areas which are most significant and sensitive to change from those which, although still of interest, are not quite so vulnerable. Tier 1 APAs help to identify where undesignated archaeological assets of equivalent significance to a scheduled monument – and which are subject to the same policies as designated heritage assets – are known or likely to be present. A total of 31 Archaeological Priority Areas are identified for Richmond, of which 7 are a Tier 1 APA, 24 are Tier 2 APAs, and 1 is a Tier 3 APA. The report by GLAAS was completed in 2022 and there is a link to the latest Archaeological Priority Areas Appraisal and borough-wide overview maps on the Council's website.

21 Increasing biodiversity and the quality of our green and blue spaces, and greening the borough

Policy 34

Green and Blue Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

A. Green and blue infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green spaces and green features, green space stepping-stone sites as well as rivers and other watercourses, ponds, floodplains and wetlands, which provides multiple benefits for people, nature and the economy, and which plays a significant role in both mitigating and adapting to climate change.

B. To ensure all development proposals protect and appropriately enhance and restore green infrastructure, the following will be taken into account when assessing development proposals:

1. Protect and enhance the borough's blue and green infrastructure networks, in particular, but not exclusively, the sites designated as Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, Local Green Space, Other Open Land of Townscape Importance, other open spaces as well as areas designated for their biodiversity and nature conservation value.
2. Protect and seek improvements to walking and cycling routes to and through the green infrastructure network, such as green spaces, and where opportunities arise create such routes, thereby promoting healthy lifestyles and active travel.
3. Enhance the existing blue and green infrastructure network, including open spaces and green corridors, providing habitats for biodiversity to flourish and expand.
4. Protect and enhance biodiversity within the green and blue infrastructure networks, particularly on sites designated for nature conservation interest, but also recognise the contribution that non-designated sites offer to increase biodiversity in the borough.
5. Increase the provision of green and blue infrastructure in and around development sites through urban greening and other green and blue infrastructure features, ensuring they complement the surroundings and link into existing networks.
6. Expect development to incorporate and maintain appropriate elements of green infrastructure which make a positive contribution to the wider network of open spaces.

7. Enhance accessibility to open spaces as well as to the blue infrastructure network, particularly to the borough's rivers and their banks, for recreational use, while ensuring that the biodiversity value is protected and enhanced in a measurable way.
8. Improve opportunities for local residents and visitors to experience nature and provide educational opportunities, both formal and informal, within the development, to allow the public to embrace their local environment and develop potential stewardship behaviours.
9. Make provision for the long-term sustainable maintenance and management of open space and green and blue infrastructure features on site, including supporting community involvement in stewardship of green and blue infrastructure networks, and ensuring there is space for growing food, including pollination and wildlife-friendly gardening.

21.1 This policy is the overarching strategic policy for the theme "Increasing biodiversity and the quality of our green and blue spaces, and greening the borough" and should be read alongside other policies in this Plan as well as the London Plan, particularly Policy G1 (Green infrastructure) and Policy G4 (Open space), the Mayor of London's All London Green Grid SPG (2012) (including the Frameworks for the Arcadian Thames, and the River Colne and Crane Area) and guidance set out in the Colne and Crane Valleys Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019). Urban greening entails more than just focusing on how the streets, buildings and other public spaces look. Roofs and walls covered in plants, street trees and small pocket parks in between buildings make our borough an even better place to live, work and invest. These green features act as part of the borough's green infrastructure network to help clean our air, reduce the risk of flooding and keep the city cool.

21.2 The borough is characterised by extensive areas of open land, designated as Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. The borough's rivers and their corridors link across borough boundaries and have a strategic function in southwest London, Greater London and beyond. The borough also benefits from highly significant historic landscapes, including those on the Historic England's national Register of Parks and Gardens, all of which make a significant contribution to the borough's green infrastructure network. In addition, there are many smaller pieces of open land, including land designated as Other Open Land of Townscape Importance, as well as non-designated land, such as residential gardens. Therefore, the green spaces and green and blue features that contribute to and make up the overall green infrastructure network range from borough-wide and strategic features such as parks, watercourses and woodlands to local features such as playgrounds, sports pitches, allotments, public open spaces, trees, woodlands, private gardens and other green spaces used for recreational purposes. There are also other features such as highway verges, railway embankments as well as site-specific elements such as green roofs and green walls that are considered to be part of the wider green infrastructure network. It is important to recognise that the borough's parks and open spaces provide not only recreational opportunities for those that live and work in this borough, but also for local communities and residents in neighbouring and other London boroughs, thus providing a green lung for southwest London.

21.3 As set out in the Local Plan's spatial strategy (see Policy 2 'Spatial Strategy: Managing change in the borough (Strategic Policy)'), housing delivery and the infrastructure required to support it, is expected to be met without compromising the green and blue infrastructure network; there is a presumption against the loss of, or building on, greenfield sites. The leisure and recreational pressure on existing green infrastructure, including nationally and internationally designated areas such as Richmond Park and Bushy and Home Park, is acknowledged, and residential development is likely to exacerbate this pressure. There will be challenges in ensuring that the Council reaps all the benefits of having high quality, well maintained open

spaces and green infrastructure. The Council will work in partnership with key local stakeholders and partners (such as the Environment Agency, Mayor of London, neighbouring boroughs, the Royal Parks, major landowners such as the Crown Estates, Thames Water the Richmond Biodiversity Partnership, Habitats & Heritage, the Thames Landscape Strategy, the Thames Strategy and others) to ensure through careful management we achieve our shared aims in respect of the quantity, quality and positive impact of our green and blue assets for both people and wildlife.

21.4 Development which provides a greener environment can be more sustainable and deliver important environmental, social, health and economic benefits. The multifunctional nature of green and blue infrastructure means it contributes significantly to the value of the local area as a place to live, work, do businesses and visit. With the decline of biodiversity across the globe, it is vitally important that new features do not only offer a 'green space' but provide value by forming part of a larger ecosystem, helping to maintain biodiversity. For example, green corridors can be safeguarded for biodiversity by carefully considering any physical infrastructure installed, such as reducing the extent of artificial lighting where possible to protect species of bat present in the borough (see Policy 39 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' and Policy 43 'Floodlighting and Other External Artificial Lighting '). Policy 8 'Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage (Strategic Policy) ' also sets out that the Council encourages the return of currently engineered riverbanks to a more natural state where this is possible, which will in turn improve the quantity and quality of natural habitat in these locations. Green and blue infrastructure plays a significant role in both mitigating and adapting to climate change, with the ability for green infrastructure to capture and sequester carbon and pollutants within the vegetation and soils being perhaps the most crucial.

21.5 Green and blue infrastructure networks and features that make up the overall network can also support healthier and more active lifestyles by providing green routes for walking and cycling, green spaces for recreation, exercise and play. Pedestrian and cycle routes across green spaces often form a strategically important part of the borough's cycling and walking. These routes enable active travel choices by connecting key destinations in the borough via convenient shortcuts and quiet routes away from busy roads. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the importance of having access to green spaces within walking distance of homes. Pedestrian and cycle routes through green spaces should be protected and, wherever possible, provided to a high standard in accordance with best practice guidance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to parks and other green spaces increased across London. It is important to protect and enhance the existing areas of open space in the borough, to ensure that as the population grows, there are good quality green spaces for everyone to enjoy.

21.6 The borough's network of green and blue infrastructure is critically important in helping to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change within the borough, given that areas of open water within the borough's river corridors, other wetland habitats and green spaces help to reduce the urban heat island effect by promoting urban cooling and reducing localised air temperatures. Green space areas also provide important storm water retention opportunities by minimising surface water run-off rates during severe rainfall storm events, and trees within the borough's green and/or wildlife or ecological corridors help promote urban cooling. Trees also provide increased shade cover during summer heatwaves and reduce levels of particulate urban air pollution. They also play a key role in helping to store carbon. Rising summer temperatures, prolonged summer heatwaves, and flash flooding due to severe extreme storm events are all likely to increase in frequency in London over the coming years as a result of climate change. The presence of a network of green spaces may reduce the likelihood of flooding by allowing water to permeate through the ground. Green infrastructure can also be designed to act as flood storage areas, holding large volumes of water in temporary ponds to protect built

up areas from flooding. The appropriate enhancement and protection of the borough's green and blue infrastructure networks is therefore considered critical in tackling the climate emergency.

21.7 Green corridors are linear natural infrastructure, containing trees and plants, that link to other typically larger green and open spaces to form a green infrastructure network. In order to make the borough more resilient to future climate change pressures and at the same time deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity (see Policy 39 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'), the Council will encourage the creation of multi-functional green space wildlife or ecological corridors within new development site layouts which have a dual function as natural green space areas and also areas which help to mitigate the effects of climate change by promoting both sustainable urban drainage and urban cooling. For example, by encouraging the use of on-site natural green space, linear shaped dry swale Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), wildlife or ecological corridors, which incorporate areas of new tree planting.

21.8 Education about green infrastructure, particularly in urban areas where ecosystem services are intertwined with human development, can include fundamental lessons about systems thinking, sustainability, and resilience. Therefore, developments should provide both formal and informal education opportunities within the site, such as through signage or information boards, or on large-scale developments through space for walks or outdoor education as well as spaces for growing food. This will allow the public to embrace their local environment and promote awareness on the benefits of green infrastructure, growing food and the importance of pollination and wildlife-friendly plants, thereby increasing public support, management, and stewardship of present and future green infrastructure projects.

21.9 Green infrastructure requires long-term management and maintenance, which should be considered at the earliest stages of design and planning. Outreach and education are fundamental to ensuring and preserving long-term benefits, particularly in relation to biodiversity conservation efforts. Management plans need to be flexible to accommodate changing needs of green infrastructure features, and management demands are likely to decrease once green infrastructure features and/or habitats have settled and established.

Policy 35

Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Local Green Space

A. The borough's Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be protected and retained in predominantly open use. Inappropriate development will be refused unless 'very special circumstances' can be robustly demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.

B. Appropriate uses within the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land include public and private open spaces and playing fields, outdoor recreation and sport, biodiversity including rivers and bodies of water, open community uses including allotments and cemeteries. Development will only be supported if it is appropriate and helps secure the objectives of improving the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, subject to national planning policy tests.

C. 'Very special circumstances' must result in the improvement and enhancement of the openness, character and use of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. Measures could include improvements or enhancements to landscape quality (including visual amenity), biodiversity (including delivering biodiversity net gain) or accessibility.

D. When considering developments on sites in proximity to Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, any possible visual impacts on the character, local distinctiveness, and openness of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land will be taken into account.