

**KNELLER HALL MASTERPLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**  
**RESPONSE BY FORCE: JUNE 2019**

Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) is a local charity, formed in 2003 with objectives to protect and enhance the community and environmental value of the River Crane corridor. FORCE has over 600, mostly local, members and recently received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in recognition of our work.

FORCE's interest in the Kneller Hall site stems from its location within the lower Crane catchment and its great potential as a community and wildlife rich open space resource. The Kneller Hall site covers 9.7 hectares within the red line area, around 75 per cent of which is protected as Metropolitan Open Land. There are several hectares of existing housing within the Kneller Hall site but outside the red line boundary to the east.

The site lies a few hundred metres to the west of the Duke of Northumberland's River. This river corridor has benefited from a major programme of works over the last five years with around £600k of investment (primarily from LB Richmond, LB Hounslow and the GLA) to create and enhance this 4km wildlife and community corridor linking Twickenham with Isleworth, and the Crane with the Thames, through Whitton.

The Whitton Brook runs through the northern part of the Kneller Hall site, albeit culverted at present. This brook is an important historical stream, still marking the boundary between Richmond and Hounslow in parts, and emerging as an attractive stream on the east side of Rugby Road, running for several hundred metres before it joins the Crane at the Cole Park allotments site. The brook featured in the historic landscaping of the site, impounded to form the lake along the northern site margin and still recognisable in the land form. Local historian Ed Harris has produced a very informative book on the history and current status of the Whitton Brook, recently updated and available from the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society.

FORCE has the following hopes and expectations of any re-development of the Kneller Hall site:

1. The Metropolitan Open Land status is protected and the opportunity is taken to create a new public park for Whitton, incorporating the MOL parts of the site.
2. The environmental value and potential of the open land is investigated in advance of any development proposals – including tree, bat and other wildlife and habitat surveys. Measures are then put in place to protect and enhance the environmental value of this space as an intrinsic part of any development. There is particular opportunity to protect and enhance the landscape and environmental value of the northern part of the site, incorporating the mature trees in this area

3. The opportunity is taken to remove part or all of the Whitton Brook from culvert through the site and re-introduce it into the open space as an open water asset. There may also be potential to re-create parts or all of the lake as a pond or wetland feature. This would reflect the historic use of the site as well as providing interesting and high value habitat which is not found elsewhere in this part of the borough. Removing the stream from culvert and creating a lake/wetland feature could also provide valuable flood risk benefits for the site and the downstream areas of the Crane and Thames.
4. The history of the site is fully investigated and reflected in any re-development. This includes the archaeology of the site, given it lies within or adjacent to the Archaeological Priority Area and local to high value archaeological sites (including the Neolithic site at the Whitton Tesco for example). FORCE would anticipate that archaeological investigations would constitute a significant component of any investigation and development phases of work for the site.
5. The council works with other local landowners to investigate the potential for linking the new park with the Duke's River corridor along the line of the Whitton Brook. Whilst this may not be within the red line of the plan it presents a major opportunity for the council and community to link this new open space into the existing green infrastructure network. There may also be scope for looking at the line of the Whitton Brook upstream of the development and exploring how this could be opened as a green transport route. The need for green transport links to and from the site needs to be a key aspiration for any development.
6. The council encourages local community groups to develop creative ideas around how the historic and open space elements of the site will be used to the benefit of the local community and the wider environment.
7. Any new housing development will take place in an area that has a dearth of local public open space. In this context, we would expect play provision for residents of the new housing to be included within the curtilage of the new housing development and not to encroach into the existing playing fields. We support the provision of high quality and accessible green and public open space, and would expect the current playing fields to remain accessible to the general public at no charge.
8. We note the "particular need for playing pitches to support local clubs" – as referenced in the supporting documentation. However, we would strongly oppose any proposals for artificial playing surfaces, fencing or floodlighting as part of the proposals. We would be particularly opposed to floodlighting, as the Duke's River corridor, (and potentially by extension the tree lined corridor of the Whitton Brook) is a known and established bat roosting and feeding corridor.

FORCE is happy to discuss these proposals with the council, prospective developers and other interested parties.