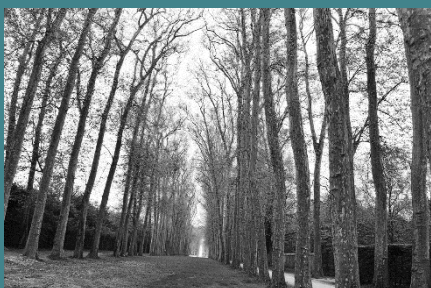


FPCR | environment
& design



Draft Recreational Management Plan

Client

Hallam Land Management Limited

Project

Land at Home Farm Road,

Knowsley

Date

May 2026

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION1

2.0 WOODLAND CHARACTER AND USAGE3

3.0 MANAGEMENT STRATEGY6

4.0 MONITORING STRATEGY8

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Baseline Recreational Plan
- Figure 2: Outline Recreational Management Plan

Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
1	Draft	YK / 17.04.26	AJB / 01.05.26

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Draft Recreational Management Plan has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited, for Home Farm Road, Knowsley Village, Knowsley (Central OS Grid Ref: SJ 4373 9466) herein referred to as 'the Site', and sets out measures to ensure that the ancient woodland within and adjacent to the Site does not deteriorate as a result of increased recreational activity associated with the proposed development.
- 1.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the other ecological documents prepared for this outline application (planning reference: 25/00486/OUT), which comprises the Ecology and Biodiversity Chapter of the Environment Statement (Chapter 7), and other associated Appendices.

Site Proposals

- 1.3 Proposals involve an outline application (including details of access to but not within the Site) for the erection of up to 700 dwellings together with public open space, landscaping, new vehicular access junctions, active travel links, sustainable urban drainage systems and other associated infrastructure.

Scope

- 1.4 Following consultation with the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), a formal response dated 12th March 2026 was received in respect of the requirement for a Recreational Management Plan relating to 'Howard's Pits' and 'Knowle's Pits', which are mapped on Natural England data sets as ancient woodland which are considered to be irreplaceable habitats. It states the following:

10. The applicant has not demonstrated that the development would not result in the loss of deterioration of ancient woodland, or that a suitable compensation strategy exists. To address this, the principles of a Recreational Management Plan for the ancient woodland is required prior to determination. The Technical Note states that little information could be provided in addition to the list set out in the previous response. I provide more technical recommendations of information to include within (but not limited to) a draft Recreational Management Plan below:

- The location of sensitive areas within the woodlands (e.g. areas of ancient woodland indicator species and important plant communities) and any protection measures for those areas;*
- Visitor management proposals including details of any proposed footpath provision or access provisions;*
- Further details of fencing such as the types of fencing deemed most appropriate and the proposed extent of fenced areas;*
- How the enhanced areas of the woodland will be safeguarded;*
- Identification and methods to eradicate certain species of plant (such as hybrid bluebell) to avoid further spread by increased recreation;*

- *Provision of dog waste bins including proposed number and locations deemed most appropriate;*
- *Frequency of monitoring for recreational impacts and how will any issues be addressed;*
- *Whether further surveys are deemed necessary to inform a finalised Recreation Management Plan ahead of a finalised layout.*

Report Scope

- 1.5 This report outlines the principals of the measures that will be included to manage recreational pressures associated with the operational phase of the proposed development, with the long-term aim of achieving the following objectives:
- To protect the retained ancient woodland from degradation arising from recreational activities.
 - To improve the current condition of the ancient woodland areas by maximising their biodiversity value, and to maintain this value through the implementation of a long-term monitoring and management strategy.
 - To allow residents to continue to use and enjoy the ancient woodland in a sustainable manner, through appropriate and controlled access and management measures.

2.0 BASELINE WOODLAND CHARACTER AND USAGE

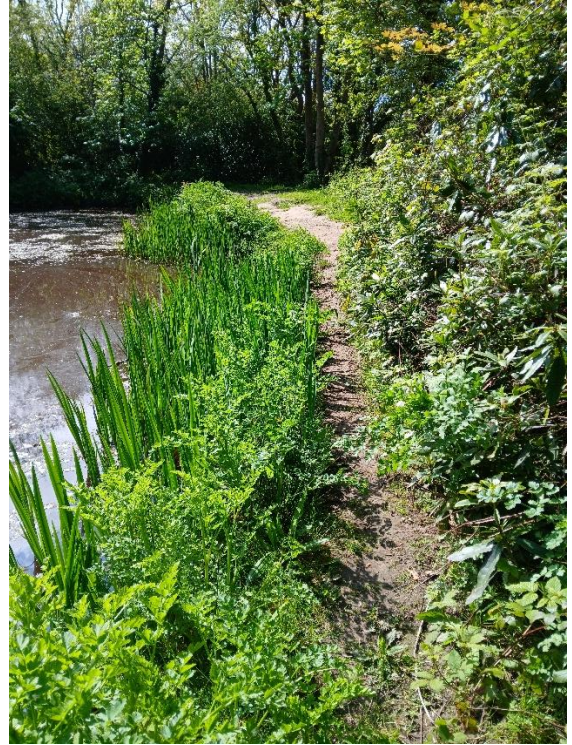
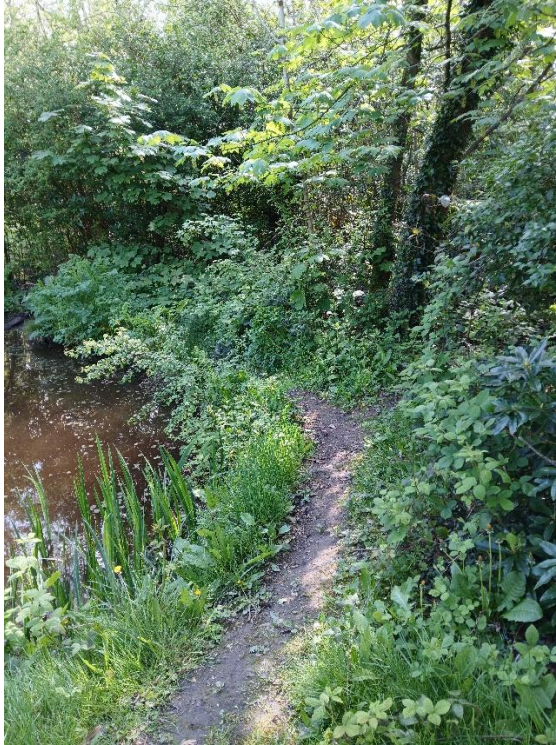
Woodland W1 – 'Knowle's Pits' (Spookies Wood)

Composition and Structure

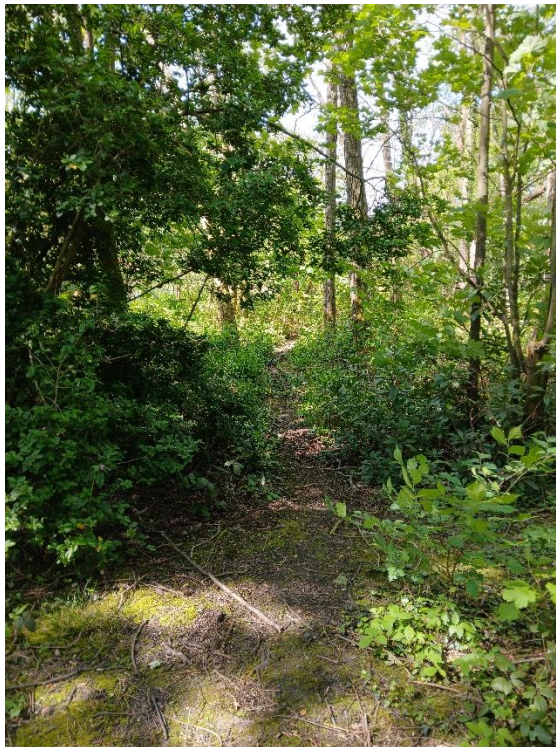
- 2.1 'Knowle's Pits', also known as Spookies Wood, is the western of the two woodland parcels located within the central area of the Site.
- 2.2 An initial habitat survey, along with habitat condition assessments, was conducted on-Site on the 8th and 9th May 2025, and on 12th May 2025 detailed botanical information including quadrat surveys was collected to inform the condition assessment of the on-Site woodland areas. During the survey, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* was found to be abundant amongst the canopy, with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and crack willow *Salix x fragilis* as locally frequent associates. An established understory was identified, comprising frequent hazel *Corylus avellana*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, and invasive non-native Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*. Rare or occasionally occurring downy birch *Betula pubescens*, alder *Alnus glutinosa*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and grey willow *Salix cinerea* were also noted.
- 2.3 The ground flora had characteristics of NVC community W10, with locally frequent ivy *Hedera helix* and other species occurring at a rare abundance, including the following ancient woodland indicator species: remote sedge *Carex remota*, native daffodil, English bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus*, and scaly male fern *Dryopteris affinis*. Localised areas in the centre were characterised more closely towards NVC community W6, where the ancient woodland indicator species remote sedge *Carex remota* was noted at an occasional to frequent abundance.
- 2.4 The woodland was assessed as 'poor' condition, scoring poorly on account of the presence of invasive non-native species (INNS), diversity and cover of native species and absence of veteran trees.

Access and Usage

- 2.5 Within this woodland, several ponds are present with a network of informal paths that provide access between the more permanent waterbodies. The woodland is currently informally used by locals for recreational activities those observed include; dog walking and fishing, and as a result the woodland is currently subject to quite a high-level of disturbance. The location of the most significant informal paths and access points into the woodland were mapped by FPCR on 28th April 2026, and are shown in Figure 1. The informal footpaths will be remapped ahead of reserved matters and the final Recreational Management Plan.



Photographs 1 and 2: Well defined footpath running around pond within woodland W1



Photograph 3: Well defined footpath running through woodland W1



Photograph 4: Existing access point into woodland W1

Woodland W2 – 'Howard's Pits'**Composition and Structure**

- 2.6 'Howard's Pits' is the eastern of the two woodland parcels located within the central area of the Site.
- 2.7 During the survey, canopy species were found to be similar to W1, broadly in line with NVC community 10, with frequent to abundant sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* throughout, and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* as a frequent associate.
- 2.8 The understorey was dominated by invasive non-native rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, with other species noted only rarely, including hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hybrid black-poplar *Populus x canadensis* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. The *Rhododendron ponticum* stands were described as dense, with ground flora mostly absent underneath, though open glades were present where the ground flora was more established. Occasional English bluebell *Endymion non-scriptus*, creeping soft grass *Holcus mollis*, and remote sedge *Carex remota* were noted.
- 2.9 The woodland was assessed as being of 'poor' condition, scoring poorly for the presence of *Rhododendron* (INNS), diversity and cover of native species, lack of ground flora and presence of veteran trees.



Photograph 5: Undercanopy cover within woodland W2, which is heavily comprised of dense invasive non-native rhododendron.

Access and Usage

- 2.10 Within this woodland, there was a notably low-level of disturbance in contrast to W1. No defined access routes were identified during the survey, which is likely attributable to the presence of dense rhododendron throughout acting as a natural barrier to movement, limiting recreational use and disturbance.

3.0 MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Access

Spookies Wood (W1)

- 3.1 The areas identified as sensitive and of higher ecological value are shown indicatively on Figure 1, and include:
- Wet woodland ground flora, encompassing the ponds and wetland in the west and northwest of the woodland.
 - A small area supporting native daffodils in the southern area of the woodland
 - Ancient woodland indicator species have been recorded sporadically throughout the woodland.
- 3.2 As there is currently informal recreational use of this woodland it would be very difficult to remove or restrict this access. The strategy therefore includes provision for public access to the woodland to be retained for recreational purposes, albeit in a controlled and managed manner so to facilitate the conservation objectives of the woodland and prevent any degradation. It is considered that the route of current informal footpaths are based on desire-lines or by accessing particularly desirable areas or features, such as the larger pond.
- 3.3 As part of the scheme, these informal footpaths are proposed to be formalised in as much as users are guided along the route of the footpaths (Figure 2) and discouraged from straying, particularly in areas which are considered to be more ecologically sensitive. This will be achieved in two ways:
- a) Where the footpaths pass through the wetter areas of the woodland boardwalk/ elevated footpaths will be installed. This is a well-documented way of encouraging visitors to not stray from the footpath.
 - b) Dead hedging will be used to waymark the remainder of the footpaths, preventing people and dogs from straying into the more sensitive parts of the woodland. The dead hedging can be supplemented with the underwood arising from the coppicing that has been recommended within the habitat management plan.
- 3.4 Existing access points to the woodland will be retained wherever they are compatible with the overall design of the scheme.
- 3.5 Through the use of designated footpaths and dead hedging, recreational activity will be restricted to specific routes, minimising impacts on more sensitive woodland areas.

'Howard's Pits' (W2)

- 3.6 During the initial habitat creation works, it is proposed to bring the woodland into favourable management to enhance its existing value, through a program of rhododendron removal. The consequence of this will be that the understory will become much more open and is therefore likely going to be more desirable and accessible for recreational use. There are no particularly sensitive areas of habitat within this woodland that have been noted but ancient woodland indicators were sporadically observed throughout. The woodland will be buffered around the perimeter with dense scrub planting, it would be overly optimistic to expect that this alone will be sufficient to prevent informal access as such a formal footpath will be provided through the

woodland following the same principals as within W1, whereby dead hedging will be used to guide users through the woodland. An indicative route for this has been shown but this may be adjusted to suit the final layouts at the reserved matters stage. Dead hedging may also be included at any particular points where informal access is found to be a particular risk.

Responsible Use

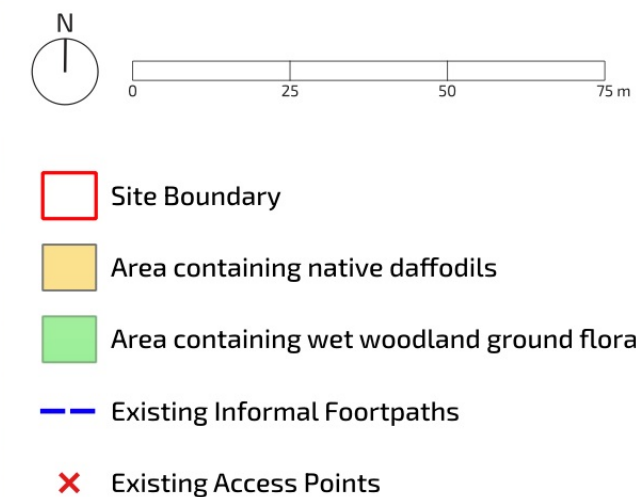
- 3.7 Combined general and dog waste bins will be installed at woodland access points, at a frequency of one waste bin per access point. This provision should encourage responsible disposal of waste and reduce impacts on woodland habitat from littering and dog fouling.
- 3.8 At woodland access points, clear signage and an interpretation board will be installed to encourage responsible visitor behaviour, including use of bins, keeping control of dogs within sensitive woodland areas, and adherence to "leave no trace" principles. In addition, signage and interpretation board could be used to increase awareness of the ecological value of the ancient woodland, its biodiversity sensitivity, and historical context, promoting informed and respectful use of the Site.

Alternative Recreational Opportunities

- 3.9 The proposed development more widely includes a range of alternative recreational opportunities that will collectively provide accessible and attractive spaces that will reduce reliance on the ancient woodland for day-to-day recreational use both in terms of current users and future occupants of the Site. These may include a neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP), a community orchard, a kick about space, and a network leisure routes, pedestrian and cycle paths within green corridors.

4.0 MONITORING STRATEGY

- 4.1 Monitoring of the management measures outlined within this report will be essential to ensure that no long-term degradation of the retained ancient woodland is occurring as a result of the proposed development, and to make sure enhancement measures are being maintained. It is proposed that this monitoring is integrated with the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring requirements for the Site, which will be undertaken over a 30-year period. This will enable a co-ordinated and efficient approach to assessing both habitat condition and the effectiveness of the recreational management measures.
- 4.2 Monitoring will include, but not be limited to, the condition of the woodland habitats, evidence of trampling or unauthorised access, the effectiveness of footpath and fencing in directing visitor movement, and the presence of invasive species such as rhododendron and hybrid bluebells. The condition of signage, bins, and access points can also be reviewed.
- 4.3 The final recreational management plan will be a dynamic document, based on the findings of the monitoring, and will be used to inform an adaptive management approach whereby measures can be reviewed and, where necessary, refined or enhanced to ensure long-term protection, and sustainable use of the ancient woodland.



drawn date	21/05/26	drwn/chkd	YK / AJB
client	Hallam Land Management Limited		
project	Land at Home Farm Road, Knowsley		
title	Baseline Recreational Plan	scale	1:1,200 @ A3
number	FIGURE 1	rev	1



- Site Boundary
- Area containing native daffodils
- Area containing wet woodland ground flora
- X Proposed Access Points
- Proposed locations for waste bins and interpretation boards at woodland access points
- Proposed footpaths along routes of existing informal footpaths where applicable, to be bordered by dead hedging
- Proposed boardwalk along route of existing informal footpaths, to control and limit impacts in wet woodland area

drawn date
21/05/26

drwn/chkd
YK / AJB

client
Hallam Land Management Limited

project
Land at Home Farm Road, Knowsley

title
Outline Recreational Management Plan

scale
1:1,200 @ A3

number
FIGURE 2

rev
1

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

Registered Office: Lockington Hall, Lockington, Derby DE74 2RH
Company No. 07128076. [T] 01509 672772 [E] mail@fpcr.co.uk [W] www.fpcr.co.uk