



North Grove

Management Plan 2017-2022

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	North Grove
Location:	Wallingford
Grid reference:	SU639831, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 175
Area:	20.26 hectares (50.06 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Part Chiltern Heritage Woodland

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Set within the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the wood is of interest for its trees, the views over the surrounding countryside of the Vale of White Horse and the woodland archaeology that includes old quarries and a very old sunken trackway.

2.2 Extended Description

North Grove is 20 hectare / 50 acre woodland within the South Oxfordshire Chiltern Hills AONB about a mile to the north of Woodcote, and was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1984. The woodland is a mix of ancient semi-natural and secondary woodland set in a landscape of pasture and woodland.

The woodland is mostly mature, beech high forest with a scattering of ash, oak and cherry. There are some small areas of semi-mature ash with hazel understorey and one small area of actively-managed hazel coppice. There is some natural regeneration and in places a varied understorey. The gaps in the canopy, partly created by the storms of 1987 and 1990, have been allowed to naturally regenerate or have been planted with native broadleaved trees. The quality of the ASNW is recognised by its designation as a Chiltern Heritage Woodland. The ground flora is rich in species with thirty-three ancient woodland vascular plant (AWVP) indicators recorded.

The area contains some woodland archaeology including old quarries and saw pits and there is a very old sunken trackway (a Restricted Byway) beside the northern boundary with well-defined banks on either side. There are scenic views in places along the northern boundary looking out over the Vale of the White Horse.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Getting there: The nearest bus stop is at the War Memorial, Woodcote. From there, it is approximately one mile along roads (take the B471 from Woodcote) and public rights of way to the wood. If crossing the A4074, please take care as traffic can be busy. Limited car parking is possible off a minor road from the A4074. A public footpath runs along a track from this minor road and enters the wood through a squeeze gap (50cms approximate) beside a gate. A combination of unsurfaced public rights of way and permissive paths run through the wood and can be muddy in wet weather. The land slopes down to the north and west.

Public conveniences: The nearest public conveniences are at Wallingford (7 miles) in south Oxfordshire (www.southoxon.gov.uk or tel. 01491 82300) which are situated in a public car park and are accessible.

All distances are approximate.

Further information about public transport is available from Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0871 200 22 33 .

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intentions for North Grove are focussed on retaining and where possible improving woodland biodiversity and increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

To protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future:

The majority of the woodland will be managed to diversify the overall age and stand species structure. Some broadleaved trees will be identified and left to reach old age and decline naturally. Deadwood, both standing and fallen will be maintained to provide important niche habitats within the wood, particularly for invertebrates and fungi, except if they pose a significant tree safety risk. A proportion of trees that are felled or collapse naturally will be retained on site to add to the biodiversity interest.

The management of the hazel coppice will be continued due to its history of regular management, the additional structural diversity it offers (temporary open ground, early successional scrub) and associated dependant wildlife. This will continue on a rotation of 10 years as long as local woodmen are interested in the coppice products. Regular deer surveys will be carried out to monitor impacts of deer browsing and deer management using a local deer stalker will continue if surveys indicate it is necessary. The areas of non-native invasive species of laurel and snowberry will be managed to eradicate them from the woodland, and any regrowth following management will be monitored on a regular basis.

Observations will be carried out to record any factors causing change that may be detrimental to the vitality and structure of the woodland. For example there should be no damaging invasive species present on the site, and the likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and other pests and diseases monitored and managed where necessary. Though the canopy layer is ash in parts, there is good natural regeneration of a mix of other species (beech, oak, cherry) making the requirement for replacement planting unlikely.

The public's enjoyment of the woodland will be enhanced by improving and maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides. Entrances, boundary fences, and benches will be maintained as necessary and the access provision will be monitored and provided.

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 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

The semi-natural woodland has a varied, mixed structure including mature beech trees, with gaps formed by natural disturbance and tree decline.

The northern section of the site lies on shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone, covering only 7% of England and providing habitats of herb-rich Downland and limestone pastures; limestone pavements in the uplands; beech hangers and other lime-rich woodlands. The southern and western sections of the woodland lie on slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, supportive of a wide range of pasture and woodland types. North Grove still contains a rich ancient woodland flora, including bluebell, dogs mercury and wood spurge. The site NVC Classification approximates to 'beech - dogs mercury woodland' W12.

The woodland mostly comprises high forest closed canopy structure though there is one area of good shrub understory with whitebeam, wych elm, spindle and privet. The woodland is surrounded on three sides by agriculture and on a fourth side by semi-natural ancient woodland. Natural regeneration in some areas is poor despite deer control.

There is a small area (1.68Ha / 4.15 acres) of secondary woodland in the centre of the site that is mature and incorporated into the ancient woodland. This is now essentially similar in composition and structure to the rest of the woodland and management will no longer differentiate between the two. Within this area there is an active coppice stand - a 1.1 Ha / 2.7acre area of hazel coppice with mostly ash maiden trees. The area is cut on an annual rotation by local woodsman. The area surrounding the existing coppice area is itself relict hazel coppice with predominantly self-set ash standards and some cherry, which have closed canopy over the coppice stools.

Significance

The amount of ASNW left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century and ancient woodland is irreplaceable. Approximately 40% of England's ASNW is found in the South East. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites. At North Grove, there have been thirty-three ancient woodland vascular plant indicators recorded. The site is listed as a 'Woodland Priority Habitat Network' site, and under the 'Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland', and lies in a well wooded landscape context. A key aim of the Woodland Trust is to prevent any further loss of ancient woodland.

The small secondary woodland incorporated area is a very rich wildlife habitat and this helps to buffer the ancient semi-natural woodland. The long established secondary woodland areas can be almost as important as ancient woodland in terms of biodiversity, and areas of managed coppice are declining nationally. The coppiced hazel area is one of the best managed stands in the Chilterns and has been managed continuously for many years. It is helping to provide a niche habitat as well as useful products for the coppice worker and thus boosts the local woodland economy.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- Access is difficult for timber extraction and haulage due to geographical restrictions and ground conditions
- Many of the paths can be extremely wet for most of the year round due to the underlying clay soils, so any management work has to be carefully timed with drier site conditions
- Woodland archaeology is present and damage must be avoided during any forestry operations
- Deer are present on site and thus browse regeneration including coppice
- Increasing shade in the secondary woodland area largely from self-set ash is threatening other relict coppice habitat

Opportunities:

- To enhance diversity of species and structure through silvicultural intervention to improve opportunities and enhance biodiversity
- To develop a diverse and mixed woodland that is resilient to pests and diseases
- To expand existing area of coppice and restore stools in neighbouring coupe and cut on a longer cycle to encourage greater diversity of habitat

Factors Causing Change

- Death of ash due to colonisation of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)
- Presence of invasive non-native species (laurel / snowberry)
- Mammal damage (deer, rabbits, squirrels)
- Decline of the coppicing industry

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) will affect the species composition of the wood over time, and the resulting mixed stands (oak, beech, cherry, being the most common species) of high forest will be being managed on a continuous cover silvicultural system to produce uneven-aged, self-regenerating stands of high conservation and amenity value. Deer damage to the broadleaf trees will be monitored and action taken if the damage becomes unacceptable.

Ride widening and coppicing to create some edge structure and introduce some lighter, drier conditions within the woodland which will benefit some specialist woodland species

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

- Eradicate the non-native invasive species during this plan period (approx. 0.28Ha / 0.7 acres)
- Deer impact surveys will be carried out every 2-5 years to assess any increase in levels of deer damage
- Selective thin of mature broadleaves (mostly beech) to encourage a more diverse variety of broadleaves such as cherry and oak (and shrub layer structure from e.g. hazel / hawthorn) through natural regeneration on western side of compartment 1a - approx. 3.5Ha - 2020

Coppice area:

- To continue with a coppice regime to ensure the site has a significant element of early successional habitat by cutting approximately 500 sq. m annually by the local coppice worker
- Expand the coppice area during the plan period to include nearly 1Ha of relict coppice adjacent to the existing coupe - area to be cut on a longer cycle to encourage greater diversity of habitat - 2019

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

North Grove is a Category C site, described as a 'low usage site', where less than 5 people are using one entrance each day, but where paths are maintained.
 There are two public footpaths and several permissive paths cross the site.
 Parking is very limited and there is no scope to increase parking facilities without land purchase.

Significance

The site provides a quiet area for walking and recreation for some people living within walking distance of the woodland. Woodcote is the closest village and is 1/2 mile (0.8km) away. Woodcote means "cottage in the wood", and was first documented in 1109, when it was a dependent settlement of South Stoke.
 One of the Woodland Trust's main objectives is the promotion of public access to, and enjoyment of, woodlands.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- Most of the woodland paths become very muddy during wet weather. The woodland is not well connected to the public path network and only accessible from the road
- Vehicular parking is limited

Opportunities:

- A woodland which is easy to explore by visitors due to it being within easy walking distance from Woodcote and Checkendon.
- Although the site is difficult to access it has a variety of habitats and historic features that could be used to engage local public, including children, in appreciating the landscape on a wider scale.

Factors Causing Change

Changes in vegetation along rides.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

- To have easier access for visitors with a drier path surface along clearly defined routes (silvicultural work will open and dry existing paths)
- The paths will be kept safe for quiet, recreational pedestrian access to the woodland
- The site should be accessible and safe but not over-managed with excessive infrastructure and signage
- There should be an appropriate (to usage) level of signage available for the site to guide and inform all visitors

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

- To maintain the main paths and a network of minor paths for easier access by annual cutting of surface and overhanging vegetation in accordance with the access category guidelines
- To provide adequate safe signage and visitor infrastructure in line with access guidelines
- Carry out regular tree safety inspections

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	19.17	Beech	1870	High forest	Archaeological features, Landscape factors, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Other
<p>Beech high forest retaining about 70% of the area as beech planted in approx. 1870 and a scattering of ash, oak and cherry. Previous thinning has produced areas of ash regeneration. In places there is an understory of holly, wych elm or elder. There are some small areas of semi mature ash with hazel understory. The gaps in the canopy, partly created by the storms of 1987 and 1990, have been allowed to naturally regenerate or have been planted with native broadleaved trees including wild cherry. Approximately half the area comprises two blocks of ASNW linked together by secondary woodland with a further area of secondary woodland infilling a gap with adjacent ASNW woodland. The quality of the ASNW is recognised by its designation as Chiltern Heritage Woodland. The ground flora is dominated by <i>rubus fruticosus</i> but is species-rich with 33 AWVP indicators recorded. Areas of laurel and snowberry are present.</p> <p>Compartment 1a is also listed and surveyed (2015-2020) under the National Forestry Inventory - plot number 53477.</p>							
1b	1.10	Hazel	1940	Coppice	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access	Area of Landscape Value, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<p>Area of planted hazel coppice on secondary woodland area [shown as a field in 1883]. One part of the area contains ash and oak young standards, one hornbeam standard and old stools of sessile oak. The coppice is good quality and cut on an annual regime by a local woodsman.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2019	1b	Coppice	0.20	25	5
2020	1a	Thin	1.00	20	20
2020	1a	Coppice	1.00	10	10
2020	1b	Coppice	0.20	25	5
2021	1a	Thin	3.50	20	70
2021	1b	Coppice	0.20	25	5
2022	1b	Coppice	0.20	25	5
2023	1b	Coppice	0.20	25	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.