

Woodland management plan Idlewood

Idlewood is a 3 ½ acre site on Longwood Avenue, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hants.

It lies east of the A3 and is remnant of Longwood which dates back to pre 1600. It is surrounded on 3 sides by housing, and to the north is adjacent to an open area of public parkland. It is situated in the district of Cowlpain, which is under the jurisdiction of Havant Borough Council.

In the centre of the woodland is a brownfield site where a previous house existed until it burned down in 1995.

Idlewood is a lowland mixed deciduous woodland. It has a natural canopy of even aged ash and oak. It has a good diversity of species given its unmanaged, urban location and its small size. 21 ancient indicators were noted in a survey dated 2005.

The woodland can be easily split into 4 sections as indicated on the plan attached.

Area 1

This area is dominated by even aged oak and ash.

The ground flora is diverse. There is much bluebell, bramble, Ivy, Cow parsley, cleavers, nettles, lesser clandine and some wood sedge, goldilock buttercup, pignut, field rose and wood millet.

Area 2

The canopy is dominated by even aged oak. There is rare ash present. There is frequent yew in the sub canopy.

The understory is bare in places, especially to the west under the yew. Elsewhere it is diverse in species, to include wood anemone, bluebells, bramble, ivy, lesser clandine, wood melic, wood sedge, goldilocks buttercup, wood melic, pignut and field rose.

At the south west corner there is standing water. Historically there was a pond here. We would like to reinstate a shallow pond to increase biodiversity.

Area 3

This area is the brownfield site of an old building. There are remnants of garden shrubs, bindweed, grasses, nettles and brambles in this area.

Area 4

This appears to be a “tagged on” area, and not part of the ancient woodland. There are a few trees, 2 dangerous. This area contains much bramble and dead wood.

The soil on site is mainly rich, in keeping with an ancient woodland site. There is some clay evident in both area 3, and to the south west of the site, where there is some standing water and is the site of an old pond.

The site is mainly flat, being slightly lower at the south west corner with the exception of area 4 which is set at a slightly lower elevation. There are areas of digging and ramp building.

There is access from Longwood avenue to the south of the site, and a dropped curb at this point. This existing drive enters the woodland here and terminates at the north west corner, passing the site of the footings of the old house.

Idlewood is in need of a management plan. To date all rubbish and fly tipping is being removed from site.

Brambles will be removed. We understand that bramble can be an important feature for wildlife, but not at the expense of ancient woodland plants. Therefore we will be planting/replanting brambles on the boundary of the site.

The edges of the woodland are presently thin. Edges are extremely important to the biodiversity of woodland creatures, giving both hiding places, nesting places and food sources. We will therefore aim to thicken the external edges of the woodland to 1-2m deep. The edges marked in red on the plan will be planted with a mixture of bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn, perhaps with the odd wild cherry/pear and hazel. Pussy willow would be a good inclusion.

We are very interested in improving the woodland for both wildlife, butterflies and bees. Our other main aim is to ensure the longevity of the woods for future generations.

Therefore, other than removing brambles, long term work in areas 1 and 2 will be low key and will concentrate on gradually bringing the woodland into sustained management.

A thinning of the overstory especially in area 2 will form part of the management plan process to increase light levels so that a varied understory can be allowed to develop. (all potential felling will be agreed with Havant Arb previous to any works being carried out. This thinning will also include restocking.) This will produce a site of varied aged trees, and can increase the diversity of the tree species, which will in turn increase the diversity of the wildlife and insects, and also become a more resilient woodland for the future. First choice for thinning will be dangerous/dying trees, then yew. We would like to plant a hazelnut and a sweet chestnut tree if the council are in agreement. The thinning will be done very slowly to allow the woodland to adjust gradually.

Ivy...although important in an ecosystem, has overtaken some areas, to the detriment of the potential ancient woodland plants. We aim to remove approximately 50% of the ivy ground cover in areas 1 and 2.

The good quality and veteran trees will be professionally assessed. Any remedial works recommended will be undertaken to protect them for future generations. Again, Havant arb will be consulted to confirm that the works are indeed in the interest of the longevity of the trees.

Area 3

This area, as mentioned, is a brownfield site with few plants of any significance or importance. We intend to clear this section of the site. It will become an open area of the woodland. Hopefully we can encourage a moss area. This area will remain open.

Area 4

This area lends itself to being an open area where we can encourage wild meadow flowers to grow, which will encourage and help both bees and butterflies. The area will be cleared of all but major trees. (there are 6, which will require work, but could possibly be retained.)

This area will be levelled, and allowed to grow naturally. A hard cut will be done in march, and june to encourage different species. Honeysuckle will be planted on the external edges. A yearly survey of plants, and butterflies will be implemented to allow us to gather information as to the effectiveness of this plan, and adjust as necessary. (perhaps planting/sewing of native woodland/wildflowers).

We will build hedgehog houses and put up nesting boxes. We will be advised by various organisations as to the best designs/sites for these.

The invasive species on site (rhododendrons and laurel) will be kept under control, and removed if necessary.

No dead wood will be removed from site. Some will be left where it drops. Some will be left standing, and some will be arranged in low stacks. This will all aid in the survival and increase of insects and small woodland creatures. Stumps from necessary felling will be left in situ.

There is already a small area of nettles (marked on map)...These will be retained and encouraged due to their importance to insects, but will be managed elsewhere on site.

After 5 years we will re assess this plan, and if required, adjust it for the following 5 years.

We would hope that within 10 years the woodland would have become more stable for the future, and have significantly increased in its biodiversity of both flora and fauna.

