4. WOODLANDS HABITAT ACTION PLAN

4.1 General

Woodlands, as the natural vegetation cover of most of the UK, are our richest wildlife habitats. They often contain the greatest numbers, as well as many of our rarest and most threatened species. Woodlands are important for most forms of wildlife, from trees and shrubs to mosses, lichens and fungi, and from mammals and birds to beetles, slugs and moths.

Woodlands are an important element in the natural environment of the Borough of Stevenage. They provide opportunities for recreation, are a valued component of the landscape, an essential habitat for wildlife, provide employment and are an effective means of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Many woodland blocks in Stevenage are identified as being ‘ancient woodland’ (that which has been in existence since at least 1600) and are described as ‘semi-natural’ because the woodlands have received past management. These represent the most important woodland habitats for wildlife, sometimes containing species of local and regional rarity. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment and they are a wonderful resource for the borough. The majority of woods are comprised of broad-leaved species, although some elements of coniferous plantations exist, the result of historical forestry planting for wood production rather than biodiversity.

The woodland type characteristically found in Stevenage is the Oak and Hornbeam stand type with Bluebell dominant in the ground flora. This woodland type has been identified as being internationally important in the EU Habitats Directive. Typical tree species found locally include Pedunculate Oak, Hornbeam, Beech, Ash, Wild Cherry, Silver Birch, Alder and Willows. Locally found shrubs include Hazel, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Dogwood, and Holly. Additionally, in Stevenage, a range of planted exotic trees can be found in some woodland, including Corsican Pine, Western Hemlock and Western Red Cedar.

Important wildlife associated with Stevenage woodlands is diverse, including animals such as Badger, Fox, Hedgehog, Yellow-necked and Wood Mice, Pygmy Shrew, bats, and amphibians. Dormouse was previously recorded in Monk’s and Whomerley Woods. Birds such as Green Woodpecker, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Bullfinch, Marsh Tit and Tawny Owl can also be found in this habitat. A variety of invertebrates are also present, along with important fungi and epiphytes (mosses, liverworts and lichens).

A good diversity of woodland ground flora includes native Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Yellow Archangel, Sanicle and Wood Mellick. Past records of rarities include Bird’s–nest and Early Purple Orchids, and Violet Helleborine.

In Stevenage, there exists around 130 hectares of woodland, which includes semi-natural broad-leaved, planted broad-leaved, planted coniferous, planted mixed woodlands and parkland. This represents around 5% of the Borough, somewhat lower than county and national averages. However, given the
urban perception of Stevenage town, this is a considerable natural resource. Around 54 hectares is defined as ‘ancient woodland’ (from Natural England’s Ancient Woodland Inventory).

Rather than comprising of a few relatively large woodlands, the Borough of Stevenage has many small woodland blocks. As a result, the woodlands exhibit a large ‘edge-effect’ – a large amount of edges, compared to their size. Whilst this may benefit feeding birds and bats, a large length of exposed edge mean that the woodlands are more affected by the adjacent land use. In many cases in Stevenage, adjacent land may have a negative effect on the woodland. For example, in a number of locations where houses back onto woodlands it was seen that the woods were used for dumping of garden and household waste. Garden waste has resulted in the establishment of non-native plants in some woodlands, including invasive and hybrid bluebells which pose a threat to our native Bluebells.
4.2 Overall Objectives

To conserve and enhance Stevenage’s woodlands. To develop and maintain an appropriate structure within the woodlands to optimise their value for wildlife and people.

Woodlands form the majority of the wildlife habitat in Stevenage Borough. Most of these woodlands, especially those designated as Local Wildlife Sites, are of ancient semi-natural woodland. Good quality ancient semi-natural woodland, not only contains a diverse mix of trees, shrubs, flowers and lower plants, but will also have a varied structure, with a mature canopy, areas of dense shrub layer and open glades or paths. A diverse structure provides more habitats for a wider range of species, including plants, birds and invertebrates.

A high quality ancient woodland will also have a large amount of both fallen and standing dead wood. These each provide habitat for their own wide-ranging community of saproxylic species (dead wood feeding and decomposing organisms) and allow the natural processes of decay and nutrient recycling to occur. Other important habitat features found in woodlands include streams and ponds, with those in woodlands often having their own unique assemblage of associated species and often retaining a relatively natural structure and hydrology.

Perhaps the largest threat to the woodlands of Stevenage Borough is their small size and isolation. Of the 22 woodland Local Wildlife Sites, 86% have an area of less than 5ha with 36% having an area of less than 1ha. The generally small woodland size and the isolation resulting from the loss of connections between semi-natural woodlands and grasslands in the wider countryside, has resulted in populations of characteristic woodland flora and fauna becoming confined to particular sites. Such isolation increases the chances of small populations becoming locally extinct, in response to local factors such as woodland management, introduction of invasive species, population fluctuations or wider issues such as climate change as a result of global warming. Once extinct, they are then unlikely to recolonise from other sites.

At present the woodlands surveyed in the making of this plan are lacking in diversity of structure which limits their ecological potential. They are generally dense, dark and shaded environments with homogenous tree cover and few openings in the canopy. This lack of structural diversity is often exacerbated in small woodlands, where a range of successional stages may not be represented continuously. The spectrum of natural growth phases from open glades to over-mature woodland and dead wood typically found within natural forests is often missing in small woodlands. This may result in the loss of suitable habitat conditions for plants and animals with specialised requirements, which may then become locally extinct. The species which are
most vulnerable to this threat are those less mobile species and those associated with open glades or old veteran trees and dead wood.

A major objective should therefore be to introduce dynamism into the woodlands by a combination of thinning, glade creation, ride creation, ride management, coppicing, dead wood retention and tree felling. This will let light into the woodland floor, stimulating the ancient woodland ground flora, restoring and creating wildlife corridors between the woodland compartments. A dynamic and diverse structure within the woodlands will greatly improve the biodiversity of the woodlands by enabling the species that depend on all stages of the woodland successionary process to flourish.
4.3 **Wildlife Sites**

Of the 37 Local Wildlife Sites in the Borough, 23 are woodland sites (see Table 4.1).
### TABLE 4.1

WOODLAND LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES WITHIN STEVENAGE BOROUGH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WILDLIFE SITE REF.</th>
<th>NAME OF SITE</th>
<th>SITE AREA (ha)</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21/018</td>
<td>Margaret’s Wood, Todd’s Green *</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural broad-leaved woodland with reasonable flora bisected by railway. The section south of the railway is composed mainly of Hornbeam coppice with Oak and Hornbeam standards and some Hazel coppice. The section north of railway may have been formerly Oak over Hazel coppice but is currently densely overgrown with Blackthorn and Hawthorn scrub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/024</td>
<td>Whitney Wood *</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural woodland on the northern edge of Stevenage surrounded by urban development. It comprises a sizeable block of Oak/Hornbeam woodland that was formerly managed as coppice with standards. The stand is now Oak and tall Hornbeams with a scattered Hawthorn/Elder shrub layer. There are relic populations of several plants associated with old undisturbed woodland. Two large ponds add habitat diversity to the wood. A small southerly extension is linked to the main wood by a wide road verge of retained coppice. It includes a few large Oak standards and Hornbeam coppice. Subject to significant dumping of soil and rubble through the wood in March 2009.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/047</td>
<td>Whitney Drive Wood</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Small fragment of ancient semi-natural Hornbeam coppice woodland with large Oak standards. Formerly part of Whitney Wood. A diverse flora for a small wood includes a good number of ancient woodland indicator species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/048</td>
<td>Almond Spring</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>Fragment of ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam woodland with Hornbeam, Cherry and Oak remnants mainly around the edges. The central area has been planted with Beech and some Pine. The ground flora is sparse but supports a small number of indicator species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/049</td>
<td>Fishers Green Wood</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam woodland, predominantly Hornbeam coppice with Oak, Ash and Cherry standards with some Field Maple coppice along the boundary. The ground flora is typical of ancient woodland with abundant Bluebells. There are remnants of banks on either side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/002</td>
<td>Sishes Wood</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>Ancient Oak/Hornbeam woodland with mainly mature Oak tree standards and sparse Hornbeam coppice. The Oaks are for the most part aligned in rows suggesting that the wood is an old plantation on an ancient woodland coppice site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/004</td>
<td>Martin's Wood</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Mixed woodland with some ancient coppice in close proximity to housing estate. Former ancient Oak/Hornbeam coppice. Some Oak and Hornbeam standards remain but the wood has largely been replanted with Scots Pine and Beech. There is a Hornbeam hedge around the margin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/005</td>
<td>Wellfield Wood</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>Mixed plantation surrounded by housing and next to the new industrial area. Ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam coppice woodland replanted with mainly Beech, Sycamore, Birch, Fir, Poplars and Field Maple. The ground flora supports typical ancient woodland indicators dominated by Bluebells and there is a ditch and hedge around the woodland boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/041</td>
<td>Hanginghill Wood</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam coppiced woodland fragment. The canopy is typically Cherry, Hornbeam, Ash and Oak with patches of young Beech. The sub canopy is mainly Hawthorn, Hazel and Elder with coppices of Hornbeam and Ash and several old rotting coppice stools. There is much dead wood and several fine old standards of Cherry and Hornbeam. The ground flora is typically Bluebells, Bramble and Cow Parsley but includes Sanicle and Wood Melick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/021</td>
<td>Watery Grove *</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information confidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Woodland Name</td>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/034</td>
<td>Monk’s Wood West</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>Thin strip of ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam coppice woodland (originally part of Monk’s Wood) located on the west side of Monkswood Way Road. The woodland supports plant species and a structure indicative of ancient woodland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/038</td>
<td>Broadwater Marsh</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>A wet wood in an urban area with an undegraded spring in the corner supporting three fen indicator species including clumps of Tussock Sedge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/039</td>
<td>Warren Springs *</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>A fragment of ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam woodland adjacent to the old London Road. The woodland consists of overgrown Hornbeam coppice with a sparse understorey of Elder. There are a few Oak standards and some Cherry. At the south end there is some Field maple. The ground flora supports ancient woodland indicators including Bluebells and Dog Mercury. The site is locally important in that it contains the only site within Stevenage for Moschatel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/040</td>
<td>Monk’s and Whomerley Woods</td>
<td>25.29</td>
<td>Ancient Oak/Hornbeam woodland on decalcified boulder clays containing a large moated site and other earthworks. The woodland comprises neglected Hornbeam coppice with scattered Pedunculate Oak, Ash and Field Maple with Hazel, Dogwood, Holly, and Guelder Rose in the shrub layer. The ground flora typically contains Bramble, Dog’s Mercury, Bluebell and Wood Anenome. Extensive areas have been converted to mixed, conifer and broad-leaved plantation. The ponds are inhabited by three amphibian species including Great Crested Newts. The varied animal life included Yellow-necked Mouse, Pygmy Shrew and past records of Common Dormouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/002</td>
<td>Loves Wood</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Small area of ancient semi-natural Oak/Hornbeam woodland on the west side of Shephall Way Road. A large part has been cleared and some Oak and Ash replanted. The southern section comprises a Silver Fir plantation with some regeneration of coppice. The wood supports a number of ancient woodland indicator species and once formed a larger woodland along with Ridlins Wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Wood Name</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/003</td>
<td>Ridlins Wood</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>Ridlins Wood is an ancient woodland site, which has been substantially replanted in the past. The stand type is Oak/Hornbeam with Ash and Field Maple. The semi-natural habitat survives as overgrown Hornbeam Coppice in patches between semi-mature plantation of Scots Pine and Larch. Some Beech is also present in the plantations. The ground flora supports a good range of ancient woodland indicators and Bird’s-nest Orchid has been recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/028</td>
<td>Ashtree Wood and Abbotts Grove</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural coppiced woodland composed of Hornbeam, Oak, Ash, Hazel, Cherry and Field Maple. The central areas have been replanted with species such as Beech, Cedar and Pine. The ground flora supports ancient woodland indicators with a greater diversity of species associated with the semi-natural canopy along the edges. Bluebells and Dog’s Mercury are abundant. There are some boundary coppice stubs and small wood banks within the wood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/041</td>
<td>Marymead Spring</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Wet deciduous Hornbeam/Alder woodland with spring sources surrounded by housing. The ground flora indicator species such as Bluebells and Wood Anemones. Wet woodland indicator species are also present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/043</td>
<td>Great Collens Wood</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural broadleaf woodland replanted in places. The canopy is predominantly Hornbeam coppice with Ash, Cherry and Field Maple with a ground cover of Bramble, Bluebell and Dog’s Mercury. The middle and southern sections have been replanted with Oak, Ash and Pine. Remnant standards and coppice can be found along the woodland edge in the replanted compartments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Code</td>
<td>Site Name</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/045</td>
<td>Pestcotts Spring and Wood</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Ancient semi-natural woodland substantially altered by blanket planting throughout the wood except at the very edges and to the far north. The main canopy supports planted Larch, Beech and some Cherry with occasional Hornbeam and Ash. The ground flora supports a number of ancient woodland indicators with Bluebells dominant in the Spring. The semi-natural canopy consists of Hornbeam coppice and standards plus some Ash standards and Cherry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/046</td>
<td>Blacknells Spring</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Thin strip of scrubby, ancient semi-natural woodland with a canopy typically of Hornbeam, Ash, Field Maple and Hawthorn. The ground flora supports wood grasses, Bramble, Bluebell and Yellow Archangel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/047</td>
<td>Wiltshire’s Spring</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Small remnant of ancient semi-natural woodland with a canopy of old Hornbeam coppice with Ash, Field Maple, and Hawthorn. A section of the wood to the west has been under planted with Beech and Scots Pine. The ground flora supports wood grasses, Bramble, Bluebell and Yellow Archangel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/051</td>
<td>Valley Way Wood</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>Planted mixed woodland with Oak, Larch and scrub supporting a number of plant species and structural features indicative of ancient woodland. The ground flora is dominated by Bramble and Bluebells.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not owned by Stevenage Borough
It is recommended that SBC include appropriate policies within the Local Plan and other strategic documents to protect all woodland Local Wildlife Sites from damage through development.

**HABITAT ACTION G1**

The woodlands of the borough are currently almost universally dense, dark and lacking in structure or dynamism. This condition significantly restricts their potential for wildlife. To improve their value for biodiversity and people they would benefit from a substantial programme of conservation work such as thinning, ride creation, glade creation, removal of non-native tree species and coppicing. If the woodland resource is considered in the whole it could provide an attractive proposition for a woodland contractor to harvest, provided that that harvesting was to an agreed plan and primarily to benefit biodiversity. This represents the most financially viable mechanism to realise the conservation aims of this document in times of restricted public funds. If managed correctly a considerable amount of structural work could be undertaken at no cost to the authority or possibly even generating funds. The produce could even be sold locally to residents, developing a sustainable, local, low carbon source of green energy for the town.

In a change to the previous BAP, all woodlands and their management priorities have been considered. These prescriptions could potentially inform wildlife conservation and habitat creation through a timber extraction agreement. The management advice is broadly similar for most of the woodlands due to their similarity. These principles should therefore be drawn up into a five year plan and personalised for each woodland.

*Sishes Wood*

Cherry Laurel
Developing understorey

Sishes Wood has better structure than most of the woodlands and shows signs of being recently managed. In common with other woodlands in the town it lacks light penetrating to the woodland floor and structure i.e. different conditions of light and sizes of tree. Where this does occur e.g. above right, more complex woodland vegetation has developed. It lacks rides or glades, and has a notable population of non-natives e.g. Cherry Laurel. The following management actions are recommended:

- Remove Cherry Laurel and treat stumps with herbicide to prevent regrowth (above left).
- Remove all non-native invasive species.
- Remove conifers.
- Reinstate coppicing in sinuous strips rather than big coupes.
- Coppice younger Hornbeam, leave oldest stools.
- Control Holly by regularly cutting back.
- Create wide central, sinuous ride through coppicing and felling trees of small diameter.
- Subject to safety considerations, leave all large trees to mature and senesce.
- Thin Sycamore copse on the south side of the wood by 50% and introduce coppicing.
- Create glades and wide central ride in south side of woodland.
- Install interpretation boards or an electronic guide to the Stevenage Woodlands.
- Create a friends group to undertake management.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo2**
Martin’s Wood

Dense homogenous regrowth

Martins Wood is also characterised by dense homogenous regrowth with little structural diversity. It would benefit from a similar management prescription.

- Remove conifers.
- Remove all non-native invasive species.
- Reinstate coppicing in sinuous strips rather than big coupes.
- Coppice younger Hornbeam, leave oldest stools.
- Control Holly by regularly cutting back.
- Create wide central, sinuous rides through coppicing and felling trees of small diameter.
Subject to safety considerations, leave all large trees to mature and senesce.

Thin the woodland to create keyholes through which light can penetrate.

Install interpretation boards or an electronic guide to the Stevenage Woodlands.

Create a friends group to undertake management.

HABITAT ACTION Wo3

Monk’s Wood West

Monk’s Wood West is a thin strip of woodland adjacent to the Roaring Meg Retail Park and is a remnant of the larger block of woodland to the east. It is dominated by old Hornbeam coppice.

The woodland would benefit from rotational coppicing to create more structural diversity, stimulate the ground flora. The Hornbeam would make excellent logs for firewood.

HABITAT ACTION Wo4

Broadwater Marsh
Broadwater Marsh is a small, steeply sloping secondary woodland. The difficulty of access, size, good structure and the relatively young age of the woodland means that management is not considered to be a priority on this site. It should be allowed to develop as a non-intervention woodland.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo5**

**Warren Springs**

Warren Springs is a small triangular wood sandwiched between the B197 London Road adjacent to the Roaring Meg Retail Park and a business unit next to the railway. The site is important in that it is the only site in Stevenage Borough where Moschatel (pictured), a scarce Hertfordshire flower, can be found.

Rotational coppicing of the Hornbeam and regular removal of litter is advised. The installation of a netting fence would prevent fly tipping from the car park and prevent litter blowing into the woodland.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo6**

**Monk’s and Whomerley Woods**

Monk’s and Whomerley Wood is the largest (25.29ha) example of ancient Oak and Hornbeam woodland in Stevenage Borough. It has benefitted from clearance and management works conducted during the period of the previous BAP by local conservation volunteers. This work ably demonstrates the kind of management that would significantly improve the majority of the Stevenage woodlands for wildlife if applied more widely. The picture below demonstrates the beneficial impact creating rides and glades has had on the ground flora. More of this work is required.
Complex woodland structure has been created

Away from the worked areas, the woodland displays the familiar character of dark homogenous planted blocks or over-stood coppice with little diversity, structure or light penetrating to the floor. The work undertaken to open up the wood demonstrates what can be achieved through this form of management. It should be expanded more aggressively into the rest of the wood and into others. Harvesting the wood through the use of a forestry contractor could be the best way of achieving this and should be explored. The scale of the work required to fully optimise the wood for wildlife is such that it is considered to be beyond the scope of small volunteer groups although they will continue to have a role to play.

However the importance of the input of volunteers should not be underestimated, both for conservation benefit and to develop groups of residents with an emotional attachment to this environment. The future condition of the woodland requires that residents are knowledgeable and well informed about what beneficial management looks like and care that it is undertaken. The development of conservation volunteers who want to work on the woodland is a major achievement of the previous BAP. There will always be tasks for volunteers to get involved with such as ride management, coppicing, hedgelaying, glade creation or bat and bird box making. The woodland interpretation and discovery trail that has been installed over the previous plan period provides an excellent resource for residents.

The following management is recommended for the woodland.

- Remove conifers.
- Remove all non-native invasive species.
- Reinstate coppicing in sinuous strips rather than big coupes.
- Coppice younger Hornbeam, leave oldest stools.
- Control Holly by regularly cutting back.
• Create a network of wide, sinuous rides through the woodland based on existing desire lines. Rides should be a minimum of 10m wide – 20m if possible.
• Leave all large native trees to mature and senesce.
• Where safe to do so, leave standing deadwood wherever safe to do so.
• Thin woodland extensively to let light into woodland floor.
• Create glades through coppicing, link to ride network when possible.
• Eradicate invasive Lesser Periwinkle.
• Block some ditches to retain water in the woodland and create diversity of ground conditions.
• Formalise aims by producing a conservation management plan for the woodland.
• Install interpretation boards or a guide to the Stevenage Woodlands electronic guide.
• Create a friends group to undertake management.
• Make and install bird and bat boxes (Kent bat boxes) and monitor use in conjunction with local bird and bat groups.

HABITAT ACTION Wo7

Wiltshire’s Spring

Wiltshire’s Spring is a small woodland to the south of the Fairland’s Valley Boating Lake. It is recommended that the conifers are removed and that it is thinned where it is too dense and little light penetrates to the woodland floor.

HABITAT ACTION Wo8
**Fisher’s Green Wood**

Complex structure and prominent ground layer

Fisher’s Green Wood is a surprisingly diverse thin strip of woodland with a well-developed ground flora. It consists largely of Hornbeam coppice and would benefit from the reintroduction of rotational coppicing. Only younger stools should be coppiced to reduce the risk of killing ancient stools. If they have been out of rotation for many years they may lack the vigour to send out sufficient new growth to sustain the tree, particularly if compromised by deer browsing.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo9**

**Marymead Spring**

This wet woodland is relatively young in origin as evidenced by the ground flora present. It should be a low priority for management but would benefit from introducing step weirs or terracing to the water course to hold back water, create small pools and wet areas subject to consent from the Environment Agency. These do not have to be complicated structures and could be created by volunteer groups.
HABITAT ACTION Wo10

Ashtree Wood and Abbotts Grove

Dense young planting with little ground flora diversity
Woodland glade with associated complexity

Ancient semi natural woodland that has been extensively re-planted resulting in dense, dark understorey, little ground flora and homogenous structure. It would benefit from a similar prescription as recommended for other woodlands.

- Remove conifers.
- Remove all non-native invasive species.
- Reinstate coppicing in sinuous strips rather than big coupes.
- Coppice younger Hornbeam, leave oldest stools.
- Control Holly by regularly cutting back.
- Create a network of wide, sinuous rides through the woodland based on existing desire lines. Rides should be a minimum of 10m wide – 20m if possible.
- Where safe to do so, leave all large native trees to mature and senesce.
- Leave standing deadwood wherever safe to do so.
- Thin woodland extensively to let light into woodland floor.
- Create glades through coppicing, link to ride network when possible.
- Formalise aims by producing a conservation management plan for the woodland.
- Install interpretation boards or an electronic guide to the Stevenage Woodlands.
- Create a friends group to undertake management

**HABITAT ACTION Wo11**
Example of dark ride.

Extensively and densely replanted semi natural ancient woodland which would benefit from similar management as other woodlands.

- Remove conifers.
- Reinstate coppicing in sinuous strips rather than big coupes.
- Do not re-coppice oldest Hornbeam stools, particularly ancient boundary trees.
- Control Holly by regularly cutting back.
- Remove all non-native invasive species.
- Create a network of wide, sinuous rides through the woodland based on existing desire lines. Rides should be a minimum of 10m wide – 20m if possible.
- Where safe to do so, leave all large native trees to mature and senesce.
- Leave standing deadwood wherever safe to do so.
- Thin woodland extensively to let light into woodland floor.
- Create glades through coppicing, link to ride network when possible.
- Formalise aims by producing a conservation management plan for the woodland.
- Install interpretation boards or an electronic guide to the Stevenage Woodlands.
- Create a friends group to undertake management.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo12**

**Great Collins Wood**
Dense internal planting on the left and remnant exterior coppice with standards on right

Ancient semi natural woodland extensively replanted. Management prescription similar to other woodlands e.g. Pestcotts Spring

HABITAT ACTION Wo13

*Hanging Hill Wood*

Hanging Hill Wood has comparatively more diverse structure and ground flora than many other woodlands. Its small sized allows light to penetrate from the sides which stimulates the edges of the wood. It would also benefit from a similar prescription to other woodlands.

HABITAT ACTION Wo14
The installation of a Tawny Owl is a welcome addition to the woodland and could be reproduced in other woodlands. Habitat management as described above would benefit this species by providing more habitat for small mammal prey.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo15**

*Wellfield Wood*

Dense single aged forestry planting and little understorey. Dark rides visible but with two Hornbeam standards in the foreground that should be retained.

Wellfield Wood is another woodland that would benefit from a similar prescription to those above. Due to its wet nature it would also benefit from creating woodland ponds within it.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo16**

*Blacknells Spring*
Thin strip of remnant ancient woodland which is compromised in terms of habitat quality by its width and proximity to housing. Dumping of garden waste and other material evident. A lower priority woodland for intervention. Remove garden waste and dumped material.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo17**

*Ridlins Wood*

This woodland together with Monk’s and Whomerley Wood has the highest potential for improvement. Where gaps in the canopy allow, an interesting ancient woodland ground flora develops and it has more complex hydrological variations than most of the other woodlands. It is also densely planted and would benefit greatly from the application of the prescriptions described above. The greatest rewards are likely to be achieved in terms of ecological enhancement from prioritising this site along with Monks and Whomerley Woods.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo18**
Dense plantation understorey inhibiting ground flora.

**Almond Spring**

Small urban woodland which would benefit from the general woodland management prescription but lower priority due to size and condition.

Create ride along desire line and control Holly.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo19**

**Whitney Drive Wood**

Small urban woodland which would benefit from general woodland management prescription but lower priority due to size and condition.
Hornbeam coppice which could provide a source of firewood which could fund beneficial management.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo20**

*Valley Way Wood*

Dense areas of planting
Another small semi natural woodland which has been densely planted in the past. Would benefit from improving structure and eradication of non-native species as per general woodland management prescription.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo21**

*Loves Wood*

![Dense conifer plot](image)

This woodland would benefit from removal of conifers and thinning as per general woodland together with ride creation and reinstatement of coppicing.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo22**

Margaret’s Wood, Todd’s Green and Whitney Wood were not surveyed because they are not owned or managed by SBC.

**Litter and Fly Tipping**

Many of the woods are used extensively by the public and can accumulate a considerable amount of litter. Also, those woods adjacent to housing estates are often subjected to fly tipping. All woods should be inspected regularly and litter and fly tipping removed as necessary.

**HABITAT ACTION Wo23**
4.4 Non-designated Sites with Improvement Potential

No other sites were identified with improvement potential.

4.5 Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are for both people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally and offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply enjoy it.

Natural England recommends that LNRs should be:

a. greater than 2ha in size
b. capable of being managed with the conservation of nature and/or the maintenance of special opportunities for study, research or enjoyment of nature as the priority concern

c. of high natural interest in the local context or
d. of some reasonable interest and of high value in the local context for formal education or research or
e. of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public

HABITAT ACTION Wo24

It is recommended that that all the woodland sites listed above are assessed to determine if any are eligible for designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

4.6 Woodlands Habitat Action Plan

The Woodlands Habitat Action Plan is shown in Table 4.2.

A grant application to secure funding for the actions listed in Table 4.2 will be submitted during 2010. The timing of the award may affect some of the action completion dates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action No.</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>By Whom (TBA)</th>
<th>By When</th>
<th>Success Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wo1</td>
<td>All Woodland Wildlife Sites</td>
<td>Include policies in Local Development Framework to ensure protection of woodland wildlife sites</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Publication of Local Plan</td>
<td>Appropriate policies published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo2</td>
<td>Sishes Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo3</td>
<td>Martin’s Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo4</td>
<td>Monk’s Wood West</td>
<td>Rotationally re-coppice Hornbeam over a 10 year period</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>All stools re-coppiced by 2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo5</td>
<td>Broadwater Marsh</td>
<td>No intervention, natural succession</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo6</td>
<td>Warren Springs</td>
<td>Rotationally re-coppice Hornbeam over a 10 year period. Install fence</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2017 and 2027</td>
<td>All stools re-coppiced by 2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo7</td>
<td>Monk’s and Whomerley Woods</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo8</td>
<td>Wiltshire’s Spring</td>
<td>Thin plantation and re-coppice</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo9</td>
<td>Fishers Green Wood</td>
<td>Rotationally re-coppice Hornbeam over a 10 year period</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2027</td>
<td>All stools re-coppiced by 2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo10</td>
<td>Marymead Spring</td>
<td>Introduce step weirs and terracing to create pools and hold back water</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Water retention features created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo11</td>
<td>Ashtree Wood and Abbots Grove</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo12</td>
<td>Pestcotts Spring and Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo13</td>
<td>Great Collens Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo</td>
<td>Woodland</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Responsible Body</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo14</td>
<td>Hanging Hill Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo15</td>
<td>All Woodland</td>
<td>Tawny Owl boxes erected in all suitable woodland</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Boxes in all woodlands of sufficient size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo16</td>
<td>Wellfield Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo17</td>
<td>Blacknell’s Spring</td>
<td>Clear dumped material</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Material cleared from the wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo18</td>
<td>Ridlins Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo19</td>
<td>Almond Spring</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo20</td>
<td>Whitney Drive Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo21</td>
<td>Valley Way Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo22</td>
<td>Loves Wood</td>
<td>Implement management to improve structural diversity of woodland via directed harvesting for firewood. Recruit volunteers to conduct less commercial conservation activities on an annual basis. Introduce dynamism into the woodland ecosystem.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>5 year plan</td>
<td>Plan issued and initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo23</td>
<td>All woods</td>
<td>All woods should be inspected regularly and litter and fly tipping removed as necessary.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo24</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Assess all woodland sites to determine if any are eligible for designation as a LNR</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Issue Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action No.</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>By Whom (TBA)</td>
<td>Success criteria</td>
<td>Achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo1</td>
<td>All Woodland Wildlife Sites</td>
<td>Include policies in Local Development Framework to ensure protection of woodland wildlife sites</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Appropriate policies published</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo2</td>
<td>Sishes Wood</td>
<td>Remove holly and laurel from wood</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>Yes, partial 2012, 2015, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo3</td>
<td>Martin’s Wood</td>
<td>Remove holly from wood</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>Yes, partial 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo4</td>
<td>Monk’s Wood West</td>
<td>Re-coppice Hornbeam over a five year period</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo5</td>
<td>Monk’s Wood West</td>
<td>Repair fence</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>Yes 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo6</td>
<td>Broadwater Marsh</td>
<td>Remove a number of saplings from the northwest corner</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo7</td>
<td>Warren Springs</td>
<td>Fence off the wood</td>
<td>Privately owned</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo8</td>
<td>Monk’s and Whomerley Woods</td>
<td>Agree a five year management plan with HMWT</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Plan issued</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo9</td>
<td>Monk’s and Whomerley Woods</td>
<td>Create a Woodland Trail and link to the Shackledell Grasshopper Trail</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Trail Opened</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo10</td>
<td>Wiltshire’s Spring</td>
<td>Thin saplings in the northwest sector</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo11</td>
<td>All woods</td>
<td>All woods should be inspected each year and litter and fly tipping removed as necessary.</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Before and after photos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo12</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Assess all woodland sites to determine if any are eligible for designation as a Local Nature Reserve</td>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Issue Recommendations</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>