

## Note of the Eighth Old Kent Road Community Forum meeting

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016,  
At Walworth Academy, Shorncliffe Road

### Presentations

**Peter Wright, Old Kent Road People residents group.** Peter talked about the best of the existing green spaces in the area, such as Salisbury Row Park (photo to the right here) and what makes these parks so valuable, and discussed how there is a need to link existing and future green spaces up so that people can walk and cycle away from traffic between them, as with the Walworth Green Link.

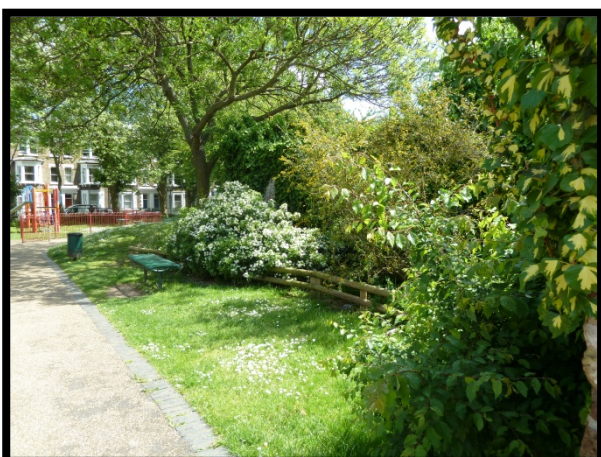


**Rupal Shah of Groundwork Southwark.**

Rupal showed us examples of how green and open spaces have been enhanced, for example a community garden at the Aylesbury estate, and a children's play area at the Bramcote and Bonamy estate. Rupal also talked about the need to involve people before work starts, so designing any new open space with the help of local people is important. Rupal gave the meeting questions to consider in the small group discussions that followed her talk.

### Small group discussions

There were five groups who each looked at the same questions about parks and open spaces. Each group had very similar ideas. The most popular ideas were all about making the best use



of what we have, create new parks and open spaces as well as new homes and workspaces, and linking parks and open spaces together so as to make walking and cycling around the area pleasurable and rewarding, rather than stressful, noisy and polluted with traffic fumes.

### Workshop questions

**How do people use parks and open spaces right now?** We have many much loved open



spaces to the north of the Old Kent Road neighbourhood, such as Salisbury Row Park, Nursery Row, Victory Park and Surrey Square Park, which are well designed, well maintained, and very well used spaces. However, apart from Burgess Park, the rest of the area has too few parks and open spaces.

Many people said that they often use Burgess Park, for both leisure activities, and as a route to other places. Walking and cycling and dog walking in Burgess Park are very popular. One group found Burgess Park “bland”. The Surrey Canal is a popular open space too, but it needs better signage. The general criticism however was to do with the need for more parks and for more links between all of them.

**Where the best parks and open spaces are right now?**

The Avondale estate has a lovely green space with children’s play area, but some said it feels very enclosed and not welcoming. Caroline Gardens is a space that really enhances its surroundings. Burgess Park stands out for its size and therefore capacity to have many different uses and types of experiences, including the pond,



the cafe and the BMX track. Some people pointed out that the really good parks and open spaces have been created due to community involvement, as with Salisbury Row Park which over the years has had local people asking for improvements and looking after the space themselves. Another interesting point was that when there are a variety of parks and open spaces close by people can walk between them and enjoy a variety of park experiences. So, Burgess Park is large and well used, nearby Nursery Row Park has lots of wooden structures for kids to play on, Salisbury Row Park has a trampoline for kids to use, Victory Park has wonderful planting, and Surrey Square Park is great for sports. Copying this way of creating the best possible park experience would be a good thing.

**What to do to in the future about the area’s parks and opens spaces?** Protect all existing parks and open spaces from developers, and spend money on enhancing existing parks too. Create new parks and open spaces, particularly in the south of the area, but also somewhere in the Mandela Way vicinity. Thousands of new residents and workers will need more green spaces





*Burgess Park and Albany Road*

not less. Make these public open spaces not private open spaces. Create green, walking and cycling links between open spaces (new and existing) and design these links, as well as the new parks; so that they are pleasant leisure spaces, with seating, art, planting, things to do such as sports, outdoor gyms, and play spaces. More trees. Try to make better use of the green spaces on estates, and try pop up parks too. Create community gardens and allotments, bandstands and cafes. Make sure these spaces feel safe, e.g. lighting. Fund more festivals in local parks

and open spaces. Support the creation and day to day admin and management of Friends of Parks groups. Ask for help from communities with the maintenance of their parks. Public toilets for larger green areas. Green spaces alongside roads, to create people friendly places.

**Ideas, suggestions, what to do and where.** Workshop participants told us that we all could learn from the Highline in New York and Promenade Plantee in Paris<sup>i</sup>. Link Burgess Park to Southwark Park. Create green routes from the south to the north of the borough, passing across the Old Kent Road. Extend the Surrey Canal green route across the Old Kent Road to the north and south towards Lewisham. A new green link from Nursery Row and Salisbury Row Park to Burgess Park. Roads can become much more pleasant and still carry traffic, see the road from Oval to Vauxhall for a local example. Planting alongside railway lines.

Don't wait, enhance the area now before new development starts, and make it a pleasant neighbourhood to move too.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.thehighline.org/visit> and [http://next.paris.fr/english/parks-woods-gardens-and-cemeteries/gardens/promenade-plantee/rub\\_8212\\_stand\\_34230\\_port\\_18987](http://next.paris.fr/english/parks-woods-gardens-and-cemeteries/gardens/promenade-plantee/rub_8212_stand_34230_port_18987)



*Burgess park on a sunny winters day*