



Whittle Avenue Wood

Management Plan 2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Whittle Avenue Wood
Location:	Warrington
Grid reference:	SJ570894, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 108
Area:	1.03 hectares (2.55 acres)
Designations:	Community Forest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

A small quiet woodland situated in an urban environment with housing and roads close by. There is an unsurfaced informal footpath through the site from Whittle Avenue. It has a mix of broadleaves including oak, birch, ash, beech, hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn with some mature oaks near to the houses. There are a series of connected ponds which add interest and there are patches of bluebells in the spring.

2.2 Extended Description

Whittle Avenue Wood is a small secondary woodland located in the Great Sankey district in north-west Warrington, approximately 3 miles from the town centre. It is a narrow linear woodland approximately 210m long by 50m wide and just over 1ha in size. The woodland is situated in an intensely urban environment and is sandwiched between Whittle Avenue and a housing estate. It is on flat low lying ground and includes a network of four linked ponds that run from north to south through the eastern side of the wood.

The wood is situated on land that was previously part of the RAF Burtonwood airbase and was acquired by the Commission for New Towns in the late 1970's. It was given to the Woodland Trust in 1992/93 along with another nine woodlands within a 2 mile radius which together make a local woodland estate of approximately 26ha.

Secondary broadleaved woodland is a key feature of the site. The wood consists mainly of oak with birch, ash, alder, willow and a few Scots pine. The understorey of the woodland contains hazel, holly, hawthorn and blackthorn and was previously dominated by *Rhododendron ponticum*, which has been cleared although some regrowth is still present. The ground flora of the woodland is sparse largely due to the previous rhododendron, however species such as bluebell and bramble can be found.

An area of 0.3 ha of new native trees were planted in 1996 (comprising oak, ash, beech, hazel and hawthorn) along the south-western border of the site next to the Whittle Avenue road frontage. This is now well established and in 2018 a thinning operation was undertaken in the young woodland to provide more space around the retained trees and increase light levels on the woodland floor to encourage natural regeneration and development of ground flora.

A permissive unsurfaced footpath runs roughly north-south through the wood and informal public access is a Key Feature of the site. The path starts and ends on Whittle Avenue road, but is not connected directly to other footpaths or the housing estate to the east of the wood and so it is only used occasionally by local people.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The wood is located at the junction of Whittle Avenue and Boston Boulevard in Great Sankey, north west Warrington, approximately 3 miles from the town centre.

There are two public access points into the wood, which are from Whittle Avenue and from Boston Boulevard near the roundabout. An unsurfaced informal footpath runs between the two entrances.

There is no car parking at the wood, with only limited on-street parking nearby in the housing estates.

The nearest bus stop is about 200m from the wood on Boston Boulevard.

There are no public toilet facilities nearby.

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Whittle Avenue Wood will be managed as a high forest of mixed broadleaves providing an amenity and conservation feature as part of the wider ecological landscape in the area. The wood will comprise largely native broadleaves such as oak, birch, alder, beech, field maple and rowan. The woodland will be left to develop largely through natural processes, with mature and veteran trees retained where safe to do so.

Guided by the Woodland Trust's woodland management approach, the long term management will continue to seek a balance between conservation and public enjoyment. Public safety and stand stability will be the key drivers for woodland management operations with tree safety being a high priority in areas near to houses, roads and footpaths. Silvicultural operations for tree safety and stand stability will create opportunities to promote natural regeneration and improve the woodland structure. The volume of deadwood (fallen and standing) will increase overtime through the retention of arisings from silvicultural work.

The woodland will be regularly monitored for threats from tree diseases, pests, invasive non-native species (such as regrowth of rhododendron) and human impacts (such as fly tipping and vandalism), and where appropriate action will be taken to tackle any threats to ensure the long term sustainability of the woodland.

The existing level of public access will be maintained and 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.

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

There is approximately 300m of permissive footpath through the wood, with two public access points which have welcome signs. One access point is from the roundabout by Boston Boulevard and one from Whittle Avenue in the north west corner of the wood. The footpath is unsurfaced and there are only low numbers of visitors to the wood. There is no parking at the wood with very limited parking nearby on residential roads.

Significance

Increasing access to and enjoyment of woodland is one of the Woodland Trust's key outcomes and the wood provides local people with easy access to woodland and nature in an urban environment. The wood is a prominent landscape feature alongside Whittle Avenue and provides a range of amenity benefits including helping to "soften" the surrounding urban landscape, absorption of pollution and acts as a noise barrier for traffic from nearby roads.

Opportunities & Constraints

The small size of the wood is a constraint to creating any new paths without causing damage to the woodland flora.
There is no direct access into the wood from the adjoining housing estate to the east which makes it less easy for nearby resident to visitor.
The site is isolated from other local green spaces by roads and housing.

Factors Causing Change

Vandalism, fires, fly tipping especially along boundaries next to houses/gardens.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to maintain the footpath and two access points at the current level of public access to the wood.
The site will be made as safe as practicable for visitors and neighbours through regular safety inspections of trees in high risk zones and site hazards.
Public use of the site will be monitored during the plan period to identify if there any issues and appropriate measures taken where necessary.

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

During the current plan period the short term objectives are:

Cut back/ trim vegetation encroaching along the footpath 2 times a year.

Clear any litter and fly tipping, 2 times a year.

Maintain public access points and welcome signs, 2 times a year.

Inspect trees in high risk zones (i.e. next to houses, roads and footpaths) and site hazards (as per the SRA inspection regime) to ensure safety of visitors and neighbours, and undertake any remedial safety work identified.

Monitor the condition of the footpath and access infrastructure once during the plan period to assess whether the current access provision is adequate, identify any issues or threats from public use of the wood, and take appropriate action to address them if necessary.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Whittle Avenue Wood is a secondary woodland which has a mosaic of habitats including mature trees, ponds, scrub and younger trees planted in the late 1990's. The mature woodland is dominated by oak, with birch, alder, willow and a few Scots pine. The younger planting comprises a mixture of oak, ash, beech, birch, hazel and hawthorn. Due to the juxtaposition of new planting with scrub and mature trees the wood has a good structural variety both in terms of age classifications and species mixture. There are four ponds which are linked by a ditch which run the length of the wood towards the eastern side of the site.

Significance

The wood is a prominent feature in the local landscape and provides an important habitat for wildlife as part of the mosaic of local woodlands and green spaces. The urban setting and proximity of the wood to houses means that maintaining stand stability and public safety is of great importance. The Woodland Trust owns and manages a further nine woodlands within 2kms of the site amounting to a local estate of 25.8 ha.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints: the wood is small and isolated from other woods by roads and housing.
 Opportunities for regeneration will present themselves due to natural processes and selective removal of trees as part of any tree safety and boundary management work.

Factors Causing Change

Rhododendron regeneration will need controlling to prevent it from spreading.
 Fly tipping, particularly garden waste, resulting in ground flora being covered and the introduction and spread of non-native garden plants.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to maintain a high forest of native, mixed broadleaves with a diverse structure (in terms of species composition, age/size classification). The wood will be allowed to develop naturally with mature trees, standing and fallen dead wood retained where safe to do so, and succession promoted through natural regeneration. Due to the urban setting of the woodland tree safety will be a high priority particularly along boundaries next to houses/ gardens and roads. Non-native invasive species such as rhododendron will be controlled to prevent them becoming a threat to the woodland.

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

During the current plan period the short term objectives are:
 Monitor for rhododendron regeneration and control any regrowth.
 Undertake a general woodland condition once during the plan period to monitor the health and resilience of the wood to identify any threats from tree diseases, pests, mammals or people.

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	1.30	Oak (pedunculate)	1950	High forest	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Informal Public Access, Secondary Woodland	Community Forest

The woodland consists mainly of mature oak with some birch, willow, alder and occasional Scots pine. Until recently the understorey was dominated by *Rhododendron ponticum* but this was cleared in 2015/16 and shrub species such as hazel, hawthorn, and blackthorn can be found in small isolated pockets. The ground flora of the woodland is also sparse largely due to the dominance of rhododendron, however woodland species such as bluebell and bramble can be found.

Approximately 0.3 ha of new planting took place in 1996 along the south-western border of the site (Whittle Avenue road frontage) consisting of oak, ash, beech, hazel and hawthorn and is now well established.

There are four connected ponds running north to south along the eastern side of the wood and an unsurfaced footpath running through the middle of the site from north to south.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2025	1a	Ride edge Coppice	0.05	40	2
2030	1a	Thin	0.05	200	10

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.