

Forest Hill Society response to: Dartmouth Road Streetscape Improvements - Feasibility Design

The Forest Hill Society is the local amenity society for the area covered by SE23 and has around 400 members. The society is keen to ensure that the area develops in a positive way that supports the economic, environmental and social well-being of the people that live and work in it. We are keen to see improvements around the town centre and last year we arranged a design workshop for local people to look at the issues around the town centre. Dartmouth Road was one of our four main areas that we recognised required design work to make improvements.

We welcome the feasibility design and the support from Lewisham Council and from TfL to improve this high street. The design contains a number of elements we were hoping to see, however there were also some concerns from residents and shop keepers regarding some of the proposals. We have taken account of views from the design workshop, residents, traders, and shoppers in compiling our response below.

Parking

Most of the parking outside shops is already in existence. We welcome the additional parking in the southern area of the scheme and prevention of parking around a bus shelter and behind the pedestrian crossing opposite Holy Trinity School and the Library. We welcome the improvements for pedestrians in this area of Dartmouth Road.



Outside the swimming pool the adjustment of the streetscape may make it difficult for servicing the pool plant equipment located at the front of the site. We hope that due consideration is given to this issue to ensure that servicing the pool does not present a wider problem.

There are concerns that by raising the level of the road and making parking in the pavement area, that cars will be encouraged to push the limits and park beyond the designated parking bays. We would be interested to hear how the scheme will prevent such abuse of the pavement area become standard practise.

We request the use of double yellow lines with no stopping (double yellow kerb markings) for the length of Dartmouth Road (Thorpewood Avenue to London Road) where parking bays are not provided. There is a particular problem at the northern section as parking here, which is legal on Sundays, seriously impacts traffic flow, especially buses.

Parking enforcement is key to any changes to parking and smoother traffic flow. We would ask for an increase in time spent by enforcement officers on this stretch of road to ensure that any new scheme is properly enforced and that pavement parking does not destroy all the good work.



We recognise that traders need to be able to load and unload close to their businesses. To help this to happen in a way that does not hinder traffic flow, nor impact pedestrians, we would suggest the inclusion of some provision for unloading.

For all parking bays we would encourage an increase in parking times to 40 minutes, rather than the very limited 20 minutes on offer at present. We would encourage some of the parking bays to be reserved for blue badge holders, so that it is easier for less able residents to visit local shops, and to replace the potential loss of the disabled parking bay outside the swimming pool.

Bus Stops

We welcome additional bus stops on the high street as the gaps between stops are currently rather large, and completely miss out the town centre.

It may be worth considering whether the bus stop outside Barclays Bank is still required if there is a bus stop slightly earlier on Dartmouth Road (possibly further north than currently planned). This stop is only used by the 122 bus, and placing a new stop slightly further back on Dartmouth Road, as well as the existing stop beyond the railway (on Waldram Park Road), would provide appropriate transport interchange for Forest Hill station.



Removing this bus stop would allow for the widening of the extremely narrow pavement on the other side of the road (outside William Hill). Adjusting the pedestrian crossing may be beyond the scope of this scheme, but improvements that facilitate this in the future would be beneficial.

Pedestrian Crossings

We are concerned that raising the level of the street for the entire length (without the existing speed humps) could increase speeds on the road if no other measures are taken, and will provide no improvement for pedestrians wishing to cross the road. In previous discussions we had talked about a series of raised tables at each of the junctions, this might provide some improvement for pedestrians, and would slow traffic speeds where necessary.

More details need to be provided about how pedestrians will be given priority at cross overs and particularly at 'uncontrolled pedestrian priority crossings'. We would like details of what measures will be in place to physically slow/stop traffic on the main road and when turning into or out of side roads (particularly Derby Hill which is the most prominent of the side roads).

Roadway / Pavement

We generally welcome the wider pavements although there are few areas where the widening will make much difference as these areas will primarily be for parking.

Consideration should be given to replanting some of the trees in front of Kingswear House further back from the road. We appreciate the amenity value of trees for residents of these flats, but the current line of trees is too close to the footpath and limits the width of the footpath available to pedestrians.

We support the concept of curved wall around planted areas in front of Kingswear House, but the ground levels may make this a difficult concept to implement without rather high planted

areas. These could be unsightly and prone to damage as the existing trees continue to grow.

Cycling

We note that there are no cycling specific enhancements to this important connecting road. Narrow roads, wider pavements, and more parked cars do not appear to provide any improvement to this road for cyclists. It is perhaps necessary for Lewisham to consider more widely how cycling provision could be improved in Forest Hill, connecting to the Southwark Spine – coming to East Dulwich and possibly extending into Forest Hill, and connecting with other cycle routes through Lewisham and Southwark.

Street Clutter and Signage

Dartmouth Road suffers from excessive street clutter including bollards, badly positioned cycle racks, telephone boxes, advertising columns and unused billboards. As many of these should be removed as possible. Cycle racks should be positioned in the main pedestrian squares rather than alongside parked cars.

More ideas for removal of street clutter can be found in the 2010 Forest Hill Street Clutter Report <http://www.foresthillsociety.com/2010/02/forest-hill-street-clutter-report.html>





However, we would encourage two types of signage:

1. Directions to town centre parking (Pearcefield Road and Perry Vale) on all approaches to the town centre, including south of Thorpewood Avenue.
2. Legible London style signage for pedestrians; located outside the swimming pool, outside WHSmith, and outside Horniman Museum.

