

Event: Markhouse Road Linear Park Workshop
Location: Early Education Centre, 34 Verulam Avenue, E17 8ER
Date: 19 October 2016, 7pm to 8.30pm

Present:

Council officers - Amy Priestley (AP) and Lukasz Longosz (LL).
15 local residents and a teacher with a group of pupils from Kelmscott School.

Workshop Objectives:

The purpose of the workshop was to involve local residents in the design process for the green space on Markhouse Road, introduce the current proposal for the site and encourage residents to have an active part in co-designing it.

The workshop:

AP presented the background and ideas for Markhouse Road green space. This was followed by comments from the residents about issues in the area. A summary of these were as follows:

- **Fly-tipping** – residents raised concerns about fly-tipping in the area of oversized rubbish, bin bags and garden waste, stating that as soon as rubbish is removed by the Council new waste is dumped on the site. Additionally, people feel that complaints do not improve the situation.
All people at the workshop agreed that the Council should do more to eradicate fly-tipping in the green space, as well as in the adjacent estate.
- **Antisocial behavior** – attendees complained about people drinking in the area making it look and feel unsafe.
- **CCTV** – people asked about the possibility of introducing CCTV in the area and its cost.

AP addressed the complaints about fly-tipping in the housing estate. She briefly explained the complexity of the issues in that location, with the estate being outside the Highways Department jurisdiction and therefore making any problems with fly-tipping more difficult to solve. These concerns have since been passed on to the relevant department and the area will be more closely monitored in the future.

A group discussion then took place. The most common themes raised were as follows:

General overview of the site – currently there is a lot of dog fouling on the site and the attendees want to see this type of behavior eradicated. Some attendees said the whole area used to be much nicer in the past.

Informal seating by the bus stop – attendees would like to see some additional seating in the bus stop area, not necessarily benches or chairs but different types of street furniture which could be used for seating.

Brick wall along the estate – attendees would like to see the wall at the back of the park used for a mural.

Urban meadow – attendees suggested that an urban meadow type of planting in the green areas would be more suitable than more formal planting. This would add colour and diversity to the site, be good for wildlife including bees, and discourage people from walking on it.

Cycle slowing measures – one attendee suggested that we introduce safety gates on all pathways leading to the estate to make sure cyclists are forced to slow down before entering the estate.

Rainwater runoff – concerns were raised about the proposed cycle lane and footpath being located on a sloped area which, in the case of heavy or long term rain, may lead to muddy spots in the green space.

Blended ‘Copenhagen’ crossings – some attendees were concerned that the blended ‘Copenhagen’ crossings that have been installed on Markhouse Road are not safe and don’t encourage drivers to slow down when entering side streets from Markhouse Road.

Green telecommunication boxes near the bus stop – attendees feel the locations of the green telecommunication boxes are dangerous for cyclists and drivers as they obstruct the view. Suggestions to disguise them with public art or dedicated masking tape were well received.

Loss of green space – one attendee was concerned that the plans would result in a loss of overall green area. AP explained how the quality and usage of the green space would increase significantly.

Moving the road towards the green space - AP discussed with the group how the design had shifted the road eastwards towards the green space to extend the footway on the west side, improving bus stop conditions. While the vast majority of attendees seemed to respond positively to this, and the improvements to the bus stop it would bring, some attendees were concerned about the road moving closer to the properties.

Buffer planting - some attendees highlighted the Selborne Road air quality scheme, saying that they liked the planting scheme, and how it separates pedestrians and cyclists from the road. It was suggested that a similar design could be used on Markhouse Road and attendees were happy to see this in the plans.

Informal play - some people discussed whether an informal play area could be incorporated into the design, creating a fun route for children to take. It could include features like those in the Queen Elisabeth Olympic Park, which use natural materials and low-tech design. A large sized rope spider web shown as an example of informal playground was well received.

Benches and seating - while some attendees were concerned that seating would encourage anti-social behavior, most people thought some seating should be included. People suggested making this seating more informal and natural such as wooden stumps and blocks.

Trees - attendees were made aware that some trees (mainly those in raised planters and behind retaining walls) would be removed as part of the scheme as the walls are in poor condition making the trees unsafe. The removal will also create space for the new footpath and cycle track.

Attendees were told about the lack of tree species diversity in the linear park, and that planting different species of tree could improve biodiversity and the attractiveness of the space. Some attendees said they would like more trees planted in the area which can add interesting colour throughout the year to the space, such as Dogwood or Crabapple.

A suggestion for tree lighting (similar to that currently found in Leyton High Road) was well received and seen as a low cost way to liven up the area.

APPENDIX Workshop activity results

The workshop discussions were organised around three group activities.

ACTIVITY ONE

What do you dislike about the space?

- Fly-tipping
- Litter in the area
- Not wide enough pavement (telecommunication boxes)
- No street lights around the area (especially near the greenery)
- The area feels dull, abandoned and unloved
- Lack of colour
- Lack of bins
- Informal seating arrangements.

What do you like about the space?

- The greenery
- The trees and grass
- The ivy on the fence
- The bus stop
- The brickwalls around the trees.

What problems and opportunities are there?

- Budget
- Lack of community – could lead to people not feeling ownership of the space so may damage any improvements
- It is a very busy road, traffic likely to increase with potential side road closures
- Dumping
- Dog fouling
- Litter (needles)
- Pedestrian connections between the area and the estate
- Artwork – to give the area an edge
- Paint the telecommunication boxes
- Plants to absorb pollution.

ACTIVITY TWO

Initial ideas - How could the space be used, and what could the space look like?

- Year round trees – cherry blossoms (red trees on the street)
- Wild flowers along the walls of the houses
- Cycle lane placed at the far back of design, all the way along
- LED lighting and lights within the trees
- Painting the telecommunication boxes
- Public art, paint the breeze block wall
- Introduce some informal seating.

What priorities should we have for the design?

- Improve lighting (like at Drapers Fields in Leyton)
- Create a fun path for children, with walls for children to walk along and balance beams
- Create community spirit
- Create a useable area e.g. table tennis without encouraging anti-social behavior

- Reduce dog fouling
- The area has no seating at the moment – it is not a destination.

ACTIVITY THREE

Let's design – Attendees were encouraged to comment on the Markhouse Lineaer Park design and put forward their own suggestion, we asked:

- **How can the space work for everyone?**
- **What materials could be used?**
- **What type of planting could be used?**
- **Where could activity occur?**
- **Where could street furniture be included?**

Suggestions collected during the activity:

- Low maintenance but resilient to pollution planting
- Lighting through the trees, possibly solar powered
- Low level lighting
- Community mural for the brick wall, e.g. something by Wood Street Walls
- Stumps to climb on in the bus stop area
- Putting some colour on the neighbouring fence
- Community notice boards
- More bins
- Potted trees
- Bug hotels and attractive planting for bees and wildlife
- Plant shrubs and wild flowers in the green strip separating the cycle path from main road
- Tap, irrigation, water supply.