Document 1

Supporting Information – Application to Fell 6 sycamores in Woolley Bank Wood (part of Hay Green Lane TPO).

Background

Woolley Bank Woods are part of Worsbrough Mill & Country Park. All of the park is owned by BMBC but whilst most of the site is managed by Culture, Sport & Tourism, Woolley Bank Woods are the responsibility of the Countryside Group, Planning & Transportation.

I joined the Countryside Group in 2005 and was made aware by my then Team Leader, Nigel Labdon, that the team had management responsibilities for Woolley Bank Woods. He also told me that our contractor had thinned some sycamores out under the 'Fuelling a Revolution' (Heritage Lottery Fund) grant. I was given to understand the whole wood was covered by a management plan which included further thinning, especially of non-native trees. I was not made aware that the wood was part of a TPO. Nigel left BMBC in 2007.

My only involvement with the wood up until 2008 has been to have a small footbridge repaired.

Earlier this year I directed our weekly conservation volunteer group to do some coppicing work in Woolley Bank Wood – their supervisor has been working with the Countryside Group for many years and told me they often went into the wood to maintain the existing coppice stools. This then keeps non-native sycamores suppressed and also allows the ground flora to develop in what I knew was a semi-ancient woodland. Whilst inspecting the wood ahead of the task I noted that the mature trees at the Worsbrough Road end of the wood near an undefined path were almost 100% sycamores of a similar age. Given what I knew of the wood's status and some previous management practices I decided to have our Countryside Rangers thin some of the mature (medium-aged) sycamores.

I estimated that none of the sycamores in that area were of more than 380mm average diameter, which is the maximum our Rangers are qualified to fell. I instructed them to enter the wood from Worsbrough Road, leave a buffer strip of woodland by the road and then to thin mature sycamores at a rate of not more than 1 tree in 4.

BMBC Existing Guidance

I have not been able to find a management plan for Woolley Bank Woods, however I was given to understand that one does exist. The most relevant plan I can find is called *Worsbrough Country Park Management Plan 2002-2007*, which was prepared for BMBC by Eamonn Wall & Co. Relevant extracts are appended separately as part of this application (appendix A), but it should be noted that the document only relates to 5 woodland compartments and not the whole park. Compartment No 5 is further

sub-divided into 6 blocks, of which 3 are just north of Woolley Bank Woods (see figure 1.2 in extract appended). It is my judgement that the management plan for this compartment and the overall objectives in the plan for all compartments have relevance for Woolley Bank Woods.

The following references within the above plan are particularly significant:

s1.1.2 – no mention of any TPO
s1.1.3 – general description of the woodland – it is not clear why Woolley Bank and Bell Bank Woods are not recognised as part of the park's woodland resource.
S1.2.2.1 – the biodiversity resource – Woolley Bank Woods is not part of the Natural Heritage Site which covers some of the Park. None of the Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats is represented in Woolley Bank Woods. 'Management must reflect both the species and their habitat requirements. Care should be taken to ensure that any works are carried out with due regards to the species listed below.' Bluebells are listed in the table which follows in the plan but sycamores are not – thinning the sycamores would help bluebells and the other ground flora listed in 1.2.2.1 (a). However, pipistrelle bats are also listed and no surveying was carried out by a qualified surveyor. I did note that the trees were not particularly old and that they appeared to me to be healthy woodland-centre trees with few side branches. As such they offered few opportunities to larger tree-living animals compared to many other species and older sycamores in open areas.
s4 relates to objectives and management options for the woodland compartments – many of the comments are generic and not compartment-specific.
s4.1.1 – silviculture – notes that little work has been carried out over the past 10 years and that 'work is needed if the wildlife, amenity and landscape values are to be retained. Thinning will be required to promote the development of the better-formed stems within compartments 3 and 5.'
s4.1.2 – nature conservation. '.....the woodland is important as a refuge for many forms of wildlife.....there is a great opportunity to improve local habitats by regenerating and restructuring the stands, controlling invasive, non-native species and increasing both standing and fallen deadwood.' Many ecologists regard sycamore as an invasive, non-native tree species. Our proposal always was to leave the fallen wood as a dead wood habitat on site. 'Active management to improve the structure and diversity within the woodland blocks should generally create better conditions for many species, not least the BAP bird species recorded.'
'Bat surveys will be undertaken within stands prior to any felling works commencing.' This was not done by a qualified person but the same paragraph goes on to suggest 'this will be essential amongst the mature willow and alder....' – no trees of these species were felled.
s4.2 – Unitary Development Plan - general policy of the Council: '.....promote, manage and sustain a healthy and secure stock of trees and woodlands ....and ensure that the special features, in particular the conservation..... interests of the semi-natural ancient woodlands are recognised and protected.'
s4.3 – Aims and Objectives of Management: 'The general objective of the Council's woodland management is to sustain the woodland environment and character for the benefit of the community, wildlife conservation, recreation, historical and landscape interests.' None of this felling work compromises this objective.
Aim 1 'to promote an uneven-aged broadleaved woodland, dominated by a mixture of trees and shrubs characteristic of the site.....'; objectives include 'to continue to

improve the age class structure of the woodland through minor thinning, coppicing and group felling'. Thinning and coppicing has already taken place but further thinning of uniform middle-aged sycamores helps greatly.
Aim 3 'to conserve and enhance the semi-natural characteristics and features of nature conservation interest....'; objectives include: 'to promote a more structurally diverse woodland, favouring locally native trees...' and 'to consider the wildlife value of the site in relation to other key habitat areas...'. Thinning these sycamores again contributes to targets.

Management Plan

A 5-year management plan (April 2008 – March 2013) is proposed for Woolley Bank Woods to improve the woodland structure in keeping with the Council's above policies and in keeping with the general aims and objectives of the *Worsbrough Country Park Management Plan 2002-2007* . 'Woolley Bank Woods' in this context is taken as meaning that area of BMBC-owned woodland east of Worsbrough Road, south of the River Dove and west of the disused rail line running northwards to the river ending at an existing footbridge (shown on some maps).

The main action will be to thin out the medium-aged sycamores at a rate of not more than 1 tree in 4. We will also to continue to control their regrowth through coppicing by local conservation volunteers, thereby allowing ground flora growth and diversification of the remaining tree community. It is predicted that other species of trees will self-set from other areas of the woodland. Opportunities will be explored for the sustainable harvesting of some of the felled trees as either timber or for chipping and use in BMBC biomass boilers. Otherwise felled trees will be allowed to rot down and form part of the natural woodland process.

Thinning Operations – April 2008

As part of this management proposal, in April 2008 our Countryside Rangers felled 6 mature sycamores (*Acer pseudoplantus*) of not more than 380mm average diameter in the area described and shown on the map submitted separately within this application. I estimate that each was of approximately 15m height. See map 1 appended for context and area in which trees felled. See also appendix B photographs of trees felled and area affected.

No felling licence was needed because the works came under the exemption for volume felled within a TPO (ie under 5m3) and because no timber was removed. See appendix C for volume calculation.

Future felling operations will be in accordance with full TPO procedures.

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BMBC
April 2008