

# Petition Requesting the Locking of Fassnidge Park

<b>Cabinet Member &amp; Portfolio</b>	Councillor Wayne Bridges Cabinet Member for Community and Environment
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Chris Wheeler, Director of Environment Jordan Groves, Head of Waste and Green Spaces
<b>Report Author &amp; Directorate</b>	James Bell, Green Spaces Technical Manager, Resident Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix A: Plan of Fassnidge Park Gates and Entrances

## HEADLINES

<b>Summary</b>	This report considers a petition signed by residents requesting that Fassnidge Park be locked each evening. Petitioners state that ongoing antisocial behaviour (ASB), noise disturbances and late-night- gatherings are affecting local amenity, safety, and quality of life. This report sets out the background, evidence, and options for addressing these concerns.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>  <b>Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026</b>	This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: Enjoy access to green spaces, leisure activities, culture and arts  This report supports our commitments to residents of: Safe and Strong Communities
<b>Financial Cost</b>	There is currently no approved budget for reinstating park locking. Retaining the existing arrangement has no financial impact. Introducing nightly locking at Fassnidge Park would create additional ongoing revenue costs for staff or contractors (estimated in the tens of thousands of pounds per year if replicated boroughwide), alongside potential one- off costs for gate improvements, signage, and managing accidental lock- ins. Any locking arrangement would therefore require spend control approval / budget reallocation.

<b>Select Committee</b>	Resident's Services Select Committee
<b>Ward(s)</b>	Uxbridge

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Community & Environment:

- 1) Notes the petition received requesting that the gates of Fassnidge Park be locked each evening.
- 2) Considers the request made by residents and determines whether to introduce the locking of park gates subject to spending approval.
- 3) Notes the Council's current policy position on park locking and the associated financial/operational implications.

### Reasons for recommendation(s)

To enable the Cabinet Member to consider the petition and the views of residents signing it.

### Alternative options considered / risk management

These are alternative options to consider and they are set out further in the report.

### Select Committee comments

None at this stage.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1. The Petition

A total of **40 residents** have signed a combined online and paper petition. While the exact wording varies slightly between the online and paper petition, the primary request asks the Council to introduce a **nightly locking regime** at Fassnidge Park. The online petition request is detailed below:

**Title:** *Tackling anti-social and criminal behaviour at Fassnidge Park in Uxbridge.*

**Statement:**

*We the undersigned petition Hillingdon Council to, as a responsible local authority, lock Fassnidge Park's both gates after 8pm to stop the antisocial behaviour that is disrupting the local neighbourhood. We would also like to ask the Council to raise a section of low fence around the Oxford Road end to prevent people from jumping over it at night. We suggest the Fire Brigade be given a key in case of any emergency and that there are notices inside the park next to the gates with a phone number should anyone be locked in. Some of the reported anti-social behaviour experienced in Fassnidge Park: drug taking, drug dealing, loud music, drunken parties, people fighting, littering, indecent*

*graffiti, setting off fireworks, people having sex in the bushes etc. The spring & summer months is when these criminal and anti-social behaviour are at its highest. The park and surrounding areas become dangerous and the constant noise coming from the park negatively affects the local residents.*

### **Justification:**

*Similar action has been introduced at Primrose Park where all gates close now close in the evening hours - you can check the article below:*

<https://www.mylondon.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/controversial-locking-primrose-hill-gates-28972441>

## **2. Background: Current Park Locking Arrangements**

In recent years, the Council has moved away from routinely locking parks as part of a boroughwide savings programme. Historically, 31 parks were closed each evening, with locking times shifting seasonally, with early evening closures in winter and later closure in summer. This longstanding practice required daily staff attendance and created ongoing budget pressures.

As part of the corporate budget process, a review identified that ceasing locking would deliver significant savings of around £35,000 annually, whilst aligning Hillingdon with the approach increasingly taken by other local authorities. Occasional additional costs were also incurred when staff were called out to release members of the public who had accidentally been locked inside.

Evidence from councils such as Richmond, Barnet, St Albans, Somerset and Birmingham shows a growing national trend towards reducing or ending park locking in favour of more targeted ASB management. In response, the Council adopted a new policy position: parks will remain unlocked unless there is a clearly evidenced and exceptional local need to reinstate locking.

## **3. National Context: Other Local Authorities**

The shift away from locked-gate regimes is not unique to Hillingdon. Across the country, councils are reevaluating whether nightly locking offers value for money or meaningful ASB reduction.

- The Royal Borough of Richmond Upon Thames trialled the cessation of park locking across 11 sites between September and December 2024.
- In 2019, Barnet Council formally approved the end of locking at 26 parks.
- Other authorities—including St Albans, Somerset and Birmingham—have implemented similar changes.

Collectively, these examples reflect a wider national movement towards:

- Reducing operational costs in parks and green spaces;
- Relying more on early evening- patrols, targeted operations or community stewardship;
- Addressing ASB case by -case rather than through blanket nightly locking.

## 4. ASB and Incident Information for Fassnidge Park

To assess whether Fassnidge Park should be considered an exception to the borough's non-locking policy, available ASB and incident information has been reviewed.

Current data indicates:

- Police logs: Not available
- Community Safety reports: 2 reports
- Recent complaints to the Council: 0
- Seasonal trends: Issues typically linked to summer months and lighter evenings
- Nature of incidents: Isolated reports of noise, gatherings, suspected drug use, and occasional vandalism

Of the two ASB reports recorded by the Council's ASB Team:

1. One concerned a single tent encampment within the park.
2. The second related to an abandoned vehicle located outside the park on Rockingham Parade.

While this information provides useful context, it represents relatively low incident levels. The Cabinet Member will need to consider whether this evidence is sufficient to justify a departure from the borough-wide non-locking policy.

## 5. Options

There are options available to address residents' concerns, but should take into account both operational feasibility and the wider corporate policy framework:

- a) Option A — Do Nothing - Retain the current borough-wide approach, keeping Fassnidge Park unlocked at all times.
- b) Option B — Introduce Nightly Locking (All Gates) - Adopt the full locking regime requested by petitioners, requiring staff or contractors to attend twice daily.
- c) Option C — Partial Locking - Lock only specific entrances where ASB is most commonly reported, potentially reducing costs and operational risks.
- d) Option D — Infrastructure Based Deterrents - Introduce physical or technological measures, such as CCTV, improved lighting, or strengthened vehicle barriers, to deter ASB without locking the park.

- e) Option E — Community or Volunteer Involvement - Work with Friends groups or other local volunteers to manage gate locking under an agreed policy—an approach referenced in the corporate proposal.
- f) Option F — Enhanced Monitoring - Increase targeted ASB patrols, especially at peak times, or coordinate joint operations with the Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team.

The Cabinet Member should also note, that if locking is reinstated at Fassnidge Park, risks include:

- Staff safety when attending late-night lock-up
- Escalation if groups confront staff
- Inadvertent lock ins
- Financial pressure on existing service budge

### **Financial Implications**

The former borough wide locking programme cost approximately £35,000 per year, primarily for staffing. Reintroducing locking at Fassnidge Park would require:

- Twice daily staff or contractor attendance
- A growth bid or budget reallocation, as no funding currently exists under the new policy. This would require spending approval.
- Additional risk-based costs such as callouts for accidental lock-ins or potential upgrades to deter vehicle access.

Alternative options may also have financial implications, although these cannot be fully quantified at this stage. Measures such as partial locking, enhanced monitoring, infrastructure- based deterrents (including CCTV, lighting or barrier upgrades), or increased ASB patrols would likely result in additional revenue and/or capital costs, depending on the scale, frequency and delivery model adopted. Any such costs would need to be assessed following further detailed investigation and would be subject to separate funding approval as no provision currently exists within approved budgets.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION**

### **The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?**

Benefits to residents will be dependent on any decision taken. There are no anticipated equalities impacts, and any locking arrangement would continue to protect daytime access for all park users.

### **Consultation & Engagement carried out (or required)**

No formal public consultation has been undertaken, other than the petition itself.

Stakeholders to be consulted if locking is introduced:

- Ward councillors
- Local community groups
- Police (Safer Neighbourhood Team)
- Parks operational staff

## CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

### Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting the recommendations to seek consideration of the requests made by residents through the petitions received for the gates of Fassnidge Park to be locked each evening.

Furthermore, it is noted there is no immediate direct financial impact to the General Fund in relation to the recommendations in this report, however, if the introduction of locking park gates were to proceed this would create an impact on the General Fund of an estimated £35k per annum, based on the former borough-wide locking programme. There is currently no existing budget for this service and therefore would need to be met through either budget reallocations or a growth bid through the current MTFS refresh and will then be subject to the spend control approval process. As at Month 7 the Green Spaces, Sports and Culture service was reporting an adverse variance of £595k.

Additionally, it is further noted that the alternative options outlined in the report would also carry revenue and / or capital implications. These costs are yet to be quantified and would require officers to undertake further detailed assessment before any funding requirements can be determined and presented for approval.

### Legal

Legal Services notes the report, which asks the Cabinet Member to consider a petition requesting the introduction of nightly gate locking at Fassnidge Park. Legal Services confirms that the recommendations fall within the Cabinet Member's delegated authority. Decisions of this nature must be taken in accordance with the Council's statutory powers, its general duties, and established principles of lawful decision-making.

When considering whether to reinstate a locking regime, the Cabinet Member must have regard to all relevant factors, including:

- the evidence of anti-social behaviour presented in the report;
- the operational and financial implications of locking or not locking the park;
- the current adopted boroughwide policy that parks remain unlocked unless there is a clear and evidenced justification to depart from that position; and
- the availability of any reasonable alternatives.

No formal consultation beyond the petition has been undertaken. While no statutory duty to consult applies in relation to an operational decision of this kind, the Cabinet Member must nevertheless act fairly and take account of the views expressed by petitioners as part of the decision-making process.

In reaching a decision, the Cabinet Member must comply with public law principles including Wednesbury reasonableness. The decision must be based on relevant considerations falling within a range of reasonable outcomes, irrelevant factors must be disregarded. Failure to do so may expose the Council to challenge by way of judicial review.

In addition, the Council must meet its Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The report confirms that no adverse equality impacts have been identified. Nevertheless, the Cabinet Member must remain satisfied that any decision taken will not disproportionately disadvantage persons with protected characteristics, including those relying on parks for exercise, socialisation or accessibility.

If the Cabinet Member is minded to approve reinstatement of nightly locking, the Council would need to ensure:

- appropriate risk assessments are undertaken for staff or contractors attending the site;
- emergency access for the fire service or other responders is maintained;
- adequate signage and processes are in place to minimise accidental lock-ins; and
- any decision involving additional expenditure complies with the Council's financial governance, budget framework and spend control processes.

If any aspect of nightly locking is delegated wholly or partly to community volunteers or Friends groups, appropriate arrangements must be in place to manage liability, safeguarding, insurance and health and safety responsibilities.

The Cabinet member's decision must be reasonable, evidence-based and properly informed by the financial, operational and policy considerations as set out in the report.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

## TITLE OF ANY APPENDICES

Appendix A Site Plan

