

# **CRANE VALLEY PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL REPORT**



## **PRODUCED BY**

**Friends of the River Crane Environment  
Alistair Grills Associates  
Bell Fischer Landscape Architects**

## **SUPPORTED BY**

**Hounslow Council  
Richmond Council  
Awards for All  
Wates Foundation**

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This project has been funded by Richmond Council and Hounslow Council, and by grants from Awards for All and the Wates Foundation. The project steering group consists of representatives from FORCE, Richmond Council, Hounslow Council and London Wildlife Trust. The project has been produced by FORCE, supported by Alistair Grills Associates and Bell Fischer Landscape Architects, under the management of this steering group. Further help and advice has been provided by members of the Crane Valley Partnership, GLA, FORCE members and many others. We are grateful to all these for their support. Particular thanks are due to those 6677 individuals who voted for Crane Valley Park in the London Mayor's Priority Parks competition. We hope through this report and your support to bring our vision for Crane Valley Park closer to fruition.

Rob Gray  
Chair of FORCE  
July 2009  
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## **CRANE VALLEY PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Crane Valley Park**

1. This document provides a summary of the Feasibility Study into the development of a new park, to be known as Crane Valley Park, in the lower part of the Crane valley and within the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond. This has been provided as an Executive Summary to the Final Report and has also been produced as a separate summary document. Further copies of both documents and the associated maps can be found at [www.force.org.uk](http://www.force.org.uk)
2. This park incorporates the existing Crane Park (of some 33 hectares) and extends it westwards to include Feltham Marshalling Yards, De Brome Fields and Pevensy Nature Reserve and eastwards to include a matrix of land including Mereway Nature Park, Kneller Gardens and Twickenham Junction Rough. The result would be a new linear Crane Valley Park of some 97 hectares and linking Twickenham Station in the east to Hounslow Heath in the west.
3. This park would have the size and status to be classified as a new Metropolitan Park for London. This park would be deemed to be providing a resource to a population within 3.2 kilometres of its boundaries, which is estimated to contain some 235,000 people, many of them living in areas of deprivation with respect to open space.
4. This Study has been funded by LB Hounslow and LB Richmond upon Thames councils, with additional grant funding from Awards for All and the Wates Foundation. It has been undertaken by a Steering Group with membership from the two councils and London Wildlife Trust and led by Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE). The project is linked to the wider management of the Crane Valley through the Crane Valley Partnership, which has representatives from the five boroughs along the Crane and all the other key statutory parties.
5. The development of the park is supported by planning policy at national, regional (London Plan) and local level. Submissions relating to the park have been made to the emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) for both councils. It is intended that both LDFs will explicitly support the development of Crane Valley Park through policy statements.
6. Most of the land within the proposed park is currently in the ownership of the two local authorities. There are two key private ownerships – Feltham Marshalling Yards and Twickenham Junction Rough – at the western and eastern ends of the proposed park respectively.
7. There are three phases envisaged to the park development. Phase One would extend the existing Crane Park to include local authority owned green spaces and result in a new park of some 63 hectares. This is considered possible in the near future (see Figure 1).

8. Phase Two would require agreements regarding private land ownerships and other more complex issues and would result in the creation of a new Metropolitan park of 97 hectares (and also shown in Figure 1). It is the delivery of this phase which is the main focus of this report. Delivery of this phase is anticipated in the medium term (of three to five years).
9. Phase Three would extend the park along the River Crane to include several large and adjacent park and heathland areas and create a new regional park of over 400 hectares. This is a longer term vision for the Crane Valley, and is shown in Figure 2 (main report only). There is also scope for extending the park still further upstream to link with other green spaces upstream in Hillingdon and Harrow in future years.
10. The proposed metropolitan park runs along the West London Green Chain – a green wildlife corridor of some 30 kilometres in length that extends from Harrow in north London, along Yeading Brook and the Crane, to meet the Thames at Isleworth. This is one of the major green corridors of London and is of great value for wildlife movement as well as a public amenity resource.
11. The area of the park consists at present of a matrix of green spaces with different designations and levels of protection. The environmental designations within the proposed park are shown on Figure 4 (main report only). These spaces are currently vulnerable to development and are also often neglected and subject to fly tipping, graffiti and other anti-social behaviour. They are however already valued by local people for activities such as walking, jogging, informal sports and fishing. They are not used as much as they could be due to access issues, lack of awareness of their existence, lack of management/facilities and concerns regarding public safety. The current situation with regard to public access is shown on Figure 5 (main report only).

### **Benefits of delivering the new park**

12. Bringing these spaces within the framework of a Metropolitan Park would provide them with an enhanced level of protection from development and be a great opportunity for coherent overall management and improvement of their environmental and public value. It would also provide an opportunity to enhance the linkages eastwards and westwards along the river corridor as well as between the site and the surrounding population, creating a resource of value to a large population of west London
13. The value of this corridor for walking and cycling has already been recognised by local people and the public authorities. The London Loop and Crane Walk already run through the park area and there are advanced proposals for new cycle routes along the river as well as a new Strategic walk for London along the Crane. This project provides an opportunity to co-ordinate these proposals within the context of the wider objectives for the park. Links to existing walking routes and two potential new routes are shown on Figure 6 (main report only).
14. The proposed area contains two Nature Reserves – Pevensey Road and Crane Park Island – and much of the land is designated at Metropolitan or Borough level for

its environmental importance. There is considerable potential for enhancing the biodiversity value of the area through landscape design and management. Crane Park Island in particular is recognised as an “outdoor laboratory” for testing environmental management techniques that can then be rolled out across the wider area. The project is already linked to the Biodiversity Action Plan process at a regional and local level. A new biodiversity officer has recently been appointed for the Crane valley through a new BIFFA award funded project, led by the Crane Valley Partnership, to work for the next three years to deliver environmental improvements to Crane Valley Park and two other sites upstream.

15. Most of the land area is within a flood risk zone. There is the potential to develop parts of the park, using both river restoration and flood plain creation techniques, to enhance its amenity and environmental value whilst also providing an enhanced level of flood protection to the surrounding population.
16. The area has a rich heritage, much of it little known by local people. Features include Hounslow Gunpowder mills; the construction of the Duke of Northumberland’s River in the 1500’s to provide a water supply to Syon Priory; ownership of much of the land by the King of Portugal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its more recent use for market gardens.
17. The proposed park is located near to two colleges and around a dozen schools in the two boroughs. Links have already been developed with some of these schools through projects managed by LWT, FORCE and the Richmond Schools Environment Forum. The LWT at Crane Park Island and the Shot Tower has run education events for children and families for many years. There are many other opportunities to develop educational activities throughout the park.
18. The work to date on this project has been instrumental in raising the profile of this part of the Crane valley. This has already resulted in the award of £150,000 from BIFFA award for environmental improvements and £400,000 from the London Mayor. This latter award was the result of a public vote where, with 6677 votes, Crane Park received more support than any other London park.

### **Approach to Delivering Crane Valley Park**

19. The first requirement to move forward with the project is to gain the agreement of the key parties to the principles of the new park. It is hoped that this document will aid considerably in this process.
20. The principles of the park development will need to be incorporated into the key planning policies for the two boroughs. A start has already been made with the Local Development Framework. Other policy and planning documents regarding specific sites and plans have been identified in this document.
21. The implementation phase of the project will be managed by the same, potentially expanded steering group. This group will manage and/or guide various implementation projects such as the BIFFA project and the Mayor’s priority parks project.

22. The steering group will be linked to the public through a network of Friends and Community groups that would liaise with the public about their priorities and bring forward projects. They would also, as FORCE, LWT and other groups already do, aid in the fund raising for these projects and run volunteer work days.

### **Project funding**

23. Two major grant funds (BIFFA and Priority Parks) are in place and a major bid has been submitted by the Crane Valley Partnership to the Heritage Lottery Fund, focussed on improvements to social conditions related to local green spaces. Opportunities for other small scale and larger scale bids have also been identified.
24. Section 106 projects linked to planned developments are a potential means of delivering aspects of the proposed park development. There are a significant number of actual and potential schemes local to the park area that could reasonably contribute to the project by means such as land transfers, access agreements and financial support. These schemes are identified on Figure 3.
25. The project has identified a number of other projects and statutory authorities that may be able to contribute to the aspirations for the park through having shared objectives.
26. Not least would be the contribution, through small grants and the provision of voluntary manpower, of the voluntary environmental and community sectors.

### **The way forward**

27. The final report will be circulated to key interested parties and presented to the public. A consultation exercise will be carried out to review the findings of this project and inform the future strategy
28. The steering group will move on to supporting the two existing projects and identifying and liaising on other opportunities to deliver aspects of the new park.
29. The aim will be to deliver substantially on the Phase Two Metropolitan Park by 2012, by which time the Priority Parks project will have ended. This would include having agreed public access for the main sites linking Hounslow Heath and Twickenham Station and a management system in place to maintain and improve the environmental and public value of the park over time.
30. The potential for delivering a regional park along the Crane valley will be explored over this same three year period.

### **In Summary**

31. There are a wide range of tangible benefits in developing Crane Valley Park. The means to achieve this new park appear to be available through a network of statutory organisations and with the support of the community and voluntary sector. The recent award of two major grants, alongside the potential for further support through other grants and Section 106 agreements, has encouraged the

steering group that this new park is deliverable. Progress on this project is essential to ensure the fragmented areas of the lower Crane Valley do not become overdeveloped and depleted of community, wildlife and a sense of place

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## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT**

BAA	<b>British Airports Authority</b>
BAP	<b>Biodiversity Action Plan</b>
BTCV	<b>British Trust for Conversation Volunteers</b>
CABE	<b>Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment</b>
CIL	<b>Community Infrastructure Levy</b>
CSO discharges	<b>Combined Sewer Overflow discharges</b>
CRISP	<b>Cycle Route Implementation and Stakeholder Plan</b>
CVP	<b>Crane Valley Partnership</b>
DCLG	<b>Department for Communities and Local Government</b>
DNR	<b>Duke of Northumberland's River</b>
DPD	<b>Development Plan Documents</b>
EA	<b>Environment Agency</b>
EU	<b>European Union</b>
FORCE	<b>Friends of the River Crane Environment</b>
GLA	<b>Greater London Authority</b>
HAP	<b>Habitat Action Plan</b>
HLF	<b>Heritage Lottery Fund</b>
IMD	<b>Index of Multiple Deprivation</b>
LB Hounslow	<b>London Borough of Hounslow</b>
LB Richmond	<b>London Borough of Richmond upon Thames</b>
LDF	<b>Local Development Framework</b>
LWT	<b>London Wildlife Trust</b>
London LOOP	<b>London Outer Orbital Path</b>
REN	<b>Richmond Environment Network</b>
RFU	<b>Rugby Football Union</b>
SAP	<b>Species Action Plan</b>
SFRA	<b>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</b>
SINC	<b>Site of Importance for Nature Conservation</b>
SPG	<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance</b>
TfL	<b>Transport for London</b>
TLS	<b>Thames Landscape Strategy</b>
UDP	<b>Unitary Development Plan</b>

## **CRANE VALLEY PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL REPORT**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In April 2006 the Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) launched its vision for a new park along the River Crane in west London, incorporating the existing Crane Park and extending it to around 97 hectares, linking Hounslow Heath in the west with Twickenham Station in the east. This new park would be known as Crane Valley Park.

Crane Park itself is a well used 33 hectare riverside park. However, its location, on the boundary of two boroughs, has led to it being relatively overlooked for council funding in the past. Recent surveys on behalf of the Crane Valley Partnership (LWT, 2008) identified concerns from park users, and other local people who currently do not use the park, about the current appearance and perceived safety of parts of the park.

There are a large number of other green spaces to the west and the east of Crane Park which also have considerable environmental and amenity value, but this value is at present compromised by their fragmented nature. The existing social and environmental values of these sites are also at risk of being further degraded by actual and potential development proposals either within or adjacent to them.

The creation of a new and expanded Crane Valley Park would enable this network of fragmented areas to be placed within a coherent management system, providing protection for these sites and a programme of improvements and maintenance. This new park would be classed as a new Metropolitan Park for London, a major new asset for the two boroughs and attracting visitors from across west London, via links along the West London Green Chain, London LOOP and the Thames path.

A Steering Group was set up in 2006 to promote the Crane Valley Park project, consisting of Officers and Councillors from the two London Boroughs – LB Richmond and LB Hounslow - covered by the park along with Trustees of FORCE and officers from London Wildlife Trust (LWT). The Steering Group subsequently raised funds from the following sources for this Feasibility Study:

- Richmond Council - £5000 grant
- Hounslow Council - £5000 via a Section 106 agreement.
- Awards for All - £10,000 grant
- Wates Foundation - £10,000 grant

The Feasibility Study commenced in September 2007 and FORCE appointed Alistair Grills Associates as lead consultants, along with Bell Fischer Landscape Architects as landscape and mapping specialists, to undertake the study with the management of FORCE Trustees.

In June 2008 an interim report was produced for the project and this can be seen at [www.force.org.uk](http://www.force.org.uk). The interim report set out the findings to that point and also included the original “Vision for Crane Park” and the “Scope of Work” for the project

as Appendices. Fifty copies of the interim report were produced as well as 50 executive summaries. Presentations on the findings were given in Richmond and Hounslow, to Councillors and Council officers, interested members of the public and members of FORCE. Separate presentations were given to the GLA and to the Crane Valley Partnership (a wider representative grouping that represents interests along the whole Crane valley from Harrow to the Thames), local MPs and others. The findings were also disseminated to FORCE members and the general public through articles in the local press, newsletters, stalls at Twickenham Fair and the FORCE Open Day.

This is the final report for the project and provides the following major additions to the interim report:

- Feedback from the Steering Group and consultees on the findings of the interim report
- New and updated information over the last 12 months
- Reports on the local social context
- Valuation report for Twickenham Junction Rough
- Outcome of the Mayor's Priority Parks competition and potential implications for the park and the project

A photographic record has also been produced, as part of this project and in parallel with this report, of the main sites in Crane Valley Park. This will be used as a baseline for the work and also to publicise the project and engage the public.

The Mayor's Priority Parks competition is the major development since the interim report stage. The competition was launched in the summer of 2008 and Crane Valley Park was entered and subsequently selected for the final stages. At this point the project steering group elected to delay the final report to include the outcome of this competition.

The final stage of the competition was in the form of a public vote, with the two best supported parks in each of five London regions receiving £400,000 each for park improvements. The steering group members organised a publicity campaign for the park and voting took place between November 2008 and the end of January 2009. When the results were announced, in March 2009, Crane Valley was not only one of the winners but, with 6677 votes, received more support than any other park across London. This result is a major indicator of public support for the park. The £400,000 funding provides a major opportunity to help realise the vision of this new Metropolitan Park for London.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 River Crane**

The River Crane is one of the main Thames tributaries in Greater London, rising in Harrow, north London as the Yeading Brook and flowing through five west London boroughs – Harrow, Hillingdon, Ealing, Hounslow and Richmond – before flowing back into Hounslow and out into the Thames at Isleworth.

The River Crane corridor forms the greater part of the West London Green Chain, a largely unbroken green wildlife and amenity corridor of some 30 kilometres length. Its importance as a wildlife corridor was first recognised in planning terms by the West Middlesex Regional Plan in 1924 and it is considered to be one of the major wildlife corridors of London.

In essence this corridor comprises the remaining flood plain of the River Crane, broadening out in some sections to include larger areas of park, woodland, wetland and heath. There are six nature reserves along its length including Ickenham Marshes, Gutteridge Wood and Crane Park Island (the latter within Crane Park) as well as major open spaces such as Cranford Park and Hounslow Heath. At its downstream end it links with the River Thames, another vitally important wildlife corridor for London.

The River Crane system includes the Duke of Northumberland's River. In reality this consists of an upper and lower channel, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to supply water to Syon Priory in Isleworth. The upper channel transfers water into the Crane at Feltham from the River Colne to the west. The lower channel transfers water out of the Crane at Kneller Gardens in Twickenham to Syon Priory (now Syon House), in Isleworth.

### **2.2 Crane Park**

Crane Park is a linear park situated in the lower third of the River Crane catchment and comprising a green corridor of land some 2.5 km in length and covering around 33 hectares. The park lies across the boundary of Hounslow and Richmond boroughs with some three quarters of the park area within Richmond. The area of the existing park, along with the borough boundary, is shown as the heavily hatched area on Figure 1.

Crane Park Island nature reserve is a small island within Crane Park managed by London Wildlife Trust (LWT). Over the last 20 years LWT and its volunteers have developed a matrix of different habitats on the island and attracted a wide range of plant and animal species.

The shot tower stands adjacent to Crane Park Island and is the only building remaining from the Hounslow Gunpowder Mills, which once extended over much of the park. The shot tower was renovated around five years ago and now houses environmental educational classrooms, managed by LWT and linked to the nature reserve.

### **2.3 Crane Valley Park**

Three phases have been identified in the development of Crane Valley Park as below:

- Phase One: extension of Crane Park to include adjacent areas of Council owned land. This phase is fairly straight forward and could happen in the short term. It would include the areas shown as stippled on Figure 1 (Pevensey Road nature reserve, Butts Farm fields, Kneller Gardens, Mereway Nature Park and Craneford West Field) and create a new park of around 63 hectares
- Phase Two: extension to include other land, some of which is in private ownership. This would include the areas shown dashed on Figure 1 (De Brome Fields, Feltham Marshalling Yards, part of Twickenham Rifle Club land and Twickenham Junction Rough.) Due to the variety of ownerships involved this phase will be more complex and may take several years to achieve. The Phase Two park will cover around 97 hectares in total and be large enough to merit Metropolitan Park status
- Phase Three: extension upstream to include other open spaces along the River Crane such as Hounslow Heath, Cranford Park and Hanworth Park and downstream to include Moormead Park and the Duke of Northumberland's River and to link with the Thames at Isleworth. The total area would be around 415 hectares, as shown on Figure 2. This size is sufficient to be designated a new Regional Park for London and represents a potential longer term aspiration for the project.

This Feasibility Study has focused largely on the potential to develop the phase two Metropolitan Park and this objective is the main focus of the final report. This new park would cover around 97 hectares with some 53 hectares within Hounslow and the remaining 45 hectares within Richmond.

The area of Crane Valley Park (phase two), upstream and to the west of Crane Park, is all within the London Borough of Hounslow. A major component is the Feltham Marshalling Yards site, currently managed as a wildlife area, but included as part of development proposals for new railway sidings. Further discussion of this issue is provided later in this report. An underpass links this site to the upstream River Crane and, by public footpath, to Hounslow Heath.

De Brome Fields to the west is meadow land on the site of an old school playing field and links the park area to Hanworth Park, on the other side of the Uxbridge Road. Pevensey Road Nature Reserve has also been included in this part of the park. A further addition in the Hounslow area is the Butts Farm field just to the north of Great Chertsey Road.

Kneller Gardens is a formal park area immediately downstream of Crane Park and has its own community group, The Friends of Kneller Gardens. At this point the river divides and a northern link is proposed along the public footpath which runs beside the Duke of Northumberland's River.

The main river runs downstream through a series of linked sites; Mereway Nature Park and Craneford West Field are both Council-owned and managed with support from FORCE. The western part of the Rifle Club site, owned and rented out by the Council to Twickenham Rifle Club, is included as a possible extension.

Downstream of this point are several green spaces in private ownership. Craneford East Field is owned by Richmond College and is not proposed for inclusion, although public access to the next site, Twickenham Junction Rough, is proposed through this site and along the river. Twickenham Junction Rough is in several private hands following the sale of this British Rail land in the 1980's. An initial assessment of the potential for purchasing this land has been included in this report.

London Road marks the proposed eastern limit to the new Metropolitan Park. However, there are proposals to re-develop Twickenham Railway Station and these provide an opportunity to link both beneath London Road to the station itself and eastwards to Moormead Park.

## **2.4 A Possible New Metropolitan Park**

Crane Valley Park (phase two) would be a new Metropolitan Park for London. The London Plan defines a Metropolitan Park as being at least 63 hectares in size and comprising:

*“Large areas of open space that provide a similar range of benefits to Regional Parks and offer a combination of facilities and features at the sub-regional level, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.”*

The area proposed for Crane Valley Park, at some 97 hectares, is easily sufficient to meet these guidelines. In initial discussions, representatives from the two councils and the GLA have provided support in principle for Metropolitan Park status.

The guidelines also state that a Metropolitan Park provides a resource for residents within a 3.2 kilometre radius of its perimeter. In the case of Crane Valley Park this includes a large swathe of Richmond and Hounslow boroughs, as shown on Figure 2. The estimated population within this area is 235,000 and this includes large numbers of people within areas of significant social and open space deprivation as well as many others of comparative wealth and privilege. Addressing the open space needs of this large and diverse population will be a key challenge for the ongoing project.

## **2.5 Friends of the River Crane Environment**

Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) is a charitable organisation, set up in 2003 to represent the interests of the environment, local residents and visitors along the corridors of the River Crane and the Duke of Northumberland's River within and local to the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It opened to public membership in April 2004, received charitable status in 2005 and currently has over 400 members. More information is available at [www.force.org.uk](http://www.force.org.uk)

The original focus of FORCE's activities was the green spaces immediately to the east of Crane Park and one of their major achievements has been the creation of Mereway Nature Park on the site of disused Council allotments. In recent years the group has extended its interests to include Crane Park and other parts of the Crane valley. The remit of the organisation extends to the Hounslow parts of the proposed park and links

have been developed with London Borough of Hounslow and local groups within Hounslow through this project.

FORCE operates by means of:

- monthly volunteer days carrying out small scale and cumulative practical improvements and maintenance
- project works – funded by grants and/or FORCE funds and implemented by FORCE members or via contracts
- lobbying local authorities, private landowners and other statutory organisations for environmental and public amenity improvements along the Crane corridor
- joint works with other bodies such as LWT, Crane Valley Partnership, Biodiversity Action Plan groups, Richmond Environment Network etc

FORCE encourages and supports the setting up of local community volunteer groups to help to manage their own spaces in partnership with FORCE and envisages this as part of the solution for the management of Crane Valley Park. FORCE is currently developing a Service Level Agreement for the management of Mereway Nature Park on behalf of LB Richmond.

## **2.6 Crane Valley Partnership**

The Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) was set up in 2005 to co-ordinate the environmental activities along the length of the Crane corridor. Membership of CVP includes:

- Five London boroughs – Harrow, Hillingdon, Ealing, Hounslow and Richmond – along the Crane valley
- Environment Agency
- GLA
- BAA (owners of Heathrow)
- London Wildlife Trust
- Thames Water
- English Heritage
- Royal Parks
- FORCE

The partnership is co-ordinated by Green Corridor, an environmental charity based in West London.

In April 2008, CVP submitted a Stage Two application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a major three year project to improve three parts of the Crane Corridor, one of which is Crane Park. The submission included a considerable amount of preparatory work, completed in Stage One and including, for Crane Park, an:

- Audience Development Plan
- Conservation Management Plan
- Access Plan

This preparatory work has been of great value to this Feasibility Study.

The HLF bid was turned down in October 2008. However, HLF encouraged CVP to provide a revised submission and this was submitted in summer 2009. The results of this submission are due later in 2009. If successful this will provide some £600,000 of funding to the Crane valley over three years, around one third of which will be focussed upon Crane Park.

In the mean time, London Wildlife Trust, on behalf of CVP, submitted an application for biodiversity improvements along the Crane valley to BIFFAward, as part of the landfill levy. This application was successful and a grant of £150,000 over three years was awarded. This award will support a biodiversity officer for the Crane valley for three years, based at the Shot Tower in Crane Park, along with improvement projects for three sites along the River Crane, including Crane Park. The officer started in post in May 2009.

## **2.7 Other Organisational Links**

The key local landowners and planning authorities for the park are LB Richmond and LB Hounslow. Officers and Councillors from both councils are on the project Steering Group.

London Wildlife Trust (LWT) is a key partner of the project. LWT operates Crane Park Island nature reserve, will be managing the Crane valley biodiversity officer and already collaborates with FORCE on a number of local environmental improvement projects. LWT employs a site manager, the newly appointed biodiversity officer, a part-time heritage officer and a youth volunteering officer, all based at the Shot Tower site.

A Local “Friends Group” has been in place for the last five years for Kneller Gardens and this group takes responsibility for some of the maintenance and improvement works in the park in collaboration with LB Richmond.

There used to be a similar “Friends” group for the Pevensey Road site and, although this has not operated for some time, individual volunteers still provide maintenance support for this part of the park. There are some 26 Friends groups within LB Hounslow and, although there does not appear to be an active group operating within the park area at present, there is a small group known as the Friends of Hounslow Heath.

There are also a number of community groups within the local area including Heatham Residents Association, Lincoln Avenue Residents Association, Rivermeads Residents Association and residents’ groups in the Edgar Road and Butts Farm housing estates. Richmond Housing Partnership manages both these latter estates and has registered its interest in this project. The Isleworth Society also has a keen interest in the Duke of Northumberland’s River.

Richmond Environment Network, and its parent body Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, help to co-ordinate much of the community environmental activity within LB Richmond and are taking an active interest in the development of

this project. Richmond BTCV undertakes regular volunteer days along the Crane, supported by LB Richmond.

The project has been discussed with the Greater London Authority (GLA) directly and with Walk London, a GLA initiative through Transport for London (TfL), to develop new long distance walks around the capital. More links are anticipated with GLA in the next couple of years, as the Mayor's Priority Parks project is undertaken.

The project has been discussed with the Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) working groups and the Hounslow BAP team. It has also been discussed at London wide level with the London Rivers and Streams HAP as well as the London Biodiversity Partnership.

The project has been discussed with Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS). TLS has a particular interest in respect of (a) its responsibilities for local flood management initiatives under the Thames 2100 project and (b) the potential for the project to enhance the links between the Thames path and the West London Green Chain.

The project has been discussed with the Environment Agency (EA) at Area Level, as part of the Crane Valley Partnership and during separate meetings. The project is also linked to the North London River Restoration Project and the London Rivers Restoration Strategy, both of which are supported by the EA.

### **3.0 PLANNING**

#### **3.1 Planning Objectives**

From the outset, a number of key planning objectives were identified for the Crane Valley Park initiative as follows:

- to strengthen the identity of the extended Crane Valley Park in planning policy documents;
- to secure Metropolitan Park status for the expanded park,
- to consider the long term potential of creating a larger Regional Park;
- to update and reinforce planning policies within LB Richmond's and LB Hounslow's evolving Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), including the inclusion of new policies relating specifically to the proposed Crane Valley Park, to ensure a consistent level of protection and encouragement for environmental and amenity improvements across all parts of the park;
- to ensure the extended linear park is sufficiently accessible to surrounding communities in order to ease existing deficiencies in open space provision within built up areas falling within a 3.2km radius (the radius specified for Metropolitan Parks) of the extended park (see Figure 2);
- to improve access for walking and cycling along the entire length of the extended park and linkages between opposite banks to provide more equal access for all; and
- to identify planning proposals (as well as other planning matters) that may provide benefits to the setting up and operation of the park, and to move forward with securing these as appropriate.

A detailed review of the existing planning policy context for an expanded park, at national, regional and local level, has been undertaken and the main features are summarised below.

#### **3.2 National Context**

The following four national policy documents are particularly relevant to this project:

- PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005)
- PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (August 2005)
- PPG17: Planning for open space, sport & recreation (July 2002)
- PPS25 Development and Flood Risk (December 2006)

##### **Planning Policy Statement 1**

PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It is generally supportive of protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment and in Paragraph 18 insists that *“planners seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space”*.

### **Planning Policy Statement 9**

PPS9 sets out policies to conserve and enhance England's biological (and geological) diversity. Paragraph 12 of PPS9 notes that *"networks of natural habitats [such as the Crane Corridor] are a valuable resource. Consequently, local authorities should aim to maintain such networks by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats through policies and plans. In addition, such networks should be protected from development, and, where possible, strengthened by or integrated within it"*.

### **Planning Policy Guideline 17**

PPG17 sets out planning policies for protecting and enhancing open space and includes a lengthy section on the protection of existing open space and the provision of new open space.

Paragraph 24 notes that *"in planning for new open spaces and in assessing planning applications for development, local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, to create public open space from vacant land, and to incorporate open space within new development on previously-used land. They should also consider whether use can be made of land which is otherwise unsuitable for development, or procure public use of privately owned areas of land or sports facilities"*.

Paragraph 32 also acknowledges that *"rights of way are an important recreational facility, which local authorities should protect and enhance. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks"*.

Finally, paragraph 33 of PPG17 states that *"planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space, sports and recreational provision. Consequently, local authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs"*.

### **Planning Policy Statement 25**

PPS25 sets out Government policy on development and flood risk. Its aims are *"to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages of the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk"*. This is relevant as most of the proposed Crane Valley Park is within a flood risk zone.

## **3.3 Regional Context**

### **The London Plan**

The London Plan is the strategic plan setting out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of London. A key part of the Mayor's Vision is *"a fundamental improvement in London's environment and its use"*

*of resources...”, and further, that “open spaces, rivers and other water features should be protected and enhanced so that growth can benefit the city’s breathing spaces”.*

Among the Plan’s key objectives are to: “...*protect and improve Metropolitan Open Land, other designated open spaces, the Blue Ribbon Network and Green Grid*”. It is relevant in this context to note that all of the area within Crane Valley Park is designated at Metropolitan Open Land level or higher.

Policy 3C.21 concerning walking includes the aim: “...*to identify, complete and promote high quality walking routes including the six strategic walking routes identified in the Mayor’s Transport Strategy*”. This links with the proposals from Walk London to develop the Crane Walk as a Strategic Walking Route and the two proposed circular walks identified in Section 6 of this report.

Policy 3C.22 in respect of cycling includes the objective: “*to identify, complete and promote the relevant sections of the London Cycle Network Plus, and other cycling routes*”. This links with the feasibility study carried out by Sustrans in 2006 for shared use for walking and cycling routes along the River Crane from the Thames to Hillingdon and the Transport for London project to develop a new cycle route along the River Crane corridor in Richmond, recently subject to a CRISP Report (Mouchel 2007) and subsequent detailed feasibility study. There are early proposals for similar work to be carried out in Hounslow with £70k available from TFL to encourage shared use of cycling and walking routes along the River Crane.

Policy 3D.11 on Open Space states that DPDs should: “*identify and support Regional and Metropolitan Park opportunities*”, “*encourage functional and physical linkages within the network of open spaces and to the wider public realm, improve accessibility for all throughout the network and create new links based on local and strategic need*” and “*identify, promote and protect Green Corridors and Green Chains and include appropriate designations and policies for the protection of local open spaces that are of value, or have the potential to be of value, to local communities. The Mayor will assist in co-ordinating this process across borough boundaries*”.

In May 2006 the GLA completed a Strategic Parks Project, investigating the potential for new Regional and Metropolitan Parks in London in support of Policy 3D.11 and considering the policy and governance models to support the development of such parks. Two new Regional and two new Metropolitan park opportunities were investigated in case studies, but the opportunities along the Crane valley were not recognised in this report. Nevertheless the report provided valuable comparators for the development of a new or expanded park. The potential approach to managing the park is considered in Section 9 of this feasibility study and a review of the approaches adopted in comparable situations across London is set out in Appendix A.

In July 2008 the project team met and discussed the Crane Valley Park project with relevant officers in the GLA. The officers noted that formal GLA approval is not required for Metropolitan Park status to be conferred, rather this occurs as a matter of course if the park is in excess of 63 hectares. The officers gave “in principle” support to the case for Metropolitan Park status for Crane Valley Park, as and when it was deemed to be in excess of this size. Furthermore, the lead GLA officer was also the first to note the potential for extending the park upstream to include other green

spaces, thus potentially creating a new Regional Park (defined as a park in excess of 400 hectares). This possibility is shown as the Phase Three park development in Figure 2 of this report.

Policy 3D.14 Biodiversity and nature conservation states: *“The Mayor will work with partners to ensure a proactive approach to the protection, promotion and management of biodiversity..... Where appropriate, measures may include creating, enhancing and managing wildlife habitat and natural landscape and improving access to nature. Priority for both should be given to sites which assist in achieving the targets in Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)”*.

FORCE has received support from the London Rivers and Streams HAP working group with respect to the Crane Valley Park project. The Feltham Marshalling Yards has been identified as a key site in the London Wastelands HAP.

Policy 3D.17 on London’s countryside and the urban fringe indicates that: *“the Mayor will and boroughs should support sub-regional and cross-borough boundary urban fringe management through the Green Arc partnership initiatives...”*

The Crane Valley Park initiative would, therefore, be appropriate for consideration under the relevant Green Arc area. The Green Arc grouping for south west London covers the area to the south of the M4 which includes Crane Valley Park. The south west London Green Arc group is managed by Surrey County Council and the Council has recently made contact with FORCE regarding this project.

In addition, Policy 4C.1 The Blue Ribbon Network, notes that the Network *“includes the Thames, the canal network, the other tributaries, rivers and streams within London and London’s open water spaces such as docks, reservoirs and lakes. It includes culverted (or covered over) parts of rivers, canals or streams.*

*The Mayor will and boroughs should recognise the strategic importance of the Blue Ribbon Network when making strategies and plans, when considering planning applications and when carrying out their other responsibilities.”*

Policy 4C.3 goes on to refer to: *“.. taking opportunities to open culverts, naturalise river channels”*.

Policy 4C.22 Rivers, brooks and streams also confirms: *“The Mayor will, and boroughs should, in discharging their development control and other duties, ensure that rivers, brooks and streams of all sizes are protected, improved and respected as part of the Blue Ribbon Network.*

### **GLA Policy on Access to Open Space**

The GLA report *Improving Londoners’ Access to Nature* attempts to identify areas of London that do not have good quality sites that are rich with wildlife. It also considers socio-economic deprivation and access to public open space in order to prioritise areas where there is a deficiency in open space. The analysis is based on the London Plan which sets out a hierarchy for the provision of public open space across London from local parks to regional parks. This hierarchy includes distances from which people

should be expected to travel, and suggests that areas beyond these distances are regarded as areas of public open space deficiency. The agreed hierarchy is:

- Small and local open spaces - 400m
- District open spaces - 1.2km
- Metropolitan open spaces - 3.2km
- Regional parks open spaces - up to 8km

LB Richmond is well endowed with open space relative to the population but there are still areas of deficiency. In addition, open space is not spread evenly across the borough.

Analysis shows that Twickenham has a 39% deficiency in district open space because residents are more than 1.2km from a district park. A number of barriers which result in pedestrian severance were identified and these include the A316 and railway lines, the lack of river crossings of the Thames and Crane, and difficult access onto and around the sites for wheelchairs and buggies. The area proposed for Crane Valley Park is crossed by various railway lines as well as the A316. For the most part access across these barriers is reasonably well provided, although some restrictions have been noted (see Figure 4).

LB Hounslow has not yet prepared an open space strategy so the same analysis is not available as a comparison. A study of the area around the proposed park identified the existing Crane Park as one of 5 local, comprehensive project areas covering a total of 1132 ha and established 5 core objectives for these areas. These are to:

- increase public use,
- increase public access,
- improve the landscape,
- remove inappropriate uses; and
- make the sites safe.

The report suggests that not all of the open space is of high quality and there is a need for improvement. The report also notes that accessibility is an issue for local people and the transport system acts as a physical barrier to preventing local people from gaining any benefit from the open space.

A further report published by the Mayor of London produced maps showing wildlife sites and areas of deficiency in access to nature; deficiency in access to nature and multiple deprivations; and areas of deficiency in access to nature and regional parks. The maps show that the area immediately surrounding the proposed Crane Valley Park was not judged to be deficient in these criteria. However, there is an area which is based in Whitton (around Murray Park) and an adjoining large portion of Hounslow to the north of Whitton, (based on Beaversfield Park and Osterley fields in the Isleworth and Brentford area) which are judged to be deficient.

A further map identified areas of deficiency in access to nature and public open space, i.e. Metropolitan Park deficiency and district park deficiency. The same areas in Richmond and Hounslow are highlighted as deficient in access to nature but,

additionally, there is a section to the east which is classified as having a deficiency in district parks.

The report states that access to nature can be improved in a number of ways:

- 1. Improving the natural value of an accessible site or by creating new open space to provide a “significant” experience of nature.*

Crane Valley Park aims to open up access to new sites including a) Twickenham Junction Rough and b) Feltham Marshalling Yards. Both sites are designated for their environmental value (see Figure 5). The proposed park will be managed as a whole rather than in fragmented parts, and there are plans to improve the overall environmental value of Crane Valley to provide a “significant experience”.

- 2. Creating new access points to a site or opening up areas to a previously restricted site.*

The project aims to open up new space which is currently inaccessible, including a) Twickenham Junction Rough and b) Feltham Marshalling Yards, and by bring several other sites into the park boundaries. There are additional plans for new access points and river crossings to establish links between existing parts of the park. Links and connections between different open spaces will be considered as an important part of the project.

- 3. Improving walking access through areas surrounding the site and extending the catchment area.*

By managing the park as a whole and bringing together currently fragmented open spaces, the catchment area for the park will be extended to that of a Metropolitan Park rather than a series of district parks and local open spaces. There is considerable potential for developing new walking links and these are set out in section 6 of this report.

The report also states that in order to “reduce deficiency” in nature conservation interest the area must be enhanced to meet the designation criteria for sites of borough importance for nature conservation. The report notes that this is not always practical and suggests that small scale enhancements may not reduce the area of deficiency in access to nature but may improve the site’s attractiveness for wildlife, thus improving the experience of wildlife. The suggestions given are examined below.

- 1. Discrete enhancements to the area*

Examples given include creating wild flower meadows, encouraging natural management, planting hedgerows to encourage nesting. Such enhancements will be achieved both through this project; the environmental improvements project managed through the Crane Valley Partnership; and the ongoing work of FORCE and both Councils.

- 2. A change to the management across the whole area*

Central to the project is the plan to consider the management of the whole area rather than a series of fragmented open spaces. Details will be worked out on the ground by staff employed for this purpose.

3. *Improving access to the site for those previously excluded, eg. disabled access*

The whole issue of access is addressed in section 6 below.

4. *Improvements to walking environment, for example: linkages, footbridges, signage and the walking and cycling environment such as:*

- *Restoring a lake, making ponds*
- *Opening culverts and naturalising channels*
- *Changing mowing regimes and shrubbery management*

Many of the examples given above are proposals that have been identified by this project.

### **The North London River Restoration Strategy**

This strategy was launched by the Environment Agency in partnership with the GLA in 2006 and includes a number of proposals for river restoration projects in the Crane Valley Park area.

The London River Restoration Trust chairs a working group charged with delivering the London Plan target of 15 kilometres of river restoration within Greater London by 2015. FORCE has submitted four projects to this working group for river restoration works within the Crane Valley Park area. One project is largely completed, one is ongoing with inputs from FORCE and LWT volunteers and two others are part of the North London Strategy. It is hoped that one or both of these projects will be implemented over the next two to three years.

### **Thames Estuary 2100 – flood risk management strategy**

Thames Landscape Strategy is taking the lead in the west London area on the identification of potential sites for the mitigation of flood risks from the Thames and its tributaries. FORCE is in early discussions with TLS with regard to the development of sites within the Crane Valley Park area as potential wetlands and flood mitigation areas.

The steering group has also been in contact with two other London wide groups regarding this project; the **London Parks and Gardens Trust** and the **London Parks and Green Spaces Forum**. Further useful contact may be made with these organisations as the project progresses.

## **3.3 Local Context - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames**

### **London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames Unitary Development Plan (LBRUT UDP)**

LB Richmond-upon-Thames's UDP First Review was adopted in March 2005 and sets out the current local planning context for this Borough, including a number of key environmental and open space policies. It is, however, in the process of being replaced by the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) – considered in a further sub-section below.

Virtually all of the expanded Crane Valley Park constitutes Metropolitan Open Land and Policy ENV 1 Metropolitan Open Land states *“5.27 The Council will protect metropolitan open land as a habitat for wildlife and take opportunities, where possible, to increase its potential for wildlife. Views across open land are important. The Council will encourage enhancement of metropolitan open land where appropriate...”*

In addition, the Proposals Map accompanying the UDP identifies several substantial “Areas of Publicly Accessible Open Space Deficiency” adjoining the proposed expanded park, which the proposed park would help to remedy. A map showing these areas can be seen in section 4 of this report.

Specifically with regard to the River Crane, UDP Policy ENV 4 River Crane Area of Opportunity states: *“5.39 The Crane Valley contains large areas of open land, which could benefit from significant environmental improvement. The Council is committed to the overall improvement of the corridor to provide an attractive walk and open wedge between the London Borough of Hounslow and the River Thames”.*

It continues: *“5.40 The Council is developing a master plan for the main area of potential change, includes the Stoop Memorial Ground, the Craneford Way playing fields, the Council Depot, the Richmond Upon Thames College and the Post Office Sorting Office. It is committed to looking at this area comprehensively with a view to enhancing the open space and the associated linkages, improving sports facilities and providing for possible improvement to the College. Also to be included are improvements to the banks of the River Crane to enhance their ecological interest and provision of a through pedestrian/cycle route along the River Crane. The Council will work with the local community as appropriate in the planning and carrying out of improvements.”*

A Masterplan for the lower Crane valley was subsequently produced as Supplementary Planning Guidance (see below)

Policy ENV 6 Green Chains states: *“5.44 The Council, in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs, will have regard to the importance of interconnected green space (or green chains) as a recreation and nature conservation resource, and as a link to the countryside. Priority will be given to proposals that will provide missing links, and enhance the value of green chains for informal recreation (particularly walking) and nature conservation. Proposals which would breach the green chains with built development will not be permitted.”*

And continues: *“5.46 To encourage the use of such green chains, the Council will, when finances are available, establish a network of signposted and way marked walks in parts of the areas having public access, including links to town centres, public transport and other attractors. Where appropriate, provision may also be made for*

*cycling and/or horse riding. Where there are missing links or urban sections between open areas, the Council will supplement planting on suitable routes, or acquire land, as resources permit, to complete chains. In liaison with other Boroughs and Authorities, the Council will publish maps and leaflets to explain routes, and publicise their existence.”*

Paragraph 5.48 goes on to note: *“Proposed Green Chains are [inter alia]: h) River Crane – “Crane Park, Kneller Gardens, Craneford Way playing fields to London Road, Moormead Park to A316 and open land further north”.*

With regard to open space policy, Policy ENV 12 – Open Space states: *“5.61 The Council will seek, where opportunities arise and finance permits, to provide new public open space with safe, convenient access for all residents, including people with disabilities...”* and continues: *“5.64 Where opportunities arise the Council will enter into Section 106 agreements with developers to secure the provision of public open space, and will seek its provision as planning advantage”.*

### **London Borough of Richmond LDF: Submission Core Strategy**

The submission version of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy document was approved by the Council’s Cabinet in February 2008 and the final version was adopted in April 2009. The Core Strategy includes a Strategic Policy for the River Crane corridor, CP12, which will replace UDP policy ENV 4.

Specifically, part of Core Strategy Policy 12 states:

*“12.B The Crane Valley within the Borough forms part of the much longer West London Green Chain which runs for 30 km from Harrow to the Thames at Isleworth.... The Council is committed to the overall improvement of the corridor to provide an attractive walk and open wedge with improvements to the biodiversity between the London Borough of Hounslow and the River Thames.”*

*12.C The Council has developed the Crane Valley Planning Guidelines for the main area of potential change, which includes the Stoop Memorial Ground, the Craneford Way playing fields, the Council Depot, the Richmond upon Thames College and the Post Office Sorting Office”. It has considered this area comprehensively with a view to enhancing the open space, historic landscape and the associated linkages, improving sports facilities and providing for possible improvement to the College. Also included are improvements to the banks of the River Crane to enhance their ecological interest and provision of a through pedestrian/cycle route along the River Crane. The development of the sites referred to above and others in the nearby area will provide the opportunity to contribute towards these improvements including through planning obligations. The Council will work with the local community as appropriate in the planning and carrying out of improvements.*

*12.D As a major landowner the Council will seek to take forward the proposals on its own sites. It will also work with key landowners, including the Royal Mail, the Richmond upon Thames College and Harlequins Rugby Club to implement the strategy. The development control process will be relevant to the development sites within the area. Improvements to the open areas may be achieved through Section 106*

*contributions or other assistance from the developments both within the area and nearby, and the actions of the Environment Agency, land owners, voluntary groups and the Council with respect to its own land. In particular the Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) are working with funding from both London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond as well as grant funding to look at improvements to a wider area which would link existing open areas from Hounslow Heath to Twickenham Station to form the Crane Riverside Park.”*

LB Richmond advises that other saved UDP policies will remain until gradually replaced by later LDF Development Plan Documents (DPDs). For instance, a Development Policies DPD containing more detailed policies is to be developed in 2009 for submission mid-2010 and adoption by LB Richmond in 2011. In addition, a Site Allocations DPD containing site specific proposals is to be developed in 2010 for submission mid-2011 and adoption by LB Richmond at the end of 2011. It is anticipated that the Crane Valley Park proposals will be included in the Site Allocations DPD where appropriate.

As with the Unitary Development Plan, the Local Development Framework allows reference to other documents as “a material consideration” in the planning process. The Thames Landscape Strategy for example is one such document. Acceptance of a document as a “material consideration” requires approval by the council’s planning committee. The steering group will explore having the final report for this Feasibility Study recognised as such a document. This may then be replaced in due course by an Implementation/Management Plan for the park.

### **Crane Valley Planning Guidelines 2005 (Supplementary Planning Guidance)**

This document provides planning guidelines for the Crane Valley in Twickenham, covering an area stretching from The Duke of Northumberland River in the west to London Road in the east and from the A316 Chertsey Road in the north to the main railway line running out of Twickenham Station and Mereway Nature Park in the south.

It provides guidance for developers for four main sites:

- Harlequins Rugby Ground
- Richmond upon Thames College
- Post Office Sorting Office Twickenham
- Central Depot, Craneford Way

The development objectives include, inter alia:

*“To protect and enhance the natural environment of the River Crane, the Duke of Northumberland River and their banks as part of the wider West London Green Chain and Blue Ribbon network as identified in the London Plan:*

- *To improve the appearance and recreational value of the open space including the provision of a river walk and the associated pedestrian/cycle linkages; taking account river corridor ecology*
- *To ensure the provision of appropriate local community facilities including for education and health and the community use of buildings and playing fields*
- *To ensure that developers take account of the Council’s Planning Contributions Strategy”*

In respect of open space, the SPG states:

*“All areas of metropolitan land should be protected and enhanced for biodiversity and recreation, both to improve their value for residents and to enhance this part of the West London Green Chain. The Council’s Open Space Strategy states that there is overall a high level of provision, but that it is necessary to improve quality and accessibility to larger open spaces in this area. The aim therefore is to link the Crane Park, Kneller Gardens, Mereway Former Allotments and Craneford Playing fields as a new public park, together with the new public open areas at Harlequins and through the College site, as well as providing the link through Twickenham rough to Twickenham Station .*

*It is expected that the developers of all four development sites within these guidelines would contribute to the improvements to all public open spaces and green links within the guideline area.*

*A key component of the proposals will be enhancing nature conservation interest and biodiversity. There is an opportunity to bring the open space of the area to the same high degree of nature conservation interest that exists along the unchannelised banks of the River Crane West of the guideline area within the wider West London Green chain. In particular there exist opportunities to create a level of naturalisation of the river banks, subject to a flood risk assessment and agreement with the Environment Agency.”*

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

In January 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) introduced provisions in the Planning Bill for a new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is intended to establish a better way to increase investment in the vital infrastructure required by growing communities. The Bill allows for regulations to empower local councils to apply a CIL on new developments in their areas to support infrastructure delivery. DCLG now confirms that the new CIL Regulations will not come into force before October 2009.

CIL is not expected to pay for all infrastructure required locally, but it is expected to make a significant contribution. CIL will be a standard charge decided by designated charging authorities and levied by them on new development. For example, the CIL could be levied as a certain amount per dwelling or per square metre of development, following the example of existing ‘tariff’ schemes introduced by some local planning authorities.

Whilst LB Richmond is currently considering the ramifications of the CIL for the Borough, it will clearly be important to ensure that the Crane Valley Park and associated projects benefit from the new regime.

### **Richmond Biodiversity Action Plan**

The Crane Valley Park project is being co-ordinated with the working groups for the Reedbeds HAP and the Water Voles SAP under the Richmond BAP process such that the objectives of this project link with objectives under these action plans. The project will also seek to link with objectives for the local BAP action plans for Broad Leaved Woodland, Acid Grassland, Bats, Stag Beetles, Song Thrush and Mistletoe during the project implementation stage. There are also major opportunities for the delivery of biodiversity improvements in the proposed park through the three year programme of biodiversity works along the entire Crane valley, funded by BIFFAward and started in May 2009.

### **Richmond Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

The extension and development of the Crane Valley Park must also take cognisance of the LBRUT Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), originally adopted by the Council in February 2008 and updated in March 2009. The key objectives of the SFRA are as follows:

- *To collate all known sources of flooding, including river, surface water (local drainage), sewers and groundwater, that may affect existing and/or future development within the Borough;*
- *To delineate areas that have a ‘low’, ‘medium’ and ‘high’ probability of flooding within the Borough*
- *Within flood affected areas, to recommend appropriate land uses that will not unduly place people or property at risk of flooding*
- *Where flood risk has been identified as a potential constraint to future development, recommend possible flood mitigation solutions that may be integrated into the design (by the developer) to minimise the risk to property and life should a flood occur.*

Paragraph 5 of the “Introduction to the SRFA” notes that: *“The River Crane and Beverley Brook, tributaries of the River Thames, also pose a risk of flooding to properties within the Borough. The River Crane is situated on the west bank of the River Thames, and whilst it flows through a relatively well defined waterway corridor, the river has been heavily constrained and modified by urban development over the centuries. Properties situated adjacent to the River Crane are potentially at risk of river flooding in events that exceed the 1 in 50 year flood”.*

## Crane Cycle Route

A CRISP study was completed on a route along the Crane valley within Richmond Borough in 2007. Detailed design work is currently ongoing with a view to starting construction works for an improved cycle path later in 2009. It is also proposed to extend the route westwards along the Crane through Hounslow. This issue is discussed further in section 6 of this report.

### 3.4 Local Context - London Borough of Hounslow

#### London Borough of Hounslow Unitary Development Plan (LBH UDP)

London Borough of Hounslow's Unitary Development Plan (LBH UDP) was formally adopted in December 2003. The proposed park area is already designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land within the UDP which protects it from development. In particular, UDP Policy ENV-N.1.1 Purposes of including land in and objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt states:

*"The main aim of the Green Belt in Hounslow is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The four purposes of including land in the Green Belt in Hounslow are:*

- a) to prevent neighbouring built-up areas from merging into one another*
- b) to check the unrestricted sprawl of Greater London;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and*
- d) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*

In addition, Policy ENV-N.1.5 Protection of Metropolitan Open Land confirms:

*"The Council will safeguard the permanence and integrity of the Metropolitan Open Land within the Borough, with special regard to conserving and enhancing its particular character, appearance, historic and cultural value and its ecological value, whilst increasing access to and enjoyment of these large open spaces. The areas of Metropolitan Open Land in the Borough are, inter alia:*

#### *Butts Farm*

*The main feature of this area is its contribution to the public open space for the residential area, its value for wildlife and nature conservation, recreational open space and its location as a gateway to the Crane Valley."*

LB Hounslow is also intent on securing improvements to MOL with UDP Policy ENV-N.1.9 Metropolitan Open Land Improvements confirming:

*"The Council will pursue ways of improving the positive role of Metropolitan Open Land in providing attractive landscape, visual amenity and improvement of land for wildlife, including restoration, maintenance and management of land, enhanced provision of public access and use, on land in its ownership and on land in private ownership when opportunities occur."*

It is noted that both Metropolitan Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land designations in close proximity to the River Crane would be highly unlikely to change as LB Hounslow's LDF Core Strategy is developed. Neither would current policies within the Unitary Development Plan which encourage improvements to Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land (Policies ENV-N.1.3 and ENV-N.1.11). Further to this, it is worth noting that there are two areas of Publicly Accessible Open Space Deficiency adjoining the proposed expanded park, which the proposed park would help to remedy.

The Proposals Map accompanying the UDP indicates that most of the proposed Crane Valley Park lying within LB Hounslow is covered by Nature Conservation policies in the UDP. Policy ENV-N.2.2 Sites of Regional/Local Nature Conservation affirms:

*“The Council will encourage the protection and sensitive management of these sites for regional, metropolitan and local nature conservation (As depicted on the Proposals Map). Development will only be permitted when it can be shown that it would not be harmful to nature conservation interests at the defined site and should include:*

- (i) built facilities for interpretation and nature study together with their ancillary uses;*
- (ii) other open air facilities where appropriate such as picnic areas and nature trails.”*

Category III in the list accompanying the policy covers Sites of Regional and Metropolitan Importance (ENV-N.2.2) and includes, inter alia:

*“4. Feltham Marshalling Yard*

*5. River Thames, its Tidal Tributaries and Islands [inc]  
b. The Tidal Crane*

*6. The Crane Corridor including:  
a. Dudset Lane to Great South West Road  
b. Great South West Road to Baber Bridge  
c. Baber Bridge to Hanworth  
d. Crane Park and Crane Island (Local Nature Reserve)*

*9. Hounslow Heath Local Nature Reserve*

In common with LB Richmond's UDP, LB Hounslow has developed Green Corridor and Green Chain policies to assist with the protection of open green areas. UDP Policy ENV-N.2.9 indicates the Council has identified a number of Green Corridors which form visual and vegetated links, often along transport routes or water courses between open areas which:

*“may provide opportunities for the dispersal of wildlife and the improvement of landscaping and amenity. The Council will seek co-operation with appropriate landowners in such improvements and will have full regard to their operational requirements.”*

Furthermore, “New development adjoining the corridors will be expected to enhance this continuity and improve amenity....”

In addition, UDP POLICY ENV- N.2.10 confirms the Council has identified a series of Green Chains which consist of *“areas of open space linked by way of marked footpaths and other pedestrian routes, often along water courses. These provide a recreational and nature conservation resource, which link across the Borough and beyond. These chains will ideally have public access at present or such access can be readily achieved. The Council, in implementing its Green Strategy intends to enhance the visual and environmental continuity and accessibility of these Green Chains, by promoting planting and landscape schemes incorporating footpaths and where they can be accommodated without undue harm to the environment cycleways.”*

LB Hounslow’s Green Chains include open land adjacent and near to the River Crane and the Duke of Northumberland River. Moreover, the River Crane Green Chain is also part of the London LOOP (London Outer Orbital Path) walking route.

Part of the proposed Crane Valley Park also falls within the Feltham, Brentford and Isleworth Regeneration Areas where the Council will seek development of relevant initiatives that contribute to improving housing, the environment, reducing crime, education, training, business, leisure and recreational opportunities.

Finally, Policy CPA4 - The Crane Valley from the Great Chertsey Road to the Grand Union Canal near Bulls Bridge, states that comprehensive treatment of the above 385ha area is needed to:

- i) preserve and enhance the ecological and nature conservation value of this important green chain; and
- ii) improve public accessibility, landscaping and recreational use of the Crane Valley.

*“To this end the Council has prepared a Green Belt Management Plan to support the protection and improvement of public and private land within the Green Belt. Parts of the Crane have been identified as Archaeological Priority Areas which will require further consideration”.*

### **London Borough of Hounslow Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (PPG17)**

LB Hounslow expects its Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, as required by PPG17, to be completed by December 2009. To this end, LBH will soon begin audits of open space, and will refer to FORCE’s report for information and detailed background on the Crane Valley Park.

### **London Borough of Hounslow LDF Core Strategy**

LB Hounslow’s LDF team confirms the Core Strategy document is at a preliminary stage at present. The project team has been in contact with relevant officers and provided them with some background information on the Crane Valley Park Project. As mentioned above, officers are currently working on the Open Space Study to inform their Core Strategy. LB Hounslow anticipates the next (preferred strategy)

stage of consultation on the Core Strategy will be produced early in 2010. Adoption of the Core Strategy is expected in late 2010 or early 2011 at the earliest.

As with LB Richmond, the Local Development Framework allows reference to other documents as “a material consideration” in the planning process, e.g. The Thames Landscape Strategy. Whilst acceptance of a document as a “material consideration” requires the approval of the council’s planning committee, the steering group will explore the option of having the final version of this Feasibility Study recognised as such a document. This may then be replaced in due course by an Implementation/Management Plan for the park.

### **LBH West Area Committee**

Most of the park area within LB Hounslow falls within West Area. The project is supported by the West Area Committee and the Chair of this committee sits on the Steering Group. Improvements to the Crane Valley are a priority under the West Area plan.

### **LBH Central Area Committee**

Improvements to the Crane Valley are also understood to form part of the Central Area plan.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy**

As with LB Richmond, LB Hounslow has yet to introduce this new levy for infrastructure works (see section above for a full description) and, again, it will be important to ensure that the Crane Valley Park and associated projects can obtain some benefit from the new proposals when CIL Regulations are introduced after October 2009.

### **Hounslow Biodiversity Action Plan**

Hounslow’s BAP was issued in 2002 and includes Habitat Action Plans for Rivers and Streams, Wasteland, Hedgerows and Parkland and Veteran Trees. The plan is currently under review by the relevant Council officers. The lead officers for the Rivers and Streams HAP are within the Environment Agency. No firm contacts have been made with the responsible parties as yet though there is clearly the potential to undertake project works in concert with the targets within these plans.

### **Hounslow Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

The final version of the Hounslow Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was adopted by the Council in October 2007. As with LB Richmond’s SFRA, the document confirms that a proportion of the Borough is affected by flooding from the River Thames and its tributaries. Within the Hounslow (Level 1) SFRA the spatial variation in flood risk across the Borough has been delineated into zones of ‘risk’ in accordance with PPS25 with the area making up the extended Crane Valley Park recorded as being partially within the functional flood plain and partly within an area of high probability of flooding.

## **Crane Cycle Route**

LB Hounslow is currently providing a cycle route along the River Crane through Cranford Park. The Council is planning to extend the network downstream along the River Crane to meet with the LB Richmond network. This could then link in with the Sustrans aspiration to complete the link from the Thames to Wembley, using this route, by 2012.

### **3.5 Comparable Park Developments in Greater London**

An initial survey has been carried out of comparable park development initiatives. Five broadly comparable projects have been identified viz:

- Wandle Valley
- Lower Roding Valley
- Lee Valley
- Brent River Park
- Colne Valley

All of these are initiatives to develop linear parks along river corridors. The results of this survey are set out in Appendix A to this report. Further review of these models will be carried out as the project moves forwards.

## 4.0 SOCIAL CONTEXT

### 4.1 Population served

Crane Valley Park is planned as a linear park of around 5km length running through a reasonably densely populated part of west London. It will span the border of LB Richmond and LB Hounslow.

In 2008, Crane Valley Partnership undertook an *Audience Development Plan* as part of an application for Heritage Lottery Funding. This plan estimated that the total population living within 1km of the existing Crane Park<sup>1</sup> was 43,670 people. 75% of these were living in LB Richmond and 25% in LB Hounslow. FORCE has previously estimated the population living within 250 metres of the existing park as some 20,000 people.

Census data from 2001 shows the population of LB Hounslow to be 212,341 in an area of 5,598 hectares (a population density of 37.93 people per hectare). The population of LB Richmond was given as 172,335 in the 2001 census in an area of 5,742 hectares (which is a density of 30.02 people per hectare.)<sup>2</sup>

Using GLA mid-2007 population estimates for London Boroughs<sup>3</sup> the population of LB Hounslow was 220,600, an increase of 2.1% since 2001, and the population of LB Richmond was 180,000 which is an increase of 3.24% since 2001. This means that in 2007 LB Hounslow had a population density of 39.4 people per hectare and LB Richmond had a population density of 31.3 people per hectare.

A Metropolitan Park is considered to serve an area of 3.2km from the boundaries of the park. This area is shown on Figure 2, providing a total catchment area of 6,570 hectares with 3,441 hectares in LB Hounslow and 3,129 hectares in LB Richmond. This catchment will include a considerable part of the built up areas of LB Hounslow and LB Richmond including central Hounslow, Isleworth, Feltham, Hanworth, Hampton, Teddington, Richmond and Twickenham.

Based on the population densities given above, the population served by the new metropolitan park in 2007 would have been approximately **235,000**. (39.4 x 3,441 = approx. 135,000 for Hounslow and 31.3 x 3,129 = approx. 100,000 for Richmond). GLA data indicate that the population density for this part of London is forecast to continue to rise.<sup>4</sup>

Using 2007 GLA data, 56% of the residents of LB Richmond and LB Hounslow will be in the catchment area for the proposed park (235,000 people out of a population for both boroughs of 400,000).

In summary, the population living adjacent to the existing park (i.e. within 250 metres) is around 20,000 and over 40,000 live within a short walk (i.e. less than a kilometre)

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<sup>1</sup> CVP Audience Development Plan p23

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics. Neighbourhood Statistics. Usual resident population (KS01) [www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> GLA Data Management & Analysis Group. Mid-year population estimates 2007. [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> The Hounslow Community Plan 2007-2010 [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

of the existing Crane Park. Furthermore, given the radius of benefit for a Metropolitan Park as being 3.2km, the population living within the area of benefit for the proposed new park is some 235,000. These populations are more or less evenly split between the two boroughs of Richmond and Hounslow.

## 4.2 Ethnicity

LB Richmond is one of the least ethnically diverse boroughs in London with just over 9% of the population made up of non-white minority ethnic groups. The largest group is Indian at 2.46%<sup>5</sup>. Heathfield ward has the largest concentration of non-white minority ethnic groups (16.2%) and Whitton and West Twickenham are more diverse than the rest of the borough (15%). Crane Valley Park runs through or close to all these wards.

Hounslow has a more diverse population,<sup>6</sup> being 64.9% White, 25.2% Asian (17.3% of those Indian) and 5.84% other, including Chinese (3%). The 2001 census shows that 83% of Hounslow West area residents were white UK residents (as compared to 65% for Hounslow as a whole) and 10% have Indian origins. 11% of local residents are migrants and 75% of these came from other parts of the UK.<sup>7</sup>

## 4.3 Employment and Incomes

The LB Richmond profile shows that in 2005, 83% of 16-74 year olds were economically active, with long term unemployment at 1.9%. This is the smallest proportion of long term unemployed in Greater London (0.61%)<sup>8</sup>. At the same time Heathfield Ward had an unemployment rate of 2.4% and Whitton Ward 1.6%<sup>9</sup>. Income levels in both these wards are the lowest in the borough, and Heathfield is the only ward in Richmond which is ranked in the lowest half of the income table for London in 2004 (270 out of 633 London wards) with an average income of £32,528<sup>10</sup>. 5.5% of incomes were lower than £10,000 (compared to 9.6% for Greater London as a whole). These wards are close to or within the park boundaries.

By comparison the average income of residents in West Twickenham (£38,323) and South Twickenham (£47,021) in 2005 was considerably higher. St Margaret's and North Twickenham, at the eastern end of the proposed park, had the second highest average income in the borough at £48,144. In London wide rankings it was ranked 613 out of 633.

The 2001 census figures for LB Hounslow<sup>11</sup> shows that 62.6% of residents between the ages of 16-74 were economically active, with an unemployment rate of 3.26%. 25.5% of these are long term unemployed people. The Hounslow Community Plan

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<sup>5</sup> Richmond Borough Profile [www.richmond.org.uk](http://www.richmond.org.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Hounslow 2001 Census, Ethnic Group – All People Table ks06 [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> West area regeneration study.

<sup>8</sup> Richmond Borough Profile [www.richmond.org.uk](http://www.richmond.org.uk)

<sup>9</sup> Area profile Whitton and Heathfield [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> Area profile Whitton and Heathfield [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

<sup>11</sup> Hounslow 2001. Census Economic activity. All people KS09a [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

2007-2010<sup>12</sup> shows that in 2007 the unemployment rate had fallen to 2.8%, which is below the average for London of 3.4%.

Analysis shows that there are pockets of low incomes in Hounslow West Area (Feltham Town Centre, Hanworth and Bedfont Wards, and Hanworth Park), Cranford and Heston, Central Hounslow and Brentford and Isleworth. The average household income for the borough is around £38,800 a year. However 10% of households have gross incomes of under £10,000 a year.<sup>13</sup>

In LB Hounslow there are 3 hotspots of income deprivation in which half the population have incomes of less than £15,000. All these areas are very close to the park boundaries - Butts Farm Estate is 0.64 km from the park, Highfield Estate (Feltham) is 1.33 km from the park and the Ivybridge Estate (Isleworth) is 1.57 km.

#### 4.4 Crime

LB Richmond has low levels of crime - it has the third lowest levels of all notified crime in London boroughs, accounting for only 1.5% of all offences in the Metropolitan police area between 2004-5<sup>14</sup>.

By comparison, on a national scale, LB Hounslow appears to have high levels of crime<sup>15</sup> with 22 areas in the 10% most deprived, although these are not concentrated around the park boundaries.

Survey work<sup>16</sup> in Crane Park carried out by the Crane Valley Partnership in 2008 has shown that many visitors mentioned unprompted that they were concerned about safety in the park. Some said that there were parts of the park that they did not visit because they had a bad reputation. Other complaints were of drug use, motor bikes, fly-tipping and dog fouling. There were calls for better maintenance and security, lighting and signage. These perceptions do not relate to the police statistics for the park, and are an issue which needs to be addressed.

LB Hounslow Community Plan 2007-10 mentions<sup>17</sup> that there is a fear of crime among residents which affects their quality of life, producing an atmosphere of mistrust amongst communities and influencing how people live their lives. Not using and enjoying parks and open spaces is given as an example.

The Community Safety Partnership analysed crime statistics in Crane Park over the last 2 years for both LB Richmond and LB Hounslow by searching the police database for the terms Crane Park and Kneller Gardens. They found 27 crimes of which 11 were recovery of stolen property.

The Community Safety Partnership concluded:

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<sup>12</sup> The Hounslow Community Plan 2007-2010 p84 [www.hounslow.org.uk](http://www.hounslow.org.uk)

<sup>13</sup> The Hounslow Community Plan 2007-2010 p84 [www.hounslow.org.uk](http://www.hounslow.org.uk)

<sup>14</sup> Richmond Borough Profile [www.richmond.org.uk](http://www.richmond.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> West area regeneration study 2.1 Income and deprivation [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

<sup>16</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Visitors, 2008

<sup>17</sup> The Hounslow Community Plan 2007-2010 p24

- This indicates that crime in the Park is very infrequent, compared with around 27,000 total offences in LB Richmond over the same period, crimes in the Park account for 0.06% of crimes in the Borough.
- Due to the low number of crimes their findings are not statistically significant but it was concluded that 81% of crimes occurred between 1300 and 0000hrs with a slight peak at 1700 to 1759 hrs.
- In terms of days of the week, there was a slight crime peak on Sunday (23% of offences). It is possible that more crimes than this occurred in the Park but the police officer reporting it did not use the words Crane Park or Kneller Gardens in his/her form.
- There is also a belief that many crimes are not reported. This was felt to be the case in the Hounslow areas of the park where anecdotal evidence suggests that the park is used for a number of low level illegal activities such as drug use, fly tipping and the dumping of stolen motorbikes.
- There is a perception of risk associated with the park which does not relate to the crime statistics.
- Perceptions of risk are influenced by many factors including – numbers of people using the park; welcoming nature of entrances; management of pathways and verges; evidence of low level misdemeanours such as rubbish and graffiti; and a public sense of ownership
- These factors are all present in the LB Hounslow side of Crane Park and can be managed in an environmentally sensitive manner

The project steering group is linking with the community safety teams in LB Richmond and LB Hounslow so as to identify and implement measures to increase the safety and perceptions of safety along the area proposed for Crane Valley Park. The local police service has also expressed interest in engaging with this process and a liaison group has been proposed whereby the community and other interested parties can liaise with the parks departments, police and the safety partnerships on matters across the area of the proposed park. This will be taken forward as part of the ongoing phase of this project.

#### **4.5 Index of Multiple Deprivation**

The “index of multiple deprivation” incorporates a number of factors to determine deprivation. These include income, employment, health and disability, housing, education, crime and the environment. The latest index was published in 2004 and uses data from the 2001 census. “Super Output Areas” identify these indices as local hotspots of deprivation.

The London Borough of Richmond has 68 wards (60% of borough) that were in the 25% least deprived in the country<sup>18</sup>. However there are pockets of deprivation, and Heathfield ward has one area, the Edgar Road estate, identified as amongst the 30% most deprived in the country<sup>19</sup>. This area is within 500m of the proposed park boundaries.

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<sup>18</sup> Richmond Borough Profile [www.richmond.org.uk](http://www.richmond.org.uk)

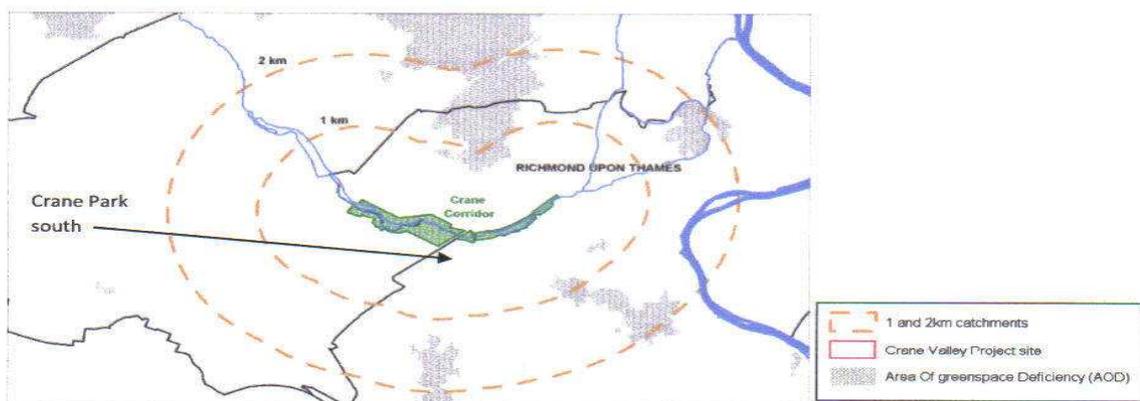
<sup>19</sup> Area profile Whitton and Heathfield [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk)

The Multiple Deprivations Index ranks Hounslow lower than the national deprivation average at 102<sup>nd</sup> out of 354 districts in England.<sup>20</sup> Although the borough has 22 areas that are in the country's least deprived 25 per cent, there are also three areas which are in the most deprived 10% in England. Two of these are in West Area, located in Hanworth (around the Butts Farm estate) and in Feltham West close to the town centre<sup>21</sup>. The third is located in Isleworth.<sup>22</sup> These areas are identified on Figure 2.

All three of these pockets of deprivation are within the catchment area of the proposed new park. One (Butts Farm estate) backs onto the existing park and the centre of the estate is only 0.64km from the park. The other two are 1.57km (Ivybridge Estate) and 1.33km (the Highfield Estate in Feltham) from the nearest park boundary. There are six other areas very close to the proposed park boundaries which have a high ranking in the indices and are ranked amongst the 30% of the most deprived in the country.<sup>23</sup>

One of the deprivation indices used to assess the index of multiple deprivation is "deficiency of green space provision". A map was produced by LWT, as part of their "Audience Development Plan for Crane Park in 2008, showing these areas of deficiency with respect to green space in relation to their distance from the existing Crane Park. This map is re-produced below.

**Map showing Areas of Deficiency of green space surrounding Crane Park**



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Source: Crane Valley Project: Audience Development Plan, March 2008, London Wildlife Trust

#### 4.6 Public uses

The main existing public uses of the open spaces comprising the proposed park areas are walking, including a considerable amount of dog walking, running/jogging and cycling. There are several short grassed areas within Crane Park and these are used for informal games.

<sup>20</sup> Isleworth and Brentford area plan 2007-2012 [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

<sup>21</sup> West area regeneration study 2.1 Income and deprivation [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

<sup>22</sup> Isleworth and Brentford area plan 2007-2012 [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

<sup>23</sup> West area regeneration study 2.1 Income and deprivation [www.hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk)

The only large formal playing fields are in Kneller Gardens and these are booked regularly for football and rugby. Kneller Gardens also contains tennis courts, a fit-point and basketball hoops. Craneford West Field is used for junior rugby competitions, organised by Harlequins RFUC, as well as informal sports. Twickenham Rifle Club is an active club with both indoor and outdoor ranges.

The River Crane (above Mereway) and the Duke of Northumberland's River are good quality coarse fishing rivers and are used for fishing during the season. The river can be used by canoeists although this has only been seen occasionally.

In the summer the open areas are well used by walkers and picnickers – most of whom are local to these spaces. The pathways are also used as throughways to Twickenham Station, Whitton town centre and Richmond College in particular, and are heavily trafficked by pedestrians on rugby days at either Harlequins or RFU.

Feltham Marshalling Yards is only accessible through breaks in the steel fence. However, the space is used by walkers and dog-walkers and quite extensively by scramble bikes. These bikes have cut trackways through the undergrowth and are currently the only effective means of keeping some of these pathways open.

There are two children's play areas, in Kneller Gardens and Craneford West Field, within the area of the park. Both are designed for younger children. A fit-point and youth shelter have been introduced at Kneller Gardens within the last year with the intention of appealing to 16 to 24 year olds. The Friends of Kneller Gardens have the aspiration of providing further youth activities for this group based at the pavilion, currently derelict and due for renovation later in 2009. Currently there are no other similar facilities based in this part of the Crane Valley.

The Shot Tower is managed by LWT and used for education of local schools and residents in conjunction with the adjacent Crane Park Island nature reserve. It is open at weekends and provides local environmental information along with public toilets. A manager, heritage officer and youth worker are based at this site along with local environmental volunteers. A biodiversity officer has recently been appointed as part of the BIFFAward funded project and will also be based at this site.

#### **4.7 Visitors surveys of Crane Park.**

In 2007 the Crane Valley Partnership carried out studies into the use of green spaces along the Crane Valley. There were three green spaces targeted - Yeading Brook Meadow and Gutteridge Wood in Hillingdon, Roxbourne Park in Hillingdon and the existing (rather than proposed) Crane Park in both Richmond and Hounslow.

Visitor surveys<sup>24</sup> were carried out with the aim of discovering the characteristics and attitudes of people who use Crane Park. An Audience Development Plan was produced based on the results of these surveys. There are no similar data for the other open spaces which make up the proposed Crane Valley Park.

#### **Numbers of Visitors to the Park**

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<sup>24</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Visitors survey, 2008

The CVP survey did not include a count of visitor numbers but suggested that some green space was visited more often than others, even though all open spaces are within easy reach of local communities. The most popular areas were Crane Park near the Meadway entrance and around the Shot Tower. Visitors were apparently deterred from visiting the area of Crane Park within LB Hounslow which backs on to the Butts Farm Estate.

In general there will be several hundred visitors to the park on a summer weekend and even during a winter weekday it is rare not to see park visitors. The Shot Tower has been open for visitors on Sunday afternoons over the last few years and FORCE volunteers man one of these Sundays per month, recording the numbers of visitors. Numbers vary from 100 or more on warm summer afternoons to between 15 and 20 on a cold and wet winter's day. Kneller Gardens is particularly popular after school and during the summer and can often appear quite full, particularly around the playground and tennis courts.

### **Travelling distance to the site**

The CVP visitor survey found that 50% of visitors travelled less than 5 minutes to reach each site and more than 80% travelled for no more than 15 minutes. The survey also concluded that most visitors (81%) walked to Crane Park.

77% of the visitors to the park were from LB Richmond and 18% were from LB Hounslow with the remaining 5% from further afield.

### **Reasons for the visit**

The most popular reason that visitors gave for visiting the park was to walk a dog (60%), followed by walking (38%), watching wildlife (6%), and taking a short cut (3%). Other reasons for a visit included: children's activities such as playing or exploring, and taking exercise including running, cycling and football.

### **Other sites visited**

48% of visitors<sup>25</sup> said that they did not visit any other park along the River Crane. However 39% said that they visited other parts of the existing Crane Park, 28% mentioned Kneller Gardens, 7% mentioned Hounslow Heath and 7% mentioned Pevensey Road Nature Reserve. This implies that some visitors use more than one open space in the proposed Crane Valley Park already, and that the idea of open spaces linked by the River Crane is already a concept which some visitors are likely to appreciate.

The survey also shows that some park visitors are prepared to travel to other green spaces rather than use local green space. For example, the survey found that many people who lived closest to Crane Park in Richmond were also prepared to travel to Richmond Park. The survey also shows that visitors who live on the Butts Farm estate in LB Hounslow are most likely to use Crane Park (63%) in preference to any other open space. This estate is located adjacent to the park boundary.

### **Social profile of visitors**

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<sup>25</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Visitors survey, 2008 p56

Large numbers of visitors<sup>26</sup> to Crane Park were between the ages of 0-15 and 30-60. There was a significant lack in visitors between the ages of 15-30 years, especially men. The majority of visitors came in groups rather than alone.

A high proportion of visitors to the park described themselves as white UK visitors. When compared to census data Indian visitors were under-represented in the entrances located in the Heathfield ward.

At the Meadway entrance the proportion of Indian and Pakistani visitors was similar to the census findings for the area, but the proportion of Black Caribbean visitors was higher than the local area.<sup>27</sup> There were only a small number of visitors at other entrances and no general conclusions were drawn.

### **Likes and dislikes**

Visitors were asked what they liked about the park. Convenience was mentioned by 18% of visitors. Other likes included the natural feel of the space (26%), the peace (24%), the wildlife (20%), and the open space (20%). The woodland and the river were also mentioned as attractive features of the park.<sup>28</sup> The list implies that the park is valued because it is a local open space which is free, wild and of high wildlife value.

Visitors were also asked what they disliked about the park.<sup>29</sup> 28% said that there was nothing that they disliked about the park, but rubbish (16%), dog mess (14%) the neglected river (10%), a feeling of insecurity and lack of safety (9%) and graffiti (4%) were mentioned specifically as issues.

The survey also asked what visitors would like to see changed. 31% said that they did not want to see any changes. However, better maintenance (10%), rubbish removal (10%), more seats (9%) and better lighting (9%) were mentioned. Improved security (8%) and more warden visits (7%) were also noted.

### **Site maintenance and safety**

Although visitors liked the peace, wildlife and greenery of Crane Park and thought that it was a safe place to bring children, many mentioned unprompted that they were concerned about safety in the park. Some said that there were parts of the park that they did not visit because they had a bad reputation. Other complaints were of drug use, motor bikes, fly-tipping and dog fouling. There were calls for better maintenance and security, lighting and signage. These perceptions do not relate to the police statistics or community safety officers understanding of real risks for park users, and this perception is clearly an issue which needs to be addressed. These comments are also echoes of those made in the Hounslow Community Plan 2007-2010<sup>30</sup> that some residents do not use and enjoy parks and open spaces because the fear of crime remains high.

These perceptions are reflected in informal discussions with local people at volunteer days and presentations, as well as the findings from focus groups currently being

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<sup>26</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Audience development plan p48

<sup>27</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Audience development plan p50

<sup>28</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Visitors survey, 2008 p52

<sup>29</sup> Crane Valley Partnership Visitors survey, 2008 p51

<sup>30</sup> Page 24

undertaken on behalf of FORCE by an MSc student. The general perception is that the park was better used in the past – between 20 and 50 years ago – when many people remember playing there unsupervised as children. The use of the park reduced quite sharply over the last 20 years and probably fell to a minimum some 5 to 10 years ago. Encouragingly, many people now say they are using the park more, although the lingering sense of unease still remains with many local people.

## Summary

The Audience Development Plan developed for the Crane Valley Partnership considered barriers to developing the audiences who use the park and concluded that before this work could be undertaken there were important issues which needed to be resolved. These include:

- Visitors' feelings of insecurity and danger,
- Improved maintenance,
- Improved facilities,
- Improved access.

Specific recommendations made by the report included:

- Promoting the use of the park
- Tackling feelings of danger and insecurity through the use of warden patrols, improved sightlines and discouraging anti-social behaviour.
- Improving access through the remaking of paths and improving path surfaces
- Improving facilities such as children's play, community activities and improved sports facilities
- Improving maintenance by cutting back vegetation along path margins, clearing rubbish from the park and river, removing graffiti, and removing fly tipping.

This report was submitted as part of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding of improvements for various sites along the Crane valley including Crane Park. This bid is currently being reviewed by HLF and will be decided later in 2009.

## 4.8 Designing out crime from Crane Valley Park

Over the last five years FORCE has been working at a local level to combat local concerns regarding site management and appearance and has found:

- Volunteer days and the removal of rubbish – with skips provided by the Council – tends to reduce the build up of rubbish in the following years;
- The prompt removal of graffiti (either by volunteers or the Council's anti-graffiti team) also reduces the frequency with which it re-appears;
- Management plans for maintenance – with strimming schedules for path margins, defined areas where the grass is left for an annual cut and others where brambles are left – are invaluable;
- Woodchip laid on pathways demarcates them and encourages use;
- Publicising the reasons why the land is managed the way it is helps the public to appreciate its wildlife value. Habitat information boards have been used in

Mereway Nature Park for example, explaining the habitat value of areas of bramble and nettles, and that these are actively managed and encouraged as wildlife habitats rather than neglected parts of the park

- More bins (including dog bins) also encourage good behaviour;
- The physical evidence of investment – signs, benches, new trees and hedges, sculptures even, encourage public use and a sense of ownership;
- Contact details, and personal relationships, with council staff and community police help considerably when dealing with all these issues; and
- The presence of a good park keeper (as at Kneller Gardens over the last three years) helps give people confidence in their parks and use them more regularly.

These practical findings are also reflected in the points made by the “Safer Crane Park” report produced in May 2009 by the LB Richmond Safer Community Partnership. This report provides generic advice to target the funding of enhancements which will maximise benefits for the Park’s physical appearance and also enhance the perceptions of park users in a positive way. Issues considered in the report include enhancements to visual signals such as entrances, neat edges to wild areas and dealing with issues such as graffiti, vandalism, litter and dog mess. Practical issues around making park users feel safe by providing staff, information, zoning, and creating sightlines are also discussed, as is the need for a good reputation by engendering a sense of ownership and positive publicity.

In short, this requires some investment in staff and infrastructure and a sustained involvement from the local community. The result, within the Twickenham parts of the proposed park, has been a significant improvement in the appearance, wildlife value and public appreciation of these areas. The plan is for the ongoing project to continue and extend these approaches over the rest of the Crane Valley Park area.

## **4.9 Broader Social Context**

### **History and Heritage**

The area proposed for Crane Valley Park has a long and interesting history of use including:

- King Manoel II, last king of Portugal, who lived in exile in Fulwell Lodge until his death in 1932 and owned parts of what is now Crane Park.
- The development of Hounslow Gunpowder Mills – covering much of the western part of Crane Park and still evidenced by the shot tower, blast mounds et al.
- Building of Duke of Northumberland’s River in the reign of Henry VIII
- Market gardens in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that covered much of the area and from which some fruit trees still remain
- The development of Feltham Marshalling Yards in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century using prisoners of war, including the Cavalry Tunnel that runs beneath it
- The history of the Richmond council depot site as a fever hospital and the ornate pumping station that remains from its time as a sewage works
- The story of Hounslow Heath
- The influence of post war building on the area

- Mereway public bathing place

Not much of this history is readily available to local people, a major exception being the Shot Tower in Crane Park which portrays the history of the gunpowder mills. LWT has also recently employed a Heritage Officer at the tower and she is developing oral histories of the area with local older people and children.

## **Buildings**

The main operational building within the area of the proposed park is the Shot Tower in Crane Park. This was refurbished some five years ago and houses exhibition spaces and classrooms as well as toilets. The site is managed by London Wildlife Trust.

The pavilion in Kneller Gardens, although used, is largely derelict at present but is due for renovation later in 2009. This will include toilets and a kiosk as well as an office for the park keeper. The Friends of Kneller Gardens would like to see the building and park used as a base for community events and, in particular, activities for local young people. The refurbishment of the pavilion to include a covered seating area is central to these developments as it has the potential for providing a base for such activities.

At present there are no other refreshment and/or public toilet facilities within the existing park area. The development of the Kneller Gardens pavilion providing public access to facilities within the park is, therefore, beneficial to the development of the Crane Valley Park as a whole.

## **Education**

There are 17 primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary colleges within a kilometre of the proposed park and these are identified on Figure 4.

LWT provides activities for local schools in both LB Hounslow and LB Richmond during term time and for families in the holidays from its facilities on Crane Park Island and the Shot Tower.

Richmond College is within 100 metres of the proposed park and has a student population of around 5,000, mostly in the 14 to 19 year range. The college serves both the local population and a wider constituency from across south London.

FORCE is a member of the Richmond College Community Liaison group as well as its Environmental and Sustainability team. The College is in the process of developing its own plans for a major re-build. The College has included the Crane Valley Park proposals within its development proposals.

FORCE has developed part of Mereway Nature Park as an outdoor classroom and this is already used by three local schools. FORCE has recently received funding for educational packs, to be developed using Mereway as a model, and providing lessons in support of large parts of the primary school curriculum in an outdoor setting.

Richmond Environment Network (REN) has set up the Schools Environment Forum to foster links and projects between schools and the voluntary and environmental sectors. REN is already working with FORCE on various projects and will advise on the development of appropriate educational links for this project.

### **Allotments and community gardens**

In LB Richmond there are three allotments immediately adjacent to the proposed area of the park – Marsh Farm, Mill Road and Briar Road. Thames Valley bee keepers are located on Whitton Road adjacent to the proposed eastern end of the park. The bee keepers have hives both on this site and at Mill Road Allotments further up the river, adjacent to Crane Park. They are also interested in having other sites within or local to the park. There are chickens kept at Briar Road allotments adjacent to Kneller Gardens.

In the LB Hounslow there are allotment sites on [Butts Farm adjoining Crane Park](#). There is also a large allotment site in [Church Road, Hanworth](#).

Richmond Environment Network is developing community gardens and allotments in various locations within Richmond Borough. There are potential opportunities for community allotments, orchards and bee keeping areas as part of the proposed park development. This would provide a link between the project and the developing local “Transition Movement”. FORCE has recently planted 30+ fruit trees and nut trees within Crane Park and other opportunities are also available during the ongoing project.

## 5.0 LAND OWNERSHIPS AND VALUATIONS

The land ownership details for most of the area within Crane valley park (phase two) have been collated from the Land Registry over the course of the project and are held by the project team. However, to date, it has not been possible to collect ownership details for parts of Hounslow borough and these have been left until the next phase of the project.

Most of the area in Crane Valley Park is within public ownership and held by either LB Richmond or LB Hounslow. Some areas, for example where ownership has not changed since 1930, are not held with Land Registry. Discrete areas are within the leasehold or freehold ownership of:

- Richmond College (Craneford east field)
- Environment Agency (the Duke of Northumberland's River, access strips along the Crane and small areas around gauges and weirs)
- London Wildlife Trust (Crane park island nature reserve)
- Harlequins RFU (the ground and associated area)
- Twickenham Rifle Club (the grounds)
- Network Rail (Feltham Marshalling Yards)
- Post Office (Twickenham sorting office and grounds)

Some of these sites are subject to potential development. Figure 3 identifies a total of 18 potential development sites within and adjacent to the proposed park. These are discussed in more detail in Section 10.

There are three private landowners for the Twickenham Junction Rough. This area has no public access at present. It had originally been owned by British Rail, was operated as a goods siding until the 1960's and sold off in the 1980's. The land was purchased at land auction on a speculative basis.

The project team commissioned a valuation of Twickenham Junction Rough by Dunphys Chartered Surveyors (Dunphys report, January 2009). This report records the sale values of five comparable areas of Green Belt land, with restricted or uncertain development potential, sold in the West London area over the last seven years and uses these as a basis for its valuation.

The completion of the park as envisaged requires this land to return into public ownership. Twickenham Junction Rough is Metropolitan Open Land with an additional designation as a local level Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). It is a narrow strip of land locked between the railway and the river and at least partly within the flood plain. The valuation reflects these factors and the low likelihood of any development being permitted on this land. As a consequence, the purchase of this land for public use is considered to be a viable proposition as part of this project.

## **6.0 SITE COMPONENTS AND LINKAGES**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This section considers the individual component sites that will make up Crane Valley Park, how they are linked together and where the breaks currently occur. The section also considers specifically the existing and potential walking routes and cycling routes through the park.

Figure 3 identifies 18 potential development sites within and adjacent to the proposed park. These are referenced in this section where relevant to site access. Further discussion of the site developments and their implications for the project is provided in Section 10.

Figure 4 shows the existing walking and cycling routes through the park area as well as severances within the existing and proposed park areas. The map also shows entry points to the park, local bus routes and railway stations, as well as the location of local schools and colleges.

Figure 5 shows the environmental designations of all the land areas within and adjacent to the proposed park over and above Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land status. These are referenced in this section and discussed in more detail in section 6.

### **6.2 Linkages and Breaks**

Crane Valley Park will be a linear feature of around 5km in length. In general there are good linkages along the length of the proposed park and between it and the surrounding suburban areas. The site components and how they are linked together are considered in turn from east to west below. Significant breaks in the existing system are shown on Figure 4 and also discussed below.

#### **Twickenham Junction Rough and the Post Office Site**

This is the major piece of land within LB Richmond not, currently, in public ownership. Twickenham Junction Rough is designated as a local Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and is largely covered with scrub and birch woodland. It is currently in three private ownerships. The Post Office site is largely disused and is a likely local development site (site 15 on Figure 3). An initial valuation of this land has been carried out for this project and the results are discussed in section 5 above.

Bringing this site into public use would open up a riverside route between Crane Park and Twickenham Station. It would also ensure that there is no possibility of future private development along this important wildlife corridor.

The incorporation of this land area into the public domain and its use as an alternative access route to Twickenham Station has been adopted as a planning aspiration by LB Richmond in its Crane Valley Supplementary Planning Guidelines. It is included as an alternative and improved route in the Crane Cycle Route CRISP. It is also proposed as an aspiration in the Richmond College Development Brief, a draft of

which was agreed by LB Richmond cabinet in May 2008 (and identified as development site 10 on Figure 3).

There is the potential to develop this route as part of any re-development of the Post Office site. It should be noted that, as a local SINC, any pathway developed through the Rough should reflect the environmental value of the site. It should in effect be relatively narrow, meandering and with no lighting. The route, and the overall development of a park through this site, should also respect as much as possible the privacy of the residential properties that adjoin the Rough on the north side of the river.

It is important that this route is not considered as a potential major access route either to the College or to the RFU. However, it could well be of considerable value as a one way route, against the prevailing rugby crowds, for local residents before and after matches at the RFU. This would need to be controlled by the police who already provide crowd and traffic control at these events.

There are also proposals to re-develop the Twickenham Station site (site 16 on Figure 3). Any development at this site would provide an opportunity to provide a link from Twickenham Junction Rough beneath London Road and into Twickenham Station. It may also provide an opportunity to link eastwards along intervening green space and into Moormead Park in St Margarets (also known as Cole Park) – thus extending the length of linked park areas by a further 1,000 metres. This extension is shown on the Regional Park map on Figure 2.

### **Craneford East Field**

This field is in the ownership of Richmond College. The Development Brief for the College re-development has proposed that a pathway along the river on the southern margin of this field be used as an access route into Twickenham Junction Rough, via a bridge in the south western corner, as part of any overall park development.

### **Twickenham Rifle Club**

The western end of the rifle club grounds is not currently used as a rifle range. Discussions have been held with the club about possible community uses for this part of the site. This would allow for the active but sympathetic management of the land not currently used by the club. A number of options have been suggested including a community orchard, for example. This part of the site has been included in the area of the park at this preliminary stage.

### **Council Depot**

The pathway along the south side of the Council depot is a major pinch point along the Crane Walk and the West London Green Chain. There are also mooted to be redevelopment options for this site and it is included as site 9 on Figure 3. FORCE has submitted proposals to the Council that this pathway should be widened and that any re-development of the depot would provide one opportunity to do this.

It is also proposed to incorporate within the park the existing gardens from 1 and 2 Mereway Cottages. These are within the depot boundary and potentially subject for re-development as part of any larger scheme. They are currently designated as MOL, The Old Pump House (recognised as a Building of Townscape Merit) has also been proposed as a public use building as part of any re-development of the Depot site.

### **Duke of Northumberland's River**

The path along the Duke of Northumberland's River (DNR) has been included as a northwards extension of the park. This pathway continues north and eastwards for a further few kilometres, passing through the ground of Mogden sewage works, until its outfall into the Thames at Isleworth. As such it provides an important riverside link to the River Thames path.

The pathway along the side of the Council Depot is also proposed to be widened as part of any development of the depot - as has previously been undertaken for the Harlequins site (see below).

Thames Water has recently received planning permission to extend the Mogden Sewage Works to provide additional storm water storage. Funding of some £180,000 has been included, as part of this agreement, to upgrade and improve the environment and public access along the Duke of Northumberland's River. FORCE has been involved in this agreement and is in contact with Thames Water, Isleworth Society, Hounslow Council, Walk London and Thames Landscape Strategy with a view to ensuring that the investment proposed is optimised for the benefit of the environment and walking links along the DNR.

### **Harlequins**

Harlequins has completed, as part of a Section 106 Agreement for its West Stand development, (a) transfer of a strip of land along the DNR and (b) landscaping of a remaining area of green space immediately north of Craneford Way. Both spaces would be incorporated into the park.

### **Mereway Nature Park**

FORCE have been working on this site for the last 5 years to encourage public use of this once derelict and intimidating site. It is currently a nature park for use by local residents, visitors and visits from local schools. As part of this work there is an additional pathway linking through the site to the Duke of Northumberland River.

LB Richmond, with support from TfL, is proposing to improve the cycle route through Mereway Nature Park and Kneller Gardens in the summer of 2009. This will include, as mentioned above, the new bridge across the DNR that will directly link the two sites.

The track that runs through Mereway Nature Park is currently used as a rear access route to the council depot and this creates a risk to pedestrians and cyclists. It is hoped that, in negotiation with LB Richmond, this traffic access route will be closed.

## **Kneller Gardens**

A new bridge across the DNR and linking Kneller Gardens with Mereway Nature Park is proposed as part of the Crane Cycle route. A new separated cycle track across Kneller Gardens is also proposed along with a new elevated ramp and associated safety provisions for the Meadway crossing into Crane Park.

From Kneller Gardens it is possible to reach Whitton High Street to the north via a tunnel under the A316. Richmond Council is currently working to improve safety in this tunnel.

## **Crane Park**

The northern (Richmond) side of Crane Park is accessed from Meadway at its eastern end and Hanworth Road at its western end, as well as a number of lateral access points (Mill Road, Lincoln Avenue, Ellerman Avenue and Hospital Bridge Road, for example).

Hospital Bridge Road and the Great Chertsey Road cut across the park and, in both cases, there is a narrow underpass access to link the park. The Crane Cycle Route project considers the possibility of providing a widened access link beneath these bridges as it is a pinch point for cyclists and walkers.

To the west of Great Chertsey Road the river marks the boundary between Richmond and Hounslow. There is, at present, no bridge linking these two parts of the park over this reach of around 1,100 metres to Hanworth Road. As a result the Hounslow side of Crane Park is somewhat isolated from the main part of the park within Richmond.

There are a number of lateral access points into the Hounslow side of Crane Park. However, these are not sign-posted or maintained and the only signed access route is from the Hanworth Road. There is an old access route into the Hounslow side of the park from Great Chertsey Road, but this is heavily overgrown and no longer accessible. There are a number of informal pathways through this part of the park but no route to the eastern end of the park, where the pathways peter out. These paths are in poor condition and subject to water logging.

We understand that in the past there was a bridge linking the Richmond side of Crane Park with the Hounslow side of Crane Park. However this fell into disrepair and was removed.

## **Pevensey Road Nature Reserve**

This green open space, on the west side of Hanworth Road, is a designated Local Nature Reserve, and features areas of meadow scrubland, woodland and wetland alongside the River Crane. The linkages across the main road are not well defined and the access into the area would benefit from improvement. The riverside pathway and habitat is, however, some of the most natural and highest quality in the whole of the proposed park area.

## **Feltham Marshalling Yards**

This site is, in principle, public open space, as agreed in the Section 106 Agreements that allowed the development of the major new post office sorting office on the remainder of the site (site 3 on Figure 3). It is also classified as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation for its environmental value and is one of the most important wasteland environmental sites in London.

The site is, however, surrounded by a high steel fence and, although posts have been removed in places by the public, it remains difficult to access with no formal entrance from the south east. This is due to an ongoing dispute between Hounslow Council and Network Rail as to the terms of the Section 106 Agreements and specifically the ownership and maintenance of two old brick lined tunnels that run beneath the site.

Not only does this represent an access issue for the development of the park, it is also a major access problem along the whole of the 30 kilometres of West London Green Chain between Ruislip and Twickenham. The London LOOP, long distance orbital footpath, which is designed to run along the Crane at this point, is also currently diverted through a local housing estate due to this access problem.

A tunnel links this site to the rest of the Crane Corridor upstream and to the north west as well as to Hounslow Heath. This tunnel is poorly maintained and subject to gross vandalism.

The issues at this site have been brought to a head by a recent proposal by BAA to develop two thirds of the site for railway stabling as part of the Airtrack scheme, linking Waterloo with Terminal 5. Network Rail has also put forward initial proposals to take over the remaining third of the site for additional stabling. This scheme would essentially lead to the loss of a major part of the proposed park and potentially compromise a large part of the Crane corridor. FORCE has submitted a response to the public consultation and Hounslow Council is currently in detailed discussion with the scheme's proposers about the implications for (a) public access routes and (b) the wider environment. A public inquiry on the scheme proposals is scheduled for the end of 2009.

## **De Brome Fields**

De Brome Fields is a large area of open meadowland, formerly school playing fields. This land provides a valuable link westwards to the Uxbridge Road and to Hanworth Park, which lies on the other side of this road. There is then a footpath route, via Thames Water's reservoirs at Kempton and Stain Hill, to the Thames path at Sunbury. This route is shown on Figure 6.

## **6.3 Walking Routes**

The London LOOP and Crane Walk are two distance walking routes that pass through the proposed area of the park and both are shown on Figure 4.

## **The London Loop**

The London LOOP (London Outer Orbital Path) is one of Walk London's six Strategic Routes within Greater London. It encircles the capital with a total length of around 240km. The route was first mooted in the early 1990's and it became fully walkable in 2001.

The route enters Crane Park at Hospital Bridge Road and turns upstream through the park as far as Hanworth Road. The Walk London website notes that the route along the River Crane is currently not accessible due to the problems at Feltham Marshalling Yards and instead it routes walkers on a detour along the Hanworth Road and through the Edgar Road Estate to Hounslow Heath.

## **River Crane Walk**

The River Crane Walk is one of the West London Waterways Walks and was developed in 1996. The eastern end of the walk breaks into two at Kneller Gardens, with one leg following the Duke of Northumberland's River whilst the other goes through Mereway Nature Park and along the depot boundary before leaving the Crane and meandering through suburban streets, emerging close to where the Crane joins the Thames at Isleworth.

The western end of the walk continues to the west end of Crane Park before crossing Hanworth Road and making a horseshoe through Pevensey Nature Reserve. The intention was to continue the walk through Feltham Marshalling Yards and up to Cranford Park, some 4km further north, where it would link with the Hillingdon Trail that continues upstream along the Yeading Brook tributary. However, this plan has also fallen foul of the Feltham Marshalling Yards dispute.

Walk London is proposing to develop the Crane Walk as one of its next tranche of Strategic Routes across London. The Crane Valley Park project has clear, common aims with this objective, not least the development of a riverside access route through Feltham Marshalling Yards in the west and Twickenham Junction Rough in the east. Upstream of the Marshalling Yards there is a more or less continuous walk available along the Crane and the Yeading Brook tributary for some 15 kilometres, passing through several parks and nature reserves in Hounslow and Hillingdon, until it reaches Harrow.

Although this link already exists it is not well known and is little used. There are also some minor breaks and areas of unclear access further along the route. Developing and promoting this route would provide a major new walking resource for the benefit of residents in Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond.

## **New Walking Routes**

This project has identified two new circular walking routes that would utilise the main part of Crane Valley Park and these are shown on Figure 6. Both routes are around 25 kilometres in length and link with other major walking routes for London.

The northern route goes upstream along the Crane to the junction with the Grand Union Canal at Bulls Bridge. It then follows the canal downstream to its junction with the Thames in Brentford. The route passes through Syon Park and links to the Crane Walk at the Duke of Northumberland's River. This route thereby links the London LOOP, the Thames Path and the Capital Ring, with which it shares part of the walk along the Grand Union Canal. These represent three of the six strategic walks across London.

The southern route leaves the Crane walk at De Brome Fields and goes through Hanworth Park and the Thames Reservoirs at Kempton before joining the Thames path at Hampton. It then crosses the Thames at Kingston Bridge and follows the southern side of the Thames path until Hammerton's Ferry at Ham House, then coming back upstream to re-join the Crane at Twickenham Station.

#### **6.4 Cycle Routes**

There is an existing informal cycle route through the entirety of Crane Park, Kneller Gardens and Mereway Nature Park to emerge on Craneford Way and thereby access London Road via the suburban road system. This is a popular alternative east - west cycling route to the A136 dual carriageway or the busy (and often congested) A305 that passes through central Twickenham.

The Cycle Route Implementation and Stakeholder Plan (CRISP) for the River Crane Shared Use Route was carried out for Richmond Council, with support from Transport for London, in 2007. This route continued the informal route through Crane Park as far as the River Thames at the Richmond Half Lock crossing point. It is part of the Southwest London Greenways cycle scheme.

The CRISP report acknowledged the value of the existing informal route and identified a number of improvements for the route to be formally adopted as a cycling route including:

- Widening of the trackway through Crane Park (but no lighting)
- New raised crossing on Meadway
- Designation of Kneller Gardens as a cycle route
- New dedicated cycle way through Kneller Gardens
- New dedicated cycle bridge across the DNR and into Mereway
- Widening of the pathway along the Council depot
- Closure of the rear access route to the Council depot
- Re-alignment of the route to go through Twickenham Junction Rough and along Brewery Lane to Twickenham station

A total of £1.28m of improvement works were costed in the report of January 2007. Further detailed feasibility works have subsequently been carried out and the first stage of the implementation works is due to start in summer 2009. This includes the new pathway through Kneller Gardens, new crossing of the DNR and a new raised crossing of Meadway.

SUSTRANS has identified the River Crane (and then the Grand Union Canal) as its proposed route to link the River Thames with Wembley Stadium in time for the London 2012 Olympics. This would necessitate extending the cycle route westwards and northwards along the Crane through Hounslow. This is part of the GOAL scheme (Greenways for the Olympics and London). This scheme aims to provide traffic free green corridors through parks and open spaces. Linking sections will be through residential streets with priority given to cyclists and pedestrians.

LB Hounslow has also indicated its desire to see a new cycle route along its part of the Crane with the potential to link with the Richmond route. In 2008 LB Hounslow agreed a cycle link through Cranford park upstream and is working its way downstream along the Crane and towards Crane Valley Park, as part of the London Greenways scheme..

There is clearly considerable scope for the improvements proposed to be integrated into the Crane Valley Park project. There is also considerable potential for conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians within the area of Crane Valley Park. This is already an issue of concern for example at Kneller Gardens where it is proposed to introduce a cycle track in a heavily-used park which has a children's playground. These issues are being addressed by LB Richmond through detailed planning and public consultation.

There are potential conflicts on all pedestrian routes between the use and needs of walkers, dog walkers and cyclists. This project seeks to provide for the reasonable needs of each of these users and to encourage the equitable sharing of existing and new routes that optimise the balance between usage, enjoyment and safety.

## **6.5 Wider Access**

The walking and cycling routes considered above provide potential linkages and access routes along the Crane between LB Richmond, Hounslow, Hillingdon and Harrow. The links with the Thames Path provide linkages to a major east-west walking and cycling route along the Thames, for Spelthorne and Elmbridge Councils as well as LBs Kingston, Richmond, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Wandsworth.

There are good bus route linkages to the park, as shown on Figure 4, with connections through the Uxbridge Rd, Hanworth Rd, Meadway and London Rd. Train links are provided by Feltham and Twickenham stations at, or close to, the two ends of the park and Whitton station within a few hundred metres of the central section. The park has links to Whitton high street and Twickenham high street.

Access for disabled people is possible along the Richmond side of Crane Park but there are significant restrictions in access to the Hounslow side of the park.

There is currently no formal car parking within the area proposed by the park. The linear nature of the park, with very good access for walking and cycling plus public transport and the large local population being served, mitigates against the provision of car parking for users of the park.

## **6.6 Signage and Public Information**

There is some signage available – for example, for the Crane Walk erected in 1996 and for the London Loop that was installed in 2008. Parts of the area remain difficult to navigate and the Feltham Marshalling Yards and associated tunnels are particularly difficult in this respect. Access into the proposed park areas at their eastern and western ends is extremely difficult at present.

Developing a system of common interpretation and signage is a means of bringing together the currently fragmented spaces to create a single park entity. It would make a clear and positive statement about the park. However there are risks that, with so many routes and destinations within and local to the park area, the resulting signage may be over-bearing and confusing. A comprehensive and considered approach that considers the needs of a wide range of users and provides information in various forms is required. This is one of the objectives of the next stage of the project.

There are not known to be any current leaflets or other hard copy material advertising the presence of Crane Park or the Crane River and Duke of Northumberland's River walking routes. Formal rambler groups do use these routes, and there is route information available on various web-sites, but their use by informal walkers is believed to be less frequent.

FORCE has a membership of over 400, issues quarterly newsletters, has a stall at local fairs and holds its own annual Open Day in conjunction with the Friends of Kneller Gardens. FORCE seeks to promote the value of the Crane Valley to the general public, local private landowners and regulatory bodies.

FORCE has installed three carved benches, each themed on local animal and plant species, within the area of Crane Valley Park in the last two years and more are planned. Locations at the shot tower, Pevensey Road nature reserve and in the park near to Butts Farm have been proposed. These benches are now the destination of visits to the park, and have an appeal to both adults and children. It is envisaged that a set of such benches along the length of the proposed park will help to develop a link in the public mind between these various fragmented spaces.

## **7 BIODIVERSITY AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

### **7.1 Habitats and Designations**

The lower Crane valley comprising Crane Valley Park is a high value habitat in its own right. It is also a key part of the West London Green Chain, a 30 kilometre green corridor that stretches from Harrow in north west London along the Yeading Brook tributary and the River Crane itself to the River Thames at Isleworth. The West London Green Chain is recognised as one of the most important (and most continuous) green corridors in greater London.

The whole of the area proposed for Crane Valley Park is protected as Metropolitan Open Land. In addition, much of the land area is designated as a site of importance for nature conservation (or SINC). Sites of Metropolitan Importance (pre-fixed with an M) are the highest designation and comprise the best habitats in London. Sites of Borough Importance (pre-fixed with a B) are deemed to be of Borough wide importance whilst Sites of Local Importance (prefixed with an L) are deemed to be of particular importance to local residents. These additional designations are all shown on Figure 5 and introduced below:

- M76 – the Crane Corridor. This extends through the area proposed for Crane Valley Park and upstream as far as Cranford Park. It comprises a remarkably diverse mix of woodland, meadowland, heathland and open water habitat.
- M7 – Feltham Marshalling Yards. Covers 30 hectares and last used in 1969, it has been colonised by a remarkably diverse mix of grassland and woodland, due in part to the highly variable ground man-made materials. It is a particularly valuable site for birds and invertebrates.
- M81 – Hounslow Heath. This site adjoins the proposed park and is a high value acid and neutral grassland of considerable value for both flora and fauna.
- B1 R4 – Duke of Northumberland’s River. A semi-natural open river habitat with habitat for kingfishers and water voles among other species
- L R10 – Twickenham Junction Rough. A naturally regenerated birch woodland adjoining the river.

The map shows that around 80 per cent of the proposed park area has an additional environmental designation over and above MOL and this serves to emphasise its high environmental value. Detailed descriptions of these habitats can be found in London Ecology Unit Ecology handbooks 15 (for LB Hounslow) and 21 (for LB Richmond).

### **7.2 The River**

#### **Water quality**

The river water quality is, generally, reasonably good and is sufficient to support a good quality coarse fishery. There are no major licensed discharges into the river. However, the river is subject to urban run-off along with CSO discharges and occasional pollution events.

## **River flow**

The river flow is characteristic of a clay-based stream with high flows and rapid responses to storm events and a low summer flow. The main part of the river is augmented by inflows from the upper Duke of Northumberland's River into the Crane below Heathrow. However, the lower part of the river, below the point where the lower Duke of Northumberland's River leaves the Crane at Kneller Gardens, suffers from major low flow and zero flow problems during dry periods. This reach of the river, from Mereway Nature Park downstream to the tidal reaches in St Margarets, stretches for around two kilometres and is severely compromised by low and zero flow problems, often for one or months per year. FORCE is currently in discussion with staff at the Environment Agency with a view to investigating this issue and developing a more equitable split between the two rivers.

## **River Channel**

The river within Pevensey Road Nature Reserve is the most natural along the whole of the park area with varied channel dynamics and extensive areas of marginal wetland and wet woodland habitat.

Much of the reach within Crane Park is reasonably good habitat although toe boarding throughout much of the main river restricts the development of marginal habitat features. This toe boarding was installed around 30 to 40 years ago and much of it is not in ideal condition. Opportunities to remove parts of this toe boarding will be explored through the ongoing project.

This reach is rather over-wide and, some 10 years ago, large deflector boulders were installed in an attempt to encourage areas of riffles and pools. FORCE and LWT have followed up this work by transplanting reeds and other aquatic plants around these areas to encourage more marginal habitat and these works, over the last few years, have been very successful. This work has been supported by the local Reedbed HAP and Water Vole SAP.

There are a number of backwater channels along this reach, originally constructed as mill stream supplies. These can be subject to low flows but generally have a better marginal vegetation as there is less toe boarding.

The Crane channel below Mereway Sluice is contained within a 3 metre deep and 8 metre wide concrete sided and bottomed channel. This work was done in the 1930's as a flood protection measure for new housing and has resulted in a severe reduction in the biodiversity and public appreciation of the river along this reach.

Opportunities for river channel improvements by (a) toe board removal in the middle reaches and (b) naturalisation or other renovation measures in the lower reaches have been identified by FORCE and others. These have been included in the London Rivers Restoration Strategy, linked to the London Plan target to renovate 15 kilometres of river by 2015, and to local planning objectives.

There may also be the potential to manage the river and the surrounding land more effectively to provide a greater level of flood protection to the surrounding built up areas whilst creating a more interesting and diverse matrix of habitats with both environmental and aesthetic/amenity benefits. This is being discussed with Thames Landscape Strategy under the Thames 2100 project.

### **7.3 Crane Park Island**

Crane Park Island has been actively and skilfully managed for environmental interest and biodiversity benefits by LWT for some 15 or more years. Over this time various habitats such as:

- Open back channels
- Reed bed
- Pond
- Grassland and meadow
- Hedgerow
- Woodland
- Coppiced and pollarded willow

have been created and these have resulted in the growth of a varied flora and the arrival of a wide range of fauna including: water voles, reed warblers, water rails, kingfishers, grass snakes, etc.

FORCE regards this island as something of a biodiversity laboratory for the rest of the lower Crane valley, whereby environmental management experiments, shown to be successful on the island, can be transplanted and replicated elsewhere within the corridor. Examples include the creation of new reed bed habitat using transplants from the island and the construction of water vole and kingfisher habitats for the use of offspring from breeding successes on the island.

### **7.4 Maintenance**

In general, maintenance of the public open areas is carried out by contractors on behalf of the two Councils. Management plans are not in place at present for much of the open areas within Richmond, although these are currently being developed. FORCE is working with the Council to develop management approaches for general maintenance of the open areas. Plans have been developed for Kneller Gardens and Craneford Fields and plans are proposed for Crane Park, with the support of LWT.

FORCE has developed a management plan for Mereway Nature Park as the first stage of developing a service level agreement with Richmond Council. The management plan includes maintenance regimes for the site and these regimes are potentially a model which could be developed for other sites and areas of the park.

The maintenance regime for the Hounslow parts of Crane Park is compromised by a lack of resources in recent years and only basic maintenance has been undertaken.

Some of the privately owned areas, such as Feltham Marshalling Yards and Twickenham Junction Rough, are not actively managed and the Rough is not subject to public access. As a result these have returned to a natural succession and large areas are covered in either bramble scrub or emergent woodland.

The Crane valley has problems with invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam. LB Richmond has instituted an active spraying regime against both knotweed and hogweed and these are largely under control although patches and occasional plants are still being monitored in the park. Within the LB Hounslow part of Crane Park there is a major problem with knotweed and at least two major stands of the plant are known to exist in this part of the park.

## **7.5 Ongoing Projects**

LB Hounslow and LB Richmond both have ongoing parks improvement plans and both councils place an emphasis on biodiversity and environmental improvement. There are Habitat Action Plans in place within both boroughs and programmes of improvements have been initiated.

FORCE works with the councils and other bodies such as LWT to undertake environmental improvement works along the valley. Recent projects include:

- Wetland and water vole habitat development works
- Planting of 650 metres of hedgerow and 40 fruit and nut trees including some that were traditionally grown locally.
- Creation of a new artificial kingfisher bank

LWT has recently secured a grant of £150,000 over three years from BIFFAward to improve the biodiversity of the Crane valley at three main sites, including Crane Park. As mentioned previously, a biodiversity officer has recently arrived in post based at the Shot Tower site.

## **8.0 POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PARK DEVELOPMENT**

### **8.1 Urban Environment**

Green spaces can contribute greatly to people's quality of life, particularly in built up areas such as this, which are heavily affected by traffic. In this case the A316/M3 corridor, main railway lines, and the Heathrow approach all cut across the site. In research by CABA 85% of people said that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and the way they feel.

The area proposed for the Crane Valley Park has considerable existing value as a green corridor through an urban environment, although this is currently compromised by the fragmentary and disjointed nature of much of the land. The focus of the project is to improve the urban environment of the Crane valley through the creation of a new Metropolitan Park for West London, by protecting and integrating the existing fragmented areas of green space and "branding" the whole entity. Park staff will provide integrated park management and maintenance and there will be improvements to the appearance of these spaces so creating an overall positive impression.

The creation of a Metropolitan Park gives opportunities to create an identity for the spaces by the use of entrance gates, artwork, interpretation and information boards. FORCE would welcome the opportunity to extend the use of carved benches throughout the park area as part of this scheme.

### **8.2 Flood Management**

Creation of an integrated park provides more protection of the flood plain from inappropriate development within the framework of the park. In addition, there is the opportunity to create additional flood protection measures in the form of wetland flood storage – with associated environmental and amenity benefits. Finally, the public can be advised that these flood management areas are there to provide local provision for the alleviation of flood risk.

### **8.3 Community**

Crane Valley Park will give communities living along the length of the park new opportunities to use the green spaces that are currently a collection of fragmented and disjointed open spaces. The popularity of the existing park and the potential for engaging the public in the extended park were shown by the response to the London Mayor's Priority parks vote, when Crane Valley Park received over 6500 votes, the highest number for any park across London.

The project aims to provide a green link within, and local to, these communities along the Crane. The total catchment area for this park includes some 235,000 people. One of the interesting features identified by the social survey is the remarkable economic diversity of the residents within this catchment area, including some of the most privileged and some of the most disadvantaged communities in the United Kingdom.

At present there are few links between communities in the Crane valley and, as shown by the Crane Valley Partnership survey work, relatively few are currently aware of the

potential links. An important aspect of this project is the cross boundary planning, providing new links across the various boundaries (roads, rail, borough and community related). Physical links by pathways and signage, as well as links across the river, is one way of achieving this. At least as important is to develop links between different communities, through events and by providing new facilities.

Crane Valley Park will be a local asset for some 235,000 people, including many living in relative poverty within both Richmond and Hounslow Boroughs. There is great potential for improving the relationship between the park and the lives of local people. For example, the Butts Farm and Edgar Road Estates are both purpose-built, high-rise council estates, subject to many social, health and economic issues. They are also within a kilometre of the existing park and yet usage by the residents of these estates is believed to be relatively low. The creation of the new park will give the opportunity of targeting support to those in areas of relative deprivation.

Co-ordinated processes and actions will also be of value in tackling local social issues, such as anti-social behaviour and consequent graffiti, fly tipping and rubbish accumulation. The promotion of an understanding and respect for the environment will be an integral part of the process of developing and managing the new park.

The park will also provide opportunities for more frequent events to provide public entertainment and information, and considerably improved engagement between local people and their open spaces. The creation and strengthening of local "Friends" groups to help manage their parts of the park, will also improve the sense of community in the residential areas around the park.

The provision of facilities such as toilets, a kiosk, and youth facilities will also contribute to a sense of place. An identity can be created for the spaces by the use of common entrance gateways, artwork and information boards.

## **8.4 Ecology**

The Crane valley currently provides a valuable natural habitat for all forms of wildlife as a result of its diversity of habitats. The development of Crane Valley Park will give an opportunity to protect and enhance the value of the green corridor by developing consistent management strategies throughout the park. This will give an opportunity to examine current working practices and identify those that help to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The strategic management of the Park will lead to an improved understanding of the matrix of habitats, and the presence and distribution of flora and fauna. It can also lead to improvements to the biodiversity through specific projects designed to create new habitat niches, targeted and co-ordinated control of invasive species and specific improvements related to BAP targets.

The development of the Crane Valley Park will also give other opportunities to link with other activities and schemes elsewhere in the Crane and Thames wildlife corridors, opportunities to naturalise and otherwise improve the river system, and to improve the low and no flow situation in the lower Crane. There are also opportunities for associated wetland development across the proposed park.

For many people living in urban areas an interaction and experience of nature is derived from a visit to the local park. Crane Valley Park, therefore, has the potential to play a significant role in increasing environmental awareness and an understanding of nature.

## **8.5 Education**

There are some 17 schools and colleges within one kilometre of the proposed park. London Wildlife Trust (LWT) and FORCE have already begun to develop links with schools with the aim of supporting the curriculum through the use of open spaces such as outdoor classrooms. LWT uses the Shot Tower as an educational facility with a number of local schools and plans to develop their programme further. FORCE is developing Mereway as an outdoor classroom. There is the potential to create and develop more outdoor classroom areas within the park and for more schools and interested educational institutions to incorporate visits to the park linked to the curriculum.

Crane Valley Park also has potential for use by educational institutions to develop concepts such as interdependence, citizenship and stewardship, the needs and rights of future generations, diversity, quality of life and sustainable change.

Through the development of sympathetic interpretation within the park there is also considerable scope for informing all park users on a number of subjects and issues including the ecology, history and heritage of the Crane Valley.

## **8.6 Play**

Crane Valley Park offers considerable potential and opportunities for play for both adults and children. This can be both formally - through playgrounds and the provision of facilities such as tennis courts, basketball hoops, and fitness equipment, or informally - by exploring the open space in the park, on foot or on bikes.

By developing a Metropolitan Park in the Crane valley, formal facilities and youth activities can be coordinated strategically by both Councils along the length of the park. This would limit duplication and would also mean that managed programmes can be developed.

The park also offers opportunities for children to meet and mix learning with valuable lessons about social interactions. Crane Valley Park offers the opportunity to develop these important skills through organised youth activities based in the park. For example The Friends of Kneller Gardens have an aspiration that youth activities could be developed based in the soon-to-be refurbished pavilion in Kneller Gardens. This could be used as a model in other areas of the proposed park.

## **8.7 Movement in and between spaces**

Crane Valley Park has a significant potential to improve movement in and between the currently fragmented public open spaces, creating a single linked open space which encourages walking and cycling. It is important that the potential for conflict between these two modes of transport is recognised and addressed. Careful strategic planning in the park has the potential to encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to the car – providing benefits for health and transport congestion. More discussion of walking and cycling routes is provided in section 6 above.

## **8.8 Sport and recreation**

There is a variety of formal sporting opportunities, already provided in the area of the Crane Valley Park. They include tennis, organised football and rugby, rifle shooting, basket ball hoops, fitness point and so on. Many of these have great appeal in that they are accessible, socially inclusive and affordable.

With improved access between different parts of the park the number of sporting opportunities available to communities along the length of the park will increase. In addition, development and management of these facilities could be planned strategically so that, for example, facilities were spread more evenly throughout the park.

There are also many opportunities for informal sports and these could be reviewed and managed sympathetically with a single approach across the whole of the area of the Crane Valley Park. Mowing regimes to provide areas for informal activities could also be reviewed and managed throughout the area of the park.

## **8.9 Healthier lives**

Access to good quality, well-maintained public spaces improves physical and mental well being by encouraging activities such as walking, playing sport or enjoying a green and natural environment. Recent research reviewed in the Lancet (Nov 2008) showed that access to green space has a beneficial impact on health partly because green spaces promote physical activity, but also because they can be “physiologically and physiologically restorative, reducing blood pressure and stress levels”. The development of Crane Valley Park has the potential to play an important role in the lives of those 235,000 residents who would have access to the public open spaces of this new Metropolitan Park.

There is potential to increase the use and appreciation of the existing open spaces so that Crane Valley Park better meets the needs of local residents. Many people appreciate the spaces as they already are but many others are put off by the outward appearance of neglect. The recent Community Consultation carried out on behalf of the Crane Valley Partnership (2008) recommended that feelings of insecurity and danger would be addressed by introducing wardens, improving sightlines and lighting and dealing with anti-social behaviour. They also suggested maintaining footpath surfacing, cutting back path-side vegetation and clearing litter, graffiti and fly tipping as soon as it occurred. All park users would benefit from improved management of the

space and having it brought into the coherent framework of the park. Many of these issues have recently been discussed in a report by the Community Safety Partnership. (Section 4.8)

## **8.10 Economy**

It has been commented for example by CABA Space that a high quality open space can have a significant impact on the economic life of towns. The argument is that well-designed and well-managed public open spaces attract employees and services, as well as attracting visitors to the town. The management of a well-designed park may, therefore, have an effect positive and beneficial impact on the local economy by attracting visitors, residents and businesses.

## **8.11 Conclusions**

There are tangible benefits in developing a park with a coherent framework and clearly defined management. Without it, the fragmented areas of the lower Crane Valley risk becoming overdeveloped, unwelcoming, lacking character and depleted of community, wildlife or a sense of place.

The benefits of a park as identified above show that if the project is to be a success the following actions should be considered seriously:

- Promoting the concept of the Crane Valley Park as a park which is larger than the district park or local open space currently in use;
- Promoting the use of Crane Valley Park to all the communities to be found within the identified catchment area;
- Developing community activities throughout the area of the park;
- Tackling feelings of insecurity;
- Discouraging anti-social behaviour e.g. fly tipping, graffiti, dog fouling and so on;
- Improving access through the re-making of paths and improving path surfaces; and
- Improving maintenance by cutting back vegetation alongside paths, clearing rubbish from the park and river, removing graffiti, and responding rapidly to fly tipping etc.

Many of these are also echoed as desires from the Crane Valley Partnership visitors survey.

## **9.0 PROPOSED APPROACH TO THE PARK DEVELOPMENT**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The proposed approach to developing Crane Valley Park in the form set out in this report is outlined below:

- Identify the key objectives and deliverables for the next phase of the project
- Development of a basic strategy;
- Agreement of the key parties to moving forward with the project;
- Incorporation of the Crane Valley Park concept into key planning documents;
- Land ownership and access agreements;
- Management plan;
- Structure and staffing;
- Support and development of Friends and Community Groups; and
- Identification and implementation of specific projects.

These components are considered in turn below. Funding opportunities are set out in section 11 and an initial programme of work is provided in section 11 of this report.

### **9.2 Top line objectives**

The top line objectives of the project over the next three years are to:

- Create a new Metropolitan Park of up to 97 hectares extending the existing Crane Park;
- Promote a new Regional Park of over 400 hectares size, incorporating much of the Crane valley within Hounslow and Richmond boroughs;
- Develop a sustainable long term approach to the management of the new park;
- Assess, promote and improve the biodiversity of the new park as a key part of the west London Green Chain;
- Improve the awareness and appreciation of the new park by local communities – including improving the perception and reality of park safety;
- Enhance the value of the new park as a social and educational resource for these local communities;
- Enhance the value of the green travel links through and to the park taking into account the needs and requirements of all users; and
- Engage local communities in the use and management of the new park.

Specific deliverables from this three year period will be:

- A new linear Metropolitan park that links Twickenham Station with Hounslow Heath;
- Walking and cycling links through the new park and linking to the Thames (to the south and to the east) and to Yeading Brook and the Grand Union Canal (to the north and west);
- Land purchase and/or appropriate agreements to bring land into public use and/or ownership;

- Delivering specific environmental, educational and social improvements through projects carried out by the project team with key players (such as Environment Agency, GLA, LWT, Walk London, Sustrans, REN, education providers and others);
- Exploring the opportunities for environmental management linked to education and training provision for young people
- Supporting existing and new community groups to take on more responsibility for the management of parts of the park, creating a network of community Friends groups;
- Give a particular focus to those areas of social and open space deprivation local to the park; and
- Identifying and delivering additional improvements through grants, Section 106 monies, other project funding streams etc.

Further details on these are provided below.

### **9.3 Development of a Basic Strategy**

The key elements of the proposed strategy are as follows:

- The Feasibility Study steering group is retained (and potentially extended) to implement the project
- The steering group provides a management and co-ordination role for various projects that help with implementation
- The group shall provide a co-ordination role for the Mayor's priority parks project and the BIFFAward biodiversity project – both of which are starting in summer 2009
- Other potential funding streams identified include the HLF funding bid and possible Section 106 agreements linked to local development projects
- Consultation and review is carried out with the public, stakeholders, wider agencies and comparable projects elsewhere
- An implementation plan is developed and agreed with the steering group
- Set a target to have the main elements of the phase two Metropolitan Park in place over the next three years by which time the two actual projects and proposed HLF project will be largely complete
- Produce a longer term management strategy for the delivery and management of the park – including the option of extension to regional park status.

This strategy will be confirmed with the steering group in advance of the start of the Priority Parks Project.

### **9.3 Agreement of the Key Parties**

#### **Richmond and Hounslow Councils**

In essence, the two key parties required to move forward with this project are Hounslow and Richmond Councils. Both councils have been supportive of the project to date and both provided £5,000 for this Feasibility Study. The interim report was presented and shared widely with both councils and there has been a good level of buy

in to the principle of the extended park. The councils were also very supportive of the Mayor's Priority Parks initiative. The project has the support from members of the main parties in both boroughs and does not have any political component.

The steering group for this project includes councillors and officers from both councils. The steering group has reviewed the draft version of this final report. The steering group will continue to operate through the next three years.

### **Other Landowners and Lessees**

The final report will be copied to, and discussed with, those landowners with whom the project has already held consultations, such as Richmond College, Harlequins, Environment Agency, LWT, Network Rail, BAA and Twickenham Rifle Club. The approach to other private landowners is considered further below.

### **The General Public**

The support of the general public is key to the success of the project. FORCE has shared the findings of the interim report with its members and others through its newsletter and web-site. Informal discussions have also been held at local fairs and the FORCE open day.

A public consultation exercise is proposed at the start of the Mayor's Priority Parks Project. This is intended to review the findings of this work and identify the priorities for the Priority Parks Project. The details of this strategy are currently being developed and discussed with the steering group.

A longer term strategy for involving the general public could be the development of a group composed of for example residents associations, Richmond Housing Trust, Friends Groups, and the community police, who could meet to discuss the development and management of the park. Their comments could be valuable for the Steering Group would complement the consultation work and has the potential to form a strong link with park users.

### **Other Key Parties**

There are a wide range of other key parties whose inputs may have a significant influence on the progress of the project such as:

- GLA
- Walk London
- TfL and Sustrans
- LWT
- Environment Agency
- FORCE trustees and members
- Other Friends and community groups
- Crane Valley Partnership members
- Green Corridor – co-ordinators of the partnership
- London and local BAP groups

- Richmond Environment Network and Environment Trust for Richmond
- London Parks and Gardens Trust
- London Parks and Open Spaces Group
- Local MPs
- Housing Partnerships
- Local schools

The findings of the interim report were communicated to many of these groups and their comments and concerns have been incorporated into this final report. Feedback on this final report and its findings will be garnered from these groups and inform the development of the project over the next couple of years.

#### **9.4 Incorporation into Key Planning Documents**

Key planning documents which impact on the development of the Crane Valley Park include:

- Local Development Frameworks for LBRUT and LBH
- Open Spaces Strategies for LBRUT and LBH
- Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Area Plans for LBRUT and LBH
- Development Briefs for specific sites for LBRUT and LBH
- Community Infrastructure Levy and associated Plans for LBRUT and LBH
- Individual planning applications within LBRUT and LBH
- London River Restoration Strategy
- GLA and LPA Plans – for parks, walks and cycling
- Thames 2100 flood management plans

The objective is for the Crane Valley Park project proposals to be incorporated into these plans as they move forward. In particular it is hoped that the proposals will be adopted as a material consideration in the LB Richmond and LB Hounslow's Local Development Frameworks.

#### **9.5 Land ownership and access agreements**

##### **Feltham Marshalling Yards**

This site has been contentious for a number of years. There is a historic dispute regarding the Section 106 Agreements linked to the Hounslow Post Office Sorting Office development. This would have allowed 25 years public access and transferred management responsibilities for this land area to Hounslow Council, along with management support costs around £150,000 and the delineation of maintenance responsibilities for the site. This latter issue led to a dispute on the responsibility for ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the tunnels that run beneath the railway. As a result of this dispute the site remains closed to the public and the section 106 monies are tied up in an escrow account.

In 2008, BAA included the site in its proposals for the Airtrack scheme linking Waterloo with Heathrow Terminal 5. This scheme, and an associated proposal by

Network Rail to develop the remaining part of the land, would have a major impact upon the Crane Valley Park proposals. This issue is still subject to discussion and development and is considered further in section 10 below.

### **Craneford Way Council Depot**

Opportunities have been identified with LB Richmond to widen the park, and the associated green wildlife corridor, as part of any proposed development of the Depot.

### **Twickenham Junction Rough**

This site is divided into three private ownerships following the sale of the land by British Rail in the 1980's. Various proposals have come forward over the last 20 years to develop these sites without success. Current opinion is that – given its status as Metropolitan Open Land, flood plain, a key part of the West London Green Chain and a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation – it will not be possible to develop this land on a commercial basis.

This land area has been valued by a land agent and the results are discussed in section 5 of this report. It is anticipated that moves to bring this site into public ownership will be instigated in the next phase of this project.

### **Twickenham Post Office Site**

This site is currently largely disused and is proposed for re-development. The future development of the Twickenham Post Office site will provide an opportunity to provide an access route between the park and London Road. It may also provide an opportunity to move forward with Twickenham Junction Rough.

### **Twickenham Railway Station Site**

The proposed development of the railway station site provides an opportunity to link the proposed park directly with the station – using a wide and disused underpass beneath London Road – and to Moormead Park using disused green space along the side of the railway line.

## **9.6 Management Plan**

A management plan will to be produced for the proposed park that considers the following items in greater detail:

- Structure of the park management
- Legal agreements required to underpin it
- Funding streams and strategies
- Social context and benefits in more detail
- Environmental context and benefits in more detail
- Proposals for the land management strategy
- Individual projects to support the overall objectives
- Staffing and maintenance requirements

An initial desktop review of broadly comparable linear parks across Greater London has already been carried out as part of this feasibility study and is presented as Appendix A to this report. Further assessment of these schemes would be of value in the next phase of the project to inform the management plan for this project.

## **9.7 Staffing**

At present the main responsibilities for these land areas lie with staff in LB Richmond (based in the parks department) and LB Hounslow (outsourced to contracts managed by Continental Landscapes and John Laing). Historically there has been little interaction between these staff regarding management matters in Crane Park and this is reflected in the lack of physical links between the two parts of the park. Lead officers have been identified in both councils for this project and this in itself is helpful in starting to develop a co-ordinated management strategy.

The Priority Parks Project is likely to include a project manager and this person will be ideally positioned to co-ordinate activities between the two boroughs over the next two years. It is currently understood that further staff will not be provided through this project.

The BIFFAward project has resulted in the appointment of a full time biodiversity officer, based in the shot tower and with a remit to consider Crane Park and two other sites upstream on the river.

The Crane Valley Partnership HLF project would, if successful, include the provision of two staff members for three years to develop the same three areas, including Crane Park. The decision regarding the HLF funding is expected in autumn 2009. The partnership itself will have a key role in linking the project with the wider objectives of organisations such as the Environment Agency, GLA, Walk London, Royal Parks, Thames Water and others. Green Corridor, the managing organisation for the partnership, has considerable experience in the management of projects to improve green environments local to areas of disadvantage. This experience could be of great value as the project moves forwards.

The longer term objective is for Crane Valley Park to be managed by a single manager, reporting to the two councils as the key landowners and other interested parties, on a long term basis. Park keepers and maintenance teams would report to this manager. Other staff may be appointed on a contract basis to deliver specific projects and programmes under the overall management plan. These staff will require a budget for the ongoing maintenance of the park's infrastructure and wildlife habitats.

FORCE will retain an ongoing keen interest in the park and its development. FORCE will retain its role on the steering group and will develop and implement projects and volunteer work in line with the overall objectives of the group. However, as a charity with no employees, FORCE does not envisage a central role in the delivery and ongoing operation of the park.

## **9.8 Support and Development of Friends and Community Groups**

Community involvement and actions are considered a valuable means of developing the park. There has been significant progress in the last five years in developing local networks of volunteers within Richmond Borough as follows:

- FORCE has grown from a few interested and concerned individuals to a charity with over 400 local members. Its area of interest and activity has grown from a few small areas of land in Twickenham to encompass all but the westernmost part of the proposed park.
- LWT has developed a network of volunteers for Crane Park Island. In the last few months it has also employed officers to develop the local heritage of the park and encourage youth volunteering for the island and the surrounding area. Both projects are developing good links with local community groups.
- Richmond Environment Network was set up four years ago to support local environmental and community groups throughout the borough. It now has over 60 groups as members and has good links with schools and the broader sustainability agenda
- A local Friends Group has been set up for Kneller Gardens in the last three years. This group has managed a number of improvements to the environment and facilities of the gardens. It is currently working with the council to re-open the pavilion on this site.
- There are several local Residents Associations which offer potential for further engagement
- Richmond Housing Partnership manages the Butts Farm and Edgar Road estates. Community development workers are employed on both sites to liaise with residents and maintain and improve the local environment. Contacts have been made with residents on both estates through these means
- There are good links with several of the local schools and colleges

It is anticipated that, with the help of these existing groups, more local groups and groupings will be developed and nurtured to manage and support specific parts of the park as the project moves forwards.

The value of these groups lies in their provision of ground level support and surveillance for the area, their links with the wider community, and as a source of volunteer efforts to improve and promote the park. These groups are not constrained by targets and budgets and bring a pragmatic and longer term perspective to the project.

There are some 26 Friends Groups within LB Hounslow although none are currently focussed on the area encompassed by the park. Links have though been made with the Friends of Hounslow Heath and they are interested in the project.

## **9.9 The Identification and Implementation of Specific Projects**

One key issue with this project will be to differentiate between those activities that can reasonably be expected to be carried out as part of the normal operations of the local

authority and those which are deemed to be additional and thereby could be subject to external funding. This will be a key issue for discussion and review through the steering group.

There are three actual and potential project schemes due to start on the lower Crane valley over the next few months as follows:

- The Priority Parks Project. A draft strategy for this project is presented here as Appendix B. The strategy is currently being developed in discussion with the boroughs and GLA
- The BIFFA award project – a three year programme to improve biodiversity in Crane Park as one of three sites along the Crane.
- The Crane valley HLF project – subject to the success of the funding bid.

There are a number of ongoing regional schemes that have been linked into the Crane valley such as the North London River Restoration strategy for example. There has also been considerable progress made to date with the improvement of spaces at a local level by the implementation of specific locally funded and volunteer driven projects.

Further progress with the Crane Valley Park project may be made, in large part, by the implementation of specific improvement projects through these and other means.

Specific components may include:

- Publicity campaign to introduce the concept of the new park into the public consciousness;
- Walking leaflets for the overall area of the new park;
- Re-naming of parts of the existing public open space as a part of the new park, e.g “Mereway Nature Park – part of the Crane Valley Park”;
- Support to walking and cycling routes through the park – for example by work with the Crane Cycle Route and the Walk London projects;
- Bringing private land areas into the public domain to extend the park or create vital linkages;
- Improving access by the creation and management of pathways through the park;
- Develop a co-ordinated approach to key issues such as:
  - park management
  - litter and bins, fly tipping and graffiti
  - policing
  - public awareness
  - signage and publicity
  - maintenance
  - invasive species
- Working alongside the community safety partnerships, police and parks departments to reduce the risk of crime and the fear of crime in the park
- Provide a means for public liaison with the bodies managing the park
- Biodiversity improvements linked to BIFFA funding and BAP priorities;

- Support to river naturalisation works through the London River Restoration Strategy;
- Support to the Environment Agency in an investigation of means to ameliorate the low flow problems in the lower Crane;
- Assess the potential for new facilities for leisure and sport, considering all sectors of the community
- Continuation of the themed carved benches to provide links within both the Richmond and Hounslow parts of the new park;
- Investigation of the potential for small scale community orchards, beehives and/or vegetable growing areas within the park;
- Guided walks for the park;
- Support for volunteer work days in various parts of the park;
- Support for educational and heritage projects within the park; linking with schools and community groups for example
- Working with local communities to deliver projects that link these communities to the park. For example with community and/or environmental organisations such as Richmond Environment Network, LWT, Environment Trust, Richmond Housing Partnership, Hounslow Volunteers Centre, Heatham House and Richmond Youth Partnership, Garden Gang etc.
- Develop educational, apprenticeship and community capacity within and local to the park. These may include for example:
  - setting up Friends of Groups
  - organising volunteer days
  - providing educational activities for local schools in the park
  - creating social enterprises to help manage the park
  - providing vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities within the park
  - identifying and implementing youth activities for the park
  - providing community activities and events within and linked to the park
- Small scale projects managed by FORCE and/or other groups with the support of the Council's Parks Departments which deliver environmental and/or amenity improvements. Currently these have been in Richmond and there is potential to undertake similar projects in Hounslow.

These and other schemes will be developed through the ongoing project works. These can also be delivered through major funding from grants and Section 106 agreements as well as by small scale grant applications and the support of volunteers and the various interested parties.

## **10.0 FUNDING AND PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The following funding components are available to implement the project:

- Specific funding schemes – these include Priority Parks, BIFFA and HLF
- Section 106 agreements related to local developments
- Links to other projects
- Locally funded and volunteer-implemented projects

These are considered in turn below.

### **10.2 Specific funding schemes**

The Priority Parks Project provides £400,000 for improvements to Crane Valley Park over the next two years. This is envisaged as a major means of implementing the project over this period. A strategy for this project delivery is proposed as Appendix B to this report and this will be the subject of further development over the next three months.

The BIFFA award project is due to start in May 2009. This is a three year £150,000 project to be delivered in three sites, one of which is Crane Park. A project officer will be based in the Shot Tower in Crane Park for this period and individual projects will be implemented.

The HLF project bid is due to be decided in summer 2009. This is a £600,000 three year project for the Crane Valley with approximately one third of the funding to be invested in Crane Park. It is likely that this project will focus on the links between the local community and the environment.

There are other major schemes such as the Big Lottery Fund and the Changing Spaces Scheme that could prove appropriate for project funding support. The availability of match funding will be of benefit in any bids to these and/or other funders as will the linkage to charities and other non-statutory organisations through the steering group.

### **10.3 Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy Contribution Targets**

The local area has been subject to considerable development over the last few years and there remain a large number of sites subject to development proposals. In some cases development proposals may be unacceptable to the project steering group, in which case outright opposition may be the only alternative. In other cases, whilst there may or may not be some adverse impact, development may also provide an opportunity for overall improvement or appropriate mitigation through for example land transfer to the public domain or financial support to a local park improvement project. The Steering group will consider each proposed development on its merits and look to identify, in each case, an approach that provides nett benefits to the park and the local community.

A total of 18 potential developments, large and small, have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the park. In each case, if the scheme goes ahead, there may be the potential for environmental improvements to the park through the planning process. At present this would be direct and through Section 106 agreements between the council and the developer set up as a requirement of planning consent. Later this year, new planning legislation will introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy, which will seek to deliver similar benefits with reference to a Community Infrastructure Plan prepared by each Council. The section 106 process will also continue, in a modified form, with the implementation of this legislation.

It will be important to ensure the proposals for the new park are incorporated into the Community Infrastructure Plans for the two Boroughs. This will require a degree of coordination between the planning departments in the two boroughs.

The actual and potential site developments are identified below, with their locations identified in Figure 3. Current progress on each project, and how it may link to the park, is outlined where known:

- **Site 1. Feltham Marshalling Yards: BAA train stabling proposal.** This is linked to Site 2 proposals by Network Rail below. Initial proposals have been put forward to develop two thirds of the old marshalling yards site for rail stabling as part of the Airtrack scheme linking Waterloo Station with Heathrow Terminal 5. This proposal, in combination with Site 2 proposals below, would result in the complete loss of a major Metropolitan SINC for London as well as a major chunk of high value green space from the West London green chain and the proposed Crane Valley Park.

LB Hounslow is the lead planning authority and is in detailed discussions with BAA on the project. FORCE has submitted a detailed response to the outline proposals and this can be viewed on the FORCE web-site. Other agencies have also submitted responses. At present it seems likely that this scheme will go ahead as it is due to be decided at a national and strategic level. There is an expectation that if it goes ahead:

- existing obligations under the Royal Mail scheme (Site 3 below) will be honoured in advance of any agreement
- a permanent public and wildlife corridor through the site will be provided as part of the scheme
- Mitigation to provide alternative high value sites within or local to the site will be undertaken where possible
- Financial support will be provided through the project for the regional park aspirations along the Crane valley. This would link well with BAA Heathrow as it would, in effect, provide a green corridor linking Heathrow with large parts of west London

The current intention is to hold a public inquiry on the overall Airtrack project at the end of 2009.

- **Site 2. Feltham Marshalling Yards: Network Rail train stabling proposal.** This proposal has come forward following the Airtrack proposals and would

utilise the remaining third of the site. The comments above regarding Site 1 also apply to this site.

- **Site 3. Royal Mail Sorting Office:** This site was built out some 5 years ago. However, the associated section 106 agreement covering public access and associated improvements to the rest of the Feltham Marshalling Yards site was not delivered (although initial work to re-naturalise the River Crane through the site was undertaken). The agreement would have provided public access to the rest of the site for 25 years as well as around £150,000 of funds to improve the public access and manage the site for environmental benefit. It is expected that an agreement on this Section 106 agreement scheme will be a necessary precursor to any planning agreement regarding the remainder of the site.
- **Site 4. Whitton School – Lincoln Playing Fields.** The school has received planning permission to provide an artificial pitch and flood lights for this site, adjacent to the existing Crane Park. FORCE has been in discussion about improvements to the boundary fencing and appropriate cowlings of the lights as part of this development. FORCE is also hopeful that the school will link with the group on local environmental improvements being carried out in this part of the park. A larger scale re-development of the school is considered separately as Site 18 below.
- **Site 5. Mereway Day Centre.** This LB Richmond council-owned site is immediately adjacent to the River Crane and on the opposite bank from Mereway Nature Park. It is currently disused and is likely to be subject to re-development.
- **Site 6. 32 Gould Road.** Development of this industrial site is currently being completed. The site includes retained open space adjacent to the river and opposite Mereway Nature Park. Final agreement on the management of this space has not yet been seen.
- **Site 7. Greggs Bakery.** This large site, beside the River Crane on the opposite side of the river from Mereway Nature Park, is due to close and be re-developed in the near future.
- **Site 8. Hamilton Road Electricity Works.** Site subject to development proposals. Adjacent to the river and opposite the Rifle Club.
- **Site 9. LB Richmond Council Depot.** The Council has indicated its intention to put forward proposals for re-configuring the site with possible enabling development. Opportunities to widen the public pathways alongside the DNR and Crane have been identified in the local planning guidance related to this project.
- **Site 10. Harlequins West Stand and Challenge Court.** New West Stand and enabling housing development, built out several years ago. The planning agreement included two land transfers from Harlequins to public use and related financial support, subject to the return on the enabling housing. The land transfers have been largely completed and the financial support is currently under

assessment by LB Richmond Council. Note that Harlequins also have outline proposals for a re-development of the south stand on this site.

- **Site 11. Richmond College.** A Development Brief for a proposed £100M+ redevelopment has been agreed by LB Richmond. This brief included agreements regarding public access to the east field owned by the college. Proposals for this development were due to be submitted for planning by the end of 2009. However, funding issues with Learning Skills Centre have led to the project being delayed.
- **Site 12. RFU South Stand and related development.** A Section 106 Agreement of £1M+ has been put in place for this project. It is not known whether the monies are allocated. Construction work for the project has been largely completed although there are proposals for additional housing on the site. The RFU Twickenham Stadium itself is within 1000 metres of the proposed park and the DNR runs along the rear of the stadium. Many supporters walk to the stadium through areas of the park.
- **Site 13. Mogden site.** The large sewage works at Mogden is owned and operated by Thames Water. The Duke of Northumberland's River, and associated pathway linking the River Crane to the River Thames, runs through the site. Planning permission is currently being reviewed by LB Hounslow for a major extension of storm water storage facilities at the site and is subject to a Section 106 agreement. This agreement includes provision of £180,000 for improvement works to the environment and associated pathway along the DNR.
- **Site 14. Richmond Adult Community College (RACC).** The college has recently received outline planning permission for the re-development of its Clifden Road site. The scheme has been costed at around £20M. This site is directly opposite Twickenham Junction Rough on the other side of the main railway line.
- **Site 15. Twickenham Post Office Sorting Office.** This large site is mostly disused and the remaining operations are due to move in the near future. The site is immediately adjacent to the River Crane and includes green space at the western end of the site adjacent to Twickenham Junction Rough. Access through this site may be necessary as part of the link between the new park and Twickenham Station.
- **Site 16. Twickenham Station Redevelopment.** Notice of pending proposals has been announced. LB Richmond Council is putting together a Development Brief for the site. This site development could provide a link between the station and the park as well as a downstream riverside link between the station and Moorhead Park.
- **Site 17. Regal House re-development.** Plans have been announced for a major new hotel adjacent to the existing office block. This site overlooks the River Crane and is next to Twickenham Station.
- **Site 18. Whitton School re-development.** This is a major proposal for a new academy school on the site with development costs of around £50M.

- **Site 19. Meadway Open Space.** This is a small site near the river and adjacent to Trafalgar Infants School and a private day nursery. The site is currently boarded up and is said to be subject to development in the future.

The principle of development supporting the improvement of adjacent open spaces is well established in planning legislation at a national and local level.

Some of the Richmond sites have been included within the Crane Valley Supplementary Planning Guidance. This Guidance identifies the taking over of Twickenham Junction Rough for public benefit and the naturalisation of the Crane River as specific benefits to be delivered through the development of these sites.

#### **10.4 Biodiversity Improvements**

There are considerable monies available to support biodiversity improvements through the Biodiversity Action Plan process at a regional and local level using ENTRUST Landfill Tax grant support. This scheme has already provided funding for the Crane valley under the BIFFAward scheme.

The first requirement is to register the project with ENTRUST and this will be done on completion of the feasibility study. Discussions with local and regional BAP coordinators can help to move specific projects forwards. The London Biodiversity Partnership is already supportive of this project in principle and may be able to provide practical support.

#### **10.5 Thames Estuary 2100**

This major project is designed to ensure the safety from flooding for the Thames Estuary, and London in particular, over the next 100 years. The River Crane is relevant to this as it feeds into the upper part of the Tidal Thames at Isleworth. It also potentially contributes a disproportionate flow during flood events due to its very rapid and high peak flow response to heavy rainfall.

Thames Landscape Strategy have been given a lead role by the Environment Agency in managing flood risks in the upper parts of the tidal Thames between Kew and Teddington and this includes the contribution of tributaries such as the Crane.

A key component of the response is to “Make Space for Water” – recreating flood plains where this is possible in order to provide storage within the system to reduce flood risk. Opportunities to develop flood storage systems within the Crane will be assessed as part of this project.

There is an opportunity here to fund environmental and aesthetic improvements in the Crane valley through this project that would also provide a contribution to local flood protection as well as aiding the wider flood issues for London. Potential sites have already been identified within the Crane Valley Park area and links have been made with TLS for the implementation phase of the project. TLS is also progressing with a major application for EU funding to move forward with the overall project over this same timescale.

## **10.6 London Regional Support**

GLA is providing considerable support for the next stage of the project through the Mayor's Priority Parks Project. Further support may be available, particularly where the project can progress GLA objectives with respect to:

- Development of a new Metropolitan Park for London;
- New strategic walks – and improved access and linkages for existing strategic walks – through Walk London;
- New and improved cycle routes – through TfL;
- A Green Arc for West London – the park falls within the south west London green arc programme, co-ordinated by Surrey County Council; and
- Wider objectives with respect to quality of life, social cohesion and the environment.

The links with GLA and others will be developed during the implementation phase of this project.

## **10.7 Crane Valley Partnership**

The Partnership consists of each of the five local authorities within the Crane catchment along with all the key statutory organisations with an interest in land and water management. The partnership is already linked into the Crane Valley Park project and is potentially a key partner in delivering the objectives of the project. The partnership is lead organisation for the recent proposal to HLF for some £600,000+ of funding over three years for the Crane Valley and Crane Park has been selected as one of three sites for delivery of the project.

Members of the partnership, such as the Environment Agency and Thames Water, for example, may also be able to support the park project where it is in line with their own objectives. There has been discussion of catchment-wide approaches to invasive species, for example, and the Agency is exploring the possible approach to toe board removal along the river.

## **10.8 Friends Support**

Friends groups can help considerably by undertaking voluntary works and raising grant funds and private funds for small scale project works. These can have an enormous cumulative benefit for the project. They can also help to gather and reflect broader public opinions regarding the proposals.

## **10.9 Local Authority Support**

Local authority support may also be available where the project is seen to be meeting and progressing Council objectives. The provision of Metropolitan park status and the alleviation of deprivation status with respect to open space from many thousands of local residents may be a key factor in this.

## 11.0 PROGRAMME

The next steps of the project programme are envisaged as follows:

- Complete the final report on the Feasibility Study in June 2009
- Agree the structure and remit of the Steering Group to oversee the next phase of the Crane valley park project
- Identify (over time) a broader network of local, regional and national bodies to link into the project
- Produce copies of the report (and an executive summary) for circulation to key parties and interested groups and individuals
- Present the findings of the report at public events in Hounslow and Richmond
- Launch the photographic record of the park in summer 2009
- Start the mayor's Priority Parks Project in summer 2009
- Link with the BIFFA award biodiversity project – commenced in May 2009
- Undertake consultation on the findings of the feasibility study and the objectives of the implementation phase of the project over the summer 2009
- HLF decision on the CVP bid in autumn 2009

At the end of this three month period it may be helpful to produce an inception report setting out a framework and programme for the main three year project period.

The aim is to deliver substantially on the Phase Two Metropolitan Park by the end of the Priority Parks Project in 2012. This would include having agreed public access for the main sites linking Hounslow Heath and Twickenham Station and a management system in place to maintain and improve the environmental and public value of the park over time. The potential for delivering a regional park along the Crane valley will be explored over this same time period.

## 12.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Crane Valley Park

1. This report presents the findings of a Feasibility Study into the development of a new park, to be known as Crane Valley Park, in the lower part of the Crane valley within the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond.
2. This park incorporates the existing Crane Park (of some 33 hectares) and extends it westwards to include Feltham Marshalling Yards, De Brome Fields and Pevensy Nature Reserve and eastwards to include a matrix of land including Mereway Nature Park, Kneller Gardens and Twickenham Junction Rough. The result would be a new linear Crane Valley Park of some 97 hectares and linking Twickenham Station in the east to Hounslow Heath in the west.
3. This park would have the size and status to be classified as a new Metropolitan Park for London. This park would be deemed to be providing a resource to a population within 3.2 kilometres of its boundaries, which is estimated to contain some 235,000 people, many of them currently classified as living in areas of deprivation with respect to open space.
4. This Study has been funded by LB Hounslow and LB Richmond councils, with additional grant funding from Awards for All and the Wates Foundation. It has been undertaken by a Steering Group with membership from the two councils and London Wildlife Trust and led by Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE). The project is linked to the wider management of the Crane Valley through the Crane Valley Partnership, which has representatives from the five boroughs along the Crane and all the other key statutory parties.
5. The development of the park is supported by planning policy at national, regional (London Plan) and local level. Submissions relating to the park have been made to the emerging Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) for both councils. It is intended that both LDFs will explicitly support the development of Crane Valley Park through policy statements.
6. Most of the land is currently in the ownership of the local authorities. There are two key private ownerships – Feltham Marshalling Yards and Twickenham Junction Rough – at the western and eastern ends of the proposed park respectively.
7. There are three phases envisaged to the park development. Phase One would extend the existing Crane Park to include local authority owned green spaces and result in a new park of some 63 hectares and is considered possible in the near future (see Figure 1).
8. Phase Two would require agreements regarding private land ownerships and other more complex issues and would result in the creation of a new Metropolitan park of 97 hectares (and also shown in Figure 1). It is the delivery of this phase which is the main focus of this report. Delivery of this phase is anticipated in the medium term (of three to five years).

9. Phase Three would extend the park along the River Crane to include several large and adjacent park and heathland areas and create a new regional park of over 400 hectares. This is a longer term vision for the Crane Valley, as shown in Figure 2. There is also scope for linking with other green spaces upstream in Hillingdon and Harrow in future years.
10. The proposed metropolitan park runs along the West London Green Chain – a green wildlife corridor of some 30 kilometres in length that runs from Harrow in north London, along Yeading Brook and the Crane, to meet the Thames at Isleworth. This is one of the major green corridors of London and is of great value for wildlife movement as well as a public amenity resource. The environmental designations within the proposed park are shown on Figure 4.
11. The area of the park consists at present of a matrix of green spaces with different designations and levels of protection. These spaces are vulnerable to development and are also often neglected and subject to fly tipping, graffiti and other anti-social behaviour. They are already valued by local people for activities such as walking, jogging, informal sports and fishing. They are not used as much as they could be due to access issues, lack of awareness of their existence, lack of management/facilities and concerns regarding public safety. The current situation with regard to public access is shown on Figure 5.

### **Benefits of delivering the new park**

12. Bringing these spaces within the framework of a Metropolitan Park would provide these spaces with an enhanced level of protection from development and a great opportunity for coherent overall management and improvement of their environmental and public value. It would also provide an opportunity to enhance the linkages eastwards and westwards along the river corridor as well as between the site and the surrounding population, creating a resource of value to a large population of west London
13. The value of this corridor for walking and cycling has already been recognised by local people and the public authorities. The London Loop and Crane Walk already run through the park area and there are advanced proposals for new cycle routes along the river as well as a new Strategic walk for London along the Crane. This project provides an opportunity to co-ordinate these proposals within the context of the wider objectives for the park. Links to existing walking routes and two potential new routes are shown on Figure 6.
14. The proposed area contains two Nature Reserves – Pevensey Road and Crane Park Island – and much of the land is designated at Metropolitan or Borough level for its environmental importance. There is considerable potential for enhancing the biodiversity value of the area through landscape design and management. Crane Park Island in particular is recognised as a laboratory for testing environmental management techniques that could then be rolled out across the wider area. The project is already linked to the Biodiversity Action Plan process at a regional and local level. A new biodiversity officer has recently been appointed for the Crane

valley and will work for the next three years to deliver environmental improvements to Crane Park and two other sites along the valley.

15. Most of the land area is within a flood risk zone. There is the potential to develop parts of the park, using both river restoration and flood plain creation techniques, to enhance its amenity and environmental value whilst also providing an enhanced level of flood protection to the surrounding population.
16. The area has a rich heritage, much of it little known by local people. Features include Hounslow Gunpowder mills; the construction of the Duke of Northumberland's River in the 1500's to provide a water supply to Syon Priory; ownership of much of the land by the King of Portugal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and its more recent use for market gardens.
17. The proposed park is located near to two colleges and around a dozen schools in the two boroughs. Links have already been developed with some of these schools through projects managed by LWT, FORCE and the Schools Environment Forum. The LWT at Crane Park Island and the Shot Tower has run education events for children and families for many years. There are many other opportunities to develop educational activities throughout the park.
18. The work to date on this project has been instrumental in raising the profile of this part of the Crane valley which has already resulted in the award of £150,000 from BIFFA award for environmental improvements and £400,000 from the London Mayor. This latter award was the result of a public vote where, with 6677 votes, Crane Park received more support than any other London park.

### **Approach to Delivering Crane Valley Park**

19. The first requirement to move forward with the project is to gain the agreement of the key parties to the principles of the new park. It is hoped that this document will aid considerably in this process.
20. The principles of the park development will need to be incorporated into the key planning policies for the two boroughs. A start has already been made with the Local Development Framework. Other policy and planning documents regarding specific sites and plans have been identified in this document.
21. The implementation phase of the project will be managed by the same, potentially expanded steering group. This group will manage and/or guide various implementation projects such as the BIFFA project and the Mayor's priority parks project.
22. The steering group will be linked to the public through a network of Friends and Community groups that would liaise with the public about their priorities and bring forward projects. They would also, as FORCE, LWT and other groups already do, aid in the fund raising for these projects and run volunteer work days.

### **Project funding**

23. Two major grant funds are in place and a third bid is being submitted to HLF focussed on improvements to social conditions related to local green spaces. Opportunities for other small scale and larger scale bids have also been identified.
24. Section 106 projects linked to planned developments are a potential means of delivering aspects of the proposed park development. There are a significant number of actual and potential schemes local to the park area that could reasonably contribute to the project by means such as land transfers, access agreements and financial support. These schemes are identified on Figure 3.
25. The project has identified a number of other projects and statutory authorities that may be able to contribute to the aspirations for the park through having shared objectives.
26. Not least would be the contribution, through small grants and the provision of voluntary manpower, of the voluntary environmental and community sectors.

### **The way forward**

27. The final report will be circulated to key interested parties and presented to the public. A consultation exercise will be carried out to review the findings of this project and help to develop the future strategy
28. The steering group will move on to supporting the two existing projects and identifying and liaising on other opportunities to deliver aspects of the new park.
29. The aim will be to deliver substantially on the Phase Two Metropolitan Park by the end of the Priority Parks Project in 2012. This would include having agreed public access for the main sites linking Hounslow Heath and Twickenham Station and a management system in place to maintain and improve the environmental and public value of the park over time.
30. The potential for delivering a regional park along the Crane valley will be explored over this same three year period.

### **In Summary**

There are a wide range of tangible benefits in developing Crane Valley Park. The means to achieve this appear to be available through a network of statutory organisations and with the support of the community and voluntary sector. The recent award of two major grants, alongside the potential for further support through other grants and Section 106 agreements, has encouraged the steering group that this new park is deliverable. If there were no progress on this then the fragmented areas of the lower Crane Valley would risk becoming overdeveloped and depleted of community, wildlife and a sense of place.

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### **6.0 SITE COMPONENTS AND LINKAGES**

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## **11.0 PROGRAMME**

## **12.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Appendix A COMPARABLE RIVER PARKS AROUND LONDON**

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## **APPENDIX A COMPARABLE RIVER PARKS AROUND LONDON**

- A1 - Wandle Valley**
- A2 - Lower Roding Valley**
- A3 - Lee Valley Regional Park**
- A4 - Brent River Park**
- A5 - Colne Valley Regional Park**

### **A1 Wandle Valley (Ref. GLA London Strategic Parks Project – Appendix A)**

The Wandle Valley has been the subject of a range of proposals for future open space provision. This existing and ongoing work has made considerable progress in developing a Vision and strategic objectives for future open space provision. Key elements include identified by the GLA London Strategic Parks Project include:

#### **A1.1 Wandle Valley Country Park (1999)**

The Wandle Valley Country Park initiative sought to draw together some 485ha of open space in the south of the Wandle Valley, encompassing proposals that extended from Mitcham Common in the north to Beddington Park in the south, including the restored Beddington Farmlands. Proposals were developed in some detail as a basis for a funding bid to the Millennium Commission, prepared through a partnership of key open space landowners in this part of the valley; the London Boroughs of Sutton, Merton and Croydon, Thames Water and Mitcham Common Conservators. Whilst the Millennium Bid was unsuccessful, the Wandle Valley Country Park concept remains an aspiration that forms a key component of the Green Ribbon Initiative (see below).

#### **A1.2 The Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative (2005)**

The South London Partnership, in association with Groundwork Merton and Bruce St. Julian Brown Associates, developed a prospectus for the Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative, which explored in some detail the opportunity for realising the full potential of the River Wandle as an asset benefiting both local communities and London as a whole. This initiative identified the potential of the River as a focus for recreation, ecology and heritage, but also identified the potential benefits of projects that would have created a healthy and desirable environment for both residential and business use. The prospectus promotes:

*“ ...a vision for a unified river-led regeneration along the Wandle through the four boroughs to the Surrey Hills, linking to the Gatwick corridor beyond the greater London boundary, [that] will inspire concerted action and provide the basis for investment in the Wandle Corridor.”*

The Initiative identified a number of ‘Issues for Action’, and set out a range of proposals in relation to the Wandle Valley Country Park, the Green Ribbon proposals, flood management and guiding principles.

### **A1.3 Wandle Valley Regional Park Initiative**

A spatial strategy is currently being developed for the Wandle Valley Regional Park by Groundwork London and the GLA, with the help of many other stakeholders including the Wandle Forum. The Wandle Valley is recognised as an important area for industry but it also has the potential to become a Regional Park, by joining up its many open spaces and regenerating sites where needed. Groundwork has canvassed the views of a wide range of residents, local business and other users of the Wandle Valley through an interactive website. The information gathered was then added to that received from the Wandle Forum and other events and meetings. Groundwork intends to use the results to inform the evolving Spatial Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Regional Park.

Groundwork's shared vision is for an innovative, sustainable and high quality Regional Park in the Wandle Valley that is easily accessible, with a rich and thriving biodiversity, offering recreational, landscape, heritage, cultural and resource management benefits in which local people and businesses can take pride and ownership.

The Regional Park is currently in its Transitional Phase during which Groundwork and the GLA will consolidate existing partnerships; agree the boundary for the park; determine its future organisation, management and financial structures; further develop priorities; and continue to demonstrate the benefits to all those involved.

#### Governance and Management

Groundwork considers that the appropriate form and structures for the future governance and management of a Wandle Valley Regional Park resource can only be determined through detailed consultation agreement with the key stakeholders. Whilst it was beyond the scope of the initial GLA pilot study to make thoroughly-tested recommendations on appropriate governance arrangements, the consultation work undertaken to date suggested a number of principles that could form a basis for future testing.

It was considered vital that any future governance and management structures involved an active partnership between the open space landowners/managers, those being the four boroughs, along with the National Trust, Mitcham Common Conservators and Thames Water. While members of this group of organisations have previously and currently formed partnership arrangements for various purposes, there is, at present, no partnership arrangement that includes all stakeholders with the intention of delivering a coordinated Regional Park. The Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative and the associated Wandle Forum is currently being led by the South London Partnership working in association with Groundwork. The Wandle Forum group incorporates any individuals and organisations with an interest in the Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative, and includes the identified key stakeholders along with a wide range of government agencies, organisations and community groups.

The GLA pilot study suggested the following initial proposals as a focus for future discussion:

### Transitional Stage

The current work of the South London Partnership (SLP) in association with Groundwork in developing the open space aspirations of the Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative and building the consultative body of the Wandle Forum, suggested that the transitional stage in the delivery of a Wandle Valley Regional Park should be continue to be led by such a partnership. Work in this stage should continue the existing Wandle Forum and Green Ribbon Initiative work (building consultative networks, increasing baseline understanding of projects, land ownership, coordinating project work), but also expanding the project focus towards building consensus and ultimately agreement between the identified key stakeholders with regard to an appropriate partnership structure that will take forward both the implementation and management stages.

The existing resources available for the Wandle Forum and Green Ribbon Initiative are limited – primarily one staff day per week (seconded staff from Groundwork) and some additional consultant time. It is clear that the current resources are not sufficient to undertake the work outlined above in a reasonable timeframe. The group advise that targeted assistance to provide additional resources to enable a dedicated staff resource is needed and that the transitional stage should seek to move as quickly as possible to the implementation stage.

### Implementation Stage

It is suggested that the implementation stage of a Wandle Valley Regional Park should be guided by an active partnership between the key open space landowners/managers. The appropriate form of such a partnership (informal or formal) could only be determined through consensus with the partner organisations, however. Nevertheless, there are a number of key governance structures that are considered likely to be formed:

The GLA group considered the principle governance structure should be a “Partnership Board”, to include representatives of the elected members of the partner boroughs and appropriate Executive members of other partner organisations. The Board would provide strategic direction and be the final decision making body. The Partnership would have a dedicated staff resource which could be drawn from existing partners, undertaking and coordinating not only the work required in preparing a Development Framework, but continuing to build wider consultative relationships with other stakeholders, exploring funding and delivery opportunities, disseminating both aspirations for the park and lessons learnt to a wider audience and servicing the partnership and meeting the reporting needs of partner organisations. Staff would have appropriate delegated authority to make decisions within the policy framework established by the Partnership Board. The extent of the staff resource required would be dependant on the scale of the partnership undertaking and the resources available.

It was considered vital that the partnership created and interacted in a meaningful way with a Consultative Forum. In this instance, the existing Wandle Forum would provide an established consultative forum that could be developed.

Specific projects or areas of activity would also be brought forward under the guidance of Working Groups or Groups. These groups would include nominated representatives from the local community, interest groups and potential project partners and would provide guidance for the implementation of delivery work, reporting and seeking necessary approvals from the Partnership Board.

### Management Stage

The GLA group concluded there were clear advantages in achieving a coordinated approach to the long term management of a Wandle Regional Park which could ensure consistent standards of management and maintenance across existing ownership and management boundaries. They also considered that it may be appropriate for the partnership established to deliver the Regional Park initiative continues to operate as a long term management entity.

## **A2 Lower Roding Valley (Ref. GLA London Strategic Parks Project – Appendix B)**

The lower Roding Valley has also been the subject of extensive strategic and site specific proposals for future open space provision. The existing and ongoing work has made considerable progress in developing a Vision and strategic objectives for the future open space provision. Again, the GLA group has identified a number of initiatives that have contributed to the emerging vision:

### **A2.1 Green Grid (2005)**

The East London Green Grid consultants' Report of Studies (July 2005) set out a vision for the development of an "inter-linked network of multi-functional green spaces and public rights of way which will contribute to the environmental enhancement of East London and enable the creation of sustainable communities within Thames Gateway". The framework identified the River Roding as one of ten sub-areas within the Green Grid study area and identified constraints and opportunities and recommended objectives for the area. These objectives have been incorporated into proposals for the future development of the River Roding Metropolitan Park.

### **A2.2 Green Grid Framework Phase 2 (2004)**

In June 2004, a Green Grid Framework Phase 2 research study was undertaken for the Roding Valley by J&L Gibbons. This research study had no formal status, but was prepared to help inform the developing policy framework (e.g. sub regional development plans, the review of London Plan, Borough Open space strategies, and Local development plans). The study set out a number of projects that built on the Green Grid Phase 1 work carried out by LDA Design and initiated the Cross River Park that emerged from the process.

### **A2.3 Cross River Park**

The Cross River Park is an initiative to create a new park on both sides of the Thames alongside the construction of the Thames Gateway Bridge. The northern side of the

proposed park encompasses the lower Roding Valley. The initiative is at an early stage, with the recent completion of a baseline and visioning document. The proposal is being developed by the GLA Architecture + Urbanism Unit under the direction of a Steering Group made up of LB of Greenwich and Newham and the GLA Group, including Transport for London and the London Development Agency. Whilst the concept is still at an early stage, work to date has included extensive baseline assessment and development of initial proposals.

#### **A2.4 Thames Strategy East**

The Thames Strategy East (2005) set out a 100-year vision for the Thames from Tower Bridge to Gravesham. It sought to provide landscape and design guidance for developments, sympathetic to the current, important landscape features, encourage new developments to take account of local heritage, important areas of habitat, recreation, access, flood defence, and all the other features that make up the distinctive landscape of the Thames today.

#### **A2.5 Roding through Redbridge, Roding through Ilford & Lower Roding Projects**

A number of projects have been undertaken through a range of informal partnership arrangements involving LB of Newham, Barking and Dagenham, and Redbridge, as well as the Environment Agency. Both the recent Roding through Ilford and Lower Roding projects have created recreational and economical opportunities and improved access to, and the ecological value of, the river. The Roding through Redbridge project is the latest initiative and seeks to capitalise on previous work, forming a partnership that takes an integrated approach between social, economics and ecological aspects and extends this approach to the whole river catchment. It will, therefore, use the projects within the lower part of the Roding valley to act as a catalyst to improve access, biodiversity, flood risk management, promote tourism and generate jobs.

To this end, the project has three component parts:

- To improve liveability by implementing major environmental improvements and promote public access to safe quality green space;
- To promote leisure and recreation facilities, generate tourism and promote community-based learning programmes through the restoration of Ray Lodge and its associated historical walled gardens; and
- To create a Roding Valley Partnership following the lead from the Lee Valley. The partnership would be capable of co-ordinating the development of the whole of the Roding valley, integrating existing initiatives from the Thames Gateway in the south to the Green Arc and the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor in the north.

#### Flood Issues

The GLA group notes that the study area lies within the extensive unprotected flood risk areas of the River Thames and to a lesser extent, of the River Roding. The potential flood risk from the Thames is significant and primarily tidal driven. Consequently, Strategic Flood Risk Assessments will be required for future development of the Roding Valley, and further protection works to the Thames will be

needed to provide appropriate protection for new developments. It is also noted there is potential for additional local flood risk mitigation within the lower Roding catchment through re-naturalisation of banks and restoration of flood plain areas within the future open space network.

## **A2.6 Lower Roding Valley Metropolitan Park**

The Vision for the future strategic park provision in the lower Roding Valley will be developed within the context of the wider strategic framework set out by the Green Grid. However, the recommended vision for the Green Grid Framework is set out below:

“A living network of parks, green spaces, river and other corridors connecting urban areas to the river Thames, the Green Belt and beyond. The Green Grid will:

- Deliver new and enhance existing public open spaces that promote vibrant, sustainable landscapes for East London communities;
- Provide strategic public access along the major river and green areas;
- Provide a diversity of leisure, recreational uses and landscapes for people to escape,
- Relax, learn, play and enjoy, and promote healthy living, clean air and energy production;
- Manage water collection, cleansing and flood risk with multi-functional spaces; and
- Provide beautiful, diverse and managed green infrastructure to the highest standards for people and wildlife.”

### Governance and Management

As with the Wandle Valley, the GLA Strategic Parks project asserted that an appropriate form and structure for the future governance and management of a Roding Valley Metropolitan Park resource could only be determined through detailed consultation agreement with the key stakeholders. While it was beyond the scope of the pilot study to make thoroughly tested recommendations on appropriate governance arrangements, the consultation work undertaken suggested a number of principles that could form a basis for future testing. It was considered vital that any future governance and management structures involved an active partnership between the open space landowners/managers, primarily the three boroughs and the Environment Agency.

The following initial proposals were made as a focus for future discussion:

### Transitional Stage

LB Redbridge is currently taking a lead role in the promotion and formation of a Roding Valley Partnership. They are in the process of preparing a funding bid to the ODPM which includes the creation of such a partnership as a primary objective. Initial discussions to date with potential partners have included:

- LB Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge;

- Environment Agency; and
- Thames Gateway Partnership

This work provides a good example of the transitional stage requirements, and subject to the funding bid being successful, adequate resources should be available to enable the creation of the type of partnership that could undertake the subsequent implementation role. It is noted that whilst the scope of responsibility for the Roding Valley Partnership extends beyond an open space focus, the preparation of an appropriate Framework Plan which addresses the range of strategic open space issues is considered a priority, and the preparation of such a plan, along with the strategic thinking that is required to deliver that plan, is considered to be of equal importance as the delivery of projects on the ground. Again, as with the Wandle Valley, the GLA Group advises that the transitional stage should seek to move as quickly as possible to the implementation stage described below.

### Implementation Stage

It is suggested that the implementation stage of a Roding Valley Metropolitan Park should be guided by an active partnership between the key open space landowners/managers. Once again, the GLA pilot study advises that the appropriate form for such a partnership (informal or formal) could only be determined through consensus with the partner organisations. However, they consider there are a number of key governance structures that are likely to be formed:

The principle governance structure should be a “Partnership Board”, which would include representatives of the elected members of the partner boroughs (LB Newham, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham) and appropriate Executive members of other partner organisations (e.g. Environment Agency). The Board would provide strategic direction and be the final decision making body. The Partnership should have a dedicated staff resource, undertaking and coordinating not only the work required in preparing a Development Framework, but continuing to build wider consultative relationships with other stakeholders, exploring funding and delivery opportunities, disseminating both aspirations for the park and lessons learnt to a wider audience and servicing the partnership and meeting the reporting needs of partner organisations. Staff would have appropriate delegated authority to make decisions within the policy framework established by the Partnership Board. The extent of the staff resource required would be dependant on the scale of the partnership undertaking and the resources available, but in order to deliver a Metropolitan Park opportunity of the scale of the Roding Valley, it was considered that a minimum of one full time post would be required.

It was also considered vital that the partnership created and interacted in a meaningful way with a Consultative Forum. As there is no existing consultative forum that meets those needs, the creation of an appropriate consultative process would be a vital activity. It was also suggested that specific projects or areas of activity should be brought forward under the guidance of Working Groups or Steering Groups. These groups could include nominated representatives from the local community, interest groups and potential project partners. These groups would provide guidance for the implementation of delivery work, and would report and seek necessary approvals from the Partnership Board.

## Management Stage

The GLA group identified clear advantages in achieving a coordinated approach to the long term management of a Roding Metropolitan Park which would ensure consistent standards of management and maintenance across existing ownership and management boundaries. It also noted that it may be appropriate for the partnership established to deliver the Metropolitan Park initiative to continue to operate as the long term Park Authority with ongoing responsibilities for the management and maintenance of the park across the various ownership/management boundaries.

### **A3 Lee Valley Regional Park**

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority was established in 1967, with a remit to regenerate, develop and manage 10,000 acres of the Lee Valley, stretching 26 miles from the East India Dock Basin on the Thames up the valley to Ware in Hertfordshire. In so doing, it would provide leisure and recreation, both formal and informal, for the residents of Hertfordshire, Essex and Greater London.

The Regional Park contains 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is made up of farmland, nature reserves, green open spaces and waterways, with centres for leisure, sport, heritage and entertainment which include Waltham Abbey, Three Mills, Rye House Gatehouse, Broxbourne Old Mill and Meadows, Myddelton House Gardens and Walthamstow Marshes.

The Regional Park is made up of two main elements - purpose-built Sports and Recreation Centres, including: horse riding, cycling, ice skating, golf, boating and swimming; and Countryside Activities including: angling, walking and general outdoor pursuits like birdwatching. The Regional Park also caters for walking, cycling and running and many organised events run throughout the year catering for all tastes, ages and abilities.

The Regional Park is also a haven for wildlife and those interested in it, with a number of nature reserves and country parks with bird hides and viewing points.

There are heritage sites at Rye House Gatehouse in Hertfordshire, Waltham Abbey in Essex and Three Mills Island at Bromley-by Bow in East London and Middlesex Filter Beds in Leyton.

#### **A3.1 Vision for the Lee Valley Regional Park**

The Authority is developing proposals for the future of the Regional Park through the Park Development Framework (PDF). This framework will develop the Authority's emerging vision with a clear statement of proposals and policies to inform the development of the Regional Park for the next 5-10 years. The PDF will eventually replace the existing Park Plan (adopted 2000).

## Governance

The Authority has a broad and dynamic remit with a duty to develop and preserve leisure, recreation, sport and nature throughout the Regional Park.

The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's remit, described in the 1966 Act, embraces just about every conceivable aspect of leisure, sport and recreation, including nature conservation and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. The Authority is able to exercise this duty by itself, or by acting in partnership with (or seeking the services of) companies, individuals or other bodies. This partnership power is an important part of the Authority's approach today, working with both the public and private sector.

The organisation is not a local authority and is not governed by local authority legislation. However, it often adopts what is considered "best practice" by local authorities.

#### **A4 Brent River Park**

This linear, green, 20.26 ha "District" park extends along much of the River Brent to include the river itself and individual parks such as Brent Lodge Park. It was formally established in July 2003. The natural landscape has recently been improved through the Brent River Project and further plans are proposed for future improvements.

The park comprises principally recreational use with formal pitch provision to be included as part of the River Brent Project improvement plans. The community space is suitable for informal ball games and is popular with local dog walkers and nature lovers with a walk along the open space leading to Wembley Stadium.

The River Brent Restoration Project, a partnership project between the London Borough of Brent and the Environment Agency, aims to restore up to 2km of the River Brent, enhancing employment, providing opportunities for recreation and improving safety and accessibility to the locality.

##### Key Issues of the area

The river has undergone periodic modifications for flood protection, most significantly during the 1930s when major channel straightening was carried out and concrete lining used to limit erosion from banks. Consequently, much of the ecological value of the river and riparian area has been lost, with an absence of many of those elements normally found within a natural river system which provides habitat, supports wildlife and improves water quality. Simultaneously, there has been a decline in the amenity value of the river and adjoining parks for recreation and short journeys on foot or by bike due to poor urban design. This has stemmed from a singular focus on the function of the river channel for dispersing water and failure to integrate complementary functions of the site as a whole.

Barriers to the proper use of the area include the very poor environment and poor landscape design that contribute to fear of crime. The project aims to minimise these barriers to help restore confidence in the use of the park as a route to employment and for recreation.

Extensive consultation was carried out using a variety of techniques amongst those living and working in the locality. These have included work carried out by the London Borough of Brent and external studies such as questionnaires with freepost return, public meetings and focus groups; a *Planning for Real* exercise, and briefings to individual groups including businesses and elected ward councillors.

The outcome of these surveys and participatory consultations in 1999, indicated that an overwhelming proportion of respondents (75%+) expressed support for major riverside enhancements, linked to improved accessibility to the locality and employment area.

Following on from the consultations, feasibility and technical investigations were undertaken in 2000 to develop scheme options, including a water safety assessment comparing existing site conditions with outline enhancement proposals by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). The studies identified and reinforced a number of key issues brought out through earlier consultations around:

- Access to the locality and employment area;
- Environmental enhancement in a heavily degraded green corridor;
- Water safety and reducing fear of crime; and
- Amenity

In the northern area of the site, the Wembley Regeneration Area, unmanaged aggregate slippage into the channel has contributed to bank failure. The aggregate enters the adjacent land and river channel from an adjoining concrete recycling plant, and LBB are in the process of acquiring the northern site in order to tackle the problem. The area is currently closed to the public. Without intervention, this bank failure would continue, becoming more severe, continuing the restriction of access by the public to the site, blocking the channel and causing the silt trap to fill up more rapidly. The rate of erosion was exacerbated by high flows in October 2001 and has remained constantly high in recent years.

LB Brent considers that the southern site, through Tokyngton Park and St Raphael's Estate, will not improve if left alone. RoSPA also noted that the current fencing around the channel was unsafe and the channel itself provided no egress points and was very overgrown. The current water quality is poor and the quality and diversity of the ecology is low. The park functions purely as a flood conveyance mechanism and there is no integration of the river with the park or the community.

### Governance

LB Brent and the Environment Agency are drawing up an agreement to ensure Brent River Park is maintained in the future.

The Park's ongoing management is guided by ISO 14001. The previous work phase was also managed from start to finish using environmental-management standard ISO 14001 which requires the Council to work with communities to address activities that might have a negative environmental impact, consult on and develop an environmental policy, and continually refine it. The Council's parks service manages a

comprehensive grounds maintenance provision which includes the design, construction, development and maintenance of hard and soft landscape features, advice and consultancy for nature conservation, horticulture, tree surgery, sports and allotment lettings, events management, facilities management and security services.

## **A5 Colne Valley Regional Park**

The 27,500 acre (or 43 sq mile) Colne Valley Regional Park was established in the mid 1960's, following a conference convened by the now defunct GLC. It provides a series of new facilities for public enjoyment and the first significant area of countryside to the west of London. It is a mosaic of farmland, woodland and water, with fifty miles of river and canal and over forty lakes. It is a living, working environment, providing employment and homes for many people, but is also a special place, regionally important for recreation and internationally important for wildlife. Much of the land is privately owned, although large areas are open to the public or accessible through a network of paths.

### Governance

There are several different types of Partnership operating in the Park.

A voluntary association of local authorities known as the Colne Valley Partnership continues to foster the Park and provide planning and financial support. This partnership plays a key role in the development of projects and the technical and political contributions enable the Park to function. The Colne Valley Partnership comprises Groundwork, Buckinghamshire CC, Chiltern DC, LB Hillingdon, Slough BC, South Bucks DC, Spelthorne DC, Surrey CC and Three Rivers DC.

However, the project work involves a much wider partnership including Groundwork, government agencies, private companies and local groups.