

Hadleigh Park Copses Management Plan from March 2023

Introduction

This document sets out a strategy for the design and management of the copses on Hadleigh park. The plan is underpinned by the Council's commitment to biodiversity, diversity and inclusivity and supports the Farnsfield Parish Council Environmental Plan¹. Consideration has been given to:

- Input from representatives of the Farnsfield Playgroup and residents local to the area who have been asked to provide feedback on how they would like to see specific copses managed.
- Input from the Community Spaces group through the inclusion of Jim and Lesly Healy in the working party responsible for the development of this management plan.
- A report written by Councillors Healy and Selby, endorsed by M Speck (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust), which sets out a management plan for areas set aside for wildlife, 'wildlife focussed approach'.

The plan takes into account the needs of a wide range of stakeholders and the requirement to minimise the ongoing maintenance costs of the copses which is undertaken by NSDC on behalf of Farnsfield Parish Council.

History of the copses

The copses were planted around the year 2000 by Wimpey homes. A number of mature trees were included within the perimeters of the copses but the majority of the planting was new. After completion of the local housing development Hadleigh Park, including the copses, was gifted by the developers to the parish Council as an open space.

From the point of the donation of the land until 2019 the copses were left to develop without any intervention or investment of resources in their maintenance. Patches of impenetrable undergrowth developed in all the copses, there were many dead and fallen trees, ivy had reached the canopy of many trees in all the copses leading to increased potential for storm damage. There was litter, bottles and broken glass in all copses and evidence they had begun to be used as dumping grounds.

The issues were exacerbated in the area of copse 1 and 2 where a hedge row had been cut down by a property developer and dumped along the entire length of the rear of the copses. The result of the general poor management of the area was youths had taken discarded materials to build a hide in copse 2 and were occupying themselves with the frequent lighting of campfires burning deadwood gathered within the copse perimeter.

In May 2019 youths emerged from the hide to threaten two under 10's who were attracted to the area by smoke from a campfire. This was reported to the police and residents, with the aid of a number of Councillors, expended significant effort to remove all the gathered detritus from the area of copse 1 and 2, lower the undergrowth to make the copse less attractive for the building of hides and removed ivy from the trees.

The work done in the copses was well received by residents who commended the visual improvements to the area, the benefits to the healthy development of the trees in the copse and also commented that they felt safer whilst walking past the copse at night due to their more open aspect.

Following a realisation of these benefits and an acceptance of their responsibility for the maintenance of the copses the parish Council passed motions for works to be carried out by contractors working on its behalf for the improvement of the remaining copses.

It is recognised that hedgerows provide the opportunities for wildlife to nest and highways for wildlife to travel across areas. Following awarding the contract for the maintenance of the area to NSDC it was agreed that mowing along the hedgerow to the eastern perimeter of Hadleigh Park would be stopped a short distance from the hedgerow to provide additional wildlife cover. This provides an effective wildlife corridor between copses 4 and 8.

During 2022 the introduction of a target hardening landscape bund along the western perimeter of Hadleigh Park and the eastern perimeter of the orchard area introduced further significant wildlife highways linking up copses 1 and 2 and copses 3, 5, 6 and 7. The works resulted in the copses in the old orchard area and in the main park area all being linked by wildlife highways and increased biodiversity due to significant lengths of the landscape bund being seeded with wildflower and grass seed mix.

Interests of stakeholder communities

There are different stakeholder communities with varying and sometimes contrasting requirements for the development and management of the copses:

Local Householders	Main concern is the roadside copses, interests include; the visual appeal of the copses, reducing vegetation for household security purposes and reducing flammable materials in the copses for fire prevention ² .
Parfitt Drive Pedestrians	Main concern is the roadside copses, interests include; reducing vegetation to open up the vista and reducing vegetation for personal security purposes ³ .
Playground users	Main concern is copse 5, interests include; reducing vegetation to allow seating adjacent to playground in shade, removing dead wood and fallen branches to reduce migration of materials onto playground surface.
Children's groups	Seek opportunities to allow toddlers upward to roam safely in one or more copse environments as an opportunity to diversify play and learning.
Environmental interest groups	Seek to influence all copses; main concern is to develop copse environments that are biodiverse with an emphasis on their suitability for wildlife.
Parish Council	Concern is with all copses, interests include; ensuring copses provide safe environments ⁴ that can be protected for the future but do not lead to costs which may overstretch the Council budget.

Clearly there are a number of different stakeholder communities who are impacted in different ways by the copses. Some communities have indirect interests whilst others have to live with the direct impact of the copses on a 24/7 basis. The voices of some communities are amplified via social media whilst others struggle to be heard. The Farnsfield Parish Council is elected to serve the entire village and it is its duty to ensure the copses provide utility to as wide a cross-section of the stakeholder communities as possible.

Whilst it is appropriate that stakeholder groups are given a voice in the design and maintenance of specific copses it should be made clear that the final decision on their design and maintenance is the responsibility of the Council and any significant deviations from the agreed design must be agreed by the Council.

Area concerned

Hadleigh Park is 31,367 m² of which 2,567 m² is on the Old Orchard side and 28,800 m² in the main area. The size of each copse, area as a percentage of the Hadleigh Park area in total, percentage of the total copse area available and recommended maintenance focus is shown in the table below.

Copse	Size m2	% of Hadleigh Park	% of available copse area	Suggested focus
1	438	1.4%	6.0%	Children's group focus
2	466	1.5%	6.2%	Children's group focus
3	1049	3.3%	14.1%	Wildlife focussed approach
4	1077	3.4%	14.4%	Mixed Householder / Wildlife focussed Approach
5	1126	3.5%	15.1%	Playground User Focus
6	1030	3.2%	13.8%	Pedestrian and Householder Focus
7	752	2.4%	19.1%	Mixed Householder / Wildlife focussed Approach
8	1522	4.8%	20%	Wildlife focussed approach

The suggested focus provides for a diverse use of the total copse area available which recognises and balances the needs of all stakeholders.

Utilisation of Copses

Copse 1 & 2 : (Children's Group Focus)

Copse 1 and 2 have been the subject of antisocial behaviour in the past as these are unobserved. As detailed above they have been cleared in response to this and additional facilities have been added including two insect hotels and the benches associated with the story glade. Given their close proximity to these facilities the road and the toddlers playground the most appropriate stakeholder group to focus these copses on is children's groups. The environments should be maintained relatively clear with low undergrowth, not including thorny plants and with small tracks cleared of trip hazards for children to explore. It should be possible for carers seated within the story glade area or on the seat provided between the two copses to observe small children ranging through the copses. The most appropriate area for a

wildlife feeding station in copse 1 would be to its rear north-west corner where an area of higher vegetation could be used to give wildlife cover without having a significant impact on sight-lines. It would be appropriate to locate this facility behind a small knee-high fence for the protection of wildlife and small children.

Given that copse 1 & 2 are focussed on the children's groups it is appropriate that the key stakeholders including the village playgroups should be included in consultations regarding the design and management of these copses.

Copse 3 : (Wildlife Focussed Approach)

This is located a short distance away from the pedestrian path down Parfitt Drive, is not adjacent to any residents and is separated from the playground by the car park. Given its location it is best suited for adaptation for wildlife allowing a more vigorous undergrowth to develop and allowing fallen wood and branches to remain on the ground.

Given that copse 3 is focussed on wildlife it is appropriate that the key stakeholders including environmental interest groups should be included in consultations regarding the design and management of this copse.

Copse 4 : (Mixed Householder / Wildlife focussed Approach)

This is located in close proximity to the Firdale residence and although security issues associated with the copse are reduced due to the boundary fence, a build-up of undergrowth or dead wood in this copse would cause an elevated fire risk for the property. Given its location its environment would be best maintained relatively clear with low undergrowth.

Decisions regarding its design and maintenance of this copse should be reserved for the grounds maintenance working group.

Copse 5 : (Playground Users Focus)

This is located directly adjacent to the playground and there have already been reports of deadwood, branches etc migrating onto the playground. With limited shade in the area this copse is ideally placed to provide a shady area for parents and children to sit and retreat from the heat of the sun on hot sunny days whilst using the playground. To achieve this the area should be cleared of undergrowth to provide a mulch like copse floor where families can spread blankets to sit. This style would also meet the requirements of Local Residents and Parfitt Drive Pedestrians.

Given that the design and maintenance of this copse will impact the operation and maintenance of the playground which is a key parish Council asset and responsibility, decisions regarding its design and maintenance should be reserved for the grounds maintenance working group.

Copse 6 : (Pedestrian and Householder Focus)

This copse is unique as it is planted around an ancient Horse Chestnut Tree which is subject to a TPO. Given the age and the delicacy of the tree a key concern is that the trees and vegetation in the copse should not be allowed to monopolise important resources including sun, water etc. The copse is also close to the only four residencies on Parfitt Drive which have a front facing aspect towards the Hadleigh Park Open Space. Given these considerations the removal of undergrowth is preferred providing a space which could add to the diversity of the area through the planting of drifts of shade tolerant bulbs to provide visual interest through the year. This style would meet the requirements of Local Residents and Parfitt Drive Pedestrians.

It is appropriate that residents as key stakeholders should be consulted on decisions regarding its design and maintenance.

Copse 7 : (Mixed Pedestrian and Householder / Wildlife Focused Approach)

Whilst this copse does not overlook the frontage of residencies on Parfitt Drive it is close to the footpath running down Parfitt Drive. It is bordered on the south side by a hedge which runs along footpath 9 which contains trees that are subject to TPO's and is not part of the copse. The copse is intersected by a disabled access path and it is recommended that the copse to the north of a line, (3m to the south of the path) is kept clear of undergrowth and mulched to allow clear sightlines from the road across the footpath area. To the south of this line the copse should be maintained according to the agreed specification and management plan for wildlife habitat.

Copse 8 : (Wildlife Focussed Approach)

This is located a short distance away from the pedestrian path down Parfitt Drive and is not adjacent to any residents. Given its location it is best suited for adaptation for wildlife allowing more vigorous undergrowth to develop and allowing fallen wood and branches to remain on the ground for wildlife.

Given that copse 8 is focussed on wildlife it is appropriate that the key stakeholders including environmental interest groups should be included in consultations regarding the design and management of this copse.

Copse Management Strategies

Management strategies for individual copses are set out in the appendices attached to this document with the intention that the document can be agreed by the Council in principle and the copse management strategies can be agreed as and when the interested parties are able to complete their investigations and plans.

Notes:

1 FPC's environmental plan references the DEFRA guidance 'Adopting to climate change: A guide for local Councils' which states 'Demand for parks and open spaces is likely to increase with warmer winters and hotter drier summers. There are likely to be a number of social, health and environmental benefits in acting now to create well shaded green spaces and community woodland areas'

2 The importance of maintaining the roadside copses with an open aspect should not be underestimated. The impact of the copse design on the safety and the security of local residences and pedestrians, especially after dark, is the primary concern as the Council seek to ensure the village streets are considered safe by all their potential users. Nottingham Council have recently commissioned works totalling £30k in the Forest Field Recreation area to clear vegetation and improve sightlines in an attempt to counter anti-social-behaviour.

3 The risks of fire and transfer to nearby fences and residencies should be taken seriously. There is a history of fires being started in copse 2 and of barbeques being used around copse 5. There is also the possibility of fires being caused in copses close to paths due to discarded smoking materials. With global warming and the increased frequency of significant and extended drought conditions this is a growing threat. Grassfires can start and spread quickly and are extremely dangerous travelling at up to 25 km per hour. The taller and drier the grass, the more intensely it will burn. The shorter the grass, the lower the flame height and the easier the fire will be to control grass (under 10cm) is a much lower risk. The grass around all the copses should be kept close cut to avoid fire spreading to hedges other copses and adjacent fences etc.

4 Falling trees, even relatively small ones, can cause a threat to life. Newcastle City Council have been prosecuted under section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act following the death of a child hit by a falling tree.

Appendix 1: Copse Map



Appendix 2 – Copses 1 & 2

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

These copses should be managed to provide interest for toddlers.

There is a wealth of research showing that the first five years of a child's life are absolutely critical in shaping their long-term learning and development,". Despite this support and facilities for this age group and their carers can be limited and hard to access. The opportunities for FPC to provide support in this area are limited but the importance of their realisation should not be understated. The use of the village centre for playgroup activities allows children to socialise as does the inclusion of toddler playground facilities in the village. There is at this point in time limited opportunities for children in this age group, and their carers, to interact in a woodland environment and learn about the importance of nature and conservation. The only area at all suitable for this is the Millennium Woods which is on the very outskirts of the village.

Councillors Westbury and Clarke have met with representatives of the Farnsfield toddler group whose feedback is they are delighted to have a quiet woodland area just across from the main toddler playground. They have used the story glade and the toddlers found it great to sit on the benches and listen to stories. However, they suggested that the addition of a seat for the storyteller would be appreciated. The toddlers love ranging through the copses and have been excited to watch the squirrels, up to five a time, scamper through the canopy. The toddler group representatives also raised the idea of having nature trail through the copse with posts dedicated to insects and wildlife.

It is proposed that copses 1&2 which are close to the toddler playground and already include the story glade and insect hotels are designed and maintained to enable toddlers within this age group to roam freely and interact with nature. This should include the following elements:

- All brambles and trip hazards should be removed from the area
- Fallen branches and dead trees should be removed from the area to reduce trip/fall hazards
- The understory should be selectively cleared and mulched to provide safe areas for toddlers to wander
- Vegetation height should be limited so that a carer can monitor their charges from the provided bench
- Low branch stubs on trees should be removed
- A woodland trail should be established running the length of both copses
- Insect information posts should be added to the trail
- A low stumpery should be added to copse 1 to provide a haven for insects and small animals*
- Consideration should be given to including small animal posts to the area
- Appropriate bird boxes should be added to the copse
- A wildlife feeding station to the north-west perimeter of copse 1*

* Both these should be confined within a rail enclosure to stop toddlers entering the area. The stumps should be large enough to discourage their removal for firewood.

Appendix 3 – Copse 3

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

This copse should be managed for the benefit of wildlife

Appendix 4 – Copse 4

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

This copse should be managed to reduce fire risk.

- All brambles and trip hazards should be removed from the area
- Fallen branches and dead trees should be removed from the area to reduce fire risk
- The understory should be selectively cleared and mulched
- Vegetation height should be limited to reduce the possibility of fire spreading
- Appropriate bird boxes should be added to the copse
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Appendix 5- Copse 5

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

This copse should be managed for the benefit of playground users

- All brambles and trip hazards should be removed from the area
- Majority of copse floor should be suitable for the setting out of picnic blankets

- Fallen branches and dead trees should be removed from the area to reduce fire risk and provide suitable surface for picnic blankets
- The understory should be selectively cleared and mulched
- Vegetation height should be limited to reduce the possibility of fire spreading
- Appropriate bird boxes should be added to the copse

Appendix – Copse 6

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

This copse should be managed to provide an area for adult reflection

A representative cross-section of Hadleigh Park residents, who have carried out manual labour in the copses, and shown an interest in their design and maintenance, has been approached to offer their opinions on the development of the copses on Hadleigh Park. Those canvased are highly complementary regarding the proposals for copse management within this document and very supportive of the overall plan for Copse 6. Those residents who have given of their time freely in the past for copse maintenance activities are happy to pledge to continue to do so.

A cluster of small trees, grouped closely together, can create a delightful woodland effect. The residents understand that the pruning and renewal of trees, to allow a dappled light effect on the ground rather than constant shade and to maintain the health of the canopy is an experts job and are happy that this task should be left to NSDC. The residents suggested the creation of a woodland tapestry within the confines of the copse with a judiciously planted carpet of shade-loving plants. The aim would be to create a backbone of foliage using plants such as asarum, hardy ferns, hosta and lamium.

A sprinkling of colour would be added to this with anemone, bergenia, chionodoxa, erythronium, hellebore and pulmonaria for spring, aquilegia, dicentra, Geranium macrorrhizum, heuchera, polygonatum and tiarella for summer and to extend the display into autumn and winter Iris foetidissima, Japanese anemone, colchicum, cyclamen and Galanthus would be added.

To allow the planting scheme the maximum opportunity to thrive the copse would be strimmed before planting. At the same time the brambles would be removed, and the area would be covered with a thin mulch to restrict their future growth, provide a mechanism for retaining water for the planting and organic matter to improve the quality of the woodland soil. Care will be taken to leave the area directly beneath the Horse Chestnut Tree, subject to a TPO, clear of planting so as to not introduce plants which may compete with the tree for natural resources. It is recognised that the area around the immediate trunk of the tree has been planted, at an earlier point in time, with daffodils and these will be allowed to grow and spread in an unrestricted manner.

The suggested design creates additional diversity for the residents of Farnsfield, and the planting would provide many opportunities that would benefit the wildlife in the area.

Appendix 7 – Copse 7

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

To the north of the footpath division line the copse should be managed to maintain sight lines and reduce fire risk.

- All brambles and trip hazards should be removed from the area
- Fallen branches and dead trees should be removed from the area to reduce fire risk
- The understory should be selectively cleared and mulched
- Vegetation height should be limited to reduce the possibility of fire spreading
- Appropriate bird boxes should be added to the copse

To the South of the footpath division line this copse should be managed for the benefit of wildlife

Appendix 8 – Copse 8

Copse design and maintenance strategy:

This copse should be managed for the benefit of wildlife