

The Spit Management Plan 2009 – 2014

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To be approved by Wandsworth Council Environment and Leisure Committee in June 2009

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

Site Description:

Site Name: The Spit

Location: The Spit is bounded to the north east by the River Wandle; to the north west by Bell Lane Creek and to the south by The Causeway.

Map showing location is shown on the following page.

Grid reference: The grid reference of the bottom south west corner of the site is TQ 2551 7514

Council Ward: Fairfield Ward, elected members for this area are:
Cllr Mrs V Graham
Cllr McCausland
Cllr Thom

Thamesfield Ward, elected members for this area are:
Cllr Lister
Cllr Madden
Cllr Ms Torrington

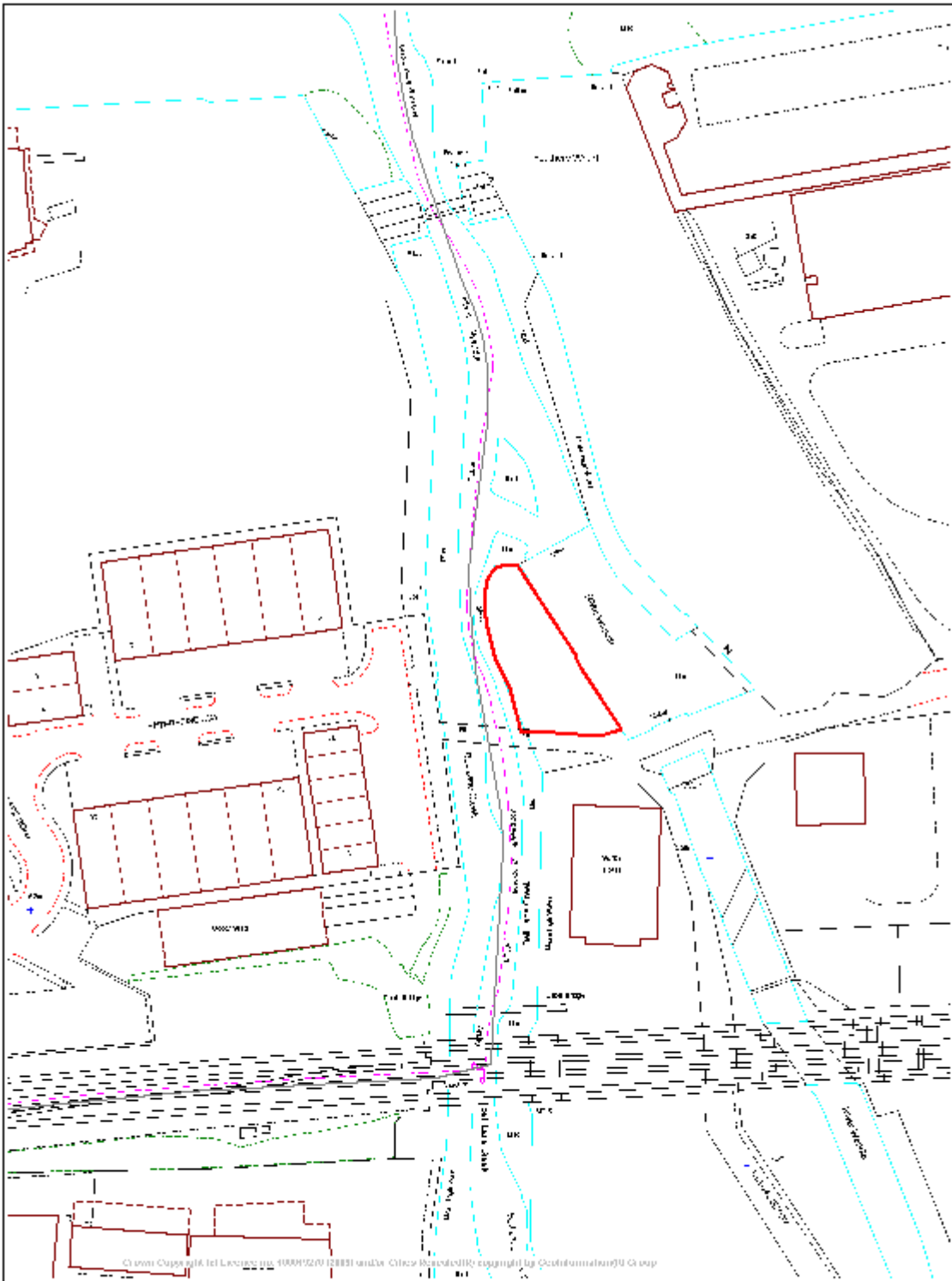
Site Area: The area of the site totals 810 square metres (0.081ha / 0.19 acres).

Tenure: The site is owned by Wandsworth Borough Council (land terrier no: 3392) 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.

Designations: The Spit is at the confluence of the River Thames Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) for wildlife and the River Wandle Site of Borough Importance for wildlife.

The Spit Park Management Plan 2009



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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, The Spit had an overall quality average score of **7.5** which puts it in the 'good' rating. Suggested improvements included more regular emptying of litter bins and addressing the lack of pedestrian flow within the site.

History:

The early history of the R. Wandle identifies the mouth of the river as being formed of various braided channels but with the main one playing host to a mill in this location as early as the Lampit Mill (a corn mill) in 1371. Despite the history of the R Wandle being well catalogued there is little information about the specific piece of land that forms The Spit. On maps from 1868-81 the area is shown as marsh land but by 1916–19 the marsh icons have disappeared but no alternative features are identified. However by 1947–52 the area housed a crane and a coal hopper which was in keeping with many of the surrounding patches of land which were also used as industrial storage areas receiving goods by barge from the Thames. For many years (1980's – 2000) the area was fenced off, giving no public access and giving rise to the presence of mature trees and scrub. In 2003 works were carried out to rejoin this area to the main through-route across The Causeway and to Enterprise Way as part of a project to regenerate this area of the borough (Wandsworth Challenge Partnership). The features visible today (see Site Features below) were installed at this time and were funded by the Single Regeneration Budget.

Site Features:

This small triangular site is composed of retreated tidal terraces bisected by a wooden boardwalk; two small sparse areas of shrubs and an area of hard surfacing which hosts a piece of public art "Sail" by Sophie Horton (2003).

Just after entering the site there is a wooden gate which is contiguous with the wooden balustrade fencing to either side of the boardwalk. The footpath is also surfaced in wooden decking to match, giving the area a defined entrance. The boardwalk with fencing continues through areas of retreated tidal terraces on either side and as this ends, the wooden balustrade gives way to a more conventional, horizontal, wooden capped metal railing surrounding an area of bound gravel which hosts the "Sail" sculpture.

There is an area of shrubbery to the east of the site, bounded by a wooden boarded edge. This hosts 3 mature willow trees, a screen of evergreen shrubs (gorse, broom etc) and a litter bin.

There is also a strip of shrub vegetation to the immediate south which is managed as part of the site. This includes native shrub species managed as a coppice.

There are neither seats, nor any lighting although the eastern shrubbery is edged with a wide wooden capping which serves as a seat. The overall impression is of a recently landscaped public open space giving views towards the R Thames. The site is not locked.

Safe & Secure:

The Spit is a narrow space ending in a point and with no capacity for a through or circular route.

The surfacing of both the boardwalk and the bound gravel is failing in places causing holes in the floor which are hazardous to pedestrians.

As the site is surrounded on two sides by tidal river deltas, it does have escape ladders and grab chains around its exterior walls to enable safe egress from the river in an emergency.

Welcome:

There is one quite small (A4 sized) sign at the entrance to the site, countersunk into a wooden upright part of the boardwalk. It outlines the tidal habitats which have been created to either side.

The boardwalk has a wooden gate at its entrance and although usually left open this does give a feel of "entering" the site.

Clean and well maintained:

The board walk and bound gravel areas are kept clean through regular litter clearance.

The tidal terraces are inundated (to a different degree) each high tide. On the highest of these tides, litter and debris can be deposited on the terraces leaving them looking unsightly. However some of this debris does get washed back off again at the next tidal inundation.

Litter clearance and removal of invasive woody species is carried out periodically on the tidal terraces. It is difficult as safety railings prevent access for maintenance. Current risk assessment of the removal of litter from these terraces prescribes that staff have to be roped

up to safeguard against falling off of the terraces, for their own safety. This makes the task complex and this is the main reason why work to clear litter is not more regular.

The shrubberies are managed as required by periodic coppicing and weed removal.

Health and well-being

Despite being small, the site offers respite for people working in the local area (which is currently full of a range of small businesses and industry). The site is popular for lunchtime breaks. It also provides a comparatively isolated spot, “away from it all” with views of water on two sides and the Thames on the horizon.

Community involvement:

There is little community involvement in this site. There is little scope for participation in management tasks as the few that are necessary are also problematic (see above “clean and well maintained”). There is also very little space to host community events.

However, annually as part of the Wandle Valley Festival a series of walks and cycle rides have started or finished at The Spit as they follow the route of the River Wandle from source to mouth and vice versa.

Service delivery:

Landscape and tree maintenance is carried out by contractor and monitored by the Parks Operational team based at Wandsworth Common.

Structural maintenance of paths and railings is the responsibility of the Premises section of the Leisure and Amenity Department.

Staff skills & knowledge:

Skills required to manage this site include knowledge about the maintenance of wetland vegetation, invasive species, general horticulture and mature trees. General building and engineering skills are required to maintain structures such as boardwalk decking and railings. Specialist knowledge will be required if the sculpture ever requires maintenance.

Sustainable approach:

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

If any weed management requires chemical control, a licence must first be obtained from the Environment Agency: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Leisure/wqm1_form_1797463.pdf

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

Finance:

Maintenance costs are met from Parks budgets covering all small parks. There is no separate budget for this site within the Parks Service.

Current Management:

All horticultural maintenance and litter clearance is as specified in the Parks Service Horticultural Maintenance contract, which includes all routine 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:

These trees are inspected every 3 years and were in general good health at their last inspection.

Shrub planting:

Planted areas are weeded regularly and pruned or coppiced as required. The planting is characterised by tall growing shrubs that, for the most part, have been kept coppiced to maintain visibility through the site.

Retreated tidal terraces:

Extensive areas, planted for biodiversity value, are inspected annually by qualified staff and relevant work carried out. This includes removal of invasive woody species to prevent succession of habitats.

Seats:

There are no standard seats but the wide wooden capping to the boundary of the eastern shrubbery doubles as a seat.

Bins:

There is one litterbin which is HG 66, manufactured and supplied by Earth Anchors Ltd and finished in dark green (RAL 6005)

Hard / paved surfaces:

There are two types of surface on this site. The first is an area of bound gravel to the northern tip which surrounds the sculpture. The second is wooden, site specific, boardwalking which is integrated with the balustrade and handrails.

Lighting:

There is no lighting within the site.

Fencing:

There is a wooden gate which is contiguous with the wooden balustrade fencing to either side of the boardwalk. The boardwalk with fencing continues through areas of retreated tidal terraces on either side and as this ends, the wooden balustrade gives way to a more conventional, horizontal, wooden capped metal railing which encloses the external tip of the site.

Services:

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

It should be noted however that the site is immediately beside two EDF energy buildings and there are deep channel electrical cables below surface in the general locality.

Future Management:

Safe & Secure:

The site has escape ladders and grab chains around its exterior walls to enable safe egress from the river in an emergency. These will be checked annually and maintained or replaced as required.

The surfacing of both the boardwalk and the bound gravel needs to be repaired or replaced as appropriate.

It will also be necessary to reapply the protective coating to the wooden elements of the boardwalk and railing structures on a regular basis (approx. once every 3 – 5 years)

Welcome:

The site would benefit from additional interpretative panels giving information on the fish, birds and vegetation of the River Wandle.

All existing and future signs and interpretation panels will need to be inspected regularly and cleaned as necessary.

Clean and well maintained:

The frequency or nature of litter clearance may have to be altered at times of exceptionally high tides e.g. the Equinoctial Spring Tides, when a greater volume of litter may be deposited.

On the areas of intertidal vegetation management will focus on removal of species of an invasive nature or those liable to undermine the structure forming the intertidal area. It is the intention that a species mix able to regulate its own density is established calling for minimal vegetation management.

On areas of terrestrial vegetation the mature trees will be incorporated into the councils rolling 3-year programme of tree surveys. These are intended to identify any problems with the trees, which are then dealt with accordingly.

The remaining vegetation will be managed on a rotation basis being coppiced every 3-5 years.

The sculpture will be inspected regularly for any damage. This will be dealt with if necessary through liaison with the artist to avoid cleaning methods resulting in additional damage to the surfaces of the sculpture.

Community involvement:

It is hoped that the ongoing involvement in the Wandle Valley Festival can be continued.

With the proposed mixed use redevelopment of the Osiers Estate, Enterprise Way there may be opportunities for greater community involvement with this site in future years.

Sustainable approach:

The council has a commitment to eradicating species such as Japanese knotweed and Giant Hogweed on its land. If found to be appearing on site, they will be treated (under licence from the Environment Agency) with Glyphosate or a similar recommended chemical by certified contractors on a regular basis until removed from the site.

There will be ongoing use of composted materials for mulching terrestrial planted areas.

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ACTION PLAN

Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
TS101	To make The Spit a place where people feel safe and secure	Remove tripping hazards caused by damaged pathways	Repair surfacing of boardwalk and bound gravel to remove hazards	2009	Parks Service Premises section
		Ensure long life span of wooden structures	Reapply protective coating to all wooden elements	Check annually	
		Ensure safety of egress from the river should people accidentally fall in.	Monitor the escape ladders and grab chains, repair as necessary	Annually	
TS201	To make The Spit welcoming and define a sense of place	Improve the interpretive information about the unusual location and local wildlife	Install additional interpretation panels	As part of wider signage review of parks and open spaces – completion 2010	Parks Service Graphics
		To ensure existing signs still legible	Inspect panels for damage and legibility	Quarterly	

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
TS301	To provide a clean and well maintained Park	<p>Ensure adequate and regular litter and debris removal</p> <p>To prevent successional loss of habitat features</p> <p>To maintain health and safe tree stock</p> <p>To retain a landmark sculpture to mark the confluence of the R Thames and R Wandle</p>	<p>Assess litter and debris immediately after Equinoctial Spring Tides</p> <p>Annual winter removal of woody invasive species from tidal terraces</p> <p>Carry out tree inspections as part of rolling programme.</p> <p>Inspect regularly for any necessary repairs to damage.</p>	<p>Twice yearly</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>2009; 2012;</p> <p>Annually</p>	<p>Parks Service Premises section Tree section Arts service (public realm)</p>
TS401	To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in the use and enjoyment of The Spit	To retain established links with the Wandle Valley Festival	Host walks as part of the festival activities	June 2009; 2010; 2011;2012; 2013; 2014	Parks Service Wandle Valley Festival