



THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

serving the Westcombe Park community

Please respond to environment@westcombesociety.org and chair@westcombesociety.org
or Westcombe Society c/o 163 Westcombe Hill, London SE3 7DP

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY RESPONSE to PLANNING APPLICATION for the FAN ZONE (19/3497/F)

The Westcombe Society objects to planning application number 19/3497/F for a Fan Zone in Greenwich Park during June and July 2020.

The Westcombe Society is an amenity society which covers the Westcombe Park conservation area and other streets that abut the eastern side of Greenwich Park. We take pleasure in enjoying and supporting the park and are actively engaged with their National Heritage Lottery Fund bid. With this in mind the strength of feeling we and our residents have in objecting to this application are all the more compelling. We feel that holding an event of this nature in Greenwich Park is totally inappropriate.

The Westcombe Society, together with the Greenwich Society, other local amenity societies and the Friends of Greenwich Park have attended public consultations and informal meetings with GLA Officers and the event organisers (Loudsound) to voice our concerns. We have also lobbied our GLA member, our local MP, the Mayor of London and RBG but with little indication of their appreciation of our concerns or any mitigating factors. This application does not remove any of the issues that we have nor does it offer any mitigation to offset the impact on the Park, residents, the surrounding area and local business.

The following are our main objections:

- **30,000 spectators is excessive**

We feel that this figure is excessive and cannot be justified. It is far greater than the attendance at the Olympic equestrian event with a distinctly different spectator demographic. No justification is provided for this figure. It is far too high for a number of reasons, not least the effect on local transport which is already stretched especially at peak times, which

together with congestion at stations and bus stops could lead to frustration and anti-social behaviour by queuing fans.

- **Transport and controlled parking arrangements are inadequate**

- Transport is one of our biggest concerns. Existing facilities will be severely stretched by the addition of those attending the event. This is especially true of weekday matches where timings of journeys conflict with rush hour travel on mainline, Jubilee, DLR and bus services which are already at or near capacity. It is also true of the impact of fans leaving the evening matches when local transport runs less frequently.
- We have not yet seen any statement from TfL, Network Rail, Southeastern or Thameslink confirming that they can put in place the plans that are needed to cope with the numbers of passengers expected on the Main line, DLR, Jubilee line and local buses.
- We also note that there are no definitive plans in the application describing how this large number of spectators are to be managed between local stations and the venue. During the Olympic events in 2012, when spectator numbers were lower, pedestrian bridges were built across both the A2 and Romney Road.
- Travel to the event by public transport will be promoted on the Fan Zone tickets but this will not stop every car driver. We are concerned that car drivers will park on residential streets within Westcombe Park outside the hours of our CPZs, in currently unrestricted areas and on Sundays.
- We feel that the closure of The Avenue at times on match days will have a very detrimental effect on local roads. This route is well used in rush hours and past closures have resulted in an increase in traffic using routes within Westcombe Park, causing congestion.

- **Loss of public access to parts of Greenwich Park, Blackheath and to the World Heritage Site.**

- The Queen's Field is a popular and heavily used area in the summer months by all manner of visitors. Families picnic, tourists wander through on their way to the Observatory and local schools and young people are able to take advantage of a large open area for their activities. None of this informal use of the area will be possible for up to 12 match days and 6/8 community days and during the set up and take down periods. This is potentially 46 of the 60 days in June and July. (77%)
- Any restorative work required post the event will also restrict access to the Queen's Field in late summer.

- We have been told that gates to the event area will not open until 8am on non-match days. This will disrupt commuters from our area and others who walk through the park on their way to and from Greenwich.
 - We are not convinced that access into the Park will be as normal for the length of the event and that there will be no restrictions on entry via any park gate at any time.
 - We have grave concerns regarding access to the eastern entrance to the Fan Zone which is very close to the children's playground. Fans will share access routes with children and their carers. We are concerned for the safety of children if fans arrive in very large numbers from this direction e.g. from trains at Maze Hill.
 - It is also unclear whether the route from the children's playground to St Mary's Gate will remain open at all times. It is important that pedestrians are not diverted along Romney Road at any time.
 - We agree with the Greenwich Society that the way in which access to visitor attractions will be facilitated during the Fan Zone period is not adequately addressed in the current document.
 - It is likely that the presence of the Fan Zone and the resulting crowds and control arrangements will deter some tourists from visiting Greenwich on match days.
 - Circus Field to the South of the Park will be used for heavy vehicles that require access to the park from time to time, to service the on-site food and drink stalls and other tasks in the park. This will mean that public access to Circus Field will be restricted.
- **Unightly and Obtrusive Infrastructure affecting residents and tourists**
 - The beauty of the area is likely to be marred by portable toilets, empty stalls, fencing and other equipment on non-match days as well as match days.
 - We are told that views of the iconic riverside buildings will be unavailable on match days due to screening being in place at the General Wolfe area and at One Tree Hill. Loss of the view from General Wolfe may deter visitors especially if it results in negative reviews. The view of the Queen's Field and Queen's House from One Tree Hill is already screened by trees. This is a favourite spot for local residents and others watching/photographing summer sunsets and would be spoilt by additional screening that may be unnecessary.
 - The open space of Blackheath will be marred for much of the summer of 2020 by the infrastructure on Circus Field.

- **Limited benefit for town centre and major tourism venues**

We feel that there will be little financial benefit to traders in Greenwich town centre. The route for the bulk of spectators to Greenwich Main line and DLR stations will avoid the town centre. Similarly, those using Maze Hill station or buses will not pass through the town centre. There may be some business done with spectators who use Cutty Sark DLR and pass through the town centre, but the bulk of visitors are predicted to use Greenwich main line and DLR stations.

We expect that tourists will be deterred from visiting Greenwich on match days fearing overcrowding and congestion and fear that some may not come at all during this period.

- **Climate change: pollution and waste generation and disposal**

In view of the policies in the London Plan and the RBG Core Strategy to protect the environment and public health we object to any use of fossil fuel generators. We also object to any use of noisy generators.

We note the plans for refuse collection, sorting and disposal but object to the use of any avoidable plastic or non-biodegradable material. There seem to be no plans to use materials that reduce the generation of waste.

- **Fear of a precedent for large events in Greenwich Park**

We fear that this event will set a precedent for others of this size and nature. It is only 8 years since Greenwich Park hosted the Equestrian Olympics which affected the park and surrounding areas throughout the summer of 2012. We were told this was a once in a life-time event. We are now being asked to host an even larger event in the park which will again affect the park throughout the summer. If Greenwich Park wins its National Heritage Lottery Fund bid, activity will be on-going until 2025. Much of this work is to attract and accommodate larger numbers of visitors, some from outside the immediate area. This combined with the predicted population increase in the local area, many of whom will be living in homes without gardens, will mean increased use of the park for leisure activities. This will also increase the potential impact events such as Euro 2020 would have on the park and surrounding area in the future.

The Westcombe Society therefore asks Greenwich Council to reject this application for the reasons stated above.

However, if the Council is minded to approve the application, we would like to request that conditions be applied to mitigate the effect on local people, the park and the local area.

Mitigation Conditions to include:

- Match day numbers to be limited to no more than were accommodated for the Equestrian Olympics, to avoid crowd control issues. We feel the limit should in fact be lower due to the different demographic of spectators and the presence of alcohol. Security and public safety must be paramount.
- Arrangements to be made on all days, including match days, for access to the park for residents and visitors through all gates, including access to visitor attractions and Greenwich Town centre.
- Arrangements to be made on all days for access through the Fan Zone site for pedestrians from 6am (when the park opens) until the park closes on non-match days. Access on match days from 6am until at least 10am (later for evening matches). This is to prevent disruption to walking routes from residential areas around the park (e.g. Westcombe Park) to Greenwich, in the morning when many commuters walk through the park to access transport services in Greenwich.
- Arrangements to be made to keep The Avenue open for rush hour traffic everyday if at all possible. This means that all set up/take down should take place outside rush hour and that closure of the Avenue should be minimised.
- Publication and approval of an access statement for the children's playground on match days for people coming from every direction.
- Publication and approval of alternative walking routes when paths through the Fan Zone are closed.
- Publication and approval of a travel plan to include:
 - commitments from Network Rail, Southeastern, Thameslink and TfL that they are able to accommodate the additional traveller numbers at the times they are expected.
 - validation of the assumed split between travel on the Main line and DLR to ensure that the correct emphasis is made and that clear instructions are given to ensure a spread of numbers between the main line and DLR trains.
 - assurances that sufficient additional staff will be available to run any extra trains needed and provide help at stations with passengers boarding and alighting from trains.
 - robust proposals for discouraging football fans from alighting at Cutty Sark in the peak rush hour period before the 20.00 kick off.

- whatever proposals are needed to mitigate the impact on transport of other major events in and around Greenwich including at the O2.
- assurances from Network Rail and TfL that no engineering works will take place that affect services on the Greenwich, Lewisham or Blackheath main lines or the DLR during this period.
- assurances from TfL that the local buses, including those going to North Greenwich, can cope with the extra numbers.
- assurances from TfL that there will be sufficient capacity on the Jubilee line to accommodate this large increase in passenger numbers taking into account any other large events taking place locally e.g. The O2.
- clear plans for pedestrian routes between all local stations and bus stops and the venue.
- A review of the necessity for screens at One Tree Hill. The view of the Queen's Field from One Tree Hill is already screened by trees especially in the summer months.
- A parking plan to amend CPZ controls in the surrounding areas on match days so that no free parking is available until after match start times on match days.
- A requirement that all on-site generators run on low emission fuels and have low noise levels.
- A requirement to avoid the use of plastic (glasses, straws, wrapping etc.) where compostable alternatives are available and for any unavoidable plastic materials to be recyclable.
- A requirement to keep the Greenwich Park web site regularly updated with match information so that visitors/tourists can plan around any access restrictions.
- Assurances that all grass areas used will be protected and reinstated both in Greenwich Park and on Circus Field and that no areas of acid grassland will be affected.
- Reinstatement of grass areas to be delayed until after the school summer holidays so that use of the areas that need reinstatement is not restricted during school holidays.
- A clear statement that this is a one-off event and will not set a precedent for future events of this size in Greenwich Park.

Marilyn Little

Chair, Westcombe Society

17 December 2019