

Waltham Abbey Church Land Management Plan



Abbey Church Centre

Purpose and objectives

As part of our commitment to respond to God's call to care for his creation, we recognise the significant contribution churches can make to protecting land for nature.

This plan aims to develop, formalise and strengthen our management plans for the land surrounding the Abbey Church Centre, to protect and support wildlife and biodiversity.

The Abbey Church Centre (ACC) provides the office for the Benefice of Waltham Holy Cross. It has a hall, rooms and grounds which are available to hire by the public, including children and church groups. A volunteer run café (The Olive Branch) operates on Wednesdays.

The grounds consist of:

- A small, grassed lawn area with a patio area adjacent
- Small garden areas and beds at the front and rear of the building adjacent to paved areas.
- A wilder grassed area extending to the west of the building
- Wooded areas between the grassed areas and the adjacent Cornmill Stream.

The ACC is set within the Abbey Gardens managed by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), from whom the ACC is leased. The Abbey Gardens and the wider Lee Valley Regional Park provides a significant wildlife resource and public access.

A significant user of the ACC is the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's Youth and Schools Service who deliver a number of activities for schools in the grounds and adjoining Regional Park.

Management of the grounds to support and complement the LVRPA Biodiversity Action Plan <https://www.leevalleypark.org.uk/biodiversity-action-plan> and the activities of their Youth and Schools Service is considered appropriate.

The Conservation Manager at LVRPA has suggested a number of actions that could help the grounds support local biodiversity:

- Installation of swift boxes on the building. (And playing the swift call).
- Installation of bat boxes on trees or building.
- Wildflower meadow which would target small mammals, macro moths etc. Preferably species should be native but all species that provide a good nectar source are good.
- Hedgehog box – or provide habitat pile for hedgehogs to hibernate in
- Stag beetle loggery
- Create a bee or insect hotel
- Plant climbers such as honeysuckle/hops up the walls or along fences to create nesting habitat and nectar source

Nature surveys/citizen science/monitoring

On 24 January 2026 we took part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch for the first time, recording birds that visited the Abbey Church Centre Garden. We plan to make the Big Garden Birdwatch a part of annual monitoring of our impact on nature on our land.

Similarly we took part in the Big Butterfly Count 2026 on 18 July 2026 to help monitor this key biodiversity indicator nationally and to form part of our own local monitoring.

Baseline survey results

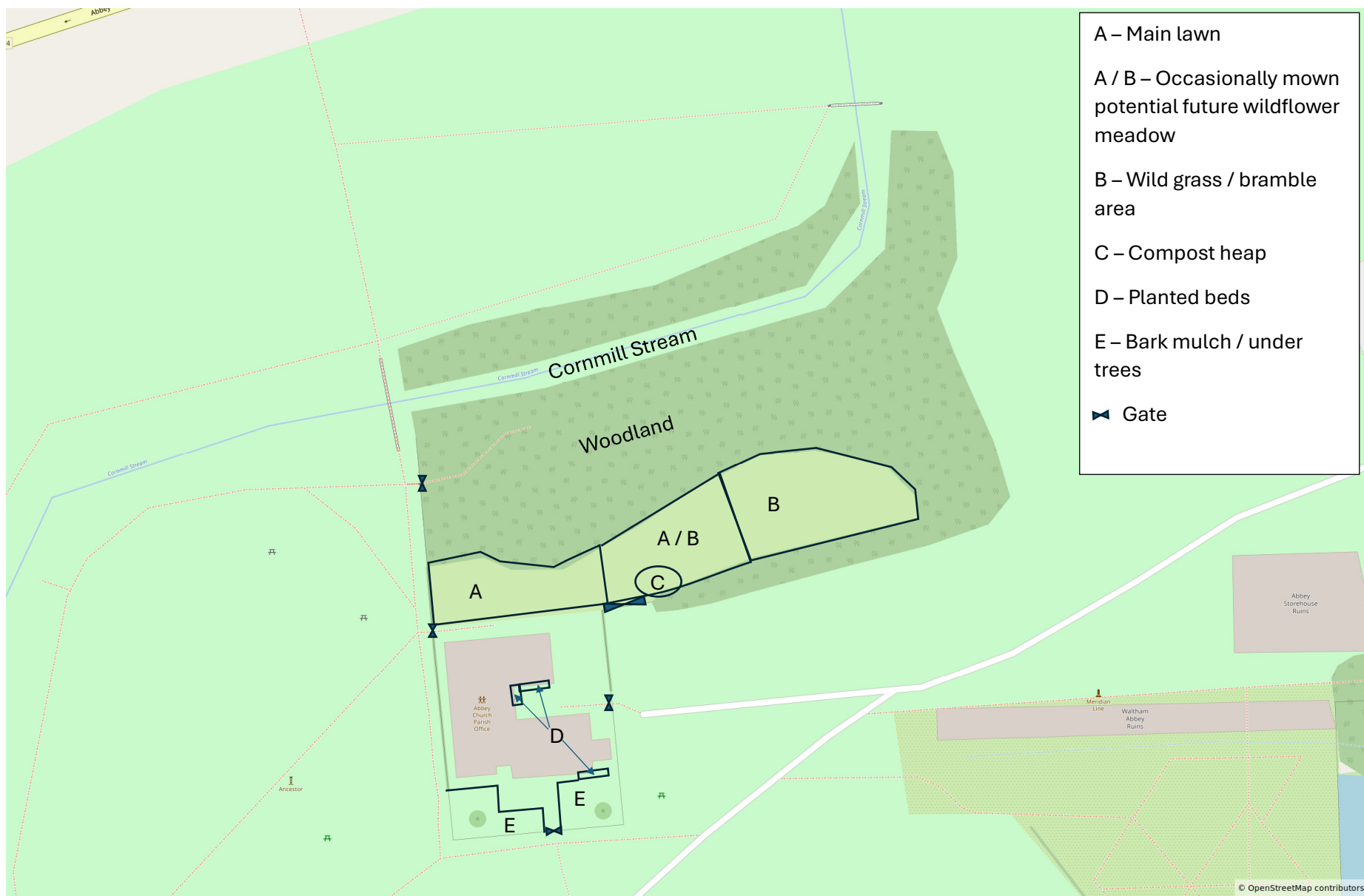
Birdwatch survey 24/01/2026		
10:25-11:25 Abbey Church Centre Garden (from hall).		
Blackbird	1	
Blue Tit	2	
Coal tit	1	Uncertain ID.
Great tit	2	
Magpie	1	
Moorhen	1	
Woodpigeons	16	On roof of "farmhouse" Uncertain ID - might have been feral pigeons
Group of 3 poss coal tit, poss other (sparrow???) also spotted but not recorded in national survey due to uncertainty		
A green/yellow bird not a parakeet - poss greenfinch? spotted but not recorded in national survey due to uncertainty		

Butterfly count 18/07/2026	
12:15 - 12:30 Abbey Church Centre garden eastern end (including wild area)	
Large White	2
Small white	2
Gatekeeper	1
Red Admiral	2
Common Blue	1

Maps



Former LV Information Centre & Grounds Boundary		Extracts from the lease documents showing the extent of the ACC land
Route of Vehicular Right of Way		
Parking Area		



Plan of work / management

Regular grounds maintenance, undertaken by Community Payback includes:

- Strimming all areas of these grounds – Being mindful to natural wildlife areas
- Grass cutting the main lawn, adjacent to the hall.
- Hedge cutting (**Not from Feb – Sept**, due to nesting season)
- Weeding the patio areas at the front and rear of the building.
- Raking leaves during the autumn season.
- Trimming low level branches.

All vegetative waste to be placed in the compost area to the right of the main lawn.

The regular work does not include use of fertilisers, weedkillers or pesticides or use of peat based composts, but for the avoidance of doubt when undertaking regular or occasional work by Community Payback or others, it is our intention that peat based compost and synthetic fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides will not be used.

Other Plans and Actions

- Identify a group or individual(s) to investigate and deliver one or more of Swift boxes / Bat Boxes / Hedgehog / Beetle / Insect hotel.
- Investigate provision of Honeysuckle / Hops planting in beds adjacent to building as suggested by LVRPA Conservation Manager
- Liaise with Community Payback Supervisor with a view to extending the wild grassed area and maintaining it as a wildflower meadow
- Maintain Birdfeeder introduced January 2026
- Garden Birdwatch 2027
- Butterfly Count 2027 (in conjunction with a social event).

Engagement

Church members have been invited to (and several participated in) the Garden Birdwatch and Butterfly Count activities that inform the monitoring for this plan, and this is expected to continue annually.

The introduction of a monthly church newsletter provides a forum for a monthly environmental article which we intend to invite participation in activities at the ACC to support this plan, and more widely to include suggestions to encourage readers to nurture and protect the environment.

Impact and celebration

Progress in delivering the actions in this plan will be reported to the Abbey DCC and the results of our Birdwatch and Butterfly Count monitoring to members of the church via notices / newsletters and annual reporting.

We envisage the Big Butterfly Count 2027 becoming part of a social / celebratory event, at the ACC providing an opportunity to celebrate changes made there and the wildlife in the surrounding Lee Valley Park and (hopefully) attainment of a bronze Eco-Church award

Date plan adopted: Abbey DCC 15/09/2026

Date for review: September 2027