

<b>Committee(s):</b> Epping Forest Consultative Epping Forest & Commons	<b>Dated:</b> 15/06/2022 11/07/2022
<b>Subject:</b> Copped Hall Park proposals (SEF 18/22b)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	11, 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	Y – if capital grants are less than 100%
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£ - currently unknown</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>Currently unidentified</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director of Environment	<b>EFCG - For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Sally Gadsdon, Environment Department	<b>EF&amp;CC – For Decision</b>

### Summary

The Epping Forest & Commons Committee of 12 July 2021 approved public scrutiny of the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (SEF 27/21b) presenting the outline plan for a potential whole site project, which was also brought to the Epping Forest Consultative Committee on the 16 June 2021 for consultation. This report gives more detailed and updated proposals. The proposed work includes parkland restoration, wood pasture creation, historic feature management, grassland management and creation, improvements for visitor access, new cattle infrastructure to improve park grasslands and the management of the habitats.

The major elements of the project are:

- The reversion of arable fields to new meadows and wood pasture
- The conservation of earthworks dating from the Tudor period in Rookery Wood by the removal of around 400 plantation poplar trees and the creation of a new woodland in part of the adjacent Long Mead field to compensate for this loss of woodland.
- Planting of new trees and installation of tree guards across the formal parkland within the views of the Copped Hall
- The thinning of the Trafalgar Wood which may revise its original design
- Removal of large trees along the driveway between the Crown Hill entrance and the M25 bridge to create a more open avenue towards Copped Hall
- Investigating a new woodland on Holly Hedge field that would retain a view to Copped Hall
- Site-wide visitor improvements notably new interpretation boards and sign posts and new permissive routes

These proposals will be revised following feedback and presented for general public consultation. The final proposals will be brought back before the

application submission. The aim is to fund this project through the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy and an application to DEFRA's Countryside Stewardship scheme.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Epping Forest Consultative Group are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Submit any comments on the proposals to [sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk) referencing map numbers in relation to specific proposals.

Epping Forest & Common Committee are asked to:

- Approve the preparation and consultation upon the revised Copped Hall Park Countryside Stewardship proposals, subject to further final approval of the application by your Committee.
- Submit any comments on the proposals to [sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk) referencing map numbers in relation to specific proposals.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. The City Corporation acquired 295 hectares (ha) of Copped Hall Park in 1992 as Buffer Land, in order to protect to protect the boundaries of the Forest from development and to provide support for the Forest's wildlife.
2. Copped Hall Park and Gardens are listed as Grade II\* on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens (RPG) of Special Historic Interest for England. Some 130ha lies within the 165ha RPG, with the remainder in other ownership, including the Historic House and gardens owned by the Copped Hall Trust. The Park also coincides with a Conservation Area designated in 1984 under the updated terms of the Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
3. This report updates the proposals presented to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee on 12 July 2021 seeking adoption for public scrutiny of the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (SEF 27/21b), which was jointly funded by Natural England, and Historic England.
4. The proposals are based on seeking funding through the government's Countryside Stewardship (CS) land management grant and the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy (CAS) through the Carbon Removals project.

## **Current Position**

5. The proposals presented in the report Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (SEF 27/21b) (Appendix 1 of that report) have been updated following further proposal planning and information from the government's CS advisory agency Natural England. The updated proposals are presented in this report and continue to follow the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan. The proposals are in a draft phase which include several potential proposals.
6. The CS grant has defined eligibility criteria for funding and some of the proposals may not be finally determined as eligible after discussion with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). Other proposals may change over time. The final proposals will be presented to EF&CC for approval.
7. Copped Hall is also proposed to be included in the Natural Environment Division's Carbon Removals project as part of the CAS. This project's aim is to increase the capacity of habitats to sequester or absorb carbon from the atmosphere and has been running since April 2021. Following a feasibility study on the scope and likely increases in carbon sequestration capacity across the Natural Environment Division, there is currently a review balancing proposed investment levels and sequestration outcomes to confirm alignment with CAS project targets. As a result, the scale of the project and subsequent funding, and therefore the scale of the proposed works at Copped Hall, is subject to this review.
8. The funding is being sought for three types of work: habitat management, visitor access, and historic feature management.
9. Habitat management focuses on restoring planted elements of the historic parkland and creating new habitats. This was recommended in the Parkland Management Plan compiled by external specialists. The creation of new habitats will increase biodiversity and create new UK priority habitat which is vitally important for the global threat to biodiversity. It will also contribute to increasing the Natural Environment division's carbon sequestration capacity and significantly contribute to the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy Net Zero targets for its direct operational emissions.
10. Increasing visitor access across the Buffer Lands will help to alleviate pressure on Epping Forest which aims to assist with the recovery of designated areas detrimentally affected by visitor pressure. This work is particularly associated with the areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This ambition will be articulated as part of the forthcoming Sustainable Visitor Strategy (SVS).

## **Options**

11. Agree to continuing work to progress the CS applications which will be subject to final approval by the EF&CC. This will allow funding opportunities under CS for works identified in site management plans to be fully assessed prior to

subsequent consultation with the EF&CC on whether to progress an application for funding. Preparing the application details costings and statutory permissions will require significant officer time to undertake. (Recommended)

12. To decline further application preparation being undertaken on CS funding for site management projects. This will free up officer time to allow work on other activity but would mean that a significant source of funding will not be available to progress well suited projects identified in site management plans (Not recommended)

## Proposals

13. The proposals are shown in the map in Appendix 1 and given in more detail in Appendix 2.

14. The main changes and key points are:

- a. Tree planting across the formal parkland – Following the recommendation in the Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (PMP) to draw on the location of trees in the earliest 20<sup>th</sup> century OS Map, a tree planting design has been created. This is considered by the external specialists to capture elements of each of the landscape design phases of Copped Hall.
- b. Tree guards – To protect young trees from deer and cattle there will be a mixture of tree guards used. Different guards will be used in the formal setting of the hall compared to away from it. See Appendix 3 for the types of guards that might be used. Trees may be left unguarded on Ridge Field as trees have been planted by the Copped Hall Trust without any significant deer damage.
- c. Natural regeneration – This method of increasing tree and scrub cover will also be used alongside tree planting. It will be controlled so that the open character of the historical landscape is maintained in the landscape around the Hall.
- d. Additional tree planting along the boundary with the M25 – This is not shown in the map. A thin belt of densely planted trees along sections of the southern sides of Deer Park West, Centre and East is being considered to screen the M25 and reduce the noise and visual impact of the motorway. This is not compatible with the CS funding for parkland restoration, so separate external funding may be sought.
- e. Fencing – There will be deer fencing in some areas to protect young trees from deer damage. The location of trees and fence lines will be finalised at a later stage of the project planning.
- f. Rookery Wood – There are a series of historic earthworks from water bodies dating from the Tudor period. The Copped Hall Parkland Plan deemed them of national importance. The proposal is to remove all the poplar plantation trees (around 400) from the area of the historic earthworks to prevent these trees falling in the future and damaging historic features. Tree and scrub growth will be prevented across the area thereafter. It is only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that there has been tree cover across the whole of Rookery Wood, before this time most of the area of the historic water bodies were open.

- g. Long Mead – The scale of tree removal at Rookery Wood falls within the remit of the Forestry Commission for felling consent. Compensatory mitigation actions would require a new woodland to be planted for the loss of woodland area. The southern half of Long Mead is suitable for this, having sufficient size and being adjacent to Rookery Wood. The woodland would be of mixed native tree and scrub species.
- h. Trafalgar Wood – This was created in 2005 to celebrate the Battle of Trafalgar (Epping Forest Work Programme Report 2005-2006) and the planting is in the form of a ship's wheel (Appendix 4). The PMP advised that this woodland was inappropriate in the context of historic designed parkland landscape. It recommended allowing it to evolve into a wood pasture area and only to last its natural lifetime with no renewal. A higher density of trees would be retained towards the M25 boundary. The trees are maturing, and the canopies are coalescing thereby losing the definition of the wheel. Thinning is required to keep trees in good health and it will be considered if this can be done in such a way as to keep a semblance of the wheel design but it may not be possible. It is proposed to remove the fence now the trees are sufficiently established and allow cattle and public access to this area.
- i. 18 Acre North – This is now proposed to remain as grassland rather than create wood pasture. A small number of field trees may be planted here.
- j. 18 Acre South – This is proposed to be created into an open wood pasture with scrub which retains the grassy ground flora. It is proposed that this would be created through a mixture of planted trees and natural regeneration. An open wood pasture would maximise biodiversity benefits compared to a densely planted woodland.
- k. Brays – In addition to the new grassland proposal on this field, a new hedge is proposed along the south side of the field along the road.
- l. Fitches Meadow – The original tree planting here has largely failed due to the fences being too low to prevent deer damage. The proposal is to remove the fences and allow the remaining trees to grow to maturity.
- m. Cludens NW – This area is proposed to be planted with willow to form a willow carr which will be managed by coppicing over time to keep it low and dense. This field has failed to develop into a grassland or wildflower/wild bird seed area in the past because of agricultural pests and the field's location. Willow is a species of much higher wildlife value than many other trees and this area sits naturally wet and is therefore more suitable for willow.
- n. Three Corner and Roundhills– The proposal is to allow wood pasture to develop solely through natural regeneration where scrub and trees colonise the site through natural factors. The density of trees and scrub would be allowed to be higher than in other areas of new woodland/wood pasture on Copped Hall, but the density would be managed to create a good quality habitat. Deer fencing is proposed to be put around the south half of the Roundhills and a new hedge is proposed along the south side of the field along the road.
- o. Ravensers North – This is now proposed to remain as grassland rather than create wood pasture. A small number of signature field trees may be planted here.

- p. Copped Hall drive – Between the gates on Crown Hill and the bridge over the M25, large conifer trees are proposed to be felled to create a more open wide avenue to encourage a grassy margin and enhance the sense of arrival to the hall. The continuing threat of Ramorum Disease precludes the recreation of the drive's Rhododendron Avenue.
- q. Holly Hedge Field – A new woodland may be considered here. The design would retain a view from this field over to the Copped Hall.
- r. Signage and gates – Some proposed new visitor routes are shown in the map in Appendix 1. Further details of visitor access proposals are:
  - i. Creating a new waymarked trail design that uses existing paths or suitable habitats. This would manage visitor movements and limit disturbance to habitats and species.
  - ii. Creating new permissive routes for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, and restoring some overgrown permissive routes in particular to offer safer and more desirable routes where the public right of way is on the road.
  - iii. Waymarking and improvement of connectivity with other rights of way including replacement and additional fingerposts.
  - iv. Removing or replacing gates, fences and stiles across Copped Hall that are not visitor friendly, and where replacing, the items will be better designed, more accessible structures.
  - v. Removal of outdated and inappropriate signage.
  - vi. Some visitor interpretation boards at points mainly at the edge of the Copped Hall estate including on the Crown Hill entrance to Copped Hall.
  - vii. Signposts with waymarker roundel disks to aid visitor orientation to new and existing paths and routes.
  - viii. Habitat works and structures to link up between areas such as between the Selvage and Raveners.
  - ix. Signage and bins to improve visitor welcome at existing car parking facilities along Fernhall Lane.
  - x. Introduction of a permissive bridleway along the entrance road and across to Copped Hall Green to create an additional safe motorway crossing for cyclists and horse riders to allow a circular route away from the Forest.
- s. Cattle grazing plan – The successful use of the GPS collars from the NoFence™ company offers much more flexibility in grazing management. The aim is to walk the cattle between different fields over the grazing season with much less need for stock fencing, which will be situated primarily against neighbouring land to prevent cattle movement on to there. This will reduce costs and help to preserve the open landscape character of Copped Hall. To help improve the management of the site through grazing, new cattle handling corrals and more water troughs are proposed. Troughs spaced out across fields will encourage more even grazing.
- t. Ha-has – The two sections of sunken fence, known as a ha-ha, (Deer Park West and Behind the Hall Field) in the City Corporation's ownership require structural work to preserve these into the future. The City Surveyor's department have started work to scope out what is required by commissioning a specialist review. The southern separate section of ha-ha

- in Deer Park West requires more work and may not be possible in this phase of project. Trees along the top of the ha-has might have to be removed. CS funding will be sought to provide match funding if possible.
- u. WWII Pillboxes – The Parkland Plan recommended works to preserve these features; this will be reviewed and determined if this is compatible with increased visitor access in the future.
  - v. The Copped Hall Trust (CHT) has been involved in the compilation of the parkland Plan and further consultation with CHT will be undertaken around projects which directly impact the context and setting of the House and Gardens.
15. Delivery of these proposals will be through a combination of staff, contractors, volunteers and the public. Recording change in the habitats and species is planned and it would be desirable to use volunteers and natural history societies as much as possible.
16. Comments on these proposals are sought. Comments are to be sent to [sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:sally.gadsdon@cityoflondon.gov.uk). Where relevant please quote the map numbers when referring to particular features.
17. Following this feedback, the proposals will continue to be developed:
- a. Through stakeholder engagement with the Copped Hall Trust, residents and stakeholder user groups.
  - b. Liaison with Epping Forest District Council around proposals within the Registered Park and Garden area.
  - c. In early autumn the proposals will be made available through a public consultation.
  - d. In early 2023 the final proposals will be brought back to this Committee and Consultative Group before the applications are submitted.
  - e. The application is processed by Natural England in discussion with Epping Forest officers over summer 2023 with its completion by August 2023.
  - f. A report in September 2023 will be presented to the Epping Forest & Commons Committee to request permission to accept the final agreement offer.

## **Key Data**

18. Copped Hall is a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden. Historic England, the government's advisory agency on the historic environment, have indicated that without additional management of the estate it might be at risk of entering on to its Heritage at Risk register, see paragraph 34. The Countryside Stewardship scheme is a valuable funding stream and alongside funding from the Climate Action Strategy.
19. The current estimated annual income for habitat management from the proposals above would be around £95,000 for Buffer Lands. In addition, capital funding for one-off works and infrastructure would be funded at a high percentage between 60-100%. Further work will be done to estimate the cost of capital works, the percentage funding is at the discretion of Natural England.

20. The applications would be made in April 2023 for the grants to start in January 2024 and would run for 10 years, finishing in 2033.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **Strategic implications**

21. City of London Corporate Plan 2018-2023: (2) People enjoy good health and well-being; (11) We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment; (12) We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
22. Copped Hall would be one of the main sites in the Carbon Removals project which is part of the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy.
23. The proposed action supports the Natural Environment division'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.
24. The proposed action meets the Natural Environment division's objective of 'Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible'. It will also contribute to the Department's performance measures of income generation.
25. The grant would deliver work to contribute to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan targets.

### **Financial implications**

26. Under City of London Corporation Financial Regulations 2.11(d) it is necessary for the Chief Officer to seek prior approval of new financial initiatives not currently included in the Epping Forest Local Risk budget.
27. The CS grant will bring in much needed 10 years of guaranteed income totalling around £950,000 for the continuation of the management of our important habitats, nationally important heritage sites and improvements required for visitor access.
28. The capital works are funded at 60-100% of actual costs. During the application process the percentage funding will be made known and a decision will be taken whether to retain any elements funded under 100%.
29. The proposals are also based on additional funding through the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy (CAS). As stated in paragraph 5, CAS funding for the Carbon Removals project is under review to be completed in June 2022. A variety of actions can be scaled up or down based on their sequestration rates including conversion of arable land and a greater degree of tree planting.



30. Future reports will give more accurate estimates of the expected income and any financial implications for the Epping Forest Local Risk budget.
31. The government's new Environmental Land Management grant schemes should provide a continuity of funding after the end of these CS grants.

### **Resource implications**

32. Significant resource will be required to develop the proposals into a grant application which will include further external stakeholder consultation. The preparation of the application and delivery of the grant will be undertaken in-house with some use of contractors. Some of the delivery will also be undertaken by volunteer groups in liaison with Epping Forest officers. In addition, the new Carbon Removals Project posts will be involved in the delivery of the proposals.

### **Legal implications**

33. The grant offer forms a legally binding agreement between the City and the government's Rural Payment Agency.
34. A forestry Environmental Impact Assessment may be required for the felling of trees across Rookery Wood.
35. Any planning permission or other approvals required will need to be obtained before works commence.
36. Forestry Commission consent will be required for the felling of trees in Rookery Wood.

### **Risk implications**

37. Prior to any decisions to proceed with any proposals of the visitor access elements of the proposed work an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out, will be taken into account in developing final options and will be considered in deciding whether to proceed.
38. If no additional management is undertaken at Copped Hall Park, the RPG may be placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (HARR). The highest concerns of this Agency are the trees on the earthworks at Rookery Wood and the split ownership/land use of the site which acts against the integrity of the whole site as an historic parkland.

### **Climate implications**

39. The management of the habitats supported by the CS grant would increase their resilience to environmental and biological changes brought about by climate change. The work complements the aims of the Climate Action Strategy of the City Corporation for both climate adaptation and biodiversity enhancement.

## **Security implications**

40. None.

## **Charity Implications**

41. 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.

42. The following topics were raised by the Epping Forest Consultative Group in June 2022 and answered by Epping Forest Officers:

- a. From the West Essex Ramblers: A desire to retain the quiet character of Copped Hall and a concern about the visual impact of lots of new signs in relation to access improvement proposals. Answer: There will be some areas of permissive access but in the northern half of Copped Hall there will be permissive routes with the majority of this area non-accessible. The signs will be at key points, mostly at entrance points and key signposting locations.
- b. From Verderer Chapman: A concern about the thinning of Trafalgar Wood. Answer: Not all the trees represent ships in the original design; without thinning the trees will become very poor in health.
- c. From Verderer Chapman: There is a concern about the cost of future maintenance after the grant has ended. Answer: The current proposals will be worked up with more details including financial budgets which will be presented to Committee for approval.
- d. From George L: A suggestion to link permissive access from the nearest point in Epping Forest through to Copped Hall and engaging with Epping Forest District Council over this. Answer: This is already being looking into.

## **Conclusion**

43. Further details on the Copped Hall Park project proposals for habitat management and creation, visitor access improvements and historic landscape and feature management are presented here, and comments are requested from these committees. Historically, the Charity has lacked the resources to restore Buffer Land landscapes, this project offers the opportunity to deliver against multiple objectives; enhanced management of this Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden will restore, manage and conserve landscape and historic features working towards reducing the risks that Historic England have identified for this site. The creation of new habitats will work towards improving biodiversity and climate change resilience of the local landscape and contribute to the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy targets. Accommodating more visitors through careful management will help to reduce pressure on Epping Forest's specially designated conservation areas.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Copped Hall Proposals at May 2022 Maps
- Appendix 2 – Copped Hall Proposals at May 2022
- Appendix 3 – Examples of tree guards
- Appendix 4 – Trafalgar Wood original design

## **Background Papers**

Copped Hall Parkland Management Plan (SEF 27/21b)

Epping Forest Work Programme Report 2005-2006

## **Sally Gadsdon**

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