Gunnersbury Park
Heritage Tree Survey
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# Contents

## 1. Introduction

1.1 General Description 1

1.2 Ownership and Governance 1

1.3 Designations 2

1.4 Vision for Gunnersbury Park 2

## 2. Development of Historic Planting

2.1 Phase 1 – The Geometric Period (c1650-1740) 5

2.2 Phase 2 – The Landscape Style (1740-1785) 8

2.3 Phase 3 - Gunnersbury Divided (1800-1889) 14

2.4 Phase 4 - Gunnersbury Reunited (1889-1925) 24

2.5 Phase 5 - Gunnersbury as a Public Park (1925 to present) 26

2.6 The Significance of the Historic Planting 28

## 3. Heritage Tree Survey

3.1 The Trees at Gunnersbury – general comments 29

3.2 Heritage Trees and Character Areas 32

3.2.1. Character Area 1 - Gunnersbury Park Mansions and Curtilage Gardens 33

3.2.2. Character Area 2 – Gothic Ruins, Bathhouse and Stables 39

3.2.3. Character Area 3 – Temple Gardens 42

3.2.4 Character Area 4 – Parkland 46

3.2.5. Character Area 5 – Kitchen Gardens 49

3.2.6. Character Area 6 – Sports Facilities 50

3.2.7. Character Area 7 – Potomac and Environs 52

3.2.8. Character Area 8 – Sports Fields 56

3.3 General Comments on Planting Character 58

## 4. Planting in Historic Views

4.1 View 1. From the terrace outside Gunnersbury Park House 60
1. Introduction

1.1 General Description

Gunnersbury Park is a 72 hectare (186 acres) public park in west London. The park is located in the London Borough of Hounslow, west of Acton Town underground station. It is bordered by the North Circular to the East, the M4 and Kensington Cemetery to the South, and housing to the North and West; its northern and western boundaries border the London Borough of Ealing. It is owned jointly by the two Boroughs. It is a Grade II* English Heritage Registered Park containing 22 Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.

Gunnersbury Park on a modern Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map, showing the park surrounded by suburban development.

1.2 Ownership and Governance

The two London Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow hold the freehold interest of Gunnersbury Park on a joint tenancy basis and have maintained it as a public park since 1926. The two councils signed a legal agreement in 1967 for the management of Gunnersbury with a Joint Advisory Committee. This was disbanded in 2007 with formal decision making resting with the two council’s cabinets. An advisory panel was set up to advise the lead member of each authority on matters of the Regeneration project and general management.
The Gunnersbury Park Regeneration and Development Manager was appointed in 2008 to drive a project to regenerate the estate. This post is supported by a project team including consultants and project managers. In 2010 a Project Board was established including the lead member and officer from each authority and a senior officer from English Heritage to validate the decisions and challenge and approve the work of the project team.

Gunnersbury has been identified as a ‘Key Park’ within the Hounslow Parks Strategy, and as such the intention will be to work towards Green Flag status. A Park Management Plan will be a requirement for this goal but has not yet been produced.

1.3 Designations

- Grade II* Registered Landscape (English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest).
- Grade II* and Grade II listed structures.
- Gunnersbury Park Conservation Area designated by London Borough of Hounslow in 1980 (106.7ha).
- Metropolitan Open Land.
- Site of Borough Importance, Grade II for Nature Conservation.

1.4 Vision for Gunnersbury Park

Both Ealing and Hounslow Councils have agreed a vision for Gunnersbury Park in the 2026 Masterplan:

_A sustainable high quality park with varied uses, which serves the local community and the region whilst respecting, enhancing and interpreting its historic framework and fabric._

The landscape has evolved and changed over many centuries reflecting the needs and aspirations of the various personalities and organisations that have owned or managed the park. The park’s landscape is also:

- A substantial resource for the local community and visitors.
- Important for nature conservation.
- The setting for a number of nationally significant buildings.
2. Development of Historic Planting

This section of the report discusses each of these historical phases in turn, identifying the significant historic planting which survives in the modern landscape from each period.

The development of Gunnersbury Park as a designed landscape can be broken down into five main phases dating from the mid seventeenth century onwards:

- Phase 1 – The Geometric Period (c1650-1740)
- Phase 2 – The Landscape Style (1740-1785)
- Phase 3 - Gunnersbury Divided (1800-1889)
- Phase 4 - Gunnersbury Reunited (1889-1925)
- Phase 5 - Gunnersbury as a Public Park (1925 to present)

There are only a handful of trees in the grounds which may have been planted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The overwhelming majority date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and – given the problems of dating individual trees from the girth measurements or other aspects of their present size or condition – it is not always easy to distinguish specimens planted in the period when the grounds were under private ownership, from those established under municipal management.

Maps 1 to 5 present the tree survey provided by Hounslow Council in different historical phases, as noted above.
Trees within the park at Gunnersbury shown by historical phase.
2.1 Phase 1 – The Geometric Period (c1650-1740)

The original mansion, constructed in the 1650s, was surrounded by formal grounds typical of the period. They were walled, with a large earthwork terrace in front of the house and a central axis flanked by two canals.

![Rocque’s Map of London, the earliest map of the park and gardens.](image)

These gardens are shown on Rocque’s map of London, published in 1747 but probably surveying in around 1741. This map is fairly schematic, but shows the footprint of the house with a formal walled garden on a central axis with parterres, rectilinear canals and an avenue extending south.
Trees which can be attributed to Phase 1 - 1650-1740.

The character of the planting within the grounds at this time is unknown, due to a lack of documentary evidence and a paucity of surviving specimens from this period. Only two trees now remain within the landscape which may have formed part of the planting within the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century gardens: both yew trees, growing in the area immediately to the south of the former western section of the Horseshoe Pond (beside the path leading from the Orangery to the bridge across the former Horseshoe Pond). These would have stood close to the southern boundary of the gardens shown on Rocque’s map. Yews were a common feature of gardens of this period. All other trees from this date were either removed when the grounds were progressively deformalised in the course of the eighteenth century, or have simply been lost over the years through age.
Trees within the park overlaid onto Rocque’s map of 1747. Due to its age, the map does not line up precisely with the modern Ordnance Survey maps on which the tree survey is based.
2.2 Phase 2 – The Landscape Style (1740-1785)

Between 1740 and 1785 the grounds at Gunnersbury were expanded, and a small park created to the south and west of the walled gardens. The gardens themselves became less formal and geometric in character, although some of their walls survived. The Horseshoe Pond was created, probably from earlier geometric canals; and the Round Pond was established. A number of gardens buildings were also erected, of which the Temple and the Bath House are the only survivors. The designer William Kent and the architect William Chambers both worked at Gunnersbury during this phase, although their precise contributions remain unclear. Between 1739 and 1756 the park was owned by Henry Furnese MP, who commissioned William Kent – possibly to created the Round Pond and associated planting. Between 1761-1786 the estate was owned by Princess Amelia, daughter of George II. The park was extended and an informal sweeping landscape with scattered trees developed.

When Amelia died in 1786, William Angus wrote that the grounds at Gunnersbury had been ‘greatly improved by her Royal Highness, to which many Additions were made by Plantations, additional grounds and elegant erections’. Some of these plantations, and the park created in this period, are shown on a map of Ealing from 1777. The representation of the planting on the map is, like Rocque, schematic, but suggests a mixture of coniferous and deciduous planting, with a mixture of clumps and perimeter belts.

A map of Ealing from 1777 showing the house and gardens.

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In 1795 Daniel Lyson described the grounds as having ‘well grouped trees’ standing in a ‘paddock’, as well as mentioning the ‘fine cedars’ which he attributed to Kent.

*Engraving of the Horseshoe Pond and original mansion from Lyson’s Environ of London.*

The accompanying engraving in his *Environ of London* shows the house and Horseshoe Pond surrounded by relatively young deciduous trees, all of which are rather generic in their representation, and which cannot be identified as relating to trees which survive in the modern landscape. The engraving does show, however, that the late eighteenth-century lawns outside the house were less densely planted with trees than they are now.

The Payne watercolours of Gunnersbury from 1792 also show details of the contemporary planting.
One of the Payne watercolours showing the Horseshoe Pond and the original mansion, 1792.

This view of the house shows scattered deciduous trees on the lawn next to the Horseshoe Pond, with a willow overhanging the water (which has since been lost, and which does not appear in other illustrations).

One of the Payne watercolours showing the entrance front of the original mansion, 1792.
The view from the northern front of the house suggests that this area was comparatively open compared to the nineteenth century and the modern landscape. In the foreground, perhaps planted along the boundary of the estate are coniferous trees, with large deciduous planting shown in the background.

*One of the Payne watercolours showing the view from the Temple, 1792.*

The view from the Temple painted by Payne also shows a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees, bearing out the evidence suggested by the 1777 map of Ealing.
Trees which can be attributed to Phase 2 – 1740-1785.

It is uncertain how many trees now growing at Gunnersbury can be reliably attributed to this period. Deciduous species like oak and beech were the mainstays of design throughout the period of the ‘landscape’ style while, in the immediate vicinity of mansions, more exotic species, and especially conifers, were frequently established, particularly in the period before c.1760. In the case of Gunnersbury, visitors have, since the eighteenth century, remarked on the excellence of the cedars, concentrated in particular in the vicinity of the Temple beside the pond. Whether any of the fine specimens currently growing there have this kind of antiquity seems unlikely: most if not all would appear to be nineteenth-century replacements, although two examples near the Temple, and several in the golf course area to the south, could conceivably pre-date 1800. Of the deciduous trees, the only example
which is very probably of eighteenth-century date is the large beech which stands to the
south of the cafe, although one sweet chestnut in the present golf course area, to the west of
the Orangery, and another on the lawn to the south of the mansions, might likewise predate
c.1800. Two of the oaks growing in the golf course area might likewise be of eighteenth
rather than nineteenth-century date.

Trees within the park overlaid onto the 1777 map. Due to its age, the map does not line up
precisely with the modern Ordnance Survey maps on which the tree survey is based.
2.3 Phase 3 - Gunnersbury Divided (1800-1889)

In 1800 the original mansion was demolished and the estate divided into two separate properties, each with a new house. Many older garden features were retained and developed, including the Round Pond, and new ones were created, such as the Orangery and the Potomac Lake. Under the ownership of the Rothschilds' the park was expanded considerably to the west across an area of former arable land. This is the period in which many of the features recognisable in the modern landscape were created, and the character of the grounds was forged.

The three Copland watercolours from the early nineteenth century give some idea of the nature of the planting in the early nineteenth century, which must have included some specimens from the eighteenth-century gardens.

One of the Copland watercolours showing the view across the Round Pond to the Temple.

The view of the Round Pond and Temple highlights the impressive cedars around the pond – some of these survive around the Temple itself, but those on the south-west corner, shown in the foreground of this watercolour, have been lost.
One of the Copland watercolours showing the view along the terrace.

The Copland view of the terrace again emphasises the importance of cedars within the grounds, alongside a number of other deciduous trees.

One of the Copland watercolours showing the view towards the large mansion across the Horseshoe Pond.
As before, the view of the house and the Horseshoe Pond shows large cedars in the foreground, with deciduous trees on the lawn in front of the house – possibly those shown in earlier, eighteenth-century engravings and watercolours.

In 1828 a description in the Morning Chronicle noted the ‘lawn and pleasure ground laid out with exquisite taste, ornamented with luxuriant shrubs, thriving evergreens and stately timber trees.’ Maps drawn up in 1835 and 1847 show the park scattered with trees and bounded by perimeter belts and – to the north of the house – areas of lawn and shrubbery. The planting featured a wide range of trees including a number of rare and exotic conifers. In 1855 Gunnersbury was ‘justly celebrated’ for the ‘magnificent cedar trees’ and introduction of rarer conifers.

An estate map of 1835 showing Gunnersbury Park House and grounds.

The 1835 estate map of Gunnersbury Park House and its grounds shows a mixture of scattered trees and a thin perimeter belt – some of which is still extant in the modern landscape. This gives a rather schematic view of the perimeter belt, and the exact nature of the planting is unclear – there are a number of plane trees along the length of the belt near the Model Farm which may relate to this phase.

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2 Morning Chronicle 23 June 1828.
Krestschmar's map of Gunnersbury Park House and its grounds, 1847, shows the same planting, essentially, as the 1835 map, including the perimeter belt. The sketches around the edge of the map show some of the planting in more detail – again, with an emphasis on the impressive cedars.
This detail of the Orangery shows a large cedar next to the building, with a deciduous tree in the foreground and shrubbery planting to the right of the building.

Some of the deciduous planting is shown in the view back from the Horseshoe Pond towards the large mansion (above) in the position now occupied by the modern rockeries.
The Temple is shown on the Kretschmar map as being surrounded by cedars, some of which are still extant. However, the illustrations do show a far larger number of cedars around the Temple than at present.
The view from the Temple shows more cedars, various deciduous trees and gives a general impression of scattered trees within the area of open parkland beyond – few of these are clearly identifiable.

Some of the planting from this phase is still extant – the belts shown on the 1835 and 1847 maps partially survive, including a number of plane trees. The ornamental planting within the gardens around the house may also date to this phase, albeit with later additions and replanting.
The Ordnance Survey map of the 1860s shows the extent of the park before its expansion in the 1870s, showing that the planting was very similar in character and extent to that shown on the earlier nineteenth-century maps. This map, however, is more accurate than the earlier maps in placing single specimen trees within the open parkland.

**Gunnersbury on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile survey, 1890s.**

The Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of the 1890s shows the expansion of the park, and the creation of the Potomac Lake. A new perimeter belt was laid out along the edge of the park, which survives towards the south. There was also new planting around the lake, including moisture loving plants such as bamboo.
Trees which can be attributed to Phase 3 – 1800-1889. It is difficult to distinguish between trees which may belong to this phase and those which date from post 1889. The trees shown here, therefore, are those considered to be more likely to be early nineteenth century in date.

Many of the trees at Gunnersbury date from the period between c.1800 and c.1889 (Phase 3) and the later years of the nineteenth century (Phase 4). Cedar and yew continued to be planted, the latter usually to provide mass to shrubberies and screens dividing ground and framing views, especially in the immediate vicinity of the two mansions; together with oak, sweet chestnut and beech. But lime and plane now formed important elements in the planting, together with various kinds of pine and other exotics, such as swamp cypress and false acacia, while holly and maple were extensively employed as underplanting, especially in the area around the Potomac Lake. It must be emphasised, of course, that it is difficult to
compare planting of this period at Gunnersbury with that of the eighteenth century because so few of the latter trees have survived. This said, the more diverse pattern of parkland planting appears typical of the way that styles, in the wider parkland especially, developed in the course of the nineteenth century.

There are some signs that, within the nineteenth century, the pattern of planting at Gunnersbury changed to some extent over time, and that towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a greater use of horse chestnut (especially in the perimeter belts established at this time, and around the Potomac Lake).

Trees within the park overlain onto the Krestschmar map of 1847.
2.4 Phase 4 - Gunnersbury Reunited (1889-1925)

In 1889 the two properties were reunited into one estate when the small mansion and its grounds were purchased by Leopold Rothschild. The planting continued to develop with the removal of some of the shrubberies to the south of the houses so that ‘Fine trees hidden from view…..are now individualised’. The Park became well known for its gardens, including the Japanese Garden created by the head gardener, James Hudson in 1900.

In terms of the overall structure of the planting there was relatively little change – the belts and scattered trees within the park continued to be maintained.

The Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1915 shows that there was little change after the estate was reunited – the perimeter belts, scatter trees and planting around the houses are all very similar to that shown on the 1890s map.

3 Gardener’s Chronicle May 1899, p.333.
Trees attributed to Phase 4 – 1889-1925. It is very difficult to distinguish between trees planted in this phase, and in Phase 3 1800-1889.

It is difficult to distinguish clearly between trees established in the grounds in this period, and those which were planted when the property became a public park after 1925, but it appears that in the wider parkland a similar range was used to that employed throughout the nineteenth century, with a particular emphasis on lime, horse chestnut, and cedar, and with ornamentals like swamp cypress and pines used for more detailed planting. The most important area of exotic planting was the Japanese Garden, where examples of magnolia, Chinese oak, and probably Chinese windmill survive from the elaborate gardens created here in the early twentieth century.
2.5 Phase 5 - Gunnersbury as a Public Park (1925 to present)

The park was purchased from the Rothschilds in 1925 by Acton and Ealing Councils and was transformed into a public park, with new tennis courts, sports pitches and a pitch and putt gold course. The grounds immediately around the houses continued to be managed as formal gardens. A great deal of new planting was carried out within the park, and many of the present trees relate to this municipal phase of the park.


The 1965 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map shows the changes made after the creation of the municipal park. The outer perimeter belt was truncated by the new housing built along the former boundary of the park in the 1920s – at that point the belt was around 50 years old. Much of the other planting in the park relates to the previous phases, with additional tree planting close to the houses.
Trees which can be attributed to Phase 5 – 1925 to present.

Large amounts of planting have taken place at Gunnersbury since 1925. Some of this has replicated the existing repertoire of species, with continued use in particular of cedar, especially in those areas of the landscape where this species was already dominant; oak and lime were also widely planted. But some of the planting is of a different and more municipal character. This has included the use of large numbers of ornamental species, often grouped together, particularly walnut, cypress, flowering cherry, Chinese windmill and copper beech. Most if not all of the numerous hornbeams also probably date to this period.
2.6. The Significance of the Historic Planting

Little survives of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century planting within the park - some yews, a few cedars, a couple of beech, two possible examples of sweet chestnut and perhaps three or four oaks. The great bulk of the surviving trees and shrubs date from the nineteenth century. Cedars continued to be established through this period, yews were extensively employed, together with oak, beech and sweet chestnut. But lime, plane and horse chestnut were now major features of the planting, with most examples of the latter species probably planted towards the end of the century. Ornamentals like swamp cypress and false acacia were established in the gardens to the south of the house, and also around the Potomac, while holly and maple were extensively used as underplanting in the belts. Feature planting of note includes the clump of walnuts in the south of the park.

In terms of its trees and shrubs, Gunnersbury is thus essentially a nineteenth-century landscape, although the Rothschilds continued to add to the planting through the first quarter of the twentieth century. On top of this, however, there is a thick veneer of municipal planting, some of which replicates the existing repertoire of species but some of which has introduced new elements – especially the use of ornamentals like walnut and flowering cherry; hornbeam, too, is largely if not entirely a tree of the ‘municipal’ period. While it is tempting to view these additions as intrusive, and out of character with the ‘historic’ planting, such a division is in many ways arbitrary.

Few of the trees at Gunnersbury predate 1800; most of these trees were, when the property became a public park, of a similar age to that attained by much of the earliest ‘municipal’ planting today. Moreover, it is often difficult, as we have noted, to distinguish with any confidence planting made in the last decades of the Rothschild’s ownership with that added since 1925.
3. Heritage Tree Survey

3.1 The Trees at Gunnersbury - general comments

The analysis of the heritage trees within the park and gardens at Gunnersbury is based on a detailed tree survey which has already been completed for Hounslow Council. This records over 2,500 trees and forms the basis for the following discussion and analysis, accompanied by field observations by the authors. The number and range of trees represents a significant resource, which is highly valued locally.

It should be noted that there is no accepted definition of what constitutes a ‘heritage tree’, and it is really only those trees that are of importance to the overall objectives to the management of the park. Even the terms ‘ancient tree’ and ‘veteran tree’ are subject to some debate.4

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4 The Ancient Tree Forum defines an ancient tree as one that is not capable of precise definition but it encompasses trees defined by three guiding principles:

- trees of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their age.
- trees in the ancient stage of their life.
- trees that are old relative to others of the same species

A veteran tree can be defined as: a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition. Some trees are instantly recognisable as veterans but many are less obvious.

The Forestry Commission defines a veteran tree in the following way:

The term veteran tree is not precisely defined, as various criteria may determine the veteran status of an individual tree when compared to others. For example, a tree may be regarded as a veteran due to great age; great age relative to others of the same species, existing in an ancient stage of life or due to its biological, aesthetic or cultural interest. Size alone is a poor indicator of veteran status, as different species may have different rates of growth or natural life spans. Management practices such as coppicing may also belittle the true age of the coppice stool. For this reason, the species, relative ages, management practice, aesthetic, cultural and biological importance should all be taken into account when surveying or assessing potential veteran trees.
All of the trees contained within the existing tree survey – many of which are nineteenth and twentieth century in date.

- In the nineteenth century the park was famed for its cedars and conifers. There are 77 cedars, many of which are mature and 9 have a trunk diameter in excess of 100cm. There are also 8 mature Swamp Cypress, Giant Redwood and Coast Redwood.
- Five common oaks are at least 150 years old.
- Of 113 limes, some common limes are around 200 years old.
- Other species of interest include a very large beech, sweet chestnut and plane as well as Ginko, 43 walnuts, Mulberry, magnolia, Chusan palm (*Trachycarpus Fortunei*), Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa*) and Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipfera*).
- The Chinese Oak (*Quercus denata*) near the stables is registered with the British Museum as there are only five in the country.

The ornamental species are chiefly located in the environs of Gunnersbury Park House and Gunnersbury House and their surrounding gardens, pleasure grounds and in the ornamental parkland to the south and south-west. There are belts of trees and areas of woodland on the east and south boundary and surrounding the Potomac Lake, all planted in the nineteenth
century. The west boundary has some large Plane trees and a length of younger smaller trees adjacent to the housing which adjoins the park. An almost continuous avenue of mature Plane trees lines the early peripheral walk, which followed the boundary of the park in the early nineteenth century and which now lies between the playing fields and the Model Farm.

More recent planting in the park comprises areas of woodland understorey, woodland edge and screen planting, areas of ornamental shrub and herbaceous planting. The former are located to the south of the park on the boundaries and around the Potomac Lake. They include a range of mature and ornamental shrubs, including a high proportion of evergreen species. In particular, the shrub growth around the Potomac Lake prevents views of the water from outside and access within the fenced perimeter.

The oldest trees are the large cedars and the beech outside the café, and appear to date from Phase 2 – the landscape style of the eighteenth century. The new owner, Henry Furnese, made payments to William Kent, in 1795 Daniel Lysons suggested that the gardens at Gunnersbury had been 'enlarged and altered by Kent for Mr Furnese'. Kent made three recorded visits to Gunnersbury and was paid £55 by Furnese, but his activities here are unclear. Later sources suggest that he was responsible for planting the first of the cedars for which Gunnersbury became well known. Few trees however, survive from this period.

Most of the mature trees within the park date from the nineteenth century, and relate to the maps drawn in 1835, 1847 and the Ordnance Survey maps which show the park scattered with trees and bounded by perimeter belts. The planting during the nineteenth century featured a wide range of trees including a number of exotic conifers.
3.2 Heritage Trees by Character Area

Although certain elements of the planting at Gunnersbury are common to the whole of the site, others are more restricted, so that particular species or combinations of species serve to give each part of the grounds its own distinctive character.

In the sections that follow we summarise briefly the particular composition of the planting within each character area (based on the modern land use areas identified in the 2013 Conservation Management Plan), in part so that this can be taken into account when changes or further additions are made in the future.

This approach, while helping to maintain the historic character and visual diversity of the landscape, has its own problems. In particular, what survives from any period represents the more durable elements, often in an over-mature state, and does not necessarily convey the original intention of the planter and designer. Moreover, in some areas the planting ‘character’ is dominated by relatively recent additions, and how far these elements should be retained and enhanced in future development may be debatable.

This said, an awareness of the present character of particular areas provides a good starting point for formulating future planting policy, some suggestions for which are also made in the sections that follow.
3.2.1. Character Area 1: Gunnersbury Park Mansions and Curtilage Gardens

This is one of the key areas of heritage tree planting within the park, comprising the area of the seventeenth-century formal gardens, the eighteenth-century landscape garden and the nineteenth-century gardens created by the Rothschilds. There are no trees of any significant antiquity within this area of the grounds and, with the possible exception of two oaks in the garden of the Small Mansion, a sweet chestnut on the lawn to the south of the terrace, and yews to the south east of the Orangery - the planting appears to be entirely of nineteenth and twentieth-century date.
The northern entrance drive, showing the late nineteenth or twentieth-century limes planted along the driveway.

To the north of the two houses the area of lawn is framed by blocks of shrub planting, dominated by yews and with variable amounts of holly, box, lime and chestnut; while the road is hidden, to some extent, by a line of chestnut, limes and other trees. The entrance drive is lined with a group of common lime trees, probably planted in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

**Management Policies**

- All these planting elements need to be maintained, in order to preserve a sense of structure and enclosure, although the shrubberies – especially the yews – need some thinning and the yews in particular need to be reduced in height. The planting on the earthwork mound (itself a possible eighteenth-century feature) to the east of the small mansion would, in particular, benefit from some thinning due to the density of trees.

- Care should be taken to maintain the largely open character of the central lawn, and some of the trees here – the young spruce in particular – should be removed. The limes along the drive could also be crown lifted to improve views towards the mansion.

- There is an excellent specimen of a tulip tree outside the small mansion. This is also probably of very late nineteenth century or early twentieth century in date, and is not shown on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch maps from the 1880s. Its size means that it blocks, to some extent, the view of the small mansion from the entrance drive, but as a very good example of a tulip tree it should be retained.
The view of the small mansion, with the large tulip tree on the front lawn, with the dense planting on the earthwork mound visible to the left.

The nineteenth or twentieth-century planting on the earthwork mound near the small mansion.
To the south of the mansion the terrace looks down across wide areas of lawn, framed by planting. It originally provided a more extended view southwards, towards the Thames, but this is now terminated by the growth of trees. Views are thus largely internal, restricted to this character area, with the exception of glimpses of the parkland to the west (Character Area 4). There are no carefully framed views. A central avenue, focussed on the original mansion, has been perpetuated by later planting, now forming a mixed-species avenue leading to the gap between the two successor mansions: it bisects the area without providing any visual focus. The Horseshoe Pond, which originally flanked the avenue and provided visual interest in the middle distance, has been removed but there are plans to reinstate its western half. The principal view from mansions and terrace is to the south west, towards the nineteenth-century Orangery, itself flanked to the north by areas of yew-dominated shrubbery of nineteenth-century date, occupying an irregular mound. The planting includes some possibly seventeenth and eighteenth-century trees (as noted above in Section 2) but is overwhelmingly of nineteenth and twentieth-century date: some of the latter, municipal in character, needs to be removed.

Management Policies

- No attempt should be made to open up the original external views from the terrace, which have been irrevocably changed by the growth of London.

- Although the avenue is now a slightly oddly-placed feature, it should be maintained into the future by replanting as necessary, especially at its southern end, which is poorly-defined.

- The planting to either side of the lawns, and framing the view across it, needs to be maintained. Blocks of mixed yew-dominated shrubbery beside the mansions, and immediately to the north of the Orangery, need thinning and height reduction.

- The view of the Orangery is interrupted by recent cypresses, at least two of which should be removed. Other inappropriate planting in this area, including relatively recent false cypresses, maples, a cherry and swamp cypress, will need to be removed when the pond itself is reinstated.

- Care needs to be taken to maintain the view south west, into the parkland (Character Area 4).

- A group of copper beeches with girths of between 2 and 4m in length stand on the lawn to the south of the small mansion. These are not marked on any of the historic maps from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, and are probably of early twentieth-century in date: they should be thinned, leaving the best specimens in place, as they imbalance the view from the terrace.

- For similar reasons the large group of Maidenhair trees, or Gingko’s, to the south of the small mansion (on the site of the Horseshoe Pond) should be thinned.

- The majority of trees in this character area can, however, be retained, even those of relatively recent date. There are some interesting and unusual specimens which need further identification: the existing tree survey notes a number of unidentified
broadleaves around the Orangery – these can be tentatively identified as Honey Locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos*).

- The area of the Japanese Garden, created in around 1900, contains a number of exotic species which should be considered as a group. Of these, the Chinese Oak is the most important specimen. There are also a number of maples and Chinese Windmills which contribute to the area’s ‘oriental’ character but which are of relatively recent date. This is an important area of planting in historic terms although it does not fulfil any major structural role in the overall design. Thought might be given to augmenting and perpetuating the ‘oriental’ character of the planting here in the future, even if reinstatement of the original design itself is impractical.

*The clump of copper beeches to the south of the small mansion.*

*The dense yew planting on the ice house mound.*
The relatively recent planting on the site of the Horseshoe Pond.

The twentieth-century planting in the area of the Japanese Garden.
The Chinese Oak in the former Japanese Garden.
3.2.2. Character Area 2 – Gothic Ruins, Bathhouse and Stables

There are relatively few trees within this area compared to Character Area 1, although given its historic use as kitchen gardens this is perhaps unsurprising. There are a few examples of oaks, laurel and yew which are of late nineteenth or twentieth century date. This area is shown as being planted with mature trees on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of the 1880s, and the draft Conservation Management Plan (2013) suggests that the area between the two boundary walls might have been used as part of the kitchen gardens or as an orchard for the small mansion. (this would be a suitable area for the creation of a heritage orchard in the future, alongside a possible restoration of the kitchen garden).
The area between the two boundary walls – a possible former orchard.
3.2.3. Character Area 3 – Temple Gardens

Although the majority of the trees within this area are, as elsewhere at Gunnersbury, of nineteenth- or twentieth-century date, a few potentially earlier specimens remain and in general terms the character of planting, especially around the Temple, appears to perpetuate that established in the eighteenth century. This is still dominated by imposing cedars which frame the building beautifully when viewed from the south, their foliage – as various visitors over the centuries have commented – reflected in the water of the Temple Pond. The view towards the temple constitutes the most important set-piece designed prospect at Gunnersbury.

To the rear of the Temple the nineteenth-century Italian Garden forms a very enclosed, secluded space, surrounded by yews, firs and cedars of both nineteenth and twentieth-century date, and with a shrubbery screen of yew and holly to the east.

This character area includes the areas of planting flanking the Temple Pond to east and west; the former is an extensive area of trees and shrubbery which extends around the cafe to the edge of the large mansion. The character area also embraces the land immediately to the south of the pond, and thus includes a fine mature oak on an earthwork bank, its size (2.86 metre girth) suggesting a nineteenth-century date, and which forms a prominent foreground feature in the view from the temple, south across the park.

*The oak standing on the earthwork bank near the Round Pond.*
The trees within Character Area 3.

Management Policies

- The cedars around the Temple are of varying age, some perhaps eighteenth century but the majority of nineteenth or twentieth-century date. The value of this planting has thus been recognised over a very long period of time and maintaining it into the future should be a major strategic priority of management. Some additional planting is needed to the west of the temple, where the trees are currently sparser than to the
east: there is space here, close to the water, for new specimens to be established. One cedar here, evidently sick, needs to be removed.

- The planting which encloses the Italian Garden could be augmented, with the planting of additional yews, and possibly holly, to hide the wall of the kitchen garden and the main perimeter wall of the grounds, which are close and slightly obtrusive.

- The planting to either side of the Round Pond needs to be maintained into the future, as it serves to frame the view out from the temple into the parkland to the south. The two trees recorded here as ‘unknown broadleaves’ on the existing tree survey may be some kind of magnolia – further research is needed to establish their exact species.

- The planting area to the east of the pond also has an important function in separating the Temple and Round Pond from the mansion and its surroundings, thus maintaining the character of the former as a distinct and separate space. It is important therefore that the overall density of planting in the area around the cafe should be preserved and maintained into the future.

- Care should also be taken of the beech tree to the south of the cafe (with a girth of over 5 metres, one of the oldest trees in the park, a rare survivor from the eighteenth-century landscape garden). It is surrounded by relatively recent planting, including a number of Chinese Windmills, and its original context in terms of planting has thus been lost: this planting is not yet a threat to the tree’s survival, but any future planting in this area should ensure that this important tree is given the space it needs and deserves.

The important group of cedars around the Temple.
The Italian Garden to the rear of the Temple.
3.2.4 Character Area 4: Parkland

This is a large area which encompasses the present pitch and putt golf course, and the land lying to the south, most of which formed the main area of open parkland at Gunnersbury in the eighteenth century. There are a few trees of possible eighteenth-century date: two oaks, a beech, and at least one cedar. The majority of the planting, however, is of nineteenth and twentieth-century date, although its overall character probably perpetuates, in broad terms, that of the original design. The area formed the termination of the view south from the Temple but is not strongly ‘designed’: it comprises a fairly dense and formless scatter of deciduous and, in particular, coniferous trees, the latter including numerous prominent cedars, both as individuals and in small clumps. Originally, the view would have included a distant prospect of the countryside towards the Thames, but this has been obscured in part by the growth of trees within the parkland and in part by the growth of the peripheral belts.

Further south, beyond the present boundaries of the pitch and put course, the landscape is more open and the character of the planting more nineteenth-century in character, featuring for example a clump of walnuts, and with a perimeter belt lined with London plane.

The open parkland, now the pitch and putt course, with a number of good specimen trees.
The trees within Character Area 4.
The nineteenth-century clump of walnuts (the lighter green trees in the distance), and the general open character of the parkland in the south section of the park.

The southern perimeter of the park, with an impressive line of plane trees.
Management Policies

- Relatively little needs to be done to this character area. It contains a large number of relatively young trees, mostly in keeping with the historic character of the design, which will mature into good specimens. The main management issue relates to proposals to prioritise the needs of nature conservation in the present golf course area, and its development in part as a wildflower meadow. This should be done with care, if at all: while it is possible that the parkland was, at least in part, managed in this manner in the eighteenth century, the view from the temple should remain a relatively ‘manicured’ one. Meadow management should perhaps be adopted elsewhere, in the less visually important areas of the park, but if implemented here should be kept to the peripheral parts, leaving the central prospect to and from the Temple and Pond closely-mown.

3.2.5. Character Area 5 – Kitchen Gardens

This area of the grounds was not accessible at the time of the survey in August 2013, and no trees are shown within this area on the existing tree survey.
3.2.6. Character Area 6 – Sports Facilities

This area comprises features, such as the children’s playground and the bowling greens, which relate to the municipal history of the park. Although the trees here lie within an area which was parkland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they are not of any particular historic interest. The children’s playground is, however, edged with a number of mature beech and limes trees, which constitute the remains of the perimeter belt which existed before the park was expanded to the west in the 1870s, but otherwise the planting is largely of the ‘municipal’ period. At the corner of the playground is a good example of a Red Oak, which has undergone recent conservation work.
Management Policies

- The remains of the old eighteenth-century belt still fulfil an important function in defining the boundary between the “inner”, designed ‘core’ of the Gunnersbury landscape – the gardens and the eighteenth-century park; and the outer, more sparsely-timbered nineteenth-century addition to the west. The fact that, in spite of the park’s expansion in the 1870s, these lines of trees were allowed to remain indicates their continuing importance as an internal division. Some attempt has recently been made to augment the planting at the northern end of this feature but the species chosen – birch – seems inappropriate and unnecessarily ‘municipal’: further planting here, of a limited nature, should seek to replicate the pattern of planting already in place.
3.2.7. Character Area 7 – Potomac and Environs

The Potomac Lake was created in the 1870s, along with the associated earthworks nearby and perimeter belts nearby. All of the planting around the lake and its environs date from the 1870s onwards, and represents a fine collection of late nineteenth-century trees and shrubs, including walnut, maple, pine, beech, cherry and swamp cypress. The area functioned as a detached pleasure ground, used for recreational boating and fishing, and as a destination for walks through the parkland. The area around the lake is now very overgrown and atmospheric, and seems almost entirely untouched by Gunnersbury’s later history, as a municipal park.

The trees within Character Area 7.
The dense character of the planting around the Potomac Lake.

The overgrown understorey around the Potomac Lake.

The crescent-shaped earthwork to the west of the Lake is also densely planted, and possibly always has been to screen the Lake from the nearby road. The planting is dominated by nineteenth and twentieth-century examples of maples, planes and a number of false acacias.
Dense understory on the crescent-shaped earthwork near the Potomac.

Nineteenth-century planting on the crescent-shaped earthwork near the Potomac.

The perimeter belt to the south of the Potomac Lake dates to the late nineteenth century, and is comprised mainly of chestnut, yew and maple, with an understorey of mature and ornamental shrubs.
Management Policies

- The trees and understorey around the Lake are overgrown and require a degree of thinning to allow more light to penetrate the area and to highlight particularly good specimens. This said, every care should be taken to ensure that the walk around the lake is kept separate and hidden from the surrounding parkland.

- The planting of the perimeter belt needs to be augmented at the front (towards the park) in order to ensure long-term continuity: it is essential that a dense screen be maintained against the tall buildings in the surrounding landscape. Some attention might also be given to adding to the underplanting.
3.2.8. Character Area 8 – Sports Fields

This area of the park is relatively open, and the evidence of nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps makes it clear that it always has been so.

Trees within Character Area 8, showing the western boundary of the park.

In historic terms, the most important trees are those contained within the late nineteenth-century belt along the western boundary of the park, which is mainly comprised of chestnuts, maples and planes of late nineteenth or early twentieth-century date.
Management Policies

- The understorey is quite sparse in this belt, and would benefit from more planting, perhaps using shade tolerant species which have been identified as offering greater resilience to climate change (see Appendix 3).

*The late nineteenth-century belt on the western edge of the park.*
3.3. General Comments on Planting Character

One of the most appealing aspects of the Gunnersbury landscape is its diversity: each of the ‘character areas’ discussed above boasts its own distinctive combination of trees and shrubs. Some of the most visually appealing and historically interesting planting can be found in the area around the two mansions. Here there is a mixture of deciduous and coniferous species, dominated by nineteenth-century trees but with a veneer of twentieth-century ‘municipal’ planting. Particularly distinctive is the Japanese garden, which survives in fragmentary form to the southeast of the two mansions.

The planting in this ‘core’ area of the landscape is very different from that found around the Temple and Round Pond (Character Area 3) and in the parkland to the south of this (Character Area 4). Here the predominant tree is the cedar, largely to the exclusion of other species in the immediate vicinity of the Temple itself, but mixed with deciduous species in the golf course area to the south. While relatively few of the surviving specimens appear to predate c.1800, the general mixture of species appears to perpetuate, in broad terms, that established in the eighteenth century.

Within Character Area 2 – occupied for most of Gunnersbury’s history by ornamental or kitchen gardens – there is little planting of any kind; while Area 6, the Children’s play area, is characterised by sparse twentieth-century planting, and the area to the west (Character Area 8) is largely open, although with some good late nineteenth-century planting remaining in the perimeter belt. To the south of this area, however, the planting around the Potomac, and in the adjoining southern belt, comprises a particularly good range of nineteenth-century trees and shrubs, for the most part very densely planted, and largely unaffected by later, ‘municipal’ additions.
4. Planting in Historic Views

The Conservation Management Plans prepared in 2008 by Chris Blandford Associates and in 2013 by Purcell contain assessments of the key historic views within the park. This section briefly addresses the planting within each view, using the numbering adopted within the 2013 CMP. Management policy points relating to the trees within these views have been outlined above for each character area, and more detailed historical analysis of each view is contained within the recent CMP.

Map showing the heritage trees by phase with the historic viewpoints identified in the 2013 Conservation Management Plan.
4.1. View 1. From the terrace outside Gunnersbury Park House, looking across the park and gardens.

This view looks over the earthwork terrace associated with the earlier house and gardens, over open lawns towards the Orangery and the site of the Horseshoe Pond. Nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps show the area to the south as being planted with trees, which may have restricted more expansive views from the terrace which were well-known in the eighteenth century.

The extent of municipal planting means that the original character of this view has to some extent been compromised. The density of such planting also ensures that the view is probably more restricted than it was in the nineteenth century. The increasingly restricted nature, over time, of the views out from the mansion, and into the wider landscape, constitutes one of the intrinsic aspects of Gunnersbury’s historic character, and is a reflection of the increasingly industrialised and urbanised character of the locality in the course of the nineteenth century.
4.2. View 2. From the terrace outside the small mansion looking over the gardens and parkland.

This viewpoint outside the small mansion overlooks the earthwork terrace and area of the early formal garden. Nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps show the area to the south as being planted with shrubbery-style planting, rather than trees, which suggests that the views down towards the Gothic ruins and the Japanese garden were more open in the nineteenth century. This is now a more restricted view due to nineteenth century and municipal planting. Recent planting on the site of the Horseshoe Pond obscures the probable nineteenth-century view over the gardens of the small mansion. The view is much more densely treed than it was in the nineteenth century, with modern groups of copper beech as a particularly prominent feature. Once again, however, it is important to note that the increasingly restricted nature, over time, of the views out into the wider landscape, constitutes one of the intrinsic aspects of Gunnersbury’s historic character, and is a reflection of the increasingly industrialised and urbanised character of the locality in the course of the nineteenth century.
4.3. View 3. View along terrace from Gunnersbury Park House towards Gothic Screen.

A mixed nineteenth and twentieth-century view along the terrace in front of the house, looking towards the small mansion and Gothic Screen. There is a clear view down the terrace to the Gothic Screen, but historic photographs show a great deal of ornamental planting along the front of both houses and the terrace itself, which has been lost, but the character of the background planting, although in part twentieth-century, is in keeping with the original composition.

A mixed nineteenth and twentieth-century view along the terrace in front of the house, looking towards the large mansion from the Gothic Screen. This is similar in scope to View 3, described above. There is a clear view down the terrace to archway at the other end of the terrace, but historic photographs show a great deal of ornamental planting along the front of both houses and the terrace itself, which has been lost, but the character of the background planting, although in part twentieth-century, is in keeping with the original composition.

A nineteenth-century view of the main approach to Gunnersbury Park House (and the modern museum and park). The view of the house itself is now obscured by tree growth – it was probably always partially obscured, but perhaps not to the same degree as present. Many of the trees and shrubs are of twentieth-century date but their character is generally in keeping with the surviving nineteenth-century planting.

A mid nineteenth-century view towards the mansion and the earthwork terrace from the Orangery. During the nineteenth century this would also have include the water in the Horseshoe Pond, which would have reflected the planting scheme and the Orangery. The view of the house is partially obscured by municipal tree planting, including some obtrusive modern cypress, and the earthworks of the Horseshoe Pond have been partly covered by a modern rockery.
4.7. View 7. From Gunnersbury Park House towards the park.

This view looks out over the earthwork of the terrace, over the rockery established at the foot of the terrace (which cannot be seen from this vantage point), towards the rose basket garden and the open parkland beyond. This view is now partially obscured by additional municipal planting which is denser than the nineteenth-century planting scheme.

This is one of two set-piece eighteenth-century viewpoints (the other being the view back from the Temple). Illustrations from the late eighteenth century, such as the Copland watercolour, suggest that the planting around the Pond was much more spartan than it was in the nineteenth century, or in the present day. The original planting scheme within this view appears to have mainly consisted of cedars, and other trees and shrubs were added in the Victorian period. The current planting is far denser that the original context of the Temple and Pond, but is a good reflection of the Rothschilds planting scheme and, to an extent, of the original eighteenth-century composition.

This is the opposite view of View 5, and the other key eighteenth-century set-piece view. The view takes in the open parkland to the south of the Temple. During the later nineteenth century the parkland within the view was planted more densely, with a number of cedars reflecting those around the Temple itself. The planting is characteristic of a mid to late Victorian area of ornamental parkland. The nineteenth-century planting within the parkland detracts from the original view designed in the eighteenth century, although to a significant extent the mixture of deciduous and coniferous planting, and some of the particular hardwood species employed, probably serves to replicate the spirit of the original design. Moreover, the density of planting – which is almost certainly greater than in the eighteenth century – serves, together with the perimeter belt to the south, to partially screen a number of tall office buildings and high-rise flats from the present view which are more intrusive than the later planting scheme. Once again we can see how views out into the wider landscape became increasingly restricted over time, as the locality became more urban and industrial in character.

The key view in this part of the park is of the Potomac Tower, island and boat house from the opposite side of the lake. Contemporary descriptions describe the original planting scheme, which included stands of bamboo and pampas grass. The Tower was much more clearly visible from this viewpoint until obscured by recent tree growth. However, it may always have been partially obscured with planting to produce a shaded, picturesque effect. Although there is much more planting within the view than originally intended, the density and height of the present planting do screen the Tower and lake from the modern buildings immediately adjacent to the boundary. The planting, moreover, is remarkably free from the ‘municipal’ additions which occur elsewhere at Gunnersbury.
4.11. View 11. The Playing Fields from the Lionel Road Entrance

The view is important in terms of the design and experience of the municipal parkland landscape created in the 1920s and 1930s. There are some intrusive high-rise buildings within the view, but the planting does screen out other development. Although the planting visible within the view mainly dates from the twentieth century, the current view gives a fair impression of the appearance of this part of the park in the late nineteenth century.

This view, similar to that described in View 1, looks over the end of the earthwork terrace associated with the earlier house and gardens, towards the open parkland created in the eighteenth century, however this viewpoint is currently almost wholly obscured by nineteenth-century tree planting on the end of the terrace itself, which could be opened up to allow more expansive views from this point.


A mid nineteenth-century view towards the mansion and the earthwork terrace from the Horseshoe Pond, which is similar to that described in View 6. During the nineteenth century this would also have include the water in the Horseshoe Pond, which would have reflected the planting scheme and the Orangery. The house is now partially obscured by recent tree planting, including in particular a number of inappropriate modern cypresses, and the earthwork of the Horseshoe Pond has been partly covered by the recently rockery.


This view, identified in the 2008 Conservation Management Plan, looks towards the eighteenth-century Temple and Round Pond. A number of cedars around the Temple have been lost, and those which survive are not from the original eighteenth-century planting scheme. The current planting is far denser that the original context of the Temple and Pond, with municipal shrubs around the edge of the pond.


This view was identified in the 2008 Conservation Management Plan, looking from the Japanese Garden towards the house. Some important specimen trees remain, but they are few in number and the details of the planting described in the early twentieth century have been lost.
5. General Principles for Planting and Conservation

Landscapes like Gunnersbury pose particular problems of future conservation and maintenance. Where parks and gardens laid out around country houses have, in the course of the twentieth century, become public open spaces there are obvious difficulties in combining the needs of recreational and sporting use, and historic landscape conservation, to say nothing of accommodating more modern concerns like nature conservation. Planting policies and management of vegetation more generally, lie at the heart of such issues. There are also questions about how far the ‘municipal’ phase of the landscape’s development is itself treated as part of the its history, rather than as something to be removed in order to highlight the ‘historic’ elements. Where, as here, private ownership continued well into the twentieth century the problems are particularly acute. It is not, for example, particularly clear why trees planted in the early 1920s by the Rothschilds should have greater historical significance than examples planted by the municipal authorities at the end of that decade. Lastly, where – as at Gunnersbury – designed landscapes have become engulfed in industrial, urban or suburban development much of the meaning of their layout and most crucially, the arrangement of views out into the surrounding landscape, is fundamentally compromised. Gunnersbury, in the course of its development, has always responded to views southwards, towards the Thames. But whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such views were welcomed in and used as a major feature of the design, by the nineteenth century the changing nature of the locality meant that the landscape became increasingly inward-looking. One way of understanding Gunnersbury, and the management of the trees and shrubs within it, is in terms of the changing character over time of this relationship between designed landscape and surrounding environment.

Two other key features of Gunnersbury need to be noted. The first is that, more perhaps than most designed landscapes, it comprises a number of quite distinct areas, each with its own particular planting character: the gardens to the north and south of the two houses; the Round Pond, Temple and flanking cedars; the area of well-timbered parkland lying immediately to the south of these; the Potomac Lake and surrounding woodland; the sparsely-timbered outer areas of parkland, to the west; the narrow strip of ground, partly enclosed by walling, beside Gunnersbury Lane. The second is the remarkable degree of continuity in the ways in which these areas were visually separated, mainly by planting, from each other; or were visually connected. There was continuity, too, in the kinds of ways in which each was used, and planted. Thus the main area of gardens below the terrace has always been focused on the house/houses, but visually separate from the parkland areas to the west; and they have always been considered primarily in horticultural and recreational terms. The Temple, and the parkland to the south, were always intimately related, yet at the same time poorly connected in visual terms to the house and gardens. The Potomac Lake was designed as a distinct and separate experience, reached through but visually quite divorced by dense planting from the surrounding parkland. The narrow strip of ground besides Gunnersbury lane has always been quite enclosed and separate, variously used over the centuries as kitchen garden and formal flower garden. The outer, western areas of the park have always been relatively free of trees, and their current use as playing fields represents a strong continuity with their nineteenth-century equestrian use.

As the survey makes clear, these various areas have today, and have always been, distinct in the character of their planting, perpetuated even through the ‘municipal’ phase of
development. Dense stands of yew thus dominate the gardens around the two houses, accompanied by a complex mixture of coniferous and deciduous species; horse chestnut tends to feature only in the wider areas of parkland planted after 1850; the area around the Temple, and the parkland to the south, has always been dominated by cedars.

Yet as well as features which have historically divided the various compartments at Gunnersbury, we should note those which have given them an overall coherence, and given the place its particular character. In particular, in all periods Gunnersbury was famous for its cedars, and these were widely planted not only around the Temple and in the area of the present golf course, but – albeit to a lesser degree - in the gardens to the south of the house(s).

These historical conditions provide some of the key principles for future planting and other developments at Gunnersbury, viz:

- Gunnersbury has developed over the centuries as an increasingly inward-looking landscape and every effort should be directed towards maintaining and enhancing the perimeter belts which help ensure that views of the surrounding locality, especially to the south, are obscured.

- The principal character areas need to be kept visually separate from each other, except where they were intended to be visually integrated. Thus, through all stages of its history the area of well-planted parkland now occupied by the pitch and put course has been largely invisible from the house(s) and gardens immediately to the south: but this area always, in contrast, formed the view from the Temple and the pleasure grounds around it. The outer areas of parkland, because of the disposition of the earlier perimeter belts, maintained when park was expanded in the later nineteenth century, have always been distinct from the designed ‘core’ which is formed by the areas just noted. Maintaining the barriers between these areas needs to lie at the core of future conservation policy.

- The distinct character of planting within the various character areas need to be continued and enhanced, blurred only, perhaps, by some increase in the numbers of cedars planted in the immediate vicinity of the two houses.

- The historic character of these various areas – the ways in which they have been used, and the relative balance of aesthetic and other concerns in their layout, planting and design – also needs to be considered in their future development. In particular, as well as continuing to relegate sports fields to the more distant parts of the park, consideration might be given to using some of these peripheral areas for wildlife conservation. Suggestions that the area of historic parkland now occupied by the golf course should be managed primarily for the benefit of wildlife should perhaps be reconsidered. Management as hay meadow might fit in with the area’s historic role, as a view from the Temple – for there is evidence that some portions of parks were used in this manner in the eighteenth century. But anything which might make this area significantly less manicured, such as the planting of scrub as cover for wildlife, should be avoided, and measures to enhance nature conservation might, as
a general principal, be directed towards the far south of the park, and specifically to the area immediately to the south of the main area of gardens.
6. Specific Recommendations for Ten Year Management and Maintenance Plan

- The existing Gunnersbury Tree Strategy prepared by John Laing is excellent but needs to be continued and added to, as a dynamic document – to take account of new pests and diseases, changes in policy and additional inspection work as development and other work processes (see below, Appendix 3). The ancient trees identified on the Ancient Tree Register need to be added to the John Laing inspection schedule as a separate item.

- All development work should be undertaken to British Standard 5837 in order to ensure that all trees and their roots are adequately protected.

- A management plan needs to be prepared for the woodlands and the belts in order to ensure their continuity and sustainability.

- A policy on memorial trees should be developed to ensure that these are planted in a suitable place, and with appropriate species, in line with any planned restoration works. Care should be taken that such trees are not out of keeping with the character and location of the existing historic planting.

- In Character Areas 1 and 2, the principal areas of shrubbery planting need to be maintained, but thinned; inappropriate young trees need to be removed, as described; and measures taken to ensure the continuity of key design features such as the avenue to the south of the terrace and the Japanese Garden.

- The planting of cedars around the Temple needs to be augmented, and some additional planting made in the area around the Italian Garden to hide the wall of the kitchen garden and the main perimeter wall of the grounds.

- Careful consideration needs to the way in which the golf course area (Character Area 4) is managed for wildlife, in order to ensure that the important view southwards, from the Temple, retains a relatively ‘manicured’ appearance.

- The remains of the old eighteenth-century belt on the boundary between Character Areas 6 and 8 needs to be augmented with further planting.

- The trees and understorey around the Potomac Lake are overgrown and require a degree of thinning to allow more light to penetrate the area and to highlight particularly good specimens. This said, every care should be taken to ensure that the walk around the lake is kept separate and hidden from the surrounding parkland.

- The planting of the outer perimeter belts, especially the understorey, needs to be augmented in places, in order to ensure that they continues to screen out near views of neighbouring development.
Appendix 1. The Benefits of Trees

Trees provide a wide range of benefits to people, and the management plan needs to take into account all these potential attributes. These have been nicely summarised in *The Case for Trees*, published by the Forestry Commission in 2010.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Change Contributions</th>
<th>Countering climate change</th>
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</thead>
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| Tempering severe weather    | • Trees remove CO2 to create a carbon sink  
• Trees provide significant low-carbon options for building and energy |
| Moderating temperatures     | • The capacity of trees to attenuate heavy rains and floodwater slows run-off and renders Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems more effective  
• Modulating temperatures  
• The ability of trees to evaporate water, reflect sunlight and provide shade combine to cut the ‘urban heat-island’ effect |

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<tr>
<th>Environment Advantages</th>
<th>Valuable aesthetic contributions</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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| Cutting soil erosion  | • More attractive landscape  
• Eye-sores hidden  
• Greener more natural  
• Linking town to country |
| Positive impact on water quality | • Preserves the valuable soil resource and keeps carbon locked in |
| Contributing to wildlife | • Trees act as natural filters  
• Increased biodiversity as countryside becomes more porous with extra links  
• Brings wildlife closer to people |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Dividends</th>
<th>Providing profitable by-products</th>
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| Reducing greenspace maintenance costs | • Firewood/woodchip  
• Compost/leaf litter mulch  
• Renewable fuel – via coppicing  
• Timber  
• Fruit – community orchards |
| Contributing indirectly to local economies | • Trees are much less maintenance intensive  
• People more productive  
• Job satisfaction increased  
• Jobs created  
• Inward investment encouraged  
• Retail areas with trees perform better  
• Increased property values  
• Adds tourism and recreational revenue |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Benefits</th>
<th>Delivering a range of health benefits</th>
<th>Assisting urban living</th>
<th>Adding to social values</th>
<th>Offering spiritual value</th>
<th>Benefiting education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Cleaner air means less asthma</td>
<td>- Improves buildings’ energy efficiency and can help alleviate fuel poverty</td>
<td>- More harmonious environments</td>
<td>- Heightened self esteem</td>
<td>- Concentration increases in ‘natural’ classrooms</td>
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<td>- Lower risk of skin cancer</td>
<td>- Buffers noise</td>
<td>- Heightened sense of pride in place</td>
<td>- Puts people more in touch with Nature and the seasons</td>
<td>- Better learning outcomes</td>
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<td>- Quicker patient recovery times</td>
<td>- Moderated micro-climate</td>
<td>- Greater community cohesion</td>
<td>- Symptoms of anxiety, depression and insomnia alleviated</td>
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<td>- Reduced stress</td>
<td>- Increased CO2 absorption</td>
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<td>- Positive impact on mental health and wellbeing</td>
<td>- Reduced crime levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Encourages exercise that can counteract heart disease and Type 2 Diabetes, reduce blood pressure</td>
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The park is a magnificent resource for both the local community and for visitors. One of the great assets of Gunnersbury is the tree collection of a wide range of species and varieties. There is a debate – which has ebbed and flowed for decades – about the relative merits of native vs. non-native trees. In the context of urban tree management it is inappropriate and restrictive to develop a policy of only planting native trees and cannot be justified. Tree selection is always a balance between achieving the desired objective whilst reducing any negative impacts to a minimum.
Appendix 2. Tree Management and Biodiversity

The London Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has 11 Habitat Action Plans (HAPs). Nine of these are for named habitat types, and two are for land uses. The principal ones of relevance are:

- Parks and Urban Green Spaces.
- Woodland.

There are local BAPs for Ealing and for Hounslow. The Hounslow BAP identifies Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and lists eleven of these as the most important as Sites of Metropolitan Importance – of which Gunnersbury Park is one. The Ealing BAP also designates the Gunnersbury Triangle as a Site of Metropolitan Importance. One of the reasons for the designation is the old and veteran trees found within the park. These are listed and plotted on the Ancient Trees website, and are important trees for both their historic and biodiversity value and should be retained, subject to health and safety inspections.

Veteran trees can be some of the oldest and most remarkable living organisms in the landscape. Their ecological significance lies in the continuity of habitat and the presence associated often highly specialised organisms. Of particular importance is the presence of deadwood both on the ground and in the crown. Deadwood plays a crucial part in the life cycles of many invertebrates.

Most of the trees at Gunnersbury are not veteran, and are of nineteenth or twentieth-century origin. A few are probably of late eighteenth-century date, but not many. For example the large beech outside the café is around 5.3m in girth. Fifty beech trees have girths between 5.0m and 5.9m at Felbrigg in Norfolk, and these are known to date to the middle decades of the eighteenth century at the earliest.

It is important to be aware of the need to retain trees to become the veteran trees of the future. Thus for example, the nineteenth-century oak near the Round Pond has a girth of nearly 3m. Although this is nothing special at the moment, this tree could become a veteran of the future in a few hundred years.

There are historic records of orchard(s) at Gunnersbury and consideration could be given to creating a heritage orchard of traditional varieties and rooting stock on the site (perhaps using the expertise of the London Orchard Group), perhaps within the area of the eastern kitchen garden, or the space between the outer boundary wall and the seventeenth-century garden wall.

The importance of Gunnersbury should also be seen in the context of the wider area. Corridors linking the site to other areas have been, or should be, identified, and the future management should be seen in the context of work at places like Kew and Richmond Park.
Appendix 3. Climate Change/Pests and Disease

Growing conditions for trees, particularly urban trees, are becoming increasingly demanding. Two related future threats in particular need to be considered - climate change and pests and diseases.

The global climate is changing as a result of human activity, caused primarily by the increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The most recent predictions for the UK suggest an increase in temperature and changes in rainfall patterns, wind speed, cloud cover and humidity.

The main impacts of climate change can be summarised as:-

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<th>Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Longer growing season</td>
<td>Earlier bud burst, later bud set, more lammas growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warmer growing season increased CO₂ concentration.</td>
<td>Increased growth rates, improved yield.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fewer frost days – milder winters</td>
<td>Reduced hardening, later dormancy, increased risk of autumn frost damage to sensitive species with extended growing season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced summer rainfall</td>
<td>More frequent and drier summers, reduced growth, increased drought stress, secondary pest/disease outbreaks resulting from drought stress, increased fire frequency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased winter rainfall</td>
<td>Increased waterlogging, increased wind damage, increased soil erosion and slope failure, increased Phytophthora infection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longer growing season</td>
<td>More generations of insect pests per year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milder winters, warmer growing season, increased CO₂ concentration</td>
<td>Increased productivity; increase in woodland mammal populations, insect pests and tree diseases and colonisation by alien invasive species.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased windiness</td>
<td>Increased wind damage and resultant bark beetle outbreaks and increased fungus infection.</td>
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The principal response is to aim to diversify species, structure and age of the tree population. Gunnersbury is already in a strong position with its wide range of tree species. Future planting should take into account the establishment of species which may be appropriate to future climates, as well as adopting management techniques for the belts and woodland – possibly Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF). CCF involves the maintenance of a forestry canopy during the regeneration phase and hence no clear felling. However, further discussions would be needed to see if this was appropriate here.

Associated with climate change is a significant increase in the pest and disease threats to trees. These include:-

Top pest and disease threats to trees in Britain

- Acute oak decline - a condition affecting oak trees in parts of England and Wales, in which bacteria are believed to be involved.
- Asian longhorn beetle - a wood-boring insect that can cause extensive damage to a range of urban and forest broadleaved trees.
- Chalara dieback of ash - an aggressive fungal disease of ash trees which causes crown death and wilting and dieback of branches.
- Chestnut blight - a highly damaging disease caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, which was confirmed in sweet chestnut trees in two nut orchards in Warwickshire and East Sussex in 2011.
- Dothistroma needle blight - formerly known as red band needle blight, and caused by the *Dothistroma septosporum* fungus. Causes mortality and loss of timber yield in pine trees. Main host is Corsican pine, but lodgepole and Scots pine also increasingly affected.
- Great spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus micans*) - is present throughout much of the Eurasian region, practically everywhere that spruce trees grow. It was first discovered in Britain in 1982.
- Horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) - first found in Britain in 2002 in London, this moth's range has expanded to much of England and Wales.
- Oak pinhole borer (*Platypus cylindrus*) - once rare in Britain, populations grew in the south after the 1987 gales, when it took advantage of the glut of suitable breeding material.
- Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) - severely defoliates oak trees and can weaken them, making them susceptible to other pests and diseases. Outbreaks in west London and Berkshire.
- Phytophthora alni - this lethal disease threatening Britain's alder trees was first discovered in Britain in 1993.
- Phytophthora ausstrocedrae - confirmed as the cause of dieback and deaths of juniper bushes in Northern England in 2011, this pathogen had previously been almost solely associated with Chilean cedar trees in South America. Juniper's conservation importance makes this a potentially serious development.
- Phytophthora kernoviae - so far confirmed only in Britain, Ireland and New Zealand, and only in a very few trees. However, the fact that it can infect beech and oak, as well as woodland under-storey species such as bilberry and rhododendron, makes it a forestry concern.
- Phytophthora lateralis - usually kills most Lawson cypress trees that it infects. First recorded in the UK, in Scotland, in 2010; now present in Devon, Yorkshire, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.
- Phytophthora ramorum - a fungus-like organism which attacks many trees and plants. The economically important larch is a host, and large numbers have had to be felled.
- Pine tree lappet moth (*Dendrolimus pini*) - has been discovered breeding in Inverness-shire pine plantation forests. It can be a serious defoliator of pines and other conifer trees in some parts of its native range in Europe and Russia.

**Threats not yet present in the natural environment in Britain**

- Citrus longhorn beetle - a wood-boring insect that can cause extensive damage to a range of urban and forest broadleaved trees. Very similar in appearance and effects to Asian longhorn beetle (above).
- Eight toothed European spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) - an insect that causes mortality, mostly in spruce trees.
- Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) - a wood-boring insect that causes widespread mortality of ash trees and loss of timber value.
- Pinewood nematode - a worm that can cause serious tree damage and mortality.
• Pine processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) - a species whose caterpillars can cause serious damage to pine and other conifer trees, and which also cause a public and animal health hazard.

A regular inspection and monitoring regime for pests and diseases needs to be established within the park.
Appendix 4. Education and Community

The trees at Gunnersbury present an opportunity for engagement with local schools – in addition to Capel Manor College.

Schools could be encouraged to use the area as part of the Forest School programme. The development of Forest School in Britain began in the mid-1990s, based on a Scandinavian idea that considers children’s contact with nature to be extremely important. Forest School has been defined in Britain as ‘an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands on learning in a woodland environment’. Such a programme will enable future generations to appreciate the heritage trees of Gunnersbury.

Volunteers could be used to develop a heritage tree trail, ranging from ancient trees to twenty-first century plantings.

Appendix 5. Health and Well-Being

Contact with natural surroundings offers a restorative environment which enables people to relax, unwind and recharge batteries, helping to enhance mood and reduce stress levels.

Regular exercise can help to prevent major conditions, such as coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes, obesity, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, bowel cancer and back pain. Moderate physical activity such as a regular walk in natural surroundings is a simple and enjoyable way of keeping fit.

The development of local Heritage Tree Health Walks, in partnership with local GPs, would benefit both local community and raise the value of the trees to the community.