

SHERRARDSPARK WOOD

Management Plan

Date:	2005	to	2025	(Plan period 2011-15)
Owner:	Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council			
Contact:	Chris James, Landscape Officer			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Location

Nearest town	Welwyn Garden City
Grid reference	TL 230 139
Total area (ha)	74.9

1.2 Description of the woodland in the landscape

Sherrardspark Wood is one of the largest ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNWs) in Hertfordshire. It is located on the NW edge of Welwyn Garden City. The wood is mostly isolated from other local woodlands being bordered to the E and S by residential housing, to the W by the Great North Road and A1(M) and to the N/NE by grassland and small woods (see map 1). Located on a plateau between two river valleys, the wood is gently undulating but has a slope falling away steeply on the N side. A disused railway line dividing the wood into two unequal parts is carried on an embankment in the SE part of the wood but follows a deep cutting at the NW end before being bricked up beneath the Great North Road.

Except for a part of the woodland complex called Malms Wood at the N end, the whole of Sherrardspark Wood is designated SSSI.

The wood is significant as a landmark principally because of its proximity to a town centre and its long boundary against the Great North Road. It is an extremely important recreational resource for local residents as well as for visitors from outside the town. An extensive network of public rights of way is augmented by a permissive horse trail and a Sustrans national cycle route which follows the disused railway line (see Maps 2 & 3).

1.3 History of Management

Sherrardspark Wood is recorded in Domesday Book as providing sufficient mast for 150 swine and appears to have previously been managed as hornbeam coppice with oak standards. Much later, and until the woodland was acquired by Sir Ebenezer Howard's Garden City company in 1919, it was part of the Digswell Park estate of Lord Desborough. Evidently, the wood was worked for local materials, firewood and timber and kept for hunting at various times. An existing estate map from the turn of the 20th century indicates felling compartments with dates, the last one indicated being 1912-13. After this, it is known that large numbers of oaks were felled during the Great War by German POWs. Following acquisition by the Garden City Company, two large parts of the wood were destined for new housing whilst the remainder was to be preserved as open space for the residents. As a result of vigorous local protest (the 'Save the Woods' campaign) only part of the wood on the E side was eventually developed.

From 1920, the wood passed through several municipal ownerships until 1983 when the Commission for New Towns transferred the wood to Welwyn Hatfield District Council. Very little information appears to exist about the management of Sherrardspark Wood during these years, apart from an inference that most of the wood was passively managed for access and recreation. Following designation as SSSI in

1986, a small area of hornbeam in Brocks Wood was coppiced (1986/7) and it was expected that 25 acres would be treated similarly on a 15-year cycle. This management has continued irregularly as resources allowed but with the assistance of several WGS until the present time.

Elsewhere in the wood, two small glades were created in the early 1990s by felling oak to encourage a more diverse age class, approximately 1ha of mixed conifer felled in comp.1e and 1.5ha of poplar plantation felled in comp.4c. Limited control of sycamore was undertaken in Comp. 3b. Way-marked public access has been maintained throughout.

In 2005, a new management plan was agreed with Natural England and Forestry Commission and a programme of works commenced, funded by Woodland Improvement Grant: approx 5ha of rhododendron have been removed from comps 1d/e/f/g/h; three major rides radiating from Six Ways have been substantially widened; 2ha of oak has been thinned in comp 1d; 3ha sycamore felled in comp 3b (with further smaller areas controlled by the Wood Wardens); a dormouse project established in Brocks Wood. Other initiatives include the establishment of a tree nursery at a local school that has already planted 100 oaks grown from acorns collected in the wood.

2. WOODLAND INFORMATION

2.1 Areas and features

2.1.1 Designated Areas	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Special Areas for Conservation (SACs)	No	No	
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	No	No	
Ramsar Sites	No	No	
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	No	No	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Yes	No	1
Other designations eg: National Parks (NPs), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	Yes		1
<p>Details:</p> <p>SSSI - designated in 1986 – extensive ASN <i>Quercus petraea</i> / <i>Carpinus betula</i> woodland with varied shrub and ground layer including heather <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> and rare helleborines. Additional habitats include swallow holes and a disused railway line where chalk is exposed</p> <p>LNR – designated in 1997</p> <p>County Wildlife Site – listed in 1997.</p>			
2.1.2 Rare and important species	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Red Data Book or BAP species	As below		
Rare or threatened species	As below		
<p>Details:</p> <p>Some progress has been made with a RDB for Hertfordshire but it remains incomplete.</p> <p>Fauna: hawfinch (regionally important), common dormouse, lesser spotted woodpecker</p> <p>Flora: both violet and broad leaved helleborines (regionally important) are present. The Sherrardspark Wood Wardens undertake a biennial flora survey throughout the wood</p> <p>Regular fungi surveys by Herts Fungi Group have resulted in good foray lists and it is likely that the wood is important for bryophytes.</p> <p>Lepidoptera: weekly butterfly transects have been undertaken for at least 10 years. Purple and white-letter hairstreak butterflies were recorded in 2010.</p>			
2.1.3 Habitats	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)	yes		All wood
Other semi-natural woodland			
Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)	yes		Maps 4 & 5
Semi-natural features in PAWS	yes		Maps 4 & 5
Woodland margins and hedges	yes	yes	
Veteran and other notable trees	yes		Map 4 comp 3e
Breeding sites	yes		Throughout
Habitats of notable species	yes		Map 4 comp 5a/5c
Unimproved grassland		yes	Map 2
Rides and open ground	yes		2 & 3
Valuable wildlife communities	yes	yes	
Feeding areas			
Lowland heath	yes		Map 4 1e
Peatlands			
Other			

Details:

Lowland sessile oak woodland is rare in SE England especially one the size of Sherrardspark
 Common Dormouse (BAP & protected species)
 Lesser-spotted Woodpecker
 Bats (protected species)
 Semi-natural grassland along NE boundary and in former parkland to N

2.1.4 Water	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Watercourses	yes		2
Lakes			
Ponds	yes		2
Wetland habitats			

Details:

The wood contains 2 swallow holes, one of which now holds water permanently, and three other ponds where water levels vary with water table. Seasonal streams feed into swallow holes, one of which is augmented by occasional flushing from water storage reservoir.

2.1.5 Landscape	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Landscape designated areas		Yes	
Landscape features			
Rock exposures			
Historic landscapes	Yes	Yes	2
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads	yes		1
Areas of the woodland prominent from settlements	yes		1

Details:

Landscape Character Area 35 – Ayot St Peter Wooded Upland - Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment
 A 'B' road follows the S boundary of the wood and an 'A' road forms the W boundary.
 The wood forms a valuable and important backdrop for residential areas on E and SE boundaries.
 Several perimeter and internal historic wood banks can be found in SPW, including one along the S boundary where the ecclesiastical parishes of Digswell and Bishop's Hatfield met. This also marks parliamentary boundary between Hitchin & St Albans. Boundary between Digswell and Welwyn parishes passes through NW side of wood.
 Unimproved grassland to N was once part of Digswell Park. Beech avenue known as Monks Walk and another more recent beech avenue leading into N side of wood are part of former estate plantings/parkland

2.1.6 Cultural Features	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Public rights of way	yes		2 & 3
Prominent viewing points	Yes		
Permissive paths	yes		2 & 3
Areas managed with traditional management systems	yes		

Details:

Extensive network of ROWs including footpaths and bridlepaths
 Recent felling of sycamore has opened up view NE across Templewood 'vale' to plateau woodlands around Bramfield/Tewin. Recent widening of rides at Six Ways has re-opened vistas originally created in Victorian times.
 A permissive horse trail creates additional links to public bridleways and facilitates use by an adjacent Riding for the Disabled Centre
 Comps 5a/b/c/d and 1a are managed as hornbeam coppice.

2.1.7 Archaeological Features	In Woodland	Adjacent to Woodland	Map
Scheduled monument			
Historical features	yes		

Details:

Wood banks can also be included here (see 2.1.5 above). Banks have been surveyed and mapped by Dr Tony Rook, Welwyn Archaeological Society.

Disused railway

Remains of ice house originally supplying Digswell House.

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Several former plans and miscellaneous correspondence stress the importance of continuing to harvest timber, although earlier attempts to do this have met with public resistance. However, operations within the first five years of the current plan aimed at improving the woodland's conservation status have yielded small quantities of firewood and most recently, oak saw-logs. It is intended that this will be continued.

The wood contains a significant amount of high quality mature oak (approx 150 years) along with relatively small stands of mature Scots Pine (1ha) and larch (3ha). Much of the sycamore in comp. 3 is generally about 30 years old but squirrel-damaged and fit only for pulp and firewood. Other more mature stems attracted better prices when felled in 2010/11. The hornbeam coppice in comp. 5 is heavily squirrel-damaged and unlikely to produce a viable crop. However, the main aim of management here is to create improved habitat for dormice rather than to produce revenue. With careful thinning, the poplar plantation in comp 4a could produce a reasonable crop; however, current market trends are not encouraging.

2.3 Site description

Sherrardspark Wood is a large ASNW dominated by oak high forest and is a product of the physical attributes of its location and man's long term intervention...

Geology: The underlying geology is comprised of chalk covered with beds of clays, sands and gravels. The latter are derived from fluvial deposits left behind by the River Thames before it was diverted by the Anglian glaciation. Sherrardspark Wood is the location of a remnant of the highest and oldest Sudbury Formation of gravels known as the Stoke Row gravel. This contains a higher proportion of quartz derived from Triassic, Carboniferous and Devonian sources in the west Midlands and south Pennines. (John Catt et al). Elsewhere, remnants of Reading gravels can be found. These are the source of Hertfordshire 'pudding stone' – accretions of flint pebbles concreted together by natural silica cement. Deposits of brick earth found on the east side of the wood provided the material from which many garden city houses were built. The chalk comes closer to the surface most noticeably in the north of the wood and here there are a number of former small pits. There are deposits of London Clay on the higher areas of the wood and these continue to cause subsidence problems in local housing particularly following changes in water table.

The highest point in the wood is almost 127m at Six Ways.

Soils: Sherrardspark Wood has largely acid soils as a result of the underlying geology, although the proximity of chalk on the north side creates more neutral – calcareous conditions, clearly shown by the variation in ground flora.

Hydrology: Two shallow valleys falling in a southerly direction contain seasonal streams, After heavy rain, water flow is brisk and one of the stream channels is quite deeply incised. The lower parts of the valleys beyond the margins of the wood are however always dry due to the existence of three swallow holes which capture the flow. The smallest of these is located in the adjacent golf course but the other two are within the wood and are characterised by large hollows.

Vegetation: The wood is dominated by mature oak high forest. The oak is thought to be originally mostly sessile as a result of earlier estate plantings but there are also common oaks and resultant hybrids. Hornbeam coppice is found mostly on the west side (comp 5a) in Brocks Wood but is scattered throughout. Where the chalk lies closer to the surface, sycamore predominates along with ash, wych elm and wild cherry. Beech is a relatively common component within the oak, although there are now rather few older specimens. There are plantations of poplar/larch (4a), scots pine (1f),

larch (2a) and mixed conifer (3d). Groves of mature sweet chestnut are located in compt 1f particularly around the swallow hole. Holly and rowan are also found.

The understorey is generally weak due to past management as high forest but hornbeam coppice remains in Brocks Wood on the W side. Existing small amounts of hazel have been augmented with additional planting for dormouse habitat. Until recently, there were significant amounts of rhododendron, particularly around Six Ways and in compt. 1e (Sefton Plantation).

Ground flora reflects the closed canopy and acid soils of the wood and is generally dominated by bramble. However, on more calcareous soils, dogs mercury, wood anemone, yellow archangel, wood anemone, wood violet and broad buckler fern can be found. In addition, both violet and broad-leaved helleborine, both regionally important have been recorded close to the old railway line.

The wood is well-known for its wide variety of fungi and extensive foray lists have been recorded by Herts Fungi Group. Mosses and lichens have been less well studied but are assumed to be of importance in a Hertfordshire context.

Fauna: The 1998-2003 management plan notes that both common and scarce species of fauna appear to be diminishing, indicating visitor pressure as the main reason. Muntjac deer, badger, fox, rabbit, hare, grey squirrel, (hazel) dormouse, bank vole and common shrew are all present. Both squirrel and muntjac are causing damage by bark stripping and browsing. The more usual woodland birds are abundant, although the once common seasonal warblers are becoming less common. All three native woodpeckers are recorded as is the locally rare hawfinch.

Access: The public have free access to all of the wood and map2 shows a network of public rights of way, bridleways and the cycle route along the old railway track. There are also permissive footpaths and desire lines within the wood. The six main rides meet at "Six Ways" where benches, a tall finger post and a new carved seat commemorating the 90th anniversary of the garden city are located. A car park is located adjacent to the reservoir. Access for 4WD and forestry machinery is possible throughout the wood.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

Hazards: steep banks of former railway line where it runs through a cutting at NW end
deep water in swallow hole adjacent to railway line
underground mains water pipeline SE of car park
brick lined pit in New Wood

Constraints:

- Public perception of management in particular the felling of trees has been a significant constraint in attempting to diversify the structure of this largely even-aged woodland.
- Housing and roads on the woodland boundary require regular inspection and careful management.
- Limited local authority budget is also regarded as a constraint.
- The woods status as a SSSI means there is a list of potentially damaging operations which must be adhered to when carrying out management.

Threats:

- Very even-aged structure of standards resulting in closed canopy and reduced regeneration
- Pests: grey squirrel and muntjac deer.
- Exotic species e.g. remaining small areas of rhododendron, a small colony of Himalayan balsam at Six Ways (controlled by hand-pulling) and a small clump of Japanese Knotweed close to Pentley Park entrance. Other planted exotics present do not appear to be invasive.
- Dumping of garden waste by householders adjacent to the woods. This has included variegated yellow archangel and the Spanish bluebell

3. LONG TERM VISION, MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

3.1 Long term vision

Sherrardspark Wood will be one of Hertfordshire's most important sessile oak woodlands. It will continue to be managed under a continuous cover regime to promote high quality oak and other products harvested as a result of maintaining the wood in favourable conservation condition as expected of its SSSI status. The wood will be well-known and loved by the local community including the Wood Wardens Society who will be important partners in its future management.

3.2 Management Objectives

No	Objective
1	Ensure long-term continuity of mainly sessile oak woodland with varied age classes and structure with healthy regeneration of oak saplings so as to ensure a harvestable resource for future generations.
2	Retain and enhance habitats supporting a wide range of wildlife species, including local BAP species such as dormouse, rare woodland butterflies and hole-nesting birds.
3	Provide a safe and attractive woodland experience for visitors on an appropriately managed path network providing reasonable access for all legitimate users whilst endeavouring to control less desirable activities.
4	Control and/or remove invasive non-native species in particular sycamore and rhododendron. Remove PAWS when appropriate – larch in comp 2a and poplar in comp 4b.
5	Encourage community involvement by working in partnership with the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society
6	Monitor changes in vegetation and species distribution resulting from habitat restoration
7	Manage all aspects of the wood in accordance with guidance contained in the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme.

3.3 Strategy

The objectives of management are aimed at being achieved over a twenty year period in order to avoid antagonising local residents who have in the past viewed the harvesting of oak with concern. After the first five years of regular low level work undertaken by both resident contractor and voluntary Wood Wardens, it appears that visitors are becoming more accustomed to active management and better understand its benefits. Consequently the focus will continue to be on continuous cover forestry. The exception to this is the removal of sycamore in compt. 3, the larch in compt. 2a which will be done on a clear fell basis and also the remaining removal of rhododendron.

It is hoped that a 20-year work programme will spread the financial strain on the Council's resources which are likely to be increasingly challenged in the forthcoming 5-year period. Central to this strategy is both the optimising of Forestry Commission Grants (annual management grant and specific capital grant for otherwise non economic undertakings) and the careful selling of any harvestable material in order to help finance woodland conservation management

Management of the wood will continue to be subject to audit under the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme.

Successful on-going site enhancement will also be dependent upon the continued commitment and enthusiasm of the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society.

4. MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS/OPERATIONS

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

A variety of harvesting approaches will be taken :

- Low impact systems will be the principal method used on site especially after PAWs work has been carried out. This will consist of continuous cover and group felling to encourage a new age class of sessile oak standards..
- Coppice will be cut throughout compt.5 on a small scale in line with English Nature's current recommendations for managing coppice for dormice and will favour and encourage hazel over hornbeam as a consequence of severe squirrel damage to the hornbeam.
- Clear felling will be used only in PAWs and sycamore areas.
- Several minimum intervention areas will be designated where no harvesting will be undertaken other than the removal of non-natives if required.
- Thinning will be used in compartment 4b to encourage native species over the hybrid poplars.

4.1.2 Phased felling and restructuring of plantations

Larch plantation at Malms Wood 2a will be clear felled as it is currently mature and contains good natural regeneration within it, particularly ash. Natural regeneration of native species will be the favoured method of restocking with planting of local provenance native whips to be considered after three years. Poplar plantation at 4b to be thinned to final crop with additional glades cut to foster natural regeneration already present. Ring barking will also be tried to prevent suckering.

4.1.3 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

Natural regeneration is to be favoured at all times and is already evident in the wood. However, if after a period of time this proves not to be working, re-stocking will take place using whips of local provenance, wherever practicable.

4.2 New planting

No new planting is envisaged

4.3 Other operations

Path maintenance for pedestrian and equestrian access will be carried out as necessary. If surfacing is considered necessary, appropriate materials approved by English Nature will be used at all times.

Existing culverts will be regularly maintained to clear blockages and to maintain good stream flow.

Replacement of two culverts on a main ride is likely to be necessary within this plan period.

4.4 Protection and maintenance

4.4.1 Pest and disease management

Squirrels are a significant pest in Sherrardspark wood and damage has been sustained in the hornbeam coppice areas and to sycamores in compt. 3b. Limited control takes place on an ad-hoc basis (unofficially) and is reasonably successful, reducing numbers on the east side of the wood. More

sustained (professional) control continues to be problematic but various options will continue to be considered.

After a five-year period of monitoring, **Muntjac deer** are also believed to be a significant pest. Until recently, control by shooting has been considered to be impossible because of the risks to visiting public and dogs. However, there is considerable support for shooting from the Wood Wardens Society and a proposal is being submitted to the council's executive for their approval. Browsing damage will continue to be monitored, new planting will be protected in tree shelters and regeneration areas will be fenced with temporary deer netting. Where voluntary labour is available, coppice stools will be protected by construction of 'doughnuts' using coppice material and brash from coppicing left in 'bunds' around the perimeter of coupes.

The remaining small areas of **Rhododendron** (apart from the limited and controlled bushes at Six Ways retained for amenity) will be eradicated by cutting and burning with regeneration being sprayed with roundup and mixture B. This will be the only significant chemical use over the period of the management plan and will cease as rhododendron is eradicated.

4.4.2 Fire plan

Sherrardspark has a low fire risk as it is predominantly broadleaved woodland. In addition there have been no serious fires historically. However, in recent years, unofficial fires started by local youngsters have become an increasing concern. It is likely that the vigilance of the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society and local residents will continue to be necessary. Larger fires that cannot be controlled by local residents or wood wardens are reported directly to the fire service, who have been extremely prompt in responding to calls.

Generic fire plan

FIRE PLAN.

The flammable material is classed as a 'Hazard' whilst the chances of the hazard being set on fire is classed as the 'Risk'. A high hazard may have a low risk and vice versa and will be dependent upon a number of criteria including the weather and public access.

FOREST OPERATIONS WITH POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARD.

Felling

During contractual felling operations it is necessary to clear the majority of lop and top from the site to facilitate regeneration of ground flora and any subsequent planting, weeding and ride management. Burning is currently the most viable way, and from the start of operations lop and top is heaped up and burnt, but only if suitable weather and ground conditions prevail and permission to burn has been granted by the Council. All fire sites are agreed in advance between the contractor and the Landscape Officer and the county Fire Control Centre informed at start and finish of contracts.

THE RISKS

1. The Public

Any access by the general public represents a risk. Unauthorised camp fires which get out of control are the most likely cause of fire in Welwyn Hatfield's Woodlands. Deliberate arson is a relatively rare occurrence.

2. Litter

Bottles, broken glass and illegal fly tipping all add to the risk that a fire can be started accidentally. Fly tips are reported to the council and cleared away. Litter is picked up on a regular basis by Wood Wardens.

3. The Weather.

Lightning strikes are a risk and dry weather enhances the hazard. Be aware!

Types of Woodland Fires.

A more effective response from the Fire Service can be obtained if an indication of the type of fire is given as soon as possible after arriving on site:

a. Surface fires.

This is the most common type of fire encountered in woodlands with the ground

vegetation burning.

Response: Report the fire and summon assistance. If the fire is small tackle it. If, after a few minutes, the fire is clearly going to get bigger the Fire Brigade should be contacted immediately.

A quick response with fire fighting equipment and the manpower that is immediately available is better than waiting to muster a larger gang and getting to the fire after it has spread and become more extensive.

Attack fire from flanks in a coordinated effort to reduce the fire front.

b. Ground fires.

These generally occur in peaty soil types and there is usually steady smouldering underground marked by a black spread of heat. This type of fire can be very difficult to deal with as scorching can occur over a wide area, particularly in old woodland sites where the fire can follow old root runs and surface many metres away from the original source. These fires are also likely to recur after the area is apparently safe.

Response: Water and spraying gear and digging equipment is required with as much manpower that can be mustered, perhaps over an extended period to ensure complete damping down. All scorched areas should be dug out with spades and sprayed with water. Trenches should be dug across the path of the fire deep enough to reach below the layer of combustible material.

Welwyn Hatfield woodlands do not have peaty soils but this type of fire can occur where leaf litter is thick.

c. Crown fires.

There are two types of crown fire, low crown and high crown.

Low crown fires are the next development after surface fires, when the lower branches of large trees are set alight, whilst smaller trees are completely destroyed after the whole crown becomes alight. High crown fires are the worst and most extensive fires encountered in forest areas where everything burns.

Response: As this type of fire develops from surface fires getting well out of control it is likely that the Fire Brigade will be onsite already.

The fire brigade will have the necessary expertise and access to the foam and aerial application equipment need to deal with the situation.

Clearing a strip ahead of the fire may be appropriate.

These fires are very unlikely in Welwyn Hatfield's predominantly broadleaved woodlands.

Logging personnel on and off site.

During a fire event, all staff should be logged on and off the site. In addition, individuals should work within sight of each other as part of a team to ensure mutual safety and eliminate the risk of becoming trapped amongst burning trees and cut off from a safe exit point.

Water Sources.

There are relatively few watercourse and supplies within the woodlands suitable for fire fighting. Permanent water sources are marked on the attached map.

Rendezvous Points.

Rendezvous points for Wood Wardens and other personnel staff will be at the nearest entrance to the site of the fire, or if it is obvious, at the fire site.

It is unlikely that the Fire Brigade will have detailed knowledge of the wood and the various woodland areas so a well known location should be used and ideally, someone with local knowledge of the quickest and best route to the fire through the affected woodland should meet them.

Keys to gates/barriers	Local Fire Stations have been issued with a key fitting all padlocked woodland entrances, although it is understood that, in extremis, chains will be cut to facilitate quick access.
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4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution
Contractors represent the main pollution and waste disposal issue.
Contracts will state penalties for leaving waste and also require the use of biodegradable lubricants where practical and the carrying of spillage kits on all vehicles.

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities
The main significant unauthorised activity is the dumping of garden waste from neighbouring houses. A programme of leafleting households in problem areas will be considered. Whilst motorbikes use the wood occasionally this is as yet not a serious problem and will be monitored.
During the first 5-year plan period, school holiday and summer-time teenage drinking parties with bonfires have increased significantly. Council staff, Wood Wardens and the local police PCSOs are working together to reduce the incidence of these events.

4.5 Game management

No game shooting takes place in Sherrardspark Wood.

4.6 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity

4.6.1 Management of designated areas
Sherrardspark Wood is a SSSI. As a result of the first five years of the current plan, the wood has been re-graded as 'unfavourable recovering' by Natural England. Approval from Natural England will be sought for this management plan revision

4.6.2 Measures to enhance biodiversity
The focus of management for biodiversity includes the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups of oak will be felled throughout the wood to encourage natural regeneration and to create structural diversity within a continuous cover canopy woodland • The oldest over-mature oak will be retained for their value to wildlife, unless health and safety is compromised. • Stands of mature pine in compt. 1g will be retained for their value to woodland birds • A minimum of 20cubic metres/ha of standing and fallen dead wood will be retained wherever possible unless public health and safety are compromised. • Main rides will be widened by selective felling and scalloping in order to provide more edge habitat. New vegetation will be cut on a rotational basis to control bramble and encourage growth of woodland herbs • 10% of the woodland will be designated as minimum intervention. Areas to be agreed with EN. • Areas of coppice generally west of the railway line will be maintained and consolidated by cutting small areas each winter on a 20-year rotation with additional dormouse nest- boxes

erected, maintained and checked.

- Transect monitoring of butterflies will be continued by the Wood Wardens and records submitted to the county recorder
- Management of heather in compt1(d) and (e) will be maintained and encouraged by scarification and removal of invasive species.
- Existing ponds to be maintained by sympathetic management when appropriate
- On-going private research into breeding birds will be encouraged.

4.6.3 Special measures for ASNW and SNW

As 4.6.2

4.6.4 Special measures for PAWS

Measures to address PAWs will be undertaken to meet the stipulations of UKWAS. Larch plantation in Malms Wood 2a will be clear felled as it is currently mature and contains good natural regeneration within it, particularly ash. Natural regeneration of native species to be the favoured method of restocking with planting of local provenance native whips to be considered after three years. Poplar plantation at 4a to be thinned to final crop with additional glades cut to foster natural regeneration already present. Ring barking will also be tried to prevent suckering.

4.7 Management of social and cultural values

4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

There are no scheduled ancient monuments on the site. However, the wood contains numerous wood banks. These have been mapped by Welwyn Archaeological Society. Existing banks will be protected during contract operations and new banks created where appropriate.

A number of memorial benches have been created and installed by the Wood Wardens Society. Attempts are made to ensure that these are evenly distributed throughout the wood and within easy walking distance of main entrances

There are some elderly wood carvings at the main ride intersection of the wood known as Six Ways. In 2010, a new carved bench was installed here to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Welwyn Garden City.

4.7.2 Public access

There is free public access to all areas of the wood on a network of public and permissive rights of way and bridleways. (See attached map).

A Sustrans bicycle route follows the disused railway line through the wood.

4.7.3 Community involvement

Sherrardspark Wood will continue to be managed with the close involvement of the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society. The Wood Wardens organise twice-weekly work parties and undertake habitat management, coppicing, rhododendron control, pond maintenance, species survey and path upkeep and enhancement.

Local councillors are kept informed of significant woodland operations and several have visited the wood.

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5. CONSULTATION

Organisation/individual	Comment	Response/action
Natural England	25% of the SSSI is in favourable condition. 75% is 'unfavourable recovering'.	NE to be consulted on new management plan
Forestry Commission	FC officer inspected and signed off WIG works in February 2011.	To be consulted on new management plan
Mr Simon Jeffreys UPM Tilhill Forestry	UKWAS Assessor	To be provided with copy of new plan
Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society	The Society is consulted regularly and involved in all major management decisions. The society has on many occasions been the originator of good ideas! Are considered as vital working partners in the care of the wood.	At least two site visits made with Chairman, Secretary and other members each year to discuss management plan activity. Weekly contact by Landscape Officer during the year. The Society will receive several copies of new plan
Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust		To be sent a copy of new plan.
Welwyn Garden City Society		To be sent a copy of new plan

6. MONITORING PLAN SUMMARY

Objective number, issue or UKWAS Requirement	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
1. Ensure long-term continuity of mainly sessile oak woodland with varied age classes and structure with healthy regeneration of oak saplings so as to ensure a harvestable resource for future generations.	Number of small group fellings and/or areas thinned. Quantity of successful oak regeneration and/or survival of planted seedlings	Visual inspection – findings to be recorded in site diary	Post-contract monitoring + Spring and summer annually	Landscape Officer + contractor	Results of monitoring will be used to assess the success of natural oak regeneration and inform subsequent vegetation control, protection or restocking.

2. Retain and enhance habitats supporting a wide range of wildlife species, including local BAP species such as dormouse, rare woodland butterflies and hole-nesting birds.	Successful regen of coppice in Brocks Wood. An increase in the numbers of dormice, rarer butterflies and hole-nesting birds	Specialist surveys undertaken in correct season. Results to be recorded according to species monitoring programmes	Weekly transect surveys April-October for butterflies. Nest box inspections in late summer for dormice. May-July nesting surveys for birds.	Landscape Officer + Wood Warden Society	To inform future routine and new habitat management
3. Provide a safe and attractive woodland experience for visitors on an appropriately managed path network providing reasonable access for all legitimate users whilst endeavouring to control less desirable activities	Level of complaints from visitors A decline in the number of unauthorised fires / littering events. A managed increase in support of wood wardens events programme	Regular inspection of path network and site structures and boundaries. Liaison with local PC and PCSO. Increase in society membership and income	Path survey twice a year and following any storm event. Extra vigilance during school holidays and at weekends All year round	Landscape Officer + Wood Warden Society	To inform any necessary management of hazardous trees and enhancements of access. To inform of changes necessary in local liaison To plan or change society/community involvement
4. Control and/or remove invasive or exotic species, in particular sycamore and rhododendron	Removal of ponticum throughout apart from at Six Ways. Good regen. of mixed broadleaves in compts cleared of sycamore	Visual inspection – findings to be recorded in site diary	Annual inspection in spring for five years	Landscape Officer + contractor	Contracts to be monitored to ensure control specification met. Subsequent monitoring to assess the success of regeneration of native species and inform further vegetation control and/or planting
5. Encourage community involvement by working in partnership with the Sherrardspark Wood Wardens Society	Happy and well motivated volunteer group who continue to understand and support management of wood	Continued weekly liaison between Landscape Officer and Chairman or work party leaders	Throughout the year	Landscape Officer & Chairman of Society	To plan volunteer work programme and other projects.
6. Monitor changes in vegetation and species distribution resulting from habitat restoration	Presence/ absence or increase/ decrease of vegetation type and species	Visual inspection – findings to be recorded in site diary	On-going spring and summer	Landscape Officer + Wood Warden Society	To inform future routine and new habitat management To report significant species sightings to relevant county recorders.
7. Manage all aspects of the wood in accordance with guidance contained in the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme.	A minimal number of corrective action requests made during annual audit	Keeping abreast of UKWAS requirements	On-going	Landscape Officer	To continue to improve the standard of management of Sherrardspark Wood

8. WORK PROGRAMMES

8.1 Outline long-term work programme (2010_ to 2025_)

Compartment or area	Activity	Year		
		11-15	16-20	20-25
All	Continuous cover forestry and small group felling to ensure new generations of sessile oak trees	*	*	*
All	Protection of natural oak regeneration and additional planting of oak where necessary	*	*	*
3b	Continue to remove sycamore	*		
2a	Fell larch	*		
1	Remove rhododendron	*		
5 a / b / c	Continue coppicing in Brocks Wood	*	*	*
4a	Thin hybrid poplar	*		
All	Ride widening and path maintenance	*	*	*
All	Species monitoring	*	*	*

8.2 Short-term work programme (2011 to 2015)

Compartment or area	Activity	Year				
		1	2	3	4	5

All	Retain FSC certification	*	*	*	*	*
All	Obtain FC WIG grant	*	*	*	*	*
2a	Clearfell larch plantation in Reddings	*				
3 a / b 5c	Remove sycamore	*	*	*	*	*
All	Continuous cover forestry and small group felling to encourage oak regeneration	*	*	*	*	*
1 (all subcompts)	Remove remaining Rhododendron	*	*	*		
	Spray or hand weed ponticum regen throughout	*	*	*	*	*
5 a / b / c	Coppice hornbeam in Brocks Wood, plant hazel, install dormouse nest boxes	*	*	*	*	*
4b	Thin hybrid poplar	*	*			
All	Ride widening and path maintenance	*	*	*	*	*
All	Species monitoring	*	*	*	*	*
5c	Pond restoration/ enhancement	*		*		
	Support Wood Warden Society activities	*	*	*	*	*

9. MAPS

List all maps here and append to plan.

Map No/Title	Description
Map 1	Site Location Map
Maps 2 & 3	Infrastructure
Maps 4 & 5	Work plan