



Welcome

Forest Lane Park Restoration project

Funding priorities



Inclusion:

A wider range of people will be involved in heritage

Improving wellbeing:

People will have greater wellbeing

Developing skills:

People will have developed skills

Supporting the economy and job creation:

The local economy will be boosted

Enhancing local areas:

Local areas will be a better place to live, work and visit

Better organisational resilience:

Funded organisations will be more resilient

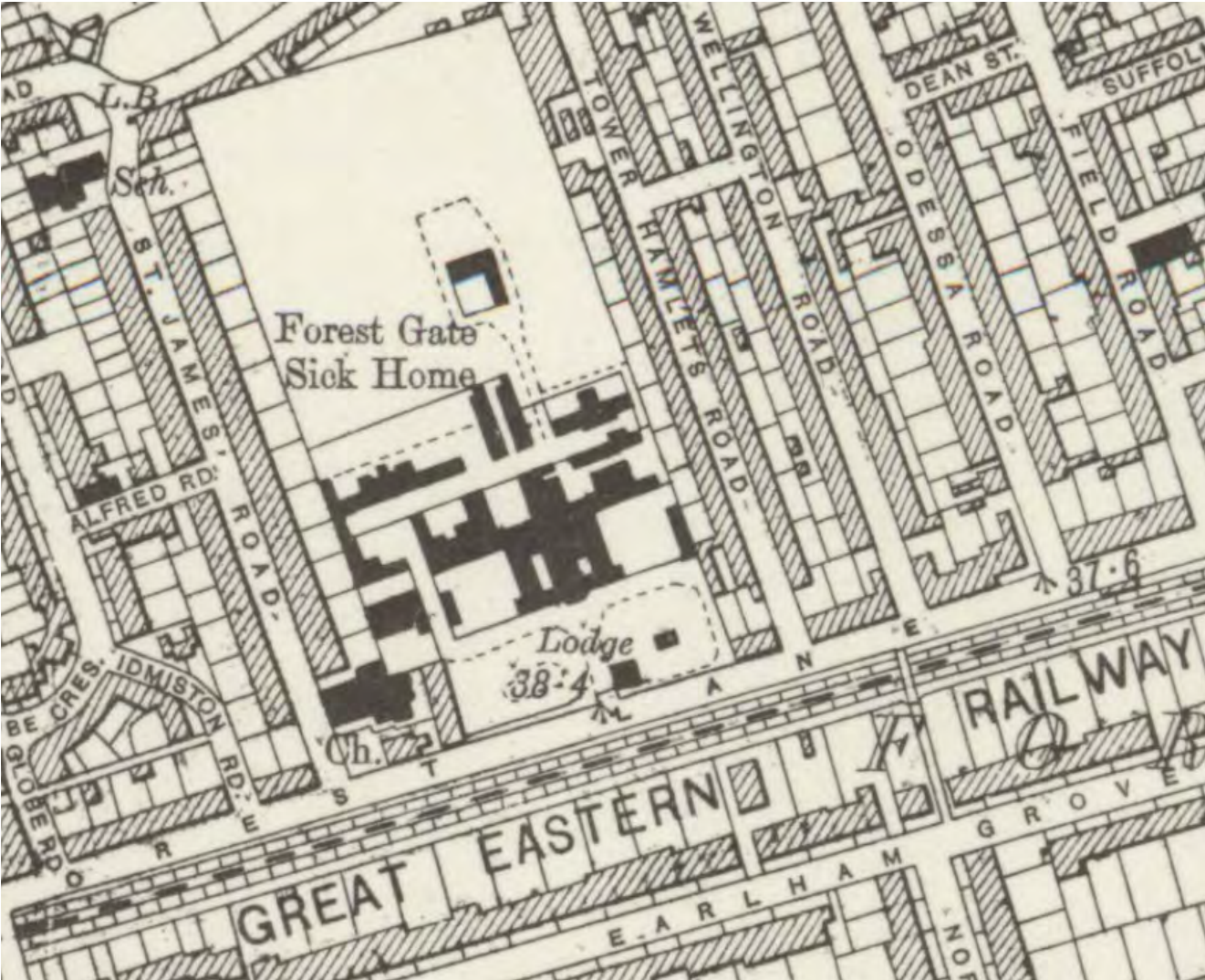
Forest Lane Park over the years

1863



Forest Gate District School first built in 1852, operating until 1906

1913



District School reopened as the Forest Gate Sick Home from 1913 to 1930

1945



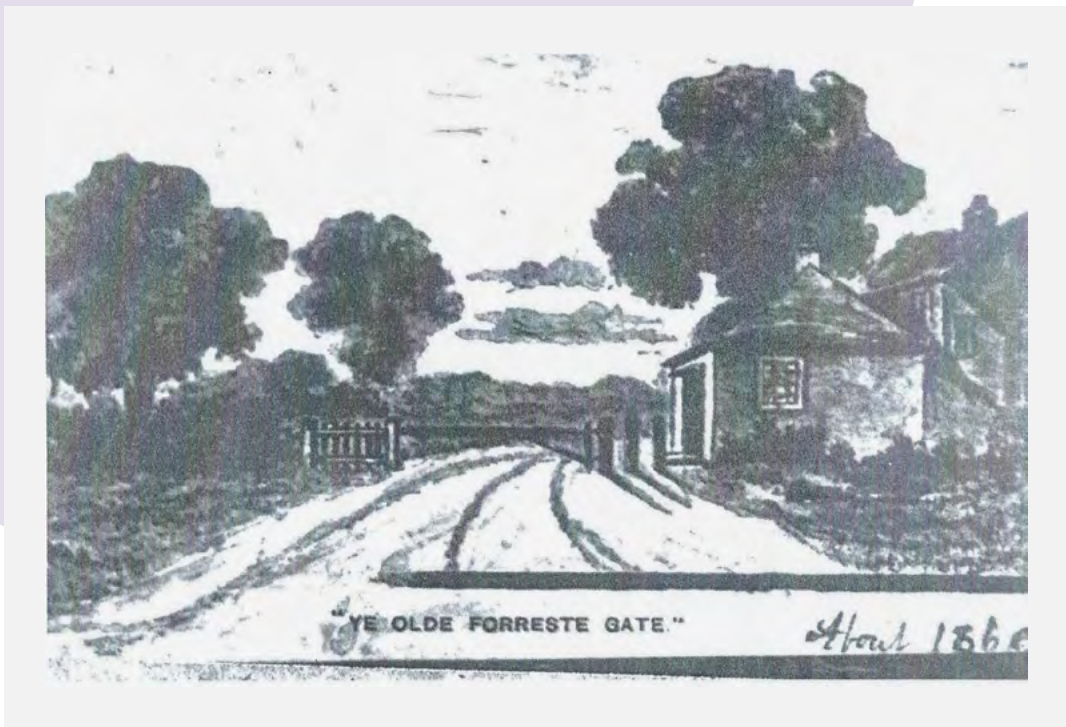
On 1945, Forest Gate Sick Home becomes Newham Maternity Hospital until its closure in 1985

Key historical moments

Abbey of St Mary's, Stratford Langthorne



1776



1860

Forest Gate District School



1889



1940



1980s

Lucel Tate

Lucel Tate was Jamaican and a retired maternity sister. She worked in Forest Gate all her life. As the first Chair of the Hibiscus Caribbean Elderly Association (HCEA), her contribution to the development of the black community in Newham saw the establishment of Hibiscus Community Centre and Hibiscus Sheltered Housing Project. Both continue to deliver services today.



1997

What we've done so far...



July 2024

We attended Forest Gate Festival to meet local people, spread the word about the project and gather contact details of people who might want to get involved.



August 2024

We built a mini-model of Forest Lane Park on wheels & popped-up around the park to meet with local residents. We distributed flyers to neighbouring streets.



September 2024

We hosted a co-design workshop in the park to listen to perceptions of the park, explore the themes of history, biodiversity & health and generate ideas together. We then shared a picnic!



Conducted six Oral History Interviews with local residents to uncover the life and legacy of Lucel Tate and develop ideas for a new sculpture for the park. Led by local resident and journalist Neandra Ettienne.



October 2024

We conducted two art workshops with Caribbean Elders to discuss and explore a new sculpture for the park through watercolour painting. Led by local resident and artist Matt Ponting.



November 2024

Reflected on the ideas of the local community and developed designs for the future of Forest Lane Park.



January 2024

Organised a design showcase to share park restoration plans with the local community.



Organised a local history exhibition to showcase the life and legacy of Lucel Tate as part of Black History Month. Led by local resident and journalist Neandra Ettienne.

A new park sculpture

‘Guardian’ sculpture

For over 20 years, a 10-foot high wooden statue of a maternity nurse holding a baby overlooked the pond at Forest Lane Park. The statue, entitled ‘Guardian’ and designed by artist Helena Stylianides, was installed in 1997 to coincide with the park’s opening. At that time, Helena held a series of workshops with local schools and community groups, including the Hibiscus Community Centre, to design the statue. The carving’s design was heavily inspired by photos of Lucel Tate, a midwife at the maternity hospital, a local community builder and an activist. Around the central nurse figure was a set of tableau showing scenes from Forest Lane Park’s history, including those relating to the former industrial school and workhouse.

‘Guardian’ sculpture overlooking the pond



A new sculpture

Over time, the original ‘Guardian’ statue suffered deterioration and had to be removed due to safety concerns. As a central part of the Forest Lane Park restoration, a new statue will be installed to celebrate the history of the park and the role that Lucel Tate played in the maternity hospital and the local community. Starting in 2025, a call-out for an artist will be shared to create a new artwork that responds to this legacy. A community group will be central to the selection process, and the artwork itself will be co-created through local workshops. The new artwork will be built robustly to resist weathering and vandalism.

Details of the original artwork and launch, 1997



Hibiscus Community Centre workshops

Research and events so far

Throughout 2024, the team has been researching the life and legacy of Lucel Tate. This work included interviews with community members who knew Lucel Tate, art workshops with the Hibiscus Community Centre and a Black History Month celebratory event. During this period, we spoke with Helena

Stylianides, learning about the values of protection and healing that were central to the original work. We also spoke with Len from the Newham Conservation Volunteers (NCV) who repaired the weathered and vandalised statue, extending its life by over a decade.

What we've heard from you...

Enhance natural ecosystems and teach people how to care for them

Many cherished Forest Lane Park for its **'wild, natural' feel and rich biodiversity** nestled in the heart of London, expressing a desire to further enhance it.

"It's a wonderful oasis and it's like a big park in miniature as it has many features normally only found in much larger parks."

Make the park more welcoming and easier to find.

Many local residents, even those who have lived in the area for years, **are unaware of the park's existence**. People feel that the entrances could be made more prominent, inviting people to explore the park.

"I've been walking the whole way round trying to find an entrance because I saw it on the map but couldn't understand how to get in."

Uncover and celebrate the park's hidden histories.

The history of the park and the stories that are told amongst the community are fragmented. Many residents and park users know nothing about its interesting history but all expressed **curiosity to find out more**.

"My mum gave birth in the maternity hospital here so it's a special place for us. I brought her back and she was so glad it is so beautiful now, as a reminder of all the births here."

Open dark corners and activate spaces to make people feel safer

Hidden, un-designated and secluded spaces make people feel unsafe, especially women and young people. People feel better signage, defined spaces, wider pathways and less bushy areas would help to resolve this alongside more community action in the park.

"There are a lot of hiding places in the park which put you on edge because it makes you feel like someone could be watching you or they might jump out at you."

Prioritise ongoing maintenance over major structural changes

While the park is cherished, many spoke of **'getting the small things' right**, improving maintenance and looking after plants and nature properly.

"I love this park. It doesn't need much, we don't want to see big changes, but it does need some love and attention."

Create uplifting, social, and tranquil spaces to restore busy minds

Many shared that the park is a place where **local people come to relax, connect with nature and take a break** from their busy lives. People felt that enhancing this peace and tranquillity should be a priority.

"I'm a carer and me and my colleagues come here to rest and have lunch. It's really calming. I like to sit under the trees."

Current issues and opportunities

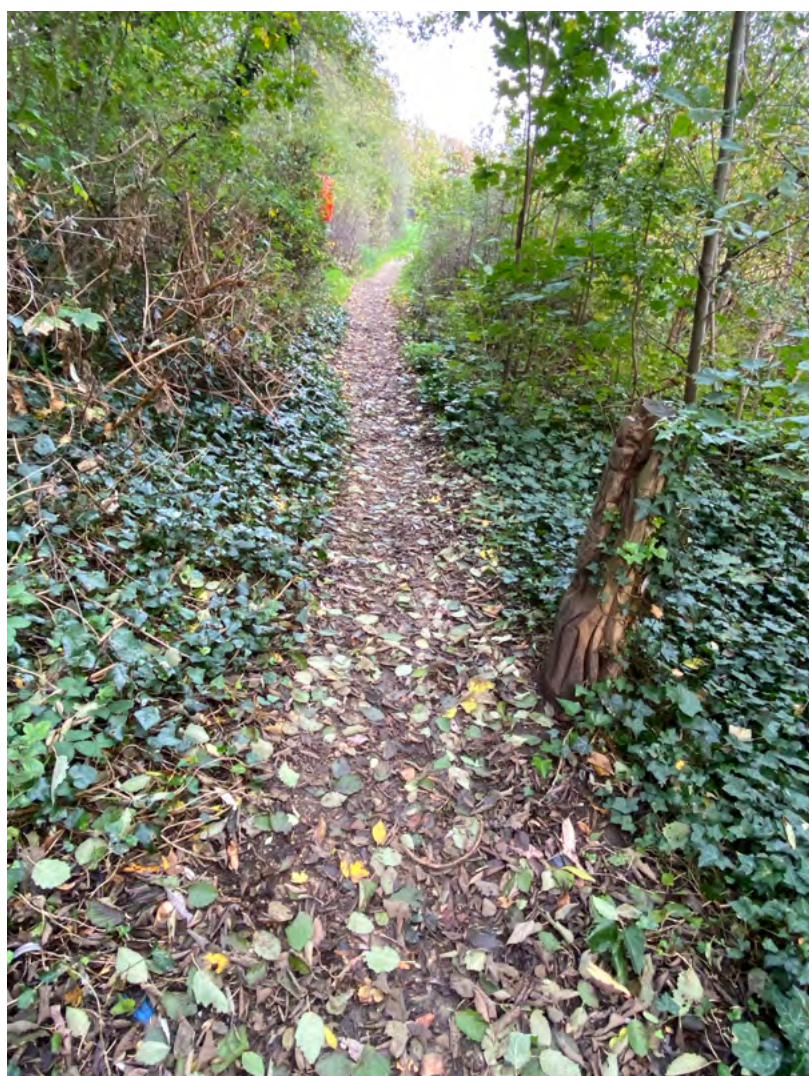
Photos of existing conditions



The ‘Guardian’ statue to be replaced



Under-used and decaying areas



Areas that feel unsafe



Poor paths



Play equipment in need of upgrade



No clear entrance

You said, we did...

On accessibility, you said...

- Limited and hard-to-find entrances
- Need more welcoming signage and maps to discover the park
- Lack of accessible paths, particularly in rainy weather
- Open up south west corner to make more accessible and safe
- Improve the connection between the Lodge and the park

And we did...

- Introduce two new southern entrances on St James' Road and Forest Lane
- Improve wayfinding, visibility and access of entrances
- Formalise the woodland trail and improve existing footpaths
- Build a traffic-calming raised platform between the Lodge and the park



Accessible footpaths

On biodiversity, you said...

- Enhance the park's natural habitats, especially on the fringes
- Plant more native plants and trees to attract pollinators, boost biodiversity and add colour features
- Install bird boxes, bat boxes and spaces for small wildlife
- Improve the woodland trail
- Build a platform in the main pond so people can get closer to the water
- Provide clear signage against feeding wildlife
- Designate nature observation areas to create educational opportunities

Opportunities for ecological enhancement include:

- Thin overgrown and/or invasive species within woodland and wetland areas where needed
- Plant native plants and wildflowers for greater botanical diversity
- Install bat boxes and log-piles
- Improve planted tree lines around the central lawn area

And we did...

- Introduce a sensory garden with opportunities to plant native species
- Provide clear signage and educational opportunities around the park
- Formalise the woodland trail footpaths
- Build a dipping platform in the main pond



Pond platform with educational opportunities



Log-piles for wildlife



Wildflower meadows

On history and heritage, you said...

- Reinststate and/or re-image the 'Guardian' statue
- Bring more physical structures and sculptures that provoke curiosity and tell stories about the park's history
- Collect stories from community members and share them through listening posts in the park

And we did...

- Created a first draft of an artist's brief to install a new statue
- Acquired funding to commission the work in 2025

Coming soon!

You said, we did...

On maintenance, you said...

- Repair and restore existing totems through paint and storytelling with children
- Vandal-proof everything
- Broken glass and drug paraphernalia creating feelings of insecurity
- Improve pond and landscape maintenance
- More regular community clean-ups

Newham Council is committed to increasing the maintenance and management budget of Forest Lane Park over the next three years.

Design improvements will be vandal-proof wherever possible, and we will work with the community to restore existing totems.



Restore existing totems

On safety and security, you said...

- Anti-social behaviour, particularly in hidden or poorly lit places
- Remove hazardous metal structure from the woodlands
- Create more natural play spaces throughout the park, particularly in the woodlands
- Activate the park by improving the connection between the Lodge and the park

And we did...

- Reduce taller hedges and overgrown vegetation to create clearer lines of sight
- Formalise the woodland trail footpaths and remove hazardous metal structure
- Refresh the play offer by the pond and the Lodge
- Build a traffic-calming raised platform between the Lodge and the park



More natural play offer



Traffic-calming raised platform

On health and wellbeing, you said...

- Create a quiet or 'sensory' garden for reflection and relaxation
- Create picnic areas or seating with scenic views around the pond
- Experiment with community gardening, involving people in creating planting plans for different areas
- Better sports facilities, such as a space for fitness classes like yoga or gentle exercise, especially for seniors
- More exercise equipment for various age groups including a pull up bar

And we did...

- Introduce a sensory garden with opportunities for community gardening
- Add seating with scenic views across the pond
- Refresh the outdoor exercise equipment and location
- Relocate the picnic area for better views and shade
- Enhance the central lawn area to better support recreational and outdoor activities



Sensory garden



New seating with scenic views

Proposed masterplan

