

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve

Management Plan

2025 to 2030

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Introduction

Our goals for the management of Curtis Wood are to preserve and create valuable wildlife habitats, while maintaining safe public access.

This Management Plan is a requirement of the Local Nature Reserve Designation and is based on the identification of Key Features and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme will ensure that these objectives are met and that any necessary management works are carried out.

This Management Plan is also intended to improve communication between the city council, its contractors, the Parish Council and local people who visit the site.

Plan review and updating

The information presented in this plan is up to date at time of writing, Autumn 2025. Printed versions may become out of date as the management programme is updated over subsequent years.

There is a formal review of this plan every five years but minor changes may be made more frequently as further wildlife data is gathered. A summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.



Woodland management approach

The management of this woodland is aligned with Canterbury City Council's Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy and [Tree Management Policy](#). Core Principles from the Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy:

- Protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows
- Expand trees, woodlands and hedgerows in rural and urban areas
- Capture more carbon
- Enable nature recovery
- Involve and benefit everyone

The council's Tree Policy sets out how it will manage the tree stock on the land it owns, which includes amenity grass, greens, parks, open spaces and woodlands. Core principles from the Policy:

- Ensure the health and safety of council-owned trees so that they do not pose a risk to people or property

- Promote natural habitat for wildlife
- Recognise tree stock as an amenity that enhances the local area
- Reduce waste by utilising timber, firewood and woodchip for wood fuel

In addition, the following Woodland Trust guidelines help to inform this plan:

1. Woods are managed to maintain key features of value. Interventions are made when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity. Wherever possible management aims to support natural processes.
2. There is free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation; woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
3. Ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
4. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained, and new open ground habitats are created where appropriate.
5. The Heritage value of woods is taken into account in management.
6. Woodland management is developed by working in collaboration with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders. The benefits of local community woodland ownership and management are recognised. Where appropriate, woods are permitted to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.

Summary of document

This public Management Plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long-term policy and lists the key features which drive management actions. The key features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with their long- (50+ years) and short-term (five years) objectives. The short-term objectives are complemented by a detailed work programme for the period of this Management Plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices, which include any major management constraints and designations.





1. Site details

Site name:	Curtis Wood
Location:	Herne Common
Grid reference:	TR179654
Area:	4.5 Hectares
Statutory Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Local Nature Reserve, Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
Local Plan Designations:	Protected Open Space

2. Site description

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve is approximately 4.5 hectares in size and encompasses small meadows of semi-improved neutral grassland. The wood consists mainly of oak, ash and hawthorn and is valued for its diverse ground flora, including early Purple and Greater Butterfly Orchids. In the springtime the woodland is carpeted with Bluebells and Wood Anemone. Both meadows consist of neutral grassland interspersed with areas of scrub and mature trees. The grassland is mown just once each year in late summer, allowing wildflowers to grow and insects to thrive.

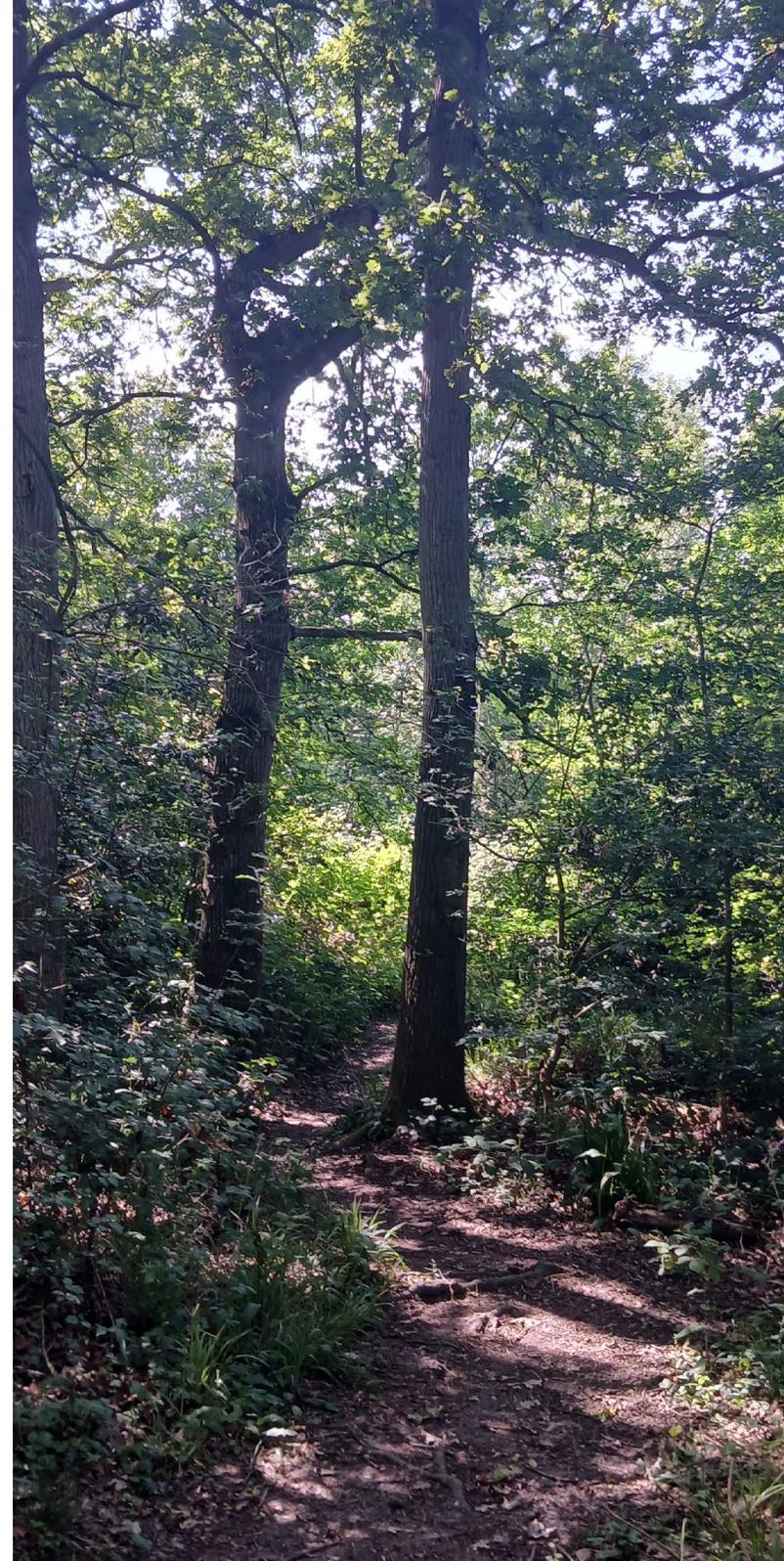
The woodland lies within a Conservation Area and is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Curtis Wood is part of a network of woods around the Herne Common area, providing habitat connectivity from East and West Blean to the south across a farmed landscape and into the urban areas to the north.

Goldspots Pond lies northeast of Curtis Wood Park, and volunteer surveys here have found common amphibian species to be present.

Access improvements have taken place over the last year to the main entrance and footpaths around the site. New information panels have been installed both at the entrance to the meadow and to the woodland. A network of wide footpaths are mown into the long grass of the meadows throughout the summer and a waymarked route through the wood encourages visitors to follow the Public Right of Way.

See [Curtis Wood Park - Explore Kent](#) for visitor information.





3. Public access information

Curtis Wood is located on Herne Street, between Herne Common and Herne. It is 3.4km from the coastline and is less than 1km from West Blean and Thornden Woods, part of the Blean complex.

Public Right of Way CH26 runs north-south through the site. There are additional pathways with seven access points to the woodland, as well as informal desire paths.

This park contains uneven trails, un-surfaced and narrow pathways. There are also width restricting features, such as stiles and narrow gaps, making it difficult for visitors with pushchairs or wheelchairs to access some parts of the site. During wet winters, pathways within the woodland can become difficult to access so suitable footwear is advised. (Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Map of Features - Appendix 2)

4. Long term policy

Our vision for Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve in fifty years' time is a diverse structure of habitats, grassland and woodland, which represents a good provision for biodiversity and is resilient to climate change. It will inspire visitors to enjoy and value woods, and nature in general, for years to come.

Through the active management of existing glade areas of the woodland, habitat for a range of plant, invertebrate, bird and mammal species will be provided. As Ash dieback inevitably spreads through the ancient part of the wood, gaps will open in the canopy. These areas will be allowed to regenerate naturally, where possible.

Where safe to do so, fallen and standing deadwood, and dead stumps will be left in situ, which will support species of bat, invertebrates, birds and fungi. Felled trees will be stacked into log piles and dead hedging, or habitat piles.

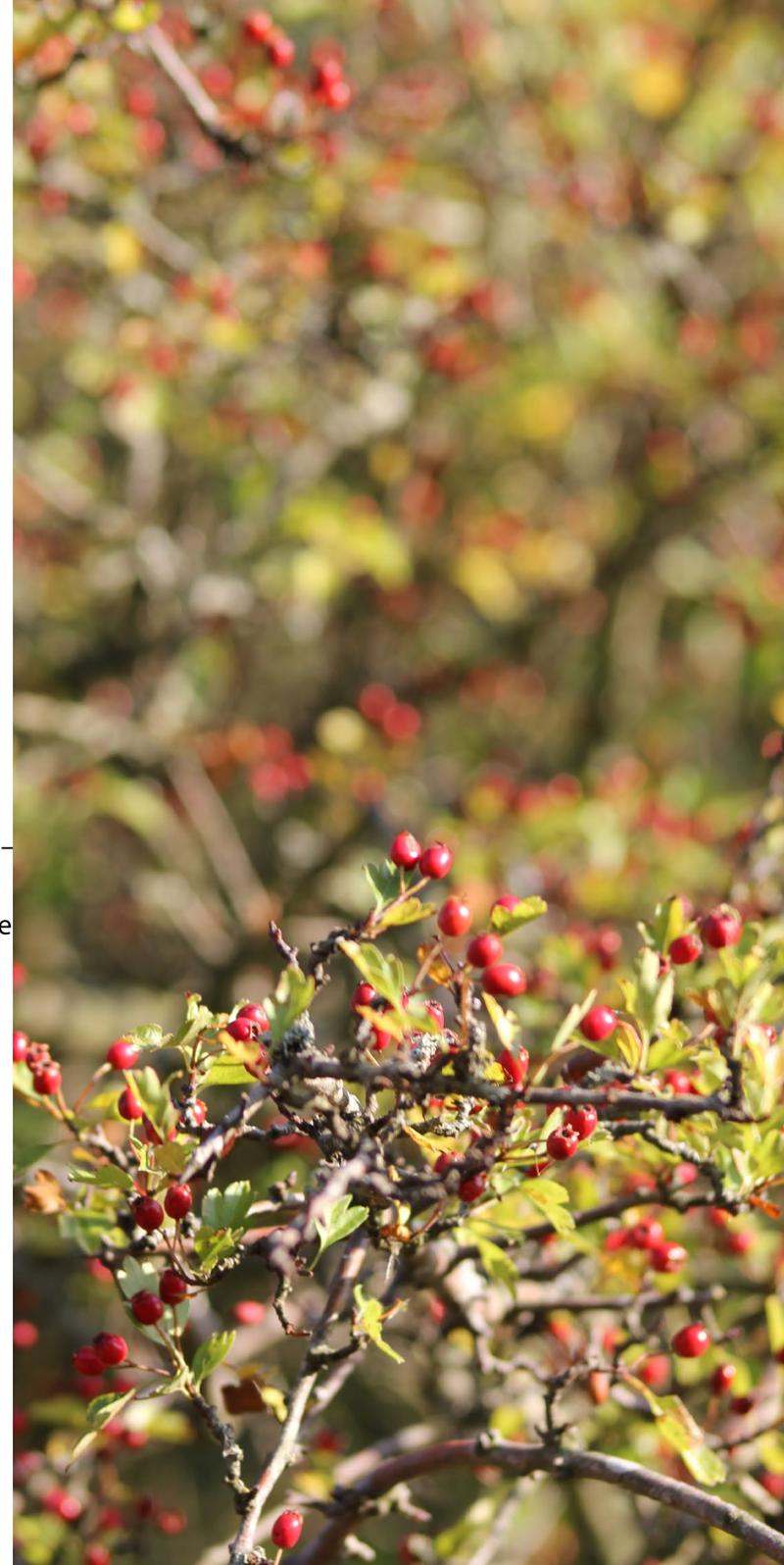
Human activity may bring new non-native invasive species to the area, adding to existing problem species. Established methods for their control will be followed. The process of exotic species establishing

in the UK will be exacerbated by Climate Change, which will also cause some native tree species to struggle to survive. Current advice on woodland adaptation includes planting suitable non-native trees with a more southerly range.

Trees adjacent to highways and private properties will continue to be managed to ensure these structures are not damaged.

It is envisaged that the site will retain a park woodland character and will be visited by a moderate number of visitors each year along a well-maintained network of paths for recreation and nature education activities. It will provide a resource for community well-being, mental health provision and an opportunity for local people to be involved in the continued development of their local open spaces.

Future monitoring will do well to involve the local community through the use of citizen science surveys for local species, as well as serving as an effective channel of communication to report on issues such as tree health and footpath condition.



5. Key features

The key features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the key feature.

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Curtis Wood is an area of Semi- Natural Ancient Woodland (ASNW) growing on a clay and silt soil of London Clay formation. This supports a vegetation community of Oak woodland with Bramble and Wood Anemone sub-community *W10b Quercus robur-Pteridium aquilinum-Rubus fruticosus woodland, Anemone nemorosa sub-community National Vegetation Classification (All descriptions of NVC woodland communities can be found on: www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/fieldguidetowoodland.pdf).*

The wood consists mainly of Oak, Ash and Hawthorn and is valued for its diverse ground flora, which includes early Purple and Greater Butterfly Orchids. In the spring the woodland floor is carpeted with a display of Bluebells and Wood Anemone.

The main tree species forming the canopy are oak, both pedunculate and sessile, with ash. The oak canopy is uniform and most of the trees are middle aged (100 to 150 years old). Some of the oldest trees in the canopy are Ash.

Below the canopy, the shrub layer consists of young Yew, Hawthorn, Hazel and Field Maple. Young suckering Elm have established where mature ash have been cleared. This is seen mostly on the roadside edges of the woodland where ash trees severely affected by dieback have been removed for public safety. Elsewhere, natural regeneration has produced stands of young Ash trees which are likely to succumb to dieback.

The scrub layer includes Dogwood, Wild Privet, Honeysuckle, Rose and Bramble.

The field layer is generally sparse under thicker tree canopy, but there are areas where carpets of bluebell and wood anemone can be found in Spring. Where light levels are higher, bramble tends to dominate. Enchanter's nightshade and hart's tongue fern are found around the sunnier edges of footpaths.

The Kent and Medway Biological Record Centre have provided data for the wood and surrounding area. Invertebrates recorded in the wood or adjacent meadow areas include Oak Hook Tip Moth and Rufous Shouldered Longhorn Beetle. White Letter Hairstreak butterfly has been recorded nearby. Several species of bat recorded in the wider area, including Noctule and Brown Eared, may use the wood to roost. Common Toad, Frog and Lizard are heavily recorded, together with Smooth and Palmate Newt, owing to the presence of several ponds.

Deer are currently absent.

There is a moderate amount of dead wood habitat, mainly due to ash dieback.

The modest 4.5 hectare site benefits from intact continuous woodland canopy cover for recreation and habitat connectivity. An area of ash alongside Curtis Wood Road was cleared in 2023 for safety reasons. This has created a glade which benefits woodland specialist butterflies and other invertebrates.

Running throughout the wood is a complex network of drainage ditches which naturally drain through the wood. Several shallow ponds, mostly dry at time of survey, are found at points along the ditches. A pond at the southern edge of the wood, alongside Ridgeway Road, appears to have been created to take run-off from the road and nearby housing.

Significance

Ancient Semi Natural Woodland is a habitat in decline. Curtis Wood's location within the Blean wooded landscape makes it valuable for habitat connectivity, allowing migration between larger blocks of woodland.

Opportunities and constraints

Opportunities

The continued protection and sensitive management of this woodland will support its associated bird, mammal, invertebrate and plant assemblages, and contribute to landscape-scale conservation of woodland by providing a 'stepping stone' between larger areas of woodland.

The volume of deadwood can be increased through making standing trees in decline safe, and retaining log piles following management practices.

The open area recently created by clearance of dangerous Ash trees can be managed as a glade. This will involve instigating a vegetation management regime on a short rotation.

Thinning dense areas of woodland outside the ASNW through rotational coppice will increase light reaching the understory, improve age structure and benefit field layer flora.

A good ecological gradient exists between the ASNW and parkland to the north. This can be maintained through careful management.

The Public Right of Way, informal tracks and woodland clearings provide recreational opportunities. The tree canopy can be opened along these routes to bring more light and encourage plant diversity.

Several ponds exist within and around the edges of the wood. Woodland ponds can develop a distinctive flora and fauna.

Constraints

The wood's small size means there are limited opportunities for creating open woodland habitats like rides and glades.

Proximity to urban areas and easy access from roads make fly-tipping an issue.

Visitor activity outside the prescribed tracks, including den-building, can invite anti-social behaviour and is eroding opportunities for sensitive ground flora to recolonise.

There are large trees and areas of dense canopy neighbouring private residential properties, highways and power lines.

Rising deer populations in East Kent pose a threat to all woods. Browsing is likely to affect lower vegetation layers: ground, field, shrub, scrub.

Invasive and threatening tree and shrub species, such as Turkey Oak, pose a threat to native flora

Factors causing change

Invasive plant species, including Laurel, Sycamore and Turkey Oak. Climate change. Antisocial behaviour, including fly-tipping. Increasing footfall due to developments in surrounding areas.

Long term objectives (50 years+)

1. A diversity of woodland habitats will exist on site, mostly high forest with areas of coppice, glades, open canopy along paths and watercourses, and ponds.
2. The proportion of all types of dead wood will have increased.



3. Coppicing in areas outside ASNW will have improved age-diversity. This method will be showing in the development of ASNW characteristics with increasing signs of regeneration and a developing woody shrub layer.
4. Field-layer plant cover will have expanded.
5. Non-native and threatening species will be absent or minor with containment and eradication work continuing as necessary.
6. The wood will be enjoyed by the local community for responsible recreational use, with access largely restricted to paths

Short term objectives (five years)

1. Create or maintain a structurally diverse woodland to enhance biodiversity
2. Reduce occurrence of Invasive Non-Native Species.
3. Manage access to encourage visitors and discourage anti-social behaviour
4. Increase proportion of dead wood in various forms
5. Manage/restore ponds within the wood
6. Carry out species monitoring

6. Work Programme

See page 23 for compartments map

Short-Term Objective	Action	Compts	Timing	Who
1	Maintain native broadleaved high forest with minimal intervention. Intervene only for essential safety work to trees	1A	Ongoing	CCC Contractor
1	Clear dense areas of bramble on rotation, around ¼ of total area per year. Remove roots where possible	1A	Each Winter	KSCP Volunteers or Contractor
1	Clear dense scrub from woodland edge in phases. Then clear on a three to five year rotation to maintain herbaceous zone	2A-C, 4A	Each winter	Contractor
1	Maintain graded height edge to the high forest by coppicing to ensure continuity of suitable breeding habitat for priority species.	2A-C, 4A	Each winter	Contractor
1	Fell small to medium sized trees alongside main tracks to provide suitable and sustainable habitat for herbaceous diversity. Following initial felling, maintain by coppicing every 10 to 15 years	All	Each winter	Contractor
1	Maintain glade habitat by short rotation coppicing/brush cutting/mowing. Monitor, assess and brush cut every two to four years, Coppice on a five to eight year cycle	3A	Winter as necessary, coppice around 2027/28	KSCP Volunteers
1	Thin to provide a diverse age range of maturing woodland	4B	Each Winter	Contractor

Short-Term Objective	Action	Compts	Timing	Who
2	Record sightings of INNS. Chemical and/or mechanical management.	All	2025 onwards	CCC Contractor
3	Maintain signs at entrances, interpretation materials and waymarked routes for members of the public. Consider adding seating within wood.	All	Monitor annually	KSCP Volunteers, CCC Contractor
3	Replace and/or restore existing boundary fencing.		2027	Contractor
3, 4	Dead hedge felled material to restrict footfall outside main paths and allow spread of field layer. Consider alternative styles of fencing if material is insufficient.	All	Each winter	Contractor, KSCP Volunteers
5	Enlarge pond to improve suitability for amphibian breeding. This will include tree work and excavation. London Clay Formation geology suggests it can be puddled.	4A	2026	Contractors
6	Survey habitats and important species and encourage research beneficial to their conservation. Consider Citizen Science approach.	All	2026 onwards	KSCP Volunteers

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve

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APPENDIX 1

Compartment descriptions

Cpt number	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1A	3.46	Oak	ASNW	High Forest	Sensitive habitats on/adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area

ASNW. Area of woodland since at least 1600s. High forest area with good show of anemones and bluebells in spring.

Oak, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Elm, Ash, Rose, Ivy, Honeysuckle.

Drainage channels run through compartment from north to south.

Well-used footpaths and way-markers, as well as area of den building with dead wood in the centre of this compartment. No observed antisocial behaviour.

Where the woodland borders residential properties, overhanging branches and trees of concern should be managed.

Minor ponds along drainage channels in compartment 1A have opportunity for restoration.

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
2A	0.46	Oak	1950	Coppicing	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
2B	0.45	Oak	1950	Coppicing	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
2C	0.27	Oak	1950	Coppicing	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
<p>Partially ASNW with natural regeneration and plantation of native tree species in 2B.</p> <p>Oak, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Elm, Ash, Rose, Ivy, Honeysuckle.</p> <p>The woodland adjacent to the grassland edge has grown due to natural regeneration, this should be managed as a graded edge to the woodland to create diversity through variation in height and light reaching the woodland floor.</p>							

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
3A	0.15	Elm and ash regrowth.	2023	Glade	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Glade habitat Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
<p>Mature Ash felled in 2023 created a woodland opening. To be maintained as a glade habitat Suckering Elm, Young Ash regrowth. Rosebay Willowherb, Jack-by-the-hedge, Bramble, Rhododendron, Sorrel, Carex sp., Apple, Mint, Ragwort. Drainage channel runs through compartment from east to west.</p>							

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
4A	0.25		1950	Thinning	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area
4B	0.57		1950	Thinning	Sensitive habitats on / adjacent to site	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland Local Nature Reserve Tree Preservation Order Conservation Area

Grassland prior to 1950s shown on heritage maps. Naturally regenerated and will benefit from cyclical coppicing to encourage a diverse age of trees and light to the understorey.

Oak, Field Maple, Hawthorn, Ash, Rose, Ivy.

Where the woodland borders residential properties, overhanging branches and trees of concern should be managed.

Laurel close to housing should be removed.

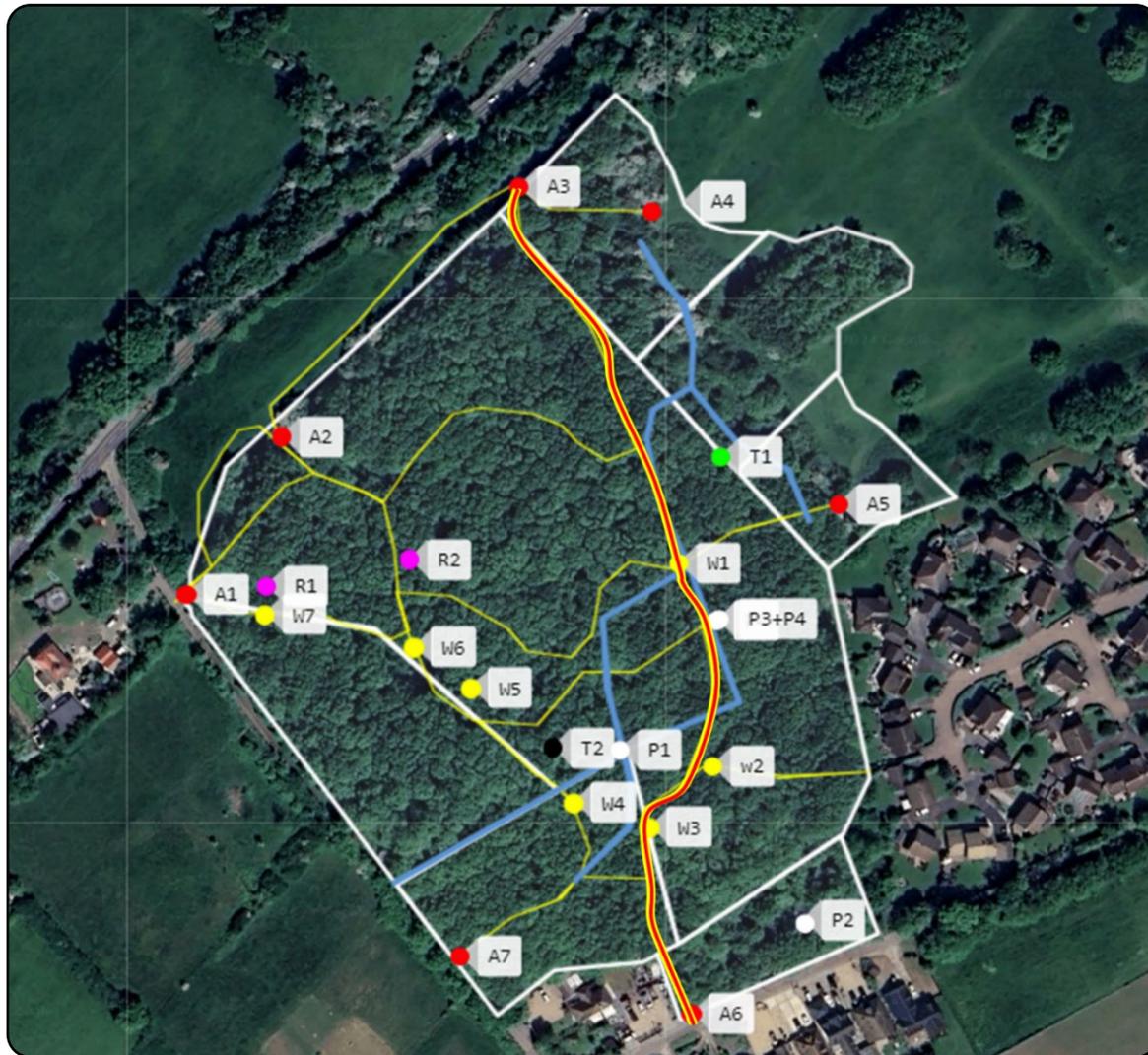
Pond in compartment 4A can be restored through tree work to reduce shade and excavation to maintain suitable water level throughout summer months for amphibian breeding.

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve

Management Plan

APPENDIX 2

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Map of Features

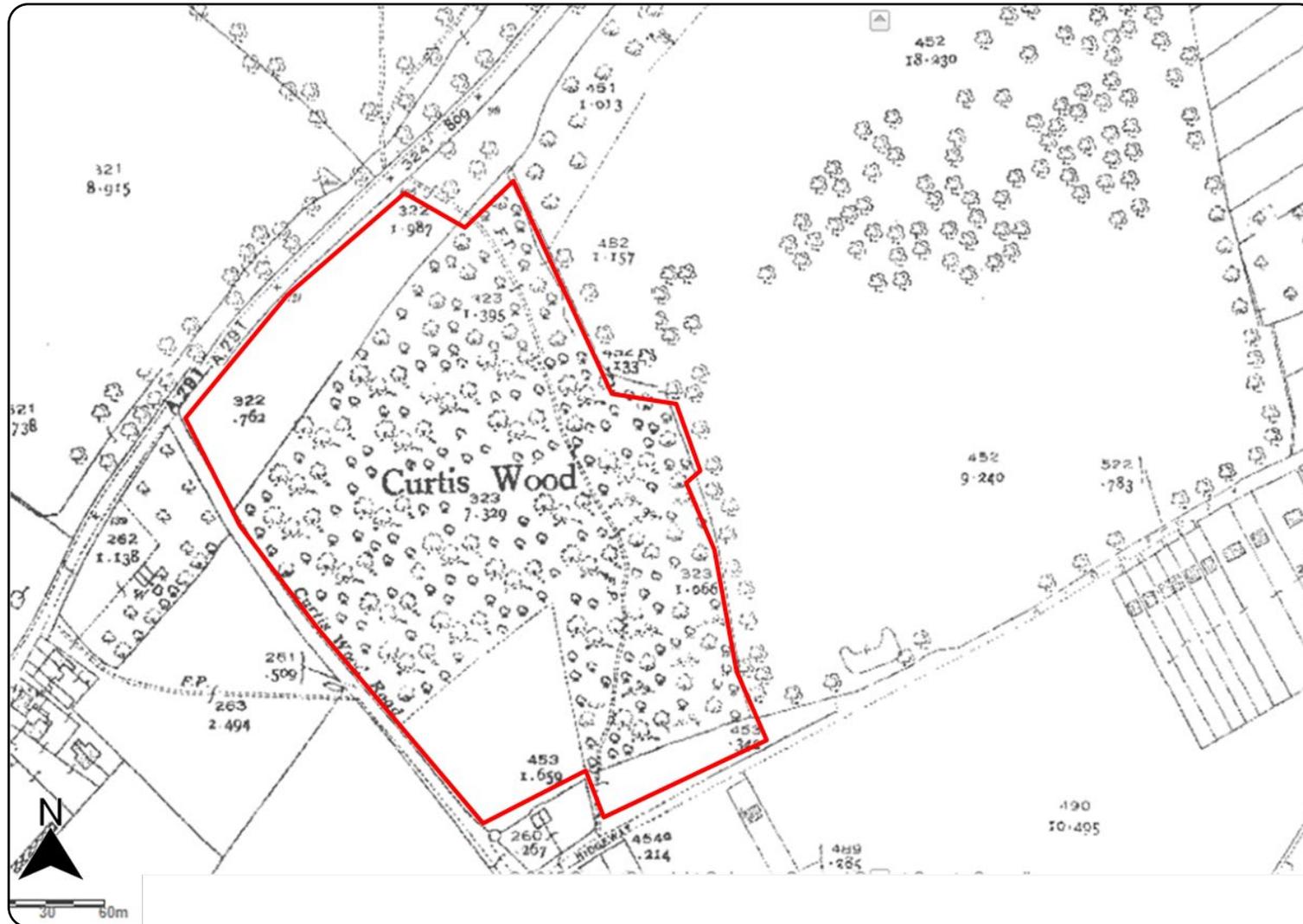


Key	
● (Red)	Access
● (Yellow)	Waymarkers
○ (White)	Ponds
● (Black)	Dead Tree
● (Green)	Veteran Tree
● (Pink)	Rhododendron
▬ (Red and Yellow)	Public Right of Way
▬ (Yellow)	Footpaths
▬ (Blue)	Drainage

Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Compartment Map



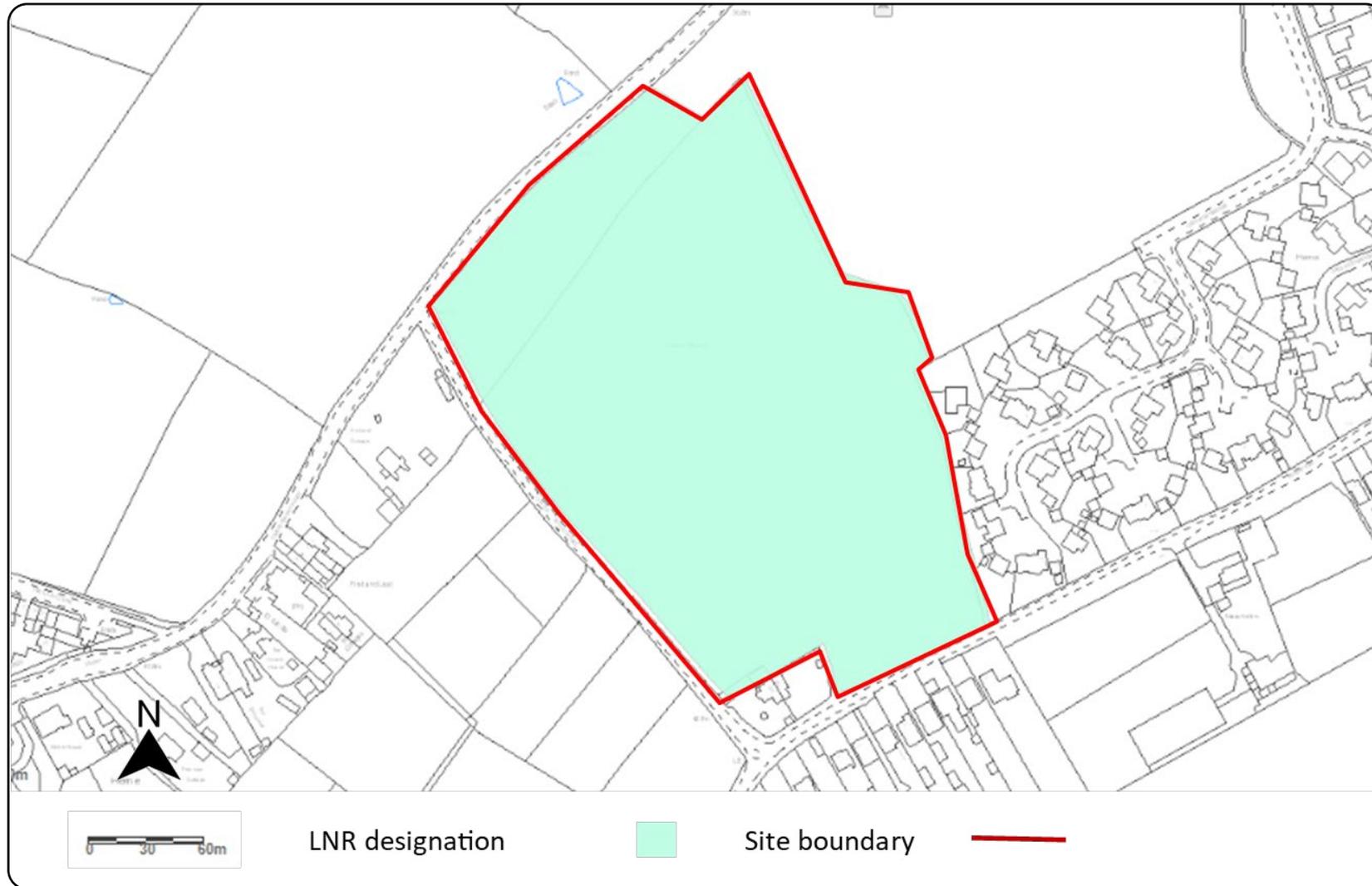
Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Heritage Map 1871 to 1890



Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Aerial Photography 1946



Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Designation



Curtis Wood Local Nature Reserve Public Right of Way Map 2024

