

HCC Woodland Associated Nature Corridor Habitats

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

Report by Dr Jenny Jones MCIEEM

2025 Photographs by Andrew Stephens

County Hall woodland (ref J26) to Wallfields (ref J29)

Location OS Grid Ref TL 3220 1206 to TL3225 1214

Ecological designations and significant species recorded

The trees extending from the tennis courts to Wallfields include some small patches of woodland registered as NERC Priority Woodland Habitat on the Natural England Inventory (Defra MAGIC website) see plan. The woodland around the car park to Wallfields is also important for bats (common pipistrelle recorded) with reptiles (slow-worms) recorded on the grass banks below the trees. Slow-worms are a flagship species for urban habitats in the proposed Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Site visit description

To complete a circular route around the Council owned area, the tree belts around Leahoe Gardens to the Wallfield Alley were walked. Although not all priority habitat, the tree belts to Leahoe Gardens and along the west side of the car park form good connecting wildlife corridors. Trees present include some mature Oak, Beech and Norway Maple providing a favourable wildlife corridor towards the wooded areas around Wallfields. On the date of the visit the area of woodland to the east of the HCC car park (priority woodland habitat) was not inspected but may be looked at during a further visit to the area.

West Street Allotments semi-improved grassland (Site Reference J28)

Location central OS grid reference TL32141213

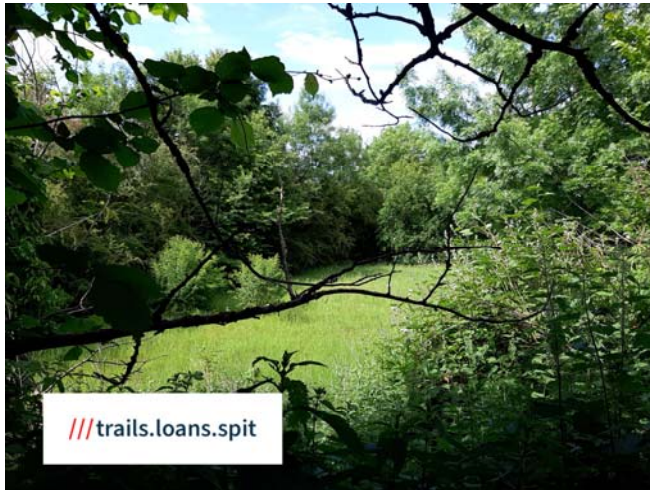
Significant species recorded

Slow-worms (NERC Priority Species) recorded- a flagship species in the proposed Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Site description viewed from Wallfields Alley

At the north end of Leahoe Gardens, the Wallfield Alley footpath was walked westwards to Horns Road. The scrub/woodland edge (ref J26), was to the south of the alley and to the north there is a steep drop with a pleasant view over a secluded area of open semi-improved grassland supporting tall grassland and herbs with scattered trees that included Oak. The habitat viewed from the high up path appeared not to be allotments but grassland as shown in the photograph. The site requires a further inspection to assess the biodiversity value of the grassland and trees. The more open grassland provides an important natural feature within the mainly wooded area that has potential for biodiversity enhancement and could be enhanced both for people and wildlife.

Photograph 1 semi-improved grassland with surrounding trees viewed from path



West Street/Horns Road Allotments Site Reference J21

Location central OS grid reference TL32071203

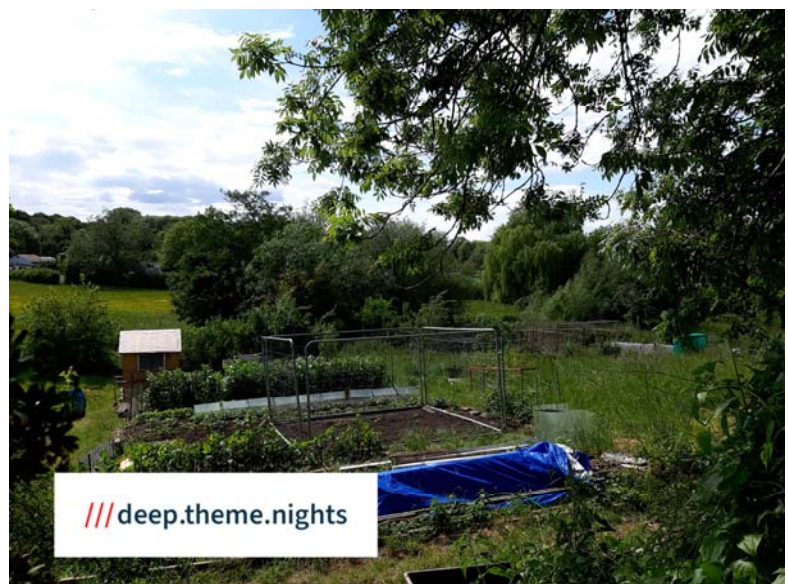
Significant species recorded

Breeding grass snakes (NERC Priority Species). The site is a HERC Wildlife Site due to its protected species value

Site Description viewed from Horns Road

Along Horns Road, there is good flight connectivity for species such as insects, birds and bats along the trees bordering the road and also between the HCC Woodland and the Horns Road Allotments. The allotments are adjacent to the River Lea and support structurally diverse habitats that form an important part of the nature corridor through the area.

Photograph 2: view across the allotments (J21) to the River Lea floodplain (J22) beyond



River Lea Floodplain (Site Reference J22)

Location OS Grid Ref TL32031196

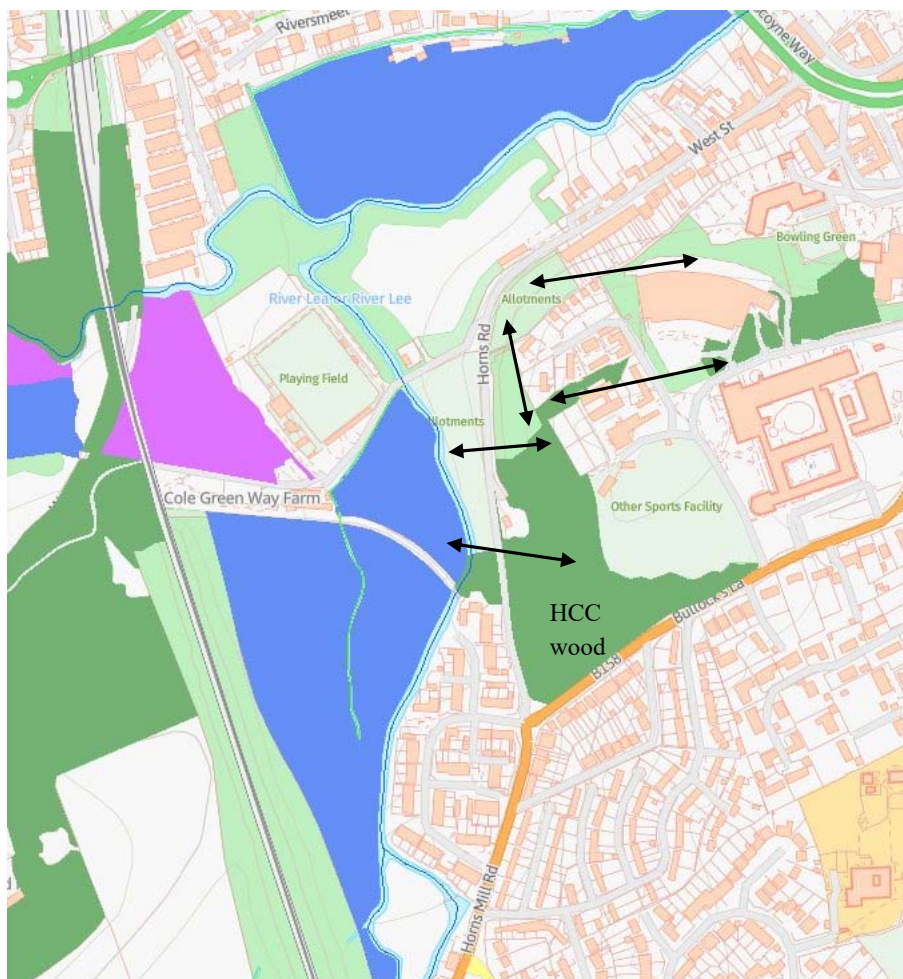
Ecological Designation

The River Lea chalk stream field adjacent to the allotments supports Priority Floodplain grassland.

Site description viewed from Horns Road

The River Lea itself is just 20-40 metres to the west of the HCC woodland (J26). The trees bordering the river and triangular patch of grassland support good tree wildlife corridors through the area to Hornsmill Road providing connecting habitat to the HCC woodland. The floodplain forms part of the important nature corridor through the area.

Plan (Defra MAGIC map) showing Natural England Priority Habitats around HCC wood



Key to NERC Priority Habitats

Dark Green- Deciduous
woodland Inventory

Blue—Floodplain
grassland Inventory

Blue line Chalk River
Inventory

Purple- species rich
semi-improved