



Hounslow Heath Open Space Conservation Management Plan

2026 - 2030





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Author	John Salisbury, Ecology Policy and Planning Officer
Contact details	
Main point of Contact	John Salisbury
Email	John.salisbury@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk



1.0 Introduction

This management plan has been written by Richmond Councils' Ecology Officer as part of the Councils' commitment to the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Each site is managed in accordance with the habitat and species action plans of the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan, the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy, general good habitat management practice and current legislation.

1.1 Caveat

The implementation of prescriptions in this management plan will be subject to available budget.

2.0 Terms of Reference

This management plan is designed to inform the restoration and maintenance of Hounslow Heath Open Space from nature conservation, landscape and visitor perspectives. This will be achieved by Richmond Council working in conjunction with Council contractors and community organisations.

Throughout this management plan our goals are to:

1. Restore the site to make it an attractive leisure and environmental asset for residents and visitors.
2. Protect and enhance the ecology of the mixed habitats with appropriate management and planting.
3. Enhance the visitor experience by creating an attractive natural space which invites exploration and food production.
4. With the support of Habitats and Heritage (H&H) explore the potential to foster local action at the site and engage with a wide cross-section of the community.



To deliver these goals, this plan considers the sites' history, ecology and visitor use; drawing on existing data, it sets out refined objectives and the prescriptions to deliver and maintain the site over the next five years.

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



3.0 Site Description

3.1 Site details

Location	Hanworth Road, Whitton, TW4 5LJ
Grid Reference	TQ 129741
Ownership	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Designation	Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (M081)
Area	0.8 ha
Key habitats	Woodland and meadow grassland
Key species	Bats, slow worm, common lizard, song thrush, white-letter hairstreak butterfly, stag beetle, pollinators

3.2 Site description

Hounslow Heath Open Space is a public park to the east and contiguous with Hounslow Heath in Hounslow. The north-western end of the site consists of a narrow strip of woodland bordered by meadow grassland, which is the part of the park which is designated as a SINC and managed primarily for nature conservation. Over the last five years, restorative management work has seen the woodland area become a more safe and attractive destination for visitors, with the felling of dangerous trees, the improvement of footpaths and significant efforts to tackle litter, fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour.

3.3 Designation

The site is a component of the wider Hounslow Heath Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, full details can be found in *Appendix 4*.

3.4 Ecological interest and features

The majority of the woodland comprises of dense English elm (*Ulmus procera*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). The dead crowns of dutch-elm-disease affected



elms dominate the canopy of the woodland. There are a few young field maple (*Acer campestre*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) trees. Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) are occasional. Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*) forms most of the understory with occasional elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). In the absence of bramble, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*) are the most frequent species. Other herbs include garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*).

Although a small area, the Hounslow Heath Open Space is an important habitat as it is contiguous with the wider Hounslow Heath within the London Borough of Hounslow. As such, it has very good connectivity with a range of habitats and is likely to provide additional habitat for many of the species known to use Hounslow Heath. This includes reptiles such as the adder (*Vipera berus*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) as well as a good range of breeding birds. The large amount of English elm recorded may also be important for the white-letter hairstreak butterfly (*Satyrium w-album*), a Richmond BAP species.

3.5 Community involvement

There is no dedicated local group for this site, however various community engagement days have been hosted in recent years with organisations such as Multicultural Richmond. The Friends of the River Crane Environment have an interest due to its location near the River Crane and the larger Hounslow owned section of Hounslow Heath (a SSSI and SMINC) which does lie adjacent to the River Crane.

3.6 Access and visitor experience

The site is accessed from Hanworth Road which is very busy and the main A314 and Simpson Road which leads to the nearby housing estate. Hounslow Heath open space sits adjacent to the south with plentiful amenity grass and a playground which are both very well used. Unsurfaced footpaths are maintained



through the woodland and meadow grassland areas on site to provide visitors and local people with access to nature. A small section of the London Loop passes through the site.

3.7 Constraints

The Richmond section of Hounslow Heath is not a destination site, but a means to get to the larger and more open Hounslow Heath through the path network and as such it is often overlooked and suffers excessive littering both fly-tipped and blown in from the nearby roads. The woodland suffers heavily from dutch elm disease and also has several non-native tree species which if uncontrolled will spread throughout the site.

3.8 Evaluation

Due to its location and connectivity Hounslow Heath plays an integral part in contributing to a rich wildlife corridor for many species. The key feature of the site is its woodland and potential habitat for the white-letter hairstreak butterfly, but the presence of non-native species and litter build up curtail its contribution to biodiversity. A dedicated Friends group would see this site flourish.



4.0 Policies

4.1 Strategic Principles for Parks and Open Spaces

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

1. Our parks and open space management will have biodiversity, climate change and sustainability at the forefront.
2. Community participation with our Friends and Community Groups will continue to be encouraged and supported.
3. Our parks will promote active, healthy living and social inclusion for people of all ages and abilities.
4. The management of Parks and Open Spaces will create a sustainable legacy for future generations.
5. The quality of our Parks and open spaces will continue to define LBRuT.
6. Richmond will lead in the delivery of excellent parks and open spaces services.
7. Through innovation, the future development of the parks will be ensured.
8. Richmond's Parks will offer positive experiences to all visitors.

All Council owned and managed parks and open spaces are controlled by Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). These orders impose various restrictions to dog control and other activities in our parks and open spaces, these can be found here.

https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/parks_enforcement_and_legislation#pspo.



4.2 Nature Conservation Policy

During 2019, Richmond Council adopted a Nature Conservation Policy in which the Council recognises the special and diverse wildlife found within its Borough and its' duty to protect and preserve biodiversity. The Policy outlines the ways the Council will achieve this through management of its land, planning obligations and monitoring. The policy can be found in *Appendix 2*.

4.3 Tree Policy

Richmond Council has a tree management policy which recognises the benefits of trees and outlines a responsible management approach towards trees within the Borough. This can be found at *Appendix 3*.



5.0 Site Vision and Objectives

5.1 Site vision

To conserve, maintain and improve the quality of the woodland and meadow grassland habitats, whilst improving the visitor experience on site.

5.2 Objectives

From the site goals (*Section 2.0*) and informed by the site description and research into key areas, the following objectives have been developed to cover every aspect of the work to be done:

5.2.1 Objective 1: Nature conservation

Maintain and improve the habitat quality on site to ensure key species are in optimum conditions.

5.2.2 Objective 2: Visitor access

Maintain the amenity grass, pathways, boundaries, infrastructure and cleanliness.

5.2.3 Objective 3: Publicity, communication, and community involvement

With support from Habitats and Heritage (H&H), raise the profile of Hounslow Heath Open Space and communicate with residents and interested parties.

Ensure volunteering work parties are available and tasks are wide ranging to cater for different abilities.

5.2.4 Objective 4: Monitoring and Management planning

Monitor the key habitats and species to ensure management action is achieving the site vision.

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



6.0 Maintenance Prescriptions

The following detailed prescriptions are designed to manage the site features to deliver the site vision and objectives. The management is not set in stone and must be reviewed and updated based on evidence observed on site, so that management is in response to the observed condition or any environmental change.

Key to terms used within the prescriptions and work programme

AC	Arboricultural Contractor
GMC	Greenspace Management Contractor
LBRuT	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
H&H	Habitats and Heritage
NCC	Nature Conservation Contractor
Minor trees	Trunks and limbs with a diameter of 10cm or less at 1.3m height off ground (Diameter at Breast Height)



6.1 Objective 1: Nature conservation

Prescription details	Description
<u>1. Glade maintenance</u> Responsibility: NCC	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cut back encroaching bramble and woody scrub from woodland glades. <u>Considerations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season unless a pre-works bird nesting survey has been conducted by an Ecologist. - All stems must be cut to ground level to avoid creating any trip hazards. - Reptiles are present on site. Follow Ecological Method Statement 2 (Appendix 6) as a guide for best ecological practice.
<u>2. Management of trees over 10cm DBH (diameter at breast height/1.3m)</u> Responsibility: AC	<u>Tasks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey and manage tree stock in accordance with LBRuT policy. <u>Considerations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AC to liaise with Appropriate Council Officer and NCC before undertaking any works on site.



<p><u>3. Meadow grassland maintenance</u></p> <p>Responsibility: NCC</p>	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grassland to be cut annually, between July and September, to a sward height of 10cm. - Remove all cuttings from the site or add to designated composting area on site. <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A litter pick must be undertaken before cutting grass. - Meadow cutting must not be carried out during high winds or extreme wet weather. - Reptiles are present on site. Follow Ecological Method Statement 2 (<i>Appendix 6</i>) as a guide for best ecological practice.
<p><u>4. Woodland management</u></p> <p>Responsibility: NCC</p>	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove any exotic species present and stump treat to prevent regrowth. - Maintain a mixed woodland understorey and increase light reaching the field layer by thinning/coppicing dense sections and boundary areas on a 10-year rotational cycle. - Carry out phased halo thinning around oak trees, retaining understory species of high biodiversity value such as hazel or hawthorn.



Considerations

- Cordwood should be stacked for habitat / deadwood value and brash piles.
- Works should be carried out outside of bird nesting season unless a pre-works bird nesting survey has been conducted by an Ecologist.
- Follow Ecological Method Statement 1 (*Appendix 5*) as a guide for best ecological practice.

6.2 Objective 2: Visitor Experience

Prescription details	Description
<u>5. Amenity grassland and pathside maintenance</u> Responsibility: GMC	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Amenity grass and 0.5m pathside strips to be maintained as per the standard specifications of the Greenspace Management Contract.- Cut back overhanging vegetation along pathways and around the edges of amenity grassland area up to a height of 2.4m, as specified in the Greenspace Management Contract.- Benches and park furniture to be neatly strimmed round. <p><u>Considerations</u></p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree issues involving larger branches or the necessity to work at height will need to be referred to the Appropriate Council Officer for liaison with the Arboriculture Contractor.
<u>6. Maintain pathways, boundaries, check site and structures</u> Responsibility: NCC	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top up and maintain woodchip pathways. - Carry out weeding along pathways. <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure and signage should be checked regularly, and any defects reported to the Appropriate Council Officer within 7 days unless urgent.
<u>7. Litter collection</u> Responsibility: GMC, NCC	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Litter picks to be carried out on a regular basis, any large / hazardous items or fly tip to be reported to Appropriate Council Officer within 24 hours. - Bins will be emptied by the Parks Cleansing Team. <p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharps and weapons have previously been found on site.



6.3 Objective 3: Publicity, communication, and community Involvement

Prescription details	Description
<u>8. Publicity and communication</u> Responsibility: NCC	<p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertise volunteering events and raise profile of Hounslow Heath Open Space through social media and on-site posters.
<u>9. Community involvement</u> Responsibility: LBRuT	<p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage community participation through appropriate social media.

6.4 Objective 4: Monitoring and Management Planning

Prescription details	Description
<u>10. Habitat and species monitoring</u> Responsibility: LBRuT	<p>Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every year identify a key ecological community or species group to monitor to inform management success. Expert help should be sought where required.



	<p><u>Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Report any incidental sightings of species to H&H.- Where a sighting is imminently important to the management of a site (such as bird nesting or badger setts), the NCC must inform the Appropriate Council Officer prior to continuation of work.
<u>12. Review management and work plans</u> Responsibility: LBRuT/NCC	<p><u>Tasks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Twice yearly site visits will be undertaken with the Appropriate Council Officer and NCC to assess work progress and any issues encountered.- At the end of each calendar year, the Management Plan and Work Programme will be reviewed and updated as necessary.



6.5 Table 1 – Hounslow Heath Open Space Work programme 2026 – 2030

Prescription	Priority	Year and compartment					Usual Timing	Lead resource	Prescription details	Comments
		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030				
P1: Glade maintenance	1	C1 C2	C1 C2	C1 C2	C1 C2	C1 C2	Oct - Feb	NCC	Cut back encroaching bramble and woody scrub from woodland glades.	Consider impacts to nesting birds and reptiles
P2: Trees over 10cm DBH	1	All	All	All	All	All	As required	AC	Carry out tree safety works as required, in liaison with Appropriate Council Officer and NCC.	Consider impacts to bats and nesting birds
P3: Meadow grassland maintenance	1	B1 B2	B1 B2	B1 B2	B1 B2	B1 B2	Jul – Sep	NCC	Mow grassy buffer zone on woodland edge on an annual hay-cut cycle, collecting and removing arisings.	Consider impacts to reptiles



P4: Woodland management	1	A	A	A	A	A	Oct – Feb	NCC	Remove and stump treat exotic species. Phased halo around oak trees. Coppice 10% of woodland per year.	Consider impacts to bats and nesting birds
P5: Amenity grassland and pathside maintenance.	1	All	All	All	All	All	April - Nov	GMC	Amenity grass, 0.5m pathside strips and overhanging vegetation along pathways to be cut as per GM contract specification. Ensure benches and park furniture are neatly cut round.	
P6: Maintain pathways, boundaries and check structures	1	All	All	All	All	All	All year	NCC	Woodchip paths when required. Keep paths clear of overhanging obstructions, keep borders clear of weeds.	
P7: Litter collection	1	All	All	All	All	All	All year	NCC GMC	Litter pick when on site, any sharps/inappropriate/ large/bulky litter and fly tipping	Sharps and weapons have previously been found on site



									to be reported to Appropriate Council Officer.	
P8: Publicity and communication	2	All	All	All	All	All	All year	NCC	Advertise volunteering events and raise profile of Hounslow Heath Open Space through social media and on-site posters.	Work with LBRuT Comms, H&H
P9: Community involvement	1	All	All	All	All	All	All year	LBRuT	Encourage community participation through appropriate social media.	H&H to provide support where necessary
P10: Habitat and species monitoring	2	All	All	All	All	All	As appropriate	LBRuT	Monitor key ecological communities and species groups to inform management.	H&H to provide support where necessary
P11: Review management plan and work programme	1	All	All	All	All	All	Nov	LBRuT NCC	Biannual site meeting to discuss progress. Annual review of management plan prescriptions.	



6.6 Priority levels

- 1** – Very important for the maintenance of the key habitats, species or visitor amenity (i.e. annual meadow cut) and should reflect the bare minimum of what should be achieved each year.
- 2** – Of secondary importance to the key tasks, to be done if more time / resources are available (i.e. coppicing / thinning a secondary woodland boundary to a meadow, or additional survey work); priority 2 tasks could become 1s if not completed for a number of years.
- 3** – Luxury, wish list tasks: nice to do but not important if resources are not available; these items might become priority 2s over time if not completed but are unlikely ever to reach priority 1 unless significant change in other factors.



7.0 Management Map





8.0 References

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Rodwell, J.S. ed. (1991) British Plant Communities. Vol I: Woodlands and scrub. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sutherland, W.J. and Hill, D.A. (2008) Managing Habitats for Conservation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan, habitats and species relevant to Hounslow Heath Open Space, [online] available at - FINAL-RBAP-2025-2_compressed-2.pdf

Appendix 2

Richmond Council Nature Conservation Policy [online] available at
https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/16895/lbrut_nature_conservation_policy.pdf

Appendix 3

Richmond Council Tree Policy [online] available at -
https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/6899/tree_policy.pdf

Appendix 4

SINC designation for Hounslow Heath

Site Reference: M081

Site Name: Hounslow Heath

Summary: A large area of grassland, valuable for birds, reptiles and rare plants, and a popular open space for local people.

Grid ref: TQ 121 744

Area (ha): 112.9

Borough(s): Hounslow, Richmond upon Thames

Habitat(s): Acid grassland, Heathland, Pond/lake, Scrub, Secondary woodland

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

Ownership: London Borough of Hounslow/Richmond upon Thames

Site Description:

An extensive area of acid and neutral grassland, with developing heathland



where restoration has encouraged natural regeneration of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Rare plants of heathland and acid grassland include bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*), petty whin (*Genista anglica*), dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), heath rush (*Juncus squarrosum*), heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) and mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*). There are also important moss and lichen communities. Breeding birds include linnet, skylark, reed bunting and abundant whitethroat, and a variety of passage and wintering species are also regularly recorded. This is also an important site for protected reptiles, with four species present. The invertebrate fauna is diverse, and includes numerous local and nationally scarce species. There are several ponds supporting typical wetland plants and animals, and small areas of marginal scrub and woodland. This is currently one of London's few sites managed through a conservation grazing programme. Hounslow Heath Golf Course is also included in the site. The remainder is a Local Nature Reserve, and an important environmental educational site.

Site first notified:	19/09/1988
Boundary last changed:	01/12/2001
Citation last edited:	15/10/2002
Defunct:	N
Mayor Agreed:	
Last Updated:	25/11/2002

ECOLOGICAL METHOD STATEMENT 1

Woodland and Tree Management



Relevant protected species	Bats, nesting birds, badgers
Relevant legislation	Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
Ecological details	
<p><u><i>Bats and nesting birds</i></u></p> <p>It is a legal offence to kill, injure or disturb a roosting bat, or cause damage or destruction to its roosting place. Furthermore, it is a legal offence to damage or destroy a bird's nest whilst it is in active use. Birds listed on Part 1, Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are further protected from disturbance whilst actively nesting.</p> <p>Trees are frequently used by roosting bats and nesting birds, particularly where they are located in areas of high-value habitat, such as woodlands and river corridors. The following features will typically be used:</p> <p><i>Nesting birds:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree cavities - Trunk forks/crown breaks - Between branch forks - Amongst dense ivy <p><i>Roosting bats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree cavities - Cracks/crevices in trees - Behind loose, flaky bark - Behind dense ivy stems (minimum 5cm diameter) <p><u><i>Badgers</i></u></p> <p>It is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger; or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a badger sett or disturb a badger in its sett.</p> <p>Badgers are frequent in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. They typically live in large family groups in a series of underground tunnels and chambers known as a sett. Many setts are present in our woodland habitats.</p>	

Potential impacts from woodland and tree works

Without necessary precautions, the following potential impacts may occur as a result of woodland and tree management works:

Bats

- Killing or injury of roosting bats
- Damage or destruction to a bat roost
- Disturbance of roosting bats

Nesting birds

- Killing or injuring of a nesting bird/destruction of eggs
- Damage or destruction of an active bird nest
- Disturbance of an active bird nest (Schedule 1 listed species)

Badger

- *Damage to a badger sett*
- *Obstruction of access to a badger sett*
- *Disturbance to badgers whilst occupying a sett*

Mitigation measures

The following general management and mitigation measures must be followed during the works:

Bats

Prior to works:

- Ensure that at least one arborist with appropriate training and/or accreditation to conduct aerial bat scoping inspections is present on site.
- Review any site-specific information which has been provided by the Local Authority Ecologist (for example, trees which have been previously identified as suitable for roosting bats).
- Visually inspect all trees from the ground to identify any cavities or other features which could support roosting bats. Any trees with no potential roosting features can be scoped out at this stage.
- Appropriately trained arborist to carry out an inspection of any potential roosting features using an endoscope or high-powered torch as necessary.
- If bat roosting activity cannot be ruled out by the inspection, or it is considered that the tree has potential to support roosts of more than just occasional individual bats, do not proceed with works to the tree and contact the Local Authority Ecologist.
- If, following the aerial inspection, the tree is considered unsuitable for roosting bats, it can be scoped out. Trees considered to be of low roosting suitability (likely

to support no more than occasional individual bats) can also be scoped out provided that it has been confirmed that there is no roosting activity taking place on the day of works.

During works:

- Sometimes, it will not be possible to conduct a thorough aerial inspection on a tree, such as where access is restricted or there is an abundance of ivy cover. If the tree is considered likely to have at most low suitability for roosting bats, soft-felling techniques may be deployed, gently lowering sections of the tree to the ground to be carefully hand searched. If this technique is to be used, the Local Authority Ecologist should be informed prior to starting works.

Further information

- Appendix A provides a flow-chart detailing the process of scoping for bats in trees.

Nesting birds***Prior to works:***

- Prior to any works taking place during the active nesting season (March to end of August), a nesting bird survey must be completed by a qualified Ecologist. The Ecologist completing the survey will provide further advice to arborists on site.
- Works should proceed with caution outside of this period, particularly in the 'shoulder seasons' of February and September. Some species of bird often breed outside of the typical nesting season, in particular the frequently encountered wood pigeon, which is known to nest throughout the year. Ivy-covered trees often conceal wood pigeon nests through the autumn and winter when deciduous foliage is lost from trees.
- It is necessary to make every possible effort to confirm the absence of active bird nesting in trees prior to carrying out works. This may mean that an aerial inspection is required.

During works:

- To safeguard nesting birds, it may be necessary to employ soft-felling techniques to trees with dense ivy cover, gently lowering the tree to the ground in sections. If this technique is to be used, the Local Authority Ecologist should be informed prior to starting works.

Badgers

Prior to works:

- Review any site-specific information which has been provided by the Local Authority Ecologist (for example, any previously recorded mammal holes or confirmed badger setts).
- Carry out a walkover of the working area. Any previously unidentified mammal burrows should be noted and reported to the Local Authority Ecologist.
- Where mammal burrows including badger setts are present, an appropriate works exclusion zone will be advised by the Ecologist.

During works:

- If the Ecologist has given the instruction that works may proceed, the following factors must be considered:
 1. Where will machinery and equipment (such as chippers and diggers) be sited? This must be away from any badger setts or mammal burrow entrances.
 2. Where and how will the tree fall when it is felled? This must be away from any badger setts or mammal burrow entrances. Soft-felling techniques may be required to gently lower sections of wood to the ground.
 3. Where will logs and woodchip be stacked? This must be away from any badger setts or mammal burrow entrances.

Ecologist contact details	John Salisbury – Tel: 07890 946991
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ECOLOGICAL METHOD STATEMENT 2

Grassland and Scrub Management



Relevant protected species	Reptiles, nesting birds, mammals including badgers and hedgehogs
Relevant legislation	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006, Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
Ecological details	
<p><u><i>Nesting birds</i></u></p> <p>It is a legal offence to damage or destroy a bird's nest whilst it is in active use. Birds listed on Part 1, Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are further protected from disturbance whilst actively nesting. During the active nesting season (March to end of August), birds nest in scrub habitats and sometimes in rough grassland.</p>	
<p><u><i>Badgers</i></u></p> <p>It is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger; or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a badger sett or disturb a badger in its sett.</p> <p>Badgers are frequent in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. They typically live in large family groups in a series of underground tunnels and chambers known as a sett.</p>	
<p><u><i>Reptiles</i></u></p> <p>All native reptiles in the UK are legally protected from killing or injury. Native reptiles which are commonly encountered in London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames include slow worms, grass snakes and common lizards. Reptiles are typically active between the months of March and October, where they will often be found on the edge of meadows where rough grassland interfaces with bramble scrub. During the winter months, they are less active and often take shelter underground or within dense piles of logs, stones and debris.</p>	
<p><u><i>Hedgehogs</i></u></p> <p>Despite not being legally protected, hedgehogs are considered to be a species of conservation importance, and the Local Authority has a duty to ensure their protection. Hedgehogs will be found in rough grassland and scrub habitats throughout the year, building hibernation nests in the winter.</p>	

Potential impacts from woodland and tree works

Without necessary precautions, the following potential impacts may occur as a result of grassland and scrub management works:

Nesting birds

- Killing or injuring of a nesting bird/destruction of eggs
- Damage or destruction of an active bird nest
- Disturbance of an active bird nest (Schedule 1 listed species)

Badger

- *Damage to a badger sett*
- *Obstruction of access to a badger sett*
- *Disturbance to badgers whilst occupying a sett*

Reptiles

- *Killing or injury of reptiles*

Hedgehogs

- *Killing or injury of hedgehogs*

Mitigation measures

The following general management and mitigation measures must be followed during the works:

Prior to works:

- Scrub cutting works should take place outside of the active bird nesting season (March to end of August).
- Review any site-specific information which has been provided by the Local Authority Ecologist (for example, location of badger setts, presence of reptiles on site etc.). Where protected species are known to be present, the Ecologist may provide a site specific method statement, request the use of specific equipment or machinery, and/or be present on site to supervise works where necessary.
- Visually inspect scrub and grassland areas prior to cutting, and report any concerns to Local Authority Ecologist prior to commencing work. Dense habitat piles of rocks, rubble, wood and debris within scrub should be treated with caution as this may provide shelter to wildlife.

During works:

- A phased cutting technique should be used for the cutting of bramble scrub, cutting first to a height of approximately 300mm before cutting all the way down to ground level on the second cut. This gives animals a chance to escape.

- Vehicles should avoid tracking over bramble scrub before it has been cut, and care must be taken not to crush any habitat piles beneath the scrub. Side-arm flails are preferable for this task if machinery is required.
- Any habitat piles within scrub and grassland must carefully be dismantled by hand or left in situ. Contact the Local Authority Ecologist before dismantling any sizeable habitat piles.
- Grassland should be mown in a pattern that encourages any wildlife to disperse away towards peripheral habitats, for example, spiralling outwards from the centre of the meadow.

Ecologist contact details	Tasha Worley – Tel: 07764 201796 John Salisbury – Tel: 07890 946991
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