WOODLAND TRUST

Staffhurst Wood

Management Plan 2020-2025

MANAGEMENT PLAN - CONTENTS PAGE

ITEM **Page No.**

MAPS

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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Staffhurst Wood
Location:	Limpsfield
Grid reference:	TQ413490, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 187
Area:	12.90 hectares (31.88 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This management plan covers Staffhurst Wood (12.9 ha) and Great Earls Wood (9.8 ha), which is located approximately 400m to the west along Staffhurst Wood Road, bordering Merle Common Road. On the Ordnance Survey maps and locally, Great Earls Wood is known as Great Earls Wood in the south and Little Earls Wood in the north. Great Earls Wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1988, followed by Staffhurst Wood in 1993, and Little Earls Wood in 1995, making a total holding of 22.7 ha (or 56 acres).

Both sites are designated ancient semi natural woodland. Administratively, the woodlands are situated in the Tandridge Council district in the southeast corner of the county of Surrey and are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. Staffhurst Wood is in the parish of Limpsfield while Great Earls Wood is within Oxted parish, as the dividing line is Red Lane. The woodlands fall within the Low Weald National Character Area which is an area located between the parallel chalk escarpments of the North and the South Downs. Both sites also fall within the Woodland Trust's Weald and Downs Treescape area – a programme for landscape scale conservation initiatives.

The underlying geology is Weald Clay, which is composed of mudstone, siltstone, sandstone, limestones, and clay ironstones. The soils in both sites are slightly acid but base-rich loams and

clays with impeded drainage. This soil type is characteristic of lowland seasonally wet pastures and woodlands and has encouraged a wide diversity of ancient woodland species to flourish.

Staffhurst Wood (Compartment 1) is an ancient wooded common of national importance forming part of a larger block of woodland, most of which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its long documented history of continuous woodland cover since at least Saxon times when it was part of a royal hunting forest. The SSSI extends to 49.8ha, of which, the Woodland Trust own and manage the north-eastern 12.9 ha. Surrey Wildlife Trust manages the adjacent section, which is also named Staffhurst Wood. The canopy is largely made up of beech and oak from the early 1900's, with other broadleaves such as hornbeam, birch, sweet chestnut and aspen present. The understorey can be sparse in places due to the closed canopy overhead, but holly, hazel, hawthorn and yew are found throughout. The northern-most 2.5 ha is a different composition entirely, being comprised of high forest oak and ash with a well-established understorey of hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, holly sweet chestnut, and hazel.

Great Earls Wood (Compartment 2) is integral to the local mixed landscape of woodlands, livestock agriculture and prominent hedgerows in undulating rural countryside. The woodland forms the western extremity of a much larger and once contiguous block of woodland which includes Merle Common (Tandridge Council) and Staffhurst Wood (Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust). The tree composition is divided between the two woodlands, with the southern part (Great Earls) being previously worked sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards as well as occasional birch, ash, hornbeam, and sycamore.

Little Earls Wood (Compartment 3) is composed of early 1900's oak and a high proportion of hornbeam with holly, hawthorn, hazel and elder in the understorey. In the west, close to where these two woodland boundaries meet is a scattering of Japanese larch trees. They have been thinned in the past, but are now at such a low density that no further intervention is required at this time.

The woodlands have a good network of maintained public and permissive paths and are popular with many locals. Visitors come from further afield during the vast display of bluebells in the spring. There are three information boards situated at the main entrances of both sites, which provide visitors with a description of features of interest and future management intentions. The track on the western boundary of Staffhurst Wood serves as the main management access and can provide suitable access for less-abled visitors under dry conditions. Whilst there is no formal parking available, there are public car parks nearby which are maintained by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Additionally, there is some minimal roadside parking at the southern entrances to both woods. A private residence "The Horns" exists as an island in the centre of Staffhurst wood and the track to this house is owned by the Trust with access rights given to the owners.

2.2 Extended Description

This management plan covers Staffhurst Wood (12.9 ha) and Great Earls Wood (9.8 ha), which is located approximately 400m to the west along Staffhurst Wood Road, bordering Merle Common Road. On the Ordnance Survey maps and locally, Great Earls Wood is known as Great Earls Wood in the south and Little Earls Wood in the north. Great Earls Wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1988, followed by Staffhurst Wood in 1993, and Little Earls Wood in 1995, making a total holding of 22.7 ha (or 56 acres).

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The woodlands have a good network of maintained public and permissive paths and are popular with many locals. Visitors come from further afield during the vast display of bluebells in the spring. There are three information boards situated at the main entrances of both sites, which provide visitors with a description of features of interest and future management intentions. The track on the western boundary of Staffhurst Wood serves as the main management access and can provide suitable access for less-abled visitors under dry conditions. Whilst there is no formal parking available, there are public car parks nearby which are maintained by Surrey Wildlife Trust. Additionally, there is some minimal roadside parking at the southern entrances to both woods. A private residence "The Horns" exists as an island in the centre of Staffhurst wood and the track to this house is owned by the Trust with access rights given to the owners.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

This is a level site with an excellent network of public and permissive footpaths extending to over 4km in length and including four public footpaths (nos. 201,202, 202A, 524 & 203). Permissive horse access is presently allowed only along the surfaced track forming the western boundary of compartment 1b. Access for less abled visitors is also possible along this track, although not advertised as such.

Staffhurst and Great & Little Earls Wood is located close to the village of Merle Common, near Oxted in east Surrey. The Woodland Trust own the NE part of Staffhurst Wood and Surrey Wildlife Trust manage the rest and larger part of Staffhurst. There are 3 entrances off Grants Lane to our site, 2 of which are public footpaths. The other is along a surfaced track leading to a private dwelling (The Horns) which is surrounded by Staffhurst Wood. There is also a public footpath which crosses the 1a, and this can be taken from further north up Grants lane and across fields. There is a stile into the wood from the fields. There are also several entrances off Merle Common Road and Caterfield Lane. The entrances off Caterham Road are through wooden kissing gates, unsuitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. All other entrances are open.

The bridleway can be accessed off Staffhurst Wood Road, and it is surfaced and possibly useable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are a number of paths leading from The Wildlife Trust part of Staffhurst into our part. There are a number of other unsurfaced paths around the wood. There are 4 public footpaths running east-west across our wood as well as the public bridleway.

The best place to park is the public car-park at Staffhurst Wood, managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust. The car-park is located at the west end of Staffhurst Wood Road. From here it is possible to walk through the Wildlife Trust part of Staffhurst and into The Woodland Trust part and also cross the road into Great & Little Earls Wood. There is also another car-park managed by The Wildlife Trust further south of our wood on Grants Lane.

The nearest railway station is at Hurst Green, approximately 2 miles away. The nearest bus-stop is not close by (1.5 miles away), but at Holland (near Hurst Green) on Coldshott, off Holland Road. The nearest public toilet is at Ellice Road car-park in Oxted, which has disabled access (via RADAR key) and baby changing facilities. For further information about public transport please contact Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk Tel: 0870 6082608

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Areas of ancient woodland within Staffhurst and Great Earls Woods will mostly be left to develop under the influences of natural processes, except where intervention is required to address issues caused by pests and diseases and to control non-native invasive species such as cherry laurel. The sweet chestnut coppice in Great Earls Wood has not been worked for 20+ years and is quickly becoming integrated into the high forest canopy. Due to the small area it occupies, the sweet chestnut will only be actively coppiced as part of a ride management regime. Although not making up a majority composition of the woodland canopy (except for the small area in the north of Staffhurst Wood), the loss of ash from the canopy – caused by ash dieback – will increase deadwood habitat across the site and open up gaps in an otherwise closed canopy. Species such as hornbeam, oak, sweet chestnut, beech, ash, sycamore, and birch are likely to fill these gaps.

Intervention to protect ancient woodland features such as woodland specialist ground flora, precursor and veteran trees, deadwood, and archaeological features may be required from time to time; particularly to control any incursion by both native and non-native invasive species (holly and laurel). Careful consideration of holly acting as bat hibernaculum around ancient/ mature oak trees will be considered. Currently invasive species are not causing a significant issue, but holly is expanding quickly in Staffhurst and is shading out other shrubs and ground flora. Additionally, laurel is beginning to sprout along the northern boundary of Little Earls Wood, south of the public footpath.

The wide ride habitat established in Great Earls Wood will continue to be managed on a short rotation (5-10 years) that will create a woodland edge habitat and protect and enhance the floral diversity. It will also create additional structure in an otherwise closed canopy complex of woodland, enhancing the biodiversity and visual interest of the woods.

Management of tree safety hazards and threats brought on by pests, diseases, windblow and natural aging processes will be required in high risk areas next to the roads and along property boundaries (Zone A) and along the path network (Zone B). Ash trees showing tolerance to ash dieback will be retained where safe to do so, as a seed source to help create future resistant generations of the species. A tree safety inspections and follow on actions will remove dangerous ash trees from higher risk areas. Some cutting of collapsing coppice adjacent to paths may also be required.

The Trust will ensure the public can continue to enjoy open access to Staffhurst and Great Earls Woods by maintaining the entrances and providing an appropriate level of signage. An appropriate maintenance regime of the public and informal footpaths throughout the wood will be in place and annual inspections will check that paths and visitor infrastructure such as gates and stiles remain safe and enjoyable for all visitors to the site.

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 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

The whole of the Trust's holdings at Staffhurst and Great Earls Woods are open to the public for quiet informal recreation and are mainly enjoyed by local residents from the surrounding rural-residential area. The towns of Edenbridge, Oxted and Lingfield are all within a 5km radius of the site with populations of circa 9000, 13,500 and 4,500 respectively. The sites have a Woodland Trust access category B designation, meaning a moderate usage site with 5-15 people using each entrance per day.

To help visitors enjoy the site, there are information boards at three of the main entrances to the wood - in Staffhurst Wood at the main entrance off of Staffhurst Wood Road, at the northern public footpath entrance to Great Earls Wood, and at the southern entrance into Great Earls Wood across from the Grumpy Mole pub. There are five public footpaths: nos. 202, 202A, and 203 through Staffhurst and 232A and 534 through Great & Little Earls Wood. Together with permissive paths, this amounts to over 4km of paths available for walking. This combined with the diverse woodland structure, wildlife and views over the surrounding landscape offer an interesting experience for walkers. Access is purely for pedestrians. Most of the paths throughout the woodland are unsurfaced and can be muddy, particularly in the winter.

There is limited parking available for visitors coming from further afield. Parking is limited to the small layby in the south-western corner of Staffhurst Wood or in one of two nearby car parks maintained by Surrey Wildlife Trust. For Great Earls Wood, parking is even more restricted to one of three laybys along the southern boundary along Caterfield Lane.

Significance

Public access to this woodland is important because it provides open access to a significant area of accessible, natural greenspace and is a valued local woodland for people living nearby. It is a place where people can enjoy the natural environment in an otherwise busy part of the country where opportunities to stray from pubic rights of way are limited. The close proximity to other publicly-accessible woods and the extensive path network enable visitors to fully explore this woodland and the surrounding area.

Great & Little Earls Woods were bought with the help of generous contributions from local people as well as donations from all levels of local government. These woodlands are well used by local people throughout the year and attract visitors from further afield in the spring due to the display of bluebells.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
- The varied network of paths and peaceful surroundings allows people to enjoy and experience the seasonal characteristics of an ancient woodland setting.
- To use Staffhurst/Great Earls as a small-scale pilot for what could be achieved in a partnership approach to woodland management that could then be applied on a larger scale under the Woodland Trust's Weald and Downs Treescape initiative.
- Work with the local police to lower/prevent the incidences of fly-tipping across the woodland complex.

Constraints:
- There is very limited, informal car-parking and local transport links are poor. These factors mean that the woodland is unlikely to be visited by many people further away and restricts the opportunity to actively promote the wood for events.
- Many of the paths are wet and muddy during the winter.

Factors Causing Change

- Vandalism
- Fly-tipping/burnt out cars
- Footpath creep due to wet, muddy path conditions
- Desire line altering paths and creating new routes
- Damage from increased use of the site in the spring season
- Dangerous trees necessitating footpath diversions (specifically in Great Earls Wood)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Staffhurst and Great Earls Woods will continue to offer a low-key but high quality visitor experience in line with their WT access category. Free and open access will continue to provide the local community with a well-maintained site with a network of paths for walking and appropriate entrance infrastructure to provide a welcoming atmosphere. The wood will continue to support usage by local people and other visitors coming from further away, during the bluebell flowering in the spring.

Communication among the woodland managers of the wider complex of woodland will be strengthened overtime and opportunities to work together on woodland management best practice will be explored.

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

During this plan period the short-term objective is to provide a quality experience for visitors which is safe and enjoyable.

- Approximately 4km of paths and all entrance points will be maintained to allow continued access across the site. This will include annual strimming of path and ride edges and cleaning/repairing entrance signage and infrastructure as required at the 13 external entrances and 4 internal entrances.

- Improve entrances off of management access track between Little Earls and Great Earls Wood (Subcpts 3a and 2b). Replace the vandalised wooden management gate with a metal barrier along this same access track in 2020/2021.

- Tree safety inspections to be carried out annually on Zone A – alternating between summer and autumn. Zone B inspections to be carried out every two years. Remedial work to be carried out as appropriate.

- Clear up fly-tip in a timely manner, in partnership with Tandridge Council.

- Carry out inspection of visitor infrastructure in 2024 in preparation for the next 5-year management plan review.

5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Staffhurst Wood:
Staffhurst Wood (Cpt 1) is an important feature in the local landscape which is predominantly agricultural and rural-residential. It also has some 20th century historical importance for being used in the Second World War as an ammunition dump. The site includes a small area of damp unimproved meadow bordered by unstable willows to the west, a derelict pond, and two small streams. It is a designated SSSI because of its long documented history of continuous woodland cover since at least Saxon times when it was part of a royal hunting forest. The SSSI extends to 49.8ha of which the Woodland Trust own and manage the north-eastern 12.9 ha, while Surrey Wildlife Trust manage the remainder.

Predominantly oak and beech high forest, the generally level wood comprises a mosaic of semi-natural stand types of somewhat mixed ages and species with a sparse under storey of scattered birch, hornbeam, yew and holly. Whilst a variety of age classes exist across the site, the Woodland Trust portion of Staffhurst Wood is dominated by a post World War I age class. Some of which, namely the beech, are beginning to collapse, creating some much needed gaps in the otherwise heavily shading canopy. The northern finger (Subcpt 1a) is not included within the SSSI and has a visibly different composition of high forest oak and ash with a well-established understorey of hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, holly, sweet chestnut, and hazel. The larger sweet chestnut which would have once formed part of the canopy, appears to have blown in the 1987 storm and has been left in place, create valuable deadwood habitat and an interesting visual effect.

The sites extensive time period of continuous woodland cover has allowed for important ancient woodland species to persist. Some parts of the site support a sparse ground flora of bracken while other areas are carpeted with bluebells, bramble, wood sorrel and ferns. In damper hollows the ground flora is rich and includes primrose, yellow pimpernel, bugle and thin-spiked wood-sedge (Carex strigosa) which is rare in Surrey. The area within the SSSI also supports an outstanding moth fauna including six uncommon species. One of these, Orthosia populeti, has its best known English location at this site.

The holly is becoming abundant in localised areas and is having a negative impact on other understorey species as well as the ancient woodland ground flora. Subcpt 1a in the far north is dominated by ash and oak trees and whilst both woodland sites show slower rates of ash dieback progression across their ash populations, this subcpt is likely going to be more heavily impacted because of the higher ash density present.

Great Earls Woods:
The entire site is designated ancient semi natural woodland and comprises an interesting variety of stands. It is not within the boundary of the SSSI that covers Staffhurst Wood.

Previously managed sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards in the south (Subcpt 2a) gives way to a high forest of oak and sweet chestnut in the north of Great Earls Wood (Subcpt 2b). Little Earls Wood (subcpt 3a) contains two distinct stand types: mixed woodland of formerly managed sweet chestnut coppice to the west and overstood hornbeam coppice to the east. Where the two named woodlands meet near the western boundary, there is also a scattering of Japanese larch, which has been previously thinned by the Woodland Trust and is not considered a threat to ancient woodland

components such as ground flora.

In Great and Little Earls Wood there is also a small component of ash, sycamore, and birch which can be locally frequent, primarily as sub-canopy recruitment in natural gaps created by windblown sweet chestnut. The most common shrub species are holly, hawthorn, elder and blackthorn. Natural regeneration on the whole is limited by the closed canopy above but ride works and windblow within Great Earls has produced patches of young oak, birch, sweet chestnut and hawthorn.

The field layer of these woodland stands is comprised mainly of a bramble and bluebell community. Great and Little Earls Woods are locally known for their display of bluebells in spring. Bracken, honeysuckle and creeping soft grass are all locally abundant. A number of other ancient woodland indicator species are also present, including dogs mercury and wood anemone.

A small pond is located in the north-west of Cpt 2a which is fed and drained by a seasonal stream. Past ride widening has created some structural diversity along the stream side There is a prominent woodbank through Subcpt 2b as well as along the eastern boundary and there is also a woodbank in the western portion of Subcpt 3a.

Significance

The amount of ancient woodland left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. Approximately 40% of England's ancient woodland is found in the south-east. Ancient woodland is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites. In a heavily wooded area where woodland has become fragmented, larger areas of woodland are able to withstand external pressures such as climate change much better. Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and the prevention of its loss is one of the main aims of the Trust.

Locally, the areas of ancient woodland within Staffhurst Wood and Great Earls Wood provide habitat diversity and contribute to the overall ecological resilience of the landscape. Staffhurst Wood also has the added significance of being a designated SSSI, therefore nationally important, due to the length of time it has been under continuous woodland cover which has allowed ancient woodland species to persist and to flourish.

Both sites (Staffhurst and Great Earls Wood) fall within the Woodland Trust's Weald and Downs Treescape area, which is a landscape scale conservation initiative. Both sites form part of a wider block of woodland, owned and managed by different organisations, which is part of what this initiative is seeking to improve – communication and cooperation among woodland owners and managers.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
- For educating visitors on the importance of ASNW.
- To work in partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust and Tandridge Council on a more joined up approach to woodland management.

Constraints:
- Heavy Weald Clay soils prohibit work in winter with machinery and limit management access.

Factors Causing Change

- Squirrel damage on coppice cut within the wide ride habitats.
- Spread of holly outcompeting woodland specialist species.
- Pest & diseases resulting in loss or damage to trees. Ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) will have an impact on the population of ash trees within the site over the next decade and the wood is also at risk from chronic & acute oak decline and spread of oak processionary moth (OPM).
- Climate change - greater increase in extreme events has the potential to cause woodland restructuring (i.e. windblow during storm events).
- Path creep and development of a network of unofficial trails and paths throughout the woodland compacting soil and damaging ground flora.
- Collapse of older trees (particularly beech) is creating natural glades which are encouraging natural regeneration and spread of ancient woodland indicator species and helping to create a diverse woodland structure.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

These woodlands will largely be left to natural processes which will in time create some structural diversity and continue the current species diversity. Canopy gaps will be created by disease, windblow and senescence, with natural regeneration of species such as oak, beech, birch and hornbeam arising in response to the increase in light. Some management intervention will be required in parts of the wood to address tree safety issues caused by diseases such as ash dieback or collapse of coppice collapse and mature trees adjacent to paths. This long term objective is consistent with the SSSI objectives of the site and advice that Natural England have provided.

Ancient woodland components will continue to be present. The understorey will consist of native shrubs with a ground layer of specialist woodland plants and ancient woodland indicator species including bluebell, dog's mercury, wood anemone and wood sorrel. Good deadwood habitat will be present through standing and fallen dead trees. Veteran trees which have the potential to become ancient trees in the future will be left to develop important characteristics such as deadwood, rot holes, lichen, etc. This will benefit a range of organisms, notably bats, several species of which are known to be present at the site.

Intervention may also be needed to ensure that holly does not dominate the understorey in Subcpt 1b and invasive non-native species such as cherry laurel is not left to establish in Subcpt 3a.

The previously managed rides and stream areas within Great Earls Wood will be maintained under a 2-zone cutting regime for the benefit of the species associated with edge habitat and open ground such as ground flora, invertebrates and birds.

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

In the next 5 years' the main objective for the ancient woodland areas is to retain the varied composition and structural diversity of the ancient woodland areas. In the body of the wood this can mostly be achieved through a programme of minimal intervention, but the following management activities will be required in targeted areas:

- Annual monitoring for tree safety in Zone A trees (all subcpts) and biennially monitor for tree safety in Zone B trees (all subcpts); address any concerns as required. Intervention will be focused on trees impacted by ash dieback but surveys will look at all trees/species within Zone A and B.

- Thin out holly in Staffhurst understory (Subcpt 1b) as required, to reduce competition with other native shrubs and ground flora. Cut should not exceed 30% of overall holly coverage across Staffhurst Wood.

- Widen approx 250m of east-west ride in Subcpt 2a by coppicing ride-side sweet chestnut in 2022/23.

- Monitor area near to pond/stream which had previously been cut for open ground habitat in summer 2021. Determine if coppicing work should be repeated in 2022/23.

- Monitor bracken levels a per NE advice and if deemed detrimental undertake light touch works to address.

- Carry out formal woodland condition assessment in 2024 to inform next management plan review.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	2.43	Oak (pedunculate)	1920	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Green Belt, Tree Preservation Order
This is the northern part of the wood commonly known as Staffhurst Wood and is classified as ancient semi-natural woodland. The stand comprises high forest of oak and ash dating from the 1920s as well as hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, holly, sweet chestnut coppice and hazel. Much of the larger sweet chestnut appears to have blown in the 1987 storm and has been left. Individual specimens of wych elm, dogwood, willow and elder can also be found. Ground flora species include bluebells, patchy dogs mercury, bramble, honeysuckle and violet helleborine (Epipactis purpurata) recorded here. A hard track provides excellent access to this northernmost compartment and the southern boundary is formed by a stream.							
1b	10.58	Beech	1920	Min-intervention	Housing/infrastructure, structures & water features on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Green Belt, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Preservation Order

The canopy is largely made up of beech and oak from the 1920s. Other broadleaves present include hornbeam, holly, hazel, blackthorn, birch, hawthorn, sweet chestnut, yew and aspen. The understory is dominated by hazel to the south. Some natural canopy gaps are allowing the understory to thrive although bracken is also present in these, especially in a previously open area near 'The Horns'. A public footpath crosses the northern part of this compartment area and once it passes north of 'The Horns' forms a distinct compartment boundary. The ground flora is relatively sparse, especially under the beech in the west where only bluebells and ivy are found. In other areas there is also bramble, bracken, dog's mercury, stitchwort, wild rose, ferns and honeysuckle. Management access is over the surfaced track also serving "The Horns" and off the surfaced track forming the western boundary. "The Horns" residence effectively forms an island within this compartment. There is a redundant water storage tank south of the "The Horns" near the western boundary.							
2a	3.41	Sweet chestnut	1880	Coppice	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order
This is the southern part of the wood commonly known as Great Earls Wood. A stand of well stocked sweet chestnut coppice last cut between 1987 and 2002. Scattered oak maidens dating from around 1880 with occasional birch, hornbeam, oak, hawthorn, hazel coppice, ash, holly, elder and beech also present. The ground flora is dominated by a dense bluebell carpet, bramble, honeysuckle and mosses. There is a seasonal stream in the north which flows into a small seasonal pond.							
2b	3.87	Oak (pedunculate)	1920	Min-intervention	No/poor vehicular access to the site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order
This is the northern part of the wood commonly known as Great Earls Wood. Ancient semi-natural high forest principally of oak dating from around 1920. Other canopy trees include sweet chestnut, hornbeam and birch. The understory is made up of holly, sweet chestnut, hawthorn and hazel. The ground flora consists of bramble, bracken and honeysuckle, with large numbers of bluebells in the spring. There is a large amount of standing and fallen deadwood in this compartment. There is scattering of Japanese larch trees grouped across the southern border of 3a and the northern border of 2b. A seasonal stream forms the southern boundary and public footpath no. 524 dissects the area.							

3a	2.58	Hornbeam	1920	Min-intervention		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Connecting People with woods & trees	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Tree Preservation Order
This compartment is known commonly as Little Earls Wood. The canopy consists of hornbeam, oak and sweet chestnut and the understory is a mixture of sweet chestnut, ash, beech, hawthorn, holly, hazel and elder. The ground flora is dominated by a bluebell carpet but there are also wood anemones and dogs mercury together with nettles. There is scattering of Japanese larch trees grouped across the southern border of 3a and the northern border of 2b.							

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2022	2a	Ride edge Coppice	0.45	156	70

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.