

AGENDA

WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 1 March 2022

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Upchurch Village Hall, The Street, Upchurch, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7EU

Membership:

Councillors Mike Baldock (Chairman), Monique Bonney, Roger Clark, Nicholas Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Richard Palmer, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen and Corrie Woodford (Vice-Chairman).

Quorum = 3.

	Pages
1. Emergency Evacuation Procedure	
<p>The Chair will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures. The Chair will inform the meeting that: there is no scheduled test of the fire alarm during this meeting. If the alarm does sound, please leave the building quickly without collecting any of your possessions, using the doors signed as fire escapes, and assemble as directed. Await instructions from the Fire Marshal before entering the building. Should anyone require assistance in evacuating the building, please make the Swale Borough Council Democratic Services Officers aware of any special needs so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.</p>	
2. Apologies for absence	
3. Declarations of interest	
<p>Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships. The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:</p>	
<p>(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and</p>	

not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary Interests (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the meeting while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 31 August 2021 (Minute Nos. 202 – 216) as a correct record.

- | | |
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| 5. Matters arising from previous meetings | 5 - 52 |
| 6. Public Forum | |
| 7. Local issues to be raised | |
| 8. Rose Hill & Meads Woodland Management & Work Plans | 53 - 168 |
| 9. Closed Churchyards | 169 - 170 |
| 10. Update on work plan - to include funding allocations for 2021-22 | 171 - 182 |
| 11. Matters referred to Committee by Cabinet | |
| 12. Matters referred to Cabinet by Committee | |

Issued on Monday, 21 February 2022.

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact DEMOCRATIC SERVICES on 01795 417330**. To find out more about the work of the Area Committees, please visit www.swale.gov.uk

**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Western Area Committee meeting: Progress on Matters arising – 1 March 2022

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
1.	Heritage issues	<p>Cabinet adopted a Heritage Strategy and Action Plan on 18 March 2020. The Action Plan contains a programme of Conservation Area (CA) reviews. It has been suggested by the Cabinet Member that the Area Committee may want to fund CA reviews for areas which are outside of the planned programme of reviews in the Action Plan.</p> <p>In December 2020, the Western Area Committee agreed that £6,270 be allocated to a firm of consultants to undertake CA reviews in Rodmersham, Milstead and Tunstall in line with a quote submitted to members. Since that meeting, the Conservation and Design Manager has been giving regular update reports on the progress of the CA reviews.</p> <p>The position reported at the September 2021 meeting was that the Milstead CA should be re-designated and the associated character appraisal and management plan adopted for development management purposes in December 2021. This has not been possible due to work pressures but Cabinet agreement has been given for the re-designation/adoption. Final editing work on the document is near completion and once this is complete and the necessary statutory notices arranged, the completed document will be made available to view on the Council’s website, in late</p>	<p>An update will be provided by the Conservation & Design Manager along with a briefing on the proposed Rodmersham Church Conservation Review.</p> <p>Please see the three presentations attached to this paper.</p>

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
		<p>February or early March. The Rodmersham Green and Tunstall CA review work has now been subject to public consultation and whilst there is still some further work to do around this, it is anticipated that reports can be prepared in time to allow for Cabinet approval for re-designation/adoption in April. A report with the recommendation to designate a new conservation centred around Rodmersham Parish Church is due to be presented to Cabinet in March. No new or continued work on possible new conservation areas is feasible for the foreseeable future given the existing Heritage Strategy Action Plan 1 work commitments (including further conservation area review work – to include at-risk Cellar Hill and Green Street CA at Teynham) and the need for the Conservation & Design Team (of just two officers) to continue to contribute to the development management element of the Planning Service and to work streams from other services, including the provision of advice on closed churchyards (for which the Council is responsible for) and Council-owned heritage properties.</p>	
2.	Changing Places Toilets	<p>A Parish Councillor for Bobbing brought the Committee's attention to the Government Fund Changing Places Toilets. Local Authorities were invited to submit expressions of interest by 26 September 2021 to install larger accessible toilets. This was also raised at the Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting.</p>	<p>In progress - an Expression of Interest was submitted within the deadline. The relevant Government department has been chased and they have confirmed that announcements of funding have not been made yet and they could not give a date when they would be.</p>

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
3.	Charging of electric cars at home where there is no driveway.	A Parish Councillor for Bobbing raised the issue of residents in the future needing to charge electric cars at home when they had no driveway. There needed to be a policy change to allow for a wire to be run either under or over the pavement. The Committee agreed that this issue was not specific to the Western Area and should be referred to Cabinet. Additionally, a Member said that the infrastructure needed to be put in place locally for high-speed rapid chargers. If such chargers were installed in communal parking areas, there would be a quick turnover of cars using them.	The EV policy is being drafted but it will pay reference to this type of issue and point to Kent County Council guidance as it is their responsibility.
4.	Agricultural Bill	A Parish Councillor asked if the Area Committee could advise where guidance can be found on the Agricultural Bill so that parish councils can engage with land-owners.	The Agricultural Bill was due to be discussed at the September 2021 Swale Area Committee Meeting. A Tunstall Parish Councillor had done some work on this and would feedback.
5.	The Air Cadet Squadron	<p>This item was raised at the Sittingbourne Area Committee meeting and passed to the Western Area Committee to look into.</p> <p>The Air Cadet Squadron building at Westlands School was discussed as it was under threat.</p>	Further to the Cabinet Member for Community contacting the Air Cadet Squadron, discussions have been ongoing. The Economy and Community Services Manager met with two of the Air Cadet Squadron's officers and discussed a number of proposals that might suit their relocation needs. Their notice to quit is not effective until the end of March 2022 and they want to invest the time to get the best possible outcome. They will keep SBC updated on their progress.

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
6.	Woodland Management Plan	In March 2021, Western Area Committee awarded £2,758.79 for a Woodland Management Plan at the Meads and Rose Hill. At the September meeting it was reported that an order had been placed with White Horse Ecology to update the previously drafted management plan.	This item will be discussed under Item 8.
7.	Walking and Cycling Project	At the March 2021 meeting, the Area Committee awarded £13,000.00 in funding for a walking and cycling project.	<p>Cllr Stephen is in the process of setting up a member working group and discussing planning routes with community groups.</p> <p>Linked to this is the new Active Travel Co-ordinator who will take up the role at the end of February. This will be to co-ordinate the technical elements of the project's work and move towards engaging with the Highways Authority to ensure the necessary highways safety audits have been undertaken ahead of any development and promotion of route(s).</p>
8.	Closed Churchyards	The Area Committee considered the report and agreed to add this to the work plan to discuss further at a future meeting.	This item will be discussed under Item 9.

Bring back to future meetings:

No.	Item	Background	Progress on actions
9.	Conservation issues, including ponds	<p>SBC only has details of the ponds which it manages directly. There is a strategic and heritage, conservation and tourism need for information, including ownership, condition and management of the ponds in the area.</p> <p>Both the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group and Kent Fire and rescue have confirmed they are happy to work with Swale Borough Council to pull this information together for Swale.</p> <p>This will be considered as part of the wider environmental work and prioritisation of work programme. No work is currently underway on ponds.</p>	Bring back to a future meeting.
10.	Youth provision in villages	<p>As part of the considerations for priorities and ambitions going forward for the Western Area Committee Meeting, the lack of youth provision in villages was raised as an issue.</p> <p>Councillor Richard Palmer agreed to take this forward and said that a report would come back to the next meeting.</p>	Cllr Palmer proposes inviting a representative from the Kent County Council Youth Service to attend a future meeting to discuss this further.

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Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area Assessment

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A presentation to the Western Area Committee by:

Simon Algar - Conservation & Design Manager
(Planning Services)

1st March, 2022



Presentation Format

- Page 12
1. Background to assessment
 2. Legislative & policy/guidance framework
 3. Purpose, status and benefits of appraisal documents
 4. Consultation process
 - 5(a) Proposed Rodmersham Church Street C.A:
Summary of heritage significance
 - 5(b) Proposed Rodmersham Church Street C.A:
Proposed boundary alignment
 - 5(c) Proposed Rodmersham Church Street C.A:
Proposed Management Plan
 6. Next steps
 7. Q & A session

1. Background to assessment

- There is a formal requirement under Section 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for every local planning authority to '*(a)...from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*', and (b) '*...to designate those areas as conservation areas*'.

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Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to publish appraisals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, which would apply to proposed new conservation area as well as in relation to the review of existing conservation areas. There is a requirement that such appraisals are subject to public consultation

- The Swale Heritage Strategy, adopted in March 2020, has resulted in a stronger commitment by the Council to ensure its conservation areas are reviewed more regularly and possible new conservation areas also given consideration, as is the case here..

- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas was not included in the work programme of the initial 3-year action plan forming part of the adopted Swale Heritage Strategy 2020 - 2032
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas has been brought forward and prioritised however in order to assist the Council in developing a more informed view on the impacts of the Highsted Park major development scheme which it is anticipated would impact to some degree on the setting of all three.
- The assessment of the area around Rodmersham parish church logically took place in relation to the review of the Rodmersham Green Conservation Area and consideration of its wider setting and boundary. It was clear from this assessment work that the area of land and buildings around the parish church possessed the degree of special interest to warrant consideration for conservation area status but that it would not be appropriate to try and take this forward as an extension to the existing conservation area

2. Legislative & Policy Framework for Conservation Areas and their review

Legislation & National Planning Policies

- Conservation Areas first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act, 1967
- Note: early Conservation Areas in England designated by County Councils or predecessor local authorities prior to local government re-organisation in 1974 originally designated between 1970 and 1976.
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (the Act).
- Formal requirement under Section 69 of the 1990 Act for local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate those areas as conservation areas.
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (chapter 16 re the Historic Environment)
- National Planning Policy Guidance, 2014 onwards

National Guidance & Local Policy/Guidance

Historic England Guidance (including)

- Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Historic England Advice Note 1 – 2nd Ed.), 2019
- The Setting of Heritage Assets (Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – 2nd Ed.), 2017

Local Level Policies & Guidance (including)

- Adopted Swale Local Plan, 2017 (Bearing Fruits)
- Emerging Replacement Local Plan (Reg. 19 stage)
- Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3. Purpose, Status and Benefits of Appraisal Documents

Purpose of Appraisals

- To identify the heritage significance of Conservation Areas to this and future generations – the significance may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic (or a combination).
- To increase public awareness and involvement in preservation and enhancement of the area.
- To provide a framework for planning decisions, to guide positive change and regeneration.
- To provide the necessary background to, and framework for an assessment of a proposed new conservation area in accordance with Sections 69(1) and 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- To highlight particular issues and features which detract from the character or appearance of existing or proposed Conservation Areas which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

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Status and Benefits of Appraisals

Status

- Forms part of a suite of local planning guidance that has been subject to and agreed following a formal public consultation process.
- Provides a material planning consideration of significant weight in the development management process and this is backed up by linked, adopted and replacement Local Plan policies.

Benefits

- Stronger position for managing development proposals (applications and appeals).
- Sound basis for partnership working between stakeholders to tackle identified issues threatening/impacting on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

4. Consultation Process

- The public consultation took place between November 2021 and January 2022 in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
 - A 7-week public consultation period was provided to comment on the consultation document
(1 extra week was provided to allow for the Christmas break)
- Documents were available to view on SBC website + hard copies at Sittingbourne Library and for Rodmersham residents, a hard copy was available on request from the parish clerk.
- Notification letters were sent to those directly or indirectly affected by proposed boundary changes and posters advertising the public consultation were posted on parish notice boards, at Swale House and at Sittingbourne Library
 - Historic England and Kent County Council were formally consulted.
 - The feedback received has been carefully considered, reported on and is likely to result in some changes being made to the appraisal document

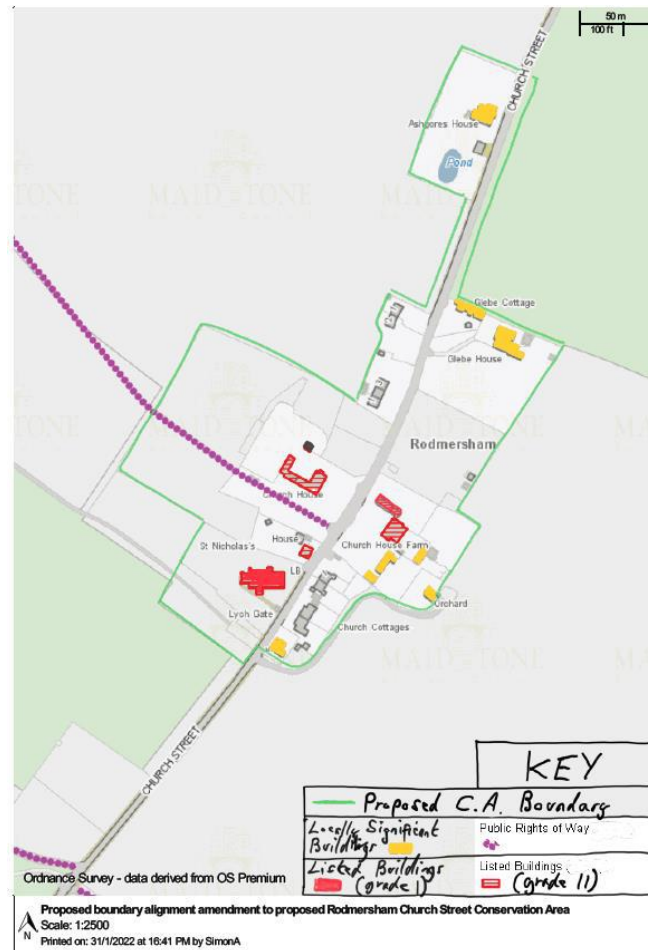
5(a) Proposed Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance

- A small settlement which originated as a farming community in the medieval period
- The ancient Parish Church and graveyard which provides a visual focus to the village and contrasts vividly with the domestic buildings roundabout.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings as well as some noteworthy non-designated buildings.
- The eclectic mix of traditional local building styles, forms and building materials.
- The contribution which boundary walls, railings and fences make is a defining feature.
- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the settlement and its surrounding landscape, in particular the views which connect Rodmersham with its surrounding landscape and vice versa.
- The contribution which mature trees make to the character and appearance of the hamlet.

• Page 17.



5(b) Proposed Rodmersham Church Conservation Area: Proposed Boundary Alignment *(as amended following public consultation)*



5(c) Proposed Rodmersham Church Street Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan

Public realm + landscape & ecology enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of public signage (including highway signage) to establish whether there is scope to remove any overhead cables or poles, or to underground services.

The removal of concrete road kerbs and their replacement with grassy verges or more appropriate kerbs.

- An audit of trees, hedgerows, green spaces and orchards may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management or for further planting
- Positive management may occasionally involve the removal of trees to restore, preserve or open up significant views

6. Next Steps

1. Comments on the appraisal document received within the consultation period have been documented, considered and referred to in any changes made to the documents as a result.
2. The Council's Local Plan Panel has recently considered and provided feedback on the appraisal document at its meeting in February 2022, as part of the consultation process. Officer recommendations were unanimously supported.

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Following the recent consideration by the Local Plan Panel, no further changes are to be made to the assessment document, and a report has been produced recommending designation of the proposed new conservation area and adoption of the supporting document for development management purposes by the Council's Cabinet, at its meeting in March.

5. It's anticipated that the proposed new conservation area and appraisal & management plan document will be designated/adopted no later than the end of April 2022.
6. Following the designation of the new conservation area and adoption of the supporting document, meetings can take place between the Borough Council, the Parish Council, and any other relevant parties to initially discuss and then scope the nature and extent of work required to take forward the management plan guidelines and other possible actions. This will be subject to sufficient officer resource being available to do so.

Thank You For Listening

Any Questions?



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Rodmersham Green Conservation Area Review

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A presentation to the Western Area Committee by:

Simon Algar - Conservation & Design Manager
(Planning Services)

1st March, 2022



Presentation Format

1. Background to review
2. Legislative & policy/guidance framework
3. Purpose, status and benefits of appraisal documents
4. Consultation process
- 5(a) Rodmersham Green C.A:
Summary of heritage significance
- 5(b) Rodmersham Green C.A:
Proposed boundary changes
- 5(c) Rodmersham Green C.A:
Other boundary changes considered
- 5(d) Rodmersham Green C.A:
Management Plan
6. Next steps
7. Q & A session

1. Background to review

- Rodmersham Green Conservation Area was originally designated in September 1974.
- There has been no formal, comprehensive review of its appropriateness/fitness for purpose in over 40 years, although this scenario is unfortunately not unusual across the whole of England...

There is a formal requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- The Swale Heritage Strategy, adopted in March 2020, has resulted in a stronger commitment by the Council to ensure its conservation areas are reviewed more regularly and possible new conservation areas also given consideration.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas was not included in the work programme of the initial 3-year action plan forming part of the adopted Swale Heritage Strategy 2020 - 2032
- The focus on conservation areas in the initial action plan has been limited to those conservation areas in the Borough classified locally and nationally as 'at risk' – of which there are 8.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas has been brought forward and prioritised however in order to assist the Council in developing a more informed view on the impacts of the Highsted Park major development scheme which it is anticipated would impact to some degree on the setting of all three.

2. Legislative & Policy Framework for Conservation Areas and their review

Legislation & National Planning Policies

- Conservation Areas first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act, 1967
- Note: early Conservation Areas in England designated by County Councils or predecessor local authorities prior to local government re-organisation in 1974 originally designated between 1970 and 1976.
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (the Act).
- Formal requirement of the Act for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- Section 69 of the Act defines Conservation Areas as '*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (chapter 16 re the Historic Environment)
- National Planning Policy Guidance, 2014 onwards

National Guidance & Local Policy/Guidance

Historic England Guidance (including)

- Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Historic England Advice Note 1 – 2nd Ed.), 2019
- The Setting of Heritage Assets (Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – 2nd Ed.), 2017

Local Level Policies & Guidance (including)

- Adopted Swale Local Plan, 2017 (Bearing Fruits)
- Emerging Replacement Local Plan (Reg. 19 stage)
- Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3. Purpose, Status and Benefits of Appraisal Documents

Purpose of Appraisals

- To identify the heritage significance of the Conservation Areas to this and future generations – the significance may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic (or a combination).
- To increase public awareness and involvement in preservation and enhancement of the area.
- To provide a framework for planning decisions, to guide positive change and regeneration.
- To provide the necessary background to, and framework for a review of the Conservation Areas boundaries in accordance with Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- To highlight particular issues and features which detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

Status and Benefits of Appraisals

Status

- Forms part of a suite of local planning guidance that has been subject to and agreed following a formal public consultation process.
- Provides a material planning consideration of significant weight in the development management process and this is backed up by linked, adopted and replacement Local Plan policies.

Benefits

- Stronger position for managing development proposals (applications and appeals).
- Sound basis for partnership working between stakeholders to tackle identified issues threatening/impacting on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

4. Consultation Process

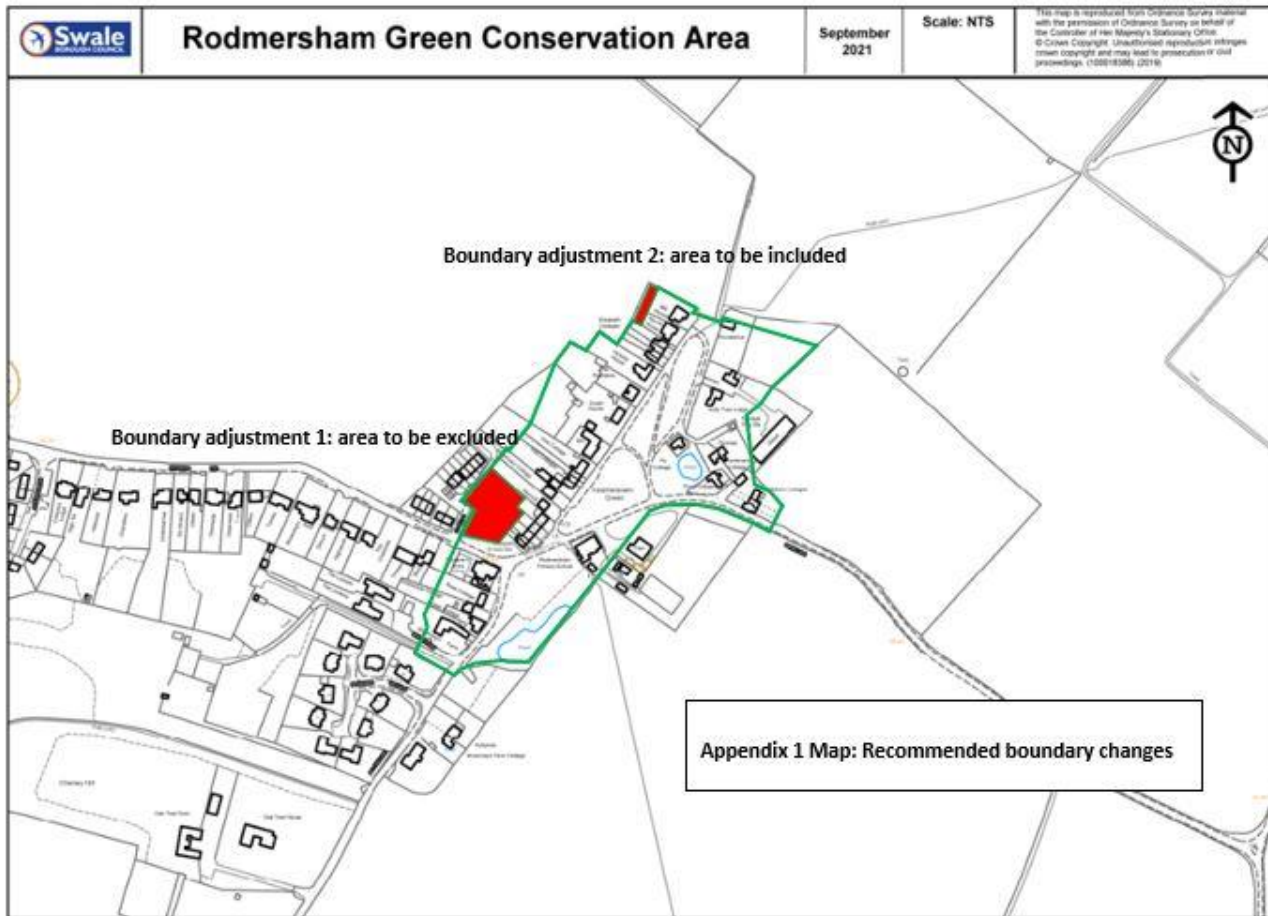
- The public consultation is now closed, but has taken place in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- A 6-week public consultation period was provided to comment on documents
- Documents were available to view on SBC website + hard copies at Sittingbourne Library and for Rodmersham Green residents, on request from the parish clerk.
- Notification letters were sent to those directly or indirectly affected by proposed boundary changes and posters advertising the public consultation posted on parish notice board, at Swale House and at Sittingbourne Library
- Historic England and Kent County Council were formally consulted.
- The feedback received is in the process of being carefully considered, will be reported on and may result in further changes being made to the appraisal document

5(a) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance

- A small settlement which originated as a farming community in the medieval period
- A manorial history which gave rise to the green which provided grazing rights for the commoners.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings and some notable non-designated buildings.
An eclectic mix of traditional building styles, forms and building materials.
- Boundary walls, railings and fences being a defining feature
- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the settlement and its surrounding landscape, in particular the views which connect Rodmersham Green to Rodmersham and the parish church and the more distant views across the landscape.
- The green spaces between and around buildings which bring the countryside into the village
- The contribution which mature trees make to the character and appearance of the village



5(b) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Boundary Changes (1)



5(b) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Boundary Changes (2)

Boundary adjustment 1

- Currently the boundary follows the middle of Fruiterers Close, so the bungalows to the east of the close are included within the conservation area and those to the west are not.

None of the bungalows are of architectural or historic significance, so the proposal is to exclude numbers 12 to 17 (consecutive) from the conservation area and to redraw the boundary line along the back gardens of numbers 1 to 6 St. Patrick's Row.

Boundary adjustment 2

- There is a minor irregularity in the line at the rear of Mill House and Ainslie House where the current boundary does not follow the line of the current gardens.
- The adjustment is proposed simply to reflect current circumstances.

5(c) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Other Boundary Changes Considered

OPTION 1:

- Consideration was given to extending the conservation area to the south along Bottles Lane to include the area of the former farm, now The Barn.

However, most of the historic farm buildings and the farmhouse have long been demolished.

- The Barn is visually and spatially separated from the green by modern development at Hollyside and Brownings Orchard on the west side of Bottles Lane and a pair of modern houses on the east

OPTION 2:

- Consideration was given to Church Road and the cluster of buildings around St Nicholas Church in Rodmersham itself.
- This area has a good concentration of listed buildings and other heritage assets. It also forms part of the civil parish of Rodmersham and there has always been a strong connection between Rodmersham Green and Rodmersham.
- However, Court Farm is 0.6km from Rodmersham Green and St. Nicholas Church is 1km away.

5(d) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (1)

Public realm enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of public signage (including highway signage) to establish whether all current signage and road markings are necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of street furniture (bollards, benches, dog waste bins, salt bin etc.) to establish whether street furniture is necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of overhead supply lines and poles with the statutory undertakers to establish whether there is scope to remove any overhead cables or poles or to underground services.
- The removal of concrete highway kerbs and their replacement with grassy verges.
- The grass area to the west of 6 St Patricks Row (1) is poorly designed and would benefit from better design and landscaping.
- The forecourt to the Fruiterers Arms (2) and the bottle bank offer considerable scope for improvement.
- Ongoing 'light touch' management of the ponds.

5(d) Rodmersham Green Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (2)

Landscape and ecology enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of trees, hedgerows, green spaces and orchards may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management or for future planting

Positive management may occasionally involve the removal of trees to preserve, restore or open up significant views. The reduction in height of the tall hedge in front of Holly Tree Lodge has been identified as a potential enhancement.

6. Next Steps

1. The work on taking this review forward has had to be delayed due to the heavy workload of the Council's Conservation & Design Team (of just two officers), but it is anticipated that the Council's Local Plan Panel will consider and provide feedback on the appraisal document at its meeting in March 2022, as part of the consultation process
2. Comments on the appraisal document received within the consultation period have already been largely considered and documented. It is likely that some changes will be made to the documents as a result, although this is still under consideration.

Any final changes to be made to document (reflecting consultation comments made) will be drawn up ASAP, and it is anticipated that a report will be produced recommending adoption of the document for development management purposes by the Council's Cabinet at its final meeting in April..
4. It's anticipated that the appraisal & management plan document will be adopted no later than the end of May 2022.
5. Following the adoption of the documents, meetings can take place between the Borough Council, the Parish Council, and any other relevant parties to initially discuss and then scope the nature and extent of work required to take forward the management plan guidelines and other possible actions. This will be subject to sufficient officer resource being available to do so.

Thank You For Listening

Any Questions?



Tunstall Conservation Area Review

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A presentation to the Western Area Committee by:

Simon Algar - Conservation & Design Manager
(Planning Services)

1st March, 2022



Presentation Format

1. Background to review
2. Legislative & policy/guidance framework
3. Purpose, status and benefits of appraisal documents
4. Consultation process
- 5(a) Tunstall C.A:
Summary of heritage significance
- 5(b) Tunstall C.A:
Proposed and rejected boundary changes
- 5(d) Tunstall C.A:
Management Plan
6. Next steps
7. Q & A session

1. Background to review

- Tunstall Conservation Area was originally designated in April 1973.
- Although the boundary was reviewed and amended in February 2003 when the conservation area was redesignated, there has been no formal, comprehensive review of its appropriateness/fitness for purpose in over 40 years,

There is a formal requirement under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- The Swale Heritage Strategy, adopted in March 2020, has resulted in a stronger commitment by the Council to ensure its conservation areas are reviewed more regularly and possible new conservation areas also given consideration.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas was not included in the work programme of the initial 3-year action plan forming part of the adopted Swale Heritage Strategy 2020 - 2032
- The focus on conservation areas in the initial action plan has been limited to those conservation areas in the Borough classified locally and nationally as 'at risk' – of which there are 8.
- The review of Milstead, Rodmersham Green and Tunstall conservation areas has been brought forward and prioritised however in order to assist the Council in developing a more informed view on the impacts of the Highsted Park major development scheme which it is anticipated would impact to some degree on the setting of all three.

2. Legislative & Policy Framework for Conservation Areas and their review

Legislation & National Planning Policies

- Conservation Areas first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act, 1967
- Note: early Conservation Areas in England designated by County Councils or predecessor local authorities prior to local government re-organisation in 1974 originally designated between 1970 and 1976.
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (the Act).
- Formal requirement of the Act for Conservation Areas to be reviewed from '*time to time*'.
- Section 69 of the Act defines Conservation Areas as '*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (chapter 16 re the Historic Environment)
- National Planning Policy Guidance, 2014 onwards

National Guidance & Local Policy/Guidance

Historic England Guidance (including)

- Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Historic England Advice Note 1 – 2nd Ed.), 2019
- The Setting of Heritage Assets (Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 – 2nd Ed.), 2017

Local Level Policies & Guidance (including)

- Adopted Swale Local Plan, 2017 (Bearing Fruits)
- Emerging Replacement Local Plan (Reg. 19 stage)
- Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3. Purpose, Status and Benefits of Appraisal Documents

Purpose of Appraisals

- To identify the heritage significance of the Conservation Areas to this and future generations – the significance may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic (or a combination).
- To increase public awareness and involvement in preservation and enhancement of the area.
- To provide a framework for planning decisions, to guide positive change and regeneration.
- To provide the necessary background to, and framework for a review of the Conservation Areas boundaries in accordance with Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- To highlight particular issues and features which detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas which offer potential for enhancement or improvement through positive management.

Status and Benefits of Appraisals

Status

- Forms part of a suite of local planning guidance that has been subject to and agreed following a formal public consultation process.
- Provides a material planning consideration of significant weight in the development management process and this is backed up by linked, adopted and replacement Local Plan policies.

Benefits

- Stronger position for managing development proposals (applications and appeals).
- Sound basis for partnership working between stakeholders to tackle identified issues threatening/impacting on the special character and appearance of the conservation area.

4. Consultation Process

- The public consultation is now closed, but has taken place in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- A 6-week public consultation period was provided to comment on documents.

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Documents were available to view on SBC website + hard copies at Sittingbourne Library and for Tunstall residents, on request from the parish council chairman.

- Notification letters were sent to those directly or indirectly affected by proposed boundary changes and posters advertising the public consultation posted on parish notice board, at Swale House and at Sittingbourne Library.
- Historic England and Kent County Council were formally consulted.
- The feedback received is in the process of being carefully considered, will be reported on and may result in further changes being made to the appraisal document.

5(a) Tunstall Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance (1)

- A small settlement historically centred on the Medieval Church of St. John the Baptist, Tunstall House and Hales Place.
- The winding eccentricity of Tunstall Road
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings and some notable non-designated buildings and structures.
- The architectural contribution made by several listed buildings as well as some non-designated buildings and structures.
- The eclectic mix of traditional building styles, forms and building materials. The frequent occurrence of flint and 17th century brickwork is particularly noteworthy.

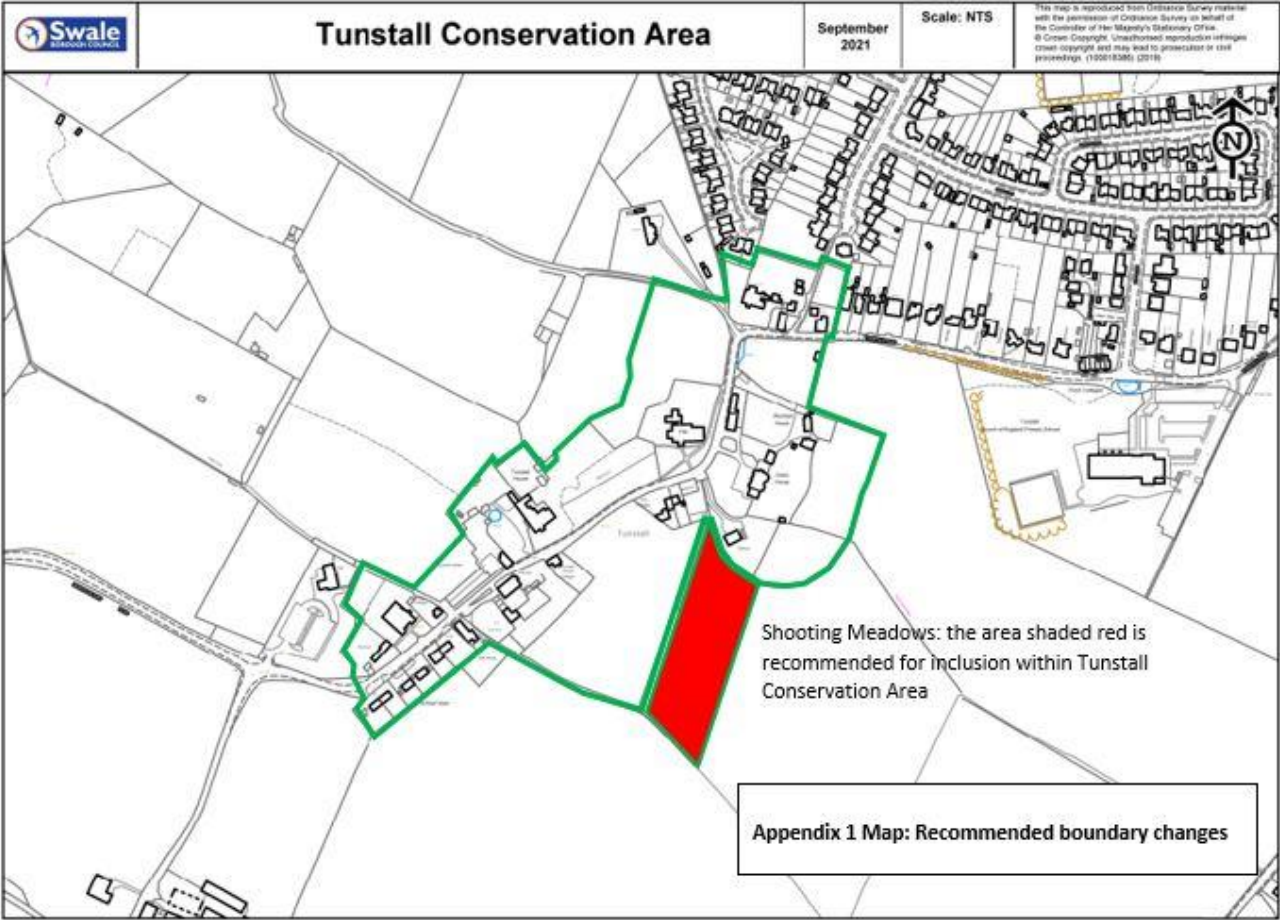


5(a) Tunstall Conservation Area: Summary of Heritage Significance (2)

- Frontage boundary walls, railings and fences are a defining feature.
- The strong historic, visual and functional link between the village and its surrounding landscape.
- The green spaces between and around buildings which bring the countryside into the village.
- The contribution which mature trees make to the character and appearance of the village
- The historical connections with the Cromer and Hales families.



5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (1)



5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (2)

Proposed Boundary Change

- The field known as 'Shooting Meadows' is located to the south of the Rectory and Flint Cottages.

The story that Sir Edward Hales was shot by Cromwell's soldiers and died at Shooting Meadows is not founded on fact. However, the field does have strong historical connections as the venue for obligatory archery practice in Tudor times.

- In 1840 Shooting Meadow is referred to as 'pasture' in the tithe apportionment. At that time it was owned by the 'Trustees of Edward Hales viz Edward Darrell' and tenanted by George Baker.

- In the 20th century what was historically one field was split into two, the southern part being used as the playing field for Tunstall Primary School. As such it has communal value for the recent generations of children who used it for exercise and sporting activities.
- Given this level of historical and communal value, and its close visual and physical proximity to the centre of the village, its inclusion within the conservation area is justified.

5(b) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed & Rejected Boundary Changes (3)

Rejected Boundary Change

- Consideration was given to extending Tunstall Conservation Area to include the Grove Farm complex which lies some 300m south-west of the existing conservation area. The historic farm complex includes a significant historic farmhouse as well as two barns and a brick-built stable, all dating from the 16th and 17th centuries and all Grade II listed buildings.
- However, after careful consideration it was decided not to recommend their inclusion within the conservation area because:
 - They are physically separated from the conservation area by a field, by a poplar tree belt and by a range of sizeable modern agricultural buildings.
 - There is no intervisibility between the existing conservation area and the historic farm complex at Grove Farm.
 - There are few locations where the conservation area can be seen in the same views as the historic buildings at Grove Farm.
 - The heritage significance of the Grove Farm complex is already highly protected by statutory listing.

5(c) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (1)

Public realm enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of public signage (including highway signage) to establish whether all current signage and road markings are necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of street furniture (bollards, benches, dog waste bins, salt bin etc.) to establish whether street furniture is necessary, well designed and appropriately located.
- An audit of street lighting to establish whether existing lighting is appropriate, well positioned and well designed
- An audit of overhead supply lines and poles with the statutory undertakers to establish whether there is scope to remove any overhead cables or poles.
- The replacement of concrete road kerbs with granite as and when the opportunity arises.
- Improvements to the concrete/pebble haunching alongside the flint boundary wall to the parish church..
- A review of Coffin Pond including its potential for improved biodiversity, its visual appearance and its immediate surroundings.

5(c) Tunstall Conservation Area: Proposed Management Plan (2)

Landscape and ecology enhancement opportunities:

- An audit of trees, hedgerows, green spaces and orchards may be undertaken to establish whether there is any scope for better management or further planting or for felling or thinning.

Positive management may occasionally involve the removal of trees to preserve, restore or open up significant views.

6. Next Steps

1. The work on taking this review forward has had to be delayed due to the heavy workload of the Council's Conservation & Design Team (of just two officers), but it is anticipated that the Council's Local Plan Panel will consider and provide feedback on the appraisal document at its meeting in March 2022, as part of the consultation process
2. Comments on the appraisal document received within the consultation period will be documented, considered and referred to in any changes made to the documents as a result. This work is currently underway.
If a significant degree of comment is received which then requires substantial change to the appraisal document, then re-consultation may be necessary.
4. Otherwise, final changes to be made to document (reflecting any comments made) as appropriate, and a report to be produced recommending adoption of the document for development management purposes by the Council's Cabinet, which it is anticipated will be able to consider the matter at its final meeting in April.
5. It's anticipated that the appraisal & management plan document will be adopted no later than the end of May 2022.
6. Following the adoption of the documents, meetings can take place between the Borough Council, the Parish Council, and any other relevant parties to initially discuss and then scope the nature and extent of work required to take forward the management plan guidelines and other possible actions. This will be subject to sufficient officer resource being available to do so.

Thank You For Listening

Any Questions?



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Rose Hill Woods

Management Plan
2022-26



Avenue of specimen trees at Rose Hill

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This management plan has been produced by White Horse Ecology on behalf of Swale Borough Council. It is an update of a management plan written in 2017 that was commissioned by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership that formed part of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project that was been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Swale Borough Council.

It should be noted that most of the material in this plan has been updated from the 2017-22 plan. The work carried out in this update included site visits to refresh species lists and discuss management with Swale Borough Council staff as well as discussions with local stakeholders. Mapping was also updated for this plan. This work ensures that the management plan is still fit for purpose and that it can be used as a guide to future management by all of those that have an interest in the site.

Thanks are due to all of the stakeholders and members of the public who took time to contribute their ideas to the original management plan as well as this update.

November 2021

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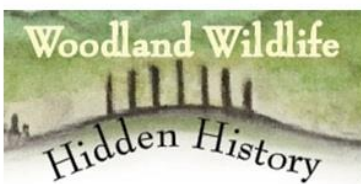
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White Horse Ecology



1. Introduction

Rose Hill Woods is owned and managed by Swale Borough Council. This management plan has been produced as a way of gathering together some of the accumulated knowledge about the site to create a plan for the future management and use of the woods. It reflects the views of local people, stakeholders and those working at the woodland that have been consulted about their views. The uses of the document include:

- Clearly identifying management objectives for each of the distinct areas within the site as well as how the woodland should be interpreted and whether there are infrastructure improvements needed to help people enjoy the open space.
- Updating knowledge about species present on site and ensuring that protected flora and fauna are identified and that works enhance and conserve the habitats of these species.
- Ensuring that the heritage of the site is integrated into the management of the wood and is well understood by visitors.
- Acting as a guide to a possible future 'Friends of' group that may get involved in the management of the site.
- Supporting external funding applications.
- Allowing Swale Borough Council to prioritise work programmes undertaken by contractors and make the best use of current site expenditure.

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre have provided species information for the site and this has been supplemented by on-site surveys. The aim of this document is to be a short introduction to the wildlife, heritage and amenity of the site that is readable, identifies achievable outcomes and maximises the potential of the site.

1.1. Location

Rose Hill Woods is situated in the western part of Sittingbourne just north of the Grove Park Cricket Club. It is to the north of the A2 and the centre of the site is located at TQ 886 644.

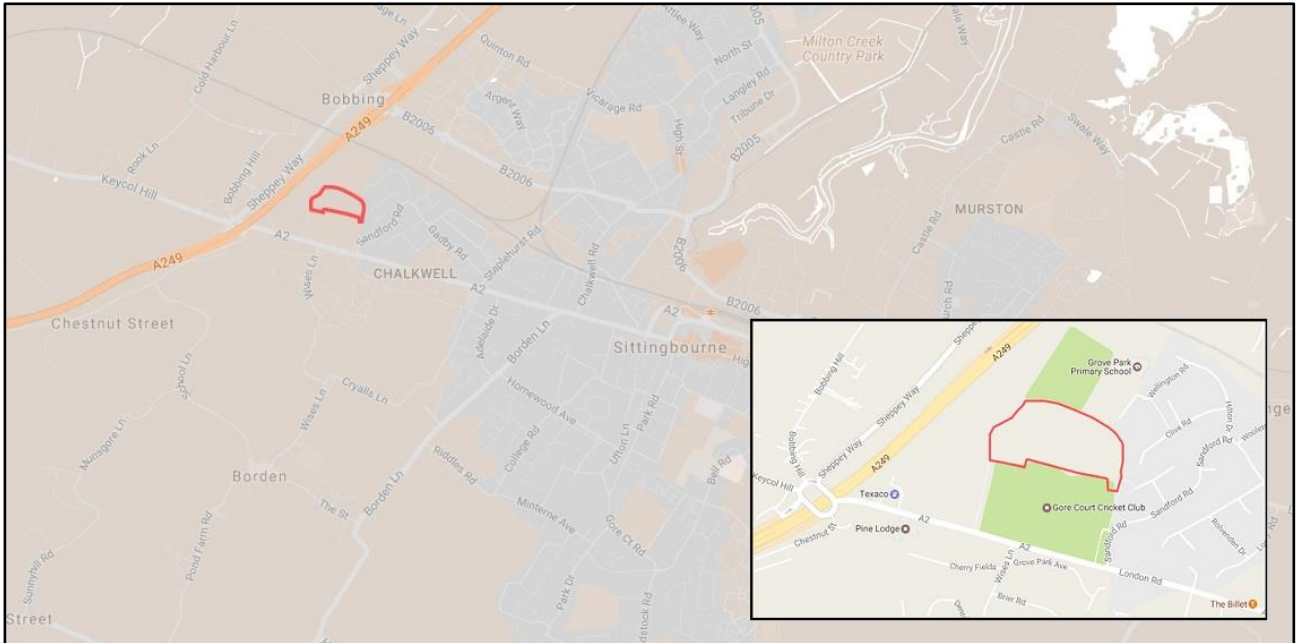


Figure 1: Location of Rose Hill Woods

1.2. Links to strategy documents

There is a selection of strategic documents at a national, county and district level that are relevant to the purpose, aims and objectives of Rose Hill Woods.

1.2.1. National

Although many documents could be quoted in this section, for the sake of brevity, just one national level document will be referenced.

25 Year Environment Plan (2018)¹

This is the overarching plan for the environment over the next 25 Years. It is a high-level document but has some clear goals:

1. *Clean air.*
2. *Clean and plentiful water.*
3. *Thriving plants and wildlife.*
4. *A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought.*
5. *Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.*
6. *Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.*

In addition, we will manage pressures on the environment by:

7. *Mitigating and adapting to climate change.*

¹ 25 Year Environment Plan -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

- 8. Minimising waste.
- 9. Managing exposure to chemicals.
- 10. Enhancing biosecurity.

Rose Hill Woods contributes to most of these goals. The ecosystem services benefits of a wood like Rose Hill should be valued highly and be recognised for the contribution they make at a local and district level.

1.2.2. County level

Kent Environment Strategy (2016)²

This is a high-level document outlining environmental priorities for Kent County Council. The vision for this document neatly encapsulates the value of green spaces like Rose Hill to local communities:

“The county of Kent is benefitting from a competitive, innovative and resilient economy, with our natural and historic assets enhanced and protected for their unique value and positive impact on our society, economy, health and wellbeing.”

Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy (2020-2045)³

This strategy looks specifically at targets for biodiversity over the next 25 years, linking broadly with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan

The goals of this document relate to the quality of terrestrial habitat, how connected it is and how much of it there is. This management plan looks to contribute to these goals.

Kent Nature Partnership Strategic Priorities and Action Plan (2018-2023)⁴

This document sits below the Environment Strategy (KES) as the mechanism for delivering the biodiversity elements of the KES. The document highlights four priorities, all of which are relevant to Rose Hill Woods and which the area is delivering:

- Priority 1 - Strengthening the consideration of biodiversity within local plans and the growth agenda*
- Priority 2 - Embedding natural capital into planning and decision making*
- Priority 3 - Taking forward the health and nature agenda*
- Priority 4 - Improving the quality, extent and connectivity of our high value habitats*

1.2.3. District level

Swale Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020)

² Kent Environment Strategy - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy>

³ Kent Biodiversity Strategy - <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/uploads/Kent%20Biodiversity%20Strategy%202020%20-%202045.pdf>

⁴ KNP Strategic priorities and Action Plan - <https://www.kentnature.org.uk/uploads/files/About-Us/Kent%20Nature%20Partnership%20-%20Strategic%20Priorities%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018%20-%202023.pdf>

Swale Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and released this action plan in 2020 to help The Council become carbon neutral by 2025 and for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030. As well as these ambitious targets this document commits to make space for nature as a key priority, and safeguard our wild places, ancient woodlands and hedgerows.

Of the ten priorities outlined by the document the two that are most relevant to Rose Hill Woods is:

- *Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.*
- *Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.*

Swale Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy (2018-2022)⁵

This strategy assesses the provision of open space in the borough, how it fits into planning policy and local strategic planning and identifies an action plan. The plan acknowledges that the funding situation is difficult at present but also makes the following recommendation:

“Destination (Strategic) Sites should be recognised through protection and enhancement.”

The recommendation goes on to state:

“The Council should seek to ensure the role and quality of these sites through continued enhancement so providing a diverse range of features.”

The strategy action plan also states that the following targets will be put in place:

- a. *To invest at least £100,000 capital spending per year for 5 years on existing open spaces through developer contributions, grants, capital works and disposals.*
- b. *To invest £500,000 in a rolling programme to refurbish several play areas during the life of the strategy.*
- c. *To achieve at least 3 Green Flag parks and open spaces in the next 5 years.*
- d. *To review our open space portfolio and identify relevant sites for investment, disposal or alternative uses by September 2018, linked to our successful programme of Community Asset Transfer and in consultation with the relevant Ward Members.*
- e. *To actively promote our open spaces in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups as places to sustain and improve health and wellbeing.*
- f. *To increase the amount of open space under a wildlife management regime by 5 hectares and by December 2022.*
- g. *Seek improvement of horticulture in our open spaces to enrich the biodiversity*
- h. *To increase community involvement in open space management by providing support to new or existing community groups.*

⁵ Swale Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy - <https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s10121/Appendix%20-%20SWALE%20BOROUGH%20COUNCIL%20OPEN%20SPACES%20AND%20PLAY%20STRATEGY%20FINALSENT%20TO%20CABINET.pdf>

- i. To ensure actions in relation to Local Plan Policy DM 17 are put in place to protect existing open space and private playing fields, to help negotiate new open space in future housing developments and to continue the designation of Local Green Space across the Borough.
- j. Look at new methods of operation and potential commercial ventures to help meet the ongoing cost of maintaining open space facilities
- k. A Borough wide review of public conveniences to also consider an audit of existing Changing Places toilets provision.

These priorities form the basis for this management plan's approach to Rose Hill Woods.

Health and Well Being Improvement Plan (2020-2023) – currently only available in consultation form

This document highlights the importance of good health, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the importance of taking regular exercise. Green spaces play an important part in how people take their exercise. One of the priorities identified in this document is:

“Work with Leisure and Technical services and Comms to consider how we use and promote our open spaces to encourage physical activity and improve wellbeing.”

Swale Biodiversity Action Plan (updated 2016)⁶

This plan focuses on the habitats and species that make Swale's biodiversity special. It includes priority habitats relevant to Rose Hill Woods:

- Woodland
- Wildflower grassland
- Built up areas and gardens

These are all habitats that are found at or adjacent to Rose Hill.

Swale Green Grid Strategy (2016)⁷

This document examines how the borough's green spaces can be enhanced and monitored via a partnership of organisations.

There are also other documents relevant to Rose Hill Woods

Swale Volunteering Strategy (2013-2016)⁸

Swale Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement (2018-2022)⁹

⁶ Swale Biodiversity Action Plan - <https://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-2016.pdf>

⁷ Swale Green Grid Strategy -

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s6079/Green%20Grid%20Strategy%202016%20proof%20Aug%202016.pdf>

⁸ Swale Volunteering Strategy - <https://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Swale-Volunteering-Strategy-May-2014.pdf>

⁹ Swale Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement -

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s11291/Item%208%20Appendix%20I.pdf>

1.3. Information gathering

This management plan was compiled with specific reference to information gathered from stakeholders and members of the public over the course of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project managed by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership. The following sources of information were used to assess opinions and a summary of the information that was contributed can be found in appendix III:

- Consultation during the introductory phase of the project (2014/15)
- Stakeholder telephone conversations conducted in December 2016
- E-mail consultation in December 2016
- Public prioritisation and consultation event on 22nd January 2017
- Further consultation with staff and local stakeholders took place in autumn 2021 to inform the updated plan.

1.4. How to use this management plan

Management plans are not designed to be static documents that never change. They are part of a process that involves identifying aims and objectives, putting a plan into place and then reviewing the success of the plan, adjusting as necessary. A typical management flow diagram can be found overleaf.

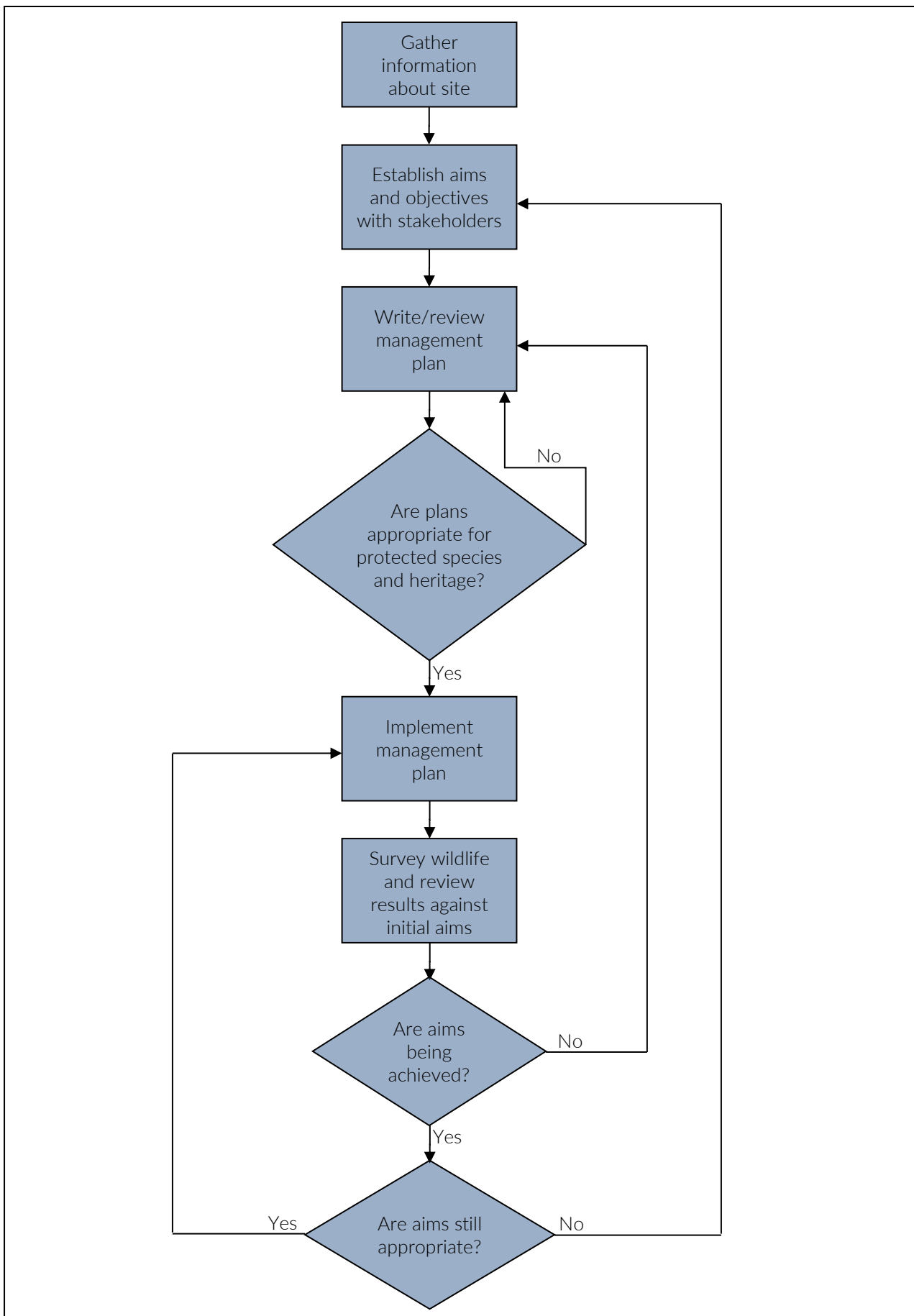


Figure 2: Management plan flow diagram

2. Site description

Rose Hill Woods is an area of amenity woodland that is situated behind Grove Park Cricket Club. It is a well-loved and well used piece of woodland that has grown up on the site of an old house known as Rose Hill. It is currently an area of trees, largely sycamore in places, which



Figure 3: Rose Hill Woods

is managed with a light touch and used as a place for local people to walk dogs and enjoy the outdoors. However, it is the history of the site that unlocks the clues that make Rose Hill Woods so much more than just a piece of secondary woodland used to exercise children and dogs.

Figure 3 shows the site boundary and an overhead photographic view of the site. To gain a better picture of the evolution of the site into what we find today it is necessary to look at the aerial view in figure 4 from the 1940s. From this we can see that Rose Hill Woods used to be a house and garden that overlooked the cricket club and was, until relatively recently, much more open than it is now. The house had a formal garden and the grounds also contained some impressive specimen trees that may date from the early 19th century, many of which are still thriving. The house was demolished in the 1970s and the land acquired by Swale Borough Council. Since the demolition of the house natural processes have been allowed to dominate and secondary woodland has grown over the area where the house once was and around the



Figure 4: Aerial view of Rose Hill in 1946

specimen trees that would once have dominated the character of the site. Rose Hill Woods now has the feel of a woodland rather than a formal garden and this has benefitted wildlife. The site is well used by birds and the botanical flora, whilst unremarkable, is becoming more diverse and typical of woodlands rather than gardens. It is a good example of nature taking over where humans once used to dominate. The purpose of this management plan is to help those managing the site to be able to investigate and celebrate the history of Rose Hill whilst enhancing the biodiversity and allowing people to enjoy walking in a place with a 'natural' feel.

2.1. Designations

The site itself has no statutory designations although Grove Park (including the cricket pitch and more formal areas of park around it) does figure on the UK database of Historic Parks and Gardens that is held at <http://www.parksandgardens.org/>

Lowland deciduous woodland is considered to be a Natural England Priority Habitat under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). As the site develops and further biological recording takes place a body of evidence that supports Local Wildlife Site designation may become available.

Although the site has no statutory designations there are a total of 27 trees that have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on them. These trees have been designated due to their public

amenity value and may not be felled or have their crowns reduced without formal written permission from the local authority unless they are dead, dying or dangerous. This has no impact upon the proposed actions of this management plan as maintaining and enhancing the specimen trees will form an integral part of the plan. There are also a number of other impressive trees that are not covered by TPOs. The list of trees covered by TPOs can be found in section 2.8.2.



Figure 5: Christmas greeting from an anonymous walker

2.2. Urban green space and links to the wider countryside

The importance of urban sites such as Rose Hill Woods is greater than the sum of the land given over to wildlife on the site itself. These areas provide essential green space that acts as a refuge to wildlife which, in turn, will increase the amount of wildlife in nearby gardens. These spaces also provide important areas of recreational space for local residents and access to wildlife. Additionally, despite extensive house building in this part of Sittingbourne, there are currently still physical links to the wider countryside to the west through woodland, farmland and the hedgerow next to the public footpath that goes north of the wood alongside the rugby pitches. These allow for the movement of wildlife both to and from Rose Hill to adjacent sites. Equally, sites like Rose Hill Woods can be used as 'stepping stones' by more mobile animals

such as birds as is illustrated by sightings of the migratory firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*). The most important habitats found adjacent to Rose Hill Woods are:

- The playing fields belonging to Grove Park School and Gore Court Cricket and Rugby clubs and associated hedgerows to the north of the site. These go on to link with The Meads Community Woodland, a newer mixed species deciduous woodland.
- To the west of Rose Hill there is some deciduous woodland that extends to the A249. To the south of this woodland but to the north of the houses on the A2 is an area of rough grassland and scrub that will provide excellent habitat for reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.
- The road margins of the A249 to the west provide some of the largest extents of semi-natural habitat in the area and continuous habitat links for reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.

2.3. Site usage

The woodland is in an area of Sittingbourne with housing to the south and east. Rose Hill Woods and The Grove provide the closest open green space for residents and it is well used by dog walkers and those looking to find peace and tranquillity in an urban area. It is also valued as a place to go with family.

There is minimal use of Rose Hill Woods as a thoroughfare although the path on the eastern side of the wood does provide access to Grove Park School and is used for this purpose.

The Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership ran the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project between 2014 and 2017 which encouraged community participation in events at both Rose Hill Woods and the nearby Meads Community Woodland. A key to the success of this project was the work of the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne (HRGS) who have undertaken exploratory digs at the house that have been volunteer led and included extensive work with Kent County Council Heritage, the local Grove Park School and local volunteers.

2.4. Biological recording and protected species

There are relatively few records for Rose Hill Woods although a database search was made by the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre few of these records can be directly attributed to Rose Hill Woods itself. A survey of significant trees was also carried out in 2006 as was a small scale wildlife survey undertaken by Kent Wildlife Trust and Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership has augmented this list. Further botanical survey work was conducted for the 2021 update. However the species list is still incomplete. Therefore, it is crucially important to ensure that all records that are made at the site are sent to the appropriate recording group and/or the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre. The records that are available for the site can be found in appendix II.

Whilst the overarching aim of nature conservation management within Rose Hill is to enhance habitats for all species groups, there are specific species that require attention in their own right due to their protected status. This section will identify those species that have been recorded on site, are protected and which legislation they are covered by. Other important, but not protected, species will be dealt with in the assessment of habitats.

Table 1: Protected species

Species	Locations (if known)	Notes
The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019		
This is the highest level of designation and provides protection against killing, injury and disturbance. The breeding and resting habitat of these species is also protected		
Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	Although no bats have been recorded on the site of Rose Hill all of these species have been recorded within 3km of the site. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that bats use the site for foraging and as there are mature trees containing dead wood, roosting is highly likely. The consequence of the likely presence of bats is that the removal of larger trees or any built structures should be approached with caution.	
Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)		
Serotine bat (<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>)		
Daubenton's bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)		
Noctule bat (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>)		
Brown long-eared bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)		
Dormouse (<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>)	Although the presence of dormice is unlikely it is not impossible that they may utilise the site due to the presence of adjacent coppice. Survey work using nesting tubes is recommended.	
Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – protection under section 9.1 of the act		
Species identified under schedule 5 of the act have protection against killing or injury although their habitat is not protected.		
Grass snake (<i>Natrix helvetica</i>)	Although neither species has been recorded it is likely that grass snakes will utilise the site and not impossible that lizards will also use some of the more open areas	Current and proposed management of Rose Hill is unlikely to impact upon reptile species. However, should open spaces be created in the woodland this should be revisited.
Viviparous lizard (<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>)		
Slow-worm (<i>Anguilla fragilis</i>)	Recorded in compartment 2	

Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – protection under section 1.1 of the act
Wild birds are protected against killing as well as damaging or destroying nests and eggs.

All wild bird species	Found throughout the site.	Vegetation management of potential nesting sites should not take place during the breeding season (usually March to August) unless using hand tools and checks are made for nests.
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Other protected species

Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*), smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and common toad (*Bufo bufo*) are protected from being sold or advertised for sale. These species are all thought to be present on site. However, this has little impact on the management of the woodland.

Managing sites with protected species needn't be overly restrictive. There are simply certain activities that should be avoided. Kent Bat Group, Kent Mammal Group and Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group can offer advice when needed.

2.5. Non-native invasive species

There are also a number of non-native invasive species that have been identified at or near Rose Hill Woods. These species have the potential to spread rapidly and threaten the status of native species. Those identified include:

- Harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) – a threat to native ladybirds.
- Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*) – a large and noisy frog (in late spring) that is thought to compete with native frogs and toads.
- Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) – a rapidly spreading tree that can shade out regeneration of native species.
- Holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) – More of a problem on chalk grassland in Kent but still has the potential to spread rapidly given the right circumstances.
- Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) – a garden escapee that can thrive in woodlands. Provides little in the way of habitat for invertebrates or other wildlife.

Whilst little can be done about ladybirds and marsh frogs, non-native invasive plants should be removed if safe to do so and where this does not compromise protected species. Sycamore has become so well established at Rose Hill Woods (and loved by some) that removal of all sycamore is neither feasible with existing resources nor necessarily favourable due to the impact it would have on the character of the woodland. Sycamore will be dealt with in more detail later in this plan. It should be noted that there are also a number of non-native plants such as winter aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) that survive from the garden at Rose Hill house.

These are not thought to pose a problem as they are not invasive and are an important part of the history of the site.

2.6. Archaeology and history

The archaeology of Rose Hill Woods is an area of significant interest and research that has been carried out primarily by the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne (HRGS). There is known to have been a house at Rose Hill, probably since the end of the 18th century and it stood until being abandoned and eventually destroyed in a fire in the 1970s. Planning permission was unsuccessfully sought for the site shortly afterwards and ownership of the site was then taken on by Swale Borough Council. Since then, the house has become buried under the soil and become shrouded in a canopy of sycamore though many local people still remember the house and played in and around it as children. More about the house can be found in Roger Cockett's notes on Rose Hill.

In 2015, HRGS undertook a nine day dig at the site as part of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project that involved thousands of volunteer hours as well as involving Grove Park School who took part in the dig. The success of the project and the interest that it generated showed the importance of the site in the local psyche. These digs were followed up by further excavations in 2016. The public consultation that took place showed overwhelming support for making more of the archaeology that is left at Rose Hill and this can be done in a way that is also beneficial for the biodiversity of the site.

Little is known about what the site may have been used for before the building of Rose Hill House. However, there is speculation that a high piece of ground close to a Roman road is unlikely to have no archaeological evidence that predates the house.

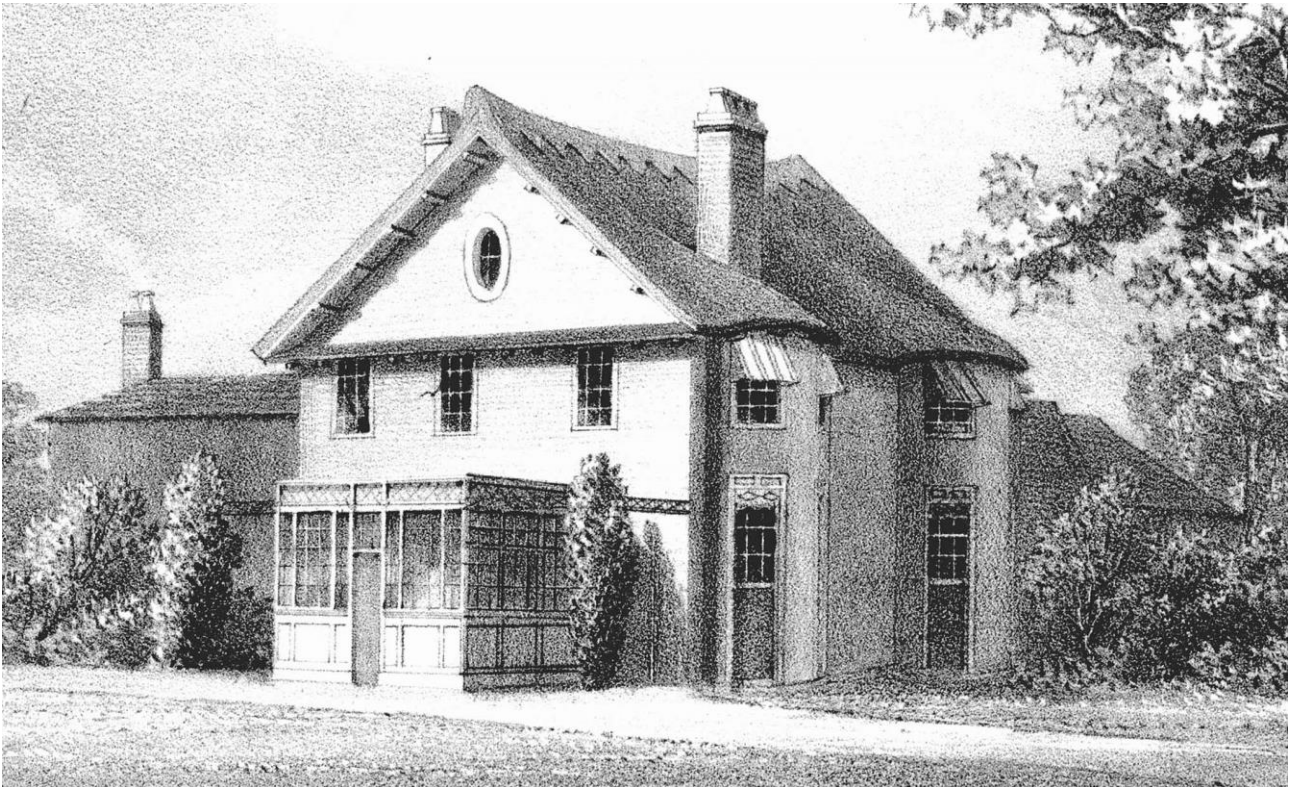


Figure 6: Rose Hill House (picture thought to date from 1838)

2.7. Infrastructure and interpretation

Currently, infrastructure consists of the following:

- A series of paths that have developed over time from desire lines. These include a main path around the site and a path with benches that incorporates some of the finest trees on the site. These paths are dynamic and reflect people's use of the woods. The main paths are shown overleaf
- Several litter bins at the entrance to the site
- Several unofficial access points at the north of the site.
- Vehicular access is provided by a tarmacked track to the rugby pitches to the north along the western side of Rose Hill Woods. This is also a public footpath. Vehicle access is also possible to the entrance of the wood on the eastern side using the access track for the rugby/cricket club car park

There is currently no interpretation at Rose Hill. Sittingbourne in Bloom have created a panel and HRGS are keen to have at least one panel to interpret Rose Hill House. Gore Court Cricket and Rugby Club have also stated that they would be happy to display information about the

woods in the pavilion. Public consultation showed support for interpretation of both the wildlife and the history of Rose Hill Woods.



Figure 7: Main paths at Rose Hill Woods

2.8. Habitats

In order to make appropriate management decisions it is necessary to assess the habitats that are found at Rose Hill Woods. This ensures that any future management does not compromise the wildlife and protected species on the site. The site can be split into broad habitat types that are described below.

2.8.1. Secondary woodland

Although there are some significant and specimen trees that will be dealt with in section 2.8.2 the majority of the site has become secondary woodland since the house at Rose Hill was abandoned. This is woodland that has grown up without assistance and is in large parts dominated by sycamore. It contains plants that have either self-seeded from species already in the woodland or are the remains of plants once in the garden at Rose Hill. Other tree species that have done well include, hawthorn, elder, holm oak and wych elm. Also present are beech, English elm, cherry, blackthorn, holly and lime.

The structure of the woodland currently benefits from a reasonable understorey in areas (the scrub and small trees that provide places for birds and other animals to perch, nest and take cover). Although some of this layer is made up of brambles it is important for the biodiversity of the site. However, the understorey is being threatened by the dominance of sycamore which casts a dense shade and is threatening the continued existence of the complex understorey. As of 2021, this problem is still present and some of the trees in the woodland are looking increasingly unstable and potentially unsafe.



Figure 8: Secondary woodland at Rose Hill

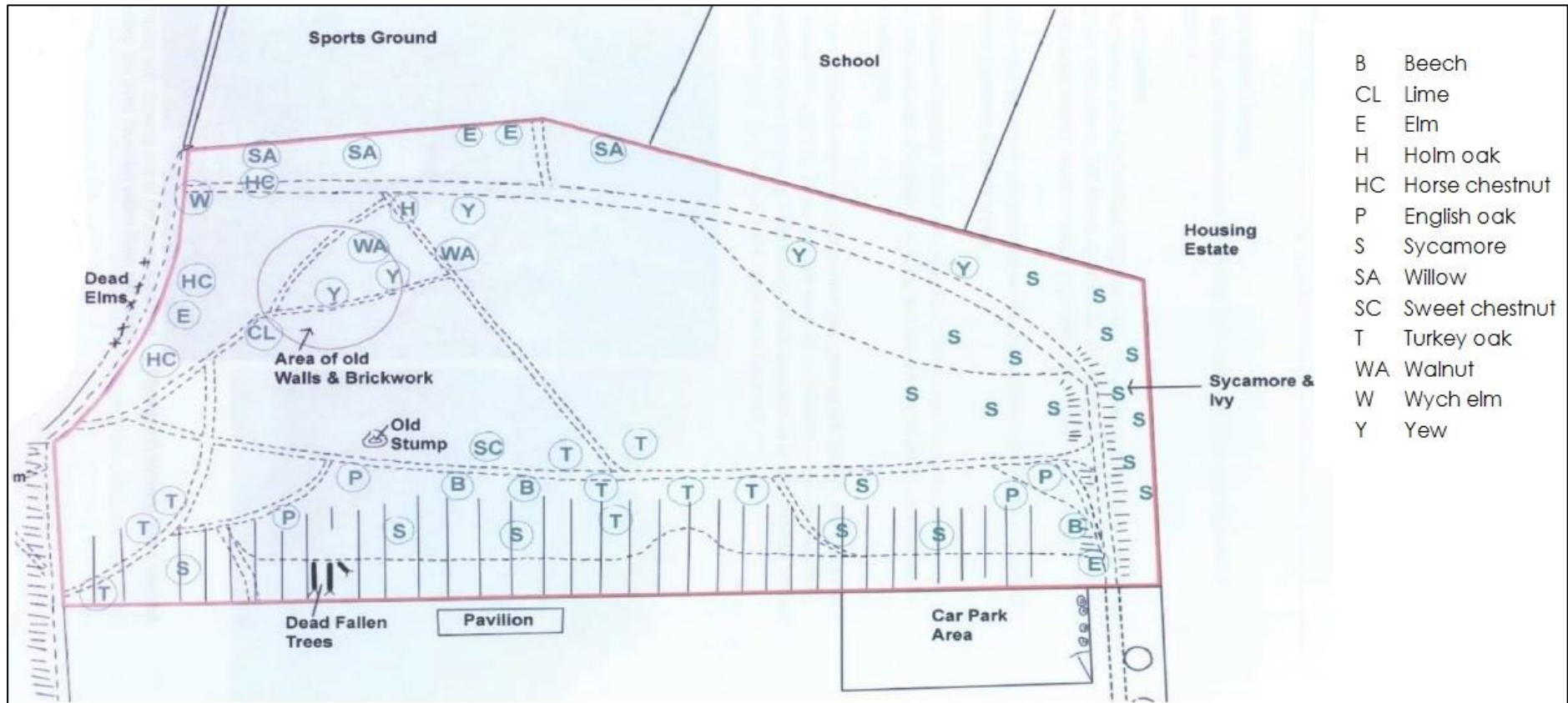
The ground flora in the woodland is typical of that found in secondary woodland with a mixture of ruderal plants that take advantage of open ground and some more traditional woodland plants such as bluebells and wood anemones. There are even records of enchanter's nightshade and sanicle, which along with the wood anemone are ancient woodland indicators. This kind of flora suggests that there may be a history of woodland that extends back several hundred years in this part of the site.

The ground layer is also dominated by ivy in places which is typical of secondary woodland. Ivy is often the victim of those who see it as something that smothers and ultimately chokes trees but this is not the case and ivy on trees does not need to be removed. It flowers late in

the season providing nectar and pollen and the berries provide vital food for birds during the winter.

The other significant feature of the ground layer is the presence of plants that are clearly from the garden at Rose Hill. These include winter aconites, several varieties of snowdrop and white sweet violets. Although not native plants, these garden escapees (or perhaps relics is more accurate) provide a splash of colour and a clue to the history of Rose Hill.

2.8.2. Significant and specimen trees



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Figure 9: Significant and specimen trees

Source: adapted from Groundwork Management Plan (2007)

The mature trees of Rose Hill Wood are the jewels of the site with some appearing to date back approximately 200 years. These trees are not all native and many are relics from the formal planting associated with Rose Hill when it was a private residence. Figure nine shows the location of some of the biggest and most important trees at Rose Hill. Some of the trees have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) placed upon them and these can be seen overleaf. Most of the TPOs are found in the northern part of the site but some of the most important trees run along the line of the east to west running path at the south of the site and these are not covered by TPOs.

These trees include some impressive specimens of beech, turkey oak, English oak and sweet chestnut. Large, but relatively young, sycamore trees dominate in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the woodland.

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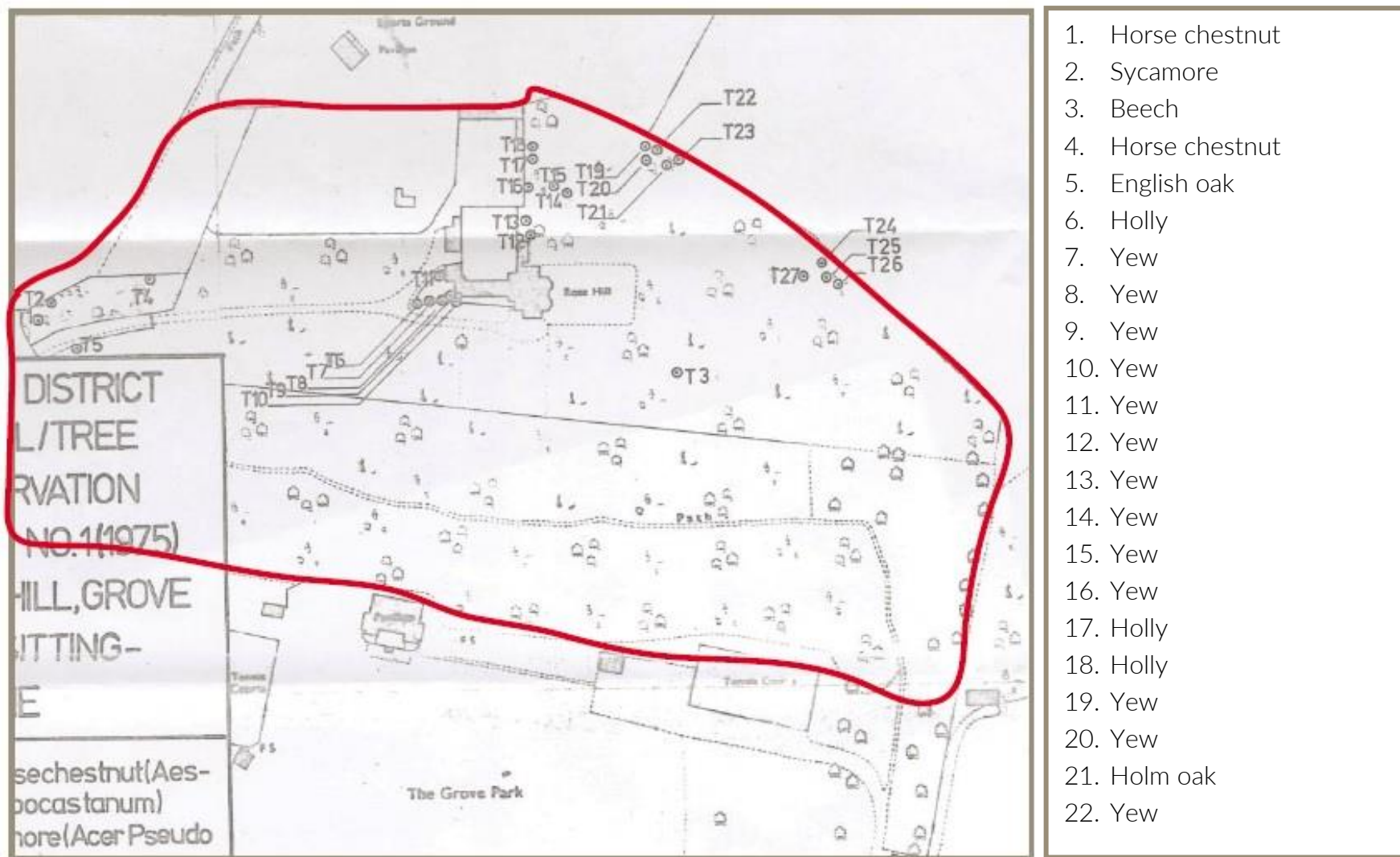


Figure 10: Tree Preservation Orders at Rose Hill

2.8.3. Paths

The only other habitat of note at Rose Hill Woods is the area of the paths. There are a significant number of paths in the woodland creating bare ground with opportunities for herbaceous plants between the interface of the path and the scrub layer. There are large, well-used paths and a network of desire lines created by people as they cross the wood or play in it. In places bare earth has been exposed where bikes have been used and/or footfall is particularly heavy. Although not particularly important for their ecological value, the total area taken up by paths is significant and more imaginative management of paths such as creating a zonal management structure could enhance the biodiversity of the site.



Figure 11: Part of the circular path at Rose Hill

2.9. Compartments

In order to assist with management planning and implementation, Rose Hill Woods has been split into different compartments that reflect both the geography and habitats found on site. Each compartment will have its own specific management objectives that need to be implemented.

Compartment summary

1	House	1.86 hectares
2	Specimen trees	1.39 hectares
3	Sycamore	0.72 hectares



Figure 12: Compartments at Rose Hill Woods

The compartments were chosen as they appear to be the most logical way to split the woodland. Rose Hill is to all intents and purposes a single block of secondary woodland but, on closer inspection, these three compartments became apparent. This is particularly the case if the 1946 imagery is viewed (Figure 4) as this clearly shows the three compartments. Compartment 1 is the old house and garden, compartment 2 contains a good percentage of the specimen trees and compartment 3 consists largely of sycamore trees. Each of these compartments will have different management proposals.

3. Management aims and objectives

3.1. Aims

The management plan has three overarching and linked aims:

Biodiversity. To maximise the potential for wildlife to flourish at Rose Hill Woods and to examine the resources available to achieve this.

History. To enable historical investigations to continue and ensure that the results of this work are known by local people and visitors to the site.

People. To make Rose Hill Woods a place that is well used, well valued and looked after by the local community.

3.2. Objectives

The management of the site has specific objectives that work towards achieving the aims identified above. These objectives have been established through public consultation, discussions with key stakeholders including Swale Borough Council and the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership and the implementation of sound, key principles of nature conservation management and the conservation of archaeology. These objectives will form the basis of the management plan for the next five years, the implementation of which will be detailed in the work plan in section 6.

1. Increase biodiversity within habitats to maximise the number of native species that thrive in the woodland.
2. Enhance the site for visitors. Make Rose Hill Woods a place visited by more local residents who understand both the wildlife and historical value of the site.
3. Have a better understanding of the range of species found at Rose Hill Woods.
4. Carry out works that do not conflict with protected species and habitats legislation.
5. Control the spread of invasive species within the woodland.
6. Maintain the woodland as a safe place for people to enjoy.

4. Strengths, threats and constraints

Rose Hill Woods is clearly valued by local people and has many positive attributes. There are many regular users of the wood, Swale Borough Council is committed to the ongoing management of the site and the number of species that have been recorded is impressive for a small wood that has such heavy use. The use of the woodland by the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne and Grove Park School are also excellent examples of how local green spaces can be used to provide opportunities for both volunteering and understanding local history and wildlife. However, there are threats to the nature conservation value, the historical remains at the site and local people's willingness to use the woodland.

4.1. Threats

- **Vandalism and anti-social behaviour** do impact Rose Hill Woods and some of those involved in consultation events have often mentioned that this does make them feel unsafe at times, particularly at night. However, vandalism is not common and usually at a fairly low level. For young people having places to explore and feel as if you are not constantly being watched is important. The interpretation of the site and information panels are going to be discussed in the near future and the potential for vandalism and arson will be considered seriously. Acts of vandalism should be dealt with promptly. The 'broken window' principle states that areas that appear to be well cared for attract less acts of anti-social behaviour.
- **Litter and dog faeces** are always an issue on urban sites and Rose Hill Woods is no different. Litter is often particularly bad along the main paths and near the entrances of the woods. These areas are particularly vulnerable to littering from those visiting nearby take away restaurants and shops. Minimal resources are available to deal with this and it creates a very bad first impression of the site. This is an area where community involvement could be of particular use and the appointment of a volunteer warden either officially or unofficially could also help.
- Local authorities are currently under significant financial strain. A lack of **resources** could compromise the ability to effectively manage the woodland. Rose Hill does not currently benefit from a ranger in the way that key strategic sites such as Milton Creek and Oare Gunpowder Works do. External funding applications, volunteers and continued support for the woodland can help to mitigate for these financial pressures and will form a key part of the management plan.
- **Invasive and/or non-native species** will exploit open space and should be controlled as they can become dominant if unchecked. With the exception of sycamore trees this is not a big issue at Rose Hill Woods
- **Dangerous trees** present a significant issue at Rose Hill Woods. Many of the trees are old and have signs of decay. Additionally, *Chalara fraxinea* (Ash die back) has been identified at Rose Hill Woods. Ash is relatively uncommon at the site but the disease will have an impact on those plants that are present and should be monitored.

4.2. Constraints

Although listed as constraints as these protected species limit certain activities, constraints should be seen as positive features of the woodland. The presence of constraints indicates that current management and conditions afford the privilege of Rose Hill Woods being chosen by species that are considered so valuable they are protected by legislation.

- **Bats** carry the highest level of protection and any works on the site should not impact upon their breeding and resting habitat. There are a considerable number of large trees at Rose Hill and the holes, decay and even fissures in the bark provide potential roosts for bats. These trees should be left untouched where safety concerns allow even at the end of their lives. To minimise the likelihood of impacting bat populations felling should take place between September and November and only after a visual inspection of trees.
- **Reptiles** are protected from harm by law and management activities must not lead to injury or death. Reptile populations are thought to be low at Rose Hill due to the limited basking opportunities and none of the prescriptions in the management plan are likely to cause injury or death to reptiles. The management plan will also identify actions that can enhance habitat for reptiles.
- All **wild birds**, their nests and eggs are protected from damage and destruction. As a consequence, potential nesting sites should not be mechanically managed during the nesting season (March to August). All but essential tree felling should also take place outside the bird breeding season.
- The presence of **Dormice** is thought to be unlikely, though not impossible, at Rose Hill Woods. The management activities prescribed within this document are unlikely to impact upon dormouse resting and breeding habitat. However, survey work for dormice is encouraged and the management work suggested in this plan will improve the diversity of plants that provide food for dormice.

5. Management prescriptions and rationale

Each of the compartments have specific objectives and this will be used as the rationale for each of the prescriptions. The work plan (an annex of this plan) will summarise all of the prescriptions.

Tree Felling

It is important to note that there are 27 trees at Rose Hill Woods that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. These trees should not be felled unless they are dead, dying or dangerous.

The felling of trees was a divisive issue during consultation and it was not possible to get a clear consensus of what people wanted to see happen. The only proposal was that sycamores should be felled. Opinions included:

- People like the tree cover provided and do not want any trees to be felled;
- During prioritisation there was some support for cutting sycamores and replacing with native shrubs and trees though little opposition either;
- There was, however, support for creating glades where the house used to stand to aid with interpretation which would include felling sycamores;
- There was also overwhelming support for managing the wood for wildlife though most people wanted to balance this with managing for people as well as wildlife. Managing for wildlife would include reducing the dominance of sycamore;
- When asked about the management of trees nine people only wanted dangerous trees to be removed, six people wanted sycamore to be removed and replaced with native shrubs and six people wanted sycamore removed to recreate the garden at Rose Hill. Although more people wanted to see sycamores removed it is not an overwhelming majority.
- Four of the telephone interviewees were positive about the removal of at least some sycamore trees and one was against.

On balance, some management of sycamore trees appears to be favoured by the majority but to balance the views of those worried about the impact this may have on the character of the woodland the removal should remain small scale and be phased.

5.1. Management prescriptions throughout the site

Certain operations apply across the whole of the site.

5.1.1. Invasive species control

Although invasive species do not pose a major problem at the current time, vigilance and eradication of non-native species now can prevent time consuming and/or expensive work in the future. The following species are viewed as the most important at this point in time:

- **Cherry laurel.** This garden escapee often finds its way into woodlands and can become a major problem. Cutting plants where it is seen is appropriate at this stage so that the spread by sexual reproduction can be limited. The use of herbicides should only be considered if the plant spreads rapidly and threatens to dominate in areas.
- **Sycamore.** Mature sycamore trees will be dealt with later in this section and there is no consensus about what to do with the mature trees. However, sycamore saplings should be removed when seen, particularly in areas that are being kept clear or areas where other shrub species are being promoted.
- **Holm oak.** There is only one large holm oak tree at Rose Hill and there is no suggestion that this tree should be removed. As with sycamore, the removal of saplings around the tree can help to prevent its spread.

These activities could make ideal volunteer tasks.



Figure 13: Invasive species at Rose Hill Woods

5.1.2. Monitoring wildlife

An essential element of assessing the impact of management activities is to monitor wildlife. Some of this can be carried out by volunteers where the skills exist and training can be provided. Developing relationships with some of the recording groups can help both build skills within the group and help generate more information about species distribution within the site. It is important that any recording that does take place is submitted to the recording groups and/or the Kent and Medway Biological Recording Centre. This should also include a survey of the significant trees on the site.

5.1.3. Wildlife friendly features

During consultation, people were asked how they felt about the introduction of wildlife friendly features in the wood such as bat and bird boxes, dead hedges and reptile hibernacula. The response to this was universally popular and should be considered not just for the potential benefits for wildlife but also because people can be involved in the installation and

monitoring of these features and they can also act as easy of helping to inform the public of what is being done to promote wildlife on the site and how.

- **Bat and bird boxes** are cheap to purchase but care needs to be taken when installing and checking due to Working at Height Regulations. There is also a danger that boxes can be vandalised, which is not a pleasant prospect if there are nesting or sheltering animals inside.
- **Dead hedges** can be produced with brash if any felling work takes place in the woodland. They are easy to construct and can also be used to help keep people from certain sensitive areas (though by no means a barrier). They are a possible fire risk.
- **Reptile hibernacula** are easy to create and have no cost. They are holes in the ground filled with rubble and wood and then covered with soil that create places for overwintering animals including reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.

5.1.4. Clearance of litter

Removing litter from the site is a very important way of improving the image of the site to local residents. Unfortunately, this work needs to take place at regular intervals as the results of a one-off spring clean can soon appear to have not happened. However, if one or two regular users of the woods can be encouraged to pick up a little litter every time they visit the overall impact can be impressive as can be seen at The Meads Community Woodland.

5.1.5. Maintaining public access

There is an extensive network of paths throughout the woodland that have been created by usage rather than by intent. The consultation asked people about paths. There was some support for surfacing and formalising the main path around the wood to make access easier in the winter but also others were vehemently opposed to surfacing of paths. There was also some support for blocking off some of the smaller and less used paths to minimise disturbance to wildlife but the majority did not want to see this happen. Zonal ride management could be implemented in some areas to help keep paths drier in the winter and this will be explored in greater detail in the compartment management prescriptions.

Although there are several unauthorised access points and nothing to stop motorbike access it is not proposed to do anything about this at the current time. Motorbike access is only occasional and preventing access is both costly and unlikely to be successful to those that are particularly determined to gain access.

5.1.6. Interpretation

There is currently no interpretation of the site. The community consultation events did reveal a high level of support for interpreting the site. Both the wildlife and the history were seen as important and that proper interpretation could enhance visits and help people to understand the significance of the site. Information panels were favoured but concerns were raised about

how vandal proof any installations would be. The Woodland Wildlife Hidden History website does carry information about the site and whilst a web browser search for 'Rose Hill Woods, Sittingbourne' does find this page it is probably not used much.

5.1.7. Furniture

During public consultation several people mentioned a requirement for benches. The woodland is small and does not have a great requirement for seating. However, several benches made from felled trees could be placed at the steepest part of the slopes on the main circular path.

5.1.8. Community engagement

There is currently no Friends of Rose Hill Woods and the formation of a group received a mixed reception during consultation. One of the reasons for a lack of enthusiasm was that there may not be many things for a 'Friends of' group to do except pick up litter. Although the need for a group is not as clear as it is at The Meads Community Woodland there are a variety of tasks that could be carried out by volunteers and the work plan will outline a number of other tasks that can be undertaken by volunteers. It should also be noted that the HRGS are very active at the site and are keen to continue to have a strong presence.

It is suggested that two approaches could be taken. A number of people have expressed an interest in joining a group over the years and these people can be approached to see if there is a real appetite to form a group. Should this not be successful (and even if it is) it may be possible to identify and appoint one or more volunteer wardens who are keen to pick litter and do other light tasks independently. They can then be given resources to help facilitate their tasks.

5.2. Compartment 1: House

This compartment covers the main area of the house and gardens and at first glance appears to be typical secondary woodland. However, further inspection shows that there are some interesting specimen trees and evidence of the existence of Rose Hill House that reveals itself as the remains of walls from the garden and the footings of the house. The evidence gathered from community consultation overwhelming showed that people would like to make a feature of the house, its remains and the voluntary work that has taken place at the wood to reveal so much about the history of the site. The aerial image from the 1940s gives a better idea than modern day imagery of how the house used to sit within Rose Hill Woods. The majority of the house and gardens still lies within the boundary of the wood though a small part of the garden in the north has been lost to the rugby pitches. It should be noted that the aerial



Figure 14: Compartment 1 as it looked in the 1940s

imagery is only a guide as to the current location. Where two images have been knitted together it is possible to see that parts of the garden are shown twice on the photo about 25 metres apart.

5.2.1. Management of trees around the house

The area that the main house stood at Rose Hill has been excavated by the Heritage Research Group of Sittingbourne. It is also an area that has fairly recently been colonised by sycamore trees. The sycamore trees around the house should be felled. The stumps should either be treated to prevent regrowth or stems that regrow should be removed annually. Trees with TPOs must be retained.

5.2.2. Interpretation of the house

As well as allowing sunlight to reach the woodland floor, the other reason for creating a glade around the house is so that the house can be interpreted in a way that allows visitors to understand what used to be on site. Although the interpretation of the site may require external funding some of the options that might be considered include the following suggestions that all received support during the consultation process:

- Exposure of the footings of the house and the garden wall in the area of the glade. This would be a way of making a feature of the house. Vegetation would need to be controlled in this area as regrowth would be rapid. This could be cleared annually either one metre around features to be exposed or the entire glade. As an alternative to annual clearance, this could be achieved by mowing at selected times during the year. The exact timing of mowing would depend upon the flowering plants that appear in this area. There would be considerable resource considerations for this option and it would probably depend upon volunteer input.
- Install interpretation at the house to help visitors understand the area. Although this could be an information panel there are other ways that this could be done including using reclaimed materials from the house to create a frame for the interpretation or using etched metal. As this part of the woodland is not overlooked the materials used and the ease of replacement of materials will need to be considered carefully.

During consultation, there was some support for the recreation of the garden as it was before the house was abandoned. There are a number of plants from the garden that still thrive so there is some evidence for what it would have looked like. The cost of doing this as well as the cost of maintenance would almost certainly be prohibitive. However, aerial photography can be used to get an idea of how open the site used to be and this could guide future tree management at Rose Hill.

5.3. Compartment 2: Specimen trees

This compartment contains some of the most spectacular trees in the wood and although they are not covered by Tree Preservation Orders, they are considered to be amongst the most valuable features of Rose Hill Woods. The compartment also contains the area nearest the sports pavilion and the cricket pitch which does suffer from litter.

5.3.1. Thinning around specimen trees

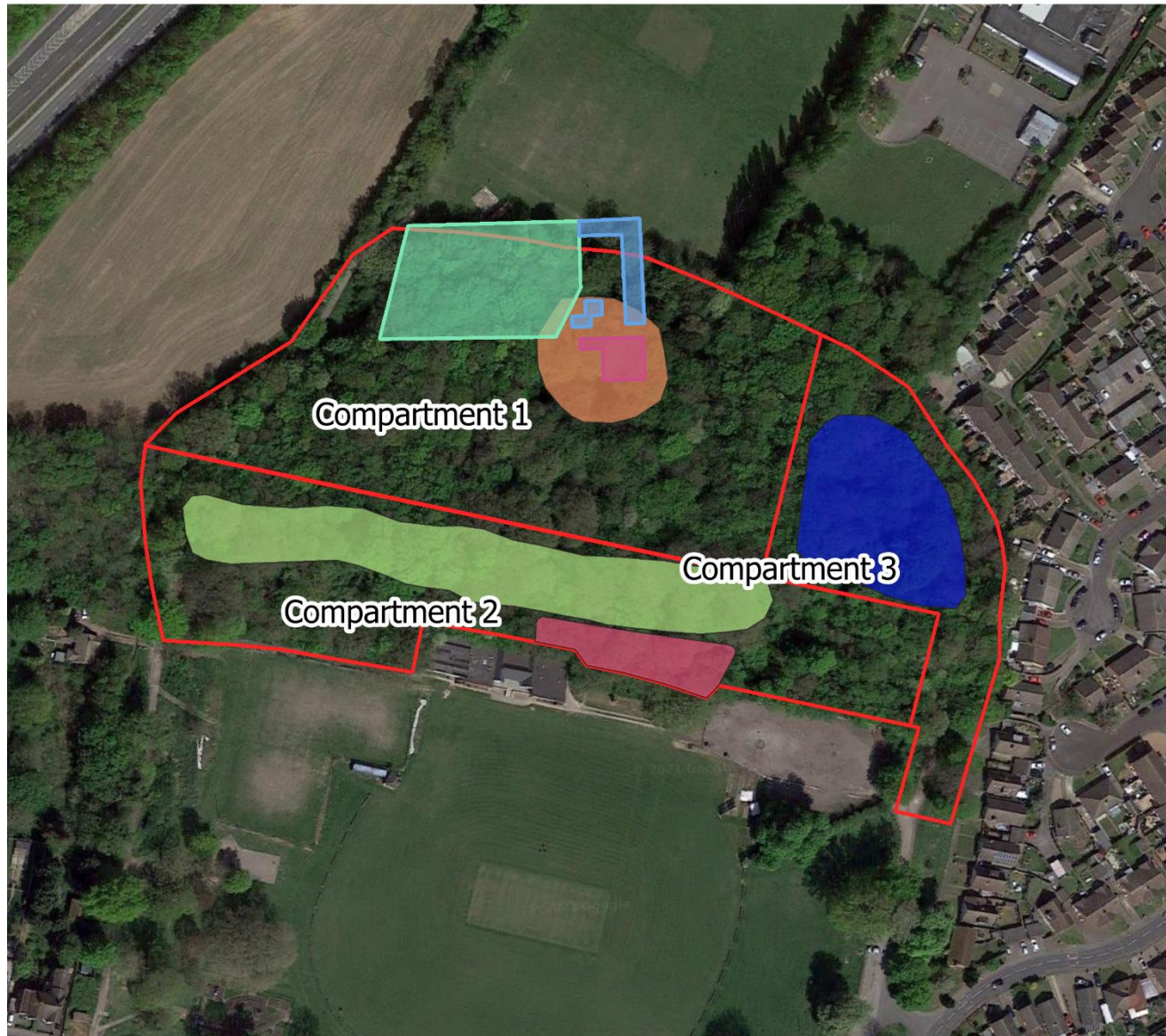
The specimen trees of this compartment mostly follow the path that runs from east to west. This is a well-used path with two benches. In order to make more of these special trees thinning of some of the sycamore trees growing around them is proposed. This will prevent the sycamore trees from growing into the crowns of the specimen trees. It will also have the benefit of creating additional light at the woodland floor which may benefit growth of the understorey and provide conditions suitable for wildlife including nesting birds and reptiles.



5.3.2. Glade creation

One of the most important parts of any woodland for its wildlife are open spaces. This not only increases the amount of woodland edge that wildlife thrives in but also creates a more open feel for people and gives them space to play in and explore. A glade is proposed at the southernmost edge of the woodland next to the sports pavilion. This provides benefits for wildlife but also provides a sheltered area in the sun to view cricket as was done in the past. Sycamore stumps should be treated and regrowth of sycamore should be cut every year or the area should be managed as grassland.

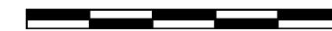
Rose Hill Woods - Management



- Rose Hill compartments
- Rose Hill Management**
 - Rose Hill House glade
 - Southern glade
 - Thin sycamore
 - Cut sycamore and replant
- Rose Hill House**
 - Outbuildings
 - Rose Hill House
 - Walled Garden of Rose Hill

© White Horse Ecology 2021

0 20 40 60 80 100 m



Base map © Google Maps 2021

Figure 16: Management prescriptions for Rose Hill Woods

5.4. Compartment 3: Sycamore

Compartment 3 comprises the eastern section of the woodland and is the area of the main circular path as it enters the wood in the south-east until the path leaves the wood to enter the rugby pitch and then Grove Park School. This makes it the busiest part of the wood for pedestrian traffic. It also makes it the area of the woodland that suffers most from litter. It is also the part of the woodland that is most dominated by sycamore. This dominance of the canopy is leading to the shading out of the understorey.

5.4.1. Sycamore thinning and replanting with native species

The recommendation for this part of the woodland is to fell sycamore trees where the budget allows and replant with native shrub and tree species including, hawthorn, cherry, field maple, wych elm and birch. It should be noted that there are several trees that have TPOs within the compartment. This will allow the recovery of the understorey that will help to ensure that tree species diversity is maintained within Rose Hill Woods and that nesting habitat for birds and potential foraging habitat is increased.



Figure 17: The main path in compartment 3

6. Appendix I: Timing of conservation tasks

Table 2: Optimal timing for conservation activities

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tree planting	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Optimal
Major vegetation clearance	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Poor	Sub-optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Path clearance	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Litter picking	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Tree felling	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Sub-optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal
Vegetation clearance (hand tools)	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Glade creation (management)	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
KEY	Optimal timing	Optimal timing	Sub-optimal timing	Sub-optimal timing	Sub-optimal timing	Sub-optimal timing	Sub-optimal timing	Poor timing	Poor timing	Poor timing	Never	Never

7. Appendix II: Species list

The following is a list of all of the species that have been recorded at Rose Hill Woods. These records have been reported by volunteers, seen by White Horse Ecology in 2021, Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership officers or form part of a 2006 survey undertaken by Kent Wildlife Trust. As such, it is a fairly rudimentary list and should not be seen even as a baseline survey but as incidental records submitted during site visits.

Species	Scientific name	Compartment (where known)	Las recorded (where known)
Birds			
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipter nisus</i>		12/02/2016
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		12/02/2016
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinera</i>	Grove Park School	12/02/2016
Gold finch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		12/02/2016
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>		12/02/2016
Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		12/02/2016
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		12/02/2016
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		12/02/2016
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		12/02/2016
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		12/02/2016
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		12/02/2016
Black headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Grove Park School	12/02/2016
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Grove Park School	12/02/2016
Coal tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		12/02/2016
Blue tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>		12/02/2016
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		12/02/2016
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		12/02/2016
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		2006
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		12/02/2016
Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		2006
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>		12/02/2016
Gold crest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		12/02/2016
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		12/02/2016
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		12/02/2016
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		2006

Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	12/02/2016
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	12/02/2016
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	12/02/2016
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2006

Plants and trees

Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	26/08/2021
Norway maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	26/08/2021
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	26/08/2021
Ground elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	26/08/2021
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	26/08/2021
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	26/08/2021
Wood anemone	<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	15/03/2015
Barren brome	<i>Anisantha sterillis</i>	2006
Cow parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	26/08/2021
Greater burdock	<i>Arctium lappa</i>	2006
Lesser burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>	26/08/2021
Lords and ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>	26/08/2021
Black horehound	<i>Ballota nigra</i>	2006
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	03/09/2015
False brome	<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	2006
Shepherd's purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	2006
Hedge bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	26/08/2021
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	03/09/2015
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	03/09/2015
Enchanter's nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	03/09/2015
Hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	2006
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	26/08/2021
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	26/08/2021
Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	26/08/2021
Greater willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	03/09/2015
Winter aconite	<i>Eranthis hyemalis</i>	26/08/2021
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	26/08/2021
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	26/08/2021
Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>	03/09/2015
Cleavers	<i>Gallium aparine</i>	03/09/2015
Dove's-foot crane's-bill	<i>Geranium molle</i>	2006
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	26/08/2021
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	26/08/2021
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	26/08/2021

Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	26/08/2021
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	26/08/2021
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	15/03/2015
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	26/08/2021
Stinking iris	<i>Iris foetidissima</i>	26/08/2021
Walnut	<i>Juglans regia</i>	03/09/2015
White dead nettle	<i>Lamium album</i>	15/03/2015
Red dead nettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	15/03/2015
Garden privet	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	03/09/2015
Common mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	26/08/2021
Wood millet	<i>Millium effesum</i>	2006
Hart's tongue fern	<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>	26/08/2021
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	03/09/2015
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	26/08/2021
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	26/08/2021
Cherry laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	26/08/2021
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	26/08/2021
Turkey oak	<i>Quercus cerris</i>	26/08/2021
Holm oak	<i>Quercus ilex</i>	26/08/2021
English oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	26/08/2021
Lesser celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	15/03/2015
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	26/08/2021
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolia</i>	26/08/2021
Wood dock	<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	26/08/2021
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	26/08/2021
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	26/08/2021
Sanicle	<i>Sanicula europaea</i>	2006
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	03/09/2015
Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	2006
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	26/08/2021
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	26/08/2021
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	26/08/2021
Lime	<i>Tilia x europaea</i>	26/08/2021
Colt's foot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	2006
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	26/08/2021
English elm	<i>Ulmus procera</i>	26/08/2021
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	26/08/2021
Germander speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	15/03/2015
Ivy leaved speedwell	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	15/03/2015
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	26/08/2021

Sweet violet	<i>Viola odorata</i>	03/09/2015
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Butterflies and moths

Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	2006
Speckled wood	<i>Perarge aegeria</i>	2006
A longhorn moth	<i>Nemophora degeerella</i>	2006
Nettle tap	<i>Anthophila fabriciana</i>	2006

Other invertebrates

Seven spotted ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7 punctata</i>	2006
Buff-tailed bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	2006
Red-tailed bumblebee	<i>Bombus lapidaries</i>	2006
White-tailed bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>	2006
A centipede	<i>Lithobius forficatus</i>	2006
A woodlouse	<i>Oniscus asellus</i>	2006
A woodlouse	<i>Porcellio scabur</i>	2006
Great black slug	<i>Arion ater</i>	2006
Brown lipped slug	<i>Cepaea normalis</i>	2006
Garden snail	<i>Helix aspersa</i>	2006

Mammals

Grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus corolinensis</i>	15/03/2015
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Reptiles

Slow-worm	<i>Anguilis fragilis</i>	23/09/2014
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Fungi

Horse mushroom	<i>Agaricus arvensis</i>	2006
	<i>Agrocybe praecox</i>	2006
Jelly ear	<i>Auricularia auricular-judae</i>	2006
Many zoned polypore	<i>Coriolus versicolor</i>	2006
	<i>Enteridium lycoperdon</i>	2006
	<i>Hyphodonta sambuci</i>	2006
	<i>Lycogala epidendron</i>	2006
Fairy ring	<i>Marasmius oreades</i>	2006
	<i>Peziza micropus</i>	2006
	<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	2006
Candle snuff	<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	2006
Dead man's fingers	<i>Xylaria polymorpha</i>	2006

8. Appendix III: Summary of public consultations

Rose Hill Summary

Comments in **RED** are from phone interviews

How often

More than once a week	3
Once a week	2
Once a month	2
Once a year	6
Not for years	3
Never	2

Why do you go?

Dog walking	4
Litter picking	1
Peace	1
History	4
Walk	3
Local	1
Meeting people	1
Enjoy woodlands	3
Rugby and cricket	1

What do you like?

Easy access to children's play area	1
Wildlife	7
Peace and tranquillity	5
Meet people	1
History	6
Tree planting	2
Parking	1

Prioritisation Exercise (22/1/17)

Respondents allowed one green dot to show support and one red dot to show opposition

Expose footings and garden walls of Rose Hill house

YES 2 NO 0

Friends Of group

YES 0 NO 1

Cut sycamores and replace with native shrubs

YES 0 NO 1

Addition of wildlife friendly features (bat boxes, reptile hibernacula, dead hedges)

YES 5 NO 0

Create glades where the house used to be to help wildlife and make feature of the house

YES 2 NO 0

Simple benches made from logs

YES 3 NO 0

Respondents also given the opportunity to rank six suggested actions

Numbers below show number of people who ranked ideas in each position

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Expose footings	4	1	3	2	1	0
Friends Of group	2	1	0	0	1	6
Cut sycamores and replace	0	1	0	1	7	2
Wildlife friendly features	2	8	1	0	0	0
Create glade around house	2	1	7	0	0	1
Benches from logs	1	0	0	7	1	2

Place for people to go 1

What puts you off

Gangs of kids 1

Drug dealers 1

Graffiti and litter 1

Feel unsafe 2

Steep access 2

Dog poo 2

Muddy bits 2

Dumped garden rubbish 1

IDEAS

	YES	NO	DON'T MIND
More litter bins	6	1	1
Picnic benches	5		3
Maps	4		4
Information signs (wildlife and history)	7		
Make a feature of old house	8		
Surfaced paths	4	4	1
Seating	5		3
Open areas for recreation	3	2	2
More family events	5		3
Volunteer activities	8		2

What would you like to see?

Make a feature of old house 2

Wooden playhouse in the style of the house with ropes and swings 1

Bat boxes, bird boxes, bug houses and dead hedges 1

McDonalds picking up litter 1

Interpretation of old house	3
Signage	5
Pond	1
More wildlife friendly areas	1
More seating	2
More events	1
School visits	1
Use old trees for benches	1

MANAGEMENT

Trees

Only remove dangerous trees	9
Remove some sycamore and replant	6
Remove sycamore and recreate garden	6
Other	1
Don't mind	1

Recreating garden too expensive	2
I like it the way it is	1
Increase numbers of trees	1
Retain character of the woods but increase species diversity	1
Make clear areas with seating	1
Access by foot and by bike easier with tall trees	1

General

Don't manage	0
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Manage for wildlife	5
Manage for people	0
Bit of both	12
Other	0
Don't mind	0

Just a bit of tidying up

Wildlife should be encouraged and monitored

Few woods in urban area and could be valuable resource for schools etc.

The rubbish is an eyesore

Paths

Leave	8
Block some paths	4
Surface some paths	6
Other	0
Don't mind	1

Nearby KCC footpath not very buggy friendly

All weather paths may discourage use of informal paths

Foot access can be difficult in winter

Archaeology

Add info to website	13
Create a panel	13
Expose footings to make a feature	14
Recreate garden	8
Other	0
Don't mind	1

Information boards and picnic area would create a destination

Footings may get vandalised

More information the better

Friends of 8

Graeme Tuff

- Increase species diversity and reduce sycamore
- Create a glade that is sympathetic to archaeology
- Survey of estate trees
- Leave informal paths
- No litter bins in woodland
- New furniture should be rustic (logs)
- Perhaps outline of house to be interpreted

Ali Corbel

- Interpretation panels for wildlife and archaeology
- School involvement
- Waymarkers

Bob Bicker

- Likes understorey at Rose Hill and would support removal of more sycamore
- Don't remove the ivy
- Litter a problem

Mike Baldock

- Likes it as it is
- No necessity for cutting trees
- Don't remove the ivy
- Log seats on hills at the sides of woodland
- Paths should be left
- Interpretation panels
- Would like Swale to buy land to west of Rose Hill
- Supports interpreting the house on the ground but sees problems

Malcolm Moore

- Interpretation panel
- Tidying up undergrowth and removing dead trees

Rose Hill should be interpreted but don't leave holes

Paths OK

No benches or tables

Friends Of group could do litter picking but what else

Richard Emmett

Supports glade around the house plus marking shape of house

Interpretation panels (could be housed at Cricket Club)

Self-guided walk

Likes very old trees and sees them as important

Andrew Mayfield

Archaeological work looking for other time periods than the house

Clearance of glades where known archaeology is with linking pathways between glades

Make remains of archaeology more obvious

Archaeological trail through woodlands

Interpretation plan

Panels at Cricket Club and Grove School

Permanent survey grid to aid future examinations of the site

School archaeology and history project

Write up of investigations

Simon Mason

Very positive about school involvement and wants more both archaeology and Forest Schools

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Rose Hill Woods Work Plan 2022 - 2026



This plan has been prepared by White Horse Ecology on behalf of Swale Borough Council.

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November 2021



White Horse Ecology



Work Plan

This work plan contains two tables. The first is a list of recommendations and enhancements to Rose Hill Woods that have been suggested by stakeholders and White Horse Ecology. This table contains recommendations for which additional funding will be required. This will have to be raised either by Swale Borough Council or with the assistance of volunteers.

The second table contains a set of management prescriptions for the wood that ideally should be carried out. The management prescriptions in the second table are currently unfunded though there are some activities that can be carried out by volunteers.

A map that will help to pinpoint the exact locations of management prescriptions is found at the back of this work plan.

The rationale and objectives for management can be found in section 4 of the management plan. More detailed information about some of the prescriptions can be found in section 5 of the management plan.

N.B. It should be noted that whilst resources are minimal at present, Swale Borough Council should prioritise tree surveys to identify potentially hazardous trees and remedial felling if required.

Rose Hill Woods Recommendations

The table below contains recommendations for actions that should be taken as and when financial and time resources allow. They have largely been identified following public consultation. They are outside of the scope of the day to day management prescriptions that need to be carried out to maintain the woods but should be used to inform and prioritise future actions and funding applications. Not all these recommendations will necessarily be achieved within the lifetime of this management plan.

Rose Hill Woods Recommendations

What	How	When (season)	3 rd party involvement	Where	Volunteer task?
Creation of Friends of Rose Hill Woods (FORHW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact stakeholders and potential key volunteers to draw up roles of group and set practicalities in place 	Anytime	FORHW, SBC, MKDCP, HRGS, SinB	All	Y
Volunteer warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be a key role within the FORHW group held by one or more people. This person or people could act as the 'eyes and ears' of the woodland and report damage, anti-social behaviour and/or other simple tasks such as litter picking 	Anytime	FORHW, SBC	All	Y
Benches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for placing benches made from the trunks of felled trees on slopes and near site of house 	Anytime	SBC, MKDCP	1 & 3	Possibly installing
Rose Hill House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision to be made about how to leave the in situ remains of Rose Hill Wood and whether to expose footings and walls or not 	Anytime	SBC, HRGS, KCC, MKDCP	1	Possibly

School engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand from Grove Park School of r continued events such as the archaeology week held in 2015 or surveying trees/wildlife 	Anytime	KCC/MKDCP	All	N
Community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community involvement not seen as important as at The Meads but support for volunteer activities and some events was strong 	Anytime	All	All	Y
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interpretation plan is funded and will be completed after the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project has been completed 	Anytime	SBC, MKDCP, HRGS, SinB	All	To assist
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From trim trails to children’s wildlife and history trails 	Anytime	All	All	Y
Wildlife friendly features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bat and bird boxes, insect hotels, beetle banks, hibernacula and other features can all be installed and created relatively cheaply 	Anytime	FORHW	All	Y

SBC = Swale Borough Council (or their contractors)
 MKDCP = Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership
 KCC = Kent County Council Heritage
 HRGS = Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne
 SinB = Swale/Sittingbourne in Bloom

Rose Hill Woods Management Prescriptions

This table provides a list of activities that will maintain Rose Hill Woods and implement the ongoing management recommendations of the management plan across the next five years. Clearly there are budgetary restrictions on what can be achieved but volunteer input could achieve several of the prescriptions outlined here. **It should be noted that tree safety surveys and remedial work should be prioritised.**

The volunteer column denotes whether volunteers could be involved in carrying out the task. The locations of activities and their timings are shown in the maps following this table.

Rose Hill Woods Management Prescriptions

What	How	When (time of year)	3 rd party involvement	Where (compartment)	Volunteer task?	When (if not annual)
Tree management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pull sycamore and holm oak saplings by hand or any other invasive species. To be focused in areas where sycamore clearance/glade creation as taken place 	Anytime	FORHW	1,2 & 3	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thin sycamore in compartment 2 alongside path 	Oct to March	Contractor	2	N	Any year as resources become available
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create glades around house and behind pavilion 	Oct to March	Contractor	1 & 2	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut sycamore in compartment 3. 	Oct to March	Contractor	3	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut glade near house and behind pavilion annually 	Oct to March	FORHW	1 & 2	Y	

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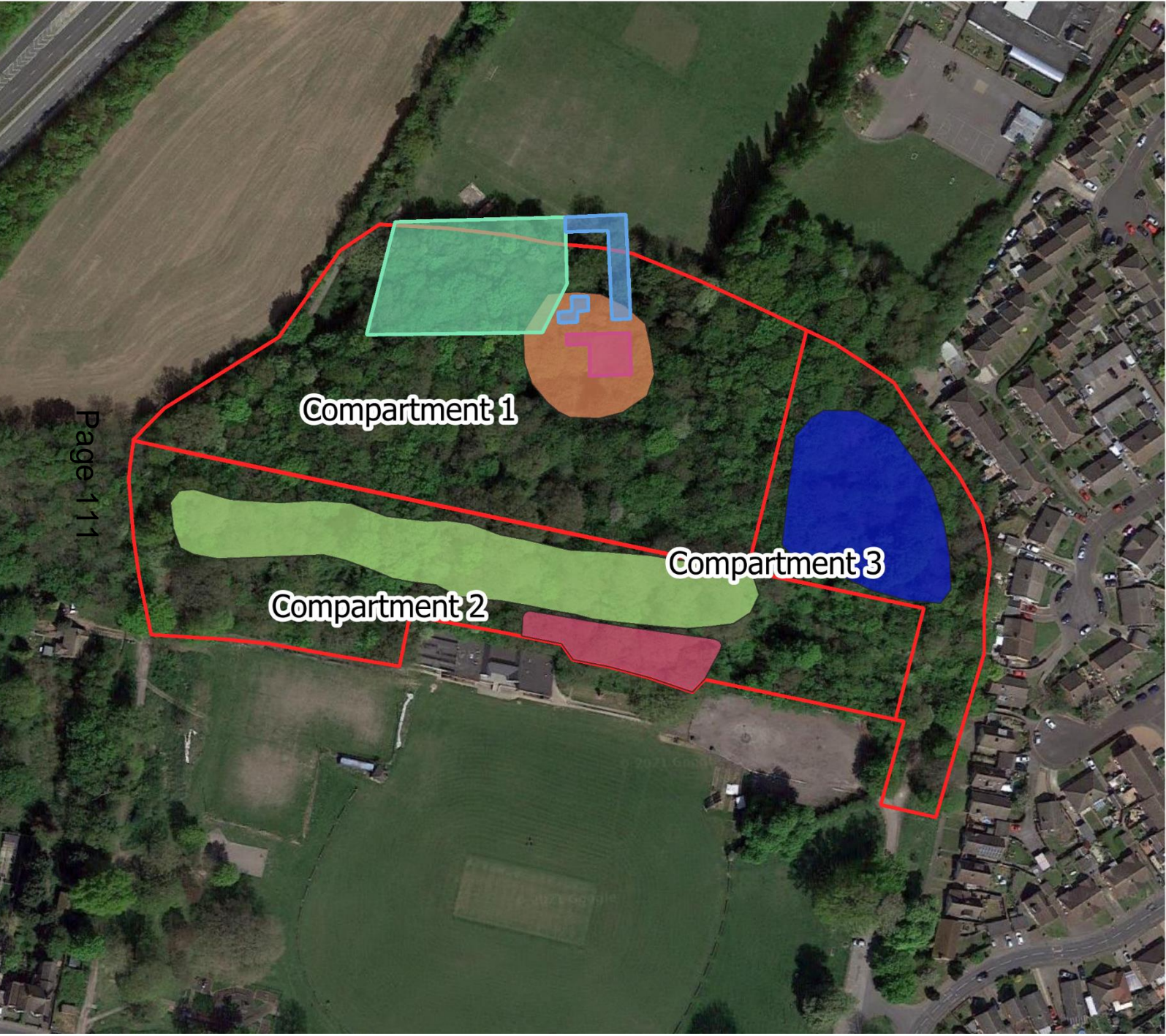
Health and safety (most important prescription)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor potentially hazardous trees near areas with high levels of public access and fell if necessary 	Anytime	SBC	All	N
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the safety of installed structures such as benches, litter bins, interpretation and log piles. Remove or repair as necessary 	Anytime	FORHW/ SBC	All	Y
Fallen wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where fallen wood exists or is felled and can't be left in situ log piles and/or dead hedges to be created where possible and secured in place 	Anytime	FORHW /SBC	1,2 & 3	Y
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear main paths of vegetation if needed so that they can be used safely by public 	Spring /summer	FORHW/SB C	All	Y
Archaeological Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued excavations and maintenance of cleared area around house 	Spring/summer/autumn	HRGS, KCC and FORHW	1	Y
Litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick litter from paths and other areas Remove fly-tipped waste 	Anytime	All	All	Y
		Anytime	SBC	All	Y
Tree planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant in areas where sycamore has been removed 	Nov to Feb	FORHW	3	Y
Wildlife recording (all records to be sent to Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre and relevant recording)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bat surveys using detectors 	Summer	FORHW, KBG	All	Y
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree surveys of significant /specimen trees 	Anytime	FORHW	All	Y
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Birds Wildflowers 	Anytime	FORHW	All All	Y Y

group) In approximate order of importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small mammal surveys (mice, shrews, voles) 	Spring/summer	FORHW, KFC	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad hoc visual surveys (larger mammals) 	Winter	FORHW, KMG	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nest box or nesting tube surveys for dormice 	Anytime	FORHW	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invertebrate surveys but particularly moth and butterfly surveys 	Summer	FORHW, KMG	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing felt refugia placed in grassland areas (when created) to check for reptiles 	Summer	KFC	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N.B. Licence required for dormouse and bat surveys if disturbance of animals likely to take place 	Mar to Oct	KRAG, FORHW	1 & 2	Y	
Management Plan review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update management plan with particular reference to management prescriptions and key species 	April	MKDCP /White Horse Ecology/All	All	Y	Annual if possible

FORHW = Friends of Rose Hill Woods
 KBG = Kent Bat Group
 KFC = Kent Field Club
 KRAG = Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group
 KCC = Kent County Council Heritage

SBC = Swale Borough Council (or their contractors)
 MKDCP = Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership
 KMG = Kent Mammal Group
 HRGS = Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne

Rose Hill Woods - Management



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Rose Hill compartments

Rose Hill Management

- Rose Hill House glade
- Southern glade
- Thin sycamore
- Cut sycamore and replant

Rose Hill House

- Outbuildings
- Rose Hill House
- Walled Garden of Rose Hill

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0 20 40 60 80 100 m



Base map © Google Maps 2021

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The Meads Community Woodland

Management Plan
2022-2026



The Meads Community Woodland

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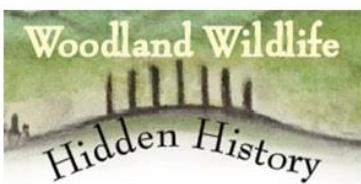
This management plan has been produced by White Horse Ecology on behalf of Swale Borough Council. It is an update of a management plan written in 2017 that was commissioned by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership that formed part of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project that was been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Swale Borough Council.

It should be noted that most of the material in this plan has been updated from the 2017-22 plan. The work carried out in this update included site visits to refresh species lists and discuss management with Swale Borough Council staff as well as discussions with local stakeholders. Mapping was also updated for this plan. This work ensures that the management plan is still fit for purpose and that it can be used as a guide to future management by all of those that have an interest in the site. It is hopes that this plan can be used as a basis for exciting work that is being initiated by volunteers on the ground.

Thanks are due to all of the stakeholders and members of the public who took time to contribute their ideas to the original management plan as well as this update.

November 2021

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1. Introduction

The Meads Community Woodland is owned and managed by Swale Borough Council. This management plan has been produced as a way of gathering together some of the accumulated knowledge about the site to create a plan for the future management and use of the site. It reflects the views of local people, stakeholders and those working at the woodland who have been consulted about their views. The uses of the document include:

- Clearly identifying management objectives for each of the distinct habitats within the site as well as how the woodland should be interpreted and whether there are infrastructure improvements needed to help people enjoy the open space.
- Updating knowledge about species present on site and ensuring that protected flora and fauna are identified and that works enhance and conserve the habitats of these species.
- Acting as a guide to a possible future 'Friends of' group that may get involved in the management of the site.
- Supporting external funding applications.
- Allowing Swale Borough Council to prioritise work programmes undertaken by contractors and make the best use of current site expenditure.

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre have provided species information for the site and this has been supplemented by on-site surveys. The aim of this document is to be a short introduction to the wildlife, heritage and amenity of the site that is readable, identifies achievable outcomes and maximises the biodiversity potential for the site.

The 2021 update is set within a context of increased community involvement opportunities at The Meads with interest to develop this from both Bobbing Parish Council and Councillor James Hunt. Set alongside this, Swale Borough Council has limited resources to devote to The Meads in terms of officer time and finance. This updated plan will reflect this changed environment and suggest some potential ways forward.

1.1. Location

The Meads Community Woodland is situated in the western part of Sittingbourne just to the east of Bobbing and between the Sonora Fields and Grove Park housing estates. The centre of the site is located at TQ 893 644.

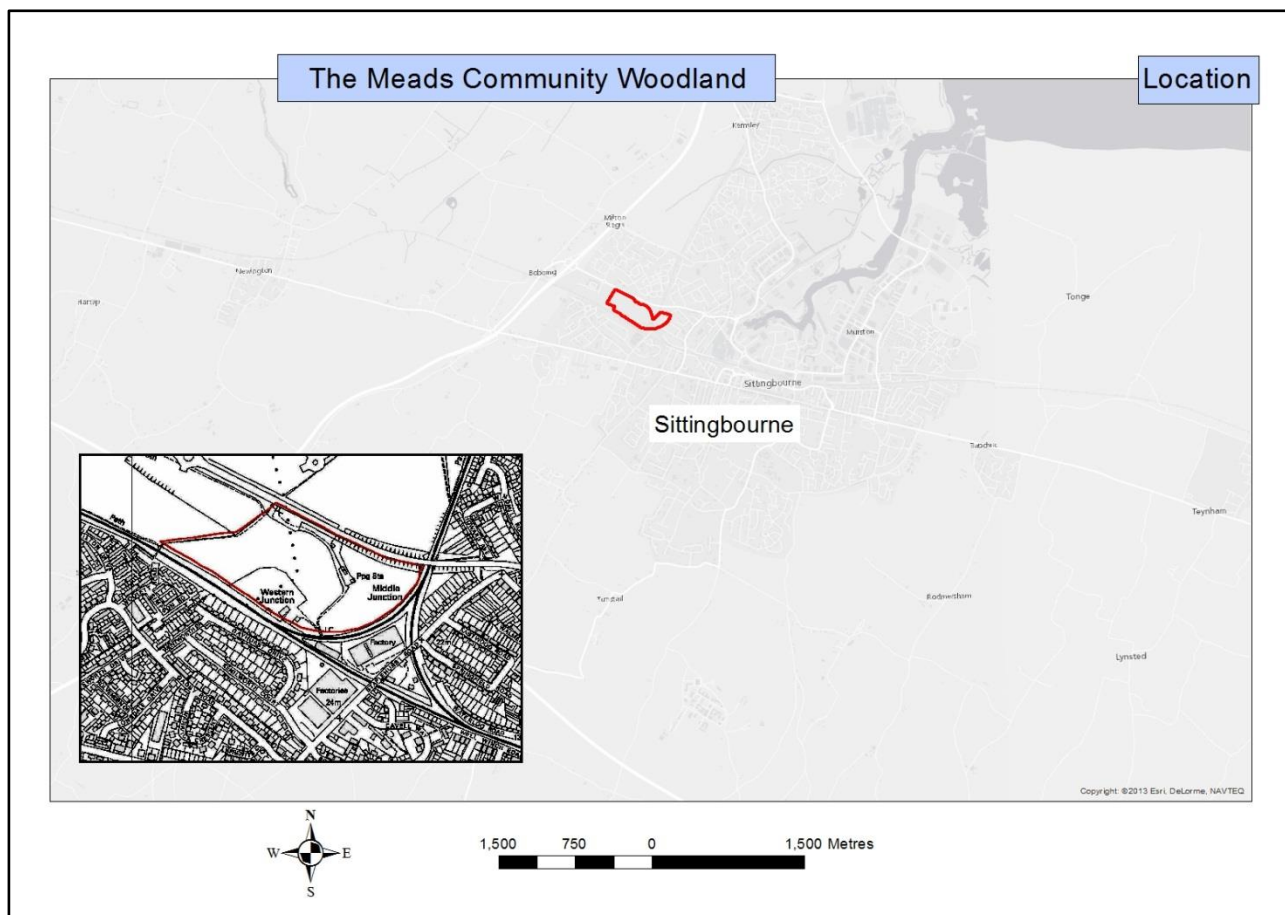


Figure 1: Location of The Meads Community Woodland

1.2. Links to strategy documents

There is a selection of strategic documents at a national, county and district level that are relevant to the purpose, aims and objectives of The Meads Community Woodland.

1.2.1. National

Although many documents could be quoted in this section, for the sake of brevity, just one national level document will be referenced.

25 Year Environment Plan (2018)¹

This is the overarching plan for the environment over the next 25 Years. It is a high-level document but has some clear goals:

1. *Clean air.*
2. *Clean and plentiful water.*
3. *Thriving plants and wildlife.*
4. *A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought.*

¹ 25 Year Environment Plan -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

5. Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.
6. Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

In addition, we will manage pressures on the environment by:

7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
8. Minimising waste.
9. Managing exposure to chemicals.
10. Enhancing biosecurity.

The Meads Community Woodland contributes to most of these goals. The ecosystem services benefits of a wood like The Meads should be valued highly and be recognised for the contribution they make at a local and district level.

1.2.2. County level

Kent Environment Strategy (2016)²

This is a high-level document outlining environmental priorities for Kent County Council. The vision for this document neatly encapsulates the value of green spaces like The Meads to local communities:

“The county of Kent is benefitting from a competitive, innovative and resilient economy, with our natural and historic assets enhanced and protected for their unique value and positive impact on our society, economy, health and wellbeing.”

Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy (2020-2045)³

This strategy looks specifically at targets for biodiversity over the next 25 years, linking broadly with the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan

The goals of this document relate to the quality of terrestrial habitat, how connected it is and how much of it there is. This management plan looks to contribute to these goals.

Kent Nature Partnership Strategic Priorities and Action Plan (2018-2023)⁴

This document sits below the Environment Strategy (KES) as the mechanism for delivering the biodiversity elements of the KES. The document highlights four priorities, all of which are relevant to The Meads Community Woodland and which the area is delivering:

Priority 1 - Strengthening the consideration of biodiversity within local plans and the growth agenda

Priority 2 - Embedding natural capital into planning and decision making

Priority 3 - Taking forward the health and nature agenda

² Kent Environment Strategy - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-environment-strategy>

³ Kent Biodiversity Strategy - <http://www.kentnature.org.uk/uploads/Kent%20Biodiversity%20Strategy%202020%20-%202045.pdf>

⁴ KNP Strategic priorities and Action Plan - <https://www.kentnature.org.uk/uploads/files/About-Us/Kent%20Nature%20Partnership%20-%20Strategic%20Priorities%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018%20-%202023.pdf>

Priority 4 - Improving the quality, extent and connectivity of our high value habitats

1.2.3. District level

Swale Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020)

Swale Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and released this action plan in 2020 to help The Council become carbon neutral by 2025 and for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030. As well as these ambitious targets this document commits to make space for nature as a key priority, and safeguard our wild places, ancient woodlands and hedgerows.

Of the ten priorities outlined by the document the two that are most relevant to The Meads Community Woodland is:

- *Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.*
- *Improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling.*

Swale Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy (2018-2022)⁵

This strategy assesses the provision of open space in the borough, how it fits into planning policy and local strategic planning and identifies an action plan. The plan acknowledges that the funding situation is difficult at present but also makes the following recommendation:

“Destination (Strategic) Sites should be recognised through protection and enhancement.”

The recommendation goes on to state:

“The Council should seek to ensure the role and quality of these sites through continued enhancement so providing a diverse range of features.”

The strategy action plan also states that the following targets will be put in place:

- a. To invest at least £100,000 capital spending per year for 5 years on existing open spaces through developer contributions, grants, capital works and disposals.*
- b. To invest £500,000 in a rolling programme to refurbish several play areas during the life of the strategy.*
- c. To achieve at least 3 Green Flag parks and open spaces in the next 5 years.*
- d. To review our open space portfolio and identify relevant sites for investment, disposal or alternative uses by September 2018, linked to our successful programme of Community Asset Transfer and in consultation with the relevant Ward Members.*
- e. To actively promote our open spaces in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups as places to sustain and improve health and wellbeing.*

⁵ Swale Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy - <https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s10121/Appendix%20-%20SWALE%20BOROUGH%20COUNCIL%20OPEN%20SPACES%20AND%20PLAY%20STRATEGY%20FINALSENT%20TO%20CABINET.pdf>

- f. *To increase the amount of open space under a wildlife management regime by 5 hectares and by December 2022.*
- g. *Seek improvement of horticulture in our open spaces to enrich the biodiversity*
- h. *To increase community involvement in open space management by providing support to new or existing community groups.*
- i. *To ensure actions in relation to Local Plan Policy DM 17 are put in place to protect existing open space and private playing fields, to help negotiate new open space in future housing developments and to continue the designation of Local Green Space across the Borough.*
- j. *Look at new methods of operation and potential commercial ventures to help meet the ongoing cost of maintaining open space facilities*
- k. *A Borough wide review of public conveniences to also consider an audit of existing Changing Places toilets provision.*

These priorities form the basis for this management plan's approach to The Meads Community Woodland.

Health and Well Being Improvement Plan (2020-2023) – currently only available in consultation form

This document highlights the importance of good health, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the importance of taking regular exercise. Green spaces play an important part in how people take their exercise. One of the priorities identified in this document is:

“Work with Leisure and Technical services and Comms to consider how we use and promote our open spaces to encourage physical activity and improve wellbeing.”

Swale Biodiversity Action Plan (updated 2016)⁶

This plan focuses on the habitats and species that make Swale's biodiversity special. It includes priority habitats relevant to The Meads Community Woodland:

- *Woodland*
- *Wildflower grassland*
- *Built up areas and gardens*

These are all habitats that are found at or adjacent to The Meads Community Woodland

⁶ Swale Biodiversity Action Plan - <https://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Biodiversity-Action-Plan-2016.pdf>

Swale Green Grid Strategy (2016)⁷

This document examines how the borough's green spaces can be enhanced and monitored via a partnership of organisations.

There are also other documents relevant to The Meads Community Woodland:

Swale Volunteering Strategy (2013-2016)⁸

Swale Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement (2018-2022)⁹

1.3. Information gathering

This management plan was compiled with specific reference to information gathered from stakeholders and members of the public over the course of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project managed by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership. The following sources of information were used to assess opinions and a summary of the information that was contributed can be found in appendix III:

- Consultation during the introductory phase of the project (2014/15)
- Consultation for The Meads futures (2016)
- Stakeholder telephone conversations conducted in December 2016
- E-mail consultation in December 2016
- Public prioritisation and consultation event on 22nd January 2017
- Further consultation with staff and local stakeholders including Councillor James Hunt and Bobbing Parish Council took place in autumn 2021 to inform the updated plan.

1.4. How to use this management plan

Management plans are not designed to be static documents that never change. They are part of a process that involves identifying aims and objectives, putting a plan into place and then reviewing the success of the plan, adjusting as necessary. A typical management flow diagram can be found below.

⁷ Swale Green Grid Strategy -

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s6079/Green%20Grid%20Strategy%202016%20proof%20Aug%202016.pdf>

⁸ Swale Volunteering Strategy - <https://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Strategies-plans-and-policies/Swale-Volunteering-Strategy-May-2014.pdf>

⁹ Swale Cycling and Walking Guidance Statement -

<https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s11291/Item%208%20Appendix%20I.pdf>

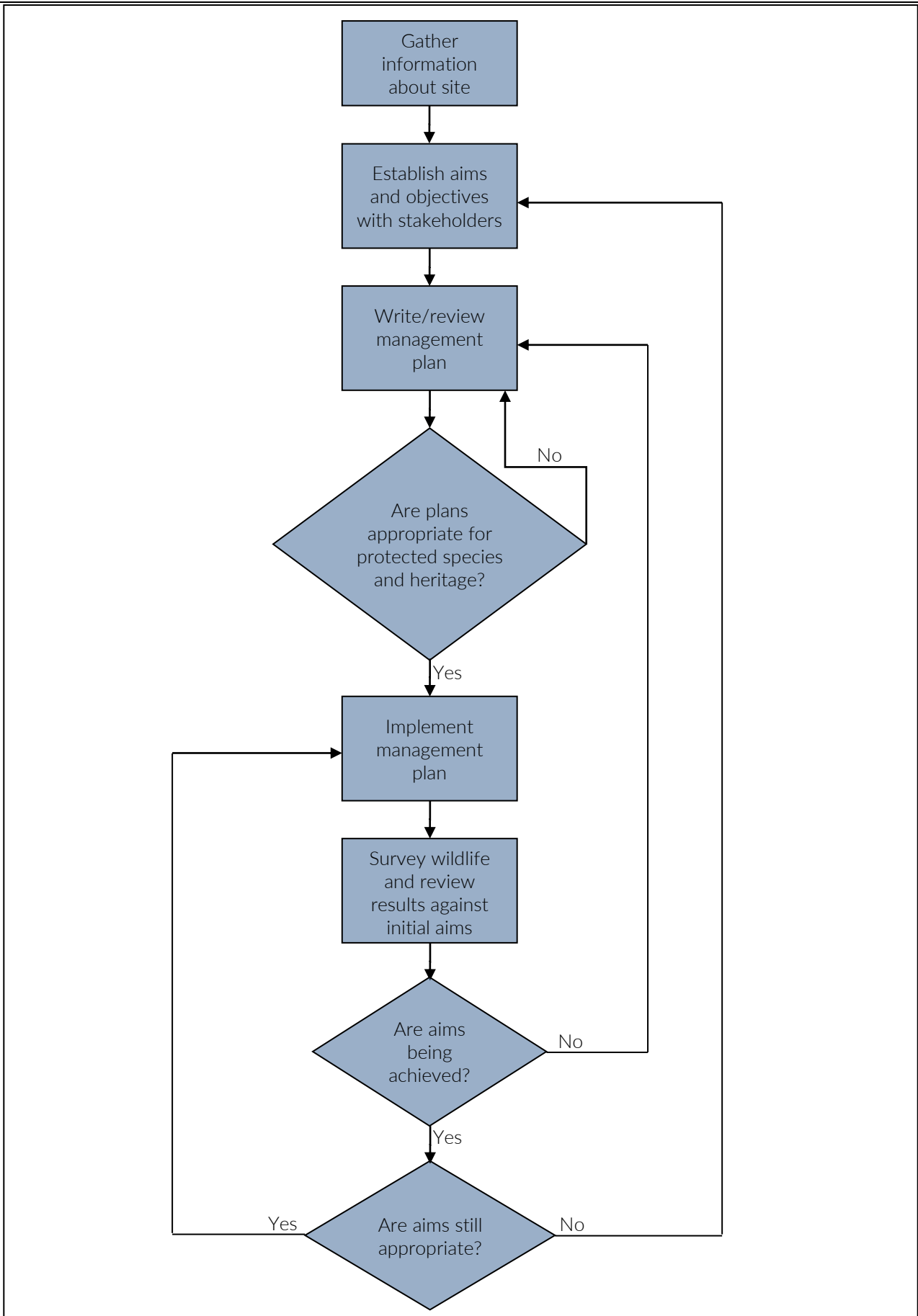


Figure 2: Management plan flow diagram

2. Site description

The Meads Community Woodland is a new wood that was planted in the late 1990s and consists of a wooded area with managed pathways as well as a small area of grassland. The site is owned by Swale Borough Council and provides local accessible green space for the communities of west Sittingbourne, particularly the estates of Sonora Fields and Grove Park. The trees are currently all of a similar size due to the fact that they were planted around the same time. However, there are varying sizes dependent upon the local conditions and species planted with the tallest trees now approaching 12m in height. This provides a closed canopy in areas where the density of planting is high but areas of open canopy where planting density was lower or where failure rates have been high.

The western side of the wood (compartment 1) is predominantly grassland that is cut once a year. Significant areas of good reptile habitat and areas with exceptional archaeological potential have been lost since the last management plan due to a school being built on what was the western part of The Meads Community Woodland.



Figure 3: The Meads Community Woodland and compartment numbers

The Meads Community Woodland - Additional features



Figure 4: Additional relict farmland features and other points of interest

2.1. Designations

There are no statutory designations on the site. However, lowland deciduous woodland is considered to be a Natural England Priority Habitat under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). As the site develops and further biological recording takes place a body of evidence that supports Local Wildlife Site designation may become available.

2.2. Urban green space and links to the wider countryside

The importance of urban sites such as The Meads Community Woodland is greater than the sum of the land given over to wildlife on the site itself. These areas provide essential green space that acts as a refuge to wildlife which, in turn, will increase the amount of wildlife in nearby gardens. These spaces also provide important areas of recreational space for local residents and access to wildlife. Additionally, despite extensive house building in this part of Sittingbourne there are currently still physical links to the wider countryside provided by The Meads. These allow for the movement of wildlife both to and from The Meads to adjacent sites. Equally, sites like The Meads can be used as 'stepping stones' by more mobile animals such as birds as is illustrated by sightings of the migratory firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*). The most important habitats found adjacent to The Meads Community Woodland are:

- The playing fields belonging to Grove Park School and Gore Court Cricket and Rugby clubs and associated hedgerows to the south-west of the site. These go on to link with Rose Hill wood, a more mature area of deciduous woodland.
- The road margins of the A249 provide some of the largest extents of semi-natural habitat in the area and continuous habitat links for reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.
- Farming areas to the west of Sittingbourne. Although these areas are degraded from a biodiversity perspective as they are predominantly arable the remaining hedgerows do provide links to the wider countryside.

2.3. Site usage

The woodland is in a heavily populated part of Sittingbourne with housing on three of the four sides of the woodland. This is the closest open greenspace for residents of the Sonora Fields estate to the north of the woodland and is well used by dog walkers and those looking to find peace and tranquillity in an urban area and it is valued as a place to go with family.

There is a surfaced footpath that runs through The Meads Community Woodland that provides pedestrian access underneath the railway line and to The Grove School. Hence, it is well used and the woodland is a part of the daily journeys of many schoolchildren and parents alike.

The Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership has run the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project which ran from 2014 to 2017 and encouraged community participation in events at both The Meads Community Woodland and the nearby Rose Hill Woods. This has been built on and litter picking events have been run by both Swale Borough Council and a team of local volunteers. Discussions with local councillor James Hunt in 2021 suggest there is appetite for more volunteer involvement at the site.

2.4. Biological recording and protected species

The Meads Community Woodland is a new habitat and there are very few records available for the site. Although a database search was made to the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre few of these records can be directly attributed to The Meads Community Woodland itself. Therefore, it is crucially important to ensure that all records that are made at the site are sent to the appropriate recording group and/or the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre.

Whilst the overarching aim of nature conservation management within The Meads is to enhance habitats for all species groups, there are specific species that require attention in their own right due to their protected status. This section will identify those species that

have been recorded on site, are protected and which legislation they are covered by. Other important, but not protected, species will be dealt with in the assessment of habitats.

Table 1: Protected species

Species	Locations (if known)	Notes
The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019		
This is the highest level of European designation and provides protection against killing, injury and disturbance. The breeding and resting habitat of these species is also protected		
Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	Although no bats have been recorded on the site of The Meads all of these species have been recorded within 1km of the site. It can therefore be reasonably assumed that bats use the site for foraging and as the trees mature, roosting will become increasingly likely if it does not already take place. The consequence of the likely presence of bats is that the removal of larger trees or any built structures should be approached with caution.	
Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)		
Serotine bat (<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>)		
Daubenton's bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)		
Noctule bat (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>)		
Brown long-eared bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)		
Dormouse (<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>)	Unconfirmed but from a reliable source. Records of dormouse have been reported from The Meads Community Woodland. Although the site is not near ancient woodland it was previously farmland connected to open countryside and these records should not be discounted. Further survey work to confirm presence or likely absence should be prioritised.	
Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – protection under section 9.1 of the act Species identified under schedule 5 of the act have protection against killing or injury although their habitat is not protected.		
Grass snake (<i>Natrix helvetica</i>)	Not recorded on site but thought likely to be present.	Any works that include mechanical control of long grasses or other vegetation should be avoided between March and October as should major ground disturbance in winter months where reptiles may be hibernating.
Viviparous lizard (<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>)	Both species are abundant throughout the site. Slow-worms and viviparous lizards were introduced to compartment 1.	
Slow-worm (<i>Anguilla fragilis</i>)		

Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) – protection under section 1.1 of the act
Wild birds are protected against killing as well as damaging or destroying nests and eggs.

All wild bird species	Found throughout the site.	Vegetation management of potential nesting sites should not take place during the breeding season (usually March to August) unless using hand tools and checks are made for nests.
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Other protected species

Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*), smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and common toad (*Bufo bufo*) are protected from being sold or advertised for sale. These species are all thought to be present on site. However, this has little impact on the management of the woodland.

Managing sites with protected species needn't be overly restrictive. There are simply certain activities that should be avoided. Kent Bat Group, Kent Mammal Group and Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group can offer advice when needed.

2.5. Non-native invasive species

There are also a number of non-native invasive species that have been identified at or near The Meads Community Woodland. These species have the potential to spread rapidly and threaten the status of native species. Those identified include:

- Harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) – a threat to native ladybirds.
- Winter flowering heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) – moisture loving winter flowering plant that can dominate if left unchecked.
- Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*) – a large and noisy frog (in late spring) that is thought to compete with native frogs and toads.
- Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) – a rapidly spreading tree that can shade out regeneration of native species.
- Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) – a garden escapee that can thrive in woodlands. Provides little in the way of habitat for invertebrates or other wildlife.

Whilst little can be done about ladybirds and marsh frogs, non-native invasive plants should be removed if safe to do so and where this does not compromise protected species

2.6. Archaeology

During the construction of the Sonora Fields housing estate extensive archaeological work was undertaken. This revealed a considerable number of Anglo-Saxon graves, a Neolithic wooden henge, Bronze Age barrows and Roman earthworks. Although no excavations were

made on the site of the community woodland it would not be an unreasonable assumption that there is a wealth of archaeological material at the woodland. The implications of this are that extensive earthworks should be avoided without professional archaeological assistance and planting should be avoided in the one area of known archaeology. Excavations are likely to reveal potentially significant archaeological features but care needs to be taken as the conservation of artefacts could be very expensive. Interpretation of known archaeology will enhance the understanding of the site and this has been implemented using interpretive panels and a replica Neolithic wooden henge.

2.7. Infrastructure and interpretation

Currently, infrastructure and interpretation consist of the following:

- One surfaced path running from the north of the site to the south-west of the site;
- A series of mown paths for public use around the site;
- One recreated Neolithic wooden henge that once existed near the site produced as part of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History Project managed by the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership;
- The Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project has also installed further interpretation panels on the site in 2017;
- A vehicular access route provided by access to the water pumping station which is an asset of Kemsley Paper Mill owned by DS Smith.



Figure 5: Interpretation and replica Neolithic henge

2.8. Habitats

In order to make appropriate management decisions it is necessary to assess the habitats that are found at The Meads Community Woodland. This ensures that any future management does not compromise the wildlife and protected species on the site. The site can be split into broad habitat types.

2.8.1. Secondary woodland

The majority of compartment 2 of the site is secondary woodland. This term is used to describe areas of new woodland that have been planted since 1600AD. Places that have been woodland since before 1600 are known as ancient woodland and are generally considered to be more important for wildlife than secondary woodland. Compartment 2 was planted with trees in the late 1990s. All of the trees that were planted were native species and include English oak, hornbeam, ash, cherry, field maple, dog rose and hawthorn. Other species have colonised these areas such as blackthorn, elder and willow. As these trees were planted very close together little sunlight reaches the woodland floor and the ground flora is limited as a consequence. However, the margins of the woodland allow spaces for species to colonise and the trees themselves will provide habitat for insects and birds. As the trees grow older and dead wood begins to appear within the trees their value for wildlife will increase.



Figure 6: Secondary woodland with desire lines appearing within them

2.8.2. Glades and paths

The areas that are not dense secondary woodland within compartment 2 are either glades where trees have not been planted or paths that are mown on a regular basis. The glades are usually mown annually to keep them open or are areas between trees that have not been colonised by scrub. The areas that are not short grass or a closed canopy of trees offer the most value for biodiversity. These are the areas that most of the flowering plants are found including pyramidal orchid, bird's foot trefoil, red bartsia and oxeye daisy. The sunlight, warmth and often sheltered conditions within these areas make them the best places within The Meads to find butterflies, dragonflies as well as reptiles. Small mammals such as woodmice and field voles are also likely to do well in these habitats. These spaces are especially important as they provide woodland edge habitat which is vitally important for wildlife but these open areas also make the area feel more open and less dangerous to visitors. These areas must be kept open as a priority for both of these reasons.



Figure 7: Glade at The Meads Community Woodland

2.8.3. Grassland

Compartment 1 has become much smaller since the 2017 management plan was written as a school has been built on the area to the west of The Meads. This can be clearly seen in the

aerial photography used to create maps in this plan. This area was used as a reptile receptor site prior to the building of the school and this population had to be moved again when the school was built which is unfortunate and should have been avoided. This makes the small area of grassland that remains even more important. This area still retains a reptile population and the grassland area is cut once a year. The western section of compartment 1 adjacent to the public footpath is scrubbing over and is providing nesting habitat for birds.

The long and complex grass sward is ideal for reptiles and the habitat had been enhanced for them by the addition of hibernacula which are holes in the ground that have been filled with rubble and wood before the grass turves are replaced on the top. They provide underground refuges for animals to hibernate during the winter. Although most of the hibernacula have been lost additional hibernation sites could be added to support existing populations. This kind of habitat is also suitable for small mammals and many invertebrates though the long grasses do tend to limit the diversity of flowering plants that are able to colonise such areas. The grassland at the site is surrounded by hedgerows which offer excellent opportunities for animals to shelter and they are likely to be some of the most important parts of the site for nesting birds.



Figure 8: Grassland

2.9. Compartments

In order to assist with management planning and implementation, The Meads Community Woodland has been split into different compartments that reflect both the geography and habitats found on site. Each compartment will have its own specific management objectives that need to be implemented.

Compartment summary

1	Grassland	0.68 hectares
2a	Secondary woodland	4.19 hectares
2b	Secondary woodland with glades	4.15 hectares



Figure 9: Compartments at The Meads Community Woodland

3. Management aims and objectives

3.1. Aims

The management plan has two overarching and linked aims:

Biodiversity. To maximise the potential for wildlife to flourish at The Meads Community Woodland and to examine the resources available to achieve this.

People. To make The Meads Community Woodland a place that is well used, well valued and looked after by the local community.

3.2. Objectives

The management of the site has specific objectives that work towards achieving the aims identified above. The actions detailed will all contribute to the implementation of the objectives. These objectives have been established through public consultation, discussions with key stakeholders including Swale Borough Council and the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership and the implementation of sound, key principles of nature conservation management and the conservation of archaeology. These objectives will form the basis of the management plan for the next five years.

1. Increase biodiversity within habitats to maximise the number of native species that thrive in the woodland;
2. Enhance the site for visitors. Make The Meads a place visited by more local residents who understand both the wildlife and historical value of the site;
3. Have a better understanding of the range of species found at The Meads Community Woodland;
4. Carry out works that do not conflict with protected species and habitats regulations;
5. Control the spread of invasive species within the woodland;
6. Maintain the woodland as a safe place for people to enjoy;
7. Facilitate the active participation of local communities in the management of The Meads.

4. Threats and constraints

The Meads Community Woodland has many strengths and is clearly valued by local people. There are many regular users of the wood, Swale Borough Council is committed to the ongoing management of the site and the number of species that have been recorded is going up. As the woodland and grassland develops, more species will be attracted to the site and improved management will help this further. However, there are threats to both the nature conservation value of the site and local people's willingness to use the woodland.

4.1. Threats

- **Vandalism** and anti-social behaviour do impact The Meads and some of those involved in consultation events have often mentioned not feeling safe at times. However, vandalism is an issue that must be considered when installing interpretation and furniture. Additionally, arson should be considered when managing the woodland itself. Acts of vandalism should be dealt with promptly. The 'broken window' principle states that areas that appear to be well cared for attract less acts of anti-social behaviour.
- **Litter and dog faeces** are always an issue on urban sites and The Meads is no different. Litter is often particularly bad along the surfaced path that runs from the Jenny Wren to the tunnel under the railway. Minimal resources are available to deal with this and it creates a very bad first impression of the site. This is an area where community involvement could be of particular use and the appointment of a volunteer warden either officially or unofficially could also help.
- Local authorities are currently under significant financial strain. A lack of **resources** could compromise the ability to effectively manage the woodland. External funding applications, volunteers and continued support for the woodland can help to mitigate for these financial pressures and will form a key part of the management plan.
- **Invasive and/or non-native species** will exploit open space and should be controlled as they can become dominant if unchecked. This is not currently a major problem in most areas of the site but the impact of new management regimes should be monitored.
- *Chalara fraxinea* (Ash die back) has been identified at The Meads Community Woodland. Ash is abundant within the site and the disease will have an impact. However, this will create natural glades and increase the amount of standing deadwood, both of which offer opportunities for wildlife. The trees are not particularly large and are unlikely to pose a threat to public safety.
- A lack of **volunteers** will threaten the effective implementation of this management plan. Opportunities to recruit more volunteers and possible committee members for a 'Friends Of' group should be pursued actively and are being facilitated by local Councillors and the Parish Council.

4.2. Constraints

Although listed as constraints as these protected species limit certain activities, constraints should be seen as positive features of the woodland. The presence of constraints indicates that current management and conditions afford the privilege of The Meads Community Woodland being chosen by species that are considered so valuable they are protected by legislation.

- **Bats** carry the highest level of protection and any works on the site should not impact upon their breeding and resting habitat. However, only the largest trees on the site are likely to provide potential roosts for bats. These trees should be left untouched where safety concerns allow. To minimise the likelihood of impacting bat populations felling should take place between September and November and only after a visual inspection of trees.
- **Reptiles** are protected from harm by law and management activities must not lead to injury or death. Mechanical mowing of long grass and vegetation during the active season for reptiles should be avoided. The management plan will also identify actions that can enhance reptile habitat.
- All **wild birds**, their nests and eggs are protected from damage and destruction. As a consequence, potential nesting sites should not be mechanically managed during the nesting season (March to August). All but tree felling that is essential for safety reasons should also take place outside the bird breeding season.
- **Dormice** have been reported though not confirmed at The Meads. Dormice also carry the highest level of protection provided by UK legislation. However, the management activities prescribed within this document are unlikely to impact upon dormouse resting and breeding habitat. The regular management of trees and the creation of glades is likely to benefit the species by increasing the diversity of flowering and fruiting plants that provide food for dormice.

5. Management prescriptions and rationale

Each of the compartments has specific objectives and these will be used as the rationale for each of the prescriptions. Although compartment 2 is split into two sub-compartments they will be dealt with together as the management prescriptions for each are very similar. The work plan which sits alongside this document will list all of the prescriptions, when they should be done and who can carry them out.

5.1. Management prescriptions throughout the site

Certain operations apply across the whole of the site.

5.1.1. Invasive species control

Although invasive species do not pose a major problem at the current time, vigilance and eradication of non-native species now can prevent time consuming and/or expensive work in the future. The following species are viewed as the most important at this point in time:

- **Sycamore.** Although uncommon at the present time it is worth felling small sycamore trees and hand pulling saplings when they are seen.
- **Cherry laurel.** This garden escapee often finds its way into woodlands and can become a major problem. Cutting plants where it is seen is appropriate at this stage so that the spread by sexual reproduction can be limited. The use of herbicides should only be considered if the plant spreads rapidly and threatens to dominate in areas.
- **Winter flowering heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*).** This plant can be mown to prevent flowering and this will also weaken the remaining roots.

These activities could make ideal volunteer tasks.

- **Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*)** is present on site but, contrary to popular opinion it is not a notifiable weed (in fact there is no such thing as a notifiable weed), and there is no obligation to remove it if it poses no threat to livestock. Ragwort is native, provides valuable nectar and pollen and is the host plant of the cinnabar moth which is found at The Meads. Having said this, ragwort is prolific on site and the reduction of ragwort levels in some places could be considered

5.1.2. Giant hogweed

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) has been reported on site but not confirmed. It is important that the presence or absence of the species is established. If the species is found to be present then chemical control by contractors is recommended. The sap of the plant is photosensitive and can cause painful blistering of the skin.



Figure 10: Invasive plants at The Meads Community Woodland

5.1.3. Monitoring wildlife

An essential element of assessing the impact of management activities is to monitor wildlife. Some of this can be carried out by the volunteers where the skills exist and training can be provided. Developing relationships with some of the recording groups can help both build skills within a volunteer group and help generate more information about species distribution within the site. It is important that any recording that does take place is submitted to the recording groups and/or the Kent and Medway Biological Recording Centre.

5.1.4. Minimal intervention areas

Areas of woodland should be identified as minimal intervention areas. There are species that benefit from the habitat provided by a high canopy and this should be allowed to develop naturally. These areas should not be managed with the exception of work to prevent hazards to human health and should be located away from areas that are well used by the public.

5.1.5. Clearance of litter

Removing litter from the site is a relatively quick (if unrelenting) way of improving the image of the site to local residents. It can be done independently by people who visit the site on a regular basis.

5.1.6. Maintaining public access

There is a good network of paths throughout the woodland. Consultation showed that there was overwhelming support to maintain the existing network of paths and the intensity of mowing that these currently enjoy. Maintaining these encourages the public stay on these paths and not to venture into more environmentally sensitive areas. It also allows zonal ride management to be implemented and this will be explored in greater detail in the compartment management prescriptions.

5.1.7. Interpretation

The interpretation of the site consists of a henge which the community were involved in installing and carving. This has been added to with some seating and several interpretation panels that provide an insight into the wildlife and history of the site. Support for this during the consultation phase of the Woodland Wildlife Hidden History project was overwhelming and will be a welcome addition to the site. Interpretation events such as plays and guided walks and uses of new technologies such as virtual tours, self-guided walks using geolocation based 'apps' should also be considered. The Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership have also been working with James Hunt to create an interpretive mural in the railway tunnel at the south-western end of the public footpath just outside the woodland.

5.1.8. Community engagement

There is currently no Friends of The Meads Community Woodland group though consultation suggests that the creation of just such a group would be supported. Work by local Councillors and the Parish Council are working hard to create a regular group of volunteers, which would be a massive boost to the woodland. The group can help with management work, act as 'eyes and ears' on behalf of Swale Borough Council and can help promote the woodland to local residents. This has support from local councillors who may support the group financially as well as politically. There is also a Sonora Fields Neighbourhood Watch group that could be used as a basis for the group and the Community Centre has offered to host meetings and support the group. Volunteers at Milton Creek Country Park could be asked to help with this group and have machinery certification that would allow the use of chainsaws, brushcutters etc.

5.2. Compartment 1: Grassland

The compartment consists of a small area of land to the west of the surfaced path that runs through the site and to the east and south of the newly built school. However, the remaining grassland provides good habitat for wildlife.

5.2.1. Management of area for reptiles

A management plan for the area was in place before the school was built but management is now restricted to an annual cut of the grassland area. This does keep the area open and prevent trees from establishing but is not ideal for reptiles.

It is suggested that only half of this area is cut every year, leaving half of the area uncut, providing year round shelter for reptiles and encouraging the retention of areas where invertebrates and small mammals can overwinter.

Additionally, hibernacula and dead hedges or log piles can be created in this compartment which will provide extra habitat features for the animals in this area.

- **Dead hedges** can be produced with brash if any felling work takes place in the woodland. They are easy to construct and can also be used to help keep people from certain sensitive areas (though by no means a barrier). They are a possible fire risk.
- **Reptile hibernacula** are easy to create and have no cost. They are holes in the ground filled with rubble and wood and then covered with soil that create places for overwintering animals including reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.

5.2.2. Woodland

There is a small amount of woodland in compartment 1 that is adjacent to the surfaced footpath that divides the two compartments. This should be managed in a way that enhances the reptile receptor site and helps to create a more open feel for the people using the surfaced footpath. The following is recommended in order to retain the open feel to the footpath.

- **Thinning.** An open canopy feel should be retained within this area to assist with the provision of cover for reptiles. Invasive trees should be cut as a priority and then diseased and possible dangerous trees next. Once these trees have been removed additional trees should be removed that leave a range of different tree species and sizes of tree whose canopies do not touch in all directions. This leaves space for trees to grow outwards as well as upwards and for sunlight to hit the woodland floor that will increase the amount of grass and herbs. It is recommended that the majority of trees are removed so that the remaining area is a mixture of shrubs, trees and open grassland.
- **Coppicing.** The trees nearest the footpath should be coppiced to the ground on a 5 year rotation. All trees where the trunk is within three metres of the path should be cut and left to regrow.
- **Arisings.** Where safe to do so, arisings should be left in habitat piles or burnt to reduce the risk of arson. This decision should be made with Swale Borough Council.

5.2.3. Interpretation

If reptile management is maintained in this area, it is recommended that interpretation that reflects this management should be installed where finances allow.

5.3. Compartment 2: Woodland

Compartment 2 consists of two sub-compartments, 2a and 2b. Although they will both be dealt with together in the management plan the reason for splitting the compartment into two is that compartment 2b contains nearly all of the more open areas of the woodland.

5.3.1. Thinning of the woodland

The trees at The Meads were planted very close together. This is standard forestry practice as it helps trees to grow up straight and fast as they compete for light. However, this is usually followed by a thinning of the trees to allow the dominant trees to continue their growth unhindered. This has never been done at The Meads Community Woodland and as a consequence very little sunlight hits the woodland floor, there is little structure in the vegetation and the wildlife potential is limited as a consequence. Sadly, many of the trees were planted in rows which also lends an 'artificial' feel to the woodland. It is recommended that thinning takes place in as much of the woodland as possible as resources allow with the exception of the minimal intervention area. It should be done prioritising the removal of trees as follows:

- Invasive and non-native trees (including sycamore and cherry laurel)
- Diseased and potentially dangerous trees
- Up to 50% of remaining trees so that the trees remain:
 - Retain a diverse range of species
 - Retain a range of sizes and shapes of tree
 - Have an open canopy structure that allows light to hit the woodland floor. The remaining trees will soon close the canopy but this will allow a greater structural diversity within the woodland

5.3.2. Glade creation

One of the most important parts of a woodland for its wildlife are open spaces. This not only increases the amount of woodland edge that wildlife thrives in but also creates a more open feel for people and gives them space to play in and explore. This is something that gained a lot of support during the consultation process. Additional glades could be created by cutting all vegetation in an area and then managing in a variety of ways including:

- Regular mowing to provide a space for people to use
- Twice yearly cut to promote botanical diversity
- Cut every two or three years to promote invertebrate, small mammal and reptile habitat
- Leave to re grow and recoppice the area every seven to ten years.

5.3.3. Ride management

Wildlife benefits when the interface between different habitat types (grassland and woodland in our example) is 'soft' and gradual. To help achieve this zonal ride management can be adopted to grade the change from grass to woodland and this is shown in the figure 12 on page 30¹⁰.

¹⁰ Managing Woodland Open Space for Wildlife. -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/707669/ewgs-on011-ride-mangt.pdf

The Meads Community Woodland - Management



- Compartment
- The Meads Management**
 - Glade (twice yearly cut)
 - Glade (3 year cut)
 - Glade (7 to 10 year cut)
 - Minimum intervention area
 - Zonal ride management
 - Annual cut
 - Thin and coppice

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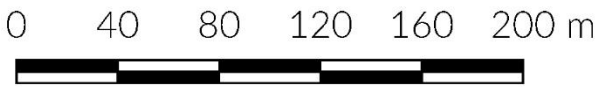


Figure 11: Management prescriptions for The Meads Community Woodland

Base map © Google Maps 2021

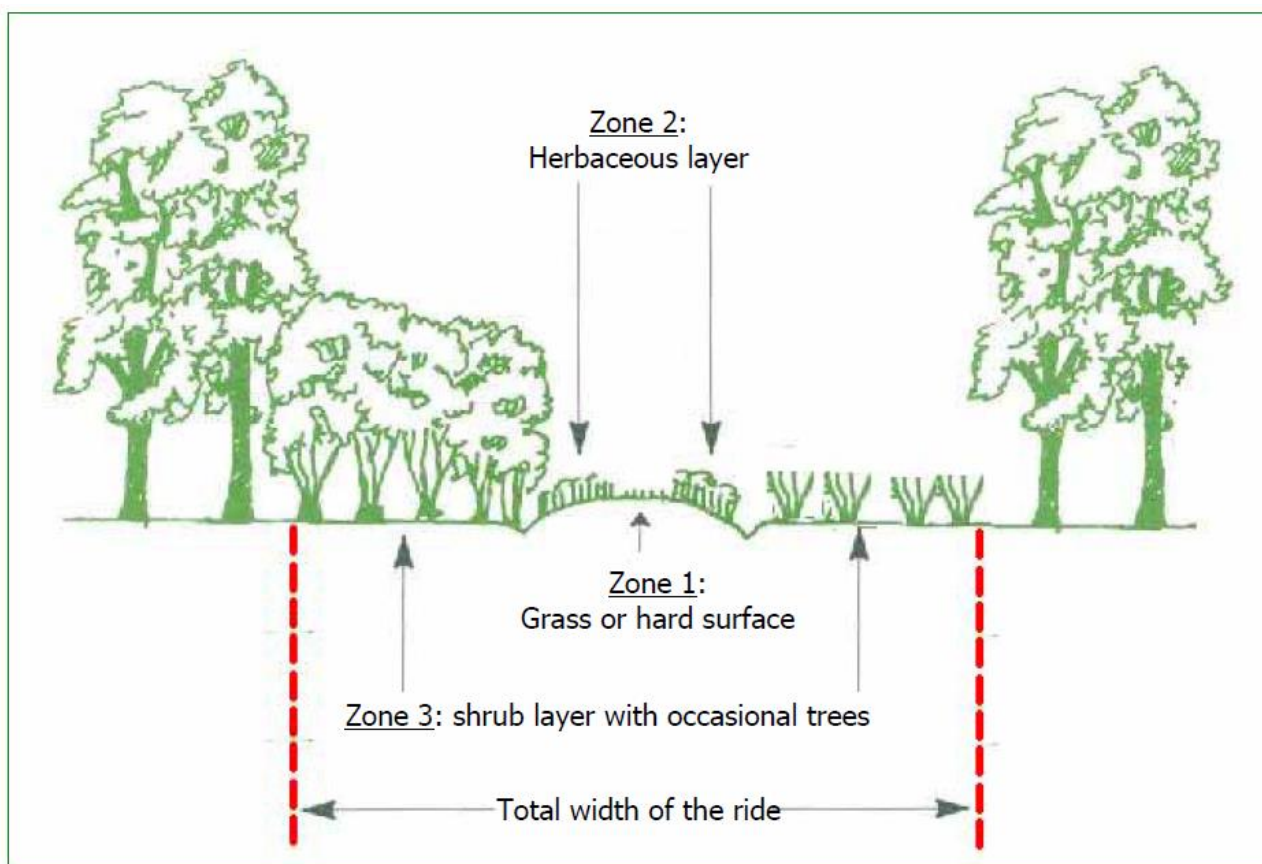


Figure 12: Three zone ride management. Source (Forestry Commission)

Zone 1 would be well managed grass paths that maintain easy public access, zone 2 would be cut twice a year in spring and autumn and zone 3 would be cut every five years and allowed to recoppice. The cost of implementing this across the entirety of the woodland for all paths would be prohibitive so the immediate suggestion is that this is implemented where possible around the main circular path. This received support during the consultation process not only because of the benefit to wildlife but many people also wanted to see more open paths to help stop the woodland from feeling so intimidating and more open. It was also felt that this may help the paths from becoming quite as muddy in the winter which is another reason stated by people that limited their use of the woodland.

5.3.4. Paths

The consultation asked the public and stakeholders whether they were happy with the current mowing regime of the paths or whether an alternative way of keeping paths open could be considered. Generally respondents were happy with how things are at the moment and it is recommended that the current mowing regime of the actual paths is maintained. The only exception to this is that paths could be widened at the sections of the main circular path nearest to the surfaced path to make the path more inviting and less likely to become muddy. Support was also expressed for adding a culvert to the ditch on the main circular path where the hedgerow crosses it making access for buggies, prams etc. difficult.



Figure 13: Paths at The Meads Community Woodland (both formal and informal)

5.3.5. Tree shelters

Tree shelters were put around the trees when they were planted but these no longer serve a purpose and may even damage the trees if they do not split and ‘suffocate’ the tree by restricting the exchange of gases through the trunk and continually keeping the tree wet. These can be removed during litter picks or as separate activities.

5.3.6. Interpretation

The recreated henge is a welcome addition to the site, particularly due to the level of public involvement in its creation.

5.3.7. Furniture

Considerable support was shown for adding benches during the consultation as well as picnic tables and additional litter bins and dog foul bins. However, concern was raised as to whether vandalism would be an issue and the general consensus was that if additional furniture was added then it could be added near to the surfaced path where it was in full view. The issue of bins is one of financial resources and needs to be considered carefully.

6. Appendix I: Timing of conservation tasks

Table 2: Optimal timing for conservation activities

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tree planting	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Sub-optimal	Optimal
Major vegetation clearance	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Poor	Poor	Optimal	Optimal
Path clearance	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Litter picking	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Tree felling	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Sub-optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal
Vegetation clearance (hand tools)	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal	Optimal	Optimal
Glade creation (management)	Optimal	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal	Optimal
KEY	Optimal	Optimal timing	Sub-optimal	Sub-optimal timing	Poor	Poor timing	Never	Never				

7. Appendix II: Species list

The following is a list of all of the species that have been recorded at The Meads Community Woodland. These records have been reported by volunteers, seen by White Horse Ecology in 2021, Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership officers or form part of a 2006 survey undertaken by Kent Wildlife Trust. As such, it is a fairly rudimentary list and should not be seen even as a baseline survey but as incidental records submitted during site visits.

Species	Scientific name	Compartment (where known)	Date last recorded
Birds			
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		07/05/2016
Long tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		07/05/2016
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		07/05/2016
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		07/05/2016
Black Headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		07/05/2016
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		07/05/2016
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		07/05/2016
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		07/05/2016
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		03/09/2015
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		07/05/2016
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		07/05/2016
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		07/05/2016
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		03/09/2015
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		07/05/2016
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>		2014
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		07/05/2016
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		07/05/2016
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		07/05/2016
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		03/09/2015
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		07/05/2016
Plants			
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	2	03/09/2015
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Horse chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	2	03/09/2015

Agrimony	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	2	26/08/2021
Cow parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	1	26/08/2021
Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	2b	03/09/2015
Lesser burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>	2	26/08/2021
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	2	26/08/2021
Buddleja	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	2	26/08/2021
Shepherd's-purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	2	26/08/2021
Wetted Thistle	<i>Carduus crispus</i>	2	26/08/2021
Pendulous Sedge	<i>Carex pendula</i>	2	26/08/2021
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	2	26/08/2021
Sweet chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>	2	26/08/2021
Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Fat hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>		03/09/2015
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	1	26/08/2021
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	2	26/08/2021
Old man's beard	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	2	26/08/2021
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	2	26/08/2021
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Wild carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	1	26/08/2021
Teasel	<i>Dipascus fullonum</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Willow herb sp.	<i>Epilobium sp.</i>		03/09/2015
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	2	26/08/2021
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	2	26/08/2021
Common fumitory	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	2	26/08/2021
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>	1	26/08/2021
Cut-leaved crane's-bill	<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Hedgerow crane's-bill	<i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i>	2	26/08/2021
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	2	26/08/2021
Ground-ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	2	26/08/2021
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	1	26/08/2021
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Perforate St John's-wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	2	26/08/2021
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	2	03/09/2015
Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Walnut	<i>Juglans regia</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Prickly lettuce	<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
White dead-nettle	<i>Lamium album</i>	2	26/08/2021
Red dead-nettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021

Oxeye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	2	26/08/2021
Bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>		11/06/2015
Apple	<i>Malus sp.</i>	2	26/08/2021
Common mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	2	26/08/2021
Spotted Medick	<i>Medicago arabica</i>	2	26/08/2021
Corn Mint	<i>Mentha arvensis</i>	1	26/08/2021
Red Bartsia	<i>Odontites vernus</i>	2	26/08/2021
Bristly oxtongue	<i>Picris echioides</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Hawkweed oxtongue	<i>Picris hieracioides</i>	1	26/08/2021
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	1	26/08/2021
Balsam poplar	<i>Populus balsamifera</i>	2	26/08/2021
Poplar	<i>Populus sp.</i>		03/09/2015
Creeping cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	2	26/08/2021
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	2	26/08/2021
Cherry (cultivar)	<i>Prunus sp.</i>		03/09/2015
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Turkey oak	<i>Quercus cerris</i>	2	26/08/2021
English oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	2	26/08/2021
Lesser celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	2	26/08/2021
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	2	26/08/2021
Wild mignonette	<i>Reseda lutea</i>	2	26/08/2021
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Dock sp.	<i>Dock</i>	2	26/08/2021
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	1	26/08/2021
Wood dock	<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>		03/09/2015
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>		03/09/2015
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	2	26/08/2021
White campion	<i>Silene latifolia</i>	2	26/08/2021
Swedish whitebeam	<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>	2	26/08/2021
Lesser stitchwort	<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	2	26/08/2021
Tansy	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>	2	26/08/2021
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	1	26/08/2021
Small-leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>	2	26/08/2021
Common lime	<i>Tilia x europaea</i>		03/09/2015
Upright hedge-parsley	<i>Torilis japonica</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	2	26/08/2021
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021

Stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	1, 2	26/08/2021
Vervain	<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	2	26/08/2021
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	2	26/08/2021
Wayfaring-tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>		03/09/2015
Guelder-rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	2	26/08/2021
Common vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	2	26/08/2021
Smooth tare	<i>Vicia tetrasperma</i>	1	26/08/2021

Insects

Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>		03/09/2015
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>		03/09/2015
Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>		03/09/2015
Marbled white	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>		03/09/2015
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		03/09/2015
Green veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>		03/09/2015
Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		03/09/2015
Comma	<i>Polygonium c-album</i>		30/03/2015
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>		03/09/2015
Cinnabar moth	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>		03/09/2015

Mammals

Common dormouse	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>		07/05/2016
European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		07/05/2016

Reptiles

Slow-worm	<i>Anguilla fragilis</i>	1, 2b	15/08/2015
Viviparous lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	1	26/08/2021

8. Appendix III: Summary of public consultations (2021 updates appended)

The Meads Summary

Comments in **RED** are from phone interviews, comments in black are from consultation events

How often

More than once a week	10
Once a week	1
Once a month	1
Once a year	1
Not for years	
Never	

Why do you go?

Dog walk	7
See henge	1
Part of Sittingbourne in Bloom	1
Family walks	5
Meet friends	2
Walk	1
Cycle	1

What do you like?

Local	5
Wildlife	7
Community feel	4
Events	1
Henge	1
Peace and tranquillity	3
Generally clean	2

Prioritisation Exercise (22/1/17)	
Respondents allowed one green dot to show support and one red dot for least favourite	
More litter bins/poo bins	
YES	2 NO 1
Friends Of group	
YES	1 NO 0
Thin trees	
YES	3 NO 0
Permanent glades for wildlife and people	
YES	3 NO 0
Construction of a pond	
YES	0 NO 5
Ride management	
YES	2 NO 2
Respondents also given the opportunity to rank six suggested actions	
Numbers below show number of people who ranked ideas in each position	
	1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th
More litter bins/poo bins	1 2 0 2 5 2
Friends Of group	3 0 2 1 4 2
Thin trees	4 1 7 0 0 0
Permanent glades	4 4 1 3 0 0
Construction of a pond	0 3 0 1 2 6
Ride management	0 2 4 3 1 2

Heritage 1

What puts you off

Muddy paths 1

Overgrown paths 4

Feels unsafe, particularly at night 4

Nothing 1

Dog fouling 3

Occasional motorbikes 1

Rubbish 1

Access as no parking on site
(dangerous road if participants
for events coming by car) 1

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IDEAS

	YES	NO	DON'T MIND	2016 (of 16 respondents)
More litter bins	8		3	2
Picnic benches	10		2	12
Maps	4		7	10
Information signs (wildlife and history)	11	1	1	
Surfaced paths	5	5	1	8
Seating	9		2	5
Trim trail	6	2	3	2
Children's play area	4	4	3	1
More events	9		3	
Wildlife pond	6	2	3	1
Meadow	8		3	
Volunteer activities	8		3	

What would you like to see?

Toilets (at new school)	1
Pedestrian crossing from Community Centre	2
Car park	1
More events	3
Community involvement	2
Summer solstice fair or similar	4
Fire pit for young people	1
Events for young people	1
Tree thinning	3
Play area outside wood (Velum Dr)	2
Dog bins	10
No development	1
No development on the field area	1
Lighting on footpaths	3
CCTV	1
Gate at Jenny Wren entrance	1
Children's trail	1
Rubbings trail	1
Clearer entrance and exit signs	1

MANAGEMENT

Mowing

Keep mowing as is	13
Stop mowing	0
Only cut some areas every 2 or 3 years	1
Other	1

Don't mind 0

Long grass makes trousers wet
 Cut more often to reduce fire
 lighting hazard 2
 Increasing floral and habitat
 diversity outweighs the risk of
 fire

Trees

Leave as they are 2
 Cut some (thin plus glades) 10
 Other 0
 Don't mind 1

Trees planted too close together
 Some areas very dark
 Like the idea of making habitat
 more wildlife friendly
 Coppicing and woodland
 management will give us the best
 space possible 2

Support for Friends of Group 11

Graeme Tuff

Small section to be retained in woodland where school is going. Unsure about what plans are for archaeology and/or reptiles
 Paths need opening up in areas
 Thinning needed - perhaps near main path
 Blenwood schedules can change - some budget as school area
 lost

In favour of pond and/or scrape
More varied grassland management favoured with zonal ride management
Open to ideas re furniture but in areas overlooked by passers by
Walking routes would help
Friend Of group would be supported
Keen on activities
Ali Corbel
The road and car parking are issues
Seated area
Bat and bird boxes
Littering is an issue
Clearing some paths to make more accessible would be good
Friends Of group supported (join forces with Sonora Fields Neighbourhood Group)
FIONA (Trustee of CC)
Keen to support local group and could help with storage, meetings.
Has coffee morning where volunteers can be targeted
Squirrel Lodge Nursey use for Forest School activities
More for older children would be good
Walks important - can help with advertising
Work in partnership with local schools and children's centres
More path clearance to keep paths clear and less muddy
Interactive or static display about wildlife and/or archaeology
Bob Bicker
Too many trees, needs thinning to create diversity of tree size. 50% of trees need to go
Create more open areas
Grasses can swamp flowers
Vandal proof benches and picnic areas

Regular Warden visits

Family friendly features favoured

Litter and dog poo bins

Dog poo a problem

James Hunt

Access poor because of Staplehurst Rd

Overgrown feel to footpaths

Friends Of group should be separate from Rose Hill

A map on site would help

Waymarked trail

Culverts over ditches for main paths

Fire site

Benches and tables near main

path

Litter is a problem

Supports interactive interpretation at the Community Centre

School may be able to share car park at weekends

Supports Friends of group and could support with members grant

Friends Group should have support to build skills

Andrew Richardson

Says school site will require £100,000+ of archaeological works

Rest of site has little archaeological value probably

Look after henge now

constructed

Trees need to be thinned

Bottlenecking of paths at either end of main paths make it uninviting

Friends Of group would be a welcome

bonus

Mike Baldock

Says new community could use a Parish Council to help galvanise community spirit

Could be a Friends Of group

Anti-social behaviour makes The Meads less inviting than Rose

Hill

Does not support opening up the woodland around the henge

Supports glades and thinning

Paths good as they are

Picnic tables would be welcome

Graeme Lloyd

More dog bins

People other than dog walkers need a reason to go there (Henge helps)

Outdoor fitness area or trim trail might help

More variation in trees needed

Interpretation may help

Walking trails plus app

Widen paths

In favour of Friends Of group and using Community Centre

Themed events (Halloween and Easter)

Staplehurst Rd a problem (speed reduction)

No houses on site

Richard Emmett

Not enough made of the fact that it is a sacred site

Could focus on fact that it is an ancient meeting site

2021 Updates

As part of the 2021 refresh of these management plans Councillor James Hunt, Bobbing Parish Council and Swale Borough Council Ranger, Kris Staples were consulted about their views about the future of the Meads Community Woodland. These views are summarised below.

Bobbing Parish Council

Felt the site was very important. An initial comment was that the Parish Council would like to see the possible inclusion of a Ranger to oversee the Woodland, similar to that at the Milton Creek Country Park. This was felt to be particularly important as there have been incidents of vandalism, damage to trees, etc., in the woodland.

James Hunt

Stated that great progress has been made and that there are volunteers interested in helping out at the site and that people take time out to pick up litter on the site. Small tasks could be organised for volunteers to get involved with and that support could be given from chainsaw operating volunteers based at Milton Creek. The site is ideal for school visits and these should be encouraged. Also stated that fires are a problem on site and that the installation of fire pits in communal areas might help to alleviate this. Ragwort pulling was also a priority and something that volunteers could become involved with.

Kris Staples

Would like to see a lot more happening at The Meads Community Woodland. Budgetary pressures make it difficult for him to commit much more time to The Meads as his focus needs to remain on Milton Creek and Oare Gunpowder Works. However, volunteers from Milton Creek could potentially be persuaded to help out at The Meads. His priorities for the site are ragwort pulling and thinning of some of the trees as well as glade creation.

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The Meads Community Woodland Work Plan 2022 - 2026



This plan has been prepared by White Horse Ecology on behalf of Swale Borough Council.

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November 2021



White Horse Ecology



Work Plan

This work plan contains two tables. The first is a list of recommendations and enhancements to The Meads Community Woodland that have been suggested by stakeholders and White Horse Ecology. This table contains recommendations for which additional funding will be required. This will have to be raised either by Swale Borough Council or with the assistance of volunteers.

The second table contains a set of management prescriptions for the wood that ideally should be carried out. The management prescriptions in the second table are currently unfunded though there are some activities that can be carried out by volunteers.

A map that will help to pinpoint the exact locations of management prescriptions is found at the back of this work plan.

The rationale and objectives for management can be found in section 4 of the management plan. More detailed information about some of the prescriptions can be found in section 5 of the management plan.

Whilst resources to implement this plan are limited, a number of activities have been identified that can be carried out by volunteers. With good training in power tools, volunteers would ultimately be able to implement that majority of this work plan. Volunteers from Milton Creek Country Park can be asked to assist with running tasks and using power tools with the assistance of the Milton Creek Country Park ranger.

The Meads Community Woodland Recommendations

The table below contains recommendations for actions that should be taken as and when financial and time resources allow. They have been identified following public consultation. They are outside of the scope of the day to day management prescriptions that need to be carried out to maintain the woods but should be used to inform and prioritise future actions and funding applications. Not all these recommendations will necessarily be achieved within the lifetime of this management plan.

The Meads Community Woodland Recommendations

What	How	When (season)	3 rd party involvement	Where	Volunteer task?
Creation of Friends of The Meads Community Woodland (FOTM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact stakeholders and potential key volunteers to draw up roles of group and set practicalities in place 	Anytime	FOTM, SBC, MKDCP, CC	All	Y
SBC Ranger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bobbing Parish Council have an expressed a desire for a ranger such as the post that covers Milton Creek and Oare Gunpowder Works to be deployed at The Meads to help combat anti-social behaviour, assist with volunteer activities and site management 	Anytime	SBC	All	
Volunteer warden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be a key role within the FOTM group held by one or more people. This person or people could function as the 'eyes and ears' of the woodland and report damage, anti-social behaviour and/or other simple tasks 	Anytime	FOTM, SBC	All	Y

Picnic benches and tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally well supported and seen as a high priority. Installation preferred in areas near the surfaced path 	Anytime	SBC, MKDCP	2a	Possibly installing
Increased number of litter and poo bins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this received some support the issue is whether these bins can be collected and emptied by contractors and if there are resources to fund this 	Anytime	SBC	All	N
Pond creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the creation of a pond has support of some stakeholders considerable concern was raised regarding safety and vandalism 	Anytime	SBC, MKDCP	2a	To assist
More events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community involvement was a consistent and recurring theme within the consultations. From summer fairs to Halloween events and Forest Schools the support was high. 	Anytime	All	All but particularly 2b	Y
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interpretation plan should be reviewed to establish desire and need for additional interpretation (including virtual and high tech.) 	Anytime	SBC, MKDCP	All	To assist
Reduction of speed limit on Staplehurst Rd and lack of crossing from Jenny Wren	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not within the remit of this plan but an issue raised multiple times 		SBC		N
Culvert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of a culvert to make buggy access easier over the ditch that runs through the site 	Anytime	SBC, FOTM	2b	Y
Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From trim trails to children's wildlife and history trails 	Anytime	All	All	Y

Wildlife friendly features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bat and bird boxes, insect hotels, beetle banks, hibernacula and other features can all be installed and created cheaply 	Anytime	FOTM	All	Y
Fire pit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some support was shown for a fire pit or other features designed for older children and families to enjoy. Has been done successfully in other publicly accessible sites but will be controversial 	Anytime	All stakeholders	2a	N

SBC = Swale Borough Council (or their contractors) FOTM = Friends of the Meads
 MKDCP = Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership HRGS = Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne

The Meads Community Woodland Management Prescriptions

This table provides a list of activities that will maintain The Meads Community Woodland and implement the ongoing management recommendations of the management plan across the next five years. Clearly there are budgetary restrictions on what can be achieved but volunteer input could achieve many of the prescriptions outlined here.

The volunteer column denotes whether volunteers could be involved in carrying out the task. The locations of activities and their timings are shown in the maps following this table.

The Meads Community Woodland Management Prescriptions

What	How	When (time of year)	3 rd party involvement	Where (compartment)	Volunteer task?	When (if not annual)
Cut herbaceous vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mow paths within the woodland to existing specifications 	Spring/summer/autumn	SBC contractor	All	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mow areas and glades for botanical diversity (twice yearly cuts). 	April and Sept	SBC contractor	2a	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove arisings from twice yearly glade cuttings 	April and Sept	SBC or FOTM	2a	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mow areas for annual cut (within the zonal ride management areas) 	Nov to Feb	SBC contractor	2a & 2b	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove arisings from annual cut areas and create habitat piles 	Nov to Feb	SBC or FOTM	2a & 2b	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut annual half of reptile receptor area and create habitat piles 	Nov to Feb	SBC contractor	1	N	
Tree management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pull sycamore saplings by hand or any other invasive species. 	Anytime	FOTM	All 1, 2a & 2b	Y	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut up to 50% of trees to thin woodland except in minimum intervention area. 	Oct to March	SBC or FOTM	1 & 2a	Y	Any year as resources become available
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create glades and cut trees near surfaced path 	Oct to March	SBC or FOTM	2a & 2b	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create zone 3 of zonal ride management. 	Oct to March	SBC or FOTM	2b	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut glade on 3 year rotation 	Oct to March	FOTM		Y	
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor potentially hazardous trees near areas with high levels of public access and fell if necessary 	Anytime	SBC	All cmptmnts	N	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the safety of installed structures such as benches and tables, interpretation and log piles. Remove or repair as necessary 	Anytime	FOTM/SBC	All cmptmnts	Y	
Fallen wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where fallen wood exists or is felled and can't be left in situ log piles and/or dead hedges to be created where possible and secured in place. 	Anytime	FOTM/SBC	1, 2a & 2b	Y	
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear paths of vegetation so that they can be used safely by public. 	Spring/summer	FOTM/SBC	2a & 2b	Y	
Litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick litter from paths and other areas 	Anytime	All	All	Y	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove fly-tipped waste 	Anytime	SBC	All	Y	
Tree shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove tree shelters, easiest to do in the winter 	Oct to Apr	FOTM	All	Y	
Ragwort pulling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull ragwort up by the roots before it comes into flower 	May to June	FOTM	All	Y	

Wildlife recording (all records to be sent to Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre and relevant recording group)	• Bat surveys using detectors	Summer	FOTM, KBG	All	Y	
	• Roofing felt refugia placed in grassland areas to check for reptiles	Mar to Oct	FOTM, KRAG	All	Y	
	• Wildflower and tree surveys	Spring/summer	FOTM, KFC	All	Y	
	• Small mammal surveys (mice, shrews, voles)	Winter	FOTM, KMG	All	Y	
	• Ad hoc visual surveys (larger mammals)	Anytime	FOTM	All	Y	
	• Nest box or nesting tube surveys for dormice	Summer	FOTM, KMG	All	Y	
	• Invertebrate surveys but particularly moth and butterfly surveys	Summer	KFC	All	Y	
	• Bird surveys	Anytime	FOTM	All	Y	
	• N.B. Licence required for dormouse and bat surveys if disturbance of animals likely to take place					
Management Plan review	• Review and update management plan with particular reference to management prescriptions and key species	April	MKDCP /White Horse Ecology/All	All	Y	Annual if possible

FORHW = Friends of The Meads Community Woodland
 KBG = Kent Bat Group
 KFC = Kent Field Club
 KRAG = Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group
 KCC = Kent County Council Heritage

SBC = Swale Borough Council (or their contractors)
 MKDCP = Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership
 KMG = Kent Mammal Group
 HRGS = Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne

The Meads Community Woodland - Management



- Compartment
- The Meads Management**
- Glade (twice yearly cut)
- Glade (3 year cut)
- Glade (7 to 10 year cut)
- Minimum intervention area
- Zonal ride management
- Annual cut
- Thin and coppice

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Base map © Google Maps 2021

Agenda Item 9

Western Area Committee Proposal form 2021-22

Title of project	Western Area committee – closed churchyard works													
Proposer (Area Committee Member)	Councillor Mike Baldock													
Relevant Heads of Service/Lead officer	Martyn Cassell Jay Jenkins													
Project Proposal	Allocation of funds to bring forward lower priority improvement works in closed churchyards sites within the area committee area.													
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site</th> <th>Description of works</th> <th>Estimated total cost of works</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>St Peter & Paul, Borden</td> <td>Repair metal railings</td> <td>£590</td> </tr> <tr> <td>St Michael & All Angels, Hartlip</td> <td>Repair to flint wall £21,850 Repair to stone arch - £1,200 Repair to entrance doors - £600 Repairs to footpath - £1,156 Make good concrete pavings - £320 Repairs to Lychgate - £1,110</td> <td>£26,226</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All Saints, Iwade</td> <td>Repair to dilapidated wall - £1,350 Remove tree damaging store roof and repair roof - £1,700 Fencing repairs - £500 Repair collapsed wall £1,000</td> <td>£4,550</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Site	Description of works	Estimated total cost of works	St Peter & Paul, Borden	Repair metal railings	£590	St Michael & All Angels, Hartlip	Repair to flint wall £21,850 Repair to stone arch - £1,200 Repair to entrance doors - £600 Repairs to footpath - £1,156 Make good concrete pavings - £320 Repairs to Lychgate - £1,110	£26,226	All Saints, Iwade	Repair to dilapidated wall - £1,350 Remove tree damaging store roof and repair roof - £1,700 Fencing repairs - £500 Repair collapsed wall £1,000	£4,550	
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All Saints, Iwade	Repair to dilapidated wall - £1,350 Remove tree damaging store roof and repair roof - £1,700 Fencing repairs - £500 Repair collapsed wall £1,000	£4,550												
Link to Area Committee criteria as agreed by the Committee	Works will improve the environment of the area.													
Anticipated officer resource required	Special Projects Officer resource to commission works. Input needed from Conservation officers in Planning team. Works to be tendered or commissioned from property maintenance contractor.													
Cost £	£10,000 allocated to works above.													
Planned Start Date	March 2022													
Due Date for Completion	TBC													

Western Area Committee Proposal form 2021-22

Title of project	Western Area committee – closed churchyard works
Please note there is a requirement to consult with the relevant Head of Service and Cabinet Member to ensure this proposal does not conflict with strategic priorities and will not put undue pressure on officer resource.	
Agreed by relevant Head of Service (Name, date and signature)	Martyn Cassell  30/11/21
Agreed by relevant Cabinet Member (Name, date and signature)	



Western Area Committee Funding Scheme

Summary of applications received for the March 2022 meeting

Area Committee’s allocation for 2021-22 - £40,000.00

There have been no previously agreed allocations by Western Area Committee.

Available to allocate at the March 2022 meeting - £40,000.00

The following applications have been checked by officers to ensure that there is no cross over with other work being carried out by Swale Borough Council (SBC) or other organisations and to check that there are no SBC financial/officer resource implications.

The following applications provided all the requested information in time for the December meeting which was subsequently cancelled:

Reference:	WAC007
Organisation:	Newington History Group
Applicant Name:	Sue Flipping – Committee Member
Status of organisation:	Unincorporated Association (Community Group)
Details of project/activity:	<p>The project is to design, print and install three lectern-frame interpretation boards on footpaths at key points south of the A2 to attract walkers and visitors to the unique historic remains of military defences built to protect London had the Axis powers invaded in World War I.</p> <p>The extensive defence line included trenches, gun emplacements, barbed wire fences and look-out posts. This would be the first time they have been clearly marked for identification by non-experts.</p> <p>We see this as the first stage of a longer-term proposal by NHG to develop facilities that will discourage private car use and promote the area of Newington and surrounding villages as a heritage walking and cycling destination. This further proposal would mean working with community stakeholders in villages within a five-mile radius to develop off-road routes that encourage people to walk and cycle from place to place rather than drive. However, we believe it is not enough to make those routes available, we need to give people reasons to use them and that making sense of the heritage and environment through interpretation boards is one way to do that.</p> <p>Location Board 1 will be sited on footpath ZR63 (Standard Hill overlooking Wormdale Farm), Board 2 on ZR64 (which runs to the paintball activity centre at Wormdale Farm) and Board 3 at the junction of ZR65 and ZR66B at Cranbrook Wood.</p>

Each of the boards interprets a different part of the landscape and heritage and the contribution each played to the defence of the country in 1914-1918.

Strategic priorities

The project supports the following Swale Borough priorities:

2.2: Encourage active travel and reduced car use, including through the permeability of new developments and work with partners to address air quality issues

The project is intended to encourage active travel by giving local people and visitors a reason to use footpaths south of the A2. The additional foot traffic will help keep the footpaths clearer for all users, particularly by helping keep undergrowth down during the summer months.

Promotion will identify the public transport links (rail and bus) that bring visitors within a mile's walk of the boards.

Interpretation boards 2 and 3 are accessible from Callaways Lane and the A2 respectively along mainly wide, generally flat footpaths. Board 1 overlooking the beacon is accessed via gently inclined and well signed footpaths from Wormdale Hill or Bull Lane. We feel they are accessible to most people who are mobile with no or with minimal assistance.

2.4: Recognise and support our local heritage to give people pride in the place they live and boost the local tourism industry.

The project identifies and interprets an important part of Newington's heritage that, until recently, has been known only to academics and people with a specialist interest. Through the interpretation boards, walkers will be able to identify both the WWI defences of a century ago and the commemorative beacon erected on the site of a WWI gun emplacement by NHG in 2018, itself a heritage project.

The boards open up a new visitor attraction in Newington by revealing how the landscape would have looked 1914-1918. While military historians are aware of the general location of the defences, this is the first project to make them easily accessible and clearly identifiable both to those with a specialist interest and to the general public.

We will enhance the visitor experience by directing them to additional information via our website address and a QR code on the boards. A choice of audio and video opportunities on the website will make the information accessible and engaging for different ages and abilities.

The boards use a mix of text and images to make the information accessible.

Feedback from NHG's many 2014-2018 WWI commemorative projects shows that local people felt more pride about living in Newington after attending the community events. It also showed that visitors were surprised about the amount of history associated with Newington. We believe that people will always be drawn to areas that they can learn something about.

We expect the interpretation board project to attract additional visitors to Newington because of its unique and specialist interest and because it takes people through attractive countryside. We anticipate repeat visits, particularly as we extend our walking and cycling heritage and nature routes.

NHG will use social media and our website blog to promote the locations throughout Kent and run occasional interactive projects to engage visitors.

3.3: Develop a communitarian approach to partnership working based on shared objectives with like-minded agencies in the voluntary and community sectors.

An interpretation board off ZR54 at the solar farm in Bobbing has been erected by a separate organisation to mark a different section of the WWI defence. If we are successful in getting funding for our project, we intend to approach communities along other sections of the defence line to share our application and design experience and encourage them to install similar boards. This would ensure the continued recognition of a vital part of British and military history, not just in Newington but across the south-east.

If successful with this project, our next will be to provide interpretation way markers along those routes and to work with community groups in other villages to create connected walking and cycling routes.

3.5: Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities appropriate and accessible to each age group.

An NHG member has run occasional guided walks along the routes where the interpretation boards will be with children as young as five and adults into their 70s. The walks have demonstrated an interest from all age groups in learning about the history of the area, a curiosity about the defences themselves and an appreciation of the countryside as it looks now. The footpaths on which the boards will be located are, for the most part, flat, wide and easily accessible from paved areas and therefore an excellent introduction to walking for those who are not regular walkers.

Additional information

	<p>The boards will give information in text and images about the important role Newington played in preparations for the protection of the country during WWI. The inland defence line is the only place in Great Britain where genuine, rather than training, trenches were dug. They were complemented by pill boxes, observation posts and gun emplacements. NHG will be using a local construction firm for the installation and a local artist to provide images.</p> <p>This current project brings benefits to local people by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising the profile of the village • encouraging inward investment and property sales • increasing villagers' pride in their heritage, particularly among younger people • positioning Newington as an interesting and desirable place to live • encouraging people to walk more in their local area and appreciate the countryside <p>It brings benefits to visitors by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating a new visitor attraction • engaging them in history and heritage in an easily accessible way • promoting footpath routes that they might not have considered before and using them to walk between villages rather than taking to their cars <p>As the projects unfold, we hope there will be benefits for other local organisations and marginalised groups by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opening learning opportunities under the guidance of experienced professionals • comparing different histories and heritages • adding walks that are accessible to all • using art and creativity to develop understanding of history and heritage • involving other specialist groups in future projects <p>Approval for installation of the boards has been granted by Kent County Council and relevant landowners.</p>
Supporting papers	No
Quote provided	Yes apart from artwork and installation estimates
Total project expenditure:	<p>3 x Aluminium lecturn frame interpretation boards - £2,430.00 3 x Artwork - £500.00 (estimate) 3 x Installation of boards - £500.00 (estimate) 1 x Delivery - £125.00 VAT - £486.00 Total Project Expenditure - £4,041.00</p>
Total project income (addition sources of income including cash/in kind):	None
Funding request:	£4,041.00

Reference:	WAC011
Organisation:	Iwade at the Barn
Applicant Name:	Kelvin Rivers-Simpson - Treasurer
Status of organisation:	Registered Charity
Details of project/activity:	<p>Timber storage shed to be erected adjacent to the Barn. This will allow the hire space to be clear of unused equipment and allow different types of equipment to be stored away from other items thus allowing for greater flexibility to types of hiring.</p> <p>The trustees feel that the application meets all the criteria required. The storage building proposed will improve the facilities in Iwade and will give greater flexibility of Iwade Barn to enable use by organisations who we cannot currently accommodate, due to the limited space we have for storage. The building has also been made large enough to be used as a workshop so there is also some potential uses of the building rather than just a storage space.</p> <p>The Barn is a listed building so the storage shed has been designed to complement the existing building which also helps the appearance of the area. The trust hope that this building will be an addition that remains for as long as the original barn has done.</p> <p>Trustees feel that the project meets the criteria of priorities 2.2 and 2.4. Having a community building in the village which will be more useable than before is beneficial as it gives residents the opportunity to walk to the facility and not have to rely on private car use to go out of the village for their needs.</p> <p>The use of the barn provides income to ensure that this heritage asset is well managed and remains to a high standard that is expected of listed buildings. It is important to the trustees that the village's heritage assets are preserved and the past agricultural use of the barn isn't forgotten.</p> <p>Trustees feel that priority 3 will also be met. The trust doesn't charge any hire fees for community groups as feel that all residents should have access to as many groups as possible. Trustees are also willing to work with other organisations to ensure that a range of residents' needs are met. Carers Groups, Yoga, Health and Fitness, Friendship Group and Men's Breakfast Club are just some of the many groups we have use the facility and this will only grow as we create the additional space required.</p>
Supporting papers attached?	No
Quote provided	Yes
Total project expenditure:	Storage timber shed complete build - £22,550.00 + VAT

Total project income (<i>addition sources of income including cash/in kind</i>):	Grant - £10,000.00 Barn Hire various hire events - £4,514.54 Visiting micro-put hire - £1652.39 Fundraising activities - £100.00 Misc - £8.99 Total Project Income - £16,275.92
Funding request:	£5,000.00

The following applications were submitted by the 12 November deadline but their evidence to show their bids complied with the Western Area Committee's criteria was received in February 2022:

Reference:	WAC008
Organisation:	Borden Parish Council
Applicant Name:	Julie Miller – Clerk and RFO
Status of organisation:	Parish Council
Details of project/activity:	<p>The parish council leases a derelict landfill site from KCC that is now a nature reserve. The nature reserve is exposed due to the lack of adequate fencing and the council is looking to erect fencing around the site to ensure it is not exposed to illegal encampments and is safe for residents to visit. The fencing will also ensure dog walkers can be confident their dogs are safe within the boundary.</p> <p>Swale's Strategic Priority 2: Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges: The fence will provide protection to the wildlife from encroaching illegal encampments</p> <p>2.3 Establish a special projects fund to provide much-needed investment in the borough's public realm and open spaces: Maintaining the nature reserve contributes to the quality of the open space.</p> <p>2.4 Recognise and support our local heritage to give people pride in the place they live and boost the local tourism industry: The current fencing is very untidy and the improvement in appearance will help those who use it treat it better and feel more inclined to look after it.</p> <p>2.5 Work towards a cleaner borough where recycling remains a focus, and ensure that the council acts as an exemplar environmental steward, making space for nature wherever possible: The fencing will ensure the space is protected for nature.</p> <p>3.4 Ensure that the council plays a proactive role in reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, including through the modernisation of CCTV provision: The fencing protects the area from illegal encampments.</p>
Supporting papers	No
Quote provided	Yes
Total project expenditure:	Fencing to boundary of Nature Reserve - £10,000.00
Total project income (addition sources of income including cash/in kind):	None
Funding request:	£10,000.00

Reference:	WAC009
Organisation:	Newington Parish Council
Applicant Name:	Mrs Wendy Licence
Status of organisation:	Parish Council
Details of project/activity:	<p>The Council would like to improve and add to the adult exercise equipment at its Recreation Ground to encourage residents to get outdoors more and improve their well-being. The current equipment is need of refurbishment and one piece needs replacing. Since the pandemic more people have been going to the Recreation Ground and there has been a greater usage of the equipment. A ladies fitness club meets at the Pavilion and uses the equipment. Local teenagers also enjoy using the equipment. This facility is important to residents across the generations and helps promote a healthier lifestyle</p> <p>The Council has recently invested heavily in improving the play area and this has sparked a new interest in the Recreation Ground which also has a MUGA, a teen shelter and five-a-side goals. There are allotments and a community woodland next to the Recreation Ground and a junior football club also plays on the playing field. The Council has also refurbished the car park and track so people come from a wide area to use the facilities. The Recreation Ground is used by people of all ages.</p> <p>The respondents of the 2011 Census were asked to rate their health. These are the results for Newington: the percentage of residents in Newington rating their health as 'very good' is less than the national average. Also the percentage of residents in Newington rating their health as 'very bad' is more than the national average, suggesting that the health of the residents of Newington is generally worse than in the average person in England. The pandemic has affected people's mental health and physical health so the provision of the additional equipment would be extremely beneficial to everyone in the local community as well as those outside the area.</p> <p>This project will improve the facilities at the Recreation Ground and will benefit residents across the area and is a much needed investment in the open space. It will help promote a healthy lifestyle to residents. People from outside the parish use the Recreation Ground. Furthermore, it will also help disadvantaged people who are unable to afford membership to a gym or sports club enabling them to take greater responsibility for their own physical health and enhance their quality of life. It will promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by encouraging a wide range of accessible leisure activities to everyone.</p> <p>The Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the outdoor gym equipment.</p>

	<p>The scheme will help <i>"improve the appearance, environment and facilities of the area and benefit residents across the area"</i> (Western Area Committee specific criteria) as the equipment is on the Recreation Ground and open to members of the public at all times. Since the Council extended the children's play area, families from outside the village have been using the facilities so it is expected that this will be the case for the adult exercise equipment. It is expected that parents and carers will use the equipment whilst at the Recreation Ground with their children. Young people would also use the equipment. The Council has recently refurbished the car park creating extra spaces which means that people from outside the village can park easily nearby.</p> <p>Swale's Strategic priorities: the equipment is open to everyone at no cost giving residents (giving equal opportunity to all), giving the opportunity of access free exercise equipment, this will help promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life.</p>
Supporting papers	No
Quote provided	Yes
Total project expenditure:	Adult Gym Equipment £16,590.00 VAT £3,313.18 Total Project Expenditure - £19,908
Total project income (addition sources of income including cash/in kind):	None
Funding request:	£10,000.00

Reference:	WAC010
Organisation:	Upchurch Parish Council
Applicant Name:	Mrs Wendy Licence – Clerk to the Council
Status of organisation:	Parish Council
Details of project/activity:	<p>Following requests from parents and carers for more equipment at its play area, Upchurch Parish Council is seeking to install a nature trail in the nearby wooded area. This will improve the appearance, environment and facilities of the area and benefit residents across the area.</p> <p>The Council added play equipment in December 2018 and in 2020 added adult gym equipment to the Recreation Ground and this has been very well used. During the pandemic, the Council saw a significant increase in families using the play area as the initial lockdown meant that people were not permitted to travel and they looked closer to home for recreation. This increased usage has continued and the Council wants to further enhance the facilities in the area for the benefit of residents in Upchurch and the surrounding areas.</p> <p>This is a much needed investment in the open space and will encourage families to spend more time outdoors. This will be beneficial both mentally and physically to residents, as well as encouraging physical activity it also encourages social interaction. The Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the woodland trail.</p> <p>Western Area Committee specific criteria Bids should seek to improve the appearance, environment and facilities of the area and benefit residents across the area The scheme will help improve the appearance, environment and facilities of the area as the equipment will be in The Paddock which is open to members of the public and at all times. It will add to the facilities giving further equipment</p> <p>Swale's Strategic priorities: Priority 2- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges 2.3- Establish a special projects fund to provide much-needed investment in the borough's public realm and open spaces. This will be a much-needed investment in The Paddock where the children's play area is. It is made of natural materials and will encourage the next generation to think about their environment.</p> <p>Priority 3: Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone</p>

	<p>3.5- Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural, leisure and development activities appropriate and accessible to each age group.</p> <p>The new equipment will be open to everyone and will encourage children to get active in a fun way, this will help promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life.</p>
Supporting papers	Yes
Quote provided	Yes
Total project expenditure:	Woodland Trail - £4,699.20
Total project income (addition sources of income including cash/in kind):	Queenborough Fishery Trust - £2,349.70
Funding request:	£2,349.50

Compiled by Janet Dart, Interim Area Committees Coordinator
 February 2022

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