

Springett's Wood Management Work Plan

Meg Game

Summer 2010



Members of the Marylebone Birdwatching Society admire the bench in Springett's Wood

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1.0. Site description

1.1 Location

Springett's Wood lies not far from Spaniard's Road, just north of the Old Hockey Pitch and adjacent to the Kenwood boundary and the old aerial enclosure. Its area is 0.42 hectares. Springett's Wood was not included in the 1991 survey; its compartment reference in the 2009 survey is 1171. Map 1 shows the boundary of the Wood. The maintenance of the fence separating the Wood from the neighbouring development is the City's responsibility.

1.2 Geology, Soils, Hydrology

The underlying geology of Springett's Wood is Bagshot Sand, but the Wood was used as an orchard for many years, and perhaps also a garden, and the soil is likely to have been modified considerably, to make it less acid and more fertile.

It is well-drained except in the vicinity of a former tennis court, which was removed after the site came into the City's ownership. In damp weather water runs through this area, accumulating in a pond, in ruts where the tennis court was ripped out, and in a tiny pond near the southern edge.

1.3 Ecology

Springett's Wood was once an orchard and tennis court, but was abandoned before it passed to the City in 1992. It still contains a central grassy area with old pear trees, but this is surrounded with scrub and trees, or land which has only been recently opened up again. Map 2 shows the locations of the component habitats and trees, which are briefly described below.

1. Damp area

This is the site of a tiny very shallow pond, which has become silted up with leaves from overhanging trees. It holds water in wet weather.

2. Scrub

This is a mass of buddleia, elder, bramble and several planted field maple saplings. The latter have been heavily stripped by grey squirrels and are misshapen and dying.

3. Woodland

This comprises trees as detailed below. Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and *H. x hispanica*) and daffodils grow in the woodland, and it also contains brambles, especially alongside the grassland edge.

4. Pond

This shallow pond is lined. It normally holds water all year round. When visited in March 2010 it contained duckweed (*Lemna* sp.) and reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), with, round the edge, pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), bittercress (*Cardamine* sp.), yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera perclimenum*) in small amounts. Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagitifolia*) has been planted. A quantity of the invasive New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) was removed from the pond in 2009, but is likely to still be present.

5. Seasonally wet area.

This is a rutted area formed when a former tennis court was removed. Bramble is dominant, soft rush and birch saplings abundant, and smaller amounts of pendulous sedge, spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), red campion (*Silene dioica*) and tutsan. In wet weather water runs south to the small damp area (area 1) and beyond.

6. Dry area

This is a heavily shaded area with ground flora including abundant nettle, red campion and ivy.

7. Open area

This is an open area where the ground is covered in ivy. Sycamore trees have recently been felled here, and the wood placed in piles nearby. Alongside the back fence grow cherry, willow and sycamore saplings. There is a large fallen cherry tree near the grassy area.

8. Felled sycamore

This large dead sycamore tree has been left lying on the ground, some of its branches rising high in the air.

9. Sycamores

This area consists of seriously squirreled-damaged sycamore trees, which are misshapen and unsightly, together with elder, buddleia and brash.

10. Ivy, nettle and fallen wood

This area is very heavily shaded by the sycamore trees along the edge of the Wood. It contains a large decaying tree partly covered in brash from a recently fallen pear tree which was cut up. Ivy, nettle and decaying wood cover the ground.

11. The main path leading from the existing gate leads directly to a central open grassy area. This contains a number of old pear trees, several much younger trees and saplings, and a recently fallen pear tree, as detailed below. Bluebells grow in the centre and eastern section.

Trees

The approximate positions of the following trees are marked on Map 1.

A1: recently planted apple tree

B1-B4: four birch trees

BC1-BC3: three fast-growing bird cherry trees, recently planted and about 3m tall

C1-C3: three old cherry trees

P1: old pear tree heavily shrouded with ivy. There is a small amount of living canopy at the top.

P2: old pear tree, partially shaded by scrubby vegetation between it and the main open grassy area.

P3: old pear tree

P4: old fallen but living pear tree, its branches surrounded with bramble and elder.

P5: old pear tree.

P6: fallen pear tree, propped up by a main branch.

P7: old pear tree

P8: very small pear tree coming from old rootstock

P9, P10, P11 : Recently planted pear trees

Pr: scrubby area of cherry seedlings and bramble

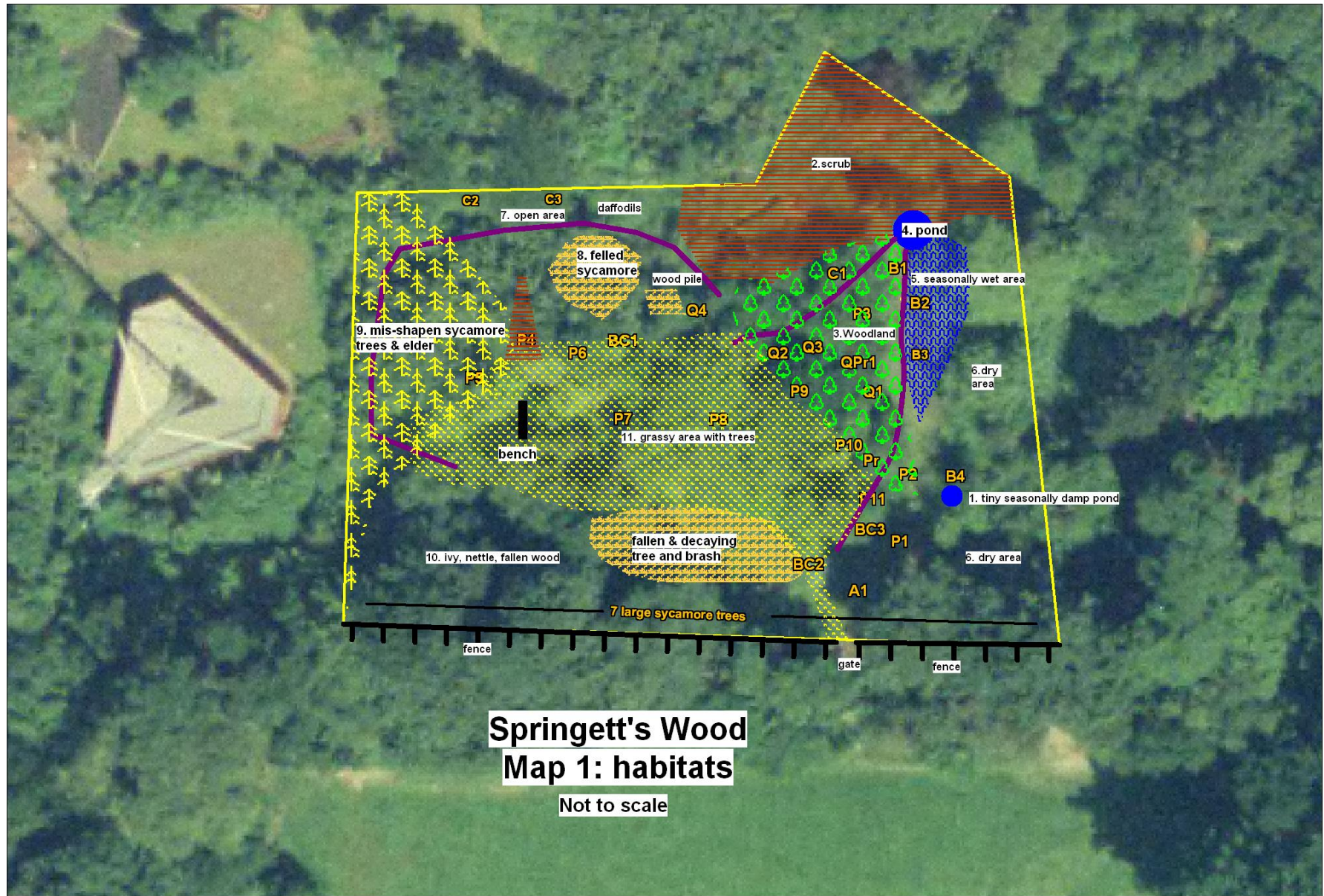
Q1: fine oak tree

QPr1: 1 spindly oak and 2 spindly cherry trees.

Honey fungus *Armillaria mellea* is prevalent in the Wood and the ageing pear trees are badly affected by it.

The ponds is frequented by breeding frogs. There is evidence of fox activity in the Wood.

Scaly male fern is grows in a number of places in the Wood.



1.4 Public and educational uses

The area is intended to be a haven for wildlife, as well as for quiet enjoyment of the natural world for visitors. It is fenced, and dogs are not permitted to enter. It is too far from the Education Centre for educational visits.

1.5 History

The Wood was formerly the orchard and tennis court of St Columba's Hospital, but became derelict. Sycamore, bramble, buddleia and elder invaded. In 1992 it was added to Hampstead Heath under the ownership of the City. The tennis court was taken out, two ponds were constructed, sycamores removed, and a number of trees planted. In 1994 it was named after Kate Springett, the official bird recorder for the Heath for over 30 years and founder member of the Marylebone Birdwatching Society. A memorial bench, funded by the Heath and Hampstead Society and the City of London, was carved from beech wood taken from the Heath, and placed at the top of the grassy slope.

The existing fencing with Kenwood and the rest of the Heath was retained. Along the boundary with the rest of the Heath this consists of cleft chestnut pale fencing, which now needs replacing.

1.6 Natural and human-induced trends

The Wood is comparatively quiet, as it is not in a busy area of the Heath, nor on a major through path, and dogs are not allowed to enter it. It occasionally suffers from garden cuttings being dumped over the fence from the new development.

Scrub and saplings will increase if not managed suitably, though retaining scrubby areas is vital if the wildlife of the area is to be retained and encouraged.

2.0. Evaluation

2.1 Natural landscape

The biodiversity value of the area comes through its mixed habitats and its relative lack of disturbance compared with other areas of the Heath. The scrubby areas are of particular value to birds. Scaly male fern, which is scarce on the Heath, is found in growing in several places in the Wood, for example near the pond and at the back near the rear fence. The pond and damp area provide habitat for invertebrates.

2.2 Public and educational uses

Springett's Wood is of particular value to visitors in offering a quiet place which possess a different character from its immediate surrounds, and indeed from the remainder of the Heath.

It is of limited educational value as it is far from easy access points to the Heath and from the Education Centre.

2.3 History and built environment

Much of the Wood is historically a fruit orchard, chiefly now of pears and cherries. Aged trees from its past still survive, though they are in decline.

The Wood is now a memorial to Kate Springett.

2.4 Vision

A secluded former orchard which is managed to maintain biodiversity and for the quiet enjoyment of the natural world

Maintain and improve:

- the variety and quality of habitats for biodiversity, especially birds
- the attraction of the area for visitors seeking quiet enjoyment of the natural world and landscape
- the historic character of the area as a fruit orchard
- safe access and security within the Wood
- screening from the neighbouring development

2.5 Relevance to achieving the 2007-2017 Hampstead Heath Management Plan

Overriding Objectives, Essential Actions and Aspirational Goals from Part I of the Hampstead Heath Management Plan which are particularly relevant to the management of Springett's Wood: :

- **H2:** Interpret and make available to as wide a public as possible the history of the Heath, and to do this in a way that will complement its other distinctive characteristics
- **NL1:** Retain and enhance the Heath's habitats and natural resources to enable continued quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the natural environment
- **NL4:** Manage the Heath's woodlands to enhance their nature conservation value and improve their distinctiveness
- **NL14** Control certain invasive and inappropriate species
- **A6:** Recognise the Heath's latent potential to provide:
 - A broader spectrum of users from all backgrounds
 - Access to managed facilities that are not fully used at present
 - Recognition of the Heath's history
 - Access to the natural environment
 - Improvements to health and well-being
 - Education for sustainable development

Policies from the Natural Landscape chapter of the Part II Management Plan which are particularly relevant to the management of Springett's Wood:

Policy 1: The Heath will be managed to maintain and preserve its unique wild and natural aspects and its ecology, and enable quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world by visitors

Policy 20: Woodland edge habitat, i.e. a gradation from trees or shrubs to long grass, will be encouraged

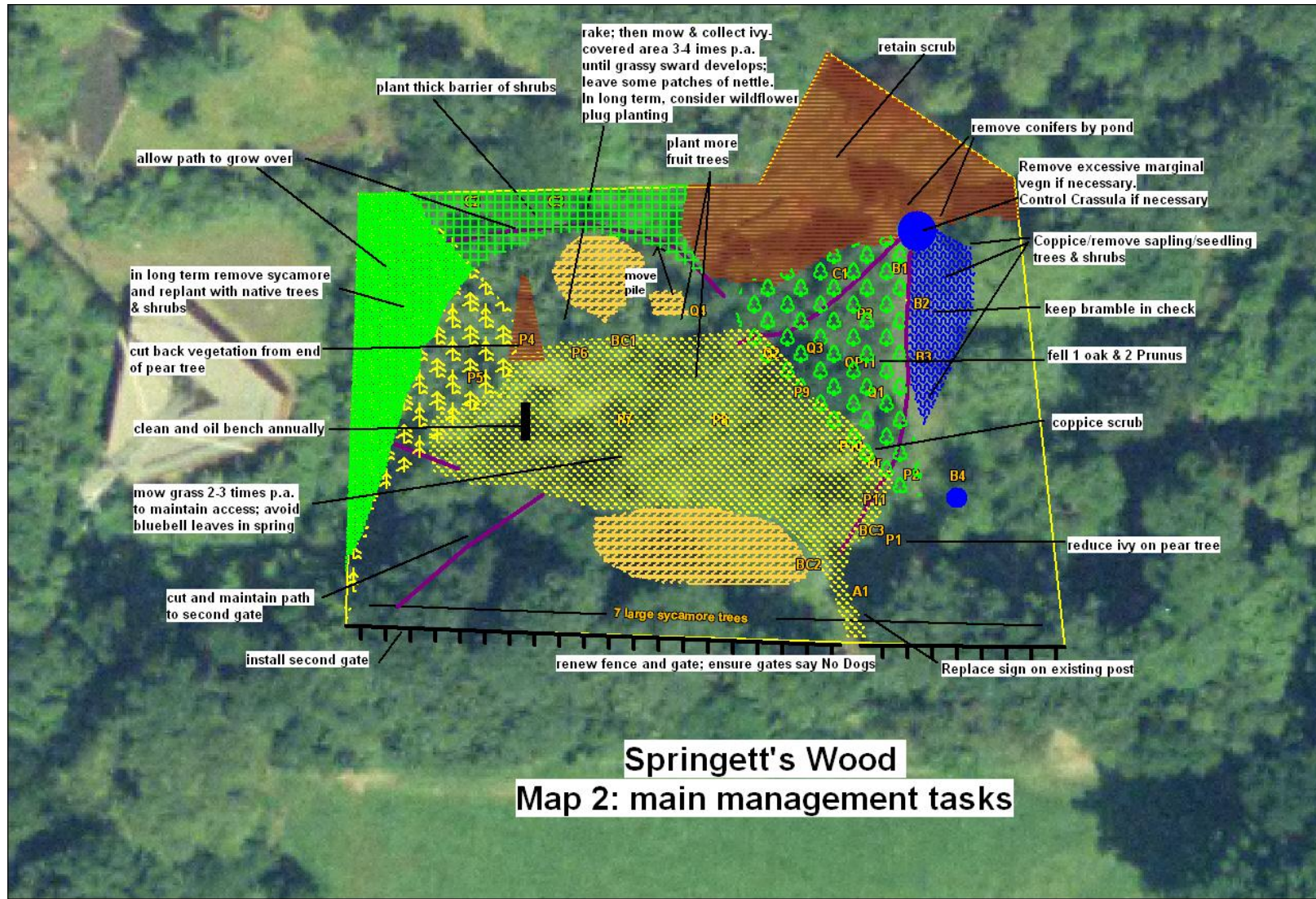
Policy 22: Standing dead and dying wood will be retained where it is not a threat to public safety. If a tree is felled, as much standing trunk as possible will be retained. Dead wood on the ground will be left lying, but generally will be dragged off grassland, and where possible will not be cut up into short lengths

Policy 36: The existing ponds, streams, ditches and wetlands will be managed to protect and enhance their nature conservation importance

Policy 39: Opportunities will be sought to reduce shading of ponds by bank-side trees and shrubs and thereby enhance the visual amenity of some ponds, improve water quality, facilitate the growth of marginal flora and encourage dragonflies and other fauna

Policy 50: Selected invasive and inappropriate species will be controlled

3.0. Prescription and work programme



Springett's Wood
Map 2: main management tasks

3.1 Regular management tasks

Objective	Prescription	frequency	Month(s)	Years	Who by	Priority: low, medium or high
Maintain public access, safety, attractiveness and public enjoyment of the Wood	Mow grass 2-3 times annually depending on season and amount of rabbit grazing. Avoid cutting bluebell leaves until they have died down. Include area north of existing grassland (currently covered with ivy and nettles), leaving some nettle and thistle patches, but reduce mowing in this areas if and where wildflowers planted (see below)	2-3 times annually or as required	May and July, or as required	Annually	Cons team	High
	Clear and mow path to new western gate - see below. (Allow path round north and west of the Wood to close up: additional access is provided by increased grassy area – see below).	As required	As required	Annually	Cons team	High
	Clean and oil bench	Annually	Winter	Annually	Cons team	High
Maintain and improve biodiversity of the Wood	Keep bramble in damp area in check by cutting back	Every other year	Autumn - early spring	2010, 2012, 2014 <i>etc.</i>	Cons team	Medium
	Coppice or remove sapling and seedling trees and shrubs in damp area to maintain light levels	Every other year	Autumn - winter	2010, 2012, 2014 <i>etc.</i>	Cons team	Medium
	Remove excessive marginal vegetation if covering say more than ½ area of pond	As required	Autumn – early spring	As required	Cons team	High

	Carefully remove <i>Crassula helmsii</i> in if present in pond or damp area and dispose of securely	As required	As required	As required	Cons team	High
	Coppice scrub near entrance to thicken it up and provide more light to habitat to east by reducing its height. This will also make path to pond less forbidding	Every 5 years or as required	Winter	2010/11, 2015/16 etc.	Cons team	Low

3.2 One-off tasks

Objective	Prescription	Month(s)	Year	Who by	Priority
Improve public access, safety, attractiveness and public enjoyment of the Wood	Replace fence along southern boundary and existing gate with ones in the same style	-	2010	Cons team/ contractor	High
	Install a second gate near the western end of the fence	-	2010	Cons team/ contractor	High
	Convert majority of area at present covered in ivy (see map) to grassy sward by removing extraneous material then mowing 3-4 times p.a. in growing season, say May, June, July, August, and also mowing wood pile further north. Then manage as grassy area. Leave patches of nettles and thistles.	Monthly May- August	2010, 2011, then review	Cons team	Medium
	Ensure 'Springett's Wood' and 'No dogs' are inscribed on the gates	Any	2010	Cons team	High
	Replace sign on existing wooden board by eastern gate with basic information about the Wood	Any	2010	Ecologist/ Cons team	High

Maintain character of the Wood as a fruit orchard	Reduce top-heavy old pear tree canopies to reduce probability that they will fall due to infection by honey fungus and poor root system (one has recently fallen over)	Any	2010	Arb team	High
	Re-stock orchard to ensure there are fruit trees to take over when current declining trees die, e.g. old varieties of apple on rootstock which will allow people to reach fruit, mulberry.	Winter	2010/ 2011 and thereafter as pear trees die	Cons team	High
	Check tree guards and tree ties, and clear any scrub from around trees	Any	Annually until all removed	Cons team	High
	Remove brambles <i>etc.</i> from fallen living pear tree (P4 on Map 2)	Autumn-early spring	2010, 2011 2012 then review	Cons team	High
	Gradually remove ivy from pear tree P1. Assess safety of tree when sufficient ivy has been removed	Autumn, winter	2010, 2011, 2012	Arb/Cons team	High
Improve biodiversity value of the Wood	Plant broad band of native shrubs along rear fence of the Wood. Include plenty of hazel and hawthorn, but also add purging buckthorn (<i>Frangula alnus</i>), guelder rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>), native dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>), and a small quantity of blackthorn. This will also improve screening from neighbouring development. Allow 'woodland edge' habitat of brambles and long	Winter	2010/2011	Cons team	High

	<p>grass to develop along southern edge, and allow brambles to grow over felled sycamore tree and wood pile.</p> <p>Move any daffodil bulbs found to grassy area</p>				
	Remove conifers around pond to provide more light to the water	Autumn-early spring	2010/2011	Cons team	High
	Remove misshapen sycamore trees along boundary by aerial and plant native shrubs, such as hazel, hawthorn, guelder rose, dogwood and a small amount of blackthorn	Winter	2015	Cons team	High
	Consider plug planting or seeding suitable wild flowers into existing ivy-covered area, such as hardheads, teasel, ox-eye daisy	Autumn, spring	2013	Cons team	Medium
	Fell two medium-sized oak and two Prunus trees to provide more space to neighbouring trees and allow development of their canopies	Any	2011	Cons/ Arb team	Medium
	Try to establish mistletoe on one of the fruit trees	Spring	2011 or 2012	Ecologist /Cons team	Medium

4.0 Review

To be filled in as time goes by

Author	Date	Task	Observation, event or alteration to task