



Highgate Wood

Conservation Management Plan

A Vision for Highgate Wood

2013-2023



Summary Document



Introduction

Highgate Wood comprises 28 hectares of ancient woodland set within the dense urban surroundings of the London Borough of Haringey in north London. The Wood is owned and managed by the City of London and has a long history of occupation and use dating back to Roman times. Its long history combined with the rich and diverse woodland habitat and facilities such as the playground, sport pitch and café ensures that the Wood is a much loved resource for the surrounding community and beyond.

Why produce a Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood?

Conservation Management Plans help landowners and managers to identify and understand what is important about a site and provides a long-term strategy to ensure these features are protected, repaired or enhanced as appropriate.

The Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood considers the themes of heritage, 'natural' environment, community and recreation, and built environment to record the character and features of this popular site. These themes are also used to assess the relative values and significances of the site and to identify key issues, vulnerabilities and opportunities. The results of this investigation and analysis work are then taken forward to inform the development of a vision and management policies which will be used to guide the future conservation and enhancement of Highgate Wood.

How the Conservation Management Plan for Highgate Wood has been produced?

The Conservation Management Plan has been developed through consultation with the Highgate Wood Advisory Group (which includes representatives of local community groups/ organisations and members of the Highgate Wood management team) and wider public consultation at Highgate Wood.

Visitors to Highgate Wood were given the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the conservation and management of the Woods during two public consultation events. The responses from these events were very positive with the results revealing that the majority of respondents were supportive the proposals for Highgate Wood.



Aerial photograph of Highgate Wood

The character of Highgate Wood

Highgate Wood enjoys a long history extending back to the pre-Norman period and was also the centre of a first Century AD small scale pottery industry. The woodland is made up of predominantly hornbeam with oak standards but also contains an assortment of other species notably a number of Wild Service trees (*Sorbus torminalis*) which is an indicator of ancient woodland.

Highgate Wood was an important woodland resource for many centuries and was once an important part of the Bishop of London's hunting park which is described in greater detail in the Heritage Assessment. The first historical reference to the wood appears in the Domesday Book of 1087, where it is described as part of the Hornsey Woods.

Highgate Wood together with Queen's Wood has been identified as a potential Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) by the London Geodiversity Partnership, and is mentioned in 'London's Foundations: Protecting the Geodiversity of the Capital', London 2012, Mayor of London.

The majority of the wood is underlain by Claygate Beds, which are sandy clay soils and at Highgate Wood, often results in erosion and run-off during periods of flooding. The sandy clay is interspersed with pockets of flint gravels, and the western edge of the wood has been disturbed by gravel digging in the past.

The rich diversity of wildlife in the wood has been well researched and documented over the years. To date, over 900 invertebrate species, 338 moth species, 353 fungi species, 70 bird species, and seven bat species have been recorded. Many of these species are reliant on very particular niches found only in ancient woodlands, with their well-developed and complex ecosystems.

In addition, Highgate Wood is an important leisure and amenity resource providing an opportunity for many people to visit a woodland site that has retained much of its historic fabric as well as gaining access to an open space that offers leisure and recreation in a built up area of London.

The site offers visitors a number of recreational facilities, including a playing field, trim trail, cricket nets, a large children's playground, a café, and an information centre with booklets, newsletters and trail guides. There is also a football and a cricket pitch which are maintained for regular weekend league clubs.

Legal Framework and Partnership

Concerned that access to the countryside was being threatened, the City of London Corporation (CoL) promoted two Acts of Parliament in the 1870s. The Epping Forest Act and the City of London (Open Spaces) Act were passed in 1878. These enabled the CoL to acquire and protect threatened open spaces. Highgate Wood was publicly declared "open for the use and recreation of the public forever" on October 30 1886, by the Lord Mayor of the time, Sir John Staples.

The Open Spaces Committee determines the overall departmental policy, considers strategic and corporate issues and is responsible for matters relating to the City Gardens. The Open Spaces Committee meets six times a year (February, April, June, July, October and December).

The management of each CoL Open Space is overseen by several City Committees, as required by various Acts of Parliament. Matters concerning Highgate Wood are discussed by the Highgate Wood Consultative Committee, and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee.

Issues and proposals for managing Highgate Wood

The next section of this Summary Document, outlines the findings of the analysis and research carried out in the preparation of the Conservation Management Plan and presents the overarching site wide policies organised under the following four themes:

- heritage
- natural environment
- community and recreation
- built environment

The overall vision and masterplan proposals are displayed at the end of this document.

Site Plan



Key

	Site Boundary		Existing footpath network		The Hollies (bird sanctuary)
	Grass		Mature wild service tree		Existing compartment areas
	Area where bluebells thrive		Wood bank/ woodbanks or site of historic importance		Existing conservation areas
	Site of ancient pottery kilns AD 50-150		Existing vehicular route		

Heritage

Highgate Wood has a long history of use and development. Its heritage values include the range of archaeological features including earthworks; ancient and veteran trees as a key features of the landscape; developments during the Victorian period and the use of the Wood during wartime.

The extensive historic records of Highgate Wood reach back to the Roman period. There are also records charting Highgate Wood through the early medieval period. Flints from the early Mesolithic period have also been uncovered on the site, suggesting early human settlement.

Whilst there is little evidence of occupation during the Roman period, archaeological records suggest that 10 kilns existed in Highgate Wood and pottery was made from AD 43 through to approximately AD 160. Part of the roman kiln discovered through the archaeological excavation is now in display in the education buildings in Highgate Wood.

Highgate Wood was managed over many centuries for the commercial production of fuel wood obtained by cyclical cutting of the hornbeam stock. It is likely the Oak standards were planted for a longer term investment and for eventual use for the shipbuilding and construction industry, but their bark may also have served as a lucrative secondary commercial crop for the tanning industry.

There are good sources of information from the period prior to the site's transfer over to the CoL's ownership in the late 19th century which indicates the rapid decline of the Wood's use as a fuel resource with the growing coal availability. The ancient coppice stools and mature oak standards provide engaging and attractive visible evidence of the former use and management of the woodland.

In February 1885, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners offered the Wood to the Corporation of London as a gift and this was accepted in 1886 under the Highgate and Kilburn Open Spaces Act 1886. On 30th October 1886 the Wood was opened to the public.

During the Second World War the site was used to station barrage balloons which helped to defend London from low-level aircraft. The balloons were anchored to concrete blocks which can be seen in the sport pitch during periods of dry weather.



Reconstruction of one of the kilns found at Highgate Wood



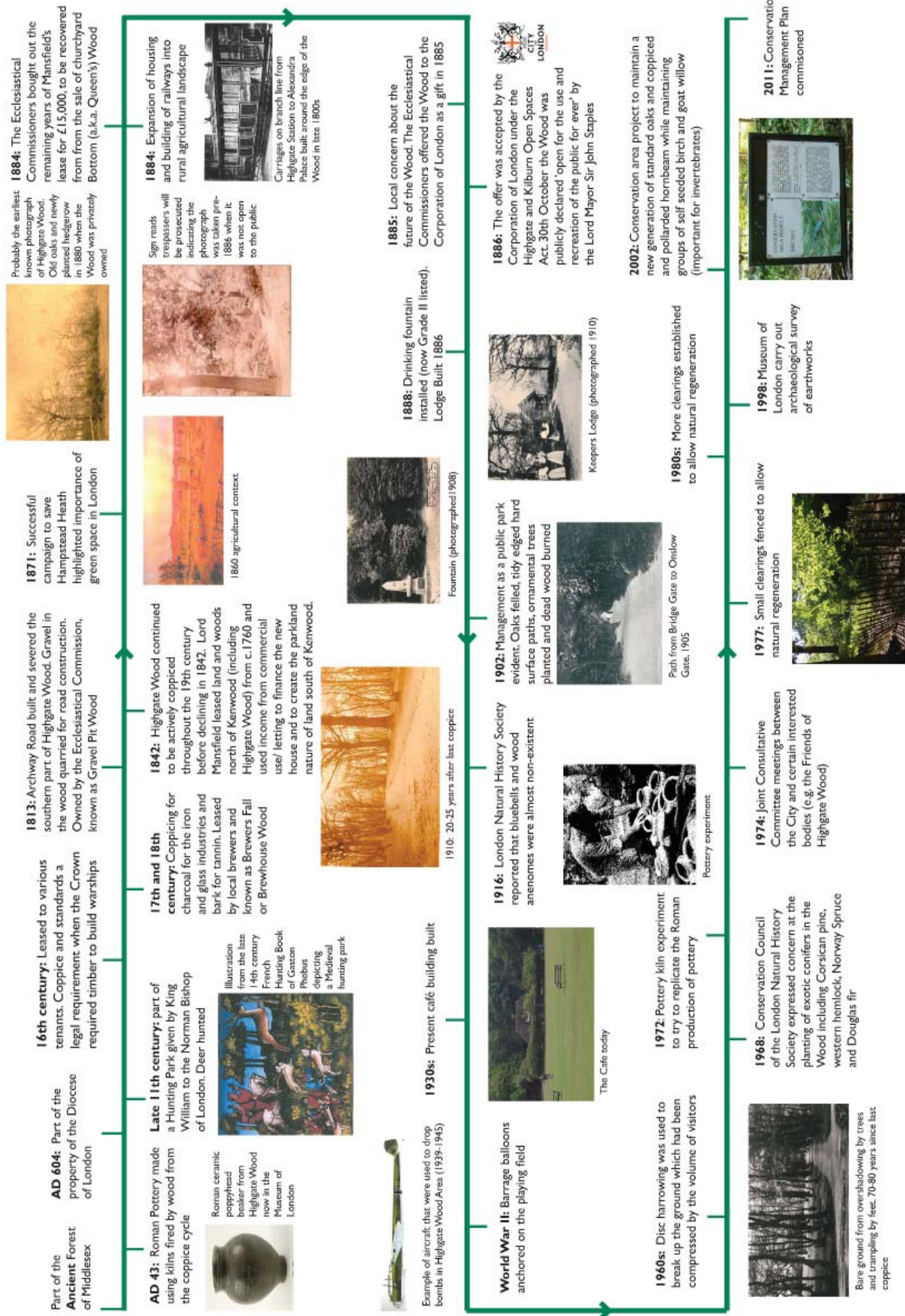
Highgate Wood Lodge constructed in 1886

Overarching policy 1:

The valuable heritage resource including the earthworks and ancient woodland fabric, the Roman Kiln site, selected developments during the Victorian period and evidence of the use of the Wood during wartime will be conserved, managed and interpreted.

Supporting actions:

- Conserve and maintain all earthworks.
- Provide relevant education and training to management staff on archaeological features.
- Seek to extend the education centre for historical exhibits.
- Explore further opportunities for a heritage themed programme of events, interpretation and education.
- Strengthen links with English Heritage and the Museum of London to explore avenues for future projects e.g. selective excavation and dating of earthworks.



Natural environment

Highgate Wood is designated as semi-natural ancient woodland forms part of a group of important woodland sites in North London. Semi-natural ancient woodland supports a large number of species, many of which are listed as vulnerable, particularly these species which require stable unchanging conditions in order to survive.

The woodland contains many niche habitats which support a range of protected and UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species including bats, birds, fungi and moths. The rich diversity of woodland within the wood has been well researched and to date the following species have been identified:

- over 900 invertebrate species
- 338 moth species
- 353 fungi species
- 70 bird species
- 7 bat species

As a result, Highgate Wood is designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and considered to be of London-wide significance for nature conservation.

Current management operations aim to conserve the diversity of the woodland through creation of individual conservation areas whilst monitoring for pests and diseases such as Chronic Oak Decline and Oak Processionary Moth.



Three legged flower beetle



Mining bee

Overarching policy 2:

The coppice with standards structure will be conserved with new conservation areas created and managed. The oak population will be conserved and its age class extended; species diversity will be maintained and enhanced. A programme of survey and monitoring will be implemented to inform future review of the CMP.

Supporting actions:

- Develop a management strategy for the oak and hornbeam population.
- Work closely with tree health organisations to plan and protect against tree disease threats.
- Promote research opportunities with students or post graduates with a focus on vulnerabilities of woodland species.
- Strengthen links with the London Borough of Haringey and consider opportunities to create and enhance 'green corridors' and coordinate habitat management across local ancient woodland sites and raise awareness of this vulnerable habitat.
- Manage and expand the existing coppice areas and seek opportunities to create new areas.
- Monitor the oak standard population as a keystone species, prolong its longevity and continue restocking operations.
- Encourage the Conservation and Arboricultural Staff on Hampstead Heath to become involved in the management of the Wood and explore the possibilities of learning from other CoL sites.

Community and recreation

Highgate Wood is an easily accessible green open space with a special atmosphere. It provides a safe environment with good facilities as well as educational and recreational activities for all ages.

The Wood is a very important resource for the surrounding community and provides a variety of options for precious periods of relaxation from the pressures and demands of urban life. The Highgate Wood team have been able to foster long standing relationships with local residents, which help nurture a welcoming environment where people feel safe and secure. The site has several distinct groups of people enjoying the natural environment from early morning joggers, to young children with their parents exploring the woodland, to dog walkers and power walker groups. The café is very popular with families with young children and it acts as an essential hub for the site where people are able to sit down for a coffee or meal.

The sport field within a natural woodland setting is a popular facility for both football and cricket teams throughout the year. The cricket practice nets are the only free nets in the London Borough of Haringey and are well used throughout the season. The sport field is also very popular for summer sports days.



The sport field is popular with local football teams

Local primary schools frequently visit Highgate Wood as a learning resource making use of the natural outdoor setting for curriculum subjects such as natural history and the environment. Children and young people are able to have a real outdoor rural experience within walking distance of their school. Staff are also available to provide walk and talk sessions on nature and woodland species.



The sport field is often used for community events

Overarching policy 3:

The wide range of recreational facilities and uses of Highgate Wood will continue to be provided, actively promoted and enhanced. The City of London will continue to engage with schools, interest groups (e.g. London Wildlife Trust) and the general public to ensure that the Wood's importance and range of facilities is fully understood and used.

Supporting actions:

- Build on existing relationships with the local community and stakeholders to form a dedicated Friends of Highgate Wood group.
- Improve links with young people and youth community groups.
- Explore opportunities to host events that raise the awareness of the UK's woodland heritage and its vulnerability.
- Develop a health and well-being programme and investigate Natural England's Greenspace Walking Scheme.
- Explore options to resolve conflicts between sports people and those enjoying the field area on weekends.
- Explore all avenues for marketing and income generation.
- Promote public access but ensure careful monitoring of visitor numbers to avoid disturbance to sensitive areas.
- Increase knowledge of and links to Queen's Wood through use of signage, websites, leaflets, maps and electronic information.

Built environment

Buildings appeared at Highgate Wood shortly after the Ecclesiastical Commission transferred ownership of the Wood to the City of London Corporation in 1886. Highgate Wood Lodge was the first building to be constructed and was designed by Sir Horace Jones who was also responsible for the designs of Leadenhall Market and Old Billingsgate Market. A Grade II listed drinking fountain sculpted from Pink Peterhead granite was added to the Wood in 1888.

Today Highgate Wood contains six staff lodges, a café and changing rooms, education centre and a playground. One of the staff lodges currently contains the site office.

A network of footpaths enables accessible routes around the site whilst the playground and education centre provide popular focal points for informal recreation and relaxation. The café is a very popular and well used facility although there are suggested improvements for its commercial use.

Overarching policy 4:

The condition and appearance of existing buildings will be maintained and the setting of key heritage features such as the Fountain and the Lodge will be enhanced. Infrastructure and site furniture will be maintained and rationalised where possible and high quality design and materials appropriate to the woodland setting will be used throughout. There will be a general assumption against further built development unless it is deemed to have no negative impact upon the heritage, ecology or enjoyment of the site and it is of outstanding architectural design or the benefits it delivers are of sufficient merit.



The café at Highgate Wood located within the former cricket pavilion



New staff office adjacent to the café

Supporting actions:

- Investigate options to create a small car park for visitors with mobility difficulties close to Onslow Gate.
- Re-configure the layout of the existing café building to improve kitchen facilities and to increase the capacity for indoor dining.
- Rationalise vehicle deliveries and restrict vehicle movements throughout the site.
- Promote access for all and ensure existing provision is DDA compliant.
- Improve environmental performance of buildings throughout the wood e.g. insulation of lodges, updating heating systems and photovoltaic installation.
- Increase the range of play equipment to cater for children in the 7 – 10 age group.



The play area is a highly valued feature of Highgate Wood

Vision

Highgate Wood's significance is defined by its evolved character as managed ancient woodland still retaining the distinct fabric of hornbeam coppice with oak standards. The inherent beauty of the Wood, its time depth value, the rich diversity of habitats and species and its use by the community are all related to this character and form of management.

The Vision for the Highgate Wood is therefore:

To ensure the continuity of Highgate Wood as a managed ancient woodland site, whilst maintaining its reputation as a safe environment for relaxation, recreation and education. This special character, combining with heritage features, and conservation value will be conserved and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations.

The vision for Highgate Wood describes the future direction for the Highgate Wood team to follow and is supported by each of the overarching and actions as highlighted in this document.

The actions have been illustrated in a masterplan, which can be seen on the following page. The delivery of the actions will be co-ordinated by the CoL team led by the Highgate Wood Manager. Each of the actions will be prioritised as follows:

Short term: 2015/16

Medium term: 2016/17 to 2018/19

Long term: 2018/19 to 2022/23

Any risk to features of heritage or biodiversity value will need to be considered fully prior to delivery of the actions. Delivery will also be dependent on funding and receiving any applicable permissions or agreements.

This document provides a summary of the Conservation Management Plan prepared for Highgate Wood. To view the full document visit www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/highgate-wood or contact the Highgate Wood Manager on 0208 883 9815.



Late 19th century photograph of Highgate Wood showing a footpath lined by coppiced hornbeam.



Heritage day to demonstrate the woodland crafts using timber produced through managed coppiced woodland








Highgate Wood staff lead educational walks (photo courtesy of Sue Czapska).

Masterplan





Key - Existing

-  Site Boundary
-  Grass
-  Area where bluebells thrive
-  Site of ancient pottery kilns AD 50-150
-  Existing footpath network

-  Existing vehicular route
-  Mature wild service tree
-  Wood bank/ woodbanks or site of historic importance
-  Existing compartment areas
-  The Hollies (bird sanctuary)
-  Existing conservation areas

Key - Proposed

-  Meadow area
-  Option for alternative small car park for visitors with mobility difficulties
-  Next phase conservation areas
-  Pedestrian priority zones
-  Consider upgrading desire line to create new footpath

-  Re-configure the layout of the existing cafe building to improve kitchen facilities and to increase the capacity for indoor dining.
-  Diversify the woodland edge to enhance the ecological value and to address safety concerns.



Highgate Wood

Highgate Wood is one of a number of open spaces, parks and gardens in and around London, owned and managed by the City of London as part of its commitment to sustaining a world class city. Each open space is a unique resource managed for the use and enjoyment of the public and for the conservation of wildlife and historic landscapes.

A full list of sites and visitor information can be found on our website at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/openspaces or by contacting the Open Spaces Directorate on **020 7606 3030**.



For further information please contact:

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