



# **GREAT ASHBY WOODLANDS & DISTRICT PARK**

## **GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN**

2020 – 2025

Produced by:



On behalf of:



## 1.0 OVERVIEW

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### 1.1 Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will facilitate delivery of the agreed aspirations identified by site managers and stakeholders for that site.

GAPs are written in as concise a manner as possible to allow them to be useable documents, translating intention into action.

### 1.2 Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held from the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2019 where a briefing document was issued, inviting comment on the key objectives outlined for the next management plan period. A second stage of engagement was carried out between the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2020, enabling site users and stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site.

### 1.3 Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
0	22/01/2020	Draft	Richard Young	Andrew Taylor	Lee Tyson
1	25/03/2020	Final	Richard Young	Andrew Taylor	Andrew Mills (NHDC)

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## **3.0 SUMMARY**

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### **3.1 Site Summary**

Site Name: Great Ashby District Park

Site Address: Serpentine Close, Great Ashby

Grid Reference: TL 267 268

Size: 28.3ha

Designations: Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW), Wildlife Site, Greenbelt

Owner: North Herts District Council

### **3.2 Vision Statement**

*The vision over the next five years is to maximise the value of Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park to both people and wildlife given the available resources.*

*The site should be a pleasant place to spend time with ample provision for dog walking, sports, exercise, family time and the enjoyment of wildlife.*

*North Herts District Council has declared a climate emergency. In the context of climate change and species loss it is vital to maximise the wildlife potential and carbon storage capacity of Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park.*

*This Greenspace Action Plan aims to realise this vision by carrying out exemplary site management, delivered with the support of site users and local people*

## 4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

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### 4.1 Introduction

Great Ashby Woodland and District Park is the collective name given to an arc of woodland and green space owned and managed by NHDC. The landscape of Great Ashby has changed significantly over the years with the development of new housing in the area. The woodland and green space therefore provides important recreational areas for local people and a home for wildlife.

An important feature of Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park is the feeling of the countryside while being so close to urban and industrial areas. Houses are screened and the wider landscape framed, creating the connection to the area's rural history. The site retains the historic mixed character of the surrounding landscape, as a mosaic of grassland and woodland

The district park features almost nine hectares (ha) of open space, with 2.6ha in total retained as amenity grassland. Adjacent to the main car park (with provision for 20 cars) is a well-equipped and modern play area, the focus of many a family visit. Very close to the main car park is a landscaped area originally intended as a cricket pitch. Some areas around the periphery were fenced and planted with a variety of trees as part of the last Greenspace Action Plan, with the intention of establishing parkland trees of the future. At the eastern boundary of this area is a viewpoint overlooking the valley towards Dane End.

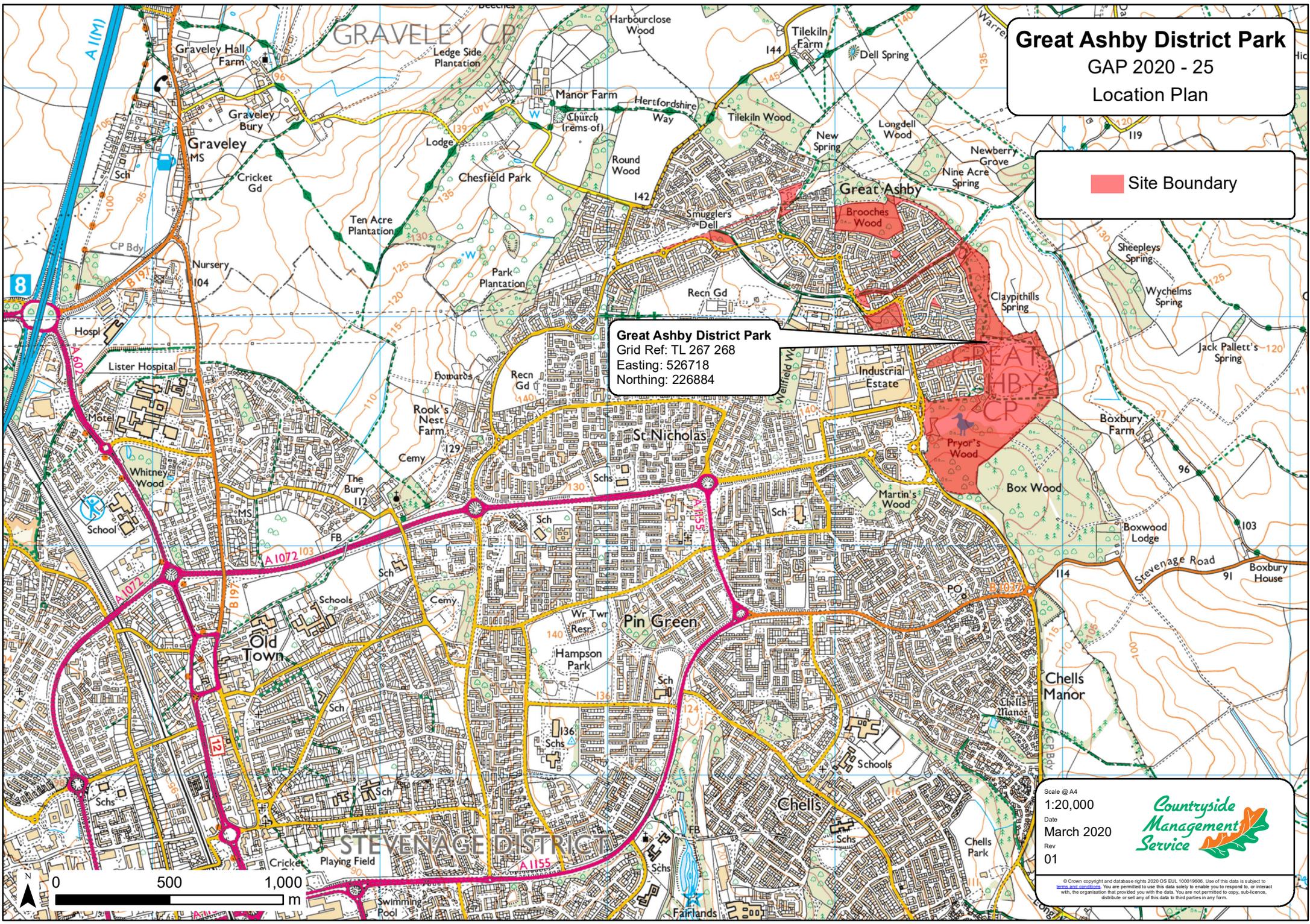
The rest of the grassland area of 6ha is managed by 'cut and lift', a facsimile of traditional meadow management where the grass is cut then removed, reducing nutrient content which encourages rare wildflowers and associated insect life. One third is left uncut each year to form a haven for wildlife such as small mammals and provide a food source for migratory birds in the spring. This area also features newly planted copses, some of which are dense and should be thinned.

Each of the woodlands has a distinctive character, with much of the site being classed as ancient woodland, having been wooded for the past 400 years and presumably much longer. Historic land use has had a continuing impact on the landscape, from relict boundary features marked with hornbeam coppice to clay pits and overgrown game cover.

# Great Ashby District Park GAP 2020 - 25 Location Plan

 Site Boundary

**Great Ashby District Park**  
Grid Ref: TL 267 268  
Easting: 526718  
Northing: 226884



Scale @ A4  
1:20,000  
Date  
March 2020  
Rev  
01



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# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Site Description

### Legend

- Interpretation panel
- Entrance sign
- Bench
- Picnic table
- Trim trail station
- Dog bin
- Litter bin
- Amenity grass
- Meadow
- Mixed plantation
- Tree planting areas
- Building
- Play area
- Scrub
- Woodland
- Woodland regen
- Hardstanding
- Permeable path
- Grassy path
- Woodland path
- Water



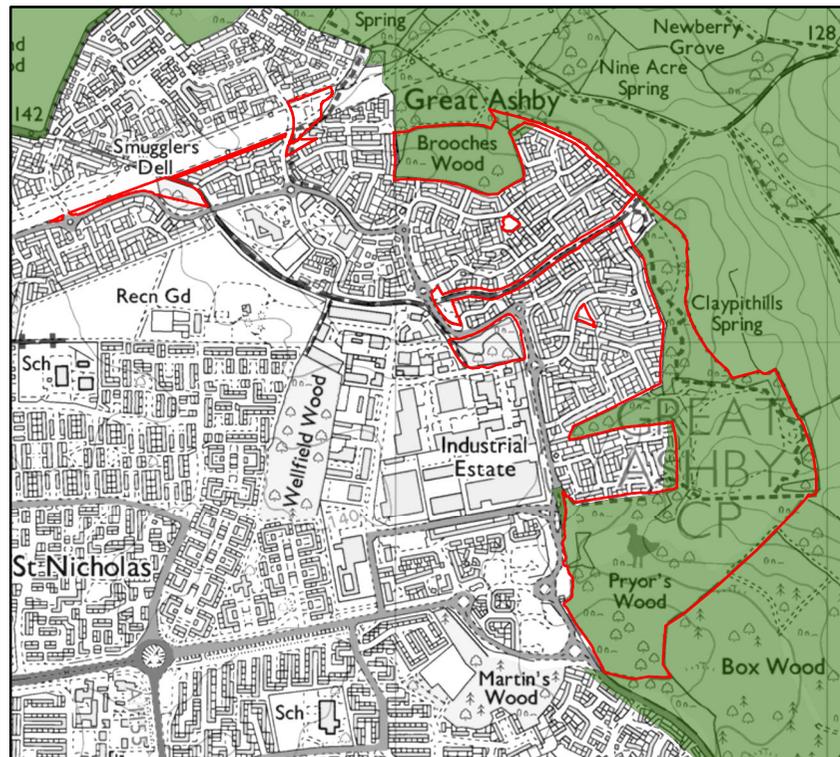
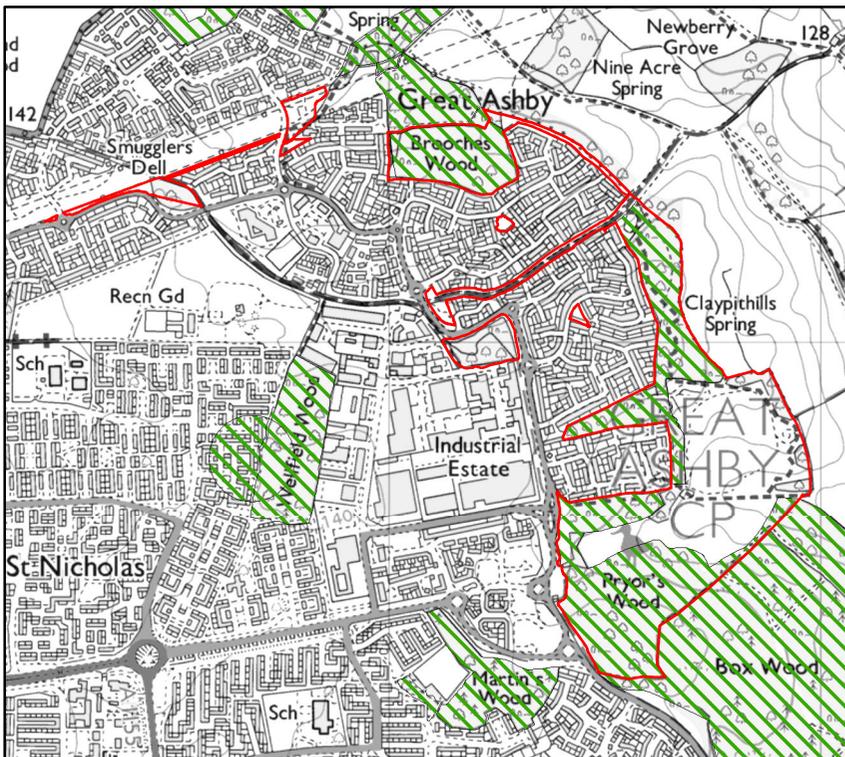
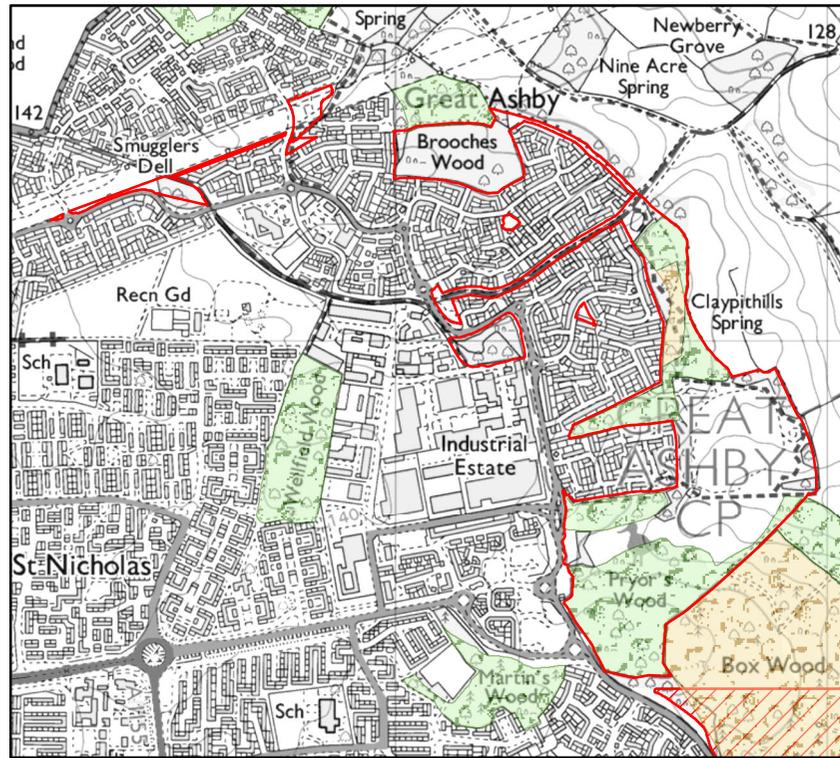
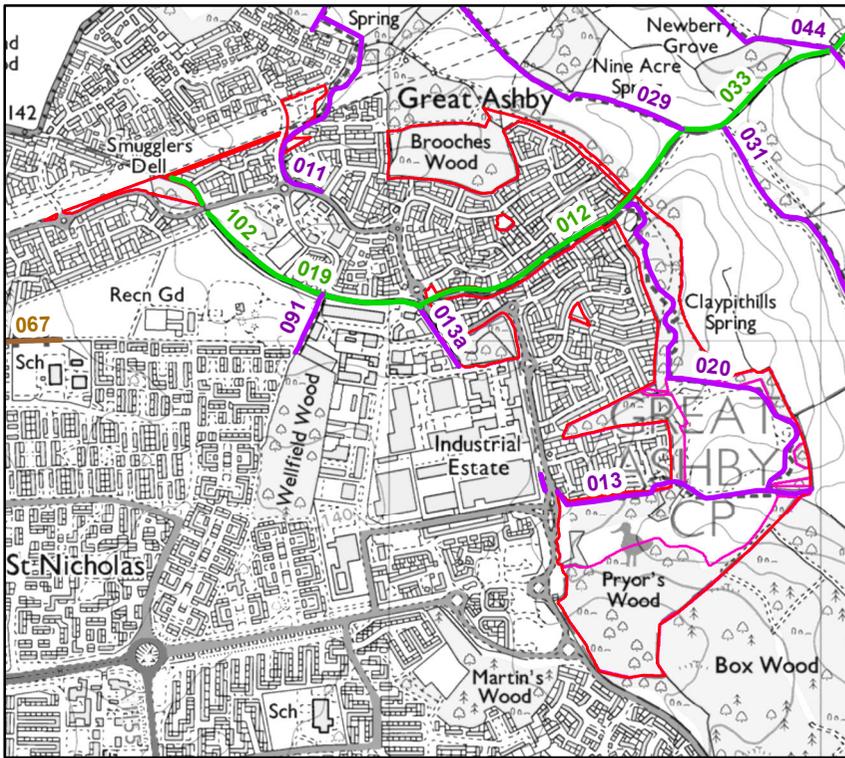
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# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Constraints

## Legend

-  Site Boundary
-  Byway
-  Bridleway
-  Footpath
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
-  Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Wildlife Site
-  Greenbelt



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## 4.2 Site Designations

Level	Designation	Location	Detail
Statutory	Green Belt	Brooches Wood Claypithills Spring Thirlmere Wood Serpentine Wood Pryor's Wood District Park	The site falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, which restricts the growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.
Non-Statutory	Local Wildlife Site 22/006 22/007	22/006 Box Wood & Pryor's Wood 22/007 Claypithills Spring Wood 22/008 Brooches Wood	Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites designated at a county level as being of conservation importance and are recognised in Local Authority development plans.
Non-Statutory	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	Claypithills Spring Thirlmere Wood Serpentine Wood Pryor's Wood	Woodland that has had continuous native tree and shrub cover since at least 1600 AD and may have been managed by coppicing or felling, and allowed to regenerate naturally.
Non-Statutory	Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Claypithills Spring	Sites where native species have been replaced, typically by softwood plantation. Remnant native ground flora may remain in less shaded areas. Restoring PAWS to semi-natural woodlands is a priority.

## 4.3 Geography and Landscape

Great Ashby Woodland and District Park is situated on the southern edge of a gently sloping chalk plateau. The soil is characterised as glacial drift, with Boulder Clay overlying the chalk, becoming loamier to the south of the site. Historically these soils would have been able to support intensive arable agriculture which is still prevalent in the area. The pattern of enclosure is an ancient one (compared to fields formed by the enclosures acts of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) with sinuous hedgerows and pocketed or linear woodlands, which typically were confined to land unsuitable for agriculture.

The site falls on the periphery of parish boundaries and character areas, with summaries below of the local and national landscape character areas which apply to Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park. Being aware of and enhancing landscape features allows partnership across landscapes to achieve common aims.

### 4.3.1 Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

Hertfordshire's landscape character assessment describes the variations in character between different types of landscape in the county.

Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park is predominantly situated in the “Middle Beane Valley” character area; though Brooches Wood to the north is classified as being part of the “Weston Park” character area. The local landscape is characterised by being seemingly rural while very close to suburban areas. Arable cultivation with wooded edges is common to both character areas with woodlands traditionally managed by ‘coppice with standards’, where hornbeam and hazel were cut rotationally for wood fuel and charcoal with larger oaks felled on a much longer rotation for construction grade timber. This character remains in Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park with the open central grassland being surrounded by woodland.

Relevant strategy guidelines:

- To promote traditional management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora
- Encourage woodland diversity
- Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of small copses around the northern fringe of Stevenage
- Encourage the development and management of species-rich wildflower meadows
- Continue to manage young woodlands to minimise the visual impact of the settlement on the landscape

#### **4.3.2 National Character Area**

“An ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure”:  
Great Ashby is located in NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland.

Habitats of importance within the character area include lowland meadows and ancient woodlands. Although the grassland at the District Park is in very early stages, continuous improvements in management and reduction of nutrients in the soil should lead to rarer species emerging.

To protect and enhance the area’s ancient woodland cover it is recommended that active woodland management be returned to neglected woodlands, with opportunities being sought to improve and restore habitats. Local communities and schools should be encouraged to become involved in conserving local woodlands.

Hedgerows are an important part of the landscape although not a great feature of the district park.

#### **4.4 History and Archaeology**

Prior to the 1950s the history of the area now known as Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park would have been in keeping with much of rural Hertfordshire. Significant features on the ground which can be seen today are the old boundary bank between Weston and Gravely parish and the numerous chalk or clay pits scattered around the woodlands. The

location of the site, on the border between settlements and parishes, suggests that significant archaeology may be unlikely.

There is significant Roman interest in the wider area (with the Roman Road passing nearby Ardley and the land being of good arable value). A Roman coin was recovered in the area of Botany Bay Farm which may have been on what is now Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park as the exact find location is unknown.

Many struck flints were recovered in the area prior to housing development which may indicate a Neolithic settlement of some kind in the area although this cannot be verified. Medieval pottery shards were also recovered in the farmland prior to housing development, although this is considered by archaeologists to be just “background noise” and not of major significance.



The 1838 tithe map of the district park and surrounding woodlands with modern boundaries imposed © Hertfordshire County Council

Over the last century the area has drastically changed, first by the development of Stevenage as a ‘New Town’ in the post war years then more recently by the building of the Great Ashby housing development. Work began on the new housing development in 1999, it is then that most of the park assumed its current boundaries. Sound planning has meant that the site retains much of its ancient woodland with ample space on former agricultural fields for public recreation.

A recent addition to the wider site is Pryor’s Wood. Management of Pryor’s Wood returned to North Herts District Council from Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust in 2016.

## **4.5 Habitats and Wildlife**

### **4.5.1 Grassland**

Although short-cut, amenity grassland does have some minor ecological value, the more valuable grassland habitat is the area of the district park managed as a hay meadow. The most species rich grassland is 'unimproved', meaning the land has not been ploughed or artificially fertilised for agricultural means. Being a former agricultural field the expectations of the grassland at Great Ashby District Park are more limited but work continues to improve the ecological value of the grassland.

Cut-and-lift management is employed to cut and remove two thirds of the grassland annually. This system uses modern equipment to simulate the hay cuts of old. This management removes nutrients from the soil, allowing rarer lowland grassland species to flourish which in turn supports a greater range of insect and bird life.

Perhaps by accident, areas hard to access with the mower are being colonised by scrub species such as hawthorn. This scrub is of particular value to birds, both as a shelter and a food source.

An annual hay cut with aftermath grazing is the gold standard in grassland management, although in the context of this Greenspace Action Plan this forms a long-term aspiration rather than a plan achievable in the next five years.

### **4.5.2 Woodland**

Most of the woodland on site corresponds to the "W10a" community of the National Vegetation Classification. "W10" woodland is typical of much of southern England, with mature pendunculate oak dominating the canopy and an understory consisting of hazel, hornbeam with some elder.

Much of the woodland on site is classed as ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) with bluebells being a widespread ancient woodland indicator species. Other ancient woodland indicating flora present on site include yellow archangel, dog's mercury, primrose and lesser celandine. Ancient woodlands typically exhibit highly specialised plant communities and great ecological diversity.

There is evidence of previous thinning and coppicing operations in the woodlands, with deadwood being used to delineate paths, a commendable practice given the ecological benefits of deadwood.

There are no truly "ancient" trees on site although there are a number of "veterans" throughout the woodlands, where through stress and damage trees exhibit deadwood features usually characteristic of much older specimens.

A feature of the Great Ashby woodlands is that each has its own distinct character, outlined below:

#### *4.5.2.1 Brooches Wood*

NHDC ownership extends only to the area of Brooches Wood south of the main ride. This area is characterised by a great number of planted, largely non-native, conifers including Western Red Cedar, Larch and Scots Pine. These species were historically planted then pinned down as game cover or grown as cash crops. Mature oaks and beech are a welcome

feature of the main ride along with mature oak and cherry to the west of the woodland. Previous management included the thinning of conifers in the centre of the woodland and a 0.4ha area of clear-felled sycamore where hornbeam and other native species have been planted.

#### 4.5.2.2 *Claypithills Spring*

An area of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) surrounding PAWS (Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site). Much of the conifer has been removed from the PAWS (with sparse exceptions to the western area) with dense semi-mature Ash becoming the dominant replacement in the centre of the woodland on the calcareous soil. Fully mature specimens of beech and oak reflect the ancient nature of the woodland. A hazel understory represents the area's history as a 'coppice with standards' woodland; with some small-scale coppicing and re-stocking being continued recently.

#### 4.5.2.3 *Thirlmere Wood*

Formerly a 'shaw', a thin strip of woodland between two fields providing coppice material. Mature oak and ash standards remain with a typical understory of hawthorn, cherry, hazel with some field elm.

Much of the centre and west of the woodland is characterised by an even-aged stand of secondary oak which may benefit from thinning.

An historic feature of the woodland is the historic boundary bank found to the south. Some restoration work to re-coppice the hornbeam on this bank has been undertaken.



Carpets of bluebells and hornbeam lined boundary banks are common throughout the site

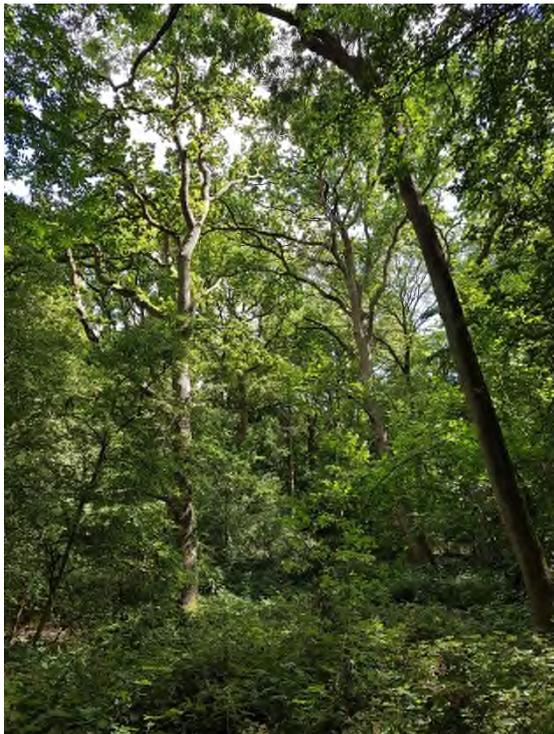
#### 4.5.2.4 *Serpentine Wood*

Serpentine wood shares the local history of coppicing in the woodland. Glades and other light areas remain. Remarkable to the woodland is the prevalence of elm, with some mature specimens.

#### 4.5.2.5 *Pryor's Wood*

An area of ancient woodland to the south of the district park. Large coupes (coppice areas) are evident of hornbeam and hazel to the west, an area known historically as "Lobs Hole". Though Pryor's Wood appears on the Ancient Woodland register, evidence from Ordinance Survey maps indicates that the wood was felled in the late nineteenth century, possibly associated with a local construction project. Some oaks remain which have regenerated from this time. Many oaks in the heart of Pryor's Wood appear of an age to be regeneration from a clear fell which would correspond to WWII.

Well used for local dog walking the wood is bordered over a bank to the south by Box Wood, a private woodland and PAWS. A mid-sized clay pit to the north of the wood is distinctive to the local area.



Oak dominant areas alongside coppice coupes are characteristic of Pryor's Wood

#### 4.5.2.6 *Hangbois Wood*

A small woodland bordering Pin Green industrial estate. Although the woodland suffers from a very busy, often non-native understory, there are some excellent individual oaks, providing habitat to insects and birds. New understory planting to the west of the woodland block has taken successfully.

#### 4.5.2.7 *Plantations*

Around the district park are several planted copses and screens. The copses are typically hornbeam whereas the screening plantations are a mix of Scots pine and native broadleaves. In some instances, such as the screen between the District Park and Windermere Close, Scots pine has apparently been planted as a nurse crop (to ensure other trees are drawn up quickly) but were not removed in a timely fashion and have shaded out other planted species. The high crowns of these pines mean they are failing to function as a proper screen.

Whilst the screening planting to the northeast of the district park has seen active management, most planting has not seen any thinning and requires immediate attention to ensure long-term viability.

### **4.6 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure**

With one principal car park, vehicular access is achieved only via Serpentine Close, causing a traffic issue at busy usage times. It is beyond the remit of this plan to propose solutions to this issue. There are many pedestrian entrances to the site, allowing for very good access for the local community.

The site is also well served by various rights of way: a central bridleway, known locally as 'Bay Lane' bisects the site, linking the Round Diamond Primary School, community centre, playgrounds and shopping district to the rest of the housing development and the district park. From there it allows access to the wider countryside to the northeast, with a good network of bridleways and public footpaths connecting to Weston, Halls Green and Luffenhall. Footpaths 20 and 13 follow paths on site and lead through Pryor's Wood towards Boxbury Farm. A well-used but informal path to the east of the district park connects footpath 20 on site with Walkern footpath no.22, providing additional access to the surrounding countryside.

The site boasts four playgrounds. The largest of which is adjacent to the main car park at the district park. A recent addition to the district park has been the trim trail and additional benches provided by the community council. At the main district park site there is a circular hard standing path which is usable all year. Other loosely surfaced, permeable paths facilitate the circular woodland walk and allow good access into the woodlands around the site. Grassy paths are mown in throughout the summer, although some of these can get muddy in the winter.

The path improvement work at Pryor's Wood should be complete when this plan is issued, allowing the extension of the circular walk; better integrating Pryor's Wood with the rest of the site.

Interpretation panels play an important role in orienting visitors around the site by supplying relevant, concise information to enhance the visitor experience. New interpretation panels are being planned, the installation of which should coincide with the new circular woodland route being installed.

### **4.7 Community and Events**

The 'Friends of Great Ashby District Park' are a newly formed but active group of local residents who carry out work to help achieve management objectives of the park. Those

interested in joining this group should contact the Countryside Management Service, northeast.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk for more information.

Great Ashby Community Council has an active role, supplying financial support and input into management planning at the District Park. Hertfordshire County Council's 'Countryside Management Service' manages a volunteer team for North Herts who carry out work at Great Ashby District Park.

Events are also run through the Countryside Management Service which have included woodland walks and small mammal trapping. Future events will be planned to support the delivery of this plan.

#### 4.8 Management Plan Engagement

At the heart of the management planning process is input from the local community and site users. Active involvement of stakeholders in the planning process ensures beneficial outcomes for the community while meeting the council's commitments to wildlife conservation and addressing climate change.

The completed first stage of the engagement process was the issue of a briefing document, advertised through posters at all entrances on site giving a link to the online document. The take-up of this exercise was very poor so a 'walk & talk' event supported the briefing process, aiming to capture site user's wishes for the future of the site.

##### 4.8.1 The Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) production process

Date	Action	Groups
March 2019	Initial discussions and outlines	North Herts District Council Officers
May 2019	Production of briefing document and outline of proposals	
June - August 2019	Briefing document issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant County &amp; District councillors &amp; officers</li> <li>• Great Ashby Community Council</li> <li>• Friends of Great Ashby District Park</li> <li>• External stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Site users</li> <li>• Local residents</li> </ul>
November 2019	Management planning event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site users</li> <li>• Local residents</li> </ul>
December 2019	Production of draft GAP	

February 2020	Draft GAP issued; comments invited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant County &amp; District councillors &amp; officers</li> <li>• Great Ashby Community Council</li> <li>• Friends of Great Ashby District Park</li> <li>• External stakeholder groups</li> <li>• Site users</li> <li>• Local residents</li> </ul>
February 2020	Production of final GAP	
March 2020	Publicity and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Ashby Community Council</li> <li>• Local residents</li> <li>• Site Users</li> </ul>
March 2020	Final GAP issued, implementation of plans	

## 5.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

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The aim and objectives of this Greenspace Action Plan are as follows:

### 5.1 Aim

To maintain and enhance the woodland, open greenspace and recreational facilities of Great Ashby District Park, providing leisure opportunities for local people and a home for a wide variety of wildlife.

### 5.2 Objectives

#### A. A Welcoming Place

To enhance the experience of Great Ashby Woodland and District Park for regular users and new visitors.

A1. Improve and develop the Woodland Walk to create a circular route around the site which includes Pryor's wood.

A2. Refresh interpretation, waymarking and welcome signage across the whole site.

#### B. Healthy, Safe & Secure

To ensure that visitors to Great Ashby Woodland and District Park feel safe and able to enjoy the site at all times.

B1. Respond pro-actively to any misuse of the site

B2. Carry out tree works to address safety issues

#### C. Well Maintained and Clean

To ensure the standard of maintenance is upheld and relevant

C1. Manage and maintain paths, interpretation and infrastructure

C2. Remove graffiti and fly-tipping

C3. Cut back vegetation around entrances and paths regularly

C4. Ensure litter is removed and bins are emptied regularly

#### D. Sustainability

To ensure the long-term sustainability of all management operations on site.

D1. Ensure maintenance costs are financially sustainable

D2. Secure external funding to ensure viability of capital works

D3. Carry out management according to best practice, avoiding the use of any herbicides, and using sustainable management practices

#### E. Conservation and Heritage

To conserve and enhance the key habitats of Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park.

E1. Carry out appropriate woodland management across the whole site

- E2. Where trees are planted, ensure aftercare is carried out for the following five years
- E3. Thin plantations across the site to promote the long term development of good quality trees and good woodland structure
- E4. Encourage scrub where appropriate
- E5. Coppice hornbeam and hazel where appropriate
- E6. Continue to pro-actively manage meadows across the site
- E7. Pro-actively respond to tree pests and diseases including ash dieback and oak processionary moth
- E8. Pro-actively respond to invasive non-native species (INNS) on site, namely cotoneaster and buddleia.

#### F. Community Involvement

To develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.

- F1. Encourage community involvement in the management of the site through volunteering and events
- F2. Promote and support the Friends of Great Ashby and other community partnership opportunities to ensure that all involved operate towards the delivery of the GAP
- F3. Create an accessible space for “forest school” groups
- F4. Engage with local natural history groups and individuals

#### G. Marketing

To promote awareness and interest in Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park

- G1. Improve external signage
- G2. Promote events, volunteer days and site management on CMS and partner social media channels, e-newsletter, websites and through press releases.

## **6.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS**

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### **6.1 A Welcoming Place**

#### **6.1.1 Woodland walk**

Procurement is already underway for an extension to the “Woodland Walk” to include Pryor’s Wood, with delivery expected in March 2020. A 380m permeable path will create a surface in Pryor’s Wood that is suitable for year-round use as part of an extended woodland walk. The extended woodland walk should be waymarked by CMS volunteers.

#### **6.1.2 Signage and interpretation refresh**

As above, procurement for replacement signage and interpretation was carried out at the end of the previous management plan cycle and should be rolled out in March/April 2020. The interpretation refresh will update the woodland panels with explanations of wildlife processes and lifecycles which visitors might find relevant to Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park. The locations of the refreshed signage to be installed may be found in the Year 1 Action Plan map.

### **6.2 Healthy, Safe & Secure**

#### **6.2.1 Response to misuse**

All site users and affected neighbours have a role to play in reporting misuse of the site. Motorcycle use on site has been an issue in recent years, using Bay Lane as a congregation and access point.

The installation of physical barriers throughout the site to prevent motorcycle access would be very costly, unsightly and impractical given the number of site entrances.

Recent communication between Community Councillors and the Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Access Officer was focussed installing the proper signage to ensure the prohibition of motorcycles is completely clear.

All anti-social behaviour should be properly reported to police by site users and neighbours. The police respond proportionally given the severity of anti-social behaviour, so only through consistent reporting can an appropriate response be expected.

#### **6.2.2 Tree Safety Works**

Tree Health and Safety surveys are undertaken every three years in accordance with the NHDC Tree Strategy. Works identified are then prioritised and completed as necessary.

### **6.3 Clean and Well Maintained**

The current grounds maintenance programme should continue, including the regular emptying of bins and litter picking around entrances.

The Friends of Great Ashby have recently instigated a litter picking campaign on site which has been much appreciated by site users. This practice is commendable and should be continued with as great a frequency that can be maintained. The upkeep of signage and

removal of soft vegetation around paths and entrances has also been included in the work programme for the Friends of Great Ashby with assistance from Countryside Management Service volunteers

Graffiti and fly-tipping should be reported to NHDC for proper removal by qualified staff.

## **6.4 Sustainability**

Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park has, in its early history, benefitted financially from the housing development which has allowed significant investment in the site. Maintaining an area of land for amenity and wildlife benefits incurs cost; this cost must be manageable in the context of budgets in an uncertain future.

### **6.4.1 Sustainability of maintenance costs**

A key element to ensuring the sustainability of maintenance cost is utilising volunteers. Some woodland activities, such as hazel coppicing and keeping the paths clear, are particularly well suited to volunteers. The voluntary provision of these services acts to both reduce financial pressure and connect local people to their local greenspace.

At present, Countryside Management Service volunteers attend to jobs such as hazel coppicing, bench installation, minor thinning and regen control in planted areas. The nascent “Friends of Great Ashby” assist with these activities with scope to take on a more active role in regular maintenance activities such as keeping paths clear of brambles during summer.

Volunteers also act as advocates for their local greenspace in the wider community.



Volunteer led hazel coppicing at Great Ashby

While volunteers should be used as much as practicable, there are some activities for which volunteer recruitment is unlikely. The grounds maintenance contract is working well, is within budget and should be continued.

#### 6.4.2 Securing external funding for capital works

A comprehensive grant framework exists for woodland improvement through Countryside Stewardship. The table below summarises applicable Countryside Stewardship (CS) options (eligible woodland at Great Ashby ≈ 23.5ha):

Code	Item	Description	Payment
PA3	Woodland management plan grant	For production of a detailed 10 year management plan. Enables access to CS schemes	£1000 for 10 year management plan
WD2	Woodland Improvement	Paid to support positive woodland management as outlined in the woodland management plan	£100/ha annual
SB1*	Felling diseased trees	Restoring woodland after damage by a tree disease or pest, for example ash dieback	£980-£1680/ha for manual cutting
TE4/5*	Tree planting	Planting at 1,100 stems/ha with native species after ash removal	£1.28/tree + £1.60/tree shelter
FG9*	Deer fencing	Provision of deer fencing to allow uninhibited growth of planted trees	£7.20 per meter

\*As part of the “woodland tree health” capital grant.

An application for the “woodland management plan” grant (a capital item) should be written immediately after publication of this Greenspace Action Plan, followed by the production of a 10 year woodland management plan using the Forestry Commission template. An application for the “woodland tree health” capital grant in 2021/22 should ensure available funds (assuming a successful application) for work to replace dieback affected ash in the year 2022/23.

#### 6.4.3 Sustainable best practice management

All woodland work should adhere to the UK Forestry Standard as published by the Forestry Commission to ensure best practice. Open and regular communication with the relevant FC Woodland Officer should continue so as to receive up-to-date advice and ensure best practice. Although the site is not a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the grassland management should still follow Natural England guidance contained in the “Lowland grassland handbook”. The current grassland management is at present a good fit and no changes are recommended.

Woodland improvement works should be undertaken given the benefits of increased carbon storage, better biodiversity and more pleasing appearance of managed woodlands. These works are typically undertaken by contractors due to the skilled labour and specialised

equipment required, which can make small-scale, bespoke operations costly. By working on a larger scale but using a measured Continuous Cover Forestry approach as outlined in section 4.5.1, marginal costs can be greatly reduced. Harvested timber has commercial value as either firewood or high-quality timber for plank and post production. The sale of timber can greatly offset the cost of woodland improvement work. Annual work designed geographically to make best use of the equipment on site should ensure best value for money for forestry operations. Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park is well served by loosely surfaced paths, providing good access for woodland work

Some engagement work may be necessary as site users will not be accustomed to woodland improvement work being carried out as proposed; however, results of positive woodland management, endorsed by the Forestry Commission, should speak for itself, greatly improving the woodland structure and biodiversity.

## **6.5 Biodiversity and Heritage**

While the importance of local greenspaces to people, their health and wellbeing cannot be understated it is the role of greenspaces as “green lungs”, carbon stores and wildlife havens that is paramount given the ongoing crises of species loss and climate change.

Ancient woodland is the most important habitat at Great Ashby Woodlands & District Park; the biodiversity of some UK ancient woodlands has been measured to be as rich as tropical rainforests. They are an incredibly valuable asset. A “hands-off” approach is unsuitable as this approach soon leads to shady, high canopy woodland which will naturally diversify but only in the long run. Most surviving UK woodland wildlife has adapted to man’s intensive management over the last millennium, meaning that continued, sensitive, management is the best course of action. Achieving diversity is important, the aim being to support as wide a spectrum of wildlife as possible in the available space.

To summarise: the management prescription to meet objectives E1-E6 is to employ a financially sustainable Continuous Cover Forestry approach in the wooded compartments while maintaining the current grassland management regime, supplemented with some tree planting in the parkland. Additional consideration is given to non-native species, tree disease and failed plantations:

### **6.5.1 Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)**

Continuous cover forestry is not a specific measure but rather an approach to sustainable forest management. The UK has been slow to implement CCF, which has been widely implemented on the Continent. CCF is sometimes known as “close to nature” forestry as it seeks to facilitate and enhance natural processes, accelerating the development of structurally diverse woodland.

If woodlands, such as those at Great Ashby, were left alone for hundreds of years a dynamic mosaic would develop of young, middle aged and old trees. As trees age they allow light into the woodland through a process known as “retrenchment”, whereby a trees crown will shrink in its latter years, allowing light to the woodland floor. This light then encourages dense new growth from seed which is naturally thinned by competition. Much like a gardener and their vegetable patch, we can selectively thin to assist the trees with the best potential; producing irregular, structurally diverse woodlands in decades rather than centuries.

Instead of costly planting which requires regular maintenance and often leads to plastic tree tubes being discarded in woodlands, CCF relies on natural regeneration. When light levels are increased and dappled sunlight hits the woodland floor, the seeds there will naturally germinate and become the next generation of saplings. Non-native and invasive species can be controlled easily at this emergent stage.

Academic research shows that managed, structurally diverse woodlands sequester more carbon (both in woody biomass and the soil) and support a greater range of species than unmanaged woodlands. CCF managed woodlands are more resilient to climate change and tree disease. It is also theorised that the woodlands managed using a CCF approach are better at intercepting airborne pollutants which is particularly beneficial in urban and suburban areas. Structurally diverse woodlands support a wider variety of wildlife and are more pleasant for visitors as they are lighter with a more diverse range of trees and a constant buzz of wildlife.

The CCF process lends itself to financial sustainability as timber is harvested annually across the site, paying for the work which improves the woodland.

An additional factor for consideration is the prevalence of “ash dieback”. A meta-analysis of academic studies estimates 70% tree mortality in a woodland setting. A more aggressive felling and re-stocking approach is therefore advocated in ash dominated areas in the interests of tree safety.

A bespoke CCF approach at Great Ashby will consist of:

- Recording “champion” trees which have ancient potential and gradually removing competition through a process known as “halo releasing”.
- Identifying areas of woodland which would benefit from irregular thinning (around 20% over a five year cycle) on a tree-by-tree basis, diversifying overall age structure.
- “Regeneration felling” of identified ash-dominated areas with native re-stocking to 1100 stems per hectare.
- Selective coppicing where the field layer is being shaded out.
- Creating temporary glades and more open areas in and around the woodland to provide diversity and benefit light and warmth loving woodland invertebrates.
- Leaving 20% of all timber arising from forestry operations as deadwood.

### **6.5.2 Screen restoration**

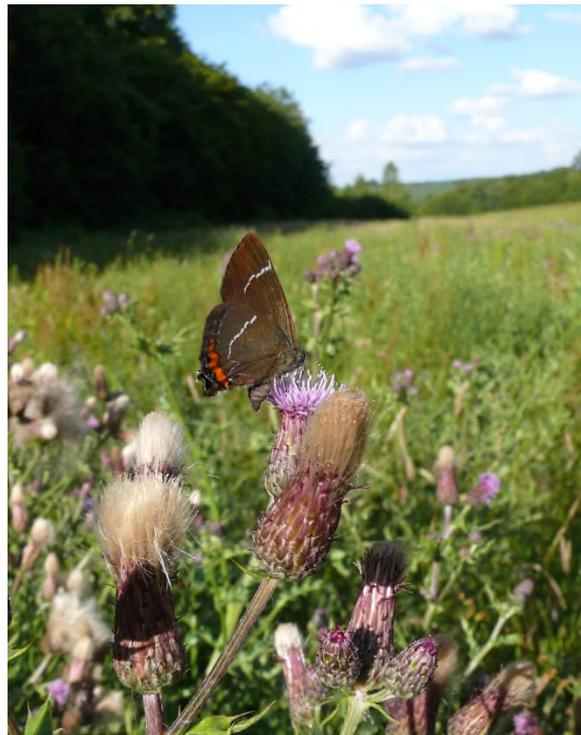
Special attention should be afforded to the Scots pine screen between the park and Windermere Close as it no longer serves its purpose. Replacement of the screening is to be achieved by clear felling alternating triangles as mapped in the “Year 1 Action Plan Map” below. These areas are then to be restocked with suitable native species. When the replanted areas fulfil their screening role the process will be repeated for the remaining triangles of pine; likely in the next management plan cycle.

### **6.5.3 Grassland management**

The current mowing regime is working well. Two thirds of the meadow area are cut then collected in late summer, leaving a winter invertebrate habitat and the standing grasses are a valuable food source for migratory birds in the spring. This process maintains low nutrient

levels in the soil, favouring rare wildflowers and grasses. The transition from a fertilised agricultural field to a species rich wildflower meadow takes dozens of years, but good progress has been made as evidenced by the appearance of some rare wildflowers such as bee orchid and pyramidal orchid. Orchids now are rare in the wild as species specific fungi (mycorrhizae) are required in the soil. Their appearance in the meadow area is a positive indicator of good management which should continue.

The only obvious shortcoming of the current management practices is that many pollinating flowers on the meadow come quite late in the season. Scrub planting, addressed below, will provide flowering hawthorn and blackthorn which provide an early spring-time nectar source.



A white-letter hairstreak butterfly feeding on black knapweed. Courtesy of Steven Lane

#### **6.5.4 Tree and scrub planting**

The new tree planting around the periphery of the amenity grassland area has been successful. Tree planting plays a role in carbon storage and will continue with the expansion of the southern planting areas. Individual specimen oaks will be planted throughout the meadow to create the classic “parkland” feel seen throughout Hertfordshire. Open grown oaks will, in time, add to the scenery and provide a valuable source of shade (and a good picnic spot) for people to spend time in that area of the park rather than just passing through.

The additional planting of scrub on the south facing bank at the northern end of the meadow area will provide a spring nectar source for invertebrates and winter berries and shelter habitat for birds.

### **6.5.5 Managing oak processionary moth**

Given the present rate of spread it is likely that Oak processionary moth (OPM) will be present in the Great Ashby woodlands during the time period covered in this management plan:

#### *6.5.5.1 If oak processionary moth is suspected on site:*

If a potential oak processionary moth (OPM) sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded, and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and sent to the Forestry Commission (FC) for official identification.  
**Email:** [OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk](mailto:OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk)
2. Notices will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.
3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.
4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

#### *6.5.5.2 Once OPM is confirmed on site:*

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC's monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC's confirmed identification.

### **6.5.6 INNS – Invasive non-native species**

British ecology has been unique since the disappearance of the land bridge to Europe at the end of the last ice age. Since then the climate has warmed but other European species have been unable to colonise this island. Since Victorian times exotic species escaping in the wider environment has been an issue as these species can out-compete native species, but support only a fraction of the wildlife.

As part of the previous management plans for the then separate Great Ashby and Pryor's Wood, invasive species on site were addressed. Box-leaved honeysuckle was removed from Claypithills Spring as well as buddleia and cotoneaster from Pryor's Wood. These areas should be observed and action taken if non-native species have returned.

Non-native trees, especially conifers warrant attention as INNS; however this action is included in the Continuous Cover Forestry approach described above.

## **6.6 Community Involvement**

### **6.6.1 Volunteering and events**

Both local volunteering and the provision of events are moving in the right direction at Great Ashby Woodland & District Park.

The “Friends of Great Ashby” have formed and are taking an active role with regards to site management with tasks such as litter picking, cutting back overhanging vegetation from paths and minor repairs. As the FoGA continue to develop their skills and confidence they can be used interchangeably with CMS volunteers in the work program for coppicing jobs, for example. Communication is important to ensure the objectives of NHDC and the FoGA remain congruent.

Bird and bat boxes are present in Pryor’s Wood, installed when that site was under Wildlife Trust management. Adding the cleaning maintenance of bird boxes to the FoGA annual activities will ensure their continuing utility to wildlife.

An opportunity exists to build on the current wildlife monitoring for both woodland and meadow through volunteers. At present a local expert butterfly transect is carried out along with some monitoring of caterpillars. Regular monitoring using a photographic list of key indicator species can be a good way to build data, informing future management.

Two “Walks and More” events have been put on in the last six months to support the development of this plan, however attendance has been low. Communication should be made through the Community Council and the local social media channels to ensure future events are suitable and desired.

### **6.6.2 Forest school area**

NHDC have expressed a wish to incorporate a “forest school” area into the actions of this management plan. There is a suitable clearing to the north of Claypithills Spring which can be accessed from either the main car park or Bay Lane. Clearance of bramble and elder should be carried out by CMS volunteers, with a biannual cut to keep regeneration down which should lead to a grassy glade within five years.

Some timber over 600mm accumulated through forestry work should be processed into rustic stools by the CMS volunteers and transported should be transported to the area to allow some seating which can also act as deadwood.

Once the area has been prepared local schools and children’s groups should be approached and supported in their use of the forest school area.

The risk of creating such areas is their misuse in the evenings and weekends, the need for additional litter picking should be monitored.

## **6.7 Marketing**

The site will continue to be regularly promoted through the CMS social media channels, eNews and NHDC’s “Healthy Hub North Herts” eNews. The Friends of Great Ashby should continue to undertake an active role in promoting the site within the Great Ashby community.

## 7.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

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Dates in the action plan are subject to change, depending on resources and funding.

Abbreviations: **NHDC** – North Hertfordshire District Council  
**FoGA** – Friends of Great Ashby  
**GACC** – Great Ashby Community Council  
**CMS** – Countryside Management Service  
**CCF** – Continuous Cover Forestry  
**GM** – Grounds Maintenance  
**FC** – Forestry Commission

### 7.1 Annual items

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
0.01	Tree safety inspection and remedial works	B2	Biannual	NHDC	NHDC	-	N/A	
0.02	Clear entrances and main paths of vegetation	C3	Biannual, summer	FoGA	-	-	N/A	
0.03	Mow 2/3 of meadow	E6	Sept/Oct	JOC	NHDC	GM contract	2	

0.04	Litter picking throughout	C4	Weekly	JOC/FoGA	NHDC	GM contract	N/A	
0.05	Emptying of litter bins throughout	C4	Weekly	JOC	NHDC	GM contract	N/A	
0.06	Emptying of dog bins throughout	C4,	Weekly	JOC	GACC	GM contract	N/A	
0.07	Guided walks and events	G2	Biannual	CMS	Officer time	-	N/A	
0.08	Support for Friends group including training	F2	Annual review	CMS	Officer time	-	N/A	
0.10	Manage regen in planted areas for three years	E2	Annual, Winter	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	-	8	
0.11	Maintain forest school area	F1, F3	Biannual, summer	FoGA	Officer time	-	6	
0.12	Clean out Pryor's Wood bird boxes	F1	Annual, Sept-Jan	FoGA	Officer time	-	8	

## 7.2 Year 1 Actions 2020-2021

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
1.01	Apply for management plan grant, produce FC approved management plan	D1	April 2020	Officer	Officer time	-	-	
1.02	Install extended woodland walk waymarking (remove old waymarks)	A1	May 2020	CMS volunteers	NHDC / Officer time	£250	-	
1.03	Install new interpretation panels	A2	June 2020	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	-	
1.04	Replace woodland benches (x7)	A1	July 2020	CMS volunteers	NHDC	£850	5	
1.05	Establish "Forest School" area	F3	Sept 2020	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	3	
1.06	Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) Selective thinning	E1	Oct - Feb	Contractor	NHDC	£1500	1.1	
1.07	CCF – Halo-releasing 6 trees	E1	Oct - Feb	Contractor	NHDC	£500	1.2	
1.08	Tree planting at periphery of cricket pitch	E2	Oct - Feb	Contractor	NHDC	£5000	3.1	
1.09	Formalising (with additional planting) scrubby bank south of old cricket pitch	E4	Oct - Feb	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	£600	3.2	

1.10	Phased conifer screen felling and replacement	E3	Oct - Feb	Contractor	Officer time	£3000	7	
1.11	Specimen planting of parkland oaks	E6	Oct - Feb	CMS volunteers	Officer time	£2000	4	
1.12	Historic boundary bank coppicing	E5	Oct - Feb	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	1.4	
1.13	Control of conifer re-gen in Brooches Wood	E1	Oct - Feb	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	8	
1.14	Inform and enable local volunteers to survey woodlands for Oak Processionary Moth	E7	April 2020	CMS	Officer time	-	-	
1.15	Set up basic annual wildlife monitoring through volunteers	F4	May 2020	CMS	Officer time	-	-	
1.16	Plant native hardwoods in regeneration area of Pryor's Wood	E1	Oct - Feb	CMS vols/FoGA	NHDC	£500	3.1	

### 7.3 Year 2 Actions 2021-2022

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
2.01	Apply for Countryside Stewardship and/or Woodland Tree Health grant (FC)	D2	April 2021	CMS Officer	-	-	-	
2.02	Glade creation – Pryor’s Wood	E1	Oct - Feb	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	6	
2.03	30% thin of parkland copses and car park birches	E3	Oct - Feb	CMS volunteers	Officer time	-	1.1	
2.04	CCF – Selective thinning	E1	Oct - Feb	Contractors	NHDC	£1500	1.1	
2.05	CCF – Halo releasing	E1	Oct - Feb	Contractors	NHDC	£500	1.2	
2.06	CCF - Hornbeam coppicing	E5	Oct - Feb	Contractors	NHDC	£200	1.4	

#### 7.4 Year 3 Actions 2022-2023

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
3.01	CCF - 40% thin and re-stock of ash dominated areas	E1, E7	Oct - Feb	Contractor	FC/NHDC	£1000	1.1	Grant funding available
3.02	CCF- Halo-release of trees	E1	Oct - Feb	CMS/Contractor	NHDC	£500	1.2	
3.03	CCF – 80% conifer removal	E1	Oct - Feb	Contractor	NHD	£1400	1.1	

## 7.5 Year 4/5 Actions 2023-2024

Ref no:	Action	Obj. no:	When	Responsibility	Funding Stream	Estimated Cost	Spec. ref:	Status (completed/ comments)
1.01	Woodland edge management	E4, E5	Feb-Oct	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	-	6	
1.02	Temporary glade creation	E1	Feb-Oct	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	-	6	
1.03	Manage areas of natural regeneration, removing non-native species	E1	Feb-Oct	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	-	8	
1.04	Check areas cleared of non-native species	E7	May	CMS Volunteers	Officer time	-	-	

# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Year 1 Action Plan

## Task Responsibility

- District led ) Officer/ Contractor delivered
- CMS led )
- District led ) Volunteer delivered
- CMS led )

## GAP Actions

- Clear fell
- Coppice
- Halo-release
- Specimen planting
- Thinning
- Tree planting areas
- i Install new interpretation
- i Replace interpretation
- Replace bench
- + Replace sign
- Extended woodland walk waymarking

## Maintenance

- Empty litter bin
- Empty dog bin

## Legend

- Amenity grass
- Meadow
- Mixed plantation
- Tree planting areas
- Building
- Play area
- Scrub
- Woodland
- Glade
- Woodland regen
- Hardstanding
- Permeable path
- Grassy path
- Woodland path
- Water

## Annual Management

- ### Practical Conservation
- Mow 2/3 Wildflower Meadow □
  - Manage regen in planted areas □
  - Maintain Pryor's Wood bird boxes □
  - Maintain glades □

### Safety and Presentation

- Keep entrances and paths clear □
- Empty litter and dog bins □
- Site wide litter pick □

### Support

- Guided walks and events □
- FoGA work programme review □

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Date

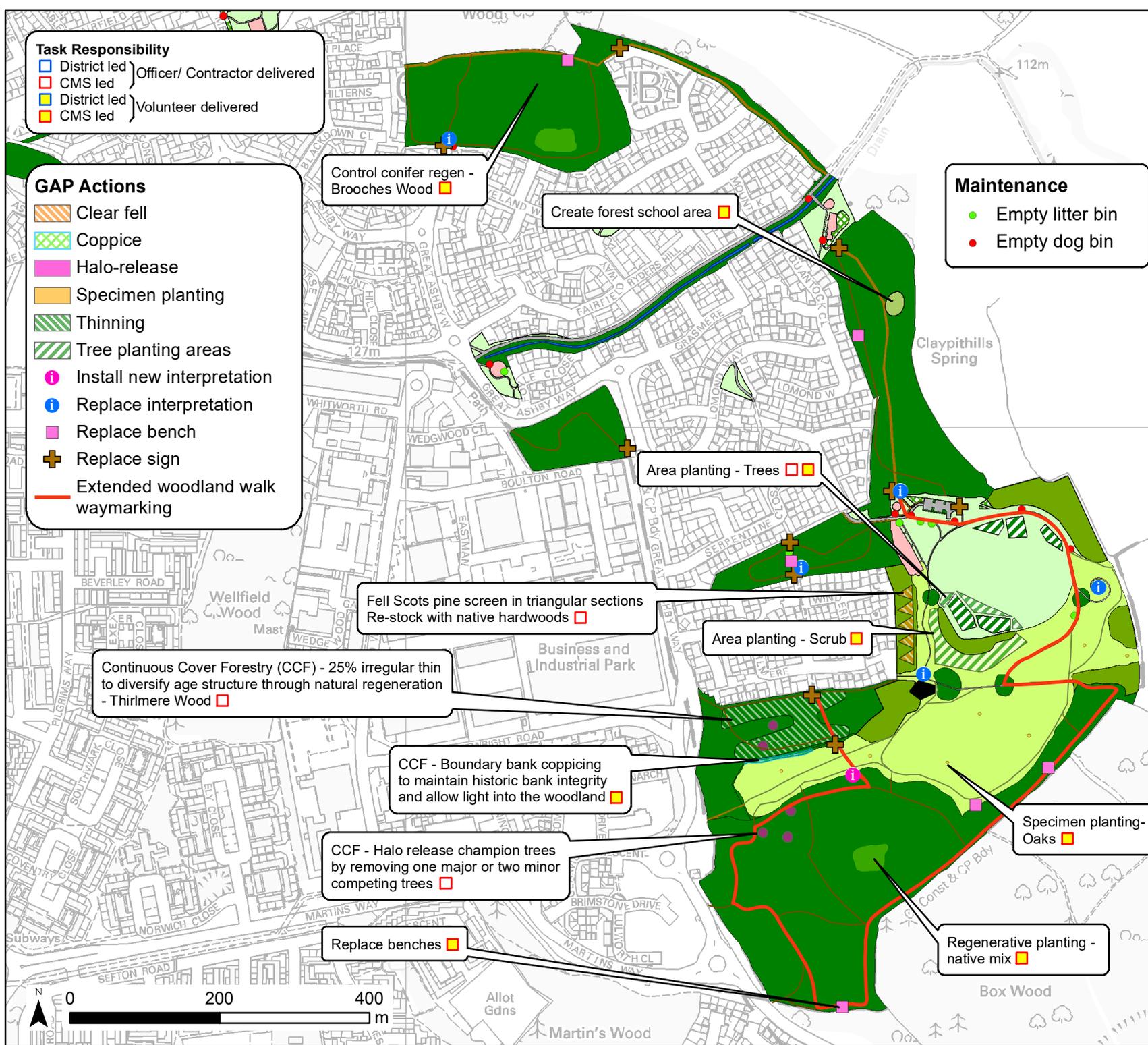
March 2020

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# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Year 2 Action Plan

## Task Responsibility

- District led ) Officer/ Contractor delivered
- CMS led )
- District led ) Volunteer delivered
- CMS led )

## GAP Actions

- Coppicing
- Halo-release
- Thinning
- Glade creation

## Maintenance

- Empty litter bin
- Empty dog bin

## Legend

- Amenity grass
- Meadow
- Mixed plantation
- Tree planting areas
- Building
- Play area
- Scrub
- Woodland
- Glade
- Woodland regen
- Hardstanding
- Permeable path
- Grassy path
- Woodland path
- Water

## Annual Management

- ### Practical Conservation
- Mow 2/3 Wildflower Meadow □
  - Manage regen in planted areas □
  - Maintain Pryor's Wood bird boxes □
  - Maintain glades □

### Safety and Presentation

- Keep entrances and paths clear □
- Empty litter and dog bins □
- Site wide litter pick □

### Support

- Guided walks and events □
- FoGA work programme review □

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March 2020

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# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Year 3 Action Plan

- Task Responsibility**
- District led ) Officer/ Contractor delivered
  - CMS led )
  - District led ) Volunteer delivered
  - CMS led )

- GAP Actions**
- Ash replacement
  - Halo-release
  - Thinning

CCF - 40% thin of diseased ash with native underplanting □

CCF - Halo release champion trees □

CCF - 40% thin of diseased ash with native underplanting □

Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) - 80% conifer removal with hardwoods retained to maintain cover □

- Maintenance**
- Empty litter bin
  - Empty dog bin

- Legend**
- Amenity grass
  - Meadow
  - Mixed plantation
  - Tree planting areas
  - Building
  - Play area
  - Scrub
  - Woodland
  - Glade
  - Woodland regen
  - Hardstanding
  - Permeable path
  - Grassy path
  - Woodland path
  - Water

- Annual Management**
- Practical Conservation**
- Mow 2/3 Wildflower Meadow □
  - Manage regen in planted areas □
  - Maintain Pryor's Wood bird boxes □
  - Maintain glades □
- Safety and Presentation**
- Keep entrances and paths clear □
  - Empty litter and dog bins □
  - Site wide litter pick □
- Support**
- Guided walks and events □
  - FoGA work programme review □



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# Great Ashby Greenspace Action Plan Years 4/5 Action Plan

- Task Responsibility**
- Blue square: District led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
  - Red square: CMS led } Officer/ Contractor delivered
  - Yellow square: District led } Volunteer delivered
  - Orange square: CMS led } Volunteer delivered

- GAP Actions**
- Green hatched box: Coppicing
  - Light blue box: Glade creation
  - Dark green box: Check regen areas for INNS
  - Star symbol: Check previous INNS

- Maintenance**
- Green dot: Empty litter bin
  - Red dot: Empty dog bin

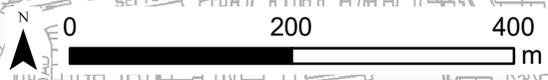
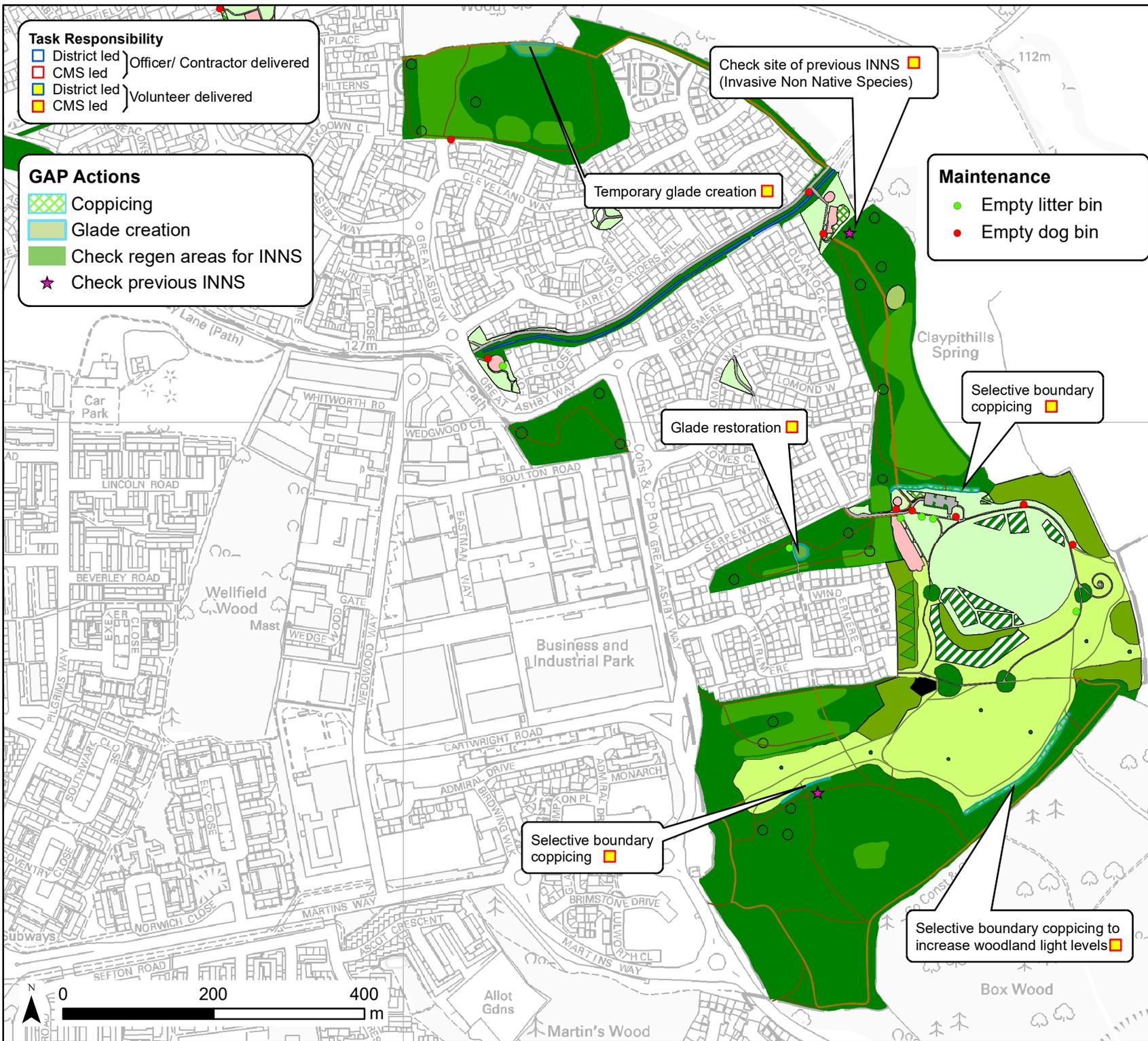
- Legend**
- Light green box: Amenity grass
  - Yellow-green box: Meadow
  - Dark green box: Mixed plantation
  - Green hatched box: Tree planting areas
  - Black box: Building
  - Pink box: Play area
  - Green hatched box: Scrub
  - Dark green box: Woodland
  - Light green box: Glade
  - Medium green box: Woodland regen
  - Grey box: Hardstanding
  - Orange box: Permeable path
  - Dark green box: Grassy path
  - Brown box: Woodland path
  - Blue box: Water

- Annual Management**
- Practical Conservation**
- Mow 2/3 Wildflower Meadow
  - Manage regen in planted areas
  - Maintain Pryor's Wood bird boxes
  - Maintain glades
- Safety and Presentation**
- Keep entrances and paths clear
  - Empty litter and dog bins
  - Site wide litter pick
- Support**
- Guided walks and events
  - FoGA work programme review

Scale @ A4  
1:6,800  
Date  
March 2020  
Rev  
01



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Check site of previous INNS (Invasive Non Native Species)

Temporary glade creation

Glade restoration

Selective boundary coppicing

Selective boundary coppicing

Selective boundary coppicing to increase woodland light levels

## 8.0 SPECIFICATIONS

1. Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)	
Purpose	<p>To accelerate natural processes; improvements to woodland structure benefit wildlife and carbon storage. In the context of Great Ashby Woodlands and District Park the CCF approach will be achieved using thinning, halo-releasing, regeneration felling and coppicing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Thinning</b> – Simulates the outcomes of natural competition by breaking up even-aged or single species stands while maintaining canopy cover. Dappled sunlight promotes natural regeneration, leading to a more age-varied and species diverse woodland.</li> <li>2. <b>Halo-releasing</b> – Promotes existing or potential veteran trees (middle aged trees with some ancient features ideal for wildlife) by gradually removing lesser competitive specimens (one major or two minor competing trees). The assisted development of ancient trees is important due to their incredible wildlife supporting potential.</li> <li>3. <b>Regeneration Felling</b> – Similar to the thinning process above, with more trees being removed to enable greater regeneration. At Great Ashby this will be used to tackle the stands of middle-aged ash in Claypithills Spring and Brooches Wood. Natural regeneration will be supplemented by planting to compensate for the vigorous regeneration or ash. The aim is to transition from an ash stand to a mixed species woodland.</li> <li>4. <b>Coppice with standards</b> – “Standards” or larger trees provide continual cover while the understory is coppiced or cut on rotation. This traditional approach generates product for activities such as hedge laying while providing temporary light and warm areas in the woodland.</li> </ol> <p>Forest operations should allow the creation of deadwood piles; important as around 20% of woodland species rely on deadwood at some point of their lifecycles. Increased levels of deadwood should allow woodland compartments on site to approach the UK Forestry Standard recommended 20m<sup>3</sup>/ha.</p> <p>Brash is defined as the non-saleable product of woodland activities, typically branches under 70mm diameter. It does not over the same value as larger deadwood in terms of supporting wildlife but has an important role to play in retaining woodland soil fertility and structure.</p>
Method	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Thinning</b> – 1 in 5 trees or stems of an even-aged stand (see action maps) are marked for felling in an irregular fashion. Felling is to occur from September to February with timber extracted and sold to offset the cost of the work.</li> <li>2. <b>Halo-releasing</b> – A maximum of three competitive stems are</li> </ol>

	<p>marked and felled as above to assist the development of veteran trees. This work is typically undertaken simultaneously to thinning.</p> <p>3. <b>Regeneration felling</b> – 1 in 2 ash felled in stands exhibiting ash dieback. A mixed range of native hardwood whips to be under planted at a rate of 550 stems per hectare over the felled area.</p> <p>4. <b>Coppice with standards</b> – All stems to be felled and stools left in the conventional manner with final cuts sloping away from centre. Suitable brash is to be woven into protective guards around freshly cut stools to prevent deer grazing.</p> <p>20% of the timber produced by the above operations should be left in deadwood piles no higher than 1m. FC research suggests deadwood has the highest wildlife value the concentrated in “high value areas” such as wet areas, sunny areas and woodland edges.</p> <p>In line with the UK Forestry Standard, fresh brash should be used as “brash mats” to limit the ground damage of extraction vehicles. Outside of this context, brash should be processed using a chainsaw to approximately 2m lengths then spread evenly throughout the woodland floor of the work area, though not covering coppice stools. An exception should be made for conifer brash which can be unsightly due to its mass. This should again be processed to 2m lengths then placed in neat windrows no higher than 1.5m along the edge of the working area.</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CMS officer to mark trees and deadwood pile locations</li> <li>▪ Contractor to fell and extract for general CCF work</li> <li>▪ Qualified CMS officers may undertake some halo-release work</li> <li>▪ CMS volunteers or Friends of Great Ashby to carry out hazel coppicing</li> </ul>
Future management	Non-native regeneration to be controlled.

2. Meadow Management	
Purpose	Cutting the rough meadow and removing the arisings gradually reduces the soil nutrient levels. This approach favours pollinating wildflowers over thick grasses, improving the biodiversity of the meadow. Uncut areas provide shelter and a winter food source for wildlife.
Method	<p>The exact methodology will depend on the equipment available to the contractor. Key points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The grass is cut with a topper of similar, not flailed, to a height of 50mm or less</li> <li>• The cut grass is then worked into windrows using a rotary rake or similar</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hay is then mechanically baled, collected and taken off site</li> </ul> <p>Due to the likely presence of dog waste the hay is not commercially viable and so will be disposed of as green waste.</p> <p>One third of the meadow is to be left uncut each year. Sections marked below.</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grounds Maintenance contractor</li> </ul>
Future management	There is the potential to train local surveyors to record data.
Mapping	

3. Area Planting	
Purpose	Tree planting aids both carbon sequestration and biodiversity. Scrub offers a refuge and food source for birds and an early nectar source for insects.
Method	<p><b>1. Tree Planting Areas</b> – The mapped areas are to be fenced using conventional stock fencing to exclude access. 1.2m wide softwood gates are to be installed to allow pedestrian access for maintenance. UK grown native tree stock will be planted as 400mm-600mm whips at 2 meter spacing (approximating a planting rate of 1100 per hectare) using secured 600mm tree tubes. The seed origin of these whips should be from local seed zone 402 at an elevation zone below 300m and will conform to British Standard 3936. The supplying nursery should: provide a certificate of local provenance, a “UK sourced and grown” assurance or equivalent, be able to demonstrate that the trees</p>

	<p>are free of pests or disease and permit inspection of the growing area and tree stock prior to purchase. An audit trail must be maintained by the purchaser, allowing planted trees to be traced back to nursery. Species – oak, beech, hornbeam, silver birch, cherry, field maple, wych elm.</p> <p><b>2. Scrub Planting Areas</b> – Method as above with fencing unnecessary. Species- hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, spindle, guelder rose.</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contractors to supply and install fencing</li> <li>▪ Volunteers to plant whips</li> </ul>
Future management	Annual of planting with cutting back as necessary to allow whips to mature. Fencing to be removed when tree species reach 3m in height.

4. Specimen Tree Planting	
Purpose	Open grown oaks are a magnificent landscape component and of great benefit to wildlife. Planting larger trees is costly but maximises each stems chance of success and gives the tree a head-start to reach maturity.
Method	<p>Oaks (<i>quercus robur</i>) are to be planted in the mapped locations. 900-1200mm bare root saplings to be planted in pre-dug holes with a surface mulch applied to prevent drying. 0.9m<sup>2</sup> palisade guards, picture and diagram below, will help prevent both accidental damage and vandalism</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Palisade tree guards</p> </div>

	<p>88mm 88mm 900mm 1500mm 1200mm 1200mm 1200mm 600mm 2.1m posts, 600mm in ground, 1500mm out of ground Coach screw Nail 38mm overlap on one edge of each panel to meet next rail flush</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers</li> </ul>
Future management	Weekly checks will be necessary in the summer to ensure the newly planted trees are watered if the ground appears to be drying out.

5. Installation of benches	
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The woodland bench type should be in keeping with the existing style of furniture currently used in the Great Ashby Woodland and District Park. Currently two types are used:</li> <li>Type 1 Woodland bench in green oak with a back rest, this type could also be used for the donated seats scheme and should be sited in the more well used areas of the site.</li> <li>Type 2 is a more rustic, simple timber bench, for use in quieter, less accessible parts of the site.</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="523 1556 852 1783"> </div> <div data-bbox="975 1556 1294 1783"> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <span data-bbox="762 1816 852 1850">Type 1</span> <span data-bbox="1206 1816 1294 1850">Type 2</span> </div>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers</li> </ul>
Future management	Annual inspections to ensure the benches are fit for purpose and have not been subject to vandalism.

6. Woodland Edge Management	
Purpose	Woodland edge habitats are a valuable and often overlooked aspect of woodland management. Graduated edges provide great wildlife benefits by adding to woodland diversity.
Method	<p>Work should be undertaken to ensure a gradual transition from open, grassy habitat and the woodland proper. This involves the identification and coppicing of understory species such as hazel and hawthorn which have grown tall enough to disrupt the graded transition.</p> <p>Regarding woodland scallops and glades: the annual control of bramble allows grasses to flourish, allowing a full transition from high canopy woodland to the ground layer.</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMS officer to identify</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul>
Future management	Edge habitats are easily lost is not actively managed. Increased activity from the Friends of Great Ashby may warrant making this a programmed annual activity.

7. Phased Conifer Screen Replacement	
Purpose	To replace the poorly crowned Scots pine screen between the District Park and Windermere Close in a gradual manner to retain adequate screening throughout the transition.
Method	Clear fell triangles of the Scots Pine screen as mapped to ensure a screen is maintained. Brash to be processed to approximately 2m then placed in windrows around the perimeter of the worksite. Re-plant the areas at 1100 stems per ha with a native hardwood mix. Ensure weeding of new growth for the first three years. In 8-10 years, the replacement sections should be sufficiently dense so as to repeat the process with the remaining pine triangles.
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractor</li> </ul>
Future management	Weeding and monitoring the planted areas then completing the work in the next Greenspace Action Plan.

8. Regeneration Management	
Purpose	Non-native species especially can out-compete native hardwoods. Non-native seeds may be present in the seed bank or arrive by wind or animal droppings. Where CCF techniques have been undertaken to encourage regeneration, it is vital that non-native species are controlled at an early stage
Method	A task suited for volunteer teams: each individual is provided with

	photographic leaf or bud ID tables) if necessary) and is assigned a 1mx1m quadrant of the woodland floor. The process is repeated until all quadrants are deemed clear of non-native species
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul>
Future management	Regularly surveying every square meter of the woodland floor is inexpedient. The CMS officer should undertake an annual spot inspection of natural regen areas to ensure native dominance.

8. Bird box cleaning	
Purpose	Bird boxes should be cleaned annually to reduce the risk of parasites and disease to their occupants.
Method	Outside bird nesting season: Using a ladder, open each nest box and remove any remaining nesting material, unhatched eggs or other debris.
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul>
Future management	The use of bird boxes in woodlands should be phased out. Any boxes unfit for further use should be removed, not replaced.