

London Borough of Hillingdon

Cranford Park Conservation Study: Draft

Site Appraisal Brief



Conservation and Design Team
5/7/2014

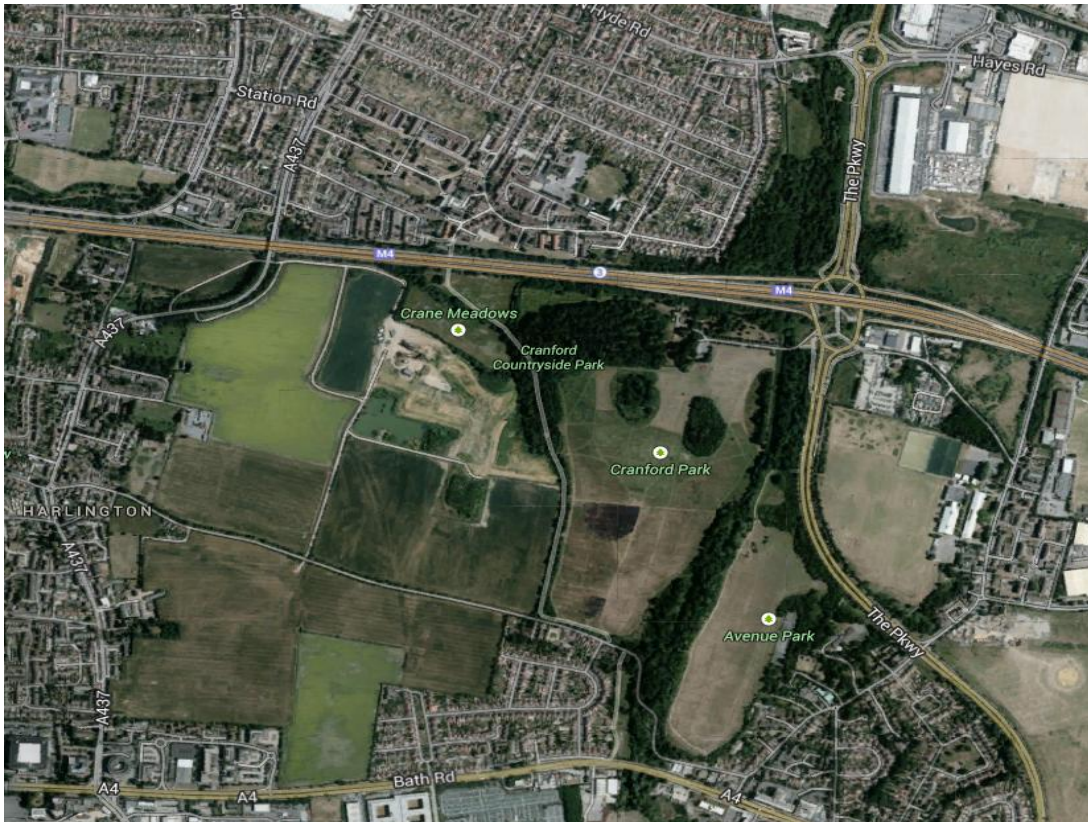


HILLINGDON
LONDON

BRIEF: CONSERVATION STUDY CRANFORD PARK, HILLINGDON, TW5 9RZ

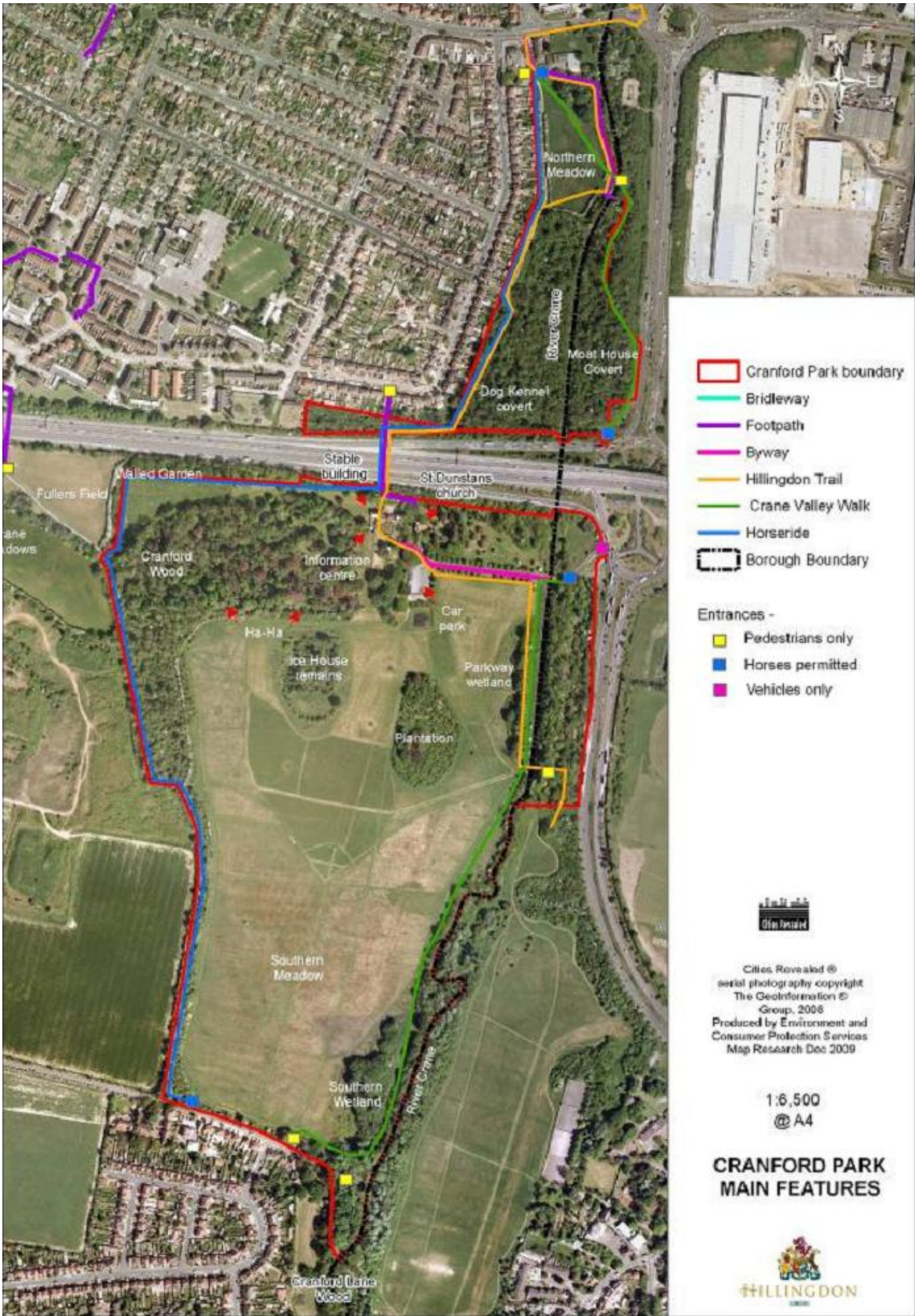
1.0 BACKGROUND

The London Borough of Hillingdon wishes to prepare a conservation study for Cranford Park, a Council owned site. The site comprises approx 58 hectares (144 acres) and is located to the north west of Cranford village, with 122 acres immediately south of the M4 and 22 acres north of the M4.



Aerial view of site and surrounding areas

A study is required to appraise the historic, communal, archaeological and environmental value of the site, and its potential for full educational and community use; in liaison with the active Friends Group and other community groups and conservation organisations, such as the London Wildlife Trust. There is also an understanding that there will need to be a commercial income from the site to allow it to be self financing, and thus eligible for Parks for People funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Study area shown within the red line area

2.0 DESIGNATIONS

Cranford Park lies within a Conservation Area and an Archaeological Priority Area, and has been included on the London Parks and Gardens Trust Inventory of historic spaces (see Appendix 7). There are nine statutory designated listed buildings on and around the site of former Cranford House. These are the Stables, the Cellars of Cranford House (both the Stables and Cellars are on the English Heritage At Risk Register, Appendix 6), a bridge, an extensive Ha-Ha, and a number of sections of garden wall to the north, west and south of the Stables, these are all grade II listed. St. Dunstan's Church lies to the east of the stables and is grade II* listed. Although within the park, it does not fall within the remit of the study. Also inside the park there are other original garden/park structures, such as icehouses, which are considered as listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of the Stables. Further details of the structures, including listing descriptions, are included in Appendix 1- 5 of this document.

In addition to the heritage asset designations, the site falls within the Green Belt. It is a Nature Conservation Site of Metropolitan or Borough Grade 1 Importance and, as the River Crane runs north/south through the park, it lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

The area of the park in the ownership of Hillingdon Council, which lies to the east of the river, falls within London Borough of Hounslow. Hounslow Council shared the management of the park with Hillingdon until 2008/9, when Hillingdon took back full management of the site.

Hillingdon Council owns the main public access road into the park, this part of the park, however, lies within the London Borough of Hounslow, whose co-operation would be needed when considering any future development proposals. Other entrances are from Cranford Lane and Watersplash Lane, although these are used only by Council vehicles for park management. Pedestrian access points are from the St Dunstan's and the Moston Close subways.

3.0 HISTORY OF CRANFORD HOUSE AND PARK

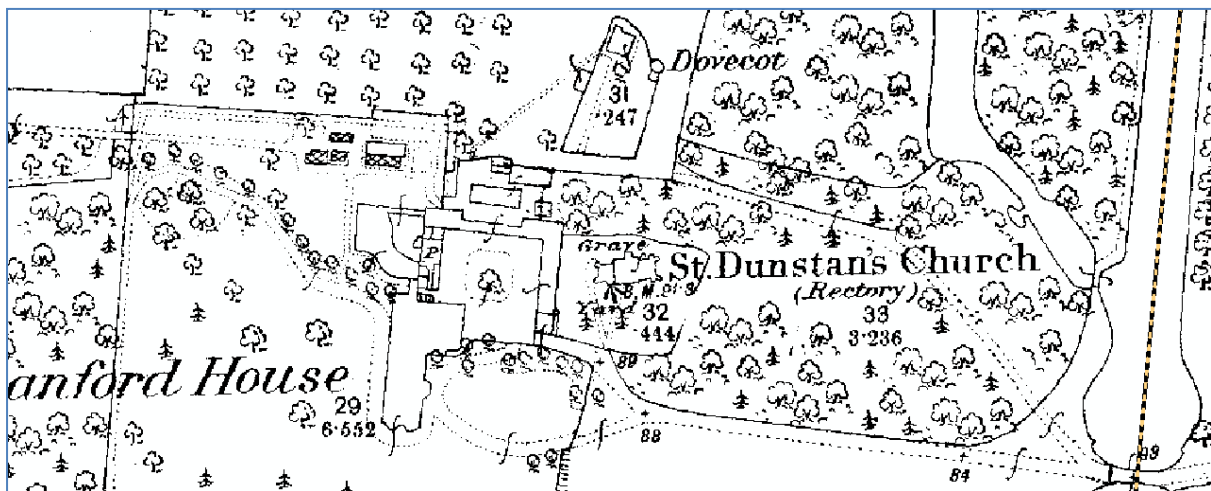
The Manor of Cranford dates from before the Norman Conquest and, in the early Middle Ages, was owned by the Knights Templar. In 1618, it passed to the Berkeley family, the first owner of the manor, Lady Berkeley, being the cousin of Queen Elizabeth I.



South front of building circa 1900

Cranford House appears to have dated from the early 17th century although it was altered and enlarged in the early 18th century to accommodate around 40 rooms. The house was demolished in 1944, but the splendid brick vaulted cellars remain and many other structures have survived. The Stables, which retain the original stalls and other features, are thought to have been built in the mid 18th century. Some of the metal work within the building is clearly dated 1783. The southern wing to the structure has been lost.

There is also a very fine Georgian bridge, a 17th century walled garden, a circular shrubbery (believed to have been an early maze), ice houses, a Ha-Ha and the remains of a large kitchen garden. Many fine trees survive in the former gardens and the River Crane runs through the open meadow land, which comprises the major part of the parkland.



Historic OS Map showing Cranford House, Stables, Garden Walls and Dovecot, circa 1840s

In 1932 the family sold the estate, including Cranford House and outbuildings, to the Hayes and Harlington UDC and it became a public park in 1949. The park was divided in two when the M4 was constructed in the 1960s. In the 1980s the public toilets were converted to an office and small information centre. The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust Inventory includes a useful history of the site and this is included as Appendix 7 of this document.

4.0 MANAGEMENT AND USE OF THE SITE

The park is owned and managed by the Council's Green Spaces Team and day to day management of the site is carried out by the Countryside and Conservation Officer for the South of the Borough. The park has a 5 year Management Plan for the period 2013-2017, which covers the management and maintenance of its landscape and ecology. This document can be found on the Council's web site.

Since gaining full management of the site the Green Spaces Team has also organised various community events within the park, including guided walks and talks, Halloween events and regular volunteer sessions. There have also been a number of corporate days and educational sessions with school groups.

The current Friends Group was established in 2012, following the demise of the previous group in 2008. In liaison with the Green Spaces Team, the Group co-ordinate volunteering opportunities and with the Council, jointly host educational and community events on a regular basis, with the aim of engaging local residents and reaching wider visitor audiences. They also carry out research into the park's history and share the Council's vision of improved and upgraded facilities, which will provide a really valuable location for community activities.

5.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE CONSERVATION STUDY

The aim of the conservation study is to guide the Council in the future management of this unique and historic park, so that its value and significance will be fully appreciated and its potential for community use fully achieved. It will seek to explain why the historic buildings and garden matter to local people and will set out what needs to be done to repair and reuse the buildings and structures, as well as to improve the site as a whole, so as to ensure its future viability and long term sustainability. The study will form the basis of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding as a Parks for People project.

To achieve this, the study will need to:

Provide an understanding of the significance of the site and an appraisal of its character. This would include:

- An analysis of its historic development, using documentary evidence historic maps and photos and other sources of information. (The Friends Group will help with providing this information).

- An assessment of the significance of its surviving buildings and structures.
- An understanding of the archaeology of the site (desk top study).
- An appraisal of the quality of the natural environment, namely the parkland, gardens, river, trees and planting, and its ecology.
- An understanding of the importance of the assets whether tangible (such as buildings and structures) and intangible (such as perceptions and aesthetic qualities) to existing park users. Provide an understanding of the physical characteristics of the site: its issues and vulnerabilities. This would include:
- Consideration of the site's wider setting (in terms of issues such as demographics, transport, adjacent uses and ownerships, gravel extraction, etc.).
- Site specific issues such as access to the site (both pedestrian and vehicular), parking, visitor usage, security, general accessibility, legibility and signage.
- An overview of the condition of the structures and a brief assessment of the extent of repairs required.
- The roles of the Council and the Friends Group in managing the site.
- An assessment of designations, policy and other constraints. Previous surveys and work undertaken at the Park would need to be included.

Explore visions for the future of the park and buildings. This would include:

- An assessment of the outcome of public consultation, to include the Council's partners, stakeholders, Steering Group, local residents and park users, which would seek to understand the perceived issues and support for new uses. (The consultation would be organised and held by the Council/Friends Group, although display material would need to be provided by the consultants).
- A full examination of potential uses, within the remit of economic viability and the long term sustainability of the site. The uses would need to provide identifiable community and educational benefits, and encourage a wide range of activities for borough residents from diverse backgrounds.
- Outline proposals for the conservation of the natural environment of the park, including habitat improvement, the restoration of River Crane, better management of existing landscapes and the protection of historic landscape features
- Consideration of the scope for increasing the volunteer base and the potential for attracting visitors from disadvantaged parts of the Borough.

- Outline proposals for the future management of the site, including how this might be funded.

6.0 THE DOCUMENT

The document will be used by the Council as a management tool and will be the basis for a pre-application submission for a Parks for People Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Thus the criteria for funding and the following outcomes as required by the HLF will need to be addressed:

Heritage:

- better managed
- in better condition
- better interpreted and explained
- Identified/recorded.

People:

- developed skills
- learnt about heritage
- volunteered time.

Communities:

- the local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit
- environmental impacts will be reduced
- more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage.

With regards to this project, the Council particularly requires that the benefits for the local and wider community are assessed, and the potential benefits of new sustainable uses for the listed structures are considered, as well as the wider use of the park and improvements to the natural environment. The study also needs to address the scope for widening the range of volunteers.

The consultants will be expected to work closely with the council officers leading the project and also when required, liaise with the Steering Group who will be guiding the project, and The Friends, who will be providing information on the history and social significance of the site. A document outlining initial objectives for the park, produced by the Friends in conjunction with council officers, forms Appendix 8.

7.0 FORMAT

The final document is to be created using Desk Top Publisher, so as to be compatible with existing Council software. It should be provided in a form that can be uploaded onto the Council's web site and also a "live" copy should be provided that can be updated by the Council if required.

The Council should be provided with 3 spiral bound colour copies and 3 CDs of the final document. This will contain text and illustrations, including relevant drawings, photos and maps (current and historic). The document should be formatted in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Corporate Communications Team and the Council's logos should be incorporated onto the front and rear covers. Illustrative boards at A1 or larger, will also be required for public consultation.

8.0 TIME FRAME

It is anticipated that the project will be tendered in mid May, invitations to tender will be invited in June with interviews held in July. The project will commence on 1st September 2014. A draft document for internal consultation will be required by the 5th January 2015, with the document finalised by 1st March 2015.

9.0 CONSULTATION

The consultants will be expected to work closely with officers and when necessary, members of the Steering Group, the following meetings will be required:

- Initial meeting with lead Council officers
- Site meeting with officers and Steering Group representatives
- 4 meetings with the project steering group
- Meetings with Council's Transportation Team and other relevant departments
- Meeting with lead officers to finalise document

Other consultees (not included on the Steering Group):

- Greater London Archaeological Service
- London Parks and Gardens Trust