

# Long Spring Wood Management: Technical Note

## Hallam Land Ltd

8575 – Woollam Park, St Albans, Hertfordshire

23.10.2025

### Documents & Plans

The following documents are referred to within this technical note:

Title	Ref	Author	Date
Ecology Chapter (Environmental Statement)	ES, Nov 2024	FPCR	November 2024
Appendix 6.3 – Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Environmental Statement)	BNG Report, Nov 2024	FPCR	November 2024
Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan	DE-565-70- Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan	Define	October, 2025

## 1.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The following technical note has been prepared by FPCR Environment & Design Ltd on behalf of Hallam Land Ltd for the site located at Woollam Park, St Albans, Hertfordshire (central OS Grid Reference: TL 153097) herein referred to as 'the Site'.
- 1.2 Following the submission of a hybrid planning application in November 2024, there have been a series of objections and comments from the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission concerning the potential effects on Long Spring Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and ancient woodland. In the submitted EclA (Nov, 2024) it was detailed that the LWS/ancient woodland would have a 15m buffer instated, which is in accordance with Natural England's Standard Advice<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.3 Following consultation with the Martin Hicks, the LPA ecologist and the Woodland Trust, this technical note provides supplementary management measures which will be implanted for Long Spring Wood LWS, to help protect and enhance the conservation value of this ancient woodland habitat. This document should still be read in conjunction with the FPCR EclA.

## 2.0 LONG SPRING WOOD BASELINE

- 2.0 Long Spring Wood is classified as a LWS due to it being:

*"A small ancient woodland comprised of semi-natural pedunculate oak Quercus rober and hornbeam Carpinus betulus coppice, with standards of ash Fraxinus excelsior and beech Fagus sylvatica. The woodland also supports two thickets of elder Sambuca nigra, hawthorn Crataegus monogyna and blackthorn Prunus spinosa. Ground flora includes woodland indicators such as bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta, wood millet Milium effusum, dog's*

<sup>1</sup> Natural England and Forestry Commission (2022). Guidance: *Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions*. Accessed online at [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions).

*Mercury Mercurialis perennis, yellow archangel Lamiastrum galeobdolon and pignut Conopodium majus.” (Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre, 2022).*

- 2.1 As an ancient woodland habitat, it is defined as being “continuously wooded since at least the 1600” which makes it ecological valuable due to the undisturbed soil and ground flora, as well as the veteran or ancient trees which may grow within it. For this reason, it is protected under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 and further classified as an “irreplaceable habitat” under the Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024.
- 2.2 The habitat survey of the whole Site was undertaken on in April 2022, with an updated survey carried out on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024. The surveys were completed by James Warren, an experienced ecologist with over 10 years’ experience, as well as a FISC Level 5 botanist and Casey Higgins-King, an experienced ecologist and FISC level 4 botanist. The description of the woodland habitat is as follows;
 

*“Long Spring Wood (W4) was a small ancient woodland located along the southern boundary of F4. It comprised of semi-natural pedunculate oak Quercus robur and hornbeam Carpinus betulus coppice, with standards of ash Fraxinus excelsior, beech Fagus sylvatica, sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus and wild cherry Prunus avium. A sporadic understorey comprised dense shrubs of holly Ilex aquifolium, hawthorn Crataegus monogyna, cherry laurel Prunus laurocerasus, hazel Corylus avellana, bramble Rubus fruticosus and elder Sambucus nigra, as well as open glades consisting of typical woodland ground flora including bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta, ivy leaved speedwell Veronica hederifolia, pignut Conopodium majus and wood mellick Melica uniflora. Along the borders of the woodland bramble Rubus fruticosus agg scrub and areas of tall ruderal vegetation were present comprised of bracken Pteridium aquifolium, common nettle, cow parsley Anthriscus sylvestris and hogweed. Informal footpaths were present throughout the woodland and connected to the industrial and residential developments to the south.” (Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report, FPCR, Nov 2024)*
- 2.3 The field survey work confirmed that the Long Spring Wood LWS meets the lowland mixed deciduous woodland priority habitat classification, as well as supporting ground flora consistent with ancient woodland habitat.
- 2.4 A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment conducted in 2024, assessed this woodland as in Good Condition, mainly due to supporting a diverse species, structure and age assemblage, as well as a diverse ground flora assemblage. The notable negative condition indicators were the lack of veteran trees, the presence of non-native cherry laurel and evidence of littering and damage. Additional notes regarding footpath erosion and occasional patches of encroaching dense bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.* scrub were recorded as potential threats to the long term ecological value of this habitat.

### **3.0 SITE PROPOSALS**

- 3.0 The proposals include the relocation and replacement of existing playing fields and erection of pavilion annex; this will make way for the construction of up to 1000 new homes (use class C3) to include a mix of market housing, affordable housing, age restricted specialist accommodation for the elderly, and adult disability service units; an 80-bed care home (use class C2); a local centre (use classes E and F); a two-form entry primary school (use class F); the laying out of green infrastructure including habitat creation, drainage infrastructure;

earthworks; pedestrian and cycle routes; and a new means of access onto Harpenden Road and Sandridgebury Lane.

- 3.1 The proposals will retain, buffer and where possible enhance this woodland habitat through the provision of a 15m buffer, which follows Natural England's standard advice for ancient woodland. The change of Site use from arable to residential means the pressures from agriculture will be lost, but increases in recreational damage may increase, in the absence of mitigation.
- 3.2 The BNG assessment has demonstrated that the proposals can deliver net gains of 11.57% across habitats and 27.50% hedgerows. This will be achieved largely through the enhancement of other broadleaved woodland compartments across the Site, as well as the creation of a range of semi-natural habitats including grasslands, woodlands, mixed scrub and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs).
- 3.3 Due to the Long Spring Wood habitat being assessed as in 'Good' Condition, it is unable to be enhanced through the BNG assessment. However, it is considered that ecological enhancements beyond the scope of the BNG methodology will be implemented to support the long-term enhancement of this woodland, which are broadly covered below.

**4.0 KEY MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES – LONG SPRING WOOD**

- 4.0 The opportunities for enhancement of this woodland will be implemented within a Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) or similar management plan at Reserve Matter to be secured through an appropriate legal agreement. While this management document is not required at this stage of planning, further details regarding the expected management measures the scheme aims to deliver to protect the Long Spring Wood LWS are detailed below.

Management Principle	Management Details
Establishment of 15m Buffer	A 15m buffer zone to be fenced off with high visibility fencing prior to construction. This fencing will be replaced by a post and rail fence following construction to deter members of the public using the buffer zone and accessing the woodland, in areas other than the proposed access points.
Realignment of permissive footpath and demarcation of public footpath	The existing permissive footpath along the northern boundary of the woodland will be closed during the construction phase. A new footpath route will be created along the edge of the buffer zone linking up with proposed footprint networks through the GI and wider Site. This footpath will be formalised to allow a year round accessibility, providing a preferred route option, deterring the use of the informal footpath throughout the woodland.

Management Principle	Management Details
Native Shrub and Tree planting	<p>A mixture of mixed scrub and tree planting within the buffer zone, along the woodland edge will aim to expand the width of the woodland belt and create structural heterogeneity along the edge, improving commuting and foraging route for wildlife. Planting preference for native, dense and spiky shrubs including hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> and Rose sp. <i>Rosa sp.</i> will aim to deter access further along the woodland edge, and direct residents to use designated footpaths. This scrub will be managed to promote maturity and maintain species and structural diversity.</p>
Community Engagement	<p>Information boards will be near to the woodland to provide public information regarding the ancient woodland habitat and its sensitivity. Further information will be provided in homeowner packs emphasising the wildlife value across the proposed site, including the Long Spring Wood LWS.</p> <p>Provision of dog bins and litter bins across the footpath network and green infrastructure will deter littering and soil enrichment of the areas of higher ecological habitats</p>
Bramble Scrub Management	<p>Annual bramble scrub management within the woodland area will be undertaken to provide cleared areas for ancient woodland indicator species growth and development. Material will be taken out of the woodland to avoid enrichment of the soil.</p>
Removal of Non-Native and Invasive Species	<p>Cherry laurel will be removed appropriately from the woodland understorey to allow for further restoration of the native ancient woodland ground flora. Further monitoring will be implemented within the HMMP to prevent re-growth or new colonisation of non-native and invasive plant species.</p>

Management Principle	Management Details
Tree Management	<p>The existing trees within the Long Spring Wood LWS will be managed to promote growth and the establishment of veteran features. Understorey shrubs will be coppiced to maintain open woodland glades to maintain the ancient woodland ground flora.</p> <p>Planted trees will be provided with stakes and tree guards to promote their survival and growth. Any failed specimens during the establishment phase will be replaced on a like for like basis.</p> <p>As the trees mature, appropriate arboricultural management will be implemented to promote the maturity and development of veteran ecological features.</p>
Ancient Woodland Monitoring	<p>The Long Spring Wood LWS will be monitored every five years to assess the condition of the trees and the diversity of the ground flora layer. The management plan/HMMP will be adapted based upon the condition to conserve and protect the ancient woodland from new threats.</p>

4.1 The removal of agricultural practices will potentially increase the health of the woodland due to reduced compaction and disturbance of the tree roots, as well as fertilisers and insecticides being removed. It is accepted that there are potential negative effects relating to residential developments, and the possible degradation of such habitats, however the measures adopted above and the longer term management of the woodland will have benefits on the health of this feature and improve its longevity, which without the development is not guaranteed.

4.2 It is concluded that the implementation of these key management principles above will mitigate the recreational impacts expected from the proposals, as well as provide a basis for the longer-term enhancement of this habitat, which is currently absent. These measures will further support the additional habitat creation and enhancement onsite, including expanding the width of the Long Spring Wood with additional woodland planting, conserving the long-term ecological value of this designated site.