

# Down Lane Park Improvement.

## Frequently Asked Questions

19.04.2024

Thank you to everyone who have been in touch about the Down Lane Park improvement project. We are working hard to minimise the disruption caused by the Phase 1 works, as we will in subsequent Phases.

While we aim to keep as much of the park open as possible during the works period, safety of the public has to be our number one priority and will at times determine decisions that are made. We will continue to update the project website on Commonplace with the latest information:

<https://downlaneparkimprovement.commonplace.is>

### Why have some trees been removed?

As part of the park improvement project a tree survey was undertaken. This found that, of the 562 trees in the park, 30 of these were identified as dying, diseased, or unsafe. Sadly, a small number were suffering from oak processionary moth (disease), whilst others are ailing and/or at risk of falling and need to be removed on health and safety grounds. This does include some of the Cherry trees.

The results of the survey were raised during the two rounds of public engagement in May 2022 and October 2023 to ensure people were aware of the proposed approach to tree management. These tree removals have been carried out as part of the works to the park. Through the improvements to Down Lane Park, we will be planting an additional 268 trees (see the image below), bringing the total of number of trees in the park to approximately 800. This is equivalent to a near 50% increase in the total number of trees in the park, which in time will increase canopy cover, nesting opportunities, and provide valuable shade in warmer months.



### **Why are some trees being pruned?**

Through co-design and public engagement, residents and park users told us improving sightlines was a top priority to improve safety in the park. Respondents responded positively to proposals to lift tree canopies to improve sightlines and remove hidden spaces, created by low hanging branches.

In response to this feedback, tree management works will be taking place in Down Lane Park from **Monday 22 April** to lift low tree canopies, trim around lighting columns, and remove dead branches that are unsafe. These works have been scheduled to address residents' safety concerns and improve overall safety in the park.

We know that residents care greatly for the trees and wildlife in the park and some may have concerns about the impact these works could have. A Wildlife Risk Assessment will be undertaken prior to any tree pruning to ensure that the works do not impact nesting birds and other species. Where nesting is identified pruning will be undertaken at a later date.

### **Reusing logs and branches from trees being removed or pruned in the park.**

Arisings (branches and twigs) from the trees that are being removed or pruned will be kept to one side so that they can be reused to create dead hedges and log piles, creating excellent habitat for wildlife, and supporting greater biodiversity. Once works are further progressed, we would love for residents and park users to get involved in helping to create these new habitat features. We will have more news on this opportunity very soon.

### **Why has tarmac been installed to pathways rather than other more permeable materials?**

The designs for the park prioritise expenditure on elements residents and park users felt most important, such as a new Hub building, high-quality play areas, sports pitches and courts, and infrastructure like more and better lighting and seating.

Some pathways were identified as being too narrow. The need to improve connectivity was also identified, leading to the introduction of new pathways, particularly between Park View Road and Harris Academy and Tottenham Marshes. This feedback has shaped the approach to pathway improvements in the park.

Pathways have been widened to accommodate cyclists, pedestrians, runners, those with buggies, and those in wheelchairs or mobility scooters more safely. Tarmac is a cost-effective material that is easy and affordable to replace and maintain. By relaying with Tarmac, we have also been able to reuse the underlying sub-base to significantly reduce costs. This has enabled more money to be spent on the things people told us matter the most.

Tackling drainage issues and climate change resilience is a key objective. As a whole the improvements will see an overall reduction in the amount of hardstanding in the park and the introduction of cambers on pathways and natural drainage solutions across the park. This will significantly reduce the flooding risk.

### **Can you enhance the lighting to improve safety?**

While the current works are on-site, the identified route for pedestrians to use to cross the park is between Park View Road (just north of the Artificial Grass Pitch) and Burdock Road (as shown on the map below). This route through the park is wide and already has lighting, as well as being illuminated by the tennis courts (when in use) and the lights on the Artificial Grass Pitch until 10pm. All other entrances in this part of the park are closed (as shown by the red dots on the map). A copy of this map was posted on-line on Commonplace in January and has been attached to the fences at each of the entrances marked in red. Tree pruning around lighting columns in the park will address shadowing and improve the effectiveness of existing lighting columns within the park.

## Phase 1 works on Down Lane Park

Work will commence on 15th January 2024.  
Phase 1 is likely to finish in May / June 2024.

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### Phase 1 works area



1. Works to Park View Underpass may be underway which will close the footway from the Underpass to Ashley road
2. Park View Road eastern highways footpath (outside of the park) will always remain open.
3. Ashley Road western highways footpath (outside of the park, adjacent to Harris Academy) will need to be closed temporarily during limited periods of the phase 1 improvement works.
4. We anticipate the pathways within the Phase 1 works area being closed for the duration of the Phase 1 works but, to minimise disruption, if they can be reopened safely at an earlier date we will do so and provide an update.

### Phase 1 complete



- ← Open pedestrian access routes (weeks 01 to 23 inclusive)
- Work area - fenced
- Existing pedestrian entrance remaining open
- Temporary closure of existing entrance
- New entrance opened

We have also been asked whether additional lighting can be provided on the route between Park View Road and Ashley Road/Burdock Road. We are currently looking into this and will provide an update on the Commonplace project website and displayed visibly in the park.

### Why are some of the railings around the park being removed?

The improvements to Down Lane Park have been co-designed with a Community Design Group made up of local residents and community representatives. One of the early proposals for the section of the park adjacent to Harris Academy was to remove railings and replace these with thick landscaping and bollards. This proposal responded to a significant reduction in traffic using this part of Ashley Road with the depot being relocated, and the school street (with timed vehicle restrictions) that is already in place in this location. Measures will be put in place to create a buffer between the park and the road through planting and bollards to address safety concerns and stop vehicles from entering the park.

Ashley Road north is already a school street, creating a safer pedestrian environment for Harris Academy pupils. Looking to the future, the completion of 272 new council homes on the Ashley Road Depot site (along the northern boundary of the park) will further reduce traffic movements and create the potential for a largely pedestrian only road. Removal of the railings and their replacement with wooden bollards will future proof this opportunity. This proposal was consulted on during public engagement, finding broad support amongst respondents. Harris Academy were consulted separately and have indicated their strong support for this change.

## Down Lane Park: proposed Boundaries



Proposals to remove railings along Park View Road north are not being progressed as part of the current Phase 1 works and the railings will remain in place. The landscape masterplan for the park envisages hedge planting along this boundary, which once established will provide the potential for removal of the railings at a later date. This would, however, be subject to a satisfactory safety assessment. In other areas of the park, railings will only be removed to create new entrances or to provide access to the future community hub.

### Can you improve access to the park along Park View Road?

We have been advised that the diversion arrangements may have created a ‘bottleneck’ at the Park View Road entrance at busy times when people are making their way to school or work in the morning and on their way home in the evening. At the moment, the double leaf gate has one side open and one closed. The closed side has a fixed bollard positioned behind it to stop unauthorised vehicles accessing the park. Having just been made aware of this issue we will monitor the situation in the first instance. An initial inspection undertaken by Park’s staff early on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> February did not identify any immediate issues, but we will keep this under review and if needs be we will look at options for opening the gate fully. We will provide an update in due course.

### Why don’t the plans include a direct pathway between the Holcombe Road entrance and Ashley Road?

The improvements to Down Lane Park have been co-designed with a Community Design Group made up of local residents and community representatives. Inclusion of a paved pathway between the Holcombe Road entrance (2f on the map, below) and Ashley Road (2b on the map) was considered during co-design.

Given other priorities – including introducing a new pathway from the Holcombe Road entrance to Harris Academy and Tottenham Marshes (2c and 2d) – it was not possible to accommodate a second new paved pathway and retain the existing grassed football pitch. People felt strongly it was important to retain the grassed football pitch to support sports, health, and community use of the park, particularly young people and families. Where people currently cut across this erodes the grass creating an unsafe playing surface, requiring periodic reseeding. We also sought to ensure a balance between the amount of hard surfaces and green space, and to encourage people to ‘dwell in’ the park, rather than to ‘pass through’.



During engagement with pupils from Harris Academy and Welbourne Primary many pupils reported feeling either less safe owing to the lack of people around, particularly in autumn and winter, or that the park lacked enough things to attract them to visit or stay in the park. Improving park usage is a major priority for the Council, Community Design Group, and the park improvement project. Through co-design a second children's play area was introduced in the northern part of the park to respond to this feedback (number 9 on the map), providing younger park users with reasons to visit or stay, and creating animation and natural surveillance to address safety concerns. This also made accommodating a second new pathway difficult. Whilst the Holcombe to Ashley Road connection was raised by some engagement respondents, a balance had to be found between competing priorities and the stronger and more consistent feedback was to retain the football pitch and prioritise play.