



Parks Strategy

2016 to 2025



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Foreword

The aim of this Parks Strategy is to set out the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's priorities for deployment of its resources in parks and open spaces over the coming years in order to maximise return on investment. These resources include staff resources, time and financial investment.

The Royal Borough is responsible for some 28 parks, two cemeteries and a further 60 green spaces. The Council and its stakeholders share a common endeavour to maintain and, where possible, improve the condition of the parks so that they are in a better condition at the end of this strategy.

Our parks and open spaces are intensively used throughout the year; this is a mark of the Royal Borough's investment to date, as well as successful management, but also means that damage and wear to the infrastructure and facilities is inevitable. As the second most densely populated local authority in the UK, with the least amount of publicly accessible open space, we are under increasing pressure to provide facilities for active recreation as well as – conversely – quiet

leisure space for reflection. We want our parks and open spaces to continue to be of an excellent standard and to provide a broad variety of features and facilities that enrich our residents' lives. In order to achieve this, we must continually improve and innovate.

Our parks are also a vital resource for nature, and we should be working towards increasing residents' access to nature by ensuring our biodiversity is able to adapt to climate change; allowing species to move easily from place to place by managing existing (and creating new) green corridors; promoting the recovery of declining species and habitats; preparing for new species; and dealing with pests. The key will be keeping abreast of expected new species and understanding the impact they may have on our biodiversity, as well as informing the public and providing guidance on new species to show our residents how they can be of help, and what to expect.

We also want each of the major parks to meet the requirements of the prestigious Green Flag award, which are an acknowledgement of excellence, and to manage all of the borough's smaller open spaces to the same high standard. A sustained programme of regular capital investment in our parks and

open spaces is essential if we are to realise our vision and ensure that we have excellent facilities for our residents to enjoy for years to come.

It is widely acknowledged that attractive, welcoming and well-kept parks play a significant role in the regeneration of an area, increasing the value of both local businesses and homes; have a significant positive effect on the health and well-being of its residents; and have a positive impact on wider determinants of health, such as employment and social cohesion. Parks and green spaces also make a vital contribution to reducing climate change by reducing the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (the cause of climate change), and helping us to adapt effectively to the impacts of a changing climate; that is, through the natural cooling effects of trees and vegetation. Parks look after us and we must, in turn, look after them.

This strategy sets out how we are going to rise to the challenge, and I hope you will enjoy reading it.



Councillor Tim Ahern

Cabinet Member for
Environment, Environmental
Health and Leisure

What will success look like?

- All residents of the Royal Borough will have easy access to a green, open space for relaxation, a variety of leisure pursuits and quiet reflection in an area of London with a dense population and competing demands on space
- These green spaces will be safe and pleasant for people to use

Contents

1	Why do we need a Parks Strategy?	4
2	The challenges that drive our strategic priorities	5
3	Priority themes	6
4	Some basic information about the Royal Borough's parks	8
5	The essence of each park and our objectives for them	10
6	External recognition of quality	16
7	Relationship between the Parks Strategy and other plans	17
8	Communicating the Strategy	19
9	Funding the Strategy	20
10	The action plan: what needs doing and when	22

Note: The action plans are written in the management plans for each individual park so that they can be specific. All park plans cascade down from the borough-wide strategic priorities.





- To understand the role that parks and similar open spaces play in the wider community
- To provide a clear and motivating picture of what we want our parks to be like now, and in 10 to 20 years' time
- To set out the Council's strategic framework for each major park's specific site management plan
- To set out the Council's strategic direction for developing and managing its smaller open spaces
- To provide a sense of direction to all stakeholders so that they understand their role and are motivated to do their best work
- To enable the Council to best focus its resources – money, time and human – so that the Council can meet the considerable challenges that face the parks and open spaces during a period of financial constraint
- To secure and guide an ongoing programme of capital investment
- To highlight and assist the Council's delivery of its statutory duties relating to climate change and the conservation of biodiversity.

1

Why do we need a Parks Strategy? 🍃



2

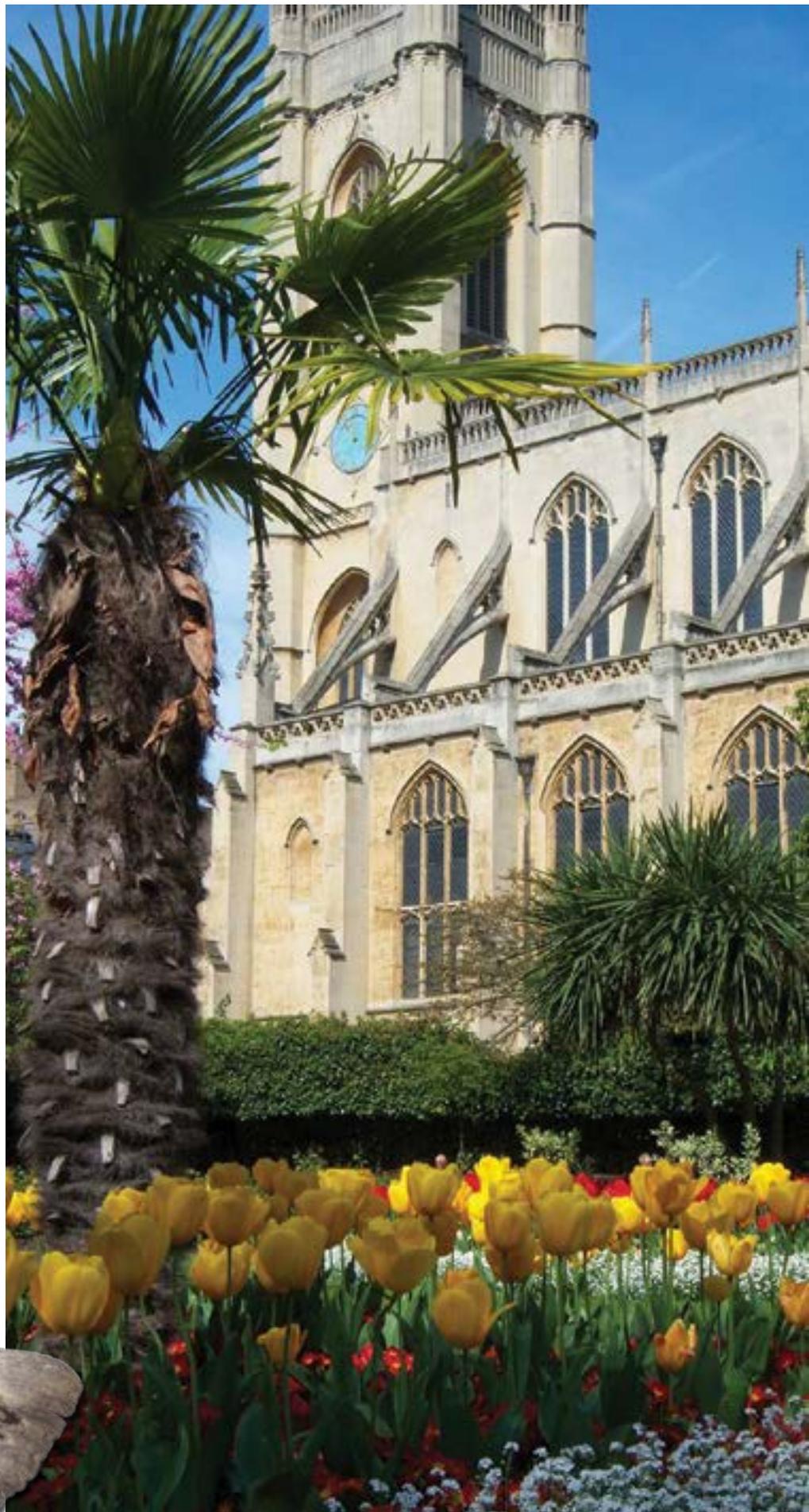
The challenges that drive our strategic priorities 🍷

- Achieving more and being ambitious (with reduced Council funding)
- The density of the resident and visitor populations, and the increase in large residential developments
- How to provide varied leisure pursuits across the borough, but retain quiet space for reflection
- Balancing the needs of many user groups, avoiding conflicts and damage caused by overuse
- Managing community expectations – not every amenity can be provided in each green space
- Being clear on the essence of each green space and communicating that clearly to residents and park users
- Delivering statutory responsibilities in relation to climate change and biodiversity
- Resisting creeping commercialisation in the parks, but not rejecting the financial benefits that may come with some commercial activity
- Managing the expectations and pressures caused by the external promotion of some parks in the borough as destinations/tourist attractions



3

Priority themes 🌱



The vision set out at the start of this strategy has been broken down into four priority themes. These themes have, in turn, been broken down into specific goals that will guide the management of the borough's parks and open spaces and will be used to set the action plan at both a borough-wide scale (see the action plan at the end of this document) and at an individual park management level.

PRIORITY THEMES	GOALS	ACTIONS: HOW WILL WE GET THERE?
<p>1. Provide a balance of leisure facilities and quiet space across the borough, so that its parks and green spaces can be enjoyed by all and no park is overwhelmed by activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify facilities wanted, but lacking in the borough, then match to appropriate park, and build facility • Get more people into the parks and enjoying facilities available. Ensure parks are accessible as well as welcoming • To ensure our residents benefit from contact with nature • Develop policies for personal trainers and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve sports facilities • Review the management of kiosks in parks • Partner with Public Health team to promote healthy living and well-being • Infrastructure improvements
<p>2. Ensure the parks are safe places to visit and enjoy, demonstrate best practice in tackling crime and disorder, and ensure that parks are acknowledged to be safe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify current and future safety issues • Focus resources in problem areas • Promote partnership and community involvement • Communicate action and success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review bye-laws and consider Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), where appropriate • Utilise current and emerging media and technology to improve internal and external communication • Maintain an on-site presence at key sites, and utilise CCTV where appropriate
<p>3. Manage the long-term resilience of the parks in relation to usage, biodiversity and climate change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and start implementing a long-term tree strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan, and a proactive plan for the management of the borough's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) • Identify and manage pressure points in parks in terms of general usage and events • Raise the quality, quantity and sustainability of SINCs and green spaces to ensure their protection as a show of best practice for other landowners • Improve sustainability of parks, including improving existing buildings, and pioneering Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and sustainable/resilient planting where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review vegetation cover to improve resilience • Explore options for the proactive management of pests and diseases using natural solutions, and pilot a proactive health plan for notable trees with external funding • Refurbish play areas for resilience under heavy usage and replace when they are at the end of their life cycle • Raise public awareness of biodiversity • Review of facilities and infrastructure to ensure it is fit for purpose/achieving its full potential
<p>4. Maximise funds by harnessing external resource (where this fits park interests)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify where a funding shortfall will have a negative effect on the plan • Identify external sources of funds/grants/donations and apply for funds • Expand managed volunteer programme • Develop partnerships in order to access external funding. • Increase commercial activity (as appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that income-generating activity in parks directly benefits the parks in which it takes place – i.e. explore potential to take commission from organised activities/Ice House Gallery art sales • Involve stakeholders in the strategic management plan for their parks • Explore match-funded crowd-funding opportunities • Develop further a volunteer programme where citizens do more

Twenty-eight parks and open spaces are covered by this strategy, nine of which are major parks, defined as those that have achieved a Green Flag Award (Athlone Gardens is currently being redeveloped to this standard).

In addition to this, a tenth site (a collective of Tavistock Gardens, Colville Square and Powis Square) has been included as a major park under

the name 'Portobello Squares', to acknowledge the importance of having three secondary parks in such close proximity.

Each park has its own individual history, landscape, features, user group profile and local community, all of which contribute to create its feel or essence. Defining and understanding the essence of each park is essential in making decisions about its future.

Statutory responsibilities and green space not under the Council's management:

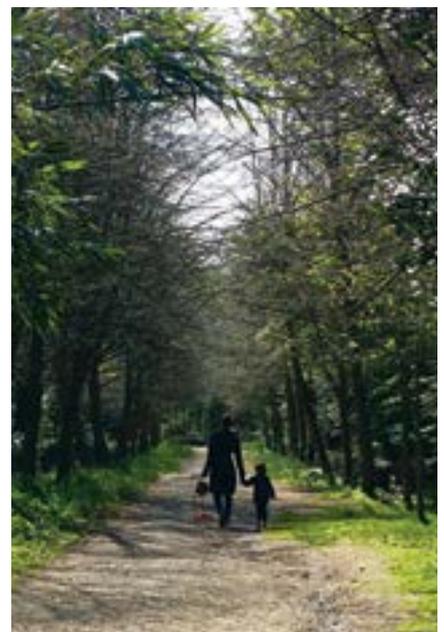
The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that: "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity." This extends beyond the green spaces under its management: there are currently 24 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in the borough, only nine of which are Council-managed. The Council's Ecology Service works with other landowners and managers in the borough to ensure that they are positively managing their sites for nature conservation.

4

Some basic information about the Royal Borough's parks 🌿

Some statistics about the Royal Borough's parks:

- Over 78 hectares of green space including 28 parks and two cemeteries
- Over 3,200 trees of 180 species
- 26 playgrounds
- One café and three kiosks
- More than 20 sports facilities (including tennis courts, grass pitches, multi-use games areas, pétanque, golf and cricket wickets)
- Three outdoor gyms
- Nine of the borough's major parks are SINC sites.



Major Parks

- 1 Athlone Gardens
- 2 Avondale Park
- 3 Cremorne Gardens
- 4 Emslie Hornimans Pleasance
- 5 Holland Park
- 6 Kensington Memorial Park
- 7 Little Wormword Scrubs
- 8 Portobello Squares - Tavistock Gardens, Colville Square Gardens and Powis Square Gardens
- 9 St Luke's Gardens
- 10 Westfield Park

Secondary Parks

- A Alec Clifton-Taylor Memorial Garden
- B Barlby Gardens
- C Canalside Walk
- D Chelsea Common
- E Chelsea Embankment Gardens
- F Cluny Mews
- G Dovehouse Green
- H Ifield Road
- I Lancaster West
- J Redcliffe Square
- K Ropers Gardens
- L St Mary Abbots Gardens
- M St Thomas More Gardens
- N St Quintin Gardens
- O Sunbeam Gardens
- P Thurloe Place/Yalta Memorial



5

The essence of each park and our objectives for them 🌿



1 Athlone Gardens

Essence:

A brand-new park with a relaxed, open feel to complement the hustle and bustle of the adjacent Portobello and Golborne Markets.

Objectives:

- Redevelopment
- Delivery of an exemplary park in a unique setting
- To balance the needs of a changing community
- Achieve Green Flag award

2 Avondale Park

Essence:

Its historic railings and features are contrasted with contemporary buildings and facilities to bring all members of the community together. The park is well used and loved by all. The balance of old meets new is integral to the character and spirit of the park, and will continue to influence future park development.

Objectives:

- Infrastructure improvements
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve biodiversity
- Maintain and improve sports facilities
- Preserve and promote heritage of the park
- Maintain as a family-friendly park

3 Cremorne Gardens

Essence:

The borough's only riverside park will remain a green oasis and space for quiet relaxation in the heart of Chelsea.

Objectives:

- Consider the addition of a Kiosk/ Cafe
- Improve partnership working with the on-site canoe centre
- Forge a better link with Port of London Authority (who own the pier)
- Infrastructure improvements
- Preserve and promote heritage and biodiversity of the park



4 Emslie Hornimans Pleasance



Essence:

A contemporary sculptural park wrapped around the historic Charles Voysey designed garden. The park is a cultural hub and base for many events including the Notting Hill Carnival as well as being a destination for sport and play.

Objectives:

- Develop the Quiet Garden area
- Improve event infrastructure and resilience of grass areas.
- Voysey Garden infrastructure improvements
- Consider options to enhance the kiosk
- Preserve and promote heritage of the park
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve biodiversity value
- Maintain as a family-friendly park

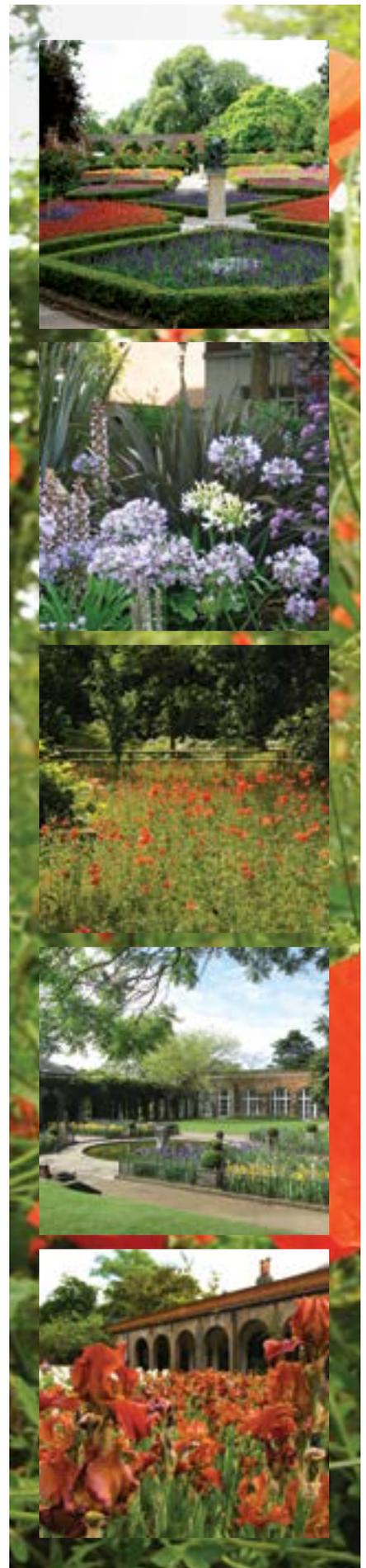
5 Holland Park

Essence:

The mix of tranquil woodland to the north, historic buildings with formal gardens in the centre, and sports facilities to the south will continue to offer local residents a chance to enjoy a large green space in West London in which they can pursue a variety of interests. The historic buildings will be respected and protected from inappropriate usage. Conservation of the natural plant, animal and birdlife will provide an opportunity for local children and adults to learn about nature and its importance.

Objectives:

- Improve resilience of infrastructure and facilities, both historic and modern.
 - Develop long-term plan for continued management of diverse habitats in the park, including tree management and sustainable planting
 - Consider using SUDS to improve park drainage
 - Identify and manage usage pressure points: e.g. traffic, cycling, activities
 - Maintain Grade I listed building in accordance with Historic England, the Council's Local Plan and its statutory duty for listed buildings.
 - Design and build a flagship adventure playground
 - Develop the Ecology Centre as a flagship site for environmental education
 - Preserve and promote the park's heritage
-
- Review the use of Holland House and Stable Yard buildings, and consider enhancements to improve the visitor experience and reduce the impact of the construction of Opera Holland Park



6 Kensington Memorial Park

Essence:

An all-round family park with a wide range of facilities and tranquil formal gardens. The open, well-balanced nature of this site links to its strong sense of community and will be preserved, and its origins as a First World War memorial park remembered.

Objectives:

- Explore options for long-term sports facility maintenance and improvements
- Improve buildings/ infrastructure
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve the site's biodiversity value
- Preserve and promote the site's heritage
- Maintain as a family-friendly park

7 Little Wormwood Scrubs

Essence:

Often described as 'a little piece of the countryside dropped into central London', this small piece of common land, originally part of the larger Wormwood Scrubs, is of significant importance in relation to biodiversity and provides unrestricted access for residents to wildlife. The work to balance competing habitats within the site should be maintained, and its biodiversity and amenity value increased by introducing a water habitat.

Objectives:

- Preserve and promote the site's heritage, and consider reinstating bandstand
- Enhance and protect wildlife habitats
- Consider introducing water habitat on-site
- Improve and maintain infrastructure

8 Portobello Squares (Tavistock Gardens, Colville Square and Powis Square)

Essence:

Three 'pocket parks' within a short walk of each other. Each caters for a different audience but, considered together as 'Portobello Squares', this park caters for all types of park user.

Objectives:

- Maintain the balance of facilities across the three sites: Powis Square – older children and sports; Colville Square – parents and toddlers, and those seeking a quiet green space; and Tavistock – a community hub, a space for picnickers and those who want light exercise
- Better promotion of the three sites in order to direct residents to the best park for their desired needs
- Improve infrastructure
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation, to improve the site's biodiversity value
- Preserve and promote the site's heritage



9 St Luke's Gardens

Essence:

This Grade II listed former churchyard has a very traditional character thanks to the Grade I listed church it surrounds. The unique layout of the park divides it into two distinct areas: quiet formal gardens, and an area for sport and play. One of the borough's more horticulturally diverse sites, this can be enhanced to create a showcase of horticultural excellence.

Objectives:

- Improve buildings/ infrastructure
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve the site's biodiversity value
- Preserve and promote the park's heritage
- Sustainable planting

10 Westfield Park

Essence:

One of the borough's newest parks (created in 1981 on top of a Second World War bombsite), it is a well-loved community resource and caters for a wide range of park users.

Objectives:

- Improve buildings and infrastructure (specifically drainage)
- Playground improvements
- Large-scale project to bring all facilities up to standard
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve the site's biodiversity value



Secondary parks

While emphasis has been given to the major parks in the borough, the secondary parks, while not having as much scope for large-scale improvement works, are still an important resource that is key to achieving the vision outlined at the start of the strategy. They must be given the same care and attention as the major parks, and managed with the priority themes in mind.

Essence:

Although each of the secondary parks will have its own character and history, the essence of the secondary parks collectively can be summed up as 'local parks', while the major parks can be seen as 'destination parks', attracting visitors from out of the borough.

Objectives:

- Better promotion of these parks in their local areas
- Infrastructure improvements
- Focus on the needs of the secondary parks as important community resources
- Identify opportunities for habitat creation to improve the biodiversity value of these sites
- Preserve and promote the parks' heritage

Cemeteries

Similarly, it should not be forgotten that the Council is responsible for two large cemeteries, one at Gunnersbury, W3 in the London borough of Hounslow, and the other at Hanwell, W7 in the London borough of Ealing. Apart from their role in providing a final resting place for the deceased, they play a vital part in the lives of the living, and it is our intent to maintain these valued open spaces as if they were in the heart of the Royal Borough. These cemeteries are covered by a separate Cemetery Strategy.



Green Flag awards

The prestigious Green Flag award scheme recognises and rewards the best green spaces in the country. The scheme supports the importance of green spaces in the community, and acknowledges that research has established a clear link between proximity to quality green space and (a) improved mental and physical well-being, (b) increased value of local business and (c) increased local property values. Keep Britain Tidy manages the scheme under licence from the Department for Communities

and Local Government to continually assess parks holding this recognition.

We are proud that ten of the borough's parks held a Green Flag award in 2015 (eight of those being for major parks), demonstrating that they have achieved at least the benchmark standard of being welcoming, clean, well maintained, safe and secure. The award also requires a park to be managed sustainably, and pays attention to the conservation of its natural and built environment.

www.greenflagaward.org.uk

London in Bloom

The London In Bloom campaigns encourage communities of all sizes to make positive and lasting changes to their local environment for the benefit of the whole community. Imaginative planting, cleanliness, sustainability and community effort are integral to the campaigns. The London in Bloom campaigns are linked to the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom competition, and judges make a rigorous check of three core areas:

- horticultural achievement
- environmental responsibility
- community participation.



6

External recognition of quality 🍃

Learning Outside the Classroom

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom runs an accreditation scheme for outdoor learning providers. The Royal Borough's Ecology Service, based in Holland Park, achieved Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation in 2015, demonstrating the high standard of the education provision we currently provide. The accreditation is reassessed on a bi-annual basis.





7

Relationship between the Parks Strategy and other plans



Individual park management plans

Each of the major parks in the borough has its own strategic and operational management plan, which is drawn up to reflect borough-wide core strategies covering, for example, service delivery, the Parks Strategy objectives, the local character of the park, and local consultation findings. All actions are therefore shown at the individual park level so that they can be specific and set out the capital infrastructure improvement (or replacement) ambitions, and summarise the daily, revenue-based contractor's (or other) management duties on the site.

For ease of understanding by all stakeholders and Council agents, the layout follows the Green Flag award recommended template.

The Local Plan

The Royal Borough's Local Plan is the main document used in the determination of planning applications (originally adopted as the 'Core Strategy' in 2010). Chapter 33 of the Local Plan covers the theme of 'an engaging public realm' which includes parks, gardens and open spaces. Within this, Policy CR5 of the Local Plan sets out the planning policies relating to parks, gardens and open spaces.



The Council has commenced a Local Plan Partial Review to ensure the planning policies are up to date and fit for purpose. While most of Policy CR5 is not part of the Review, the Policy is being reviewed in light of the fact that the Council now receives Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies which can be spent on 'Parks and Open Space' infrastructure projects (as per the Council's Regulation 123 List, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and Neighbourhood CIL). The Local Plan Partial Review policies are expected to be adopted and come into effect in 2017.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The role of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) is to translate national and regional targets into effective local action, as well as to protect and enhance locally important species and habitats. The focus of urban nature conservation is on increasing biodiversity, and counteracting habitat fragmentation by re-creating and enhancing natural ecosystems by integrating biodiversity features into the fabric of the city, which also involves raising awareness and engaging local communities.

The Royal Borough has a responsibility to protect and enhance biodiversity, and this

is a significant area of activity for the borough. The adoption of a Biodiversity Action Plan actively demonstrates the borough's commitment in terms of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and ensures that the Council continues to make a significant contribution to the protection and improvement of the natural environment, working closely with landowners, local organisations and residents of the borough. The revised LBAP is in preparation at present, and will link to the Parks Strategy as well as individual park management plans.





- The Royal Borough's Parks Strategy will be available via the Council's website (www.rbkc.gov.uk/parks)
- Individual park management plans will be available via the Council's website
- Utilise current and emerging technologies to facilitate access to the Parks Strategy
- Staff working in parks, including contractor staff, will have access to the Parks Strategy; contractor staff will have access to the park management plans covering their work areas
- The Council values its stakeholders and will engage them on this strategy and consult with them on park management plans and major developments

8

Communicating the Strategy 🗨️



Capital Programme

A sustained programme of regular capital investment in our parks and open spaces is essential if we are to realise the borough's goals and ensure that we have excellent facilities for our residents to enjoy for years to come. We need to ensure that capital investment is driven and guided by our strategic goals, thus contributing directly to the realisation of our vision for our parks. All development must therefore be able to demonstrate a clear and tangible link to the specific themes, initiatives and objectives set out in this strategic document. The Parks Strategy currently has a rolling capital budget of £675,000 per annum, which is formally approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy annually in advance.

9

Funding the Strategy 🍁



External Funding

Although internal capital bids will be made each year to fund improvements from the Royal Borough's capital programme, officers will additionally seek funding from large funding bodies and external partners to help fund specific projects. Funding from such bodies is often dependent upon a quite technical application being submitted – ideally from, or at least in conjunction with, a local voluntary organisation. Officers will therefore work closely with friends groups and other partnering organisations to facilitate this.



Revenue Expenditure and Income

The ongoing management and maintenance of parks and open spaces in the Royal Borough is funded from existing revenue budgets. Like all services, these budgets have been reduced in recent years in order to deliver the Royal Borough's savings plans. This is likely to continue in future. Thus expenditure on the parks, including maintenance costs, needs – wherever possible – to be supported by income. Officers will seek to identify innovative income-generating schemes in the parks, but will be sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of park users.



Section 106 and CIL

The Council now receives Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies which can be spent on parks and open space infrastructure projects. Funding from CIL and existing S106 contributions will also be sought to fund park improvement works, where feasible.

10

The action plan: what needs doing and when 🌱

Localised specific development objectives will be subject to change over the course of this strategy life cycle, given financial, political and operational needs. Therefore, the programme itself must be dynamic in nature. Although a high-level development vision is set out here in advance, specific local projects will be determined on an annual basis, in line with evolving priorities and budgets.

Key to Action Plan (facing page):

-  Management Planning Process
-  Activity

Action	Financial year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Strategy approved by Cabinet					
New Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) adopted					
Parks Events Policy agreed					
Annual Green Flag award applications					
Holland Park Management Plan approved					
St Luke's Gardens Management Plan reviewed					
Kensington Memorial Park Management Plan reviewed					
Review grounds maintenance contract specification, and agree procurement methodology ahead of re-tender					
Grounds maintenance contract procurement					
Gunnersbury Cemetery Management Plan reviewed					
Athlone Gardens: design and consultation on permanent park					
Review Holland House and Stable Yard building					
Holland Park Building enhancement works resulting from review					
Holland Park SUDS implementation					
Consultation and feasibility regarding sports hub at Kensington Memorial Park (including ancillary facilities)					
Powis Square improvement works					
Ropers Gardens improvement works					
Sports facility improvements at Ifield Road Games Area (delivered by Play Service)					
Yalta Memorial garden redesign					
Cremorne Gardens kiosk feasibility study					
Holland Park adventure playground redevelopment					
Deliver objective-driven capital improvements					
Athlone Gardens: construction of permanent park					

