

4 January 2019

Dear Councilors Tripp and Ali,

1. We are writing to you, as Cabinet members for Environment and Sustainable Transport, to express our serious concerns about the facilities for active travel in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) and the surrounding area. The facilities that have been built for walking and cycling are not up to scratch, and in many cases they are being made worse. We are worried that the window of opportunity to fix this is closing.
2. We would, of course, be delighted to meet with you to discuss these concerns or, even better, to ride around the Park and Westfield with you to highlight the barriers to safe and inclusive cycling, and explain what improvements we believe should be made.
3. By way of background; as part of the Olympic legacy, QEOP has the potential to set the standard for sustainable transport and healthy streets:
* It is in the centre of an area of fast development - of housing, retail, office and leisure sites;
* It covers several important utility and leisure routes, and has more on its periphery - QEOP is suitably well connected to be a centre for leisure cycling and a broader off-road cycle network; and
* Unlike in many parts of Newham where narrow street widths make it physically and politically difficult to allocate space to active travel, this is not the case for QEOP. The area is, in the truest sense for London, a ‘blank slate.’
1. At the time of the Park’s construction, the London Cycling Campaign and its local groups (Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest) campaigned for exemplar facilities for cycling and walking, with the Olympic legacy in mind. Unfortunately, despite starting from an almost blank slate, the current facilities for walking and cycling vary from mediocre, to unacceptable, to dangerous. This problem has been recognised for some years, by campaigners and also by City Hall. For example, the March 2013 paper published by TfL “[The Mayor’s Vision for Cycling in London – an Olympic Legacy for all Londoners](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cycling_vision_gla_template_final.pdf)” states (at page 28):

“We will do our best to improve some new schemes, such as the Olympic Park, that were given planning consent under previous regimes with insufficient provision for cycling.”

1. A good example of the types of problems we see is the road system around the Westfield shopping centre, which has poor facilities for active travel[[1]](#footnote-1) but a large amount of space allocated to dual carriageway roads. A park wide 20mph speed limit was intended, but has not, to date, been fully pursued.[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. We are particularly alarmed that the situation appears to be worsening. Even as Newham Council’s intervention to prioritise walking and cycling in Stratford town centre is making huge progress, on the other side of the railway tracks, LLDC are constructing a new north-south road in a former pedestrian area of the Park near the London Stadium. LLDC have now said that this road will be, in principle, access only except for buses and cycles - however we remain concerned that, without physical enforcement, it will provide a new rat-run for motor traffic from the A12 through the residential streets of Hackney Wick and the East Village. We’re also concerned that, despite being brand new, the road will have unprotected painted cycle lanes, with no physical protection for people cycling to the new schools, or to the leisure facilities in the Park.
3. We are also very worried that construction and events traffic is not being properly managed, and routinely results in important transport connections closing without warning. For instance, Copper Street, an important route for pupils at Mossbourne Academy and the schools near Victoria Park, was closed for some months for construction. Only a very narrow section of Copper Street was open to pedestrians, with the expectation that cyclists would dismount and push their machines (including disabled cyclists, who may not be physically able to dismount - this site is within sight of the Paralympic agitos displayed on the Eastcross Bridge.) The alternative route, via Waterden Road and East Bay Lane, was also unusable, because the pavement and cycleway have disappeared under hoardings for another construction project.
4. Furthermore the plans for the major development of “Stratford Waterfront” evidence continued complacency.
5. To this letter, we have annexed a [Newham Cyclists report on an audit ride which took place on 18 July this year](Newham%20Cyclists%20report%20on%20an%20audit%20ride%20which%20took%20place%20on%2018%20July%20this%20year), which included representatives of LLDC, TfL and Bespoke Transport Consulting (involved in the Waltham Forest Mini-Holland programme.) The headlines indicate a long list of concerns, and that the ongoing approach of the planning authority seems to prioritise the convenience of passing motorists over the safety of people walking and cycling, including local residents. We aren’t convinced that new plans for Montfichet Rd (in conjunction with the MSG Sphere) provided to the LLDC’s Sustainable and Active Travel Group meet an acceptable standard.
6. LLDC’s Policy Objectives include: promoting convergence, ensuring high quality design, ensuring environmental sustainability, and alleviation of intrusive works. We are heartened by the appointment of Councillor Tripp and and Councillor Beckles to the LLDC Planning Committee, and hope you will both use this opportunity to hold LLDC to these objectives. We urge you to promote QEOP as a true Olympic legacy, in the spirit of Liveable Neighbourhoods, by enabling sustainable transport and avoiding through motor traffic.
7. We are standing at a crossroads, and have the opportunity now to alter the trajectory of bigger traffic jams, worse pollution, and more casualties. Instead, you can play a critical role in helping ensure the Park is retrofitted to deliver a big increase in walking and cycling and a reduction in car dependency. Current major development plans like Stratford Waterfront provide a key opportunity to achieve this.

Newham Cyclists,

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Copied to: Mayor of Newham; Councilors - James Beckles, Joshua Garfield, Nareser Osei, Terence Paul; Simon Munk LCC; Newham Cyclists website.

1. For example: indirect, staggered pedestrian crossings shared with cyclists; signalised pedestrian crossings with long waiting times over small loading bays for cars; narrow painted cycle lanes encouraging drivers to overtake dangerously; and cycle paths obstructed by trees, cobblestones, signposts for car parks, and suddenly ending with ‘CYCLISTS DISMOUNT’ signage. In 2015 Assembly member Darren Johnston drew attention to the failings of the Olympic Park, e.g. no cycle lane on the loop road in Mayoral Question 2015/0854. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mayoral answer to Question 1339/2013 states: “I can confirm that the speed limit on the Park’s roads will be 20 mph. Individual boroughs may choose to amend the speed limits on roads once adopted. The MPS will enforce the speed limit, however, the park streetscape has been designed in consultation with stakeholders using a variety of measures to discourage speeding”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)