

Garratt Park Management Plan 2007 – 2012

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To be approved by Wandsworth Council Environment and Leisure Committee
in April 2007

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

Site Description:

- Site Name: Garratt Park
- Location: Garratt Park is bounded to the northeast by the rear of Weybourne Street; to the east by Siward Road; to the south by the rear of Rosemary Road and to the west by Garratt Park Allotments.
- Map showing location is available on request
Map showing the internal layout of Garratt Park is available on request.
- Grid reference: The grid reference of the bottom south west corner of the site is TQ 258 721
- Council Ward: Earlsfield Ward. Elected members for this area are:
Cllr Mrs Angela Graham (Conservative)
Cllr Mr Marc Hope (Conservative)
Cllr Mr Charles McNaught-Davis (Conservative)
- Site Area: The area of the site totals 3.6Ha (7.5 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, with the exception of the playground and One o'clock Centre, which are managed and maintained by Play Services.
- 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
Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – This site is designated as "Other Larger Protected Open Space Sites".

History:

Garratt Park was opened as a public park 'for children's recreation' in May 1906. It was laid out in the grounds of the former Garratt House, demolished in 1890. The village of Garratt was a hamlet in the southern part of the parish of Wandsworth and is mentioned in the records of Merton Priory as 'tenement of the Garrett, manor of Durnsford' in 1538.

As late as the beginning of the 19th century there were only 50 houses in the hamlet of Garratt, including the Leather Bottle public house opposite Garratt Green. However, the ten miles of the length of the River Wandle had long been heavily used for mills. Garratt House, located around Summerly Street, was the residence of the proprietors of Garratt Mills during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The 1893-94 Ordnance Survey maps show Siward, Maskell, Burtop, Headworth and Turtle roads with small terraces. Behind these are open fields with a millstream along the boundary between the park and allotments site. The area of the current Council depot was the Garratt Print Works. An orchard took up the north end of the allotments site and much of the southern end was the millpond. Garratt Mills stood on the travellers' site over the river. All along the opposite bank the ground is marshy.

The Council acquired the land for a 'shoot', what we would call a dump, a tip, or infill these days. For the first few years in Council hands it was let out for grazing 'at £8 for the year'. In 1904, it was decided that the south east part of the shoot would be the last to be in-filled, so this was the most suitable and could be adapted for the purpose of the recreation ground. Also that year, the Earlsfield Rifle Club applied to the Council to use land on part of the 'shoot' for its own outdoor rifle range. This was agreed and constructed far more quickly than the recreation ground for children, as it involved no cost to the Council.

Being adjacent to the river and low lying, there was danger of flooding and a network of ditches had been installed over the centuries to contain the water. In preparation for laying out a park there was much work to be done filling in the ditches. In 1905 clay excavated from East Hill, where sewers were being dug out, was used at Garratt Park to raise the riverbanks. In 1970 a bend in the Wandle was straightened out as the continuation of flood relief work.

Various improvements was made during the 1950s. Seesaws and play equipment was installed in 1953. A paddling pool was replaced with the cinder cycle track in 1955. A games hut was built in 1958 and changing rooms in 1963.

Site Features:

Garratt Park is split into two distinct halves; one a more formal, traditional layout and the other an open grassed area. Within the formal section there are a range of features including children's play equipment, cycle facilities and a floodlit ball sports court, interspersed with lawn areas and shrub beds. In the informal area there are scattered trees amongst mown amenity grass with a football pitch marked out during the winter season. There are several lit pathways through the site and benches, bins and dog waste bins. The park has many secluded areas and is not overlooked by residential housing other than from the south. There is also a one o'clock centre accessed from the park. The park is of a good standard for its size.

Safe and secure:

The main entrance to Garratt Park is via a quiet side street off of the main Garratt Lane. This brings you into the park half way down its length and provides the divide between the formal and informal areas; there are also two pedestrian entrances, one to the north and one to the south. These are all towards the eastern side of the park. The main entrances are gated and locked through the night. The method of locking used in this instance is a weak point as, despite having a lockable slide bolt, this is unused. Instead a chain is used to hold the padlock.

Beyond the park, to the west are Garratt Park Allotments, which are only open to key holders and beyond this, the River Wandle. There is a concrete storage building within the park, associated with the allotments, which is covered with a climbing plant. Between the rear of this and the allotment fence there is potential "hiding place". There is also a desire line across the park and which enters the allotments via bent railings in the fence. Both of these combine to give the border with the allotments an air of disrepair.

Within Garratt Park is an area layed out as a mini cycle route intended for cycle training for young children, with miniature versions of road signs. The routes are demarcated with mixed hedges that are approx 1.5m high. The surfacing itself is tarmac that is being undermined in places by tree roots causing it to lift and crack. Only a few of the road signs are left in place. Together these factors give the facility an air of neglect and probably as a result of this, it appears to be unused.

There is also cycle track and associated rain shelter. This shelter is constantly defaced by graffiti and tagging and is also a favoured venue for vagrants overnight, which results in debris including food containers, cardboard boxes, bedding and used toilet paper. The cycle track itself has not formally been used since 2002.

Some of the planting beds surrounding the junior and toddler play areas include very thorny species of plant. This could be considered unsafe to the children using these areas although conversely it may be seen to protect this boundary to the play area from intrusion.

The ball games area is used by local youths in the evenings, particularly for basketball. The area is floodlit late into the evening. Whilst it is believed that the lights are controlled by a timer, they often remain on when the park is locked, and there is concern that the public could be encouraged to enter the park whilst it is locked and lit, only to find themselves locked in there when the lights go off. This is potentially dangerous.

Welcome:

Relatively new gates demarcate the main entrance in Siward Road, and these provide separate access for service vehicles and pedestrians. The service gate, however, is continually left open, negating the safety benefit of separating vehicles and pedestrians at this entrance, and also allowing unauthorised vehicles into the park. The service gates are missing the right drop bar and at the base there are no channels / holes to drop the drop bars into, which may be contributing to them being left open. The entrance at the north end is also relatively new and seems in good order. The pedestrian entrance to the south is within a boundary of exceedingly tall chain link fencing that gives this end of the park a oppressive feeling of enclosure. There are also large holes in the fencing allowing people to enter the park even when the gates are locked.

All gates are rather functional and uninspiring.

As has been described, the central park entrance is down a quiet side street off of the main Garratt Lane. However there are no signs on this road to indicate that the park is close by or how to get to it. There is a sign board at the main entrance, however the key piece of information shows bye-laws; there is no general welcome sign. At the southern end the same signage is in place but the condition of this sign cabinet is poor. At the northern entrance there is no sign at all. There is a one o'clock centre situated within the park and there is a sign as you enter the main gate of the park to direct visitors to it.

Clean and well maintained:

In general this park is well maintained, and free from litter.

The grass is mown regularly to maintain a short dense sward across the park. There is a regular litter collection programme for both general litter and dog waste. The trees are inspected on a regular rotation to identify any works which may be required to maintain a healthy tree stock. Areas planted for biodiversity are inspected annually and relevant works carried out. The play areas have daily visual safety inspections carried out by the Wandsworth Parks Police, weekly recorded inspections by Council staff and quarterly safety inspections made by technical staff. There is, in addition an annual inspection of all Council owned playgrounds carried out by an independent inspector.

There are a few problems with the chain link fencing as indicated above; these partly arise as a result of this boundary being the responsibility of the Housing Department rather than the Parks Service.

The planting bed by the playground has a poor edge to it and the planting has been allowed to grow quite tall, obscuring views into the play area.

By the entrance to the allotments there is an area that appears to be frequently used for delivering piles of woodchip etc for use by the allotment holders. As this area was formerly part of the informal lawn area there is no edge to retain woodchips and these are spreading causing a wider area of grass to be lost.

A recent open spaces study by the Borough Planners Service has highlighted that there is "some equipment in need of repair/maintenance - particularly railings and benches".

Health and well being:

The mini cycle route is well placed to contribute to the health and well being of local children providing a safe "off road" area for cycling and allowing a place for training in street safety.

The cycle speedway club who previously used the cycle track have been unable to secure insurance, and users have dispersed to other clubs. There has been occasional use by people with remote control toy vehicles. It is also believed 2 local speedway enthusiasts use the site for training occasionally. Use of this area needs to be reviewed.

There is both a toddler and a junior play area that provide for play and exercise of children. The informal grassed area hosts one football pitch during the winter sports season, whilst the ball court is well used by local teenagers for informal basketball, football and hockey / netball games.

Community involvement:

There is no known community involvement currently. The toddler and junior play areas are well used by local families. The allotments are at capacity and therefore a lot of local people enter the park to gain access to their allotment. There is the opportunity for picnicking on the amenity grass areas. Previously, a local businessman / shopkeeper organised and hosted a local "fun day" on this site, although this no longer occurs.

Service delivery:

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

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

Playground maintenance is the responsibility of the Play Services section of Leisure and Amenities department.

Staff skills and knowledge:

Skills required to manage this site currently include basic horticultural maintenance such as knowledge of mowing & strimming machinery and shrub maintenance. There is also a need for arboricultural skills to inspect the trees on site. Staff with knowledge of the maintenance and necessary safety inspections of play equipment are also required. Knowledge of the current use and local value of the mini cycle route and the cycling track are lacking.

Sustainable approach:

Sustainability issues here will depend upon type of machinery used to maintain the area and what happens to any arisings (grass cuttings and branches from any tree work) once they are removed from the site.

Finance:

Maintenance costs are met from Parks budgets covering all small parks. There is no separate budget for this site within the Parks Service. Playground maintenance is carried out through the Play Services budgets

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, Garratt Park had an overall quality average score of 6.8 which puts it just under the 'good' rating. Recommendations for improvement included improving the signage to welcome users to the space, and improved condition of the railings and benches. The overall conclusion was that the Park was maintained to a good standard for its size.

Current Management:

Horticultural 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 e.g. the maintenance of park furniture, is carried out under additional works programmes by order with the main contractor or outside contractors depending on the scope of the work entailed.

Play equipment:

The Councils Playgrounds Officer manages the facility and the associated fencing and gates.

Gates:

There are three gates giving access to the Park. These are currently locked and unlocked daily by Parks Police.

Future Management:

Safe and secure:

Parks police officers have visited this park as part of a wider programme to assess security needs of parks across the borough. Following an assessment under a range of criteria, it is proposed that Garratt Park be left unlocked. This would encourage open access, rather than restricting it and it is not considered that this will compromise the security of the park. The effects of the review will be monitored over the summer months when use is at its highest and should there be a need to reinstate the daily unlocking and locking of a particular facility, then this can be considered.

Discussions should be held with the allotment holders to ascertain their views on access to the allotments through, and boundary treatments with, Garratt Park. These discussions should include reference to the desire line and forced access point; the storage building; ease of access for deliveries such as bark chippings for paths and any other issues which arise.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of increasing effective use of the mini cycle route through liaison with the council's transportation and education departments. There is every possibility that such a facility could be used by local schools, play and youth facilities for cycle training. To allow this to go forward safely and effectively, renovation work such as resurfacing and remarking will need to take place. The management of the vegetation should also be reviewed in these circumstances. If there is no demand for such a facility, the future use of this area must be reconsidered as this feature should not be allowed to fall into total disrepair.

As there is no likelihood of the cycle club using the cycle track, alternative uses should be considered. The shelter should be removed as a priority.

Some of the planting beds surrounding the junior and toddler play areas include very thorny species of plant. This could be considered unsafe to the children using these areas although conversely it may be seen to protect this boundary to the play area from intrusion. Consultation work should be carried out with families using the play areas to determine their views on this issue. If it is felt to be unsafe, consideration should be given to altering the species over time to reduce the number of thorny varieties.

The ball games area is floodlit late into the evening. Whilst it is believed that a timer controls the lights, what was believed to be the switch was investigated and was found not to work. Discussions should be held to identify required uses of this site and who has responsibility for the floodlights. These two factors need to be streamlined to ensure that unofficial use of the area ceases and the lights go off at the same time.

Welcome:

The gates at the main entrance should be enhanced by the creation of footings for the drop bars to fall into to prevent the constant motion of the gates. Following the review of the proposed unlocking, if unlocking is to

continue, consideration should be given to removal of the gates and the creation of a more welcoming entrance to the park. A review of the style of the other pedestrian gate to the south should be carried out to try to achieve a more welcoming effect. This review should also include discussion with the council's housing department to reconsider the style of fence on the southern boundary and to instigate repairs to the damaged sections of fencing.

To encourage people to the park, a sign should be placed on Garratt Lane, showing the way to the central park entrance. To give a greater sense of place and a better welcome, the sign at the main entrance should be replaced by one which details the features within the park and relevant contacts. At both other pedestrian entrances, smaller signs listing facilities should be installed.

Clean and well maintained:

The edges of the planting beds by the playgrounds requires repair and the planting would benefit from a substantial prune to lower the height.

The current regime for collection of litter should be maintained but under regular review.

An audit of railings and benches should be undertaken to identify those in need of repair and to progress this work.

Health and well being:

The current use of the mini cycle route should be investigated. If no formal use is currently being made of it, opportunities should be explored with the council's education and transportation departments to ascertain possible demand for formal cycle training to be offered here. This will encourage not only cycling within the park but also safe cycling within the rest of the borough. If there is no demand for such a facility, consultation will need to be carried out to identify new potential uses for this area.

Likewise, similar investigations should be undertaken for the cycle track. Although the current usage of this facility is unknown, it has the potential to provide a unique exercise facility for local people enhancing their health and well being. Links could be established with the council's integrated youth service and local cycle groups (such as the council's own "bugs" group) to encourage appropriate (club based?) use of this facility. As with the mini cycle route, this facility will require some renovation work to the shelter, barriers and the track surface if it is to be reinstated safely. If no demand for this facility can be identified, consultation will need to be carried out to identify new potential uses for this area.

Following consultation there has been a request for a cycle route to connect the gates so cycling on nearby Garrett Lane can be avoided. Investigations will be required into any possible links to existing cycle routes and the wider demand assessed prior to funding being sought.

The ball court also provides an important opportunity for exercise, especially for young people. Use of this facility should be further researched to identify any period of the day when it is underused. Checks should also be made to identify current demand on floodlights as referred to under “safe and secure”. If this facility is not being used to its full potential, wider use should be encouraged through joint working with the council’s sports services and possibly via local businesses.

The informal grassed area is used most weekends during the winter, with football teams booking the marked out pitch from the Parks Service contractor. Previously a lacrosse team used the area, and this, or a similar sport, could be an alternative to the football if there were sufficient demand. There is insufficient space for further pitches or for use during the summer for sports such as cricket. Sports requiring a smaller area, such as rounders could be accommodated.

Community involvement:

There is capacity for greatly increased community involvement at this site. It may be possible to establish a community led cycle group to part-run sessions at both the mini cycle route and the bicycle speedway. Better links are currently being established amongst allotment holders, which may prove to be of benefit to the Park as a whole. There are also opportunities to link to local families through both the play facilities and the one o’clock centre at this site. Local youth groups could be encouraged to make greater use of the ball courts.

Service delivery:

If there is a demand for both the cycle facilities to be reinstated within Garratt Park, the byelaws will need to be altered. Currently, the whole park is a no cycling area. There may also be a demand for a cycle route through the park to the allotments. This action should be linked to a cycling / transportation review for all parks and open spaces. There will also be links between this park and aspects of an allotments review e.g. access arrangements.

Garratt Park Management Plan 2007

ACTION PLAN:

Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
GP101	To make Garratt Park a place where people feel safe and secure	Encourage safe open access across longer hours.	Instigate a trial unlocking period for the park	Summer 2007	Parks Police
			If successful, implement permanent unlocking.	Autumn 2007	Parks Police
			If unsuccessful, reinstate locking of all gates at dusk.	Autumn 2007	Parks Police
			If unsuccessful, enhance the bolting capacity of the gate and provide channels for drop bars	Autumn / Winter 2007	Premises Management Services.
		To improve security of access to adjacent allotment site	Consider options to re-route fence line to incorporate the storage building.	??	Parks Service (allotment officer, plot manager & plot holders)
GP102			Implement favoured option to eliminate hiding place at rear		Premises Management Services

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
			of the storage building		
GP103			Repair fence to eliminate desire line across park.	??	Premises Management Services.
GP104			Demarcate the area for deliveries for the allotments, to contain materials effectively.	??	Parks service
GP105		Renovate mini-cycle route area	Through liaison with other council departments, identify demand for the mini cycle route.		Parks service Transportation Education department
GP106			If demand is identified, carry out repairs and replanting to the route		Premises management service Parks service
GO107			If demand is not identified, consult locally to identify how this area should be used		Parks service
			Identify funding sources to implement new use		Parks service

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
			Implement new use		Parks Service Premises management service
GP108		Renovate bicycle speedway area	Through liaison with other council departments, identify demand for the bicycle speedway area		Parks service Transportation Education department
GP 110			If demand is identified, carry out repairs to the barriers and track and relocate the shelter to prevent misuse		Parks service
GP111			If demand is not identified, consult locally to identify how this area should be used		Parks service
			Identify funding sources to implement new use		Parks service
			Implement new use		Parks Service Premises management

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
					service
GP112		Maintain safe planting around play areas.	Consult locally to identify views about current planting	2006??	Parks service
			Manage shrub beds in accordance with consensus of consultation		Parks service
GP201	To make Garratt Park welcoming and define a sense of place	To provide good clear signage to the park	Liaise with Highways dept to provide fingerpost sign to the park from Garratt Lane		Parks service Highways Dept
GP202		To provide information on facilities within the park, at entrances.	Replace or provide new signs at each of the 3 entrances to the park.	As part of wider signage review of parks and open spaces	Parks service Graphics
GP203		Provide defined entrances.	Create footings for drop bolts on main gate if locking reinstated	Autumn / Winter 2007	Parks service
GP204			Review style of pedestrian entrance gates and fencing style at southern		Parks service Housing dept

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
			end		
			Identify funding sources to implement new entrances if required		Parks service
			Implement new entrances		Parks service
GP301	To provide a clean and well maintained Park	To maintain defined and well kept planting areas	Repair edges of planting beds		Parks service
GP302			Review maintenance of planting within beds with a view to possibly lowering the overall height of planting.	2006?	Parks service
GP303		To maintain well kept facilities such as fences and benches	Audit railings and benches to identify those in need of repair		Parks service
			Repair or replace railings and benches identified above		Parks service
GP401	To provide a park which contributes to the health and well being of all who use it.	Understand and make best use of the ball court area	Identify current use and demand for ball court area		Parks service Sports development service

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
GP402			Subject to this research, encourage more use of the ball courts in under used time slots		Parks service Sports development service
GP403			Identify who has responsibility for floodlights and ensure that there is an effective mechanism to turn them off when not required.		Parks service Sports development service Play services
GP404		To increase cycle facilities to and within parks.	Investigate the potential for cycle parking		Parks Service Technical Services Dept
GP405			Investigate potential for cycle route to connect the gates, any possible links to existing cycle routes and the wider demand		Parks Service Technical Services Dept
GP501	To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in decisions made relating to Garratt Park.	To carry out consultation with different user groups as outlined above to influence the enhancement of this park		Ongoing	Parks service

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
		To build on these links created during consultation to ensure an ongoing dialogue with park users & the local community.		Ongoing	Parks service