

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT & HOUSING

### RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM BURGESS PARK ACTION GROUP CONSULTATION June 2010

**1. The now mature landscaping paid for by Groundwork Southwark in front of the library will be bulldozed.**

This area will not be bulldozed. All the trees will be kept. The shrubs that are not over-mature will also be kept however much of the landscaping in this area is now overgrown and of a low quality and species variety. The meadow habitat, shrub planting will be re-provided elsewhere in the park. The dilapidated timber posts will also be removed.

This area is the heart of the park – the place where people gravitate to because there are facilities such as toilets, a cafe, a world garden, fountains and a new play area.

The new toddlers' play area has been welcomed but local people have told us that there is a need for even more play facilities in Burgess Park, particularly for older children. Therefore, the proposal is to create an area that includes natural play equipment for older children in the area north of Chumleigh Gardens and the retained trees will form the structure for this.

**2. The landscaping, re-tiling and new lighting installed by Groundwork Southwark in Wells Way underpass is going to be bulldozed.**

Wells Way divides the park, creating what could be described as two separate parks. The road is busy with buses, cars and bicycles and is often used for on-street parking in front of the library and St. George's Church. The consultation has shown that there are mixed views about the underpass. Some park users like it and others feel it creates a threatening and unsafe part of the park and avoid it all together. Clearly any alterations to the underpass need to be coupled with a redesign, and change of use, of Wells Way.

We think that a good solution would be for Wells Way to become a buses only road thus reducing the flow of traffic significantly. This would allow the road to be narrowed and footpaths to be widened. When (and only when) we can make changes to Wells Way can we consider changes to the underpass, and create a crossing that gives priority to the pedestrian and cyclists. Fountains either side of Wells Way could

create a linear plaza space, rather than a road crossing. Until then the existing underpass and its tiling and lighting will be kept.

3. **The 20 year old woodland and hill between the lime kiln and library will be flattened.**

The trees in this area are on a mound that surrounds the cycle track, go-karting and adventure play. Many users of the park have never visited these facilities, or even know that they exist. One of the first things the designers did was an inventory of the facilities at Burgess Park and compare them with the facilities at great parks like St. James's and Hyde Park. We discovered that Burgess Park has more on offer than either of the parks. The trouble is, many of these facilities are hidden away.

This is the narrowest part of the park, offering little aside from a few redundant roads and an underpass. Our proposal is to re-sculpt the landform to widen this part of the park. This will allow the facilities to be better incorporated into the park, create a larger area of useable park space, and will open up views to the library from the Lime Kiln. This will also help to combat current antisocial behaviour problems in this area and help with maintenance. These works will impact the scrub on the banks of the mound, and some of the trees, but the benefit to the park will be an overall gain. Any tree and habitat loss will be re-created elsewhere in the park.

4. **The borough's first LED ultra-efficient park lighting scheme which has recently been installed on the path between Southampton Way and Albany Road be removed**

We knew we would probably have to move these lights when they were put in as a pilot scheme. They have proved to be very successful and any new lighting in the park will be similar. These particular lights will be relocated onto the new cycle path at New Church Road. The new path will be a more direct route for the cyclist passing through the park to Portland Street and further north towards Elephant and Castle.

5. **The large and formerly very popular toddler and teenage playground on Wells Way – to be bulldozed and landscaped instead of being repaired, installed by Southwark Council about 15 years ago and which the council had no money to repair even the swings**

There are no plans to bulldoze this space. This area ceased to be a play area several years ago and none of the play equipment remains or could be reused. It also raises the question as to whether the play area was in the right location in the first place.

We feel the play area is therefore more appropriately located near the existing facilities at Chumleigh Gardens, away from the road, and in an area that is more open. It is currently proposed that the existing

landforms that were created to form the play area will be re-used to form the cycle track that will be relocated to this area following changes to the mound that surrounds the current cycle track. This approach will reduce costs, and recreate a community facility that will fit into the park better.

6. **About 400m of the popular cycle and pedestrian Canal Avenue where it passes under the old canal bridge paid for by Groundwork Southwark about 8 years ago will be dug up and a pond put in its place.**

The historic Surrey Canal ran through the park during its industrial past, making the canal a key element that is unique to Burgess Park. The canal will be re-introduced as a shallow water feature. The footpath will be widened to 7m and will run alongside the canal.

7. **The entire side of the dual line of cherry-blossom trees planted by Groundwork Southwark at same time as laying of Canal Avenue is to be bulldozed between the canal over-bridge and Glengall Road on St Georges side of Avenue.**

Many of the existing cherry trees are suffering from disease and have been damaged by dogs. Also whilst beautiful for a few weeks of the year, cherry trees only have a life span of 20-25 years. This is a short life span in the life of a park. The large trees that can be seen in Hyde Park, Clapham Common, Dulwich Park and others are hundreds of years old. The proposal is to introduce trees that can be left undisturbed as the park matures. It is important that these trees are in the right place so that they can be left undisturbed to mature. The ancient tree-lined avenues of the royal parks have only matured to look as beautiful as they do because they were planted in the correct place from the beginning.

8. **The cycle track by the lime kiln is to be bulldozed – part funded by Southwark Cyclists just over two years ago.**

The cycle track is closely associated with the mound and scrub planting around it. To widen the park in this area, increase the amount of usable park space, combat antisocial behaviour and improve safety, the landform is proposed to be re-sculpted. This will have an impact on the cycle track and it is proposed that the existing landforms at the former play area will be re-used to form the cycle track.

9. **The woodland, wildlife site and hill at east end of the lake will be flattened. This was planted by Southwark Council about 15 years ago and is now mature.**

We have been told that this planting helps to shelter the lake from the wind. This makes complete sense to us and we are now looking at alternative designs for the area so that the planting can be kept. We also know that this is area of dense planting is a hotspot for antisocial behaviour. We are therefore also looking at ways in which the planting can be managed to deter illegal activities.

- 10. A second woodland, wildlife site and hill on other side of the closed Calmington Road will be flattened.**  
As with the planting on the other side of Calmington Road we are looking at ways of modifying the design so that it can be kept.
- 11. The wildflower meadow by the Canal Avenue will have the cycle and BMX track built on it. It has been colonised by wild-plants and flowers for over 10 years and has been undergoing meadow management for over 10 years.**  
This is also now being reviewed with current thinking being that this area should be kept as wildflower meadow and the cycle facilities being located at the old play area.
- 12. The mature wildlife and woodland sections along St George's Way which were planted by Groundwork Southwark about 12 years ago and now mature, will be split up with a complex maze of paths.**  
This area at present comprises scrub, trees (some of which are reaching maturity) and meadow. The long term plan is to enhance the biodiversity of this area and to increase access both to it and through it. All trees will be kept. The meadow will be improved to make it richer in species. A number of subtle paths will be carefully located in the meadow. The intention is that the western section where there is no vegetation (around the old canal bridge) will be used to create a series of ecological gardens. These would be designed to attract birds, invertebrates and small mammals and will be a valuable addition to the biodiversity of the park. There will be paths here to encourage people to enjoy the wildlife but again these will be low-key and made from sustainable materials.
- 13. The landscaping between the lake and Old Kent Road will be bulldozed to allow the lake to be seen from the Old Kent Road (disastrously this will allow traffic and pollution from Old Kent Road to be seen from the currently peaceful lake).**  
The current proposal involves creating a straight path that provides a more direct and wheelchair-friendly route from Old Kent Road to the heart of the park. This will involve minor changes to the existing levels and the removal of nine trees. The mounded landscape between Old Kent Road and the lake will be reinstated. The path has been designed so that Old Kent Road will not be visible from within the park.
- 14. The entrance at Old Kent Road installed by Southwark Council about 13 years ago will be completely bulldozed rather than revamped.**  
The design of the existing entrance is over-complicated and dated and merely revamping it will not solve the problem. The quality of the entrances to the park are extremely important. The long term proposals

for the park include a complete overhaul of all the entrances so that they are smart, elegant spaces.

15. **LDA “landscape architects” have been unable to provide a number of mature and semi-mature they intend to kill and remove. Initial guestimates are well over 1,000. Nearly 50 years of planting and growth of trees is threatened in large swathes of the park.**

We are keeping and relocating trees wherever possible. Overall, we are trying to increase the variety of trees, and diversify the age range of the trees. Trees that are affected by disease or have been severely damaged by dogs will have to be removed, but overall, the approach is to protect trees wherever possible as we improve the park for everyone.

16. **In the words of the architects the Canal Avenue mature wildflower meadow will be replaced by “A purpose built space for some of the largest festivals in Europe with amphitheatre style viewing for over 100,000 people, a floating stage, and a dedicated cultural hub.**

The description in the master plan is misleading and should not have been used. The new landform, which will use some of the earth removed to make improvements elsewhere in the park, will give a better view of the area that is already used for sporting activities and events such as the Mix festival and Carnaval del Pueblo and no new large events are planned. Those large events only occur a couple of times a year. For the rest of the year the area will be a place for picnicking, sunbathing, rolling down (many people have told us their children love to do this on the existing slopes) or just watching the informal use of the events space, the lake and the football pitch. There isn't any seating proposed and the area will be lawned and will support trees and wild flowers. It will be a great place to take in panoramic views of London with many landmarks visible from it (the Gherkin, the Shard, Canary Wharf, Elephant and Castle etc).

17. **The wildlife site beside the cricket pitch is to be bulldozed. This is well over 30 years old and is on the site of a garden that predates the park.**

The plan currently shows the expansion of the sports facilities into a 'sports hub'. This will provide a fantastic sporting facility for the surrounding communities. Within the current plan this requires the removal of the area of scrub adjacent to the pitch. This is a landscape that can be relatively easily replicated in other areas of the park.

18. **An area the size of three football pitches is to be removed from open space and instead fenced off for polytunnels and allotments.**

We are looking at creating food growing areas but the shape and nature of these has not been decided. We understand and accept that any area needs to remain accessible to all. We invite anyone who wants to be involved to comment on the plans for the area. The

community garden at Chumleigh is a tremendous success and there is clearly a demand for other similar growing space within the park.

19. **The existing cafe that overlooks the beautiful multi-cultural Chumleigh Gardens is to be closed and moved inside the building to overlook the Aylesbury estate and Albany Road. The outdoor tables instead of being placed in a beautiful sheltered Arabic garden with the cafe furniture designed in line with the Arabic heritage of the garden will be on a concrete site exposed to a wind-tunnel funnelled from adjacent buildings.**

This is not part of the current consultation having already been subject to planning consent, and is opening at the end of August.

The current cafe is cramped and cannot cope with busy times. Also families have told us that they would like to have cafe facilities overlooking the new play area. The improved cafe will be a much more pleasant space and make use of the gardens. People will still be able to eat in the Arabic garden. The new cafe location ties in with the new play areas. This is important as it will help the cafe prosper.

20. **Two sets of paths are to be placed through the existing RSPB maintained special house-sparrow meadows.**

We hope to work more with the RSPB to incorporate house-sparrow meadows in the proposed ecological gardens.

21. **The 30 year old wildlife woodland and nesting area by the Albany Road side of the lake will be bulldozed.**

This area will not be bulldozed. There may be a path running along the front or through the first few metres of it. We are looking at the options for this and welcome any comments.

22. **The largest and most mature section of wild woodland along Albany Road at other side of path near lake looks to be bulldozed.**

There is no intention to bulldoze this area. We are hoping to thin it out as it has become overgrown. Proper care and maintenance like this will help the woodland thrive.

23. **Mature shrubbery in front of St George's Church at junction of New Church Road will be bulldozed. This was planted by an international student workshop 14 years ago.**

This is not correct. The only proposal is for proper maintenance as it has become overgrown.

24. **The avenue of mature trees between entrance at corner of Wells Way to the Canal Avenue all look likely to be removed, along with the path installed by Groundwork Southwark about 8 year ago.**

This is not correct. However, there are some horse chestnut trees here that are diseased and these, unfortunately, will have to be removed.