

THE GROVE MANAGEMENT PLAN



Wild Garlic

Prepared by East Suffolk Services Countryside Team



The Grove, FELIXSTOWE

MANAGEMENT PLAN
Updated March 2025

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Hazel coppice stool

1: VISION STATEMENT & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 East Suffolk Council will endeavour to provide a countryside service to the public to enable them to appreciate and enjoy the local landscape and wildlife.
- 1.2 The Grove is a small broadleaved woodland situated to the north of Felixstowe and cut off from the town by Candlet Road and Grove Road. It is part of a larger area of woodland and recreational greenspace being adjacent to Eastward Ho playing field and Abbey Grove, the new Woodland Trust community plantation. The Grove is fully accessible to the public. The main management objectives are to maintain public access within a safe environment and to maximize biodiversity.

2: POLICY STATEMENTS

- 2.1 The Countryside Service of the District Council has the following objectives:
- To conserve and enhance the local landscape and biodiversity
 - To provide appropriate countryside recreation facilities for residents and visitors
 - To encourage access to the countryside for all
 - To work in partnership with other organisations wherever practical to ensure the most effective use of resources.
 - To work with volunteers and community groups on practical habitat management and woodland infrastructure projects.



Reinforcing banks around an old bridge

3: DESCRIPTION

3.1 General information

3.1.1 Location & site boundaries

The Grove is situated in the Parish of Felixstowe to the north- east of the main town. The main access is from the Eastward Ho. Public car park off Grove Road.

The site covers some 4.87 ha. in area.

See Appendix 1 for the Location & Site Boundaries.

3.1.2: Tenure

The land has been in public ownership since 1927 when it was handed over by the late George Prettyman with covenants “...undertaking the council to support and maintain the said hereditaments as public walks or pleasure grounds”. Further additions to the site were donated in a 1937 covenant.

3.1.3: Management/organisational infrastructure

The site is now managed by the East Suffolk Council with occasional support from volunteers and contractors.

The Town Council has an interest in ensuring that The Grove is both well managed and accessible to local people.

3.1.4: Map coverage

The OS Grid Reference for the land is TM 302 359 (Landranger Sheet 169).

3.1.5: Site description

The main section of The Grove is essentially secondary broadleaved plantation woodland consisting of a tall canopy made up of ash, oak (species), and sycamore and chestnut trees, with a variable understory of hawthorn, holly, bramble, hazel and bramble and a varied ground flora. The main wooded area is dissected by a stream which eventually runs into King’s Fleet. There is an internal drainage system, which works in part to feed the myriad of natural springs, to the east of the wood, into the stream. In the center of the wood, a pond now exists, which was created by excavation and damming. The pond has become an important wildlife feature, attracting frogs and newts each year to spawn. There is a second pond to the east of

the wood that is covered by this plan, but is detached from the main wood.

An area of disused and wet playing field adjacent to the Grove was planted as woodland in 1988. This extended the wood by an extra 1.2ha. and is now merging with the existing woodland. 2025 update: most of this area has now been coppiced in several coupes and will be due to be re-coppiced in 2032.

3.2: Environmental Information.

3.2.1: Physical.

Geology and Soils.

The Grove is sited in a small, low profiled valley, cutting into the surrounding red crag right down to the underlying London clay. Acidity tests shows the top soil layer over most of the woodland to be slightly alkaline (ph7 – 7.5)

Climate.

This area of Suffolk is one of the driest in the British Isles recording an average of 23" (588mm) of rain per year.

The months of March to May normally have the lowest monthly rainfall and this normally coincides with a period of cooler than average temperatures. The mean maximum annual temperature is 12.7deg. C

3.2.2 Biological.

3.2.2.1: *Habitats/communities*

The following habitat types have been identified as:

- Secondary woodland with scrub understory
- Ponds

3.2.2.2: *Flora*

There is no official flora list, but observations show that there are no exceptional plants found within the wood. The gradual build up of sycamore leaf litter throughout the years have had a detrimental effect on the woodland's floristic diversity. Bramble has begun to dominate in several areas. There are however several patches of 'wild garlic'.

(2025 update): Wild Garlic or Ransoms has spread throughout the woodland and although it is an ancient woodland indicator in this case it is not. The plant may well have been dormant in the seed bank from a much earlier woodland on the site.

3.2.2.3: Fauna

Whilst the main feature of the woodland is the rookery within the high canopy, an ornithological survey is required to show whether the BAP species recorded in 1993 are still present. The survey list from that year can be found in appendix 3. Whilst it is not known what species are currently using the woodland the areas of scrub and understory provides breeding habitat for the more common passerine species.

(2025 update): Badger, Fox and Muntjac have been recorded in the woodland since 2013. Chiffchaff have been encouraged to nest in the woodland by coppicing several 'coupes' of the 80's Addition to the woodland. A breeding bird not recorded in the woodland before this.

3.2.2.4 Site Status

- The site is adjacent to an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)
(2025 update): The woodland does not have any nature designations but with the increasing housing developments surrounding the woodland it should be considered that the site acquires a Local Nature Reserve status. This would recognise its importance to the local community and encourage local schools to use it as an educational resource.



The main pond

3.2.3: Cultural

3.2.3.1: Archaeology

No archaeological remains have been found in the wood, but a few Roman remains have been found in adjacent fields.

3.2.3.2: Past land use

There are no floristic indicators to show The Grove as being ancient. (20205 update): Wild Garlic or Ransoms is an Ancient Woodland indicator. Hodkinson's map from 1783 records no woods on the Felixstowe peninsula. By 1840 a tithe map shows parts of the Grove were now plantation, but some parts still pasture. The turkey oaks within the woodland can probably be dated back to approximately that time.

Eastward Ho adjacent to the Grove was a golf course up until World War II. It was then ploughed up to help the war effort and The Grove itself was used to cover vehicles and equipment prior to the D Day landings. The presence of 2 concrete bridges within the wood are testimony to this.

3.2.3.3: Present land use

The woodland is mainly used for informal recreation, mostly walking or dog walking. Children use the woods and make camps, which is not discouraged. There is occasional use by BMX bikes which are discouraged due to the excavation of the ground to create banks and ramps. (2025 update): This has had a detrimental effect on the ground flora. The area has now had a dead hedge created by volunteers to prevent the use by BMX bikes or others.

(2025 update) Paths that were hard surfaced during the 1980's should now be resurfaced with a camber surface, as present surfaces have dished and filled with earth. Wooden steps that have degraded will be renewed in 2025.

3.2.3.4: Past management work

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the woodland used to have its own keeper parochially known as 'Billy Buttons'. It has been said he kept sycamore trees at bay and during his tenure they were never dominant.

Some thinning of sycamore trees of various ages was carried out during the 1980s. Extensive work was also carried out post 1987 'hurricane' to clear a number of large fallen trees. The spaces that were created have since filled with natural regeneration.

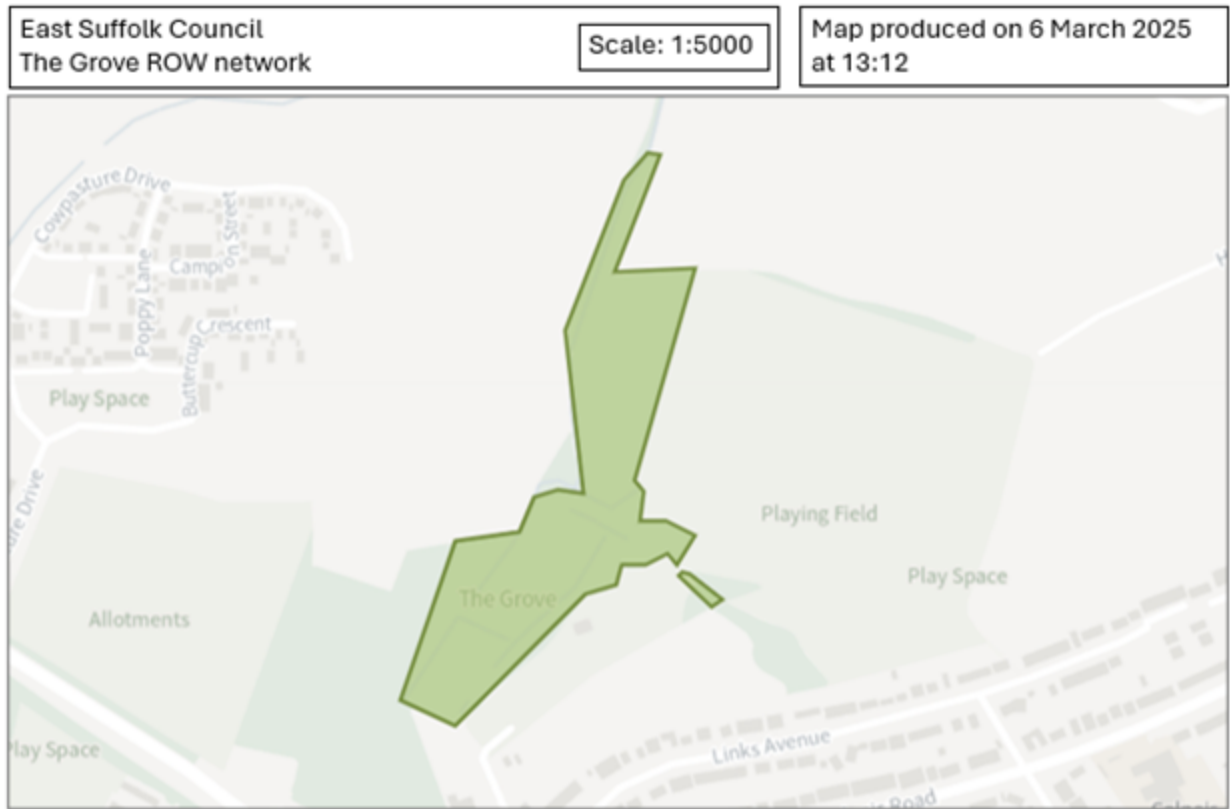
A network of surfaced paths was also created in the 1980s to improve public access, as many of the paths were quagmires during the winter period. The east pond was restored at this time and a new internal pond has also been created since.

(2025 update): Over the period from 2015 to 2017 most of the woodland planted in the 1980's that borders Eastward Ho playing field, was coppiced with dead hedges created to keep deer out. The post dense undergrowth encouraged Chiffchaffs to nest on site for the first time.

Timber that has made its way into the drainage channels that run through the wood have historically been removed to hasten drainage. Current thinking on this regard is to leave the timber in the drainage channels and even put it in where required. This slows up the drainage and so prevents bank erosion and possible flooding downstream. Holding up the flow is better for bankside flora and the decaying timber provides transient habitats for fungi and invertebrates.

3.2.3.5: Present legal status of the site

The land is a Countryside site in the ownership of East Suffolk Council.



3.3: Current public use & interest

3.3.1: Public interest/relationship with local communities

In the 1980s a 'Friends of the Grove' group was formed to help carry out practical work with the ESC Rangers. Their demise was in parallel with that of the Ranger service at that time. Presently, the 'Footprints' conservation volunteers help with some management tasks, led by a new Ranger team which began in 2010. Some of the 'Footprints' are Felixstowe residents and also volunteer with the Woodland Trust and carry out work in the neighbouring Abbey Grove.



The 'Footprints' volunteers carrying out coppicing and dead hedging.

3.3.2: Access

The Grove has a network of PROW in and adjacent to the wood as well as several permissive footpaths and a number of access points at different locations that make the whole site very accessible and allow local people to use the wood as part of a longer route.

The majority of people visiting the site live in Felixstowe and arrive on foot or by car.

3.3.3

3.3.4 Current interpretation provisions

The single interpretation board has now deteriorated and been removed. The board needs to be replaced as a priority.

3.3.4: Current educational use

There is currently no evidence that any educational use is made of the land.

3.3.5: Current research use & facilities

Currently there is no research being carried out on the site.



Leaving timber in various locations of the drainage channels slows up the drainage, limiting bank scouring, creating transient habitat and preventing flooding downstream.

3.4: Landscape

There is very little woodland on the Felixstowe peninsula and the Grove, like Felixstowe's other older woodlands are mostly found on the subtle slope between the plateau and the marshes, forming significant landscape features of irregular form and are visible from many locations. It also lies within the Suffolk River Valleys ESA. Guidelines for this ESA state that existing woodland trees and copses are a significant part of the landscape and require positive management to maintain their value.

4: FEATURES OF INTEREST

4.1: Identification/confirmation of nature conservation features

The habitats and species listed below are identified as local priorities in the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan.

Habitats

Lowland deciduous mixed woodland

Species

Native black poplar

5: SERVICES, FACILITIES, OBLIGATIONS ETC.

5.1: Identification/confirmation of other focus points of plan

5.1.1: List of other focus points of plan

The following issues are also of relevance to the management plan:

- Encouraging the responsible use of the land.
- Ensuring that the land is safe for the public to visit by carrying out regular site safety audits and tree safety audits
- Encouraging greater community involvement by holding occasional volunteer sessions or creating a 'Friends of' group.
- Maintaining a high quality landscape by controlling litter and fly tipping.
- With the advent of a forthcoming Natural History GCSE the woodland should be promoted as field studies hub for local schools.

6 PRESCRIPTION

6.1 Recommendations for management to improve biodiversity are:

- **Create a varied age structure with standards.**

Introducing a programme of thinning and coppicing and planting in the main woodland would improve the overall structure of the wood.

Thin out/ coppice the 1 hectare+ area planted in 1988. 2025 update: This area was coppiced, thinned and dead hedged to deter browsing by deer and will be due to be re-coppiced in 2032.



- **Maintain pond in optimum condition**

The pond will require occasional dredging of branches, etc. Coppice pond side trees every 5 years. 2025 update: The ponds is now managed as a wet feature and fallen timber has been left in situ. The feature remains valuable to wildlife.

- **Check sycamore invasion**

Sycamores in particular can have a detrimental effect on woodlands by producing a dense leaf litter which decays slowly and inhibits ground flora. It also supports fewer invertebrates which has a detrimental effect on bird populations. A programme of thinning out young seedlings would be beneficial. 2025 update: Sycamore thinning is ongoing, when time permits

- **Encourage dead wood**

Leave all fallen trees and as many dead standing trees/trunks and branches that do not compromise public safety. 2025 update: The woodland holds good quantities of decaying timber. This effectively feeds into the woodland food chain. The sun's energy that grew the timber transfers into invertebrates and fungi that break down the timber, which in turn provide food for other woodland fauna such as its bird life.

- **Carry out further biological monitoring**

It is at least 16 years since the last survey and further comprehensive botanical and ornithological surveys are essential if the nature conservation importance of the site, especially for those BAP species that were identified then as being present, is to be maintained and improved. 2025 update: Biological monitoring has been undertaken on an ad-hoc basis.

6.2 Annual Work Programme

Timetable of management operations

Management projects	Season
Safety Audits	(x2)
Tree Inspection	Autumn/winter (x1)
Routine footpath maintenance (cut back vegetation)	Spring/summer (x4) Autumn /winter (x1)
Routine patrolling/litter control	All
Maintain steps	Any
Make safe dead or windblown trees and branches	Any (reactive works)
Thin/coppice 1988 planting	Autumn /winter. Approx. one fifth of area per year
Thin/coppice sycamores/ash of poor form and coppice hazels throughout main woodland	Autumn/winter (as time allows)

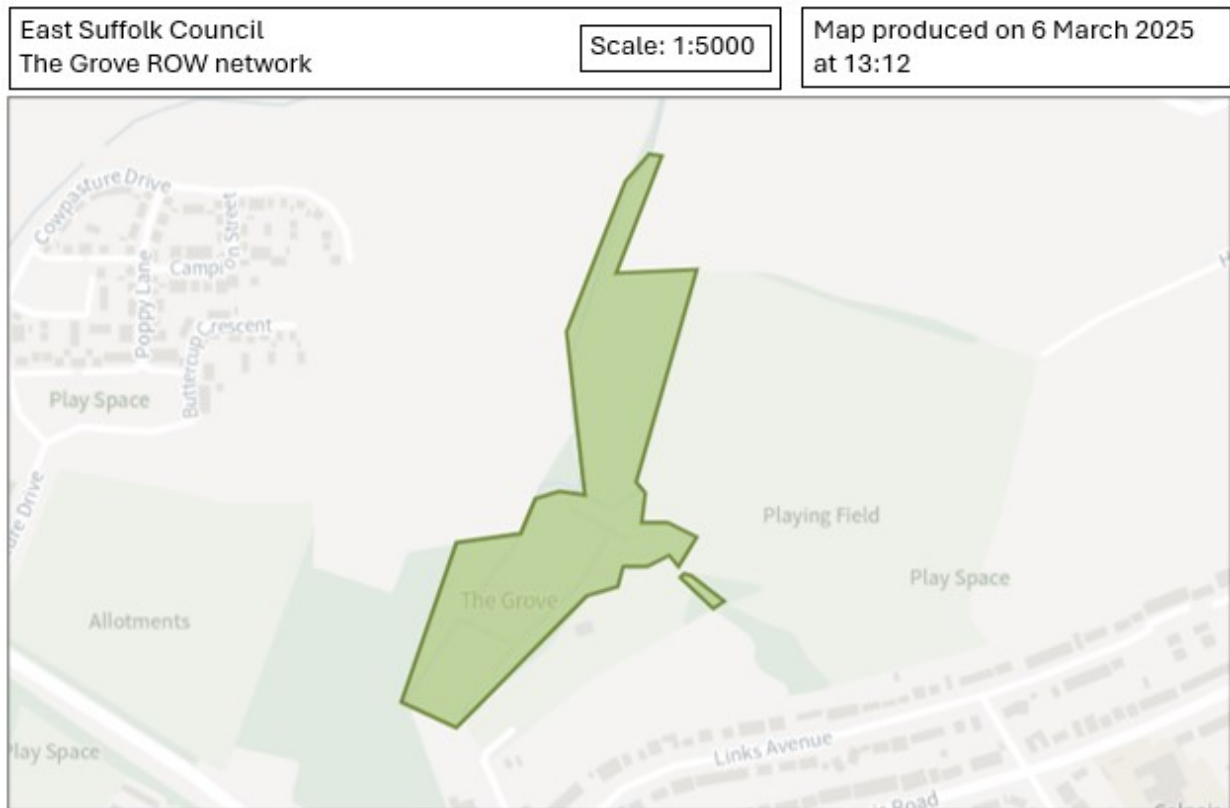


The 'Fairy Tree' is a large mature Ash tree locates adjacent to the main pond.

The bark has been carved away on its trunk to locate several wooden windows. This practice is not to be encouraged due to the pathogens that can enter the tree through the wounds.

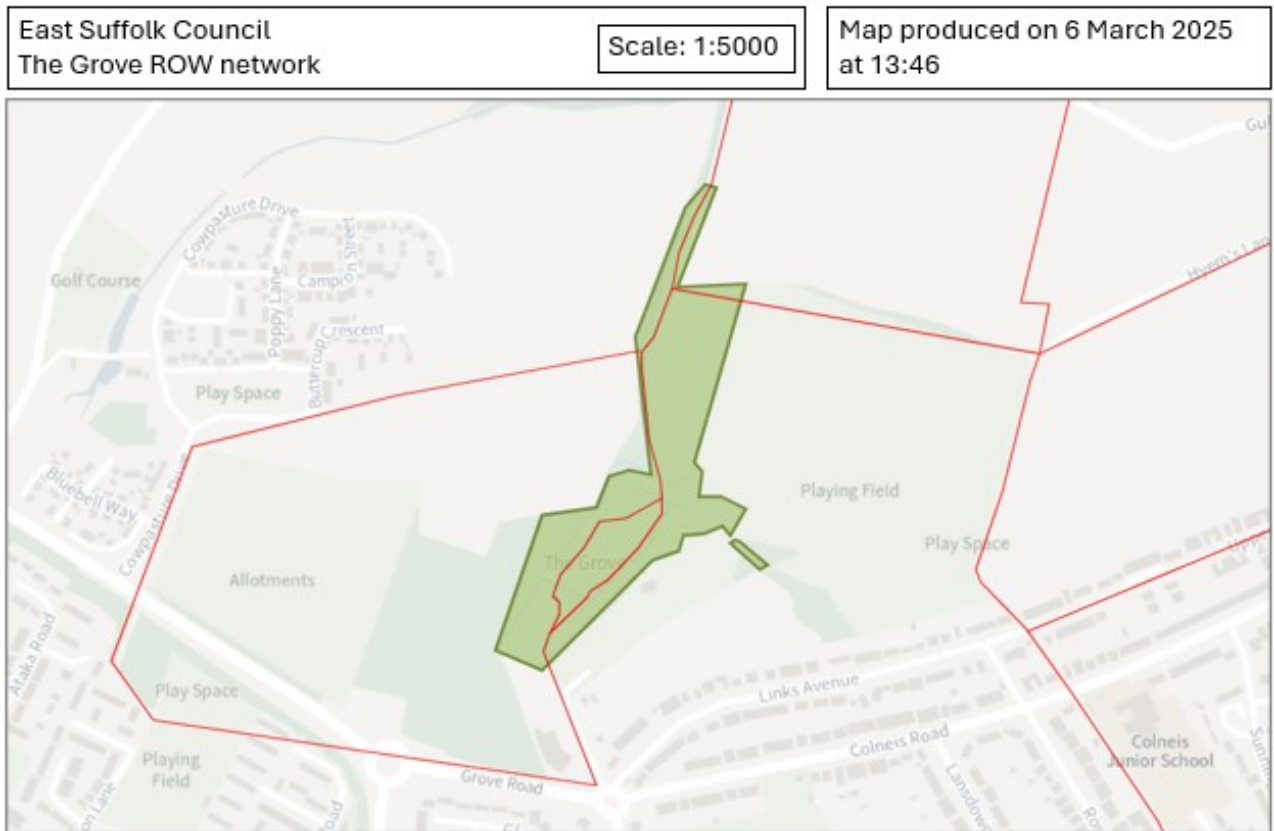
The tree has lost two major limbs in the last ten years since 2025 and is being closely monitored for its health and vitality.

APPENDIX 1.



Map showing the extent of The Grove land holding

APPENDIX 2.



Map showing PROW's through and around The Grove

APPENDIX 3.

List of birds recorded in 1993 survey

i) Birds

Blackbird
Blackcap
Bullfinch
Cuckoo
Chaffinch
Chiffchaff
Carrion Crow
Fieldfare
Garden Warbler
Goldfinch
Goldcrest
Hawfinch
Jay
Kestrel
Linnet
Magpie
Mistle Thrush
Nightingale
Nuthatch
Redpoll
Redstart
Robin
Rook
Sedge Warbler
Siskin
Starling
Sparrow Hawk
Spotted Flycatcher
Turtle Dove
Tawny Owl
Treecreeper
Tit, Great
Tit, Blue
Tit, Coal
Tit, Long tailed
Waxwing
Whitethroat
Willow Warbler
Woodcock

Wood Pigeon
Woodpecker, Green
Woodpecker, Great spotted
Wren
Yellow Wagtail
