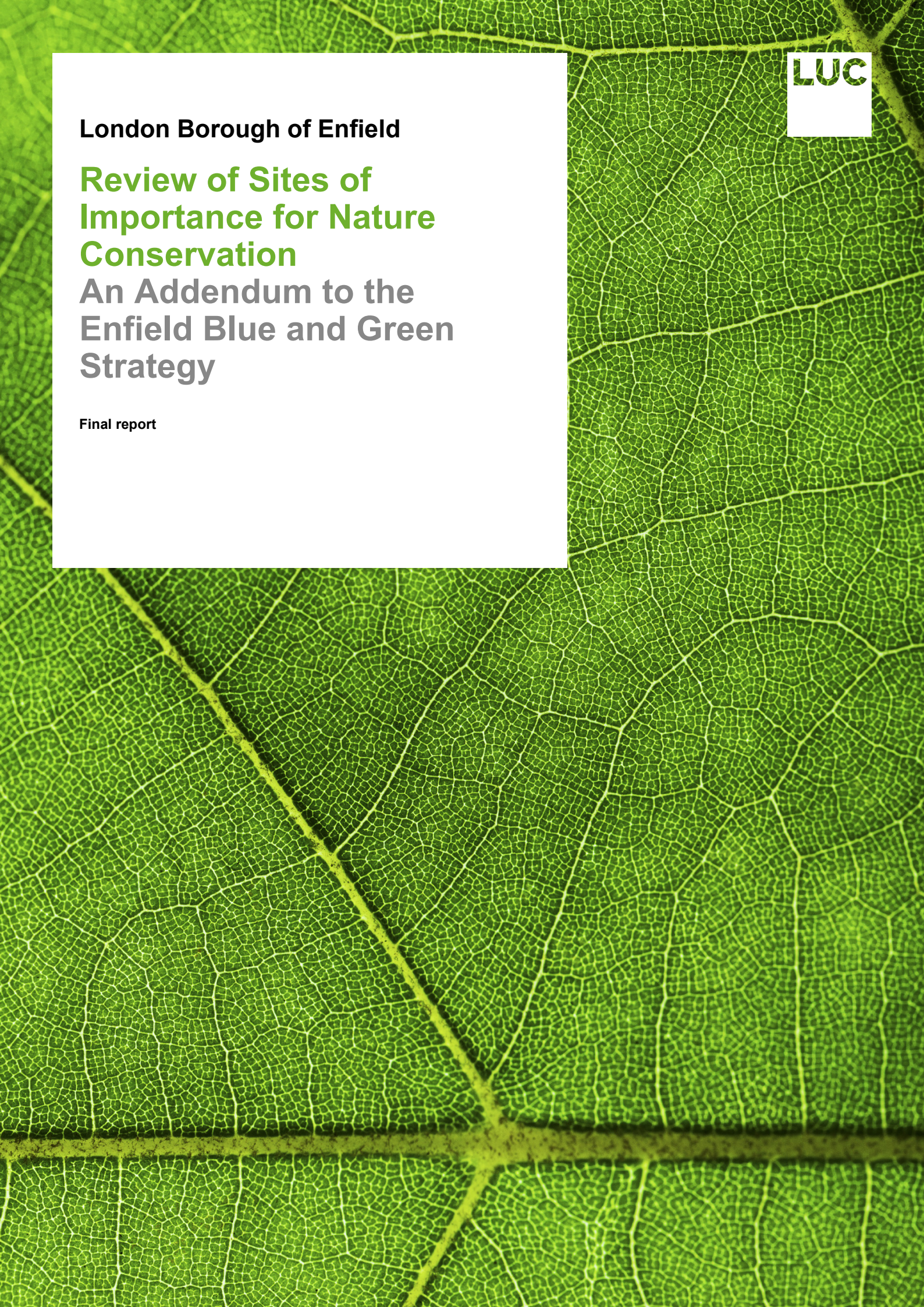

London Borough of Enfield

Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

An Addendum to the Enfield Blue and Green Strategy

Final report

London Borough of Enfield

Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

An Addendum to the Enfield Blue and Green Strategy

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1.	Draft report for client comment	R. Turner A. Coleman R. Glackin	S. Swindlehurst	S. Swindlehurst	06.11.2020
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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 LUC was appointed in June 2020 by Enfield London Borough Council to undertake a review of existing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within the borough.

1.2 This review is an addendum to the Enfield Blue and Green Strategy and will form part of the evidence base of the emerging Local Plan. It is the council's duty to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is considered as part of the plan-making process. The recommendations outlined in this report will need to be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders, including local natural history experts and representatives of "Friends of…" groups, at the borough level prior to submitting these recommendations to the ondon Wildlife Sites Board (LWSB). This part of the SINC Review process will need to be led by Enfield Council.

Background

1.3 The London Borough of Enfield supports a range of existing biodiversity assets, including:

- **1 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**;
- **1 Local Nature Reserve (LNR)**;
- **41 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)**;
- **ancient woodland** – large and small fragments of ancient woodland are recorded to the north and north-west of Enfield, including Whitewebbs Wood and Trent Park;
- **priority habitats**, including deciduous woodland, wood pasture and parkland, good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh;
- **green corridors** – a network of natural and semi-natural habitat, which connects wildlife populations in areas, which are separated by human activity, such as development and farming. Enfield supports several green corridors, which span the length of the borough and provide important corridors for species to disperse through Enfield Town to open countryside in the north.
- **blue corridors** – a network of waterbodies, which connect wildlife populations that are separated by human activity. There are a number of blue corridors,

which run through the centre of Enfield in highly urbanised areas and at Lee Valley, which is located along the eastern boundary of the borough. These provide important corridors for wildlife to disperse to suitable habitat, such as open country side in the north in the wider area.

- **Buglife B-Line corridor –** a network of 'insect pathways' where wildflower-rich habitat will be restored and created to connect existing wildlife areas, which will be of benefit to insects, such as bees and butterflies

1.4 A map of biodiversity assets within the borough is presented in **Figure 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3** in **Appendix A** and Areas of Deficiency (AoD) in access to nature are presented in **Figure 1.4** in **Appendix A.**

Chapter 2
Methods

Site Selection

2.1 The SINC review included the assessment of all 41 existing SINCs within the London Borough of Enfield. Reference should be made to **Figure 2.1** in **Appendix B** which presents the locations of the site reviewed as part of this assessment.

Desk Review

2.2 To provide additional background and to highlight likely features or species groups of interest, a study of available biological records was undertaken within each site. This included statutory and non-statutory sites and existing records of protected[1] and/or notable[2] species of relevance to the site. The following resources were used:

- The Government's Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC);
- Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping; and
- Aerial photography.

2.3 The findings of this review are presented in the proformas provided in **Appendix E**.

Site Survey

2.4 The sites were surveyed using the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Open Space and Habitat Survey Methodology[3] which has been specifically developed to enable the identification of SINCs and enables the collection of the key site Information. This involved the collection of data relating to a range of site attributes as detailed in **Table 2.1** below.

2.5 Detailed plant species lists were only collected for species-rich or particularly notable habitats as per the GLA methodology.

2.6 Surveys were completed by Rebecca Turner BSc MSc ACIEEM, Amy Coleman BSc ACIEEM and Rory Glackin BSc GradCIEEM in June during the flowering season to allow for

[1] Protected species are those which are listed within conservation designation and afforded protection under national and international legislation. JNCC create and maintain the list of conservation designations.

[2] Notable species are those which have been listed as rare, endangered or a priority species of conservation concern. JNCC create and maintain the list of conservation designations.

[3] Greater London Authority, Open space and habitat survey for Greater London

optimal opportunities for floral identification, particularly for rare and notable species.

Site Evaluation

2.7 The sites were assessed against a consistent and well-established methodology and set of criteria which is set out in **Table 2.1** and **2.2** below. This will follow the methodology established by the London Wildlife Sites Board as published in 2019, which sets out the Mayor of London's criteria on SINCs selection.

Table 2.1: Definitions of each SINC Grade.

SINC Grade	Description
Metropolitan	Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation are those sites which contain the best examples of London's habitats, sites which contain 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. The identification and protection of Metropolitan Sites is necessary, not only to support a significant proportion of London's wildlife, but also to provide opportunities for people to have contact with the natural environment. Sites of Metropolitan Importance include not only the best examples of each habitat type, but also areas which are outstanding because of their assemblage of habitats. A small number of sites are selected which are of particular significance within heavily built up areas of London. Although these are of lesser intrinsic quality than those sites selected as the best examples of habitats on a London-wide basis they are outstanding oases and provide the opportunity for enjoyment of nature in extensive built environments. Should one of these sites be lost or damaged, something would be lost which exists in a very few other places in London. Management of these sites should as a first priority seek to maintain and enhance their interest but use by the public for education and passive recreation should be encouraged unless these are inconsistent with nature conservation.
Borough	These are 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 to the borough. As with Metropolitan sites, while protection is important, management of borough sites should usually allow and encourage their enjoyment by people and their use for education In defining Sites of Borough Importance, the search is not confined rigidly to borough boundaries; these are used for convenience of defining areas substantially smaller than the whole of Greater London, and the needs of neighbouring boroughs should be taken into account. In the same way as for Sites of Metropolitan Importance, parts of some boroughs are more heavily built-up, and some borough sites are chosen there as oases providing the opportunity for enjoyment of nature in extensive built environments.
Local	A Site of Local Importance is one which is, 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. Where a Site of Metropolitan or Borough Importance may be so enjoyed it acts as a Local site, but further sites are given this designation in recognition of their role. This local importance means that these sites also deserve protection in planning. Local sites are particularly important in areas otherwise deficient in nearby wildlife sites. To aid the choice of these further local sites, AoD are identified. Further Local sites are chosen as the best available to alleviate this deficiency; such sites need not lie in the AoD but should be as near to it as possible. Where no such sites are available, opportunities should be taken to provide them by habitat enhancement or creation, by negotiating access and management agreements, or by direct acquisition. Only those sites that provide a significant contribution to the ecology of an area are identified.

Table 2.2: SINC Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria	Guidance
Representation	The best examples of each major habitat type are selected. These include typical urban habitats such as abandoned land colonised by nature. Where a habitat is not extensive in the search area it will be appropriate to conserve all or most of it, whereas where it is more extensive a smaller percentage will be conserved.
Habitat rarity	The presence of a rare habitat makes a site important, because the loss of, or damage to, only a few sites threatens the survival of the habitat in the search area.
Species rarity	The presence of a rare species makes the site important in a way that parallels rare habitat.
Habitat Richness	Protecting a site with a rich selection of habitat types not only conserves those habitats, but also the wide range of organisms that live within them and the species that require more than one habitat type for their survival. Rich sites also afford more opportunities for enjoyment and educational use.
Species richness	Generally, sites that are species rich are preferred, as this permits the conservation of a correspondingly large number of species. (However, some habitats such as reed beds, heaths and acid woodlands, are intrinsically relatively species poor.)
Size	Large sites are generally more important than small sites. They may allow for species with special area requirements. Larger sites may be less vulnerable to small scale disturbance, as recovery is sometimes possible from the undisturbed remainder. They are more able to withstand visitors. Size is also related to the richness of habitat and species.
Important populations of species	Some sites are important because they hold a large proportion of the population of a species for the search area.
Ancient character	Some sites have valuable ecological characteristics derived from long periods of traditional management, or even continuity in time to woodlands and wetlands that occupied before agriculture. Ancient woodlands, old parkland trees and traditionally managed grasslands tend to have typical species that are rare elsewhere. These habitats deserve protection also because of the ease with which they are damaged by changes in management.
Recreatability	The more difficult it is to recreate a sites habitat the more important it is to retain it. (Ponds can be created from scratch within a few years – whereas woodlands take decades.) Certain habitats cannot be recreated because of practical reasons such as land availability and cost.
Typical urban character	Features such as canals, walls, bridges, railway sidings colonised by nature often have a juxtaposition of artificial and wild features. Some of these habitats are particularly rich in species / have rare species / communities. Particular physical or chemical substrates may allow rare species to thrive. They may also have particular visual qualities.
Cultural and historic character	Sites such as historic gardens with semi-wild areas, garden suburbs, churchyards which have reverted to the wild may have a unique blend of cultural and natural history.
Geographic position	This criterion is operated using search areas and areas of deficiency. Reference should be made to **Figure 1.4** in **Appendix A**, which outlines Areas of Deficiency in access to nature.
Access	An important consideration – especially in areas where there are limited opportunities for large urban populations to enjoy the natural world. Some access is desirable to all but the most sensitive sites, but direct physical access to all parts of a site may not be desirable.
Use	The current use of the site, relating to how the site is used by people e.g. education, research, or quiet enjoyment of nature.
Potential	Where a site can be enhanced given modest changes in management practices gives it value. Opportunity exists where a site is likely to become available for nature conservation use, or where there is local enthusiasm.
Aesthetic Appeal	Factors which contribute to the enjoyment of the experience of visiting a site –seclusion/views/variety of landscape etc.

2.8 The assessment included a set of recommendations based on the following categories detailed below. This included:

- **Proposed upgrade and/or extension** – this category identified SINC sites, which were recommended for an upgrade in SINC designation and/or alteration of the site boundary to include additional habitats, which were considered to contribute to the value of the SINC.
- **At Risk** – this category identified sites, which were at risk of downgrade or de-designation due to a decline in ecological value. These sites should retain their existing SINC designation, however, it is recommended that action is taken to ensure that these sites retain their value as a SINC.
- **De-designation** – this category identified sites that had changed significantly and were therefore no longer considered to support habitats of SINC value, and which were not considered viable for restoration. This included changes to site boundaries to exclude areas where the site no longer supported habitats that contributed to the value of the SINC.
- **Opportunity** – this category identified sites, which have potential through further management and establishment of habitats to be recommended for upgrade in the future. At this stage, these sites were recommended to retain their SINC designation in this SINC review.
- **No change** – this category identified sites, which were not considered to have changed since the previous survey and continued to retain their value as a SINC. These sites were recommended to retain their SINC designation.

2.9 Given the nature of the assessment methodology and criteria, field-based assessments were necessarily subjective to a degree and based on the professional judgement of experienced ecologists. In addition, not all criteria are necessarily applicable to all sites. Following completion of the surveys, a workshop was held with the project manager to develop recommendations and ensure consistency during the assessment.

Limitations

2.10 Data was sought from Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GIGL); however, it was not possible to obtain this data without an existing service level agreement between Enfield London Borough Council and GIGL. The review was based on data sources provided by Enfield London Borough Council and mapping produced as part of this project, which provided sufficient information to inform the review.

2.11 SINC citations used as part of this review were obtained from the previous SINC review[4]. As this was the most recent review completed to date, this was considered to provide relevant information to inform this assessment.

2.12 The SINC citations used as part of this assessment do not distinguish between a borough grade I and II site. Therefore, this assessment has considered the sites for their value as a borough grade site only.

2.13 No access was available to West Lodge Park Hotel Grounds SINC or to Hadley Wood Golf Course and Covert Way Field SINC due to COVID-19. In addition, there was restricted access and view to the following three sites: Riverside Park and Saddler's Mill SINC, Glasgow Stud and Plumridge SINC, Vault Hill and Little Beech Hill Woods SINC. Assessment of these five sites was therefore led by a desk-based review and, where possible, site conditions were obtained from adjacent public rights of way. However, it should be noted that existing conditions of the site could not obtained in all cases. It is recommended that where site conditions could not be verified that a site survey is completed.

[4] Enfield London Borough Council (2013), Enfield's Local Plan - Evidence base: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Citations

Chapter 3
Summary of the SINC Assessment

3.1 The findings of the SINC review are detailed below with a summary of the survey findings presented in **Figure 3.1**, **Appendix B** and **Table 3.1** found **Appendix C**.

3.2 Site survey proformas presenting the information recorded during the surveys and photos, are provided in **Appendix D**.

Summary

3.3 In summary, a total of 41 sites were surveyed and reviewed as part of the project. This comprised:

- 7 metropolitan sites;
- 19 borough sites; and
- 15 local sites.

Recommendations

3.4 Following a review of existing and potential SINCs, the following recommendations were identified:

Sites to Upgrade and Extend

3.5 The following six sites were considered suitable for upgrade and/or extension:

- Jubilee Park SINC;
- Tatem Park SINC;
- Bush Hill Golf Course SINC;
- Crews Hill Golf Course SINC;
- Plumridge, Vault Hill and Little Beechill Woods SINC; and
- Forty Hall Park and Estate SINC.

3.6 These sites were considered to support habitats of higher quality, variety and value than previously identified and/or were if sufficient size to provide valuable opportunities for wildlife in an urban setting and to contribute to the strategic ecological corridors in the borough.

Risk

3.7 Turkey Brook SINC was identified at risk of de-designation as the ecological value of these sites have

declined since the previous survey and would require management to maintain the sites at their current status.

Sites Recommended for De-Designation

3.8 None of the sites reviewed were found appropriate for de-designation and therefore this category does not need to be considered further.

No Change in Designation

3.9 The status of the remaining 34 sites was considered to be unchanged. However, three were identified as opportunity sites, which with further management and establishment of habitats could be considered for upgrade in the future. This included:

- Broomfield Park SINC;
- Woodcroft Wildspace SINC; and
- Enfield Loop of the New River SINC.

Summary of SINC Review

3.10 It is the council's duty to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is considered as part of the plan-making process. The primary purpose of the SINC review is to provide an up to date review of existing and potential SINCs within the borough to inform the development of the Blue and Green Strategy and future iterations of the Local Plan. Th recommendations detailed in this report will need to be subject to consultation at the borough level with relevant stakeholders prior to submission to the LWSB. This element of the SINC Review will need to be led by Enfield Council.

3.11 The Blue and Green Strategy offers the opportunity to maximise the benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of priority and notable habitats and species and designated sites at an early stage of the plan making process. The SINC review provides the evidence base to inform the requirements as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and the London Plan to protect, enhance and restore sites of biodiversity value and to promote a strategic approach to maintain and enhancing ecological networks so that they more resilient to current and future pressures.