

Browning Road

Conservation Area

The Browning Road area of Leytonstone was designated a Conservation Area by Waltham Forest Council in March 1973.

Conservation Areas are areas chosen because of their special historic and architectural interest, and have been given special protection under planning laws.

This does not necessarily mean that the Area is 'frozen', or that no change or development can take place. It does mean, however, that the best features of the area should be preserved; and that new building (including alterations and extensions) should be designed and carried out sympathetically, to preserve or enhance the character of the area.

Those who live and work in the area should be aware, in particular, of the following requirements:

An Article 4 Direction was made on the area in 1977 which removed certain Permitted Development rights normally enjoyed by householders. Planning consent is as a result required for any of the following works:

- Any external alterations, additions or improvements including changes to doors, windows and roofs. The erection of any structure within the curtilage, including porches, fences and walls.
- The painting of the exterior of any property.

- The construction of a hardstanding for vehicles within the curtilage and the formation of an access to the highway.

Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any building in the area, and higher standards are necessary for any works requiring planning permission.

If you are in doubt about any work you are proposing, advice is always available from the Council's Conservation Officer.

All trees in the Conservation Area are protected, and you must give the Council six weeks written notice of any intended tree works.

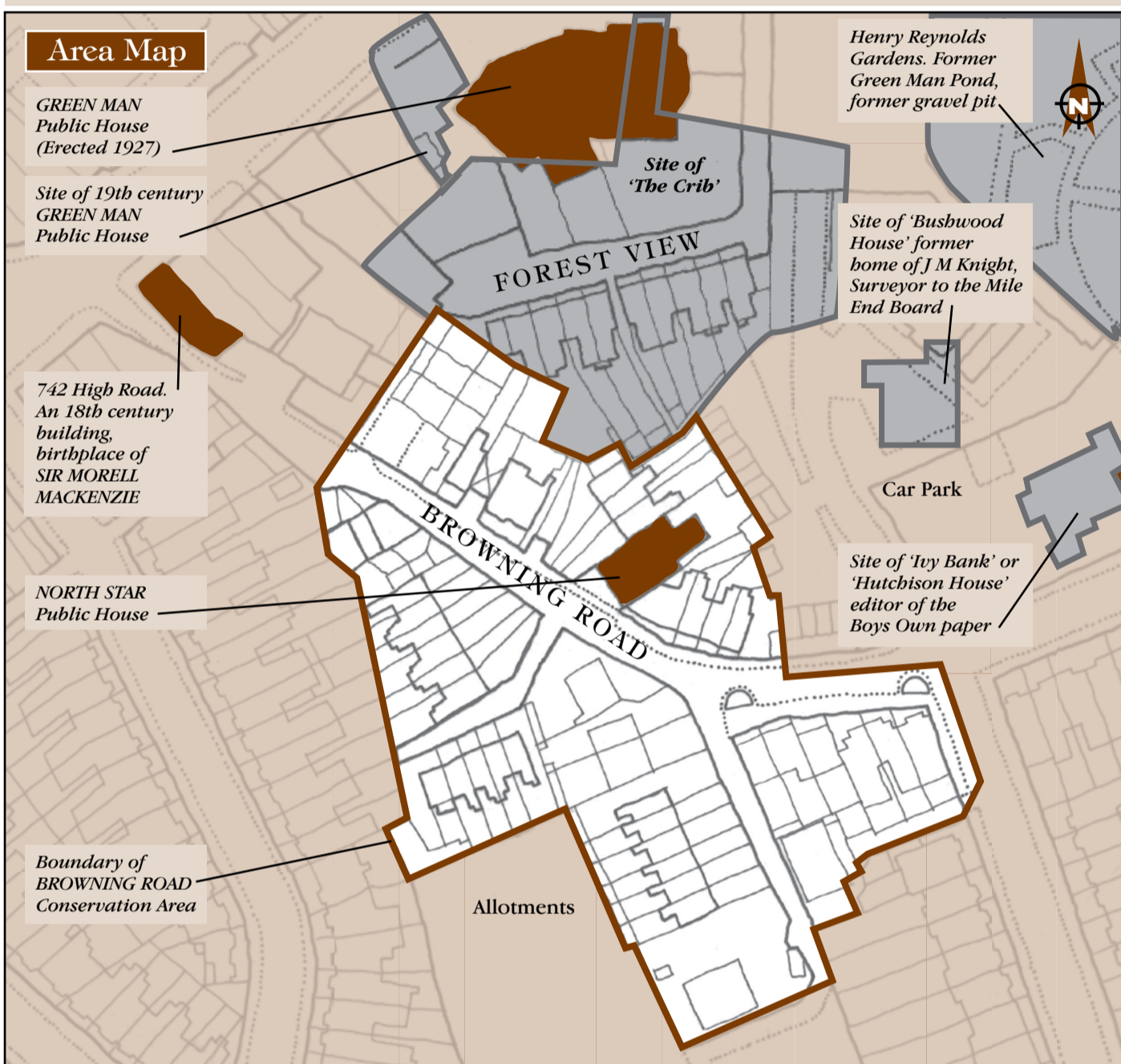
Again, free professional advice is available from the Council's Tree Preservation Officer: Telephone 020 8496 2819.

The Council will use its planning powers whenever necessary to control and avoid harmful changes within the Conservation Area, and will take the guidelines contained in this leaflet into account when considering planning applications.

Successful conservation however depends in practice just as much on the support and co-operation of local people – without that co-operation, the special character and attractiveness of your area could slowly but surely be lost.

This leaflet is therefore intended as a guide for all residents and businesses in the Conservation Area. It draws attention to its history and special character, and outlines some basic do's and don'ts necessary to protect that character.

We hope that, with your support, it will help to ensure the continued preservation and enhancement of this special area.



Historical Background

By the middle of the 19th century Low Leyton (as it was then known), and Leytonstone, that part of the parish near to the High Stone, were predominately rural areas, providing a sylvan setting for the houses of wealthy city merchants and businessmen such as the Charringtons, Buxtons, Barclays and Cottons.

The landscape consisted of forest, marshes, the landscaped grounds of large 'country' houses, and farmland cultivated for both food and ornamental trees and flowers for the ever increasing London market.

The hamlet of Leytonstone which lay on the high ground in the east of the parish was in the manor of Ruckholt until the early 18th century. Ownership then passed to the Tylney family, owners of Wanstead House, and it subsequently descended as part of the Wanstead House estate. Until auctioned off and demolished to pay Lord Tylney's debts in 1824 Wanstead House itself stood a short distance to the east almost within view.

Leytonstone High Road was part of the main highway from Epping to London; carrying long distance coaches as well as market carts and waggons. The road left the forest at the Green Man Inn; establishments of that name having existed at the forest junction since 1668. The earliest Inn was situated nearer to the Browning Road junction with the High Road than either its 19th and 20th century successors, however. In the late 17th and 18th century the Inn was a known refuge of highwaymen, the scourge of forest travellers. It was reputedly only 40 yards from the Inn where Dick Turpin stole the racehorse 'Whitestockings' from Joseph Major in 1737.

Behind the Inn was an unsavoury group of hovels called 'the Crib', and south of it was 'Back Lane' which led east from the High Road to the forest. It was on 'Back Lane' that Lord Wellesley, then owner of the Wanstead and Leyspring estates, erected the cottages of what is now Browning Road. These simple two up two down vernacular buildings were let on yearly or similar tenancies and were not copyhold. For this reason they do not appear in the Manor Court records and their exact date of construction is therefore uncertain, although the 1840's seems most likely.

It is recorded that by 1766 some 50 to 60 gentleman families were living in Low Leyton parish. These wealthy residents with their fine houses and spacious grounds employed so many servants and small tradesmen that the church could not hold them all. It seems probable therefore that the Browning Road cottages were erected to accommodate at least some of this extensive workforce.

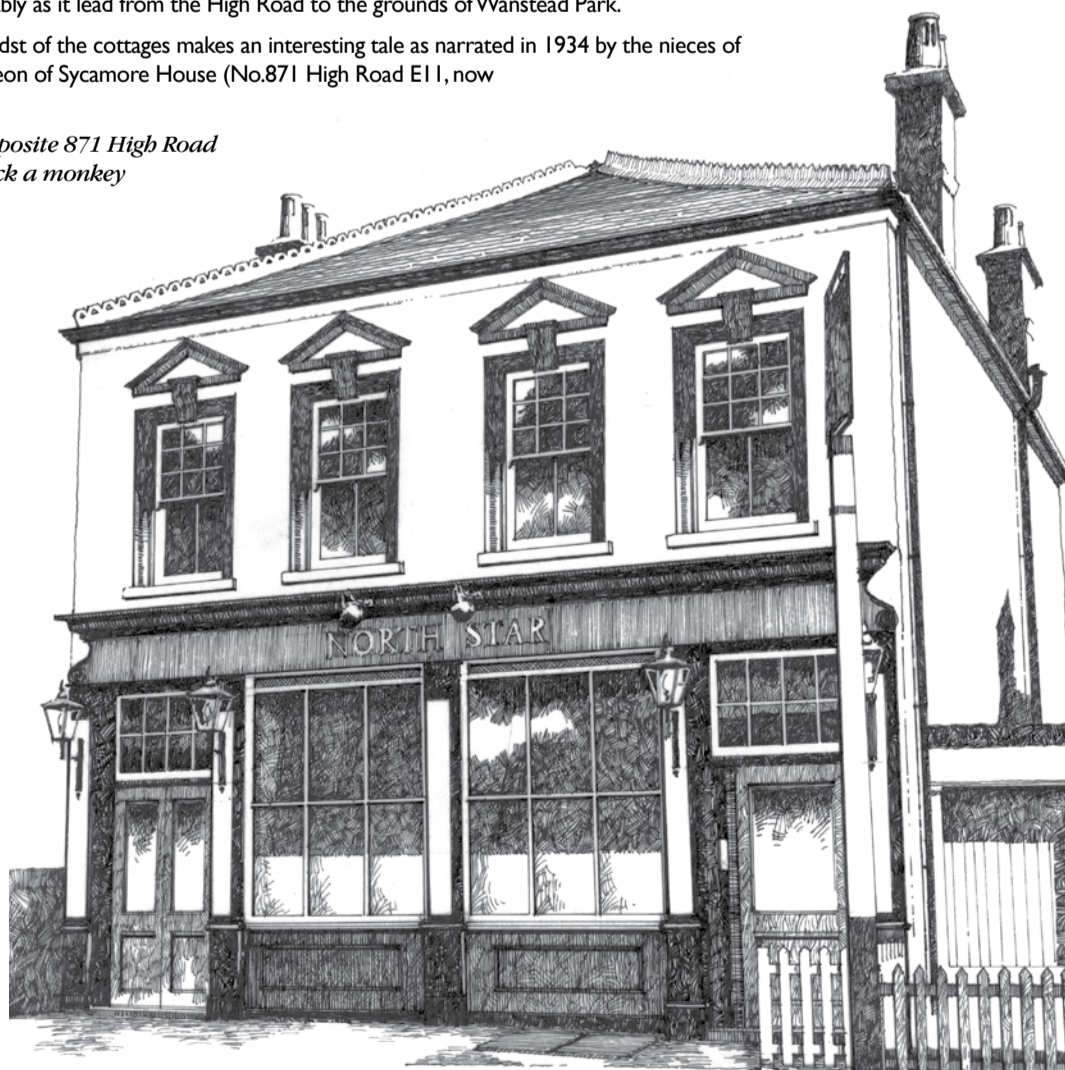
The road itself has had several names over the years and only became Browning Road in 1900, in honour one assumes of the poet and author Robert Browning (1812-1889) who wrote amongst other works The Pied Piper of Hamelin. Earlier the road was known as Green Man Lane, Back Lane and by 1893 as Park Road, presumably as it lead from the High Road to the grounds of Wanstead Park.

The establishment of a Public House in the midst of the cottages makes an interesting tale as narrated in 1934 by the nieces of the late Lord Lister, the famous Victorian surgeon of Sycamore House (No.871 High Road E11, now the site of the Welsh Moreia Church):

"Grandfather Wildsmith's house stood opposite 871 High Road and his uncle Fred Wildsmith brought back a monkey from a sailing voyage on the 'North Star' under Captain Nunn. Fred Wildsmith's one voyage was enough of the sea and from Mr Charrington of Leyspring House (of the Charrington brewery family), two cottages in the Back Lane were thrown into one and converted into the Public House which he named 'North Star'".

The ship itself was a 253 ton Brigantine, a relatively small two masted sailing vessel, which voyaged between Hartlepool and India between 1854 and 1856.


Frederick Wildsmith, founder of the North Star, was the son of Frederick William Wildsmith (1812-1877) a builder/carpenter of 5 High Street Leytonstone. He tendered for the West Ham Union Workhouse works in 1843 and was elected to the Local Board in 1873. As building construction was the family profession it seems probable that the North Star was both built and operated by the Wildsmiths.



THE NORTH STAR The 'beerhouse and premises owned by Wellesley then Earl Cowley' (owners of the Wanstead House estate on which it stood) were originally two cottages knocked together and are first referred to in the 1858 Ratebook. In the 1861 Census Frederick Wildsmith of the North Star is registered as a 'beer retailer' at the tender age of 23

Historical Background (Continued)



 A typical short terrace of cottages in the Conservation Area with characteristic clay tiled roofs and original pattern 'Georgian' sash windows. Low ceiling and door heights, 4 1/2" thick party walls and the most basic internal space standards were typical features of the more modest domestic buildings of the period. Their scale and picturesque quality contrasts with the later Victorian and 20th century developments which now surround the area.

Low Leyton and Leytonstone remained rural until the mid 19th century when the steam railway reached the area in 1856. The cheap and speedy transport combined with the expansion of employment opportunities led to the rapid urbanisation of the area, as the wealthy families moved out and their estates were replaced by the now familiar streets of Victorian housing. By the end of the 19th century the whole area had been transformed into a suburban dormitory for clerks and workmen mostly employed outside the area.

By the 1960s little recognisable remained of the old hamlet of Leytonstone. The erection of the John Drinkwater tower block on the site of Bushwood House and Hutchison House, and proposals by the then Leyton Borough Council to redevelop the adjacent Browning Road area for modern housing, almost obliterated what little that had survived the passage of time.

The amalgamation of Leyton, Chingford and Walthamstow into the London Borough of Waltham Forest in 1965, however, put such plans on hold and the future of the area was reconsidered. Whilst individually none of the buildings in Browning Road were of sufficient quality to merit statutory 'Listing',

the area as a whole was of considerable historic and architectural interest in a Borough that had become dominated by late 19th and 20th century patterns of development.

The scale and style of the buildings and their informal layout were characteristic features of domestic country building of a previous age, and it was to protect such areas that the Conservation Area concept was introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967

The Browning Road area was accordingly designated a Conservation Area by the council in 1973, and today still survives as a tranquil reminder of Leytonstone's rural past just yards from the hustle and bustle of the High Road.

Design Guidance

The Conservation Area consists essentially of six terraces of modest early 19th century cottages, a Victorian public house and a few additional properties including a recently converted warehouse.


All have features of interest which contribute to the unique character and charm of the area. This special character can however be easily eroded by unsympathetic and insensitive alterations and additions. Alterations to doors, windows and roofs, flat roofed extensions, satellite dishes and unsympathetic colour schemes are just some of the more obvious things which can adversely affect the character and appearance of both individual buildings and the area as a whole, and will not be permitted by virtue of the Article 4 Direction.

Wherever possible the original architectural features of buildings in the area should be retained intact. Where they have been removed or altered over the years they should be restored whenever the opportunity arises. In most cases this need not be prohibitively expensive and adds to the character and value of the property. The Council's Conservation Officer can usually advise you on specialist suppliers and manufacturers.

In certain cases the Council will be able to offer financial assistance towards the cost of restoration works by means of Historic Building Grants.

Funds are limited however and each case is looked at on its individual merits.

Contact the Conservation Officer for more details.

 Another reminder of pre-suburban Leytonstone is the 18th century property on the corner of Browning Road and the High Road where Sir Morell Mackenzie, the eminent 19th century throat specialist was born. Knighted by Queen Victoria, Sir Morell attended the German Emperor Frederick III, father of the future Kaiser, who died of throat cancer in 1888.

The commemorative plaque was erected in 1909 by the Leyton Urban District Ratepayers Association.



Materials And Colours

The traditional materials for all buildings in the area are brick and either natural Welsh slate or clay tiles. Brickwork is attractive and durable in its own right and the only maintenance ever likely to be required is periodic re-pointing. When this does become necessary it should be done in a lime-based mortar not a modern cement mix, and heavy weather-struck joints should be avoided in favour of original flush or recessed joints.

Brickwork should never normally be painted, but as many cottages have already been painted over the years it is important to ensure that the colours chosen are appropriate for the age of the buildings concerned.

A brilliant white is never appropriate, being very much a 20th century development. Far better is an off white such as Buttermilk BS08C31, Cream BS10C31, Soft White BS10B15, Magnolia BS08B15 etc.

Ideally terraces should be finished in the same colour but, provided that light colour tones are chosen which harmonise with each other, then the Council will not be unduly stringent in controlling proposed colour changes.

External doors should always be finished in a dark colour such as brown, black, dark green, dark red etc. Windows can be either an off white or a dark colour such as grey or dark green where the walls of the house have been painted in lighter tones and a contrast is desired.

Roofs

Clay pantiles and natural Welsh slates, both new and second hand, are still freely available and should always be used if your roof requires replacement or repair. Concrete tiles and imitation slates should be avoided as they are inappropriate on historic buildings and will not be permitted.


Chimney stacks and pots, even if no longer used, should also be retained in good order as they are attractive and characteristic features of the roofscape. Second hand or new clay pots to the original patterns are still available.

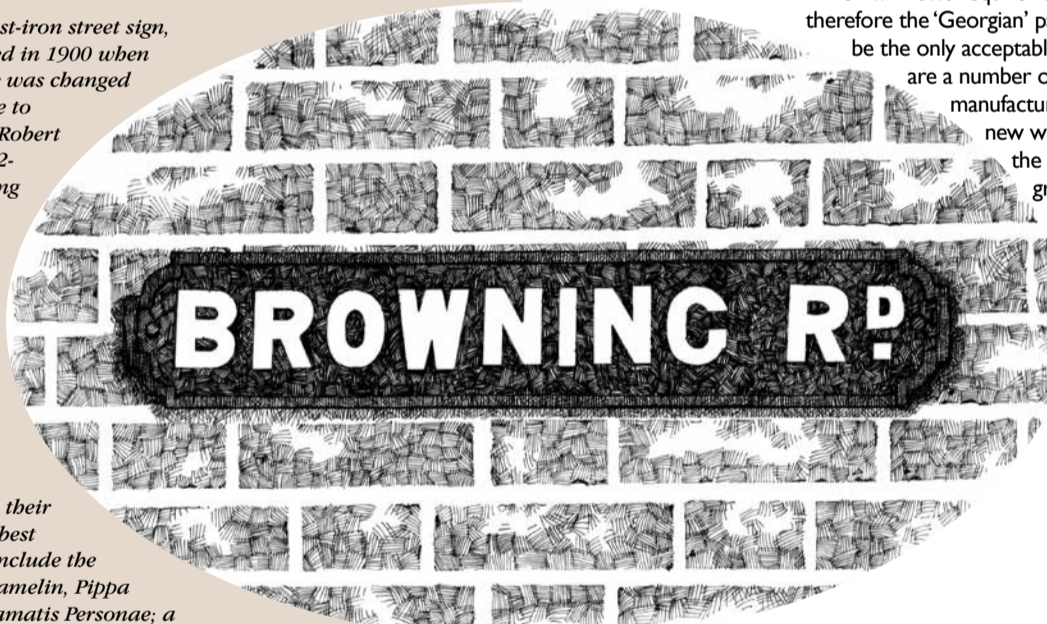
Windows

Alterations to original windows detract from the historic interest and character of buildings in the area and will not be permitted.

Painted timber sash windows are the original and correct form of window for the majority of the buildings in the area, and where they have decayed they can easily be repaired or replaced to match the original design.

Multi-paned 'Georgian' sashes were cheaper to produce at the time the buildings were erected than the larger paned Victorian sashes, and were consequently original features on the modest cottages within Browning Road.

 An early cast-iron street sign, probably erected in 1900 when the street name was changed for the last time to commemorate Robert Browning (1812-1889). Browning was a notable 19th century poet but until 1855 was perhaps known as the man who eloped with Elizabeth Barrett in defiance of her father's ban on their marriage. His best known works include the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Pippa Passes, and Dramatis Personae; a collection of poems expressing his grief at Elizabeth's death in 1864.



When windows require replacement therefore the 'Georgian' pattern sashes will be the only acceptable option. There are a number of local firms who manufacture and install new windows to match the existing at no greater cost than the historically and visually inappropriate aluminium, UPVC and hardwood alternatives which will not be permitted.

Doors

Many of the properties in the area still retain their original painted doors and these should always be retained, never replaced with inappropriate mass produced modern designs. These only spoil the originality and appearance of the property, and are not necessarily any cheaper than maintaining the original or replacing it with a matching design.

Original door furniture, such as knockers, letter boxes, and bell pulls is now becoming rarer, and where these features have survived they should be kept as items of interest. In nearly all circumstances these would be made of cast iron and finished in black paint or the same colour as the door – not the polished brass of modern examples. Salvaged or reproduction doors and door furniture are still available from specialist sources.

Internal Features

The internal features and layout of buildings are often ignored, but are equally important elements in conservation. Alterations such as partitions, lobbies and through lounges can all affect the originality of a building and should be carefully considered. Original fireplaces and mantelpieces, ceiling cornices and roses, skirting boards, and panelled doors are all valuable features which should be kept and restored wherever possible, if they have survived.

All these features are still freely available from salvage yards and specialist suppliers and will add considerably to the internal character of those buildings where they have been removed.

This leaflet can only serve as a general guide to those elements which make up the special character of the Conservation Area and what is required to preserve and enhance it.

We hope that you find it both interesting and useful, and support the basic principles outlined to ensure the successful preservation of this special area.

Numerous specialist books, leaflets and magazines are also available from newsagents, bookshops, and specialist bodies such as the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

These will provide further interesting and useful reading on the care and repair of older buildings.

More detailed information on local history is available at:

Vestry House Museum, Vestry Road, Walthamstow Village, E17 9NH Tel: 020 8509 1917

Further information and assistance on any of the issues raised in this leaflet can be obtained by contacting:

The Conservation Officer, Environment and Regeneration, Sycamore House, Town Hall Complex, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF. Tel: 020 8496 6737

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Waltham Forest

A large print version of this leaflet is available if required