Woodland Management Plan

To be completed by the plan author:		
Woodland or Property name	**Northaw Great Wood**	
Woodland Management Plan case reference	**1905579**	
The landowner agrees this plan as a statement of intent for the woodland		**Yes**
Plan author name	**Gilles Sauvestre – Maydencroft Ltd**	

For FC Use only:				
Plan Period *(dd/mm/yyyy - Ten years)*	**Approval Date:**		**Approved until:**	
Five Year Review Date				

Revision No.	Date	Status (draft/final)	Reason for Revision

Template user support:

The functionality in this version of the management plan template has been downgraded to ensure compatibility with Word 2003. This document is not protected and as such rows can be added & deleted or copied and pasted from tables where needed.

UK Forestry Standard management planning criteria

Approval of this plan will be considered against the following UKFS criteria.
Prior to submission review your plan against the criteria using the check list below.

	UKFS management plan criteria	Minimum approval requirements	Author check ☑
1	**Plan Objectives:** Forest management plans should state the objectives of management and set out how an appropriate balance between social, economic, and environmental objectives will be achieved.	• Management plan objectives are stated. • Consideration is given to environmental, economic and social objectives relevant to the vision for the woodland.	Yes
2	**Forest context and important features in management strategy:** Forest management plans should address the forest context and the forest potential and demonstrate how the relevant interests and issues have been considered and addressed.	Management intentions communicated in ***Sect. 6*** of the management plan are in line with stated objective(s) ***Sect. 2***. Management intentions should take account of: • Relevant features and issues identified within the woodland survey (***Sect. 4***) • Any potential threats to and opportunities for the woodland, as identified under woodland protection (***Sect. 5***). • Relevant comments received from stakeholder engagement and documented in ***Sect. 7***.	Yes
3	**Identification of designations within and surrounding the site:** For designated areas, e.g. National Parks or SSSI, particular account should be taken of landscape and other sensitivities in the design of forests and forest infrastructure.	• Survey information (***Sect. 4***) identifies any designations that impact on woodland management. • Management intentions (***Sect. 6***) have taken account of any designations.	Yes
4	**Felling and restocking to improve forest structure and diversity:** When planning felling and restocking, the design of existing forests should be re-assessed and any necessary changes made so that they meet UKFS requirements. Forests should be designed to achieve a diverse structure of habitat, species and ages of trees, appropriate to the scale and context. Forests characterised by a lack of diversity, due to extensive areas of even-aged trees, should be progressively restructured to achieve age class range.	• Felling and restocking proposals are consistent with UKFS design principles (for example scale and adjacency). • Current diversity (structure, species, age structure) of the woodland has been identified through the survey (***Sect. 4***). • Management intentions aim to improve / maintain current diversity (structure, species, and ages of trees).	Yes
5	**Consultation:** Consultation on forest management plans and proposals should be carried out according to forestry authority procedures and, where required, the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.	• Stakeholder engagement is in line with current FC guidance and recorded in ***Sect. 7***. The minimum requirement is for statutory consultation to take place, and this will be carried out by the Forestry Commission. • Plan authors undertake stakeholder engagement (ref FC Ops Note 35) relevant to the context and setting of the woodland.	Yes
6	**Plan Update and Review:** Management of the forest should conform to the plan, and the plan should be updated to ensure it is current and relevant.	• A 5 year review period is stated on the 1st page of the plan. • ***Sect. 8*** is completed with 1 indicator of success per management objective.	Yes

Section 1: Property Details

Woodland Property Name		Northaw Great Wood	
Name	Oliver Waring	Owner	
Email	o.waring@welhat.gov.uk	Contact Number	
Agent Name (if applicable)		Gilles Sauvestre	
Email		Contact Number	
County	Hertfordshire	Local Authority	Welwyn Hatfield Council
Grid Reference (e.g. ST 625 785)	TL 284 042	Single Business Identifier	107142304
What is the total area of this woodland management plan? (In hectares)		120.31	
You have included an Inventory and Plan of Operations with this woodland management plan?		Yes	
You have listed the maps associated with this woodland management plan? (PLEASE NOTE: Google Maps/ images of maps will not be accepted because they are copyright protected and should not be used commercially without the appropriate licencing from Google).		Map 1 – Designations Map 2 – Tree Preservation Orders Maps 3 and 4 – Habitats (1 and 2) Map 5 – Hazards, constraints and public access Map 6 – Stand types Map 7 – Harvesting	
Do you intend to use the information within this woodland management plan and associated Inventory and Plan of Operations to apply for the following?		Felling Licence	Yes
		Thinning Licence	Yes
		Woodland Regeneration Grant	Yes
You declare that there is management control of the woodland detailed within the woodland management plan?		Yes	
You agree to make the woodland management plan publicly available?		No	

Section 2: Vision and Objectives

To develop your long term vision, you need to express as clearly as possible the overall direction of management for the woodland(s) and how you envisage it will be in the future. This covers the duration of the plan and beyond.

2.1 Vision

Describe your long term vision for the woodland(s). (*Suggest 300 words max*)

Northaw Great Wood will comprise a dynamic mosaic of open and closed canopy woodland, featuring large glades linked by broad rides, areas of coppice, beautiful and veteran trees, restored and newly created pollards, and thriving ponds and streams — all supporting a rich diversity of wildlife.

Appropriate management steered by its history as a wood pasture common will maintain it in favourable conservation condition as expected of its Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) status.

Natural regeneration of oak, hornbeam, birch, and a variety of other native species — supplemented by targeted planting where necessary — alongside the dynamic regrowth of coppice, will secure the long-term continuity of the woodland habitats and strengthen their resilience to pests, diseases, and the impacts of climate change.

Invasive species will have been effectively controlled or removed, reducing pressures on the wood's rich and varied habitats. Archaeological features, carefully preserved during management operations, will stand as enduring reminders of the wood's historic legacy.

Management of the Nature Reserve will ensure the wood continues to offer a remarkable landscape and a relaxing, safe, and welcoming environment for visitors to enjoy.

2.2 Management Objectives

State the objectives of management demonstrating how sustainable forest management is to be achieved. Objectives are a set of specific, quantifiable statements that represent what needs to happen to achieve the long term vision.

No.	Objectives (include environmental, economic and social considerations)
1	Maintenance of open woodland habitats and wood pasture features.
2	Ensure long-term continuity, diversity and resilience of oak/hornbeam woodland.
3	Maintain and enhance habitats condition and diversity. Preserve the historic and archaeological features.
4	Provide safe and attractive visitor experience.
5	Ensure early detection and management of pests, diseases, and invasive species.

Section 3: Plan Review – Achievements

Use this section to identify achievements made against previous plan objectives. This section should be completed at the 5 year review and could be informed through monitoring activities undertaken.

Objectives	Achievement
Maintenance of open woodland habitats and wood pasture features.	
Ensure long-term continuity, diversity and resilience of oak/hornbeam woodland.	
Maintain and enhance habitats condition and diversity. Preserve the historic and archaeological features.	
Provide safe and attractive visitor experience.	
Ensure early detection and management of pests, diseases, and invasive species.	

Section 4: Woodland Survey

This section is about collecting information relating to your woodland and its location, including any statutory constraints i.e. designations.

4.1 Description

Brief description of the woodland property:
Northaw Great Wood is one of the three largest remaining semi-natural deciduous woodlands in Hertfordshire. It forms part of a complex of woodland in the south-east of Hertfordshire representing some of the most important oak/hornbeam woodlands in Europe and is also one of only two large woods in the county with habitats derived from its origin as wood pasture common. **Geology:** The wood lies between 73 and 125m on a north facing slope. Lower areas lie on the acidic sands and gravels of the Reading beds, overlain in the north-east towards the Cuffley Brook by gravels, with a small area of chalk exposure in the north east corner. As the land rises, the mid slopes are on acidic London Clay. The highest areas to the south and west are on pebble gravel. **Soils:** The soils in the wood are of three main types: poorly drained gley soils typically on impervious clay, podsolic soils which are located on freely-draining, acidic substrates such as the Reading Beds and the Pebble gravel and brown earths, moderately well drained soils which occur to the north east of the wood. **Hydrology:** Springs emerging from the clay on the western and southern sides of the wood give rise to streams that flow northwards, descending towards the Cuffley Brook. These streams sometimes carve shallow channels into the underlying geology, though

in flatter areas they slow and fade into more marshy ground. In the northeast of the wood, the Cuffley Brook cuts a series of swallow holes. Two ponds are also found on the higher ground along the Ridgeway, in the southern part of the wood.

Boundaries: The Cuffley Brook and Hatfield New Park pale form the northern boundary of the wood but north of this there is further woodland and arable farmland. There is more woodland to the west. A busy road (the Ridgeway) forms the southern boundary but private estate woodland and meadows lie south of this. Large private houses and gardens form the eastern boundary.

Vegetation:

The vegetation of Northaw Great Wood is dominated by two main woodland types: oak-hornbeam stands and open woodlands.

Oak-hornbeam stands are a defining feature of the wood, though they developed largely as a result of the 19th-century transition from wood pasture to more productive woodland. The relative dominance of oak and hornbeam varies considerably across the site—from oak-dominated areas where hornbeam persists mainly in the understorey, to nearly pure hornbeam stands with overmature trees. Many of these stands likely originated from lapsed hornbeam coppice with oak standards, although in some areas single-stem hornbeam trees dominate, with little remaining evidence of historic coppicing. Oak is overall relatively far from commercial maturity.

Decades of lapsed management had left these stands structurally homogeneous, but active management—including coppicing and thinning—over the past few decades has significantly improved their structural diversity. This has created a varied mosaic of young, maturing, and mature coppice, dense patches of hornbeam seedlings, and areas of temporary open space.

Nonetheless, there are challenges to address. Unmanaged hornbeam reaching the canopy can outcompete oak, often leading to oak crown dieback or even tree mortality. Furthermore, the near-total absence of oak regeneration poses a serious threat to the long-term presence of this key species. In recent years, deer browsing has increasingly hindered both hornbeam regeneration and coppice regrowth.

The **open woodland** areas are considered proxies for the former wood pasture habitats that likely once covered most, if not all, of Northaw Great Wood. However, their current structure and composition differ from the historic wood pasture, notably due to the near-absence of old hornbeam pollards—once likely a defining feature, still observable nearby at Cuffley Camp but largely felled during the 19th century.

These open woodlands tend to self-thin naturally, with trees dying or being blown over, which helps maintain an open structure. They are, however, relatively homogeneous and dominated by mature and maturing trees—primarily oak, along with shorter-lived species such as birch and rowan, and windthrow-prone species like sweet chestnut, particularly on pebbly soils (although several trees survive even after being blown over). Worryingly, there is little to no regeneration of key wood pasture species such as oak and hornbeam, and even birch and rowan seedlings are often absent. This lack of regeneration is likely due to a combination of intense deer browsing and the dense cover of bracken, which inhibits seedling establishment.

Across the wood, **"intermediate" stands** can also be found—diverse, yet often dominated by oak, with a mix of sweet chestnut, beech, hornbeam, ash, aspen, sycamore, wild cherry, and elm. Birch occurs in patches, often as regeneration from former open glades, the most significant of which have been restored. Groves of planted sweet chestnut are also present, now largely overaged coppice.

The shrub layer is generally sparse in both oak-hornbeam and open woodland stands. Where present, it typically includes holly (which can become invasive), hawthorn, and some hazel (particularly on damper soils), along with crab apple. Remnant Victorian-era rhododendron persists around the car park and in several other identified locations, where it has undergone several management interventions. Important areas of sallow and blackthorn scrub are found around restored glades, along streams, and along the southeastern boundary. Honeysuckle is widespread throughout the wood.

The restoration and management of glades and wide rides has significantly improved the wood's structural diversity. Regeneration of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), broom, gorse, and other heathland plants is now contributing notably to species diversity in several areas.

Bracken remains a dominant component of the ground layer in many places, especially on the more acidic soils, and is particularly abundant in glades, rides, and open woodlands where light levels are higher. In these areas, bracken, a legacy of former wood pasture, tends to suppress the natural regeneration of trees and shrubs. Several species of bramble are also widespread.

Fauna: The Great Wood supports a rich population of woodland vertebrates. However, some of the rarer bird species such as nightingale, wood warbler and redstart are now extinct, as in the rest of the county. Significant mammals such as badger, yellow-necked mouse, pigmy shrew and dormouse have been observed in the wood, although it is thought that dormouse is not present any longer. The white admiral, purple emperor, purple hairstreak and silver-washed fritillary are rarer woodland butterfly species now returning to the wood as a result of opening up of rides and glades. The wood is important for coleoptera and a number are 'nationally notable'.

History of Management:

The "wood of Northaw" is first referenced in early Norman times when the hunting of deer and wild boar are recorded. The first brief description of its use as common land occurs in the mid–eighteenth century when Northaw Common is described as being a large open area of 'waste' with scattered hornbeam pollards used for fuel. The common was enclosed in 1806 and most of the wood sold in about 1811. The new owner changed the use from wood pasture to forestry with many of the old pollards felled and large scale planting carried out in blocks divided by a grid pattern of rides. There are subsequent records of timber sales in the 1870s. The Great Wood was sold again to a local farmer in 1923 and he felled most of the remaining mature trees, especially the oaks, leaving large areas of open ground with scattered birch and worthless trees.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to convert the woodland into a housing estate and the bankruptcy of the builder, the Great Wood was purchased jointly in 1937 by London and Hertfordshire County Councils as a public open space. Since then, the pattern has largely been one of steady re-growth in the gaps left by the 1930s felling and the

shading out of former rides and glades. Corporate management was aimed at conservation and public access with little large scale work taking place.

The wood was designated as Country Park in 1971 and the first management plan dated 1973 had management for high forest as its principal objective with selected areas being left as non-intervention. In addition, coppice-with-standards was implemented in the south-east corner of the wood. A new system of way-marked rides was implemented and two glades mown. In the 1980s a major part of the east-west ride was significantly widened and an overgrown hornbeam hedge boundary pollarded. The plan intended that non-native rhododendron and sycamore were to be controlled but , due to vociferous local objections, little further management other than coppicing was actually carried out with consequent further canopy closure and loss of former wood pasture habitats. There remained a severe rhododendron infestation especially in the centre of the wood and around the car park.

A subsequent management plan dated 1997 – 2002 highlighted the failure of the previous management to recognise the wood pasture origins of the woodland but although small-scale work took place, the removal of exotics was never addressed with the vigour the problem required.

The most recent phase of management commenced in 2005 and is still ongoing, and has included the systematic removal of rhododendron, the widening of several major rides, the restoration of glades, the rotational cutting of rides and glades to control bracken, thinning of oak and hornbeam to create regeneration gaps, hornbeam coppicing, and deer control.

Designations:

Northaw Great Wood Country Park (managed by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council), is part of Northaw Great Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (unit 2). This unit's condition was upgraded in 2024 from "Unfavourable – Recovering" to "Favourable" due to the results of ongoing management of rhododendron, holly, bracken and coppice.

SSSI citation: *"Prominently situated in two valleys dissecting the London Clay plateau of south Hertfordshire are Great Wood and Well Wood which together comprise one of the county's most extensive areas of ancient hornbeam* Carpinus betulus *dominated woodland. The acid soils range from poorly to freely draining with a corresponding richness in plant communities. Traditional woodland management practices of coppice-with-standards and pollarding are still pursued, so ensuring survival for the site's important wildlife features.*

Tall hornbeam coppice is found almost throughout in association with both sessile and pedunculate oak Quercus petraea *and* Q. robur*, though silver birch* Betula pendula *is a constant member of the tree canopy. Present in more or less well defined groves are sweet chestnut* Castanea sativa*, aspen* Populus tremula*, beech* Fagus sylvatica *and ash* Fraxinus excelsior*. Rowan* Sorbus aucuparia *also occurs. The generally sparse shrub layer is comprised mainly of hawthorn* Crataegus monogyna*, holly* Ilex aquifolium *and hazel* Corylus avellana*. Blackthorn* Prunus spinosa *locally forms dense thickets which along with re-growth from hornbeam coppice, is attractive to nightingale* Luscinia megarhynchos*. The diverse breeding bird community also includes tree pipit* Anthus trivialis*, nuthatch* Sitta europaea *and great spotted woodpecker* Dendrocopos major*. In places ground flora is absent under the densely shading hornbeam, but either bracken* Pteridium aquilinum *or bramble* Rubus fruticosus *can be dominant with honeysuckle*

Lonicera periclymenum *and bluebell* Hyacinthoides non-scripta *abundant. Rides, glades, streamsides and springs add considerably to the diversity of the wood's herb layer. Foxglove* Digitalis purpurea*, wood sage* Teucrium scorodonia*, heath bedstraw* Galium saxatile *and common bent* Agrostis capillaris*, characterise the drier areas. Where wetter, the less common marsh pennywort* Hydrocotyle vulgaris *and skullcap* Scutellaria galericulata *have been found. Elsewhere are pendulous sedge* Carex pendula*, yellow pimpernel* Lysimachia nemorum *and lady and broad buckler-ferns* Athyrium filix-femina *and* Dryopteris dilatate.

Northaw Great Wood Country Park is also a Local Nature Reserve and a County Wildlife Site. Some areas of the wood are under Tree Preservation Order.

4.2 Information

Use this section to identify features that are both present in your woodland(s) and where required, on land adjacent to your woodland. It may be useful to identify known features on an accompanying map. Woodland information for your property can be found on the Magic website and the Forestry Commission Land Information Search.

Feature	Within Woodland(s)	Cpts	Adjacent to Woodland(s)	Map No
Biodiversity - Designations				
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Yes	All	Yes	1
Special Area of Conservation	No	-	-	-
Tree Preservation Order	Yes	1, 2, 6, 8, 9	Yes	2
Conservation Area	No	-	-	-
Special Protection Area	No	-	-	-
Ramsar Site	No	-	-	-
National Nature Reserve	No	-	-	-
Local Nature Reserve	Yes	All	No	1
Other: Country Park, County Wildlife Site	Yes	All	No	-
Notes	SSSI – Northaw Great Wood SSSI unit 2 – first notified in 1953 and re-notified in 1985 LNR – Northaw Great Wood Country Park LNR - designated in 1999 Country Park: designated in 1971 County Wildlife Site – listed in 1997 TPO – The entirety of compartment 1, and part of compartments 2, 6, 8 and 9 are under blanket TPO			

Feature		Within Woodland(s)	Cpts	Map No	Notes
Biodiversity - European Protected Species					
Bat	Species (if known)	Yes	All	-	No routine surveys are undertaken. According to the previous woodland management plan, the following bat species have been observed in the wood: Noctule (1996), Common Pipistrelle (1996 and 2005) and Brown Long-eared (1996). According to NBN Atlas, Soprano pipistrelle has also been observed in Northaw Great Wood. According to Woodland Wildlife Toolkit, the wood is likely to shelter Barbastelle, Noctule, Soprano

					Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bat. Prior to any felling work, the area should be surveyed from the ground for potential bat roosting sites. If any are seen, the tree, together with its neighbours should be excluded from the work area. The timing of the work in areas of high bat roost potential will be kept to late Summer/ early Autumn to minimise the risk of disturbance.
Dormouse		Yes	1	-	Summer nests observed in 2012 but no observation since.
Great Crested Newt		No	-	-	According to NBN Atlas, Great crested newt was observed in the wood in 2015 and 2017.
Otter		No	-	-	
Sand Lizard		No	-	-	
Smooth Snake		No	-	-	
Natterjack Toad		No	-	-	
Biodiversity – Priority Species					
Schedule 1 Birds	Species:	Yes	All	-	According to NBN Atlas, the following Schedule 1 bird species have been observed in Northaw Great Wood: Redwing, Brambling, Firecrest, Field Fare and Red kite. According to NBN Atlas, the following Section 41 bird species have also been observed in the wood: Marsh tit, Song thrush, Common starling, Common cuckoo, Hedge accentor, Common bullfinch, Spotted flycatcher, House sparrow, Wood warbler, Herring gull, Sky lark, Tree pipit, Eurasian tree sparrow, Willow tit, Yellowhammer and Reed bunting. Wildlife Woodland Toolkit refers to the likely presence of the following Section 41 bird species in the wood: Hawfinch, Lesser spotted woodpecker, Marsh tit, Spotted flycatcher, Lesser redpoll.
Mammals (Red Squirrel, Water Vole, Pine Marten etc)		Yes	-	-	According to NBN Atlas, Hedgehog (section 41 species) has been observed in the wood.

				According to the previous woodland management plan, Yellow-necked mouse has been recorded in the 1990s.
Reptiles (grass snake, adder, common lizard etc)	Yes	-	-	According to the previous management plan, Grass snake and slow worm (section 41 species) were present in the wood in 2015. There are no records of priority reptiles species in the wood in the NBN Atlas.
Plants	No	-	-	There are no records of priority plant species in the wood (local records, NBN Atlas). However, Lesser Skullcap, White Sedge, Star Sedge, Ling & Heath Rush and Marsh Pennywort are present in the wood and are rare in Herts.
Fungi/Lichens	Yes	-	-	There are no records of priority fungi or lichens species in the wood (local records, NBN Atlas). According to Woodland Wildlife Toolkit, the wood is likely to shelter Tiered Tooth and Oak Polypore (section 41 species). Northaw Great Wood is of known importance for fungi in a county context. Regular forays undertaken.
Invertebrates (butterflies, moths, beetles etc)	Yes	All	-	According to NBN Atlas, the following Section 41 invertebrates species have been observed in the wood: White Admiral (butterfly), White-Letter Hairstreak (butterfly), Pearl-bordered Fritillary (butterfly), Small Heath (butterfly), Lesser Searcher (beetle). According to the previous woodland management plan, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, Silver-washed Fritillary (section 41 species) are present in the wood. The wood was also remarkable for being the only site where several invertebrates species could be observed in Herts, such as Willow leaf beetle *Gonioctena viminalis*

				*(*recorded in 2012), and *Polydrusus pilosus* (recorded in 2012).
Amphibians (pool frog, common toad)	Yes	-	-	According to the previous woodland management plan, Common toad (section 41 species) is present in the wood, along with Common frog and Common newt.
Other (please Specify):	No	-	-	
Historic Environment				
Scheduled Monuments	No	-	-	
Unscheduled Monuments	Yes	1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9	5	According to Hertfordshire online HER, several unscheduled monuments can be found or have been found within Northaw Great Wood and along its boundaries, highlighting the rich ancient and recent history in the wood: - MHT 6712 - the sloping concrete "road" found in compartment 1 was the site for a WWII anti-aircraft gun. Anti-tank obstacles (blocks and sockets for steel rails) can also be found at the entrance of the road and are worthy of preservation. - MHT 10233 – the WWII anti-tank ditch (outer Lond stop line, central section) runs in the eastern part of the wood, within compartment 1 and along its boundary, and can still be observed today in the form of a rather large and shallow ditch. - MHT 10417 – Hatfield New Park pale runs along the northern boundary of Northaw Great Wood, mostly beyond the boundary itself (stream), but in its western part (compartment 6), the pale used to mark the boundary. The pale is a late 17th-early 18th century boundary fence on a mortared flints and brick base, about 60-80cm wide and standing 30-60cm. The pale is still

				traceable along most of the boundary. - MHT10418 – Probable worked flint have been recorded in compartment 2 on the stream edges and banks of Grimes Brook and Justice Hill Brook. - MHT1845 – A large assemblage of Mesolithic flint tools have been found at the northern edge of Northaw Great Wood (compartments 8/9). This included 3 cores, 163 blades and flakes, 42 scrapers and 3 microliths.
Registered Parks and Gardens	No	-	-	
Boundaries and Veteran Trees	Yes	-	-	Veteran trees are rare as a result of 19th century felling, but a few specimens of oak, beech, hornbeam and sweet chestnut have developed veteran features. Old boundary hornbeams can be observed along the southern boundary with The Ridgeway, relics of a laid hedge. Coppice stools springing from ground level derived from felled pollards are a characteristic feature in some areas of the wood. Along the eastern boundary of compartment 9, a line of hornbeam 'stubs' were pruned as high pollards in the 1980s, and the adjacent hornbeam hedge has been laid a few years ago along the School camp boundary.
Listed Buildings	No	-	-	
Burial Grounds	No	-	-	
Other (please Specify):	Yes	-	-	Ride boundary banks throughout the wood are relics of Victorian compartments. The southern boundary of the wood, along The Ridgeway, was laid out at Enclosure.
Landscape				
National Character Area (please Specify): 111 – Northern Thames Basin				
National Park	No	-	-	
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	No	-	-	

Other (please Specify):	Yes	-	-	Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment Area 52: Northaw Great Wood
People				
CROW Access	No	-	-	
Public Rights of Way (any)	No	-	-	There are no public Rights of Way in Northaw Great Wood
Other Access Provision	Yes	All	5	A dense network of permissive footpaths can be found in the wood, including three colour-marked trails of varying length, and several other rides and paths accessible for pedestrians.
Public Involvement	Yes	All	-	The Friends of Northaw Great Wood is an active volunteer group working once a week on practical management such as waymarking improvement, maintenance and improvement of footpaths, maintenance and restoration of the glades, ponds, management of invasive species, wildlife and vegetation surveys, etc. The group also provides regular input to reserve management planning.
Visitor Information	Yes	All	-	A large map board is present at the entrance, and information boards can be found at the toilet block. A web page on the council's website contains information for visitors.
Public Recreation Facilities	Yes	-	5	A large car park is located at the southern side of the wood, at the end of a short hardstanding internal road. Toilets are available at the car park. Picnic tables and benches are available at several locations in the wood.
Provision of Learning Opportunities	No	-	-	
Anti-social Behaviour	Yes	All	-	Fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, and occasional vandalism.
Other (please Specify):	No	-	-	
Water				
Watercourses	Yes	All	4	Seasonal streams flow through almost all compartments. Cuffley Brook & Grimes Brook are important natural watercourses.
Lakes	No	-	-	

Ponds	Yes	4	4	Two small ponds can be found in cpt 4, adjacent to the road.
Other (please Specify):	Yes	9	4, 5	Swallow holes.

4.3 Habitat Types

This section is to consider the habitat types within your woodland(s) that might impact/inform your management decisions. Larger non-wooded areas within your woodland should be classified according to broad habitat type where relevant this information should also help inform your management decisions. Woodlands should be designed to achieve a diverse structure of habitat, species and ages of trees, appropriate to the scale and context of the woodland.

Feature	Within Woodland(s)	Cpts	Map No	Notes
Woodland Habitat Types				
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland	Yes	All	3	
Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS)	No	-	-	
Semi-natural features in PAWS	No	-	-	
Lowland beech and yew woodland	No	-	-	
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Yes	All	3	
Upland mixed ash woods	No	-	-	
Upland Oakwood	No	-	-	
Wet woodland	No	-	-	
Wood-pasture and parkland	Yes	2 to 9	6	Eighteenth-century maps indicate that the entire woodland was once designated as common land and was likely managed as wood pasture. Today, the remaining areas of open woodland serve as a proxy for these historic wood-pasture habitats. However, most original features—such as old pollards—have been lost, largely due to felling in the 19th century. In recent decades, efforts have been made to recreate key elements of wood-pasture structure through the creation and maintenance of new pollards, glades, and wide rides, helping to restore some of the landscape's

				former character and ecological value.
Other (please Specify):	No	-	-	
Non Woodland Habitat Types				
Blanket bog	No	-	-	
Fenland	No	-	-	
Lowland calcareous grassland	No	-	-	
Lowland dry acid grassland	Yes	All	4	Along 19th century ride system. Restoration has focussed on the most botanically diverse of these, creating links between them.
Lowland heath land	Yes	Mainly 4 and 9	3, 4	In large glade created following removal of rhododendron.
Lowland meadows	No	-	-	
Lowland raised bog	No	-	-	
Rush pasture	No	-	-	
Reed bed	No	-	-	
Wood pasture	Yes	2 to 9	6	See above (Wood-pasture and parkland)
Upland hay meadows	No	-	-	
Upland heath land	No	-	-	
Unimproved grassland	No	-	-	
Peat lands	No	-	-	
Wetland habitats	Yes	-	-	Patches of sphagnum, wet flushes with sedge, willow, and seasonal streams can be found at several locations of the wood.
Other (please Specify):	Yes	-	-	Relics of laid hedge along southern boundary with The Ridgeway. Hornbeam pollard hedge along School Camp boundary.

4.4 Structure

This section should provide a snapshot of the current structure of your woodland as a whole. A full inventory for your woodland(s) can be included in the separate Plan of Operations spreadsheet. Ensuring woodland has a varied structure in terms of age, species, origin and open space will provide a range of benefits for the biodiversity of the woodland and its resilience. The diagrams below show an example of both uneven and even aged woodland.

Woodland Type (Broadleaf, Conifer, Coppice, Intimate Mix)	Percentage of Mgt Plan Area	Age Structure (even/uneven)	Notes (i.e. understory or natural regeneration present)
Open woodland	28%	Rather even	Dominated by mature and maturing trees. Absence of recent natural regeneration, especially for oak. Ground flora dominated by bracken.
Oak and hornbeam woodland	41%	Even and uneven	Many areas are a patchwork of mature stand, patches of dense hornbeam regeneration, and young and maturing hornbeam coppice. Some areas, unmanaged, are still very homogeneous. Absence of oak natural regeneration. Hornbeam regeneration and coppice regrowth recently hindered by deer browsing.
Other woodlands	26%	Rather even	Various stand types comprising mature mixed broadleaved high forest, sweet chestnut coppice, ash-dominated stands, etc.
Open areas (glades)	5%	Uneven fringes	-

Section 5: Woodland Protection

Woodlands in England face a range of threats; this section allows you to consider the potential threats that could be facing your woodland(s). Use the simple Risk Assessment process below to consider any potential threats to their woodland(s) and whether there is a need to take action to protect their woodlands.
Note: To add more tables, Copy the table and Paste below.

5.1 Risk Matrix

The matrix below provides a system for scoring risk. The matrix also indicates the advised level of action to take to help manage the threat.

Impact	High	Plan for Action	Action	Action
	Medium	Monitor	Plan for Action	Action
	Low	Monitor	Monitor	Plan for Action
		Low	Medium	High
		Likelihood of Presence		

5.2 Plant Health

Threat	Ash Dieback
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	Ash is not a dominant species at Northaw Great Wood. It tends to occur in pure stands on wetter ground and along certain stream sections, particularly in subcompartments 4.b, 7.b, and 9.d. Elsewhere, ash is only rarely found mixed within the woodland stands. As a result, ash dieback, although observed in the wood, is not a major concern across most of the site. However, there are ash-rich areas along the southern road and residential boundaries, as well as near some footpaths throughout the wood. In these locations, ash dieback could pose a safety risk. Therefore, monitoring will be prioritised in these areas to enable timely and appropriate action to maintain the safety of workers, neighbours, and visitors, mainly through the targeted removal of trees showing signs of advanced dieback. No regeneration felling or clear felling of ash is planned under this management plan. However, to support tree health, safeguard the crop and ensure the future viability of affected

	stands, vigorous thinning of the canopy will be carried out where ash densities are high, targeting diseased trees as a priority. This will improve airflow and help reduce the future severity of ash dieback. Thinning operations will also aim to increase the proportion of non-ash species by favouring them during interventions. Throughout the woodland, trees or clusters showing signs of resilience or resistance to ash dieback will be retained wherever possible to support the long-term survival of ash at Northaw Great Wood and across the wider landscape. Dead ash trees will be retained where they do not pose a safety risk. Should ash health deteriorate significantly and retention become unviable, regeneration or clear felling will be considered, but only after having secured an appropriate felling licence. Grants are available to support restocking efforts, and applications should be discussed with the Forestry Commission before any felling operations are undertaken.

Threat	Acute Oak Decline
Likelihood of presence	Medium
Impact	High
Response (inc protection measures)	Oak is a major component in almost every stand type across the woodland, where the potential spread of Acute Oak Decline (AOD) poses a significant threat. Oak trees are vital to the landscape, biodiversity, and the overall health of Northaw Great Wood ecosystem. No recent signs of AOD have been observed in Northaw Great Wood, but their presence will be continuously monitored. AOD remains poorly understood, and current guidance from Forest Research emphasises the importance of recording the number and location of symptomatic trees, as well as assessing the severity of their condition. Infected trees should generally be left in place and monitored unless there is an immediate safety concern. However, if a small number of trees appear to be infected, especially if they belong to the same oak species, it may be advisable to fell and destroy

	the infected trees. This approach aims to reduce the risk of spreading the disease to healthy trees and to keep inoculum levels low. Sightings of symptomatic trees should be reported to the Forestry Commission via the Tree Alert app or online via https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-andresources/tree-alert/ For more detailed guidance on managing AOD, visit: https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/managing-acute-oak-decline/

Threat	Oak Processionary Moth
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response	Northaw Great Wood lies within the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) established area as per its 2024 boundaries. OPM has been identified in Northaw Great Wood in 2021 (in compartment 8, by Rowbourne Brook), and, given its continued expansion, further colonisation is expected in the coming years. While OPM can weaken oak trees through significant defoliation, it rarely results in their death. However, the presence of OPM can pose a serious public health risk in Northaw Great Wood, particularly given the abundance of oaks along footpaths and other frequently used areas. Regular monitoring of oaks will be undertaken, and any sightings of OPM will be reported via the Tree Alert app. In line with Forestry Commission guidance, appropriate control measures — including the safe destruction of nests — will be implemented. Access to affected areas will be restricted to protect public health while OPM remains present. Movement of large oak trees, as well as the handling of oak material (such as branches, brash, and logs), is subject to restrictions within the established area. Before carrying out any work that could be affected by these restrictions, always consult the latest official guidance available online: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/managing-oak-processionary-moth-in-england

5.3 Deer

Species - Likelihood of presence	Muntjac – high Roe - low
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	Muntjac deer are abundant in Northaw Great Wood and are exerting considerable pressure on the vegetation. Unprotected coppice, tree and shrub regeneration, as well as ground flora, are experiencing heavy browsing, impeding their growth and threatening the woodland's ability to regenerate and maintain its biodiversity and resilience. Several areas opened or coppiced in recent years, such as in subcompartment 5.b, showed almost no regrowth or natural regeneration until they were fenced off. Although deer control is challenging at Northaw Great Wood due to high levels of public activity, it is essential to continue and intensify the deer management efforts initiated in recent years. In parallel, measures must be taken to protect regenerating trees, shrubs, and coppice before deer populations can be reduced to levels compatible with natural regeneration. Protection measures will include constructing brash baskets or stacking brash around regenerating coppice stools, using protective shelters such as tubes and wraps for planted and naturally regenerating trees and shrubs, and installing deer fencing where other methods do not provide sufficient protection. Plastic protection materials must be removed as soon as they are no longer required to prevent growth restriction and avoid contributing to plastic pollution. Deer activity and habitat impact surveys, started in 2023 as part of the Countryside Stewardship agreement for the woodland, will be conducted biennially to provide a consistent and standardised approach to monitoring changes in deer activity and their impacts on the woodland. These surveys also aim to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing deer management efforts. To further assess the intensity of deer pressure on ground flora and natural regeneration, two deer exclosure plots were established during the winter of 2024–2025. One exclosure was set up in subcompartment 9.c, within a recently coppiced area, to monitor the impact of deer on the natural

	regeneration of oak and hornbeam, as well as on the regrowth of hornbeam coppice stools. The second exclosure was erected in the open woodland of subcompartment 6.a, where it will help determine whether natural regeneration can occur in these habitats if deer pressure is removed (in this area, bracken is currently thought to be the primary barrier to regeneration).

5.4 Grey Squirrels

Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	Grey squirrels are present throughout Northaw Great Wood, with visible impacts particularly on young sycamore, birch, and hornbeam. Although current levels of damage do not appear to significantly affect the overall health of the woodland, grey squirrels could pose a serious threat if damage levels increase. As planted and naturally regenerating trees—especially hornbeam coppice and oak standards—reach vulnerable sizes (typically between 10 and 40 years old), they become more susceptible to bark stripping, which can compromise their health, survival, and growth. Such impacts would undermine efforts to restore the hornbeam coppice with oak-standards stands, regenerate oak in the open woodland areas, and diversify tree species to enhance biodiversity and woodland resilience. It is therefore essential to monitor grey squirrel damage using a consistent and replicable protocol. Should impacts become significant, control measures, including trapping and shooting, will need to be implemented to protect regeneration efforts and support the long-term health of the woodland.

5.5 Livestock and Other Mammals

Threat	Rabbit and hare
Likelihood of presence (high/medium/low)	Medium

Impact (high/medium/low)	Low
Response (inc protection measures)	Rabbit guards used on trees/shrubs planted in areas near fields.

5.6 Water & Soil

Threat	Wet and soft soils
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	The woodland soils at Northaw Great Wood can become very wet during the winter months (especially on clay). Consequently, activities involving heavy machinery, such as timber extraction, will be scheduled during drier periods, typically from late spring to early autumn. Wet conditions also restrict safe access to work areas during late autumn, winter, and early spring. Therefore, works that cannot be undertaken during the bird nesting season, such as tree felling, will be prioritised in September and October. Trampling by walkers and dogs can become problematic along the muddiest sections of rides and footpaths, damaging ground flora in areas targeted for regeneration and diversification. Where possible, these sections should be made more accessible through the installation of drier, flatter surfaces with clearly defined boundaries (stabilised footpaths). Visitor information should also highlight the impacts of trampling and the importance of protecting soil, flora, and natural regeneration. In addition, major rides used regularly for winter works—where healthy ground flora is already lacking due to repeated trampling and vehicle use—could be upgraded to hardstanding surfaces using neutral stone. This would improve safety during winter operations, enhance the visitor experience, and allow surrounding ground flora to recover and thrive by concentrating traffic onto the hardstanding strip. This approach would be particularly beneficial along the main ride running through compartments 3 and 4, from the car park to Six Ways.

5.7 Environmental

Threat	Invasive species
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium (high in long term)
Response (inc protection measures)	One of the main threats to the diversity and resilience of Northaw Great Wood is the extensive presence of *Rhododendron ponticum* (see map 6). Until recently, rhododendron covered large areas of the south-western part of the wood, suppressing the ground flora as well as the natural regeneration of shrubs and trees. Just under 5 hectares of dense and scattered rhododendron have been controlled through a combination of mechanical and chemical methods. The results are encouraging; however, continuous monitoring of these areas and surrounding stands is essential to detect any regrowth and to treat it proactively. Mechanical control methods—such as cutting and stump removal—will be preferred for their greater efficiency and to minimise herbicide use within the woodland. Despite recent progress, three main sources of rhododendron remain: a residential property at the southern boundary, adjacent woodlands along the western boundary, and the main car park. While some woodland visitors value the aesthetic appeal of rhododendron flowers, complete removal remains a priority to preserve the wood features, protected by its designations. This is justified by the significant threat the species poses to woodland diversity and resilience, the ongoing costs of its management, and its capacity to spread through both suckering and seeding, particularly into the open areas and areas of open woodland. Efforts will therefore focus on the complete removal of rhododendron from the main car park area and on engaging with neighbouring landowners to coordinate the removal of rhododendron along the SSSI boundaries. The woodland's proximity to residential areas also exposes it to the threat of other invasive garden species, often introduced through the dumping of garden waste. For example, variegated archangel has been identified near the

	car park and will be managed to prevent further spread into the woodland. Overall, the presence of invasive species will be closely monitored, with control measures including cutting, stump removal, chemical treatment, and hand-pulling as appropriate. In addition, efforts will be made to actively engage with neighbouring residents to raise awareness of the risks and costs associated with invasive species. Education campaigns will aim to foster a sense of shared responsibility by highlighting how garden escapes can harm the local ecosystem. Residents will be encouraged to dispose of garden waste responsibly and to favour non-invasive plants in their gardens.

Threat	Holly
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	High
Response (inc protection measures)	Holly is a native and common species in many English woodlands, offering dense cover, nesting, hibernation opportunities, and food for birds and small mammals. However, in some woodlands, including extensive areas of Northaw Great Wood, holly can grow to extreme densities and heights. In these areas, it can overgrow coppice and shrubs, compete with mature trees, hinder natural regeneration, and suppress ground flora. This ultimately jeopardises the woodland's species diversity, age range, and structural diversity, and, as a result, its biodiversity and resilience. To address this, holly in these areas will be drastically reduced, though not completely removed, through cutting, root removal, and/or chemical treatment. This will bring it back to a density and height that does not compromise natural regeneration, coppice growth, and the development of ground flora. These operations will generally take place before or concurrently with silvicultural operations, such as regeneration felling or thinning, in the same areas. Holly can be maintained at a higher density along roads and residential boundaries as a visual and sound barrier.

Threat	Bracken

Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	High
Response (inc protection measures)	Bracken is a dominant component of the ground layer in many places on the more acid soils, especially in glades, rides and open woodland where light levels are higher and where bracken derives from former wood pasture habitats. Its dense growth tends to suppress ground flora diversity and abundance, as well as hinder the natural regeneration of trees and shrubs, ultimately reducing woodland biodiversity and resilience. To address this, two annual cuts are being carried out in the glades to curb bracken dominance. Early results are encouraging, although improvements may be more linked to the bruising caused by tractor wheels than to cutting alone. Management will be continued, and alternative techniques such as rolling and bruising, will be (re-)explored, but must receive approval from Natural England prior to implementation. Targeted bracken management, combined with measures to protect against deer browsing, could further support the establishment of natural regeneration of trees and shrubs in open woodland habitats.

Threat	Pollution incidents
Likelihood of presence	Low
Impact	Low
Response (inc protection measures)	To minimise environmental impact and pollution risks, all fuels, oils, and chemicals must be stored in work vehicles at all times. Refuelling should be conducted at the vehicle and away from watercourses and water bodies. All machinery with hydraulic hoses should carry an oil spillage kit to address potential leaks. Chemical product application will be avoided during rainy conditions, with extra care taken near watercourses to prevent runoff. Plastic shelters should be collected and recycled when no longer in use to prevent degradation in the woodland and subsequent plastic pollution. Several plastic temporary deer

	fences can also be found across the wood, and are no longer useful. They should also be removed.

Threat	Wind
Likelihood of presence	Medium
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	The woodland generally experiences a low risk of wind damage, except along its southern boundary where a sudden transition from open spaces to mature woodland increases vulnerability. Additionally, certain species—particularly sweet chestnut growing on pebbly soils—appear especially prone to windthrow. As a general guideline, when thinning stands or widening rides, special care should be taken with areas facing dominant winds and along the southern boundary. These edges should be kept as windfirm as possible by retaining windfirm trees and avoiding the creation of large gaps that could funnel strong winds into the woodland interior.

Threat	Fire
Likelihood of presence	Medium
Impact	Medium
Response	Extensive areas of open woodland, with abundance of flammable materials such as dry bracken and dead wood, can create favourable conditions for wildfires. Although mature trees are generally resilient to fire damage, fire can have devastating impacts on the ground flora, shrubs, coppice regrowth, coppice stools, and natural regeneration. This risk is further heightened by the increasing likelihood of prolonged droughts associated with climate change. To mitigate this risk, lighting fires within the woodland will be strongly discouraged, with seasonal signs put up. The rides will be cut annually to act as fire breaks. Additionally, the local fire brigade should be provided with a detailed map of the site, clearly marking the best access points and any available surface water sources that could be used in the event of a fire emergency.

5.8 Social

Threat	Public access – residential boundaries

Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	The woodland is extensively frequented by the public, with numerous permissive footpaths weaving through the wood. It is bordered to the south by a public road and adjacent residential properties. To ensure safety, trees along the footpaths, the road and residential boundaries will be regularly inspected, and any dangerous trees or limbs will be removed. Appropriate measures such as signage and labour resources will be implemented during maintenance and harvesting works to ensure visitor safety. Trampling by walkers and dogs can significantly impact the footpaths and rides, compacting the ground and damaging the ground flora. Authorised footpaths should be clearly marked and, where possible, the muddiest sections should be made more accessible through the installation of drier, flatter surfaces with clearly defined boundaries (stabilised footpaths). Visitor information should also highlight the impacts of trampling and the importance of protecting soil, flora, and natural regeneration.

Threat	Anti-social behaviour
Likelihood of presence	Medium
Impact	Medium
Response	Anti-social behaviours are occasionally observed within the woodland, including fly-tipping, littering, dumping of garden waste, dog fouling, and occasional vandalism of signage and fingerposts. While the overall impact of these activities remains relatively low, littering and sporadic "guerrilla-style" fly-tipping can sometimes be more significant. The height barrier at the entrance helps prevent larger vehicles from entering and illegally dumping waste. Street wardens also patrol the area periodically.

5.9 Economic

Threat	Markets – operational costs
Likelihood of presence	Medium
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	Firewood, chipwood and oak timber markets can fluctuate. While revenue from timber is not the primary focus of the

	council's woodland management, timber sales will be timed to avoid market lows and capitalise on peaks (especially for oak millable timber). If market conditions deteriorate, the harvesting of the most affected products will be postponed. However, excessive delays in silvicultural operations to wait for market improvements can negatively impact the health and resilience of the woodland and should be avoided. To minimise impact on the landscape and wildlife, operations will be small-scale. This approach may produce limited quantities of timber, complicating commercialisation. Therefore, whenever feasible, operations will be planned or combined to ensure that timber volumes are sufficient for marketability.

Threat	Hand cutters availability
Likelihood of presence	High
Impact	Medium
Response (inc protection measures)	Finding hand cutter teams for traditional harvesting methods, such as coppicing, pollarding, or felling large oaks, has become increasingly difficult and expensive. This challenge threatens the continuation of these traditional management techniques and the maintenance of stand structures like coppice with standards. To address this, harvesting techniques should be diversified according to the specific requirements of each task. Consideration should be given to using machinery, such as harvesters and shears, in certain stands to complement traditional methods, mitigate safety risks, and enhance efficiency. However, any use of heavy equipment must be carefully planned to avoid damaging the sensitive soils and stands of Northaw Great Wood. Additionally, securing appropriate grant funding will be essential to offset the costs associated with traditional, labour-intensive woodland management techniques.

5.10 Climate Change Resilience

Threat	Lack of structural, species, and age diversity
Likelihood of presence	Medium

Impact	High
Response (inc protection measures)	Northaw Great Wood demonstrates interesting structural and species diversity. The current level of **structural diversity** is largely due to sustained management efforts undertaken over the past few decades. The reintroduction of coppicing (e.g. in cpts 1b, 2b, 3b, 5b, 9c), pollarding (e.g. along the eastern edge of the wood, cpt 9c), and thinning (e.g. in cpts 8b and 9c) has led to the development of areas with dense natural regeneration (predominantly hornbeam and birch), successful coppice regrowth (mainly hornbeam and sweet chestnut, with some stands nearing maturity for the next coppice cycle), and the restoration or creation of several pollards (primarily hornbeam and sallow). These interventions have notably diversified the woodland structure. Dense shrub understorey and scrub communities—mainly comprising hawthorn, blackthorn, and sallow—are also present in various cpts (e.g., 7.b, 8.d) and along the open space edges. As a result, the woodland now features a patchwork of structural types: mature and rejuvenated coppice with standards, dense regeneration thickets, areas of mature stands with closed canopy, open glades, wide rides, and areas of open woodland. However, despite these efforts, deer browsing has significantly limited natural regeneration and coppice regrowth in recently managed areas, undermining the continuation of structural diversity gains. Furthermore, some hornbeam and oak stands remain unthinned or have not been opened for extended periods, resulting in homogenous, structurally poor stands. Extensive areas of open woodland are also dominated by mature trees with little to no shrub layer or areas of natural regeneration. Invasive species—such as rhododendron (until recently) and holly—continue to suppress the development of diverse understorey vegetation across substantial areas. In terms of **species composition**, Northaw Great Wood supports a relatively diverse assemblage of trees and shrubs. Oak, hornbeam, and birch dominate, but other commonly occurring species include sweet chestnut, beech, ash, rowan, and sycamore. Less frequent but still present are sallow,

	aspen (in cpts 4c and 6d), wild cherry, hazel (mainly in 6d), horse chestnut, hawthorn, and blackthorn. Nevertheless, some areas—particularly hornbeam-oak and birch-oak stands—are dominated by only two species, making them more vulnerable to pests, diseases, and the consequences of climate change. Other key concerns for species diversity are the lack of natural regeneration for many species, including oak (see below), reducing the sustainability of the current species mix, as well as the competitive dominance of mature hornbeam, which often suppresses oak crowns, can lead to oak dieback, and compromises the perpetuation of oak in the mix if left unmanaged. Thanks to the management operations undertaken over recent decades, **age diversity** is relatively good for hornbeam, with an interesting distribution of mature trees (some quite old), younger individuals, saplings, areas of dense seedlings, and young coppice regrowth. Birch and sallow also show reasonable age diversity where present, and some regeneration of sweet chestnut and sycamore is scattered across the woodland. However, significant recent natural regeneration of species other than hornbeam and birch is generally lacking. This is primarily due to high deer browsing pressure, the closed canopy still characterising many stands, and the vigorous regeneration of hornbeam and birch in areas opened through silvicultural interventions, which tends to outcompete slower-establishing species. Of particular concern is the status of oak. Although it occurs across nearly all stand types in the wood, it remains largely even-aged—likely a legacy of extensive harvesting during the first half of the 20th century. The near-absence of oak regeneration is especially concerning in open woodland areas, where many existing trees are short-lived species such as birch and rowan, sweet chestnut is prone to windthrow, and oak populations are even-aged. This lack of young oak threatens the long-term continuity of the open woodland landscape. Even in mixed hornbeam-oak stands, where hornbeam regenerates prolifically when the canopy is opened, oak regeneration is largely absent. This imbalance reduces the resilience of this mix to pests, diseases, and climate change,

	highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to support oak regeneration and diversify age structures across the woodland. To enhance Northaw Great Wood's resilience to pests, diseases, and the impacts of climate change, it is essential to maintain and increase its structural, species, and age diversity. The specific strategies for promoting diversity and resilience are outlined in detail for each woodland stand type in *Section 6: Management Strategy*.

Section 6: Management Strategy

This section requires a statement of intent, setting out how you intend to achieve your management objectives and manage important features identified within the previous sections of the plan. A detailed work programme by sub-compartment can be added to the Plan of Operations.

Management Objective / Feature	Management Intention
Maintenance of open woodland habitats and wood pasture features	The open woodland areas, seen as a proxy for the former wood pasture habitats that likely once covered most, if not all, of Northaw Great Wood, generally require little to no active harvesting for their maintenance. These stands tend to self-thin naturally, with trees dying or being blown over, preserving an open structure. The main exception is where sycamore begins to fill gaps in the canopy (e.g. in cpts 2a, 3a and 4b); in these areas, management is needed to prevent progressive canopy closure. However, these stands are relatively homogeneous, dominated by mature trees—mostly oak along with short-lived species such as birch and rowan, or species prone to windthrow, like sweet chestnut, particularly on pebbly soils (although several trees remain alive after being blown down). The overall lack of regeneration of characteristic wood pasture species—namely oak and hornbeam—is concerning (however hornbeam is overall very scarce in Northaw Great Wood open woodlands, while it was probably one of the main species in the past, in the form of pollards which can still be observed in the nearby Cuffley Camp woodland, but were felled at the end of the 19th century in Northaw). Even young birch and rowan regeneration is absent of these stands. This lack of regeneration is likely due to a combination of intense deer browsing and the dense bracken cover, which suppresses seedling establishment. To promote and sustain structural, species, and age diversity in these open woodlands, planting will be carried out in areas where natural regeneration is absent and the stands are likely to evolve in a non-wooded habitat if left unmanaged (very low density of oak, birch in the ageing phase, etc.), e.g. in cpts 4a, 5a, 6a. Small clusters of the same species will be planted, focusing primarily on oak and hornbeam. Additional native species suited to the site—such as birch, whitebeam, small-leaved lime, and field maple—will also be included more sparingly. The aim is not to increase canopy cover in these areas but to maintain it over time. Deer management, along with operations aiming to reduce bracken cover, can also help

	securing natural regeneration of these species, preferred over planting. To further enhance diversity, some planting will take the form of roundels: tree groups encircled by native shrubs like blackthorn and hawthorn. All young trees and shrubs will be protected—either with individual shelters or temporary deer fencing—and maintained during their early years to reduce competition, particularly from bracken. Open habitats will be actively maintained. Management of glades will continue, with at least one late-summer cut annually to prevent succession to scrub or woodland. An additional early-summer cut will be introduced to reduce bracken dominance, which limits plant diversity. Alternative methods such as bracken rolling or bruising may also be considered but will require approval from Natural England. During these operations, special care will be taken to avoid damaging valuable heathland species, including heather and gorse. Ride management will also continue, following a two-zone pattern: annual mowing of the central strip and alternating cut and uncut scallops every 20-50m along the edges. The main east-west ride follows a defined rotational cutting schedule, with designated blocks cut every other year. Other rides will be managed more flexibly, encouraging varied cutting patterns to increase structural diversity. Overgrown or closing rides will be reopened through cutting or mulching dense regeneration or selectively removing mature trees. Pinch points will be retained to facilitate canopy connectivity. Finally, suitable hornbeams, oaks, and sallows will be selected for re-pollarding or for the creation of new pollards throughout the wood. A minimum of two new pollards will be established annually, with a preference for locations in open woodlands, glades, along rides, footpaths, or near streams. These actions, by perpetuating traditional woodland management practices and ensuring the survival and enhancement of the ancient hornbeam dominated woodland features (hornbeam pollards) and habitat diversity (rides, open spaces, etc.) will contribute to maintaining the favourable condition of the SSSI.
Ensure long-term continuity, diversity and resilience of oak/hornbeam woodland	Oak and hornbeam woodlands are a defining feature of Northaw Great Wood. The relative abundance of these two species varies across stands—from oak-dominated woodlands where hornbeam persists only in the understorey, to nearly pure hornbeam stands. Many of these stands likely originate from

	lapsed hornbeam coppice with oak standards, although some areas are now dominated by single-stem hornbeams, with little evidence of historical coppicing. Once structurally homogeneous due to decades of lapsed management, these woodlands have seen a marked improvement in structural diversity thanks to active management—coppicing and thinning—carried out over the past few decades. This has created a more varied mosaic that includes young, maturing and mature coppice, dense patches of hornbeam seedlings, and areas of temporary open space. Despite this progress, several key concerns remain: • Unmanaged hornbeam, when allowed to reach the canopy, tends to outcompete oak, often resulting in oak crown dieback or even tree mortality. • A near-total absence of oak regeneration, which threatens the long-term presence of this key species. • An overreliance on just two dominant species, which limits the ecological resilience and adaptability of the woodland. To ensure the long-term continuity, structural diversity, and resilience of these oak-hornbeam stands, the following management strategies will be implemented: • Continuing the rotational coppicing programme, with a focus on: ○ Rejuvenating areas last coppiced 15–20 years ago (e.g. in cpts 1b, 2b and 3b), particularly once their current environmental value (temporary open spaces and dense understorey) begins to decline. ○ Reintroducing coppicing in overaged hornbeam stands (e.g. in cpt 5b, 7c and 8b). ○ This strategy is also applicable to the areas of sweet chestnut scattered across the wood (e.g. in cpts 1b, 1c, 3c, 5e, 6b, 9b). • Retaining and managing selected mature stands as hornbeam-oak high forest rather than as coppice with standards (e.g. in cpt 7c and 9c). This approach will maintain diversity in structure and age classes, especially where species ratios allow without jeopardising either oak or hornbeam. Thinning operations in these stands will mainly aim to release oak crowns from hornbeam competition, increase ground-level light availability, encouraging natural regeneration, promoting understorey development, and supporting a diverse ground flora. Importantly, given that most oaks are far from reaching commercial maturity, they will not be removed solely to encourage regeneration or coppice regrowth. Some areas

	will be left untouched to preserve species associated with undisturbed, moist, shaded conditions. • Respacing dense hornbeam regeneration to accelerate individual growth and reduce the time required to bring these areas into an active coppice cycle. Regenerating stools will be released from competition with dense seedlings to enhance their survival and promote vigorous development. These actions are particularly recommended in cpts 5b, 8b, 9c. • Continuing deer management to support successful natural regeneration and coppice regrowth, as well as the development of a dense, species-rich understorey. Current deer densities exceed thresholds compatible with sustainable woodland regeneration. Therefore, additional protective actions will include temporary or permanent deer fencing around coppiced or regenerating areas, brash-stacking on stools to deter browsing, and the use of tree shelters or tubes to protect planted and naturally regenerating seedlings. • Prioritising natural regeneration, but supplementing with planting where natural recruitment is lacking or where species diversity is insufficient to ensure long-term resilience. Planting efforts will focus on recently coppiced areas or newly created canopy gaps, where light levels are sufficient to sustain light demanding species (e.g. in cpt 9c). Oak will remain the principal species used, but a broader palette of site-suitable native species will also be introduced to increase diversity. These include sallow, wild cherry, whitebeam, small-leaved lime, wild service tree, and field maple. The objective is not to alter the core oak-hornbeam composition, but to enhance ecological resilience and adaptability to future conditions. Planted and naturally regenerating trees will be protected from competing vegetation (e.g. dynamic hornbeam or birch regrowth) through respacing, where needed. The transplanting of oak and other native seedlings from areas where natural regeneration is not required—such as ride edges—will also be considered, to support woodland regeneration in priority areas. • Preserving existing species diversity through appropriate selection during thinning operations. These actions, by continuing the traditional woodland management practices, perpetuating the ancient hornbeam dominated woodland, improving its age and structural diversity, and enhancing the overall species diversity in the wood, will contribute to maintaining the favourable condition of the SSSI.

	Timber generated through coppicing and thinning operations will contribute to supporting the local economy. The primary product will be hornbeam firewood; however, with the coppice rotation length reduced to 15–20 years to maximise environmental benefits, the availability of large-diameter hornbeam suitable for traditional firewood will decrease. This shift will result in increased volumes of smaller-diameter material, better suited to alternative markets such as charcoal production. Additionally, some millable timber from oak and sweet chestnut may be harvested, although most oaks in the woodland are still many years from reaching commercial maturity. Timber sales, although not a priority for the council, will help balancing some of the management costs.
Maintain and enhance habitats condition and diversity Preserve the historic and archaeological features	In addition to the strategies outlined above to diversify woodland structure, age, and species composition, the following actions will be implemented to maintain and enhance the condition and diversity of habitats at Northaw Great Wood, and to preserve its historic and archaeological features. **Open Spaces and Rides** Glades and rides will be managed as previously described (Maintenance of Open Woodland Habitats and Wood Pasture Features). The scrubby fringes of these features will be regularly rejuvenated by rotational cutting, promoting healthy regrowth and preventing succession into closed-canopy mature woodland. **Pollard Management** Existing pollards will be rejuvenated, and new pollards will be created as previously described (Maintenance of Open Woodland Habitats and Wood Pasture Features). **Pond management** Vegetation around ponds in cpts 4a and 4b will be managed through selective coppicing and the removal of low branches from mature trees to manipulate light levels. This will help prevent excessive shading and dense macrophyte growth, conditions that can lower water temperatures, reduce aquatic vegetation and invertebrate populations, and diminish the suitability of ponds for breeding amphibians. Vegetation management around pond edges will be conducted in sections to facilitate wildlife dispersal and to create a mosaic of light and shade. Habitat enhancements such as log piles and the retention of lying deadwood will support feeding, foraging, and hibernation opportunities for amphibians and other species. More intensive operations, including pond dredging and leaf litter removal from ponds will be considered on a case-by-case basis, based on pond condition assessments and the availability of funding or incentives. If such works are proposed, specifications must be agreed upon with Natural England, and

	an eDNA survey for Great Crested Newts must be conducted. If no evidence of their presence is found, the work may proceed. However, if Great Crested Newts are detected, the work must either be carried out in winter—when the amphibians have left the pond for their hibernacula—or a specific licence must be secured with Natural England before any disturbance can take place. **Stream management** Varied light conditions will be maintained along streams by managing adjacent vegetation to create a mix of sunny, open areas and shaded sections. Techniques such as coppicing and pollarding will promote a dynamic and gradually changing light regime. Where appropriate, the installation of leaky dams will be explored to slow stream flow, reduce erosion, enhance habitats, boost biodiversity, and contribute to downstream flood mitigation. **Veteran Trees** Veteran trees and future veteran trees will be identified, mapped, and, where necessary, freed from competing vegetation during silvicultural operations. Contractors working nearby will be notified of their locations and briefed on protection measures to avoid damage, including ground compaction and physical injury. **Deadwood** Standing and fallen deadwood will be retained wherever possible during management activities, with efforts made to increase deadwood presence to enhance biodiversity. In line with existing practices at Northaw Great Wood, large dead trees will be left standing or monolithed, subject to safety considerations. **Monitoring** Habitat and species monitoring will continue, resume, or be initiated as needed to assess the impacts of management (or lack of management) on characteristic habitats, flora, and fauna. This will inform adaptive management strategies and ensure the long-term health of Northaw Great Wood's ecosystems. By enhancing habitat diversity within the woodland, these actions will support the area's rich biodiversity and help maintain the favourable condition of the SSSI. **Historic and Archaeological Features** Archaeological features, including earthbanks and WWII remains, will be mapped. Their locations and any necessary protection measures will be clearly communicated to contractors

	to avoid accidental damage during management operations such as use of heavy vehicles, restocking, fencing, creation of tracks, etc.). Any management in the vicinity of these recorded monuments and features, or any suspected historic and archaeological feature, will follow the Historic environment guidance for forestry in England (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/historic-environment-guidance-for-forestry-in-england/historic-environment-guidance-for-forestry-in-england). The main strategies to preserve these features are to avoid ground disturbance when operating heavy machinery or felling trees (or to mitigate impacts where avoidance is not possible), and to remove trees that could damage the features if uprooted or fallen.
Provide safe and attractive visitor experience	Implementing small-scale operations will minimise the visual impact of harvesting on the landscape, preserving structural diversity in the woodland and preventing the creation of overly large openings or sudden, large-scale changes. To ensure the safety of visitors and neighbouring residents during silvicultural and management operations, appropriate signage and additional labour resources will be utilised. Regular safety inspections, particularly along footpaths, roads and residential boundaries will be conducted. Necessary safety measures will be implemented to reduce the risks posed by diseased and dangerous trees. Ensure footpaths are maintained and kept open by clearing fallen trees and branches and cutting back overgrowth. Maintain good way marking (coloured trails) and information boards. Maintain seat and tables in good condition. Enhancing the accessibility of footpaths in the wettest, muddiest and eroded areas through surface upgrades, will make the woodland more attractive to the public while safeguarding its environmental features.
Ensure early detection and management of pests, diseases, and invasive species	The presence of pests and diseases will be proactively monitored, with appropriate mitigation measures implemented as needed (see Section 5.2). Deer management will continue to reduce browsing pressure on young and regenerating trees, as well as on ground flora, with impacts regularly assessed and monitored (see Section 5.4). Both non-native and native invasive species will be monitored and controlled where necessary. In particular, the ongoing

	management, suppression and monitoring of rhododendron regrowth remains a high priority (see Section 5.7).

Section 7: Stakeholder Engagement

There can be a requirement on both the FC and the owner to undertake consultation/engagement. Please refer to Operations Note 35 for further information. Use this section to identify people or organisations with an interest in your woodland and also to record any engagement that you have undertaken, relative to activities identified within the plan.

Work Proposal	Individual/ Organisation	Date Contacted	Date feedback received	Response	Action
All works in the SSSI	Natural England				
All	Herts County Council				
All	Northaw & Cuffley Parish Council				
All	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust				
All	Friends of Northaw Great Wood				
All	Herts Natural History Society				

Section 8: Monitoring

Indicators of progress/success should be defined for each management objective and then checked at regular intervals. Other management activities could also be considered within this monitoring section. The data collected will help to evaluate progress.

Management Objective/Activities	Indicator of Progress/Success	Method of Assessment	Frequency of Assessment	Responsibility	Assessment Results
Maintenance of open woodland habitats and wood pasture features.	Number and species of trees/shrubs planted, nature of protection and maintenance operations Areas of sycamore controlled in open woodlands Length of rides and their fringes managed, nature of the management Area of open spaces and their fringes managed, nature of the management (including bracken management)	Data collated in annual management report	Annually	Forest manager	

	Number, species and location of pollards rejuvenated or created				
Ensure long-term continuity, diversity and resilience of oak/hornbeam woodland.	Area of woodland coppiced (rejuvenated or restored coppice), thinned or with regeneration felling Area of hornbeam seedlings and coppice regrowth respaced Trends in the establishment of natural regeneration (including species) and success of coppice regrowth Number and species of trees planted, nature of protection and	Data collated in annual management report	Annually	Forest manager	

	maintenance operations				
Maintain and enhance habitats condition and diversity. Preserve the historic and archaeological features.	Indicators for improvement of structural, species and age diversity in stands (cf above) Length of rides and their fringes managed, nature of the management Area of open spaces and their fringes managed, nature of the management (including bracken management) Number, species and location of pollards rejuvenated or created Number of ponds and of sections of stream managed,	Data collated in annual management report	Annually	Forest manager	

	nature of the management Inventory and mapping of veteran trees, number of veteran trees released from competition Number of dead trees monolithed, or felled and left on the ground Nature and results of environmental surveys	Data collated in owner's records	Annually	Owner	
Provide safe and attractive visitor experience.	Number, extent and result of tree safety inspections Description of tree safety works undertaken Nature and extent of maintenance and improvement works on footpaths,	Data collated in owner's records	Annually	Owner	

	equipment, and marking Number of complaints from members of the public, and content				
Ensure early detection and management of pests, diseases, and invasive species.	Presence levels of invasive species and other pests. Area of invasive species and other pests control operations undertaken. Number of trees protected against deer browsing Levels of deer activity and habitat impact Deer culling numbers	Routine monitoring Data collated in annual management report. Data collated in owner's records Deer activity and habitat impact survey Culling records	Annually Annually Annually Biennially Annually	Forest manager Forest manager Owner Forest manager Game manager/owner	

Forestry Commission England

UK Forestry Standard woodland plan assessment

For FC office use and approval only:

UKFS management plan criteria	Minimum approval requirements	Achieved	Review notes
Plan Objectives: Forest management plans should state the objectives of management and set out how an appropriate balance between social, economic, environmental objectives will be achieved.	• Management plan objectives are stated. • Consideration is given to environmental, economic and social objectives relevant to the vision for the woodland.	**Yes/No**	
Forest context and important features in management strategy: Forest management plans should address the forest context and the forest potential and demonstrate how the relevant interests and issues have been considered and addressed.	Management intentions communicated in ***Sect.6*** of the management plan are in line with stated objective(s) in ***Sect. 2***. Management intentions should take account of: • Relevant features and issues identified in the woodland survey (***Sect. 4***). • Any potential threats to and opportunities for the woodland, as identified under woodland protection (***Sect. 5***). • Relevant comments received from stakeholder engagement are documented in ***Sect. 7***.	**Yes/No**	
Identification of designations within and surrounding the woodland site: For designated areas, e.g. National Parks or SSSI, particular account is taken of landscape and other sensitivities in the design of forests and forest infrastructure.	• Survey information (***Sect. 4***) identifies any designations that impact on woodland management. • Management intentions (***Sect. 6***) have taken account of any designations.	**Yes/No**	
Felling and restocking to improve forest structure and diversity:	• Felling and restocking proposals are consistent with UKFS design principles (for example scale and adjacency).	**Yes/No**	

When planning felling and restocking, the design of existing forests should be re-assessed and any necessary changes made to meet UKFS requirements. Forests should be designed to achieve a diverse structure of habitat, species and age range of trees, appropriate to the scale and context. Forests characterised by a lack of diversity, due to extensive areas of even-aged trees, should be progressively restructured to achieve age class range.	• Current diversity (structure, species, age structure) of the woodland has been identified through the survey (***Sect. 4***). • Management intentions aim to improve / maintain current diversity (structure, species, and ages of trees).		
Consultation: Consultation on forest management plans and proposals should be carried out according to forestry authority procedures and, where required, the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations.	• Stakeholder consultation is in line with current FC guidance, and recorded in ***Sect. 7***. The minimum requirement is for statutory consultation to take place, and this will be carried out by the Forestry Commission. • Plan authors undertake stakeholder engagement (ref FC Ops Note 35) relevant to the context and setting of the woodland.	**Yes/No**	
Plan update and review: Management of the forest should conform to the plan, and the plan should be updated to ensure it is current and relevant.	• A 5 year review period is stated on the 1st page of the plan • ***Sect. 8*** is completed with 1 indicator of success identified per management objective	**Yes/No**	

Approved in Principle *This means the FC is happy with your plan; it meets UKFS requirements.* *a) You can use it to support a CS-HT or other grant application.* ***b) You do not yet have a licence to undertake any tree felling in the plan.***	**Name (WO or FM):**	**Date:**
Approved	**Name (AO, WO or FM):**	**Date:**

This means FC is happy with your plan; it meets UKFS requirements, and we have also approved a felling licence for any tree felling in the plan (where required).		