

Committee(s): Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee	Date(s): 21 st November 2012
Subject: Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report provides an update on the production of the new Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood. The Plan has now progressed through four revisions and the latest draft is enclosed with this report for the Committee's scrutiny. Two public consultation events have been held to capture public opinion on the core components of the new plan, and the results show overwhelming support. There now remains the final task of any revisions that the Committee consider necessary for final sanction and adoption. This will enable the Management team to formally adopt the plan and make it available as a public document.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>That Members of the Consultative Committee take note of the content of this report and provide any further views on the final draft of the Conservation Management Plan.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. The draft Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood is now approaching completion after four revisions and two public consultation events held between September and October. With the key objectives and policies formulated from the Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan Advisory Group Workshop event held in September 2011, the iterative process of developing the plan has progressed over the succeeding twelve months. The focus has been on carrying out the recommendations which were made at the Highgate Wood Consultative Committee meeting in May this year. The current draft now contains an executive summary, a more focused set of policies and aspirational objectives with broad timescales, and a revised and improved overall master plan. At both the public consultation events there was overall support for all the key policies and also the vision for the site.

Principle changes to the fourth draft.

2. The inclusion of an executive summary section with the vision and headline objectives included provides a useful 'quick glance' view of the Plan.

Documents of this size invariably are not read in their entirety, and this section is an essential component.

3. During the September workshop last year the four topic area groups produced a comprehensive list of objectives and proposed policies for future management direction. These proposed policies were derived from a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) document which was compiled earlier in 2011 and provided to each workshop group to focus the process. The resulting policies were an exhaustive list in the Heritage and Natural Environment groups and for the sake of clarity the number of policies supporting each headline topic area policy was reduced to a maximum of eight sub policies. These now appear in the latest draft of the plan, but the complete list arising from the workshop activity appears in the appendix for reference.
4. The Master plan is a critical element of the Management Plan, encapsulating all the headline policies on a single visual plan, along with the more aspirational proposals. There are some proposals which will be challenging for management, but a strategic document should contain some element of long term planning and the disabled car parking, and Pavilion Café proposals are in this category and will necessitate negotiations with local planning departments and other City of London departments. The revised Master plan is a major improvement from the version that appeared in the first draft and does provide a clearer interpretation of proposed changes and improvements to the site over the forthcoming years. It should be noted that there is no defined scale on this plan and the illustrated existing and proposed conservation areas appear much larger than their actual size.
5. The inclusion of timescales for each of the topic area policies provides an improved perspective of implementation times. These have been divided into generic categories of short, medium and long term with the additional category of on-going for those that are already in progress. It is probably better to use this particular method at present while there is still such uncertainty about the economic situation as a number of the policies do require an element of additional funding.
6. The Highgate Wood Manager has held a number of meetings with the team from Land Use Consultants (LUC) over the period since they were commissioned to take on the task of drafting the Conservation Management Plan, and they have acted with great professionalism and patience throughout, carrying out numerous changes and revisions. Fortunately they clearly understand the success of the project is ultimately dependent on this iterative process, and the LUC team understand that they may be requested to make further revisions before the Conservation Management Plan is fully adopted.

Public consultation

7. Two separate public consultation sessions were held, the first in September at the Highgate Wood Heritage Day on 2nd September, and the second on 20th October. Both events were well attended and the results of the survey are shown in Appendix 7 of the draft Conservation Management Plan which accompanies this report.
8. The Heritage Day participants were largely from the surrounding area but were not all regular users. Because of this it was decided to hold an additional consultation on Saturday 20th October using the same displays to capture the opinion of the more regular users, such as the dog walking community and joggers.
9. The Highgate Wood Manager is indebted to the Conservation Officer from Burnham Beeches for allowing access to the extensive material that was used for Burnham's own Management Plan consultation in 2010. This material provided the structure and format for the panels that were produced and used for the two consultation days for Highgate Wood and proved very effective.
10. On both occasions there was an overwhelming consensus of support for all the policies, and a broad agreement with the Master plan. There were clearly some concerns about the proposed changes to the café, and the relocation of the disabled parking area and participants were invited to record these concerns on paper sticky notes.

Heritage Chapter

11. Highgate Wood's extensive and long history was always going to present a challenge to producing a concise and accurate document to accompany the Conservation Management Plan. A revised version was produced by the LUC team earlier this year but with the passing of time and further research there is a requirement to update the document in the interests of accuracy. During the public consultation at the Heritage Day event a member of the Hornsey Local History Society took part in the survey and spent some time making a number of very welcome changes to a historical time line document that was part of the consultative material display. This just demonstrated the importance of ensuring that the material in the Heritage chapter is accurate.
12. The other critical element to include in this document is a map showing the extent of fragmentation that Highgate Wood experienced following the period after the construction of the Archway Road in 1813. The wood prior to this time extended to over 100 acres and the period following the separation of the southern part of the site after the Archway Road

construction saw a progression of fragmentation and loss which was mirrored in many woodland nearby.

13. The completion of the Heritage Chapter will be a priority for the New Year. As mentioned in a previous report the purpose of including this document in the Conservation Management Plan is to validate and support the central policy of conserving the Ancient Woodland component of the site, and creating a strategy which reflects the previous uses of the wood as a local resource, and a valuable haven for wildlife.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The proposal contributes to producing a Clean, Pleasant and Attractive City (Objective CPAC4) and to Conserve and Protect Biodiversity (Goal 15) in the Community Strategy. It will help fulfil the Department's Strategic Goals and Objectives 2 (To adopt sustainable and sensitive working practices, promote biodiversity and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations) and 5 (To ensure that the profile of the Open Spaces is further recognised through working in partnership with others to promote our sites and through influencing policies at a local, regional and national level).
15. Part of the purpose of the Conservation Management Plan will be to identify a number of projects which will necessitate capital funding from either the City of London or other bodies.

Conclusion

16. The process of producing a new Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood has taken some time, but the end result will hopefully justify the considerable time and effort invested in the task. As stated already the project was always intended to be an iterative process but with a fixed completion date and a number of key milestones along the route. The final task is to obtain Committee approval and formal adoption. There will be a regular review process to keep the Plan current and viable as a management document and a comprehensive reassessment after five years.

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