

## Friends of Brockwell Park's Plan for the Herne Hill Junction

Dear Mayor Johnson,

As is proper for a Friends' group, Friends of Brockwell Park (FOBP) is committed to preserving the integrity of Park land. Our understanding of your election manifesto was that you too would preserve and indeed enhance Metropolitan Open Land.

We believe that a proper examination of our revised, final proposals of April 2009, commissioned by FOBP at some expense from IMA, a respected, independent traffic engineer of national renown, would show that Lambeth Council could and should have chosen the FOBP scheme, that removes significantly less land from Brockwell Park: 500sq mtr rather than 1070sq mtr required for the Council's plan.

Given your respect for the separation of powers between the Mayor and Local Authorities, the one thing you specifically asked of the Council – that it carry out an independent assessment of the FOBP alternative scheme – has not been done. We believe that failure genuinely constitutes "a last resort" where it **would** be proper for the Mayor to intervene; not to cancel the Herne Hill Junction scheme completely, but to withhold TfL funding until proper consideration of the FOBP alternative has been done. Accountability for over £1 million of TfL funding for a scheme that takes an unnecessarily large amount of Metropolitan Open Land is the issue.

**1** We do take many of the points you make about the distinction of role between Mayor and Local Authority and agree with your choosing as your first point an insistence that "the borough carries out a proper independent evaluation of the option preferred by you, the Friends of Brockwell Park". This is the kernel of the matter – that the Council submit to outside, independent scrutiny its plans for the Junction ie that it not be judge and jury in its own case. Ensuring such independent scrutiny of a plan that is to be funded by public funds through Transport for London **is** a proper exercise of Mayoral authority vis à vis the boroughs.

FOBP argues that the *Lambeth Council Report to GLA on Herne Hill Regeneration and Junction Improvements Scheme* (which embodies the TMS report) does **not** constitute such an independent assessment, on two grounds:

**A TMS consultancy is not sufficiently independent**, as it has been a paid contractor of London Borough of Lambeth for some years and in particular has worked for the Council on the Herne Hill Junction scheme.

**B TMS did not work from the final FOBP plan.** The FOBP plan TMS commented on was an early iteration (of three major iterations). The Council was well aware that its Officers and some Members of Council were in dialogue with FOBP and should reasonably have waited for the final iteration of the FOBP before submitting FOBP's plans to TMS. On February 26, 2009, Tim Jackson, Assistant Director - Street Management, Housing Regeneration & Environment, Lambeth Council, told Alex Williams, Director of Borough Partnerships, TfL, that "since the report was submitted there have been no requests for additional information or clarification"; this is simply not true, as FOBP was both still in dialogue with Council Officers and had sent the Council a detailed letter contesting the independence of the TMS report.

**For a longstanding Lambeth consultant to comment on a preliminary draft of the FOBP scheme does not amount to the independent and proper assessment you asked for.**

**2** As you point out, local opinion is divided on this great matter. We would only comment that in terms of numbers in the course of the debate, opposition to the Council's preferred option has been overwhelming, with over 5000 objections registered via FOBP petitions on paper

and online, one of the largest single-issue registrations of opposition to a Lambeth plan; while you yourself have received 800 recent emails on the matter via the FOBP website. Barely 300 supported the Council's original plan and later 300 supported a Herne Hill Society-led petition to Lambeth Council.

**3** In terms of replacing parkland, pedestrianising a commercial street and widening pavements, however welcome (and which could have happened without any land being taken from Brockwell Park), is not a genuine substitute for the loss of 1070sq mtr of Metropolitan Open Land, nor does it fulfil the relevant legal requirements about protecting Metropolitan Open Land. The fact that Lambeth Council has not identified a piece of land adjacent to the Park for purchase – with TfL funds, as you have indicated – does not absolve the Council of its moral responsibility to maintain and not reduce MOL. The FOBP has long indicated a suitable site: the Vicarage garden, removed from the Park in the 1860s. Now that the church it is attached to is redundant and has been turned into offices and that the local vicar declines to live in the house, there are strong grounds for a determined Council to take back this land into the Park, with the help of TfL funding. We would strongly support such a move.

**4** We take your third point on the legal issues and have raised the matter with both Lambeth Council and the Secretary of State.

**5** On your fourth point, we agree with you in welcoming the pedestrian access, cycling, lighting and bus journey improvements; but all of these are delivered equally well if not better by the latest version of the FOBP scheme.

#### Conclusion

Friends of Brockwell Park (FOBP) thanks you for the care and attention you have given to our various communications about the Herne Hill Junction. As implied by your entitling your reply 'an open letter', FOBP will be publishing your letter and our reply on the FOBP website, [www.brockwellpark.com](http://www.brockwellpark.com). If it would help expedite matters, we are happy to meet you and your officials.

Time is of the essence. Work has already begun, with the demolition of the toilets at the Herne Hill entrance. As that demolition is common to both schemes, it is not too late for the Mayor properly to intervene, as a last resort, to insist that Lambeth Council get a properly independent assessment of the final scheme of the FOBP.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Morland  
Chair, Friends of Brockwell Park

Peter Bradley  
Vice Chair, Friends of Brockwell Park