Oxleas Woods Management Plan

2008

Oxleas Meadow

Incorporating the 1995 Oxleas Woodlands Management Brief (by John Archer, London Ecology Unit, in consultation with Andrew Gordan and the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party) and the 2001 Addendum produced by Nick Radford (English Nature), in consultation with Greenwich Council, John Archer (GLA), and Jeremy Cotton (GWAG and advisor to the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party).

Greenwich Council

PART I: WHERE WE ARE NOW

INTRODUCTION:

What is a park management plan?

Management Plans are an important aid to the efficient and effective management of a site. A Plan forms part of a process for evaluating performance against agreed standards, consulting and involving people, strategic planning and providing continuity. Individual plans are specific to each park and will deliver aims and objectives specific to the needs of the local community who will be directly involved in its formulation.

A Park Management Plan also provides an excellent opportunity to collate a wealth of information relating to the park that the management authority possesses, into a single comprehensive document.

Name of Site: Oxleas Wood, Jackwood, Shepherdleas Wood (known collectively as Oxleas Woods), Oxleas Meadows, Castlewood, Falconwood Field, Deansfield and Eltham Common.

Address: Shooters Hill Road/Welling Way/Rochester Way

If you require any further details about this plan please contact:

Address: Parks & Open Spaces:
Shooters Hill depot
Opposite Eaglesfield Rd
Woolwich
SE18 4LX

Tel. 020 8856 0100

Email parks@greenwich.gov.uk

This site is allocated a technical officer who can be contacted for any further information (using the contact details provided above).

Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Group (SHWWP)
Oxleas Woods has a dedicated community group; the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party. This was set up by Greenwich Council at the end of 1994 in response to concerns of local people at the lack of management in the woodlands at that time.

The Working Party is comprised of local Councillors, Council officers and representatives from local groups.

Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party can be contacted through their representative; Laurie Baker, at laurie.baker@btinternet.com

Due for Revision:
Writing Timescale:
Approved:
Adopted:

Purpose of this management plan

In 1995, the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party formed and developed a Management Brief for the management of the SSSI site within Oxleas Woodlands (Oxleas Wood, Shepherdleas Wood and Jackwood). The Management Brief was developed by the former London Ecology Unit in consultation with English Nature. It was reviewed in 2001 by Nick Radford (English Nature) in consultation with Lee Beasley (London Borough of Greenwich), John Archer (Greater London Authority) and Jeremy Cotton (Greenwich Wildlife Advisory Group advisor to Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party) and an addendum was produced. The 1995 brief and the 2001 Addendum are still relevant and have been incorporated into this plan, which also includes Oxleas Meadow, Falconwood Field, Deansfield, Castle Wood and the Falconwood in its remit.

As well as developing a Green Space Strategy, the production of individual management plans for parks and open spaces is good practice and is in accordance with the Council's commitment to providing Best Value.

It is envisaged that this plan (incorporating the 1995 plan and 2001 addendum) will provide a framework around which any future decisions concerning this site will be taken and will assist with allocating existing and securing additional resources for developments on this site that this management plan specifies.

Future actions/priorities for this site are identified in the Action Plan to this document. This management plan therefore should provide a benchmark against which future progress can be measured.

Wider Policy Context

The Management Plan has been updated within the context of a wide framework of national, regional and local policy statements and strategies.

A number of strategies have been considered in the production of this document to ensure that the priorities identified in this plan deliver and compliment the appropriate aims and objectives identified in them.

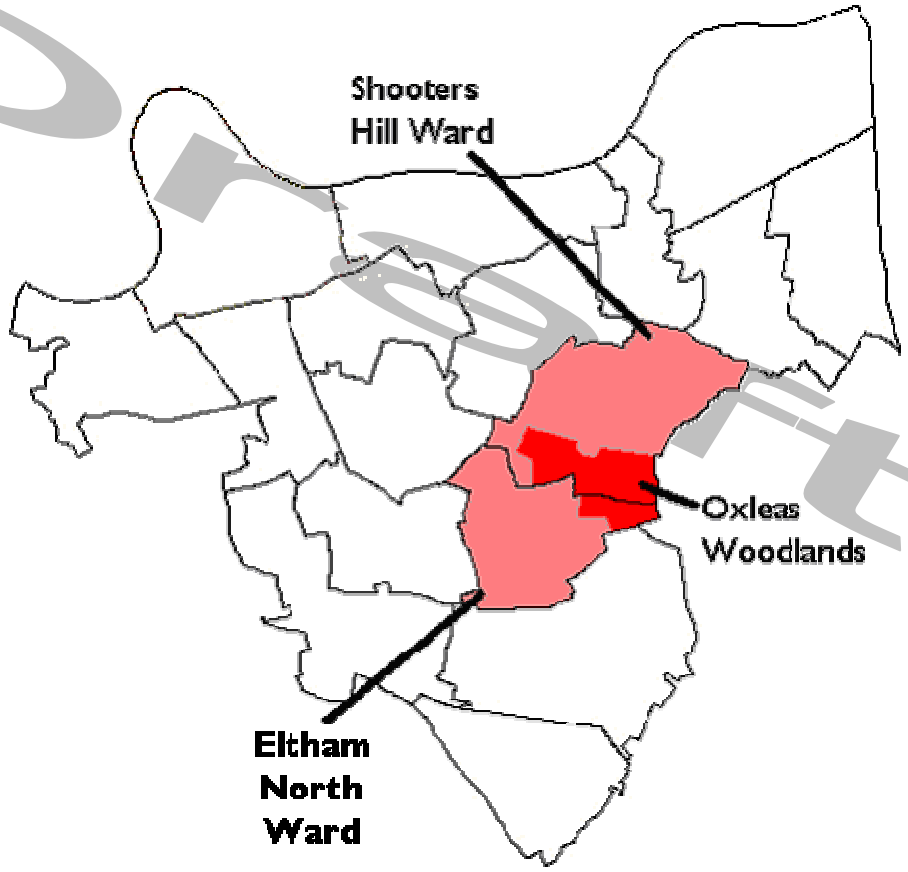
The main documents impacting on the development of this plan are listed in Appendix II.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND INFORMATION BASE

Heritage and history

A summary of Oxleas Woodlands heritage and history can be found in Appendix III.

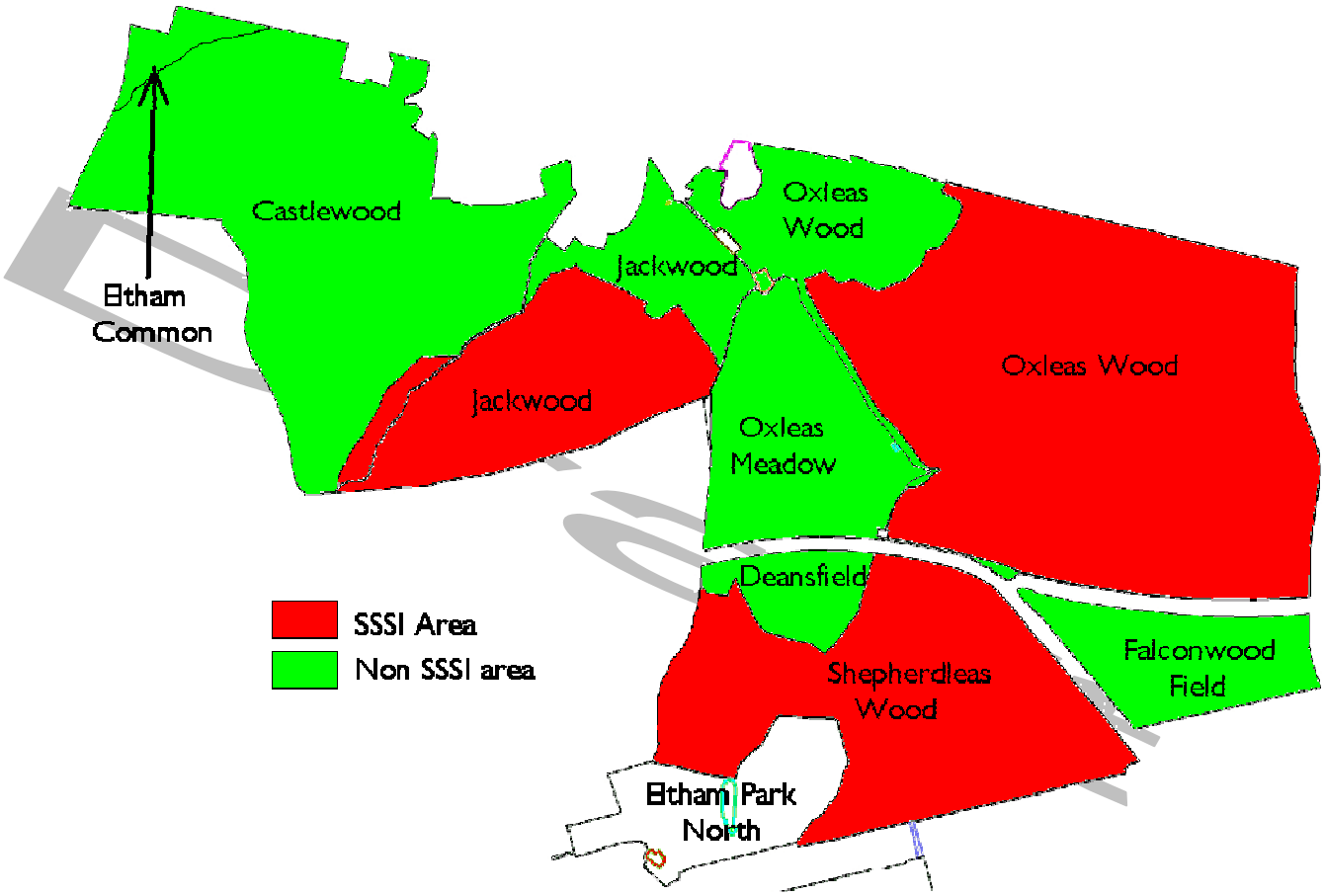
Brief Description of the site (Physical)



Location of the Woods within the Greenwich Borough

This Management Plan covers Oxleas Wood, Shepherdleas Wood and Jackwood (as covered by the 1995 Management Brief and 2001 Addendum), Oxleas Meadow, Falconwood Field, Deansfield, Castle Wood and the Falconwood Field, which together occupy a total area of approximately 133.5 hectares and is surrounded by residential property on most of their borders. Parks of this size are classified by the London plan, 2004, as Metropolitan Parks

Oxleas Wood, Shepherdleas Wood and Jackwood are notified by English Nature as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The SSSI area covers a total area of 77 hectares within the park (See map below).



Map showing names and SSSI status

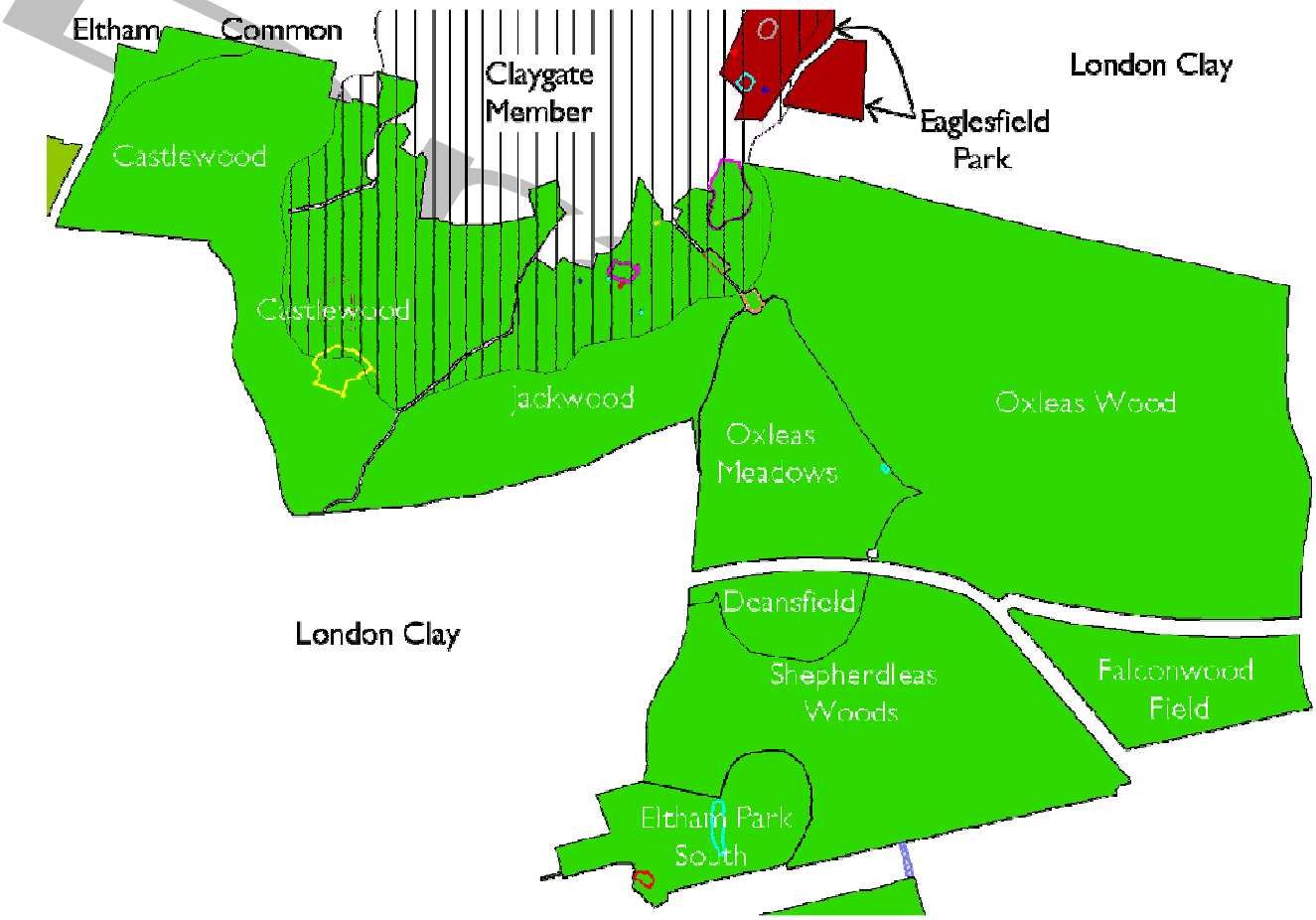
Records of Oxleas Woodlands date back to the 12th century, and their management is known from the mid-14th century. In 1311, the Royal manor of Eltham was established and included the woods. The woods passed out of crown occupation in 1679 when they were leased to Sir John Shaw, whose family managed them until 1811, when they were taken over by the War Department. The woods were acquired by the London County Council for public recreation in 1930, and opened to the public in 1934. Ownership passed from the Greater London Council to the London Borough of Greenwich on abolition of the GLC in 1986.
Records show that most of the woodlands were managed for many centuries by coppicing. However, most of the standard trees were clear felled in the mid 19th century, and there is now little evidence of coppicing to be seen except in the south-eastern half of Oxleas Wood. Only very small areas have been coppiced in the last 50 years or more. A more detailed history of Oxleas Woodlands can be found in Appendix III.

The woodland is comprised of a large area of varying slope and aspect, facing south to west, and has a height range of approximately 70 metres above sea level to 120 metres above sea level.

Oxleas, Shepherdleas and Jackwood form an extensive area of ancient woodland on the southern and eastern slopes of Shooters Hill. The woods lie largely on the London Clay, giving rise to slightly acidic soils, which are poorly drained in places, particularly in flatter areas. Oxleas Wood drains eastward

and Shepherdleas drains southeast, both to the river shuttle, while Jack Wood drains south-west to the river Quaggy.

The geology of London Clay and Claygate member gives rise to acidic soils over the entire site, which is poorly drained because the underlying geology resists infiltration and encourages overland flow.
Oxleas Wood drains eastward and Shepherdleas drains southeast, both to the river shuttle, while Jack Wood drains southwest to the river Quaggy.



Map showing woodland sites and geology

A network of footpaths of varying widths crosses the woodlands. The Green Chain Walk runs through Oxleas Wood. A public bridleway bisects Oxleas Wood roughly from north to south, and two other paths in Oxleas Woods are permissive bridleways.

The woodlands in this plan are categorised in the Greenwich Green Space Strategy guidelines, as having a primary purpose classification of Natural/Semi-natural open space.

The site is an 'open site' meaning it is open 24 hours a day, every day.

Management of the site

Management Structure

The management of the woodlands described in this management plan is the responsibility of the Parks & Open Spaces department within Greenwich Council. This is shown in Appendix IV.

The Parks and Open Spaces department is located within the Directorate of Culture and Community Services. The Parks and Open Spaces Operations Manager is accountable for the overall management responsibility of the Service.

Individual management functions are devolved and key functions are identified as follows:

- Horticultural Maintenance
- Park Keepers, Rangers and Parks Security
- Parks Development
- Fixed Equipment Playgrounds
- Ecology & conservation
- Tree & Woodland maintenance
- Administration – Sports lettings, complaints monitoring

The Parks and Open Spaces gardening staff carries out regular maintenance and are based at the Shooters Hill depot. The mobile Park Keeping staff carry out routine litter clearance on a regular basis and the Parks Security (Based at Well Hall Pleasaunce) carry out periodic monitoring of the site.

Budget Information
The budgets used to maintain parks and open spaces are currently split into two areas, Horticulture Operations and Property Services.

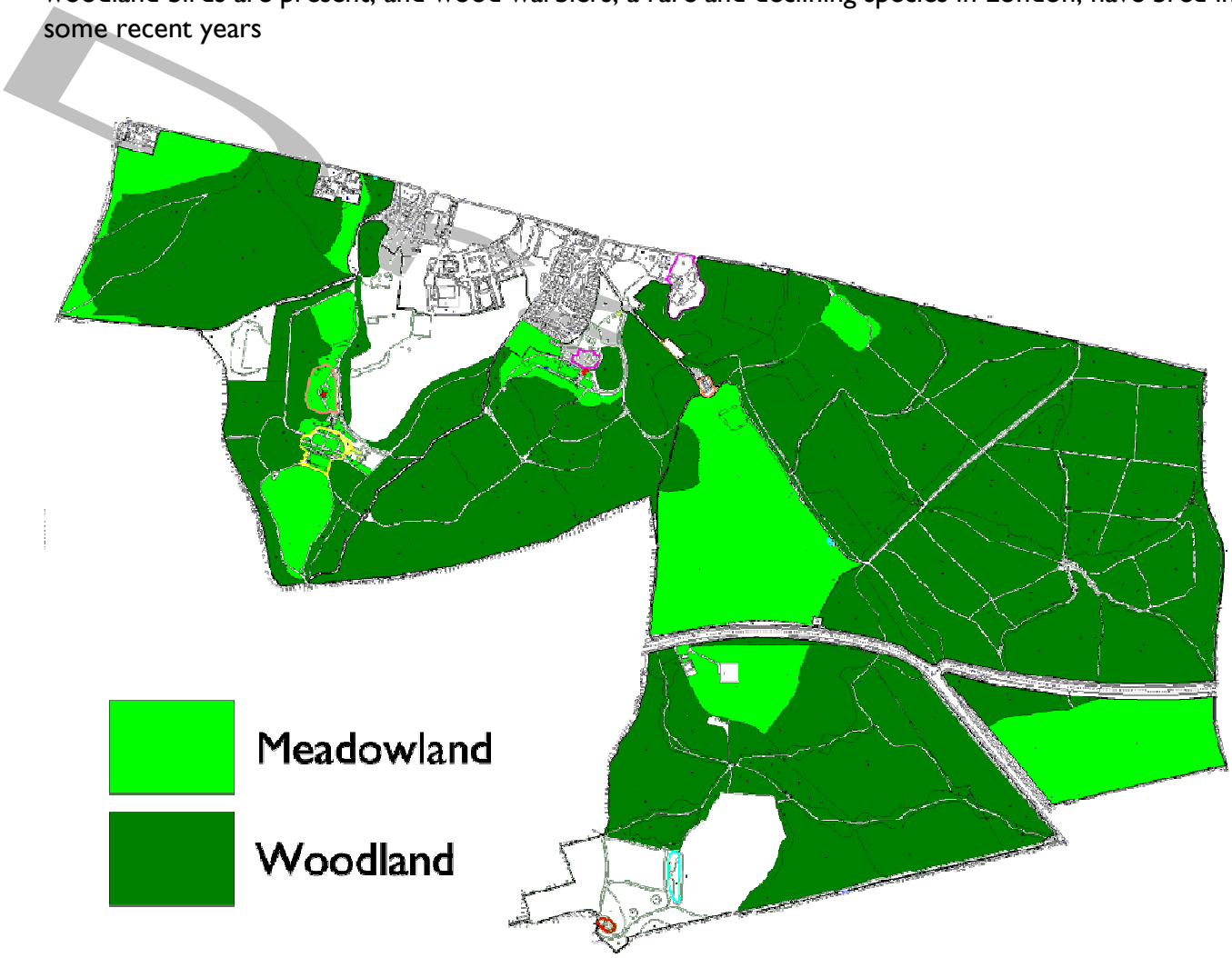
Horticulture operations
Currently it is not possible to identify expenditure specifically related to Oxleas Woodlands, as finances generally come from a central fund.

Property Services
The corporate budgets for both planned and responsive maintenance of the Council's property infrastructure are held by Greenwich Property Services in the Directorate of Strategic Planning. Planned works are carried out on a strict basis of corporate priorities and, as a consequence, P&OS have to compete against other service departments for a share of the limited funds available. Responsive repairs are carried out for minor items as and when they arise.

Marketing
The Council's current marketing of Oxleas Woodland is currently limited. There is a section on the Greenwich Council website devoted to parks and Oxleas has a page in this section, but the information on Oxleas Woodland in this section is currently brief. Other websites contain information on Oxleas woodlands for example, Wikipedia (http://wikipedia.org/) which contains a short description (stub) on the Oxleas Woodlands. Other websites set up by cyclists detail rides in the area and list Oxleas as being a good place to ride mountain bikes.

Biological
The woodland canopy is largely dominated by oak, with a particularly large number of mature specimens. The under storey consists mostly of sweet chestnut and hazel. The woods are particularly rich in tree and shrub species. The population of wild service-tree is particularly important, being numerous, widespread and with a good age range from saplings to mature specimens. The ground

flora, as is typical of woodlands on acidic soils, is not particularly diverse, and is mostly dominated by bramble and, locally, bracken. It does, however contain a substantial number of ancient woodland indicators, though mostly in small quantities. Of these, southern wood-rush (Luzula forsteri) and butcher's-broom are rare in London. The more diverse ground flora communities are generally found where drainage is poor. The Oxleas woodlands support diverse assemblages of fungi and invertebrates, the latter including several Red Data Book species. A wide range of common woodland birds are present, and wood warblers, a rare and declining species in London, have bred in some recent years



Overall area of Oxleas Woodlands showing woodland coverage

Oxleas Wood:

Most of Oxleas Wood is dominated by pedunculate oak, with birch and sweet chestnut frequent. Ash is locally abundant, aspen occasional and wild cherry forms a stand in the northwest. There is a wide age distribution of trees. Much of the area contains a good shrub layer of hazel. Other shrub species present include hawthorn, Midland hawthorn, Guelder rose, wild service tree, dogwood, blackthorn and wayfaring tree, as well as considerable amounts of the invasive alien rhododendron, especially in the north. In parts of the southeast of the wood, hazel and sweet chestnut have been coppiced. There are also several stands of old hornbeam coppice, long neglected. On the northern edge is a small flush where alder is the dominant tree, with sallow and hazel below. All these factors produce an excellent and varied woodland structure. The ground flora is dominated by bramble and, locally, bracken. Bluebell, wood sage and wood millet are widespread, and wood sorrel, wood anemone, southern wood-rush and wood melick, wood meadow-grass, butchers-broom and broad buckler-fern

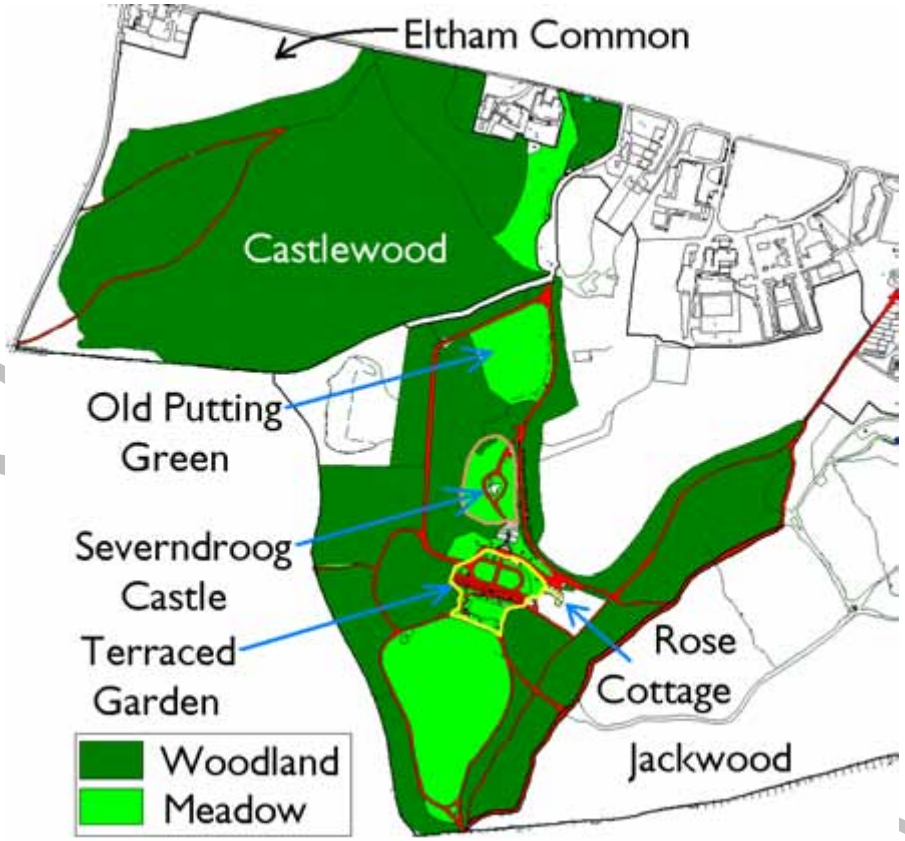
all present in small amounts. A meandering seasonal stream crosses the wood and its banks support hairy wood-rush, remote sedge and giant fescue. Ground flora in the alder wood includes wild angelica and pendulous sedge.

Shepherdleas Wood:
Like Oxleas, Shepherdleas wood is dominated by pedunculate oak with associated birch and sweet chestnut and a hazel under storey. There is a strong population of wild service-tree on the western boundary. Much of Shepherdleas shows signs of past coppicing, but little or no coppicing has taken place in the last 50 or more years. A network of drainage ditches support soft-rush, remote and wood sedges, tufted hair-grass and hairy wood-rush.

Jackwood
In the northern part of Jackwood, the London Clay is overlain with deposits of Plateau Gravel and Claygate Beds, which produce better-drained, more acidic soils. The canopy in this part of Jackwood is dominated by sessile oak. The shrub layer in Jackwood is less well developed, perhaps due to localised clearance work in the past. The aerial photos show that the Sessile Oak dominated canopy and sparse undergrowth follows the geology closely through this area and Castlewood. There are substantial eroded areas of bare ground. Sycamore and rhododendron re-growth are evident. A seasonal stream, probably the best in the Oxleas woodlands, supports yellow pimpernel and most of the other wetland plants mentioned earlier.

The northern part of Jackwood also contains a formal garden area that consists mainly of grassed area, approximately half of which is walled off and is only accessible by one entrance.

Castlewood
As with Jackwood, the geology in the northern part of the area consists of deposits of Plateau Gravel and Claygate beds overlaid on London Clay, producing a more freely draining and more acidic soil than that found in the southern part of the area. As with the Jackwood, the canopy in the northern area, (roughly corresponding with the Claygate bed geology, this can be seen on aerial photographs) are dominated by sessile oak. Jackwood is broken up by a band of amenity grass and regeneration grass that runs from north to south through this area. This band contains a regeneration meadow that was formerly a putting green, Severndroog Castle, a rose garden and a terraced viewing area.



Castlewood. (areas in white are not part of the wood)

Oxleas Meadow

Oxleas Meadow consists of a large south facing area of amenity grass. It contains an ancient hedgerow and an area of grass with mature oaks and young wild service trees. Next to the hedgerow, there is a small area that is maintained as natural meadow.

Deansfield

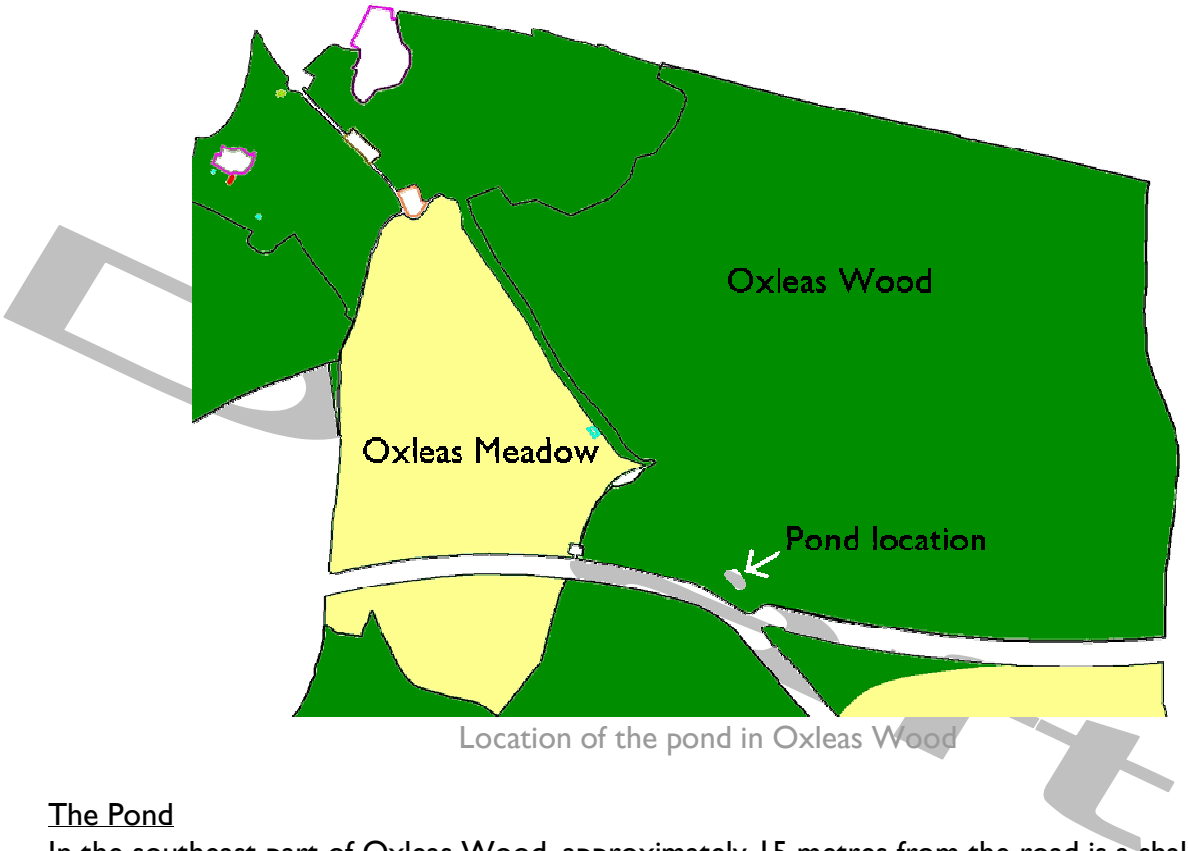
Deansfield is an area of open land enclosed by the northern side of Shepherdleas woods. It consists of a large open space that is fenced off to the public and left unmown in order to encourage woodland species to naturally encroach on the meadow. It has been in this state for approximately 10-15 years and woodland species appear to be colonising the space effectively.

Regenerating woodland in Deansfield

Fungi

Fungi within Oxleas Woodlands are abundant and include scarce and rare species. A fungi survey in November 2002 by Andy Overall of the London Fungi Recording Group noted several practices that were identified as being detrimental to fungi growth.

- Rhododendrons, where they are re-growing
- Over compacted pathways
- Over proliferation of brambles
- Sycamore and other alien tree species



Location of the pond in Oxleas Wood

The Pond

In the southeast part of Oxleas Wood, approximately 15 metres from the road is a shallow pond. This pond is almost dry during the height of summer, but fills during wetter weather. This pond is a breeding ground for frogs and newts, including the Palmate Newt (Lissotriton helviticus), which is the rarest species of newt in the London area. During 2006, in a joint effort between the SHWWP and the Council, the pond was dug out to assist with retaining water.

Buildings and structures

Oxleas Meadow

Oxleas Meadow contains four buildings; the café at the northern edge of the meadow, the Electricity Substation building, and the reservoir and Pump station building in the southern part of the meadow.

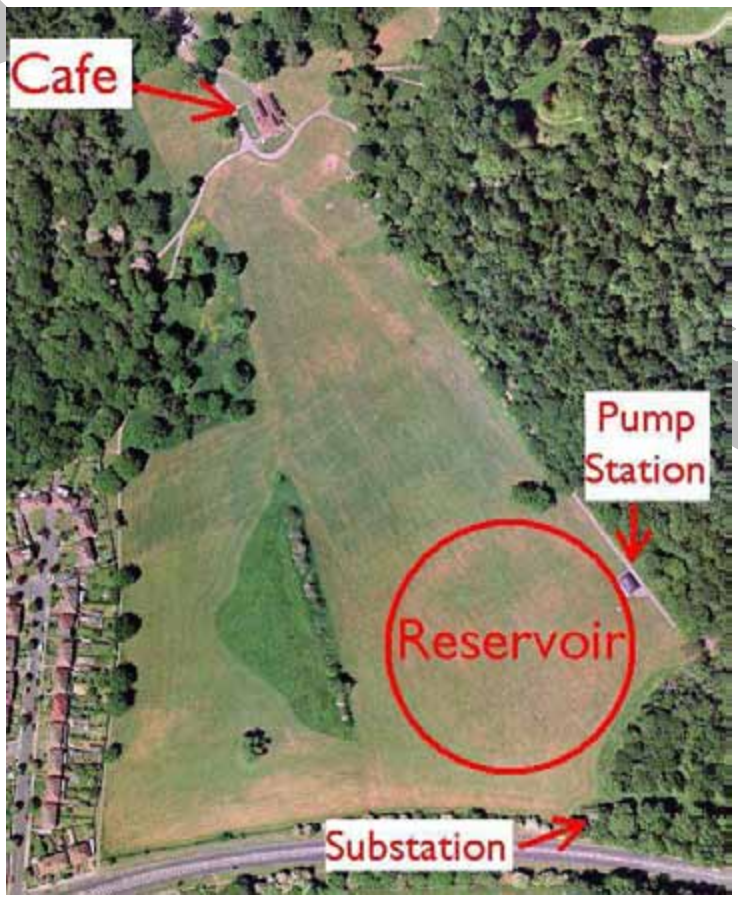
The café building is of brick construction and is owned by the Council. Public male and female toilets are also located in this building and are during the café opening hours. The café part of the building is leased to the café operator. The area around the south of the building overlooking the meadow has been fenced off and there are picnic tables and benches installed (this area was fenced off to stop dog walkers bringing their dogs into the café). During the summer, the outdoor area is well used and is a popular venue for everyone using the woods. During the winter or during rainy weather, the patrons tend to group inside. This can be a problem as the café area is too small to accommodate more than approximately 10 people inside.

The Pump Station is located near the south east corner of the meadow and is closed off to the public. It is of brick construction and contains machinery necessary for the functioning of the Reservoir that is located underneath the southern part of the meadow. It is owned by Thames Water Utilities. The building is frequently vandalised, so Thames Water Utilities are investigating two alternatives to stop vandalism. The two options are – fencing the current building off to try and stop

the vandalism or demolishing the building and installing the equipment currently in the building underground, the only evidence of which will be a manhole.

The Reservoir is buried under the southern part of the meadow and is owned and operated by Thames Water Utilities. The presence of the reservoir means that it is not possible to hold large events or park more than a couple of cars on top of this area, as the weight would break through the roof of the reservoir.

The Electricity Substation is on the southern edge of Oxleas meadow and is owned and operated by the London Electricity Board. It is fenced off from the park by a 2 metre security fence.



Location of buildings in Oxleas Meadow

Castlewood
Castlewood has two buildings within it, Rose Cottage and Severndroog Castle.

Rose Cottage is currently on a secure lease.

Sevendroog Castle is a large folly that was built in 1784. It is a Grade II listed building and is on the English Heritage Greater London Buildings at risk register. Local people have formed the Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust in order to restore and reopen the castle.
The castle was included in BBC TV's Restoration programme in 2004 and received much publicity. The Trust has been working hard with expert consultants on planning a scheme and they intend to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund next year for a substantial grant to restore the castle and bring it back into beneficial use.

Severndroog Castle

On the western side of Castlewood there is a reservoir that is on council property, but is not considered part of the park and is fenced off. This reservoir is currently being repaired, as it is subject to "downhill creep" and is badly cracked. The repair will involve ground anchors being drilled back into the hillside underneath the park to prevent further movement. Creep is a slow mass land movement associated with successive wet and dry ground conditions usually on clay geology.

Jackwood
Jackwood has a number of structures in its northern section, within a large area of formal terraced gardens. The structures are mainly shelters that were built as part of the formal gardens. These shelters are frequently vandalised, and are gradually deteriorating over time.
Also within the formal garden area are the toilet buildings. These buildings have been vandalised and are currently closed to the public.

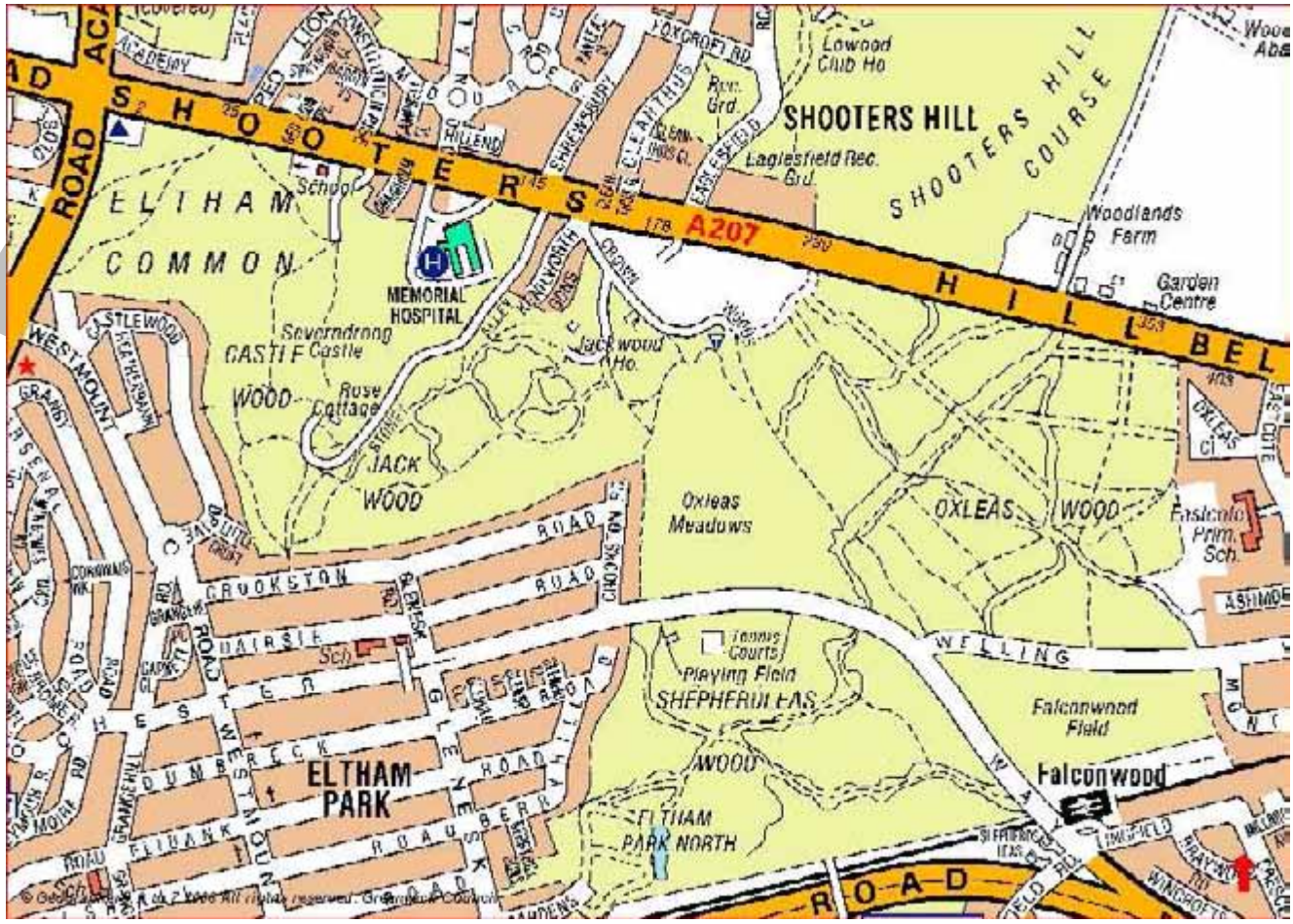
Deansfield
Deansfield contains a scout hut that is owned by the Scout association and used by the 1st Royal Eltham scout group. The scout hut was burnt during the spring of 2006 and at the time of writing is derelict and has large amounts of rubbish around it.

Scout hut

Deansfield also contains a disused tennis court which is scheduled for removal by the property services department once funding becomes available.

Oxleas Wood, Shepherdleas Wood, Falconwood Field and Eltham Common
These areas have no buildings within them.

Access to the site



Map showing train stations.

The nearest train station to the parks is Falconwood train station on the Bexleyheath line, to the south of Falconwood field. The station to the west of Falconwood station is Eltham Station and the station to the east is the Welling station.

Buses servicing shooters Hill Road are numbers 89, 486, 244 and N89.

Fencing and Furniture

The park boundaries are fenced where the parks back onto private land, but are unfenced in most cases where it is adjacent to a road.

There are litter bins scattered throughout the parks of differing designs. The parks department is at present replacing many of the bins that have become rusty/rotten and in order to achieve design continuity.

The London County Council acquired Oxleas in or around 1936, and any fencing existing then was a result of pre-war policy. The removal of fences in Jackwood was made a matter of policy (M.Dunk, GLC manager, 1974), which helped to encourage the natural regeneration of tree seedlings, which were then used to replant other GLC properties. Rationale for this was based on the fact that in natural woodland up to the middle ages, wild boar formed part of the woodland fauna. By foraging in the leaf layer and disturbing the upper layers of the soil, they assisted in the germination of seeds that they did not eat. When wild boar became extinct in the British Isles, the use of woodlands for feeding swine under the common rights of pannage maintained this method of regeneration. The

removal of fences in Oxleas woodlands by the GLC allowed disturbance of the leaf litter layer by humans, and more especially dogs. The parks department is investigating fencing off some areas again, as disturbance in some areas has prevented, rather than encouraged regeneration.

Other fences and furniture within the parks are as follows:

Oxleas Meadow

There is a fence around the café to prevent dogs from entering the dining area. (see picture below) Within the dining area are a number of picnic tables for patrons of the café. Just outside the western side of the dining area is a drinking fountain. This fountain is of an older design that was specially installed for dog walkers, as it has a special bowl for dogs at its base which water drains into from the top.

Café dining area

Also in Oxleas Meadow, there is an ancient hedge bisecting the meadow from north to south and there is a hedge down the eastern edge of the meadow that was re-laid in early 2005.

The Hedgerow on the eastern side of the meadow is composed of mainly hawthorn (Crataegus spp) with some self-seeded oak. This hedgerow is rather special as it contains some examples of butchers broom (Ruscus aculeatus), which is used as an indicator of ancient woodland, as it rarely grows in regenerated woodland. It was the presence of this plant that aided the campaign to stop the East London River Crossing putting a road through Oxleas Wood. This hedgerow was re-laid in 2004 by the GLLAB New Deal project.

The hedge that bisects the meadow consists of a sparse line of mature Hawthorn. The hedgerow was to be re-laid around 2004 by the GLLAB New Deal project, but funding ran out before the project was undertaken.

Jackwood

The council depot is separated from the park by bricked walls of varying height. Part of these walls extends to form the back of the upper terrace garden and the surrounds of the Walled/Secret garden. The upper terrace garden and the walled garden are of historic importance due to their association with the gardens of Jackwood House (no longer in existence). These gardens are within the area defined by the Greenwich Unitary Development Plan as being of Archaeological Potential.

Part of the upper terrace garden

Main uses, recreational facilities, visitor attractions and activities

The main use of the wood is by dog walkers. Other users include mountain biking, horse riding, nature appreciation and open space recreation (such as kite flying, ball games, etc).

There is no recreational infrastructure in the wood, so recreation within the site is limited to passive recreation. The only infrastructure on the site is the parks furniture, as previously described, the fences and the café and toilets.

The main visitor attraction is the woodland itself. As the one of the few areas of ancient woodland within the London area, it is quite a large attraction, although marketing of this is currently limited. While Oxleas woodlands are mentioned by quite a large number of websites, there appears to be few references to Oxleas elsewhere.

Walks organised by the Parks & Open Spaces ranger service take place every Thursday morning and every second Sunday.

Volunteering opportunities are available through the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party. Examples of work undertaken to date include laying of dead hedges, repairing steps in Jackwood, and restoration works to the pond.

Other visitor attractions within Oxleas include; Severndroog Castle, Oxleas Meadow, Eltham Common and the Walled/Secret garden.

Who uses the site, where they come from, patterns of use and behaviour?

Regular users of Oxleas woodlands come from all over the Greenwich Borough and the Bexley Borough. This makes it almost impossible to assess the users without doing a thorough survey.

Stakeholders

Greenwich Council

- Culture & Community Services (P&OS)
- Strategic Planning (Property Services, Planning)
- Chief Executives (Communications/Events/Marketing)
- Neighbourhood Services (Neighbourhood Panels/Representatives)
- Children's Services (Schools, Youth Services)

Community

- Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party
- GWAG
- Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust
- Horse Riders
- Dog walkers
- Green Chain users
- Park Users

Agencies

- (Police, Fire & Rescue Service)
- English Nature
- London Wildlife Trust
- Young Ornithologists Club

Politicians

- Local MP
- Ward Members

Businesses

- Café owner

PART II: WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET TO

VISION

The vision for Greenwich's woodlands is to:
-Conserve and enhance woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity for current and future generations of people
-Maintain, improve and promote the enjoyment and use of Greenwich's woodlands
-Increase the area of woodland in Greenwich, without destroying other valuable habitats

Management Objectives for Oxleas Woodlands

- To maintain the woodlands for nature conservation and amenity for the enjoyment of future generations
- To ensure continuity over time of the diversity of the flora and fauna and the communities they form
- To maintain a varied woodland structure and a full age range of trees
- To maintain the high density of mature oaks over large areas of the woods
- To encourage the accumulation of dead wood, both standing and fallen, as habitat for invertebrates, fungi and cavity-nesting birds
- To provide opportunities for recreational use of the woods, where this does not compromise the objectives listed above
- To encourage the use of the woodlands for the environmental education at all levels, and to provide appropriate facilities for this
- Monitor flora and fauna (a) to inform future management of the woodlands and (b) to produce records of important species (from 2001 addendum)
- Additional objectives below
- To reduce Anti Social Behaviour in the park
- To work with the local community in identifying local priorities for improvements

ANALYSIS & ASSESSMENT

Woodland geographic and ecological context

The Oxleas woodlands complex is a substantial tract of ancient woodland, containing several different community types and supporting a high diversity of flora and fauna. Of particular significance are the diversity of tree and shrub species, the large and thriving population of wild service-tree, diverse communities of fungi and invertebrates including nationally rare species, and the large number of mature oaks. These factors make the woods of sufficient importance for nature conservation to be notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation.

The location of the woodlands so close to central London also makes them of enormous social, recreational and educational significance.

Site Potential

In nature conservation terms, Oxleas Woodlands is close to its maximum potential, though removal of invasive alien species is necessary to prevent deterioration of the ecological interest. Restoration of coppicing in a few areas would increase the habitat diversity and perhaps encourage light-demanding species to increase or colonise the woods.

There is potential to allow the woodland to spread into some of the surrounding grasslands, and to provide better edge habitats between woodland and grassland. This would provide excellent buffer zones between the different types of habitat, shielding the SSSI area from some adverse factors. An increase in the area of woodland would not mean an increase in the SSSI area however, as re growth woodland would take many hundred years to reach the ecological value that the ancient woodlands already possesses.

Many of the more interesting plants in the woods, such as southern wood-rush are characteristic of damp conditions. An examination of the drainage in the woods should be conducted to assess the possibility for increasing the dampness in some areas.
An assessment of the footpath network, probably resulting in improving some paths and closing others, would help to solve the problems of erosion. A similar review of use of the woods by horses should also be undertaken.

The 2001 Addendum to the 1995 Oxleas Woods Management Brief identified that currently, there is little baseline survey data and a need has been identified for existing records to be collated and monitoring set up. The results of these activities will be used to inform future management. There are obviously resource implications and contractual arrangements that may be necessary. The groups that could be most usefully recorded include vascular plats, birds, butterflies, fungi, birds, macrolepidoptera and mammals.

Constraints on Management of the Woodlands

As a Site of Special Scientific Interest, any Potentially Damaging Operation (PDO) has to have written consent from English Nature before it is carried out. Most site management tasks are PDO's, so

English nature must be consulted in advance on all management work. A list of PDO's for Oxleas Woodlands is listed in Appendix VI

Several public rights of way, including one public bridleway cross the site.

Limited resources in terms of available labour and money are likely to be the most significant limiting factor in managing the entire site.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 imposes an important new duty on public bodies (including local authorities), when exercising statutory functions that may affect SSSI's to take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of these functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of the features for which the site is of special interest.

Public bodies must apply strict tests when carrying out functions in or affecting SSSI's to ensure adverse effects are exceptional. All public bodies must consult English Nature at the earliest opportunity over proposals in or affecting SSSI's. If a public body decides exceptionally to go ahead against English Nature's advice, it will need to demonstrate clearly how it has weighed the balance between conflicting interests.

Public bodies are expected to adopt the highest standards in relation to SSSI's which they own or occupy, in order to secure positive management of the SSSI.

The provisions of Section 28G of the CROW act, described above, are set out in the DETR Circular 04/2001 (Para 53-57).

Ecology

The Pond

The pond contains rare plamate newts. It could be restored to provide more open water and less shading. An invertebrate survey would help to plan the long term management of the pond. The draft Bio Diversity Action Plan highlights waters edge and Wetland as one of six priority habitats and one of the Targets is to set up a Wetlands working group. It is recommended that once set up, the group should be approached to seek advice and developing a plan for the pond for incorporation into this plan.

Coppicing

The Oxleas Woodlands were coppiced in medieval times, but the wood was clear-felled in the mid-nineteenth century and much has not been coppiced since. The structure of most of Shepherdleas, all of Jackwood and much of Oxleas is now high forest with the canopy dominated by oak. Only small areas of Oxleas have been coppiced in the last 50 years. The woods are not noted for open-stage invertebrates such as butterflies, and the ground flora over most of the woods is species-poor and dominated by bramble, as is typical of woods on acid soils. The structure of most of the woodland is good, with a good age range of trees, a reasonably well-developed by variable under storey, and adequate regeneration of most if not all of the species present. The abundance of mature oaks, with a scattering of veteran trees, is probably the greatest ecological asset of the woods.
There is therefore no ecological reason for coppicing over most of the woods; indeed, it would be ecologically damaging to do so in many parts. Most users of the woods would probably prefer as few trees as possible to be cut down, even for coppicing, and there is no pressure to coppice for timber

production purposes. Therefore, apart from the initial removal of some non-native species (see below), it is proposed to manage most of the woods as minimum intervention high forest.
There are, however, a few areas in Oxleas and Shepherdleas where coppicing could be ecologically beneficial. Small areas of coppice will also provide a more varied environment for users of the woods, and will be valuable for education. The following characteristics indicate suitability for coppicing:

Low density of mature oaks
Existing fairly dense hazel, hornbeam or sweet chestnut (With stems less than 15 cm and stools about 2 m apart or less), particularly where coppicing has been undertaken in the fairly recent past;
Small blocks dominated by sweet chestnut;
Ground flora not totally dominated by bramble;
Areas where there are patches of alien plants are to be removed.

There is one, perhaps two areas in Oxleas where these conditions are found over sizeable areas and one or two smaller areas in Shepherdleas. These should be divided into compartments of around 0.5 to 1 hectare, and coppiced on a 15 year rotation. All species except oak (and wild service) would be coppiced.

As detailed above, there are several paths in Oxleas and Shepherdleas which are suitable for management as wide rides, with a coppiced strip of 7 m or so, on each side, with slightly wider glades in places where chestnut dominates and/or there are no large oaks. The benefits of this are listed above (see Access).

The 2001 review recommended the continued monitoring the need for further coppicing against available resources (LBG/GWAG).

Tree management
Tree management of the site should be undertaken in two different fashions.

Woodland trees should only be managed on an as Necessary basis where problems are reported. It should be rare that any great issue would arise from the trees in these areas, so active management should not be necessary.

Amenity trees, trees located in or adjacent to open areas, or trees adjacent to well used paths should be more actively managed, in order to mitigate any risk arising from these trees. In order for this to be effective, a tree survey needs to be made of those areas.

Bleeding Canker
Bleeding canker occurs on several species of oak, but of most note recently, Horse Chestnut trees. It was originally thought to be a form of Phytopthora fungus (Phytopthora – from the Greek words, meaning 'Plant Destroyer), specifically P. cactorum and P. citricola. Research in the Netherlands (see http://www.kastanjeziekte.wur.nl/uk/index_uk.htm) has recently shown that a bacterium called Pseudomonas syringae is the most likely causal agent. In addition, another agent, the horse chestnut leaf miner (Cameraria ohridella – first found in Wimbledon in 2002) has become a widespread problem and can cause major damage to trees.
It may be that the leaf miners are carriers for the bacteria, but this has not been proved.

The incidence of the canker on horse chestnut trees has been found to be higher within the urban environment than the rural, and Red Flowering Chestnut has a higher incidence than the Horse chestnut

The seriousness of this disease has been likened to that of Dutch elm disease. If Bleeding canker has a similar mortality rate, any ecology which contains Horse Chestnut trees will be significantly changed.

Planting

The 1995 management brief specified that planting of some species be undertaken in the several areas. Due to funding, this was not carried out and the 2001 addendum stated "Further planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is occurring."

In some areas, planting was recommended by the 1995 plan that may still be advantageous to carry out, and could be re-considered:

On the eastern edge of the grassland of Eltham Park North, the edge of Shepherdleas Wood is currently very abrupt; hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel could be planted in a strip extending 10 – 20 m into the grassland which, once established, should be coppiced on a 5 – 10 year rotation. This strip of vegetation would provide a buffer zone to the SSSI area and would assist in maintaining the ecosystem within the SSSI.

Where Jackwood is to be allowed to extend into Oxleas Meadow, wild cherry could be planted/seeded as an under storey beneath the existing trees to supplement the wild-service trees that are currently there, as wild cherry is declining in numbers in the woods. This could be done by collecting wild cherry seeds and fruit from elsewhere in the wood and scattering the seeds in this area.

Ecological Studies

To date, there have been a number of ecological studies done within the woodlands, but not regularly or consistently.

The Greenwich Council UDP says that "Plans need to be based on adequate information about species and habitats… To achieve these goals, baseline data needs to be established where ecologically friendly management is already in place. Therefore, Ecological assessments must be undertaken in order to establish baseline data."
Oxleas Woodlands should have regular ecological assessments to establish the state of the woodlands. Individual surveys are not sufficient as they merely give a snapshot view of the state of the ecology and do not indicate trends within the ecosystem.

Access/Paths & Erosion

The network of paths throughout the woods is extensive and consists of paths of varying widths and levels of use. There are a number of problems associated with the paths: there are perhaps too many paths, leading to high levels of disturbance throughout the woods; path proliferation (coupled with use by mountain bikes) leads to serious erosion and large areas of bare ground in some places, notably at "spaghetti junction" in Oxleas and in two areas of Jackwood; the paths tend to become muddy and almost impassable in winter, leading to further erosion at path edges.

The wide ride treatment outlined above should hep the latter problem by allowing more sun to dry out paths. Surfacing a small network of paths with hoggin would also hep to keep them useable year-round, and would assist wheelchair access. Some of the existing paths have in the past been surfaced with hardcore, and use of these should be encouraged. A good network of "official" paths which are easy and comfortable to use is the best way to discourage the formation and use of "unofficial" paths. There may be a need to take further action to block off unwanted paths, especially in the areas of greatest erosion, for example by dead hedging. However, this can lead to resentment from the public, and dead hedges can become bonfires. At present, seriously eroded areas are a very small fraction of the total area of the woods, so it is recommended that the situation is monitored, and action taken only if erosion becomes significantly more widespread, or where other work in the vicinity makes blocking of paths convenient and appropriate. In any event where Hoggin is applied, mineral content of the hoggin should be matched as closely as possible to the natural geology and soil types in the area so as not to disturb the existing soil chemical conditions.

The path through the alder wood in the north of Oxleas becomes particularly wet in winter, and is often impassable at this time. Consideration could be given to providing a raised boardwalk here to allow year-round access while not interfering with the movement of water in this area. Alternately, the path could be closed in winter, with explanatory signs put in place. The wetness of this area is ecologically very important, so improved drainage is not an option.

The network of horse rides through Oxleas Wood also needs review, as horses cause more severe erosion than pedestrians. There is one public bridleway running north-east to south-west across the centre of Oxleas Wood. Additional permissive horse rides are currently on the western edge along Crown Woods Lane, from the bridleway to the south-east corner, along the eastern edge, and from the north-west corner to the northern end of the public bridleway. This latter ride passes through the alder wood referred to above, and should be closed to horses due to serious erosion. The path along the eastern edge of the wood is too narrow for safe use by horses and pedestrians, and should be closed to horses. The ride to the south-east corner suffers from some erosion, and its use by horses should be monitored and reviewed periodically. Crown Woods Lane is suitable for continued use by horses.

Drainage

A network of drainage ditches criss-crosses the woods. It has been suggested that the woods have become drier in recent years; if this trend is verified, it needs to be reversed, perhaps by blocking selected ditches. An assessment of the drainage of the woods is required.

Flooding in the south-west of Oxleas woods during 1993-4 led to the deaths of a number of trees. This flooding was believed to be related to the underground reservoir beneath the adjacent part of Oxleas Meadow. The 2001 addendum commented that the problems in this corner now appear to be solved and the current water balance across the rest of the site should be maintained.

Falconwood Field

Falconwood field is currently maintained as natural meadowland. Up until recently, it was used for Football pitches and maintained as amenity grass. People walking to and from the Falconwood station use this particular field as a pathway and this has worn a "desire line" through the middle of the field. The field itself is almost completely shielded from view from the road, and is used by the public for illicit motorcycling. Falconwood field is directly adjacent to a very large power substation. This

creates a visual eyesore that could be softened by planting beside the fence. Any such planting should be comprised of thorny plants to further discourage ASB.

Treatment of alien plant species in Woodlands

Non-native species are generally undesirable in ancient woodland as they compete for light and other resources with native species. The latter, being a natural part of the ecosystem which has evolved over many centuries on the site, tend to support a greater diversity of animal life. Some alien species are particularly undesirable; these are species which spread rapidly, cast particularly dense shade, carry diseases which can transmit to native species, and/or hybridise readily with native species thus diluting the native genetic stock. In general, attempts will be made to eradicate most alien species within the woods.

In the 1995 management brief, several species were listed for eradication. The only one of these species that has been subject to a completely successful eradication program was Giant Hogweed (Heracleum mantegazzianum). The 1995 management brief listed the following species as being the main non-native species found on the site. The following are the main non-native species found on the site.

Rhododendron (Rhododendron ponticum)

Distribution: Widespread in Oxleas and Jackwood, particularly frequent in the north of Oxleas and the east of Jackwood.

Characteristics: Highly invasive evergreen shrub, causing dense shade and soil acidification. A serious ecological problem within the woods.

Treatment: Eradicate throughout the woods. Large specimens should be cut and the stumps treated with a suitable herbicide. Any re growth should be treated again with herbicide the following summer. Seedlings can be pulled up.

History of actions and recommendation: Most of the rhododendrons through the wood were removed as a result of the 1995 management brief. These need continual monitoring and treatment where appropriate. The 1995 plan also recommended replanting sterile rhododendrons along the "Rhododendron Walk" to replace any that were removed from that area. This was found to be impractical and was not completed. There was some public reaction to this, but the public have now become accustomed to the change.

Priority: URGENT/ONGOING

Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)

Distribution: scattered throughout the woods, mostly as young trees, re growth and saplings.

Characteristics: Highly invasive, fast-growing tree casting dense shade, thus out-competing native tree regeneration and suppressing ground flora. Likely to become a serious ecological problem in the woods if not controlled. These trees do support a high biomass of invertebrates, and are therefore valuable to birds in late summer, but are undesirable in an ancient semi-natural wood.

Treatment: Eradicate throughout the woods. Sizeable trees should be cut and stumps treated with a suitable herbicide, or ring barked and left to stand. Seedlings and small saplings can be pulled up. Some mature trees well away from paths, where they are unlikely to be a safety hazard, could be killed in situ using herbicides and left as standing dead wood, a valuable habitat, should be removed from surrounding areas wherever possible to prevent re-colonisation. If ring barking is used as a method of control, cuts should be no more than 1.5 cm wide but encircling the whole trunk at approximately 30 cm from the ground. The bare wood can then be rubbed with dirt or leaf litter in order to discolour the wood and make the cut less obvious.

History of actions and recommendation: Most of the sycamores within the parks have been removed by working parties as a result of the 1995 Management Brief. There were some small plants left and as a result, these have grown over the years. It is recommended that further action should be taken to remove the remaining plants.
Priority: URGENT/ONGOING

Turkey Oak (Quercus cerris)
Distribution: Seedlings, young trees and occasional mature trees scattered thinly throughout the woods. An avenue of mature trees runs alongside the railway in Shepherdleas.
Characteristics: Supports far fewer invertebrates than native oaks, and much less valuable as a timber tree. Spreads fairly slowly by seed. Main impact is as a carrier of the Knopper gall, which can wipe out acorn crops of native oaks. Also hybridises with native oaks.
Treatment: Eradicate throughout the woods, and in surrounding areas if possible to prevent Knopper gall attack on native oaks in the woods. Mature trees should be felled and stumps treated with a suitable herbicide. Seedlings and small saplings can be pulled up.
History of actions and recommendation: This species was recommended for eradication in the 1995 management brief but no action has been taken due to lack of resources. As a result, there has been some spread of the species.
It is recommended that action should be taken to remove the remaining plants.
Priority: Medium

Swedish Whitebeam (Sorbus intermedia)
Distribution: Seedlings and small saplings scattered throughout all three woods, often in clusters.
Characteristics: Bird-sown from street trees. A small tree, harmless in small quantities, but large amounts could displace more desirable native species. May possibly hybridise with wild service-tree, but this is unlikely. Other alien whitebeams, such as Sorbus latifolia, are present in much smaller quantities; the same characteristics apply to these.
Treatment: Eradicate where convenient, especially where large concentrations are growing. Seedlings and saplings should be pulled up or cut, as appropriate. Due to close resemblance to wild service-tree in winter, this should be undertaken when the trees are in leaf (unlike all other work on trees and shrubs).
History of actions and recommendation: This species was recommended for eradication in the 1995 management brief but no action has been taken due to lack of resources. The 2001 addendum identified removal of this species as being a priority (to be controlled by ring barking).
It is recommended that action should be taken as soon as possible to remove the remaining plants.
Priority: MEDIUM/HIGH

Sweet chestnut (Castana sativa)
Distribution: Common and Widespread through all three woods.
Characteristics: Although not native to Britain, and not particularly good for wildlife, sweet chestnut is an ancient introduction and is an integral part of many coppiced woods. Regenerates poorly by seed, but coppices readily.
Treatment: Coppice areas where sweet chestnut is the dominant tree. Encourage gradual replacement with hazel and hornbeam where particularly frequent. Otherwise leave alone.
History of actions and recommendation: The 1995 management brief recommended coppicing of areas where this species was dominant (as above). The 2001 addendum identified that this would happen when funding became available.

It is recommended that action should be taken to secure funding to continue with the original management brief of coppicing areas where this species is dominant.
Priority: Low

Beech (Fagus sylvatica)
Distribution: Saplings and one or two mature trees in the north of Oxleas, Jackwood and Castlewood have a growing population which are gradually becoming a problem.
Characteristics: There are no historical records of beech in the Oxleas Woodlands, although the site is within its native range both geographically and in terms of soil type. Dense shade and soil acidification suppress ground flora below beech.
Treatment: No action required unless beech spreads significantly within the woods. Monitor the distribution of beech and review periodically.
History of actions and recommendation: This species was recommended for monitoring in the 1995 management brief but no spread has been detected.
It is recommended that monitoring of this species should continue.
Priority: Low

Other alien trees and shrubs
Distribution: Several other species of non-native trees are scattered very thinly throughout the woods. Red oak (Quercus rubra) occurs as a small stand in Oxleas, horse-chestnut (Aeschelus hippocastanum) seedlings, saplings and occasional semi-mature trees are scattered through the woods, occasional clumps of cherry-laurel (Prunus laurocerasus) and mock-orange (Philadelphus sp) have been found in Oxleas, and a single young tree of rum cherry (Prunus serotina) has been found on the southern edge of Jackwood.
Characteristics: These species in small quantity will have only a minor effect on the ecology of the wood, although Red Oak might possibly hybridise with native oaks, and Horse-chestnut when mature casts very dense shade. They are all of little value to wildlife.
Treatment: Kill individual trees when convenient (e.g. when carrying out other tree work in an area), by felling and treating stumps with herbicide or by pulling up seedlings.
History of actions and recommendation:
It is recommended that removal of these species (where convenient) should continue.
Priority: medium/low

Japanese Knotweed (Fallopia japonica)
Distribution: One clump near the western edge of Jackwood, One at the edge of Eltham Common and one area within Oxleas?
Characteristics: Tall perennial which spreads rapidly by underground rhizomes but not by seed. Suppresses native vegetation, and can be a serious ecological problem.
Treatment: Repeated treatments with a suitable herbicide over several years until there is no re growth. Monitor for re growth in subsequent years. Remove any soil tipped in the woods to prevent rhizomes from establishing.
History of actions and recommendation:
The 1995 Management brief recommended that this species be eradicated. No effective action has been taken to date and the species has spread.
It is recommended that this species be eradicated as soon as possible.
Priority: URGENT

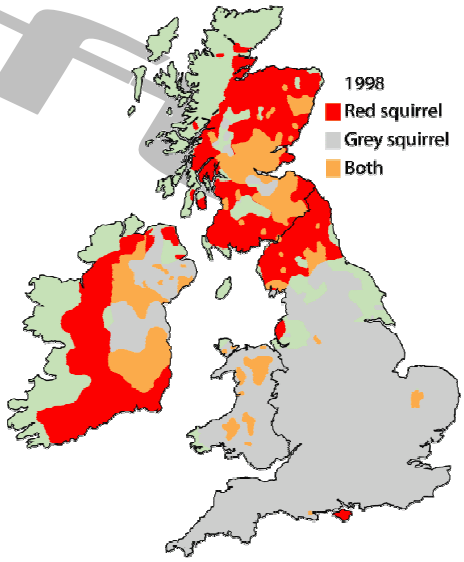
Greek Dock (Rumex cristatus)
Distribution: group of plants in the southeast corner of Jackwood
Characteristics: Tall perennial which spreads rapidly by underground rhizomes but not by seed. Suppresses native vegetation, and can be a serious ecological problem.
Treatment: Repeated treatments with a suitable herbicide over several years until there is no re growth. Monitor for re growth in subsequent years. Remove any soil tipped in the woods to prevent rhizomes from establishing.
History of actions and recommendation:
The 1995 Management brief recommended that this species be eradicated. No effective action has been taken to date and the species has spread.
It is recommended that this species be eradicated as soon as possible.
Priority: URGENT

Other Biological Issues

Mammals

Grey Squirrel

The grey squirrel was introduced into Britain in the late 19th century (from 1876 onwards), and has replaced the native red squirrel in most of its former British range. Red and grey squirrels occupy the same ecological niche, as they are both small tree-dwelling mammals that rely on similar food sources (tree seeds, nuts, berries, etc). However, because of differences in their ability to digest large seeds from broadleaved trees (such as acorns and hazelnuts), grey squirrels have a competitive advantage over native red squirrels in broadleaved and mixed woodland, being able to feed on these seeds before they are fully ripe, and gain more nutritional benefit from them than red squirrels. In this way, grey squirrels out-compete red squirrels for food resources in areas where there are large-seeded broadleaved trees, resulting in weight loss and reduced breeding success for reds. Grey squirrels strip the bark of many tree species which can seriously damage the trees.



When Oxleas Woodlands was managed by the GLC, senior parks staff carried air rifles and used them to cull grey squirrels early in the day. This practice would not be considered appropriate now.

Foxes
Within Oxleas, Foxes are not an ecological problem, but they can steal food out of litter bins and also spray, which can also be a problem.

Birds

- Parrots

England has several introduced parrots which have become feral, but the species that is the biggest problem currently is the Indian Ring Necked Parakeet.

Originally from Africa and southern Asia and kept as caged birds, some Ring-necked Parakeets escaped and by the 1970s, had started to breed in south-eastern England. Flocks are now common in areas close to south London, from Richmond Park to Lewisham.
The recent population boom of this species has also been attributed to a series of mild winters, a lack of natural predators, food being available from humans and that there are now enough parrots for a wider range of breeding partners. York University has undertaken a study of the spread of these birds and Oxford University has also received funding for a similar study.

Rose Ringed Parrot Distribution

In woodlands they are a problem as they are extremely noisy, they congregate in large numbers, their calls tend to discourage/scare other birds away from them and they take over woodpecker holes. In addition, they can be aggressive towards other birds in territorial disputes, which can intimidate the other birds away from the area, especially as their larger size gives them an advantage.

As with squirrels, culling would probably not produce a favourable public reaction. Alternate means of controlling this species should be sought.
Esher Rugby club is at the time of writing trialling a new dispersal method using a parakeet alarm call played late at night in the middle of the nesting area.

- Crows

Crows within Oxleas Woodlands can be a problem as they steal food from litter bins and create a mess. This problem is accentuated when the litter bins are overfull.

Summary of known ASB at the site
A range of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) occurs at the site. Due to its size and density of woodland, it is quite a difficult area to police. However, uniformed Police and plain clothes Police do patrol the Park and surrounding area. ASB within the parks includes Mountain Biking and BMX riding (including construction of Jumps and new tracks), Motorcycling, Graffiti and Arson. The Parks & Open Spaces department has a database to record incidents of ASB. Residents should be encouraged to report this to either the P&OS emergency hotline or the local Police.

Oxleas woodlands are patrolled by several officers from the Safer Neighbourhoods team of the Metropolitan Police on an informal basis, particularly in the summer months.

Anti-social issues

Litter and Tipping

The 1995 Management Plan highlights litter as being only a minor problem over most of the woods, with fly tipping being generally rare, with the exception of Shepherdleas and Jackwood which directly adjoin back gardens (where dumping of garden refuse over the fence is a frequent and long-standing problem).

Garden refuse will be removed and any introduced species removed or killed with herbicide. Letters should be sent to occupants of adjoining properties explaining the undesirability (and illegality) of dumping garden waste in the woods and threatening action if there is any repetition.

Any other tipping will be removed immediately if it is reported, as it attracts further tipping if left in situ. General litter will be picked up regularly.

The 2001 addendum notes that the problem of fly-tipping appears to have stabilised and is mainly around the edges of the wood and car parks, and that the most successful preventative method at present is to place bollards where, at the moment, vehicles can access so they are prevented. This appears to be relevant to date.

In an effort to address other ASB and prevent illicit access at certain times, barriers are scheduled to be installed in the car parks in the near future.

Illicit Motorcycling

Illicit motorcycling does take place on Oxleas Woodlands and in particular, the Falcon Wood Field. Measures have been taken to try and restrict access around the perimeter of the Falconwood Field (for example dead hedging). This has been partially successful.

Mountain Biking and BMX riding

Mountain bikers and BMX riders use the site quite often and 'jumps' have been found on the site, in particular at Spaghetti Junction.
Parks & Open Spaces do not currently have the resources to remove them. Biking can cause damage for example, erosion and soil compaction.
As highlighted earlier, Oxleas Woods is recommended by several website as being a good site for Mountain biking and BMX biking. This is probably a public perception that could be addressed through education.

Sport & Recreation

Although Oxleas Woodlands provides plenty of scope for passive recreation, there is little scope for organised sport or recreation development within the site, except on Falconwood Field. Any developments elsewhere would inappropriate to the character of the sites. Falconwood field has been used for football in the past, but this has ceased.

Management

Management of Oxleas Woods currently appears to satisfy the wider users of the site.

However, further consultation is needed to ascertain users' needs and aspiration.

Visitor & Community Needs

Oxleas Woodlands benefits from having a Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party. Consultation will be undertaken with the group and with the wider community to identify priorities for improvement in terms of visitor facilities (for example, interpretation, educational etc). The results of this consultation will be incorporated into this plan as appropriate and will inform the Inward Investment Strategy.

Consultation

The results of the consultation are detailed in TBC once undertaken

STRENGTHS

- Is considered to be the largest area of Ancient woodland so close to the central London area
- Has an active community group - the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party - who take an active role in the management of the site
- A Management Brief for the management of the SSSI site has been developed (and incorporated into this plan)
- The site is historically significant
- Very wide user catchment area – regionally/nationally significant
- Very wide range of users
- There is a very accessible ranger walk that takes place every week on a Thursday and once a month on a Sunday
- Designated as a SSSI
- Very large park area, this has a dissipating effect on some impacts
- Shooters Hill Woodland Pond containing rare palmate newts
- Volunteering opportunities available (organised by the SHWWP)

CHALLENGES

- Constraints on Management of Woodlands with SSSI designation and rights of public way
- Few ecological or aboricultural assessments have been done
- Threats to the SSSI (woodland) site (as identified by the 1995 Brief) include invasive species and erosion of pathways
- No arboricultural survey has been performed within the area
- Limited resources in terms of labour and money
- The ecology may become significantly changed if Bleeding Canker destroys many of the Horse Chestnuts
- Antisocial Behaviour within the site
- Ring Necked Parakeet is a possible deterrent to other bird species.
- Wild Cherry numbers are in decline across the woodlands.
- Concerns about falling trees and branches and the denseness of the woodlands may be a barrier to members of the public enjoying the woodlands (This is balances against objectives in retaining dead standing wood to encourage habitat creation).
- Lack of interpretation within the site
- The woods are at risk from overuse with effects including the proliferation of ad-hoc unauthorised paths
- Threat from alien invasive species
- Climate change has resulted in the wet character of the woodlands drying out significantly, with potential changes in the ecology as a result

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Undertake consultation to identify priorities for improvement (including opportunities for interpretation) and feed the findings into the plan as appropriate
- To continue to manage the SSSI site as per the 1995 Management Brief and 2001 addendum and to carry out the actions detailed in its action plan

- Seek resources to undertake regular ecological studies within the woodlands in order to provide baseline data.
- To investigate the possibility of fencing off some areas in the Woodlands as disturbance in some areas has prevented, rather than encouraged regeneration (and incorporate into Management of SSSI Action Plan as appropriate).
- Monitor the spread of Bleeding Canker in regards to Horse Chestnut tree and manage its spread where possible (incorporate into the Action Plan for the SSSI site where appropriate)
- Review feasibility of undertaking an area based arboricultural survey
- To seek Inward Investment as appropriate
- To work toward the achievement of a recognised standard in conjunction with Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party
- To improve awareness/use of site by all sections of the community
- To investigate undertaking a historical assessment of the upper terrace garden (remnant Garden of Jackwood House) to determine whether it is feasible to restore to its original design
- Reduce ASB

Part III: HOW WILL WE GET THERE

Timescales as given in this document are as following;
Short Term – Within one year from adoption of this plan
Medium Term – Within three years from the adoption of this plan
Long Term – Five years and more from the adoption of this plan

Recommendation	Action	Timescale (Long/Medium/Short Term/Ongoing	Responsibility	Reviewed
Approach the Shooters Hill Woodland Party to comment on the draft plan and feed findings into the plan as appropriate	Take plan to first available meeting (January 2007?)	Short Term		
Undertake consultation with stakeholders to identify priorities for improvement (to include investigating user needs for interpretation/education at the site)	Develop consultation strategy (to include surveys/questionnaires) and consult with stakeholders identified in the plan	Short Term		
To continue to manage the SSSI site as per the 1995 Oxleas Woodland Management Brief (and 2001 addendums) as listed in Appendix VII		Ongoing		

To seek resources to undertake regular ecological studies with the woodlands in order to provide baseline data		Ongoing		
To investigate fencing off some areas in the Woodlands as disturbance in some areas has prevented, rather than encouraged regeneration (permanent or temporary fencing must be assessed)	Incorporate into Management Brief for SSSI site as appropriate)	Medium Term		
To monitor the spread of Bleeding Canker in regards to Horse Chestnut Tree and manage its spread where possible and monitor other pathnogenics to the tree stock	Incorporate into Management Action Plan for SSSI site as appropriate	Ongoing		
To review feasibility of undertaking an area based arboricultural survey		Long Term		
To seek Inward Investment as appropriate	Once priorities for Investment have been identified, feed into Inward Investment Strategy	Ongoing		
To work toward the achievement of a recognised standard in conjunction with	Work with Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party to identify what	Long Term		

Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party	improvements are required to enable Shooters Hill Woodland Working Party to meet a recognized standard When/if appropriate, apply for a recognized award.			
To reduce ASB at Oxleas Woods	Develop ways to tackle the major ASB in Oxleas Woods (listed in the plan) through programme of education/intervention Liaise with local Police where appropriate. Undertake works as appropriate	Ongoing		
To improve awareness/use of site by all sections of the community	Through consultation, identify if any user groups are deterred from using the site. Review how site is currently marketed. Investigate ways of improving marketing of site (through the use of different mediums etc) and through improvements to current marketing material	Medium Term		
To investigate the feasibility of undertaking a historical assessment of the upper terrace garden (remnant Garden of Jackwood House) to determine whether it is feasible to restore to its original design		Long term		

PART IV: HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'VE ARRIVED

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Oxleas Woods Management Plan will be fully reviewed and updated every five years by Parks Management Staff responsible for Oxleas Woods.

There will also be a need to keep a working document copy of the Management Plan within the parks office so that issues and changes that arise as well as new information can be documented, and the action plan can be regularly reviewed and completed works documented within it as part of the Parks Service business planning process.

Upon review, the new management plan will make note of the works performed and review the success of those works.

APPENDIX I: References

Greenwich Unitary Development Plan 2006
Greenwich Council GIS
Oxleas Wood Fungi Survey Sept/Nov 2002, Andy Overall, London Fungi Recording group
The Campaign to Save Oxleas Wood, David Black, PARC, June 1993
Oxleas Woodland Management Brief, John Archer, London Ecology Unit, October 1995, Addendum October 2001

APPENDIX II: Legislation, policies and strategies affecting park management

As highlighted earlier in the plan, Greenwich Council's Parks & Open Spaces department operates within a wide framework of national, regional and local policy statements and strategies. The main documents impacting on the development of this plan are listed below.

The Greenwich Strategy
The Greenwich Strategy sets out the vision for Greenwich Borough as being the place to live, work, learn and visit. This vision underpins all of the strategies produced by Greenwich Council and directly impacts on all service plans and service delivery.

The Cultural Strategy
Parks & Open Spaces is one of six 'areas' considered by the Cultural Strategy. The Strategy has five over-arching themes: - Equality and Access, Sustainability, the Cultural Economy, Achievement and Excellence and Partnerships. All of these aims are relevant to this management plan and have been considered in developing the opportunities and priorities for this site.

Green Space Strategy
The Green Spaces Strategy sets out the Council's strategic intentions for its green assets and its vision of the positive contribution that Greenwich's open networks make to our lives.

The thematic objectives (community safety, biodiversity, education and culture, culture & events, tackling inequality, sport, health & well being) are all relevant to the management plan for Oxleas Woods. The following points in the Action Plan specifically have been addressed in the Action Plan to this document.
We will develop detailed management plans for individual parks in partnership with local communities and users. The management plans will set priorities as well as identify areas of potential.
We will work in partnership with local groups and the wider community to identify areas in need of protection and intervention to protect and conserve our natural and semi natural green and open spaces

Parks & Open Spaces Service Plan 2006-7
The Parks & Open Spaces department aims to develop, manage, ensure accessibility and maintain to a high standard the borough's Parks, Open Spaces, Woodlands, Tree Stock, Cemeteries, Playgrounds, Sports Pitches, Allotments and other outdoor facilities. To meet the needs of the community and deliver the Council's core objectives where applicable to the service, and specifically regarding the provision of a clean and well cared for environment and supporting Health and Quality of Life for the local community.
Through consultation with local residents/visitors, the management plan for Oxleas Woods supports these aims by ensuring accessibility of the site and that it meet the needs of the local community. It is envisaged that it will also assist with achieving the aim of mainlining the site to a high standard. This document assists with achieving the following key tasks from the Action Plan: -
Develop Investment Strategy (the findings of this management plan will be used to inform the development of an Inward Investment Strategy).
Commence implementation of recommendations from the Green Space Strategy

ISO 9001:2000 – Quality Management System

Quality Management System ISO 9001: 2000 is used by organisations to manage their activities and resources to guarantee a quality service. This management system is based on eight quality management principles:

- Customer Focus
- Leadership
- Involving People
- Process Approach
- System Approach to management
- Continual Improvement
- Factual Approach to decision making
- Supplier relationship, which benefit both sides.

The Parks & Open Spaces department is currently ISO 9000 accredited.

Unitary Development Plan

Local Councils have a duty to prepare a Development Plan by law. The Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out the vision for use of the land in the Borough, and provides the main guidance for making decisions on individual planning proposals. The document is intended to cover the period 2001 – 2011 (or 2016 in some instances) it is a legal document with the following purposes

- To provide a framework of acceptable uses within the Borough, defining areas where development is not desired or where it needs to be carefully directed and;
- To provide a detailed basis for the control and development

The UDP may be viewed at the Directorate of Strategic Planning, Planning Department, Peggy Middleton House, Woolwich, SE18, or alternatively at a local library.

The UDP identifies and designates the parks within this management plan as following

- Metropolitan Open Land
- Green Chain
- Green Chain Walk
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (confirms the designation)
- Site of Nature Conservation Importance
- Area of Special Character of Metropolitan importance
- In addition, policies O10 and O12 apply to the parks

The policy references here are from the 2006 version of the UDP

<u>Metropolitan Open Land</u>

The UDP designates Oxleas Woodlands as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). Policy references O1, O2, and O4 under the section 'Protecting Open Land' set out what the acceptable land uses and allowable developments are within areas designated as MOL. These policy references are too lengthy to reproduce here. The policies are broadly meant to control development or alterations to existing

land that would be inappropriate to MOL and has an adverse affect on the character and usage of the open space.

Green Chain

The UDP also designates Oxleas Woodlands as Green Chain. Policy reference O15 under the section 'Protecting Open Land' sets out what the objectives of this designation are. The objectives are as follows

- To improve and encourage the provision of suitable recreational facilities, with an emphasis on those serving a wide area of South East London and/or requiring open land.
- To safeguard the open land from built development and maintain its positive contribution in providing a visual and physical break in the built-up area of London.
- To conserve and enhance the visual amenity and ecological aspects of the landscape.
- To improve public access to and through the area.
- To promote an overall identity for the area in order to increase public awareness of available recreational facilities.
- To encourage the collaboration and co-operation of the various public and private agencies, owners, organisations, clubs, etc. in the area to achieve the above objectives.

For the extent of the Green Chain Area, refer to the UDP proposals map and second draft alterations maps.

Green Chain Walk

Policy O14 refers to the Green Chain Walk, which passes through Oxleas Woodlands.

O15 Existing footpaths will be safeguarded and new footpaths created to and through open spaces and places of interest, where they do not adversely affect nature conservation. The Council will endeavour to create a signposted network of continuous and circular routes. In particular the 'Green Chain Walk' footpath network will be improved and extended and new links created wherever possible.

The UDP then says that the Mayor's Transport strategy has identified the Green Chain Walk as being one of six strategic walks in London Section 2.4

Conservation

The UDP identifies parts of Oxleas Woodlands as being a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), listed in the UDP as a Site of Metropolitan Importance Grade I. This SNCI area covers much of the woodlands and is listed as NC2.

Oxleas meadow is listed as an SNCI and is considered to be a Site of Borough Importance Grade I. It is listed as NC20.

Deansfield is listed as an SNCI and is considered to be a Site of Borough Importance Grade II. It is listed as NC30.

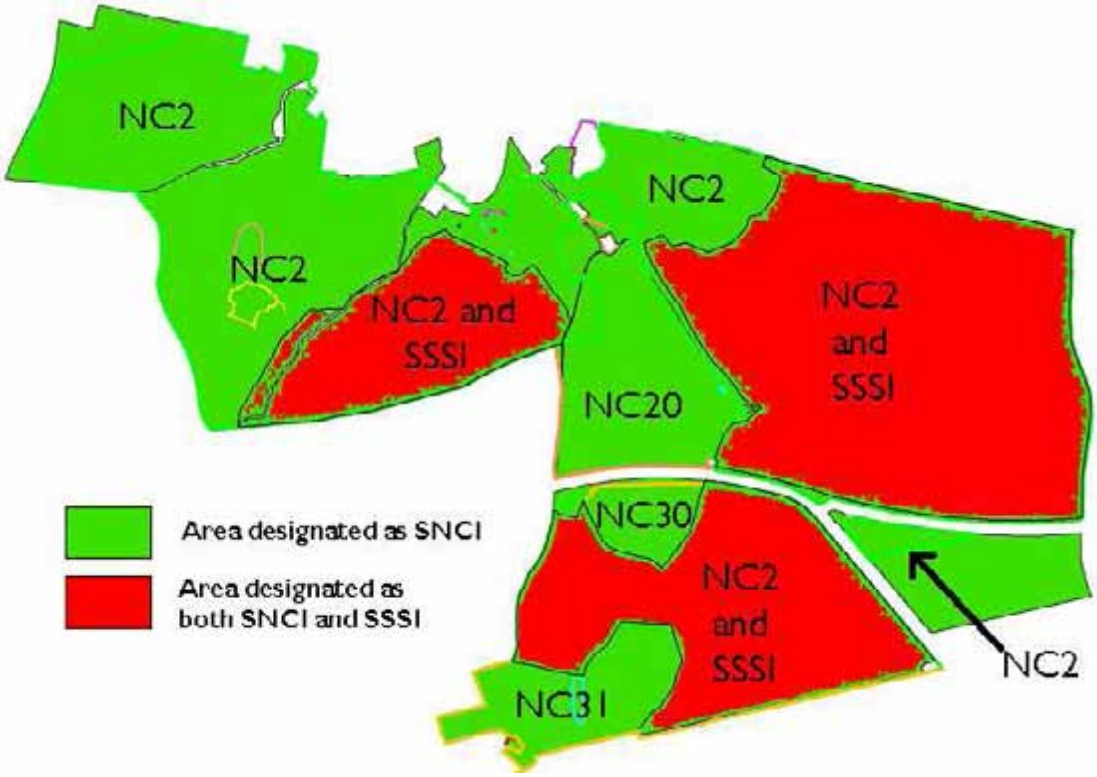
Eltham Park North, while not considered part of this management plan, directly borders Shepherdleas Woods, is listed as a SNCI and is considered to be a Site of Borough Importance Grade II. It is listed as NC31.

The UDP refers to SNCI's as following: -

O18 A network of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) throughout the Borough has been identified for protection. These include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and sites

declared as Local Nature Reserves (LNR). They are defined on the Proposals Map and listed in Table O2 as sites of Metropolitan, Borough or Local importance for nature conservation or geology. There will be a presumption against the development of these sites: the level of protection accorded to a site will be commensurate with its designation. Conservation and enhancement of important scientific features will be sought by appropriate management.

In addition, It says: -
'Plans need to be based on adequate information about species and habitats… To achieve these goals, baseline data needs to be established where ecologically friendly management is already in place. Therefore, Ecological assessments must be undertaken in order to establish baseline data.'



Map showing SNCI and SSSI areas.

Areas of Special Character

Also, the Greenwich UDP in part 2.6 refers to Oxleas Woodlands as part of a larger area designated as Special Character of Metropolitan Character.

D29 Within Areas of Special Character defined on the Proposals Map, special consideration will be given to the safeguarding, restoration and enhancement of character, scale and quality of open spaces and associated buildings. Skylines and distant views both to and from the Areas of Special Character will be protected

Community Benefits

O10 The Council will seek to secure improvement and enhancement of existing parks and public open spaces, where major development places increased demand on existing areas, and, where appropriate, the creation of new parks and public open spaces in line with Policies O9 and C3, through planning obligations and conditions on planning permissions in line with Policy SC2.

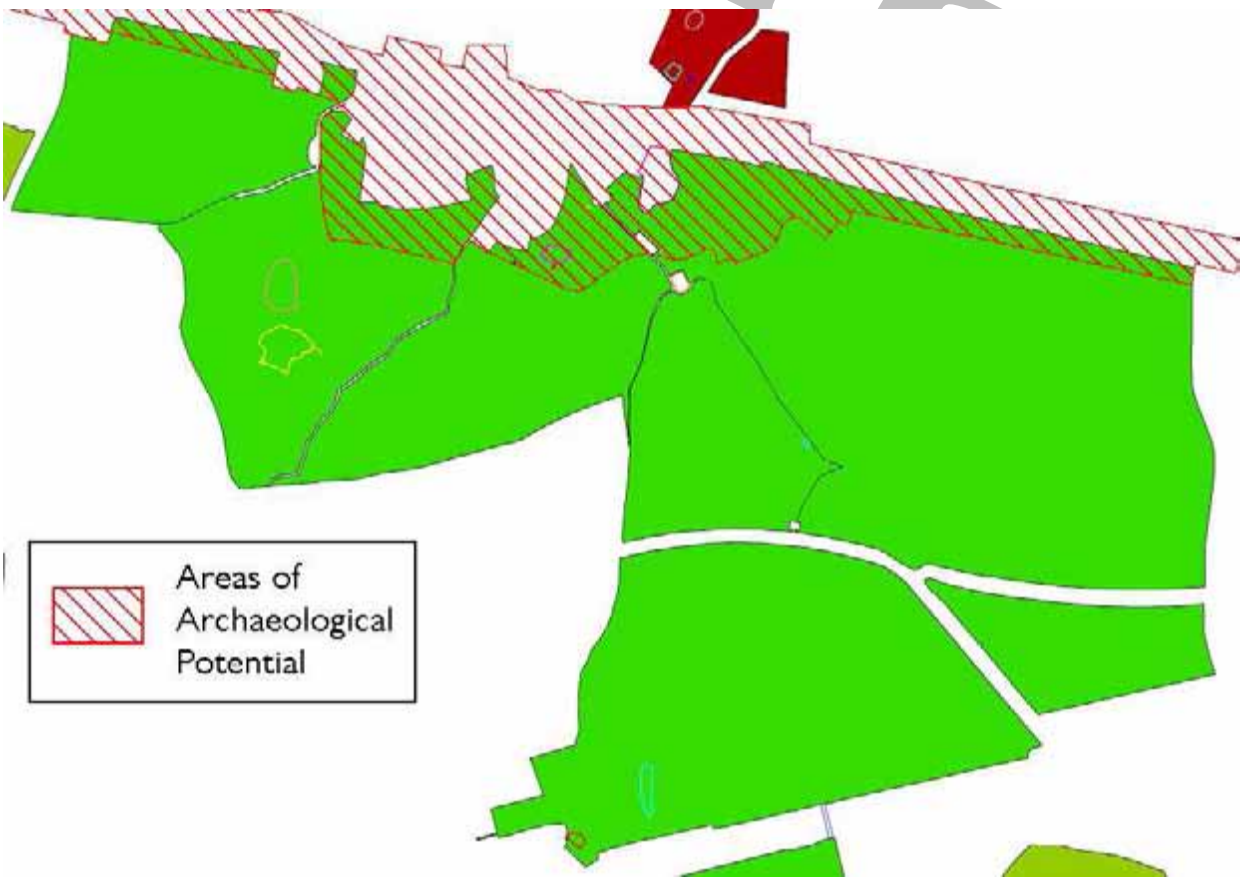
Park Facilities

O12 The Council will seek to enhance open space by the provision and encouragement of appropriate park facilities (e.g. seating, children's play equipment, refreshment facilities, outdoor tennis courts, pitch and putt, sports pitches and changing facilities and Arts, Culture and Entertainment facilities, such as open air performance spaces, sculpture and visual imagery and areas for cultural exhibition and study) within suitable parks and public open spaces. Facilities should be of a high standard of design and quality and respect local nature conservation interests. Such facilities should be safe to use and accessible to all. (See Policies D5, D6 and D7).

Archaeological Potential

The UDP identifies parts of Oxleas Woodlands as being of Archaeological Potential

D30 The Council will expect applicants to properly assess and plan for the impact of proposed developments on archaeological remains where they fall within 'Areas of Archaeological Potential' as defined on the constraints Map 10 (Shown below). In certain instances preliminary archaeological site investigations may be required before proposals are considered. The Council will seek to secure the co-operation of developers in the excavation, recording and publication of archaeological finds before development takes place by use of planning conditions/legal agreements as appropriate.



Map showing Oxleas woodlands and areas of archaeological potential

Green Corridors

The Railway cutting adjoining the southern edge of Shepherdleas wood is designated a Green Corridor by the UDP. This cutting is also designated an SNCI of borough importance grade II, listed as NC38.

O20 The network of main Green Corridors will be protected and enhanced. Development will not normally be permitted where it would damage the continuity of wildlife habitat within the corridor.

The Biodiversity Action Plan

The Greenwich Biodiversity Action Plan will be the first co-ordinated approach to conserving Greenwich's biodiversity. The aim of the plan is:
'To ensure the conservation, enhancement and public appreciation of the biodiversity of the London Borough of Greenwich'.

The Biodiversity Action Plan focuses on locally important habitats and species and has actions drafted to ensure that they cover all relevant habitats and species. Initially actions may be focussed on those under the most pressure or where most advantage can be gained. However, it allows for all important habitats and species to be covered.

The Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed in partnership with local and regional groups and organisations and is currently in a draft stage. Once the final draft is agreed it will be released for wider consultation before a final plan is adopted.

Legislation

The Parks & Open Spaces department operates within the frameworks set out by the following legislation, and therefore, the legislation may impact upon the delivery of service of the Parks and Open Spaces department both financially, through planning and human resources. This is not a comprehensive list but is indicative of key pieces of legislation relating to P&OS.

- Alcohol Consumption in Public Places Order 2003
- Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2004
- Control of Pesticide Protection Act 1986
- Country Code 1981
- Country side and Rights of Way Act 2000 and increments
- Countryside & Right of Way Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1998
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1998
- Litter Act 1983
- Ministry of Housing and Local Government Provisional Order Confirmation (Greater London Parks & Open Spaces Act)1967
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957
- Road Traffic Act 1988 (as amended 1991)
- The 2004 Country Code
- The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 & Dogs Act 1871??
- The National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949
- The Weeds Act 1959
- The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

In addition there are numerous bye-laws that relate to specific parks.

The current legal framework for SSSIs is provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, amended 1985, and the protection of SSSIs was enhanced by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

APPENDIX III: Oxleas Woodlands History

Oxleas Woodlands

This is taken, in the main, from "…The campaign to save Oxleas Woods…" Ask authors' permission as to whether we can include and acknowledge authors.

Woodland history in Britain can be traced to the end of the last glaciation, about 11,000 BC, when the ice sheets began to retreat north and the British Isles again became suitable for tree growth. Plants and animals returned from southern latitudes, to colonise slowly in the wake of the glaciers. The first British native trees to become established were aspen, birch and sallow, followed by pine and hazel. The first pollen records of oak and elm are found in the early Boreal Period (approx 7600-7000 BC). Oak and elm were followed by lime and probably alder, then holly, ash, beech, hornbeam and maple. Great Britain and Ireland became cut off from Denmark and the Low Countries when the level of the North Sea rose at the end of the Boreal Period, and no more species could enter naturally. Between 7,000 and 6,000 BC, lowland Britain was covered by this wildwood, the prehistoric forests which dominated much of the British Landscape. This is why so many British animals and smaller plants depend in some way on old woods, the original source of many species now in other habitats.

The Atlantic Period (From approximately 6,500-4,500 BC) was a relatively stable one, being warmer and wetter than today when substantial areas of bog and marshland existed. Tree species fought one another by the natural processes of succession to form a series of 'climax' woodland types. The Elm Decline ended this period, the time of the fully developed wildwood. The wildwood was Man's first home; Paleolithic and Mesolithic men cleared small areas of woodland, though as hunters and gatherers they had little more effect on the landscape than the beasts upon which they preyed. The temporary clearings were soon abandoned and quickly reverted to woodland, a practice known among archaeologists as swidden, though to what extent it occurred in Britain is not clear.

Humans first made their presence felt some 5,000 or 6,000 years ago when the settlers of the Neolithic arrived around 4,000 BC. The immigrants bought with them cereal crops and weeds, domestic animals and polished stone axes, of an agricultural technology which required clearing for farmland and the ability to manage woodland by coppicing and pollarding. They built houses, made pottery and constructed earthworks, graveyards and temples. Progressive clearance for settlement and agriculture, much of which was extensive and permanent, meant that the great broadleaved woodlands gradually receded and large tracts of woodland were converted to farmland or heath. Beech, hornbeam and maple became widespread in the southern woods, while birch and ash spread into the man-made clearings. The imported grazing animals, the sheep, goats and cattle, prevented regeneration of the woodlands and these animals were slaughtered in the cold winter months when vegetation was scarce. The larger carnivores, the brown bear and lynx which we now associate only with alien wilderness, became extinct. Aurochs, the wild ancestors of European domestic cattle, were associated with our wildwood, while the beaver survived into Anglo-Saxon times. The numbers of the enormous Irish elk also dwindled until it too was exterminated, the same fate as that of the wolf.

Man's numbers grew as the stability and quantity of the food supply increased, farming methods becoming more sophisticated during the Bronze Age (2,400-750 BC) and the Iron Age (750-40 AD). The late Bronze and Iron Ages witnessed the onset of a wetter climate, with the continuing rise of beech and hornbeam in southern England. The Saxons are generally credited with the introduction of heavy, wheeled ploughs drawn by oxen and capable of bringing heavy clay soils into cultivation, an

apparent legacy of the period after the Roman legions left in the 5th Century AD, though there was much earlier cultivation of the clays.

As mentioned, the Anglo-Saxon word leah meant a permanent glade or clearing in woodland, although it can also refer to a wood, and was later corrupted to ley, and was used as an ending for place names.
On the 1660 Crown Survey map and the Tithe map of 1869, Oxleas Wood was called Oxleys wood, and Shepherdleas wood was called Shepherd Leys Wood.

At the time of the time of the Norman conquest, almost all of the wildwood had gone, or been reduced to isolated fragments in remote corners of the parishes, and by then, England had become one of the least wooded countries of Europe. Woodland shrank from 15% of England's land surface in 1086, to perhaps 10% by 1350.

Eltham, Bexley and Plumstead were included in the Surrey lathe of Wallington; Lathes were provinces of the Jutish kingdom, surviving long after Kent had lost its independence and appearing in the Domesday Book as the primary division of the county. Each of the lathes had by then been divided into a number of hundreds, which were both judicial and administrative units at whose court, the Sherriff, presided, to try offenders and conduct the king's business. The original tract of woodland of which Oxleas was a part, was located in the hundreds of Blackheath and Lesnes (Andrews, Dury and Herbert's map of Kent, 1769). Eltham came under the lordship of Odo of Bayeus, while the manor of Bexley owed lordship to the Archbishop and that of Plumstead to St. Augustine's. The reference given below, to fifty pigs, is a statement of dues or swine-rent, part of the traditional custom of pannage, where pigs were allowed to browse for acorns or beech mast in autumn. A sulung is a form of measurement for apportioning dues and services to the manor, the hundred, the lathe, or even the kingdom (The Jutish Forest, K.P.Witney, 1976). The Domesday Book Relates that:

> 'Hamo the Sherriff holds Eltham from the Bishop.
> It answers for 1½ sulungs. Land for 12 ploughs
> In lordship 2 ploughs.
> 42 villagers with 12 smallholders have 11 ploughs
> 9 slaves; meadow, 22 acres; woodland 50 pigs.
> Value before 1066 £16; when acquired £12; now £20.
> Afwold held it from the King'

Oxleas was maintained as a coppice with standard woodland from the Middle Ages, and perhaps earlier. In 1542, Henry VII enacted an early woodland conservation measure by appointing a surveyor to manage the whole of the Crown Woodlands, which presumably included Oxleas.

The best oaks of Oxleas Wood were cut for shipbuilding by order of Parliament, during the interregnum (1642-51). The general output of timber-built ships between 1800 and 1860 was probably equal to that in all the rest of history put together, though during the period 1780-1850, the tanyards were also a massive industry, consuming far more oaks in the processing of the necessary bark than the naval dockyards. The continual harvesting of oaks for timber, over the centuries is the reason why there are no very large, old oaks in Oxleas and similar woodlands.

Oxleas was part of the Royal manor of Eltham from it's inception in 1311 until its lease to Sir John Shaw in 1679 on a lease of 43 years. The lease lasted for nearly two centuries, with every tenant

being called John Shaw due to family tradition, each being responsible for the management of the wood. Land on the summit was also leased to the tenant. In 1780, to build Nightingale Hall in Jack Wood, the timber rights were considered valuable and normally permission to build was withheld; among the schemes proposed were a spa with a coffee house on the Hill, in 1766. However, the Hill was thought to be vital for the defence of the dockyards and the approach to London, so that a line of forts was considered and the spa idea faded.

Oxleas was notorious for highwaymen,

During the Napoleonic Wars, in 1805, the lease for the Shooters Hill Woodlands passed into the hands of the Commissioner for Woods, as a supply for the naval dockyards at Woolwich and Deptford. It is highly likely that ships of Oxleas oak fought at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Historical Woodland Management

The first woodland management in Britain was coppicing and wood-pasture, introduced by the Neolithic men. Wood-pasture, the system of management used in Epping Forest, tends to give an open scatter of large old trees with spreading crowns. Coppicing involves the division of trees and tree-shrubs into timber – known as standards (often oaks) suitable for making planks, beams and gateposts; and underwood, which is suitable for light construction or firewood (faggots logs or charcoal). Underwood is normally the most important product and historically the most valuable, because tithes were payable on wood, but not on timber, thus, underwood and timber in the same woodland would often belong to different people.

Woodland also supplied local communities with fodder for stock (e.g. holly), nuts, honey, medicinal herbs and even hawks for falconers. The Anglo-Saxons used underwood for fencing, wattle-work and light structures of many kinds. By the 13th century, a balance had emerged between the exploitation of woods for their produce, and conservation.

The Crown retained the timber rights for the Shooters Hill Woodlands, at the beginning of the 19th century, leasing the underwood, or coppice, to Sir John Shaw. The commissioner for Woods arranged for regular surveys of the timber resources and that of 1811, carried out by AP Driver, recorded that Shepherdleas had lost 85% of it's timber, and Oxleas 64% since the first survey of 1805 and the recommended felling of 1805-6. WC Driver recommended in 1811, that the power be reserved for the Surveyor General to plant acorns in the wood, which normally had to be done at the time of cutting the underwood. Standards grown from seed were known as maidens and it was common practice to leave a group of larger trees as seed parents at the end of each felling. Elms were also taken for timber at this time.

Sir John was unhappy with the loss of his control over the management of the woodlands and the emphasis to be placed upon timber production. His lease was renewed until 1841, though he lost most of his estate, including the woodlands and coppice rights, in order for the Crown to re-establish a succession of timber trees, a 'timber nursery'. His lease was not renewed again and Lord Truro was granted a 99-year property lease in 1864. The shooting rights were taken over in 1842, by a Mr. Coulthurst, who was also granted permission to build a carriage road to his cottage, as the current one was impassable in winter, which may also have been on the line of the present bridle path which runs roughly north-south through Oxleas to the edge of Oxleas Meadow (from F.B. Goldsmith, Appendix One – A History of Oxleas Wood).

The 1849 survey was carried out by the firm of John Clutton, who observed that underwood in most districts of England was of little value as domestic fuel, because the effect of the railways had been to reduce the price of coal considerably. He was generally impressed with the state of the woods, saying that 'There (is) upon a large part of the Woods a very thriving and growing crop of young Oak trees.' With various improvements they would contain 'a fine a plant of young Oaks as can be found in any wood in the South of England' (op. cit.). Many ancient semi-natural woods have artificially enhanced oak populations and in Oxleas such areas seem to be patchy rather than widespread. The term semi-natural refers to natural vegetation which has in some way been modified by man, but which reflects the existing soil conditions and other factors, and therefore the plant community appropriate to the location. Semi-natural communities include those formed by vegetative re growth from stumps, as in coppices over many centuries, or vegetation which has arisen from natural regeneration. The areas concerned in Oxleas and Shepherdleas which were formerly planted, are now regarded as semi-natural (K.Kirby, NCC).

Oxleas is one of the few areas of woodland in London that has recently been managed by coppicing, which was abandoned in the 1920's and resumed by the GLC in 1968 under the Oxleas Woods (Jack wood, Oxleas Wood and Shepherdleas Wood) Management Plan (Departments of Recreation and the Arts and Transportation and Development). Coppiced wood is ideal for poles, stakes, fencing in general, thatching, rods, props, firewood and many other uses. John Clutton recommended, in 1849, that some ash and sweet chestnut should be planted instead of oak, for the hop pole trade in Kent; to what extent this was carried out and how it has affected the present distribution of ash and chestnut is uncertain. The sweet chestnut was originally introduced by the Romans and is an 'honorary native' (Kirby). The 18th Century debate over whether the tree was native initiated the science of historical ecology, and anticipated many of the methods used in investigating woodland history. Chestnut wood is suitable for stake and pal-and-wire fencing, and like birch, is also used for wood pulp.

Ash is a traditional material and due to it's elasticity it is used for handles of all kinds of tools, frames, shafts of vehicles (from ancient chariots to Morris Travelers) and aircraft; it was the commonest wood for spears due to the 'modern' cavalry lance. Ash and hazel were often used in Neolithic Track ways. Hazel was the customary tree for wattle-work and used to make the sheep hurdles once in huge demand in the Weald and on the Downs, and is now used for garden and motorway fences, while the nuts were also a valuable crop. The tough, heavy, nearly white wood of the hornbeam was used for chopping blocks, mallets, skittles, wooden rollers and teeth on the gears of windmills and watermills, cartwheel hubs, pulley-sheaves, yokes and the works of pianos; it was also good for fuel and charcoal. The wood of the pear, crab and service trees is also resistant for abrasion and used for the gear teeth of mils. Birch was valued for making brooms and as a teaching aid, while alder was the preferred tree for making clogs and charcoal (for gunpowder).

Coppicing was a widespread and common form of management as far back as the 11th Century, as confirmed by the Domesday Book, and this continued until late in the 19th Century; by the 1960's, the practice had retreated to south-east England. Renewable fuels were forgotten in the successive fashions for coal, atomic energy and heating oil.

Coppices were once part of a complex landscape of interlinked habitats, so that the individual components were buffered against change, one type acting as a reservoir for the re colonisation of another. Modern agriculture and to some degree urbanisation and the growth of suburbs, has

reduced coppiced woodlands to small islands in a monocultural sea; they can thus serve as sanctuaries for the species of grasslands and other natural communities whose habitats were once widespread but have become increasingly spread. The great majority of coppices were ancient woods and since 1945, 10% of these were cleared for agriculture and 30% converted to plantations; 50% were left as semi-natural but only 10% survived under traditional management (Peterken and Allinson 1989). In fact, 'many coppices are remnants of the original-natural woodlands (Peterken 1981, Marren 1990)… Most coppices have not been greatly modified by planting, so the distribution of species – including the trees – within the wood bear some relationship to natural factors, such as soil texture and drainage…' 'Original-naturalness' is a state which existed in the distant past before the Neolithic period when man became a significant ecological factor, so that existing coppiced woodland, for example, has been modified to a greater or lesser extent from it's original-natural form.

Coppices differ from unmanaged woodland in that they contain the permanent open spaces of rides and glades, and good stock of pioneer trees (e.g. birch and sallow) and various shrubs; very large, old trees are usually absent or confined to the margins and are generally oaks. Coppiced woodlands often contain drainage ditches instead of untended watercourses. Coppicing eliminates some trees, (e.g. pine) and discourages others like beech, while providing a favourable environment for hazel, ash and aspen, giving greater opportunities for elm and sometimes birch to invade.

Oak woods were only one kind of wildwood vegetation; the present abundance of oak is in part, a cumulative effect of various activities which have favoured it over centuries, including a reduction of competition for the natural oak saplings. Other species have been coppiced and become less prominent, but they are usually more numerous and much of the biological character and historical continuity of a wood depends on them. Underwood grows poorly in shade so the timber trees were usually kept in a minority and not allowed to form a continuous canopy.

A coppiced wood is divided into a number of sections or cants. One or more of these is felled each year when the trees are cut down to almost ground level and then allowed to regenerate over the succeeding years. Most native species grow vigorously from the stumps, or coppice stools, to form multiple shoots (also called spring). The stools are allowed to develop for a number of years, usually between seven and twenty, before being cut again. Coppice stools are an important characteristic, giving woodland distinct ecological and visual features while the age of the stools may provide a clue to its antiquity.

Hornbeam stools, more common in the eastern part of the wood vary up to six feet in diameter; those of service, which grows abundantly in the western part on the upper slopes can measure up to five feet in diameter. Ash stools are more evenly distributed and generally smaller, below five feet in diameter. The fast-growing chestnut stools, found in most areas, can be up to eight feet in diameter. These are the tree species that have generally been treated as underwood; coppiced hazel is fairly widespread, though more numerous in the eastern part of the woods.

The cycle established by coppicing ensures a continual supply of wood and most trees will coppice for at least a hundred years. Coppicing can prolong the life of the individual tree concerned by retarding it's ageing, while the root system continues to grow and remain healthy. Coppicing also increases the range of wildlife present, thereby enhancing the aesthetic and educational aspects of woodland. Each stage of regeneration supports a different animal and plant community and the practice has given Oxleas many places with their own distinctive features.

Woods that are managed with coppicing as part of that management need to be coppiced at least once every fifty years to allow the seed present in the soil to germinate, though wood spurge seed can remain dormant for at least 125 years. Spring –flowering perennials, like primrose, flower profusely only in the years after felling, while summer flowering perennials grow tall and flower. These plants dwindle as the underwood grows again, the undergrowth returns and the area slowly regains its original form. The cyclical nature of coppicing furnishes a wide variety of habitats in a small area, providing the continuity which is important for the survival of many species. Oxleas was noted for it's high degree of habitat diversity (NCC) The continual cycle of felling and re growth ensures that some areas, e.g. under Ash trees, will always be suitable for plants that cannot stand heavy shade.

Ancient coppiced woods, because of their links with primeval (original-natural) woodland, are of great interest to ecologists in the study of primitive environments, because planting has played only a minor role, allowing mixtures of trees and shrubs to survive in much the same mixtures as were found in prehistoric woodlands. They are our last link with the lost lowland woodlands and are potentially important as scientific controls, or baselines, against which the effects of human impacts in the wider environment can be measured.

Severndroog Castle

(Taken from the Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust Webpage)

Severndroog Castle was erected in 1784 by Lady James as a folly, to the designs of William Jupp, in the grounds of what was then Park Farm Place.
She built the tower following the death of her husband (Sir William James), to commemorate his capture of the pirate fortress of Severndroog on the Malabar coast of India on the 2nd April 1755.
For a thousand years, pirates had been attacking ships on the important trade route off the coast of India, and from the early 1700s had their fortress based at Severndroog on the island of Vijayadrug. In 1755 James defeated the pirates near Severndroog with his warships, which led to the capture of the island and of their mainland fort. An inscription recording the event can be seen above the entrance.
Sir William James died of a stroke at his daughter's wedding on December 16, 1783, his grief-stricken wife had the monument built on the highest point of Shooters Hill to commemorate his greatest achievement.
Sir William James was born in 1720, the son of a Pembrokeshire miller. He went to sea at the age of twelve and rapidly made his name as a daring seaman. At the age of 18 in 1738 he served in the West Indies under 'Hawke'. The East India Company engaged him to suppress piracy and protect its interests on the high seas in 1755. The capture of Severndroog was just one of many dramatic ventures he carried out to safeguard the Company's fortunes. He led a small squadron, which set out to capture the Severndroog Fort on the Western seaboard of India, off a district called Concan, which stretched from Bombay south to Goa.

He eventually became a director of the Company, and Deputy Master of Trinity House. He bought Park Farm Place, on Shooters Hill, in 1759 and he lived with his wife for the remainder of his life. He died there in 1783.
The miniature keep offers views of the surrounding land for 20 miles and is one of the highest spots in the south east, its roof standing 40ft further above sea level than the cross at the top of St Paul's Cathedral. For this reason, it was used during the Second World War by plane spotters and as a radar station.
1797: The tower was made use of by General Roy when linking up England and France trigonometrically and for that purpose the 36" theodolite made by Ramsden and presented by George III to the Royal Society was installed on its summit
c.1816: Mr John Blades, ex-sherriff of London purchased the castle, it being a conspicuous object eastward of his mansion at Brockwell Hill, near Dulwich.
1847: The castle was under threat from a proposal to build a 10,000 catacomb cemetery in terraces on the site.
1848: Royal Engineers used the building for conducting a survey of London
1869: Mr Barlow, ship owner, leased Castle Wood - he terraced the slope south of the castle and built Castle Wood House but never lived there
1874: Mr Thomas Jackson (eminent railway and docks contractor of Eltham Park) acquired the lease and his son Mr John Jackson occupied the house until the lease transferred to Mr E Probyn Godson.
1922: Mr E Probyn Godson bequeathed to the London County Council (LCC) an option on the estate, the freehold of which he had acquired together with that of the castle. The property was bought by a committee for £6,000 part made up by contributions from metropolitan borough councils of Bermondsey (£250), Deptford (£500), Greenwich (£500), Lewisham (£500) and Woolwich (£2,000) and was transferred to LCC management in November. Castle Wood House (and its outbuildings including the classical style Flint Lodge) is demolished but the castle is kept for "park purposes"
1939 - 45: During World War II the tower was manned day and night by two observers (special constables) who were in telephonic communication with Whitehall and kept constant lookout for air raiders
1986: Greater London Council (GLC) is abolished and the London Borough of Greenwich takes ownership of the castle.

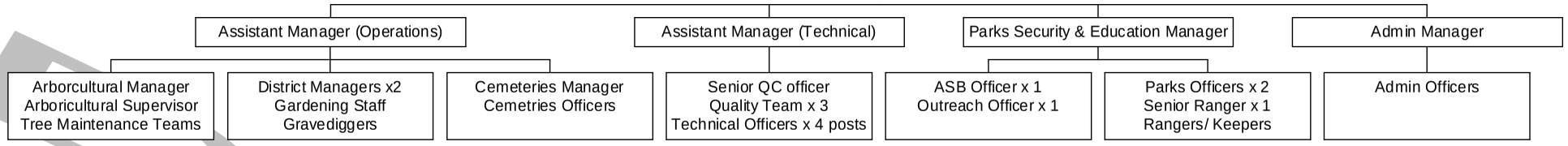
During peacetime, from 1921 to 1984, Severndroog Castle was open as a tearoom and observation tower.
It was closed to the public in 1988.

In spring 2002, Greenwich Council, planned to lease the ailing monument to property developer Mount Anvil, which intended to convert it into offices

Severndroog Castle is at the time of writing, listed as a Grade II* listed building and is included on the English Heritage Buildings at List register.

Plan of the northern part of the woods, showing buildings extant in 1890.

APPENDIX IV: Parks and Open Spaces Management Structure



APPENDIX V: Table of figures

APPENDIX VI: PDO's

Oxleas Woodlands, Greater London - Potentially Damaging Operations
(Operations requiring prior consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council)

Standard
Ref. No.
Cultivation, including ploughing, rotervating, harrowing, and reseeding.
Grazing
Stock Feeding
Mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation
Application of manure, fertilisers and lime
Application of pesticides, including herbicides (weed killers).
Dumping, spreading or discharge of any materials.
Burning
The release into the site of any wild, feral or domestic animal*, plant or seed.
The killing or removal of any wild animal*, including pest control
The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains (including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf mould, turf).
Tree and/or woodland management+
13a Drainage (Including the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains)
13b Modification of the structure of water courses (e.g. streams, springs, ditches, drains) including their banks and beds, as by realignment, regarding and dredging.
13c Management of aquatic and bank vegetation for drainage purposes.
14 The changing of water levels and tables and water utilisation (including irrigation, storage and abstraction from existing water bodies and through boreholes)
Infilling of ditches, dykes, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or pits.
16a Freshwater fishery production and/or management**
Extraction of minerals, including sand, topsoil, subsoil and spoil
Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hard-stands, banks, ditches or other earthworks, or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground
Storage of materials
Erection of permanent or temporary structures, or the undertaking of engineering works, including drilling
Use of vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
Recreational or other activities likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
Game and Waterfowl management and hunting practices

** including sporting, fishing and angling
+ (including afforestation, planting, clear and selective felling, thinning, coppicing, modification of the stand or under wood, changes in species composition, cessation of management.
* "Animal" includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate

APPENDIX VII: Previous management plan objectives

These can be incorporated into the main Action Plan if this makes the document flow better?
The items which are in normal font are prescriptions from the 1995 plan and the items in bold are the updated recommendations from the 2001 addendum.

KEY:

***	High Priority – Nature conservation value will decline if not carried out
**	Medium priority – would significantly enhance nature conservation, amenity and/or educational value.
*	Lower priority – desirable, to be undertaken when resources or opportunities arise.
REG	Tasks which need to be undertaken regularly for the foreseeable future
REV	*Generally one-off tasks, which may need to be repeated periodically*

Recommendation	Status
**REG Coppice south-west corner of Oxleas on a 15 year rotation (i.e. once coupe every 3 years) during November to February.	Action: Continue to monitor the need for further coppicing against available resources (LBG, GWAG)
**REG Coppice edge of Shepherdleas to north of Eltham Park North on 15-year rotation (i.e. one coupe every 5 years) during November to February.	Action: Continue to monitor the need for further coppicing against available resources (LBG, GWAG)
**REG Coppice edges of wide ride running north from "Piccadilly Circus" in Oxleas on a 10-year rotation during November to February.	Action: Continue to monitor the need for further coppicing against available resources (LBG, GWAG)
**REV If public reaction is favourable, coppice other wide rides in Oxleas and Shepherdleas on a 10 year rotation during November to February	Action: Continue to monitor the need for further coppicing against available resources (LBG, GWAG)

**REV Establish a tree nursery of Oxleas Woodlands stock for planting in and near the woods.	Further planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is occurring? No Action required?
**REV Plant external edges of Oxleas beside roads with shrubs to exclude traffic noise	Further planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is occurring? No Action required?
**REV Plant hazel and hawthorn along eastern edge of Eltham Park North in 10-20 metre strip	Further planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is occurring? No action required.
**REV Inplant as necessary in areas to be coppiced or cleared of alien species, after initial coppicing or clearance has been carried out.	Further planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is occurring?? No action required?
**REV Review path network and improve or block as necessary. In general, improve existing hardcore paths and discourage use of others, especially where other work, such as coppicing, is undertaken nearby.	Erosion of paths should be monitored and any essential treatments carried out in consultation with English Nature. To prevent new pathways being created or sensitive areas of the wood being overused, dead hedges may be built.
*REV Consider feasibility of boardwalk through alder wood.	To be completed
***REVClose path through alder wood and path along eastern edge of Oxleas to horses	To be completed
**REV Review use of path to south-east corner of Oxleas by horses.	To be completed
***REVEradicate Rhododendron throughout the woodlands by cutting or pulling as appropriate and treating stumps and/or re growth with an appropriate herbicide. Clearance to be undertaken between September and February inclusive.	Adequate resources MUST be directed at controlling invasive species. This management is of high priority (especially rhododendron) ACTION: High priority will be given to appropriate and control of invasive species
***REVEradicate sycamore throughout the woodlands by cutting or pulling up as appropriate and treating stumps with an appropriate herbicide. Work, other than pulling up small saplings, to be undertaken between September and February inclusive	Adequate resources MUST be directed at controlling invasive species. This management is of high priority (especially sycamore) ACTION: High priority will be given to appropriate and control of invasive species
**REV Eradicate Turkey oak throughout the woodlands by cutting or pulling up as appropriate and treating stumps with an appropriate herbicide. Work, other than pulling up small saplings, to be undertaken between September and February inclusive	Adequate resources MUST be directed at controlling invasive species. ACTION: High priority will be given to appropriate and control of invasive species

**REV Control Swedish Whitebeam by pulling up or cutting when the trees are in leaf.	Adequate resources MUST be directed at controlling invasive species. This management is of high priority. Swedish Whitebean is also a problem and this may be able to be controlled effectively by ring barking ACTION: High priority will be given to appropriate and control of invasive species Aigh
*REV Thin sweet chestnut in areas where it is dominant, replacing by implanting hazel and hornbeam.	ACTION: Low priority. Undertake to seek resources to complete this project.
*REV Control other alien trees and shrubs by cutting or pulling up and treating stumps with an appropriate herbicide. Work, other than pulling up small saplings to be undertaken between September and February inclusive	ACTION: High priority will be given to appropriate and control of invasive species
***REVEradicate Japanese Knotweed by regular treatment with an appropriate herbicide until there is no re growth.	Adequate resources MUST be directed at controlling invasive species. ACTION: High priority will be given to this species
**REV Remove tipped garden refuse from edge of woods where they back onto houses.	The problem of fly tipping appears to have stabilised and is mainly around the edges of the wood and the car parks. The most successful preventative method at present is to place bollards where, at the moment, vehicles can access so they are prevented
***REG Remove litter on a regular basis and any fly tipping immediately.	The problem of fly tipping appears to have stabilised and is mainly around the edges of the wood and the car parks. The most successful preventative method at present is to place bollards where, at the moment, vehicles can access so they are prevented
**REV Plant sterile hybrid rhododendrons along “Rhododendron Walk”.	To be completed
*REV Explore the possibility of establishing an educational and interpretive centre in the old café or other appropriate location near the woods	To be explored through consultation
*REV Examine possibilities for further interpretation, both signs in situ and leaflets.	To be explored through consultation

**REV Commission an invertebrate survey of the pond in Oxleas and review management options in the light of the survey results.	Currently there is little baseline survey data and a need has been identified for existing records to be collated and monitoring set up. The results of these activities will be used to inform future management. There are obviously resource implications and contractual arrangements that may be necessary. The groups that could be most usefully recorded include vascular plats, birds, butterflies, fungi, birds, macrolepidoptera and mammals. ACTION: Collate existing records and consider possible approaches to future monitoring (LBG, GWAG) Approach Wetland Working Group once established
**REV Consider blocking some drainage ditches to locally increase wetness, particularly in the alder wood.	The problems of flooding in the southwest corner now appear to be solved and the current water balance across the rest of the site should be maintained. NO ACTION REQUIRED
**REV Plant wild cherry beneath trees in Oxleas Meadow at edge of Jackwood, fence this area off and cease mowing to allow woodland regeneration.	To be completed This could be done by collecting wild cherry seeds and fruit from elsewhere in the wood and scattering the seeds in this area.
Implement provisions of the CROW Act (LBG, EN)	Action: Ongoing