

**Contact:** Mark Frost, Senior Transport Planner  
**Tel:** 020 8583 5037  
**E-Mail:** mark.frost@hounslow.gov.uk

**Chiswick Area Committee Monitoring – 16 March 2010**

**DUKES MEADOWS TRANSPORT & ACCESS STRATEGY – UPDATE ON  
SCHEME PROGRESSION AND PROPOSED PARKING RESTRICTIONS NEAR  
TIDEWAY SCULLERS ROWING CLUB**

**Report by:** Director of Environment

## **Summary**

The Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy sets out a plan for improving access, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, to and within the Dukes Meadows area.

This report updates the Committee on progress made in implementing a number of the schemes from within the strategy.

The report also discusses options for formalising the parking provision around the Tideways site. It provides a summary of different ways forward, and seeks approval in principle from Members for their favoured option, which may require a formal planning application at a later date.

## **1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the contents of this report.
- 1.2 Notes that Officers have secured TfL investment of over £130,000 spanning the financial years 2009/10 – 2010/11 for the implementation of the Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy.
- 1.3 Approves proposals to formalise parking provision around Tideway Scullers Rowing School in line with either Options A, B or C as detailed in the report; whilst noting that this may require a further formal planning application to be submitted at a later date.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy was developed in response to concerns about specific transport problems at Dukes Meadows, raised by the Dukes Meadows Trust and other stakeholders including the London Borough of Hounslow.
- 2.2 A detailed summary of the development of the strategy was provided at the Chiswick Monitoring Committee on 17 November 2008 and again on the 22 July 2009, where the majority of the strategy was approved by Members.

- 2.3 The purpose of the strategy is to provide a 'menu' of schemes that can be implemented within the park as and when funding becomes available; or indeed that can form a well researched basis for funding bids to internal or external sources.

### **3.0 SCHEME PROGRESS**

- 3.1 Officers have been able to progress a number of schemes approved as part of the strategy over the last few months.
- 3.2 Dan Mason Drive, The Promenade and Riverside Drive are now in the process of being re-designated from 'private road, unadopted' to 'public highway, privately maintained' (as approved by the Committee on 22 July 2009). This will allow speed and parking enforcement to be carried out if required.
- 3.3 In December, following approval from ward councillors, a consultation on the removal of the mini-roundabout and introduction of a raised table at the Staveley Gardens/Alexandra Gardens/Riverside Drive Junction was undertaken. Local residents in the vicinity of the site were consulted, with all respondents supporting the scheme. Work will now commence on this scheme in March 2010. The total cost of this scheme is around £30,000.
- 3.4 The Council has been allocated £90,000 of Transport for London Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding in 2010/11 to progressing schemes from the Transport & Access Strategy.
- 3.5 At this stage it is likely this will include the further development and implementation of a pedestrian path along Riverside Drive from Staveley Gardens to the river and improvements to the speed humps on Dan Mason Drive to make them 'cycle friendly'. Improvements to the Thames Path as it runs across the slipway near Tideways under Chiswick Bridge (joining with the newly completed University of Westminster path to Ibis Lane) are also being scoped. Additional work on the improvement and regulation of parking areas will also be undertaken.
- 3.6 Thames Strategy Kew-Chelsea (a partnership of boroughs facing this stretch of the river, with a coordinator hosted at London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham ) have secured an additional £20,000 for improvements to the walking environment along the Thames Path National Trail for 2010/11. It is currently anticipated that this will be used to progress the development of the walkway under Barnes Bridge, following the technical assessment and principal stakeholder consultation completed last year. Funding for this project could be provided in part through the TfL LIP programme, possibly over two financial years ( 2011/12 and 2012/13) – however this is likely to be short of the total amount required for the bridge (approximately £500,000). Thames Strategy Kew-Chelsea are therefore working with the Council to identify other funding sources that can be used to augment the TfL funding.

## 4.0 PARKING NEAR TIDEWAY SCULLERS

- 4.1 Officers are aware that the problem of parking around Tideway Scullers remains an issue, with the ground now severely degraded from cars parking there during the wet winter period.
- 4.2 Recognising this unwelcome degradation, the strategy proposed to prevent parking along the riverside by continuing the existing fence line to the Tideway Scullers building (allowing for the Thames Path to continue behind the school). Parking (approximately 20 spaces) would then be provided abutting the embankment of the Great Chertsey Road (proposal 42). This area has been partly cleared already, but requires resurfacing. In addition, the riverside car park 300m east of the rowing school could also be better maintained and marked out for vehicles, with special 'bays' created for rowing trailers if necessary.
- 4.3 As part of the consultation on the strategy, 52 responses were received from members of Tideway Scullers Rowing Club, all in opposition, or with serious reservations, to the proposed parking restrictions along the riverside. A number of responses from allotment holders also stated their opposition to these restrictions.
- 4.4 Whilst in general Tideway's users welcomed the proposal for new additional parking against the A316 embankment (proposal 42), they did not believe that 20 spaces were sufficient for a successful club of their size and consider that restricting the area currently used for parking would have a significant impact on the club's ability to operate – particularly in terms of hosting large events. Most respondents from the club stated that parking for at least 60 vehicles must be provided. The general results, alongside some sample comments, are provided in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Summary of results for Proposal 36.**

<b>Proposal 36</b>				
<b>Replace concrete bollards with short metal fencing on Dan Mason Drive as far as Tideway Scullers Rowing School</b>				
Survey Results	Agree <sup>1</sup>	Disagree	Reservations	Total
Number	38	62	5	105
% <sup>2</sup>	18.4	30.0	2.4	50.7
Description / Rationale	To restrict parking on the river front, improving visual amenity and improving conditions for walkers using the Thames Path National Trail.			
Comment ( <i>numbers represent respondents unique identifier</i> )	(E149) - safety for women would be compromised by making people walk further from their cars (73) - Current parking at Tideways is an eyesore, but parking should be improved not removed (87) - objects to Tideways boathouse extension (42) - parking for 20 cars is not enough 60 would be needed (E146 et al) Additional facilities for the parking of boat trailers and additional vehicles must form part of the proposal			

<sup>1</sup> Note: many of those stating that they agreed with this proposal provided a blanket return to the strategy as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Note: the percentages in this table are expressed as a percentage of the total response rate. This allows readers to take into account those that responded generally but made no mention to this specific proposal.

(E182) - provision needs to be provided for the accommodation of trailers during boat race events on the Thames  
 (E216) formalisation of parking would not provide enough spaces for TSS  
 (221) - more parking should be provided at TSS even if it is on a temporary basis.

- 4.5 Ruth Hatton, Chair of the Thames Regional Rowing Council summarised the number of clubs and their membership numbers in the area (Table 2); illustrating the importance that rowing has to users of Dukes Meadows.

**Table 2: Membership of Rowing Clubs in Dukes Meadows Area**

Rowing Club	Membership Numbers
Tideway Scullers School	234
American School in London	53
Kings College London	50
Thames Tradesman RC	56
Emmanuel School	118
Barnes Bridge Ladies	51
Cygnets	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>625</b>

- 4.6 In addition Ms Hatton also summarised the number of regional events held in the area, giving details of eight separate events totalling over 13,000 participants (from rowing clubs all over the country) annually. This excludes the Oxford/Cambridge Boat race which draws crowds of several hundreds to Dukes Meadows.
- 4.7 In general, there was a view from those that used the area for rowing that their needs, and the operational requirements of the clubs, had not been considered to an appropriate extent within the current strategy. Ms Hatton states:

*'If the measures are implemented as described (they) will have a major detrimental impact on rowing clubs in the area and also on a number of rowing events which are of national and international importance...your scheme does not appear to take into account the needs of the rowing community and in fact the impact of the proposals, if implemented, would be to reduce the number of people taking part in the sport which is in direct contravention of current government policy.'*

- 4.8 However, a number of respondents supported the proposal to remove parking, including local community organisations such as the West London River Group and Dukes Meadows Trust. The former stated the following:

*(Those that support this proposal)...have failed to take into account the material River, landscape and planning considerations relevant to the preservation and enhancement of the Riverside of Dukes Meadows. They have also failed to take into account the existing under-used car-parking space available on the Riverside opposite the Golf Club, and around the Thames Tradesmen's Boathouse.*

- 4.9 The Dukes Meadows Trust also reiterated that there appeared to be ample parking available abutting the A316, and on the hard standing opposite the

golf course. They would prefer an holistic approach to developing rowing facilities around the Dukes Meadows and state their preference for a renewed emphasis to be put on the development of Chiswick Boat House (which currently houses the smaller Thames Tradesmen's RC), with its large off-river car parking facility immediately adjacent. In addition, they have concerns about the precedent that may be set for 'rewarding' land users who caused environmental degradation through their parking by legitimising this activity:

*It would also set a very worrying precedent that groups demand for parking in open spaces along the river can be met by effectively turning the riverfront into a car park. Once established, there are likely to be many other clubs and groups who would, not unreasonably, seek the same arrangement. This would ultimately lead to the loss of green open space.*

#### Officer recommendations

- 4.10 Officers note that the issue of parking around the Tideway's site has been brought to Committee Members' attention previously and debated at some length (see for example minutes from the Area Committee Planning meeting of 5 March 2008).
- 4.11 At the meeting to approve the general Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy in July 2009 the Committee:
- Approved the strategy for all recommendations except 16, (gating of Riverside Drive), **36 (restricting parking around Tideway Scullers Rowing School)** and 47 (regulation of parking within Dukes Meadows Area).
  - Approved further feasibility into the implementation of appropriate parking controls to regulate parking within the Dukes Meadows area, with the results of the feasibility study to be presented in a subsequent report to the Committee ( to cover proposals 47 and 36).
- 4.12 As noted in 4.2, the proposal (36) presented in the strategy saw all parking along the riverfront prevented, with the degraded grassland currently used for parking restored. This was coupled with the introduction of parking (approximately 20 spaces) along the embankment of the A316 (proposal 42).
- 4.13 An alternative proposal to that consulted upon, and one supported by the rowing club, could see the creation of an additional parking area alongside the school for 20-30 spaces, in the area on which the grass has currently been degraded.
- 4.14 Tideway Scullers have confirmed that they would be willing to lease this area from the Council and invest in creating an attractive parking area<sup>3</sup> which protects the Thames Path in this area. This parking would not be designated for Tideway's use and could be utilised by other park users (including those using the public slipway).
- 4.15 At the last Committee meeting it was suggested that the provision of parking along this stretch would be contrary to various planning policy documents.

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<sup>3</sup> Having reviewed different alternatives, officers currently suggest that parking areas within the Dukes Meadows site be constructed of a semi-sealed gravel surface (possibly Breedon Gravel), not grasscrete blocks as consulted on in the Transport & Access Strategy.

- 4.16 Officers from the Development Control section have reviewed the proposal and can confirm that Policy ENV-N.1.8 (Dukes Meadows/Riverside Lands, Chiswick – Specific MOL Policies) of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that along the riverside, development for river related recreational uses, such as boathouses are permitted. An element of parking for recreational users of the boathouse would be reasonable. However in dealing with traffic arising from development proposals in this area, priority will be given to pedestrians and cyclists as the primary use of the area is for passive and low key recreation. Increases in road capacity and traffic will generally be opposed because of their intrusion into the open character of the area. Further expansion of car parking along the river foreshore would need careful consideration to ensure the existing pedestrian and cycle paths along the river are protected and enhanced where necessary, with the informal character of the riverside to be maintained and the legibility of the Thames Path at the site improved. Should additional parking be seen as desirable it should be kept to a minimum, with permeable surfacing, limited signage and markings, and it should not be exclusive for any one group. Planning permission will be needed for this development.
- 4.17 Officers from Leisure and Cultural services confirm that rowing development is to form a part of the upcoming Physical Activity and Sports Strategy along with the Parks and Open Spaces strategy to promote youth rowing through a Hounslow Youth Rowing Program (HYRP), and are keen to promote this sport where possible.

#### Options

- 4.18 The following options are therefore provided for consideration by Committee Members:
- Option A – Removal of all parking along the riverfront as presented in the strategy and detailed in 4.2. Current users of the informal riverfront parking area would be required to use an improved embankment car park, or the one opposite the golf club.
- Option B – Provision of approximately 20-30 spaces along the riverfront for general use by rowers and all other park users. Developed and maintained by the Council.
- Option C – To lease the area along the riverfront to Tideway Scullers for them to develop and maintain a parking area for approx 20-30 cars for use by all park users. Maintenance and pedestrian access through the site to be ensured through lease conditions.
- 4.19 Options B and C would be subject to a formal planning application (either from the Council or Tideways) at a later date, setting out the exact number of spaces, surfacing and alignment of the parking areas, and any environmental improvements required to ameliorate the negative impact from their provision.

## **5.0 COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

- 5.1 The report highlights a number of schemes which are being progressed within the Dukes Meadows area, connected to the Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy.
- 5.2 As noted in section 3, a number of schemes currently have funding allocated to them, or will do next financial year. These have all been through Transport for London.
- 5.3 In regards to the implementation of new parking areas around Tideway Scullers club, no funding has currently been identified within the Council's budgets for the design, implementation and maintenance of the parking area. Funding from Transport for London, or from the general park's development budget could be used for this process – however no specific funding has been identified at this time.

## **6.0 COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor notes that should planning permission be required and refused for any of the options, then an alternative scheme may have to be pursued. The Borough Solicitor supports the recommendations in the Report.

## **7.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A relevance test for whether the Transport & Access strategy as a whole requires an EIA has been completed. It is not evident that a strategy to improve access to this area, particularly via sustainable travel methods, will have an unequal adverse impact on any particular ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation or age. Whilst some groups may feel that using public transport, cycling, walking or car sharing is an inconvenience, it is not one that is notably increased as a result of being a member of a particular group. There are also notable positives to choosing these travel methods for all groups, particularly when they give rise to the opportunity for exercise. Although the strategy proposes some changes to vehicular passage through the park, overall restrictions on vehicle access or parking for disabled drivers will be minimal, should all proposals be implemented.
- 7.2 Appropriate provision will be made for disabled drivers within any new parking sites provided.

## **8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 This strategy sets out a package of measures to improve access to Dukes Meadows – in particular in terms of sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling. By reducing motorised traffic in the area local air quality can be improved as well as acting to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that contribute towards global warming. Some specific proposals may have further environmental impacts – for example the proposed pedestrian walkway under Barnes Bridge passes through Dukes Hollows nature reserve and will therefore need an in depth EIA as part of progressing this proposal.

**Background Papers:**

Attachment 1 – Dukes Meadows Transport & Access Strategy Consultation Brochure

**This report has been or is due to be considered by:**

Chiswick Area Committee – Monitoring – 16 March 2010

**This report is relevant to the following wards/areas:**

Chiswick Homefields

**Report reviewed and approved for submission by:**

Chris Calvi-Freeman, Head of Transport

Stuart Harrison, Divisional Head, Sustainable Planning

Hamish Pringle, Divisional Head, Leisure and Cultural Services

Shane Baker, Area Manager (Chiswick), Development Control