



# **Ham Common Woods**

including Ham Gate Avenue

## **Management Plan**

March 2024 – February 2027

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This management plan has been written by Richmond Councils' Ecology Policy and Planning Team as part of the Councils' commitment to the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Each site is managed in accordance with the habitat and species action plans of the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan, London Borough of Richmond Borough (LBRuT) Policies, general good habitat management practice and current legislation.

### **1.1 Caveat**

The implementation of prescriptions in this management plan will be subject to available budget. It is anticipated that additional external funding may need to be secured to realise the complete fulfilment of the four-year management plan.

## **2.0 Terms of Reference**

This management plan is designed to inform and outline the restoration and maintenance of Ham Common Woods and Ham Gate Avenue from landscape, conservation and visitor perspectives by Richmond Council working in conjunction with Council contractors and community organisations.

Throughout this management plan the goals are to:

1. Protect and enhance the ecology of the mixed habitats of the Site with appropriate management and planting.
2. Restore Ham Gate Avenue and the vista through appropriate management and planting.
3. Restore and enhance the Site to make it an attractive leisure and environmental asset for local residents and visitors alike
3. Enhance the visitor experience by creating an attractive natural space which invites exploration and encourages use for educational and well-being purposes.

To deliver this vision, this plan considers the sites history, ecology, and visitor use; it draws together existing data on its trees, habitats, and species with new surveys; it sets out defined objectives and the prescriptions to deliver and maintain the site over the next five years, while having regard to the vision which takes a ten year and longer view.

The management plan should not be regarded as fixed; the prescriptions provide a framework and guidance that enable reaction to changing conditions. Reviewing progress and monitoring key features on a regular basis is important in ensuring the site is managed appropriately and in a sustainable way, as such as a management review will be carried out annually by the Council.

## 3.0 Site Description

### 3.1. Site details

Location	Church Road, Ham Gate Avenue and Latchmere Lane, Richmond, TW10 5HD
Grid Reference	TQ180720
Ownership	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Designation	A Common Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMINC) – M84 Site of Borough Importance (SINC) – RiBII10
Area	Ham Common Woods 41.0Ha
Key habitats	Acid grassland, broadleaf woodland, wet woodland and scrub
Key species	Badgers, Bats, Song Thrush, Stag Beetle and Toads

### 3.2. Site Description

Ham Common Woods is the wooded part of the larger area of Ham Common, which is split into two distinct parts by the busy A307. On the west a large triangular piece of formal landscape popular with local residents for sport and recreation and on the east a calm wooded buffer with Richmond Park. Ham Common lies on river terrace gravels which gives rise to well drained slightly acidic soils. These rare acidic soils are home to a special collection of species communities that make up heathland and acid grassland. Lack of management on the eastern side has resulted in the succession of a predominantly Oak (*Quercus robur*) woodland and the loss of most of the heathland. There has been some sporadic gravel extraction from the woodland side giving rise to undulated surfaces with dips and swales. The formal western part of the Common is regularly mown and still has patches of acid grassland identified by the red tinge of the Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) which can be seen in the spring and summer.

Ham Common Woods and Ham Gate Avenue lie along the western edge of Richmond Park, providing an invaluable continuation of wildlife habitat, which is connected further to the River Thames through the Ham Avenues and The Copse. Roads cutting through the woodland mean issues for some wildlife trying to cross between breeding and foraging areas. A population of Common Toads (*Bufo bufo*) has declined significantly in the last 15 years due to traffic mortality from crossing Church Road between their terrestrial and breeding habitats.

Ham Gate Avenue is one of the five avenues that make up The Ham Avenues, a series of formal Avenues which radiate out from Ham House. Ham Gate Avenue runs between the north and central compartments of Ham Common Woods linking Ham Common formal and Richmond Park.

### 3.3 Designation

3.3.1 Ham Common Woods is designated as:

- A Common, full details can be found in Appendix 7
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), the definition of MOL can be found in Section 8
- A Local Nature Reserve, full details can be found in Appendix 8
- Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, (SMINC, full details can be found in Appendix 5

### 3.3.2 Ham Gate Avenue is designated as:

- A Common, full details can be found in Appendix 7
- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), the definition of MOL can be found in Section 8
- A Local Nature Reserve, full details can be found in Appendix 8
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), full details can be found in Appendix 6

## 3.4 History

### 3.4.1 Ham Common Woods

Ownership of Ham Common lay with the lord of the Manor and, from the mid-17th century to the early 20th century, this was held by the Earl of Dysart and the Tollemarche Family. The management of Ham Common, as with most commons, residents were able to freely graze their animals which kept the land free of trees and structural vegetation. Grazing ceased in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and since this time secondary broad-leaved woodland, predominantly Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) has developed.

### 3.4.2 Ham Gate Avenue

The Avenues are a remainder of the original Ham House Gardens developed in the 1670's by the then owners, the Dysart family. The Avenues radiated from the house as a display of wealth and power and they link the River Thames with Richmond Park. Unlike the other Avenues the structure of Ham Gate Avenue has been lost and contrary to the other Avenues it is not made up of Lime trees (*Tilia europaea*) but a mix of species including Oak, Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatinus*), London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) and Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). It is an aim of the Ham and Petersham Association Amenities Group and the Thames Landscape Strategy to restore this Avenue back to its original structural line with Oak trees as per its original setting.

## 3.5 Ecological interest and features

### 3.5.1 Ham Common Woods

Ham Common Woods has a mix of Nationally important lowland acid grassland, semi-improved grassland, broad leaved woodland and maturing oaks. The Oaks are not considered ancient, but several are notable because of their size.

#### 3.5.1.1 Ham Common Woods - Acid grassland

Acid grassland can be found in two main locations within Ham Common, a large glade in the central section and a small area within the southern section. The large glade is dominated by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Sheep's-sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) is abundant and cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) frequently found. Within the sward occasional specimens of Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Cock's-Foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) can be found. To the east of the grassland area a patch of gorse is growing.

The smaller area on the southern section is less diverse, including abundant Common Bent, together with less frequent grasses such as Cock's-Foot, Yorkshire Fog and Smaller Cat's-Tail (*Phleum bertolonii*). In the sward are the Acid Grassland indicator species Cat's-Ear, Mouse-Ear Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) and Hare's-Foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*).

Winter works have been carried out in the last 7 years to enlarge and improve the existing acid grassland habitat quality have been successful especially in the southern section; as well as creating new smaller areas in the central section. Further works are required to continue this improvement. When the Silver Birch trees within the centre of the southern section (AG2) fail they will not be replaced. This is to allow the acid grassland to be managed more effectively and to reduce the annual leaf drop which increases the nutrients. The specimen trees around compartment perimeters will be replaced with Lime trees as they are an important character of the local area.

### 3.5.1.2 *Ham Common Woods - Broadleaved woodland and scrub*

Ham Common Woods is a good example of relatively young, developing woodland. On the north side of Ham Gate Avenue, the woodland is predominantly Oak of varying ages, with frequent Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), occasional Birch (*Betula pendula* & *B. pubescens*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Yew (*Taxus baccata*). The shrub layer is dominated by bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) and Elm (*Ulmus* sp) occasional Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and the odd specimen of Dogwood (*Cornus* sp). A large dominant Elm scrub patch has formed adjacent to the houses on Ham Gate Avenue. There are some individual trees that have potential to become veteran trees and these need to be identified and mapped with a view to managing appropriately.

The central section is similar with additions of frequent Norway Maple (*A. platanooides*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) some of which are impressive in size, Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Field Rose (*Rosa arvensis*). There is a very dominant Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) understory which has had some control through a Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant, in 2014 – 2019. In two areas the ground flora has been kept clear of shrubs to encourage the acid grassland but in other areas the ground flora has come back well and needs to be controlled through rotational management.

There are two large specimens of Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) in the eastern end of the woods which were planted to celebrate King George V's Coronation on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1911. These need specific management plans to help ensure their longevity.





Photo courtesy of Vanessa Fison

The southern woodland section (W5) is predominantly made up of long straggly oaks. Where the Holly was removed in 2014, the understory has yet to develop due to the thick layer of leaf litter. A trial top soil scrape may help encourage this regeneration.

Compartments W4a and W4b are much smaller and slightly cut off due to Church Road and Latchmere lane, they are a similar composition to that of the main central section.

New glades are recommended to be created within the woodland to create new stepping stones for wildlife and increase the acid grassland and neutral grassland where possible.

Specimen Avenue trees have been planted along the Petersham Road boundary of the central section and also around compartment AG2; these trees should be managed as Avenue trees with canopy and basal growth management. If any of the formal trees fail they should be replaced with Limes unless specified by the Appropriate Council Officer.

#### 3.5.1.3 *Ham Common Woods - Ground flora*

In the northern section the ground flora includes frequent to abundant Ivy (*Hedra helix*), frequent Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) and Bracken (*Pteridium* sp). Species of note include occasional Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) and Black Bryony (*Tamus communis*) both of which are ancient woodland indicator species.

In the central section, outside the acid grassland areas, small glades and rides are characterised by frequent False Oat-Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Perennial Rye-Grass (*Lolium perenne*), Annual Meadow-Grass (*Poa annua*). Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Creeping Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) are occasional.

#### 3.5.1.4 *Ham Common Woods – Ponds, wetlands and ditches*

Due to the gravel extraction in the late 1800's, Ham Common woods is very undulated in places with depression and ditches especially to the east of the site. These have naturally led to some wetter ephemeral areas. Pond projects have been carried out in recent years to create

permanent ponds using the existing clay and liners using grants from Froglife in 2014 and 2020, creating ponds P1, P2 and P3 and P4 respectfully.

Latchmere Brook (T4), which flows from Kingston Borough, through private residential houses, Ham Common and then north into Richmond Park, is quite stagnant as the inflow source looks to have been blocked and the only water it gets is from road run off which brings additional sediment as well as chemical pollutants. A project to reduce the sediment within the Brook was carried out approx. 13 years ago and for a while has done well, but recent site visits look like it needs to be done again.

Water tests were done at the time and again 3 years after (2014) after, the PYSM [PSYM Method - Freshwater Habitats Trust](#) score of very poor was recorded each time. However, the Index of Biotic Integrity had increased from 0% in 2011 to 17% in 2014 indicating that there had been an improvement in water quality each time. A resurvey and further works are still required. An area adjacent to the brook has been adopted by the Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities group and they have sown the grass with a wildlife mix and have regular volunteer events to keep back the overhanging vegetation. A member of HPAAG has donated a dedicated bench for visitors to sit and watch the wildlife.

The brook flows into Latchmere Pond just inside the boundary of Richmond Park and beyond northwards. Unfortunately, Latchmere Pond has previously had two non native invasive species; New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) and Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*). This constrained the 2011 improvement project by preventing enhancement of the brook closer to the Park wall for fear of attracting the non native plants. A connecting drain from the Brook runs south under the road into the ditch on the north east side of Church Road, and then runs under the nearby houses, it is dry for most of the year.

Naturally damp areas are found around ponds P1 - P4 and also in the very north corner, where the floral species include common sedges (*Carex sp*) and rushes (*Juncus sp*). This area is relatively undisturbed apart from a few walkers.

### 3.5.2 Ham Common Woods - Fauna

A number of dying Birch trees, which are short-lived species, provide valuable habitat for woodpeckers and fungus such as Birch Polypore. The standing deadwood on this site also provides ideal habitats for Birds and Bats. The wooded and boundary areas are home to many Butterfly species including the Purple Hairstreak (*Favonius quercus*), Red Admirals (*Vanessa atalanta*) Large White (*Pieris brassicae*) and Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*). Breeding bird species include Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) Woodpeckers, Chiff Chaffs (*Phylloscopus collybita*), Great Tits (*Parus major*), Blue Tits (*Cyanistes caeruleus*). and Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*). Visiting birds include Firecrests (*Regulus ignicapill*) and Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*). The non native invasive Ring-Necked parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) native to southern Asia is abundant in this area and increasing throughout the whole of the south east and beyond. Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*) Common Frogs (*Rana temporaria*) and Common Toads (*Bufo bufo*) are all regular visitors helped by the improvements to the ponds and wetland areas.

#### 3.5.2.1 Ham Common Woods - Toads



In 2011 a population of Common Toads in their hundreds was reported to the council by a local resident concerned about traffic mortality on Church Road. The Toads were crossing the road from their terrestrial habitat to reach their breeding grounds. Despite a Toad Patrol being created by local volunteers, numbers have dwindled significantly. A remaining stalwart toad population has persevered, but with no new young toads being seen, it is thought that their breeding location (which has not been located despite several attempts to find it) has now been destroyed or access to it blocked. Since 2015 and again in 2016 a number of pond creation projects funded by Richmond Council and Froglife grants [Froglife](#) have enabled four ponds to be dug within the central compartment of Ham Common Woods in an attempt to divert new toadlets to use them for breeding instead. Anecdotal observations by the local Toad Patrol has recorded Toad (and Frog) spawn in the ponds but there is still work to be done to create successful breeding ponds. Recent water testing has been carried out to help understand what changes are required to improve and enhance the ponds, (see FOA report in Appendix 10).

#### 3.5.2.2 *Ham Common Woods - Badgers*

Richmond is a particularly good area for badgers and Ham is one of the epicenters, with numerous setts dating back decades. This is due to the sandy soil conditions which make easy digging for these charismatic animals. With abundant food sources, the population is doing well, but increased development in back gardens and unused backlands is pushing them out from their original setts and creating an increased interface between humans and badgers. Sadly, there are traffic casualties when individuals are travelling between setts and feeding grounds as well young males when forced out to find their own territories.

#### 3.5.2 *Ham Avenues*

The Ham Avenues consist of a Public Right of Way or road between two parallel rows of trees with a native hedge running behind and meadow grassland in front. Each Avenue has a slightly different width and structure depending on its location. Melancholy Walk, Petersham Avenue and Great South Avenue are made up with Lime trees. Ham Gate Avenue was originally Oaks but has since been diversified through inappropriate planting decades ago and has also lost its structure in places. The Great River Avenue has completely lost its formal tree line and is now a ride within the mature scrub and woodland.

##### 3.5.2.1 *Ham Avenues – meadow grassland*

The grassland in front of the trees is for the most part semi-improved grassland. The sward typically comprises Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), False Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Clumps of Cock's-Foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) is frequent and Annual Meadow Grass (*Poa annua*) occurs at the edges of the habitat. This grass is cut twice a year but where the grassland meets roads or paths a monthly metre wide pathside strip is required to keep access clear.

##### 3.5.2.2 *Ham Avenues – scrub/hedge*

Behind the tree line is a mix of native hedge and scrub made up from Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) which connects with the woodland of Ham Common, creating an important habitat and connecting corridor for nesting birds and mammals.

### 3.5.2.3 *Ham Avenues – Avenue trees*

The trees along Ham Gate Avenue have lost their formal structure and instead of the original Oaks have had a mix of tree species planted over the years. Several of the trees have developed into nice mature specimens which are extremely valuable to the woodland fauna, such as Bats and Owls. When the existing Avenue trees are required to be removed (for Health and Safety reasons) Oak (*Quercus robur*) trees should be planted at regular 20m intervals to reinstate the formality of the Avenue. A longer term aim is to look at reinstating the areas of lost Avenue.

## 3.6 Community involvement

There are two main groups interested in Ham Common Woods and Ham Gate Avenue, The Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities Group and the Thames Landscape Strategy.

### 3.6.1 *The Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities Group*

The Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities Group is a local group that was formed in 1933 and represents the residents of Ham and Petersham in all aspects of village life.

The objectives of the Group are:

To advance citizenship for the public benefit by protecting and improving the quality of life of people living in, working in, or visiting the area of Ham and Petersham, in particular by promoting and encouraging:

- 1) a sense of civic pride amongst members of the local public and the fostering of community involvement and the capacity to effect necessary change;
- 2) high standards of planning, urban design, landscaping, infrastructure and transport;
- 3) the conservation, creation of or improvement to lands, buildings, open spaces, waterways, amenities, features of historic interest and the individual character of localities, especially by adherence to the principles and practice of sustainable development, and the avoidance, removal, or improvement of features that are unsightly or, in the public interest, undesirable

[Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities Group - Ham and Petersham Association and Amenities Group](#)

### 3.6.2 *The Thames Landscape Strategy*

The Thames Landscape Strategy formed in 1994 is a non profit partnership organisation whose remit is *To conserve, promote and enhance for the future, one of the world's great river landscapes between Weybridge, Hampton and Kew*. Its main interest is with the Ham Gate Avenue which is a part of the Arcadian Thames [Arcadian Thames – Thames Landscape Strategy \(thames-landscape-strategy.org.uk\)](#).

Their objectives are:

- To champion community action by bringing together a partnership of organisations, individuals and community groups that have an interest in the Arcadian Thames.
- To implement the policies, projects and management proposals set out in the Thames Landscape Strategy and to develop new initiatives and opportunities.
- To improve sites of nature conservation value and create new opportunities for biodiversity and flood risk management.
- To protect and enhance historic buildings, historic parks and gardens, landscapes and ancient monuments.
- To raise awareness of the Thames Landscape Strategy, increase educational opportunities and promote understanding of the Thames environment and ways of protecting, conserving and enhancing that environment

***‘Landscape is not only seen with the eye, it is felt in the heart’***

The Thames Landscape Strategy is about people, and the ways they connect with their physical, aesthetic, historic, natural, recreational and spiritual landscape. At the core of this organisation, is the acknowledgement that landscape assessment is based on more than aesthetic or heritage interest alone.

The Thames Landscape Strategy accounts for this specialness – setting out ways to conserve and enhance this unique landscape for the benefit of all, for the next 100-years.

[Thames Landscape Strategy \(thames-landscape-strategy.org.uk\)](https://thames-landscape-strategy.org.uk)

### **3.7 St Andrews Church**

St Andrews Church and its’ churchyard are nestled on three sides by the southern part of Ham Common Woods. There is a separate management plan for the churchyard, but its interface with the Common is important as it is regularly visited by residents tending their loved one’s graves as well as visiting the Ham War Memorial. When managing this boundary, the aesthetics need to be considered as well as the biodiversity. This is especially important at Remembrance Day when parishioners gather round the Ham War Memorial to show their respect; an extra cut and collect is required outside the graveyard to provide the required standing space. (T15). The Ham War Memorial is listed on the Historic England National Heritage List for England number 1445855 - [Ham War Memorial, Non Civil Parish - 1445855 | Historic England](#).

A linear view from the St Andrews Church to the War memorial and beyond has been proposed in a draft Supplementary Planning Document ([Consultation Draft Local Views SPD \(richmond.gov.uk\)](#)) for approval in the Draft 2024 Local Plan (see Section 4), therefore the view from the War Memorial to Petersham Road should not be impeded by inappropriate tree planting and existing trees are to be kept at a minimum of a 4/5m canopy height.

### **3.8 Forest Schools**

Ham Common Woods has one regular forest school with children from age 3 to teenagers. Activities include, looking at the wide range of habitats found on site, identifying flora and fauna, scavenger hunts, bushcraft skills and shelter building with dedicated qualified leaders. All activities are carried out with small participant numbers and a leave no trace ethos.

### **3.9 Access and visitor experience**

Ham Common Woods is directly adjacent to Richmond Park and two roads run through the site splitting it into a number of sections. There are four formal Public Rights of Way and numerous pedestrian paths running through the site. A permissive horse path runs parallel to Ham Gate Avenue within the central area of the site allowing horses to ride from the stables near Ham Avenues through Ham Common formal to Richmond Park and beyond. A review the permissive horse paths is required as it's been over 20 years since they were introduced. Other uses of this site consist of bird watching, photography, exercise and dog walking.

#### *3.9.1 Car parking area*

The parking area on Church Road is not a formal car park, but an area of Common land that has had some adhoc surface treatments over time. There are no plans to formalise this as this would potentially require Secretary of State permission and an equivalent area of land substituted to make up for the loss of Common land.

### **3.10 Constraints**

There is evidence of high amounts of dog fouling and fly tipping and the site does seem to attract unauthorised camping due to the dense canopy in certain areas. There is also the possibility of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. There was a stand of Japanese knotweed in the north corner but has not been apparent for a number of years now. There is a concern of the unknown and long term impacts of Forest Schools, and the Council has frozen all new Forest School applications whilst monitoring the impacts.

### **3.11 Evaluation**

Although the site does suffer from some minor anti-social behaviour, the recent management improvements and habitat creation is helping to enhance the woodland setting.

The key habitats of this site are; acid grassland, broadleaf woodland, ponds, mature scrub and potential future veteran trees. The woodland supports a wide range of woodland birds, butterflies and mammals, several of which are scheduled species. The site is also notable for the wide range of bryophytes and fungi.

## **4.0 Policies**

### **4.1 Strategic Principles for Parks and Open Spaces**

The borough has the largest area of public open space per head of population of any London borough. We have a local and national reputation for quality and leadership in the delivery of excellent parks. To ensure the quality of our Parks and Open Spaces remains at a high level, following public consultation, we have developed a series of strategic principles by which parks will be managed.

1. Parks and Open Spaces will be a sustainable legacy for future generations.
2. Parks and Open Spaces will continue to define our borough.
3. Parks and Open Spaces will enrich the life, health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
4. The Council will lead in the delivery of excellent Parks and Open Spaces services.
5. Parks and Open Spaces will offer positive experiences to all visitors.
6. Through innovation, the future development of Parks and Open Spaces services will be ensured.
7. Increased community participation in Parks and Open Spaces will be encouraged and supported.
8. Parks and Open Spaces will be celebrated as centres of excellence.

All Council owned and managed parks and open spaces are controlled by Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). These orders impose various restrictions to dog control and other activities in our parks and open spaces, these can be found here. [https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/parks\\_enforcement\\_and\\_legislation#pspo](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/parks_enforcement_and_legislation#pspo).

### **4.2 The London Plan**

The Mayor for London is responsible for the strategic planning in London. Their duties include producing a 'Spatial Development Strategy' for London - the London Plan. Local (Local Authority level) plans must be in 'general conformity' with the plan. The London Plan 2021 recognises "the current and potential value of open space to communities, and to protect the many benefits of open space including those associated with sport and recreation, regeneration, the economy, health, culture, biodiversity, and the environment". [The London Plan 2021 - Table of Contents | London City Hall](#)

### **4.3 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames planning strategies**

#### **4.3.1 Local Plan**

Richmond upon Thames' Local Plan, adopted July 2018, recognises the importance of open space in the Borough. The extensive areas of open land create a varied and distinct landscape prominently defined by Richmond Hill and the River Thames valley in addition to Kew Gardens, two Royal Parks and many smaller open spaces and water courses. The importance

of open space as an urban structure, providing relief from the built environment, is acknowledged, as is the importance of providing for play and recreation. These collectively contribute to quality of life in the Borough.

The role of ecology and open space's ability to provide a range of habitats is recognised, leading the Borough to protect areas of nature conservation value and to manage and enhance wildlife habitats. The strategy seeks to promote open space as a network of recreational, ecological and landscape assets which both serve the people of the Borough and help enhance and preserve the Borough's physical entity. Richmond's current Local Plan can be found in Appendix 2 and a draft Local plan is currently undergoing consultation for adoption in 2024 which can be found here [Draft Local Plan - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#).

#### *4.3.2 London Borough of Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)*

To conserve Richmond's biodiversity, the decline of valuable species and habitats needs to be reversed. The origination of the Biodiversity Action Plan was one of the agreements resulting from the Rio 1992 Earth Summit (for more information see website - <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmenvaud/616/61604.htm> ) promoting the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources and to encourage protection.

Richmond's BAP priorities habitats and species that are rare, in decline or characteristic of Richmond, and aims to use them to help raise the profile of biodiversity in the borough. The BAP's strategy is based around protecting and celebrating local wildlife and improving the quality of wildlife habitats and the environment in our borough.

There are currently twenty Biodiversity Action Plans covering selected species and habitats for Richmond; they are listed in Appendix 1. The Council is committed to developing and implementing the objectives enshrined in these plans into their management practices; although these are not all relevant to Ham Common Woods. The plans that will have most relevance are: Acid Grassland, Neutral Grassland, Broad Leaved Woodland, Ancient Parkland and Veteran Trees, Ponds, Bats, Song Thrush and Stag Beetle.

#### *4.3.3 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Nature Conservation Policy*

Richmond Council adopted a new Nature Conservation Policy in 2019 in which the Council recognises the special and diverse wildlife found within its Borough and its' duty to protect and preserve biodiversity. The Policy outlines the ways the Council will achieve this through management of its land, planning obligations and monitoring. The policy can be found in Appendix 3.

#### *4.3.4 London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Tree Policy*

Richmond Council has a tree management policy which recognises the benefits of trees and outlines a responsible management approach towards trees within the Borough. This can be found at Appendix 4.



## 5.0 Site Vision and objectives

### 5.1 Site vision

To conserve, maintain and improve the quality of the acid and neutral grasslands, scrub woodland and pond habitats, whilst improving the visitor experience on site.

### 5.2 Higher Level Stewardship Agreement

Currently parts of the site are currently under a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS). The HLS aims to deliver significant environmental benefits. It involves more complex environmental management regimes utilising advice from local advisers, to develop a comprehensive agreement over a longer period of time. Richmond Councils HLS agreement is due to finish in 2027.

### 5.3 Objectives

From the site goals (*Section 2*) and informed by the site description and research into key areas, the following objectives have been developed to cover every aspect of the work to be done:

#### 5.3.1 *Objective 1: Nature conservation*

Maintain, improve and extend the acid grassland habitats on site to ensure this Nationally important habitat increases in size as well as quality.

Maintain and improve the pond and wetland habitats with a series of habitat enhancements.

Maintain and improve the quality of scrub, broad-leaved woodland and future veteran trees.

#### 5.3.2 *Objective 2: Visitor access*

Maintain the amenity grass, pathways, permissive horse paths, infrastructure and cleanliness. Reinstate lost Public Rights of Way where applicable and review permissive horse paths, making amendments where necessary.

#### 5.3.3 *Objective 3: Community involvement*

With support from the Council and Habitats and Heritage (H&H), raise the profile of Ham Common Woods and communicate with HPAAG, TLS, local residents and interested parties.

#### 5.3.4 *Objective 4: Management planning and Monitoring*

Review management regularly and amend work plan as appropriate to ensure site vision is achieved.

Look ahead to the next management plan period, factoring in potential further enhancements and management objectives.

\*Monitor the key habitats and species to ensure management action is achieving the site vision. \*Optional element to be costed separately and subject to funding.

## 6.0 Management Prescriptions

The following detailed prescriptions are designed to manage the site features to deliver the site vision and objectives; the detailed management aims and rationale are given where relevant. The site management is not set in stone and must be reviewed and updated based on evidence observed on site month to month or year to year, so that management is in response to the current conditions or any environmental change.

*Key to terms used within the prescriptions and work programme*

AC - Arboriculture Contractor

ACO - Appropriate Council Officer

GMC - Grounds Maintenance Contractor

LBRuT - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

NCC – Nature Conservation Contractor

**\*\*Brash piles** – when creating brash piles, fire hazards to be considered with excess brash removed off site

### 6.1 Objective 1: Nature conservation

#### 6.1.1 Prescription 1: Scrub and minor tree maintenance - **NCC**

Scrub is defined as transitional, or climax vegetation dominated by locally native shrubs, usually less than 5 m tall, occasionally with a few scattered trees.

Scrub is a dynamic habitat and must be controlled in order to prevent adjacent habitat such as grassland from disappearing, however it is also valuable in its own right through providing nesting opportunities for birds and overwintering invertebrates. Scrub of differing ages throughout a site creates a valuable habitat mosaic for a greater species diversity. The elm scrub (*Target Note 5*) is of particular importance to the White-Letter Hairstreak (*Satyrion w-album*, a S41 Species of Principal Importance (of the NERC Act 2006)) which relies on Elm for all parts of its lifecycle.

- All scrub works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (for definition see Section 8) unless first checked for nesting birds by an Ecologist.
- Rotationally coppice 15% in each compartment to ensure a range of ages is available for different invertebrates. Map works carried out each year for reference.
- Annually cut back bramble leaders or scrub encroachment onto meadow and amenity grassland.
- Areas of permanent dense scrub to be left unmanaged, and only trimmed if encroaching grassland areas.
- Remove any non native species present. Where in abundance, remove over an appropriate period by thinning to allow natural succession and use stump treatment to prevent regrowth.
- Any cordwood and small brash piles\*\* should be stacked for habitat/deadwood value.
- All stems near paths must be cut to ground level to avoid creating any trip hazards.
- Remove canopy deadwood and mature growth of ivy on trees within 2m of paths.
- Where tree pruning is required, wounds should be kept to the minimum diameter necessary.

### 6.1.2 *Prescription 2a: Acid grassland maintenance – NCC*

Maintain and improve the acid grassland to increase the diversity and abundance of floral and grass species. The grassland is currently under a Natural England Higher Level Stewardship biannual cutting regime.

- Litter pick before cutting any grass.
- Meadow cutting must not be carried out during high winds or extreme wet weather.
- Cut the grass twice a year, achieving a sward height of 10-15cm and all cuttings removed off site, a small proportion can be used to create a hibernaculum as per good practice.
- 5% of grass to be left uncut per year, the 5% area should be rotated around the site per year and marked on the site map for reference.
- A 1m buffer zone should be left along the scrub parcels.
- Once diversity has been increased the cutting regime will be revisited.
- Increase the acid grassland permanently through pushing back trees and scrub.

### 6.1.3 *Prescription 2b: Neutral grass maintenance – NCC*

Maintain and improve the neutral grassland to increase the diversity and abundance of floral and grass species.

- Litter pick before cutting any grass.
- Meadow cutting must not be carried out during high winds or extreme wet weather.
- Cut the grass, cow parsley and upright hedge parsley after the plants have set seed but before they get too tall or woody. All arisings to be removed.
- A further cut and collect is required at the end of August or beginning of September.
- Once diversity has been increased the cutting regime will be revisited.
- If the growing season has been extended due to weather conditions, a further third cut and may be required over the winter months.

### 6.1.4 *Prescription 3: Woodland – Woodland management – NCC*

Due to lack of previous woodland management, the first 5 years of management are concentrating on removal of non native species and Holly. Following that a resurvey will be done and a new plan drawn up.

- All woodland works are to be in accordance with good practice.
- All woodland works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (for definition see Section 8) unless first checked for nesting birds by an Ecologist.
- Remove 20% of non native species such as Sycamore and Norway Maple per compartment per year, over a 5 year period by thinning to allow natural succession. If required use stump treatment to prevent regrowth.
- Where trees are of a good size, ring barking can be carried out to create standing dead wood.
- Exceptions to removals are mature non native trees that are beginning to show bird or bat roosting features, these should be left unless their removal will contribute significantly to acid grassland or pond enhancements; or known to host bird nesting such as Owls or Kestrels.
- 15% of Holly to be removed from each compartment per year with the aim of having a maximum of 10 – 20% of Holly (of the 2023 levels) remaining after 5 years. Dense Holly clusters should be retained for habitat purposes as well as along the boundaries of the site to act as a visual barrier from the roads. Works to start in compartment W1a.
- Following the first 5 years of non native and Holly control, woodland management will be revised to look at the woodland structure and understory.

- Where tree works are required alongside path, stems must be cut to ground level avoiding any trip hazard creation.
- Any cordwood and small brash piles\*\* should be stacked for habitat/deadwood value.
- Remove canopy deadwood and mature growth of ivy on trees within 2m of paths.
- Where tree pruning is required, wounds should be kept to the minimum diameter necessary.
- In collaboration with Appropriate Council Officer halo around any mature or potential veteran trees carefully and sensitively.
- In agreement with the Appropriate Council Officer selective planting can be carried out.
- Potential veteran trees should be reported to Appropriate Council Officer
- Bat checks and surveys are required as per best practice.

#### 6.1.5 *\*Prescription 4: Potential veteran tree management – NCC or specialist tree contactors*

Veteran trees are an important part of the woodland setting; appropriate and expert management is required.

- \*A veteran tree survey and schedule of works to be produced with required works listed on a priority basis.
- All works on potential veteran trees to be in accordance with the good practice guidance.
- Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (for definition see Section 8) unless first checked for nesting birds.
- Any arisings to remain near the base of original tree in small brash piles. Only if there is an unacceptable fire hazard should excess to be removed off site.
- Remove canopy deadwood and mature growth of ivy on trees within 2m of paths unless agreed with LBRuT Arboriculture Team.
- Bat checks and surveys are required as per best practice.

*\* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding*

#### 6.1.6 *\*Prescription 5: King's Trees management – NCC or specialist tree contactors*

The King's Trees are historically significant trees and management is required to ensure their longevity.

- A survey and schedule of works for the King's Trees to be produced with required works listed on a priority basis.
- All works on the King's trees to be in accordance with the good practice guidance.
- Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (for definition see Section 8) unless first checked for nesting birds.
- Remove canopy deadwood and mature growth of ivy on trees within 2m of paths.
- Where tree pruning is required, wounds should be kept to the minimum diameter necessary.
- Bat checks and surveys are required as per best practice.

*\* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding*

#### 6.1.7 *Prescription 6: Avenue and perimeter tree maintenance – NCC or specialist tree contractor*

All specimen Avenue trees are to be managed in accordance with the LBRuT Tree Policy (Appendix 4), ensuring the vista is clear and any failed trees are replaced with Oaks (*Quercus robur*). Long term the aim is to reinstate the structural integrity of the Avenue trees

- Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season (for definition see Section 8) unless first checked for nesting birds.

- The canopy of the Avenue trees is to be kept a minimum of 4/5 metres above ground level and a uniform gap between tree canopy lines, ensuring the vista is kept clear as per Local Plan Policy LP5.
- All arisings to be removed off site unless permitted by the Appropriate Council Officer for habitat creation behind the tree line.
- Remove canopy deadwood and mature growth of ivy on trees within 2m of paths.
- Where tree pruning is required, wounds should be kept to the minimum diameter necessary.
- Where Avenue trees are to be removed for Health and Safety reasons, new Oak (*Quercus robur*) trees are to be replanted by LBRuT within the next growing season.
- Bat checks and surveys are required as per best practice.

#### 6.1.8 Prescription 7: Hedgerow maintenance – **NCC**

There is only one formal hedge in Ham Common Woods (T13) which is within compartment W5 alongside a desire line adjacent to residential properties. The hedge is predominantly Holly and only one side is the Council's responsibility. A dead hedge (T14) runs alongside Ham Farm Road to prevent unauthorised access into the woodland behind as this is a non-intervention area.

- Hedges should be pruned annually and left neat and tidy after cutting, with no structural damage to the main trunks, ie rips or tears. Appropriate machinery must be used.
- Any vegetation more than the annual growth to be checked with Appropriate Council Officer before.
- Berries and flowers must be allowed to grow to provide a food/nectar source for birds, mammals, and invertebrates.
- There should be refuge areas of longer grass alongside hedges with less than 5% bare ground.
- Leaf litter should be left under hedges.
- The dead hedge is to be topped up annually using arisings from the Common.

#### 6.1.9 Prescription 8: Glade and Ride *\*creation, extension, and management* – **NCC**

Glades provide larger areas of open habitat within a woodland which have varying levels of vegetation structure favoured by invertebrates. Rides connect these glades and link the woodland to the wider habitat network. New glades and rides are required to enhance the diversity. Existing glades are to be increased on a phased approach.

- In Year 1, locations for two new glades to be determined and agreed with Appropriate Council Officer and stakeholders, one each within the northern and central sections.
- *\*Glades should be approx. 50m by 50m where possible and a price for their creation should be submitted as a separate cost within the tender submission.*
- The location of the glades should be based on existing openness and lack of mature or significant native trees. Ideally non native trees should be removed.
- Extend existing glades T6, T7, T8, T9 and T10 to a minimum of 30m x 30m
- Glade in W5 (T11) to undergo a soil scraping trial to allow ground vegetation to establish. If possible, soil to be reused or removed off site.
- Following approval in year 1, *\*two new glades to be created in years 2 and 3.*
- In year 1, investigate locations for new ride/s to be presented to Appropriate Council Officer and stakeholders for consideration. Further funding will be required for this.
- All stems near paths must be cut to ground level avoiding any trip hazard creation.
- Any cordwood and small brash piles\*\* should be stacked for habitat/deadwood value.
- Once new glades are created, they must be managed as open glades.
- New glades and rides are to be digitally mapped and added to the Council records.

- Where tree pruning is required, wounds should be kept to the minimum diameter necessary.
- \* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding

#### 6.1.10 Prescription 9: Ponds and Wetland areas – **NCC**

The ponds are an important habitat within the woodland and a priority for the Council. Surveys have been carried out to determine works required for the improvement of the habitat for amphibians and other wildlife see Appendix 10.

- Produce a specific Pond Plan and schedule of works for each pond/wetland area (P1, P2, P3, P4 and T4) within 3 months of NCC commencing (taking in consideration Appendix 10).
- In years 1/2 submit a funding application in partnership with Appropriate Council Officer for required pond works.
- If the funding bid is successful carry out pond works in year 2/3.
- Support the Toad Patrol with help installing and removing temporary fencing in liaison with the Toad Patrol leader.
- Report any hazards to Appropriate Council Officer within 24 hours of observation.
- Recommendations for any changes of management to be reported to Appropriate Council Officer at next management meeting.

#### 6.1.11 Prescription 10: Invasive and Schedule 9 Species management – **LBRuT/NCC**

Invasive species must be either eradicated or controlled depending upon species. Those species of a hazardous nature such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed or Oak Processionary Moth will be treated by LBRuT. Himalayan Balsam and selected non-native herbaceous species should be controlled by the NCC, unless agreed with the Appropriate Council Officer.

- Any treatment of non-native herbaceous species, Creeping Thistle, Holm Oak, False Acacia and Tree of Heaven, must be approved by Appropriate Council Officer prior to commencing and must be done according to best practice.
- Where stands of hazardous non-native plants are identified, Nature Conservation Contractor to prepare map and advise the Appropriate Council Officer within 24 hours.

## 6.2 Objective 2: Visitor Experience

#### 6.2.1 \*Prescription 11: Amenity grass maintenance – **GMC/NCC**

To be carried out by Grounds Maintenance Contractor in liaison with NCC.

- Council Parks Officers to carry out visual checks on amenity grass areas and commission any works required.
  - \*Grass in front of residential properties on Church Road to be cut on an amenity grass schedule.
  - \*Benches and park infrastructure and furniture to be neatly trimmed round.
  - Nature Conservation Contractor to support Council Parks Officers by reporting any defects noted whilst on site.
- \* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding

#### 6.2.2 \*Prescription 12 Pathside metre strip maintenance – **GMC/NCC**

To be carried out by Grounds Maintenance Contractor in liaison with NCC.

- Council Parks Officers to carry out visual checks on metre strips and vertical edging and commission any works required.
- \*Grounds Maintenance Contractor to cut 0.5m pathside strips on a monthly basis,



- \*GMC to cut/prune vertical edging twice a year, before and after bird nesting season. In cases of rapid growth additional light cuts may be necessary, subject to bird nesting. Cutting should be done with appropriate machinery and left neat and tidy, with no structural damage to the main trunks, ie rips or tears.
  - \*Benches and park furniture to be neatly sttimmed round.
  - Any vegetation more than the annual growth to be checked with Appropriate Council Officer before.
  - Where possible berries and flowers must be allowed to grow to provide a food/nectar source for birds, mammals, and invertebrates.  
Nature Conservation Contactor to support Council Parks Officers by reporting any defects noted whilst on site.
- \* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding

### 6.2.3 *Prescription 13: Maintain pathways, boundaries and check structures - LBRuT/NCC*

Provide a welcoming and clean visitor environment with clear entrances, paths, roads and parking area including free from trip hazards.

- Council Parks Officers to carry out visual checks on Infrastructure and signage and commission any repairs required.
- Nature Conservation Contractor to coppice the Lime in the parking area annually.
- Nature Conservation Contractor to support Parks Officers by reporting any defects noted whilst on site. Emergency works to be reported within 24 hours non urgent within 5 days.
- Where large timber is generated through woodland works, NCC to move trunks to verges on Church Road to prevent unauthorised parking and driving on the common.

### 6.2.4 *Prescription 14: St Andrews Church – LBRuT/NCC*

Ensure boundaries with St Andrews Church, Graveyard and the War Memorial and vista are maintained as appropriate.

- Ensure the view from St Andrews Church towards Petersham Road through the Ham War memorial is clear.
- Manage tree canopies within the centre of Compartment AG2 are kept at a 4/5m height.
- Every November cut and collect the grassland in the area on the Common side of the War Memorial (T15) to provide standing room prior to Remembrance Day.
- Council Parks Officers to carry out visual checks on Infrastructure and signage and initiate any repairs required.
- Nature Conservation Contactor to support Council Parks Officers by reporting any defects noted whilst on site.

### 6.2.5 *Prescription 15: Bridleway and Permissive horse path maintenance – NCC*

Provide a welcoming and clean horse-riding environment with clear entrances and paths, including free from trip and eye hazards.

- Nature Conservation Contractor to carry out visual checks on permissive horse paths and bridle ways and implement any repairs required.
- Maintain vegetation alongside bridleways and permissive horse paths at a 3m width by 3m height to ensure horses and riders can safely pass.
- Top up surfacing (with an agreed material) on a regular basis but no less than every two years, unless agreed with Appropriate Council Officer.
- Ensure bridleways and permissive horse paths are free from compaction and can free drain, preventing puddles forming with an annual harrow.
- Maintain bridleways and permissive horse path surfaces as per national guidance.

- NCC to assist LBRuT review of permissive horse paths when required.

#### 6.2.6 *Prescription 16: Litter collection – GMC/NCC*

All Nature Conservation Sites must be kept free of litter. The bins should be emptied under the Parks Cleansing contract at least three times per week.

- Council Parks Officers to carry out visual checks for litter on site and report any hotspots.
- Regular litter picking to be carried out by GMC within 2m of main paths and pavements.
- Scavenge picks and/or deep cleans to be carried out annually by GMC or when required.
- Nature Conservation Contractor to litter pick whilst working on site, any large items or fly tip to be reported to Appropriate Council Officer within 24 hours.

### 6.3 **Objective 3: Publicity and communication**

#### 6.3.1 *Prescription 17: Publicity and communication – NCC*

The Council is keen to ensure Friends groups and local residents are kept up to date with works on site. NCC to liaise with stakeholders as well as other Council contractors and partners such as the LBRuT Parks Enforcement Contractor and the local rough sleep charity SPEAR.

- Nature Conservation Contractor to liaise with interested parties before each season's work.
- Nature Conservation Contractor to provide summaries of work for ward councillors and press releases when required by Appropriate Council Officer
- Nature Conservation Contractor to report any signs of rough sleeping or antisocial behaviour/vandalism to Appropriate Council Officer within 24 hours of sighting.

### 6.4 **Objective 4: Management Planning and Monitoring**

#### 6.4.1 *Prescription 18: Review Management and Work Plans – LBRuT, NCC*

The plan should be seen as a live document for ongoing editing and updating, no plan can anticipate every situation or environmental response and it is vital that management be reviewed every year and the subsequent work programme adjusted. To ensure that management remains on track to deliver the site vision and objectives, the completed actions must be reviewed each year and if necessary, the following years actions updated.

- Unless otherwise agreed in writing a monthly report should be submitted to the Appropriate Council Officer outlining details of projects undertaken and items of note
- This should include a simple summary of the work completed with an annotated map to be discussed at an annual review meeting (in November) with the Appropriate Council Officer.
- A minimum of twice yearly site visits will be undertaken with the Appropriate Council Officer to assess work progress and any issues.
- This management plan will be fully reviewed at the end of every 5-year period (next due in 2029) to evaluate achievements of the site vision and objectives. At this time useful feedback from NCC and stakeholders along with requirements for further funding and resources should be considered and used to produce an updated management plan for the next five or ten year period, as appropriate.

#### 6.4.2 *Prescription 19: Monitor key species and habitats. - NCC*

To inform future management plans, species and habitat information should be collated. Key species and habitats including, but not restricted to, those featured within the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan and those classed as 'priority' by the Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

- On each site visit, any sightings to be collated and reported back to the Appropriate Council Officer and Habitats and Heritage (H&H) for recording.
- Where a sighting is imminently important to the management of a site (such as bird nesting, uncovering of a badger sett/fox earth etc) the impacts must be discussed with the Appropriate Council Officer and a decision taken to continue the works or not.

• **\*Species surveys to inform site management. Surveys are listed below in Table 1.**

\* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding

6.4.3 Table 1 – Species surveys required

Survey type	Expected timing	Survey details
Ash dieback survey	June-Aug	Carry out basic ash dieback survey across the site. Survey should follow health categories detailed by the Tree Council.
Ancient and veteran tree survey	Jan-Dec	Identify, number tag and map all veteran and ancient trees. Produce a schedule of required works in priority order
Amphibian survey	Mar-Jun	Survey suitable waterbodies for amphibians during springtime to determine a) presence/likely absence and b) population size where present.
Breeding bird survey	Mar-Sep	Carry out a breeding bird survey in Ham Common Woods.
Set up butterfly transect route across the site	Apr-Sept	Liaise with Butterfly Conservation Trust to see if possible to set up official transect. If not carry out bi-weekly butterfly transect following same survey methodology.
Survey and map Potential Roost Features (PRF's)	Jan-Dec	Survey woodland and build a QGIS database of all trees with PRF's.
Mammal survey	Jan-Dec	Survey woodland using live capture traps for mammals.
Invertebrate survey	May-Sept	site wide invertebrate survey including interception traps for saproxylic invertebrates
Moth trapping		Set up light traps to survey for moth species
Bioacoustic surveys for bats	May-Oct	Use static bioacoustics recorders to survey for bat species across the site each season
Maintain pan species site list and send to Habitats and Heritage	Jan-Dec	Keep up to date records of all species recorded and send records to Habitats and Heritage <a href="https://habitatsandheritage.org.uk">Richmond Biodiversity Partnership - Habitats &amp; Heritage (habitatsandheritage.org.uk)</a>

## 6.5 Objective 5 : Tree Health and Safety works

### 6.5.1 Prescription 20: Dangerous trees procedure **ACC/NCC**

- All Council Nature Conservation Sites are surveyed by Council Tree Officers on the approved cycle and any required works will be specified and undertaken by the Councils Arboriculture Contactor within an appropriate time period.
- Reactive Health and Safety tree works will be carried out by the Council's Arboriculture Contactor as required. However minor remedial works may be carried out by the NCC with prior approval of the Arboriculture Manager.
- Nature Conservation Contractor to report any hazardous trees to the Tree Technical Support Team immediately.

**6.6 Table 2 – Ham Common Woods Local Nature Reserve Work programme 2024 – 2029**

Prescription	Priority	Year and compartment					Usual Timing	Lead resource	Prescription details	Comments
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29				
P1: Scrub and minor tree maintenance	1	All	All	All	All	All	Oct - Feb	NCC	Rotationally coppice 15% per area per year. Cut back bramble and other suckers/leaders from grassland. Remove non natives.	Precautionary approach for hibernating hedgehogs
P2a: Acid grassland maintenance	1	AG1 AG2	AG1 AG2	AG1 AG2	AG1 AG2	AG1 AG2	March and September	NCC	Cut the grass achieving a sward height of 10-15cm and any cuttings should be removed off site, a small proportion can be used to create a hibernaculum as per good practice.	5% of grass to be left uncut per year. A 1m buffer zone should be left along the scrub parcels.
P2b: Neutral grassland maintenance	1	G1 G2 G3	G1 G2 G3	G1 G2 G3	G1 G2 G3	G1 G2 G3	June and September	NCC	Cut and remove neutral grassland islands at a height of 10 – 15cm after seeds have been set but before plant gets too woody.	Ensure parks infrastructure are neatly cut round
P3: Woodland management	1	W1 W2 W3 W4 W5	W1 W2 W3 W4 W5	W1 W2 W3 W4 W5	W1 W2 W3 W4 W5	W1 W2 W3 W4 W5	Oct - Feb	NCC	Remove 20% of non native species and 15% of Holly from each compartment per year. Halo round any potential mature specimens, create glades and maintain edges.	Woodland management to be revisited once non native species are removed.
*P4: Veteran Tree Management	1	All	All	All	All	All	As per best practice	NCC	Veteran tree survey and schedule of works to be prepared.	All veteran tree works to be in accordance with current best practice.
*P5: King's Trees management	1	W1a	W1a	W1a	W1a	W1a	Oct - Feb	NCC	Survey and schedule of works for King's Trees to be prepared.	All tree works to be in accordance with current best practice.
P6: Ham Gate Avenue tree maintenance	1	Ham Gate Ave	Ham Gate Ave	Ham Gate Ave	Ham Gate Ave	Ham Gate Ave	Oct - Feb	NCC	The canopy of the Avenue trees is to be kept a minimum of 5 metres above ground level and uniform gap between tree lines, ensuring the vista is kept clear.	Where Avenue trees are to be removed, Oak trees to be planted within the next growing season.

P7: Hedgerow maintenance	1	W5	W5	W5	W5	W5	Oct - Feb	NCC	Prune hedgerow annually. Top up dead hedge with arisings from metre-strips and vertical edging.	Avoid bird nesting season.
*P8: Glade and Ride creation, extension, and management	1	W1b W1c W1d W3	W1b W1c W1d W3	W1b W1c W1d W3	W1b W1c W1d W3	W1b W1c W1d W3	Oct - Feb	NCC	Extend existing glades. Identify two new glade locations. Glade T11 to undergo soil scraping. Investigate the potential for new ride/s to be created for consideration by the ACO.	Precautionary approach for hibernating hedgehogs. Avoid bird nesting season
*P9: Pond and wetland area management	1	W1c W3c	W1c W3c	W1c W3c	W1c W3c	W1c W3c	Sept - Feb	NCC	Write and submit Pond Plan in first 3 months of contract. Funding bid to be submitted in partnership with LBRuT	As per best practice
P10: Invasive and Schedule 9 Species management	1	All	All	All	All	All	As required	LBRuT/NCC	Manage non-native invasive species as required in line with best practice.	Treatment must be done according to best practice.
*P11: Amenity grassland maintenance	1	A1	A1	A1	A1	A1	*June and September	GMC/NCC	Cut grass on an amenity grass regime (between 50 – 70mm height) unless formally agreed with ACO	Ensure trees and parks infrastructure are neatly cut round
*P12: Pathside metre strip maintenance	1	All	All	All	All	All	April - Nov	GMC/NCC	Pathside strips to be cut and removed on a monthly basis.	Ensure trees and parks infrastructure are neatly cut round
P13: Maintain pathways, boundaries and check structures	1	All	All	All	All	All	All year	LBRuT/GMC	Report any defects to ACO	
P14: St Andrews Church	1	AG2	AG2	AG2	AG2	AG2	As required	NCC	Keep vista clear. Cut and collect grass around War Memorial before Remembrance day	
P15: Bridle way and Permissive horse path maintenance	1	W1	W1	W1	W1	W1	As best practice	NCC	Keep a 3m wide by 3m height path for horses.	
P16: Litter collection	1	All	All	All	All	All	All year	GMC/NCC	Litter pick when on site, any large/bulky litter and fly tipping to be reported to ACO within 24 hours	
P17: Publicity and Communication	1						All year	NCC	Liaise with interested parties and prepare brief summaries of works when required	



P18: Review plan and work programme annually	1						Sept	LBRuT /NCC	Annual meeting in September to discuss works for forthcoming year.	
P19a: Monitor key species and habitats.	1	All	All	All	All	All	As appropriate	NCC	Sightings to be reported to ACO and Habitats and Heritage as appropriate.	
*P19b: Monitor key species and habitats. Optional Survey work	1	All	All	All	All	All	As appropriate	NCC	Provide species surveys as per best practice to inform management plan	
P20 Tree Health and Safety works	1	All	All	All	All	All	As required	ACC/NCC	Report health and safety works to Tree Technical Support Team	

## 6.6 Priority levels

**1** – Very important for the maintenance of the key habitats, species or visitor amenity

(i.e. annual meadow cut) and should reflect the bare minimum of what should be achieved each year.

**2** – Of secondary importance to the key tasks, to be done if more time / resources are available (i.e. coppicing / thinning a secondary woodland boundary to a meadow, or additional survey work); priority 2 tasks could become 1s if not completed for a number of years.

**3** – Luxury, wish list tasks: nice to do but not important if resources are not available; these items might become priority 2s over time if not completed but are unlikely ever to reach priority 1 unless significant change in other factors.

**1** – Priorities in red mean the task was not completed as scheduled.

**R** – Reactive, unplanned work, may be coupled with a numerical priority, i.e. R1.

\* Optional element to be priced separately and is dependent on funding

## 7.0 Management Map

### 7.1 Map to show site features and management compartments



#### Target Notes:

- 1 – Badger sett
- 2 – Badger sett
- 3 – Japanese knotweed
- 4 – Latchmere Brook
- 5 – Elm scrub
- 6 – Woodland glade
- 7 – Woodland glade
- 8 – Woodland glade
- 9 – Woodland glade
- 10 – Woodland glade
- 11 – Woodland glade
- 12 – The King's Trees
- 13 – Holly hedge
- 14 – Dead hedge
- 15 – Ham War Memorial
- 16 – Parking area



## 7.2 Map to show pathside strips and vertical edging



## 8.0 References

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## 9.0 Glossary

### 9.1 Bird Nesting Season

Bird nesting season (BNS) is classed as from the 1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> July inclusive however some birds (for eg herons) breed outside of this period and this is going to become increasingly common with climate change. All breeding birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/plants-for-wildlife/garden-hedges/hedge-law/>

### 9.2 Bridle way and Permissive Horse paths

#### 9.2.1 *Bridle way*

Bridle way” means a highway over which the public have the following, but no other, rights of way, that is to say, a right of way on foot and a right of way on horseback or leading a horse, with or without a right to drive animals of any description along the highway; extract taken from [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(c. 69\) \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

#### 9.2.2 *Permissive horse path*

Permissive horse paths are paths that Richmond Council have allowed horses to use for recreational purposes. These paths may be changed from time to time in accordance with management objectives with the site.

### 9.3 Green Belt

Green Belt (GB) is a national policy designation and there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In line with the NPPF, the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

### 9.4 Metropolitan Open land

Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is open land or water which is of significance to London as a whole or a part of London, either publicly or privately owned, and with or without a public access, which either:

- a) Contributes to the physical structure of London and helps to separate and/or define London’s distinctive communities’
- b) Contributes to the establishment of London’s special character by providing attractive breaks in what would otherwise be continuous urban development
- c) Creates a significant visual open space experience when used, passed or crossed
- d) Contains natural features, buildings or landscape of historic, recreational, agricultural, natural conservation or scientific interest, worthy of protection on account of their value nationally or to the whole part or a part of London
- e) Includes open air facilities, especially for leisure, recreation and sport of importance for the whole or a part of London; or

- f) Forms part of a green chain of related open spaces and linking footpaths, bridleways, riverside and canal walks and towpaths

Some open spaces and gardens which themselves might not be of significance to London as a whole, but which combine visually and physically to form a larger significant open area or green wedge are included.

## **9.5 Other Open Land of Townscape Importance (OOLTI)**

Open areas, which are not extensive enough to be defined as Metropolitan Open Land, but act as pockets of greenery of local significance, contribute to the local character, and are valued by residents as open spaces in the built-up area. These areas can include public and private sports grounds, some school playing fields, cemeteries, allotments, private gardens, areas of vegetation such as street trees and mature trees. OOLTI is a local policy and new designations are made by the council as part of the plan-making process. This is different to the national policy designation of 'Local Green Space'.

## **9.6 Public Open Space**

Public Open Space is parks and similar land for public use, whether provided by the Council, or privately, where access for the public is secured by virtue of legal agreements.

## **9.7 Richmond Biodiversity partnership**

The Richmond Biodiversity Partnership (RBP) is an independent consortium of local specialists and organisations concerned with wildlife and biodiversity across Richmond Borough. Chaired by Habitats & Heritage, the Partnership regularly updates and publishes the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan (see 4.3.2), a strategy document that details plans for the protection and management of habitats and species of national, regional or local significance and those that are on the Red List of Threatened Species across the Borough

## **9.8 Site of Importance for Nature Conservation**

London's most valuable and special places for wildlife are recognised by the Mayor and London borough councils as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Over 1500 SINCs have been identified across the capital. Within Richmond Borough there are 55 (as of 2019) and some are also designated as Local Nature Reserves or as internationally or nationally important sites for the habitats or species found within them. Many SINC's are places where residents and visitors can enjoy nature close up.

There are three tiers of SINC's those important at Metropolitan, Borough and Local levels.

**9.8.1 Metropolitan Importance** - contain habitats or species important at a London Level for example bats or acid grassland. These sites may not all have public access.

**9.8.2 Borough Importance** – contain habitats or species important at a borough Level for example stab beetles. These sites may not all have public access

**9.8.3 Local Importance** - contain habitats or species important at a local level such as graveyards. These sites have open public access



## Appendix 1

Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan, habitats and species relevant to Ham Common Woods, [online] available at - [https://habitatsandheritage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-Richmond\\_compressed.pdf](https://habitatsandheritage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-Richmond_compressed.pdf)

## Appendix 2

Richmond Council Local Plan, [online] available at - [Draft Local Plan - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames](#)

## Appendix 3

Richmond Council Nature Conservation Policy – link  
[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/17991/nature\\_conservation\\_policy\\_statement.pdf](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/17991/nature_conservation_policy_statement.pdf)

## Appendix 4

Richmond Council Tree Policy [online available at] -  
[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/18699/tree\\_policy.pdf](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/18699/tree_policy.pdf)

## Appendix 5

SINC designation for Ham Common Woods

Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation

Site Reference:	M082
Site Name:	Richmond Park and associated areas
Summary:	One of London's two National Nature Reserves, with a tremendous
range of wildlife	habitats, including grassland, woodlands, ponds and some very old
trees. Of great	importance for insects, especially beetles.
Grid ref:	TQ 200 730
Area (ha):	1063.55
Borough(s):	Richmond upon Thames
Habitat(s):	Acid grassland, Bracken, Pond/lake, Secondary woodland, Veteran trees, Wet grassland
Access:	Free public access (all/most of site)
Ownership:	The Royal Parks and London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Site Description:

In addition to Richmond Park itself, this site includes Richmond Park and Sudbrook Park Golf Courses as well as Ham, Petersham, East Sheen and Palewell Commons. Together, these form an extensive area of high quality wildlife habitats. The many ancient pollarded oaks are of international importance for invertebrates, especially beetles, and also support a wide range of fungi and hole-nesting birds. The stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) is common here, while many

other insect species are nationally rare or scarce. Acid grassland is the most extensive habitat on the site, and includes both dry and damp areas. These support numerous regionally uncommon plants, including upright chickweed (*Moenchia erecta*), blinks (*Montia fontana*) and subterranean clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*). A variety of wetlands include ponds, ditches and a section of the Beverley Brook. These support many locally uncommon plants, including Ivy-Leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*), and an extremely diverse invertebrate fauna, including 135 species of wetland beetles. There are also several areas of plantation woodland supporting a diversity of breeding birds, including woodcock and hobby. The adjacent golf courses and common provide additional areas of acid grassland and secondary woodland. Richmond Park is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve and a Special Area for Conservation (EU Habitats Directive).

Site first notified:	19/09/1988	Boundary last changed:	09/03/2001
Citation last edited:	22/05/2006	Mayor Agreed:	25/11/2002
Defunct:	N	Last Updated:	14/03/2007

## Appendix 6

SINC designation for Ham Gate Avenue

Site of Borough Grade II Importance for Nature Conservation

Site Reference: RiBII10

Site Name: The Copse, Holly Hedge Field and Ham Avenues

Summary: A flowery meadow, a stand of ancient oaks and an historic avenue of lime trees  
combine to provide habitat for a wealth of animals and plants.

Grid ref: TQ 174 726

Area (ha): 11.88

Borough(s): Richmond upon Thames

Habitat(s): Scattered trees, Secondary woodland, Semi-improved neutral grassland, Veteran trees

Access: Free public access (all/most of site)

Ownership: London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, National Trust

Site Description:

Holly Hedge Field is an attractive, flowery meadow. Parts are quite rough and dominated by cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), while areas of finer grassland display sheets of bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) intermingled with other wild flowers, including meadow saxifrage (*Saxifraga granulata*), which is rare in London. The Copse is a stand of ancient oaks (*Quercus robur*). Their gnarled trunks and twisted branches contain much dead wood and many holes, providing habitat for invertebrates, fungi, hole-nesting birds and probably roosting bats.

Also included in the site are the historic avenue leading north to Ham House and, to the south, the horse ride leading from Holly Hedge Field to Ham Common. The avenue in the north is mainly of common lime (*Tilia x europaea*), merging into young oak woodland in the western edge. In the east some gaps occur, which are filled by rough grassland providing good habitat for invertebrates. The horse ride in the south provides cover for birds and mammals in an area otherwise dominated by short-mown amenity grassland. The ride is

flanked on either side by dense scrub and trees.

Site first notified: 01/01/1993      Boundary last changed: 01/02/2000

Citation last edited: 01/02/2006      Mayor Agreed:

Defunct: N

Last Updated: 06/06/2007

## Appendix 7

Common designation details for Ham Common Woods including Ham Gate Avenue

Registration Authority	Greater London Authority
Registration number	CL64
Borough	London Borough of Richmond
Area	48.69ha
Description of site location	Partly wooded area adjacent to Richmond Park, south of Richmond

## Appendix 8

Local Nature Reserve designation for Ham Common Woods including Ham Gate Avenue

Name	Ham Common
Status	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
Area	30 hectares
Grid reference	TQ 184 718
Planning Authority	London Borough of Richmond
Owner/Manager	London Borough of Richmond

### Scientific interest/Existing use of site

Most of the site has been succeeded by birch and oak woodland. There is a lot of dead wood habitat valuable for invertebrates, fungi and cavity-nesting birds such as woodpeckers. There are several wet hollows within the woodland which support breeding frogs during wet springs where there is sufficient standing water. The common is divided in two by a road—in the northern section the woodland is generally younger with a denser understorey and more diverse ground flora. A more extensive area of grassland survives at the western end of the common with a wide range of plants typical of dry acid grassland.

### Reasons for declaration

Ham Common supports a large number of species and habitats, many of which have been identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan process. Additionally, the site is used extensively by the public for the informal enjoyment of nature.

## Appendix 9

Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Prescriptions

HK7 – restoration of species-rich, semi natural grassland.

This option is targeted at grasslands that are potentially rich in plant and associated animal life. They are often on difficult ground and may have suffered from management neglect or they may have been selected for agricultural improvement. The botanical diversity of such grassland may be enhanced by simply amending existing management practices. However, on many sites pro-active restoration management will be required involving introduction of

seeds and creation of gaps for their establishment. Substantial changes of livestock type, timing or grazing or control of dominant species may also be required. The options can also contribute to protecting valued landscapes and archaeology, and the promotion of good soil conditions.

HK16 – restoration of grassland for target features.

This option is aimed at adjusting the management of existing semi-improved or rough grassland which is known to provide good conditions for target species and to protect other features such as historic sites.

The restoration of semi-improved and rough grassland will strengthen the mosaic of pastoral landscapes. This option may be applied to grassland Priority Habitat types, but which occur in land parcels that are extensively managed for topography and location, for example species-rich upland calcareous grassland in large allotments. It may also be used to restore grassland which has limited biodiversity value, but which has been created under a classic scheme for other objectives, such as protection of the historic environment.

HK18 – Supplement for haymaking.

This option aims to ensure the continuation or re-introduction of hay-making on sites where the ready availability of livestock and /or the climatic difficulty of hay-making means that they would otherwise be grazed and not cut. These fields will have high existing or potential value as meadow land. This option can also help to reduce diffuse pollution, benefit the integrity of the historic landscape as well as reinforcing the landscape character of the area. It will also help ensure hay-making techniques and traditions are not lost to future generations.

## **Appendix 10**

FOA Spring 2022 and Summer 2023 Common Toad Survey Report

## **Appendix 11**

Salix Ecology Ham Common Woods Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2019