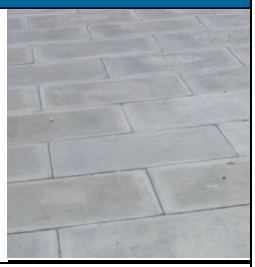
Your streets Your say

In today's 'Your streets, your say" agenda item you'll be asked to vote about how you think we should approach a number of common issues related to how streets and spaces in Southwark and Dulwich are designed and used. A brief presentation will be provided on each issue before you are asked to vote. This note provides greater background detail on the various issues. To help you make a more informed decision, you may like to read it before the agenda item.

Issue 1: Footway materials in Dulwich

Dulwich has a unique character. The materials used to footways in Dulwich are generally different to those used in much of the rest of Southwark. Because of maintenance concerns and funding stresses we need to be more consistent about which material we use in future if we are to preserve this difference. However, the council often receives very differing feedback from residents about which materials they prefer.

Which of the following materials do you think would be best? Each has different benefits or draw backs in respect to cost, appearance, sustainability and maintenance. We've provided a quick summary of how they perform in each respect on this page using ticks to score them. On the next page you can more detail to explain why we've scored each as we have.

	i. Asphalt (blacktop)	ii. Gravel dressed asphalt	iii. Self binding gravel	iv. Concrete slab paving
Image				
General information	What most people would know as 'blacktop', 'bitmac' or 'tarmac'. A mixture of aggregates held together with a binder made primarily of bitumen or tar. Dark grey to black in appearance. Already used to many footways in the area.	The same as asphalt, only finished with a dressing of scattered golden gravel that is 'glued' to the surface with a resin binder.	A mixture of graded aggregates down to fines. Compacts to form a stable surface without the addition of any binder. Is hard underfoot unlike most gravels. Typically golden. Often used to paths in parks and gardens and rural highway footways.	A large light-grey rectangular slab made with a subtle pimple textured finish. Made of secondary or recycled aggregates mixed with and bound by concrete. The standard footway paving used elsewhere around much of the borough.
`Visual quality (additional ticks indicate higher visual quality)	✓	✓✓ .	✓✓✓	✓✓
Maintenance issues (additional ticks indicate easier maintenance)	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Cost (additional ticks indicate lower cost)	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Sustainability (additional ticks indicate greater sustainability)	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

The table below provides further details as to why we've scored each of the materials on the previous page as we did. The table continues on the next page.

	i. Asphalt (blacktop)	ii. Gravel dressed asphalt	iii. Self binding gravel	iv. Concrete slab paving
General information	What most people would know as 'blacktop', 'bitmac' or 'tarmac'. A mixture of aggregates held together with a binder made primarily of bitumen or tar. Black in appearance fading to grey over time. Already used to many footways in the area.	The same as asphalt, only finished with a dressing of golden gravel that is scattered onto a binder that has been pre-applied to the surface following priming. A further application of the binder can be applied on top of this to reduce the tendency for the gravel to wear off with time.	A mixture of graded aggregates including fines. Compacts to form a stable surface without the addition of any binder. Is hard underfoot unlike most gravels. Typically golden in appearance. Often used to paths in parks and gardens and sometimes highway footways in more rural parts of the country.	A light-grey rectangular slab made with a subtle pimple textured finish. Made of secondary or recycled aggregates mixed with and bound by concrete. The standard footway paving used elsewhere around much of the borough.
Visual quality (additional ticks indicate higher visual quality)	✓ A non-descript material. However, will scar badly should it need to be dug up, though the relatively dark muted colour makes this less obvious than some other similar surfaces. Stains are similarly hidden.	✓✓ Dressing provides a softer more informal finish well suited to more historic and rural areas. However, like asphalt it will scar badly should it need to be dug up and reinstated. The lighter colour of the aggregate dressing makes this more obvious.	✓✓✓ Has a soft landscaped feel owing to the fine texture created by the aggregates, some of which are often slightly loose at surface level, creating a dusty or crumb appearance. Well suited to greener less-urban areas. Small bits of litter and vegetation can become trapped in it creating a slightly messy appearance. Stains will be barely noticeable as will generally be absorbed, with any residual easily rubbed out by roughly breaking up the surface and recompacting it by foot.	✓✓ Though relatively ubiquitous and non-descript, slabs create a simple unfussy surface. Providing a relatively large rectangular plan form is used with a smooth surface and narrow joints (to avoid attracting dirt and moss) can be moderately attractive, acquiring a fair patina with age. However, stains are very obvious owing to the flat uniform surface.
Maintenance issues (additional ticks indicate easier maintenance)	✓✓✓ Easy to reinstate and unlikely to result in errors from statutory undertakers. Requires little maintenance providing it is not disturbed. Not a good option for use around mature trees as the surface will crack and break up if roots disturb it. Seldom damaged by vehicle over-run.	✓ More difficult to reinstate with greater risk of confusion for statutory undertakers. Will show visual scarring, whether replacing the entire surface layer or just the gravel dressing. Though the gravel can wear away in more heavily trafficked areas, this can sometimes add character. Not a good option for use around mature trees as the surface will crack and break up if roots disturb it. Seldom damaged by vehicle over-run. Gravel can block drains as it becomes loose.	✓ Very easy to reinstate with any errors from statutory undertakers easily corrected. However, requires light but frequent maintenance to keep the surface compact and level to avoid sever drainage and ponding issues. This is normally achieved by simple rerolling. This is most likely to be required to pavements with little footfall where some weed growth may also occur. Flexible nature is well suited to areas where footways have mature trees as the surface will not crack and create trip hazards should roots disturb it. Readily accepts vehicle over-run though this	✓✓ Being large rigid units, requires a more robust foundation than the other options in order to prevent breakage if over-run by vehicles. Concrete slabs have a relatively short life span. They cannot always be reused if lifted, but like other modular units are easily replaced without sign of visual scarring. Likely to be lifted if used around existing mature tree due to root heave of the pavement which may create a significant trip hazard requiring costly correction.

			may cause slight but easily corrected rutting if very heavy. The gravel can block drains as it becomes loose. Can be difficult to remove small items of litter if these become embedded.	
Cost (additional ticks indicate lower cost)	✓✓✓ Inexpensive with moderate costs for the foundation.	✓ As there is no national standard for bound gravel dressings these are typically produced as proprietary products by private companies with licensed installer schemes. This can push up supply and laying costs. Additional applications of the binder to reduce tendency for wear can be expensive, as can priming/pre-sealing treatments for the receiving surface.	✓✓ Whilst the surface material itself is inexpensive, initial installation costs may be greater due to the need to return to site and re-roll it several times during the first few months after laying to achieve proper compaction. Moderate costs for the foundation, though likely to be slightly higher on account of drainage issues due to the at least partly pervious nature of most self binding gravel surfaces.	✓✓ Inexpensive. However, the foundation will be more expensive than other options as it will need to be more robust in order to support the slabs without these cracking with vehicle over-run.
Sustainability (additional ticks indicate greater sustainability)	✓ Largely made from local recycled or secondary materials so low embodied carbon footprint, with the greatest part of this being on account of the bitumen binder. Short life span comparable to a concrete slab pavement. Being a bound granular material cannot be re-laid if lifted (though can be recycled for other purposes). Being black, absorbs heat and may exacerbate urban temperatures. Depending upon type of asphalt, may permit infiltration of rain water to help manage flood risk.	✓✓ Embodied carbon footprint for the asphalt base will be as 'i' opposite. Primers and binders can have a significant footprint whilst the more attractive gravels that provide better wear are often imported. Life span for the gravel dressing can be short unless a further additional covering binder layer is applied. As both the gravel and asphalt are bound granular materials, neither can be re-laid if lifted (though can be recycled for other purposes). Slightly more reflective of heat compared to standard asphalt, though this will reduce as the gravel dressing wears off. Unlikely to allow rainwater to permeate for flood risk management purposes as binder will generally seal any pores in the underlying asphalt.	✓✓ Embodied carbon footprint will vary from product to product depending upon whether made from recycled or secondary aggregates or a virgin natural 'dug' gravel mix. However, will generally be very low, with both products being available locally and easily produced. Moderate life span. Easy to relay if lifted, though may require a little 'topping up'. Moderately heat reflective owing to reasonably light colour. Extent to which allows water to permeate for flood risk management purposes will vary from product to product.	✓✓ Low embodied carbon footprint due to high secondary and recycled content and local manufacture. However, the substantial concrete foundation required to withstand vehicle over-run will typically raise this significantly. Short life span unlikely to extend beyond that of the foundations. More likely to need replacing than other surfaces as can be damaged by vehicle over-run. Often possible to relay if needs to be lifted. Highly heat reflective so helps manage urban temperatures.

Issue 2: Level surfaces and shared surfaces

Background

The term '*level* surface' is used to describe streets and spaces without a vertical kerb to separate the carriageway for vehicles from areas for pedestrians only. This means that the entire street is at a single level.

The term '*shared* surface' is used to describe a street or space (or a part of one) where people and vehicles mix with equal priority and without any segregation between them. There are numerous ways this could work. A shared surface could be a conventional street where pedestrians are able to share the carriageway but where pedestrian only footways that vehicles cannot used are still kept. Alternatively, it could be a 'level surface' without vertical kerbs to physically contain vehicles to certain areas. Though pedestrians might be able to use all part of the streets, vehicles may or may not be restricted to certain areas, though given the absence of vertical kerbs other means would need to be found to manage this.

Both these approaches may be used by designers when trying to create what they call 'shared *spaces'* (as distinct from shared '*surfaces*'). Shared space is a design philosophy that broadly attempts to create more people friendly spaces in which pedestrians and vehicle interact with greater courtesy to one another. There are numerous ways this could be achieved. 'Shared surface' and 'level surface' measures are just some of these. Understandably there is a lot of confusion between these terms – including amongst designers!

'Shared surface' or 'level surface' approaches could be applied to anything from very small quiet spaces that are only lightly used by vehicles to whole lengths and widths of very busy streets or junctions - including those on major vehicle through routes. One high profile scheme elsewhere in central London that is currently under construction will see an entire 'A' road carrying thousands of vehicles a day redesigned as a level surface where pedestrians and vehicles share the entire width of a street.

The idea of creating streets that are level surfaces shared between pedestrians and vehicles is relatively new to the UK and - despite the odd high profile scheme - there are few examples to draw conclusions from. Whilst many designers and users support the philosophy of creating 'shared spaces' that are more 'people friendly' and strike a better balance with vehicle traffic, the proposed creation of 'level surfaces' and 'shared surfaces' within these has provoked a lot of debate about whether this is the best way to achieve these aims.

Things to consider

- The Southwark Sustainable Community Strategy (the overarching strategy for the borough) commits the council and its partners to creating more 'child and people friendly streets'.

- People in favour of 'level surfaces' and 'shared surfaces' argue that removing the certainty for vehicle users that segregation of the carriageway with vertical kerbs creates will encourage them to behave more cautiously and courteously towards pedestrians, slowing their speed to make eye contact to negotiate priority and generally being more aware. To date a major national study has been unable to substantiate these suggested benefits. However, it has acknowledged the potential dis-benefits to people with some types of disability. Further phases of the study are on-going. Groups representing people with disabilities have argued that it may not be possible for them to engage in negotiation through eye contact due to lack of sight, hearing or other cognitive difficulties.

- The council are under a statutory duty to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and other equalities target groups, avoid discriminating against them without good grounds and promoting their equal access to opportunities. We must also be prepared to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the design of streets and spaces to assist disabled people.

- Many groups representing people with various disabilities are opposed to or concerned about the idea of level surfaces and shared surfaces, considering that the removal of well-defined traffic free space will put them at risk and reduce their confidence to use public spaces alone. They argue that this may discriminate against them since creating conventional kerbed streets with vehicle free footways remains easily achievable, and feel that more research is required before level surfaces can be confirmed as safe and none discriminating. National research with a large number of blind and partially sighted people about their attitudes and experience of level surfaces found that the over-whelming majority were opposed to them.

- People in favour of level surfaces and shared surfaces have argued that the approaches already work well elsewhere in northern Europe where they have been used for some time. Opponents argue that disabled people in those countries avoid such streets and spaces and feel threatened by them. Neither of these views are well evidenced.

- A lot of research has been carried out looking at alternative delineators to vertical kerbs that disabled people (particularly blind and partially sighted people) could use with confidence to recognise the limits of 'safe space' and to navigate their way through streets and spaces. Many of these consist of special forms of 'tactile' paving that would generally be provided in a contrasting colour to a significant width. To date this research has been unable to identify any acceptable or effective alternative to vertical kerbs above a certain height. Studies continue but it is likely to be some time until an alternative is identified and agreed (if at all).

- Separate research into older people's general attitudes to the design of streets has also identified their concern about the need for clear segregation from vehicles and the discomfort and instability some types of tactile paving cause for them. The latter of these raises difficult questions as tactile paving is the main alternative to vertical up-stand kerbs generally advocated in order to meet blind and partially sighted people's needs (see point above). A specific further study about their attitudes to level surfaces and shared surfaces is currently underway.

- There are various potential legal concerns surrounding level surfaces and shared surfaces that are yet to be clearly resolved. These include: potential discrimination against some users; the ability to enforce highway and traffic offences; and liability for Highway Authorities in the event of an incident. Like most council's we are currently trying to better understand these issues. However, many highway and design professionals recognise that resolving these fully may require changes to legislation, which can take a very long time.

- Further anecdotal arguments for and against shared and level surfaces include:

    - That they will help make more efficient use of land – allowing greater room for housing and other development.
    - They will encourage developers to cram in buildings, providing insufficient public space.
    - That the removal of kerbs will make streets more flexible, so making it easier for play and other social activities to take place in them.
    - That removing kerbs will make streets less safe for children and other vulnerable users who rely on clear identification of the limits of safe space.
    - That shared surfaces will result in an increase in 'street clutter' owing to the increased visual impact of safe space delineator alternatives to kerbs, street furniture to restrain vehicles from entering some areas and signing to keep traffic and parking prohibitions enforceable.

Issue 3: Cycle tracks on footways and footpaths

Background

A cycle track is a footway or footpath that has been designated to allow its use by pedal cyclists in addition to people on foot. This is different to a cycle *lane* which is a marked area provided for cyclists within a carriageway.

Cycle tracks may be either adjacent use (so that one side of the track is for pedestrians and the other for cyclists) or shared by both user groups across their entire width.

Where cycle tracks provide for adjacent use, some form of delineation is required to distinguish one side of the track from the other.

Whether cycle tracks are adjacent use or shared, all require significant signage and special tactile way finding paving to be provided to make users (particularly blind and partially sighted people) aware that they are entering or exiting a track.

The introduction of cycle tracks has traditionally caused much debate amongst residents, with strong views for and against, including from cyclists themselves. Aside from the issue of whether cycle tracks should be provided at all on footways there is an additional debate about whether they should be designed as adjacent use or shared use.

Things to consider

- Pedal cyclists typically have the choice of using the carriageway like other vehicles, the cycle track being an additional aid made available to them in most circumstances. Where cycle tracks exist pedal cyclists are not compelled to use them rather than the carriageway.

- National guidance suggests that provision of cycle tracks on footways should be considered as a last resort after attempts to find other solutions to provide for pedal cyclists on carriageway have been exhausted. These include slowing traffic in the carriageway, reducing the volume of traffic in the carriageway, and providing cycle lanes in the carriageway. In Southwark we have an existing policy of making all borough controlled streets 20mph, with any 30mph streets being the exception. At present around 85% of streets are 20mph and this figure is increasing rapidly.

- In Southwark we have an adopted road user hierarchy. This commits us to considering the needs of pedestrians first before other users of streets including cyclists (who are second) and motor vehicles. Some pedal cyclists and non-pedal cyclists argue that the introduction of cycle tracks on footways is a form of unacceptable ‘risk transference’ inconsistent with this hierarchy. It is suggested that this stems from an unwillingness to address issues for cyclists posed by motor vehicles (who are lower in the hierarchy) such that pedal cyclists can share the carriageway safely with them. Instead, pedal cyclists are forced into potential conflict with pedestrians on footways to whom the risk is passed.

- Some pedal cyclists and non-pedal cyclists argue that young children and more nervous adults (particularly people new to cycling) may require cycle tracks in order to give them the confidence to cycle. As such, cycle tracks are important in order to achieve targets to increase the number of people cycling and keep people fit and active. Opponents (including some cyclists) argue that a preference for cycle tracks is often passing and that once people become used to cycling, they quickly prefer using carriageways because of their greater safety and convenience. They suggest that initial nervousness is best addressed through proper early cycle training. They also argue that pedal cyclists using footways may

compromise the safety and attractiveness of walking for which there are similarly targets in relation to modal share and efforts to improve public fitness.

- Some pedal cyclists and highway designers are sceptical about the safety of footway cycle tracks because of design issues where tracks cross side roads. Where pedal cyclists are on the carriageway they have priority when passing a side road junction. However, when they are on a cycle track beside the carriageway they will most often not have priority (though they may assume they do). This may create confusion that could increase the possibility of an accident.

- The council are under a statutory duty to anticipate the needs of people with disabilities and other equalities target groups, avoid discriminating against them without good grounds and to promote their equal access to opportunities. We must also be prepared to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the design of streets and spaces to these ends.

- National research undertaken with 500 blind and partially sighted people into their experience and attitudes towards footway cycle tracks found the overwhelming majority of respondents to be opposed to them. The findings also suggested significant under-reporting of accidents with cyclists on such facilities, with this seemingly being more common on shared cycle tracks on account of the mixing of pedestrians and pedal cyclists. A separate national research study into older people's needs in design of public space also found participants to be concerned about the presence of footway cycle tracks with the preference being for clearly differentiated adjacent use design when these were necessary.

- The above suggests that we should only be installing adjacent use designs. In the past a particular type of raised kerb (appearing like a narrow hump) has been used to delineate the pedestrian side on adjacent use cycle tracks from the side for pedal cyclists. This was thought to help blind and partially sighted people know which side to stay on whilst also serving to deter pedal cyclists from crossing onto the pedestrian side. However, research has now found this to be inappropriate as an aid for blind and partially sighted people. At present a vertical kerb of 60mm or greater is the only delineator supported by research for their use. Having to provide a kerb step of this kind substantially complicates design and construction.

- Some designers suggest that the introduction of footway cycle tracks generates excessive 'street clutter'. This is because of the significant signage, road markings and tactile paving required to make these enforceable and safe for all users (including blind and partially sighted pedestrians). This is particularly so where adjacent use cycle tracks are provided as they will need to switch back to shared use sections at junctions between paths and where pedestrians require access to the front of the footway. Designers suggest that this may undermine efforts to create less 'highway dominated' streets that encourage more courteous behaviour from all road users (though this is not clearly evidenced) and so ultimately prove self defeating.

- Some people who are opposed to footway cycle tracks argue that the distinction between footways that can be used by pedal cyclists and those that can't is not always well understood by the public and that that the more cycle tracks are introduced, the more likely people are to cycle on footways not intended to be used by pedal cyclists.

- Under current statutes, pedal cyclists are not subject to speed limits. This and other complications about fines and sentencing can make it difficult to carry out enforcement where cyclists are using cycle tracks inappropriately.

Issue 4: Providing more seating in streets and other public places

Background

Seating and benches can provide opportunities to stop and watch the world go by in a pleasant spot.

Increasingly, designers and some user groups are arguing that seating is also important for other reasons too. These include providing regular rest opportunities for less mobile pedestrians such as older people, pregnant women or people with mobility disabilities, and providing opportunities for informal social interaction. This can animate streets to help keep them safe whilst addressing social isolation which affects many older people.

However, proposals to introduce seating can also be strongly opposed by local residents and businesses due to anti-social behaviour concerns.

Things to consider

- The council are under a statutory duty to anticipate the need of people with disabilities and other equalities target groups (including older people), avoid discriminating against them without good grounds and to promote their equal access to opportunities. We must also be prepared to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the design of streets and spaces to these ends.

- Southwark's Strategy for Older People recognises the importance of remaining activity to older people's health. Walking is the most important way of getting about and source of exercise for older people. However, this can be strenuous. Lack of rest opportunities may prevent them and other less mobile people from getting out and about and accessing important services. National research with older people into their concerns about the design of the public realm identified the provision of greater rest opportunities as one of their main priorities.

- Advocates of greater seating argue that this is important to provide rest opportunities for other less mobile people too, such as pregnant women or people with mobility disabilities.

- Southwark's Strategy for Older People recognises the importance of providing opportunities for older people to engage with younger people to their health and well-being. Many older people live alone and some suffer from social isolation. This may be exacerbated by their lack of mobility. Some people argue that providing more seating opportunities will help their mobility whilst providing opportunities for them to engage in informal social interaction.

- The Southwark Sustainable Community Strategy (the overarching strategy for the borough) commits the council and its partners to creating more 'child and people friendly streets'.

- People opposed to the introduction of seating often express concerns that these will become magnets for rough-sleeping, street drinking and other anti-social behaviour. People in favour of seating often argue that this can be addressed by good design. Examples might include providing central arm rests to prevent people sleeping on a bench, else providing seating in the former of individual 'chair' units, spaced to discourage groups forming. It is also sometimes suggested that providing more seating would mean that individual seats would be less intensively used where there is a problem.

- People in favour of more seating sometimes argue that this will encourage more people to use streets socially and for longer periods – so helping to animate them and keep them feeling safe.