WOODLAND TRUST

Archers Wood

Management Plan 2016-2021

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.
Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Archers Wood
Location:	Sawtry
Grid reference:	TL173810, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 142
Area:	18.61 hectares (45.99 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, County Wildlife Site (includes SNCI, SINC etc), Scheduled Ancient Monument, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

True to its name, this wood was once a hideout for highwaymen! Nowadays, this tranquil woodland close to the edge of the Huntingdonshire fens is a perfect place for relaxing walks and wildlife watching.

2.2 Extended Description

Archer's wood is a prominent feature in the landscape, lying at the foot of a boulder clay ridge close to the fen edge of Huntingdonshire and visible from the nearby A1. It is one of a cluster of ancient woodlands in this part of Cambridgeshire.
A wet Ash/Field maple and Pedunculate oak/Hazel type woodland (NVC type W8). However also notably contains large number of Wild Service trees. Pendulous sedge (and other Carex), Dog's mercury and Bluebell dominate the ground flora with ancient woodland indicators such as Stinking iris and Early purple orchid also mentioned in the records. Primrose, oxlips, wood anemone and Stitchwort are also a common sight. The Elm area (compartment 4) was clear-felled in the late 1980's prior to the trusts ownership in response to Dutch elms disease (DED). Subsequently planted up with a mix of broad-leaved trees (including ash, oak and goat willow), Elm is also regenerating very successfully and dominates until succumbing to DED at between 3-5m in height.

Historically Archers Wood was managed as coppice with standards until the beginning of the 20th century, but evidence of its earlier history is still visible in compartment 2 by way of extensive earthworks dating from a 14th century abbey underneath. The rest of the earth works were in the adjacent field, however they were flattened in the early 1980's.

The solid geology is Oxford Clay overlain by glacial till with a mixture of sand and loess in the topsoil. Both clays are calcareous, but made slightly acid by the sand and leaching. Soils are surface water gleys belonging to the Hanslope Series. These are ill drained and suffer from poaching from even moderate use in wet periods.

Surrounding land use is largely arable fields, intensively managed and hosting a verity of crops. Stony, heavy soil limits root crops to low grade beets, but oilseed rape and cereals are in regular rotation.

An extensive path and ride system allows good access to all of the four woodland compartments, however in cpt 2 the path crosses the manorial earthworks and can be difficult due to slopes. Several of the paths were created following Trust purchase of the wood. One ride is thought to be of older origin and has the remnants of a good flora still. Rides are mown annually for access.

Much of the site is well used by the public, as access is easy for those travelling by car, however parking is limited.

The key features are:
Archaeological Feature
Ancient Semi-natural woodland
Informal public access

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus: There is a bus service between Peterborough and Huntingdon. The nearest bus stop is next to the Co-op in Sawtry, around two kilometres (1.2 miles) to the north of the site. The road to the woods is narrow with no footpath.

By train: The closest train stations are Peterborough (18km/11 miles) and Huntingdon (19km/12 miles).

For up-to-date information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk (0871 200 22 33).

By car:

From the north, leave the A1 at junction 15. Follow Old North Road, taking the second exit at the first roundabout, and the first exit at the second and third roundabouts. At the next roundabout, take the third exit, which crosses the motorway, and continue until you see the wood on the left.

From the south, leave the A1 at junction 15. At the roundabout take the first exit, and continue along Toll Bar Way, then turn right at the T-junction. Continue until you see the wood on the left.

There is very limited parking at the wood entrance. Parking is also available in the St Judith's Lane car park at Sawtry village.

3.2 Access / Walks

Access is through a kissing gate from the adjoining road.

The wood has an extensive system of paths and rides. These are largely flat in the north of the site, but more undulating in the south east (due to archaeological earthworks), and steep to the west. Paths can be muddy and waterlogged in places, especially in winter.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

Archers will be allowed to continue to develop in high forest woodland structure, with intervention supporting natural processes to maintain the present diversity of species in the canopy and understory. Re-introduction of coppice is unfavourable now the stools are relatively sparse and the structure is too diluted.

Deadwood, both standing and fallen, will be retained where it is safe to do so. Age structure across the site is varied and should be actively developed by retaining standards past maturity and into veteran status, as well as encouraging natural regeneration of at least 3 native tree species across the site, through control of deer populations as well as protection from browsing where necessary. The deer population and these effects will be monitored and action will continue be taken to control excessive browsing through culling. The desired long term vision will be to reduce the deer population to sustainable number where browsing will not have an adverse effect on the site ground flora and natural broadleaf regeneration.

Intervention will also be required to maintain the current floristically diverse areas of open rides within the wood enriching the overall diversity of habitats within Archers wood. The desired condition of the open ground habitat will be to have a wide floristically rich ride with good scrubby edge habit. This will be achieved by annual cutting and rotational ride edge coppicing.

The site will be regularly enjoyed by local people via the network of paths and rides which will be maintained as open and easy to follow. Entrances will be clearly marked and branded, maintained to encourage pedestrian access but restrict damaging traffic such as horses and motorbikes.

Archers wood has features of archaeological interest situated in the western part of the wood. These earth banks and ditches are from mediaeval activity, the last vestiges of a larger site which once existed in field to the west. This should be protected and maintained in its current state, not allowing activity or root structures to adversely affect the archaeology.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Archaeological Feature

Description

Earth banks and ditches from mediaeval activity, the last vestiges of a larger site which once existed in field to the west. a scheduled ancient monument it is thought to be part of a Cistercian Monastic Grange built in the 1300s.

Significance

Archaeology provides historical record of past management on that part of the wood. Which is of intrinsic interest. The rest of the feature has been put under the plough.
- area designated as Scheduled Ancient Monument (ID number: 363918)

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
Available for future archaeological studies/ research.
Possible added visitor interest. (interpretation opportunity)
Constraints:
Limits the kind of activities permitted in this compartment.

Factors Causing Change

Possible root damage to under soil archaeology or windblow/ root plate lifting.
possible mammal damage (rabbits/ badgers)
Erosion arising through visitor/pedestrian use or misuse (e.g. Motorbikes/ mountain bikes/ horses)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Protect and maintain the archaeology in its current state, not allowing activity or root structures to adversely affect the features.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Continue to visually monitor archaeological feature for erosion and tree stability improving paths if human activity is causing erosion and coppicing unstable trees to protect existing aspect. Works identified through Biennial inspection by site manager.

5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Ash- field maple with some oak with good understorey structure and composition including hazel, midland hawthorn and wild service trees. Some ground flora of interest including Bluebell, wood anemone, Early purple orchid and some local bryophyte species.
Ride flora and fauna is of interest, flora is dominated by sedges and course grasses but with meadow sweet and other typical ride species also. There is one main east west ride through the site which may be of older origin most of the other rides are recent.

Significance

Ancient woodland of this type, although relatively common over the country as a whole, is under threat. The rides provide a valuable resource of unimproved neutral grassland habitat in an area where much of this has been lost. Very attractive and sometimes essential to many common invertebrate species. Archers wood is one of a cluster of ancient woodlands in this part of Cambridgeshire and constitutes a key island habitat in the intensive agricultural landscape.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints
Wet ground conditions most of the year leave a narrow window for management operations.
High levels of deer browsing within the site.
Opportunities
Other close-by woodlands to link to and increase landscape resilience.

Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage.
Over shading by ride edge canopy trees.
Climate change (pests and disease)

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A structurally and floristically diverse native woodland, robust in the face of climate change and requiring limited large scale intervention to maintain. Good deadwood habitat and sunny, open rides well maintained and biologically-diverse.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Sustain integrity of woodland structure and deadwood habitat within Archers wood. The site will be left to undertake a Natural process where intervention will be left to a minimum apart from occasional ride edge coppice, safety work or maintenance of KF1. Works identifies through biennial inspection by site manager. Take opportunity to engage with Peterborough conservation volunteers to undertake practical works where appropriate.

Cut main rides on a 2 zone cutting regime after plants have seeded (September)

Annual deer monitoring and culling will continue as part of the on-going control of deer population within the site to reduce browsing pressure on developing natural regeneration and ground flora.

The effects of ash die will be monitored through annual visual inspection by the site manager, taking note of changes in species composition and the effects on the recruitment of natural regeneration. Safety concerns in dealing with any standing ash will also be considered and any interventions required will be carried out while it is still safe to do so. If natural regeneration is not forth coming after 5 years under planting with appropriate species will be carried out.

5.3 Informal Public Access

Description

Good permissive access throughout much of the wood, the site is close to the village of Sawtry although Parking is limited. The paths are seasonally muddy and waterlogged in places, but largely flat in the north, undulating to the south east (due to archaeological earthworks) and steep to the west with a strong cross gradient.

Significance

freely and easily accessible woodland close to the village of Sawtry. Well used and valued by local people, including the school. Providing quality recreational and educational opportunities in the least wooded county in the UK (20015)

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:
PRoW(s) and WT owned Aversley wood close by to create and promote longer walks
Constraints:
Sections of the path network can be wet even in summer.

Factors Causing Change

encroaching vegetation

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will be regularly enjoyed by local people via the network of paths and rides which will be maintained as open and easy to follow. Entrances will be clearly marked and branded, maintained to encourage pedestrian access but restrict damaging traffic such as horses and motorbikes.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Paths cut to a width of 2m (as per WT standard specs) at least twice during the growing season. Ride edge coppice undertaken as necessary to maintain clear access and full ride width (at least to the far side of any ditches present) works to be identified by inspection every 2 years by the site manager, and carried out in late autumn/ winter when ground conditions allow, to minimise impact to wildlife and in line with industry best practice. Internal structures (i.e seats and boardwalk) will be maintained in a safe usable condition through a similar process of observations and appropriate actions.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By

APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	7.70	Ash	1940	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland
Oak and ash standards established around 1900 or before, as well as a proportion of younger ash coppice stems estimated to have last been cut around 1940s, make up the canopy composition. Other species making up a small percentage of the main canopy include rare wild service trees and some large field maple and hawthorn coppice, as well as a proportion of younger oak maidens estimated to have been established around the 1940s. Understorey consists of ash, hazel, hawthorn, goat willow and elder. Near the road the compartment is under planted in the canopy gaps with oak, ash and field maple planted in 1997. There is a well used wide ride with side ditches running down the eastern edge of this compartment, well maintained by mowing, and the edge of the wood is defined by a thick hedge. A small drain runs east west across the compartment.							
2a	4.70	Ash	1940	High forest	Archaeological features	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Scheduled Ancient Monument
Compartment 2a contains some very large oak standards established around 1850 or before, as well as a proportion of younger ash coppice stems estimated to have last been cut around the 1940s. These two species make up the greater proportion of the canopy composition. Other species making up a small percentage of the main canopy include some younger ash stems estimated to have last been cut around 1980. Understorey consists coppiced ash, hazel, hawthorn and field maple. The main feature of this compartment is an array of medieval earthworks throughout the northern part of the compartment (a scheduled ancient monument). It is said to be part of a Cistercian Monastic Grange built in the 1300s.							
3a	3.00	Ash	1940	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Oak and ash standards established around 1870, as well as a proportion of younger ash coppice stems last been cut around 1940s, makes up the greater proportion of the canopy composition. Other species making up a small percentage of the main canopy include rare wild service trees as well as some large field maple coppice

Understory consists of hazel, hawthorn, goat willow, elder and spindle.
The northern boundary of the comp is the main west-east ride this is linked at both ends by a minor path running through the compartment.

3b	0.50	Ash	1970	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Sub compartment 3b has been coppiced over the winter of 1998-1999 and 1999-2000
Oak standards established around 1900 or before, as well as a proportion of younger ash coppice stems last cut at two intervals at around 1970 and 1985, make up the canopy composition.
Other species making up a small percentage of the main canopy include rare wild service trees and some large field maple.
Understorey consists of occasional to frequent coppiced ash, hazel and hawthorn.
Sub compartment 3b is under planted in the canopy gaps with oak and ash planted in 1997.
Sub compartment 3b has a gentle to moderate aspect, and contains small patches of bramble, and an abundance of dead wood.
Deer damage is also evident at the base of the younger stems. Ground flora includes a lot of Pendulous sedge and some primula.

4a	2.10	Elm species	1985	High forest		Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Sub compartment 4a is an area of archers containing areas of young coppice, natural regeneration and new planting at the thicket stage.
Coppice species include ash, hazel, blackthorn and wych elm as well as naturally regenerating ash, elm and the occasional to rare oak.
Planted species include ash, oak, aspen, hazel, wych elm, field maple and goat willow planted around 1989.
Approximately half the area along the southern compartment edge has been re-spaced and cleaned.
Compartment 4a is situated on level ground containing bramble and patchy cleavers in the wet areas. Course grasses dominate the ground flora in more open areas
Deer damage is evident at the base of the younger stems. The Main ride forms the northern boundary and is less than 5m wide in places

Appendix 2: Harvesting operations (20 years)

Forecast Year	Cpt	Operation Type	Work Area (ha)	Estimated vol/ha	Estimated total vol.
2016	4a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	1	0.4
2020	4a	Ride edge Coppice	0.50	1	0.5

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.