

The St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens Management Plan 2008



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PART I: WHERE WE ARE NOW

INTRODUCTION:

What is a park management plan?

Management Plans are an important aid to the efficient and effective management of a site. A Plan forms part of a process for evaluating performance against agreed standards, consulting and involving people, strategic planning and providing continuity. Individual plans are specific to a park and will deliver aims and objectives specific to the needs of the stakeholders and local community who will be directly involved in its formulation.

A Park Management Plan also provides an excellent opportunity to collate a wealth of information relating to the park that the management authority possesses, into a single comprehensive document.

Name of Site: St Nicholas Church and Gardens

Address: Plumstead High Street SE18

Contact: Reverend Andrew Stevens

If you require any further details about this plan please contact:

Address: Parks & Open Spaces:
Shooters Hill depot
Opposite Eaglesfield Rd
Woolwich
SE18 4LX

Tel. 020 8856 0100

Email parks@greenwich.gov.uk

This park is allocated a technical officer who can be contacted for any further information (using the contact details provided above).

Due for Revision:

Writing Timescale:

Approved:

Adopted:

Purpose of this management plan

As well as developing a Green Space Strategy, the production of individual management plans for a park is good practice and is in accordance with the Council's commitment to providing Best Value.

Tenure or legal basis on which the organisation owns or holds responsibility for the green space

The Churchyard and Gardens are owned by the Church Diocese of Southwark and vested in the incumbent of the benefice of Plumstead, St Nicholas, and the Reverend Andrew Stevens.

During the 1960's, the responsibility for the maintenance of the churchyard and gardens was passed to the Local Authority (prior to the 1972 Local Government Act).

If the Local Authority wishes to undertake any works in the churchyard other than routine maintenance, it will need to apply for a Faculty.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND INFORMATION BASE

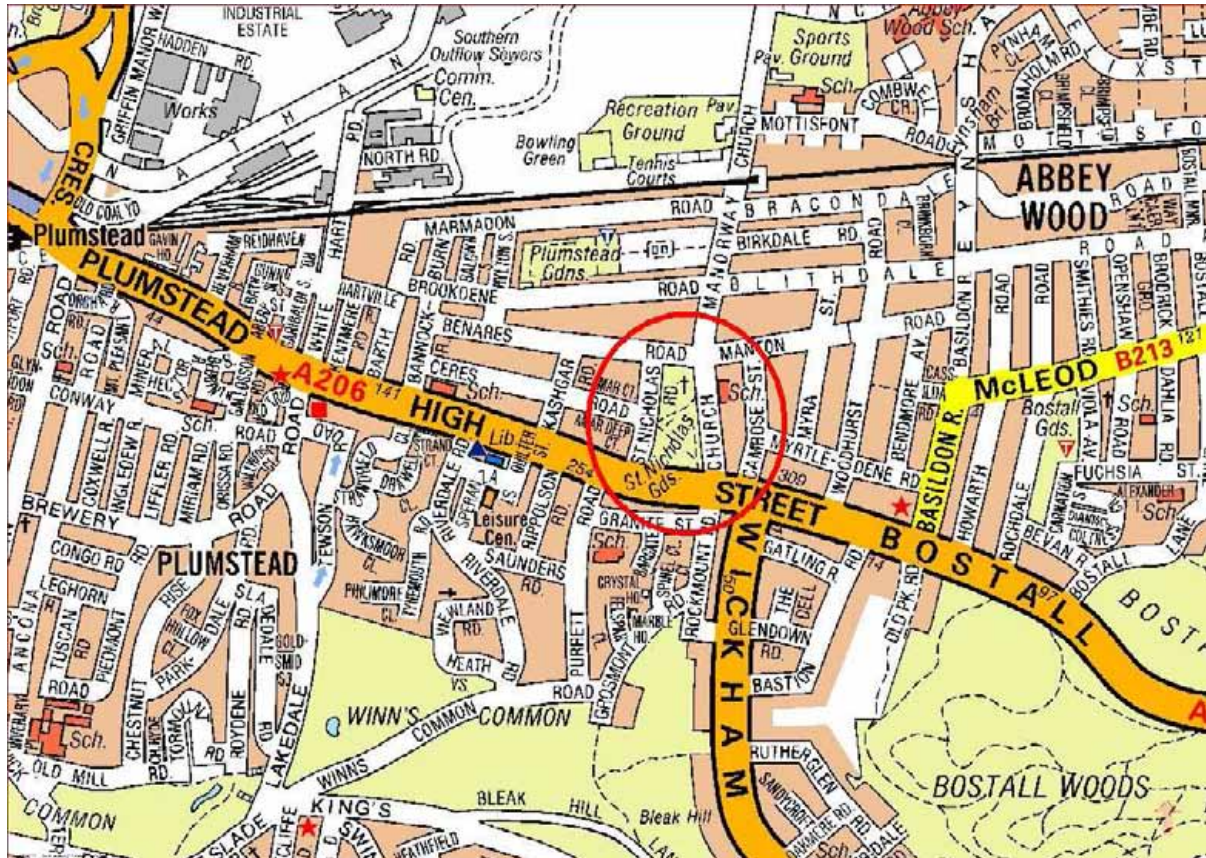
Description of the park

St Nicholas Churchyard is a closed Churchyard. The garden is a flat, rectangular shaped open space occupying a site the size of 0.31 hectares.

The Church is situated at the northern end in the top third of the park and the rest of the park is laid out as amenity grassland. The Church is separated from the Churchyard by a through-fare to the streets bordering the park.

The Green Space Strategy classifies St Nicholas Church and Churchyard as a local park.

The underlying soil geology of the park is Thanet sand. Thanet sand is generally porous but tends towards clay and to be more impervious at the base.



Heritage and History

A summary of St Nicholas Church and Churchyard can be found in the appendices.

Biological

St Nicholas Gardens is mostly improved grassland, trees and planted shrubs the trees are significant for their maturity.

Tree Survey

Tree surveys in Greenwich parks are conducted when time and money permits. This identified the number of trees, classified them according to age, recorded the tree's measurements, located any tree wounds and made a recommendation for action depending on the tree's health.

No tree survey in this park has been done in the gardens but from observation there are approximately 40 – 50 trees in it. The trees are a mixture of mostly mature common species but there are some natives such as ashes. There is a good example of a tulip tree in the churchyard.

Some of the tree trunks appear to have been bitten and scratched by dogs where owners are hanging their dogs from the lower branches of the trees. This brutal practice is damaging the bark and branches and is detrimental to the overall health of the trees.



Example of damage done to trees by dogs

Fauna Description

Common birds and squirrels can often be seen in the gardens.

The Churchyard

After the Churchyard was cleared of gravestones it was laid out as a public garden. Some gravestones remain and rest on the perimeter fencing.

The subsistence of the graves has created a slightly undulating surface. The fence lines are planted with shrub beds and ground cover plants. The shrub beds close to the access points appear to have suffered from trampling in the past.



The Churchyard

The Church

The medieval Church is the only structure within the grounds and occupies approximately of 0.9 hectares of the site.

Furniture, Fencing and General Infrastructure

Park Benches

There are approximately 4 park benches in the gardens which at the time of writing, are in good condition. They were funded by a Section 106 contribution.

The gardens may benefit from additional park benches or picnic tables.

Fencing

The perimeter fence dates back to the 60's and would benefit from replacing/painting.



Walkway between Churchyard and Gardens

Rubbish Bins

There are approximately 5 rubbish bins in the park which appears to be sufficient to meet the needs of the park.

Dog Bins

This is a dog free park so there is no provision for dog litter. However, it would appear that dogs are frequently brought in although dog litter does not appear to be a problem in the gardens.

Signage

A sign on Plumstead High Street indicates the direction of the Church and a sign near the Church gives the details of the parish and Reverend. There are no signs at the entrances to churchyard or gardens advising of emergency contact numbers or the name of the site. Only one of the entrances has a sign advising that dogs and cycling are not allowed. At the time of writing, the sign is currently graffitied so that this information is not very clear.

Pathways

The pathways within the churchyard are tarmac and in good condition.

St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens is situated amongst medium density housing and some light commercial premises. Roads line the four sides of St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens. Plumstead High Street is the busiest of the roads with a continual stream of traffic. Churchfield School is located on the quieter side-street, Church Manor Way.

St Nicholas Church and Churchyard is bordered by fences on three and a half sides. There is one access point to the Church and three access points to the Churchyard. The access points to the churchyard are suitable for wheelchairs, mobility vehicles and maintenance vehicles.

The gates to the gardens are closed and locked at dusk.

Parking spaces are available on some of the neighbouring streets.

Public Transport Links

The closest train station is Plumstead. Buses 96, 99, 177 and 180 serve Plumstead High Street.

Summary of main uses, recreational facilities, visitor attractions and activities

St Nicholas Church and Churchyard is mostly used for passive recreation such as sitting and relaxing and as a thoroughfare.

Several types of antisocial behaviour occur in the Churchyard. Dogs are also brought into the park and from the evidence, would suggest that they are trained for fighting. Motorcycles are sometimes burnt and left in the thoroughfare.

Who uses the site, where they come from, patterns of use and behaviour?

The information gathered in this section is from a number of sources, including the 2001 Census and the Neighbourhood Statistics website. The information relates to the Plumstead ward as a whole and not specifically to St Nicholas Church and Churchyard.

The resident population of Plumstead ward as measured in 2001 was 14,112. This is made up of 6,761 males and 7,351 females. The majority of households are sole dwellers followed by married couples with dependent children. 40.69% of people are in the 20 – 44 age bracket and 17.5% are in the 5 – 15 age bracket. The average weekly income was £510. Ethnicity in Plumstead was 65% white, 17.38% Asian or Asian British and 13.09% black. 39.66% of the ward had no access to cars or vans.

Other Local Parks in the Area

Plumstead Gardens is located on Church Manor Way and is within walking distance. Plumstead Gardens was originally an ornamental garden which now provides play facilities for young children as well as a casual football pitch and BMX track and a smaller formal area for passive relaxation.

Stakeholders

Incumbent Church Wardens and the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

Greenwich Council

- Culture & Community Services (P&OS)
- Strategic Planning (property Services, planning control)
- Chief Executives (Communications/Events)
- Neighbourhood Services (Neighbourhood Panels/Representatives)
- Children's Services

Agencies

- (Police, Fire & Rescue Service),

Community

Churchfield School

Local businesses on Plumstead High Street

Local residents

Politicians

- local MP
- Ward Members

Management of the park

Management Structure

The maintenance of the Churchyard and Gardens described in this management plan is the responsibility of the Parks & Open Spaces department within Greenwich Council. The management structure is shown in Appendix V.

The Parks and Open Spaces department is located within the Directorate of Culture and Community Services. The Parks and Open Spaces Operations and Technical Managers are accountable for the overall management responsibility of the Service.

Individual management functions are devolved and key functions are identified as follows:

- Horticultural Maintenance
- Park Keepers, Rangers and Parks Security
- Parks Development
- Fixed Equipment Playgrounds
- Ecology & conservation
- Tree & Woodland maintenance
- Administration – Sports lettings, complaints monitoring

Grounds Management and Maintenance

St Nicholas Church and Gardens is managed as a mobile site. Mobile sites are inspected and litter picked on a rotational basis. The frequency is determined by the availability of staff, but usually between two and three times per week. The mobile sites are also locked and unlocked on a daily basis.

Grounds maintenance takes place at St Nicholas Gardens in accordance with an annual ground maintenance schedule (see appendix IV).

Budget Information

The budgets used to maintain parks and open spaces are currently split into two areas, Horticulture Operations and Property Services.

Horticulture operations

Currently it is not possible to identify expenditure specifically related to St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens, as finances generally come from a central fund.

Infrastructure Budget

The corporate budgets for both planned and responsive maintenance of the Council's property infrastructure are held by Greenwich Property Services in the Directorate of Strategic Planning. Planned works are carried out on a strict basis of corporate priorities and, as a consequence, P&OS has to compete against other service departments for a share of the limited funds available. Responsive repairs are carried out for minor items as and when they arise.

Marketing information, activities and approach

Marketing of the St Nicholas' Churchyard is currently limited. Information about local parks is available on the Greenwich Council website.

Summary of the known issues or challenges

Anti-social behaviour

Combating anti-social behaviour will continue to be an on-going challenge in St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens. The main anti-social behaviour that occurs appears to be prostitution, drug use and irresponsible dog owners. There is some graffiti on parts of the church.

Community Support Officers regularly patrol St Nicholas and the surrounding area.

Anti-social behaviour has a variety of causes and needs a multi-pronged approach in order for it to be addressed. This will be explored further through consultation with stakeholders and the local community.

Facilities

Park users identify toilet facilities as a required improvement to parks and open spaces. However, unfortunately, public toilets in parks and open spaces are particularly vulnerable and suffer badly from vandalism. The closest toilets are located on Aberly Street but these are not operational at present (at the time of writing).

Other issues

At the time of writing, the Woolwich Regeneration Agency has secured funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to 2009 to carry out a programme of regeneration work in the Plumstead area. As part of this work the WRA (at the time of writing) have explored the feasibility of carrying out a programme of improvements to St Nicholas Gardens. Extensive consultation has been carried out with stakeholders/ the local community. The proposals (based on the process of consultation) are detailed on page 16.

PART II: WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET TO?

VISION

The vision for St. Nicholas' Churchyard is to *****to be developed in conjunction with the Reverend Andrews/stakeholders/local residents

General Objectives (DRAFT)

- To reduce Anti Social Behaviour
- To improve the health and well being of visitors and residents by offering a well maintained and quality churchyard and gardens for relaxation
- To protect biological assets and increase biodiversity
- To realize the potential of the gardens as a cultural and historical place to visit through a programme of publicity, information and events
- To work with the Reverend and parish/community in identifying local priorities for funding of the park

ANALYSIS & ASSESSMENT

Heritage

St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens has a rich heritage. The history of the Church is well documented by church members and local historians who have produced several pamphlets on the Church's history. These pamphlets are available to members of the public at the Local Heritage Centre. The heritage of the Church could be enhanced further with sculptures in/around the gardens.

Vandalism of the church or gravestones could lead to local heritage being damaged.

Landscape

St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens has a flat topography and is evenly landscaped. The landscaping provides plenty of area for passive activities such as walking, relaxing, picnics and sitting.

Access and Anti Social Behaviour

The boundary walls, fencing and bushes reduce natural surveillance of the site. Removal of the greater part of the boundary walls and fencing and bushes would create a Village Green' encouraging greater pedestrian footfall, increased leisure use and neighbourhood surveillance. It would also establish a visual axis between Plumstead High Street and the Church, which would create a greater presence on the High Street.

The footpath between church and gardens has potential to make users feel unsafe and would benefit from integration into the gardens/yard or re-alignment.

Ecology

St Nicholas Churchyard and Gardens is a mature and stable environment with an established flora and fauna. To date no tree survey has been conducted but when time and money permits one should be conducted.

There is the potential for further planting within the north eastern corner of the gardens and a wild-life garden behind the Church to harmonise the Church more fully with the gardens and utilise the currently disused space for the church and local users.

Sport and Recreation

As this is a Churchyard, sport and recreation would not be appropriate. Plumstead Gardens, a short walk away, currently provides a casual football pitch and BMX track and therefore meets some of the needs for sports facilities in the area.

Consultation

A process of extensive consultation was undertaken by Greenwich Mural Workshop, commissioned by the Woolwich Regeneration Agency, to explore the feasibility of carrying out a programme of improvements in Plumstead Gardens.

A number of stakeholders were consulted including:

- 3,000 local residents by postal questionnaire followed by design workshops
- Plumstead Resident Group
- Attendees at the Council's 'great get-together' day in Plumstead

- Bannockburn Primary school
- Galleons Mount Primary School
- St Patrick Secondary School

- Charlton Athletic Community Scheme
- Hawksmoor Youth Centre, Abbey Wood

- St Nicholas Parochial Church Council
- Hindu Temple, St Nicholas Road, Plumstead
- Woolwich Mosque

- Environment Curriculum Ctre
- Plumstead Environment Group

A summary of the consultation questionnaires is attached as Appendix **.

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A summary of the consultation questionnaires is attached as Appendix **.

Proposed St Nicholas Gardens Master plan

Based on the findings of the consultation, a Master plan (shown below) has been developed. A summary of the proposals is detailed below:-

- Remove the greater part of the boundary walls and fencing and bushes to create a 'Village Green' encouraging greater pedestrian footfall, increased leisure use and neighbourhood surveillance
- Establish a visual axis between Plumstead High Street and the Church to create a greater presence on the High Street and realise the vision of a *Plumstead Gateway* (as recommended by *Urban Practitioners* in the draft *Plumstead Development Framework* December 2006).
- Establish a new central entrance on Plumstead High Street, realign the existing bus stops, remove the recycling bins and install a low level seat/wall to create a 'presence' to the Gardens
- Realign the public footpath between the gardens and the churchyard to create a single northern route between Church Manorway and St Nicholas Rd
- Remove the coniferous trees in the north eastern corner of the Gardens, replant to create a woodland area underneath the naturalised trees, fenced to serve as a picnic area
- Install a sculpture at the Plumstead High Street entrance and/or a series of sculptures around the Gardens to publicise the history of the Church and Plumstead
- Develop a wild-life garden behind the Church to harmonise the Church more fully and the Gardens and utilise a disused space for the Church and local users

STRENGTHS

- Historical church providing backdrop to gardens and historic significance
- Mature trees/Parkland feel
- Accessible to local population
- Extensive process of consultation carried out with local community
- Master plan developed for the site based on extensive consultation

CHALLENGES

- Unsocial activities including prostitution and drug misuse
- Site divided into three spaces: churchyard, public footpath/gardens
- Deteriorating infrastructure generally (signage, walls, fences)
- Gardens cannot be seen from High Street which may encourage ASB within the gardens
- Walkway between Churchyard and gardens (currently narrow and enclosed by perimeter fences) may be a potential to users/making people feel unsafe/vulnerable
- Poor boundary walls and other built infrastructure
- Consecrated grounds restrict development

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with WRA and Greenwich Mural Workshop to develop proposals (summarised on page 16) developed on the basis of extensive consultation with stakeholders and local community
- Reduce ASB
- Increase awareness/use by local community

Part III: HOW WILL WE GET THERE

Action Plan

Timescales as given in this document are as following;

- Short Term – Within one year from adoption of this plan
- Medium Term – Within three years from the adoption of this plan
- Long Term – Five years and more from the adoption of this plan

Recommendation	Action	Timescale (Long/Medium/Short Term)	Responsibility	Reviewed
Work with WRA and Greenwich Mural Workshop to develop proposals based on consultation with stakeholders and local community	Continue discussion with WRA/Greenwich Mural Workshop Seeking funding scheme			
Reduce ASB	Continue to work with Police and agencies as appropriate to reduce ASB – in particular prostitution			
To improve awareness/use of site by all sections of the community	Review how site is currently marketed. Investigate ways of improving marketing of site (through the use of different mediums etc) and through improvements to current marketing material Ensure that information on is			

	available on the planned website being developed as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan.		
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PART IV: HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'VE ARRIVED

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The St Nicholas Church and Gardens Management Plan will be fully reviewed and updated every five years by Parks Management Staff responsible for maintaining the site.

There will also be a need to keep a working document copy of the Management Plan within the parks office so that issues and changes that arise as well as new information can be documented, and the action plan can be regularly reviewed and completed works documented within it as part of the Parks Service business planning process.

APPENDIX I: Legislation, policies and strategies affecting park management

As highlighted earlier in the plan, Greenwich Council's Parks & Open Spaces department operates within a wide framework of national, regional and local policy statements and strategies. The main documents impacting on the development of this plan are listed below.

The Greenwich Strategy

The Greenwich Strategy sets out the vision for Greenwich Borough as being the place to live, work, learn and visit. This vision underpins all of the strategies produced by Greenwich Council and directly impacts on all service plans and service delivery.

The Cultural Strategy

Parks & Open Spaces is one of six 'areas' considered by the Cultural Strategy. The Strategy has five over-arching themes: - Equality and Access, Sustainability, the Cultural Economy, Achievement and Excellence and Partnerships.

Green Space Strategy

The Green Spaces Strategy sets out the Council's strategic intentions for its green assets and its vision of the positive contribution that Greenwich's open networks make to our lives.

The thematic objectives (community safety, biodiversity, education and culture, culture & events, tackling inequality, sport, health & well being) are all relevant to the management plan for St Nicholas Church and Church yard.

Parks & Open Spaces Service Plan 2006-7

The Parks & Open Spaces department aims to develop, manage, ensure accessibility and maintain to a high standard the borough's Parks, Open Spaces, Woodlands, Tree Stock, Cemeteries, Playgrounds, Sports Pitches, Allotments and other outdoor facilities. To meet the needs of the community and deliver the Council's core objectives where applicable to the service, and specifically regarding the provision of a clean and well cared for environment and supporting Health and Quality of Life for the local community.

ISO 9001:2000 - Quality Management System

Quality Management System ISO 9001: 2000 is used by organisations to manage their activities and resources to guarantee a quality service. This management system is based on eight quality management principles:

- Customer Focus
- Leadership
- Involving People
- Process Approach
- System Approach to management
- Continual Improvement
- Factual Approach to decision making
- Supplier relationship, which benefit both sides.

The Parks & Open Spaces department is currently ISO 9000 accredited.

Unitary Development Plan

Local Councils have a duty to prepare a Development Plan by law. The Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out the vision for use of the land in the Borough, and provides the main guidance for making decisions on individual planning proposals. The document is intended to cover the period 2001 – 2011 (or 2016 in some instances) it is a legal document with the following purposes

To provide a framework of acceptable uses within the Borough, defining areas where development is not desired or where it needs to be carefully directed and;

To provide a detailed basis for the control and development

The UDP may be viewed at the Directorate of Strategic Planning, Planning Department, Peggy Middleton House, Woolwich, SE18, or alternatively at a local library.

Community Open Space

The UDP refers to St Nicholas Church and Gardens as Community Open Space.
Policy Reference O7 in section 2.4 of the Greenwich UDP refers to Community Open space.
Policy O1 refers to MOL policy.

O7 Public and private open space areas defined as Community Open Space on the Proposals Map will be safeguarded from built development. New buildings and extensions to existing buildings will only be permitted where they are ancillary to the existing land use, are limited in size and extent, sensitively sited, and are compatible with neighbouring development.

Changes of use of existing buildings in ancillary use will be considered in the light of Policy O1. Where existing built development within parks and public open spaces becomes surplus to demand, the Council may allow the sites to be redeveloped for specialist sporting development (which combine the use of outdoor and indoor space), subject to the criteria set out in Policy O1.

Community Benefits

O10 The Council will seek to secure improvement and enhancement of existing parks and public open spaces, where major development places increased demand on existing areas, and, where appropriate, the creation of new parks and public open spaces in line with Policies O9 and C3, through planning obligations and conditions on planning permissions in line with Policy SC2.

Park Facilities

O12 The Council will seek to enhance open space by the provision and encouragement of appropriate park facilities (e.g. seating, children's play equipment, refreshment facilities, outdoor tennis courts, pitch and putt, sports pitches and changing facilities and Arts, Culture and Entertainment facilities, such as open air performance spaces, sculpture and visual imagery and areas for cultural exhibition and study) within suitable parks and public open spaces. Facilities should be of a high standard of design and quality and respect local nature conservation interests. Such facilities should be safe to use and accessible to all. (See Policies D5, D6 and D7).

Archeological Potential

St Nicholas Church and Churchyard are defined by the UDP as being in an area of Archeological Potential.

D30 The Council will expect applicants to properly assess and plan for the impact of proposed developments on archaeological remains where they fall within 'Areas of Archaeological Potential' as defined on the constraints Map 10. In certain instances preliminary archaeological site investigations may be required before proposals are considered. The Council will seek to secure the co-operation of developers in the excavation, recording and publication of archaeological finds before development takes place by use of planning conditions/legal agreements as appropriate.

Draft Biodiversity Action plan

The Greenwich Biodiversity Action Plan will be the first co-ordinated approach to conserving Greenwich's biodiversity. The aim of the plan is:

'To ensure the conservation, enhancement and public appreciation of the biodiversity of the London Borough of Greenwich'.

The Biodiversity Action Plan focuses on locally important habitats and species and has actions drafted to ensure that they cover all relevant habitats and species. Initially actions may be focussed on those under the most pressure or where most advantage can be gained. However, it allows for all important habitats and species to be covered.

The Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed in partnership with local and regional groups and organisations and is currently in a draft stage. Once the final draft is agreed it will be released for wider consultation before a final plan is adopted.

Legislation

The Parks & Open Spaces department operates within the frameworks set out by the following legislation, and therefore, the legislation may impact upon the delivery of service of the Parks and Open Spaces department both financially, through planning and human resources. This is not a comprehensive list but is indicative of key pieces of legislation relating to P&OS.

- Alcohol Consumption in Public Places Order 2003
- Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2004
- Control of Pesticide Protection Act 1986
- Country Code 1981
- Country side and Rights of Way Act 2000 and increments
- Countryside & Right of Way Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1998
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1998
- Litter Act 1983
- Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks & Open Spaces Act)1967
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957
- Road Traffic Act 1988 (as amended 1991)
- The 2004 Country Code

- The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 & Dogs Act 1871??
- The National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949
- The Weeds Act 1959
- The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

In addition there are numerous bye-laws that relate to specific parks

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APPENDIX II: Site History and Heritage

The Church of St Nicholas dates back to 960AD. Over its history the Church has fallen into a state of ruin, and been restored (on two occasions at least). The Church purchased the area that is now St Nicholas Churchyard in 1860 in order to meet the increased demand for burial space. Over 40,000 internments were made by the time the burial ground was closed. A notable, local person buried here in 1800 was Thomas Winn, the local landowner, whom Winn's Common also in Plumstead is named after. Many veterans of the Royal Artillery and Engineers are buried at St Nicholas Churchyard.

In 1955, it was agreed that part of the Church yard (currently referred to as St Nicholas Gardens should be laid out and maintained as open space within the meaning of the Open Spaces Act 1906. As a result, the position of the tombstones was altered to make way for the ornamental garden that exists today.

Previously, there were male and female public toilets on this site. These were located on the eastern side of the park and were accessed from the street. The gates on the access ways to these have been welded shut. The remnants from the toilet block are two concreted holes in the ground.

The Ordinance Survey of the site from 1890 shows a mortuary on this site located near the toilets.

APPENDIX III: REFERENCES

Park explorer website [www. Parkexplorer.co.uk](http://www.Parkexplorer.co.uk)
Church pamphlets
Ordinance Surveys
Greenwich UD

DRAFT

APPENDIX V: PARKS AND OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

