

**Woodland Management Plan
Revision 3 – February 2024**

**Little Furze School Wood
Oxhey Woods
South Oxhey
Wafford
Hertfordshire**

2022-2028



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Survey Date

September 2018

Date of Management Plan

Revised February 2024

Quality Assurance

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Background

1.1 Background Information

- 1.1.1 For the purposes of this Management Plan, the area of woodland with which this Plan is concerned is referred to as Little Furze School Wood for ease of identification and separation from the larger Oxhey Woods.
- 1.1.2 This small area of woodland forms a small part of a much larger woodland complex - Oxhey Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is located in South Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire.
- 1.1.3 Little Furze School Wood is located at national grid reference TQ109932 and occupies an area of approximately 4.4ha out of a total of 97ha of Oxhey Woods.
- 1.1.4 Oxhey Woods is owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council under a WPG Management Plan 2012 – 2032 which covers just the woodland in the ownership and management of Three Rivers District Council. Little Furze School Wood is owned by Hertfordshire County Council and has not been included in the WPG Management Plan.
- 1.1.5 Oxhey Woods, including the part of the wood referred to as Little Furze School Wood is designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) number 90/006. The LWS citation describes Oxhey Woods as ancient semi-natural oak and hornbeam woodland on acidic clays and a gravel plateau and is one of the most important woods in Hertfordshire.
- 1.1.6 This Woodland Management Plan for Little Furze School Wood has been produced in compliance with Planning Condition 14 of application 20/1677/FUL, for the redevelopment of the former Little Furze JMI School, Gosforth Lane, South Oxhey, Hertfordshire.

2.0 Site Description

2.1 Oxhey Woods

- 2.1.1 Oxheys Woods are described as a mix of ancient semi-natural woodland and secondary woodland forming one contiguous woodland complex. A number of woodlands form part of Oxhey Woods complex which includes Abbots Wood, Nanscot Wood and the locally named Little Furze School Wood.
- 2.1.2 The ancient semi-natural woodland part of the complex is described as sessile oak and hornbeam coppice with evidence of coppicing of other species such as hazel, ash and sweet chestnut. Areas of woodland not considered ancient are described as afforested and with conifer from the eighteenth century.
- 2.1.3 Oxhey Woods lies on London Clay and pebble gravels with soils which are only slowly permeable and seasonally water-logged. A high forest structure dominated by oak best describes Oxhey Woods but significant pockets of oak and hornbeam coppice are still evident today.
- 2.1.4 Notably, a rare tree; the wild service tree, is found in Oxhey Woods and it is reported that Oxhey Woods has the largest population of this tree in Hertfordshire.
- 2.1.5 Rhododendron and laurel are considered to be found in all areas of the wood, although recent management has taken steps to control these non-native invasive species of shrub.

2.2 Little Furze School Wood

- 2.2.1 Little Furze School Wood forms part of the Oxhey Woods complex, located in the far north-eastern corner of the woodland, adjacent to Gosforth Lane and sandwiched between the former Little Furze JMI School and St Joseph's Primary School.
- 2.2.2 This part of Oxhey Woods is described and marked on the ancient woodland inventory as ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by sessile oak with hornbeam coppice with a small area of oak-dominated high forest adjacent to Gosforth Lane. An apparent long-established track divides Little Furze School Wood through its centre which runs from Gosforth Lane to Oxhey Drive. On either side of this track large pockets of hornbeam coppice is found appearing to show two periods of recent coppice history.
- 2.2.3 Growing as high forest and as a shrub layer in this part of Oxhey Woods are a number of species including mature oak and ash with some suckering elm, with a shrub layer consisting of cherry laurel, some holly, occasional sweet chestnut and sycamore. The ground flora appears generally lacking with only occasional small areas of bramble obvious, however the high forest and stored coppice structure appears to have resulted in little light reaching the woodland floor.
- 2.2.4 Whilst no recent re-coppicing dates have been attributed to the hornbeam coppice in Little Furze School Wood, it does appear that the re-coppicing has been carried out over two periods of time. The pockets of hornbeam coppice east of the dividing track appear to have been coppiced much more recently than the coppice to the west of the track.



Older re-coppice west side of the track



Newer re-coppice east of the track

3.0 Management Plan

3.1 Aims

- 3.1.1 The history of Oxhey Woods appears to show a diverse mix of management approaches which have included traditional coppicing and timber production which has led to a long history of diversification of the woodland structure.
- 3.1.2 Structurally diverse woodlands, more often than not, result in a diversification of biodiversity, with a woodland structure of high closed canopy, open woodland floor through coppice, thicket and shrub development and open grassland and rides, where a diversity of wildlife can thrive. Often this wildlife is unique to the specific structural conditions of the woodland ranging from specialist woodland butterflies exploiting open early coppice coups to deadwood specialist insects utilising the standing and lying deadwood.
- 3.1.3 As such, it is the aim of this Management Plan to carrying out woodland management within Little Furze School Wood that compliments the overall management approach of Oxhey Woods. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of managing a relatively small area of woodland such as Little Furze School Wood, it is proposed to create some structural diversification of woodland through the re-coppicing of the hornbeam, primarily within the coppice west of the dividing track, over a seven-year period.
- 3.1.4 As Little Furze School Wood is part of the much larger Oxhey Woods LNR & LWS, the management prescribed below will be carried out in consultation with Three Rivers District Council. As the management prescribed is specifically for the benefit of biodiversity, the woodland work is to be directly supervised by a qualified Ecologist with woodland management experience and expertise.

3.2 Management Objectives

1. To re-coppice the hornbeam stools west of the dividing track
2. To create and improve the deadwood resource within the wood
3. To remove invasive non-native species such as cherry laurel
4. To monitor the success of the re-copping of hornbeam stools

3.3 Strategy

1. Re-coppice the hornbeam

3.3.1 All hornbeam coppice stools west of the dividing track including the hornbeam coppice lining the western side of the track edge within the ownership of Hertfordshire County Council will be re-coppiced over a seven-year period. The wood west of the track will be divided into three coups (compartments) which are considered large enough to allow sufficient sunlight to penetrate the coup floor to promote coppice stool regeneration.

3.3.2 The arising cut brush will either be carefully placed over the cut hornbeam stool to provide some protection from browsing mammals such as muntjac or drifted around and through the coups, or piled around the edge of the coup to create a deer fence and discourage deer access.

3.3.3 Please see plan for greater detail.

2. To create a lying deadwood resource

3.3.4 The cordwood arising from the re-coppicing will remain within Little Furze School Wood. The cordwood will be cut to lengths of approximately 1.2m which allows easy handling but is long enough to be used to create habitat piles and to be used by burrowing insects. The cordwood will be stacked within or outside each coup, as

determined by the Ecologist, in habitat piles small enough to be safe from toppling but large enough to create habitat for insects and small mammals.

3. Remove cherry laurel

3.3.5 Cherry laurel is an evergreen shrub of non-native origins. Whilst Little Furze School Wood is not overrun by this shrub, there are a number of shrubs throughout this part of the wood. It does naturally regenerate and the re-coppicing may encourage the germination of seed within the woodland soil, possible outcompeting the natural development of the native woodland flora.

3.3.6 At the time of re-coppicing, the existing cherry laurel within Little Furze School Wood will be grubbed out and any regeneration of cherry laurel that occurs over the period of this six year Plan will also be removed by hand.

4. Re-coppicing monitoring

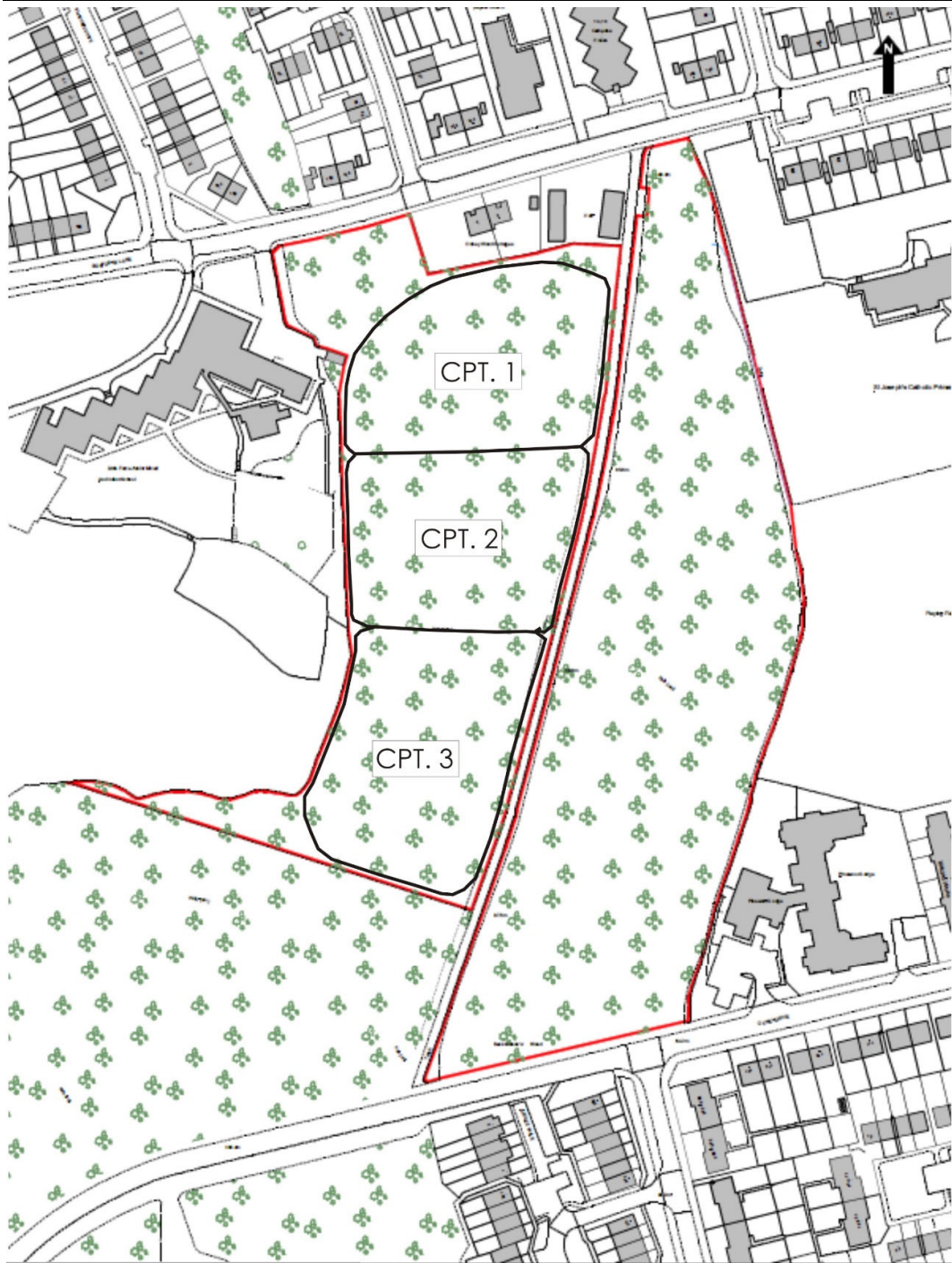
3.3.7 Over the six-year Plan period, an Ecologist will monitor the success of the re-coppicing, which would manifest itself through the regrowth from the cut stools. Attention will be given to any apparent muntjac browsing that hinders successful regrowth and appropriate remedial action will be taken should muntjac browsing be detected. Attention will also be given to any germination of cherry laurel and if any is detected, the regeneration will be immediate removed.

4.0 Work Programme 2022 - 2028

Cpt No.	Area	Activity	Year 1 (Winter 2022/ 2023)	Year 2 (Winter 2023/ 2024?)	Year 3 (Winter 2024/ 2025)	Year 4 (Winter 2025/ 2026)	Year 5 (Winter 2026/ 2027)	Year 6 (Winter 2027/ 2028)	Year 7 (Winter 2028- 2029)
1	0.51ha	Re-coppice hornbeam Remove cherry laurel Monitor Remove cherry laurel regeneration	√ √	 √ √	√* √ √	 √ √	 √ √	 √ √	
2	0.55ha	Re-coppice hornbeam Monitor Remove cherry laurel regeneration			√ √	√ √ √	√ √	√ √	
3	0.70ha	Re-coppice hornbeam Monitor Remove cherry laurel regeneration					√ √	√ √	√

- 3 trees remaining from Year 1 (Winter 2022/2023) to be coppiced.

5.0 Re-coppicing Compartment Plan



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Little Furze School Wood
Compartment Plan

6.0 References

WPG Management Plan. Oxhey Woods. 2012. Forestry Commission England