

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 23 NOVEMBER 2022

PART I

8. OXHEY WOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2027 (DCES)

1 Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the new Management Plan for Oxhey Woods, following public consultation and engagement with stakeholders and to recommend its adoption by the Council.

2 Details

2.1 The current management plan for Oxhey Woods expired in 2022. 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: 2022-2027.

Public Engagement

2.2 An initial engagement period took place between November and December 2021, 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 15 August and 15 September 2022.

2.3 A total of 3 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 Oxhey Woods Greenspace Action Plan 2022-27, carried out in summer 2022.

Theme of comments	Engagement response	Outcome
Access	Surfacing of London LOOP welcomed, particularly sections identified as being wet in winter at north of site.	No action necessary.
	Action plan maps could be clearer in showing sections of path to be surfaced.	Mapping amended.
	Mapping amendments required to accurately show paths near car park.	Mapping amended.
Dog bins	Increase number of dog bins.	Review of dog bin provision added to actions.
Sculptures	Planned addition of new sculptures welcomed.	No action necessary.

Habitat management	Increase detail around management of rhododendron walk.	Detail added to relevant sections.
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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 and includes:

- Increase value of the site for biodiversity through management of the woodland habitats. This is further detailed at point 2.4 of the Management Plan (Appendix A)
- Access improvements. This is further detailed at point 2.5 and from section 5.0 onwards in the action plans, of the Management Plan (Appendix A)
- To realise Oxhey Woods' potential of being a great place for everyone to enjoy while acting as a haven for local wildlife. This is further detailed at point 3.0, aims and objectives, of the Management Plan (Appendix A)

2.6 The action plans detailed from point 5.2, propose a number of projects over the next 5 years, with a number subject to sourcing external funding and therefore not confirmed. Some of these projects include:

- Delivery of forestry works, funded through existing Countryside Stewardship agreement
- Opportunities to be investigated to provide natural flood management on site
- Delivery of improvements to entrances
- Surfacing sections of London LOOP to provide year-round access and increase connectivity across the site
- Deliver interpretation improvement project
- Addition of new sculptures

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The purpose of this report is to present the new Management Plan for Oxhey Woods, following 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 not within the Council's agreed budgets.

4.2 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy.

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

4.3.1 Housing and Thriving Communities

4.3.2 Sustainable Environment

4.3.3 CP02/EP16 - Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces

4.3.4 LL35 - To ensure all our key open spaces have a current management plan in place

4.3.5 CP50 – Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan

4.3.6 EP15 – Satisfaction with keeping public land clear of litter and refuse

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

4.4.1 The approval of the Oxhey Woods Management Plan and associated projects (subject to securing external funding) will support the Council with achieving the Corporate Framework Priority Themes, delivering against Key Performance Indicators and Service Performance Indicators for Leisure and Landscapes and Environmental Protection.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan includes an annual budget to maintain Oxhey Woods. 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 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? No, the Management plan reviews accessibility and impact for all. Project proposals include enhancements to the London LOOP	No

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 Oxhey Woods will enable a varied and diverse development of habitats, which will have a positive impact on the flora and fauna across the district.
- 9.2 Specifically, enhancements will be made to the wet woodland area, a habitat of principle importance as defined under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), as well as working alongside the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to introduce Water Voles along the Aquadrome stretch of the River Colne.

10 Public Health implications

- 10.1 Accessible, well maintained parks and open spaces have never been more vital to the health and wellbeing of individuals than during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Being able to connect with wildlife has a positive impact on both the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals.
- 10.2 During a recent (2021) 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.
- 10.3 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>

11 Customer Services Centre Implications and Community Safety Implications

11.1 None specific

12 Communications and Website Implications

12.1 The website will be kept updated with any relevant changes to the site, following the adoption and ongoing delivery of the Management Plan.

13 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

13.1 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.

13.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Leisure and Landscapes and Environmental Protection service plans. 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
Increase in OPM	Statutory notices from Forestry Commission to control this pest/disease Financial implications if an increase of OPM	Officers and CMS to continue to work collaboratively. Additionally with Forestry Commission to look at alternative ways of response	Treat	9

13.3 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%))

13.4 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.

14 Recommendation

That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee:

14.1 Adopt the new 5 year Oxhey Woods Management Plan (2022 – 2027)

Report prepared by: Kelly Barnard, Leisure Contracts and Landscapes Projects Officer

Data Quality

Data sources:

Public Consultation Data

Data checked by:

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

Jess Hodges – Community Biodiversity Officer

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Oxhey Woods Management Plan