including drug taking and dog fouling) could be lessened by opening up the park and its entrances. People want to feel safe using the park and current worries make people avoid using the park, which is poorly used at present.

There was strong support for the five entrances suggested on all three concept drawings in the design options document: these comprise one to Brockham Street and two each on Harper Road and Falmouth Road. For both the roads, the entrances at each outer edge were considered appropriate. The main entrance should remain on Harper Road, near to the parade of shops: there should be a better relationship between the park and the shops.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

With regard to widening the pavement on Falmouth Road by moving the park boundary back, there was a slight preference for this (six against four responses). We note that this would be a preferred option, but is not a definite option. The third consultation will include different design options, for residents to comment on.

There was wide support for the principle of a roughly circular path approximately around the perimeter of the park. In addition, there should be a path crossing roughly north/south and west/east. This would mean having a diagonal path from Harper Road to the top of Falmouth Road and one linking from Falmouth Road to the back of the mosque [as well as along Butterfly Walk to Brockham Street.]

For removal of the fence along Harper Road, there was a very slight preference for retaining it (six responses) and five consultees wishing it removed. For the fence along Falmouth Road, the desire to retain or remove it was almost equal (five to remove it and four to retain it). A few people suggested some low level fencing as a compromise and a few had no opinion on the fencing. One consultee wanted the Harper Road side of the park opened up so there was more the appearance of a common, such as Wandsworth Common.

There is support for information boards near an entrance on both the Harper Road and Falmouth Road sides of the park.

The surfaces of existing and any new paths should be easy to walk on and should not be muddy.

Better lighting was requested, and places to leave bikes.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

There is an issue with the pavement adjacent to the park on Falmouth Road being inaccessible, due to mature street trees growing on the pavement. The third consultation will show two options: one with the park boundary removed and one retaining it. Although it would be desirable to remove the boundary treatment, so people could negotiate their way behind the trees, this is not a high priority.

There were different opinions about the boundary treatment to Harper Road: the third consultation will show two options: one design with no boundary and one with a low timber kneeling fence. At other parks, it has been noted that existing low timber kneeling fence have perished due to the timber becoming rotten, so if a new timber kneeling fence is provided, it should have metal supports above and into the ground.

We support the provision of bike stands.

### **Q6: Exercise equipment**

We would like your opinions on exercise equipment within the park.

Options could be:

- Outdoor gym equipment.
- Trim trail.

### **Summary of consultees' opinions**

Overall, there was significant and strong support for both outdoor gym equipment and a trim trail. Both are considered to be very beneficial for fitness and health, increased use of the park, informal surveillance and for teenagers and adults. Teenagers would prefer a trim trail to the existing large outdoor play area. Trim trails are well used in other local parks in the borough.

A few consultees had no particular opinion, were unsure what a trim trail is, or were opposed to gym equipment which is provided elsewhere.

Groups of exercise equipment for joint/group workouts would be better located at the Harper Road edge, to permit easy access 'drop in' use and avoid noise disturbance to the rear residential boundary.

A zipline would be popular, together with inclines for mini hill runs.





### **Other comments:**

These are either general remarks or comments on specific issues not yet consulted about. These are grouped by topic, in alphabetical order.

**Bikes:** One consultee requested somewhere for bike storage.

**Bins:** Several consultees requested the need to consider the bin areas, which need relocating or to be buried bins. One option would be to move the bins onto the shopping parade side on Harper Road, opposite the park.

**Design drawings/Parks & Leisure comment:** A resposdee noted that the mosque extension was not shown on the concept drawings. Some people did not understand the symbol indicating the provision of picnic benches. Both will be rectified in the third consultation drawings prepared by LDA Design.

**Dog park:** There was one request for a small dog park, with sand, which could encourage more users of the park.

**Events:** One responder would like to see summer events in the park.

### **General comments:**

Strong support to transform the park into an attractive and well-designed leisure facility.

The council abandoning plans to relocate the REPA building north to the border with Trinity Village was much welcomed, to reduce noise and nuisance for those residents.

It is hoped that the finished park would be pleasant and welcoming, and attract visitors from both the local and wider vicinity.

As reflected in some of the questions above, there is a strong desire to see the park opened up more, particularly more visibility, so mothers with children and individuals feel safer using it. At present, the park is too 'enclosed' and there are not enough users of the park. Opening up

the park could discourage anti-social behaviour from dog walkers who permit dog fouling and drug users.

Alongside opening up the park, there should be more open green space for families and others to enjoy and use the park. Existing green space should be retained and added to.

**Picnic and barbeque facilities:** People would like a dedicated picnic and BBQ area, which would serve the community well.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

We acknowledge that picnic tables are popular and good for community use. Picnic tables were indicated in symbolic form on the design sketch drawings, but this was not widely understood by consultees. In future consultation drawings, picnic bench symbols will also be annotated, so the purpose is clear.

**Squash courts:** As noted above, there was one request for the REPA building to be used for squash courts. This would be space efficient and London is short of such sports facilities.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

We acknowledge that squash is a popular sport and good for fitness, the current budget covers landscaping works only and there is no budget to refurbish the existing building or to demolish and re-build. Due to constraints on Parks budgets, the costs of a new building cannot be funded, nor could associated costs of maintenance and staffing.

As noted in the response to questions above, there is strong support for removal of the existing building and re-landscaping its site, to provide more green and open space that can be used by the whole community.

**Tennis courts:** Two consultees requested the provision of tennis courts at some time in the park.

**Parks & Leisure response:**

We recognised that tennis is a popular sport, but there is no budget for this expenditure, and such facilities would be too large for the modest size of the park.

**Trees:** One respondent noted that the lovely view of the trees in the summer months was enjoyed, and hope this would be retained.

**Water feature:** Two consultees wanted some kind of water feature, and one of them suggested a design of an Islamic nature.

**Water fountain:** one request.

**Youth facilities:** One consultee suggested a youth shelter, a graffiti wall and a skate park.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

Although skate parks are enjoyed, especially by teenagers, the park is too small to accommodate a skate park.

**Comments relating to the Harper Road Highways scheme, relating to the park:**

It is essential to dramatically reduce all through traffic, if we are not going to spend a lot of money and just have the park revert to unused and unloved space.

A preference to include a raised pedestrian area for the shopping parade, with easy access to the park.

**Parks & Leisure comment:**

The redesign of the park will coordinate with the Highways scheme in relation to the park's entrance on Harper Road. The third community consultation will be a joint consultation on both the Parks and the Highways projects, so as to facilitate community consultation on both projects.