

Committee(s)	Dated:
West Ham Park Committee	02/02/2015
Subject: Application for new park gate by Park Primary School	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision

Summary

This report outlines a proposal from the London Borough of Newham (LBN) to permit the creation of a new entrance to West Ham Park opposite Park Primary School, in conjunction with the planned expansion of the school and a potential upgraded crossing between the school and the proposed new entrance. This is partly due to increasing pressure on existing space in and around the school premises.

LBN's application is on the understanding that the project would be cost neutral to the City Corporation (CoLC), and that all aspects of the project, including the final design of the gate and the resulting mitigation works within the park boundary, must be to the satisfaction of CoLC.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Instruct the Director of Open Spaces and the City Surveyor to enter into negotiations with the London Borough of Newham in order to progress the design and costs of the proposed new gate;
- Agree that Officers report back to this Committee seeking approval for the design of the gate and any reinstatement of park land resulting from its installation.

Main Report

Background

1. LBN has been working with Park Primary School (Ham Park Road) on the annual School Travel Plan that seeks to encourage safe, healthy, and more sustainable school travel. As part of this process schools are asked to think about any potential physical improvements to the area around the school that would help improve safety and/or sustainable travel. Park Primary requested that a new entrance to West Ham Park be created opposite the school gates, along with

improved informal or formalised crossing points on Ham Park Road (LBN Highway).

2. Park Primary School is planned to expand from 525 to 630 children in 2014/15, with a corresponding increase in staff, parents, and visitors. The expansion presents the opportunity to facilitate quicker and more direct access for students, staff, parents, and visitors to and from West Ham Park which is currently used extensively for travel to school, physical and other outdoor education, and school trips.

Current Position

3. Both Park Primary School and LBN have now approached officers to ascertain the feasibility of installing another gate. The reasons for wanting to create a new entrance can be grouped into three themes and are set out below.
4. **Health and Safety around the school:** in cases of emergency evacuation at the school, it is evident that the current muster points used for practice could not be used in a real emergency. Even if the school were to assemble as far from the building as possible, the students and staff could not physically be far enough away from a building to ensure safety. An additional gate would mean that the school could evacuate via existing large gates, escort the children straight across the road and then directly into a safe area at a reasonable distance from the school. Whilst the existing Linden Gate is only 100-150m along the road, this entails marching children single file down a busy road, which LBN considers unacceptable.
5. **Curriculum coverage and efficiency within the school day:** With the expansion of the school, there is increased pressure on the existing limited play facilities at the school, impacting on student time and staff resources. A new entrance opposite the school would reduce the time required for students and staff to travel back and forth to the park during the school day, which, over the course of the academic year, would result in significantly more time available for the delivery of education rather than travel.
6. **Promoting safe and active travel to and from school:** West Ham Park provides a very secure environment for young people to travel to school, be that on foot, scooting or cycling. Although Linden Gate is only a short distance away, it could be argued that the more direct the route to the school gate, the more likely parents and carers are to encourage young children to use it.

Proposals

7. LBN are requesting an additional gate immediately opposite Park Primary School's main gate, as shown in the plan at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows a view of the wider area including the location of the School in relation to park facilities. Unfortunately due to the layout of pathways and pedestrian flow lines, it

is not practical to close nearby Linden Gate to offset the creation of an additional park entrance.

8. The design of the gate and any remedial work to land within the park boundary (e.g. the addition of footpaths to link to existing paths within the park) would all need to be approved by CoLC. All costs, including consultation, design work and implementation (regardless of whether this was undertaken by LBN or CoLC) would be met from LBN's Local Implementation Plan's 'Physical Measures outside Schools' programme.
9. Changes to the existing junction table may also form part of the final design for the area. These do not form part of this report and will be dealt with solely by LBN.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. Working with LBN and Park Primary School as outlined in this report supports the following community strategy themes:

- Supports our communities – by encouraging well-being and participation in activities
- Protects, promotes and enhances our environment – by encouraging use and enjoyment of City open spaces

11. It also supports some of the key aims identified in the Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2014-17:

- Inclusion: Involve communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites
- Promotion: Promote opportunities to value and enjoy the outdoors for recreation, learning and healthy living

Implications

12. **Financial Implications:** As well as the initial cost of project implementation, LBN is also proposing to pay for any ongoing maintenance costs. Although the maintenance of the gate itself is likely to be only marginally more expensive than the current stretch or park railings, opening and closing the gate has an implication for staff and is harder to quantify in the long term. Also, all gates in the park are fitted with People Counters, to enable monitoring of park usage. The cost of an additional counter would need to be included, as would the cost of replacement batteries ongoing. All costs will be evaluated as part of the detailed design process and then reported to Members, along with designs, for agreement.

13. **Property implications:** If the City wishes to grant permission to LBN to create and install a new entrance to West Ham Park, there should be careful

consideration to ensure that the asset remains in a good, safe and statutory compliant condition during the installation works and thereafter. From the information provided it is clear that with this additional entrance West Ham Park will have increased use particularly following expansion of the school – and the subsequent increased numbers travelling to and from school via the park, as well as increased use for curriculum use and for fire evacuation meeting points. The City will need to ensure it has sufficient resources to ensure that West Ham Park's ability to be fit for purpose and to meet service delivery needs is not affected by an additional gate or that any impact is adequately mitigated.

14. **Legal Implications:** Members must consider whether the proposal is in the best interests of the West Ham Park charity, including the promotion of its objects, which are that the Park is to be held “for ever as open public grounds and gardens for the resort and recreation of adults and as play grounds for children and youth”.
15. Under the conveyance of 1874 the City covenanted to for ever maintain the existing entrances and also to construct and maintain a new footpath and entrance at a particular location. There is no other explicit reference to footpaths in the conveyance, although additional paths are known to have been constructed in the early 20th Century. If a specific statutory power is required it may be found in section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. The City additionally covenanted to maintain and preserve the Park in a proper and ornamental condition and therefore any works should not interfere with its ornamental character.
16. Any new entrance and footpaths should be fully accessible for disabled people, in accordance with the City's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 – this has already been recognised in the proposals. An additional entrance would have the ancillary benefit of improving access to the Park for disabled users. Depending on the precise details, the proposals may also require planning permission.
17. **Other Implications:** LBN has undertaken consultation with the Park Primary School community including Governors, and with Cabinet Members. All have shown strong support for the proposed scheme.

Conclusion

18. West Ham Park has worked closely with Park Primary School in the past and students, staff, parents and carers all use and appreciate the healthy and secure environment that the park provides. Whilst there is an existing entrance to the park a little over 100m from the school's main gate, the school and LBN are keen to minimise any risk to students either as the result of an emergency within the school itself, or as they travel to and from the site at the beginning or end of the day, or for sports classes.
19. A more accessible gate would also allow for greater spontaneity in terms of the curriculum in general, giving staff the freedom and time to use the park for a variety subjects, as well as physical education and break times.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Physical Measures Outside Park Primary School
- Appendix 2 – West Ham Park showing location of Park Primary

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