

Tranquil Wood

Woodland Condition, Opportunity & Threat Assessment

Property: Tranquil Wood

Location: Old Road, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DS

Prepared by: Colin Corkhill MICFor
Role: Forestry Consultant

On behalf of: Betchworth Parish Council

Date: August 2026



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Section 1: Executive Summary

Tranquil Wood is a 4.95-hectare, partly designated Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland with significant ecological, cultural and recreational potential. Its principal constraints are hazardous and deteriorating infrastructure, unsafe trees, invasive plants, limited access, damaged boundaries and uncertain seasonal drainage. The recommended priorities are to reduce immediate hazards, complete the required ecological and tree surveys, establish controlled public access, restore woodland structure and biodiversity, and adopt a phased management programme supported by community engagement.

Section 2: Contact & Property Details

Property Name	Tranquil Wood
Grid Reference	TQ21425070
Nearest Post Code	RH3 7DS
Access Point	///silks.skip.merit
Local Authority	Mole Valley District Council
Woodland Area	4.95 Hectares (12.23 Acres)

Interested Proprietor	Betchworth Parish Council
Address	Hamilton Room, Church Street Betchworth Surrey RH3 7DN
Contact Details	clerk@betchworth-pc.gov.uk

Assessor	Colin Corkhill MICFor, LWM FdSc, PTI
Organisation	Regenerative Forestry Ltd
Contact Details	colin@regenerativeforestry.uk
Date of COT Assessment	28/07/2026



Section 3: Background Survey

Tick	Designations	Name or other reference or descriptor
☒	SSSI, SAC, SPA, Ramsar	None recorded
☒	SINC, LNR, Local Wildlife site	None recorded
☒	ASNW, PAWS/ARW	In-part: Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
☒	National Park, AONB, TPO, CA	None recorded
☒	SAM, OAM	Grade II Listed Building 'Temple in Grounds of Broome Park': 1378122
☒	Veteran Trees	Veterans & potential veterans within survey area
☒	Water	Field system drainage and pond fed stream (dry), sluice & weir system (defunct), catchment pond
☒	Public Access	None / Full access proposed
☒	EPS	Bird & Bat habitat evident, possible habitat for GCN

* SSSI Site of special Scientific interest
 SPA Special Protection Area (birds)
 SINC Site of Interest to Nature Conservation
 ASNW Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
 ARW Ancient Replanted Woodland
 AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 CA Conservation Area
 SAM Scheduled Ancient Monument
 Veteran trees are living trees that are often centuries old

SAC Special Area of Conservation
 Ramsar Convention Site (Wetland)
 LNR Local Nature Reserve
 PAWS Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site
 TPO Tree Preservation Order
 GCN Great Crested Newt
 OAM Other Ancient Monument or historic feature



Section 4: Woodland Condition Assessment

Overall Description

Tranquil Wood appears to have formed part of a formal water garden during the late Victorian or Georgian period, with a small lake, cascading water features, a folly temple and ornamental planting. The garden fell into neglect many decades ago, and although many original features survive, almost all are damaged or in disrepair. Mature ornamental trees, principally oak, lime, yew, chestnut and Douglas fir, now stand above a much younger mixed woodland.

The sluice and weir system has largely collapsed, draining the lake and leaving a shallow pond and seasonal watercourse. Some tree planting appears to have taken place during the past twenty years, possibly in response to storm damage. However, the new planting has remained unmanaged, to the detriment of the young trees.

In addition to the dilapidated infrastructure, the site's undulating topography includes steep slopes and seasonally wet areas. These hazards must be identified and assessed before public access is introduced.

Part of the site is designated as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW). More than twenty tree species are present, together with ancient woodland indicator species in the ground flora. Rhododendron and bamboo have colonised large areas and are overwhelming native plants. Bramble also dominates the northern area, where the soil is base-rich, loamy clay, while bracken dominates the lower sections, where the soil is free-draining, slightly acidic loam.

No formal access is currently provided with no defined paths or tracks. The boundary fence is also in disrepair, with many sections having collapsed.

The southern boundary abuts Old Road. Several historic trees and many poorly formed self-set trees lean heavily over the public highway. The old cast-iron railings that once protected the watercourse where it passes beneath the road are now derelict and present a hazard to people and wildlife.

Trees within the southeastern boundary overhang the access to the car park at the rear of the Red Lion public house and the grounds of the Reigate Pilgrims Cricket Club. These consist mainly of self-set sycamores, with two 'veteran' oaks and a very large poplar.

A public right of way (PRoW) footpath defines the eastern boundary which borders an agricultural field (currently grass). Mature woodland defines the northern boundary, with grazing grassland to the west.



Woodland Compartment Summary			
Cpt.	Area	Planting Years	Management Regime
1a	4.95	1900 / 1980 / 2000	None
Main Species Observed Composition			
Ash - <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> Elm - <i>Ulmus procera</i> Hazel - <i>Corylus avellana</i> Oak - <i>Quercus robur</i> Sweet Chestnut - <i>Castanea sativa</i> Sycamore - <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Native Broadleaves		90%
	Other Broadleaves		5%
	Conifers		<5%
	Understorey & Regeneration		
	Poor		
Sub-species Observed			
Alder, Beech, Birch, Blackthorn, Copper Beech, Cherry, Cypress, Douglas fir, Elder, Hawthorn, Holm oak, Holly, Horse chestnut, Large-leaved lime, Poplar, Scots pine, Small-leaved lime, Sweet chestnut, Willow, Yew			
Flora Species Observed			
Bluebell, Bramble, Bracken, Campion, Celandine, Cleavers, Clematis, Dead nettle, Dock, Dogs mercury, Fern, Ground ivy, Lords & ladies, Nettle, Pignut, Privet, St John's-wort, Wild garlic			
Invasive Species Observed			
Bamboo, Bindweed, Laurel, Rhododendron			
Constraints /Hazards			
Ash Dieback, Badgers, Bracken, Bramble, Deer, Rabbit, Roadside, Rubbish & Detritus, Squirrel, Topography, Water Features			
Key Features			
Pond, Veteran Trees, Folly Temple			



Management & Public Access

No vehicular access or formal footpaths currently exist. The only evidence of previous access is a historic gate opening onto the cricket ground; elsewhere, a dilapidated fence runs along the eastern boundary. Any new entrance is therefore likely to be located on the eastern boundary, where the public footpath and the Red Lion car park provide the most practical approach.

The steep slopes, particularly around the pond and water features, should be treated as hazardous. The metal sheet piling supporting the embankment at [///sake.engine.moves](#) requires particular attention.

Rabbit excavations can be found throughout, including many shallow divots which could cause slips, trips, or falls.

Extensive colonisation of nettle and bramble shall require control to permit easement through the woodland. This would also aid the natural regeneration of floral and arboreal species.

Where formal paths are created, bracken and bramble will require regular control to keep the route clearly defined and prevent it from becoming obscured by vegetation.

The watercourse was dry at the time of inspection. Because 2026 has been unusually hot and dry, this condition may not be typical. Seasonal change must therefore be considered when planning public access: a dry channel in summer may become waterlogged or impassable in autumn, making previously accessible areas hazardous.

The degraded materials that once formed the watercourse features, including loose brickwork and metalwork, should be inspected. Hazards should either be removed or made inaccessible through suitable exclusion measures.

Woodlands and trees are considered living organisms which can be affected by a myriad of biotic and abiotic stresses. Predicting their decline or failure can be almost impossible. However, regular assessment can reduce the likelihood of injury. By their nature, however, trees shall always contain features that may cause failure and can therefore never be considered as 'safe'. Where public access is invited or already in existence (such as the road frontage), assessment should be conducted in accordance with the perceived level of risk.

Ash trees in areas such as [///feel.ship.turkey](#) are showing the effects of ash dieback. The disease is caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. Trees with at least 50% crown dysfunction should be removed where they are accessible to the public.

Desired outcomes: Provision of public access for recreational and educational purposes.

- Create a single, gated entrance from the Red Lion car park and install appropriate safety and information signs;
- Install a well-defined footpath that guides visitors safely through the woodland while avoiding hazards and seasonally wet features;
- Repair the Buckland boundary fence by raising flattened sections and closing gaps;
- Dead hedge created along the northern boundary with neighbouring land.



Significant Features

The now drained lake and impeded watercourse would have once been the main features of the water garden; their reinstatement would not be affordable. However, some minor repairs might aid the retention of water providing valuable habitat.

The dilapidated weirs present a risk and should be reviewed.

The remains of a historic building, including a fireplace, are located at ///give.tasty.waddle. If the structure is confirmed to be sound and its use is appropriately managed, the area could provide a focal point for supervised activities such as community group BBQ's or campfires.

The listed Folly Temple at ///caked.bricks.stable is described as being in disrepair. Its restoration is also likely to be unaffordable. However, the adjacent area could serve as a feature location, such as a meeting area or forest-school site.

The many veteran and notable trees provide cultural and social significance along with irreplaceable habitat and must be protected. A survey to identify these trees is recommended.

Once cleared, the Ash glade could provide opportunity for planting a natural flower garden.

Desired outcome: Provision of recreational and educational areas

- Manage the flow of water in Slough Brook;
- Provision of Forest School site and covered meeting area;
- Creation of new habitats - e.g. log piles, bird and bat boxes.

Browsing and Grazing Levels

Evidence of deer, grey squirrel, and rabbit activity is present throughout the property. Epicormic growth on many older trees, consisting of new shoots on the stem or around the base, indicates high browsing pressure. Most juvenile broadleaved trees, including oak, field maple and sycamore, show bark stripping by grey squirrels, which deforms the trees and can contribute to branch or crown failure. Most naturally regenerated seedlings are also routinely browsed by deer and rabbits.

Local deer are likely to use the property for cover and its stable internal woodland climate. Grey squirrels use cavities and other features in older trees and have built dreys. Rabbits appear to alternate between the woodland and adjacent field margins for grazing. Two warrens were identified during the survey: an active warren at ///tennis.stole.epic and an inactive warren at ///helps.unions.table.

The Forestry Commission (FC) considers the woodland to be at high risk of deer damage, with roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*) present. Evidence of both species was identified during the survey. The FC also promotes the management and control of



grey squirrel populations because this non-native invasive species reduces bird numbers, damages trees and consumes native seeds and flowers.

Desired outcome: Because total exclusion of browsing mammals is not possible, protection must be given to individual seedlings through suitable tree guards.

- Wildlife monitoring by camera trap, run by volunteers;
- Grey squirrel reduction programme;
- Natural regeneration protection using bridgeable tree guards.

Predominant Adjoining Land Use

The property is bound by public highways to the south with agricultural farmland to the east and west. The surrounding fields provide both arable crops and grazing.

A Public Right of Way (PRoW) runs adjacent to the eastern boundary.

The Red Lion public house is situated to the south-east with the car park access road abutting the woodland edge.

The Reigate Pilgrims Cricket Club forms the central eastern boundary, from which the main access is likely to be implemented.

Desired outcome: Safety for users of the PRoW and public highway is paramount. Trees within falling distance of these areas should be inspected at intervals proportionate to the level of risk, with higher-risk trees assessed more frequently.

- Undertake regular risk based tree assessments;
- Complete all remedial tree work promptly;
- Maintain regular communication with adjacent landowners and stakeholders to support transparency and coordinated action.



Section 5: Assessment of Opportunities & Threats

Public Engagement		
Objectives: To provide a safe location for recreation and enjoyment through leisure, education, and commercial activities. - Establish 'Friends of Tranquil Wood'; - Wildlife monitoring, conservation and restoration work; - Parish Council and community partnership; - Enhance woodland biodiversity.		
Item	Opportunity	Threat
Public engagement	Recreation Education Health & Wellbeing Social groups Community Woodland improvement	Slips, trips & falls Injurious fungi & insects Personal injury Lone working Appropriate insurance cover Wildlife disturbance Rubbish / waste Soil compaction
Volunteer labour	Cost efficiency Habitat creation Invasive species control Education Health & wellbeing Social bonding	Slips, trips & falls Organisational costs Weather & working conditions Appropriate insurance cover Injury to personnel, tools & machinery Misidentification of flora Ecosystem disruption

Environmental		
Objective: To provide a wildlife sanctuary and visitor enjoyment.		
Item	Opportunity	Threat
Flora	Enhance growing conditions Species diversification	Encourage browsing of regenerating trees



	Invasive species control Public enjoyment Education Insect diversification Ecosystem creation Bee & Butterflies Fauna nourishment	Translocation of pathogens by grazing mammals Invasive species introduction Bramble growth on disturbed land Rhododendron acidification Bracken smothering Bamboo colonisation
Fauna	Habitat provision Ecosystem creation Species diversification Public enjoyment Education	Increased browsing damage Translocation of pathogens Damage to paths & fences Damage to trees Control measures could be required
Habitat creation	Recreation Education Species diversification Ecosystem creation	Translocation of pathogens by visitors Increased browsing Personal injury
Tree Health	Public safety Commercial value Insect diversification Biosecurity	Translocation of pathogens by visitors Public safety Commercial value Biosecurity
Deadwood	Habitat creation Woodland health Ecosystem creation Slow carbon release Education	Encourage fungal pathogens Translocation of pathogens by grazing mammals Personal injury
Ponds	Habitat creation Woodland health Education Species diversification Ecosystem creation Fauna nourishment	Danger of drowning Public liability Invasive species



Economic		
Objective: To provide a well-reasoned, low-cost community enterprise.		
Item	Opportunity	Threat
Woodland Insurance	Mensuration data capturing Compartment Mapping Windthrow cover Fire cover Personal injury cover	Loss due to Storm damage Loss due to Fire Loss due to injury
Personal Insurance	Cost reducing in event of claim Reassurance to visitors	Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 compliance PRoW Highway Visiting public
Standing Timber	Financial return Offset cost of projects Species diversification Provision for public events	Lack of timber available Poor condition & quality No access / egress Personal injury
Tree Safety Works	Tree health Public safety Financial return of firewood	Financial outlay Occupiers' Liability Act 1984 compliance PRoW & Highway
Local Groups	Commercial value Volunteer engagement Education Furniture makers Woodturners Local advice and assistance Introduction to local talent Social interaction & rapport	Management time / cost Injury to personnel, tools & machinery Cost of insurance
Volunteers Friends of Tranquil Wood	Education Cost efficiency Habitat creation	Management time / cost Injury to personnel, tools & machinery Misidentification of flora



	Ecosystem creation	Efficiency of work
Biosecurity	Tree & plant health Woodland resilience Wildlife condition	Translocation of pathogens Introduction of invasive species
Fire	Fire Beater Stand installation	Damage to habitat Damage to infrastructure Personal injury

Section 6: Proposed Work Programme to Achieve Desired Outcomes

Proposed Work: Public Engagement	
Initial Hazard Reduction	Public safety should be addressed before access is promoted. Harmful waste should be removed, and visitors should be excluded from dangerous features, including the following: - Metal sheet piling at ///sake.engine.moves, - Abandoned excavator at ///whips.milk.person, - Active rabbit warren at ///tennis.stole.epic - Building / fireplace at ///give.tasty.waddle Fencing can be installed, alternatively, the implementation of 'dead hedging' should be considered; particularly to keep people away from steep slopes or accidental entry onto the streambed when conditions are unsuitable for access.
Diseased Ash Clearance	The diseased Ash trees present a high risk and should be professionally cleared. The felled material could be stacked neatly, ready to be utilised in the formation of the dead hedges, and the logs used to form the edges of the footpath to aid easement.
Boundary Fence	The boundary fence should be reinstated to address its current hazardous condition.
Access Gate	A single entrance will guide visitors onto the footpath and away from more hazardous areas. It will also provide space for a noticeboard displaying seasonal hazard warnings and information about events.



Footpath Creation	A well-defined and signed footpath shall provide a safe route through the woodland. The path should avoid tree stumps, raised roots and other trip hazards. A log-lined route can prevent 'desire lines' and keep visitors from wandering. Once the route is confirmed, a safety inspection will be required to identify and remove high-risk trees and prune branches that could cause harm. Adjacent vegetation must also be controlled to prevent injury and stop the path from becoming obscured.
Drainage Network	Exploration of the existing watercourse and drainage network is required to identify opportunities for water movement and water retention. This will create variable habitat, and help define areas suitable for public access. Initially, clearance of vegetation and debris from the features should be conducted to promote water transfer.
Tree Safety	The July 2026 Visual Tree Assessment (VTA), which identified risks, recommended remedial work and set out ongoing management requirements, should be implemented without delay. The 2026 VTA recommends the removal of 19no. dead, dying and dangerous trees from within striking distance of PRow, highway, and along boundary with Red Lion public house and cricket ground. Aerial access, traffic management, and a road closure may be required, for which professional assistance should be sort. High risk trees and high risk areas should be resurveyed every twelve months, with a full resurvey advised every three years. Once the footpath route is confirmed, those trees in close proximity should be assessed. A walkover inspection should be conducted before events and after extreme weather to identify obvious signs of failure.

Proposed Work: Biodiversity Enhancement

Deadwood Habitat	Deadwood habitat can be created by stacking cut branches and logs. These piles support fungi, invertebrates, myriapods and nematodes, which in turn provide food for predatory insects, birds and mammals. The same material can also form dead hedges that discourage access to hazardous areas.
Wildlife Boxes	Bat, bird and owl boxes are inexpensive to construct and are suitable for community projects. Because installation at height may require a ladder, the work should be undertaken by a suitably trained person.



	Bee hotels can easily be made and installed on the sunnier field edges.
Native Flora	Twice-annual cutting with simple hand tools or mechanical brush cutters of bracken and bramble can reduce its impact and smothering of surrounding ground flora and naturally regenerated saplings. The provision of sunny glades can enhance wildflower emergence. This can be achieved through the removal of dangerous trees.
Invasive Flora	Invasive non-native species spread rapidly, are difficult to control and can outcompete native species. Some may also act as vectors of disease. Rhododendron out competes native plants through the provision of heavy shade and soil acidification; these should be cut down and the stumps immediately treated with herbicide to prevent recolonisation. Bamboo has colonised two large areas and is 'choking' the watercourse. Bamboo is notoriously difficult to control and may require excavation to remove or destroy its rhizomes. Herbicide can be applied to freshly cut stems; however, chemicals such as glyphosate may harm soil organisms, including earthworms. The resulting material can add to the site's fuel load and should be removed to reduce fire risk. It may be stacked as a dead hedge or burned in small, infrequent fires.
Veteran Trees	Old trees are incredibly important and provide habitat found nowhere else. These trees must be preserved. 'Veteran' and notable trees should be identified and actions taken to reduce competition and improve their immediate environment. Pollarding and coppicing of younger trees can provide opportunity for future veterans.
Open Space	Opening of pockets of bare ground and maintaining them as such brings great benefit to wildlife providing areas for grazing, foraging and sun bathing. These should be no larger than one-quarter acre, although can be developed into ride edges, ponds and boundaries. These can be incorporated into the mowing regimes.
Riparian zones	Open glade like structures adjacent to water or areas of marsh provide an interface between the water and the woodland environment. This encourages plant and amphibious communities to develop. These only have to be small pockets or a metre either side of a stream to permit direct sunlight to penetrate.
Herbaceous Zones	The creation of scalloped edges adjacent to the footpath shall provide areas of interest; by providing space for vegetative growth such as grass sward,



	herbaceous plants, and shrubs. These areas can provide nectar rich plants and seeds.
Trees	The planting of individual trees can enhance the availability of specific habitats. Native trees each support a varied array of insects, bryophytes, and fungi.
Fauna	The provision of the above points will all provide conditions suitable to encourage greater numbers of local native fauna into the woodland.

Proposed Work: Commerciality

Timber Products	The woodland contains no commercial timber stands or coppice crops and no significant volume of high-quality standard trees. Its value therefore lies primarily in the land itself. Improving access and security, removing invasive species, reducing hazards and maintaining the woodland should increase that value over time.
Woodland Management	A felling licence may be required for woodland maintenance and remedial tree-safety work if more than five cubic metres are felled in any one calendar quarter. The threshold is reduced to two cubic metres if any resulting timber is sold. A five-year proposed work programme or plan of operations should be conducted in year one of ownership, reviewed in year three, and updated in year five. The property should be managed in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard, and in line with all industry best practice.
Public Engagement	Income could be generated by running courses, workshops or events, or by renting the space for these activities. Appropriate insurance and indemnities must be in place before any activity begins.
Sponsorship	Local business could be approached to aid community projects or spaces. This could include the provision of tools, time or funds. Advertising space could be given on notice boards, fencing, or the Friends of Tranquil Wood website and newsletter.



Proposed Work: Silviculture	
Silviculture	Although the woodland is non-commercial, silvicultural principles can still guide tree care and cultivation, supporting healthy trees and valuable habitat. Silvicultural systems such as Continuous Cover Forestry or Irregular Silviculture models can provide guidance on woodland management practices; providing resilience and a more sustainable, healthy, and regenerative ecosystem.
Species Selection	The property is designated in part as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW), meaning that woodland has been present on the site since formal records began. Only native trees should therefore be promoted. Forest Research suggests the following species as suitable for planting on the site: - Alder - Aspen - Beech - Black Poplar - Cherry - Elm - Holly - Hornbeam - Horse Chestnut (internationally endangered) - Lime - Oak - Rowan - Scots Pine - Silver Birch - Sweet Chestnut - Sycamore - Walnut - Wild Service Tree - Willow A diverse mix of suitable species should be selected to improve resilience to disease and climate change. Nursery-grown stock should be used only where locally sourced seed or seedlings are unavailable. Where enrichment planting is needed, suitable saplings may instead be translocated from elsewhere within the woodland to more appropriate locations. To protect individual trees from browsing by resident deer and rabbits, suitable tree shelters should be installed.



Section 7: Recommended Surveys before Work Commences

Recommended Surveys	Description
Digital Mapping	Map the property's boundaries, access points, hazards, features, sensitivities and notable trees to support well-reasoned management decisions.
Geological Assessment	Survey of local geology to confirm suitability of species, inform influence on current species, and possible impacts on operations.
Drainage Assessment	Inspect property to determine historic and existing watercourse activity and assess storm water flow rates; to ensure all public access and infrastructure plans are suitable during the wetter months.
Tree Safety Survey	Professional inspection of trees within striking range of PRow and public highway, and adjacent public house car park. (Completed July 2026)
Ecological Surveys	Bat and bird surveys required prior to tree safety works. European Protected Species (EPS) surveys required prior to woodland activities. Identification of flora and fauna, mapping protected and important species. (Repeat seasonally to build data).
Invasive Species Survey	Invasive plant mapping to establish management regime.
Path & Trail Mapping	Map potential routes for paths and trails through the woodland, assessing accessibility and hazards while identifying suitable locations for educational stops and community activities.

