

Hillside Gardens Park: Report from the public meeting held on 25 March 2019

Introduction

Just under £600,000 of funding is available to be spent on Hillside Gardens Park. This comes from the community infrastructure levy charge which Lambeth Council has raised from the developer of the London Square development on Streatham High Road. Ward councillors have successfully ensured that the money is assigned to Hillside Gardens Park.

A working group is in place to explore and oversee how the funds will be spent on the park. This group is comprised of representatives from the Friends of Hillside Gardens Park (Tom Stanbury – Chair) and Nigel Duckers (Minutes Secretary) together with Dino Skeete (Serious About Tennis) and Cath Raitt (representing residents of a local estate). The working group is supported by a project manager - Rob Kelly - working for Lambeth Council. In addition, a landscape architect (Joe Todd from Turkington Martin) has been contracted by Lambeth Council to identify design and improvement opportunities for the park.

On 25 March 2019, a public meeting was held at the hall of St Simon and St Jude Church on Hillside Road (neighbouring the park). The purpose of the meeting was for the working group, project manager and landscape architect to outline the initial plans for improvements to the park and to seek feedback from local people and park users.

During the meeting, Joe Todd from Turkington Martin presented a “Landscape Design Sketchbook” (dated March 2019) outlining design and improvement opportunities for the park. The working group had provided initial feedback on an earlier version of this sketchbook / plan. Features of the plan included the following: a well-defined circular walking route; switching the location of tennis courts 3 and 4 and the Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) to create a bank of four tennis courts; a new football pitch on what is currently court 4; continuous planting of hedgerow around the park boundary to improve biodiversity; and an area for young adults to include a climbing wall or skating area.

Over 30 people attended the meeting. They worked in seven “cluster groups” to provide feedback on the plans. Each cluster group, comprised of four to six people, recorded comments on what they liked about the plans, their top priorities for the park, anything that they did not like about the plans and any other ideas that they had for what they would like to see happen with the park.

This report contains the following information:

1. A summary of who attended the meeting (demographics, where they live and their involvement in the park). The information is presented as aggregate data and is therefore anonymised.
2. Feedback from the cluster group discussions. There is a summary of the feedback in the main body of the report and the groups’ full responses are provided in Appendix 1.

The information within this report will be reviewed by the working group, project manager and landscape architect and will be used to inform the next stages of planning and stakeholder engagement. A further public meeting will be arranged in due course.

1. Summary of attendees

The following summary relates to the 24 attendees who provided information about themselves. It does not include members of the working group or Lambeth Council staff.

The attendees' ages ranged from 37 years to 88 years (median: 56 years). There was an even mix of male and female attendees (12 male, 11 female, 1 not stated).

A quarter of the attendees (6/24; 25%) live on roads adjacent to the park (Kingsmead Road and Hillside Road) and two-thirds of the attendees (16/24; 67%) live on roads within 500 metres of the park (as the crow flies). The remaining attendees live in Streatham Hill, Streatham, West Norwood and Norbury.

Table 1: Where attendees live

Location	Road	Number of attendees
Roads adjacent to the park:	Kingsmead Road	4
	Hillside Road	2
Other roads in close proximity to the park (within 500 metres as the crow flies)	Leigham Vale	2
	Palace Road	2
	Hillside Gardens	1
	Amesbury Avenue	1
	Downton Avenue	1
	Mount Nod Road	1
	Normanhurst Road	1
	Knollys Road	1
Other roads:		
Streatham Hill and Streatham	Telford Avenue	1
	Gaumont Place	1
	Conifer Gardens	1
	Bournevale Road	1
West Norwood	Lancaster Avenue	2
	Thornlaw Road	1
Norbury	Senley Road	1
		Total: 24

Attendees were asked “What is your involvement with the park?” and provided “free text” responses (there were no predefined options). Attendees’ responses are summarised in Table 2. Some attendees listed more than one form of involvement with the park.

Table 2: Summary of responses to “What is your involvement with the park?”

Activity or role	Number of attendees
Tennis	11
Visiting the park with children and/or use of the play area	8
Dog walker	4
Past or present committee role with Friends of Hillside Gardens Park	3
Involved with allotments	3

Table 2: Summary of responses to “What is your involvement with the park?”

Activity or role	Number of attendees
“Nursery” user	2
Litterpicking and/or labouring	2
Use of dog free area	1
Use of gym equipment	1
Sports day (organising)	1
Connections with other local groups and places:	
Volunteer at Palace Road Nature Gardens	1
Involved with St Margaret’s redevelopment	1
Involved with Hitherfield Parent Teachers’ Association (PTA) and consequently interested in the children’s centre	1

2. Summary of feedback from cluster group discussions

The seven cluster groups discussed the following topics:

1. Name at least three things you like about the plans
2. List your top three priorities
3. Is there anything you REALLY don’t like
4. Do you have any other ideas for what you would like to see

For discussion topics 1 to 3, the groups provided answers in writing on A3 sheets. A summary of the information which they provided is presented below and a full transcription of the responses is contained in Appendix 1.

For discussion topic 4, the groups wrote their ideas on post-it notes which were then stuck to a flipchart at the front of the room. Some groups also wrote responses on their A3 sheets. This section contains a record of all of the ideas which were proposed, whether this was on post-it notes or on the A3 sheets.

The summaries below include information about the number of groups who commented on particular topics. However, given the informal nature of the exercise, caution should be used in the interpretation of this numerical information.

Discussion topic 1: “Name at least three things you like about the plans”

The groups recorded that they liked the following elements of the plans:

- **Changes and improvements to sports facilities (6 groups):**
 - “Enhanced sport – tennis courts and moving MUGAs”
 - “Upgrade of MUGA and tennis surfaces”
 - “New surfaces on sports courts / pitches”
 - “Improved facilities for tennis”
 - “Consolidation of the tennis courts”
 - “Better tennis courts / MUGA”
- **Entrances to the park (4 groups):**
 - “Agree that entrance needs improvement – remove hedge + make more welcoming, etc. Decent plan shown.”

- “Improved and open entrance”
- “Opening Hillside Entrance”
- “Improving tarmac area use by entrance”
- **Opening up of space (3 groups)**
 - “Agree removal of fence through middle of park to create a more open walking area”
 - “Opening up of grass area through removal of fences”
 - “More opener & flow/circulation of space”
- **Circular walking route (2 groups)**. A further group stated “I like idea of “circular” flat area”.

Individual groups also noted the following things which they liked: redevelopment of play area; area for young adults; improved planting / landscaping; improvements to biodiversity; and picnic area adjacent to nursery. One group noted that the design opportunities offer improvements for the whole range of park users / stakeholders.

Discussion topic 2: “List your top three priorities”

The priorities recorded by the groups are summarised below (some groups provided more than, or less than, three priorities and one group did not respond to this question):

- **Sports facilities (4 groups)**: “tennis courts + MUGAs”, “consolidation of tennis courts / area”, “tennis court surfaces”, “tennis courts”. Three of these groups also mentioned floodlights (which for the purposes of this report, it has been assumed is related to the sports facilities). One of these groups also mentioned “fair allocation of tennis courts between coaching + non-coaching”.
- **Facilities for older children / young adults (3 groups)**: comments included “redevelopment of play areas → new area for young adults / older kids” and “new youth area – seating/fitness/games”.
- **Entrances and access (2 groups)**: “improvement of entrances”, “accessibility”, “better access”.
- **Landscaping (2 groups)**: “integrated landscaping”, “support planting of hedge adjacent to new wall to improve appearance and to prevent people climbing over the wall into neighbouring properties (... adjacent to existing tennis courts).”

Individual groups also commented on the following: definitely wanting a dog free area; limiting hard surfaces and maintaining biodiversity and greenery; improved “furniture”; and “with funding new building” and water fountains.

Discussion topic 3: “Is there anything you REALLY don’t like?”

The feedback provided by the groups to this question is summarised below (one group did not respond to this question):

- Two groups commented on the **skateboarding park**, with feedback from one group being “too big + noisy” and from another being “possible safety problem with teens skate park next to play area for small children’s playground...” and “skate park is a good idea, just looks a bit small”.
- Two groups commented on the **location of the climbing / bouldering wall**: “move bouldering wall (good idea) up to top of park?” and “the climbing wall should be by court 4”.
- Two groups expressed concern about **hard surfaces**: “care to be taken over amount of existing grass area changed to tarmac” and “additional hard surfaces”.

Concerns were also raised by individual groups about the following:

- “Dog-free area / children’s picnic area now too small. It is $\frac{1}{4}$ of what it was before, happy to lose part to circular walkway but think should remain at least $\frac{1}{2}$ current one (2 x size on new plan).”
- “Splitting 2 areas for exercise equipment is not desirable. Put in one place.”
- “No more gyms.”
- “The existing building!”

One group also said “...to bear in mind → people learn to cycle on the tarmac and “boules” area.”

Discussion topic 4: Do you have any other ideas for what you would like to see happen?

The ideas which were recorded by the groups for this discussion topic are presented below, grouped by theme:

Access to the park:

- Middle entrance from Hillside Road (currently no actual access to park) - something needs to be done with this area. If it is not going to be an entrance, this needs to be made clear, otherwise people try to go down it but can’t get in.
- Clarity of middle entrance?
- Gate at the top of entrance.
- Gates up the top to open up even more.

Signage:

- Signage; better signage/info boards.
- Educational signs (e.g. wildlife, ecology).

Paths, landscaping and appearance:

- Improved surfaces and paths.
- Path by the railway line could be incorporated into the new circulation for walkers and be made much more attractive.
- No extra tarmac paths (grassy hexagons OK).
- Grass instead of tarmac in front of allotments.
- Trim / remove trees along the perimeter and maintain.
- More trees planted.
- Tidy up the housing area next to court 3 – or take it over.

Artwork:

- Mural on walls.
- Piece of art / statue.

Gardening / food growing:

- If new building put polytunnel on roof.

Refreshments:

- Café.
- Hatch door to make small café in room next to toilets in existing building like maybe bowling green café Clapham west side.

- Coffee kiosk / cart.
- Seating area with tables and chairs.
- Coffee kiosk + seating area possibly with covered pergola.
- Café at end of Amesbury Avenue next to Hillside Passage – more passing trade.
- (More) drinking water fountains. At bottom of park and top.

Amenities for young children:

- Mud kitchen for young children / creative play similar to Brockwell Park Community Gardens.

Gym:

- Perspex canopy for outdoor gym.

Sports:

- Basketball hoops (in MUGA area).
- Key pad / lock on gates to tennis court areas.
- Floodlights (code) access and gates for the tennis courts.
- Do not put locks on courts – as limits use by less well off.
- Tennis surface (low maintenance).
- Resurfacing tennis courts.

Locations of facilities:

- Is it possible to put the skate park up by the MUGA? i.e. teens at the top of park, young children at the bottom.
- Bouldering at top of park?
- Top exercise area don't split.

Rubbish:

- Recycling bins (waste + recycled waste options).

Dog-related matters:

- Dog poo bag dispenser.
- Self-closing gate for dog-free area and polite notice “no dogs please, picnic area”.
- Dog poo + antisocial behaviour irresponsible owners, fined, regular community officers, ...
- Dog-free zone.

Other ideas / comments:

- Additional funding.
- Skate area (small?).
- Spec of bouldering wall.
- Lighting.
- Floodlights.
- First aid area
- Take over housing area alongside courts 3+4.
- Leave garden of 19 Hillside Road!
- Permitted working supported permitted working links, (sign post) referrals to Garden & Park (groups) (individual) from Department of Work and Pensions Benefits Team.

Report prepared by: Catharine Raitt, working group member, 10 April 2019

Appendix 1: Full written responses provided by the cluster groups

For discussion points 1-3, the groups were asked to capture their responses in writing on A3 sheets which contained the questions and a space for the answers. This appendix contains a transcription of the responses provided. For question 4, the groups were asked to capture their input on post-it notes which were then stuck to a flipchart at the front of the room. Some groups also captured information on the A3 sheets. The collated comments from both the post-it notes and A3 sheets are contained within the main body of this report.

Discussion point 1: Name at least three things you like about the plans

Group	Responses
1	enhanced sport – tennis courts and moving MUGAs. redevelopment of play area. improved planting / landscaping > integration.
2	1. Agree that entrance needs improvement – remove hedge + make more welcoming, etc. Decent plan shown. 2. Agree removal of fence through middle of park to create a more open walking area. 3. Upgrade of MUGA and tennis surfaces.
3	1. The design opportunities offer improvements for the whole range of park users / stakeholders 2. Opening up of grass area through removal of fences. 3. New surfaces on sports courts / pitches.
4	Improved facilities for tennis Improved + open entrance More opener & flow/circulation of space
5	- I like idea of “circular” flat area - Opening Hillside Entrance - Area for young adults
6	• Consolidation of the tennis courts. • Circular walking route. • Improving tarmac area use by entrance.
7	Better tennis courts / MUGA. Improvements to biodiversity. Picnic area adjacent to nursery. Circular walkway.

Discussion point 2: List your top three priorities

Group	Responses
1	1. tennis courts + MUGAs. 2. redevelopment of play areas > new area for young adults / older kids. 3. integrated landscaping.
2	Definitely want a dog free area.
3	• Surfaces – limit hard surfaces + maintain biodiversity and greenery! • Improvement of entrances • Accessibility • Play area for older children / young adults. • Support planting of hedge adjacent to new wall to improve appearance and to prevent people climbing over the wall into neighbouring properties (by area 1 adjacent to existing tennis courts).

4	Consolidation of tennis courts / area. Flood lighting. Fair allocation of tennis courts between coaching + non-coaching.
5	Tennis court surfaces. Floodlights. Improved “furniture” With funding new building Facilities for young adults
6	tennis courts. new youth area – seating/fitness/games water fountains, floodlights, better access.
7	<i>None provided.</i>

Discussion point 3: Is there anything you REALLY don't like?

Group	Responses
1	Skateboarding park – too big + noisy!
2	Possible safety problem with teens skate park next to play area for small children's playground access/entrance could help this Skate park is a good idea, just looks a bit small Move bouldering wall (good idea) up to top of park? Splitting 2 areas for exercise equipment is not desirable put in one place
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No more gyms”. • Care to be taken over amount of existing grass area changed to tarmac.
4	<i>None provided.</i>
5	The existing building! The climbing wall should be by court 4. Not that I don't like but to bear in mind --> people learn to cycle on the tarmac and “boules” area.
6	Additional hard surfaces Dog poo!
7	Dog-free area / children's picnic area now too small. It is $\frac{1}{4}$ of what it was before, happy to lose part to circular walkway but think should remain at least $\frac{1}{2}$ current one (2 x size on new plan).