Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

London Borough of Bromley

Client: London Borough of Bromley

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

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Introduction

1.1 LUC was appointed by the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) in February 2023, to undertake a partial review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the Borough. The study establishes the status of, and outlines opportunities for, the SINC network as part of wider nature recovery. It will be used to inform land planning and management decision-making, and the development of new policies in relation to the protection, enhancement and expansion of ecological assets across the borough.

1.2 This review informs a network-led approach to identify and target opportunities to maximise and strengthen the core network and intervening habitats, which are vital for ensuring long-term viability of nature recovery in the borough, as well as improving access for people to nature.

1.3 This included the following key elements:

- A desk-based review of biodiversity in the borough to identify key assets, strategic networks (including corridors, waterways and stepping stones), and Areas of Deficiency (AoD) in Access to Nature within the borough.
- A field-based review of select SINC in the borough, including habitat survey. This provides an up to date baseline and informs recommendations for changes to management, to status, to boundaries of existing SINCs, and brings forward sites that should be considered for designation.

1.4 This report will form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan that will ensure the protection of the designated site (international, national and local) network in LBB. The network forms the core of the forthcoming Greater London Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) **[See reference 1]**. The protection, restoration and enhancement of this designated site network, connected and buffered by intervening habitats of the wider network, will be vital

to ensure that biodiversity is protected and able to thrive, resilient to the challenges that are brought by both climate change and future population growth.

1.5 The Greater London LNRS will identify opportunities to maximise biodiversity through improving green infrastructure and strategic habitat corridors within the borough.

Background

1.6 The London Borough of Bromley is the largest borough in London and has the lowest population density of around 21 people per hectare as of the 2011 census **[See reference 2]**. Bromley has the largest area of rural land of any London Borough, and supports 119 SINCs, six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and three Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) **[See reference 3]**. The extensive and diverse network of SINC cover 19.34% of the borough.

- The status of the 119 SINCs are summarised as:
  - 25 Metropolitan
  - 31 Borough Grade I
  - 42 Borough Grade II
  - 21 Local.
- **Ancient woodland** across Bromley is extensive. The borough contains a third of Greater London's ancient woodland habitat **[See reference 4]**
- **Priority habitats** present within Bromley are diverse and consist of the following:
  - Deciduous woodland
  - Good quality semi-improved grassland
  - Lowland calcareous grassland
  - Lowland dry acid grassland

- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchards

- **Green corridors** consist of the south-east London Green Chain **[See reference** 5**]**.
- **Waterways** in Bromley consists of rivers, tributaries and streams **[See reference** 6**].**

1.7 The biodiversity assets within the borough, as presented in Figures 1-7, Appendix A, form the basis for the borough's nature recovery network.

1.8 Bromley's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) **[See reference** 7**]** was one of the first BAPs, written in 1997. The Biodiversity Plan 2021-2026 will contribute, along with nature recovery responses from other boroughs, towards the development and delivery of the Greater London LNRS, led by the Greater London Authority (GLA).

Previous SINC Reviews: Understanding change over time

1.9 A full review was undertaken in 2011 for all existing SINCs (previously referred to as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)). The sites which were reviewed in 2011 were proposed for inclusion within the Local Plan in 2015 **[See reference** 8**]**. The supporting survey for the review was undertaken in line with the London Wildlife Site Board's criteria for SINC selection (2019) **[See reference** 9**] [See reference** 10**]**, and the Open Space and Habitat Survey for Greater London **[See reference** 11**]**.

1.10 The 2011 review provided baseline data on the SINC network and intervening habitats within the borough, which have informed this report. Further detail is presented in Chapter 5.

Report Structure

- **Chapter 1** - This Chapter provides an introduction and background to this review. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 2** - Provides comprehensive overview of the legal and policy context and how this influences the designation and management of SINC sites.
- **Chapter 3** - Outlines the approach that has been used in this assessment to undertake the desk study and habitat survey and assessment.
- **Chapter 4** - Describes the findings of the desk study that provide a network-led approach to the SINC review. This chapter provides an overview of the local conservation priorities across the borough, recognising those protected within and those currently beyond SINC designation.
- **Chapter 5** provides a summary of the findings of the habitat survey and outlines recommendations in relation to the status of the SINC sites and broad management and enhancement recommendations for the SINC network and wider habitat network.

Chapter 2

Legal and Policy Context

2.1 This section provides an overview as to how UK, London-wide and London Borough of Bromley level legislation and policy influence the designation and management of SINC sites.

National

2021 Environment Act

2.2 The 2021 Act commits much of the Government's ambition for the environment as set out in Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP; see later subheading) **[See reference 12]** into law. It places emphasis on the delivery of nature recovery and sets this in the context of wider environmental recovery. In support of this, the Act includes a duty on local authorities to conduct a review every five years of all policies with regard to nature conservation.

2.3 Targets of the Environment Act for national nature recovery, to which the borough SINC network contribute, include:

- Create or restore at least 500,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042 compared to 2022 baseline.
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 17.5% of total land area in England by 2050.
- Halt decline of species abundance by 2030 and increase by at least 10% by 2040.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

2.4 The 2021 Environment Act sets the requirement for the Nature Recovery Network to be delivered through LNRS, each led by a Responsible Authority **[See reference** 13**]**. The GLA is the Responsible Authority for the Greater London LNRS. The LNRS will be delivered, in part, through the Local Plan policies of the boroughs. The London Borough of Bromley is a delivery partner for the Greater London LNRS **[See reference** 14**]**.

2.5 The designated site network is core to nature recovery and to the future LNRS.

Biodiversity Net Gain

2.6 Regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the Environment Act requires a minimum 10% BNG for all new development, delivered over a legacy period of at least 30 years. BNG follows the mitigation hierarchy i.e. is delivered on site or, where this is not possible, in adjacent land or, as a final option, offsite. BNG is a mechanism which can contribute to the delivery of nature recovery, if appropriately implemented and accurately monitored. Strategic planning of BNG delivery can serve to strengthen the SINC network, for example, through connecting and buffering sites.

2.7 This requirement is reflected in the London Plan (2021) Policy G6 **[See reference** 15**]** and the borough's Local Plan (2019) Policy 79 'Biodiversity and Access to Nature' **[See reference** 16**]**, which are both described in the London-wide Policy and Borough-wide Policy sections below. Bromley's Biodiversity Plan 2021-2026 **[See reference** 17**]** provides guidance to landowners and developers on what type of biodiversity enhancements are expected through BNG.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.8 To ensure increased resilience to current and future pressures, the NPPF promotes a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing ecological networks. The role of the planning system is outlined in Paragraph 174 as to:

- Protect and enhance valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils.
- Recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services.
- Minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- Enhance public access to nature.

Imperatives and Duties in the Conservation of Habitats and Species

2.9 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) forms the principal legislation which transposes the EU Regulations into UK law. Habitats (Annex I) and species (Annex II) of importance at the European level are legally protected within the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Together, these form the legal basis to nature conservation against which the Government, and supporting local authorities, must act.

2.10 The Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended) places a duty on public and local authorities to have:

> *"Regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions",* including the provision of local polices and strategies, in planning and development control, and in managing their estates.

2.11 Section 41 of the NERC Act lists the habitats and species of principal importance. The Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI, held by Natural England) maps national coverage of priority habitats. A finer resolution of local priorities is the London BAP habitats (held by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL)). Most of the PHI and London BAP habitats within the borough lie within designated sites **[See reference** 18**]**.

London-wide Policy

2021 London Plan **[See reference** 19**]**

2.12 The 2021 London Plan sets the context for a coordinated approach to nature conservation across all boroughs. Policy 'G6 Biodiversity and access to nature' states that:

> *"SINC sites should be protected but that where harm to a SINC is unavoidable, and where the benefits of the development proposal clearly outweigh the impacts on biodiversity, the following mitigation hierarchy should be applied to minimise development impacts:*
>
> - *Avoid damaging the significant ecological features of the site.*
> - *Minimise the overall spatial impact and mitigate it by improving the quality or management of the rest of the site.*
> - *Deliver off-site compensation of better biodiversity value."*

Greater London LNRS

2.13 The Greater London LNRS is a spatial biodiversity strategy, which is being prepared by the GLA, in association with all 33 London Boroughs. As a cross-

sector delivery mechanism for nature restoration it will also be used by key organisations and stakeholders to delivery other environmental incentives. The LNRS will include a statement of London's biodiversity priorities and an updated and comprehensive spatial habitat map with designated sites, other areas important for biodiversity and nature recovery, and areas where biodiversity could contribute to other environmental benefits **[See reference** 20**]**. In addressing nature recovery, the strategy looks beyond simply existing sites and habitats. The LNRS will produce a robust evidence base for the next London Plan and London Environment Strategy. The designated site network, including SINCs, form the core of the LNRS.

2.14 There are a number of datasets contributing to the emerging LNRS, one of which includes the London Rewilding Taskforce **[See reference** 21**]**. The Taskforce explores opportunities for rewilding in London to support nature recovery and enhance biodiversity. The Taskforce has identified strategic zones for co-ordinated action. Bromley lies within Opportunity Zone 7 & 8 'Croydon and Bromley Downs', which is an area identified as suitable for large-scale rewilding. This zone forms an opportunity for delivery of nature recovery for the borough as part of the Greater London LNRS.

2.15 The Rewilding Taskforce Report **[See reference** 22**]** states that within Bromley:

> "*Although this is already one of the most wildlife rich areas of the capital, there are significant opportunities, particularly in the Bromley section, to rewild large areas of farmland to reduce the isolation of existing wildlife sites and to support the recolonisation and reintroductions of species."*
>
> *"The zone is predominately privately owned farmland, but also includes High Elms and Saltbox Hill SSSIs and a large area of Bromley owned land to the north."*

Green Corridors

2.16 Green corridors are defined in The London plan as:

> *"Relatively continuous areas of open space leading through the built environment, which may be linked and may not be publicly accessible and provide an extension to the habitats of the sites they join.*
>
> *They need not be very wide, but they are essential routes for the movement of both flora and fauna and, as they are often undisturbed, can provide similar conditions to formally designated nature reserves."*

Waterways

2.17 Waterways are defined in The London Plan as a network of waterways including:

> "*The River Thames, its tributary rivers and canals, but also to other water spaces including docks, lakes and reservoirs"* which are of strategic importance for London.

London Environment Strategy **[See reference 23]**

2.18 The Environment Strategy states that the establishment of a SINC network is designed to protect valuable habitats and natural features from development.

Policy 5.2.1 sets out proposals to *"protect a core network of nature conservation sites and ensure a net gain in biodiversity".*

2.19 Appendix 5 **[See reference** 24**]** sets out the methodology and process by which boroughs should identify SINCs in their Local Plans. SINCs are assessed against a set of criteria (summarised in Chapter 3, **Table 3.1**), which are considered together using professional judgement. For some sites there may only be one or two criteria that are important, but for others it may be all or most of them.

London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) **[See reference** 25**]**

2.20 The UK BAP (the UK's initial response to the 1992 Rio Convention in advance of enacted legislation) was replaced by the introduction of the NERC Act (2006). However, some local BAPs such as the London BAP remain in place for the purposes of identifying local conservation priorities and supporting actions. The London BAP is managed through the guidance of GIGL, who also facilitate the mapping of areas of London which would give the best benefit to biodiversity, if used to create any of nine BAP priority habitats. This dataset is called 'BAP Habitat Suitability Mapping' **[See reference** 26**]**.

2020 London Urban Forest Plan **[See reference** 27**]**

2.21 The majority of LBB's SINCs contribute towards London's Urban Forest, due to the expansive cover of woodlands and parkland across the network. Bromley supports predominantly broadleaved woodlands comprising lowland mixed deciduous woodland, lowland beech and yew woodland, and wood pasture and parkland. As of 2017, 2,181ha of Bromley was identified as woodland **[See reference** 28**]**. Nearly a quarter of Bromley's Green Belt is

wooded and the borough supports one third of London's ancient woodlands **[See reference** 29**]**.

2.22 The 2020 Plan sets a series of goals that aim to better protect and manage London's Urban Forest, encourage new planting and natural regeneration to grow the urban forest, and to value and promote its benefits to landowners, managers and the wider public. Actions of the Plan relevant to the management of the SINC network include the identification of woodland sites requiring management to maximise benefits for people and wildlife.

The SINC Network

2.23 The London Plan defines SINC as

> *"Areas of land chosen to represent the best wildlife habitats in London and areas of land where people can experience nature close to where they live and work".*

2.24 The SINC network offers a comprehensive network of protected sites which stretches across London, protecting a breadth of rare and important wildlife habitats. Maintaining SINCs as the key nodes of nature networks is critical to maintaining the ecological health and functionality of the upper echelon statutory and non-statutory designated sites and wider green space network. Many mobile species rely on multiple sites and/or habitats within their lifecycles, ideally adjacent to each other, connected via suitable green corridors or within close proximity.

2.25 Management of SINCs for the benefit of wildlife provides people with access and connection to nature. SINCs are also an important constituent of London's heritage and cultural identity. LBB SINCs include several iconic cultural and religious sites such as Grove Park Cemetery and Chinbrook Community Orchard Borough Grade II SINC, and Beckenham Crematorium and

Cemetery Local SINC that through designation as a SINC, these important architectural and heritage features and landscapes are preserved contributing to a sense of place and distinctiveness.

Local Site Selection Panel

2.26 As part of the Local Wildlife Sites Board process for determining SINC designations, there is a requirement for a Local Site Selection Panel to providing independent, expert advice on site selection, the approach to survey and in validating the recommendations on SINC status. Bromley Biodiversity Partnership, are engaged with LBB and, at the outset of this review.

2.27 Baseline data used to inform this SINC review includes survey data provided by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership. This information is considered additional and complementary to the 2023 survey data, albeit it has been recognised that where time has elapsed since the data collection that there is potential for changes to occur over time and through alterations in land management practices.

2.28 Bromley Biodiversity Partnership were consulted on the findings of the Draft Report and their feedback has been reflected within the subsequent updates.

SINC Classification

2.29 Table 2.1 presents the classification of LBB's SINCs into three tiers depending on their relative value.

Table 2.1: SINC Classification

Status	Description
Metropolitan Importance	Sites of Metropolitan Importance are strategically important conservation sites for London. These sites may contain the best assemblages of London's habitats or species. Sites contain particularly rare or important populations of species, or they may be sites which are of particular significance within otherwise heavily built-up areas of London. Should one of these sites be lost or damaged, something would be lost which exists in a very few other places in London.
Borough Importance (Grade 1 and Grade 2)	Sites of Borough Importance are sites which support habitats or species of value at the borough level. Although sites of similar quality may be found elsewhere in London, damage or loss to these sites would mean a significant loss to the borough. Borough Grade 1 sites are of a higher status than Borough Grade 2 sites.
Local Importance	Sites of Local Importance are sites which are important for the provision of access to nature at the neighbourhood level. These sites can be found across the borough and are particularly important in areas otherwise deficient in access to nature.

Proposed vs Preliminary SINC

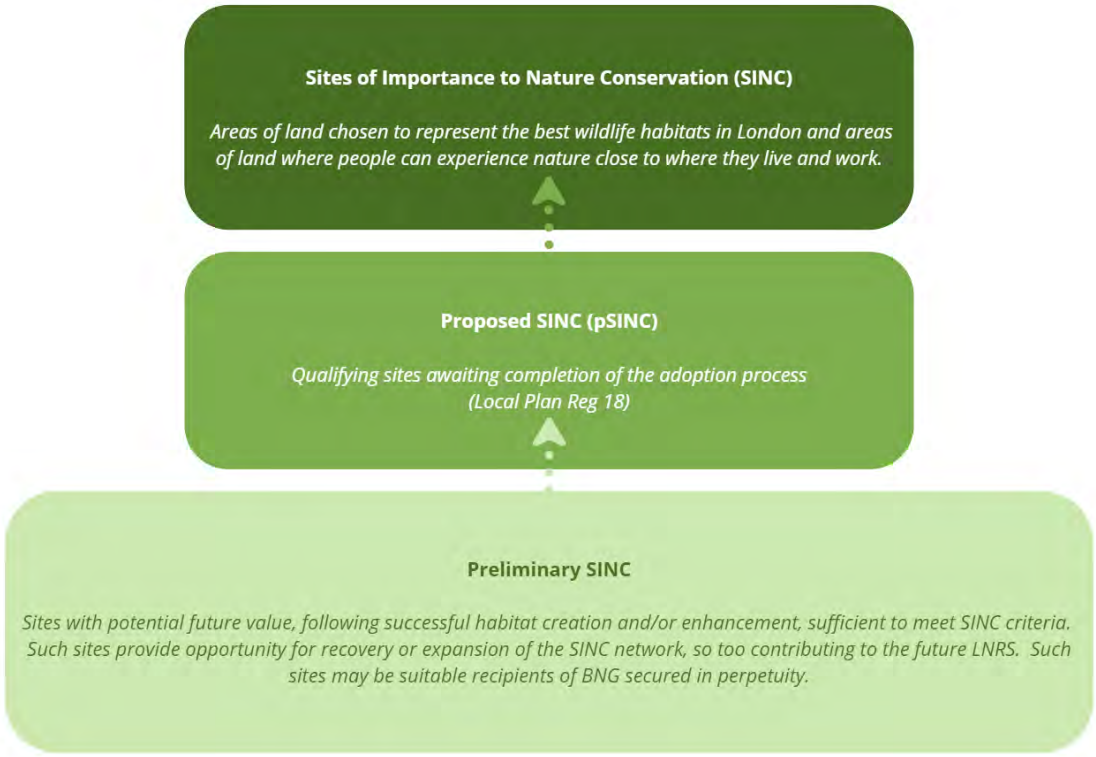

Figure 2.1 Long-term planning for a robust SINC network

2.30 When sites are under public consultation (Local Plan Reg 18) but have not yet been officially adopted within a Local Plan for inclusion as a SINC, they are named 'Proposed SINCs (pSINC)'. The register of pSINC is held by GIGL to ensure their recognition and protection during the period between submission and official adoption. The pSINC dataset allows these sites to be shared with GIGL partners and clients to benefit their conservation during the Reg 18 consultation period.

2.31 It is important to also consider new sites that will strengthen the SINC network to address, for example, the pressures associated with the growing population and with climate change. New sites may include a broad spectrum, from long-term candidates for future pSINC recognition (e.g. sites identified through high level review of spatial data as having opportunity for habitat restoration, enhancement and creation such that SINC status can be met) to

more immediate candidates (e.g. those already of higher ecological value in current condition).

2.32 For the broad group of sites, which have not yet been recommended for designation, but which have potential to offer future value to the SINC network following successful implementation of habitat creation and/or enhancement or require further survey to determine the suitability for designation and/or for suitable management recommendations to be made, the term preliminary SINC has been applied and there is no abbreviation of this term.

2.33 For the purposes of this study, preliminary SINCs are defined as:

> *'Sites with potential future value, following successful habitat creation and/or enhancement, sufficient to meet SINC criteria. Such sites provide opportunity for recovery or expansion of the SINC network, so too contributing to the future LNRS. Such sites may be suitable recipients of BNG secured in perpetuity'*.

Bromley's SINC Network

2.34 Bromley's SINC network is core to the delivery of the BAP, nature recovery and any future LNRS. At the outset of this study in the summer of 2023, LBB has a total of 119 SINCs, comprising 25 Metropolitan, 31 Borough Grade 1, 42 Borough Grade 2, and 21 Local SINCs. There are no existing pSINC within the borough.

Borough-wide Policy

Bromley Local Plan 2019 [See reference 30]

2.35 The following policies extracted from the Bromley Local Plan 2019 are relevant to this assessment:

- **Policy 56: Local Open Space**

  These spaces have demonstrated to have special qualities and holds particular significance to the local community which it severs.

- **Policy 71: Additional Nature Conservation Sites:**

  In course of development proposal, the nature conservation interest of the site becomes evident, the protection and active management of the site will be sought as part of the proposal.

- **Policy 74: Conservation and Management of Trees and Woodlands:**

  To improve the amenity and conservation value of trees and woodlands, the Council will encourage:

  - Encourage appropriate beneficial management;
  - Encourage appropriate new tree planting in suitable locations; and
  - Promote public interest in and enjoyment of trees and woodlands.

- **Policy 78: Green Corridors:**

  The Council will assess the likely impact on the quality and character of green corridors through the Borough and will seek and support appropriate enhancement and management.

- **Policy 79: Biodiversity and Access to Nature:**

  The Council will enhance biodiversity across the Borough, assist ecological restoration and address spatial deficiencies in access to nature by:

- Using Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy to identify and secure the appropriate management of sites of metropolitan, borough and local importance for nature conservation in consultation with the Local Wildlife Sites Board.
- Identifying areas deficient in accessible wildlife sites and seek opportunities to address them.

LBB Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2021-2026 [See reference 31]

2.36 LBB's Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the mission statement to promote coordinated action for biodiversity at the local level.

2.37 To achieve this the LBB pledge to:

"Sustain our local species and habitats for future generations, ensuring that a long-term strategy for conserving, protecting, and enhancing biodiversity is in place".

2.38 The BAP set out the following targets, which this study aims to help address:

- To maintain and increase biodiversity in LBB through improved management of existing greenspaces which is guided by evidence.
- To increase the area of habitat managed for biodiversity in LBB including improving links between greenspaces.

2.39 The BAP identifies the following 'General Principles for Biodiversity Management' relating to SINCs:

1. Maintain, enhance and restore Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and other green spaces for biodiversity.

2. Follow existing site Management Plans, updating as necessary.

3. Promote a landscape scale approach to biodiversity management through partnership working and the planning system.

4. Promote wildlife corridors between existing habitats, for example along rivers (Rivers Ravensbourne, River Cray and their tributaries) and walking routes (London LOOP, Green Chain) and road verges managed for wildlife.

5. Protect, enhance and promote the public's access to nature for example through environmental education and walks, talks and events.

Net Zero Action Plan **[See reference** 32]

2.40 The Plan focuses on achieving Net Zero by 2027 and follows the already ambitious and London leading target to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2029, focusing on seven priority areas to reduce the Council's organisational emissions.

- Phased upgrade of street lighting with LED.
- Energy efficiency to be achieved by prioritising site refurbishments and installing automated meter readers.
- Purchasing power directly from renewable energy generator.
- Managing and maintaining 100% zero emissions fleet and accompanying infrastructure.
- Establish a portfolio of renewable Council owned, or joint owned, investments.

- Establishment and/ or enhancement of Council green spaces for natural carbon offsets and co-benefits.
- Purchase UN certified and/ or verified voluntary carbon credits based in the UK.

Environment and Community Services: (Portfolio plan for 2023-2024) [See reference 33]

2.41 The Portfolio plan is shaped around the delivery of the following priorities that focuses on environment:

- **Priority 1: Keep our streets clean.**

Focus on promoting behaviour change, working with the community and volunteer groups and take appropriate action to ensure the street environment meet local needs.

- **Priority 2: Minimise Waste and Maximise recycling.**

Work with the residents and local businesses to recycle and reduce the amount of waste.

- **Priority 3: Enhance Bromley's Parks and Green Spaces.**

LBB's ten-year Open Space Strategy aims to conserve and enhance Bromley's parks and green spaces. The tree management strategy ensures the health of the Borough's trees. The LBB's services will support biodiversity, enhance air quality and improve residents' health and wellbeing.

- **Priority 6: Overarching Themes for all Portfolios.**

Focus and progress towards meeting the Council's Net Zero Carbon target. The theme directly supports the Council's focus "*To manage our resources*

well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents."

South-east London Green Chain **[See reference** 34**]**

2.42 In Bromley, strategic green corridors are defined by the South East London Green Chain, which was designated in 1977 and gives extra protection to and promotion of open spaces which extend through the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Royal Greenwich, Southwark and Lewisham. The Open Spaces within the Green Chain contain ancient woodlands, historic parks and landscapes, commons, heathland, farmland and recreational grounds.

2.43 Bromley's Biodiversity Action Plan, which is described in detail in the LBB Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2021-2026 **[See reference]**section above, identifies the following green principle, relating to the Green Chain:

"Promote wildlife corridors between existing habitats, for example along rivers (Rivers Ravensbourne, River Cray and their tributaries) and walking routes (London LOOP, Green Chain) and road verges managed for wildlife."

2.44 LBB's Local Plan Policy 54, states:

"Development proposals will be required to respect and not harm the character or function of the Green Chain and the Green Chain Walk, as defined on the Proposals Map. Measures to protect the designated area are to include the use of suitable screening, landscaping or in appropriate areas the planting of native vegetation and enhancing wildlife habitats."

Area of Deficiency (AoD) in Access to Nature

2.45 AoD in Access to Nature is defined in Improving Londoners' Access to Nature **[See reference** 35**]** as:

> *"Localities where people are further than 1km walking distance from a publicly accessible Site of Borough or higher level of significance for nature conservation."*

2.46 AoD in access to nature is mapped by GIGL **[See reference** 36**]** to include:

> Areas within 1km walking distance from a Borough or Metropolitan SINC which is accessible to the public.
>
> Local SINC do not contribute to the AoD.
>
> National (or higher) nature conservation designations are included in the calculation as for a Borough or Metropolitan site.

2.47 In contrast, AoD in access to Public Open Space (POS) is calculated using specific distances to each category of POS, ranging from Local (1km), through District and Metropolitan to Regional (8km).

2.48 The Draft Bromley Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) **[See reference** 37**]** highlights the following key challenges as identified by the AoD in Access to Nature:

- The eastern side of Bromley Town centre has a deficiency in Local Parks (2 hectares or more).

- The whole of Bromley Town Centre has a deficiency in access to nature.

2.49 The SPD and LBB BAP summarises the opportunity for addressing the AoD in access to nature by stating:

- Development proposal should seek to enhance access to nature and access to green space by improving connections between existing spaces.
- Proposals which reduce deficiencies in access to nature should be considered positively.
- Protect, enhance and promote the public's access to nature through environmental education and walks, talks, and events.
- Work with partners and the planning system to link woodlands wherever possible by providing a corridor for movement of wildlife between sites and bringing the countryside into urban areas to improve access to nature for people.

Borough-wide Initiatives

Countryside and Biodiversity [See reference 38]

2.50 Partnership with idverde and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) will help improve the understanding and role 'Friends of Parks' groups and residents can play in looking after the wildlife and plants in their neighbourhood. This innovative approach will help deliver the LBBs Biodiversity strategy. The work underlines the commitment to maintain, enhance, and restore SINCs and other green spaces for biodiversity.

2.51 The partnership will play a key role in helping the community become a greener place that benefits both people and wildlife and create a green legacy for future generations.

Nature Friendly Verges **[See reference** 39**]**

2.52 By allowing verges to grow, LBB expects to improve biodiversity in the borough, increase natural carbon storage and reduce the impacts of pollution. Grass verges can act as wildlife corridors connecting habitats and greenspaces, increase floral diversity and increase pollinator habitats, which will benefit bees, butterflies, and invertebrates.

2.53 Nature friendly verges will receive only one annual cut in September/ October and will be left to grow throughout the rest of the year. An initial pilot which started in March 2023, will end in 2025 at which time the council will review its impact to inform future interventions.

Brilliant Butterflies in Bromley **[See reference** 40**]**

2.54 The brilliant butterflies project will create new homes for butterflies and insects through the restoration and creation of chalk grassland, a rare habitat that many species thrive in. New habitats such as butterfly banks will be installed at several sites across the borough, including Leaves Green Common and Cator Park, subject to the necessary consents being granted.

2.55 Partners include the London Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, and Natural History Museum who are working with the council and their parks and green space contractor, *i*dverde and RSPB, to create chalk grassland 'living landscapes' that will come alive with wildflowers, butterflies and pollinating insects. These pockets of chalky habitats will strengthen the nature recovery network offering connecting habitat with wildflowers of nature reserves such as Saltbox Hills SSSI.

Catchment Management Plans and Partnerships

2.56 Catchment Management Plans include actions, which aim to improve their ecological status and potential. Plans identify and map opportunities and can help inform wider considerations on locally appropriate green infrastructure interventions, such as prioritisation of SuDS features, such as rain gardens, where surface (open streams and watercourses) and sub-surface (culverted channels) hydrological connectivity exists.

2.57 Catchment Management Partnerships enable coordination with wider initiatives and interventions across the catchment. This coordinated approach streamlines funding, resourcing, and planning.

2.58 Bromley's Waterways lie within the Thames River Basin District **[See reference** 41**]**. Thames 21 **[See reference** 42**]**, is a Rivers Trust which hosts the Catchment partnerships for the Thames River Basin Management Plan. Within Bromley, the Ravensbourne Catchment Improvement Group (RCIG) delivers the Ravensbourne Catchment Partnership and Action Plan **[See reference** 43**]**.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) **[See reference** 44**]**

2.59 SuDS are recognised within Bromley Local Plan Policy 115 'Reducing Flood Risk' and Policy 116 'Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems'.

2.60 SuDS are designed to maximise the opportunities and benefits of surface water management, which is particularly important in dense urban areas with less permeable grounds and increased risk of flooding, pollution and erosion. SuDS counteract these impacts on the water cycle and enhance urban space

by making them more vibrant, attractive, sustainable and resilient, with improved air and water quality, microclimate and amenity.

2.61 There are four main categories of benefit that can be achieved through high quality SuDS design:

- **Water Quantity:** Use surface water runoff as a resource. Support the management of flood risk in receiving surface waters, preserving natural hydrological systems.
- **Water Quality:** Support management of water quality in receiving surface waters and ground water, design system resilience to cope with future change.
- **Amenity:** Maximise multi-functionality, enhance visual character, deliver safe surface water management, support site resilience and adaptability, maximise legibility and support community environmental learning.
- **Biodiversity:** Support and protect natural local habitats and species, contribute to the delivery of local biodiversity objectives, contribute to local habitat connectivity, create diverse, self-sustaining and resilient ecosystems.

Chapter 3
Approach

Desk Study

3.1 To collate background information and to highlight likely features or species groups of interest, a study of available biological records was undertaken within each site. This included a review of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and existing records of protected **[See reference** 45**]** and/or notable species **[See reference** 46**]** of relevance to the sites as provided by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) CIC.

3.2 To inform a network-led approach to assessment of the SINC across the borough, the following additional cross-boundary and strategic data was included. The following resources were used:

- Designated sites, SINC boundaries and citations (Natural England and GIGL).
- Ecological network mapping – national (Natural England), London-wide (GIGL).
- AoD in access to nature (GIGL).
- Strategic green space information, specifically South East London Green Chain.
- Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping.
- Aerial photography.

3.3 The findings of the desk study are presented in Figures 1-7. Appendix A and in Appendix C, which includes proformas presenting the site survey data.

Site Survey and Assessment

Selection of Sites for Survey

3.4 There are 119 SINCs within the existing network. Sites selected for survey as part of this review, were identified by the Council and Bromley Biodiversity Partnership. This included 25 sites (11 existing SINCs and 14 preliminary SINC sites). Reference should be made to Figure 1, which presents the location of the sites surveyed as part of the review.

3.5 Targeted survey of the existing SINCs were carried out, to capture key areas of potential change. Surveyed were as follows:

- Four Metropolitan SINCs
- Four Borough Grade I SINCs
- Three Local SINCs

3.6 In addition, 14 new sites identified by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership were surveyed and assessed for their suitability to be taken forward in the Local Plan process as pSINC. Using the terminology of Figure 2.1, these sites come from the bracket of 'preliminary SINC'.

Expansion and Strengthening of the Network: Preliminary SINC

3.7 Opportunities for expansion of the SINC network are required to ensure:

- the network is of sufficient space for nature to thrive despite the pressures associated with climate change.
- as a key component to achieving climate change mitigation across the city.

- the network can support the health and wellbeing of local (present and future) residents of the borough.

3.8 Identification of new sites is led by the Council in partnership with the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership. 14 such sites were put forward at the outset for survey in 2023 as part of this review. These were assessed for future designation within the SINC network where there is sufficient value to meet the designation criteria i.e. to be progressed as pSINC. In the event that a site does not, in current condition, meet the criteria for designation, recommendations to address this are provided.

London Borough of Bromley SINC review
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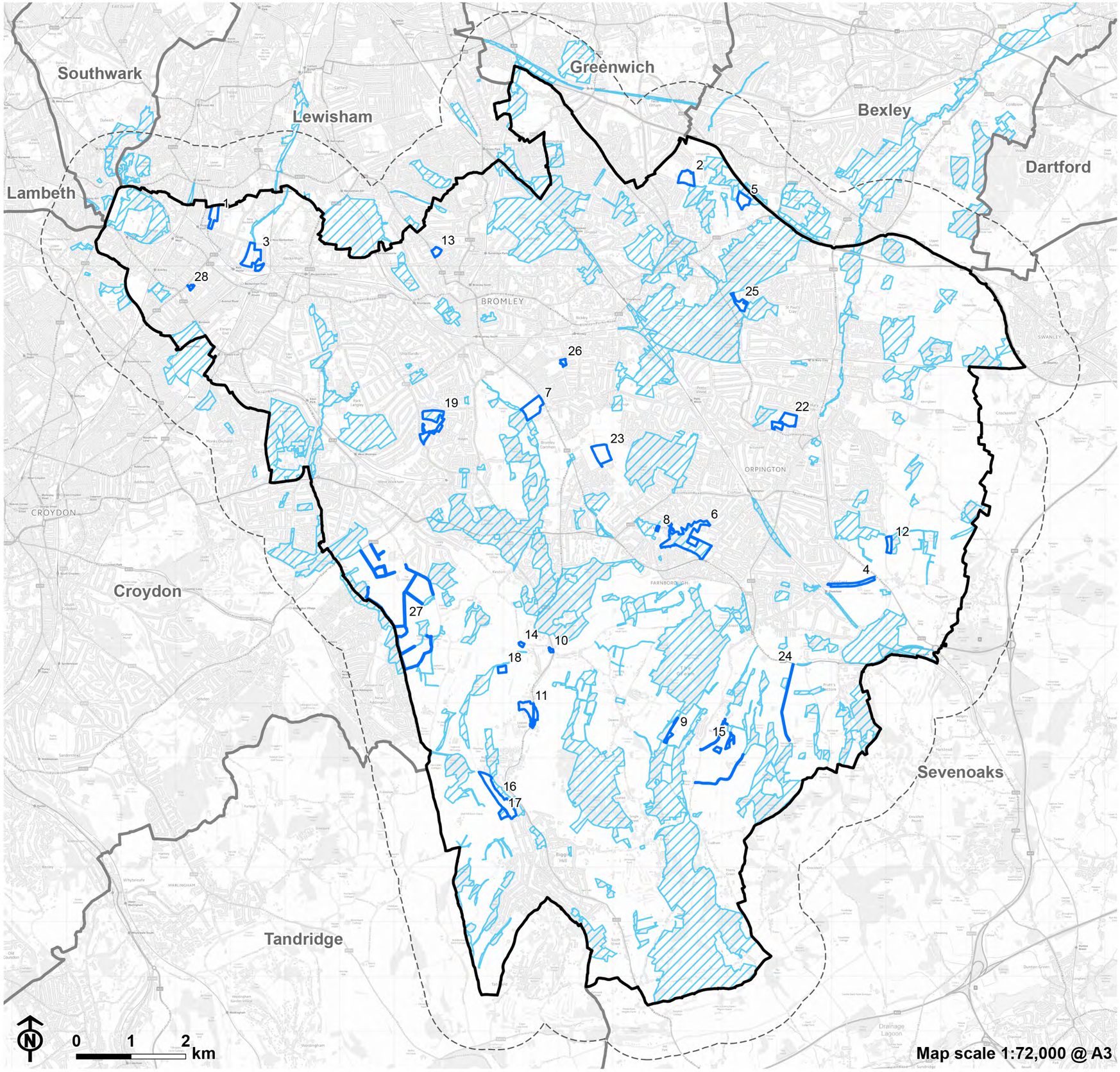
Figure 1: Summary of Site Assessment



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Site assessment boundary

1. Alexandra Recreation Ground
2. Belmont
3. Cator Park
4. Chelsfield Green
5. Chislehurst Cemetery
6. Darrick Wood
7. Elmfield Wood
8. Farnborough Recreation Ground
9. Hangrove
10. Keston Church
11. Leaves Green Common
12. Lillys Wood
13. London Road Cementery
14. Milchden Apple Trees
15. Millfield Wood
16. Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill
17. Oaklands Lane Soakaway
18. Pear Orchard
19. Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood
22. Poverest Recreation Ground, Meadow and Allotments
23. Richmal Crompton Fields
24. SNAG Farm Wood Area
25. St Paul's Green
26. Whitehall Recreation Ground
27. Wickham Court Farm
28. Winsford Gardens

Please note: Non-consecutive site ID numbers are due to sites 20, 21 and 22, that were merged into one site for survey (22 - Poverest recreation Ground, Meadow and Allotments).

Site Survey

3.9 A site survey was undertaken for all accessible sites between May and July 2023, during the optimal survey window for general habitat survey. The data was collected using tablets in the field i.e. digital mapping using GIS and supporting assessment data recorded in a bespoke proforma designed specifically for the project. To inform the field survey, the proforma was pre-populated with data collected during desk study. This included data on designated sites, priority habitats, protected/notable species, invasive species and whether this site was located in an area of deficiency in access to nature.

3.10 Ahead of the site surveys, a pilot survey was carried out to test the proforma and a session was carried out with all surveyors to ensure consistency in assessment and in recording and interpretation of the SINC criteria.

3.11 Given the nature of the assessment methodology and criteria, field-based assessments were necessarily subjective to a degree and based on the professional judgement of experienced ecologists. All LUC ecologists in the survey team are suitably experienced in the SINC survey and assessment process. All survey proformas are subject to QA checks, and as the project progresses, reviews involving the collective team are held to ensure consistency in the collection and assessment of results. Following completion of the surveys, a workshop was held with the Project Manager to develop recommendations for each site.

3.12 The survey incorporated relevant best practice methods described under the subheadings below.

Greater London Authority Open Space and Habitat Survey

3.13 Survey was principally guided by the GLA Open Space and Habitat Survey Methodology, which enables the collection of the key site information. This involves collection of data relating to a range of site attributes ranging from land

use, access and management to the habitats present and their percentage cover. Detailed plant species lists were only collected for species-rich or particularly notable habitats as per the GLA methodology.

Phase 1 Habitat Survey Method

3.14 The Phase 1 Habitat Survey technique provides a rapid and standardised assessment to classify and mapping habitats. Whilst the survey was not extended to include a detailed assessment of the sites' suitability to support protected and notable species such as through Bat Roost Suitability surveys, or close inspection for evidence of protected species, general consideration was made as to the suitability of habitats to support protected and notable species.

3.15 The survey was undertaken in accordance with Joint Nature conservation Committee (JNCC) **[See reference** 47**]** methodology. The survey was completed by a team of experienced, professionally qualified ecologists.

SINC Status Review

3.16 The surveyed sites designated as SINC and the 14 additional preliminary SINC as part of this review were assessed against the 2019 London Wildlife Sites Board criteria for SINC selection **[See reference** 48**]**, which is set out below.

Table 3.1: SINC Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria	Guidance
Representation	The best examples of each major habitat type are selected. These include typical urban habitats such as abandoned land colonised by nature. Where a habitat is not extensive in the search area it will be appropriate to conserve all or most of it, whereas where it is more extensive a smaller percentage will be conserved.

Assessment Criteria	Guidance
Habitat Rarity	The presence of a rare habitat makes a site important, because the loss of, or damage to, only a few sites threaten the survival of the habitat in the search area.
Species Rarity	The presence of a rare species makes the site important in a way that parallels rare habitat.
Habitat Richness	Protecting a site with a rich selection of habitat types not only conserves those habitats, but also the wide range of organisms that live within them and the species that require more than one habitat type for their survival. Rich sites also afford more opportunities for enjoyment and educational use.
Species Richness	Generally, sites that are species rich are preferred, as this permits the conservation of a correspondingly large number of species (however, some habitats such as reed beds, heaths and acid woodlands, are intrinsically relatively species poor).
Size	Large sites are generally more important than small sites. They may allow for species with special area requirements. Larger sites may be less vulnerable to small scale disturbance, as recovery is sometimes possible from the undisturbed remainder. They are more able to withstand visitors. Size is also related to the richness of habitat and species. The evaluation of the site's size was based on professional judgement, which was informed by the information on the extent of the site relative to the local area. For those sites of notable size, these were considered to be of particular importance in the local area, for example a large site within an urban area is considered to be of notable size, and which due to its size provides a significant contribution to a strategic wildlife corridor.
Important Populations of Species	Some sites are important because they hold a large proportion of the population of a species for the search area.
Ancient Character	Some sites have valuable ecological characteristics derived from long periods of traditional management, or even continuity in time to woodlands and wetlands that occupied before agriculture. Ancient woodlands, old parkland trees and traditionally managed grasslands tend to have typical species that are rare elsewhere. These habitats deserve protection also because of the ease with which they are damaged by changes in management.
Recreatability	The more difficult it is to recreate a sites habitat the more important it is to retain it. (Ponds can be created from scratch within a few years – whereas woodlands take decades). Certain habitats cannot

Assessment Criteria	Guidance
	be recreated because of practical reasons such as land availability and cost.
Typical Urban Character	Features such as canals, walls, bridges, railway sidings colonised by nature often have a juxtaposition of artificial and wild features. Some of these habitats are particularly rich in species / have rare species / communities. Particular physical or chemical substrates may allow rare species to thrive. They may also have particular visual qualities.
Cultural and Historic Character	Sites such as historic gardens with semi-wild areas, garden suburbs, churchyards which have reverted to the wild may have a unique blend of cultural and natural history.
Geographic Position	Regarding areas of deficiency in access to nature.
Access	An important consideration – especially in areas where there are limited opportunities for large urban populations to enjoy the natural world. Some access is desirable to all but the most sensitive sites, but direct physical access to all parts of a site may not be desirable.
Use	The current use of the site, relating to how the site is used by people e.g. education, research, or quiet enjoyment of nature.
Potential	Where a site can be enhanced given modest changes in management practices gives it value. Opportunity exists where a site is likely to become available for nature conservation use, or where there is local enthusiasm.
Aesthetic Appeal	Factors which contribute to the enjoyment of the experience of visiting a site –seclusion/views/variety of landscape etc.

3.17 The SINC assessment included a set of recommendations based on the following categories tabulated below.

Table 3.2: Assessment Categories

Category	Description
Designated SINC	
Proposed upgrade and/or extension	SINC recommended for an upgrade in SINC designation and/or extension to the site boundary to include additional habitats that contribute to the value of the SINC.
Opportunity	Existing SINC with potential, through habitat management and/or creation, to be recommended for upgrade in the future. These sites are recommended to retain their designated grade in advance of such measures being implemented.
No change	SINC that have maintained their value and at which no significant interventions for restoration, enhancement or creation are identified, such that may increase their grade of designation.
At risk	SINC at risk of downgrade or de-designation due to a decline in ecological value. These SINC should retain their existing designation, however, action is required to ensure that these sites retain, and where appropriate additionally enhance, their value.
De-designation and/or reduction	SINC, or portion thereof, that has been subject to significant and irreversible change i.e. no longer considered to support habitats of SINC value and not considered viable for restoration or recreation. This includes changes to site boundaries to exclude areas that no longer supports habitats that contribute to the SINC value or its operation. Compensatory measures are recommended to ensure the network maintains minimum overall existing value.
Pre designation sites	
Potential SINC (pSINC)	New sites meeting the SINC criteria – for any specified any grade – and recommended to progress through the designation process.

Category	Description
Preliminary SINC – not yet recommended for designation	Sites not yet recommended for designation in current condition. Recommendations for restoration, creation and/or enhancement are made to enable these to meet the SINC criteria at the target grade.
Preliminary SINC – further survey	Sites at which further survey of all or part the site is required to enable suitability for designation and/or management recommendations to usefully be made.
Not recommended for designation	Sites which, following survey, do not meet SINC criteria nor present opportunities for delivering habitats of such value. These sites may offer opportunity for delivering wider nature recovery complementary to the SINC network and/or integration of off-site biodiversity net gain as part of future land use.

3.18 Two further sites were identified by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership, later in the project after the survey window. Whilst these sites are not included in the assessment against SINC criteria, their importance to local ecology is recognised. As such it is recommended that these are taken forward in any future nature recovery opportunity mapping, land use planning and/or SINC review :

- Fields between High Elms & Cudham Lane North, there may be opportunity for extension of High Elms SINC to include chalk grassland supporting rock rose *Helianthemum nummularium*.
- Areas of ancient woodland identified through the recent 2022/ 2023 ancient woodland inventory surveys.

Limitations and Constraints

3.19 For sites which could not be accessed, proforma and assessment were completed, as far as possible, using desk-based information and information provided by Bromley Biodiversity Partnership. For transparency, the extent of survey access for each site was recorded within the site proforma. Restricted access applied to the sites listed below. Where there was no access to conduct

a survey of three sites listed below, the review was carried out using available information from the desk study and information supplied by Bromley Biodiversity Partnership.

- Partial access:
  - Cator Park – The area of dense scrub and woodland to the north-east of the site was fenced preventing access at the time of the survey, therefore this area was viewed from adjacent land. However, access could be gained to the rest of the site. Since completion of the survey, this area of the site has been subject to tree felling and vegetation clearance of 131 trees. Additional information is provided within Chapter 5.
  - Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill – Access was along the PRoW through the southern field, therefore there was no access to the northern field, which was viewed from adjacent land.
- No access but viewed from adjacent land:
  - Milchden Apple Trees
- No access:
  - Millfield Wood & Millfield Wood East
  - Pear Orchard
  - SNAG Farm Wood

Chapter 4

Biodiversity in the Borough

4.1 This chapter describes the findings of the desk study that provide a network-led approach to the SINC review. The designated site network forms the core of the broader nature recovery network. This chapter provides an overview of the local conservation priorities across the borough, recognising those protected within and those currently beyond SINC designation.

4.2 Chapters 5 subsequently goes on to explore three key principles for enhancing the borough's nature recovery network:

- Enhancement of existing SINC.
- Identification of preliminary SINC.
- Enhancement of wider habitats – linkages and stepping stones – as part of a wider nature recovery network.

The Hierarchy of Designated Sites

4.3 Designated sites form the core of a nature recovery network. The network of SINCs support the upper hierarchy of designated sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) through connection, buffering and dilution of pressure. In turn, this supports the wider habitats across the borough and provides a thriving biodiversity resource. Bromley's SINC network is presented in Figure 2 and Designated site network is presented in Figure 3.

4.4 The total extent of SINC designated land is 2,903ha representing 19.34% of the borough.

4.5 There is a relatively even distribution of SINCs across the borough, the majority of SINCs are present within the southern extent of the borough, including a higher density of Metropolitan and Borough Grade 1 SINCs. The northern extent of the borough is more densely populated with extensive urban and residential areas and fewer SINC sites including fewer Metropolitan and Borough Grade 1 SINCs.

London Borough of Bromley SINC review
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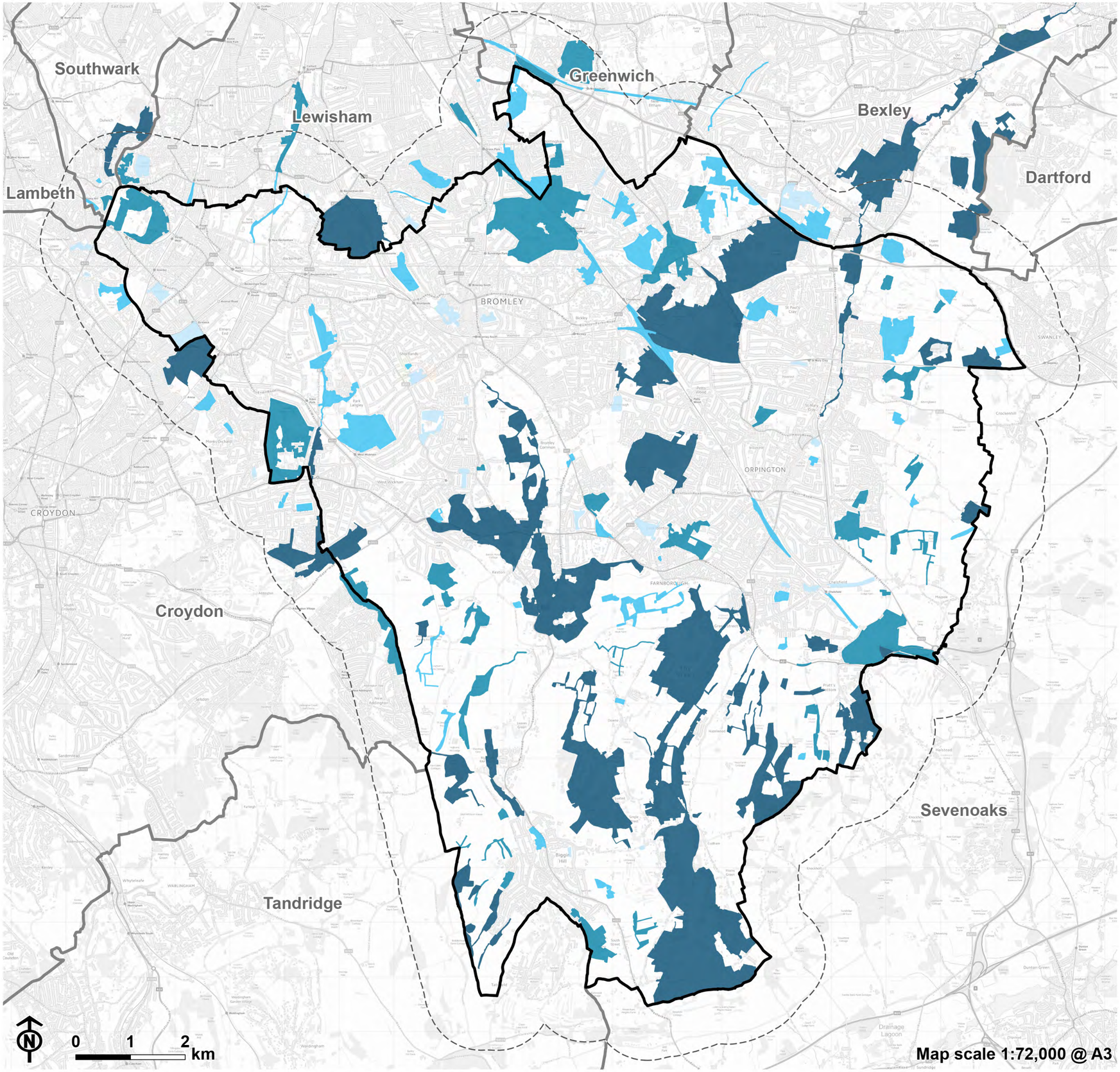
Figure 2: SINC Network



London Borough of Bromley
Bromley 1km buffer
Neighbouring local authority

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

Metropolitan
Borough Grade 1
Borough Grade 2
Local

Map scale 1:72,000 @ A3

Extent of SINC network within Borough

SINC Category	Number of sites	Area within Bromley (Ha)	Coverage within Bromley (%)
Metropolitan	25	1840.99	12.26
Borough (Grade 1)	31	622.52	4.15
Borough (Grade 2)	42	363.38	2.42
Local	21	76.17	0.51
Total	119	2903.06	19.34

London Borough of Bromley SINC review
London Borough of Bromley

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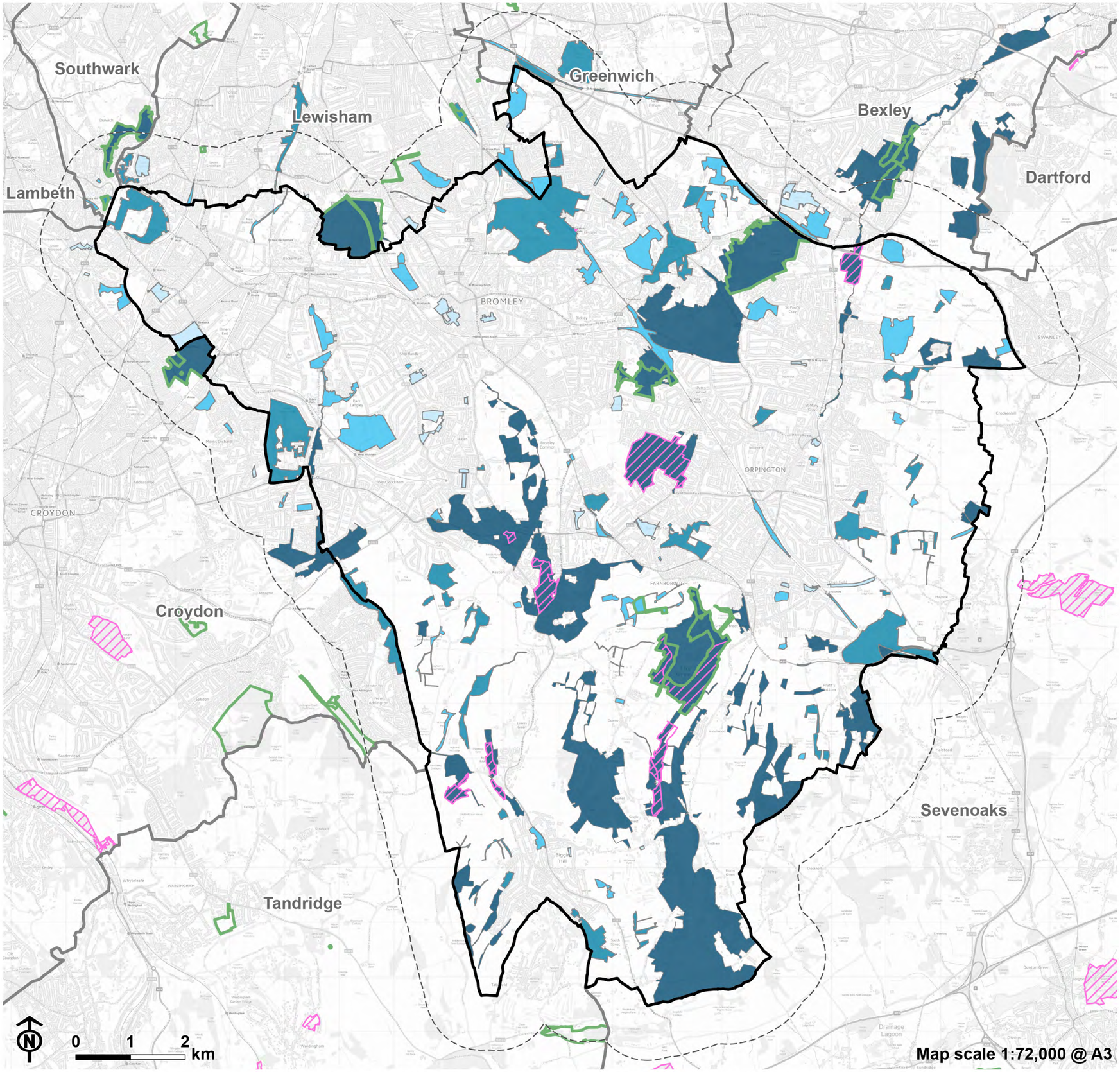
Figure 3: Designated Site Network



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Local Nature Reserve
- Site of Specific Scientific Interest

Sight of Importance for Nature Conservation

- Metropolitan
- Borough Grade 1
- Borough Grade 2
- Local

Extent of designated site network within Borough (Ha)

	SSSI	LNR	SSSI and LNR	Only SINC	Total
SINC	167.45	183.95	60.59	2491.04	903.0
Non SINC	3.76	3.18	0.01	-	6.95
Total	171.21	187.13	60.6	2491.04	909.9

Habitat Network

4.6 Figure 4 presents the ancient woodland and priority and notable habitats within Bromley. There are two caveats to the data presented in Figure 4, as indicated by asterisks on the figure legend, which is described below:

4.7 * There is overlap between the AWI and PHI Deciduous Woodland, which represents a duplication in the area extent for these habitat categories. For estimations of the total area of Bromley, which is covered by priority habitat, the deciduous woodland extent has been used since this is includes ancient woodland as well as other broadleaved woodland types within the borough.

4.8 ** As defined by Priority Habitat Inventory version 2.1 "Where candidate habitats exist but no main habitat can be identified, the whole polygon is mapped as 'No main habitat but additional habitats present'" MAGIC Map (2015) **[See reference** 49**]**. This habitat category is typically relevant to unidentified grassland types, woodland edge habitats, mosaic habitats such as scrub and grassland, and modified habitats such as gardens, pastures, and golf courses.

Ancient Woodland

4.9 Bromley supports significant areas of remnant ancient woodland (947ha, 6.3%), many of which lie within the SINC network forming several of the borough's Metropolitan SINCs including Scadbury Park, St Paul's Cray Common, Petts Wood and Hawkwood Estate, Crofton Wood, and West Kent Golf Course and Down House.

4.10 Bromley Biodiversity Partnership have recently undertaken surveys of Ancient Woodlands to inform the update of the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) in partnership with GIGL **[See reference** 50**]**. The update includes sites of a smaller size than previous, ensuring that the AWI represents ancient woodlands of 0.25-2ha, which increase the overall extent of the known network

of AWI in Greater London. Woodlands under 2ha are particularly relevant to London as small and fragmented sites are a significant component of the landscape's wooded areas **[See reference** 51**]**. Given the significance of small ancient woodlands, which inherently have a reduced resilience to impacts such as development, air quality, and recreational pressure etc, understanding the ancient woodland network helps inform opportunities for strengthening the network. This may be achieved through woodland expansion, buffering and increased connectivity, for example.

Priority and Notable Habitats

4.11 The Priority Habitat Network is extensive covering an area of 2,288ha representing 15.24% of Bromley, as presented within Figure 4. The network comprises predominantly deciduous woodland (1,841ha), good quality semi-improved grassland (153ha), lowland calcareous grassland (52ha), lowland meadows (42ha), and traditional orchards (41ha).

4.12 Priority Habitats which are of smallest extent and therefore, rarest and most fragmented within Bromley include lowland heathland (10ha), and lowland dry acid grassland (3ha).

London Borough of Bromley SINC review
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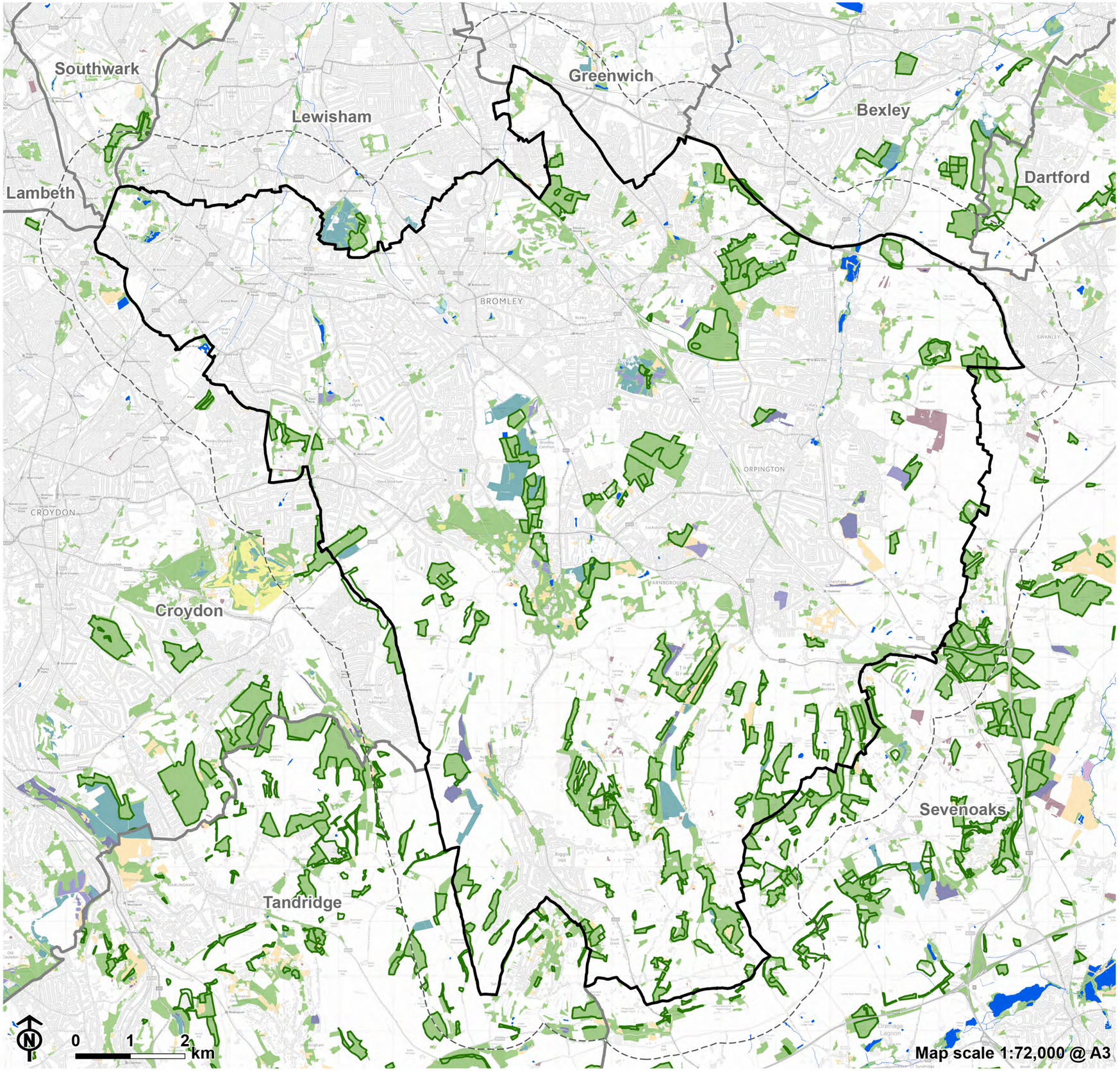
Figure 4: Priority and Notable Habitats



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Ancient Woodland Inventory*
- Surface water

Priority Habitat Inventory

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchard
- No main habitat but additional habitats present*

Extent of priority & notable habitats within the Borough

Priority habitat type	Area within Bromley (Ha)	Coverage within Bromley (%)
Ancient Woodland	947	6.31
Deciduous woodland	1841	12.26
Good quality semi improved grassland	153	1.02
Lowland calcareous grassland	52	0.34
Lowland dry acid grassland	3	0.02
Lowland heathland	10	0.07
Lowland meadows	42	0.28
No main habitat but additional habitats present	146	0.97
Reedbeds	0	0
Traditional orchard	41	0.27
Total	3236	21.55

*Refer to figure caption in the report.

South-East London Green Chain

4.13 Bromley contains several Open Space and SINC sites which form the South East London Green Chain **[See reference** 52**]**, which is defined in Bromley's Local Plan as:

> *"A chain of public and private open spaces, lined but separate, and the footpaths between them. They are accessible to the public and provide way-marked paths and other pedestrian and cycle routes. The South London green chain extends through south east London from Southwark through Bromley to Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley to the Thames."*

4.14 Figure 5 presents the South-East London Green Chain in Bromley, which includes the following five SINCs:

- Crystal Palace Park;
- River Pool at New Beckenham;
- Shortlands Golf Course and adjacent River Ravensbourne;
- Sundridge Park Golf Course, Elmstead Wood and Lower Marvels Wood; and
- Mottingham Nature Reserve and River Quaggy.

Waterways

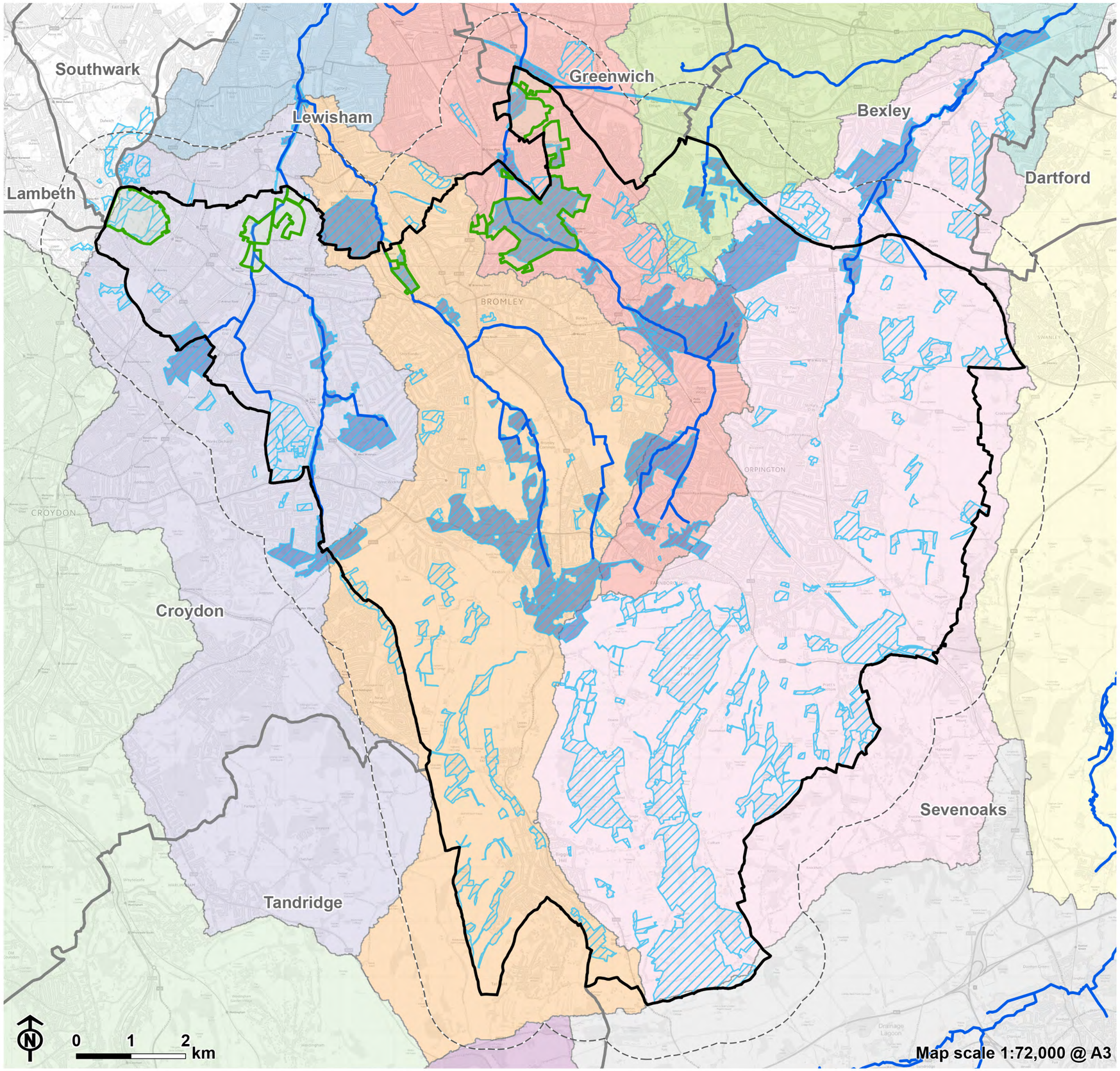
4.15 Identification of the Waterways network is important for linking to established catchment management plans and partnerships, as described in **Chapter 2: Borough-wide Initiatives**. The OS Open Rivers dataset was used for the purposes of identifying strategic corridors which form the Waterways Network, and highlights the connectivity of Waterways across the SINC Network.

4.16 Figure 5 presents the Waterways within Bromley, which includes the following seven SINCs:

- Mottingham Nature Reserve and River Quarry;
- Pool River Linear Park;
- River Beck, including Langley Park Nature Reserve, Harving Estate Woodland and Kelsey Park;
- River Cray;
- River Pool at New Beckenham;
- River Ravensbourne, Ravensbourne Valley Woodlands, Hayes and Keston Commons; and
- Spring Brook at Downham Playing Fields.

LUC

Figure 5: South East London Green Chain and Bromley's Waterways Network



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- SE London Green Chain
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

Waterways

- OS Open River
- SINC sites within the Waterways network

Operational catchment

- Lower Cray
- Middle and Lower Darent
- Pool River
- Quaggy
- Ravensbourne (Catford to Deptford)
- Ravensbourne (Keston to Catford)
- Shuttle
- Upper Cray
- Upper Darent
- Upper Eden
- Wandle (Croydon to Wandsworth) and the R. Gra

Areas of Deficiency (AoD) in Access to Nature

4.17 The importance of people's connection with nature was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when people relied on their local green spaces within walking distance in order to spend time outdoors. Green spaces support the physical and mental health of local residents through offering opportunities for recreational activities including sports, and socialising and the use of local green space has remained high following the peak during the pandemic.

4.18 Public access to nature must be balanced with accommodating undisturbed habitat for wildlife in order to prevent impacts upon ecosystem resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some green spaces experienced decline in habitat condition as a result of increased pressure by recreational activities and increased footfall. Long term declines in condition can affect the health of an ecosystem and reduce the resilience of habitats in supporting the complete lifecycle of component species including breeding, foraging and hibernation.

4.19 Dependent on the ecology of local species, examples of undisturbed areas may include unlit tree and hedgerow canopy, complex and cluttered structural diversity of undergrowth within woodland, swathes of tall and tussocky grassland, and patches of dense brambles and scrub.

4.20 Figure 6 presents the location of the AoD in access to nature across Bromley.

4.21 The Draft Bromley Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) **[See reference** 53**]** highlights the following key challenges as identified by the AoD in Access to Nature:

- The eastern side of Bromley Town centre has a deficiency in Local Parks (2 hectares or more).
- The whole of Bromley Town Centre has a deficiency in access to nature.

4.22 Overall, the majority of the borough has good access to nature, however, further analysis of the GIGL dataset of AoD in Access to Nature identifies the following broad areas are also deficient:

- An arc between Penge, Beckenham and West Wickham to the north-west of the borough;
- Bromley Town, and Bickley within the centre of the borough; and
- Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom, and Orpington to the east of the borough.

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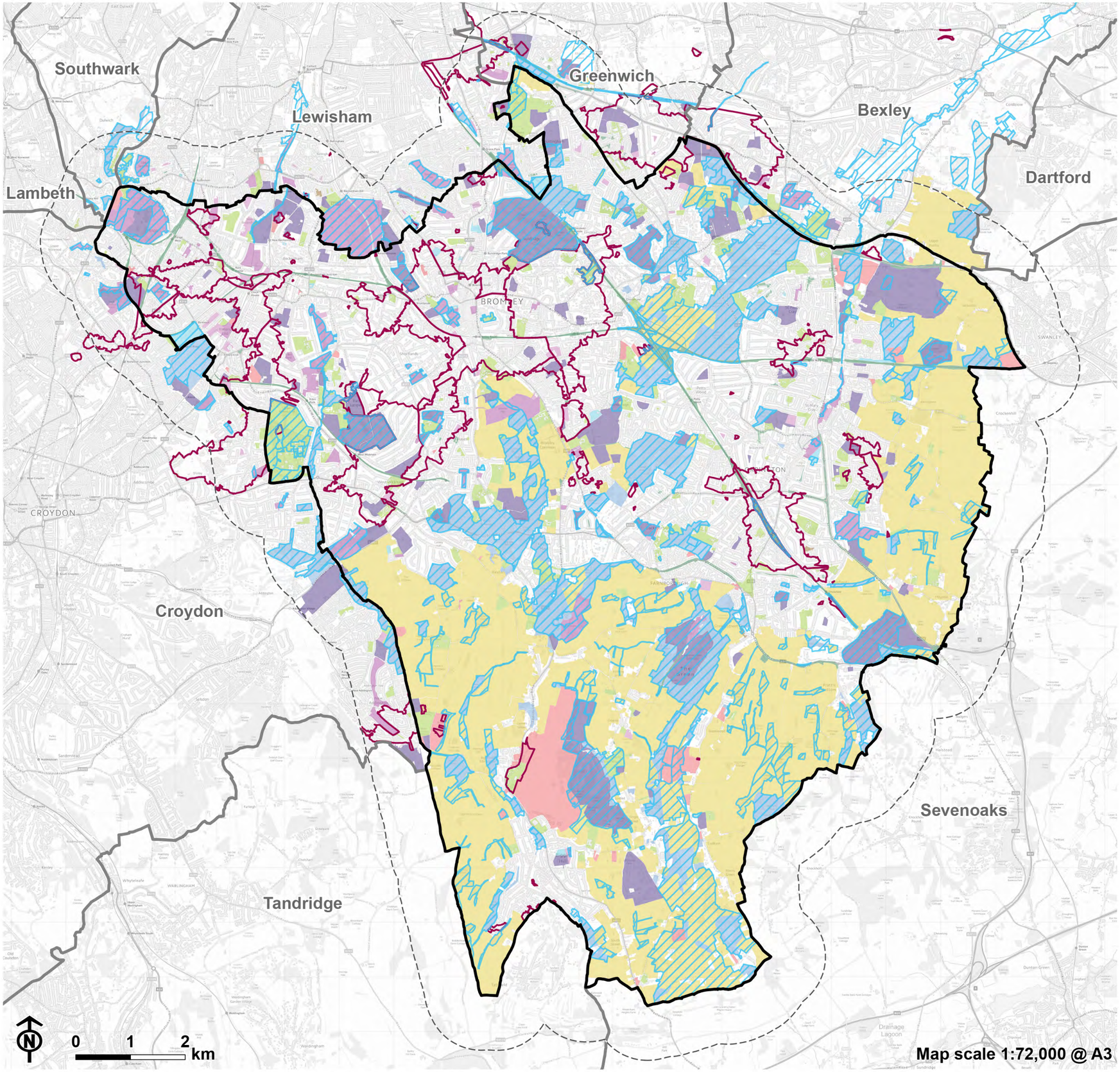
Figure 6: Areas of Deficiency in Access to Nature



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Area of deficiency in access to nature
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

Bromley open space*

- Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms
- Amenity
- Cemeteries and Churchyards
- Children and Teenagers
- Civic Spaces
- Green Corridors
- Natural and Semi-natural Urban Greenspace
- Other
- Other Urban Fringe
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Parks and Gardens

*The Open Space dataset is provided by GiGL which covers Greater London only. Therefore, this map does not present cross boundary Open Space data for Tandridge District and Sevenoaks District.

Existing Strategic Opportunities

4.23 Figure 7 presents the existing strategic opportunities within the borough as identified through desk-based review of the following datasets:

- National Habitat Network (Natural England) **[See reference** 54**]**
- BAP Habitat Suitability (GiGL) **[See reference** 55**]**

National Network Mapping

4.24 Natural England National Habitat Network (NRN) mapping identifies existing priority habitats (PHI) and from this, a network of habitat creation, restoration, enhancement and fragmentation action zones as presented in Figure 7. The aim of the National Habitat Network map is to:

> *"Provide a useful baseline for the development of a NRN as required within the 25 Year Environment Plan and LNRS as proposed within the Environment Bill"* [now 2021 Environment Act] and therein, *"to help identify possible locations for actions to improve ecological resilience of the current habitat network in line with Lawton principles 'more, bigger, better and joined'".*

4.25 The National Habitat Network **[See reference** 56**]** is comprised of primary habitats (existing priority habitats), as presented in Figure 4 (predominantly deciduous woodland, good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland calcareous grassland and lowland meadows in Bromley), and existing strategic opportunities for network connection and enhancement.

4.26 Eight categories are mapped within the National Habitat Network, identified as follows. Those categories in **bold** represent the data layers which are used to inform existing strategic opportunities within Bromley:

A) Existing habitat

1. **Habitat creation/restoration:** Areas where work is underway to either create or restore the primary habitat.

2. **Restorable habitat**: Areas of land, predominantly composed of existing semi-natural habitat where the primary habitat is present in a degraded or fragmented form and which are likely to be suitable for restoration.

B) Network enhancement & expansion

3. **Network Enhancement Zone 1**: Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitat which is likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat. Action in this zone to expand and join up existing habitat patches and improve the connections between them can be targeted here.

4. **Network Enhancement Zone 2**: As for Zone 1, land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitat but which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat. Action in this zone that improves the biodiversity value through land management changes and/or green infrastructure provision can be targeted here.

5. **Fragmentation Action Zone**: Land within Enhancement Zone 1 that connects existing patches of primary and associated habitat, which are currently highly fragmented and where fragmentation could be reduced by habitat creation. Action in this zone to address the most fragmented areas of habitat can be targeted here.

6. **Network Expansion Zone**: Land beyond the Network Enhancement Zones with potential for expanding, linking/joining networks across the landscape i.e. conditions such as soils are potentially suitable for habitat creation for the specific habitat in addition to Enhancement Zone 1. Action in this zone to

improve connections between existing habitat networks can be targeted here.

4.27 The total area of strategic opportunities within the National Habitat Network is 6,975ha, which represents a significant proportion, 46% of Bromley, as presented in the tables in Figure 7.

London Network Mapping

4.28 GIGL BAP Habitat Suitability mapping identifies areas which would give the best benefit to biodiversity if used to create nine BAP priority habitats in London. It provides finer resolution of suitable land for enhancement in comparison to the National Habitat Network mapping, as presented in Figure 7.

4.29 The dataset represents a London-wide resource which is maintained by GIGL for long-term, centralised monitoring. It can be used to inform cross-boundary land use planning as part of any future LNRS. The dataset focuses purely on ecological criteria and does not take account of factors such as land use, ownership or management.

4.30 For each habitat type within the borough, the dataset identifies areas where existing habitat in acceptable condition could be expanded without detriment to other important habitats [See reference].

4.31 GIGL BAP Habitat Suitability categories are as follows:

1. Create new/restore relict: “No existing acceptable condition BAP habitat of the same type found in parcel but potential for creation of new habitat and/or restoration of poor condition (relict) habitat.”

2. Expand existing: “Existing acceptable condition BAP habitat, plus potential for creation of new habitat in parcel.”

3. Maintain existing: “Existing acceptable condition BAP habitat, but no apparent potential for creation of new habitat.”

4.32 The GIGL BAP Habitat Suitability dataset offers a more extensive cover of available land for enhancement within the borough than the National Habitat Network. Within Bromley the total area of BAP Habitat Suitability land that either lies within or outside of the National Habitat Network, is as follows:

- 1,206ha within Network Enhancement Zone 1;
- 2,513ha within Network Enhancement Zone 2; and
- 4,968ha which lies outside of the National Habitat Network.

4.33 Therefore, the total area of BAP habitat suitability land within Bromley is 8,687ha. This represents a substantial area of the borough (57%).

4.34 Review of the National Habitat Network and London BAP Habitat Suitability datasets (Figure 7), identified opportunities across the borough for restoration and expansion of existing priority habitats that may strengthen the SINC network. The broad areas of opportunity that lie outside of the existing SINC network, are described by grouped habitat types below.

Grassland

4.35 There are several opportunities across the borough for the creation or restoration of acid and chalk grasslands. There are also opportunities for expansion of existing acid grassland, chalk grassland and meadows. These are summarised as:

- Along the south-western boundary of the borough there is opportunity for expanding chalk grassland within the chalk downlands around Saltbox Hill SSSI and SINC.
- Opportunities for strengthening the network of chalk grassland extends as a broad band between Nash in the west and Pratts’ Bottom in the east,

where there is also opportunity for creation/ restoration of relict chalk grassland.

Wetland

4.36 There are currently few pond and wetland habitats within the borough. Opportunities for wetland habitats focus in the north-west, around Cator Park and the Chinbrook watercourse, there are opportunities for creating or restoring relict floodplain. Opportunities for pond creation, as part of a diverse woodland structure are also discussed below.

Woodland

4.37 Across the agricultural and pastoral landscape within the southern extent of the borough there is extensive opportunity for creating new or restoring relict woodland. Within this broad opportunity area there are smaller parcels offering opportunity for the creation or restoration of relict meadow, and creation, restoration and expansion of ponds.

Mosaic Habitats

4.38 Due to the nature of the existing landscape and its land uses, the majority of areas of opportunity for enhancing the habitat network, are mosaic habitats. Priority habitats are those identified by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 to be habitats of principal importance. These habitats represent those habitats, which are most threatened and requiring conservation action. Figure 7 presents mosaic habitats as a single layer to illustrate the total extent of land with potential for creation or restoration of this category.

4.39 Broad opportunities are focused within agricultural land such as south of West Wickham and east of Hayes. A number of smaller pockets of land offering

opportunity for the creation of mosaic habitat also occur, such as north of Beckenham, east of Chislehurst, and east of Chelsfield.

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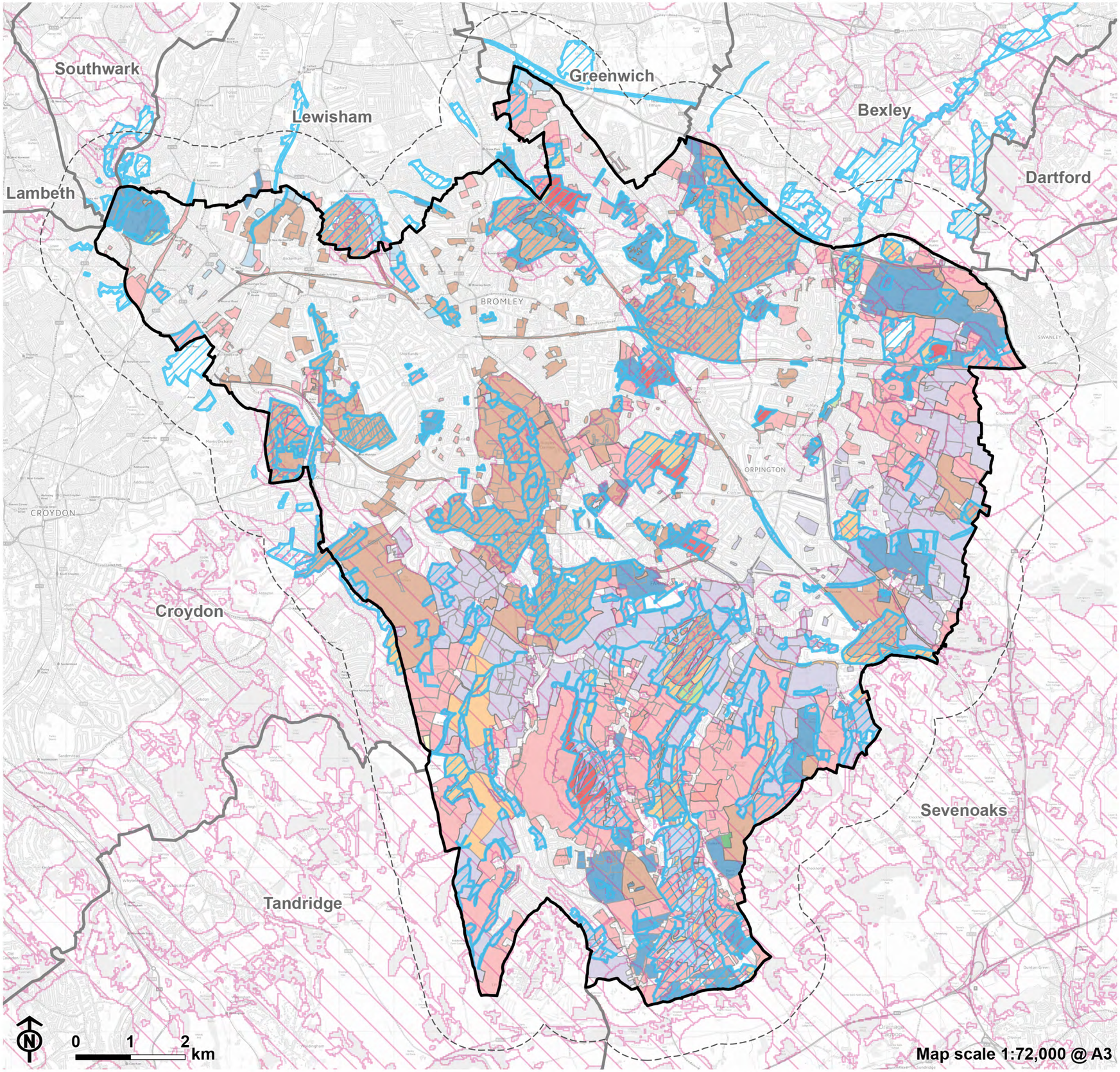
Figure 7: Existing Strategic Habitat Opportunities to support the SINC Network



- London Borough of Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

National Habitat Network

- Natural England Habitat Network*

Brorough-wide Network

GiGL BAP habitat suitability

Heathland opportunities
- Create new/restore relict heath

Grassland opportunities
- Create new/restore relict acid grass
- Create new/restore relict chalk grass
- Create new/restore relict meadow
- Expand existing acid grass
- Expand existing chalk grass
- Expand existing meadow
- Maintain existing acid grass
- Maintain existing chalk grass

Mosiac habitat opportunities
- Mosiac habitat creation/ restoration

Wetland opportunities
- Create new/restore relict floodplain GM
- Create new/restore relict pond
- Create new/restore relict reed
- Expand existing pond

Woodland opportunities
- Create new/restore relict wood
- Expand existing wood
- Maintain existing wood

*The following National Habitat Network layers are presented; Habitat Creation/ Restoration, Restorable Habitat, Fragmentation Action Zone, Network Expansion Zone, Network Enhancement Zone 1, and Network Enhancement Zone 2.

Species Network

Priority Species

4.40 Across the borough there are 259 priority species including mammals, birds, butterflies, moths, vascular plants, fungi, and lichen. Species records provided by GIGL within each SINC are included within the site proformas (Appendix C).

4.41 Appendix B presents various priority species and their habitat associations relevant to the habitats present within Bromley's SINC network. The SINC network provides protection of habitat which support a range of priority, notable and common species within the borough, making the network vital in the maintenance of existing species populations.

4.42 Expansion and enhancement to the SINC network provides opportunity to halt and reverse the decline in species by supporting increases in species diversity and richness. The SINC network is therefore, core to nature recovery and any future LNRS.

Chapter 5

SINC Status Review

5.1 This Chapter outlines the findings of the SINC Review. This includes details of recommended changes to SINC Status and overarching habitat management recommendations for SINC network and the wider habitat network.

Local Site Selection Panel

5.2 Sites identified by Bromley Biodiversity Partnership in partnership with the Council, were assessed in relation to the SINC criteria. The results of habitat survey and assessment are detailed in the sections below. In addition, management recommendations are provided for those sites which currently fall short of the SINC criteria but for which this is aspired in the future.

Summary

5.3 In summary, a total of 27 sites were surveyed and assessed as part of this project. This comprised of:

- 11 SINC sites:
  - Four Metropolitan.
  - Four Borough Grade I
  - Three Local
- 16 Preliminary SINC sites.

SINC Recommendations

5.4 The review of the existing SINC network identified that it was, overall, in good status with no sites at risk or in a condition requiring urgent management action to avoid de-designation. The SINC status recommendations are presented in **Table 5.1** below and **Figure 8**. More detailed information is provided in the site proformas in **Appendix C**.

Table 5.1: SINC Status Recommendations

Site status prior to 2023 Review	Recommen-dation	Site Name
Existing SINC	Proposed upgrade	Chelsfield Green SINC; Darrick Wood SINC; Oakland Lane Soakaway SINC; and Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC.
	Proposed extension	Elmfield Wood; Farnborough Recreation Ground; Hangrove; Lilly's Wood; Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill; Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood; and St Paul's Green.
	Opportunity	None
	No Change	None
	At risk	None
	De-designation	None
Pre-designation sites	Potential SINC	Belmont Open Space; Cator Park; Chislehurst Cemetery;

Site status prior to 2023 Review	Recommen-dation	Site Name
		Keston Church; Leaves Green Common; London Lane Cemetery; Poverest Recreational Ground, Meadow and Allotments; Richmal Crompton Fields; Whitehall Recreation Ground; and Wickham Court Farm.
	Preliminary SINC - not yet recommended for designation	Alexandra Recreation Ground; Milchden Apple Trees; and Winsford Gardens.
	Preliminary SINC – further survey	Millfield Wood & Millfield Wood East; Pear Orchard; and SNAG Farm Wood.
	Not recommended for designation	None

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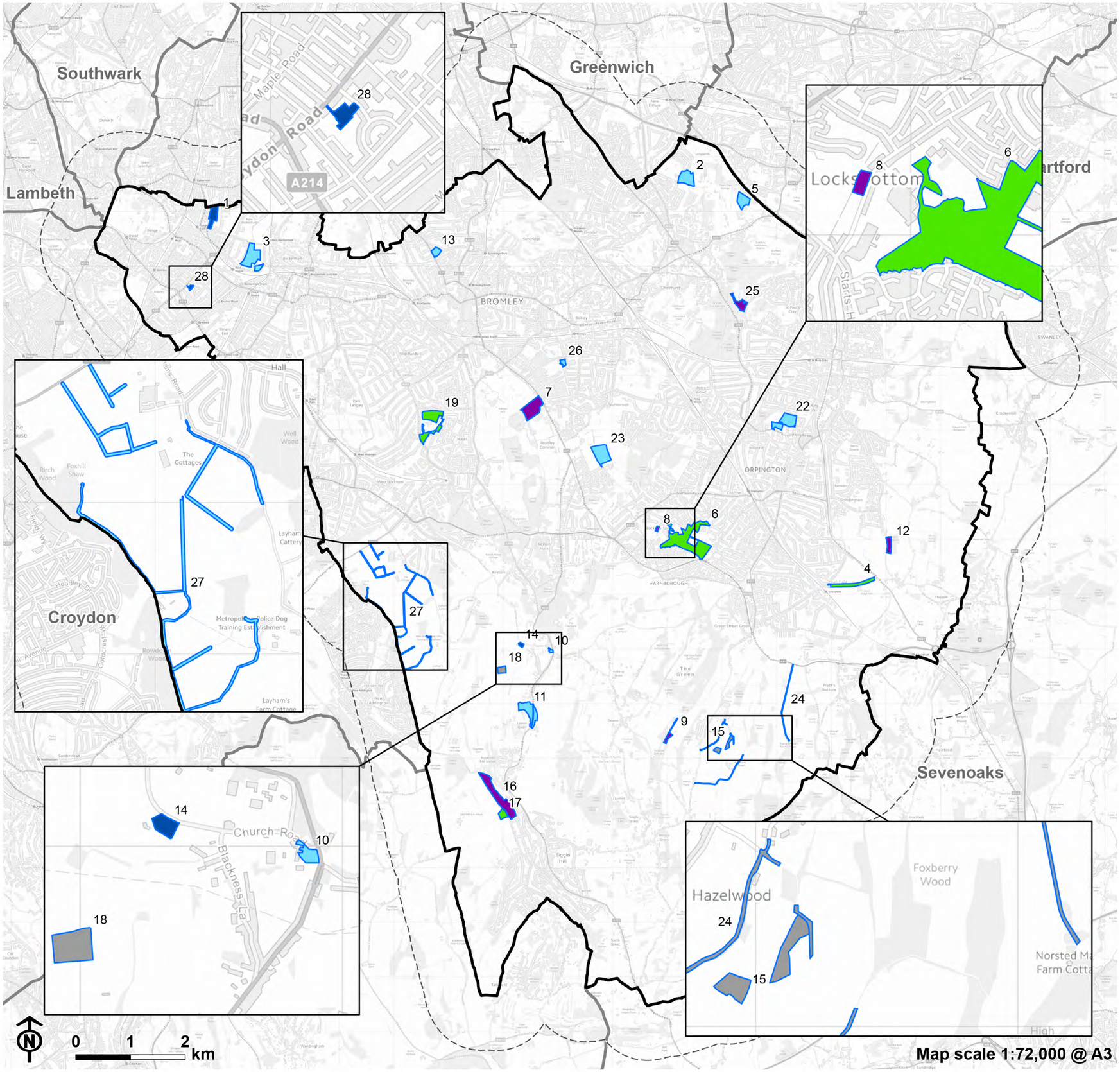
Figure 8: Summary of SINC Review



- Bromley
- Bromley 1km buffer
- Neighbouring local authority
- Site assessment boundary

SINC recommentations

- Proposed SINC
- Proposed extension
- Proposed upgrade
- Preliminary SINC - not yet recommended for designation
- Preliminary SINC – further survey required

1. Alexandra Recreation Ground
2. Belmont
3. Cator Park
4. Chelsfield Green
5. Chislehurst Cemetery
6. Darrick Wood
7. Elmfield Wood
8. Farnborough Recreation Ground
9. Hangrove
10. Keston Church
11. Leaves Green Common
12. Lillys Wood
13. London Road Cementery
14. Milchden Apple Trees
15. Millfield Wood
16. Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill
17. Oaklands Lane Soakaway
18. Pear Orchard
19. Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood
22. Poverest Recreation Ground, Meadow and Allotments
23. Richmal Crompton Fields
24. SNAG Farm Wood Area
25. St Paul's Green
26. Whitehall Recreation Ground
27. Wickham Court Farm
28. Winsford Gardens

Proposed Upgrade

5.5 The following sites were considered suitable for upgrade:

- **Chelsfield Green SINC** supports a substantial area of calcareous grassland and species-rich broadleaved woodland. The SINC is easily accessible by locals and residents from further afield. The SINC is located next to Chelsfield train station and is accessible by foot, car or bike. Therefore, this SINC is suitable for upgrade from Local to **Borough Grade II**.
- **Darrick Wood SINC** offers a significant natural heritage asset to Bromley's SINC network due to the diversity of habitats, species assemblages and species richness recorded across the site. The ancient woodland represents one of the best quality sites in Bromley and it is readily accessible on foot by residents of Farnborough, and by bike or car by residents living elsewhere in Bromley. Therefore, it is suitable for upgrade from Borough Grade I to **Metropolitan SINC**.
- **Oakland Lane Soakaway SINC** offers an area of significant habitat for notable invertebrate species and provides an ecological link between two further SINCs. Therefore, upgrade of the SINC from Borough Grade I to **Metropolitan SINC** will recognise the unique values of this Site as part of the existing SINC network.
- **Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC** supports species-rich ancient woodland within Cupola Wood and the wider woodlands also offer ecological value due to their native origin, presence of an understorey and other features such as ditches and a pond. Therefore, this SINC is suitable for upgrade from Local to **Borough Grade II**.

5.6 These sites were considered to support habitats of higher quality, variety and value than previously identified and/or were of sufficient size to provide valuable opportunities for wildlife in an urban setting and to contribute to the strategic ecological corridors in the borough.

Proposed Extension

5.7 The following sites were considered suitable for extension:

- **Elmfield Wood SINC** offers habitat of similar type and value to the adjacent River Ravensbourne, Ravensbourne Valley Woodlands, Hayes and Keston Commons SINC and meets several SINC criteria, making it suitable for extension of the SINC. The addition of Elmfield Wood will strengthen the existing Metropolitan SINC and wider SINC network as the site offers native secondary woodland which will enhance the resilience of adjacent woodlands within the SINC through addition of younger trees of a diverse species composition.
- **Farnborough Recreation Ground SINC** comprises of broadleaved scattered trees, dense scrub and neutral semi-improved grassland of similar value to that of the adjacent SINC and meets several SINC criteria making the site suitable for the extension of the Farnborough Recreation Ground Local SINC.
- **Hangrove SINC** supports calcareous grassland of similar quality to that of the adjacent Downe Bank and Cudham Valley North SINC, therefore the extension of the SINC will strengthen the current Metropolitan SINC.
- **Lilly's Wood SINC** contains secondary woodland, which offers habitat of similar type and value to the adjacent Lilly's Wood and Black Bush Wood SINC and meets several of the SINC criteria, making this site suitable for extension of the Lilly's Wood and Black Bush Wood SINC. The extension of this SINC will strengthen the existing Borough Grade I SINC and wider SINC network.
- **Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill SINC** supports a large area of calcareous grassland and meets several SINC criteria. The extension of the SINC to include this site offers a substantial increase in the habitat richness of the Metropolitan SINC and wider SINC network.
- **Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC** it is recommended to extend the boundary of the SINC, to include the native species-poor hedgerow along the southern boundary of the allotments and amenity grassland and

mature tree line either side of the footpath as this offers ecological connectivity between the east and west sections of the site.

- **St Paul's Green SINC** meets several of the SINC criteria and is suitable for extension of the adjoining Scadbury Park, St Paul's Cray Common, Pett's Wood and Hawkwood Estate SINC. Given the diversity and condition of habitats present within St Paul's Green, such as species-rich neutral grassland and broadleaved woodland, the extension of the adjoining SINC to include this site offers a substantial increase in the habitat richness of the Metropolitan SINC and wider SINC network.

5.8 It is recommended that the site boundaries for each of these is altered to include additional habitats, which are considered to contribute to the value of the existing SINC site. The inclusion of these areas will further bolster the existing designated site network by increasing the area protected by 29.2ha (1%), which in turns provides greater resilience to impacts from climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

Potential SINC

5.9 This assessment included a review of new sites offering potential for designation as a SINC. Those considered suitable are as follows:

- **Belmont Open Space** supports habitat of **Local SINC** quality and diversity, including broadleaved woodland, mature tree lines, a canalised stream and semi-improved grassland.
- **Cator Park** supports a diverse range of habitats of **Local SINC** quality and diversity including Chaffinch Brook, which is surrounded by amenity grassland with scattered broadleaf and coniferous trees There is also an extensive area of dense scrub along the northern boundary of The Beck. In addition, the site offers strategic connection with River Pool at New Beckenham SINC to the north, which is a Borough Grade II SINC. Since completion of the survey, the area of broadleaved woodland and scrub within the eastern proportion of the site, which was inaccessible due to fencing, has been subject to tree felling and vegetation clearance of 131

trees (available at: https://www.bromley.gov.uk/news/article/532/interim-injunction-obtained-following-felling-of-protected-trees). The area should be reinstated with broadleaved woodland and scrub habitat of high species diversity and habitat complexity in order to reinstate the site's ecological value and contribution to the SINC network.

- **Chislehurst Cemetery** supports habitat of Local SINC quality including species-rich grassland, hedgerows and scattered trees.
- **Keston Church** supports habitat of **Local SINC** quality and diversity. The site is a small churchyard of 0.4ha, which contains calcareous grassland supporting meadow saxifrage and large numbers of orchids. Meadow saxifrage is listed on Kent Rare Plan Register as it has suffered notable declines in recent years from Southern England. Common, spotted and pyramidal orchids are present within the churchyard and the adjoining road verge. Gravestones at the churchyard also support a diverse assemblage of lichens and previous surveys carried out in 2011 identified over 50 species including rare acid stone species which are uncommon in other churchyards in Bromley.
- **Leaves Green Common** supports a variety of habitats of **Local SINC** quality including neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland and scrub which provides opportunities for notable species.
- **London Lane Cemetery** supports habitat of **Local SINC** quality, including species-rich neutral grassland, which is a priority habitat within Bromley, and native hedgerows and scattered trees.
- **Poverest Recreational Ground, Meadow and Allotments** support habitats of **Local SINC** quality and diversity, including mosaic habitat of horticultural planting and community food growing within the allotments, semi-improved acid grassland within the recreational ground and species-rich neutral grassland within the meadow. The site also contains a network of mature broadleaved trees and native species-poor hedgerows.
- **Richmal Crompton Fields** meets several SINC criteria including representation, species rarity and potential which make it suitable for proposal as a **Local SINC**. The site is located between several residential areas, many of which lie within areas of deficiency in access to nature.

Therefore, designation of this site as a SINC would protect this site as an important area offering access to nature.

- **Whitehall Recreation Ground** supports habitats for notable invertebrates including brown hairstreak and stag beetle and therefore, is suitable for proposals as a **Local SINC**.
- **Wickham Court Farm** contains a network of hedgerows and treelines with hedgerow buffer strips/ field margins that provides functional and ecological connection between the adjacent three SINCs and further areas of woodland habitat. Therefore, these linear features are suitable for proposal as a **Local SINC**. The site also includes a field with Roman remains of historical value. The designation of these wildlife corridors will strengthen the local SINC network and ensure protection of important commuting, foraging and shelter habitat for birds, bats, small mammals and invertebrates of the surrounding woodlands within an otherwise intensive agricultural landscape.

5.10 The inclusion of the above sites within the designated SINC network would bolster and expand the network by an additional 59.3ha (2%), representing a substantial increase in protected land for wildlife.

Preliminary SINC - Not yet recommended for designation in current condition

5.11 Three sites were considered to not yet meet SINC designation in their current condition. Nevertheless these remain important within the wider nature network. It is recommended that these site continue to be beneficially managed and monitored in collaboration with Bromley Biodiversity Partnership for future designation. The sites are described below:

- **Alexandra Recreation Ground** is a small site which, at the time of the 2023 survey, did not support habitats of local SINC quality or diversity. Information from Bromley Biodiversity Partnership demonstrates that the site supports a native hedge (Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hornbeam, Cherry Plum & Hazel) which was recently planted, in addition to the creation of a

small orchard and wildlife area. In its current state, the site is primarily managed for recreation with an intensive mowing regime, which limits the ecological value. The amenity grassland verges and areas around mature scattered trees could be reinstated or enhanced to a more species-rich assemblage to encourage greater diversity within the site. Providing a relaxed mowing regime for the verges and eastern section of the parkland would re-instate structural diversity within the grassland with benefit for invertebrates, birds, small mammals and reptiles. Incorporating wildflowers and fruiting species with an extended flowering and fruiting period would offer foraging habitat for a range of invertebrates, birds and mammals year-round.

- **Milchden Apple Trees** is a small site of 0.57ha. The Site was previously surveyed by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership around 2018/2019, which identified veteran apple trees along the farm access track to the south of the field and orchids within the north-western corner of the field. In 2023 and as part of this SINC Review, LUC conducted a site survey which recorded the presence of native species-rich hedgerows. However, the field was noted to be subject to high-levels of grazing and nutrient enrichment, which was considered to have a detrimental impact on the grassland habitat present. It was considered that the site did not meet the criteria of local SINC quality or diversity at the time of survey. The improved grassland could be restored to species-rich grassland supporting orchids, and offering higher ecological value through a reduction in intensive grazing and soil stripping and re-sowing where appropriate to encourage greater floral diversity.
- **Winsford Gardens** is under management by a Friends of Group **[See reference** 57**]** who were delivering restoration works to the pond at the time of the survey. In its current state, the site is primarily managed for public access with frequent mowing of the grass and cutting of scrub and hedgerows to avoid encroachment to paths. Therefore, the site does not meet the criteria of Local SINC quality or diversity due to heavy visitor use and limited areas of undisturbed habitat for wildlife. However, through habitat restoration, the site may be suitable for consideration for future designation. The site lies within a predominantly urban area of the borough and therefore, restoration and reinstatement of the ecological value of the site will offer an important space for wildlife. The site would benefit from

further relaxed mowing and meadow creation and addition of wildlife friendly planting to benefit invertebrate richness. With these enhancements there is opportunity for this site to be of higher ecological value in the future.

Preliminary SINC - Further Survey

5.12 For sites which could not be surveyed, a review of available desk information and information provided by Bromley Biodiversity Partnership was carried out as presented within the SINC proforma (Appendix C). These sites have potential to meet some of the SINC criteria, however as they could not be surveyed, a complete assessment could not be made. The sites are described below:

- **Millfield Wood & Millfield Wood East** are two parcels of broadleaved woodland with a combined area of 2.2ha. Based on available desk information the woodlands are in good condition, supporting a species-rich composition and have potential to support other fauna such as mammals, birds and invertebrates.
- **Pear Orchard** is an area of potential remnant orchard. Based on available desk information, the site supports broadleaved woodland and scrub with suitability to support a range of birds, bats, other mammals, invertebrates and lower plants.
- **SNAG Farm Wood** supports a network of hedgerows, including species-rich hedgerows with trees. Based on available desk information, hedgerows are in a good condition and are suitable to support other species such as mammals, birds and invertebrates.

5.13 For each of these sites, survey is required to confirm whether the site could be suitable for consideration as a pSINC and to identify supporting beneficial management recommendations.

5.14 The current SINC status and recommendations of the survey are presented in **Table 5.2.**

Table 5.2: Summary of SINC Status and Recommendations. This has been colour coded with the following references: Upgrade in designation (green), Proposed extension (purple), Potential SINC (jade), Preliminary SINC – not yet recommended for designation in current condition (blue), and Preliminary SINC – further survey (grey).

Site Name	2023 Surveys	
	SINC Status of land surveyed	Recommendation
Darrick & Newstead Woods LNR	Borough Grade I	Upgrade to Metropolitan
Oaklands Lane Soakaway	Borough Grade I	Upgrade to Metropolitan
Chelsfield Green	Local	Upgrade to Borough Grade I
Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood	Local	Upgrade to Borough Grade II and small area of Extension
Elmfield Wood	N/A	Extension of Metropolitan SINC
Hangrove reversion field	N/A	Extension of Metropolitan SINC
Oaklands Lane Saltbox Hill	N/A	Extension of Metropolitan SINC
St Paul's Green	N/A	Extension of Metropolitan SINC
Lilly's Wood	N/A	Extension of Borough Grade I SINC

Site Name	2023 Surveys	
	SINC Status of land surveyed	**Recommendation**
Farnborough Recreational Ground	N/A	Extension of Local SINC
Belmont Open Space	N/A	Potential SINC
Cator Park	N/A	Potential SINC
Chislehurst cemetery	N/A	Potential SINC
Keston Church	N/A	Potential SINC
Leaves Green Common	N/A	Potential SINC
London Lane Cemetery	N/A	Potential SINC
Poverest Recreation Ground, Meadow and Allotments	N/A	Potential SINC
Richmal Crompton Fields	N/A	Potential SINC
Whitehall Recreation Ground	N/A	Potential SINC
Wickham Court	N/A	Potential SINC
Alexandra Recreational Ground	N/A	Preliminary SINC - Not yet recommended for designation in current condition

	SINC Status of land surveyed	**Recommendation**
Milchden Apple Trees	N/A	Preliminary SINC - Not yet recommended for designation in current condition
Winsford Gardens	N/A	Preliminary SINC - Not yet recommended for designation in current condition
Millfield Wood & Millfield Wood East	N/A	Preliminary SINC - further survey
Pear Orchard	N/A	Preliminary SINC - further survey
SNAG Farm Wood	N/A	Preliminary SINC - further survey

Recommendations to strengthen the SINC network

5.15 The SINC network forms the core of the nature recovery network and is a vital component for ensuring biodiversity can thrive in the borough. In line with the Bromley Biodiversity Plan, it is important that the SINC network and supporting habitat in the wider network are protected, restored enhanced and expanded to maximise opportunities for biodiversity in response to climate change and other pressures faced.

5.16 This report presents the recommendations for enhancing Bromley's SINC network through habitat management, habitat enhancement, creation and designation of new SINCs. More specific recommendations for each site are provided within the site proformas in **Appendix C**.

5.17 Strengthening of Bromley's SINC network can be achieved by:

1. Enhancement and expansion of existing SINCs

2. Identification of Preliminary SINCs.

Overarching Recommendations

5.18 Recommendations are provided below with regards to enhancing the SINC network and wider habitats of Open Spaces and private land.

Habitat Management

5.19 Habitat management should be conducted in accordance with best practice guidance by appropriately qualified and licenced contractors, and in consultation with an experienced ecologist.

Woodland and Hedgerow Management

5.20 Many of the sites identified as Preliminary SINC or suitable for upgrade in status support broadleaved woodland both native semi-natural and secondary planted, which would benefit from the creation of a specific woodland management plan. For example, Elmfield Wood and Lilly's Wood both support secondary planted woodland adjoining ancient woodland. Therefore, holistic management of these woodlands as part of the surrounding woodland network will ensure the future resilience of woodlands against pests, diseases and INNS considering species composition, structural integrity and complexity and opportunities for natural regeneration bolstered with tree planting where needed to enhance species-richness or diversity in age class.

5.21 Elsewhere, such as at Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC, the woodland belt around the east and southern perimeters of the site would benefit from management which complements the management of ancient woodland of Cupola Wood through management of veteran trees and creation of glades with species rich ground flora in order to improve the condition of the wider woodland and expand supporting habitat for protected and notable species including saproxylic invertebrates, bryophytes, lichen and fungi.

5.22 Where there are existing native hedgerows which are either species-poor or gappy, there is opportunity to strengthen these through management such as hedge laying and gapping up with native berry bearing shrubs that provide fruits and flowers at varying times throughout the season to enhance species diversity and provide foraging resources for birds and invertebrates throughout the year. Across many sites, such as Richmal Crompton Fields, Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC, and Chislehurst Cemetery there are further opportunities to enhance their value for wildlife through maintaining unmown buffers and bolstering with wildlife friendly planting such as nectar and pollen rich wildflowers or diverse grasses to offer expanded habitat cover and tussocky ecotones for reptiles, hedgehogs and birds.

Relaxed Mowing

5.23 It is recommended that mowing regimes within the SINC and wider network, including open spaces, road verges, private gardens and in housing estates, are reviewed to adopt a more varied and relaxed mowing regime **[See reference** 58**]**. This would provide greater structural diversity and support species richness, which in turn will create more opportunities for wildlife than existing amenity grassland. The implementation of mowing regimes that vary between areas will also provide foraging and sheltering resources for pollinators throughout the seasons. There are number of SINC sites and open spaces surveyed in this review, which would benefit from this management recommendation, which will help to create green links between SINC sites in the core network.

5.24 Relaxed mowing and meadow creation would improve species richness, diversity and grassland habitat condition for a range of flora and fauna. This could be achieved at Belmont Open Space, Cator Park and Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC.

Management of Invasive Non-Native Species

5.25 There are several records of INNS across the sites surveyed, including Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*. Additional non-native species which were observed during surveys include butterfly bush *Buddleja davidii*, Spanish bluebell *Hyacinthoides hispanica,* Turkey oak *Quercus cerris* and Cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus.*

5.26 Invasive species have a negative impact on the environment by outcompeting native species, destabilising river and stream banks, increasing risk of flooding, creating hazards in canals and waterways and through the introduction and spread of diseases, amongst other issues, such as impacts to human health and the economy. Therefore, management of habitats in the borough should seek to control the spread and eradicate invasive species in line with the London Invasive Species Plan (LISP) **[See reference** 59**]**.

Habitat Enhancement

Wildflower Meadows

5.27 Further to enhancing the grassland habitat within the borough, and in association with the ‘Brilliant Butterflies’ project, it is recommended that the SINC and wider network include creation of new and larger wildflower meadows. This will provide a network of wildflower and nectar-rich resources that connect to hotspots such as existing species-rich grasslands with larger areas of this habitat for pollinators to forage and shelter. This can be achieved through consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, such as the Highways

Agency (e.g. to create wildflower verges and pollinator pathways) or working with land owners and managers such as idverde (e.g. to create stepping stone habitats in the form of pocket parks).

5.28 Meadows could be created within areas of amenity grassland at Poverest Recreation Ground to the south and west of the allotment, and at Pickhurst Green and Cupola Wood SINC.

Wildlife Friendly Planting

5.29 Wildlife friendly planting should be incorporated within existing and new ornamental plant beds and introduced shrub borders such as at Richmal Crompton Fields, and London Lane Cemetery. This could include seed and berry bearing plants, which provide additional foraging opportunities for wildlife, and where appropriate, include select non-native species, which have extended flowering periods (early and late winter). Plants lists are available from the Royal Horticultural Society **[See reference** 60**]**, Buglife **[See reference** 61**]**and British Trust of Ornithology **[See reference** 62**]**.

De-canalisation of rivers and streams and wetland creation

5.30 There is opportunity for the enhancement of rivers and streams through de-canalisation such as at Belmont Open Space and Cator Park.

5.31 In the absence of channel naturalisation, in-channel modifications could be made for aquatic invertebrates and fish, through making minor modifications to the channel bed to retain gravels and pebbles, and installing floating reedbeds and marginal vegetation.

5.32 Freshwater habitats could be further enhanced through the creation of wetland habitat features such as reedbeds, aquatic marginal planting to expand the riparian zone and creation of wet meadows or SuDS features where topography and natural surface flows allow.

5.33 Interventions should be coordinated with the Catchment Management Plan. Consultation with Catchment Management Partnerships (**Chapter 2: Borough-wide Initiatives)** may identify additional opportunities for wetland enhancement and creation within the Borough.

Wildlife Only Zones

5.34 Enhancements can be achieved through the creation of undisturbed habitat as part of alterations in habitat management to create pockets of dense scrub mosaic with tall grasses, or through alterations in public access through the creation of exclusion zones for wildlife.

Habitat Creation

5.35 Across the SINC network, wider Preliminary SINCs such as London Lane Cemetery and other Open Spaces supporting Priority Habitats, can be enhanced for wildlife through the addition of habitat features such as log piles, deadwood features, bug hotels, ponds, hibernacula for reptiles and amphibians, and bare and sandy earth for ground dwelling invertebrates such as mining and mason bees.

5.36 There may be opportunities for engagement with local communities within and beyond the SINC network such as at allotments and orchards, on the opportunities for encouraging wildlife into greenspaces through the addition of habitat features.

5.37 The addition of habitat features complements any changes in mowing or management of woodlands and hedgerows through providing opportunities for a diverse assemblages of species.

Future Designations

5.38 Three sites which are 'Preliminary SINC - *Not yet recommended for designation in their current condition*', namely Alexandra Recreation Ground, Milchden Apple Trees, and Winsford Gardens, are of ecological value in their current state within the wider nature network as they provide important stepping stones, connecting and/ or buffering core habitats. Recommendations are provided for these sites which aim to restore their ecological value in order for them to be reconsidered in future for designation within the SINC network. Recommendations might include simple changes in land management or additional wildlife friendly planting and habitat features.

5.39 Additionally, for the three sites which are *'Preliminary SINC – Further Survey'*, namely Millfield Wood & Millfield Wood East, Pear Orchard, and SNAG Farm Wood, survey is strongly recommended to enable full assessment of their suitability in time step with the Local Plan process.

5.40 Sites which were identified by the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership later in the project after the survey window, as detailed within Chapter 3: SINC Status ReviewChapter 3, are recommended to be taken forward in any future nature recovery opportunity mapping, land use planning and/or SINC review.