



# York House Gardens Management Plan

## **Foreword**

York House Gardens are a vitally important asset for local people and visitors to the borough. Therefore the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames will aspire to maintain and manage the Gardens to the highest standards.

This management plan is based on the use of an audit of the park following central government guidance known as PPG 17. This is explained within this document but the approach is based on common sense. We believe that it is important to get the simple things right. Is the green space clean and tidy? Is the grass cut? Are the trees and shrubs well maintained? Is the graffiti removed effectively and quickly?

Working with local communities to deliver the highest quality of service is top priority and it is hoped that this document will provide a framework for continuing and improving dialogue. The site will be maintained appropriately and the local community in the form of the York House Society will be consulted on any proposed changes or improvements to facilities.

We actively encourage suggestions both regarding the management and maintenance of the park and ideas about changes or possible improvements to elements of the park's infrastructure or its facilities.

While the section is open to the changing needs of the local community with regards to facilities within any of the borough's parks, the gardens are a long established and are well maintained. Major changes to the Gardens or its facilities are not envisaged. The action plan at the end of this document reflects this perspective.

Parks officers, working closely with colleagues in Veolia and using a partnership approach regularly monitor York House Gardens. Members of the local community are also encouraged to let us know their impressions about the level of maintenance as well as their ideas for improving the facilities. It is hoped that the resulting observations and ideas will result in continually improving management and maintenance practises, as well as careful consideration of ideas to improve and maintain the Gardens.

The current financial situation will inevitably have a detrimental affect on the resources available to improve and maintain the borough's parks and open spaces. The tightening of available budgets seems likely for the foreseeable future. The borough will continue to work closely with its partners, in this case Veolia and the York house Society, to maintain standards. In addition we will need to look for additional ways of funding to maintain and improve the boroughs parks, one of our most valuable assets.

Central to our determination to maintain and if possible improve the facilities and infrastructure of parks and open spaces across the borough is the ongoing review of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Management Plan for York House Gardens provides guidance for the management and any relevant development of the Gardens over the next five years. It utilises the methodology outlined in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance note 17 (PPG 17) in order to audit the state of provision of features and facilities in the Gardens.

The Plan includes an Action Plan, which we aim to achieve within the remit of current budgets. The Plan has been drafted for a broad audience interested in the development of the Gardens namely:

- The York House Society and borough residents
- The Parks and Open Spaces Service
- Other services and departments within the London Borough of Richmond
- Elected members, ward councillors and portfolio holders
- National agencies
- Local businesses

The Plan will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Following this Introduction the Management Plan is set out in the following sections:

Section 2: Outlining the National Context.

Section 3: Describes the plan's relationship to the Council's aims and objectives.

Section 4: Site Description and audit of facilities

Section 5: Vision and objectives for the site.

Section 6: Management principles and practices and includes the Action Plan.

## 2.0 The National context

2.1 Parks are managed areas of the green environment which provide opportunities for a range of formal and informal leisure, passive and active sport, recreation and play.

2.2 The significance of parks, open space and countryside provision is clear:

- In 1988 the Audit Commission estimated that local authorities in England and Wales maintained approximately 120,000 hectares of parks and open spaces - an area approximately the size of Berkshire.
- In 2000, the Heritage Lottery Fund estimated that there were approximately 30,000 urban green spaces in the UK, of which 5,000 are urban parks.

2.3 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality 'public realm' facilities such as parks can assist in making an area as an attractive place to live and work, and can result in a number of benefits in terms of economic development and regeneration. A local park can also play a big part in promoting healthy living as a place for people to exercise.

2.4 The benefits of safe and accessible parks and open spaces can be summarised as follows:

### **Social**

- providing safe outdoor areas that are available to all members of the local population
- providing opportunities for community events, voluntary activities and charitable fund raising
- providing easily accessible recreation as an alternative to other more chargeable leisure pursuits
- providing opportunities to improve health and take part in a range of outdoor sports and activities
- providing an educational resource or outdoor classroom

## **Economic**

- adding value to surrounding property, both commercial and residential, thus increasing local tax revenues for public services
- contributing to attracting visitors, including using parks as venues for events
- encouraging tourism into the area
- helping to create an attractive local image
- helping to reduce social exclusion and its associated costs to society

## **Environmental**

- providing habitats for wildlife as an aid to local biodiversity
- helping to stabilise urban temperatures and humidity
- absorbing pollutants in the air and ground water
- providing opportunities for the recycling of organic materials
- providing opportunities to reduce transport use through the provision of local facilities, and by providing walking and cycling routes through urban areas

### 3.0 Relationship to Council's Aims and Objectives

The London Borough of Richmond recognises that its parks and open spaces contribute to:

- To the overall Vision and Priorities of the Council
- To the quality of life of local people
- To the physical, social and economic regeneration of the borough
- To the greening, attractiveness and biodiversity of the area

Accordingly this Management Plan and the Parks and Open Spaces Service are guided by and are in agreement with the aims, objectives and principles of the following plans and strategies. These can be found at [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

### 3.1 Richmond's Community Plan

All Council's are now required to develop a Community Plan as part of their commitment to delivering more 'sustainable communities'. The Community Plan is a top tier strategy that sets out how the Council will target, manage and monitor its services for the benefit of all local people. The Community Plan has been created in partnership with residents and key local stakeholders and is reviewed on a regular basis. The vision of the plan is:

- Inclusive
- Puts protection of the environment at the core of its services and community life
- Delivers quality public services that truly reflect the needs of all its local people
- Addresses its challenges by harnessing the capacity of all its partners in the public, private, voluntary and community sector.

#### 3.1.2 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2003

##### Vision

- 'to provide access to an exciting range of open space experiences for all'

##### Key Principles

- **Stewardship**
  - Protect visual and physical access to open land
  - Protect, enhance and promote the characteristic features of the Borough particularly the riverside, historic landscapes and features
  - Improve the maintenance infrastructure
- **Management and Use**
  - Plan to provide for the needs of the community and visitors

- Make the best use of public and private resources and maximise external funding
  - Work in partnership with the community and other local landscape agencies
  - Promote the use of open land for all
  - Reduce the fear of crime by providing healthy, safe environments and promoting activity
- **Environmental Protection**
    - Maintain and enhance the Borough's biodiversity
    - Provide high quality, sustainably managed open spaces

This strategy is currently under review.

### 3.1.3 Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Richmond

The main aims of the Plan are:

- To conserve and where possible enhance Richmond's variety of habitats and species, in particular those which are of international or national importance, are in decline locally, are characteristic to Richmond or have particular public appeal, which can raise the profile of biodiversity
- To ensure that Richmond residents become aware of, and are given the opportunity to become involved in conserving and enhancing the biodiversity around them
- To raise awareness and increase stakeholder involvement in maintaining and where possible, enhancing species and habitats of importance

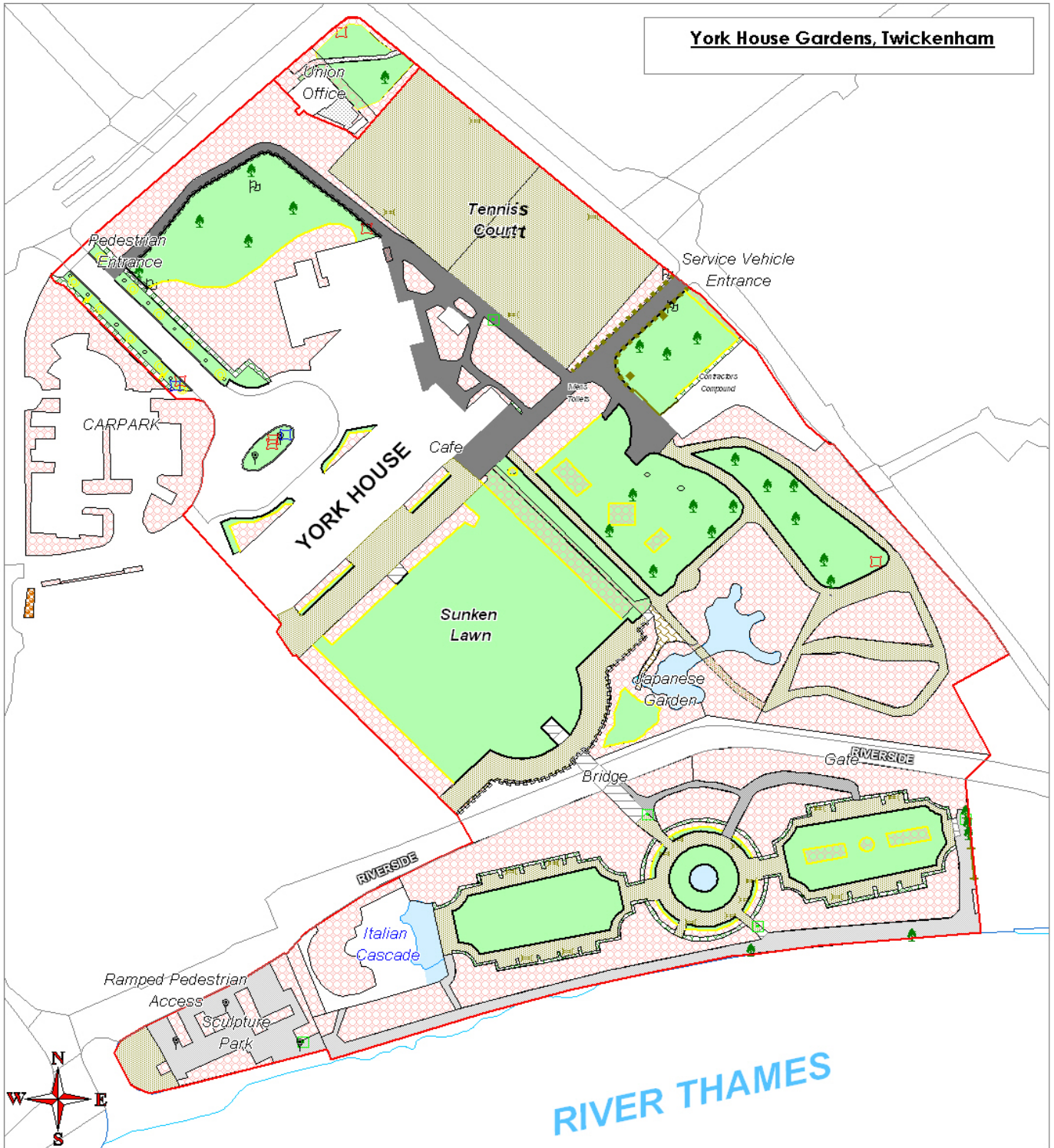
### 3.1.4 Other relevant council policies

The following policy documents can be found at [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk).

Printed versions of these policies are available on request:

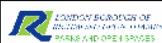
- Community Safety Policy
- Equality and Diversity Plan
- Unitary Development Plan
- Local Agenda 21
- Cultural Strategy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Parks Byelaws
- Customer Service Standards
- Dog Control Orders
- Tree Strategy
- Events Policy

**York House Gardens, Twickenham**



**Graphic Key and Quantity**

	Site Boundary	26,590m <sup>2</sup>		Concrete/ Tarmac	1548m <sup>2</sup>		Wooden Bollards	27		Wooden Knee Rail	66m
	Shrubs	7536m <sup>2</sup>		Breedon Gravel	1499m <sup>2</sup>		Man Hole/ Water Point	6		Metal Fencing	70m
	Hedge	1759m <sup>2</sup>		Painted Tarmac (Tennis Courts)	2108m <sup>2</sup>		Litter Bin	5		Sign Post	4
	Grass	6275m <sup>2</sup>		Vertical Edging	82m		Lamp Post	7		Bench	18
	Water Features			Hard Edging	900m		Tree	25			
				Soft	539m						



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## 4.0 **Site Description**

### 4.1 **Outline History of York House Gardens**

York House was built in the mid-seventeenth century and a plan showing the present extent of the Gardens was drawn in 1784. The riverside gardens were commissioned by Sir Ratan Tata, a Parsee from Bombay who bought the house from the Duc d'Orleans in 1906. Tata, whose family continues to run one of the largest industrial companies in India, had the Gardens re-designed and installed the Italian marble statues from Lea Park (aka Witley Park) near Godalming. After Tata's death York House was sold to the Council and used for offices. In addition to the marble statuary many features of the grounds remain today from Tata's ownership of the House and Gardens. These include the Japanese Garden and the sunken lawn. Of note is the Victorian cast iron pissoir/urinal – a very rare and decorative example of functional ironwork still in use today.

### 4.2 **General Information**

#### 4.2.1 **Land Tenure**

The site is owned by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and is managed by the Parks and Open Spaces Service.

Enabling Acts: Local Government Act 1963,  
Parks and Open Spaces Order 1971  
Open Spaces Act 1906  
Town and Country Planning Act (S. 32)  
Commons Registration Act

#### 4.2.2 **Location**

York House and Gardens are located close to the centre of Twickenham, set back from Richmond Road, the main road from Twickenham to Richmond. The main area of the Gardens surround York House but another section, containing the cascade and bordering the river is situated on the other side of Riverside Road. This is reached via a stone bridge that crosses the road from behind the House in the area of the sunken lawn. Access is also possible from Champions Wharf/Sculpture Park situated on the riverside.

#### 4.2.3 **Access**

As a free and open facility York House Gardens has the potential to provide fully inclusive access to local residents and visitors to the area. Pedestrians and those arriving by train and bus and car can currently access the site.

#### 4.2.4 **Local Transport**

**Train:** Twickenham Station is situated within ten minutes walk of the Gardens. Trains for this station run into central London (Waterloo Station via Clapham junction) and west with trains running to Reading and Windsor and all stations in between.

**Bus:** The centre of Twickenham is well served by buses, with routes to all areas of the borough, neighbouring boroughs and the centre of town.

The Gardens are served by the following bus routes:  
R70, R68, 490, 33, 281 and 111.

#### 4.2.5 **Landscape & Topography**

The Gardens are laid out in a formal manner in roughly rectangular areas to the south and east of the House. The area is generally flat although it contains a sunken lawn area immediately behind the House. This is divided by a wall (to the east of the sunken lawn) from another formal area that contains a number of mature trees of different varieties. The area to the east of the House contains tennis courts.

To the south of the sunken lawn a stone bridge leads over the Riverside Road into another rectangular area that borders the riverside walk. This area contains lawns (surrounded by mature yew hedging), rose beds, mature trees, a small pond and a larger water feature surrounding the statuary installed by Ratan Tata.

The Gardens have a range of horticultural features including - herbaceous borders, seasonal bedding, historic trees, ornamental shrubs and roses, woodland Gardens, water Gardens, and Cascades. There is a five year improvement plan in operation to upgrade and enhance these areas.

##### **Herbaceous borders**

Bordering the rear lawns this varied range of mixed perennials acts as a colourful backdrop all the year round to both civic and private events such as weddings.

##### **Seasonal Bedding**

Spring and summer formal bedding schemes are displayed around the café patio area of York House. The planting schemes have been chosen for their appeal to both aesthetic and invertebrate appeal.

##### **Shrub beds**

Mixed shrub beds can be found throughout the gardens. In some instances they are themed as per location, e.g. Japanese Garden, Woodland Garden. Work is ongoing to rejuvenate and replant these areas. Shrubs have been chosen to provide food and shelter for the many birds and mammals that inhabit the site.

##### **Rockery/Bulb Garden**

The rockery is currently being re-designed to incorporate a wider range of alpine plants. Different species of bulbs are planted at this location with a backdrop of Camellia varieties.

##### **Water Features/ Cascades**

New planting has taken place which is more fitting to the location and creates a more impressive backdrop to the statues. The water features provide a home to lots of frogs, toad and smooth newts, which come back every year to breed.

## **Historic Trees/Woodland**

The Gardens have many fine tree specimens including one of the Great Trees of London “York House Gardens Cut Leaf Beech”. The Council’s Tree section has surveyed the trees and has installed species labels on trees of interest.

### **4.2.6 Listed Historic Buildings**

York House is a Grade 2 listed building. The iron pissoir is reputed to be the oldest in the country.

### **4.2.7 Ecology**

The strengths and weaknesses of York House Gardens from an ecological perspective are listed below. There are some suggested improvements in the five year action plan.

#### **Strengths**

- The shrub beds and hedges that run in corridors along the site enable the easy movement of wildlife from one area to another.
- There are many mature trees which have natural cavities ideal for nesting and feeding opportunities.
- The mixed planting make a very diverse site that for cater both invertebrate and vertebrate species.
- There are several dead wood loggeries situated at various spots through the garden, which provide excellent habitat for saprophytic invertebrates and fungi, which then support the higher levels of the food chain.
- The ponds provide an additional habitat type for wildlife to use and spawn in.

#### **Weaknesses**

- There are many ornamental/non-native species used in the Gardens – this is fine provided they produce nectar and pollen.
- There is a lot of close mown grass.

### **4.2.8 Facilities**

York House Gardens contain the following facilities:

- Public toilets in York House
- Tennis Courts
- A large number of benches
- Riverside terrace walk

## 5.0 Audit of facilities

### 5.1 The main reasons for undertaking a Local Assessment are:

- to plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to ensure, as much as possible, that there are appropriate types of parks and open spaces required
- to work towards ensuring an adequate provision of high quality, accessible green space to meet the needs of community
- to identify the gap between current and desired levels of need and demand, quality and quantity of provision
- to assist in achieving and maintaining standards such as the Green Flag Award

### 5.2. Desirable Outcomes of the Local Assessment

A local assessment of green space will enable planning to be effective and achieve key outcomes required by PPG 17.

These are:

- provision of accessible, high quality park space for sport and recreation that meet the needs of residents and visitors
- provision of a park that is 'fit for purpose': the right type in the right place
- to provide an appropriate balance between new provision and enhancement of existing provision
- setting locally derived provision standards

5.2.1 It is intended that this management plan helps to achieve these outcomes in terms of providing an analysis of existing provision and a plan to effectively maintain and, where appropriate, develop the facilities and infrastructure of the Gardens.

5.2.2 In addition, it produces a series of actions which will help to achieve the standards laid down for Green Flag Award parks:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Clean and well-maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing

- Management
- Educational value

### 5.3 **Methodology**

The methodology used was prescribed in the Government's Planning Policy Guideline note 17 (PPG17) for the provision of public open space. This consisted of a review of the following key areas of provision:

- Main entrance
- Boundaries
- Roads, paths, cycle ways and access
- Parking
- Information
- Planted areas
- Grass areas
- Cleanliness
- Provision of litter bins
- Seating
- Children's play space
- Buildings including toilets
- Health and safety
- Nature conservation value
- Access for the disabled

#### 5.3.1 **Main Entrance**

Although there are several entrances, there are two main entrance points into York House Gardens. One of these, situated on Sion Lane allows access for vehicles. This is limited to contractor's vehicles and delivery for events being held in the Gardens or in York House. The other main entrance for pedestrians is situated on Twickenham Riverside through Champions Wharf. Both entrances are welcoming and well maintained with appropriate signage.

### 5.3.2 **Boundaries**

The boundary of York House Gardens is marked by an historic wall around the whole site with the exception of the area bordering the Twickenham riverside which is marked by trees and well maintained shrubs. The walls are in good condition and are kept free of graffiti.

### 5.3.3 **Roads, Paths, Cycle ways and Access**

The pathways, some tarmac and some of compacted hoggin, are in good condition. They are even and do not present any trip hazards. The edges are well defined.

### 5.3.4 **Parking**

There is no public parking within the Gardens. The nearest public car park is situated outside the borough's Civic Centre within two minutes walk of the gardens. There is a larger public car park situated in Arragon Road within ten minutes walk of the Gardens.

### 5.3.5 **Information**

Information relating to York House Gardens is available on the parks section of the council's website [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk). The parks signage is attractive and durable giving appropriate contact details. It uses easily understandable symbols to deter users from inappropriate and anti-social behaviour. In addition there is an attractive interpretive sign adjacent to the recently renovated cascade. This gives some interesting historical information about the cascade and its statuary.

### 5.3.6 **Cleanliness**

The Gardens are kept clear of litter and graffiti. Dog fouling does not seem to be a problem.

### 5.3.7 **Planted Areas**

All the planted areas are attractive, in good condition and are well maintained. Of particular note are the recently replanted herbaceous borders on either side of the sunken lawn area. These are particularly striking and it is nice to see an area of horticulture that has all but disappeared from public parks. These are also very valuable food sources for insects and butterflies.

### 5.3.8 **Scenic Quality**

York House Gardens has great scenic value. As mentioned above the Gardens are divided up into several areas; these are separated either by a wall (in the case of the sunken lawn) area or by the historic footbridge that, spanning the road, leads from the sunken lawn into the rose garden and cascade area. The scenic value is enhanced by the way the gardens are divided and the variety of planting and the mature trees that grow within them. This is not to forget the scenic value of York House itself.

### 5.3.9 **Grass Areas**

The amenity turf throughout the Gardens appears appropriately cut and maintained. The edges are well defined.

### 5.3.10 **Provision of Litter Bins**

There are enough litter bins throughout the Gardens and these are generally in a good condition.

### 5.3.11 **Seating**

There is no shortage of seating in the gardens. Benches are in a good condition and are spaced throughout the area offering many peaceful and scenic spots for people to rest a while.

### 5.3.12 **Children's Play Space**

There is no children's play ground in the gardens and it hard to see where one could be suitably positioned. The nearest playground Jubilee Gardens is within five minutes walk and is situated on the Twickenham Riverside.

[www.richmond.gov.uk/home/leisure\\_and\\_culture/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/park\\_details.htm?parkId=193](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/leisure_and_culture/parks_and_open_spaces/park_details.htm?parkId=193)

### 5.3.13 **Buildings, including toilets**

Within the Gardens themselves the iron 'pissoir' situated close to the tennis courts is in good condition. As mentioned above, it is reputed to be the oldest in the country. In the works yard there is a mess room. This is not the most attractive building, but being tucked away it does not intrude in an ugly way on the gardens. The dilapidated green house has been removed and, in its place, some raised planters are used as a small staff allotment area. The shelter opposite the tennis courts is in a reasonable condition.

### 5.3.14 **Health and Safety**

There are no obvious dangers to health and safety in the gardens. The paths are in very good condition and present no trip hazards. The historic footbridge has been extensively renovated and is as safe as anything of its nature can be.

### 5.3.15 **Nature Conservation Value**

The shrub beds and hedges that run in corridors along the site enable the easy movement of wildlife from one area to another. In addition, there are many mature trees that as well as providing habitats for insects and birds also have natural cavities which provide valuable nesting and feeding opportunities in an urban setting. The mixed planting make a very diverse site for both invertebrate and vertebrate species providing food sources all year round. The three pond areas within the gardens provide spawning areas for frogs and smooth newts and during this time the parks attendants keep a close watch on the ponds.

### **5.3.16 Access for the Disabled**

This factor has been included not only to ensure maximum accessibility for those in wheelchairs and for the elderly and the less able-bodied, but also to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Access for people with disabilities is good on either side of the gardens around a pathway system that is even and in good condition. On the York House side this is interrupted by wooden steps that cross the pond in the Japanese Garden area and also by steps that lead into the southern end of the sunken lawn area.

Access from one side of the Gardens to the other is not possible in a wheelchair. This is because the recently renovated stepped historic bridge is the only way that the two sides of the garden are linked.

### **5.3.17 Educational Value**

The principal educational value of York House Gardens lies in its history and relationship to York House itself. In addition the variety of planting with shrubs, trees, herbaceous borders and seasonal bedding is rarely seen in public parks and offers great horticultural interest.

## 6.0 **Vision and Objectives for the Gardens**

### 6.1 **The overall vision for the Gardens:**

In line with the wishes of the local community the future vision for the Gardens is to preserve the heritage, maintain the aesthetics and interpret the history of this valuable formal garden area in the centre of Twickenham. The Gardens are a valuable part of the area's heritage and an integral part of the delightful riverside area of today's Twickenham. The Council is committed to maintaining and improving the Gardens to a high standard and in a sympathetic manner.

### 6.2 The key objectives for the Gardens are to:

- To identify and cherish the special character of the Gardens
- To ensure that the management of the Gardens protects and enhances the biodiversity of the site
- To ensure that the management of the landscape maintains the predominantly formal character of the Gardens with the current mixture of formal beds, trees and grassed areas
- To ensure that all landscape improvement works are supported by a commitment to maintenance of the same
- To ensure that the Gardens are managed in order to provide a high quality service.
- To meet the demands and expectations of the local community primarily as a place of quiet enjoyment
- To promote the educational value of the site and to encourage local schools to use the Gardens for a variety of educational purposes
- To encourage and promote community involvement in the implementation of the proposals and in the on-going management of the Gardens

## 7.0 Management of York House Gardens

### 7.1 Introduction

This section sets out guidelines and general principles to be followed in delivering the vision and objectives outlined above.

Management needs to deliver high standards of maintenance of all aspects of the soft and hard landscaping of the Gardens within existing revenue budgets. Any developments have been funded by a major borough wide capital investment programme that began in 2005 and was completed in 2010.

The parks section is headed up by the Head of Parks. It is made up of three sections.

- The Operations team is responsible for liaising with contractors and monitoring the parks. The team includes an ecology officer and a GIS mapping officer.
- The Service Development team which is responsible for consultation and the planning and initiation of projects.
- The Arboricultural team is responsible for all street trees and arboricultural work in council managed parks and open spaces.

We value diversity and are committed to delivering a service that puts equality of opportunity as a priority.

The Council works and consults with the York House Society. This assists the Council to work in harmony with users' and residents' views.

The Council works in partnership with Veolia Environmental Services in a contract that began in 2003 and will end in 2013. In broad terms maintenance will be carried out by the contractor's operatives who have the necessary skills to achieve high and consistent standards.

Veolia Environmental Services has a contracts manager in overall control of the service. It is made up of grass cutting teams and mobile maintenance gangs who are managed by supervisors who monitor the work. The Parks Patrol Service is managed by Veolia Environmental Services. They play a community safety role patrolling the parks and also inspecting playgrounds on a daily basis. The patrol will attend incidents involving anti-social behaviour and liaise directly with Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

#### *Grounds Maintenance Staff - Health and Safety*

All staff complete a company induction before they commence their employment. The induction includes relevant Health & Safety legislation and responsibilities along with environmental awareness training.

An assessment is carried out on each employee to ascertain their skill and competence levels. This includes manual handling training and driver assessment where applicable.

Following a 6 month probationary period for new employees, the new employee will complete a one to one personal development plan with their line manager which will set key targets for development and training needs. The information will be entered on the staff training matrix and is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Throughout the year, a refresher programme of tool-box talks, including Health & Safety issues, new legislation and machinery training, is given to all employees.

All employees have the opportunity to raise any Health & Safety concerns at monthly meetings through their nominated Health & Safety representative who is invited to all contract Health & Safety meetings

The maintenance works will be monitored effectively and regularly by parks officers who understand the nature and purpose of the works being carried out. Any points and actions arising from monitoring will be communicated to the parks contractors and officers will ensure that any necessary work is completed.

Client / Contractor jointly inspect 25 sites a month on a random basis. Comments are made at the time and the client will advise the contractor of any items below specification that need to be put right, before the site is passed. The inspections are recorded and are scored to provide a % satisfaction figure for that particular month.

The Client / contractor site inspections for Green Flag sites (and those parks that have received major investment) also include comments and proposals to protect the investment of both hard and soft landscaping

The following management processes and regimes are listed below under the Green Flag standards listed in 5.2.2. Any new initiatives in the following sections will also be included in the action plan that follows.

## **7.2 A Welcoming Place**

The following management regimes all play a part in ensuring that York House Gardens continues to be a welcoming area.

### **7.2.1 Graffiti removal**

As a part of our aim to make the Borough safe, green and clean we are committed to reducing and removing graffiti. The site will be inspected daily for any evidence of graffiti. The full details of the borough's commitment to the prompt removal of graffiti can be viewed at [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

There is an agreement with Councils Street Scene Contractor Continental Landscapes to manage the removal of all graffiti within five working days. Where the graffiti is racist or offensive it will be removed within one working day of notification.

## 7.2.2 Signage

Signage will be kept clean and will be regularly inspected. Any repairs will be carried out promptly.

## 7.2.3 Pathways

All paths will be inspected annually. Any necessary repairs will be carried out as promptly as possible.

## 7.3 Healthy, Safe and Secure

The following management regimes all play a part in ensuring that York House Gardens continues to be a healthy, safe and secure place.

York House Gardens are designated in the Bye-laws as a site where dogs must be kept on a lead.

### 7.3.1 Community Safety

York House Gardens has two site-based members of staff whose shift patterns are organised so as to maximise staff presence on the site. There is usually a staff member on duty during recognised parks opening hours (8am – dusk). It is believed and generally accepted that the presence of recognisable site based staff helps to allay peoples' fear of crime.

All operatives working at York House Gardens undertake an important role in terms of a visible staff presence in the Gardens and structure their maintenance work accordingly. All staff are uniformed and wear highly visible clothing. The current Parks Patrol personnel have worked in the Gardens for a number of years. They are consequently well known by park users.

In addition as part of the Twickenham Safer Neighbourhood initiative, the Police Neighbourhood team regularly patrol the Gardens on foot.

### 7.3.2 Dog fouling

The Mobile Litter gang, Parks Patrol and the Parks Service make efforts to educate dog owners to be responsible, particularly close to areas where people are liable to be eating or children playing. Signage clearly indicates that dog mess should be picked up and disposed of by those walking their pets

Dog bins are emptied on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and more if required. Richmond has adopted the new dog control orders.

## 7.4 Clean and Well Maintained

The following regimes are designed to ensure that the Gardens are clean and well maintained.

### 7.4.1 Grass Maintenance

Grass surfaces within the Gardens are mainly classed as amenity grass.

Amenity turf is those areas used for general recreation and formal and informal sports and can include wide-open spaces or those areas planted with trees and shrubs. The height of this grass is kept between 15 and 25mm throughout the year.

The level of maintenance will depend on the level of use, with increased repairs, fertilising, and scarifying of those areas subject to heavy wear. Most repair works to turf will be carried out in the autumn or spring, with areas either re-turfed or seeded.

Grass edges, whether they are against paths, fences or walls will be cut at the same time as the rest of the grass using strimmers in most areas.

#### **7.4.2 Trees**

The trees on the site have been managed on a reactive basis since the Gardens was opened in the early 1920's. They are a prominent feature in both the local and wider landscape, and characterise the Gardens.

Many of the trees within the grounds are particularly noted for their diversity and taxonomic interest, with many rare trees present of both native and exotic origin.

New trees and shrubs have been planted on a regular basis over the years to continue to increase and diversify the magnificent tree stock.

#### **Current Management:**

The trees are all currently inspected on an annual basis and following periods of high wind, following which any dangerous trees or limbs are removed/pruned. Any removed trees are subsequently replaced with new specimens of the same species in the next planting season.

The more "interesting" trees throughout the park have been labeled for the visitors to the Gardens. A particularly notable arboricultural feature of the site is a Cut Leaf Beech on the riverfront. This tree is classified as a Great Tree of London on the trees for cities website.

[www.treesforcities.com/greattrees/west.asp](http://www.treesforcities.com/greattrees/west.asp)

#### **Future Management**

The trees will continue to be inspected on an annual basis and following periods of abnormal weather. The site is currently at its maximum tree density, when considering other site features, however we will continue to re-stock new sites as and when they become available.

#### **7.4.3 Shrubs Beds**

Shrub beds are managed to maintain healthy stocks of plants, pruning as necessary and as appropriate for the plant species to remove dead and damaged branches and to retain a natural shape. A count of dead plants is carried out each autumn and replacement plants are planted between November and March each year in order to maintain the character of the bed.

Replacement planting will use species with a form and flowering habit, which is appropriate for the plant's position in the bed (lower growing at the front, taller in the middle) both to improve the appearance of the feature and minimise the need for pruning to restrain unwanted growth. Drought tolerant species will be generally chosen and where possible those with a wildlife interest.

All beds will be kept weed free by hand weeding when required. A programme of mulching of the shrub beds will be instigated to improve the appearance of the beds, to maintain moisture levels in the soil and to discourage weed growth. The depth of the mulch will be checked annually in August and topped up during the winter if required using course grade bark mulch or woodchips produced in-house.

#### **7.4.4 Cleansing**

The collection of litter is extremely important in maintaining the appearance of the Park and in the consequent respect with which people will treat and use it. Litter is collected on a daily basis with a litter pick of the park being carried out before 10.30am each day by the site based staff.

Site based staff carry out litter picking, emptying of litterbins and the sweeping/blowing of paths. The zone applies to all surfaces, paths lawns and beds.

To prevent bins overflowing on days when the park has high numbers of visitors, site based staff will carry out additional emptying with the litter bags being collected and removed from the site on the same day. In addition the bins are cleaned and disinfected quarterly to avoid an unsightly accumulation of dirt.

#### **7.4.5 Park Furniture and Fittings**

The site based staff and Parks Patrol ensure that all park furniture is clean, and will check benches, notice boards and bins on a regular basis. Items will be cleaned on a monthly basis or more frequently when heavily used. Repairs will be requested by site based staff and Parks Patrol on a Defect Report and repairs will be carried out promptly. Any single replacement or repair will match the existing furniture so that the style of the seat remains consistent.

#### **7.4.6 Hard Surfaces**

Hard surfaces will be kept clean, with litter swept from surfaces regularly by the site based staff.

Paths will be kept in a good state of repair, all paths being inspected annually and any repairs carried out as promptly as possible.

Drains and gulleys will be inspected regularly by the Mobile Litter gang and Parks Patrol. Kerb edges are swept twice a week and cleared of all litter.

#### **7.4.7 Sports Facility Maintenance**

The only sports facilities within the gardens are the tennis courts.

## **Tennis Courts**

The courts are jet washed annually to remove moss and debris from the playing surface.

Nets are replaced when required.

### **7.5 Environmental Sustainability**

The following regimes are designed to ensure that the Gardens are managed in a sustainable way.

#### **7.5.1 Recycling green waste**

From a number of points of view, sustainability, environmental considerations and to comply with Local Agenda 21, efforts should be made to recycle green waste. In doing so it is essential to ensure that the recycled waste only includes acceptable material, i.e.

- Grass clippings – these are left in situ in the park
- Grass edgings – reused to fill hollows and dips in the park
- Soft herbaceous cuttings (not woody)
- Broken turfs (after lifting and turfing operations)
- Shredded shrub pruning's – chipped along with tree waste

Wood chippings from York House Gardens are taken to the compound within Hatherop Park and left there for approx 1.5 years to mulch down. The mulch is then used on the flowerbeds around the borough as both compost and a weed control.

#### **7.6.1 Pesticides**

Pesticides are used as and when necessary in parks however this is kept to a minimum. With regard to York House Gardens the council has adopted a Herbicide and Pesticide free approach to the maintenance of the site.

To control weeds and increase moisture retention a thick layer of mulch is spread over the shrub beds. When available this is re-cycled woodchip, however on more formal areas quality grade ornamental bark mulch is used. Weeds are removed by cultural methods such as hoeing and hand weeding. Water weed problems in the ponds and cascades are resolved by hand removal and by improving water circulation.

Pest and Disease problems are countered by selection of resistant varieties and the use of mycorrhizal fungi to aid establishment.

### **7.7 Community Involvement**

Engagement with the local community is carried out by working together with the long established York House Society. There are regular meeting with members of

this group to discuss their concerns and to consult with them on maintenance issues and improvement projects. The views of this group are given serious consideration in the planning of maintenance and improvements.

#### **7.7.1 Parks Events**

In relation to York House Gardens the policy of the Council is to encourage the hire of parts of the Gardens to appropriate organisations or groups. The layout and location of the Gardens obviously dictates the kind of events that would be suitable.

Weddings and receptions are held throughout the year in York House and the Gardens provide an attractive backdrop for these occasions. The main event in the Gardens is held annually in the Sunken Lawn area by the Richmond Shakespeare Society who put on performances over a two week period during the summer. In July 2010 the Society staged A Midsummer's Night Dream on the lawns facing the statues.

In 2005 another community group put on performances of a Shakespeare play by children, aimed a younger audience. This was performed in the lawn area in front of the statuary. In 2007 yet another youth theatre group put on an evening performance of a Shakespeare play aimed also aimed at a younger audience. This is likely to become an annual event. Also in 2007 there was a programme of events organised by the mayor's office, with proceeds being donated to the mayor's nominated charity.

An evaluation process is held during / after each event.

Local ward councillors are consulted before permission is granted for any new event. An evaluation process is held after each event.

Events are held in accordance with the Parks and Open Spaces Events Policy which can be found at [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

#### **7.7.2 Marketing**

Promotion and marketing of York House Gardens is carried out by means of a range of measures to ensure that local people and visitors to the borough are aware of the facility.

##### **Entrance Signage**

A new corporate style of signage for Richmond's parks and open spaces has been launched in 2007. York House Gardens had these attractive and informative signs installed at the end of 2007.

##### **Internet**

York House Gardens features on the council's website and can be accessed from the Parks and Open Spaces link [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

Information on York House and the Gardens can also be viewed on [www.twickenham-museum.org.uk](http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk)

### **General Promotion**

In order to create community awareness for all of its facilities the Parks Service regularly and systematically produces articles and press releases about activities and facility development.

## 8.0 Achievements and Action Plan

### 8.1 Achievements

Changes and improvements made to York House Gardens during 2010 are listed below:

- The steps leading from the statuary garden to the riverside walk have been repaired.
- The plantings in the cascade pond were enhanced with the planting of native marginal, aquatics and bog plants.
- The enhancement of woodland ground cover with indigenous plants e.g. foxglove, wood sorrel, red deadnettle, betony, bugle, ground ivy, sweet violet.
- The planting of native species in the woodland edge e.g. honesty, dame's violet and primroses.
- Ornamental plantings were further developed to maintain a continuous supply of pollen and nectar for bees, hoverflies and butterflies.
- Yard re-tarmaced and improved in terms of management

The following action plan is divided into three sections:

### 8.2 Development and renewal

As indicated previously, while the section is open to the changing demands from the local community with regards to facilities within any of the borough's parks, major changes to or developments of the Gardens facilities are not envisaged. York House Gardens is a site of great heritage value. The major challenge is to maintain high standards of maintenance and to plan for effective repair and renewal of the major elements of a park's hard landscaping or infrastructure e.g. path system.

The following projects are planned for 2011:

#### **Green Flag priorities:**

1. Repair ornamental gates, pillars and retract path leading from York House to Sion Road
2. Interpretation signage or directional signage with map at York St entrance to highlight presence of statues/toilets/riverside walk/various types of gardens
3. Yard to be managed more efficiently
4. Limit access to cars on site – close one gate at Sion Road entrance
5. Investigate public art initiatives and seating in cascade area.

### 8.3 Community Engagement

The parks section intends to continue to work with the York House Society. We are committed to being receptive to concerns and suggestions voiced individually or through community groups.

### 8.4 Operational Commitments

This is presented in tabular form and includes the most important elements of the day to day maintenance of the Gardens, grass cutting, trees and shrubs, litter collection and maintenance of parks furniture. Monitoring and inspection duties are included. Biodiversity management and initiatives are also included in this section.

Element	Action	Frequency
Grass Maintenance	Kept to a height of between 15mm & 25mm	Cut approximately every 10 days during the growing season
Tree maintenance	Inspection Replacing and expanding variety and stock	Annual As required
Shrub Maintenance	Kept weed free Mulching to minimise weed growth Pruning	As required Annual  As required, dependent on species
Annual bedding	Annual bedding replaced twice a year Beds weeded and watered as necessary	Twice annually  Ongoing
Hedge cutting	Hedges cut twice a year outside bird nesting season	Twice annually
Woodland areas	Paths are kept clear by hand weeding and topping up with woodchip	Ongoing
Leaf raking	Leaves are collected in Autumn and taken to the green waste recycling facility in Hatherop Park	Annually
Cascade statues	Water features are maintained in conjunction with BTCV Statues by specialist company	As required
Litter collection	Litter picking Emptying of bins	Daily Daily
Graffiti	Removal of obscene/offensive Removal of other	Within 24 hours  Within 5 working days
Parks furniture	Clean and paint Repair/replace	Annual As required

Monitoring of contract	Monitoring	Weekly inspection with contractors
Infrastructure inspection	Inspection	Annual
Biodiversity opportunities and actions	Ensure that the wood plank is put in situ for the amphibians to leave the round pond during the breeding season.	Annual

### 8.3 Conclusion

This Management Plan is not 'set in stone'. It provides a framework and guidelines that enable the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames to manage the site to a high standard in a sustainable way. The Council is open to the changing needs of local communities and will continue to work closely with the York House Society. This Management Plan will be reviewed annually.