

# West Woods & Collingbourne Forest Plan

## 2025 - 2035

### West England Forest District

FE Reference: OP10/54



Forestry England  
forests and woodlands  
have been certified in  
accordance with the UK  
Woodland Assurance  
Standard (UKWAS)



## Application for Forest Plan Approval

Forest District:	West England Forest District
Woodland or property name:	West Woods Collingbourne Wood
Nearest town, village or locality:	Lockeridge / Marlborough (West Woods) Ludgershall (Collingbourne)
OS Grid reference:	West Woods - SU 1656 6675 Collingbourne - SU 2699 5461
Local Authority:	Preshute Parish Council (West Woods) Kennet Valley Parish Council (West Woods) Collingbourne Ducis Parish Council (Collingbourne) Collingbourne Kingston Parish Council (Collingbourne)

Plan area:	892.3 ha
Conifer felling:	15 ha
Broadleaf felling:	0 ha  <b>Note:</b> small ( $\leq 0.25$ ha) group fells are to be integrated into thinning operations, with no more than 30% of stand volume being removed per intervention



- 1) I apply for Forest Plan approval for the property described on this page and in the enclosed forest plan.
- 2) I confirm that the scoping, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders that FE agreed must be included. Where it has not been possible to resolve specific issues associated with the plan to the satisfaction of consultees, this is highlighted in the Consultation Record.
- 3) I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.
- 4) I undertake to obtain any permissions necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed .....  
Forest Management Director

Date:

Signed .....  
Area Director

Date of approval .....

Date approval ends .....

## List of Contents

Application for Forest Plan Approval	2
Contents	3
Forestry England's Vision	4

### **West Woods & Collingbourne Forest Plan Area**

Introduction	5
Forest Plan Objectives	6
Conservation & Ecology	7 - 8
Heritage	9
Current Species Composition	10
Structural Composition	11
Ancient Woodland	12
Naturalness on Ancient Woodland	13
Landscape Character	14
Recreation and Access	15

### **Our Plans for West Woods & Collingbourne**

Analysis and Concept	16 - 17
Silviculture	18
Felling and Restocking 2025 - 2035	19 - 20
Management Prescriptions 2025 - 2051	21 - 22
Future Habitats and Species	23 - 24
Landscape Analysis	25

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms	26 - 27
Appendix 2: Stock Data	28 - 29
Appendix 3: Consultation record	30 - 35

## We are Forestry England

We are the country's largest land manager, caring for the nation's forests for people, nature, and the economy. The foundation of our organisation is our world-class sustainable management of the nation's forests.

Our vision **for wildlife**: The nation's forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.

Our vision **for people**: The nation's forests are a living treasure for all, deeply connected to people's lives improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.

Our vision **for the climate**: The nation's forests are resilient to climate change, increasing their value for communities by producing high-quality, sustainable timber and absorbing carbon emissions.

Read more about our Growing the Future plan [here](#), or search online for "Growing the Future".



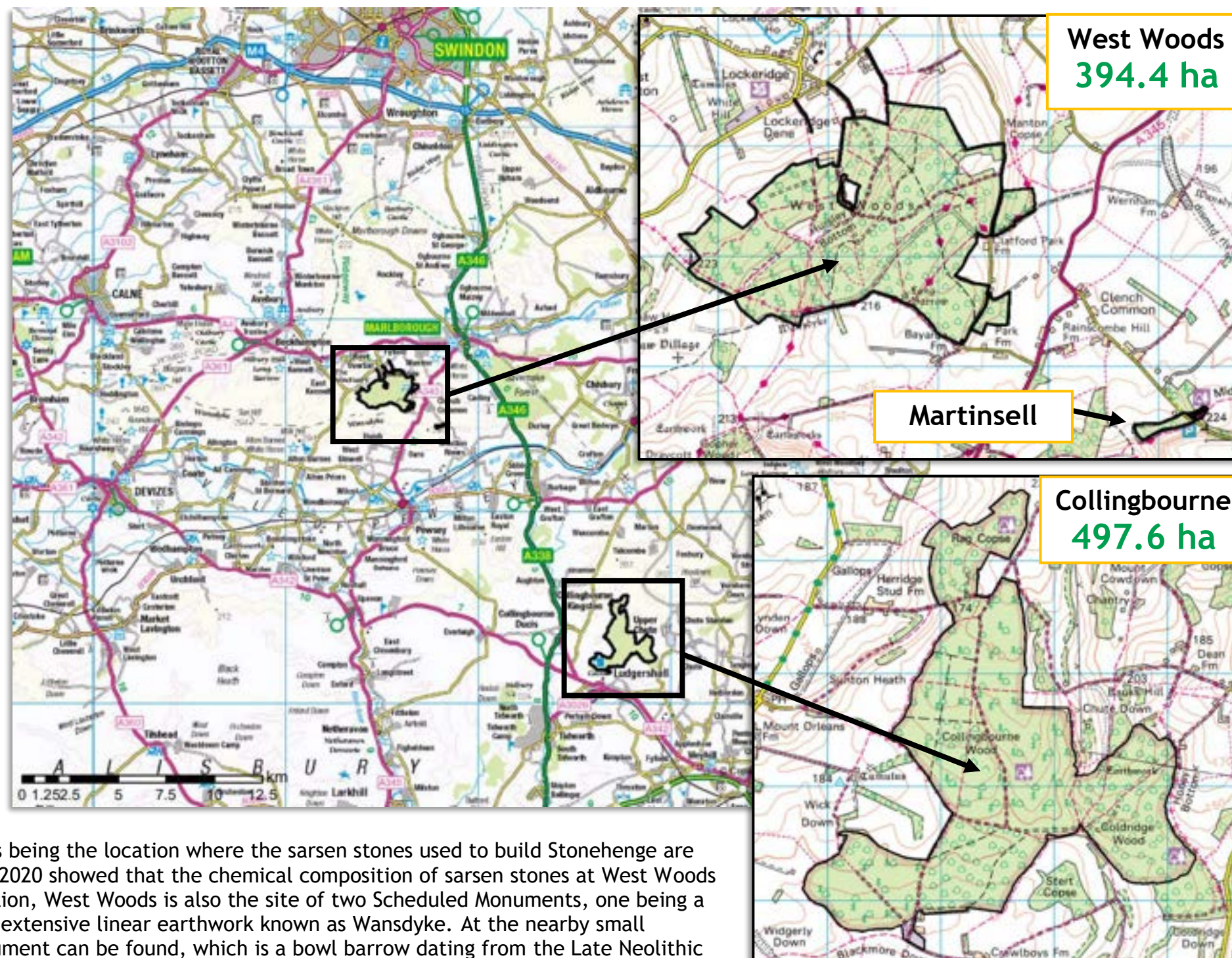
## Introduction

West Woods and Collingbourne Wood are located in the county of Wiltshire, with West Woods situated approximately 2 miles from the town of Marlborough, and Collingbourne less than a mile from the town of Ludgershall. Covering a combined area of 892ha, the woodlands are similar in structure and composition. Both are predominately composed of broadleaf species, and largely dominated by plantations of 1930s - 1960s beech, with small pockets of evergreen conifers found sporadically throughout. As a result of the extensive beech canopy found at both woodlands, an impressive display of bluebells can be seen in the spring, with West Woods in particular being regionally well-known in regard to its bluebell display, attracting many visitors every spring.

The vast majority of the plan area is classed as ancient woodland. As beech is considered a native species here, these woodlands score highly in regard to naturalness. However, this is slightly misleading as it does not acknowledge the uniform, monoculture-like nature of the beech stands which have been intentionally planted as such, with many sub-compartments being composed of 100% beech.

Of the whole plan area, only the 5.8ha isolated compartment near Martinsell Hill is leased land (from the Savernake Estate), with the rest of the plan area being publicly owned. Currently, broadleaves make up 88% of the plan area and conifers 9%, with the remaining 3% being open, agricultural land or car park areas. Topographically, the two woodlands range from approximately 120m to 220m above sea level, and contain numerous undulations and a number of steep slopes and banks (particularly at West Woods). Soils across the plan area are largely derived from chalk, which has an impact on the tree species that are able to establish and flourish.

The formal recreation offer across this plan area is minimal, consisting of two small car parks at West Woods, one waymarked walking trail at West Woods, Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and informal footpaths within both woodlands, as well as land dedicated as open access under The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW) at West Woods. There are no conservation designations at either woodland, however there is abundant ecological interest at both, including recorded observations of badgers, dormice, and Schedule 1 birds. There are also numerous features of heritage interest across both woodlands. West Woods is nationally notable as being the location where the sarsen stones used to build Stonehenge are now known to have originated from. Research published in 2020 showed that the chemical composition of sarsen stones at West Woods matches that of the stones comprising Stonehenge. In addition, West Woods is also the site of two Scheduled Monuments, one being a Neolithic long barrow, and the other being a stretch of the extensive linear earthwork known as Wansdyke. At the nearby small compartment known as Martinsell, another Scheduled Monument can be found, which is a bowl barrow dating from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age.



## Forest Plan Objectives

Forestry England's Vision	Forest Plan Objective	Actions We'll Take	Monitoring Achievement
<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">For people</div> <p>The nation's forests are a living treasure for all, deeply connected to people's lives, improving the health and wellbeing of the nation.</p>	❖ To deliver woodlands with social amenity value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will implement Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (LISS), working towards a more diverse stand structure which will increase the aesthetic value of the woodlands for visitors.</li> <li>• We will preserve key bluebell areas close to popular walking routes, ensuring continued enjoyment for visitors</li> </ul>	➤ Analysis of planned felling completion at the five- and ten-year Forest Plan reviews.
	❖ To conserve, maintain and enhance cultural and heritage assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through following the actions outlined in the associated Scheduled Monument management plans, we will maintain and enhance the Wansdyke, Long Barrow and Bowl Barrow Scheduled Monuments.</li> </ul>	➤ Regular reviews of Scheduled Monument condition by the beat team, and a formal review of each Scheduled Monument management plan to be carried out at their half-way point.
	❖ Deliver well-designed forests that both protect and enhance the internal and external landscape, in keeping with the local landscape character.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will carefully assess planned felling to ensure that the resulting loss of trees does not negatively impact internal or external views of the woodlands for visitors.</li> </ul>	➤ Monitor any landscape impact resulting from scheduled felling at Forest Plan review stage.
<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">For wildlife</div> <p>The nation's forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.</p>	❖ The diversification of woodland species and structure for greater ecological and economic resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through carefully planned small group fells and subsequent natural regeneration, we will create pockets of variable stand structure in both woodlands.</li> <li>• If diversification of species composition within stands is not achieved through natural regeneration alone, future opportunities for enrichment planting will be taken.</li> </ul>	➤ Sub-Compartment database records will be assessed at Forest Plan review stage, with ground surveys completed.
	❖ Protect and enhance woodland and open habitats and their associated species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will take opportunities to increase and enhance areas of open space in both woodlands. For example, ride-widening will be carried out at the same time as other forestry operations when opportunities arise.</li> </ul>	➤ Ride widening completion to be analysed at Forest Plan review stage.
<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 10px;">For the climate</div> <p>The nation's forests are resilient to climate change, increasing their value for communities by producing high-quality sustainable timber, and absorbing carbon emissions.</p>	❖ The continued production of sustainable and marketable woodland products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will produce sustainable timber through thinning on a regular cycle, and through carrying out clearfelling operations and small group fells.</li> </ul>	➤ Comparison of the production forecast yield (approximately 7900m <sup>3</sup> (2025 - 2030) and 14,000m <sup>3</sup> (2025 - 2035)) to actual production at the five- and ten-year Forest Plan reviews.

## Conservation & Ecology

### Schedule 1 Birds

Both West Woods and Collingbourne provide valuable nesting habitat for numerous bird species, including Schedule 1 birds such as goshawk (pictured), red kite, and firecrest. At Collingbourne, stands of mature Scots pine have been purposefully retained due to their suitability as nesting sites, and raptor nest sites have also been recorded in larch and Norway spruce stands. Similarly, in West Woods, pockets of conifer found throughout the woodland break up the uniform beech canopy and provide different options for nesting habitat. Areas of Scots pine here will be retained into the future.



### Dormice

The hazel dormouse is a European Protected Species which has declined significantly in both range and population over the last century. Both West Woods and Collingbourne have dormice monitoring schemes in place, managed by Wiltshire Mammal Group. A series of nesting boxes placed in set locations within the woodlands are used to monitor the local dormouse populations. The ride widening work planned within both woodlands will be beneficial for dormice, as they like to make use of new woody vegetation growth which arises following coppicing, ride widening and other woodland management practices.



### Bluebells

This ancient woodland indicator species is found extensively throughout West Woods and Collingbourne, providing an obvious sign that there has been woodland present on these sites for hundreds of years. The annual springtime bluebell display is a feature of both woodlands, but in particular West Woods which receives a noticeable increase in visitors in the spring when the bluebells are on show. The extensive beech canopy at both woodlands with occasional pockets of sunlight provides favourable growing conditions for bluebells, and also prevents prolific bramble and bracken growth which would dominate the bluebells if allowed.



### Ancient Woodland and Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

Of West Woods and Collingbourne's total area, 88% is classed as either ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), or plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Ancient woodland sites are those which have been wooded since 1600AD. The vast majority of ancient woodland area at West Woods and Collingbourne falls into the PAWS category, having been felled and restocked largely with beech plantations in the 1930s - 1960s. As well as bluebells, other ancient woodland indicators found here include herb-Paris and greater butterfly-orchids.



## Conservation & Ecology

### Lepidoptera

With pockets of open space, ride sides, and areas of scrub and bracken, West Woods and Collingbourne Wood provide feeding and breeding opportunities for many invertebrates including various species of butterflies and moths. The Forest Plan area is known to contain favourable breeding habitat for species including brown hairstreak, broad-bordered bee hawk-moth, white admiral and purple emperor. At West Woods, there is a maintained open grassy area known as Hursley Bottom, with patches of transitional scrub dotted throughout. Directly adjacent to this area, there is now a wide ride which was created when diseased Corsican pine was felled during the previous Forest Plan period. The open ride sides are starting to develop into interesting and varied habitat, with an array of vegetation heights present, from grassy sward and bracken, through to low scrub and naturally regenerated and planted broadleaved trees. With mature stands of conifer and broadleaved trees either side of the ride, an interesting and sheltered area of habitat has been created which has the potential to develop into a valuable area for wildlife. At the time of writing this Forest Plan, different options for the management of Hursley Bottom are being considered, including the potential to create a grazing unit within the wood which would incorporate Hursley Bottom, the open ride, and other nearby areas. By introducing a large herbivore at a low density, this ecologically valuable area could be further enhanced through the grazing, browsing and disturbance behaviour of the animals. Grazing herbivores can create mosaics of different height vegetation and areas of bare ground, resulting in a variety of habitats utilised by different species. If grazing is not a viable option, then this area will be managed on a cutting regime, with different stretches of the open ride area being cut on each intervention to create a mosaic and recreate the effect of grazing and disturbance. Species such as the white admiral butterfly (pictured) and broad-bordered bee hawk-moth utilise rides and clearings to feed on flowers found in these open habitats.



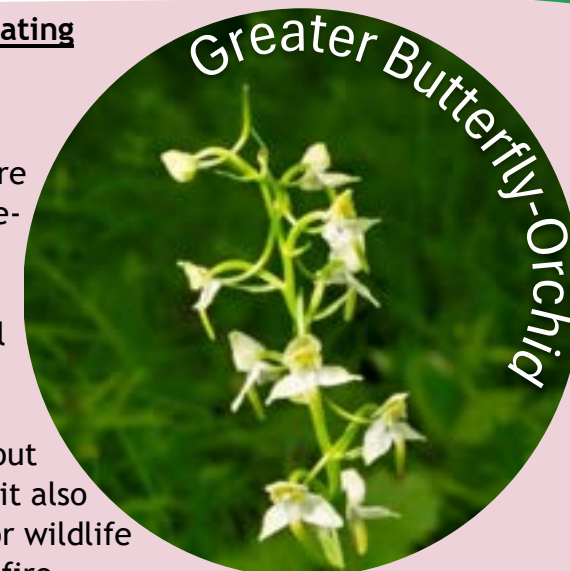
### Bats

Woodlands provide essential foraging and roosting opportunities for bats, and the majority of the UK's bat species will utilise trees, woodlands and hedgerows. Vegetation alongside forest rides, and scrubby understorey beneath the forest canopy provide habitat for a variety of insects which are a food source for bats. Holes, splits, and cracks in trees are used by bats for roosting, particularly in ancient and veteran trees. Linear features such as forest rides, woodland edges and hedgerows provide navigational landmarks and commuting corridors. Some species of bat are woodland specialists, such as the barbastelle. Barbastelles have been recorded in both West Woods and Collingbourne, and both woodlands are thought to be of high importance for this species which is of conservation concern. With Savernake Forest nearby, known to be a very important site for barbastelles, it is possible that individuals move between these close woodlands. As standard practice, we protect veteran trees from forestry operations, and leave standing deadwood in place where it is safe to do so. These actions help to maintain these habitats for bats such as barbastelles. Also, our continued ride-widening work will help to enhance habitat connectivity.



### Woodland Flora and Creating Open Space

At both West Woods and Collingbourne Wood, there is an aim to continue ride-widening work during this Forest Plan period. Not only is this beneficial for recreation and forestry operations, as increased sunlight dries out the surface of the rides, it also has numerous benefits for wildlife and for resilience to wildfire. Small mammals, woodland birds, and invertebrates including butterflies and moths, benefit from the increased breeding habitat and feeding opportunities which result from increased sunlight reaching the ride sides, and new vegetation and scrub growth. Furthermore, with increased sunlight reaching the ride sides, floral diversity and abundance can increase, which has knock on beneficial impacts for various other species which utilise woodland flowers. In the south-west corner of Collingbourne, an area known as Heaven's Corner, a number of uncommon woodland floral species have been recorded in recent years, including herb-Paris, meadow saffron and greater butterfly-orchids (pictured). In West Woods, as well as springtime displays of bluebells, visitors enjoy seeing wild daffodils which are another species associated with ancient woodlands. Alongside ride widening, opportunities will be taken in both woodlands to open up box junctions where rides meet, by felling a small number of trees on each corner of the junction to create a larger open area. The main forest road through West Woods has already had the ride sides pushed back in certain places during past interventions, meaning there are areas of valuable scrub habitat developing in differing stages of succession. During this Forest Plan period, this widening work will be continued, with opportunities taken to carry out work in combination with other existing planned forestry operations. By targeting different stretches of the road side during each intervention, the forest road will become to an even greater degree an invaluable wildlife corridor through the wood, with a mosaic of scrub and successional vegetation alongside it.





## Heritage

### Wansdyke - West Woods

The Wansdyke is a linear frontier earthwork dating from the late Roman or early medieval period, which stretches over 70km in total across Wessex. It consists of a ditch and embankment, and was thought to have been constructed to mark and possibly defend a significant border. West Woods contains a section of the Wansdyke approximately 3km in length, running east to west through the southern half of the woodland and forming part of the southern boundary of the wood. This stretch constitutes part of a Scheduled Monument, and as such it is managed under an associated management plan. Actions within the management plan to undertake in upcoming years include clearing broadleaf regeneration from the earthbank and ditch, removing any mature trees on the monument showing signs of decline, and ongoing bracken management.

**Below: A section of the Wansdyke, running through West Woods**



National Heritage List for England reference number: **1004719**

### Long Barrow - West Woods

Long Barrow is a Neolithic barrow mound located in Barrow Copse, West Woods. Measuring approximately 40m long and 27m wide, it is one of a significant concentration of monuments of this type in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. The Long Barrow is a Scheduled Monument, and has an accompanying management plan. The management plan contains a number of key actions which will be carried out across several years, the most significant of which is the removal of all tree cover from the monument. Currently, there are mature trees and also young broadleaf regeneration growing on the monument, the roots of which could possibly damage any historic contents within the barrow, especially in the event of a tree blowing over and the root plate being ripped up. An area of open space around the monument will also be created, improving the visual impact of the monument.

**Below: Looking down from the top of the Long Barrow, West Woods**



National Heritage List for England reference number: **1012429**

### Bowl Barrow - Martinsell

The small compartment of woodland near Martinsell Hill, south-east of Culley's Farm Cottages, contains a bowl barrow dating to the late Neolithic to late Bronze Age. Bowl barrows are burial mounds, and this particular one was partly excavated in the 1890s. Fortunately, it remains largely intact. Measuring 12m in diameter, and standing to a height of 1m, it is encircled by a shallow ditch around all but the northern edge of the mound. The barrow is currently overgrown with brambles and bracken, and therefore a key action in the monument's management plan is to clear this vegetation from the scheduled area. Once cleared, a regular cutting regime will ensure vegetation does not overtake the monument again. Although the condition of the monument is currently stable, the bracken and bramble growth has the potential to compromise the monument's condition, and also severely affects its visual impact. Thinning operations taking place in the vicinity of the monument will be sensitively managed to ensure no damage to the monument occurs as a result.

**Below: The bowl barrow at Martinsell. The red dashed line shows the approximate outline of the barrow beneath the brambles**

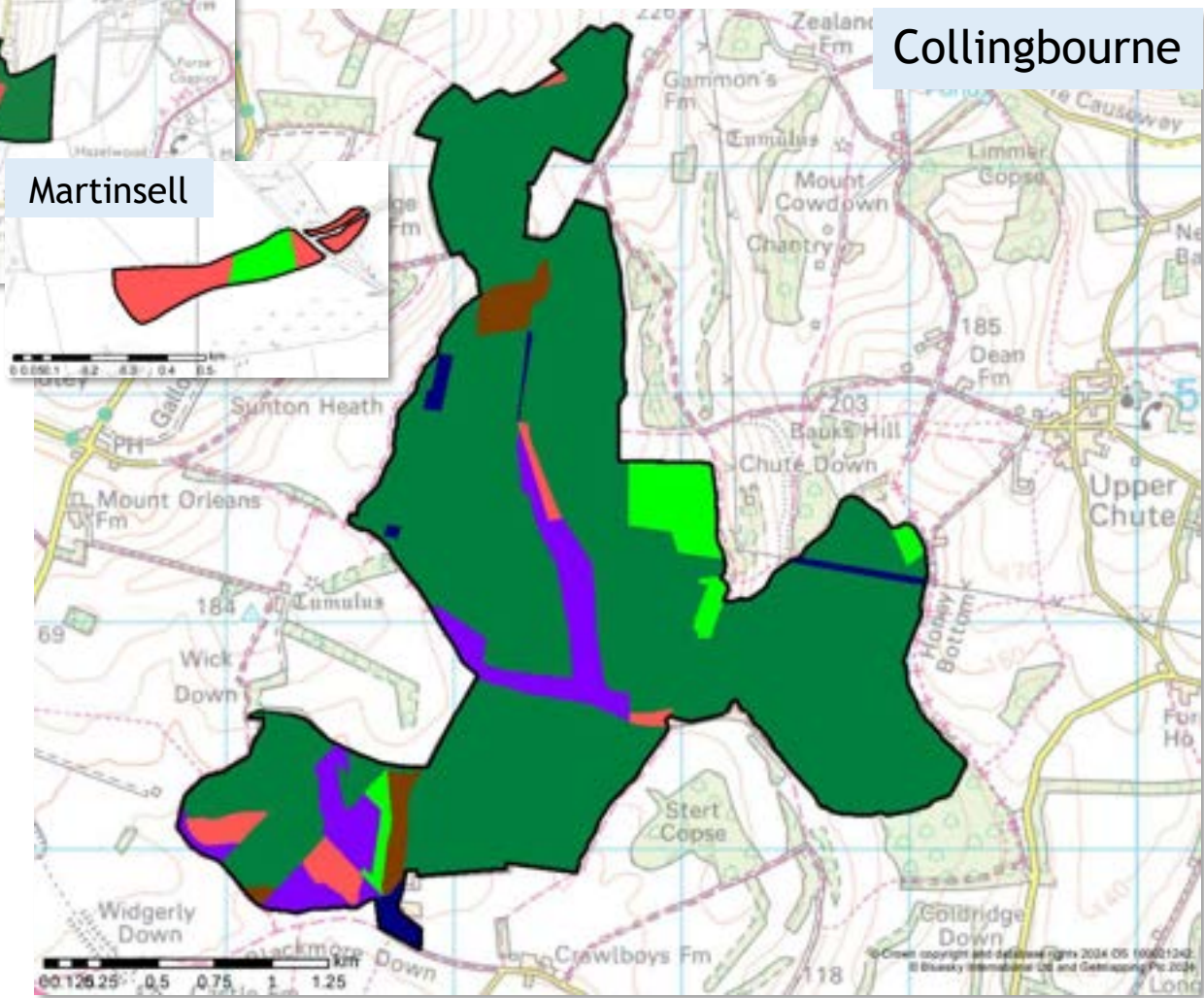
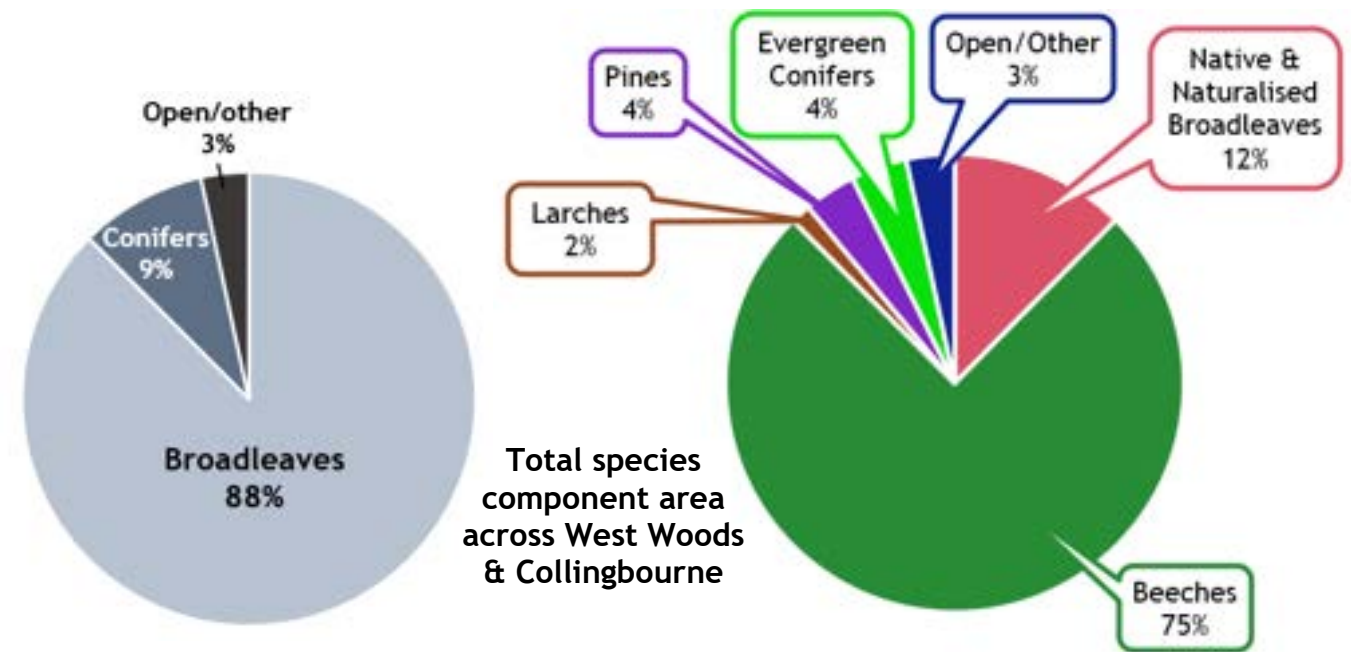
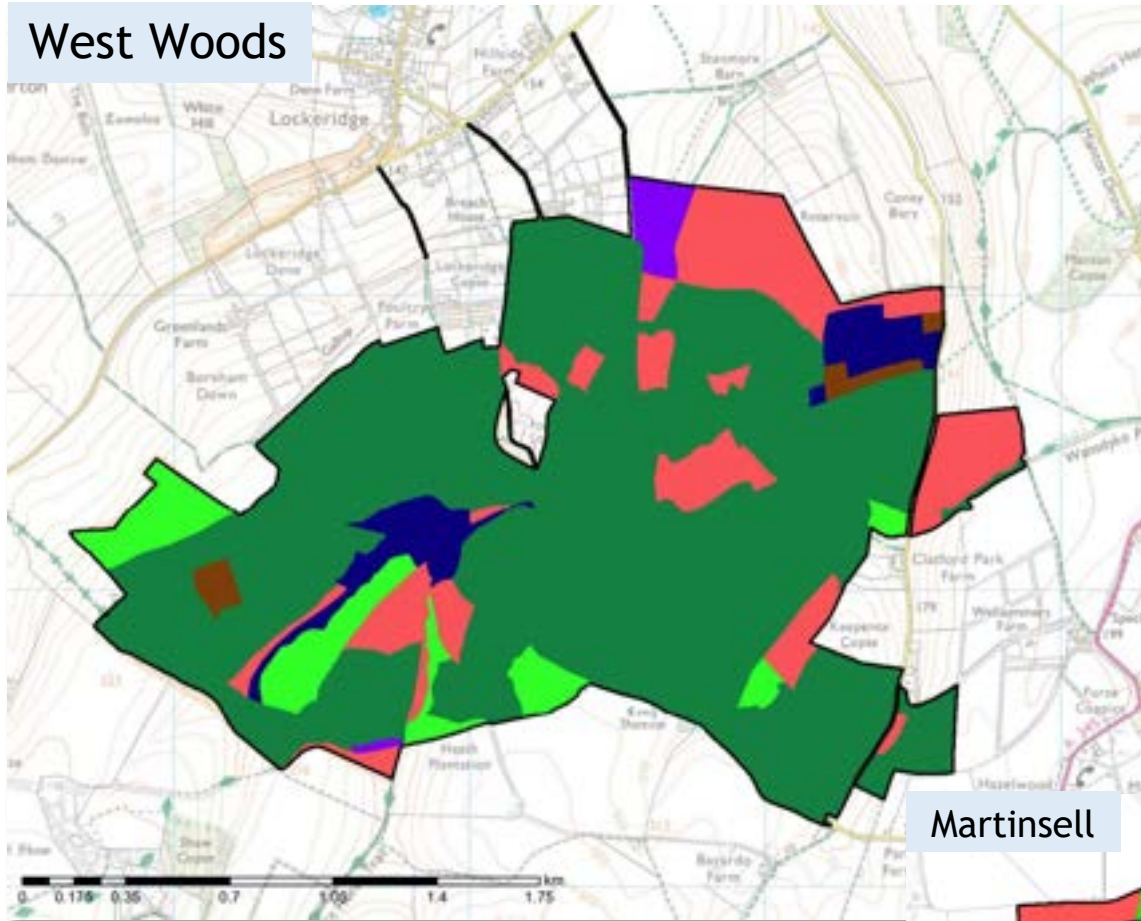


National Heritage List for England reference number: **1012794**

### Unscheduled Heritage Features

As well as the three Scheduled Monuments found within the West Woods and Collingbourne Forest Plan area, there is also a very high density of non-scheduled heritage features found within both woodlands, including medieval boundary banks and ditches, enclosures, field systems, and 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete structures. At Martinsell, the small satellite area of woodland southeast of West Woods, there is a bowl barrow, an enclosure, and undated earthworks. In recent years, an academic breakthrough has put West Woods on the map for archaeological reasons again. In 2020, new research pinpointed West Woods as the probable source of the giant sarsen stones which were used to construct Stonehenge in prehistoric times. The wide array of heritage features found at these sites demonstrates the rich history of human occupation and usage of these woodlands over thousands of years.

### Current Species Composition



The West Woods and Collingbourne Forest Plan area consists of a mix of broadleaf and conifer species, with broadleaves comprising 88% of the plan area. By far the most abundant broadleaf species is European beech, which covers 75% of the Forest Plan area, with a large number of sub-compartments within both woodlands being composed of entirely this species.

Scots pine is the most abundant conifer species, covering 3% of the Forest Plan area. Some conifer stands are providing valuable nesting habitat for Schedule 1 bird species, and will be retained into the future to ensure continuity of habitat provision. Other stands within both woodlands, including those composed of western red cedar, will be felled when the trees reach economic maturity, and the aim for these areas will be to return them to broadleaf cover given that the vast majority of the Forest Plan area is classed as plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

**Legend**

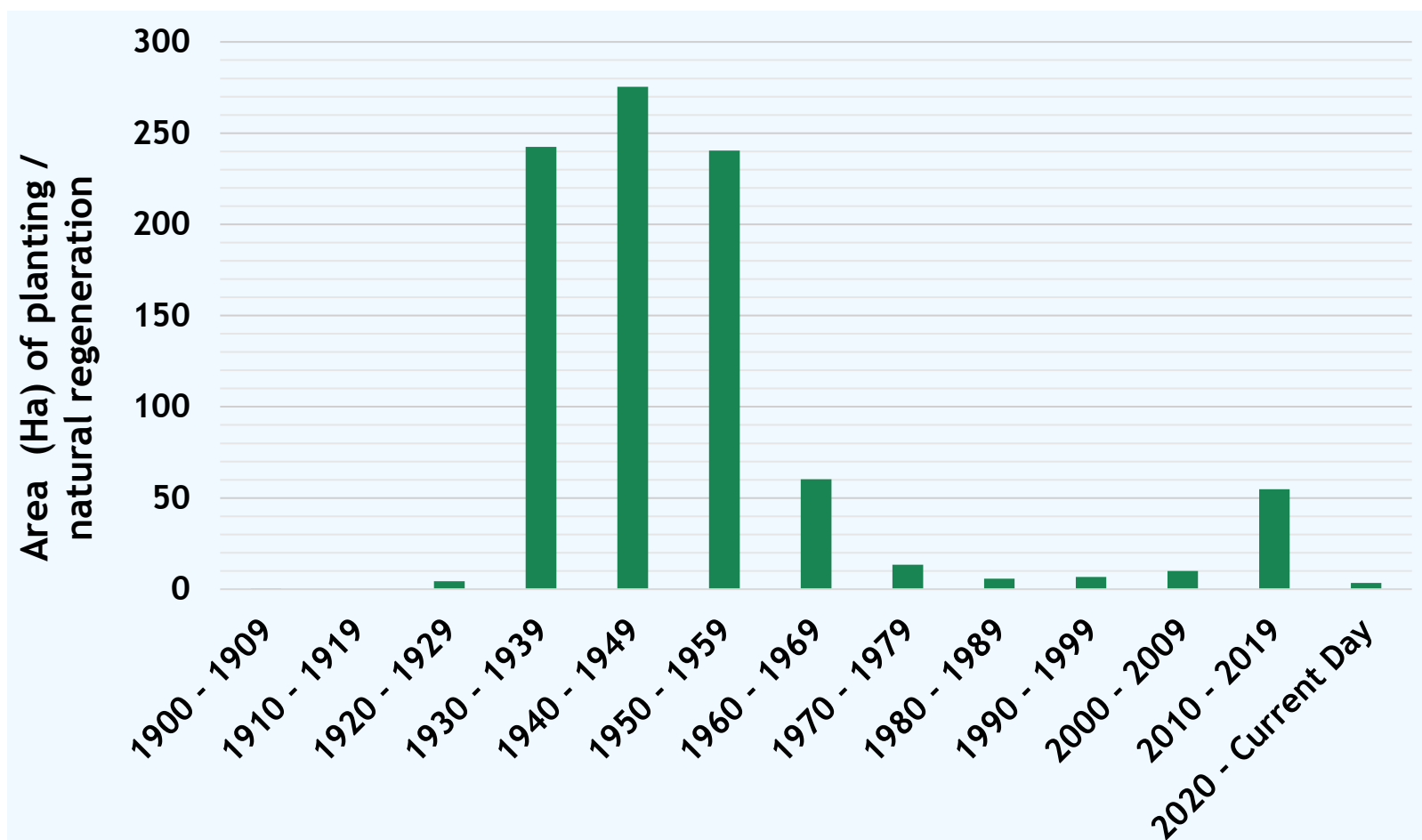
**Largest Component Species**

<span style="color: green;">■</span> Evergreen conifers	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Larches
<span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> Beeches	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> Pines
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Native/naturalised broadleaves	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Open/Other

**Notes:**

- Sycamore is not considered to be within its native range, but is considered to be 'naturalised'
- Open/other includes car park/picnic areas, and agricultural land

## Structural Composition



Area (Ha) of planting or natural regeneration per decade in the West Woods and Collingbourne plan area

As shown in the graph above, the majority of planting of trees in the Forest Plan area took place between the 1930s and the 1960s, which is when the majority of the beech and Scots pine stands were planted that can be seen in the woodlands today.

Currently, the beech stands in both woodlands are managed through thinning interventions only. Therefore, opportunities to plant, or for natural regeneration to occur have been limited to where stands of conifer have been clearfelled, or where thinning interventions have allowed light to reach the forest floor, facilitating natural regeneration which is largely composed of beech and sycamore. Moving forwards, the integration of small group fells into thinning operations within both woodlands will provide space and light for natural regeneration to occur more readily, and there may also be opportunities for supplementary planting of alternative species during the plan period.



Japanese larch (right) at Collingbourne, planted in 1980, alongside beech (left) planted in 1942



Naturally regenerated sycamore understorey at West Woods, beneath an overstorey of mature sycamore and beech, both planted in 1935

## Ancient Woodland

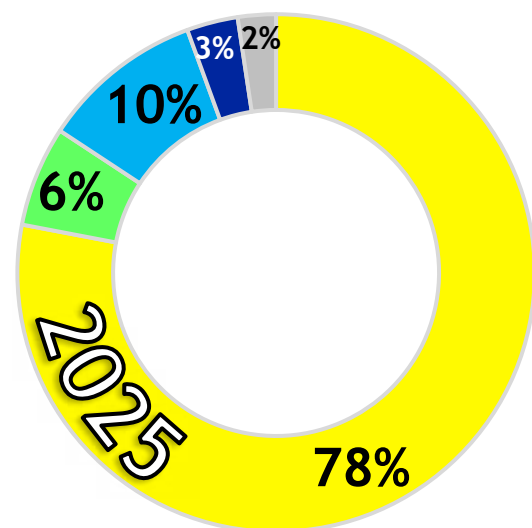


Ancient woodland sites are classed as areas that have been continuously wooded since 1600AD, and can be further broken down into:

- **Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)** - trees and other plant species appear to have established naturally rather than having been planted, and typically these sites will contain at least 80% site native species, or species native to the surrounding area
- **Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)** - the original semi-natural woodland has been cleared and replaced with a plantation of either native or non-native species, resulting in a decline in ecological value

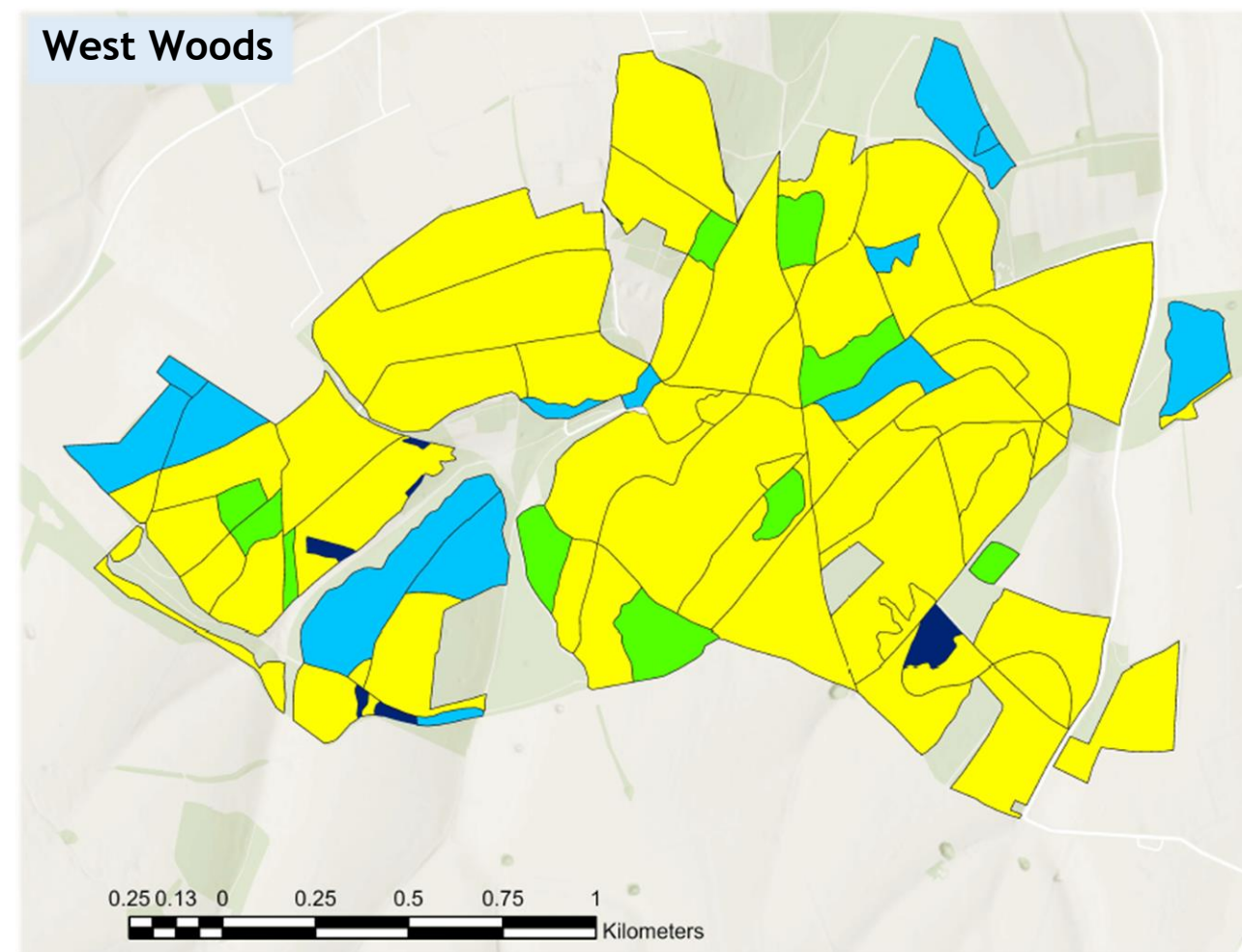
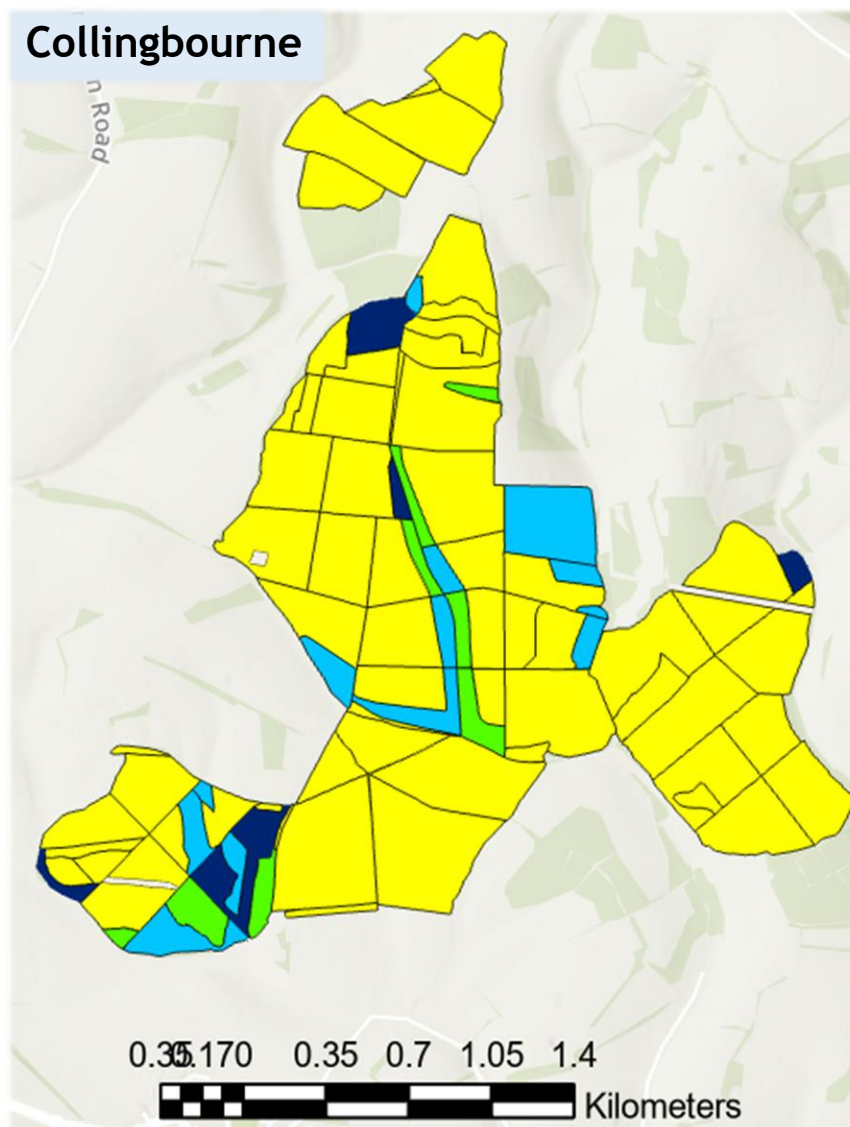
In the West Woods and Collingbourne Forest Plan area, 76% of West Woods (including Martinsell) and 97% of Collingbourne are classed as either ancient semi-natural woodland or PAWS. This equates to 88% of the total Forest Plan area. In areas of PAWS, conifers will continue to be removed over time when they reach the point of economic maturity, and they will be replaced by native broadleaves, either through natural regeneration or through targeted supplementary planting when opportunities arise. Our aim is to continuously progress towards an increasingly native canopy cover. Progress will be measured through the assessment of naturalness scores, which are a tool used to show the percentage of site native tree species in a particular area.

## Naturalness on Ancient Woodland



### Legend

- Class 1 - >80% Site Native Species
- Class 2 - 50% - 80% Site Native Species
- Class 3 - 20% - 50% Site Native Species
- Class 4 - <20% Site Native Species
- Open/Other



Naturalness scores are a measure used to show the percentage of site native tree species in a particular area. The maps on this page show the naturalness scores for the areas of ancient woodland in the West Woods and Collingbourne Forest Plan area. The small area of woodland at Martinsell contains no ancient woodland.

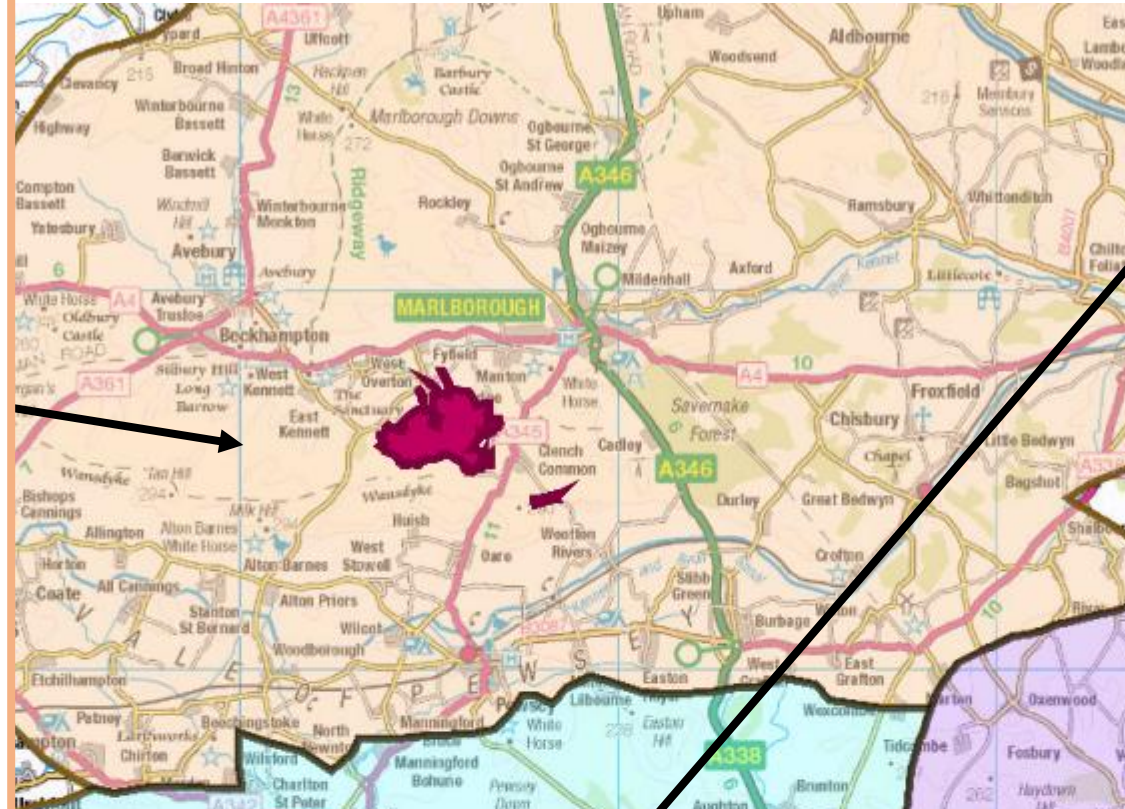
Class 1 indicates the highest level of nativeness, and class 4 the lowest. The measure of naturalness is used to monitor the condition of ancient semi-natural woodland, and scrutinise progress in the restoration of PAWS sites back to native broadleaf cover. With the majority of both West Woods and Collingbourne Wood being composed of largely beech and other broadleaves, both woodlands score well for naturalness, with semi-natural class 1 being the most abundant class, and only small, isolated areas falling into the lowest naturalness class. Planned clearfelling operations targeting non-native conifers in this Forest Plan period, and subsequent expected natural regeneration or planting of broadleaf species will help to restore areas of class 4, 3 and 2 back to class 1. Despite both woodlands scoring well for naturalness, one of our key aims for this Forest Plan period is to break up the uniform beech canopy and diversify the stand structure for the purpose of increasing forest resilience, value for wildlife, and visual diversity for visitors.

## Landscape Character

### Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area (NCA 116)

Natural England, 2015

- West Woods and the small compartment at Martinsell Hill sit within this National Character Area
- Vast arable fields stretch across the sparsely settled, rolling Chalk hills of the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area
- Woodland and hedgerows concentrated on clay-with-flint soils of the lower dip slope where Savernake Forest is the nucleus of ancient woodland. Isolated beech clumps and shelterbelts stand out on the hills
- In the post-Roman period it is thought that the south-west part of the area was a frontier between tribal areas - the construction of the Wansdyke formed the boundary stretching westwards towards Bath



### Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs National Character Area (NCA 132)

Natural England, 2015

- The western side of Collingbourne Wood is located within this National Character Area
- Salisbury Plain is a sparsely settled, predominantly agricultural area with a strong sense of remoteness and openness. The dominant element in the landscape - apart from the expansive sky - is the gently rolling chalk downland, forming part of the sweep of Cretaceous Chalk running from the Dorset coast and across the Chilterns to north of the Wash
- Scattered copses and shelterbelts occur on the high downs with woodlands confined mainly to valleys and steep slopes. There are small hilltop woodlands of beech and conifer





### Hampshire Downs National Character Area (NCA 130)

Natural England, 2014

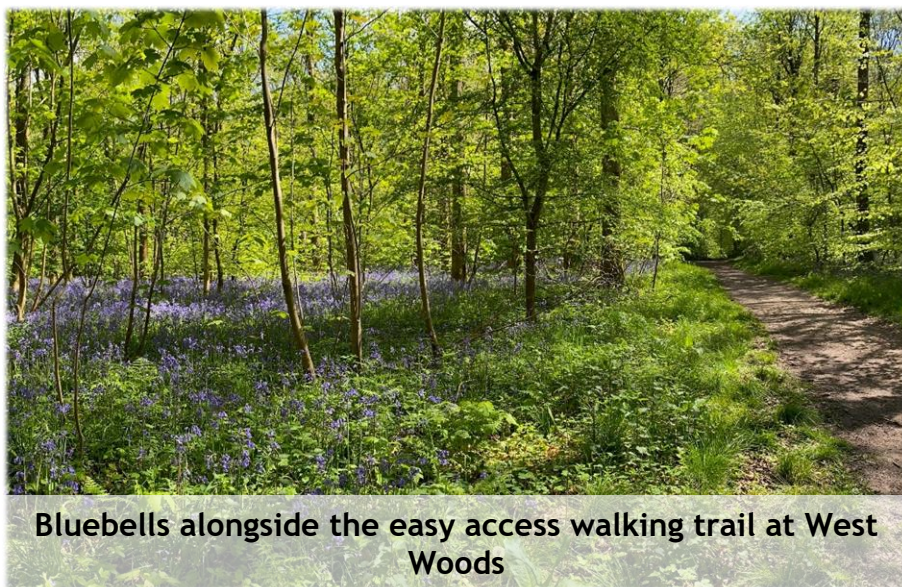
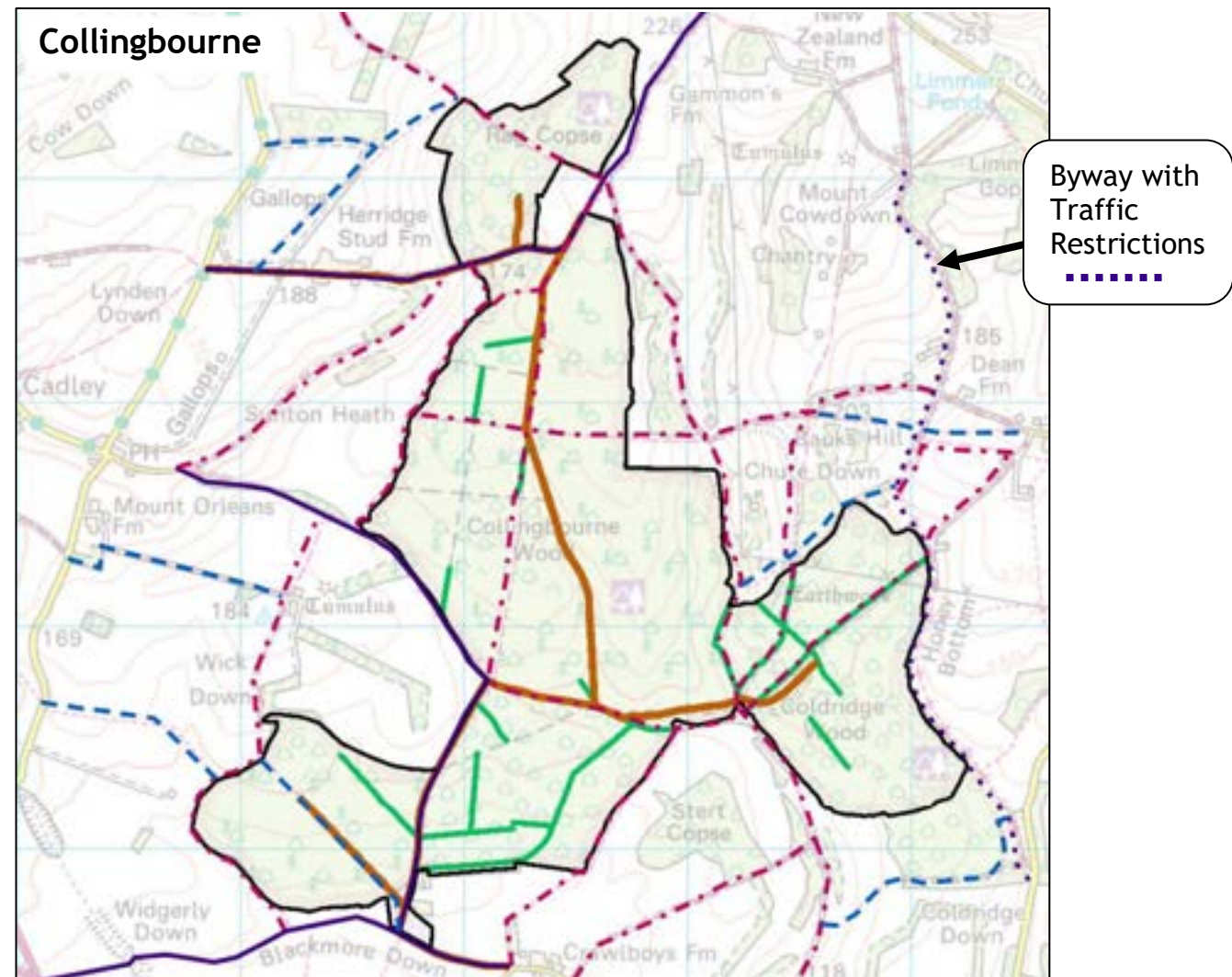
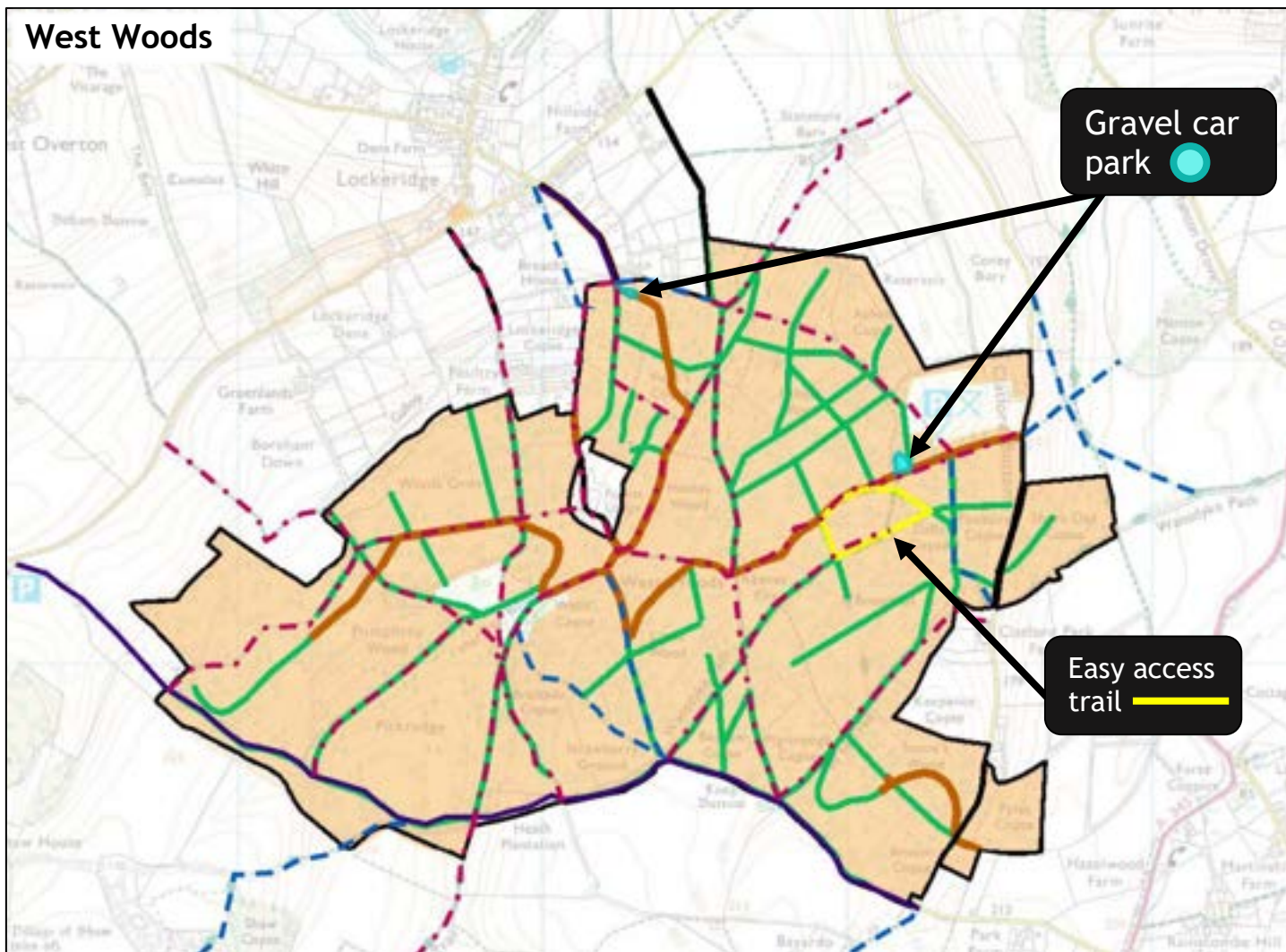
- The eastern side of Collingbourne Wood is located within this National Character Area
- The countryside is large-scale, open and rolling, with broad, gently domed, undulating plateaux and distinct hill tops, ridges and scarps, which are dissected by both steep and shallow valleys
- Soils are mainly free-draining, thin chalky loams, with heavier, younger clay-with-flint soils on the caps and some of the valley sides
- Elevated plateaux and upper valley slopes are characterised by extensive open tracts of large, low-hedged fields with thin chalky soils, shelterbelts, and ancient semi-natural woodland blocks on clay-with flint caps on some of the steeper slopes



### Legend

-  West Woods & Collingbourne block area
-  Berkshire and Marlborough Downs NCA
-  Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA
-  Hampshire Downs NCA

## Recreation and Access



Bluebells alongside the easy access walking trail at West Woods

West Woods and Collingbourne Wood provide a valuable recreational and wellbeing facility for people in the local area. While Collingbourne has no formal parking areas, at West Woods there are two gravel car parking areas, providing convenient access into the woodland for visitors. Both woodlands contain numerous Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and West Woods is also almost entirely designated as open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW). There are only two waymarked trails within these two woodlands, the first being the short (0.9km) easy access walking loop at West Woods, which starts a short distance from the main car park and takes in one of the most striking bluebell areas of the wood. The second is a section of the long-distance path known as the Wansdyke Path, which follows the linear Wansdyke monument through West Woods and beyond. At both woodlands, walkers, cyclists, and horse-riders can enjoy an extensive network of paths, bridleways, forest roads and rides. The annual springtime display of bluebells is a draw for visitors at both woodlands, but particularly West Woods which receives high numbers of visitors keen to observe and photograph this natural spectacle.

**Legend**

- CRoW designated land
- Forest road
- Ride

**Public Rights of Way:**

- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Byway

## Analysis & Concept - Collingbourne




**Analysis:** 

Two powerlines run through Collingbourne, necessitating the maintenance of open ground beneath.

**Concept:**


Whilst the northern powerline is above forest road, the grassy corridor beneath the southern line will continue to be maintained through mowing, and is an ecologically beneficial feature of the woodland due to its potential use as a corridor by wildlife.

**Analysis:** 

Although not containing any Scheduled Monuments within the woodland, Collingbourne holds a number of unscheduled heritage features, including enclosures, a field system, and various banks and ditches.

**Concept:**

Care will be taken during forestry operations to protect these features, and contractors will be made aware of their presence.

**Analysis:** 

These stands of mature conifer, including larch, Scots pine and Norway spruce are providing valuable nesting habitat for raptors, including goshawk, a Schedule 1 species.

**Concept:**

The Scots pine alongside the main forest road, and larch in the northern end of the wood will be retained into the future, to ensure they continue to provide habitat for wildlife and contribute to the aesthetic impact of this central woodland corridor. The Norway spruce in the south west of the wood will be felled at economic maturity, however retention areas around known nesting sites will be outlined to ensure they are protected from operations.

**Analysis:** 

Stands of mature western red cedar are present on the eastern side of the woodland. This species is not particularly valuable for wildlife, and it produces seed prolifically.

**Concept:**

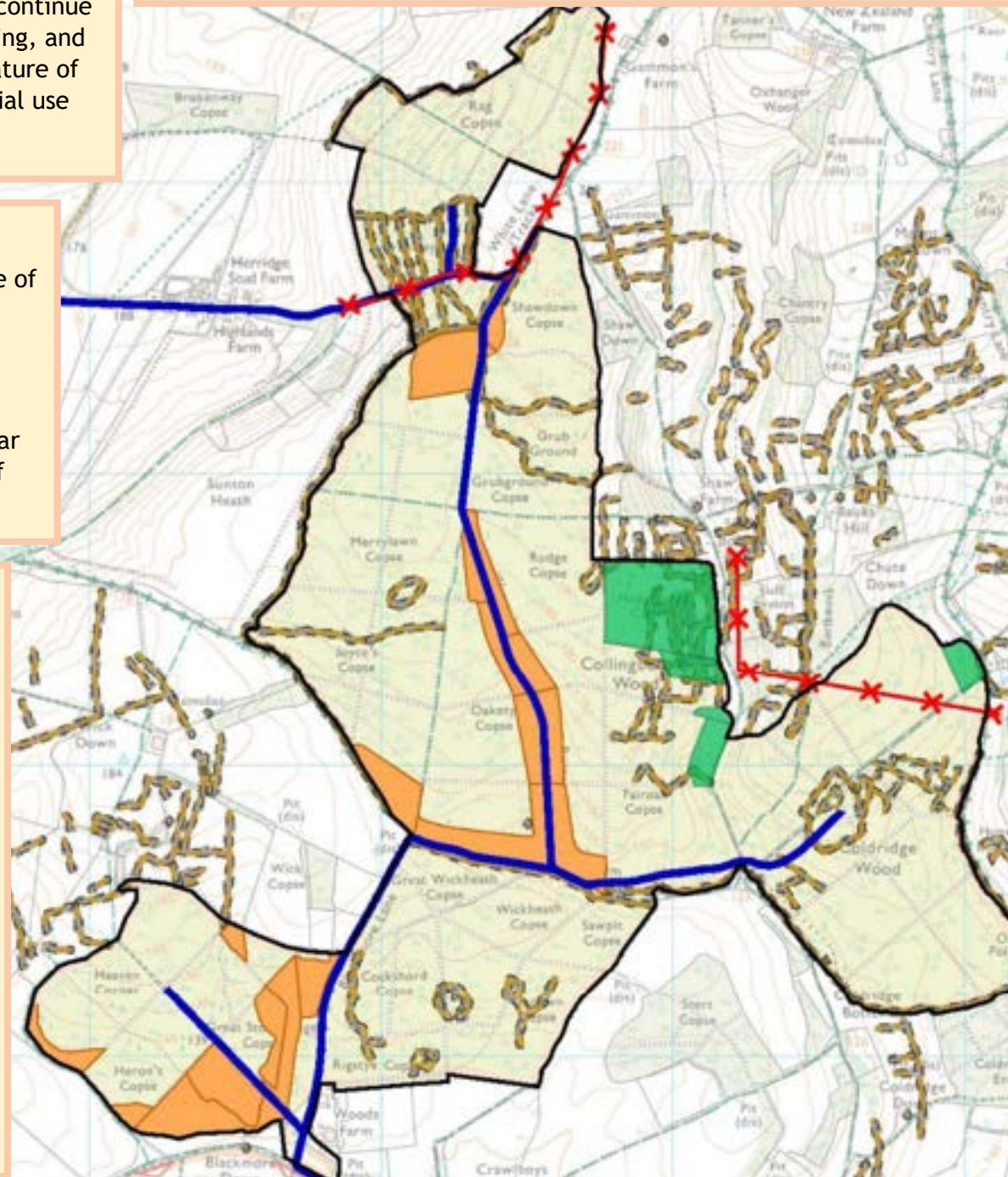
To contribute to the restoration of PAWS in this woodland, the cedar will be felled within this plan period, and if natural regeneration of the species is found to be arising abundantly, it will be controlled.

**Analysis:** 

The forest roads within Collingbourne have the potential to be utilised as wildlife corridors for many species, including lepidoptera. In the south-west corner of Collingbourne, known as Heaven's Corner, there are numerous records of various woodland flora species alongside rides, including uncommon species such as herb-Paris, meadow saffron and greater butterfly-orchids.

**Concept:**

Proactive widening of road and ride-sides will be carried out in combination with planned forestry operations in order to increase the sunlight reaching the ride sides, therefore enhancing their wildlife value and encouraging floral abundance and diversity. Although opportunities to carry out this work will be taken throughout the whole wood, a particular focus will be given to the rides in Heaven's Corner where rides are currently quite enclosed with vegetation.



**Analysis:**



Collingbourne is largely dominated by uniform-aged beech planted between the 1930s and 1950s, with very little structural or species diversity, presenting adaptation and resilience concerns for the future.

**Concept:**

Throughout the woodland, areas of group beech felling will be carried out, with 30-50m gaps created. These resulting open areas will be allowed to naturally regenerate, with opportunities taken where possible to supplementary plant with desirable species later in the plan period. This will result in pockets of greater diversity, which will be beneficial for wildlife as well as ensuring we are increasing the resilience of the woodland to future challenges.

As Collingbourne has bluebells growing extensively throughout the wood, areas of particular abundance will be noted and avoided when deciding where to locate group fell operations.



## Analysis & Concept - West Woods

### Analysis:

Like Collingbourne, West Woods is home to extremely high numbers of unscheduled heritage features, including Medieval boundaries, banks and ditches. In recent years, it was discovered that the famous sarsen stones used to construct Stonehenge were sourced here.

### Concept:

Care will be taken during forestry operations to protect these features, and contractors will be made aware of their presence.

### Analysis:

At Hursley Bottom, felling of diseased conifers in recent years has created an open ride area which is showing promising development of varying vegetation heights, from grassy sward progressing through scrub up to the mature trees of the neighbouring stands.

### Concept:

There is potential here for the introduction of a carefully managed grazing scheme, which could provide extensive ecological benefits for numerous invertebrates, particularly lepidoptera. The opportunity to pursue this idea will be explored with potential partner organisations over the first year of the plan period.

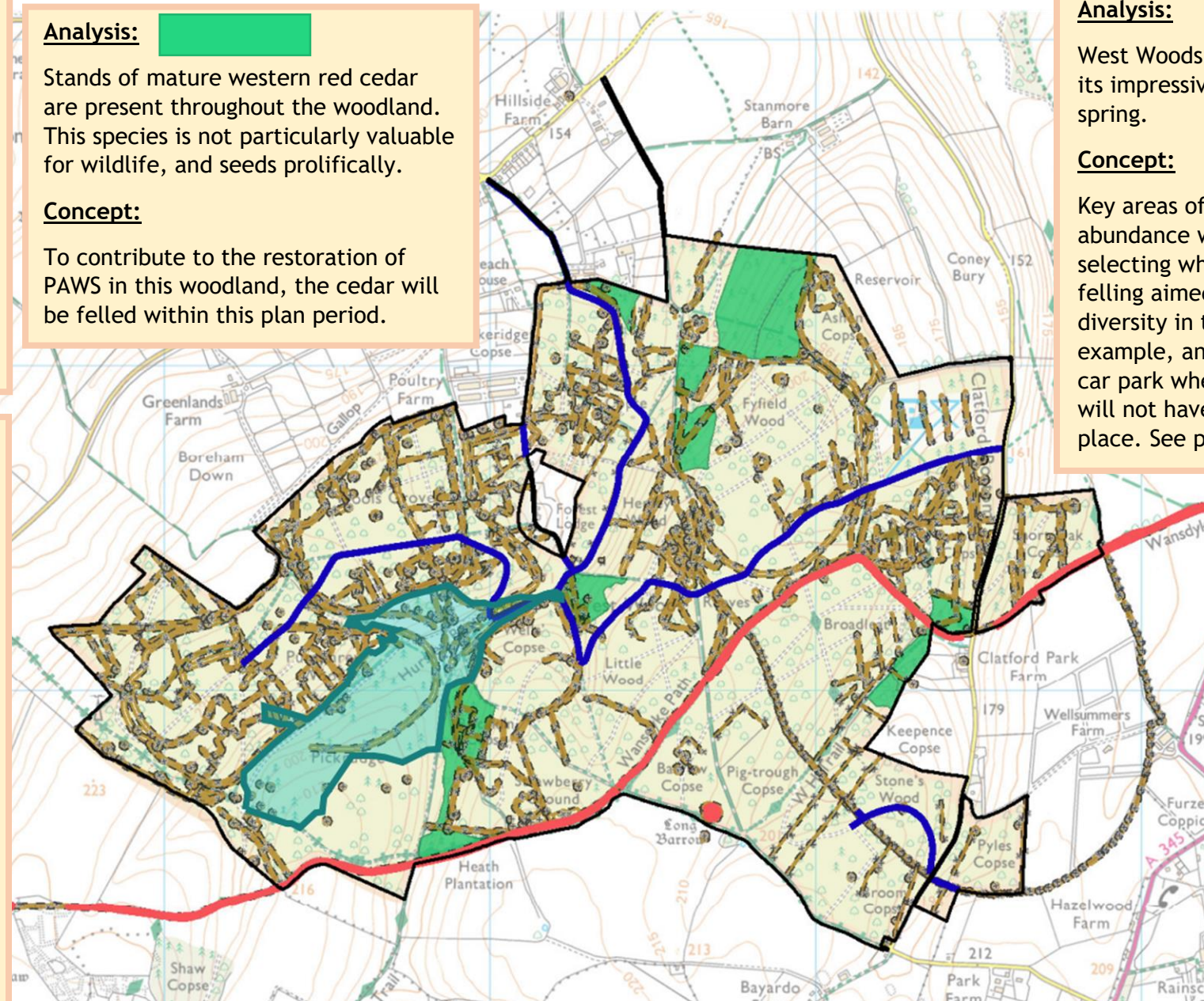


### Analysis:

Stands of mature western red cedar are present throughout the woodland. This species is not particularly valuable for wildlife, and seeds prolifically.

### Concept:

To contribute to the restoration of PAWS in this woodland, the cedar will be felled within this plan period.



### Analysis:

West Woods is home to two Scheduled Monuments, a Long Barrow, and a section of the linear earthwork feature, Wansdyke.

### Concept:

These two Scheduled Monuments will be managed under their own Scheduled Monument management plans, to ensure their condition is maintained and enhanced through restorative operations where possible.

### Analysis:

The forest roads within West Woods have the potential to be utilised as wildlife corridors for many species, including lepidoptera.

### Concept:

A cycle of vegetation clearance along defined stretches of the main forest road (running east-west) will be carried out in combination with planned forestry operations.

### Analysis:

West Woods is locally well known for its impressive bluebell display each spring.

### Concept:

Key areas of particular bluebell abundance will be avoided when selecting where to carry out group felling aimed at increasing structural diversity in the beech stands. For example, an area close to the main car park where bluebells are prolific will not have any group felling taking place. See page 18 for more details.



### Analysis:



West Woods is a largely dominated by uniform-aged beech planted between the 1930s and 1950s, with very little structural or species diversity, presenting adaptation and resilience concerns for the future.

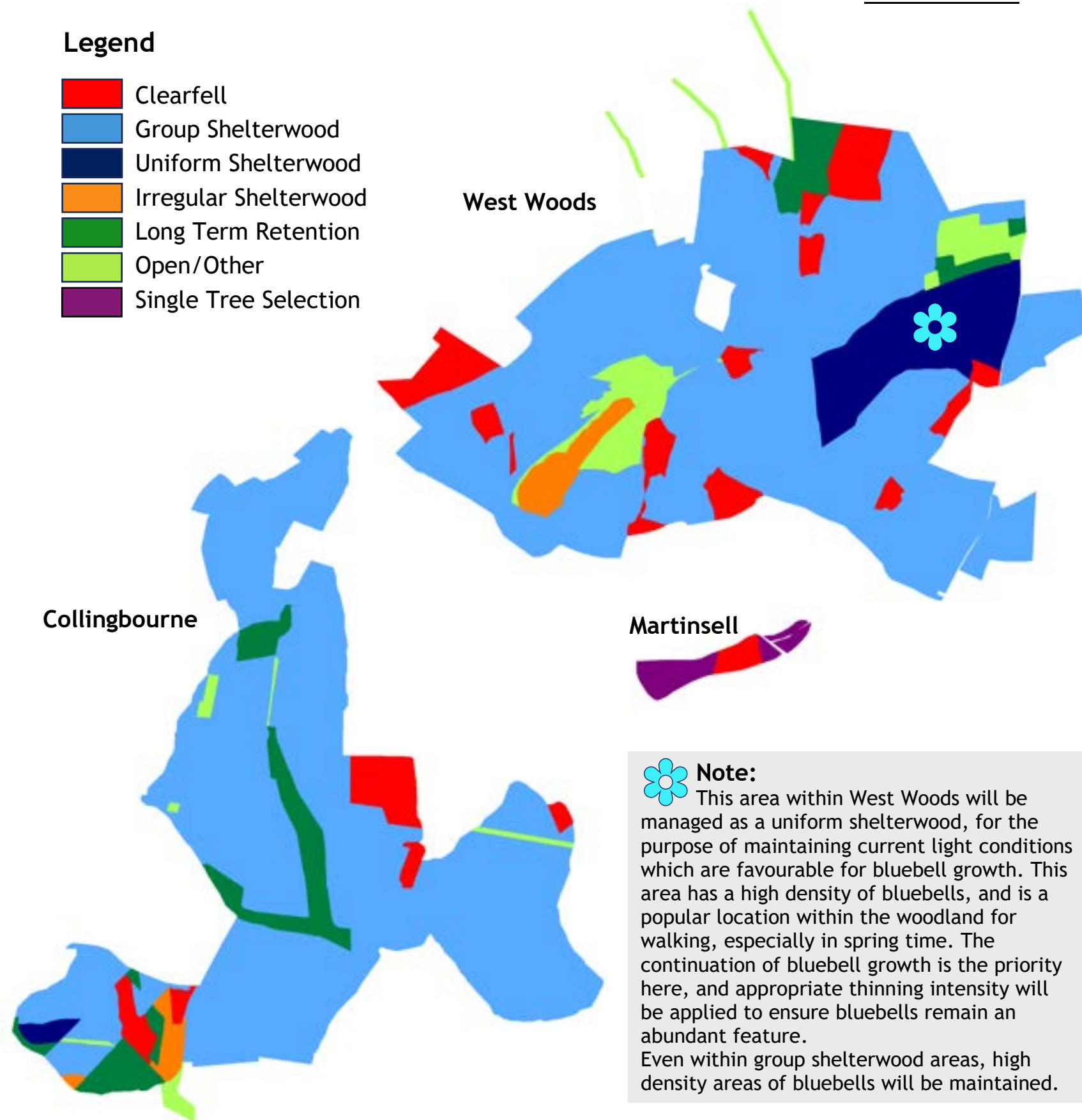
### Concept:


Throughout the woodland, areas of group felling will be carried out, with 30-50m diameter groups of beech removed. The resulting open areas will be allowed to naturally regenerate with opportunities taken where possible to supplementary plant with desirable species later in the plan period. This will result in pockets of greater diversity, which will be beneficial for wildlife as well as ensuring we are increasing the resilience of the woodland to future challenges.

## Silviculture

### Legend

- Clearfell
- Group Shelterwood
- Uniform Shelterwood
- Irregular Shelterwood
- Long Term Retention
- Open/Other
- Single Tree Selection



 **Note:** This area within West Woods will be managed as a uniform shelterwood, for the purpose of maintaining current light conditions which are favourable for bluebell growth. This area has a high density of bluebells, and is a popular location within the woodland for walking, especially in spring time. The continuation of bluebell growth is the priority here, and appropriate thinning intensity will be applied to ensure bluebells remain an abundant feature. Even within group shelterwood areas, high density areas of bluebells will be maintained.

**Clearfell** coupes will be managed by cutting and removing all identified trees, and will be restocked with native broadleaves primarily via natural regeneration. The establishment of a diverse natural stand will take time, and natural regeneration will be assessed at the 5- and 10-year Forest Plan review stage, to determine whether any supplementary planting is required to increase stocking density and/or species diversity. In PAWS areas, clearfelling of conifers and natural regeneration of broadleaves will contribute to the restoration of PAWS woodland.

**Group shelterwood** fellings will be integrated into thinning operations to diversify woodland composition and structure. Small ( $\leq 0.25$ ha) fells will be undertaken, focussing on locations where there are mature trees or regenerated saplings of a species other than beech, for example oak. This is to provide the opportunity for natural regeneration of that species to succeed, to contribute to the diversification of the largely uniform beech-dominated canopy. The gaps created will be left to naturally regenerate, with any conifer regeneration being removed. Supplementary planting of desirable broadleaf species may be carried out later in the plan period where opportunities arise.

**Uniform shelterwoods** will be used in broadleaf stands, enabling an understorey of next generation trees to establish via natural regeneration beneath the canopy throughout the stand. This will be achieved through the application of appropriate thinning intensity to open up gaps uniformly across the stand for natural regeneration to utilise.

**Irregular shelterwood** management will help to move conifer-dominated stands in PAWS areas towards a broadleaf-dominated complex structure, through the targeted removal of conifers during thinning operations. Thinning the conifers at a higher intensity than the broadleaves will gradually contribute to transforming the stand composition and structure. Gaps created through heavier thinning will allow light to reach the forest floor, facilitating the establishment of natural regeneration.

**Long term retention** coupes contain conifer stands which are providing ecological benefit in terms of nesting sites for birds (particularly Schedule 1 species), or aesthetic/landscape value within the woodland. These stands will be retained into the future beyond the age they would typically be felled, due to these benefits that they are providing.

**Single Tree Selection** is used in mature broadleaf habitat with high ecological value where timber production is not the priority. Careful selection of individual trees for removal will enhance the conditions for valuable veteran trees.

**Open space** will be maintained as valuable habitat for wildlife, adding to the diversity of the overall woodland structure. A regular mowing regime is in place to ensure forest cover in open areas remains less than 2m in height.

## Felling and Restocking 2025 - 2035: West Woods

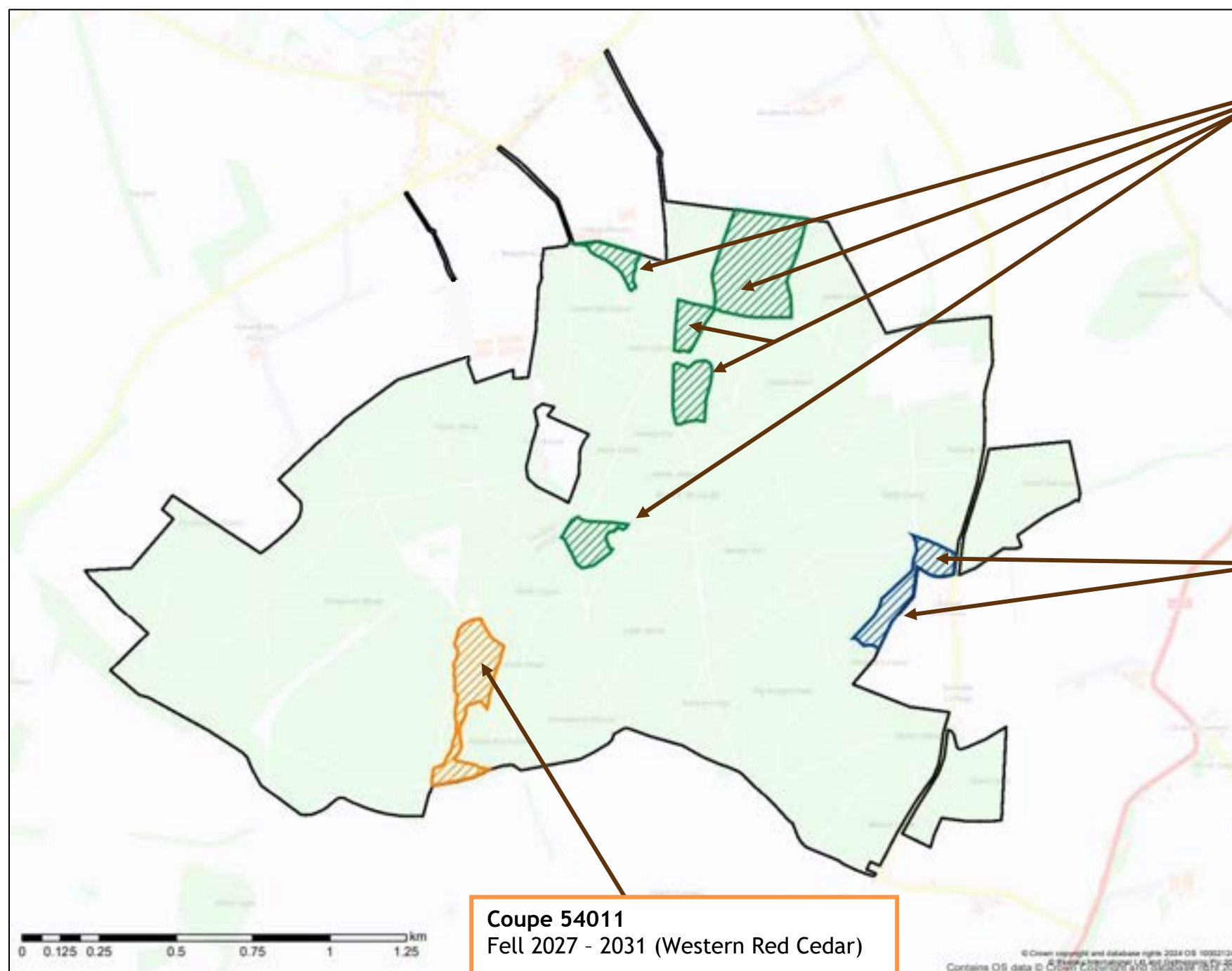
### Legend

-  Fell 2025 - 2026
-  Fell 2027 - 2031
-  Fell 2022 - 2035

### Restocking

Restocking will primarily utilise natural regeneration. However, future supplementary planting of desirable broadleaf species will be considered if assessments of natural regeneration after a 5- and 10-year period show little regeneration has occurred, or there is a lack of species diversity within the regeneration. If any planting is proposed, the species selected will be carefully considered to take into account local soil conditions and the projected future temperature and moisture regime for this part of Wiltshire.

Open space will continue to be maintained and enhanced. The inclusion of pockets of open space within a woodland diversifies the range of habitats present for various species to thrive, and increases the area of ecotone (areas of transitional vegetation between two differing habitats) which again can be valuable niches for certain woodland species.



**Coupe 54006**  
Fell 2025 - 2026 (Western Red Cedar)  
Total coupe size: 14.74ha  
Area to be felled: **2.47ha**  
Retain broadleaves

**Coupe 54044**  
Fell 2032 - 2035 (Western Red Cedar)  
Total coupe size: 2.91ha  
Area to be felled: **0.83ha**  
Retain broadleaves

**Coupe 54011**  
Fell 2027 - 2031 (Western Red Cedar)  
Total coupe size: 4.66ha  
Area to be felled: **1.62ha**  
Retain broadleaves

All timber arising from the Forestry England estate represents a negligible risk under the Timber and Timber Products Placing on the Market Regulations (UKTR) and UK FLEGT Regulations

## Felling and Restocking 2025 - 2035: Collingbourne

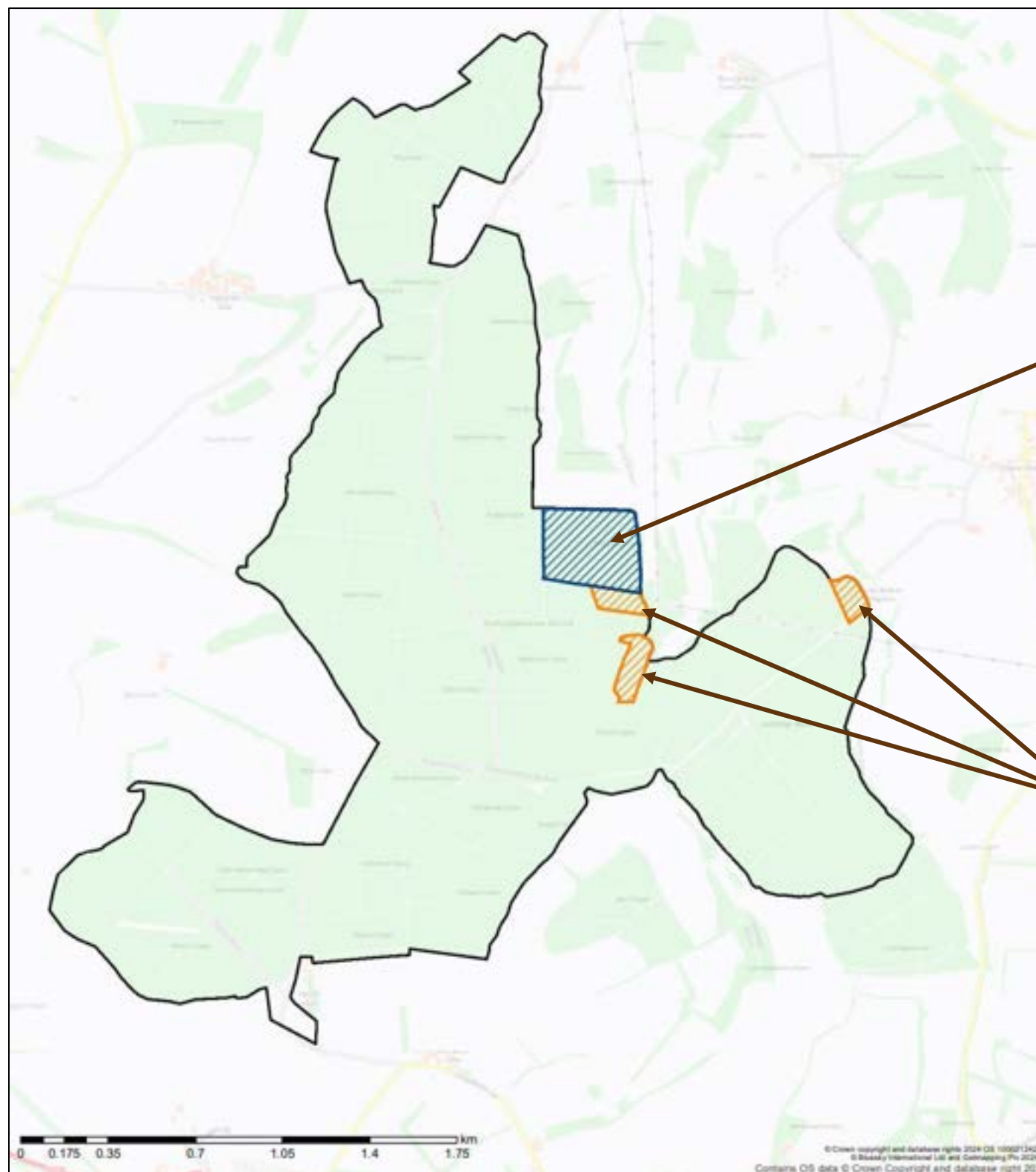
### Legend

-  Fell 2025 - 2026
-  Fell 2027 - 2031
-  Fell 2032 - 2035

### Restocking

Restocking will primarily utilise natural regeneration. However, future supplementary planting of desirable broadleaf species will be considered if assessments of natural regeneration after a 5- and 10-year period show little regeneration has occurred, or there is a lack of species diversity within the regeneration. If any planting is proposed, the species selected will be carefully considered to take into account local soil conditions and the projected future temperature and moisture regime for this part of Wiltshire.

Open space will continue to be maintained and enhanced. The inclusion of pockets of open space within a woodland diversifies the range of habitats present for various species to thrive, and increases the area of ecotone (areas of transitional vegetation between two differing habitats) which again can be valuable niches for certain woodland species.

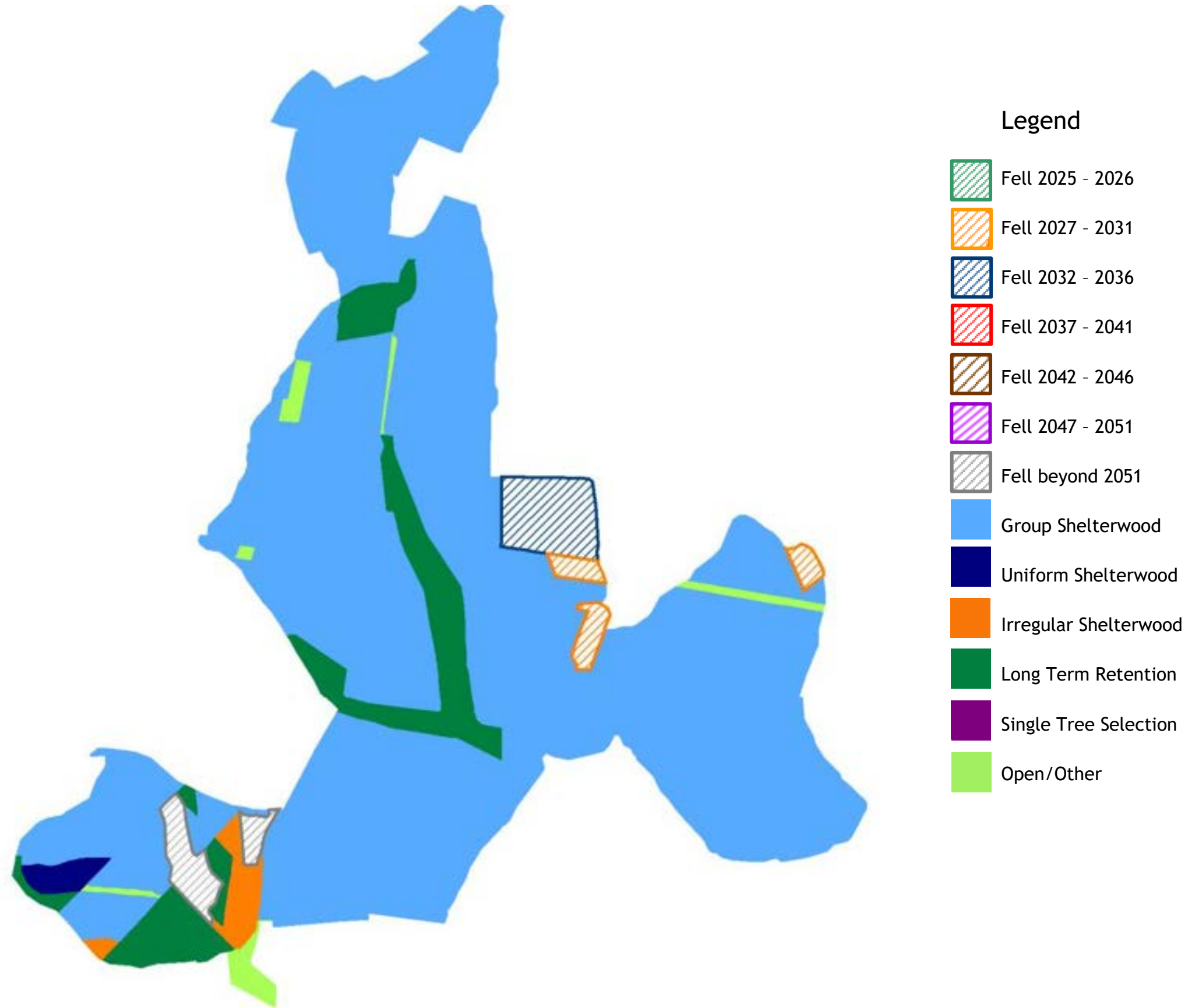


**Coupe 54037**  
Fell 2032 - 2035 (Western Red Cedar)  
  
Total coupe size: 11.74ha  
Area to be felled: **6.1ha**  
  
Retain broadleaves

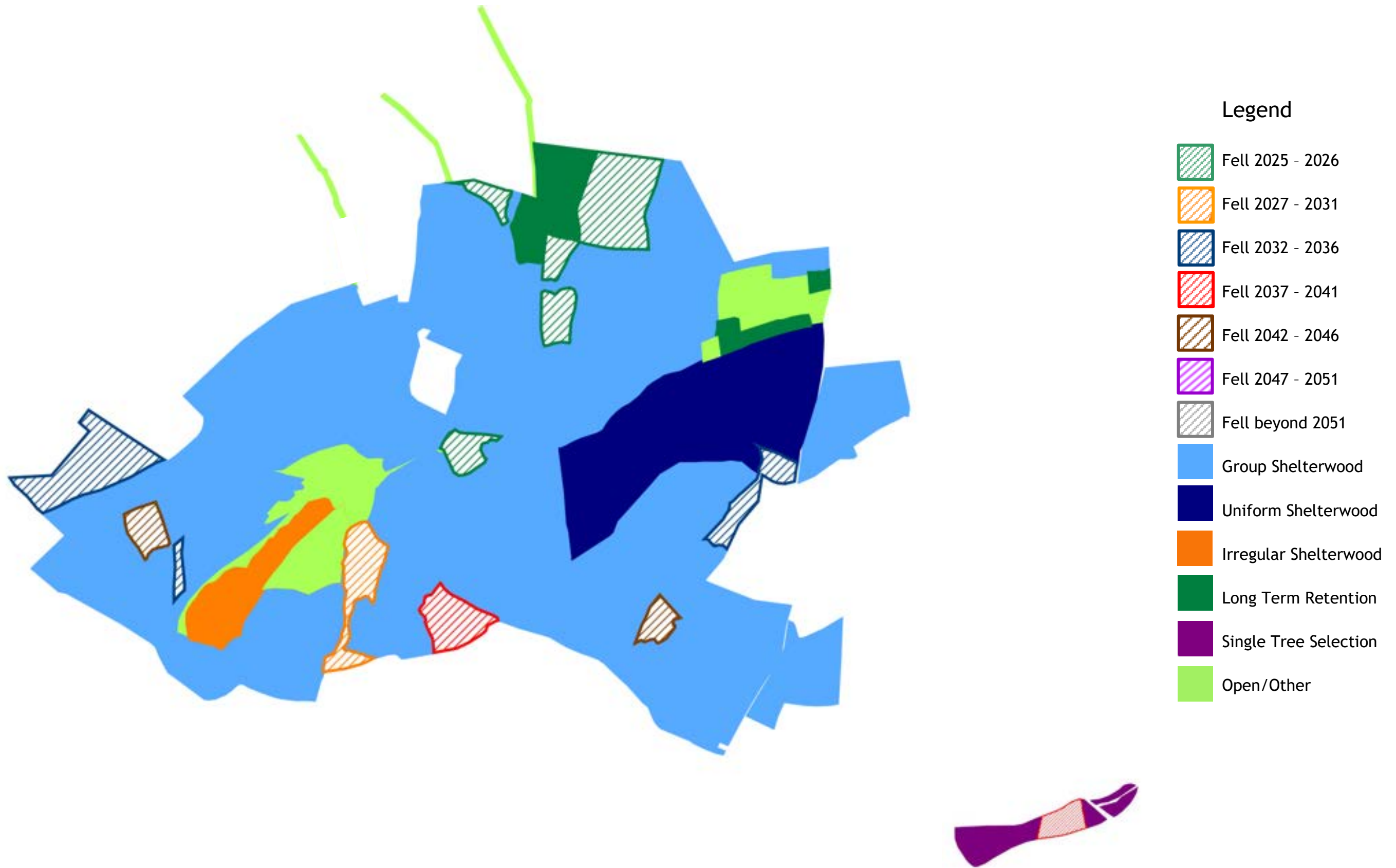
**Coupe 54036**  
Fell 2027 - 2031 (Western Red Cedar)  
  
Total coupe size: 5.79ha  
Area to be felled: **3.98ha**  
  
Retain broadleaves

All timber arising from the Forestry England estate represents a negligible risk under the Timber and Timber Products Placing on the Market Regulations (UKTR) and UK FLEGT Regulations

Management Prescriptions 2025 - 2051: Collingbourne



Management Prescriptions 2025 - 2051: West Woods & Martinsell

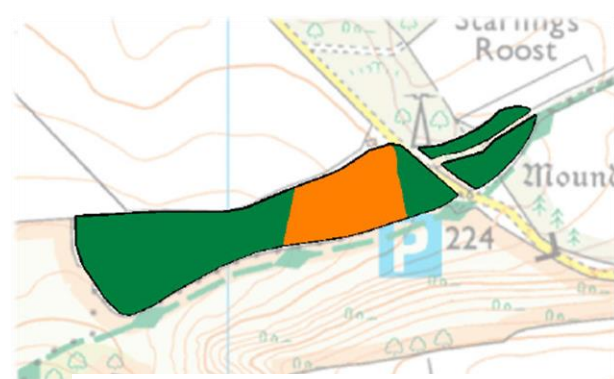


## Future Habitats and Species

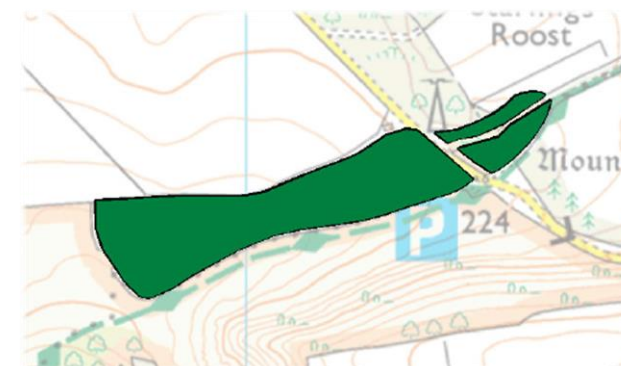
Over time, our planned thinning and felling operations will gradually transform the currently conifer-dominated areas of West Woods, Collingbourne Wood, and Martinsell, to broadleaf-dominated stands, in line with our commitment to restoring PAWS woodland. At Martinsell and West Woods, the planned thinning and felling interventions within this 10-year Forest Plan period will not alter the proportion of conifer-dominated to broadleaf-dominated areas. Even though there are areas of conifer felling planned at West Woods during this Forest Plan period, the conifers being felled are minor components in stands that are already of a majority broadleaf composition. At Collingbourne, the felling interventions planned for this Forest Plan period will result in certain areas of the woodland switching from conifer-dominated to broadleaf-dominated (see next page). Once the entire rotation of all conifer stands is complete over the coming decades (i.e. all conifers have been felled), the intention is that all of these woodlands will have become completely broadleaf-dominated, with some open areas.

### Legend

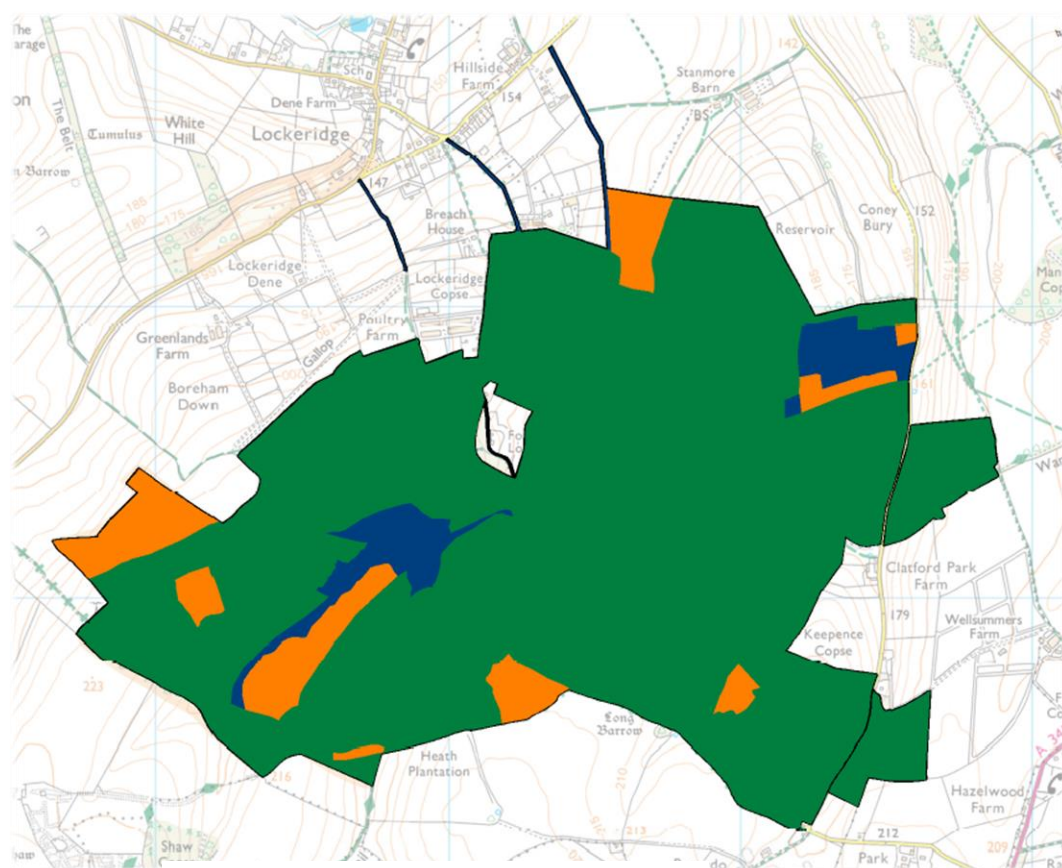
- Broadleaf-dominated woodland
- Conifer-dominated woodland
- Open/other



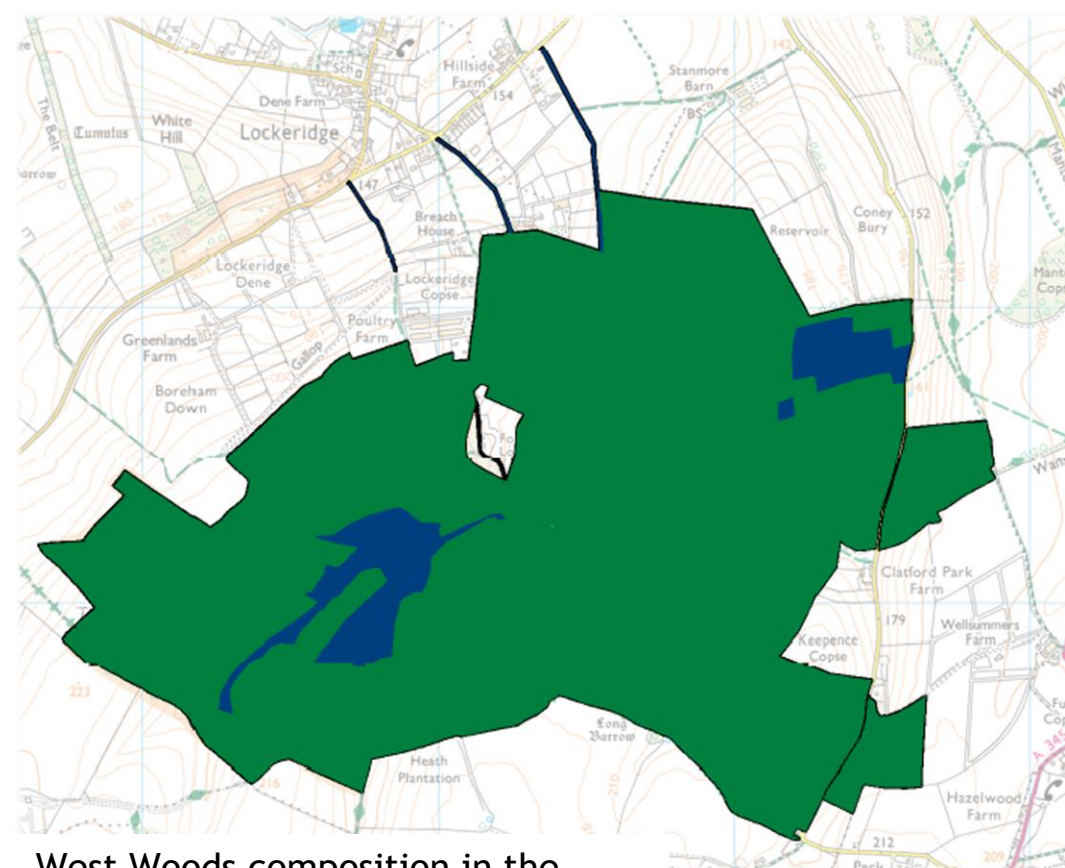
Martinsell composition now



Martinsell composition in the future  
once current stock removed

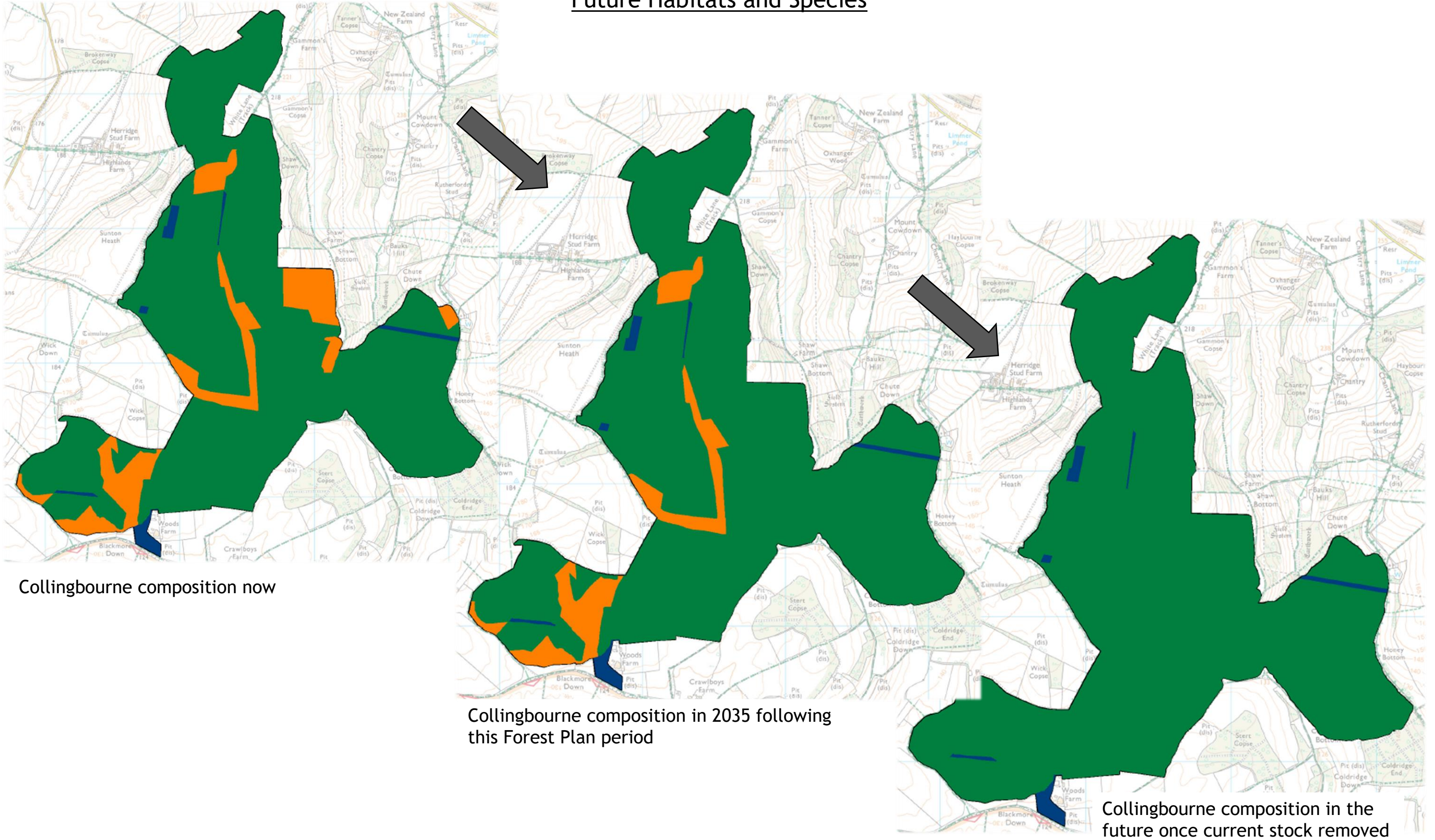


West Woods composition now



West Woods composition in the future  
once current stock removed

Future Habitats and Species



Collingbourne composition now

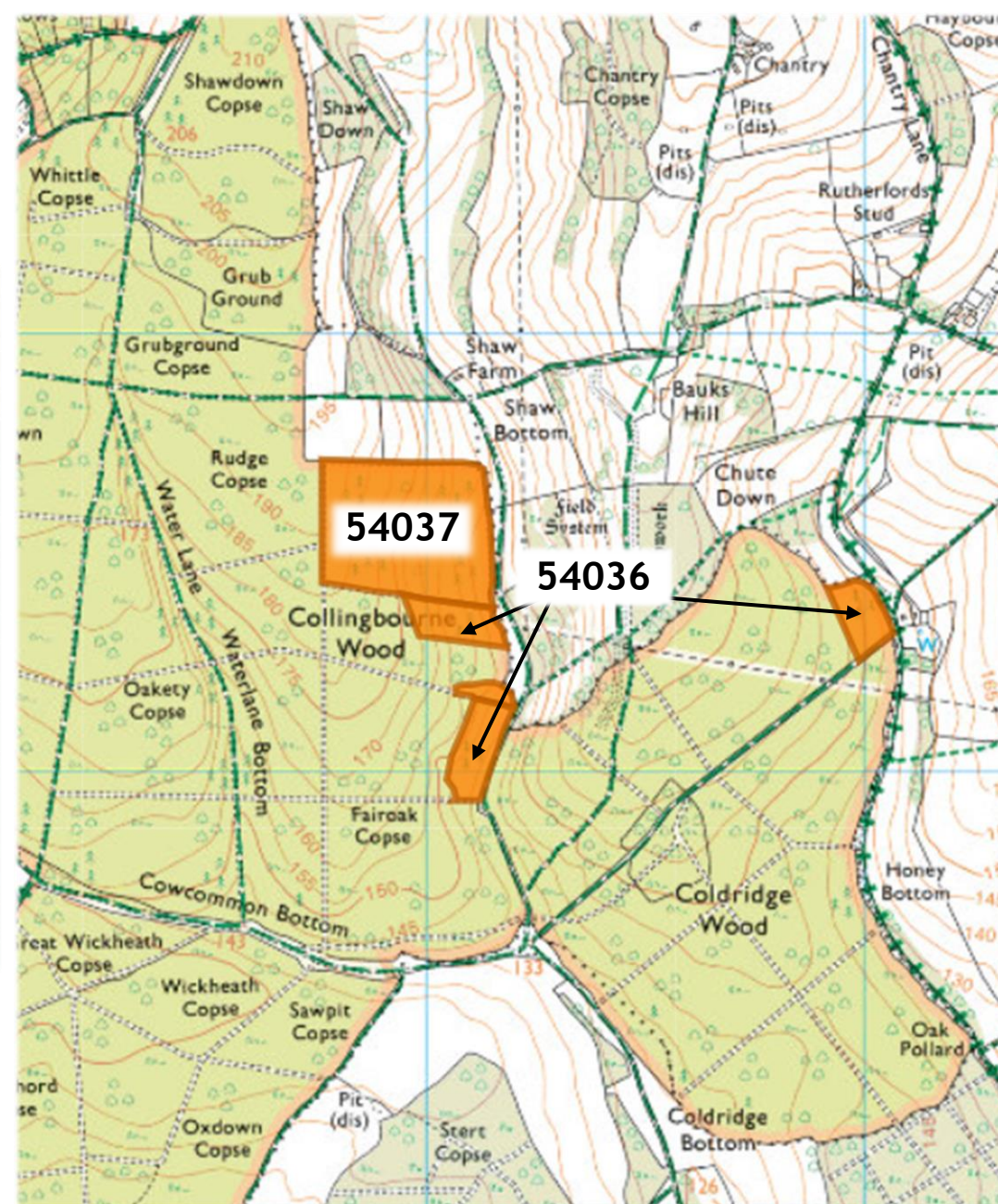
Collingbourne composition in 2035 following this Forest Plan period

Collingbourne composition in the future once current stock removed



## Landscape Analysis

Throughout this plan period, clearfelling operations will be carried out in both West Woods and Collingbourne Wood. In all of these operations, only conifer species will be clearfelled, and the broadleaves that are present will be retained. Clearfelling the conifers within these coupes, and subsequent expected regeneration with native broadleaves (and planting where necessary/possible) will help to restore areas of PAWS to native cover. The fact that all of the clearfell coupes are mixed stands, with broadleaves present as well as conifers, is beneficial from a landscape point of view. The retained broadleaves will help to minimise the visual impact of the conifer removal, especially given that a number of the clearfell coupes are located on the edges of the woodlands where they could feasibly impact the aesthetic composition of the external landscape. Another key point to note is that all of the clearfell coupes on an external woodland boundary are relatively small in size, which again will help to minimise their impact on the landscape once trees have been removed. The exception to this is coupe 54037, which is 11.74ha in total, though only 6.1ha of it (the conifer component) will be felled. An analysis of the potential landscape impact of felling this coupe can be seen below.



Although coupe 54037 is on the edge of Collingbourne Wood, the felling of the western red cedar within it is not expected to have a significant impact on the landscape.

Only the western red cedar component of the coupe will be felled, with the beech in the coupe being retained. The cedar currently makes up 52% of the coupe area, and it is largely clustered in the south and west of the coupe. This is shown in the aerial photograph on the far left, with the yellow line providing an indication of the rough divide between the area dominated by beech (north and east of the line) and western red cedar (south and west of the line). This is important from a landscape perspective, because the beech which remains in place after the cedar is felled will help to screen any views of bare ground. This is also the case for the section of coupe 54036 shown in the photograph.

As can be seen from the contour lines on the map to the left, only footpaths and a byway would have a downhill view towards coupe 54037. Therefore, visual impact is expected to be limited, especially given the screening effect of the beech trees as discussed above.

Broadleaf restocking of both coupes 54037 and 54036 will ensure a better integration with the existing landscape.

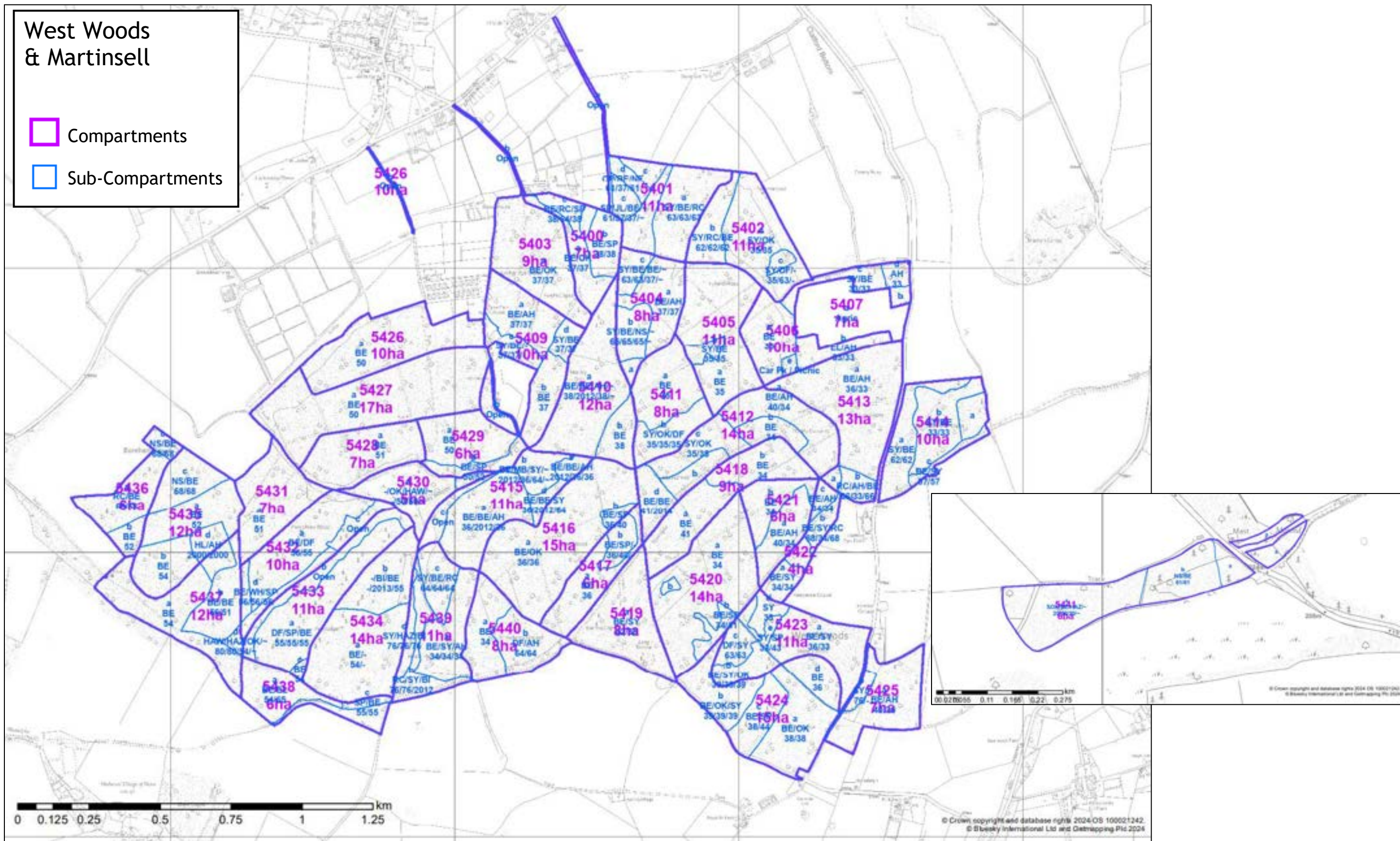
Above: Aerial photograph of coupe 54037, and part of coupe 54036. The yellow line provides an indication of the rough divide between the area dominated by beech (north and east of the line) and western red cedar (south and west of the line).

## Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Abbreviation	Description
<b>Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland</b>	ASNW	An ancient woodland site, where trees and other plant species appear to have established naturally rather than having been planted. Predominantly these sites will contain at least 80% site native species or species native to the surrounding area.
<b>Ancient Woodland Site</b>	AWS	A site that has been wooded since 1600AD and is unlikely to have been converted to farmland in the last few centuries.
<b>Clearfelling</b>	CF or C/F	To cut and remove all trees from a certain area of woodland.
<b>Coppicing</b>		A traditional method of woodland management where trees are felled near their base to leave a stump (or “stool”). New shoots regrow from the stool, creating numerous thin stems or “poles”. Areas of coppice are usually managed on a rotation system, so that each area gets cut on a regular cycle after a certain number of years. Traditionally woodlands were managed this way to produce a sustainable source of wood suitable for many uses (such as firewood, fencing and basket-making). Today, coppicing is mostly implemented for its ecological benefits as it provides a variety of habitats and periodically allows light to reach the woodland floor.
<b>Coupe</b>		Woodlands are divided up into delineated areas of management called coupes, which can be any size. The trees within each coupe are managed under particular prescriptions.
<b>Crop</b>		A stand of trees. Often associated with stands completely or partially managed for timber.
<b>Forest Development Types</b>	FDT	A management tool developed by Forest Research which helps to set the long-term vision for a stand and increase its future resilience. It provides guidance on various different species mixtures, the required site conditions for each mixture, and advice on management in order to achieve the desired stand transformation.
<b>Group felling</b>		This is where small areas of woodland are felled, and then either allowed to develop through the use of natural-regeneration or planted (“group planting”). These techniques can help to develop a diverse structure* within a wood over a given length of time. *Either in terms of age or the number of tree species present, since shelter and shade are provided by the remaining upper storey a larger number of tree species can be considered when deciding what to plant.
<b>Hectare</b>	Ha	Unit of area equating to 2.47 acres.
<b>High forest</b>		Stands of mature trees forming a closed canopy.
<b>Irregular structure</b>		When a stand contains trees of a variety of ages, meaning there is a diversity of tree sizes and forms and the canopy is not uniform.
<b>Lepidoptera</b>		An order of insects, including moths and butterflies.
<b>Long term retention</b>		When a stand of trees is retained in a woodland beyond their economic peak (the age/size when they would usually be felled for optimum financial return), for ecological, cultural or aesthetic reasons.
<b>Low Impact Silvicultural Systems</b>	LISS	Woodland management practices which result in a less severe impact on the woodland environment than a traditional clearfelling regime. LISS can help build structural diversity and resilience into a woodland, and can help to maintain the soil health and microclimate of the woodland. LISS management systems include single tree and group selection, shelterwood or under-planting, small coupe felling, coppicing and minimum intervention systems.
<b>Minimum intervention</b>		Areas of woodland where forestry operations rarely take place. This may be because these areas of woodland are difficult to access with machinery, too wet or boggy to safely carry out operations, or otherwise unsafe or impractical to regularly intervene. Or, it may be because the area has been designated as a Natural Reserve (see definition below).
<b>National Character Area</b>	NCA	There are 159 National Character Areas in England as defined by Natural England. They are natural areas not defined by administrative boundaries, that embody the landscape, ecology, geology and/or culture of that area.
<b>Native/naturalised</b>		The trees making up the woodland are part of England’s natural, or naturalised flora. Determined by whether the trees colonised Britain without assistance from humans since the last ice age (or in the case of ‘honorary natives’ were brought here by people but have naturalised in historic times); and whether they would naturally be found in this part of England.
<b>Naturalness</b>		The measure to show the percentage of site-native tree species in a given area.
<b>Natural Regeneration</b>	Nat regen	When trees grow on a site as a result of natural seed fall, as opposed to having been planted by humans. Natural regeneration of desirable species is often encouraged and promoted through careful thinning of the surrounding woodland over a number of years. This provides more light and space in order to ensure the young trees can establish themselves into larger trees, eventually allowing them to be incorporated (‘recruited’) into the main crop for the next rotation at some point in the future.
<b>Natural Reserve</b>		Areas of woodland which are managed under a minimum intervention (see definition above) approach, specifically for ecological/wildlife benefit.

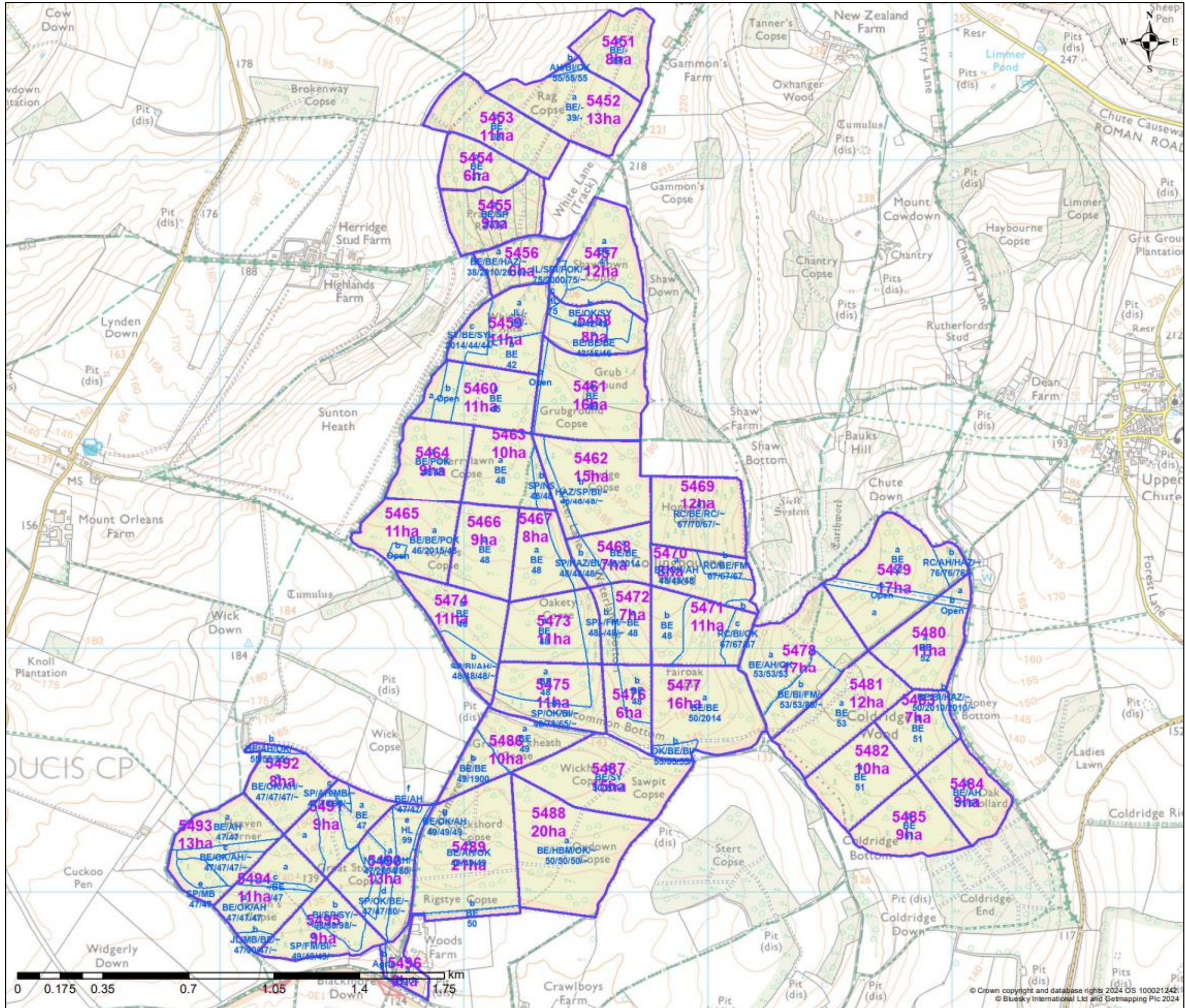
<b>Open access land</b>	CROW	Land designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act), which gives the public a right of access on foot to land mapped as “open country”, and these areas are known as “open access land”. This access can be used to walk, run, climb, sight-see and bird-watch.
<b>Plant and Seed Supply</b>	PSS	Forestry England’s Plant and Seed Supply unit, who facilitate the supply of high-quality tree seedlings for planting on Forestry England sites
<b>Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site</b>	PAWS	Areas of ancient woodland where the original semi-natural woodland has been cleared and replaced with a plantation of either native or non-native species, resulting in a decline in ecological value. Many PAWS sites retain remnant ancient features.
<b>Pollarding</b>		A method of pruning in which the upper branches of a tree are cut back to the trunk, which controls the height of the main stem and encourages the growth of a dense head of branches.
<b>Public Right of Way</b>	PROW	A linear route over land which the public have a right to pass over at all times. There are four types of Public Right of Way, which are footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, and byways open to all traffic.
<b>Ride</b>		A track through a woodland/forest.
<b>Rotation</b>		Generally a commercial term used to describe the length of time an area of trees is growing for, from the time of planting to the time of felling. For broadleaves, a rotation is generally a lot longer than that of conifer species and can broadly speaking be anywhere between 80 years to 3-400 years, as opposed to conifer crops whose rotation is generally shorter but can vary from 20-25 years to 120 years plus. Coppiced broadleaves are an exception, as rotation length can vary from 5 years up to 30 years plus, depending on management objectives. “First rotation” would refer to an area of wood planted on open ground not previously wooded. And so “second rotation” is where woodland has been cleared and replanted.
<b>Scheduled Monument</b>	SM	A nationally important heritage site which has been selected by Historic England for protection.
<b>Scrub</b>		Vegetation dominated by low woody plants such as shrubs and bushes, which can be a successional/transitionary habitat between open or grassy habitat and woodland. Examples of scrub species include blackthorn, hawthorn, alder and gorse.
<b>Secondary woodland</b>		Woodland located on a site which has not been continuously wooded throughout history (unlike ancient woodland).
<b>Selection system</b>		A silvicultural system where single trees or small groups are felled with the aim of achieving and maintaining an uneven age structure within the woodland. Trees of all age classes and sizes may be selected for removal, and continuous canopy cover is maintained.
<b>Shelterwood</b>		A management system that is applicable to conifer or broadleaf trees, where the tree canopy is maintained at one or more levels without the need to clearfell the whole site. Felling generally occurs in small groups, whose size, shape and spatial distribution will vary depending on site conditions. By removing mature trees in this way, a new stand of trees is able to develop underneath the remaining mature trees. The gaps where groups have been removed are then either allowed to develop and establish via natural regeneration, are planted, or are established using a mixture of both techniques. This known as a “group shelterwood system”.
<b>Silviculture</b>		A term coined during late 19 <sup>th</sup> century from the Latin <i>silva</i> meaning 'wood' and the French <i>culture</i> meaning 'cultivation' and so Silviculture is the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, and quality of forest vegetation to achieve a full range of objectives.
<b>Site of Special Scientific Interest</b>	SSSI	Land that has been designated for protection by Natural England due to features of special interest such as wildlife, geology or landform. Achieving “favourable” condition is the goal for all SSSIs, which means the habitats or features within are being managed appropriately and as a result are in a healthy state.
<b>Stand</b>		A group or area of trees that are more or less homogeneous with regard to species composition, density, size, and sometimes habitat.
<b>Thinning</b>		Selective removal of trees from a wooded area, giving the remaining trees more space to grow into larger trees.
<b>Tree of Special Interest</b>	TSI	An outstanding tree that is of particular note and interest for one of many reasons, including its age, size, form, cultural or historic significance.
<b>Underplanting</b>		When shade-tolerant tree species are planted beneath an existing mature woodland canopy, for the purpose of diversifying the stand structure and facilitating the growth of the next generation of trees which will eventually replace the current canopy trees.
<b>Understorey</b>		A layer of tree or shrub vegetation beneath the forest canopy.
<b>Veteran tree</b>		A tree of particular interest due to its significant age, size, history, and because it has characteristics which make it aesthetically, ecologically or culturally valuable. Although such trees may not be old enough to be classed as ancient, they have some “ancient” features that are valuable to wildlife such as deadwood, decay, hollows or fungi, and may have acquired these features through physical damage or stress.
<b>Windblow</b>		When trees are uprooted as a result of wind.
<b>Windfirm</b>		When trees are not at a high risk of windblow because they are securely rooted and are able to withstand strong winds.
<b>Wood pasture</b>		Sometimes also referred to as parkland. Areas of open grazed pasture characterised by the presence of mature trees, which are either spaced sporadically, in groups, or form a fairly uniform canopy cover. Wood pastures are often the result of long-established grazing regimes and can be historically significant.

Appendix 2: Stock Data October 2024



**Collingbourne Wood**

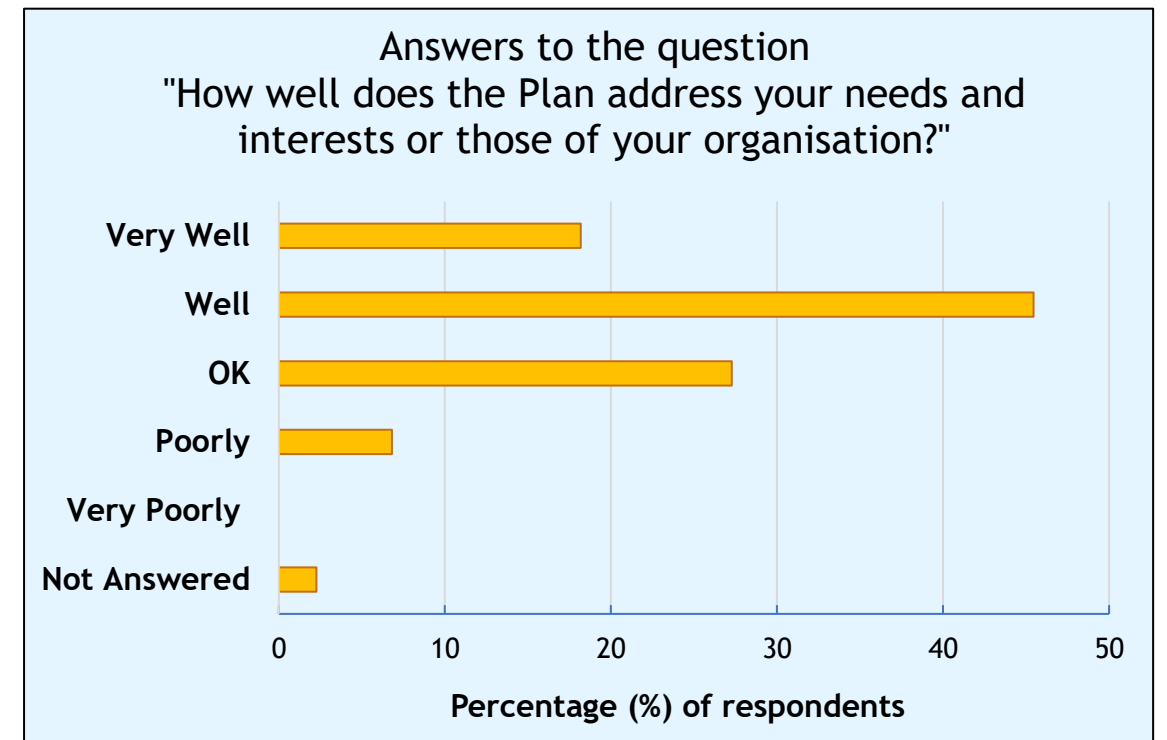
- Compartments
- Sub-Compartments



### Appendix 3: Consultation Record

Between the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2024, and the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, the consultation for this Forest Plan was conducted online via Citizen Space. Posters promoting the link to participate in the survey were displayed in several locations within West Woods and Collingbourne Wood for this period of time, and the link was directly emailed to key stakeholders. In addition, letters inviting participation in the survey were hand delivered to a number of properties neighbouring the two woodlands.

The vast majority of respondents described themselves as forest users, visitors, or members of the public. However, responses were also received from NGOs, community groups, parish councils, and ecological experts. Overall, the response to the Forest Plan was positive, with 64% of respondents saying that the plan addressed their needs and interests “very well” or “well”, and 27% saying “OK”. Respondents were also asked to score a variety of interests in terms of their importance to them or their organisation. “Biodiversity & woodland ecology”, “communities & people”, “climate change”, “forest protection” and “recreation and access” were all of high importance to people, with the majority of respondents saying these interests were “very important” to them.



Respondents had the opportunity to provide comments on the Forest Plan, and a summary of the most common topics which arose in people’s comments can be seen in the table below, along with our response.

Topics Raised in Consultation	Quotes from Respondents	Forestry England’s Response
A number of respondents expressed strong concern over the <b>illegal use of motorbikes and off-road vehicles within the woods</b> , at both West Woods and Collingbourne Wood. A specific point was raised about the barrier at the Lockeridge car park at West Woods being able to be driven around.	<p>“I would ask that there is more policing of the woods by Forestry Commission staff to stop motorbikes entering. It is becoming a daily intrusion and is not only noisy but threatens walkers/dog walkers/wildlife. Signs alone have not worked.”</p> <p>“To effectively deter motorcyclists from using the woods, we need better monitoring and restricted access.”</p> <p>“I would hope more could be done to prevent/restrict their movement within the area.”</p>	<p>We take illegal activity very seriously, and encourage residents to report all incidents to the police and to Forestry England with as much information as possible. The local Forestry England team looks after 3500 hectares of woodland and isn’t resourced to police the forests against incursions. But we record all incident reports in order to understand recurring patterns of behaviour.</p> <p>The Lockeridge entrance to West Woods is a Public Right of Way. We need to maintain access for horse riders and pedestrians, including visitors using wheelchairs or mobility scooters. Maintaining access for legitimate forest users whilst preventing abuse by motorised vehicles is an ongoing challenge.</p>

<p>Two respondents felt that <b>deer numbers</b> have increased in the woods, and asked about our approach to deer management.</p>	<p>“There's plenty of deer in there damaging the landscape and trees.”</p> <p>“There appears to be an increasing number of deer in West Woods which stray regularly beyond the woods into local residents’ gardens. Does Forestry England have a plan for controlling deer populations?”</p>	<p>Active deer management is carried out in West Woods via a Deer Control Licence managed by Forestry England. Deer live wild and pass freely through the landscape wherever they want, not adhering to land boundaries. They aren’t confined to one particular habitat, and the number occupying a particular woodland at any given time is unlikely to remain consistent.</p>
<p>Several respondents had <b>concerns for the bluebells and wild daffodils</b> present in the woods, expressing fear over a potential reduction in these wildflowers as a result of our planned forestry activities.</p>	<p>“Bluebell density must be conserved throughout all of West Woods, not just the protected area near the eastern car park.”</p> <p>“Whilst I applaud the attention to be given to the preservation of bluebell displays, the bluebells are much less extensive or attractive than they used to be several years ago.”</p> <p>“....request that attention is given to protecting the bluebells across the Woods when conducting felling operations and not merely the site near the main car park.”</p>	<p>Wild flowers, in particular bluebells, are a significant ecological feature of these woodlands and an ancient woodland indicator. They are also a greatly loved feature of the woodlands for visitors. Proposals within the new Forest Plan have been carefully considered to balance the need to diversify the woodland structure, and to preserve the bluebells which visitors love to see and which are important from a wildlife perspective.</p> <p>While the area on the eastern side of West Woods near to the Clatford car park and the Wansdyke footpath has been identified as an area of particular bluebell abundance, this does not mean that bluebells elsewhere in the woodlands will be disregarded when felling operations are planned. In areas identified for group felling to take place, care will be taken to avoid areas of high bluebell/wildflower density.</p> <p>Whilst preserving ecological features is a high priority, it is important to maintain a holistic view of the woodlands. If we do not carry out felling in an attempt to protect wildflowers, these woodlands would continue to have a very uniform canopy, with very little diversity - including woodland flora - and a lack of resilience and provision for healthy trees in the future.</p>
<p>There were a number of comments regarding <b>signage of trails</b>, including bridleways and other Public Rights of Way (PROW), and a <b>wish to see more waymarked trails</b> in the woods. A small number of comments also voiced concerns about the <b>maintenance of trails and PROW</b>.</p>	<p>“Most visitors do not know which paths/tracks are footpaths or bridleways. Consequently horse riders use footpaths which makes it very difficult for those on foot to use them for a long time after heavy rain.”</p> <p>“The plan mentions rights of way but more could be done to help visitors unfamiliar with the woods to navigate paths, particularly as there is limited signal.”</p> <p>“Pathways are poorly marked and as west woods has nearly no mobile phone signal, it would be helpful to have a few coloured circular "routes" to follow to encourage more people to visit and enjoy this woodland.”</p> <p>“Some of the paths we use have become blocked with fallen trees or the ground cover has eroded with the weather.”</p>	<p>At the moment, we don’t have the financial or staff resources to manage additional waymarked trails, which require regular inspection and maintenance. We plan to invest our existing resources to maintain the current trail in West Woods and leave the rest of the forest as a place for informal exploration.</p> <p>We are responsible for maintaining the vegetation alongside Public Rights of Way (PROW) and for keeping them open and accessible, including clearing any fallen trees which are blocking PROWs. If members of the public notice any such fallen trees blocking PROWs, we ask them to get in touch with us in case we are not aware, so that we are able to clear the tree(s) and make the area safe. The council’s Public Rights of Way staff are responsible for the signage on PROWs, and for the maintenance of PROW surfaces.</p>

<p>Several respondents expressed concern over our intention to investigate the <b>potential for a grazing scheme</b> to be put in place at Hursley Bottom in West Woods, for the purpose of habitat enhancement. In particular, there were worries about whether such a scheme would limit access to the public in this part of the wood.</p>	<p>“I would be concerned about grazing, especially if it involved cattle, and think that it needs very clear information for walkers, so that they can avoid areas where cattle are grazing.”</p> <p>“This openness is intrinsic to the character of this area and the enjoyment of the area by public and wildlife alike. The area currently contains a lonely picnic bench which is a quiet place of contemplation in the middle of the woodland for passing walkers and cyclists. If it is grazed it will have to be fenced in thus preventing any amenity use.”</p> <p>“The proposed grazing plan has the potential to exclude the public from this area whilst offering limited gains in terms of benefits to the wildlife.”</p>	<p>At this stage, the idea of introducing a conservation grazing scheme at Hursley Bottom is in the early stages of development and is only one of several possibilities being considered to manage this area effectively for wildlife benefit.</p> <p>If grazing was to be progressed, maintaining public access throughout the grazed area would be a key objective. Any proposals would be thoroughly assessed and discussed within Forestry England, and we would seek advice from other organisations who are successfully managing conservation grazing initiatives in publicly used areas.</p>
<p>A small number of respondents didn't agree with our proposals to <b>embrace natural regeneration</b> as a method of restocking areas following felling.</p>	<p>“The reliance on natural regeneration ensures that saplings of today will not yield any timber in the future.”</p> <p>“It makes more sense to plant beech trees in replacement to regeneration.”</p>	<p>Following any group felling or clearfelling operations, no immediate planting will take place, and instead we will monitor the abundance and species of natural regeneration, reviewing at 5 years post felling and 10 years post felling against stocking densities required by the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. At this point, if little regeneration has occurred, or it is of undesirable species or lacking in species diversity, then supplementary planting will be considered. Any planting will be carefully planned to achieve a desired species mix that is suited to expected future climatic conditions.</p> <p>There are many advantages to embracing natural regeneration. The resulting trees are likely to be very well adapted to local site conditions, including soil type, and are likely to be hardier to local climatic conditions and stressors. The process of natural regeneration allows for natural selection of the best adapted trees to occur. The species mixes and habitats created by regeneration are often more natural, and better able to support wildlife communities within the woodland. It is also beneficial to avoid needing to import saplings from abroad to plant, to reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases to our woodlands.</p>
<p>One respondent was concerned that the new plan proposals didn't focus enough on the <b>production of timber</b>.</p>	<p>“It is disappointing to see that the plan includes no emphasis on the production of quality British timber. Yes there is a plan to fell trees, but the purpose, in all cases, is to improve ecosystems rather to produce high quality timber.”</p> <p>“The financial resilience of a woodland is also important for it's long term survival.”</p>	<p>Across the nation's forests, individual woodlands are managed for a variety of objectives in the context of our core aims to shape woodlands for people, wildlife, and timber. The extent to which each woodland delivers on each of those three aims varies, and depends largely on the unique characteristics and composition of each woodland. Both West Woods and Collingbourne are largely ancient woodland sites that have been previously felled and restocked with plantations of uniform beech. A key objective for both woodlands therefore is to diversify this uniform structure and restore a native composition. This involves regular thinning interventions, as well as thoughtfully planned clearfell and group felling operations, all of which produce sustainable British timber. Although commercial timber production isn't the primary objective of this forest plan, timber harvesting remains an important and integral part of the woodland management here.</p>



<p>Several respondents expressed disappointment that there are no plans for the <b>development of cycle routes or mountain biking facilities</b> in the new Forest Plan.</p>	<p>“There is no provision for mountain biking which other areas have. This is a great activity particularly for youth who need to exercise in open spaces for their physical and mental health.”</p> <p>“The plan does not contain provisions for preserving or enhancing cycling routes in either location.”</p>	<p>In Forestry England, we are riders ourselves and we support off-road cycling with trails in many of the nation’s forests. Like other recreation infrastructure, cycling trails must be suitable for the woodland, with consideration for user safety, parking, emergency access, and resources to meet the ongoing demands of inspection, maintenance, and repair. Whilst at some Forestry England woodlands we are able to offer a range of biking trails, we cannot offer a diverse spectrum of trails for cyclists in every woodland.</p> <p>Bikes are welcome at West Woods and Collingbourne Wood on bridleways and forest roads. As predominantly ancient woodland sites, these woodlands are not appropriate places to develop cycling trails. Where unauthorised tracks are used by mountain bikes, we monitor the impact of these on the woodland and other forest visitors. Where jumps are built, or we see tracks start to conflict with other woodland users, or affect features such as biodiversity or heritage, we intervene.</p>
<p>A concern about <b>general maintenance</b> was raised, particularly verge cutting, damage to barriers/fences, and the mowing regime of the picnic area at Hursley Bottom in West Woods.</p>	<p>“The lack of human resources over the past decade - or longer - has led to under maintenance, e.g. verges and main track edges not cut back and cleared out during autumn months, broken fences/barriers not repaired or replaced, picnic site areas not cut/ mowed during the summer.”</p>	<p>Over the previous decade, we have undertaken extensive work widening the forest road in West Woods, and this is due to continue under the new Forest Plan. Opening up the verges alongside the forest road will be beneficial for biodiversity and will further enhance the wildlife corridor through the woodland, linking with Hursley Bottom. Throughout the woodland, ride sides are cut back every autumn.</p> <p>There are two barriers in West Woods, at the two main entrances to the wood, and if any damage is reported to us the beat team ensures that repairs are organised and completed swiftly. The picnic area in the middle of the Clatford car park on the eastern side of the woodland is mowed monthly from April through to October every year. We also mow around the picnic bench at Hursley Bottom.</p>
<p>A small number of respondents felt that previous forestry work had left behind <b>damage or mess</b> in the woods, and were worried that this will happen again in the future.</p>	<p>“I would ask that the contractors try and be as minimally destructive as possible. In the recent past they have destroyed the bluebells and left very rutted and unsightly paths through the woods (crossing the footpaths) and making little or no attempt to “make good.”</p> <p>“The brash has allowed brambles to grow, crowding out many of the bluebell and daffodil areas, and heavy machinery left huge ruts which are still present, many years later.”</p>	<p>Forestry operations are an essential part of woodland management, and by carrying out regular thinning, and clearfelling where necessary, we help to ensure the woodlands we manage remain healthy and robust to face future challenges. Operations are always carefully planned, taking into account numerous factors, including visitors, wildlife and ecology, heritage, tree health, how the ground slopes, soil condition, and likely rainfall.</p> <p>The machinery required to carry out these operations can sometimes leave visible signs behind, in the form of ruts or injuries to nearby trees. Our contractors are aware of the need to work with utmost care, and we work closely with them to protect important woodland features and irreplaceable soils. Where ruts appear, these are the restricted routes used by machinery instead of making multiple routes through the woodland and compacting far greater areas of soil. Brash (side branches and tree tops) is used to protect softer ground, but we pause works where ground conditions become too wet to support equipment. Work will only resume once we are content that the ground has improved. If ruts caused by forestry operations cross waymarked trails or Public Rights of Way, the damage will be rectified once the operations are complete.</p>
<p>Many comments highlighted how <b>valued and cherished</b> these woodlands are, as a local amenity for <b>relaxation, recreation, wellbeing and mental health</b>.</p>	<p>“Much needed respite and mental health opportunities. Walking through these woods is normally extremely relaxing. The fauna, flora and wildlife is exceptional and a pleasure to watch.”</p>	<p>Both West Woods and Collingbourne Wood are well used by local communities, and it is great that their value for recreation and wellbeing is well known and appreciated amongst local people. Spending time in the forest has been proven to be good for health and wellbeing. We are proud that our ongoing management of these woodlands enables continued enjoyment and benefits for people.</p>

<p>These respondents included walkers and horse-riders.</p>	<p>“I walk in West Woods very frequently, and have done for over 40 years”</p> <p>“The woods are used by a variety of people and it is a beautiful place”.</p> <p>“The network of bridleways in the woods is well used and appreciated.”</p>	
<p>Several respondents praised the ambition of the new Plan proposals to increase the value of these woodlands for <b>wildlife</b>, and to increase <b>ecological diversity and resilience to climate change</b>. People were pleased to see <b>recognition of biodiversity and heritage features</b> in the Forest Plan.</p>	<p>“I support the objective to diversify the woodlands to help make them more resilient to future shocks from climate change, disease and benefit wildlife and greater ecological diversity.”</p> <p>“Very much welcome other aspects of the plan to diversify natural woodland and support wildlife and biodiversity, and support better management of heritage features.”</p> <p>“Good recognition of biodiversity and heritage features.”</p>	<p>The support for our proposals within West Woods and Collingbourne Wood is greatly appreciated. Protecting ecological and heritage features within the woodlands is a high priority for us, and these aspirations feature in our Forest Plan objectives. Many of our proposed actions, such as opening up rides, ancient woodland restoration, retention of valuable conifer nesting sites, and grassland management are to benefit the diverse range of wildlife which lives within the Forest Plan area.</p>
<p>There was positive feedback for the <b>silvicultural proposals</b> in the Forest Plan, and appreciation for a long-term vision. In particular, respondents were pleased to see our aim to continue <b>ancient woodland restoration, and the reduction of conifer species</b> where they are not providing known ecological benefits. One respondent felt that our proposed <b>ride-widening</b> would help improve walking routes for visitors too.</p>	<p>“Very interesting to see a plan of the different trees and a long term strategy to manage the woods effectively - thank you.”</p> <p>“I am excited about your thinning interventions to encourage natural regeneration and the benefits for the wildlife.”</p> <p>“I fully endorse the plans to restore West Woods and Collingbourne Woods to Ancient Woodland.”</p> <p>“Widening of road and ride-sides particularly in the south west of Collingbourne Woods where rides are currently quite enclosed with vegetation will make this area more accessible for walking.”</p> <p>“This is an excellent document and feel confident our woods are in good hands.”</p>	<p>We appreciate your positive feedback on our proposals, and we are committed to delivering diverse, resilient woodlands that can face the challenges of the future. Much time and thought has gone into creating a Forest Plan which balances objectives and priorities within each woodland, and it is great to hear that our silvicultural proposals have support from woodland users.</p>

<p>Some respondents thought that <b>increasing visitor facilities</b> at the woods would be beneficial, however others <b>want infrastructure to remain minimal</b>, to maintain the quiet feel of the woods.</p>	<p>“Picnic areas would be welcomed, as well as a toilet, as similar to Savernake woods.”</p> <p>“A toilet facility would help visitors, particularly young families and older people. If possible, a dog washing facility in the main car park (could be pay per use).”</p> <p>“We would not like to see any promotion of West Woods over and above that already done, that would result in more visitors and more road traffic.”</p> <p>“Keen not to see ‘urbanisation/sanitising’ of either of the woods in the name of opening up access for recreation. It is hugely beneficial that there are not recognised car parks for Collingbourne Woods and users must walk, cycle or ride as this preserves the wildlife.”</p>	<p>While Forestry England is committed to removing barriers and widening access to the nation’s forests, visitor facilities must be appropriate to the woodland and we need the resources to manage them. At the current time, there are no plans to develop further visitor facilities at either West Woods or Collingbourne Wood. These largely ancient woodlands are valued for their tranquillity and naturalness, and we are keen to maintain the relaxed simplicity which visitors seek.</p>
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