



# Shotover Country Park

Management Plan 2022 - 2032

**FINAL**

**October 2022**



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# Preamble

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Shotover Country Park is a special place. It contains a rich diversity of habitats from woodland, to heathland, to meadow and represents one of the key jewels in the greenspaces of Oxford. Founded on its geography and geology, it is uniquely different to other parks and open spaces in Oxford...loved for its naturalness, almost mystical qualities. It has been the inspiration for authors and artists and is cherished by local communities and visitors alike.

This Management Plan looks to the future. To build on and support all the good work of numerous active local community groups in and around the Park. It seeks to retain and enhance the best of the Park, protecting those special qualities, some statutorily protected as SSSI. It also recognises the changing needs and demands placed on parks and greenspaces, and responds positively to those needs.

But perhaps most importantly, it seeks to celebrate the Park, to recognise its specialness and encourage and welcome both existing and new visitors to enjoy this wonderful landscape of Oxford.

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**SECTION 1**  
Introduction

## Purpose

This management plan seeks to build on the effective management of the Country Park to allow it to deliver on the needs and aspirations of Oxford for the next 10 years. The area considered is shown on the map below. It should be noted that whilst the management plan focuses on areas within this boundary only, reference to areas beyond the Park are also made, where appropriate, as part of wider strategic green infrastructure opportunities that may exist.

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## The Site

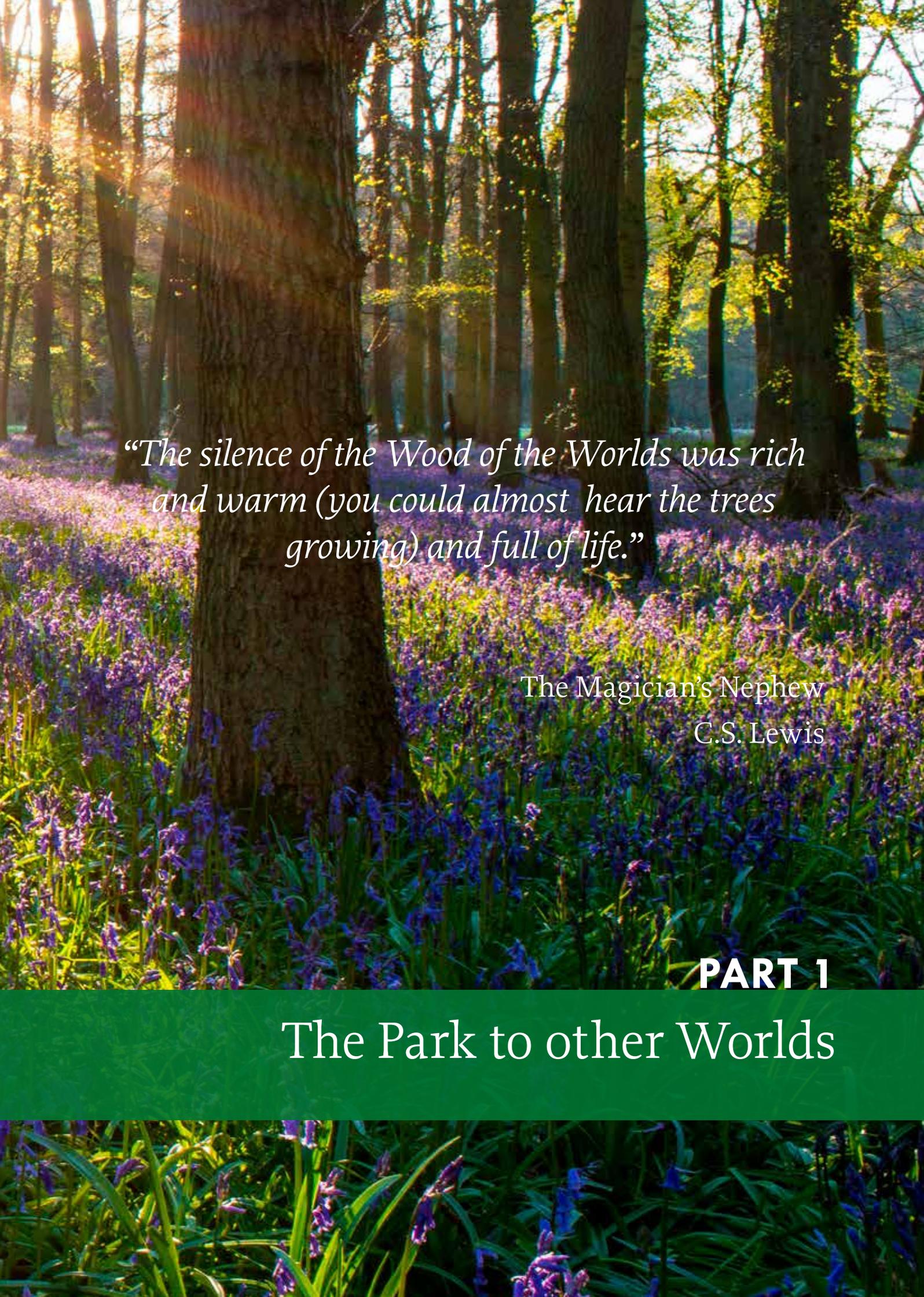
Shotover Country Park comprises of approximately 115ha of diverse habitat mosaic located on the southern slopes of Shotover Hill at Oxford's eastern fringe. The varied landscape comprising flat woodland, heathland, rides, and glades provides a combination of diversity of habitat for wildlife, as well as a natural countryside amenity for visitors so close to the city.

The Park has been managed by Oxford City Council (OCC) as a recreational amenity area for around 80 years. A large part of the Country Park is a nationally important wildlife site, being designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Shotover Hill forms a prominent ridge rising sharply from the eastern fringes of Oxford. The eastern bypass separates the Park from the conurbation of Oxford, with access through Headington via Old Road that crosses the bypass on a bridge.

Two pedestrian crossings across the Eastern Bypass are also available allowing direct connection to the Park for adjacent communities. To the south and east of Shotover Hill are the villages of Horspath and Wheatley. Footpaths and bridleways access the Park from the south and east but the only vehicle access, other than for site management vehicles and equipment, is from Old Road in Headington to the car park at the west end of the Plain on the hilltop of Shotover. There is also access through Old Road in Wheatley, to the east end of the Plain.



A photograph of a forest floor covered in a dense carpet of purple flowers, likely bluebells. Tall, slender trees stand in the background, with sunlight filtering through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The scene is peaceful and vibrant.

*“The silence of the Wood of the Worlds was rich and warm (you could almost hear the trees growing) and full of life.”*

The Magician's Nephew  
C.S. Lewis

**PART 1**

The Park to other Worlds



**SECTION 2**

Historical Background

Historically, Shotover Hill was part of a Royal Forest (Shotover with Stowood) and the richness of habitat variety and natural history interest may in part reflect the long period of being managed for nature conservation during Royal Forest times.

The Shotover area has an extensive history including from records of prehistoric worked flints in the general area, through Roman period pottery finds to the long period of mediaeval history when Shotover was a Royal Forest. Substantial military training activity during the Second World War saw some areas entirely stripped of vegetation cover and this can be seen in the aerial photographs of that time. Subsequent aerial images up to the present time graphically show how the open character of the Park has steadily declined as scrub and trees have colonised much of the formerly open slopes.

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Shotover Hill by G.J. Fookes (1880 - 1910) © Oxfordshire History Centre / Picture Oxon

Legend and myth also highlight the cultural importance and associations of the area including concretionary masses of sandstone (doggers). In the twelfth century Empress Matilda, the enemy of King Stephen, was staying in London when a change of allegiance within the army put her life in danger. Finding safety in Oxford, on reaching Shotover Hill Matilda expressed her relief by bursting into tears and it is said that her tears were so voluminous that as they fell they hardened into enormous boulders now seen as doggers. Doggers are also known as 'Giant's Marbles' and there are several different legends concerning giants at Shotover, which may date back to the seventeenth century when a figure of a giant was cut into the hillside. An unusually shaped dogger, known locally as 'Giant's Loaf' was formerly found at the junction of the Ridings and the Old Road up to Shotover Hill.

By the 19th and 20th centuries the landscape of Shotover had experienced significant changes. Ten acres of Brasenose Wood were converted to arable land between 1852 to 1853, whilst some areas of Magdalen Wood (as defined between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries) is currently used for housing. In the 1920s, an area of heathland on the south side of Shotover Hill was lost, 2.5ha were planted with European larch and about 15ha were used for housing. Since 1930, heathland habitats at Shotover have declined further due to a lack of grazing and control management, and the cover of woodland and bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) has significantly increased.

The area known as Johnson's Piece, which is owned by University of Oxford, was planted with a number of ornamental trees including sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), and maple (*Acer spp*). Woodland re-growth has occurred here too, with aerial photographs from the 1940s showing less woodland there than at present and extensive open areas and bare ground in the north.

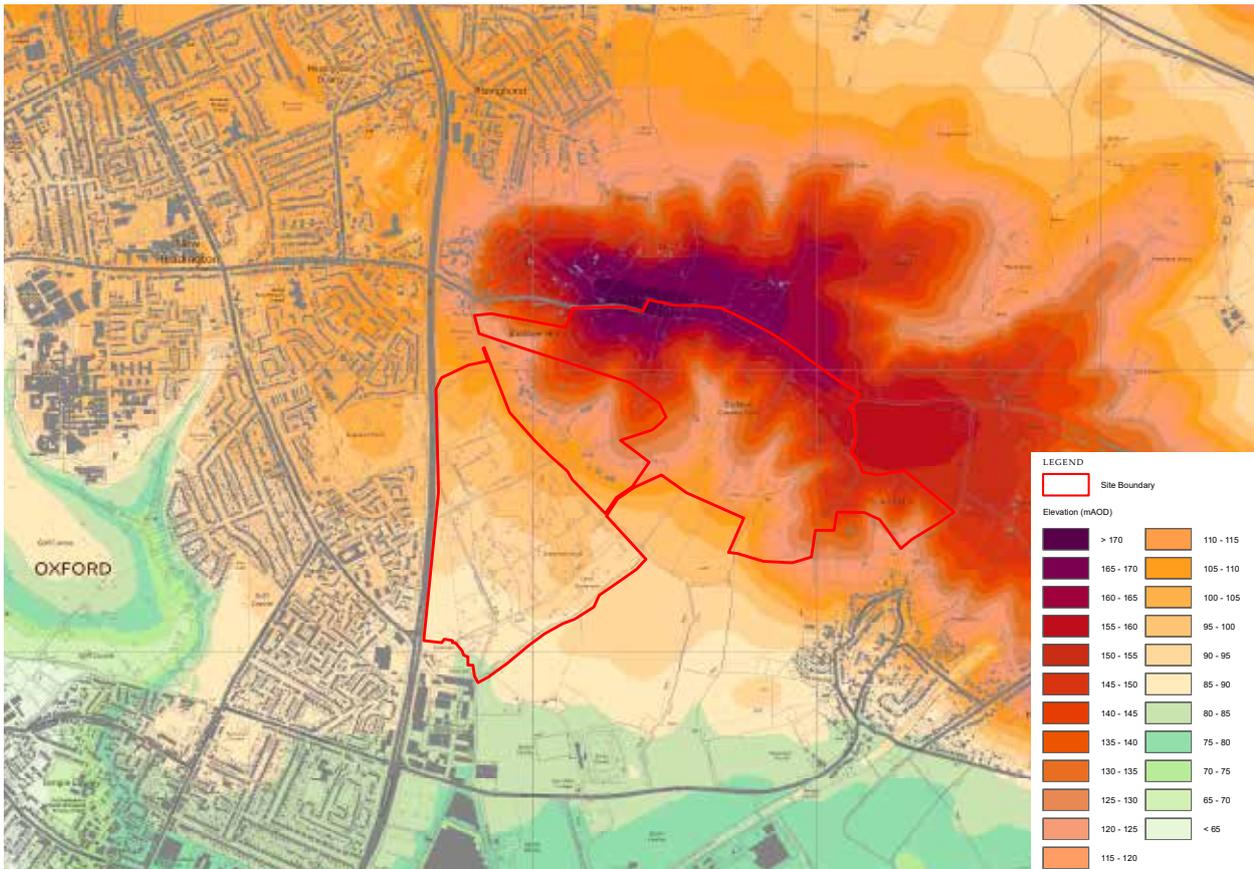
Aerial photographs of the area from 1945 show that there was no tree cover in Sandpit Field, Bottom Ground and Horseshoe/Tank Field at that time. These areas are now dominated by woodland. Oxford City Council has managed the Park since the 1930s and a wide range of land management activities has been undertaken since that time.

Shotover Wildlife, an independent voluntary organisation founded by Ivan and Jacqueline Wright in 1999 has undertaken extensive research and communication on the wildlife and habitats of Shotover and has organised and carried out much of the habitat management at the Park, alongside Oxford City Council (currently via the Parks and Open Spaces team at Oxford Direct Services).

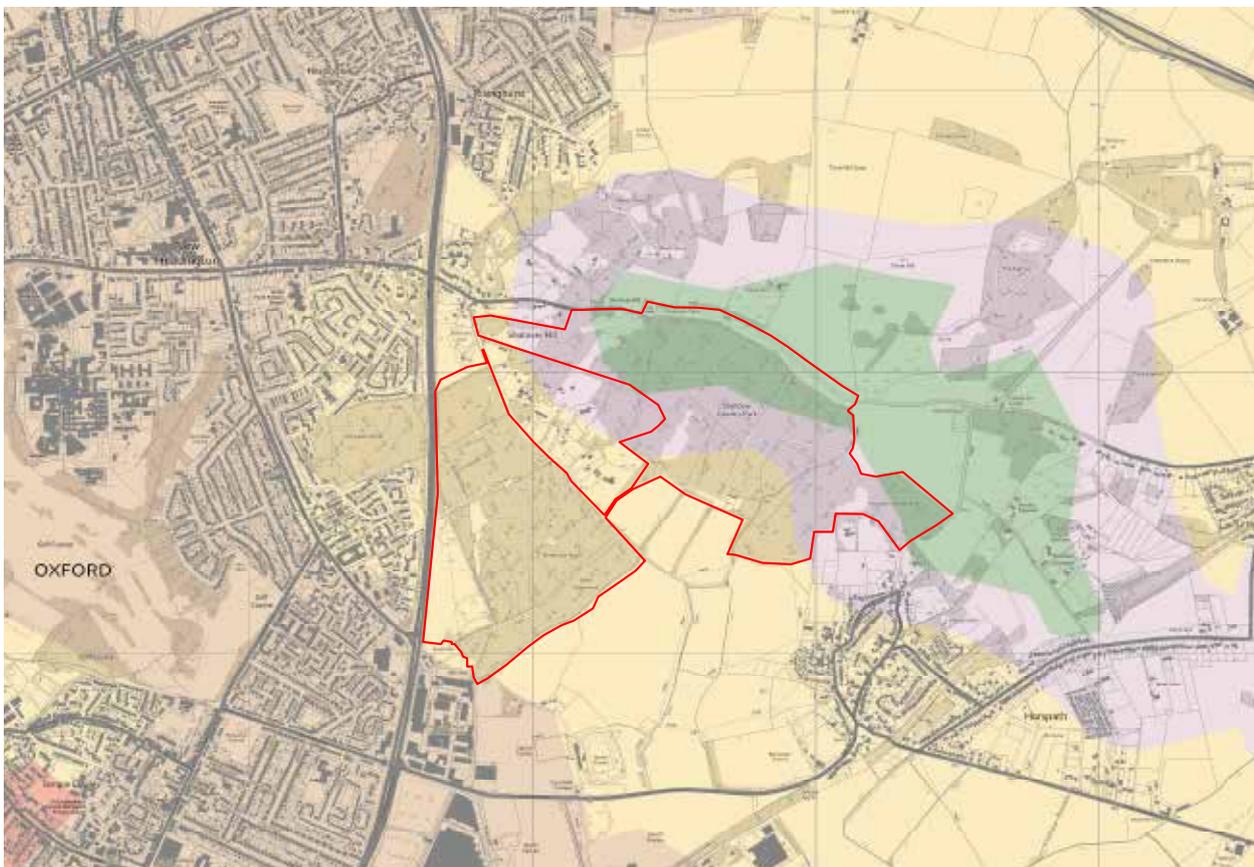


**SECTION 3**  
The Park Today

SHOTOVER COUNTRY PARK  
Management Plan 2022 - 2032



Topography



Geology

## Geology

Shotover Hill stands at 171 metres, representing the highest of the hills surrounding Oxford. It is a steep-sided flat topped hill, with flat bottomed valleys to the north and south. The Shotover Sands which cap the hill are porous and comparatively resistant to erosion. The flatter land surrounding Shotover Hill consists of alluvium, clays and limestones, whereas the hill itself and the outlying Forest Hill consists of thin bands of limestones, clays and sandstones with the latter predominating.

The core of Shotover Hill is formed of Kimmeridge Clay, though this is itself composed of a sandier layer of Kimmeridge Sand between the thicker clay bands. The Kimmeridge Sands give rise to the sandy character most evident at 'Sandpit Field', while the clay band above this is where the spring line has developed. These springs give rise to several short, steep-sided valleys with periodic streams and a marshy area. The lower deposit of Kimmeridge Clay is largely overlain with much more recent deposits derived from post-glacial erosion and deposition.

The upper slopes and hilltop have a capping of iron-rich sands now known as Whitchurch Sands, laid down about 135 million years ago. These deposits were once known as Shotover Sands. They give rise to the sandy, acidic soils that historically supported a more extensive presence of heathland. It was the Shotover Sands that also contain the yellow ochre, exploited as a source of pigment several centuries ago. The remains of ochre pits can be seen on the eastern side of Horspath Common.

The lower slope and flatter area of woodland has slowly permeable and seasonally wet, slightly acid but base rich loamy and clayey soils (University of Cranfield, 2022). A layer of clay towards the middle of the hillside acts as an impermeable barrier to percolating water and gives rise to several springs which flow into marshy areas (e.g. at the base of Johnson's Piece and Bottom Ground). Ponds are limited to the more impermeable soils of the lower flatter ground and woodland.

## Biodiversity

### Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The majority of the Park coincides with Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The main exceptions being a section of woodland at the west of the hillside known as the Larches, and an area of land around Westhill Farm; both of these areas are within the Park but not covered by the SSSI.

SSSIs are designated for their particular interest to science due to rare flora, fauna, geology or geomorphology. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood was notified as a SSSI in 1986 due to its biological interest, namely the presence of acid grassland, remnant ancient woodland and heathland habitats which are particularly scarce in Oxfordshire. The full citation for the SSSI is provided in Appendix A. The status of most of the Park as a SSSI is a key consideration in its management.

Natural England list the following priority features of the SSSI on their website:

- invertebrate assemblage of scrub-heath and moorland;
- invertebrate assemblage of bare sand and chalk;
- lowland dry acid grassland;
- lowland mixed deciduous woodland; and
- populations of the nationally scarce butterfly species black hairstreak.

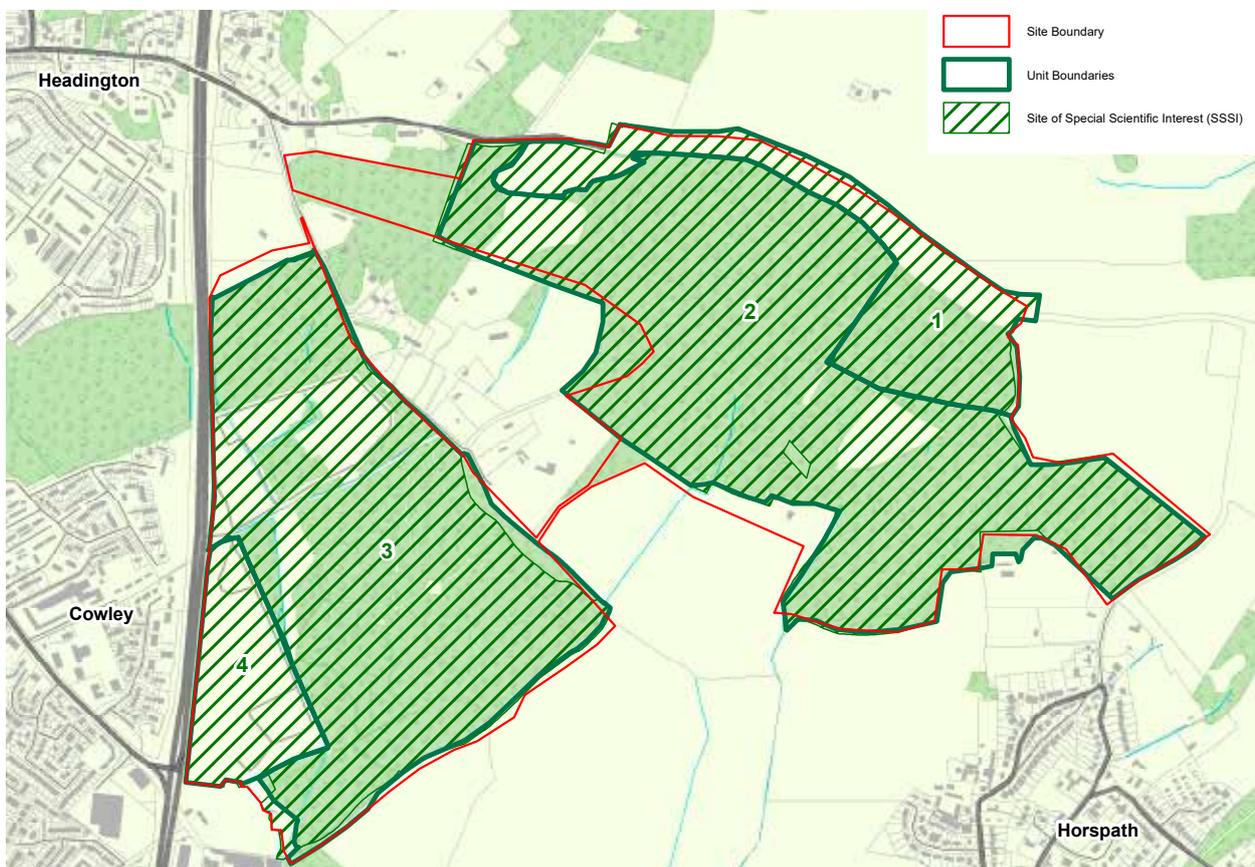
## SSSI Condition

Natural England (the statutory agency for nature conservation in England) monitors and reports on the condition and management of SSSI sites. The most recent condition assessment for Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood was carried out in 2021. This found 43% of Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood habitats to be in 'favourable' condition (i.e. habitats healthy and being appropriately managed), whilst 57% of habitats within the Park were considered to be in the condition 'unfavourable - recovering' (i.e. if current management measures are sustained the site will recover over time). Condition was assessed separately for the following four subunits of the SSSI.

## Unit 1 Acid Grassland Shotover Hill Woods

The acid grassland and heath of at the north and northeast of Shotover Hill is in unfavourable-recovering condition. Natural England note that: *'sward height is within acceptable range and there is no scrub developing in the open areas of grassland/heathland'*.

Management to prevent scrub encroachment is considered appropriate here to achieve 'favourable' status, although it was noted that an area of woodland in this area is used by local bikers as a BMX track.



## Unit 2 Shotover Hill Woods

Is in unfavourable-recovering condition. Natural England note that: *'structural diversity is good with a relatively well represented age range of trees'* and *'no loss of woodland to development or significant areas of felling were noted'*.

## Unit 3 Brasenose Wood

Is in favourable condition and Natural England note that *'current management is working well and should continue'*. They suggest that *'Future management could include ride maintenance, some opening of ride edges will create more structural diversity and openings to enhance the ground flora'*.

## Unit 4 Neutral grassland along the southern edge of Brasenose Wood

Is in 'favourable' condition and Natural England recommend that cutting management of the hay meadow should continue rotationally. However, some evidence of vehicle tracks, that should be managed, was noted.

## Views about Management

Natural England (then English Nature) produced a Views About Management document for the SSSI in 2005 (English Nature, 2005). This sets out general (rather than site specific) management advice for woodland, dry lowland heath, and lowland acid grassland, and notes that the use of inorganic fertilisers and pesticides should be avoided. Herbicides (if necessary) should be used with extreme care, and that access and recreational activities at the Park may need to be managed.

## Operations Requiring Consent

Natural England has produced a document setting out operations likely to damage the special interest of the SSSI and requiring its consent (Natural England, 2022). Items in this list are general and hence include a range of operations that would not be likely to occur in the Park.

## Bylaws

The Shotover byelaws specifically address the protection of wildlife by making it an offence to harm animals or disturb plants.

## Non-Statutory Designations

### Local Wildlife Sites

There is one designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS) within the boundary of the Park: Magdalen Wood, also known as Open Magdalen. Local Wildlife Sites are selected locally as areas of land with 'substantive nature conservation value'. Magdalen Wood is designated a LWS due to the presence of remnant ancient woodland patches and rich understorey floral communities.

### Conservation Target Area

Shotover Hill Conservation Target Area (CTA) includes the Park and Shotover House Park to the north-east. It also includes meadows between Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood. CTAs are designated as some of the most important areas for wildlife conservation in Oxfordshire where targeted conservation action will have the greatest benefit. Habitats noted for the Shotover Hill CTA comprise: heathland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, lowland meadow, acid grassland, fen, parkland and eutrophic standing water.

### Ancient Woodland Inventory

Brasenose Wood and Open Magdalen (wood) are both listed as ancient and semi-natural woodland on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory. No other woodland at the Park is included on the inventory.

### Oxfordshire Local Geological Site

The central section of the hillside is designated as an Oxfordshire Local Geological Site. It is designated for the youngest deposits of the Upper Jurassic in Oxfordshire, doggers within the Kimmeridge Sand, and springs at the junction between permeable and impermeable strata.

## Key Habitats

### Ancient Woodland

Brasenose Wood, approximately 28.5ha in extent, is situated on clay and some limestone on relatively level land at the base of Shotover Hill in the south-west of the Park. It comprises a coppiced understorey with standards (i.e. many of the smaller trees and shrubs are periodically cut close to ground level and then regenerate, whilst the canopy supports mature trees). The canopy is dominated by mature oak (*Quercus robur*), with a range of other native tree species including field maple (*Acer campestre*), aspen (*Populus tremula*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*).

The understorey is dominated by hazel (*Corylus avellana*), with a range of other native shrubs and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*). The ground flora supports a range of woodland indicator species. There are abundant bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), several ferns, a range of mosses, and rarer plants such as violet helleborine (*Epipactis purpurata*), greater burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella major*) and orpine (*Sedum telephium*) have been recorded.

The various open rides and paths increase the habitat variation present by providing more open areas and woodland edge habitat. The woodland has a long history of coppice management, which continues to the present day, and this continuity has made an important contribution to its high biodiversity value.

North of Brasenose Wood is the ancient woodland of Magdalen Wood. This woodland is dominated by a dense canopy of oak, and abundant bramble. Magdalen Wood is bisected by the A4142 Oxford Eastern Bypass. Only the eastern section is covered by this Management Plan.



Key Habitats



Image © Steve Daniels



## Other Woodland

Along the south-eastern edge of Brasenose Wood is an area known as Open Brasenose, which has a denser canopy dominated by oak and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with some areas of dense blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) scrub. Slade Wood lies to the north-east of Brasenose wood, providing connectivity to Magdalen Wood. Open Brasenose and Slade Wood are not classified as ancient woodland but nevertheless support some woodland plant species.

Woodland across the south-west facing side of Shotover Hill (at Johnson's Piece, the Larches, Horseshoe/Tank Field, and Horspath Common) is considered secondary woodland, having grown up to replace more open heathland, grassland and scrub habitats following the cessation of grazing.

This history is supported by the lack of a diverse woodland ground flora, various historical accounts and maps, and early 20th century photographs. Some mature trees are present on the hillside, such as in Johnson's Piece, and their growth form is indicative of former more open conditions.

Aerial photographs from 1945 show no tree cover in Sandpit Field, Bottom Ground and Horseshoe/Tank Field at that time, and extensive open areas in Johnson's Piece and Horspath Common.

This woodland is dominated by native species, such as oak and ash, with hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*), blackthorn, silver birch and gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).

Non-native tree species have been planted in some areas, with maples, sweet chestnuts (*Castanea sativa*) and pines (*Pinus sp.*) forming an informal arboretum in Johnson's Piece, a plantation of European larch (*Larix decidua*) in the Larches, and self-set sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in various areas.

Given the general dominance of native species in the canopy, understorey and ground layer, both the ancient and secondary woodland at the Park are considered to be habitats of principle importance in England: Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland.

## Heathland and Acid Grassland

Acidic sandy soils are rare in Oxfordshire, and therefore associated habitats, such as heathland and acid grassland, are also rare in the county. Heathland and acid grassland habitats at the Park therefore form a key component of its biodiversity value, particularly for the plants, fungi and invertebrates they support. These open, sandy habitats are the main site for a range of



invertebrates, especially solitary bees and wasps that need such soils to form their nesting burrows.

Heathland and acid grassland (both Habitats of Principal Importance in England) occur together as a mosaic of grassy heath at Shotover and are therefore considered together in this Management Plan. The dominant heathland shrubs are heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and gorse.

The largest areas of these habitats are in the southern part of Mary Sadler's Field towards the west of the hillside, and at Horspath Common towards the east. These areas have both been subject to extensive conservation management over recent decades, including gorse, bracken and scrub control, and reestablishment of heather by seeding.

There are further areas of this habitat in various clearings across the wooded hillside which have been opened up through management, and around the sandpit area (an area formerly dug for sand that is now used as a play area 'sand pit' by families visiting the Park). Bracken, scrub and gorse continue to require management of encroachment to prevent loss of heathland and acid grassland habitats at the Park.

### Neutral Grassland

Areas of neutral grassland are present within the Park at Slade Common in the south-west (which the SSSI citation describes as unimproved neutral or slightly acid grassland), and at the Plain in the north. This grassland is of biodiversity value because it has not been agriculturally 'improved' through the use of fertilisers, herbicides or reseeded. This habitat supports a range of native grasses and wildflowers including clovers and vetchlings, and also supporting invertebrates, small mammals and feeding and breeding birds.

### Wetland

Wetland habitats on the hillside are absent from the free-draining sandy areas. However, where percolating water meets an impermeable clay layer, groundwater issues from the hillside as a number of springs. These feed small areas of wetland habitats, including at the southern (lower) end of Johnson's Piece and Bottom Ground, and at the western edge of the Larches. These areas support wetland plant species and the former two are under conservation management to address encroachment by woody vegetation.

Several ponds are present within the woodland below the hillside, including in the east of Slade Woods.



## Wildlife

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) returned 3,104 records of protected and notable species within the boundary of the Park and within a 2 km of the boundary. The following sections consider the post-year 2000 records.

## Bats

There were records of five species of bats. Of these, many were from within the Horspath Wildlife Conservation Area (designated as a Local Wildlife Site). This area lies around 450m south-west of the Park and contains populated bat hibernaculum. Species identified include: common and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*) Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auratus*), and Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*). There were no bat records from the Park itself, but habitats there are likely to provide high quality foraging resources and connectivity for bats, and a large number of potential roosting sites within mature trees. All bats and their roosts are protected by law in the UK.

## Other mammals

The data search returned 29 records of other mammals, of which three were from within the Park itself. These were records of badger (*Meles meles*) in Shotover Hill Woods, of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in Magdalen Wood and of hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) in Shotover Hill Woods (the latter dated 2010). The woodland and scrub habitat at the Park is likely to provide good habitat for all of these species.

Hedgehog and dormouse are both Species of Principal Importance in England (SPI), and dormouse and badger are protected species.

Whilst not surveyed as part of the TVERC dataset, regular sightings of Muntjac and Roe deer have been observed.



## Birds

The data search returned 1,546 individual bird records of which 61 different species were represented. Of the 61 species recorded, a number are afforded special protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These include wintering birds such as brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), and fieldfare (*T. pilaris*), all of which have been recorded in flocks in Shotover Hill and Brasenose Woods.

In addition, birds that have been classed as Birds of Conservation Concern Red List (Eaton et al, 2021) (species of highest conservation priority due to declining national and international populations) have been identified within the Park. Both willow tit (*Poecile montanus*) and marsh tit (*Poecile palustris*) have been recorded in Brasenose Wood.

Other Red List species such as cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) and corn bunting (*Emberiza calandra*) have been recorded in the surrounding area.

## Reptiles

The data search returned 129 records for three species of reptile: grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). All three species were identified within the Park boundary and most of the records were of slow worm, particularly from around Horspath Common in the east of the Park. The habitats at the Park are highly suitable for these species.



## Amphibians

Of 184 records of amphibian species, only two were from within the boundary of the Park. These comprised one record of common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and one of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in Shotover Hill Woods. Records of common frog vary greatly depending on mortality rates of breeding females.

The limited records of amphibians at the Park likely reflects the dominance of free-draining habitat at much of the site, and the consequent limited extent of wetland habitats and ponds.

## Invertebrates

The Park is noted for its invertebrate interest, including Hymenoptera (and bees and wasps), beetles and butterflies. Management over the last two decades has supported the conservation and creation of disturbed, open grassland that has benefitted invertebrate species that rely on these habitats.

The data search returned 378 records of invertebrates. Within the Hymenoptera, buff-tailed mining bee (*Andrena humilis*) and sharp-collared furrow bee (*Lasioglossum malachurum*) have been identified on the open habitats with the Park, and are both designated as Notable-B and nationally scarce.

A number of notable beetles have been recorded from Brasenose Woods: Mab's lantern (*Philorhizus quadrisignatus*) is designated nationally rare and a SPI, and four species are designated Notable-A: *Gnathoncus buyssoni*, *Rhinocyllus conicus*, *Cossonus linearis* and the pinhole borer (*Platypus cylindrus*).



## Butterflies and Moths

The Park is known for the presence of nationally scarce butterflies such as black hairstreak (*Satyrium pruni*) which is designated a SPI. A total of 46 post-2020 records of this species from the Park were returned in the data search, mostly concentrated around Brasenose Wood, its boundary with Slade Meadow, Slade Woods and Magdalen Woods. There are also records of white admiral (*Limenitis camilla*), mainly from the various woodlands at the west of the site, and brown hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*), from the eastern edge of Slade Common. Both of these species are SPIs.

A large number of SPI moth species have been recorded from the Park, including the autumnal rustic (*Eugnorisma glareosa*), large wainscot (*Rhizedra lutosa*) and small phoenix (*Ecliptopera silaceata*), all found close to Mary Sadler's field. Others such as the minor Shoulder-knot moth (*Brachylomia viminalis*) and oak hook-tip (*Watsonalla binaria*) have been recorded around the open glades in Johnson's Piece.

## Plants

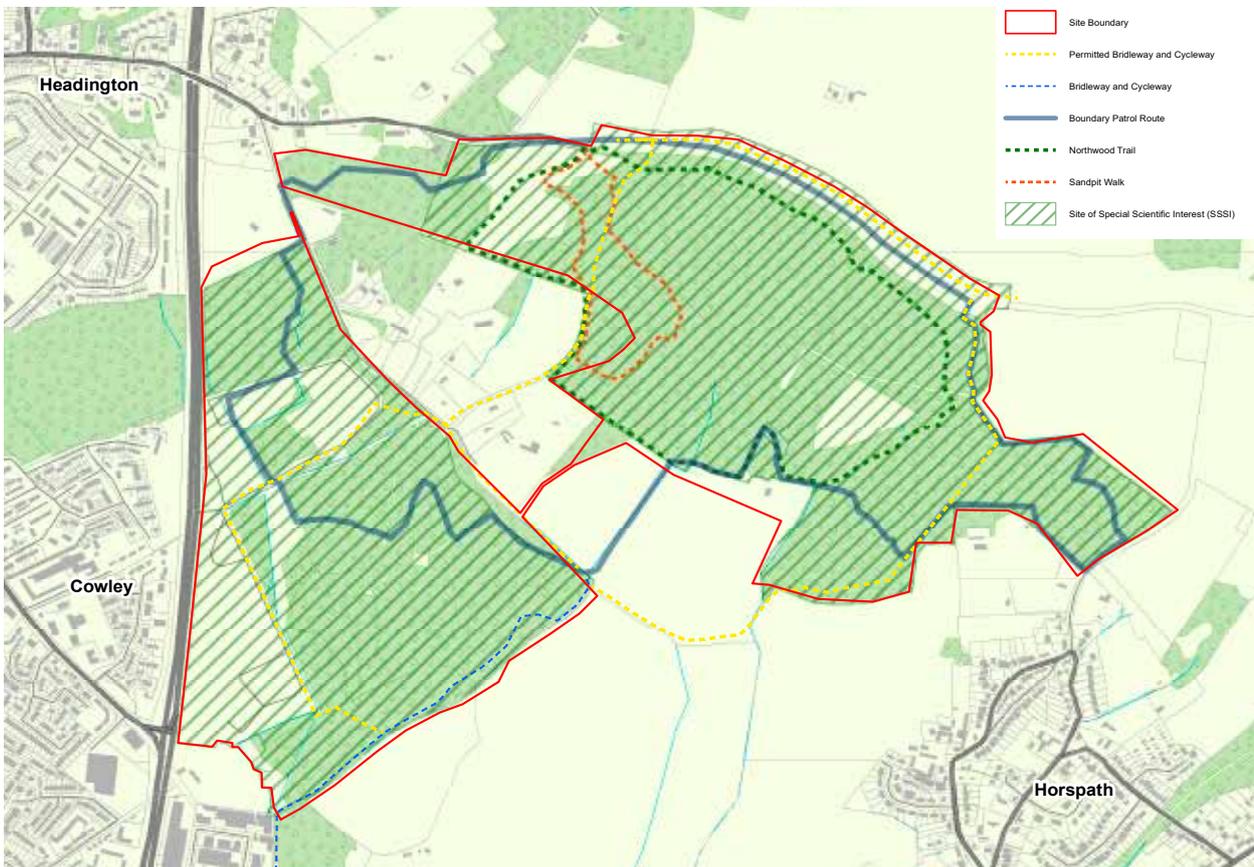
Historically, a wide range of heathland plants have been recorded at Shotover Hill, and the area is of importance as a location for early botanical studies. However, with the loss of much of the more open habitats many of these species have been lost.

The post-2000 data search returned records of seven species on the England Red List (Stroh et al, 2014): corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*), field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) on the boundary of Slade Meadow, heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) in Magdalen Wood, and marsh valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) in Bottom Ground. All of these species have Near Threatened status and Yellow glandular hawkweed (*Hieracium sabaudum*) has Endangered status.

There were also records of five species listed as scarce in Oxfordshire: great wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), greater burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), trailing tormentil (*Potentilla anglica*), Sand spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*), and common vetch (*Vicia sativa subsp. sativa*).

Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is abundant in Brasenose Wood, and is present in other areas of woodland at the Park. This species is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

SHOTOVER COUNTRY PARK  
Management Plan 2022 - 2032



Site Analysis

## Amenity

Shotover Country Park is a very popular country park, attracting at least 500,000 visitors a year. Leisure activities include walking, dog-walking, horse riding, mountain bike riding, orienteering and facilitated events such as cross country running.

It is substantially larger than the next biggest park managed by OCC. However, unlike the other parks in OCC management, Shotover is a predominantly wild countryside site with natural habitats of grassland, heath and woodland, characteristic of the area. The Park provides an accessible area of genuine countryside and diversity of natural habitats very close to the City with outstanding views over the surrounding landscape.

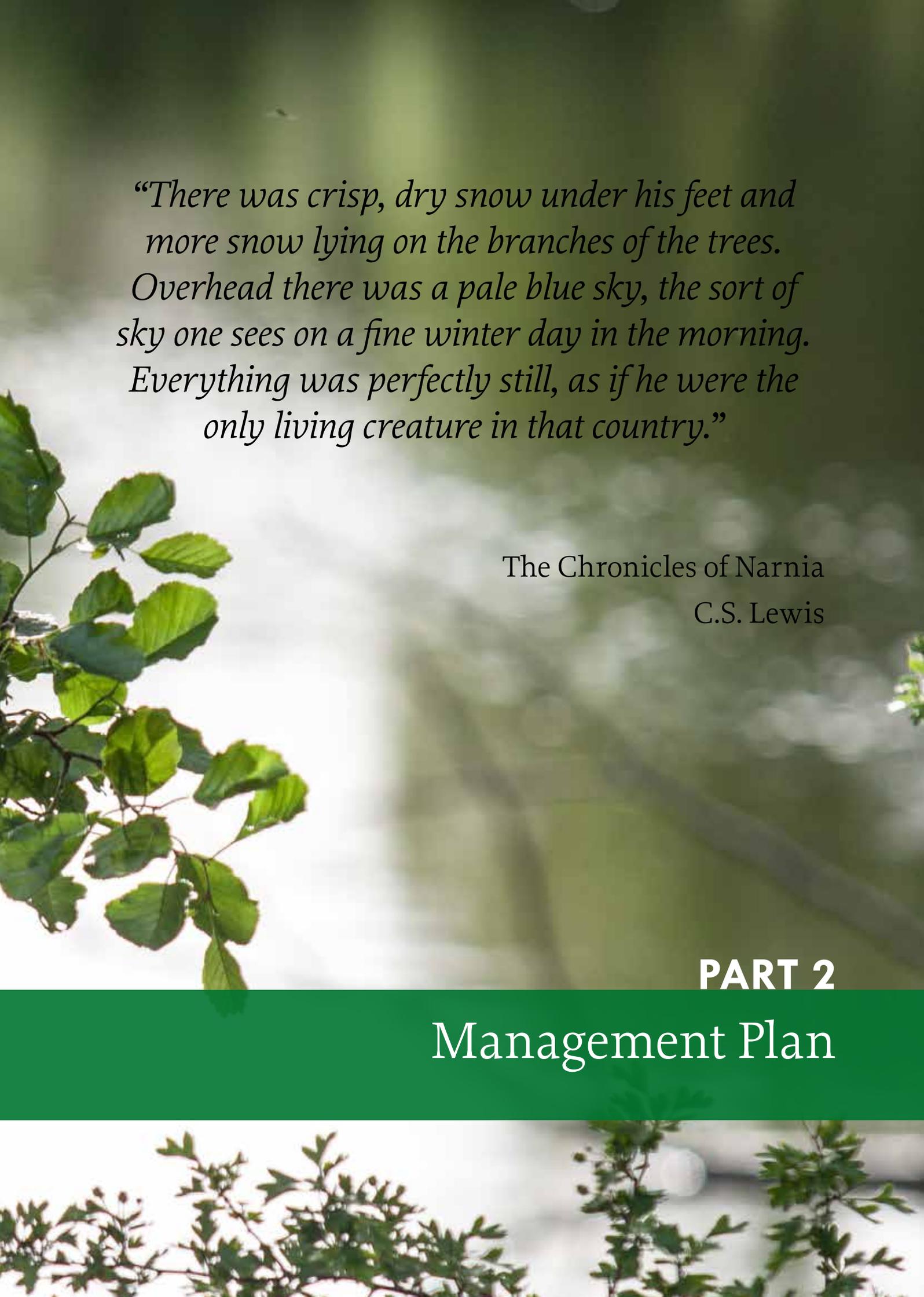
The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the recognition of the importance of green spaces. This, along with naturally increasing demand, has seen inflated visitor pressure, but also the great value and further potential the Park has as a resource for Oxford.

Vehicular access is largely limited to the main car park on Old Road at the top of Shotover Hill (Headington side). This is accessed by the single lane of Old Road and there is anecdotal evidence from residents in periods of high demand this route quickly becomes blocked with traffic. Alternative accesses for cyclists and walkers exist across the Park and are often used by locals to access the area.

Numerous routes and pathways cross the Park, some formal, including Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and many smaller informal paths. The ability to wander across the Park in places is viewed as one of its qualities, however a lack of signage of key routes makes navigation for users, and particularly new visitors, difficult.

There is also some confusion and tension in use of routes for example where cyclists are allowed or not, exacerbated by the much greater numbers using the Park, and there is an opportunity to reduce confusion through clearer signage and relating these to the Shotover bylaws.





*“There was crisp, dry snow under his feet and more snow lying on the branches of the trees. Overhead there was a pale blue sky, the sort of sky one sees on a fine winter day in the morning. Everything was perfectly still, as if he were the only living creature in that country.”*

The Chronicles of Narnia  
C.S. Lewis

**PART 2**

Management Plan



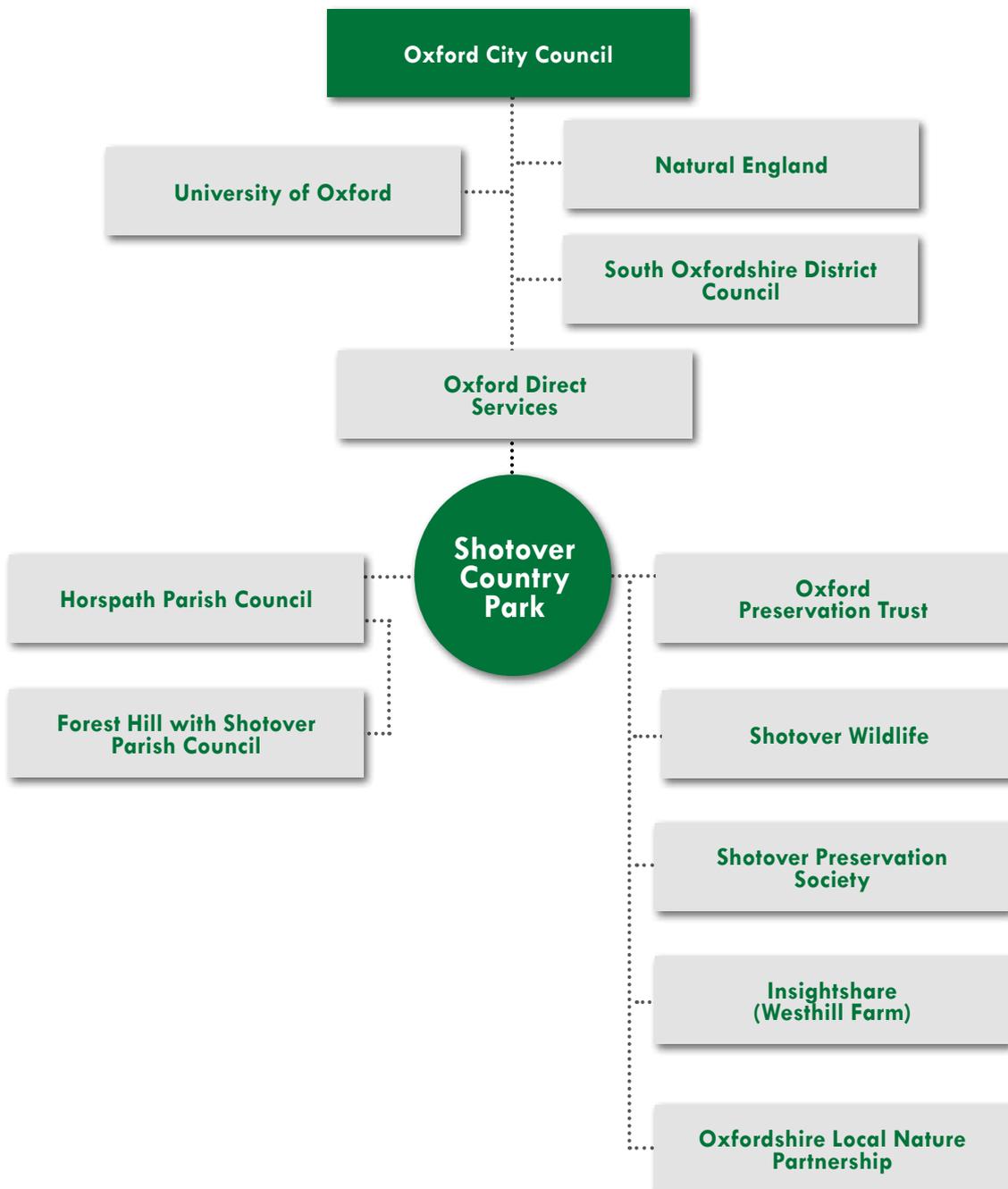
**SECTION 4**  
Operational Management  
Structure

## Country Park Management Structure

The ownership and management of Shotover Park is complex as the Park extends across two Local Authorities; Oxford City Council and South Oxfordshire District Council (although there is a good working relationship). Further, a large part (approximately 115 ha) is designated as SSSI.

Historically parts of the Park were donated to OCC by Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) and University of Oxford own the area known as Johnson's Piece.

When parts of the land forming the Park were donated, the transfers contained restrictive covenants controlling the on-going use and management of those areas of the Park. The need to consider the impact of these restrictions and their legal implications (if any) will continue with the on-going administration of the Park.



There is keen and active interest in Shotover Country Park from the local community who have a long history of husbandry of the Park. The main interest groups are represented on the Shotover Forum and there is also a smaller group – the Shotover Users’ Group - that meets more frequently to give feedback to OCC rangers and local Council members. Bodies represented on the Users’ Group include:

- Shotover Preservation Society.
- Two Parish Councils.
- Residents Associations.
- University of Oxford.
- Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership – Wild Oxfordshire.
- Shotover Wildlife.
- Oxford Preservation Trust.
- Various sports and activities clubs.
- Westhill Farm – Insightshare.

## Volunteering

OCC’s Community Services promote many different ways to volunteer including:

- Joining the Shotover Preservation Society or Shotover Wildlife.
- Joining a volunteering working group organised by the Countryside Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator.
- Receiving volunteers from the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) which is the foremost organisation protecting wildlife and enhancing iconic landscapes. Also from the Oxford Conservation Volunteers (OCV), a voluntary organisation that has been carrying out practical work conserving the wildlife and traditional landscape of the Oxford area since 1977.
- Business team building days.
- Volunteering to be a Health Walk Leader which includes a free day of training by Natural England.



Images courtesy of Insightshare

## The Westhill Farm Project

The primary aim of Westhill Farm is to become a hub of land-based activities and courses, to provide opportunities for participation, education and engagement for the wider community of Oxford. It aspires to be a place to support greater liaison with community groups, addressing issues of diversity and inclusivity, by providing a safe and welcoming space for learning, socialising and community building for people and groups not currently using the Park.

It sets out to increase activities and professionals operating from Westhill Farm to realise the huge potential of the Park for health walks and social health prescribing; and to develop a cross-sector strategy to address and alleviate poor health, and mental health, especially reaching those neighbourhoods within the surrounding area including Blackbird Leys, Cowley, Horspath, Barton and Wood Farm.

It also aims to build up a volunteer base to assist OCC in maintenance of the Park, of paths, signage, accessibility and wayfinding across the Park, and the protection of the wild, and become a recognised outdoor cultural hub, with art and sculpture trails, storytelling, outdoor theatre, music, local history and biodiversity, educational walks and talks.

Various groups involved with Park via the Westhill Farm project include:

- Youth Ambition Team for holiday camps for vulnerable youth across Oxford.
- FarmAbility - an outdoor, farm-based programme for people with learning disabilities and autism.
- Wildings - a social enterprise based in Thame looking to expand their successful bushcraft and forest school activities.
- In Our Element - a local social enterprise offering bushcraft and nature connection activities for children.
- SOFEA - provide education, employability and wellbeing programmes for vulnerable youngsters.
- Meadowbrook College - an Alternative Provision Academy providing full and part-time education and temporary support to over 100 students aged 5-16 who are excluded from, or are finding it difficult to fully access, their mainstream schools.
- Ma Roemca foraging & wild cooking
- Oxford Damascus Youth Project - hosting outdoors learning activities, taking young people off the roads in an outdoors healing space.
- Nature Effect - Ecological Constellation workshop.
- Various local societies and businesses organising away days and land-based activities.



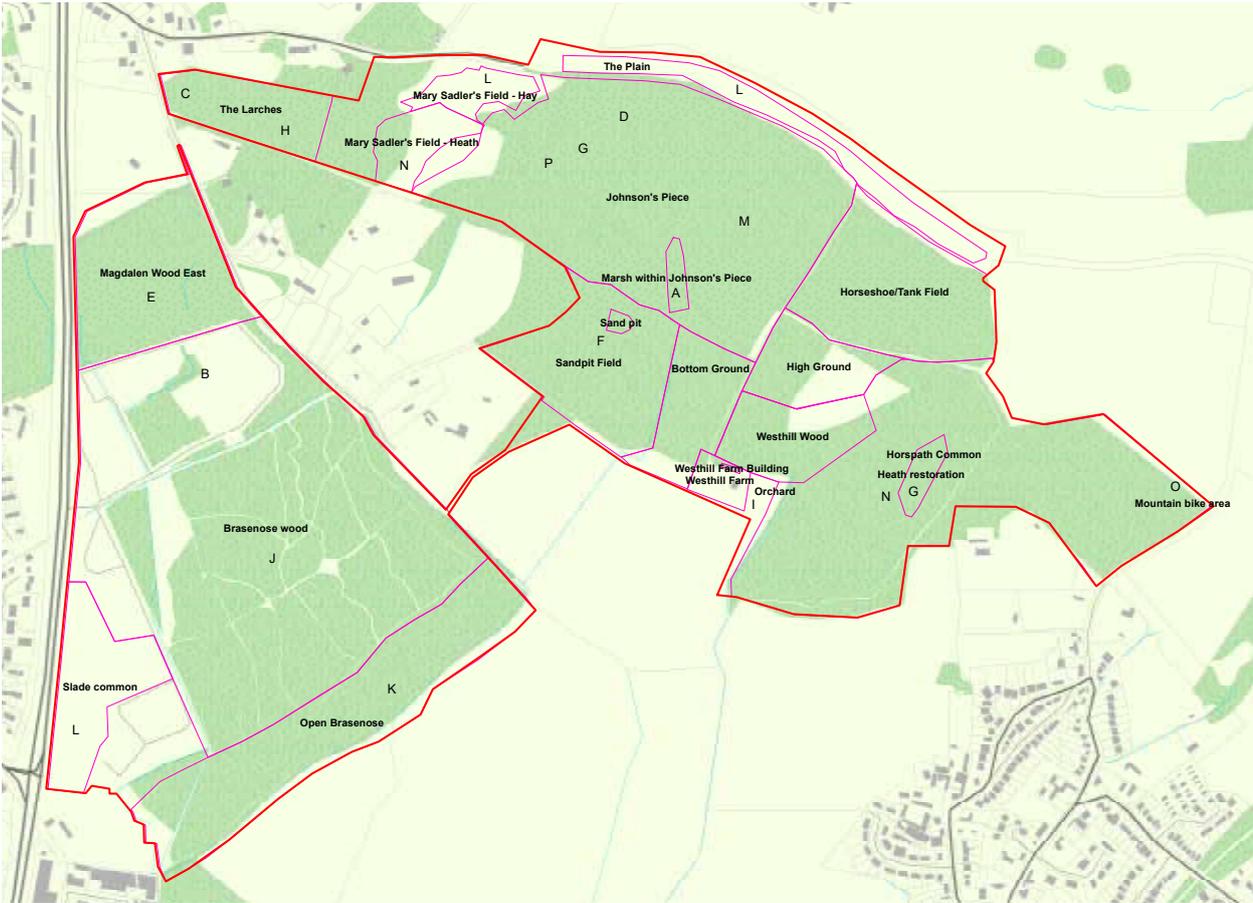
## **Biking Area**

In the eastern corner of the Park, OCC is looking to proactively manage a small area currently used for informal mountain biking. OCC has commissioned design options for securing the management of biking activities in this area on a more sustainable basis and as part of this process is engaging with stakeholders, including Natural England, and the biking community. This work is ongoing and has informed this Management Plan.



**SECTION 5**  
Management Objectives

SHOTOVER COUNTRY PARK  
Management Plan 2022 - 2032



Some images courtesy V. Dudley

The aims and objectives set out in this Management Plan are multifaceted and can be divided into four main themes. The overall aim is to achieve a high quality and resilient park through a flexible and strong Management Plan that can be used as a tool to recognise and facilitate synergies arising from opportunities over the next 10 years of the plan period.

### Ecology and Biodiversity

- Obj 1 Enhance biodiversity across the Park.
- Obj 2 Improve habitats for rare/endangered species across the Park.
- Obj 3 Enlarge areas of priority habitats – heathland, grassland and open woodland.
- Obj 4 Protect and enhance ancient woodland.
- Obj 5 Allow space for nature.

### People - Amenity and Recreation

- Obj 6 Enhance user experience – ensure welcoming to all.
- Obj 7 Enhance signage of routes for wayfinding and exploration.
- Obj 8 Enhance accessibility – access points and access modes.
- Obj 9 Encourage community group engagement, and promote sense of involvement and ownership by local communities.
- Obj 10 Enhance educational opportunities – volunteering and information sharing (links to website).
- Obj 11 Promote idea of a Shotover user code that can relate to the existing bylaws in place, to ensure the Park is well looked after by users and fosters respectful behaviours by all users.

### Place – Heritage and identity

- Obj 12 Enhance and celebrate history and character of the Park.
- Obj 13 Promote identity and culture – lore / legends, historical and cultural uses.
- Obj 14 Promote / restore historical connections – viewpoints and features.

### Climate – Adaptability and Resilience

- Obj 15 Promote and improve habitat resilience – eg. promoting good age structure to woodland.
- Obj 16 Encourage access by sustainable transport – minimise carbon use.
- Obj 17 Promote voluntary work and engagement with nature that provide benefits for the Park – eg propagation of seeds, fencing, clearing.

### Management Units

The following table sets out the management units identified within the Park, and their respective management objectives. The management units are indicated by letter in the Management Units Plan. The choice of units has involved consideration of habitat variation across the Park, management units employed in previous Management Plans and the various objectives and actions that have been suggested as part of the Management Plan consultation process.

|   | Management Unit                               | Description  | Management Objectives   |
|---|---|--|---|
| A | Marsh in Johnson's Piece and in Bottom ground | There are marshy areas, both on the slope in the south-west of Johnson's Piece and on the southern edge of Bottom Ground. These are being managed by Shotover Wildlife to control willow growth to maintain habitat suitability for invertebrates. Drying out or encroachment of this habitat would have impacts on rare invertebrate species and would reduce the overall range of habitats and biodiversity within the Park. | Maintain on-going conservation management of marsh habitat to maintain suitability for specialist invertebrate species.   |
| B | Slade Woods                                   | A block of secondary woodland between the ancient woodland at Magdalen Wood and Brasenose Wood. Canopy dominated by ash in many areas, likely to be significantly affected by ash dieback within the lifetime of this Management Plan. Regeneration is currently limited by deer browsing pressure.  | Maintain woodland cover. Replace ash suffering from dieback with appropriate tree species.  |
| C | Marsh in the Larches                          | There is a remnant marshy area at the western edge of the Larches. There is potential for conservation work to enhance this wetland area through opening up the canopy to encourage wetland plants and invertebrates.  | Enhance marsh habitat quality through selective removal of scrub/trees to increase light and soil moisture levels.  |
| D | Former open area in Johnson's Piece           | The woodland below the concrete bench has developed from a more open area since the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century (which formerly allowed views through the canopy towards Oxford). There is scope to restore this without compromising the biodiversity value of the Park, since open woodland habitats, rides and glades form valuable habitats within the Park.  | Thin the canopy to restore the open area and open up views towards Oxford.  |
| E | Magdalen Wood East                            | Ancient woodland which supports mature trees but where re-generation of tree seedlings is currently limited by deer browsing.  | Maintain woodland cover. Protect the mature trees and promote regeneration of canopy tree seedlings to give, in time, a more balanced age structure of trees.   |
| F | Sandpit field                                 | An area of sand extraction, now providing a large natural sandpit used as a play area by children, but with areas of open grassy and low scrub habitats at its margins which provide valuable habitat for invertebrates and plants.  | Maintain open and woodland edge habitats and reduce the cover of bracken and gorse. Keep the focus of amenity use towards the central area.   |
| G | Heathland /acid grassland areas               | There are various areas of remnant and recently restored and created heathland and acid grassland habitat with the secondary woodland across the hillside. These form a key part of the biodiversity value of the Park and are a key reason for the designation of the SSSI.   | Maintain existing areas and create new glades of heathland/acid grassland within secondary woodland across the hillside, including providing connecting areas between existing patches of this habitat. |
| H | Woodland in the Larches                       | Larch plantation at the north-west of the Park. Sycamore is abundant in some areas. These two non-native species limit the biodiversity value of this woodland.  | Reduce the cover of non-native canopy trees and rebalance with native planting.   |

SHOTOVER COUNTRY PARK  
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|   | Management Unit   | Description   | Management Objectives   |
|---|---|---|---|
| I | Westhill Orchard  | A former orchard associated with Westhill Farmhouse is now overgrown, with few fruit trees remaining. Traditional orchard is a Habitat of Principal Importance in England.  | Restore the orchard habitat.  |
| J | Brasenose Wood  | The woodland has a history of management by coppicing which has been successfully maintained, including measures to limit deer browsing pressure. Canopy tree seedling regeneration is currently limited by deer.   | Maintain coppiced woodland structure. Promote regeneration of canopy tree species. Retain deadwood resources for invertebrates.   |
| K | Open Brasenose  | This rectangular block of ancient woodland to the south of Brasenose Wood has a dense canopy.   | Retain woodland cover. Minimal intervention required.   |
| L | Neutral grassland at Slade Common, Mary Sadler's Field and the Plain. | This area of neutral grassland is managed with an annual hay cut and supports a range of native grasses and other plants.   | Maintain hay-meadow grassland management, without extending mown areas. Prevent encroachment of scrub and woodland, whilst retaining habitat structure at interface with the woodland to the east to provide overwintering cover for invertebrates, reptiles and mammals. |
| M | Woodland on the hillside  | The secondary woodland which dominates the hillside has resulted from woodland regeneration of formerly more open heathland, rough grassland and scrub habitats, resulting from the cessation of grazing by livestock. There are a number of mature or veteran trees which pre-date the majority of the woodland.   | Identify and monitor veteran trees to allow protection measures if deemed necessary.  |
| N | Heathland at Mary Sadler's Field and Horspath Common                  | These two areas are the largest and oldest areas of heathland and acid grassland restoration in the Park. Shotover Wildlife have successfully restored and maintained these habitats and extended them to other areas of the hillside. On-going management is necessary to prevent encroachment by gorse, bracken, scrub and trees.   | Maintain existing heathland and acid grassland habitats in these areas. Prevent encroachment.   |
| O | Mountain bike area  | An area in the east of the Park has informally developed a use by mountain bikers. This has created conflicts with walkers and has potential to damage habitats. However, a management approach has been developed by Shotover Wildlife and OCC, with input from Natural England, to address these issues. It should be noted that this usage has provided new opportunities for conservation management. | Subject to a separate design study and specific management plan if appropriate.   |



**SECTION 6**  
Cross-cutting Objectives

Several further objectives that are considered appropriate to this Management Plan relate to various parts of the Park rather than to a specific location. These are called ‘cross-cutting’ objectives and are listed in the following table.

| Topic                                  | Description  | Management Objectives  |
|--|--|--|
| Ecological Monitoring                  | <p>This covers the mountain bike area (O), heathland restoration areas (G and N), wetland restoration areas (A and C), blackthorn scrub, and regeneration in Brasenose (J), Slade (B) and Magdalen (E) Woods.</p> <p>Maintaining monitoring of these areas (ongoing by Shotover Wildlife) will be necessary to ensure that initial management actions are having the desired effect and to guide further management actions.</p>   | Provide information on the success of management actions in these areas and modify management actions if necessary to achieve their particular objectives.   |
| Blackthorn management                  | Blackthorn in the Park is known to support caterpillars of the black hairstreak butterfly. Scrub clearance works across the Park (and in particular on the eastern edge of Slade Common) should take account of the need to maintain stands of blackthorn in a range of growth stages, to allow continual regeneration and replacement when more mature stands need to be cut.   | Integrate retention of blackthorn (in various successional stages) into the management of habitats, particularly at Slade Common. Avoid single-species conservation measures which could harm other habitats or species. |
| Least balsam monitoring and management | Least balsam ( <i>Impatiens parviflora</i> ) is a non-native invasive plant which invades woodland and woodland edge habitats. This plant is present on the south-western edge of Johnson’s Piece, west of Sandpit Field and eastern edge of Open Brasenose. Shotover Wildlife have been investigating the ecological impact of this plant at Shotover and do not yet see evidence of a disbenefit (and have noted potential benefits to woodland ground flora species from the cover it provides). Wider research indicates little evidence of negative economic, social or environmental impacts in Europe (CABI, 2022). | Continue to investigate the potential impacts of this species at Shotover through fieldwork. Consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of any control measures.  |
| Tree safety                            | Felling of trees that pose a safety risk, as revealed by an ongoing inspection programme by OCC.   | Set out in separate OCC documentation.   |

| Topic                                    | Description   | Management Objectives  |
|--|---|--|
| Reporting on Management Plan Delivery    | Delivery against Management Plan objectives and target dates should be reviewed by OCC on an annual basis.  | Annual review. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held with stakeholders and the public.  |
| Deer management                          | Mitigation of browsing pressure by deer, limiting tree and shrub growth and regeneration in some areas of the Park is to be managed through localised vegetation protection measures such as dead hedges, fencing, or the higher coppicing methods that have been developed by Shotover Wildlife. Wider control measures (e.g. via fencing or culling) are not workable nor desirable at the Park.  | Mitigation measures as appropriate for individual vegetation management operations.  |
| Monitoring and management of ash dieback | Ash dieback is likely to significantly affect ash trees across the Park during the lifetime of this Management Plan.  | Monitoring (and provision of necessary management recommendations) should form part of regular tree safety inspections across the Park by OCC. |
| Adapting to climate change               | <p>There is potential for climate change (e.g. more extreme drought, summer heat, rainfall events, and warmer winters) to affect habitats and species at the Park.</p> <p>Consideration of mitigation measures should be made during the Annual General Meeting with stakeholders. Where tree planting occurs, species and cultivar selection should take such factors into account including, given the longevity of canopy trees, forward planning.</p> | <p>Consideration in Annual General Meeting with stakeholders.</p> <p>Consideration in choice of tree species and cultivars for planting.</p>   |



**SECTION 7**  
Prioritised Action Plan

## Prioritised Action Plan

A Prioritised Action Plan has been identified in consultation with stakeholders as part of the Management Plan. This seeks to identify key priorities for management, identify quick wins but also longer term opportunities. The prioritised interventions split into three main categories of Ecology, Accessibility, and Amenity are summarised in the following table and correspond to locations on the Management Plan (where applicable).

It should be noted that the interventions are not mutually exclusive to the categories and over the course of the Management Plan may change in nature and priority.

## Funding and Revenue Streams

All interventions will need to secure both capital funding to implement works and also maintenance funding to secure long term maintenance. The main source of funding for the Park is from OCC budgets working with ODS and supported by volunteering.

However, access to funding streams may come from a variety of sources. Given the fluid nature of funding opportunities this Management Plan does not seek to identify specific opportunities or sources but encourages a diverse funding stream portfolio to spread risk. Given the often labour intensive requirements in bidding for funding a pragmatic and rational approach to funding opportunities should be taken, based on a clear understanding of chance of success.

| Year/Period | Action Category  |   |  |
|-------------|--|---|--|
|             | Accessibility  | Ecology   | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities  |
| Year 0-1    | <p>(1) Signage and waymarking</p> <p>- Re-establishment of primary walking routes/trails (red, green, and yellow) with new signposts /waymarkers</p>               | <p>E) Magdalen Wood East</p> <p>- Identify veteran trees and any appropriate protection measures.</p> | <p>i) Park Safety</p> <p>- Ensure the park is safe for users via annual walkover survey of woodland areas, and after storm events to limit any health and safety risks from falling trees.</p>   |
|             |  |   | <p>ii) Engagement</p> <p>- Establishment of AGM for all stakeholders and community groups.</p> <p>Develop programme with local community groups, educational, health facilities. Particular focus on hard to reach groups. Facilitation of community and 'give it a go' a days. Promotion of volunteer and community days building on existing good work of volunteer activities. Use of Westhill Farm Initiatives and cycle area as a 'gateway' to wider park access.</p> |
|             | <p>(3) Interpretation and information boards</p> <p>- Provision of 3 new information boards at Mary Sadler's Field, Open Brasenose, Cycle area / Oxford GB Way</p> |   | <p>iii) Review feasibility for a cycle skills area.</p>  |
|             |  |   | <p>WH1) Westhill Farm</p> <p>- Promotion of Westhill Farm projects/initiatives - Education and engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Continue and build on existing operations and programmes led by Insightshare.</p>  |

| Year/Period     |   |  |   |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| Action Category |   |  |   |
|                 | Accessibility   | Ecology  | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities   |
| Years 1 to 3    | <p>(4) Open Brasenose / Brasenose Woods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- footpath improvements for more inclusive access e.g. surface improvements where required, signage of circular routes etc.</li> </ul>   | <p>C) Marsh in the Larches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey to determine if there is scope for or significant value in targeting conservation measures here (2024 target).</li> </ul>   | <p>iv) Cycle Skills Area - Continued establishment and integration of the Cycle Skills Area within the Park (including ecological benefits).</p>  |
|                 | <p>(5) Cycle stand provision at access points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brasenose Wood, Westhill Farm, Bike area</li> </ul>  | <p>D) Former open area in Johnson's Piece</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tree and ground flora survey to determine potential ecological benefits and impacts of opening up this area (2024 target).</li> </ul>   | <p>v) Trail Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintenance of walking routes / trails and discouraging access to particularly sensitive areas/ areas under regeneration where access is likely to hinder establishment.</li> </ul>                                  |
|                 | <p>(6) Signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promotion of the Park as an attraction and destination from the surrounding area to raise awareness, use, and value to local community.</li> </ul> <p>Locations for wayfinding could include from Sustrans Cycleway, Sports Centre, New Headington, Cowley, Horspath.</p> | <p>I) Westhill Orchard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Site walkover to plan new orchard layout and appropriate spacings and local apple varieties and suitably vigorous rootstocks (2024 target).</li> <li>- Planting of fruit trees. Care after planting (in particular watering during spring and summer in the first 2-3 years).</li> </ul> | <p>vi) Communication of Management Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing communication in relation to managements works explaining management activities undertaken where suitable via temporary signage/ notices and other forms of communication media.</li> </ul> |

| Year/Period     |   |   |  |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Action Category | Accessibility   | Ecology   | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities  |
|                 | (7) Maximise potential benefit of the Park for any new projects/endeavours in surrounding area. e.g. as an important strategic green infrastructure element to enhance/connect through to local communities. Consideration of nearby opportunities and how they may contribute to the Park e.g. potential car parking facilities/toilets if desirable and subject to funding. | <p>Least balsam monitoring and management.</p> <p>This species is known to invade undisturbed ground and could spread to ancient woodland.</p> <p>Surveys to monitor extent of this species, determine whether there are any ecological impacts and identify and assess suitable control measures will be undertaken.</p> | <p>WH2) Westhill Farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration and alignment of projects with management within the Park.</li> <li>- Seed collection and growing saplings for use in the Park.</li> <li>- planting throughout the Westhill Farm site.</li> </ul>                                 |
|                 |   |   | <p>WH3) Westhill Farm</p> <p>Further build on projects and programmes to be identified by Insightshare.</p>  |
|                 |   |   | <p>Vii) SandPit Field – Enhancement of the Sandpit / Sandpit Field - e.g. potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearing scrub</li> <li>• Review provision of bench seating / picnic benches</li> <li>• Interpretation / Information Board - History of the Sandpit and the Park</li> </ul> |
|                 |   |   | <p>Viii) Amenity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of bench seating / picnic benches in strategic locations to stop, rest, admire or enjoy the Park.</li> </ul>   |

| Year/Period     |  |   |  |
|-----------------|--|---|--|
| Action Category |  |   |  |
|                 | Accessibility  | Ecology   | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities  |
|                 |  |   | <p>IX) Amenity – (re)creation of viewpoints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Burt Davy Seat (North) as historic viewpoint,</li> <li>- Westhill Farm (southern edge),</li> <li>- Oxford Green Belt Way access point (south, overlooking Horspath) –</li> </ul> <p>Open views as required and implement signage as appropriate.</p> |
|                 |  |   | X) Continued programme of engagement with local communities.   |
|                 |  |   | XI) Potential furniture including litter bins / dog bins.  |
| Years 3 to 6    | 8) Continuation of (6) Promote awareness of the Park by locals ease of access and recognised loops connecting with local community areas.                          | H) Woodland in the Larches<br><br>- Thin non-native canopy trees (2026 Target). | XII) Harmonise use and reduce conflict between different users / requirements through shared sense of informed responsibility, ownership and value to Oxford's communities   |
|                 |  | I) Westhill Orchard<br><br>- Formative and maintenance pruning of fruit trees.  | XIII) Explore potential for warden posts (e.g at Westhill Farm or Cycle Skills Area)<br><br>WH4) Westhill Farm – support endeavours as an outdoor cultural hub programme   |
| Years 6 to 10   | 10) Review / maintain path network and accessibility of the Park.<br><br>Consider opening up new areas/ experiences e.g. wetland walk if sufficiently established. |   | XIV) Grow wider set of volunteer and other educational course opportunities within the Park that work in concert with the Park's ecological and historical value.<br><br>- Deliver toilet facilities subject to viability analysis.  |

| Year/Period            | Action Category  |   |  |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
|                        | Accessibility  | Ecology   | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities  |
| Ongoing<br>0 -10 years | 11) Maintain, replace and repair paths and signage to ensure good condition and safety for visitors.   | A) Marsh in Johnson's Piece and in Bottom Ground<br><br>- Maintain current conservation management to prevent encroachment by willow scrub.   | XVIII) Maintain, replace/repair paths and furniture to ensure safe use for visitors.                 |
|                        | 12) Review intervention/ management outcomes and amend as required to ensure objectives remain current and actions are successfully delivering on objectives within the Management Plan. | B) Slade Woods<br><br>- Thin ash trees, targeting trees with ash dieback.<br>- Encourage tree regrowth via 'dead hedge' protection and/or propagation.  | XIX) Promote and provide diversity of experiences and opportunities within SCP as a resource for all |
|                        |  | E) Magdalen Wood East<br><br>- Encourage tree re-growth through dead hedge protection and/or propagation and/or fencing.  | XX) Priority - Annual meeting with stakeholders  |
|                        |  | F) Sandpit field<br><br>- Site walkover to determine extent of vegetation management needed each season.<br>- Reduction of gorse, bracken and scrub cover through cutting.  |  |
|                        |  | G) Heathland /acid grassland areas<br><br>- Walkover to determine extent of vegetation management needed each season and to identify any suitable areas for extension of this management.<br>- Reduction of gorse, bracken and scrub cover through cutting. |  |

| Year/Period | Action Category |  |   |
|-------------|-----------------|--|---|
|             | Accessibility   | Ecology  | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities |
|             |                 | <p>J) Brasenose Wood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain coppice management including via deer-compatible method. To include retention of dead wood for invertebrates and on-the ground decisions on retention of understorey trees and shrubs.</li> <li>- Walkover by OCC and Shotover Wildlife to review and agree ride flailing extent and frequency.</li> </ul>            |   |
|             |                 | <p>K) Open Brasenose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage primarily by non-intervention.</li> <li>- Walkover by OCC and Shotover Wildlife to review and agree ride flailing extent and frequency.</li> </ul>  |   |
|             |                 | <p>L) Grassland at Slade</p> <p>Common, northern part of Mary Sadler's Field, and the Plain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain grassland through on-going mowing and scrub control regime.</li> <li>- Annual site walkover by OCC and Shotover Wildlife to agree extent and timing of each year's works.</li> <li>- Mapping of habitat work undertaken each year.</li> </ul> |   |
|             |                 | <p>M) Woodland on the hillside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage primarily by non-intervention.</li> </ul>   |   |

| Year/Period   |  |   |  | Action Category                             |  |  |  |
|---------------|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Accessibility |  | Ecology   |  | Public Amenity / Recreation / Opportunities |  |  |  |
|               |  | <p>N) Heathland at Mary Sadler's Field and Horspath Common</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain heathland and acid grassland through on-going mowing and scrub control regime.</li> <li>- Annual site walkover by OCC and Shotover Wildlife to agree extent and timing of each year's works.</li> <li>- Mapping of habitat work undertaken each year.</li> </ul> |  |   |  |  |  |
|               |  | <p>O) Cycle skills area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walkover each year by OCC and Shotover Wildlife to review any changes or impacts and to discuss conservation works for that year.</li> </ul>   |  |   |  |  |  |
|               |  | <p>Ecological monitoring - Continue ongoing ecological monitoring of: biking area (O), heathland restoration areas (G, N), wetland areas (A, C), and woodland (B, E, J).</p>  |  |   |  |  |  |
|               |  | <p>Blackthorn management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that consideration of blackthorn is integrated into the above habitat works (to prevent an overall reduction in blackthorn) at Slade Common or across the site as a whole, and to ensure a balanced age structure.</li> </ul>  |  |   |  |  |  |

### Future opportunities within the Park

The feasibility of returning a level of grazing to the Park should be reviewed. There could be conservation benefits from low intensity conservation grazing by traditional breeds of cattle across the secondary woodland on the hillside (Management Unit M). The use of GPS electronic collars avoiding the need for fencing may facilitate this.



**SECTION 8**

Opportunities beyond the Park



The three meadows between Shotover Hill and Brasenose Wood are in the ownership of OCC and are currently leased for agricultural use.

The potential to bring these into conservation management as part of the Park should be reviewed. It would be appropriate to base any management decisions on good baseline botanical survey information, but there may be potential to conserve and enhance the grassland to a more species-rich grassland managed as hay meadow.

It may be appropriate to mow some areas (or margins) only once every few years, in order to provide continuous and overwinter structure for mammals, reptiles, invertebrates and birds. There may also be potential to enhance hedgerows in this area, or to provide woodland corridors linking the hillside woodland with the lower woodland at Brasenose Wood.

Fields to the south-west of Brasenose Wood are also in the ownership of OCC and in agricultural tenancy. There may be potential for these to be brought into conservation management, or an Environmental Land Management (ELM) agreement secured with a tenant farmer.

Clear conservation objectives should be agreed. A baseline survey should be undertaken to establish their ecological value and inform any habitat creation or management, but there may be potential for the creation of woodland, scrub, grassland and pond habitats.



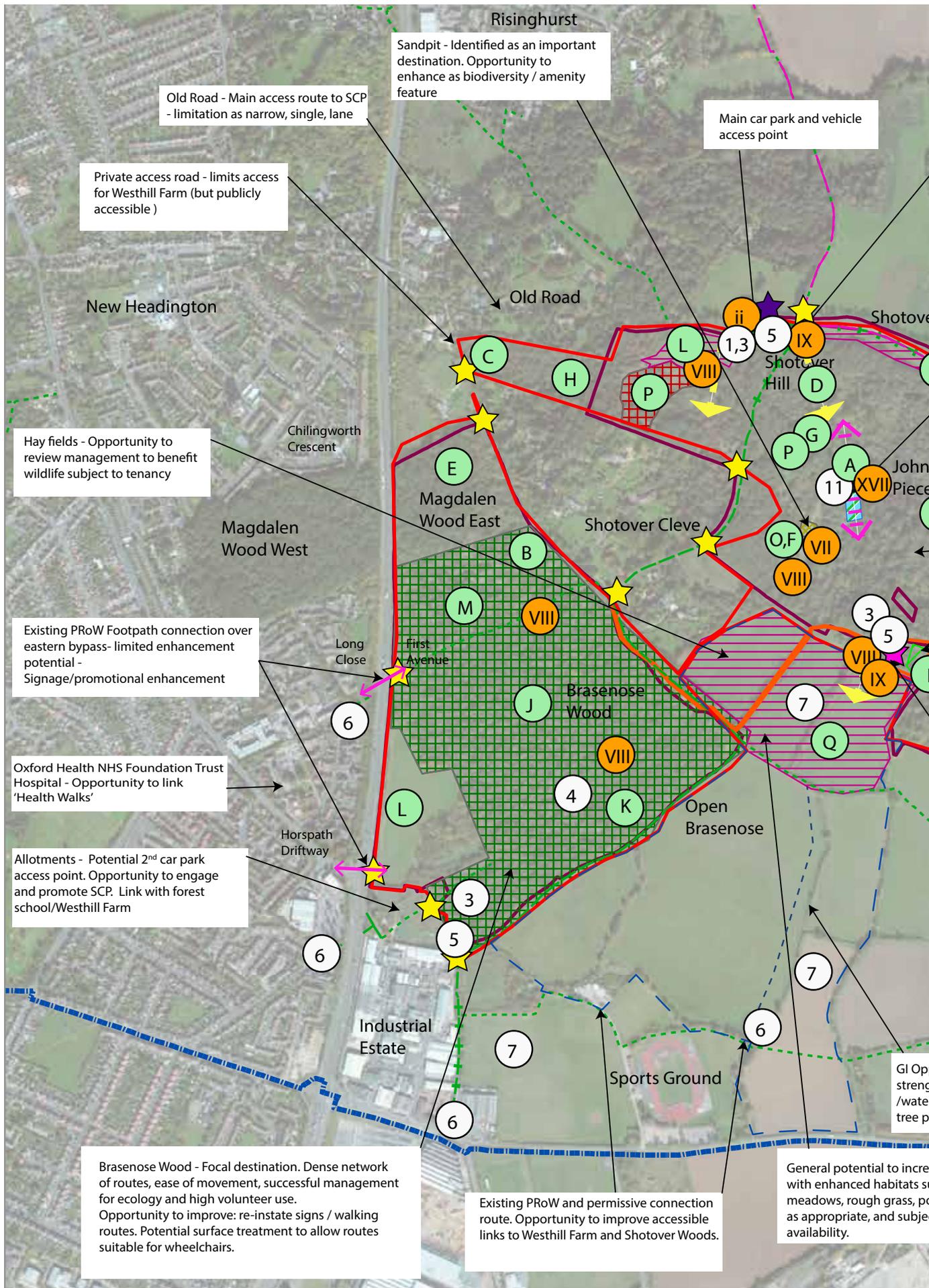
There are a number of existing access points (from permissive paths and existing PRow) to the Park that connect it within the wider PRow and access network. As well as local PRow, the Oxford Green Belt Way Long Distance Footpath traverses the Park, and Sustrans National Cycle Route N57 runs along approximately 500m south of the Park between Cowley and Horspath. These routes provide good connectivity across the area and enhanced signage from these routes directing people to the Park would allow for increased awareness and potential use of the Park for local communities and visitors.

This, together with additional bike stands and improved paths and trails, would also help contribute to active travel within the area, discouraging use of motor vehicles. An additional benefit of spreading the use of points of access around the Park would potentially reduce pressure on the current more well-known access points.

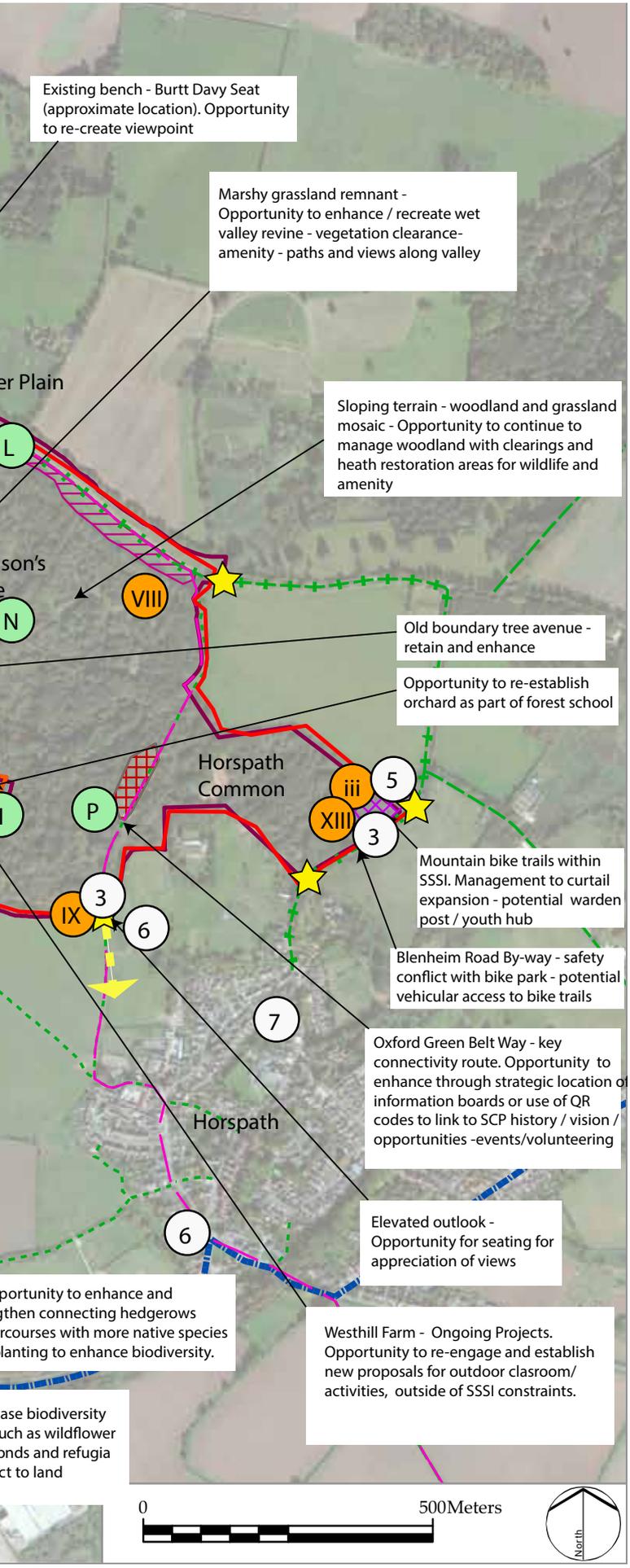
## Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review of specific management units or features of the Park are set out in the management units table. It will be important for the main local stakeholders of the Park (Shotover Wildlife/SPS and ODS/OCC) to carry out regular (at least annual) joint walkovers of the Park (in particular those areas when interventions and actions are identified) to inform ongoing management discussions.

At least one minuted Annual General Meeting (AGM) is recommended between OCC and stakeholders to review progress against the Management Plan objectives and to agree on the programme and areas of works for the year ahead.



SHOTOVER COUNTRY PARK  
Management Plan 2022 - 2032



|                     |  |                       |                            |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|
|                     | Shotover Country Park Management Plan Area |                       | Strategic Opportunity Area |
|                     | SSSI Boundary                              | <b>Amenity Routes</b> |                            |
| <b>SCP Features</b> |  |                       | Bridleway                  |
|                     | Brasenose Wood                             |                       | Byway                      |
|                     | Hay Field                                  |                       | Footpath                   |
|                     | Heath Restoration                          |                       | Oxford GB Way              |
|                     | Marshy Grassland Valley                    |                       | National Cycle Route       |
|                     | Sandpit                                    | <b>Roads</b>          |                            |
|                     | Mountain Bike Area                         |                       | Primary Road               |
|                     | Westhill Farm Area and Access Route        |                       | B Road                     |
|                     | Historic Orchard                           |                       | Minor Road                 |
|                     | Accessibility Priority Action Reference    |                       | Local Street               |
|                     | Ecology Priority Action Reference          |                       | Pedestrian Access Point    |
|                     | Amenity Priority Action Reference          |                       | Vehicular Access Point     |
|                     |  |                       | Potential Viewpoint        |
|                     |  |                       | Connectivity Enhancement   |





Image courtesy of Shotover Preservation Society © Philipa Logan Insightshare

**SECTION 9**  
Appendices

## APPENDICES

- A. Brasenose Woods and Shotover Hill SSSI Citation

**COUNTY:** OXFORDSHIRE                      **SITE NAME:** BRASENOSE WOOD AND SHOTOVER HILL

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

**Local Planning Authorities:** Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SP567058

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 164 (Oxford)                      **1:10,000:** SP50 NE, SP50 SE

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1986                      **Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 109.5 ha 270.6 ac

**Other information:** The site is managed by Oxford City Council as a Country Park.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

Brasenose Wood has a well defined coppice-with-standards structure and is one of the few English woods which is still actively managed by this traditional method. The greater part of the wood is an ancient remnant of Shotover Forest with a documented history dating back to the thirteenth century. The wood lies on poorly-drained Kimmeridge clays but oolitic limestone occurs close to the south western boundary and the presence of lime-loving plants suggests that it outcrops elsewhere in the wood. The flora is exceptionally rich for a wood of this size with 221 recorded vascular plant species including 46 which are characteristic of ancient woodland.

The canopy consists mainly of mature pedunculate oak. Field maple is widespread but nowhere abundant. There are several clones of aspen and, in common with other remnants of Shotover Forest, wild cherry is frequent. Smaller amounts of silver birch, beech, rowan and yew occur, but standard ash trees are confined to Open Brasenose, a wood of relatively recent origin derived from an open common. The coppice layer is dominated by hazel with abundant blackthorn, hawthorn, Midland hawthorn, crab apple, field maple, dogwood, ash, holly and elm suckers. Smaller numbers of guelder rose, wayfaring tree and spindle are found in the southern part of the wood. The field layer is rich and varied, the composition of which is dependent on the stage of coppicing. Bramble dominates broad areas of recent coppice, but in suitable places plants such as goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*, orpine *Sedum telephium*, nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, spurge laurel *Daphne laureola*, blackcurrant *Ribes nigrum*, wood meadow-grass *Poa nemoralis* and bearded couch *Elymus caninus* occur. In recently cleared areas plants such as henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* and deadly nightshade *Atropa belladonna* may flourish for a short time.

Further variety is provided by a network of sinuous rides, with glades at the intersections, and two small ponds. Open Brasenose has a different structure from the main body of the wood, characterised by narrow, close-packed stems and few open areas. Open Magdalen is of similar composition and recent origin, but both of these woods are sufficiently close to the ancient wood to have developed a relatively rich flora and fauna. Brasenose Wood is a promising site for invertebrates and the blackthorn thickets and hedges along the northern and southern perimeter are the main habitat and foodplant of the rare Black Hairstreak butterfly. The nesting bird population is dense with an estimated average of 225 pairs representing 34 species within the 55 acres of ancient woodland. They include grasshopper warbler and tree pipit, both scarce species in the Oxford area. The Slade Camp fields are good examples of unimproved neutral or slightly acidic grassland managed for hay and pasture. Large numbers of butterflies and day-flying moths use the fields and they contain a wealth of wild flowers including characteristic species of clay soils such as grass vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia* and smooth tare *Vicia tetrasperma* as well as naturalised aliens such as goat's rue *Galega officinalis* and the rare tuberous pea *Lathyrus tuberosus*.

Shotover Hill provides one of the few extensive examples of unimproved grassland and heath in Oxfordshire. Only a small area (1-2 acres) of heather-dominated vegetation now remains and elsewhere former heathland and bog have been replaced by bracken, birch and gorse. Current management aims at reinstating some of the former heathland area. The grassland is maintained as a short sward by rabbit grazing and human trampling, and the dry, sandy soils support a rich flora of annuals such as bird's-foot *Ornithopus perpusillus*, knotted clover *Trifolium striatum*, slender trefoil *T. micranthum*,

knawel *Scleranthus annuus*, early hair-grass *Aira praecox* and squirrel-tail fescue *Vulpia bromoides*. The vegetation of Shotover has been studied by botanists for the past three hundred years and some of Britain's earliest scientific collections were made here. OVER/

The sheltered open swards, sandy banks, scrub woodland, wet flushes and stream banks of Shotover Hill are of outstanding entomological interest. A substantial number of rare species occur here, particularly among the diptera (true flies) and aculeates (bees, wasps and ants). The recorded total of 174 aculeate species is one of the highest in Britain and although many of these have not been seen in recent years, the area is still an important one. Shotover Hill is also of local importance for breeding and wintering birds.

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