

Warren Gardens, East Twickenham

Application for Planning Permission for a Proposed memorial to First World War Belgian Refugees

Biodiversity Report for Warren Gardens

Because of the its maturity and particularly the growth of its trees (**see Biodiversity Map 6, p.2**), Warren Gardens is in fact the richest habitat for wildlife of the two adjacent public parks lining the river at this point, reaching almost to the side of Richmond Bridge.

Linking with other sites of mature tree growth (to the **SW**: Haversham Close and the other residential sites extending to Marble Hill Park and Orleans Gardens; to the **NW**: the relatively poorer habitat of Cambridge Gardens and the tree-fringed garden of Richmond Bridge Mansions), it is part of the important bat super-highway along the river from Richmond Park.

Warren Gardens adjoins the section of the Warren Footpath described by the Thames Landscape Strategy as “urban” (2009, *Warren Footpath Lighting Project: Thames Landscape Strategy in Action!*; and contrasted with the “rural” section running immediately from the end of Warren Gardens to Twickenham).

This means inevitably that the demands of biodiversity conflict at times with expressed needs of the local population, and at times there is a balance which needs to be struck.

Bats

The same Thames Landscape Strategy Report of 2009 quotes the results of a bat survey undertaken to support moves to reduce lighting levels along the Warren Footpath and make the route more agreeable for the bats. Large numbers of bats fly out at night from their roosts in Richmond and Marble Hill Parks to feeding sites along the river. The 2009 survey found that whereas the more common Pipistrelle bats were recorded on the Warren Footpath side of the river, the rarer Daubenton's bats were only recorded on the Ham side of the river. Daubenton's bats, it should be noted, are more sensitive to light.

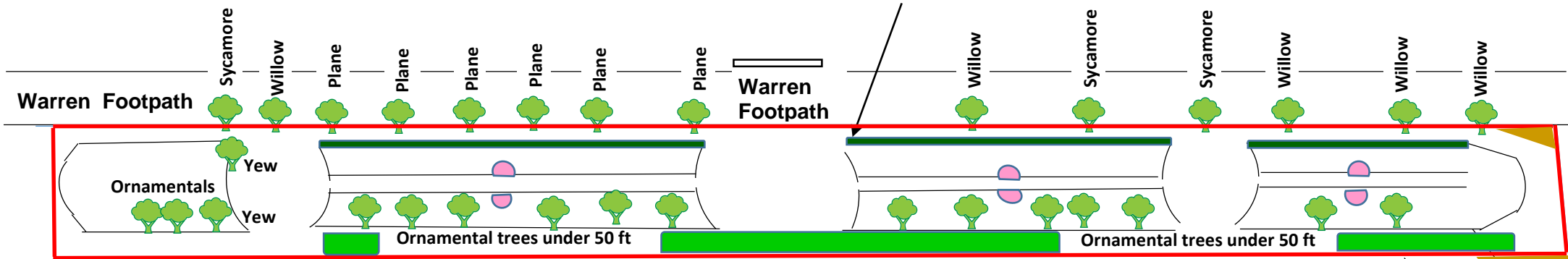
The light levels along the Warren Footpath have since been reduced. Our co-affiliated group, the Friends of Cambridge and Warren Gardens (FOCG), made their own informal bat survey one evening in April 2014, and recorded not only the common Pipstrelles (actually within Warren Gardens), but also a rarer DAubenton's (on the Warren Footpath just next to the gardens). One might conclude from this, Impressionistically, that the light reduction exercise has been successful.

It is worth noting too that whereas the Warren/Cambridge Gardens stretch of the Warren Footpath has been castigated as “urban”, it is considerably less urban than the stretch of river bank at this point on the other side of the river in Richmond. With this perspective, it is fair to say that the bats need the habitats of Warren and Cambridge Gardens to be as rich as possible to give them somewhere to go and to rest (as they need to, at times, between feeding).


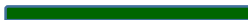


Map 6. Warren Gardens, East Twickenham: Biodiversity: the Contribution of Trees, Hedges, Shrubberies and Flowerbeds (accompanying the Planning Application for a memorial to the First World War Belgian Refugees of Twickenham and Richmond.)

RIVER THAMES

A very large mature Weeping Willow has very recently fallen from this spot



Richmond Bridge Estate

-  Site boundary
-  Yew hedge
-  Shrubbery
-  Unused or Derelict Open Land



Not drawn to scale

The need for bat conservation is a national issue. It is also topic of local interest. When East Twickenham Village published the result of FOCG's bat survey, the page received over 100 hits in the next month (unusually high for the website).

This indicates that the local community is not unsympathetic to bat conservation; indeed, quite the opposite.

Many people though would ask for a balance which meets the needs of the bats while simultaneously meeting other expressed community needs, eg for perceived safety in the Gardens.

Other species: birds, small animals, invertebrates

The Friends of Cambridge and Warren Gardens have not made specific surveys of any of these other species, therefore the following evaluation rests on one-off observations.

The substantial tree coverage of Warren Gardens which is so attractive to bats is equally attractive to other species, particularly birds. The Friends of Cambridge and Warren Gardens give the opinion that some shyer birds can be seen in Warren Gardens which are not seen in Cambridge Gardens. Undoubtedly these are attracted by the secure hiding places offered by the tree growth as well as by the insect food stocks which the trees sustain.

Small animals (field mice etc) are sometimes seen in Warren Gardens, as indeed in Cambridge Gardens and perhaps even more along the Warren Footpath itself. Foxes are known to pass through the area.

Invertebrates are seen from time to time, often at the foot of trees or at soil level in the shrubbery.

Bees and butterflies are seen at times, but not extensively. There are relatively fewer bees and butterflies to see these days anyway. Warren Gardens, largely shaded as it is, is not the most attractive habitat for butterflies or bees, especially as nectar and berry bearing plants are very limited.

The Friends of Cambridge and Warren Gardens (FOCG) Biodiversity Plan

FOCG has recently drawn up a Biodiversity Plan for the Gardens taken together. The points relevant to Warren Gardens are:-

1. A suitable balance to be achieved between the encouragement of trees for maximum biodiversity and the needs of the community for enjoyment of the space and perceived safety.
2. No work on trees to be undertaken during the Spring-Summer months when birds are nesting, except in emergencies.

3. Dead trees to be replaced, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
4. The yew hedge in Warren Gardens to be cut regularly, maintaining a height of 4 ft.
5. Restoration of the long shrubbery in Warren Gardens, with maximisation of nectar-, and berry-bearing plant species. Pruning time to suit the horticultural needs of each shrub and to maintain its natural shape.
6. Planting of additional English bluebells (*Scylla nutans*) along the edges of the Warren Gardens lawns, to support this "at risk". However, the incipiently invading examples of Spanish bluebells at the far end of the Gardens to be retained, with monitoring and appropriate management, to maintain this feature as an educational resource.
7. Reinstatement of the flowerbeds at the centre of the three lawns in Warren Gardens, with planting of nectar- and seed-bearing plants with seasonal coverage.
8. Cultivation of the small area of open soil at the very end of Warren gardens beside the Warren Footpath, with introduction of selected native English perennial species which are:-
 - a) found along the river bank
 - b) give at least some seasonal interest
 - c) are not overly informal in habit
 For example: loosestrife, willowherb, sorrel, Michaelmas daisy, English bluebell, primrose, etc).
 The purpose here is to provide an attractive and suitable transition between the formal area of Warren Gardens and the natural area of the river bank, while also maximising biodiversity.
9. Re-planting of the derelict open space at the far inner corner of Warren Gardens, extending along the path to Denton Road, with suitable perennial plants and shrubs which:-
 - a) are rich in the provision of nectar, seeds and berries
 - b) are visually attractive
 - c) provide seasonal coverage
 - d) are reasonably drought tolerant.
10. A section of the space discussed in (16) is seemingly not part of Warren Gardens, but appears to be publically-owned land. Therefore:
 Discussion with Richmond Council as to whether this could be designated as part of Warren Gardens, to promote unified planning and management.
11. Provision of a wood-pile and stumpery in this same open space (16), to support invertebrates, particularly stag-beetles.
12. Provision of bird boxes at suitable positions in Warren Gardens, in consultation with the RSPB.

13. Provision of bat boxes at suitable positions in Warren Gardens, in consultation with the London Bat Group.
14. Provision of solitary bee boxes along the side wall of the shrubbery in Warren Gardens, in consultation with Richmond Bridge Estate.

Many of these points are included in FOCC's Landscaping Proposal for Warren Gardens, and, as explained previously (**see Description**) go beyond what is immediately practicable to progress. There are mentioned here to indicate that the issues of diversity in Warren Gardens are being actively addressed and promoted by a relevant community group, and will be progressed as circumstances permit.

The impact (or lack of impact) of the proposed memorial on the biodiversity of Cambridge Gardens.

The proposed memorial itself would not impact on the biodiversity of Warren Gardens in any way. It would cover a very small area of hard stone (0.3 sq m), and would make no change to the nature of the surface which it covers.

There is no proposal or wish for the memorial to be lit at night, therefore it will have not impact on the Warren Gardens and Warren Footpath light levels which are so important for bats.

The two interpretation boards located at the front of the Warren Gardens shrubbery would have only a minimal impact on biodiversity. They would require loss of a very small planting area. If the Landscaping Proposal is accepted, this loss would be more than balanced by the enriched re-planting within the shrubbery and in other areas of the gardens.

The proposed new safety barrier between Warren Gardens and the Warren Footpath at the SE end of the gardens would not impact on biodiversity in any way, as it would replace a similar but less satisfactory structure.

The proposed work to the trees would impose a small but significant loss for biodiversity. The applicant considers though that this loss is not severe enough to be substantially damaging. Given that the impact would be relatively limited, the applicant sees this as an instance where the needs of biodiversity should be balanced against the needs of the community for safety and comfort within a public space; also for the memorial to the community's heritage to be displayed in a suitable manner.

The proposed soft landscaping would not impact deleteriously on biodiversity at all. Rather, it would greatly enhance biodiversity as all the proposed changes have been defined with this aspect at the core of the planning.

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