

Southwark Council Healthy Communities Scrutiny Investigation – Autumn 2014

Submission from the Southwark Living Streets

We would very much like to thank Southwark Council for this investigation into healthy communities. Southwark Living Streets would like to make a submission in relation to the physical health of the borough and how to better embed active travel in terms of walking and cycling into our daily lives.

At its heart, we believe that active travel in Southwark can play an enormous role in improving the physical health and wellbeing of those who live and work in the borough and visit it. We believe that the increase in population that is proposed can be accommodated happily if “post-car” planning policy and thinking is adopted. We believe that a borough designed around and for people rather than motor vehicles can encourage people to be happier and healthier through walking and cycling and to live more space efficient and sustainable lives by not needing to be based around motor vehicles.

We believe that liberating people to walk, cycle and enjoy the profusion of nature and leisure opportunities in Southwark’s parks and open spaces and other iconic amenities such as access to the river offers a real opportunity to address issues in the borough such as high levels of childhood obesity, mental illness and deprivation.

As a result we would like to propose the following policy areas for consideration as a means to delivering a happier healthier people-focused borough. Where we would like to get to as a borough is beautifully illustrated in this short film about Copenhagen - <http://vimeo.com/13826541>

1. Permeability

To reduce the impact of motor vehicles on (residential) communities and to encourage walking, cycling and social interaction through the use of area-wide filtered permeability.

Filtered permeability is defined¹ as *“making the existing streets join up better for cyclists (and pedestrians) than they do for cars. It means blocking rat run-type streets as through-routes for motor traffic, while still allowing through journeys by bike. It improves life for all who live or walk on that street. It makes children safer when they cross the road. It cuts traffic, noise and pollution. It makes room for new green space, tree-planting or pavement”*. The use of filtered permeability is supported strongly in the Vision for Cycling and demonstrated nicely in a blogpost² under the title - Removing through motor traffic in residential areas. An example of this working extremely well at low cost was the closure of Lytham St in Walworth to through traffic. This closure has encouraged far more people to walk and cycle through the area and reduced intimidation through rat running traffic.

¹ <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Cycling%20Vision%20GLA%20template%20FINAL.pdf>

² <http://therantyhighwayman.blogspot.co.uk/2014/05/vote-2014-vote-space4cycling.html>

2. Access to High Streets

To ensure that local communities have good walking and cycling routes to local high streets and that high streets are welcoming to those on foot and who cycle.

This would include ideas from the Living Streets' High Streets campaign³ and the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan⁴. High streets would be places:

- where motor vehicles move at no more than 20mph
- where streets and roads can be crossed safely and without unnecessary delay
- which are inviting (wide, smooth and uncluttered pavements with greenery and good seating)
- which have a good mix of shops and services.

In addition it would be ensured that local communities have good walking and cycling routes to local high streets. This is especially important for older people to encourage them to stay active and independent by continuing to have access to the local shops, services and social engagement of town centres and high streets and to ensure that these remain welcoming to them (eg by accommodating walking speeds of 0.8 metres per second in crossings).

³ <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/Better%20High%20Streets-2014%20amendedv5%20-%20web.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/pedestrian-safety-action-plan.pdf>

3. Access to Local Shops and Services

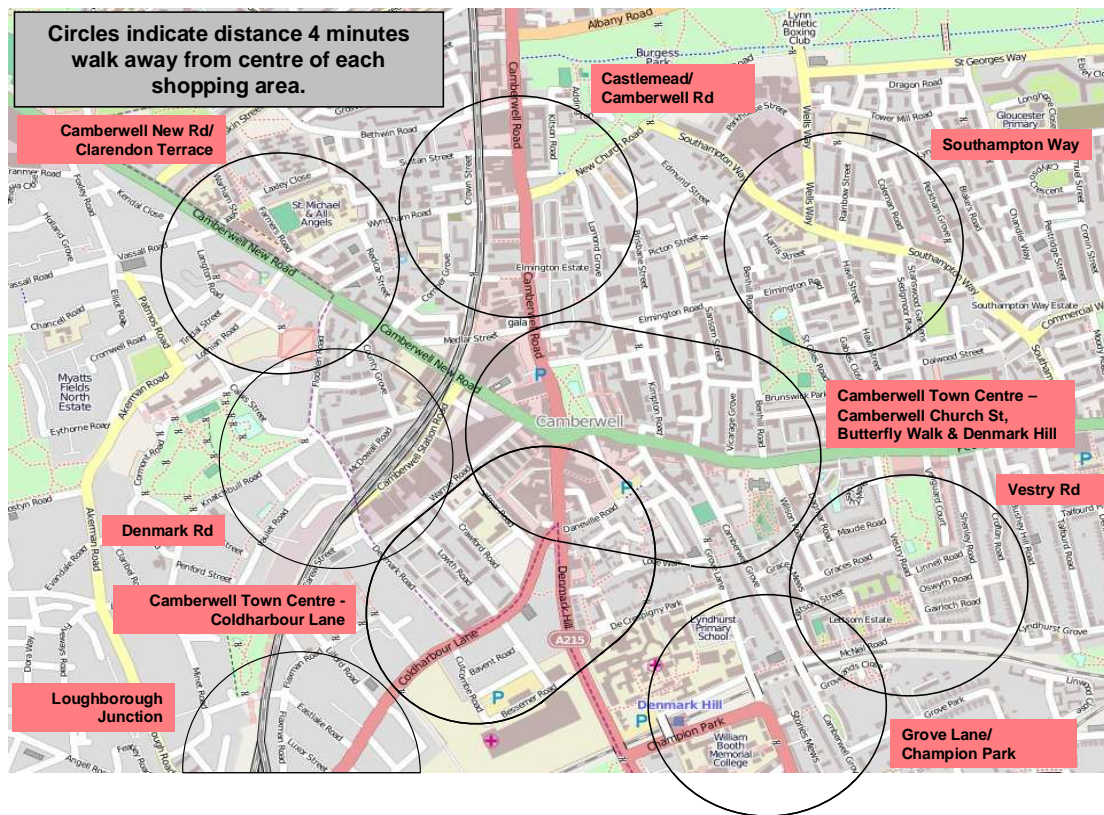
(With the exception of College, Village and Peckham Rye wards), to ensure that no one lives more than 5 minutes walk from a convenience store/local centre and to analyse the location of services on that basis.

Owing to the extremely high population densities of almost all of Southwark north of East Dulwich Rd/Nunhead Lane, it is likely that almost all areas can offer a viable business to an appropriately located convenience store (if walking/cycling routes to them exist). The population densities of Southwark wards are shown below in comparison to the London average. Surrey Docks ward is proposed for inclusion in the policy owing to the large amount of new housing proposed in the Canada Water area.

Population density (persons per sq km) - 2013⁵	
England and Wales	404
London	5,293
Southwark	9,977
Chaucer	19,750
Newington	18,563
Peckham	16,667
Camberwell Green	15,450
Brunswick Park	14,833
Faraday	14,333
South Bermondsey	14,050
Grange	13,750
East Dulwich	12,250
Riverside	11,923
East Walworth	11,546
The Lane	11,357
Nunhead	10,539
Livesey	10,357
South Camberwell	9,885
Rotherhithe	9,600
Cathedrals	9,028
Surrey Docks	7,605
Peckham Rye	5,848
Village	4,446
College	3,688

⁵ <http://data.london.gov.uk/datafiles/demographics/ward-profiles-excel-version.xls>

Planning policy would be used to help identify areas of lack of facilities and then businesses encouraged to start up where lack is identified. The map below shows how this analysis might work in Camberwell.



4. PlayStreets

To actively encourage the creation of PlayStreets both after school during term-time and for periods during the daytime during the school summer holidays.

5. Access to Green Space and Nature

To develop strategies based on access of all ages to green space both as a place of relaxation and play and also to deepen relationships with nature in the form of food growing or community planting.

Green space would be defined not only as formal parks but also housing amenity land. The table below shows the Southwark wards in terms of a) the % which is open space⁶ and b) % of homes with “good access to nature”⁷. Although there may be some question marks over the future of housing amenity land as it is not protected space and there will be need to identify locations for some house building in the future, it is important that this is given some weight in terms of inclusion as open space in an area (ie for food growing, wild flower planting etc). From the table initial candidate wards in terms of initiatives might include Newington, Grange, Chaucer and Chaucer.

Area	a) % of the area that is open space	b) % homes with good access to nature
London	39.0	73.7
Southwark	22.6	70.4
Peckham Rye	45.7	100.0
College	43.7	97.8
Surrey Docks	40.3	100.0
Rotherhithe	34.1	100.0
Village	33.8	82.9
Faraday	30.0	100.0
East Walworth	24.1	71.6
Riverside	23.2	51.2
Nunhead	20.1	50.8
South Camberwell	20.0	71.2
Cathedrals	15.3	-
Brunswick Park	7.0	92.7
Peckham	7.0	83.5
The Lane	6.0	50.0
Chaucer	5.6	-
Livesey	4.5	58.5
Grange	4.5	39.5
Newington	3.8	40.8
South Bermondsey	3.0	100.0
Camberwell Green	1.6	99.4
East Dulwich	0.7	89.4

⁶ <http://data.london.gov.uk/datafiles/demographics/ward-profiles-excel-version.xls>

⁷ Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)

6. Cycle Parking

To create large volumes of cycle parking at destinations (eg high streets, local shops and services and local amenities (eg leisure centres)) and where people live (secure on street parking and secure parking on estates).

7. Cycling on Main Roads

To create conditions for safe cycling on main roads.

To complement the creation of safe and cyclable neighbourhoods (see 1), main roads would be made safer for cycling with the adoption of the 20mph speed limit in Southwark and where-ever possible (where there are no bus lanes) the creation of protected cycles lanes at least up to the standard of semi-segregation (eg through armadillos as in Royal College St in Camden) and the safe design of major junctions (which would of course have benefits for pedestrians too).

8. Safe Routes to School

To encourage young people to walk and cycle to school in far greater numbers.

Taking cues from the Dulwich Safe Routes to School project (with its parallels in other parts of Southwark – there is also a project amongst a number of Bermondsey schools) to research and understand and then overcome the barriers to walking and cycling to school in areas where schools are clustered to maximise the value and potential of area-wide initiatives. Once infrastructure changes have been made (eg barriers overcome and parking created), to promote active travel to parents, children and schools in that area as viable alternatives to driving and public transport.

In addition to these points we would just like to raise a couple of more place specific issues but which obviously have wider ramifications across the borough

Economic Health

We believe that in a number of locations (such as Walworth and Peckham) there are too many betting shops/pawn-brokers/payday loans. This is also particularly noticeable in the short stretch of Borough High Street between London Bridge and Borough Underground stations. It is difficult to see how these establishments contribute to the economic health of residents of the area, in that they exclude other more socially valuable retail outlets. They tend to displace more valuable shops, which would be used by a much larger sub-set of the population who would get greater economic value from a wider range of retail outlets. They are often very badly designed aesthetically and serve to detract from the feel and quality of the area thus also putting off better quality retailers from moving into the area.

Environmental Health

Another area of concern can be poor 'environmental health' once again as evidenced on Borough High Street but problems with commercial waste exist on high streets across the borough including for example the Walworth Rd. There needs to be a much more effective system of rubbish collection, especially immediately outside the LB Underground exit at the north side of Borough High St. For 200 yards going south, the pavements are permanently affected by rubbish bags from commercial premises. There needs to be co-ordination by the Council of private rubbish collection contractors to enable more frequent rubbish collection. It is deeply unpleasant, especially between 4 and 7 pm., and is permanently filthy. The pavements appear not to have been washed for a number of years.

Once again many thanks for asking us to contribute to this investigation.

Southwark Living Streets – 25th August 2014