

Biodiversity Corridor H

Hampstead Grove, Admirals Walk, Upper and Lower Terrace

This biodiversity corridor includes the Upper Terrace Reservoir, the gardens of Upper Terrace House, Admiral's House, Grove Lodge, Netley Cottage, Fenton House, and Grove End, as well as the three small public open spaces of Windmill Hill Enclosures in Upper Terrace, with the late-mature sweet chestnut with veteran features on the green triangle on Upper Terrace near to Judges Walk.



Sweet chestnut on Green Triangle of the 'Windmill Enclosures': winter and summer

The tall lime trees of this biodiversity corridor are an important feature of this area of Hampstead. The 'Victoria County History' states that Hampstead has a history of planting lines or groves of trees. The area in and around this biodiversity corridor particularly does: it could easily be re-named 'Groveland'. Hampstead Grove - the road previously named 'The Grove' but changed to distinguish it from the road with the same name in Highgate - has several buildings with the name Grove close by, including: 'Grove Lodge', 'Grove End', 'Old Grove House' and 'The Grove' (the previous name for Admiral's House) while 'Frognal Grove' (an 18th century house famous for its impressive avenue of lime trees leading up to the entrance of the house and later named 'Montagu Grove' was converted into 105-111 Frognal) and the more modern 'Highgrove Point' are just south of here within Biodiversity Corridor G 'Frognal', and the road Grove Place is to the east.



Frognal Grove, engraving by Maria Catherine Prestel (1747-94)

The lime walk planted up to Froggnal Grove has featured in many old Hampstead pictures, notably in 'As Happy as a King' (1836) by William Collins at the Tate Gallery:



Indeed William Hone in his *Table Book of 1827* called Hampstead 'the place of groves'. There are still enough fine old lime trees along Hampstead Grove, Admirals Walk and Upper Terrace to justify its name.

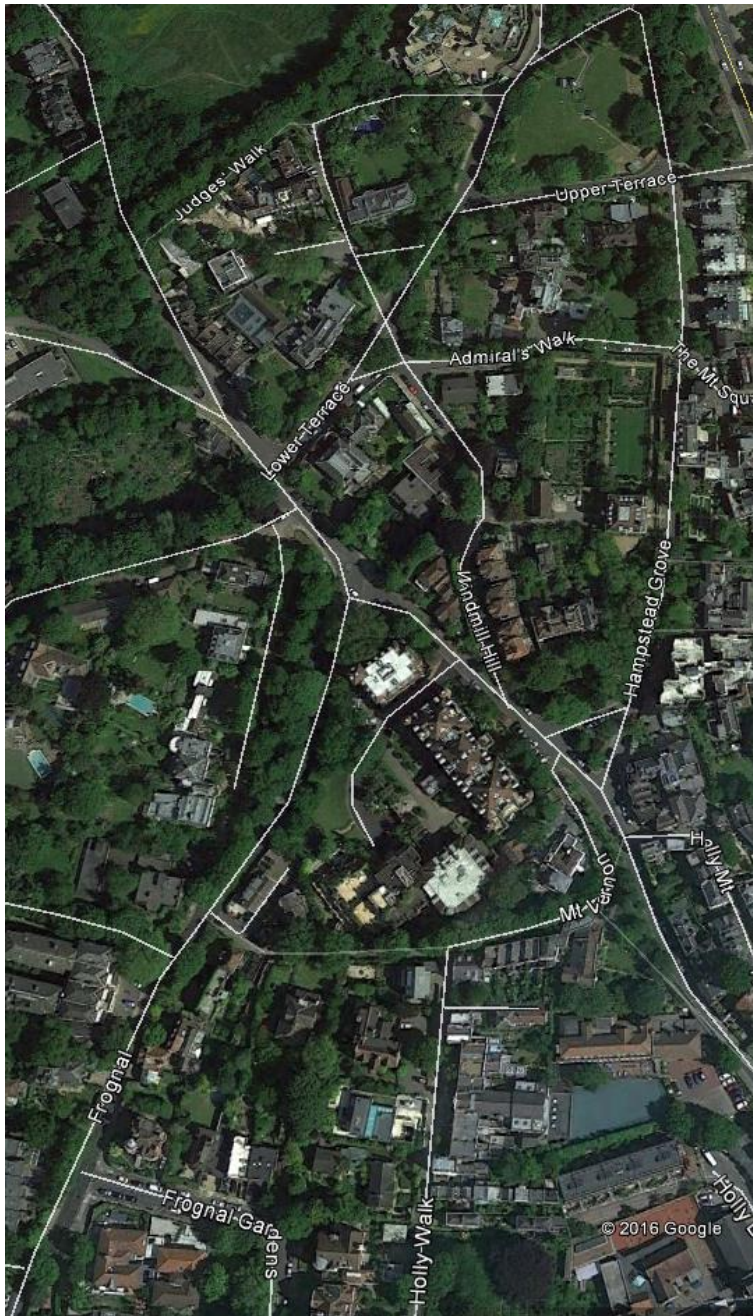


Row of Admiral's Walk lime trees (on left), winter

Row of lime trees by Grove House, Admiral's Walk, winter



Lines of lime trees in Admiral's Walk - and along Hampstead Grove in summer



Historic lime trees by Netley Cottage,



Historic lime trees in summer



Recently pollarded lime trees along south west section Lower Terrace in winter and in summer

The presence of these tall water-loving forest trees reflect the many springs and tributaries of the Westbourne river that flow through this area and can be seen at the bottom of the many wells present here e.g. one within Admiral's House and three alone within the grounds of Fenton House.

There was previously a triangular pond known as Clock House Pond (west of Clock House, the previous name for Fenton House) or Crockett's Pond just below Admiral's House and bounded by Admiral's Walk, Windmill Hill and the public footpath running between the two and immediately west of Fenton House's west wall. This was painted by John Constable during the time that he rented 2 Lower Terrace nearby in the summers of 1821 and 1822:



The many 18th and 19th century paintings of this area include lime, poplar, willow and oak trees (large water-loving trees for keeping gardens, roadways and paths drier) show these trees to be an important historic feature of this area and have practical water-balancing value in this area of wells and ponds, with groundwater that to this day can erode silt from the soil and is a local cause of building subsidence.

Biodiversity Corridor I

Holly Hill to Church Row & Perrins Walk NF boundary, via Frogнал Gardens.

This biodiversity corridor continues on from Biodiversity Corridor H, extending down via Frogнал Gardens to meet St John's Churchyard in neighbouring Church Row & Perrins Wsalk Neighbourhood Forum, an important Borough level grade I Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. These two biodiversity corridors connect this SINC with Hampstead Heath.

The main gardens in BC I are those of 'Mount Vernon House', 'Pavilion Court' (a wonderful woodland garden of great biodiversity value behind the northern wall of Holly Walk before it turns south) and 'Frogнал End' (18 Frogнал Gardens, built 1892). Biodiversity Corridor I runs south along the front gardens of 1-9 Frogнал Gardens.





John Constable's 'Trees at Hampstead: The path to church' 1821

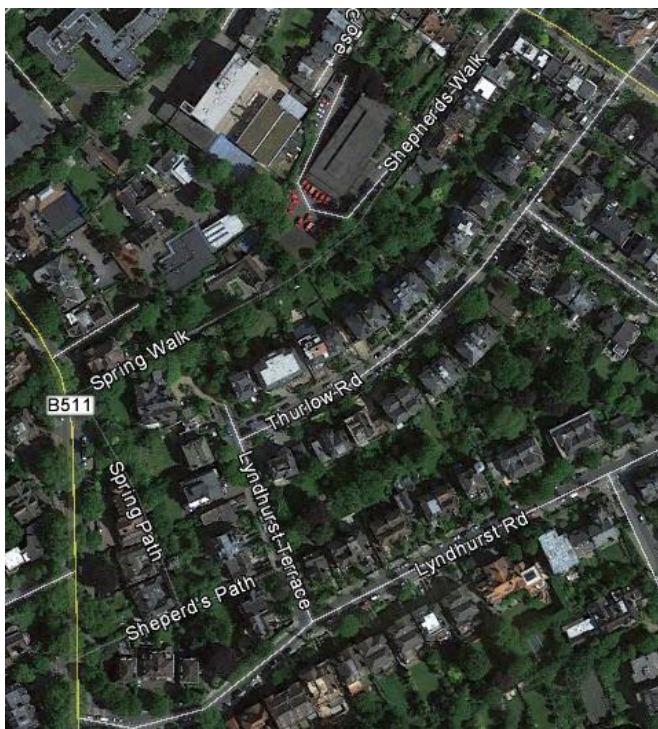
Constable painted the oil 'Trees at Hampstead: The path to church' in 1821 when he was living at 2, Lower Terrace. On September 20 1821, when he was painting it, he wrote to his friend John Fisher: "I have done some studies ... particularly a natural (but highly Elegant) group of trees, Ashes, Elms, and Oaks etc which will be of quite as much service to me as if I had bought the feild [sic] and Hedge Row, which contains them, and perhaps one time or another will fetch as much for my children."

In fact his children retained this work, now in the V&A, perhaps from sentiment, because it depicts the way to Hampstead Parish church (just visible at the extreme left hand side of the painting) where Constable and his wife lay buried.)

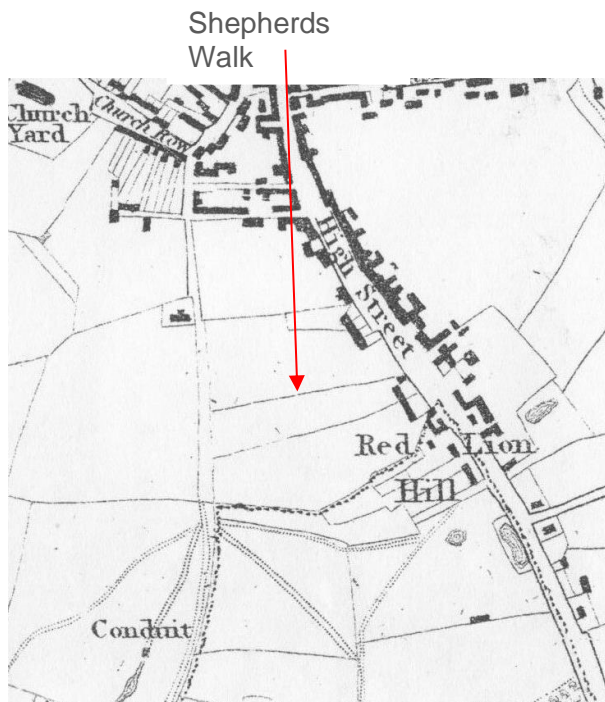
It is difficult to judge exactly where it was painted but this line of trees is likely to be along the line of this biodiversity corridor as the most direct route to St John's church from 2 Lower Terrace: paths on the western side of field 138 on the 1866 OS map. Other possible routes he could have painted with a line of trees on the left hand side of a path when walking down to the church would have been well off any route he is likely to have taken.

Biodiversity Corridor J

Shepherds Walk, Spring Walk and Spring Path



Google Earth



1814 Newton's map

This biodiversity corridor BC J is a long established line of trees and gardens that runs south west along the rear gardens of the length of north west Thurlow Road, just south of Shepherd Walk which later becomes Spring Walk. It then continues south down the western gardens of Lyndhurst Terrace and part of the course of the Shepherd stream, then between the rear gardens of Daleham Gardens and Fitzjohns Avenue to the edge of the HNF boundary.

BC J includes the garden of Elm Bank: a large mid-Victorian detached villa built in the 1860s with a large garden on three sides.



Elm Bank

1866 OS map



Stanford's Library map 1862

As it follows the original course of the Shepherd stream between the rear gardens of Fitzjohns Avenue and Daleham Gardens, the garden boundary here contains several black poplars, water-loving trees that were planted to help keep the gardens less waterlogged. These are not always being replaced with black poplars now they are coming towards the ends of their lives or are removed for development, so many gardens are now reported as much wetter and other trees as suffering from more outbreaks of honey fungus. Nevertheless bats and tawny owls have been observed in these gardens.

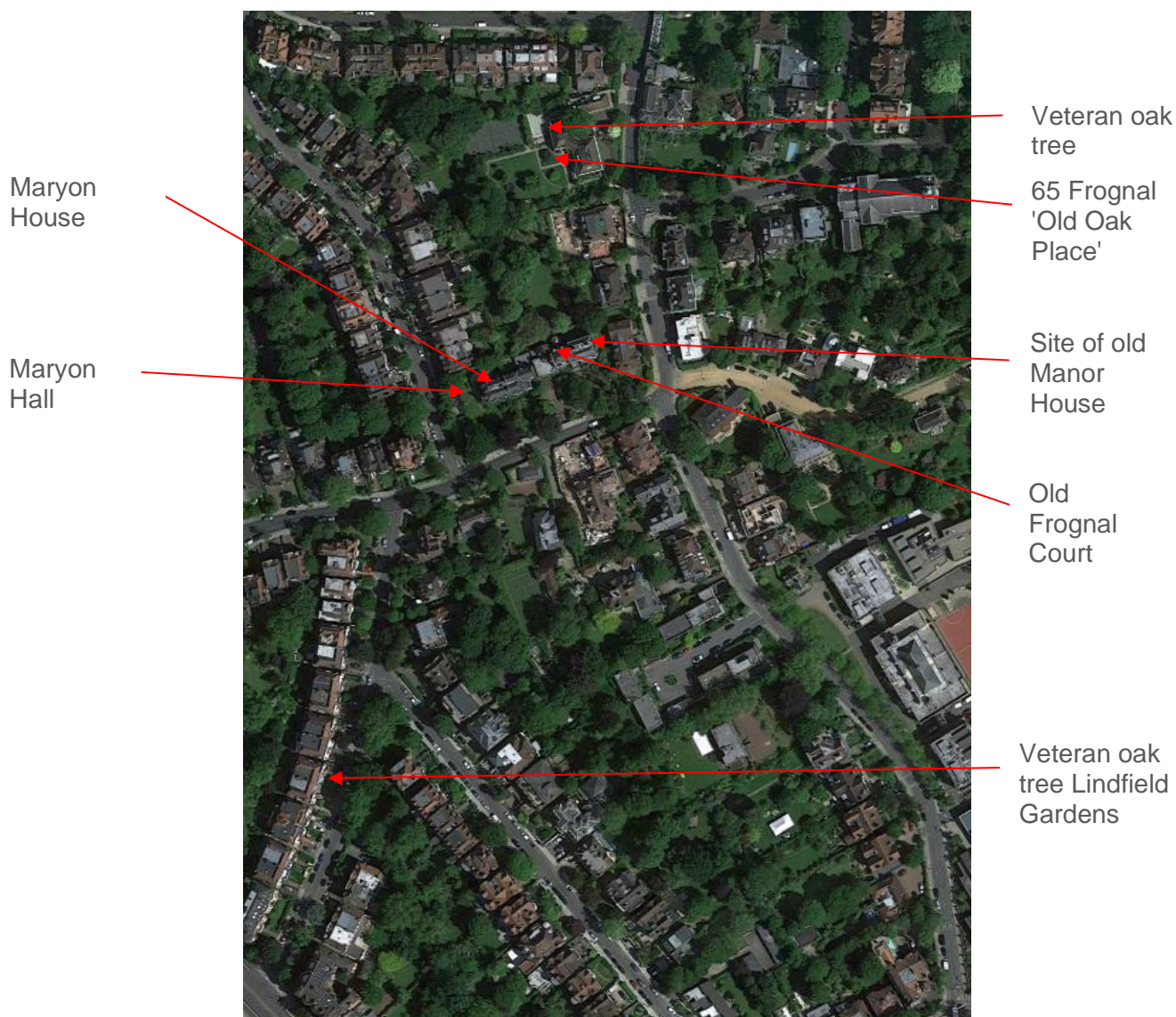
Biodiversity Corridor K

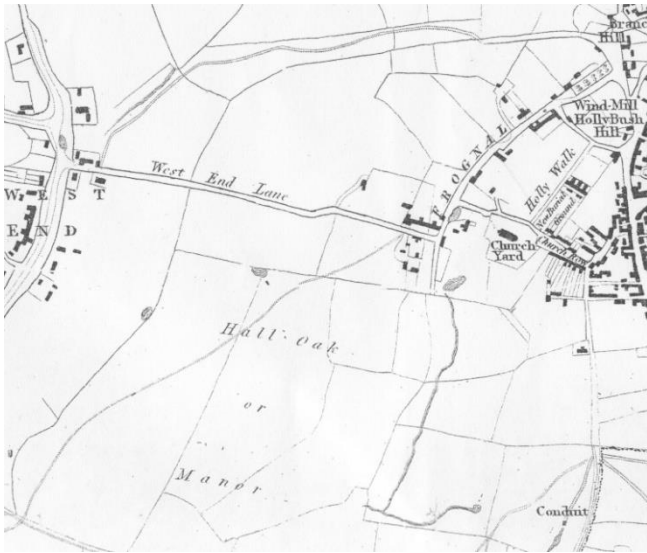
Western Frognal rear gardens from south Redington Road to HNF boundary.

This biodiversity corridor runs south from the rear gardens of 1-19 Redington Road, 67-61 Frognal and 23 Frognal Lane, across the front gardens of 21 and 19 Frognal Lane, crosses Frognal Lane then runs along the western gardens of Frognal and the east side of Langland Gardens to the edge of Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum boundary. Here it links with Redington Frognal Neighbourhood Forum's biodiversity corridor.

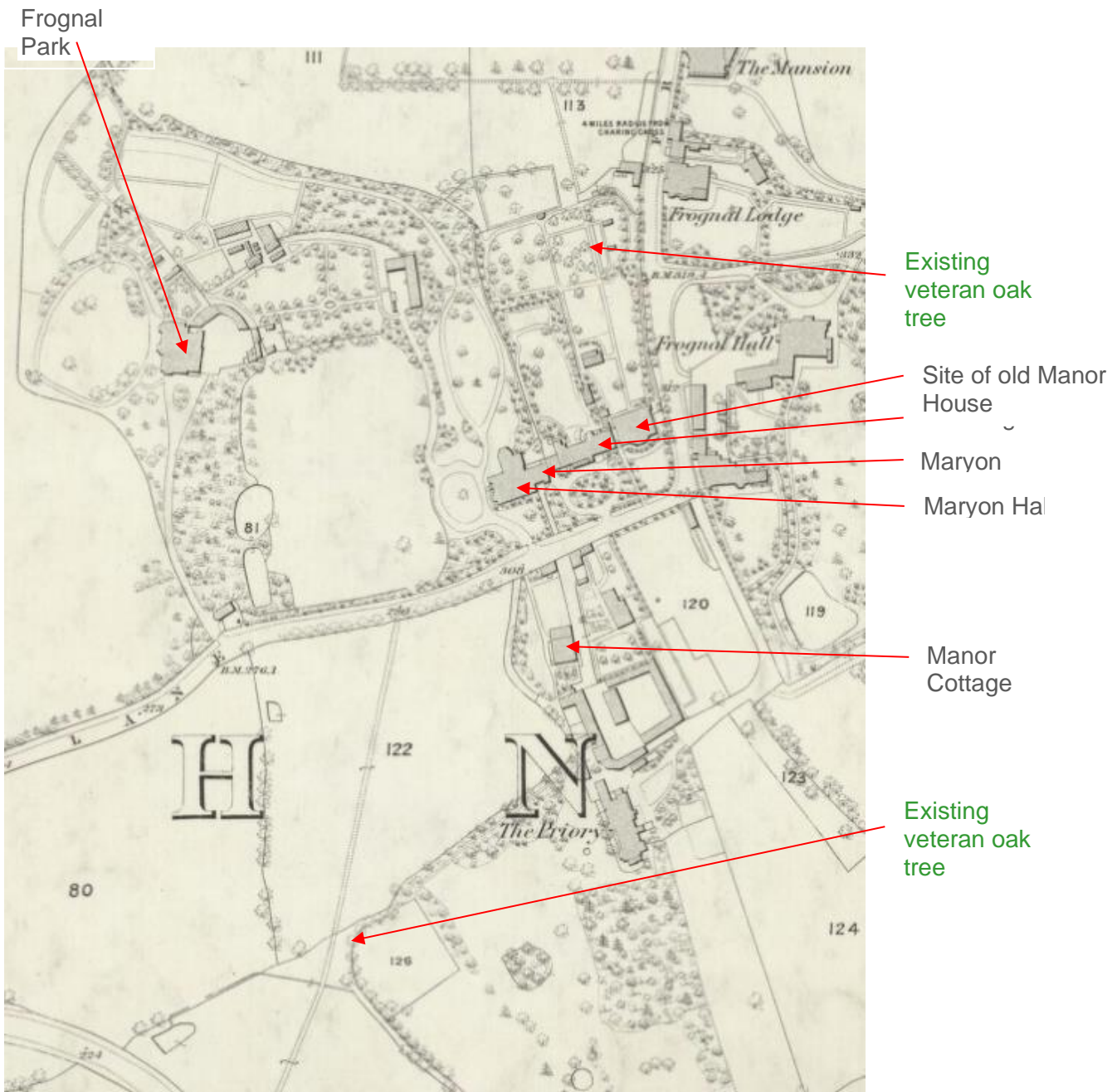
This biodiversity corridor has good historical credentials as it contained the Hampstead Estate manor-house where the Courts Lees were held. The section north of Frognal Lane was ancient demesne land (land that the lord of a manor, in feudal times, kept for himself rather than letting out): part of Manor Farm. Later it became the eastern side of Frognal Park, an area between Old Frognal Court (now 23 Frognal Lane) and the house called Frognal Park. The old manor-house which stood at the north-east corner of West End Lane (now called Frognal Lane) was a long, low farmhouse building. This was demolished and a brick house built on the site (Old Frognal Court now 23 Frognal Lane), another further west (Maryon Hall), later split into two houses: Maryon Hall (no. 19) and Maryon House (no. 21) Frognal Lane.

In the 1800s Frognal Park had grounds of 23 acres, and Manor Cottage (south of Frognal Lane and now number 40) had grounds of 5 acres, with the grounds of Frognal Priory continuing south. A grand veteran oak tree now in the garden of 65 Frognal 'Old Oak Place' would have been a mature tree then. With the development of Frognal down to Frognal Lane during the 1880s, most but not all signs of farm life disappeared. The gardens of these houses now form a section of the proposed biodiversity corridor with fine tall trees including holm oaks where tawny owls and woodpeckers were previously seen to roost and still fly to.





from Newton's 1814 map



This biodiversity corridor is an important link for another veteran tree associated with 27 Lindfield Gardens and a large area of rear gardens with tall trees and springs: part of Redington Froggnal Neighbourhood Forum which will be proposed as a Biodiversity Corridor itself.

Local Green Space: Branch Hill

The area proposed as the Branch Hill Local Green Space (LGS) is on the western slopes of Hampstead. It consists of the area of the Branch Hill Grade I Borough level Site of Importance for Nature (SINC) CaB104 and two additional areas.

Branch Hill SINC consists of several individual blocks of woodland, interposed with small areas of open grassland, allotments, gardens around a local authority housing estate and private gardens.

Geologically the LGS lies on Bagshot Sands and the spring line between the Bagshot Sands and the Claygate Beds. The northern part is a valley formed from the original stream flowing from the site of Branch Hill Pond (a spring near the junction of Branch Hill and West Heath Road, but now dried up most of the year since 1900). Its course, now underground and mainly but not all in pipes, is west south west before it turns south to join the Canon Stream at the western end of Redington Gardens and down Heath Drive to cross Finchley Road. Another arises from springs in Oak Wood, separated from the eastern branch of the Westbourne that arises from the Whitestone area and above Admiral's Walk by a higher ridge. The Branch Hill area streams flow into the more western river Kylburne that eventually runs into the eastern Westbourne and thence to the Thames.

Special Policy Area:

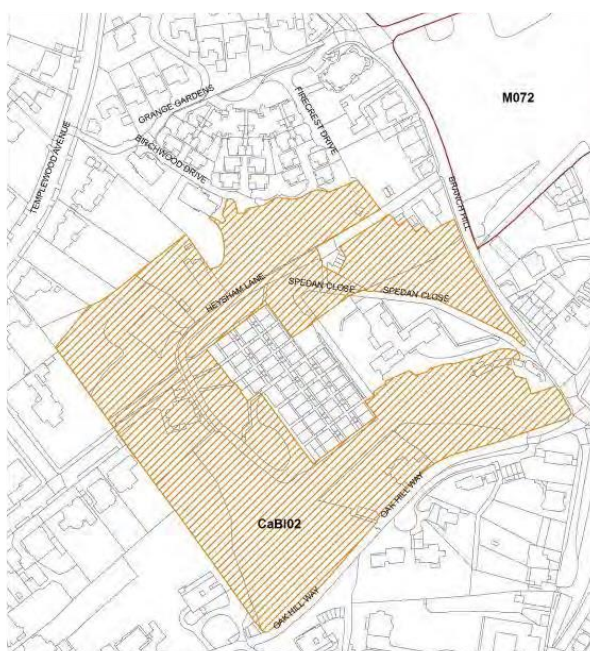
Area of Special Character: Hampstead & Highgate Ridge. Grade 1 Borough SINC.

Other LA designation:

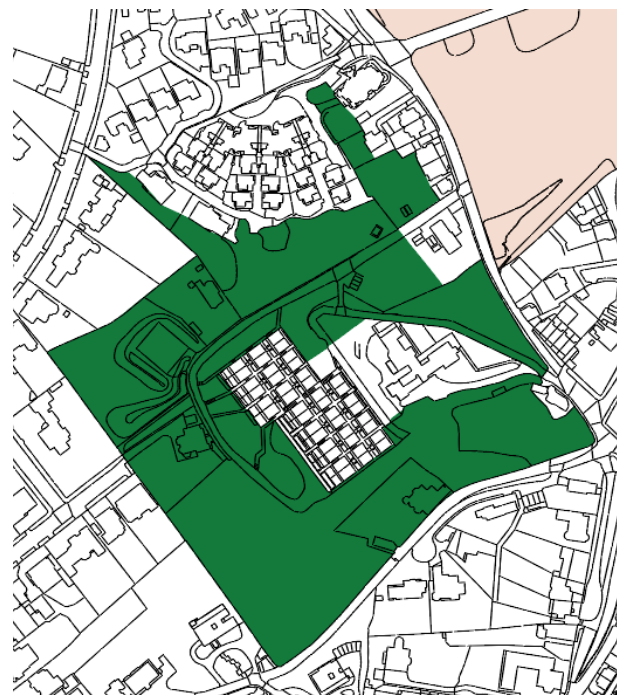
Public Open Space (Small Local), nos 145, 146, 147, 148, 269 in Camden's Schedule of Open Spaces. Hampstead Conservation Area.

Supports Local Plan Policies:

SP13 (open space and biodiversity) 'protect and enhance and when and where possible extend the existing boundaries of the borough's green belt, designated open land, designated open spaces, green chains, allotments, river corridors and other open spaces from inappropriate development'; 'protect and improve sites of biodiversity and nature conservation'; 'protection, management and enhancement of existing trees'.



Current extent of Branch Hill SINC CaB104



Proposed boundaries of Branch Hill Local Green Space showing the 2 additional areas

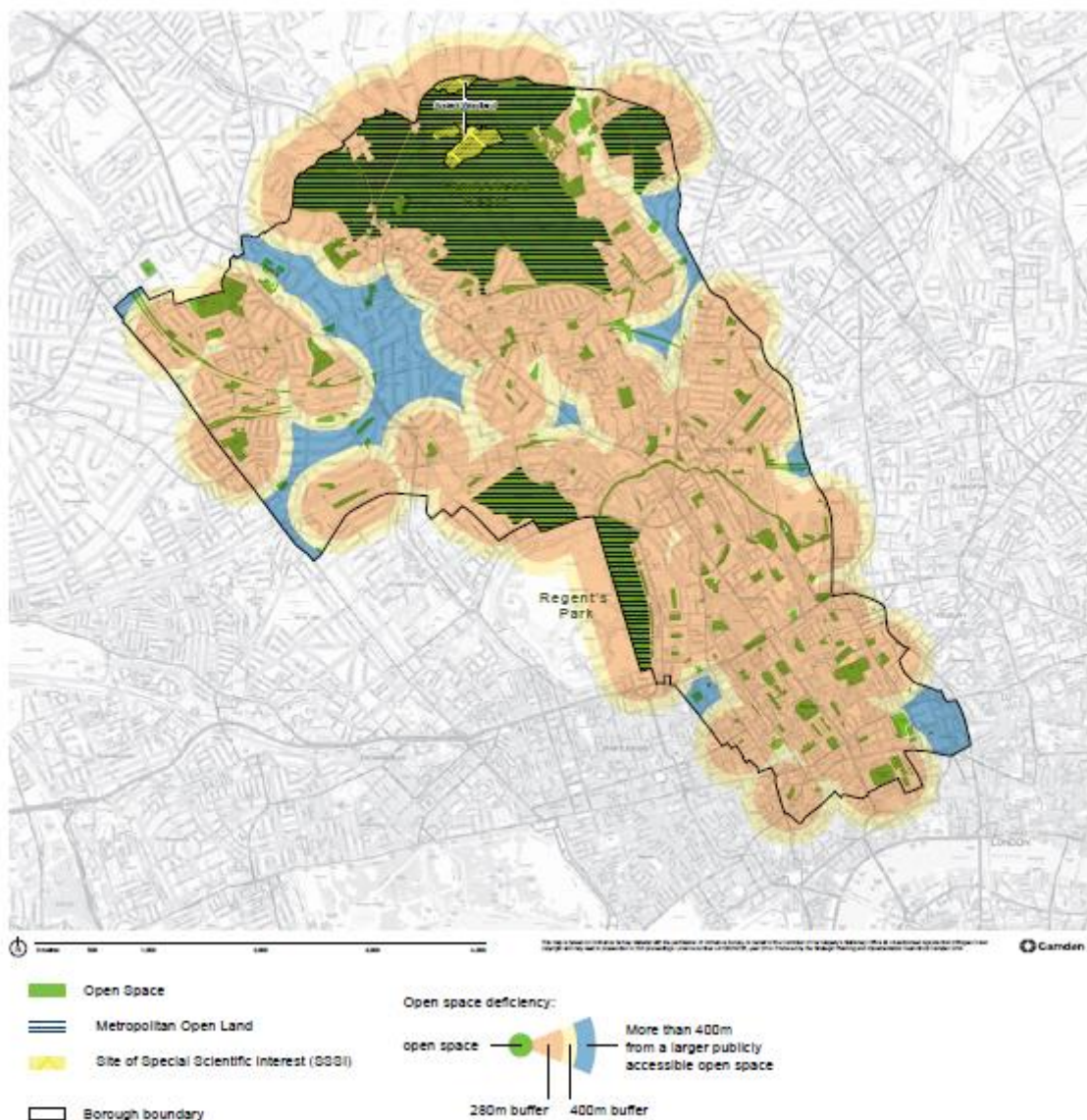


Sections of Branch Hill SINC with their Camden Open Spaces schedule numbers



Houses associated with LGS Branch Hill and its neighbouring LGS Oak Hill Park

Hampstead ward has 1.1 hectares of Total Public Open Space Area per 1,000 population, but Frognal and Fitzjohns has 0.6 and the map of 'Locations deficient in natural greenspace' in the Camden draft Local Plan show the importance of the Branch Hill Local Green Space to our neighbouring ward as well as to Hampstead.



Camden Local Plan Map 3: Locations deficient in natural greenspace

Branch Hill House Gardens

History

On the site of Branch Hill House there have been several houses since the first built on a piece of 'waste' (that is demesne heathland) near to Northwood well **in the early 1700s**. The second house built on this site in 1745 by the architect Henry Flitcroft (1697-1769) was enlarged by Thomas Neave who, to his 4 acres of copyhold land added 9 acres of demesne freehold purchased in 1807 and 1815, and 21½ acres of demesne that he leased from 1808. It is said the house was re-built by Teulon in the 1860s but this too was replaced by the present exterior in 1901, and converted and unsympathetically extended in 1965 by Camden Council to become an old people's home.

Richness of Wildlife:

The gardens, though reduced from their Edwardian extent, include some areas of woodland (the area bounded by the roads Branch Hill, Spedan Close and Heysham Lane has a Woodland TPO), lawns and flower beds with some specimen trees and some individually TPOed trees. There is also an upright monolith and a stump. These veteran oak tree remains are still immensely important habitat for beetles and other invertebrates and fungi exclusive to veteran trees and dead wood.

Retained standing deadwood:
habitat that is important for veteran
trees



Branch Hill Allotments

Adjacent to Frognal Rise and Oak Hill Way are the well-used Branch Hill Allotments that were formed from the gardens of Branch Hill House, probably including a kitchen garden for which part of a wall remains. In the 1980s the neglected gardens were taken on by enterprising gardeners who informally maintained them by growing vegetables there. Their endeavours had the support of local residents and The Heath & Hampstead Society, and resulted in Camden Council earmarking the land for community use as allotments.

Use by Local Community:

The Branch Hill Allotments Association is currently taking over management of the area from LB Camden. There are 32 plots here, although a number are divided in two, and some 40 allotment-holders belong to the Association. Probably half as many again ('helpers') garden there and visiting schoolchildren are pleased to assist. It is a regular and active part of the annual Open Garden Squares weekend. The Association aims to allow wildness while developing cultivation in this area once frequented by poets such as John Keats and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and artists such as John Constable and George Romney.





One of the two main ponds and part of the wildlife strip



Winter time

There is de facto access to most of the site and it is an extremely popular recreational resource for many local people.

Richness of Wildlife:

It has a wide nature strip along its Oak Hill Way boundary, is surrounded by trees along and just inside all boundaries, and supports several bee hives and ponds.

Plot holders report that a good number of birds regularly visit the site including jay, great spotted woodpecker, tawny owl, nuthatch, goldcrest, long-tailed tit, kestrel, heron and stone chat as well as the more common robins, blackbirds, pigeons and parakeets. Bats are seen in summer at dusk, stag beetles and their larvae are found in some piles of logs kept carefully protected in the wild strip, and tadpoles, newts and many varieties of insects such as water boatmen and dragon flies have self-colonised the ponds for many years.

Support of Local Plan Policies by Branch Hill Allotments:

The Development Policies document CPG6 recognises the important function of allotments in achieving **Camden's Plan** Policy DP31 that **supports** 'Provision of, and improvements to open space and outdoor sport and recreation facilities' and sets out the need to conserve and improve open space provision with the Borough. Camden identifies allotments and community garden space as the Council's priority for on-site provision, due to the very high demand and limited scope for additional provision.

Given the limited number of allotment sites in the Borough, the majority of residential areas (except those in the immediate vicinity of an allotment site) have poor access to allotment provision. Residents can consider themselves fortunate that they have 2 allotment sites within the Plan area - one (Branch Hill allotments) Camden owned, one community managed (by South End Green Mansfield Allotment Association) - despite there being no allotments actually within Hampstead Ward. Waiting lists for all 4 Camden-owned allotments are now closed with the Branch Hill wait now approaching 20 years.

Designation of Branch Hill Allotments as part of a Local Green Space would support **Camden's Local Plan Policy A2 'Open Space': c, f and h; A3 'Biodiversity': a, c, e, f and h. Through its provision of facilities for allotment holders and their helpers**, it is consistent with Local Plan Policy C1 'Health and well-being': a, and Policy C2 'Community facilities'.

Spedan Close

Below Branch Hill House is a low-rise tiered housing scheme built unobtrusively in the midst of the woods on a site purchased by Camden Council in 1965. The estate was designed in 1974-78 by Gordon Benson and Alan Forsyth. The houses have gardens that also form the roof of the house below, thus blending into the surrounding green space.

Wildlife and Use by Local Community:

The woodland around Spedan Close and Oak Tree House contains numerous mature trees including hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), oak (*Quercus* sp.) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Amongst the understorey species are holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) ('Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the London Borough of Camden', 2014). Sections near Spedan Close houses and Heysham Lane roadway and pathways have been landscaped in a way that blends in well with the surrounding woodland and is maintained by Camden with the help of 'Green Gym'.

Oak Hill Wood

Richness of Wildlife:

The area of Oak Hill Wood is particularly known for its native bluebells. This is the largest individual block of woodland in the Branch Hill area. It is secondary woodland which includes sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), oak (*Quercus* sp.), white poplar (*Populus alba*), common lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Other species have colonised, including silver birch (*Betula pendula*), downy birch (*B. pubescens*), elm (*Ulmus* sp.), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) ('Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the London Borough of Camden', 2014). Many of its taller trees have veteran characteristics and are therefore important sources of insects and fungi associated with such trees, as well as harbouring birds and bats that nest within their hollows and holes.

After rainfall its sloping areas run with water rivulets and there are permanently boggy areas at their

base, even in periods of drought. The local streams merge into the eastern arm of the Canon Stream which can be heard under a manhole cover in Redington Gardens outside Oak Tree House. The gardens of private houses Coombe Edge and Oak Hill House are also included in this section. It is of immense importance as a biodiversity corridor into the village, particularly for bats and owls and for the link between the veteran hedgerow trees on Hampstead Heath and the veteran hedgerow trees in the Redington Frogna area that still exist in some gardens.

Spedan Close Play Area

Connected to Oak Hill Wood by wide wooded avenues of common lime, poplar (*Populus* sp.) and yew (*Taxus baccata*), the grounds of Oak Hill House (mostly composed of sycamore and oak), and of Heysham House, is a smaller area of woodland and scrub in the north-west corner of the site. It is dominated by sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with an understorey in which holly is abundant and accompanied by a small number of species including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder, cherry laurel and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) ('Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in the London Borough of Camden', 2014).



Spedan Close Play Area

Use by Local Community:

Spedan Close Play Area is set in a wooded enclosure in this north-west area and provides a valuable play facility for the local community. It caters for children from 4-12 years old.

Evidence for Particular Importance

As well as containing the largest area deficient in natural greenspace in Camden, our neighbouring Frogna and Fitzjohns ward has zero public parks, the only ward in Camden to have none.

From Camden's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in 'Camden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study Final Report June 2014':

The proposed standard for children's play should follow the GLA recommended standard of 10 sq.m per child (0.15 ha per 1000 population), but with the inclusion of an element of provision of formal children's play which it is recommended should be 0.65 sq.m per child (0.01 ha per 1000 population). The following play space access standards are recommended: *All residents within the Borough should have access to a formal children's play provision within 400 m from home, and all residents within the Borough should have access to a GLA designated Site of Borough Importance or Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation within 1 km from home.*

From Camden's Map of 'Locations deficient in natural greenspace' (see above) it can be seen that this proposed Local Green Space is very close to the largest area of greenspace deficiency in Camden. This shows the importance of Oak Hill Wood and the public Play Area to our neighbouring ward. It is thus very precious and warrants the strongest statutory protection which the status of 'Site of Importance for Nature Conservation' - being non-statutory - does not give it.

Wooded bank south of Firecrest

This is a private wooded area aside Firecrest Drive, that is the grounds of this modern and sensitively built series of blocks of flats. It has a high density of mature trees, carefully retained fallen trees with their deadwood habitat, and a significant veteran (previously hedgerow) tree. This is fenced off from but is otherwise connected with the woods of the north-western section and play area, and is chiefly composed of sycamore, oak, yew and lime. This area passes along the valley formed by the stream that runs from the spring at the site of the original Branch Hill pond. This river valley and its wooded bank along with 'additional area 2' is an immensely important bridge between the wildlife and veteran trees of Hampstead Heath and those of gardens in the Redington Frognaal Neighbourhood Area. Birds have been recorded for some years by a resident of Firecrest (see the report 'Heysham Lane & Firecrest Woodland Bird Sightings & Nests').

Use by Local Community:

The Firecrest community comprises approximately 48 households many of which are families with children or regularly visiting grandchildren who use the gardens for leisure. Only ten of the households are houses with their own garden space so this area is of great value to the majority who live in the flats. While private, this is an area of recreation not only for the Firecrest community, but also for the many users of Heysham Lane, who either live on the similarly wooded Spedan estate, or walk through to access the Heath or the children's playground there.

All these facilities are integral with or contiguous to the Firecrest trees & gardens, thus the recreational use & benefits to wildlife and the natural Heath land surroundings are far more widespread than just for the Firecrest residents; the widespread value & benefit of the space cannot be separated by apparent boundaries.



Veteran oak: a lapsed hedgerow pollard

The particularly rich habitat associated with the wooded bank and sensitively managed gardens of Firecrest



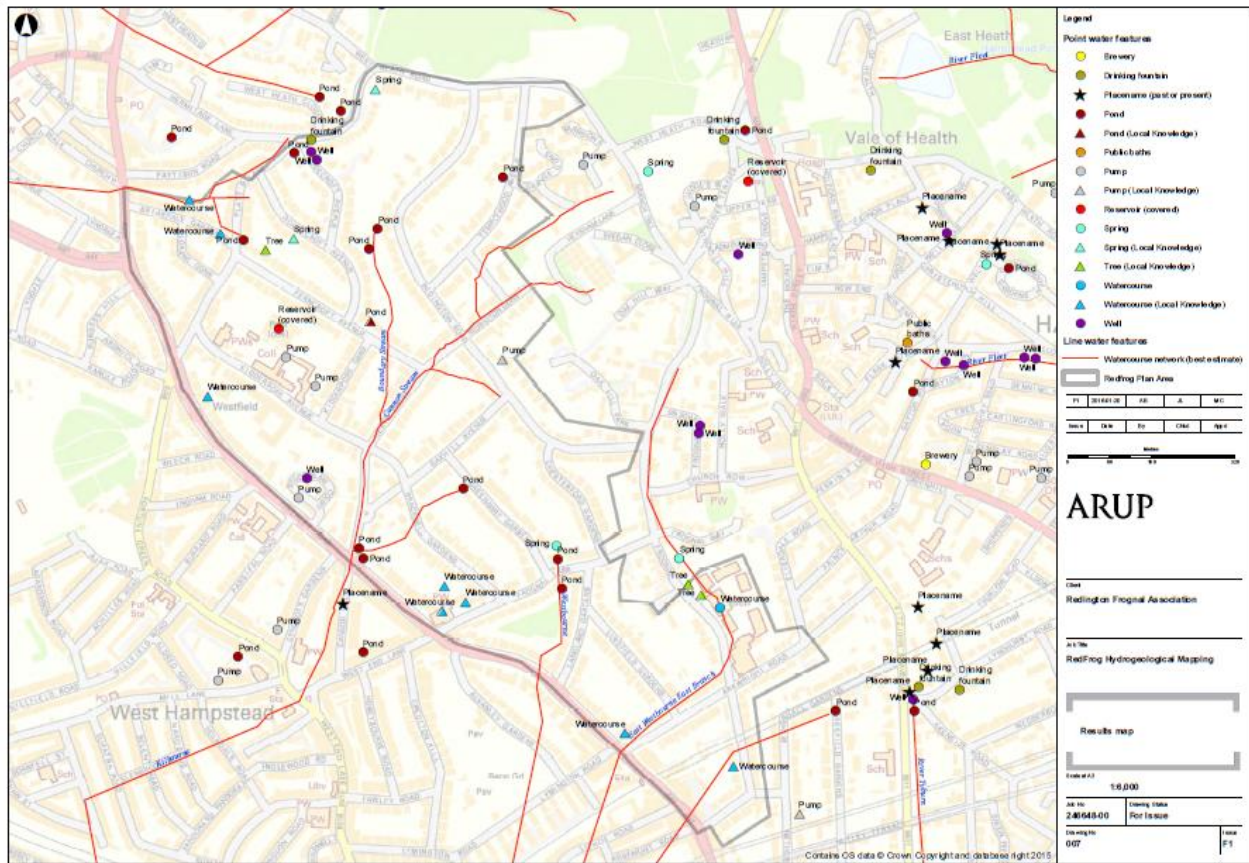
Fallen trees & deadwood in the grounds of Firecrest

Additional Areas

All the woodland and gardens mentioned above are within the Branch Hill SINC. Two additional areas are proposed to be included within this Local Green Space.

1) The additional area of woodland garden to the west of Birchwood Drive is important as it joins Branch Hill SINC to the proposed Biodiversity Corridor within the Redington Frognaal Neighbourhood Forum area. This corridor runs from Hampstead Heath towards Finchley Road along the valley of the western arm of the Canon stream and thence to the course of the river Kyleburne. It provides cover for birds and bats and a route for non-flying invertebrates and fungi.

2) The area of trees and garden along the east of Firecrest Drive provides more continuity with Hampstead Heath than the Branch Hill SINC can give alone, assisting the physical connections between veteran trees on the Heath, within Branch Hill SINC and along Hampstead and Redington Frognaal NFs' biodiversity corridors.



Initial map of local springs and streams produced by Arup as part of a study for the Redington Frognal Neighbourhood Forum daylighting urban rivers project. Reproduced with kind permission.