

# *Old Deer Park Study*

**Conservation Area No.57**



**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**

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The Old Deer Park was designated a Conservation Area on the 12 June 1990, following extensive studies by the Council, The Friends of Old Deer Park and the Richmond Society. Although its historic interest and landscape value is immense, there are many areas which are in need of improvement. These landscaping proposals were adopted by the Council on 20 March 1990 following extensive public consultation. This study draws attention to opportunities for enhancing the Park and suggests improvements in the context of local planning policies.

## *Historic Interest*

The Park has been part of the Royal Estates extending from Kew to Richmond since medieval times. Part of the Park was given for the foundation of a monastery in the C15th. The Sheen Charterhouse is one of the most important archeological sites in the Borough and an approach has been made to have it scheduled as an Ancient Monument.

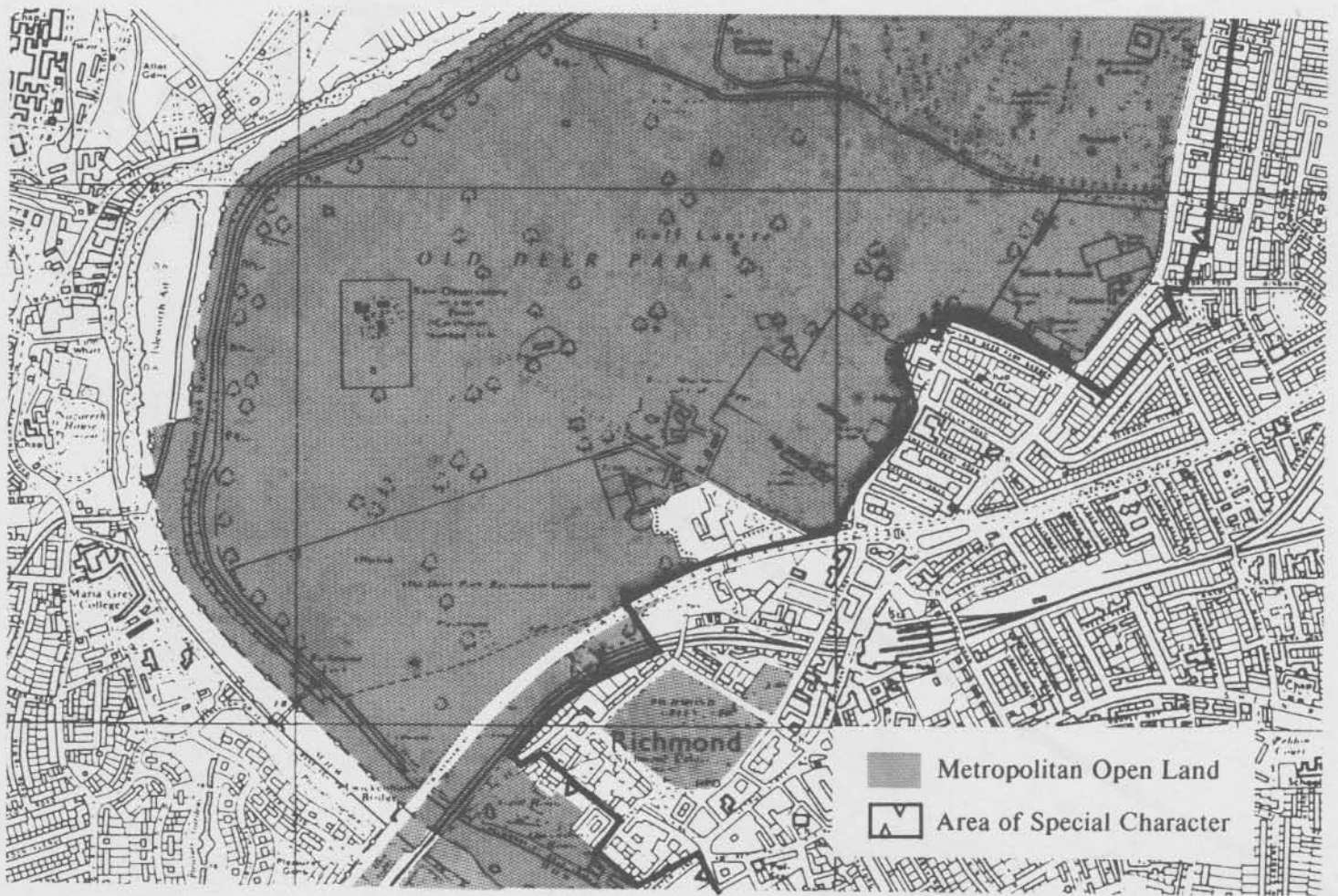
Following the final dissolution in 1559 (the Charterhouse having been refounded by Queen Mary in 1556) the site was occupied by various lessees. The Crown resumed occupation in 1769 and the last of the Charterhouse buildings were demolished to make way for the Royal Observatory's use, though only the small meridian marker in the middle of the playing fields has a known astronomical significance. Restoration of the visual link between the Observatory and the meridian marker would be most desirable.

The Old Deer Park, originally excluding the Charterhouse site, has acquired its name by virtue of being at one time the Royal Hunting Park, created by King James I in 1604. It was considered too small by King Charles I and was replaced by Richmond Park in 1635 and the Little Park was then used mainly as farmland. The Park passed into various private ownerships after the Civil War but a large part was given back to the Crown following the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. Richmond became a fashionable residence for Royalty and the Court with formal gardens and mansions. The former hunting lodge in the Park was occupied and extended by Queen Caroline who employed Charles Bridgeman as landscape architect to design gardens in the innovative semi-formal style. He is reputed to have introduced the ha-ha to this country. This was employed along the Kew Road where later King George III's famous Merino sheep were kept. Part of those gardens are now incorporated in Kew Gardens, the remainder being part of the Old Deer Park.

## *Current Uses*

The land is still owned by the Crown Estate but is leased to a number of users, mainly for sporting/recreational purposes. The Council leases an area known as the '87 acres' for a Recreation Ground. This area now includes the swimming pool complex and the car/lorry park. The remaining parcels of land are leased as the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Course and two athletic grounds, the Richmond Athletic Ground and the London Welsh Sports Ground.

The overall impression of the Old Deer Park is one of open but segregated land uses with little obvious relationship with the totality of the Park's landscape. Trees have been used to create visual barriers along artificial boundaries, thereby destroying the 'parkland' character. While appreciating that the Park is no longer a deer park and must meet the needs of the urban population, nevertheless there is significant scope for landscape improvement.



# Local Plan Policies

The Old Deer Park was designated a Conservation Area on 12 June 1990. The Council's policies on Conservation Areas include an expressed intention to protect and enhance their character by retaining buildings and trees which are important to the character or appearance of the area; allowing redevelopment only where new building will make a contribution towards improving the character or appearance of the area; making Directions under Article 4 of the General Development Order 1988 to restrict development rights; and publishing supplementary planning guidance.

The Park has Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) status except for two of the parcels of land leased by the Council namely the car/lorry park and the swimming pool complex. The swimming baths site is designated as a project (K7) in the Local Plan for intensification of sports use by provision of a public indoor sports hall. The Council's policy towards MOL is to protect and conserve it by keeping it in predominantly open use (Policy ENV 3).

The whole of the Park is included in an Area of Special Character in the GLDP, the preservation of which is essential to London's character. The Council is committed to protecting this character (Policy ENV 1). In addition, any development adjacent to open spaces must be of high quality (ENV5).

The riverside boundary and the hedgerow between the recreation ground and the golf course is defined as a Site of Local Nature Interest in the Local Plan.

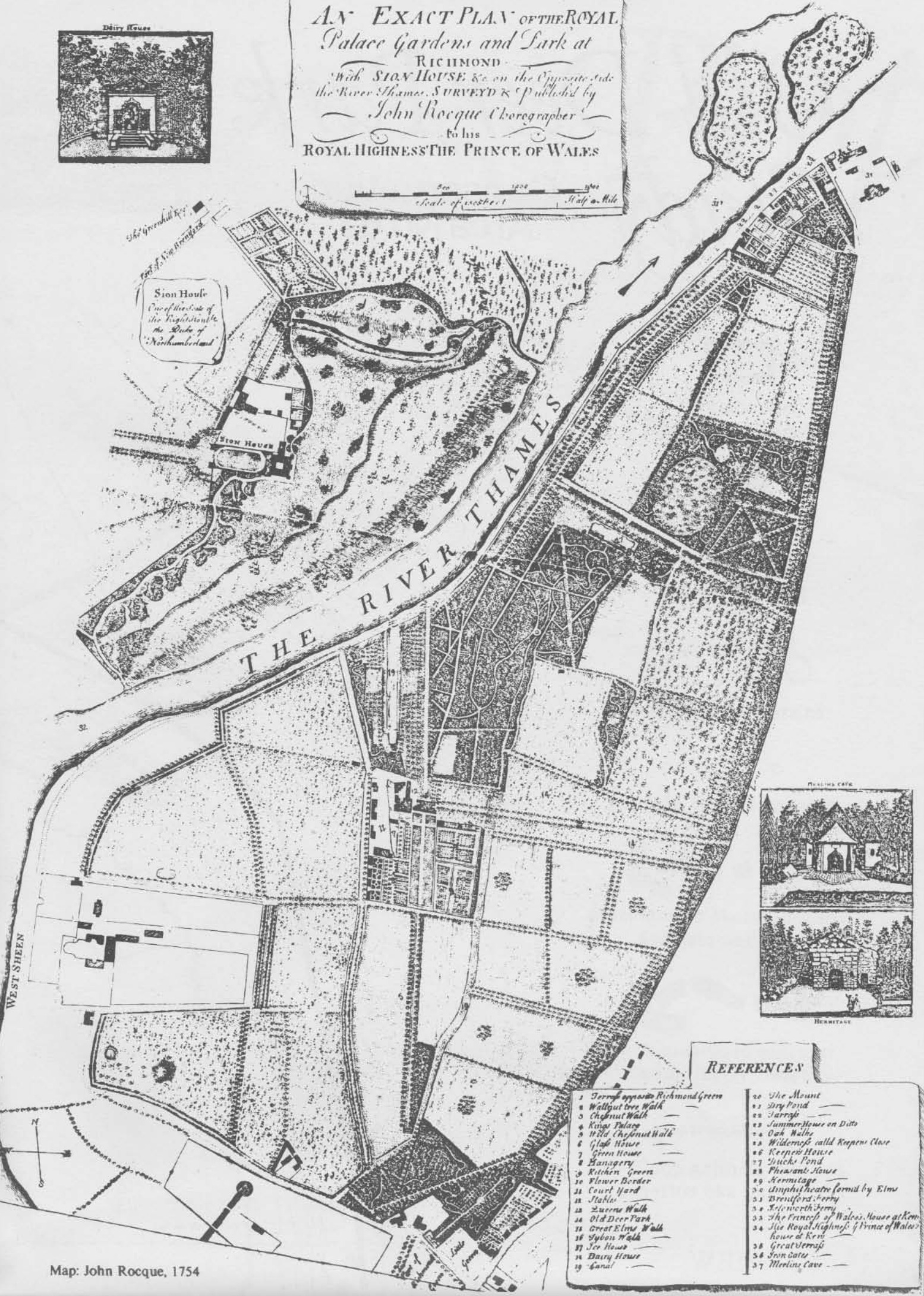
## Charter for the Environment

There will be a clear commitment to the Council's Charter for the Environment in considering any proposals for the Old Deer Park. A tree survey will be undertaken prior to detailed landscaping proposals being formulated. There will be an emphasis in favour of landscaping to improve the wildlife habitat of the Park.



AN EXACT PLAN OF THE ROYAL  
*Palace Gardens and Park at*  
 RICHMOND  
*With STON HOUSE &c on the opposite side*  
*the River Thames. SURVEYED & Published by*  
*John Rocque Chorographer*  
 to his  
 ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES

Scale of Feet  
 0 500 1000 1500  
 Half a Mile



Ston House  
 One of the Seats of  
 the Right Honble  
 the Duke of  
 Northumberland



REFERENCES

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 Ferry opposite Richmond Green | 20 The Mount                             |
| 2 Walnut Tree Walk              | 21 Dry Pond                              |
| 3 Chapel Walk                   | 22 Terrace                               |
| 4 Kings Palace                  | 23 Summer House on Ditto                 |
| 5 Wild Chestnut Walk            | 24 Oak Walks                             |
| 6 Glass House                   | 25 Wilderness call'd Keepers Close       |
| 7 Green House                   | 26 Keepers House                         |
| 8 Banqueting                    | 27 Ducks Pond                            |
| 9 Kitchen Green                 | 28 Pheasant House                        |
| 10 Flower Border                | 29 Hermitage                             |
| 11 Court Yard                   | 30 Amphitheatre form'd by Elms           |
| 12 Stables                      | 31 Brentford Ferry                       |
| 13 Quene Walk                   | 32 Foxworth Ferry                        |
| 14 Old Deer Park                | 33 The Francis of Wales House at Ken     |
| 15 Great Elms Walk              | 34 The Royal Highness of Prince of Wales |
| 16 Sybon Walk                   | house at Ken                             |
| 17 Ice House                    | 35 Great Terrace                         |
| 18 Dairy House                  | 36 Iron Gate                             |
| 19 Canal                        | 37 Merlin Cave                           |

# Study Areas and Proposals

## 1 Car and Lorry Park

This area was formerly part of the parkland and some mature trees remain. Former pedestrian links with the main area of parkland and The Green and town (via Park Lane) have been severed. The car park detracts from the character of the parkland, and this is compounded by the use of part of the area for lorry parking. The appearance of the recycling skips next to the A316 could be improved.

A number of voluntary associations have leases on plots of land adjacent to the car park, with buildings of varied vintage. The main problems arising are boundary maintenance and inadequate means of rubbish disposal.

The objective of any landscaping improvements to this area should be to reduce the impact of vehicles and tarmac and improve the environment for pedestrians by encouraging pedestrian links with the town and open spaces.

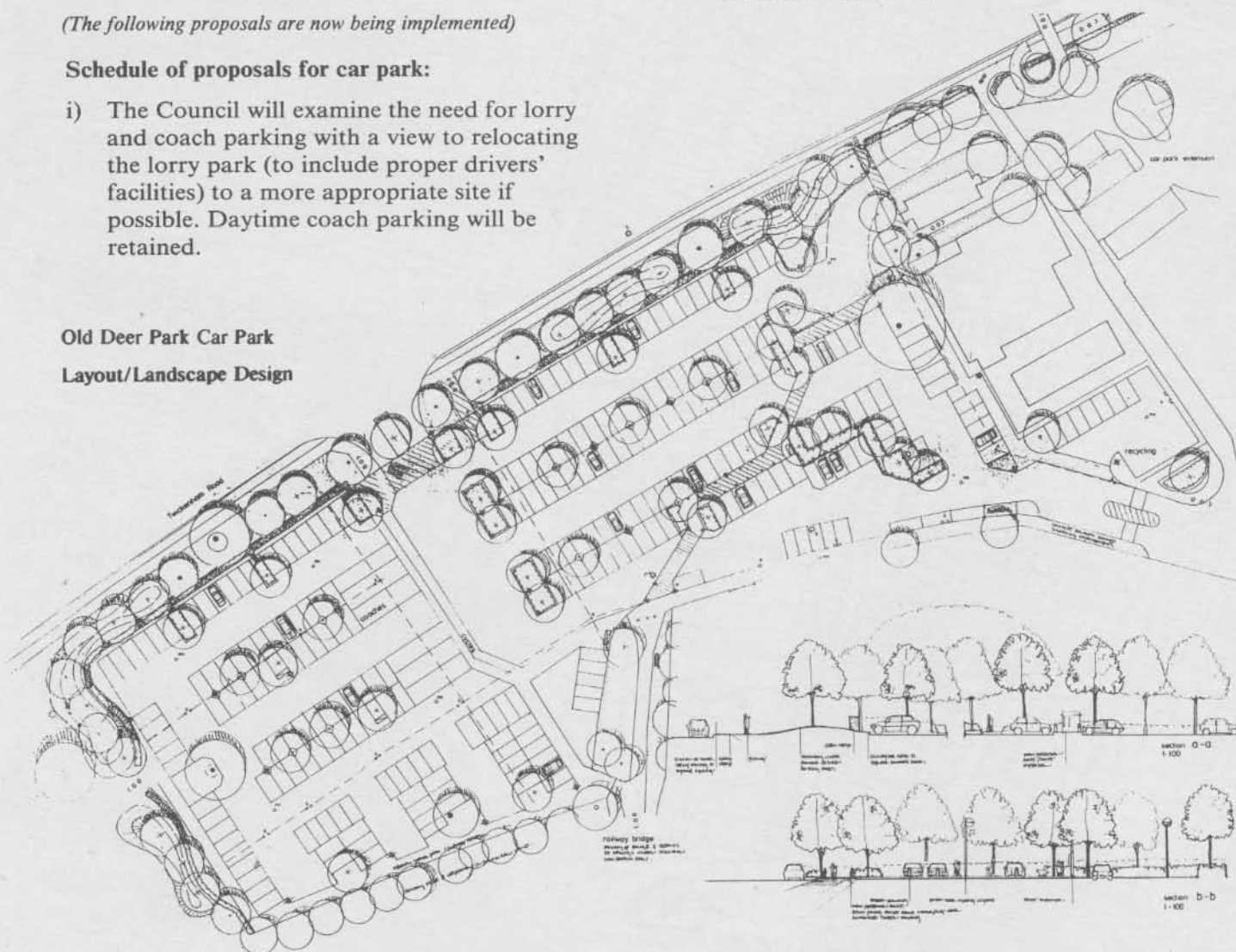
*(The following proposals are now being implemented)*

### Schedule of proposals for car park:

- i) The Council will examine the need for lorry and coach parking with a view to relocating the lorry park (to include proper drivers' facilities) to a more appropriate site if possible. Daytime coach parking will be retained.

- ii) Resurfacing and landscaping of the car park should include clearly marked pedestrian routes and planting of large standard trees to recreate the wooded parkland appearance as far as possible.
- iii) New boundary treatments will be introduced to lessen the visual impact of the car park but allowing a degree of public surveillance.
- iv) Links between the town, the Green, the river and the park should be improved for the benefit of pedestrians, including disabled people, and cyclists.
- v) Provision of improved boundaries and rubbish disposal facilities for lessees of premises within the car park area will be sought.
- vi) The recycling skips will be relocated and screened and procedures for management and collection improved.

Old Deer Park Car Park  
Layout/Landscape Design



## 2 Recreation Ground

The Council has leased the recreation ground for some 80 years. Sadly, most of this open space has been severed from the town by the A316. The south side of the A316 is a remnant of the original parkland landscaping and includes many mature trees. There is a narrow strip of land between the railway and Palace Lane used as allotments. Paths to the recreation ground are poor, frequently waterlogged and can make the lone pedestrian feel vulnerable.

Most of the recreation ground is used for sports pitches and includes tennis courts in the corner next to the swimming pool. While the need for such large grassed areas prevents extensive tree planting, there is potential for improvement to the unnatural form of the privet hedge.

The historic associations of the Park include the obelisks, now separated from the Observatory, the latter can only be glimpsed at occasional points. There is some potential for the enhancement of the obelisks which might include an information board and opening a view through to the Observatory.

The playground in the middle of the area is in very poor condition. Equipment is very old, though kept in repair, but the surface of the playground is badly broken. The Council has already agreed that there should be a phased survey of play equipment and implementation of safety surfaces. Safety surfaces have been installed under the swings only, while the whole surface requires repair. The condition of this playground should make it a priority for improvement and it presents a good opportunity to consider relocating the playground, perhaps closer to the existing leisure facilities where it could be screened from the traffic and made more accessible to residential areas.

The environmental impact of the A316 on the recreation ground, as well as the problem of severance, causes significant noise and visual intrusion from speeding cars with little or no protection for pedestrians. The verge is protected in part by a metal post and rail fence, and a line of cherry trees softens the impact of the road to some degree. More appropriate materials such as wooden bollards or wooden post and rail fencing could be considered to protect verges and footpaths. Supplementary planting to enhance the embankments and eventually replace the cherries when they reach the end of their natural life could be investigated.

### Schedule of proposals for the recreation ground:

- i) A tree survey will be carried out to assess the quality of existing trees with a view to planting additional native and parkland species, including additional cherry trees (of native variety) along the A316. The landscaping proposals should seek to reduce the impact of the A316. Additional planting on parts of the Recreation Ground not used for sports purposes should seek to improve the wildlife habitat along the boundary with the Golf Course which is a Site of Local Nature Interest.
- ii) Provision of safer and improved links between the two sides of the recreation ground and the Thames Path for pedestrians including the disabled.
- iii) Landscaping proposals should include screening of the swimming pools complex and the parks servicing area.
- iv) The obelisks and other historic associations of the Park will be given recognition by means of an information board.
- v) An alternative location for the playground will be investigated, giving due consideration to accessibility and safety surveillance. Equipment to be of natural materials wherever possible.
- vi) Ways will be investigated of reducing the adverse impact of traffic on the A316 by means of landscape treatment.



The Obelisks.



Richmond Swimming Pool.

### 3 Swimming Pool

The swimming pool complex was built just over 20 years ago and was given a Civic Trust Award in 1967. It is set in a landscaped area within which is an outdoor swimming pool, many fine trees are included within its boundary. The site is scheduled within the Local Plan as a project site for intensification of sports use but this should not encroach upon the landscaped area.

The entrance to the pool car park displays a multiplicity of materials, concrete bollards, iron railing, chestnut paling, and brick wall which detracts from the appearance of the area.

#### Schedule of proposals for the swimming pool site:

- i) A landscaping scheme for the improvement of the shared access road will be prepared.
- ii) Any new development on the site in pursuance of the Council's proposals to intensify sports use must be carefully screened to minimise impact on the open parkland.

### 4 Richmond Athletic Ground

The Athletic Ground is used by a number of sports clubs. The primary use is rugby pitches, including an unattractive concrete grandstand which obscures much of the view of the Old Deer Park. Subsidiary users include the Bowls Club, squash and golf driving. There is an attractive wooden club house and many fine mature trees.

The boundary along the A316 presents an unsatisfactory appearance with a hotch-potch of wall, railings, fencing and signs. The appearance is made still worse by the unauthorised hardstanding and daily use for parking of private cars. Planning permission for the hardstanding was approved but enforcement action was authorised for the cessation of its use for parking other than in connection with sporting activities.

#### A schedule of improvements to the Athletic Ground should include:

- i) Tree planting to screen the rear of the concrete grandstand.
- ii) A sensitively landscaped parking area for use by spectators and cessation of commuter parking along the perimeter fence.

## 5 Kew Road Sports Ground (London Welsh Rugby Ground)

The Sports Ground is visually quite separate from the rest of the Old Deer Park because of the intervening residential area along the Kew Road. The view through from this sports ground to the rest of the Park is obscured by a row of conifers within the golf course. There is considerable potential for enhancing the landscape quality of this area.

There are a number of sports clubs using the Ground, with clubhouse and storage facilities. The hedgerow, ha-ha and railings along the Kew Road are included in the sports ground lease. The historical value of the ha-ha has been drawn to the attention of English Heritage with a view to proposing it for statutory listing which would enable grants to be made available for its repair. The hedgerow is receiving attention and will be tidied by volunteers. The railings are to be repaired to match those existing.

A proposal exists in the local plan (project K3) to provide coach parking for Kew Gardens, but has not yet been implemented. Trees on this site would remain.

### A schedule of improvements to the sports ground

- i) Renovation of the ha-ha and repair of broken railings and improvement to the existing hedgerow by additional planting and management.

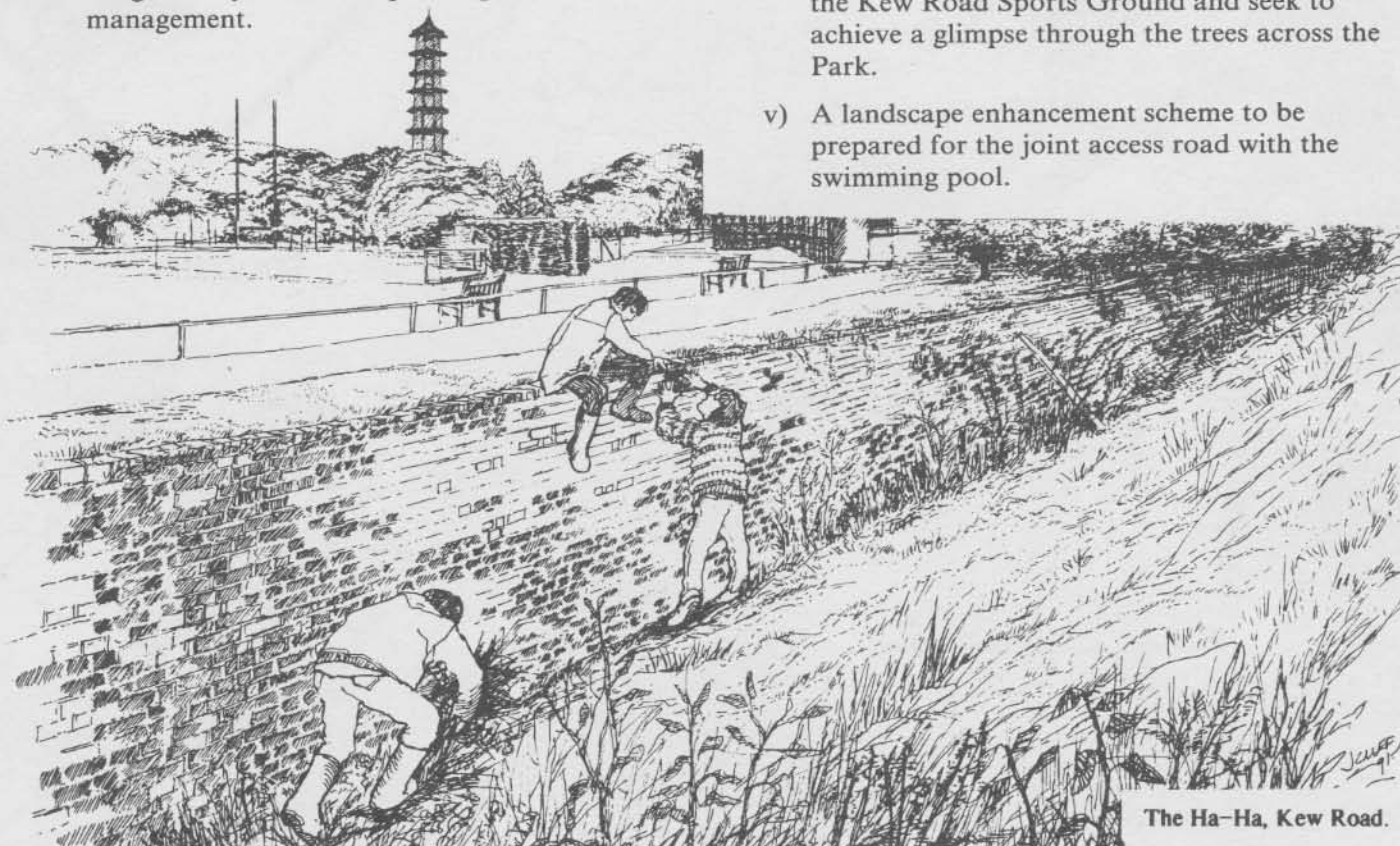
## 6 Golf Course

The Golf Course, leased to the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club, occupies the greater part of the Old Deer Park. The frontage to the River Thames provides an undisturbed wildlife sanctuary and is a Site of Local Nature Interest. The Golf Course is separated from the Recreation Ground by a belt of trees which largely obscures the view of the Observatory and the open space beyond from the Recreation Ground. Within the Golf Course is the site of the Charterhouse.

The access to the Golf Club off the A316 is shared with the swimming pool and is visually unattractive. The Golf Club buildings can hardly be seen from the road but comprise a club house and various outbuildings.

### A schedule of proposals for the Golf Club:

- i) Scheduling of the site of the Charterhouse as an Ancient Monument by the Department of the Environment.
- ii) The Golf Club to continue its policy of retaining views and landmarks within the Golf Course.
- iii) The limited view of the Observatory from across the Recreation Ground to be preserved.
- iv) Enhancement of the view from the Kew Road across the Park to be investigated in conjunction with the Golf Club to soften the impact of the conifers on the boundary with the Kew Road Sports Ground and seek to achieve a glimpse through the trees across the Park.
- v) A landscape enhancement scheme to be prepared for the joint access road with the swimming pool.



The Ha-Ha, Kew Road.