
PLANNING STATEMENT

Johnston's Coppice, Purbrook Way

Application for mixed use – Woodland and Natural Pet Cemetery

Executive summary

This Planning Statement is to be submitted in support of a proposal for altering the use of Johnston's Coppice from 'Woodland' to 'Mixed use – Woodland and Natural Pet Cemetery'. The proposal offers the opportunity to bring this woodland back into management and create local jobs, it also offers the opportunity for the woodland to be used to support community projects such as those investing in mental and physical health. Johnston's Coppice forms part of the Havant Gap which links the 'South Downs' to 'Portchester Hill' and it is important that the habitat is cared for and managed for future generations. The Natural Pet Cemetery will allow private income to finance the management of the woodland.

Recent activity on the site from the Natural Pet Cemetery has shown a marked reduction in litter, reduction in deliberate damage to the woodland and an increase in positive community use and care of the woodland.



Appendix

Documents

- A 1 Woodland Management Plan and relevant maps (M1 – 7)
- A2 Letter from Matthew Woodcock – Forestry Commission
- A3 Letter from Michael Pittock – Forestry Commission
- A4 Letter from Kate Hutchins – Hampshire County Council Estates
- A5 Letter from Sarah Johnston – Arboricultural Expert
- A6 Letter from Rachael McMurray – Havant Borough Council

Maps

- M8 Map of entrances
- M9 Plan of car park
- M10 Location plan

1. Introduction

Johnston's Coppice is important woodland that is no longer playing a role in the education and relaxation of the local community, it is not being actively managed due to cuts to the local council budget and it is not being surveyed or monitored so that the indications regarding the health of the woodland are no longer being observed. A few dog walkers use the land but there are no organised activity or management (apart from safety work) taking place.

This application is to ask for mixed use so that a private business can operate a Natural Pet Cemetery on the site, using private money to manage the public woodland.

2. Site description

Johnston's Coppice is situated near the junction of the A3 and Purbrook Way close to both Havant and Waterlooville. It is a beautiful woodland with a wealth of variety which can be used to educate young and old.

The site has 3 main areas (please refer to management plan for further detail)

- Southern area – Mostly wet and damp, trees mostly Alder and Willow
- Central area – Western area is Hazel Coppice and the Eastern area is Sweet Chestnut Coppice
- Northern area – High Forest with trees of significant size such as Oak. This area also has a large pond.

3. Application proposals

3.1 The application proposes to alter the use of the woodland from 'Woodland' to 'Mixed use – woodland and natural pet cemetery'.

3.2 The application proposes to use the Natural Pet Cemetery (a private company) to generate income, some of which will cover the cost of the management of the woodland.

3.3 The application proposes to encourage use of the woodland by the general public and to keep access open.

3.4 The proposal will allow some of the income from the cemetery to support new programmes for volunteering and health related programmes for the local community.

3.5 The proposal hopes to strengthen links with the local schools and colleges to support education of young people regarding the importance of woodland. A link with St Peter's School has already been welcomed.

3.6 The proposal will also allow some of the income from the cemetery to support a programme to restore the health of the pond in the north of the woodland.

4. Woodland Management

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The Woodland Management Plan describes the specific history and future management of the site in detail, and also describes the operation of the Pet Cemetery please see Document A1.

The future professional management of the site and its valuable woodland is of paramount importance to the applicant for several reasons:

- Terena Plowright has been involved in Woodland Management for 13 years and has actively managed several woodlands in the past with a focus on biodiversity
- Terena Plowright has a specific interest in the promotion of wood-fuel from undermanaged woods in line with Forestry Commission policy with a view to tackling Climate Change
- Terena Plowright set up the South Downs Natural Burial site which has recently won the National Award for Best Natural Burial Site in the Country.
- Terena Plowright has a specific interest in the promotion of Wildlife and is part of a Wildlife Rescue team based near Chichester

The Woodland Management Plan has been approved by the Forestry Commission – please see Document A3.

5. Biodiversity impact

The Forestry Commission have carefully consulted on the impact that the Pet Cemetery may have on the woodland, specifically to the biodiversity and their response is recorded in Document A2 from Matthew Woodcock. The recommendations he has made have been included in the final Woodland Management Plan Document A1.

The applicant also sought advice from an Arboricultural Consultant who visited the site and made recommendations regarding the digging of graves and the impact this may have on larger trees. The report is provided in Document A5.

6. Access and Parking

Introduction

The Pet Cemetery and the new volunteering programmes are expected to generate a greater use of the site but no more than have visited using the same facilities in the recent past. It is only since council budgets have been cut that the site has been inactive. The increase in use planned is only expected to occur when a member of staff is present and can open the gate for parking (this is in line with previous activities shown by historical records). All activities will be organised and can be planned for and overseen.

The Pet Cemetery is not expected to generate a large number of visitors with up to 2 cars visiting for a funeral of an animal – less than those numbers for general activities.

Johnston's Coppice has 3 main points of entry - see map 8

- Northern entrance – At the northern most tip of the coppice there is a footpath which connects to the local housing estate and to the neighbouring woodland and field.

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- Western entrance – There is a small track which runs up the western boundary and leads to a vehicle access gate and a vehicle turning circle. This access point is used by people walking into the woodland and the gate is locked to prevent access by vehicle unless entering the site for management purposes. A drop-down post has also recently been installed at the bottom of the track (where it meets Purbrook Way) to stop cars driving up the track and discharging household waste.
- Southern Entrance – The Southern Entrance is the main entrance and is a point of entry by either footpath or gate (locked). See Map 9 and full description below.

The Main Entrance – Southern Entrance See map 8 and 9

There are four main points of interest to the Main Entrance – Bus Stop, Foot access, Joining Purbrook Way, Lay-by, Access Road.

- Bus Stop – There is a bus stop directly beside the Main Entrance which means the woodland is easily accessible by Public Transport, thus reducing the need for travelling there by car.
- Foot access – The general public can walk through the gate onto the access road and enter the woodland via the footpath.
- Joining Purbrook Way – there is a drop curb providing access from the parking area onto Purbrook Way with good visibility. The vehicles would enter traffic travelling in a single direction.
- Lay-by – After the drop curb there is a small lay-by where up to two cars can park without opening the gate.
- Access Road and Car Park – The Access Road is laid with tarmac although a small section of this has recently been damaged by gas works and is waiting for repair. There is a gate preventing unauthorized access to the parking area. This gate will remain locked unless an organised event such as a funeral or volunteering programme is taking place. Up to 25 cars can presently parallel park on this area of tarmac and that number will not be increased. It is highly unlikely that more than 3 cars will need to park for a funeral (mourners/staff) and average volunteer car numbers seems to be 8 cars although at times this has been far higher.

Disability.

Those using a wheelchair can access the woodland using the western track and then use the main cross-path which has a firm top covering.

7. Experience brought to the application by Terena Plowright

- Terena set up and managed the South Downs Natural Burial Site in Hampshire, which has won Best Natural Burial Site 2013 and has been commended for its woodland management strategy.
- Terena ran the Sustainability Centre for 9 years which included environmental management practice, running a biomass boiler with wood, management of the woodland and working with vulnerable adults and children.
- Terena set up and still runs The Greening Campaign which is working with 250 communities across the country to reduce their impact on the environment.
- The Greening Campaign has recently won 'Best Green Business' Awarded by EHDC.
- During her role at The Sustainability Centre, Terena ran a volunteer programme and the Health and Safety strategy was commended by EHDC and the Volunteer Programme was used as an example by the East Hants Volunteer Bureau.

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