

Three Rivers District Council

**Climate Change,
Leisure and
Community
Committee
Report – Bishops
Wood (including
Batchworth Heath)
and Chorleywood
House Estate
Management Plans:
2023-2028**

Date: 5 July 2023

CLIMATE CHANGE, LEISURE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE – 5 JULY 2023

PART I - DELEGATED

7. BISHOPS WOOD (INCLUDING BATCHWORTH HEATH) AND CHORLEYWOOD HOUSE ESTATE 5 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLANS (ADC&C)

1 Summary

1.1 The existing management plans for Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) and Chorleywood House Estate expired in 2023. Officers have worked with Countryside Management Service (CMS) to draft new management plans for both sites for 2023-2028.

1.2 The final version for Bishops Wood is attached as an appendix (Appendix A) and the draft version for Chorleywood House Estate is attached at Appendix B. The public consultation for Chorleywood House Estate closed on the 12 June and therefore the final version will be circulated by email to JLT prior to the Climate Change, Leisure and Sustainability meeting in July. As such, the section at points 2.8-2.10 are not completed.

2 Details

Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) Management Plan 2023-2028

2.1 The current management plan for Bishops Wood expired in 2023. Officers have worked in partnership with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) to develop a new management plan, which will be effective for a period of five years: 2023-2028.

Public Engagement

2.2 An initial engagement period took place between December 2022 and January 2023, to establish core aims and objectives for the site. Following this period of engagement the draft plan was developed and further public consultation on the draft plan took place in May 2023.

2.3 A total of 4 responses were received in response to the public consultation process. An associated engagement response document is published as an appendix in the Management Plan.

2.4 Below is a summary of comments received from the second stage engagement process on the Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) Management Plan, carried out in May 2023.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Outcome
White Admiral Butterfly Section	Herts and Middlesex Butterfly Conservation group have requested a specific section in the plan regarding the White Admiral Butterfly and the sites continued support of this	Detail in plan amended

	species.	
Land adoption – White Hill Woods (part of London Loop)	3 comments were received regarding maintenance of land, which is outside of TRDC’s ownership, including White Hill Wood. This area is impassable most of the year (forms part of the London Loop) due to flooding.	TRDC to investigate further, including resource/budget implications. Added to action plan.
Litter bins	Request for litter bins to be emptied more frequently	TRDC to investigate this further and review the litter bins at the site – included as an action point.
Grass Cutting	The report recommends the grass is cut once a year – would prefer this to be cut twice a year.	Wording has been amended to make clearer that the grass Cutting at Batchworth Heath will be twice a year, once in July and a second cut later in the year. Grass adjacent to the verges will be cut as an amenity cut for safety purposes.

Key Action Points considered in the Management Plan

2.5 The Management Plan picks up a number of key points for the site over the next 5 years. These are subject to securing the necessary funding to deliver these and includes:

- Conserve and enhance the key habitats of Bishops’ Wood and Batchworth Heath including acid grassland areas and the Southern Wood Ant habitat.
- Access improvements. This is further detailed in section 3 and within the action plan, in particular investigating the viability of opening up the car park and improving visibility, along with improved signage and interpretation.
- Explore grant funding opportunities for a wood pasture restoration project including grazing.
- Investigate the land ownership at White Hill Wood and consider options on whether or not to adopt this land, highlighting the key resource and budget implications.

Chorleywood House Estate Management Plan 2023-2028

2.6 The current management plan for Chorleywood House Estate expired in 2023. Officers have worked in partnership with the Countryside Management Service (CMS) to develop a new management plan, which will be effective for a period of five years: 2023-2028.

Public Engagement

- 2.7 An initial engagement period took place between December 2022 and January 2023, to establish core aims and objectives for the site. Following this period of engagement the draft plan was developed and further public consultation on the draft plan took place between May and June 2023.
- 2.8 A total of 9 responses were received in response to the public consultation process. An associated engagement response document is published as an appendix in the Management Plan.
- 2.9 Below is a summary of comments received from the second stage engagement process on the Chorleywood House Estate Management Plan, carried out between May and June 2023.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Outcome
Access	Comments welcomed the investigations into parking arrangements on the site.	Comments noted and will be considered as part of any investigations.
	Request for consideration into a safer crossing across Rickmansworth Road between CWHE and Chorleywood Common.	A pedestrian crossing has previously been installed at the traffic lights at the junction between Rickmansworth Road and Common Road.
	Request to remove old signage if new signage is introduced.	This will be carried out when new signage is installed.
	Consideration to be given to privacy and access for residents in and around the site.	To be investigated further and considered as part of any future work, budget permitting.
Facilities	Tennis courts in need of renovation More benches and bins requested	Comments noted and to be investigated further and considered as part of any future work, budget permitting.
Heritage Features	Support for improvements to the Pump House as a Heritage Feature	Comments noted, objective to develop plan for Pump House included within the plan, subject to securing additional funding.
Habitat Management	Differing views regarding introducing grazing to the orchard.	Further engagement suggested.
	Concerns around scrub	Scrub management will be

	management.	rotational, ensuring a variety of ages of scrub, including brambles, will be present along the route
	Differing views around introducing a green screen along Rickmansworth Road.	Consider low lying plant species and planting at intervals to allow visibility, whilst allowing some privacy.
	New area of wildflower grassland on the main lawn area supported.	Noted
	Reservations regarding the construction of a new pond.	Ambition for a new pond retained in plan, however, comments noted. Further investigations will look at feasibility before any works are undertaken
	River Chess “beach” area is very popular with visitors – would oppose attempts to limit access here.	Comments noted for any further discussions around projects to improve the River Chess for wildlife.
Volunteers	Particular praise for the work of the Friends of Chorleywood House Estate in their work on the site.	
	Concerns around feasibility of some works by volunteers, contractor use suggested	Comments noted. Intention for volunteers to undertake works as a preference, however, if required contractors will be brought in where required

Key Action Points considered in the Management Plan

2.10 The Management Plan picks up a number of key points for the site over the next 5 years and includes:

- Introducing a Meadow Cut and Lift in the main lawn area near the main car park.
- Investigate improvements to car parking provision on site.
- Develop a green screen along Rickmansworth Road (taking into consideration the feedback from the public consultation).
- Investigate further the introduction of grazing as part of the Chorleywood Community Orchard project.

- Protect and enhance the chalk stream habitat, working in partnership with other organisations and as part of the Smarter Water Catchment project.
- Protect and celebrate heritage features at the site and consider funding opportunities to support these projects, including the Pump House and additional interpretation.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The purpose of this report is to present the new Management Plans for Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) and Chorleywood House Estate, following a period of public consultation and engagement with stakeholders and to recommend its adoption by the Council.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policies and budgets.

4.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators.

- CP02/EP16 - Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces – updating the management plans for both of these sites will include a number of measures to enhance biodiversity, make improvements and consider opportunities for additional funding. By introducing a number of schemes and projects and through showing investment in these spaces, residents are more likely to be satisfied with our parks and open spaces.
- LL34 - To Maintain Accreditation with Green Flag – Chorleywood House Estate is a Green Flag Award winning site and a pre-requisite of the award is to have an up to date management plan which clearly outlines the key objectives and actions over the next 5 years.
- LL35 - To ensure all our key open spaces have a current management plan in place – approval of these updated management plans will support achieving this performance indicator.
- LL39 - Number of new trees planted by TRDC Trees and Landscapes Officers – the management plans support and recommends future tree planting opportunities across the sites.
- CP50 – Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan – improving the biodiversity of the sites is within the action plan – failure to do this will have an impact on the action plan.

4.3 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:

- The implementation of the Management Plans will support the Council with achieving the Corporate Framework Priority Themes, delivering against Key Performance Indicators and Service Performance Indicators for Community Services and Community Partnerships.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes an annual budget to maintain Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) and Chorleywood House Estate. However, this is not sufficient to deliver the actions planned within the Management

Plan. The delivery of projects will be dependent on securing external funding which will need to be obtained in advance of projects proceeding.

- 5.2 Officers have already applied to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for £142,000, which will go towards supporting some of these projects, as well as other key parks and open spaces across the district.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and procurement procedures, where required.
- 6.2 The preparation of this plan is being undertaken in order to support compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and its Corporate Framework and Priorities. The report provides details of the Council's consultation process and provides an update on that consultation and the plans development.
- 6.3 The Council has a duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing biodiversity under S40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This does not mean that the duty must be given greater weight than other matters and the Management Plan recommendations that are being presented within this report satisfy the duty, which is for the Council to 'have regard' when it exercises its functions.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 An Impact Assessment has been completed for these Management Plans.
- 7.2 On the whole the new Management plans should have a positive impact on the accessibility of the site through enhancements to pathways and additional seating.
- 7.3 Funding will need to be sourced in order to make these improvements.

8 Staffing Implications

- 8.1 Delivering the Management Plan project and objectives as well as securing external funding in order to deliver these will be led by the Leisure and Landscapes department.
- 8.2 In particular, it will require the time of the Leisure Contracts and Landscapes Projects Officer, Principal Trees and Landscapes Officer and the Community Biodiversity Officer.
- 8.3 Officers will also be working collaboratively and will require support and input from Officers in other services, including Regulatory Services, Property Services, Environmental Protection, Community Partnerships, Finance and Legal.

9 Environmental Implications

- 9.1 New management prescriptions for Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) and Chorleywood House Estate will enable a varied and diverse development of habitats, which will have a positive impact on the flora and fauna across the district. This includes, but is not limited to new proposals for grassland management, including a large area of Hay Meadow and additional conservation grazing.

- 9.2 A sustainability impact assessment has been completed, with the following outcome:

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	3.50
Engagement and Influence	4
Total Overall Average Score	3.7

10 Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 None specific

11 Public Health implications

- 11.1 Accessible, well maintained parks and open spaces have never been more vital to the health and wellbeing of individuals. Being able to connect with wildlife has a positive impact on both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals.
- 11.2 During (2021) a survey of people using Leavesden Country Park, over 80% said that being able to use the park was either very important or important to their health and wellbeing and 98% of people said using the park enhanced their quality of life.
- 11.3 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 The website will be kept updated with any relevant changes to the site, following the adoption and ongoing delivery of the Management Plan.

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 (insert name of plan) 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>
Any changes to the Countryside Stewardship agreement (CSA) and or not completing the works as set out in the CSA	Loss of grant funding Unable to complete a number of projects	Officers and CMS to work collaboratively to make sure that applications are submitted on time and works are undertaken in the correct time scales	Treat	4
Objectives of the Climate Change Strategy are not achieved	Corporate Framework implications Reputational damage and potential complaints	Members to agree the recommendations	Treat	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 Remote Likelihood ----- ----- -----	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



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

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 Climate Change, Leisure and Community Committee

15.1 Agrees to adopt the 2023 – 2028 Management Plans for Chorleywood House Estate and Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath).

Report prepared by:

Kelly Barnard, Leisure Contracts and Landscape Projects Officer

Charlotte Gomes, Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager

Data Quality

Data sources:

Public Consultation Data

Data checked by:

Michael Poole – Projects Officer – Countryside Management Service (CMS)

Kelly Barnard – Leisure Contracts and Landscape Projects Officer

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Bishops Wood (including Batchworth Heath) 2023 – 2028 final
Management Plan
APPENDIX B: Chorleywood House Estate 2023-2028 draft Management Plan
APPENDIX C: Short Equality Impact Assessment
APPENDIX D: Climate Change and Sustainability Impact Assessment



