

Latchmere Recreation Ground Management Plan 2008 – 2013

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in May 2008

Progress against action plan to be monitored annually via the Parks Service
AQPR.

Site Description:

- Site Name: Latchmere Recreation Ground
Also known as Latchmere Rec
- Location: Latchmere Recreation Ground is bounded to the north and east by Reform Street; to the south by Burns Road and to the west by Southside Quarter, a recent housing development on the site of a former school.
- Map showing location and internal layout is available on request.
- Grid reference: The grid reference of the bottom south west corner of the site is TQ27777637
- Council Ward: Latchmere Ward, Elected members for this area are:
Cllr Tony Belton (Labour)
Cllr Mrs Leonie Cooper (Labour)
Cllr Maurice Johnson (Labour)
- Site Area: The area of the site totals 7469 square metres (0.75 ha /1.8 acres).
- Tenure: The site is owned by Wandsworth Borough Council and managed by the Council's Parks Service (part of the Department of Leisure and Amenity Service).
- Management: The site is managed and maintained by Wandsworth Borough Council, with responsibility for the site taken by the Parks Service. The footpath dividing the park is the responsibility of the Council's Department of Technical Services as this is public highway.
- Designations: The council has adopted planning policies, which aim to protect and enhance the quality of life, and improve economic and social opportunities. They are the basis for promoting and controlling development in the borough. The current statutory development plan for the borough comprises the Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted August 2003.
- Under the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – this site is designated as “Other Larger Protected Open Space Sites”.
- The footpath dividing the park is designated as public highway.

Excluding the toddlers playground, the eastern side of the park is designated as “Canine Faeces Removal Area” under the Councils Dog Bye Laws. The toddlers playground on the eastern side, and the whole of the western side, is designated as “No Dogs”. This includes the junior playground and an area of tarmac previously used by the former school.

The Multiple Dog walking Bye Laws also apply to this site. This limits the number of dogs that can be walked without obtaining a licence from the Council (Parks Police).

Wandsworth Open Space Study

In 2006, the Wandsworth Planning Office carried out an Open Space Study. As part of that Study, a quality assessment of all of the open spaces in the Borough was carried out. The range and condition of facilities within each open space were assessed using a scoring criterion derived from the Civic Trust Green Flag standard assessment which is also consistent with the GLA guidance.

The criteria included the assessment of the quality of natural and landscape features, conservation of buildings and structures, provision of interpretation facilities, standards of arboricultural management, whether the space was welcoming, its accessibility and safety, signage, levels of personal security, dog-fouling, cleanliness, standards of horticultural maintenance and the overall appropriateness and quality of provision of facilities for the site.

All aspects were scored between 0 and 10, with below 5 being poor, 5-6 Fair, 7 good, 8 very good, 9 excellent and 10 exceptional.

In this assessment, Latchmere Recreation Ground had an overall quality average score of **8.3**, which puts it in the 'very good' rating. Suggested improvements included minor repairs to paths and railings and improved signage.

History:

Latchmere Recreation Ground was laid out in 1906 as a recreation ground for children on the new Latchmere Estate, which had been built three years earlier.

The estate was built on land that had previously been a large allotments site extending from Latchmere Road along the railway line as far as Culvert Road and up to Battersea Park Road. The allotments were owned by the Battersea Vestry, a form of local parish council responsible to local ratepayers. Allotments were often set up by churches or charities with the express purpose of enabling poorer people to feed their families. This site had existed for less than forty years by the time it was replaced.

Following the 1880 Education Act, a portion of this field was bought by the School Board for London. The former Latchmere School still stands adjacent to the recreation ground. The Clapham Union acquired another portion for building. Pressure for development had begun but the land was still used for public services. In 1888, Battersea Vestry who were responsible for the land began to discuss its value in the light of the development and expansion of London. By comparison, sale of the two parcels of land had raised £2,000 and over £1,000, whereas the allotments - which still took up a far larger area - brought in a total rent of £18 a year. Some Vestry Members built up arguments to sell the remaining land for private development. This was resisted for 20 years by which time the picture of local government in London had altered. London County Council had come into being and locally the Vestry was replaced by Battersea Borough Council, which quickly gained a reputation of being politically radical. The allotments disappeared but plans for private housing were replaced by public social housing, one of the first examples by a local council. Latchmere Estate still stands.

The Latchmere Recreation Ground provided the original setting for the Brown Dog statue, currently resurrected in Battersea Park. In 1911 anti-vivisectionists chose to commemorate the life of a terrier that had died as a result of animal experiments in University College, London. The radical Battersea Council supported an anti-vivisectionist hospital, which stood on the corner of Albert Bridge Road and Prince of Wales Drive, and permitted the statue to be placed in the centre of the Latchmere Recreation Ground. This provoked huge public unrest, involving medical students, local trades council, the police and others in several fairly violent skirmishes. The statue was removed within a matter of weeks, and believed to be destroyed.

Site Features:

Latchmere Recreation Ground is a small, enclosed area with slightly mounded grass areas, large mature trees and shrubs, and play equipment. The large, mature London Plane trees at the boundaries, and two large Willow trees near the junior playground, are a major feature. Original railings, with nearly all spikes removed, enclose the site on 3 sides. A central footpath, forming part of the public highway and linking Burns Road and Reform Street, divides the park, with both sections separately enclosed.

There are two double gates on either side of the central footpath. Two double gates, one in Burns Road to the southwest, and one in Reform Street to the east, allow combined vehicle and pedestrian access to the western and eastern sections of the park. All four gates are original and add to the character of the park.

A tarmac footpath runs from the gate in Reform Street to the central footpath. The western section is extensively surfaced with tarmac.

A wooden pergola in the eastern section forms a sitting area. This is paved with concrete block pavers.

There are 14 seats and 7 litter bins, including those in the playgrounds. There are 2 dog waste bins. Seats and bins are of differing types and colours.

Although surrounded by street lights, including lighting on the central public footpath, the site is not well lit, with no internal lighting. This is partly due to the dense leaf canopy of trees throughout the site.

The overall impression is of a tired worn park in need of renovation. The park is locked at night.

Safe & Secure:

Local residents have highlighted problems with youths and others using the park for drug taking, “exercising” of “fighting” dogs and other antisocial behaviour. This is borne out by drugs paraphernalia being found by maintenance staff, and damage to plants, seats and play equipment. Views in some areas of the park, and on the central public footpath, are partially blocked by large mature shrubs. Some shrubs were reduced in height in the winter of 2007.

Parts of the park are very dark due to heavy shade cast by the large mature trees, mostly at the boundaries, but also throughout the park. Surfaces in the junior playground are covered in moss due to the amount of shade.

There are new signs detailing the different designations under dog control bye laws at 3 of the 4 gates.

Gates not fastened back when the park is open, swing out onto the public footpath, causing a hazard to pedestrians. Drop bolts on the gates need repair to enable this to be rectified.

The two vehicle gates provide access for service vehicles and pedestrian users of the park. The lack of separation between vehicles and pedestrians could be regarded as a potential threat to users. There is no control of vehicle access, although there are no reports of this being abused.

The lack of control at the 2 vehicle gates leaves the park vulnerable to fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and illegal access by joy-riders.

The junior play area has one small gate with a self closing mechanism that is not working. The other gate to this area is a double gate that cannot have this type of mechanism fitted. This may allow dogs to inadvertently get into play areas and small children to easily run out of them.

Only one gate in the western section of the park allows users to access this side without walking through the junior playground.

Welcome:

Signs at entrances are limited to detailing dog bye laws and other restrictions. These are contained in cabinet style signs at three of the four entrances to the park. These are in good condition. There is no sign at a fourth entrance, which is also one of two entrances to the junior playground. There is a small "No Dogs" sign fixed to the gate of the toddler playground. A very faded and illegible sign is sited near to the toddler playground.

All four entrances have double gates that are left partly closed or opening onto the street rather than being opened fully and secured in the open position with drop bolts. Railings and gates need repair and painting to improve the sense of welcome.

Vehicle damage to grass at the sides of paths from Reform Street, signals a lack of care.

The toddler and junior playgrounds are each located in different sections of the park, with the central public footpath separating them. This is likely to be inconvenient for parents with children of both age groups. The location of the junior playground also restricts access to the western side of the park for visitors not using the playground

Planted areas provide little colour or interest.

There is no mention of the historic "Brown Dog" statue that was on the site until 1910.

Clean and well maintained:

The grass is mown regularly to maintain a short dense sward. Shrub beds are weeded regularly, and cut back once a year as required. There is a regular litter collection programme for both general litter and dog waste.

Occasionally, drugs paraphernalia is found in some parks. A system has been devised to ensure safe removal and recording of each incident. This helps to ensure staff and park users are protected, and Metropolitan and Parks Police informed. Steps to minimise drug use in parks can then be undertaken using this information. Drugs paraphernalia has occasionally been found at Latchmere Recreation Ground and action has been taken to deal with this problem.

This site contains a mixture of native and non-native trees. There is good age class diversity with trees ranging from young to mature. The routine tree inspection and maintenance is undertaken on a three-year rotation. The most significant trees are located around the perimeter of the site; there is mixed local opinion towards these large mature trees. There is no significant Pest or Disease problem and no evidence of recent vandalism.

The play areas have daily visual safety inspections carried out by Wandsworth Parks Police, weekly recorded inspections by designated Council staff and quarterly safety inspections by Council technical staff. In addition an

independent specialist carries out an annual inspection of all Council playgrounds.

Footpaths are in reasonable condition, but the surface layer of the large tarmac area to the west of the park is breaking up.

Tall shrubs at the Burns Road boundary have been replaced with Photinia which will need regular pruning to maintain sightlines.

Several stumps of shrubs, cut to ground level to improve sightlines, and a large tree stump, have not been removed.

Litter bins and dog waste bins vary in style and condition, with several in very poor condition.

Health and well-being

Latchmere Recreation Ground has both a toddler and a junior play area, which provide for play and exercise of children. Childrens Services are currently drawing up plans to redevelop the playgrounds in the near future.

The park is well used by dog walkers and there is some use of the large tarmac area for ball games.

Community involvement:

There is no known organised community involvement currently.

Service delivery:

Landscape maintenance, including maintenance of seats and bins, is carried out by contractor and monitored by the Parks Operational team based at Wandsworth Common.

Structural maintenance of buildings paths and railings is the responsibility of the Premises section of the Leisure and Amenity Department. Maintenance of the playground is the responsibility of the Childrens Services Department.

Staff skills & knowledge:

Skills required to manage this site include basic horticultural maintenance including the use of mowing and strimming machinery. A higher level of knowledge is required for maintenance of trees. General building and engineering skills are required to maintain structures, paths and railings and the playground.

Sustainable approach:

The site is generally managed without the use of pesticides or watering.

Weeds are occasionally controlled with glyphosate.

Organic material, collected from all sites during maintenance operations, is composted and used, when suitable, for mulching and soil improvement of ornamental planted areas.

Finance:

Maintenance costs are met from Parks budgets covering all small parks.

There is no separate budget for this site within the Parks Service. Costs of playground maintenance are met from Childrens Services Department budgets.

Current Management:

All horticultural maintenance and litter clearance is as specified in the Parks Service Horticultural Maintenance contract, which includes all routine grass cutting, litter collection, weed clearance, shrub pruning and other routine horticultural tasks. All work that does not fall under this contract is carried out under additional works programmes by order with the main contractor or outside contractors depending on the scope of the work entailed.

Trees:

There are 23 very large mature trees on the site and many smaller trees. These trees are inspected every 3 years and were in general good health at their last inspection.

Ornamental planting:

There are areas of ornamental planting at boundaries and within the park. These are weeded regularly and pruned as required. The planting in these areas is characterised by tall growing shrubs, which, for the most part, have been kept pruned at a low level to address security issues.

Seats:

There are fourteen seats, all in good condition, but of three different styles. Five seats, in the large tarmac area, are constructed of horizontal wooden rails with ornamental cast iron ends. These are of a style that matches the age of the park, and were supplied by George Gregory Steels Ltd. Seven seats, supplied by Macemain Engineering, are constructed of sheet metal. Two further seats, in the toddlers playground, are of horizontal wooden planks, built into a retaining wall.

There are two picnic tables constructed of recycled plastic and sited near the large tarmac area

Bins:

There are seven litterbins, and two dog waste bins, of differing styles and colours. They vary in condition from good to extremely poor.

Hard / paved surfaces:

Footpaths and play areas are surfaced with black tarmac. The surface wearing course over extensive sections of paving has deteriorated considerably. A sitting area with pergola is surfaced with concrete block pavers.

Lighting:

There is no lighting within the park.

Fencing:

Original iron-railing fencing forms the boundary on three sides. This is in reasonable condition, although some settlement has caused the top rail to be uneven. The spikes having been removed has not helped the appearance. This has been carried out because of fears of children falling from nearby trees. The fourth, western, side is bounded by a high brick wall, originally the

wall to the adjacent school, now a housing development. This wall is the responsibility of the owner of the adjacent development. There are original ornamental iron gates at the four entrances to the park. Three of these are in reasonable condition with remedial work needed to drop bolts. A fourth gate has a section of upright missing.

Services:

There is no water, electricity, gas or telephone supply to the park.

Future Management:

Safe & Secure:

Continue liaising with Parks Police and other agencies to reduce antisocial behaviour.

Routinely prune shrubs and trim hedges to maintain views through the site.

Replace large shrubs with lower growing plants. Where appropriate, prune lower branches of existing large shrubs to create views through the tall stems.

Reduce shade by thinning branches of smaller trees in the park, if appropriate. Where trees are not likely to survive in the long term, because of damage or overcrowding, consider removal to help achieve a reduction in shade.

Ensure all entrances have signs showing details of dog control areas.

Contact Premises section to ensure gate repairs are carried out, to prevent gates opening onto paths.

Consider options to secure the park against unauthorised access by vehicles.

Assess condition of gate closer to junior play area, to check if repair or replacement is needed.

Ensure that the design of a replacement playground takes into consideration the lack of security caused by using the existing double gates as an entrance to the junior playground. Access to the western side of the park should not be shared with access to the playground at this point.

Welcome:

Design and install more welcoming entrance signs at each entrance, detailing the features within the park and relevant contacts. These should contain more positive information about features of the site. This would give a greater sense of place and a better welcome.

Remove redundant signs.

Following repair to gates, ensure they are opened fully and secured in the open position by Parks Police when unlocking the park.

Investigate access requirements of service staff vehicles. Install protective measures as appropriate to prevent damage to grass edges.

Repair damage to grass strips at edge of footpath in eastern side of park and protect grass from further damage, as appropriate.

Ensure the position of any future playground does not restrict access to the western side of the park to visitors not using the playground.

Install interpretation sign concerning the Brown Dog statue that was on the site until 1910.

Clean & well maintained:

Establish programme of repairs to tarmac area and paths.

Ensure replacement signs are positioned at all gates.

Maintain hedge cutting programme to tall growing shrubs used at the boundary to Burns Road to maintain sight lines.

Remove tree and shrub stumps where these have been cut to ground level, replant with appropriate plants.

Replace all litter and dog waste bins, positioning new bins as appropriate

This site is well stocked with trees; any replacement or additional trees should be located to improve site lines into the gardens and assist with the future aims for this site.

Health and well being:

Liaise with Childrens Services in refurbishing the playgrounds. Consider other features that would contribute, particularly in the western side of the park on the existing tarmac area. Consider cycle parking racks to encourage greater use of cycles to and from the park.

Community involvement:

Install new cabinet signs to include area for temporary notices and any community group contact information. Contact any residents association groups in nearby housing estates.

Staff skills and knowledge:

Monitor any effect to staff following the start of a new landscape maintenance contract in February 2007.

Sustainable approach:

Maintain restriction on use of chemicals. Use composted materials for mulching planted areas. Use recycled plastic seats etc where possible.

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ACTION PLAN

Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
LRG101	To make Latchmere Recreation Ground a place where people feel safe and secure	Reduce antisocial behaviour	Monitor crime reports provided by Parks Police	Ongoing	Parks Service Parks Police
LRG102		Ensure users can readily see all areas	Prune or replace shrubs as appropriate		Parks Service
LRG103		Reduce excessively shaded areas	Survey trees with this objective in mind. Order works as appropriate		Parks Service Tree section
LRG104		Improve effect of dog control bye laws	Ensure all gates have signs showing designation of differing areas		Parks Service
LRG105		Remove hazard to pedestrians	Repair gates		Parks Service Premises section
LRG106			Install bollards or modify gates to prevent vehicle access		Parks Service Premises section
LRG107		Improve safety in playgrounds	Repair or replace self closer		Parks Service Premises section

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
LRG108			Ensure existing double gates are not used as access to refurbished playground		Parks Service Childrens Services
LRG201	To make Latchmere Recreation Ground welcoming and define a sense of place	To provide information on facilities within the park.	Replace signs at entrances to the park.	As part of wider signage review of parks and open spaces	Parks Service Graphics
LRG202			Remove redundant signs		Parks Service
LRG203			Design and install historic interpretation sign incorporating details of Brown Dog statue		Parks Service Parks Police
LRG204		Improve visual appearance at entrances	Ensure gates are fully locked back when open	Following assessment of access requirements	Parks Service
LRG205		Protect grass edges from service vehicle damage	Install bollards or protective matting if appropriate		Parks Service Graphics

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
LRG206		Remove restricted access to park at junior playground gate	Liaise with Childrens Services in playground refurbishment		Parks Service Childrens Services
LRG301	To provide a clean and well maintained Park	Repair tarmac area and paths	Contact Premises section to establish programme of works.		Parks Service Premises section
LRG302		Reseed grass edges	Order works once area is protected from further damage	Following LCG204 above	Parks Service
LRG303		Maintain views from Burns Road	Cut hedge routinely each year	Ongoing	Parks Service
LRG304		Improve appearance within park	Remove tree and shrub stumps		Parks Service Tree section
LRG305			Replant as appropriate		Parks Service
LRG306			Replace all litter and dog waste bins		Parks Service
LRG401	To provide a park which contributes to the health and well-being of all who use it.	Improve play and other facilities	Liaise on plans for refurbished playground		Parks Service Childrens Services
LRG402			Consider other features		Parks Services
LRG403		To increase cycle facilities to and within parks.	Investigate the potential for cycle parking		Parks Service Technical Services Dept

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
LRG501	To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in decisions made relating to Latchmere Recreation Ground.	To carry out consultation with different user groups to influence the enhancement of this park	Contact any local residents associations and schools etc	Ongoing	Parks Service