

**Climate Change, Leisure and Housing Committee
Wednesday 16 October 2024**

PART I

NEW MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR CARPENTERS WOOD AND PHEASANTS AND SOLOMANS WOOD (ADE)

1 Summary

- 1.1 New five-year management plans have been developed for Carpenters Wood in Chorleywood, and Pheasants and Solomans Wood in Rickmansworth/Mill End and Chorleywood.
- 1.2 Both new plans contain management actions for the woodlands over the next five years from financial year 2025/26 until 2030/31. The detailed actions relate to woodland management for biodiversity and improvements to public access and interpretation.
- 1.3 Officers are recommending that these plans are approved by the Climate Change, Leisure and Housing committee and adopted by the Council. Should the plans be approved, Officers will seek to implement the actions within the plans over the next five years. Work will be completed within existing budgets or subject to external funding.

2 Details

2.1 Plan development process

- 2.1.1 The plans were developed and produced by Countryside Management Service (CMS) part of Hertfordshire County Council, who commissioned by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) to assist with the management of TRDC Open Space.
- 2.1.2 Public consultation on the management plans was carried out in two stages. An initial period of consultation was held to encourage local residents, site users, Councillors and other interested parties to share ideas and thoughts on the management of the woodlands over the next five years.
- 2.1.3 Once draft plans had been completed, a second period of consultation was held to enable stakeholders to comment on draft versions of the plans. Finally minor amendments were made to the plans to produce the final versions.

2.2 Pheasants and Solomans Wood

- 2.2.1 The initial consultation for Pheasants and Solomans Wood was held between 13th November 2023 and 5th January 2024.
- 2.2.2 During this period a guided walk was held on the 11th December 2023. Approx. seven people attended, comprising of local residents and ward councillors. The main desire expressed was for additional litter bins to be provided at entrances to the woods and ensuring that the site is secure against fly-tipping.
- 2.2.3 Consultation on the draft plan was held between the 23rd May and 9th June 2024.

2.3 The key actions within the Pheasant and Solomans Wood management plan relate to woodland management for biodiversity and improvements to public access and interpretation, they include;

- thinning selected areas of mature trees (focusing on Ash suffering from Ash Die Back disease) to favour larger, better quality specimens;
- removal of non-native and/or invasive species in particular Laurel and Rhododendron;
- establishing a waymarked circular walking route through the woods;
- installing new entrance features, benches, and interpretation panels;
- making entrances and access points safer and more welcoming;
- cutting back trees and vegetation from footpath edges;

2.4 Carpenters Wood

2.4.1 The initial consultation for Carpenters Wood was held between the 30th October and 10th November 2023.

2.4.2 Consultation on the draft plan was held between 19th June and 4th August 2024

2.4.3 Actions within the management plan relate to woodland management for biodiversity and improvements to public access and interpretation. Key actions within the plan include;

- thinning selected areas of non-native Larch trees to favour larger, better quality specimens;
- cutting back trees and vegetation from footpath edges;
- removal of Ash suffering from Ash Die Back disease;
- managing veteran trees on the boundaries by pruning and pollarding to aid their longevity;
- hedge laying - traditional management of recently planted hedgerows on Farm Road;
- removal of non-native and/or invasive species, particularly Holly and Laurel;
- new and replacement tree planting;
- installing new notice boards;

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The officer recommendation is that the management plans for Pheasants and Solomons Wood and Carpenters Wood are formally adopted by the Council.

3.2 Officers will then begin implementing the actions within the plans, subject to available funding where necessary.

3.2.1 If the plans are not approved by the committee, maintenance of the Woods will continue at a minimum level, but no additional improvements for biodiversity or public access will be undertaken.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policies are the Tree Strategy agreed in 2022 and Nature Recovery Strategy agreed in 2023.

4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to and support the achievement of the following objectives within the Corporate Framework 2023 – 2026:

- Expand our position as a great place to do business
- Support and enable sustainable communities

5 Financial Implications

5.1 Work outlined within the Management Plans will be completed within existing budgets or subject to external funding.

5.2 Ash dieback work will be facilitated utilising the existing Ash Dieback budget. Entrance enhancements at Pheasants and Soloman's Wood will be completed during 2024/25 using agreed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, subject to adoption of the Management Plan.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and contract procedure rules and any other permissions obtained (for example planning) where required.

6.2 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, updated by the Environment Act 2021, places a legal responsibility on public authorities in England to have due regard for habitats and species of the greatest conservation importance, whilst protecting all biodiversity. Section 40(1) states that a "public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective." The accompanying footnote to this part of the Act states that the aim of the biodiversity objective is to provide for the enhancement or improvement of biodiversity, not just its maintenance in its current state. Gone is the former 'have regard' element in respect of conserving biodiversity, and this has been replaced by a proactive duty (new section 40(1)) to "from time to time consider what action the

authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective”.

6.3 The new management plans outline a number of actions; including hedge management, ride management, thinning, coppicing and replanting, which all aim to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of each woodland.

6.4 Subject to the receipt of external funding, under the Council Constitution (as outlined in part 3, section 4.1.3 of the Council Constitution), Committee approval is required to enter into any contract above the value of £25,000.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1 Impact Assessment

There are no negative equalities implications as a result of adoption of the new management plans.

The overall impact should be positive by enabling a wide range of users to continue to access the woods and make them more accessible to new users who weren't previously able to.

8 Staffing Implications

8.1 All projects and funding awards will be delivered by existing staff within the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service.

9 Environmental Implications

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	3.00
Travel	3.50
Goods and Consumption	4.00
Ecology	4.00
Adaptation	4.00
Engagement and Influence	4
Total Overall Average Score	3.8

9.1 New management prescriptions for the woodlands will enable a varied and diverse development of habitats, which will have a positive impact on the flora and fauna across the district.

10 Community Safety Implications

10.1 None specific.

11 Public Health implications

11.1 Trees and greenery may boost lifespan, this has been studied for 8 years by Harvard researchers and published in April Environmental Health Perspectives.

<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/2016-12-09/the-many-health-benefits-of-trees>

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

12.1 None specific.

13 Communications and Website Implications

13.1 Implementation of the new management plans may require occasional external and website communications to advise residents and site users when works are taking place on site.

13.2 Good news stories will be circulated and shared via the Communications team, including across a range of social media channels.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Landscape and Leisure service plan(s). Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Actions within the Management Plans are not implemented due to a lack of resources	Reputational damage to the Council	Implementation of the plans is monitored and reported to highlight any issues at an early stage	tolerate	Low 4

14.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ----- Likelihood ----- ▼ Remote	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
Impact ----- Low -----> Unacceptable				

Impact Score	Likelihood Score
4 (Catastrophic)	4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
3 (Critical)	3 (Likely (21-79%))
2 (Significant)	2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
1 (Marginal)	1 (Remote (≤5%))

14.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

15 Recommendation

That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee:

- 15.1 Adopt the new 5 year Management Plan for Carpenters Wood
- 15.2 Adopt the new 5 year Management Plan for Pheasants and Solomans Wood
- 15.3 Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.

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APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1. Pheasants and Solomans Wood Management Plan

Appendix 2. Carpenters Wood Management Plan

Appendix 3. Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment

Appendix 4. Climate and Sustainability impact assessment