

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee.	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2013
<b>Subject:</b> Final Draft of Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	<b>For Decision</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></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 five revisions and the latest final draft is enclosed with this report, for the Committee's scrutiny and approval. Two public consultation events have been held to capture opinion on the core components of the new plan and the results show overwhelming support. The comments of the Highgate Joint Consultative Committee have also been received and the document amended to reflect their comments. There now remains the final consideration of any revisions that the Management Committee consider necessary for final approval and adoption. The Plan will then be published.</p> <p><b>Recommendation(s)</b></p> <p>That the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considers and approves the attached final draft of the Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan 2013 – 2023;</li> <li>• authorises publication as the adopted Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood.</li> </ul>	

## Main Report

### Background

1. The draft Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood is now at a final stage after five 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 held in September 2011, the iterative process of developing the plan has progressed over the succeeding fifteen months. The focus has been on carrying out the recommendations which were made at the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee meetings in May and November 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.

## **Public Consultation**

2. 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 the appendix of the Conservation Management Plan which accompanies this report.
3. 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 more regular users, such as the dog walking community and joggers.
4. 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.
5. 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.

## **Principle changes to the final draft**

6. The inclusion of an Executive Summary with the Vision and Principle 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.
7. The master plan is a critical element of the Conservation 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 from a management perspective, but a strategic document should contain some element of long term planning.
8. 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 metric scale on this plan and the illustrated existing and proposed conservation areas appear much larger than their actual size.

9. The proposals for the disabled car parking and potential improvements to the Pavilion Café are in this category and will only be deliverable if innovative partnership/commercial funding opportunities arise. It is recognised that capital funding from within the City Corporation is unlikely to be available for the foreseeable future. No funding details have been included in these proposals, but we are seeking Members acknowledgement that these are the priority aspirations for the site and would be subject to more detailed feasibility and business case reports. They would also necessitate negotiations with local planning departments and other City of London departments if they were to be pursued.
10. The inclusion of timescales for the each of the topic area policies provides an improved perspective on the likely implementation time-frame. 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. Whilst this is a ten year plan, it is proposed that there is a 5 year interim review.
11. An objective has been added on tree disease issues. This is becoming a serious concern for all woodland areas and tree management in general. Work is already underway to monitor the progress of oak decline within the site. However there are several other diseases which require careful consideration and planning, the most serious being Oak Processionary Moth which is currently established in West London but moving progressively to other parts of the capital
12. An additional objective has been included within the Natural Environment Section on page 50 to designate Highgate Wood as a Local Nature Reserve. The process of nominating the site is carried out by the London Borough of Haringey, with the approval of Natural England. The Highgate Wood Manager has held exploratory meetings with Haringey's Conservation Officer and Natural England and the site has been confirmed as being eligible for designation. Final approval can be arranged if the Management Committee give their consent for the proposal and the City of London legal team have confirmed that there are no legal conflicts between the designation and the foundation legislation within the Kilburn and Highgate Wood Act of 1886.
13. The Local Nature Reserve status will be a significant promotional opportunity for Highgate Wood, reinforcing the link with neighbouring Queen's Wood, which was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1990, and other Ancient Woodland sites in the area. The designation will also increase potential opportunities for additional external funding for heritage and educational projects.

### **Heritage Assessment as a supplementary document**

10. Highgate Wood's extensive and long history has presented a challenge to produce a concise and accurate document, to accompany the Conservation Management Plan. A revised version was prepared by the LUC team earlier in

2012 but with the passing of time and further research, more information has come to light. The final version of the Heritage Assessment has undergone extensive change and it is hoped that the revised document and the historical images and maps included, provide a relatively accurate rendering of Highgate Wood's two thousand years of history. The production of this document would not have been possible without the support of local historian Michael Hammerson who provided free access to his extensive collection of historical images and other reference material.

11. The purpose of including this document with the Conservation Management Plan is to validate and support the central policy of conserving the Ancient Woodland component of the site. The previous history of the wood and its management as a sustainable source of fuel wood and timber, provides the framework for a management strategy, which now focuses on ensuring the woodland's preservation and conservation and providing a valuable haven for wildlife and people alike.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

12. 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).

### **Conclusion**

14. The process of producing a new Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood has taken some time and involved a large number of people, but the end result will hopefully justify the effort invested in the task. As stated, 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 remains to obtain Management Committee approval and formal adoption. There will be a regular review process to keep the Plan current and viable and a comprehensive reassessment after five years.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Final Draft Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan
- Appendix 2 – Heritage Assessment

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