

A guide to planning new woodland in England





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Section 1 – Introduction

Trees, woodlands and forests provide a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. Creating woodland now is investing in the future.

This guide supports anyone who wants to plan, design and create new woodland in England. Following it will help you to get approval under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and, if you seek one, to apply for a grant. We (the Forestry Commission or FC) regulate all forestry activities in England, including woodland creation, and administer grant support that you might want to apply for.

This guide refers to the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. We can only approve woodland creation proposals that comply with UKFS. It also refers to design principles for your new woodland, as set out in the UKFS Guidelines on Landscape and the FC Practice Guide on Design techniques for forest management planning.

This guide describes:

- Important information to include in your woodland creation plan.
- How to apply UKFS forest design principles to benefit your woodland creation plan.
- Where to find further information and support.

1.1 Planning your new woodland

The process of designing a new woodland¹ brings together your management objectives, the site's landscape context and silvicultural suitability, and environmental, economic and social factors into a comprehensive plan that will make your woodland sustainable and UKFS compliant.

Key features of the process:

- It is transparent and enables effective engagement with others.
- It is an iterative process, and the design may change in response to information received and stakeholder engagement.
- It uses reliable information and feedback to make evidence-based decisions.
- It reflects that the landscape (including all environmental, heritage and other constraints and opportunities) provides the context for the planning process, allowing all aspects of UKFS to be addressed.
- It presents a thorough approach to landscape and visual analysis, shaping design proposals that bring together and grow from an understanding of the site, the landscape setting, your objectives, and stakeholder feedback.
- Proposals are presented in an engaging, meaningful and visual way.

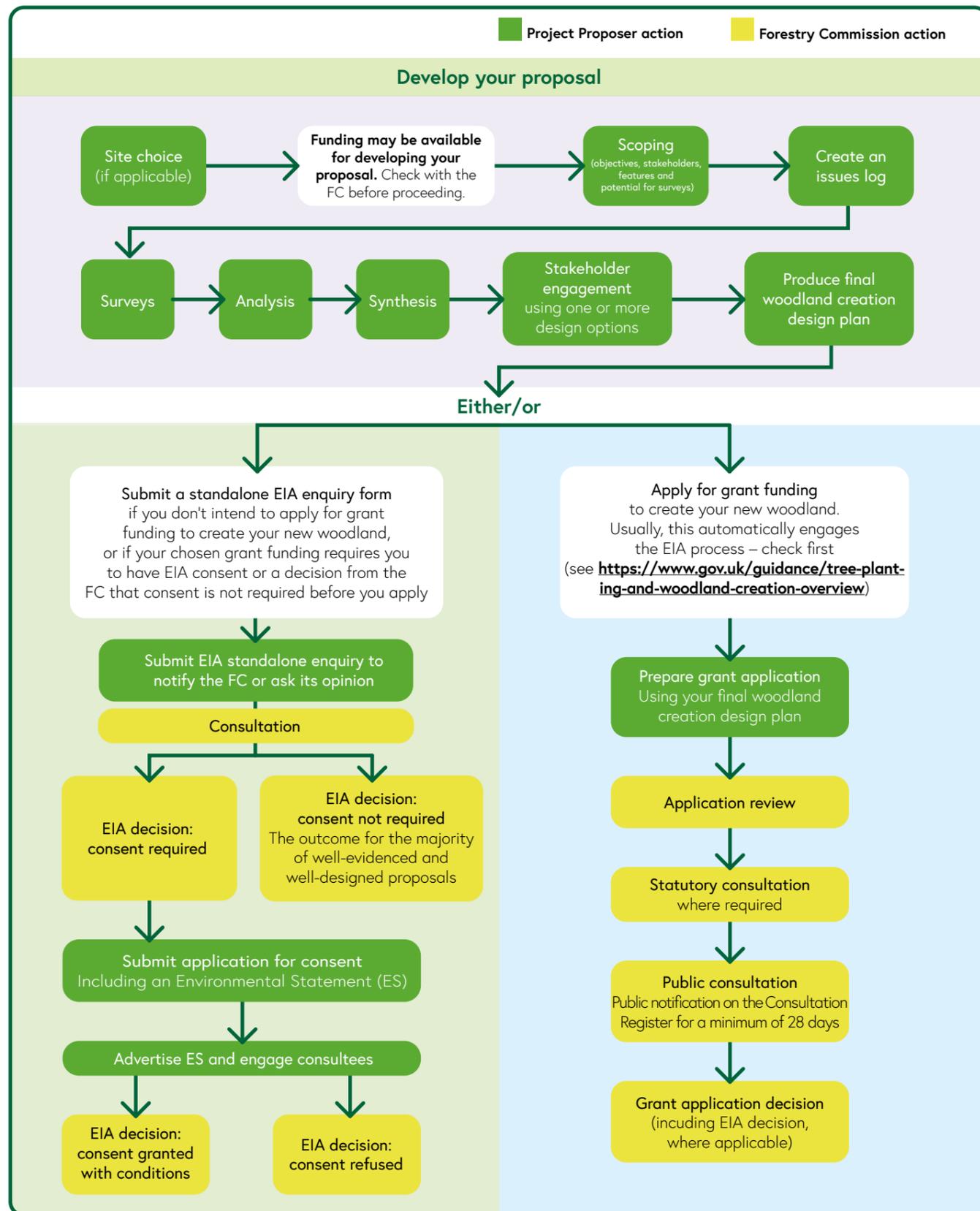
A woodland creation plan should:

- Set out your objectives for the new woodland.
- Describe the site's context, constraints and opportunities.
- Explain how your plan responds to these factors, using the evidence you have gathered and UKFS forest design principles to arrive at a good design.
- Reflect information and concerns that arose during your engagement with stakeholders.
- Provide sufficient information for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion (if this is required).
- Take account of the eligibility requirements of any woodland creation grant you may wish to apply for.

Your woodland creation plan should consider all the land that you propose to create woodland on over the next five years and adjacent land that your proposal might affect. It should also include details of other adjacent woodland created within the last five years.

¹ Woodland is defined in the UK Forestry Standard as land which is under stands of trees with, or with the potential to achieve, at least 20% canopy cover. The terms 'woodland' and 'forest' are often used interchangeably. The processes described in this guide refer to any new planting or 'natural colonisation' (allowing or encouraging trees to establish from seeds dispersed naturally from local sources) that satisfies the above definition, irrespective of whether the term 'woodland' or 'forest' is used.

Overview of the woodland creation planning process



1.2 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process

We have responsibility for administering the EIA (Forestry) Regulations 1999 (as amended), to ensure that woodland creation in England does not have significant negative impact on the environment.

The Regulations set out a two stage process for determining the environmental impact of a woodland creation proposal. Most proposals will only be required to complete the first stage.

Section 4 explains the EIA process in detail. You can also visit www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland-overview for more information. Your FC Woodland Officer can confirm if your project will require screening and, if so, when you should apply for it.

1.3 UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) compliance

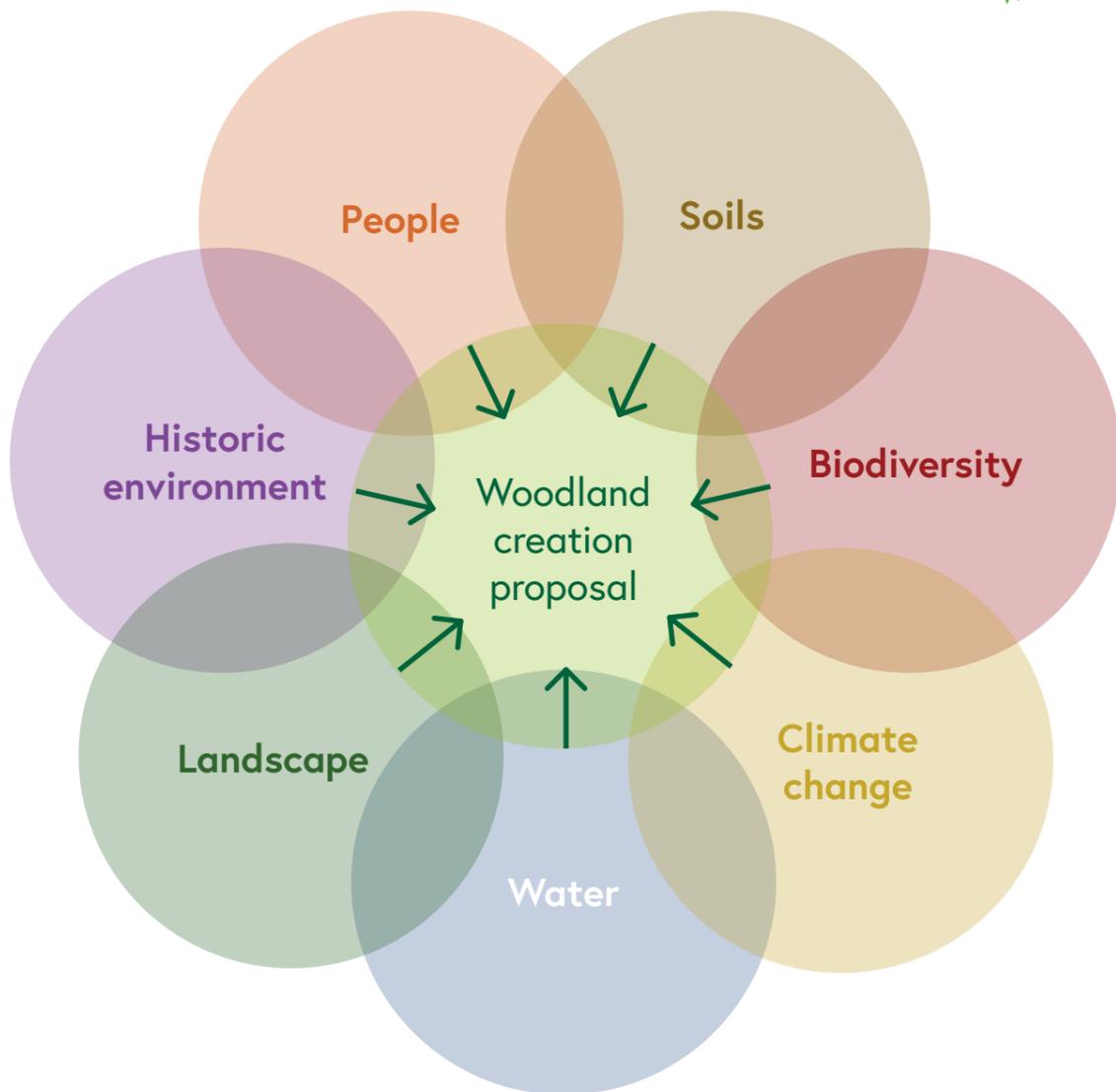
Your woodland creation plan must meet the requirements and follow the guidelines set out in the UKFS. The UKFS sets out the criteria and standards for the sustainable management of forests and woodlands in the UK.

When preparing your woodland creation plan you should consider UKFS at all times. This will ensure that your final proposal complies with the standards expected.

The UKFS describes the legal and good forestry practice requirements for woodland creation and management. The requirements are categorised into seven different elements of sustainable forest management, each supported by guidelines for managers. Together these form the basis for assessing woodland creation proposals.

Read the whole document at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard





These are the seven elements of the UKFS that will feed into your woodland creation proposal. The elements should not be considered in isolation but through an integrated design approach.

1.4 Before you start

You need to:

1. Speak to your local Woodland Officer or Woodland Creation Officer, or contact your local FC office to have one assigned to you.
2. Check with the local authority about constructing forest roads and tracks.
3. Consider applying for grant support for planning and establishing your new woodland.

1.4.1 Get expert advice

Before you start preparing your woodland creation plan there are a few points to consider.

It is often a good idea to engage a professional forestry agent to help prepare your woodland creation plan.

You should also consider seeking other expert advice if your plan needs to account for environmental, historical, social, landscape or other sensitivities. For example, on larger, complex, or sensitive proposals in designated landscapes, experts could help by writing a landscape character appraisal.

Hint

It is important that your FC Woodland Officer is familiar with your woodland creation proposal. Engage with them early – see Section 5 for contact details. It can be helpful to have an initial understanding of your site and a sketch of how your proposal might look, to aid this conversation.

Hint

If you plan to create your woodland via natural colonisation, read our guidance at www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-natural-colonisation-for-the-creation-of-new-woodland.

1.4.2. Check with the local authority about constructing forest roads and tracks

If you plan to build forest roads or tracks in your woodland creation scheme, you must notify the local planning authority and send them a description of planned infrastructure work.

They will decide whether it can be classified as a permitted development.

Permitted developments do not require full planning permission. If the local authority tells you that permitted development is allowed, you should then check with us to see if you need our formal Opinion on the planned infrastructure work under the forestry EIA regulations.

However, if the planning authority tells you that planning permission is required, ask them to consider the whole of your infrastructure project from the highway edge to the end of the route. This will avoid the need for a separate forestry EIA decision to be made as well.

If a road or track is set to cross a watercourse or use culverts during its construction, use or maintenance, then you must also check whether you need consent for this from either the local planning authority or (if your proposal is in an internal drainage district) from the internal drainage board.

1.4.3 Think about long-term economic viability

Consider whether income generation from your new woodland is an important objective for you, and how the long-term management of the woodland will be paid for.

Future management of new woodland should be an early consideration in the planning process. To increase the potential of your future woodland to provide long-term social, environmental and economic objectives, it will be important to make regular checks to ensure that trees are healthy, damage from browsing animals is low, and undesirable plant species are not becoming established on the site.

We recommend that woodland owners have a long-term management plan for their woodland and that this is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in woodland condition or owner objectives.

The long-term economic viability of your woodland should be factored into management plans and planned for from the outset.

1.4.4 Site choice and guiding principles

Once you have collated the information that will influence the design of the woodland, you should consider the following basic principles as they apply to your site as you embark on designing your woodland:

- Avoid obvious constraints (avoiding is easier than mitigating).
- Land used for agriculture is graded from 1 (best) to 5 (unimproved). Grades 1, 2 and 3a are currently excluded from the low risk map for woodland creation because of their high value for food production.
- Don't expect to create woodland on 100% of a site, right up to every boundary.
- Don't expect to plant 'productive' or 'commercial' species across the entire site.
- Remember to design the woodland's open space, not just the stands of trees.
- Design existing site features and constraints into the new woodland – you may have opportunities to enhance existing features.
- Match the tree species to the site's characteristics, rather than trying to fit the site to tree species you have in mind.
- Think about how your new woodland will fit into and could benefit your existing business, where applicable. For example, could trees provide shelter and shade to livestock on the holding?
- Lots of factors can affect the time it will take to put your design together. For example, if the land is in an existing agri-environment scheme you should check on the scheme's end date and the rules around withdrawing land early (if you wish to do so).

1.4.5 Consider applying for grant support

There are different grant schemes available for woodland creation projects. Projects need to comply with the UKFS and meet the grant scheme's eligibility requirements.

Visit www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-planting-and-woodland-creation-overview to read about the grants that are currently available from the FC. Funding may be available from other organisations too.

An application for an FC woodland creation grant must include some form of woodland creation plan (often contained within the grant application form) that demonstrates that the project will comply with the UKFS. This will usually be taken as a 'stage 1' EIA application (see section 4), which means that the FC will give you a regulatory decision about your proposal at the same time as giving you a grant funding decision. The requirements (in terms of minimum woodland size, for example) differ across grant schemes and you should consider these alongside your management objectives when producing your woodland creation plan.

Funding is available through the Woodland Creation Planning Grant (www.gov.uk/guidance/woodland-creation-planning-grant) to help with the costs of producing your plan through the process described in this guide.

Hint

It is essential that work does not begin on any grant-funded activity until you have a signed grant agreement. Work carried out before you have a signed agreement will be ineligible for funding. You should, however, speak to nurseries early about availability of plant supply. The more notice you can give your nursery, the more likely they are to be able to fulfill any order you make later.

Be aware that grant funding is not available for woodland creation that is:

- already required by any form of legally binding obligation, such as planning consent or a section 106 agreement. However, in these cases you should still consider the requirements and guidelines of the UKFS as part of your design.
- on land that was previously wooded and then felled or deforested within the past 20 years.
- on land that is currently subject to incompatible or overlapping obligations under an existing grant scheme. In certain circumstances you may be able to amend or withdraw from an existing grant scheme in order to enter a new one, though this may be subject to penalties or repayment of grant funding. In this case, you will need to contact the relevant organisation that administers the existing grant scheme. If in doubt, check the MAGIC map application (see magic.defra.gov.uk) for 'Land Based Schemes' and ask your FC Woodland Officer for advice.

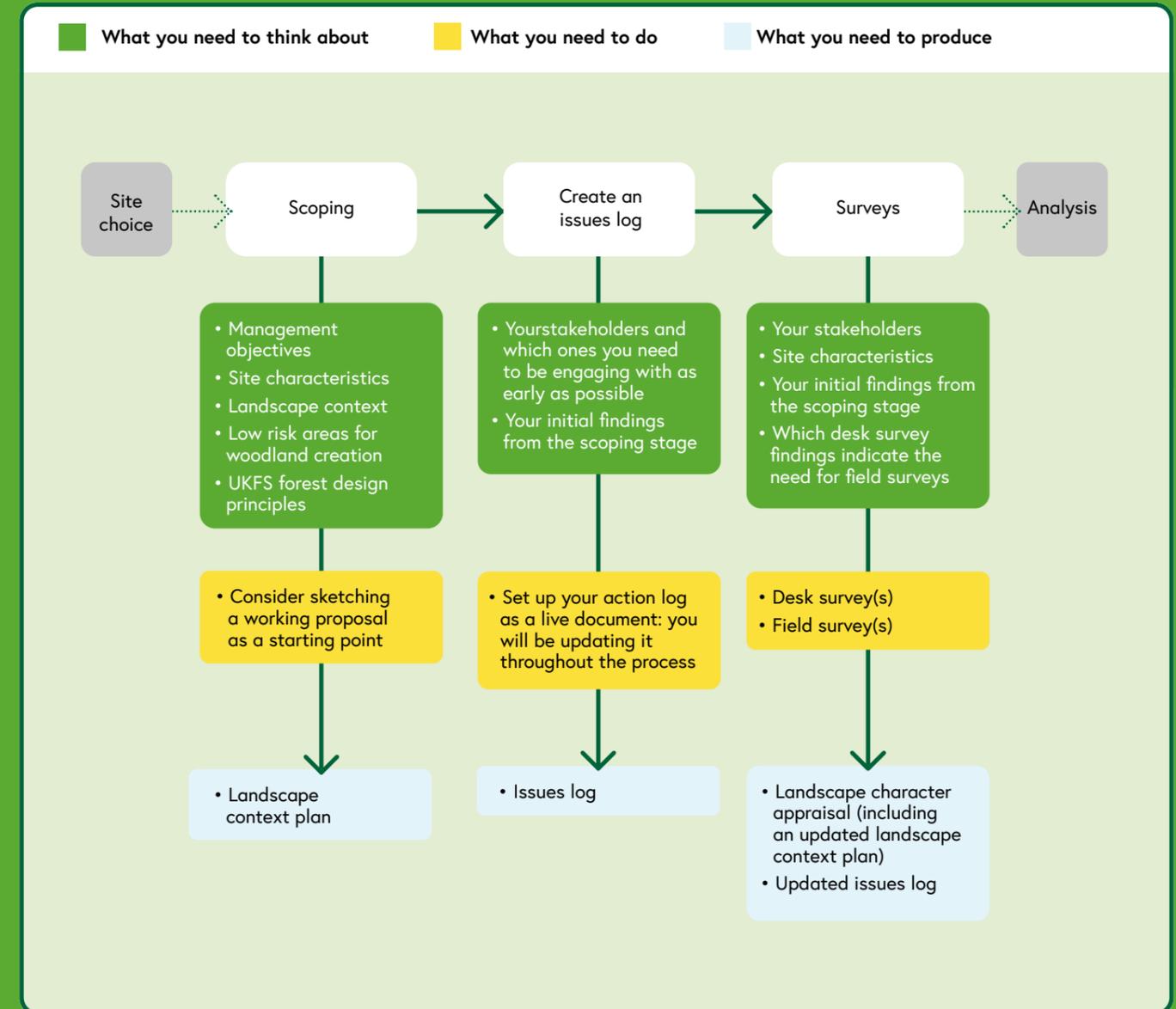
You may wish to secure future investment for the carbon sequestered by your woodland creation project, by registering with the Woodland Carbon Code - a voluntary quality assurance standard backed by the Government, forest industry and carbon market experts. You can learn more at: woodlandcarboncode.org.uk

Hint

Read inspiring case studies of successful tree planting and woodland creation projects from across England at www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-planting-and-woodland-creation-case-studies

Section 2 – Preparing to plan your woodland: scoping and survey

Overview of scoping and survey: considerations, actions and outputs



2.1 Introduction to scoping and survey

The scoping stage is when you identify the potential for, and extent of, woodland creation on your site, and who, or what, might be affected by it. The survey stage is when you identify the site's context, constraints and vulnerabilities, so that the new woodland is designed to be appropriate and sustainable.

This section gives a step-by-step guide to the actions you need to take to gather the information to inform your woodland creation proposal.

Appendix 1 explains the general mapping standards for woodland creation proposals, and what to show on the maps and plans in your woodland creation plan. In particular, it describes and provides examples of three fundamental spatial plans in your woodland creation plan: the landscape context plan, site appraisal plan, and design concept plan.

It is also sometimes necessary to produce additional outputs to support these, as part of your plan. For example, annotated photographs, illustration of cross-sections, and drawings or digital renders of the new woodland from different perspectives can be useful for further illustrating important parts of your analysis and design. Using them to support your site appraisal plan and design concept plan is good practice, particularly for large-scale, complex or sensitive sites. You can see examples of these types of additional outputs at Appendix 2.

Hint

The UKFS Guidelines on General Forestry Practice and the FC Practice Guide **Design techniques for forest management planning²** will help you work through the seven stages of producing a forest management plan (the general term for a plan that outlines intentions over the next 10 years for new or existing woodlands). Following the detailed advice in the practice guide will give you enough credible information to write a plan for a new woodland that complies with the UKFS.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/design-techniques-for-forest-management-planning-practice-guide>

2.2 Scoping stage

You will need to provide information about your site. The degree of detail you provide will depend on the landscape context of the proposed woodland. Producing a landscape context plan, a map showing the wider context of the site and highlighting relevant landscape and visual characteristics and site features, will assist with scoping the proposal (see an example in Appendix 1).

2.2.1 Scoping stage: Management objectives

Be clear about the short and long-term objectives for your woodland as this will inform the rest of the process. You might have multiple objectives for the same woodland, for example commercial timber production, biodiversity gain, public recreation, natural flood management or business diversification. They will reflect the nature and characteristics of the site, and will inform the type of woodland that is created. The UKFS General Forestry Practice section explains how to develop management objectives.

2.2.2 Scoping stage: Identify your stakeholders and analyse their potential concerns

Depending on the scale and sensitivity of your woodland creation project, you will need to engage the local community (for example, through a parish council) and neighbours to seek their views. You may also need to engage with public bodies, especially if there are designated landscapes or protected sites or features on or near your proposed site. If you think your project could impact on neighbours or other stakeholders, engage with them at an early stage and tailor your conversation to the audience, to make the best use of your time and the information they can provide to you. This might bring to light important and useful new information about the site that will help you improve the design of your proposal. It is also likely to make the later stages of the planning and design process easier, especially if we decide that consent is required under EIA Regulations.

2.2.3 Scoping stage: Create an issues log

The scoping stage is a good time to set up an issues log – a record of positive or negative considerations and actions taken or mitigations proposed during the planning and design process. We recommend that you start one early, to provide a record of your journey to develop a woodland creation proposal, the considerations that arise and any actions taken. The log should be a working document that is updated as issues are found and addressed. It should be proportionate to the scale and sensitivity of your proposal. See Appendix 3 for an example of what an issues log may look like.

The issues log can provide a basis for stakeholder engagement and discussions with your FC Woodland Officer (and agent or woodland creation advisor, if you have one) on the appropriate next steps. Recording what has been considered and reviewed can help you answer stakeholder questions, reducing the need for more correspondence later. It will also help you move through the EIA process, UKFS compliance assessment and the grant approval process.



2.3 Survey stage

During the survey stage, you should collate and assess information on the site's characteristics and landscape context, which will determine whether any follow-up surveys are needed to help develop your plan.

Early engagement with the FC is recommended to help provide guidance on the main types and level of information that you need to consider for your site.

You should undertake the survey stage to:

- Determine if there are existing survey data or maps available for the site that can be used to identify areas or features of interest.
- Identify the location, extent, distribution and interaction of features (such as wildlife rich habitats or historic environment features) that should be protected, will require mitigation, or could provide opportunities to improve the overall outcomes of the proposal.
- Confirm (or 'ground-truth') information found in the desk-based assessment, to ensure it is still current and that risk/opportunity areas are correctly mapped.
- Identify where further information is required.

Two main information sources should be used during your survey stage:

- A desk survey of existing data sources (see section 2.3.1).
- One or more site surveys (see section 2.3.2).

Hint

Examples of recommended early engagement include discussions with your local Natural England advisor where woodland proposals contain areas where wading birds frequently nest and successfully rear young, and discussions with your local historic environment/archaeology service to identify historic environment interests. Early engagement with the Environment Agency and your Local Authority is also recommended.

2.3.1 Desk survey – assessing site characteristics

There are many sources of information that can provide evidence on the land in your proposal.

The first check to make is whether the land is partly or wholly identified as protected under international, national or local designations. You can search for protected areas in England using [Forestry Commission's map browser and Land Information Search](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-the-land-information-search).³

You can also search for land designations on [Defra's interactive MAGIC Map Application](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx).⁴ Appendix 4 lists further data sources by category and Appendix 5 provides links and further detail on some of these sources.

The desk survey should consider the following site characteristics and establish whether further survey work is needed.

Site characteristics: landscape

Begin by reading Section 6.4 of the UKFS to understand more about the requirements and guidelines on landscape context and forest design principles (see Section 2.5). These will help you consider how the site's landscape context and characteristics will shape your proposal.

Consider the landscape in which your project sits by reviewing the relevant Landscape Character Assessment and National Character Area (NCA) profile, and finding out if there are any other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or priority habitats on, or adjacent, to the site. You will need to choose appropriate species, forest structure and size to ensure that the new woodland will fit into its landscape.

Woodlands and forests should be holistically designed with an approach that integrates management objectives with all features present on the site, as well as the context of the site within the wider landscape. Opportunities should be explored to enhance all existing features and avoid damage.

Hint

The terms 'landscape' and 'visual' do not mean the same thing. The landscape resource includes natural and cultural features such as watercourses, habitats, flora and fauna, land use, landform, existing land cover, and heritage features. In contrast, visual and aesthetic features include site visibility, views and viewpoints, sounds, patterns, colour and form.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-the-land-information-search>

⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>



Site characteristics: physical information

Get to know your site by assessing the soils, prevailing climate, aspect and altitude. National soil maps are available from the Magic Map and UK Soil Observatory digital platforms. However, national scale maps often do not represent the variability across a site nor the detailed characteristics of the soils, so it is strongly recommended that you carry out or commission a soil survey to help identify appropriate species and establishment methods (for example ground preparation and weed control). This more detailed information can be used with Forest Research's **Ecological Site Classification Decision Support System**⁵ (ESC) to help inform these decisions.

Your ground preparation method(s) must be based on soil type and individual site requirements. Ground disturbance must be kept to the minimum required to ensure successful establishment and must avoid the unnecessary release of soil carbon. The environmental impacts of your proposal, from establishment (including your chosen ground preparation method(s)) to subsequent forest operations (including harvesting), must be considered during the planning and design process. Read the FC's **Operations note 53 on cultivation and UKFS compliance for application in England**.⁶

Site characteristics: vulnerability to the impacts of climate change

Consider the pressures of climate change and read our advice on **Managing England's woodlands in a climate emergency**.⁷ You should access up-to-date information on climate projections for your area and consider how this will affect the suitability of the species you propose to plant. The ESC tool includes climate projections which will help inform your decisions. It may also be helpful to use the FC's **Climate Matching Tool**⁸ to understand which locations currently experience a climate that is consistent with future climate projections for your site. You should also consider that woodland which is diverse in species and age will be more resilient to climate change and extreme weather events.

⁵ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/ecological-site-classification/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-cultivation-and-ukfs-compliance-for-application-in-england-operations-note-53>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-englands-woodlands-in-a-climate-emergency>

⁸ <https://climatematch.org.uk/>

Site characteristics: threats to your new woodland

Young trees can be outcompeted by vegetation or browsed out by deer, livestock, rabbits, hares, and voles. Think about which browsing animals are already present on site and which ones might be attracted to your new woodland. This will help you consider the best way of protecting the newly established trees.

You must consider appropriate protection, such as fencing, at the planning stage. Although effective in many situations, tree shelters may not be the most appropriate, effective or sustainable option and their use is optional within grant schemes. Your plan should address the use of plastics and show why the chosen type of tree protection and weed control is necessary or silviculturally beneficial.

If you do intend to use tree shelters, be clear how and when they will be removed and disposed of or recycled, in compliance with waste disposal regulations. You can find more information in the FC guidance on the use of tree shelters and guards. **Read our guidance on Tree protection: The use of tree shelters and guards.**

Deer can quickly occupy new woodlands and many sites are likely to need deer management from an early stage. Further specific guidance is available, or you can contact one of the FC's Regional Deer Officers.

If you are planting (or encouraging natural colonisation of) species that are susceptible to grey squirrel damage, consider at this planning stage how you will manage this threat to your new woodland.

You will also need to consider the susceptibility of your proposed species to pests and diseases. Information on the Forest Research website will help you understand the risks presented by pests and diseases, including maps of current distribution. When selecting species and provenance/origin for your new woodland, you should consider where you source your planting stock from, recognising the biosecurity risks of importing plants. Where possible, get your plants from nurseries with clear plant health management standards in place (including, for example, nurseries with Plant Healthy certification or similar - see planthealthy.org.uk/certification).

Site characteristics: historic environment

Check if there are Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas on or near your site, because they have legal protection. You will also need to consider features recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) and assess if they will be adversely affected by woodland creation.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tree-protection-the-use-of-tree-shelters-and-guards>

¹⁰ <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/mediaLibrary/other/english/countryside-for-all-guide.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-support-framework-for-peatland-protection-and-the-establishment-of-new-woodland-interim-june-2021>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-for-afforestation-on-or-near-priority-habitats-operations-note-43>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-open-habitats-and-woodland-creation-a-field-guide>

¹⁴ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/catchments-vulnerable-acidification/>

¹⁵ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/managing-forests-in-acid-sensitive-water-catchments/>

¹⁶ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/managing-forest-operations-protect-water-environment/>

Site characteristics: access and terrain

Think about how the site will be accessed for establishment operations and for future forest operations such as maintenance, felling, timber extraction and haulage. Planning for access in the event of a wildfire or an emergency is also important.

The slope, ground conditions and roughness of the terrain will influence options for machinery and haulage access. When planning access, consider what tracks, rides and forest roads will be required now and in the long-term. Forest roads may require EIA screening, depending on length and sensitivity. Also consider where materials, planting stock, equipment and machinery will be stored and maintained safely.

Access to the site from a public road might be restricted – you can check if there is a local Agreed Routes Map maintained by the Timber Transport Forum. All woodland creation applications greater than 10 hectares will require the FC to undertake formal consultation with the Local Planning Authority, who may require evidence of planned and forecast haulage operations depending on the scale and nature of the woodland creation project.

Any public rights of way, or land that has open access under the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000, must be kept open unless a Direction is in place to restrict or exclude access.

Consider how existing access could be improved, or new access provided for the public to enjoy, if that is one of your management objectives. If so, consider the terrain and how you will meet **minimum access standards**.¹⁰

Site characteristics: biodiversity

The existing value of the site for wildlife must be fully understood. A number of habitats and species are protected under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Whilst historic losses and habitat fragmentation have rendered such habitats a scarce resource, the best examples of these habitats and areas that are most important in sustaining populations of key species are protected by the designation of a suite of protected areas: RAMSAR sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). You will need to find out if there are protected species, habitats or areas on or adjacent to your site and assess if they will be adversely affected by woodland creation.

The presence of peat and associated hydrological systems should also be identified. If any part of the site is located on peaty soils as defined by the Natural England peat map (available on the Forestry Commission's map browser and Land Information Search) or as directed by your Woodland Officer, this has implications for site survey and you will need to follow the **Decision support framework for peatland protection and the establishment of new woodland (interim) June 2021**¹¹

If there is evidence (data or survey results) that your site supports important habitats or species, your site is likely to require survey to fully understand its ecological value. This must be carried out by appropriately qualified professionals at the appropriate time or times of the year, so factor this into your schedule for starting work. **FC Operations Note 43**¹² provides further information and consideration of priority non-woodland habitats when planning new woodland. The FC Field Guide **Priority Open Habitats and Woodland Creation**¹³ will help you to identify any existing priority open habitat on the site and provides further information on undertaking surveys. Contact your local FC Woodland Officer early to discuss the need for surveys if you are in any doubt.

Site characteristics: water

Water quality, flood resilience and water availability must all be considered when planning a new woodland, as must the impact of establishment and management operations on private water supplies. Water quality can be maintained or enhanced through good woodland design and subsequent management, and through the identification and management of buffer areas. These areas, which will include the riparian zones next to watercourses, are set aside to help buffer any potentially adverse effects from adjacent land management, including commercial forestry. In general, the aim in buffer areas is to establish and maintain a partial cover of riparian woodland comprising species native to the location and soils. You must always consult the Environment Agency if you propose to create woodland within eight metres of a main river or flood defences and must obtain the necessary consents.

In areas prone to flooding, woodland creation in relevant upstream water catchments should be considered as a way of mitigating flood risk and improving flood resilience. Where new large woodlands are proposed, the sensitivity of downstream water bodies and wetlands to a reduction in water quantity should be considered. If there are sensitive waterbodies downstream that may be affected by your woodland creation or management actions, advice should be sought from the Lead Local Flood Authority and Natural England.

You must identify whether the site is in an **acid vulnerable catchment**,¹⁴ in which case you will need to follow the steps set out in the FC Practice Guide on **managing forests in acid sensitive water catchments**.¹⁵

If you are designing a large scheme (generally taken as more than 50 hectares) in a catchment at less than good quantitative status, you should consider impacts on water availability. Although trees tend to use more water than some other vegetation types, this varies with forest type and tree species; in some situations woodland water use, particularly for broadleaved species, may be less than other land covers. You should include the Environment Agency amongst your stakeholders in this instance and ask them to consider whether your proposal will have an adverse effect on water availability in the area.

Operations associated with establishing and subsequent management of the woodland could affect both the quality and quantity of water draining from the site. This may have impacts for statutorily protected rivers systems (SACs and SSSIs). The potential for negative impacts due to increased sediment discharge need to be properly considered. See the FC Practice Guide on **Managing Forest Operations to Protect the Water Environment**¹⁶ for more information.

Site characteristics: other

Utility infrastructure (such as water, gas and electricity) might be present and might impact on the design and subsequent management of your new woodland. Other characteristics that could influence your design and management include other wayleaves, access rights (and any others, such as sporting rights).

Hint

Mapping information about features as you uncover them could make it easier to draw up your site appraisal plan.





2.3.2 Site survey: are there any sensitive, site-specific issues that may require extra consideration?

If there are any designations, protected sites or features, indications of peat, priority habitats or species present, historic environment features, or sensitive landscape or visual characteristics that are likely to influence the design of your woodland creation proposal, additional information is likely to be required.

In such cases, your FC Woodland Officer will be able to advise you on how early you should begin discussions with relevant statutory bodies or environmental records centres that have an interest on the site, or on land that is adjacent to it. Key sources of data and information are listed in Appendices 3 and 4. Keep a record of the source and date of your surveys or searches and where the data is kept, for future reference.

Surveys may be needed for features such as priority habitats, priority species, peat depth, deer and other herbivore presence and potential impact, historic environment surveys and landscape character appraisals. These features might also be identified during stakeholder engagement, which is why it is a good idea to start that as early as possible.

We will not normally expect you to fund surveys simply to look for features of interest. However, if a stakeholder provides enough reason to suggest that a feature may be present and adversely affected by the proposal, you might need to undertake a survey (at your own cost) to establish the likely significance of any effect. You should not undertake any surveys until you have discussed and agreed them with your FC Woodland Officer.

In an area where creating a new woodland could be highly sensitive, providing stakeholders with additional information could help dialogue and find a way forward. In turn, this will help you prepare a robust and evidence-based proposal.

Surveys should cover both the extent of the area of land with your proposal and any adjacent protected areas or sensitive features that may be affected by the proposal.

Site surveys should be undertaken once the initial evidence, maps and survey information have been collated and reviewed. Undertaking a survey may be the only way to confirm the findings of the desk survey or supply missing data or evidence, and will supplement the proposal – for example, you might provide evidence of species growing locally to supplement your Ecological Site Classification (ESC) assessment. See Appendix 5 for further details on ESC.

Habitat and species surveys should be completed at the appropriate time of year, generally between April and September. Surveys undertaken at the wrong time of year may fail to pick up areas or features of interest and could result in environmental damage. Investigations at other times of the year are feasible if additional or supplementary evidence exists to support the investigation (for example, data from local raptor study group members, or a wader survey).



2.4 Low risk woodland creation

Areas that are of low risk (or 'low sensitivity') for woodland creation – in other words, areas which have few or no known constraints for new woodlands – can be seen on an indicative map ([Forestry Commission map browser and Land Information Search](#)¹⁷). This map screens out areas with significant sensitivities, such as National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Targeting woodland creation to these low risk areas means that the significance of any environmental damage is less likely and that, usually, only local stakeholders and local environmental records centres need to be engaged.

We encourage you to use the low risk map to make the EIA screening process easier and quicker, but you must still gather survey information, particularly local information, and analyse it to make robust proposals for your new woodland.

The low risk map is indicative and will change over time as new environmental data is gathered and environmental policy changes.

The following should be considered when interpreting the low risk map:

- The map was developed primarily to identify sensitivity to large scale woodland creation.
- It does not indicate a 'green light' for woodland creation within low risk areas, or a 'red light' for woodland creation outside those areas.
- National maps often do not capture small scale or local sensitivities, such as local wildlife sites (the collective term for sites selected on for their county or regional significance, based on biological or geological interest - known in some areas as, for example, County Wildlife Sites, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, or Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation), important areas of priority habitat not recorded on national datasets, and non-designated heritage assets. You will still need to check for evidence of these.
- Even if your proposal is in a low risk area, you will still need to gather and assess site-specific evidence to make decisions about your woodland creation plan.
- You should also consider sensitivities that are near to your proposal area and will still require stakeholder engagement even where your proposal itself is within a low risk area.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-the-land-information-search>

2.5 UKFS forest design principles

Applying the seven UKFS forest design principles will help you design your new woodland well. It is helpful to become familiar with these and think about them at the survey stage – when you are getting to know the characteristics of your site. Having these principles as a framework for your scoping, analysis and synthesis of site information will help you to produce a UKFS-compliant and well-considered woodland creation design more easily.

2.5.1 Spirit of place

What makes a place locally distinctive

Spirit of place describes the combination of unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of a place that might be intangible. It is important to identify what makes a place special or unique early in the design process, and to consider how your proposal can conserve these qualities, rather than detract from them.

2.5.2 Unity

How the woodland fits and functions in the landscape

Unity is achieved when all parts of your design contribute harmoniously to the whole, and the elements fit and function well together. It is about ensuring the new woodland integrates with the surrounding landscape, fitting in with the defining local character in a balanced and positive way – looking as though it belongs in the landscape. Woodland creation design needs to respond to the prevailing shapes and patterns in the landscape to achieve unity and visual integration.

2.5.3 Scale

The relative size of the woodland and its components

Scale is an important visual factor in fitting new woodland into the landscape. The scale of the proposed woodland should reflect the scale of the surrounding landscape. For example, hilltops and higher slopes with open views present a much larger scale of landscape than the intimacy of restricted views on lower slopes, in valleys and close to settlements. Smaller scale elements are better located in valley bottoms and along woodland edges. Scale also applies to the elements within the woodland, such as species compartments and open space.

2.5.4 Shape

Shape is a powerful factor that has a major influence on how woodland can be designed to fit and enhance the landscape by using shapes that integrate well into the existing landscape. This principle applies to shapes experienced by the viewer both at a landscape scale and at the detail scale, including edge character and planting layouts. Public preference studies show that shape is one of the most important aspects of a forest and woodland design, with organic, naturalistic shapes being significantly preferred over geometric shapes.

2.5.5 Diversity

Diversity refers to the number and variety of elements in a design. This is an important factor in woodland creation design. Public preference research shows that diverse landscapes are usually more visually and perceptually appealing places, rich in biodiversity, and are often not only more interesting to look at, but rich in the sound of birdsong, for example. A landscape character appraisal will help identify the existing degree of diversity. Diversity has many benefits for forest and woodland habitats. It also provides resilience in the face of climate change. Diverse and graded woodland edges, together with species mixes, will create visual and ecological diversity. Other landscape elements such as water, wetland, rocky outcrops and open spaces contribute to woodland diversity, and should be emphasised.

2.5.6 Landform

Landform, or topography, is the dominant landscape influence on woodland creation design in upland areas with steep topography. This type of proposal may need to respond to the visual forces flowing down the main spurs and ridges and up the hollows and valleys, in order to assist with landscape integration. Natural forests and other vegetation patterns tend to reflect the underlying landform – for example, upper treelines are lower on exposed ridges and higher in sheltered valleys. These patterns should be integrated with new woodland.

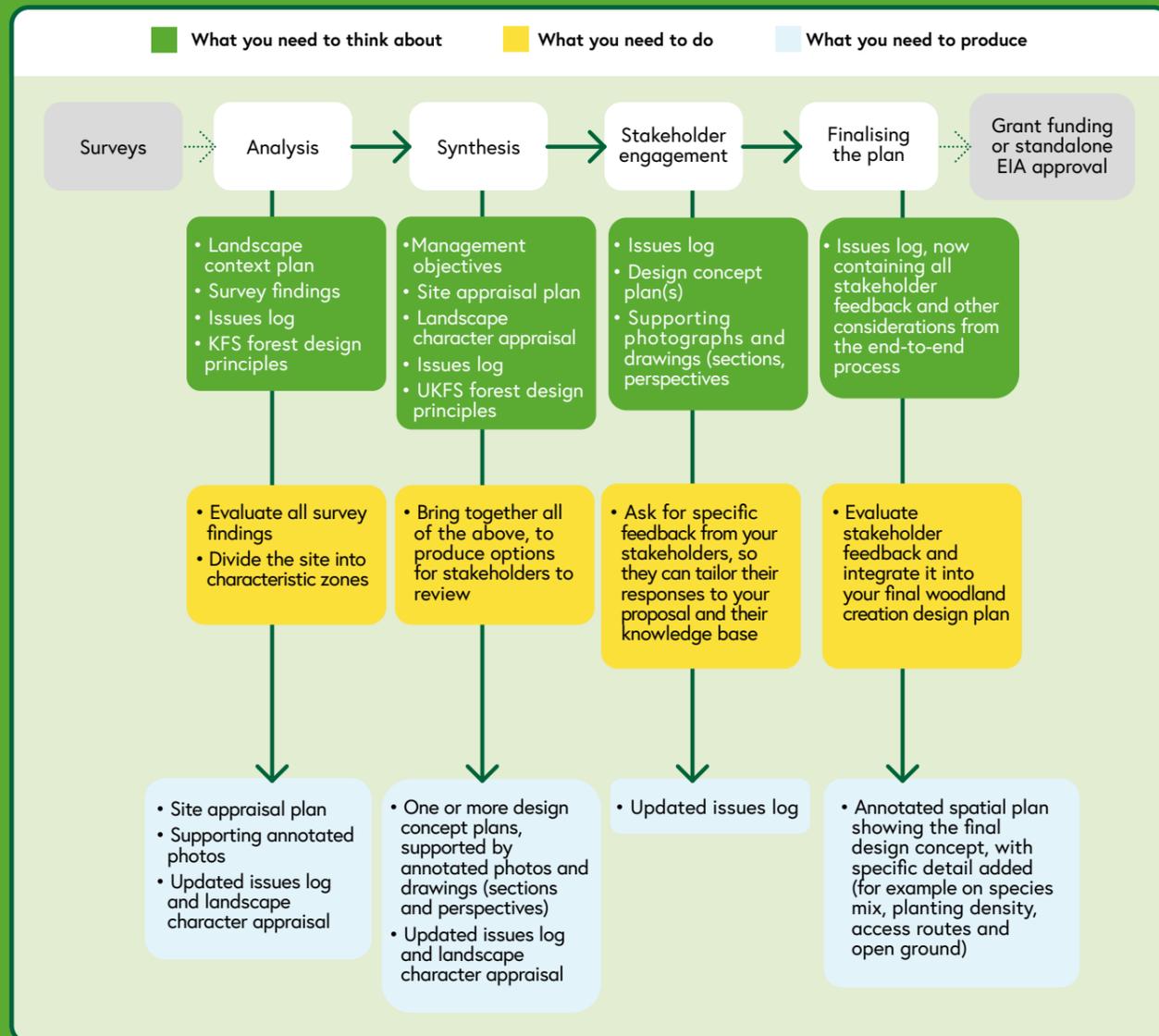
2.5.7 Pattern of enclosure

Pattern of enclosure has historic and cultural value and is a cherished and distinctive characteristic in the English countryside. The field pattern, hedges, walls and tree lines define field boundaries in most of the lowlands and upland fringes of England. Often, the influence of enclosure patterns and landform blend together but sometimes the pattern of enclosure may be the dominant influence on design, rather than landform. This is often the case in lowland areas. In these circumstances, tree planting can reinforce the pattern, especially where hedges and trees have been lost. The layout and proportion of new woodland can be designed to reflect and add to the established pattern.



Section 3 – Developing your woodland creation plan: analysis and synthesis

The woodland creation design process



Once you have established your management objectives, considered the site's landscape context, features and sensitivity, and undertaken surveys, you are ready to progress to the analysis and synthesis stages of the process.

3.1 The contents of your plan

Your woodland creation plan should include the following parts:

- Landscape context plan – a map showing and analysing the context of the site within the wider landscape.
- Site appraisal plan – a spatial plan with annotation and zones, showing how you have used information about the site to make your decisions. Very large sites may require more than one of these to show the necessary scale and detail.
- Design concept plan(s) – an annotated spatial plan showing options for your woodland design, to support your engagement with stakeholders. You may need to produce more than one of these to aid stakeholder engagement, if appropriate.
- Final woodland creation design plan – a spatial plan showing your selected design option for the woodland including detailed design of key areas.
- An accompanying written document that details your management objectives, a description of the site, survey information and analysis, your proposals for mitigating any negative impacts of creating woodland, what you found out by engaging with stakeholders, and an outline of how the young trees will be managed (planted and tended to ensure establishment).

These outputs are described in detail later in this section and examples can be found in Appendix 1. Your issues log and any other relevant outputs should also be appended to your plan.

Hint

You should provide concise descriptions and a clear rationale for your decisions. Good use of tables, charts, spatial plans, and visualisations will reduce the need for long text explanations. Annotated photographs, drawings and digital renders to accompany the main documents in your plan and 'show your working' can also help stakeholders to understand your proposal more quickly and easily - see Appendix 2 for examples.

Well evidenced and designed woodland creation proposals that demonstrate compliance with UKFS should meet the 'Stage 1' EIA screening requirements, avoiding the need for 'Stage 2' EIA Consent.



3.2 Analysis

Your desk and site survey work will have provided information on the opportunities and constraints on site, and the level of mitigation that should be planned for.

Analyse the information you have gathered. What does it tell you about the likely impacts of woodland creation on your site and on the local community and other local interests? This will ensure that all relevant areas or interests are appropriately protected (for example, by using appropriate non-planted buffers) and indicate whether advice from statutory bodies or specialist groups is necessary.

Details of evidence collected from both the desk and site surveys can be added to the issues log in your woodland creation plan and used as a record of the areas of interest that require mitigation. The issues log allows space for recording any engagement with stakeholders or statutory consultees, or to provide evidence that no issues have been found on site and no additional mitigation is necessary.



Avoiding negative impacts through careful woodland creation design and stakeholder engagement should always be prioritised, with potential negative impacts mitigated where they cannot be completely avoided. Compensation for negative impacts should be a last resort.

An analysis of characteristics and impacts is an important part of designing and communicating your woodland creation proposal. It will inform how the management objectives and stakeholder aspirations for your woodland could be delivered. Conversely, the analysis may demonstrate why current constraints limit what your proposal could deliver; its interpretation will therefore contribute towards stakeholder understanding of your proposals.

Your analysis is important and will help you to:

- decide the design concept and options.
- clarify and summarise likely impacts and mitigation proposals.
- demonstrate that you have factored these aspects into your proposal.

The analysis should cover all the characteristics of the site and its immediate surroundings, listed in Section 2.3.1, in the form of a site appraisal plan. This is a spatial plan that shows your site divided into zones, each representing landscape character types based on your surveys and analysis (see Appendix 1 for an example).

Every site requires some level of landscape character appraisal that should capture and highlight the distinctive landscape and visual features and characteristics of a proposed site and its context, on either an Ordnance Survey or an aerial photography backdrop. The level of detail will be dictated by the complexity and sensitivity of the site. On the simplest sites the analysis can be undertaken by applying the seven UKFS forest design principles summarised in Section 2.5.

On larger, sensitive, or more complex sites, a higher level of analysis may be required, and specialist landscape input may be necessary. For example, where a proposal is expected to have a significant impact, the EIA regulations may require an in-depth Landscape and Visual Character Appraisal (survey and analysis), which should be undertaken by a professional landscape architect.

You should discuss the findings of your analysis with your FC Woodland Officer. This will influence how your plan develops, help to identify key issues that might need further analysis, and indicate the best time to engage with stakeholders.

3.3 Synthesis

The synthesis stage brings together your planning so far in order to develop one or more design concept plans and a draft management plan.

Producing a design concept plan is a vital stage in designing your new woodland. It shows one or more design options, as informed by your analysis and site appraisal plan, and broadly indicates what your new woodland will consist of (woodland type, species and mixture specification, stocking density, edge treatment and open ground). The detail and annotations on the design concept plan must be clear, with well identified keys and legends.

The outputs from this stage of the process will be one or more design concept plans, supported by annotated photographs, sections and perspectives that help consultees to understand and visualise your woodland creation proposal.

3.4 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an important opportunity for you to explain your objectives and plans to those interested parties identified at the scoping phase, and for you to take account of their views.

Initial contact should be carried out early in the process of developing your plans and so avoid any unexpected issues arising during the FC's formal consultation and public register processes, which are usually needed for us to make our regulatory and funding decisions to approve a woodland creation project. It is your responsibility to undertake stakeholder engagement. Your FC Woodland Officer will be able to advise you on which stakeholders should be considered and the type of engagement that should take place to obtain the right level of information from stakeholders. You may need to engage with stakeholders more than once during the planning process, as your woodland creation design plan develops.

Hint

Designing a new woodland is an iterative process, and so is stakeholder engagement. A final design tends to be arrived at over time and following multiple discussions with different stakeholders. Be prepared to engage with stakeholders early and to 'show your working' to them.

3.4.1 Prepare for stakeholder engagement

Information you should supply to stakeholders:

- A short summary of your proposal.
- Your issues log (where appropriate).
- Your landscape character appraisal (including a landscape context plan), a site appraisal plan and at least one design concept plan.

Sharing your design concept plan (or plans, where there is more than one design option, issues log and other materials) created during the scoping, surveys and analysis stages with stakeholders gives them the opportunity to see what you have considered and if any remaining issues need to be discussed. These can also be used to provide statutory bodies with any specific information they need to provide a targeted response.

Hint

Highlighting specific issues that you expect stakeholders to comment on will help them to provide targeted responses and demonstrate to them that you have considered the site thoroughly.



3.4.2 Engage stakeholders

The method of stakeholder engagement should reflect the size of your woodland creation proposal, extent of operations and sensitivities on your site, and the potential to impact on other people's interests. If you will be holding a public meeting, schedule it for early in the process to allow people time to respond.

Offer your stakeholders enough information to let them consider the issues raised by your proposed new woodland. Provide them with a short summary of your key proposals, your management objectives, potential timber transport access points and detail of proposed public access together with accompanying maps and plans. It may also be helpful to provide them with a copy of your issues log. The information you give to your stakeholders must be clear and understandable.

3.4.3 Review stakeholder responses

Record the issues raised through stakeholder engagement on your issues log. This will be used to establish the relevance of the issue and your strategy to resolve it. Later, when you are ready to finalise your plan, you should send a copy of the updated issues log to your FC Woodland Officer along with a copy of any responses received, to help us make our regulatory and funding decisions about your proposal.

Make an objective assessment (with respect to the UKFS) of the likely impact that each issue could have through the creation and management of the woodland, or on the existing land use. This should recognise and highlight areas of potential conflict between the various objectives of stakeholders and the proposed management objectives.

You may also find it useful to update the site appraisal plan and design concept plans with any new information after completing stakeholder engagement.

3.4.4 Address the main issues

Agree the main issues and identify the need for any further stakeholder engagement with your FC Woodland Officer.

We will decide if stakeholders who respond have a material interest with respect to the UKFS and we will subsequently make final decisions on relevant concerns.

The issues log should be used to record how issues have been resolved and those that have been identified but are not expected to be resolved. It can also be used as a prompt for follow up action.

Give an outline of any additional surveys to be undertaken as a result of your stakeholder engagement.

It may not always be possible to resolve every issue raised while still delivering the management objectives for your woodland creation proposal. Where this is the case, a rationale for your response should be provided and discussed with your FC Woodland Officer.

3.5 Finalising your plan

Finalising your plan involves drawing together the written and graphical information you have gathered throughout the planning and design process and integrating it with your management objectives and your analysis of the site's opportunities and constraints.

When preparing your woodland creation plan you should be mindful that we will assess the final plan against the legal and good forestry practice requirements of the UKFS and, where above the relevant threshold, against the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. The proposals may also be placed on the Public Register for Consultation (see Section 4). You must ensure the plan contains enough information to enable this assessment.

Summary:

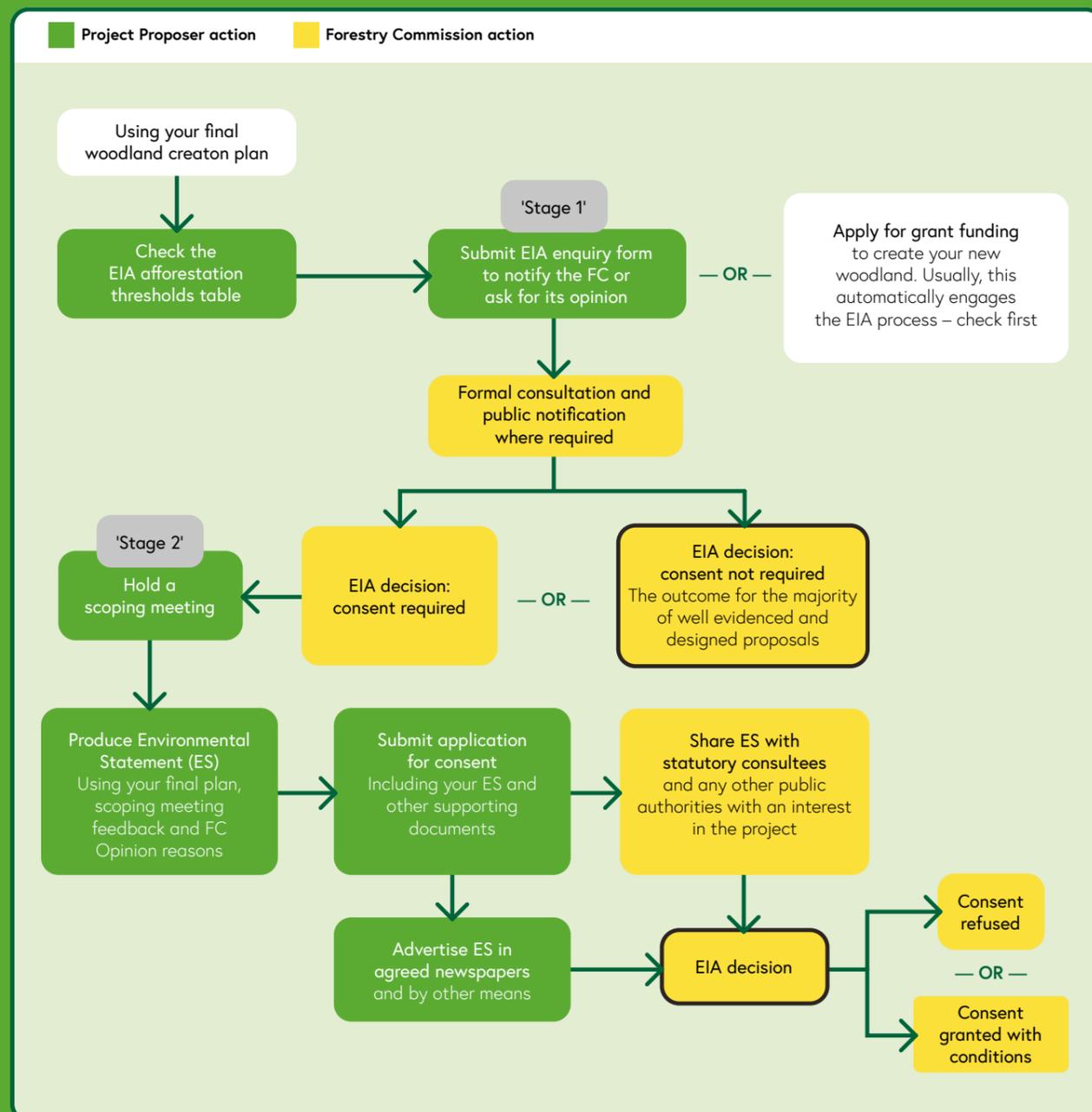
- All woodland creation plans must comply with the UKFS. This is a minimum baseline for regulatory and grant funding approval.
- You are expected to collect and provide information on your site through scoping, desk-based information gathering and surveys.
- Creating an issues log at the start and keeping it up to date with new information will help your stakeholder engagement.
- Stakeholder feedback and your responses to it should also be added to the issues log to show that you have considered all relevant feedback and advice.
- A landscape character appraisal which includes a landscape context plan, site appraisal plan and one or more design concept plans will help stakeholders (and your FC Woodland Officer) to understand your site and your woodland creation proposal.
- You are expected to bring together and analyse all the data and stakeholder responses contained in your issues log, and integrate them with your management objectives, to shape your final woodland creation proposal.



Section 4 – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) ensure that woodland creation proposals undergo an appropriate level of environmental due diligence, and are in line with good practice and government policies, such as UKFS. The EIA process ensures that any potential negative environmental impacts of woodland creation are identified early, so that plans can be adapted to respond to them.

Process overview: EIA



4.1 Introduction to Environmental Impact Assessment

We are the responsible body for administering the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (often referred to as 'The EIA Regs'). These regulations cover projects for afforestation (woodland creation), deforestation, and creating forest roads and quarries.

Hint

This guide contains only an overview of the EIA process for woodland creation. We strongly recommend that you read the information at www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland for full detail.

If you are applying for a grant administered in part or in full by the Forestry Commission then the EIA application will be incorporated into your grant application form, and you will receive a 'stage 1' EIA decision at the same time your grant application is determined. You do not need to submit a separate EIA form if you are applying for a Forestry Commission woodland creation.

Even if you are not applying for an afforestation grant, there are still some instances when you may not need to submit an EIA form:

- The regulations relate to 'afforestation'. Our definition of a forest or woodland means that woodland creation schemes smaller than 0.5 hectares in size are exempt and do not require an EIA application.
- The regulations create a presumption that, for some smaller scale projects, the FC's 'stage 1' EIA decision will be that your proposal does not need a 'stage 2' EIA application for Consent. For these projects, you may, at your own risk, decide not to apply for a 'stage 1' EIA decision. See the thresholds table for which projects this applies to.

For those projects where you do apply for a 'stage 1' EIA decision, we will decide whether your proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment or not. Projects that are likely to have a significant effect will require our Consent, via the 'stage 2' EIA application process, before you can begin work.





There are three different types of 'stage 1' forestry EIA application

1. Basic Notification
2. Full Notification
3. Application for Opinion

The type of 'stage 1' forestry EIA application you must make is determined by the project size and land sensitivity, often referred to as 'the thresholds'. While you must identify which application type you are making, all three application types use the same application form.

The type of application simply determines the length of time that the Forestry Commission has to give you a 'stage 1' decision (when not submitted as part of a grant application).

Remember that if you are applying for a woodland creation grant administered in part or in full by the FC, you will not normally be required to submit a separate EIA application, as the EIA element will be included in the grant application process.

If you are intending to apply for a Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG), you must not apply for a ('stage 1' or 'stage 2') EIA decision until you have received payment for the final stage of that grant.

Having a woodland creation design plan already prepared (whether funded by WCPG or not) will substantially reduce the number of questions that you need to answer when later completing an EIA afforestation application form (or grant application form).

4.1.1. Thresholds for EIA forestry projects

Information about the various EIA project thresholds can be found on www.gov.uk¹⁸

The thresholds in the table below are most relevant to applicants applying for a non-grant funded EIA decision, as all application forms for FC administered grant schemes incorporate the necessary EIA questions.

Afforestation thresholds table

Project size (Ha)	Land sensitivity	Is there a presumption against likely significant effect?	If I don't submit a 'stage 1' EIA application, what's the risk?	Type of 'stage 1' EIA application
<0.5ha	Anywhere	Yes	No risk (such proposals are not deemed to be 'afforestation')	Application for Opinion
0.5 ha – 2 ha	Any part of the proposal is in a 'sensitive area' that is not a National Park or AONB	No	High risk	Application for Opinion
	Any part of the proposal is in a National Park or AONB but no other sensitive area, OR no part of the proposal is in a 'sensitive area'	Yes	Low risk	Application for Opinion
>2 ha – 5 ha	Any part of the proposal is in a 'sensitive area'	No	High risk	Application for Opinion
	No part of the proposal is in a 'sensitive area'	Yes	Mandatory requirement (you must submit a 'stage 1' application)	Basic Notification
>5 ha – 50 ha	The entire proposal is in a 'low risk area'	Yes	Mandatory requirement (you must submit a 'stage 1' application)	Full Notification
	Any part of the proposal is outside a 'low risk area'	No	High risk	Application for Opinion
>50 ha	Anywhere	No	High risk	Application for Opinion

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland#thresholds>



To apply the thresholds for afforestation, the total area of your woodland creation proposal must be added to that of other nearby (within 500 metres) recent woodland creation projects (those completed within the past five years, including on other people's land). We will consider the combined environmental impact of all new woodland within and around your proposal area.

The table on the previous page shows the thresholds for different afforestation proposal sizes and land sensitivity. The table below describes the designations and characteristics that make land sensitive to woodland creation for the purposes of the EIA regulations. You can check whether your proposal is in a low risk or a sensitive area for woodland creation (or neither) using the Forestry Commission map browser and Land Information Search. The low risk map is subject to revision as new evidence becomes available.

Land Sensitivities

Sensitive Land	Contains one or more of the following designations: a) Special Area of Conservation / Special Protection Area; b) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; c) Local Nature Reserve; d) National Nature Reserve; e) National Park; f) Ramsar site; g) Scheduled Monuments; h) Site of Special Scientific Interest i) The Broads; j) World Heritage Sites
Neither 'Sensitive' nor 'Low Risk' land	Contains none of the sensitive features above and at least one of the following characteristics: a) Deep peat b) RSPB Important Bird Area c) Acid Vulnerable Catchments d) Nature Reserve e) Higher Level Stewardship schemes f) Agricultural Land Classification: Class 1, 2 and 3a g) Priority Habitats (s.41 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) h) Registered Battlefield i) Registered Park or Garden
Low Risk Land	Contains none of the above designations or characteristics (though due to the incompleteness of national datasets it is important that you undertake further checks - see www.gov.uk/guidance/forestry-project-checks-all-projects)

A new decision making framework for peatland protection and woodland establishment has been developed (June 2021), which provides more detail on the protection of peatland. As a consequence, when making our EIA and grant funding decisions, we will consider **all peaty soils** - not just deep peat - on the Natural England peat map (available on the LIS) against this framework. The 'Low Risk' map layers available online will be updated regularly to reflect policy changes, and to direct applicants to the most appropriate sites for woodland creation. This data will be considered as part of the EIA process, but will not determine the EIA threshold that applies to your project.

Hint

National datasets can be inaccurate when applied to the field level and are not a substitute for conducting a 'walk over' survey.

4.2 EIA Regulations and woodland creation

Most of the information we need to come to a 'stage 1' EIA decision on your proposal, and whether it requires a separate 'stage 2' EIA application, is asked for on your FC administered grant application form (or if you are not seeking grant aid, on your EIA enquiry form).

If you are applying for a grant scheme that is not administered by us, you may need to submit a separate 'stage 1' EIA application. It is your responsibility to gather this information as evidence to support your application.

However, we also need to see evidence that you have engaged with local stakeholders and interest groups, and evidence from any field surveys or searches for constraints or features that may be affected by the woodland creation proposal

Once your application and supporting evidence is submitted, we have set timescales in which to give you a decision on EIA. Providing an issues log showing evidence of stakeholder engagement and mitigation responses will help your EIA enquiry to be processed more swiftly.

If your project is considered likely to have a significant impact to the environment, an Environmental Statement, as part of your 'stage 2' EIA application, will be required.



4.2.1 When can you start planting?

If you are not applying for grants to create your woodland, and if we have told you at EIA 'stage 1' that EIA Consent 'stage 2' is not required, then you can begin to plant your woodland.

You should expect to receive a decision within either 28 or 42 days, depending on the 'stage 1' EIA decision type, although this may take longer if we require more information than was included in your application. If you apply for an FC administered grant scheme, you can expect to receive the FC's 'stage 1' EIA decision at the same time that you hear back about your grant application. For more information on EIA timescales see: www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland#application-process.

If we have told you that our Consent is required at 'stage 1', you will need to apply for 'stage 2', which will involve the production of an Environmental Statement before getting a decision on whether Consent will be given. You must not begin any work until you have received our Consent in writing. If you choose not to continue with your project, you do not need to apply for 'stage 2' EIA consent.

If you are applying for grant support, you must not begin any work until you have accepted in writing our grant agreement offer.

4.3 Tree planting, permitted development and planning permission

We are only responsible for administering the Forestry EIA regulations.

Other areas of EIA regulation, such as the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (which deal with built development projects such as roads, bridges and buildings), are administered by local planning authorities.

In some situations, compensatory planting may be proposed as part of the mitigation for a development scheme that requires full planning permission. In these situations, whilst the planning EIA will still most likely be conducted by the local planning authority, developers are encouraged to use the approach described in Sections 2 and 3, to show that the compensatory planting plan has been properly assessed and that the proposals comply with the UKFS.

If you are not sure which body should be conducting the EIA, please ask either the local planning authority or your FC Woodland Officer for advice.

4.4 The formal consultation process

We will often undertake a formal consultation process on a woodland creation proposal, either as part of the EIA Regulations process, or as part of the grant approval process.

For grants and 'stage 1' EIA applications, we will only do this where other statutory bodies have an interest in the impact of your proposal, or where their advice or consent is required.



4.4.1 The Public Register for Consultation

If you are applying for grant funding for a proposal that is 0.5 hectares or more, or if your proposal falls into the Full Notification category under the EIA thresholds, then we must notify the public.

We do this by placing relevant proposals on the [Public Register for Consultation](#)¹⁹ for four weeks. During this time, anyone can comment on the proposals in respect of UKFS requirements and guidelines.

We then review the responses made on the Public Register for Consultation and consider those which have raised a concern about UKFS compliance. This may lead to your proposal having to be amended, or the design changed, so that the consultation concerns are addressed. You will need to reflect these changes in an updated issues log.

If your woodland creation proposal is both a grant application and in need of consultation for the EIA element, we will try to satisfy both consultation requirements at the same time, meaning that in most cases the proposal will only be published once on the Public Register for Consultation.

4.4.2 Consulting on Environmental Statements (stage 2)

Where significant issues are identified with the proposal at 'stage 1', then applicants will be required to complete 'stage 2' of the EIA process, which will involve creating an Environmental Statement as part of an application for EIA Consent. We will tell you if this is the case.

You will usually not require a 'stage 2' EIA decision, particularly if you show in your 'stage 1' EIA application (or FC grant funding application, if relevant) that you have undertaken sufficient environmental due diligence.

If your proposal needs to go through 'stage 2' of the EIA process to gain our Consent, then formal consultation will be required on the Environmental Statement. You will need to place adverts in local newspapers to tell the public where they can view your EIA application for consent, the woodland creation proposal and Environmental Statement. Consultation will last for 30 days and we will guide you through the process.

We are also required to formally consult with Natural England, the Environment Agency and the relevant local authority, as well as any other interested public bodies. These statutory bodies have four weeks to consider the proposal and provide comment to us.

4.4.3 Publishing decisions

We publish all EIA and grant funding decisions on the Public Register for Decisions for a period of four weeks. Note that this is different to the Public Register for Consultation, and it is not an opportunity for further consultation.

4.5 The Environmental Impact Assessment Process

This section gives a three-point guide to taking your woodland creation proposal through the EIA process. The work you have already done to design your new woodland should give you a faster and easier route to an EIA decision.

See www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland for more information.

Point 1: Check the EIA afforestation thresholds table

The size and location of your proposal will determine whether your 'stage 1' EIA afforestation enquiry will be treated as Basic or Full Notification, or an application for an Opinion requiring full EIA screening.

See the afforestation thresholds table on page 37 to determine what EIA application type your application will be treated as. You will need to confirm this information on your application form, and it will be used to determine what our timescales are for providing an EIA decision. However, you should be reassured that there is only one 'stage 1' EIA application form for afforestation, regardless of application type. The thresholds will also inform your decision as to whether you want or need to submit an EIA application at all.

Note that statutory timescales for a decision only apply to non-grant funded EIA applications. EIA decisions which are to be made as part of a grant application are given at the point that a grant offer is ready to be made. Read about our timescales at www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland#application-process.

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-the-public-registers>



Point 2: Submit your woodland creation proposal and 'stage 1' EIA application

If you are applying to us for grant funding, you do not need to submit a separate EIA enquiry form, as it will have already been incorporated into your grant application form. The EIA decision will be given at the point that a grant offer is ready to be made.

If you are not applying to us for grant funding for a proposal which requires a 'stage 1' EIA decision, you should complete a standalone EIA enquiry form for afforestation. Your woodland creation plan should be used to support this enquiry.

If you are unsure whether your proposal will require an EIA decision, or whether you need to submit a standalone **EIA afforestation application form**²⁰, please read our **gov.uk page on forestry EIAs**²¹ or ask your FC Woodland Officer.

You can apply for a standalone EIA enquiry at any time, but should not do so if you have applied, or are about to apply, for a grant on the site (where the grant application process includes the EIA process).

To ensure we can make a 'stage 1' decision, you must submit enough information and evidence for us to assess the proposal. Completing all parts of the standalone EIA enquiry form (or grant application, where appropriate) with relevant information, sharing evidence gathered to support the conclusions that you have reached, and sharing all parts of your woodland creation plan will provide much of the required information.

Most well-evidenced and well-designed woodland creation proposals that take sensible measures to protect the environment will not require a 'stage 2' EIA application and Point 3 on the next page will therefore not apply.

Point 3: Make a 'stage 2' EIA application (where required)

If we decide at 'stage 1' that your proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, you must make a 'stage 2' EIA application for our Consent. Your application for Consent will need to include an Environmental Statement, the scope of which will need to be explored before you draft and submit it.

In most cases, we strongly advise applicants to ask, through the 'stage 1' EIA process, if a 'stage 2' application for Consent will be required before formally seeking our Consent. However, if you are certain that an application for Consent is required, it is possible to apply for Consent without first completing a 'stage 1' application.

Your FC Woodland Officer will help you to identify key stakeholders and statutory bodies who may need to be involved in providing information that will help the preparation of an Environmental Statement, which is an essential element of a 'stage 2' application for Consent.

You will be advised to hold a scoping meeting. This meeting between you, us, relevant statutory and local stakeholders, consultees and interested parties such as neighbours, will help to identify the issues that your Environmental Statement must address.

Using your final woodland creation plan, the feedback received during your scoping meeting, and the reasons given to you by us at 'stage 1' that Consent is required, you must prepare an Environmental Statement. The purpose of the Environmental Statement is to provide us and other interested parties with a full understanding of the consequences of your proposal. Following the planning and design process explained in this guide – particularly producing the issues and risks log, and spatial and written plans – will make the preparation of the Environmental Statement much easier. You can reuse information already submitted to us or that is in your plan: you will not have to recreate the required evidence.

We have published **guidance on EIA scoping and preparing an Environmental Statement**.²²

You can now submit your application for Consent to the **Forestry Commission Admin Hub**²³ that covers your area.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eia-afforestation-application-form>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland>

²² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1017124/171024-EIA-Scoping-and-ES-Statement-Guidance-v.5.pdf

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening>

Your 'stage 2' EIA application for Consent must include:

- A map showing the area where new woodland is proposed, and the extent of any planting, natural colonisation, constructions, works or operations – this should be a clear Ordnance Survey map at a scale of 1:10,000 or 1:2,500.
- A description of the nature of the relevant project, using your woodland creation plan.
- Any other information that might be relevant, such as species maps, plans and photographs.
- Your Environmental Statement.
- A copy of the publicity notice that you will place in newspapers (it should not actually be placed anywhere at this stage).

Once we are satisfied that your Environmental Statement addresses all the issues of concern identified at the scoping meeting, you must make a public notice. Place the public notice (advertisement) in local newspapers and/or electronically (we will confirm which). You are responsible for the cost of this notice. You must also make copies of your application for Consent and your Environmental Statement available to the public in locations such as at the local library, post office or local FC office. We can also suggest suitable public locations.

We will give details of your application to the appropriate consultees and statutory bodies, as well as the local authority with an interest in the application. These consultees are required to provide their comments to us within 30 days.

We will respond to your 'stage 2' EIA application for Consent with one of three possible decisions:

- Consent granted subject to the standard conditions (that the work must be started within five years from the date of Consent and finished no later than 10 years from the date of Consent).
- Consent granted subject to the standard conditions (above) plus additional bespoke conditions.
- Consent refused.

After notifying you and other interested parties about our decision, we will advertise our decision in the same newspapers in which the notice of the application for Consent was placed. We will be responsible for the cost of this notice.

Full details of the EIA process can be found at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

4.6 Funding opportunities and their interaction with EIA

Funding is available to help you with planning and implementing a woodland creation proposal.

Woodland creation grant offers change over time but can be broadly categorised as providing funding towards planning, establishment and maintenance, and to carbon sequestration. In all cases, public grant funding approval is based on compliance with UKFS requirements and guidelines as a minimum, but every grant scheme has its own eligibility rules.

Where a site is eligible for funding towards planning a new woodland, any grant funded woodland creation plan must be completed and approved prior to engaging in the EIA process and usually prior to applying for establishment funding. You should check in advance the requirements, deadlines and timescales around any grant funding you intend to apply for, to ensure that they are compatible with your own project timescales.

Where a request for an EIA decision has not already been submitted independently, submission of our grant application forms will normally be taken to also be a request for an EIA decision, and the grant application will be assessed against the relevant EIA threshold and decision type. This means an EIA decision will not be given until the point a grant offer is ready to be made, ensuring that changes to a proposal for reason of grant rules are appropriately reflected in EIA decision making.

Funding for carbon sequestration has several independent time-related stages. If you wish to apply, you should start considering this while you are still planning your new woodland; it is a good idea to engage with this process before applying for establishment funding.

Summary:

- We have specific responsibilities under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 for 'afforestation' (woodland creation) proposals.
- We will undertake a formal consultation with statutory bodies, notify the public by publishing proposals that have applied for public funds, or require an EIA Full Notification, on the Public Register for Consultation for four weeks, and will publish and consult on details of Environmental Statements, where EIA Consent is required.
- Most well-evidenced and well-designed woodland creation proposals not require 'stage 2' EIA Consent.
- A comprehensive woodland creation plan, proportionate to the scale and sensitivity of the site in question, can help us reach an EIA decision more quickly.
- The woodland creation planning, EIA, and grant funding processes are separate from one another but interact. A grant application made to us for woodland creation and establishment will normally be taken as a request for us to give an EIA decision, unless this has already been done independently for the proposal in question.

Section 5 – Further advice

Further advice on preparing woodland creation plans, getting an EIA decision, and applying for grant funding can be obtained by contacting our staff at Forestry Commission area team offices:

Yorkshire and North East

Foss House, Kings Pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York, YO1 7PX

Telephone: 0300 067 4900

yne@forestrycommission.gov.uk

North West and West Midlands

Ghyll Mount, Gillan Way
Penrith 40 Business Park
Penrith
Cumbria, CA11 9BP

Telephone: 0300 067 4190

nwwm@forestrycommission.gov.uk

East and East Midlands

Santon Downham
Brandon
Suffolk, IP27 0TJ

Telephone: 0300 067 4574

eandem@forestrycommission.gov.uk

South East and London

Bucks Horn Oak
Farnham
Surrey, GU10 4LS

Telephone: 0300 067 4420

southeast.fce@forestrycommission.gov.uk

South West

Bullers Hill
Kennford
Exeter, EX6 7XR

Telephone: 0300 067 4960

southwest.fce@forestrycommission.gov.uk



A list of Forestry Commission Woodland Officer email addresses are available at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission/about/access-and-opening





Appendix 1: Producing maps and plans for your woodland creation proposal

This appendix provides advice on general mapping standards for woodland creation proposals, and what to show on the maps and plans in your woodland creation plan (including examples).

General mapping standards

When assessing a woodland creation proposal for an EIA decision or a grant funding application, the Forestry Commission expects certain general standards to be met by the maps that you submit.

Backdrop

Your maps must be based on up-to-date Ordnance Survey Mapping (or mapping of a similar standard and detail). Your site appraisal plan should be produced on an aerial photograph backdrop. Ensure you have appropriate copyright permission where applicable.

Scale

Ensure maps are at a scale appropriate for the detail being shown, and that they have contours clearly marked and at appropriate intervals to illustrate the terrain. A scale of 1:5,000 to 1:10,000 should be used for most of your maps and plans.

Legend and labels

Ensure maps show the name of the EIA or grant funding application, the scale, North sign, central grid reference and legend. These markers clearly identify what your maps are showing, and that they are consistent with your application.

Presentation

Proposal details and operations should be clearly and accurately shown, and not obscured by any folds, marks or labels on the map. If you have access to digital mapping software enabling you to produce maps to the required standard, then you can submit maps in either .pdf or .jpeg format.

What to show on your maps and plans

Landscape context plan:

This map shows the location and boundary of the proposed woodland creation site on a colour Ordnance Survey backdrop, with annotations highlighting important features and characteristics of the site and wider landscape context that will be relevant to the planning and design process. Scale – 1:15,000, to include contours. Some topographical data is available free of charge from the Ordnance Survey (you must check any conditions around copyright and data use). [See example on pages 55.](#)

Site appraisal plan:

This is an annotated spatial plan, zoned according to different landscape types, showing an evaluation of the survey information and key features present on site, ideally on an aerial photograph backdrop. Scale – 1:10,000, or smaller scale if required to illustrate detail sufficiently. It may be useful for larger sites to produce a site appraisal master plan at a larger scale, and zoomed in appraisal plans of portions of the site, where more detail is required, at a smaller scale. See examples on pages [56](#) and [58](#).

Design concept plan:

This is an annotated spatial plan showing one option for the design of the woodland, shaped by the findings of the site appraisal plan, and is a tool to support consultation. You should consider producing more than one design concept plan to show alternative design options. Scale - 1:10,000 to 1:5,000 (or smaller, if necessary), making sure that sufficient detail can be illustrated. Again, it may be useful to produce a design concept master plan with accompanying smaller scale plans showing portions of the site in more detail. See examples on pages [57](#) and [59](#).

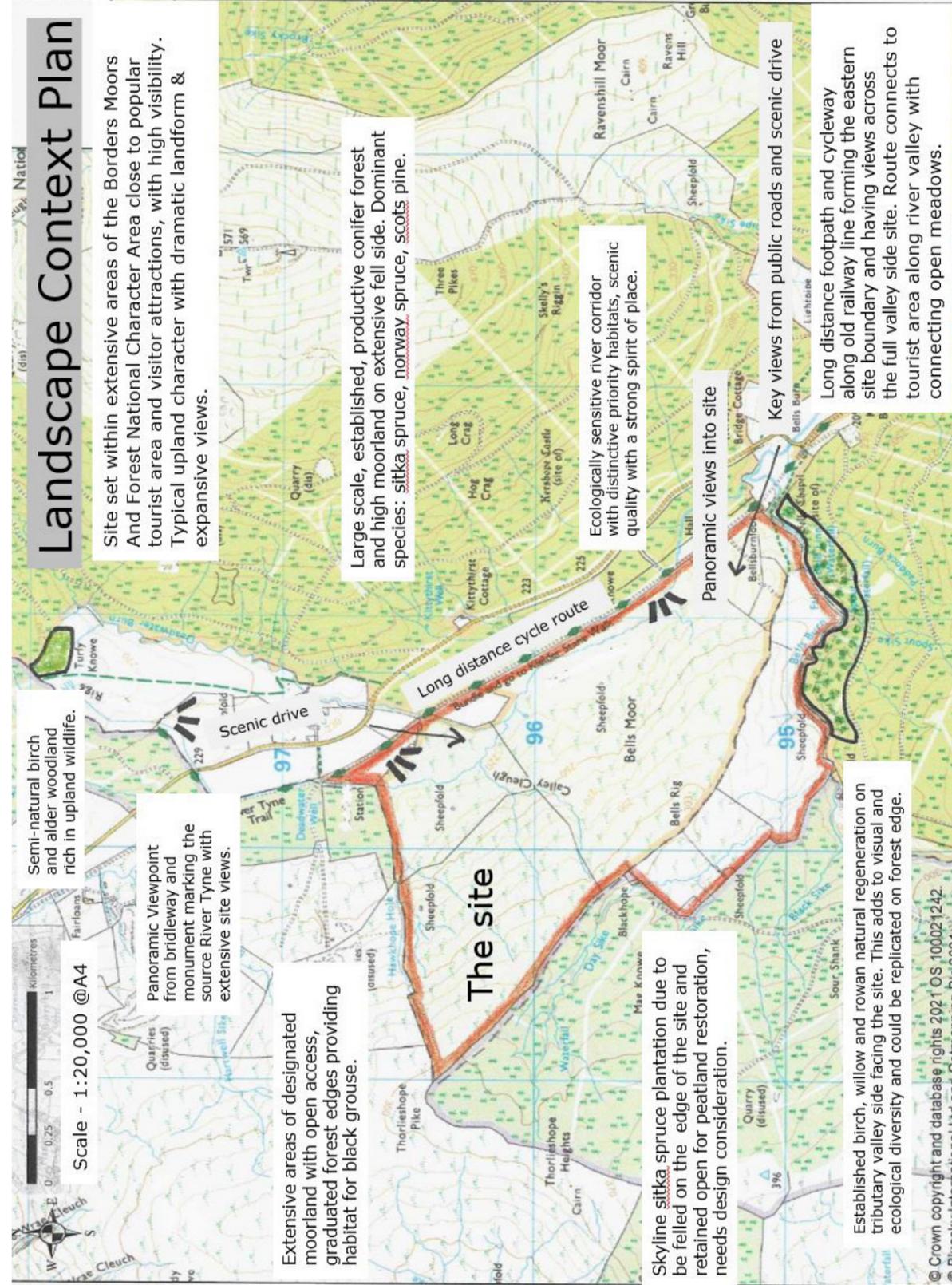
Final woodland creation design plan:

The graphic part of your final woodland creation design plan is an annotated spatial plan showing the chosen design concept, finalised following stakeholder engagement, with specific detail added (for example around species mix, planting density, open ground, access points, routes and transitions between woodland open ground).



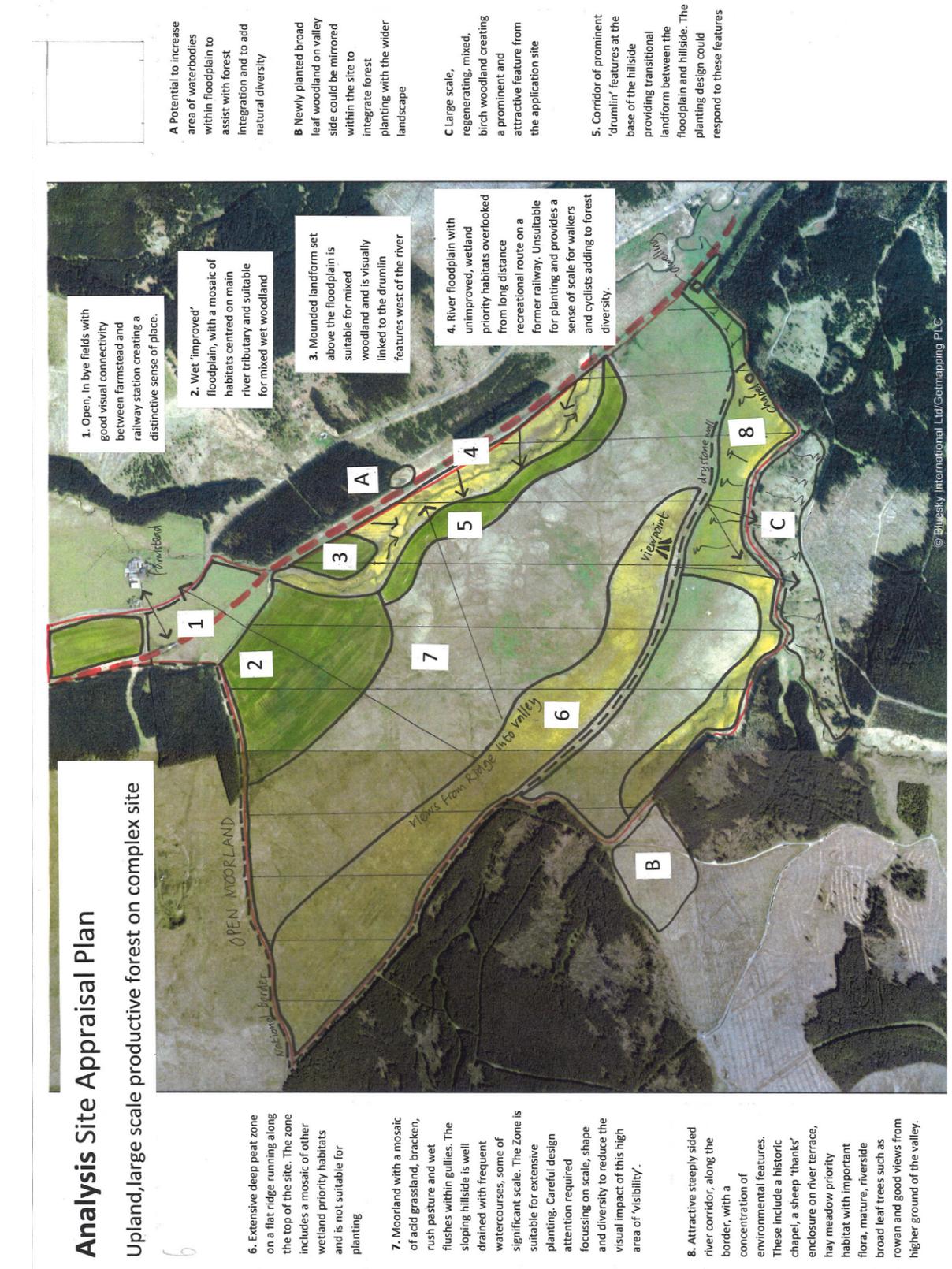
Example Site 1: Upland

Landscape context plan:



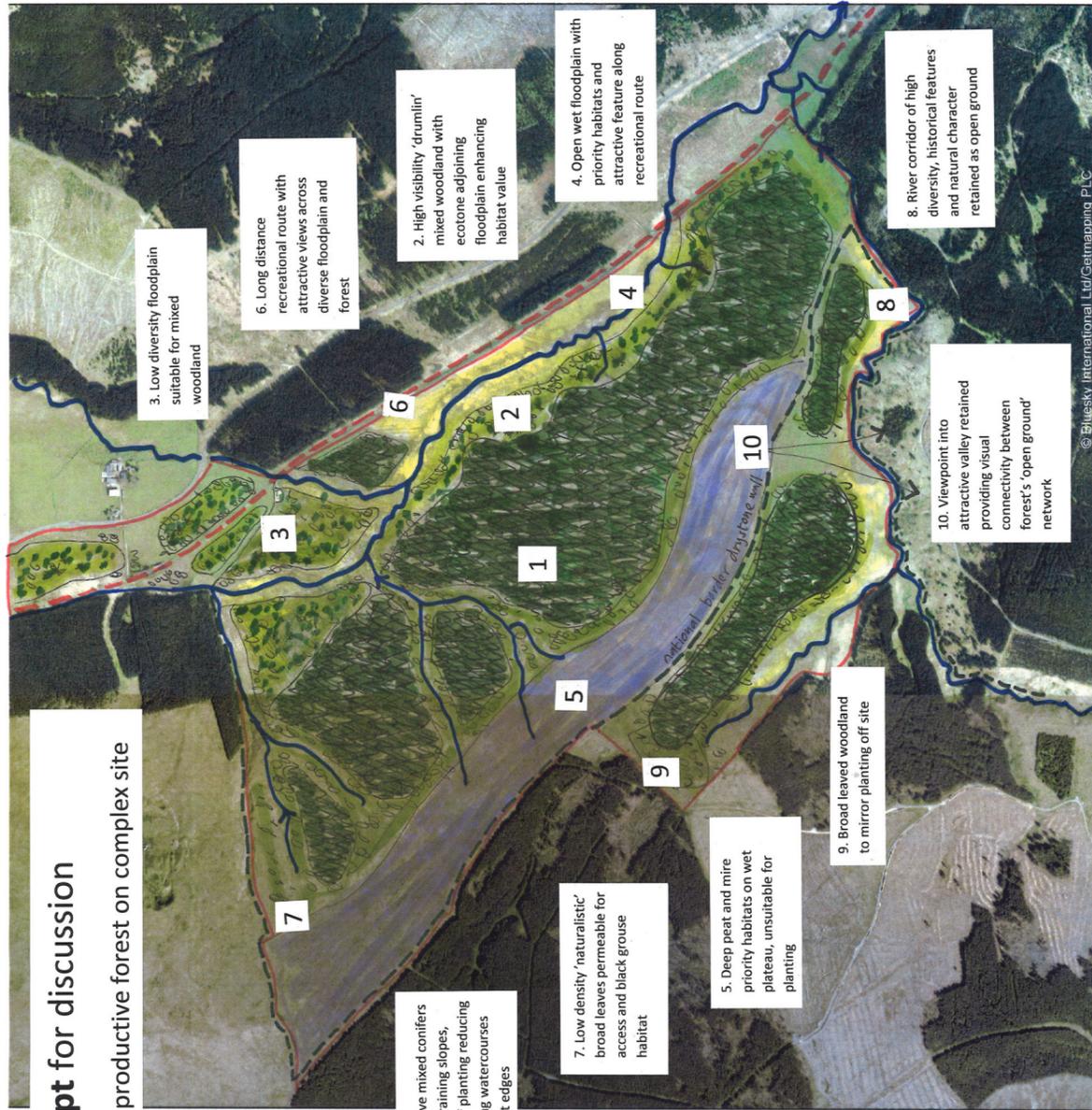
Example Site 1: Upland

Site appraisal plan:



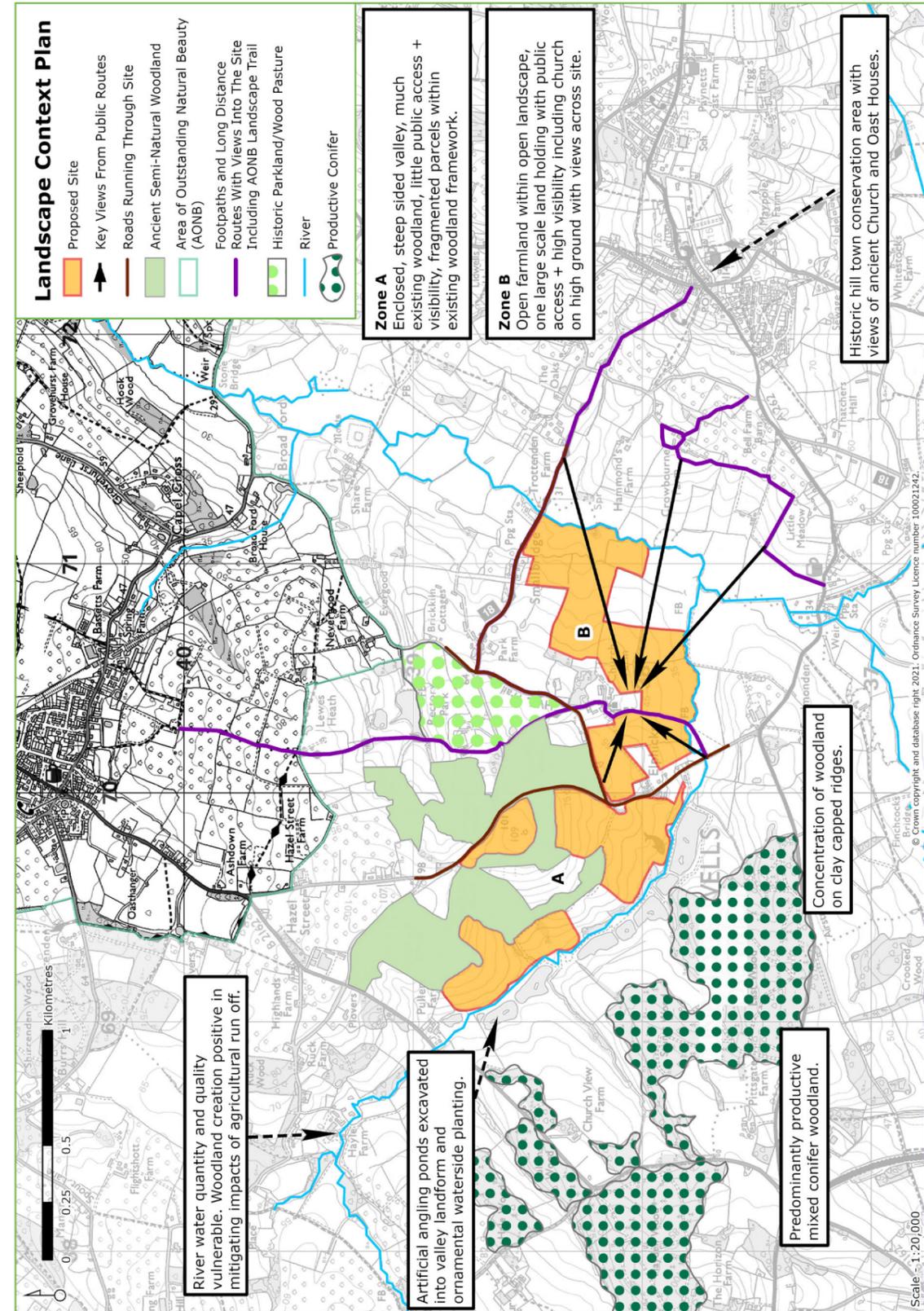
Example Site 1: Upland

Design concept plan:



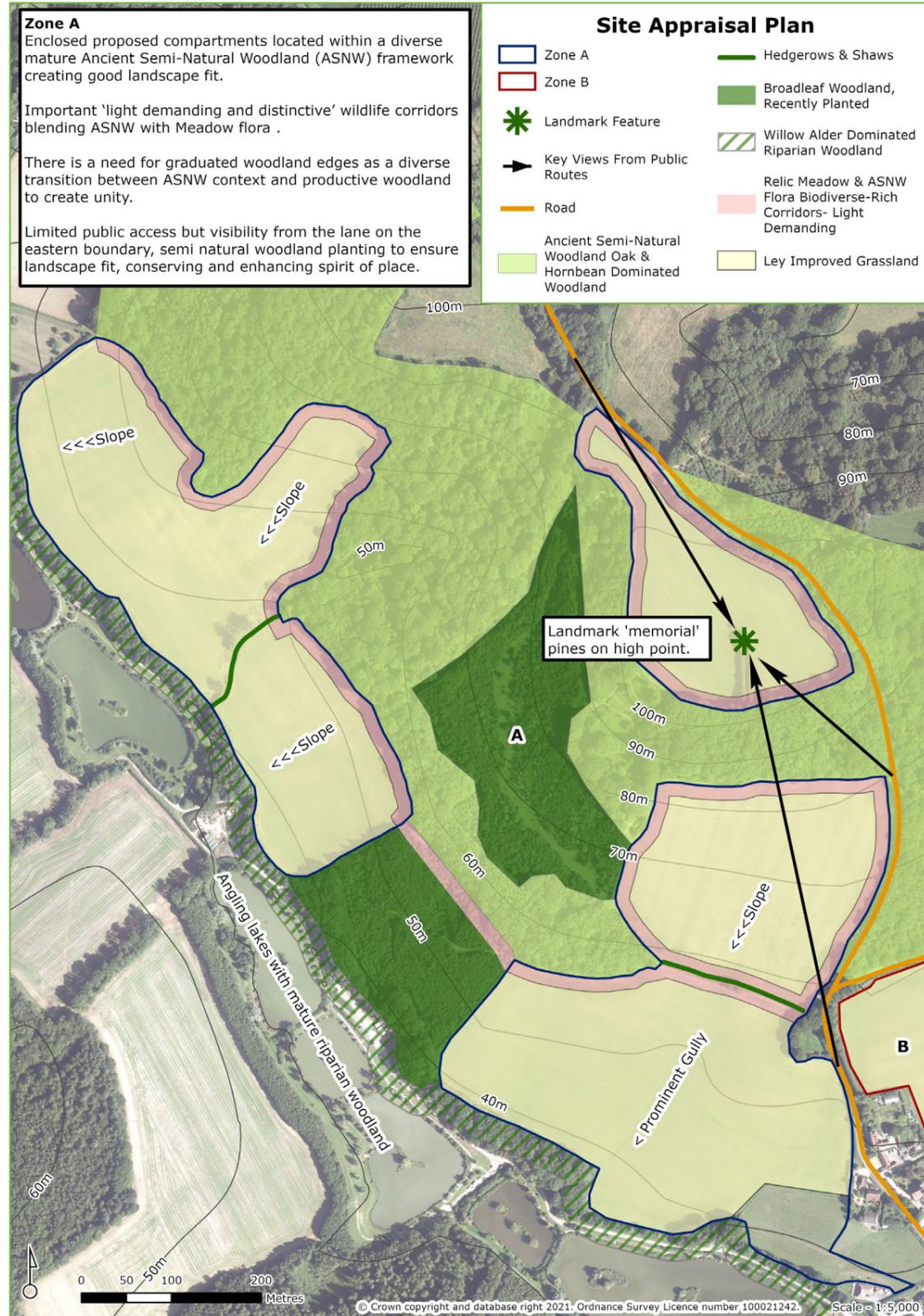
Example Site 2: Lowland

Landscape context plan:



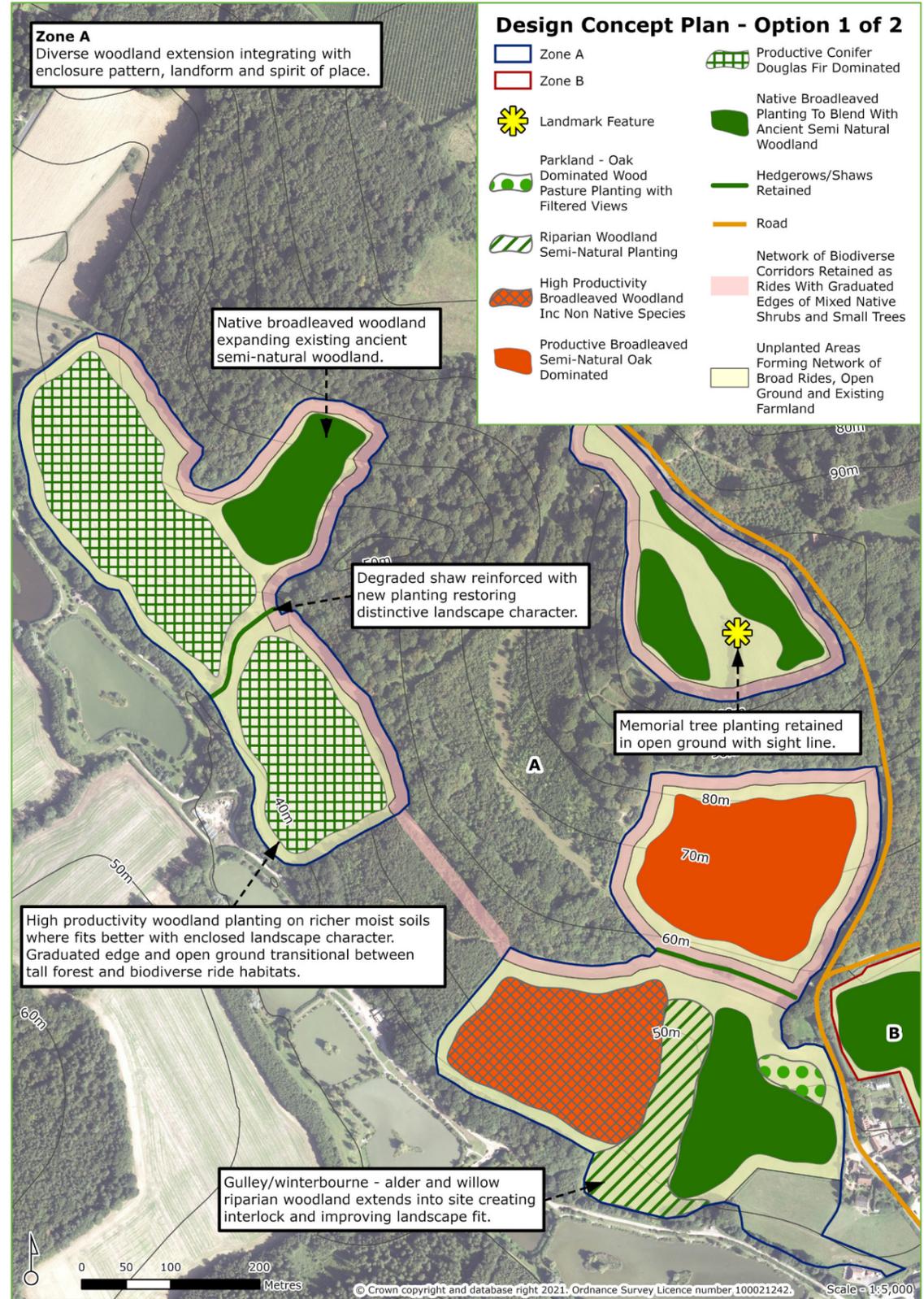
Example Site 2: Lowland (Zone A)

Site appraisal plan:



Example Site 2: Lowland (Zone A)

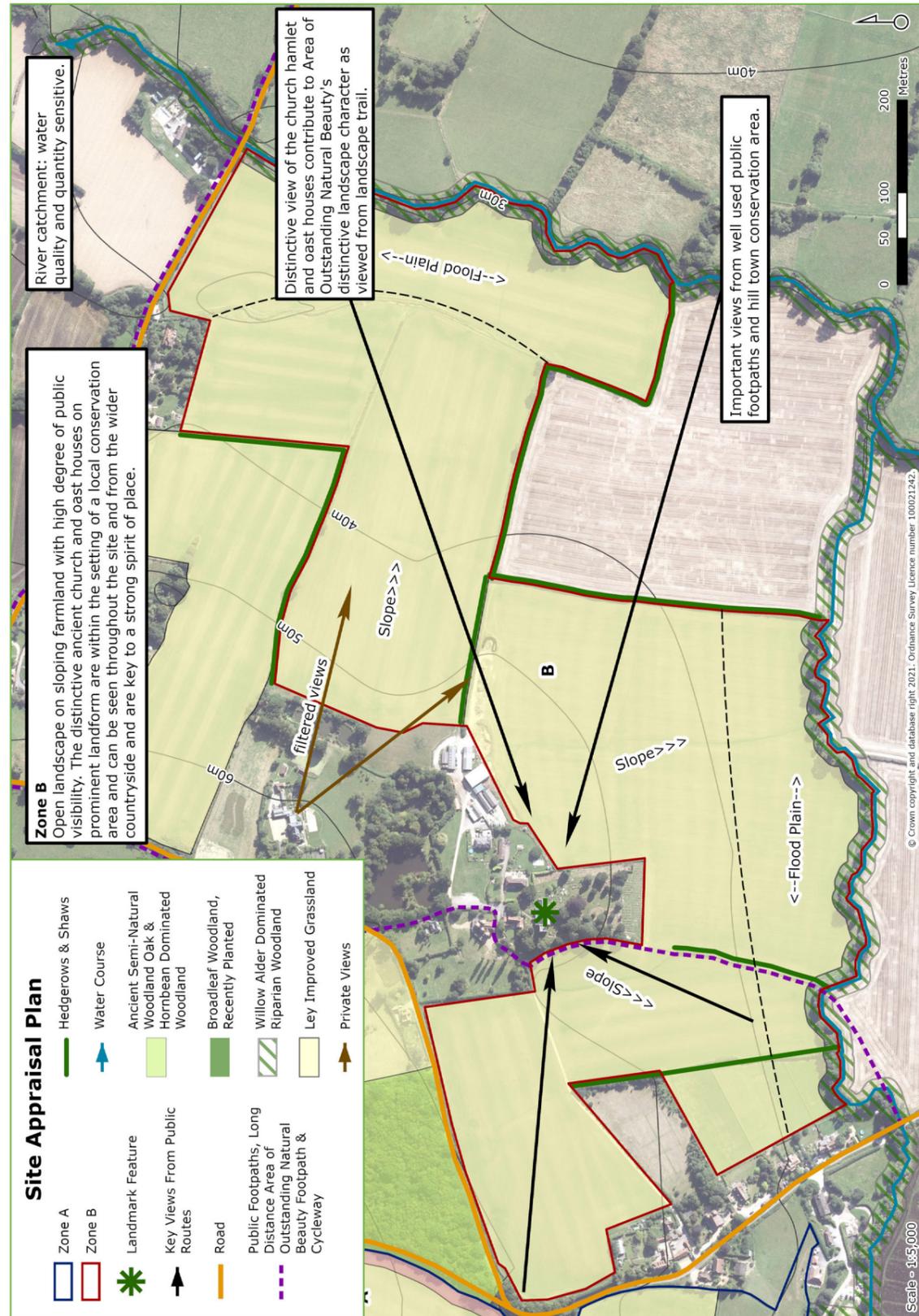
Design concept plan:





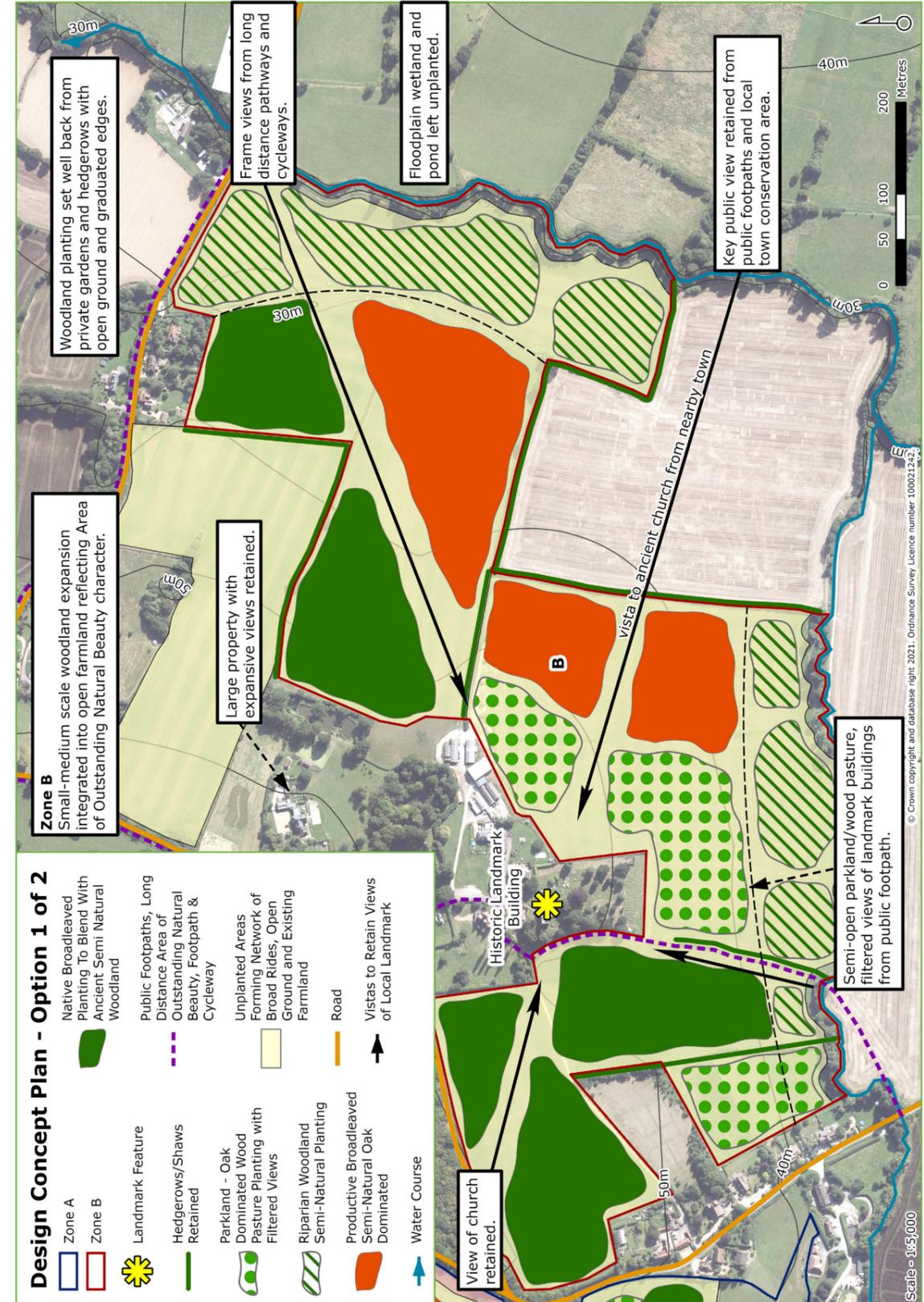
Example Site 2: Lowland (Zone B)

Site appraisal plan:



Example Site 2: Lowland (Zone B)

Design concept plan:

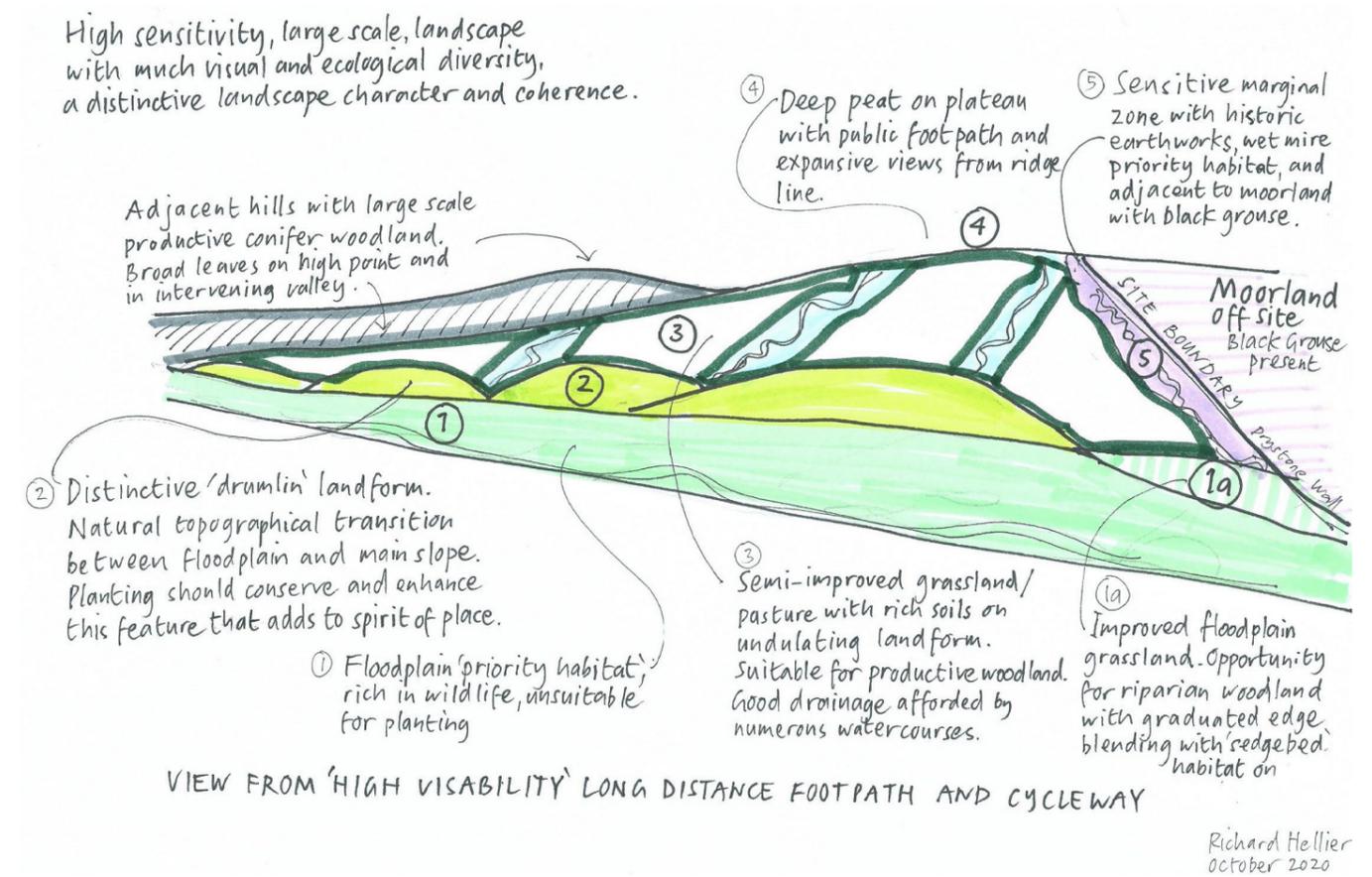


Appendix 2: Examples of visual outputs to accompany your maps and plans

Annotated photograph to accompany landscape context plan:



Perspective analysis that zones the site from a key viewpoint, to accompany a site appraisal plan:





Annotated photograph to accompany site appraisal plan:

Design Concept View of river corridor from Open Access Land

Upland, large scale productive forest on complex site

- Attractive river valley and habitat mosaic is left unplanted within a linear 'open ground' corridor.
- This protects the best historic and landscape features within the forest design and forms part of an 'open space' network for access and biodiversity.
- This approach provides some mitigation for the loss of extensive CROW Open Access Land. It also gives the forest a positive and distinctive character, enables landscape integration and contributes to forest resilience

Regenerating birch-dominated mixed woodland adjoining site forms an important view from the elevated ridge running across the application site

An attractive and diverse river corridor on the site boundary has important historic and environmental features to be left as open ground. This contributes to the mitigation for the significant loss of 'Open Access Land'.

Low density, naturalistic broad leaved planting mimicking regenerating woodland outside the site can be established at the top of sloping valley side. This approach assists in the integration of the new scheme into the existing landscape

Carefully designed and sited 'open' planting fringing this corridor will extend and buffer the semi-natural character and provide a rich forest ecotone. Such an approach will deliver multi-beneficial objectives, forest resilience and enhance visual quality and integration

Section showing integration of new woodland with landscape character:

GRATED WOODLAND

PRODUCTIVE STAND

VIEWPOINT

CRAGS & VIEWPOINT RETAINED WITHIN large scale open space in large scale landscape context

VISUAL CONNECTIVITY WITH LANDSCAPE CONTEXT RETAINED

OPEN MOORLAND

WATERCOURSE

EXISTING LARGE SCALE FOREST

PRODUCTIVE CONIFER STAND

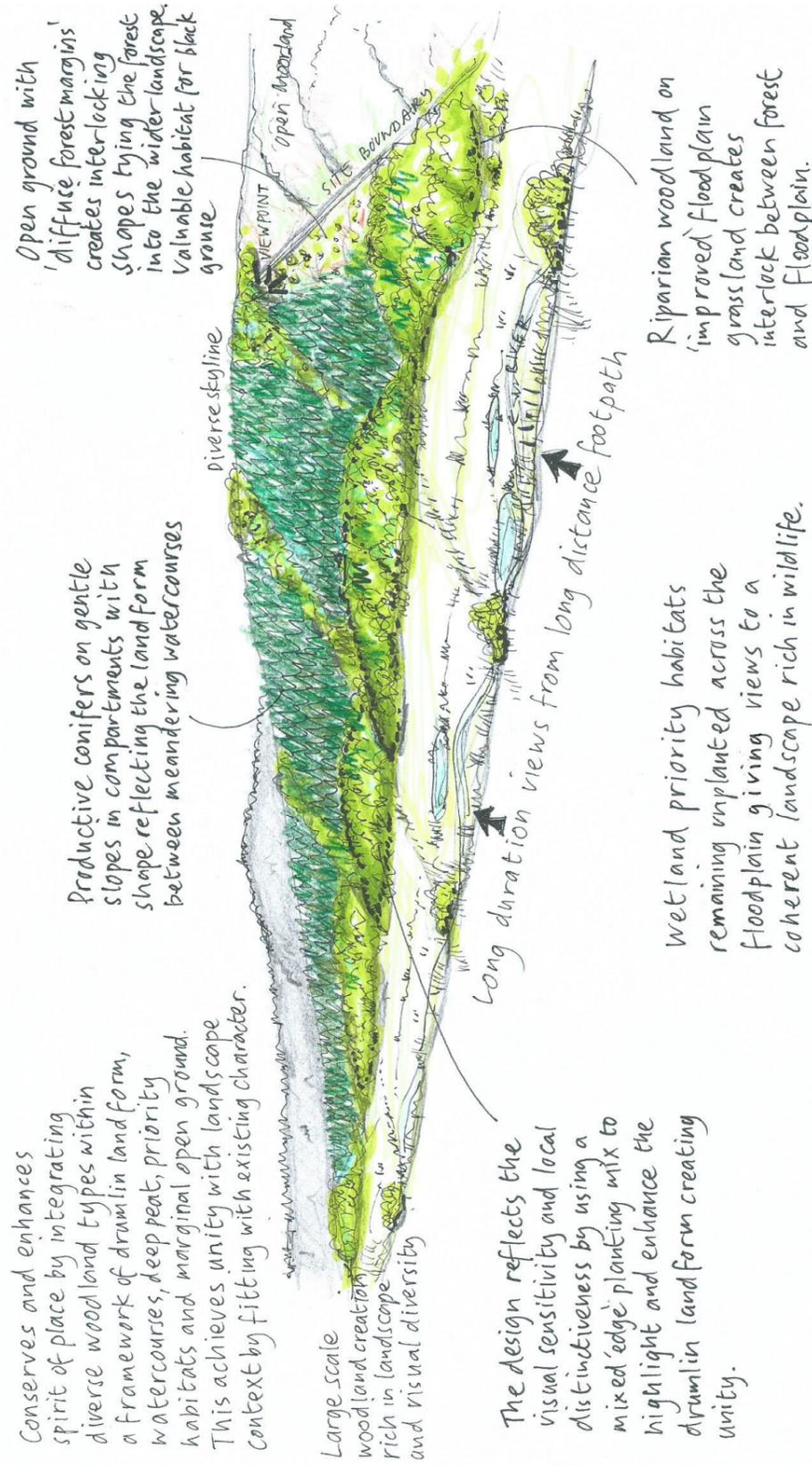
PLAN M.T.S.

26.09.2020
Richard Mellor

INTERLOCKING WOODLAND TYPES ACROSS BOUNDARIES TO CREATE LANDSCAPE 'UNITY'

CRAGS AND VIEWPOINT WITH STRONG SPIRIT OF PLACE (Local distinctiveness). ADEQUATE SCALE OF OPEN SPACE BUFFER AND NATURALISTIC FOREST MARGINS ENHANCE CHARACTER AND CREATE UNITY.

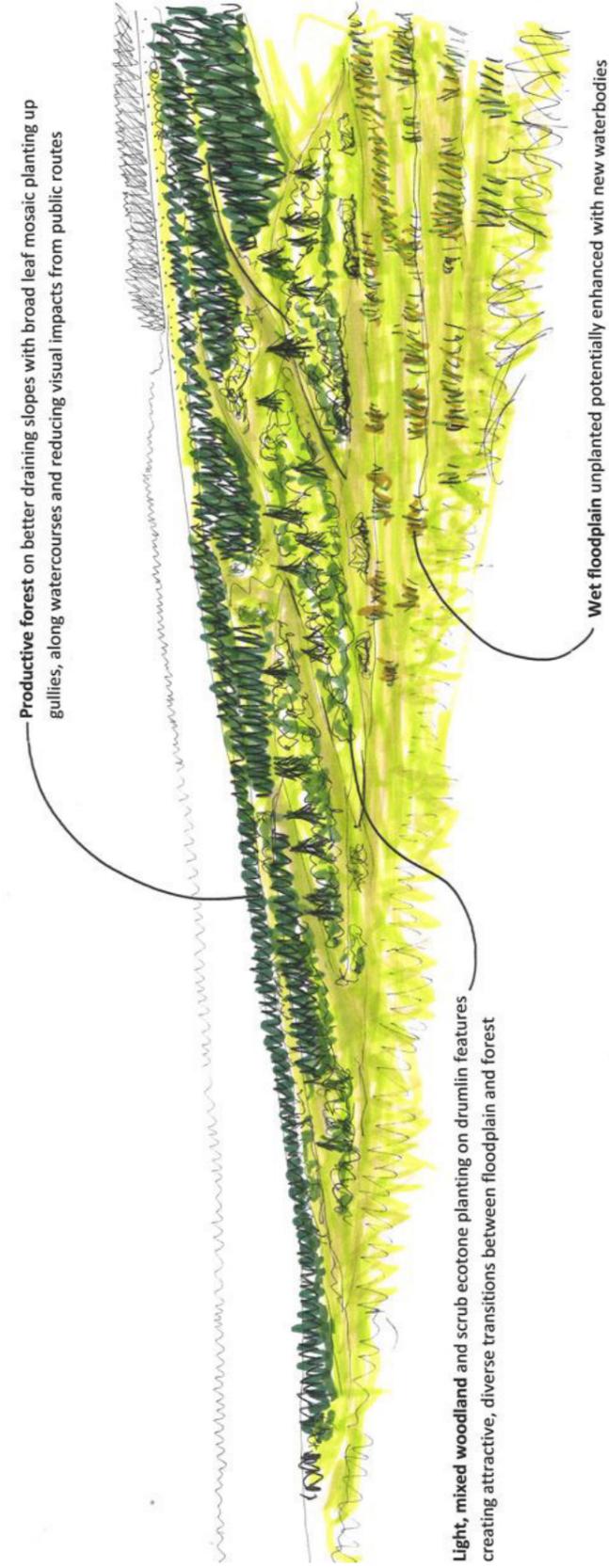
3D perspective to accompany design concept plan:



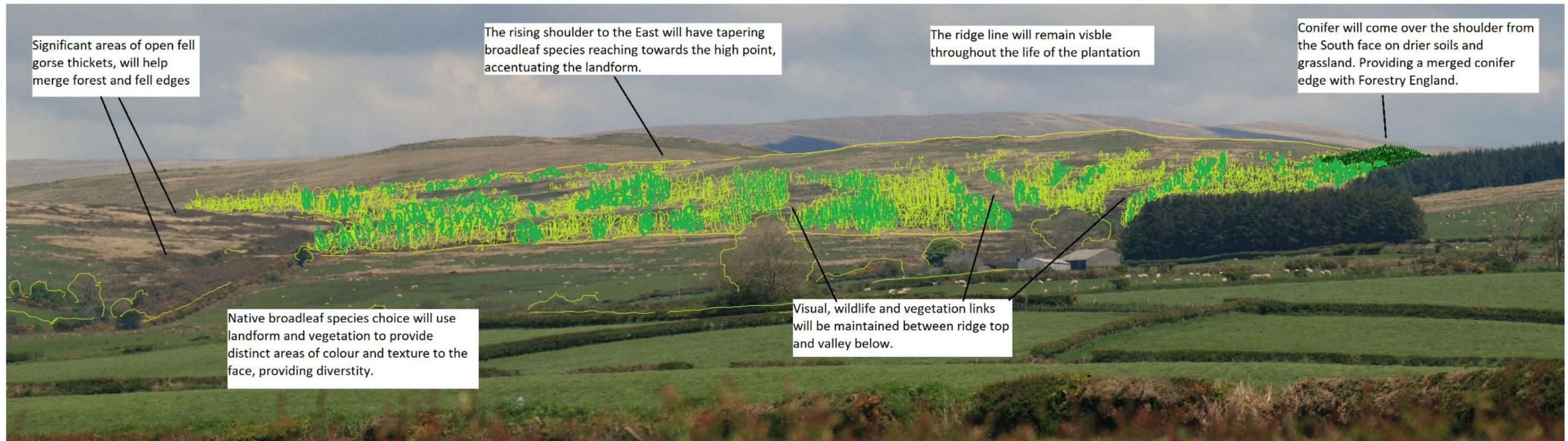
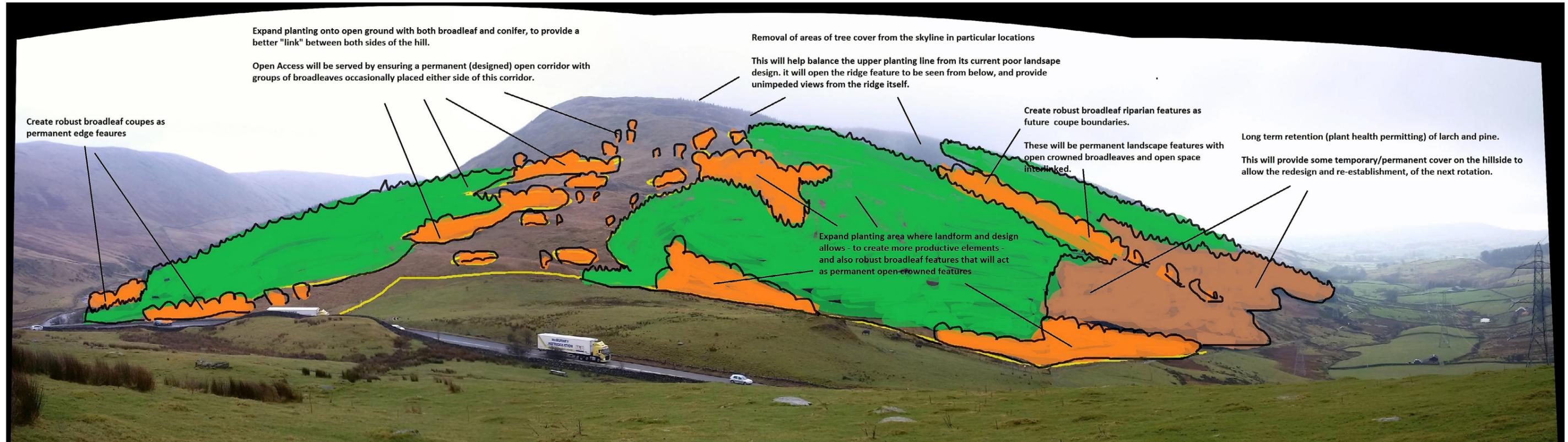
Richard Heller
October 2020

3D perspective to accompany design concept plan:

View from public route showing planting design responding to landform facilitating good integration



Annotated photographs to accompany design concept plans:





Appendix 3: Example issues log

An example issues log is given below, showing the types of issues it should cover.

Issue (include date and raised by)	Applicant's comments	Forestry Commission comments	Significance of Impact (High, Medium, Low)	Status (Open, Closed)	Agreed Mitigation
e.g. Archaeology Scheduled Monument at NZ123456. Historic England, 23/10/16	e.g. Scheme design includes open ground to buffer Scheduled Monument as per UKFS. John Smith, 25/10/16	e.g. Applicant has taken on board Historic England feedback and designed the scheme in accordance with best practice. Susan Jones, 27/10/17	e.g. Low	e.g. Closed	e.g. 20 metre open ground buffer around Scheduled Monument
People					
Historic Environment					
Soil					
Biodiversity					
Landscape					
Climate					
Water					
Material assets					
Land use					
Other					

Appendix 4: Surveys

The following directory identifies the information type and some main sources of that information that should be investigated before undertaking on-site surveys. See Appendix 5 for more detail on sources of data and other information.

Information class	Information required	Data sources
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ownership boundaries Legal access points/routes Other rights (e.g. sporting) Existing commitments such as agri-environment grant agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Records (deeds, leases, licences, etc.) RPA Online, MAGIC Map, or FC Land Information Search
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAMSAR sites, Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Important Nature Conservation (SINCs), Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) Priority Habitats Priority Species Existing agri-environment schemes and species targeting layers Important Bird Areas (IBAs) Important Plant Areas (IPAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAGIC Map and Forestry Commission Land Information Search to identify presence or proximity of features. Consultation with Natural England to discuss planting opportunities and mitigation. MAGIC Map; consultation with Local Authorities and Wildlife Trusts MAGIC Map Phase 2 Habitat Survey Species survey Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) Consultant ecologist, where appropriate Biological Records Centre NBN Atlas Previous grant applications on the land
Landscape and visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape Character Area (refer to National Character Area profile). <p>Landscape Character Assessment</p> <p>You should undertake a landscape survey, expressed in the form of a spatial plan and including or supported by the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual context, including photographs Visual detractors Landscape designations Viewpoints from within and outside planned woodland Elements of landscape and visual diversity Watercourses, infrastructure supply catchments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Character Area profile National Park, Community Forest, etc. - where relevant Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Local authority Landscape architect, where appropriate.





Appendix 4: Surveys (continued)

Information class	Information required	Data sources
Historic Environment	<p>Designated heritage assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Heritage Sites Scheduled Monuments Listed Buildings Conservation Areas Registered Parks and Gardens Registered Battlefields Advice on designated heritage assets and their settings <p>Non-designated heritage assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice on non-designated historic features and HLC Non-designated historic features Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Historic features visible in lidar data Historic features visible on aerial and satellite images Historic features visible on historic maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAGIC map National Heritage List (does not include World Heritage Sites) Local authority planning or building conservation department (Conservation Areas only) Historic England local team Local authority historic environment/archaeology service Local Historic Environment Record National HLC: Magic website Local HLC: local Historic Environment Record and/or Archaeology Data Service Environment Agency lidar data Historic map webpages Google Earth
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood risk Water quality Surface water acidification Water availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Agency (main river) or Lead Local Flood Authority (if not a main river) Forestry Commission Land Information Search Water provider
Soil, species selection and silviculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil type and site conditions Presence of peaty soils and deep peat on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest Research decision support system – Ecological Site Classification (ESC): Baseline, 2050 and 2080 'high' scenarios Site soil survey Natural England peat map and peat survey
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Public Rights of Way CRoW land Common land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAGIC Map and Forestry Commission Land Information Search Local Access Forum

Appendix 5: References and additional sources of information

The following range of guidance and data sources will help you prepare a woodland creation design plan. Further information on each can be obtained by following the relevant links.

The full address has been provided for each link. If you experience difficulty accessing the document please try an independent internet search or contact your local Forestry Commission office for advice. Please note, when accessing external data you should always check the copyright details for how you can use the information.

UK Forestry Standard (UKFS)

UKFS²⁴ acts as the foundation for sustainable forestry in all parts of the UK. The UKFS is agreed by all of the governments within the UK and links international obligations on sustainable forest management with policies on implementation. It therefore sets the context for forestry policy and practice in England.

Design techniques for forest management planning

The Forestry Commission practice guide, **Design techniques for forest management planning**²⁵, provides a step-by-step approach to design techniques used in forest management planning process. The guidance can be applied to both woodland creation and woodland management, and provides further information to supplement this guide

Principles for afforestation on or near priority habitats

The Forestry Commission **Operations Note 43: Principles for afforestation on or near priority habitats**²⁶ offers clarity on the principles to adopt when considering or planning woodland creation on or near priority habitats, including peat in England.

Decision making framework for woodland establishment on peaty soils

A **decision making framework**²⁷ has been developed to determine whether woodland establishment is appropriate on peaty soils. The framework will be applied to proposals where any part of the site coincides with the Natural England peat map (including deep peat, shallow peat and other soils with peaty pockets categories) or as directed by your Woodland Officer. The peat map can be viewed on the Forestry Commission map browser and Land Information Search.

²⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard

²⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/design-techniques-for-forest-management-planning-practice-guide

²⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-for-afforestation-on-or-near-priority-habitats-operations-note-43

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/decision-support-framework-for-peatland-protection-and-the-establishment-of-new-woodland-interim-june-2021>





Guidance for afforestation proposed on or near nationally important upland breeding wader areas

This [guidance note](#)²⁸ has been jointly produced by the Forestry Commission and Natural England to help ensure that proposals for afforestation identify and avoid important breeding wader sites i.e. those sites that are capable of supporting breeding waders and where breeding waders are present. The note concentrates on species (curlew, lapwing, redshank, oystercatcher, snipe and golden plover) associated with upland farmland and moorland.

Forestry Commission Land Information Search (LIS)

The [Forestry Commission Land Information Search](#)²⁹ is an interactive map browser that provides free access to Forestry Commission datasets covering land in England.

MAGIC Map Application and local wildlife search

The Defra [MAGIC Map Application](#)³⁰ is another interactive map browser that provides free access to datasets. Magic provides details relating to, for example, priority habitats, priority species, designated areas and sites, current agri-environment schemes in place, and open access land. MAGIC allows users to run a constraints check against proposal areas and create a report.

[NBN Atlas](#)³¹ shows a map of species recorded, and other data, in the area identified for search.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is an approach to understanding the differences between landscapes, and can serve as a framework for decision making that respects local distinctiveness. These are often prepared by local authorities and can usually be found through a basic internet search (there is no online central collection of LCAs for all of England).

Review the relevant LCA for your proposal area and read the general sections of the report that apply to the entire LCA area; these will provide you with essential background and contextual information for your landscape. Review and consider the landscape character type, landscape description, forces for change and associated guidance; there are usually relevant sections on forest and woodlands. Use this information during the process of designing your new woodland, specifically when developing the landscape character appraisal for your proposal.

Some guidance on preparing an LCA is provided at [gov.uk](#)³²

National Character Area (NCA) profiles

England is divided – by natural lines in the landscape, rather than by administrative boundaries – into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs), each defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. Each NCA has a profile that provides data, landscape descriptions and statements of environmental opportunity, which should inform woodland creation planning. Natural England hosts an [online list of all NCA profiles](#)³³.

Advice on tree pests and diseases

The [Tree pests and diseases collection](#)³⁴ on gov.uk gathers wide range of information on tree pests and diseases, including biosecurity, from the Forestry Commission and Animal and Plant Health Agency.

Ecological site classification (ESC)

The [Ecological Site Classification Decision Support System](#)³⁵ can help you to choose appropriate tree species to match the site. ESC is designed to match key site factors (soils, rainfall, land drainage etc.) with the ecological requirements of different tree species and woodland communities. It can also be used to predict climate suitability for tree species in 2050 and 2080. There are default settings but inputting site specific data, for example soil moisture and nutrient status, will significantly improve your results.

Environmental Impact Assessment

You can access all of our guidance on EIA for woodland creation at www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessments-for-woodland.

Natural colonisation

If you plan to create your new woodland via natural colonisation, read our guidance at www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-natural-colonisation-for-the-creation-of-new-woodland.

²⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719944/FC-NE_Joint_Guidance_Note_-_Afforestation_and_important_wader_sites_FINAL_V7.pdf

²⁹ www.gov.uk/guidance/use-the-land-information-search

³⁰ magic.defra.gov.uk

³¹ records.nbnatlas.org/explore/your-area

³² www.gov.uk/guidance/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments

³³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles

³⁴ www.gov.uk/government/collections/tree-pests-and-diseases

³⁵ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/ftth/ecological-site-classification/>



Historic Environment

Information on designated heritage assets, including World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Registered Battlefields, can be found on the Defra **MAGIC Map Application** and the **National Heritage List**.³⁶ It may be necessary to contact local authority planning or building conservation departments and use their websites to identify Conservation Areas.

Where your site includes (or has in a close proximity) a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Registered Battlefield, Grade I or II* Listed Building or Grade I or II* Registered Park and Garden you will need to contact the relevant Historic England local team. If your site includes (or has in close proximity) a Grade II Listed Building or Grade II Registered Park and Garden you may need to contact **Historic England's local team**;³⁷ your Woodland Officer can provide guidance on this. If your site is within or close to a World Heritage Site it would be advisable to contact the appropriate partnership board. If it is within a Registered Park and Garden it would be advisable to seek the views of the local **Gardens Trust**.

Local authority historic environment/archaeology services must be consulted for advice on non-designated assets, including how they can be considered in woodland creation proposals. They should be asked to consult the local Historic Environment Record (HER), local Historic Landscape Character (HLC) data, lidar data, aerial/satellite images and historic maps for you. Contact details for local authority historic environment/archaeology services can be found on the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (**ALGAO**)³⁸ website.

There may be a charge for local authority historic environment/archaeology service advice in some areas.

Information on non-designated historic features can be obtained from a range of sources, including the local HER, lidar data and historic maps. Local authority historic environment/archaeology services will consult their HER for you, but further details can be found on the **Heritage Gateway**³⁹ (although this website holds records on some heritage assets, it and other online heritage datasets are often incomplete and therefore must not be relied upon to inform woodland creation). Selected historic maps are available in local Record Offices and online, including on the **National Library of Scotland's map images**⁴⁰ website and **Old-Maps**⁴¹ Environment Agency lidar images can also be viewed on the National Library of Scotland website and on **Flickr**.⁴² Aerial and satellite images are available online.

National Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data is available through the 'Landscape – Landscape Classifications' section of the MAGIC Map Application. Some Historic Environment Records hold local HLC data. Selected local HLC data is held by the **Archaeology Data Service**⁴³.

³⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

³⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/contact-us/local-offices/>

³⁸ <https://www.algao.org.uk/membership>

³⁹ <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/default.aspx>

⁴⁰ <https://maps.nls.uk/>

⁴¹ <https://www.old-maps.co.uk>

⁴² <https://www.flickr.com/photos/environmentagencyopensurveydata/albums>

⁴³ <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/HLC/>

Information on water quality, flood risk and other water related issues

In addition to information that can be found on the Forestry Commission LIS and MAGIC the following may prove useful:

Environment Agency contact details:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about/access-and-opening

Flood risk map:

flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/

Check the long term flood risk for an area in England:

www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk

Main rivers consultation:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/main-river-map-for-england-proposed-changes-and-decisions

Data on water abstraction licenses:

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Groundwater source protection data and aquifer designations can be found on MAGIC:

magic.defra.gov.uk/

Local Environmental Records Centres (LERCs)

The Association of Local Environmental Records Centres is a membership organisation representing LERCs across the United Kingdom. It promotes the standing of LERCs as the definitive source of high quality, local, capture-resolution biodiversity data to inform the decision-making process, provides representation at a national and regional level and seeks to enhance the professional standing of LERCs through its Accreditation scheme. As a central hub of environmental information at the local level LERCs will be able to provide confirmation of the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) status of your land and information on the presence of protected and priority species, see www.alerc.org.uk



Ordnance Survey Maps

An Ordnance Survey (OS) map provides a lot of information about what exists within the local area, such as properties, rights of way, streams and rivers, ponds and reservoirs, and places of public interest. It has contours to help evaluate slopes in the landscape. Old maps may also be of use – the following website is a good place to start: www.old-maps.co.uk.

It is a good idea to compare the OS map of your site and its surrounding area against recent aerial photography to check that features (hedgerows, woodland boundaries, ponds and other identified features) align with reality. Different websites often hold aerial photographs of different ages, which allows for historic comparison if necessary.

Forestry Commission consultation and public registers

You can read guidance on how to access and use FC's public registers at www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-the-public-registers

The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands in England. We (the Forestry Commission) work with landowners to plant the right trees in the right places, for the right reasons.



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