HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Reconstruction of Sham Bridge in the grounds of Kenwood House

Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane, Hampstead,

NW3 7JR London

English Heritage

January 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment is provided as part of a Listed Building consent application for replacement of the grade II* listed Sham Bridge located in the grounds of Kenwood House. It has been produced in accordance with NPPF, Section 12: *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, paragraphs 128, 131, 132 and 134 to demonstrate the understanding of the cultural significance of the bridge in relation to the history and development of Kenwood House and its grounds and to assess the impact of the proposal on this significance.

1.2 The Appraisal has been produced by Dr Agnieszka Sadraei, Senior Properties Curator for English Heritage London Portfolio. The History, Description and Significance sections have been informed by the 'Caring for Kenwood' Landscape Management Plan and analysis of archival drawings (copies appended in Carden&Godfrey's Design and Access Statement).

1.3 Kenwood House and its grounds are owned freehold and managed by English Heritage Trust.

1.4 The bridge was probably constructed in mid-18th century and it has been remodelled and rebuilt several times in the modern era. Due to low quality materials used in previous remodelling and insufficient maintenance care it is now suffering from progressive decay.

1.5 The proposed work will include the draining of the east end of the lake, including temporary structural shoring and drainage outfall, the dismantling of the existing decayed bridge and its complete replacement in painted timber, to matching appearance but with modified details.

1.6 This Assessment outlines the impact of the works on the significance of the Sham Bridge which is a grade II* listed heritage asset. This document complements and should be read in conjunction with architectural drawings by Carden &Godfrey, Design and Access statement (with appended design and archival drawings) both by Carden & Godfrey Architects; Structural Engineer's report, AMP condition survey for English Heritage by Geoff Dyer and Phase 1 Habitat Survey by FPCR (2018).

2. THE SITE

2.1 The site consists of the bridge located on the east edge of the Thousand Pound Pond to the south-east of Kenwood House and on the north-east edge of the character area described in the 'Caring for Kenwood' Landscape Management Plan (first issued in 1996) as Ken Wood (see Fig.1).

2.2 As noted in the Landscape Conservation plan, Thousand Pound Pond is a substantial water body fed by springs originating in the valleys of the Pasture Ground and West Meadow, together with surface drainage. The Pond has steep banks of a uniform angle that

extend to a flat bottom. Only at the eastern end below the Sham Bridge is there a marginal shelf with shallow water above. The majority of the pond is uniformly very deep.

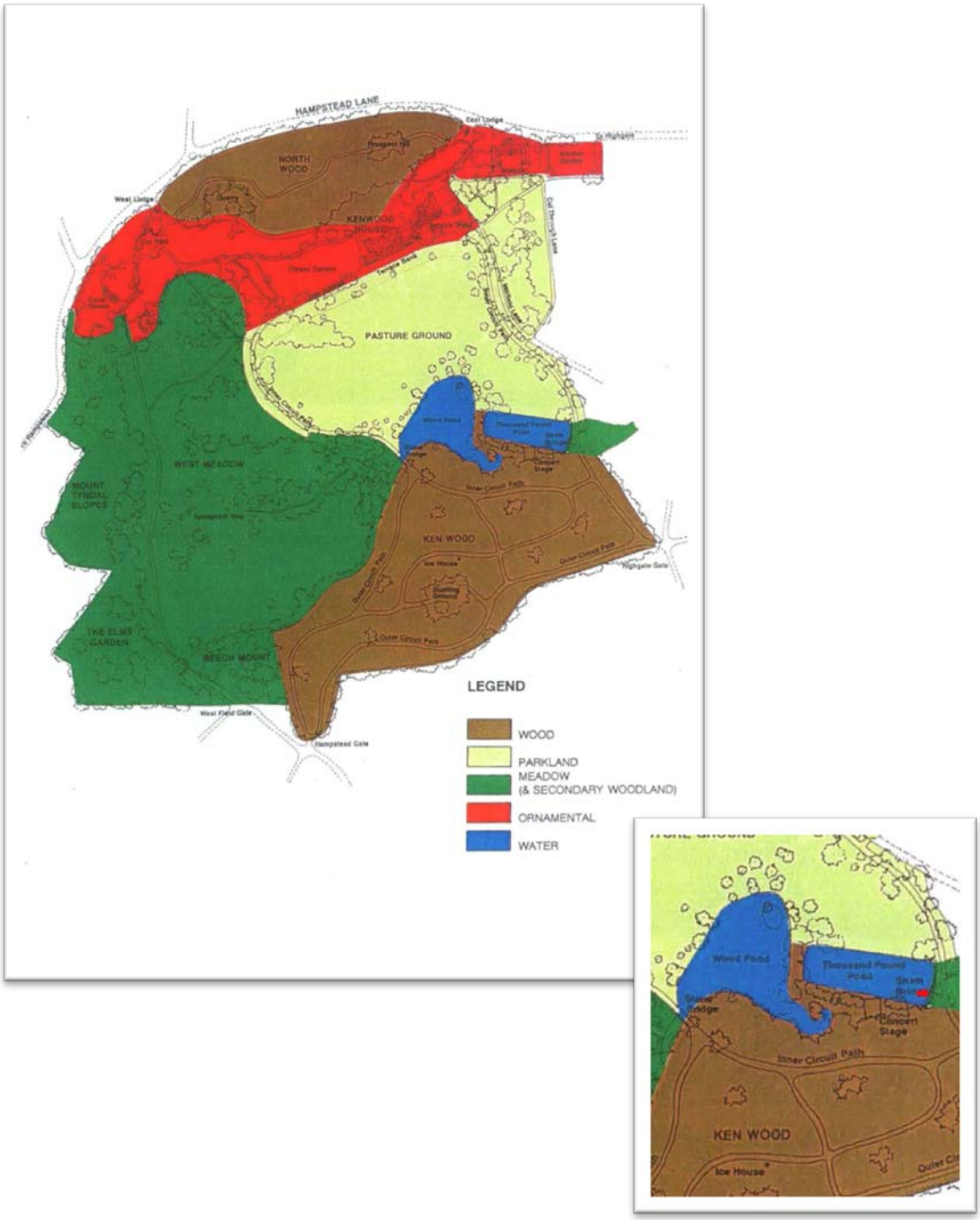

Fig.1 Kenwood grounds character areas and inset showing the location of Sham Bridge (red arrow).

3. DESIGNATIONS

3.1 The Site includes the grade II* listed Sham Bridge (listed in 1954, National Heritage List for England Entry Number: 1379245) which sits within grade II* Kenwood Registered Park

and Garden and was constructed as a landscape feature associated with grade I listed Kenwood House located some distance to the north.

3.2 Ken Wood, stretching to the south of the Thousand Pound Pond, is a designated Ancient Woodland (see Fig.2). The pond itself lies within the Hampstead Heath Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SMINC), and is partially bordered by the Hampstead Heath Woods Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI), designated for its high forest woodland community on free draining acidic soil.

3.3 There is also a Wildlife Statement for the site dating back to 2000 and a Phase One Habitat survey was undertaken in January 2018.

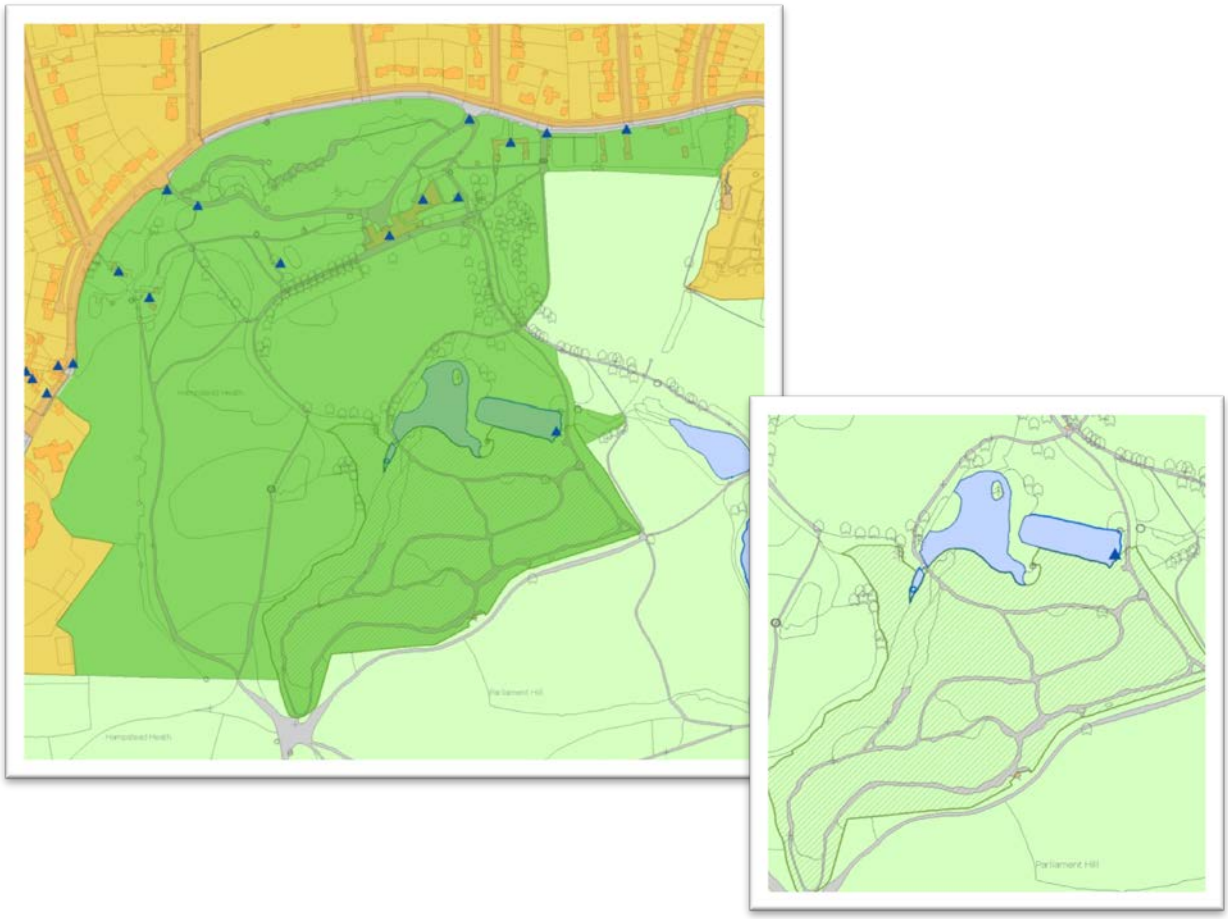

Fig.2 Kenwood grounds showing Listed Buildings (triangle); extent of Registered Park (green); conservation area (yellow) and the Ancient Woodland (Ken Wood – green hatching shown on the inset).

4. THE PROJECT: BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

4.1 Bearing in mind its status as a significant building on one of English Heritage's flagship sites the condition of the Sham Bridge has long been a cause of concern for the Trust. The structure is a highly visible decorative landscape feature and it has been decaying

progressively since it was last restored in 1993, impacting on the aesthetic and historical values of Kenwood Park as a heritage asset.

4.2 The periodic condition survey undertaken in 2106 for EH as part of the Asset Management Plan highlighted that the Bridge is in a very poor state as a result of significant rot decay. This is largely due to the use of inferior softwood in a damp environment in which the bases to the bridge abutments are immersed in water.

4.3 The surveyor estimated that the current bridge appears to date back no further than the 1980s. This is also reflected in the listed description which acknowledges that it was restored in the late 20th century, has been supported by an analysis of archival drawings and a survey by the project architect.

4.4 It is therefore proposed to dismantle the existing decayed bridge and carry out its complete replacement in painted timber, to matching appearance but with modified details (as per architectural drawings).

4.5 The bridge will be carefully dismantled by hand and the existing components will be carefully studied and recorded (with all the parts labelled carefully) for the purpose of reassembly and replication of the profiles of mouldings and balusters. It is possible that some of the elements of the substructure can be re-used.

4.6 The stainless steel angles will be replaced to match existing. The structural softwood will be of good quality, eg. slowly grown Baltic Pine and the structural engineer has recommended that the main posts should be in hardwood timber called “Ekki” as this is extremely durable and suitable for marine construction work.

4.7 The lower cladding, which has been in contact with the ground or water (eg. the abutment bottom boards and arch springing panels), will be replaced with GRC panels made to replicate the appearance of the existing.

4.8 The western elevation of the bridge will be painted.

4.9 English Heritage will look into improving the sluice maintenance to achieve a more consistent water level throughout the year.

5. HISTORY OF THE SITE

5.1 Archival research has so far proven unfruitful in identifying the designer of the bridge and time of its inception. The first written reference appears in 1786 and it forms an integral part of Kenwood grounds as remodelled by Humphry Repton between 1793 and 1796, for the 2nd Earl of Mansfield. However, some authorities attribute it to Robert or James Adam who worked on Kenwood from 1764 (with breaks) to 1784.

5.2 Adam did design certain features for the grounds (probably unexecuted). However, the drawings by the Adam Office in Sir John Soane's Museum do not contain any relating to the Bridge and the quality of the design does not speak of Robert, or indeed James Adam's, approach to architectural design. It has been suggested that the design should be attributed to James 'Athenian' Stuart. He is mentioned by Repton in the Kenwood Red Book as having designed and executed the Stone Bridge that lies not too distant from the Thousand Pound Pond and the Sham Bridge.

5.2 It is clear, reading The Red Book that Repton produced for the 2nd Earl in May 1793, that the Bridge was already a feature of the grounds. The bridge is a folly , a screen which merely comprises a wooden façade and performs no practical function. For this reason its design provoked some contempt from Repton who describes it thusly:

…I cannot in this place refrain from observing, that the Sham Bridge however beautiful from some parts of the terrace, yet as it is a deception so frequently liable to be detected, I think it is an object beneath the dignity of Kenwood and this might possibly be remedied.

5.3 Extensive landscape work was carried out at Kenwood between 1992 and 1994 to further the objectives of the management strategy as set out in the Landscape Management Plan. As part of this project the lakes were dredged and repaired and Sham Bridge rebuilt. Three trees to the north-east of the Wood Pond were removed to re-open the view to the Sham Bridge from the ivy arch and House terrace.

5.4 Unfortunately, apart from 1993 survey drawings, it was not possible to find drawing records of the alterations that were carried out at the time.

6. DESCRIPTION

6.1 Sham bridge is constructed of wood and designed to give the impression that a river ran beneath it.

6.2 The bridge compromises three arches with bridge abutments to North and South. On the west elevation the arches have mock voussoirs and a dog-tooth frieze under the balustrade with undecorated bulbous, vase-shaped balusters with cushion toruses.

6.3 It is supported on stout timber posts, possibly of tropical hardwood, which are founded on stainless steel vertical angles driven into the ground. It has not been possible to determine if the posts are footed on the earlier concrete piles, as they may survive below ground. Stainless steel vertical angle supports have been bolted through timber posts.

6.4 The west (front) elevation of the bridge has slightly different details compared with the 1993 survey, for instance the number of arch voussoirs and the width of springing blocks. It is deemed that as it is at present the bridge looks authentic and geometrically correct, with better proportions at the springings than previously surveyed.

7. CONDITION OF THE BRIDGE

7.1 The post footings consist of the steel angles and no trace of piles had been found. The posts are decayed where moisture is trapped within the superstructure, and they are to be replaced. The six main posts will not be painted, as it appears from a visual inspection that they had not been painted before.

7.2 The South and North Abutments (see Fig.3) are in a very poor condition and affected by rot decay. The timber framing is immersed in pond water and significantly affected by rot decay which also affects the rusticated boarding to the West elevation along with the entablature, balustrade and handrail.

7.3 There are various causes of the rot decay, including poor weathering details, the loss of protective lead capping due to squirrel nibbling, as well as the use of inferior softwood for most of the bridge components with the exception of the posts. It is also exacerbated by the location of the structure as it exists in damp environment enclosed by trees and its base is immersed in water. A lack of proper maintenance has also been a contributory factor.

Fig. 3 North Abutment showing progressive decay.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

8.1 The bridge enjoys statutory protection as a Grade II* Listed building, it forms an integral part of the Grade II* landscape grounds of the house, and is within the curtilage of the Grade I Listed and internationally famous Kenwood House. The designation of the building recognises its age and architectural character, but due to the wholesale replacement of the historic fabric relies primarily on its design and aesthetic values.

8.2 Located at the south-east end of the 'Thousand Pound Pond' the Bridge was intended to act as an eye-catcher, drawing the viewer's gaze down the valley that extends towards London through the Kenwood estate – a view that was celebrated by writers and painters since the early 18th century at least and which has been described as 'the finest view in the Kingdom'. Because of this the bridge makes a significant contribution to the setting of the House and has a high artistic value.

8.3 The bridge was cleverly designed, and although no more than a false screen or trompe l'oeil to enhance the view of the landscaped gardens from the house it remains a testament of the ingenuity of the designer and the fashion in landscape design for picturesque and fanciful features which had no practical purpose. It therefore holds high aesthetic, artistic and landscape design values.

8.4 Through its associations with the owners of Kenwood, especially first Lord Mansfield, and its presumed designers (probably either James 'Athenian' Stuart or Adam Brothers) it has high historical values.

8.5 Kenwood has considerable communal value as one of the great historic houses and amenities of north London. It attracts a very diverse crowd ranging from dog walkers who never set foot inside the house, to art lovers, architectural historians, and family groups using the cafe as a meeting place.

8.6 The landscape and house are of great importance to local people as a site of recreation and artistic enjoyment; they form a real centre for the community and have great social value. The majority of regular visitors to Kenwood are drawn to it by the quality of the landscape and its nature conservation interests, for passive recreational activities such as walking, enjoying the landscape and its wildlife.

8.7 There is further communal value to be found in the site's role as one of English Heritage's flagship properties, which has a very large number of visitors and generates considerable revenue via the well-used restaurant, cafe and shop. In this role, the management and popularity of the house are essential to perceptions of English Heritage's wider role as a custodian of our national heritage. The estate at Kenwood is prized as an amenity for many reasons including the quality of the landscape, contact with Nature, standards of Upkeep and Presentation, History, Recreation.

8.8 For these reasons, the Sham Bridge, as an integral part of Kenwood grounds, makes a significant contribution to the community value of the site as a heritage asset.

8.9 Kenwood Estate contains many elements of high ecological value in, amongst others in the categories of geology, hydrology & drainage, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Semi-natural Habitats, Ancient semi-natural woodland, Secondary Woodland, Grassland, Sphagnum Bog, Weir Pond Marsh, Ditches and Watercourses, Open Water.

8.10 The Ken Wood area is designated as Ancient Woodland, meaning that it has existed continuously as woodland since at least 1600 and include many mature trees, some 200 years old, principally Sessile Oak *(Quercus petraea)* and Beech *(Fagus sylvatica)* with secondary species including occasional Pedunculate Oak *(Quercus robur),* Hairy Birch *(Betula pubescens)* and Silver Birch *(Betula pendula),* Mountain Ash *(Sorbus aucuparia)* and Holly *(flex aquifolium).*

8.11 The ecological significance of the Thousand Pound Pond is recognised by being included in the Hampstead Heath Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SMINC). The pond is also partially bordered by the Hampstead Heath Woods Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI), designated for its high forest woodland community on free draining acidic soil. This is an area of mature and over mature tree species which provides important habitats for Grass snakes various bat species, as well as a variety of invertebrate species including the nationally rare, jewel beetle Agrilus pannonicus.

8.12 All these values and the heritage significance of Sham Bridge as a heritage asset, as well as the amenity and setting of Kenwood House, have been undermined by the deteriorating condition of the bridge.

9. POLICY FRAMEWORK

9.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The national policies of relevance to this report are set out within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) and within the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (2010), which remains relevant despite the replacement of *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (2010) by the NPPF (2012).

The NPPF requires applicants for development proposals to provide a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected by proposed development. A heritage asset is defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Significance (for heritage policy) is defined within Annex 2 of the Framework as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF indicates that, in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to:

Describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF indicates that, in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

In respect of designated heritage assets, paragraph 132 states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be".

Paragraphs 133 and 134 then set out the criteria for weighing 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' against the benefits of proposed developments:

Paragraph 133. *Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*

the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;

and

no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and

conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and

the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Paragraph 134: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

9.2 London Borough of Camden Local Planning Policies

The Council has adopted a number of planning documents that form Camden Local Development Framework (2010), the 'development plan' for Camden - the starting point for planning decisions in the borough. Among these documents, the Core Strategy and Development Policies include legislation and guidance relevant to the Site.

9.2.1 Camden Local Development Framework (2010), Core Strategy:

Policy CS14 *Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage*

Policy CS15 - Protecting and improving our parks and open spaces and encouraging biodiversity

Trees

15.21 *Trees are important for their aesthetic value, as habitat, in shading, cooling and filtering the air and in removing carbon dioxide and providing oxygen. They will play an increasingly important role in providing shade and refuge in the hotter summers predicted due to climate change.*

Hampstead Heath

15.24 *The Heath and some of its surrounding areas are designated Metropolitan Open Land*

9.3 'Caring for Kenwood' – Landscape Conservation Management Plan prepared by English Heritage.

The objective of the plan is to carefully integrate the demands of public access and enjoyment, nature conservation and the historic designed landscape. Understanding this complexity and balancing the interests is a delicate task which can only be achieved by setting out proposals at a detailed level. This has been done in the Plan and in this Heritage Statement.

10. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

10.1 For several years now English Heritage has been working to restore Kenwood landscape in accordance with the Landscape Management Plan. It is considered that the present condition of the bridge undermines the significance of Kenwood landscape and the proposal is in line with the strategy set out in the Plan and will enhance this significance.

10.2 Although the proposal envisages a wholesale replacement of the existing bridge, this will not undermine the material authenticity of this heritage asset as its components are of modern date and subject to severe decay.

10.3 In fact the proposal will enhance the overall heritage significance of the bridge as an essential landscape feature of Kenwood Registered Park. If left unattended this important feature could be lost and this would have a highly detrimental impact on the qualities of the registered park and the setting of Kenwood House.

10.4 The proposal is part of English heritage's strategy to improve and promote the quality of its estates and as it will enhance the aesthetic values of Kenwood landscape it will be in keeping with the local planning policies as outlined above.

10.5 The replacement of the bridge will not have a detrimental impact on the tree roots as the bridge stands well clear from the trees which are confined to the banks of the pond. In order not to impact on the wildlife habitat of the Pond, a variety of mitigating measures will be implemented as recommended by FPCR consultant (see the letter outlining the conclusions of the Phase One Habitat survey). It is considered that with these measures in place the impact of the works on the protected species will be low.

10.6 The proposal will not compromise the openness of the landscape within Kenwood estate or Hampstead Heath area.

11. PUBLIC AND HERITAGE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

11.1 The project will bring considerable public and heritage benefits as follows:

- Reconstruction of an important landscape feature
- Enhancement of the setting of Kenwood House
- Enhancement of the public enjoyment of Kenwood grounds
- Enhancement of the aesthetic qualities of Kenwood grade II* Registered Park
- New ecological survey underpinning a better understanding of the ecological values of Thousand Pound Pond and its immediate surroundings

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Considering that the bridge does not retain any historic components and it will be replaced to carefully replicate its historic form and design details, it is considered that the works will not have a detrimental impact on the architectural and historical values of this heritage asset.

12.2 In addition, considering the progressing decay of the structure, its replacement will enhance the aesthetic values of the bridge and consequently the setting of Kenwood House and design and amenity value of its grounds.

12.3 The replacement of the bridge will improve the appearance and enjoyment of Kenwood grounds and thus their community value.

12.4 As the works will implement the measures recommended by the ecological consultant the impact of the project on the ecological values of Thousand Pound Pond will be low.

12.5 Taking into account that the project will deliver a range of heritage and public benefits and will enhance the cultural significance of Sham Bridge and Kenwood estate, it is considered that the proposal is in line with the national and local policies and should be supported.