



MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Old Parsonage Gardens

Park Plan

2022



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1.0 Park Summary Information

Park Name	Old Parsonage Gardens
Ownership	Manchester City Council
Designation	N/A
Covenants	The Old Parsonage (Grade II listed building)
Area	0.5 hectares
Category	Destination Park
Current Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbourhood Delivery Team - Ground Maintenance• Greater Manchester Police• Friends of Old Parsonage Gardens• Councillors• Local schools• Mitie
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alpine glasshouse.• Ornamental flowerbeds• The Old Parsonage• Amenity Grass

2.0 Introduction and Background

2.1 Manchester's Park Strategy 2017 – 2027

Manchester's park strategy has been to develop and "guide the investment and upkeep of Manchester's parks¹", the vision for the strategy is:

"Together, we want our parks and green spaces to be the soul, lungs and heart of Manchester by providing the conditions for our people, our environment and our city to flourish"

This vision is supported by four strategic themes:

- Parks at the Heart of Neighbourhoods looks at the physical role of parks in neighbourhoods across the city, as well as their size, accessibility and character.
- Vibrant Parks, Vibrant Communities considers the use and activities that take place in parks to ensure they are a focus of community life, providing opportunities for exercise and sport, and a wide variety of events that can generate additional income for the benefit of parks.
- A Manchester Quality Standard sets out a good-quality standard for managing and maintaining parks.
- Productive Parks in Partnership describes ways to deliver park services in a more collaborative and fruitful manner with communities and local organisations, not just the Council.

Whatever its site, location or typology each park across the city has a role to play in achieving this vision. To support the delivery of this aspiration, over the ten-year life of the strategy a park plan will be developed for every park in the City.

2.2 Why We're Writing a Park Plan

A Parks Plan for Old Parsonage Gardens will support the Manchester's Park Strategy and enable us to....

- Strategically develop and enhance the park for the benefit of its local community and visitors.
- Make sure we're making the best use of our available resources including funding and staff.
- Build & enhance activities & events to reflect the needs of the local community.
- Build the sustainability of park groups.
- Enhance bio-diversity of the site.
- Enable us to monitor the development & use of the park against a shared vision.
- Build partnership with stakeholders so that we can work together.

2.3 How We Developed This Plan

The development of this plan was led by the Park Ranger in partnership with a steering group of stakeholders: the Councillors for Didsbury West and the Friends of Parsonage Gardens.

Public feedback was sought through a two-stage consultation:

1. A survey hosted via Microsoft Teams: which received 57 responses. This survey asked a series of qualitative and quantitative questions aligned to the Spaceshaper Criteria. A highlight report was then produced from the results.

¹ Manchester's Park Strategy 2017 - 2027

2. SWOT analysis: our steering group and local residents met in Parsonage Gardens and used the survey highlight report to conduct a SWOT analysis. The results of the SWOT analysis were then used to form the action plan within this document

Thank you to the following stakeholders who contributed to the consultation:

- Cllr Stanton, Cllr Hillal and Cllr Leech
- Friends of Parsonage Gardens
- Neighbourhood Officer, Didsbury West and East



3.0 Where Are We Now?

3.1 What the site has

Old Parsonage Gardens is located in the Didsbury West ward of South Manchester adjacent to Fletcher Moss Park. Bequeathed with the Old Parsonage to the Council in 1919 by Alderman Fletcher Moss, the building and park were originally his place of residence. The surrounding red brick wall which encloses the gardens, and the gravestones of Fletcher Moss' dogs, speak to the previous private residence of space.

The Old Parsonage, a Grade II listed building, is now managed by the Didsbury Parsonage Trust and open to members of the public 7 days a week with art exhibition space, legal offices and bookable rooms for functions.

The gardens have a collection of rare trees and beautifully maintained flower beds thanks to hard work of the Friends of the Park. Opposite the lawn of grass popular with picnickers, is an alpine glasshouse.

3.2 Who uses the site

Old Parsonage Gardens is often viewed as part of a collective alongside Fletcher Moss Gardens and Park and is overseen as such by the Friends Group. The park is held in high esteem by local residents but also attracts visitors from across greater Manchester and internationally, despite its small size, due to its beauty and historical significance.

Didsbury West ward is a densely populated residential area with a population of 15,470 and is rated as the least deprived ward in Manchester².

3.3 Who looks after the site

The park is managed by the South Area Parks Team within the Neighbourhoods Service. However, the incredibly dedicated Friends Group are to be credited for the high horticultural standard maintained across the park and the subsequent Britain in Bloom awards. In 2021 alone, volunteers provided 4580 hours across Parsonage Gardens and Fletcher Moss Gardens.

MCC Grounds Maintenance Team undertake regular maintenance tasks such as litter management. The Parks Team work with approved council contractors to rectify defects within the park.

² [Indices of deprivation 2019.pdf \(mcc.local\)](#)



3.4 Site Assessment
Table 1. Site Assessment

Spaceshaper Criteria	Assessment	Identified Issues	Proposed Actions
<p>Access – finding your way and getting about including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Entrances • Pathways • How visitors move around the site • Park boundaries • Park furniture, seating, signage and bins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park is easy to navigate and well signposted. • Adequate benches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps present a potential barrier to access due to being steep for children and those with mobility issues. • The church gate can be difficult to close after heavy rain due to the movement of the loose pathway material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a composite resin path.
<p>Use – what activities and opportunities the space has to offer including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Play Areas • MUGAs • Sports Facilities • Events and activities spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary purpose of the park is for peace and tranquillity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in activity would potentially be detrimental to the tranquil nature of the park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus should be on horticulture rather than activities or large events. • More labelling of plants
Spaceshaper Criteria	Assessment	Identified Issues	Proposed Actions

<p>Other people – how the space caters for different needs including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the park cater for people with additional needs? • Does the park have age friendly elements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled step free access around the site. • Lots of benches to allow rest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps reported as steep and inaccessible to some residents. It is perhaps not clear where the alternative step-free can be located. • Information boards not the right height for wheelchair users and children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce disabled access sign near steps. • Height and layout of information boards should be checked to ensure they are accessible for wheelchair users.
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<p>Maintenance – how clean and cared for the space is including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the site clean and well maintained? • Are there litter and / or fly tipping hot spots? • Are there areas of the park that would benefit from different or additional maintenance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cleanliness and quality of the space is the result of an incredible team of volunteers. • Very well manicured and herbaceous borders in exemplar condition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly bin collections in the summer are not frequent enough to prevent overflow. • Open top bins are vulnerable to litter spread by birds and squirrels. • The space is beautifully cared for by volunteers. The only problem is the bins, which are not their responsibility and removal of dead trees, also down to the council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bins should be emptied more frequently in summer. • Bins would benefit from lids that prevent animals spreading litter. • Work with Arbor team to address delay removing dead trees.
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Spaceshaper Criteria	Assessment	Identified Issues	Proposed Actions
<p>Environment – how safe and comfortable the space is including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape and horticulture • Does the park feel safe? Are there specific areas or issues with ASB? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a woman I'm constantly alert in areas with bushes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased lighting might help park users feel safer after dusk. • I always feel safe in the evenings on my own although a few times the gate by the Didsbury pub has been locked early and that doesn't feel as safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost lighting along main path between the Parsonage and Stenner Lane gates (opposite the church).
<p>Design and appearance – what the space looks like and what it's made from including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any areas of the space that feel tired, or would benefit from redesign and / or development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site has many heritage features which require specialist maintenance, including vulnerable stone walls around the perimeter and greenhouse yard. • Paths made of a loose chalk substance that is vulnerable to the rain. • Benches well maintained by volunteers who have organised them to be cleaned using funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paths surface could be improved e.g. composite. • Structural integrity concerns with stone wall along Stenner Lane. • Structural integrity concerns with stone wall and gate by the greenhouse. • Coping stones missing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural integrity concerns to be considered by MCC corporate property. • Concrete mock York coping stones to be used? • Replace existing path with composite resin.

	from an anonymous donor.		
Spaceshaper Criteria	Assessment	Identified Issues	Proposed Actions
<p>Community – how important the space is to local people including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence of community involvement is there in the space e.g. signage and promotion? • Is there any evidence of barriers or issues that limit or could limit community engagement? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gardens are both a historic community asset and site that attracts national/international visitors. • Residents visit the park in search of peace and tranquillity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

<p>You – how the space makes you feel including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the space make stakeholders feel? • Consider your individual perspective and also other visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The park is a calm space that has a positive impact on visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
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4.0 Where Do We Want To Be?

4.1 Thinking About The Future

The following Green Flag Award Criteria³ have been used to inform a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats) of the park:

A WELCOMING PLACE *First impressions are all too important and the site should look inviting. Issues that must be considered are: good and safe access, welcome signage and equal access for all. The site should be freely accessible to the public. However, we are fully aware that sites may well have to be locked at night for security reasons or that access to the site may be restricted to regular, advertised open days, with a designated member being the key holder.*

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE *It is of paramount importance that the site is safe. Issues such as personal security, safe equipment and facilities, appropriate level of facilities and control of dogs, and dog fouling must be considered. Sites should encourage people to live healthy lifestyles through the facilities, activities and events provided.*

WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN *There should be an appropriate standard of maintenance throughout the site and effective management skills to combat issues including: litter, fouling and waste management, as well as graffiti and vandalism.*

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT *Judges will examine environmental issues such as peat and pesticide use, sustainable material use, waste and its minimisation.*

BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE *Each green space is unique and has its own character. The judges will be looking at how the natural and historic features are identified on site, and what measures have been taken to enhance them where appropriate.*

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *This is a key criterion for the Green Flag Community Award as it looks to how well the site relates to and encompasses the local and wider community.*

MANAGEMENT/ACHIEVEMENTS *Here judges will be looking at what you have achieved, not only in terms of managing the green space, but also what funding and resources you have secured and how you have used them. How creative and innovative you have been with projects on your site will also be of interest.*

³ <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/how-it-works/judging-criteria/green-flag-community-award/>

Table 2. SWOT Analysis

Old Parsonage Gardens SWOT Analysis
Please use the following themes for the SWOT analysis: a welcoming place, healthy, safe and secure, well maintained and clean, environmental management, biodiversity, landscape and heritage, community involvement, management/achievement

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Environmental benefits of trees and flowers	Drainage Blocked easily by the grit from the paths	Better using the knowledge of the gardening volunteers	Dogs can damage herbaceous borders Keep them on a short lead?
Holistic benefits and positive vibes	Pitch black at night Need lighting along the main path	Medicinal plants	Climate change Need drought resistant plants
The location as a park	Bins Need tops on to prevent spread by animals. More frequent collection in the summer.	More navigation signage e.g. sign for wheelchair access	Mould in the clubhouse is a threat to volunteers
A lot of seating space	Loose path material	A just giving page (a collection box is a security risk)	Walls being climbed
families feel safe for small children		Wedding venue makes a fortune. Could charge for wedding photos	Antisocial behaviour Drug dealers, plant theft, coping stone theft
Small park with a lot of different areas		Better publicity RE transport links	Security when people come in at night
Mutual respect between house and volunteers		More volunteers	Events (bigger scale) are the Council's decision
Positive mental attitude of volunteers			Lack of bicycle storage Having bike storage at the entrance would remind visitors not to cycle through the gardens.
Tree guides			Erosion of paths - grit goes into the drains Replace with a resin path?
Volunteering inspires donations			
The volunteers! Without them it wouldn't look the way it does.			

4.2 Aims and Objectives

Action Plan:

Timescales

Quick – Quick Wins

Short Term – 1 to 2 years

Medium Term – 2 to 3 years

Long Term – 4 + years

Objective	Project/s	Timescales	Resources	Est. Cost	Lead	Partners	Completed	Strategic Project (Y/N)
1. Further advance the accessible and welcoming nature of the space.	a) Install disabled access route sign near steps.	Short Term			Park Ranger			
	b) Inspect height and orientation of information boards to ensure they are accessible for wheelchair users.	Quick						
	c) Cost the replacement the path between the Stenner Lane stone arch and the church gate entrance with composite resin, should the Friends wish to fundraise.	Medium Term		£16,500	Park Ranger and Friends Group	Old Parsonage Trust		
	d) Investigate the cost of lighting along the pathway between the Old Parsonage building and the Stenner Lane double gate (opposite the church)	Short Term	LIF		Park Ranger and Friends Group	Didsbury West Councillors		
2. Ensure the high standard established by volunteers is sufficiently supported by Council maintenance.	a) Investigate possibility of bespoke bin lids to prevent spreading of litter by animals.	Short Term	Parks Team and volunteers	£54 per lid	Park Ranger	Earth Anchor		
	b) Improve MCC response time for removal of dead trees.	Medium Term			Park Ranger	Arbor		
	c) Discuss summer refuse collection schedule with Grounds Maintenance team.	Short Term			Parks Team	Grounds Maintenance		
	d) Structural integrity concerns with Stenner Lane barrier wall and greenhouse wall to be considered by MCC corporate property and repairs coordinated if necessary.	Long Term		TBC				
3. Preserve the reputation of gardens as a site of horticultural excellence.	a) MCC to direct support towards horticultural activity, rather than events which may undermine the tranquil nature of the space.	Long Term			Events Team and Parks Team			
	b) Consider adding further plant labelling.	Short Term			Friends Group			
	c) Pilot a scheme for the sharing of horticultural skills amongst volunteers.	Medium Term			Parks Team and Friends Group	Other Friends Groups		

5.0 How Are We Going to Get There?

5.1 Marketing and Communication

Manchester City Council aims to make sure people and visitors can easily find out about our parks and the events and activities that take place in them. All communications and marketing is managed by our marketing team, who make sure that the image the people of Manchester, and visitors, have of Manchester City Council, including Parsonage Gardens, is reflecting what we do and what we stand for. We ensure the information and vision presented is appropriate and regularly reviewed and updated.

The marketing team and press office work in partnership with our parks to ensure information is communicated for maximum impact. To promote Parsonage Gardens we will:

- Celebrate the Friends Group's successes, activities/events and upcoming projects on the central parks social media accounts when requested.
- Update Manchester City Council's website as required.
- Participate in Ward Meetings and other initiatives where the status of the park is discussed.
- Attend Friends of the Park meetings.
- Share information about activities/events to be displayed on the Loads to Do website when requested.
- Provide support recruiting volunteers through the MCR VIP website when requested.

6.0 How Will We Know When We've Arrived?

The success of this plan is not just about achieving the action plan, it is also about how the plan, park and the team can support the aspirations of the Parks Strategy. Progress on the action plan will be monitored through:

- **Regular Park Inspections**
- **Friend Group Meetings**
- **Park Strategy Reviews**
- **Visitors surveys and informal feedback**

The Parks Team will coordinate the monitoring, evaluation and review of the management plan. Alterations and amendments will be the result of a collective decision between key stakeholders, the Friends group and Council Officers

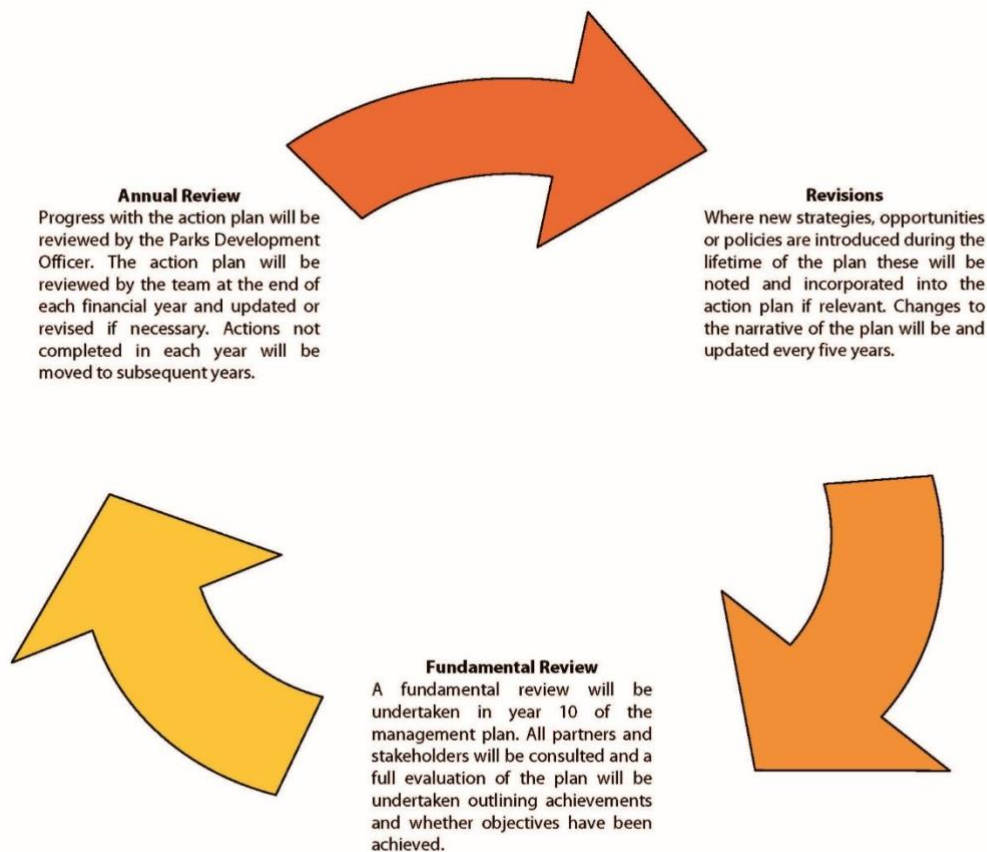
6.1 Analysis of Monitoring

The Parks Team will coordinate the monitoring, evaluation and review of the management plan. Alterations and amendments will be the result of a collective decision between key stakeholders, the Friends of Parsonage Gardens, the community and Council Officers.

Control of finances will rest with the South Parks Team, with support from Manchester City Council's Finance Department. Control of other resources and personnel will, in the first instance, be the responsibility of the Friends of Parsonage Gardens. Referrals for additional resources, capital investment and unresolved personnel issues will be made to the Area Parks Lead (South).

Review, update and amendment of the management and maintenance plan will be a continuous process based on the following process.

Figure 1. Evaluation and Feedback System



7.0 Appendices

7.1 Manchester Parks Strategy Key Themes

- 7.1.1 Parks at the Heart of Neighbourhoods looks at the physical role of parks in neighbourhoods across the city, as well as their size, accessibility and character.
- 7.1.2 Vibrant Parks, Vibrant Communities considers the use and activities that take place in parks to ensure they are a focus of community life, providing opportunities for exercise and sport, and a wide variety of events that can generate additional income for the benefit of parks.
- 7.1.3 A Manchester Quality Standard sets out a good-quality standard for managing and maintaining parks.
- 7.1.4 Productive Parks in Partnership describes ways to deliver park services in a more collaborative and fruitful manner with communities and local organisations, not just the Council.

7.2 Grounds Maintenance Schedule

Feature/Facility	Tasks	Timing	Frequency	Comments
GRASS MAINTENANCE	AMENITY & VOLUME GRASS - MOWING	March - Oct	Every 3 Weeks	
	AMENITY & VOLUME GRASS - EDGE WEED CONTROL	March - Oct	2 / Year	Additional measures as required
	ALL GRASS AREAS - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
SHRUB NATURALISED MAINTENANCE	SHRUB NATURALISED - MAINTENANCE	On Request	Winter programme	
	SHRUB NATURALISED - WEED CONTROL	On Request	Winter programme	
	SHRUB NATURALISED - PRUNE	On Request	Winter programme	Additional works where obstruction or nuisance has been identified
	SHRUB NATURALISED - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
HEDGE MAINTENANCE	HEDGE - CLIP	Oct - Feb	1 / Year	Additional works where obstruction or nuisance has been identified

	HEDGE BASE - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
PATHS / ROADS / & CAR PARK MAINTENANCE	HARD SURFACE, ROADS, PATHS AND CAR PARKS - MECHANICAL SWEEP/BLOW	All Year Round	4 / times per year	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
	HARD SURFACE - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
	HARD SURFACE - WEED CONTROL	March - Oct	2 / Year	
	PLAY AREA - EDGE OFF/ WEED CONTROL	March - Nov	2 / Year	
	PLAY AREA SURFACE - MATS - CARPET - RUBBER & TARMAC .- CLEAR - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
MULTI USE GAMES AREA [MUGA] [Includes.- Football - Tennis - Basketball - Skate/BMX Facilities]	MULTI COURT - HARD SURFACES - COLLECT LITTER	All Year Round	Regularly	
	MULTI COURT FENCE LINE - WEED CONTROL	March - Oct	2 / Year	
LEAF CLEARANCE	ALL AREAS - SEASONAL LEAF CLEARANCE	Sept - Jan	Regularly	Placed/blown into shrubby and/or mulched onto grassland no removal from site
LITTER BIN & DOG BIN COLLECTIONS	LITTER BINS	All Year Round	Regularly	Annual schedule to be determined using historical information. Dog waste bins to be phased out. Litter bins are mixed waste bins.
	DOG WASTE BINS	All Year Round	Regularly	
TIPPING & SKIPS	REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL	All Year Round	Regularly	Tipping and/or skip provision at strategic locations for park generated arisings and waste supplied by Parks.

FLY TIPPING [INCLUDES WATER COURSES]	REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL	All Year Round	CRM Request	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
SHARPS & HAZARDOUS WASTE	REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL	All Year Round	CRM Request	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
DOG FAECES	REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL	All Year Round	CRM Request	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
GRAFFITI	REMOVAL	All Year Round	CRM Request	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
DEAD ANIMALS	REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL	All Year Round	CRM Request	Responsibility of waste Contractor Biffa
PLAY	INSPECTION	All Year Round	CRM Request	Weekly Parks Team / Quarterly Play Team / Annually RoSPA