

Open Letter to the Friends of Brockwell Park

Thank you for the correspondence concerning the scheme of transport improvements at Herne Hill and their impact on Brockwell Park. The London borough of Lambeth is, by law, the highway authority, traffic management authority and local planning authority for the area concerned, and therefore is responsible for the design and development of the scheme, including consultation on options, and for planning permission, subject to the decisions of the Secretary of State.

Transport for London (TfL) provides funding towards the scheme of improvements and I fully appreciate your concerns. I will address each point in turn.

First you ask me to insist the borough carries out a proper independent evaluation of the option preferred by you, the Friends of Brockwell Park. Following completion of a feasibility study by IMA for an alternative option, I asked Transport for London to work with the borough to ensure the borough considers this alternative option for part of the scheme. The London Borough of Lambeth has met my request. Its consideration of the alternative scheme is set out in its document 'Lambeth Council Report to GLA on Herne Hill Regeneration and Junction Improvements Scheme'. This draws not only upon the Council's internal advice, but also upon an independent study commissioned by the Borough from TMS consultancy, which compares Option A (approved scheme) with Option B (alternative scheme) on safety grounds. TMS have recommended the borough to follow Option A (approved scheme) over Option B (alternative scheme), and in addition to include changes to signal timing and bus lane design! to further address safety considerations.

Given this response, I cannot fault Lambeth Council for having regard to the independent advice and progressing the option that was recommended, although I appreciate it was not the option you preferred. I note that local opinion remains divided as to the merits of different scheme options. Whilst the Herne Hill Society have acknowledged the evaluation that followed my intervention as independent, and agree with the option it recommends, the Friends of Brockwell Park take a different view. This division of local opinion does not give me grounds to intervene again.

Secondly, you refer to TfL paying to replace the parkland, and raise a concern that public money should not be used for this. This concerns the loss of 0.2% of the parkland, some 1070 square

metres, in mitigation of which the borough has proposed measures such as a new pedestrian area at the end of Railton Road, a landscaped area in replacement of a toilet block, and the widening of pavements. TfL offered to make funding available to the borough, if in addition to these proposals, a piece of land adjacent to the park could be identified for laying-out as new parkland to maintain its acreage and value for money shown. Such an area has not been identified by the borough.

Thirdly, you raise concerns about the legality of the borough implementing the Secretary of State's planning permission if the Friends of Brockwell Park go ahead with a planning application for a different scheme, and in due course both options have planning permission. Whilst I would not wish to imply any legal doubt, this is a matter which should be up taken up with Lambeth Council and the Secretary of State.

Finally, I must stress that the borough's proposals at Brockwell Park are part of a wider package of improvements which include:

- Improvements to pedestrian crossings on all arms of the junction;
- Reduced bus delays and improve interchange facilities;
- Improved lighting in the area;
- Improvements for cyclists including cycle lanes and advance cycle stop lines.

These are intended to balance the needs of both pedestrians and road users.

Ultimately the decision to go forward with the scheme lies with Lambeth Council and I have pledged on a number of occasions that I will only use my legal powers to overrule borough decisions as a last resort subject to advice from officers.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London