

Nursery Row Park

The Heart of the Community

'The health of the people is the highest law' – inscription on the façade of the old NHS building on the Walworth Road

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I **Abstract**

In a recent survey of 250 local Southwark residents, an impressive 92% declared their support for Nursery Row Park, confirming findings from an earlier pilot of 75 residents.

This unusual stretch of green open space exists in the middle of housing estates, edged by car park and East Street Market; more housing development is to come. Nursery Row Park also exists in the middle of an area of high multiple deprivation and health needs. Diabetes, obesity and hypertension are all high in East Walworth. Everyone at risk could gain from regular engagement with and exercise in a natural environment.

“Nursery Row Park – the Heart of a Community” looks at the strategic role of the park. Thoughtfully developed by the Friends of Nursery Row Park (supported by the borough’s Cleaner, Greener, Safer Programme), the space majors on the natural world rather than formal displays, and aspires to be a key exemplar in biodiversity. The report looks to maximise this. Based on 4 months’ research, interviews with 60 organisations and key individuals, and 325 surveys, it proposes a partnership development for Nursery Row Park that will:

- Recognise that open space can have a multiplicity of functions and Nursery Row Park could respond to a number of local agendas.
- Build on the core character of the park – the natural environment and biodiversity -, developing its role as a route to local health and wellbeing.
- Respond to today’s increasing need in the economic climate for stakeholders and diverse constituencies to work together in partnership
- Recognise ways in which the park could deliver against the borough’s own targets around cohesion and participation, in addition to the environment and wellbeing

- Respond to national Acts and policy guidance around the environment, health and localism: clarifying the role of the local community in the future of the park
- Enhance Southwark Council's own reputation for innovative thinking in the public realm.

“Nursery Row Park – the Heart of a Community” believes the pieces exist separately that will, when brought together, maximise the park’s contribution to its community and serve a range of local interests, from commerce to culture.

A cross-departmental response is needed to support an integrated vision for the park and strengthen its role at the heart of its wider East Walworth community.

II Introduction

Nursery Row Park is an unusual piece of green space. 1.69 hectares in size and sandwiched between East Street Market, Stead Street Car Park and several blocks of social housing, it offers a surprising bit of rural landscape in the midst of built-up environment.

The park was renovated in 2007, when the old ‘ball court’ became a gentle hill and the steel coloured archways and freestanding poles were erected. It has since been significantly improved by the Friends of Nursery Row Park (supported by LB Southwark’s Cleaner, Greener, Safer Fund). The hill became a wild flower meadow, paths were resurfaced, lights appeared in trees and the community orchard was expanded.

These changes are comparatively recent, and one purpose of this exercise has been to explore what difference they have made (or not) to local people.

However, its major purpose has been to provide the Friends with material and recommendations for them to reassess their present position and adopt a long-term strategy.

This report took four months (Sept-Dec 2011) to complete. It is based on desk research, on an extensive series of interviews with a range of actual and potential stakeholders, on meetings and conferences and on two surveys, with 57 and 250 local residents respectively. (See Appendices A and B.)

It uses a number of reports – local and national - as its points of reference. A full list of supporting documents is to be found in Appendix C.

It sets out to consider:

- How can the Friends of Nursery Row Park broaden local awareness of the park and expand its usage?
- How can Nursery Row Park address local needs?
- How can Nursery Row Park deliver against Southwark's own targets and national planning guidance?
- What structures, tools and skills do the Friends need and how might they acquire them?

III Summary – Survey and pointers for action

The surveys presented a clear picture of people's opinions of Nursery Row Park – what they liked and did not like.

They discovered strong views and more awareness than had been assumed. Out of 250 respondents hardly anyone did not know it: some would simply cut through it, others came with children, some jogged there. 79 people thought it was a 'Great' park. They saw it had improved and liked new elements such as the playground and the lights in the trees. 'Cutting through it is a good time to collect my thoughts on my way to work.,' said one woman. 'In the summer, I take my lunch and go and eat it in the park.'

At the other end of the spectrum, 13 people thought it was 'Poor' – saying there was not enough to do: 'There's nothing nice about it, and the drinkers keep kids away,' said one young man dismissively.

In the middle came the bulk of the survey – 128 people (51%) who went to the park and thought it was ‘OK’.

What would make it better, they (and all others) were asked. There were two broad categories of response. Firstly people wanted to find a reason to spend time in the park – a café was a very popular request, though as the Analysis in the Appendix comments, this could seem a shorthand for a means to aid sociability. A regular number wanted more things for children. An outdoor gym was popular too. ‘Flowers’, requested several.

But secondly, there was near unanimity on the negatives – the existence of dog mess and the regular presence of drinkers spending time in the park. Many people even proffered these before the survey itself had begun.

Despite that, the suggestion that it would be better to use the space for housing was met with near universal indignation. It was clear that almost everyone – 93% - wanted the park. They wanted it to be cleaner, safer, more attractive, and with more of a function for the area’s diverse locality.

Work undertaken in the four months of the study uncovered a large amount of opportunities. The park exists in an area of serious health conditions, but also an area of possibilities in terms of culture, commerce and education. Above all, its own central core - as a natural space of carefully managed biodiversity - provides a role that could be maximised and could connect directly with these other facets.

In an era in which partnerships, co-working and cross-departmental action all increasingly matter, Nursery Row Park is well placed to deliver against a number of central and local policy priorities. It represents an opportunity to develop a model that will respond to imperatives that include, amongst others, the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), Southwark’s Core Strategy and the government’s recent document, ‘The Natural World’.

This study therefore recommends that the Friends of Nursery Row Park and the London Borough of Southwark work together to create a space that integrates needs and opportunities of its locality around healthy living. That they should do so by:

- capital developments (work on railings, electrics etc)
- increasing its identity as a source of wellbeing with signage and interpretation
- developing partnerships with organisational stakeholders in order to increase usage and profile
- seeking funding for an outreach worker to facilitate links and usage around environmental good practice and healthy living.

The following sections deal with the opportunities, risks and policy contexts.

IV Context and Opportunity

How should this be achieved? Over the course of the months, it became steadily clear that the key to Nursery Row Park lay in its context – context in the broadest sense.

Nursery Row Park stands at the node of a number of different needs and assets and has the potential for responding to them.

Location

Its geographical location and its own dimensions first of all are strong indications of likely use.

Southwark is fortunate in having a range of parks and open spaces, from the grand to the pocket. The scale of each directly shapes its options as well as the way each is used. A park that has the breadth and resources for instance of Peckham Rye with its sports facilities, café and finely-tended gardens, can engage users for hours in a way that small parks like the delightful Red Cross Gardens does not seek to.

Nursery Row Park has its own set of determinants and advantages.

- 1 It sits in the middle of dense social housing, offering a breath of fresh air and a contrast to the built environment. It is an immediate and accessible park that is knitted particularly well into the fabric of people's daily lives.
- 2 Its function as a cut-through route both enhances its place within people's daily routines and increases local safety. Although people interviewed reported alarming activity at night, the Safety Neighbourhood Team has recorded very little daytime crime. The regular presence of people – however brief – is regarded in other parks as deterring crime, and must be true here too. Dog-walkers sometimes seen as "the eyes and ears of the public" also act as unofficial deterrents.
- 3 A number of people described the impact of walking through the park – the temporary sense of relief it gave them, and the ability to draw breath before getting back to work/school/family pressures. Nursery Row Park prides itself on its naturalness, a comfortable quality that does not seek to impose.

Health

- 1 The surrounding locality has grave health issues. East Walworth has the highest levels of health and disability deprivation in the borough. Heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes are all high. 25% of households suffer overcrowding, with the inevitable impact on health. Low socio-economic status also has a negative impact, as detailed in this year's Public Health report – childhood obesity is particularly high, as are statistics around diabetes, hypertension and cardiac disease.
- 2 On the other hand, there is growing awareness of the beneficial relationship between wellbeing and green open space. The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002) 'found health benefits associated with good quality parks and green spaces in terms of reducing obesity, decreasing the risk of coronary heart disease and strokes and reducing daily stress (Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2003). Further research into green space has supported these findings and shown green spaces to be associated with decreased blood pressure, lower cholesterol (Maller et al, 2005), a decrease in health

complaints (de Vries et al, 2003) and perceived better health (Mass et al, 2006). Ellaway et al (2005) found that residents in high 'greenery' environments were 40% less likely to be overweight and obese as those in the lowest greenery category.‘

3 More recently, the influential Marmot Review looking at inequalities in health demonstrated the positive impact that nature has on both mental and physical health. Particularly relevantly, it has shown statistically that improvements in the local environment have most effect on health in low-income areas. The SE London Report on health (2001) found that people in social rented housing were 2-3 times more likely to report poor health than people in owner-occupied housing.

4 The argument for green open space has been significantly supported by the Ministry of Environment's recent White Paper – 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature'. Unfortunately neither Southwark's new Open Space Strategy nor Framework were ready for outside viewing at this time: but it is unlikely that either would take a very different tack.

5 Exercise is no stranger to Southwark parks. A number of local ones - such as Mint Street and Burgess Park - have popular open-air gyms; other medical centres advise walks in parks as an element in Health Checks for seniors. Walking groups, exercise sessions stimulated by BTCV and buggy-runs for new mothers all profit by the existence of parks. So far, Nursery Row Park answers only to the needs of independent walkers. But there are three local surgeries/health centres within easy reach. And while some evidence has shown that doctors' health referrals to local gyms result in 6-weeks' enthusiasm, the recent 'Prescribing Green Space' conference cited brisk walks in parks – with friends or alone – as a more fitting alternative.

6 Given the local health profile and the park's own location, there is not only a strong opportunity but also a strong need for Nursery Row Park to maximise its own potential for improving local wellbeing.

Environmental

- 1 Nursery Row Park has biodiversity at the head of its agenda. It has developed a community orchard, herb garden, wild flower meadow and a play area that uses natural wood rather than metal. Environmental needs have been at the head of the priorities of the Friends of Nursery Row Park right from the start.
- 2 The Friends commissioned an independent Habitat and Protected Species Audit in 2008 (see Appendix D) that concluded that the site supported a number of habitats, which, although of relatively recent origin, provide an important wildlife and open space resource in an area of open space deficiency.
- 3 It is entirely fitting that the park should be widely known for its environmental emphasis and that it should take as its central aim the development of the park as a centre for healthy living.
- 4 The recent Strategic Planning Document affirms that Nursery Row Park provides a vital open space for the surrounding homes. 'There has already been recent investment into the park, including money spent on landscaping and sculptural features. Further improvements are necessary to improve its setting and the edges to the park and enhance its value to nature conservation. In our view, the nature conservation value of Nursery Row Park would justify its designation as a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation.'
- 5 Interpretation is badly needed. Although many people now understand the function of the wild flower meadow, a number spoken to thought it was simply neglected and untidy. The Friends have planned signage for some time and there is no doubt that it would enhance people's experience of the park.

Education

- 1 The park is close to three primary schools - Robert Browning, English Martyrs and St John's - all of whom have engaged with it at some point in the past.
- 2 Nursery Row Park with its emphasis on the sustainable environment offers an opportunity for studying bio-diversity on their doorstep. Teachers spoken to for this study were keen to develop a relationship. The space could be useful, they felt, for art displays and sport as well as for ecology. 'Schools should be able to teach outdoors when they wish to,' says "The Natural Choice" White Paper, and proposes easing restrictions around health and safety rulings.
- 3 Other examples have shown how a working link with a local site can increase children's sense of being grounded in an area. The Green Circus programme between Arnold Circus and Virginia Primary School in Tower Hamlets developed a keen local loyalty to the heritage site. Almost all its pupils come from a Bangladeshi background, and acquiring that sense of identity was regarded as a major plus by school staff.
- 4 Obesity has increased exponentially nationally. Children entering reception classes in Southwark have the highest rate of obesity in the whole country, and 25% of the borough's Year 6 pupils are officially obese. Exercise is vital. Nursery Row Park could play an important role with immediately local schools.
- 5 'Sowing the Seeds' a report from the London Sustainable Development Commission (Nov 2011) argues for the benefits that children acquire from a connection with nature, and sees it as a fundamental part of their development.

Commercial

- 1 Nursery Row Park sits side by side with East Street Market, established in 1888 and one of Southwark's oldest street markets, yet has minimal

connection with it. Some events have created collaborations (such as Santa's 'grotto' in December 2011) but on the whole the main impact has been through rubbish left by the park's entrance at the end of a market day.

2 East Street Market - like many of Southwark's other street markets – is seeking to redefine its role in an age of supermarkets and out-of-town shopping. The borough's Markets and Street Trading Strategy 2009-12 rightly cites markets' role in the move to 'support and promote healthy eating'. Nursery Row Park's own emphasis on health and the natural life suggests a partnership with the market that could be filled out.

3 Suggestions during interviews have included:

- A farmers' market where Nursery Row Park and East Street market meet
- Cooking demonstrations in the park, with guidance on where to buy ingredients in the market
- An extension of the Sunday flower market into the park

4 The renaming of the car park to the north of the park – from Stead Street Car Park to East Street Market Car Park – suggests another linkage. A notice-board at the car park entrance to the park could tell people about the history of the market as well as the plants and elements they could see in the park they are about to cross. The walk across the park could be more than a simple corridor to the market, and the market's role in promoting healthy living could simultaneously be highlighted.

5 The Strategy's recommendation (Section 3.6) is to the point: 'Promote the contribution of markets and the fresh food offer to Healthy Eating and the reduction of obesity and illness. Work with schools to link education on healthy eating with what is available in the local market.'

6 This could not be better said, and neatly conflates the possible link of the market to schools and park. A link could work to everyone's needs and benefit.

Cultural

1 Southwark has been imaginative in supporting cultural events in non-traditional sites and venues. The deserted Heygate Estate, the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, the Cuming Museum and the Coronet for Marcus Coates' vision quest come to mind.

2 Nursery Row Park offers another useful space for events - during Elefest, for instance, and at other times. A number of people who responded to the questionnaire believed events were a way to bring people together: they developed, they said, a sense of community. Their comments echo Richard Rogers' thoughts about 'open-minded spaces' in his 1995 Reith Lectures when he advocated places that 'bring diverse sections of society together, and breed a sense of tolerance, identity and mutual respect.' UNESCO's 'Our Creative Diversity' (1995) stresses the importance of 'a shared space' for today's providing a neutral space for today's more diverse and fractured communities.

3 People felt that the active use of the park could be developed. In particular, they felt, many local young people would leap at the chance to showcase their music. The recent KissKiss event showed that the park could stage events very easily, and there is a history. The youth carnival started from the park in 2010. And Inter-Galactic Arts had staged events there, said its co-founder Ro Shannon, for over ten years. Vibrant events, they had involved local bands, children's competitions, bonfires and bulb-planting, and had been particularly successful in bringing nearby schools and artists together.

The close ties with Charlie Chaplin would make it fitting, for instance, for the annual London International Mime Festival to stage one of its events in or near the park.

4 Nursery Row Park is easy to get to. Transport links are good and so is parking. Above all, there is a large immediate audience to hand around the park, with more to come once the housing development has taken place.

5 Electrical points around the north of the park would give the it more flexibility in the view of events managers. They would also allow a small summer pop-up refreshments facility (very popular with people surveyed) and nutritional cooking demos that would reinforce the function of East Street Market. These could draw people from the East Street end into the centre of Nursery Row Park.

6 Finally, the borough is home to a quantity of artists, a number of whom have expressed an interest – during the work on this report – in creating work for Nursery Row Park. Final-year MA students at the London College of Communication have already undertaken projects around the park as a result. Plans for the refurbished Burgess Park also recognise the way that the arts can stimulate, engage, delight and inspire. Nursery Row Park can benefit too from their affect.

7 The Friends of Nursery Row Park could develop a skeleton events programme themselves in conjunction with interested parties. Arts and artists increase a park's attractiveness and enhance its profile. 'Festivals and community events,' says a recent CABE report, 'raise awareness of the park and encourage the community to get involved.'

Development

1 Plans at various stages of immediacy exist to build housing at points on two sides of the park. The Friends have been given assurances that this will entail no loss of land.

2 In fact, it could – if handled with care and forethought - be to the park's advantage. Space Syntax's Public Realm report (2008) commented on the way that the buildings currently on the west of the park (with 'inactive frontage and blank walls') appear to turn their backs on it. Two CABE 'Enablers' who

visited the park came independently to the same conclusion. Far from the park becoming landlocked between buildings there is the potential, they felt, - if design were careful – to integrate housing with park in a useful and farsighted way.

3 They speculated on ways in which buildings could feature terraces at a number of levels with greenery on them, facing the park and with direct access to it. Design could stress the unique advantage of social housing with its own park – a benefit that usually is enjoyed by wealthy individuals. Building could embrace the park, they felt, rather than sequester it.

4 CABE recently found that less than 1% of social housing residents report use of green space. The presence of Nursery Row Park is a huge opportunity for developers – a chance to establish a sustainable model that integrates good design with the natural environment and that offers future residents a healthier lifestyle. Both Council and developers should see this as a chance to craft a prototype that could have transferability and demonstrate how developer, council and community can collaborate.

5 The Friends of Nursery Row Park should be able to demonstrate wide and representative local support through its membership base and be an active partner in such an exercise.

V Policy and Strategy Context

1 Southwark's own Core Strategy set five overriding objectives –

- Improving individual life chances
- Making the borough a better place for people
- Delivering quality public services
- Making sure positive change happens
- Delivering in growth areas.

Its particular relevance would seem at first to be solely under Strategic Policy 11 which covers Open Spaces and Wild Life.

2 SP11 values them for their contribution to overall health; the way in which they break up the built environment and add character; how vegetation reduces the temperature; for their historic significance, for their role in enabling food-growing.

3 The Council undertakes to promote green corridors and chains and SINCs. It also will 'identify and protect open spaces that provide quietness and relative tranquillity.'

4 Nursery Row Park delivers against this objective. However, it is also relevant to Strategic Policy 1 that looks at Achieving Growth, and of the necessity (Strategic Objective 1C) for people to be healthy and active; on SO1D to support culture, creativity and diversity; and in SO 2F to conserve and protect historic and natural places.

5 Strategic Policy 4 looks to support places for learning, enjoyment and healthy lifestyles.

6 Research for this report has strongly indicated the need to develop a unified vision for Nursery Row Park so that it can address basic needs of the area. Health, culture, commerce and education are as important as the park's in the Council's Core Strategy. The Council's aims and those of Nursery Row Park march hand in hand.

8 They are in harmony too with both the London Plan (3D.8 Value of Open Space and 3D.12 Open Space Strategies) and the Mayor's Biodiversity and Access to Nature Strategy that requires that 'Development should enable people to live healthy, active lives; should maximise the opportunity for community diversity, inclusion and cohesion; and should contribute to people's sense of place, security and safety. Places of work and leisure, streets and neighbourhoods, park sand open spaces should be designed to meet the needs of the community at all stages of people's live and should meet the principles of lifetime neighbourhoods.'

7 At a national level, they respond readily to the government's Policy Planning Guidance no.17 ' Planning for Open Space, Sport, Recreation that asks that local authorities should 'also recognise that most areas of open space can perform multiple functions.' It lists these as being strategic; relating to urban quality; promoting health and well-being; providing havens and habitats for flora and fauna; as a community resource and, lastly, 'as a visual amenity: even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape.

8 The Department of the Environment's White Paper, 'The Natural Choice' is extremely clear about the benefits of open space. It details the positive impact on health and wellbeing. "Forthcoming guidance," it predicts, 'will make clear the wide determinants of health, including the natural environment, will be a crucial consideration in developing joint strategic needs assessments and joint health and wellbeing strategies.'

9 'The Natural Choice' also calls for the development of green networks, links and 'stepping stones', an initiative that already involves Nursery Row Park, in conjunction with other nearby green spaces. It is strategically well placed to be part of one of the Local Nature Partnerships that the White Paper also proposes.

8 The trend of national guidance in general is towards partnerships and multi-functionality. Both fit well with Nursery Row Park. The park has, as detailed, the potential to address a number of keen local agendas: from schools to commercial enterprise.

9 The Big Society favours local initiatives, and the aim of the Localism Bill (since, an Act) to shift 'power away from central government and towards local people'. The advantages of local involvement are well documented. CABE, for instance, noted the impact of the Transforming Your Space lottery programme: '...people learned how their council worked and became more trusting and open to dialogue. The council gained a better understanding of

community groups and their ability to take responsibility for improving their local environment.'

VI Issues and risks

- 1 Both surveys recorded distinct and strong opinion over two negative elements connected with Nursery Row Park – dogs, and drinkers. Over half of the people surveyed (56%) disliked the fact of dogs. Mostly this was because of dog mess left around the place. This stopped a number of parents bringing children to play in the park, and was a hazard that Play Rangers had to contend with before they started any of their play sessions. There are dog bins, but it is all too apparent that they are not used enough.
- 2 Dogs off the leash also were seen as a problem. They scared children, and some adults too. One nearby school had had an incident in another park where one of their children had been attacked, and this affected their view of using Nursery Row Park.
- 3 The regular presence of groups of drinkers was even more of a deterrent or irritant. 72% of people said how much they put them off using the park or feeling at ease in it. People bringing children home from school across the park took pains to avoid them.
- 4 They also saw that they were the direct cause of rubbish, and it is undeniable that there seems no attempt to put cans or bottles in bins, however close and convenient they might be. Consequently, areas of the park get littered, at times with broken glass.
- 5 There was great local support for the park (92% rejected the idea that it should be replaced by housing), but at the same time people wanted more reason to be in the park – flowers and benches, giving them more of a reason to sit and spend time on the one hand, and the sociability of a café or festival events on the other.

6 People appreciated the park, but were not wholly clear what it was for – why the grass was left to grow, what the function of the orchard was. There is very little signing and no interpretation, and a number of people in their response to the survey picked this up. They felt the park lacked an identity.

7 They also wanted the park to be more amenable to a sense of shared community. Nursery Row Park is a quiet park in its essence, and needs to retain that quality. Noise and a great deal of activity cannot be appropriate. Development needs to be sensitive and discreet. But that does not preclude an occasional events programme to open the space out to local groups or a temporary refreshments point to provide a place to sit and congregate.

8 The survey recorded regular requests for 'more for children', and more benches nearby so that children could be overseen as they played. It was noticeable, during visits, that the active 'swing' was far more used than other bits of equipment. A less anecdotal investigation could be useful.

8 However, the Friends of Nursery Row Park need to be realistic about their own capacity. They are all volunteers with day jobs. Their achievement to date has been nothing less than impressive. The park has been improved, activities like regular gardening days have taken place, and the whole area – as many people commented – now gives a feeling of being cared for. But there is a limit. If the park is to play the part for which it has such potential, then another system of management needs to be found.

VII Conclusions and Recommendations

1 The role that Nursery Row Park could play in the life of its locality is undeniable and valuable, and so is its relevance to both local and national policy priorities.

2 It is recommended that the park builds on its core character of biodiversity by developing its role as a site for local health and wellbeing, capitalising on its strength in providing a natural environment.

3 To do so would need creating active partnerships with local stakeholders – education, health, environment, business and culture - and would need a worker. It is recommended that the Friends of Nursery Row Park investigate links with appropriate organisations that could provide a co-management service.

4 In order to fundraise more widely, it is recommended that the Friends consider their status, and become either a registered charity or a CIC.

5 It is recommended that the Friends and Southwark Council establish a clearer picture of the respective rights and duties of themselves and the borough with regard to the park. It is to everyone's advantage for the Friends to be acknowledged locally as having a responsible and respected role, but that the parameters be articulated.

6 It is recommended that signage and interpretation gets high priority, and that links with East Street Market be maximised.

7 Actions be set in motion to address the problems of dogs and of drinkers – an education programme for the former and joint collaboration between social services, police, park rangers for the latter.

8 Consideration be given to green gym equipment, possibly dispersed around the park (as in Kennington Park) so as to avoid corraling exercise into one corner.

VIII Ideas Bank

The following ideas came from organisations and individuals during the project.

- More defined edge to the park – especially by car park: consistent railings all the way round
- Arches over each entrance echoing the rectangular arches over the path in the park itself

- A health trail with markers for distance walked in a number of circuits
- Container at car-park entrance with health, environment and market information: possible refreshments point/caf 
- Wires to stretch over the rectangular arches in the park that could be used to train plants and eventually create a spectacular green tunnel.
- A schools Olympics in the park, bringing together local primary schools
- Creating mown 'islands' in the wildflower meadow and paths to reach them so as to allow some of the space to be used - CABE.
- More active play in the adventure playground –eg ropes to swing from, from the trees.
- 'Feeling Good' vivid arts/health event/festival, mixing games, invented sports, health checks, artist's work – Home Live Art
- A sound piece installed and to be discovered around the park, using memories, music, testimonies – Eva Sajovic
- Talking rubbish bins
- Concrete stands for do-it-yourself barbecues
- Healthy cooking demos in the park
- Pedestrianising 100m of Orb Street approaching East Street
- A farmers' market at the East Street end of the park
- Sunday flower market in the park
- Celebrating the area's most famous son – Charlie Chaplin. London Mime Festival
- School pig, fed on East Street market waste.
- Pop-up caf  point on the hill – summer only

- Dog show, with education programme (telling people statistics about Toxicara, and danger to children's health of dog turds).

IX Appendices

Appendix A

Survey I

A street survey of 57 individuals took place as a pilot on October 2nd, 10th and 23rd.

It found that two thirds (38) of those interviewed had visited the park recently, and recorded the elements they thought would improve it. It led into the second survey.

Survey II

250 individuals, taken between Oct 23rd and Nov 11th 2011.

Method –

- Delivered through doors, with return to nearby shops marked
- Administered on doorsteps
- Sent home in children's bookbags
- Administered from a dedicated market stall on Oct 25th and Nov 1st

The survey was based on the indications received from the earlier survey of which 66% said they had visited Nursery Row Park; a third (33%) of these had noticed improvements (particularly the play equipment).

The purpose of this extended survey was threefold: to confirm or contradict the results of Survey I; to try to assess the value of the park, given the undeniable facts of housing need in the borough as well as criticisms that had

emerged in Survey I; to see what would improve people's experience of the park and attract them into it.

It also took on board the fact that many of the people surveyed earlier had not been entirely comfortable with English, so it devised a series of icons to illustrate each item – eg a cup to denote a café, and a set of faces with expressions ranging from delight to disgust to denote a range of opinions.

1 What do you think of the park? Mark just one face!

Great 79

OK 128

Poor 33

Don't know 10

Those who were particularly appreciative recorded their views:

Dogs don't run around loose so much – it's better (90 yr old)

It's cleaner +3 more

It's better – new playground + 6 more agreed

'It's more appealing to the eye, and the lights at night-time are lovely.' 'I love the lights in the trees, and it's cleaner generally.' 'It's friendly and cosy.' 'I feel comfortable in it.' 'Cutting through it is a good time to collect my thoughts on my way to work. In the summer, I take my lunch and go and eat it in the park.' 'I go to the park for meditation; at times when there might be problems at home, I go to the park and sit and think.' (80yr Jamaican woman)

'It feels busier, with more people using it and wardens moving the drinkers on.' (young man). It's cleaner, and lovely when the flowers are out' ;The Friends is doing a good job' 'This is our garden – we don't have any.' 'It was lovely – seeing someone cutting the grass in the old-fashioned way.' – elderly white couple.

'This park, you can walk through it at night – some parks you can't.' (young Afro man). 'It's a real community park – an example to all the others.' (white male)

Comment

This is an interesting finding. The bulk of respondents felt the park was 'OK' and very few (13%) found it 'poor'. Taken together, the results for Great and OK add up to 82% - significant approval of Nursery Row Park - and the comments given above are satisfying. However, most of the results favour 'OK' as opposed to 'Great' and the rest of the survey suggests ways in which that could be shifted to be 'Great'.

This is essentially an approval vote, but one that says clearly there is work to be done for Nursery Row Park to up its game.

2 Tick what would make it better – and as many as you want

In order of popularity:

Café	117
Benches	107
Flowers	97
Outdoor gym	83
Festivals	69
Music	49

Other:

Lots more children's stuff. + 16 more (active play such as swings)

More signs/interpretation needed. Better advertising. 'A board which explains the rules of the park – ie no loud music, no dog turds, no swearing/Anti-social behaviour.' Encourage visitors more.

'Dog area for dogs to run around' + 4. 'A warden' - nursery school parent.

'Tree-house; kiddies' farm/rides'; Youth Centre. 'Adventure playground' (?) –

child. 'Activities on a weekend' - child. 'Cultural events that engage the local community – eg South American festival, Caribbean food festival, African music.'

More wild flowers would be good. 'A bit of greenery.' 'Public meetings.' 'Summer kiosk/caf  ' 'Gym for older people'

'We need communal space so we can have the opportunity to interact' 'An ice-cream van in the park and caf   near the playground.' 'For us older people, if there is a caf   and you have a cup of tea and meet people you don't know, is good' (Ugandan lady)

More waste-bins signs, surveillance. Walking/running trails. 'Local kids would love to play their music in the park'.

Comment

The practicality of a caf   in the park needs to be examined. But the message that came back on the doorstep was that a caf   was often a shorthand for a reason to sit and socialise.

Several people described the park as a place in which different people could meet and interact, whether through festivals and events or in a caf  . There seemed a regular desire to create community by some means, in a safe and attractive environment.

Music came down on the list, mainly it would seem because it was taken to mean muzak. People valued the calm and peace of a park, and hence the votes given to more flowers.

3 'What don't you like about it? Tick as many as you want...'

Drinkers	180
Dogs	140
Rubbish	120

Dangerous	33
Boring	32

Other/additional:

‘There’s nothing nice about it, and the drinkers keep kids away.’ ‘I used to go jogging in the mornings in the park but I’ve stopped because of dogs’ mess.’

‘Them orange sticks, I don’t see the point of them!’ ‘Low maintenance.’ + 1, and needs ‘regular maintenance’. ‘It’s got worse – the drinkers in particular are intimidating.’ Dangerous because the surface is too rough in case children fall – I don’t take my children there for that reason.’ + elderly couple’s comment too. ‘A warden is needed’ - nursery school parent. ‘No things to do’ – child? ‘Spitting’ – child? Youth Centre. ‘Boring children’s park’ – child.

‘Messy’ ‘The dogs are so big and they scare me’ (9yr old) + 1 ‘Concerned about groups that are taking over the park.’ ‘Sometimes it’s fearful.’ ‘Drinkers have made it worse.’ ‘Dogs shouldn’t be let to run off the lead.’ + 1; Teenage gangs +3 “There should be no dogs where children play.” ‘It’s boring – there’s nothing in it that stands out’ (young man).

Comment The very high score – 72% - over drinkers in the park is very striking. Indeed, people frequently opened out the conversation – even before launching into the survey – by immediately bringing up this aspect. It was mentioned with a high degree of emotion and dislike. Rubbish (48%) was mainly seen as the direct result of drinkers who left bottles and cans around. The issue of drinkers is not limited to Nursery Row Park, and the involvement of the Safer Neighbourhood Team and park rangers offers a very temporary solution. Although there is an argument for saying a park should cater for all needs – the homeless/rough sleepers etc included – in this case it was presented as a real deterrent by many people. The fact that the drinkers frequently congregate near East Street market entrance makes them even more prominent and probably defines the nature of the park in people’s eyes.

There were two aspects for the dislike of dogs - firstly the fact that they run loose, and secondly the prevalence of dog turds. Even dog owners deplored the fact that others refused to pick up their dogs’ mess. Parents gave it as one

reason for feeling uneasy about using the parks with children. The Play Rangers reported having to clear the area before they embarked on play sessions with children. Several people recommended a dog area, as in other parks. But it is more likely that a concerted education project is needed, in conjunction with the SNT.

Finally, several people talked about the way the park is used at night-time – by 'gangs', drug dealers –

Drinkers in park at night + 5 more. 'I park my van here at night-time, and I see drug dealing.' Youths threatening, at night +3. Drugs. Dangerous at night + 3 'Too dark – more lights at night' + 3; Crackheads. No warden + 1. 'No police presence'.

4 Should the park be shut up and used for housing? Circle Yes or No

No 232

Yes 17

Don't know 1

Comment

This – 92% - is a very striking result indeed. There were many people who had strong criticisms of the park, in particular the presence of the drinkers and unmanaged dogs. But when it was suggested that the park could be disposable and used for another purpose (and one with strong local need), the response virtually unanimously was outrage.

It is very clear that local people at large – whatever their caveats – set a non-negotiable value on the park. They valued it – whether as a place to visit, to spend time in, to take children in or simply to pass through. They want it, but they want it better.

5 Have you seen any changes in the park? Mark just one please

It's better 138

It's much the same 65

It's worse	15
Don't know	32

Comment Over half (52%) felt it was better. They were aware of the improvements that had been made - the new playground and the lights in the trees (see above). A number recorded their sense that the park was now better cared for, cleaner and safer.

6	<u>Finally</u> , people were asked if they would like to join the Friends of Nursery Row Park and help make the park better.
Yes	157
No	91
Already a member	2

Postscript

A draw was held for people who said they wanted to be entered. The names of three local people were drawn out of the proverbial hat by Southwark's Mayor, Lorraine Lauder. They won vouchers for Marks & Spencer/Morrisons.

Appendix B

People contacted

<i>LB Southwark:</i>	Sharon Lomas
Andrea Allen	Jon Best
Julia Edwards	Mayor, Lorraine Lauder
Hemali Tailor	Cllr Darren Merrill
Kate Johnson	Cllr Abdul Mohammed
Miranda Clarke	Cllr Martin Seaton
Deborah McKenzie	Rob Wray
Nina Chantry	Helen Firminger (BOST)

Amanda Webb (Robert Browning)	Tom Wolseley
Rochelle Brook “	John Wallington, Southwark Market Traders
English Martyrs School	Emma Passmore 2In-Spire
Aydin Djamel Pembroke House	Sarah McCarthy, Creation Trust
Kathleen Murrary “	Liz Kessler, CABE consultant
PC Chris Daley	Lynn Kinnear, CABE consultant
PC Neil Beddison	Liz Greenhalgh, Comedia
PC Haughey	Ken Worpole, Comedia
Gary Malloy, Dawes TRA	Eva Sajovic, artist
Katherine McVeigh	Ro Shannon, Inter-Galactic Arts
Rosie Dalton-Lucas, PCT	Laura Godfrey-Isaacs, Home Live Art
Lorraine Weatherman, Aylesbury Medical Centre	Rob Deck, Lend Lease
Elizabeth Tongoi, The Surgery, East Street	Pat Brown, Lend Lease
Christine Nolan-Bertuol, NHS	Paul Bailey, LCC.
Sylvia Levitt, NHS	
Richard Reynolds	<i>Events attended</i>
Celia Cronin	London College of Communication : MA students 21.11.11
Laura Kim	‘Prescribing Green Space’ Health and Green Space Conference 24.11.11
Luke Miller	Localism in London conference 26.11.11
Jim Dennison	
Nicole Beedell	
Jim Beedell	

Appendix C

Reports and publications consulted

‘Community-led Spaces’ CABE 2010

‘Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal’ Comedia, with Demos 1995

‘The Natural Choice: Securing the value of nature’ – Dept of Environment 2011

‘Fair Society, Healthy Lives’ – Marmot Review 2010

‘Juggling Health’ Southwark Director of Public Health 2010

Nursery Row Park: Analysis & Design Review, Space Syntax 2008

Southwark Corporate Plan 2009-2011

Southwark Markets & Street Trading Strategy 2009-2012

“Leading to a Greener London’ GLA 2009

‘Better Green and Water Spaces’ GLA 2009

Localism Bill/Plain Guide Dept for Communities and Local Government

Planning Policy Guidance No17: ‘Planning for open space, sport and recreation’ DCLG 2006

Elephant & Castle Supplementary Planning Document/Opportunity Area Framework 2011

‘Child Obesity in Southwark: the current picture, 2010-2011’ NHS SE London

‘Art in Burgess Park: an Art Strategy’ UP Projects 2009

Habitat Survey, Ecology Consultancy 2008

‘Swing the Seeds: reconnecting London’s Children with Nature’ London Sustainable Development Commission Nov 2011

Appendix D

Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Assessment, The Ecology Consultancy 2008

Concluding Criteria Comments

- *Habitat rarity* - The site supports a community orchard, scrub, trees, amenity grassland and wildflower meadow. None of which are particularly rare, apart from the community orchard, which is relatively uncommon.
- *Species rarity* No rare species have been recorded on the site and it is unlikely that the site currently has the potential to support rare species.
- *Habitat richness* The site is relatively rich in terms of habitats for a small

area.

- *Species richness* Based on the findings of the survey, the site cannot be considered to be species-rich.
- *Size* The site covers an area of 1.76 ha which although relatively small, supports a number of habitats and is larger than a number of other local SINCs. The area of scrub on the site, particularly in the Community Orchard is sufficient to be considered of local importance for breeding birds
- *Important populations* The site is not considered to have the potential to hold important populations of species.
- *Ancient character* NA
- *Recreatability* - The grassland habitats can be recreated in the short-term, but the trees and scrub, including the community orchard, could only be recreated in the medium-term.
- *Typical urban character* - The site is typically urban in character in being relatively small and surrounded by urban housing and roads..
- *Cultural or historic character* - The site provides an local community resource, whose character will develop over time.
- *Geographic position* The site is isolated from other areas of greenspace by roads and development. The site is located in an area where open space is small and fragmented.
- *Access* The site is open to the public..
- *Use* The site is used by walkers, dog-walkers and children. Local people are involved with planting the community orchard and managing the wildflower meadow.
- *Potential* The site, in particular the community orchard, has the potential to contribute to increasing the biodiversity of the park as it matures. There is also the potential to increase the diversity of trees and shrubs elsewhere in the park.
- *Aesthetic appeal* The site has great aesthetic appeal, particularly due to site management and its location amidst urban housing.

In summary, the site supports a number of habitats, which, although of

relatively recent origin, provide an important wildlife and open space resource in an area of open space deficiency.

X Acknowledgements

With many thanks to the members of the Committee of Nursery Row Park who contributed energetically - not only with ideas but also with practical help: administering surveys in streets, on a dedicated market stall and on doorsteps.

To Cllr Darren Merrill for his help on the doorstep with surveys.

To those interviewed who generously donated their time, particularly those who came to view the park to give their opinion

To Starlite Café (54 East Street) who acted my informal (and friendly) base, and provider of sustenance.