

Trent Park North Lake Restoration Proposals

A guide to how Enfield Council will help restore and manage the landscape of the north lake

Lewis Kennedy's watercolour of the lake, 1815.

History and context

Enfield Council are in the process of planning the restoration of the landscape to the area north of the lake in front of the Trent Park Mansion. Historic England have identified that the visual relationship between the mansion, gardens and country park has been compromised by vegetation which now screens much of the historic views across the lake. Enfield council have developed a plan to address this issue which involves thinning out some of the existing trees and scrub areas and creating more of a grassland habitat. In addition a practical management plan which will ensure the continuation of this habitat for the future.

Further background history and context related to this project can be seen in appendix A - North lake restoration report, which was produced by external Landscape Architects. In addition please see appendix B - Aerial photos of the north lake vegetation, these images show evidence of the more open landscape which has changed over time to the current situation.

Work achieved so far

In February 2026 we cleared the site of all the areas of thick bramble and small saplings to help open up and better assess the site. A qualified arboriculturist has surveyed and assessed the best tree specimens for retaining. These present a good range of species and age to ensure the greatest benefit to biodiversity. We also consulted an ecologist to ensure we are compliant with environmental regulations and our plans enhance biodiversity.

Working with our experienced parks team we also identified some areas of scrub (under-storey typically including hawthorn, apple, young cherry, birch and bramble) to manage on a rotational cycle. This habitat has gradually encroached upon the north lake landscape and offers value to wildlife but needs to be kept in check, so we achieve a balance of grassland with pockets of scrub among the best trees.

The Plan

Our plan (on the following page) shows indicative areas of retained pockets of scrub (selecting the best most diverse areas) to be managed on a 2-4 year cutting cycle. We believe this will offer the greatest benefit to local wildlife whilst also achieving the objective of improving the historic views. The council is now in a strong position to coordinate this management. Trent Park falls within the heart of our Landscape recovery scheme which will bring a greater focus and monitoring ability to the landscape management. In addition a woodland management plan is being produced by our in-house woodland officer which focuses on woodland regeneration, but also recognises the value of thinning and opening up areas and is therefore aligned with this area. Our Parks team are fully onboard with this management approach and are investing in machinery to help accomplish the scrub cutting cycles more effectively, (e.g.. investing in a Robomulcher to easily remove bramble and saplings) using a dedicated maintenance budget secured through this project.



Aerial view of Trent Park showing the north lake area




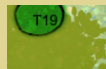






View of the Mansion from the north lake taken a couple of years ago - image from X Doc.



View of the north lake site taken in February 2026 after bramble and low scrub cutting

Trent Park North Lake Restoration Proposals

Key

-  Retained tree
-  Retain some scrub area with a 2-4 year cutting cycle
-  Removal of majority of tree and shrub vegetation, scrape out bramble and sow a meadow
-  Proposed route of new lakeside footpath (self bound gravel)
-  Existing main routes
-  Informal paths maintained by mowing
-  Lake edge improvements - various locations requiring bank support/erosion protection
-  Potential to replace existing pipe with a swale and mini wetland feature



Plan showing landscape restoration proposals for the north side of the lake

Creating a grassland meadow

Between the pockets of scrub and the retained trees we propose to create a grassland meadow habitat. We propose to scrape off the top layer of soil and remove the worst of the bramble roots (off-site). We have an on-site location to deposit the soil arisings and gently blend into a naturally undulating landscape. This then allows us to sow native wildflower meadow seed into an ideal substrate. Our Parks team are now set up for future seasonal cut and collect management.

Lake edge

Along the lake edge we are proposing to remove the majority of alder and willow trees whilst retaining a few of the best specimens. In addition we will carry out improvements to protect the lake edge from erosion using natural materials and techniques such as piling in timber and forming retaining edges of branch/brush bundles and backfilling with soil, then planting marginal vegetation. We also propose to address the erosion issues around the western edge where a drainage pipe outfalls and is the most frequent area for dogs to enter the lake. Here we propose to formalise a dog entry area to help manage this activity and make a more vegetated and natural setting around the pipe.

Footpath and interpretation

If the budget allows we would also like to install a new footpath around the north lake to connect to the path around the south side. We propose a self bound gravel material, the path would follow the existing desire line and provide an improvement to the existing situation which becomes very muddy. We hope to include some wayfinding and interpretation features and seating opportunities to complement the lakeside environment.

Management

The wildflower meadow would be cut and collected on an annual cycle

The scrub areas cut down on a 2-4 year cycle

The informal paths through the site can be mowed regularly throughout the summer

The trees being removed from the lake edge are species that will rapidly regenerate once cut, however removing the roots will be destructive to the lake (reservoir) edge. Therefore we propose to fell and then eco-plug the root base which should kill the tree, prevent the regrowth but allow the root system to keep operating as a bank retention for many years to come, meanwhile the new marginal vegetated revetments can establish, these areas can be extended if needed over time.

Following Steps

Enfield Council have produced this document to help explain our proposals and offer the public an opportunity to comment on these plans. Once the engagement period is complete we will consider all comments and respond to questions and suggestions.

Following this we will move to detailed design with an aim of beginning implementation this Autumn/winter and meadow sowing in Spring 2027.



Example of grassland meadow and scrub areas with mown path



Example of grassland meadow typical species



Example of erosion at Trent Park Lake, potential to remove the pipe and create a swale and mini wetland area along with a formalised dog entry area with erosion protection.



Community event at Firs Farm creating a vegetated river bank support using natural materials.



If budget allows the project offers an opportunity for a footpath made from self bound material similar to the path on the south side of the lake to form a circuit around the whole lake. Current proposal is to follow the main informal existing 'desire line' route (shown on proposal plan)

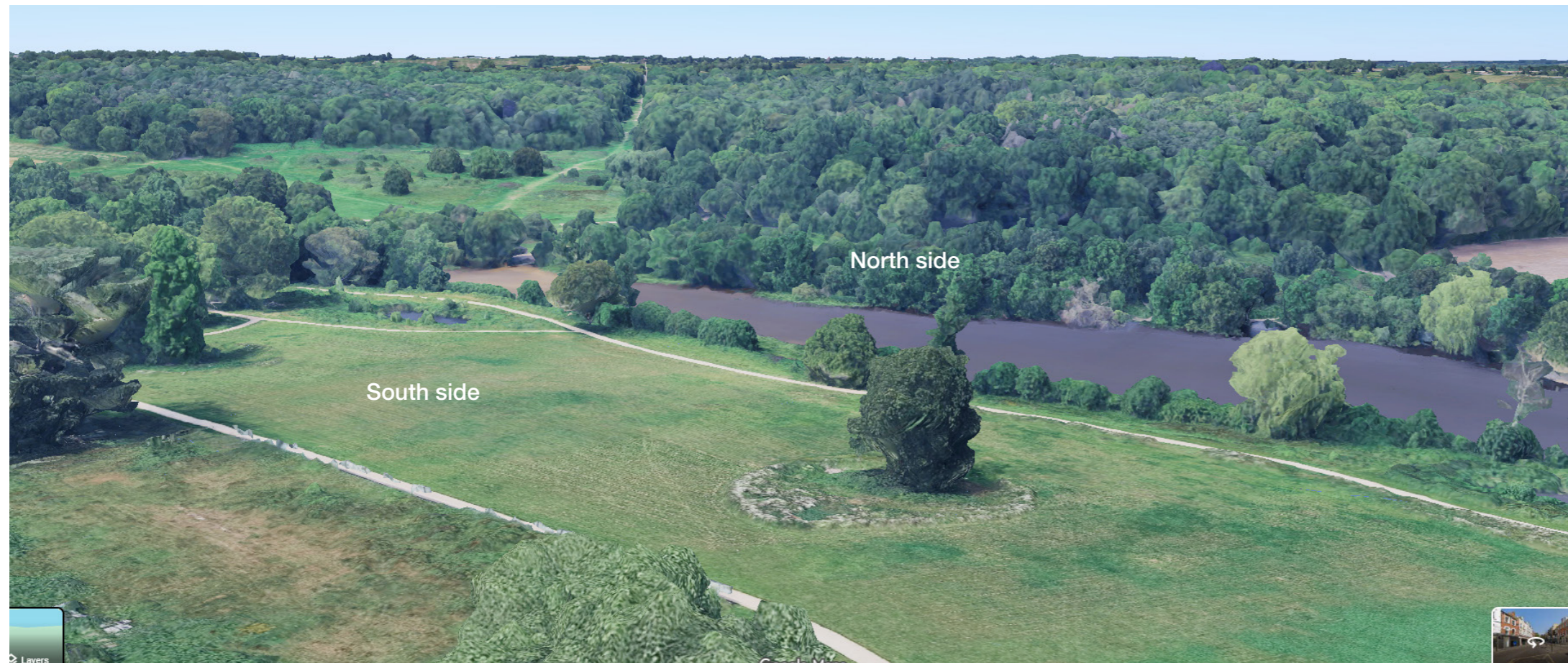


The project offers an opportunity for some interpretation signage to inform visitors of the historic landscape and management objectives. This could form a nature trail around the lake

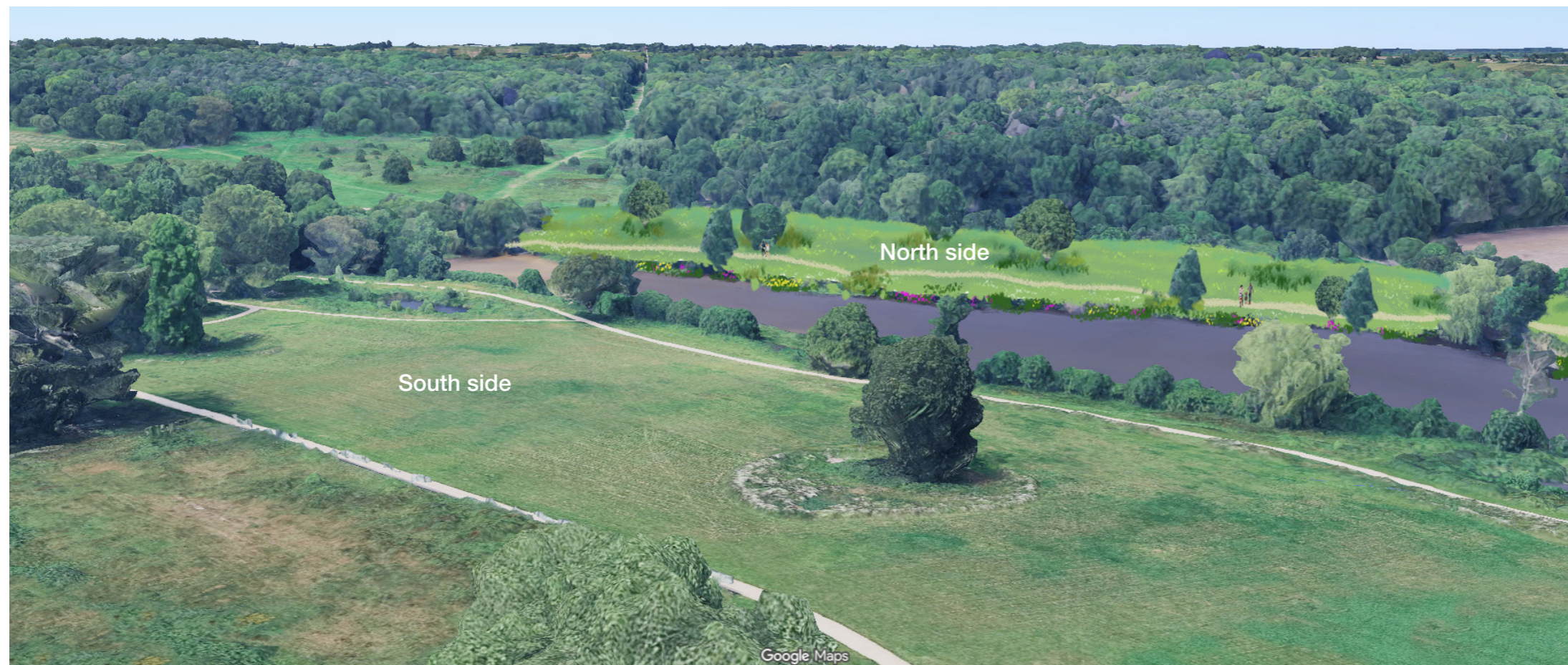


If budget allows we can look to install a bench/benches along the proposed footpath

Trent Park North Lake Restoration Visualisation



Existing aerial view from Google Earth of the north lake from the south side



A simple manipulated image of the north bank after the proposed north lake restoration project

Appendix A - North Lake Report_ Murdoch Wickham

Restoration of the Historic Landscape at Trent Park Mansion and Lake

Trent Park, Enfield
Document Reference: 1441/023 Rev C
May 2024



MURDOCH WICKHAM
THE LANDSCAPE ATELIER

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1. Introduction

Figure 1 - Location

1. Introduction

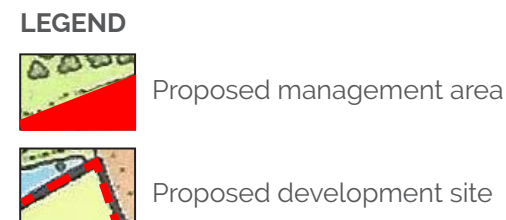
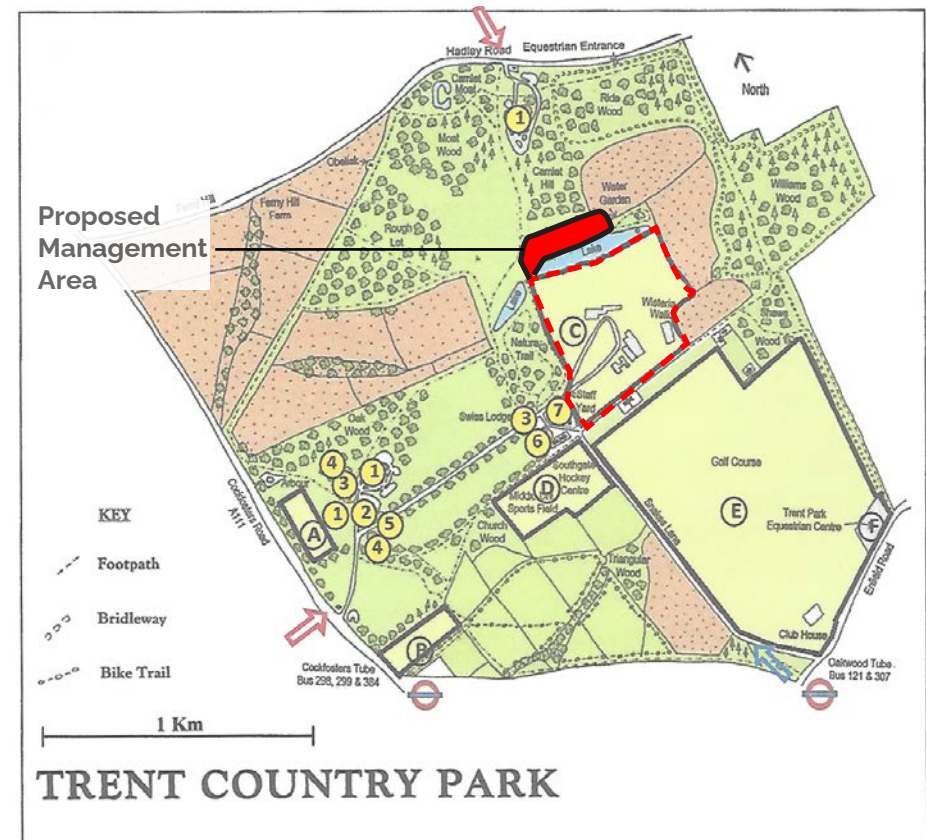
In November 2016 Murdoch Wickham finalised a report on Restoration of the Historic Landscape of Trent Park Mansion and Lake following discussions between Berkeley Homes and the Trent Country Park management team. Its purpose was to set out the heritage, landscape and nature conservation benefits of restoring the pre-war vegetation pattern on the north bank of the lower lake at Trent Country Park. The area concerned is shown on Figure 1 and is on the opposite side of the lake from the Berkeley Homes development. This restoration proposal was part of commitment of Berkeley Homes to ensuring that the Trent Park Registered Park and Garden is taken off Historic England's at risk register.

None of the work itemised in the 2016 report has been carried out and the site has changed substantially since then. It is now best described as scrub woodland. The purpose of the present report is to re-state the landscape and heritage issues and to set out the best heritage options for the north bank. This can then be reconciled with the Country Park's amenity and nature conservation objectives. In combination with Berkeley Homes' restoration of the south bank, the work will reinstate views and the setting of the mansion. These are central to Trent Park's heritage significance.

Historic England has identified 13 areas of concern within the park. Nine of these lie wholly within the Berkeley Homes land, and their conservation and restoration is included within the development. Of the remaining four areas, the Lime Avenue leading from the Cockfosters Road entrance into the park is well managed by LB Enfield and the Japanese Garden/Water Garden is managed by LB Enfield with the aid of volunteers. The two remaining areas, which are the subject of this proposal are:

- the lakes and cascade which lie partly within the development area and partly within the country park;
- the visual relationship between the mansion, gardens and country park.

The history and significance of the lake and the land around it are briefly reviewed, followed by a description of the present vegetation. Proposals for best heritage option are set out.



2. History and heritage significance

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Figure 2 - Lewis Kennedy's watercolour, 1815.

A villa was built on the site of the present Trent Park mansion shortly after 1787. Lakes were present soon after this. The first evidence of a lower lake and the woodland above it in their present form is Kennedy's watercolour of 1815 (figure 2). This shows the lawn extending down to the water's edge from the mansion and grassland on the other side.

There was woodland on the site of the Water/Japanese Garden and a small block of woodland to the west.

Aerial photograph from the north, 1939



The pattern of the landscape up to the start of the Second World War is shown on figure 3. By then, Sir Philip Sasson had planted weeping willows around the lake. One has been retained on the south bank and there are several on the north bank.

Figure 3 - Aerial photograph from the north, 1939.

The view across the lake from the north in the 1930's



Figure 4 - The view across the lake from the north in the 1930's.

The views from the north bank across the lake (Figure 4) showed the dominant position of the mansion.

This setting of the mansion is one of the most important aspects of the site both as a core feature of the registered park and the setting of the grade II listed mansion.

The view across the lake from the mansion terrace in the 1930's



The views from the mansion terrace were across the lake to a landscape of interlocking woodland, individual trees and grassland.

Figure 5 -The view across the lake from the mansion terrace in the 1930's.

Key wider views from and of the mansion

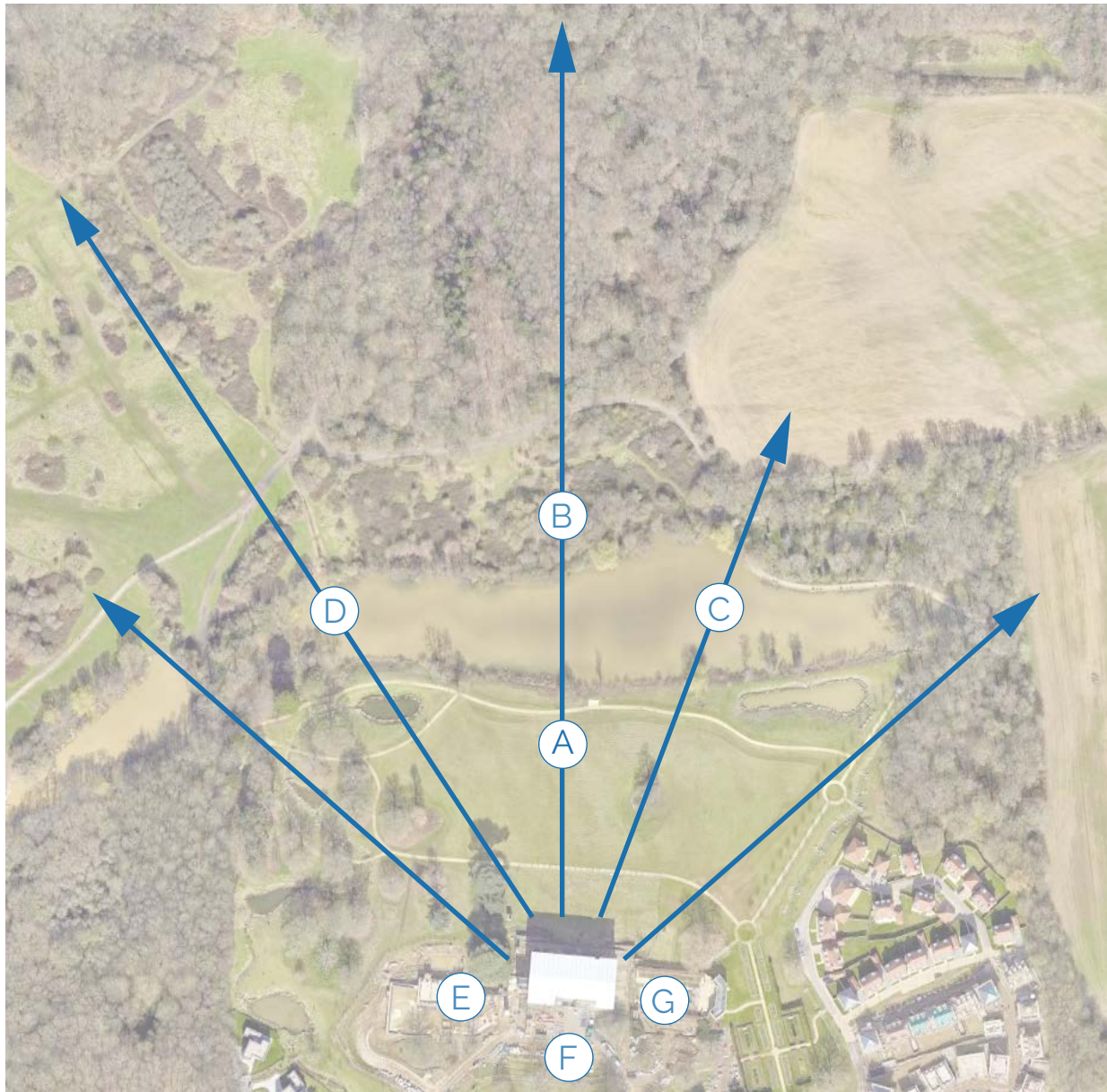


Figure 6 - Key wider views from and of the mansion.



Figure 6A - View from the mansion terrace

Although the views from and of the mansion across the lake are the essential heritage ones, wider views also need to be considered.

The full sweep of the view from the mansion terrace (figure 6A) has Camlet Wood on the horizon B with a wide arc to the east and west. The view fades into woodland to the west and Ice House Wood/Williams Wood to the east. There are no particular management issues here except that historically Ice House Wood may have been thin enough to permit views through to the farmland. If one is now required, some management of the wood may be necessary.

To the east there is the designed view of the obelisk D. This is a precise vista from the north east corner of the mansion. Mowing the ride annually to prevent natural regeneration is straightforward but the control of tree canopies is potentially a high indefinite expense. Options include pruning from a cherry picker at 2-3 year intervals and annual cutting with a long arm flail. A specialist contractor needs to be consulted. It was cut for a particular occasion and it would be a mistake to alter it or create new viewpoints.

The views from and of the mansion to the east south and west have been fully taken into account as in the development as the setting of a listed building.

The south bank today



Since the 1960s, trees and shrubs gradually encroached around all sides of the lake.

The south bank has now been cleared and has a fringe of marginal aquatics, together with willow and alder cut on a short rotation.

Figure 7 - Looking across the lake from the south bank.

The scrub woodland on the north bank



The mansion can only be seen from a few clearings and the vegetation is largely impenetrable. Even a very restricted view like this will soon be lost.

Figure 8 - The view from the north edge of the north bank.

The north bank at the lake edge



Figure 9.1 - For most of the lake edge - about 80m - there is dense scrub with patches of wetland vegetation like the iris seen here.



Figure 9.2 - In the few gaps in the edge vegetation the view of the mansion that will be created by scrub clearance can be seen.

Erosion of the edge



Figure 10.1 - This is the worst case of erosion of the edge, where erosion around an outfall has been accelerated by wave action.

The edge here takes the full force of the north-easterly winds and there are many eroded sections. It is impossible to judge them fully from the bank but they cover approximately 50% of the edge.



Figure 10.2 - There are some sections with an established soft edge of marginal aquatics - in this case mainly Branched Bur-reed, similar to those on the south bank.

3. Present state

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Present state

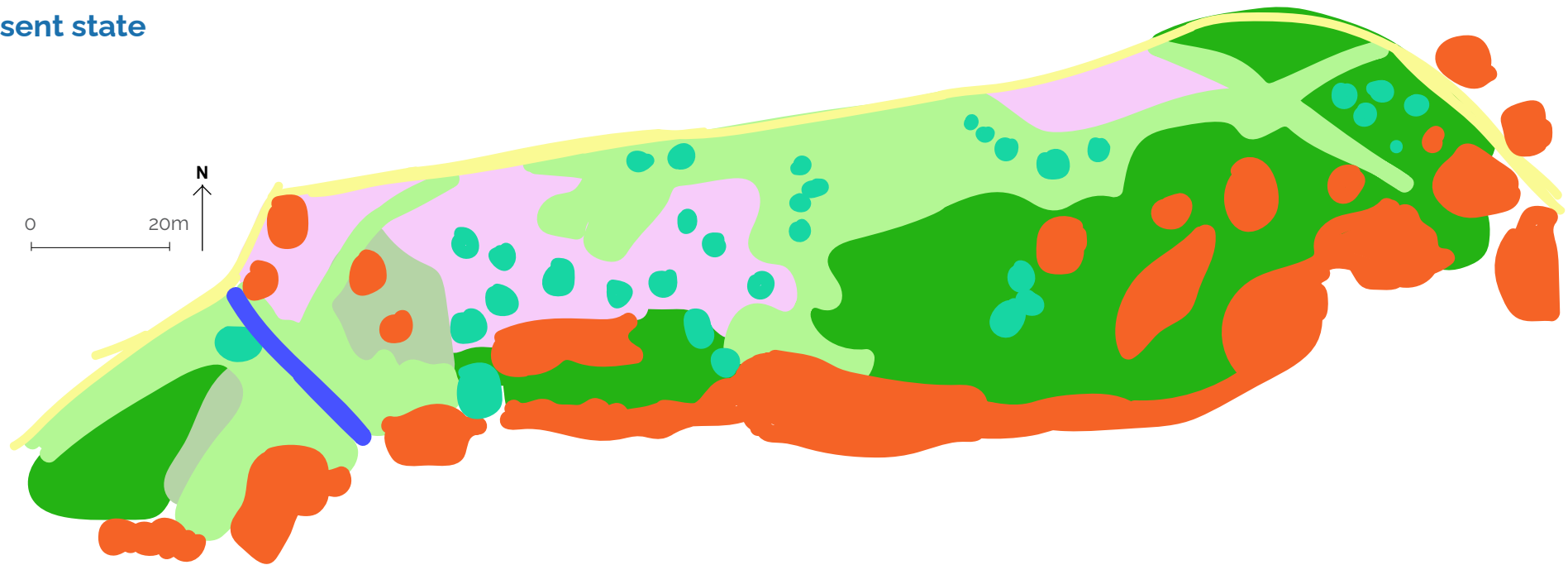


Figure 11 - The present state

Figure 11 shows the present vegetation. There is an intermittent marginal aquatic fringe of Branched Bur-reed. Along the water's edge there is woodland with alder, willow and hawthorn. There is no understorey here but the willow and alders have suckers. The edge bears the brunt of the wave action from the north-easterly winds and there are very eroded areas which have deteriorated since 2016.

In the south-east of the area further away from the edge there is a clump of closed canopy woodland of field maple, sycamore, hawthorn and willows; and birch extending to the east with more birch to the northeast.

Down the western side there is a band of mature hawthorn and young cherry while the northern edge is formed by the path around the edge of Camlet Wood. Within these boundaries there is a mosaic of hawthorn, birch, apple, oak and willow embedded within bramble scrub and rough neutral grassland with species like cock's foot and perennial rye grass. There are small patches of dense lower scrub, mainly hawthorn, around the scrub woodland.

A comparison with the 2016 report shows that the statement 'if left unmanaged the whole area will eventually become closed canopy woodland' was correct.

Legend

	Mature/early mature oak, maple, willow, silver birch, hawthorn		Bramble and young trees
	Path		Trees to 6m within bramble and hawthorn
	Species poor grassland and tall herbs		Individual young trees
	Grassland and tall herbs with bramble		Drain

4. Proposals

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Proposals

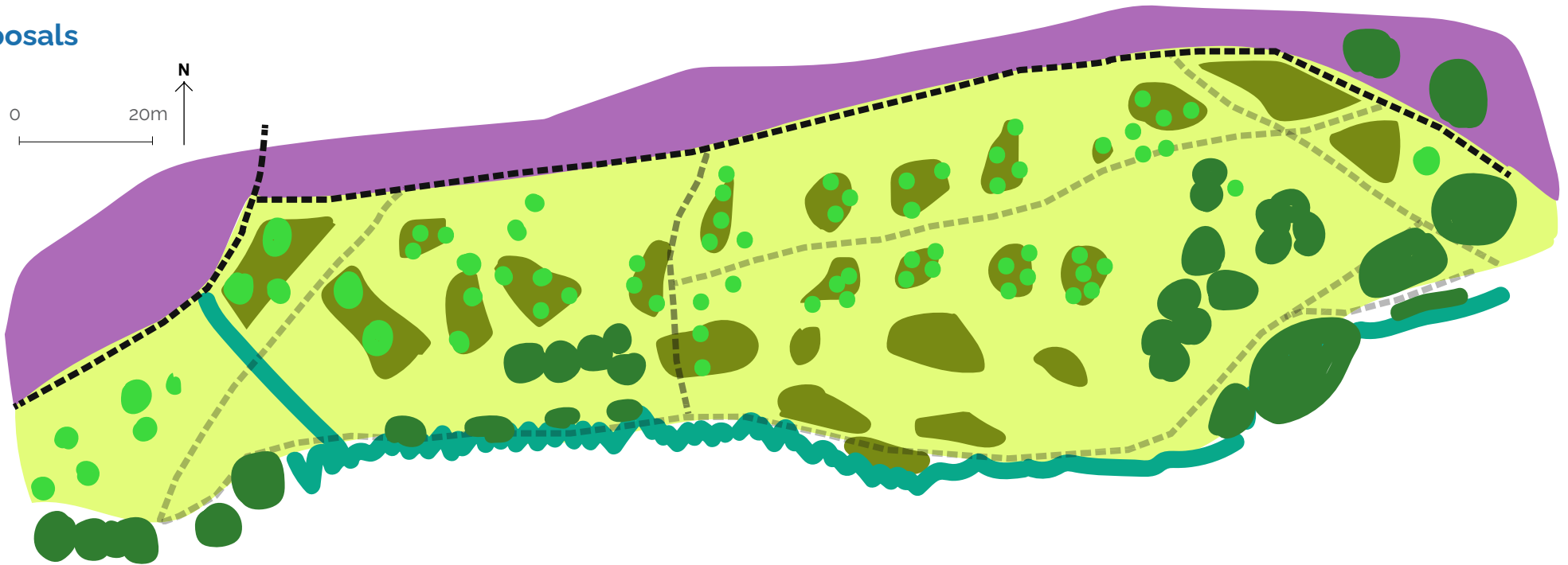










Figure 12 - Proposals

The issues

1. The best heritage option is to remove the scrub and trees and return the site to grassland. However, it is recognised that by 2016 the site had developed considerable nature conservation value although this has probably diminished slightly since then. There is surely a compromise to be reached in balancing the two aspects.
2. Whichever option is chosen the maintenance requirements should be as straightforward as possible.
3. Opening-up the vegetation on the waters edge may increase the risk of windblow. In any case the trees are vulnerable to collapse. If this happens there may be considerable root disturbance.
4. Scrub and rough grassland are easily replaceable habitats.
5. Where parts of the historic landscape have become overgrown or have been planted so that views are lost or obscured, one solution has been to cut keyholes to allow fixed views. This would be poor practice in the present case because it would give the impression that there were only set views as is the case for the obelisk. Keeping some of the trees on the north bank so that there are shifting views and glimpses would be better.

Legend

	Rhododendron removed and coppice edge to Camlet Wood		Main path
	Neutral grassland cut once a year		Unsurfaced path
	Possible site for scrub cut on a 2-4 year cycle		Potential retained trees in first phase
	Edge of short cycle coppiced alder and willow with marginal aquatics		Older retained trees

Management and maintenance



Figure 13.1 - There is a good range of trees that could be retained particularly in the size class of the oak shown here but there needs to be a good distribution across the whole of the site and between ages so that the tree cover is self-sustaining.



Figure 13.2 - Coppicing of the native shrubs and removal of rhododendron in a 10m band along the edge of Camlet Wood will compensate for the short-term changes to the north bank scrub.

Proposals continued

A specialist company to repair the eroded areas and provide a soft edge to combat erosion based on native species.

Clear fell/coppice trees and shrubs to 10m back from waters edge. Allow suckers and shoots to regrow. Ideally this should be done in two phases. Coppice regrowth on 1-2 year cycle.

Clear other scrub in two phases and mow the grassland with a forage harvester removing all arisings. Clear the trees leaving 20 below 150mm diameter, 20 at 150-300 mm and 20 at over 300mm diameter. These should include hawthorn, birch, alder and willow and should have as even a distribution across the site as possible. The trees marked on figure 12 are just indicative and choice should be based on site judgement. It should allow for retaining small clusters where thinning to one tree need to be phased.

In consultation with stakeholders and Historic England reduce the 60 to 30 with a coverage that allows visitors to move around the site taking in views and glimpses of the mansion and gives an open wood pasture appearance when viewed from the mansion. When this has been done scrub can be allowed to grow back in areas based on the best amenity and nature conservation options and accessibility. An indicator for management might be 25% cover of scrub cut on a 3-year cycle with the rest being grassland cut once a year in late summer.

In order to provide compensatory south-facing scrub the southern edges of Camlet Wood could be coppiced.

Appendix B - Historic Aerial photos of the north lake

Appendix B - Trent Park North Lake
Aerial images from recent decades showing the vegetation of the north side of the lake



2003



2010



2006



2011