



# **POST WOOD & PRESDALES**

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN, 2025 - 2030

BRIEFING DOCUMENT



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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A new five-year Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) is being produced for Post Wood & Presdales. This briefing document provides an overview of how the GAP will be produced, and sets out how stakeholders can contribute to shaping the plan.

GAPs are essentially map-based management plans that provide focus and direction for the running and improvement of open spaces. They provide a clear, logical process to determine the activities that should take place over a stated period of time to achieve the objectives for the site.

The GAP is being produced by the Countryside Management Service (CMS), part of Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside and Rights of Way Service, on behalf of and in partnership with East Herts District Council. The completed document will inform the management actions to be undertaken over the next five years, commencing in April 2025.

Engaging communities is integral to the production of GAPs, to ensure that stakeholders are fully aware of and able to interact with the plan production process. This briefing document initiates and supports this community engagement.

The engagement period will run from Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December to Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2024. A further engagement period in 2025 will provide an opportunity to assess the draft version of the GAP. Please use the contact details in Section 6 to comment on the aspirations for the site.

This document has been broken down into easy to read sections:

Section 2 provides an overview of the site and location map.

Section 3 reviews recent management of the site.

Section 4 contains the core objectives for the Post Wood & Presdales GAP.

Section 5 summarises the public engagement methodology, setting out how and when stakeholders can contribute to the plan.

## 2. BACKGROUND

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Post Wood is an oak-hornbeam woodland on the outskirts of Ware, Hertfordshire. It is adjoined by Presdales Recreation Ground, a popular open space with tree-lined boundaries. The sites are owned and managed by East Herts Council.

As an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW), Post Wood has been in existence since at least the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Tree species reflective of its ancient heritage are mature oak and hornbeam, with hazel, crab apple, and rowan in the understorey; more recent species additions include sweet chestnut and sycamore. Many of the hornbeam trees were coppiced historically, prolonging their life and creating the gnarly forms that exist today.

The ground flora contains remnants of ancient woodland habitat, including butchers broom, wood anemone, and yellow archangel, whilst tracts of bluebells are a highlight each spring. Overall, however, the diversity of woodland plants is low for an ancient woodland, and regeneration of native shrubs and trees is poor.

Presdales provides a large area of open space which is used for a range of recreational activities, including football, exercise groups, and dog walking. With recreation being its main function, there is not a requirement to alter management of the grassland, but to ensure it is maintained as a valuable open space for the community. The boundaries of Presdales are marked with mature hedgerows and linear woodland, providing landscape connectivity for woodland habitats and creating attractive views across the field.

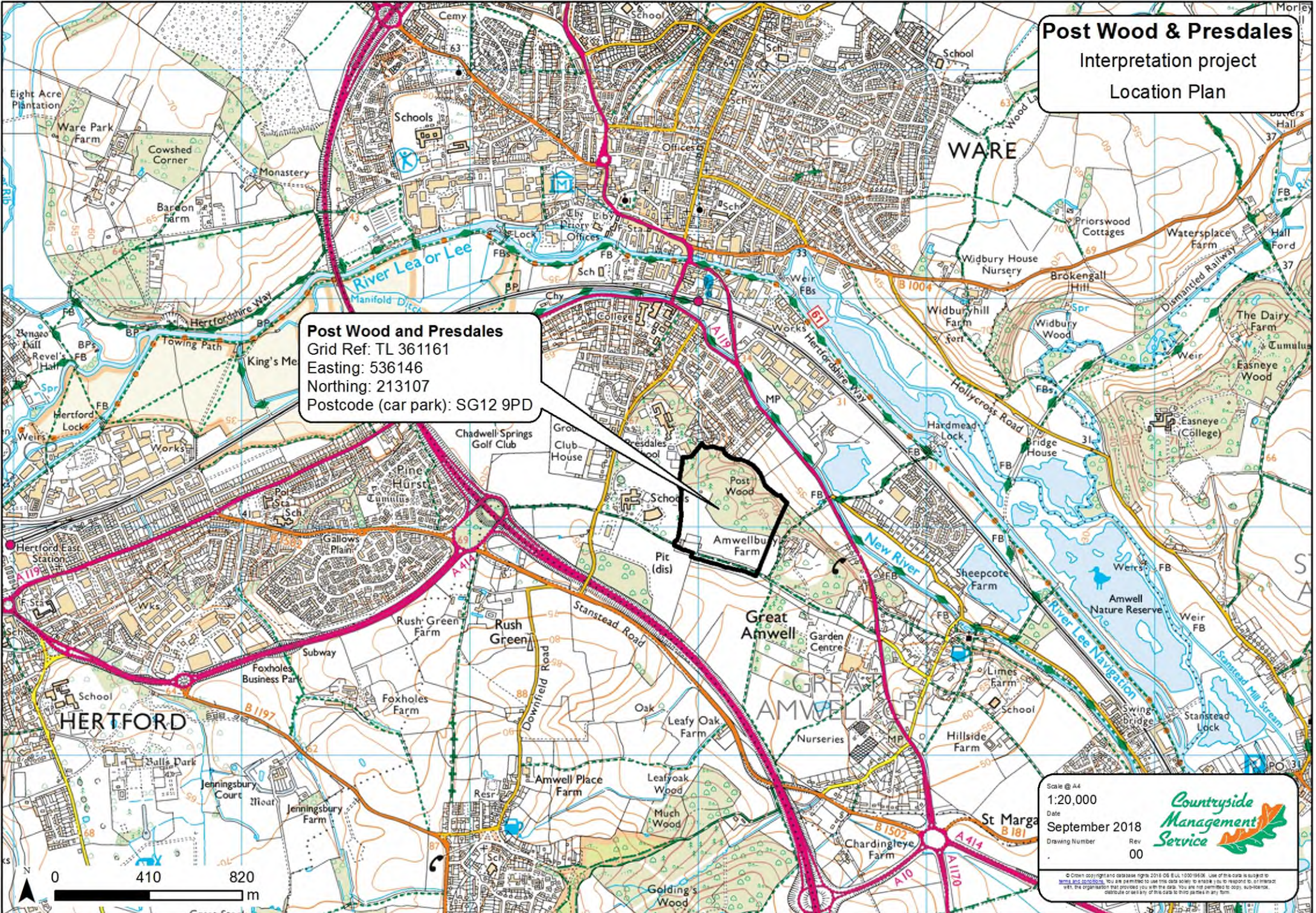
The only public Right of Way on the site is the tree-lined bridleway Walnut Tree Walk, which runs along the southern boundary of Presdales. A network of permissive footpaths throughout Post Wood provides good coverage of the woodland.

Situated within the catchment of Ware, the woodland and recreation ground are popular sites for the local community. Owing to the value and scarcity of ancient woodlands, management of Post Wood for conservation is a high priority to ensure it is a protected and thriving habitat into the future.



# Post Wood & Presdales Interpretation project Location Plan

**Post Wood and Presdales**  
Grid Ref: TL 361161  
Easting: 536146  
Northing: 213107  
Postcode (car park): SG12 9PD



Scale @ A4  
1:20,000  
Date  
September 2018  
Drawing Number  
REV  
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### 3. REVIEW OF PROGRESS

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The previous iteration of a Greenspace Action Plan for Post Wood & Presdales covered the period between 2019-2024.

During this time, new interpretation panels and way markers have been installed to help encourage visitors to explore the woodland on site. The previous management plan also set out to tackle the invasive species on site, with volunteer task days occurring most years to work toward removing the Himalayan balsam, snowberry, and cherry laurel, as well as maintaining the holly so it does not overtake the surrounding flora.

Regular maintenance of the site furniture installed since 2019 will be undertaken throughout the span of this plan. We will also seek to maintain the progress achieved in managing the invasive species on site. A particular focus will be placed upon attempting to eradicate Himalayan balsam from the glade. Alongside this, efforts will be made to reduce the overabundance of large holly trees, in particular around the edges of the woodland to bring in more light to the understory, to in turn help to promote the growth of flora in these areas, such as the Bluebells that characterise this woodland.

Hazel within the woodland have previously been coppiced, however there is no formal coppice rotation set for the site. We will look to introduce yearly coppicing in small coupes around the site to improve the overall health and diversity of the woodland.

Light soil scrapes around the hornbeams within the woodland were also undertaken, as well as the creation and installation of mammal exclosures, to explore the quality of the soil seed bank present within the woodland. This has been completed with little positive impact.

The woodland glade is cut once per year in most years, aiming to create a grassland habitat, although bracken, nettle, and Himalayan balsam burden is high within this area. We will set out to continue the cutting regime, formalising a rotational approach in an attempt to promote species diversity within the glade. We also aim to implement small scale scrapes within the glade to trial exposing the underlying seedbed and trigger germination of plants within the soil.

Presdales playing fields are maintained with a regular grass cutting regime in order to keep the facility usable year-round. Occasional cutting of the verges along the bridleway seeks to maintain access along this route. There is limited scope for works within the playing fields due to its regular use as football pitches.

To the north of the site, there are barbed wire fences along the boundary that are in a state of disrepair and are collapsed in places. We will remove these redundant features and investigate an appropriate replacement.

While not all actions in the previous plan were completed, the majority of the objectives set out were delivered through this period.

## 4. GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN (GAP) 2025 - 2030

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The new Post Wood and Presdales GAP will lead on from the work of the previous management plan for the site. It will be a simple, easy to read plan, accessible to interested members of the public and for us by EHDC and CMS officers and volunteers to guide the management of the site for a five-year period.

The plan will be largely map-based, with sequential annual management maps to show the actions planned for each year, with the resulting change represented on the map for the following year. The document will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and relevant. It will identify works, provide specifications, and enable funding and resources to be allocated for improvements. The aim and aspirations for the new plan will be as follows:

### Aims

To protect and enhance the ancient woodland habitat, and to maintain the sites as safe and enjoyable places.

### Objectives

**A. Public Access and General Maintenance** – *Ensure the sites are accessible, safe, and enjoyable for visitors.*

- A1 Review condition of parking area to ensure it is safe, welcoming, and resilient.
- A2 Improve landscape features and visual amenity through enhancing boundary hedgerows and fences.

**B. Conservation and Woodland Management** – *Enhance condition and resilience of the oak-hornbeam woodland and associated habitats.*

- B1 Undertake a sensitive and structured programme of woodland management to increase regeneration of trees and ground flora.
- B2 Recognise the value of mature and veteran trees and provide optimum conditions for their longevity.
- B3 Remove Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) of plants, notably cherry laurel, Himalayan balsam, and snowberry.
- B4 Maximise value of woodland glades and edges and connected linear habitats.
- B5 Continue monitoring of species, herbivore impacts, and tree health; apply appropriate best practice in consultation with experts in these fields.



- B6 Continue management of Holly in areas where it is causing over shading due to excessive growth.
- B7 Introduction and continuation of a regular coppice cycle for hazel within the woodland.
- B8 Implementation of small-scale scrapes within the glade.
- B9 Implementation of edge habitats around Presdales where it will not impact upon the football pitches.

**C. Heritage and Marketing** – *Develop a stronger recognition of the heritage and ancient woodland aspects of the site and promote respectful and appropriate use.*

- C1 Continue to preserve historic features.
- C2 Continue to inform site users and the wider community about the site's heritage.
- C3 Promote the use of the footpath network and responsible dog ownership, to reduce woodland damage and improve user experience.

**D. Community Involvement** – *Develop and maintain an informed, involved, and enthusiastic local community.*

- D1 Encourage local community and volunteer involvement in the stewardship of the site and ensure all operate towards the objectives of the GAP.
- D2 Publicise and facilitate the involvement of a range of local groups, including the forest schools and the local school adjacent to the site.
- D3 Promote responsible and respectful use of the site, and proactively respond to any misuse of the site.

**E. Sustainable Operations** – *All management and activities will be environmentally and financially sustainable.*

- E1 Ensure the costs of ongoing maintenance proposed in the GAP are financially sustainable and achievable with the resources available.
- E2 Seek external funding from grant bodies and development funds, to deliver proposed activities beyond annual maintenance.
- E3 Ensure all management is carried out according to environmental best practice, including on herbicide use, plant biosecurity to minimise tree disease, and sustainable woodland management practices.

- E4 Identify approaches which will deliver multiple benefits, such as combining habitat and tree risk management.
- E5 Explore the potential for the development of a Friends of Group.

## 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLAN PRODUCTION PROCESS

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Effective community engagement is at the centre of successful management plans. The value of a GAP is maximised when it incorporates and balances the aspirations of stakeholders and interest groups.

In order to provide all interested stakeholders and groups with the opportunity to feed into the production of the new GAP, we have adopted a structured two-stage approach to community engagement.

- For the first stage (this briefing document), stakeholders and site users will be invited to make comment on the core aspirations in Section 4; it is hoped that any further aspirations and/or issues will be identified through this information gathering process. This first stage of community engagement will run between **Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January and Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February.**
- For the second stage, stakeholders and site users will be invited to read through and make comment on the draft GAP, which will include the detailed proposals and actions. This stage is intended to run in 2025.

Following the second stage exercise, the final document will be produced, published and the actions will commence.

Please be aware that we will not respond individually to comments received through the public engagements; instead, we will produce a summary of comments, noting any amendments made to the plan as a result. This engagement response document will be published online alongside the briefing document, draft plan and final plan. We will retain contact details only for the purpose of keeping respondents informed about the plan development process.

### STAKEHOLDERS:

- East Herts District Council Councillors
- East Herts District Council Staff
- Hertfordshire County Council Councillors
- Hertfordshire County Council Staff
- Great Amwell Parish Council
- Ware Town Council
- Other interested Councillors
- British Horse Society
- Bury Rangers Football Club



- Cyclists
- Great Amwell Scout Group
- Herts Natural History Society
- Herts Env Records Centre
- Herts & Middlesex Butterfly Conservation
- Herts & Middlesex Bat Group
- Historic Environmental Record
- Presdales School
- Middleton School
- Pinewood School
- Open Spaces Society
- Ramblers Association
- RSPB Local Group
- Ware Civic Society
- Site Users

## **6. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK**

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Thank you for taking the time to read this document. We are keen to receive feedback from you on our proposals for the Post Wood and Presdales Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) 2025 – 2030

Please return your comments using the contact details below by **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February** at the latest.

**FAO Frankie Downes**

Countryside Management Service

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