



Charles Wood

Management Plan 2018-2023

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Charles Wood
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ585888, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
Area:	0.36 hectares (0.89 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A small block of woodland which provides a home for wildlife and access to nature for local people in an urban setting surrounded by houses, roads and footpaths. It is mainly oak, sycamore, birch, cherry, willow and alder species. There is a tarmac footpath through the site.

2.2 Extended Description

Charles Wood is a small (0.35ha) urban woodland located in the Great Sankey area of Warrington, approximately 3 miles to the north west of the town centre. It is situated on Canons Road with housing estates, roads, church and car park, railway line and public open space in the immediate vicinity of the wood. The wood was formerly farm woodland before it was purchased by the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) in the early 1980's and then gifted to the Woodland Trust in September 1995 along with several other woodlands in the area. The Woodland Trust owns a further nine woodlands within 2 miles of Charles Wood amounting to a local woodland estate of 25.8 ha.

The site is flat and lies within a flat landscape. The soils across much of the wood have been subject to disturbance and are typically sandy silt loam with a good humus and organic surface layer, with poor drainage in the eastern spur.

Secondary broadleaved woodland is a key feature for the site. The wood has a good varied structure and mix of species for it's size with the canopy dominated by mature English oak with sycamore, birch, willow and Scots pine. The under storey and shrub layers comprise a mixture of birch, alder, goat willow, ash, wild cherry, hawthorn, rowan, elder, sycamore, pear, beech and oak. Ground flora includes bramble, dog rose, bluebells, ferns and ivy.

Informal Public access is another key feature and there is a tarmac footpath with street lighting which runs through the wood from Canons Road to Lowry Close. The footpath and lighting are the responsibility of Warrington Borough Council. The site is well used on a daily basis as a cut through between the housing estates and nearby shops and roads. As with many urban woodlands it suffers from time to time with issues including vandalism, litter and fly tipping of household rubbish and garden waste particularly in the summer months.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

There is good public access with a surfaced footpath (tarmac) running through the wood with entrances from Canons Road adjacent to St James's Church Hall and on Lowry Close/ Bevens Close.

There is no official parking apart from on local roads. The nearest bus stops are less than 300 yards from the wood along the pavement on Canons Road. See the Traveline website for more details on bus stop locations and bus services <http://www.traveline.org.uk/index.htm>.

The nearest public toilets can be found at the Westbrook Shopping Centre about 1 mile to the north along the A574 Cromwell Avenue.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Charles Wood will be managed as a woodland landscape feature, whilst also providing an on-going amenity to the local population and ensuring the continuity of woodland habit as an integral part of the local area's wider ecological landscape. It will be managed to maintain a high forest canopy of mixed native broadleaves with diverse understorey, shrub and ground layers.

Guided by the Woodland Trust's woodland management approach, long term management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment; and where safe to do so the development of stand structure and species mix will be allowed to develop naturally. Mature trees will be retained for as long as safe to do so and natural regeneration will be promoted. Public safety and long term stand stability will be the key drivers for woodland operations, particularly focussing on areas bordering roads, buildings and footpaths.

The present levels of public access will be maintained, and management will ensure that the wood remains a pleasant place to visit and pass through, whilst continuing to deliver further community benefits such as softening the built landscape and filtering out pollution. The Trust's duty of care to neighbours and visitors will continue to be addressed through on-going tree safety and site risk assessment inspections.

The woodland will be regularly monitored for long term threats from tree diseases, pests, non-native species, human impacts and the long term sustainability of the woodland.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Informal Public Access

Description

Charles Wood is open to the public for informal public access. There are access points off Lowry Close/ Bevan Close and Canons Road that link in with the local footpaths. The only footpath in the wood is tarmac surfaced providing good access for visitors and is an adopted footpath by Warrington Council. The mature canopy of the woodland is of a high visual amenity value serving to soften the back drop of housing.

Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes. Whilst only small (0.35 ha) Charles Wood provides an amenity for local people to enjoy. The public footpath that crosses the wood is a well used through route for the local community to get from housing estates to bus routes and shops. Charles Wood provides local people with the opportunity to access and enjoy woodland and nature close to where they live. The wood is a prominent feature in the local landscape located next to a busy main road (Canons Road) and nearby housing estates. It provides a range of amenity benefits including helping to "soften" the surrounding urban landscape, absorption of pollution and as a barrier against noise from nearby roads, and provides physical and mental health benefits for people in the local area. The wood is part of the Mersey Forest which aims to promote public access to woodland in the region.

Opportunities & Constraints

Access provision is already a very good standard (tarmac path) and requires no further improvements.

The urban setting of the wood means that the site is subject to intense use and misuse.

The small size of the wood is a constraint to developing new access routes which would cause damage and disturbance to the ground flora and wildlife.

Factors Causing Change

High usage, fly tipping, mis-use/ vandalism, people wandering off the tarmac path and creating desire paths in the wood could cause damage to flora.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long-term intention is that the site will be welcoming to visitors, accessible and safe, whilst continuing to deliver the community benefits of visual amenity and pollution filter.

Guided by the parameters set out in the Woodland Trust's woodland management principles and access policy, management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. The site will be made as safe as practicable for visitors and neighbours through regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones, site hazards and access furniture. Any threats to the wood arising from public access or misuse will be monitored and appropriate measures taken if necessary.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

During the plan period the short term objectives will be to:

1. Carry out annual maintenance of the entrances, welcome signage and where necessary cut back any vegetation and trees encroaching on the footpath, roads and boundaries to keep sight lines open. Litter & fly tipping will be removed on a regular basis.
2. Undertake regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones (i.e. next to buildings, roads and footpaths) and site hazards as per the Trust's safety inspection regime to ensure safety of visitors and neighbours, and undertaking any remedial safety work identified.
3. Monitor public use of the site and identify any issues/ threats to the wood from public usage, taking appropriate action to address them if necessary.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Charles Wood is secondary woodland of predominately mature broadleaves with a relatively varied structure for its size. The west and north section is dominated by mature English (pedunculate) oak with sycamore, birch, Scots pine, ash and a large crack willow. The understorey comprises a mixture of natural regeneration and under planting with silver birch, wild cherry, hazel, sycamore, beech, rowan, ash, elder, hawthorn, and oak. An area of younger low canopy to the east of the site has a mixture of alder, birch, rowan, hawthorn, goat willow, wild cherry, and a pear. The shrub and ground flora includes dense patches of bramble, dog rose, bluebells, ferns and ivy. There is some limited regeneration of rhododendron and laurel within the wood.

Significance

Whilst the woodland is very small it provides an important landscape feature and wildlife habitat within an urban environment, and along with other nearby Woodland Trust woodlands are a valuable part of the local ecological landscape in the area which includes ponds, streams and ditches, formal and informal scrub and shrubs, rough and managed grassland.

Opportunities & Constraints

The existing under planting and natural regeneration provides an opportunity to ensure a variable structure in terms of species and age class mixtures, and developing future trees to fill gaps in the canopy.

The small size of the wood and limited management access are constraints to management operations which will generally be on a small scale.

The proximity of the woodland to housing and roads brings with it greater tree safety risk which needs to be managed and has significant cost implications.

Tree safety work may generate opportunities to create gaps in the canopy enabling future canopy trees to develop.

Factors Causing Change

The success of shade tolerant understorey species (particularly sycamore) and ivy spreading across the woodland floor may limit opportunities for oak regeneration.

The urban setting of the site results in regular mis-use and anti-social behaviour including fly tipping (mostly of garden waste), fires, vandalism and litter.

Invasive rhododendron and laurel has been cleared in the past, but this needs monitoring for any signs of regrowth and controlling to stop it spreading in the wood.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term intention for Charles Wood is to maintain it as a woodland feature in the local area, offering an on-going amenity to the local population, and ensuring the continuity of woodland habit as an integral part of the local area's wider ecological landscape. The wood will be left to develop largely through natural process with mature canopy trees and succession promoted through natural regeneration. Due to its urban location, tree safety work will be required for public safety which will create gaps in the canopy to promote natural regeneration. Threats to the wood from pests, tree disease and invasive species (such as rhododendron & laurel) will be monitored and where necessary appropriate action taken to control them.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

During the plan period the short term objectives will be to:

1. Monitor the health and resilience of the woodland by carrying out a woodland condition assessment during the plan period to monitor levels of natural regeneration, identify any threats from tree disease, pests or non-native invasive species, and take appropriate action where necessary.
2. Undertake tree safety inspections as part of the site risk assessment regime for public safety in high risk zones (i.e. by buildings, footpaths and roads) and carry out any remedial work identified.
3. Carry out tree safety operations for long term stand stability and public safety in 2022 focusing on boundaries adjacent to housing, the church hall and car park, roads and footpaths.
4. Control any rhododendron and laurel regrowth during the plan period.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	0.35	Oak (pedunculate)	1940	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, People issues (+tve & -tve), Site structure, location, natural features & vegetation	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

The compartment is flat and roughly triangular. The western boundary abuts a tarmac footpath at the top of an embankment; the northern boundary abuts the fences of sheltered housing properties in Lowry Close; and the south-eastern boundary is defined by post and rail fencing adjacent to the grounds of St James's Church hall and car park. A public footpath managed by Warrington Borough Council crosses the site from Lowry Close and links with the footpath from Canons Road to the railway line. The site is secondary broadleaved woodland, with a relatively varied structure for its size. The mature canopy is dominated by English oak with birch, willow, sycamore, and Scots pine. The areas of younger canopy and understorey comprise a mixture of birch, alder, goat willow, ash, wild cherry, holly, hawthorn, rowan, elder, sycamore, pear, beech and oak. The shrub and ground flora includes bramble, dog rose, bluebells, ferns and ivy.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2023	1a	Thin	0.36	28	10
2033	1a	Thin	0.36	14	5

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.