

Fred Wells Gardens 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: Fred Wells Gardens
- Location: Fred Wells Gardens is bounded to the north by Vicarage Crescent; to the east by Orville Road; to the south by a railway viaduct and to the west by Lombard Road.
- 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 TQ26797640
- Council Ward: St Marys Park Ward, Elected members for this area are:
Cllr Mark Davies (Conservative)
Cllr John Hallmark (Conservative)
Cllr Mrs Tessa Strickland (Conservative)
- Site Area: The area of the site totals 8567 square metres (0.85 ha / 2.1 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). The Council does not currently own a derelict area, just inside the Orville Road entrance. Legal proceedings are underway to transfer the freehold of this area to the Council.
- Management: The site is managed and maintained by Wandsworth Borough Council, with responsibility for the site taken by the Parks Service.
- 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 gardens are designated as “Canine Faeces Removal Area” under the Councils Dog Bye Laws. The original areas of separate toddler and junior playgrounds are designated as “No Dogs”.

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, Fred Wells Gardens 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:

The open space known as Fred Wells Gardens is situated on land that had previously been used for small works yards, eg, scaffolding, etc, which fitted with the industrial area that stretched along the River Thames. Earlier there had been a greyhound track, and a small halt on the railway line which served Battersea High Street.

The Wandsworth Borough News on 2 April 1982 reported on the death of Fred Wells aged 69 years. The article said he would be sadly missed by Irene, her 4 children, 10 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. Fred lived in the nearby newly-built Totteridge House. He was a long-serving Labour Councillor, an ex-Alderman, who represented Latchmere Ward. Apparently he could not turn anyone away who had a problem, and this damaged his health (this was a tribute from a political opponent). The park that was opened in 1982 was named in his honour.

At the other end the area was known as Orville Road Open Space. A terrace of Victorian town houses had been demolished by bomb damage during World War Two and was replaced with temporary prefab housing. During 1980s and 1990s, this had been the source of much debate as to whether it should be retained as open space or further developed. Wandsworth Council was determined it should remain as public parkland because this area needed open space.

Site Features:

Fred Wells Gardens is a small, partly fenced area with both flat and mounded grass and shrub areas. Features include mature trees and shrubs, play equipment, tennis court and two shaded sitting areas. Paths run from two entrances in Vicarage Crescent to the centre of the park and then a single path leads to Orville Road. Informal paths have been created through two mounded shrub areas. Entrances are not gated, except at one entrance from an adjacent housing development. Residents of the development control this gate.

The Council does not currently own a derelict area, just inside the Orville Road entrance. Legal proceedings are underway to transfer the freehold of this area to the Council.

There are 13 seats and 10 litter bins, including those in the playgrounds. There are 4 dog waste bins. Seats and bins are of differing types and colours. There are three picnic tables, including two in the toddlers playground.

The site is not well lit, with no internal lighting.

The overall impression is of a park with good structure and potential, in need of renovation in parts, to compliment the recent refurbishment of the playground and immediate surrounds.

Safe & Secure:

Most areas of the gardens are visible from both outside and inside the site, although shrubs and the mounded areas obscure visibility to some extent. Some shrubs have been reduced in height in the winter of 2007.

The dense leaf canopy of trees heavily shades several parts of the park, including the two sitting areas.

There are signs detailing the different designations under dog control bye laws at two of the three entrances. Signs at the playground detail restrictions and contact information.

Entrances are not gated, although this has not caused problems to date. One entrance in Vicarage Crescent provides 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 vehicle entrance leaves the park vulnerable to fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and illegal access by joy-riders. It is also possible for small vehicles to potentially gain access via the two smaller entrances, although there is no dropped kerb at these.

Welcome:

Two wooden arches at entrances in Vicarage Crescent have been removed, as timber uprights had become rotten and unsafe. Carved wooden signs at all three entrances remain, and contribute to a sense of welcome, although they need repair and cleaning.

Other than the carved wooden signs, entrance signs are limited to detailing dog bye laws and other restrictions. These are contained in cabinet style signs at two entrances to the park. These are in good condition although one is of an old style and difficult to read, being placed too far into a shrub bed.

There is no cabinet sign at one of the entrances. There are faded, illegible signs at two of the entrances, which should be removed. Planted areas provide some colour and interest.

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 Fred Wells Gardens, and action has been taken to deal with this problem.

This site contains a wide species mix of native and non-native trees. There is good age class diversity across the site. Routine tree inspection and maintenance is undertaken on a three-year rotation. No significant Pest or Disease problems have been recorded and there is no evidence of recent vandalism. The boundary trees screen the gardens from the adjacent buildings and railway line. Some areas of the site are overcrowded with trees and this is causing suppressed trees to develop with poor form.

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, although some paths show damage from nearby tree roots.

Internal wooden fencing is in reasonable condition, but needs to be removed in parts, as the recent moving of the playground has made it redundant. This is also the case with two internal gates. Sections of wooden boundary fencing are in poor condition, needing either repair and cleaning or replacement.

Cabinet signs are in good condition at two gates but missing at one gate.

Grass in some areas is very thin due to heavy shade from trees. There are also extensive bare areas in some shrub beds. One shrub bed has large amounts of brick and other rubble on the surface.

A recycled plastic picnic table has had a section removed because of vandalism. This limits seating to one side only. A wooden bench, in a grass area, has been damaged with only the uprights remaining, fixed to the ground. Litter bins vary in style and condition, with two in very poor condition and one with a missing lid. Not all bins are located in appropriate positions.

Health and well-being

Fred Wells Gardens has both a toddler and a junior play area, recently refurbished, which provide for play and exercise of children. The park is well used by dog walkers and there is some use of the large flat grass area for ball games.

Community involvement:

One local resident has organised the replanting of two areas in the park and keeps these maintained. A local "Surestart" group is keen to develop a secure area in the park to involve and encourage local residents who use this childrens facility.

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 many 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 several areas of ornamental planting 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 issue. Encroachment by undesirable species and pernicious weeds from the railway embankment is a continuing problem at shrub and grass areas by that boundary.

Seats:

There are thirteen seats, of two different types. Eleven seats, in various areas of the park including the original section of playground, are constructed of horizontal wooden rails with steel frame. Some of these have moss on the surface, due to shade from nearby trees. Two new metal seats, one in the new playground and one just outside, are model KC180, manufactured and supplied by David Ogilvie Ltd. These two are in good condition.

There are two new metal picnic tables in the playground, both in good condition. One damaged picnic table of recycled plastic, manufactured and supplied by BPI Industries Ltd, is located in one of the grass areas.

Bins:

There are ten litterbins, and four dog waste bins, of differing styles and colours. Two metal bins are in extremely poor condition, and one bin with wooden slatted sides, has a missing lid and broken hinge. Other than these three and a further wooden slatted bin, litter bins and dog bins are model HG66, manufactured and supplied by Earth Anchors Ltd

Hard / paved surfaces:

Footpaths are surfaced with black tarmac in reasonable condition apart from some damage from tree roots. Two areas of grass, reinforced with plastic mesh, in the playground are badly worn. One strip, at the side of the slide, is particularly badly worn, and may need replacing with a more appropriate material. Another, under one of the picnic tables, is less worn and may respond to reseeding

Lighting:

There is no lighting within the park.

Fencing:

New 1.2 metre high metal hoop top fencing encloses the western and part of the northern boundaries, at Lombard Road. Fixed on top of a low brick wall, this prevents park users falling to the pavement. The remainder of the northern boundary, along Vicarage Crescent, has a low retaining wall, with no fencing, along one section, and 1.2 high metre wooden fencing, in fair condition, to the sitting area. The eastern boundary currently opens onto a derelict piece of land. A second sitting area, located beyond this piece of land, has a 1.2 metre high wooden fence in poor condition at it's boundary with Orville Road. The southern boundary, to the railway embankment is fenced with new 1.8 metre high metal mesh fencing. This fencing is the property of Network Rail. Although secure, this is not attractive. 1.8 metre high chain-link fencing enclosing the single tennis court is in fair condition, but unattractive. Two sections of low wooden fencing, previously enclosing the toddlers playground, is in fair condition but is now redundant.

Services:

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

Future Management:

Safe & Secure:

Routinely prune shrubs to maintain views through the site. Where appropriate, prune lower branches of existing large shrubs to create views through the tall stems. Ensure new planting is either low growing or suitable for routine pruning.

Reduce shade by thinning branches of trees and shrubs, 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.

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

Welcome:

Investigate whether wooden name signs can be renovated or need replacing.

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.

Clean & well maintained:

Establish programme of repairs to paths damaged by tree roots.

Remove redundant internal wooden fencing and metal gates. Repair or replace sections of wooden boundary fencing, where it is in poor condition.

Install missing cabinet sign at one entrance, when other signs are replaced.

Reseed grass areas as appropriate and plant gaps in planted beds. Remove brick rubble before planting.

Replace vandalised picnic table and remove remaining uprights of damaged seat.

Remove damaged litter bins and replace in appropriate positions.

Continue to replace those trees that have to be removed, with a view to improving sightlines and addressing the other objectives of the site. Consider the selective removal of suppressed trees in overcrowded groups (Cherry trees near northwest entrance, Sycamores surrounding the tennis court).

Health and well being:

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.

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
FWG101	To make Fred Wells Gardens a place where people feel safe and secure	Ensure users can readily see all areas	Prune or replace shrubs as appropriate		Parks Service
FWG102		Reduce excessively shaded areas	Survey trees and shrubs with this objective in mind. Order works as appropriate		Parks Service Tree section
FWG103		Improve effect of dog control bye laws	Ensure all gates have signs showing designation of differing areas		Parks Service
FWG104		Remove hazard to pedestrians	Install bollards or modify entrances to prevent vehicle access		Parks Service Premises section
FWG201	To make Fred Wells Gardens 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
FWG202		Improve visual appearance at entrances	Renovate wooden name signs		Parks Service

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
FWG203			Remove redundant faded signs	May 2008	Parks Service
FWG301	To provide a clean and well maintained Park	Repair tarmac paths	Contact Premises section to establish programme of works.		Parks Service Premises section
FWG302		Remove redundant fences and gates	Contact Premises section to establish programme of works.		Parks Service Premises section
FWG303		Repair or replace sections of wooden boundary fencing	Contact Premises section to establish programme of works.		Parks Service Premises section
FWG304		Install sign where missing	Include with FWG201 above	See FWG201 above	Parks Service Graphics
FWG305		Improve appearance within park	Reseed grass areas	2008	Parks Service
FWG306			Replace missing plants in beds. Remove rubble	2008	Parks Service
FWG307			Replace picnic table & remove damaged seat uprights	2008	Parks Service
FWG308			Replace litter bins	2008	Parks Service
FWG309		Improve tree stock	Remove, replace, protect as needed	Ongoing	

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	Who
FWG401	To provide a park which contributes to the health and well-being of all who use it.	To increase cycle facilities to and within parks.	Investigate the potential for cycle parking		Parks Service Technical Services Dept
CG501	To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in decisions made relating to Fred Wells Gardens.	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