

Your local services

Feedback briefing from autumn 2012 public meetings in Holland ward on planning and subterranean developments, streets and parks, and transport and parking



Planning and basements, 11 October 2012

Mr Jonathan Bore, the Executive Director for Planning and Borough Development, made presentation that shared updates on the Council's current work to address subterranean developments and took questions. You can download his full presentation from our website, www.rbkc.gov.uk/holland.

In particular, Mr. Bore shared more information about:

- The extent of existing control local government and others have in regards to subterranean developments:
 - Planning deals with finished product: appearance, character and use.
 - There is an agreed Construction Method Statement, but it is only there to show it can be done, not to control damage to neighbouring property.
 - At the moment, damage to neighbours' property is outside of planning control due to the 'Party Wall Act' which makes this a civil matter between parties.
 - Planning permissions can include reasonable conditions such as the Considerate Constructors' Scheme, which addresses hours of work, noise and dust; a traffic management plan; and conditions on noise.
 - The Council also has other controls under environmental health and highways legislation if developments breach these.
 - While building regulations are another tool of statutory control, the construction phase itself is not controlled by building regulations.
- What the Council is currently doing to review its policies and what else can be done to help residents better manage subterranean developments together. This review work is considering:
 - Getting developers to consult neighbours before putting in planning applications
 - Getting developers to draw up Construction Traffic Management Plans, talk to their neighbours about them and have them agreed by the Council's Transportation Team before planning applications are submitted
 - Examining whether to apply a tighter limit on under-garden excavations to allow for more planting and drainage
 - Examining whether there is any justification for limiting depth in certain circumstances
 - Examining whether to use Article 4 directions to bring permitted development basements under planning controls
 - Making more effective use of Environmental Health powers

Don't forget you can get notifications directly by email on planning issues local to you using the MyRBKC service, available at www.rbkc.gov.uk/myrbkc. For any other planning related matters, contact Planningline on 020 7361 3012.

Streets and Parks, 18 October 2012

Kathy May, Head of Waste Management, Markets and Enforcement, and Jeremy Plester, Project Manager in Leisure, attended and took questions.

Discussion included how to address dog fouling, provisions for dog walking in Holland Park, cycling on pavements, anti-social cycling, promoting better cycling and cycling routes, news and updates about Holland Park, street cleaning and more.

There were a number of questions asked at the meeting that Jeremy Plester took away to follow up. Here are the questions and answer:

Q: Why have the dog mess bins been taken away? People who do actually scoop now have to put their mess in the normal bins which are usually right next to the benches. As a result, if you sit on a bench there is often now a foul smell coming from the bin.

A: Dog waste is no longer considered clinical waste and consequently does not require special bins. Having additional bins just for dog waste is therefore much more labour intensive. If any particular bins that cause offence are identified we can always move them away from the bench.

Q: There is little or no signage at entrances or within the park stating that dog fouling will be penalised (and specifically what the penalty will be), We should increase the visible signage and specify penalties in order to address the ongoing fouling problem.

A: Dog fouling is a criminal offence, and the same penalties apply everywhere. Signage will be looked into as part of our continued campaign to deal with dog fouling.

We launched a Dog Fouling Campaign in July in various hotspot dog walking and dog fouling area across the borough. This involved depositing yellow cardboard poop scoop pyramids to promote the campaign, speaking to dog owners, handing out dog poo bags, and giving warnings as appropriate. The Council is now looking to roll this out to other areas, and Holland is being considered as a priority area.

Q: Based on some recent experiences, residents are concerned that some Parks Police have an anti-dog attitude and that dog owners are unfairly vilified. They also feel that the dog / owner is always blamed, often unfairly. Examples given included an incident when a child took a dog's ball and was then chased by the dog, and a time when a couple threw a child's scooter at a dog, the dog was badly injured and the police still blamed the dog owner.

A: This feedback has been noted and communicated to the Parks Police. The parks are indeed designed and set aside for people but some of those people are dog owners. The Parks Strategy recognises that the latter are as much users of the parks as anyone else. RBKC received the Dogs Trust National Award 2012 for best local authority on dog related issues, and we take this kind of feedback very seriously. The award was shared between the Parks Police Service and the Youth Offending Team for a range of dog education initiatives which include our annual dog show and regular dog surgeries and microchipping events run in conjunction with Dogs Trust. Clarissa Baldwin, Dogs Trust chief executive, paid tribute to the work taking place in the borough to promote responsible ownership and make the location suitable to four-legged friends.

All incidents in the parks, whether involving dogs or not, are dealt with on their merits and advice and guidance (including that on responsible dog ownership) given accordingly. If residents have

further negative experiences with the Parks Police on this or any other issues, we encourage them to contact Leisureline on 020 7361 3033 or email leisure.services@rbkc.gov.uk.

Q: The area available for dogs is too small in relation to the overall size of the park – could it be increased?

A: RBKC has the least amount of publically accessible open space of any London borough. Nationally, it is estimated that 10% of people are dog owners, but this figure is lower in RBKC due to being in inner London. It would be impossible to increase the dog space without upsetting the more than 90% of users who do not have dogs. We can look to improve the existing space for dogs and better communicate this – please see below answers.

Q: The designated dog area is also unclear and unmarked and this may exacerbate some of the above issues. Can we have better signage (possibly a map in the notice boards / at entrances) so that the leash / no leash areas are obvious to both dog owners and non-dog owners alike?

A: Agree – we will look at how best to resolve this.

Q: The dog area is in poor condition, although it is appreciated that it is heavily used. Can it be re-turfed? Suggestions include laying rubber matting to protect the grass, and using the special “tough grass” used for the Olympics.

A: Unfortunately, turf does not grow under trees (even special “shade” mixes). The area is covered with bark mulch. While this is regularly maintained, this feedback has been raised with Park staff.

Q: There are still people cycling in the park. Although a Parks Policeman sometimes stands by the Duchess of Bedford’s walk entrance in the morning, many cyclists come from other entrances. Another Parks Policeman by the Ilchester gate entrance to stop cyclists would help. Improved / more obvious signage may also help.

A: This could be done on a spot basis but not constantly as it would be tying up too many resources for limited gain. More obvious signage is being looked into and we’ve already begun to implement this based on this feedback.

Q: Many trees have been felled recently but it appears that new tree planting has stopped. There are obvious gaps in tree cover appearing in some places. Is this due to lack of funding?

A: The park has more trees than it can possibly accommodate sensibly at present and that leads to spindly growth. We are encouraging more space for the more desirable trees to grow and flourish. In terms of woodland enclosure management (from an ecological perspective), there is a need to increase light to the woodland floor in order to create an understory thus increasing the biodiversity value of the park. Inside many of the enclosures there is simply not enough light and therefore woodland wildflowers and the associated biodiversity which live in these microhabitats are not thriving. There is also need to consider tree health and mature tree height, and all tree planting must be carefully considered to ensure the appropriate tree species is planted and that tree has sufficient resources to grow into a healthy mature tree.

There has not been a reduction in funding for parks and the Council continues to be very committed to ensuring well-run green spaces.

Q: The natural playground area is ugly and very close to the path (so it is imposing / obvious).

A: While we have noted this feedback, it is as always a balancing act between different park users. The natural playground area is extremely popular and children are also major users of the park. This is an area which is well used by local children giving them an opportunity to interact directly with nature and the woodlands, something that children cannot freely do elsewhere in Holland Park. However, we are discussing options to ensure the current site has an opportunity to rest thus ensuring the vegetation has an opportunity to grow back.

Q: Is there anything we can do to stop pigeons being fed? This is of particular issue in the Kyoto garden and surrounding area.

A: There are no byelaws to prevent this from happening. Our bird feeding volunteer is careful to feed the moorhens and spends time ensuring that the pigeons are not fed directly. The biggest attraction for pigeons is the regular feeding by multiple park users. We always appreciate suggestions to combat this.

Q: Can we use a hawk to manage pigeon numbers?

A: No. Hawks will not only move pigeons to other locations but also have a serious and detrimental effect on our native nesting bird populations.

Q: When are the pigs coming back? They have proven to be very popular with residents (particularly with children).

A: Possibly in 2013. The pigs were used as a sustainable habitat management method to clear the two woodland enclosures of bramble. The aim in the first enclosure is to restore the meadow (grass and wildflower), the second enclosure is to create a diverse woodland wildflower area. The pigs proved very successful at clearing the bramble and we are monitoring the enclosures to see whether further management using animals is required. Options being considered, depending on the progress we make in creating the desired habitats, will include using grazing animals, using pigs and manual management using traditional tools.

For other comments or questions to do with waste management and streets, you can contact the team on Streetline, 020 7361 3001 and streetline@rbkc.gov.uk.

Parking and traffic, 25 October 2012

Mahmood Siddiqi, Bi-Borough Director for Transportation and Highways, and Mark Chetwynd, Chief Transport Policy Officer, attended and took questions.

For further information or to make comments, Mr. Chetwynd highlighted there is a special email address, Traffic@rbkc.gov.uk, which goes to his team.

The key points from the discussion are as follows:

- Traffic volume has fallen by about 10% in London in recent years
- RBKC continues to do what it can to reduce traffic. Initiatives in recent years include:
 - Promoting car clubs - 6,000 residents are members in the borough and this figure is growing
 - Reviewing and repaving footpaths and making walking easier with better signage and routes
 - Promoting cycling, with a three year marketing campaign, creating bike lanes, making one way roads two way for cycles, including mirrors at junctions and providing more cycle parking
- Traffic safety remains, as always, a big concern. What RBKC does is work closely with the police to use accident data on its roads actively to plan traffic calming, speed bumps or other initiatives. When the Council receives feedback that a particular crossing, street or junction is dangerous, this is checked against police data for accidents for that road crossing. However, it is important not to just 'wait for an accident to happen', so the Council collates and investigates resident suggestions of trouble areas, including the various spots that were highlighted in the Holland ward survey.
- There were a number of questions and discussion about controlling car speeds in the borough. Mr Chetwynd described how they do regular speed surveys, and consistently find speeds are on average usually around 30 mph, which makes it difficult to justify the costs of implementing a 20 mph speed limit, especially as this is usually to limited effectiveness and hard to enforce. What the Council have been doing, at less cost and with higher evidence of effectiveness, is to use the speed signs that monitor and broadcast drivers' speeds as they go past. These signs have to be regularly rotated to remain effective as once drivers get used to them they stop being effective. The Council officers committed to ensure they continue to actively use these in the main roads through Holland ward.
- Parking
 - There are 36,000 permits for a smaller number of spaces – it's always a challenge
 - New builds in the borough are not being allowed new parking spaces
 - Parking suspensions are also very high, which reduce the number of available parking spaces further. To reduce parking suspensions, the Council has recently dramatically increased fees as a disincentive and, when the suspension is due to Council use, they have introduced 'back in service' stickers to end the suspension when it's only needed for a few hours. The Council is looking in to whether 'back in service' stickers could be possible for non-Council parking suspensions, but they have to be careful these aren't freely available as they could be abused.
 - There were many questions about visitor parking permits. Mr Siddiqi responded that they know it is a big problem and that it's always very high on the Council's agenda to keep considering if it could be done, as it's directly related to the overall problem of more demand for parking than spaces. For example, it's difficult to justify visitor parking permits when new builds are being denied parking spaces entirely. However, while on average pressure for parking spaces is high, some areas are always at 100% capacity while others fluctuate below this.