Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher

11932_R11c_Ecology Specialist Statement

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement has been prepared to address the following matters in relation to ecology and the Appeal process for Sandown Racecourse, Esher:

- Public consultation responses (See Section 3);
- Statement of Case prepared by Elmbridge Borough Council (See Section 4);
- Summary of degree of "harm" resulting from the proposal (See Section 5); and
- The benefits of the development proposals (See Section 6).

1.2 This statement has been prepared by Nathan Jenkinson, a suitably qualified Associate Ecological Consultant at Tyler Grange Group Limited. Nathan has 5 years' experience in ecology and ecology within the planning system. Nathan is a full member of the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds an MSc in Species Identification and Survey Skills (an MSc focussed on ecological consultancy) (see **Appendix 4** for more information on qualifications and experience).

2.0 Context of Statement

2.1 This statement is written in the context of the submitted ecological planning material, as set out below.

2.2 An 'extended' phase 1 habitat survey undertaken on 8th October 2018 and updated 26th October 2018 to account for minor changes in the red line boundary of the scheme. The findings of these surveys, which were undertaken for each of the individual red line boundaries, are set out in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) report (Core Document CD5.58). The report includes details of:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated sites within influence of the sites;
- The presence of protected/notable habitats within and adjacent to the sites;
- The potential for protected/notable species within the sites; and
- Recommendations for further survey work, namely for protected species, to inform the planning application.

2.3 Given that over 24 months have passed since the original ecology survey was completed, an update site visit was undertaken in August 2020, with no significant changes in the baseline conditions at the sites. The findings of the update walkover are set out at **Appendix 1**.

2.4 Phase 2 protected species surveys (the scope of and requirement for which was agreed and initially confirmed as required by the Surrey Wildlife Trust to inform the planning application, but then subsequently confirmed as not being required as these can be undertaken at the reserved matters stage) for roosting bats (sites 1, 2, 3, 5, A, C and F) and great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* (sites 3, 4, 5 and C) were undertaken between March – May 2019. The results of these surveys are set out in the Bat and Great Crested Newt Survey Report (Core Document CD6.46).

2.5 A 'shadow' Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA; Core Document CD5.59) to set out that no likely significant effects (on any of the four European designated sites within 10km of the site) are likely as a result of increased recreational disturbance from development associated with sites 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and B, as agreed with Natural England (as the statutory consultee; agreement from Natural England is appended to the 'shadow' HRA report).

2.6 'Heads of Terms' (HoT) for a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP; Report Ref: **11932/R04;** an Appendix to Core Document CD6.47) for the masterplan site, setting out the broad principles that will be included in more detail in the LEMP.

2.7 The Ecology Technical Appendix to the Appeal Statement of Case (Report ref. **11932/R07b** dated 23rd March 2020), which details:

- Ecological work undertaken to date;
- reasons to support the scheme;
- benefits of the proposal; and
- responses to the reasons for refusal.

2.8 In consideration of the results of the above ecology assessments for the proposed scheme (a summary of which is presented at **Appendix 2**), the impact assessment for ecology and subsequent design process followed the mitigation hierarchy (in line with best practice guidance[1]), which is as follows:

- Avoidance: Seek options that avoid harm to ecological features (for example, by locating on an alternative site);

- Mitigation: Negative effects should be avoided or minimised through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed – for example, through a condition or planning obligation; and

- Compensation Where there are significant residual negative ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures.

3.0 Interested Party Representation Responses

3.1 Rapleys LLP provided a summary of concerns raised by interested party representations relating to ecology, as listed below:

- *'Impact on the natural environment;*
- *The proposal will have an impact on the local wildlife, habitat and travel corridors; and*
- *The proposal will be a threat to the wildlife, the birds, hedgehogs, field nice, foxes etc which live in and around the area of the racecourse.'*

3.2 It is considered that the above interested party representations can be addressed collectively. With regard to off-site impacts, for statutory designated sites these have been adequately assessed through the HRA screening process including liaison with relevant consultees,

namely Natural England. With regard to non-statutory designated sites, impacts have been largely screened out with the only outstanding matter being that of the nearby Littleworth Common Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (see Sections 4, 5 and 6).

3.3 With respect to the ecology at the sites, the habitats present have been assessed with regard to their ecological importance in line with best practice guidance[1]. Where possible the more ecologically important habitats have been recommended for retention and enhancement, and where loss is required to facilitate the development, replacement planting over and above that to be lost has been recommended (in line with recommendations in the Arboriculture Specialist Statement; Report Ref: **11932/R10a**). Where protected species may be affected, initial survey works have been undertaken (the scope of which has been agreed with Surrey Wildlife Trust, the council's statutory consultee on ecology matters) to determine their presence/likely absence, and appropriate mitigation included in the design response. Enhancement measures are also included in line with relevant national and local planning policy.

3.4 It should be noted that whilst birds and hedgehogs have been considered in the assessments of the ecological impact of the development, field mice and foxes are afforded no statutory protection based on their conservation interest and have not been considered.

3.5 With regard to 'travel corridors' and connectivity for biodiversity, the assessments for ecology take into account any retention/enhancement or loss of connecting features in the context of individual sites (see **Appendix 2**) and the wider landscape. When produced in detail, the LEMP (Report Ref: **11932/R04;** an Appendix to Core Document CD6.47) will set out how connectivity can be improved across the masterplan site as a whole.

4.0 Response to Elmbridge Borough Council's Statement of Case

4.1 The Statement of Case prepared by Elmbridge Borough Council has been reviewed to identify any concerns relating to ecology.

4.2 Only one issue has been raised relating to potential impacts on ecology, which reads:

'Due to the lack of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards the long-term management plan of Littleworth Common SNCI, the proposed development is likely to result in adverse impact on biodiversity contrary to the Policy CS15 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011, Policy DM21 of the Development Management Plan 2015, the requirements of the NPPF 2019 and the Developer Contributions SPD 2012.'

4.3 To mitigate for the potential impact on Littleworth Common SNCI, a survey of the SNCI was undertaken in September 2020. The survey found that there is currently very little evidence of recreation/urbanisation impacts on the SNCI, but the SNCI would benefit from more regular management to ensure the habitats for which the SNCI was originally designated can persist, or in the case of acid grassland, be recreated. Based on observations made during the survey of the SNCI, it is considered that in the absence of management (the 'do nothing' scenario) the site would likely decline in terms of its ecological importance.

4.4 A heads of terms (HoT) management plan was prepared by the applicant (see **Appendix 3**) to outline high-level management recommendations for Littleworth Common SNCI. The broad management prescriptions for a 10-year period are:

1. Targeted tree removal to increase structural diversity;
2. Creation of mown glades to create neutral or acid grassland;

[1] https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ECIA-Guidelines-Sept-2019.pdf

3. Remove dense understorey stand of holly *Ilex aquifolium*;
4. Scallop glades and rides to increase habitat heterogeneity;
5. Removal of invasive Indian balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*;
6. Continued management of grassland by mowing;
7. Provision of information boards;
8. Potential traffic calming along Littleworth Common Road; and
9. Monitoring of the above measures.

4.5 The SNCI was originally designated for the woodland and grassland habitats found there (see **Appendix 3**). Management prescriptions 1, 3, 4 and 5 above are to improve the quality of semi-natural broadleaved woodland present, with measures 2 and 6 intended to encourage the establishment and maintenance of areas of neutral and potentially acid grassland at the SNCI, in line with the citation for the SNCI.

4.6 It is intended that the applicant will make a financial contribution towards the management of the SNCI over a 10-year period.

5.0 Summary of Degree of Harm Resulting from the Proposal

5.1 With regard to the degree of harm to ecology resulting from the proposal, this was considered in detail for each of the sites (1-5 and A-F) in line with relevant protective legislation, planning policy and best practice standards, with the results for each site presented in full at **Appendix 2**.

5.2 With regard to harm to habitats, through considering all proposals together across Sites 1-5 and A-F, a majority of the habitats to be lost/impacted by the proposed schemes are largely of low ecological importance (see **Appendix 2**) and are common and widespread. Overall, there is will be no harm as the scheme will replace habitats lost with habitats of the same of greater value to biodiversity.

5.3 With regard to harm to protected and notable species, the most notable impacts will be to roosting bats (present within Building B2, Site 2 and potentially within trees, namely those with potential within Site 3 that have not yet been subject to survey), common and widespread foraging/commuting bats (likely present at all sites) and common and widespread reptiles (potentially present at sites 3 and 4, likely in low numbers).

5.4 When considering trees for loss/retention and associated impacts on protected/notable species (for example, roosting bats), the function of the racecourse/proposed schemes and associated health and safety considerations will also be factored into the decision making process on tree retention or loss. If trees that may support protected or notable species are to be lost or affected by works, appropriate survey and (if present) mitigation measures can be put in place to ensure no harm to these species.

5.5 Roosting bats at Site 2 will be appropriately mitigated for through sensitive timing of works and appropriate European Protected Species Mitigation Licencing (EPSML), and the available roosting resource at the site increased through the provision of bat boxes. Impacts on foraging and commuting bats will be mitigated through the provision of landscape planting sympathetic to bats (using native woody species and nectar rich species) within development parcels, which will act to enhance the site for bats through providing increased habitat connectivity. A Sensitive Lighting Management Plan will also be prepared at the reserved matters stage, which will reduce the light levels around the site and therefore be of benefit to foraging and commuting bats.

5.6 The presence of common and widespread reptile species can be mitigated through the sensitive timing of works and, where necessary, working under a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS). The provision of habitats of better quality than that being lost (namely neutral grasslands) and refugia piles will be provided to enhance the sites for reptiles, with the locations of these enhancements to be detailed at reserved matters following presence/likely absence survey and more detailed scheme design. Therefore, no harm to protected/notable species is predicted.

5.7 With regard to Littleworth Common SNCI, through communication with Elmbridge Borough Council, it has been determined that no formal management plan for the SNCI exists and any management currently undertaken is on an ad-hoc basis. As such, at present the habitats for which the SNCI was originally designated are not being actively managed and risk falling into unfavourable condition (namely the semi-natural broadleaved woodland) or have ceased to be present (namely areas of acid grassland) due to succession.

5.8 There is the potential for some harm to the SNCI from the proposed schemes at Sites 4 and 5 due to increased footfall associated with the new residential units. Therefore, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, impacts at the SNCI may occur, for example, from dogwalkers who may use the SNCI daily, along with joggers, walkers and (potentially) anti-social behaviour.

5.9 Through the implementation of the HoT management prescriptions set out in Section 4, any perceived harm as a result of increased footfall from residents associated with Sites 4 and 5 can be fully mitigated.

5.10 It is considered that overall, through following the avoidance, mitigation and enhancement recommendations set out in the PEA and PBRA report (Core Document CD5.58), the Bat and Great Crested Newt Survey Report (Core Document CD6.46), the 'Heads of Terms' (HoT) for a LEMP; Report Ref: **11932/R04;** an Appendix to Core Document CD6.47) and making a financial contribution to aid in the implementation of the aforementioned HoT management plan for Littleworth Common SNCI, it is considered that any unavoidable impacts on biodiversity can be fully mitigated and the wider masterplan site enhanced overall.

5.11 The widening of the site accesses at Sites 1, 4 and 5 is considered to have negligible impacts in terms of ecology as the habitats to be impacted are of low/negligible ecological importance, and therefore no further work is required. The widening of the access/associated vegetation removal to facilitate the visibility splay at Site 3 results in the loss of some scrub vegetation, along with potential impacts on two trees with 'moderate' potential to support roosting bats.

5.12 It is considered that the loss of a small amount of vegetation to facilitate the Site 3 access can be mitigated through the planting of additional tree cover/native woody vegetation within detailed scheme design at the reserved matters stage. With regard to the trees with potential for roosting bats, these trees are unlikely to be lost but may require pruning or similar management to create the required visibility splay. Therefore, further survey for roosting bats at the reserved matters stage will be sufficient to determine if a bat roost(s) is present/likely absent, and if present appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures provided.

6.0 Benefits of the Proposal

6.1 Through appropriate mitigation and enhancements for habitats and species within the scheme and associated landscaping proposals (see details for all sites at **Appendix 2**), implementation of the full LEMP, and an appropriate financial contribution to the aforementioned management plan for Littleworth Common SNCI, the scheme is envisaged to result in an overall enhancement for biodiversity across the masterplan site.

6.2 With regard to tree loss and replacement planting across the schemes, the tree species to be planted will be agreed with the local authority, be native species and factor in considerations for longevity with regard to climate change. It is considered that replacement tree planting will enhance the sites overall as some of the trees to be lost are ornamental species or of little ecological value (for example, the line of Leylandii at site 2).

6.3 With regard to the LEMP, full details of site enhancement locations and quantum are not provided as part of the outline application. However, it is envisaged that the LEMP will include recommendations for the instatement and management of the following:

- Installation of bat and bird boxes, and insect hotels;
- Nectar rich planting to increase the invertebrate food resource at the site, for species such as birds and bats;
- Establishment of wildflower grassland;
- Establishment of hedgerows/new native woody boundary features (in line with recommendations in the Arboriculture Specialist Statement; Report Ref: **11932/R10a**);
- Replacement and additional native tree planting (in line with recommendations in the Arboriculture Specialist Statement; Report Ref: **11932/R10a**);
- Enhancement of on-site ponds, for example through the planting of emergent and marginal vegetation; and
- Establishment of refugia/deadwood piles nearby to ponds for amphibians.

6.4 It is considered that the above enhancements (secured through the LEMP) will aid in achieving the objectives of the 'Biodiversity and Planning in Surrey'[2] (2018), which aims to identify opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements as 'net gains' in the most effective way for the area.

6.5 The creation of a formal 10-year management plan for the SNCI presents an opportunity to not only mitigate any impacts that may arise from development at Sites 4 and 5, but significantly enhance it through bringing existing habitats back into favourable management (namely woodland) and through creating habitats for which the SNCI is designated that have ceased to be present due to vegetational succession (namely acid grassland). In addition to the habitat management measures proposed, the provision of information boards will encourage engagement form the local community with biodiversity found at the SNCI, and provide details of existing walking routes, to balance amenity use of the SNCI with retaining its value for biodiversity through minimising disturbance in the most ecologically sensitive areas of the SNCI.

6.6 The scheme will pump-prime the future strategy for the enhancement of Littleworth Common SNCI and its ecological importance, which is of particular importance because of its lack of a

[2] Surrey Nature Partnership (2019). *Biodiversity in Surrey*

current formal management plan (including surveys to look at the efficacy of management activities) as it will likely lead to a decline in its biodiversity value over time.

6.7 At the reserved matters stage there will be many opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the racecourse land as a whole, including on the development sites, in order to demonstrate a measurable net gain for biodiversity. The development is proposed in any event to include planting of approximately 2.5 ha of species-rich grassland on the racecourse site, at least 50 bat and bird boxes, planting and maintenance of 225 trees and a contribution to the management, maintenance and monitoring on Littleworth Common SNCI. Therefore, it is considered that the scheme will result in an overall enhancement for biodiversity both on-site (habitats and species) and off-site (namely Littleworth Common SNCI). This is in line with the following relevant national policy frameworks, national strategies, local policies and local SPDs on biodiversity:

- NPPF 2019:
    - Paragraph 11 on a presumption in favour of sustainable development;
    - Paragraph 170 on contributing to and enhancing the natural and local environment;
    - Paragraph 171 on international, national and locally designated sites;
    - Paragraph 174 on protecting and enhancing biodiversity;
    - Paragraph 175 on the mitigation hierarchy, irreplaceable sites/habitats and incorporating biodiversity into schemes;
    - Paragraph 176 on candidate European sites; and
    - Paragraph 177 on the presumption in favour of sustainable development and appropriate assessment.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Planning for the Future White Paper (August 2020).
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Biodiversity 2020 – A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services (2020).
- Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011 and Development Management Plan document:
    - Policy CS14: Green Infrastructure;
    - Policy CS15: Biodiversity; and
    - Policy DM21: Nature Conservation and Biodiversity.
- Elmbridge Borough Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2020.

Statement of Truth

The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal reference APP//K3605/W/20/3249790 in this written statement is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Signed: Nathan Jenkinson MSc MCIEEM

Appendix 1 – Update Ecology Walkover Survey Results – September 2020

Introduction

A1.1 This note has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Limited to provide a summary of an update 'extended' Phase I habitat survey completed at Sandown Racecourse on behalf of Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd.

A1.2 This survey update has been completed to ensure the emerging Appeal (Appeal ref: APP/K3605/W/20/3249790) for the refused planning application (Planning Application ref: 2019/0551) considers the current baseline ecology conditions within the proposed application areas.

A1.3 The previous survey was completed in October 2018 and the details of the findings and assessment of the scheme proposals are included in the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) report (Core Document CD5.58). As nearly two years have elapsed since the initial baseline ecology survey at the sites, an update 'extended' Phase I habitat survey was completed on 19th August 2020 by Nathan Jenkinson, a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). This update is in line with best practice guidance on '*The Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys*'[3].

A1.4 The brief was to verify the previous baseline ecology survey data, record updates where required and identify any resulting changes to the assessment made within the submitted PEA and PBRA report.

Updates to Previous Baseline Survey

A1.5 The table below lists site names and corresponding habitat features plans, as set out in the PEA and PBRA report (Core Document CD5.58). Within **Table A.1**, those sites where the ecological baseline was found to have changed between October 2018 and August 2020 are highlighted in green. Where changes to the baseline were noted, these changes are noted along with any implications for the scheme.

Table A.1: Summary of site locations and corresponding plans

Site Name	Habitat Features Plan	Updates Recorded	Scheme Implications
Site 1	11932/P01	-	-
Site 2	11932/P02	-	-
Site 3	11932/P03a	One tree removed – labelled as T42 on the previous iteration of the Tree Constrains Plan (11932/P13a)	None – shown as removed as part of scheme proposals
Site 4	11932/P04	-	-
Site 5	11932/P05a	Bare ground earth bank in the centre of the site has become colonised by tall ruderal vegetation, namely common nettle *Urtica dioica*	None
Site A	11932/P06	-	-
Site B	11932/P07	-	-
Site C	11932/P08	-	-
Site D	11932/P09	-	-

[3] https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf

Site Name	Habitat Features Plan	Updates Recorded	Scheme Implications
Racetrack Widening (Sites E1 and E2)	11932/P12	-	-
Site F	11932/P16	-	-

Conclusion

A1.6 The update ecology baseline walkover survey verified that, when reviewed alongside the submitted PEA and PBRA report (Core Document CD5.58), there were minimal changes to the baseline ecology of the sites between the initial survey in October 2018 and the update survey in August 2020.

A1.7 Read in conjunction with this note, the PEA and PBRA report therefore reflects an up-to-date account of the ecological baseline of the sites to inform the Appeal process.

Appendix 2 – Table of Impacts and Opportunities arising from Compensation for each Site (1-5 and A-F)

A2.1 The below table sets out the likely impacts at each of the sites (Sites 1-5 and A-F) on Littleworth Common SNCI, habitats and protected/notable species. The table also addresses how enhancements for biodiversity will be delivered at each of the sites, in line with relevant local planning policy.

A2.2 With regard to the evaluation of each ecological feature with respect to 'ecological importance', these are defined in accordance with published guidance[1]. The level of importance of specific ecological features is assigned using a geographic frame of reference, with international being most important, then national, regional, county, district, local and lastly, within the site boundary only.

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
Site 1	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all amenity grassland	None	-
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all buildings and hardstanding	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	Retention of trees	No mitigation required as (at the outline stage) no trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21
Site 2	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of some amenity grassland	None	-
	Building and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of building B2 and hardstanding	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	Likely retention of scattered trees along southern boundary	Small amount of mitigation required as a few trees along Portsmouth Road to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
	Bats	Local ecological importance	Loss of Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii* day roost	A Bat Low Impact Class Licence (BLICL) from NE with any modification/demolition works should be undertaken between September – May to avoid the bat hibernation period. Demolition of the building should be undertaken under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). To compensate for roost loss, and to provide increased opportunities for roosting bats, several artificial roost features should be included within the design of the proposed development. These bat boxes should be integrated into the new building design at the reserved matter stage.	CS14, CS15, DM21
Site 3	Allotment	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all allotment space	None	-
	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of majority of amenity grassland	None	-
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of buildings B1-B4 and B6	None	-
	Dense Scrub	Site ecological importance	Loss of majority of dense scrub	Replacement planting of native woody species, to create a 'species-rich' thicket in places. An increase in woody species diversity would represent an enhancement in what is habitat currently dominated by bramble	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Introduced Shrub	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of introduced shrub	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	Loss of some broadleaved trees	Mitigation required through replacement planting, to replace trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Wet Ditch	Site ecological importance	Loss of wet ditch (to be largely culverted)	Watercourse will be appropriately buffered during development through the implementation of best practice water pollution prevention measures. Replacement planting of other habitats of ecological value to compensate for the loss of the ditch, as the ditch is to be culverted	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Reptiles	N/A – not yet surveyed	Loss of suitable scrub and allotment habitats	Presence/likely absence surveys in suitable areas of habitat, April – October (excl. July/August); to be undertaken at the reserved matters stage.	CS14, CS15, DM21

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
				The recommended surveys, to be undertaken at the reserved matters stage, will determine if reptiles are present/likely absent and therefore detail the need for appropriately detailed impact avoidance and mitigation measures to be submitted with the reserved matters planning application. Habitat enhancement targeting reptiles, where appropriate, could include the instatement of artificial refugia (log/rubble piles) and the establishment of graded habitats, to include less intensively managed grassland and enhancing retained areas of scrub.	
Site 4	Littleworth Common SNCI	County ecological importance	Potential impact from increased recreational pressure/urbanisation impacts	To mitigate for the potential impact on the SNCI, a management plan has been prepared by the applicant to outline high-level management recommendations for Littleworth Common SNCI. It is intended that costs for the management of the SNCI over a 10-year period can be apportioned appropriately with the LPA.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all amenity grassland	None	-
	Bare Ground	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all bare ground	None	-
	Dense Scrub	Site ecological importance	Loss of dense scrub	Replacement planting of native woody species, where possible. An increase in woody species diversity would represent an enhancement in what is habitat currently dominated by bramble	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Poor Semi-improved Grassland	Site ecological importance	Loss of poor semi-improved grassland	Loss of this grassland. Mitigated through the enhancement of retained amenity grassland to neutral grassland.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	Loss of some scattered trees	Mitigation required through replacement planting, to replace trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
	Tall Ruderal	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all tall ruderal vegetation	None	-
	Reptiles	N/A – not yet surveyed	Loss of suitable scrub and allotment habitats	Presence/likely absence surveys in suitable areas of habitat, April – October (excl. July/August); to be undertaken at the reserved matters stage. The recommended surveys, to be undertaken at the reserved matters stage, will determine if reptiles are present/likely absent and therefore detail the need for appropriately detailed impact avoidance and mitigation measures to be submitted with the reserved matters planning application. Habitat enhancement targeting reptiles, where appropriate, could include the instatement of artificial refugia (log/rubble piles) and the establishment of graded habitats, to include less intensively managed grassland.	CS14, CS15, DM21
Site 5	Littleworth Common SNCI	County ecological importance	Potential impact from increased recreational pressure/urbanisation impacts	To mitigate for the potential impact on the SNCI, a management plan has been prepared by the applicant to outline high-level management recommendations for Littleworth Common SNCI. It is intended that costs for the management of the SNCI over a 10-year period can be apportioned appropriately with the LPA.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of most of amenity grassland	None	-
	Building and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all buildings	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved and Coniferous Trees	Site ecological importance	Loss of some trees	Mitigation required through replacement planting, to replace trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Scrub (Dense and Scattered)	Site ecological importance	Loss of all scrub	Replacement planting hedgerow to compensate for the loss of scrub area, likely to represent an overall enhancement.	CS14, CS15, DM21

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
Site A	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of all amenity grassland	None	-
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of buildings B2 – B5 and B10, and loss of hardstanding	None	-
	Introduced Shrub	Negligible ecological importance	Likely retention of introduced shrub	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Local ecological importance (veteran trees) and site ecological importance (remaining scattered broadleaved trees)	Retention of veteran trees Likely selective loss of other scattered broadleaved trees	Mitigation required through replacement planting, to replace trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Scattered Scrub	Site ecological importance	Likely retention of scattered scrub	None	-
Site B	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of amenity grassland	None	-
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of buildings B1 and B2, and potentially B3	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of scattered broadleaved sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* trees	None	-
	Species-poor Hedgerow	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of cherry laurel hedgerow	None	-

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
Site C	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of amenity grassland	None; retained amenity grassland to be enhanced to neutral grassland, representing an enhancement at the site	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Potential loss of buildings and loss of hardstanding	None	-
	Dense Scrub	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of dense scrub	None	-
	Introduced Shrub	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of leylandii hedgerows	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	Potential loss of scattered willow trees	No mitigation required due to the low value of trees to be lost. Retained trees appropriately buffered during development in line with best practice guidance (BS5837). Additional trees to be planted as part of landscaping, representing an enhancement at the site.	CS14, CS15, DM21
Site D	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of amenity grassland	None; retained amenity grassland to be enhanced to neutral grassland, representing an enhancement at the site	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Buildings and Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of buildings and hardstanding	None	-
	Treeline	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of some or all of evergreen treeline	None	-
Race Track Widening (E1 and E2)	Amenity Grassland (E1 and E2)	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of existing amenity grassland, to be replaced by new amenity grassland in the form of the racecourse	None	-
	Hardstanding (E1)	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of existing hardstanding, to be resurfaced	None	-

Site Name	Ecological Feature	Ecological Importance	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Potential for Enhancement	Relevant Local Planning Polices
	Improved Grassland (E2)	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of improved grassland	None	-
	Introduced Shrub (E2)	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of introduced shrub	None	-
Site F	Amenity Grassland	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of isolated areas of amenity grassland	None; retained amenity grassland to be enhanced to neutral grassland	CS14, CS15, DM21
	Hardstanding	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of isolated areas of hardstanding	None	-
	Introduced Shrub	Negligible ecological importance	Loss of isolated areas of introduced shrub	None	-
	Scattered Broadleaved Trees	Site ecological importance	None	None	-

Appendix 3 – Littleworth Common SNCI Management Plan – Heads of Terms

15 October 2020

Littleworth Common - Site of Nature Conservation Interest

Management Plan – Heads of Terms

Report Number:	11932_R14_NJ_HM
Author:	Nathan Jenkinson MSc MCIEEM
Checked:	John Moorcroft MSc MCIEEM CEnv

Tyler Grange

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Contents

Appendices

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

1.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Ltd on behalf of Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd (JCR; 'the applicant').

1.2. A hybrid planning application (Application Ref: 2019/0551) was prepared and submitted for the site, for mixed-use development comprising:

- Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access to the development) for:
    - Enhancement and rationalisation of existing racecourse facilities/infrastructure and car parking;
    - Re-location of an upgraded children's nursery (Use Class D1);
    - Development of a c. 150 room hotel (Use Class C1), and
    - Demolition of existing buildings/structures and residential development of approximately 318 dwellings (Use Class C3).
- A full planning application for:
    - Racetrack widening to the southwest and east sections of the existing racecourse track, including associated ground levelling/earthworks to the southwest section, and re-positioning of fencing, and improvements to a section of the existing internal access road from More Lane, and
    - New bell-mouth accesses serving the development.

1.3. The above application was refused on 3rd October 2019. Within the decision notice reason 4 of the notice, which related to ecology matters, was as follows:

'….4. Due to the lack of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards the long-term management plan of Littleworth Common SNCI, the proposed development is likely to result in adverse impact on biodiversity contrary to the Policy CS15 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011, Policy DM21 of the Development Management Plan 2015, the requirements of the NPPF 2019 and the Developer Contributions SPD 2012.'

1.4. An appeal has been lodged (Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/W/20/3249790). As part of the evidence base to inform the appeal and to address reason 4 of the decision notice, a baseline survey of Littleworth Common Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) was undertaken in September 2020, to inform Heads of Terms (HoT) for a management plan for the site.

1.5. It should be noted that, of the 11 sites that form the hybrid application (as set out in the Planning Statement prepared by Rapleys[1]), sites 1-5 relate to the construction of c. 318 new residential units. Of these sites, sites 4 and 5 (c. 140 new residential units combined) are considered likely to contribute to visitor footfall at Littleworth Common SNCI given their proximity to the SNCI and therefore lead to potential recreational pressure/urbanisation effects on the SNCI.

1.6. Sites A-F relate to the repurposing of areas of the racecourse for car parking, racecourse operations, the provision of a hotel at Site B (adjacent to the grandstand). The final element of the application is the widening of bellmouth accesses serving the development sites. Therefore, the proposals in relation to sites A-F and the bellmouth accesses are not considered likely to give rise to adverse effects on Littleworth Common SNCI.

Background and Purpose

1.7. Local Wildlife Sites or SNCIs as they are known in Surrey are identified on account of the habitats and flora/fauna they support. Each SNCI has been selected according to criteria outlined in *Criteria for SNCI Selection in Surrey* published by the Surrey Nature Conservation Liaison Group (SNCLG; now the Surrey Local Sites Partnership (SLSP)) in July 1997, subsequently revised and updated in *Guidelines for the selection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in Surrey*[2].

1.8. Littleworth Common is owned by Elmbridge Borough Council and managed by the Leisure & Cultural Services Countryside Officers. It was selected as an SNCI in 1996 for its large area of semi-natural habitat, with 14 ancient woodland indicators, as well as its value for birds, mammals, invertebrates and fungi. The original citation for Littleworth Common SNCI can be found at **Appendix 1**.

1.9. Littleworth Common SNCI was resurveyed for its SNCI interest in 2004 (see **Appendix 2a** for the survey notes and **Appendix 2b** for the corresponding target notes plan); the survey noted that since the designation of Littleworth Common as an SNCI in 1996, that the number of recorded ancient woodland indicator species has risen from 14 to 20, and that the SNCI was noted to likely be an important refuge for many species including birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

1.10. Through communication with Elmbridge Borough Council, it has been confirmed that no formal management plan for Littleworth Common SNCI exists and it can therefore be assumed that current management is undertaken on an ad-hoc basis (a history of known previous management is set out in Section 2). In addition to the lack of a formal management plan, Littleworth Common SNCI is adjacent to the settlements of Hinchley Wood to the east and Esher to the west, meaning it is already likely subject to some recreational pressure and that with the proposed hybrid application, the residential proposals could give rise to additional recreational pressure.

1.11. It is considered that in the absence of a formal management plan (that also considers how to alleviate potential recreational pressures/urbanisation), the reasons for which Littleworth Common was designated as an SNCI, namely the habitats, may be subject to succession and degradation resulting in a loss of ecological function at the SNCI. Therefore, this report sets out the proposed HoT for the Littleworth Common Management Plan (LCMP), to cover a 10-year management timeframe. It is intended that the HoT LCMP prescriptions within this report can be used to inform a financial contribution from the applicant to the long-term management of Littleworth Common SNCI.

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[1] Rapleys (2019). *Amended Planning Statement for Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd SANDOWN PARK RACECOURSE PORTSMOUTH ROAD ESHER KT10 9AJ* Ref: CB/385/12/6

[2] Gibbs, Claire (2008); Guidelines for the selection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in Surrey, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Pirbright, Surrey

HoT LCMP Structure

1.12. The HoT LCMP is structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** describes the site context and summarises the features for designation as an SNCI;
- **Section 3:** describes the objectives of the HoT LCMP and likely management constraints;
- **Section 4:** describes the management prescriptions to achieve objectives set out in Section 4; and
- **Section 5:** sets out who will be responsible for implementing the plan and how arrangements for funding will be organised.

1.13. The management regime would broadly commence prior to first occupation at Sites 1-5. Full details of management prescriptions are provided in **Section 4**.

1.14. Implementation of the plan will be iterative in that management prescriptions will be refined as necessary based on the outcomes of the first 10-year cycle of management being implemented (if the management plan is to be utilised beyond the 10-year timeframe/in perpetuity).

Quality Control

1.15. All ecologists at Tyler Grange Ltd are members of CIEEM and abide by the Institute's Code of Professional Conduct.

Section 2: Littleworth Common SNCI Summary

Site Location and Context

2.1. Littleworth Common is located to the north east of Esher and surrounded by a combination of housing, roads, railway and a golf course. The site is bisected by a number of trackways and paths used by pedestrians, horse riders and occasional cyclists, as well as busy roads (Littleworth Common Road and the A307).

2.2. As set out in the most recent citation for the SNCI (see **Appendix 2a**), the SNCI comprises a large area of semi-natural habitat predominantly made up of broadleaved woodland, with some small areas of open grassland and ponds.

2.3. The site is designated as an SNCI, and as such is afforded protection under Policy CS15 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011 and Policy DM21 of the Development Management Plan 2015, along with the NPPF 2019 (see **Appendix 3**).

Previous Management

2.4. As set out above, through recent communication with Elmbridge Borough Council, it has been confirmed that no formal management plan for Littleworth Common SNCI exists and it can therefore be assumed that current management is undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. There is evidence of previous management, as set out below.

2.5. Historic management is evidenced through the initial SNCI citation prepared in 1995 (see **Appendix 1**), which notes that some tree felling and mowing of grassland areas was evident at the time of the survey.

2.6. The update SNCI citation survey in 2004 (see **Appendix 2a**) set out that the following management had been carried out by Elmbridge Borough Council:

- Clearance of trees and subsequent spraying of Sycamore re-growth to encourage an acid grassland habitat;
- Woodland thinning in isolated areas in 1994, 1997 and 2000;
- Spraying of New Zealand Pigmyweed within a pond; and
- Tall uncut margins of vegetation were left between the paths and the woodland edge in the northernmost areas of the site.

2.7. In 2011, Elmbridge Borough Council produced a 'Short Term Work Plan' for Littleworth Common SNCI as part of the Woodland Grant Scheme, which mapped areas of the SNCI to be subject to management prescriptions (see **Appendix 3**). Through correspondence with Elmbridge Borough Council in September 2020, it was noted that the thinning works denoted on the plan have largely been carried out.

Summary of Update Botanical Survey

2.8. An update walkover survey of the SNCI was carried out (see **Appendix 4**) by Dominic Price MSc (a highly experienced botanical surveyor) in September 2020. The survey broadly followed the methods used in a Phase I habitat survey[3], with the addition of a 'rapid' phase 2 botanical assessment of each of the broad habitat areas identified. A botanical species list is included within the report at **Appendix 4**.

2.9. The survey aimed to address two key points, namely:

1. Are the habitats present representative of those habitats that the SNCI was originally designated for and what is the condition of the habitats present; and

2. Is there evidence of impacts from urbanisation/recreation within the SNCI, resulting from its use as an amenity space for local residents.

2.10. The below summarises the habitat and urbanisation/recreational survey, along with a target noted break down of areas of the SNCI. The below information has been extracted from the report found at **Appendix 4**.

Habitat Summary

2.11. The SNCI was found to comprise deciduous woodland with small areas of maintained grassland and glades, and a small section of the River Hythe. The woodland was in good condition and supported a good range of species, with some areas of more acidic woodland. The smaller areas of grassland supported mesotrophic grassland with some indicators of acidic grassland.

2.12. There were some areas of slightly damper woodland and a small section of the River Hythe running along the eastern boundary of the site. Within the woodland one of the key factors to consider is the elevated levels of nutrients in the soils, which meant that areas where the canopy was open tended to be dominated by dense stands of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus.*

2.13. There was evidence of flora species indicative of the formerly acid and damp nature of the site. However, in no areas was either true acid grassland, heath or acid woodland recorded, meaning these habitats of much higher conservation value are absent on the site. The grasslands that were present contained species that were characteristic of higher nutrient mesotrophic grasslands.

Urbanisation/Recreational Impacts

2.14. The site is bisected by a number of trackways and paths, all of which were in excellent condition at the time of survey (note: it had been a hot, dry September, so no assessment of how the paths react to high precipitation could be made).

2.15. There is limited access to the southern block of woodland with the absence of any parking facilities. This absence of parking, possibly factored in with the affluence of the local area, meant there was no evidence of antisocial behaviour such as littering, fires, graffiti and vandals witnessed during the visit (apart from some polite graffiti written on a social distancing poster).

[3] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*. JNCC, Peterborough

2.16. This situation was mirrored in the northern half of the SNCI, which was possible to park adjacent too, but still lacked a formal carpark, and apart from slightly elevated levels of dog faeces did not suffer from any littering or fire damage.

Target Notes

2.17. **Table 2.1** summarises the Target Notes (TNs) found in the report at **Appendix 4** (Appendix 5 also includes site photos). **Figure 2.1** shows the location of the TNs outlined in the table.

Table 2.1: Summary of Target Notes from the report at Appendix 4

Target Note	Summary of Target Note
1	Areas of dense understorey vegetation with a sparse tree canopy and little/no ground flora
2	These areas of mature trees comprised most of the woodland, with an a less dense understorey and shrub layer
3	Very thin tree canopy, with evidence of acid soils
4	Area of mown grassland/bracken
5	A small river running near the eastern boundary of the site. Invasive Indian Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* was present
6	A strip of mature pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* trees
7	Good quality woodland with a sparse shrub layer
8	Open glades with evidence of management to maintain openness, however succession was evidenced by the presence of dense shrubs within the areas of grassland
9	Woodland with a dense shrub layer
10	A well-spaced woodland canopy, with some open areas dominated by dense bramble
11	Similar to TN2, but with a mixed broadleaved woodland canopy
12	An area of amenity grassland

Figure 2.1: Plan of Target Note areas

Section 3: Management Objectives and Constraints

Management Objectives

3.1 Considering the original and updated citations for the SNCI, the following objectives for its management have been set:

- Objective 1: - To encourage the creation (in the case of grasslands) and enhancement of habitats as defined in **Appendix 2a**;
- Objective 2: - To establish a regime of annual nature conservation management works that will maintain the functionality of habitats for which the SNCI is designated;
- Objective 3: - Achieve a balance between providing public access and maintaining seclusion for species sensitive to disturbance; and
- Objective 4: - Monitor the efficacy of nature conservation management through undertaking an update assessment of the SNCI.

Management Constraints

3.2 Management cannot be undertaken that would result in offences under protective legislation. As such, management would ensure conformity with the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. No detailed surveys have been undertaken by Tyler Grange to assess which protected/notable species are present within Littleworth Common SNCI. The HoT LCMP would be required to ensure management and monitoring of habitats is in conformity with relevant legislation and policy.

Section 4: HoT Management Prescriptions

4.1 The Littleworth Common SNCI HoT management prescriptions are as follows:

1 Targeted tree removal to increase structural diversity;

2 Creation of mown glades to create neutral or acid grassland;

3 Remove dense understorey stand of holly Ilex aquifolium;

4 Scallop glades and rides to increase habitat heterogeneity;

5 Removal of invasive Indian balsam Impatiens glandulifera;

6 Continued management of grassland by mowing;

7 Provision of information boards;

8 *Optional* traffic calming along Littleworth Common Road; and

9 Monitoring of the above measures.

4.1 It is envisaged that once the management prescriptions are agreed, along with the extent of each management prescription. a Gantt chart will be produced to set out when management prescriptions are due to be implemented throughout the 10-year management plan period, along with the time of year that each measure should be undertaken.

4.2 It will be the responsibility of the controlling body (namely Elmbridge Borough Council) to employ a suitably qualified ecologist to undertake all Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) tasks and monitoring for the duration of the LCMP.

4.3 The prescriptions seek to cover a period considered to equate managing the SNCI for a period of 10 years. However, notwithstanding alterations that should be made to the management plan based on monitoring data to be collected to ensure the management prescriptions are effective, the management plan could be repeated on a 10-year cycle basis, in perpetuity.

4.4 One of the management recommendations for amenity resource management relates to the installation of traffic calming measures along Littleworth Common Road. It is noted that this is likely to fall beyond the control of Elmbridge Borough Council's Leisure & Cultural Services Countryside Officers, and so is listed as an optional management prescription.

Section 5: Delivery of the Littleworth Common Management Plan

5.1. Elmbridge Borough Council own Littleworth Common SNCI and therefore responsibility for implementing the management plan/appointing an appropriately qualified contractor to implement the management plan is with Elmbridge Borough Council.

5.2. It is intended that funding for the management of the SNCI will be provided by Elmbridge Borough Council. The cost of implementing the 10 year plan will be calculated from contractor estimates and a proportion of the cost will be paid by the applicant to be secured by a S106 agreement or unilateral undertaking.

Appendix 1: Littleworth Common SNCI Survey Notes (1995)

Site Name: Littleworth Common
Grid Ref: TQ 148654
Area: 62 ha
Recorder No: 771/3
Borough: Elmbridge
Date of Survey: 20/6/95
Surveyed By: Charlotte Lamble and Sarah Lipscombe

Site Description

Littleworth Common is a secondary woodland site situated to the north east of Esher. It lies on unclassified terrace drift and is flat at an altitude of 15m. It is divided into sections by roads and has open access with many footpaths throughout.

The main species in the canopy are Oak, Ash, Sycamore and Silver Birch with Hawthorn, Hazel and Holly in the understorey. Bordering the stream to the east of the site there is a stand of Alder and Aspen.

The ground flora throughout the site includes Bluebell, Wood Avens, Herb Robert, Red Campion, Hedge Woundwort and Broadleaved Willowherb.

It has great local nature conservation interest in that it covers such a large area and supports a mosaic of habitats. It supports fourteen ancient woodland vascular plants and provides habitats suitable for woodland birds, mammals, invertebrates and fungi.

Site Notes

(1) Ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and Oak (Quercus robur) dominate the canopy. The shrub layer consists mainly of Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) with occasional Hazel (Corylus avellana) and Holly (Ilex aquifolium). Young Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus) also contribute to this layer. Along the southern boundary Alder (Alnus glutinosa) borders the stream.

The ground flora to the west of this section is quite scrubby with dense Nettle (Urtica dioica), Bramble (Rubus fruticosus agg.), Hogweed (Heracleum sphondylium), Cow Parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris), Green Alkanet (Pentaglottis sempervirens) and Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum). Further east it is more open and less wooded with occasional Common Vetch (Vicia sativa), Wood Avens (Geum urbanum), Herb Robert (Geranium robertianum), Germander Speedwell (Veronica chamaedrys), False Oat-grass (Arrhenatherum elatius), Yorkshire Fog (Holcus lanatus) and Goosegrass (Galium aparine).

(2) Ash, Oak and Sycamore are the most common species in the canopy with Hawthorn and Holly forming the shrub layer. The field layer is patchy with areas of dense Bramble. Ground flora present includes Broadleaved Dock (Rumex obtusifolius), Hedge Woundwort (Stachys sylvatica), Nipplewort (Lapsana communis), Red Campion (Silene dioica), Herb Robert, Bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta), Broadleaved Willowherb (Epilobium montanum), Ivy (Hedera helix) and Honeysuckle (Lonicera periclymenum).

Adjacent to Littleworth Road the canopy is very dense with lots of young Silver Birch (Betula pendula). The leaf litter is deep

and there are some Silver Birch stumps which provide good dead wood habitats. However there is little ground flora present.

(3) In this section there is Oak, Ash, Sycamore and Silver Birch with occasional Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia). The ground flora is less diverse with Bracken, Wood Avens, Hedge Woundwort and Bluebell dominating.

(4) This section lies adjacent to housing and is subject to tipping of grass cuttings. Japanese Knotweed (Reynoutria japonica) is invading and Laurel (Prunus laurocerasus) is also present. Further east there is dense Silver Birch with Bracken. Other species commonly occurring are Oak, Rowan, Holly, Honeysuckle and Creeping Soft-grass (Holcus mollis). Some of the Silver Birch has been felled and as a result there is dead wood present.

(5) In this section the Silver Birch is less dense and the area appears to be much wetter. As a result Grey Willow (Salix cinerea) is locally frequent. The field layer is scrubby with Bracken, Great Willowherb (Epilobium hirsutum), Nettle, Goosegrass, Rough Meadow-grass (Poa trivialis) and Creeping Buttercup (Ranunculus repens).

(6) The area parallel to the Portsmouth Road is regularly mown and managed as amenity grassland. It contains species such as Cut-leaved Cranesbill (Geranium dissectum), Hedge Mustard (Sisymbrium officinale), Mouse-ear (Cerastium fontanum), Crow Garlic (Allium vineale), Greater Plantain (Plantago major), White Clover (Trifolium repens), Yarrow (Achillea millefolium), Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) and Ground Elder (Aegopodium podagraria).

(7) This central area of the site contains dense stands of young Silver Birch. Scattered amongst these are a few mature Oak, occasional Grey Willow, young Sycamore, Rowan, and Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa). The ground flora is limited due to deep leaf litter and shading, as a result the field layer consists almost entirely of Bracken.

(8) A ride has been created here where Silver Birch has been cleared. It is slightly wet and species indicative of this include Soft Rush (Juncus effusus), Hard Rush (Juncus inflexus) and Tufted Hair-grass (Deschampsia cespitosa). Yorkshire Fog, Barren Brome (Bromus sterilis), Broadleaved Willowherb and Rosebay Willowherb (Epilobium angustifolium) also occur and Bracken is beginning to invade.

(9) This is another cleared area but is different in that it is dominated by Bracken. There is little else present other than scattered Silver Birch, Rowan, Oak and Sycamore.

(10) The woodland is more open here and contains few mature trees. The canopy is dominated by Oak and Silver Birch, and English Elm (Ulmus procera), Hawthorn, Holly, Gorse (Ulex europaeus) and Sycamore saplings form the shrub layer. In the wooded area the ground flora is poor with occasional Bramble, Honeysuckle and Ivy and there are large areas of bare ground and deep leaf litter.

In the more open areas False Oat-grass dominates with Yorkshire Fog, Cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata), Giant Fescue (Festuca

(Stellaria graminea) also present.

In the eastern corner of this section there is an area of amenity grassland which is regularly mown. Species in the sward include Catsear (Hypochaeris radicata), Common Sorrel (Rumex acetosa), Yarrow, Creeping Buttercup, Dandelion and Ribwort Plantain (Plantago lanceolata).

(11) This is another piece of woodland with open areas of rough grassland. The main tree species are Oak, Silver Birch, Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus), Ash, Sycamore, Hawthorn and Crack Willow (Salix fragilis). The ground flora in these wooded areas consists of Bramble, Hedge Garlic (Alliaria petiolata), Cow Parsley, Wood Avens, Ivy, Hedge Woundwort and Hogweed. In the open areas there are coarse grasses such as Cocksfoot, Rough Meadow-grass and False Oat-grass, with frequent Lesser Stitchwort.

(12) This section is very scrubby is made up of Elm, Elder (Sambucus nigra), young Sycamore, Holly, Hawthorn, Cherry (Prunus avium) and a few mature Oak. The ground flora includes Ivy, Goosegrass, Bramble and Gorse with occasional Rosebay Willowherb, Hedge Woundwort, Bluebell, Common Vetch (Vicia sativa) and Germander Speedwell (Veronica chamaedrys).

(13) The main species in the canopy are mature Oak and Ash, Cherry and frequent Sycamore. Beside the stream there is frequent Pendulous Sedge (Carex pendula) and the ground flora in the wooded area consists of Herb Robert, Enchanters Nightshade (Circaea lutetiana), Common Vetch, Hogweed, Bramble and Dog Rose (Rosa canina).

(14) Oak and Ash dominate most of the woodland in this section. To the east of the stream the canopy is closed and ivy is abundant. Elder and Elm are locally frequent.

Beside the stream Alder is present with Crack Willow. The ground flora is dominated by Pendulous Sedge and Yellow Flag(Iris pseudacorus) with occasional Tufted Hair-grass and Great Willowherb.

West of the stream the woodland also supports young Wild Cherry and a stand of mature Aspen (Populus tremula). The ground flora includes Hedge Woundwort, Common Vetch, Wood Avens, Field Rose (Rosa arvensis), and grasses such as False Oat-grass, Cocksfoot and Yorkshire Fog.

(15) This is an area of rough grassland with a few recently planted Ash and Rowan. The main species are False Oat-grass, Rough Meadow-grass, Yorkshire Fog, Cow Parsley, Hogweed, Nettle and Broad-leaved Dock.

Management

Littleworth Common has open access and presumably was grazed as common land in the past. It is now covered in secondary broadleaved woodland and managed by the Borough Council. There is evidence of quite recent felling and creation of a ride towards the north of the site.

This management should be encouraged as the Silver Birch has become very dense in patches and needs to be thinned to let more

light through which will benefit the ground flora and other wildlife. Whilst thinning more open glades could be created which would promote a greater diversity in the ground flora and encourage species such as butterflies. This is particularly relevant to sections (2) and (7).

In some areas the footpaths appear to be mown. It would benefit nature conservation generally if this operation was stopped but where this isn't possible it would be of value to cut as little as possible into the woodland edge and to do so where necessary on alternate sides of the path.

Throughout the site it is recommended to leave dead wood, either standing or on the ground, to benefit invertebrates and to remove non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed and Laurel from the site.

Comments

The site is secondary semi-natural broadleaved woodland. On the O.S. map of 1920 it appears as Littleworth Common and is not wooded at all. It is a site of "Local nature conservation Importance" on the Elmbridge Borough Local Plan.

The vegetation communities can be defined using the National Vegetation Classification. The woodland community type is outlined below:

W10c (Quercus robur - Pteridium aquilinum - Rubus fruticosus woodland; Hedera helix sub-community.

Vegetation communities for the grassland areas have not been classified.

Nature Conservation Interest

Littleworth Common has great local conservation value due its large size and urban location. It supports a wide range of plants, including fourteen ancient woodland vascular plants, and has potential for birds and invertebrates.

E C O R D E R Surrey Wildlife Trust
Species list for Littleworth Common
Recorder site number 771/3 Survey date 20 JUN 1995

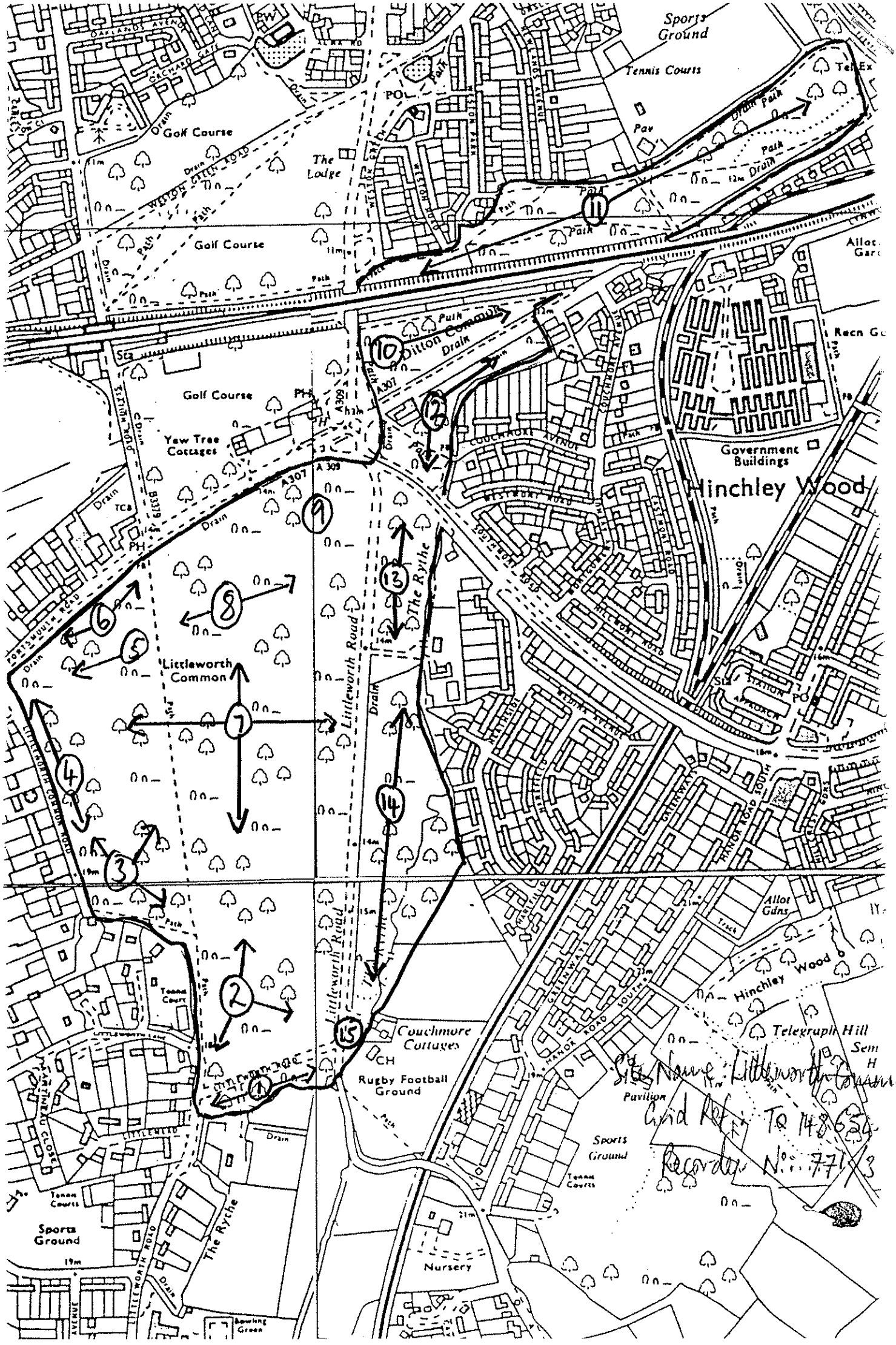
Scientific name.....	Common name.....	Abundance.
Acer campestre	Field Maple	R
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	F
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	O
Aegopodium podagraria	Ground Elder	O
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse Chestnut	R
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard	O
Allium vineale	Crow Garlic	R
Alnus glutinosa	Alder	R
Alopecurus pratensis	Meadow Foxtail	O
Anthoxanthum odoratum	Sweet Vernal Grass	O
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley	O
Aphanes arvensis agg.	Parsley Piert	LF
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass	O
Artemisia vulgaris	Mugwort	O
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	F
Bromus sterilis	Barren Brome	O
Calystegia sepium agg.	Great Bindweed [agg.]	O
Carex pendula	Drooping Sedge	O
Carex remota	Remote Sedge	O
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	R
Centaurea nigra	Black Knapweed	O
Cerastium fontanum	Common Mouse-ear	O
Chenopodium album agg.	Fat Hen	R
Circaea lutetiana	Common Enchanter's Nightshade	O
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	O
Corylus avellana	Hazel	O
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	F
Cytisus scoparius	Broom	R
Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot	O
Deschampsia cespitosa	Tufted Hair-grass	R
Digitalis purpurea	Foxglove	R
Dryopteris filix-mas agg.	Male Fern	R
Epilobium angustifolium	Rosebay Willow-herb	F
Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willow-herb	O
Epilobium montanum	Broad-leaved Willow-herb	O
Epilobium parviflorum	Small-flowered Willow-herb	R
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	R
Festuca gigantea	Giant Fescue	O
Festuca rubra sens.str.	Red Fescue	O
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	F
Galium aparine	Goosegrass	O
Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Cranesbill	O
Geranium robertianum	Herb Robert	O
Geum urbanum	Herb Bennet	O
Hedera helix	Ivy	O
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed	O
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog	F
Holcus mollis	Creeping Soft-grass	O
Hordeum murinum	Wall Barley	O
Humulus lupulus	Hop	R
Hypochaeris radicata	Common Catsear	O
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	O
Iris pseudacorus	Yellow Flag	LF

R E C O R D E R Surrey Wildlife Trust
Species list for Littleworth Common
Recorder site number 771/3 Survey date 20 JUN 1995

Scientific name.....	Common name.....	Abundance.
Juncus effusus	Soft Rush	R
Juncus inflexus	Hard Rush	R
Lamiastrum galeobdolon	Yellow Archangel	
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort	R
Lathyrus pratensis	Meadow Vetchling	R
Leucanthemum vulgare	Ox-eye Daisy	O
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet	R
Lolium perenne	Common Rye-grass	O
Lonicera periclymenum	Honeysuckle	F
Lotus corniculatus	Common Birdsfoot Trefoil	O
Malus sylvestris sens.lat.	Apple	R
Malva sylvestris	Common Mallow	O
Matricaria matricarioides	Pineapple Weed	O
Medicago lupulina	Black Medick	O
Myosotis sylvatica	Wood Forget-me-not	R
Pentaglottis sempervirens	Green Alkanet	O
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain	O
Plantago major	Ratstail Plantain	O
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass	O
Poa nemoralis	Wood Meadow-grass	R
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass	O
Polygonum persicaria	Redleg	O
Populus sp.	indet poplar	R
Populus tremula	Aspen	O
Potentilla anserina	Silverweed	O
Potentilla reptans	Creeping Cinquefoil	O
Prunella vulgaris	Self-heal	O
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry	O
Prunus laurocerasus	Cherry-laurel	R
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	R
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken	O
Quercus robur	Common Oak	F
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup	R
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup	O
Reynoutria japonica	Japanese Knotweed	LF
Rosa arvensis	Field Rose	O
Rosa canina	Dog Rose	R
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble	O
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel	R
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock	O
Salix caprea	Goat Willow	O
Salix cinerea	Common Sallow	O
Salix fragilis	Crack Willow	R
Sambucus nigra	Elder	O
Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort	O
Silene dioica	Red Campion	R
Sisymbrium officinale	Hedge Mustard	O
Solanum dulcamara	Bittersweet	R
Sorbus aria agg.	Whitebeam	R
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	O
Stachys sylvatica	Hedge Woundwort	O
Stellaria graminea	Lesser Stitchwort	O
Symphoricarpus rivularis	Snowberry	R

E C O R D E R Surrey Wildlife Trust
Species list for Littleworth Common
Recorder site number 771/3 Survey date 20 JUN 1995

Scientific name.....	Common name.....	Abundance
Taraxacum officinale agg.	Dandelion	R
Taxus baccata	Yew	R
Tilia x vulgaris	Common Lime	R
Trifolium repens	White Clover	O
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	O
Ulmus procera	English Elm	R
Urtica dioica	Stinging Nettle	R
Veronica chamaedrys	Germander Speedwell	O
Vicia sativa ssp. sativa	Common Vetch	O
Viola riviniana	Common Dog Violet	O


Sports Ground
Tennis Courts
Golf Course
The Lodge
Golf Course
Golf Course
Yew Tree Cottages
Dillon Common
Government Buildings
Hinchley Wood
Littleworth Common
Littleworth Road
The Rythe
Couchmore Cottages
Rugby Football Ground
Pavilion
Sports Ground
Nursery
Telegraph Hill
Hinchley Wood
Site Name: Littleworth Common
Grid Ref: TQ 148 654
Recorder No.: 771/3

Appendix 2a: Littleworth Common SNCI Re-survey Notes (2004)

Elmbridge SNCI Re-surveys 2004

Site Name:	**Littleworth Common**
Grid Ref:	TQ 148654
Area:	61.2 Ha
Recorder Number:	771/3
Borough:	Elmbridge
Date / Surveyor for 1st survey:	20th June 1995
Date re-surveyed:	21st & 22nd June 2004
Surveyed by:	Claire Leech, Milana Seccombe

Site Description

Littleworth Common is located to the north east of Esher. It is surrounded on most sides by housing with Sandown Park also forming part of the western boundary. Littleworth Common Golf Course SNCI is located immediately to the north of this site. A number of roads, a railway and many footpaths run through the site. The site is situated on unclassified terrace drift. On the O.S. map of 1920 the area is not wooded at all. Today, the survey found the site to consist primarily of secondary woodland.

Much of the site, particularly west of Littleworth Road was subject to a fire back in 1976. This area now consists of Birch (*Betula pendula*) scrub with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*) below and locally frequent Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). The other areas of woodland on Littleworth Common are mainly dominated by Oak (*Quercus robur*) with young Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*) frequent across much of the area. Bramble, Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Ivy (*Hedera helix*) dominate most of the ground flora. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is also frequent in some parts. The ground flora is diverse in some parts with a total of 19 ancient woodland indicator species recorded. Just south of the railway is an area which has recently been cleared by Elmbridge Borough Council in an effort to recreate an acid grassland habitat. North of the railway line is a mosaic of Oak woodland and open grassland areas which is well used by the public. Also present on Littleworth Common is a pond and a number of species rich drains.

Site Notes

1. This is an area of mature broadleaved woodland. Ash is frequent and Oak occasional in the canopy with young Sycamore also frequent. Ivy is frequent as a climber. This area has a well developed shrub layer. Elm (*Ulmus procera*) and Sycamore are locally frequent and young Yew (*Taxus baccata*) is frequent. Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Ash seedlings are occasional. Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) is rare. On the ground Bramble is abundant and Ivy frequent and locally abundant. Sycamore saplings are locally frequent. Other occasional species include Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Bracken. Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) are rare. Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Hedge Woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*) and Hedge Garlic (*Alliaria petiolata*) are present near to the path.

2. In this section of woodland Oak and Birch are frequent, the latter being locally abundant. Sycamore is rare. In the shrub layer, Holly is frequent including some mature specimens. Yew is locally frequent and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel are occasional. On

the ground, Bramble is once again abundant over much of the area. Bracken is also frequent and locally abundant. Where Bramble and Bracken are not dominating, Purple Moor-grass is locally abundant, particularly to the west. Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*) is locally frequent in some areas. Other occasional species on the ground include Sycamore saplings, Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Ivy, Rowan seedlings and Broad-buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*). Bluebell and Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) are rare, although Wood Avens is frequent along the path. Where Yew and Holly are abundant, the ground flora is bare. Near to Littleworth Common Road, some garden waste is present along with some exotic species including Bamboo (*Sasa sp.*), Geranium (*Geranium sp.*) and Cherry Laurel. Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) and Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) are also locally frequent here.

3. A ditch runs along the edge of Littleworth Common Road. Here Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) is frequent. Other frequent species along the ditch include Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) and Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*). Nettle, Bramble and Bracken are also frequent with Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*).

4. This is a large area of young secondary woodland with dense Birch. Oak is occasional including some mature specimens. Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) is occasional and locally frequent in wetter areas, particularly to the north. Aspen (*Populus tremula*) is also occasional and locally frequent. Other tree species include occasional Sycamore, Alder buckthorn, Rowan and Hawthorn. Yew is rare. Holly is occasional. On the ground Bracken and Bramble are both frequent and locally abundant. Where these species are not dominating, Purple Moor-grass becomes locally frequent. Other grass species present include locally frequent Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) and occasional Wood Millet (*Milium effusum*), Rough Meadow-grass and Creeping Soft-grass. Other species in the ground flora include frequent Ivy and occasional Rose-bay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), Cleavers, Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis)* and Honeysuckle. Enchanter's Nightshade is rare. Along the path Wood Avens is frequent and Broad-leaved Willowherb (*Epilobium montanum*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Giant Fescue (*Festuca gigantean*) are occasional.

5. This is an area of tall unmown grassland. Tufted Hair-grass is abundant here forming tussocks. Yorkshire Fog and Rough Meadow-grass are also locally frequent. Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) are frequent. Herbs include frequent Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), occasional Broad-leaved Willowherb, Willow saplings, Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and Bracken and rare Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

6. This is a pond with abundant Common Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), Common Spike Rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) and Soft Rush around the margins. Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) is frequent within the pond. Tufted Hair-grass surrounds the pond with locally abundant Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil. Dave Page, Countryside Estates Officer for Elmbridge Borough Council reported that New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) is present in the pond although this was not recorded on the day of the survey.

7. This footpath/ride is quite damp and grass species found here include Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Yorkshire Fog and Tufted Hair-grass. Herbs include Hedge Woundwort, Broad-leaved Willowherb and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

8. This is a small open area dominated by Bracken. Scattered trees include Silver Birch, Rowan, Oak and Sycamore.

9. Here Oak dominates the canopy although they are widely spaced. Birch is locally frequent. The shrub layer is sparse although Birch, Young Yew, Rowan saplings, Holly and Cherry Laurel are occasional. On the ground Bramble is abundant with frequent Bracken. Wood Avens is occasional. Purple Moor-grass, Tufted Hair-grass and Creeping Soft-grass are all occasional and locally frequent. A ditch running along Littleworth Road has frequent Remote Sedge with Gipsywort, Great Willowherb and Meadow Vetchling.

10. This is the most species rich area of woodland described so far. Ash and Oak make up the canopy with Ivy and Honeysuckle frequent climbers. Elder is frequent in the shrub layer with occasional young Sycamore, Norway Maple, Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Holly, Field Rose (*Rosa arvensis*) and Cherry Laurel. Yew, Grey Willow, Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and Mock Orange (*Philadelphus coronarius*) are rare. Bramble continues to be abundant on the ground with locally frequent Bracken. Other species include locally frequent Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*), Greater Stichwort (*Stellaria holostea*), Cleavers and Nettle. Wood Avens, Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Nipplewort, Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*) are occasional. Additional species along the path include Ground Elder, Violet (*Viola sp.*), Hedge Garlic, Herb Robert, Enchanter's Nightshade, Broad-leaved Dock, Hedge Woundwort, Wood False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and Remote Sedge. The stream to the south is very shaded. Trees here include Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*) and Alder. Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is locally frequent here in other areas Bramble dominated to the stream edge. Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) and Remote Sedge are occasional.

11. This is an area of woodland with frequent mature Oak and occasional Ash. Other species in the canopy include occasional Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and Norway Maple. The shrub layer is well developed. Norway Maple saplings are locally abundant and Sycamore saplings and Hazel locally frequent. Other species making up the shrub layer include occasional Elder, Cherry Laurel, Cherry, Rowan, Hawthorn and Holly. Horse Chestnut, Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) are rare. On the ground Bramble is abundant with locally abundant Bracken and Nettle and locally frequent Ivy. Creeping Soft-grass and Yorkshire Fog are locally frequent. A rich diversity of species is found along the paths here and occasionally within the woodland although the density of Bramble prevents many. Species include Herb Robert, Hogweed, Cleavers, Wood Avens, Broad-leaved Dock, Remote Sedge, Violet, Soft Rush, Giant Fescue, Nipplewort, Wood False-brome, Bush Vetch, Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), Hedge Woundwort, Enchanter's Nightshade and Pendulous Sedge.

    Towards the south of this area, the shrub layer becomes more open although young Ash, Sycamore and Norway Maple are locally frequent. Young Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) is occasional. There are a number of small open areas where Bramble does not dominate.

Here Herb Robert is frequent with Enchanter's Nightshade, Soft Rush and Yorkshire Fog. There are some areas where the canopy is open. Here Nettle and Bramble dominate.

The stream which runs along the eastern boundary is very shaded. Tree species found along the stream include amongst others, Crack Willow, Grey Willow, Alder and Hornbeam. Nettles and Bramble are abundant up to the stream in places. In other areas Wood False-brome is locally frequent. Himalayan Balsam, Male Fern, Giant Fescue and Pendulous Sedge are occasional.

12. This is a small area where the woodland is wetter and intercepted by a number of drains. Trees include occasional Crack Willow, White Willow (*Salix alba*) and Alder. Himalayan Balsam is frequent in the drains. Nettle is locally abundant and Pendulous Sedge frequent. Along the path, Ground Elder is locally frequent. Other species include Greater Plantain (*Plantago major*), Germander Speedwell and Wood Avens.

13. Oak is still the main canopy dominant here although Ash is locally frequent and increases to the south. A Poplar (*Populus sp*) species is also rare in the canopy. Again this area has a well developed shrub layer. To the west is a large area with abundant Norway Maple Saplings and occasional Ash saplings. Here the ground flora is bare. Other species making up the shrub layer include frequent Sycamore saplings, occasional Rowan, Elder, Holly, Hawthorn, Cherry Laurel, Hazel and Elm. Yew is rare. Bramble is abundant on the ground over much of the area with locally frequent Nettle, Ivy and Cleavers. Other occasional species include Hedge Woundwort, Herb Robert, Enchanter's Nightshade and Broad-buckler Fern. Violet, Figwort (*Scrophularia nodosa*), Male Fern and Tufted Hair-grass are rare. Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is locally frequent. Along the path Wood Avens is frequent and other species include occasional Bush Vetch, Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), Wood Dock (*Rumex sanguineus*) and Hogweed.

14. East of the stream Ash is more frequent in the canopy becoming abundant in the north although Oak is still frequent. Elder and Elm are frequent in the shrub layer with occasional Hawthorn, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Holly and rare Yew and Cherry Laurel. The ground flora is variable while some areas are bare others are quite lush. Bramble is frequent although it does not completely dominate the ground flora here allowing a greater diversity of other species. Seedlings including Yew, Elm, Elder, Ash and Hawthorn are frequent. Other frequent species include Wood Avens, Herb Robert and Wood False-brome. Ground Elder, Ground Ivy, Greater Stichwort and Red Currant (*Ribes rubrum*) are locally frequent. Other occasional species include Wood Dock, Enchanter's Nightshade, Bush Vetch, Germander Speedwell, Hedge Woundwort and Giant Fescue. Hedge Garlic, Remote Sedge and Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) are rare. There is a patch of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) near the stream to the south.

15. This is an open area with scattered trees including Grey Willow, Ash and Oak. Tall, rank vegetation exists below dominated by Nettle. Bramble, Cleavers, False Oat-grass, Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) are also frequent. Broad-leaved Dock and Yorkshire Fog are occasional. Herb Robert and Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) are present on the edge of the path.

16. This is an area of Oak woodland with Ash becoming frequent towards the east. Sycamore is occasional in the canopy. There is a well developed shrub layer. Elder and Hawthorn

are frequent and Sycamore, Norway Maple and Cherry are locally frequent. Elm, Blackthorn, Cherry Laurel and Holly are occasional. Alder Buckthorn and Yew are rare. On the ground Bramble, Cleavers and Ivy are frequent with locally abundant Nettle and locally frequent Bluebell. Ground Elder is frequent along the path. Other occasionals in the ground flora include Herb Robert, Enchanter's Nightshade, Wood Avens, Ground Ivy and Giant Fescue. Hart's-tongue Fern (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) is rare. Near to the river, Bramble and Nettle are abundant with occasional Himalayan Balsam. Crack Willow is also occasional here.

17. This is an area which has been recently cleared by Elmbridge Borough Council leaving only scattered trees standing. Oak and Birch are frequent and Yew rare. The ground is currently quite patchy. Sycamore saplings are frequent and other tree saplings include Oak, Birch, Hawthorn, Cherry and Hazel. Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) are frequent, suggesting that the habitat may once have been acid grassland. Bramble is also frequent becoming abundant towards the west. Other occasional species include Gorse seedlings, Yorkshire Fog, Ivy, Broad-leaved Willowherb, Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil, Cleavers, Smooth Hawk's Beard (*Crepis capillaris*) and Prickly Sow Thistle (*Sonchus asper*). Broad-leaved Dock, Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and Nipplewort are rare.

    Further west are some areas of tall grassland. Here False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) is abundant. Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and Yorkshire Fog are frequent and Rough Meadow-grass locally frequent. Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) is occasional and Timothy (*Phleum pratense*) rare. Rosebay Willowherb is locally abundant and Lesser Stichwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Sheep's Sorrel occasional.

    Woodland remains in the eastern corner. Here Oak and Sycamore make up the canopy. Ivy is frequent as a climber and on the ground. Bramble is also frequent. Hawthorn, Holly, Elder and Sycamore saplings make up the shrub layer.

    Small Copper and Common Blue butterflies have been recorded within this area.

18. This is a small strip of damp woodland/scrub along the railway line. Here Crack Willow and Grey Willow are frequent and Hazel and Alder occasional. There is a tangly vegetation below where Bramble, Nettle and Cleavers are frequent. False Oat-grass is locally frequent, Couch grass (*Elytrigia repens*) and Cock's-foot occasional and Yellow Iris rare. Further east Oak becomes frequent and Willow rare with Elder and Hawthorn scrub below.

19. North of this woodland strip is an area of mown amenity grassland. Here Rye-grass is abundant with frequent Yorkshire Fog and occasional Wall Barley (*Hordeum murinum*). Occasional herbs include Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), White Clover and Ribwort Plantain. There are some scattered trees here including Common Lime (*Tilia cordata x platyphyllos*), Ash, Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris sens. lat*) and Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*). A good size unmown border has been left around these trees. These borders have abundant Cleavers, Creeping Thistle, Nettle, Bramble and False Oat-grass. Ground Elder is locally frequent.

20. Within this area there is a mix of woodland and open grassy areas. Within the mostly unmown grassy areas, False Oat-grass is abundant with frequent Yorkshire Fog and occasional Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Soft Brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), Timothy, Meadow Foxtail, Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra sens.str.*) and Sweet Vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Herbs include occasional Bramble, Lesser Stichwort, Ribwort Plantain, Common Sorre (*Rumex acetosa*), Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Common Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) and rare Wild Onion (*Allium vineale*) and Hedge Mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale*).

    The woodland consists of frequent Oak and Birch and occasional Ash, Sycamore Turkey Oak and Horse Chestnut. Grey Willow is locally frequent. Sycamore and Hawthorn are frequent in the shrub layer with occasional Holly, Hazel, Gorse, Elder and Elm. Yew is rare. There is a small area where Japanese Knotweed is frequent. The ground is not particularly species rich. Bramble and Ivy are abundant. Ivy is also frequent as a climber. Other species include locally frequent Creeping Bent, Bluebell and Rose-bay Willowherb. Yorkshire Fog and Male Fern are occasional. Along the paths, Hogweed is locally frequent with occasional Wood Avens. Tall unmown vegetation has been left at the edge of the paths here. Here False Oat-grass is abundant with frequent Cleavers, Nettle, Hedge Bindweed and Bramble.

21. Oak woodland continues in this section with occasional Ash. In the shrub layer Elder is frequent and Sycamore, Elm and Holly are locally frequent. Other occasionals in the shrub layer include Hazel, Hawthorn, Ash saplings, Cherry Laurel and Cherry. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is rare. Again Bramble and Ivy are abundant allowing few other species on the ground. Honeysuckle is locally frequent, Hedge Garlic and Male Fern are rare. Wood Avens and Wood Dock are occasional along the path.

    There is a large open grassy area towards the south. Here Yorkshire Fog is abundant, Rye-grass locally abundant and Cock's-foot frequent. Meadow Foxtail is occasional. Occasional herbs include Common Cat's-ear, Black Knapweed, Lesser Stichwort, Ribwort Plantain, Broad-leaved Dock, Hogweed and Dandelion.

NVC Communities present

Formal NVC quadrats were not undertaken, however the Phase 2 survey indicates that the much of the woodland most closely resembles W10; the *Quercus robur – Pteridium aquilinum – Rubus fruticosus* woodland. Mostly the typical sub-community although the *Hedera helix* sub-community is also present. Other areas, particularly within the area of Birch scrub resemble W4a; the *Dryopteris dilatata – Rubus fruticosus* sub-community of the *Betula pubescens – Molinia caerulea* woodland.

Management

Littleworth Common is managed by Elmbridge Borough Council. Management on the site which has taken place in the recent past includes the following;

- Clearance of trees from target note 17 and subsequent spraying of Sycamore re-growth to encourage an acid grassland habitat.
- Target notes 9 & 1 were thinned in 2000
- Target note 11 was thinned in 1997
- Target notes areas 20 & 21 were thinned about 10 years ago.

- Spraying of New Zealand Pigmyweed within pond.
- Within target note 20 and 21, tall uncut margins of vegetation are left between the paths and the woodland edge. This is advantageous as it creates good structural diversity and a variety of habitats for many different species.

Additional management that may be beneficial on site could include the further thinning of some additional areas of woodland and the creation of some open glades particularly in the dense birch scrub described in target note 4. This may help to encourage a greater diversity in the ground flora and will also encourage other species such as butterflies. It would also be beneficial to attempt to remove some of the young Sycamore and Norway Maple which are beginning to become abundant in some areas of the woodland. Rhododendron and Japanese Knotweed are both exotic species which can become invasive on sites. They are not a major problem on the site at the moment, but should be removed to prevent their further spread. Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed should also be removed for similar reasons. Any dead wood, either fallen or standing should be left in situ where possible as this is an important habitat for many species including birds, bats and invertebrates.

Nature Conservation Interest / Differences with previous survey

Littleworth Common was selected as an SNCI in 1996 for being a large area of semi-natural habitat with 14 ancient woodland indicators and for being good for birds. The site has changed little since this time and the reasons for selection remain valid. 19 ancient woodland indicators were recorded in the current survey. Wood Meadow-grass (*Poa nemoralis)* was observed in the previous survey but not in the current one. This brings the total number of ancient woodland indicators recorded on the site to 20.

Littleworth Common remains an important site particularly due to its location within an urban area and adjacent to Littleworth Common Golf Course. The site's history is important having once probably been heath although there is little evidence of this remaining on the site today. The site is likely to be an important refuge for many species including birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. The site is managed sensitively with wildlife in mind and this adds to its value. The protection and enhancement of this site will contribute towards meeting the targets within Surrey's Woodland Habitat Action Plan including to *'prevent loss of woodland of conservation importance'* and to *'maximise biodiversity in all woods'*.

Elmbridge SNCI Re-surveys 2004

Species List for Littleworth Common

Abundance uses the DAFOR system;

(**L**ocally) **D**ominant, **A**bundant, **F**requent, **O**ccasional, **R**are

[Please note that plants ranked are 'rare' means that they were not found often over this site and does not necessarily indicate that they are a County rarity]:

Scientific name	**Common name**	**Abundance**
*Acer campestre**	Field Maple	R
Acer platanoides	Norway Maple	LF
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	F
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	R
Aegopodium podagraria	Ground-elder	O
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse-chestnut	O
Agrostis capillaris	Common Bent	O
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent	O
Agrostis vinealis	Brown Bent	R
Alisma plantago-aquatica	Water-plantain	R
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard	O
Allium vineale	Wild Onion	R
Alnus glutinosa	Alder	R
Alopecurus pratensis	Meadow Foxtail	O
Anisantha sterilis	Barren Brome	R
Anthoxanthum odoratum	Sweet Vernal Grass	O
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley	O
Arctium lappa	Greater Burdock	R
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass	O
Bellis perennis	Daisy	O
Betula pendula	Silver Birch	F
Brachypodium sylvaticum	False-brome	O
Bromus hordeaceus	Soft Brome	LF
Calystegia sepium	Hedge Bindweed	O
*Carex pendula**	Pendulus Sedge	O
*Carex remota**	Remote Sedge	O
*Carpinus betulus**	Hornbeam	R
Castanea sativa	Sweet Chestnut	O
Centaurea nigra	Common Knapweed	O
Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay Willowherb	R
Circaea lutetiana	Enchanter's-nightshade	O
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	O
Cirsium palustre	Marsh Thistle	O
*Convallaria majalis**	Lily of the Valley	R
Corylus avellana	Hazel	O
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	O
Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawk's-beard	R
Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot	O
Deschampsia caespitosa	Tufted Hair-grass	O
Dipsacus fullonum	Wild Teasel	R

Elmbridge SNCI Re-surveys 2004

Scientific name	Common name	Abundance
Dryopteris dilatata	Broad Buckler-fern	O
Dryopteris filix-mas	Common Male Fern	R
Eleocharis palustris	Common Spike-rush	R
Elytrigia repens	Common Couch	O
Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb	O
Epilobium montanum	Broad-leaved Willowherb	O
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	R
Fallopia japonica	Japanese Knotweed	R
*Festuca gigantean**	Giant Fescue	O
Festuca rubra sens.str.	Red Fescue	R
Fragaria vesca	Wild Strawberry	R
*Frangula alnus**	Alder Buckthorn	O
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	F
Galium aparine	Cleavers	O
Geranium dissectum	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	R
Geranium robertianum	Herb-robert	O
Geranium sp.	A Geranium	R
Geum urbanum	Herb Bennet	O
Glechoma hederacea	Ground-ivy	R
Glyceria fluitans	Floating Sweet-grass	R
Hedera helix	Ivy	O
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed	O
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog	O
*Holcus mollis**	Creeping Soft-grass	O
Hordeum murinum	Wall Barley	R
*Hyacinthoides non-scripta**	Bluebell	O
*Hypericum androsaemum**	Tutsan	R
Hypochaeris radicata	Cat's-ear	R
*Ilex aquifolium**	Holly	O
Impatiens glandulifera	Himalayan Balsam	LF
Iris pseudacorus	Yellow Iris	R
Juncus conglomeratus	Compact Rush	R
Juncus effusus	Soft Rush	R
Lamiastrum galeobdolon	Yellow Archangel	R
Lamium album	White Dead-nettle	R
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort	O
Lathyrus pratensis	Meadow Vetchling	R
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye Daisy	R
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet	R
Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass	O
Lonicera periclymenum	Honeysuckle	F
Lotus corniculatus	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	R
Lotus pedunculatus	Large Bird's-foot-trefoil	R
Lycopus europaeus	Gipsywort	R
Lysimachia vulgaris	Yellow Loosestrife	R
Lythrum salicaria	Purple-loosestrife	R
*Malus sylvestris sens. lat.**	Apple	R
*Melica uniflora**	Wood Melick	O
*Milium effusum**	Wood Millet	O

Elmbridge SNCI Re-surveys 2004

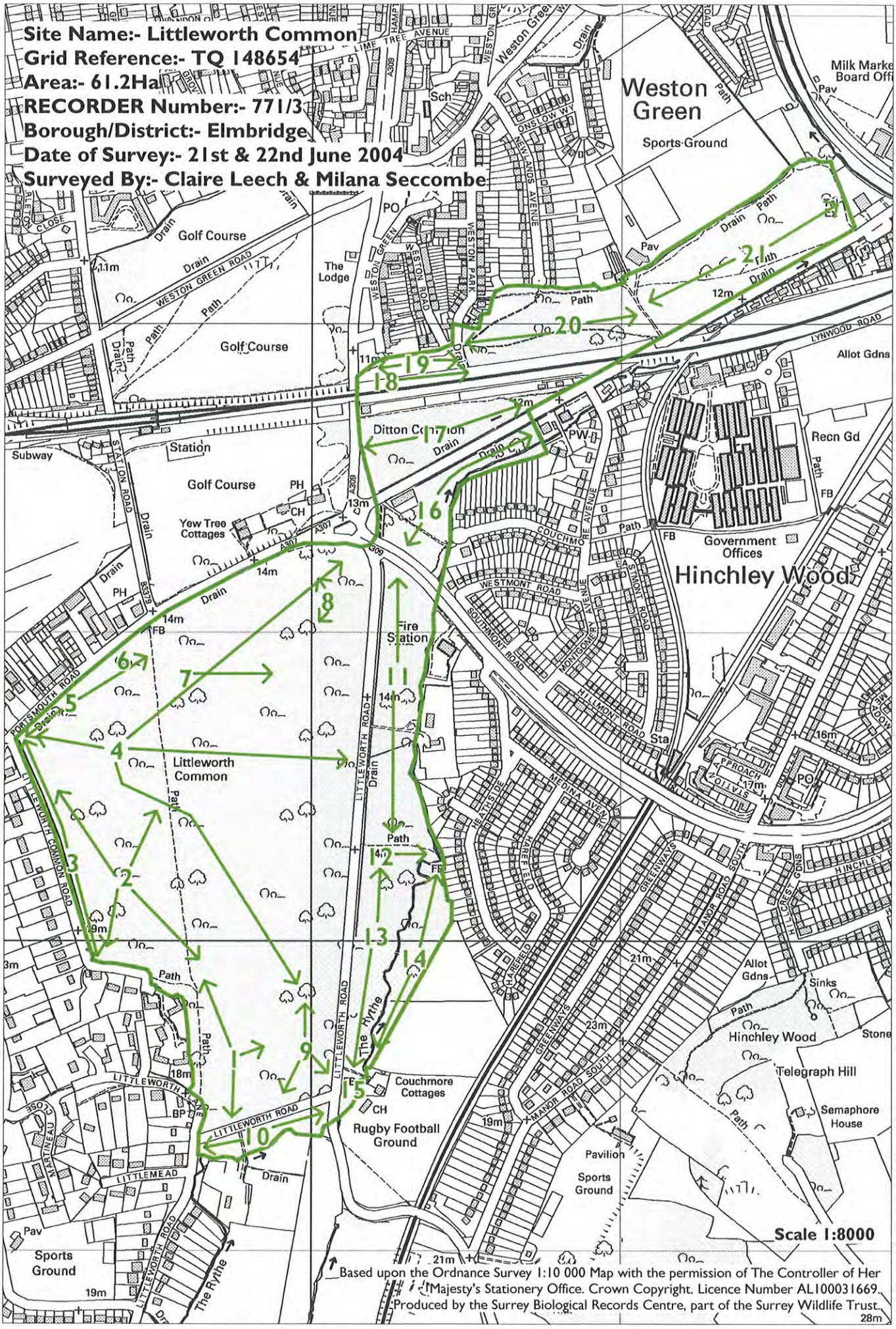
Scientific name	Common name	Abundance
Molinia caerulea	Purple Moor-grass	O
Pentaglottis sempervirens	Green Alkanet	O
Persicaria hydropiper	Water-pepper	R
Philadelphus coronarius	Mock Orange	R
Phleum bertolonii	Smaller Cat's-tail	R
Phleum pratense	Timothy	R
Phyllitis scolopendrium	Hart's-tongue	R
Pinus sylvestris	Scots Pine	R
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain	O
Plantago major	Greater Plantain	R
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass	O
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass	O
Populus sp.	a poplar	O
*Populus tremula**	Aspen	O
Potentilla anserina	Silverweed	R
Potentilla reptans	Creeping Cinquefoil	O
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal	R
*Prunus avium**	Wild Cherry	O
Prunus laurocerasus	Cherry Laurel	O
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	R
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken	O
Quercus cerris	Turkey Oak	R
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak	F
Quercus rubra	Red Oak	R
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup	R
Ranunculus flammula	Lesser Spearwort	R
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup	R
Rhododendron ponticum	Rhododendron	R
*Ribes rubrum**	Red Currant	R
*Rosa arvensis**	Field Rose	R
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble	A
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel	R
Rumex acetosella	Sheep's Sorrel [agg.]	R
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock	O
Rumex sanguineus	Wood Dock	O
Salix alba x babylonica	Weeping Willow	R
Salix alba	White Willow	R
Salix cinerea	Grey Willow	O
Salix fragilis	Crack Willow	R
Sambucus nigra	Elder	LF
Sasa sp.	a bamboo	R
Scrophularia nodosa	Common Figwort	R
Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort	R
Silene dioica	Red Campion	R
Sisymbrium officinale	Hedge Mustard	O
Solanum dulcamara	Bittersweet	R
Sonchus asper	Prickly Sow-thistle	R
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	O
Stachys sylvatica	Hedge Woundwort	O

Elmbridge SNCI Re-surveys 2004

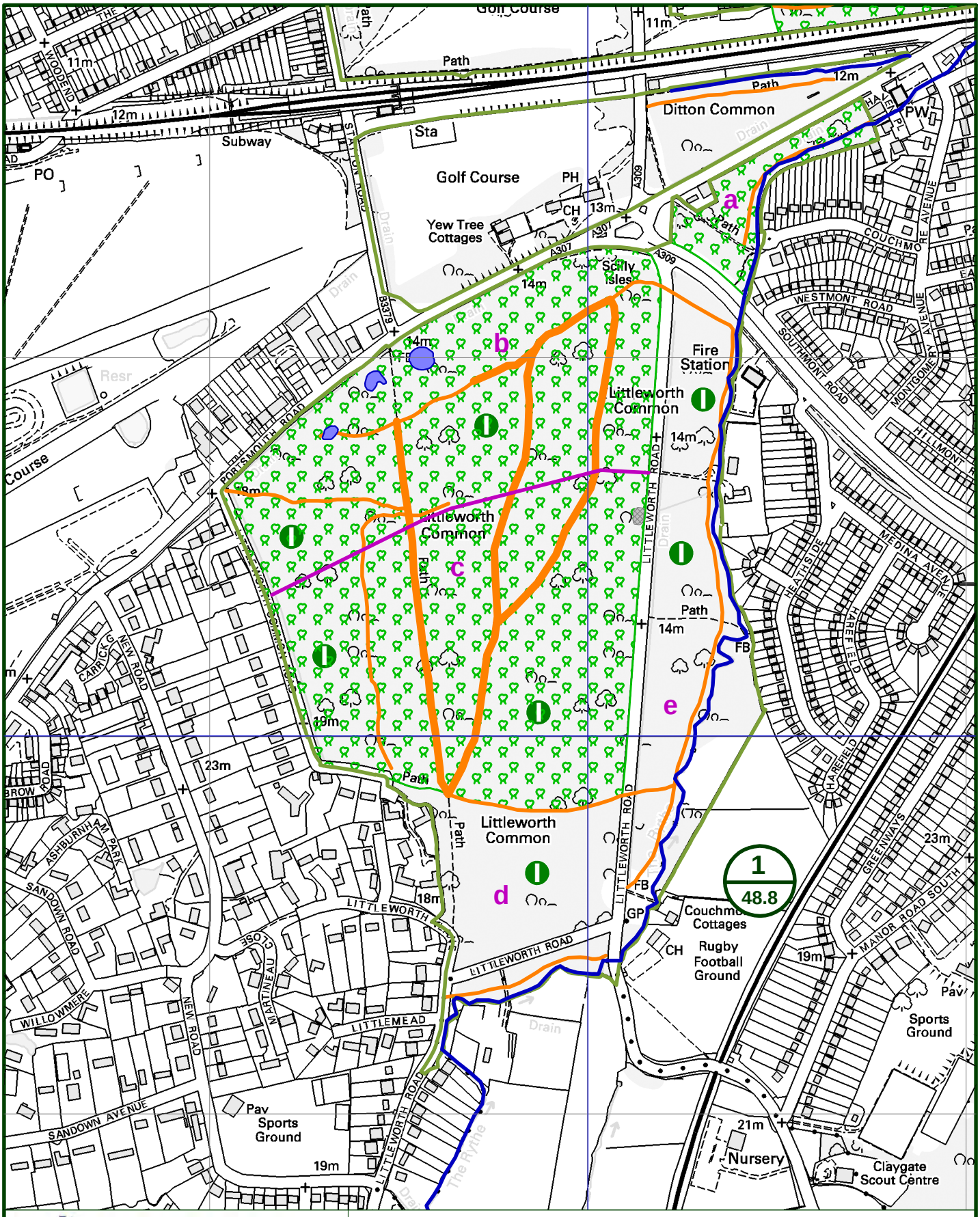
Scientific name	Common name	Abundance
Stellaria graminea	Lesser Stitchwort	O
Stellaria holostea	Greater Stitchwort	O
Taraxacum officinale agg.	Dandelion	R
Taxus baccata	Yew	O
Tilia cordata x platyphyllos	Lime	R
Trifolium repens	White Clover	R
Typha latifolia	Bulrush	R
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	R
*Ulmus glabra**	Wych Elm	R
Ulmus procera	English Elm	R
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle	O
Veronica chamaedrys	Germander Speedwell	O
Vicia sativa	Common Vetch	O
*Vicia sepium**	Bush Vetch	O
Viola sp.	a violet	O

Number of records:	153
Number of ancient woodland vascular plants (*):	20

Appendix 2b: Littleworth Common SNCI Re-survey Notes (2004) Target Note Plan


Site Name:- Littleworth Common
Grid Reference:- TQ 148654
Area:- 61.2Ha
RECORDER Number:- 771/3
Borough/District:- Elmbridge
Date of Survey:- 21st & 22nd June 2004
Surveyed By:- Claire Leech & Milana Seccombe
Weston Green
Sports Ground
Golf Course
Littleworth Common
Hinchley Wood
Government Offices
Fire Station
Rugby Football Ground
Couchmore Cottages
Pavilion
Sports Ground
Scale 1:8000
Based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:10 000 Map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Licence Number AL100031669.
Produced by the Surrey Biological Records Centre, part of the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Appendix 3: Elmbridge Borough Council Short Term Work Plan Map 1: Littleworth Common



KEY :

- Site Boundary
- Thin Broadleaves
- Pond
- Create Hardstanding
- Compartment Boundary
- Watercourse
- Ride - Zone 3 Major - 1800m
- Ride - Zone 2 Minor - 2350m
- Invasive Species Control

25 0 25 50 75 100 125 150 175 200 Metres

Elmbridge Borough Council
... bridging the communities ...

TITLE : Elmbridge Borough Council Countryside Estate	
SUBJECT/SITE : Short Term Work Plan Map 1 : Littleworth Common	
SCALE : 1:5000	**DATE :** 28/07/11
Produced by : NB	**Checked by :** DP

www.elmbridge.gov.uk

Appendix 4: Littleworth Common: Botanical Survey and Evaluation report by Ilex Ecology (2020)

LITTLEWORTH COMMON
BOTANICAL SURVEY AND EVALUATION

Client: Tyler Grange
Date: September 2020

Ilex Ecology
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Salisbury
SP1 3YQ
ilexecology@gmail.com
www.ilexecology.co.uk

SUMMARY

Ilex Ecology were commissioned by Tyler Grange to carry out an ecological appraisal of Littleworth Common SNCI in Esher, Surrey. The scope of the survey was to evaluate the SNCI in terms of its current conservation and amenity value, and to assess the potential for enhancement as part of a potential mitigation strategy, as well as examine the potential for its higher protection as a SSSI. The survey was carried out on September 16-17 2020.

The site comprised deciduous woodland with small areas of maintained grassland and glades, and a small section of the River Hythe. The woodland as a whole was in good condition and supported a good range of species associated with *W10 Quercus robur-Pteridium aquilinum-Rubus fruticosus* woodland, with some areas of more acidic *W4 Betula pubescens-Molinia caerulea* woodland. The smaller areas of grassland supported mesotrophic grassland with some indicators of acidic grassland.

The woodland is well managed in most parts, but in some areas has developed a relatively homogenous secondary structure, with all the trees of similar age, and in other areas is choked by dense Holly scrub. However, where glades have been created they have nearly all been dominated by dense Bramble and Bracken. Although the woodland would benefit from enhanced levels of management there is a risk of creating further areas of dense ruderal vegetation. As such the highest potential would lie in the creation of mown glades within the more acidic W4 areas, and managing these with an annual cut, as has been done currently in the northern areas of the site adjacent to the A307. This should act to gradually reduce soil nutrient levels and lead to the creation of species-rich glades of higher conservation value. In addition some variation to the management of the rides is suggested.

There is currently little evidence of antisocial activity in the woodland, perhaps due to the lack of car parking and relative affluence of the local area.

METHODOLOGY

Botanical Survey

A rapid assessment was made of the site, involving a walkover of all the trackways, and brief forays into the areas of denser under-scrub. Rough areas of different habitat type were mapped, and evidence of excessive human impacts documented.

Constraints

September is late in the year for woodland surveys, and therefore no attempt was made to compile an exhaustive list of woodland indicators, many of which are not present this late in the year.

Successful management plans tend to be based on previous experience on specific sites. There currently appears to be a fairly rigorous management regime across much of the site, and the success or otherwise of previous and ongoing management would form an essential input into any detailed management programme into the future.

SITE MAP

Site boundary and location of target notes

OVERVIEW

Conservation

(Full species names with Latin binomials are presented in Appendix 1)

Littleworth Common is located to the north east of Esher and surrounded by a combination of housing, roads, railway and a golf course. The site is bisected by a number of trackways and paths used by pedestrians, horse riders and occasional cyclists, as well as a relatively busy road.

Littleworth Common was selected as an SNCI in 1996 for its large area of semi-natural habitat, with 14 ancient woodland indicators, as well as its value for birds. The site has additional value in that it once contained areas of heathland.

No lowland heath is currently present on site, and the small areas of grassland do not contain adequate indicator species to bring them close to being classified as acid grassland.

However, the woodland is an excellent example of lowland deciduous woodland and, despite the fire damage, contains a large amount of mature oak trees, a good mixed canopy and under-storey structure and a good range of woodland species, although at lower levels than ideal. The woodland is included in the Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat Inventory and is currently in a Woodland Grant Scheme.

Much of the area was subjected to a a severe fire in 1976 which accounted for the secondary nature of much of the woodland, supporting a dense sub-canopy of early aged Birch trees, with an under-storey of Bracken and Bramble. Elsewhere the woodland was dominated by an Oak canopy and comprised fairly typical *W10 Quercus robur - Pteridium aquilinum - Rubus fruticosus* woodland.

There were some areas of slightly damper woodland, evidenced by the presence of Remote and Pendulous Sedges, and a small section of the River Hythe running along the eastern boundary of the site. There were also ditches present throughout, but these supported a limited range of aquatic and riparian fauna.

Within the woodland one of the key factors is the elevated levels of nutrients in the soils, which meant that areas where the canopy was open tended to be dominated by dense stands of Bracken and Bramble.

The presence of Bracken and Purple Moor-grass gave a good indication of the formerly acid and damp nature of the site. However, in no areas was either true acid grassland, heath or acid woodland recorded, meaning these habitats of much higher conservation value are absent on the site.

Some small glade grasslands did support high amounts of Common Bent, often associated with *U1 Festuca ovina - Agrostis capillaris - Rumex acetosella grassland grassland*, but there was an absence of any other indicator species and forbs associated with this vegetation type, and in many areas this grassland soon gave way to higher abundance of False Oatgrass, Cock's-foot and Perennial Ryegrass, all associated with higher nutrient mesotrophic grasslands.

At present active management appears to be carried out across much of the site, but additional recommendations for enhanced management are made later in the report.

Amenity

The site is bisected by a number of trackways and paths, all of which were in excellent condition at the time of survey (which coincided with an exceptionally hot dry September, so no assessment of how the paths react to high precipitation could be made).

There is limited access the the southern block of woodland with the absence of any parking facilities. This absence of parking, possibly factored in with the affluence of the local area, meant there was no evidence of antisocial behaviour such as littering, fires, graffiti and vandals witnessed during the visit (apart from some polite graffiti written on a social distancing poster).

One tent was observed, and a scattering of dens built by children, but all of these were litter free.

This situation was mirrored in the northern half of the SNCI, which was possible to park adjacent too, but still lacked a formal carpark, and apart from slightly elevated levels of dog poo did not suffer form any littering or fire damage.

The southern wood is bisected by a busy road, which tends to deter walkers from using this area.

RESULTS

Target Notes

1. These areas, generally located away from the tracks, were characterised by a dense under-storey of Holly, beneath a sparser Oak canopy. They were extremely closed off, and supported little to no ground flora due to a combination of heavy leaf fall and dense shading. Some Yew and Rhododendron were recorded, but overall they were species poor.

2. These areas, which accounted for most of the woodland, contained mature Oak and Sycamore with an under-storey comprising a range of young tree and shrubs, preliminary Birch with some Yew. In the shrub layer, Holly was occasionally frequent but not dominant and included some mature specimens. Rowan, Alder, Rhododendron, Ash and Hawthorn were found occasionally.

3. This area had a much thinner canopy (presumably due to the fire in the 1970s), and was dominated by equally aged Birch trees. Of all the sections of the wood this had the the clearest affinity with acid soils with with a dense growth of Bracken and Purple Moor-grass characterising the ground cover.

4. A area of mown grassland/bracken adjoining the road. Despite the mowing this area still clearly had a high Bracken burden, but this is likely to decrease over time.

5. A small river running near the eastern boundary of the site. This was generally in very good condition, but supported only a narrow range of riparian species due to low light levels. In some areas the Bankside vegetation was dominated by stands of Indian Balsam.

6. This southern strip of woodland supported the greatest density of mature Oak trees.
7. An area of good quality woodland with an Oak dominated canopy. The shrub layer was relatively sparse with Birch, Yew, Rowan and Holly all recorded. In any open area Bramble was abundant with frequent Bracken.

8. These areas contained several glades that had been created and appeared to be actively managed to keep them open, although some were supporting dense Gorse re-growth at the time of survey. The grassland was dominated by Common Bent in several places with small amounts of Brown Bent, both suggesting that at one point this area supported acid grassland,. However, high amounts of False Oatgrass and Cock's-foot were also recorded, giving the grassland an overall more mesotrophic feel and unlikely to currently qualify as acid grassland. A rigorous search was made for any other acid grassland species, but none were found, with Common Sorrel, Ribwort Plantain and Common Cat's-ear as the most common forbs.

9. To the east this area graded into Oak woodland, with a dense ground cover of Bramble. Hawthorn, Holly, Elder and Sycamore were all recorded in the shrub layer.
10. This area of woodland supported a well spaced canopy of mature Oak trees, with a dense under-storey of Sycamore and Holly. Again, in open areas, the ground flora was dominated by dense Bramble, with some grass along the track edges. Tall, un-mown vegetation had been left at the edge of the paths with dominant False Oat-grass and frequent Cleavers, Nettle, Hedge Bindweed and Bramble.

11. Similar woodland to 2, but with a mixed canopy of Oak and Ash. Elder was more frequent in the shrub layer, with occasional Hazel and some Cherry. Bramble and Ivy formed a dense cover, preventing many other species from colonising.
12. This area supported amenity grassland, characterised by species-poor mesotrophic grassland, dominated by Perennial Ryegrass with forbs including Yarrow, Smooth Hawk's-beard and small amounts of Common Knapweed.

RECOMENDATIONS

Due to the elevated nutrient levels (suffered by many woodlands in built-up areas of the southeast) there is considerable difficulty attached to canopy reduction and glade creation, in order to avoid the creation of areas of dense Bracken and Bramble and often an associated drop in biodiversity.

However, the following recommendations are made, which would require consultation with Elmbridge Council to gauge whether they have already been tried out, and are feasible within the context of the site.

1. Woodland Management

Five specific recommendations are made

1. Carry out some targeted tree removal in the areas of dense Birch regrowth (3). The structural diversity of these areas is currently low, and the removal of selected trees could create some variation in the under-storey; supporting the growth of fewer more mature trees, which will then provide a better resource for birds and invertebrates.

2. Create mown glades. A small number of large glades could be created in Area 3. This area contained the most acidic and low-nutrient soils, and would be likely to lead to the creation of more diverse glades. The glades would have to be managed as small hay meadows, which is a common practice in parts of Europe, where cattle fodder is harvested from small woodland clearings. An annual hay cut would keep the bracken and bramble under control, and by removing the arisings each year should eventually decrease soil nutrients, leading to the development of a more open and diverse sward, possible one day supporting more typical species of acid grassland.

3. The areas of dense Holly (1) should be partially opened up, getting the right balance of allowing more light in but preventing the large clumps of Bramble from colonising. The areas designated by Target Note 1 are currently extremely species-poor due to the density of the Holly stands, so this management could boost diversity, if carried out carefully and regularly monitored.

4. The glades are currently well managed to keep them open, but are straight and rather homogenous. By cutting scallops into the woodland edge at periodic intervals, a system of inter-linked glades could be created. By managing these on an annual basis a more diverse flora should eventually build up. Ride glades also have the advantage of being extremely well linked, allowing butterflies to travel from area to area and easily colonise and breed in new areas.

5. The area of Indian Balsam by the river should continue to be controlled (this may already be taking place) in order to prevent this invasive species from spreading into the woodland.

6. Grassland Management

A continuing programme of grassland mowing should be maintained in all the open areas of the site, again involving removal of arisings to attempt to lower soil nutrients and potentially lead to a shift towards a more calcifugous flora.

7. Amenity

At present there appears to be an excellent balance of a medium use of the woods for dog walking, jogging and horse riding, with mostly locals, who have walked from their properties, using the woods. It is not recommended to increase general access and car parking facilities as this would likely lead to a rise in activity that would be detrimental to the woods, and there is adequate provision of larger areas of green-space in the local areas for those in vehicles.

As discussed earlier, the paths all appeared in excellent condition during the time of survey, but this would have to be confirmed by individuals who use the woods in the wetter months.

The tracks appear well way marked with different colour posts clearly denoting routes and directions.

As mentioned in the report the site is bisected north to south by the Littleworth Road, on which cars travel at 60mph. This tends to deter walkers from this section of the wood, and undoubtedly has an impact on wildlife, both in terms of fragmenting the woods and a linear source of nitrogen deposition. Consideration could be given to installing traffic calming and a speed limit on this stretch of road, to improve both the amenity and conservation value of the eastern half of the woodland.

SITE EVALUATION

At present the site is in relatively good condition and is without doubt of a quality to justify its continued status as a SNCI.

If the management was successful in shifting the grassland areas back into the category of lowland acid grassland there might be grounds for a higher level of protection, but with the current condition of the site this is unlikely to happen. The total area of grassland at the moment is very low, and despite the conservation interest in the woodland, it is not large enough to form a significant block of woodland to take it above simply being listed on the woodland priority habitat list.

It is therefore considered unlikely that the site could be considered as a candidate for SSSI, but nonetheless it is a very high quality SNCI, and without doubt the biodiversity could be boosted with a continuation and enhancement of the current management regime.

APPENDIX 1

Species list

FORBS	
Acer campestre	Field Maple
Acer platanoides	Norway Maple
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse-chestnut
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard
Alnus glutinosa	Alder
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley
Bellis perennis	Daisy
Betula pendula	Silver Birch
Calliergonella cuspidata	Pointed Spear-moss
Calystegia sepium	Hedge Bindweed
Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay Willowherb
Circaea lutetiana	Enchanter's-nightshade
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle
Cirsium palustre	Marsh Thistle
Corylus avellana	Hazel
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawk's-beard
Epilobium hirsutum	Great Willowherb
Fagus sylvatica	Beech
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash
Geum urbanum	Wood Avens
Glechoma hederacea	Ground Ivy
Hedera helix	Ivy
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed
Hypochaeris radicata	Cat's-ear
Ilex aquifolium	Holly
Impatiens glandulifera	Indian Balsam
Lamium album	White Dead-nettle
Ligustrum vulgare	Wild Privet
Lonicera periclymenum	Honeysuckle
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
Plantago major	Greater Plantain
Potentilla anserina	Silverweed
Potentilla reptans	Creeping Cinquefoil
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak
Ranunculus flammula	Lesser Spearwort
Ranunculus repens	Creeping Buttercup
Rhododendron ponticum	Rhododendron
Ribes rubrum	Red Currant
Rosa arvensis	Field-rose
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble
Rumex acetosa	Common Sorrel
Rumex obtusifolius	Broad-leaved Dock
Salix cinerea	Grey Willow

Salix fragilis	Crack-willow
Sambucus nigra	Elder
Scrophularia nodosa	Common Figwort
Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort
Silene dioica	Red Campion
Sisymbrium officinale	Hedge Mustard
Solanum dulcamara	Bittersweet
Sonchus asper	Prickly Sow-thistle
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan
Stachys sylvatica	Hedge Woundwort
Stellaria holostea	Greater Stitchwort
Taraxacum agg.	Dandelion
Taxus baccata	Yew
Tilia cordata x platyphyllos	Small-leaved Lime
Trifolium repens	White Clover
Typha latifolia	Bulrush
Ulex europaeus	Gorse
Ulmus glabra	Wych Elm
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle
Veronica chamaedrys	Germander Speedwell
Viola sp.	Violet

GRAMINOIDS	
Agrostis capillaris	Common Bent
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent
Agrostis vinealis	Brown Bent
Alopecurus geniculatus	Marsh Foxtail
Anisantha sterilis	Barren Brome
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass
Brachypodium sylvaticum	False Brome
Bromus hordeaceus	Soft-brome
Carex pendula	Pendulous Sedge
Carex remota	Remote Sedge
Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot
Deschampsia cespitosa	Tufted Hair-grass
Festuca rubra	Red Fescue
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog
Juncus effusus	Soft Rush
Lolium perenne	Perennial Ryegrass
Molinia caerulea	Purple Moor-grass
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass
Poa nemoralis	Wood Meadow-grass
Poa trivialis	Rough Meadow-grass

FERNS	
Dryopteris dilatata	Broad Buckler-fern
Dryopteris filix-mas	Male Fern
Phyllitis scolopendrium	Hart's-tongue
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken

BRYOPHYTES	
Brachythecium rutabulum	Rough-stalked Feather-moss
Calypogeia muelleriana	Mueller's Pouchwort
Eurhynchium praelongum	Common Feather-moss
Eurhynchium striatum	Common Striated Feather-moss
Fissidens taxifolius	Common Pocket-moss
Lophocolea bidentata	Bifid Crestwort
Polytrichum commune	Common Haircap
Pseudoscleropodium purum	Neat Feather-moss

Appendix 4 – Qualifications and Experience

A4.1 This statement has been prepared by Nathan Jenkinson, a suitably qualified Associate Ecological Consultant at Tyler Grange Group Limited.

A4.2 Nathan is a full member of the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), holds an MSc in Species Identification and Survey Skills (an MSc focussed on ecological consultancy) and a BSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation.

A4.3 Nathan has been an ecological consultant since 2015. Prior to working at Tyler Grange, Nathan was employed at Southern Ecological Solutions and RSK, working as a professional ecologist.

A4.4 Nathan has undertaken ecological assessments and designed mitigation and enhancement strategies for the following types of development projects:

- Housing - single new dwellings through to settlement extensions up to 1,000 dwellings;
- Retail and commercial;
- Tourism - caravan parks; and
- Infrastructure – railway and highways.

A4.5 Nathan is an expert in the planning system as it relates to ecology and nature conservation, along with the various international and UK legal instruments that are designed to protect wildlife during land use change.