



WOODLAND
TRUST

Small Woods in Oakwood

Management Plan

2018-2023

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 Natural Secondary Woodland

5.2 Informal Public Access

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Small Woods in Oakwood
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ649913, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 109
Area:	3.36 hectares (8.30 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This cluster of urban woodlands is a tranquil place where you can escape town life and get your daily dose of nature. Its network of accessible paths makes it perfect for a stroll with the buggy, a family picnic, or a visit to the pond to watch the ducks or do a spot of dipping.

2.2 Extended Description

The site is made up of a cluster of small woodlands lying north and south of Ordnance Road in the Oakwood area of Warrington. As the name of the road suggests this part of the New Town was constructed on the site of a former ordnance factory. The characteristics of the individual woods are very much determined by their origin. The five woods on the north side of the road and the westernmost on the south side are essentially mature Oak woods along the line of former large drainage ditches. The remaining woods on the south side are predominately *Salix caprea* woodlands established on a thick bed of ash in an area prone to water-logging.

The north-western woods (Sub-compartments 1a & b) form part of Oakwood Gate Park. 1a has a high water table and was planted with white willow and alder with some turkey oak. It has the only significant section of permissive footpath in the whole of the complex of woodlands owned by the Trust on this site. Sub-compartment 1b lies between a roadside embankment and an attractive ornamental pond not in Trust ownership. The mature turkey oak was under planted with scots pine, ash, field maple, hazel and rhododendron.

The north-eastern group of woodlands (Sub-compartments 2a, b and c) form an important landscape backdrop to the complex pattern of roads, cycleway and footpaths although direct access to the woods themselves is not encouraged as they all have deep drainage ditches and in the case of 2b a small dammed pond. All are composed of mature oak, ash and sycamore under planted with cherry, willow spp, common lime, holly, hawthorn, hazel and elder. Most of the margins are graduated to the mown grass verges.

The southern group of woods (Sub-compartments 3a, b, c and d) vary significantly. 3d and the western section of 3a are very similar to the northern group of woodlands having a canopy of mature oak and ash under planted with holly, hazel and hawthorn. The other areas of this group are made up of birch, willow and cherry with some oaks forming a discontinuous canopy in generally poor condition.

Small Woods in Oakwood had two key features Informal Public Access & Secondary Woodland.

The woods are traversed by well used footpaths with grassy margins which are not in Trust ownership and are managed by either Warrington Council or Birchwood Town Council.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus: The nearest bus stop is opposite the fire station on Ordnance Avenue. The number 25 bus runs from central Warrington.

By train: The nearest station is Birchwood.

For up-to-date information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk (0871 200 22 33).

By car: From central Warrington, head east along the A57 (Manchester Road). Turn left onto the A50 and then right onto the A575 (Birchwood Way). Continue over two roundabouts, then at the third roundabout take the third exit onto Oakwood Gate. At the next roundabout take the first exit onto Ordnance Avenue. There is no formal car park.

(March 2017)

3.2 Access / Walks

The site has several entrances, including one off Ordnance Avenue, near the fire station.

The paths through the woods are part of the local network which allows people to walk or cycle from the residential neighbourhoods in Birchwood to the shopping centre, high school and leisure centre. Most of the site is suitable for less able users, buggies and wheelchairs as all paths are flat and most are surfaced. However, the paths near the Walled Garden are unsurfaced so may be uneven, wet or muddy at any time of the year.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Small Woods in Oakwood will be maintained as woodland in perpetuity; offering an ongoing amenity to the local population, and ensuring the continuity of woodland habitat as an integral part of the areas greater ecological landscape. Where safe and practicable the woods will be subject to minimum intervention, allowing natural rates of change in the woodland structure and species dynamics. This will enable the widest possible range of habitats and species to survive and evolve.

Guided by the parameters set out in the Woodland Trusts woodland management principles and access policy, management will continue to seek a balance between the Trusts conservation values and public enjoyment. This site is high-use urban woodland, therefore stand stability; public safety; and amenity, will be the key drivers for woodland operations. The Woodland Trust will capitalise on opportunities triggered by these drivers for the recruitment of regeneration and for structural change. A stable woodland edge and stand structure will be maintained (where necessary) through the selection of the best specimens for long-term retention this will be a dynamic process subject to reviewed before each new management plan period.

The Trust will continue to inform the local community regarding plans and issues relating to the wood, and will continue to engage local involvement where opportunities arise. The Trusts duty of care to neighbours and visitors will be addressed through ongoing tree safety and site risk assessment regimes that will stimulate remedial works as required.

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 Natural Secondary Woodland

Description

The small woods within this complex site can be divided into two groups. Sub-compartments 1a & b, 2a, b & c, 3d and the western part of 3a these are well-structured and robust. Sub-compartments 3b, 3c and the eastern section of 3a are in poor condition, the principal causes for this poor condition derive from an ash substrate; frequent waterlogging; and regular misuse.

Significance

These woodland blocks help to add diversity to the wider ecological landscape, although the planting was a mix of non-native and native species and is not necessarily the most appropriate for the area.

Opportunities & Constraints

The woods are small and fragmented but nevertheless form an important feature in the landscape. They provide habitats for wildlife and considerably enhance the aesthetic quality of the locality. Managed appropriately these woods will enhance the local communities understanding and enjoyment of woodland space. The graduated planting along the woodland edges in the northern group has done much to maintain the integrity of each small wood and consequently there are few signs of misuse. Unfortunately that cannot be said for the southern group.

Factors Causing Change

Dumping of rubbish including garden waste, especially near boundaries to compartment 3; vandalism and damage to trees; fires.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Trust will manage the Small Woods In Oakwood in perpetuity as a mixed predominantly broadleaved woodland. The Trust aims to allow the woods to develop through natural processes where safe to do so. Regular tree safety inspections will be carried out and where opportunities arise for tree safety work this will be used to favour native species and remove inappropriate planting in areas.

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

Tree safety and boundary issues will cause opportunistic works over the management plan period, but otherwise the compartments will be subject a minimum intervention regime
A woodland condition assessment will be carried out once during the plan period to monitor natural regen. and ground flora, the health and resilience of the woodland and identify any threats from tree disease, pests or mammals.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Permissive footpaths within the Trust holding are confined to compartment 1 where they form part of a complex of paths within Oakwood Gate Park. In the rest of the woods footpaths/cycleways in Local Authority ownership either divide; surround or in the case of compartment 3 traverse the wood at canopy height.

Significance

The paths through the woods are part of the local network which allow people to walk or cycle from the residential neighbourhoods in Birchwood to the shopping centre, high school and leisure centre which are close to the compartment 3. The woods are an important visual amenity and open space in an urban area and help to screen the houses from the main roads.

Opportunities & Constraints

Through endeavouring to maintain safe and aesthetically pleasing woodland in this very urban location, there is the opportunity to foster a greater understanding and enjoyment of trees and woodland within the local community.

Due to the fact that many of the sub-compartments are already subject to levels of use and misuse there is little opportunity to improve direct public access in these small fragmented woods without causing negative impacts on their value and integrity. The fact that there is no public access within the majority of the sites does much to maintain the integrity of these small and fragmentary woods.

Factors Causing Change

Dumping of rubbish and accumulation of litter particularly along the footpaths through compartment 3 near to the school and along the boundary of sub-cpts 3a and 3c with housing on the eastern boundary. The worst affected area immediately adjacent to the housing is not in Trust ownership.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The Woodland Trust will maintain the present levels of access. Guided by the parameters set out in the Trusts woodland management principles and access policy, management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. The Trusts duty of care to neighbours and visitors will continue to be addressed through ongoing tree safety and site risk assessment regimes. Local residents will be encouraged to play an active part in caring for the site where opportunities arise.

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

Signs, plaques, woodland fixtures welcoming the general public to make use of the site will be maintained at 6 key entrance points will be carried out (x1 year).

Path side cutting/ coppice along 100 metres of path and entrance maintenance will be carried out (x1 year).

Removal of litter and flytipping will be a part of an annual Estate Maintenance Contract (EMC) carried out (x8 year).

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	0.57	other oak spp	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This sub-compartment has the broad, embanked, landscaped road margins as all but its southern boundary which is to the "Walled garden" which was once part of the former ordnance factory. The most mature trees are turkey oaks which are largely confined to the south-western end and the rest of the sub-compartment, being somewhat prone to water-logging was planted with alder and white willow in the 1980s and now form the canopy. The relatively sparse understorey is made up of hawthorn and holly and the field layer is dominated by bramble. The regeneration is primarily of ash. A permissive footpath surfaced with "suresport" runs east-west along the southern boundary and the wood, together with sub-compartment 1b, is part of Oakwood Gate Park.</p>							
1b	0.23	other oak spp	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>A narrow sub-compartment lying between the road embankment to the north and an attractive ornamental pond to the south. The pond is not within the Trust ownership, but the mature turkey oaks with a rhododendron and hazel understorey on its northern shore are an integral part of the areas aesthetic value. On the road embankment beyond the pond margins the underplanting is of ash, field maple and Scots pine. At the southern end hazel forms a dense thicket.</p>							
2a	0.41	Sycamore	1900	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>A long narrow block of mature oak, sycamore, willow and ash straddling a deep ditch and sandwiched between a cycle path and a fenced boundary with the fire station. The area was underplanted with hawthorn, elder, holly and hazel and the planting is graded to the grassed margins. Although a minor focus for play activity there is no formal access to the wood.</p>							

2b	0.46	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>Mature oak and ash trees flank a steep water-filled ditch that runs the length of the sub-compartment, at the ditches western end there is a small brick dam that creates a small seasonal pond. underplanting to the cyclepath on the north boundary; and Ordnance Avenue to the south is of common lime, hawthorn, willow spp., holly, hazel, elder and wild privet.</p>							
2c	0.10	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>A very small wood surrounded by cycleways and road. Contains a remnant of the deep ditch in the western corner. There is a low canopy of mature oak, underplanted with field maple, cherry, hazel and elder, forming a graded edge to the mown grass which forms the periphery.</p>							
3a	0.47	Birch (downy/silver)	1960	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This sub-compartment has good structural variety in terms of species mix, distribution, and condition. The western section close to the footbridge from Oakwood Gate Park is similar in character to sub-compartment 3d being of mature oak, willow and birch with an understorey of hawthorn and holly. However the western section contains a higher proportion of birch many of which are either dead or dying. There is considerable damage from children playing and often an accumulation of litter and rubbish. The most severely affected area close to the housing is not in Trust ownership.</p>							
3b	0.64	other willows	1980	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This sub-compartment lies between the Birchwood High School and the central cycle/walkway. As a result of poor substrate and waterlogging many of the willow, birch and cherry trees that once formed the low canopy are in a poor condition and a state of collapse.</p>							

3c	0.18	Oak (pedunculate)	1960	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This is a narrow wood between the multi use games/play area to the east and the surfaced footpath to the west. It contains some mature oaks underplanted with hawthorn, elder and goat willow. The understorey/ shrub layer is fairly well established including natural regeneration and the ground layer is dominated by bramble and coarse vegetation with some woodland flower species.</p>							
3d	0.31	Oak (pedunculate)	1880	High forest	No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Community Forest
<p>This sub-compartment is similar in character to those in the north of this cluster of sites. A central ditch is lined by mature oaks with an additional planting of oak, ash and cherry extending the canopy to the north and south. The understorey is made up of hawthorn, hazel, holly, elder with some natural regeneration of oak, ash and cherry. Denser planting along the northern edge was designed to discourage pedestrians from crossing the road directly instead of using the foot bridge. This sub-compartment is in a relatively good condition.</p>							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2022	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.20	10	2
2023	1a	Thin	2.00	3	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.