

Palmers Green public realm consultation

Consultation summary

August 2014



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Introduction

In March 2014, Enfield Council undertook a consultation to explore how residents feel about the public realm in Palmers Green, and to establish what the issues are with streets in the area at the moment, what positive features there are to build upon and what residents would like to see in the future. The consultation was based on the earlier 'Palmers Green Town Centre Survey', but sought to expand the focus group and draw in the wider community.

The aim of the consultation was to form a list of key areas and issues for consideration, rather than asking residents to respond to a set number of themes or a design. For this reason the format of the consultation was kept very open.

This means that there is a wide range of comments relating to all types of issues within the public realm, however a number of common themes and locations emerge in the consultation responses. This reports summarises these comments and draws up a list of key themes and locations that should be further explored in future consultation exercises to set design parameters for the streets in the area.

Through feedback sessions where these results are presented, residents will be able to review the consultation summary and start further discussing and prioritising the key issues.



Face painting at the consultation event

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Consultation methodology

On 21-23 March 2014, a consultation vehicle was installed on Green Lanes. A large 'Planning for Real' model of the Palmers Green area had been built by students at St. Anne's School, and this was set up in the vehicle to form a focal point for the consultation.

The model was then used to start conversations about the area, and residents were asked to place comment cards within it to point out issues and positive features in the Palmers Green public realm. They were also able to put forward their ideas and suggestions for the future of the streets in the area. In addition to the model, questionnaires were provided on which residents could make more detailed comments.

Because of the consultation format, it was felt that residents of various ages and backgrounds found it easy and enjoyable to engage with the process. A total of 100 residents filled out the questionnaire and worked on the model, and an additional 56 people chose to only work with the model.

Unless otherwise stated, all numbers within the report have been shown as a percentage of the total number of consultation responses. However, it is worth noting that due to the open format of the consultation people will only have commented on issues which they feel are important to them (i.e. not all residents will have commented on all topics), but clear trends regarding the key issues can be identified.

Furthermore, a large number of residents chose not to fill out the questionnaire or place comment cards, but only stopped by the vehicle to talk to the consultation facilitators. Although their comments have not been included in the report statistics their concerns and suggestions support the overall feedback summarised in this report.

Image Classroom



Model building workshop at St Anne's School

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Consultation Themes

Sense of Community

Respondents talked about a 'town like feeling' and that there is a community spirit, together with a diversity of facilities in the area for people of all backgrounds and cultures (15% commented on this). Residents are positive about community events such as the Palmers Green Festival, and they feel that the area has significant potential to build upon this, possibly through more events in locations such as Broomfield Park or by extending the existing market.

However, some residents feel that the area has changed over the last few years, and for this reason features such as the Triangle have become ever more important to retain a sense of place and historical connection.

It was felt a better public realm could help create identity for the area and a feeling of community. This would be achieved through improvements to the Triangle and through high quality seating areas and more greenery on Green Lanes. It was suggested that this also may help to attract more independent shops, bakeries and butchers etc. 'rather than betting shops'. 30% of respondents suggested that the amount of betting shops is one of the key problems in the area.

Residents also suggested that the lack of facilities for young people in the area needs to be addressed, since this leads to them congregating and loitering in certain areas, particularly around McDonalds on Green Lanes, the Triangle and the Lodge Drive car park.



Image Community

“There is a good sense of community amongst the residents”

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Local History

Several residents commented on the historical value of impressive Victorian/Edwardian buildings on Green Lanes/Aldermans Hill, but felt that these need to be better maintained, and that the appearance of shop fronts needs to be controlled – ‘be firm, do not allow horrible shop fronts that destroy original features’/‘Ban more betting shops, protect the older buildings in the area’.

As mentioned, Palmers Green Triangle is also seen as a key historical location that needs to be protected and improved to remain a high quality landmark for the area, for example through new public artwork. “We love the Triangle, its sense of history and community - it is a focal point in the area”

Antisocial behaviour

There are problems with antisocial behaviour in certain areas, and it was suggested that a higher police presence and more lighting is needed, particularly in areas such as the Lodge Drive car park. This location, together with alleyways at the back of Green Lanes/Hazelwood Lane and Devonshire Mews were said to be linked to issues with drug dealing, and some residents (7%) commented on that this made them feel unsafe and caused them to avoid these locations at night.

In addition to this, alleyways and hidden spaces at Green Lanes/Hazelwood Lane, Devonshire Mews, Devonshire Road, Osbourne Road, Springfield Parade Mews, Windsor Road, Fox Lane and along the New River also suffer from fly tipping.

Several residents pointed out problems around Old Park Road, such as littering and a wall that has collapsed onto the pavement.



“We love the Triangle”... “Make it a focal point for people rather than traffic!”

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Traffic and transport

Many respondents were concerned about that the area has high volumes of traffic and problems such as speeding, and some suggested drastic measures such as turning the entire area (including Green Lanes) into a 20 m.p.h. zone to make the area more pedestrian friendly.

There were many comments that Green Lanes is particularly problematic, with 'car drivers speeding and not indicating', but residents also suggested traffic calming measures on Aldermans Hill, Fox Lane, Devonshire Road, Bourne Hill, Hedge Lane, Hazelwood Road, the Grove and Park Avenue. Several pointed out problems on Hazelwood Lane, and requested that speed humps are installed in this location.

There are also problems with rat runs and speeding on roads such as Devonshire Road and Old Park Road, Lodge Drive, Cranford Avenue, Broomfield Avenue and Hawthorn Avenue. 44% of respondents talked about the need for improvements to the traffic system, whereas 26% suggested that traffic calming measures on residential roads are required.

It was felt that Palmers Green has good transport connections (10% of respondents commented on this). The railway station is a hub for the area, but the narrow pavements between the station and Green Lanes are a problem, and some felt that the station needs to be better integrated with the rest of the town.

Parking

The opinions on parking in the area were divided – some residents would like to see more parking, whereas others feel that too much importance has been given to vehicular traffic in the area – 'Traffic dominates the area'. Some suggested that additional greenery could help alleviate the problem, if trees are integrated into parking areas to green the area up and help give it a more pedestrian feel.



“There’s too much emphasis on traffic. Pedestrians have rights too.”

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Several respondents commented that the existing 'parking on Green Lanes is excellent', but some (20%) also added that they would like to see parking improvements, more free parking or cheaper fees since 'expensive parking stops you popping into local shops'. Others suggested that the 'pay and display' system works well, since it makes shoppers park for a shorter period of time which is healthy for business.

Residents also commented on issues with parking on side streets such as Riverway, Hazelwood Lane, Windsor Road and Fox Lane. It was suggested that 'one hour parking restrictions on residential roads' would be suitable or a CPZ of some form with residents parking permits, since people park here and walk to the station or Green Lanes.

Cycling

The opinions on cycling in the area are divided – of the people who commented on cycling 70% said they would welcome the proposed Cycle Enfield improvements, whereas 30% have concerns about the proposed new cycle lanes.

Some feel that new cycle lanes are crucial for the area - 'I would like to see designated cycle lanes everywhere'. Current problem spots for cyclists include onstreet parking at the Lodge Drive junction, which create dangers for cyclists, and the Bourne Hill junction, where there is no safe crossing. It was also mentioned that new cycle paths down to the New River are required.

However, others point out problems with cycling such as 'cyclists going through red lights on Green Lanes' and 'people cycling on pavements' on Green Lanes and Aldermans Hill.



“I would like better cycle lanes and reduced speed on the roads”

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Few respondents were against cycling improvements altogether, but some will only support new cycle lanes if no parking spaces on Green Lanes are lost. Some also felt that cyclists need to be separated from pedestrians and motorists, and for this reason they are concerned about more cyclists on Green Lanes.

Provision for pedestrians

It is felt that central Palmers Green is very traffic dominated at the moment, with many barriers hindering pedestrian movements, poor pedestrian crossing provision and wide junctions with vehicular rather than pedestrian priority.

Residents pointed out the need for more crossing points on Green Lanes, and brought up several areas of pedestrian/vehicular conflict such as the Triangle, Palmers Green Station, Hazelwood Lane, the crossing at Broomfield Avenue/Broomfield Lane and in particular the Bourne Hill/Green Lanes junction. It was felt that this junction is unsafe for both pedestrians and cyclists, and people would like to see improvements here. 26% of respondents suggested that this is one of the key issues in the area.

The wide pavements in the area were mentioned as a positive feature, since they create potential to encourage outdoor seating areas and a 'cafe culture'. This was also mentioned as a possible new location for the existing market.

However, some (10%) felt that the pavement surfacing is in need of improvement, since cracked paving slabs create trip hazards, particularly on Aldermans Hill. Several point out that they would prefer paving slabs rather than asphalt, however this would need to be reviewed in light of the Council's Streetscape Policy and Guidance 2012.



“Create an area where people will want to come on foot and stay”

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Green Space

Many respondents (29%) commented on green structure in the area. Most residents are positive about the 'peaceful green spaces' in the area such as Broomfield Park, Grovelands Park and Hazelwood Recreation Ground, but feel that there is not sufficient greenery on the streets at the moment, and that this needs to be addressed.

Comments from residents focused mainly on Green Lanes, The Triangle and Aldermans Hill and included 'We need to get some greenery back into the town centre!' / 'lots of low maintenance plants along the shopping area would block some of the views and fumes from traffic and encourage restaurants and cafes to make better use of the outside space.' / 'Create a boulevard of trees along the shops'

There are however some concerns as to how additional tree planting will affect parking space on Green Lanes, and this will need to be further evaluated as proposals for the area are developed. Some respondents also mentioned that newly planted street trees on the side streets in the area have died, and felt that it is key that any new specimen trees needs to be replaced by similar sized trees immediately should there be any such issues in the future.



"It would be really lovely to put the 'green' into Palmers Green"

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Key Locations

The consultation included comments for many areas, however the following locations stand out as places of particular interest, both with regards to existing issues and suggested improvements, but also for their potential to contribute to a high quality public realm in Palmers Green.

The Triangle

Many residents suggested that this would be an ideal spot to create identity for the area and to form 'a focal point for people rather than traffic'. It was felt that this could partly be achieved through the new clock tower but many also felt that public art would be appropriate. It was suggested that more greenery needs to be introduced on the Triangle to replace the removed tree – this does not necessarily need to be a replacement tree, but could be raised planters or other planting areas. Of residents who commented on the Triangle, 96% would like to see some improvements, whereas only 4% were against changes to the Triangle altogether.

Some creative suggestions were put forward, such as extending the Triangle so that the road only runs on one side to create wider pavements and room for trees, bike parking and outdoor seating areas. It was also suggested that a shared pedestrian/vehicular space could be created. However, it was felt by others that any such measures would reduce vehicular flow and aggravate existing traffic problems.

Others suggested improvements to the traffic lights and crossing points to make it easier for all users to cross.

Green Lanes

Green Lanes is very important for the area, but residents commented that the high street has declined over the last few years due to the type of shops and the state of the public realm. A large number of residents (33%)



'Planning for Real'-model of the Triangle

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commented on the need to attract different types of shops such as new start ups, independent shops and pop ups such as temporary art galleries. It was felt that the public realm on Green Lanes is key to 'bring back charm and character' to the area, and suggestions included more greenery and tree planting, lighting, more places to sit and less clutter and advertising. As mentioned, some residents commented on the potential to create more of a 'pavement cafe culture' and pedestrian friendly area by better utilising the wide pavements. It was felt however that better control is needed of how the pavements are used by shops, since at the current usage makes the area look 'cheap looking' and 'grotty'.

Traffic is seen as a key issue for Green Lanes, and comments were made that introducing a new 20 m.p.h. zone would improve the area significantly, together with better crossing points and traffic calming measures such as build outs and shared surfaces at certain locations such as the Lodge Drive/Green Lanes junction. This junction is currently seen as dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, and residents would like to see improved crossing points in this location. Respondents also suggested that improvements for pedestrians are required at the Bourne Hill/Hedge Lane/Green Lanes junction, and that this junction has potential to become a gateway into Palmers Green.

Parking is a key issue for this location, however respondents have mixed views – please refer to the 'parking' section of this report.

Fox Lane

Fox Lane and the adjacent railway bridge were pointed out as particular problem areas by residents. This location suffers from antisocial behaviour such as noise and rowdiness, fly tipping, dog fouling, drinking and drug use. Due to this, people commented on that they don't feel safe here, particularly at night time.



'Planning for Real'-model of Green Lanes

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The railway bridge is deemed very problematic, since the corrugated metal walls give it an unpleasant feel and creates blind spots. Residents requested more policing in this location, for the walls to be replaced by transparent fencing and for additional lighting to be installed. It was felt that gating alleyways may alleviate problems.

Devonshire Road

Devonshire Road has a number of issues, including litter dumped from commercial premises on the street, rat running to avoid the Triangle, fly tipping around the garages at Devonshire Close and antisocial behaviour.

Nevertheless, residents in this road appear to be actively engaged in improving the local environment, and are looking to start a street play scheme for local children.

Aldermans Hill

Aldermans Hill was seen as an important entrance point into the town and an opportunity to create better links between Green Lanes and Broomfield Park, potentially by creating a 'boulevard of trees' and other planting areas.

However, some residents commented on traffic speeds and would like to see the speed limit lowered. There were also concerns about the condition of the paving slabs in this location, and some residents commented that they don't feel safe walking along Aldermans Hill due to antisocial behaviour. Suggestions for resolving these problems included more policing and secure bike lockers.

Hazelwood Lane

Hazelwood Lane was pointed out as a problem area due to speeding and dangerous driving, making it difficult and unsafe to cross the street. Residents suggested lowered speed limits, and would also like to see residents only parking, along with improvements to paving surfaces.

There were also reports of fly tipping and littering, and requests to have the alleyway to the back of Green Lanes closed off.

Hedge Lane & Bourne Hill

These roads suffer from speeding and dangerous driving, and it was suggested that speed limits need to be lowered. Respondents also requested more, better regulated car parking at the junction of Hedge Lane/Fox Lane, and it was suggested that more trees and greenery is needed on Bourne Hill and Hedge Lane.

Osborne Road & Windsor Road

Several residents reported problems with potholes in these locations, and would like to see paving surfaces improved. There were also reports of antisocial behaviour such as illegal dumping and irresponsible dog owners.

Some residents suggested that these roads should be made one way streets due to conflicts when cars are trying to pass in both directions.

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Summary - Recommendations

Based on the consultation results, the following recommendations have been put together for the future development of the streets in Palmers Green:

- The 'town like feeling' and sense of place should be underpinned through public artwork, outdoor seating areas, more greenery and improved pedestrian environments, particularly on Green Lanes
- The requirements for parking on Green Lanes should be further evaluated (and additional consultation undertaken) to ensure that parking is located correctly and that it can be integrated with cycling proposals and proposed additional greenery, while also addressing concerns from residents regarding lost parking space
- Better, safer cycle lanes should be created within the area – having designated cycle lanes may help to reduce problems with cyclists using the pavements on Green Lanes and Aldermans Hills
- Further improvement proposals for the area around the Triangle should be developed, to ensure that this location remains a focal point in the area and becomes a place for 'people rather than traffic'
- The feasibility of suggested traffic calming measures and parking management in residential roads should be further evaluated
- Potential improvements to crossing points and new crossing points in proposed locations should be further investigated
- The potential for improving and moving the existing market to a more visible location (possibly using the wide pavements on Green Lanes) should be explored
- High quality ornamental planting areas and tree planting should be introduced in key locations such as Green Lanes, Aldermans Hill and the Triangle. This can help to create 'green links' from the high street into existing green spaces.
- Potential 'quick fixes' such as repairing potholes, gating alleyways and more policing in locations which suffer from antisocial behaviour (for example the area around the station, Fox Lane and the Lodge Drive car park) should be identified, while more complex issues such as the requirement for parking and cycle lanes are evaluated further
- The resident suggestion to expand the street play scheme on Devonshire Road (drawing inspiration from earlier schemes by organisations such as 'Playing Out') should be explored

“It would be lovely if Palmers Green became known as a village like Blackheath / Hampstead Heath and an attractive place to live and visit.”

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Comments outside the scope of this consultation

Some of the comments from residents fall outside the scope of this consultation. These should be referred to the appropriate departments or organisations for further investigation.

- Many respondents had questions and comments about the future of Broomfield House, and would like to see a 'resolution to the Broomfield House situation'
- There were suggestions for more maintenance and additional facilities in Broomfield Park such as a cafe, more play provision and a paddling pool
- There were questions around the future of the library, and many respondents felt that the local library is very important for the area
- Residents would like improvements to Hazelwood Recreation Ground play area and resurfacing of the tennis courts
- Some people requested improvements to bus routes, and would like to see better links to areas such as Winchmore Hill Green
- Most people commented on the amount of betting shops on the high street and the need to create more opportunities for smaller, independent shops. This issue falls outside the scope of this consultation, however due to the amount of comments surrounding this problem it is clear that this is one of the key concerns for residents in the area. It was suggested that the Council needs to find ways to attract the desired type of shops and make use of existing derelict facilities. Residents also suggested that better public places on Green Lanes may help to draw different types of businesses to the area.

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