Plumstead Common & Winns Common
Location: London Borough of Royal Greenwich
Plumstead Common is bounded by Old Mill Road, Plumstead Common Road, St Margarets Terrace, Heavitree Road, and the Slade.

Winns Common is bounded by Lakedale Road, Kings Highway and Wickham Lane. It is crossed by Winns Common Road.
Map Ref: TQ 451 778

Special designation
Site of Metropolitan Importance for wildlife

Brief description
The two commons form one large continuous open space, divided only by roads. Much of the area is covered by playing fields. There is also a paddling pool and children’s play area. A steep sided valley at the Slade, accessible by paths and steps, has wooded areas, long grass and scrub and contains a system of ponds.

Towards the western end of the common lies Plumstead Common Nature Reserve, which can be found to the rear of Blendon Terrace.

Notable species include:
Trees: ash, oak, sycamore, silver birch, hawthorn, lime, poplar, London plane
Mammals: grey squirrel, brown rat, fox
Birds: moorhen, mallard, coot, tufted duck
Insects: Damselflies, dragonflies, butterflies

Crucial points from the site’s history
Inhabited for 4000 years?
The mound on Winns Common is a tumulus (burial mound) dating from the Bronze Age (2200 – 700 BC). At some stage in the past it was opened, and no one knows what remains or artefacts were found in it. During the 19th century the army used Winns Common barrow as a practice area and the cavalry rode over it or shot into it. There were prefab houses on Winns Common and a scrap yard. The scrap yard was filled in and covered over some time ago.

Imagine when this was a cliff
The fragments of rock (known locally as the “pudding stones”), opposite the adventure playground are the remains of a headland, on cliffs flanking an arm of the sea, then the unbanked river Thames. They are a rock called conglomerate: made from pebbles accumulated along the sea shores and in rivers and then compressed
together to make rock.

Compare the Victorian photograph with how they look today.

What do the names mean?
“Plumstede” appears in Domesday Book (1086) and means ‘place where the plums grow’.

The word Slade means a valley or ravine. This was formed at the end of the last Ice Age when the melting glaciers formed rivers which rushed down and eroded the soft soil and rock.

**The Plumstead Riots**
At the start of the 19th century Plumstead was a farming village with a population of 1000. The roads were still quiet country lanes.

With the coming of the railway and the Woolwich Arsenal, by the 1860s there were 3000 inhabitants and a huge demand for housing. The owners of the common (Queens College, Oxford) started selling off tracts of the land to property speculators for building and also gave the army permission to use the common for exercises with horses and gun carriages.

This enraged the local people who protested that they had the right to graze their livestock on the land, dig sand and gravel, cut turf and fern and to use it for recreation and sport.

On 1st July 1876, the Irish activist John de Morgan of the Commons Protection League led a demonstration to tear down illegally erected fences on the common and demonstrate the opposition to what the landowners were doing. Overnight the fences were replaced, so next day rioting ensued.

**Saved for the public**
As a result, the Local Authority of the time bought the Common for £9000, and in 1878 the Plumstead Common Act was passed, ensuring that one hundred acres of land remained as public open space for ever.

**Victorian Plumstead**
The 18th Century tower behind the Old Mill Pub is all that remains of the Plumstead Windmill. By 1848 it had stopped grinding wheat and began selling beer.
Access points into the site
The Green Chain walk comes onto Winn’s Common from the east from Wickham Lane, and from the west onto Plumstead Common from Warwick Terrace/Old Mill Road.

The common is an open site, you can get onto it from all the surrounding roads.

Public transport to the site
Train: nearest station Plumstead ½ - ¾ mile away
Bus: 51 (The Slade), 53 (Plumstead Common Road); 291 (Garland Road);
But consult Transport for London’s Journey Planner

Facilities for people
Cafe: No-but one nearby
Toilets: Yes
Shelter: No
Children’s play equipment: Yes - Also - outdoor fitness trail and an adventure playground (opening times apply).
Other - e.g. pond dipping area? Info centre? good viewpoint?: Pond viewing area at the Slade ponds, though the ponds are not open to the public because of health and safety concerns over the rat population there.

Steep sided grassy valley

Key wildlife features present
Short grass: Yes
Long grass: Yes
Lowland heathland: No
Hedge: Yes
Clumps of trees: Yes
Wood: Yes

Name and details of person to contact if you want to visit or know more about the site
Address: Parks and Open Spaces, Greenwich Council, Shooters Hill Depot, Shooters Hill, London SE 18 4LX

For visits (including visiting the animal park) and information:
John Beckham, Ranger Service
Telephone: 020 8319 4523
For general outreach:
Jonathan Bangs, Parks Outreach Officer
Telephone: 020 8856 2232

For technical info:
Jeremy Shearmur, Parks Technical Officer
Telephone: 020 8856 2232

Other organisations involved at the site?
Plumstead Common Environment Group:
Mr Nick Day
Address: 186 Lakedale Road, London, SE18 1PU
Website: www.pceg.org.uk

Information already published (eg site leaflet, website etc).
“Our Common Story” - Full colour book, telling the story of Plumstead Common (£10 + p&p). Buy from:
Address: Abalone, Plumstead Common Rd, SE18
Website: www.pceg.org.uk

Schools within 1 mile of Plumstead Common & Winns Common

BANNOCKBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.66 miles, GReeNwIch
CONway PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.54 miles, GReeNwIch
eGLINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.86 miles, GReeNwIch
FOXFeLD PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.63 miles, GReeNwIch
GALLIONS MOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.70 miles, GReeNwIch
GReeNSLADe PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.09 miles, GReeNwIch
NIGHTINGALe PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.62 miles, GReeNwIch
NOTRe DAmE PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.75 miles, GReeNwIch
PLUMCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.45 miles, GReeNwIch
ROCKLIFFe MANOR PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.44 miles, GReeNwIch
SOUTH RISe PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.44 miles, GReeNwIch
ST MARGAReT’S Cofe PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.42 miles, GReeNwIch
ST PATRICK’S C PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.54 miles, GReeNwIch
ST PeTeR’S C PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.83 miles, GReeNwIch
TIMBeRCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL: 0.32 miles, GReeNwIch