



MAYDENCROFT[®]

ATTENBOROUGH'S FIELDS
5-YEAR LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN



2019 - 2024

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Document Amendment History

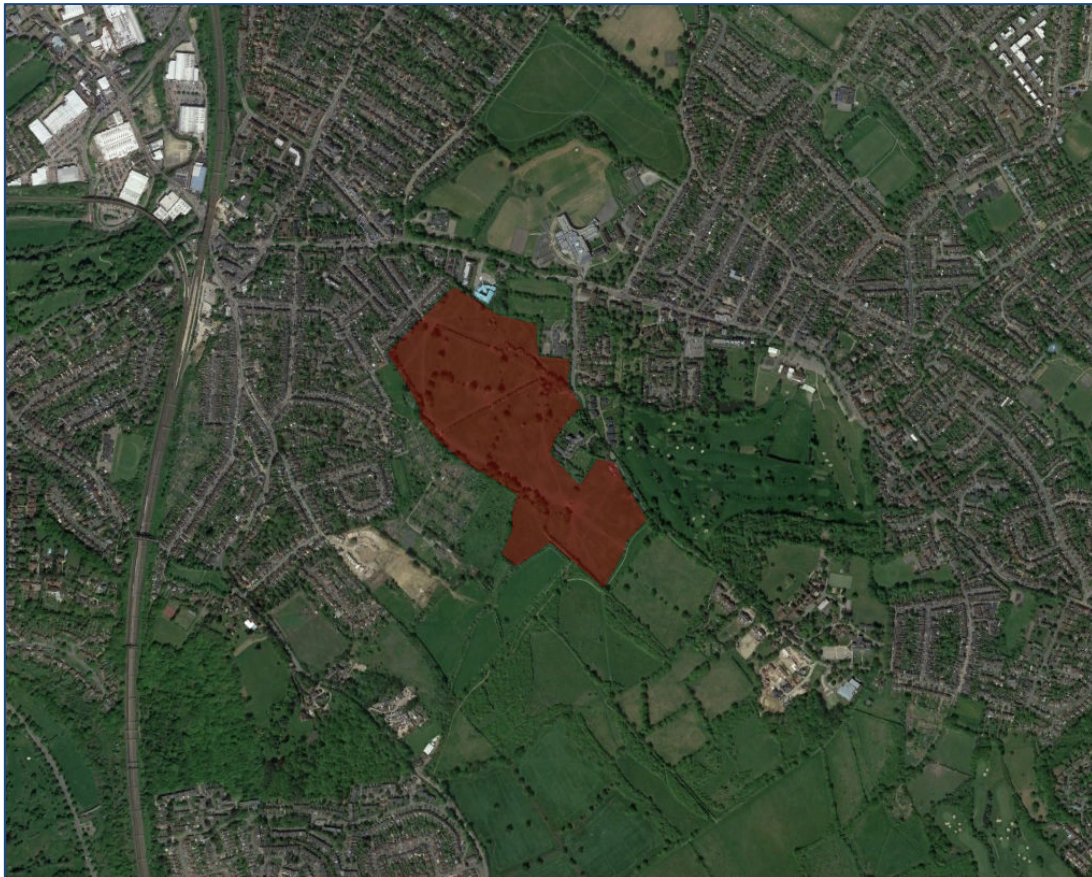
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Document Approval

	Name	Title	Signature	Date
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Site Summary

SITE NAME	Attenborough's Fields
SITE ADDRESS	Merry Hill Road, Bushey, Hertfordshire
GRID REFERENCE	TQ 12678 95006
SIZE	22.6 ha
SITE OWNER	Hertfordshire County Council
CONTACT DETAILS	Serena Aston serena.aston@hertfordshire.gov.uk
DESIGNATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan Green Belt - SSSI Impact Risk Zone – Harrow Weald and Bentley Priory SSSI - Haydon Hill Pastures and Pond, County Wildlife Site



Attenborough's Fields (© Google Earth 2018)

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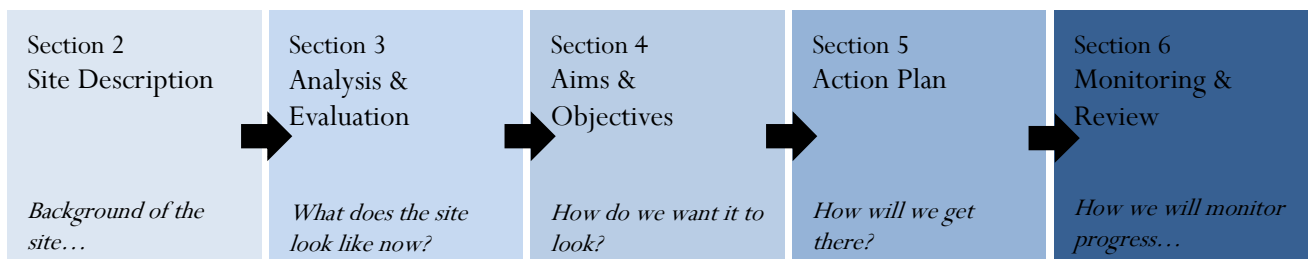
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Maydencroft Limited was commissioned by Serena Aston, Senior Rural Works Team Officer at Hertfordshire County Council's Rural Estate Team to produce a Landscape Management Plan (LMP) for an area of land known as Attenborough's Fields, Merry Hill, Bushey, Hertfordshire.

Attenborough's Fields is the historic parkland of Haydon Hill House, a 19th century manor still present on the northern boundary of the site but under different ownership. The name 'Attenborough's Fields' was given to the site after the former occupants of Haydon Hill House, Richard and Sir David Attenborough.

This Landscape Management Plan is intended to direct the management of the site for a five year period from 2019 – 2024, and replaces the previous management plan which expired in 2014. It aims to capture all of the basic requirements to manage Attenborough's Fields effectively, and seeks to make meaningful site improvements where opportunities are identified.

The plan is designed to be read and understood by all who are involved or interested in the management of the site, with the aim that more people can understand, contribute and have a say in how Attenborough's Fields should be managed. The structure of the document aims to give a legible process for understanding the current condition of Attenborough's Fields and how actions for the next five years have been determined. The layout can be summarised as follows:



Section 2 of this document provides a Site Description which sets out all the factual, baseline information relating to the site in terms of history, ecology, landscape and policy framework. Section 3 takes this factual information and analyses it to ascertain the key issues facing the site and opportunities for improvement. The aims and objectives for site management and enhancement are set out in Section 4 and action plans for delivering these aspirations in Section 5. The final section includes details on how the plan will be monitored and reviewed.



2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

Attenborough's Fields is a beautiful area of historic estate parkland retaining much of its heritage and landscape value. The site of approximately 22.6 hectares (55.84 acres) is located between Bushey to the east and Oxhey to the west, on the south east fringe of Watford. It is within the M25 corridor and close to the M1, situated within a band of open countryside that extends south into the London Borough of Harrow. Within this valuable stretch of Metropolitan Green Belt the peri-urban influences are always present, with a high number of golf clubs, sports fields and cemeteries. As such the importance and value of Attenborough's Fields to the surrounding residential conurbations and the landscape as a whole cannot be overstated.

Attenborough's Fields was acquired by Hertfordshire County Council under the Green Belt Act and is managed following a general vision of being a farmed parkland landscape, grazed by animals and supporting informal permissive access. Visitor infrastructure and facilities have been kept purposefully low with the principle focus being the continuation of grazed parkland with all the associated benefits for biodiversity.

Determining the management needs of Attenborough's Fields over the next five years requires knowledge of its current condition, an appreciation for its history, and an understanding of future challenges. The following paragraphs give an overview of the site, providing an information base that will support actions and operations defined in the latter sections of this document.

2.2 Historical Context

The parkland of Attenborough's Fields once formed part of the Haydon Hill Estate. Occupancy of the land dates back to at least 1652, as evidenced by the presence of a Grade II listed red brick garden wall about 20 metres to the south east of the house and containing an ornamental stone plaque with that particular date; the listing suggests that this plaque may have come from a farmhouse that once occupied this site. Prior to construction of the current building, the estate is known to have been under the ownership of Dr Thomas Monro (1759-1833), Principal Physician at Bethlem Hospital and consultant physician to King George III. Dr Monro was also a known patron of the arts and it is likely that many of the leading contemporary artists visited his home, including J.M.W. Turner. At this time the house was named Merry Hill Cottage, as evidenced on the 1840 tithe map.

The estate was purchased in the early 19th Century by Thomas George Fonnereau (1789-1850), a lawyer, writer and artist. On return from travelling in Italy, he worked with his friend and eminent architect Decimus Burton (1800-1841) to design and build an Italianate villa to replace the previous house on the site. Decimus Burton was one of the most celebrated Victorian architects having designed the Wellington Arch at London Zoo, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, and much of Hyde Park including the gate and screen at Hyde Park corner. Construction of the house commenced in 1841 and completed in 1843.



Figure 1: Haydon Hill House; 1908

The estate was purchased by the Attenborough family in the 1870's who commissioned extensions and renovations c. 1890s. The family remained in the house through the 1920's and 1930's. The house was commandeered during the Second World War by the RAF and was used as a mapping centre during the Battle of Britain. Post war, the house was converted into a retirement home by Harrow Council, then subsequently sold and converted into private apartments. The parkland was at some point separated from the house and came into the ownership of Hertfordshire County Council.

Today, the house survives in favourable condition as a result of a recent development project dividing the building into luxury private apartments. Under the council's ownership, the parkland estate has survived development pressures and retains much of its character and features including veteran trees, ponds, field boundaries, and remnant structures such as estate railings.

There are no scheduled monuments associated with the site, although the Hertfordshire Environment Record contains a record of ridge & furrow earthworks visible within the grassland to the north-west of Haydon Hill House. There are also several historic field boundaries which remain as tree lines, banks and shallow ditches (Historic Environment Records ID ref: 10377). Some of these features can be identified on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (figure 2).

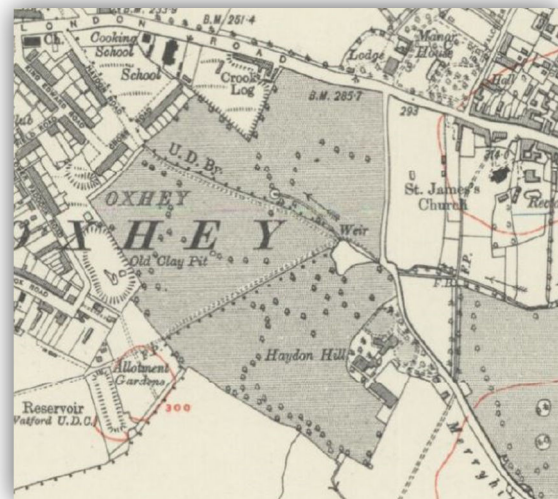


Figure 2: 1st edition Ordnance Survey map showing Attenborough's Fields historic field boundaries

Other features of historic interest include a World War II bomb crater located towards the northern boundary, and remnant farm structures adjoining the south east boundary wall to the garden of Haydon Hill House. This area, which is currently separated from the wider parkland by estate railings, contains a seemingly intact brick-paved floor beneath a layer of grass and vegetation, a brick-lined well, and surrounding low structures hidden by scrub vegetation. It is known by the Friends group as the ‘Piggery’.



Figure 3: The weir near the pond at Attenborough's Fields, 1940's

2.3 Site Designations

The site sits within the Metropolitan Green Belt which is a statutory green belt around London.

The entire site is classified as a County Wildlife Site (a non-statutory designation) under the name *Haydon Hill Pastures and Pond* (also known as Attenborough's Fields) ref: 84/012, described as being:

'Parkland supporting old semi-improved neutral grassland. The sward is moderately diverse with a range of herbs and grasses. There are numerous large old parkland pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) and some younger ash. A small pond with good marginal vegetation is present to the eastern edge which is fed by a small stream. There are remnant hedgerows on the boundary and crossing the site. Wildlife site criteria: grassland indicators'.

County Wildlife Sites are designated for their local nature conservation value based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species. They are monitored by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre which is hosted by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

The site lies within the Impact Risk Zone of the following Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

- **Harrow Weald SSSI:** noted as a geological site which displays exposure of Pleistocene Gravel Beds overlaying Claygate Beds;
- **Bentley Priory SSSI:** noted for its mosaic of unimproved neutral grassland, ancient woodland as well as its wetland and open water features.

The parkland itself is not listed on the register of historic parks & gardens, but Haydon Hill House and the associated garden wall are both Grade II listed structures.

2.4 Geology and hydrology

Haydon Hill House is perched on a reasonably prominent rise within the landscape. Attenborough's Fields has some gentle undulating variations in topography across the parkland, but is generally lower towards the north west Oxhey end, rising across the length of the site to the south east towards Merry Hill. This aspect means that certain areas of the site enjoy expansive views to the north and west across the surrounding rural and urban landscape. The slopes are most evident from the south western field (adjacent to the Woodland Trust site) which offers views back across the site in the direction of Oxhey and Watford.

The Soilsmap map hosted by Cranfield University shows that the majority of Attenborough's Fields is within Soilsmap 18, which is described as being slowly permeable, seasonally wet base-rich loamy and clayey soils. The northern, lower part of the site towards Haydon Road is within Soilsmap 8 which is slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. These issues of drainage are evident on site with some sections of the path network, particularly those with heavy foot fall, becoming muddy and waterlogged during the winter months.

The site contains a number of waterbodies, the largest of which is the pond/lake located just north of Haydon Hill House. It is known that this pond was a part of the formal estate and once supported small pleasure boats. The pond appears to be fed from a land drain / stream from the east (passing under Merry Hill Road via a culvert) with an outfall via a concrete sluice into a wet ditch that leads to a sink hole. This feature was created by the water authority to provide attenuation during periods of localised flooding. Affinity Water are currently responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of this structure. The land either side of this ditch and associated features, continuing north west into Haydon Road, are designated Flood Zone 2 by the Environment Agency.

There is a series of three smaller ponds in the higher southern section of the site. The land in the vicinity of these ponds shows signs of being damper, likely as a result of higher clay content in the soils reducing permeability. The historic field name for this area was Rush Mead, which would suggest that it has a legacy of wetter conditions.

2.5 Habitats and Wildlife

2.5.1 Grassland

The majority of Attenborough's Fields consists of open grassland, maintained by animal grazing. The site is designated a County Wildlife Site due to its semi-improved neutral grassland habitat containing a good range of grasses and herbs (*See Table 1*).



Figure 4: Short grassland, overgrazed by horses

Historically the park would likely have been cattle grazed, but in recent years it has supported a large herd of horses. The over-stocking of horses and the nature of their grazing has led to a reasonably uniform habitat across the site of very short grass with limited variation or evidence of floristic diversity (*Figure 4*). There are some areas of longer rough grass around the fringes of the site which appear to be dominated by coarse grasses and thistle. In its current condition, the grassland

offers limited biodiversity value and doesn't reflect the CWS citation.

The site contains one small separate meadow within the field parcel known as Lower Brick Field. This area is not currently grazed by horses (although grazing infrastructure is present) which has

allowed a more diverse sward to develop (Table 1). This meadow is currently managed through a cut and lift regime.

Table 1: Recorded floral species at Attenborough's Fields (CWS citation)

Species	Scientific name
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Sweet Vernal-grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Crested Dog's-tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>
Bird's-foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Burnet-saxifrage	<i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i>
Meadow buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>

2.5.2 Waterbodies and wetlands

The site contains a number of waterbodies, as described in section 2.3. Two of the ponds in the southern section of the site appear to contain a good assemblage of emergent vegetation, and are known to have historically supported great crested newts. Both of these ponds are fenced to discourage access from dogs. Located close to these ponds is a seasonably dry pond which appears to receive regular access from horses.



Figure 5: Largest pond located close to Haydon Hill House

The largest pond located close to Haydon Hill House is approximately 0.18ha in size and heavily shaded by large bankside willows resulting in minimal emergent vegetation. There also appears to be high levels of silt within this pond, likely as a result of autumn leaf fall but potentially due to the quality of water entering the waterbody from the east. A small tree covered island is located within the centre of the pond (Figure 5). The pond is largely enclosed with the exception of one 'viewing' spot on the northern bank, with a section of post & rail fencing to discourage access from dogs.

2.5.3 Trees

Attenborough's Fields trees are arguably the sites most important feature; they define the parkland landscape character, preserve historic field boundaries, give structure and sense of place at both small and larger scales, and are of significant biodiversity value. Some of the veteran trees on site are likely to be hundreds of years old, pre-dating Haydon Hill House itself.

English oak (*Quercus robur*) is the most commonly found species on site with numerous veteran and mature specimens present (Figure 6). These trees are largely in reasonable condition, albeit showing all the signs and features one would expect to see



Figure 6: Two large mature/veteran oak situated in the middle of a field at Attenborough's Fields

in older trees, such as deadwood, crown dieback, cavities, fungal fruiting bodies, and bark wounding. Some of these features provide ideal habitats for invertebrates, birds, and mammals. Many of the trees were seen to contain Potential Roost Features (PRFs) for bats; it should be noted that bats and their habitats are protected under both domestic and European legislation. Some trees were noted to contain bird and bat boxes.

Other notable specimens found on site include a reasonably large cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) located close to the main pond, common lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), with crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) and common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) around the pond, and occasional large mature hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). A standing dead tree was noted on the boundary of Lower Brickfield; retention of standing dead wood where safe to do so can provide excellent habitat opportunities.

In recent years the Friends Group have carried out some specimen tree planting, focusing on historic boundaries and providing future replacements for older trees. Species have included oak, lime, hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), all surrounded by rough timber guards to protect from horses (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Recently planted hornbeam with guard

Attenborough's Fields falls into the Rural Estates tree safety inspection programme. The roadside trees were inspected and remedial works completed in 2017 and will be resurveyed in 2020. The parkland trees are due to be surveyed in 2019/20.

2.5.4 Hedgerows

Much of the site boundary is formed of native hedgerows containing hawthorn, ash, field maple (*Acer campestre*), hazel, (*Corylus avellana*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and dog rose (*Rosa canina*), with occasional large mature hedgerow trees. There are also some notable internal hedgerows following roughly east-west field boundaries. The Friends Group is currently working to lay one of these internal hedgerows.

Hedgerows are important habitats for a variety of species, providing song posts, foraging, shelter and nesting opportunities for woodland and farmland birds. In addition, the nectar and berries provide nourishment for a variety of invertebrates and mammals. Species rich hedgerows are considered a priority habitat in England.

2.5.5 Fauna

At the time of writing this plan there was limited available information on the species of fauna present on Attenborough's Fields. Of the known records held by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centres, great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) has been recorded in two of the ponds located close to Lower Brickfield, and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) has been recorded at nearby Haydon Dell Farm.

The variety of habitats on site and connectivity to the wider countryside would suggest the likely presence of a number of species. Waterbodies, grasslands and areas of longer vegetation alongside hedgerows provides suitable habitat for commonly found amphibian and reptile species. The more common species of bat are very likely to be present on site due to the roosting and foraging opportunities provided by the veteran trees, hedgerows and waterbodies. The welcome board for Attenborough's Fields mentions the presence of brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). No badger setts were recorded on site but they are likely present in the area, and the site has the potential to be used for foraging habitat. In addition to these protected species, it is likely that the site is used by the more common species of fauna including rabbit, grey squirrel, fox, deer, and rat.

2.5.6 Ecological Connectivity

Attenborough's Fields sits at the northern end of a relatively large expanse of open countryside that stretches south towards Harrow Weald, east to Stanmore and west to Northwood. Within this area are numerous golf courses, farmland and public open spaces including Merry Hill Wood (owned and managed by the Woodland Trust) and Bentley Priory Nature Reserve. This network of rural land contains hedgerows, tree lines, woodlands and grasslands, providing important wildlife corridors enabling species to move throughout the landscape.

2.6 Landscape Character

The distinctive landscape character of Attenborough's Fields is of an historic parkland landscape comprising open grazed pasture, lines of mature and veteran native trees defining former field boundaries, scattered ponds, and remnant historic structures including Haydon Hill House itself. The site has a gently undulating topography with a steady rise towards the south east leading to expansive views across the site and on towards Oxhey and Watford. The landscape character is one of the site's major strengths and as such it important that future management decisions take this into account.

2.6.1 National Context

Attenborough's Fields is located within the National Character Area (NCA) 111: Northern Thames Basin. The area is described as an area rich in geodiversity, archaeology and diverse landscapes ranging from wooded plateaux's, river valleys, heathland and areas predominated by intensive agriculture. Urban expansion has been a feature of the landscape since the 16th century, mainly in the Hertfordshire area which saw a significant increase in the 19th century. There are a wide variety of semi natural habitats in the area supporting many important species, however many of these habitats have now become fragmented.

Statement of Opportunity 3 for NCA 111 is to *protect and appropriately manage the historic environment for its contribution to local character and sense of identity, and as a framework for habitat restoration*. This statement captures well the focus for Attenborough's Fields.

2.6.2 Local Context

The site is located within *Area 14: Bushey Hill Pastures* of the Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. This area is described as having a distinctive east-west ridge extending from Merry Hill to Caldecote Hill. The majority of land use is grazing pasture which maintains a rural and tranquil atmosphere. A key characteristic and feature of the landscape are the parkland areas and associated features, including the railings at Attenborough's Fields.

The condition and robustness of the area have been assessed as moderate, resulting in a strategy to improve and conserve. There are a number of guidelines for managing change which relate to



Figure 8: Parkland landscape of Attenborough's Fields

Attenborough's Fields including;

- *Survey and manage parkland and veteran trees at Haydon Hill for biodiversity value and public safety. Undertake the planting of new parkland trees to develop a diverse age structure. Trees to have metal railings to match existing estate fencing;*
- *Promote both the creation of new ponds and the retention/enhancement for wildlife of existing ponds;*
- *Promote the creation of new orchards with community involvement, using traditional varieties of fruit and minimal use of herbicides and pesticides;*
- *Consider the use of low-density stock grazing as an alternative to over-grazing by horses;*
- *Ensure that the distinctive long-distance views are framed and not lost by emerging woodland areas.*

2.7 Access and recreation

There are a number of pedestrian access routes into and across Attenborough's Fields. These are as follows:

- Two site entrances from Merry Hill Road, one to the north of Haydon Hill House and one next to The Cottage (residential property);
- Four site entrances to the south eastern end of the site from Merry Hill Wood and the Greenway;
- Two site entrances from Paddock Road allotments;
- Two site entrances from Lower Paddock Road via Oxhey Green open space;
- One site entrance from Haydon Road in Oxhey.

All of the site entrances are gated due to the presence of grazing animals, but otherwise there are no restrictions on permissive access. One of the entrances from Oxhey Green open space has a

large map-based visitor interpretation panel with images and information about the site. This entrance also has a leaflet dispenser containing leaflets about the Friends group. Most of the other site entrances have small panels containing the site name (*Haydon Hill, Bushey*), the HCC logo, and contact details.

There are two vehicular access points to Attenborough's Fields via field gates on Merry Hill Road; these entrances are used by maintenance vehicles, including the grazier. The site has no formal provision for car parking, but there is on-street parking available on Merry Hill Road, Lower Paddock Road, and Haydon Road.

A number of public rights of way pass through the site. Footpaths 62, 58 and 71 enter the site at Haydon Road to the west and exit the site to the north onto Merry Hill Road. Footpath 68 also enters at Haydon Road and exits the site via Oxhey Green to the west. Footpath 60 enters the site at Merry Hill Road and exits the site via Paddock Road Allotments to the west. This footpath also runs along the western boundary connecting to footpath 59, exiting through Merry Hill Wood to the west. Footpath 17 enters the site from Merry Hill Road to the north of Haydon House and also connects to footpath 59. Bridleway 65 runs along the eastern boundary within land owned by the Woodland Trust and does not enter the site.

All of the paths on site are either grass or beaten earth with no provision of hard surfaced routes. At the time of writing this plan no visitor survey has previously been undertaken for the site, but it would appear that it is relatively well used by the local population, particularly for dog walking. The site does occasionally receive some misuse, including a legacy of fire damage to a couple of the large parkland trees. Attenborough's Fields is not widely promoted as a site of public open space as it is viewed primarily as grazed farmland with permissive access rather than an amenity site.

2.7.1 Site furniture

The site has minimal site furniture with litter and dog waste bins provided at the site entrances from Merry Hill Road and Haydon Road, and a small number of rustic wooden benches located around the site. Sections of metal estate railings are present around the perimeter and within the site in varying states of condition. The site also contains a number of structures to facilitate grazing including troughs, fencing and a stock handling area close to the gated vehicular entrance on Merry Hill Road.

2.7.2 Signage and interpretation

The majority of the public rights of way are signposted with fingerposts at the points of entry into the site and within the site itself. Although there are many permissive routes throughout the site, none of these are signed or waymarked. An interpretation board is located near the entrance from Oxhey Green open space displaying information regarding the site's ownership, history and associated habitats and species. There is also an offsite Woodland Trust information board at the entrance to Merry Hill Wood.

2.8 Site Management

2.8.1 Management structure

The site is owned by Hertfordshire County Council with management of the site delivered through the Council's Rural Estates team. The Rural Estates team are responsible for all aspects of the site's management and security.

2.8.2 Agricultural tenancy

The site has historically been grazed by horses, dating back to at least 1986, and before then is believed to have been managed by cattle grazing. In recent years the herd has expanded beyond the capacity of the site, resulting in the grassland being significantly over grazed with large expanses of closely-cropped grass and little botanical diversity within the sward. Subsequently, the county council have embarked on a process to remove the horses from the site and to investigate alternative methods of grazing.

2.8.3 Friends of Attenborough's Fields

The Friends of Attenborough's Fields group was formed in 1994, following a successful campaign by the local community to resist efforts to develop Attenborough's Fields as an extension to Bushey Golf Course. Since this time, the Friends group have assisted the county council with ongoing site management, completing a range of tasks including laying hedges, planting trees and installing bird and bat boxes. The group meets every first Sunday of the month and regularly attract up to ten volunteers from the local community. In addition, the Friends of Attenborough's Fields helped raise the match funding of £20,000 for the Woodland Trust to purchase the neighbouring "Merry Hill Farm". The Friends group has their own website with information about the site and membership, and work closely with the Oxhey Village Environment Group (OVEG).

3.0 Analysis & Evaluation

3.1 Introduction

This section of the management plan constitutes an analysis of the current situation at Attenborough's Fields. It takes the factual information set out in the Site Description a stage further by exploring the condition and quality of important features and combining it with the aspirations of HCC and the Friends group to highlight opportunities for change and improvement. This evaluation will determine the aims, objectives and future management actions for Attenborough's Fields over the next five years.

The information supporting this process has come from a number of sources. An initial site meeting with HCC rural estates staff flagged up various issues and opportunities related to the site. This was followed by a consultation meeting with the Friends of Attenborough's Fields group to discuss their involvement in the care of the site and to look at aspirations for future improvement. It should be noted that a public consultation exercise has not been undertaken as a part of this process.

3.2 Landscape & Heritage

3.2.1 Trees

Attenborough's Fields is scattered with a fantastic array of mature and veteran parkland trees. These trees are of vital importance to the landscape character of the site, giving structure and purpose to the historic parkland. Many of these trees contain defects in the form of deadwood, cavities, wounds, and fungal fruiting bodies, all of which are common signs that one would expect to find in veteran and over mature trees. Although deadwood and cavities provide excellent habitat and can form part of a tree's veteran character, it is important that due consideration is given to the safety of trees, and remedial works undertaken where trees are found to pose a significant risk to the general public or neighbouring targets such as buildings and roads. It is also important that due consideration is given to the future of trees on site, with appropriate plans in place for providing future replacements for mature trees as they inevitably fail or need to be removed.

Where a tree is hazardous because of decay or structural weakness the occupier of the land is on which it stands is liable under UK law for any personal injury or other damage caused by breaking or falling. It is therefore imperative that all the trees at Attenborough's Fields are assessed for their safety and any which are deemed unsafe have remedial works undertaken as required.

Over the past few years, the Friends Group have done a fantastic job planting future replacements for the parkland trees, selecting appropriate native species of local provenance and siting them within existing tree lines or on lost boundaries. It would be useful if this positive approach was built into a Tree Strategy that would (a) identify, record and assess all important veteran and mature parkland trees on the site, (b) establish risk zones and a plan for undertaking tree safety inspections, and (c) set out a planned approach for planting replacement trees, including suitable locations and species. This supporting plan would help to provide clear direction for all future tree management.

3.2.2 Historic structures and remnant features

In addition to trees, Attenborough's Fields contains a number of remnant historic structures including a section of the outbuildings associated with Haydon Hill House (an area known as the 'Piggery') and numerous lengths of estate railings in various states of repair.

The 'Piggery' area is currently separated from the wider site by estate railings and a locked gate, and is largely obscured by grass and scrub vegetation. Periodically the Friends Group have cleared the vegetation in order to reveal the brick-paved floor and surrounding structures, but otherwise there are no plans for the conservation or interpretation of this feature. Without knowing conclusively what purpose this area served and therefore the importance of the surviving structures, it is difficult to say how it should be managed and if there would be any value in providing interpretive information. It may be worth considering a small specialist study to look into the history of this area and to provide some guidance on its future management.



Figure 9: Broken estate railings

The remnant estate railings are an interesting feature of the site, although many lengths are now either redundant due to their location or in a poor condition. It would be useful to undertake a full survey and audit of the railings on site to determine which can be left intact, which are well sited but require some form of maintenance, which are beyond repair and require removal, and which would benefit from being relocated. This would open up opportunities to use the estate railings in different ways, such as to provide shelters around the newly planted trees.

3.2.3 Connections to Haydon Hill House

The plan has identified that at some point in the 20th Century, Haydon Hill House was separated from its parkland with both sites being managed under different ownership. This disconnect continues to this day, and is evident in the 'lost' transition between the house and the parkland, which is now a dense belt of laurel (likely formally managed on the house side) and bramble scrub with lengths of estate railing and post & wire fence.



Figure 10: View of Haydon Hill House from parkland

The private ownership of Haydon Hill House means that some form of secure boundary between the house and park will likely need to be retained; however, there is no reason why this boundary couldn't better reflect the character of the site with consideration for how it would previously have appeared. There is certainly work that could be done on the Attenborough's Fields side to improve the boundary, but it also flags up the importance of sharing this document and future plans with the managers and residents of Haydon Hill House and seeking their support for potential future improvements.

Throughout the wider site it is important to consider the connectivity to the house within important views and vistas, ensuring that new tree planting is appropriately sited. For visitors to Attenborough's Fields, the connection to Haydon Hill House is of great interest, not least because the house was once occupied by the Attenborough family. Again, consideration towards gaining the support of managers and residents of Haydon Hill House will help to maintain and improve the way the house is viewed from the wider estate, and also help to encourage residents to view the wider parkland with a sense of ownership and pride.

3.3 Biodiversity & Conservation

3.3.1 Grassland Management

The grassland habitats associated with the site have been significantly over grazed by horses for a number of years, leading to a sward dominated by rye grass with few herbs and a lack of diversity. Historically, the grassland would have been far richer, as evidenced by the county wildlife site designation for semi-improved neutral grassland and supporting species list (*section 2.4.1*).

Horses spend between 16 – 18 hours a day grazing and browsing, preferring high fibre grasses, plants and herbs that provide a balanced diet. They are selective grazers which means they favour some areas and leave others untouched. Over-stocking fields with horses can lead to areas of tightly grazed land where the grass is prevented from rejuvenating, coupled with soil compaction, poaching and damage to biodiversity. It also creates areas of unpalatable 'rough' within the pastures, untouched by horses and developing coarse weeds and scrub vegetation. Research suggests that grazing grass and meadows consistently below 2.5cm can cause irreparable damage and loss of plant species.

As a result of over-stocking and issues related to the tenancy, the horse population has recently been removed from Attenborough's Fields completely. It is important that the new grazing requirements are reviewed in terms of animal appropriateness, stocking density, and timings in order to provide the best result for the associated habitats. Infrastructure will need to be reviewed and updated accordingly. Consideration should also be given to site user safety and the potential conflicts between animals and dog walkers. Monitoring will be essential in the first few years of establishment to ensure that numbers and timings are correct.

3.3.2 Ponds and wetlands

The main pond at Attenborough's Fields is currently surrounded by dense trees and shrubs (predominantly willow and alder) and appears to be very silty, likely as a combination of leaf drop and the quality of water entering the pond from the east. The Friends Group have previously done work to manage vegetation around the pond margins through coppicing and pollarding, and a section of fence has been installed to restrict dogs from entering and causing bank erosion. Several sections of estate railing still exist around the pond fringes.

It is known that the pond is an important component of the parkland estate's history, and believed to have once been used for recreation by the owners of the house. It is likely that the pond was previously far more open in character, as evidenced by the position of remnant ornamental specimen trees including a cedar of Lebanon. Continued management by the Friends Group will certainly help to keep control of the bank vegetation, but it will be a constant battle. It may be

worth considering a larger project to ‘restore’ the pond back to its original ornamental character but with greater biodiversity potential due to increased light levels and habitat variety.

There is an opportunity to create some habitat diversity in a perennially wet area of the site known as Rush Mead (in the vicinity of three ponds). The wetter nature of this area means that it could support a network of waterbodies including scrapes and ponds, to add to the existing habitats in this location and provide greater opportunity for reptile and amphibian species.

3.3.3 Control of dogs

The site appears to be well-used by dog walkers, but at this current time there does not appear to be a significant problem with dog fouling. Two of the entrances have dog bins which may be a sufficient number for site usage. There is currently no prohibitive signage at the site entrances, but it may be useful to consider some form of ‘bag it, bin it’ message to encourage dog owners to take responsibility.

There does not appear to have historically been much conflict between dogs and horses on Attenborough’s Fields, but there is always the potential for issues when the public are able to access animal grazed sites. An important consideration for future grazing will be the use of animals that are comfortable around dogs and people.

3.4 Access & Enjoyment

3.4.1 Site entrances

Attenborough’s Fields benefits from having multiple entrances which provide permissive access to the site from all sides. Some of these have particularly welcoming qualities, such as those from Paddock Road allotments and Oxhey Green which provide relatively clear sight lines in and out of the site. The entrance from Haydon Road provides particularly inviting views across the site, drawing visitors in from the residential areas of South Oxhey.



Figure 11: Enclosed entrance on Merry Hill Road

Other entrances were found to have some issues that reduced their welcoming quality. The entrance from Merry Hill Road to the south of Haydon Hill House is very enclosed and shaded by tall vegetation with an array of current and redundant site furniture (Figure 11). The presence of the kissing gate makes it clear that there is an entrance to somewhere, but the lack of visibility and signage means that it is not clear where the entrance leads.

Attenborough’s Fields and the Woodland Trust’s Merry Hill Wood site have shared entrances along the south east boundary, but none at the site entrances from Merry Hill Road where the sites are separated by a post & wire fence. There appears to be opportunity to provide greater connection between the two adjacent public open spaces through the creation of a new entrance point.

3.4.2 Signage

Current site signage is quite limited with only one high quality entrance/interpretation panel located at the site entrance from Oxhey Green open space. With the exception of public right of way fingerposts, standard entrance signage for the site consists of basic information panels attached to post & rails fences; whilst these are of use, they do little to promote the site entrances or encourage visitors in. There is an opportunity to develop a consistent style of entrance signage across the site that will help to strengthen identity and provide clarity around site ownership, and provide a more welcoming experience for visitors. The scale of any signage scheme should be appropriate to the site's focus of being grazed farmland with permissive access.

3.4.3 Recreation & Facilities

The provision and quality of facilities on a public open space should be appropriate to the size and nature of the site. In the case of Attenborough's Fields, the site is primarily grazed farmland but with several public rights of way and permissive access. This means that the site is amenable for informal recreation such as walking and jogging, but doesn't contain any sports or play equipment, or formal facilities such as toilets or café.

Attenborough's Fields appears to be well used by the local community, appearing on several walking websites such as Ordnance Survey and the Ramblers Association promoting the site to individuals and walking groups within the area. There is also an active health walk scheme operating within Bushey which may use the site.

Adjoining the north west boundary of Attenborough's Fields is a small public amenity open space called Oxhey Green, owned and managed by Watford Borough Council and containing a play area, amenity cut grass, and small sports pitch. The location of this park is strategically useful, providing site visitors with play facilities just outside of the historic parkland landscape.

3.4.5 Personal security

The character of Attenborough's Fields is largely open with long views throughout and very few enclosed areas. As such the feeling of personal safety and security is generally quite favourable, particularly with the presence of multiple site entrances/exits. A site entrance from Merry Hill Road was identified as having some security concerns due to the presence of dense, overgrown shrubs between the path and adjacent pond. An area like this would benefit from opening up to improve visibility.

There is little evidence on site of antisocial behaviour other than a couple of blackened oak trees from previous fire damage, and a small fire site within the 'piggery' at the south eastern side of Haydon Hill House.

3.5 Community Involvement

3.5.1 Volunteer groups

The Friends of Attenborough's Fields was established in 1994 and meet every first Sunday of the month. This group is an important asset to the site, completing a range of tasks from planting trees to litter picking, and providing a 'presence'. It is important that the Friends group continue

to be well supported so that they remain a vital component in the management of the site, and opportunities sought to increase membership and local support.

Another important local organisation is the Oxhey Village Environment Group (OVEG), a local residents association run by volunteers. The aims of OVEG are to maintain, protect and enhance the character and environment of the village, foster community spirit, protect and support local services, and to record the history of the area. As a part of their work, OVEG occasionally conduct guided walks at Attenborough's Fields to promote the conservation value of the site. As with the Friends group, it is important that OVEG continue to be consulted on decision making at Attenborough's Fields, and given the opportunity to be involved with its future.

Both of these groups are very active in the local area and have a vested interest in Attenborough's Fields. Through their websites and contacts, the Friends of Attenborough's Fields and OVEG can help to keep site users such as local dog walkers informed on local events and site management.

3.5.2 Other stakeholders

The Woodland Trust's Merry Hill Wood sits on the western boundary and provides an opportunity for potential partnership working. The Woodland Trust will have a network of volunteers that may be willing to support the existing friend's group on larger projects if required. It is also likely that the site management plans share mutual aims that may benefit from a joined up approach to management and funding.

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School backs directly onto the site and as such likely use the site either formally during lessons, or informally before and after school for play and access. The school should be included in future consultation and given the opportunity to comment on decision making about the site. Use of the site by the school should be encouraged to promote a sense of ownership and interest from the younger generation.

The managers and residents of Haydon Hill House should be given the opportunity in future to be involved in the decision making about Attenborough's Fields. This will help to strengthen the links between the house and wider estate.

3.5.3 Marketing and communication

The Friends of Attenborough's Fields have a simple website providing useful information relating to the site, background information about how and why the friends group was formed, and contact details and information on how to join and become involved with the friends group. The website also contains links to neighbouring organisations including the Woodland Trust and Oxhey Village Environment Group. Oxhey Village Environment Group also has a website which provides regular updates relating to Attenborough's Fields, with a link back to the friends of Attenborough's Fields website.

4.0 Aims & Objectives

As a result of the evaluation and assessment of Attenborough's Fields, the following Vision Statement has been developed for the site, supported by a number of Aims and Objectives. A programme of actions and activities have been formulated to work towards these aims during the life span of the Management Plan.

4.1 Vision Statement

“Attenborough's Fields will be a beautiful, picturesque and tranquil farmed parkland landscape, sensitively managed to protect and enhance its valuable natural and cultural heritage.

Traditional practices such as grazing and hedge laying will be employed wherever possible to continue the legacy of managed farmland, to reinvigorate the landscape character, and to maximise biodiversity potential.

The site will continue to offer permissive access for the informal use and enjoyment of local communities and visitors from further afield, with accessible routes and connections into the wider countryside”.

4.2 Aims and Objectives

A Landscape & Heritage – *To understand, conserve and strengthen the quality and value of Attenborough's Fields' historic parkland landscape and cultural heritage.*

- A1 Develop a Tree Strategy for Attenborough's Fields, recording and assessing the location and condition of important mature and veteran parkland trees, and establishing a principal for ongoing inspections and replacement tree planting.
- A2 Audit and record all surviving historic remnant features, and plan for effective conservation as required.
- A3 Identify, establish and maintain important views and vistas throughout the site, and retain visual connectivity to Haydon Hill House.

B Biodiversity & Conservation – *To protect, improve and enhance the diversity and abundance of Attenborough's Fields' natural habitats and species assemblages.*

- B1 Adapt current management practices to provide greater scope and opportunity for habitat diversity and stability.
- B2 Undertake targeted restoration to improve the condition of degraded habitats, such as the main pond.
- B3 Develop opportunities for creating and managing new habitats on site.
- B4 Undertake a programme of ecological monitoring to understand more about the wildlife of Attenborough's Fields, and to analyse the success of habitat management.

C Access & Enjoyment – *To improve accessibility throughout Attenborough's Fields and to strengthen connections between the site and surrounding countryside.*

- C1 Improve site entrances to form welcoming, visible and attractive gateways to Attenborough's Fields, in proportion to their location and perceived usage.
- C2 Strengthen the physical and perceived connections between Attenborough's Fields and neighbouring open spaces, including Merry Hill Wood.
- C3 Review the grass path network around the site with a view to providing improvements where a definite need is identified.

D Community Involvement – *To involve key stakeholders and the local community in decision making and active support of Attenborough's Fields.*

- D1 Encourage community and volunteer involvement with practical conservation tasks and active involvement through the Friends of Attenborough's Fields.
- D2 Support the development of new skills in the community through training opportunities and events.
- D3 Carry out regular information sharing to let people know what is happening on the site, and to provide an opportunity for feedback.
- D4 Encourage a partnership approach to working with neighbouring organisations such as the Woodland Trust.

5.0 Action Plans

The following Action Plan section is divided into two tables. The first is a Capital Work Programme, covering all one-off items that will be delivered throughout the 5-year life span of the Management Plan. Each action is preceded by one or more objective references, and where appropriate suggests responsible parties and timescales. Some of these actions are to be completed by HCC Rural Estates and the Friends of Attenborough Fields, but others may require external funding.

The second table contains an Annual Maintenance & Monitoring Schedule which includes all of the regular tasks required to maintain the site in positive management. It should be noted that the schedule does not include for any reactive remedial works and standalone operations that will be determined by future management plan meetings.

ABBREVIATIONS

HCC RE	Hertfordshire County Council Rural Estates
CWT	Countryside Works Team
FoAF	Friends of Attenborough's Fields
SC	Specialist Consultant
C	Contractor
G	Grazier
OVEG	Oxhey Village Environment Group
WT	Woodland Trust

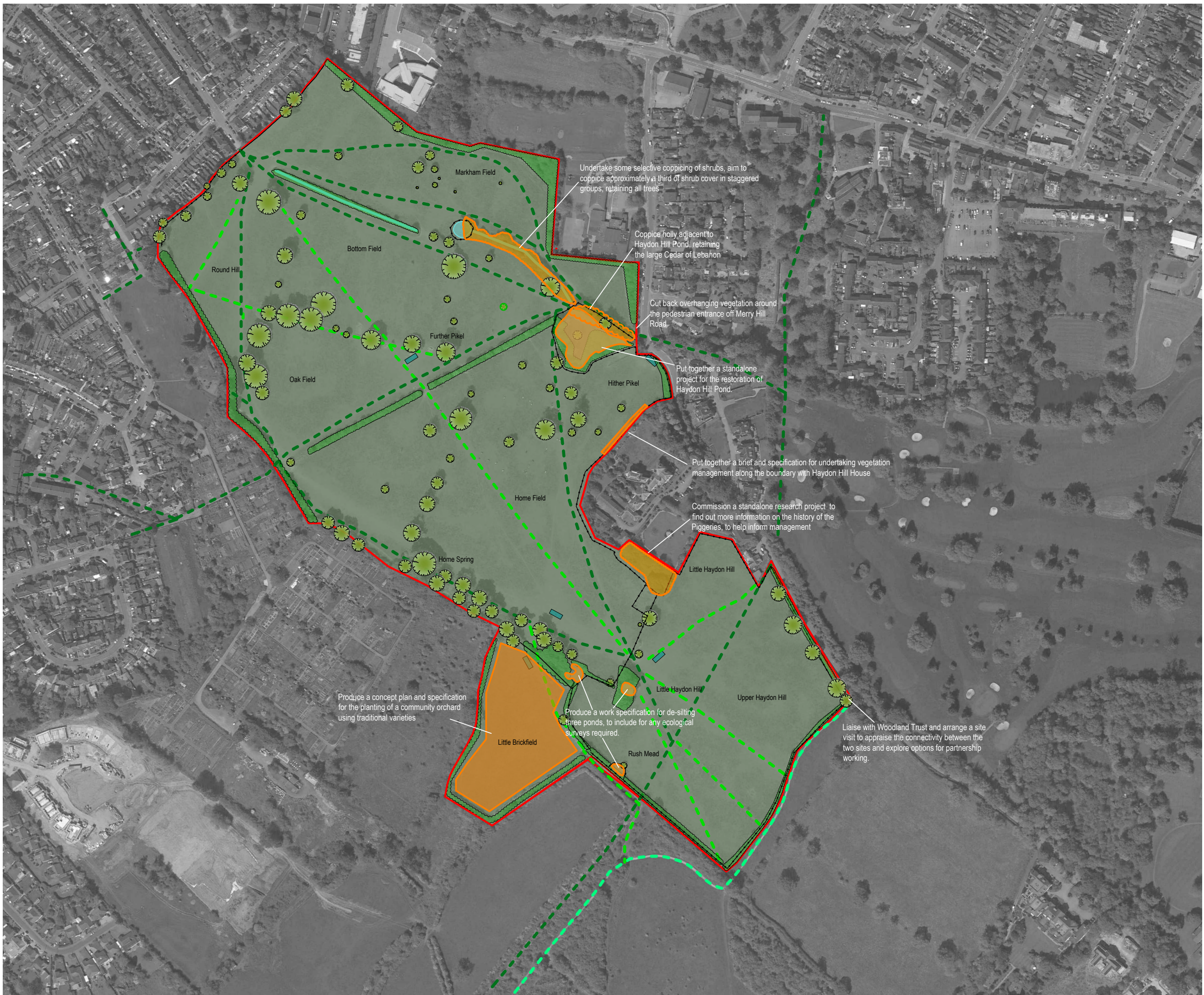
5.1 Capital Works Programme

Obj ref.	Habitat/Location	Description of works	Timing	Responsibility	Est. Cost*	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	STATUS
A1 A3	Whole site – Trees	Undertake a site audit of all mature, veteran and ancient trees, recording details of location, condition, and any remedial works required.	Any time	SC or FoAF	£1,800						
		Use site audit information to produce a Tree Strategy to programme proactive remedial works to notable trees, and to have an informed plan for replacement planting.	Any time	SC or FoAF	£2,400						
A2	Whole site – Estate Railings	Undertake an audit and condition assessment of the estate railings and gates to establish sections are in good state of repair and those that need repair, replacing, removal and/or relocating.	Any time	HCC RE	-						
A3 D1 D3	North east boundary with Haydon Hill House.	Put together a brief proposal for undertaking vegetation management along the boundary between Haydon Hill House and Attenborough's Fields.	Any time	HCC RE	-						
		Carry out some form of stakeholder communication with residents/managers of Haydon Hill House to inform them of plans.	Any time	HCC RE	-						
		Undertake some clearance (and possible replanting) of dense bramble scrub developing along the boundary with Haydon Hill House; assess estate railings and repair/remove as required.	Oct – Feb	FoAF	-						
B1 B3 D3	Whole site – grazing	Make contact with potential graziers to gauge interest in taking on the grazing Attenborough's Fields.	Any time.	HCC RE	-						
		Undertake an audit to check on the condition of grazing infrastructure, including fencing, gates, water troughs, and access points.	Any time	HCC RE	-						

Obj ref.	Habitat/Location	Description of works	Timing	Responsibility	Est. Cost*	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	STATUS
		Carry out any repairs to grazing infrastructure as required, including the fixing of the trough water supply in Little Brickfield.	Any time	G	TBC						
		Production of a grazing agreement and signing of all required documentation.	Any time	HCC RE & G	-						
		Release local press statements and communication regarding the introduction of new grazing animals.	Any time	HCC RE & FoAF	-						
		Introduce grazing animals to site.	TBC	G	-						
B2 D1 D2 D3	Haydon Hill Pond	Put together a project 'concept' brief for the restoration of Haydon Hill Pond; use this concept as a foundation for seeking external funding. <i>Funded project likely to include initial development stages (ecological surveys, hydrographic survey, detailed design, permit applications etc), de-silting, de-shading, bank reinforcement, planting, and interpretation.</i>	If/when funding is available	HCC RE & FoAF	-						
		Complete restorative works to the Haydon Hill pond including de-silting and de-shading.	If/when funding is available	C	TBC						
B2	Footpath from Merry Hill entrance (adjacent to Haydon Hill Pond)	Coppice the dense border of predominantly holly shrubs (retaining larger trees, including the notable Cedar of Lebanon) to de-shade the path and open up views to the pond.	Oct – Feb	CWT	TBC						
B2 B4	Ponds on southern boundary.	Produce a work specification for de-silting the three small ponds on the southern boundary; include for any ecological surveys required and EA permitting for arisings.	If/when funding is available	HCC RE	-						

Obj ref.	Habitat/Location	Description of works	Timing	Responsibility	Est. Cost*	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	STATUS
		Undertake eDNA testing of all three ponds to establish the presence/absence of great crested newt.	Apr - Jun	SC	£1,500						
		Complete small-scale de-silting of the ponds (works to be undertaken during GCN hibernation period)	Nov – Feb	C	TBC						
B2	Ditch between Haydon Hill Pond & swallow hole	Undertake some selective coppicing of shrubs along the ditch that runs from Haydon Hill pond to the swallow hole; aim to coppice approximately a third of shrub cover in staggered groups, retaining all trees.	Oct – Feb	CWT	TBC						
B3 D1 D2	Orchard	Produce a concept plan and specification for the planting of a community orchard Attenborough's Fields using traditional varieties; use plan to try and secure external funding.	Any time	HCC RE & FoAF	-						
		Undertake consultation on the plan and promote community involvement.	Any time	FoAF & OVEG							
		Carry out orchard creation	Sept – Nov	C, CWT, &/or FoAF							
B4 D2	Grasslands – Reptiles	Undertake a presence/absence reptile survey, focussing on differing areas of grassland habitat across the site, including in the vicinity of ponds and Lower Brickfield <i>Potential to be used as an opportunity for offering FoAF experience/training in undertaking reptile surveys.</i>	Apr – Aug	SC & FoAF	TBC						
B4 D2	Grasslands – Flora	Install fixed quadrants to monitor the botanical composition of the grasslands and the change in composition as a response to grazing, where economically viable.	Apr – Sept	SC &/or FoAF	TBC						

Obj ref.	Habitat/Location	Description of works	Timing	Responsibility	Est. Cost*	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	STATUS
C1 D1	Merry Hill Road entrance.	Cut back over-hanging vegetation around the pedestrian entrance leading from Merry Hill Road to increase visibility into and out of the site.	Oct – Feb	FoAF or CWT	-						
C2 D4	Shared boundary with the Woodland Trust site.	Share this Management Plan with the Woodland Trust and arrange a site visit between HCC RE and WT to appraise the connectivity between the two sites and explore options for partnership working.	Any time	HCC RE & WT	-						
		Undertake any improvement works as a result of meeting with WT, such as the creation of a new site entrance into Attenborough Fields located close to the entrance to the Woodland Trust site from Merry Hill Road.	Any time	HCC RE & WT	TBC						
C1 C2 D1 D3 D4	Whole site	Design, produce and install simple welcome boards at all entrances to the site; explore the potential for external funding support alongside other projects (pond restoration, orchard creation etc). Consider inclusion of a dual-use information board on site for use by HCC RE, FoG & OVEG.	If/when funding is available	HCC RE, FoAF, OVEG & SC	TBC						
		Discuss with WT the potential for joined up map panels and/or leaflets that include both sites with linked	If/when funding is available	HCC RE & WT	-						
D3	Management Plan Review	Undertake a Management Plan review meeting to discuss the progress of the plan and to look ahead towards the next 5 years.	Any time	HCC RE, FoAF & WT	-						



KEY

- Site Boundary
- Public Right of Way
- Grass paths
- Woodland Trust Greenway
- Fence
- Watercourse
- Tree
- Capital Projects
- Grassland
- Pond
- Hedgerows
- Troughs

Base aerial plan (c) Google Earth 2018
The original of this drawing was produced in colour. A monochrome copy should not be relied upon.

Client Hertfordshire County Council - Rural Estates		
Project Attenborough's Fields Landscape Management Plan		
Title Capital Works Action Plan		
Drawn AW	Checked JC	Date 11.04.19
Drawing No. ML5541-002		Revision Issue
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5.2 Annual Maintenance & Monitoring Schedule

Habitat / Location / Feature	Description of Works	Responsibility	Timing	Frequency	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
TREES	Undertake a programme of tree inspections of High and Moderate risk areas as part of the Rural Estates Tree Safety Inspection Programme.	HCC RE	Any time	High 3 years / Mod 5 years												
	Undertake pro-active remedial works as prescribed by tree inspections.	CWT or C	Any time	As required												
ESTATE FENCING	Develop and implement a work programme for the repair and maintenance of the estate fencing and associated structures (details to be informed by the audit and condition assessment).	CWT or C	Any time	n/a												
HEDGEROWS	Continue to lay the hedgerow at the centre of the site to preserve open views.	FoAF	Oct - Feb	n/a												
	Undertake periodic siding up and topping of all boundary and internal hedgerows, including those alongside Merry Hill Road and surrounding Little Brickfields.	G	Dec - Feb	Every three years												
GRASSLAND	Control under-grazed areas of coarse vegetation (such as those dominated by thistle) through additional topping, where economically viable.	G	June	Once per year												
	Cut and lift in early spring prior to grazing to reduce the amount of coarse grasses and weed species (prior to the implementation of grazing – may not be required once grazing has been established), where economically viable.	G	Mar - Apr	Once per year												
	Maintain the grass path network through regular mowing as and when required.	G	Apr - Aug	TBC												
GRAZING	Annual check that all grazing infrastructure is functional and secure, including fencing and water troughs.	G	Feb - Mar	Annually												
	Monitor grazing animals on site (to include for regular checks of stock – potential for support by the FoAF)	G	Apr - Aug	TBC												
MEETINGS	Hold annual meetings with the friends' group to agree forthcoming work programmes.	HCC RE & FoAF	Jan	Annually												
LITTER	Remove all litter from the site (note – frequency may need to be increased during summer months).	CWT	Any time	Monthly												
INFRASTRUCTURE	Undertake an inspection of all site infrastructure and furniture to identify any issues and remedial works required, including benches, signage, fences and gates.	HCC RE / FoAF / G	Feb - Mar	Annually												

6.0 Monitoring and review

The Attenborough's Fields Management Plan is intended to cover a period of five years, from 2019 to 2024. Monitoring will be used to measure the success of improvement works on site and to determine how site usage and habitats are responding to the changes in management. This information will then be utilised to modify management operations as required.

6.1 Annual management meetings

It is recommended that annual management meetings are held between the landowner, Friends of Attenborough's Fields, grazier, and all other relevant stakeholders in order to review the progress of site management for the current year, and to agree the work programme for the forthcoming year. This approach will allow management objectives to be adjusted through the course of this plan or as and when the conditions on site change in response to management.

6.2 Management Plan review

The management plan is intended to run for a period of five years in which time it is hoped that the majority of the actions set out within the Capital Works Programme will be completed. At the end of the five-year period, a meeting will be held with the landowner and all relevant stakeholders to discuss the progress of the plan and review successes, failures, and lessons learnt. The process of reviewing and amending the document, and the preparation of new action plans, will help build a new plan for the period 2025 - 2029.

7.0 References

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