



Bramingham Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM	Page No.
Introduction	
Plan review and updating	
Woodland Management Approach	
Summary	
1.0 Site details	
2.0 Site description	
2.1 Summary Description	
2.2 Extended Description	
3.0 Public access information	
3.1 Getting there	
3.2 Access / Walks	
4.0 Long term policy	
5.0 Key Features	
5.1 Community Woodland Group	
5.2 Informal Public Access	
5.3 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	
6.0 Work Programme	
Appendix 1: Compartment descriptions	
Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)	
Glossary	
MAPS	
Access	
Conservation Features	
Management	

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Bramingham Wood
Location:	Luton
Grid reference:	TL068258, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 166
Area:	15.70 hectares (38.80 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

An ancient woodland sanctuary in an urban environment. A network of paths, sometimes narrow and winding, leads to new discoveries, including ponds and several native fungi species found nowhere else in Britain. Stout footwear recommended. Bramingham Wood is one of our Top Ten bluebell woods. If you'd like to visit and see a superb bluebell display, check our live map for bluebells www.naturescalendar.org.uk as flowering times do vary around the UK. However, mid-April to early-June is usually an ideal time for most woods.

2.2 Extended Description

Bramingham wood is an oasis of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) less than 3 miles from the centre of Luton and is almost completely surrounded by housing developments. 15.7 hectares in size, Bramingham wood is historically Ash coppice woodland with oak standards. Around 130 species of plants have been recorded along with several rare species of fungi. In 1986 a new British species (*Agaricus bohusii*) was found here.

The thin, clay-with-flints soils are poorly drained despite being on top of chalk and the wood is often very wet in places. Two restored ponds provide habitat for common frogs, smooth newts and dragonflies.

There are housing developments on both sides of the wood linked by a number of hard surfaced paths. These are regularly used by local residents and the school children attending the large secondary school sharing much of the western boundary.

The first known records of the wood date back to 1227 when the tenant, Simon de Bramblehanger, planted a hedge around it. Some of the local residents objected and it could only be resolved in court. Since then there have been several owners of the wood including the Crown in 1539. During the late 1800's the wood was managed as part of a shoot and the foundations for the gun dog kennels can still be found in the wood today.

The woodland had been actively managed by coppicing for firewood, fencing stakes and poles. However, as the work became less viable in the late 1920's the wood was neglected and by the 1980's had become overgrown. By then the surrounding fields had become compulsory purchased and new housing developments had shot up. The Marsh Farm Estate was built on the east side of the wood in the Sixties and the Bramingham Park estate was built on the East side in the 80's and 90's. In 1985 the owner, Mrs Robinson, handed the management of the woodland over to the Woodland Trust in order to protect the woodland. The freehold passed to the trust when Mrs Robinson died in 1999.

In September 1985, the local community came together to look at the various management options. A volunteer group of local residents was set up less than a year after that first meeting and the Bramingham Wood Volunteers have been managing the wood ever since.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Public access is available direct from Whitehorse Vale on the northern boundary and Lygetun Drive on the southern boundary and also from many other points around the wood. The main paths are level, surfaced and with no obstructions. Minor paths are unsurfaced and become muddy in wet weather. The area of Bramingham, Marsh Farm and Whitehorse Vale is very well served by public transport. For times and services ring Traveline on 0871 2002233 or visit www.traveline.org.uk. Parking is easily available at all access points around the wood. No information available on public toilets at the time of writing (2007)

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

As an unparalleled opportunity for the residents of Luton to enjoy ASNW on their doorstep, Bramingham wood will remain open to the public in perpetuity.

It is hoped that the Bramingham wood volunteers will continue to manage all aspects of the woodland. The local “ownership” and strong community presence within the wood not only deters antisocial behaviour, keeping the wood safe to walk in. They also make Bramingham wood a well cared for and pleasant place to be.

The current coppice regime will be continued in compartment 2, with the rest of the wood managed under minimum intervention. Although a robust stance will be taken regarding tree safety, given the high visitor numbers and close proximity to permanent dwellings.

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 Community Woodland Group

Description

The Bramingham Wood Volunteers have been involved in the day to day running of the woodland since the Trust took over the wood in 1985. They organise the coppicing programme, carry out maintenance along with grass cutting in the glade and rides, organise litter picking, arrange talks and activities in the woods and have a local presence reporting on wildlife sightings as well as encouraging others to leave the wood the way they find it. The strong local presence provides very quick response to unexpected issues liaising with the Police, Councils and local groups.

The Group contains many keen naturalists who are able to monitor the woodlands wildlife value and contribute regularly towards the management policy of the wood.

Significance

The group is an excellent site based resource that can take advantage of opportunities related to their management which benefit the wood and the wider work of the Woodland Trust. The Marsh farm area is a recognised area of social deprivation and the opportunities the wood and the work of the volunteers offer are a valuable resources available to contribute towards addressing the local issues.

The group provide a local presence able to react quickly to emergencies or unexpected events. The instances of vandalism and abuse are lower than could be expected as a result of their regular presence in the wood. Their continued coppicing programme not only provides excellent habitat for species that prefer this early successional vegetation; but also serves to deter access to the wider woodland as a result of the brambles and dense re-growth, restricting visitors to exiting paths. The group's contribution was acknowledged by the Trust in 2001 when they won the Volunteers of the year award, and again in 2012

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities;

-A very active community group who take every opportunity to promote the wood and the WT.

-Very good local links to council / police

-A large local population from which to draw

Constraints:

-At times the lack of new active members to ensure the long-term sustainability of the group.

Factors Causing Change

Change in make up of the groups membership

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain and improve the wood's diverse habitat and levels of public access as a direct result of the continued levels of input by the volunteer group

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

- Increase active membership by at least 10 people by the end of 2014
- The membership of the group to become more diverse appealing to newer members from all sections of the community by directing recruitment through new, inovative channels.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

There are housing developments on three sides of the wood with more development possible. The wood is therefore subject to very high public usage. Most public access involves people crossing the wood from east to west and vice-versa to get to the shops, schools and centres surrounding the wood. A hard surfaced path allows people to cross the wood in reasonable conditions, as the rest of the wood can be very wet at certain times of the year. Some dog walkers walk further into the wood and the local volunteer group work in all parts of the woodland. Children enjoy playing in the wood making dens as well as doing less constructive activities.

Significance

Locally unrivalled area of ASNW in very close proximity to a large population, including areas of social deprivation and wide ethnic diversity. A rare opportunity to involve a large and broad user base with quality local woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- The wood is very wet in the winter months, restricting access
- High visitor pressure

Opportunities:

- There are two well surfaced cross paths that allow access all year round without environmental damage.
- There is a large local population able to take advantage of what the wood has to offer

Factors Causing Change

- Footpath erosion
- Scrub encroachment
- Antisocial behaviour

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The pedestrian access levels will be maintained, encouraging use of existing footpath to avoid trampling of sensitive ground flora and containing soil compaction to a minimum area.

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

The volunteer group ensure that litter is regularly picked and paths kept open by keeping back the vegetation to WT spec 2.1. Entrance points and signs are cleaned and repaired as needed by the volunteer group. Any serious incidents of fly tipping are reported by the volunteer warden to the local council, who are sympathetic, efficient and cooperative.

Regular priority zone tree safety surveys to be carried out in accordance with standard WT guidelines and in partnership with B.W.V. to maintain good working relationships.

5.3 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

This ancient wet ash/maple woodland with hazel understory provides a significant wildlife habitat in an urban setting. Ground flora is impressive; bird life plentiful and the variety of insects and molluscs are numerous.

Tree species include field maple, goat willow and wild crab. Ground flora includes bluebells, Dog's Mercury, Primrose, Wood Anemone, Yellow archangel and Enchanters nightshade.

Over 50 species of birds have been recorded here, including Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Blackcap and Chiffchaff. Sparrow Hawks and Tawny owls are also resident and breed here too.

Mammals such as wood mice, shrews, voles and Muntjac deer are present and Speckled wood, peacock, Small tortoiseshell and Holly blue butterflies can be seen on sunny summer days amongst the hazel coppice. There are two restored ponds which support frogs, smooth newts and dragonflies.

Significance

The woodland attracts birds and animals from the surrounding area providing a relatively undisturbed environment amid a highly developed area. The flora is still rich and diverse despite considerable public pressure and a new British species of fungi was discovered in the wood in 1986. Designated as a county wildlife site and protected by a blanket TPO.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

- The woodland is almost completely isolated by surrounding development.
- High visitor pressure.

Opportunities:

- a key point along a Wildlife corridor running into Luton
- major local provider of ecosystem services

Factors Causing Change

- High Deer pressure
- Footpath erosion and soil compaction

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Manage as high forest through a matrix of minimum intervention areas with compartment 2 remaining in active coppice with standards. Allowing for an overall stand including a variety of species of all age ranges, from new growth to over-mature veteran trees and everything in-between. A good level of deadwood will be retained, both laying and standing where it is safe to do so.

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

Continue to coppice approximately one acre (0.4 Ha) each year over a twelve year rotation, lead and managed by the BWV. The rest of the woodland will be allowed to develop naturally, only intervening where access or public safety requires.

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	6.00	Ash	1880	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Woodland Group, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order
<p>Compartment 1 is a twenty to forty metre strip running around much of the perimeter of the wood. All ancient semi natural woodland in origin, the main tree species include Ash coppice with Oak standards, although over 80 years of neglect has meant that many of the Ash stems have grown as tall as the Oak. Other species include Field Maple and Wild Crab with an understory of Hazel, Midland Thorn, Blackthorn and Elder. The outside of the compartment is thick with woody shrubs, including Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Midland Hawthorn. The eastern boundary displays dense thickets of natural Ash regeneration. There are a number of entrance points dotted right round the wood, formalised with rustic looking cleft oak squeeze stiles, wide enough for easy access on foot, but designed to restrict access by motor bikes. There are numerous paths running all over the compartment and there is a restored pond to the North of the wood. The secondary school to the west of the wood have erected a new metal fence to reduce litter encroaching into the wood.</p>							
2a	5.70	Hazel	1990	Coppice	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Woodland Group, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order

This compartment extends to nearly 6 hectares of mixed broadleaf woodland including 5 hectares of Hazel coppice divided into 12, roughly equally sized coppice coupes that are presently (2012) in a rotation. The main tree species are overgrown ash coppice with oak standards. The understory is predominately Hazel, but with Field Maple, Blackthorn and Crab apple. Each winter a coupe extending to about 0.4 Ha (1 acre) is coppiced according to the Woodland Grant Scheme recommendations. This has been going on since 1986 and offers a varied wildlife habitat. The main north-south path runs along the eastern side of the compartment, named "Rod's ramble" after a long serving chairman of the Bramingham Wood Volunteers (B.W.V.). This path also bisects the main open glade dedicated to Tony Rhodes, the original chairman of the B.W.V. Along its southern edge a surfaced cross path links the housing estates to the east with the houses, recreation centre and school to the west.

3a	3.90	Ash	1880	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Community Woodland Group, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order
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This compartment extends to just under 4 hectares and is found in the south western part of the wood from the Kershaw Close to Brompton Close cross path running almost to the southern boundary. Like the other compartments the main species are Oak and Ash with Field Maple and Wild Crab. There is a restored pond in the north east corner of the compartment. Many gardens from Brompton Close back onto the wood at this point and there is a problem with garden rubbish being deposited in the wood. There are many paths winding around the compartment and numerous entrance points into the wood.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2015	2a	Coppice	0.40	8	3
2016	2a	Coppice	0.40	0	0
2017	2a	Coppice	0.40	0	0
2018	2a	Coppice	0.40	8	3
2019	2a	Coppice	0.40	0	0
2020	2a	Coppice	0.40	0	0

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.