



CAMLEY STREET NATURAL PARK

Design & Access Statement including Conservation Statement

The London Wildlife Trust

September 2017

Document prepared by

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the proposals for a new learning centre and landscape works to Camley Street Natural Park.

Camley Street Natural Park is a very unique place, and has been in the hearts and minds of many people for over 30 years. The site, a former coal drop was colonised again by nature after its abandonment. Local residents fought hard against development for this green pockets to be retained. CSNP was managed by London Wildlife Trust since it opened in 1985, has a charm that would be hard to replicate today without feeling contrived. It feels informal and cared for, the result of a place that has evolved through many years of dedicated development by a committed group of staff and volunteers. The development of the neighbouring King's Cross yards, especially the newly constructed Somers Town Bridge linking Camley Street and wider Somers Town to King's Cross Central, is an ideal opportunity to enhance Camley Street Natural Park to offer long lasting natural and educational assets to the area.

The architectural and landscape proposals contained in this D&A statement have been developed through careful and close discussion with the London Wildlife Trust, Camden Council, the OHeritage Lottery Fund, Argent and through public consultation, enabling the Trust to achieve a number of aims:

1. To explain the reserve's important role in the development of urban nature conservation
2. To be one of the best places to experience wildlife in Central London
3. To improve accessibility
4. To equip the reserve with the necessary infrastructure to be a model of urban nature conservation
5. To engage with new neighbours emerging in the development of King's Cross, and with wider Londoners
6. To explain the site's historic significance as a Victorian coal drop
7. To allow the Park to be more financially self-sustaining.

Proposed works include:

1. Demolition of existing visitor's centre building, which are at the very end of their life span
2. A new learning centre building
 - The learning studios that can be reduced for small education groups or expanded for conferencing and training events
 - Optimised access to the canal by creating a wide open canal frontage and views towards the KXC
 - Dedicated volunteer room has a direct relationship with the nature reserve helping to manage and nurture.
 - Office space for site staff

- High quality access and welfare facilities for disabled people
- Situated to make the best use of space on site for biodiversity
- Small café offer serving hot drinks, sandwiches and cake acting as a key point of access
- Alternatively school class access to the reserve.

3. The key features of the site wide masterplan and landscape are as follows:

- New widened route to the pond dipping area which aims to take the primary load of visitors. This is supplemented with crown lifting and selective tree thinning to give greater views to the canal and listed buildings to the east.
- Re-surfacing of the honeypot area to the north of the new building
- New interactive learning zone and habitat for invertebrates around the entrance of the building.
- A new rain garden show casing sustainable urban drainage
- The canal edge will also be enhanced with marginal planting
- A repaired sluice gate and drainage system will aid the temporal variations in the ponds in the natural park
- The area of no-go intervention will be better maintained and extended
The pond decking will be repaired and resurfaced

This Design & Access Statement should be read with the full planning submission drawings.

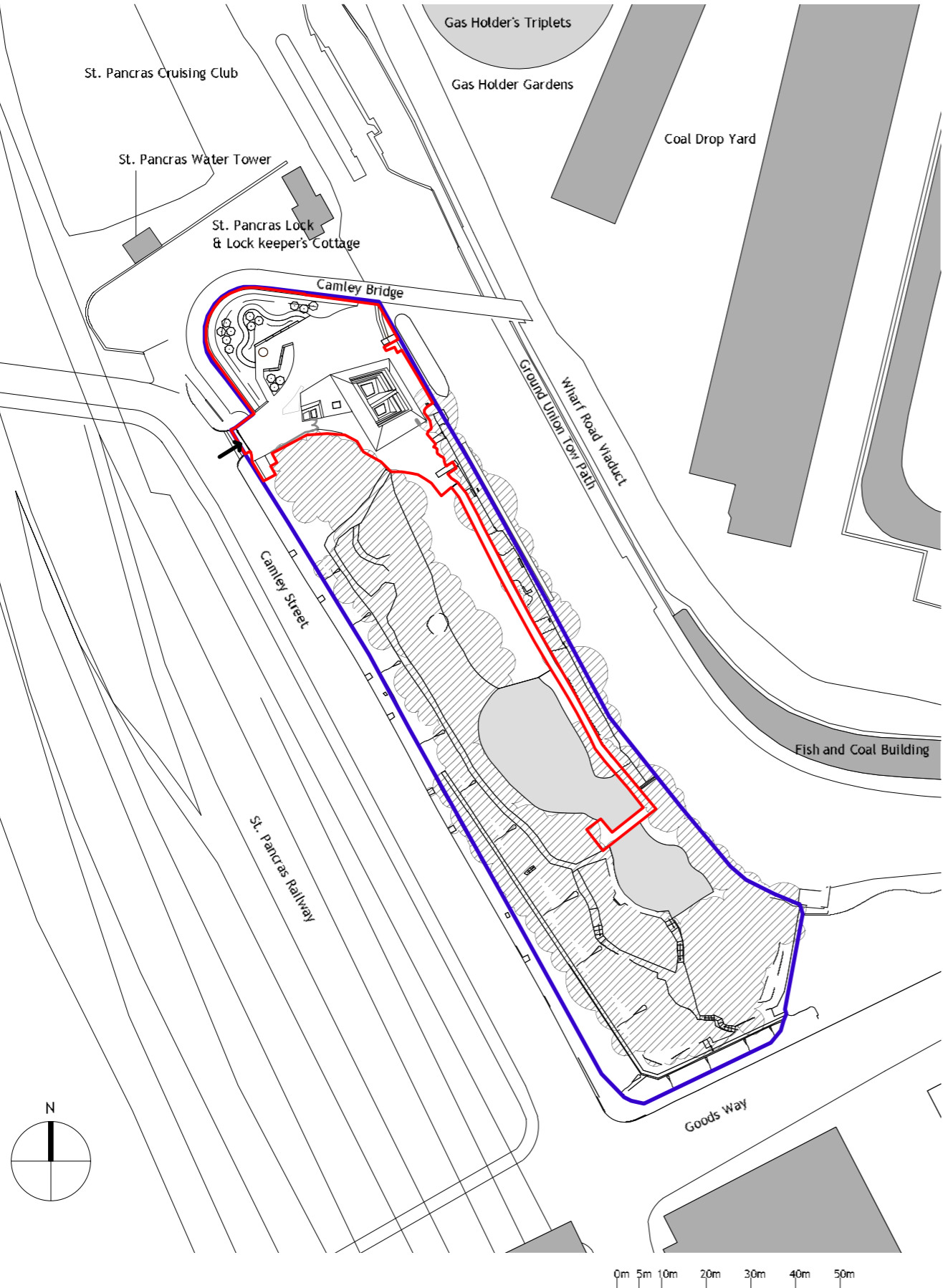
Site Address

12 Camley St, Kings Cross, London N1C 4PW



Aerial view site plan (Site boundary shown in yellow)

1.1 Site Location Plan



1.2 Drawing Issue Sheet

The following full set of drawings have been issued as a part of the planning submission.

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erect architecture

Camley Street Natural Park

PROJECT	DD	20
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DRAWING DESCRIPTION

PAGE	SCALE	SHEET	NUM	REV
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Site Location Plan	1:1250	A4	LOC	01	P01
Existing Plan	1:200	A3	GA	01	P01
Demolition Plan	1:200	A3	DEM	01	P01
Demolition Area Photos 1	NTS	A3	DEM	02	P01
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Proposed Section AA	1:100	A3	GA	20	P01
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DISTRIBUTION	COPIES	
London Wild Trust	E	
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2.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project will make Camley Street Natural Park (CSNP) an inspirational place to learn about wildlife in central London. It will be the wild heart of the King's Cross metropolis, where people can access, connect with, and explore London's wildlife, whilst also celebrating the site's industrial heritage and transformation - 'from coal drop to coal tit'.

A new learning and visitor centre will enable delivery of a varied, exciting activity programme where visitors will explore and learn about urban nature conservation through a rich, enhanced 0.8 hectare mosaic of thriving habitats including wetland, woodland, meadow and invertebrate areas.

The new centre, enhanced landscaping and expanded activity programme will enable a step-change for LWT through increased provision, visibility and increased sustainability - environmental and financial - of CSNP.

2.0.1 The Applicant

London Wildlife Trust (LWT) is the only charity dedicated to protecting London's wildlife, engaging local communities through outdoor learning, volunteering and access to their nature reserves. The LWT vision is a city rich in biodiversity, where people treasure wildlife and where access to natural green space is a right for all. In a city facing development pressure and a rising population, where people are increasingly disconnected from their natural environment and projects such as Camley Street Natural Park can create real change.

LWT have a proven track record and presently manage over 40 nature reserves. Working in partnership to provide Londoners with ever better experiences of nature.

2.1 SCOPE AND BRIEF

2.1.1 Scope

Camley Street Natural Park (CSNP) is a unique 0.8-hectare nature reserve in King's Cross, central London. Once a railway coal drop transferring coal to London's homes and businesses, the site has since transformed into a wildlife haven and a centre of national and international significance for urban nature conservation.

In 1981 the land was earmarked for development as a coach park, by which time local people had discovered its wildlife value. Local efforts to save it became a joint project between London Wildlife Trust (LWT), the Greater London Council (GLC) and Camden Council to create a new type of nature reserve, open to the public, ran with the community in mind and situated in a deprived inner-city area. CSNP was opened by Ken Livingstone, the leader of the GLC, in May 1985 and today the reserve is open daily with free public access.

CSNP is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and a statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is nationally and internationally important as an urban nature reserve.

Today, the neighbourhood around CSNP has changed beyond recognition. The site is now located in the middle of one of the largest urban redevelopments in Europe; by 2020 40,000 new people will live, work or study within 1km of the site and the new footbridge connecting CSNP to the development across the canal was opened in July 2017.

In 2014, CSNP welcomed approximately 15,000 visitors per annum; by 2015 this had increased by 42% to 20,000 and is expected to continue to grow to potentially 40-50,000 per annum.

A recent study by Atkins estimated CSNP's value as £2.8 million per year to the local economy in terms of its environmental, cultural and societal impact ("Camley Street Natural Park, An economic valuation of ecosystem services", Atkins 2015).

The increased visitor numbers are putting pressure on the wildlife and habitats which are sensitive to damage and footfall. The buildings are timber pre-fabs over 30 years old, in need constant maintenance and no longer fit for purpose.

2.1.2 The Brief

The brief given to the design team was to develop a scheme that will allow LWT to engage the estimated 40,000 people per year by 2020.

Key features of the new learning centre were to include:

- An education studio and a multi-functional learning space that can be reduced for small education groups or expanded for conferencing and training events.
- Dedicated volunteer welfare area
- Office space for site staff
- High quality access and welfare facilities for disabled people
- Situated to make the best use of space on site for biodiversity
- Small café offer serving hot drinks, sandwiches and cake

The building was to have high environmental sustainability standards, built in habitat features and greater energy efficiency than the current structure.

Externally landscaping and habitat enhancements were to include:

- Enhancing existing habitat and creating new areas to better manage the site for visitors and wildlife.
- New mini-beast habitats with the potential for hands-on activities including exploratory mini-beast hotels and deadwood.
- Wildflower planting with rich plant diversity attracting pollinators.
- Improvements to the wetland area enabling marginal plant communities to regenerate, clearing the large pond and rerouting paths to enhance the reedbed and reduce disturbance.
- A protected zone with little disturbance and high biodiversity to increase the ground flora, enriching invertebrate communities and attracting nesting birds and bats.
- An accessible route around the reserve to improve access for people with limited mobility, create new stopping/navigation points and improving sightlines to habitats, enabling better engagement with the reserve's wildlife.
- New high quality signage and interpretation, to help people learn about the reserve's natural and industrial heritage

LWT and the design team have also consulted widely with the Council, visitors, potential visitors and the local community to identify what stakeholders would like CSNP to offer. LWT has also worked in partnership with Camden Council during the development of the design proposals, listening carefully to their advice on design matters to refine and improve the proposals. The collaborative process with Camden, stakeholders and LWT's knowledge of the site have informed these proposals.

3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 Site as Existing

Camley Street Natural Park (CSNP) is a 0.8 hectare wild green space in the heart of London on the banks of the Regent's Canal in King's Cross. The site is to the North West of the King's Cross Regeneration project, KCX. With the completion of Granary Square, Central St Martins and the immediate townscape, the King's Cross development has already shifted the focus of the area closer to Camley Street Natural Park. To the North East of the site are the Gas Holder Triplets and across the Regent's Canal on the East lies the Coal Drop Yard developments. The new pedestrian and cycling bridge, the Somers Town Bridge, now drastically improves connectivity between Camley Street and the proposed public realm improvements along Wharf Road.

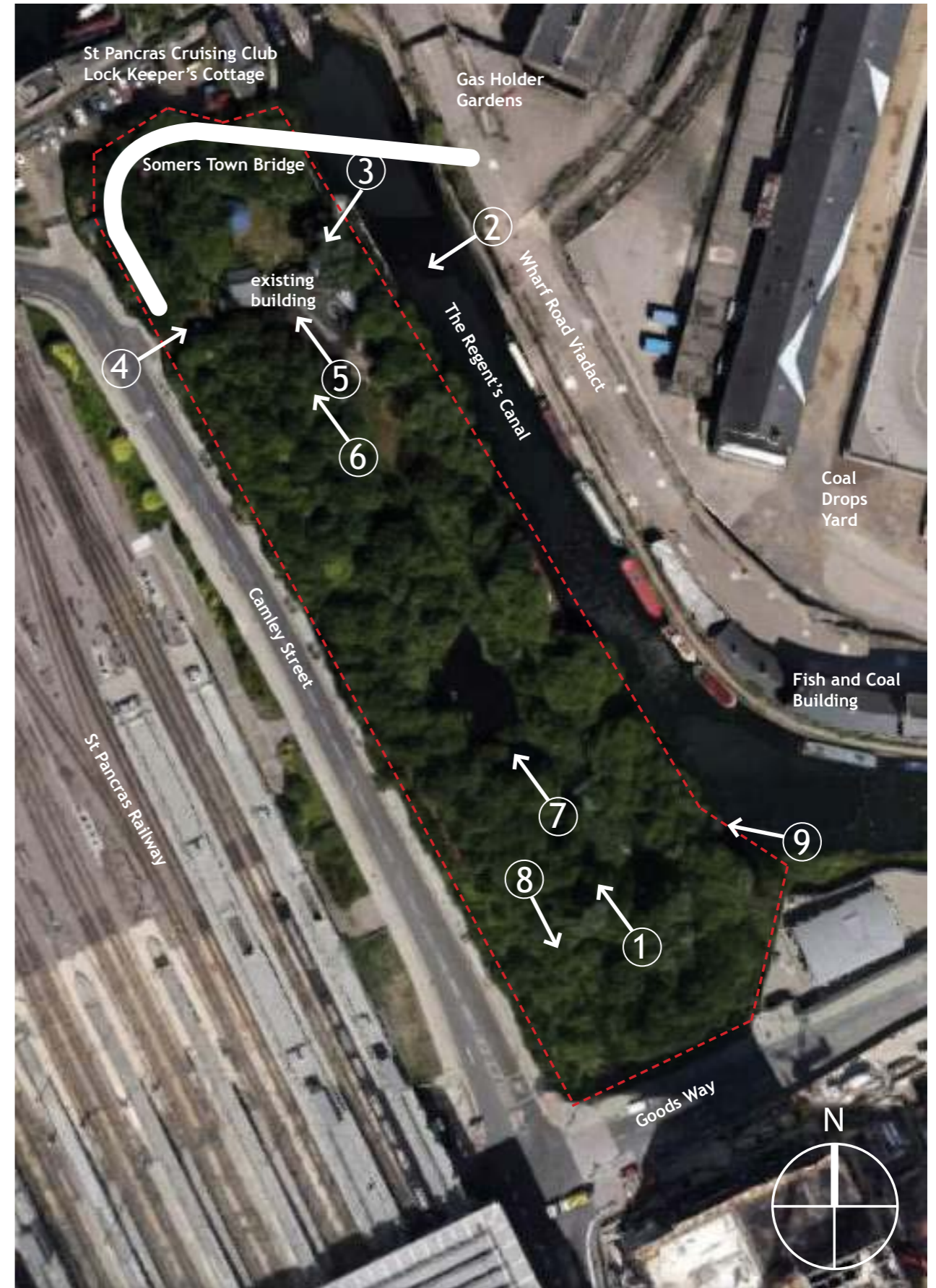
The reserve is managed by London Wildlife Trust as a Local Nature Reserve, and receives visits from 2,500 school children annually, as well as 22,000 from the general public.

Created in 1984 from land that had previously been occupied by a coal drop, the reserve is long and narrow, presenting its long edge to the canal, facing the huge King's Cross redevelopment site across the canal to the east.

It sits within Regent's Canal Conservation Area and it is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and a statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

To the west are the Eurostar lines running into St Pancras, with a new link road to the south. As such the site is surrounded by major infrastructure, and visitors are left in no doubt that they are at the heart of a major metropolis. However, the park still maintains the feeling of an oasis of calm to be discovered.

The site is largely flat, with a gentle slope up to the south, heavily wooded with pioneering tree species. The wild meadow and two ponds to towards the south of the site also provide habitats for wild plants, birds and insect species. There are localised high point at the south ends of the site with a new connection across the canal by the bridge from King's Cross (see right).



Aerial view of site (Somers Town Bridge across Regent Canal, indicated notionally in white)

The existing buildings are located in the northern area of the park, bordering onto the area recently cleared and re-graded for the bridge works.

The most valuable habitat is situated in the southern third of the site, and the only recent construction in this area is the “Viewpoint” constructed as a floating seating area on the canal by Finnish architects, AOR in 2013. London Wildlife Trust has indicated that major buildings in the southern section of the site are unlikely to be appropriate due to its nature conservation value.

The most compelling aspect of the site at the moment is its sense of discovery offering memorable moments to be uncovered, or arrived at by chance. Both our landscape and building strategies have striven to keep this underlying trait of discovery and surprise, which is part of what makes CSNP special.

3.1.0 Existing Site Photos



Aerial view from the south of the site



North end of Camley Street Natural Park viewed from Somers Town Bridge



CSNP viewed from the tow path on the opposite side of the canal



CSNP entrance gate viewed from Camley Street

3.1.0 Existing Site Photos



The pond at south edge of site



The existing classroom viewed from the meadows



The pond at south edge of site



The 'View Point'