

Section B: Aspirations

This section of the management plan describes a vision for Vauxhall Park that represents the aspiration of the local community, supported by management. Information provided in Section A has been assessed and analysed to produce a set of clear aims and objectives in discussion with the Friends of Vauxhall Park and Parks Officers.

B.1 Vision

Discussion with stakeholders and community consultation indicated that the vision should reflect the following:

- Access/inclusion of the whole community
- Localness
- Sense of place
- Opportunity and diversity of facilities
- Importance of greenspace
- Quality of place and quality of life
- Heritage

From this the Friends developed the following vision statement:

“Our vision is that by 2016, Vauxhall Park should be a modern urban park of the highest quality, which preserves its historic character while providing a safe peaceful and varied environment for relaxation and recreation and enhancing the wellbeing of all sections of the community. “

B.2 Analysis

An analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) has been carried out using information gathered through research, site survey and consultation and brought together in Section A

Strengths

- Local park, free and accessible to all
- Valued green space, a green lung in the city
- Small area incorporating a range of facilities and different garden areas
- Trees provide a canopy and sense of enclosure, sense of being away from it all
- High level of use - as a destination and as a through route
- Level of use contributes to sense of security
- An active Friends group with good links and relationships with other agencies
- Focus of community activity through the One O' Clock Club
- Site based gardener
- A good play area for younger children
- Ranger service
- On community police beat

Weaknesses

- Lack of toilets, a barrier to use and contributing to inappropriate use
- Poor quality buildings, one derelict and another 'serving as a magnet for vandalism'
- Poor signage, limited information and no interpretation
- Disparate street furniture, fencing and planting
- Lack of design quality in horticultural elements
- Changes made without long term plan, some of which have resulted in degradation of original design
- Lack of clarity about who can use picnic benches due to inadequate signage and provision

Opportunities

- To utilise Section 106 monies and other funding to realise planned improvements
- To increase habitat diversity through new plantings
- For informal and creative play
- To provide exercise trail, measured routes, health walks
- To develop ranger services to lead guided walks, health walks and work with schools
- For developing interpretive material/education packs to facilitate school use
- To provide an outdoor class room for local schools during times when the park is less well used
- To market to schools and other groups who have limited knowledge of what the park has to offer
- To develop more inclusive involvement in events
- To expand the events programme
- To develop training and gardening programmes

- To enhance the quality of the park through improved use of resources, planned improvements and higher standards of planting and horticultural display
- To increase the sense of ownership through engagement of stakeholders in projects
- To utilise goodwill of users to support, participate and contribute to improvements
- To increase use of MUGA
- To have an artist in residence
- To replace the One O' Clock Club with a new multi purpose building able perhaps to offer health clinics and language classes

Threats

- Failure of the café project
- Failure to provide public toilets
- Demise of the One O' Clock Club due to lack of resources and the building being condemned
- Removal of the site based gardener
- Increase in anti social behaviour due to changes outside the park – changes in tenancies, closure of hostels, cuts in community policing, policies of adjoining boroughs
- Plant disease and consequent tree loss
- Failure to manage dog owners and their pets, and cyclists

B.3 Assessment

B.3.1 Use of Green Flag Award criteria for assessment

The criteria used in the Green Flag Award scheme have been used to undertake an assessment of the park. The assessment criteria focus on the following themes:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Well maintained and clean
- Sustainability
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing
- Management

A summary of the assessment is provided below with a full assessment included in Appendix 8.

B.3.1.1 A welcoming place

The initial impression is that the park is a welcoming place because it is an attractive space, easily accessible and provides a good range of facilities for its size. However the poor presentation of entrance areas, lack of design coherence and absence of public toilets all limit the welcome.

Priorities for action are:

- Improvements to signage and information
- Repairs to entrance paving
- Replacement of entrance barriers
- Vegetation management to improve sightlines from Fentiman Road entrance
- Provision of public toilets
- Provision of a public picnic area
- Installation of play equipment to meet needs of children of varied ability

B.3.1.2 Healthy, safe and secure

The park provides opportunities for sport relative to its scale. Security is acknowledged to have improved in recent years though attention to specific issues would limit opportunities for illegal access and drug taking. The condition of the sports facilities and the lack of toilets and a working drinking fountain are all considered to inhibit greater use. The control of dogs is an issue for some users.

Priorities for action are:

- Renewal of tennis court fencing
- Adjustments to the MUGA to dampen noise
- Vegetation management to limit opportunities for drug taking
- Improved security of Lawn Lane entrance

- Provision of public toilets and a drinking fountain

B.3.1.3 Clean and well maintained

The park is generally litter free, play equipment is inspected and maintained and the presence of a site-based gardener creates the perception among many that the park is well maintained. In reality parts of the park are well maintained but resources could be managed better to improve standards of soft landscape management throughout the park. The poor condition of buildings is a major issue.

Priorities for action are:

- Improved monitoring of contractor to ensure delivery of specified standards
- Improved maintenance of tennis courts
- Full assessment of 1 One O' Clock Club to assess life expectancy and cost of upgrading and feasibility study for building replacement
- Reuse/removal of toilet block

B.3.1.4 Sustainability

Issues of sustainability do not appear to have a high priority in park management. This may be partly because there is limited scope for recycling or composting within the park but also perhaps because issues of sustainability are not highly valued in comparison with other demands on managers and operatives. The reliance on annual bedding for colour is demanding of resources.

Priorities for action are:

- Improved awareness of officers and site staff
- The development of planting guidelines and a tree management strategy

B.3.1.5 Conservation and heritage

There is considerable awareness but limited understanding of the park's historic heritage displayed in management. Vauxhall Park forms part of a Conservation Area and though recent work has sought to reflect this status there is scope for considerable improvement.

Priorities for action are:

- Design guidance on planting, railings and park furniture
- Improved monitoring of contractor to ensure delivery of specified standards
- Interpretation of the parks history

B.3.1.6 Community involvement

The park is well used and valued by the local community and has a Friends group who are actively involved in the life of the park. The range and

provision of facilities is good though the accommodation is poor. There is no volunteers group though some users have expressed an interest in being more actively involved in the park. There is limited use of the park as an outdoor classroom for school children though families clearly appreciate the 1 o'clock club, nursery and play facilities.

Priorities for action are:

- Maintaining communication and increasing community engagement
- Undertaking a user survey to establish visitor numbers
- Encouraging use of the park as an outdoor classroom

B.3.1.7 Marketing

The park is well regarded but there are still people in the local community who do not know what the park has to offer. The FOVP have a good website and organise and promote about three events a year, but otherwise there is little information about the park and no interpretation.

Priorities for action are:

- To make information about the park available to visitors
- To provide some interpretation
- To organise events designed to attract people who may not otherwise visit the park

B.3.1.8 Management

There has been no management plan or coherent and shared vision for the park. A clear sense of direction and the absence of procedures to measure improvements have been lacking. There is the opportunity for considerable investment in the park and the potential for funding from local regeneration.

Priorities for action are:

- An adopted management plan for the park expressing a shared vision agreed by all stakeholders
- An adopted management plan containing a prioritised costed workplan as a basis for action and funding applications
- A review process to record progress and measure improvement

B.4 Aims and objectives

B.4.1 Aims

- To welcome, encourage and improve access for all sectors of the local community
- To develop existing and new facilities that contribute to social interaction and well-being
- To provide opportunities for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge (Life Long Learning)
- To extend opportunities for sport and informal exercise
- To progressively improve the park so that it becomes a leader in horticulture and design with improved environmental sustainability
- To conserve the historic fabric and character and, where appropriate, recreate elements of the original design
- To enable greater understanding and appreciation of the park's heritage
- To maintain and enhance a safe, orderly and peaceful environment

B.4.2 Objectives

1. To welcome, encourage and improve access for all sectors of the local community

Physical

- Provide toilet facilities
- Install a green man pedestrian crossing on South Lambeth Road at the Fentiman Road traffic lights
- Replace entrance barriers with bespoke craftsman designed metalwork to improve the sense of welcome
- Repair and upgrade sections of uneven paving, particularly at park entrances
- Provide new signage containing site name, list of key facilities, brief history of the site, basic good rules, who to contact for more information or to report a problem
- Provide a map of the park with symbols for facilities as well as text
- Provide play equipment for children with varied abilities and disabilities

Activities/management

- Make leaflets with information about the park available in languages used locally
- Understand the numbers and types of people who use the park by undertaking a survey
- Develop an events strategy to encourage the involvement of a wider cross section of the community – this should encompass encouraging 'hard to reach' groups to visit, use and become involved in park through community events which have a cultural theme
- Include free tennis taster sessions at events
- Invite people/organisations to undertake tasks – translation, leaflet design, sponsorship of or donations to events or improvements, write letters of support, give time for surveys, clean ups, organising events?
- Consult and provide information about proposed changes and activities and seek feedback on changes

2. To develop existing and new facilities that contribute to social interaction and well-being

Physical

- Replace the One O' Clock Club building - to include multi use facilities, publicly accessible toilets, a gardeners base and possibly a Ranger base and Information point
- Clarify signage of children's area
- Improve children's play equipment to meet current standards, including provision of more swings
- Provide dog free picnic area for general public use - not within children's area
- Café
- Improve dog area, increasing run
- Provide drinking fountain
- Replace tennis court fencing

Activities/management

- Programme new/additional activities for times of lower use to reduce conflict with established uses/users
- Utilise existing ranger skills to deliver health and guided walks
- Provide additional training for existing staff – rangers and gardeners Gardening staff?
- Hold a campaign to encourage increased responsibility by dog owners?
- Hold a campaign to encourage increased responsibility by cyclists?
- Improve maintenance of tennis courts
- Improve letting service for tennis courts?
- Sponsor tennis coaching?

3. To provide opportunities for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge (Life Long Learning)

Activities/management

- Provide information on the facilities available and what can be seen and done in the park
- Develop education packs/ideas notes for using park - mini beasts, class picnics, art work, nature walks, creative writing etc
- Enable the MUGA to be booked on weekdays only
- Facilitate specialist led opportunities for science, art and growing plants
- Practical gardening training
- Practical programme linked to NVQ or RHS Level 1 Certificate in Horticulture
- Language classes, parenting skills? – the need for these is implicit but not proven. These and other community classes could probably only be provided in the park with a new building offering a multi purpose facility, not the present One O' Clock Club building.

4. To extend opportunities for sport and informal exercise

Physical

- Improve MUGA – reducing noise and improving maintenance, marking out and access
- Develop a fitness trail

Activities/management

- Provide information on measured walking/jogging circuits
- Organise health walks through Lambeth's healthy walks co-ordinator
- Promote use of park/MUGA for open-air classes?
- Provide sports equipment for summer holiday fun sessions – tennis racquets, boules, badminton, volleyball?
- Offer cycling proficiency classes and tests

5. To progressively improve the park so that it becomes a leader in horticulture and design

Physical

- Develop prioritised list of repairs and upgrading to surfaces, railings and park furniture that includes the rationalisation of disparate styles
- Produce a park style guide which defines the character of the park and balances historic and modern high quality design covering furniture, signage etc
- Develop and implement a signage strategy
- Remove redundant surfacing and low railings
- Programme phased refurbishment and rationalisation of planting areas
- Install bird and bat boxes to encourage wildlife

Activities/management

- Improved monitoring of contractor and enforcement of the specification
- 'Grow' a volunteer workforce by exploring and developing appropriate partnerships e.g. with BTCV, to contribute to maintaining high standards
- Develop quality checklist to ensure that all new additions to the park support the vision, aims and objectives, meet rigorous design standards, and are compatible with and complement existing features and provision
- Improve monitoring of contractor – use of equipment, herbicides etc
- Increase habitat diversity through new plantings and management

6. To conserve the historic fabric and, where appropriate, recreate elements of the original design

Physical

- Repair plinths and replace historic boundary railings and gates
- Restore alignment of northern path? (the path relocated following the Victoria line extension work)
- Re-plant areas of shrubbery?
- Restore character of original paths?

7. To enable greater understanding and appreciation of the park's heritage

Activities/management

- Provide interpretation – information boards? Plaques? Leaflets?
- Develop education packs related to school curriculum
- Organise guided walks
- Develop and implement a tree management strategy focussed on conserving and renewing historic plantings

8. To maintain and enhance a safe, orderly and peaceful environment

In addition to many of the other objectives that will increase use, sense of ownership and improve quality, listed under different objectives -

Physical

- Replace One O' Clock Club building – see above
- Re-use existing toilet block or demolish
- Provide toilets
- Remove or manage 2 areas of shrubbery attracting drug abuse
- Improve security of Lawn Lane entrance by implementing changes to prevent unauthorised access.
- Revise fence alignment north of Montessori nursery

Although no specific objectives have been identified to help maintain and enhance a peaceful environment, it is considered that the fulfilment of many of the objectives will contribute to this. For example restoring the character of original paths, such as restoring the path from Fentiman Road to a more flowing alignment; the rationalisation of materials, styles and planting that will enhance the sense of harmony and visual appearance of the park, and be more restful on the eye.