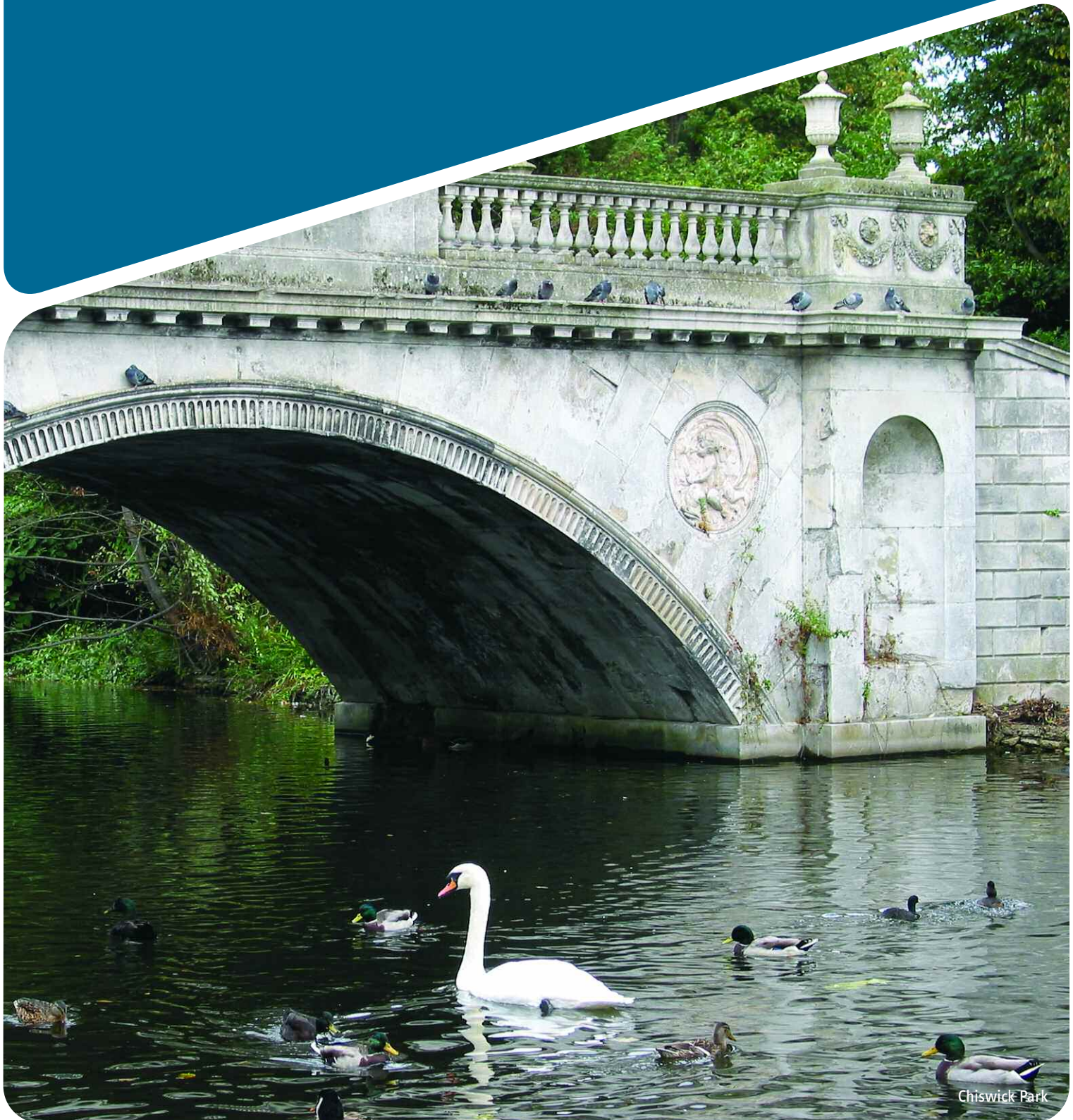
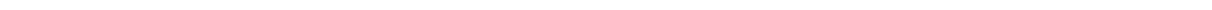


# ENVIRONMENT

London Borough of Hounslow

Unitary Development Plan Adopted December 2003







# ENVIRONMENT INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 EXISTING SITUATION

### 1.1

Planning is a fundamental tool of environmental protection and enhancement. Hounslow's application of its statutory planning powers is especially important because of the Borough's location between London's urban core and its rural fringe. The nature and quality of the Borough's environment varies appreciably. The River Thames, mature parks, conservation areas and nature reserves are all valuable assets, while aircraft noise, traffic congestion and poorly developed and restored land seriously detract from the quality of life of Hounslow's residents and workers.

### 1.2

One of Hounslow's greatest assets is its framework of green spaces and open land which offer valuable recreational opportunities for local residents and, in some cases, play a London-wide role attracting visitors from outside the Borough. Parts of the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land fall into this latter category, although public access is limited in some instances. The Green Belt includes public open space at Hounslow Heath and Hanworth Park. However, much of Hounslow's Green Belt has suffered severe environmental deterioration due to poor restoration after gravel workings in the past. These areas not only look unsightly but fail to provide open land for recreation or other pursuits. Most of the Green Belt in public ownership has been restored and more recently the Council has entered into joint ventures with the private sector in order to upgrade the environment and provide public access, including the Bedfont Lakes Country Park, Lower Park Farm, Cranford and Croft Farm, Lower Feltham. Bedfont Lakes Country Park, which has been created from 101ha of degraded, inaccessible

and contaminated land, is one of the most successful achievements in Green Belt restoration, which has taken place in partnership with the private sector.

### 1.3

The Borough also benefits from large areas of Metropolitan Open Land, providing 'green lungs' within the urban fabric, at Osterley, Boston Manor, Syon and Gunnersbury Parks, and also the playing fields along Chiswick Riverside (Dukes Meadows). Specifically serving a local function are district parks (over 50 acres). These are concentrated in the west and east of the Borough with deficiencies in Hounslow, Heston, Isleworth and Osterley. Local parks (5-50 acres) serve a less mobile local population and are also lacking in the centre of the Borough. Within its 85 parks and open spaces the Council provides a variety of outdoor sports facilities including 40 football pitches, nearly 55 tennis courts, as well as other sports pitches, bowling greens and a public golf course on Hounslow Heath. There are national league football and hockey clubs at Brentford and Chiswick (Hounslow Hockey Club), as well as various other local sports clubs and associations. In addition, there are other Local Open Spaces, which contribute to the image of the area, assist nature conservation, provide breaks in the built up environment and provide recreation space for residents.

### 1.4

Together, the Borough's network of open spaces contribute to a series of Green Chains, which provide potential for walking and cycling routes, act as wildlife corridors and enhance local ecological diversity. Two of the Green Chains are linked by London-wide walking routes the Capital Ring and the London Loop and the Thames Green Chain by the Thames Path. The Borough contains a considerable array of wildlife habitats and

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designated areas of nature conservation importance, many of which link together through Green Chains and Green Corridors. Appreciation of the value of sound ecological management methods has grown in recent years, and has been highlighted in Hounslow's Local Agenda 21 process, especially in relation to managing for wildlife as part of other development activities.

### **1.5**

Striking contrasts are evident within Hounslow's residential environments. Chiswick is characterised by distinctive Victorian and Edwardian properties. Seven conservation areas are located here. In other areas such as Feltham, Brentford, Heston and Isleworth, the areas are more varied in character. All have conservation areas, but in some areas the environmental quality is less attractive due to tower and slab blocks of the post war decades. Many of these areas have benefited from substantial capital investment in recent years although others are still in need of improvement.

### **1.6**

The River Thames is a working river and one of London's most valuable natural assets. It runs alongside Chiswick, Brentford and Isleworth forming the southern boundary of the Borough. Its function has changed substantially over the years, moving away from being a main transport thoroughfare and prime location for commerce and warehousing, to a valuable recreational and tourism resource and a desirable location to live. Development in Old Isleworth has brought new life to this area of the Thames, the original character of the Thames has been preserved at Strand on the Green in Chiswick but in other areas, the river is an underused and sometimes neglected asset. Plans are at an advanced stage in Brentford which will bring new life to this Thameside area, maximising the value of this riverside location through the promotion of high quality design in new developments and encouraging a diversity of river related uses and activities whilst protecting its ecological value.

### **1.7**

Problems associated with air and noise pollution, waste management and land contamination are common to all London boroughs to a greater or lesser degree. However, there are particular concerns of relevance to Hounslow. Air and noise pollution raise particular concerns due to the large volume of aircraft coming to and from Heathrow. Large volumes of traffic, particularly on the main arterial roads running through the Borough also add to air pollution. Large areas of landfill lying in the west of the Borough serve to remind us of the importance of responsible waste management and the need to adopt a sustainable approach in order to avoid creating problems in the future. The Council have taken a proactive approach in dealing with land contamination issues and have made substantial inroads in promoting new methods of waste management, particularly with regard to recycling and composting.

## **2.0 DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE**

### **2.1**

The Borough's open spaces, including the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, and other Local Open Space are constantly under pressure for urban development, particularly residential development.

### **2.2**

The privatisation of some public utilities has put pressure on open land as the newly formed companies attempt to gain the highest development value for surplus land. Private sports grounds which provide valuable private amenity space continue to be threatened by development.

### **2.3**

The Borough's limited reserves of gravel are generally located close to residential properties. However, the pressure for gravel extraction is increasing as London's reserves dwindle.

### **2.4**

As the demands for higher density development increase in order to foster more sustainable patterns of development and accommodate housing and commercial needs of the Borough, there is an increasing need to

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ensure high quality urban design when considering new developments whilst, at the same time, addressing problems of dereliction and poor design characteristic of earlier built developments.

### **2.5**

The River Thames is increasingly the focus for new development and it is imperative that this should contribute to enhancing the visual appearance of the Thames side as well as increasing its role for recreational and river related uses whilst protecting its ecological value.

### **2.6**

A further terminal at Heathrow could subject Borough residents to even worse environmental effects not only because of increased aircraft noise and air pollution but also due to increased development pressure, use of surface access by ever increasing numbers of private vehicles, and airport related parking.

### **2.7**

New, major trip generating development, is often proposed in poorly accessible areas resulting in an excessive number of car journeys being made within and through the Borough making poor use of energy and resources and having a detrimental effect on the environment by contributing to air pollution and traffic congestion.

## **3.0 SOCIAL NEEDS**

### **3.1**

The quality of the environment affects everybody and it is sensitive to development pressure. Some residential areas are run down and suffer from neglect and inherently bad design. High quality building and urban design and environmental improvements such as tree planting and associated landscaping will enhance the appearance of these areas whilst appropriate lighting and better estate layouts including the provision of private amenity space, will increase people's access, safety and security.

### **3.2**

Much of the built and natural environment has restricted access and it is difficult for some people, particularly people with impaired mobility, to get around.

## **4.0 STRATEGIC MATTERS**

### **4.1**

When drawing up detailed environmental policies for Part II of the UDP, consideration has been given to guidance and advice at national, regional and London-wide levels. These are summarised below.

## **PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES (PPGs) AND STRATEGIC GUIDANCE**

### **4.2**

PPG1 reaffirms the role of the planning system in facilitating development whilst protecting the natural and built environment. It promotes sustainable and mixed use development, and strengthens the role of building design and urban design considerations in the planning process.

### **4.3**

PPG2, Green Belts, sets out the main purposes for including land in the Green Belt and promotes its permanence and open character. Strategic Guidance for London recognises the considerable pressure on London's Green Belt and reaffirms the presumption against inappropriate development, which equally applies to Metropolitan Open Land. UDPs should indicate boundaries clearly and changes will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Appropriate provision for other open spaces should also be made in UDPs. Consideration should be given to the valuable role of "Green Chains" which provide wildlife corridors and extended pathways for recreational use as well as valuing the contribution made to the environment by Green Corridors linking green spaces.

### **4.4**

PPG7 states that good quality agricultural land should be protected from irreversible development in accordance with national policy.

### **4.5**

In accordance with national policy (MPG6), Strategic Guidance states that mineral resources should be identified for extraction or safeguarding. London boroughs should take account of an overall level and annual production apportionment agreed by the GLA, SERAWP and SERPLAN.

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Provided that high environmental standards are maintained and sites are well restored, extraction may be acceptable in the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land. The scope for restoring previously worked land should be identified in UDPs.

#### **4.6**

The Borough should take full account of nature conservation as set out in PPG9. Strategic Guidance also indicates that UDPs should take account of water supply and flooding issues (RPG3 para 9.33 and 9.34).

#### **4.7**

PPG17, Sport and Recreation, advises local authorities to ensure the adequate provision of land for organised sport and recreation in their local plans, and preserve areas of urban open space because of the contribution which they make to the quality of the urban environment. There is growing awareness of the importance of sports and recreational facilities of all kinds in our towns and cities, and increasing use of countryside for these purposes. The Government recognises the particular concern felt by many communities that open spaces with recreational value should be protected from development. The Guidance note describes the role of the planning system in assessing opportunities and needs for sports and recreation provision and safeguarding open space with recreational value.

#### **4.8**

In relation to the built environment, Strategic Guidance states that areas and buildings of special character should be conserved and strategic and local views protected. PPG15, Planning and the Historic Environment, states that UDPs should set out the local planning authority's policies for the preservation and enhancement of historic environment in their area and the factors which will be taken into account in assessing different types of planning applications relating to historic buildings, areas and landscape features. Policies concerning Listed Buildings should encourage keeping them in active use as the best way to preserve them. Consideration should also be given to ancient monuments and archaeological remains as set out in PPG16 on the protection of the archaeological heritage. Strategic guidance also emphasises the need for good design and a high quality

environment and suggests that, in some locations, such as town centres or other public transport nodes, higher density development should be considered.

#### **4.9**

RPG3B 'Strategic Guidance for the River Thames' recognises that although the Thames is of enormous strategic importance to London, there has been a tendency for it to be undervalued, neglected and lined with many poor quality developments. The Guidance provides a land use planning framework for enhancing the status and vitality of the Thames, primarily through the implementation of policies specific to the Thames Policy Area.

#### **4.10**

PPG23, Planning and Pollution Control, emphasises the role of planning in determining the location of development and the control of operations, which may give rise to pollution. It emphasises the importance of the waste hierarchy i.e. reduction, re-use, recovery/recycling, and safe disposal as a last resort. Parts of PPG23 have been replaced by PPG10: Planning and Waste Management which was published in September 1999. This document sets out a policy framework for sustainable waste management and provides advice on how land use planning should contribute to sustainable waste management facilities. RPG3 encourages Authorities to include policies in their UDPs for the reduction of waste generation and the encouragement of recycling and energy recovery. The 'proximity principle' whereby waste should be disposed of (or managed) as close to the site at which it is generated is encouraged. PPG24, Planning and Noise, suggests that UDPs should contain guidance on noise acceptability.

### **LPAC'S STRATEGIC ADVICE**

#### **4.11**

LPAC reaffirms the purpose of the Green Belt and gives high priority to programmes for the management and improvement of Green Belt land, including land restoration programmes. Metropolitan Open Land should be given equal status to Metropolitan Green Belt land and may include sites for nature conservation. LPAC also recognises the Thames and Thameside area on being one of London's greatest assets and an area of special character, where development proposals need to be considered carefully.

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#### **4.12**

UDPs should set out proposals to maintain the openness of Public Open Space and identify Areas of Public Open Space Deficiency in which the Authority should seek to enhance and provide access to Urban Green Space. UDPs can contain proposals for the protection, creation and management of Green Chains, and the implementation of the missing links and the 'greening' of the built up sections of the Chains. UDPs should include policies which resist the loss of existing playing fields where they meet the longer term needs of the community for recreation or amenity open space, and to enhance their use. Boroughs should also formulate guidelines, particularly in the Green Belt or MOL, for the location of appropriate sports and recreational facilities.

#### **4.13**

LPAC recognised that some past mineral workings have not been adequately restored and that damaged land needs to be rehabilitated. LPAC advocated policies which minimise the environmental disturbance caused by mineral workings. LPAC's mineral's responsibilities have recently been taken over by the GLA.

### **5.0 KEY ISSUES**

#### **5.1**

The UDP needs to fully embrace the concept of sustainable development and tackle issues raised in the environmental appraisal.

#### **5.2**

There is an urgent need to locate new, major trip generating development, in the most accessible areas of the Borough in order to reduce the number of car journeys and make the most efficient use of energy and resources.

#### **5.3**

Much of the Green Belt has been under or misused and therefore suffers from a poor environment which is in need of improvement. Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt are still under pressure and need protecting and enhancing.

#### **5.4**

The need to take account of the annual London wide production level agreed by GLA, SERPLAN and SERAWP of sand and gravel during this

period up to 2006 has to be set against the serious disruption to the environment, which the Council is extremely concerned to minimise.

#### **5.5**

Hounslow's built environment needs to be protected and enhanced. Some residential areas are run down and in need of investment and improvement. Other areas and buildings of high townscape value i.e. Conservation Areas and the Thames Policy Area need protecting from inappropriate development. A high quality environment including good design should be encouraged in all areas of the Borough. The Borough's archaeological heritage needs to be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced.

#### **5.6**

Much of the natural and built environment poses obstacles for people who have impaired mobility. Often the built environment is not conducive to safety and security and some members of society, for example women, feel particularly vulnerable.

#### **5.7**

Ecological matters should be given full consideration when assessing the acceptability of new development even when land is perceived to be derelict or abandoned.

#### **5.8**

Aircraft noise and pollution are of a particular concern to the Borough, together with air pollution related to an over reliance on the use of private cars. This will be exacerbated, and the pressure on roads and public transport will increase, with a fifth terminal being built at Heathrow.

#### **5.9**

Increasing concern about the quality of the environment and the necessity to develop a more sustainable economy means that efforts to reduce the production of waste and pollutants at source should be given a high priority. A sustainable waste hierarchy should be promoted, reducing waste generation and encouraging re-use and recycling before energy recovery or disposal. Suitable sites for the treatment of waste should be identified locally.

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## **6.0 OBJECTIVES**

### **6.1 ENV-N.1**

To protect, maintain and improve, the open nature, amenity, ecological value, recreational value and the quality of Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, Local Open Space, Heritage Land, Historic Parks and Gardens, Green Corridors, Green Chains and other open spaces.

### **6.2 ENV-N.2**

To protect, provide, enhance and promote Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, other areas of nature conservation interest, with reference to the Hounslow Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and areas of high amenity value.

### **6.3 ENV-B.1**

To promote high quality design, urban design and a sense of place and identity throughout the Borough, and promote improvements which prioritise a safe, sustainable, accessible and pedestrian friendly environment for all.

### **6.4 ENV-B.2**

To protect and enhance the built environment from the adverse implications of development, particularly views and landmarks, Conservation Areas, listed buildings, areas of townscape value, the built Thames landscape and other water features.

### **6.5 ENV-B.3**

To conserve, protect and enhance the Borough's ancient monuments and archaeological heritage.

### **6.6 ENV-W.1**

To protect and enhance the status, quality and vitality of the Thames Policy Area as defined on the Proposals Map.

### **6.7 ENV-W.2**

To protect and enhance the status, quality and vitality of all the Borough's water features and the waterside environment and to prevent an increased risk of flooding.

### **6.8 ENV-P.1**

To protect residents and workers in the Borough from further detrimental effects due to noise, poor air quality, contaminated land and general environmental pollution.

### **6.9 ENV-P.2**

To promote the conservation of resources, including energy, by promoting and providing facilities to support a comprehensive and sustainable waste management strategy for the Borough.

### **6.10 ENV-P.3**

To protect the environment and amenities of residents whilst having regard to the need for minerals in the London Area.