

THE EAST COURT ESTATE
ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT
10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN
2016 – 2025



Prepared on behalf of
Mid Sussex District Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The East Court Estate in East Grinstead, West Sussex is owned by East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd. and leased to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC).

The 41.2 ha site is used predominantly for formal and informal recreation and comprises two main areas; Ashplats Wood (an area of semi-natural habitats with high biodiversity value) and East Court (largely parkland and sports pitches).

The East Court Estate has been identified by MSDC as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This means that, subject to some enhancements, it is a site that is suitable to attract visitors as mitigation to offset the impact of new development on the Ashdown Forest SPA.

SANGs can attract significant funding for their ongoing management and enhancement through a levy raised on new development that takes place in their vicinity.

MSDC commissioned this 10 year management plan to guide the management of the East Court Estate. The plan commences in late 2015 and will expire at the end of 2025 with a mid-plan review due in 2020.

Previous management of the East Court Estate has mostly been through routine grounds maintenance in the parkland areas and either reactive or ad hoc work by volunteers and contractors in the woodland. There has been only limited success in adopting and following a cohesive long-term management strategy.

The aim of this new management plan is to define a pathway to better integration of management across the whole East Court Estate state that will promote both amenity and biodiversity.

Management objectives set out in the plan are, broadly, to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the East Court Estate whilst also promoting its recreational use, increasing community engagement and making better educational use of the site.

Management activities that will achieve the site objectives are described and timetables for their implementation are contained within 10 year action plans.

Key natural habitats found on the East Court Estate include ancient semi-natural woodland and gill streams, ponds, parkland with veteran trees and species-rich grassland fragments. Legally protected species are known to occur on the site including great crested newts, dormice, bats, breeding birds and badgers.

Enhancement of the path and ride network in Ashplats Wood through linear coppicing forms a significant part of the workload over the next 10 years but there are management recommendations made for all parts of the East Court Estate.

None of the management tasks set out in the plan are particularly complex but there needs to be a nominated officer from within MSDC Landscapes Team, with sufficient available time, to implement the plan and coordinate the activities of volunteers and contractors. The nominated Officer is going to be instrumental with realising the holistic approach of management that is outlined in this plan. Coordinating the maintenance activities of volunteers and contractors, along with the skills to oversee habitat management is going to be a crucial element to enable the East Court Estate achieve its full potential as a SANG.

Part 1

1.0 Background

1.1 Context

This management plan for East Court Estate has been prepared at the request of Mid Sussex District Council. Much of the text was written by Kate Ryland of Dolphin Ecological Surveys with additions from MSDC Officers.

The plan covers a site in the north east of East Grinstead in West Sussex. It sets out a programme of management actions for the ten-year period from winter 2015/6 to the end of 2025.

This ten-year plan is based on supporting information from a data search, from recent specialist surveys and on new survey data collected during 2015.

In 2014 the East Court Estate was identified by Mid Sussex District Council as a potential Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Full details of the purpose of SANGs and the rationale for choosing the East Court Estate as a SANG are contained in Appendix 1 and in the 2014 MSDC East Court and Ashplats Wood Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Strategy.

In brief a SANG is a strategic site that is judged capable of attracting visitors and to function as mitigation to offset the impact of new development (and thus increased visitor pressure) on the Ashdown Forest Special Protected Area (SPA). Improvements and management of the SANG are to be funded by ring-fenced funding that is raised through a levy on all new development in the vicinity of the SANG.

Management of the East Court Estate rests with Mid Sussex District, however in accordance with the lease a Steering Group has been established to review the development of the East Court Estate and Management Plan. The structure and function of the group is shown in Appendix 2, these Terms of Reference have been signed by the Chair of the East Court & Ashplats Woods Steering Group.

1.2 Ownership and tenure

The whole East Court Estate is principally owned by East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd (EGWML) and the majority of it is leased to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). The current 125 year lease to MSDC was signed in late 2014. It will be the responsibility of MSDC to provide the appropriate funding to deliver the stated annual programme of each 10 year term of the Management Plan

Some smaller parts of the East Court Estate are leased to third parties such as the Police, Sussex Ambulance Service, Magistrates Court, East Grinstead Town Football Club and the Rifle Club. East Grinstead Town Council occupies the Mansion and the surrounding grounds.

For the purposes of this management plan the East Court Estate is divided into two separate areas: Ashplats Wood and East Court (Figure 1). These two areas have very different characteristics and whilst there is an over-riding rationale for management across the whole East Court Estate, the management objectives for the two major parts are slightly different. Ashplats Wood is predominantly semi-natural woodland managed for nature conservation whilst East Court comprises a mixture of semi-natural habitats, parkland and sports pitches.

The East Court Estate is currently managed under an interim management plan written by MSDC that is due to expire in November 2015. The current plan will take effect from late 2015/early 2016 and run until the winter of 2025.

In line with the interim management plan the terms used in this plan are:

- ◆ **The East Court Estate** – meaning the entire area of land known as East Court and Ashplats Wood.
- ◆ **Ashplats Wood** – meaning the area of woodland in the north and east of the East Court Estate.
- ◆ **East Court** – meaning the area for formal and informal sport and recreation on land leased to MSDC and owned by East Grinstead Town Council

1.3 Location and Description

East Court Estate lies on the eastern edge of East Grinstead in West Sussex at central grid reference TQ405388. The East Court Estate covers 41.2ha of which Ashplats Wood accounts for approximately 25ha and East Court is approximately 16ha in extent.

The East Court Estate is surrounded by housing on all sides except for one section of its eastern boundary, which adjoins woodland with open countryside beyond.

The northern parts of the site lies on Tunbridge Wells sand whilst the lower, southern parts are on Wadhurst Clay. Springs and seepage lines are frequent on the south facing slopes of Ashplats Wood at the junction of the permeable and impermeable soils.

Two small headwater streams of the River Medway run from the northern parts of Ashplats Wood and converge at its southern tip, to the east of the playing fields, before flowing south and east to join one of the river's tributaries.

The East Court Estate is topographically complex with a range of different slopes and aspects. Ashplats Wood lies on a broadly south-facing slope with a central sandstone plateau whilst the parkland areas around East Court generally slope downwards to the north, east and south from the high point of the mansion.

1.4 Status

Different parts of the East Court Estate are subject to different designations.

- ◆ Ashplats Wood is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
- ◆ Most of Ashplats Wood and fragments of woodland in East Court have been identified as ancient semi-natural woodland (i.e. sites that have been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD) and appear on the provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory for Mid-Sussex
- ◆ Part of the East Court Estate lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- ◆ East Court is part of a Conservation Area (a planning designation most recently re-iterated in the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan 2015)
- ◆ Most recently the East Court Estate has been identified as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

1.5 Summary of Key Habitats

The East Court Estate includes a wide range of habitats, some of them semi-natural and some more highly modified, but all of them with the potential to support a variety of native fauna and flora.

The biodiversity of The Estate is described in more detail in Part 2 of this report, which contains information about existing data and the results of an ecological survey and assessment that was carried out during 2015.

In summary the key habitats and features present are:

- ◆ Ancient semi-natural woodland
- ◆ Gill stream woodland
- ◆ Ponds
- ◆ Parkland
- ◆ Veteran trees
- ◆ Species-rich grassland fragments
- ◆ Secondary woodland

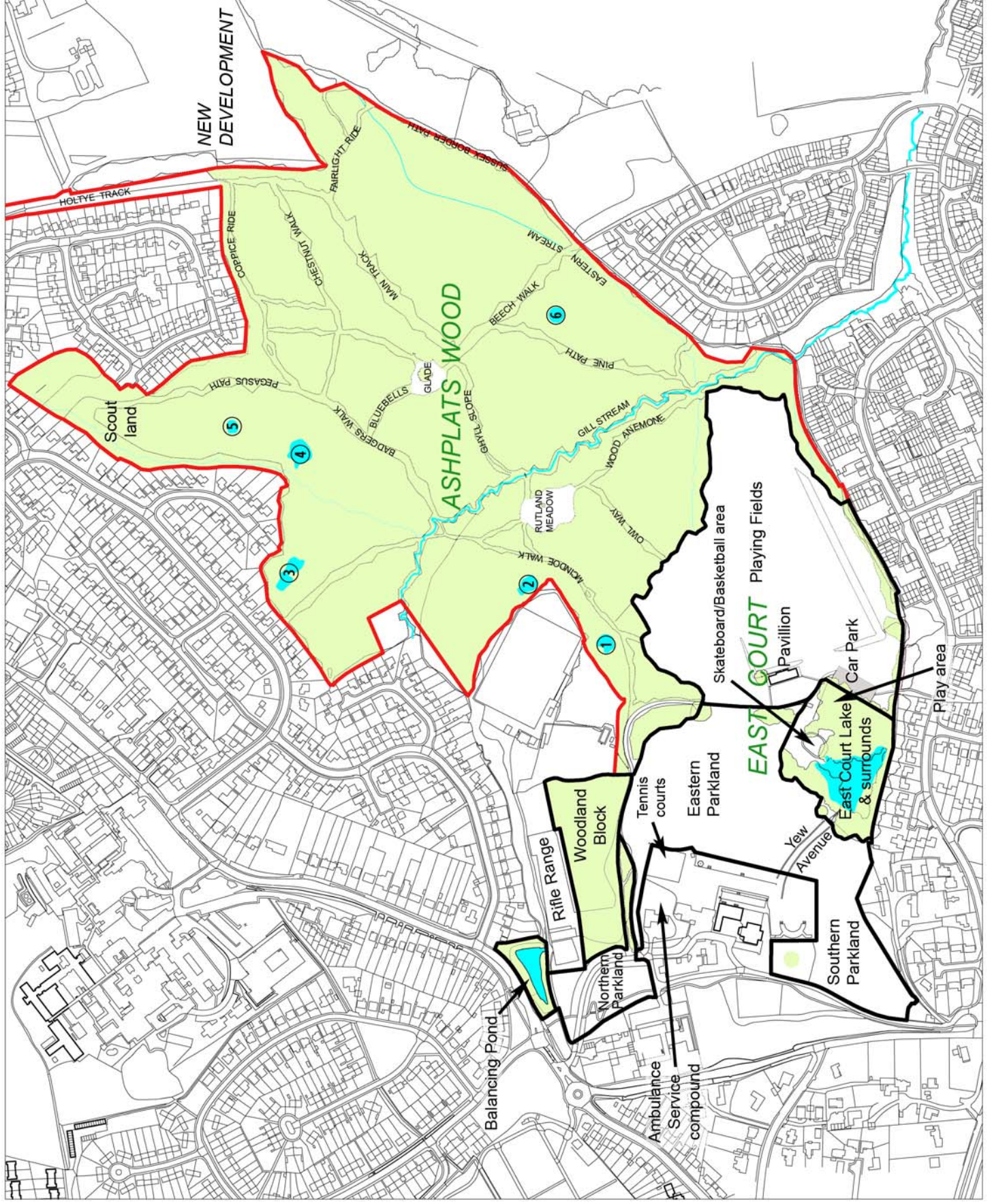
Individually these habitats and features are of all of ecological value and each will support a range of fauna and flora, however, at the East Court Estate it is the combination of different habitats, sometimes in intimate mosaics that adds to the overall biodiversity value and high wildlife potential of the site. Legally protected species, including European Protected Species, occur on The East Court Estate.

This biodiversity value is heightened by the site's urban setting, surrounded as it is on almost all sides by housing and accessible to a large number of people. The community benefit of such a large area of open space is immense.

There is direct connectivity between Ashplats Wood and, to the east, the undeveloped, open countryside of the High Weald AONB. This direct linkage is likely to be crucial for the continued survival of some of the larger, more mobile species of fauna on the site.

Figure 1
East Court Estate

- ① Alfreds Pond
- ② Cranston Pond
- ③ Lancaster Pond
- ④ Hoskins Pond
- ⑤ Scouts Pond
- ⑥ The Sunken Pond



1.6 History

An historical report of East Court was prepared by the Sussex Gardens Trust (May 2006) at the request of MSDC. The report documents the history of the East Court Estate house and gardens from 1769 up to the early 21st Century.

From its origins as a family residence the East Court Estate grew to a considerable size (over 500 acres) by the early 20th Century. Much of that land was sold for development and the East Court Estate changed hands several times.

During the Second World War East Court was requisitioned by the army and in 1945 it was bought by a local merchant banker through a charitable trust and established as a permanent memorial to the people of East Grinstead who lost their lives during WWII. The Mansion and surrounding 5 acres of gardens were sold to the then East Grinstead Urban District Council (now the Town Council) as their headquarters.

In 1949 East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd (EGWML) was set up to own and manage the East Court Estate for the enjoyment of local people. MSDC manages the East Court Estate under a long-term lease with the East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd.

The focus of management on the East Court Estate over the past 40 years has been on its sport and informal recreation facilities. Management of Ashplats Wood from approximately the 1940s to the late 1990s has been limited to periodic coppicing of sweet chestnut. Since that time the formation of a group of local volunteers, the Ashplats Conservation Group (ACG) has brought about a resurgence of active woodland management for the benefit of nature conservation.

1.7 Previous Management Plans

In 1999 a 5-year management action plan was written to provide outline guidance for management of Ashplats Wood based on previous ecological survey work (Dolphin Ecological Surveys 1999). It contained simple prescriptions for a range of management actions including coppicing, thinning standards, control of invasive species, ride and path management, pond restoration, glade creation and expansion of the areas of acid grassland. Non-intervention zones along the stream valley and woodland edges were recommended.

Unfortunately only a few of the management actions contained within the 1999 plan were implemented, perhaps due to a lack of available resources. However, the need to control invasive rhododendron, which was identified as the top priority for the site, has been tackled with outstanding results by the Ashplats Conservation Group (see below).

An interim management plan for the East Court Estate covering the period November 2014 to November 2015 was prepared by MSDC. This plan also utilised previous survey information and referred back to the 1999 management plan. It contains useful background information about the site and a simplified management regime for Ashplats Wood based on coppicing, invasive species control, monitoring tree health, low key pond management, annual meadow management and path maintenance. Management of East Court in this interim plan is simply the routine work (mostly grass cutting) carried out by contractors.

The interim plan was only intended to be a stop-gap document that will be superseded by this new 10-year management plan for the East Court Estate.

1.8 Ashplats Conservation Group (ACG)

ACG was founded in 1997 and since then its members have undertaken a range of activities in the woodland. Inevitably the number of active members varies but a core group of volunteers meet every month to carry out practical management tasks and sometimes to undertake informal surveys of fauna and flora.

The group's most impressive achievement to date is the almost total eradication of rhododendron and cherry laurel from their stronghold on the central plateau of Ashplats Wood and control of scattered stands elsewhere in the woodland.

Tackling invasive species has been a major undertaking but the mature rhododendron thickets that were present under sweet chestnut coppice stools have been successfully treated and any re-growth is being controlled. The woodland in this area now has a greatly improved structure and the potential to recover much of the biodiversity that was being lost.

Other work done by ACG includes building steps on one of the steepest and muddiest paths in the wood (for which they won an award from CPRE in 2014), tree planting in the parkland with school groups, pond management, path edge maintenance and litter picks.

The Rutland Meadow and the Glade are cut annually in September by contractors and the hay is removed by hand by members of ACG. The group also carry out control of any bracken and bramble that is encroaching around the edges of these open areas in the woodland.

In previous years ACG have used Weald Native Origin mixed wildflower seed and yellow rattle in an attempt to enhance the sward in Rutland Meadow.

1.9 Funding

The East Court Estate comprises East Court & Ashplats Woods, two separate and distinctive areas of the East Court Estate that are managed to provide quite diverse recreational activities. The East Court section is primarily laid to formal recreation with habitat creation around the perimeter and Ashplats Woods prioritising natural habitat management. Due to the diversity of function the funding for the management of the East Court Estate will be generated via a number of sources. These being Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), SANG developer contributions from relevant planning applications, grants and awards and volunteer activity. The MSDC Landscape Team will endeavour to ensure that the annual tasks set in this management plan are adequately covered by a funding stream to deliver the objectives of the plan.

- MSDC Landscape budgets include the maintenance of the formal recreation areas (sport pitches, amenity grass and play areas etc.). There is a provision for unforeseen maintenance for damage to the infrastructure of the East Court Estate i.e. vandalism and storm damage. Maintenance that is required, but not covered by the prescripts of the Management Plan will be reviewed against the SANG criterion to assess whether it is a reasonable expense for MSDC to cover under their revenue budgets or is a justifiable cost from the SANG Fund. The assessment will be to consider whether the work item has been included into the general principles of this Management Plan.
- MSDC Property & Asset budgets include maintenance of the pavilion, paths and structures. Funding from SANG developer contributions would only cover expense that is directly related to works that meet the SANG criteria.

- SANG developer contributions will be used for enhancements to increase the SANG site's attractiveness to visitors. This will include specific works, management and maintenance works, and visitor monitoring for the term of the lease.
- Grants and awards will be sought to cover the more aspirational aspects of the plan that would not be deemed routine maintenance of the East Court Estate i.e. potential replacement of the pavilion.
- Volunteer Activity is provided by the generosity of the community investing their time undertaking practical conservation maintenance. There are no actual costs relating to the time that Ashplats Conservation Group (ACG) commit to maintaining the East Court Estate, but there are support costs relating to the provision of equipment, training and insurance.

The programmes of tasks and projects identified in the management plan have been programmed to be achievable within the available funding streams. However, managing the environment is a dynamic venture that may require priorities to be reassessed and phasing over longer periods to be achieved. The Steering Group process will enable a reasonable discussion of the necessity to re-evaluate priorities, whilst maintaining the objectives of the plan.

Appendix 5 is a guide for how funds are allocated to this site. This is a management report that is intended to be for guidance as it is likely that projects and/or tasks could be funded from alternative sources.

Part 2

2.0 Preliminary Survey & Ecological Assessment

2.1 Supporting Information

2.1.1 Biological Data Search

In early 2015 a report was requested from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre (SxBRC) on all existing biological data, site status and previous surveys relating to East Court Estate. The full SxBRC report is included as a confidential appendix to this document.

The SxBRC report highlights some of the uncommon and legally protected species of fauna and flora that have been recorded in and around the site in the past.

Whilst there are numerous biological records from the East Grinstead area, surprisingly few are specific to the site itself. Records of legally protected species have arisen due to surveys of nearby development projects, notably at Queen Victoria Hospital. Most of the site-specific records relate to Ashplats Wood rather than to other parts of the East Court Estate.

Within a 1km radius of the East Court Estate the SxBRC report contains records of:

- 12 European Protected Species of which 10 are bat species
- 98 bird species including 18 on the BoCC Red list, 29 on the BoCC Amber list, 14 on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and 10 significant breeding bird records
- 47 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species (note that these are now categorised as Species of Principle Importance under S41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act)
- 14 Alien species

(Confidential Appendix that will only appear on internal copies of the plan)

Legally protected species that have been recorded on, or next to, the site itself are:

- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (recorded in 2012 and 2015, see below)
- Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* (recorded from Ashplats Wood in October 2015 and from land immediately adjoining Ashplats Wood in 2007)
- Daubentons bat *Myotis daubentonii* (East Court Lake 2013)
- Grass snake *Natrix natrix* (on land immediately adjoining Ashplats Wood in 2007)

The SxBRC report contains many recent fungi records from Ashplats Wood and the number of moth records they hold from East Grinstead suggests that there is at least one active moth recorder nearby. Members of ACG are also known to make casual records of fauna and flora in the woodland, though not all of these have reached the SxBRC database yet.

There appear to be some gaps in the biological data for the site. Recommendations for targeted surveys to fill the gaps, along with monitoring activities to help document the impacts of habitat management, are set out in Part 3.

2.1.2 Previous Biological Surveys

Botanical surveys of the grassland in parts of the East Court Estate were carried out in 1981 and 1987 as part of county-wide grassland surveys. The results highlight the presence of small areas of valuable, species-rich grassland on the western side of Ashplats Wood and around the football pitch/tennis court area near Holtye Road (Various authors 1981-87)

The patches of unimproved acid grassland were found to contain several plant species of note, including dyers greenweed *Genista tinctoria*. However, even in 1987 the grassland was described as being in deteriorating condition and due to a continued lack of appropriate management during the 1990s much of the former grassland in the west of Ashplats Wood has now tumbled down to scrub and secondary woodland.

Surveys of Ashplats Wood were carried out in 1995/96 by the Sussex Wildlife Trust (Court and Whitbread 1996). These were essentially an assessment of the woodland stand types and the survey report describes the different parts of the wood in terms of their National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities. This survey was used as the basis for the 5-year management action plan for the period 1999- 2003.

In 2010 an extended Phase 1 survey of an area on Holtye Road adjoining the north-eastern part of Ashplats Wood which has subsequently been developed for housing (Betts 2010). The survey found evidence of badger activity and identified the potential for dormice, amphibians, reptiles, bats and breeding birds to occur in the area.

In 2014 an extended Phase 1 survey of East Court lake was undertaken (Barry Kemp Conservation Ltd. 2014) in relation to proposals by EGWML for a path around the lake. This survey identified the potential for legally protected species such as great crested newt, dormouse and bats, to occur in and around the lake. It also identified problems of invasive species around the edges of the lake and pinpointed the location of some notable trees.

Surveys for great crested newts (GCN) in East Court Lake and in the six ponds within Ashplats Wood took place in 2015 (BKCL 2015).

During the 2015 surveys GCN presence was confirmed in East Court Lake, Alfred's Pond and Cranston Pond. Smooth newts were found in all seven of the waterbodies with very high numbers of this species in Sunken Pond.

Members of ACG have been undertaking dormouse surveys using nest boxes in Ashplats Wood since 2014 and the first dormouse was recorded from the site in October 2015 (Chris Nunn ACG pers.comm.).

2.1.3 Gill Woodland

In 2014 the High Weald AONB Unit produced a very timely and useful research report into gill woodlands (Sansum 2014). The report is highly relevant to the management of the gill woodland within Ashplats Wood.

The report findings confirm that it is not always easy to determine what is the most appropriate management for gill woodland to maintain its very special and fragile features.

Important gill plant species are potentially very sensitive to disturbance and changes in light, temperature and humidity. All of these conditions are likely to be affected by woodland management activities such as coppicing, felling and thinning.

The 2014 report also highlights the particular importance of small fern and bryophyte rich banks, which may be centuries old and which are especially vulnerable to harm. In these special gill

features the rate of change should be minimised and any areas with these features should be protected from potentially damaging uses such timber extraction routes or increased public access.

The research results reinforce the precautionary approach to management of stream-side areas in Ashplats Wood that are put forward in this plan (see Part 3) and which were also recommended in the previous management plan (DES 1999).

It should be noted that the 2001 East Court Masterplan (Parklife 2001) included suggestions to open up paths along the gills. Due to the sensitivity and importance of these habitats, this recommendation for increased access should not be adopted.

2.2 The 2015 Survey of The East Court Estate

2.2.1 Survey Aim & Methodology

The aim of the 2015 survey was to provide baseline information to support production of the new 10 year management plan and to inform an ongoing survey and monitoring strategy.

An extended Phase 1 survey of the whole East Court Estate was carried out by the author during the summer of 2015. This type of survey is a broad ecological assessment of a site based on the vegetation and habitats present. Typical, characteristic and notable plant species are recorded in each vegetation zone and casual records of fauna observed are also collected over several site visits.

A map of the site with target notes linked to the descriptions below forms part of the survey results.

The fauna and flora observed during the survey at East Court Estate are listed in Appendix 2 but these are not exhaustive lists for the site.

2.2.2 Survey Results

2.2.2.1 Main habitats, features and their importance

Previous ecological surveys of selected parts of the East Court Estate have highlighted the presence of important habitats and features such as ancient woodland, the gill, species-rich acid grassland and ponds which support GCN. There do not appear to have been any systematic ecological assessments of the East Court Estate since its designation as a Site of Nature Conservation in 1992.

The 2015 survey confirmed the presence and value of the core semi-natural habitats, most of which are found in Ashplats Wood and which are largely responsible for the site's designation as an SNCI. Perhaps most importantly the new survey also clearly identifies habitats and features of biodiversity value across the whole East Court Estate.

2.2.2.2 Ashplats Wood

2.2.2.2.1 Woodland description

Overview

Ashplats Wood is predominantly ancient, semi-natural woodland with secondary woodland of quite recent origin to the west of the gill stream. It has a network of paths, several ponds and two open glades.

Standing and fallen deadwood is abundant throughout the woodland and provides a valuable resource for a range of wildlife. Deadwood, dead limbs within tree crowns, cracks, bark flaps and crevices are all very important features for specialised wildlife including as fungi, invertebrates, birds and bats.

The woodland includes a good range of native trees and shrubs with a diverse ground flora. Numerous ancient woodland indicator species occur in the eastern part of Ashplats Wood (see Appendix 2).

The woodland is topographically and edaphically varied and there are two stream valleys running from the northeast and northwest to meet in the south of the site. The larger, western stream is categorised as a gill in the SxBRC report (confidential appendix).

Several features of archaeological interest are present in Ashplats Wood including a range of banks, ditches and hollows derived from old field and woodland boundaries and marl extraction. There is a very prominent old field boundary bank to the west of Rutland Meadow in the area of secondary woodland.

The Plateau

A plateau towards the north of the woodland supports predominantly sweet chestnut coppice on the sandy soils overlaying Tunbridge Wells sandstone whilst mixed ash, birch, hazel, alder and oak occur on the valley slopes and heavier clay soils.

Sweet chestnut dominates on the plateau (to the east of Pegasus Path/Badgers Walk) but small amounts of sycamore, hazel, birch and holly are also present over the rather sparse ground flora. Small sections of the sweet chestnut coppice on the plateau have been cut in recent years but most of the stools are over-shot and some are of a considerable age.

The majority of ACG's invasive species control has taken place to the south of Main Track. This area now comprises a mixture of sweet chestnut, birch and oak with a sparse ground flora (Target Note 1).

To the north of The Glade the mixed age sweet chestnut coppice grades into an area of mixed coppice where the sweet chestnut gives way to hazel, birch and oak woodland. Birch and aspen are locally frequent in the western corner of this block alongside Badgers Walk.

The Scout Land

An area in the north of Ashplats Wood, known as The Scout Land (Target Note 2), adjoins the upper parts of the gill stream's northern headwater. This area comprises a mixture of ash coppice with locally dense holly in the understorey as well as stands of alder where ground conditions are most wet.

There is a steep, wooded slope on the western edge of the stream adjoining the properties of Lancaster Drive and Hilary Close. There are large accumulations of rubbish that has been dumped along the slope from adjoining gardens and some encroachment of gardens into the woodland.

On the much wider, eastern edge of the Scout Land stream valley there is mixed coppice of hazel and sweet chestnut along with sycamore, birch and oak. A large crab apple tree is present on the edge of Pegasus Path that runs up into the Scout Land.

There is a considerable amount of fallen deadwood in the Scout Land and the eastern slopes have had invasive species cleared by ACG. Several very large ash and alder trees are present in this

part of the woodland as well as some standing dead trees and the structure of the shrub layer ranges from rather dense thickets of holly to open areas where non-native species have been cleared.

At the northern end of the Scout Land there has been some encroachment from neighbouring properties and the woodland edge vegetation is being mown regularly by householders (Target Note 3). Garden waste has been dumped in this area which is leading to exotic species becoming established in the woodland, especially near the road entrance at Pegasus Way.

Ongoing dialogue with the owners of neighbouring properties by the nominated officer will be especially important in the Scout Land to prevent further abuses of this part of the woodland.

Eastern Stream

The eastern part of Ashplats Wood, between Main Track and the Sussex Border Path (Target Note 4), contains unmanaged, mixed coppice woodland along a small stream valley. Alder, hazel, oak, sycamore, birch and field maple are present over a diverse ground flora which includes swathes of bluebell, ramsons, yellow archangel and a range of other ancient woodland indicator species including plants that are not common elsewhere in the wood such as goldilocks buttercup and pignut.

The stream valley is steepest in the north and in this area wet woodland, gill-like characteristics are more pronounced with alder and mature hazel over a ground flora rich in ferns with abundant pendulous sedge, wood sorrel, bluebell, marsh marigold and opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage.

To the north of Fairlight Ride the block of windblown hazel, birch, ash and alder along the northern stream bank adjoins a steep, newly seeded grassy slope and reinforced bank that forms the boundary of the area of new housing (Target Note 5).



Ditch between the new development and Ashplats Wood

There is an outlet drain from the new development system which appears to discharge directly into

a tiny ditch with a row of sandbanks at the top of this wooded slope. There is a real risk that excess surface water run-off or other any other overflow from the development could directly affect this part of Ashplats Wood and its stream.

Regular water quality monitoring and visual inspection of the outlet from the development and the surrounding area is strongly recommended to detect any possible pollution of the stream.

The Gill Woodland

The eastern side of the main gill supports a mixture of coppice species, predominantly hazel, birch and ash along with alder in the wetter flushes and seepage lines. Oak, holly, rowan, sycamore and beech are all occasional species in this area.

Bramble and bluebell are prominent in the field layer of the upper slopes with wood anemone, wood sedge and pendulous sedge more frequent on the lower slopes.

Near the head of the gill there is a significant example of encroachment into the ancient woodland from a property on Gleave Close (Target Note 6). Trees have been felled, a log pile constructed and even an area of lawn laid within the woodland. This must be addressed by the nominated officer to prevent any further unauthorised or damaging activities taking place in the ancient woodland habitat.

The woodland around Lancaster Pond contains a higher proportion of beech than in other parts of Ashplats Wood, including some large, mature trees. Hazel stools are quite sparse in this area. There are several small paths through this part of the site and an informal crossing over the stream has caused some erosion of the banks.

Secondary Woodland

The area of secondary woodland in the south west of Ashplats Wood contains a mixture of oak, sycamore, ash, birch, field maple and some very dense stands of holly. There is abundant bramble and ivy in this area with a rather mixed ground flora. Towards the edge of the playing fields there is a particularly high proportion of young ash growth with bramble, hawthorn and pendulous sedge also prominent (Target Note 7).

The secondary woodland to the west of McIndoe Walk comprises frequent young oak along with dense stands of holly and scattered ash, field maple, sycamore, birch, hawthorn and hazel. The ground flora in this area comprises abundant bramble along with honeysuckle, enchanters nightshade, bracken and patches of bluebell (Target Note 8).

The northern extent of this area of secondary woodland and its transition into the ancient woodland along the gill is marked by a significant boundary bank. The woodland flora shows an abrupt change from the vegetation of the secondary woodland to mature hazel and ash coppice and oak standards with a rich ground flora of bluebell and wood anemone along the gill stream. This vegetation type extends across much of the woodland to the north of the gill.

The woodland between Owl Way and Wood Anemone path (Target Note 9) is very diverse with areas of both ancient and secondary growth. Towards Owl Way the secondary woodland is predominantly young ash over large stands of wood sedge and dense bramble but along the small tributary stream on the edge of the playing field there is an area of much older woodland with alder, hazel, holly and oak over a ground flora rich in wood anemone and violets.

Old and veteran trees

Scattered throughout the woodland with a particular concentration along the southern boundary of

the woodland where it adjoins playing fields, there are large, old trees. Of particular ecological and historic interest are the veteran oaks, some of which appear to have been pollarded in the past. The oldest of these oaks are likely to be several centuries old and are very important features of the site.

The western sections of Ashplats Wood lie on either side of the track to the pavilion (Target note 10). These are blocks of secondary, partly planted woodland containing a mixture of oak, hawthorn, ash, hornbeam, holly, rowan, sycamore and bramble. Their most important features are some of the best veteran trees on the East Court Estate including some old pollards.

The veteran oaks in this area are at the interface between parkland and woodland habitat. They all have features of importance to wildlife such as deadwood in the crowns, tree holes and bark flaps. There are clear signs of bat occupancy in some of these trees.



Tree hole with signs of bat occupancy

2.2.2.2.2 Path and ride network

The principle paths and rides within Ashplats Wood have been given names (see Figure 1). They are described individually below. Management of the path and ride network is central to the 10 year plan (Part 3) and the enhancement of the circular walk around The East Court Estate will also involve enhancements to some of the woodland paths.

Main Track is a wide ride with a domed, sandstone surface and small drainage ditches on either side. The ditches support frequent sedges and rushes whilst plants such as tormentil and heath wood-rush on the ride edges reflect the acid soil conditions. There are sweet chestnut stools of varied ages along Main Track with a narrow strip of mid-aged stools between Main Track and the new housing development.



Main Track showing domed surface

Chestnut Walk runs through the heart of the sweet chestnut plateau and is currently a rather damp and shaded path that would benefit from much more open, sunny edges. At the point where this path meets several other, unnamed paths there is an excellent opportunity to open up a box glade.

Coppice Ride runs along the northern edge of Ashplats Wood adjacent to Fulmar Drive. The edges of this path have been coppiced in the past but it remains very narrow and dense bramble and coppice regrowth has rendered it rather difficult to walk along. Management should aim to maintain a dense barrier of vegetation to the north alongside the housing but widening the ride to the south would be very beneficial.

Fairlight Ride is a steep path with considerable surface erosion and a tangle of exposed tree roots as a result of heavy use and of surface water running down the path. This path is due to have steps installed and improvements made as part of the MSDC circular path work.

A new informal path is emerging from the new development into the woodland at the top of Fairlight Ride. Consideration should be given to opening up this “desire” route slightly to provide access into the wood from the East Court Estate at a single point rather than allow multiple new informal paths to form.

The Ghyll Steps were built by ACG to help reduce path erosion on this steep, wet slope up the eastern side of the gill valley. This route is still very wet and shaded and would benefit from a more open canopy along the path. At the foot of the Ghyll Steps there is an extremely wet area where the path crosses the gill stream. The MSDC circular path will include a section of boardwalk across this area which should relieve the problem considerably.



The Ghyll Steps

Beech Walk passes through mixed birch, hazel, oak and sycamore woodland on the upper slopes of the plateau down to the birch and alder woodland of the eastern stream along the Sussex Border Path.

Pine Path extends from the stream confluence in the southern tip of Ashplats Wood to meet Beech Walk just beyond the Sunken Pond. It is a well-used path and has had some surface consolidation in the past. The woodland in this area is predominantly mixed hazel, oak, ash and birch with some beech and locally frequent wild cherry.

Wood Anemone path runs through the diverse area of woodland from Rutland Meadow to the stream confluence and has fragments of an old bank along its edge. There is an old oak tree at the southern end of this path which has extensive rot and bark loss but which is likely to be an excellent habitat for wildlife (Target note 11). There may be some safety concerns about this tree, which should be monitored regularly, but it should also be assessed for its potential as a bat roost before any major work is undertaken to it.

McIndoe Walk links the playing fields with Lancaster Drive and is one of the most heavily used paths in the woodland and has had some surface consolidation in the past. This path would benefit greatly from much more open, scalloped edges and more light reaching the woodland floor. This would help the path to dry out and make it feel much lighter and perhaps safer for visitors to the woodland.



McIndoe Path near Alfred's Pond

Badgers Walk climbs from the gill stream through an area of mixed coppice with a dense carpet of bluebells up to the sweet chestnut plateau. A key feature of this attractive path is the large, active badger sett that extends across the whole width of the path (Target note 12). The path surface is very eroded with exposed roots in places and has been widened where it becomes wet and boggy on the lower slopes.

Pegasus Path runs through the Scout Land to the access point at Pegasus Way. It passes through an area of varied woodland with some parts very shaded by a dense understorey of holly.

Bluebell path is a short route through sweet chestnut coppice from The Glade to Badgers Walk. It has an uneven surface and some damp areas on its edges.

2.2.2.2.3 Ponds

The six ponds within Ashplats Wood have also been named (Figure 1) and are briefly described below.

Alfred's Pond in the southwest of Ashplats Wood lies within an area of mixed dense, scrub and woodland with abundant deadwood and a section of dead hedging on its southern side. Recent coppicing and clearance of bankside trees and shrubs by ACG has opened up the banks of the pond to allow in more light. The pond has a willow growing in its centre, which has been coppiced but is re-sprouting very vigorously. Patches of marginal vegetation including soft rush, gipsywort and branched bur-reed. At the time of the survey the pond's surface had a layer of duckweed due to the increased light reaching the water.



Alfred's Pond showing duckweed

Cranston Pond has also been managed recently by ACG to open the canopy and clear bankside vegetation. Dead hedges have been built to restrict access from McIndoe Walk. This pond has a single crack willow stump in the water which is likely to re-sprout quickly. Little marginal vegetation had developed at the time of the survey but the increased light will be very beneficial to this pond.

Lancaster Pond is very steep-sided and shaded by overhanging trees and shrubs. It was almost dry at the time of the survey. There is a large alder growing in the pond base along with a tangle of bramble, pendulous sedge and common cleavers.

Hoskins Pond is surrounded by alder trees with steep slopes on its eastern edge and a prominent old bank on its western side. It has not had any recent management and at the time of the survey contained quite deep water.

The Sunken Pond is shallow, unmanaged and nearly hidden amongst the trees on its steep banks. There is limited marginal vegetation though some pendulous sedge and marsh marigold occur in damp flushes at the base of the pit.

Scouts Pond lies to the east of the stream in an area where ACG have carried out quite a lot of clearance work in the Scout Land. It is small and shallow pond but has quite open banks.

2.2.2.2.4 Glades

There are currently two open areas within the woodland, known as The Glade and Rutland Meadow (Figure 1). Both are managed to promote the development of grassland by annual mowing.

The Glade lies almost in the centre of Ashplats Wood and is a small, open, grassy area with a single large oak tree. The mossy sward contains plants such as bent-grass, tormentil, heath wood-rush, bluebell and honeysuckle. Bramble and bracken occur around the edges of the glade. The northern edge of The Glade has a well-developed graded edge where careful management by ACG has promoted a scrubby but sunny zone with birch, ash and rowan. Alder buckthorn occurs at the corner of this area and Bluebell path. Rotational management of the woody edge vegetation helps to maintain the open habitat of The Glade and promote scrubby edges. Extending the open glade to the southeast into the adjoining junction of rides would be very beneficial (Target note 13).



The Glade

Rutland Meadow is the largest glade in Ashplats Wood. It lies within the area of secondary woodland and was formerly part of an open field system to the west of the gill stream. There is an apple tree within the glade and well-worn paths cross the open space. The sward is generally quite tussocky and grass-dominated with some bramble on the margins, especially in the southwestern corner. There are some signs that scrub is spreading into parts of the open glade.

ACG have expended considerable effort into managing Rutland Meadow by annual cutting and raking off the arisings. They have also sown locally sourced wildflower seed, including yellow rattle, in an attempt to enhance the sward and reduce the dominance of coarse grasses. At the time of writing ACG were experimenting with cutting only two thirds of the meadow annually.



Rutland Meadow

This work has produced some good results with patches of herb-rich sward where plants such as common knapweed, marsh thistle, common sorrel and wild angelica occur. There are also groups of common spotted orchids present and yellow rattle is locally frequent. However, the soil is clearly quite nutrient rich which promotes lush growth of tussocky grasses and combined with the late

season mowing regime the grassland will always tend towards a coarse sward. After mowing the hay is raked off the glade but is piled on the edge of the open area. This will also contribute to gradual soil enrichment on the margins as the hay rots down.

Recommendations for enhanced management of Rutland Meadow to help address these problems are included in Part 3.

2.2.2.2.5 Gill stream

The gill stream and the damp ancient woodland on its valley slopes is an important and valuable feature of Ashplats Wood (Section 2.1.3).

The gill already suffers to some degree from excessive access by people and dogs, in particular at the confluence of the gill stream and the minor stream from the northeast of the woodland (Target note 14). In this heavily used part of the woodland the area around the paths and bridges over the streams has become very eroded and the soil compacted. There is little vegetation growth and as the paths get muddier so the width of trampled vegetation increases. In addition this is an area where dogs regularly paddle in the stream and tend to damage the banks as they get in and out.

This area needs to be the subject of a special project to address these issues in a way that will reverse the damage to the fragile gill stream whilst still allowing access to people and their dogs. This is likely to require a combination of soft engineering solutions to the bank erosion, careful management of surrounding vegetation and some protective bank fencing at the same time as maintaining accessible areas of water. All of this will need very clear interpretation before, during and after works to ensure that site users are included in the process not antagonised by it.

2.2.2.2.6 Sussex Border Path

The Sussex Border Path (SBP) is a public right of way that runs along the entire southern edge of the East Court Estate.

Where the path adjoins the Fairlight property it has a diverse ground flora below predominantly hazel coppice stools along its edges. There is a patch of small balsam in this area that was noted in the 1996 survey (Court and Whitbread 1996) and which appears to be largely unchanged in extent over the intervening 20 years.

There are invasive species along the path edge outside the EGWML owned land which are a source of colonists into Ashplats Wood. Rhododendron and garden privet are the main species that are encroaching and overhanging the path. Ideally these should be removed, with the consent of the neighbouring landowner.

The Fairlight property is an extremely important neighbour to The East Court Estate and in particular to the wildlife of Ashplats Wood. It is the only area of undeveloped land adjoining the East Court Estate and therefore represents its only connection to open countryside and the wider landscape of the High Weald AONB.

A section of the SBP within Ashplats Wood runs alongside the properties of Mindelhelm Avenue (Target note 15). Here the landownership is complex because a strip of land between the SBP and the stream within the wood is not owned by EGWML but instead belongs to adjacent domestic properties. This part of the SBP is not a pleasant footpath to use because it is very narrow, enclosed by fencing and the strip of dense scrub and garden waste.

The remainder of the SBP runs parallel to Escots Drive (Target note 16). Much of the path here is a narrow strip of ground between the tall garden fences and a dense bank of bramble and scrub. Garden waste dumping is frequent along this strip and garden plants such as montbretia and snowberry have become established within the woodland. Resolving the issue of garden

encroachment and dumping in this area should be a priority.

2.2.2.2.7 Holtye Track

The Holtye Track runs between housing for most of its length and is the main northern access route into Ashplats Wood from the Holtye Road.

The southern end of Holtye Track is generally wide and grassy with a coarse, tussocky sward and scattered trees and shrubs of a wide range of native and non-native species. There are some potentially invasive species of garden origin present such as rhododendron, garden privet and cherry laurel which should be removed. There is also some evidence of garden encroachment and garden waste dumping from adjoining properties which needs to be addressed.

Occasional large oak trees are present alongside the Holtye Track, though possibly outside the land leased by MSDC. Some of these veteran trees are surrounded by dense holly scrub and would benefit from gradual halo thinning.

The northern section of Holtye Track has a more wooded character with less grassland along the path. Garden shrubs are particularly noticeable along this section.

The track needs to be maintained for pedestrians and as a key vehicle access route into the woodland, especially to facilitate coppicing and other woodland management. However there is scope to enhance its value as a corridor for wildlife through careful management of the vegetation along the track edges to create a combination of grass of different heights and scrub margins with sunny scalloped edges with occasional trees, equivalent to a woodland ride habitat. Recommendations for management are included in Part 3 of this document.

2.2.2.3 EAST COURT

2.2.2.3.1 Playing fields

The playing fields are for the most part areas of short mown amenity grassland of rather limited value to wildlife. This part of East Court lies on a south-facing slope and there is a significant bank along the southern edge of the playing fields to create a level surface on the pitches. However, away from the central pitch areas there are some features of interest associated with this part of East Court.

Much of the grassland sward across the playing fields is of low botanical interest due to its long-term management as a sports pitch. Nevertheless there are still wildflowers and native grasses present in places, especially around the edges of the playing fields where they adjoin woodland. Common plants such as creeping buttercup, daisy, dandelion and white clover are quite frequent but there are also some more interesting plants in places including glaucous sedge, fleabane, rough hawkbit, autumnal hawkbit and sneezewort. These relict areas of the previous, less intensively managed grassland sward will fare much better and possibly expand their range under a relaxed mowing regime (see Part 3).

The boundary of the lake woodland (see below) is contiguous with a tall, dense outgrown hedgerow that grades into a wider shaw with both mature trees and shrubs along an associated ditch and bank (Target Note 17). Species noted in this diverse hedgerow include oak, hawthorn, ash, bramble, blackthorn, dog rose, holly, ivy and yew.

Along the southern edge of the playing fields is the Sussex Border Path which forms the boundary between the East Court Estate and the housing of Escots Drive. The narrow, wooded strip with its small, steep sided stream which runs along the edge of the playing fields is a very important

habitat link between the lake area and Ashplats Wood.

A short length of old trackway at the entrance from Escots Drive has a path between two rows of mixed trees and shrubs on relict banks with a woodland ground flora still evident (Target note 18). Occasional rhododendron shrubs that occur in this area should be removed.

The interface between the woodland edge habitat and the mown grass of the playing field would benefit from a much less intense mowing regime. There are some large old ash coppice stools along the edge of the woodland along with a mixture of native shrubs such as hawthorn, holly and hazel. Other plants noted in the woodland edge include honeysuckle, enchanters nightshade, lesser celandine, cow parsley and occasional stands of pignut.

Around the northern edge of the playing fields, adjoining Ashplats Wood, the scrubby woodland edge habitat contains a row of large, open grown oak trees which have many features of value to wildlife including tree hollows, dead limbs and bark flaps and crevices (Section 2.2.2).

2.2.2.3.2 Eastern parkland

The eastern parkland area comprises sweeping lawns of mown, species-poor grassland on an east-facing slope from the mansion down to the playing fields with extensive views out across open countryside. This part of East Court is a very popular open space and is used for informal recreation.

A small group of mixed, native trees (including oak, wild service-tree, beech and hornbeam) has been planted in the northern part of this area, between the tennis courts and the track. This planting was a joint initiative between ACG and local schools and includes a “diamond jubilee” tree.

On the grassy bank around the edge of the tennis courts and ambulance station there is a fragment of species-rich grassland sward (Target note 19) where some of the wildflowers noted include bugle, common sorrel, common cats-ear, marsh thistle, yarrow and selfheal.

At the top of this bank, forming the boundary to the ambulance station, there is a fence with a very sparse, gappy mixed species hedge that grades into the yew-dominated hedge around the tennis courts.



Hedge and bank around the tennis courts

At the foot of the main east-facing slope there is a small, sparse copse with oak, birch, hazel, sycamore, goat willow and ash over a ground flora with much bramble and cow parsley, lesser celandine and germander speedwell (Target Note 20). Soil and construction spoil has been dumped in this area at the base of the trees. There is huge scope to enhance this copse and use it as the core from which a wildlife corridor can be developed between the lake and Ashplats Wood.

2.2.2.3.3 Southern parkland

The parkland to the south of East Court Mansion forms a dry valley with both south- and north-facing slopes. This area is apparently very popular for tobogganing in snowy winters.

Much of the grassland sward in the southern parkland is of only limited ecological interest but in some places, particularly on the upper parts of the south-facing slope, there are relict patches of much more species-rich grassland (Target note 21).



Southern Parkland with view of species-rich bank

Some of the herbaceous species noted on this bank are common sorrel, cuckoo-flower, lesser stitchwort, common knapweed, yarrow, selfheal and common birds-foot-trefoil. If these areas were mown less frequently the herb-rich grassland would quickly recover and provide very attractive patches of flowering meadow within the parkland.

On the southern boundary there is a very tall cypress hedge which grades into a line of mixed trees and scrub. Along the base of the wooded strip there is a narrow unmown fringe of coarse grasses and scrub with cow parsley, bramble, nettle and elder. The adjoining grassland is mown to a very short sward and the interface between the mown and unmown vegetation is very abrupt.

In the parkland near the Mansion there is a small grove of closely spaced beech trees as well as some young oaks on the road edge and some mixed cherry, wild service-tree and hawthorns (Target note 22). Some of these have been planted as memorial trees. Trees within the group of beech would benefit from thinning.

2.2.2.3.4 Northern parkland

The northern parkland comprises a series of grassland areas and parkland trees bisected by the surfaced entrance road from Holtys Road and surfaced paths. Horse chestnut, lime and oak are the main tree species in this area.

The grassland of the northern parkland is of variable quality but includes some species-rich areas

and has very good potential for a change in management to enhance its biodiversity and its visual appeal. The species mixture present in some areas, such as the abundance of common birds-foot-trefoil and fox-and-cubs, suggest that there may have been some seeding with a wildflower mixture in the past though other areas clearly reflect relict natural grassland vegetation. This part of East Court is very near to the area where high quality unimproved grassland was present in the past.

At present most parts of the northern parkland appear to be mown and the cuttings left in place. This will promote the development of a coarse, grassy sward as the cut grass forms a mulch which will tend to suppress wildflower growth and gradually increase soil fertility. Some species indicative of enriched soil such as hogweed, docks and ragwort are already present in places.

The species-rich areas support a diverse and colourful range of native flora including abundant common birds-foot-trefoil, common cats-ear, red clover and white clover along with sedges, common knapweed, marsh thistle, jointed rush, silverweed, hedge bedstraw, field wood-rush, creeping cinquefoil, common sorrel and meadow buttercup.

Around the new zig-zag footpath (Target note 23) there is a sparse, open sward with some bare patches which is likely to provide a very good area of nectar and pollen rich vegetation that will benefit invertebrates such as bees and butterflies.



Sparse grassland around the zig-zag path

The best areas of herb-rich grassland in the northern parkland should be managed with care to promote attractive meadow-like habitat (see Part 3). Clear explanation of the reasons for changes to the grassland management would be needed in this high-use part of East Court.

A steep, wooded bank is present between the edge of the northern parkland and the boundary fence around the football club grounds.

2.2.2.3.5 East Court Lake and its surrounds

East Court lake and the surrounding area of woodland are a very important part of East Court Estate with high ecological value. The lake supports breeding great crested newts, bats have been observed feeding over the lake and may roost in nearby trees and the surrounding habitats have the potential to support dormice.

The presence of European Protected Species (EPS) makes it especially important to manage this part of the site with extreme sensitivity. It also presents the opportunity to undertake some excellent

habitat enhancement work (see Part 3).

The woodland area around East Court Lake is a fragment of mixed ancient woodland. The canopy is predominantly even-aged oak and ash with some hornbeam and a mixed shrub layer includes field maple and hazel coppice. Occasional coppiced oak stools are present near to the lake.

The ground flora includes quite dense bramble in places but also several typical ancient woodland species such as bluebell, goldilocks buttercup, wood anemone and wood melick.

To the east of the lake there is a children's play area and some woodland sculptures. The outer edge of the woodland is defined by a low bank planted with a row of hornbeams that were probably once managed as a laid hedge.

On the northern side of the lake there is a dense band of mixed native and exotic trees and shrubs on a southeast-facing slope. In places relict ancient woodland vegetation including hazel, aspen and bluebell is visible but further into the surrounding parkland the vegetation is dominated by exotic and planted species such as bamboo, Norway maple, rhododendrons, raspberry and cultivated dogwood. Rhododendron, cherry laurel and Portugal laurel are also present in some abundance in this area.

On the southern and western sides of the lake the wooded slopes support some very large mature trees, including poplars and sycamores, over dense stands of rhododendron, laurels and holly with little ground flora below. Deadwood is frequent in this area.

At the northern tip of the lake there is a circular, sunken concrete area. This was once part of the lake before being turned into a boating pond and is now a skateboard/basketball area. In wet conditions the lake overflows into this area.

The narrow, straightened outlet ditch from the lake runs around the outside of the woodland block. Wetland plant species such as yellow flag and soft rush are present in the ditch but it is mown very close to its edges which restricts the amount of emergent vegetation that can develop. Leaving a wider, less frequently mown fringe around the ditch would be very beneficial (see Part 3).

This is an area where there is the opportunity to improve both semi-natural habitat and historic parkland features. However, any management and enhancement of the East Court lake and its surrounding woodland habitat must take into account the presence of protected wildlife.

2.2.2.3.6 Woodland block adjacent to the rifle range

There is a block of ancient woodland to the north of the surfaced track to the pavilion which adjoins the rifle range land (Target note 24). The woodland edge next to the track is trimmed into a tall, dense, impenetrable hedge of holly, ash, hazel, hawthorn and sycamore.

This area is largely inaccessible and remains mostly undisturbed. There are a series of steep, north-facing slopes and much fallen deadwood present along with some dense patches of holly, cherry laurel and bramble.

Piles of cut branches from grounds maintenance work have been dumped over the old East Court Estate fence in this part of the site. This is bad practice, especially in an area of ancient woodland, and should be stopped.

2.2.2.3.7 Balancing pond

The balancing pond lies in a deep, steep-sided, wooded pit which receives surface water run-off from the urban area to the north of East Court. This area is fenced off from public access though there is clearly some unauthorised access to the woodland slopes and pond banks via the

dilapidated fencing along Holtye Road.

There is an accumulation of rubbish along the roadside bank of the pond and the water quality in the pond is likely to be compromised by pollutants from the road. Nevertheless this appears to be an area with some value to wildlife.

The pond appears to hold water all year round and there are stands of mixed emergent vegetation. The wooded slopes support a range of trees and shrubs including oak, field maple, willows, hazel, holly and elm with cherry laurel along the roadside edge. Much of this area was inaccessible for survey but some bluebell was noted in the ground flora and it is possible that other species of interest are present.

2.2.2.3.8 Yew avenue

The yew avenue that leads from East Court Mansion to the lake has an old, dilapidated stone bridge at its southern end. The parallel lines of trimmed yew hedging are currently in a poor state of repair and other species including sycamore and bramble have become established in the hedges.

Restoration of the yew avenue as a formal parkland feature is due to be carried out as part of the circular path work.

2.2.2.3.9 Sport Pitches

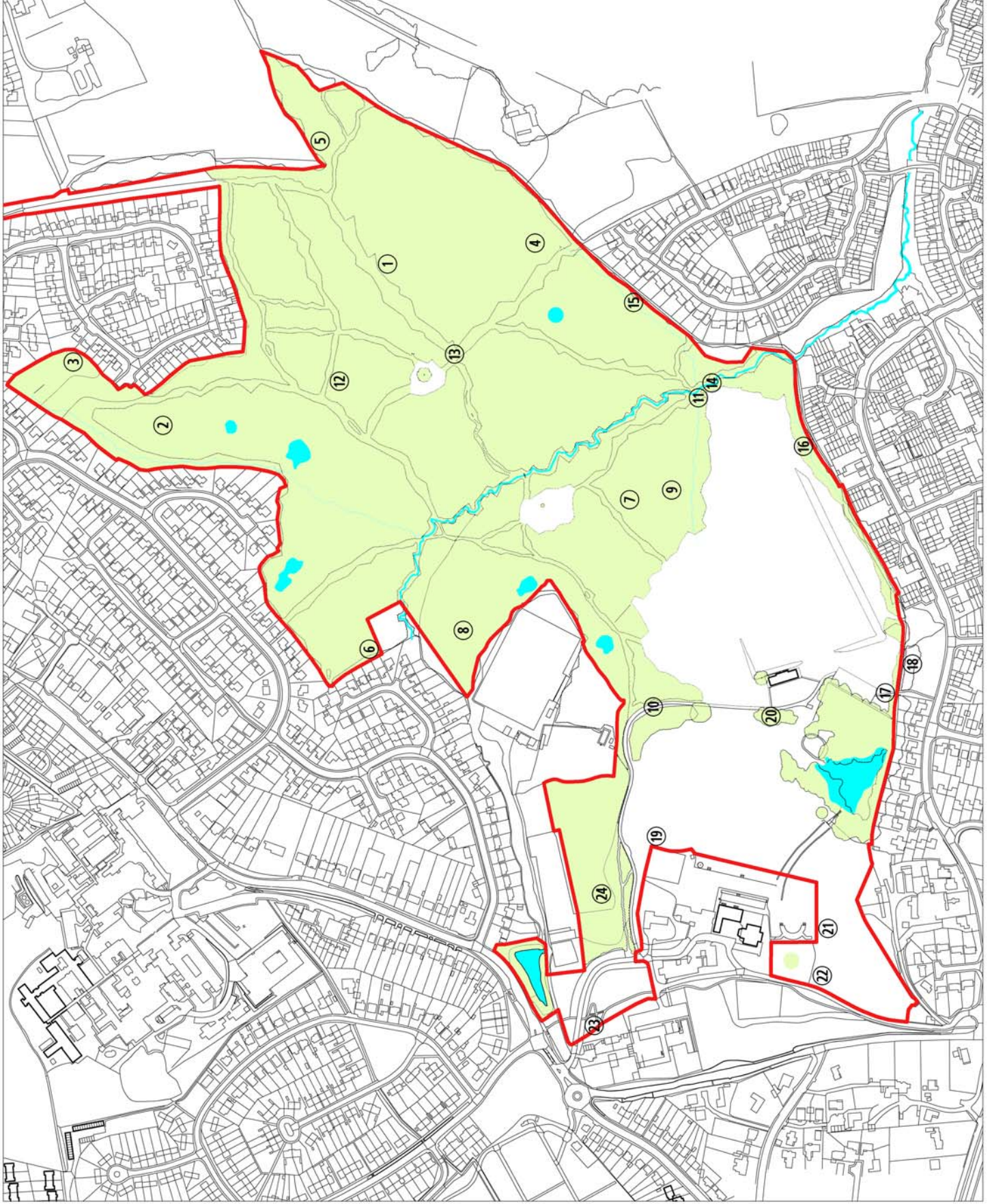
Formal sports include football for adults and juniors during the winter months and Stoolball during the summer months. Grounds maintenance to ensure a suitable surface for these sports has required the installation of sub-surface drainage and levelling by cut and fill to increase the area for formal sport. Management of these facilities will involve intervention management to provide a robust grass sward to accommodate such activities. The Maintenance of these facilities is defined in a Grounds Maintenance Contract that has been let to The Landscape Group and is for a term of 14 years, which can be viewed on the MSDC web pages.

The intensity of activity on the pitch areas is such that maintaining grass cover throughout the year is an important factor for their management. Renovation of pitches should seek to use a sports grass mix that will provide a robust sward to meet the demands of the hirers and obviate the need for chemical control of invasive species. The Council has a policy of avoiding the use of pesticides, but there will be occasions when their use will be necessary to keep the standards of the playing surface.

The pavilion has a dual function of being the changing rooms for the formal sport and accommodating a play group. Management of the building is undertaken by building surveyors in the Council's Property and Asset Management Team. The building is not part of the SANG and as such its repair and maintenance will come under existing budgets and/or grants and not funded by SANG contributions.

The pavilion has a regular hirer with a play group and it also accommodates the changing room facilities for the formal sport activities. Cleaning maintenance is procured by private contractor that is managed by the Council's Property & Asset Team. Maintenance of the infrastructure of the building is also lodged with this team and they undertake an annual inspection of the built assets and condition surveys that will define the development and expenditure of the MSDC budget. The funding for this maintenance is directly through MSDC and not from SANG income.

Figure 2
Target Notes from
2015 survey



Part 3

3.0 The 10 year Management Plan

3.1 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the East Court Estate as a whole are:

- To manage the site in accordance with the aims of the East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd:
'To provide and maintain a Memorial to the men, women and children of East Grinstead who lost their lives in the 1939-1945 war, a public park with playing fields and recreation grounds. Also to encourage and promote any form of public recreation or education or any other charitable objective'.
- To sensitively manage the woodlands, to include formal/ informal recreation, conservation and education purposes.
- To protect and enhance the biodiversity and landscape value of the East Court Estate, with reference to its special characteristics associated with nature conservation designations, and to promote improved understanding of the value of the site.
- To provide a high quality recreation resource, protecting and enhancing public access of the East Court Estate.
- To produce and implement a 10 year management plan that guides the day-to-day maintenance and development of the site. This will include recommended actions for the East Court Estate and outline a proposed schedule of works. The Natural England SANG criteria and MSDC SANG Strategy will impact on the management activities for East Court and Ashplats Woods that will also have implications on the East Court Recreational Area.
- The East Court Recreational Ground area will be managed predominantly for the provision and enhancement of formal recreation, with secondary interests for passive recreation/ non-sporting events, as defined in the lease

There needs to be an overarching vision for management of The East Court Estate in its entirety and all management activity should endeavour to include ways to enhance biodiversity even in the formal gardens and recreational areas.

Simple measures such as planting species that attract pollinators and beneficial insects, adopting organic gardening techniques and avoiding the use of chemicals or peat-derived products all contribute to the overall value of the site to wildlife.

In many cases less intense management of formal areas will lead to reduced management costs. MSDC has already adopted many of these measures as policy on land they manage across the district.

3.2 Site Management Implementation

3.2.1 Nominated Officer

There have been several consultations about ways to enhance the management of the East Court Estate over recent decades, including the comprehensive and aspirational East Court Masterplan (Parklife 2001). Unfortunately these seem to have resulted in few tangible improvements to the site, largely due to the limited resources available to implement change but also to the absence of a nominated officer with a responsibility for the management of the East Court Estate.

Identifying the East Court Estate as a SANG will generate income that is ring-fenced for management and enhancement of the site. This may represent the best opportunity to actually achieve the full suite of management that is needed on this unique site.

A member of the Landscapes Team to be the point of contact for all stakeholders who use the different parts of the site could focus on meeting the management plan objectives. Without such a person to co-ordinate management actions there is the serious risk that the East Court Estate will continue to have unrealised potential in terms of its biodiversity value and its use by the local community.

Ideally the Council could consider acquiring suitable, specialised equipment to carry out some of the management tasks recommended in this plan e.g. a track driven barrow that could be used in relation to meadow.

3.2.2 Steering Committee

A Steering Committee will support the Council with the implementation of the management plan. The group should include representatives from stakeholders who use the site or lease parts of it. Representatives should be invited to attend meetings and to be actively involved in the management strategy for the East Court Estate. Regular meetings (perhaps every 6 months) would provide an opportunity for the nominate officer to report back on issues affecting the East Court Estate and for tenants or users of the site to discuss aspects of site management.

This 10-year management plan, combined with guidance and support from an appointed nominate officer, will help ACG volunteers by providing them with a more organised, less ad hoc, programme of coppicing, path maintenance and other work tasks than has been available to them in recent years.

3.2.3 Timing of Management Actions

The confirmation that great crested newts are present on the East Court Estate is a significant consideration when planning and carrying out management activities, especially in wooded areas and near ponds.

The GCN method statement (Appendix 3) must inform site management to ensure that any risk of harming this legally protected species is minimised. The seasonal timetable (Figure 10) should be used to guide management activities so that they are undertaken at the optimum time of year. This will ensure that management tasks are carried out at the optimum time of year to avoid harming legally protected species.

3.3 Management Recommendations

This section includes the management rationale and prescriptions for the two parts of the East Court Estate: Ashplats Wood and East Court.

3.3.1 Ashplats Wood

Within this plan Ashplats Wood is divided into a series of different areas and features to be managed. These differ somewhat from the compartments used in previous management plans in order to reflect the recommended change in management priority over the next 10 years.

The broad woodland management principles are to open up the canopy, promote structural and species diversity, enhance habitat connectivity and retain existing, valuable features.

The emphasis will change from coppicing blocks of woodland (coups) to carrying out “linear coppicing” as a way to enhance the structural diversity of the woodland and create an improved network of open, linked, ride edge habitat across the path network.

Key management themes for 2015 to 2025 are:

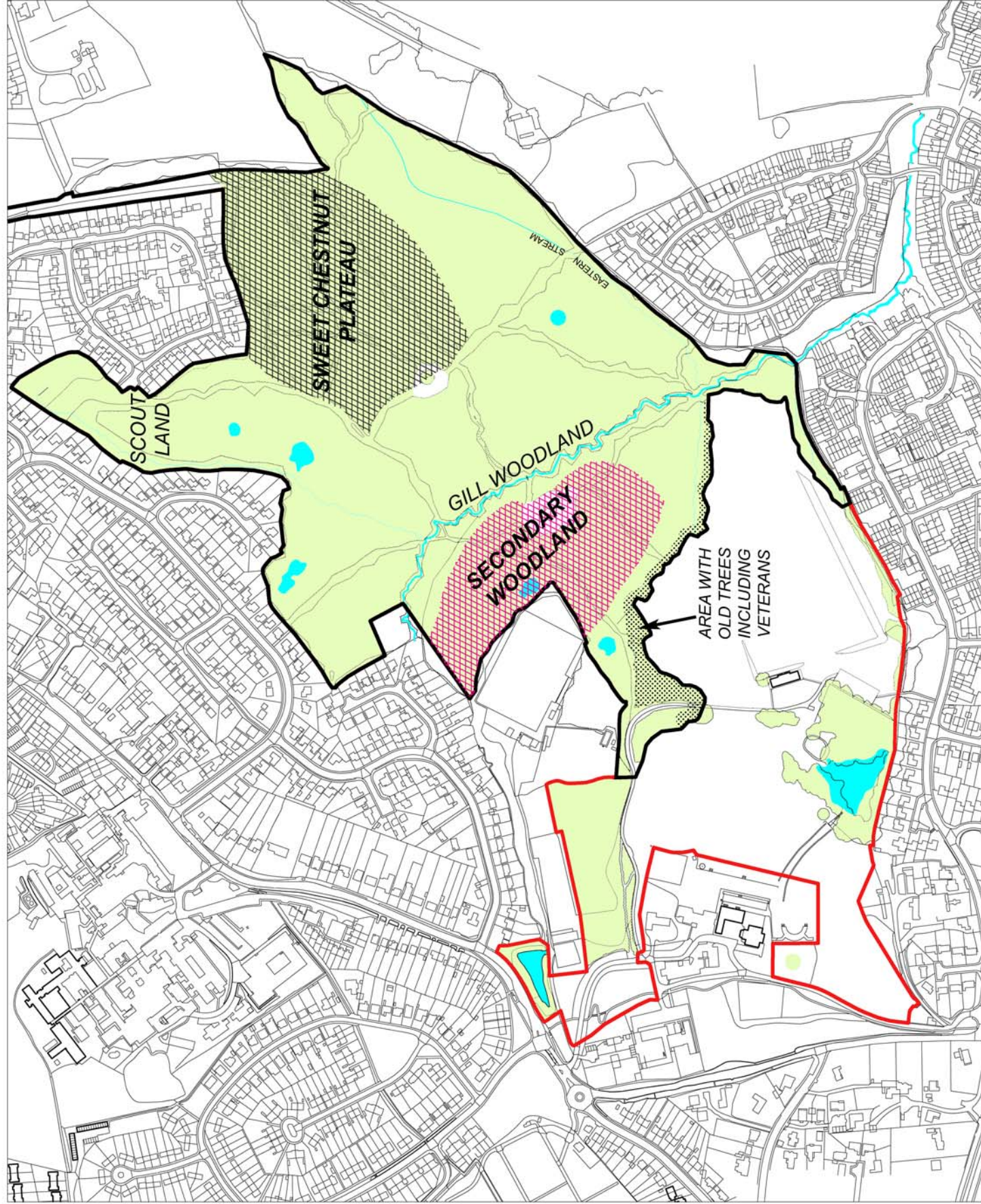
- *Woodland management - coppicing and thinning*
- *Enhancement and management of the path and ride network*
- *Glade and open area creation and management*
- *Invasive species control*
- *Pond and stream management*
- *Improvements to safe access and site infrastructure*
- *Enhancing interpretation*
- *Reducing site abuses through better engagement with community and neighbours*
- *Survey and monitoring of flagship and protected species*

3.3.1 1 Compartments & Features

- Sweet chestnut plateau
- Gill stream
- Scout Land
- Rides and paths (13 named paths)
- Open glades (The Glade and Rutland Meadow)
- Ponds (6 named ponds)
- Secondary woodland
- Sussex Border Path
- Holtye Track
- Veteran trees

The names of paths, ponds and other features used in this plan are taken from the ACG/MSDC illustrated map of Ashplats Wood used on interpretative boards.

Figure 3
Compartments &
Features in
Ashplats Wood



3.3.1.2 Ashplats Wood Management Prescriptions

3.3.1.2.1 Woodland management

Coppicing

Since ACG was formed in 1997 their primary focus has been on bringing the worst infestations of rhododendron and cherry laurel under control. The central plateau is now almost free of these invasive species.

Management in Ashplats Wood now needs to be focused on diversifying the woodland structure through routine woodland management tasks, primarily coppicing and thinning to enhance the woodland for a variety of fauna, particularly woodland butterflies and other invertebrates.

Management of path edges by coppicing will create graded profiles next to the open central portion of the paths. Increased light reaching paths will promote the growth of ground flora species and allow low, shrubby vegetation to develop along the edges of sunny rides.

Coppicing in strips along path edges and around path junctions will gradually create a network of wider, sunnier rides with open glades where several paths meet (see below).

The coppicing regime will primarily take in sweet chestnut stools along paths radiating out from the central plateau, but ash, hazel and other species will also need to be cut. For the duration of this plan, the species that are coppiced is of less importance than the function of coppicing to enhance structural diversity.

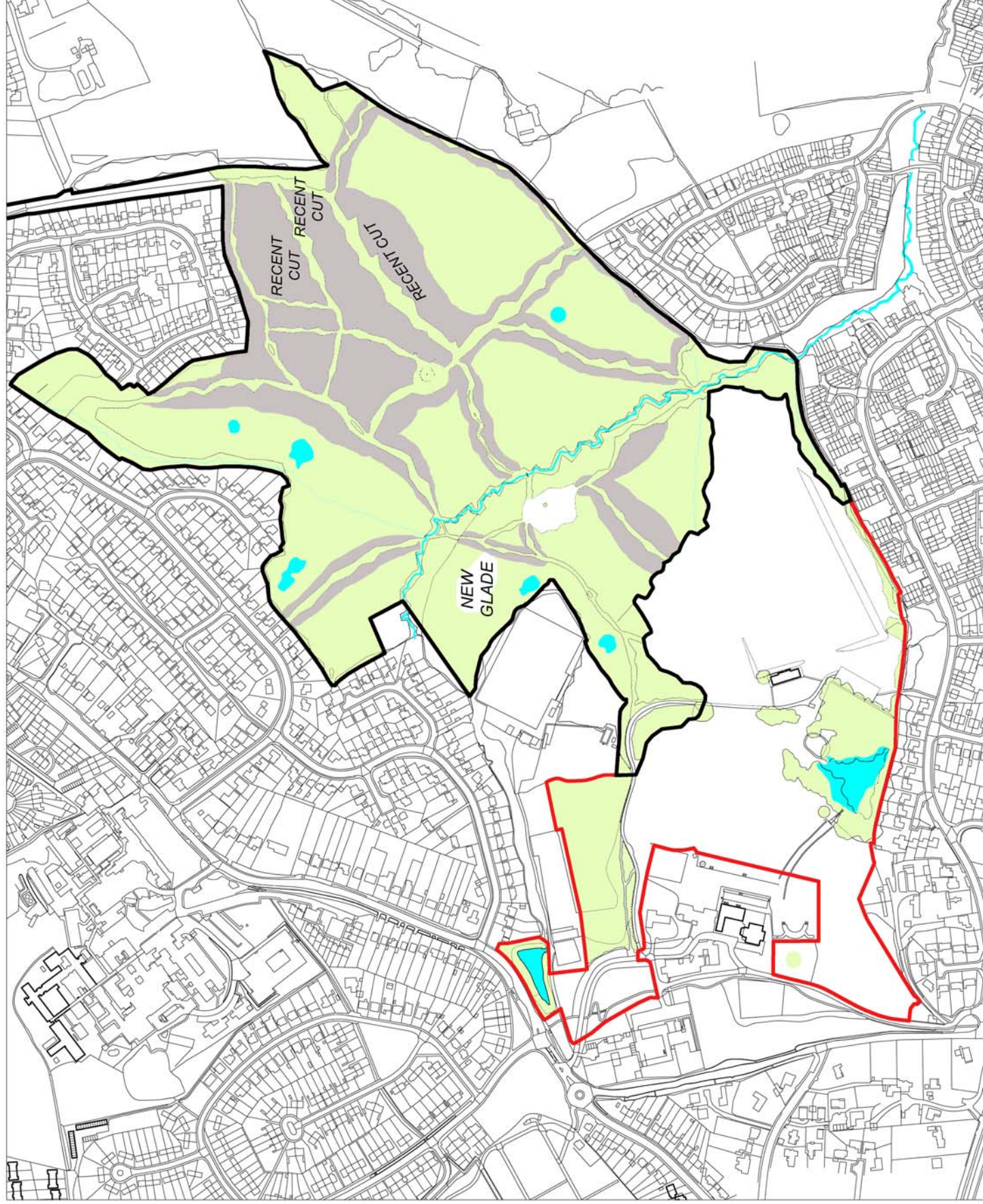
Whilst the primary focus of the coppice rotation for the duration of this 10 year plan is on the path and ride edges, some small coups of over-mature sweet chestnut on the plateau should also be integrated with the linear coppicing along the major routes (see Figure 4).

Within the Scout Land there are several mature ash trees with large canopies very near to housing. These trees should be selectively coppiced within the early stages of the management plan to reduce the risk of damage to nearby properties.

Sycamore is present in parts of Ashplats Wood, especially in the secondary woodland in the south west. In places sycamore regeneration is dense and this species may eventually come to dominate the canopy. Selective coppicing of mature sycamores is recommended to reduce the seed burden and routine removal of sycamore seedlings and small saplings would also be beneficial.

The Ashplats Wood Action Plan (Figure 6) sets out a framework for the coppice rotation but there will need to be a high degree of flexibility in the areas that are cut and the amount of coppicing that can be achieved in any given year.

Figure 4
Suitable Coppicing
Zones in
Ashplats Wood



Thinning

Selective, gradual thinning of oak standards and dense stands of holly across parts of the woodland will help to promote better structural diversity. The Scout Land in particular will benefit from this and should be the main area where canopy and shrub layer thinning takes place over the 10 years of this plan.

Some thinning is likely to be suitable as a volunteer task but other work will need to be done by contractors.

Extracting cut timber from Ashplats Wood can be problematic because even the main access tracks are prone to waterlogging. The nominate officer will need to make a decision each year on the optimum timing for coppicing and thinning work (within the period November to February) and the most appropriate way to extract or store the cut wood.

Low impact options to extract timber from particularly sensitive parts of the site should be investigated. There may be scope to use heavy horses for timber extraction as a way to reduce damage to paths from vehicles and also as a way to engage members of the community.

Other woodland tasks

Regular tree inspections and monitoring of potentially dangerous trees near paths should be undertaken and appropriate remedial management implemented as needed,

Minimal intervention areas should be observed along both gill streams and in the vicinity of Badgers Walk. Some limited management to control invasive species may be needed in these zones but this should be through manual removal only as chemical use close to the streams should be avoided.

3.3.1.2.2 Path management

Coppicing path and ride edges

Management and widening of the paths and rides from 2015 to 2025 will form an integral part of the coppice rotation in order to restore a series of wider rides with much more structurally diverse margins.

Large coppice stools along ride edges should be cut and subsequent vegetation re-growth will need to be managed on a suitable rotation in sections to promote and maintain the valuable open, sunny and structurally diverse habitat along the rides.

As a general rule approximately half of each ride/path edge should be cut annually but the nominate officer will need to make annual decisions on exactly how much to cut depending on growth rates. No more than 50m lengths of each ride edge should be coppiced at one time.

Creating scalloped edges to the widened rides will help to provide warm, sheltered areas favourable for woodland butterflies and other insects along the edges and prevent the rides from becoming wind tunnels.

Occasional “pinch points” where branches meet overhead should be retained every 50m or so along widened rides to maintain habitat connectivity for dormice.

Within the ancient woodland area widened rides will radiate out from the existing glades and towards the gill steps. A box junction at the point where Main Track meets The Glade should be

created to extend The Glade and create an open area at the top of the Gill Steps on the central plateau of the woodland (see Figure 4).

Management ride edges to increase light levels will help to promote the growth of more dense, buffering vegetation in the narrow strip of land between Main Track and the new housing development in the north east.

Path surface management

Path and ride surfaces will be affected by the changes in light and air flow brought about by coppicing. Flexibility will be needed in their management over the next 10 years depending on how individual paths respond.

Water flow causing erosion along paths can be a problem throughout Ashplats Wood, in large part due to the slopes and geology of the site. In 2015 ACG identified a particular need for some ditch reinstatement work between Chestnut and Coppice rides.

Monitoring water damage and erosion of paths is an ongoing task that the nominate officer will need to address. Identifying path damage and take appropriate, timely action will prevent problems getting worse.



Badly eroded path surface

Main Track and some of the other most heavily used paths are likely to require occasional repairs to fill in potholes and persistent wet areas. In the past Main Track has been maintained by mounding crushed sandstone to form a domed profile which sheds water to ditches on either side.

Preliminary work for the circular walk includes surface repairs to Main Track using an appropriate material, though locally sourced sandstone is not always easy to find. Any new development schemes within East Grinstead could potentially provide a good source of local sandstone for path maintenance in Ashplats Wood.

It is recommended that MSDC should ask their planning department to alert the East Court Estate nominate officer of any development proposals that could yield suitable local material to use for path consolidation material.

Monitoring the use of paths

As part of the monitoring schedule the circular walk through Ashplats Wood that is due to be completed in 2016 should be reviewed after 3 years to assess how well its surface has lasted and its use by visitors to the site.

ACG members reduced the drop of some of the Gill Steps in 2015 to make them easier to use but this route should also be kept under review in case further modifications are needed.

Informal paths into Ashplats Wood from the new housing in the northeast have started to develop. It may be less damaging to the woodland ground flora to formalise a single access point rather than allowing multiple new routes to evolve.

There is an active badger sett with several entrances in the upper parts of Badgers Walk. The lower end of this path is very eroded and extensive tree roots have been exposed. Management around this area must be carried out with care and with awareness of the legal restrictions that apply when working near the sett. Consideration should be given to passively discouraging public access along this path through limited upkeep management whilst making other paths easier and more attractive to use.

Sussex Border Path

The Sussex Border Path, which runs along the entire southern edge of the East Court Estate, needs considerable improvement. Some, but not all of its faults will be addressed during construction of the circular walk.

Additional enhancements that would make this important Public Right of Way a safe and enjoyable route to use include selectively opening up the canopy along the darkest parts of path and widening the path itself in places.

There is an urgent need for the nominate officer to undertake some community engagement in order to address the long-standing and persistent issues of garden encroachment and green waste dumping along the path (see section 3.3.3).

Land ownership in this part of the East Court Estate is complex because a narrow strip of the woodland adjoining the Sussex Border Path is not owned by EGWML and as such not included within the MSDC lease. The strip is assumed to be owned by the residential properties that back into the path. There is evidence that some properties have used this strip to dispose of garden debris and it should become a long-term aspiration for MSDC to engage with these residents to become more sympathetic to the objectives of the Management Plan.

3.3.1.2.3 Glades and open areas

Glade management

Current management of the two glades within Ashplats Wood comprises an annual cut in September by contractors. ACG members then rake the hay by hand and stockpile it on the edges of the glades.

Ideally the hay should be removed from the ancient woodland completely and not left to accumulate on the glade edges where as it rots down it will tend to cause nutrient enrichment and encourage coarse vegetation to develop.



Hay piled in woodland on the meadow margin

Cutting the grass late in the season should be continued but alternatives to piling hay on the glade edges are needed.

The glades could be cut and the arisings/hay baled using a hand operated mini-baler. The bales could then be removed from the East Court Estate or used in areas away from the ancient woodland. Alternatively the piles of cut, raked material should be removed to be composted elsewhere on the East Court Estate or at another MSDC facility. Taking small bales of hay from the glades is likely to be the more manageable option.

In order to meet the management prescriptions for species-rich grassland across the whole of the East Court Estate, not just the woodland glades, purchase of suitable machinery for small scale mowing and baling, such as a mini-baler, would be extremely worthwhile.

The woodland glades should have well-structured, graded edges with sunny banks of bramble and scrub species but periodic management of edge vegetation is needed to stop it encroaching too far into the grassland.

Bramble, bracken and scrub around the edges of open areas should be cut back on a 2-3 year rotation (depending on growth rates).

New open area creation

Increasing the extent of open habitat where light can penetrate to ground level within Ashplats Wood is a key management objective.

In addition to widening existing paths and rides in the ancient woodland areas it is recommended that new linked glades and widened paths should be created in the secondary woodland west of the gill stream. These should extend to the northeast and south of Rutland Meadow, as far as the boundary bank (see Figure 4). In the long-term there is the possibility of creating a new pond in this area.

Stumps of the trees and shrubs around the edges of newly opened areas should be managed by short rotation coppicing to create dense, scrubby margins but wherever possible smaller stumps within the open areas should be carefully removed to facilitate future mowing of grassy glades.

The positioning of new glades within the secondary woodland should be planned very carefully to

take advantage of areas where there are fewest large diameter trees and where stump removal could be kept to an absolute minimum. However, in many places the canopy is thin and young ash trees are relatively sparse.

Any necessary stump removal must take into account the potential for legally protected species to be encountered. In particular great crested newts and dormice may hibernate at the base of trees and shrubs during the winter months. Only hand tools should be used in such operations and work must stop immediately if hibernating animals are encountered.

3.3.1.2.4 Invasive species management

It is important that management to control invasive species (primarily rhododendron and cherry laurel) is continued throughout the woodland and monitoring for re-growth and seedlings takes place in areas where control of large shrubs has been completed.

There are some small concentrations of invasive species that should be targeted in the Scout Land and along the Sussex Border Path.

Removal of seedling/sapling sycamores by hand should be an ongoing management task throughout Ashplats Wood and consideration should be given to targeted coppicing of mature sycamore trees to reduce the amount of seed produced.

Various plant species of garden origin occur in Ashplats Wood, some of which may become invasive over time though others may simply persist without spreading far. As a rule it is best to remove all such species before they become established, provided that their removal does not compound management difficulties.

3.3.1.2.5 Pond management

Great crested newts (GCN) are a European Protected Species and should be considered as a priority species on The East Court Estate and especially within Ashplats Wood. The woodland provides very important areas for breeding, foraging and hibernation.

The pond management recommended over the course of this 10-year plan is intended to create a variety of conditions across the six woodland ponds and thus provide a good range of habitat for GCN and other wildlife.

Woodland ponds tend to become over-shaded by trees and the lack of sunlight results in the suppression of marginal and aquatic vegetation. Leaf litter builds up in the water over time and this also reduces the growth of aquatic and marginal vegetation as well as making ponds progressively shallower.

Although newts can deposit their eggs directly onto leaf litter, their preferred substrate for egg laying is aquatic vegetation. GCN in particular prefer ponds of a good depth and will avoid using heavily silted up ponds or ponds with excessive leaf litter.

The most common reason to restore ponds for amphibians is when anaerobic sediment and accumulated leaf litter reduce depth so much that the pond may be dry for most of the year.

The main objective for pond restoration work is to establish areas of deep water for newts to breed in, ideally with a 1m to 2.5m maximum central depth and some well vegetated margins of more than 20cm deep. However, restoring ponds must be done with great care to ensure that other nature conservation interests are served, as well as those of amphibians.

If 360° excavators and dumper trucks are required to restore a pond then it is important to minimise any disturbance to the surrounding woodland. Using the excavator to form a ramp down into the pond is often the only way to avoid excessive bank edge disturbance.

Wherever possible machine access should be restricted to a single track. This may require the removal or coppicing of some scrub or immature trees around the pond. Generally speaking opening up a pond to the south will allow most sunlight to reach the water so if any trees or shrubs need to be cut back for access, it should be done on the south side of the pond.

The timing of work is critical, especially in ponds containing GCN. Ponds should never be subjected to disturbance during the amphibian breeding season (usually from March to July) or when tadpoles are still in the pond (up to the end of October).

There is usually only a small window of opportunity to carry out the work during the winter months. The exception to this is if the pond is dry during the summer or autumn. These conditions provide a good opportunity to undertake the work with little risk to amphibians and at a time when there will be reduced ground impact.

Disposal of excavated silt and leaf litter is often problematic. It is rarely acceptable to deposit the spoil within the woodland as this will suppress any existing ground flora and increase nutrient levels. Disposal of spoil off-site is expensive and this can often prevent large scale pond management projects. In some circumstances a local farmer may be able to take the spoil, in which case the Environment Agency may need to be consulted.

Specific recommendations for the six ponds in Ashplats Wood are as follows:

Alfred's Pond

The willow growing in the centre of the pond could be removed or its regrowth restricted by coppicing. This is one of the smaller ponds in the wood and machine access would be fairly straightforward so it would be possible to remove the willow and deepen the pond at the same time.

Cranston Pond

Cranston Pond appears to be quite shallow with a flat base. It would benefit from deepening although it is one of the larger ponds within Ashplats Woods so any significant improvements to depth could produce a large amount of spoil for disposal.

Lancaster Pond

Some selective tree thinning/coppicing would increase light levels at Lancaster Pond. Removal of the majority of the dead wood lying in the pond would help to increase its depth, though some should be retained as habitat for specialist invertebrates. Access by vehicles would be difficult to this pond so work by volunteers is likely to be the most practical option.

Hoskins Pond

Some selective tree thinning/coppicing would increase light levels at Hoskins Pond. This is the largest of the ponds in Ashplats Wood and any mechanical deepening may be impractical. However, removal of the majority of the deadwood lying in the pond would help to increase the depth of water.

Scouts Pond

Scouts Pond is the smallest pond and one of the more open with only approximately 50% of the shoreline shaded. The water depth is approximately 15cm and it is fed by a small stream which has deposited a silty substrate. Removal of silt would be advantageous and should not create too much spoil. Machine access would involve removing quite a lot of surrounding holly and other shrubs but this could be tied into the proposed thinning of the locally dense shrub layer in the Scout Land.

Sunken Pond

Sunken pond is fed by two small ditches and supports a small area of wetland vegetation, including marsh marigold. If access for machinery is possible then deepening this pond would increase its value to wildlife. Some thinning/coppicing of the surrounding woodland would also help to increase light levels and promote further growth of wetland plants.

3.3.1.2.6 Gill stream and adjoining woodland

Stream bank Rehabilitation

There are some very eroded areas of the gill stream banks, especially around the heavily used bridges in the south of the gill. These areas are in need considerable reinforcement work to stop the erosion and conserve the valuable biodiversity of the stream valley.

Soft engineering solutions to this problematic area will be necessary, for example the installation of willow spilling's to help stabilise and bind the eroded banks that are now devoid of vegetation. It may also be possible to re-shape parts of the banks and install gravel shallows that would allow people to have partial access to the streams without damaging the banks.

The affected areas will have to be fenced to exclude access by dogs whilst the work is going on and it will be vital to provide information and interpretation of the work so that visitors know what is happening and why.

It is probably not realistic to attempt to exclude dogs from the stream completely and allowing their dogs to paddle in the water undoubtedly adds to the enjoyment of many visitors to Ashplats Wood. However, this must be balanced against the damage that excessive canine access is causing.

A detailed proposal and specialist advice will be needed for the stream bank rehabilitation project. Commissioning such advice should be the responsibility of the nominate officer and extensive community consultation and engagement before, during and after the project will be essential.

Water Quality

Water quality monitoring is needed in two areas where potential sources of pollution were noted during the ecological assessment survey. The first is downslope of new housing in northeast where a small treatment plant for the East Court Estate appears to have an outflow into a very small and poorly sited ditch (TQ40568 39097).

The second potential source of pollution is at outlet into the upper parts of the gill stream in the Scout Land where apparently soapy water was discharging during a survey visit (TQ40393 39259).

Minimal Intervention

In general the gill stream and surrounding woodland should be treated as minimal intervention zones in order to maintain the warm, humid micro-climate and shady conditions that favour the growth of the characteristic ferns, mosses and liverworts of gill streams in the High Weald (Samsun 2014).

3.3.1.2.7 Holtye Track

The Holtye Track is the main access routes into Ashplats Wood from the north. Its management needs to balance access requirements with maximising its value to wildlife.

The grassy part of the track has been mown by contractors twice per year in the past and this has apparently been adequate for good access.

A management regime that promotes structurally varied vegetation along Holtye Track is needed. It

should include short grass to walk on with taller grass/scrubby margins for the benefit of wildlife such as invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. This could be created by mowing alternate sides of the track on rotation to maintain open access but also promote areas of mid-successional tussocky grassland habitat.

Occasional, rotational management of scrubby edges to create scalloped bays along with control of invasive species as needed would prevent the area from progressing into secondary woodland. The frequency of edge vegetation management will depend on growth rates and should be at the discretion of the nominate officer but it is likely that sections will need to be cut every 2-3 years.

There are some impressive veteran oaks along the Holtye Track. Some of these old trees would benefit from “halo thinning”, which is gradual removal of young trees and shrubs that are crowding close to the trunk of the veteran tree.

Thinning scrub around veteran trees can help to prolong their life and maintain them in good condition. However, it should only be carried out gradually because causing sudden changes in the micro-climate or rapid increases in wind exposure can be very damaging to the trees.

Holtye Track is another part of East Court Estate where the nominate officer will need to employ a policy of tactful but persistent community engagement to prevent any further inappropriate planting of non-native species and garden waste dumping.

3.3.2 EAST COURT

3.3.2.1 Compartments & Features

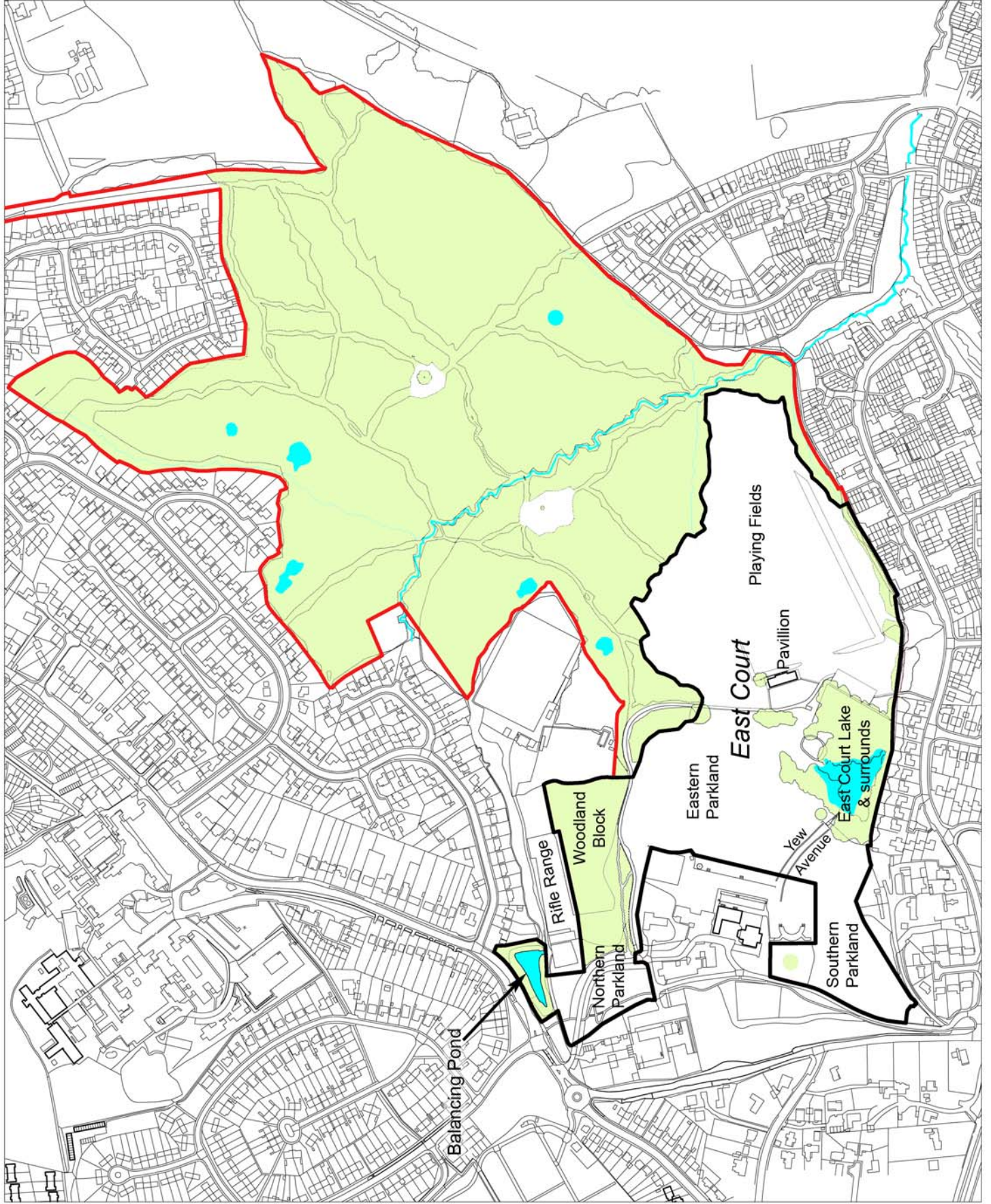
East Court is divided into the following compartments and features for management.

- Playing fields
- Eastern parkland
- Southern parkland
- Northern parkland
- East Court Lake and its surrounds
- Woodland block adjacent to the rifle range
- Balancing pond
- Yew avenue
- Parkland trees

Key management themes for 2015 to 2025 are:

- *Less intensive and more creative grassland management*
- *Low level management of the ponds and their surrounds*
- *Improved management of veteran trees*
- *Hedge enhancement and planting*
- *Invasive species control and monitoring*
- *Enhancing interpretation*
- *Better community engagement to reduce site abuses*
- *Survey and monitoring of flagship and protected species*

Figure 5
Compartments &
Features in
East Court



3.3.2.2 East Court Management Prescriptions

3.3.2.2.1 Grassland management

Grassland management within East Court over the life of this plan should have two primary aims: to enhance the biodiversity value of the grassland resource within the parkland and to improve habitat linkage between the different parts of the East Court Estate.

Relaxation of the very conventional, amenity grassland mowing regime throughout East Court would be very beneficial. Whilst the formal sports pitches and other high-use amenity areas should continue to be mown regularly to promote a short sward, there are many areas which could be mown far less often and allowed to grow longer to promote patches of meadow-like sward, especially on the species-rich banks (identified in Part 2 of this report).

Taller, less frequently mown grassland margins around the edges of the site would be far more beneficial to wildlife and act as habitat corridors for fauna such as GCN to move around the site, especially where grassland adjoins woodland habitats, such as at East Court lake area and next to Ashplats Wood.

Less frequent cutting and mowing sinuous, rather than hard, straight edges, around the perimeter of the parkland areas would enhance the visual appeal of the edge zones and would allow a far more gradual, transitional habitat to develop in the interface between the grassland and the surrounding woodland.

The exact frequency of mowing needed to make the best of the different grassland areas within much of East Court will have to be established by trial and error. There is likely to be considerable variation in the success of leaving areas unmown for weeks or months at a time and some areas may produce a crop of undesirable coarse plant species such as docks or hogweed. Monitoring and review of the relaxed mowing regime should be an important task for the nominate officer in the early years of this management plan.

There will also need to be very clear and visible explanation of the new grassland management regime so that visitors to the site understand the reasons for the changes in appearance of some areas.

The circular walk route runs around the southern edge of the playing fields. The path itself will be mown regularly but will have longer grass margins that are cut annually in September. The taller grass zones should be allowed to extend from the top of the embankment on the playing fields to the edge of the woodland.

The late season grass cut should mimic the mowing regime in the glades in Ashplats Wood which is designed to allow as many of the wildflowers as possible to flower and set seed. Cut material from the autumn mowing should be collected and removed, not allowed to remain in situ where it would accumulate to form a deep mulch.



Grass cuttings forming a thatch in the Northern Parkland

A lower intensity mowing regime is also recommended for some of the less heavily used areas of East Court; including parts of the northern and southern parkland where the grassland sward was found to contain wildflower-rich patches (see Figure 2). It may be necessary to cut some of these areas more often than once a year, at least in the initial years of the management plan to see how the sward develops, but often a colourful response of the wildflowers that have been suppressed by constant mowing in the past can be very well-received by members of the public.

In the northern parkland a relaxed mowing regime will also need to include selective removal of some of the coarse weedy species especially docks, along with a regularly mown, short sward strip next to footpaths. However, other areas should be mown much less frequently and cuttings removed or baled. This area could also be considered for small-scale sward enhancement using yellow rattle seed to reduce the vigour of grasses and promote the growth of wildflowers.

Less frequently mown, more structurally complex grassland habitats within and around the parkland areas will be extremely important in creating and strengthening connectivity between the fragments of semi-natural habitat around East Court, notably the lake and copses. It will also greatly improve the linkage between the lake and Ashplats Wood and thus be of benefit to the meta-population of GCN that occurs across the East Court Estate.

In the longer term it would be possible to enhance some of the parkland area grassland by using green hay or wildflower seed collected from nearby MSDC unimproved grassland sites, such as Bedelands Farm LNR. This should only be considered once the relaxed mowing regime has been in place for a period of years so that the natural sward recovery can be evaluated.

It would be possible to create a new pond, away from woodland areas, on the lower slopes of the southern parkland area. A sunny, open pond in this area could be an attractive feature and provide a different type of habitat from the woodland ponds and the lake. It would certainly need to be fenced in order to keep children and dogs from venturing into it. However, the need for this habitat creation would depend on whether some of the possible enhancements to East Court Lake are taken forward (see below).

The grounds maintenance specification for the amenity area is outlined in the Grounds Maintenance Contract that can be viewed on the Council's web pages at:

<http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/leisure/7873.htm>

This Contract covers the maintenance of the formal and informal recreational areas of East Court.

The specification is intended to be dynamic to enable adjustment for trends in the community's demands for recreation. This Management Plan is intentionally silent on the provision of activities as it has already been address in the Grounds Maintenance Contract documentation. Inclusion of these specifications would simply be a repetition. MSDC fund the maintenance covered in this specification and this will remain for the expected duration of the lease. The contract is a public document and has been published on the Council's web pages.

3.3.2.2.2 East Court Lake & Surrounds

Note: It may be necessary to obtain a licence from Natural England to carry out major work in and around the lake due to the confirmed presence of breeding GCN.

Woodland

The woodland around East Court Lake would benefit from management and would also improve the aesthetic appeal of the lake itself. The primary constraint in this area is the confirmed presence of GCN breeding in the lake, which means that particular care must be taken to carry out all work in an appropriate manner at suitable times of year.

Approximately 95% of the shoreline of the lake is shaded so some selective thinning and clearance of trees and shrubs is recommended to increase the amount of light reaching the water.

Much of this could be achieved by gradually removing the non-native and invasive plant species around the lake and within the woodland area. Retaining native trees and shrubs whilst removing exotic species will help to restore this fragment of ancient woodland habitat and promote the recovery of its woodland ground flora species.

Electro-fishing and de-silting

Fish are certainly present within East Court Lake, possibly in large numbers. The presence of fish is detrimental for all amphibian species (other than common toads) because they can consume large numbers of amphibian larvae. GCN larvae in particular tend to suffer from fish predation. Serious consideration should be given to removing the fish from the lake by electro-fishing.

Electro-fishing involves placing electrodes in the water and generating an electrical field to stun the fish. The fish are then removed using nets. Electro-fishing is more effective on larger fish (over 100 mm in length) less so for smaller fish.

The process requires specialised equipment and must be performed by a trained, experienced operative. This process can only be undertaken during the winter months as any amphibians present could drown if stunned.

The electric field is only effective when applied within a couple of metres of fish and is less effective in water over one metre deep. Consequently it is usually helpful to reduce the depth of water to increase the effectiveness of the electrical field and to clear a sump in the base of the pond where fish can be collected as the water draws down. Removal of silt from the pond may also help to reduce the number of fish by removing any fish eggs or fry that cannot be removed by hand.

Carrying out silt removal and electro-fishing as one operation would be the most effective and efficient way to enhance the lake. A considerable amount of silt would need to be removed from the site.

Extending the lake

A further enhancement of East Court lake would be to return it to its former, historic extent (May 2006). The area that is now the basketball/skateboard area was once part of the main lake, though from the mid 1800's map evidence shows it as a separate pond. It was then

variously a swimming pool, a model boating pond, a paddling pool and a skateboard area.

Restoring the second pond to an area with more open, sunny banks that is visible from the mansion would add to the biodiversity of the area and provide a new feature of interest in the parkland.

An extension of the lake should be designed carefully to have shallow, sloping banks that will allow the growth of dense marginal vegetation to provide good cover for wildlife and habitat for breeding amphibians. It is very likely that some form of fencing would be needed around the pond to prevent damaging access from people and dogs. Interpretation of the landscape and wildlife value of the lake is also recommended.

Habitat corridor

There is very good scope to create a habitat corridor from East Court lake to Ashplats Wood. This would be extremely beneficial for the GCN meta-population because at present individual newts must cross an expanse of short mown grassland to move between the lake and the woodland. Newts are vulnerable to predation when crossing open ground.

The aim should be to provide a continuous strip of less intensively managed vegetation from the lake area via the small copse opposite the pavilion to the south-western tip of Ashplats Wood (see Figure 2). This corridor could take the form of either a new, mixed species native hedgerow with tall grassy margins or a wide strip of infrequently managed grassland (a “grass hedge”).

The first step should be to define the route of the habitat corridor and stop regular mowing within that strip. This will provide a tall grass corridor that will be useful to GCN and other wildlife in the short term. The grassland sward that develops under reduced mowing should be monitored to see whether it includes any wildflowers of interest and after a full season of growth a decision can then be taken over whether to plant a hedgerow or perhaps to undertake some small-scale sward enhancement along the corridor using yellow rattle and locally sourced wildflower seed or plant plugs.

Because this part of the parkland is highly visible from the mansion and to visitors arriving via the track there may be aesthetic considerations over which type of habitat corridor to create. Ecologically the most important factor is to create a structurally diverse link between the two areas of semi-natural habitat across the expanse of short, open grassland.

Whilst carrying out this work it would be very beneficial to remove the dumped spoil from within the small copse.

3.3.2.2.3 The Balancing pond

The balancing pond, which lies between the northern parkland and Holtye Road, is an area that is likely to be important for biodiversity but which appears to have considerable public safety risks and potential problems with pollution and dumping. Public access should continue to be restricted for safety reasons but the area should be monitored by the nominate officer for its water quality and accumulations of material that is dumped from the road edge.

Despite some signs that unauthorised access takes place, this area is likely to be a valuable refuge for wildlife and may also support GCN, though this is unconfirmed as it was not included in the previous surveys.

Access to this area will be unsuitable for anyone other than MSDC staff and it is not safe for

ACG input at present. There are invasive species that should be removed but the nominate officer will need to assess the best way to tackle management activities here.

3.3.2.2.4 Trees and woodland

Woodland blocks

The block of woodland that surrounds East Court lake and the play area would benefit from control of invasive species (especially rhododendron and cherry laurel) in order to promote the growth of the various native tree and shrub species that are present in this small fragment of ancient woodland habitat.

Regular litter picks should be continued in all the woodland blocks in East Court, especially in the most heavily used parts around the play area.

The block of woodland adjacent to the rifle range should be treated as a minimal-intervention zone for the duration of this management plan. It was noted during the 2015 survey that green waste, apparently from grounds maintenance in East Court, has been dumped in the edge of this woodland area. This should not continue since it will have an adverse impact on the woodland ground flora. It also undermines the nominate officer trying to prevent others from dumping their green waste in Ashplats Wood.

Parkland trees

Parkland trees in East Court are an important and attractive feature of this area. As they get older such trees can develop very high biodiversity value (see below). Careful management of parkland trees is needed to ensure that they develop into the veterans of the future and a long-term schedule of new plantings should be developed.

There is a very crowded stand of beech trees at the entrance to the mansion. This would benefit from quite heavy thinning so that a much smaller number of trees can develop into more open grown specimens and become future parkland veterans.

3.3.2.2.5 Hedges

Yew avenue

The yew avenue that leads from the formal mansion gardens down to East Court Lake at its end. The restoration of the yew hedging that forms the avenue will involve specialist work, including removal of various broadleaved species that have become established between the yews and restorative pruning of the yew itself. This work is beyond the scope of ACG and will need to be carried out by an experienced contractor

New hedge

In the eastern parkland, around the ambulance service compound, there is a rather dilapidated fence with a patchy hedge containing various woody species including sycamore, honeysuckle and bramble. This boundary is an ideal location to plant a new mixed native hedge to link in to existing yew hedge around the tennis courts.

A new hedge in this area would strengthen habitat connectivity around the edges of the parkland. The grassy banks at the foot of the hedges appear to have a sward that is locally quite species-rich and is one of the areas where a relaxed mowing regime would be beneficial (see above).

3.3.3 Estate-wide Management Prescriptions

This section summarises management actions and recommendations that apply across the whole of the East Court Estate or which can be applied to any area when appropriate.

3.3.3.1 Veteran trees

Enhanced monitoring and management of the veteran trees on the East Court Estate is strongly recommended. The mature oaks in the south west of Ashplats Wood and along Holtye Track are particularly important and valuable features of the site and may sometimes need sensitive management.

Careful, gradual halo thinning is needed where dense holly and other shrubs are crowding open grown trees.

Wherever possible deadwood should be retained in the crown of veteran trees since this is a vital resource for a range of specialised taxa ranging from invertebrates to lower plants to bats.

If large limbs fall or are removed from veteran trees, the timber should be retained on the ground near the tree and not removed from the site.

3.3.3.2 Infrastructure, interpretation, education and status

The East Court Estate already has some very good infrastructure for the benefit of visitors, but there is definitely room for improvement.

Signs to help visitors find their way around the site are not always clear and Ashplats Wood in particular is in need of better waymarking. Marker posts along the circular walk were installed in 2015 but some extra markers in the woodland might be welcomed by visitors. Additional seating where visitors can rest and enjoy the views in all parts of the East Court Estate.

East Court Estate is a very popular place for dog walking (Ecology Solutions Ltd. 2013). Whilst many dog owners are very responsible, additional dog waste bins on the circular walk and at other key points around the site should be installed. Signs at the entry points to the East Court Estate should encourage their use.

Routine litter picks take place across the site and an annual clear up is organised by ACG. This should continue across all areas and a nominate officer might be able to organise more frequent volunteer clean up days.

The new management plan and consequent increased levels of management across the Estate will need to be clearly explained to visitors. It is extremely important that local people and regular users in particular should be forewarned of any activities that may appear to be large-scale, for example coppicing, pond clearance and glade creation. New permanent interpretation boards should be supplemented by temporary explanatory signs before and during any major work.

Increasing the educational use of the East Court Estate would be much more feasible with a nominate officer in place. The possibilities include using Ashplats Wood as a forest school site, inviting local artists to become involved at the site and fostering stronger links with organisations such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, the High Weald AONB Team as well as with local schools and community groups.

The presence of the Greenwich Meridian through the East Court Estate should feature more prominently in the interpretation material for East Court and a site leaflet highlighting the varied features of the East Court Estate should be produced and made available in the local area.

The current SNCI designation only includes the eastern, wooded part of the site. In view of recent biological survey information which highlights the ecological importance of other areas, such as the lake, it would be advisable for the nominate officer to request a review and possibly an extension to the SNCI boundary. At the time of writing responsibility for West Sussex SNCIs lies with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC).

The 2001 East Court Masterplan (Parklife 2001) suggested a review of vehicle access to the pavilion car park because the current route is convoluted and poorly signposted. The potential for access from Escots Drive should be investigated, provided concerns that it could increase levels of site abuse and vandalism can be overcome

3.3.3.3 Site boundaries, neighbours and land acquisition

Garden boundary encroachment and green waste dumping must be addressed across the East Court Estate. This will require direct engagement by the nominated officer with the perpetrators as well as strategically placed new fencing in some places and possibly punitive action against repeat offenders. The Scout land and the Sussex Border path alongside Escots Drive are likely to need some intensive interventions.

Ongoing efforts to remove accumulated garden waste and debris that is dumped around the edges of East Court Estate will help but talking with the householders concerned to prevent it happening is the only long-term solution to this problem.

It can be difficult to control site abuses of this kind but the regular monitoring by the key stakeholders will certainly help. Increased community involvement with the site and encouraging local residents to report anti-social behaviour at East Court Estate to MSDC via the nominated officer will be beneficial.

Eliminating garden waste dumping would go a long way towards addressing the ongoing problem of invasive plant species becoming established in Ashplats Wood.

Site abuses take different forms but most can be reduced or eliminated by better community engagement. The ACG seems to maintain a steady number of active members but a new nominate officer may be able to inspire and promote more volunteer and local resident involvement on the site.

MSDC should consider adopting a long-term policy of strategic land acquisition around the edges of the East Court Estate. This would be especially valuable along the Sussex Border Path where tiny parcels of land within the woodland are not owned by EGWML and are therefore outside the area leased by MSDC.

If the opportunity were to arise in future then public ownership of the land adjoining the eastern edge of Ashplats Wood, which is the sole remaining link between the East Court Estate and the wider countryside, would secure the habitat and landscape connectivity of the East Court Estate.

3.3.3.4 Survey and monitoring

The highest priority survey and monitoring activities to carry out from 2015 onwards are:

- Continue fixed-point photographic monitoring and improve storage and accessibility of the

photo archive. Include photos of areas with boundary encroachment or dumping issues to allow monitoring of changes.

- Survey and map the location and extent of invasive species across the whole site. Carry out regular monitoring of invasive species that are a focus of management to ensure that control measures are being effective.
- Continue the dormouse survey using nest boxes in Ashplats Wood. Consider extending the survey into other parts of the East Court Estate with potential to support dormice such as hedges and scrub using nest tubes.
- East Court Estate is potentially an important site for bats. More data about bat occupancy and use of the woodland, parkland and buildings would provide a more comprehensive view of bats across the whole site.

Some important new baseline biological surveys and monitoring activities that should also be undertaken during the lifetime of this plan are:

- Survey of lower plants, especially in the gill areas.
- Baseline survey of butterflies in all parts of the Es East Court Estate tate.
- Ideally a regular butterfly transect walk should be set up using the standard Butterfly Conservation methodology. Including some of the newly widened woodland paths and rides is recommended.
- Breeding bird survey
- Repeat visitor survey in year 5 as part of monitoring visitor usage and numbers
- Monitor path use and issues, especially use of the circular walk

This management plan should be reviewed after the first five years of operation to ensure that the recommended actions are effective and that the site management objectives are being met.

The management plan should be used as a reference and guidance document but there should always be the flexibility to adapt and amend management as circumstances change over time.

It is important to document management successes and failures for the benefit of future nominate officers.

Suggested schedules for implementing the management prescriptions described above are set out in the following action plans for the East Court Estate.

Part 4 Ten-Year Action Plans & Management Timetables

Figure 6 Ashplats Wood Action Plan

MANAGEMENT TASK	COMPARTMENT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Woodland Management											
Coppice small blocks of sweet chestnut	Sweet chestnut plateau			√		√		√		√	
Coppice mature ash	Scout Land	√									
Coppice mature sycamore	All			√				√			
Thin oak standards	Scout Land						√				
Thin holly	Scout Land				√					√	
Dangerous tree monitoring	All	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Path and Ride Management											
Coppice along path edges – one side at a time	Coppice Ride			√					√		
	Main Track				√					√	
	Pegasus Path					√					√
	McIndoe Walk		√					√			
	Ghyll Steps	√					√				
	Beech Walk		√					√			
	Fairlight Ride				√					√	
	Pine Path			√					√		
	Bluebells				√					√	
	Sussex Border Path					√					√
	Chestnut Walk	√					√				

MANAGEMENT TASK	COMPARTMENT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Cut back edge vegetation on alternate ride edges	Coppice Ride		√			√			√		
	Main Track			√			√			√	
	Pegasus Path		√			√			√		
	McIndoe Walk		√			√			√		
	Ghyll Steps			√			√			√	
	Beech Walk	√			√			√			√
	Fairlight Ride			√			√			√	
	Pine Path	√			√			√			√
	Bluebells					√			√		
	Sussex Border Path	√			√			√			√
	Chestnut Walk			√			√			√	
Monitor path surfaces	All	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Path surface repair	As necessary	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Investigate sources of local sandstone		√									
Open canopy by coppicing and thinning	SBP		√				√				√
Glade and Open Area Management											
Mow and rake or bale	Rutland Meadow	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	The Glade	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cut sections of scrub and bracken on edges	All open areas (2-3 yr rotation)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Create new open areas in secondary woodland	Owl Way		√								
	South west of Wood Anemone					√					
	West of McIndoe Walk			√							
Invasive Species Management											
Control rhododendron and cherry laurel	All and especially Scout Land and Sussex Border Path	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

MANAGEMENT TASK	COMPARTMENT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Monitor re-growth of invasive species	All	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Remove sycamore seedlings and saplings	All	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Remove garden species where appropriate	All	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Map and monitor invasive species	All	√		√		√		√		√	
Pond Management											
Thin or coppice trees and shrubs	Lancaster Pond	√									
	Hoskins Pond			√							
	Scouts Pond				√						
	Sunken Pond						√				
Remove most of deadwood from pond	Lancaster Pond	√									
	Hoskins Pond			√							
Remove silt by excavator	Alfred's Pond										√
	Scouts Pond				√						
Remove willow from pond or coppice regrowth	Alfred's Pond										√
Gill and Stream Management											
Commission plans for the repair of eroded stream banks	South end of gill	√									
Minimal-intervention	Gill stream	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Water quality checks	Major streams & Scout Land tributary	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Track Management											
Track edge mowing 2x per year	Holtye Track	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Rotational management of sections of scrub	Holtye Track	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Tree removal	Holtye Track		√								
Halo thinning around veteran trees	Holtye track		√		√		√				

Figure 7 East Court Action Plan

MANAGEMENT TASK	COMPARTMENT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grassland Management											
Annual mowing and removal/baling of grassland on playing field edges adjoining woodland as part of SANG route	Playing Fields	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Annual mowing and raking/baling of selected areas of parkland sward	Southern Parkland	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Northern Parkland	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Eastern Parkland	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Selectively remove coarse species from sward	Northern Parkland	√	√	√	√	√					
Mow 1m wide strips alongside path edges frequently	Northern Parkland	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Less frequent mowing and creating sinuous edges on grassland adjoining woodland	All grassland areas	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Create an unmown strip alongside the track to link the lake with Ashplats Wood	Eastern Parkland	√									
Consider sward enhancement with locally sourced seed and/or yellow rattle	All parkland areas		√								
Consider creating a new pond in the parkland area	Southern Parkland			√							
Lake and Pond Management											
Consider removing silt and electro-fishing East Court lake	East Court lake		√								
Consider restoring the lake to its former extent	East Court lake		√								
Monitor water quality and dumping	Balancing pond	√	√								
Investigate potential for future management	Balancing pond		√								
Woodland Management											
Minimal intervention	Rifle range wood	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Stop disposing of green waste in woodland area	Rifle range wood	√									
Remove dumped spoil in small copse	Eastern Parkland	√									

MANAGEMENT TASK	COMPARTMENT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Selective coppicing and felling	Lake surrounds		√								
Gradually remove non-native woody species including bamboo	Lake surrounds	√	√								
Invasive Species Management											
Control rhododendron, cherry laurel and Portugal laurel	Lake surrounds	√	√	√							
Monitor re-growth of invasive species	Lake surrounds			√	√	√	√				
Remove sycamore seedlings and saplings	Lake surrounds	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Map and monitor invasive species	All	√	√		√		√		√		√
Parkland and Veteran Trees											
Map and photograph all veteran trees	All	√									
Thin stand of beech trees	Mansion entrance		√			√			√		
Develop a long-term schedule of replacement planting of parkland trees	East /Court			√							
Hedges											
Restore yew avenue	Yew avenue	√	√								
Plant a new, mixed native hedge	Eastern parkland			√							

Figure 8 Whole East Court Estate Action Plan

MANAGEMENT TASK	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Infrastructure										
Improve direction signs, woodland way-marking and seating	√									
Install extra dog waste bins	√									
Review feasibility of creating a new access via Escots Drive to the pavilion car park		√								
Regular litter picks	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Veteran Trees										
Map and record locations of all important old trees	√									
Monitor condition of veteran trees		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Retain deadwood in situ as much as possible	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Gradual halo thinning of over-crowded veteran trees where necessary			√			√			√	
Education and Interpretation										
Increase educational uses		√								
Review SSSI designation			√							
Improve permanent and temporary interpretation of management activities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Produce leaflet to be available off site		√								
Boundary Issues & Community Engagement										
Address boundary encroachments	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Address green waste dumping	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Consider adopting a policy of strategic land acquisition around the East Court Estate boundaries		√								

MANAGEMENT TASK	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Survey and Monitoring										
Fixed point photography	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Map locations of invasive species										
Continue and possibly expand dormouse survey	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Whole site bat survey and assessment for roosts	√									
Lower plant survey		√								
Butterfly survey and transect		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Breeding bird survey			√							
Visitor survey					√					
Monitor use of circular walk				√						
Review management plan					√					

Figure 9 Responsibility for Management Actions

COMPARTMENT/FEATURE	MANAGEMENT ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
All areas	Manage invasive species	ACG
	Monitor and map invasive species	ACG
	Monitor, map and photograph veteran trees	ACG
	Improve signage, interpretation material and seating	MSDC
	Install extra dog waste bins	MSDC
	Review and improve meridian markers	MSDC
	Review vehicle access to pavilion car park	MSDC/EGWML
	Litter picks	ACG/MSDC
	Promote educational use of site	MSDC
	Review SNCI designation	MSDC
	Consider a policy of strategic land acquisition	MSDC
	Review management plan	MSDC
Ashplats Wood - Ancient woodland	Coppice (sweet chestnut, ash, sycamore)	Contractor
	Thin oak standards	Contractor
	Thin holly	ACG
	Monitor dangerous trees	ACG
Ashplats Wood - Paths and rides	Coppice path edges	Contractor
	Manage path edges (small-scale coppicing & cutting back vegetation)	ACG
Ashplats Wood - Secondary woodland	Create glades	MSDC/ACG
Ashplats Wood	Monitor path surfaces	MSDC/ACG
	Repair path surfaces	MSDC/ACG
	Investigate sources of local sandstone	MSDC
Ashplats Wood - Glades	Mow and rake or bale	MSDC/ACG
	Remove hay from glades	MSDC
	Manage glade edge vegetation (bracken, bramble and scrub)	ACG
Gill and streams	Repair eroded banks	Contractor
	Water quality checks	MSDC

COMPARTMENT/FEATURE	MANAGEMENT ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
Ashplats Wood - Ponds	Thin and coppice edges	MSDC/ACG
	Remove deadwood from water	MSDC/ACG
	Remove silt to deepen ponds	Contractor
	Remove/coppice willow in pond	Contractor
Sussex Border Path	Coppice and thin canopy	Contractor
Holtye Track	Mowing	MSDC
	Edge management (scrub and woody vegetation)	MSDC/ACG
	Tree removal	MSDC
Veteran trees	Halo thinning (gradual)	ACG
Woodland/playing field edges	Annual mowing and removal of hay wherever possible	Contractor
	Regular mowing of path	Contractor
Woodland/housing edges	Community engagement to reduce/prevent encroachment and dumping	MSDC
East Court - Playing fields	Routine sports pitch mowing	Contractor
East Court - Eastern parkland	Reduced mowing around edges	Contractor
	Annual mowing and removal of hay in selected species-rich areas	MSDC/ACG
	Plant new parkland trees	ACG
	Plant new mixed hedge around ambulance station	ACG
East Court - Southern parkland	Reduced mowing around edges	Contractor
	Annual mowing and removal of hay in selected species-rich areas	MSDC/ACG
	Thin beech trees	Contractor
	Plant new parkland trees	ACG
East Court - Northern parkland	Reduced mowing around edges	Contractor
	Annual mowing and removal of hay in selected species-rich areas	MSDC/ACG
East Court - Lake and surrounds	Consider extending lake	MSDC/EGWML
	Invasive species control in woodland	ACG
	Selective coppicing and thinning	Contractor
East Court - Woodland blocks	Invasive species control	ACG
East Court - Balancing pond and surrounds	Investigate potential for management	MSDC
Yew avenue and stone bridge	Restore yew avenue	Contractor
Survey and monitoring	Fixed point photos	MSDC/ACG/specialists
	Dormouse survey and monitoring	

COMPARTMENT/FEATURE	MANAGEMENT ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
	Bat survey of all areas and tree roosts Butterfly survey and transect Lower plant survey Breeding bird survey Visitor survey Monitor SANG path	

ACG = Ashplats Conservation Group volunteers

MSDC = Mid Sussex District Council staff. Either the nominate officer or other employees

EGWML = East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd trustees

Contractor = Appropriate contractor appointed by MSDC

Figure 10 Habitat Management Timetable

Woodland, tree and scrub management												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Coppicing coups and rides												
Thinning												
Dangerous tree management												
Path edge management												
Glade creation												
Halo thinning around veteran trees												
Grassland management												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Glade and species rich areas mowing and baling												
Regular mowing of amenity areas and paths												
Sward enhancement												
Edge habitat management												
Invasive species management												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Invasive woody species control												
Bracken management												
Garden plant removal												
Pond and stream management												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Bankside tree felling or coppicing												
Deadwood removal												
Silt removal*												
Stabilisation of gill banks												
Survey and monitoring												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wildlife surveys												
Photographic monitoring at fixed points												
Habitat and species mapping												
Maintenance of site infrastructure												
Visitor surveys												

Dark blue = Most effective/least damaging time for management

Pale blue = Work may be less effective and/or requires more care but is acceptable if essential

* Silt can be removed from ponds if they have been dry over the summer months

Important notes:

- This timetable is intended simply as a guide and a reminder for when management tasks should take place in order to minimise possible disturbance or adverse impacts on wildlife, including legally protected species.
- It should not be used as an alternative to the more detailed ten-year work plan and the GCN method statement (Appendix 3).
- Some activities will extend over several months and there is likely to be some variation in the ideal time to carry out different tasks from year to year depending on seasonal factors.
- Not all the recommended management tasks from the full management plan are included in the calendar.
- Community engagement and other similar, non-time critical tasks, for example routine path safety maintenance and litter removal will need to take place all year round.

Abbreviations used in the text

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BoCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
CPRE	Council for the Protection of Rural England
EGWML	East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd.
EPS	European Protected Species
GCN	Great Crested Newt
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MSDC	Mid Sussex District Council
NERC Act	Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act
NVC	National Vegetation Classification
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SBP	Sussex Border Path
SNCI	Site of Nature Conservation Importance
SPA	Special Protection Area
SxBRC	Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre
SWT	Sussex Wildlife Trust
W&C Act	Wildlife & Countryside Act
WSCC	West Sussex County Council

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APPENDIX 1

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) Guidance (Natural England 2012)

INTRODUCTION

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is the name given to greenspace that is of a quality and type suitable to be used as mitigation to offset the impact of new development on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). The purpose of SANGs is to provide alternative greenspace to attract visitors away from the Ashdown Forest SPA.

A SANG site can be created from:

- Existing open space with existing public access, which could be enhanced to become a SANG site.
- Existing open space of SANG quality with no existing public access, which could be made fully accessible to the public.
- Other land which could be converted to a SANG site.

SANG CRITERIA

The assessment of the suitability of a site as SANG is made against a number of criteria. Essential features are those that will be required in order for land to become a SANG site and additional features are those that can be implemented to enhance a SANG site.

Essential Features

Provision of these features will be required in order for the site to fulfil its purpose as a SANG.

Landscape

- Natural greenspace with areas of open (non-wooded) countryside and areas of dense and scattered trees and scrubs. Land should preferably not be entirely flat.
- A range of habitats should be provided for users to experience if the SANG site is larger than 12Ha.
- Perceived as semi-natural with few buildings or artificial structures except in the immediate vicinity of car parks.
- Perceived as safe – no tree or scrub cover along parts of the walking routes.
- No unpleasant intrusions (e.g. sewage treatment smells etc.).

Car Parking and Access

- Parking should be provided on all SANG sites larger than 4Ha (unless the site is intended for use of developments within 400m only). The amount of car parking space should be adequate, determined by the anticipated use of the site and reflect the visitor catchment.
- Car parks must be easily and safely accessible by car and should be clearly sign posted.
- Safe access route on foot from the nearest car park and/or footpath(s) to the SANG.

Walks

- It should be possible to complete a circular walk of 2.3 - 2.5km, which starts and finishes at the car park (if the site is larger than 4Ha). It is desirable to have a choice of routes available, extending up to 5km in length.
- Paths must be easily used and well maintained, but most should remain unsurfaced to avoid the site becoming too urban in feel.

Additional Features

Provision of additional features on the SANG site will increase its attractiveness to visitors and enhance their experience. These features could be added to the SANG site.

Landscape

- Focal point such as a view point, monument or feature of interest within the SANG.

Access

- The SANG site should be clearly sign posted or advertised in some way.
- It is desirable for access points to have signage outlining the layout of the SANG and the routes available to visitors.
- It is desirable for leaflets to be made available at entrance points and car parks.
-

Walks

- Visually-sensitive way-markers and some benches are acceptable.

Source: SANG guidelines were originally developed by Natural England for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA

APPENDIX 2

EAST COURT & ASHPLATS WOODS STEERING COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

General

The East Court & Ashplats Woods boundary is defined in the lease and in essence is the areas locally known as East Court Recreation Ground and Ashplats Woods. This land is owned by East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd (EGWM) and leased to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). Both of the areas are managed for different purposes, with East Court Recreation Ground being laid for formal recreation and Ashplats Woods for nature conservation and habitat creation. East Court & Ashplats Woods has been identified as a strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) for the District which means that it is to be used as mitigation for new residential development within 7km of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). The function of the Steering Committee is to assist MSDC with views on the green space management of East Court and Ashplats Woods.

Management Aims for East Court & Ashplats Woods

The aims for East Court and Ashplats Woods, as agreed in the Management Plan.

- To manage the site in accordance with the aims of the East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd:
‘To provide and maintain a Memorial to the men, women and children of East Grinstead who lost their lives in the 1939-1945 war, a public park with playing fields and recreation grounds. Also to encourage and promote any form of public recreation or education or any other charitable objective’.
- To sensitively manage the woodlands, to include formal/ informal recreation, conservation and education purposes.
- To protect and enhance the biodiversity and landscape value of the East Court Estate, with reference to its special characteristics associated with nature conservation designations, and to promote improved understanding of the value of the site.
- To provide a high quality recreation resource, protecting and enhancing public access of the East Court Estate.
- To produce and implement a 10 year management plan that guides the day-to-day maintenance and development of the site. This will include recommended actions for the East Court Estate and outline a proposed schedule of works. The Natural England SANG criteria and MSDC SANG Strategy will impact on the management activities for East Court and Ashplats Woods that will also have implications on the East Court Recreational Area.
- The East Court Recreational Ground area will be managed predominantly for the provision and enhancement of formal recreation, with secondary interests for passive recreation/ non-sporting events, as defined in the lease.

Structure of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will be comprised of two representatives of MSDC, two representatives of EGWM Ltd and two representatives from EGTC and will be Chaired by the Cabinet Member at MSDC that has “Leisure” in their portfolio.

Role of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will:

- Give views on the proposed content of any revisions to the management plan. The Committee may request explanation or improvements of the contents, but will not have delegated authority to reject the plan.
- Review new proposals from MSDC for the management of East Court and Ashplats Woods.
- Review the impact of the management plan on the East Court Estate and advice on any changes needed to the plan or its implementation as a result of such monitoring.
- Give views on the implementation of the management plan, including priorities and timing of projects in the light of the funds available.
- Review the activities of the Ashplats Conservation Group (ACG).

Membership

The lease defines the membership of the Committee as set out above. However, the Committee can invite other individuals or groups to attend specific meetings if that would aid their discussions.

Management Structure

Arrangements for Meetings

- The nominated representatives from each organisation are to ensure that the views and opinions expressed at meetings are representative of their organisation.
- Committee members nominated to the Committee will be the representatives of their organisation until such time as the Committee is advised of the need for a replacement.
- The Committee is to meet on two occasions per year, where one meeting is to be a tour of East Court and Ashplats Woods and the second in a formal setting. The second meeting is to be held at MSDC Offices at a mutually convenient date and time.
- The Chairman of the Committee may convene a meeting at their discretion should the subject matter be deemed necessary to be heard before the next scheduled meeting.

Mid Sussex District Council

MSDC Officers will have overall responsibility for the continued management of East Court and Ashplats Woods. This will involve:

- Production, review and updating the management plan.
- Development of landscape plans and proposals for achieving the aims of the plan.
- Responsibility for the operational management of East Court and Ashplats Woods, including the allocation of funding received and monitoring and reporting of works.
- Responsibility for managing East Court and Ashplats Woods in line with the SANG strategy.
- Liaise with other organisations to stay abreast of developments in conservation and recreation.
- Writing and circulating minutes and notes from meetings

East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd

- EGWM will be consulted and agree the proposed 10 year management plan, and subsequent revisions to it ahead of its presentation to the Steering Committee.

East Grinstead Town Council

- Representing the interests of East Grinstead and their ownership of the surrounding mansion and land.

East Court and Ashplats Woods Steering Committee Administration

- Meetings will be arranged by an Officer of the MSDC Landscapes Team.
- The agenda will be sent out by an Officer of the MSDC Landscapes Team. Items for inclusion on the agenda will need to be emailed no later than 5 working days prior to the date of the meeting.
- Minutes will be taken and circulated by an Officer of the MSDC Landscapes Team.
- MSDC, EGTC, EGWM Ltd will be entitled to invite administrative support for their organisations to meetings, but they will not constitute being on the Committee.

Ashplats Conservation Group

- The Management Plan will be the guiding document for the group's annual activity programme.
- Report to the Steering Committee of their progress.
- Seek approval of any activity or event not covered by the Management Plan.

Volunteers and Contractors

The management plan will define the operational activities that will be undertaken by either volunteers or Contractors. Volunteers will be encouraged to be self-managing by using the direction of the plan. Some aspects of the plan that are deemed to be tasks for contractors can be reviewed depending on the experience and qualification of those wishing to undertake such work.

Signed by the Chairman:..... Dated:.....

Print Name:.....

Organisation:.....

APPENDIX 3

Species Recorded During the 2015 Ashplats Wood and East Court Survey

Fauna Species List

(Note that this is not an exhaustive list of the fauna on the site)

Taxon Group	Common Name	Latin Name
Mammals	Grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>
	Bank vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>
Birds	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>
	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
	Chiff chaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>
	Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Butterflies	Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Bees and wasps	Woodland bumblebee	<i>Bombus hypnorum</i>
	Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>
Dragonflies and damselflies	Large red damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>

Flora Species List

(Note that this is not an exhaustive list of plants present on the site)

Latin Name	Common Name	Comments & Status
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple	AWI
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>	Sneezewort*	UGIS
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse chestnut	
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent-grass	
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping bent-grass	
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugle	Useful early season source of nectar for bees
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic mustard	Larval foodplant of the orange tip butterfly
<i>Allium ursinum</i>	Ramsons	AWI
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder	
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	Wood anemone	AWI
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild angelica	
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley	
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet vernal grass	
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat-grass	
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords and ladies	
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Harts-tongue fern	AWI
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Lady fern	
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver birch	
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Downy birch	
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False-brome	
<i>Callitriche agg.</i>	Water starwort	
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh marigold	
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge bindweed	
<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>	Wavy bittercress	
<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Cuckoo-flower	Larval foodplant of the orange tip butterfly
<i>Carex flacca</i>	Glaucous sedge	
<i>Carex pallescens</i>	Pale sedge	UGIS
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous sedge	AWI
<i>Carex remota</i>	Remote sedge	AWI
<i>Carex sylvatica</i>	Wood sedge	AWI
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam	AWI
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet chestnut	
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common knapweed	
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Common centaury	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse-ear chickweed	
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay willowherb	
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater celandine	Usually of garden origin
<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>	Opposite-leaved golden-saxifrage	AWI
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's nightshade	
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh thistle	
<i>Conopodium majus</i>	Pignut	AWI
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	
<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>	Midland hawthorn	AWI
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	
<i>Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora</i>	Montbretia	Non-native plant of garden origin
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom	

Latin Name	Common Name	Comments & Status
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	
<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common spotted-orchid	
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted hair-grass	
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Wavy hair-grass	
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove	
<i>Dryopteris affinis</i> agg.	Scaly male-fern	AWI
<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Broad buckler-fern	
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male fern	
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	Great horsetail	
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech	
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	
<i>Ficaria verna</i>	Lesser celandine	
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet	
<i>Frangula alnus</i>	Alder buckthorn	AWI Larval foodplant of the brimstone butterfly
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	
<i>Galium album</i>	Hedge bedstraw	
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Common cleavers	
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood avens	
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	Larval foodplant of the holly blue butterfly and late season nectar for bees and other insects
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	
<i>Hieracium</i> sp.	Hawkweed sp.	
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	
<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Creeping soft-grass	AWI
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Bluebell	AWI
<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>	Tutsan	AWI
<i>Hypericum pulchrum</i>	Slender St John's-wort	AWI
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common cat's ear	
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	AWI Larval foodplant of the holly blue butterfly
<i>Impatiens parviflora</i>	Small balsam	Non-native species
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow flag	
<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>	Compact rush	
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush	
<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>	Yellow archangel	AWI
<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i> ssp. <i>argentatum</i>	Garden yellow archangel	Non-native plant of garden origin. Can be invasive
<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>	Garden privet	Non-native plant of garden origin
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial rye-grass	
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle	Larval foodplant of the white admiral butterfly
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common birds-foot-trefoil	Larval foodplant of the common blue butterfly
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field wood-rush	
<i>Luzula multiflora</i>	Heath wood-rush	
<i>Lycopus europaeus</i>	Gipsywort	
<i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>	Yellow pimpernel	AWI
<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>	Creeping Jenny	

Latin Name	Common Name	Comments & Status
<i>Malus pumila</i>	Apple	
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab apple	AWI
<i>Melica uniflora</i>	Wood melick	AWI
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's mercury	
<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	Wood sorrel	AWI
<i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>	Fox-and-cubs	Garden origin
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots pine	
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater plantain	
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow-grass	
<i>Poa nemoralis</i>	Wood meadow-grass	AWI
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadow-grass	
<i>Populus x canescens</i>	Grey poplar	
<i>Populus tremula</i>	Aspen	AWI
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil	
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping cinquefoil	
<i>Potentilla sterilis</i>	Barren strawberry	AWI
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose	AWI
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal	
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild cherry	AWI
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry laurel	Non-native invasive species
<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>	Portugal laurel	Non-native invasive species
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	
<i>Prunus sp.</i>	Prunus sp.	
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken	Native species but can be invasive
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate oak	
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup	
<i>Ranunculus auricomus</i>	Goldilocks buttercup	AWI
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Yellow rattle	
<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	Rhododendron	Non-native invasive species
<i>Ribes rubrum</i>	Red currant	AWI
<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>	Gooseberry	
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field rose	AWI
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose	
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble	
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry	
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel	
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled dock	
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock	
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood dock	
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat willow	
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Grey willow	
<i>Salix x fragilis</i>	Hybrid crack-willow	
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	
<i>Sanicula europaea</i>	Sanicle	AWI
<i>Schedonorus giganteus</i>	Giant fescue	AWI
<i>Scorzoneroidea autumnalis</i>	Autumn hawkbit	
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common ragwort	
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet	
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan	
<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>	Wild service-tree	AWI
<i>Sparganium erectum</i>	Branched bur-reed	
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge woundwort	
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Lesser stitchwort	

Latin Name	Common Name	Comments & Status
<i>Stellaria holostea</i>	Greater stitchwort	
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry	Non-native shrub of garden origin
<i>Tamus communis</i>	Black bryony	AWI
<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>	Dandelion	
<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>	Wood sage	
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew	
<i>Trifolium campestre</i>	Hop trefoil	
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover	
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle	
<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>	Brooklime	
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell	
<i>Veronica montana</i>	Wood speedwell	AWI
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved speedwell	
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Guelder-rose	AWI
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush vetch	AWI
<i>Vinca minor</i>	Lesser periwinkle	Non-native plant of garden origin
<i>Viola reichenbachiana</i>	Early dog-violet	AWI
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common dog-violet	Larval foodplant of the silver-washed fritillary butterfly

* Recorded by Mike Funnell of Ashplats Conservation Group August 2015 in the playing fields

Plant status abbreviations

AWI = Ancient Woodland Indicator Species (plants often associated with ancient woodland habitats in the South-east of England). Note that the presence of one or more AWI does not necessarily indicate that the habitat is ancient woodland

UGIS = Unimproved Grassland Indicator Species (plants often associated with unimproved grassland habitats with a long history of uninterrupted management)

Nomenclature is taken from the New Flora of the British Isles. 3rd Edition. C. A. Stace (2010). Cambridge University Press

APPENDIX 4

GCN Method statement.
Barry Kemp Conservation Ltd. 2015

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK		COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
1	ASHPLATS WOOD Woodland Management												
1.1	Coppice small blocks of sweet chestnut	Sweet chestnut plateau				✓		✓		✓		✓	
1.2	Coppice mature ash	Scout Land	✓	Large operation. Meeting CTS 10/5. Need to consider Ash dieback.									
1.3	Coppice mature sycamore	All				✓				✓			
1.4	Thin oak standards	Scout Land							✓				
1.5	Thin holly	Scout Land		Part done. Jan Task day - smaller stuff			✓					✓	
1.6	Dangerous tree monitoring	All	✓	ACG to report suspect trees. Oak in SE corner of wood is being taken down.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	ASHPLATS WOOD Path and Ride Management												
2.1	Coppice along path edges – one side at a time	Coppice Ride				✓					✓		
		Main Track					✓					✓	
		Pegasus Path						✓					✓
		McIndoe Walk			✓					✓			
		Ghyll Steps	✓	Identifying trees to be cut and approaching contractors for winter 16/17 work. Dealing with cut timber needs to be part of contract.					✓				
		Beech Walk			✓					✓			
		Fairlight Ride					✓					✓	
		Pine Path				✓					✓		
		Bluebells					✓					✓	
		Sussex Border Path						✓					✓
		Chestnut Walk	✓	Ditto above					✓				
2.2	Cut back edge vegetation on alternate ride edges	Coppice Ride			✓			✓			✓		
		Main Track				✓			✓			✓	
		Pegasus Path			✓			✓			✓		
		McIndoe Walk			✓			✓			✓		
		Ghyll Steps				✓			✓			✓	

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK			COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
			Beech Walk	✓	Part done. Nov/Dec Task day			✓			✓			✓
			Fairlight Ride				✓			✓			✓	
			Pine Path	✓	Done in 2015			✓			✓			✓
			Bluebells						✓			✓		
			Sussex Border Path	✓	Possible Nov/Dec Task day			✓			✓			✓
			Chestnut Walk				✓			✓			✓	
2.3	Monitor path surfaces		All	✓	Need to report problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.4	Path surface repair		As necessary	✓	Some SANGS paths need remedial work next winter. Barratts need to repair N end of Holtye Track. MSDC to get budget price for S end of Holtye Track with possible EGWML/ grant funding.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.5	Investigate sources of local sandstone			✓										
2.6	Open canopy by coppicing and thinning		Sussex Border Path			✓				✓				✓
3	ASHPLATS WOOD Glade and Open Area Management													
3.1	Mow and rake or bale		Rutland Meadow	✓	Sept 16 Task day	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
			The Glade	✓	Sept 16 Task day	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.2	Cut sections of scrub and bracken on edges		All open areas (2-3 yr rotation)	✓	Sept 16 Task day	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3	Create new open areas in secondary woodland		Owl Way			✓								
			South west of Wood Anemone						✓					
			West of McIndoe Walk				✓							
4	ASHPLATS WOOD Invasive Species Management													
4.1	Control rhododendron and cherry laurel		All and especially Scout Land and Sussex Border Path	✓	On-going through 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.2	Monitor re-growth of invasive species		All	✓	On-going through 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.3	Remove sycamore seedlings and saplings		All	✓	On-going through 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.4	Remove garden species where appropriate		All	✓	On-going through 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK			COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
4.5	Map and monitor invasive species		All	✓	On-going through 2016		✓		✓		✓		✓	
5	ASHPLATS WOOD Pond Management													
5.1	Thin or coppice trees and shrubs	Lancaster Pond		✓	Done in 2015									
		Hoskins Pond			B/F from 2018. Oct 16 Task day		✓							
		Scouts Pond						✓						
		Sunken Pond								✓				
5.2	Remove most of deadwood from pond	Lancaster Pond		✓	Be opportunistic and wait for it to dry out. ACG to monitor?									
		Hoskins Pond					✓							
5.3	Remove silt by excavator	Alfreds Pond												✓
		Scouts Pond						✓						
5.4	Remove willow from pond or coppice regrowth	Alfreds Pond												✓
6	ASHPLATS WOOD Gill and Stream Management													
6.1	Commission plans for the repair of eroded stream banks	South end of gill		✓	Done									
6.2	Minimal-intervention	Gill stream		✓	Done	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3	Water quality checks	Major streams & Scout Land tributary		✓	Could ACG do this?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	ASHPLATS WOOD Holtye Track Management													
7.1	Track edge mowing 2x per year	Holtye Track		✓	To be included in mowing regime	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.2	Rotational management of sections of scrub	Holtye Track		✓	Nov/Dec 2016 Task day	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.3	Tree removal	Holtye Track				✓								
7.4	Halo thinning around veteran trees	Holtye track				✓		✓		✓				
8	EAST COURT Grassland Management													
8.1	Annual mowing and removal/baling of grassland on playing field edges adjoining woodland as part of SANG route	Playing Fields		✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK			COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
8.2	Annual mowing and raking/baling of selected areas of parkland sward	Southern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Northern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Eastern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.3	Selectively remove coarse species from sward	Northern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓						
8.4	Mow 1m wide strips alongside path edges frequently	Northern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.5	Less frequent mowing and creating sinuous edges on grassland adjoining woodland	All grassland areas	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.6	Create an unmown strip alongside the track to link the lake with Ashplats Wood	Eastern Parkland	✓	New instructions issued to contractors. Need to monitor										
8.7	Consider sward enhancement with locally sourced seed and/or yellow rattle	All parkland areas			✓									
8.8	Consider creating a new pond in the parkland area	Southern Parkland				✓								
9 EAST COURT Lake and Pond Management														
9.1	Consider removing silt and electro-fishing East Court lake	East Court lake		EGWML now abandoned “path” project, but considering alternatives	✓									
9.2	Consider restoring the lake to its former extent	East Court lake		EGWML now abandoned “path” project, but considering alternatives	✓									
9.3	Monitor water quality and dumping	Balancing pond	✓		✓									
9.4	Investigate potential for future management	Balancing pond			✓									
10 EAST COURT Woodland Management														
10.1	Minimal intervention	Rifle range wood	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.2	Stop disposing of green waste in woodland area	Rifle range wood	✓	MSDC informed										
10.3	Remove dumped spoil in small copse	Eastern Parkland	✓											
10.4	Selective coppicing and felling	Lake surrounds			✓									
10.5	Gradually remove non-native woody species including bamboo	Lake surrounds	✓		✓									

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK		COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
11	EAST COURT Invasive Species Management												
	11.1	Control rhododendron, cherry laurel and Portugal laurel	Lake surrounds	✓	On-going programme	✓	✓						
	11.2	Monitor re-growth of invasive species	Lake surrounds				✓	✓	✓	✓			
	11.3	Remove sycamore seedlings and saplings	Lake surrounds	✓	On-going programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	11.4	Map and monitor invasive species	All	✓	On-going programme	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
12	EAST COURT Parkland and Veteran Trees												
	12.1	Map and photograph all veteran trees	All	✓	May 16 Task day								
	12.2	Thin stand of beech trees	Mansion entrance			✓		✓			✓		
	12.3	Develop a long-term schedule of replacement planting of parkland trees	East /Court				✓						
13	EAST COURT Hedges												
	13.1	Restore yew avenue	Yew avenue	✓	MSDC considering. Possibly replace with different species. Conservation area.	✓							
	13.2	Plant a new, mixed native hedge	Eastern parkland				✓						
14	WHOLE ESTATE Infrastructure												
	14.1	Improve direction signs, woodland way-marking and seating		✓	Pursue seats - maybe CTS?								
	14.2	Install extra dog waste bins		✓	Another dept dealing with this, but extras <u>must</u> be assigned								
	14.3	Review feasibility of creating a new access via Escots Drive to the pavilion car park				✓							
	14.4	Regular litter picks		✓	April 16 Task day + ad hoc thro' year	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	WHOLE ESTATE Veteran Trees												
	15.1	Map and record locations of all important old trees		✓	May 16 Task day								
	15.2	Monitor condition of veteran trees				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	15.3	Retain deadwood in situ as much as possible		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

ASHPLATS WOOD & EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK			COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	15.4	Gradual halo thinning of over-crowded veteran trees where necessary					√			√			√	
16	WHOLE ESTATE Education and Interpretation													
	16.1	Increase educational uses				√								
	16.2	Review SNCI designation					√							
	16.3	Improve permanent and temporary interpretation of management activities		√	Winter 16/17 coppicing will require info.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	16.4	Produce leaflet to be available off site				√								
17	WHOLE ESTATE Boundary Issues & Community Engagement													
	17.1	Address boundary encroachments		√	EGWML started on this	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	17.2	Address green waste dumping		√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	17.3	Consider adopting a policy of strategic land acquisition around the Estate boundaries				√								
18	WHOLE ESTATE Survey and Monitoring													
	18.1	Fixed point photography		√	Plan being devised + training	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	18.2	Map locations of invasive species												
	18.3	Continue and possibly expand dormouse survey		√	Task days thro' 16	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	18.4	Whole site bat survey and assessment for roosts		√	MSDC to find expert.									
	18.5	Lower plant survey				√								
	18.6	Butterfly survey and transect				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	18.7	Breeding bird survey					√							
	18.8	Visitor survey							√					
	18.9	Monitor use of circular walk						√						
	18.10	Review management plan							√					
		COLOUR CODING KEY												
		MSDC LEAD												

ASHPLATS WOOD &EAST COURT 10-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN														
AREA AND MANAGEMENT TASK			COMPARTMENT	2016	2016 PROGRESS updated 9 May 16	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
		ACG LEAD												
		EGWML LEAD												

East Court & Ashplats Wood Cost Allocations

Area		SANGS Developer Contributions	MSDC Landscapes Budget	MSDC Property & Asset Budget	Potential Grants (inc EGWML)
SANGS Area (green on plan)					
	Enhancement of SANGS area as outlined in management plan	✓			✓
	Visitor Monitoring	✓			
	“Settling in” repairs and improvements to SANGS path		✓		
	Storm Damage & Vandalism		✓		
	Dangerous Trees		✓		
	Cutting of grasslands		✓		
	Road & Car Park			✓	
Non SANGS area (blue on Plan)					
	Maintaining playing fields and surrounds		✓		
	Sports Pavilion			✓	✓
	Playground near lake		✓		
	Skateboard rink		✓		
Non SANGS area (yellow on Plan)					
	Holtye Track		✓		✓
East Court/Ashplats Wood areas managed by MSDC but not in Leased area					
	Brick path in front of East Court Mansion		✓		
	SANGS path alongside Estcotts Drive		✓		
	Sussex Border Path		✓		WSCC?
	Balancing Pond		✓		Southern Water?
All areas					
	Dog Bins		✓		
	Insurance & taxes		✓		
	Nominated Officer		✓		
	cpn 23-2-2016				

Lease of East Court Playing Fields and Ashplats Wood East Grinstead in the County of West Sussex



CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX – NOT FOR WIDER PUBLICATION

SXBRC REPORT FOR EAST COURT ESTATE