

Metropolitan Police Environmental Visual Audit Update May 2022.

Each of the fifteen recommendations in the audit are set out below. Included for each is the initial council response, any feedback from the public consultation and details of any further proposed actions that have taken place subsequently or are currently in progress.

Since the date of this report many other significant changes have taken place in the park. For example, the park now has a dedicated manager and a full-time team maintaining the park. The park has celebrated its 150th birthday and many physical improvements have been made to improve the park further. The park is not the park it was in 2018 when the audit took place and has throughout the pandemic had to serve an even bigger portion of the local community.

Full Closure Policy

MPS EVA recommendation - It is recommended that a new policy is implemented to ensure that the park is closed and fully secured at a single designated time.

Initial response - The council is aware that there will be differing views on this and therefore has made this a topic within the public consultation.

Consultation response - Almost half (46%) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with fully locking the park. Over a third (35%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal. Almost a fifth (19%) of respondents did not have an opinion.

Further proposed action – Throughout the pandemic the Council has moved away from locking all parks in the borough, and this continues to be the case in Finsbury Park. This policy position will be adopted in the new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and will be subject to further consultation this autumn.

Stroud Green gate

MPS EVA recommendation - The current installation is not fit for purpose. The gate should be of a design and construction that maximises visual permeability and incorporate a good level of security.

Initial response - Works to the gate will only be required if there is a decision to lock the park at night.

Consultation response – Not applicable.

Further proposed action – Action only required if a different policy is adopted on park locking.

Stroud Green entrance

MPS EVA recommendation - The area leading to the open expanse of the park has created a haven for illicit use and anti-social behaviour.

Initial response - With the agreement of the Councils Nature Conservation Officer, this area is now being mown more regularly and new wildlife areas will be created elsewhere in the park.

Consultation response - Not applicable.

Further proposed action – A new Nature Conservation Management Plan is being developed this year. MKA ecology have been appointed to develop this in conjunction with park stakeholders.

Boundary Treatment

MPS EVA recommendation - It is recommended that the wooden fencing be replaced.

Initial response - The council agrees with this recommendation and will undertake a replacement programme over the next four years. However, this is subject to further decisions, including planning permission, relating to the style and materials for a new fence. In addition, a fence may no longer be required if the park is to remain unlocked overnight.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – An initial estimate for the complete replacement of the fencing is close to £1m including gates and entrances. This funding is currently not available. However, it will be identified as part of the Parks Asset Management Plan and additional funding sort as available.

Arboriculture

MPS EVA recommendation - 'The Growing Space' is treated to improve the surveillance levels, particularly natural an informal, from the street and the buildings opposite.

Initial response - Tree works have commenced in a number of areas around the park and will continue throughout 2019/20.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – regular surveys of the trees in the park will be undertaken and works programmed as required on an ongoing basis.

Manor Lodge

MPS EVA recommendation - The building and adjoining gardens are in need of attention to prevent this area falling into further disrepair.

Initial response - The council is working with all the current tenants of this building and the Friends of the park to ensure the building has a good level of community use and the garden area is well maintained. The Friends of the Park have planned three working days in the garden during July.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – This is an ongoing piece of work and has been hindered to some degree by the unofficial usage of the building by Street Kitchen. Currently discussions are taking place about the potential for the building to become a museum.

Wooden Shelter removal

MPS EVA recommendation - This small building near to the inner carriage drive by Seven Sisters gate has been highlighted as a prevalent location for anti-social behaviour and drug use.

Initial response - This building is an historic asset within the park. Rather than remove this building the council's enforcement team and the police are working to reduce antisocial behaviour through engagement and introducing new powers through a Public Spaces Protection Order. The introduction of Public Spaces Protection Orders is covered in the consultation.

Consultation response – Over half (55%) of respondents strongly agreed with introducing a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to help with antisocial behaviour, alcohol consumption and dog control. Just over a quarter (27%) agreed with the suggestion. Almost a tenth either disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with the suggestion. A further 9% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further proposed action – the shelter has had the roof refurbished and the ceiling secured to prevent people sleeping in the roof space. The draft PSPO's were consulted on, however, agreement could not be reached across all three boroughs and therefore they have not progressed.

Finsbury Gate seating

MPS EVA recommendation - It is recommended that the benches near to the Finsbury Gate are removed in order to deter their use by the street drinkers and drug dealers.

Initial response - The council is aware that there will be differing views on this and therefore has made this a topic within the public consultation.

Consultation response - Approaching half of respondents (45%) of people strongly agreed or agreed with removing the benches near Finsbury Park gate but over a quarter (28%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal. Around a quarter (26%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the suggestion.

Further proposed action – the benches were removed due to the persistent use for anti-social behaviour. Although this has displaced the activity to other locations in the park and will need continued attention by the Police.

Waste Bins

MPS EVA recommendations - The current installations around the park can be used for the storage of weapons and drugs. An option would be complete removal and a re-education of park users to take all their waste with them. A bin design that prevents illicit usage should be considered.

Initial response - The council is not aware any incidents where this is the case, and all bins could be used in this way. The council is working on a new bin strategy and has also tripled the number of Park Keepers in the park who collect litter and empty the bins.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – the council has introduced concrete bin bases to the bins in the park which reduce any long grass around the bins that may have encouraged the hiding of weapons or drugs. During the pandemic there has been a significant uplift (70%) in litter in the parks which has required attention. The Council still believes bins in the park is the correct approach.

Cricket Pavilion

MPS EVA recommendation - As the area has become popular with rough sleepers, steps need to be taken to reduce the desirability of the location.

Initial response - The council has undertaken works to secure this building and deter people from sleeping rough in close proximity to the building.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – None.

Exercise Equipment

MPS EVA recommendation - The inclusion of pull-up bars to the exercise area should be implemented as soon as practicable.

Initial response - The council will introduce some additional fitness equipment at the outdoor gym to meet the need of those undertaking this kind of activity. However, it is unlikely that this measure alone will tackle the adult use of the adjacent playground. Therefore, the Council has included the issue of children's play in the consultation. This is alongside an investment of nearly £600,000 in the children's play areas this year.

Consultation response - A third (33%) of people, either strongly agreed or agreed with relocating the children's playground by the American gardens to a new location near the centre of the park. A fifth (20%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, almost half (47%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this proposal.

Further proposed action - A new fitness gym has been installed in partnership with the Steel Warriors charity. This has proved very popular but has not prevented the abuse of the children's play area and therefore the play area will be removed once the new Richard Hope Play Space opens.

Lighting

MPS EVA recommendation - Vandal resistant bollard lighting has been installed to provide a 'safe route' from the athletics track to the Manor Gate. Bollard lighting is not considered as an effective light source.

Initial response - The council cannot provide a different style of lighting in this location due to the presence of bats in this part of the park. However, the council is consulting more broadly on the introduction of lighting in the park.

Consultation response - Over half (52%) of respondents strongly agreed to the introduction of lighting in the park at night and just over a quarter (28%) agreed. A tenth either strongly disagreed (4%) or disagreed (6%) with the suggestion. A further tenth of people (9%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further proposed action – the Council is limited in where it can install lighting due to the known presence of bats. However, it would be possible to light the route between Finsbury gate and Endymion Road gate and the spurs to Stroud Green gate and Oxford Road gate. Funding is yet to be secured for this project and will be included in the forthcoming Parks Asset Management Plan.

CCTV

MPS EVA recommendation - Any consideration for the installation of CCTV would require the advice and guidance of a suitably qualified CCTV installer.

Initial response - The council is aware that there will be differing views on this and therefore has made this a topic within the public consultation. No new cameras can be installed until the council has fully commissioned its new CCTV Control Room at the beginning of 2020.

Consultation response - Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the implementation of CCTV in the park. Nearly half (46%) strongly agreed with this proposal and nearly a third (31%) agreed. One in eight people either disagreed strongly (4%) or disagreed (8%) with the proposal. Just over a tenth of respondents (11%) did not have a view.

Further proposed action – Six locations have been identified to provide the best possible coverage of the park. Preliminary works have taken place and the camera installation will take place in August this year.

Legislation

MPS EVA recommendation - The park is not currently covered by any local bye-laws or legislation regarding dog control, alcohol consumption or anti-social behaviour in general. It is recommended that consideration is given to the use of a Public Spaces Protection Order

Initial response - This is incorrect. The park has its own set of byelaws that were put in place by the GLC when they ran the park. In addition, there is a Public Spaces Protection Order that covers the control of dogs within the park. Further powers could be implemented, and this is set out in the public consultation.

Consultation response – Over half (55%) of respondents strongly agreed with introducing a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to help with antisocial behaviour, alcohol consumption and dog control. Just over a quarter (27%) agreed with the suggestion. Almost a tenth either disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with the suggestion. A further 9% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Further proposed action – the shelter has had the roof refurbished and the ceiling secured to prevent people sleeping in the roof space. The draft PSPO's were consulted on, however, agreement could not be reached across all three boroughs and therefore they have not progressed.

Licensing

MPS EVA recommendation - The prevalence of street-drinking within the park is a significant concern and engagement needs to take place with local licensed premises.

Initial response - Most of the local licensed premises are not in Haringey. However, where they are in Haringey, they all receive regular inspections by the council's licensing team and are reminded of their responsibilities under current legislation. Similar inspections are carried out by Hackney and Islington.

Consultation response – Not applicable

Further proposed action – This is an ongoing piece of work.

Items not covered in the MPS EVA but covered in the consultation.

Rather than create a separate document please find below the three remaining issues that were covered in the public consultation.

Car parking

Consultation Question - Respondents were invited to select one of three options for managing the amount of vehicle traffic in the park.

Consultation response – Just over two fifths (42%) preferred Option one which was to stop public car parking in Finsbury Park. A third of respondents (33%) Option 2 which was to reduce the amount of parking. The third option, which was to limit parking to hybrid or electric vehicles only was supported by a sixth (17%) of respondents. A further 8% of respondents did not express a preference.

Further proposed action – The pandemic and the need for more space for people and social distancing in lockdown 1 led to the closure of the park to most of the public car parking. It is proposed to maintain the current position and only allow car parking for authorised users, such as stakeholders, staff, film crews and events. Specific provision will be made for blue badge holders and minibus drop offs.

Electric vehicle charging

Consultation Question - Implementation of electric vehicle charging points in the park.

Consultation response – Almost half of respondents (45%) agreed or strongly agreed to implement electric charging points in the park, while almost a third (31%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Just under a quarter (24%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the suggestion.

Further proposed action – This proposal will now not move forward as most cars are excluded. In time the Council's fleet will move to electric. At that point it may be possible to provide charging points to other "authorised vehicle users".

Priority for investment

	Selected by	% all respondents
Cleanliness	547	57%
Diversity of wildlife	282	29%
Maintenance of flowers and shrubs	265	28%
Lighting	264	27%
The number and quality of the toilets	245	25%
Litter bins	216	22%
Play areas	191	20%
Youth facilities	140	15%
Lake improvements	126	13%
Improving entrance points	125	13%
Sports facilities	104	11%
Outdoor fitness	99	10%
Community events	93	10%
Improving access for the disabled people	76	8%
Art activities or installations	71	7%
Dog control	59	6%
Seating	57	6%
Other	129	13%