

Committee: Epping Forest Consultative Epping Forest & Commons	Dated: 16/06/2021 12/07/2021
Subject: Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (SEF 27/21b)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 11 and 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	see Appendix 7
What is the source of Funding?	Climate Action Strategy (CAS) – Strand 9 <i>Carbon Removals</i> and external grant funding
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes, CAS funding agreed from FY2021-2022; other funding to be agreed subject to future Gateway reports
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For decision
Report author: Jeremy Dagley, Head of Conservation - Epping Forest	

Summary

This report presents proposals for the reversion of arable land at Copped Hall to grassland and the creation of up to 127 hectares of new parkland and wood-pasture habitat, and over 50 hectares of grassland, to sequester carbon and provide for biodiversity net gain. It is proposed that the work, funded by the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy (CAS) *Carbon Removals* project, would begin from Sept 2022 under CAS. Alongside this, the report proposes that a bid for external grant-aid is made under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme in its last year for applications, 2023, to start in January 2024. The work on the bid would be developed with the assistance of the new *Carbon Removals* Project Manager and Team.

This bid would seek funding for wood-pasture creation under CSS, alongside funding for access enhancement measures, and would aim to integrate the conservation of heritage features through capital grant-aid, should sufficient subsidy be made available for these. The report seeks approval to start the reversion of arable land from September 2022 funded by CAS and approval for these outline habitat creation proposals. The access and heritage proposals would be developed later as part of the CSS application to be put before Committee for approval prior to April 2023.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- approve Option 1 below, to allow work to begin at Copped Hall, from September 2022, using the allocated CAS *Carbon Removals* Project funding;
- approve the development of a CSS application based on the wood-pasture and parkland proposals in, and as appended to, this report, plus further development of their detail alongside development of heritage protection proposals and additional visitor access enhancement, including a future report on car parking. The details of the application to be presented for approval at future Committee prior to any application in April 2023.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation acquired 295 hectares (ha) of the Copped Hall Estate in 1992 in order to protect the boundaries and overall landscape setting of the Forest from development and to provide support for the Forest's wildlife. This purchase, alongside the Copped Hall Trust's acquisition of the Hall and gardens, also prevented inappropriate development of the historic parkland itself.
2. This acquisition was one of a series of Buffer Lands acquisitions during the 1980s and early 1990s made to protect the Forest in a strategy recognised and endorsed in October 1993 by Policy and Resources Committee (P&R). The criteria used to target areas of land for acquisition were set out in the reports to Epping Forest & Open Spaces Committee and P&R as:
 - i) threats of development that might damage the Forest materially or people's enjoyment of it
 - ii) land that would provide a barrier to urban development
 - iii) land that would provide "*valuable wildlife support areas*"
3. Once acquired, the purpose of Buffer Land was set out in policy documents (e.g. Buffer Lands Action Plan 1998) and later in a memorandum to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Rural Affairs in 1999 (TCP55 8th June 1999, Parliamentary copyright):

"The purpose of Buffer land is to safeguard the rural environment of the Forest and thereby its natural aspect or feel and to provide to the Forest wildlife support and complementary wildlife habitats, thus facilitating the protection of the Forest's flora and fauna".
4. Copped Hall Park and gardens are recorded as Grade II* on the Historic England *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest for England* (RPG). The boundary of the RPG Grade II* designation straddles the M25 motorway and also covers areas outside the City Corporation's management. South of the

Motorway the land is incorporated into the Forest as Compartment 15, The Warren Plantation. The west side it in Compartment 4 of the Forest. North of the motorway Copped Hall is divided into two Buffer Land compartments Copped Hall North and South (respectively Compartment nos. 54 and 55). Much of Copped Hall South outside the wooded areas and some fields in Copped Hall North have been managed in-house as grassland since acquisition in 1992 (see map at **Appendix 1**).

5. These grassland areas, including the Deer Park, have been managed by grazing with the support of consecutive Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship grants in 1993, 2003 and 2008. The last of these agreements terminated in 2018. During this time the rest of Copped Hall North has been managed through a series of agricultural tenancies, with the fields used for arable crops.
6. The important heritage of this historic open parkland landscape had been recognised at the time of purchase, but recent research and review, through the Conservation Statement in 2015 and the Parkland Management Plan (PMP) in 2018 has brought this into sharper focus. The PMP has demonstrated the Park's Tudor origins and artefacts of "exceptional significance", overlaid with other important parkland development over several centuries (see **Appendix 2** for Committee report and the appended summary notes for the PMP).
7. The importance of Copped Hall for wildlife was also recognised in 1992 and in the subsequent approved Buffer Land policies. The Parkland contains several ancient, hollow trees and in its woods support Schedule 1 (Wildlife & Countryside Act) breeding bird species, including nesting Red Kites. The parkland and farmland also support red-listed, declining bird species, Cuckoo, Linnet, Skylark and Yellowhammer. In addition, there is a population of Barbastelle Bats, an IUCN red-listed species and UK Priority that relies on the parkland. An important local population of Brown Hare is also on site.
8. At the Consultative Committee in March 2021 (see report SEF10/21b – *Background Papers*) there was a consensus opinion that any land management changes should aim to ensure that these species were protected and retained at Copped Hall (see also paragraphs 69 – 71 below for further Consultative Committee comments)
9. Fallow Deer have a very significant impact on the landscape and especially the woodland understoreys. Their browsing has limited the woodland bird community, impacting adversely on Nightingales for example. The approved Deer Strategy will play an important part in the proposed future management of Copped Hall's habitats.

Current Position

10. There is currently a 1-year Farm Business Tenancy (FBT) on the northern fields of Copped Hall (see map at **Appendix 1**), as recently approved at Epping Forest & Commons Committee in March this year (see *Background Papers Non-public* report SEF 17/21). This involves traditional arable field management with

ploughing of soils and the use of crop protection chemicals. The southern fields, including the Deer Park, are grazed by the Epping Forest English Longhorn herd, currently.

11. The PMP is clear that the vision for the Park, and its surrounding landscape, should be to protect the important heritage features, from all centuries of the parkland development, whilst making its biodiversity importance a strong focus and “guiding factor” in the restoration of the Park (see pages 189 and 190 of the PMP). For the main body of the RPG and beyond, to the historic Tudor boundaries of the parkland, the PMP recommends parkland restoration with open-grown oaks and wood-pasture, restoring open-grown trees at varying densities alongside natural regeneration and the development of valuable scrub for breeding birds and insects. These twin approaches would unite landscape heritage conservation with biodiversity enhancement at a critical moment for conservation in the area, as development pressures increase and wildlife continues to decline.
12. In addition to the Registered Park & Garden status, most of the Copped Hall Buffer Land lies within the Copped Hall Conservation Area designated under the Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Local Plan. A Conservation Area is an “*area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. The Character Appraisal for the Conservation Area (Report to Epping Forest District Council, August 2015) emphasises the importance of the Park’s development within the purlieu of Epping Forest and as a key part of the Forest’s ancient surrounding landscape.
13. In addition, the submission version of the EFDC Local Plan affords full protection to the Buffer Lands, including Copped Hall, as if it were part of the Forest. Copped Hall is also mentioned in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for the Plan.
14. The City Corporation’s new Climate Action Strategy (CAS) was approved in October 2020. This emphasises the importance of the Buffer Lands, especially Copped Hall, in helping the City to meet its net zero emissions target for climate heating gases. Copped Hall, alongside several other sites in the Buffer Lands, through the CAS *Carbon Removals* project (see *Background Papers* Report SEF 10/21), provides one of relatively few places where the City Corporation can increase carbon sequestration to enable it to meet its net zero target.
15. The *Carbon Removals* Project also aims to contribute an improvement in wildlife habitats to support the Forest in recognition of the biodiversity crisis which is entwined with the climate emergency. Biodiversity Net Gain is a core element of the project’s approach to land management for carbon sequestration and storage. To enhance biodiversity, a common element shared by both the PMP’s and the CAS *Carbon Removals*’ objectives is the restoration and creation of wood-pasture and parkland habitats.
16. There is increasing evidence of the importance of wood-pasture and large-crowned open-grown trees, or what are now often termed silvo-pasture or agroforestry systems, in sequestering carbon alongside providing significant

biodiversity benefits. Adjacent to one of the most important wood-pasture sites in Europe, Epping Forest, this additional extensive wood-pasture habitat should increase the resilience of the Forest to future environmental change by providing a greater variety of refuges for wildlife dependent on open-grown trees and by providing a new generation of such trees as well as increasing the resilience of the Buffer Lands themselves and increasing the capacity of these sites for beneficial natural processes such as air pollution amelioration.

17. There are no car parks serving Copped Hall and most visitors enter by foot from the south over the M25 bridge and from the west from Upshire, along the two respective public rights of way (PRoWs) (see map at **Appendix 3**). There are two bus services that run along Crown Hill with a bus stop close to the southern entrance gates. In Compartment 55, which is managed as grassland in-house (see paragraph 9 above) there is also permissive public access, approved in 2004 (see *Background Papers*). In Compartment 54, which covers the tenancy as well as some grassland managed in-house, there is no general public right of access.

Proposals

18. This report focuses on the ecological and landscape restoration required for the main body of the parkland, as well as the opportunities for enhanced sequestration and better, longer-term storage of significant amounts of carbon in the soils. The urgencies of the climate and biodiversity crises, the case made by the PMP for parkland protection and the current availability of funding from CAS and external grants provide a compelling combination for advancing this conservation work now, thirty years on from the purchases that secured the Hall and its parkland (see outline proposals Map at **Appendix 4**).
19. However, in developing these proposals important heritage and access considerations will also need to be addressed. The aim of this report is to set out the work proposed to begin the ecological restoration of Copped Hall, with the support of CAS funding, and to outline the process of seeking external funding to allow the integration of heritage and access enhancements alongside the carbon and biodiversity gains.
20. The statutory bodies protecting heritage and wildlife in England, respectively Historic England and Natural England, have made clear that they regard the PMP as the starting point for negotiations for any future Stewardship or other external grant application. The support of these two statutory bodies is essential for future grant applications under any of the government-backed schemes. The aim would be to explore grant funding for as many important elements for restoration and management at Copped Hall as possible, but the level of grant-aid and feasibility of the delivery of any restoration would be taken into account in recommending which grants are applied for.
21. Carbon targets: Copped Hall is a key part of the CAS Carbon Removals Project. CAS funding is, at the moment, for 6 years until 2027. The CAS funding would be drawn down from 2022 to:

- i. establish a cover flora in 2022, after the termination of the current arable tenancy by reverting all the arable fields by sowing seed and carrying out subsequent hay-mowing and meadow management from 2023

and from 2023 or 2024 to contribute to the costs of:

- ii. planting and care of trees and hedges,
- iii. providing tree guards (possibly both wooden and metal in keeping with the historic park setting),
- iv. erecting deer-proof fencing to protect the natural regeneration areas (see Map at **Appendices 5 and 6**)

22. **Biodiversity targets:** from 2021 through to 2023 it is proposed to work up external grant applications to provide subsidy support for the management work begun by the CAS *Carbon Removals* project. Countryside Stewardship grant-aid for wood-pasture creation is the current preferred grant because it would last for 10 years. Such an application has been encouraged by Historic England and Natural England to advance the recommendations of the PMP (see *Financial Implications* below for more detail on grant timetables and see **Appendix 7** for likely budget should CSS options be approved as envisaged on current field proposals).

23. The CAS-funded work on habitats, and any subsequent external grant-aid, would be targeted at replacing the arable management with a regenerative approach to soil and sward management to lock up the carbon stores better and begin to sequester carbon through reversion to grassland. The proposals are for over 50 hectares of grassland, including reversion from the current net carbon emitting arable management (see Map at **Appendix 4**).

24. The rationale for the reversion to grassland and scrub in the northern areas of the Copped Hall Buffer Lands is to address the requirements of the wildlife, including Cuckoos, Yellowhammers and Skylarks, severely declining, UK red-listed, species. The grassland areas would be for these target species but would also provide open vistas across the Cobbin's Brook, maintaining the historic open landscape with wooded areas (see Maps at **Appendices 4 & 6**).

25. The new grassland initially would be mown to establish a basic sward. Should a Stewardship application be successful this would allow the development of wood-pasture species-rich sward for pollinators under an extensive grazing regime.

26. The remainder of the fields would be brought into extensive wood-pasture management. This would see more formal widely spaced oak tree plantings, with protective individual tree shelters closer to the Hall (e.g. at the western end of the Deer Park). At further distances from the Hall, such as the eastern end of the Deer Park, outside of the RPG, natural regeneration would be combined with denser tree planting encouraging areas of scrub to develop to provide habitat for insects and birds and protection for the establishing trees (see indicative Map at **Appendix 6**).

27. Natural regeneration is of key importance to the proposals, where native trees and scrub develop naturally with limited intervention, thus minimising the carbon footprint in achieving landscape change. Natural regeneration, locally on the Forest at Fernhills and Trueloves and at sites further afield like the much-studied Knepp Estate in Sussex and the Ken Hill project in Norfolk, has been shown to be very important for many threatened bird species, including Nightingale that has previously bred at Copped Hall
28. Also, a key priority is the establishment of oak, of critical importance to the restoration of the landscape and biodiversity and providing a new generation of open-grown trees to replace those ancient oaks that remain as part of the historic parkland landscape (see PMP). But the plantings and natural regeneration will contain and promote a diversity of species to develop.
29. Grazing is also a key component of the landscape and ecological restoration process, but the timing of grazing in the various areas would be dependent on the progress of natural regeneration. Grazing will increase the biodiversity benefits that will result from this project.
30. The current field divisions would be softened to be in keeping with a more extensive and open parkland and lowland wood-pasture landscape, recognising the heritage importance of the original landscape as well as the biodiversity value of this habitat.
31. Heritage considerations: There are three key heritage artefacts that require to be addressed in the management of Copped Hall and in any future external grant applications. In order of priority the heritage features are:
- i. The Tudor Square Pond and Serpentine
 - ii. The Victorian ha-ha – in two sections east and west
 - iii. The two WW2 pill-boxes
32. The Tudor Square Pond requires further surveys of resident species, the waterbodies and earthworks before any management interventions are considered. It is proposed that grant-aid for such surveys be sought externally ahead of any Countryside Stewardship application. Officers have already approached Historic England for it consider how it could help resource such research work.
33. Depending on whether such surveys could be completed in time, proposals for the Tudor Square Pond and the later Serpentine component would be likely to involve Poplar tree removal. Any proposals for restoration work would be submitted as part of a Stewardship application and the capital works components could attract up to 100% subsidy depending on the work proposed. However, any inclusion in an application in 2023 would be contingent on finding funding for and completing the surveys, this may not be possible in the timeframe. Liaison with Historic England will continue throughout the next two years to establish the best approach.

34. The ha-ha has been inspected by the City Corporation's Department of Built Environment, with a condition survey completed and a full schedule of works which just require costings. The viability of any restoration would depend on the level of grant support offered for the capital works, which again could attract up to 100% funding. Such funding is determined by advice from Historic England and is at the discretion of Natural England and the Rural Payments Agency in determining any Stewardship application.
35. The management requirements to protect the WW2 Pill-boxes is outlined in the PMP. The costs of works need to be determined but would be explored during the Stewardship application preparation process.
36. Access considerations: One of the key considerations for access, apart from the park and Hall's own inherent attraction for visitors, is the proposed large growth in residential housing at Harlow and elsewhere in the Epping Forest District. The City Corporation, as The Conservators, has continued to make the case for the better protection of Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC) by the provision, through the Local Plans, of suitable alternative natural greenspaces (SANGS) around the Forest or other alternative destinations for the growing residential populations of the District and London Boroughs.
37. It is proposed that Copped Hall has a role to play in receiving these extra visitors thereby protecting the Forest and reducing or preventing an unsustainable growth in visitor numbers there to the detriment of its relative tranquility and its internationally important habitats. However, in playing any such role Copped Hall would need additional resources and would need to be set in a wider context of a robust network of other destination sites, in order for the parkland itself, with its significant biodiversity and heritage, not to be adversely impacted.
38. It is the current intention to create a car park in a suitable place (or places) to serve Copped Hall and this would be the subject of a separate report to both Consultative and Epping Forest & Commons Committee as the proposals for the PMP are developed for grant applications over the next 18 months. Sustainable transport options, particularly bus services, will also be examined and these and the car parking will be items for discussion with stakeholders, such as EFDC and Copped Hall Trust.
39. Currently, any resources for access or for the cohesive network of alternative destinations have yet to be made a reality under the various Local Plans encompassing the Forest, although a Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy has been approved by Epping Forest District Council recently. Therefore, early engagement with Epping Forest District Council, in particular, in relation to these matters and specifically in relation to the protection of the Copped Hall Conservation Area (see map at **Appendix 1**) will be required.
40. The existing permissive access to the southern half of Copped Hall, including the Deer Park, should be considerably enhanced by the proposed parkland tree planting near the Hall. Subject to resources, including grant-aid, for improved signage, orientation and interpretation, there should be better shielding of the M25 view, noise and pollution by a belt of tree establishment and the greater

variety of edge habitats and new vistas to explore and view (see map at **Appendix 5**).

41. For the northern parts of Copped Hall, mostly outside the RPG boundary, as part of the wood-pasture creation there is a proposal for new, additional public access to be provided in the form of a long loop walk, 3.2 km in length (see Map at **Appendix 4**).
42. This loop walk would start out from the existing public right of way (PRoW) and take a route through the proposed new wood-pasture creation, the ancient semi-natural woodland rides of Spratt's Hedgerow and the Copped Hall hay-meadow alongside the Cobbin's Brook that was created 20 years ago.
43. The loop walk would be routed carefully to ensure minimal disturbance of important breeding areas for Skylarks, Yellowhammers, birds of prey territories and Brown Hare habitat and so ensuring that good views can be obtained across the Cobbin's Brook Valley while limiting disturbance to wildlife which would be an essential consideration in the devising of any new access route. Providing a green lane-like route with hedging would be an option to be considered as details of the habitat works are developed.
44. In developing any enhanced access, attention will need to be paid to the current relative low levels of disturbance in much of the Deer Park, which allows ground-nesting Skylarks to breed successfully. Consideration will need to be given to modifying the extent or timing of access so as to protect the Skylarks and other ground/low-nesting birds, as well as preventing undue disturbance to other wildlife, including Brown Hares and birds of prey.

Options

45. **Option 1:** To approve the use of CAS funding for the initial sowing of Copped Hall land to begin the process from September 2022 of ecological restoration by reverting 84 hectares of arable land to grassland ensuring more secure carbon storage in the soils and net carbon sequestration to meet the targets of the *Carbon Removals Project*.
46. To approve the development from 2021 onwards of an application seeking external grant aid for wood-pasture creation (at £409 per hectare) to supplement CAS funding with the aim of creating 127 hectares of lowland parkland and wood-pasture habitat and up to 50 hectares of grassland from 2024 onwards.
47. To approve the development of further elements for the preparation of Countryside Stewardship or other grants application involving proposals for enhanced conservation of heritage features, seeking 100% capital grants, and to approve the development of proposals as part of any application for improved access for visitors from 2024 onwards. **This option is recommended.**
48. **Option 2:** To delay the start of any restoration works under CAS until all elements of the heritage conservation are prepared with external grant-aid (and

any match-funding) achieved for the heritage elements, along with a full sustainable visitor strategy for the Buffer Lands and provision of car parking facilities to serve Copped Hall. This would delay the achievement of City Corporation's CAS targets. This strategy would also be likely to require a grant application after 2023 to the successor to CSS, such as the Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM) or some other grant funding. **This option is not recommended.**

Key Data

49. The City Corporation owns 295ha of Copped Hall as buffer lands acquired in 1992. Of this 130ha is within the 165ha Registered Park and Garden Grade II* (RPG).
50. The proposals for ecological restoration, biodiversity enhancement and to achieve carbon sequestration involve the reversion of 70 hectares of arable fields to grassland in the first instance.
51. Subsequently, the in-house grasslands of the southern park would be 'restored' to wood-pasture and parkland. Ultimately, the target would be to create 127 hectares of wood-pasture and parkland and up to 50 hectares of grassland for target species like Skylarks.
52. The work above would be funded by the City Corporation's CAS fund initially followed by an external grant to subsidise the work in future years and allow more CAS funding to be directed towards additional projects.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

53. This action plan would contribute significantly to City of London Corporate Plan 2018-2023 Outcome 2 *People enjoy good health and well-being*; Outcome 11: *We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment* and Outcome 12: *Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained*.
54. The action plan is directly aimed at fulfilling an important element of the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy by enhancing carbon storage and increasing carbon sequestration, alongside ecological restoration and recovery.
55. The aim of the Copped Hall PMP and its recommendations are to support the Open Spaces Department's Vision of enriching people's lives by enhancing and providing access to ecologically diverse open spaces and outstanding heritage assets across London and beyond.

Financial implications (see also *Risk Implications* below)

56. Some of the elements of the PMP would be implemented through the *Carbon Removals* Project funding under Strand 9 of the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy (CAS). In 2022 it is proposed to involve greater than £70,000 of

investment from the CAS to start the arable reversion to grassland and begin the process of carbon sequestration.

57. To supplement CAS funding for the project, and to allow CAS funding to be spread across further projects, any CSS grant would need to be applied for by April 2023 with final details agreed with Natural England and Historic England before August 2023. If successful, any CSS grant would start in January 2024. The current forecasted overall budget is given in **Appendix 7**.

58. Additional income from the Basic Payment Scheme will be available from 2023 until 2027 when the BPS scheme ends.

59. Other grants will also be investigated, including those forthcoming from the Forestry Commission this year. Discussions with the FC have already begun to assess the benefits of the potential grant schemes when compared with the current CSS grant rates and requirements. The publication of details is still awaited and is expected in early summer this year

Resource implications

60. The consultation work on the PMP and the proposals contained in this report would require significant Epping Forest officer time, both to consult local stakeholders, including Epping Forest District Council and the Copped Hall Trust, as well as to develop external grant applications (e.g. Stewardship) maintaining close liaison with Historic England, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

61. The work would also involve further reports to Committee as the proposals and any grant applications are developed. The new *Carbon Removals* Project Manager post and the *Carbon Removals* Team (up to 3 officers) would provide the additional resources in order to achieve this work and to ensure the carbon sequestration and storage plans are expedited.

Legal implications

62. Tree planting will require an assessment under the Environmental Impact Assessment as required under Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, as amended.

Risk implications

63. In terms of the resources required to manage risk, the *Carbon Removals* Team would provide oversight for the carbon sequestration and biodiversity elements of the project. A risk register has already been compiled for the *Carbon Removals* project overall and presented to Epping Forest & Commons Committee and Projects Sub-Committee (see SEF23/21 *non-public* Gateway 2 report in *Background Papers*).

64. Of these risks the most immediate one would be the loss of income from the termination of the tenancy from September 2022 should a Countryside Stewardship application not be accepted in 2023. However, a proportion (75%) of

this rental income would be recovered, from 2023 onwards, as the City Corporation would begin to receive the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments.

65. For tree planting and establishment through natural regeneration across grassland and farmland on this scale an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project is required to be approved by the Forestry Commission (FC). FC officers have already been contacted with regard to the aims, objectives and proposed locations for the CAS *Carbon Removals* project and a site visit to Copped Hall with FC officers is proposed for later in 2021. FC Officers are, in principle, supportive of the outline direction of travel for this project. In addition, liaison with other sites, owned by organisations carrying out similar EIA work, is currently being arranged in order to share understanding of the process.

Equalities implications

66. There are no immediate equalities implications from the recommendations in this report. Future access and site interpretation arrangements would need to examine equalities issues.

Climate implications

67. The proposed land management changes, involving the ecological restoration of Copped Hall, are of fundamental importance to the achievement of the City Corporation Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027. The *Carbon Removals* Project at Copped Hall supports the achievement of Net Zero by: increasing the carbon sequestration capacity of our open spaces, by providing environmental stewardship and advocacy, in the use of resources, emissions, conservation, greening, biodiversity and access to nature. The *Carbon Removals* Project at Copped Hall builds climate resilience by preparing our response to natural and man-made threats, providing thriving and biodiverse green spaces which enhance the capacity of the land to provide ecosystem services.

Security implications

68. N/A

Charity Implications

69. Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Epping Forest Consultative Committee

70. Four members of the Consultative Committee made comments on the report. The Epping Forest Heritage Trust (EFHT) requested that they might be involved in some capacity with the project and were keen to assist. One suggestion was around the chronicling of the phases of work and the changes to the habitats. A separate meeting is to be held with EFHT to discuss ideas further.

71. Concern was expressed about the car parking proposal and the fact that a car park would not fit with sustainable management of the area. The car park provision also raised an issue of fair access to greenspace for those without cars and there was some discussion on the issue of fair access and who would benefit.
72. The Epping Forest Riders' Association (EFRA) raised the issue of access to the Buffer Lands for horse-riders in the future, which was linked to a concern that the Forest was now so busy that its members were seeking to ride outside the Forest in quieter areas like Warlies. As a result, EFRA is concerned that if the Buffer Lands are made into more of a general destination this will impact adversely on the already displaced horse-riders.

Conclusion

73. The launch of the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy requires an increase in carbon sequestration to be achieved to reach the aim of net zero of direct emissions by 2027. The Epping Forest Buffer Lands, particularly Copped Hall, provide a major opportunity to achieve increased carbon sequestration relatively early in the Strategy and thereby to increase the likelihood of achieving the net zero target. Therefore, CAS funding would be put towards the reversion of arable land to grassland and the creation of up to 127 hectares of new parkland and wood-pasture across the Copped Hall site, in line with the Parkland Management Plan recommendations.
74. Importantly, the Parkland Management Plan provides the basis for a bid for Countryside Stewardship (CSS) funding in 2023, with the likely full support of Historic England and Natural England. If successful such funding would provide a significant subsidy to the CAS *Carbon Removals* Project and allow its funds to be spread to other projects. In addition, an application to CSS would allow the development of heritage protection proposals which may attract substantial capital grant-aid, up to 100%. The CSS bid would also involve the development of access enhancement proposals, which would be subject of a further report to Committee. Nonetheless, other grant opportunities would also be explored, as new Forestry Commission-administered grants are soon to be available, and the cost-benefits need to be compared to CSS.

Appendices

- **Appendix 1:** Map of Copped Hall RPG Grade II* boundary and land use
- **Appendix 2:** SEF 22/21 *Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan*. Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee 10th May 2021
- **Appendix 3:** Map of current management & heritage boundaries with PRoWs
- **Appendix 4** – Map of proposed management and additional access route
- **Appendix 5** – Copped Hall tree establishment proposals I (indicative only)
- **Appendix 6** – Copped Hall tree establishment proposals II (indicative only)
- **Appendix 7** - Projected 10-year budget balance with

Background Papers

- SEF 22/21 *Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan*. Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee 10th May 2021 (appended to this report)
- SEF 23/21 *Climate Action Strategy – Carbon Removals Project. Non-public Gateway 2* Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee 10th May 2021 and to Projects Sub-Committee 17th May 2021
- SEF 17/21 *Farm Tenancy – Copped Hall North – future options. Non-public* Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee 8th March 2021
- SEF 10/21 *Climate Action Strategy – Open Spaces “Carbon Removals”*. Report to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee 8th March 2021 and the Epping Forest Consultative Committee 10th February 2021.
- SEF 24/04 *Providing additional public access to Epping Forest Buffer Lands*. Report to Epping Forest & Commons Committee May 2004
- SEF 59/98 *Buffer Land Action Plan*. Report to Epping Forest and Open Spaces Committee 13th July 1998.

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