

Woodlands Park: Woodland Master Plan

Development Control, item 9

Committee: Development Control

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Title: Woodlands Park: Woodland Master Plan

Author: John Mitchell

Agenda Item

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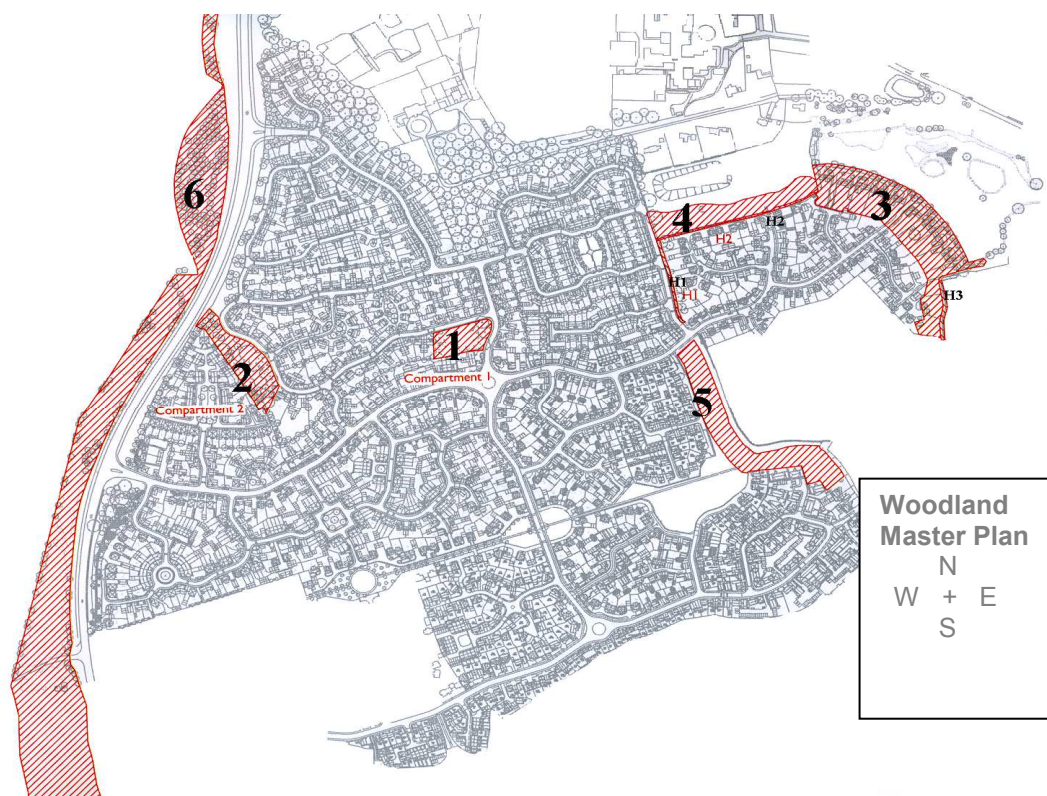
Item for
decision

Introduction

- 1 This report seeks Members consideration of the Woodland Master Plan for the Woodlands Park development at Great Dunmow. The Plan, which has been submitted by the Wickford Development Company, sets out management proposals for woodland areas within the development.

Assessment

- 2 The Woodland Master Plan describes the woodland areas' type and condition and sets out a strategy for their management.



- 3 The woodlands fall into two main categories: Existing retained mature woodland and plantation areas (compartments: 1, 2 & 5); and new woodland and plantation areas (compartments: 3, 4 & 6).

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- 4 The proposals for existing mature woodland and plantations include the provision of additional native tree and shrub planting to enrich and improve the structure of these woodlands; the maintenance and protection of new planting; and the general management of existing trees and understory plants to maintain the woodland in good condition.
- 5 The proposals for new woodland and plantation areas include selective thinning to encourage good development and structure; additional/replacement planting; and measures for the protection of newly planted areas.
- 6 In respect of existing plantations identified in the Plan as compartments 3 & 4 the proposals include the felling of the Poplar trees. Within compartment 3 there are 26 Poplars, of approximately 11m in height, subject to UDC tree preservation order no. 1/85 (ref: G21 & G22) and it is proposed that these be replaced with a stand of 80 Birch trees. The size of specimens to be planted could be specified as heavy stock i.e. about 3 metres in height. Within compartment 4 the approximately 40 Poplars, which are not the subject of a tree preservation order, are proposed to be replaced with new mixed native woodland. This would be planted as whips and feathers, i.e. specimens would be between 1 and 2 metres tall at time of planting.
- 7 The Poplar trees proposed to be felled have been inspected by the Council Landscape Architect. The Compartment 3 trees were protected by TPO in 1985 as they were felt to have an amenity value as a group, which they currently retain although individually the trees are not outstanding specimens. In both Compartment 3 and 4 some of the Poplars are now in poor condition so that it is likely that some will need to be removed and as a consequence the visual value of the group will be compromised. Selective felling of the poorer Poplar subjects and the retention of others within this group is not considered a satisfactory alternative as the trees have developed co-dependency. Selective felling would expose adjacent retained trees to an increased risk of being wind thrown. Furthermore since the Order was served in 1985 the layout of the estate has been approved and the trees have been included within the gardens of 10 of the approved plots. The trees are large specimens and Poplars tend to have a high water uptake creating structural stability problems when near to dwellings.
- 8 The Order has protected these trees from felling and required that they be given full consideration in a Master plan. However Members will be aware that a preservation order need not be retained for all time if a superior landscape solution is provided. On balance officers believe that due to the poor quality of some of the specimens, the likely devaluation of the resultant group due to removing the poorest trees and the approval of the plots on Sector One in the early 1990's to include the trees with residential curtilages all suggest that replacement planting could be preferable.
- 9 The replacement of the Poplars in Compartment 4 with new native woodland planting, and replacing the Poplars in Compartment 3 (subject to TPO) with Birch (which would then become subject to the TPO) may provide both visual amenity and biodiversity benefits. The replacement of the Poplars with a visually strong tree belt using Birch is less likely to cause potential problems

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than the Poplars in the context of residential gardens. Members will need to balance such considerations against the immediate loss of amenity which would result from the felling this attractive group of tall Poplars.

- 8 The management proposals for the 3 hedgerows identified in the Plan (H1, H2 & H3) include the infilling of gaps, topping and facing-up to increase hedge density. The proposals include the felling of 3 Ash, 1 Sycamore & 2 Oak trees which are included within tree groups subject to tree preservation order no.1/85 (G20, G21 & G22). These subjects are found to be in decline and in poor condition. Their removal and replacement with new tree planting within the existing hedge line is considered appropriate.

Consultations

The Great Dunmow Town Council have considered the proposed felling and replanting proposals for those trees subject to tree preservation order and have confirmed that they have no objection.

The District Council's Landscape Architect has recommended that the proposals set out in the Woodland Park: Woodland Master Plan are approved subject to replacement planting being made subject to tree preservation order.

Applicant's case

The conclusions and recommendations forming part of the Woodland Master plan are attached to this report.

Recommended that the proposals set out in the Woodland Park: Woodland Master Plan be approved subject to replacement Birch planting being of heavy stock and planting being made subject to tree preservation. Alternatively if Members cannot accept the loss of the TPO Poplars they may decide to approve the plan with the exception of the works to compartment 3.

Background Papers

Woodlands Park: Woodland Management Plan

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Nil
Community Safety	See report

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Equalities	Nil
Finance	Nil
Human Rights	Nil
Legal implications	Nil
Ward-specific impacts	Great Dunmow (North)
Workforce/Workplace	Nil

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