



WESTON HILLS

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2021 – 2026

Produced by:



On behalf of:

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



OVERVIEW

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 help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

Public engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for 6 weeks in May and June 2020, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement completed in February/March 2021 enabled stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document, published as an appendix to this plan, summarises comments received, and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

Version control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved

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1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Site summary

Site Name: Weston Hills

Site Address: Chalk Hills / Hatch Lane, Baldock

Grid Reference: TL 249 326

What3Words: dome.hunter.rush (carpark on Chalk Hills / Hatch Lane)

Size: 17 hectares

Designations: Local Nature Reserve; Local Wildlife Site

Owner / Lease Holder: North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC)

1.2 Vision statement

Valued and well-used by the local community, Weston Hills will be maintained to a high standard, using the Green Flag Award as a quality benchmark. Recognising the range of important habitats, management will continue to enhance the value of the site for both people and wildlife.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

Weston Hills is a mixture of broadleaved woodland, ancient species-rich grassland and scrub-grassland mosaic, covering a north-west facing chalk slope overlooking the western edge of Baldock, North Hertfordshire. The 17-hectare site is listed as both a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) in recognition of its importance for biodiversity.

As a public green space, the site provides the opportunity for informal recreation and access to nature for the local community. The provision of a network of surfaced and unsurfaced paths through the site, leading out to the wider countryside, offers a range of route options from short and accessible to longer and challenging.

Weston Hills is part owned and part leased by NHDC who have managed the site since 1981 for public access and to conserve its significant biodiversity and heritage value. Since 2005, management has been guided by five-year Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs) which are produced by the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and built around specific objectives developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders through two-stages of engagement.

Under previous management plans, site access and interpretation have been improved through the installation of notice boards, interpretation signs, large mobility gates and surfaced access routes to connect main entrance points. Re-introduction of traditional land management practices such as seasonal grazing by sheep and rare-breed cattle, and rotational coppicing of scrub and woodland edges has supported the restoration of an historic landscape.

Delivering GAP objectives for site maintenance and improvement is achieved through NHDC's green space maintenance contract, short-term external contracts, and through volunteer work parties led by CMS and the Friends of Baldock Greenspaces (FoBGS) community group.


Weston Hills has been entered into a number of grant agreements which ensure that management and / or restoration of semi-natural woodland and grassland habitat on-site is economically sustainable. Grants have supported the installation of grazing infrastructure and engagement of local graziers, improvement of access, and forestry thinning operations to improve woodland health and diversity. Active payment schemes at the start of this plan are Higher Level [Environmental] Stewardship (HLS) which supports grazing and scrub control to manage and restore chalk grassland, and a Countryside Stewardship Tree Health Grant which will support replanting in woodland impacted by disease.

The following document sets out a framework to manage and develop the site from 2021 to 2026, building on the successful outcomes of previous GAPs for equality of access and interpretation, environment and heritage, and community engagement.

The plan is structured around Green Flag objectives, to address the range of factors which are important for a successful green space. The plan includes annual management maps, a timetabled action plan, and management prescriptions, located towards the end of the document. The plan will be reviewed annually so that actions can be revised as necessary.

Weston Hills Greenspace Action Plan Location Plan

Legend

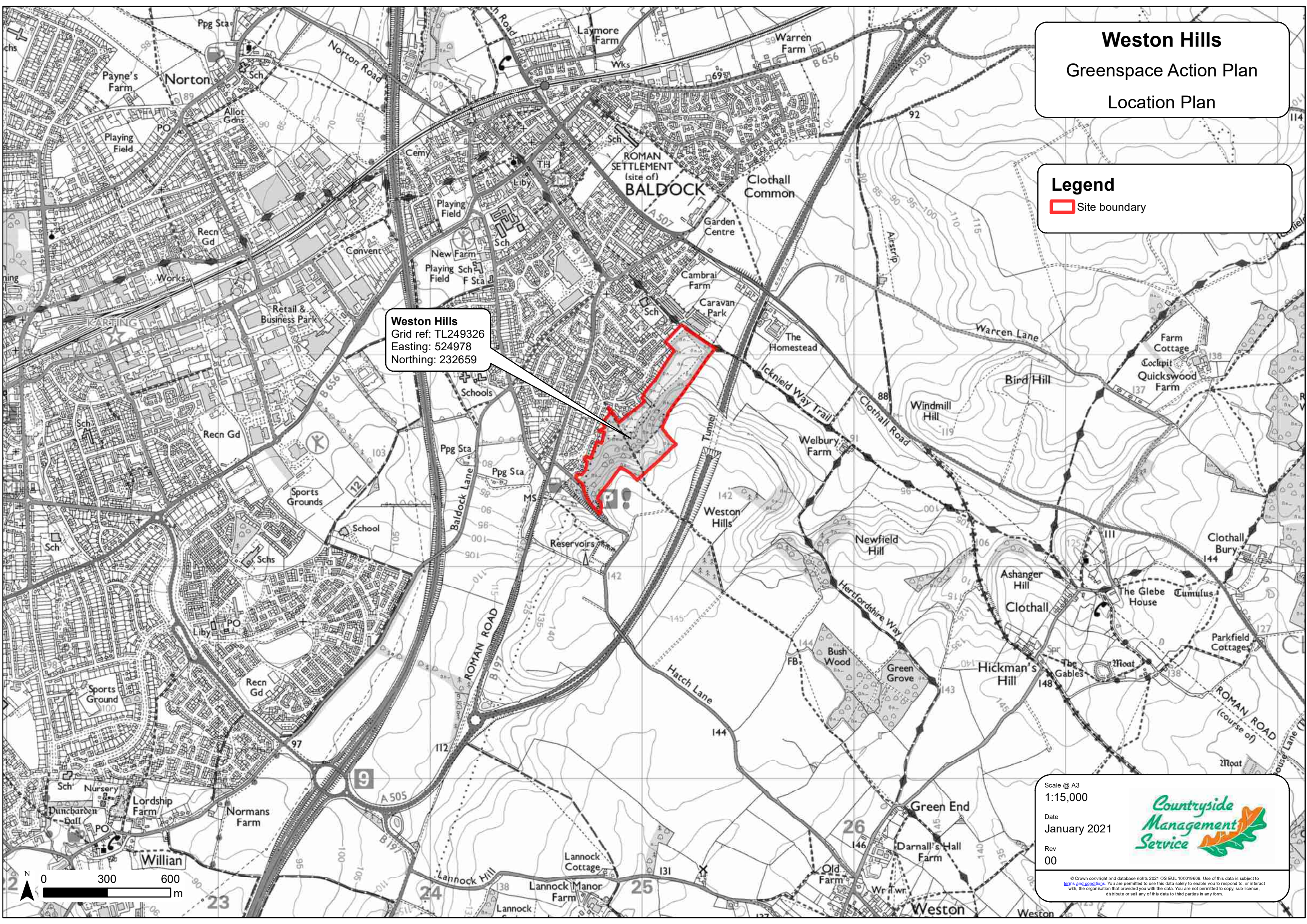
 Site boundary

Weston Hills
Grid ref: TL249326
Easting: 524978
Northing: 232659

Scale @ A3
1:15,000
Date
January 2021
Rev
00



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Weston Hills Greenspace Action Plan Site Description

Legend

- Conservation grassland
- Informal path
- Scrub
- Surfaced path
- Woodland
- Woodland ride
- Stock fencing
- Pedestrian gate
- RADAR gate
- Bench
- Dog bin
- Field gate
- Interpretation
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicle access
- Waste bin
- Welcome sign

Northern Grassland
Semi-improved, species-rich calcareous grassland with scrub mosaic

Orchid Glade
Neutral grassland with southern marsh orchid colony

Medieval chalk pit

Evidence of ancient strip lynchets (cultivation terraces) in wood

Mature beech woodland

Roman chalk workings in woodland

Gibbet Hill
Unimproved, species-rich chalk downland

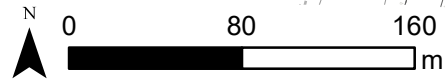
Woodland planting trial plot

Ash/beech woodland, regenerating from 1990 storm damage

Woodland glade with historic records for white-letter hairstreak

Chalk Hills car park

Overgrown former picnic area



Scale @ A3
1:3,500

Date
January 2021

Rev
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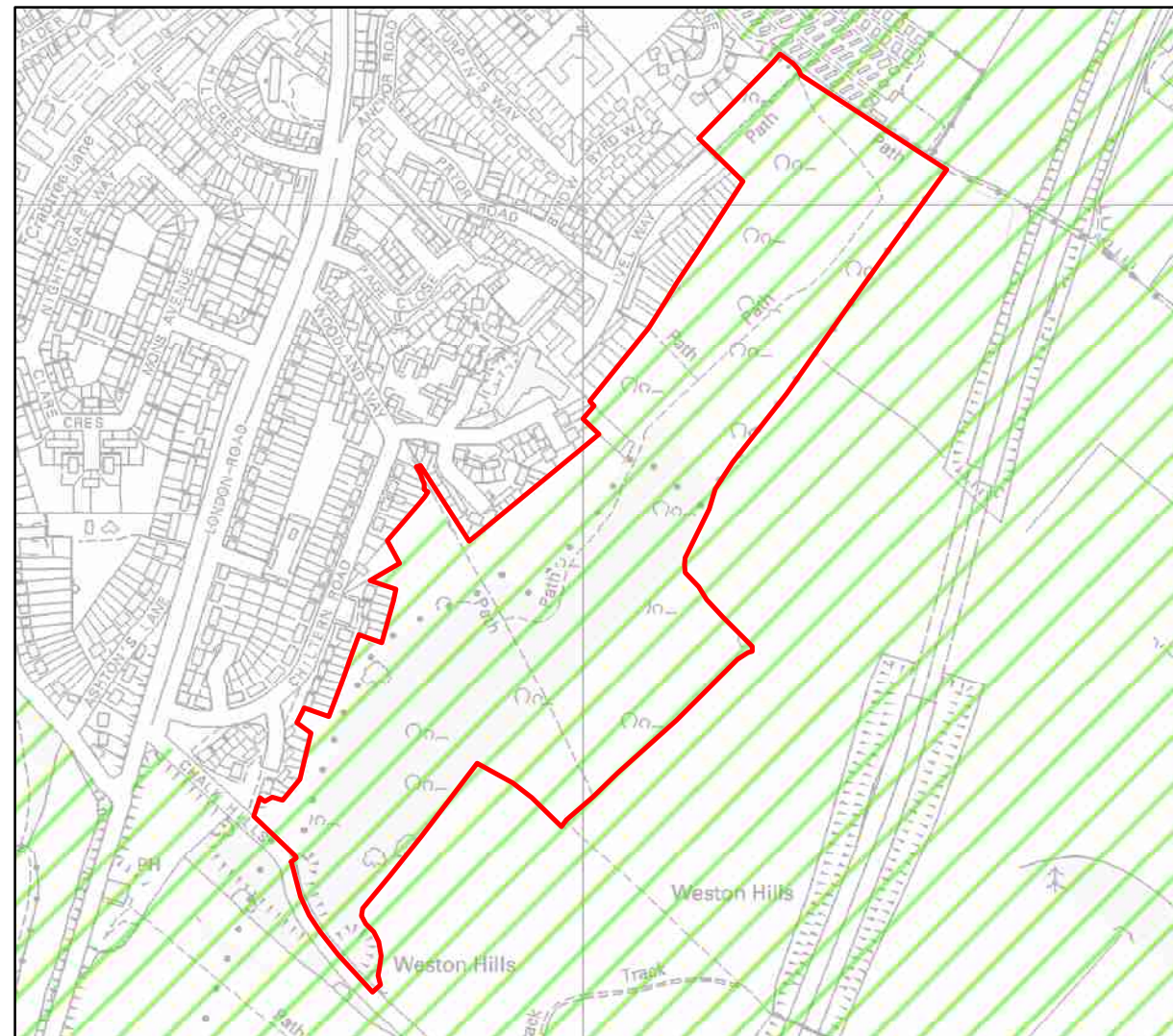
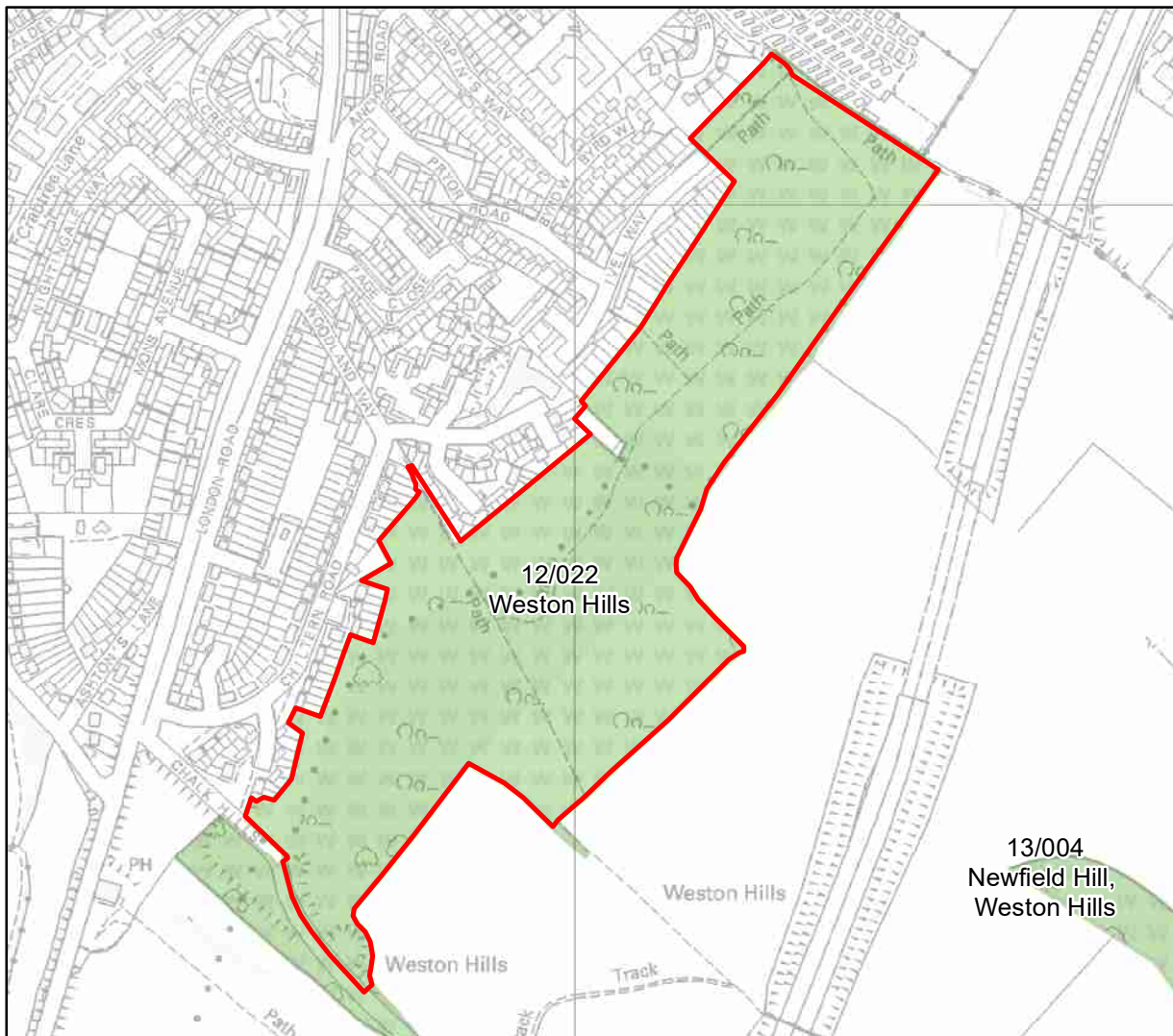
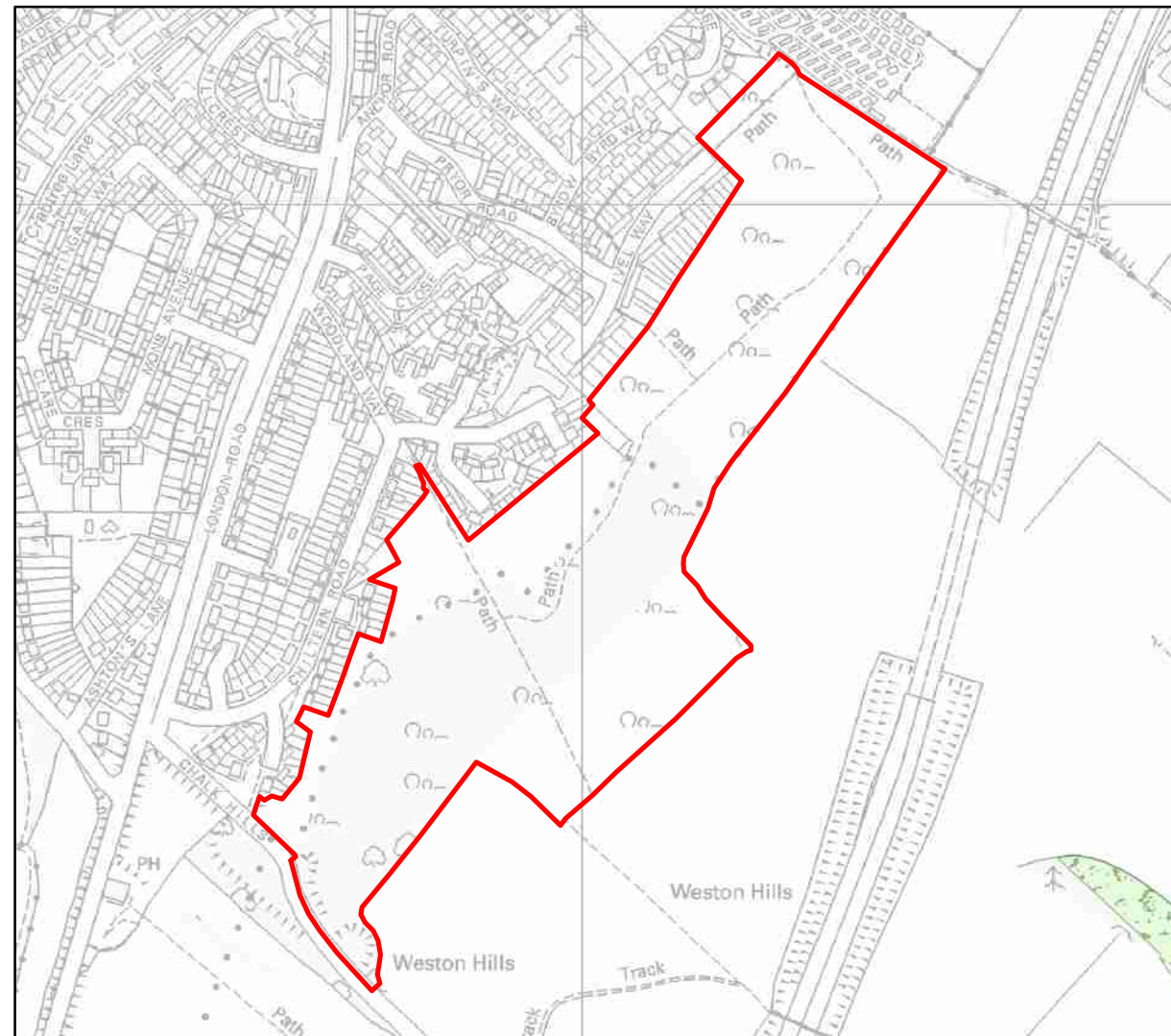
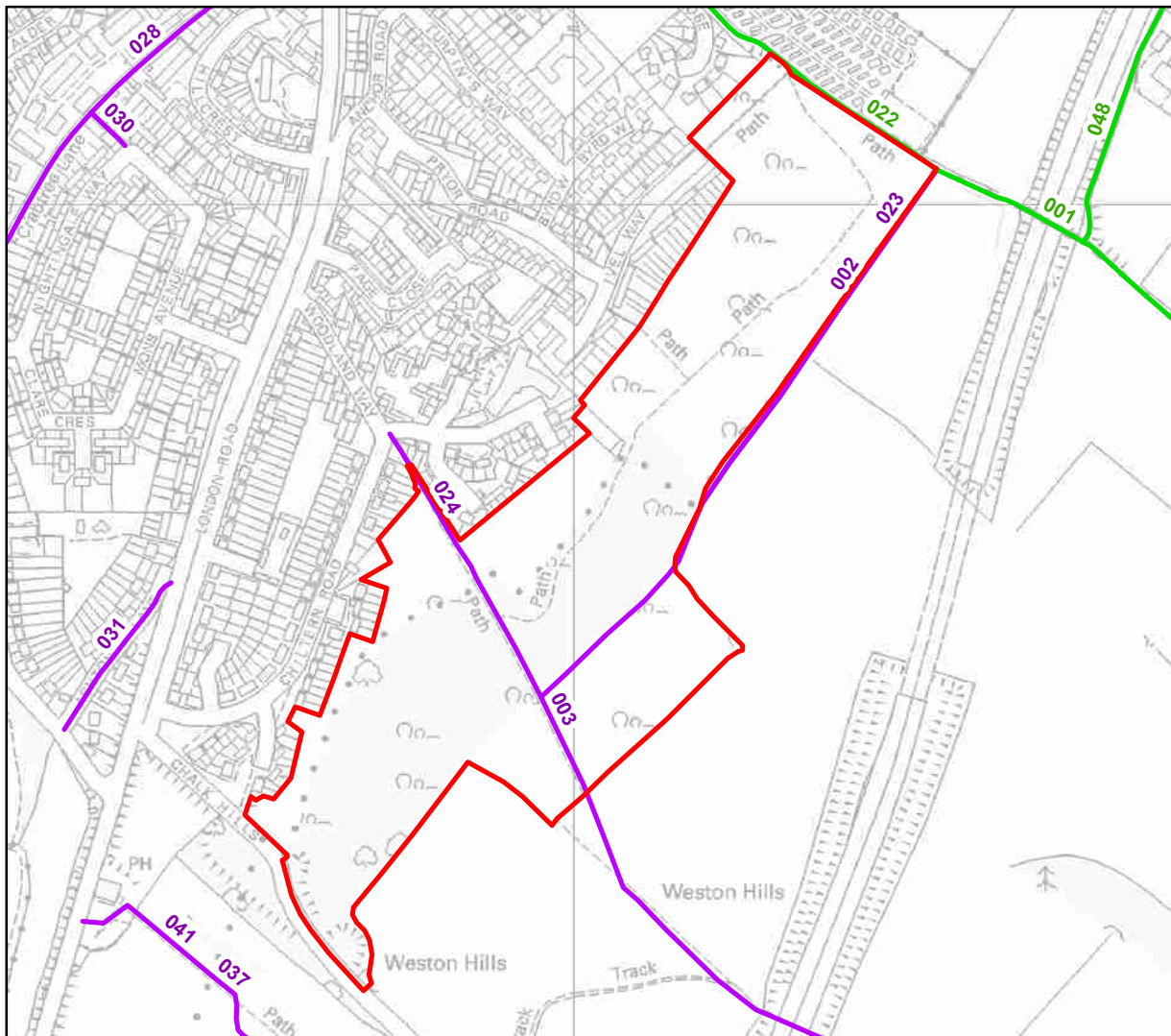
Weston Hills

Greenspace Action Plan

Constraints Plan

Legend

-  Site boundary
-  Bridleway
-  Footpath
-  Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
-  Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
-  Wildlife Site
-  Greenbelt



Scale @ A3
1:6,889

Date
January 2021

Rev
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2.2 Geography and landscape

Weston Hills is situated on a north-west facing scarp slope which forms part of the Chilterns chalk ridge. Soils overlaying chalk geology are shallow, alkaline, and free draining.

Characteristic semi-natural habitats of the Chilterns are wildflower-rich downland and beech hanger woodland. Weston Hills represents the typical Chiltern landscape in the species-rich chalk grassland occupying Gibbet Hill and the Northern Grassland, and in the mature beech trees lining the slope ridge. The north-west facing slope is exposed to prevailing winds and the ash dominated woodland occupying the southern part of the site is the result of natural regeneration following extensive storm damage in the 1980s to the former beech plantation.

North Hertfordshire is largely rural with arable farming being the most common land-use, while grassland and woodland are generally confined to the fringes of urban settlements. Grassland is typically managed as pasture and woodland is predominately secondary or plantation in origin. Weston Hills reflects the local landscape character, supporting traditionally grazed pasture, secondary and remnant plantation woodland, and is surrounded by arable crop fields. Baldock is a small town, with a population <10,000, however the larger settlements of Letchworth Garden City, Hitchin, and Stevenage are all located within a ten-mile radius.

2.3 History and archaeology

The chalk geology of the area has been exploited for building materials on a commercial scale since the Roman period. A chalk mosaic in a Leicestershire Roman villa has been traced to quarries located in Weston Hills. The oldest finds from the site are Mesolithic flints which date to 4000 BC, and evidence of chalk workings date to the earliest local settlements in 1000 BC.

Baldock was established as a market town in the medieval era by the Knights Templar. The supply of chalk for building material resulted in the excavation of new quarries, access tracks, and lime kilns, some of which are still visible in Weston Hills. Clearance of tree and scrub cover took place over surrounding land at this time to provide householders with individual plots for strip cultivation on lower fertile soils and common grazing rights on steeper ground. Centuries of sheep grazing on infertile chalk soils opened-up extensive areas of herb-rich downland. Ancient land boundaries pre-dating the town, when the site was part of the Weston Manor, are visible in the woodland and medieval ridge and furrow is visible in the Northern Grassland

The Enclosure Acts dating from the 17th century led to a widespread decline in grazing as common land was acquired by single landowners and converted to higher value uses such as arable, forestry, or game management. In Weston Hills, significant land-use change took place in the late 19th century with the cessation of sheep grazing in the northern section, and plantation of beech woodland with a nurse conifer crop harvested during the first world war in the southern section. Strip cultivation also ceased following enclosure, although was revived in the lower slopes in some form during the Second World War. Following devastation of the rabbit population across Britain in the 1950s, chalk grassland on Weston Hills was released from grazing pressure and threatened by the rapid encroachment of scrub. In the 1970s, it was recognised that across the UK ancient semi-natural habitats which had survived agricultural intensification were now threatened by management neglect. From the mid-1970s, action was taken to control scrub and recover open chalk grassland

habitat in Weston Hills, led by local authorities, and local interest and community groups. A management strategy for the site was first published in the 1980s and the site has since been managed continuously to achieve a balance between biodiversity and heritage conservation and providing an amenity resource.

2.4 Habitats and wildlife

The Local Wildlife Site (LWS) citation describes Weston Hills as supporting ancient chalk downland, with a diverse plant community which is important for invertebrates including butterflies. Other habitats noted in the LWS citation are secondary chalk grassland, beech plantation transitioning to secondary woodland, and open and closed scrub.

2.4.1 Grassland

There are three discrete areas of grassland in Weston Hills, with each having a distinct character and individual management regime. Gibbet Hill is a sheep grazed compartment located at the highest point on-site at the south-east boundary; the orchid meadow is located centrally on flat ground; and the Northern Grassland occupies the north portion of the site.

Grassland management is supported by a ten-year Higher-Level Stewardship Agreement which is due to expire in 2022, administered by the Rural Payments Agency with management advice from Natural England.

The most recent assessment of the LWS in 2016 identified encroachment of scrub (hawthorn, dogwood, buckthorn and bramble) into species-rich, secondary, and restored grassland as a target for monitoring and control. Patches of ruderal species are also identified as a target for control to support restoration of species-rich grassland.

2.4.1.1 Gibbet Hill

The most species-rich grassland on Weston Hills is found on Gibbet Hill, an area of ancient chalk downland surrounded by woodland and scrub. Gibbet Hill is fenced for grazing in summer (June – September) by a flock of up to 20 sheep, supplied by a local grazier. Approximately 1.8 hectares is fenced of which approximately 1.5 ha is open grassland. Grazing management achieves the ecological objectives of maintaining / improving the diverse plant community which includes quaking grass, common-spotted orchid, salad burnet, fairy flax, yellow wort, wild basil, and restharrow. The north slope has been partially cleared of encroaching scrub over the last ten years to increase the amount of grassland habitats. A temporary fence divides Gibbet Hill during the first six-weeks of the grazing season which confines sheep to this slope, encouraging hard grazing of coarse grasses and adventitious scrub, and allowing visitors access to the south slope when orchids are flowering. After the first six weeks the electric fence is removed, and sheep graze the whole compartment undisturbed. Visitors are excluded from any area of Gibbet Hill that sheep have access to, and dogs are discouraged from entering Gibbet Hill throughout the grazing season to protect sheep from distress or injury.

The site lacks visibility as it is surrounded by trees and scrub, cannot be seen from housing or the carpark, and access paths are steep. This lack of visibility may contribute to the incidences of anti-social behaviour including littering, bonfires, and fence damage. The area is more visible in summer when volunteers and the grazier conduct daily animal welfare and fence checks.



Gibbet Hill in early June, sheep are confined to the south facing slope until mid-July

2.4.1.2 Orchid meadow

The Orchid Meadow is located on the north west boundary of the site and is accessible from surfaced paths which lead into the site from entrances on Woodland Way and Chalk Hills car park. This grassland area is not enclosed and is surrounded by woodland. This area of grassland has been expanded in the last ten-years by removing over-shading trees along the south-east woodland edge. The sward is managed as a meadow with a single annual late summer cut-and-collect. This grassland supports an abundance of native wildflowers including southern-marsh orchid, yellow rattle, wild thyme, wild carrot, and ladies-bedstraw. The sward along the woodland edge is relatively species poor and tends towards rankness, in the main grassland there is an occasional occurrence of cultivated sweet pea.



Central Orchid Meadow in late July before the annual hay cut



Southern marsh orchid in the Central Orchid Meadow

2.4.1.3 Northern grassland

The Northern Grassland is a mix of species-rich and secondary chalk downland, with patches of hawthorn-dominated scrub. Approximately 3.8 ha is fenced for grazing throughout the summer (June – September) by a small herd of four longhorn cattle, supplied by a local grazier. Over the last ten years, as part of the HLS agreement, scrub cover has been reduced in the centre of the compartment to provide a greater area of grassland for restoration to species-rich quality. A supplement is paid for grazing by rare breeds as

evidence suggests they are better adapted to the nutritional and environmental character of unimproved grassland than modern cattle breeds. Longhorns are known for their placid nature and are generally unstressed by proximity to people or dogs, provided they are not unduly harassed, making them a good choice for grazing an area with frequent public access. Fringing scrub provides cattle with shelter from the elements and a refuge from people; it is common to walk through the Northern Grassland in the summer without encountering the cattle. The grazing compartment is kept open throughout the grazing season, visitors are requested to keep dogs under close control to limit the risk of disturbing the cattle, in keeping with the Countryside Code. A 'Meet the Cows' event is held at the beginning of each grazing season, hosted by the grazier and CMS, to introduce site visitors to the cattle and explain their role in maintaining wildflower diversity. The plant community in the Northern Grassland is relatively diverse and includes pyramidal orchid, ladies-bedstraw, common knapweed and field scabious.

The Northern Grassland is more visible than Gibbet Hill, being accessible from Ivel Way, which likely discourages anti-social behaviour. Incidences of metal detecting, which damages the sward, and drone flying, which can stress the cattle, occur occasionally. Daily cattle welfare checks are undertaken by volunteers and the local grazier during the grazing season, fence breaks and other concerns (such as loss of grazing information posters) are also reported.



The Northern Grassland in May before the arrival of cattle



Marbled white on field scabious in the Northern Grassland

2.4.2 Scrub

Scattered scrub within the Northern Grassland and Gibbet Hill is characterised by chalk tolerant shrub species including hawthorn, dogwood and buckthorn, wayfaring tree and spindle. Yew occurs in woodland, however, has been eradicated from grazing compartments due to toxicity to cattle.

Scrub is managed in grazing compartments under the HLS agreement to achieve a mosaic habitat in which a diverse scrub community occupies no more than 10% of the grassland area.



Mature scrub patch in Northern Grassland



Patch of bramble in Northern Grassland

To maintain a variety of ages and heights of scrub, rotational coppicing is carried out by CMS and FoBGS volunteer work parties. Maintaining this mosaic of scrub increases the availability of habitat niches, encouraging a larger diversity of wildlife. In order to maintain scrub cover at 10% or less, it was necessary at the start of the HLS agreement to remove patches of mature scrub on Gibbet Hill and the Northern Grassland. To reduce scrub cover, shrubs in strategic locations were cut to ground level to open and connect grassland.



Gibbet Hill north and south slope divided by a band of mature scrub in the early 2000s prior to clearance

Scrub encroachment is the greatest threat to chalk downland habitat in Weston Hills. Restoration of a diverse chalk plant assemblage in recently cleared grassland is threatened by regenerating scrub, coarse grasses and ruderals which thrive in soil enriched by leaf decay. The aim of grazing is to strip nutrients from these successional grassland areas, releasing wildflowers from competition.



Successional grassland with regenerating hawthorn shoots in the Northern Grassland



Dogwood suckers invading species-rich chalk downland on Gibbet Hill

Mature scrub / secondary woodland, composed of elder, hawthorn, buckthorn, sycamore and ash, occupies steep ground along the north-east boundary above the Northern Grassland. The understory is shaded and dominated by ivy and bramble. Ash is affected by ash dieback resulting in suppression of natural regeneration, dead limbs and small trees.

Scrub can also be found at the edge of the main woodland areas in places, providing valuable transition habitat between woodland and grassland habitats, a particularly wildlife-rich habitat for birds, mammals and invertebrates.



Scrubby woodland edge habitat

2.4.3 Woodland

The southern portion of Weston Hills is covered with broadleaved woodland, occupying the south-west facing chalk slope overlooking residential streets. Along the ridge of the slope on the eastern site boundary, and in sheltered valleys further down the slope, mature beech trees persist as remnants of the 19th century plantation largely destroyed by 1980's storm damage. Where they survive, the beech trees reflect the classic Chiltern landscape and provide suitable habitat for specialist beech woodland flora such as white helleborine and yellow-bird nest orchid for which there are historic site records. White-letter hairstreak, a

woodland specialist butterfly species dependent on wych elm, has also previously been recorded on-site.

Most of the woodland in Weston Hills is composed of secondary woodland regeneration across the storm damaged area, with ash being the major component. Sycamore is the most frequent alternative species whilst wych elm, beech, and field maple are minor components. Planting to diversify woodland composition has taken place on a small scale, including 500 'Trees for Life' following storm damage, and more recently a trial plot of Woodland Trust native broadleaf mix was planted by FoBGS to identify the tree species best suited to site conditions.

A three-zone ride edge habitat is maintained along the east to west path which leads through the woodland, from Woodland Way to Gibbet Hill. The grassy path margins are mown every two years and woodland margin scallops are maintained through coppicing to provide sheltered edge habitat which is valuable for invertebrates. The ride connects to areas of open grassland, forming an open space network which is valuable for bats and other species.

Prior woodland management has included localised and even thinning to vary the structure of the woodland (opening glades) and to improve growing conditions for retained trees.

Ash dieback was first observed in 2012 as suppressing regeneration of ash coppice in boundary scallops. In 2019, a Forestry Commission assessment confirmed that ash dieback was now widespread throughout ash woodland with disease symptoms evident as crown thinning, epicormic flushing, and wilting foliage. The Forestry Commission have recommended selective thinning, or clear fell, followed by replanting of a diverse tree species mix as the appropriate strategy for restoring a healthy and diverse broadleaved woodland habitat.



Dense woodland along lower woodland path



Scalloped woodland ride leading to Gibbet Hill

2.4.4 Wildlife

The site provides habitat for protected wildlife including common lizard and slow-worm, a diversity of nesting birds, badger, and bat species. Small mammals recorded on site including field voles, wood mouse, harvest mouse and shrews. Grey squirrels are common in woodland (including the local 'melanic' form), and there are also records for brown hare, fox, and muntjac. Invertebrate species include yellow meadow ant, which are strongly

associated with ancient pasture, and a variety of butterfly species, although a former colony of small blue is now extinct. Weston Hills is on the Invertebrate Site Register for scarce and localised species.

2.4.5 Invasive non-native species (INNS)

INNS found on Weston Hills include snowberry amongst scrub patches on the Northern Grassland, and a variety of garden escapes, primarily along the boundary with residential areas. There is also a patch of Russian vine growing near the Ivel Way entrance, this has previously been cut back and treated with glyphosate to prevent further spread.



Garden escapes near residential areas



Snowberry

2.4.6 Heritage features

The chalk pit located on the edge of the surfaced path through the site has previously been cleared of encroaching trees and scrub to protect heritage features.



Chalk pit within woodland

2.5 Access, facilities and infrastructure

2.5.1 Car park

A small stone-surfaced car park for the site is located on Chalk Hills. The car park surface is currently in poor condition with numerous ruts and potholes, particularly at the entrances.



Potholes in Chalk Hills car park

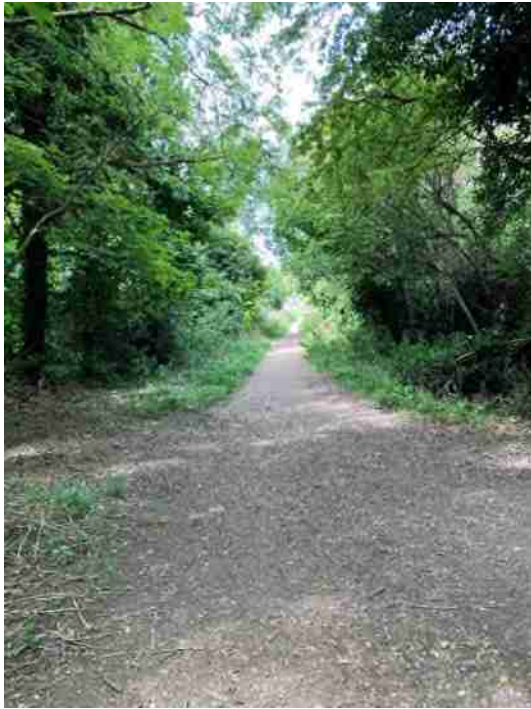


Rutted entrance to Chalk Hills car park

2.5.2 Paths

The nature of the site, located on a steep slope and with sensitive floral communities across open areas, means it is not suitable for formalised recreation or multi-user access. Horse riding and motorbikes are prohibited, and surfaced paths are confined to the lower parts of the site. A firm surfaced path runs east to west along flat ground connecting the Chalk Hills car park to the Northern Grassland and to site entrances from Woodland Way, Ivel Way and Limekiln Lane. The Northern Grassland is gently sloping with a firm access path which is used by visitors with pushchairs and rough terrain mobility vehicles. Surfaced paths are in poor condition, with accumulated organic matter making the path muddy in winter in places, and fragments of broken glass and tile in the surface material posing a hazard to site users.

Kissing gates located at entrances to the Northern Grassland, Gibbet Hill, and onto surfaced paths have a RADAR lock allowing gates to be opened wide to provide space for wheelchairs and personal mobility vehicles. Informal paths up through woodland and towards Gibbet Hill are steep and can be muddy in winter.



Surfaced path



Informal path through woodland

2.5.3 Steps

A set of steps leads from the Chalk Hills car park up to informal paths through the woodland, linking to the wider RoW network. Two sets of dilapidated steps are also found on Gibbet Hill. These are in poor condition and now pose a trip hazard to site users, especially when vegetation is long.



Steps leading from Chalk Hills car park



Dilapidated steps on Gibbet Hill

2.5.4 Vehicle access

Access for vehicles to deliver management is available at Woodland Way, Chalk Hills and Ivel Way. Due to the limited availability of surfaced paths, and the steep gradient of the site, management is limited to hand tools and smaller vehicles such as a tractor and trailer.



Vehicle access from Chalk Hills

Where the surfaced path leads from the woodland into the Northern Grassland, vehicle access can be difficult, particularly after wet weather, due to the offset of the path, slope, location of bench and surrounding trees.



Access in to Northern Grassland

2.5.5 Disabled access

Disabled access into the site is obstructed at some locations around the site due to infrastructure outside the site boundary. The raised kerb at the end of Ivel Way creates an obstacle for personal mobility vehicle users who wish to access the RADAR key gates at the base of the Northern Grassland. The bridleway leading from Limekiln Lane to the base of the Northern Grassland is rutted making it unsuitable for personal mobility vehicle users. The road system around Weston Hills means a significant detour is required from Ivel Way and Limekiln Lane to access the site from Woodland Way where the RADAR key gate is more accessible.



RADAR kissing gate on site



Kerb at the end of Ivel Way

2.5.6 Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way lead into and through the site. Waymark signs at site entrances indicate the dedication and route direction of footpaths through the site. Signage of footpath routes in the site is lacking, making it difficult to navigate the routes correctly, particularly at the corner of Gibbet Hill where Weston 002 and 003 intersect. Footfall along Weston 002 is relatively low, annual management of encroaching vegetation would make the route more visible.

2.5.7 Benches

Benches are located at resting points across the site. Picnic tables are situated near to the carpark, although this area has become overgrown in recent years. The location of the picnic area lacks visibility, making it vulnerable to anti-social behaviour.



Example of benches found on site



Overgrown picnic area

2.5.8 Bins

Rubbish / dog waste bins located on site are emptied regularly as part of the Grounds Maintenance contract.



Bin in Chalk Hills car park

2.5.9 Interpretation and signage

Interpretation panels are located around the site, providing history and wildlife information. Four topic panels provide specific information on site history, grassland habitat, and woodland habitat. Welcome panels located in cabinets at entrances provide a map of the site with main access routes and entrances marked. A notice board incorporated into cabinets at site entrances provides a location for site notices which inform visitor of volunteer and community events associated with the site, and any upcoming or current management activities (such as grazing). Leaflets produced under the previous plan provide a map and introduction to the site. Site maps displayed on interpretation panel and leaflets are no longer up to date with all the site infrastructure and features, such as the location of disabled access points.



Combination interpretation/noticeboard at site entrance



'Topic' interpretation panel within woodland

Routed wooden entrance signage welcome visitors to the site at minor entrances, these are currently being renovated by a CMS volunteer.



Wooden entrance sign

2.5.10 Grazing infrastructure

Grazing infrastructure installed as part of the HLS agreement is checked and repaired as necessary each year. An emergency protocol for livestock is updated each year identifying the procedure for reporting non-emergency (such as lameness or fence damage) and emergency (such as escaped stock on roads or dog attack) incidents involving grazing animals. Contact numbers for the grazier and for NHDC are displayed on posters on gateways and noticeboards when animals are on site, allowing visitors to report any concerns about the grazing animals.



Stock fencing around Northern Grassland



Water trough on Gibbet Hill

2.6 Community and events

The Friends of Baldock Greenspaces (FoBGS) are a constituted community group who are stakeholders in this plan and support the management of the site. FoBGS run monthly volunteer tasks, alternating between Weston Hills and Ivel Springs, another green space in Baldock, owned by NHDC. Actions agreed in this plan form the basis of their task programme and contribute to habitat management and site maintenance. The FoBGS are often a first point of contact for visitors with concerns or queries about the site. CMS and NHDC support the group by providing insurance cover, first aid, task leadership and specialist training and regular on and off-site meetings to discuss and resolve any issues.

FoBGS provide significant support for grazing management, recruiting volunteers to carry-out daily stock checks and producing a weekly grazing blog on the FoBGS Facebook page.

The CMS Communities Team also run periodic volunteer work parties at Weston Hills to help ensure the aims of this plan are realised, for example to support grazing preparation and scrub management tasks.

The site is promoted through a number of channels, including the CRoW Facebook page and e-News, the FoBGS Facebook page and NHDC's 'Healthy Hub North Herts' e-News. FoBGS also hold a stall at the annual Baldock Festival to promote the group's activities. CMS guided walks and events are promoted via the Walks and More website and through site posters. A 'Meet the Cows' event is held each year with the graziers to introduce site visitors to the cattle and sheep and to promote the benefits of conservation grazing for wildflower diversity. The two-stage public consultation process for new GAPs is promoted through on-site posters, social-media posts, and e-News communication from CRoW and NHDC.

A site leaflet containing an illustrated map, a description of the site's main features, and access information can be downloaded from the NHDC website.

3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aim

To provide a sustainable strategy for the conservation of biodiversity and heritage of Weston Hills, balanced with maintaining an engaging and welcoming greenspace, offering opportunities for informal exercise, enjoyment of nature, and participation in community events to improve the site.

Objectives

A. A welcoming place – *To provide a welcoming green space for the enjoyment of the local community*

A1 Update interpretation

A2 Liaise with neighbouring landowner and HCC to improve ease of access into the site

B. Healthy, safe and secure – *To provide and maintain clear and safe public access onto, and around Weston Hills*

B1 Maintain carpark surface

B2 Carry out planned and reactive tree work to address safety issues

B3 Respond promptly to reports of anti-social behaviour and misuse of the site

C. Well maintained and clean – *To ensure that all aspects of Weston Hills are kept clean and well maintained*

C1 Re-surface surfaced paths across the site

C2 Maintain site infrastructure, e.g. gates, fencing, benches, steps, and paths

C3 Maintain high standards of site cleanliness through grounds maintenance operations

C4 Improve way marking of footpaths through the site

D. Environmental management – *To ensure all aspects of site management are undertaken with sustainability as a guiding principle*

D1 Ensure all site activities adhere to relevant NHDC policies and strategies, including all work undertaken by contractors

D2 Ensure ongoing management costs are financially sustainable

D3 Carry out management according to environmental best practice

D4 Monitor results of delivery to evaluate the success of management activities

E. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage – *To conserve and enhance the important wildlife, landscape and heritage features of Weston Hills*

E1 Manage woodland to improve long-term resilience to disease and climate threats

E2 Manage rides and edge habitats to connect with grassland and diversify woodland margins

E3 Manage grassland to promote wildflower diversity, including through the continuation of conservation grazing

E4 Manage scrub in and around grassland as a dynamic habitat in coppice rotation

E5 Maintain visibility of chalk pit, near path, by control of tree and scrub encroachment

F. Community Involvement – *To ensure engagement and involvement of local communities*

F1 Support the Friends of Baldock Green Spaces and CMS volunteers in contributing to site management

F2 Provide an opportunity for stakeholders, including local residents and community groups, to influence the new GAP through a structured engagement process

F3 CMS / Friends of Baldock Green Spaces led guided walks / engagement events

G. Marketing – *To promote awareness and interest in Weston Hills*

G1 Promote and celebrate voluntary and capital works projects that improve the site

G2 Visitor information, such as maps and leaflets, available on a variety of platforms

4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

4.1 A Welcoming place

A1 Interpretation

Map based orientation panels will be updated with a new site map identifying all disabled access (RADAR) gates and distinguishing between RoW and permissive paths. Maps will include information on how the paths through the site link to the wider RoW network and long-distance paths, e.g. the Hertfordshire Way and Icknield Way.

A2 Improve access into the site

Installation of a dropped kerb at the end of Ivel Way and improvement to the rutted surface of Baldock Bridleway 022 off Limekiln Lane will improve access to RADAR gates at the base of the Northern Grassland for wheelchair, pushchair, and personal mobility vehicle users. Ivel Way and Limekiln Lane fall outside the site area and therefore NHDC will liaise with neighbouring landowners and HCC Rights of Way to deliver these improvements.

4.2 Healthy, safe and secure

B1 Maintain carpark surface

Aggregate surface will be topped up to smooth-out ruts and potholes. Vegetation management will take place as required to maintain sightlines at the entrance and exit. Fly tipping will be cleared to maintain safety of visitors, and incidences will be investigated.

B2 Tree safety

Tree risk surveys are undertaken on a three-year cycle, in line with NHDC's Greenspace and Tree Strategies. A programme of planned and reactive tree risk management is carried out by specialist contractors and managed by the NHDC Tree Office. See appendix for protocols to follow if signs of oak processionary moth are observed on-site.

B3 Anti-social behaviour

Targeted signage on-site will address reported anti-social behaviour, for example fires started on grassland areas and metal detecting, which have been issues in the past.

4.3 Well maintained and clean

C1 Re-surface surfaced paths

Surfaced paths will be scraped to remove organic material and scarify the existing surface. A new top layer will then be applied to cover the base course. Surfacing should take place following forestry works to prevent possible damage to the new surface through forestry operations.

Where vehicle access into the Northern Grassland is difficult due to the slope/bench/location of field gate, the path will be reprofiled, bench removed and vegetation cleared as necessary to improve access.

C2 Maintain site infrastructure

Benches, fences, gates, steps and signage will be repaired and replaced as necessary. Annual checks of cattle infrastructure prior to grazing will continue. This should include an assessment of when fencelines will require replacement, which may occur during this plan period. Dilapidated steps on Gibbet Hill will be removed. Opportunities will be investigated into the reinstatement of picnic benches on the site. Graffiti and vandalism will be addressed by repairing damage and communicating expectations of responsible site use.

C3 Site cleanliness

Bins will continue to be emptied as part of the Grounds Maintenance contract. Litter picking around the site will also continue to be a part of FoBGS and CMS volunteer task days. Graffiti and fly-tipping reports will be dealt with promptly.

C4 Waymark footpaths

Waymark posts and directional signage for Weston Footpaths 002 and 003 will be refurbished, particularly at the footpath junction on the south-west corner of Gibbet Hill.

4.4 Environmental management

D1 Policies and strategies

Management of Weston Hills should be guided by all relevant NHDC policies and strategies, including the North Hertfordshire District Council Plan 2020-25, Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and Green Space Management Strategy (GSMS) 2017-2021. The GSMS is currently under review, with an updated strategy due to take effect from 2021.

D2 Management costs

The Grounds Maintenance (GM) contract is reviewed and tendered periodically to ensure the service remains effective and provides value for money.

The Rural Payments Agency administers the Environmental and Countryside Stewardship payment schemes which support landowners in delivering management practices which are beneficial for biodiversity. From 2024, applications will open for a new payment scheme called the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) which will replace other stewardship schemes. In Weston Hills, a ten-year HLS (Environmental Stewardship) agreement which supports grazing and scrub management in chalk grassland will expire in 2022. A two-year extension to the HLS agreement will be sought to support grazing up to 2024 when an ELMS agreement will be applied for to support the continuation of positive grassland management. A two-year Tree Health Restoration Grant (Countryside Stewardship) which will support tree planting to diversify the diseased ash woodland, expires in 2022. Following expiration of the associated felling licence in 2024, a Woodland Management Plan grant will be applied for which will fund the development of a ten-year plan to improve woodland habitat.

D3 Environmental best practice

Exercising good practice biosecurity measures in woodland and tree management will reduce the risk of spreading pests and diseases and increase the resilience of woodland on

site. Simple measures such as cleaning footwear, machines, and tools between sites can reduce the risk of spreading plant material or soil containing plant seeds or pathogens. Safe sourcing of trees for new planting is an important biosecurity measure. Stock grown from seed in the UK is the most reliable source of disease-free trees.

Where non-native or invasive species are present, hand and mechanical methods of control will be applied to reduce spread or eradicate wherever possible. Herbicide will only be applied when other control methods have been unsuccessful and there is a clear beneficial outcome for biodiversity in eradicating the target species.

D4 Monitoring

A programme of monitoring will be implemented to monitor the success of management activities, including:

- Rapid Grassland Assessment (RGA) of grassland habitats
- Fixed-point photography to monitor habitat changes

Volunteers will be provided with training to deliver these surveys as part of regular volunteer activities.

4.5 Conservation and heritage

E1 Woodland

Over the next few years, a woodland recovery strategy will be implemented for ash dieback impacted woodland in Weston Hills, with the aim of restoring a diverse and resilient habitat. This management will be supported by the Countryside Stewardship Tree Health Restoration grant scheme. Thinning will aim to create conditions suitable for gap and canopy under-planting, targeting suppressed and poorly formed ash stems and sycamore coppice. A proportion of the dominant canopy ash trees will also be removed where there is a benefit to woodland diversity e.g. releasing alternative tree species from competition or reducing shading of the woodland floor to improve conditions for establishment of newly planted trees. Several small glades will be cleared by felling groups of trees to be replanted, or retained as open space, further enhancing the structural diversity of the woodland.

Along the southern edge of the lower woodland path, the woodland margin will be pushed back by clear felling 10-metres from the path edge into the woodland to create a new 'ride', increasing woodland edge habitat on the site. Beyond this, a 10-metre buffer of the woodland will be un-thinned or lightly thinned to lessen the visual impact of operations. Standing and fallen dead wood will be retained wherever possible.

Thinning works are planned to take place early in the felling season (September to October) to avoid damage to the woodland floor. Timber will be extracted along the lower woodland path to exits on Woodland Way or Chalk Hills. A market will be sourced for extracted timber (mostly firewood quality) to support sustainability of management costs. Replanting will then follow in the same season, before the end of February. A diverse mix of broadleaves will be introduced to the woodland, including hazel to be managed as coppice, hornbeam which is a typical Hertfordshire tree, and lime which was once a common associate of ash but has declined due to favouring of economically valuable species. Aftercare will be applied to replanted trees for at least five-years from planting.

A proportion of woodland is excluded from the Tree Health Restoration grant and regeneration felling licence area, this area will be left un-thinned to maintain a diverse woodland structure across the site.

E2 Woodland margins

North-east to south-west orientated paths up through woodland are managed under a biennial cutting regime to maintain wide vegetated rides which are beneficial for invertebrates and reptiles. Rotational coppicing had previously maintained wide scallops along ride margins, this management ceased in 2012 when ash dieback was observed to suppress regeneration from ash coppice stools. A regenerative felling licence is currently in place for Weston Hills which allows for the creation of 20% open space to diversify the woodland habitat. Coppicing scallops along the base of the woodland slope (western edge) will contribute to the creation of open woodland habitat whilst reducing over shading of the path. Other areas of scrubby woodland edge habitat will be assessed during management planning visits to identify further areas for coppicing each winter where required. Elm will be retained on site, especially in woodland margins, for the benefit white-letter hairstreak. Non-native escapes found where the woodland backs on to gardens will be removed.

E3 Grassland

The current grazing regimes for Gibbet Hill and the Northern Grassland will continue, in accordance with the HLS agreement for the site.

Natural England advisors visit periodically to assess the success of grazing as a conservation management tool. To supplement these visits, condition indicators for species-rich grassland from the HLS agreement will contribute to species lists for Rapid Grassland Assessment monitoring.

The current Orchid Meadow management of an annual September cut-and-collect should be adjusted to a mid-summer (mid-July / early August) cut. Shifting to an earlier cut removes more nutrients from the sward which limits the spread of coarse grasses and therefore allows wildflower species to thrive. If required, a periodic supplementary spring or autumn cut can be undertaken to further suppress coarse grasses. Leaving strips of uncut vegetation will ensure later flowering species can set seed, as well as provide refuge habitat for invertebrates.

E4 Grassland scrub

Scrub under HLS is defined as any woody shrub, young trees, and bramble. Under the HLS agreement for Weston Hills, parts of Gibbet Hill and the Northern Grassland are managed as successional (mosaic) habitat which maintains up to 10% cover of a dynamic scrub habitat. The current regime of rotational coppice will continue, to maintain scrub at different heights and ages. Combined with grazing, this management achieves a diverse mosaic of open and closed habitat.

Appendix 7.4 shows a selection of aerial photographs of Gibbet Hill and the Northern Grassland going back to the year 2000. On Gibbet Hill, management has clearly reduced scrub levels by removing the central belt of scrub and linking the two areas of grassland, increasing the area of grassland habitat. This has left a boundary of scrub around the edge of the grassland where it performs an important function as a buffer to surrounding

agricultural land and woodland. Mature scrub is also particularly important here to provide shelter for grazing sheep. Although scrub cover has been reduced in recent years, it is still estimated at between 15% and 20%, so could be reduced further. Scrub management here will therefore focus on maintaining a graduated scrub habitat between the grassland and surrounding land, while pushing the scrub boundary back slightly further to move towards the 10% target. On the Northern Grassland, the aerial photos show that scrub cover has remained largely the same, estimated at around 20%. Scrub management here will target mature patches of scrub. Some of these areas will be left to regenerate to maintain a mosaic of scrub ages, while some will continue to be cut in future years in order to encourage conversion back to grassland and move towards the 10% scrub target.

Coppicing can be carried out safely and effectively as a volunteer task with the appropriate tools and guidance. Woody shrubs, such as hawthorn (the dominant scrub component in Weston Hills), should be coppiced on a ten-year cycle whilst bramble should be managed on a shorter three-year cycle. Coppicing must occur outside of the bird breeding season (March to September), and as far as possible at the end of winter to allow birds and small mammals to forage nuts and berries. Areas of dense scrub and scattered scrub should be maintained within the mosaic habitat, to provide a diversity of habitat niches for wildlife. Cut material from coppicing can be removed from site for use in traditional crafts / charcoal etc. If retained on site coppice material should be tidied into habitat piles or burned, only where grassland and woodland plant communities and heritage features are not damaged. Burning on a metal sheet limits risk of damaging the grassland and must only take place in agreement with Natural England and NHDC.

INNS will be controlled where present. Snowberry found on the edge of the Northern Grassland should be cut and the material removed from site. Russian vine near the level way entrance should be cut back to the stumps in late winter and the stumps painted with glyphosate in early spring. Stumps should be monitored in future years and any regrowth sprayed in July/August until eradicated.

E5 Chalk pit

To ensure this historic feature remains visible any young tree and scrub growth on the surface of the pit should be cut back periodically. Roots will not be dug to protect heritage features below ground. The surface of the pit is colonised by a lower plant assemblage, including rare mosses, which should not be damaged.

4.6 Community involvement

F1 Friends of Baldock Greenspaces

The CMS 'Friends Group' model has been independently assessed and accredited to nationally recognised "Investing in Volunteers" standard. Regular meetings are convened between the Friends, CMS and NHDC, to ensure the group development needs are established and ongoing training provided. An annual task list is drawn up, in line with the objectives of the plan, and delivery by FoBGS supported by CMS and NHDC as required.

F2 Stakeholder engagement

Production of a new Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for Weston Hills follows a structured two stage engagement process to enable site-users and wider stakeholders to feed into the development of achievable and supported objectives for site management and enhancement. In the first stage of engagement, a briefing document is produced which summarises the aspirations and key objectives for the site over five years. The briefing document is made publicly available over a six-week engagement period. Feedback from the initial consultation phase informs development of the draft GAP document which includes a time-tabled action plan and annual plan maps. A second engagement period is held for the draft GAP and returned comments summarised in an Engagement Document, published as an appendix of the final GAP to explain how comments influenced the final plan.

F3 Guided walks

Weston Hills is included in the 'Walks and More' programme of events across Hertfordshire which connect communities with the wildlife and history of local greenspaces. The annual 'Meet the Cows' event will continue, held in June to introduce site visitors to the cattle and sheep on-site and to explain the benefits of conservation grazing. This event is popular each year and helps to reassure and inform site visitors who may otherwise feel uncomfortable about the presence of livestock in a public green space.

4.7 Marketing

G1 Promote and celebrate

NHDC and CMS produce regular e-Newsletters which promote planned management activities and achievements across greenspaces. Opportunities to engage with the development of new management plans are promoted online and through site notices.

Significant projects to improve the site and engage the community will be shared with local Councillors and celebrated through press releases.

G2 Site leaflets and visitor information

Welcome boards at site entrances and topic boards throughout the site provide information for site visitors on the main features of the site. Leaflets and general information about the site is available on the NHDC website. The Friends of Baldock Green Spaces operates a Facebook page which is regularly updated with details of work parties, stock checks, photos and information about Weston Hills and Ivel Springs. In line with other NHC sites, signage encouraging dog owners to pick up after their dogs will be installed at site entrances where appropriate. Information on site management, such as grazing or woodland works, is displayed on posters around the site and in welcome boards at main entrances.

5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Submit claim to Rural Payment Agency for HLS (AG0039540) and subsequent Countryside Stewardship or ELMS agreement	D2	April	NHDC	CMS	Office time			
0.2	Arrange annual grazing contracts for Gibbet Hill and Northern Grassland to meet HLS requirements	E3	Feb to March	NHDC	CMS	Officer time			
0.3	Maintain grazing infrastructure (fencing and water supply)	E3	April	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	External (RPA)			
0.4	Carry out preparatory grazing tasks in Gibbet Hill and Northern Grassland, including strimming electric fence line	E3	May	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & Vol time			
0.5	Cut down scrub suckers encroaching into grassland (e.g. dogwood) prior to arrival of grazing stock	E3	May	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time			
0.6	Carry out daily animal welfare checks for livestock	E3	June to Sept	CMS	FoBGS	Vol time			
0.7	Operate emergency protocol for livestock grazing	E3	June to Sept	NHDC	NHDC	Officer & vol time			
0.8	Conservation cut and collect of Orchid Meadow	E3	Mid-July	NHDC	GM contract	GM budget		6.11	
0.9	Control Russian vine near Ivel Way entrance	E3	Feb to Aug	NHDC	Contract	GM budget			
0.10	Rotational coppice 1/10 of mature grassland scrub	E4	January	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time		6.12	
0.11	Weed and maintain FoBGS trial replant plot (Woodland Trust mix). Remove supports / guards as trees become self-supporting	E1	July	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
0.12	Rotational cutting along ½ woodland rides and scallops (two-zone ride management – cut each edge of rides in alternate years)	E2	Sept	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time		6.16	
0.13	Promote volunteer and community events at Weston Hills, including holding the 'Meet the Cows' event held at start of grazing season	F3	June	CMS	CMS	Officer time			

0.14	Tree survey and proportionate risk management	B2	Winter	NHDC	GM contract	GM budget			
0.15	Vegetation management along main access routes into site	C2	May to Sept	NHDC	GM contract	GM budget			
0.16	Manage vegetation along Baldock 002 to keep route visible	C2	July	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
0.17	Maintain site furniture, signs and interpretation	C2	All Year	NHDC/ CMS	GM contract/ FoBGS/ CMS vols	GM budget			
0.18	Prompt removal of graffiti and fly-tipping	C2	All Year	NHDC	GM contract	GM budget			
0.19	Ensure site visitors are informed of prohibited activities (such as metal detecting & burning) that damage biodiversity and heritage	C2	All Year	NHDC	NHDC	Officer time			
0.20	Rapid Grassland Assessment of wildflower meadow and glades	D4	Jun/Jul	CMS	FoBGS/ Vols	Officer time			
0.21	Fixed point photography monitoring	D4	Jan/Apr Jul/Oct	CMS	FoBGS/ Vols	Officer time			
0.22	Develop and promote Friends of Baldock Green Spaces	F1	All year	CMS	NHDC/ CMS	Officer time			

Weston Hills Greenspace Action Plan Annual Actions

Task Responsibility

□ District led	} Officer/contractor delivered
□ CMS led	
□ District led	} Volunteer delivered
□ CMS led	

Habitat Management

- Carry out pre-grazing checks and maintain grazing infrastructure
- Cut suckering vegetation in grasslands
- Carry out animal welfare checks
- Woodland ride management
- Rapid grassland assessment monitoring
- Fixed point photography monitoring

Site Maintenance

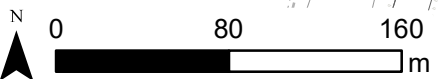
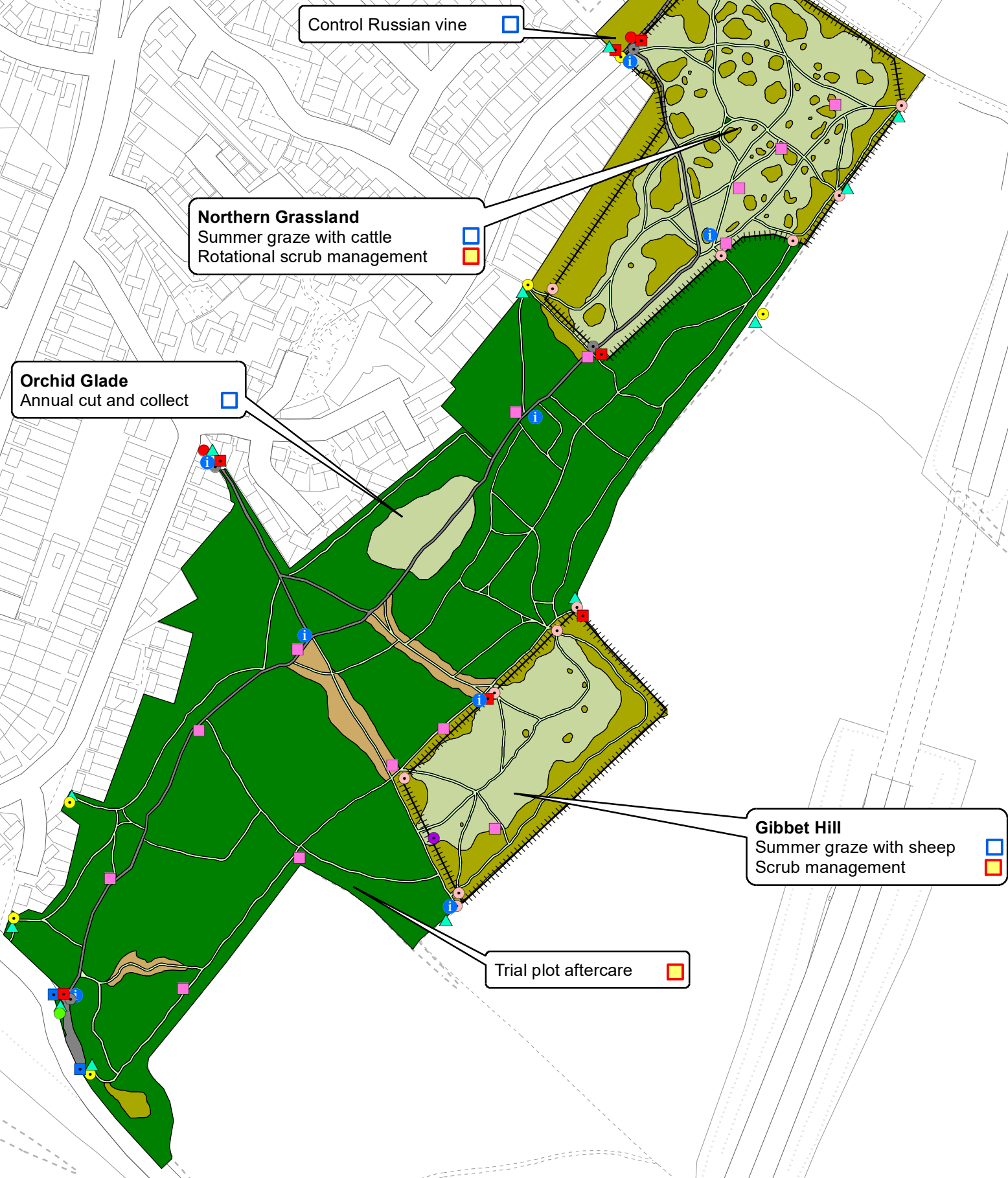
- Manage vegetation along paths and at access points
- Maintain site infrastructure
- Remove graffiti and fly-tipping

Site Management

- Submit claim to RPA for HLS agreement
- Operate emergency protocol for livestock grazing
- Tree risk management inspections
- Hold annual 'Meet the Cows' event
- Site promotion and community engagement
- Develop and promote FoBGS
- Promote volunteer and community events

Legend

- Conservation grassland
- Informal path
- Scrub
- Surfaced path
- Woodland
- Woodland ride
- Stock fencing
- Pedestrian gate
- RADAR gate
- Bench
- Dog bin
- Field gate
- Interpretation
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicle access
- Waste bin
- Welcome sign



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Date
January 2021

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5.2 YEAR 1 2021-22

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Install dropped kerb at the end of Ivel Way (dependent on permission from neighbouring landowner Settle Housing)	A2	All year	CMS	Contract	Revenue / Locality Budget		6.21	
1.2	Liaise with HCC Access Team to identify options for repair of rutting on bridleway (Baldock 022) to improve mobility vehicle access	A2	All year	CMS	Contract	Revenue / Locality Budget			
1.3	Remove steps on Gibbet Hill	C2	April	CMS	CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
1.4	Review and improve RoW signage access the site	C3	April	CMS	CMS vols / Friends	Officer & vol. time			
1.5	Pull / dig out cultivate sweet pea in Central Orchid Meadow	E3	June	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
1.6	Remove non-native snowberry from Northern Grassland	E3	Oct – Feb	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
1.7	Remove non-native escapes where gardens back on to woodland	E1	Oct – Feb	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer & vol time			
1.8	Selective fell and replant woodland as part of FC tree health grant	E1	Sept to Nov	CMS	Contract	External (RPA)		6.13, 6.14	

Task Responsibility

- District led } Officer/contractor delivered
- CMS led } Officer/contractor delivered
- District led } Volunteer delivered
- CMS led } Volunteer delivered

Weston Hills
Greenspace Action Plan
Year 1 Actions (2021-22)

Legend

- Conservation grassland
- Informal path
- Scrub
- Surfaced path
- Woodland
- Woodland ride
- Stock fencing
- Pedestrian gate
- RADAR gate
- Bench
- Dog bin
- Field gate
- Interpretation
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicle access
- Waste bin
- Welcome sign

Liaise with HCC Access team to improve access along Bridleway 022

Install drop-kerb

Remove invasive snowberry

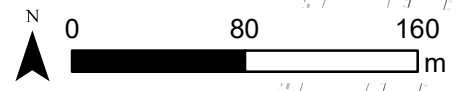
Remove non-native garden escapes

Ride creation

Remove dilapidated steps

Improve RoW signage

Selective thinning and replanting



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5.3 YEAR 2 2022-23

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Update site map and replace entrance interpretation	A1	All year	CMS	Contract	Revenue			
2.2	Replenish carpark aggregate surface	B1	All year	CMS	Contract	Revenue/ S106			
2.3	Scrape organic material and regrade existing surfaced paths	C1	All year	CMS	CMS	NHDC Budget/ S106/ external funding		6.22	
2.4	Investigate options for reinstatement of a picnic area on site.	C2	All year	CMS	FoBGS/ CMS vols	Revenue			
2.5	Aftercare of newly planted woodland trees, watering and weeding in summer, replacing tree supports and dead trees in winter	E1	All year	CMS	Contract	External (RPA)		6.15	
2.6	Apply to RPA for HLS AG0039540 two-year extension (up to 2024)	E3	March	NHDC	CMS	Officer time			
2.7	Apply for Woodland Management Plan grant (CS/ELMS)	E4	April	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time			
2.8	Coppice scallops along interior woodland path	E1	Sept to Oct	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Revenue / Officer time			
2.9	Selectively fell tree groups to create woodland gaps (5% woodland)	E1	Sept	CMS	Contract / vols	Revenue / Officer time			
2.10	Manage trees and scrub encroaching onto chalk pit	E5	February	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time			

Task Responsibility

- District led
 - CMS led
 - District led
 - CMS led
- Officer/contractor delivered
- Volunteer delivered

Weston Hills

Greenspace Action Plan

Year 2 Actions (2022-23)

Legend

- Conservation grassland
- Informal path
- Scrub
- Surfaced path
- Woodland
- Woodland ride
- Stock fencing
- Pedestrian gate
- RADAR gate
- Bench
- Dog bin
- Field gate
- i Interpretation
- Kissing gate
- Pedestrian access
- Vehicle access
- Waste bin
- ▲ Welcome sign



Remove bench and reconfigure field entrance ■

Update site map and replace entrance interpretation ■

Investigate options for reinstating picnic benches on site ■

Scrape and regrade surfaced path through site ■

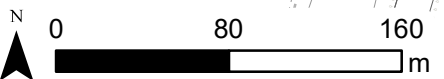
Coppice scallops along interior woodland paths ■

Replenish car park aggregate surface ■

Manage trees and scrub encroaching on to chalk pit ■

Selectively fell tree groups to create woodland gaps ■

Tree planting aftercare ■



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5.4 YEAR 3 2023-24

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Apply to RPA for acceptance into ELMS payment scheme to replace defunct Environmental and Countryside Stewardship schemes	E3	March	NHDC	CMS	Officer time			
3.2	Produce Woodland Management Plan (CS/ELMS)	E4	April	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time			
3.3	Aftercare of newly planted woodland trees, watering and weeding in summer, replacing tree supports and dead trees in winter	E1	All year	CMS	Contract	External (RPA)		6.15	
3.4	Selectively fell tree groups to create woodland gaps (5% woodland)	E1	Sept	CMS	Contract / vols	Revenue / Officer time			

5.5 YEAR 4 2024-25

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
4.3	Aftercare of newly planted woodland trees, watering and weeding in summer, replacing tree supports and dead trees in winter	E1	All year	CMS	Contract	External (RPA)		6.15	

5.6 YEAR 5 2025-26

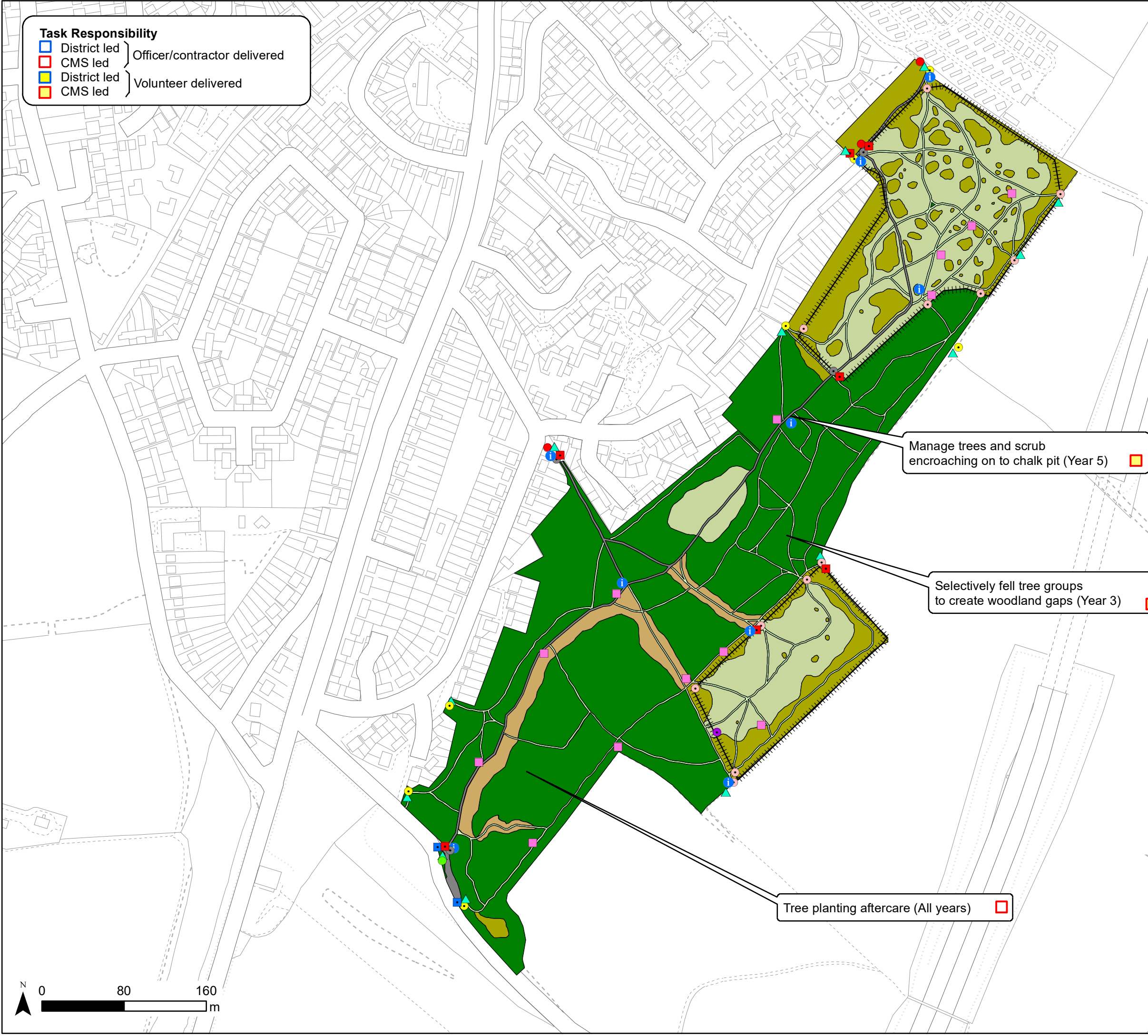
Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
5.1	Aftercare of newly planted woodland trees, watering and weeding in summer, replacing tree supports and dead trees in winter	E1	All year	CMS	Contract	External (RPA)		6.15	
5.2	Manage trees and scrub encroaching onto chalk pit	E5	Feb	CMS	FoBGS / CMS vols	Officer / vol time			

Task Responsibility

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| □ District led | } Officer/contractor delivered |
| □ CMS led | |
| □ District led | } Volunteer delivered |
| □ CMS led | |

Weston Hills
Greenspace Action Plan
Years 3 - 5 Actions (2023-26)

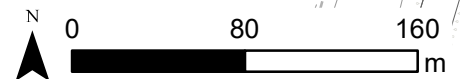
- Legend**
- Conservation grassland
 - Informal path
 - Scrub
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 - ▲ Welcome sign



Manage trees and scrub encroaching on to chalk pit (Year 5)

Selectively fell tree groups to create woodland gaps (Year 3)

Tree planting aftercare (All years)



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6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

6.1 Habitat management

6.1.1 Conservation cut-and-collect

To achieve the best outcomes for wildflower diversity in grassland managed as meadow. (mown as opposed to grazed), a mid-summer (July/early August) cut will achieve the best outcome for wildflower diversity. Consistently taking a single meadow cut in September, as currently happens on the Orchid Meadow, can result in the spread of coarse grasses and transition to a rank sward which shades out less competitive wildflower species.

The Grounds Maintenance team or external agricultural contractor will undertake the meadow cut-and-lift, the operation will:

- Take place no earlier than mid-July, in a period of fine weather;
- Achieve a sward height of between 5cm to 10cm;
- Leave arisings to dry and shed seed on the meadow for three to seven days;
- Collect all arisings and take off site no more than a week after cutting;
- Avoid damaging soil structure by ensuring no machinery is used on wet soil.

To ensure later flowering plants can set seed, 10-20% of the sward should be left uncut, with the areas left rotated to avoid the development of scrub and ruderal vegetation. Leaving strips of sward uncut with each cut-and-collect operation will also provide a refuge for invertebrates. If required, a supplementary cut-and-collect in either spring (April/May) or autumn (September/October) will help suppress growth of coarse grasses/ruderal species. The need for this will be informed by the results of monitoring.

6.1.2 Coppicing

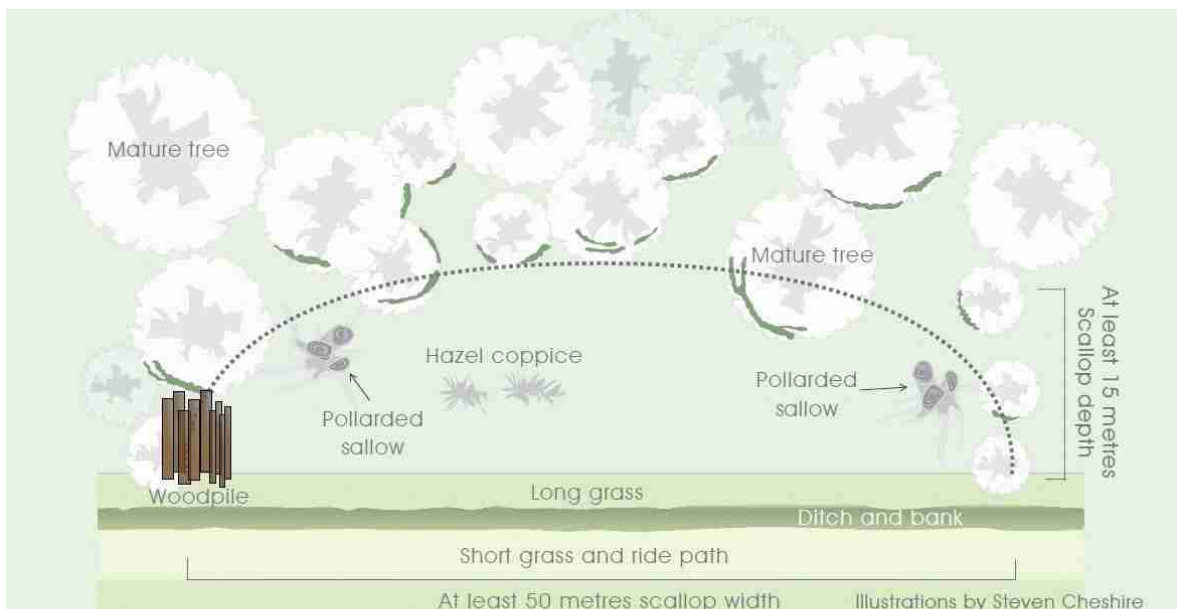
Rotational coppicing of in-field and woodland edge scrub maintains a dynamic habitat of various ages and heights. Coppicing products can be harvested for traditional crafts (e.g. charcoal or hurdle making), burned, or retained in woodland as deadwood habitat piles.

Coppicing should proceed by:

- Cutting above the last coppice mark (or close to the ground on first coppice cycle);
- Cutting on an angle to allow water to roll off the stump and prevent rotting;
- Cutting stems cyclically around the stool from the outside into the centre;
- D-shaped woodland edge scallops create sheltered habitat beneficial for a range of wildlife, to enhance habitat for butterflies and invertebrates' scallops should be at least 50m wide x 15m deep to provide a sheltered and sunny micro-climate;
- Coppiced material which is not harvested as woodland product will either be burned or left on site as deadwood, in habitat piles or incorporated into protective dead hedges.
- Rotational coppicing of woody shrubs (e.g. hawthorn / hazel) will take place over an eight to 15-year cycle / bramble control will take place over a three-year cycle.



Woodland perimeter coppicing to create a 'soft' wavy edge



A "D" shaped scallop on the side of a woodland ride will create more edge habitat than merely cutting the adjacent length of the ride. Cutting scallops on opposite sides will increase the amount of sunlight and warmth reaching the centre of that ride. The warmest and most valuable scallops will be those which are south facing on east-west rides, thus receiving sun for most of the day.

Dimensions for a butterfly friendly woodland edge scallop, 50m long x 15m deep

6.1.3 Thinning

A regenerative felling licence for Weston Hills, expiring in 2024, allows for thinning and / or clear fell to create conditions suitable for replanting, to create open space, and to improve growing conditions for retained trees. The thinning strategy for Weston Hills will aim to diversify the woodland structure through:

- Selective felling of ash and sycamore across the project area, amounting to 50% canopy thinning. The thinning rate will vary across the stand with the aim of creating

conditions suitable for planting and establishment of tree species with different shade tolerance.

- Felling of five small tree groups 0.1 ha in area to create open space / replant with light demanding species.

Ash and sycamore (which can be densely shading) will be targeted for thinning and clear fell, alternative woody species and specimens pre-dating 1980s storm damage will be marked before thinning for retention. Felling will be carried out by chainsaw or mechanical methods. The site is steep but accessible by machinery.

Protected species will be considered when planning and implementing woodland management works, timing of works will avoid the bird breeding season (March to September inclusive) and trees with bat potential will be retained.

All felled timber will be extracted and taken off-site. Extraction processes will not damage access paths, sensitive vegetation, or compacting soil. Where timber is not extracted on the day of felling it will be stacked in a safe area which does not obstruct visitor access paths.

Ash trees affected by ash dieback can respond unpredictably to felling, due to advanced internal decay being more advanced than indicated external visible disease symptoms, see guidance from the Arboricultural Association.

A minimum of 80% of the thinned area must be replanted under conditions of the regeneration felling licence, to achieve a stocking density of at least 1,100 stems after ten years.

In some locations, such as path margins where woodland is easily accessible, thinning can be implemented by the FoBGs by selecting poorly formed and suppressed stems which can be felled safely with hand tools. Timber can be cut into short lengths and staked into habitat piles. Felling along the woodland should take the form of coppicing to create a varied height edge.

6.1.4 Procuring tree stock

Stock will be produced from seed which has been sourced, propagated and grown until point of sale within the UK. As far as possible, seed will originate from the local seed zone (402) at an Elevation Zone below 300m. To plan for increased genetic diversity and climate change resilience a proportion of trees can be sourced from other UK seed zones, with a preference for neighbouring Seed Zones (405 and 406), below 300m elevation.

For Seed Zone mapping information see:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/701331/FRMGuidelinesRoPmap.pdf

As part of the procurement process, nurseries will be required to:

Provide a Certificate of Local Provenance;

- Provide assurance of UK propagation from seed through accreditation under the Woodland Trust's 'UK Sourced and Grown' Scheme or equivalent evidence;
- Demonstrate, as far as is possible, that trees are pest and disease free.

- Permit inspection of growing area, and tree stock, prior to purchase;

Following procurement, an audit trail of trees must be maintained by the purchaser, allowing planted trees to be traced back to the nursery source and tree batch.

Stock will conform to BS 3936 (where applicable).

Species mix for woodland replanting under the Tree Health Restoration Grant:

- hornbeam (30%),
- small leaved lime (10%),
- oak (5%),
- beech (5%),
- wild cherry (5%),
- field maple (5%),
- yew (5%),
- rowan (5%)
- hazel (10%);
- remaining planting (20%) will be composed of an even proportion of hawthorn, common whitebeam and Italian alder.

6.1.5 Aftercare of newly planted trees

To achieve healthy growth, newly planted trees should be checked and maintained regularly in the first few years until whips are well established:

Summer aftercare

- Check trees in prolonged dry periods and water as required
- Weed 1m² area around trees to control competing grasses and weeds

Winter aftercare

- Thin out and replace dead trees;
- Prune broken or dead branches;
- Fill in any soil gaps in the planting area resulting from swaying;
- Report any signs of pest or disease to the Forestry Commission, <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert>;
- Loosen or remove any ties / stakes / guards as appropriate.
- If restacking tree after guard removal, tie at the highest stable point (allowing for natural swaying in the wind which strengthens the trunk over time).

6.1.6 Woodland ride management

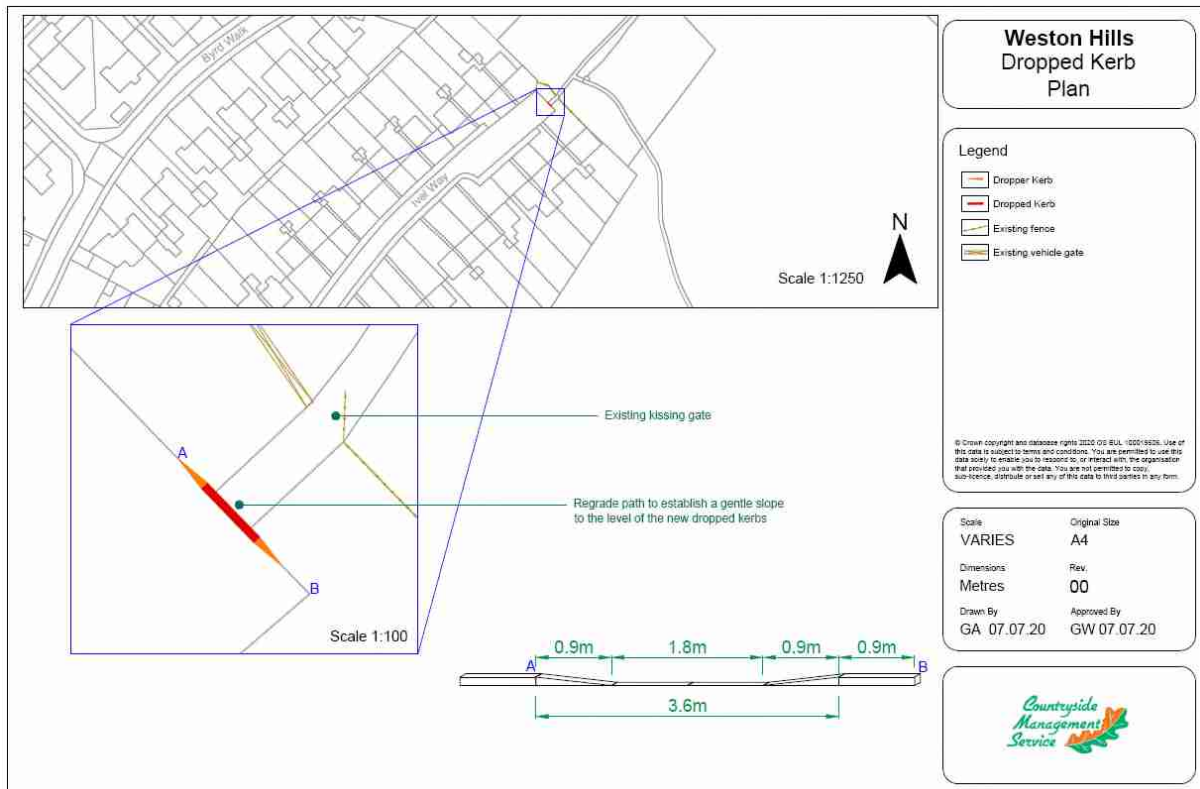
Ride management should aim to achieve a graduated transition from closed woodland to open grassland by maintaining a dynamic edge habitat of scrub, tall herb, and shorter grassland. Mowing ride edges on a two or three-year rotational cycle will control scrub regeneration whilst maintaining a mix of short and rough grassland which is beneficial for invertebrates and other wildlife, such as basking reptiles. Rotational coppicing of woodland edge scallops create warm sheltered micro-climates which diversify the woodland habitat.



Ideal woodland ride structure

6.2 Infrastructure

6.2.1 Dropped kerb on Ivel Way



6.2.2 Path scraping and re-grading

- Scrape off all loose surface material and accumulated organic matter from existing track to a usable, sound base. Excavate any hollows also to a sound base. Roll to ensure an even, firm base.
- Supply and lay a base course of crushed concrete 50mm to dust and a surface layer of crushed concrete 10mm to dust. Path to have a final camber of 1:20.

- Finished compacted depth to be an average of 60mm, varying from not less than 20mm at the edges to not less than 100mm at the centre of the path to achieve the required camber.
- Edges to be lost in adjoining ground and to be at least as high as adjoining ground. Base course and/or existing surface to be completely covered. Material must be completely free from deleterious materials. The start of the new surfaced section should be edged flush up to existing surfaces.
- Spoil to be removed from site.

7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 North Hertfordshire District Council Plan 2020-25

The Council Plan is a high-level strategic document setting out our ambitions and aspirations for the district from 2020-2025.

The 2020-25 objectives have been set for at least five years and these will be reviewed at the end of the period, or sooner should external circumstances dictate.

The Council Plan is supported by a five-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

7.1.1 Our vision

The Council has a clear vision for the area, which is making North Hertfordshire a district in which everyone who lives, works or visits is able to flourish. It is clear that the Council must work with its partners, businesses, and urban and rural communities to achieve this vision.

7.1.2 Our objectives

There are five objectives for the Council for 2020-2025, which are:

- **Be a more welcoming and inclusive council**

We will engage with and welcome the contributions of residents, community groups and businesses; working collaboratively with local people.

- **Build thriving and resilient communities**

We will work on frequent and regular opportunities to improve the partnership and relationship that the Council has with local citizens. Some of this will be achieved by change in culture, tone and communications but more will be done through direct measurable activity, intervention and consultation.

We will develop a range of innovative ways in which local communities, from small groups to whole towns and communities of interest can be encouraged to become more involved in supporting, planning, improving and maintaining local environments.

This work stream will focus particularly on engaging with young residents and those who are disadvantaged or in any way socially excluded, to ensure such innovations are fit for the future and imaginative in concept and delivery.

- **Respond to challenges to the environment**

We will seek to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will engage local people and organisations as we progress towards our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, whilst taking action to enable and encourage residents to minimise their own carbon impact. We will protect the natural and built environment through our planning policies and an effective green spaces strategy. We will take action against environmental crime and ensure that our approach to waste and recycling promotes the hierarchy of reduce, re-use, recycle. We will complete the elimination of single use plastics from the council and support reductions in their use across the district. We will work to improve the monitoring and management of air quality across the district, prioritising those areas where air quality is most in need of improvement.

- **Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy**

We will aim to become an increasingly innovative and inclusive Council, committed to generating community wealth, by seeking commercial and investment opportunities and through proactive engagement with a wider range of small and medium sized businesses to build a sustainable local economy. We will continue to engage with residents, staff and Councillors to continue to embrace modern working practices through the use of IT and a commitment to working towards a paperless Council whilst increasing the efficiency of services and access to them by residents.

- **Support the delivery of good quality and affordable homes**

We will enable and support the delivery of good quality and affordable housing in the district, ensuring both new and existing housing is fit for purpose, including a commitment to consultation and ensuring communities have the infrastructure they need. We will build more effective relationships with local housing associations and recognise our role in the fight against homelessness. We will continue to support Parishes with Neighbourhood plans

The Council Plan 2020-2025 document explains what each objective means and details specific projects that will help deliver each one. The [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) will review the progress of these projects midway through and after the end of each financial year.

7.1.3 Performance management

Performance management helps to ensure that the Council is achieving what it sets out to do and is giving value for money. The Council measures its performance in order to analyse how well it is doing and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Effective performance management requires performance information that is robust and accurate. Regular updates on how the Council is performing are provided to senior managers and to Councillors every three months.

7.2 Protocol for animal health and welfare incidents involving livestock at Weston Hills, Baldock

This protocol is for animal health and welfare incidents involving the grazing livestock at Weston Hills, Baldock. It is for use by North Hertfordshire District Council and partners.

The specified livestock grazing regime for the site consists of:

- Four English Longhorn cattle grazing the northern grassland for 17 weeks between June and September.
- 20 sheep grazing Gibbet Hill for 17 weeks between June and September. For the first six weeks, sheep will be confined to the northern slope by an electric fence, following which they will graze the whole compartment. Access will be restricted in the areas being grazed by sheep, with kissing gate chained closed.

Grazing timings may be altered slightly depending on habitat conditions and availability of livestock.

English Longhorns are a very docile breed of cattle and are tolerant of dogs. Nevertheless they should not be handled by anyone except the grazier or their appointed representative.

The graziers are responsible for the welfare of livestock and will carry out regular checks on the animals (i.e. several times a week) with the support of local volunteer stock checkers.

However, they are not present on site. This document therefore provides guidelines to NHDC and other partners, such as the police, dealing with a response to emergency and non-emergency situations affecting the health and welfare of the livestock. It includes contact details for all relevant parties (see table).

In all situations, the person taking the initial report should gain as much information as possible about the incident, including the name and contact details of the caller, location and condition of the animal and details of the incident / injury.

Important note. These animals are not inherently dangerous or aggressive. In the event that they escape the best course of action is to contact the grazier who can organise rounding them up and returning them to their field.

There should be no reason for the police or other party to take a more drastic approach (such as shooting the animals) and such an approach should be avoided at all costs.

7.2.1 Guidelines for the Public

Contact telephone numbers to be displayed on site in all four notice boards and gateways whilst livestock are present on site.

Two numbers to be displayed:

- Grazier's number for animals
- NHDC for site-related calls

7.2.2 Internal procedure

To be followed on receipt of a report of an incident affecting the health and welfare of the livestock.

Non-emergency situations

e.g. stray livestock (except if on road), a lame animal, damaged fencing

During working hours:

- Contact the site manager. If they or a colleague cannot be contacted please follow the next steps.
- Site manager to contact grazier if necessary
- If grazier cannot be contacted, site manager to monitor / deal with situation appropriately (which may mean escalating to emergency procedure)
- Outside working hours:
- Contact NHDC out-of-hours service
- NHDC out-of-hours service to contact grazier if necessary
- If grazier cannot be contacted, NHDC out-of-hours service to monitor and deal with situation appropriately (which may mean escalating to emergency situation procedure)

Emergency situations

e.g. a dog attack, broken leg, traumatic wound, livestock on road, fire on site

During working hours

- Contact the site manager. If they or a colleague cannot be contacted please follow the next steps.
- Site manager to contact grazier who can contact their vet as appropriate
- Site manager to contact the relevant emergency service (police, fire service) if appropriate and not already done
- If grazier cannot be contacted and animal is badly injured, site manager to contact the grazier's vet
- If grazier and vet cannot be contacted and animal is badly injured / distressed, site manager to contact the RSPCA
- Site manager to attend site

Outside working hours

- NHDC out-of-hours service to contact the relevant emergency service (police, fire service) if not already done
- NHDC out-of-hours service to contact the grazier and grazier to contact their vet as appropriate
- If grazier cannot be contacted and animal is badly injured, NHDC out-of-hours service to contact the grazier's vet
- If grazier and vet cannot be contacted and animal is badly injured / distressed, NHDC out-of-hours service to contact the RSPCA

7.2.3 Contacts

Role	Name	Contact details	Comments
Cattle grazier	Maydencroft – Chris Oakley	chris.oakley@maydencroft. co.uk 07821111653	Contract reviewed on annual basis
Sheep grazier	Church Farm – Rozelle Bettlesworth	rozelle.bettesworth@ churchfarmardeley.co.uk 07790264904	Contract renewed on annual basis
Site manager		Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF	Office hours only
NHDC Out-of- hours service	Careline	01462 420600	Outside office hours
Vet	The Woolpack Veterinary Practice	01763 273707	Only if grazier cannot be contacted
Police		999	
Fire service		999	
RSPCA		0300 1234 999	Only if grazier or vet cannot be contacted

7.3 Processes for dealing with oak processionary moth

7.3.1 If OPM 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

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.

Link: [../OPMPublicInformationPoster_06APR16_print.pdf](#)

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.

7.3.2 If OPM is suspected 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.

7.3.3 If OPM is suspected on site:

While this document outlines the intended process for OPM control this may be adjusted in line with additional instructions included in the statutory plant health notice issued by the FC.

The OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

- Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in chapters 6-7 of the OPM Manual.

Chapter 6: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-proceSSIONEA/opm-manual-6-chemical-control-larvae/>

Chapter 7: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-proceSSIONEA/opm-manual-7-manual-removal-nests-and-larvae/>

7.3.4 Subsequent OPM control measures

Based on current FC policy and practice, sites of OPM infestations within the 'control zone' (encompassing the entire county of Hertfordshire) are typically included in the FC's inspection and insecticide spraying programme for two seasons following the initial discovery. The FC informs landowners that are to be included in this programme by February of each year. The FC will be contacted (if no communication has been received) by late-February in the two seasons following the initial discovery to confirm whether the site is to be included in the programme. If the site is not included in the FC's programme, then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be engaged to conduct insecticide spraying following caterpillar emergence.

Whether insecticide spraying is conducted by the FC or by an appointed arborist the contractors will be required to operate in accordance with FC guidance (outlined above).


Once insecticide spraying has occurred, a suitably qualified and experienced arborist can be instructed to carry out nest removal. This will be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high-risk areas.

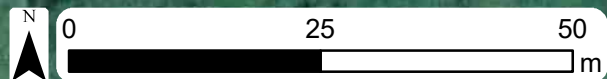
Following two seasons of spraying the FC will be consulted to confirm whether OPM has been successfully eradicated from the site. If OPM is still present the FC will be consulted on appropriate future action.

7.4 Scrub maps

Gibbet Hill 2000

Legend

 Gibbet Hill grazing area



Scale @ A3
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Date
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Gibbet Hill 2010

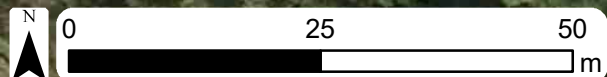
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 Gibbet Hill grazing area

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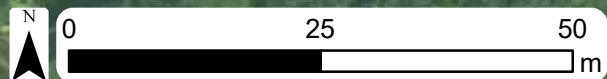


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Gibbet Hill 2016

Legend

 Gibbet Hill grazing area



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
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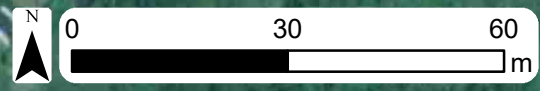
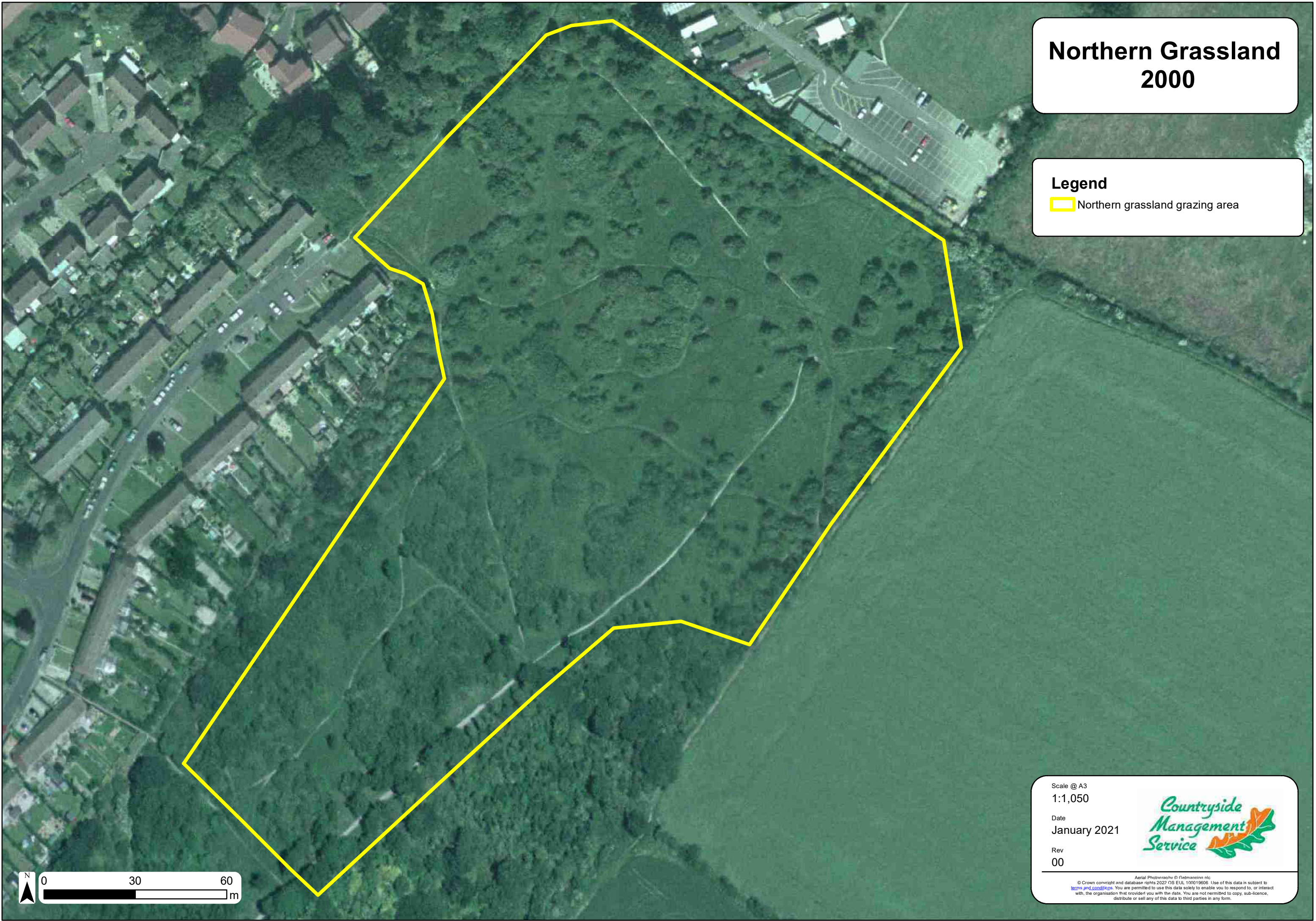
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Northern Grassland 2000

Legend
 Northern grassland grazing area



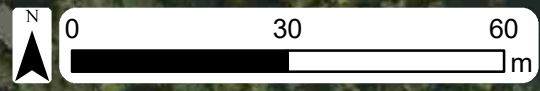
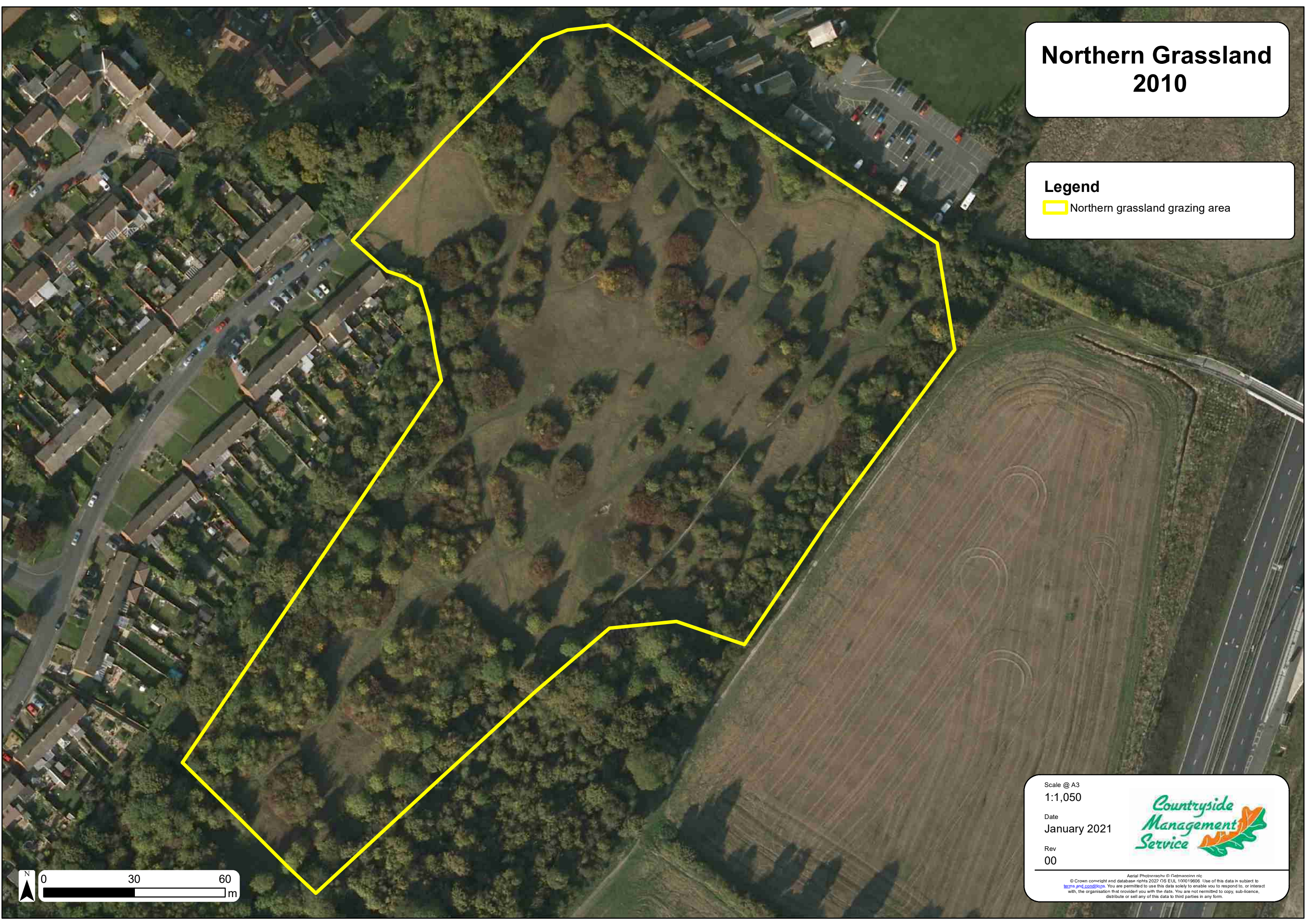
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Northern Grassland 2010

Legend
Northern grassland grazing area




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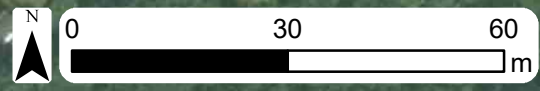


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Northern Grassland 2016

Legend

 Northern grassland grazing area



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7.5 Engagement response

Below is a summary of comments received from the second stage engagement process on the Weston Hills Greenspace Action Plan 2021-26, carried out in early 2021.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Outcome
General	Welcome the plan, especially aspects such as improvements to the car park and path surfacing.	
Rights of Way (RoW)	Baldock Bridleway 022 is in a poor state and would benefit from surfacing.	Not within the remit of the GAP as outside the site boundary, but comments shared with Access Team staff and improvements are planned.
	Current interpretation does not show RoW or promote wider links.	Map will be improved as part of interpretation refresh, including better representation of RoW.
Tree planting	How has the species mix for tree planting been chosen, could elm be included to benefit butterflies?	Species mix prescribed as part of Tree Health Restoration Grant, so cannot be changed for the current project. However, elm to be considered for future planting schemes and existing elm on the site will be retained.
Wildflower seeding	Is there an opportunity to increase wildflower diversity through seeding of grasslands to benefit invertebrates, particularly butterflies?	Not currently planned, however, Rapid Grassland Assessments will be undertaken as part of the new GAP, results of these surveys will inform future works.
Chalk pit	Chalk pit should be enhanced to provide added visitor interest as an important feature of the site.	Scrub clearance of the chalk pit included within the plan. Interpretation to be updated as part of refresh.
Site infrastructure	Picnic area near car park should be reinstated.	The picnic area previously attracted anti-social behaviour. It is therefore not planned to reinstate the picnic area in the previous location, however, opportunities to install picnic

		benches elsewhere on site will be investigated.
	Steps leading from car park may need attention before the end of the plan.	Steps to be monitored as part of the GAP and repairs made as necessary.
	Signage should be improved to encourage dog owners to pick up after their dogs.	Signage has been increased at other NHC sites, e.g. Oughtonhead Common, Ivel Springs, added signage will be installed at Weston Hills where appropriate.