



Friends of Old Park & Chequers Wood

ACTION PLAN

2024 – 2030

SEPTEMBER 2024



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The Friends of Old Park & Chequers Wood was formed in January 2022 with the aims of:

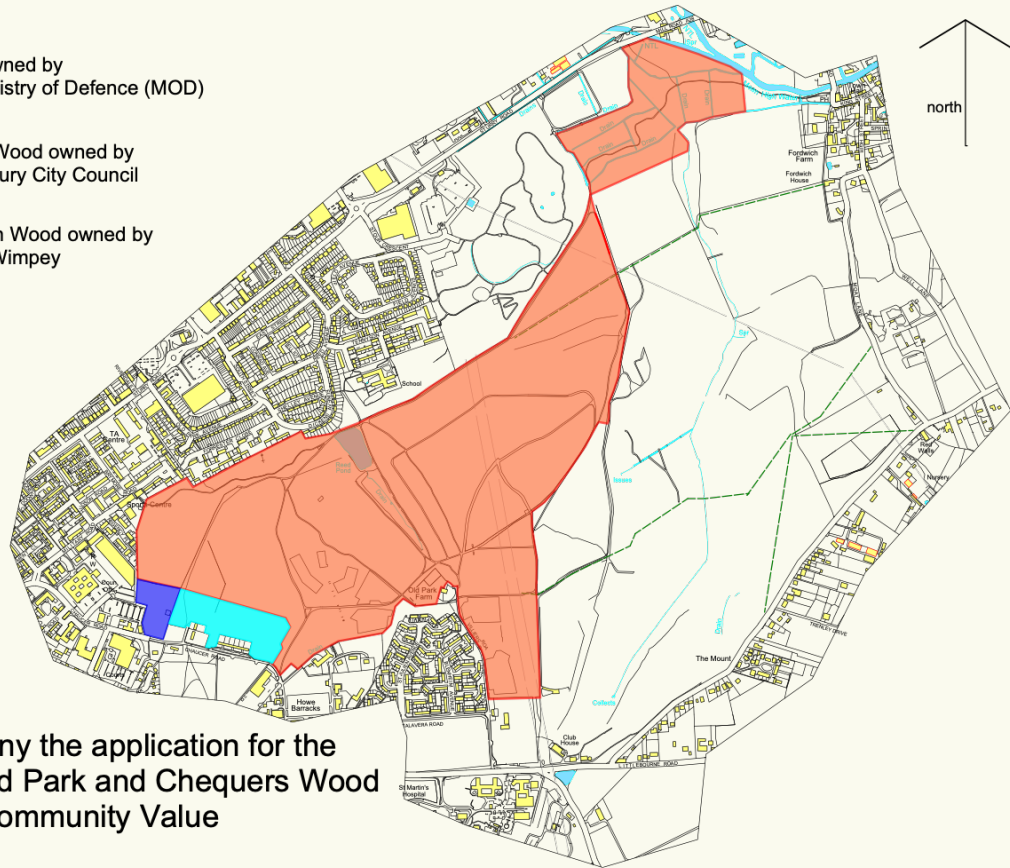
- Securing the long-term protection and ecological integrity of the Old Park & Chequers Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the non-SSSI designated land within the MoD's land-holding on Old Park, and the adjacent Timpson Wood and Realm Wood.
- Raising awareness of the site's significant ecological, archaeological and historical heritage.
- Promoting the site's use for academic research, environmental education, health and public recreation.

We have made considerable progress over the last two years in reducing the threats facing the site. This document sets out our aims and action plan for the next six years (2024 - 2030). This will be updated on a periodic basis, as needs require.



Key

-  Land owned by The Ministry of Defence (MOD)
-  Realm Wood owned by Canterbury City Council
-  Timpson Wood owned by Taylor Wimpey



Map to accompany the application for the registration of Old Park and Chequers Wood as an Asset of Community Value

1. Supporting the local acquisition of MoD land on Old Park & Chequers Wood and the adjacent Timpson Wood:

- 1.1 To utilise Canterbury City Council's designation of the MoD's landholdings, Timpson Wood and Realm Wood as an Asset of Community Value (see map above), as and when required.
- 1.2 To support CCC, or a consortium of conservation organisations, in acquiring the MoD land and Timpson Wood with the aims of i) maximising their potential for biodiversity and ii) improving public access.
- 1.3 To ensure that the MoD disposes of Old Park & Chequers Wood in one integral unit.

2. Protecting the buffer zones around the SSSI and improving their management

- 2.1 To demarcate the buffer zones around the SSSI & determine how they can help to reduce the impacts of roads, housing, urban development, anti-social behaviour and agricultural activity on the SSSI.
- 2.2 Where appropriate, to apply for the designation of the buffer zones as Local Wildlife Sites as an interim measure of protection, while simultaneously working towards the extension of the SSSI.
- 2.3 To advocate sympathetic land management practices within the buffer zones to help protect the habitats and biodiversity of the SSSI.





3. Expanding the boundaries of the SSSI:

- 3.1 To continue survey work to record and monitor the biodiversity on the SSSI and within its buffer zones with a view to increasing the evidence base for the extension of the SSSI.
- 3.2 To ensure that the significance of recent geological and archaeological discoveries on the site is reflected in the evidence base for the extension of the SSSI and that the potential for future discoveries is fully taken into account.
- 3.3 To work together with Natural England to extend the boundaries of the SSSI to cover the whole of Old Park & Chequers Wood, as well as the northern section of Canterbury Golf Course and the woodland in the north-east corner of the Golf Club's driving range (see map above).

4. Protecting the site's Palaeolithic archaeology:

- 4.1 To work together with Natural England to ensure that 'the Fordwich Pit' is correctly located when the SSSI citation is reviewed and updated.
- 4.2 To ensure that any extension of the SSSI protects the wider Palaeolithic artefacts contained in the quaternary gravel terrace across the whole site.



5. Improving site management:

- 5.1 To achieve an effective future management strategy, in line with expert guidance, so as to return the site to a favourable ecological condition.¹
- 5.2 To advocate the need to enhance and upgrade the habitats on the site, eg to restore the acid grassland.
- 5.3 To encourage a joined-up approach to the management of Old Park & Chequers Wood, Canterbury golf course, Timpson Wood, Realm Wood, the Sturry Road Community Park and Legacy Park.
- 5.4 To work together with CCC and a partnership of other organisations to submit an Expression of Interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a 5 year project to:
 - i) Significantly enhance the management of the site;
 - ii) Raise awareness of the site's unique environmental, archaeological and historical heritage;
 - iii) Create a programme of public engagement initiatives.



6. Improving wider ecological connectivity within the Lower Stour Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA):

- 6.1 To support the protection and enhancement of green spaces adjacent to the site, such as the increasingly biodiverse Sturry Road Community Park and the newly established Legacy Park.
- 6.2 To support the improvement and extension of wetland habitat in the Lower Stour BOA to facilitate ecological connectivity between Old Park & Chequers Wood and the Stour valley wetlands of Fordwich, Westbere and the Stodmarsh SSSI, NNR and Ramsar site.²
- 6.3 To identify strategic habitat corridors to strengthen ecological connectivity between the ancient woodland of Chequers Wood, Sandpit Wood, Hospital Wood and Trenley Park Wood.



The aerial photo below from 2007 shows the proximity of Old Park & Chequers Wood (centre of the photo) to the newly established Sturry Road Community Park (in the foreground) and the Fordwich Water Meadows, the wetlands of the Stour valley and the ancient woodland complex of Sandpit Wood, Hospital Wood and Trenley Park Wood (in the background).³

¹ NB: The SSSI is currently categorised as being in an 'unfavourable - recovering' position by Natural England.

² See Landscape Character Type F (River Valleys) in CCC's Canterbury Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Appraisal document (October 2020)

³ See Landscape Character Type G (Stour Valley Woodlands) in CCC's Canterbury Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Appraisal document (October 2020)





7. Promoting Landscape-scale Nature Recovery:

- 7.1 To work together with other stakeholders in CCC's Open Spaces & Biodiversity Group and KCC's Making Space 4 Nature (MS4N) programme⁴ to ensure that the whole of Old Park & Chequers Wood is recognised as 'an area of particular importance for biodiversity' in the Canterbury District Biodiversity Plan and in Kent's Local Nature Recovery Network, and that the site's buffer zones are recognised as 'areas which could become important to biodiversity'.
- 7.2 To support the creation of a landscape-scale vision for nature restoration encompassing Old Park & Chequers Wood, Canterbury golf course and Sturry Road Community Park. The photo above shows the green wedge of Old Park extending right up to the edge of the city.

8. Improving public access:

- 8.1 To work together with KCC, Canterbury Golf Club, Sustrans and other key stakeholders to ensure that the path network on Old Park & Chequers Wood is well maintained and properly waymarked.
- 8.2 To facilitate public access by installing information boards at strategic points with an overall map of the site.
- 8.3 To develop leaflets giving self-guided trails of the site.

⁴ <https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk>





9. Increasing public engagement:

- 9.1 To encourage greater use of the site as an area for ecological, social, historical and archaeological research by local universities and conservation organisations.
- 9.2 To work together with conservation organisations (eg the RSPB, Operation Turtle Dove, the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, Wildwood Trust, the Kent Tree & Pond Partnership, Bumblebee Conservation and Butterfly Conservation) to hold public engagement events, including themed walks, to encourage local residents to appreciate the wealth of biodiversity and heritage on the site.
- 9.3 To involve local schools, colleges and youth organisations, including the Prince of Wales Youth Club, in educational visits and recreational activities in the area.
- 9.4 To work together with local community groups and health providers to use the site for the promotion of physical and mental well-being.



10. Curbing anti-social behaviour:

- 10.1 To develop robust strategies to tackle the problems caused by motorbikes, fires, fly-tipping and littering.
- 10.2 To work together with the police, fire service, local council and youth clubs to discourage and design out anti-social behaviour.
- 10.3 To work together with residents and community groups in the neighbouring residential areas to encourage respect for, and engagement with, the SSSI and its adjacent green spaces.



11. Ensuring organisational sustainability:

- 11.1 To agree a Memorandum of Understanding with CCC and other interested parties.
- 11.2 To profit from our recent registration as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) to support the acquisition of the MoD's landholdings on the site and to enhance the management of the whole area.
- 11.3 To elaborate a long-term funding plan.



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