

Broadoak Plantation, Clayton Wood and The Keep

The Broadoak plantation, between Higher Broad Oak and Lower Broad Oak Roads, consists of three areas – Clayton Wood, Broadoak Plantation and The Keep. Together the area covers three hectares. It was gifted to the Woodland Trust by its owner in 1980 and has been managed by the Trust ever since with the help of contractor Tilhill Forestry. It is noted on maps dating from the mid-19th Century.

Broadoak consists mainly of birch. Clayton Wood and the Keep were planted in 1980 with predominantly ash and some oak and wild cherry. There are paths for walking, though these are unsurfaced and intersected by tree roots and are soft underfoot, especially in the winter, which unfortunately restricts access by wheelchair. The long-term strategy pursued by the Woodland Trust is to allow the woodland to develop naturally into the typical woodland types of the area and allow natural processes to determine the woodland structure and character. Maintenance is limited to keeping paths clear and safe, removing non-native plants and managing the mature boundary trees as safety requires.

The public has permitted access to the woodland and use has increased over the years. Following the establishment of West Hill Parish Council, discussions were held with the Woodland Trust to explore ways in which more use could be made of the space to encourage public use. The woodland is one of very few public open spaces within the parish boundary. Eventually approval was secured to create a glade cleared of brambles and undergrowth, where people could relax and children could play. The Parish Council secured permission to install two picnic benches in the glade.

There are entrances to the woodland from both Higher and Lower Broad Oak Road but there is no car park. The Parish Council has provided bins for dog waste, one at each entrance, which are emptied three times a week.