

'Capability Brown's Wimbledon Park'
19th Century Water Colour Circa 1870 by an Unknown Artist



WIMBLEDON PARK

**A VISION
FOR CAPABILITY BROWN'S WIMBLEDON PARK
BY
THE CAPABILITY BROWN SOCIETY**

March 2021



INTRODUCTION

Launcelot "Capability" Brown designed Wimbledon Park in the 18th century. Most of the land was lost to urban development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The remnant open land, focusing on his lake, is the only surviving Capability Brown landscape within an urban area and is in three different ownerships; The London Borough of Merton, The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), and the Wimbledon Club.

This heritage landscape is now on Historic England's 'At Risk Register' and will be subject to significant change and development in the future as a result of

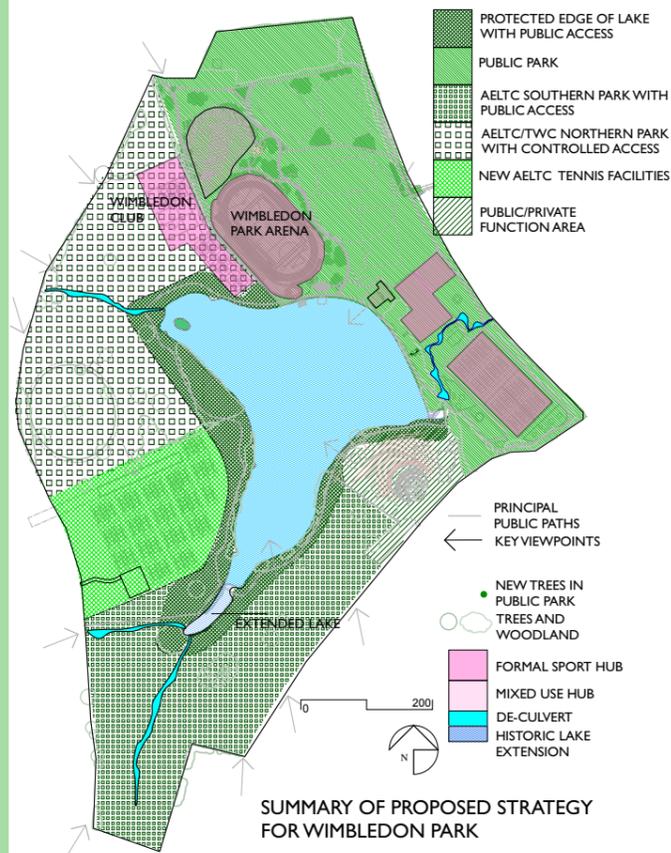
a. AELTC's ambitions to introduce more than 30 new tennis courts for their Qualifying Rounds within the parkland following the imminent closure of the Wimbledon Park Golf Club requiring planning approval and agreements,

b. The deteriorating condition of ageing and inappropriate facilities in the public park, and

c. The need for works to prevent the dam holding back the lake from failing. These works will affect the drainage of land around the western and southern sides of the lake and the frequency of flooding by the brook in the public park.

This synopsis, in seeking the widest possible community support, summarises new opportunities for private and community use with improved public access combined with the conservation of the landscape.

We believe this would make the wider Wimbledon Park perhaps the most intensively used multi-purpose park in London whilst also being respectful of nature conservation and its heritage value.



1. Protection and restoration of historic views and openness

There are critical views of the landscape that require protection and restoration including views to the lake, to St Mary's Church and Vineyard Hill. Historically the parkland had more open views to the lake which have been lost with inappropriate tree planting on the Golf course, around the stadium and around the Wimbledon Club. Buildings near the lake also impair views.

2. Conservation of the historic lake within its drainage catchment

The lake should be restored to its historic southern extremity. Safety requires works on the dam and outfall to ensure that there is no chance of the dam failing. Unfortunately, LB Merton's preferred works would destroy the core of the ancient Ashen Grove Wood and prevent the restoration of the lost eastern arm of the lake. Further outfall might utilise an enhanced cascade with a modest ancillary outfall once the sailing centre is moved. The tributary brooks and Wimbledon Park Brook might be opened out and configured to ameliorate flooding. Silt traps are needed on the tributaries and all new development and land management should attenuate runoff. Sediment needs removing from the lake bed, but not in a way that destroys Capability Brown's design.

3. Protection, conservation and enhancement of nature, woodland and historic trees.

The lakeside offers a rich and diverse natural landscape that requires protection and enhancement with restored wet woodland, wetland and marginal vegetation. There are also important heritage woodlands, particularly Horse Close and Ashen Grove Woods that require conservation and a number of ancient parkland oaks, that must be protected. The trees, wetlands and lake provide important habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including bats, birds, fish, invertebrates, and the European eel and this should be enhanced, not harmed, in any developments.

4. Removal, replacement and relocation of inappropriately located facilities

The unsightly 1970s sailing club with its storage yard and the sports dome and tennis shed at the Wimbledon Club are too prominent at the lakeside. The underused and neglected sports stadium with its linear coniferous tree screen planting dominates the public park. Any athletics provision should be redesigned to fit much better into the landscape. The Wimbledon Club and Golf Club maintenance facilities are also too close to the lakeside.

5. Finding the least intrusive place for the extra tennis facilities

The Wimbledon Club's land, fronting the AELTC, provides the best location available for new tennis facilities for the AELTC without any loss of heritage trees. The Club's relocation, and continued land ownership, should therefore be carefully considered in reshaping the wider parkland landscape and enhancing the lakeside setting.

6. Promotion of a wide range of public and private recreational, sporting and educational facilities

A wide range of new facilities is proposed.

a. The Wimbledon Park Arena is a proposal for a state of the art new sports stadium which would combine formal sport with educational, function and new recreational facilities extending into a dog free levelled and drained "Bowl" area to the north. This northern area would be open to informal public access for the majority of the time when formal sport is not in operation and might also host concerts, a fairground or simply be used for picnicking. An eight lane athletics track would bound a slightly sunken all weather hockey pitch which would also be available for multi-sports use for adults and juniors. The stadium would have flexible function facilities, classrooms, an underground sports hall, gym, changing, catering facilities and grandstand. An option exists to locate athletics throwing events, not in the Bowl, but at a distance on AELTC levelled land.

b. Within the Public park occasional football and cricket pitches would be created within compartments of new tree planting clumps and informal landscape in the Brownian tradition, and new flexibly used public gardens would be created next to the existing Bowls pavilion. The Bowls pavilion might also be converted and enlarged to provide upper level views of the lake and have an educational role on the park's heritage and natural history as well as continuing to function as a nursery and day care centre.

c. The upper levels of public tennis courts would be replanned and graded to provide a more flexible multi-sports use while still incorporating tennis facilities.

d. The former Golf Course clubhouse should be replanned to serve as a flexible public and private functions facility and include a new outdoor community theatre.

e. New AELTC tennis courts with a new facilities building on Wimbledon Club land set into the landscape with roof gardens and linked to a new area of accessible parkland.

f. Relocated Wimbledon Club terraced into the hill side with lake views and roof terraces to form a hub with the new Wimbledon Park Arena, located within shared AELTC parkland with new cricket ground and pavilion.

7. Improved public access

Public access around the lake is proposed within a protected landscape setting that enhances the lakeside landscape character. New public pedestrian access is proposed to the lakeside from Church Road and Home Park Road to the south which improves direct access from Wimbledon Village. A new accessible public parkland area is also suggested at the south of the lake where an alternative, or additional, lakeside access for the tournament queue is possible with space to service it, well separated from the main public park. Better access includes providing new paths within the public park that acknowledge desire lines, but also reducing the amount of vehicle parking which is considered unsightly. Controlled and limited vehicle access would be provided for vehicles servicing and using the new stadium complex. There is also scope to enhance the public views to the park from Home Park Road with new fencing, paving and tree planting in and beyond the park boundary so that this road was better integrated with the valley's parkland character.

8. Options for public/private partnerships for facility management

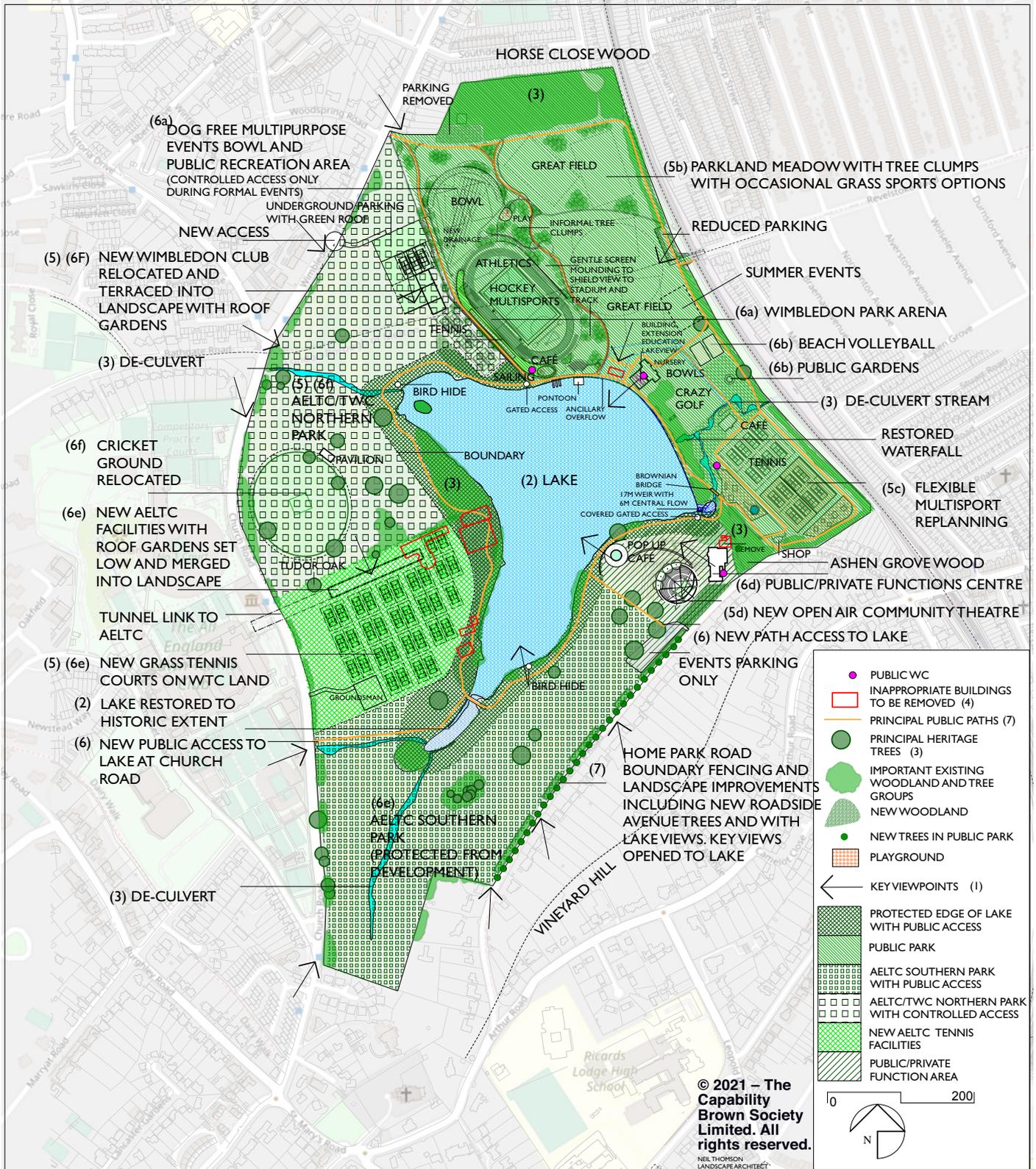
The relocation for the Wimbledon Club facilities to adjoin a new public park stadium offers the potential for joint management and administration as a unified hub. There are also options for some of the new AELTC tennis facilities to be made available for use by the Wimbledon Club so that a plethora of tennis facilities are consolidated. Hiring of the Golf clubhouse for community events may also be combined with private AELTC use.

9. Enhanced landscape ambience with consistent standards for public and private facilities.

Throughout the parkland there should be coordinated and consistent designs for street furniture, fencing, paving, lighting and building materials to enhance the unity of the landscape setting. New planting should also respect the Brownian tradition of protecting view lines, providing clumps of trees, enhancing openness and the promotion of a pastoral landscape. Lighting should have regard to the need for dark skies.



The Capability Brown Society (TCBS) is an independent not for profit organisation with no agenda other than to stimulate debate to get the very best possible imaginative outcome for the future direction and use of the wider Heritage Wimbledon Park landscape. It aims to be proactive and imaginative, setting out proposals for the wider parkland, perhaps the most intensively used multi-purpose park in London, at the same time fully providing for the conservation and improvement of the park's natural environment and ecology. This sympathetic and constructive approach will be adopted for other Brownian Landscapes in the British Isles.



1. PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC VIEWS AND OPENNESS
2. CONSERVATION OF THE HISTORIC LAKE WITHIN ITS DRAINAGE CATCHMENT
3. PROTECTION, CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURE, WOODLAND AND HISTORIC TREES
4. REMOVAL, REPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION OF INAPPROPRIATELY LOCATED FACILITIES
5. FINDING THE LEAST INTRUSIVE PLACE FOR EXTRA TENNIS FACILITIES
6. PROMOTION OF A WIDE RANGE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RECREATIONAL SPORTING AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES
7. IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCESS
8. OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR FACILITY MANAGEMENT
9. ENHANCED LANDSCAPE AMBIANCE WITH CONSISTENT STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACILITIES.

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