



WEST END COPSE – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 – 2022

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL

Adopted May 2017

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1. Introduction

West End Copse is owned by West End Parish Council, whose overall aim is to maintain the Copse as a community and biodiversity asset, and to maximise opportunities to protect and enhance the natural environment. This plan provides information about the Copse as it is today; its habitats, wildlife and use by the community; and how it will be maintained and managed to benefit nature and the local community over the next five years. It has been prepared in consultation with Parish Council staff, local residents and volunteers, and other users of the site. Its purpose is to direct the management of the site taking into account their views, the conservation value of the site and the available resources. However the condition and use of the site can change over time, so the plan is not intended to be completely rigid; progress should be reviewed each year, work plans adjusted accordingly, and a new plan should be written to follow on from this in 2022.

2. Site description

2.1. Location

West End Copse is located in the Chartwell Green area of the parish of West End, 5 miles north-east of the centre of Southampton in Hampshire, centred on national grid reference SU458146. (See Fig 1.) It is a small woodland, approximately 5.25 hectares in size and lies in a small stream valley, surrounded by housing built in the early – mid 1980's. The main valley holding the stream runs south-west to north-east, and a dry side valley joins it from the south-east about halfway along the site.

The main part of the site is bordered by Windermere Road, Ullswater Avenue, Duddon Close, Monnow Gardens, Derwent Close and part of Old Ivy Lane, and at the southern end of the site a small extension runs east between Monnow Gardens and Grasmere Close to Ullswater Avenue (See fig 2).

The site boundaries consist largely of board fences belonging to the adjacent properties, though there are sections of chain-link fence adjacent to communal parking areas where these adjoin the western side. The majority of the physical boundaries correspond with the Parish Council's title boundary, (see Appendix A) but the north-western boundary parallel to Ullswater Avenue is not marked on the ground, and slight encroachment by the owner of the adjacent property may have taken place in this area.

Figure 1. Site location.

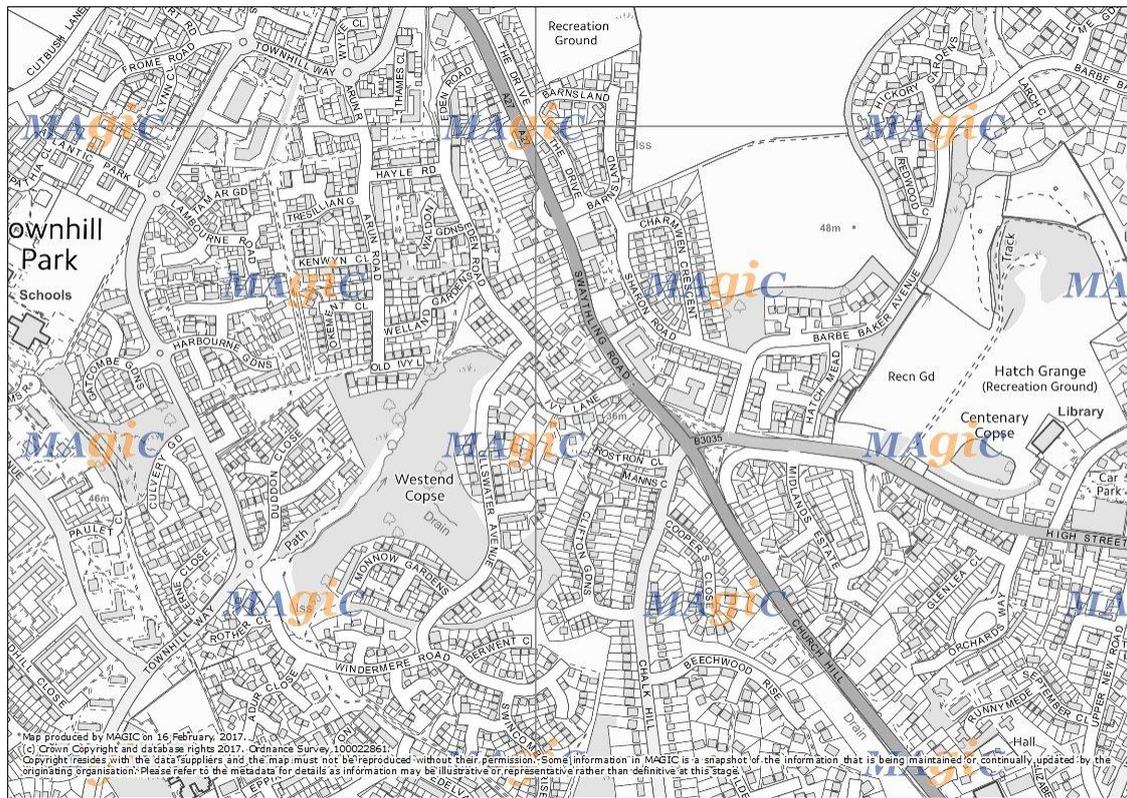
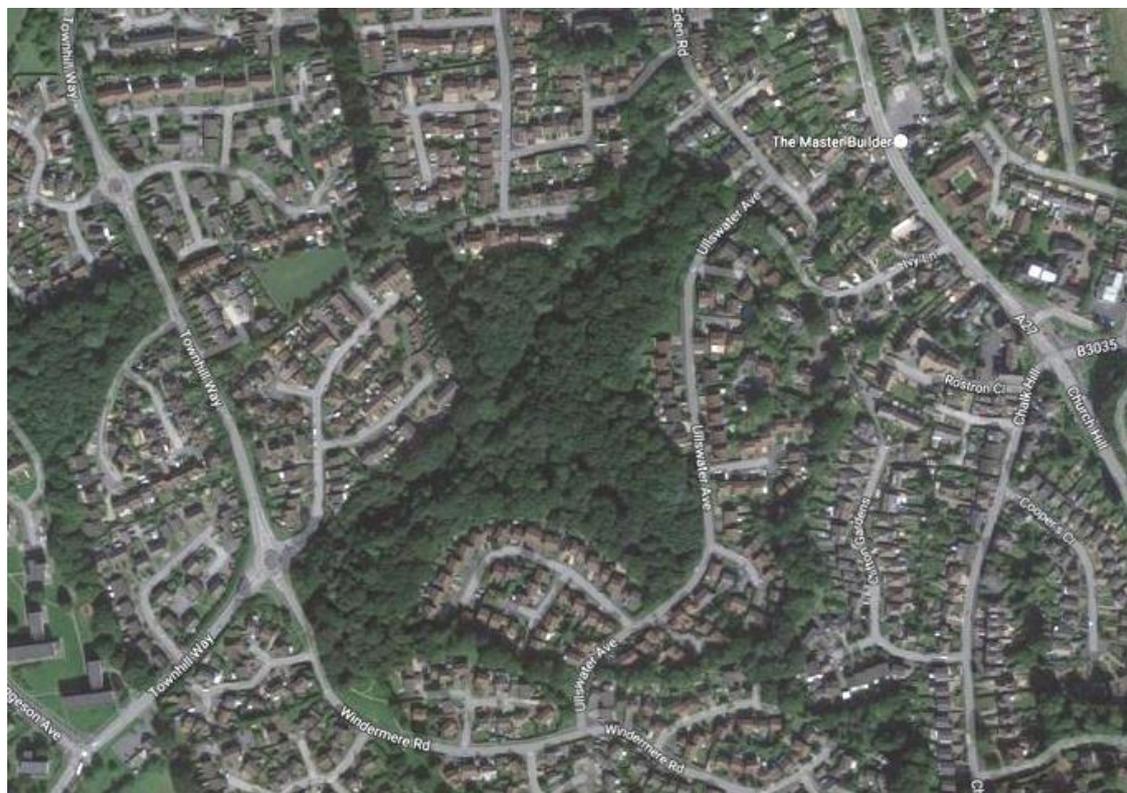


Figure 2. Aerial view of West End Copse.

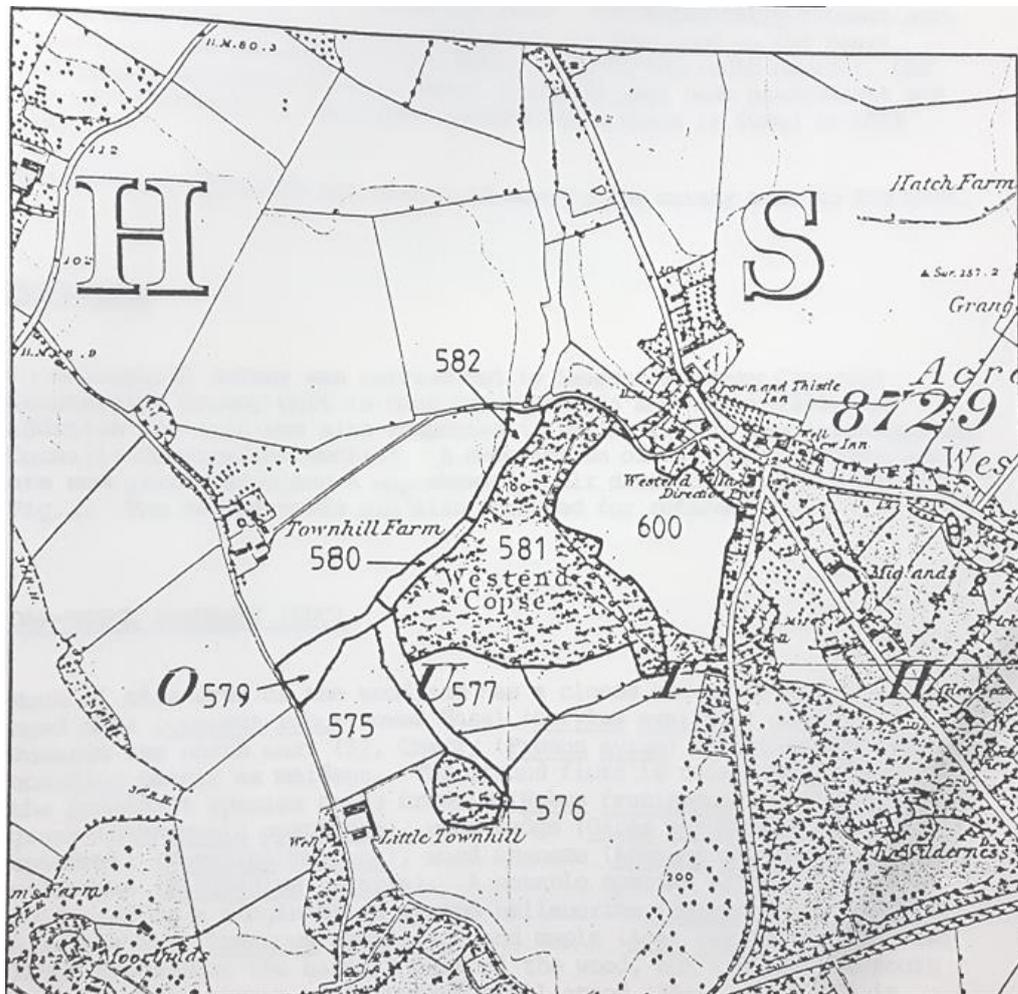


2.2. History

Once a tiny hamlet, West End now has a population of over 10,000, but despite this it is still referred to as 'the village' by many residents. In the past, West End was known for its agriculture and market gardening, much of this on land now developed for housing.

The 1845 South Stoneham tithe map includes information on the name, land use, area and owner of all the plots of land which existed at the time – see Fig 3 below. The Copse - then known as Rowlands, though the name had changed to Westend Copse by 1870 – is clearly shown and is therefore likely to be of ancient origin. The strip of marshy ground north-west of the stream was pasture at that time and the trees in this area have grown since that time.

Figure 3. 1845 Tithe map information overlaid on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map



<u>Plot Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Description of Land Use</u>
574	Little Rowlands	Arable
576	Round Copse	Wood
577	The Four Acres	Arable
579	Upper Mead	Pasture
580	Long Meadow	Pasture
581	Rowlands Copse	Wood
582	Long Meadow	Pasture
600	West End Piece	Arable

The small sand/ gravel pit in the area west of this is not shown on the tithe map or 1870 OS map so probably dates from after this, and the trees in this area have also grown since it was dug. It appears that the area changed very little until the 1980's when most of Townhill Farm was developed for residential properties and a significant part of the Copse was lost. In the late 1980's the remaining woodland was transferred into the ownership of Eastleigh Borough Council and managed by the Countryside Service. A management plan was prepared in 1989, and work including path construction, excavation of a pond, tree thinning and coppicing took place with the support of an active group of volunteers, "The Friends of West End Copse". The group disbanded and active woodland management ended in the mid 1990's, and after that time work generally took the form of maintenance in response to tree safety concerns and vandalism.

Ownership and management of the site were transferred to the Parish Council in 2012, and the Friends of West End Copse reformed in 2014 as the result of publicity by the Parish Council.

2.3.Habitats

The site was surveyed by Hampshire Biological Information Centre (HBIC) in 2000 and 2011, and a copy of the latter survey is attached as Appendix A. The site has been divided into a number of areas, referred to as compartments, based on these surveys as shown in Figure 4, and key features are identified by Target Notes (TN).

Almost all of the woodland south-east of the stream is of ancient origin, the exceptions being small areas around the entrance from Ullswater Avenue and to the rear of properties in Barle Close which were cleared during the adjacent housing development and subsequently replanted. Most of the canopy trees, particularly the oaks, are early mature and of a similar size and age, with few older mature trees and no over-mature or veteran trees.

Compartment 1. North/ east of the dry side valley the dense woodland canopy is dominated by oak, with some silver birch, cherry, beech and ash, and sycamore in the south-eastern part. There is a fairly dense shrub layer of Hazel, Hawthorn, Rowan some Holly and honeysuckle, with occasional non-native and invasive Cherry Laurel in some places (TN1), and extensive sapling stage sycamore spreading from the south-east. This part of the site has the most widespread ancient woodland ground flora including bluebell, wood anemone, solomon's seal and lesser celandine (TN2), though in most areas only wood anemone is present, with other species limited to small patches. Areas of richer ground flora near Old Ivy Lane have been smothered by wood chippings arising from tree works last autumn.

Compartment 2. South of the side valley in addition to the oak there is some sweet chestnut in the canopy and ash and cherry are absent. The shrub layer is dominated by holly with less hazel, and the ancient woodland ground flora is less widespread, though the same range of plant species is found in patches in more open areas beside paths. The area around the Ullswater Avenue entrance contains young trees planted in the late 1980's (TN3) and a small patch of Japanese knotweed.

Compartment 3. The valley bottom contains wet woodland developing on the former meadow, with a variety of willow species and oak, hazel and beech at the drier margins, and a ground flora of sedges and nettle with occasionally other woodland and meadow plants. In the late 1980's a pond was dug approximately halfway along this area, filled from the stream by a channel and weir. As a result of regular vandalism and heavy leaf fall from surrounding trees it was prone to

silting up, and work to maintain it ended in around 2004. Since that time it has completely silted up and dried out, and developed into an area of sedge and rushes. (TN4)

Compartment 4. West of the stream is an area of secondary woodland with a closed canopy dominated by oak and hawthorn, and ground flora dominated by bramble and ivy, the latter becoming well established in the tree canopies in some areas. (TN5) The north-west corner of the area is more open with more scattered hawthorn scrub and extensive bramble.

Compartment 5. The small area north of Old Ivy Lane and running along the stream to Eden Road is not ancient woodland but contains some larger oaks and hazel stools as well as trees planted at the time of the housing development and more recent planting, with a ground flora mainly of bramble plus some sedges in wetter areas.

Compartment 6. A narrow extension of ancient woodland similar in species to Area 1, and containing an old wood bank. This area is affected by tipping of garden waste and contains quite large amounts of branches and logs arising from tree safety works carried out in recent years. The western end of the compartment adjacent to properties in Grasmere Close contains dense native tree and shrub planting dating from the late 1980's.

The stream is heavily shaded and largely lacking in emergent or marginal plants over most of its length, and appears to have been cleared relatively recently as it contains little or no debris apart from north (downstream) of Old Ivy Lane. The section south (upstream) of the roundabout on Townhill Way is not in the Parish Council's ownership and runs within a balancing pond, with a bund and culvert at its northern end, and the channel is reinforced or contained within concrete slabs, some of which are breaking away. Immediately downstream of the bund the channel is actively eroding beneath the outfall of the culvert.

2.4. Wildlife

Mammals. There are three disused badger setts on the site as shown on Figure 4. Sett 1 (TN6) has approximately 5 entrances and has not been used since the site was transferred to the Borough Council. Sett 2 (TN7) with approximately 5 entrances is long disused but was in use until the mid 2000's, perhaps later, and caused some problems for the residents in adjacent houses whose gardens the sett ran beneath. Sett 3 (TN8) was not active in November 2016, but parish staff report that it was in use in 2015. The entrances showed signs of use within the last 6 months, and there were recent snuffle holes nearby. A probable outlier to this sett (3a, TN9) appears to have been disused for slightly longer.

Grey squirrels are relatively common, deer, probably roe, are reported to be seen occasionally, though there were no signs of damage to regrowth from coppice cut in winter 15/16; and a fox was sighted during the middle of the day on 30th November 2016, though an active fox earth was not found.

A detailed bat survey and assessment has not been carried out, but four dead tree monoliths with woodpecker holes were found which have medium potential for roosting bats (TN10). The general absence of older trees with rot or growth defects means there are likely to be only a limited number of potential bat roosts within the site.

Birds. During the HBIC survey in April 2011, 23 mainly common bird species were noted most of which probably breed on the site or nearby. Four of these - House Sparrow, Bullfinch, Firecrest

and Song Thrush - are notable species, being either UK or Hampshire BAP species or on the Birds of Conservation Concern red list. In addition a woodcock was flushed from the northern part of the site during a site visit in December 2016.

Invertebrates. No specific surveys have been carried out; the Speckled Wood butterfly was sighted during the HBIC survey in 2011. A private blog noted a colony of solitary ground nesting bees in a mound of earth near the boardwalk in 2014.

2.5. Access and community use

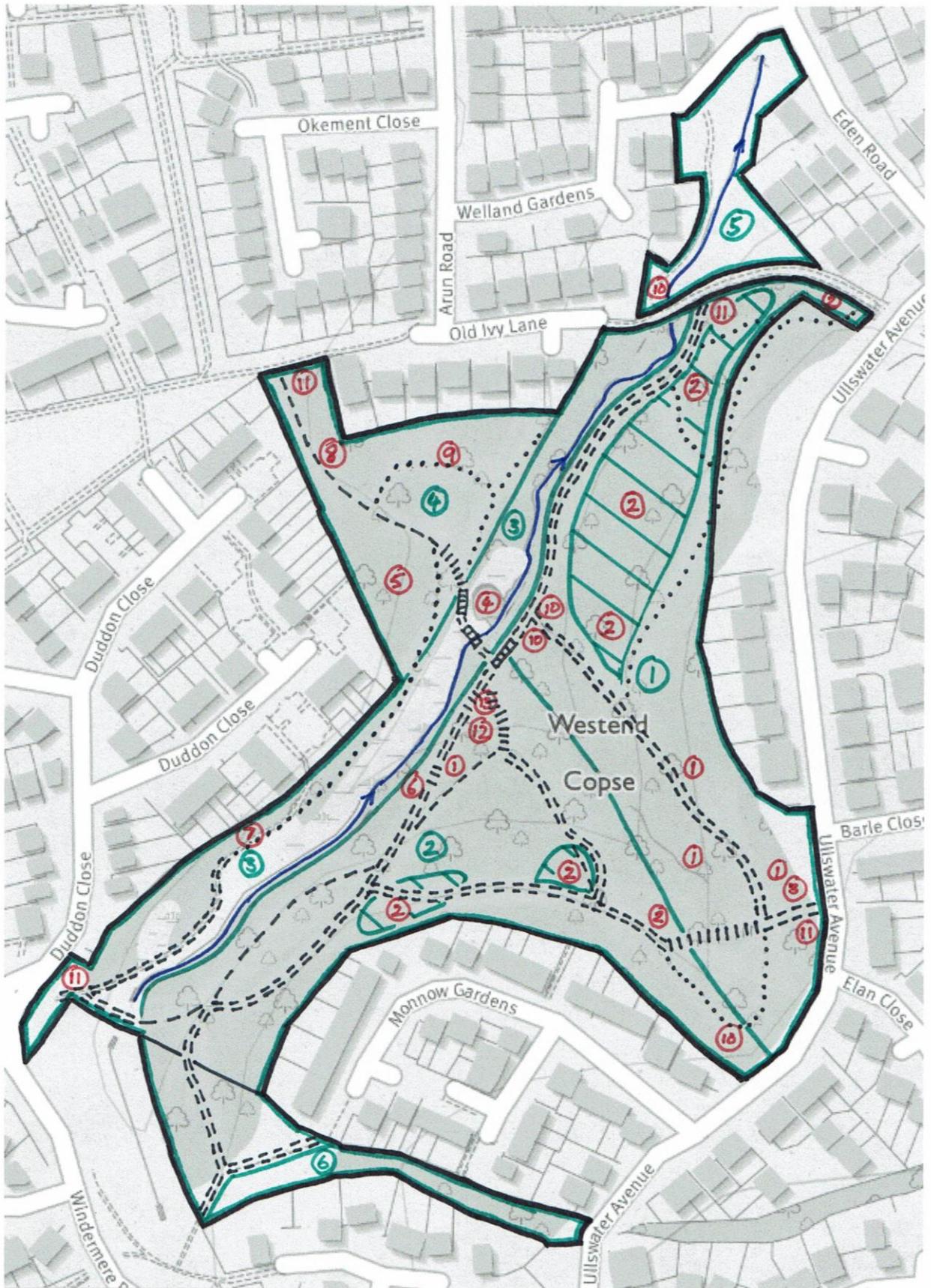
Physical Access and infrastructure. A simple network of surfaced paths links the main entrance points, and a number of informal unsurfaced paths have developed between them, as shown on Figure 4. Limited vehicle access is possible at four points (TN11), and more information about all access points is shown in Appendix B. Much of the surfaced path network has become obscured by the build-up of leaf mould, but some sections have been resurfaced with loose gravel by the Friends group relatively recently. Steps take paths up the steeper slopes either side of the valley, and a boardwalk crosses the stream and bottom of the valley where the ground is soft, particularly in winter. Parish staff report that parts of the boardwalk are in poor condition.

Entrance signs are located at all the main access points giving the name of the site and contact details for the Parish Council; and a four-way fingerpost was installed in 2015 where the paths from the main access points meet near the boardwalk giving directions to the surrounding roads

Informal Public use. The main surfaced paths are used as links between the surrounding roads and as a route to the Townhill local centre, and the whole site is well used by dog walkers. A giant table and chair (TN12) were installed in the centre of the site around ten years ago and are used as a meeting point by some young people. Some anti-social behaviour does occur which is monitored by the Parish Council and the Police.

Formal public use. Noah's Ark Preschool use the Copse once or sometimes twice a week for forest school activities, focused on a low-key "base camp" located in Area 1. These short sessions involve a group of up to 12 children aged 2 – 4 walking from Townhill Community Centre to use the site for activities including small campfires (in a fire bowl), a mud kitchen, and occasional stream dipping, plus an end of term celebration with parents. There are no permanent structures associated with these activities and the group makes use of natural materials found on the site.

Figure 4: Site survey plan (not to scale)



Key to Site Survey plan

-  Boundary of West End PC ownership
-  Compartment boundary and number
-  Stream
-  Main paths - surfaced
-  Main paths - unsurfaced
-  Informal paths
-  Boardwalk
-  Steps

Target Notes

- ① Cherry Laurel
- ② Area of richest ancient woodland ground flora
- ③ Dense native species planting
- ④ Former pond
- ⑤ Dense ivy cover on younger oaks
- ⑥ Badger sett (abandoned)
- ⑦ Badger sett (abandoned)
- ⑧ Badger sett - active
- ⑨ Outlier badger sett
- ⑩ Tree monoliths – medium bat roost potential
- ⑪ Vehicular access
- ⑫ Table and chairs
- ⑬ Site of former solitary bee colony

3. Current Management and Community Engagement

3.1. Parish Council Management Structure and resources

Council and Committees. Parish Council policy and key decisions are determined by the full Council of 14 members, and responsibility for the management of open spaces including West End Copse lie with the Recreation and Environment Committee. The Committee meets monthly and receives a report of issues arising at the site and decides on actions and expenditure recommended by Parish staff.

Staff & equipment. The Parish Council currently employs five full time groundstaff to maintain all the open spaces in West End including West End Copse, who report to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. The groundstaff have access to ride-on mowers, push mowers, strimmers, hedgetrimmers, chainsaw and chipper which are stored in a stand-alone workshop/store adjacent to the Parish Centre. The team also liaise with neighbouring parishes with a view to sharing equipment.

Financial resources. A sum of £10,000 was transferred to the Parish by EBC with the site, most of which has been spent on tree works, with around £2000 remaining. Ongoing maintenance and management of the Copse is funded from the general recreation budget, and a specific budget for tree works across the parish. The Grounds Team in consultation with the Clerk to the Council can use the maintenance budget to carry out work speedily without the need to obtain Council approval. The Copse does not generate any income for the Council.

Funding for major projects may need to be sourced from other organisations or donations. Eastleigh Borough Council's Hedge End, West End and Botley Local Area Committee (HEWEB LAC) maintains a Capital Investment Project List and any developers' contributions can be made available for these projects. The Parish Council have ensured that improvements for West End Copse are included on this list.

3.2. Parish Council Management Policies

General. West End Parish Council acknowledges that well designed, managed and maintained public spaces can make a major contribution to securing sustainable economic development, support an ageing population, promote social and community cohesion, improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, and reduce perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Health & Safety. West End Parish Council recognises that it has a legal duty of care for the health and safety of its employees and others who may be affected by the council's activities in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Occupiers Liability Act and other legislation, and that managing health and safety is a business critical function. The Parish Council has adopted a Health & Safety Policy and Procedures, and maintains a safe place of work, safe equipment and safe systems of work. Risk assessments have been developed for all tasks which are reviewed annually. If an accident occurs, the risk assessment will be amended to ensure the prevention of further incidents.

All equipment is regularly maintained and serviced, and a log is kept in the workshop. Most routine maintenance is carried out by the groundstaff, but annual servicing of larger machinery, e.g. ride on mowers is carried out by the manufacturer. Staff carry out visual safety checks prior to use of any machinery/vehicle and follow the adopted Health & Safety Policies.

Use of pesticides/ chemicals. COSHH assessments have been produced for all chemicals used. Every effort will be made to minimise use of pesticides although currently Roundup may be used if considered necessary.

Sustainability. The Parish Council accepts that it has an obligation to manage its open spaces including West End Copse in ways which minimise energy consumption and waste. Cuttings and prunings are chipped and used on informal paths or to suppress weeds wherever possible. Recycling of all materials will be encouraged.

When sourcing new benches, fencing, bins etc sustainable or recyclable materials will be used whenever this is feasible, such as recycled plastic, or FSC wood. As an example, the wooden boardwalk on Hatch Grange was replaced in 2013 with recycled plastic.

Biodiversity. Section 40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 states that, *“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”*. This statutory obligation is often referred to as the *“Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities”*; West End Parish Council accepts this responsibility and will maximise opportunities to protect and enhance the natural environment of West End Copse.

In 2010 the Parish Council adopted a Parish Plan which recognises the Biodiversity of West End and includes the following aims:

- To protect, restore and maintain the green and natural sites that exist in West End,
- To protect, conserve and enhance the fauna and flora that are present in and around West End,
- To encourage residents of West End to value the flora and fauna in their midst;
- To develop projects by which all residents can become involved in the conservation of the biodiversity of West End
- To improve access to green sites for disabled residents and visitors

The Parish Council values the input from the Parish Plan Steering Group and takes account of their aims when discussing and considering all projects for West End Copse and other open spaces in the Parish.

3.3. Community Engagement

The Friends of West End Copse (FoWEC). The group was reformed in 2014 after Councillors sought volunteers to help maintain the site. It is an independent formally constituted group with around 15 members and has raised funds and secured grants to buy a small stock of tools (wheelbarrow and litter pickers) and materials for use at the site. Practical work tasks are held quarterly on Saturday mornings for up to three hours and are attended by about 10 members on average, and perform a social as well as practical purpose. Through these tasks the group has carried out major litter clearances, cleared and surfaced sections of path, installed a directional sign, planted bulbs, cleared out the stream culvert, severed ivy on trees and sprayed Japanese knotweed. In addition a number of members carry out informal litter picks when they visit the site or visit specifically to do so, and the group has successfully lobbied for the installation of extra dog waste bins.

3.4. Vision and aims for the site

The Parish Council's vision is that West End Copse should be an asset valued by the local community and of value to biodiversity. Its aims are:

- To protect and enhance the amenity value of West End Copse, enhancing public access and providing opportunities for informal recreation.
- To enhance the wildlife value of the woodland by diversifying and improving the quality of habitats on the site.
- To involve local residents and site users in the development and implementation of management proposals.

3.5. Current Site Management

General. Parish Council groundstaff visit twice weekly on Mondays and Fridays, and occasionally on other days, spending on average 4 man hours/ week. The Head Groundsman undertakes a more in depth inspection monthly and an annual inspection with the Clerk to the Council. Other work carried out by staff is mainly reactive in response to vandalism or tree safety issues. In addition some time is spent supporting FoWEC and enabling work to be carried out by community payback teams which has included coppicing, stream clearance and painting fences. Site boundaries are checked annually for encroachment or the creation of new private access points by neighbouring residents which is strongly discouraged.

Litter. Litter picking is carried out by staff on routine visits and also by members of FoWEC, and fly-tipping is removed as soon as it is discovered. Some tipping takes place on the strip of privately owned woodland adjacent to Ullswater Avenue which is not under the Parish Council's control. There are four dog waste bins at main site entrances.

Tree safety. Trees on the site are maintained in accordance with the Parish Council's adopted Policy for Trees on Public Land (see appendix C) which outlines the council's general strategy and maintenance programme for trees on all Parish Council owned land. West End Copse is identified as a high risk area under this policy, and on this basis trees which overhang residential neighbours' properties or well-frequented paths are inspected annually, and where there is a demonstrable hazard to people or property then the appropriate works will be carried out as a matter of urgency to render the tree safe by a qualified tree surgeon.

Public access. Clearance of vegetation from paths and improvements to surfacing have been carried out by FoWEC; gates and fences are repaired or maintained by groundstaff and some work by community payback teams.

Biodiversity. A community payback team carried out some small-scale coppicing in Compartment 1 during winter 2015/16, and hazel stools along Ivy Lane were coppiced by groundstaff during 2016. Stream clearance has also been carried out by community payback teams.

Information and marketing. There is no information or interpretation on site other than the entrance signs. West End Copse is mentioned on the home page of the Parish Council website and the section on community includes a page for FoWEC containing contact details for the group and very brief information about practical tasks.

4. Evaluation and objectives

4.1. Vision and aims

The current vision and high-level aims for the site provide an appropriate balance between public access and biodiversity, and encouraging community involvement in site management is clearly desirable in generating support and appreciation for the site among local residents and providing support and additional resources for site management. Objectives and actions to help achieve these aims have been developed based on evaluation of the condition of the site and consultation with stakeholders including Parish Council staff, the Friends of West End Copse and Noah's ark Preschool.

4.2. Public access and amenity

The main path network provides good access through all parts of the site, and the new fingerpost by the boardwalk provides useful directions to surrounding roads from that point, but there is no indication at site entrances where paths lead to, which may discourage people from entering; additional fingerposts would address this and may increase use of the site.

The existing informal paths enable access to other areas for people who wish to explore, without causing excessive disturbance or damage to vegetation, though these should not be allowed to expand significantly as this could result in erosion of the ground flora. An informal path through compartment 6 has been largely blocked by timber arising from tree safety works but this is not a key part of the path network. Lack of access may improve the security of adjacent properties and access to check site boundaries is still possible.

Most of the main paths have a bound gravel surface but in many places this has become covered by leaf mould making them muddy and slippery in winter or after wet weather. FoWEC have done good work in laying pea shingle in softer areas, though a loose surface can be awkward for people with reduced mobility, and Noah's Ark Preschool commented that young children also found some of the loose surfaced areas awkward to use. A self-binding material such as "Romsey Red" path gravel would create a firm durable surface. The site contains a number of steep slopes and it would not be reasonable to make access DDA compliant, but when maintenance or improvements are being carried out reasonable measures to improve access for people with mobility problems should be included. Kissing gates at the site entrances have helped to prevent abuse of the site by BMX riders or motorcycles, but there is one path entrance off Duddon Close which does not currently have a gate.

Many of the paths are open and pleasant to use, but some sections in compartment 2 are tightly enclosed by dense holly which limits visibility and may make visitors feel less safe, and reduces sunlight & breeze which would help to dry out wetter areas. Removal of a small area of holly away from the main paths could also create an alternative "base camp" location for Noah's Ark Preschool.

The table and chair feature is used as a meeting point by young people and can be a focus for some antisocial behaviour (ASB), typically on Friday and Saturday evenings during spring and summer, which has led to complaints from residents including one member of FoWEC in particular. FoWEC members reported that before it was installed the problem did not exist and there was no public consultation; that drug paraphernalia had been found at the site including needles, and there was sometimes an inconsistent response from the police when reporting ASB. The group was strongly of the view that if the site and problems could not be properly monitored and responded to then the feature should be removed or at least not repaired or

replaced when this becomes necessary. Local police / PCSOs advised that they will respond when available, and have also visited the site proactively. The young people who have been spoken to when they have been present have not been from the immediate local area, and the level of activity and nuisance does not suggest that this is a high-level hotspot for ASB or drug taking.

Anti-social behaviour is having an effect on at least one and possibly a number of residents in Monnow Gardens, and may also affect the perception of the safety of the site and act as a deterrent or to other visitors. Action to reduce or resolve the problem, e.g. considering whether to retain the table and chairs, should be evidence-based. The police have previously canvassed residents of Monnow Gardens to assess the impact of the problem, and offered suggestions to the Parish Council, and a similar approach should be taken in future.

Work by groundstaff and FoWEC mean the site is relatively litter-free, and as there is no source of litter nearby e.g. a convenience store, it is not necessary or appropriate to install litter bins on the site. The problem of fly-tipping on the private land adjacent to Ullswater Avenue might be deterred and reduced by signage and prompt removal when it occurs, but it is not the parish council's responsibility to do this. Tipping of garden waste elsewhere is not a major problem, but signage and contact with those responsible if they can be identified in addition to wider leafletting may help to reduce this further. There have been reports of rats from neighbours in the past but not recently.

Objectives

AA1. Improve the condition of main path network.

AA2. Prevent excessive disturbance and erosion of vegetation caused by development of informal paths.

AA3. Reduce antisocial behaviour occurring on the site and improve perceptions of personal safety and security for site users and neighbours.

AA4. Minimise litter and fly-tipping.

4.3. Biodiversity/ Nature Conservation

Habitats - woodland. Most of the site, and all of the ancient woodland, is heavily shaded by the almost 100% tree canopy. The lack of sunlight at ground level makes the site generally unattractive to butterflies and other insects, and will increasingly limit the growth and regeneration of the ground flora, making it more vulnerable to erosion by any increase in the network of informal paths. The area adjacent to the stream in compartment 1 and smaller areas elsewhere still have a reasonable range of ancient woodland plants, but these will decline over time if they remain in deep shade. Selective felling or reduction of surrounding trees and periodic coppicing of the shrub layer and smaller trees in this area and along the bank of the stream will help to retain a good population of these species.

Selective tree felling elsewhere on the site focusing on removing suppressed or poor quality specimens to increase light along paths and to create small glades around areas of richer ground flora would also benefit insects as well as making the site more pleasant and interesting for visitors. Removal of holly along paths could also focus on areas with a richer ground flora. Areas of dense recent tree planting such as adjacent to the entrance from Ullswater Avenue should be thinned to promote development of good specimens and reduce the need for more significant

work in future. It may be necessary to use herbicides to treat tree stumps where coppice regrowth is not required. Sycamore saplings spreading from the south-east part of the site should be removed if this species is not to become more dominant throughout the site, which would increase the level of shading.

Logs and brash arising from coppicing and tree felling should wherever possible be stacked and used to create dead hedges of habitat piles rather than chipped on site, as a woodchipper generates CO₂ and other pollutants. If arisings must be chipped, the locations for this should be carefully chosen to avoid smothering areas with a rich ground flora.

There is significant ivy growth on trees in parts of Compartments 1 and 4, which is not harming the trees and is a good food source for invertebrates, but does increase the level of shade. Ivy should generally be retained and selective felling be used to increase light levels, but in some areas if felling is not appropriate then selective ivy removal should be considered.

Stream and former pond. Most of the length of the stream has little or no in-channel or bankside vegetation, and because of stream clearance it holds no woody debris. As a result it acts mainly as a drain and probably supports little aquatic life. Coppicing trees along the bank would increase light levels and encourage plant growth, and leaving or introducing woody debris at appropriate points would create sections of slower flow where marginal plants could become established and invertebrates could survive. This would also improve the appearance of the stream, making it appear more natural and attractive to visitors and more interesting for the pre-school and others for stream dipping. Stream clearance should be restricted to the removal of litter, and removal of debris dams only if they are causing flooding to paths.

The former pond was not an ancient feature and suffered from regular vandalism and interference which caused significant problems of silting up. Recreating the pond in this location would be very costly, cause very significant disruption and probably some damage to the surrounding area and access routes, and create a significant maintenance liability for the future. FoWEC members were not in support of the idea. The benefit in terms of habitat creation would not outweigh these impacts, particularly if the funds required were invested in improving other habitats on the site.

Species – mammals. Although there was no active badger sett on site when this plan was written, the sett in Compartment 4 had been active within the previous 12 months, and badgers are a mobile species and may reuse an abandoned sett. This sett is in an area of bramble which provides reasonable protection for the sett entrances, but it is adjacent to a well-used path and fencing beside the path would provide some protection from disturbance by dogs if the sett were reopened, as well as reducing the risk of injury to visitors from slipping/ tripping in overgrown sett entrances. However installing fencing could damage the sett itself, and might draw attention to its presence, and this is not favoured by the Parish Council.

Despite the general lack of potential roost sites, FoWEC members reported seeing bats flying on the site in the evening, which may well be roosting in adjacent houses. Installation of bat boxes on trees would provide additional or alternative roosting sites if roosts in adjacent houses were lost. Formal or informal bat surveys would identify species using the site and guide the type of bat boxes to be used.

Birds. The site supports a good range of common woodland species, and measures to increase sunlight at ground level will be of benefit. The lack of old/ dead trees limits the number of nest

sites for hole nesting sites such as tits, so installation of bird nesting boxes would be of some benefit, but these would have to be built to resist attack by squirrels and woodpeckers.

Invasive species. The site contains small amounts of invasive non-native plant species: a small stand of Japanese knotweed and scattered small cherry laurel bushes, which should be removed physically and/ or using herbicides as appropriate.

Objectives.

B1. Increase light levels to benefit insects and woodland plants.

B2. Increase the value of the stream for wildlife.

B3. Increase the number of breeding or roosting sites for specific species.

B4. Reduce the extent of invasive plant species.

4.4. Community Engagement

FoWEC. Liaison between the group and the Parish Council via FoWEC's chair and the Clerk and Head Groundsman works well, and relationships are good, though the group felt there had been odd occasions when they hadn't told in advance when things were going to happen. Group members value the naturalness of the Copse, its wildlife and the fact that it is not overly maintained or manicured and are broadly supportive of tree felling where it would benefit wildlife, e.g. by increasing light levels. Members would like to take part in new activities which would benefit wildlife e.g. making and installing bat and bird boxes and thinning young trees, and would welcome training in the relevant skills if this were needed. The members felt there was scope for more promotion of FOWEC to increase involvement from other residents, and to increase the range of activities the group was involved in, e.g. specialist walks and surveys.

Noah's Ark Preschool. The staff value and make use of the naturalness and variety of the site, and would welcome measures which would enhance this and support their use of the site, e.g. removal of holly to create an alternative "base camp", supplying logs from tree works to sit on and make log piles and branches for dead-hedges to create natural boundaries.

Wider public engagement. West End Copse has a low profile on the Parish Council's website, which could be raised e.g. by increasing the content about FoWEC, providing information on the "Walking in West End" page, or creating a dedicated page under "Council Facilities". The Copse is also listed on the Woodland Trust website and on Wikimapia.org without any further information, and features in some walking and running routes published privately online, and again there is scope to link to such sites.

The potential value of more extensive on-site signage should be balanced against the potential cost of installation and maintenance. Simple waymark posts supported by information available online could be a cost-effective alternative.

Tree felling can generate concern and opposition from the local community, so care should be taken to provide advance notice and good information about the reasons for felling to avoid adverse publicity. Although possibly not easy to source and more costly, using traditional methods of woodland management e.g. timber extraction using heavy horses, can raise profile and provide news.

Objectives.

CE1. Increase membership of FoWEC and number of people attending practical tasks.

CE2. Support use of West End Copse by Noah's Ark Preschool.

CE3. Increase public information and awareness of West End Copse among the local community.

5. Tasks and action plan

Public access and amenity Aim: To protect and enhance the amenity value of West End Copse, enhancing public access and providing opportunities for informal recreation.					
<u>Objective</u>	<u>Task</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Year(s)</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Cost estimate</u>
AA1. Improve the condition of main path network.	• Remove build-up of soft leaf-litter from muddy sections of surfaced paths and improve drainage.	FoWEC	1,2	Autumn/ winter	Vol time
	• Raise surface of low spots with self-binding gravel.	FoWEC	1,2	Spring/ summer	£5-10/ linear metre
	• Larger-scale resurfacing of main paths	Senior groundsman/ contractor	2	Spring/ summer	£20 - £40/ linear metre
	• Replace wooden boardwalk with recycled plastic design.	WEPC Clerk/ Senior Groundsman/ contractor	1	Summer	
	• Clear holly and other shrubs where these closely enclose paths in Compartment 2 to create an open path corridor.	FoWEC	1,2,3	Autumn/ winter	Vol time
	• Install direction fingerposts at main site entrances.	FoWEC	1	spring/ summer	£500
	• Install kissing gate at path entrance off Duddon Close.	Senior Groundsman	2	any	£250 + staff time/ £500 contractor
AA2. Prevent excessive disturbance and erosion of vegetation caused by development of informal paths.	• Monitor extent and size of informal paths.	FoWEC/ Groundstaff	Ongoing	All year	Staff/ vol time
	• Block informal paths using brush from coppicing and path clearance if causing erosion of ground flora particularly in sensitive areas.	FoWEC	Ongoing	Autumn/ Winter	Staff/ vol time

AA3. Reduce antisocial behaviour occurring on the site and improve perceptions of personal safety and security for site users and neighbours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install information signage for young people at the Table and Chairs about the impact of noise etc on neighbours & site users, and potential loss of facility. 	Clerk/ Senior groundsman	1	Spring	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain or increase police and youth service attendance proactively and in response to reports of ASB. 	WEPC Clerk, Police.	1	Spring / summer	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and record ASB incident reports. 	WEPC Clerk, Police.	1	Spring/ summer	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If ASB continues following preventative measures, remove Table and Chairs. 	WEPC Clerk/ Senior groundsman	1	Autumn	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor ASB following removal. 	WEPC Clerk, Police	2,3	Spring/ summer	Staff time
AA4. Minimise litter and fly-tipping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current frequency of visits by groundstaff (2/week) and informal litter-picking by FoWEC. 	WEPC Groundstaff, FoWEC	Ongoing	All year	Staff/ vol time

Biodiversity/ Nature Conservation. Aim: To enhance the wildlife value of the woodland by diversifying and improving the quality of habitats on the site.					
B1. Increase light levels to benefit insects and woodland plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce shading of the area in Compartment 1 which retains the best area of ancient woodland plants: in phases fell or coppice smaller trees within or surrounding the area including on the stream bank, and consider reducing larger trees by removing significant limbs. 	WEPC Senior groundsman/ contractors	1,2,3	Autumn/ winter	Staff & vol time; £600/ yr contractor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce coppice regime in the above area, cutting half the area every 4 years. 	FoWEC/ groundstaff	1,5	Autumn/ winter	Staff/ vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elsewhere in compartments 1 and 2 selectively fell individual or small groups of poor quality trees each year. 	WEPC Senior Groundsman	1,2,3,4,5	Autumn/ winter	£600/ yr contractor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove holly where it is encroaching onto areas or richer ground flora in compartment 2. 	FoWEC/ WEPC groundstaff	3,4,5	Autumn/ winter	Staff/ vol time

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove sycamore seedlings/ saplings; dig/ pull roots or treat cut stems with herbicide. 	FoWEC	3,4,5	Autumn/ winter	£20 + vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use material arising from coppicing and tree felling to create logpiles, dead hedges etc. 	WEPC Senior Groundsman	Whenever carrying out tree works	Autumn/ winter	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In areas where tree felling to increase light levels is not appropriate, selectively kill small amounts of ivy by severing the stems. 	FoWEC in liaison with Senior Groundsman	3,4,5	Winter	Staff/ vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thin areas of dense native planting to favour best specimens 	FoWEC	4,5	Autumn/ winter	Vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish simple butterfly survey/ transect to monitor effects of woodland management. 	FoWEC	2,3,4,5	Spring/ summer	Vol time
B2. Increase the value of the stream for wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain natural debris dams except where causing flooding of paths. 	WEPC/ FoWEC	Ongoing when carrying out other tasks e.g. litter clearance	All year	Nil
B3. Increase the number of breeding or roosting sites for specific species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build and install nest boxes for common bird species. 	FoWEC	2,3	Winter	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When felling trees, retain trunks of suitable species (birch) as standing monoliths 4 – 5m tall to create additional standing deadwood. 	Senior Groundsman/ contractors	Ongoing	Autumn/ winter	As part of B1 and safety works
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply and install bat boxes suitable for species likely or known to be using the site. 	WEPC/ FoWEC	2,3	Any	£200 - £300 for 10 boxes
B4. Reduce the extent of invasive plant species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue herbicide treatment of Japanese knotweed. 	WEPC Groundstaff	Annual	Spring, Summer	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove cherry laurel wherever found, digging up roots wherever possible or treating cut stems with herbicide. 	FoWEC	2,3,4	Any, but autumn if treating with herbicide	£20 + Vol time

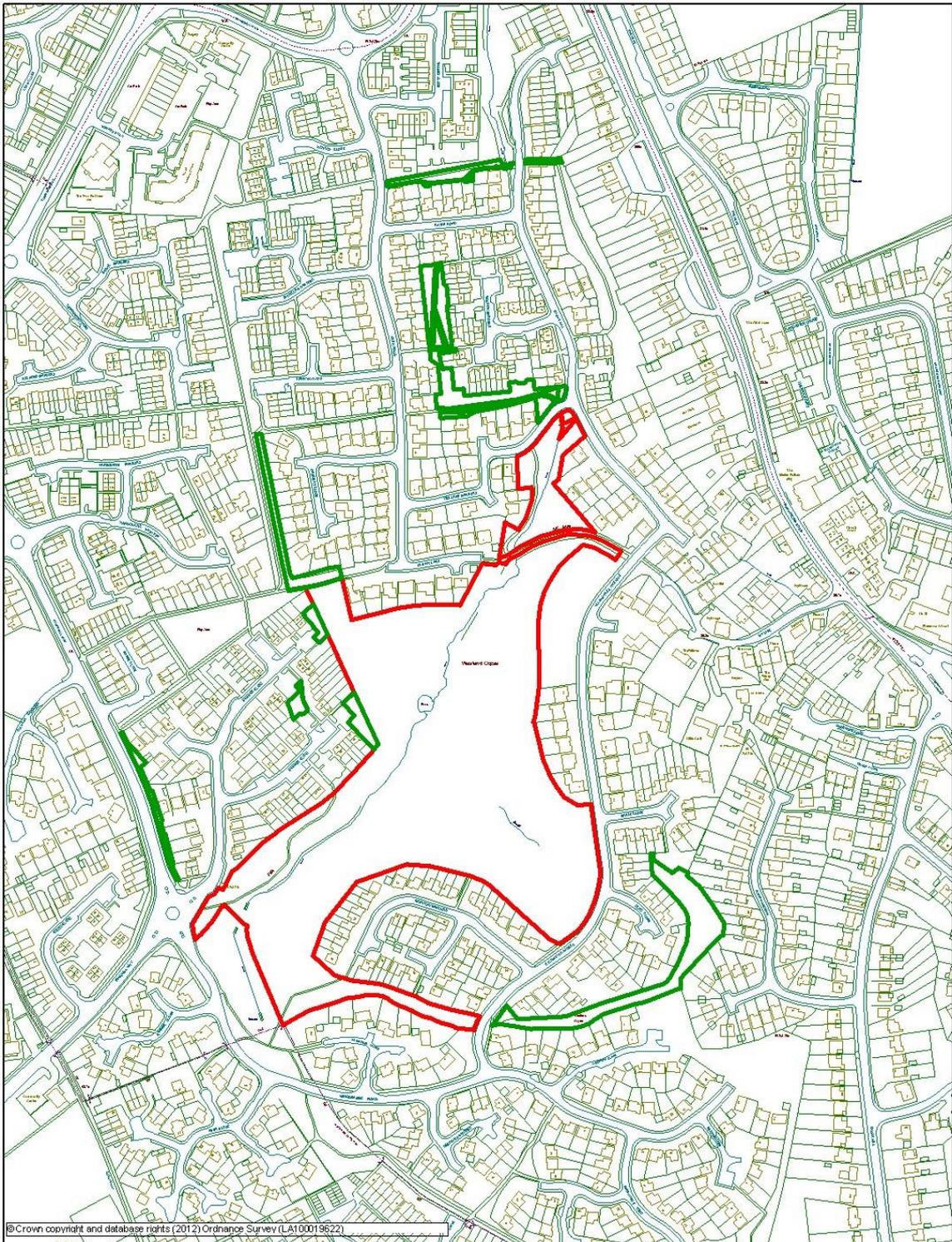
Community Engagement Aim: To involve local residents and site users in the development and implementation of management proposals.					
CE1. Increase membership of FoWEC and number of people attending practical tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more information about FoWEC on the WEPC website. 	WEPC Clerk	1	Any	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote FoWEC tasks around site – posters at main entrances, local notice boards etc. 	FoWEC/ WEPC Clerk	Ongoing	In advance of tasks	Staff/ vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to hold quarterly action mornings. 	FoWEC	Ongoing	All	Vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broaden range of tasks carried out by FoWEC, e.g. bird box construction, coppicing/ thinning. 	FoWEC	Ongoing		Vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise training to develop skills and enable FoWEC to carry out wider range of tasks. 	FoWEC/ WEPC Clerk	1,2	Summer, autumn	Staff/ vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise other events, e.g. bat walk/ informal bat survey to increase knowledge about wildlife on the site. 	FoWEC/WEPC Clerk	1	Summer	Staff/ vol time
CE2. Support use of West End Copse by Noah's Ark Preschool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide materials for use by Noah's Ark from woodland management work, e.g. round logs for seating, brash for creating informal boundaries, create logpiles for minibeast hunting. 	WEPC GRoundstaff/ FoWEC/ Noah's Ark	1,2	Autumn/ winter	Staff/ NA time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear holly in an appropriate location to create alternative "base camp". 	FoWEC/ Noah's Ark	2	Autumn/ winter	Staff/ NA/ vol time
CE3. Increase public information and awareness of West End Copse among the local community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide dedicated page about West End Copse on WEPC website, or add information about the site on the "Walking in West End" page. 	WEPC Clerk	2,3	Any	Staff time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular information updates for WEPC website. 	FoWEC	Ongoing	All	Vol time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise and promote annual event, e.g. themed guided walk. 	WEPC Clerk/ FoWEC	Yr 2 onwards	Spring/ summer	Staff/ vol time

6. Monitoring and review

Progress made against the adopted action plan should be reviewed annually, and the action plan for future years updated to take account of tasks which have not been completed; information gained as a result of monitoring the effects of tasks which have been undertaken, e.g. effects of coppicing or creation of debris dams in the stream, occupation of nest boxes; and new information and unexpected events.

A phase II ecological survey of ancient woodland should be carried out every 10 years at least, to enable some monitoring of the effects of overall management. The next survey would be due in 2021 and should be used to inform a full review of the management plan in 2021/22. However more specific interim surveys may be needed to assess what effect particular management tasks are having, and fixed-point photography can be a useful way to do this as it is relatively quick and does not necessarily require detailed knowledge of habitats or species.

Appendix A: Site Plan of West End Copse showing WEPC's title in red



EASTLEIGH
BOROUGH COUNCIL
ASSET
MANAGEMENT

Title:
AST1126 WEST END COPSE (SINC)

Scale:
1:2500
Map Ref:
SU4514NE
Date:
27/06/2012



Appendix C: WEST END PARISH COUNCIL - POLICY FOR TREES ON PUBLIC LAND

1. The Council is committed to planting, protecting, improving and developing the Parish Council's tree stock in public places. This will be achieved in two main ways:
 - a. through the adoption of a continuous programme of tree survey and maintenance; and
 - b. through seeking a continuous improvement in the quality and quantity of trees on public land. A range of species will be selected for new and replacement planting taking into account their suitability to each site. Preference to be given to native species.
2. The Council's priority in the management of the Parish Council's trees will be that of public safety. Where a tree constitutes a demonstrable hazard to people or property, then the appropriate works will be carried out as a matter of urgency to render the tree safe by a qualified tree surgeon.
3. The Council is committed to maintaining the health and longevity of trees through appropriate management. Appropriate works will be undertaken on unhealthy trees where they are threatened by disease or instability.
4. Trees on public land will be encouraged to develop as well balanced individuals of a natural form characteristic of their particular species. Works on such trees will be carried out to the highest standards of Arboricultural practice and in accordance with all relevant health and safety legislation. All tree works will be carried out to at least BS 3998, 1989 standards, either by a suitable Arboricultural contractor or in house, if appropriate
5. The Council will not, unless legally obliged to do so, undertake works to otherwise healthy and well-formed trees for reasons of:
 - branches overhanging adjacent property
 - size
 - shedding of leaf, seed, twig or flower litter
 - shading of daylight
 - interference with transmitted signals
 - honeydew exudation
 - reduced security by virtue of concealment or
 - alleged root damage to property

It should be noted that landowners have the right to prune back any part of a tree which overhangs their own property as far as their boundary. The Council can supply a list of suitable contractors for this type of work. It is the landowner's responsibility to ensure that a tree is not covered by a tree preservation order before carrying out or authorising such works.

6. The Council will ensure that trees on public land are retained wherever possible and are given appropriate protection from the effects of development and construction activities including the installation of underground utilities.
7. The Council will ensure that all woodlands on public land are managed appropriately in accordance with accepted forestry practices and traditional methods of woodland management and with respect for their value as important landscape features, wildlife habitats and recreational amenities.
8. The Council will notify local residents in advance where major tree works are required. A clear explanation will be given as to why such works are necessary.
9. The Council will market all usable healthy timber which arises from tree works where it is cost effective to do so.

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL - TREE POLICY

West End Parish is committed to protecting its arboricultural heritage through positive tree management on land owned or managed by the Parish Council.

The Council has an adopted 'Policy for trees on public land' and accepts its duty of care to manage these trees. The Parish Council's Groundstaff visually inspect trees every week.

To assist with routine management and to regularise inspections, the Council will categorise trees as follows :

LOW RISK	No regular routine inspection of trees
MEDIUM RISK	Those trees such as those which are located close to informal paths, will be inspected every three years
HIGH RISK	Those trees such as those which overhang residential neighbours' properties, a play area or well-frequented paths, will be inspected annually

LOW RISK AREAS

All open space areas in West End are Medium or High Risk

MEDIUM RISK AREAS

Barnsland, Upmill, Carpathia, Townhill Play area, Allotment site, Moorgreen, Chartwell Green

HIGH RISK AREAS

Hatch Grange, Cemetery, Burial Ground, Megan Green, Quob Green, Cutbush Lane football facility, Chartwell Copse, West End Copse

Amended August 2012