

Open Space Review

Addressing SINC Responses as Part of the Local Plan Process

London Borough of Lewisham

Final report

Prepared by LUC

March 2022

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft Report	E Mayhead L Beagley	E Moseley	E Moseley	05.11.2021
2	Final – addressing client team comments	S Swindlehurst E Mayhead	S Swindlehurst	S Swindlehurst	10.02.2022
3	Final – addressing client team comments	E Mayhead	E Moseley	E Moseley	04.03.2022
4	Final – addressing client team comments	C Clements	E Moseley	E Moseley	07.03.2022



Land Use Consultants Limited

Registered in England. Registered number 2549296. Registered office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD. 100% recycled paper

Open Space Review

Contents

Chapter 1 **5**

Introduction

Review of Select SINC Designations 5

Chapter 2 **7**

Identification of Selected Sites

Chapter 3 **10**

Policy Protection of SINC in London

SINC 10
Proposed SINC (pSINC) 19

Chapter 4 **22**

Review of Selected Sites

Hither Green Station Borough SINC, Hither Green Sidings Borough SINC and
Grove Park Nature Reserve 22
Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve & Local SINC 27
Ringway Community Gardens 31

References **36**

Table of Figures

Figure 2.1: Sites identified during the Regulation 18 stage consultation and now considered in this review	9
Figure 4.1: Location of Hither Green Station Borough SINC, Hither Green Sidings Borough SINC and Grove Park Nature Reserve	23
Figure 4.2: Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve and Local SINC - proposed boundary change	28
Figure 4.3: Location of Ringway Community Gardens	32

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC was appointed in October 2021 by the London Borough of Lewisham to undertake an Open Space Review to support the new Local Plan (2020 to 2040) preparations with regard to the designation of open spaces, and the Spatial Strategy with regard to their protection and sensitive management.

1.2 The Lewisham Local Plan process is at the stage having recently undergone Regulation 18 consultation. Discrete components of this review respond to specific components of the Regulation 18 process, including review of the following:

- Open space designation hierarchy;
- Omitted open space;
- Boundary review of open spaces; and
- Review of select Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) designations, which is the focus of this report.

Review of Select SINC Designations

1.3 In response to Regulation 18 consultation feedback on select SINC, this review collates current technical evidence regarding the identification of new SINC and the elevation of some existing SINC from Borough to Metropolitan importance.

Supporting the Consultation Process

1.4 To support informed and constructive dialogue, this report will be shared via a Council website to support respondents to submit clear and evidence-based contribution to the Regulation 18 process.

Chapter 2

Identification of Selected Sites

2.1 The Council has identified select sites for review, to establish their status in accordance with policy G6 of the London Plan (2021). This desk-based review considers the best available evidence in support of the proposed designation of new SINC, changes to existing status or to boundary alignment.

Policy G6: Biodiversity & Access to Nature

a) SINC should be protected.

b) Boroughs, in developing Development Plans should:

- (1) Use up-to-date information about the natural environment and the relevant procedures to identify SINC and ecological corridors to identify coherent ecological networks;
- (2) Identify areas of deficiency in access to nature (i.e. areas more than 1km walking distance from an accessible Metropolitan or Borough SINC) and seek opportunities to address them;
- (3) Support the protection and conservation of priority species and habitats that sit outside the SINC network, and promote opportunities for enhancing them using Biodiversity Action Plans; and
- (4) Seek opportunities to create other habitats, or features such as artificial nest sites, that are of particular relevance and benefit in an urban context.

2.2 The following sites, as presented on Figure 2.1, were identified during the Regulation 18 stage consultation on the Local Plan and are therefore considered for this focussed review:

Chapter 2 Identification of Selected Sites

- Hither Green Station Borough SINC, Hither Green Sidings Borough SINC, and Grove Park Nature Reserve – proposed to form a combined site of Metropolitan status;
- Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve & Local SINC – proposed for extension to include the strip of green space to east of Edward Tyler Road and along the Quaggy River; and
- Ringway Community Gardens – proposed for designation as a Local SINC.

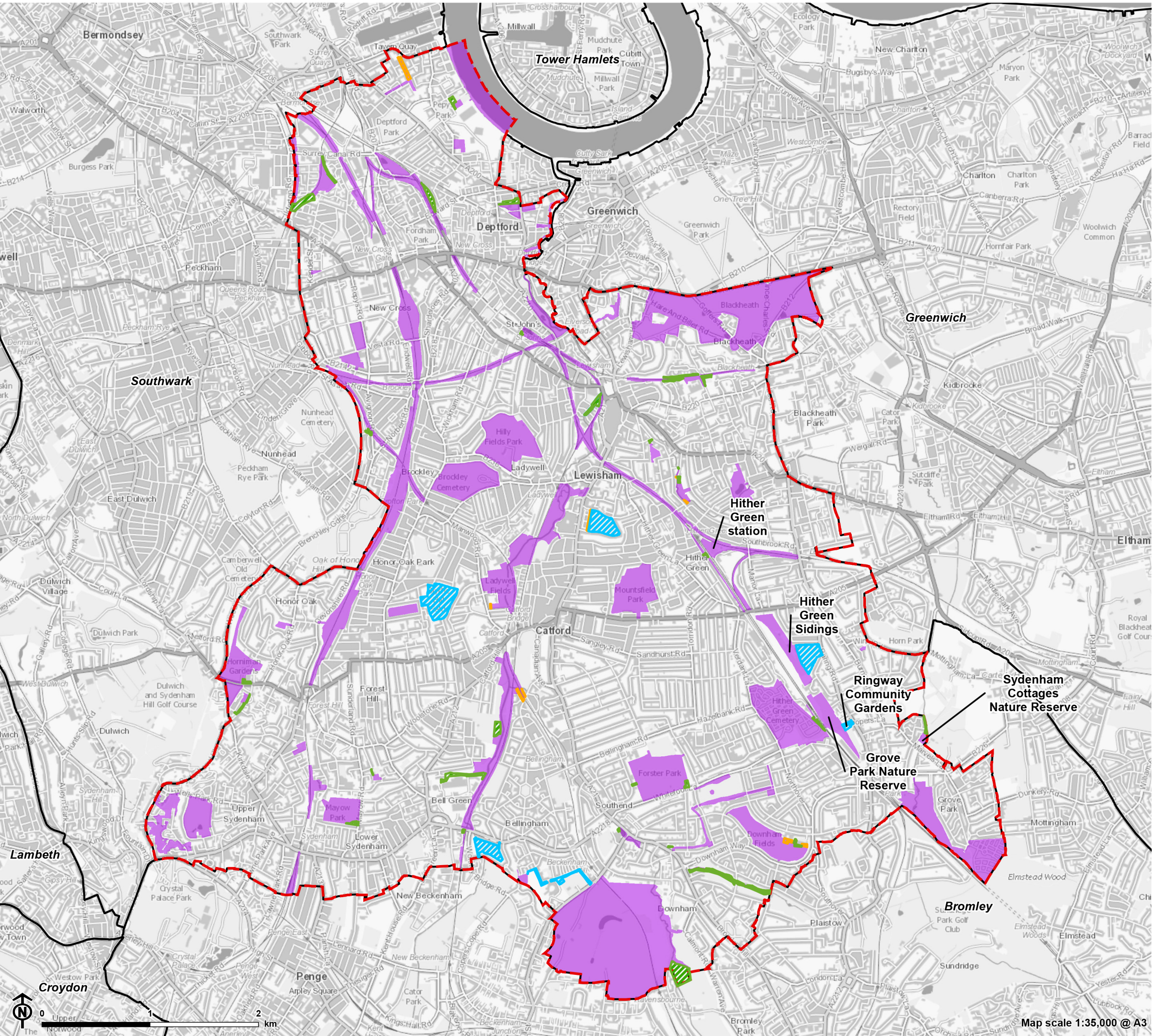


Figure 2.1: Sites identified during the Regulation 18 stage consultation and now considered in this review

- Lewisham borough
- Neighbouring borough
- Current SINC
- Proposed removal from SINC
- Proposed extensions to SINC
- Proposed new SINC

Chapter 3

Policy Protection of SINC in London

SINC

3.1 SINC in London are defined as:

“Areas of land chosen to represent the best wildlife habitats in London and areas of land where people can experience nature close to where they live and work. Sites are classified into Sites of Metropolitan, Borough and Local Importance depending on their relative value. Unlike SSSIs, SINC are not legally protected, but their value must be considered in any land use planning decision. Procedures for the identification of SINC are set out in Appendix 5 of the Mayor’s London Environment Strategy.”

The London Plan and London Borough of Lewisham (2021) Lewisham Local Plan: Regulation 18 stage “Main Issues and Preferred Approaches” document.

3.2 Sites of Metropolitan Importance are defined as:

“Sites which contain the best examples of London’s habitats, sites which contain particular rare species, rare assemblages of species or important populations of species, or sites which are of particular significance within otherwise heavily built-up areas of London.

The best examples of London's habitats include the main variants of each major habitat type, for example hornbeam woodland, wet heathland, or chalk downland. Habitats typical of urban areas are also included, e.g. various types of abandoned land colonised by nature ('wasteland' or 'brownfield'). Those habitats which are particularly rare in London may have all or most of their examples selected as Metropolitan Sites."

The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Greater London.

3.3 Sites of Borough Importance are defined as:

"Sites which are important on a borough perspective in the same way as the Metropolitan sites are important to the whole of London. Although sites of similar quality may be found elsewhere in London, damage to these sites would mean a significant loss to the borough. As with Metropolitan sites, while protection is important, management of borough sites should usually allow and encourage their enjoyment by people and their use for education.

In defining Sites of Borough Importance, the search is not confined rigidly to borough boundaries; these are used for convenience of defining areas substantially smaller than the whole of Greater London, and the needs of neighbouring boroughs should be taken into account. In the same way as for Sites of Metropolitan Importance, parts of some boroughs are more heavily built-up and some borough sites are chosen there as oases providing the opportunity for enjoyment of nature in extensive built environments."

The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Greater London.

3.4 Sites of Local Importance are defined as:

“A Site of Local Importance is one which is, or may be, of particular value to people nearby (such as residents or schools). These sites may already be used for nature study or be run by management committees mainly composed of local people. Where a Site of Metropolitan or Borough Importance may be so enjoyed it acts as a Local site, but further sites are given this designation in recognition of their role. This local importance means that these sites also deserve protection in planning.

Local sites are particularly important in areas otherwise deficient in nearby wildlife sites. To aid the choice of these further local sites, Areas of Deficiency (see below) are identified. Further Local sites are chosen as the best available to alleviate this deficiency; such sites need not lie in the Area of Deficiency, but should be as near to it as possible. Where no such sites are available, opportunities should be taken to provide them by habitat enhancement or creation, by negotiating access and management agreements, or by direct acquisition. Only those sites that provide a significant contribution to the ecology of an area are identified.”

The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Greater London.

3.5 In-line with Greater London Authority’s recommendations that SINC are afforded protection in the London Borough Local Development Frameworks

[See reference 1], SINC are afforded protection in the existing Lewisham Core Strategy Development Plan [See reference 2] and in the Draft Lewisham Local Plan [See reference 3]. The section overleaf collates the protection of SINC in the London Plan and the Local Plans.

3.6 The SINC designation process is led by the London Wildlife Site Board [See reference 4]. The role of each borough in this process is summarised as follows:

- Maintain up to date data on all land of nature conservation interest (irrespective of ownership), habitats and species;
- Access current evidence base relating to habitats, species, etc. from which to support site selection, de-selection or changes to boundaries;
- Submit the survey data and recommendations to the local Site Selection Panel for independent, expert advice on the approach to surveys, evaluation and to validate any recommendations on SINC status;
- On the basis of survey data, other relevant evidence and the advice of the local Site Selection Panel, the relevant Borough Officer should produce a schedule of proposed SINC or changes to SINC; and
- Approval of the SINC by the Borough Officer using appropriate internal processes, primarily those linked to its Development Plan process.

3.7 Current SINC selection criteria are [See reference 5] listed below, which form a guide to professional judgement when comparing sites. There are a total of 17 selection criteria; the importance of a site may relate to one, several or many. “Whichever criteria are important for a particular site, only those sites that provide a significant contribution to the ecology of an area are identified”.

Protection of SINC in The London Plan and Lewisham Local Plan

The London Plan

Adopted [See reference 6] Policy G6 Biodiversity and Access to Nature

- A – SINC should be protected.
- B – Boroughs, in developing Development Plans, should:
 - 1. Use up-to-date information about the natural environment and the relevant procedures to identify SINC and ecological corridors to identify coherent ecological networks.
 - 2. Identify areas of deficiency in access to nature (i.e. areas that are more than 1km walking distance from an accessible Metropolitan or Borough SINC) and seek opportunities to address them.
 - 3. Support the protection and conservation of priority species and habitats that sit outside the SINC network, and promote opportunities for enhancing them using Biodiversity Action Plans.
- C – Where harm to a SINC is unavoidable, and where the benefits of the development proposal clearly outweigh the impacts on biodiversity, the following mitigation hierarchy should be applied to minimise development impacts:
 - 1. Avoid damaging the significant ecological features of the site.
 - 2. Minimise the overall spatial impact and mitigate it by improving the quality or management of the rest of the site.
 - 3. Deliver off-site compensation of better biodiversity value.

2013 Lewisham Local Plan: Site Allocations Local Plan (Adopted Version) [See reference 7]

Site Allocations Section 2.7

- The Site Allocations Local Plan sets out the allocation for 18 SINC. The key Core Strategy Objectives (CSO) delivered by the Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation are: CSO5: Climate Change, CSO7: Open spaces and environmental assets, and CSO11: Community wellbeing.

2011 Lewisham Core Strategy Development Plan (Adopted) [See reference 8]

Adopted Core Strategy Objective 7

- The important environmental, ecological and biodiversity features of Lewisham will be protected and capitalised to promote health and well-being by: protecting Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and supporting and promoting local biodiversity.

Adopted Spatial Policy 1

- Open space, including Metropolitan Open Land and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, will be protected, and a net gain of open space across the borough will be sought, particularly through on-site provision.

Adopted Core Strategy Policy 12

- 1. In recognising the strategic importance of the natural environment and to help mitigate against climate change the Council will:
 - a. Conserve nature.

- b. Green the public realm.
- c. Provide opportunities for sport, recreation, leisure and well-being.
- This will be achieved by:
 - Preserving or enhancing the local biodiversity and geological conservation interests in accordance with national and regional policy, in the form of PPS9 and the London Plan by designating Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Lewisham Local Plan [See reference 9]

Draft Policy GR3 Biodiversity and Access to Nature

- C – Development proposals on sites that are within or adjacent to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves, Ecological Corridors or other sites of special biodiversity interest must protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the site.
- E – All major development and other development proposals likely to impact on sites with special biodiversity interests must be accompanied by an Ecological Assessment carried out by a suitably qualified assessor.
- F – The Council will seek to manage positively the nature conservation value of habitats and sites by: a. Securing management plans, where appropriate, in order to ensure the achievement of conservation objectives; and b. Positively engaging with stakeholders, including the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership, to protect and enhance the Borough's open spaces and sites of conservation value.

SINC Selection Criteria

3.8 The SINC selection criteria are as follows:

- **Representation** - The best examples of each major habitat type are selected. These include typical urban habitats such as abandoned land colonised by nature ('brownfield'). Where a habitat is not extensive in the search area it will be appropriate to conserve all or most of it, whereas where it is more extensive a smaller percentage will be conserved.
- **Habitat Rarity** - The presence of a rare habitat makes a site important, because the loss of, or damage to, only a few sites threatens the survival of the habitat in the search area.
- **Species Rarity** - The presence of a rare species makes a site important in a way that parallels rare habitat.
- **Habitat Richness** - Protecting a site with a rich selection of habitat types not only conserves those habitats, but also the wide range of organisms that live within them and the species that require more than one habitat type for their survival. Rich sites also afford more opportunities for enjoyment and educational use.
- **Species Richness** - Generally, sites that are rich in species are to be preferred, as this permits the conservation of a correspondingly large number of species. However, some habitats, such as reed beds, heaths and acid woodlands, are intrinsically relatively poor in species.
- **Size** - Large sites are usually more important than small sites. They may allow for species with special area requirements. Large sites may be less vulnerable to small-scale disturbance, as recovery is sometimes possible from the undisturbed remainder. They are also more able to withstand visitors, by diluting their pressure within a wider space. Size is also related to the richness of habitat and species, and so is used as a surrogate for these other two criteria where information is incomplete.

- **Important Populations of Species** - Some sites are important because they hold a large proportion of the population of a species for the search area (e.g. waterfowl populations or colonial birds such as herons or jackdaws).
- **Ancient Character** - Some sites have valuable ecological characteristics derived from long periods of traditional management, or even a continuity in time to the woodlands and wetlands which occupied the London area before agriculture. Ancient woodlands, old parkland trees and traditionally managed grasslands tend to have typical species that are rare elsewhere. These habitats deserve protection also because of the ease with which they are damaged by changes in management, ploughing, fertiliser and herbicide treatment.
- **Recreatability** - Habitats vary in the ease with which they can be re-created and the length of time required; for example ponds can be created from scratch with reasonable success within a few years, but woods not only take much longer – at least decades – to mature, but even then they do not contain the same flora and fauna as ancient woods on undisturbed soils. In addition to the ecological reasons why certain habitats cannot be recreated, many sites are not capable of being recreated because of practical reasons such as land availability and cost. The more difficult it is to recreate a site's habitats the more important it is to retain it.
- **Typical Urban Character** - Features such as canals, abandoned wharves, walls, bridges, tombstones and railway sidings colonised by nature often have a juxtaposition of artificial and wild features. Some of these habitats are particularly rich in species and have rare species and communities of species. Their substrates may have a particular physical and chemical nature which allows species to thrive that are rare elsewhere. They may also have particular visual qualities. Such areas are often useful for the study of colonisation and ecological succession
- **Cultural or Historic Character** - Sites such as historic gardens with semi-wild areas, garden suburbs, churchyards and Victorian cemeteries which have reverted to the wild may have a unique blend of cultural and natural history

- **Geographic Position** - This criterion is operated through the use of search areas and areas of deficiency.
- **Access** - Access is an important consideration, especially in areas where there may be few places for large urban populations to experience the natural world. Nature conservation is not restricted to the preservation of wildlife but goes hand in hand with the enjoyment of it by all people, from the specialist naturalist to the casual visitor. Some access is desirable to all but the most sensitive of sites, but direct physical access to all parts of a site may not be desirable.
- **Use** - The importance of a site can include its established usage (e.g. for education, research, or quiet enjoyment of nature).
- **Potential** - Where a site can be enhanced given modest changes in management practices this gives it value. Opportunity exists where a site is likely to become available for nature conservation use, or where there is considerable local enthusiasm about it, or where a voluntary group is willing to use and manage it. Potential in this context can be for habitat enhancement through management, for educational or nature conservation amenity use. Where such potential could remedy a deficiency, or is readily capitalised, it is considered important.
- **Aesthetic Appeal** - This factor is the most difficult to measure, but it includes such factors, which contribute to the enjoyment of the experience of visiting a site, as seclusion, views, variety of landscape and habitat structure, colour, and natural sounds and scents.
- **Geodiversity Interest** - Where a site has a geological interest which has educational, scientific, historical or aesthetic interest as set out in London's Foundations (2009).

Proposed SINC (pSINC)

3.9 Proposed SINC in London are defined as:

“Sites that have entered public consultation (Local planning regulation 18) but have not yet been officially adopted within a Local Plan.”

GiGL (2021) Non-Statutory SINC [See reference 10]

3.10 Until the Local Plan is officially adopted any proposed SINC are not formally recognised. However, ecological value on any site must be taken into account during the planning decision process. The draft Lewisham Local Plan (2021) states that “All proposals will be expected to clearly identify biodiversity interests both within and in proximity to the site. They should set out how the development will respond positively to these interests whilst also demonstrating how harm will be avoided”.

3.11 Once new pSINC have entered public consultation (Regulation 18), they can be provided to GiGL who will update the pSINC dataset with new sites or changes. These data can then be made available to inform decision making. Once the Local Plan is adopted, GiGL transfer pSINC to the adopted SINC database.

3.12 The timeframe for approval of pSINC is outlined below [See reference 11]:

- Local review and survey of SINC sites is carried out and recommendations for new sites are made.
- Recommendations are published as proposals, entering public consultation as part of planning Regulation 18.
- Proposed changes are reviewed by the London Wildlife Sites Board (LWSB). The board provides expert and independent advice on the borough’s approach and sites selected.
- Following further consultations, and examination by an independent planning inspector, final decisions are made regarding which SINC are adopted.

Chapter 3 Policy Protection of SINC in London

- Local Plan and SINC are adopted.

Chapter 4

Review of Selected Sites

Hither Green Station Borough SINC, Hither Green Sidings Borough SINC and Grove Park Nature Reserve

Proposed to form a combined site of Metropolitan status. Also proposed to remove an area of hardstanding and isolated patch of scrub from the south-eastern extent of Hither Green Sidings.

4.1 Sources of evidence to inform review are as follows:

- Re-survey of SINC in Lewisham (2016);
- Hither Green Sidings SINC Status Assessment (2020) [\[See reference 12\]](#); and
- Current aerial photography [\[See reference 13\]](#).

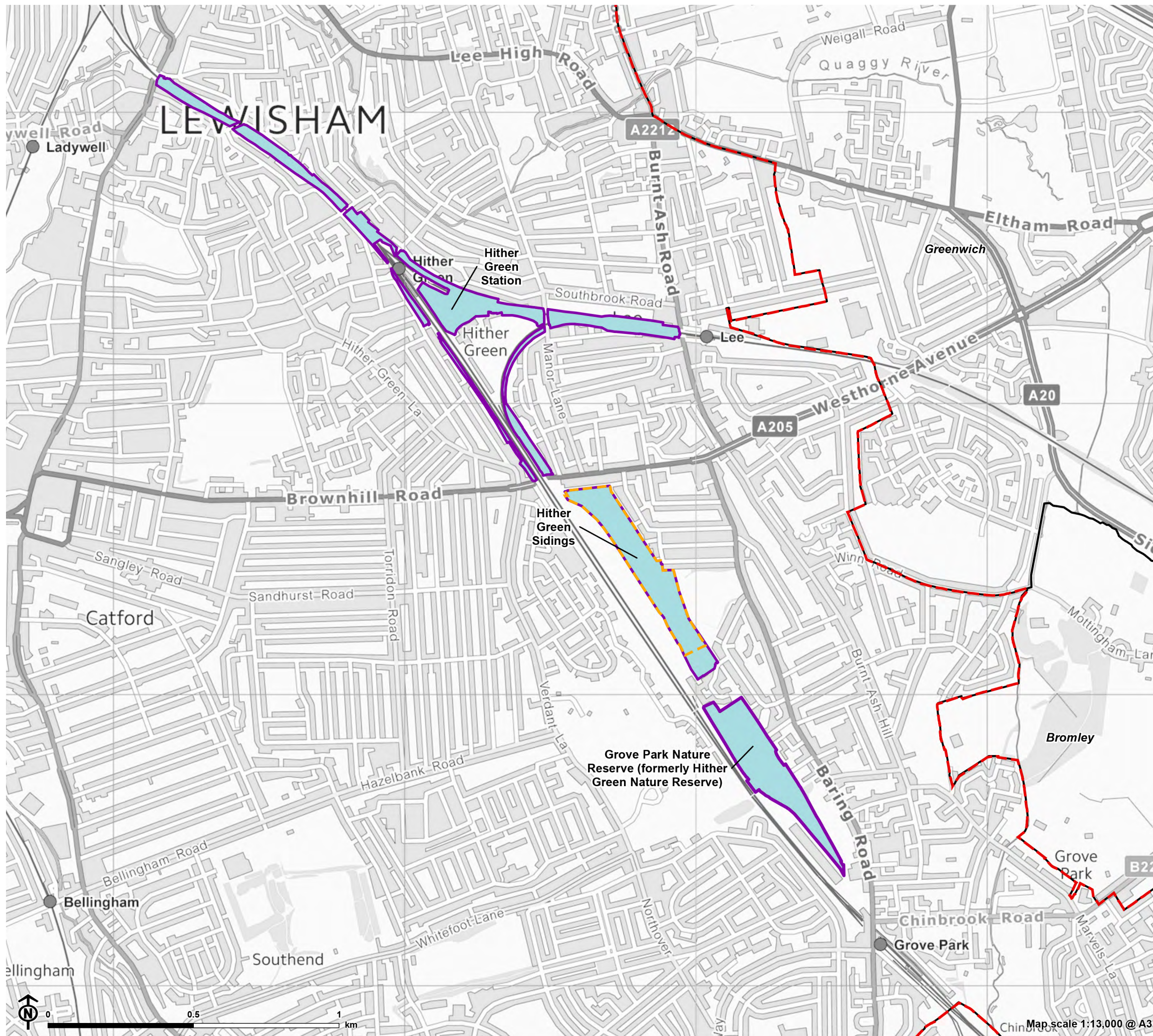


Figure 4.1: Location of Hither Green Station Borough SINC, Hither Green Sidings Borough SINC and Grove Park Nature Reserve

- Lewisham borough
- Neighbouring borough
- Current SINC boundary
- SINC boundary change

Summary of Proposal

4.2 Figure 4.1 presents the extent of each site, which are proposed to be combined to form a Site of Metropolitan importance.

4.3 A summary of each site is as follows [\[See reference 14\]](#) [\[See reference 15\]](#):

- Hither Green Station supports scattered trees, bare soil and rock, semi-improved neutral grassland and tall herbs. Hither Green Triangle Nature Reserve lies at the centre of the site between platforms 4 and 5. It supports non-native woodland, tall herbs, and a small stream flows north to south forming a small pond, which is surrounded by dense scrub. The reserve is open to the public a few times each year for management activities.
- Hither Green Sidings supports broadleaved native woodland including a small area of wet woodland consisting of willow species and ground flora supporting wetland species such as yellow iris and soft rush, scrub, ephemeral/ short perennial grassland on disturbed soils resembling the Habitat of Principle Importance Open Mosaic Habitat on previously developed land and marginal vegetation surrounding a pond. There is an existing area of hardstanding present towards the southern section of the site, which detracts from the overall ecological value and an isolated parcel of dense scrub along the southern boundary of the SINC. This area of hard standing and isolated parcel of scrub is therefore, proposed to be removed from the SINC boundary. The site currently has no formal public access routes or infrastructure, although there is informal access across broken fences. It is understood that an agreement has been made recently between the local community and Network Rail to enable local leasing and management of the site. It is anticipated that formal public access (one of the SINC criteria) may then be made available.
- Grove Park Nature Reserve supports native and non-native woodland, scattered trees, scrub, basic/calcareous grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland, tall herbs, wet marginal vegetation, herb-rich grassland,

roughland and a pond. Grove Park Nature Reserve has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve and provides public access.

4.4 It is proposed to combine three sites (Hither Green Station., Hither Green Sidings and Grove Park Nature Reserve) to form a single Site of Metropolitan Importance.

Supplementary Information

4.5 Although the sites support wet woodland and calcareous grassland, which are rare habitats in the London and Lewisham context, the habitat rarity of these three sites cannot be ascertained without additional data.

4.6 Although there are records for rare species of invertebrate within 1.5km of Hither Green Sidings [See reference 16], such as stag beetle and brown-banded carder-bee which are of conservation concern both locally within Lewisham and nationally, and various notable invertebrate species were reported during the 2020 survey including ringlet butterfly which is typical of high quality grasslands, the species rarity of the three sites cannot be ascertained without further species surveys or species-specific habitat suitability assessments of all three sites.

4.7 Similarly, there are records of common lizard at Grove Park Nature Reserve and Hither Green Sidings and slow-worm within 3km of Hither Green Sidings [See reference 17]. However, the species rarity of the three sites cannot be ascertained without further species surveys or species-specific habitat suitability assessments of all three sites.

4.8 There are several records of rare and migratory birds such as cuckoo, spotted flycatcher and lesser whitethroat within 1.5km of Hither Green Sidings and due to the mosaic of suitable breeding habitats and inaccessibility of all three sites, these sites are deemed suitable to support a diverse assemblage of birds. However, the species rarity of these sites cannot be ascertained without

species-specific surveys or targeted habitat suitability assessments at all three sites.

4.9 All three sites are suitable to support a range of mammal species including bats and badger. Hedgehog have been recorded at Grove Park Nature Reserve and within 1.5km of Hither Green Sidings. There is also evidence of Hither Green Sidings supporting bat species [\[See reference 18\]](#). Additionally, butterfly and moth surveys completed in 2021 revealed presence of priority species in the local area, including white letter hairstreak [\[See reference 19\]](#).

4.10 The removal of an area of hard standing, which is used as a car park, and the adjacent parcel of scrub to the south from the boundary of Hither Green Sidings will not be detrimental to the status of this SINC. Although scrub is an important habitat, in isolation its value is reduced as it cannot act as a corridor for wildlife.

Meeting the Metropolitan Status Criteria

4.11 In order to identify whether the combined sites meet the criteria for Metropolitan Status the following assessments are required:

- A calcareous grassland assessment should be undertaken at Grove Park Nature Reserve. The survey window should be timed to target grasses such as tor-grass, one of the indicator species listed in the GLA calcareous grassland habitat criteria [\[See reference 20\]](#) that is present at Grove Park, as well as flowering species including common knapweed, round-headed rampion and early gentian, within the optimal window between June and August. Current conservation management planning at the site recognises the presence of tor-grass and any future assessment could usefully inform this.
- Species assessments are required for the following priority species for Lewisham at each of the three sites: invertebrates, reptiles, breeding birds, bats and hedgehog. An assessment of habitat suitability could be undertaken for these species at any time of year.

4.12 Additional ecology surveys to ascertain whether sites along the Hither Green to Grove Park corridor (including Hither Green SINC, Hither Green Sidings SINC, Grove Park Nature Reserve as well as incorporating Cox Wood and Reigate Road Open Space) combined meet the criteria to be awarded metropolitan SINC status will be undertaken as part of this review. The surveys will be undertaken in late May and presented in a separate report.

Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve & Local SINC

Proposed for extension to include the strip of green space to east of Edward Tyler Road along the Quaggy River and also a native hedgerow along Alice Thompson Close.

4.13 Sources of evidence to inform review are as follows:

- Re-survey of SINC in Lewisham (2016); and
- Current aerial photography **[See reference 21]**.

Figure 4.2: Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve & Local
SINC - proposed boundary change



Summary of Proposal

4.14 A summary of the site is as follows [\[See reference 22\]](#):

- The site supports native woodland, scattered trees, native hedge, semi-improved neutral grassland and tall herb habitats.

4.15 Figure 4.2 presents the proposed SINC boundary extension to include two additional areas consisting of a native hedgerow along Alice Thompson Close to the west of the SINC and an area of woodland bordering the River Quaggy to the north. This represents a total additional area of 0.15ha.

Supplementary Information

4.16 The native hedgerow along Alice Thompson Close comprised frequent hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and dogwood at the time of the 2016 re-survey of SINC. The inclusion of this habitat within the SINC would be beneficial to the biodiversity value of the SINC, as hedgerows provide an important wildlife corridor. It is recognised that since the 2016 re-survey, the hedgerow has been laid and is managed annually by the Council's ecology contractor.

4.17 Additionally, the boundary extension to the north of the site would include the broadleaved woodland, which extends along the River Quaggy, forming a wooded corridor between Sydenham Cottages SINC and Mottingham Nature Reserve and River Quaggy SINC. Although this section of the River Quaggy is canalised with limited in-channel habitat opportunities for fish and invertebrates, it forms a dark corridor for foraging and commuting bats.

Meeting the Local Status Criteria

4.18 The boundary extension to include the native hedgerow and additional section of the River Quaggy to the north contributes towards the ecology of the

site and the site's overall value as a SINC of Local Importance. This is detailed below, in-line with the selection criteria for Sites of Local Importance:

- **Habitat richness** – The addition of the native hedgerow and area of woodland along the River Quaggy increases the habitat richness as these linear habitats are vital wildlife corridors for a range of species including birds, bats and mammals.
- **Size** – The existing SINC is relatively small in size, 0.57ha, however the boundary extension will increase the total area by 0.15ha which is a significant increase of 26%.
- **Recreatability** – Woodlands and native hedgerows are difficult to recreate due to the length of time that it takes for these habitats to mature. Therefore, they are important habitats to protect for their ecological value.
- **Access** – The site is easily accessible and forms an important wildlife site of particular value to local residents.
- **Potential** – The River Quaggy in-particular has potential for ecological enhancement through de-culverting this section and re-profiling the river banks. De-culverting forms part of the Quaggy Links project of the Ravensbourne Catchment Improvement Group.

4.19 It is recommended that the hedgerow along Alice Thompson Close and the area of woodland along the west bank of the River Quaggy are included within Sydenham Cottages Nature Reserve and Local SINC, since they provide important wildlife corridors and connectivity with the adjacent Mottingham Nature Reserve and River Quaggy SINC to the north. Although it is not required to determine the Site's value as a Local SINC, a survey should be carried out of the hedgerow along Alice Thompson Close to identify the condition of the hedgerow and species composition in order to identify appropriate enhancements and management. The biodiversity value of the hedgerow could be enhanced through planting more native species to create a species-rich hedgerow, which is a Habitat of Principle Importance. Species-rich hedgerows must contain seven or more native woody species, as listed in Schedule 3, Part II Criteria, paragraph 7(1) of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, which include hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, hazel, holly, elm, field maple and crab apple.

Ringway Community Gardens

Proposed for designation as a Local SINC.

4.20 Sources of evidence to inform review are as follows:

- Re-survey of SINC in Lewisham (2016);
- Ringway Community Gardens PEA; and
- Current aerial photography [\[See reference 23\]](#).

4.21 The site boundary shown on the habitat map of Appendix 1 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal [\[See reference 24\]](#), was used as a geographical reference in this assessment as there was no GIS data available for this site at the time of the report.

Figure 4.3: Location of Ringway Community Gardens



Summary of Proposal

4.22 The Ringway Community Gardens site, presented in Figure 4.4, is proposed to be designated as a Local SINC. This site has a total area of 0.47ha.

4.23 The site consists of predominantly broadleaved woodland (semi-natural), scrub, introduced shrub and amenity grassland.

Supplementary Information

4.24 The 2020 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal [\[See reference 25\]](#) of this pSINC concludes that the Ringway Gardens meets the criteria for selection as a Local SINC.

Meeting the Local Status Criteria

4.25 On review of the 2020 PEA and the SINC selection criteria detailed above, the proposed SINC meets ten of the 17 criteria for Sites of Local Importance, as identified by Vickers, J.D. (2020) and as a result it qualifies as a Site of Local Importance. The criteria that are met are as follows:

- **Habitat Rarity** – Although the habitats at Ringway Community Gardens are not rare, woodland is a London BAP Priority Habitat [\[See reference 26\]](#).
- **Habitat Richness** – The habitat richness of the site is moderate in relation to the small size of the site as it supports broadleaved woodland with good species composition and structural diversity with a shrub layer and natural regeneration present, dense scrub, planted scrub and amenity grassland with areas of rough grassland.
- **Recreatability** – Semi-natural broadleaved woodland is difficult to recreate due to the length of time that it takes to mature. Therefore, it is an important habitat to protect for its ecological value.

- **Typical Urban Character** – As the site forms part of the wooded corridor along the railway sidings, it has typical urban character.
- **Cultural or Historic Character** – The Ringway Gardens are linked to the cultural history of the neighbourhood and in particular to the story of *The Railway Children*, written by Edith Nesbit (1906), who lived in the ‘Three Gables’ house of this garden between 1894-1899. Inside the woodland, there is a gathering space now called ‘Camp Nesbit’ in tribute, which is used for outdoor learning by local schools.
- **Geographic Position** – The site is approximately 820m from the closest Area of Deficiency (AoD) in access the nature.
- **Access** – Public access is available by appointment with the Community Centre. There is a footpath named the Railway Children Walk linking Ringway Community Garden with the wider railway corridor and adjacent Grove Park Nature Reserve SINC to the west.
- **Use** – The Ringway Gardens is a key focal point for the various community groups using the community centre. The Grove Park Community Group, who use the buildings on site, was formed in 1972 and therefore, the site has a long history of use as a community space. The gardens and adjacent SINC are used for environmental education, forest school and other outdoor learning activities.
- **Potential** – There are various improvements proposed for the site in order to improve public access and use of the site year-round. Additionally, there is a vision for Ringway Community Gardens, which has recently gained Pocket Park funding that aims to create a therapeutic health and wellbeing outdoor space.
- **Aesthetic Appeal** – Within the urban setting, Ringway Community Gardens provides a peaceful green oasis adjacent to the main road, Baring Road.

4.26 In addition, the site has the potential to meet the criteria for species richness, as detailed below, but this could not be confirmed due to a data deficiency. This does not retract from the sites’ value as a Local Site of Importance. Further surveys would provide additional information on the

biodiversity value of the site but is not required to determine the sites value as a Local SINC.

4.27 During the 2020 survey, 59 plant species were recorded, however the survey did not constitute a botanical assessment. The site was also deemed suitable to support several species of Principle Importance for which there are records within 1km of the site. These include bats, breeding birds of conservation concern including song thrush and dunnock, hedgehog, reptiles including common lizard which was recorded at the site in 2017, amphibians such as common frog and common toad which have been recorded at the site and invertebrates including stag beetle, which was reported at the site in 2020. However, no species-specific surveys have been conducted at the site, therefore the species richness of the site cannot be determined without further surveys including a breeding bird survey and invertebrate surveys, as per the recommendations by Vickers (2020). Assessments of these species' assemblages may also identify rare species, which contribute to the species rarity of the site.

References

- 1 The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in Greater London. Available at:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sinc_selection_process_2019_update.pdf
- 2 London Borough of Lewisham (2011) Core Strategy Development Plan. Available at: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/files/imported/corestrategyadoptedversion.ashx>
- 3 Lewisham Borough Council (2021) Lewisham Local Plan: Main Issues and Preferred Approaches. Available at: https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/lewishamlocalplan/Jan_2021_LEWISHAM_LOCAL_PLAN_accessible-compressed.pdf
- 4 The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in Greater London. Available at:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sinc_selection_process_2019_update.pdf
- 5 As defined in The London Wildlife Site Board (2019) Advice Note: Process for selecting and confirming Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in Greater London. Available at:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sinc_selection_process_2019_update.pdf
- 6 Greater London Authority (2021) The London Plan. Available at:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the_london_plan_2021.pdf
- 7 London Borough of Lewisham (2013) Site Allocations Local Plan. Available at: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/files/imported/siteallocationsadoption.ashx>
- 8 London Borough of Lewisham (2011) Core Strategy Development Plan. Available at: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/files/imported/corestrategyadoptedversion.ashx>

References

- 9 Lewisham Borough Council (2021) Lewisham Local Plan: Main Issues and Preferred Approaches. Available at: https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/commonplace-customer-assets/lewishamlocalplan/Jan2021LEWISHAMLOCALPLAN_accessible-compressed.pdf
- 10 GiGL (2021) Non-statutory SINC. Available at: <https://www.gigl.org.uk/designated-sites/non-statutory-sincs/>
- 11 GiGL (2021) GiGL Proposed Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Available at: https://mcusercontent.com/0a88f9a80a37489c4d5238491/files/a783ba8e-381d-448f-92f3-a12c52470972/GiGL_pSINCS_timeline.pdf
- 12 London Wildlife Trust (2020) Hither Green Sidings SINC Status Assessment
- 13 Google Earth (2021)
- 14 London Wildlife Trust (2020) Hither Green Sidings SINC Status Assessment
- 15 The Ecology Consultancy (2016) Re-survey of SINCS: Report for Lewisham Planning Service
- 16 London Wildlife Trust (2020) Hither Green Sidings SINC Status Assessment
- 17 Kingfisher Ecology Ltd (2019) DC/19/111719 Revised Ecological Impact Assessment. Available at: https://planning.lewisham.gov.uk/online-applications/files/4DC8979895E989CC54FCADE433EF3004/pdf/DC_19_111719-REVISED_ECOLOGICAL_IMPACT_ASSESSMENT-816999.pdf
- 18 Kingfisher Ecology Ltd (2019) DC/19/111719 Revised Ecological Impact Assessment. Available at: https://planning.lewisham.gov.uk/online-applications/files/4DC8979895E989CC54FCADE433EF3004/pdf/DC_19_111719-REVISED_ECOLOGICAL_IMPACT_ASSESSMENT-816999.pdf
- 19 Borough Ecologist, pers. comm., November 2021
- 20 The Ecology Consultancy (2016) Re-survey of SINCS: Report for Lewisham Planning Service. Appendix 1 GLA Methodology
- 21 Google Earth (2021)

References

- 22** The Ecology Consultancy (2016) Re-survey of SINC's: Report for Lewisham Planning Service
- 23** Google Earth (2021)
- 24** Vickers, D.J. (2020) The Ringway Gardens 268 Baring Road, Grove Park, London, SE12 0DS: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- 25** Vickers, D.J. (2020) The Ringway Gardens 268 Baring Road, Grove Park, London, SE12 0DS: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- 26** GiGL (2021) London BAP Priority Habitats. Available at: <https://www.gigl.org.uk/london-bap-priority-habitats/>

References

Report produced by LUC

Bristol

12th Floor, Beacon Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE
0117 929 1997
bristol@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh

Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
0131 202 1616
edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow

37 Otago Street, Glasgow G12 8JJ
0141 334 9595
glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London

250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD
020 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester

6th Floor, 55 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ
0161 537 5960
manchester@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

Landscape Design / Strategic Planning & Assessment
Development Planning / Urban Design & Masterplanning
Environmental Impact Assessment / Landscape Planning & Assessment
Landscape Management / Ecology / Historic Environment / GIS & Visualisation