



## Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath – Design and Access Statement

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## 1.0 Introduction and Context

Jon Sheaff and Associates have been appointed by the City of London to develop proposals for a new pond on Hampstead Heath on open ground between Branch Hill and West Heath Lane. The site is in City of London ownership.

The proposed pond recalls the pond in the same position depicted by John Constable in his 1825 painting 'Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath, with a Boy Sitting on a Bank'

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to form part of an application for planning permission for the proposed development. This Design and Access Statement and scheme proposal drawings constitute the planning application for this project.

### 1.1 The aim of the project

The project is driven by an aspiration to reinstate the pond depicted by Constable in his painting. Historical research and an assessment of the position of the buildings depicted in the painting (some of which remain) has confirmed the approximate site of the former pond. The original pond was filled in around 1890.

The site is currently made open ground as the area was formerly the site of sand extraction operations that have

created its distinctive bowl-like character with levels rising sharply to the south and east of the site of the proposed pond (at the lowest point of the site). The site is fringed on its northern and southern sides by secondary woodland.

### 1.2 The application site area

The application boundary is shown in drawing A1793-JSA-L500 Site Location Plan.

### 1.3 Policy Context

This section summarises the relevant planning, design and access policy background to the application. These policies and plans provide the context within which the detailed landscape design proposals have evolved.

#### **Central Government Guidance:**

National Planning Policy Framework  
National Planning Practice Guidance

#### **London Borough of Camden Local Plan:**

Policy A3: Open Space  
Policy A3: Biodiversity  
Policy CC3: Water and flooding  
Policy D2: Heritage

## Current Local Plan Designation

In the 2017 Camden Local Plan, the site of the proposed pond lies is designated as Metropolitan Open Land. The site lies within the Hampstead and Parliament Hill Fields Archaeology Priority Area. The site lies within the Hampstead Heath Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation.

## Hampstead Local Plan (2018)

Policy NE1: Local Green Spaces

Policy NE2: Trees Policy

NE3: Biodiversity Corridors Policy

NE4: Supporting biodiversity

### 1.4 Broader site context

The site of the proposed pond is on the western edge of Hampstead Heath and approximately 0/5 kms north west by north from the centre of Hampstead village. The site forms an open bowl fringed by woodland. The remainder of Hampstead Heath lies to the north and east of the site. The site is bounded by Branch Hill to the south and west and by West Heath Lane to the north. To the south and west of the site lie residential areas of West Hampstead.

### 1.5 Environmental context

The proposed site forms the western edge of Hampstead Heath which is an area of near continuous greenspace extending approximately 2 kms to the east and to the south from the site.

The site forms part of the Hampstead and Parliament Hill Fields Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Having declared a climate and ecological emergency, Camden Council is currently consulting on a new Biodiversity Strategy to supersede its 2013-18 Biodiversity Action Plan.

Habitats within the site consist of neutral (semi-improved) grassland and native broadleaved woodland.

The City of London has baseline data for the site based on a 2009 modified Phase 1 habitat survey. The proposed site for the pond is part of compartment 1236, which has an area of 0.498 Hectares. The site has been re-surveyed by the City of London's ecologist in 2021. The site is described as an area of semi-improved neutral grassland with low species diversity, dominated by the grasses, yorkshire fog, cock's-foot, red fescue and common bent. Small amounts of bramble are present in the grassland as is a small amount of soft rush. The site is fringed by a woodland band to the north with a bramble understorey and a planted copse to the west. No protected species or habitats have been recorded on the site.

## 1.6 Land Ownership

The site is in the ownership of the City of London. The City of London has adopted a Management Plan for Hampstead Heath for the period 2018-28. The Management Plan commits the City of London to the Heath Vision:

- We protect and conserve the Heath
- The Heath enriches our lives
- The Heath is inclusive and welcoming
- Together we care for the Heath

The Management Plan will deliver against a number of specific target outcomes including:

- A balance between visitor activities and conservation of natural, built and heritage values is maintained
- A mosaic of natural habitats is maintained and flourishes
- Heritage aspects and landscape character are maintained

## 1.7 Response to context

The proposed pond will occupy the lowest point of the former quarry site at Branch Hill/West Heath. A geo-environmental assessment of the site has established that the ground upon which the pond will be excavated has a high degree of permeability, probably as a consequence of silts washing down the slopes created during quarrying operations.

These silts are underlain with London Clay at a depth of more than 2 metres sub-surface.

The site is drained via an open culvert at the western edge of the site that connects into the culverted River Westbourne catchment.

Table 1 summarises how the design has responded positively to these considerations (see also Section 3.2)

## 2.0 Design Development

The Redington Froggnal Association obtained grants of £35,000 to develop a proposal for the restoration of Branch Hill Pond. In addition to the reinstatement of the pond illustrated by Constable, the pond project formed part of a wider initiative to map the catchment of the Westbourne River.

Redington Froggnal appointed Jon Sheaff and Associates to develop a design for the reinstatement of the pond. Design development has been informed by the following criteria:

- An aspiration to reinstate the Constable pond at or close to its original location
- The creation of a small waterbody that would not constitute a flood risk

Table 1: Design responses to site characteristics

Consideration	Design response
Historic environment	The proposed pond re-creates an historic landscape feature
Metropolitan Open Land	The proposed pond will not detract from the quality of the public open space
Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation	The proposed pond will provide additional habitat on site
Design	Functional durable design Visually attractive with effective landscaping Safe, inclusive and with a high amenity standard
Arboriculture	The proposed pond will not impact on existing trees
Ecology	The proposal will not impact on species and habitats

- The creation of a pond that responds to the site conditions established through geotechnical and hydrological survey
- The creation of a pond that makes a contribution to the biodiversity of this part of the Heath
- The creation of a pond that is a safe and sustainable amenity

Following initial design development, discussions continued with the City of London as owners and managers of the site. The City of London will also implement the work to create the pond if planning approval is secured.

Following discussions with the City of London, design revisions were developed in response to the following design criteria:

- The creation of a pond with minimum capital cost
- The creation of a pond that is of an appropriate scale for the proposed setting
- The creation of a pond from durable materials that will require minimum ongoing maintenance

### 3.0 Design components

(refer to drawings A1793-JSA-GA01A, A1793-JSA-GA01B and A1793-JSA-L100)

#### 3.1 Scheme description

Supporting information submitted with this application shows the redline boundary for the proposed development.

The existing site components consist of:

- Open semi-improved grassland and fringed by native secondary woodland.

The proposed scheme will consist of the following elements.

- A pond approximately 13m wide by 17m wide with a depth of 1.18 m at its centre point
- The pond to be lined with puddling clay to a depth of 350mm
- The pond will drain into the existing culvert on the western edge of the site
- A surrounding post and rail fence with a dog-proof base mesh to a height of 1m offset from the pond edge by 1.5m
- Native marginal, aquatic and shrub-herbaceous planting in and around the pond

- The pond will be fed by run off captured from the surrounding site but will be ephemeral in nature, depending on levels of rainfall

Given the nature of the proposed scheme (the reinstatement of an historical waterbody) no alternative sites have been considered. Reference studies suggest that the proposed scheme will not have a negative impact on the site and its current components and an alternative site need not be considered.

#### 3.2 Design response to reference documents

##### 3.2.1 Geoenvironmental study

The study has established that the site consists of made ground of silty clays. Site observations suggest that these strata are permeable. A puddled clay liner has thus been proposed for the pond.

The Geoenvironmental study has confirmed that the absence of contamination on site. Arisings from the pond excavation will be spread across the site.



### 3.2.2 Phase I Habitat Survey

The Phase 1 Habitat survey and data from Greenspace Information for London (GiGL) suggest that there are no protected species or habitats on site that will be affected by the works.

## 4.0 Access and accessibility

The site does not currently include any formally established paths. Access is made through informal paths that have been established through use across the landscape.

The scheme does not propose any changes to the current ways in which the site is accessed.

## 5.0 Reference documents

### 5.1 Security and design standards

- Secured by Design 2016
- British Standards

### 5.4 Existing surveys

- Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2009 – updated 2021)
- Greenspace Information for London datasheets

### 5.5 Commissioned surveys

- Geoenvironmental survey (2020)

## APPENDIX 1 – OUTLINE SPECIFICATION AND TYPICAL DETAILS



Existing ephemeral pond – Hampstead Heath



Native marginal and aquatic planting



Rustic fence with dog-proof mesh