Chorleywood Common

Local Nature Reserve

Greenspace Action Plan (GAP)

2018 - 2023

Produced by:
Countryside Management Service

On behalf of:
Chorleywood Parish Council

Overview

i. Greenspace Action Plans (GAPs)

Greenspace Actions Plans, or GAPs, are essentially map-based management plans that provide focus and direction for the running and improvement of open spaces. They specify clear, logical activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

ii. Public Engagement

Public engagement and consulting with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held for Chorleywood Common in January 2018 to compile the aspirations of stakeholders for the site; these are reflected in Section 3: Aims and Objectives. A second stage of engagement ending in April 2018 enabled stakeholders to comment on the draft version of this GAP.

iii. Version control

Version	Date	Alterations	Author
v0	February 2018	Original	ND
v1	April 2018	Final Draft	ND
Final	June	See amendments: Appendix 2	ND

Contents

1. Site Summary

Site name:	Chorleywood Common
Site address: (Parish Council Office)	South Lodge Rickmansworth Road Chorleywood Hertfordshire WD3 5SL
Grid reference (centralised):	TQ 032962
Size (area):	75.6 hectares (187 acres)
Owner:	Chorleywood Parish Council
Designations:	Local Wildlife Site (82/002) Local Nature Reserve Conservation Area Metropolitan Greenbelt

GAP vision statement

Chorleywood Common will maintain its place as a tranquil nature reserve sitting on the outskirts of the London conurbation. Remaining cherished and popular with the local community, the site will continue to be an attractive and safe place for visitors, with welcoming entrance points which invite visitors to explore the wider Common.

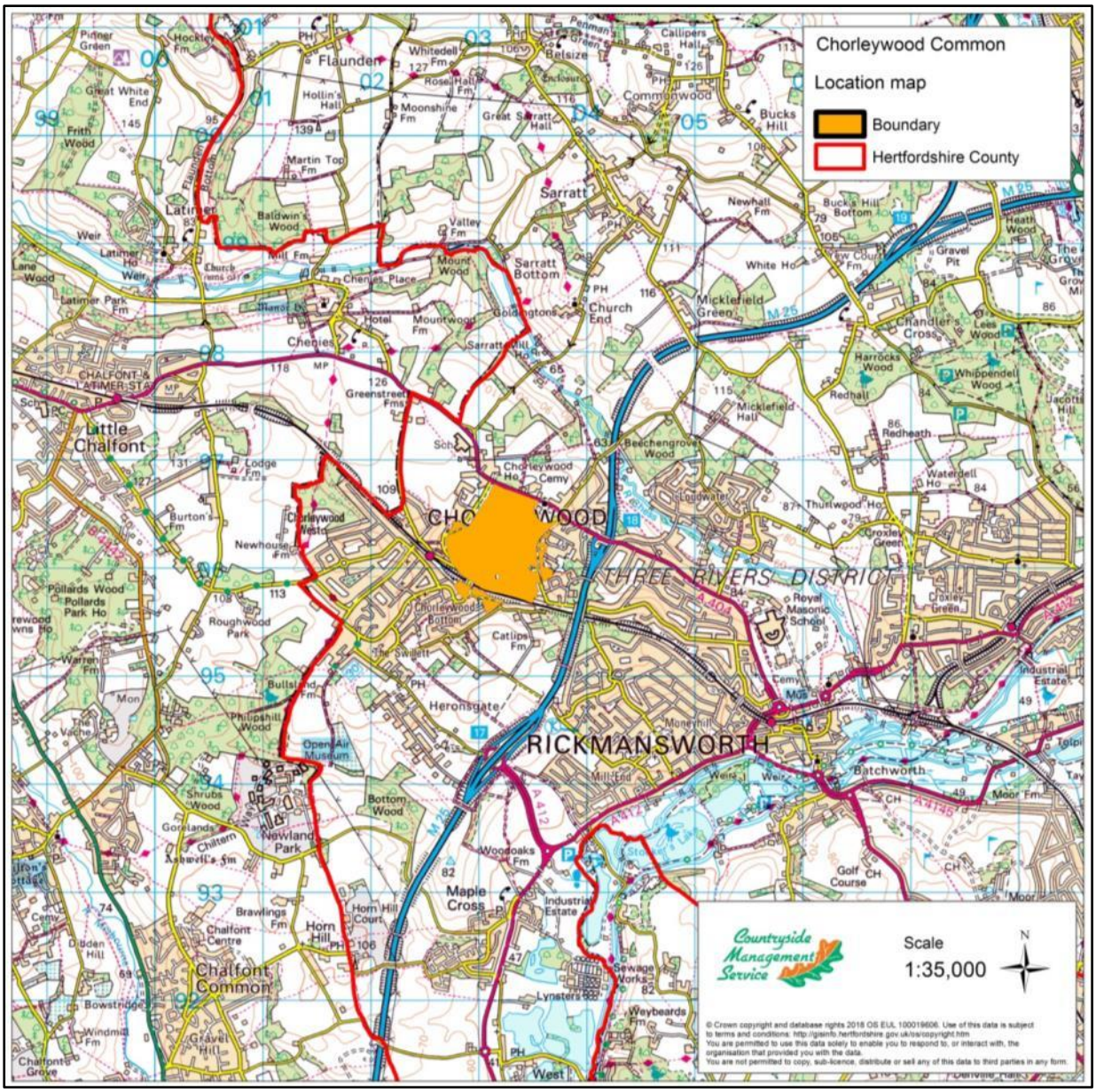
The ability of the Common to cater for various recreational uses is one of its greatest assets. Appropriate site-based information and way-marking will encourage the Common to be used in a respectful and sustainable way, to ensure that the site continues to uphold its place as the centre-piece of Chorleywood. Enhanced information and education opportunities will help to inform people about the importance of the site for wildlife in Hertfordshire.

As a designated Local Nature Reserve, the habitats of Chorleywood Common will continue to be managed to the highest possible standard to ensure wildlife conservation is prioritised. Protection of species and encouraging regeneration into the future will be implemented through sustainable, best practice management. Increasing the amount of permanent and mature habitat features, including veteran oak trees, lowland heathland, wildflower-rich grasslands and ponds, will continue to increase the biodiversity value.

2. Site Description

2.1 Location Map

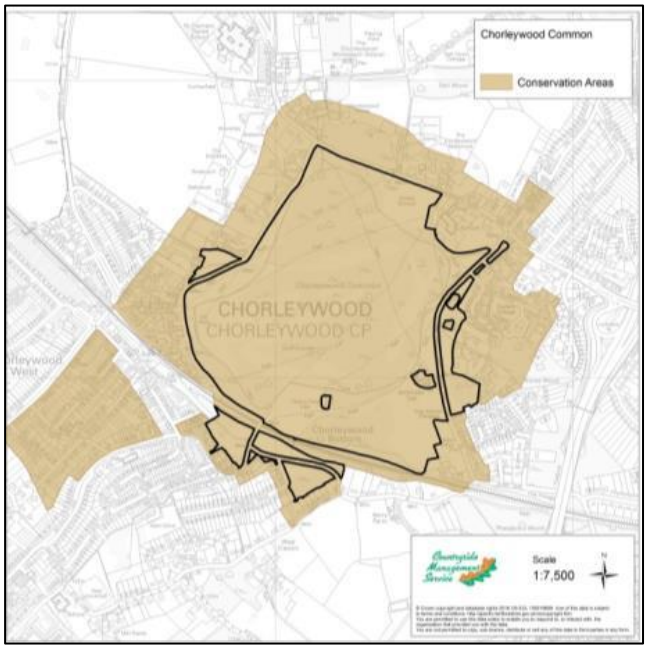
Chorleywood Common is located at the centre of the Parish of Chorleywood, with the majority of the site sandwiched between the A404 Rickmansworth Road to the north and London-Aylesbury railway line to the south. The M25 is around ½ mile to the east, served by junction 18.



2.2 Constraints and Access Maps

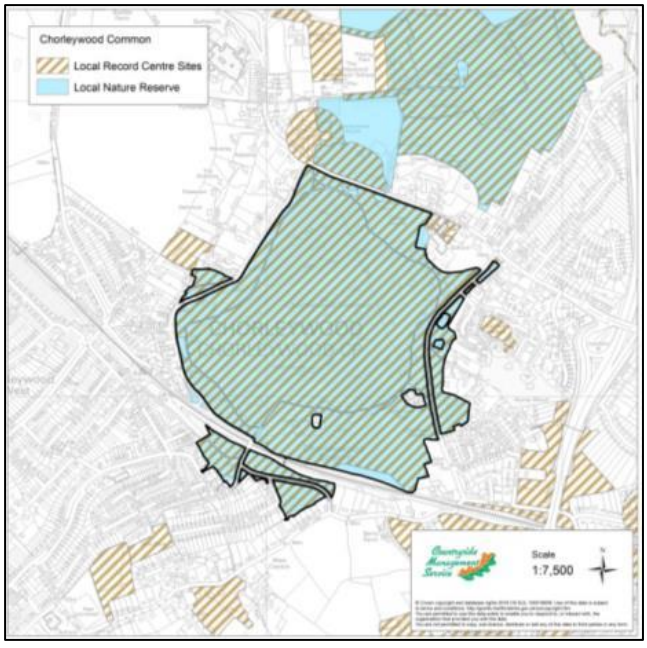
The following maps show the designated protections that apply to Chorleywood Common, followed by maps showing the area of Higher Level Stewardship and access routes.

London Metropolitan Greenbelt (2007)

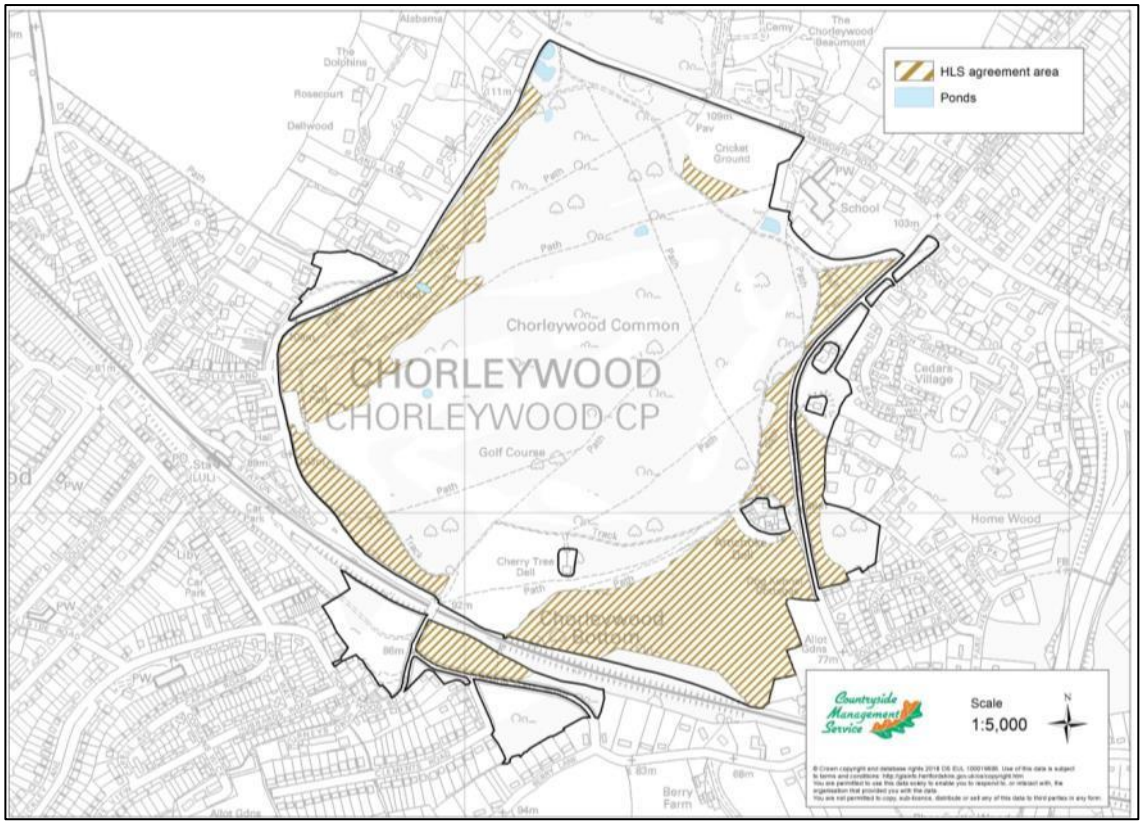


Chorleywood Conservation Areas

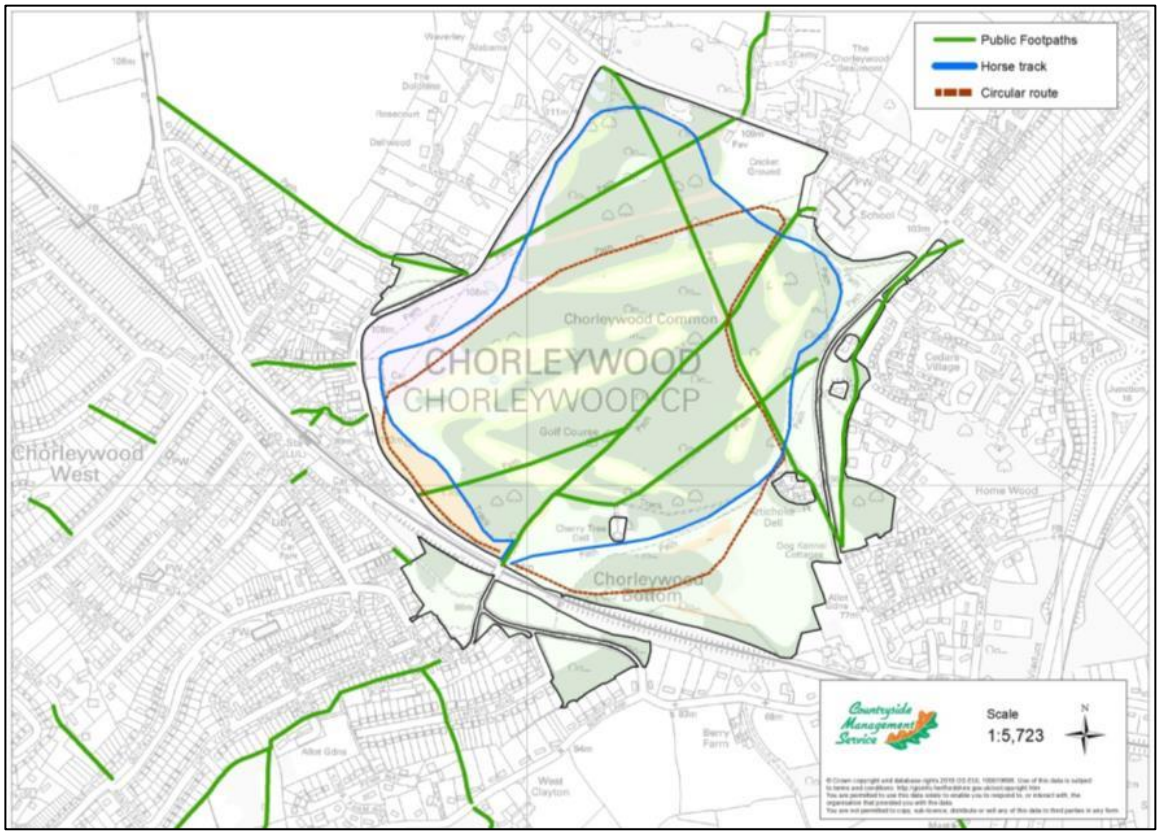
Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Sites

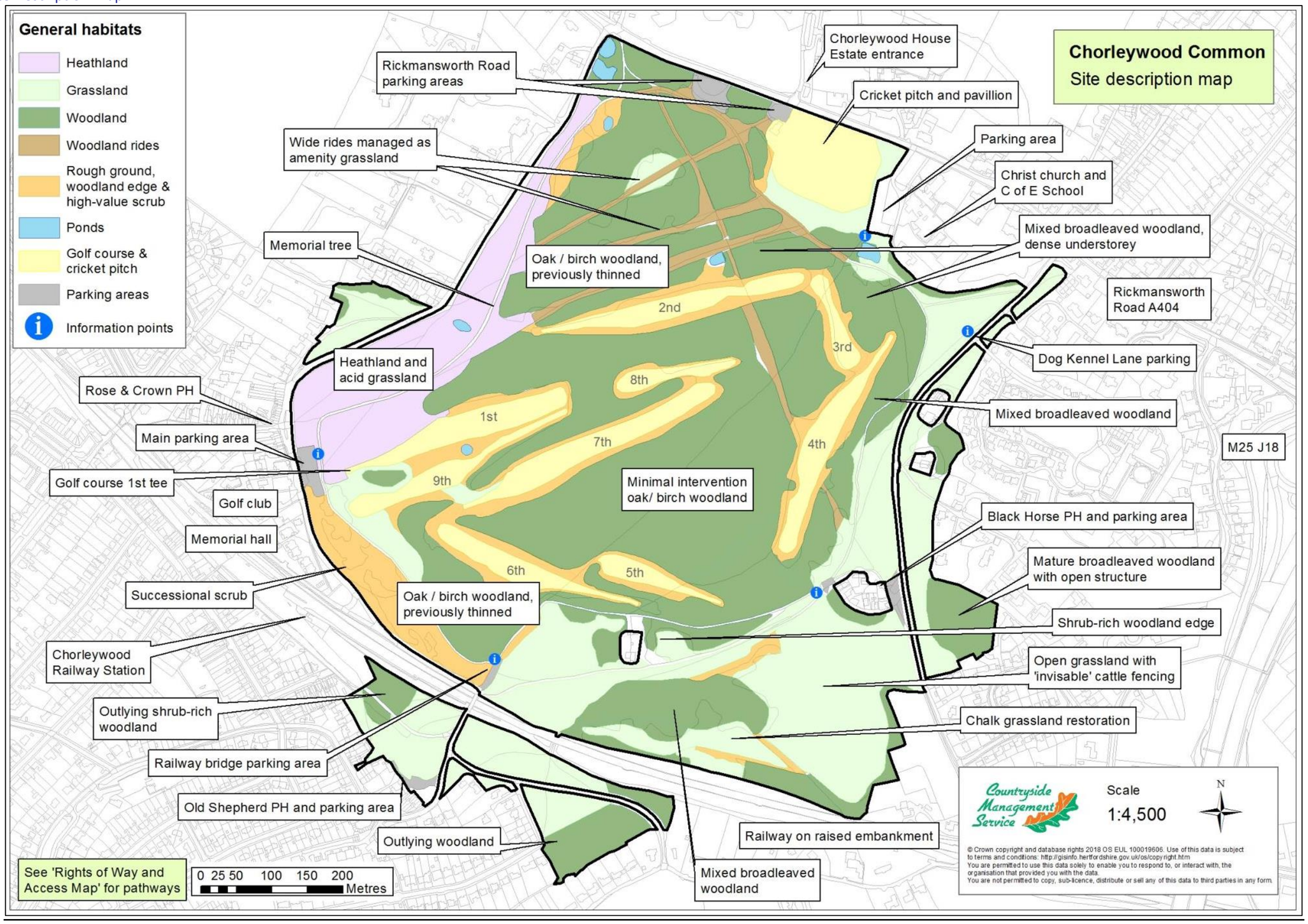


Chorleywood Common Higher Level Stewardship Agreement areas (2012-2022)



Public Rights of Way and Circular Routes on Chorleywood Common

2.3 Site Description Map



2.4 Introduction

Chorleywood Common is a 75 hectare Local Nature Reserve, owned and managed by Chorleywood Parish Council (CWPC) with the assistance of the Friends of Chorleywood Common volunteer group.

The site contains a mosaic of UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, comprising acid, neutral and calcareous grasslands, lowland heathland, secondary broadleaved woodland, and ponds. The cessation of grazing during the 20th Century and shift to recreational use across large areas of the Common resulted in a reduction in habitat condition, particularly of the grassland and heathland habitats. In recent years however, conservation initiatives including the reintroduction of grazing, rotational scrub management and pond restoration have significantly improved habitat quality.

The site is a particularly important location for moths and butterflies, amphibians, woodland birds, and grassland and heathland flora. It also has the potential to support a number of bat species, currently unknown due to an absence of targeted surveys.

Providing opportunities for people to enjoy the open spaces without compromising habitat condition is key to effective management of nature reserves. The established path network at Chorleywood Common offers opportunities to explore the site on foot and horse-back, whilst leaving undisturbed areas for nature to thrive. Amenities also have dedicated space, including a 9-hole golf course, cricket pitch, permissive horse-track and family recreation areas.

2.5 Geography and Landscape

Chorleywood Common is located close to Hertfordshire's south-western border with Buckinghamshire, on the outskirts of Greater London. Historically, the landscape was formed of open farmland with interspersed villages and estates. Whilst areas closer in to the London metropolis underwent heavy urbanisation during the 19th and 20th centuries, Chorleywood retained its connection to the rural landscape of the Chiltern Hills.

Chorleywood sits on the edge of a large chalk formation which stretches across much of the Home Counties to the north of London, spanning into the Chiltern Hills and East Anglia; however, superficial sand and gravel deposits over the chalk bedrock have greatly influenced the soil, drainage and habitats on site.

Geology and soils	
Bedrock type(s)	Chalk formations: Seaford, Newhaven and Lewes Nodular
Superficial deposit(s)	Chorleywood gravel formation: Sand and gravel
Soil type(s)	1. Freely draining slightly acid loam soils (higher ground) 2. Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (lower ground at southern end of site)

The primary soil type for the area is a free draining acid loam, which is found on the main plateau of Chorleywood Common; these soils typically support acid grassland, heathland and oak-birch woodland communities. As the ground runs away to the south, the soils become more clay-rich and water retentive, resulting in neutral and calcareous grassland communities, and woodland with a wider mix of tree species.

There are no flowing watercourses on site, with the closest river being the River Chess around 750 metres to the north. A number of ponds are located around the Common, which were likely to have been created for cattle and working animals; these ponds are largely ephemeral, with variable water levels depending on rainfall throughout the year.

Designations

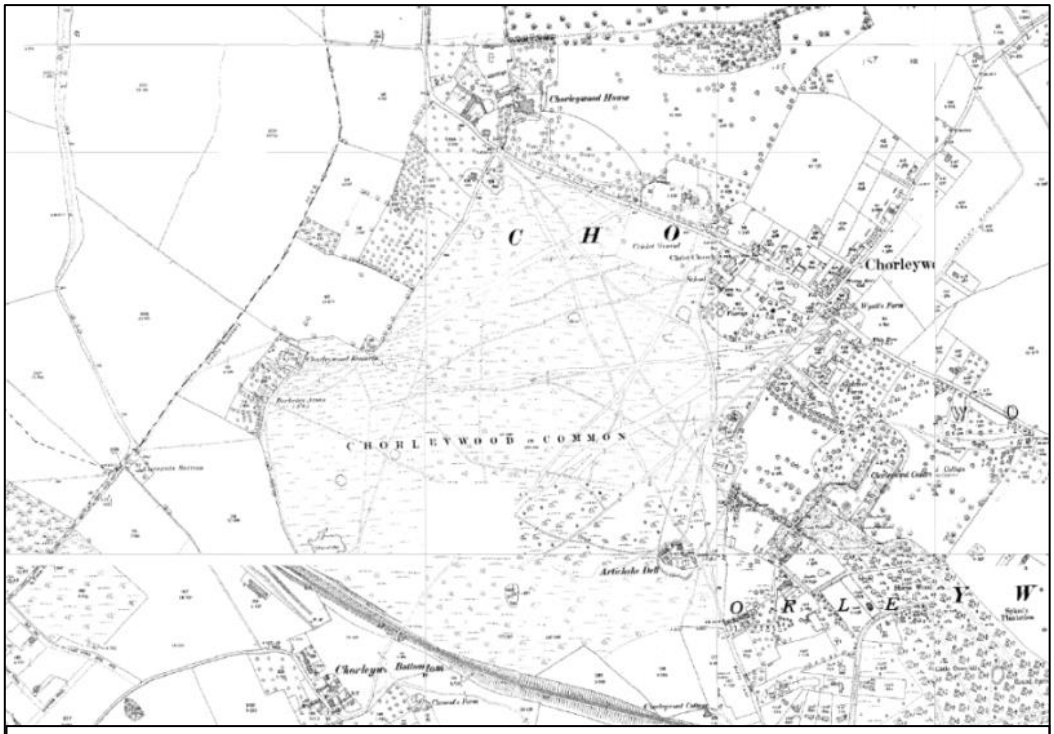
Details of the conservation designations that cover the site are listed in the table below:

Level	Designation	Detail
Statutory	Metropolitan Green Belt	The site falls within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, which restricts growth of development in strategic rural areas on the edge of conurbations.
Non-statutory	Local Wildlife Site: Chorleywood Common Ref: 82/002	Assigned in 1997: Common land, situated on glacial sands and gravels overlying chalk, supporting a wide variety of habitats. The high ground supports **acid/heathland** communities with heather (Calluna vulgaris), sheep's sorrel (Rumex acetosella), heath bedstraw (Galium saxatile) and heath-grass (Danthonia decumbens), which merge into neutral grasslands on the slopes. Areas of herb-rich **chalk grassland** also occur and support species such as quaking grass (Briza media), pyramidal orchid (Anacamptis pyramidalis), common eyebright (Euphrasia nemorosa), fairy flax (Linum catharticum) and large thyme (Thymus pulegioides). **Secondary woodland**, predominantly of pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) and silver birch (Betula pendula), with numerous bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) glades has developed over a large part of the site. There are several **ponds** containing county rarities including bogbean (Menyanthes trifoliata) and bladderwort (Utricularia australis). Five species of amphibians have been recorded from the ponds. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators; species.
	Local Nature Reserve	Declared in 2004
	UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats (S41 NERC Act habitats)	Acid grassland; Lowland calcareous grassland; neutral grassland; heathland; ponds; species
	Conservation Area(s)	Chorleywood Common Chorleywood Station Estate (adjacent to site).
	Higher Level Stewardship Agreement	Agreement AG00404911

2.6 Site History

The earliest references to the site refer to the provision of grazing land for the commoners (public) of Chorleywood, from around the late 17th Century. The surrounding agricultural land was under the ownership of aristocracy, who recognised that the local population had little space to raise their own livestock, and provided the Common for this purpose. Grazing continued to be the main land use during Georgian and Victorian eras. It was during late Victorian times that the cricket and golf clubs were established, suggesting the requirements of the Common were changing, from food production to recreational use.

The following map from around 1896 shows the Common mapped as furze, whin and rough pasture, surrounded by open farmland, orchards and gardens, and estates:



In 1921, the Common was given by the Lord of the Manor (JH Batty) to Chorleywood Urban District Council, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Chorleywood. It was shortly after this time, during 1930's, that grazing ceased on the Common, and by post second world war, scrub and secondary woodland had begun to colonise large areas of the Common; this was a trend seen across many common lands in the UK. Woodland has continued to mature since then to reach the age and structure seen at the present day.

Areas of the Common have been managed through the English Woodland Grant Scheme, Countryside Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship Agreements during the 21st Century. The aim of these schemes has been to restore UK BAP grasslands and lowland heathland to species-rich condition through vegetation management and conservation grazing. The ponds have also seen significant improvements through support from HLS and commitment from CWPC Rangers.

2.7 Habitats and plants

Grasslands

The grassland types vary across the Common according to soil type and management history. There has been little in the way of fertiliser applications and intensive mowing on the open grassland areas which has maintained a natural composition, albeit a little low on species diversity; the cricket and golf course areas have lost species diversity, and are therefore not included here.

The sloping and lower ground in the southern area of the site is underpinned by chalk soils, resulting in a **calcareous to neutral grassland** community. A large section of this area is under Higher Level Stewardship restoration, with successes in returning scrub pasture back to a more diverse grass sward. The plant community in this area contains a characteristic mixed grass sward and wildflower species including greater knapweed, wild strawberry, rough hawkbit, fairy flax, restharrow, broomrape, eyebright, salad burnet, large thyme, dwarf thistle, lady's bedstraw, wild basil, wild carrot and mouse-ear hawkweed. Pyramidal orchids are also locally common along the lower slopes.

Calcareous grassland in winter following cutting.

Areas of **neutral grassland** are found at numerous points around the site, with a large area on the sloping ground south of the minimal intervention woodland. Indicator species for neutral grassland which have been recorded include yorkshire fog, sweet vernal-grass, field wood-rush, common sorrel, burnet saxifrage, meadow vetchling, black knapweed, bird's-foot-trefoil, meadow buttercup and lesser stitchwort.

The plateau on top of the Common is the primary area of **acid grassland**, its extent reduced due to other land uses (woodland, cricket and golf). Where unimproved acid grassland remains, heather is present in small patches (see 'lowland heathland' below), and the species community is comprised of red fescue, common bent, wavy and early hair-grass, heath grass, pill sedge, tormentil, heath bedstraw, sheep's sorrel and harebell. In scrubbier patches, foxglove and European gorse are also present

Lowland heathland

The primary area of heathland restoration is along the western boundary, where remnant areas of heather are being expanded through seed harvest restoration and sensitive mowing to increase coverage. Acid grass species and wildflowers are integral to the lowland heathland habitat, which are represented in this area (as listed under 'acid grasslands' above). Small areas of heathland also remain in isolated patches around the site, such as along woodland edges and glades arounds ponds.

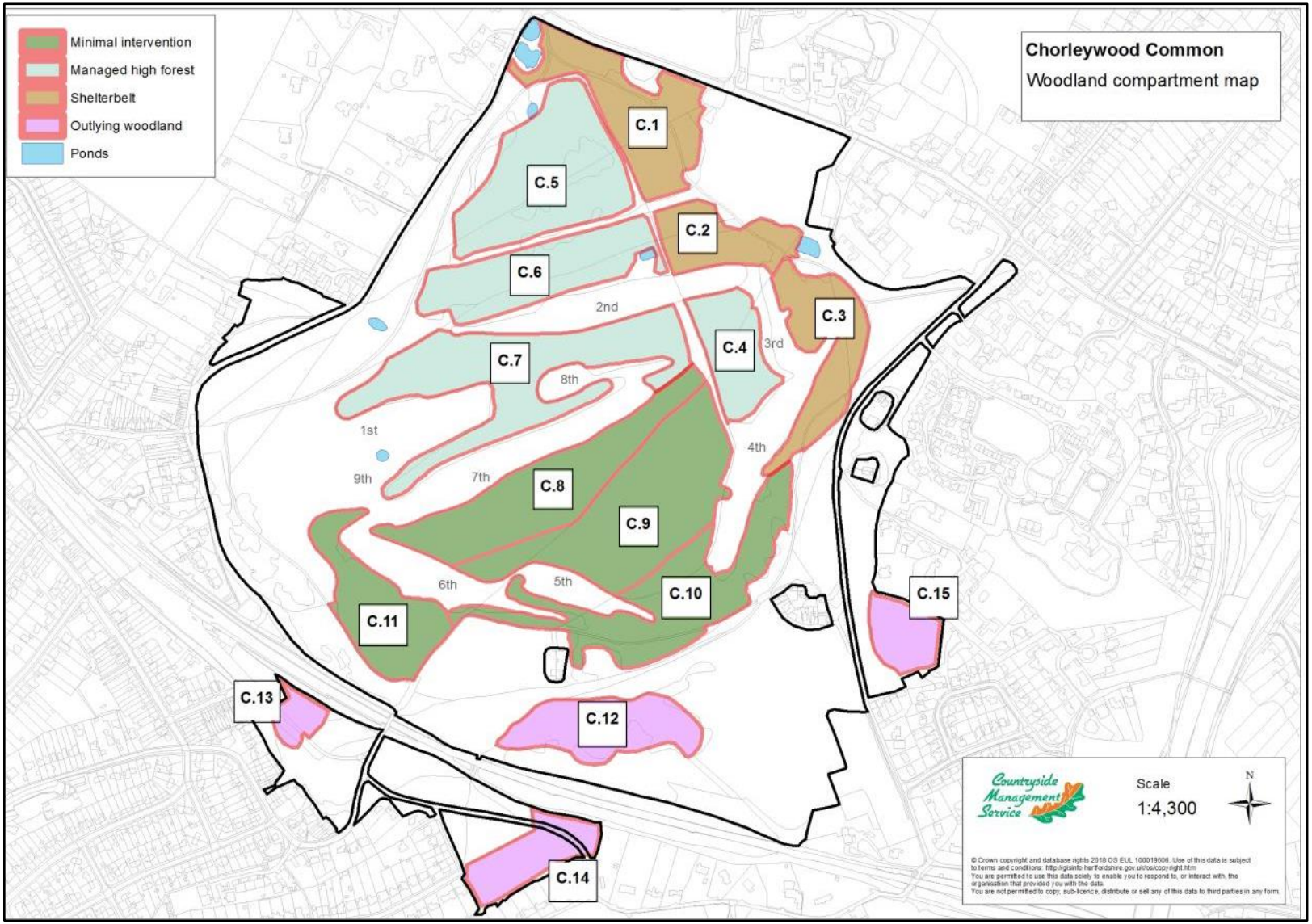
Lowland heathland with heather and acid grassland

Woodland

Secondary broadleaved woodland covers approximately 33 hectares of the Common, and has been at this extent for around the last 60-70 years since grazing ceased. The majority is typical of acidic soils, dominated by oak and birch trees, with occasional rowan, yew and ash. The woodland is generally in good condition thanks to occasional management interventions, and time will improve this further as trees mature to form high forest. Small interventions can be carried out to speed up the rate at which trees veteranise (grow to maturity), and these are proposed below.

In order to assess and propose management for the woodland, it has been compartmentalised as per the following map:

Woodland compartment map:



General management

Cherry laurel is distributed sporadically across the woodlands, both as mature bushes and new saplings. Laurels can have a severe impact on growth of native species and woodland if left unchecked, although control is being attempted at Chorleywood.

Cherry laurel sapling

Holly is present across much of the woodland, and is dense in certain areas. As a native shrub, it has benefits for native wildlife such as thrush species and the Holly Blue butterfly which have been recorded on site. It also forms an effective barrier or 'shelterbelt' to reduce noise and light reaching interior areas of the Common which are prioritised for wildlife. However, in areas it has become highly dense and risks outcompeting other shrub growth, limiting the biodiversity value of these areas.

The **shrub and herb layer** is typical of acid oak-birch woodland, with bramble and bracken dominant in many areas, and gorse occasional. The continuous forest cover also provides good conditions for fungi, of which Chorleywood Common has had over 450 species recorded.

Ivy is present on many trees around the Common, providing a valuable resource for wildlife. It offers shelter for species to nest and roost in, and provides a welcome supply of nectar for early emerging invertebrates when many other plants are not in flower; it is a natural component of the broadleaved woodland ecosystem. Its impact on trees is minimal where trees are healthy, and the benefits of ivy to the woodland ecosystem outweigh negative impacts that weight may have on unhealthy trees. Management and removal of ivy will only be considered where it is increasing a risk to the public, such as in high risk areas (e.g. road-side); these will be identified on the annual tree risk map.

Compartments 1 – 3: Shelterbelt woodland

Compartments 1 to 3 contain a mixed structure of oak and birch with a dense understorey of holly, laurel, yew and shrub species. The woodland edges are well managed and there is a good representation of maturing trees. This is a key area for implementing tree safety checks due to high pedestrian usage for children's wild play areas and well use footpath network.

Whilst beneficial woodlands in their own right, compartments 1-3 act as 'shelterbelts', forming a line of shelter between the busy road and land uses to the east, and areas to the south and west which are intended to be tranquil areas for wildlife and people.

Compartment 3: Young to mid-age oaks with holly understorey

Compartments 4 – 7: Semi-mature woodland between fairways

These compartments contain semi-mature woodland with a good resource of maturing oak and birch specimens. The thinning which has taken place previously has provided beneficial space for trees to grow into, and allow ground flora to develop. Generally, the understorey is dominated by bracken and bramble, with light regeneration of tree saplings.

Wide rides in this area are managed for amenity use, creating attractive open space for visitors; a by-product of wide rides is provision of bushy woodland edges offering beneficial habitat for species.

Widely spaced oaks, previously thinned.

Wide woodland ride with semi-mature oaks.

Compartments 8 – 11: Semi-mature woodland managed as minimal intervention

A large tract of woodland (7ha) south of the seventh fairway, compartments 8 and 9, has been managed as minimal intervention, to allow natural processes to create a high forest habitat. Furthermore, compartments 10 and 11 (5ha) have received low levels of

management over recent decades, resulting in a largely semi-natural structure. The tree species are reminiscent of the wider common, with oak and birch dominating, and a bracken and bramble understorey with low levels of regeneration.

This will be a highly valuable area for bats, woodland specialist birds and invertebrates such as moths, and continuation of this structure should be the primary focus for these compartments. The amount of deadwood is quite low, owing to the relatively young age of the woodland. Regeneration of saplings is also limited, possibly due to a lack of fruiting and acorn-yielding trees on site, as much of the tree resource is relatively young.

This area of woodland will continue to increase in biodiversity value as individual trees reach maturity. Techniques can be used to speed up maturation of trees, which are discussed in Section 3. The western end of compartment 8 is predominantly tall, thin birch, and would benefit most from light and selective thinning management, as would the southern edge of compartment 10.

Semi-mature oaks with holly understorey.

Birch with occ. oaks, compartment 8

Southern edge of comp. 10, with some light penetration

Compartment 12: Calcareous grassland restoration zone

Under the HLS scheme to restore the chalk grassland, a significant section of this compartment will be removed. Undertaking a scrape of the top soil layer following scrub removal helps to reduce nutrient levels, and facilitates chalk grassland establishment. Although looking drastic in the first instance, this is a necessary step to increase the proportion of BAP grassland, and will help return an area of the Common to its historically open grassland habitat.

Area cleared for grassland restoration

Compartments 13 – 15: Outlying woodlands

The outlying woodlands around the southern boundary of the site are valuable in their own right, despite being separated from the main block of woodland. Compartment 15 in particular has developed a nice park-woodland structure, with trees growing into maturity.

Well-spaced oaks in comp. 15

Coppiced and shrub woodland, comp. 13

Compartments 13 and 14 contain a mixture of semi-mature and coppiced trees, with shrub understorey. Some of the trees would benefit from re-coppicing, yet this should be very gradual to maintain woodland cover; bats, woodland-associated butterflies and slow worms are likely to use this area, and any major changes could result in displacement of these.

Woodland edges

The edges of woodlands where they meet other habitats (known as 'ecotones') can provide some of the most beneficial areas for wildlife. Although not providing habitat themselves, the very presence of golf course fairways has ensured that significant lengths of woodland edge is available on the Common. Edges facing south-east through to south-west are the most productive for wildlife, as these aspects promote leaf, flower and fruit growth on vegetation. Key groups using the woodland edge are butterflies and hoverflies, bats, and birds.

Graded woodland edge with long grass, gorse, and oak canopy

Outside of the area managed for the golf course, longer grass and scrub vegetation is managed on a long rotation, and provides excellent habitat. This is cut along a scalloped line, to create an ever-changing habitat. Deeper scallops into the woodland encourage heathland and acid grassland to grow in a sheltered environment, whilst trees extending out from the woodland edge present opportunities for open grown specimens.

Within the area of the golf course, the rough areas are cut once per year in September, after grass and flower seeding. This is typically what would be carried out for a meadow cut, although cuttings are not removed at present, leading to light nutrient accumulation. The semi-rough zone is cut regularly to maintain a sward height of around 7.5cm (3") to a width of 1 metre either side of the fairway. This area will provide little by way of permanent habitat benefit, yet it does offer foraging areas for species such as green woodpecker and mistle thrush. Altering this management would impact on the use of the golf course. The fairway does not offer opportunities for wildlife, yet its management adheres to environmental standards which ensure it does not impact on other features on the Common.

The areas of long grass outside of the golf course management provide opportunities for allowing taller grass to establish, to create a more graded edge to the woodland. Reducing regularity of mowing to two year rotations would allow plants and grasses to set seed, and also provide wintering habitat. An example area is along the north-western edge of the fourth fairway; by allowing taller vegetation to establish would provide some much needed height, and would not impact golf as the fairway width is substantial.

Area for taller grass, fourth fairway

To increase the value of woodland edges, allow occasional shrubs and tree saplings to grow in the long grass and rough zone, to form a graded woodland edge, as per the specification (Section 6). Occasional scallops can also be created in areas of light scrub, small tree and bracken cover.

Woodland rides will be maintained, with the aim for all rides to obtain the 3-zone structure shown in the specification (Section 6). Coppicing of trees growing within zone 3 will be undertaken on an occasional basis to ensure ride width is maintained; where mature trees fall within this range, particularly oaks, preference will be for retention.

Scrub and gorse

Scrub and gorse are common and important components of grassland, heathland and woodland habitats. In addition to the plant species associated with scrub, it provides a year-round supply of food and shelter for wildlife, which is particularly beneficial when other habitats are dormant and exposed over winter.

Traditionally, scrub including broom and gorse was referred to as ‘furze’, and was a key component of open heathland. Historic maps of Chorleywood Common indicate the presence of furze across the whole site. It would have been used by Commoners for hedging, ingredients and utility.

It is important that the scrub and gorse is always in a cycle of management, to maintain a variety of age structures; this is represented well in HLS successional scrub area. An area of opportunity is along woodland edges, through encouragement of gorse to set seed and grow.

Semi-mature gorse (c. 5 years) with birch saplings, amongst HLS successional scrub area

Ponds

There are a number of ponds on site, which are likely to have been created and lined with local clay soils, to supply livestock when the common was grazed; pond creation for livestock was once common practice, and particularly where horses were used to plough or cut hay fields.

The ponds have experienced significant improvements in condition over the past decade, thanks to management by the Parish Council; this can only have helped to support the five species of UK amphibians which are found on site. The range of plant species supported by the ponds include floating sweet-grass, common water-plantain, opposite-leaved pondweed, bur-marigolds, common and oval sedge, soft rush, marsh speedwell, lesser spearwort and sweet-flag.

Individual ponds also support common bladderwort, bogbean, greater speedwort, floating sweet-grass and water forget-me-not.

Pond with well-developed, managed margin

Seasonal variations in water levels are often beneficial for pond wildlife, particularly in smaller ponds, as it prevents dominance by individual plant species. The ponds on Chorleywood Common all vary as the site is on a plateau, particularly the dew pond towards the centre of the Common.

The ponds at the north-west corner of the site are subject to reductions in water quality due to proximity to the road network, which creates rainfall run off and build-up of detritus. This would be a particular issue during winter months when gritting takes place and rainfall run off tends to be greater.

Buffer zones of tall vegetation around each pond are vital to stop influx of sediment-rich water, delineate the feature, and provide habitat for invertebrates and amphibians. These are well established and maintained across the Common.

Amenity areas

There are two large areas of amenity grassland on site, the cricket pitch and golf course. Due to the short turf and management history, these areas provide few opportunities for wildlife, yet are being managed without impacting the wider environment through sustainable practices e.g. fertiliser and herbicide free, appropriate disposal of arisings.

Two of the woodland rides are maintained as wide, open areas with a regular mowing operation. The aim of these areas is to provide a space for people to enjoy recreational activities (e.g. picnics, family ball games), and to segregate these activities from the more sensitive areas of the Common.

Wide woodland ride managed as amenity grassland

To increase the habitat value of the wide rides which are managed on an amenity cut, a 5-10 metre undulating strip of grass will be left uncut each year along the edge of the woodland. This will provide valuable long grass and wildflower habitat, particularly for butterflies. Cutting should take place in late September.

2.8 Wildlife

Wildlife surveys have been carried out by interest groups, casual observers and county recorders, to compile a comprehensive summary of species present on the Common; although surveys for some taxa are not up to date, the records do offer a good reflection of the species and condition of habitats on site. A notable exception in the surveys is for bats; the Common has the potential to support multiple species of bats, and in significant populations. Taxonomic groups are summarised briefly here:

Bird surveys, including a year-long study in 2012-13, have recorded a range of common and scarcer species. The overall species list is strongly in favour of the woodland habitat, with few records of grassland associated species (despite the equal share of these habitats on the Common).

The woodland assemblage includes treecreeper, nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker, tit and finch species, goldcrest, magpie and tawny owl. Warblers are also represented with blackcap, chiffchaff and willow warbler. A targeted survey is recommended for lesser spotted woodpecker, as Chorleywood sits within the core range of this BoCC Red Listed species, and offers increasingly good habitat for the species as the woodland matures.

The open woodland and grassland habitats are used by jay, green woodpecker, linnet and siskin. Whitethroat, cuckoo and meadow pipit are rarer visitors, and are unlikely to breed due to the shortage of undisturbed grassland areas.

The biggest opportunities for bird species into the future management are likely to be provided by the maturing woodland structure, and provision of scrub and diverse understorey. Due to the high levels of human usage and insufficient areas of grassland available to be managed for conservation, opportunities for grassland birds are likely to be low.

At least 22 species of **butterfly** and 720 species of **moth** have been recorded on the nature reserve and immediate area, highlighting the importance of the site for Lepidoptera. The species are representative of a mix of habitats including woodland, heathland, scrub, and grasslands. Of these, small blue and small heath are the two species most threatened with extinction, and are associated with dry, sheltered grasslands. The restoration of the grasslands under the HLS agreement has obvious benefits for these species, as does enhancement of the woodland edge ecotone for providing longer sward and sheltered grasslands. In general, ensuring the woodlands maintain a good canopy cover and increasing deadwood provision is likely to help moths.

The site offers good habitat opportunities for **mammals** with red fox, badger, hedgehog and rabbit all using the site. Grey squirrels are abundant on the Common, the evidence of which can be seen in bark stripping on some trees. Deer are also present with muntjac confirmed, and the possibility of larger species such as roe; deer abundance should be assessed and monitored, as their impact on woodland regeneration can be severe if a population becomes established.

The Common and its surrounding area offers important opportunities for a number of bat species; soprano and common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats are all likely, and

rarer species such as barbastelle and Bechstein's are possible. A bat survey is suggested to discover which species are present, to inform future management actions.

The Common is a prime site for **amphibians**, with five of the UK native species recorded on site; this highlights the quality of the ponds and protection provided by the surrounding vegetation. Care should be taken with all management actions, including winter woodland management works, as great crested newts are likely to be in these areas outside of breeding season.

The only **reptile** species recorded in recent years has been slow worm, inhabiting the unimproved grassland and scrub areas to the south-west of the site.

2.9 Access, facilities and infrastructure

Access

The Common can be accessed on foot from much of the site's perimeter, owing to the absence of fencing, although in practice pedestrians access via the main parking areas and path network.

The Rights of Way network and many 'desire line' pathways around the Common provide good coverage of the site. Footpaths generally maintain good condition throughout the winter months, notably along the main rides, due to free-draining loamy soils. Where clay is more abundant in the soils, footpaths tend to become muddier during winter months. In the absence of vehicle and bicycle use, and minimal use by horses, the paths should not be subject to heavy degradation, although unpermitted bicycle use is having an impact. A horse track is provided around the Common, which receives light use year-round, and is well adhered to by users.

Arriving by car, the site is served by the A404 Rickmansworth Road. Junction 18 of the M25 motorway is less than 500 metres away, allowing good access for visitors from further afield. Chorleywood railway station provides another transport hub beyond the western edge of the Common.

Facilities and infrastructure

Car parking for the site is on permissive parking areas at key points around the Common, which also serve other facilities such as the cricket and golf clubs. These are generally in good repair, although can become degraded during winter months due to vehicles turning when water pooling has occurred. There is not currently a provision for storing bicycles, the installation of which may help contribute towards reducing use of bikes on the Common.

Information and notice boards are located next to three of the parking areas on the Common, with an extra information board located at the eastern end of the chalk grassland area (Larks Meadow). These provide a good overview of the Common, however could be enhanced to show routes more clearly and highlight the features of the site.

The way-markers, including the permissive horse-track signs, are dated; new visitors to the Common may not notice these or could find them unclear. Renewing way-markers and horse track signs with clear markers which are in-keeping with the site, would better identify the routes for all users; this would also increase pedestrian awareness of horses, to afford horses the necessary space and respect.

Litter and dog waste bins are located at all parking areas around the Common, and site users evidently use these as littering is infrequent.

3. Assessment and analysis of opportunities

The opportunities for the site have been compiled as a result of habitat surveys, historic records, and through incorporating public and stakeholder comments from the Stage One public engagement (January 2018). The sections below aim to encompass all of the issues identified, and provide rationale for any site management changes.

3.1 A welcoming place

Approaching the Common, it is an appealing and open greenspace which naturally attracts visitors onto the site. The permissive car parking areas are well situated for the main access points and user groups. The parking areas receive high usage, and surfaces inevitably become degraded during winter months, whilst the security features, albeit necessary, are a little unattractive. As the first area of the Common that many visitors see, enhancing these areas to be more in-keeping with the site and local area would be beneficial; this will include 'rustic' entrance signage, and encouraging wildflower-rich vegetation to grow on parking area banks and verges. Large logs could also help to delineate the edges of the parking areas.

The site would benefit from updated information and map panels, to highlight the route options that users of the Common have, and to highlight the features of the Common. There should not be an increase in signage, but an improvement of the existing to be more effective, attractive and in-keeping with the rural setting.

3.2 Healthy, safe and secure

Chorleywood Common offers a safe place for people to relax and enjoy the open space, and encourages children to interact with the natural world in a safe environment.

The site is well used throughout daylight hours. Parking areas are sited in visible locations next to the road network, therefore vehicle crime is not a significant issue.

The site has a variety of uses, and thanks its size, is able to cope with varying uses whilst allowing areas to be more secluded for nature. As part of new signage and way-marking, respectful and responsible use will be encouraged to ensure all user groups are afforded the space and respect to enjoy the Common. Any signage infrastructure installed will be in-keeping with the rural character, and will only be used where necessary to avoid cluttering the site.

An example of bespoke signage which has been to encourage respectful use has recently been installed on the Alban Way in St Albans:

Trees are surveyed and actively managed by CWPC where they present a risk to people or property. Tree safety is largely integrated in to habitat management, as footpaths generally follow wide rides which remove risk from trees. The tree species and woodland structures on site are also largely stable by nature. A tree risk map will be incorporated into the final GAP, as a simple method for identifying tree risk without unnecessary removal of trees.

3.3 Clean and well maintained

The Common is largely clean and well maintained. Sufficient provision of waste bins and regular litter collection, together with a responsible community, leads to low levels of waste around the site. Litter does occasionally accumulate to the eastern end of the site due to prevailing winds.

Pathways around the Common are generally in good repair for most of the year, although deterioration does occur during wetter months. Updating the waymarking and signage (Section 3.1) will improve the appearance of these features and reflect the overall high level of maintenance on site.

3.4 Sustainability

All management operations at Chorleywood common should be as sustainable as possible, both financially and in terms of environmental impact. This can be implemented through initiatives including:

- A presumption against the use of peat.
- A presumption against the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Use of FSC timber in construction activities, and where possible using timber from on-site or locally.
- Ensuring any imported material is from a reputable source and is clean and free from pathogens (e.g. wood chip).
- Follow the "Check, Clean, Dry" procedure for machinery, materials and people brought on to or taken off site, to uphold the biosecurity of the site. Regular monitoring for tree health issues should also be implemented.

During the first year of the GAP, environmental statements will be publicised by CWPC, the golf club and cricket club, in order to show compliance with industry standard environmental sustainability.

On-site information and education opportunities will communicate the benefits that public greenspaces offer to local communities, and highlight the importance of adopting the above initiatives at home.

3.5 Conservation and heritage

This section sets out the broad aims for the habitats. Further information is contained in the maps, actions and specifications.

Woodland

The broadleaved woodland on the Common is a nice example of acidic oak-birch woodland. The management that has been carried out, such as thinning some compartments and creating gaps in the woodland edge, has provided much needed space within the woodlands to encourage regeneration and epicormic growth of existing trees. The woodland is only 60-70 years old, and relatively young in woodland terms; the oak trees in particular are yet to reach maturity, and only time will add further value to these woodlands as trees start to take on mature features.

The key points to implement over the next five years of woodland management are:

- Complete control of cherry laurel
- Thinning of dense holly to allow other shrubs to grow
- Protect and encourage the next generation of mature trees

- Light thinning in the minimal intervention area to encourage maturation of mid-age oaks, and growth of saplings. Halo- and cluster thinning will be used, which will also create greater variety in canopy height and structure to benefit woodland bats and invertebrates.
- Increase volume of standing and fallen deadwood, as a by-product of any management, to benefit woodland birds and saproxylic invertebrates.
- Ensure an appropriate felling licence and/ or FC woodland management plan is in place, to comply with legislation and UKFS standard.

Woodland edge

Where possible, enhancing habitat opportunities along the woodland edges will be implemented through allowing long grass and scrub to grow on longer cutting rotations. Protection of appropriate tree species and gorse saplings growing in the woodland edge zone is important to encourage a shrubby edge to develop. The second fairway is a good example of the desired structure incorporating a scalloped mosaic long grass, gorse, bracken and trees.

Gorse and scrub

Ensure gorse and scrub continue to regenerate, maintaining a beneficial presence across the site. Where possible, allow gorse seeds to disperse before any winter management works; this can be further facilitated by collecting and scattering gorse seed pods in beneficial locations, e.g. woodland edge.

Heathland

Continue restoration of heathland within the wider acid grassland habitat, through cut and collect management of grass to open space for heather, localised scarification around stands of heather, and transplanting of heather seedlings.

Grassland

Continue implementation of HLS scheme and wider grassland management to restore grasslands, through cut and collect and/ or grazing (where possible). The different grassland habitats should benefit from the following regimes:

- HLS grassland (grazed): Aim to graze with current stocking density for 4-6 weeks from early April; remove cattle for flowering period; undertake a hay cut in late August/ September; aftermath grazing in October for 6 weeks.
- HLS acid grassland (ungrazed): Cut and collect in late September.
- HLS neutral grassland: Cut and collect as per GAP specification.
- Non-HLS grassland: Cut and collect as per GAP specification.

In addition, by occasionally missing the autumn cut in smaller compartments within the above areas, there will be longer periods of opportunity for wildflowers to disperse

seeds; this would be particularly useful in areas with high wildflower, low grass density. The areas can then be cut in the following spring.

To help establish wildflowers on the parking area banks, harvest seeds (with the help of volunteers) in early autumn from the acid and neutral grassland areas, and disperse onto parking area banks and verges. Prior to spreading on verges, cut and scarify these areas to help wildflower seeds establish.

Wetland (ponds)

Ponds have undergone significant improvements in quality in recent years. Maintenance of the buffer zones going forwards should ensure tall vegetation is always present around the margins, yet not too tall to over-shade the ponds.

Invasive *and* non-native species (INNS) monitoring and control

The current site management has ensured INNS have not become established on the site, although cherry laurel continues to grow sporadically; this should be a key management action for the beginning of the GAP.

Although a native species, holly is dominant in areas of the understorey, especially in the northern and western woodland sections. Occasional thinning of holly, together with opening up small areas of woodland to encourage regeneration of other species, should help reduce holly coverage.

The non-native tree species on site extends to small quantities of sycamore, which will be managed out of the woodland as this out-competes native tree species such as oak and rowan. Going forwards, preference should be given for native species in future tree management decisions, to encourage transition to a fully native species composition.

Regular monitoring of any site for INNS and plant health issues is important to safeguard that site and also the wider environment.

3.6 Community involvement

There is a large catchment of potential users around the local areas of Chorleywood and Rickmansworth, as well as further in to London, and 'passing trade' of people using the A404 and M25. In summer, the public houses are popular with people on day trips out from the city.

The local community can be engaged in variety of ways, including on-site information, events (e.g. walks, picnics), leaflets, and on-line sources including a bespoke website, Local Authority website, and social media.

Reinstating the Chorleywood Common User Group meetings will be a beneficial step to allow an open platform for issues and opportunities to be discussed.

A key requirement is to ensure the Friends of Chorleywood Common volunteer group is supported to continue their stewardship and involvement in the management of the site.

The development of the Nature Trail, with associated wooden sculptures and areas for children to explore, will continue, and will be incorporated into new interpretation materials.

3.7 Management and Achievements

Chorleywood Common has undergone significant habitat improvements during recent years thanks to concerted effort from the Parish Council Ranger team, who have implemented woodland thinning, pond restoration, and grassland and heathland restoration under the HLS agreement.

To build on these successes, the primary areas for improvement are site-based information, entrance points, and the woodland edge zone. From a public perspective, accommodating multiple user groups is a key consideration, and if fully achieved could lead to greater improvement and interest in the site. Achieving this within the budgets and constraints that are available, would be considered a real success during the course of this GAP.

4. Aims and objectives

Aim

The overall aim of the GAP is to ensure the management of Chorleywood Common is beneficial, achievable, and sustainable. Conservation management will be prioritised, as will provision of a welcoming and interesting open space for people to enjoy.

Objectives

4.1 A welcoming place

Provide a welcoming and informative experience for visitors to Chorleywood Common.

1A: Renew **information** panels and maps, and install way-markers, to highlight the features and pathways of Chorleywood Common.

1B: Enhance **access points and permissive parking areas**, ensuring these are clearly signed, welcoming, and complement the natural setting of the site.

1C: Improve road and rights of way **signage** to the site around the local conurbation.

4.2 Healthy, safe and secure

Ensure visitors are safe, the site is secure, and habitats and visitor health is maximised.

2A: Promote **responsible and respectful use**, and respond proactively to misuse of the site.

2B: Incorporate **tree safety** into woodland management, to avoid future risks and minimise reactive tree works.

2C: Build on **healthy lifestyle opportunities** of using the Common for exercise and exploration, through promotion of circular trails for all age groups.

4.3 Clean and well maintained

Vegetation and the site generally should be maintained to highest standards.

3A: **Maintain** levels of cleanliness and the visual appearance, and carefully consider aesthetics of any signage to be changed on the Common.

3B: **Alter vegetation management on banks surrounding parking areas** to promote grass and wildflower growth, to enhance appeal.

4.4 Sustainability

Ensure management operations are environmentally and financially sustainable.

4A: Ensure the costs of ongoing maintenance proposed in the GAP are **financially sustainable and achievable** with the resources available.

4B: Ensure management is carried out according to **environmental best practice across all areas of the Common**, and Environmental Statements are publicised.

4C: Promote the benefits that Chorleywood Common offers as a public greenspace in terms of **ecosystem services**: Water retention; pollinating insects; carbon storage; reducing urban heat effect; and access to greenspace for health and wellbeing.

4.5 Conservation and heritage

Maximise condition of habitats and opportunities for associated species across the site, whilst maintaining the landscape heritage.

5A: Continue **restoration of areas of grassland and heathland** under HLS agreement

5B: Targeted and **gradual halo-thinning** in woodland, to encourage veteranisation of mature oaks, regeneration of the ground flora, and variety in the canopy.

5C: **Remove invasive non-native** cherry laurel from site, and continue managing holly coverage.

5D: Protect and enhance the **woodland edge habitat** through allowing rough grass areas (outside of golf course) and scrub to persist for longer between cutting intervals.

5E: Continue **pond management** as per HLS and CWPC management; extend long grass buffer around dew pond (9th fairway) by approx. 1 metre to protect against run-off.

5F: Protect and **enhance mid-age trees**, notably oaks, to allow maturation for wildlife and heritage value.

4.6 Community involvement

Develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community interest in Chorleywood Common.

6A: **Encourage the local community** to maintain involvement in the management of the site in a structured and supported way, operating towards achievement of the GAP.

6B: **Support the Friends of Chorleywood Common volunteer group** in the maintenance of the Common.

6C: **Inform** site users and wider community about the site's heritage through effective marketing including information panels, online and printed materials.

6D: Increase opportunities for a range of **local groups** to make use of the site, such as Forest Schools.

4.7 Management and achievements

Continue to build on the work of previous years restoration work

7A: Ensure ongoing maintenance costs are **financially sustainable.**

7B: Develop opportunities for **biodiversity monitoring** in association with wildlife interest groups, and a Bio-Blitz event

7C: Reinstate Common User Group meetings to create a forum for discussing issues

5. Action plan and maps

The actions in this plan apply the following key principles for habitat management:

- Low intensity grazing of unimproved grassland to create species-rich swards
- Rotational cutting of scrub and gorse to maintain regeneration and distribution
- Traditional, minimal intervention woodland management to enhance woodland edges, glades and rides, promote regeneration, and protect maturing trees
- Remove Invasive Non-Native Species – notably cherry laurel
- Sensitive management of heathland, including propagation of heather seedlings
- Protection of all ponds with buffer zones
- Monitoring of taxonomic groups, to ensure management is appropriate and delivering for wildlife

Woodland compartments are identified in Section 2.7: Woodlands. Outline specifications for techniques to be used are included in Section 6.

Key: Chorleywood Parish Council (CWPC); Friends of Chorleywood Common (FoCWC); Wildlife conservation NGOs (NGOs); Chorleywood Common Golf Club (CWCGC); Chorleywood Common Cricket Club (CWCCC); Countryside Management Service (CMS)

Indicative number of person days required for new tasks are included under 'Delivery'. For annual actions, these are number of days per year.

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Neutral grassland (HLS): Cut & collect once per year in late summer; extra cut & collect in April on areas with low wildflower abundance and vigorous grass growth. Select small compartments with high wildflower abundance to be left uncut each year, and rotate.	Late September	CWPC	
Acid grassland (HLS): Cut & collect once per year. Select small compartments with high wildflower abundance to be left uncut each year, and rotate.	Late September	CWPC	

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Heathland (HLS): Continue transplanting seedlings; cut individual heather plants when they become over-mature. Lightly scarify ground around heather plants to encourage further regen	Oct-Dec	CWPC + FoCWC	
Calcareous and Neutral grasslands (HLS): Continue with annual grazing and hay cut; target: • 6 weeks grazing between mid-March and early May • 6 weeks grazing from late September, following hay cut • Aim to carry out hay cut as late as possible in summer – September Continue with vegetation and tree removal in chalk grassland restoration area; consider a top soil scrape of cleared ground, as railway field, in consultation with CMS and NE.	Year-round	CWPC	
Successional scrub management (HLS): Continue management of scrub to ensure there is an equal balance of emerging, growing and mature gorse and scrub Collect gorse seeds and disperse over areas which have been cut.	Winter	CWPC Seed collection: FoCWC 1 day	
Annual management of **banks around parking areas**, following enhancement in Year 1 actions. **From Year 2**, Cut & collect 2-3 times per year, aiming to increase wildflower abundance and reduce nettles and docks.	April and September. Additional cut in June if required.	CWPC 2-3 days	
Woodland edge management along fairways (outside of golf course rough). Rotate grass cutting to allow grass to grow for 2 years. Allow new patches of scrub and gorse to develop, and cut degenerate areas.	Grass: April or October Scrub: Winter	CWPC 3 days	

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT ACTIONS			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Monitoring: Survey for Invasive Non-Native Species (notably cherry laurel) and review tree safety	Every 15 months	CWPC 1 day	
Monitoring: Carry out species surveys, aiming for each taxa to be surveyed every 3 years	Spring (timing dependent on taxa)	CWPC + NGO's 3 x ½ days	
Bracken: Carry out bracken bruising in woodlands where bracken is dense, by mechanical or hand techniques	May/ June & July/ August	CWPC 3 days *if available*	


Chorleywood Common
Annual actions map
Heathland and acid grassland
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking area
HLS agreement area
Ponds (HLS):
Maintain current management.
Cut and collect buffer zone vegetation in short sections on a long rotation (c. 3-5 years)
Parking area banks:
From year 2, cut and collect vegetation on twice per year (March and September) to encourage grass and wildflowers
Manage centre of rides as amenity grassland.
Leave uncut grass margins along ride edges.
Target margin width varying between 5-10 metres.
Cut in late September each year.
Neutral/ acid grassland (HLS)
Cut and collect twice per year in April and late September.
Woodland edges:
Cut on a long rotation, as per specification (see appendices)
Woodlands: Carry out bracken bruising to dense stands in May and August
2nd
3rd
8th
1st
7th
4th
9th
6th
5th
Neutral/ acid grassland (HLS)
2 no. cut and collects per year in April and late September.
Acid grassland and heathland (HLS).
Grassland: 1 cut and collect per year in late September.
Heather: Cut when over-mature.
Continue heather seedling transplants to scrapes. Scarify soil locally around heather plants to encourage seed regen.
Neutral and calcareous grassland (HLS)
Hay cut in July/ August. Continue aftermath and early season grazing.
Successional scrub (HLS)
Continue rotational gorse, scrub and unimproved grassland management.
Encourage new gorse to propogate by leaving piles of cut gorse with seeds
Lowland neutral/ calcareous grassland (HLS)
Hay cut in August. Continue aftermath and early season grazing.
Continue tree removal as HLS prescription.
Consider soil scrape after tree removal.
Neutral / acid grassland (HLS).
1 cut & collect per year in late September.
In areas of vigorous grass growth, carry out an extra cut & collect in April
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:5,000
N
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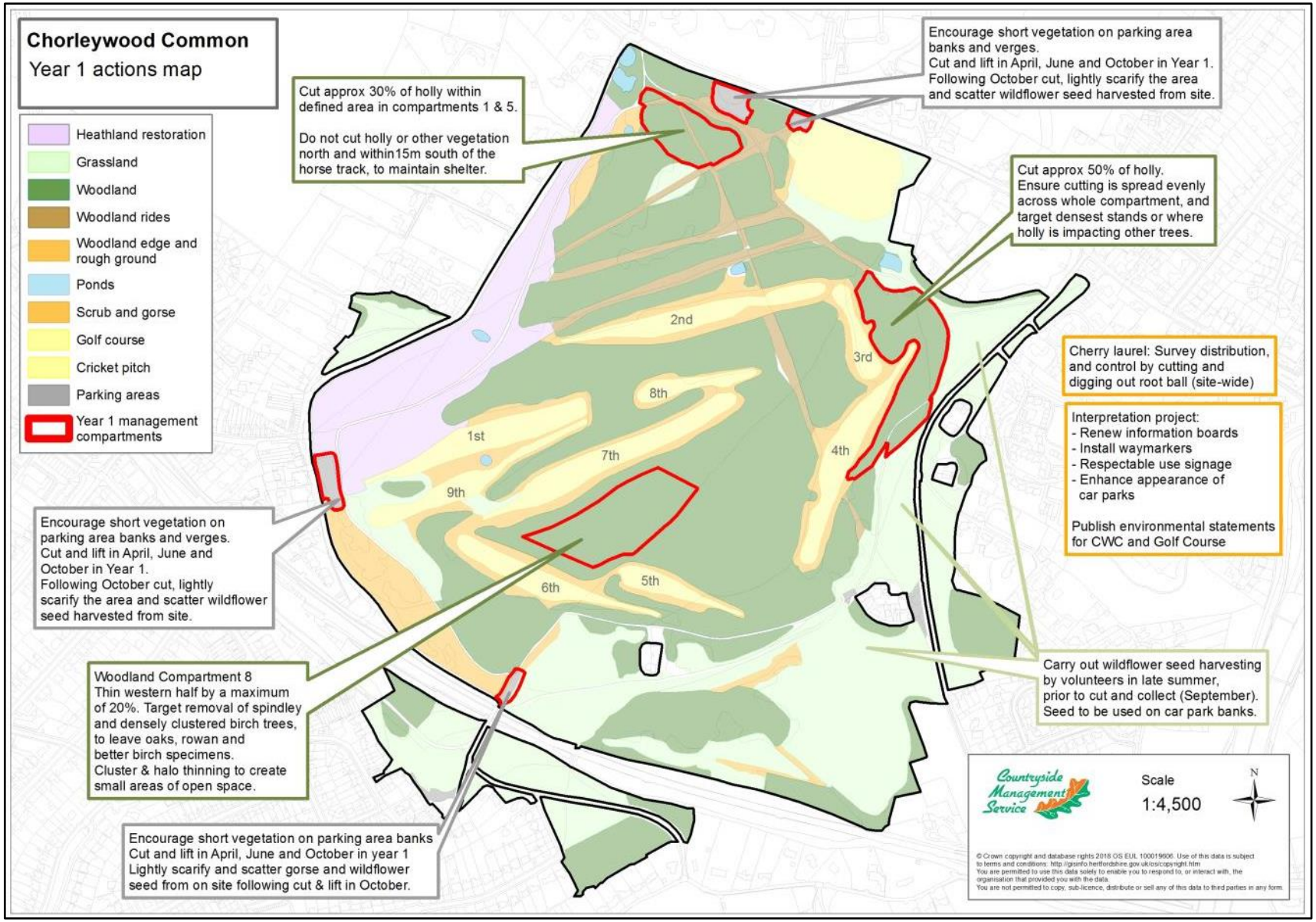
YEAR ONE ACTIONS 2018-19			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Site interpretation and information project: Renew information boards, circular routes, way-markers, entrance signage and code of conduct signs	Apr – Sept 2018	CWPC + CMS	
Banks around parking areas: Cut and lift in April, June and October to reduce vegetation height and nutrient levels.	April, June, October	CWPC 3 days	
Neutral and acid grassland: Carry out wildflower seed harvest, to be used on parking area banks and verges *Carry out prior to cut & collect	September	CWPC + FoCWC Group: 2 x ½ days	
Banks around parking areas: Lightly scarify or rake grass to create patches of bare soil; scatter wildflower seed and grass harvested from site; tread in lightly	October	CWPC 1 day	
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution and carry out control by cutting and digging out root ball	October to February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Submit FC woodland management plan to gain felling licence for works over next 5 years, if required	Summer	CWPC + CMS	
Woodland management: Carry out holly cutting compartments 1, 3 & 5, as per map and specification.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Carry out thinning in compartment 8, as per map and specification.	October - February	CWPC 6 days	
Publicise **environmental statements** for the common, golf course and cricket pitch	Apr – June	CWPC + CWCGC + CWCCC	


Chorleywood Common
Year 1 actions map
Heathland restoration
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough ground
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking areas
Year 1 management compartments
Cut approx 30% of holly within defined area in compartments 1 & 5.
Do not cut holly or other vegetation north and within15m south of the horse track, to maintain shelter.
Encourage short vegetation on parking area banks and verges.
Cut and lift in April, June and October in Year 1.
Following October cut, lightly scarify the area and scatter wildflower seed harvested from site.
Cut approx 50% of holly.
Ensure cutting is spread evenly across whole compartment, and target densest stands or where holly is impacting other trees.
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution, and control by cutting and digging out root ball (site-wide)
Interpretation project:
- Renew information boards
- Install waymarkers
- Respectable use signage
- Enhance appearance of car parks
Publish environmental statements for CWC and Golf Course
Encourage short vegetation on parking area banks and verges.
Cut and lift in April, June and October in Year 1.
Following October cut, lightly scarify the area and scatter wildflower seed harvested from site.
Woodland Compartment 8
Thin western half by a maximum of 20%. Target removal of spindley and densely clustered birch trees, to leave oaks, rowan and better birch specimens.
Cluster & halo thinning to create small areas of open space.
Encourage short vegetation on parking area banks
Cut and lift in April, June and October in year 1
Lightly scarify and scatter gorse and wildflower seed from on site following cut & lift in October.
Carry out wildflower seed harvesting by volunteers in late summer, prior to cut and collect (September). Seed to be used on car park banks.
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
8th
9th
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:4,500
N
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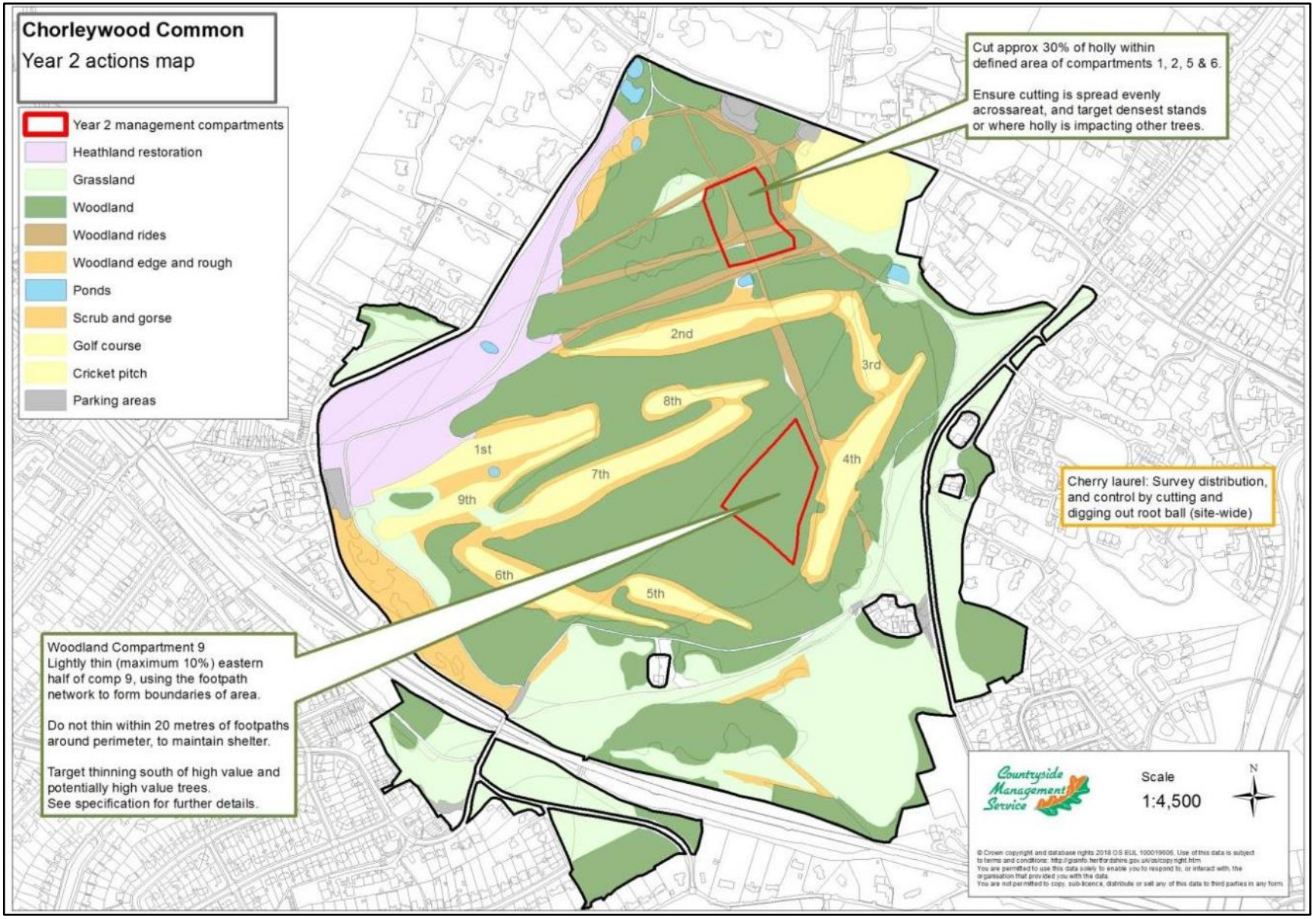
YEAR TWO ACTIONS 2019-20			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution of re-growth following Yr 1 clearance; carry out control by digging out seedlings	October and February	CWPC 2 days	
Woodland management: Carry out holly cutting and thinning in compartments 1, 2, 5 & 6 as per map and specification.	October - February	CWPC 2 days	
Woodland management: Carry out light thinning in eastern section of compartment 9 Use opportunity to create standing and fallen deadwood.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	


Chorleywood Common
Year 2 actions map
Year 2 management compartments
Heathland restoration
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking areas
Cut approx 30% of holly within defined area of compartments 1, 2, 5 & 6.
Ensure cutting is spread evenly acrossareat, and target densest stands or where holly is impacting other trees.
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution, and control by cutting and digging out root ball (site-wide)
Woodland Compartment 9
Lightly thin (maximum 10%) eastern half of comp 9, using the footpath network to form boundaries of area.
Do not thin within 20 metres of footpaths around perimeter, to maintain shelter.
Target thinning south of high value and potentially high value trees.
See specification for further details.
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
8th
9th
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:4,500
N
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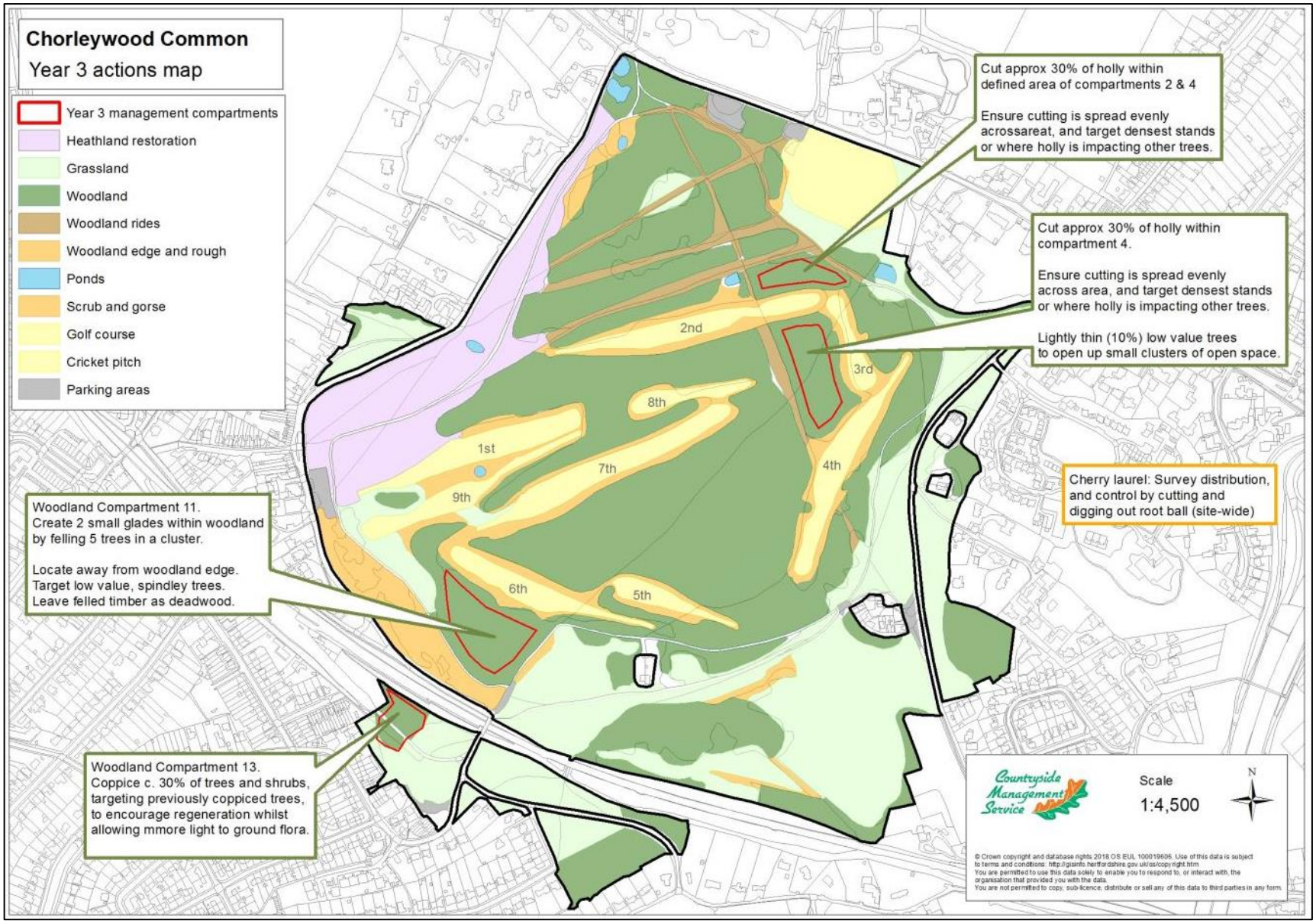
YEAR THREE ACTIONS 2020-21			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution of re-growth; carry out control by digging out seedling	October and February	CWPC 2 days	
Woodland management: Carry out holly cutting and thinning in compartments 2 & 4 as per map and specification.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Create two small glades in compartment 11. Use opportunity to create standing and fallen deadwood.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Re-coppice large trees in compartment 13 which have been coppiced previously. Cut c. 30% of scrub to form small glades to promote regeneration	October and February	CWPC, CMS 4 days	


Chorleywood Common
Year 3 actions map
Year 3 management compartments
Heathland restoration
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking areas
Cut approx 30% of holly within defined area of compartments 2 & 4
Ensure cutting is spread evenly acrossareat, and target densest stands or where holly is impacting other trees.
Cut approx 30% of holly within compartment 4.
Ensure cutting is spread evenly across area, and target densest stands or where holly is impacting other trees.
Lightly thin (10%) low value trees to open up small clusters of open space.
Cherry laurel: Survey distribution, and control by cutting and digging out root ball (site-wide)
Woodland Compartment 11.
Create 2 small glades within woodland by felling 5 trees in a cluster.
Locate away from woodland edge.
Target low value, spindley trees.
Leave felled timber as deadwood.
Woodland Compartment 13.
Coppice c. 30% of trees and shrubs, targeting previously coppiced trees, to encourage regeneration whilst allowing mmore light to ground flora.
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
8th
9th
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:4,500
N
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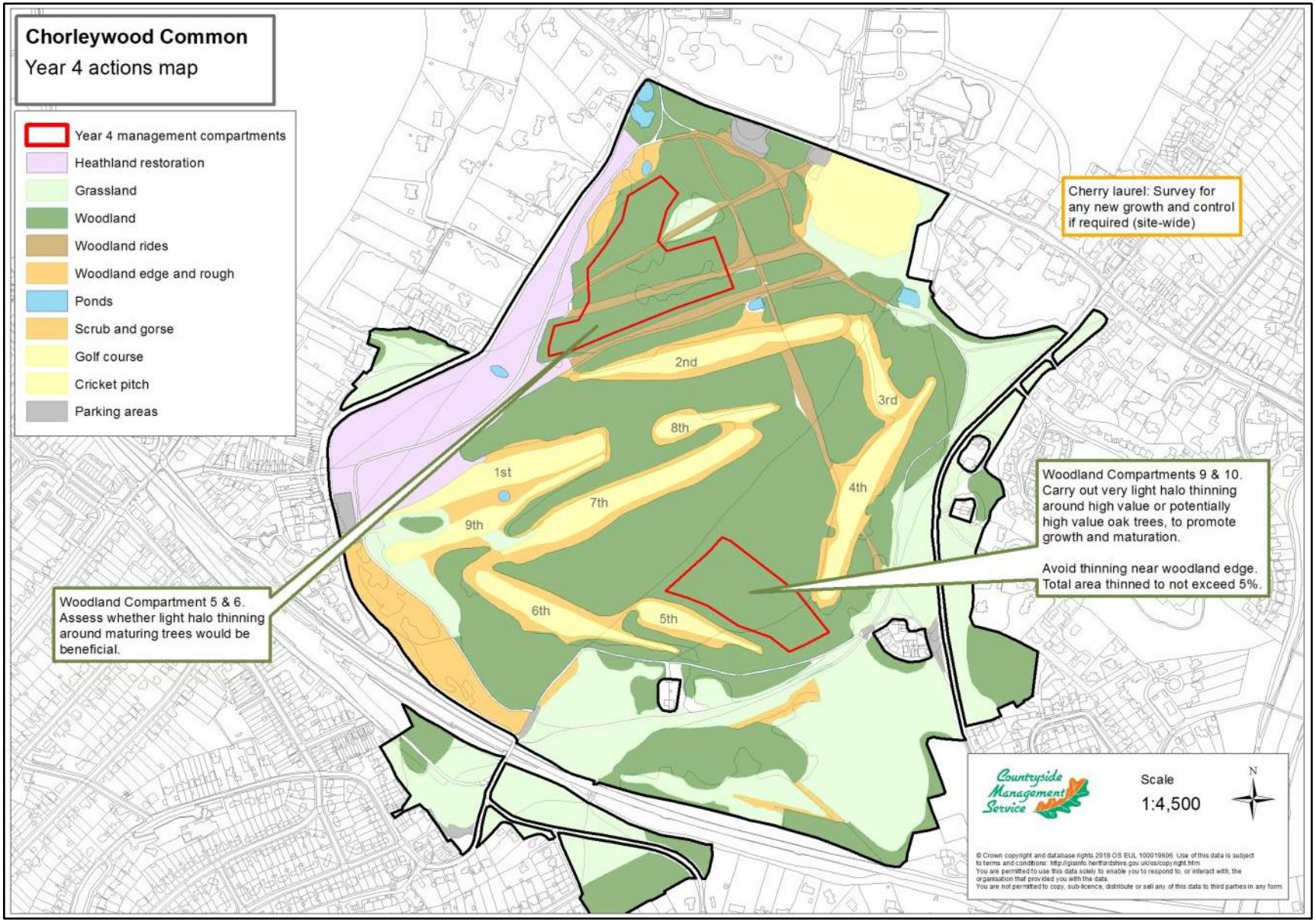
YEAR FOUR ACTIONS 2021-22			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Overall site management: Carry out an assessment of habitats on site and evaluate results of wildlife surveys from past 3 years. Adjust management actions based on above, if required. Re-apply to agri-environment scheme for BAP grasslands and ponds (if available)	Spring 2021	CWPC + CMS	
Cherry laurel: Distribution should now be minimal. Survey on ad-hoc basis and remove any re-growth immediately	Year-round	CWPC 1 day	
Woodland management: Assess whether light halo-thinning around any maturing oak trees would be beneficial, in compartments 5 & 6	October - February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Carry out light halo-thinning around potentially high value oak trees in compartments 9 & 10. Overall thinning to not exceed 5% of area. Use opportunity to create standing and fallen deadwood.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	


Chorleywood Common
Year 4 actions map
Year 4 management compartments
Heathland restoration
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking areas
Cherry laurel: Survey for any new growth and control if required (site-wide)
Woodland Compartments 9 & 10. Carry out very light halo thinning around high value or potentially high value oak trees, to promote growth and maturation.
Avoid thinning near woodland edge. Total area thinned to not exceed 5%.
Woodland Compartment 5 & 6. Assess whether light halo thinning around maturing trees would be beneficial.
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
8th
9th
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:4,500
N
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YEAR FIVE ACTIONS 2022-23			
Action	**When**	**Delivery**	**Achieved**
Cherry laurel: Distribution should now be minimal. Survey on ad-hoc basis and remove any re-growth immediately	Year-round	CWPC 1 day	
Woodland management: Carry out cutting and 30% thinning of holly in compartments 7 & 8	October - February	CWPC 4 days	
Woodland management: Thin eastern half of compartment 8 by maximum of 15-20%, targeting removal of birch trees with low value. Use cluster and halo-thinning to create small gaps around high value oaks and small canopy gaps. Use opportunity to create standing and fallen deadwood.	October - February	CWPC 6 days	
Woodland management: Thin eastern spur of compartment 10 by c. 10%, to open up small areas of space. Target low wildlife value trees. Use opportunity to create standing and fallen deadwood.	October - February	CWPC 4 days	


Chorleywood Common
Year 5 actions map
Year 5 management compartments
Heathland restoration
Grassland
Woodland
Woodland rides
Woodland edge and rough
Ponds
Scrub and gorse
Golf course
Cricket pitch
Parking areas
Cherry laurel: Survey for any new growth and control if required (site-wide)
Woodland Compartment 8.
Light thinning in eastern half of compartment, maximum 15-20%.
Target removal of any birch trees of low-value, in clusters or halo thinning.
Aim to create space for maturation of oak trees and ground regeneration.
Cut approx 30% of holly, which is concentrated at eastern end of compartment.
Woodland Compartment 10.
Thin by c. 10% targeting low-value trees, to open up a little space.
1st
2nd
3rd
5th
6th
7th
8th
9th
Countryside Management Service
Scale
1:4,500
N
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6. Specifications

These specifications are intended as a quick go-to guide to support the maps and actions. Further literature and information is available to guide habitat management.

Grassland and heathland management

General:

Reduce and/ or maintain low nutrient levels across grassland area through cut and collect mowing operation, to promote growth of wildflower and finer grass species. Reducing nutrient levels and regular cutting of dominant grass species such as rye grass, creates favourable conditions for BAP grassland habitat indicators.

- HLS grassland (grazed): Aim to graze with current stocking density for 4-6 weeks from early April; remove cattle for flowering period; undertake a hay cut in late August/ September; aftermath grazing in October for 6 weeks. Cutting not necessary unless cattle unable to access, or grass is vigorous.
- HLS acid grassland (ungrazed): Cut and collect in late September, one cut per year.
- HLS neutral grassland (ungrazed):
    - In areas of high wildflower abundance: Cut and collect in late September, leaving small compartments uncut each year
    - In areas with more vigorous grass growth and low wildflower abundance: Cut and collect twice per year, in April and late September.
- Non-HLS grassland: Cut & collect in April and late September. In areas of vigorous grass growth or high foot-fall, a cut & collect in June will assist access.

Following cut and lift operations, if wildflower abundance does not increase by Year 3 of the GAP, seed harvesting and dispersal or green hay from other areas of the Common could be considered to speed up wildflower dispersal.

Grazing

Low intensity grazing is often the best option for management of grasslands, as livestock create a varied sward and ground which allows opportunities for plants to colonise.

Continue periods of grazing in early season, to reduce grass dominance, and after the hay cut, to remove thatch. Leaving the hay cut to as late in the summer as possible extends the period for flowering and seeding, thereby increasing its value.

Heathland

Due to the limited area and maturity of heath on the Common, this has been rightly treated with care. Continuing transplants of seeds from heather to bare scrapes in the acid grasslands will help to disperse heather through the seedbank.

Over-mature (leggy) heather plants could be cut on an individual basis, if no longer yielding much flower and seed; this should promote re-growth. A trial should be carried out first on a few poor leggy specimens, to see response.
Scarifying ground locally around heather plants should promote germination of seeds in the seedbed, and provide bare ground for new heather seeds to colonise. Do not disrupt existing heather plants.

Woodland management

General

The aim is to encourage and allow the woodland on site to mature into native broadleaved high forest. This will eventually comprise a mixture of mature and veteran trees, young growth, a good proportion of deadwood, and small open spaces such as glades and rides. This will only be achieved over longer time periods as trees grow to maturity; however, small management interventions can speed up the natural progression of trees maturing, and also make woodlands more resilient to environmental pressures.

Mature trees

Protecting and encouraging the next generation of mature trees is vital, particularly of oaks, but also less common species such as rowan and yew.

Carrying out light halo-thinning around semi-mature trees will increase light reaching the base of the trees, which promotes growth of lower limbs and a more rounded structure. Thinning only needs to involve felling a few low-value trees, particularly to the south of potentially high-value specimens. Care should be taken to not open up trees to wind-throw.

Deadwood

The proportion of deadwood across the woodlands should increase, particularly as standing and in-tree deadwood. This can be achieved through:

- Leaving dying trees in place (where there is minimal risk to people)
- Leaving dead and dying limbs in trees
- Where trees are to be felled, use ring-barking and techniques such as coronet cuts to create deadwood features

Fallen deadwood, whether natural or through felling, can be stacked in small piles; it can also be beneficial to leave fallen trees and brash in-situ, to create more natural deadwood situations.

Glades

Opening small glades in areas of dense, spindly tree growth can provide much needed space for regeneration and the growth of saplings and ground flora. Focus on creating glades in dense birch growth, through felling of half-a-dozen trees in a cluster. Avoid felling mature birch or trees with beneficial features such as nesting holes.

Protection of tree saplings can also be beneficial to encourage regeneration and diversify the tree species mix across the site to reflect acid woodland mix: Rowan and yew are notably sparse on site.

Holly

To ensure holly maintains a beneficial and regenerating structure, cutting it on a cycle will reduce the density of the shrub, to allow other species space to grow.

Holly is a species which will usually grow well after being cut, and can be taken down to coppice level (10-20 cm) or pollard level (0.5-1.5m). Aim to achieve the thinning percentages spread across the whole area to be cut, i.e. for a 30% thin, take out every third tree rather than felling a complete one-third section.

Cherry laurel

To remove cherry laurel, cut to stump height in order to remove the bulk of vegetation. Once cut, this can usually be burned on site (subject to permission) in order to reduce the volume of arisings. As herbicides are not used on the Common, dig out the root-ball, using mechanical means if

necessary. Root-balls should be bagged and removed for disposal.

Regrowth will occur, both in locations where laurel has been cut, and where seeds have been dispersed. Removing small seedlings as they emerge, by digging out with a trowel, will reduce future effort.

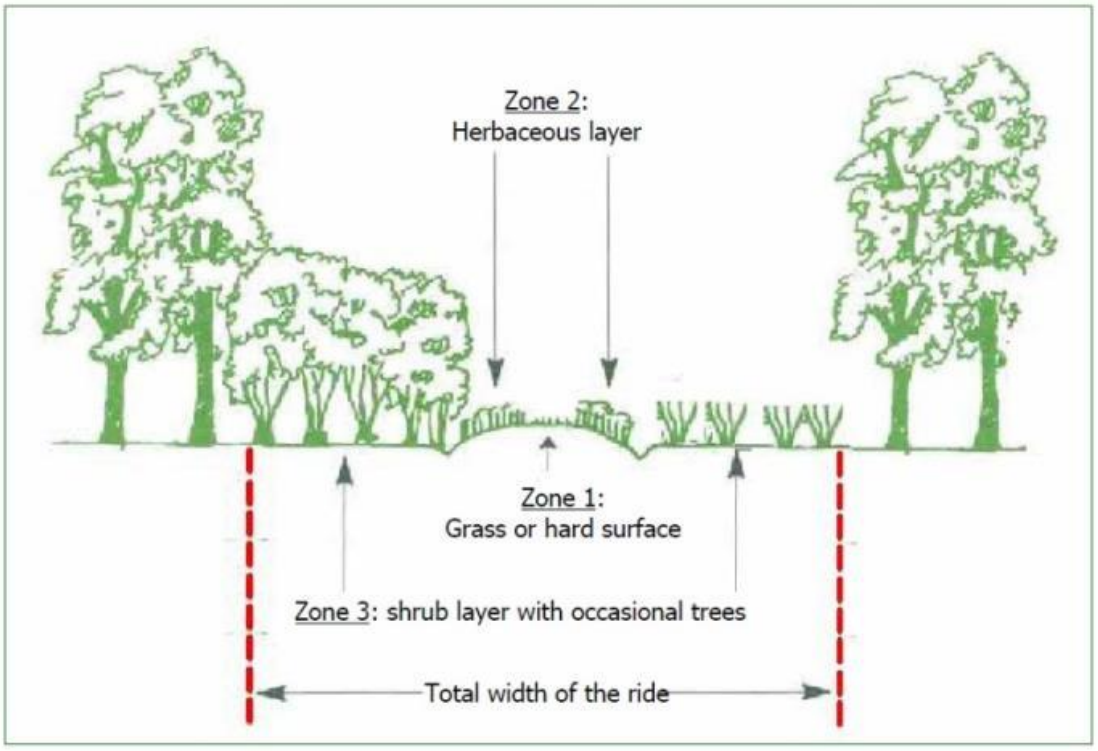
Woodland ride management

3-zone management of rides

A 3-zone ride-management is proposed in order to implement simple yet effective management of the woodland rides and adjacent vegetation. The principle aims of 3-zone ride management have multiple benefits:

- Habitats and wildlife: An ever-changing mix of grass, scrub and woodland edge
- Plant health: Creating a gap to maintain plant health, light, provide a fire-break, and allowing space for trees to mature
- People: Improving the woodland space with vegetation-free footpaths and open space, improved views, and allowing light and warmth to reach the pathway
    - Zone 1 - pathway in centre of ride;
    - Zone 2 - wide grass verges either side of pathway, cut regularly;
    - Zone 3 - Scrub and shrubs cut on a 5 year rotation between verges and mature woodland;
    - Bushy woodland edge abutting Zone 3;

Acid woodlands, as found on Chorleywood Common, are less likely to develop dense, bushy woodland edges; the ride edge should instead incorporate a mix of gorse, scrub, bracken and saplings of birch, yew, rowan and oak. **Aim to increase the width of Zone 3** to c. 10 metres wide along rides, where space allows.



3-zone woodland ride diagram © Forestry Commission

Woodland edge along fairways

The edges of woodlands where they meet open ground can provide areas of significant value for wildlife. A balanced approach to management can also complement neighbouring land uses such as golf courses.

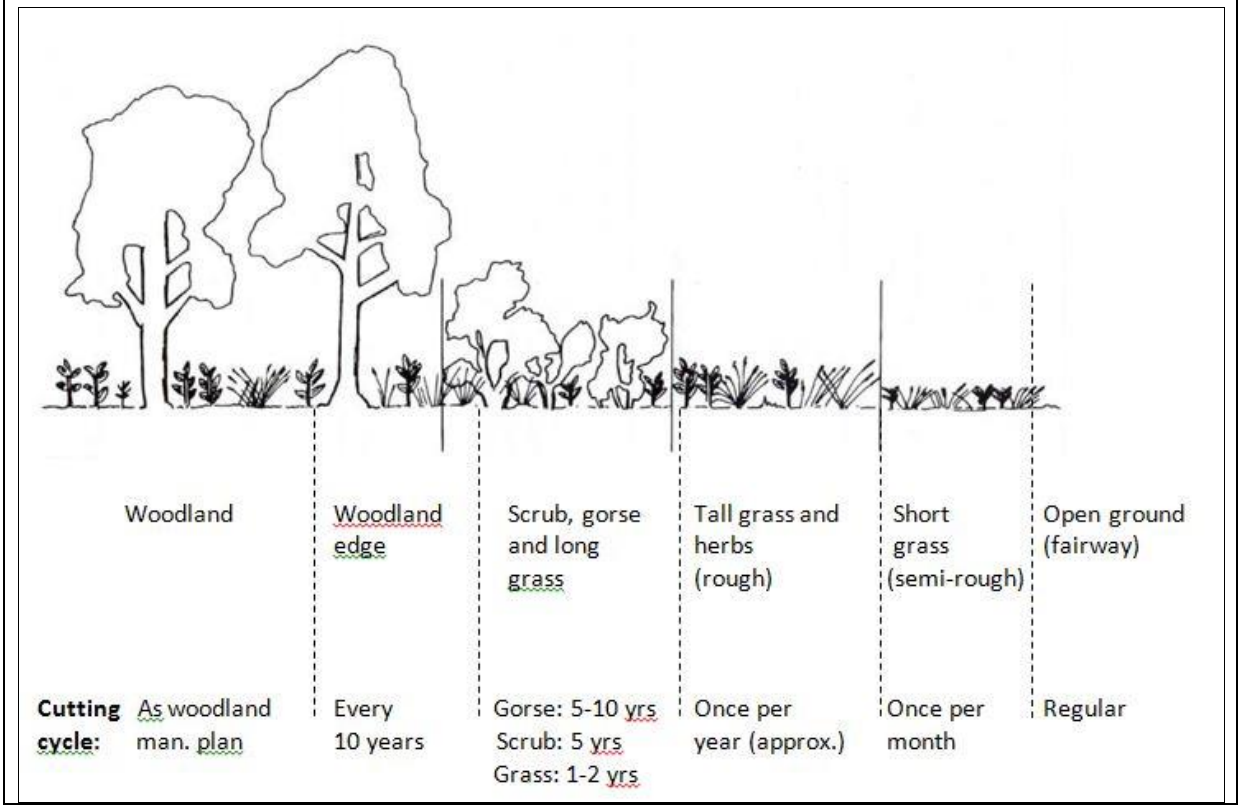
This specification sets out the management principles for the woodland edge zone; it does not set out specific locations for actions to be carried out, due to the length of woodland edge and rough area.

The aim of woodland edge and rough management is to keep the habitat in a perpetual cycle between short grass and mature scrub/ shrub stages. This is typically a 5-10 year cycle for scrub and gorse zone, and 2-3 years for long grass. Remember nature does not do 'straight lines'; varying the width and management of the zones within this habitat offers greater opportunities for biodiversity.

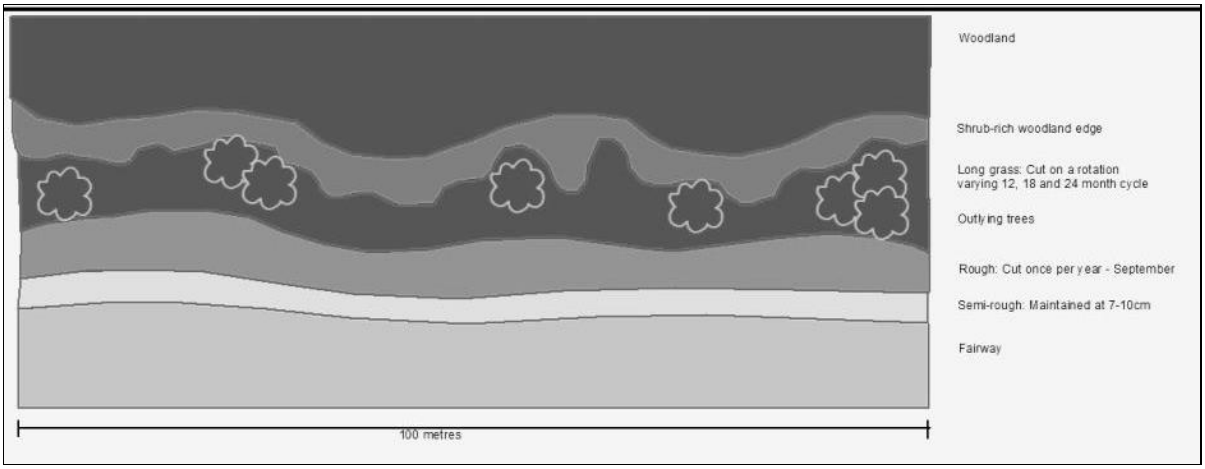
On Chorleywood Common, allow tall grassland zones (outside of the golf course rough) to grow on 2 year rotations; where scrub is establishing, particularly gorse, allow this to grow and only cut once it becomes degenerate. Allow time for vegetation to grow naturally and work with what grows, rather than being tempted to tidy the area up; this is, after all, a part of the woodland rather than amenity space.

The following cross sectional diagram represents a well-structured woodland edge, and includes how regularly management should be carried out for each zone of the habitat:

Diagram adapted from: Scrub edge cross section (English Nature The Wildlife Trusts 1999: The Grassland Management Handbook. English Nature and the Wildlife Trusts)



In plan view, the transitions between each zone should be as undulating as possible. Allowing outlying trees to grow out from the woodland edge is beneficial.



To assist with management responsibility and clarify areas:

Area	Management	Responsible
Greens, fairways and tees	Regular cut	CWC Golf Club
Semi-rough	Approx. 1 metre wide adjacent to fairways Maintained to a height of approx. 7.5cm (3”).	CWC Golf Club
Rough	Approx. 1 metre wide adjacent to semi-rough. Cut once per year in September, after seeding of grasses and wildflowers.	CWC Golf Club
Long grass outside of golf course rough	Cut grassland on a two year cut and collect cycle; cut half of each length in one year, the other half in second year	CW Parish Council
Scallops	Maintain and create small scallops into woodland edge, as tall grass, heath and scrub	CW Parish Council
Scrub and gorse	Cut on a rotation of 5 years for scrub areas and 10-15 years for gorse	CW Parish Council
Trees at edges of fairway	Maintain current line of woodland edge as the maximum width, and protect saplings that establish within scrub and gorse zone.	CW Parish Council

Parking area banks
Aim: To make the banks surrounding the parking areas more attractive, easier to manage, and increase diversity of plants. To create shorter vegetation and reduce nutrient levels, increase number of cut and lifts on banks to three per year: April: To reduce early season grass density to create space for finer species June: To reduce mid-season growth of tall grass, nettles and scrub, to open up space for wildflower development October: To remove end of season growth to reduce amount of vegetation available to decay, thereby reducing nutrient levels To speed up establishment of wildflower species: Following harvesting of wildflower seeds from acid-neutral grass areas, and the final grass cut on the banks (October), carrying out seed spreading. Seeds stand a better chance to establish if bare ground is available, yet require surrounding short vegetation for shelter. Use a mechanical scarifier or hand-held rake to create small areas of bare ground amongst grass. Aim for a total of 30% bare ground, made up of small patches. Scatter seeds on to bare ground. Mixing seeds with a small amount of sand or sawdust can help with establishment and controlling soil moisture.

7. Contact details

Countryside Management Service
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Hertfordshire County Council I County Hall I Pegs Lane, Hertford I SG13 8DN
 01992 555604 (Comnet 25604)

Chorleywood Parish Council
South Lodge
Rickmansworth Road
Chorleywood
Herts WD3 5SL
 01923 285594

Appendix 1

Interpretation and way-marking project

In year one of the GAP, a distinct project will deliver new and bespoke interpretation for Chorleywood Common. The renewal of multiple features will be treated as one project to ensure all signs and way-markers follow a single design brief, and are appropriate designs for Chorleywood. There is not an ambition to increase the amount of signage on the Common, but to improve the quality and usefulness of what exists. An allocated budget has been established to deliver this project, which will include:

- Renewed structures for interpretation boards to be attached to (as per current locations at main access points (7 no.)
- Interpretation boards with revised map and descriptions of the Common
- Attractive and engaging code of conduct signs to be attached to interpretation boards (+ other locations such as way-markers).
- The by-laws will be displayed in full on the reverse of interpretation boards for further details, as required
- Way-markers to show the circular routes and permissive horse track, in-keeping with the rural aspect of the Common
- Welcome signs at 2-3 key parking area locations around the Common, to identify the site.
- Leaflets and accompanying online materials

Materials used for interpretation will be in-keeping with the nature of the site, being rustic and timber, with the potential to use timber from on site.

Signage will be kept to a minimum; once users are on site beyond the parking areas, there will not be additional signage around the Common, preserving the natural feel to the place.

Appendix 2

List of amendments made to GAP following public engagement, April 2018.

Proposed amendments following public engagement	Page
Insert in 'woodland – general management': Guidance on Ivy.	15
Insert in 'Compartment 12: Calcareous grassland restoration zone': Guidance on soil scrape.	18
Insert in 'woodland edges and rides': Guidance on enhancing woodland edges and 3 zone rides.	19 + annual management map
Insert in 'Amenity areas': Guidance on long grass margins along woodland rides.	22 + annual management map
Grassland (in Conservation & Heritage): Tweaked alteration to management of grasslands to provide longer flowering periods and protection for invertebrates: HLS grassland (grazed): Aim to graze with current stocking density for 4-6 weeks from early April; remove cattle for flowering period; undertake a hay cut in late August/ September; aftermath grazing in October for 6 weeks. HLS acid grassland (ungrazed): Cut and collect in late September. HLS neutral grassland: Cut and collect in late September, with additional cut & collect in April on areas of vigorous grass growth.	28 + annual management map
Annual management action tables and maps: Alterations to actions on annual maps and action tables, to reflect the above amendments.	34-46