

County Hall Woodland and Associated Nature Corridor Habitats

Visit by Jenny Jones and Andrew Neil Stephens 28th May 2025

County Hall Woodland – Site Ref J26

Location central OS Grid Ref TL 3218 1188

The woodland is bordered: to the south by Bullocks Lane (B158) with residential houses beyond, to the west by Hornsmill/Horns Road with the West Street allotments and the River Lea floodplain beyond, to the east by the recreational cricket ground, disused tennis courts and Council buildings beyond and to the north by an area of scrub, Wallfields Alley with a small area of grassland/woodland and the River Lea floodplain beyond.

Ecological designations and significant species recorded

The woodland is registered as NERC Priority Woodland Habitat on the Natural England Inventory (Defra MAGIC website).

The site has records for protected species that include grass snake, (NERC Priority Species), bats (common pipistrelle) and badgers.

Site visit description

The mainly semi-natural secondary woodland is dominated by sycamore but with some planted mature old conifers (some estimated to be over 100 years old) that include two tall Giant Redwoods and many Scotts Pine trees. Other trees recorded during the visit included: Horse Chestnut, Lime, Field Maple, Elm, Hazel, Holly and Yew with an understorey of young tree saplings, snowberry and brambles. The ground flora was limited but includes the ancient woodland indicator dogs mercury with garlic mustard, wood avens, alkanet, cow parsley and nettles. There is standing and lying dead wood; supporting fungi, providing habitat for invertebrates and potential shelter for reptiles. Many of the trees are covered with ivy with ivy also spreading over the woodland floor.

There is a pleasant quiet footpath through the woodland with the occasional person walking through. The narrow footpath starting at the Pegs Lane entrance (alongside the B158) has relatively steep banks either side with mammal pathways (potential muntjac, fox and badgers) crossing through. Westwards, the path widens as the woodland becomes broader and there are good views across the slopes either side of the path that include the impressive tall Giant Redwoods and tall Scotts Pine. Some of the more mature woodland trees support features suitable for roosting bats. Northwards, at the location of the roadside private house, the wood narrows with continuing steep slopes down to the house and a steep rising bank to the field and tennis courts. There are steps along the path as the land rises northwards.

At the north end of the woodland by the Leahoe Gardens houses, there is a fenced off area where the vegetation changes to an area of dense vegetation supporting tall ruderals (including nettles) with scrub (brambles, sycamore, elder and hawthorn) with bordering mature trees of Sycamore, Hazel and Scotts Pine. In the 1990s this was documented as a Wildlife Site with species diverse grassland but over the years has suffered from scrub encroachment and no longer supports the criteria for a wildlife site. With appropriate management the grassland value could be restored to its previous meadow habitat.

The large area of ecologically important woodland with habitat connections to the important wildlife corridor through the Castle Ward area that also has the potential to provide an interesting educational walking route for the local community meets the rational for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Report by Dr Jenny Jones MCIEEM

2025 Photographs by Andrew Stephens

Photograph 1: Pegs Lane Entrance



Photograph 2: woodland viewed from Tanners Crescent



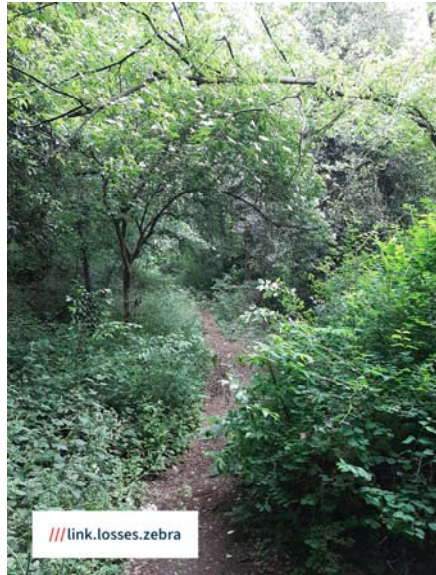
Photograph 3: Tall Scott's Pine



Photograph 4: Tall Giant Redwood



Photograph 5-9: Views through woodland



2011 photographs by Jenny Jones showing woodland and badger sett

