

**Boxley Parish Council
in association with
KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

WALDESLADE WOODS VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

August 2015

WALDESLADE WOODS VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Index	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Walderslade Woodlands 25 year forward plan	3
3. Community Use	4
4. Round Wood	6
5. Future possibilities for the amenity woodlands and Round Wood area	7
6. Public consultation	8
7. Charitable Trust	9
8. National and Local Policies	10
9. Conclusion and Chairman's supporting statement.	11
10. Photographs	12

Enclosures

Walderslade Woodlands Nature Conservation Management Plan June 2014

Example of leaflets.

Education Pack contents page.

Details of SNCI.

Location of local play areas.

Walderslade Woods (existing) and Round Wood (potential) footpaths.Boxley Parish Council
Report on youth facilities in Boxley Parish 2002.

Round Wood Enabling Development Boxley Parish Council Supporting Information

- 1.1. A previous planning application for planning development at land adjacent to Wildfell Close MA/08/1235 was refused because Maidstone Borough Council did not consider that the need for enabling development had been proved. This application contains a 25 year forward plan which is linked (shown by reference numbers) to the 2014 Kent Wildlife Management Plan for Walderslade Woodlands (enclosed). Whilst it is understood that the planning context has since altered and a strict enabling case is not a requirement, the development will nonetheless continue to directly fund the woodland management and improvement works in the long-term and this remains a fundamental part of the proposals that will be secured through the appropriate legal mechanisms.
- 1.2. Walderslade Woods is Ancient Woodland with 30+ indicator species¹ including rare and important species (Red Data Book or BAP species)². Since the 2008 application Walderslade Woodlands, excluding this small site, has been registered as a Village Green.
- 1.3. The County Council has clearly and publicly stated that it will not consider Walderslade Woods for a country park nor is it able or willing to fund active and proactive management. Whilst the County Council appears happy for the volunteers to undertake work in the amenity woodlands it has stated its wish to no longer have the financial responsibility of the woodlands.

2. Walderslade Woodlands 25 year forward plan

- 2.1 The long term aim is for a community supported Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to be set up to ensure the long-term protection, management and improvement of the woodlands. The Parish Council have prepared a 25 year business plan for the necessary improvement and management works, which underpins the long-term proposals and is fully costed for a 25 year period.

Income.

- 2.2 The experiences of the Parish Council in obtaining grants from outside organisations has led to a realistic projection of grant income as part of the Forward Plan. Other sources of income have been identified, but these are not guaranteed so figures have not been included.

Expenditure.

¹ KWT Walderslade Woods Management Advice 1.45 Species present within the woodlands.

² WPG Woodland Management Plan. 2.1 Areas and features

- 2.3. The maintenance and improvement projects for the woodland were identified from the Kent Wildlife Trust Management Plan (updated 2014) and from the results of the community consultation.
- 2.4. The suggested expenditure includes provision for initial and continued training for volunteers, professional support and one off and long term costs for managing the existing woodland and Round Wood are also included. Contingency funds for emergencies and provision for refurbishment and renewal of structures are also included.

3. Community Use.

- 3.1. In the seventies the woodlands were compulsory purchased by Kent County Council and Walderslade Woodland development commenced. The original development ideas included a school, minor shopping area, recreation areas etc. None of these community facilities were undertaken and what was left was a heavily developed area, set in ancient woodlands, with a lack of facilities. The woodlands cover 3 steep sided wooded valleys and the area reserved for the school (Round Wood). Each of the 3 valleys has a single type one path running along its bottom with occasional formal and informal paths to the residential development. This does allow some less mobile members of the community to access the woods however the steep sides and steps are a barrier. Cossington Valley is however accessible from a public road as the 'security barrier' is a kissing gate that is wheelchair compatible.
- 3.2. In 1997 a draft management plan to manage the wood for the community was commissioned by Kent County Council but due to cutbacks it was never adopted. The Parish Council attempted for many years to get adequate management but was not successful. Kent County Council has only ever undertaken health and safety work which resulted in the woods becoming a 'no go area' for most of the local community. The woods were abused by joy riders and regularly littered with burnt out cars and flytipping. In 2013 the last remaining community structure, a trim trail in Cossington Valley, was removed by KCC due to maintenance issues. The one small formal play area (Tunbury Valley) was removed some 28 years ago.
- 3.3. As the 3 valleys were wooded and steep sided they were unsuitable for recreation beyond walking and the viewing of flora/fauna. Due to the lack of maintenance and abuse of the woods the community rarely enjoyed the woods which were locally perceived as dangerous.
- 3.4. In 2003/4 the Parish Council decided that the only way to rescue the woodlands from the abuse was to become proactive and negotiate with the County Council. From this the Parish Council set up the Walderslade Woods Group. This small group,

facilitated by the Parish Council successfully applied for a £29,835 Grant towards woodland improvements. The improvements undertaken from the grant included:

- Securing the entrances into the woods so that cars cannot be dumped and burnt out. This has covered entrances in Tonbridge and Malling and Medway as a result of negotiations with the neighbouring authorities.
- Installing a kissing gate and motor cycle barriers.
- Introducing seats and picnic benches.
- Repairing and installing new paths and steps to link the 3 valleys.
- Maintaining the pathways.
- Introducing interpretation, notice and welcome boards into the 3 valleys.
- Producing leaflets about each of the valley's, flowers and birds (examples are enclosed).
- Producing an educational pack for the local primary school and residents (a copy of the contents page enclosed).
- Eradicating Japanese Knotweed from the Round Wood Valley.
- Maintaining a small flat area and general areas.

The Parish Council funded the volunteer group for the expenses not covered by the LHI grant and also covered the groups day to day running costs. The Parish Council provides secure storage of equipment at the local hall.

- 3.5. Since 2003/4 the County Council has not increased it's involvement in the Walderslade Woods area, the only improvements have come about due to the hard work and dedication of the Walderslade Woodlands Group volunteers and the support of the Parish Council. Volunteers have undertaken specialised training to allow them to undertake small scale coppicing which allows the management plan to be undertaken.
- 3.6 Due to continual improvement to paths and the purchase of specialist equipment, such as a wood chipper which allows wood chippings to be used as path surfaces on muddy slopes, the woods are now safer and used more.
- 3.7 In May 2012 the registration of the woods as a Village Green was greatly welcomed by the community as this was one of the stated aims identified from the 2007 consultation.
- 3.8 Recent changes in the way primary schools expand learning opportunities resulted in Tunbury School requesting that an outside classroom, with natural seating, be created for use by the Forestry class. The ability to react to such requests and to expand the educational use of the woods is vital not only to meet the needs of the community but also to ensure that they feel that the woods are theirs.

4. Round Wood.

- 4.1. The Round Wood site lies between the Round Wood Valley and Wildfell Close.

Due to the lack of formal paths and entrances the site is generally used by dog walkers and families with older children. What were 3 flat fairly open areas are now being consumed by brambles/scrub and regular proactive maintenance is planned by the volunteers to rescue these sites otherwise they will soon totally disappear.



- 4.2. With no dedicated or type one path system the flat area of Round Wood is inaccessible to wheelchairs or prams. During periods of very wet weather it can become extremely water logged. This stops the work of the volunteers who cannot manhandle large equipment onto the site and it becomes off bounds to everyone but the most intrepid user.

This area is also home to orchids and as such needs careful maintenance and management to ensure the orchid areas are accessible to the public but not trampled upon. In 2014 part of this area was targeted for increased cutting and this has resulted in an increase of orchids in that area.

- 4.3. Due to the number of residential properties bordering the wooded areas many residents are affected by tree problems. Kent County Council, because it does not have an adopted management plan, does not undertake any works in this area. Previously any tree work (and all the trees are covered by a blanket Tree Preservation Order) tended to be done in large batches, which is not necessarily wildlife friendly. Since the start of the recession and Government and local Authority cutbacks there has been no work undertaken. Residents constantly complain about the time it takes to get a response about the trees and the fact that there is no long term management. Coppicing is suggested by the KWT Management Plan and this would, with careful planning, alleviate many problems but also enhance the wildlife habitats and environment.

5. Future possibilities for the amenity woodlands.

- 5.1. The 3 valleys and the flat area of Round Wood as well as being a village green are also designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (see enclosure). Active wildlife management could preserve and increase the diversity of the woodlands but no action would result in the loss of habitats, as the woodlands encroach on the remaining open spaces, and the increasing loss of sunlight to the floor of the wooded valley's would also change the habitats that presently exist. Woodland margins which only really exist at the flat areas of Round Wood are particularly important to the ecosystem of the woods and without proactive management these would gradually disappear.
- 5.2. Due to the initial and subsequent Parish Council grants and the work of the volunteer group the woodlands are being transformed. The 3 valleys have welcome signs, noticeboards and circular walk marker posts. The type one footpaths in Tunbury Bottom and Cossington Way are now designated as Public Rights of Way. There is a wish to designate the type one path in Round Wood Valley as a Public Right of Way too but until the issue with the flat area of Round Wood is resolved this has been suspended as there is not a clearly defined exit/access at the Walderslade Woods Road end of the path and Kent County Council would be looking towards funding for the work to be undertaken.
- 5.3. The small scale work identified by the Management Plan, removing self-seeded saplings, maintaining paths, creating linking paths and encouraging wildlife by creating glades, has mainly been completed in the three valleys but the work undertaken will need continue refreshment. The initial instalment in noticeboards, welcome signs etc. was over 10 years ago and due to the damp nature of the woodlands these will need to be replaced in the near future.
- 5.4. The management plan identifies a short – term work programme up until 2018. Large scale work for the 3 valleys and Round Wood is now required. The volunteer group has become a victim of its own success in that having proved its worth by undertaking and completing various areas of the management plan it now needs specialised equipment, more storage and professional help. Refreshment training for chainsaw licences etc. will need also be needed and funding needs to be identified.
- 5.5. With no clear end to the Government and Local Authority cutbacks and with no indication that KCC could financially support the woodlands in the near future the Walderslade Woodlands Group is reliant on the Parish Council's financial support.
- 5.6. Maidstone Borough Council is actively developing strategies and policies whereby Parish Councils and local organisations are encouraged to take on existing and

future facilities³. Maidstone Borough Council recognises that the Walderslade area has a chronic lack of formal play provision but has no plans to rectify this.

5.7. If the development is allowed and the land goes over to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation then the future of the woodlands will be secured. Long term funding will be available to undertake all the aims in the management plan and also to develop sympathetic play structures and opportunities for formal and informal play within the woodlands.

5.8. Future plans meet the various aims and objectives set out in the Maidstone Play Strategy, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy December 2013. Walderslade Woodlands business plan outlines expenditure for providing:

- Play equipment
- Increased wildlife habitats
- Increased and improved educational and volunteering opportunities
- The opening up a large area that is currently inaccessible to any person with mobility issues or people with buggies.
- Community events
- Proactive management for both flora, fauna and the community
- A dew pond

This path currently connects Wildfell Close Open Space to the larger flat area of Round Wood. This steep path is a good example of access problems experienced due to the geography of the area.



6. Public Consultation.

6.1. Public consultation took the form of meetings, letter drops to all residences in the Walderslade area of the parish, displays and use of the Parish Council's website. The meetings included questions and answer sessions during which members of the

³ Maidstone Play Strategy 2014-2024

public could question the Parish Council, Paul Carter (County Councillor) and Kent County Council Officers. A copy of the response to one of the consultations is enclosed (see appendix H). The summary of the consultations was as follows.

6.2. "The responses.

Option A (do nothing – but KCC can no longer spend funds to maintain woods. This option leaves the huge question unanswered of how maintenance of woods (health and safety) will be funded. **24 votes.**

Option B (Designate whole Round Wood area a village green and seek funds from other sources. This does not resolve the future of the rest of the woodland.) **41 votes.**

'No change option' (invented by the parish clerk to take into account the comments of residents who did not consider that the 3 options available were correct. Comments from these residents will be included in the summary of written comments.) **23 votes.**

Option C (facilitates community ownership of woodlands and open space by way of a Trust. In order to achieve this, a limited area of Round Wood would be released for enabling development, the funds which would be donated to the Trust to maintain their land in future.) **77 votes.**

6.3. The Parish Council considers it has a clear remit from the community that;

- The woodlands needed to be retained.
- Large scale residential development was totally unacceptable.
- KCC as a manager of the land is seen as too remote and susceptible to political and financial changes in direction which is outside the control of the local community.
- There was a strong wish for the woods to remain 'as they are' but that this would not be possible without active management.

7. Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

7.1. A CIO is considered a better option than a Charitable Trust due to the financial protection it offers to the 'Trustees'. The Governing Document for the Organisation would have clear objectives to manage the area for community use and to enhance wildlife and fauna. The Parish Council will retain ownership of the land and lease it for 99 years to the Trust.

7.2. The Parish Council is suggesting that the Trustees are from the local authorities and the community. The Parish Council has used the Vinters Valley Park Trust as an example of what can be achieved with 'community ownership'. It would be up to the

Trustees to decide, in accordance with the Trust Deed, what projects are progressed and the timetable for the projects.

8. National and local policies that support the application for an enabling development.

Maidstone's (draft) Play Strategy 2014-2024.

Introduction states

The provision of free outdoor play and sport opportunities is seen as a vital ingredient in ensuring the all-round, healthy development of children and young people in an era of declining levels of physical and social interaction and activity. Stimulating and challenging play and sport activity will enable young people to develop their physical, mental and social skills, find out more about themselves and their environment, and provide a form of therapy to help overcome emotional problems and the effects of other distressing pressures in modern day living.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by Government on 27 March 2012 requires that each local planning authority takes account of the needs of its community for recreational activity and to identify where there may be deficiencies in such provision.

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

The **Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone 2009–2020** contains a number of objectives including

- *Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives.*

Maidstone Biodiversity Strategy A Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1 2009 – 2014 primary aims for biodiversity conservation are:

- *Maintain and enhance the populations and natural ranges of species and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats and ecosystems.*
- *Conserve internationally, nationally and regionally important species, habitats and ecosystems and to enhance their conservation status where possible.*
- *Conserve species, habitats, and natural and managed ecosystems that are locally characteristic and to enhance their conservation status where possible.*
- *Maintain the genetic variation within species and hence habitats and ecosystems.*
- *Contribute to the conservation of biodiversity on a local, regional, national, European and global scale.*

- *Ensure that current policies and practices which affect the environment do not damage global biodiversity, but instead contribute towards conserving and enhancing it.*
- *Increase public awareness of and involvement in, conserving biodiversity.*

Maidstone Borough Council draft **Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy December 2013** has the following specific aims:

- *Mitigating and adapting to climate change Integrating sustainable movement and access for all*
- *Promoting a distinctive townscape and landscape. Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, water and air quality.*
- *Providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health*
- *Achieving a quality environment for investment and development*
- *Providing community involvement and opportunities for education*

Green spaces in the community can also provide significant social benefit. This enhanced 'social capital' includes social bridging features such as community networks, civic engagement, sense of belonging and equality, co-operation with others and trust in the community. GBI can also facilitate social bonding features, providing activities and environs in which families and friends can engage.

3.94. Quality affects how people perceive their local green space and therefore how often they visit.

Objectives and supporting statements in the Blue and Green Infrastructure Plan include

Providing community involvement and opportunities for education

To achieve greater community involvement in the planning and management of green spaces and encourage the use of green and blue infrastructure as an educational resource.

- *Access to green and blue infrastructure provides opportunities for formal sport or informal exercise and an effective and low-cost health resource.*
- *Access to nature can encourage participation in physical activity. Evidence suggests that being outdoors in nature is an important factor that helps to maintain people's motivation to keep fit. Many participants in health walks cite the changing seasons and variety of wildlife as a major encouragement to continue attending. This type of 'green exercise' – physical activity undertaken in the outdoors – connects people to nature in their local area*
- *Access to affordable, quality outdoor sports facilities will encourage more people to take part in sport.*
- *Contact with nature can help to prevent, alleviate and assist recovery from mental health problems. In particular, natural environments help to lower levels of stress, enhance mood, increase concentration and boost self-esteem.*

- *A network of child friendly, playable green spaces particularly close to where people live and on the routes to schools will encourage more children to play outdoors.*
- *Green routes encourage people to walk or cycle instead of taking the car, reducing unhealthy air pollution as well as promoting physical fitness.*

Key issues identified in the Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy include

- *Public parks and green space funding is under pressure and community involvement in management and volunteering can help secure additional resources.*
- *Anti-social behaviour in public green spaces can detract from use and therefore benefits.*
- *Lack of knowledge about the value of the natural environment in the local community means they are not always as protective of it.*
- *Schools are missing an opportunity if the natural environment is not used as part of learning.*

The green and blue infrastructure identifies that

Attractive spaces that are well managed and maintained generate positive use and encourage a variety of activities by all age groups and abilities. Involving local people in their design, management and maintenance helps address local needs. Children and young people in particular can provide valuable insights into what makes a good play space to help reduce pockets of anti-social behaviour that may exist.

Green spaces can generate civic pride and community ownership; Friends groups regularly use their spaces and are best placed to help put together a management plan to make sure their space is well looked after and provides facilities and activities that local people want. They are better informed about their needs to apply for external funding from organisations like the National Lottery to see improvements take place more quickly on the ground.

Green spaces provide a venue for outdoor learning across all aspects of the school curriculum.

Providing volunteer opportunities on environmental projects can harness community energy and skills and add social value to green and blue infrastructure. Experience gained through working with specialist organisations like the Medway Valley Partnership can also prove attractive to employers.

Providing activities for children and young people can inspire them to love and take care of the natural

9. Conclusion and Chairman's supporting statement.

- 9.1. The 'why not leave it as it is' argument must be considered. If the woods are left without pro-active management they will, of course, develop naturally. However this would not be beneficial environmentally or to the local community. Open spaces and tree- margin ecosystems that exist at the moment would become over-grown and disappear and tree canopies would become thicker reducing light to the woodland floor. The resulting adverse impact on the existing flora and wildlife would make the woods less attractive for recreational and educational purposes. Without a robust financial package to

pro-actively maintain the many different areas of the woods, its future as a viable and vibrant wildlife asset for the community would be in question. Without the cash input from the proposed development, taking on the substantial long-term financial liability of managing and maintaining the Three Valleys and Round Wood does not make an attractive option for the Parish Council and/or other wildlife/tree organisations.

- 9.2. Having undertaken extensive public consultation the Parish Council passed a resolution that it would support in principle the suggestion of the enabling development. It considered that this was the only long term solution to protect and improve this area to a standard that the community deserves and ensure it becomes and remains accessible to all. The public consultation was clear that the local community wanted the land owned locally and held in perpetuity for the benefit of local residents and wildlife. By allowing the development, and the concomitant financial long-term viability this would be achieved.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Wood chippings from coppiced trees used as a base on muddy paths. Work undertaken by volunteer group



Small scale safety work undertaken by volunteers to keep the area safe. Glades are also being created and kept clear to increase biodiversity in the woods.



Area reclaimed by wood reducing sun light to wood floor



Maintenance work to keep picnic area free of nettles and brambles.





Walderslade Woods are managed to increase biodiversity and to protect current habitats from being covered in brambles etc.





Sign posting the circular walk



Clearing the type 1 footpath in Cossington Valley of overgrowing nettles.

Work undertaken by the Walderslade Woodlands Group which is financially supported by Boxley Parish Council.



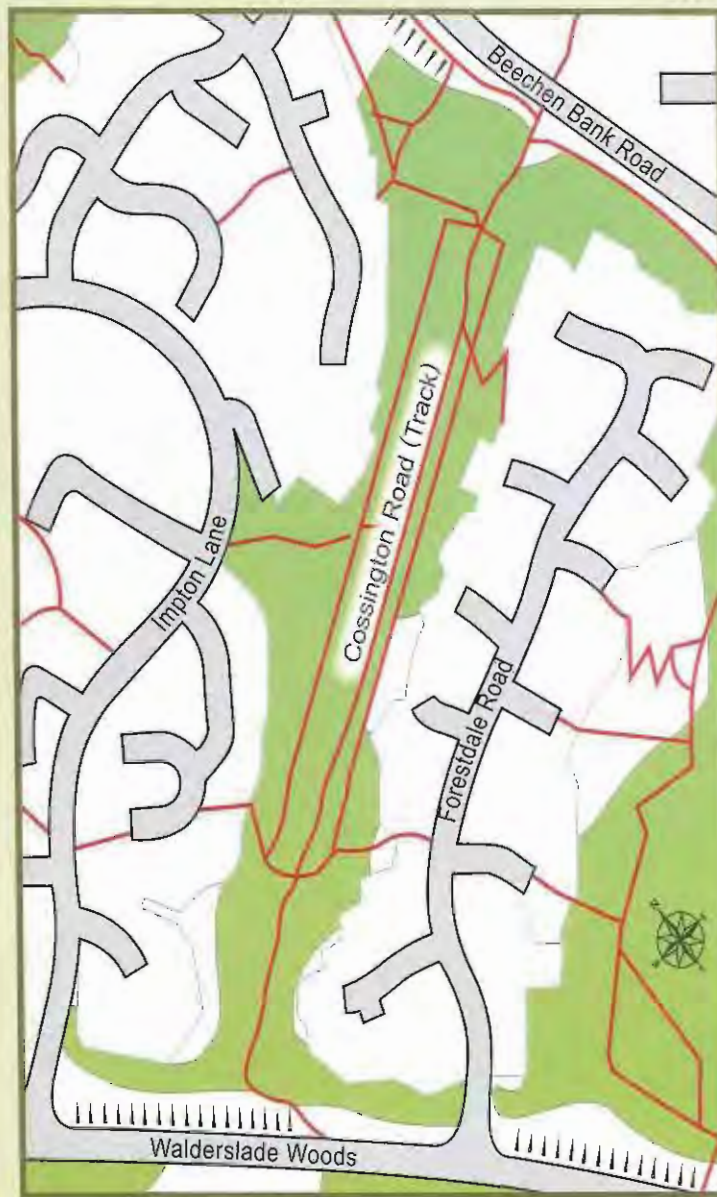
Walderslade Woodlands Cossington Valley

This small valley is part of a complex of steep valleys incised into the chalk of the North Downs at the end of the last glacial period. Other evidence of the effects of glaciation include the sarsen stones which are glacial 'erratics' - stones from far away which were dropped here by glaciers.

The valley sides and bottom are covered in various deposits, including clay with flints. Where chalk is near the surface soil conditions tend to be alkaline and neutral where the deposits are deeper.

The valley has almost certainly been wooded since the last glaciation, but it has also been much modified by man. The woodland is therefore classified as semi-natural ancient woodland.

Man's influence has included coppicing of hornbeam, hazel and chestnut, the latter being a species introduced to Britain by the Romans. The valley has also contained scattered settlements and you can still find the masonry remnants of some of the houses amongst the trees.



Hornbeam is probably the predominant tree and is mostly represented by 'overstood' coppice. There are also many ash and oak standards and a few large beech standards (especially on the western slope near the path down from Impton Lane). There are many ash saplings and a reasonable population of young oak, beech and hornbeam.

The ground flora are typically dominated by bramble, but there are drifts of bluebell and wood anemone in the spring. You will also find lesser celandine, toothwort and a range of other woodland species.

You should be able to spot or hear the woodpeckers and in the evenings if you are lucky pipistrelle bats can be seen.

Hornbeam
leaf



Beech
leaf



The Walderslade Woodlands Group is comprised of local residents who care for these woods.

Walderslade Woodlands - Species

ASH - *Fraxinus excelsior*



ASH - Many large standards, younger trees and saplings throughout the woods. Ash is an early coloniser and provides food for privet hawk moths.

BEECH - *Fagus sylvatica*



BEECH - There are still a few large beech standards left within the woods, but many were destroyed by the 1987 hurricane. The beechnuts are eaten by mammals and birds. Instantly recognisable by its smooth bark.

OAK - *Quercus robur*



OAK - Most of the oak in the woodlands is common or *Quercus robur*, also referred to as Pedunculate oak (because its acorns are carried on long stalks). Oak is an excellent tree for wildlife and supports a wide range. Oaks have separate male & female flowers appearing in the same tree.

FIELD MAPLE - *Acer campestre*



FIELD MAPLE - These generally form a smallish tree and are found scattered through the woodlands, especially near the edges. Good for wildlife and lichens.

BIRCH - *Betula pendula*



BIRCH - Tends to be found on more acid soil areas of the woodlands. Birch is relatively quick growing and is excellent for moths and its seeds are eaten by many birds.

HORNBEAM - *Carpinus betulus*



HORNBEAM - Very common in the woodlands, mostly as overstood coppice - that is old coppice. It is likely that hornbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal - perhaps for gunpowder production at the dockyards. Hornbeam readily propagates from seed and plenty of saplings can be found in the woods. The fruits of the hornbeam are favoured by Hawfinches.

SWEET CHESTNUT - *Castanea sativa*



SWEET CHESTNUT - Found in just one area of the woodlands, this tree was introduced by the Romans. It was planted extensively and coppiced for firewood and fencing stake production. It flowers after its leaves have opened - usually late May or June.

Walderslade Woodlands Round Wood

This small valley is part of a complex of steep valleys incised into the chalk of the North Downs at the end of the last glacial period. Other evidence of the effects of glaciation include the sarsen stones which are glacial 'erratics' - stones from far away which were dropped here by glaciers.

The valley sides and bottom are covered in various of deposits, including clay with flints. Where chalk is near the surface soil conditions tend to be alkaline and neutral where the deposits are deeper.

The valley has almost certainly been wooded since the last glaciation, right up until relatively recent times. When parts were cleared for gardens or small scale farming. There are still some 'open' areas where woodland has not regenerated. Despite this the woodland areas can still be classified as semi natural ancient woodland.

Man's influence has included coppicing of hornbeam, hazel and the valley also contains remnants of scattered settlements.

Much of the valley floor is covered in what might be described as woodland regeneration, where hazel coppice and



other saplings are developing a thick low level canopy.

At the southern end of the valley and on the valley sides the woodland is more mature and contains a lot of hornbeam and ash, with some oak and beech. Throughout the woodland there is a good under storey of young saplings.

Of particular interest is a growth of yew on the valley sides, probably growing in shallow soil directly over chalk.

The ground flora are typically dominated by bramble, with dog's mercury or drifts of bluebell and wood anemone. You will also find moschatel, lesser celandine, toothwort and a range of other woodland species.



Yew foliage
and berries

The Walderslade Woodlands Group is comprised of local residents who care for these woods.

Walderslade Woodlands - Species

ASH - *Fraxinus excelsior*



ASH - Many large standards, younger trees and saplings throughout the woods. Ash is an early coloniser and provides food for privet hawk moths.

BEECH - *Fagus sylvatica*



BEECH - There are still a few large beech standards left within the woods, but many were destroyed by the 1987 hurricane. The beechnuts are eaten by mammals and birds. Instantly recognisable by its smooth bark.

OAK - *Quercus robur*



OAK - Most of the oak in the woodlands is common or *Quercus robur*, also referred to as Pedunculate oak (because its acorns are carried on long stalks). Oak is an excellent tree for wildlife and supports a wide range. Oaks have separate male & female flowers appearing in the same tree.

FIELD MAPLE - *Acer campestre*



FIELD MAPLE - These generally form a smallish tree and are found scattered through the woodlands, especially near the edges. Good for wildlife and lichens.

BIRCH - *Betula pendula*



BIRCH - Tends to be found on more acid soil areas of the woodlands. Birch is relatively quick growing and is excellent for moths and its seeds are eaten by many birds.

HORNBEAM - *Carpinus betulus*



HORNBEAM - Very common in the woodlands, mostly as overstood coppice - that is old coppice. It is likely that hornbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal - perhaps for gunpowder production at the dockyards. Hornbeam readily propagates from seed and plenty of saplings can be found in the woods. The fruits of the hornbeam are favoured by Hawfinches.

SWEET CHESTNUT - *Castanea sativa*



SWEET CHESTNUT - Found in just one area of the woodlands, this tree was introduced by the Romans. It was planted extensively and coppiced for firewood and fencing stake production. It flowers after its leaves have opened - usually late May or June.

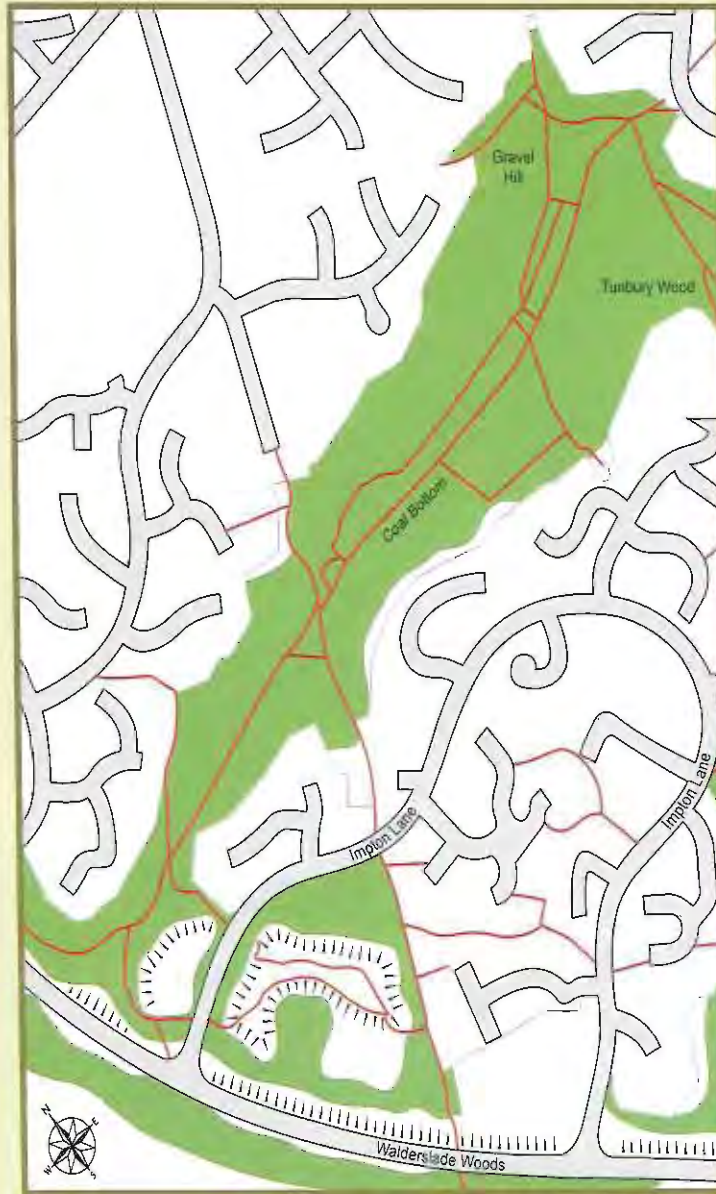
Walderslade Woodlands Tunbury Bottom

This is the largest of the three valleys that comprise the Walderslade Woodlands. The valleys were incised into the chalk of the North Downs at the end of the last glacial period. Other evidence of the effects of glaciation include the sarsen stones - which are glacial 'erratics' - stones from far away which were dropped here by glaciers.

The valley sides and bottom are covered in various thickness of deposits. Where chalk is near the surface soil conditions tend to be alkaline and neutral where the deposits are deeper.

The valley has almost certainly been wooded since the last glaciation, but it has also been much modified by man. The woodland is therefore classified as semi-natural ancient woodland.

Man's influence has included coppicing of hornbeam and hazel. It is possible that the hornbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal for the many forges and smithies in Chatham Dockyard and surrounding villages. It was also an ingredient of gunpowder and there were gunpowder works at Faversham, Oare and Dartford.



At the eastern end of the valley hornbeam is probable the predominant tree and is mostly represented by 'over-stood' coppice. As you move towards the western end of the valley birch becomes more common, indicating more acidic soils. Ash and oak standards are common throughout and there are still a few isolated large beech trees (most were lost in the 1987 hurricane). There is a reasonable population of young oak, ash, beech and hornbeam.

The shrub layer typically contains hawthorn (Midland and Common), rosa, elder, etc. The ground flora is typically dominated by bramble, but there are drifts of bluebell and wood anemone in the spring. You will also find lesser celandine, toothwort and a range of other woodland species, including wood sorrel and wood sanicle.

You will also see lots of 'dead' wood lying around, this is an important habitat for insects and fungi - it is part of the natural woodland cycle. Look carefully and you will see plenty of 'bracket' type fungi on the dead and decaying wood for example, the gelatinous "Jew's Ear Fungus" common on dead elder.

The Walderslade Woodlands Group is comprised of local residents who care for these woods.

Walderslade Woodlands - Species

ASH - *Fraxinus excelsior*



ASH - Many large standards, younger trees and saplings throughout the woods. Ash is an early coloniser and provides food for privet hawk moths.

BEECH - There are still a few large beech standards left within the woods, but many were destroyed by the 1987 hurricane. The beechnuts are eaten by mammals and birds. Instantly recognisable by its smooth bark.

BEECH - *Fagus sylvatica*



OAK - *Quercus robur*



OAK - Most of the oak in the woodlands is common or *Quercus robur*, also referred to as Pedunculate oak (because its acorns are carried on long stalks). Oak is an excellent tree for wildlife and supports a wide range. Oaks have separate male & female flowers appearing in the same tree.

FIELD MAPLE - *Acer campestre*



FIELD MAPLE - These generally form a smallish tree and are found scattered through the woodlands, especially near the edges. Good for wildlife and lichens.

BIRCH - *Betula pendula*



BIRCH - Tends to be found on more acid soil areas of the woodlands. Birch is relatively quick growing and is excellent for moths and its seeds are eaten by many birds.

HORNBEAM - *Carpinus betulus*



HORNBEAM - Very common in the woodlands, mostly as overstood coppice - that is old coppice. It is likely that hornbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal - perhaps for gunpowder production at the dockyards. Hornbeam readily propagates from seed and plenty of saplings can be found in the woods. The fruits of the hornbeam are favoured by Hawfinches.

SWEET CHESTNUT - *Castanea sativa*



SWEET CHESTNUT - Found in just one area of the woodlands, this tree was introduced by the Romans. It was planted extensively and coppiced for firewood and fencing stake production. It flowers after its leaves have opened - usually late May or June.

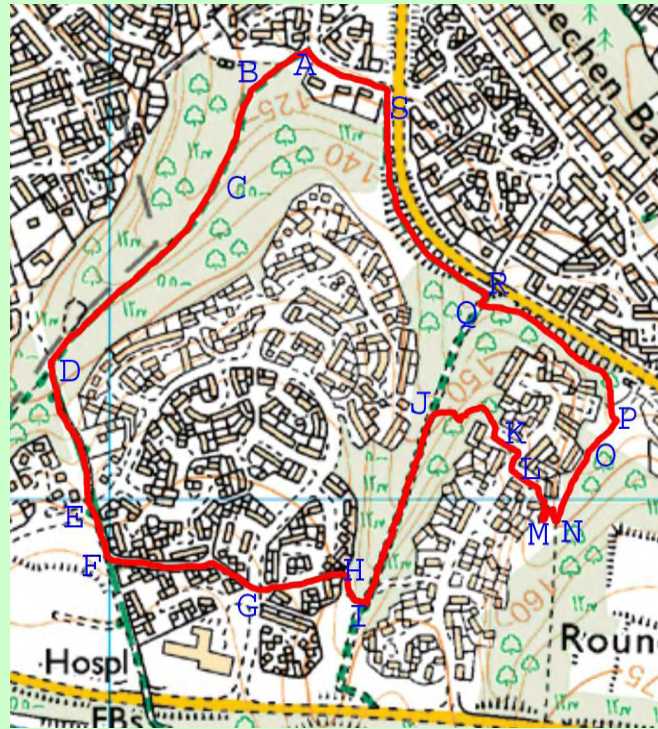
This 3.6km walk is signed both anti-clockwise and clockwise and may be joined at any point; it can be shortened at several points. For the purposes of this guide the walk starts at the northern end of Coal Bottom (Tunbury Wood) by the cul-de-sac Woodlands (off Beechen Bank Road) and proceeds anticlockwise.

Starting at an interpretation noticeboard **A** (at Coal Bottom, so-called because of charcoal production), walk south up the valley along a gravel/hardcore path. To your right a tarmac footpath leads up to Sherwood Avenue **B**. The dry valley bottom with semi-natural ancient woodland contains a range of standard trees including ash, oak and the odd beech. 'Over stood' hornbeam coppice predominates at first (this is old coppice that has grown up into medium or large size trees, many with several trunks). Hazel, elder and hawthorn (midland and common) are common components of the under storey, along with saplings of ash.

At first both sides of the valley have meagre ground layer vegetation. This is caused partly by the deep shadow and partly by motorbikes. Further up the valley the woodland ground layer becomes more obvious and contains a range of species including dog's mercury, bluebell (April & May), wood anemone, bramble, etc. During spring you may even spot a patch of toothwort – a saprophytic plant with no chlorophyll that feeds directly from tree roots. Where summer light levels are good along the footpath edges or in small clearings, stinging nettles and bramble quickly dominate. Walking on past a waymarker post **C** with a footpath forking left uphill to Bracken Hill, you come to a small open area.

Walderslade Woodlands Circular Walk

The three valleys walk



Just after this on the right side of the footpath you will notice a ditch feature which is the ancient medieval wood-bank or boundary ditch between Aylesford and Boxley parishes. A little further on there is a collection of 'sarsen' stones near to a small clearing.

As you meet the tarmac footpath **D** the circular walk continues up the steps to the left. Straight ahead leads to the Walderslade Woods road and the path on the right leads to Tunbury Avenue. Follow the steps up to Impton Lane **E** and cross straight over to the tarmac footpath opposite.

Follow this footpath for about 90m and then at a junction **F** turn left following the waymarker signs. This path now runs between housing (behind Orbit Close, Spenlow Drive, Trotwood Close and Bellgrove Court) and emerges again onto Impton Lane **G** just to the north of the Alexandra Hospital. Carefully cross Impton Lane and continue straight down the tarmac footpath past some rose beds and through some more housing (Olivine Close). Keep going straight towards the woodland down a tarmac path with garden fencing on both sides. Immediately in front of you is a waymarker post **H** near to a large cherry tree. The path turns right and goes down a flight of gentle steps into Cossington Valley. At the bottom of the steps there is a Walderslade Woods notice board **I** and a waymarker post directs you to turn left down Cossington valley.

The next part of the route (**I** to **O**) has no waymarker posts at present. Walk down the central path in Cossington Valley, which is the most shaded of the three valleys. There is some adventure playground equipment on each side. Continue until you reach a path going diagonally uphill on the right **J**. For a shortened walk, continue straight to point **Q**. For the circular walk, follow the uphill zigzag path until you emerge in Malus Close. Walk along this **K**, turn right into Forestdale, and immediately **L** left into Fagus Close. At the far end you will see a footpath between 2 hedges leading to a wooden gate. Proceed through the gate and into Round Wood valley. Follow the tarmac path as it zigzags down the valley side (accessible by push chairs with care). If you stop at the point of the first zigzag at the top **M** and look into the wood straight ahead you will see an area with yew trees. Further down

there are a couple of large beech trees adjacent to the zigzag path and some tall ash standards as well. The ground under the large beech tree in the valley floor is thick with beechmast. Immediately opposite the beech the regeneration woodland growth is mostly hazel coppice with a dense ground cover of moschatel. Follow the zigzag footpath down into the valley bottom **N**.

The circular walk turns left and heads down the valley towards Beechen Bank Road. Turning right would take you up towards the Walderslade Woods road. The path now emerges into an open area and after a few more metres a path joins from the right (near the notice board) **O**. This path leads up the valley side and runs along the back of the Longwood houses through more high quality woodland.

Continue on down the valley path and observe that the range of species increases. The open area is dominated by bramble, nettles, grasses and cranesbill with some patches of dense bracken. Amongst the fairly young trees lining the path you will notice plums, blackthorn, alder and cherry – all of which were probably part of a garden or farm area. Further on you come across the picnic site, the table on the right being in an area once infested with Japanese Knotweed. At this point the circular route turns left at the waymarker post **P** and climbs up and along through chestnut coppice; this route can be slippery when wet.

If you need an easier route don't turn left at the waymarker **P** but head straight down Round Wood Valley and through the wooden kissing gate at the end and onto Beechen Bank Road. If you look up and ahead as you walk through the gate you will see a couple of whitebeam trees. You can turn left

there and walk down the footway to rejoin the walk **R** near the underpass.

The circular walk route from point **P** up the valley side and through the woodland first takes you through a hornbeam dominated area and then past a large oak standard. The woodland character then changes as sweet chestnut becomes dominant. This tree was introduced to the UK by the Romans and is commonly managed as coppice in Kent. The wood is traditionally used for stakes and other woodland products. These chestnuts had not been coppiced for many years and were consequently quite tall – again described as 'over stood coppice'; we have started coppicing here recently. At the rear of the residential gardens (behind Silver Tree Close) the chestnuts were cut down in 2001 and are now strongly re-growing. The path runs on through the woodland immediately above Beechen Bank Road, until it dips back down into Cossington Valley near the underpass. The descent here is quite steep and slippery when wet.

On reaching the valley floor footpath **Q** you turn right. After a few metres the circular walk turns left **R** up a fairly steep path just before the underpass (the footpath through the underpass goes towards the bypassed section of Boxley Road and can be followed to Walderslade Village). This section can be slippery in the wet. The path now follows Beechen Bank Road but at some height above it. It slowly dips down as you near Woodlands. Follow the waymarkers keeping to the main path (there are a couple of paths leading off to the left which also take you into Coal Bottom). As you approach the first house in Woodlands **S** you follow the waymarker arrow straight on (if you turn right at the barrier near the

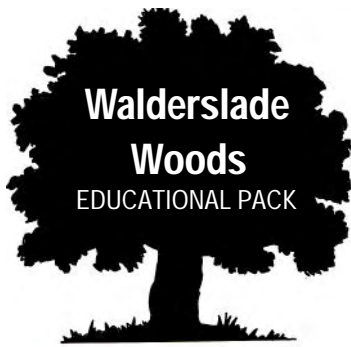
waymarker post you can cross Beechen Bank Road and join up with a footpath towards Walderslade Village). Follow the tarmac footpath left into Woodlands and to the start point **A**.

Please take all litter home with you. There is a legal requirement in these woods to clean up after your dog. Motor vehicles are prohibited in the woods; the police community support officer can be contacted via the control room 01622 690690. Please report any serious dumping or other problems to the Parish Office, Wildfell Close – tel 01634 861237.

This leaflet is produced by Boxley Parish Council and the Walderslade Woodlands Group, with help from the KCC GIS team, and is one of a series freely available from the Parish Office.

The map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019238. 2009



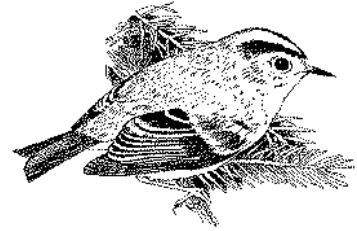


Walderslade Woods Pack - contents



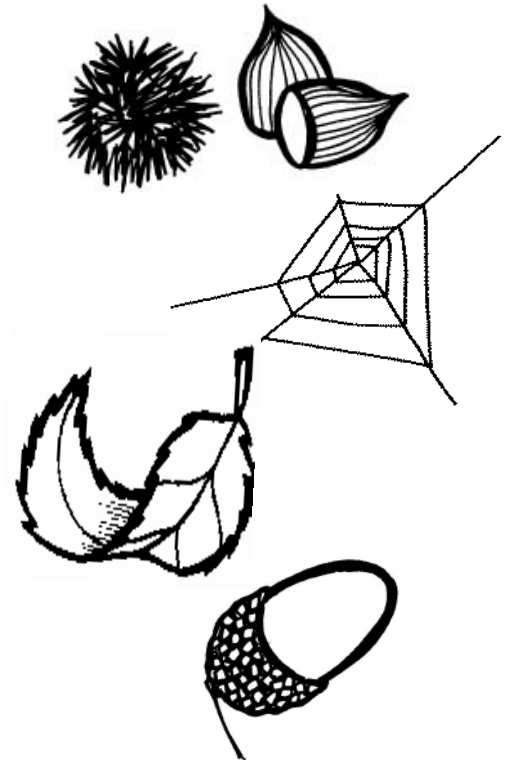
Identification sheets

- Identifying trees from leaves
- Bird identification and record sheet
- Flower identification and record sheet
- Fruits and seeds identification and record sheet
- Minibeast identification and record sheet



Activity sheets

- Minibeast passport
- My Biological records
- Minibeast investigations
- Nature Detectives
- Seasonal change
- Seasonal colours
- Sensing nature
- Treasure hunt
- Wildlife art
- If you go down to the woods today
- In a tree's lifetime
- Make friends with a tree



Information sheets

- KWT tutor led days
- Minibeast information
- Tree information
- Using maps in Walderslade woods
- Maps of Walderslade Woods
- Links and sources of further information



Kent Wildlife Trust

Tyland Barn Sandling Maidstone Kent ME14 3BD

Registered charity no. 239992 A company limited by guarantee no 633098

Tel: 01622 662012 Fax: 01622 671390 www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Protecting Wildlife for the Future

KENT LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE

KWT File No: 763620

Site:	Walderslade Woods, Chatham	Site Ref. No:	MA 67
LPA:	Maidstone / Tonbridge & Malling	Central Grid Ref:	TQ 763620
Parish:	Boxley / Aylesford	Category:	Woodland, scrub
Owner:	KCC	Natural Area:	North Downs
Area:	38.52	AONB:	No
Surveyed:	2006	TPO:	
First notified:	Dec 2007	Public rights of way:	Yes
Date approved:	6 Dec 2007		

REASON FOR DESIGNATION

The site includes three main areas of ancient broadleaved woodland listed on the ancient woodland inventory and with over 30 ancient woodland indicator plants recorded. Also within the site are several unimproved grassland clearings.

RATIONALE FOR SITE BOUNDARY

The site boundary follows the edge of the three main wooded valleys of Tunbury Wood and Round Wood.

DESCRIPTION

The site consists of three relict wooded dip slope dry valleys cut into the North Downs at Walderslade. Formerly, the woodland covered a much larger area including much of the plateau area between the valleys.

The unmanaged semi-natural ancient woodland, once managed as coppice with standards, supports a typical chalk dip slope woodland flora.

There is a variety of woodland habitats associated with soils that vary from acidic on the plateau and upper slopes to highly calcareous on the lower slopes and valley floors, including sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* / sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, on the plateau, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* / hazel *Corylus avellana* on the middle slopes, and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* / hazel / field maple *Acer campestre* in the valley bottoms. In addition there is a small area of albeit damaged beech *Fagus sylvatica* woodland on the slopes in part of the complex, and scrubby grassland (former woodland) at the north eastern end of the area. Dense secondary ash/hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* woodland has colonised areas that were damaged in the Great Storm of 1987.

The ground flora is diverse and reflects the diversity of soil types with bluebell ' *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and bramble dominating the plateau and upper slopes, and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* dominating the lowest slopes and valley floors.



The varied woodland habitats support 30+ ancient woodland indicator plants including wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*, wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosa*, herb paris *Paris quadrifolia*, early purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, narrow buckler fern and scaly male-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and *D. affinis*, sweet woodruff *Galium odoratum*, sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, and goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*.

A wide range of trees/shrubs in the understorey includes woodland and common hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* and *C. monogyna*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, both whitebeam and rowan *Sorbus aria* and *S. aucuparia*, birch *Betula pubescens* and *B. pendula* and elder *Sambucus nigra*.

Climbers are frequent and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* is common in the sweet chestnut/oak woodland whilst traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba* scrambles through the ash/field maple/hazel areas.

A good number of bryophytes occur, reflecting the soils types and the sheltered damp nature of the valleys. An interesting suite of bryophytes is associated with the Sarsen stones in particular.

There is plenty of dead wood scattered throughout the complex which ensures the presence of lignicolous fungi and should also be beneficial to invertebrates.

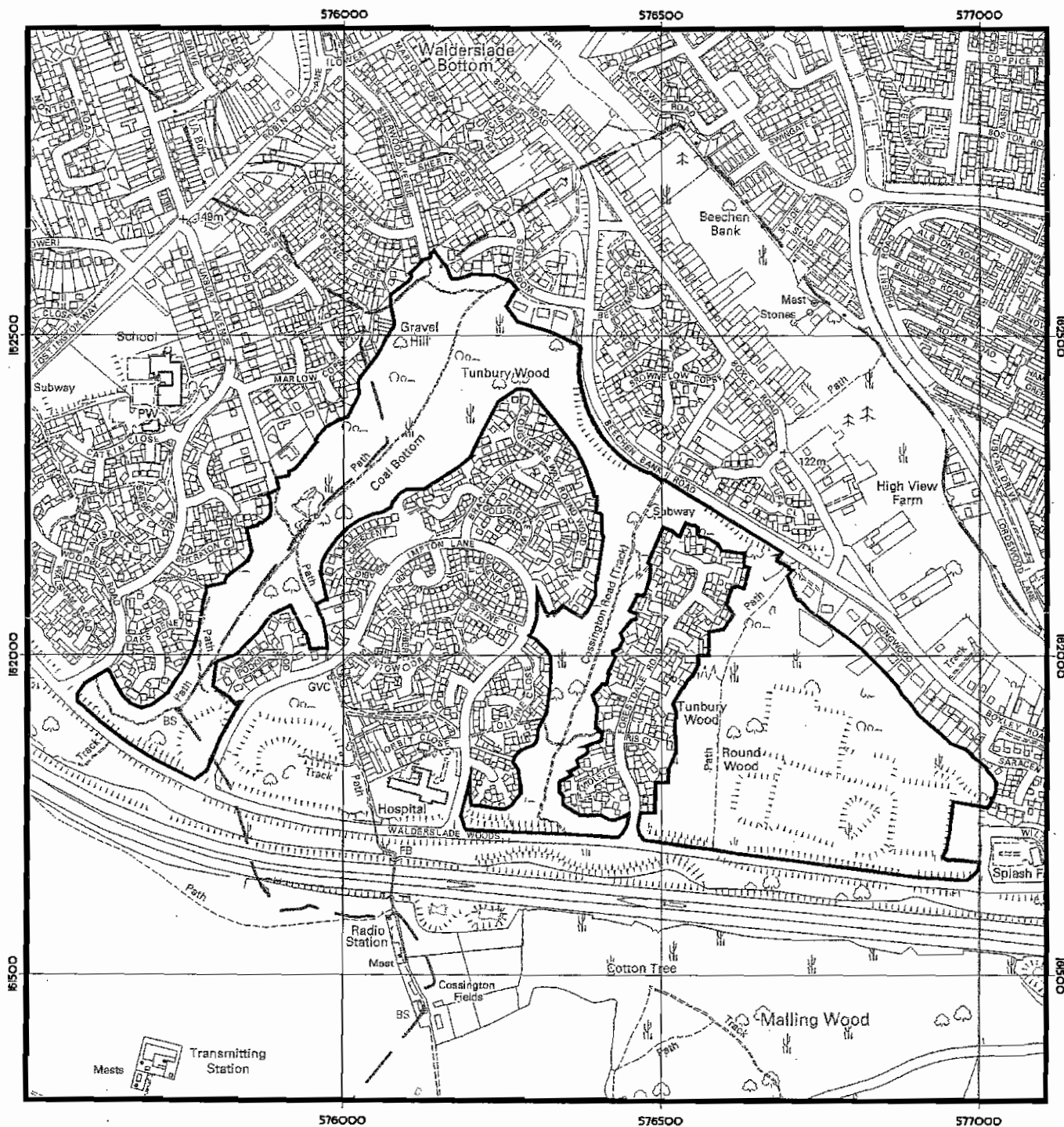
Several grassy clearings are present within Round Wood. These contain a range of species including those indicative of unimproved grassland such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*. Areas of bramble scrub in the clearings are also included within the site as these have value for birds and other wildlife for example, dormice ^{1,2,3,4}.

Despite the proximity of housing, a variety of woodland birds including common warblers, tits and finches were observed during the botanical survey. The site was known in the recent past to support a winter roost of hawfinches ^{2,6,7}. There are records of whitethroat and willow warbler ⁶ using the clearings, along with many common grassland butterflies and several day flying moths.

Dormice ^{1,2,3,4} and badgers ⁵ are present and the site is used by bats ¹.

¹ Protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
² Priority Species UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1998 & the 2007 list
³ National Red Data Book
⁴ Priority Species Kent Biodiversity Action Plan
⁵ Badger Protection Act 1992
⁶ Amber List. Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-7
⁷ Kent Red Data Book Status 3. A. Waite (Ed.) 2000





Kent Wildlife Trust © 2007

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. 100019238. 2007.

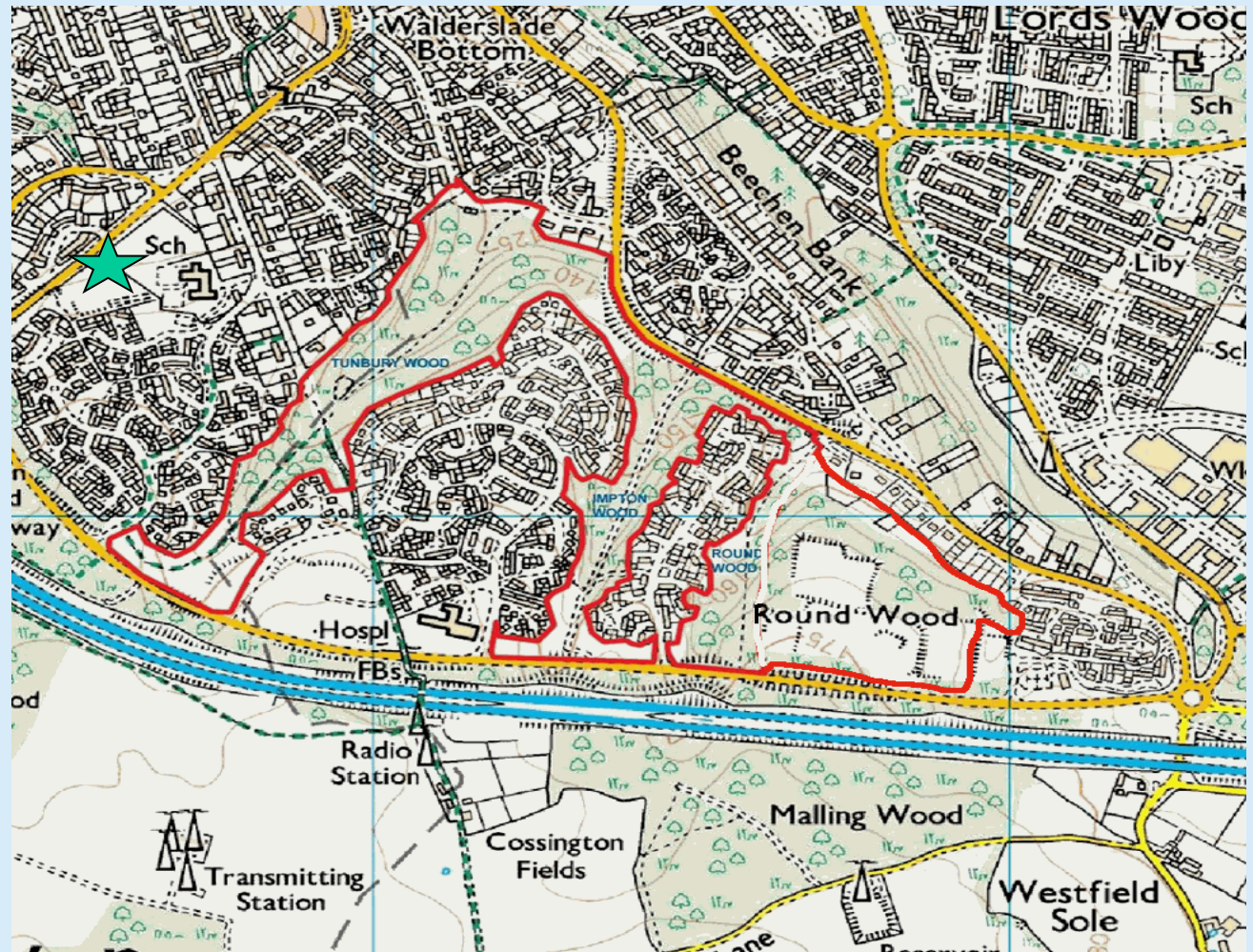


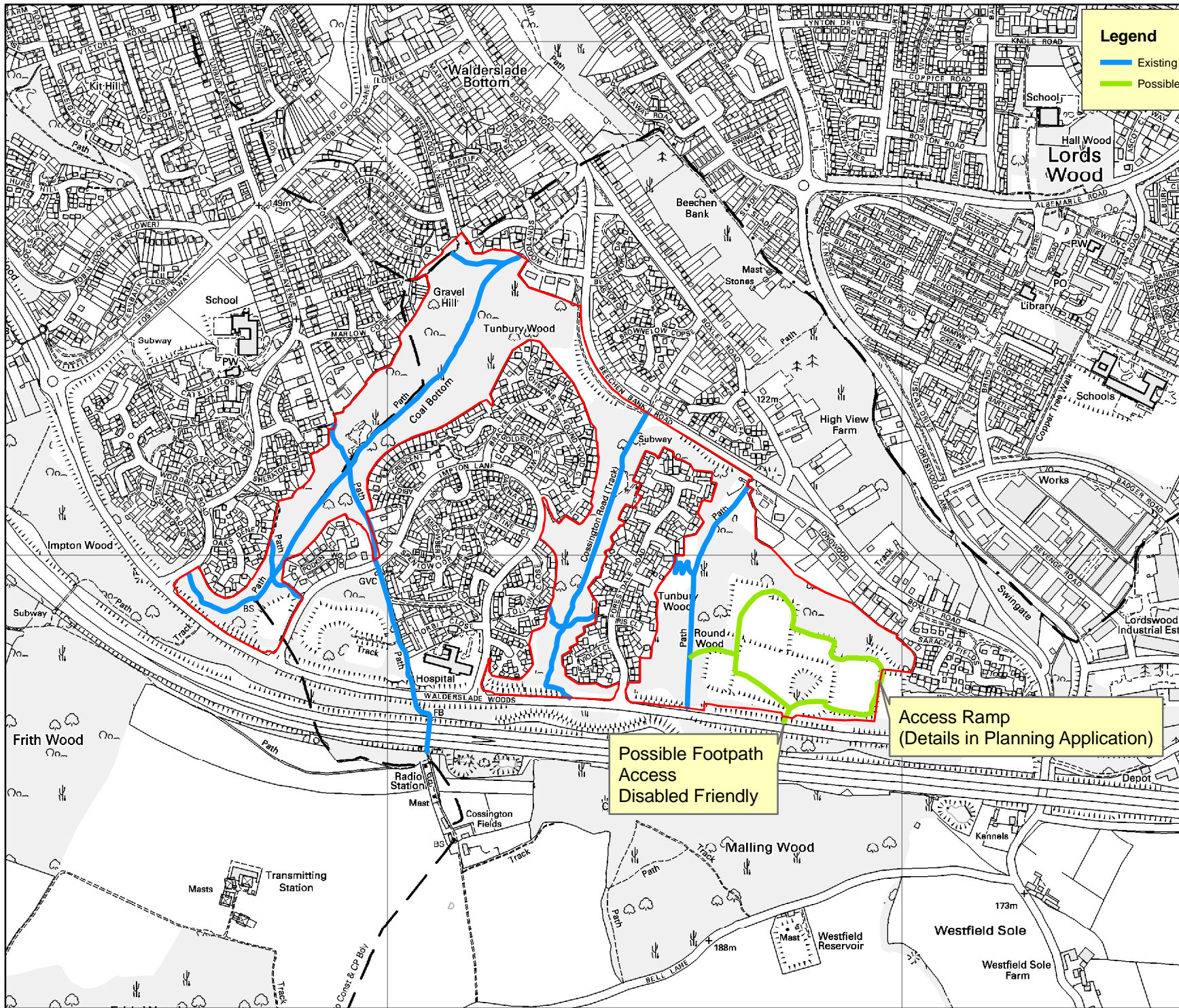
Local formal play areas.



Play area. Tonbridge & Malling BC

Maidstone Borough Council provides a small play area at Timber Tops (off map to the East)





Legend

- Existing footpaths that are surfaced - generally type one
- Possible path that could be introduced



Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
 (C) Crown Copyright Licence No. LA076708.
 Additional information copyright Kent County Council



PROPERTY GROUP
 County Hall, Maidstone
 Kent ME14 1XQ
 Tel:08458 247247

Drawing Title

LAND AT WALDESLADE WOODS:
APPENDIX G:
FOOTPATHS & ACCESS

Access Ramp
 (Details in Planning Application)

Possible Footpath
Access
Disabled Friendly

MasterMap

Drawn By	JTN	Date	MAR 2008
----------	-----	------	----------

0 80 160 240 320 Meters

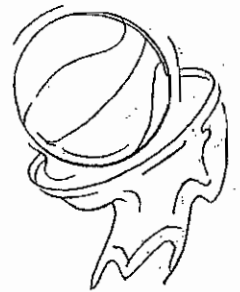
1:10,000

Drawing No. TQ7661/17A



Boxley Parish Council

Report on Youth
Facilities within the
Boxley Parish.



Children and Youth in Boxley Parish

Introduction

The purpose of this report to highlight issues relating to children and youth within the parish. Boxley parish is the largest parish within Maidstone with an electorate of 5,255. It is made up of three very distinctive areas. To the north of the parish is the densely populated Walderslade/Lordswood area. In the south the densely populated Grove Green/Vinters Park area and sandwiched in the middle is the rural area with two villages - Boxley and Sandling. The parish also has a number of isolated rural properties

At the last review of the Local Plan the parish council brought to the attention of the Borough Council the lack of formal open space provision within the Walderslade/Lordswood area. In 1998 the Borough Council's view was that there were adequate provisions for the children and young people of the area just outside the Maidstone boundary (in the north of the parish) and just outside the parish boundary in the South. Little thought was given to the distance of these facilities from the residential areas, the lack of connecting footways at Walderslade/Lordswood and the main roads that have to be negotiated. No thought was given to the fact that these facilities already serve large residential areas and that the more local residents extensively use them.

It has been long recognised that facilities within the parish for children (1 – 9 years) and youth (10 – 17 years) are often inadequate and there has been concern about the impact this is having on the local communities and the young people themselves.

Anti-social and criminal behaviour.

The two main areas Grove Green/Vinters Park and Walderslade/Lordswood are experiencing problems with youths.

Grove Green.

Maidstone Police have been closely monitoring the situation at Grove Green/Vinters and regular reports have been received at Kent County Constabulary Parish Forums. The last forum was held on 10th June 2002, the report on Boxley Parish reported, against the previous year, a 39% increase in crime, which was focused on the Grove Green/Vinters Park area. The report states "*Youth issues around Grove Green, in particular the 2 community halls and Tescos, has been the focus of much attention by us. Operation Farthing ran for 11 days at the end of March and with continued police presence a number of arrests have been made. Camera installations have gained us evidence required to tackle the graffiti issues.*"

Walderslade/Lordswood

Police statistics and evidence is not readily available from the Medway Police, who cover this area. The only statistics supplied by Medway Police for the Walderslade/Lordswood area show that over a 9 month period 111 crimes were reported, the majority connected to thefts from vehicles and criminal damage. It should be noted that the parished area of Walderslade/Lordswood does not have a single shop or public house to act as a gathering or focal point. The local shop and the Walderslade Shopping Centre are outside the parish boundary and Medway

Police has often targeted these areas due to youth disturbances. In March 2002 the Clerk to the parish council produced an 'informal' breakdown of the problems faced by residents of this area and this is enclosed as Appendix A. In June 2002, and not included in the Police statistics, a mini crime wave hit the community hall, which is operated by the parish council. In 3 weeks 12 windows were smashed and there were two attempted break-ins. 6 windows were smashed by 2-3 local children aged 9 – 10.

As village and community halls within Grove Green and Walderslade are being targeted by vandals the parish council is actively considering funding the installation of CCTV at these locations.

How many young people are there?

The parish council has not been able to locate accurate figures for the number of children/young people in the areas. Therefore in an attempt to arrive at a figure a crude calculation has been devised. Number of properties in the area (taken from electoral rolls) x 50% (number of households with children) x 1.4 (average number of children per family). The figures used are often the minimum in each case.

This crude calculation results in the following numbers of young people.

Grove Green/Vinters Park. $1,916 \times 50\% \times 1.4 = 1,341$

Walderslade/Lordswood. $1,554 \times 50\% \times 1.4 = 1,088$

Boxley Village $76 \times 50\% \times 1.4 = 53$

Sandling Village $203 \times 50\% \times 1.4 = 142$

If this is taken a step further and if it is surmised that half of the young people population is under the age of 10 then.....

- 544 children (aged 1 to 9) in Walderslade/Lordswood. Children in Lordswood have access to a small play area but children in Walderslade have no formal play facilities at all and are approx. 2 miles from the Lordswood play area.
- 544 youths (aged 10 to 17) in Walderslade share 1 basketball hoop and 1 football goal and to gain access to this some children will walk 1.5 miles.
- 670 youths in Grove Green/Vinters Park have no formal facilities at all.
- No young people in the two villages have access to any formal facility.

What can be done?

There is little doubt that only a minority of youth causes the serious problems by being involved in criminal or disruptive behaviour. However it is recognised that boredom also causes abusive and disorderly conduct. Home office research shows the peak age for offending is 15 years. If young people do not have a place or area of their own it may increase the risk of minor damage, this can easily spiral into anti-social behaviour and the possibility of a criminal record.¹

¹ Youth Shelters and Sports Systems. A practical guide 2nd Edition.

The Towards a Safer Maidstone Community Safety Plan 1999-2002 clearly identifies the needs *“to constructively engage with young people in the Borough to reduce the likelihood of their being involved in, or the victims of, incidents of crime and disorder. The community often sees young people as a problem. Groups of teenagers in public areas are perceived as a threat and young people are often accused of being abusive and showing little respect for others. Whilst in some cases this is clearly true, the audit showed that there is more chance that a young person will be a victim themselves.”* This audit supports the view that abusive and disorderly conduct is often caused by boredom.

*“Young people need to socialise as part of their normal growth and development, they need to learn how to relate to each other in the absence of adults, this is how they mature. It is true that they will sometimes make fools of themselves, take a few risks, get too boisterous and show off inappropriately in front of their peers. It is much better to have them do this in a designated space out of harms way.”*² If this statement is accepted as true then this signifies the urgent need to ensure that adequate facilities are available for youths. These facilities need to be carefully identified to ensure that local residents are not inconvenienced. The need to have separate youth facilities can be seen wherever there is a children’s play area. Youths will take over this area in the evening and due to inappropriate behaviour the play equipment is often damaged.

Young people who want a more organised structure such as a youth club are often already members but a large group of youths do not want this structure. It is recognised by everyone young enough to remember their youth and also by the professionals working with youths that their needs are very modest – a dry place to hang out, a basketball hoop or a football goal.

The lack of facilities and open space in Walderslade and the lack of facilities for youths in Grove Green/Vinters Park may be a cause for the anti-social and criminal damage being experienced by the communities. Appendix B lists the facilities, within the parish, available for the children and youth of the parish.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that all relevant authorities – which includes parish, District and County Councils *“have a duty to consider the impact of their functions and decisions on crime and disorder in their local areas.”* The parish council recognises the constraints, especially financial, on the relevant authorities. Where possible it has provided facilities. At present it supplies and maintains the only flat open space in Walderslade, it also supplies a football post and a basketball hoop. However more needs to be done and the parish council would like to see the following.

- A proactive stance from the Borough and County Council to identify land and provide facilities for children and youth in Walderslade/Lordswood.
- The provision of youth facilities at Grove Green/Vinters Park. Area D Shepherds Gate Drive has already been recognised as a possible location.
- The regular maintenance of the small area identified at Sandling. A small triangle of land in the village might be suitable for some facilities or just be maintained as

² Youth Shelters and Sports Systems. A practical guide 2nd Edition.

an open space. The land is presently owned by Highway department. Shown as red on the accompanying maps.

- Consultation with young people to see exactly what they want.

BOXLEY PARISH COUNCIL

www.boxleyparishcouncil.co.uk

e-mailed to Sandie Smith &
Graham Rogers as an
attachment JB. 22/03/02

Clerk - Mrs. Pauline Bowdery
Assistant Clerk - Ms Sallyanne Parvin

Beechen Hall
Wildfell Close
Walderslade
CHATHAM
Kent ME5 9RU

Parish Office Tel & Fax 01634 861237
E Mail bowdery@boxleyparishcouncil.co.uk

Ms S Smith
Maidstone Borough Council
13 Tonbridge Road
MAIDSTONE
ME16 8HG

Our Ref: Wald/Youth01

Date: 22nd March 2002

APPENDIX A

Dear Ms Smith

Anti-social behaviour in Walderslade.

Thank you for your fax dated 20th March 2002 due to the wet and windy winter things have been a little quiet. I get regular reports from one or two residents who keep me up dated. Perhaps if I categorise the problems this may help.

1. Gangs in Walderslade.

Last year there were two quite distinctive gangs. One older group met at the bus stop, opposite the hospital, but the reports on these were that although they looked quite intimidating they kept themselves to themselves and were really no trouble. They are fairly approachable and there has been very little graffiti and hardly any damage to the shelter.

The second gang, they normally wear white baseball caps, were the main troublemakers and they also encouraged smaller children to do damage. It is reported that it was this group that vandalised, intimidated and generally acted anti-socially giving verbal abuse etc. Although I never heard of any physical violence it did come close on a couple of occasions. It is this gang that was thought to have caused criminal damage and harassment of some residents at Goldstone Walk.

2. Open space, Impton Lane near Celestine Close.

Residents facing onto this small patch of ground, last year, complained that children were congregating there and causing problems including smashing windows and deliberately kicking footballs at doors etc.

Open space Timber Tops.

Complaints were received last year about older youths congregating there but it appears to be quiet at the moment.

3. Scramble/trial bikes.

These are a huge and continuing problem. My caretaker and I have had bikes reared up at us at Beechen Hall and it is only a matter of time before children are killed as the bikes are driven erratically on the main roads. Due to the fairly rugged nature of the Walderslade woods the riders are attracted to use public footpaths and the open areas. Some parents have actually informed this office that they encourage this to keep them away from the roads.

Last year an incident occurred at Orbit Close where the Police arrested a resident for hitting a rider. The riders were, I gather, using Orbit Close and a local footpath as a circular racetrack and were also riding at small children. The noise etc. caused horrendous problems and this nuisance went on for months, barriers have been erected but this has only pushed

the problem elsewhere. The bikers using the woodland and the local open spaces (called the plateaus which are at different levels) suddenly appear without warning, riding at speed and at head height which has caused much local alarm and many near misses.

Bracken Hill/Ploughmans Close have had particular problems and local residents felt very threatened by the behaviour and verbal abuse/threats. Just before Christmas it was the turn of Wildfell Close to have bikes racing up and down the road. Beechen Bank Road and Boxley Road, Walderslade are also used regularly as a racetrack. Lordswood (especially Birch Drive and Dogwood Close) also has problems.

The riders are local and I have approached some on three/four occasions, and asked them to leave the open space at Wildfell Close, which they have damaged. One older group is fairly polite although they basically ignore your request and return later the other are full of hormones and I generally try to avoid them.

Bikes are always around here but the complaints are starting to rise again due to the light evenings.

4. Other.

Egg/stone throwing this went on for months but is now quiet.

Football games etc outside houses damaging cars and property (Celestine Close had a real problem last year)

Burnt out cars and dumped cars. Like everywhere they are a magnet for the local children.

One car last year on having a dumped sticker placed on it was completely smashed up in less than 2 hours.

Basically the real problem is that there are no facilities for young people in this area if they don't want to join a club or organisation. The parish council did arrange for the youth bus to attend last year and this was generally well received and for a while successful. However it was decided not to book this again due to its unreliability, when it was late or cancelled gangs of youths then roamed around causing problems. The parish council is trying to purchase an open space, which is away from the properties, and is considering a youth huddle or something similar. Unfortunately the County Council sold this land and the parish council is now trying to buy some from the new owner.

Recently a footway has been opened along Walderslade Woods Road, which will now allow young people to walk/cycle to Beechen Hall. There is a small but maintained open space here with a goalpost and also a proper basketball hoop in the car park. The basketball hoop is quite well used and local children often use the car park for football, the open space is too wet at the moment. The hall is occasionally vandalised, but knowing what happens to the hall at Catkin Close, it gets off lightly. This may be because when new youngsters appear we approach them and let them know they are welcome and in the summer holidays I often let them use the toilets and get a drink.

There are a number of issues that really annoy the parish council and local residents and may I take this opportunity to highlight them.

1. Lack of any response from the Police. Even when criminal damage is caused they are not interested. There have recently been more sightings of Police cars in the area but the feeling is that this is a forgotten area. There was one very Policeman that tried to keep an eye on the area but he was moved on. There is absolutely no communication with or information from the Medway Police.
2. Lack of written response to letters sent by the parish council. I have been informed that it is the policy of Medway Police not to send written replies this would be acceptable if there were telephone calls but there isn't.

3. Lack of interest in quality of life issues, residents have complained and the excuse from Medway Police is that they deal with intelligence led work and do not get involved in quality of life issues.
4. Every parent in this area has an angel for a son or daughter it is always somebody else's child.
5. Total lack of facilities or any official large open spaces.

The parish council has indicated that it will try to support any initiative that will help youth in the area. It paid for the youth bus and also gives a discount on the hall hire fees for any regular clubs that caters for children. It would obviously be interested in any initiatives in the area.

I hope that the above is of help and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Pauline Bowdery
Clerk to the Council

Formal facilities for children (1 – 9 years of age)

Grove Green/Vinters Park.

Fenced play area incorporating some child play equipment with 4 swings at Shepherds Gate Drive. Shown as A on map.

Fenced play area incorporating a slide and 2 swings at Crownfields. Shown as B on map.

Fenced play area at Penhurst Close incorporating some child play equipment with 4 swings. Shown as C on the map.

Fenced play area incorporating some child play equipment with 4 swings N.E of Weaving Village Hall. Shown as D on map.

Walderslade/Lordswood.

Play area incorporating some child play equipment with 4 swings at rear of Timber Tops, Lordswood.

Sandling No facilities.

Boxley No facilities.

Formal facilities (basketball hoop, goalpost etc.) for youth (10 – 17 years of age).

Grove Green/Vinters Park. No facilities.

Walderslade/Lordswood.

One goalpost on Wildfell Close open space (leased and maintained by Boxley Parish Council) Shown as E on map.

One basketball hoop in car park at Beechen Hall (operated by Boxley Parish Council) Trim trail in Walderslade Woods. Shown as F on map.

Sandling. No facilities

Boxley. No facilities. This is a small village set in an AONB and it is not clear what can be achieved.

Official public open spaces, including Wildfell Close and Boxley Green, are shown as green on accompanying maps.

Area to be adopted by MBC shown as orange.

Grove Green and Walderslade also have amenity woodland shown as blue on accompanying maps.

Possible land at Sandling shown as red on accompanying maps.

