

29 June 2018

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Dear Dennis,

Cophall Sports Hub and Mill Hill Open Spaces Master Plan Consultation

1. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Our responses concern primarily improving pedestrian, cycle and bus routes from the Hendon campus to Cophall, which we believe would have a substantial wider community benefit, and an exciting proposal for the University to lead with creating an engaging corridor through the area based primarily on enhancing awareness and enjoyment of its wildlife.
2. Overall, Middlesex University very much welcomes the Cophall and Mill Hill Open Spaces Master Plan. We recognise the extensive work that has gone into the Plan and appreciate the opportunities we have had to contribute to it. We fully support the four key elements of the vision.
3. The University is probably the single largest user of sports facilities across the London Borough of Barnet. Cophall is already extensively used by our students and staff, many of whom are local residents, and Sunny Hill Park is both an important amenity in itself and a route between Cophall and our campus. We have less of an interest in the Mill Hill open spaces but welcome how the three areas are being considered holistically.

Regional Sports Hub

4. We believe that this area has exceptional potential. The new leisure centre and planned development of Allianz Park will enhance a site which currently feels underused. The University is integrally involved with the development of Allianz Park as a partner with Saracens in the redevelopment of the West Stand, to which we plan to move our Sports Science provision currently inadequately housed in the East Stand. Our staff and students will participate in the opportunities presented by the Regional Sports Hub and contribute to its success, bringing the University and wider community together to make the best use of its facilities.
5. Careful design of pitches and changing facilities will facilitate their use by University students and staff and by local residents, and we are keen to contribute to this. Similarly, the installation of sensitive floodlight facilities sympathetic to the wider park environment such as tennis courts will enable year round use, helping avoid the area feeling empty and unsafe.

Better Connected Parks

6. Copthall is not very accessible by public transport and both the wider community and our staff and students would benefit significantly from a direct bus route from Hendon. At the moment the bus trip from the University campus to Allianz Park involves two changes and a 15 minute walk, taking almost an hour. While Copthall is accessible from the campus on foot (a 30 minute walk) and by cycle, this is not suitable for everyone and when it is wet or dark there is a particular need for good public transport connections.

7. Walking and cycling is to be encouraged, however, and the walking and cycling infrastructure needs developing. We believe that there needs to be sensitive lighting and preferably security camera coverage along shared pedestrian and cycle routes from the Hendon campus and through Sunny Hill Park and Copthall, with improved signage. The University would give consideration to linking CCTV along these route to our control room on the campus.

8. With regard to connections west of the M1, p. 42 refers to four potential routes into Copthall. We request that the following points are considered:

- From point 2 on the 03 red route, and from point 4 on the 04 blue route, access to Sunny Hill Park should be implemented as soon as possible, rather than trying to link the red and blue routes in some way along the Watford Way.
- Route 04 on p. 42 of the Master Plan is important to the University as it connects Colindale, where we have our main halls of residence (as well as the large and growing Colindale population). The pedestrian route east along Aerodrome Road under the M1 and railway needs improvement as it approaches the A41. Passing under the M1 and railway at points 1, 2 and 3 is very unfriendly and could be significantly enhanced with aesthetic improvements such as murals. The path narrows dangerously as it approaches the A41 and exposes pedestrians to fumes from standing traffic. The underpass beneath the A41 needs some improvements to reduce littering and water collection, and should have security cameras and emergency call points. The route from the underpass exit on the west side to and through Sunny Hill Park to Copthall needs signage and should have a dedicated cycleway.

9. Page 43 shows several circle points. At Circle 4 we are very pleased to see the recognition of two access points for the University into Sunny Hill Park especially as one of these improves the forgotten access from Church Terrace. Turning these into more formal entrances will enhance the access to the park.

10. Circle 3 shows a new feature footbridge over the Great North Way. The road at this point is very wide and the feeling that one gets from crossing the footbridge further up the Great North Way is unpleasant and unsafe because of the sheer volume of traffic. The complication with building a bridge here is that the height will mean stairways and/or lifts on one or both sides because of differences in height. These will be an interruption to all users and will not be very accessible. We would instead like to see the existing underpass connecting Sunny Hill Park with Copthall, a few hundred metres west of the existing pedestrian bridge, retained but improved. This is the best crossing of the Great North Way and we suggest improvements include shared cycle and pedestrian accessibility, better lighting, security cameras, emergency call points, and measures to

minimise graffiti and littering. There also need to be improvements to the path that leads from the underpass into Cophall and onwards.

11. The existing bridge across the Great North Way is both unpleasant to cross and difficult to use with a bicycle. However, for some this may be the preferred route from and to the University on dark evenings. We do not think replacing the bridge would be cost-effective but it could be significantly improved with higher handrails and improved insulation from the busy traffic below. The pedestrian route from Sunny Gardens Road west along the Great North Way to the underpass could also be improved for pedestrians and cyclists and better insulated from the road traffic.

Wider Leisure and Cultural Activities

12. The University is very involved in Barnet, contributing to many community activities, voluntary work, and initiatives such as the new arts and culture strategy. Many of our students and staff are local residents. The Master Plan presents opportunities for us to further enhance this engagement. In particular, we would like to encourage the development of marked and measured jogging and walking routes across the whole area, extending into other green spaces in Arrandene and Mill Hill. Our proposal for a Wildlife Corridor would further add to the amenity of the area, as described below.

Nature and Biodiversity

13. The nature conservation challenge reflected in this plan has inspired the University to develop a proposal for a wildlife corridor from the Hendon campus through Sunny Hill Park to Cophall. We are making this proposal to the Council through this submission and would be prepared to co-invest in it. The aim would be to create an asset which combines community benefit with a teaching and research resource for the University, including schools and community engagement, together with cutting edge technology to create opportunities akin to the BBC 'Springwatch' TV programmes.

Our aim would be to incentivise use of the current green corridor from the Hendon campus to Cophall for the University and the community. We have consulted on the concept and received support for the idea from local schools, the Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum and Mill Hill Preservation Society. The project would take the following form:

- A scoping stage engaging local residents and community groups, including a participatory mapping event and using the University's innovatory Urbanapp (a software app) to enable people to identify what they like or dislike whilst using the corridor, with photographic entries geotagged and recorded to build up further information on perceptions of green space. We would in addition run focus groups and semi-structured interviews to explore experiences of the area and ensure we enhance it in ways that reflect the community's ideas and priorities.
- A co-production stage to develop projects to enhance green corridor use, including a student competition to develop plans to enhance park use and meet local needs, and an event where students pitch their ideas to local residents, with the most popular ideas selected for implementation. We would also pair up local groups with students and assign

teams a site along the corridor, with each team developing a physical form (e.g. arts piece/sound sculpture/butterfly garden/maze) and an online presence at each site along the route as an opportunity to integrate real and virtual engagement.

- A stage to generate ideas to encourage use of the green corridor. This could include smart benches (talking benches) as way-markers which could, for example, tell the history of the area, play music linked to the weather or time of day, report calorie loss based on distance walked or run between the benches, and suggest activities (e.g. mindfulness or physical exercises) to support people to use the space. Other possibilities are QR codes so smart phone users can identify trees and plants or listen to local stories; bird and bat boxes with IP cameras accessible via a YouTube channel; and motion cameras for 'Springwatch' style broadcasting. We would also consider different types of walks and activities, such as an arts walk, nature walk, health walk and multisensory walk (e.g. sound, smell, texture). In the longer term, we envisage the area could include an urban ecology observatory managed by the University and open to the public and schools.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to these plans. The University looks forward to continuing to work with you and your team.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Blackman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor