

## Prospect Park and Devils Dip

Date (from/to)	2013 – 2023 (reviewed in 2018)
Date of last review [UKWAS 2.1.3]	
Owner/tenant	Reading Borough Council
Agent/contact	Giles Sutton /Dave Booth
Signed declaration of tenure rights and agreements to public availability of the plan [UKWAS 1.1.3/1.1.5/2.1.2]	

### 1 Background information

#### 1.1 Location

Nearest town, village or feature	Reading
Grid reference	SU687728
Total area (ha)	3.6

#### 1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

Three small blocks of mixed deciduous woodland, the largest of which The Rookery is within Prospect Park, located to the north of the A4 (Bath Road). The other two areas are a small woodland pond in Prospect Park, and Devils Dip, a small block of broadleaf woodland in a former clay pit.

#### 1.3 History of Management

Management activities include the removal of brambles to encourage bluebells, the deliberate retention of deadwood for saprophytic invertebrates such as stag beetles and the management of woodland edge habitats. A Management Plan was produced in 2009 which this management plan now supersedes

## 2 Woodland Information

### 2.1 Areas and features

Designated Areas	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Special areas for conservation (SACs)			
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)			
Ramsar Sites (see note on Guidance)			
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)			
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)			
Other designations (e.g. National Park (NP) / World Heritage Site)	Entire Site	X	
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)			
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)			
TPO / Conservation Area (CA)			
Details: Prospect Park and Devils Dip are both Local Wildlife Sites. Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory designation for sites of significant value for the conservation of wildlife and represent local character and distinctiveness and receive protection from development through planning policy.			

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Rare and important species	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Red Data Book or BAP species		X	X
Rare, threatened, EPS or SAP species		X	X
Detail: The following species have been recorded in and around Prospect Park and Devils Dip (data from records held by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre):			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Year of record	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2003	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	1985	
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	2004	
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	1985	
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	2007	
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	1985	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1994	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2005	
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	1986	
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	2005	
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	1985	
Good-King-Henry	<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>	1985	
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>	1986	
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	1985	
Hedge Accentor	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	1994	
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1985	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	2003	
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2005	
Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	1985	
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	2004	
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	2005	
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	1985	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2000	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	2005	
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	1998	
Stock Pigeon	<i>Columba oenas</i>	2003	
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1985	
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	2003	

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Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland			
Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)			
Semi-natural features in PAWS			
Woodland margins and hedges			X
Veteran and other notable trees			X
Breeding sites			
Habitats of notable species			
Unimproved grasslands			X
Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			
Details: Part of Prospect Park is being managed under a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement and management options include the management of veteran parkland trees and species rich grassland			

Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses			
Lakes			
Ponds		X	
Wetland habitats			
Details: There are two pond/ wetland areas covered by this plan: the small woodland pond within Prospect Park and the wet area in Devils Dip			
Landscape	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Landscape designated areas			
Landscape features			
Rock exposures			
Historic landscapes			
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads			
Areas of the woodland prominent	1	X	

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from settlements			
Details: Prospect Park is a significant landscape feature prominent from the A4 bath Road. There are good views from the park to the south.			
Cultural features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Public rights of way		X	
Prominent viewing points			
Existing permissive footpaths		X	
Proposed permissive footpaths			
Areas managed with traditional management systems			
Details: The land is owned by Reading Borough Council and is accessible by the public at all times			
Archaeological Features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Scheduled monument			
Historical feature (Inc. designed landscapes, registered parks and gardens)	Entire site	X	
Other			
Details: Prospect Park was originally part of the estate of Calcot Park and was turned into a mansion in the 1760s, by Benjamin Child. He named it after its views over Reading.			

## 2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

### Amenity

Prospect Park is of significant amenity value and is well used by the public who have permanent access to the site. The public particularly enjoy the annual bluebell display.

### Biodiversity

The woodlands are designated as a Local Wildlife Sites. Prospect Park hosts a number of bat species and a population of stag beetles

### Timber

There is no timber extraction proposed.

### 2.3 Site description

The Rookery is predominantly mature broadleaved woodland with the canopy dominated by mature and semi-mature oak with occasional ash, beech and yew. Structural diversity is limited and the woodland is dominated by mature trees with few young or semi-mature trees. Where a shrub layer exists, it is generally dominated by bramble or non-native shrubs including snowberry and laurel. Bluebells are abundant in the herb layer in the central section. There are two small blocks of ash-dominated secondary woodland, outside of the main woodland and these have a greater diversity of species and good structural diversity. The woodland edge habitats have been left to develop over the last few years.

Prospect Park Pond is fenced and inaccessible to the public. The surrounding trees and vegetation are a mix of native and non-native species.

Devils Dip is a small woodland in a Dip (probably an old clay pit). Tree species include ash, sycamore, cherry, suckering elm, willow and horse chestnut. Shrubs species include field maple, hawthorn, elder, privet, blackthorn, hazel and hornbeam. There is a shallow pond/ seasonally wet area at the base of the dip.

### 2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

The main threat to The Rookery is over dominance of bramble and snowberry in the shrub layer which is left unmanaged will suppress the ground flora. There are no significant threats to the other woodland areas.

## 3 Long term vision, management objectives and strategy

### 3.1 Long term vision

The overall aim for the site is to maintain a structurally and biologically diverse woodland which maximises the site's wildlife value and amenity value.

### 3.2 Management Objectives

Objective 1 - To encourage greater structural and species diversity

Objective 2 - To maintain the extent of the bluebell cover

Objective 3 - To control non-native and invasive species

Objective 4 - To increase the area and quality of woodland edge habitat and manage it

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so that it grades from short cut grass to long grass to scrub to woodland  
Objective 5 - To provide nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats and habitat for dead-wood invertebrates

### 3.3 Strategy

#### **Objective 1 - to encourage greater structural and species diversity**

##### Reason for objective

A woodland can be described as having 4 layers of vegetation; the tree canopy, the shrub layer, the field layer and the ground layer. Each of these layers supports different species. Where one of these layers dominates a wood, the woodland can be described as having a poor structure normally supporting fewer species than woodland with a more diverse structure.

The Rookery has a fairly uniform structure with a dense canopy layer and occasional dense patches of brambles and scrub.

##### Actions to be carried-out

- Retain the areas of secondary woodland (compartments 1 and 2)
- Control non-native species where appropriate (see objective 3)

#### **Objective 2 - To maintain the extent of the bluebell cover**

##### Reason for objective

Each spring the rookery has a good display of bluebells which is enjoyed by the many visitors to the park. In order to ensure that that this continues bramble in the area needs to be controlled.

##### Actions to be carried-out

- Continue the current regime of annual rotational bramble clearance

#### **Objective 3 - To control non-native and invasive species**

##### Reason for objective

There are a number of non-native species in the woodland including snowberry and Portuguese laurel. If not controlled these species could threaten native plant species and reduce the ecological value of the woodland.

##### Actions to be taken

- Remove snowberry and laurel adjacent to Mansion House car-park
- Remove sycamore and laurel throughout the woodland as opportunities arise

#### **Objective 4 - To increase the length of woodland edge habitat and manage it so that it grades from short cut grass to long grass to scrub to woodland**

### Reason for objective

Studies have shown that a greater number of species inhabit the first 10 metres of a woodland's edge than inhabit the remainder of the woodland. This is especially true where the edge habitat grades from trees to scrub to grass. By increasing the length and diversity of the woodland edge it is possible to increase its value to wildlife.

At present the interface between trees and short-mown grass at the rookery is abrupt which limits its wildlife value.

### Actions to be taken

- Establish and retain a 5m scalloped strip around the woodland to be cut on a rotational basis every 3 years.
- Establish and retain a 5m scalloped strip 5m from the woodland edge to be cut once every year in late summer

### **Objective 5 - To provide nesting and roosting sites for birds and bats and habitat for dead-wood invertebrates**

#### Reason for objective

Management of the woodland should benefit many species of birds and invertebrates. This can be enhanced further by installing and maintaining bat and bird boxes and providing dead wood habitat for saproxylic invertebrates (dead-wood invertebrates such as stag beetles)

#### Actions to be taken

- Install bird and bat boxes on trees in the woodland.
- Leave standing and fallen dead wood where it poses no risk to the public (standing deadwood is an important habitat for a number of invertebrates and birds including nuthatches, tree-creepers and woodpeckers)

## 4 Management prescriptions/operations

### 4.1 Silvicultural systems

#### 4.1.1 Harvesting

Continuous Cover Forestry. The wood is to be managed as low intervention forest.



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### 4.1.2 Phased felling and restructuring of plantations

Not applicable

### 4.1.3 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

No tree planting is planned

## 4.2 New planting

Not applicable

## 4.3 Other operations

None planned

## 4.4 Protection and maintenance

### 4.4.1 Pest and disease management

Management of ash dieback in line with national guidance

### 4.4.2 Fire plan

In general this wood represents a low fire risk, and as with most broadleaved woodlands arson is the most likely cause of fire, however there is no history of serious fires in this wood. In the event of a fire being reported the fire brigade will be contacted immediately.

Bottles, broken glass, illegal fly tipping etc. can all add to the risk that a fire can be started accidentally. Litter will be removed regularly.

The rendezvous points for the fire brigade are shown on Map 1.

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### 4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution

Litter is generally not a problem in this woodland and regular litter picks are undertaken

### 4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

The parks department's offices are located in Prospect Park. Unauthorised activities are managed in line with council policy.

### 4.4.5 Protection of other identified services and values

Not applicable

## 4.5 Game management

Not applicable

## 4.6 Protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and special features

### 4.6.1 Management of designated areas

Prospect Park and Devils Dip are designated as a Local Wildlife Site. A major objective of this woodland management plan is to enhance the woodland for biodiversity. This will contribute to Local, Regional and National Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

Implementation of this management plan will also ensure that one of the indicators used by the council to measure its success, that is the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites under positive conservation management, known as Single Data List 160, will be increased.

### 4.6.2 Measures to enhance biodiversity and other special features [UKWAS 2.1.1/6.1.1]

Implementation of the management plan will significantly enhance the site for biodiversity

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### 4.6.3 Special measures for ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and semi-natural woodland (SNW)

Not applicable

### 4.6.4 Special measures for plantation on ancient woodland site (PAWS)

Not applicable

### 4.6.5 Measures to mitigate impacts on landscape and neighbouring land [UKWAS 3.1.2]

The woodland will be managed as continuous cover forestry

## 4.7 Management of social and cultural values

### 4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

Works that could potentially impact upon old earthworks will be avoided. Where this is not possible advice will be sought from the Council's archaeological service team at Reading Museum.

### 4.7.2 Public access and impacts on local people

There is full public access to the woodland. Where tree felling or woodland work could represent a safety risk, signs will be erected and access prohibited during works.

## 5 Consultation

A series of public consultation events were held over the summer of 2013 and modifications to the plans were made. For more information on the consultation and the changes that were made please contact the council.

## 6 Monitoring plan summary

Objective number, issue or UKWAS Requirement	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
1	Structural diversity of woodland	Visual check	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform future management plans
2	Bluebell cover	Visual check	Annual	Parks supervisor	To determine the extent of bramble cutting
3	Non-native species regeneration	Visual check	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform future management plans
4	Monitoring of woodland edge habitats	Visual check	Twice per year	Parks supervisor	To inform the extent of cutting/mowing
5	Local Wildlife Site Survey	Ecological survey	Approximately every 5 years	Council Ecologist (via Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre)	To inform future management plans

## 7 Work programmes

### 7.1 Outline long-term work programme (2018 - 2033)

(Use this table to outline medium to long term areas of work)

Cpt. Ref or Name	Activity	Year ( <i>tick</i> )	
		6-10	11-20
All	Control of invasive species	X	X
All	Selective felling		X
The Rookery	Bramble control	X	

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### 7.2 Short-term work programme (2013 - 2018) – **for full details see section 3.3 above**

(Use this table to collect basic inventory data for the woodland areas you propose to work during the next 5 years)

Cpt. Ref / Name	Area (ha)	Main Species	P. Year	Yield Class	Activity	Year				
						1	2	3	4	5
The Rooke ry	2.9	Snow berry, Laurel / Syca more	NA	NA	Control of non-native species	X	X	X	X	X
The Rooke ry	2.9	Bramb le	NA	NA	Annual flailing of bramble	X	X	X	X	X
All	3.6	Mixed	NA	NA	Retention of standing and fallen dead wood	X	X	X	X	X
All	3.6	Mixed	NA	NA	Installation of bird and bat boxes	X	X	X	X	X
The Rooke ry	2.9	Mixed	NA	NA	Woodland edge management annual flailing of approximately 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> of edge habitat (see map 4)	X	X	X	X	X
The Rooke ry	2.9	Mixed	NA	NA	Annual cut of outer edge of long grass 5m from the woodland edge in autumn	X	X	X	X	X

8 Costing Operations

The strategy for Reading’s woodlands is to use volunteers, council staff and contractors to undertake management tasks throughout the woodland, following the detailed prescriptions given in table 7.2.

There will be no income from the sale of timber at Prospect Park or Devils Dip, however money to fund other works will be applied for through the EWGS Woodland Management Grant (WMG) and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) with any outstanding costs paid for through income from the sale of timber elsewhere in the Councils Woodland estate.

9 Maps

Map no./Title	Description
1	Location
2	Geology and contours
3	Management prescriptions overview
4	Woodland edge management areas

10 Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1      **Table A is not required for this application**

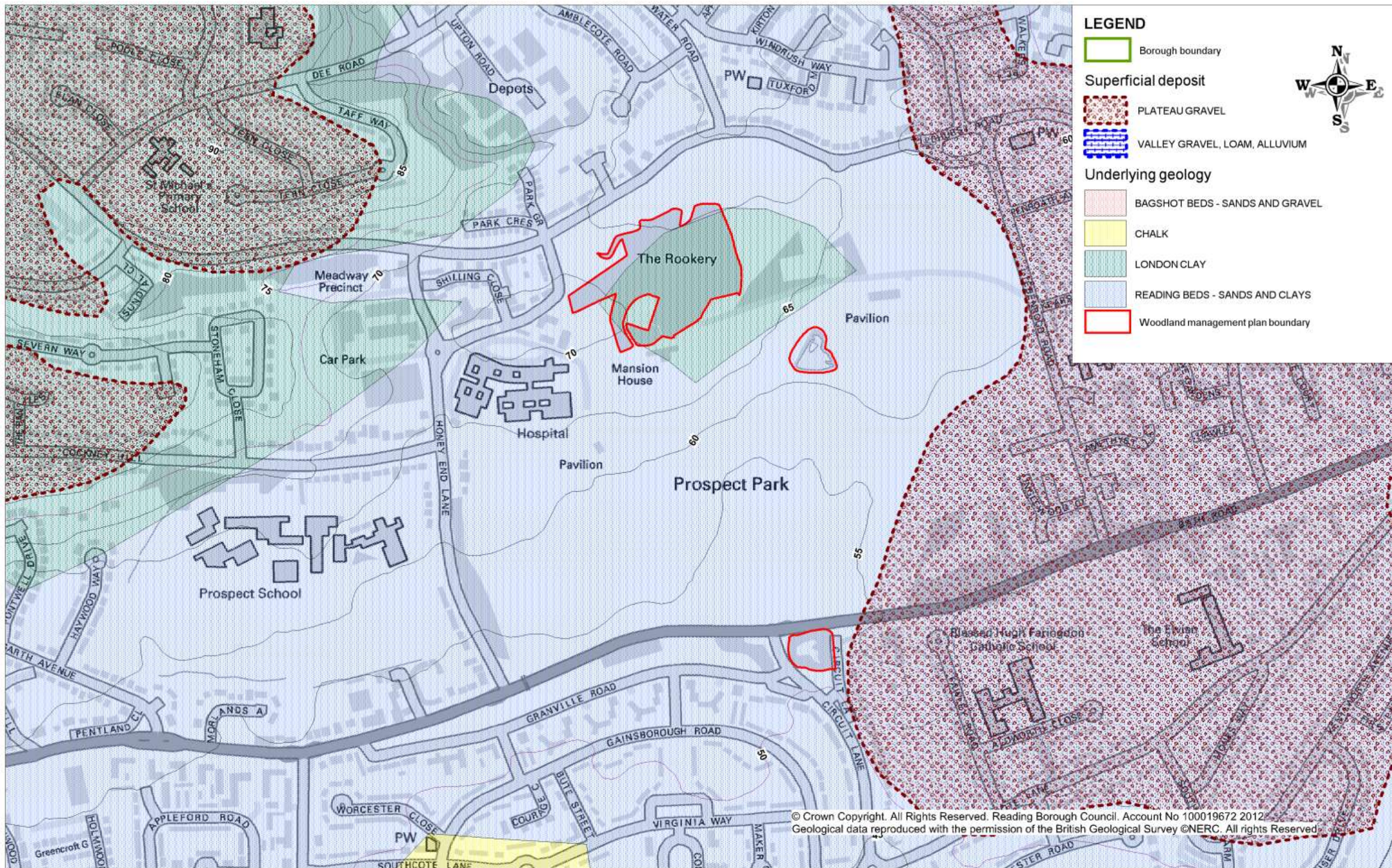
10.2      **Table B is not required for this application**

### Appendix 1 - Maps









**TITLE**

PROSPECT PARK AND DEVILS DIP WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FIGURE 2 - GEOLOGY AND CONTOURS

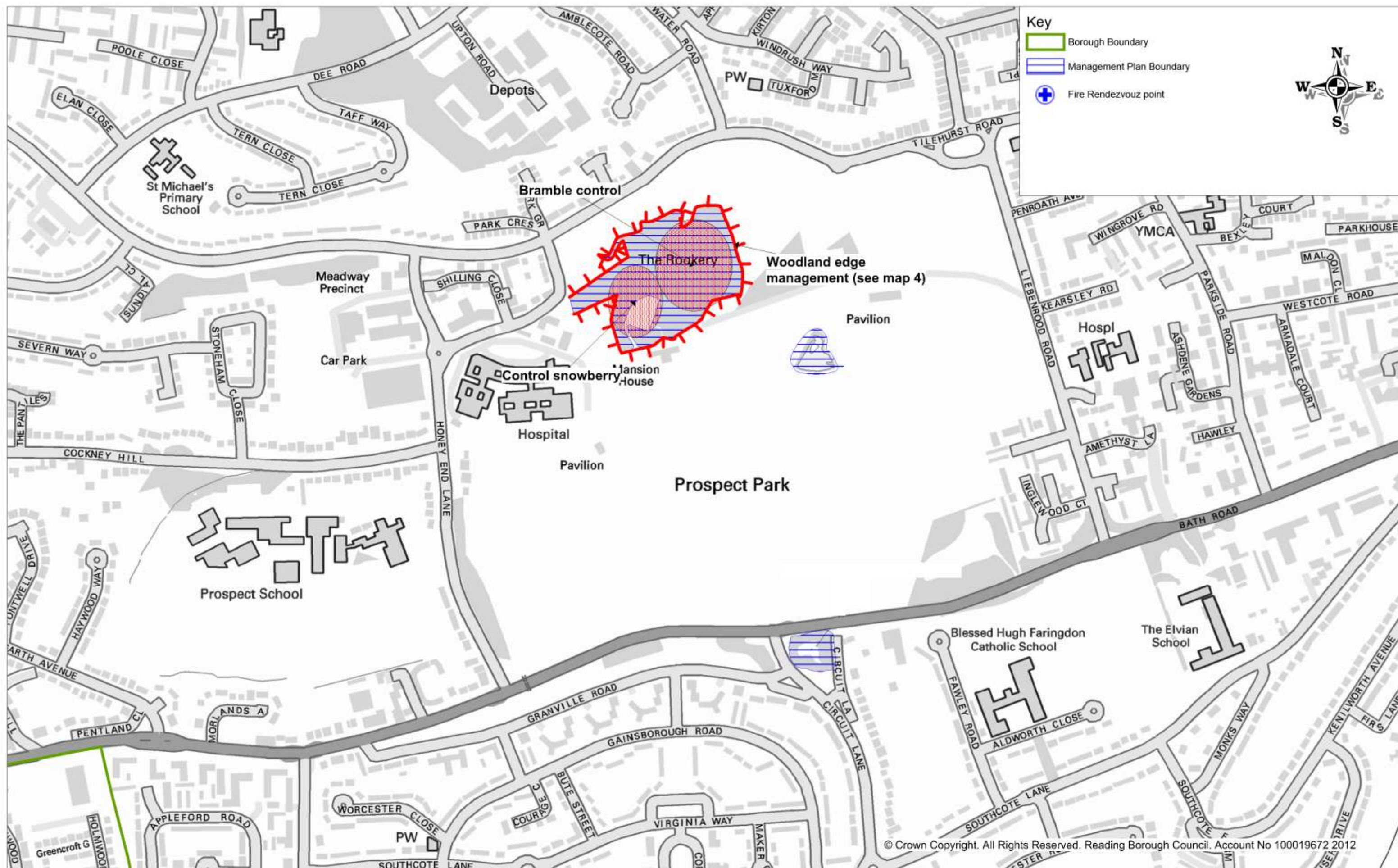
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DRAWN BY GS

DATE 23rd August 2012

SCALE 1:5000 at A3





TITLE  
PROSPECT PARK AND DEVILS DIP  
WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN - FIGURE 3 - PRESCRIPTIONS

DRG NO 01	DATE 23rd August 2012
DRAWN BY Giles Sutton	SCALE 1:5,000 at A3

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## Woodland Management Plan

### Map 4 – Woodland edge management regime

