OPDC Local Plan – Draft Plan for Regulation 19 Consultation 2017

Background Paper on Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation

1 Introduction

1.1 Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs), known nationally as Local Wildlife Sites, are locally designated areas which are recognised as being of particular importance to wildlife and biodiversity. Although a non-statutory designation, SINCs are afforded a high level of protection within the planning system. Development that negatively impacts on a SINC may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where mitigation can be proven.

1.2 Within London, a hierarchy of SINC designations is in place:

a) Sites of Metropolitan Importance: Sites which contain the best examples of London's habitats, including particularly rare species, rare assemblages of species or important populations of species, or sites which are of particular significance within otherwise heavily built-up areas of London. They are of the highest priority for protection.

b) Sites of Borough Importance (Grade 1 and 2): Sites which are important on a borough perspective in the same way as the Metropolitan sites are important to the whole of London. Although sites of similar quality may be found elsewhere in London, damage to these sites would mean a significant loss at a Borough level.

c) Sites of Local Importance: Sites which are, or may be, of particular value to people nearby (such as residents or schools). These sites may already be used for nature study or be run by management committees mainly composed of local people. Local sites are particularly important in areas otherwise deficient in nearby wildlife sites.

1.3 Sites of Metropolitan Importance are designated by the Mayor in partnership with Local Authorities, while the designation of Sites of Borough or Local Importance is the responsibility of the local authorities. The London Wildlife Sites Board (LWSB) provides guidance on selecting and confirming SINCs designed to ensure consistency and that the process is compliant with various policy frameworks.

1.4 The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) was established by the Mayor of London on the 1st of April 2015, and includes lands within the London Boroughs Ealing, Brent and Hammersmith and Fulham. The mission of the Corporation is to ensure that the maximum benefits for London are achieved through the once in a generation opportunity presented by the development of a major new transport hub in the area which will connect the Elizabeth Line with High Speed 2 and national rail services.

1.5 Upon its establishment as a Mayoral Development Corporation, the OPDC also became the Local Planning Authority for the area, and is currently preparing a Draft Local Plan. This background paper provides an overview of the Corporations approach to designating SINCs through the Local Plan process and the evidence for their designation, and future approach to protecting existing, and creation of new, natural areas.

2 Existing SINCs within the OPDC Area

2.1 SINCs are currently designated across the OPDC area as part of the Local Development Frameworks (LDF) of the three constituent Boroughs, each of whom have relied upon different evidence in designating and classifying sites.

London Borough of Ealing

2.2 SINCs within the London Borough of Ealing were designated on the basis of the 2008 "Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Ealing", jointly undertaken between the Borough and the GLA. The review identified 9 sites within the OPDC area which are designated as part of the Borough's LDF. Details of these sites are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Existing SINCs designated within the LB of Ealing portion of OPDC

Borough Reference	Site	Level of Importance
BII16	Central Line, West Ruislip Branch	Borough (Grade 2)
BII15	Former Guinness Mounds	Borough (Grade 2)
BI19	Acton Railsides	Borough (Grade 1)
Eal21	North Acton Cemetery	Local
Eal39	Wesley Playing Fields	Local
M006	London's Canals	Metropolitan
BII20	Silverlink Metro & Dudding Hill Loop	Borough (Grade 2)
BII19	Picadilly & District Lines in Ealing	Borough (Grade 2)
BII26	Mason's Green Lane	Borough (Grade 2)

London Borough of Brent

2.3 The London Borough of Brent retained EPR to undertake a review of existing SINCs across the Borough in 2014. The review identified 6 sites within the OPDC area, all of which have been designated as part of the Boroughs Policies Map. The sites are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Existing SINCs designated within the LB of Brent portion of OPDC

Borough Reference	Site Title	Level of Importance
BI06D	Harlesden to Wembley Central	Borough (Grade 1)
M6	Grand Union Canal	Metropolitan
BII07	Abbey Road Mound and Bestway Park	Borough (Grade 2)
BI07	Diageo Lake	Borough (Grade 1)
BI07	Diageo Lake	Borough (Grade 1)
BI06A	Silverlink Metro (Brondesbury and Willesden Junction)	Borough (Grade 1)

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

2.4 SINCs within the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham have been designated on the basis of the "London Ecological Unit Handbook 25". This study was undertaken by the London Ecology Unit in 1994, and forms the basis current SINC designations in the Borough's LDF. 4 of the designated sites are located within the OPDC area, and are outlined in Table 3

Table 3: Existing SINCs designated within the LBHF portion of OPDC

Borough Reference	Site Title	Level of Importance
BI 7	Rail Side Habitat (Various Locations)	Borough (Grade 1)
BI 2	Old Oak Slidings Birch Wood	Borough (Grade 1)
M6	Grand Union Canal and Towpaths	Metropolitan
BI 1	Scrubs Wood and Wormwood Scrubs	Borough (Grade 1)

3 Designating SINCs as part of the OPDC Local Plan

3.1 As part of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, OPDC proposes to designate those SINCs identified in Section 2 which are currently designated as part of Borough Local Development Frameworks. This approach will result in no change to the number, boundaries or classification of any existing SINCs within the OPDC area. Details of all sites to be designated are outlined in Table 4, and their locations are identified on Map 1.

3.2 In total across the OPDC area, there are 19 SINCs proposed to be designated as part of the Local Plan. This includes:

a) 2 sites of Local Importance;

b) 8 sites of Borough Importance (Grade 1);

c) 6 sites of Borough Importance (Grade 2); and

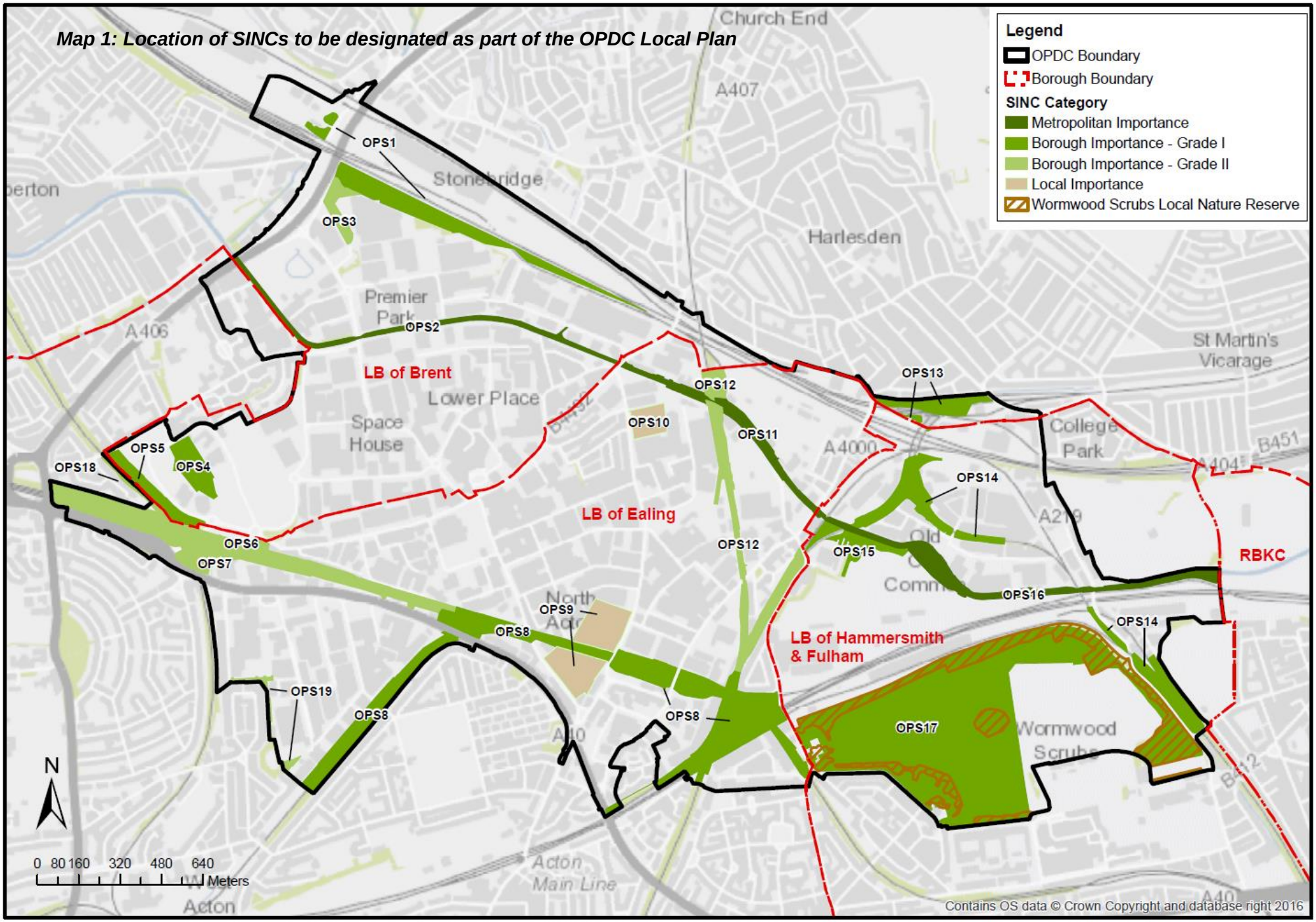
d) 3 sites of Metropolitan Importance (each of which relate to the Grand Union Canal).

Statutory Designations

3.3 In addition to SINCs, parts of the Wormwood Scrubs are designated as a Local Nature Reserve, as identified on Map 1. No other statutory designated natures sites of local, national or international importance are located within the OPDC area.

Table 4: SINCs to be designated as part of the OPDC Local Plan

OPDC Site Reference	Site Title	Level of Importance	Borough	Borough Site Reference
OPS1	Harlesden to Wembley Central	Borough (Grade 1)	Brent	BI06D
OPS2	Grand Union Canal	Metropolitan	Brent	M6
OPS3	Abbey Road Mound and Bestway Park	Borough (Grade 2)	Brent	BII07
OPS4	Diageo Lake	Borough (Grade 1)	Brent	BI07
OPS5	Diageo Lake	Borough (Grade 1)	Brent	BI07
OPS6	Central Line, West Ruislip Branch	Borough (Grade 2)	Ealing	BII16
OPS7	Former Guinness Mounds	Borough (Grade 2)	Ealing	BII15
OPS8	Acton Railsides	Borough (Grade 1)	Ealing	BI19
OPS9	North Acton Cemetery	Local	Ealing	Eal21
OPS10	Wesley Playing Fields	Local	Ealing	Eal39
OPS11	London's Canals	Metropolitan	Ealing	M006
OPS12	Silverlink Metro & Dudding Hill Loop	Borough (Grade 2)	Ealing	BII20
OPS13	Silverlink Metro (Brondesbury and Willesden Junction)	Borough (Grade 1)	Brent	BI06A
OPS14	Rail Side Habitat (Various Locations)	Borough (Grade 1)	LBHF	BI 7
OPS15	Old Oak Slidings Birch Wood	Borough (Grade 1)	LBHF	BI 2
OPS16	Grand Union Canal and Towpaths	Metropolitan	LBHF	M6
OPS17	Scrubs Wood and Wormwood Scrubs	Borough (Grade 1)	LBHF	BI 1
OPS18	Picadilly & District Lines in Ealing	Borough (Grade 2)	Ealing	BII19
OPS19	Mason's Green Lane	Borough (Grade 2)	Ealing	BII26


Map 1: Location of SINCs to be designated as part of the OPDC Local Plan
Legend
OPDC Boundary
Borough Boundary
SINC Category
Metropolitan Importance
Borough Importance - Grade I
Borough Importance - Grade II
Local Importance
Wormwood Scrubs Local Nature Reserve
OPS1
OPS2
OPS3
OPS4
OPS5
OPS6
OPS7
OPS8
OPS9
OPS10
OPS11
OPS12
OPS13
OPS14
OPS15
OPS16
OPS17
OPS18
OPS19
LB of Brent
LB of Ealing
LB of Hammersmith & Fulham
RBKC
Church End
Harlesden
Stonebridge
Premier Park
Lower Place
Space House
St Martin's Vicarage
College Park
Old Oak Common
North Acton
Wormwood Scrubs
Acton Main Line
West Acton
A406
A407
A4000
A219
A40
B451
A404
N
0 80 160 320 480 640
Meters
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4 Next Steps

4.1 The OPDC Local Plan is set to be formally adopted in Winter 2017/18, replacing the existing Local Development Frameworks for the three constituent London Boroughs as they apply to the OPDC area. While the Local Plan will not result in any changes to currently designated SINCs, proposals will be need to comply with Local Plan Policies with regards to their impact on SINCs.

4.2 The Old Oak Common area is set to undergo major change over the next 20 to 30 years. The area will see the development of the largest train station in the UK in over a century, along with 25,000 new homes and employment space for over 45,000 new jobs. In addition to preparing a Local Plan, which sets out the spatial vision and key planning policy to help guide this future development, the OPDC is also preparing a detailed Masterplan for the Old Oak area.

4.3 OPDC recognise that this level of development will have a major impact on existing SINCs within and adjacent to the area. However, it also it provides an opportunity for the creation of new natural areas rich in biodiversity and wildlife habitats. This may be provided as part of enhancing existing SINCs, the creation of new natural areas and green spaces, and as part green roofs, green walls or other urban greening approaches.

4.4 Alongside the preparation of the Old Oak Common Masterplan, OPDC intends to produce a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan for the overall OPDC area. These studies will not only review existing SINCs, but also map out a clear vision for the delivery of new green infrastructure and biodiversity rich natural areas as part of high density redevelopment of Old Oak Common. This will ensure that the delivery of appropriate new biodiversity rich green infrastructure is integrated within the overall masterplan process, and forms a core element of development of the area from the very early stages.