

SHAMBLEWOOD BIKE PARK

Woodland Management Plan

2026-2031

Site	Shamblewood Bike Park, Hedge End, Hampshire
Prepared for	Shamblewood Bike Park
Site Manager	Shaun Goddard
Plan Period	2026-2031
Review Cycle	Annual review and after significant change in woodland condition or site use

A practical framework for woodland protection, biodiversity enhancement, safe recreational use and long-term stewardship.

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1. Purpose of the Management Plan

This Woodland Management Plan sets out the principles and practical measures by which the woodland occupied by Shamblewood Bike Park will be managed, protected and enhanced alongside its recreational use for non-motorised cycling.

The primary objectives are to:

- retain the wooded character and overall woodland canopy of the site;
- maintain a safe environment for woodland users;
- encourage natural regeneration and a varied woodland structure;
- protect and enhance habitats for wildlife;
- manage coppice on an appropriate rotational basis;
- retain deadwood and habitat features where safe to do so;
- minimise soil compaction, erosion and unnecessary disturbance;
- integrate cycling features sensitively within the existing woodland;
- make productive ecological use of material generated through woodland management;
- manage public recreational use rather than allowing uncontrolled access; and
- demonstrate that the recreational use of the site can coexist with positive long-term woodland management.

The intention is not to transform the woodland into a conventional surfaced sports facility. Shamblewood is intended to remain recognisably a woodland, with cycling activity taking place within and around the existing natural environment.

The management approach is one of intervention where beneficial and restraint where intervention is unnecessary.

2. Site Description

Shamblewood Bike Park occupies an established woodland site in the Hedge End area of Hampshire. The site is approximately triangular in form and extends roughly 266 metres along its northern boundary with a longer boundary of approximately 317 metres.

The woodland contains a mixture of mature trees, younger growth, coppice, scrub and woodland-floor vegetation. Historically, the land has also been used in association with livestock and horses and was not established as a purpose-built recreational facility.

Shamblewood has subsequently introduced controlled cycling activity, principally:

- bike trials;
- mountain-bike skills features;
- timber riding features;
- dirt-based riding features;
- coaching;
- supervised riding sessions;
- youth and community sessions; and
- occasional organised events.

The riding use is non-motorised. The woodland itself remains the dominant characteristic of the site.

3. Management Philosophy

The management philosophy for Shamblewood is based upon the principle that recreation and woodland conservation do not have to be competing land uses. Active occupation and management provide an incentive to inspect, maintain and improve the woodland.

Shamblewood therefore seeks to manage the woodland as a multifunctional environment providing environmental, recreational, community, landscape and long-term management value.

- Environmental value through woodland management, habitat retention and natural regeneration.
- Recreational value through cycling and outdoor activity.
- Community value through youth engagement, coaching and organised access.
- Landscape value through retention of the woodland environment.
- Long-term management value through active inspection and maintenance of land which might otherwise receive substantially less intervention.

4. Existing Woodland Management

Management undertaken at Shamblewood has principally involved coppicing and vegetation management rather than wholesale tree clearance.

The purpose of this work is to:

- maintain safe areas around riding features;
- manage dense or unsuitable growth;
- encourage regeneration;
- produce a more varied woodland structure;
- retain visibility where required for supervision;
- generate natural material for habitat and screening;
- improve practical access for woodland management; and
- maintain the woodland as an actively managed environment.

Coppicing is a traditional woodland-management technique in which selected stems are cut while the stool and root system remain alive and are permitted to regenerate. Regrowth will therefore form part of the continuing management cycle.

Future coppicing will be undertaken selectively and progressively rather than through large-scale clearance.

5. Retention of Trees and Woodland Canopy

The fundamental management principle at Shamblewood is the retention of the woodland. The recreational use does not require the wholesale removal of the tree canopy.

Riding areas and features will, wherever reasonably practicable, be positioned around existing established trees. No tree will be removed merely because complete removal would make construction or operation more convenient where a reasonable alternative arrangement is available.

Where works are required close to established trees, consideration will be given to trunks, major roots, soil levels, crown condition and the potential for compaction around root areas.

The layout of riding areas can also be modified over time where monitoring identifies an undesirable impact. Any future felling will be undertaken only where lawful and appropriate, with licensing requirements checked where relevant.

6. Coppice Management

Coppice will be managed to create a mixture of different ages and structures rather than repeatedly cutting the entire site at the same time. Where practicable, management will therefore be undertaken in compartments or small areas.

This provides several benefits:

- continuous woodland cover;
- areas of dense vegetation for wildlife;
- areas of younger regeneration;
- variation in woodland structure;
- a continuing source of coppice material;
- reduced landscape impact from management operations; and
- avoidance of unnecessary widespread disturbance.

Following coppicing, stools will normally be allowed to regenerate naturally. Regrowth will be monitored and intervention undertaken only where required. Selected coppice may subsequently be recut as part of a continuing rotational management system.

7. Natural Regeneration

Natural regeneration will be the preferred method of maintaining woodland cover where appropriate. Young trees and coppice regrowth will be retained unless their removal is required for safety, access, woodland health, protection of another important tree, management of invasive species or maintenance of established recreational areas.

This allows the woodland to renew itself naturally and helps retain vegetation derived from the existing site. Where regeneration is poor in a particular area, supplementary planting of suitable locally appropriate native species may be considered.

8. Deadwood Management

Deadwood is an important component of a healthy woodland ecosystem. Fallen timber, branches and standing deadwood can provide habitat for insects, fungi, mosses and lichens, birds, small mammals and other woodland organisms.

Accordingly, deadwood will not automatically be removed simply because it is dead. Where it does not create an unacceptable safety risk, deadwood may be:

- retained standing;
- left naturally on the woodland floor;
- relocated into habitat piles;
- incorporated into dead hedges; or
- used for other habitat-management purposes.

Safety will take priority immediately adjacent to riding areas, gathering points and other regularly occupied locations. Where dangerous deadwood must be removed from such locations, the resulting material should, wherever practical, remain elsewhere within the woodland.

9. Dead Hedges and Coppiced Material

A significant feature of Shamblewood's woodland-management approach is the reuse of material generated on site. Coppiced stems, brash and other suitable woody material are being used to construct substantial dead hedges.

The principal dead-hedge screening is approximately 30 feet thick and 12 feet high in places. This provides several functions simultaneously:

- retains coppiced material within the woodland rather than requiring burning or removal;
- provides habitat and refuge for insects and small mammals;
- offers potential nesting and foraging habitat;
- creates physical separation between activity areas and sensitive woodland;
- provides visual screening; and
- provides additional attenuation of sound from activity within the site.

As the material decomposes it returns organic matter to the woodland system. New material generated through future coppicing may be incorporated into existing dead hedges where appropriate.

10. Wildlife and Biodiversity

Shamblewood supports a variety of wildlife. Species observed using the woodland include tawny owls, sparrowhawks, lesser spotted woodpeckers, deer, foxes and rabbits, together with numerous other woodland birds and smaller species.

The management objective is not to remove vegetation simply to create a visually tidy site. Areas of dense scrub, coppice, deadwood and relatively undisturbed woodland will be retained.

Management will seek to maintain a mosaic of mature canopy, younger trees, coppice, scrub, deadwood, woodland floor and small open areas. This structural variety is preferable to attempting to maintain every part of the site in an identical condition.

11. Birds and Nesting Season

Particular care will be taken when undertaking vegetation management during the bird-nesting period. Before significant coppicing, pruning or vegetation clearance, the area will be visually inspected for active nests.

Where an active nest is identified, vegetation immediately supporting or protecting that nest will not be disturbed until the nest is no longer active. Where there is uncertainty concerning protected species or an activity has the potential to cause significant disturbance, specialist ecological advice will be sought where appropriate.

12. Tawny Owls and Other Woodland Birds

Tawny owls are known to use the woodland. The retention of mature trees, woodland edge, dense vegetation and deadwood will help preserve suitable conditions for these and other woodland birds.

Potential nesting cavities will be retained wherever it is safe and practicable to do so. Any tree containing an obvious occupied cavity or nest will receive additional consideration before arboricultural works are undertaken.

Similarly, the presence of woodpeckers provides an additional reason to retain mature trees, standing deadwood and suitable decaying timber where this can safely be achieved.

13. Mammals

Deer, foxes and rabbits have been observed within Shamblewood. The intention is not to exclude wildlife from the site.

Dense woodland areas and habitat corridors will remain available around and between the principal recreational areas. The park does not operate continuously throughout the day and night, allowing periods with little or no human activity. No unnecessary night-time illumination of the wider woodland is proposed as part of normal management.

14. Tree Safety

Because Shamblewood is used recreationally, reasonable management of tree risk is important. Trees adjacent to regularly used riding areas, spectator or gathering locations, paths, parking, facilities and other regularly occupied areas will be visually monitored for obvious signs of deterioration or instability.

Particular attention will be given following significant storms or extreme weather. Indicators warranting further investigation may include:

- major hanging branches;
- recently split limbs;
- substantial storm damage;
- significant root plate movement;
- severe fungal decay;

- sudden crown decline; or
- obvious structural failure.

Where a significant concern is identified, the affected area may be temporarily closed until the tree can be assessed or made safe. Where specialist judgement is required, advice will be sought from an appropriately qualified arboricultural professional.

15. Soil Protection

Woodland soil is an important environmental resource. Shamblewood will therefore seek to concentrate recreational pressure within defined areas rather than encourage unrestricted riding throughout the woodland.

Where excessive wear becomes apparent, measures may include:

- redirecting riders;
- temporary closure;
- natural surfacing;
- drainage improvements;
- installation of timber features over sensitive ground;
- reinforcement of specific high-wear locations; or
- allowing an area to regenerate.

16. Erosion Control

Mountain-bike and trials activity can cause localised wear if poorly managed. The condition of riding areas will therefore be monitored.

Signs requiring action include:

- formation of deep ruts;
- exposed significant tree roots;
- uncontrolled water channels;
- persistent standing water;
- widening of riding lines; and
- substantial loss of woodland soil.

Corrective action will be proportionate to the problem. The objective is not to prevent all evidence of recreational use but to prevent localised wear from developing into significant environmental deterioration.

17. Drainage

Existing natural drainage patterns will be retained wherever practicable. Construction of riding features will seek to avoid creating artificial channels which concentrate runoff against tree roots or into vulnerable areas.

Where local drainage intervention is necessary, simple low-impact measures will be preferred. The use of extensive impermeable surfacing within the woodland is not proposed.

18. Cycling Features

Cycling features form part of the recreational use of Shamblewood but will be managed as elements within the woodland, rather than replacing it.

Features may comprise natural ground, soil, timber, stone, tyres and suitable recycled materials, constructed trials obstacles and raised timber skills features.

Where possible, features will be positioned within existing spaces between trees. Trees will not normally be used as structural components of riding features where doing so would damage them. Fixings, excavation or construction likely to cause significant unnecessary damage to established trees or major roots will be avoided.

19. Defined Activity Areas

The site contains identifiable recreational zones including a trials area, mountain-bike or Northshore skills areas, dirt-jump areas and associated access and parking.

Concentrating activity in known areas enables the remaining woodland to be managed with substantially lower recreational pressure. This approach also permits particular areas to be rested or modified where necessary.

The arrangement should therefore be viewed as managed woodland recreation rather than unrestricted recreational use of the entire woodland floor.

20. Public Access and Supervision

Shamblewood is a managed facility rather than unrestricted public open space. This distinction provides an environmental management benefit.

Access can be controlled, supervised, directed to appropriate areas, restricted where woodland works are taking place and temporarily excluded from environmentally sensitive or unsafe locations.

Users can also be instructed not to enter sensitive areas. This gives the site manager substantially greater control over recreational pressure than would exist with unrestricted informal access.

21. Woodland Management and Community Use

The management of Shamblewood should be considered alongside the community function of the site. The woodland provides a setting for outdoor exercise, youth activity, coaching, cycling skills development, scout-group sessions, community participation and engagement with the natural environment.

The recreational use therefore gives the woodland a direct social value while creating an incentive for its continuing management. The long-term objective is not simply preservation of trees in isolation, but maintenance of a functioning woodland which provides environmental, recreational and community benefits simultaneously.

22. Invasive Species and Woodland Health

The woodland will be monitored for invasive non-native vegetation and signs of significant tree disease. Where invasive vegetation threatens native woodland regeneration or habitat quality, proportionate control will be undertaken.

The use of chemical control will be minimised where practical alternatives are reasonably available. Material known to contain harmful invasive species will not be casually redistributed around the woodland. Significant tree-health concerns will be investigated and, where appropriate, specialist advice obtained.

23. Fire and Waste Management

No routine burning of coppiced material is proposed where the material can instead be beneficially reused. Preference will be given to:

1. dead hedging;
2. habitat piles;
3. retention as deadwood;
4. appropriate construction or use within the site; or
5. removal or recycling where retention is unsuitable.

Waste generated by users will be collected and appropriately disposed of. Fly-tipping or dumping will be removed where reasonably practicable to prevent accumulation.

24. Lighting

The woodland will not be unnecessarily illuminated. Any lighting associated with facilities or occasional activities should be limited to locations where required, directed away from woodland habitat wherever practicable, used only when required and switched off when the site is not operating.

This will assist in maintaining dark areas suitable for nocturnal wildlife.

25. Noise and Woodland Screening

The woodland itself provides substantial natural visual separation between activity areas and the surrounding environment. Dense vegetation and the substantial dead hedge provide additional screening.

Management will seek to retain vegetation around the site boundaries and between principal activity areas where it contributes to screening and habitat. This is particularly relevant given the railway infrastructure situated between the site and nearby residential areas.

Woodland management will therefore avoid unnecessarily opening substantial sight or sound corridors towards neighbouring properties.

26. Ancient and Veteran Trees

No tree will be assumed to lack ecological value merely because it is old, damaged or partially decayed. Ancient and veteran trees can be exceptionally important ecological features.

If a tree displaying potential veteran characteristics is identified, its management will prioritise retention where reasonably possible. Any significant work to a confirmed veteran tree should be informed by appropriate arboricultural advice. Standing deadwood associated with such trees will be retained wherever compatible with reasonable public safety.

27. Relationship with Forestry Commission Involvement

Shamblewood has previously been subject to Forestry Commission interest following concerns raised regarding woodland management and canopy cover. The site management position is that the works undertaken comprised appropriate coppicing and woodland management rather than unlawful wholesale woodland clearance.

Any written Forestry Commission correspondence confirming the outcome of its inspection or assessment should be appended to this Management Plan as supporting evidence.

The management principles within this document are intended to provide a clear framework for continuing that approach. Where future works potentially require a Forestry Commission felling licence or other consent, the appropriate regulatory requirements will be checked before work is undertaken.

28. Five-Year Management Programme

Year 1 - 2026/27

Priority will be given to establishing a baseline and formalising existing management practices.

- photographic record of the principal woodland areas;
- identification of mature and notable trees;
- inspection of trees around principal activity areas;
- identification of coppice compartments;
- continuation of dead-hedge construction;
- retention of appropriate deadwood;
- monitoring of riding-related ground wear;
- identification of areas requiring regeneration;
- recording notable wildlife observations; and
- removal or control of invasive vegetation where necessary.

Year 2 - 2027/28

Management will focus upon regeneration and habitat condition.

- assessment of coppice regrowth;
- selective coppicing of the next appropriate areas;
- protection of successful natural regeneration;

- additional habitat piles and dead hedging;
- review of drainage around riding areas;
- repair of any significant erosion;
- tree-safety inspection; and
- review of wildlife observations.

Year 3 - 2028/29

A mid-plan review will consider canopy retention, coppice regeneration, woodland-floor condition, recreational wear, deadwood availability, habitat structure, tree condition, invasive species and whether any areas require temporary rest from activity.

Year 4 - 2029/30

Selective management will continue, with emphasis on maintaining variation in woodland structure.

- selective coppicing;
- management of over-dense regrowth where required;
- retention of suitable young successor trees;
- deadwood creation and retention;
- maintenance of dead hedges;
- erosion and drainage inspection; and
- tree-safety review.

Year 5 - 2030/31

A full review of the management plan will assess woodland condition compared with the 2026 baseline, natural regeneration, canopy condition, wildlife observations, effectiveness of recreational management, soil and erosion condition, effectiveness of habitat features and management requirements for the following five-year period.

A replacement or updated Woodland Management Plan will then be prepared.

29. Annual Inspection

An annual woodland-management inspection will be undertaken and recorded. The inspection should consider:

- tree condition;
- storm damage;
- coppice regrowth;
- natural regeneration;
- invasive species;
- deadwood habitat;
- nesting and habitat features;
- soil erosion;
- drainage;

- condition of dead hedges;
- recreational wear; and
- any management work required during the following year.

Additional inspections should take place following exceptional storms or where a specific issue is reported.

30. Record Keeping

A simple woodland-management record will be maintained. Records may include dated photographs, areas coppiced, significant arboricultural work, tree failures, habitat works, wildlife observations, drainage repairs, erosion-control measures and significant changes to riding areas.

This provides evidence that the management plan is being actively implemented rather than existing solely as a planning document.

31. Management Prescriptions

MP1 - Retain woodland character

The site will continue to be managed primarily as woodland containing recreational activity.

MP2 - Avoid unnecessary tree removal

Established trees will be retained wherever reasonably practicable.

MP3 - Coppice selectively

Coppicing will generally be undertaken progressively rather than through unnecessary large-scale simultaneous clearance.

MP4 - Encourage regeneration

Coppice stools and natural tree regeneration will be allowed to develop where compatible with safety and appropriate management.

MP5 - Retain deadwood

Standing and fallen deadwood will be retained where compatible with reasonable public safety.

MP6 - Reuse woodland material

Coppiced material will preferentially be reused for dead hedging, habitat piles and other appropriate on-site purposes.

MP7 - Protect wildlife

Management work will take account of active nests and protected species.

MP8 - Manage recreational pressure

Cycling will principally be concentrated within established activity areas.

MP9 - Protect soils

Significant erosion, compaction and drainage problems will be identified and addressed.

MP10 - Maintain dark habitat

Unnecessary illumination of woodland habitat will be avoided.

MP11 - Monitor

Woodland condition will be reviewed at least annually.

MP12 - Adapt

Management practices will be modified where monitoring demonstrates that a different approach would provide a better environmental outcome.

32. Expected Environmental Outcomes

Implementation of this plan is expected to result in:

- continued woodland canopy;
- healthy coppice regeneration;
- a greater variety of vegetation ages and structures;
- retention of mature trees;
- increased deadwood habitat;
- substantial dead-hedge habitat;
- protection of wildlife refuge areas;
- controlled rather than unrestricted recreational pressure;
- early identification of tree-safety issues;
- active monitoring of woodland condition;
- improved management of erosion and drainage; and
- a long-term incentive to maintain the woodland.

The recreational use therefore provides a mechanism through which active woodland stewardship can be sustained.

33. Long-Term Vision

The long-term vision for Shamblewood is a thriving, actively managed recreational woodland. Success should not be measured by the absence of human activity.

Instead, success will be demonstrated by a woodland in which:

- trees continue to mature;
- coppice regenerates;
- young trees establish;
- wildlife continues to use the site;
- deadwood habitat increases;
- soil and drainage are actively monitored;

- recreational pressure is concentrated and controlled;
- children and adults experience outdoor sport within a woodland environment; and
- the continued recreational value of the land creates a strong incentive for its long-term management.

Shamblewood's approach is therefore based upon use, management and conservation working together.

34. Commitment

Shamblewood Bike Park commits to implementing this Management Plan throughout the plan period and reviewing its effectiveness annually.

Where professional ecological, arboricultural or Forestry Commission advice is required for particular works, such advice will be sought.

The plan will remain a living management document and may be strengthened or updated as additional ecological, arboricultural or woodland information becomes available.

Signed:

Name:

Shaun Goddard

Date:

Appendix A - Annual Woodland Inspection Record

This record should be completed at least once each year and retained with the management plan.

Inspection date
Inspector
Weather / recent significant weather
Trees - condition and issues identified
Coppice - areas inspected / works required
Regeneration - successful or poor regeneration
Wildlife - notable observations
Deadwood - habitat retained or created
Dead hedge - condition / maintenance required
Ground condition - erosion, compaction or exposed roots
Drainage - issues identified
Invasive species - species / location / action
Recreational areas - environmental management required
Actions for coming year

Appendix B - Five-Year Photographic Monitoring

A series of fixed photographic monitoring points should be established around the woodland. Photographs should be taken from approximately the same position and direction annually.

Suggested locations include:

6. entrance;
7. car park / woodland interface;
8. trials area;
9. Northshore / skills area;
10. dirt-jump area;
11. principal coppice area;
12. principal dead hedge;
13. representative mature woodland;
14. representative regeneration area; and
15. site boundary facing the railway / residential direction.

This will create objective evidence of how vegetation, canopy, coppice and habitat develop during the management-plan period.

Appendix C - Supporting Documents

Where available, the following should accompany this plan:

- site and location plan;
- aerial plan showing principal activity areas;
- dated site photographs;
- Forestry Commission correspondence or site inspection findings;
- ecological information or species records;
- tree or arboricultural information;
- photographs demonstrating coppice regeneration;
- photographs of the dead hedge and habitat piles; and
- annual woodland inspection records.

These documents can be added progressively as the management plan is implemented.