

Falcon Park and Shillington Street Open Space 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: Falcon Park. Also known as Banana Park
Shillington Street Open Space. Also known as Falcon Park

Location: **Falcon Park** is completely enclosed by a railway viaduct and embankments with access via brick railway arches at the junction of Cabul Road and Latchmere Passage to the Northwest and the junction of Latchmere Road and Latchmere Passage to the Northeast. To the South, a railway arch gives access from Shillington Street Open Space.
Shillington Street Open Space is bounded to the North by Cabul Road; to the East by Cranliegh Mews and railway embankments ; to the South by Christchurch Primary School in Batten Street and to the West by Este Road and Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School.

Map showing location is available on request
Map showing internal layout is available on request

Grid reference: The grid reference of the bottom south west corner of Falcon Park and Shillington Street Open Space is TQ27527601 and TQ27477597 respectively.

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 Falcon Park totals 22418 square metres, (2.24 ha or 5.5 acres).
The area of Shillington Street Open Space totals 19975 square metres, (1.9 ha or 4.9 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 Services). British Rail has access rights from Cabul Road to an area at the rear of the derelict changing rooms at the north of Falcon Park.

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, managed and maintained by Play Services, and the George Shearing Centre, managed by Youth Services. These are both sections of the newly formed Childrens Services Department.

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”.

Both sites are also listed as sites of Local Importance for Nature

Both Falcon Park and Shillington Street Open Space are designated as “Canine Faeces Removal Area” under the Councils Dog bye laws.

The Multiple Dog Walking bye law also applies to both these sites. This limits the number of dogs that may 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, Falcon Park had an overall quality average score of **6.7**, which puts it in the 'Fair' rating. Suggested improvements included lighting and signage to access routes. Also adding additional facilities to increase use thereby improving security.

Shillington Street Open Space had an overall quality average score of **7.0**, which puts it in the 'Good' rating. Suggested improvements included increased maintenance and cleaning, repair of fencing and nature interpretation.

History:

Information source:

Martin Linton, MP for Battersea, former local councillor and chair of Recreation Committee

Shillington Street open space is one of several in Battersea that were newly created as public parks from areas of derelict land following World War II bomb damage. Others include Dorothy Road Open Space, Heathbrook Park, Montefiore Street Gardens and Queenstown Road Open Space.

Other parks, namely Battersea Park, Christchurch Gardens, and Latchmere Recreation Ground, had all been laid out many years earlier. The areas that were to become Elspeth Road Open Space, Falcon Park, Harroway Road Open Space, Fred Wells Gardens and York Gardens had also suffered in the Blitz. Their transformation into open spaces followed a different path of decision making and funding.

Battersea was a target during the war due to the abundant convergence of railway connections. Parts of Battersea Park and Clapham Common were laid out as allotments during the War. Many parks were used for 'prefabs' to house those who had lost their homes. This temporary housing lasted in many cases well into the 1960s.

LCC and GLC planners had already zoned the areas around Chalmers Street and Stainforth Street for the creation of new public open space. Ownership of these spaces was transferred to Wandsworth Council along with the large parks on 1 April 1971. It was not compulsory on the Council to observe this zoning designation but they believed it was appropriate to provide parks in these areas to serve the local population. During 1970s housing competed with parks in demand for land. However, the housing estates were public housing. Unlike today there was little private development, and little opportunity for 'planning gain'. It was a reverse of the original thinking when Battersea Park was laid out in mid 19th century, funded by residential development of adjacent streets, which were part of the original land purchase. By 1970s, Battersea had a history of industry, railway, small terraced housing and a relatively poor population, none of which was capable of attracting private money to the area.

Falcon Park had been created by the GLC only a little earlier, with the bombed area of Stainforth Street and Shillington Street intended as open parkland eventually. Martin Linton pointed out the poor accessibility to Falcon Park. If there were access from Latchmere Road by the railway bridge then residents of the Shaftesbury Estate could walk to Clapham Junction without the need to climb a hill. It would open up a route across Battersea.

Site Features:

These 2 sites consist of large areas of mown amenity grass, scattered trees, children's play equipment, and several planted areas including some originally planted for biodiversity value. Many local users regard these two sites as one (usually as Banana Park, a reflection of the shape of Falcon Park itself).

A single storey building, in the south of the site, houses the George Shearing Centre, a specialist disabilities project for young people. An after-school club takes place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday during term-time with special provision during the school holidays. The Katherine Low Settlement and Generate also run schemes at the Centre.

Falcon Park itself suffers very wet ground conditions in winter. To the north of Latchmere Passage, a separately enclosed area contains derelict changing rooms. To the south of Latchmere Passage is a large tarmac area, formerly used for car parking during football matches. A former horse exercise area, further south, still has a layer of compacted material under the grass cover.

There are 15 seats, 3 litter and 3 dog waste bins in Shillington Street Open Space. There is 1 seat, 3 litter bins and 3 dog waste bins in Falcon Park.

To the south of Shillington Street Open Space there are 2 separate toddlers and junior play areas, both in poor condition.

A single tarmac footpath runs between entrances in Batten Street, Este Road and Cabul Road. A railway arch at the end of Cranleigh Mews, leased from British Rail, provides access between the two sites. There are no footpaths in Falcon Park.

The predominant boundary to both sites is very high railway embankments, with wire mesh fencing to school boundaries and 1.6 metre high railings to the remainder.

Two adjacent primary schools have gates leading directly into the open space.

The area has no internal lighting.

The overall impression is of an open, natural area with a rural feel.

Safe & Secure:

A pedestrian gate and metal railings form the entrance at Batten Street, with high brick walls to left and right, just inside. Low railings to the junior playground reduce access to a narrow walkway. This provides a forbidding, potentially threatening area. A low brick wall, in unstable condition, with dense shrub growth nearby, further encloses the area.

High brick walls and tall shrubs enclose the toddler playground, with no views in or out.

Self closing mechanisms to the gates into the play area are not working. This may allow dogs to inadvertently get into play areas and small children to easily run out of them.

A vehicle gate, by the George Shearing Centre in Este Road, provides access for service vehicles, staff at the Centre 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 or parking, although there are no reports of this being abused. There is no barrier between the park and the car parking area of the Centre. The lack of control at this gate, and the gate in Cabul Road, leaves the park vulnerable to fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and illegal access by joy-riders.

The park is not locked at night, although vehicle gates at Falcon Park are kept locked.

Despite being too narrow, the gate at Cabul Road, and the path from it, are used by service vehicles. This causes damage to the grass at the sides of the path and intimidates park users.

Potholes and damage from tree roots are a potential trip hazard on several sections of footpaths, and an unpaved "desire line" is very worn and uneven.

Dense, natural planting screens most of the embankment boundaries and other areas, forming a dark forbidding area.

Shrub planting encloses two seating areas. These are routinely pruned to help maintain sight lines.

Dogs have damaged several trees, indicating use in the training of potentially aggressive dogs.

Welcome:

Signs at entrances are either poor or non-existent. A sign for the George Shearing Centre is in good condition.

Entrances at Latchmere Passage to Falcon Park, and Este Road to Shillington Street Open Space, lack definition, and this detracts from a sense of welcome. The entrance in Batten Street, and the area inside, look unkempt, cluttered and threatening. Damage to grass at the sides of paths from Cabul Road, signals a lack of care.

Although the site is designated as "Poop Scoop" under current bye laws, there are no signs to this effect except those on the dog bins. Evidence at Falcon Park suggests several users are not complying with the bye law.

Railings and gates in Cabul Road and Batten Street need painting to improve the sense of welcome at these entrances. Alternatively, removal of the railings, in total or in part, could be considered

Shrubs planted along Cranleigh Mews screen the adjacent industrial units in the railway arches. These are routinely pruned to maintain views for security reasons, but this reveals the units until the shrubs re-grow.

The excessive disturbance caused by drug users to the naturally planted biodiversity areas, coupled with the small size of the areas, drastically reduces their benefit to wildlife and subsequent enjoyment by park users.

Planted areas provide limited colour or interest.

Clean and well maintained:

The grass is mown regularly to maintain a short dense sward across the bulk of this open space. 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 been found at Shillington Street Open Space and action has been taken to deal with this problem.

This site contains predominantly young or semi-mature trees. There is a wide species mix of native and non-native trees. Routine tree inspection and maintenance is undertaken on a three-year rotation. No significant Pest or Disease problems have been recorded. There is evidence of minor vandalism to several trees but this is not widespread.

The trees are inspected on a regular rotation to identify any works that 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.

The area overall looks tidy and reasonably cared for. Some sections of path are poor, with the remainder in reasonable condition. A badly worn and uneven "desire line" needs to be paved or designed out. Seats are sound but with poor surface condition to the wood. Litter and dog waste bins are in good condition. External railings and gates are in reasonable condition, but would benefit from painting. Internal wooden fencing to planted areas is in need of repair or removal.

Paving and safety surfaces in both play areas is in very poor condition.

A vandalised drinking fountain at the Latchmere Passage entrance has been removed, but the concrete base has been left.

Health and well being

Shillington Street Open Space has both a toddler and a junior play area, which provide for play and exercise of children. There is informal sports use of the large grassed areas. Falcon Park is well used by dog walkers. Passive use of the ornamental areas also contributes to the wellbeing of users.

Community involvement:

There is no known organised community involvement currently.

Service delivery:

Landscape 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.

The George Shearing Centre is operated by the Childrens Services Department, with building maintenance here also being their responsibility.

Playground maintenance 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 and equipment such as paths, 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. Playground maintenance is carried out through the Childrens Services budgets, as is the operational and maintenance costs of the George Shearing Centre.

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.

Play equipment:

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

Trees:

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

Ornamental planting:

There are several planted areas that are weeded regularly and pruned as required. The planting is characterised by tall growing shrubs that, for the most part, have been kept pruned at a low level to maintain site lines across the site.

Other planting:

Extensive areas, planted for biodiversity value, are inspected annually by qualified staff and relevant work carried out. This includes pruning or removal of some plants to improve sightlines, to alleviate problems of drug takings in these areas.

Seats:

There are 16 seats within this park excluding the play areas. These are of horizontal wooden planks on a metal frame.

Bins:

There are 3 litterbins with 3 dog waste bins in Falcon Park,
There are 3 litterbins with 3 dog waste bins in Shillington Street Open Space, fixed as a combined unit with the litter bins. The bins are model HG 66, manufactured and supplied by Earth Anchors Ltd and are finished in dark green (RAL 6005) and red (RAL3003) respectively. In addition large wire basket style containers are installed for the summer only to cope with additional demands.

Hard / paved surfaces:

Footpaths are mostly surfaced with black tarmac with brick edging. There are areas of brick pavers around the George Shearing Centre and areas of loose compacted gravel paths by the Batten Street entrance. The play area has safety surfacing installed under individual pieces of equipment.

Lighting:

There is no lighting within the park.

Fencing:

An iron-railing fence forms boundaries at Latchmere Passage, Cabul Road, Este Road and Batten Street. There is one gated entrance to Falcon Park, with an adjacent service gate. There are three gates to Shillington Street Open Space, one of which is also a service gate. Wire mesh fencing to two adjacent schools is the property of the schools.

Services:

There is no water, electricity, gas or telephone supplies to the park, except for water, electricity and gas to the disused changing room and George Shearing Centre (which also has a telephone supply).

Future Management:

Safe & Secure:

Review the entrance in Batten Street, and the area immediately inside, with a view to improving open access to the main part of the park and improving surfaces. Consider this in any future refurbishment of the playgrounds, especially in relation to the position of playground fencing. Remove the line of shrubs to the school wall at this point, and consider widening the path to include the area of this bed. Consider removal of railings at this entrance. Demolish the free-standing, low brick wall and reduce the nearby shrubs.

Reduce or remove the tall shrubs inside the toddlers playground. If possible, replace the high walls with low railings.

Repair or replace self-closing mechanisms to playground gates

Review the shared pedestrian and vehicle access at the gates by the George Shearing Centre. Consider bollards or similar restrictions to prevent vehicle access to the grass areas.

Review access by service vehicles at the Cabul Road gate. Impose restrictions if appropriate. Protect grass at path edges with ground reinforcing materials if no restrictions are imposed.

Arrange repairs to sections of damaged paths.

Maintain programme of winter works to natural planted areas. With Metropolitan and Parks Police, review effects of current works on the use of these areas by drug takers, and increase shrub and tree removals if appropriate.

Continue programme of pruning of shrubs to maintain sight lines. Consider replacement with lower growing or less dense plants.

Liaise with Parks Police to minimise damage to trees by irresponsible dog owners.

Determine the future of the derelict changing rooms at Cabul Road.

Welcome:

Signs should be placed at each entrance detailing the features within the park and relevant contacts. This would give a greater sense of place and a better welcome. Consider renaming whole site as Falcon Park.

Design and install more welcoming entrance signs containing more positive information about features of the site, including nature interpretation as appropriate.

Review all entrances with a view to enhancing a sense of welcome and showing the park looks cared for.

Ensure signs include details of dog bye laws. Liaise with Parks Police to improve enforcement.

Arrange repair and painting of railings and gates.

Continue programme of pruning of shrubs that screen the industrial units in Cranleigh Mews. Consider replacing with more appropriate plants that would maintain screening with less need to prune.

Clean & well maintained:

Review the unpaved and badly worn “desire line” when arranging path repairs. Arrange cleaning of all seats and repair or removal of internal fencing to planted areas.

Discuss programme of future playground refurbishment with Childrens Services Department, to ensure improvements to paving and entrance layout.

Remove base to old drinking fountain and renovate surface.

Replace those trees that have to be removed and review the species and age class diversity. Vandalism should be monitored closely and if necessary primary trees should be protected.

Health and well being:

Improve both toddler and junior playgrounds. Consider other features that would contribute, such as a “Trim Trail”. Consider cycle parking racks

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.

Falcon Park & Shillington Street Open Space Management Plan 2008

ACTION PLAN

Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
FSH101	To make Falcon Park & Shillington Street Open Space a place where people feel safe and secure	Improve views inside Batten Street entrance.	Review layout of existing & future junior playground		Parks Service Childrens Services
FSH102			Remove shrubs at school wall. Level & compact surface.		Parks Service
FSH103			Widen path to include ex shrub bed		Parks Service Premises Management
FSH104			Remove free-standing wall behind junior playground. Reduce shrubs at this point		Parks Service Premises Management
FSH105		Improve views at toddlers playground	Reduce or remove tall shrubs inside fencing		
FSH106			Replace wall and tall fence with low fencing	As part of playground refurbishment	Childrens Services
FSH107		Provide secure play areas	Repair or replace faulty self closing mechanisms to playground gates	As part of playground refurbishment	Childrens Services

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
FSH108		Improve pedestrian safety at entrances	Review vehicle access to gate by George Shearing Centre		
FSH109			Impose restrictions as appropriate		
FSH111			Review vehicle access to gate at Cabul Road		
FSH112			Impose restrictions as appropriate		
FSH113		Improve condition of footpaths / Prevent trip hazards	Ensure repairs to footpaths		
FSH114		Reduce misuse of planted areas by drug takers	Monitor effects of recent work. Continue removals as appropriate	Ongoing	Parks Service Parks Police
FSH115			Replace screening shrubs with appropriate plants		
FSH116		Reduce damage to trees	Liaise with Parks Police and Tree section	Ongoing	Parks Service Parks Police

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
FSH201	To make Falcon Park & Shillington Street Open Space welcoming and define a sense of place	To provide information on facilities within the park, at entrances.	Install name sign at entrances. Consult on name change	As part of wider signage review of parks and open spaces	Parks Service Graphics
FSH202			Replace or provide new signs at each of the entrances to the park. To include details of dog bye laws	As part of wider signage review of parks and open spaces	Parks Service Graphics
FSH203		To improve views at entrances	Arrange repair & painting of railings and gates		
FSH204			Investigate alternative screening plants		
FSH301	To provide a clean and well maintained Park	To improve condition of paths	Include provision of new path to “desire line” in repairs to other paths.		Parks Service Premises
FSH302			Contact Childrens Services to ensure improvements paving around playground is included in playground refurbishment		Parks Service Childrens Services
FSH303		To improve condition of internal fencing	Arrange repairs to wooden rail fencing		

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Code	Aim	Objective	Action / task	Target date	who
FSH304		To improve condition of seats	Arrange cleaning of seats		
FSH305			Remove base to drinking fountain		Parks Service Premises
FSH306		Improve tree stock	Remove, replace, protect as needed	Ongoing	Parks Service Tree section
FSH401	To provide a park which contributes to the health and well-being of all who use it.	Improve poor play facilities	Refurbish playgrounds		Parks Service Play Services
FSH402		Increase use of the area	Consider any other features that could be provided		Parks Service
FSH403		To increase cycle facilities to and within parks.	Investigate the potential for cycle parking		Parks Service Technical Services Dept
FSH501	To effectively engage with, and involve, the community in decisions made relating to the park.	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
FSH502			Involve users and local schools in bulb planting		Parks Service