

Report written September 2006

St Luke's Gardens Improvements

Public consultation report – Phase 1

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
**KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA**

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What we found out about St Luke's Gardens

- The park is used by a wide variety of people and those using the park reflect the demographic make up of the area.
- Everyone has more good than bad things to say about the park.
- The formal gardens should be kept as they are as the quiet part of the park. The northern side of the park should be developed to provide more varied activity.
- The Quadron staff working in the park are extremely highly thought of for their care and commitment to the park. It seems that they know most of the regular users of the park.
- The flowers and other planting in the formal gardens bring pleasure to many.
- The children's play area is heavily used and popular but in need of improvement. The equipment needs updating to better suit the age of the children who use the park, the area needs re-surfacing and security needs to be improved. The children's toilets are in much need of improvement.
- There are mixed views on the dog exercise area and confusion over the rules which apply there with regard to cleaning up after dogs. The smell is a serious problem for local residents and the dog area, being open 24 hours a day, currently allows access into the park once the park is closed.
- The hard court area is predominantly used by schools who book it and local young people who use it on a casual basis. Football is the most popular choice of sport amongst the young people who use it. There is support for re-surfacing and improving the area and some support for dividing the space into more than one pitch. There is however concern that if the area is improved, an increase in bookings will prevent the area being used by local young people on a casual basis.
- Local residents see the replacement of the pre-war railings around the park as a high priority.
- Despite the fact that a wide cross section of the local community use the park, the community does not feel involved in the park. There were mixed views as to whether community involvement in the park would succeed.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's ten-year Parks Strategy

In January 2006, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea published its ten-year Parks Strategy and Action Plan. The Strategy lays out how the Council will approach improving the main parks in the Borough over the next ten years based on seven themes. The action plan details the timing of these improvements.

The seven themes of the ten-year Parks Strategy are:

- Maintenance, management and safety
- A community resource
- A space for nature
- A space for leisure and relaxation
- Design quality and cultural heritage
- Health and wellbeing
- Local economy

St Luke's Gardens is due to undergo improvements commencing in April 2007.

1.2 St Luke's Gardens

St Luke's Gardens is sited in the old churchyard of St Luke's Church- Chelsea and surrounds the church to the north and the south. The park has entrances from Sydney Street, Cale Street, Britten Street and St Luke's Street. It is across the road from the Royal Brompton Hospital and a few minutes walk from the King's Road. There is both private and social housing surrounding the park.

The park comprises a formal bedded garden, a children's play area with children's toilets, a hard court area for sports, and a dog exercise area. The hard court area can be booked for use through Chelsea Sports Centre. The legacy of the park's past is marked by the presence of tombstones around the perimeter of the park and there is one small area with larger tombstones which is not accessible to the public. The iron railings that surrounded the park before the Second World War were removed as part of the war effort and have not yet been replaced.

St Luke's Gardens is a local park serving the local community but also provides strategic sporting provision for the south of the borough.

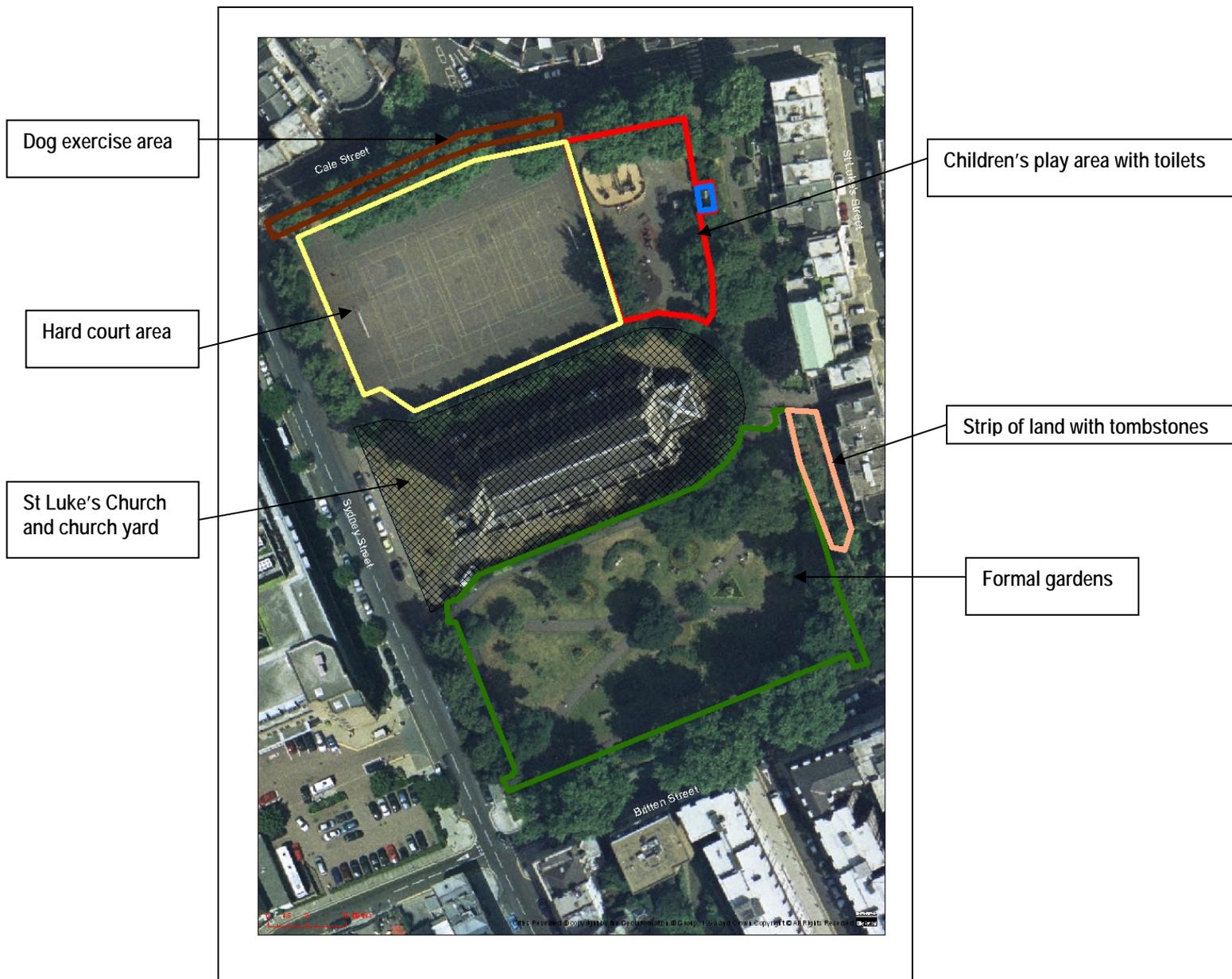


Figure 1: St Luke's Gardens and the elements within them

1.3 Consultation methodology

The aim of the public consultation was to find out from as many different people as possible what they think of the park at the moment and how they would like to see it improved. The consultation involved visits to community and youth groups, formal focus groups, informal discussions with park users and meetings and telephone discussions with those involved in the park. All residents' associations in Stanley Ward were written to and informed of the consultation and articles appeared in the local press following a press release. The following people and groups were involved in or invited to be involved in the consultation:

- Parks Police officers (RBKC)
- Attendees at the WRVS club for the elderly
- Mothers at the Violet Melchett Family Centre
- Local residents
- Quadron staff working in the park
- The Associate Vicar of St Luke's Church
- Teaching staff from Knightsbridge School, the Oratory Primary School and Hill House International School
- Young people attending the Wiltshire Close Youth Club
- The organiser of a football team who books out the hard court area
- Representatives of local residents' associations
- Staff at the Royal Brompton Hospital

Council officers working in the Transport, Environment and Leisure Services and Family and Children's Services business groups, carried out the consultation.

See Appendix 1 for further detail of the consultation that took place.

1.4 The next stages

The findings from the public consultation, along side political and strategic priorities, will form the brief for landscape designers to develop proposals for improvements to the park. These proposals will then form the basis of a second phase of public consultation to find out which elements of the proposed designs are favoured by park users and local residents. The final designs for the park will be decided in the winter of 2006 and improvement works will commence in April 2007.

1.5 For more information

For information on the results please contact Jenny Champion-Smith, Research and Statistics Officer on 020 7341 5166 or at consult@rbkc.gov.uk. Further detail about the consultation can be found at www.rbkc.gov.uk/consultation on the Vital Messages database.

2. Findings from the consultation

2.1 Who uses the park?

Based on observation and on conversations with park users and those working in and around the park it appears that the following user-groups use St Luke's Gardens:

- Elderly people – sit on benches and look at the flowers
- Parents and carers with small children – use the play area and the grass in the formal gardens
- Staff, patients and visitors from the Royal Brompton Hospital
- Teenagers from the local estates- play football on hard court area, sit and chat on benches
- Large groups of families and friends picnicking in the formal gardens
- People walking through the park
- Sunbathers
- Workers eating lunch in the formal gardens
- Schools using the hard court area and the playground for playtime and PE lessons
- Dog walkers
- Sports teams and clubs who book out the hard court area
- People spilling out from the local pub on Sydney Street
- Wedding parties taking photos
- People from further away who drive to get to the park

2.2 General impressions of the park

People were asked to give general impressions of the park and words that come to mind when thinking of the park. Some of these words are listed below in no particular order.

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| - Lovely | - Little haven | - Mix |
| - Lack of refreshments | - Hooligans (on northern side) | - Office workers at lunchtime |
| - Alec | - Serene | - Flowers |
| - Clean | - Peaceful | - Happy |
| - Toilets not clean | - Dog toilet | - Tired |
| - Beautiful | - Increasingly noisy | - Meeting place |
| - Well maintained | - Pretty | - Kids |
| - Valued by local community | - Colourful | - Picnics |
| - Many fewer problems than in parks in north of the Borough | - Wonderful | - Friendly – people and atmosphere |
| - Jolly | - Pleasure of benches in sunshine | - Safe |
| - All ages | - Elegance | - Old folk |
| - Run down | - A mess | - Chilled out |
| | - Tranquillity | |

The words chosen by people to describe the park conjure up images of a park full of colour and beauty that is maintained to high standards and brings joy, peace and happiness to people. However there are also words that indicate that the park is tired, run down and in need of improvement. It may be that people have very different views of the park or that they are describing different elements of the park.

The next section of this report deals with the different elements of the park in turn, in each case starting with a box highlighting the main issues and suggestions for improvements.

2.3 The different elements of the park

2.3.1 The perimeter of the park – fences, railings and entrances

- **Re-install railings**
- **Improve the security of the park**
- **Make the fences higher especially around hard court area**
- **Ensure the fence between the hard court area and the church yard is flush with the line of gravestones**

There is general acceptance that the fencing needs improving and/ or replacing both around the perimeter of the park and dividing the sections of the park.

The replacement of the current fencing with railings akin to those that were taken from the park during the Second World War is a priority for many local residents. St Luke's church has recently renewed its railings and the preference is (for both residents and the church) for any new railings around the park to be the same. The church is happy to pass on details of contractors used. The Chelsea Society would like the railings to be replicas of the originals and pointed to the local study centre in the Central Library for pictorial evidence of what these were like.

Regardless of how the fencing is improved there is a general feeling that security into the park should be improved. Despite the fact that the park can easily be accessed 24 hours a day via the dog exercise area, the fences are currently climbed and in places the wire fencing has been cut. Although this should not be encouraged, the Parks Police suggested that it will always happen and as such the fencing / railings should be designed to enable them to be climbed causing as little damage as possible. As for the gates, it was suggested that flat tops are avoided as this makes them easier to climb and that they are easy to use with padlocks- the Parks Police experience difficulty with using padlocks to lock and unlock gates at present. Although the church staff do close the church gates, they will not lock them as the front of the church is hired out for private parking.

There were calls for higher fences around the hard court area to prevent balls going onto the road and into the children's play area. Some of the young people who use the area suggested this as they get in trouble when their balls go over. Someone who hires the pitch to play football matches explained how balls going over the fence can ruin whole games. It was suggested that if the playground were to be improved before the exterior fencing, then higher fences would be needed around the playground to make it more secure.

At the moment there is about a foot of land between the fence between the church and the hard court area and the line of gravestones that mark the perimeter of the churchyard. The rough sleepers who have been sleeping on the church porch currently use this space to store their belongings. The bags and boxes are visible from the park but not from the church despite being on church land. The church has recently changed its policy on allowing rough sleepers to sleep in the church grounds and as such has given the rough sleepers a month to retrieve their belongings. Despite this, the Associate Vicar suggested that any new fence is flush with the

gravestones to prevent the recurrence of this problem. This may result in the park including an extra foot of land along one side of the hard court area.

One of the representatives of a local residents' association noted that he felt the banner advertising Cannons at Chelsea Sports Centre, which is attached to the fencing of the hard court area, is not appropriate in a conservation area.

Some people commented on the access to the park at the back of the church and from St Luke's Street and that as cars can use this it should be fenced off. The Parks Police officers stressed that parking is required for when they visit the park. One person suggested installing large gates into the hard court area from Sydney Street and someone else suggested creating a coach park for the coaches used to transport school children to the park.

A number of people mentioned the steps at the Britten Street entrance to the park and how these are not suitable for people in wheelchairs or those with prams, pushchairs or shopping trolleys. However, people did point out that by exiting the park onto St Luke's Street the steps can be avoided.

Some people suggested drinking fountains and signs at each of the entrances to the park.

2.3.2 The formal gardens

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The horticulture is loved and valued and the Quadron staff are highly praised- The seating is much appreciated- Conflicting views on the use of the grass for picnics and for children playing- Paths and edging in need of maintenance |
|--|

The general message that came from park users about the formal gardens was "leave well alone". The number of people who mentioned the flowers, planting and hanging baskets and how they walk through the park especially to look at these and be among them, highlights the importance of the horticulture for many park users. Only one person felt that there was disproportionate time and money spent on the flowers and plants. They felt that new plants are unnecessarily planted before the previous ones have run their course.

It is the formal gardens that the elderly people like to visit. They like to sit on the benches and talk to friends (and strangers), look at the flowers and watch the world go by. This seems to be an important part of the daily routine of many of the elderly park users. A number of them also said they walk through the park on the way to or from the shops on the King's Road and stop for a rest in the park. One suggestion was for priority seating for the elderly like on buses, whereby people are asked to give up their seats for those who may need them more than themselves.

As well as people sitting on the benches on the pathways, younger people like to sit and lie on the grass. One person thought that sprawling picnics and children running around made the formal gardens seem messy and that they should remain as more formal gardens with such behaviour being discouraged. Another person felt that the gardens should reflect the signs of the times and encourage this sort of use. One resident suggested that part of the formal gardens is designated for children to play on.

One of the residents' associations represented at a focus group had specific comments about the gardens. Its members felt that the shrubbery areas around the edges and near the

playground could be made more colourful and interesting and that the ivy needs better control, especially along the north side of the gardens. They also felt that *“the trees should be pruned more frequently with consideration of the sight-lines of neighbouring houses and flats”*.

Although most people felt that the formal gardens needed little change there was acceptance that the paths and their edges need resurfacing and updating.

The Quadron staff were extremely highly praised for the quality of the gardens – something that St Luke’s Church really benefits from too.

2.3.3 The strip of land with tombstones

- **There is uncertainty as to whom this piece of land belongs**
- **There are differing views on how best to manage this piece of land – cut it back, tidied and maintained versus managed in its wild state**

There is a strip of land along the eastern edge of the gardens which is fenced off from the public, contains tombstones and is generally quite overgrown and wild. There is confusion as to whether this land belongs to the church or is part of the park. Quadron staff do enter the area to trim the hedges however if birds are nesting they will not disturb them.

A number of people mentioned this area of land with differing views as to what it could/ should be used for. One school of thought was that it should be *“tidied up”* as it is unattractive for residents whose gardens back onto it and that weeds should be removed before they spread into neighbouring gardens. Some residents even said they would do this themselves if they could access the area.

However, another resident felt that it would be *“tragic”* to cut it back and described it as *“divine”* – *“a little bit of wild London that attracts butterflies and bees”*. She said she would love to be able to visit the area of the park to watch wildlife but would not want the secrecy of it to be spoiled. Apparently there were rumours of it being turned into a wildlife area and this was welcomed by some. The view of the associate vicar at St Luke’s (who is also uncertain as to whom the land belongs) is that, whatever is decided, the land needs to be managed. He mentioned that this should be done bearing in mind the sensitivities of it being a graveyard more than a park and that it backs onto the gardens of residents living in St Luke’s Street.

2.3.4 The children’s play area

- **The play area is very heavily used**
- **It needs updating and re-designing to make better use of the space**
- **The surface is not suitable and the gates are too heavy**
- **The equipment needs to be suitably challenging for children aged 1 to ten plus**
- **The swings are the most popular piece of equipment followed by slides and climbing frames**
- **The toilets are in a very bad state of repair**

The playground is very popular and heavily used. It was described by one person as a *“community hub”*. Many people mentioned that it is the only place in the nearby area to take children to to play. Local schools also use the play area although some other users complained about these groups being noisy. Some people thought that the play area is over-crowded.

There was a general feeling that the play area needs improving, updating and redesigning and that the children's toilets within the play area need completely refurbishing, if not knocked down and rebuilt.

The surface of the play area was mentioned as a problem –it is too hard, the woodchips are not appropriate and the matting under some of the equipment is raised and causing a trip hazard. There is also a problem of subsidence that causes dips in the surfacing and therefore large puddles after the rain. There were calls for a softer surface causing fewer children to graze their knees when falling.

There are two gates into the play area – one of these was reported as being too heavy and slams shut. Apparently small children can open them both. The second, and newer, gate from near the church was a welcome addition. The member of the Quadron staff also pointed out that children can climb into the hedges and fences around the play area and exit the play area this way.

One of the main issues people had was around suitable play equipment for all ages. Currently there is an area for very young children and toddlers and an area for over-sevens. The large climbing frame has a sign saying that is only for use by those children over-seven. Despite this, most of the children using this piece of equipment are under this age limit and seem to be suitably challenged by it suggesting that is pitched at the wrong age group. This also means that there is little that is likely to be challenging to the over-sevens despite the fact that children up to fourteen years old may want to use the play area.

When asked about the equipment in the park the favourites seem to be the swings followed by climbing frames and slides. A number of people requested more swings as there are always queues for these. The swings seem to be popular with the older children as well. It was suggested that the more traditional play themes of swing, slide and climb are still the most popular among children and should feature above more modern, “fancy” play equipment in parks. Specific comments about pieces of play equipment in the park include the following:

- The animal rockers are not suitable for young children as they bash their chins on them. However, the bigger children who use them are too big and damage the springs.
- The climbing frame for very young children is too small and doesn't have much on it.
- Slides should be put in the shade as they become very hot in the sun.
- Swings should be enclosed to prevent passing children hitting their heads on them.

Many people felt that the space within the play area could be used more effectively if the area were arranged more sensibly. Currently it seems there is a lot of “wasted space”. One person thought the age groups should be separated more. Some people mentioned brightening up the area or introducing grass and some landscaping. There were calls for more benches, especially in shaded areas. One person suggested having a “buggy park” at the entrance to the play area to prevent the buggies having to be taken around the playground. Other ideas for additions to the play area included a sandpit and a water feature.

The children's toilets in the play area were unanimously disliked and were the priority for improvement for a lot of people. They are currently unclean, dark and in a general poor state of repair. This encourages teenagers and adults to use them for smoking or sheltering in and makes them generally unsafe. The Parks Police will always check the toilets when they visit the

park. Although some people thought it was good to have the toilets inside the play area it was felt that the position within the play area, particularly of the entrances to the toilets is not good as the Quadron staff are unable to keep an eye on them. One of the Quadron staff mentioned a sink that has been coming off the wall for a long time. Quadron are not responsible for maintenance of the toilets.

Some people requested adults' toilets as well with baby-changing facilities.

There is a water fountain near the toilets that is often not working partly due to children filling it with mud.

There were some calls for CCTV in the children's play area.

Playgrounds that were cited as examples of best practice were Eel Brook common in Fulham, Playdale in Hyde Park and the Princess Diana Park in Kensington Gardens.

2.3.5 The hard court area

- **The hard court area is a very important feature of the park**
- **The surface should be softer – Astroturf was a popular choice**
- **There was some degree of support for sub-dividing the area**
- **Football is the most popular choice of sport**
- **Suggestion of hiring out equipment**
- **Suggestion of landscaping the space around the hard court area and providing additional seating**
- **The idea of toilets was more popular than the idea of changing rooms**

The hard court area is a large concrete area which can be booked for use through Chelsea Sports Centre. The facility is used in this way by social sports teams, youth clubs and schools. A number of the local schools hire out the space for games lessons and for playtime. When the area is not booked, it is open for use and many young people, boys in particular, use the space for impromptu football games and kick-arounds. There are goals and netball hoops but without nets. The area is also used for exercising dogs and for riding bikes and scooters- all of which are prohibited. In the past this area has been used for table-top sales and cycling proficiency training.

Both those who do and don't use the area felt that it was important that the hard court area remains to allow somewhere for local people to have a run around and let off steam. The hard court area is a crucial resource for one of the local schools. Everyone was also in agreement that it should be improved. Most footballers requested that Astroturf be laid down- they knew that grass would be even better but accepted that it would be too much work for the Quadron staff to maintain. They thought an improved surface would mean that people could play harder without the fear of falling on concrete.

Some people came up with the idea of subdividing the area themselves whilst others were asked for their views on this. There was a mixed response to the suggestion.

Sports that were mentioned that the hard-court area could / should cater for were:

- Football
- Basketball

- Tennis
- Netball
- Hockey
- Kwik-cricket

Football was by far the most popular choice amongst the teenage boys who use the pitch. They appreciated that some people might want to play basketball but the consensus was that it would be a waste to mark out a basketball court- one of two hoops at the sides of the area would suffice. Basketball can be quite a noisy sport but someone suggested that a softer surface might reduce the sound of the ball bouncing.

There were suggestions of hiring out equipment for a number of different sports and activities however one of the local schools said they felt that they would prefer to be responsible for their own equipment. Some people suggested that staff from Chelsea Sports Centre run activity sessions; apparently these used to take place in the past. There were also ideas about the way the area is booked; this is mentioned in more detail in the section on Maintenance, Management and Safety on page 13.

A member of the Quadron staff and others suggested some secure storage capability for sports equipment so it is not left out in between activities.

A number of people mentioned improving the area around the hard court area to make it more interesting and attractive and to make better use of the space. This may mean making the fenced area smaller and having landscaping and planting around the edges. The idea of benches and seating was supported but people pointed out that those sitting watching would have to be protected from flying balls. They also thought that any seating should be covered for when it rains. Currently the only place with shelter is in the children's play area. Some people felt that if there was additional seating in this area of the park then it might encourage larger groups away from the gardens. Other ideas for seating included a tiered stand at one end of the hard court area.

There is a tree-stump at the western end of the hard court area that needs to be removed.

The idea of changing rooms and toilets were muted to people who use the area. The Parks Police officers and others commented on the importance of security of these. The representative of a local social football team that use the area thought toilets with a key would be a good idea but didn't pick up on the idea of changing rooms. Another comment on this, from a non-user, was that most people live near by and so wouldn't really use changing rooms on site. Two of the schools who use the area said that they would not use the changing facilities.

A couple of people cited the Astroturf in Battersea Park as an example of best practice.

2.3.6 The dog exercise area

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The dog exercise area is heavily used- There is confusion over the rules of the area- Residents on Cale Street complain of the smell from the area- People think the area is unhygienic |
|--|

The dog exercise area is a strip of land that runs along the northern edge of the hard court area. It can be accessed 24 hours a day and has easy access into the hard court area. It is heavily used.

There seems to be confusion among users and non-users alike as to the rules with regard to cleaning up after dogs as there are no clear signs informing people of the rules. A bin and bags are apparently provided but many people do not use these. The result is smells from the area reaching the street beyond the fence and the flats on the other side of the street. This is extremely unpleasant for residents.

Many people complained of the dog exercise area being unhygienic and had concerns for the health of young children and even other dogs who may pick up infections from the area. There were calls for the area to be monitored and cleaned and sprayed regularly.

Currently, those using the hard court area during sessions that finish after the park has closed have to exit the park through the dog exercise area. This is not particularly pleasant for them.

Park users and residents are split over whether the dog exercise area should stay or not. Many people sympathise that dog owners need somewhere to walk their dogs and suggest that there would be great discontent if the dog exercise area were to be removed. That said, people also appreciate that it is difficult to know where to appropriately site such a facility. Many people would be happy to see the dog exercise area go.

2.3.7 Other ideas for St Luke's Gardens

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A separate informal garden for young people- Somewhere serving refreshments- Toilet facilities- Somewhere to ride bicycles |
|---|

A number of other ideas were suggested which would provide additional facilities in the park. Examples of these include a garden with seats for young people. This would be separate from the formal gardens and could have hedges creating different areas.

A number of people mentioned somewhere serving refreshments from either a permanent or mobile outlet. One suggestion was a van, another was a small hut. The feeling was that this could serve inexpensive food and drink, compared to that available from outlets on the King's Road and one idea was that it could be run by volunteers. One person however pointed out that the cafeteria in the Royal Brompton Hospital serves this purpose.

Toilet facilities were also mentioned by a number of people. These should either be separate from, or adjoined to, toilets for children but not necessarily in the children's play area. People reported how some local public toilets had been closed down in recent years. Some people use the toilets in the Royal Brompton Hospital. Concern was expressed that if toilets were provided, they are securely locked at night to prevent encouraging rough sleepers into the park.

One other suggestion was for somewhere to ride bicycles in the park.

2.4 St Luke's Gardens and the themes of the Parks Strategy

This section of the report deals with findings from the consultation based on the seven themes of the ten-year Parks Strategy.

2.4.1 Maintenance, management and safety

- **The park is generally very well maintained- Quadron staff are praised for this**
- **Rules of the park are enforced by Quadron staff, Parks Police and other park users**
- **Improved signage would make the park easier to manage**
- **The park should be open later**
- **People feel safe in the park**
- **Management of the hard court area could be improved with better information on the booking procedure, a timetable displaying when the area is free and proof of booking**

The park is very well maintained and this is appreciated by all those who use it. The Quadron staff are held in very high acclaim for all their hard work. The Associate Vicar at St Luke's Church mentioned how the church benefits from being in the grounds of such a well-maintained park.

There are however some parts of the park where maintenance is lacking, for example the toilets in the children's play area and some of the gates. These are not the responsibility of the Quadron staff.

The management of the park is a broader issue. In general there are few problems although people still break the rules, for example by letting their dogs off the lead in the formal gardens, cycling in the park or feeding the pigeons although signs say clearly not to do so. The Quadron staff can do so much to prevent these rules from being broken but they are not empowered to enforce the by-laws of the park. The Parks Police officers said that when they are called to St Luke's Park they know it will be important as many issues will be dealt with by the staff in the park.

Better signage is one way to improve the management of the park, ensuring that people know the rules. The Parks Police officers explicitly said that this would help them enforce the by-laws if they could point to signs clearly stating the rules. For legal reasons, the by-laws have to be displayed in full legalese somewhere in the park. Residents and park users requested more signs. For example signs in the dog exercise area are needed clearly stating whether dog walkers are obliged to clean up after their dogs or not.

The Quadron staff know many of the park users and this helps to control the behaviour of people using the park as does the presence of so many elderly people, some of whom are quick to tell others off when they are breaking the rules. Despite this there were many calls for greater supervision in the park. Some people felt that the children's play area, the dog exercise area, the toilets and the hard court area should all have people dedicated to monitoring the behaviour of the people using the facilities.

Another aspect of managing the park is the opening and closing times. The park currently opens at 7.30am and closes between 4.30 and 9.30pm depending on the time of year. The dog exercise area is open 24 hours a day and provides easy access to the hard court area over a low fence and gate. Some booked sessions on the hard court area finish half an hour after the

park has closed and people have to exit the park via the dog exercise area. Many people, including residents who live close by, felt that the park could be open later. Some of the young people who use the hard court area for football would like to be able to play much later into the evening and would like the floodlights to stay on later than 10 pm. This suggests that they currently access the hard court area after the park has closed. Parents of young children also felt that the park should stay open later in the winter to allow children to let off steam after school even if it is dark. In general people thought it would be a bad idea for the park to remain open at night.

In the main, people seem to feel safe in the park. There were some calls for CCTV coverage and heightened security through improved fencing. Some people thought that if the park were better lit this would help with the security within the park. The Parks Police will only visit St Luke's Gardens when they are called. There are some health and safety concerns around the children's play area regarding the equipment and the surface and there are certain tombstones that some people felt need to be made safer. Some people have health and safety concerns with dogs urinating in the formal gardens and with the dog exercise area in general.

The management of the hard court area is slightly separate and has its own issues. Currently the hard court area is booked for use through Cannons who operate Chelsea Sports Centre. It appears that Cannons have no further involvement with the management of the area. Many people are unaware of the booking procedure for the hard court area and the parish office administrator based in the church often gets telephone enquiries about it. There should be better information provision about this.

When the hard court area is not booked it is open for all to use on a casual basis. Some of the young people who live nearby said that they get annoyed when they are forced to vacate the area if someone has booked or when they have to wait for others to finish. That said, the representative of the social football team said that his team will often let other players join in with their games. In a similar vein, different groups of people will often join together to play one game when the area is not booked out. The young people thought that a timetable showing when the area is booked and when it's free would help. They said they wouldn't start playing a game if they knew someone had booked the area shortly afterwards. They also said that they don't really plan what they do so would be unlikely to book an area themselves. It was also suggested that some sort of proof of booking would be useful to make it clear who has priority over the area.

The head teacher of the local school suggested that someone is employed to manage the hard court area. This person would be responsible for checking people in and out and helping to set up equipment. They could also be responsible for helping to resolve any conflict over use – the head teacher pointed out that his teachers do not want to argue with other users in front of the children.

Some of the young people suggested that equipment could be hired out for use in the hard court area possibly for a small deposit. Again, this would need to be managed in some way. They also suggested that staff from Chelsea Sports Centre run activity sessions in the area.

2.4.2 A community resource

- **The park is very much a community resource- a particularly important resource for those living on the nearby estates**
- **Quadron staff know many of the park users by name**
- **It is important that the hard court area remains available for use by local young people**
- **There were suggestions for community events in the park and activity sessions**
- **There were mixed views on the likelihood and success of community involvement with the park**

St Luke's Gardens is very much seen as a community resource although people are now traveling from further afield to use the park. For some of the people living on the estates near by generations of the same family have been using the park, referred to as the "graveyard". The Associate Vicar at St Luke's Church felt that it was particularly important that the park remains "their park" especially as so many other local amenities such as the local pubs, are being bought up and turned into exclusive venues for the wealthy.

The park however is a community resource for all sections of the community and in a way it is the Quadron staff who bind them all together. One member of staff in particular knows many of the park users by name even if they don't all know one another.

It was strongly felt that with improvements to the hard court area, every effort should be made for it to remain available for use by the local young people. This may be through ensuring that there are slots where it cannot be booked out or, if it is subdivided, ensuring that at least one of the pitches remains free for casual use.

Some people suggested that the park could be used for holding more community events such as fun days with music, food and activities. It was thought that this might bring the community together and provide an opportunity to meet new people. Another idea was for the local library to run reading sessions in the park. Some people felt that the park should be kept quiet and as a park and that these sorts of activities should not be encouraged.

Although the park very much feels like a community park, the community are not really involved in the park. There were differing views as to whether this should be encouraged and/ or would work. Suggestions for ways in which the community could be involved in the park included gardening, running a small café or monitoring behavior in the park. Some people said they would join a "Friends of St Luke's Gardens group" if there was one.

2.4.3 A space for nature

- **Few people mentioned the park as a space for nature**
- **A pond, a butterfly garden and bird baths were suggested to attract more wildlife to the park**
- **Some support for managing the strip with the tombstones in its wild state**

Although a lot of people mentioned their enjoyment and pleasure in the flowers in the park only a few mentioned the park as a space for nature. Ideas for encouraging more nature into the park included introducing a pond, a butterfly garden an ecology section and birdbaths to encourage birds into the park. There were also discussions of whether the strip of land with the tombstones should be managed in a way that retains its wild natural state or whether it should

be cut back and tidied up to be managed more like the rest of the park. If the area is left wild access should be restricted.

2.4.4 A space for leisure and relaxation

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Many people use the park for relaxation and like the park to be quiet- Some people would like more leisure activities in the park |
|--|

For many people the park is somewhere for them to relax, whether it be by sitting on the benches and looking at the flowers, sunbathing whilst on a lunch break, hanging out and chatting with friends or kicking a football around on the hard court area. Many people enjoy the peace and quiet of the formal gardens and would like this part of the park to remain this way. Some people find that lots of people in the gardens and children running around make that area of the park less relaxing.

The park is also an important space for leisure activities although these are currently restricted to those activities that are catered for on the hard court area. It is possible that this area could be used for a wider variety of leisure activities beyond sport.

2.4.5 Design quality and cultural heritage

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is a strong local desire for the original style of railings to be reinstated- Local history information boards were suggested |
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Local residents are evidently concerned about the design quality and cultural heritage of the park given their desire for the original railings, or replicas, to be replaced around the perimeter of the park. The park is in a conservation area and as such residents do not like anything that looks out of place such as the advertising banners for Cannons fixed to the fences of the hard court area.

The cultural heritage of the park is interesting given its history as a churchyard and graveyard. The gravestones around the park indicate this legacy something that some people really like but other find “morbid”. A number of people thought that more should be made of the history of the park through information boards. At the moment there is a small sign on one of the notice boards about the history of the park which one of the young people in the park pointed out. Some local people spoke of how they have explained the history of the park to tourists and visitors who they thought would be interested in having something to read. People might also be interested to know that the church was used for the filming of 101 Dalmatians!

Much of the knowledge of the cultural heritage of the park lies with the elderly residents of the area, some of whom used to play in the park as children. They have many interesting stories to tell.

2.4.6 Health and wellbeing

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The park makes people feel happy, peaceful and relaxed- A large space to run around contributes to the health and well-being of park users |
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The fact that so many of the words that came to mind when people thought about the park were about being happy, peaceful and relaxed in the park indicates that the park does bring a sense

of wellbeing to many of its users. Many people chose to walk through the park rather than along the streets as they like to be near the flowers and plants. One person said they walk in the park as part of an exercise regime.

The sports provision in the park and the space to run around and let off steam also contributes to the health and wellbeing of park users.

A number of people mentioned how the park is used by patients in the Royal Brompton Hospital across the road from the Sydney Street entrance.

2.4.7 Local economy

- The park provides a resource to local independent schools
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There were few explicit references to the local economy throughout the consultation however some links can be identified. It could be argued that due to the nature of the local economy (i.e. the expensive shops on King's Road) the park is even more important as a community resource for the whole community. This could be an argument for providing inexpensive refreshments in the park as not everyone can afford to pay the prices charged in the shops nearby. This could potentially benefit the local economy.

By providing a resource to local private schools, the park is also contributing to the local economy.

2.5 Priorities for change

At the end of a number of the consultations, participants were asked for their one priority for change in the park. Below are the things that were mentioned:

- The children's play area (x2)
- The toilets
- Soften the play area and hard court surfaces
- Make the play area bigger
- Remove the steps into the park from Britten Street
- The dog exercise area (x4)
- The hard court area re-thought and landscaped
- Cut the hard court area in half to make more space for children
- Refreshments
- More public access around the edge of the hard court area
- Tarmac improved in the gardens
- Railings
- Remove the tombstones

3. Conclusions

St Luke's Gardens is a much-loved and well-valued community park. Much of the success of the park comes down to commitment of the Quardon staff. The formal gardens are highly praised and people would like these "*left well-alone*". The children's play areas are very popular but in need of being updated and redesigned to make better use of the space and to better cater for all age ranges. The hard court area needs improving and its use should be maximised

whilst balancing the use between those who book it and local people who use it on a casual basis. The northern side of the park needs to be made more attractive.

Appendix one: Consultation timetable

Group consulted	Date	Venue	Officers involved in consultation
RBKC Parks Police	7 th June 2006	Stable Yard- Holland Park	RSO, SDO
Quadron staff	4 th July 2006	St Luke's Gardens	RSO, SDO
WRVS club for the elderly	4 th July 2006	St Luke's Hall	RSO, SDO
Local resident	21 st July 2006	Via telephone	RSO
Local residents (mother with two children)	25 th July 2006	St Luke's Gardens children's play area	RSO
Mothers at Violet Melchett Family Centre	27 th July 2006	Violet Melchett Family Centre	SDO, CFM
Young people at Wiltshire Close Youth Club	27 th July and 8 th August 2006	Wiltshire Close Youth Club	RSO and SDO
Residents (Two focus groups)	27 th July 2006	Hall of Remembrance	RSO and SDO
Residents and representatives of Residents' Associations (Focus group)	3 rd August 2006	Christ Church Vestry	RSO and SDO
Social football team who book the hard court area	8 th August 2006	Via email	SDO
Associate Vicar of St Luke's Church	8 th August 2006	St Luke's Church	RSO
Local resident	9 th August 2006	Via telephone	RSO
Head master of Knightsbridge School	11 th August 2006	Via telephone	RSO
Children and families using the park	August 2006	St Luke's Gardens children's play area	PW
Head of the Oratory Primary School	20 th September 2006	Via telephone	RSO
Director of Sports – Hill House International School	21 st September 2006	Via telephone	RSO

Key: RSO = Research and Statistics Officer
CFM = Children's Fund Manager

SDO = Sports Development Officer
PW = Play worker