



Blundells Copse

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Blundells Copse
Location:	Charlton
Grid reference:	TL179281, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 166
Area:	0.22 hectares (0.54 acres)
Designations:	Archeological Site, Area of Landscape Value, Conservation Area, Great Landscape Value, Green Belt

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Blundell's Copse is a tiny piece of alder carr woodland in the northern part of Charlton village just outside Hitchin. The River Hiz forms the western boundary of the wood. The wood is not open to the public, but is a haven for local wildlife.

2.2 Extended Description

Blundell's Copse is a tiny piece of woodland in the village of Charlton just outside Hitchin. It is primarily alder carr running along the eastern bank of the River Hiz. There is a cottage piggery to the east of the wood and a RUPP called Brick Lane to the south. The woodland continues in private ownership to the north. The River Hiz forms the western boundary with a small shallow spring fed stream emerging in and running through the middle of the wood.

The wood was left to the Trust by the late Eric Blundell who wanted the wood to remain a haven for wildlife. Respecting Mr Blundell's wishes and those of local villagers who shared his view, the wood is not open to the public. Left undisturbed, the wood is a haven for ducks, moorhens, flycatchers and even kingfishers have been seen using the river.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

The wood is not open to the public, but is a haven for local wildlife.

3.2 Access / Walks

Located just of Brick Lane RUPP, however the wood is not open to the public, but is maintained as a haven for local wildlife.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The woodland is small and does not provide a good opportunity for informal public access but local residents can enjoy the woodland by observing wildlife from outside the wood. It also has a part to play in the wider landscape of the valley and village, sitting as it does within the conservation area. Long-term management is aimed at preserving the wood as a local landscape feature.

Tree safety will remain an important consideration and surveys will be carried out every year along the boundaries adjacent to houses and agricultural buildings and every two years along the remainder. Fences will also be checked to ensure they are functional and safe. The Eastern fence will be maintained as a stock proof barrier if the current agricultural buildings are removed and once again provide access into the wood from the field adjacent.

The woodland will be managed on a minimal intervention regime as it is too small and difficult to access for regular intensive management. However, as trees become more drawn up and potentially unstable on waterlogged and shallow soils coppicing on a 20 year rotation may have to be considered. The desire of the local community to maintain the woodland as a haven for wildlife reinforces the minimal intervention approach.

The Eastern bank of the River Hiz is the responsibility of the Trust and tree growth or operations that are likely to cause damage to the bank of watercourse should be avoided.

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

A small alder carr extending to only 0.2 Ha. The wet woodland is home to ducks, moorhens, flycatchers and other birds. Kingfishers have been seen on the river. The woodland has a positive local landscape value.

Significance

The woodland has a landscape value to the local community. It is in a local authority conservation area.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

No public access means a largely undisturbed riparian site which should benefit local wildlife and biodiversity

Constraints:

Access is across a ford via a narrow RUPP known as Brick Lane. This road is only wide enough for a car or small 4x4/tractor/quad.

The only potential access/extraction routes for forestry/safety work which produce significant amounts of wood are across the RUPP, through the hedge, and into the neighbouring farm yard or out into the field to the east if agricultural buildings are removed.

Presence of water course within and adjacent to site restrict management options for use of spray or livestock to manage the coarse vegetation, and requires the use of bio-oils at all times.

Small nature of site, shallow soils, drawn up alder, and over-mature ash along the eastern boundary, mean phased approach to any coppicing/felling work would likely increase risk of wind throw.

Factors Causing Change

Closure of canopy and reduced light levels on the woodland floor with little/no natural regeneration. Tree growth. Many stems increasingly drawn up and potentially unstable on seasonally saturated soils.

Changing land use around the wood.

Tree pests and diseases (Chalara of Ash, Ash Emerald Borer).

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term vision is for the woodland to remain as a wildlife habitat and a local landscape feature.

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

No public access to continue.

Safety inspections of trees, fences, and balancing chamber every one-two years, work undertaken as necessary.

Some clearing of elder and rolling of field layer to reduce dominance of nettle and bracken and assist/stimulate natural tree regeneration.

Some clearing of elder and limited restocking with Hazel in SE corner.

Consultation on and planning for coppicing much of site retaining feature trees such as mature hornbeam and false acacia.

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	0.20	Alder species	1940	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site, Landscape factors, Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site	Natural Secondary Woodland	Conservation Area, Great Landscape Value, Green Belt

The woodland is seasonally wet with a stream and areas of standing water/saturated soil within. The main tree species are alder and ash established around 1940 with some signs of historical coppicing of the ash in particular. The woodland has an untended feel to it. The top soil sits to a depth of approx. 2ft on top of a gravel bed and is highly alluvial/silt based as would be expected on a low floodplain site; it supports a dense layer of nettle, bramble, and elder. Snowdrops and other bulbs are found along the RUPP but these are more likely to be cultivated rather than natural. Elderberry, hazel and hawthorn form an understorey and the main canopy is closed and dominated by Alder, though a large mature hornbeam tree and declining false acacia trees are found to the south of the site on drier ground and an element of sycamore has established on the northern and western edges of the wood. The river Hiz flows south-north along the eastern boundary and there is a smaller spring fed stream running through the middle of the wood which joins the Hiz 30 metres north of the WT's northern boundary. There is a brick balancing chamber measuring about 2 metres by 1 metre wide and 4ft deep (though now silted to 2ft deep) built next to this smaller stream, part of the obsolete infrastructure supporting the water main to the SE of the site. The water level in the chamber is the same as the water level in the stream, which stands at about 1ft deep in winter and lower in summer. Because of the shallow nature of the chamber, the risk of accident is small and a metal barred cover is sufficient for safety at present. The wood is defined by fencing to the north (private), agricultural buildings (piggery) with stock fencing to the east, fencing along the RUPP to the south, and the river Hiz to the East.

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2022	1a	Coppice	0.20	200	40

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.