



# CREATING SUSTAINABLE WORKING WOODLAND AT HORSENDEN HILL

**A TREES FOR CITIES AND EALING COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP  
PROJECT DELIVERED IN THE WINTER OF 2017-18**

Rethinking the design and management of London's urban woodlands will ensure they remain healthy, resilient, accessible and useful within their community and help to secure their long term future. Ealing Council, Trees for Cities and the local community are demonstrating a unique model for the co-design, creation and management of working sustainable urban woodland delivering long term social, environmental and economic benefits, as well as creating a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

**CASE STUDY PUBLISHED AUGUST 2018**



**HORSENDEN HILL IN EALING**, is a 300-acre site comprising a 50/50 mix of ancient semi-natural woodland and grassland and is the largest single nature conservation site in Ealing. Rising 276 feet above sea level, it is one of the highest points in west London. Timber cropping and demands for hay as feed to support the horse drawn transport systems meant that by the end of the 1800s much of the ancient oak woodland had been clear felled. Only 4 hectares were retained for future harvest whilst the rest was managed for hay. As motorised transport developed and demand for wood fuel and hay decreased, fields and hedge lines were left unmanaged and returned to scrub, creating unmanaged secondary woodland. Whilst supporting some natural regeneration, Horsenden Hill lacked a diverse range of flora and high canopy woodland with a low proportion of veteran trees, limiting the biodiversity value of the site and reducing its value for the local community.



Creating a working woodland became a catalyst for reassessment of the long-term future for the site. Regenerating and reconnecting the woodland and its community informed the design process for new planting, creating an exemplar of what in the future can be productive urban woodland. The planting scheme used a wide variety of species to create resilience, support biodiversity and generate productivity through high-quality, local timber.

- Hazel creates a perfect understorey, shading out bramble and supporting woodland flora such as bluebells and wood anemone. The hazel will also provide a rotation harvest of coppice for woodland crafts.
- Silver birch not only provides beauty and colour but also acts as a “nurse” crop supporting oak and scots pine saplings to grow tall and straight for future life as mature standard trees.
- Orchard planting provides beautiful displays of blossom in spring and fruit for picnics in summer both for pollinators and the community.
- Planting saplings close together ensures they outcompete the brambles. This reduces the need for undergrowth clearance and the competition encourages them to grow quickly and straight, creating a useful future crop.
- Species choice and planting design fulfil multiple roles within this hard working site delivering a range of community, environmental and economic benefits.



# CREATING SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE ENSURES THE PROJECT DELIVERS LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

## SOCIAL VALUE

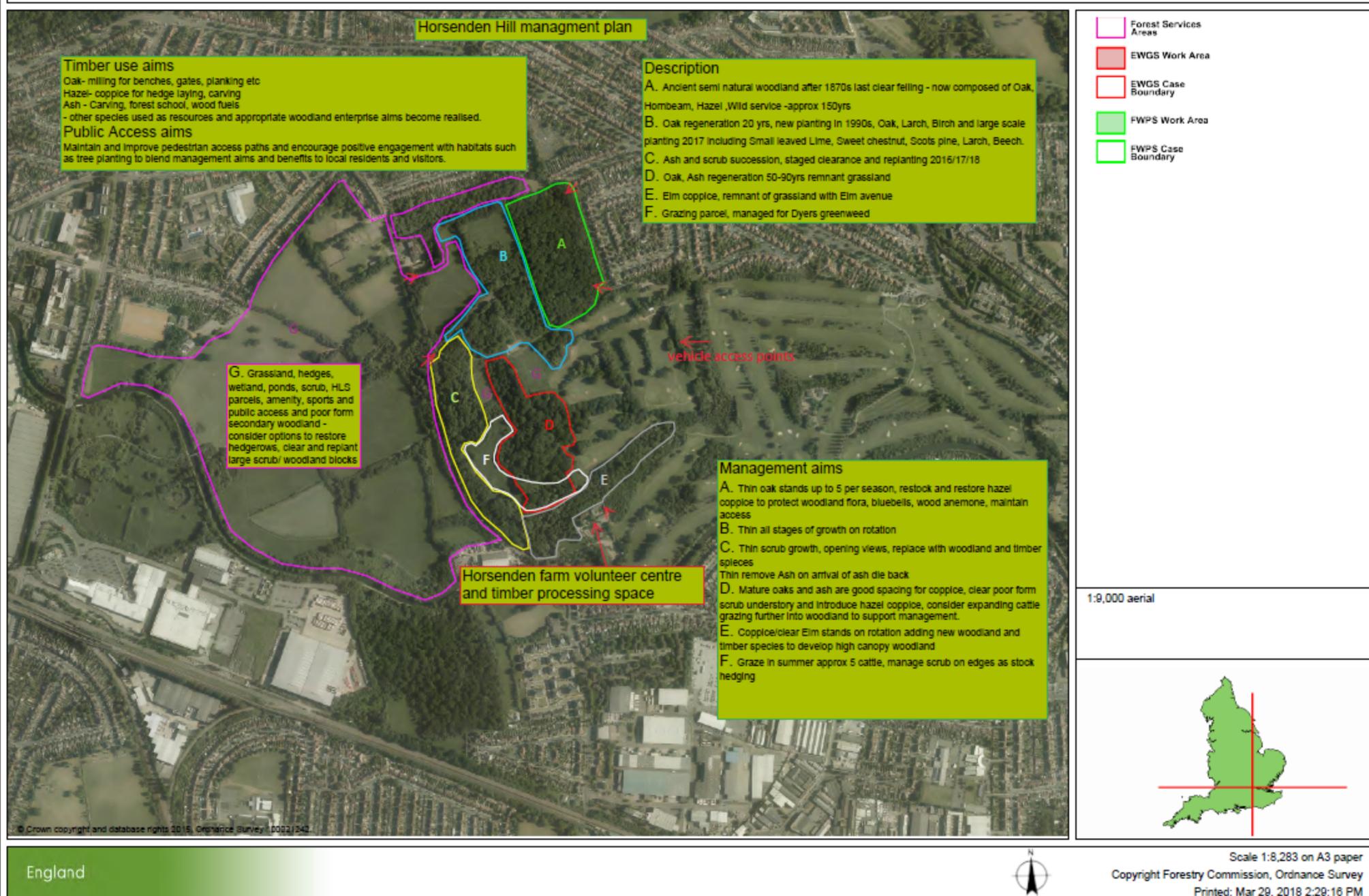
- Trees for Cities mobilised 800 volunteers to plant 9,500 trees and form Whittlers' Wood. The new woodland was named through a public vote led by a panel of key community stakeholders.
- The Friends of Horsenden Hill help maintain the site and raise funds to support management and access to the site for a range of user groups such as the elderly and vulnerable clients of local charity Neighbourly Care and Belvue School.
- Restoring rides, improving sightlines, and opening up viewpoints enhance the community's safety and enjoyment of the site.
- Planting fruit and nut trees provides a future harvest to be enjoyed by all users; planting with a view to a future timber harvest provides the opportunities for community woodland based activities.
- An interpretation board on site provides information on tree species, timber, edible produce for foraging and their culinary uses.

## ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE

- The new planting and woodland restoration activities are designed to enhance habitats and improve overall site biodiversity.
- Clearing overgrown scrub to let more light into the woodland will provide the conditions for understorey species to thrive.
- Creation and restoration of woodland rides will encourage butterflies and other pollinator species, which in turn support larger woodland species such as bats.
- Choosing a diverse mix of tree species for the new woodland will build long-term resilience to threats from climate change and future pests and diseases.

## ECONOMIC VALUE

- Planting decisions have also been guided by the potential for harvesting some of the timber in future and realising the value of the material, helping to contribute to the long-term management costs of the site.
- Native hardwoods and softwoods such as beech, oak, lime, larch and scots pine provide a long-term timber crop whilst hazel and birch will provide a harvest of coppice material on 5-7 years' rotation.
- A small number of 150-year old plantation oaks were harvested and local craftsman Thomas Bickerdike used the timber to craft benches, gates and fencing for the site.
- Furniture making and wood craft courses are run from the site as part of a new social enterprise approach established as part of the project. Revenue generated supports the wider management work taking place.



The work being done at Horsenden Hill will be guided by a site management plan. The draft Forestry Commission compliant plan provides a strategic and long-term document to ensure that management activities are aligned with best practice UK forestry standards. Through their strategic partnership Trees for Cities and Ealing Council have also undertaken the first i-Tree Eco survey of a London borough's tree resource. This project has calculated the ecosystem service value of Ealing's tree stock and informs future management of Ealing's urban forest.

## LEARNING FROM THE PROJECT

- Harvesting in urban environments is challenging as activities such as felling cause community concerns. Working with the right team of contractors and clear communicating are crucial to manage this effectively.
- Carefully select species and planting specification which offer diversity and flexibility for ecological value and end use.
- Creative harvesting and timber processing approaches such as horse logging and on-site milling help to make best use of the wide range of available timber.
- Strong partnership working and high levels of personal commitment are vital to project success.
- The right financial structure is required to allow enterprise to flourish e.g. community interest company

## FURTHER PROJECT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

**Trees for Cities:** <https://treesforcities.org/>

**Planting Design:** <https://www.treesforcities.org/stories/on-film-a-day-planting-trees-on-horsenden-hill>

**Download the Ealing i-tree full technical report or explore the data on the interactive map:** [www.ealingitree.online](http://www.ealingitree.online)

**London Borough Ealing tree and woodland strategy:**

[https://www.ealing.gov.uk/downloads/download/3715/ealing\\_tree\\_strategy](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/downloads/download/3715/ealing_tree_strategy)

**Friends of Horsenden Hill:** <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofHorsendenHill/>

**Thomas Bickerdike:** <https://thomasbickerdike.com/>

## ADDITIONAL NATIONAL RESOURCES:

**Green Infrastructure and open environments:** Preparing borough tree and woodland strategies - SPG Feb 2015: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/supplementary-planning-guidance/tree-and-woodland>

**Creating a woodland management plan - Forestry Commission guidance:**

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-9bmjwe>

**London Woodland Evidence base** - <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/171130-londonwoodlandevidencereport.pdf>

**UK Forestry Standard** - <https://www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs>

**A Marketing Guide for Owners of Small Woodlands** -

[https://sylva.org.uk/myforest/documents/Woodland\\_owners\\_marketing\\_guide.pdf](https://sylva.org.uk/myforest/documents/Woodland_owners_marketing_guide.pdf)

**So you own a woodland?- Resources for owners of small**

**woodlands:** [https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/so-you-own-a-woodland.pdf/\\$file/so-you-own-a-woodland.pdf](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/so-you-own-a-woodland.pdf/$file/so-you-own-a-woodland.pdf)

**Stakeholder and community engagement toolkit for woodland owners** -

<https://sylva.org.uk/myforest/documents/Stakeholder%20and%20community%20engagement%20guide%20Final%20Doc%20170614.pdf>

**I-tree** - <https://www.itreetools.org/eco/index.php>

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