

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Culture and Tourism</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> November 2012</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Silver Wood Management Plan, Ravenfield</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Environment and Development Services</b>

**5. Summary**

A new management plan has been prepared for Silver Wood. It outlines the Council's general position regarding the proposed long term development of these woodlands and includes a detailed work programme for the next five years.

**6. Recommendations**

**That:**

**Silver Wood Management Plan 2012 to 2017 be approved.**

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## **7. Proposals and Details**

Silver Wood is an ancient woodland site that was clear-felled in the early 1900s and replanted at that time with beech. The woodland area is 1.64 hectares (4.0 acres) and was transferred to the authority from Persimmon Homes in 2008 following completion of the Woodlaithes Development. The site has been valued locally for many years and is an important amenity close to Hollings Lane, Ravenfield and the new Woodlaithes development. It provides opportunities for informal recreation such as walking and contributes to the health and well-being of the local community, together with providing valuable opportunities for wildlife conservation and landscape protection. This management plan provides a framework and a long term commitment to the careful stewardship of Silver Wood to ensure these benefits continue.

The main aims of the plan are providing safe and appropriate access, and improving the valuable wildlife interests whilst protecting its landscape importance, in accordance with good management principles supported by the Forestry Commission and Forest Stewardship Council.

Many of the trees are of a similar age having matured together as little management has taken place following planting. Unmanaged in the long-term these trees are likely to be lost at the same time putting at risk the amenity and wildlife benefits that the woodland provides. To improve the wildlife benefits and to help the next generation of trees to establish some management of the trees is proposed. This includes thinning of mature beech trees, creation of one felling area of around 10 mature trees and coppicing along the woodland edge.

This operation involves the removal of selected trees throughout the woodland, principally the poorer formed trees with limited future prospects, giving the best trees more light and room to grow whilst helping to encourage establishment of ground flora, a shrub layer and the next generation of trees. Coppicing of trees along the southern edge is intended to create a light, warm, sunny edge to the woodland providing habitat to encourage fruit and nectar rich plants to thrive, helping to support insects, butterflies, birds and bats. A number of trees will also be topped to leave a standing dead stem providing valuable habitats for wildlife.

### Access and recreation management

Access and recreation will continue to be encouraged. The works will be carried out in such a way that access for walking and other informal recreation such as wildlife study, photography and informal play can continue safely. Because the woodland is only small there are no proposals to increase the level of access provision at the site.

## **8. Finance**

The estimated cost of the works over the five year period is £10,971 of which approximately 40% will be incurred during the first year of the plan and will be funded entirely from sale of timber and a Forestry Commission grant of £1,692.00. The remainder of the costs relate to maintenance works that would take place in any case and have therefore been budgeted for from existing resources.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

There are a number of potential difficulties that can affect woodland sites, particularly in respect of vandalism, littering, fly-tipping and inappropriate access. These will continue to be addressed through partnership working.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The Authority's Woodland Estate is important in contributing to the themes identified in the Council's Corporate Plan.

A well cared for woodland estate across the borough will help create an attractive setting for investment, contributing to towards a mixed and diverse economy. Accessible woodlands contribute towards providing a high quality of life in urban and rural areas, provide an outdoor, alternative setting in which to learn, together with a place to exercise in a safe, clean, green and attractive environment away from traffic and less affected by pollution. Ancient woodlands such as Silver Wood provide a tangible link to the borough's heritage.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

Silver Wood Management Plan 2012 - 2017 Draft, attached as appendix 1  
Formal objections to the proposals, attached as appendix 2

Wide and detailed consultation has taken place with 140 local households, Ward Members, Ravenfield Parish Council and 10 local interest groups. In addition, there was a presentation at a Wentworth South Area Assembly meeting. This is in accordance with Rotherham Partnership Community Engagement Framework and Section 5 of The Consultation Procedure for the Development, Review and Implementation of Management Plans for Council Owned Woodlands. There were 31 responses to the consultation from households and one from Ravenfield Parish Council. Pleasingly there was a largely positive response to the proposals, including 4 responses that were very positive about need for management of the trees. Three formal objections to some of the proposals were also received; two were received from local residents and one from Ravenfield Parish Council. The objections were largely concerned with the removal of healthy trees protected by a tree preservation order. A detailed account of the objections and responses to these are included in appendix 2. A response to the consultation will be will be sent to all consultees following determination of this report. This will reaffirm the importance delivering the proposals to protect the long-term value of the site.

### **Contact Names:**

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