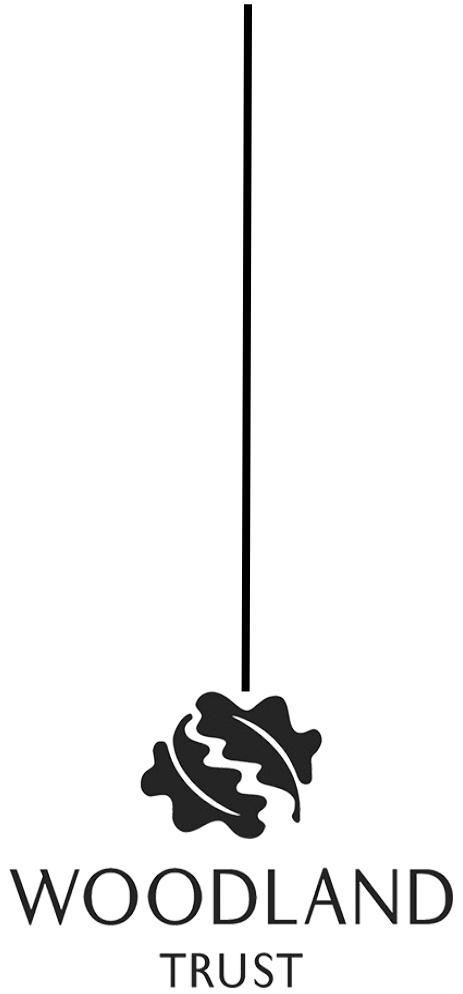
College Wood (Oxfordshire)

(Plan period – 2025 to 2035)



Management Plan Content Page

Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

"A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife."

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK's native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.

2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.

3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.

4. The long-term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.

5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.

6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.

7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.

8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.

9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.

10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 10 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 10 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust website which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. SITE DETAILS

College Wood (Oxfordshire)

Location:	Oxfordshire - Grid reference: SU660810, OS Explorer Map 1:50,000 No. 171
Area:	69.09 hectares (170.73 acres)
External Designations:	Ancient Woodland Site, Chilterns National Landscape
Internal Designations:	N/A

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

College Wood, 69 hectares (170 acres) is an ancient woodland 2.6km (1.6 miles) south of the village of Woodcote in South Oxfordshire. The site sits within the Chilterns National Landscape where 22% is woodland over 0.5ha in size, creating a very important concentration of long-established woodland habitat. Of this 13% is classified as ancient woodland, compared to just 2% average across England. College wood is part of a contiguous larger woodland block measuring approximately 140ha with a total of 135ha designated as ancient woodland. A further 264 hectares of woodland shares boundaries though is intersected by roads. This large area of woodland habitat is privately owned and consists of small wood lots of 4ha to much larger single ownership's such as the Hardwick Estate (167ha). Public rights of way and permissive paths facilitate access for the public to navigate their way through much of the woodlands.

The manor of South Stoke, along with the woodlands including what was once known as Abbots Wood and now more commonly College Wood, was given by Henry VIII to endow to Christ Church (University of Oxford) in 1546 and managed as mainly beech and oak woodland, often coppiced and actively managed as some form of woodland. The last lease granted by Christ Church was in 1863 where upon it was sold into private ownership. College Wood was acquired by the Woodland Trust in March 2023 along with the nearby site, New Copse (62ha / 153 acres). A further 6 Woodland Trust owned woodlands are within 4km miles (2.5 miles).

The underlying geology is known as the Satwell Gravel formation which was laid down by the old River Thames up to 1 million years ago. The age of these deposits is an important time capsule from which we can learn more about early humans cultural adaptations when moving from coastal regions along rivers into inland habitats. The geology is characterised by slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, with moderate to high fertility suitable to a wide range of woodland types. Topography is gently sloping with an above ordnance datum (AOD) of 124m.

As in much of the Chilterns National Landscape, the woodland is currently characterised by mature beech and oak trees which were originally planted around 1900 for the local furniture industry. College Wood has been managed as high forest since planting, and has had successive periods of thinning, the last being in 2012. Within the mature woodland the understorey shrub is primarily holly which can tolerate the high amounts of shade under the beech trees. Where tree felling has created glades, bracken and bramble dominate. Where natural regeneration occurs, birch as the pioneer species establishes first followed by beech and oak.

In 2006, a non wooded open area (2.8ha) in the south of the site was replanted by the previous owner with ash, wild cherry, yew, birch and oak. Due to ash dieback, the ash was felled in 2018 and the gaps were replanted with small leaved lime, oak and hazel between 2020-2022. A small pond can also be found in this area.

The woodland has been accessible to visitors along permissive and public rights of way for many years and this access will continue unchanged. There are almost 7km (4.3 miles) of paths and tracks which are made up of 1.6km (1 mile) of public bridleways, 3.6km (2.2 miles) of improved vehicle accessible track and 1.7km (1.1 miles) of maintained permissive footpaths. Parking is restricted to using an informal lay-by on Deadman's Lane (B4576) and one on the A4074 road. The woodland is an integral part of the wider countryside access network with public and permissive routes reaching out from the site boundaries into more woodland habitat.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

College Wood has been an important part of the high ancient woodland concentration in South Oxfordshire for many centuries, and as such any required silvicultural intervention will ensure the mature woodland appearance sees only gradual naturalistic changes through a considered continuous cover management approach.

In 50 years' time, College Wood will contain a diverse range of plant and animal species typical of a managed varied age and structure Where gaps in the canopy have occurred, this has permitted early successional habitats and heathland to establish. This process of allowing the pattern of natural processes such as storm events and trees succumbing to old age will continue. Any human intervention will have aimed to assist this natural process and diversify the overall age and stand species structure. Temporary openings in the canopy will have helped increase light levels and improve overall health of retained trees, encouraging natural regeneration of species such as beech, oak, birch and rowan, facilitating a more varied structure and composition. Holly will be present but will not be permitted to dominate the woodland understorey, where associated common flora and ancient woodland indicator species together with shrubs will flourish. The circular ride (compartment 3a) and other management access tracks will have continued to provide a mosaic of woodland edge habitats with constant rotational changes in vegetation heights and types, benefiting a large range of plant and animal species. In the long term this important edge habitat will also be present alongside the road boundaries.

Beech is likely to remain the dominant tree species in the wood in the long term, with oak as a secondary species. Certain trees will have been identified as future old growth trees and left to reach old age and decline naturally. Deadwood volume will increase as trees mature and senesce contributing to important deadwood habitat both standing, fallen and within old hollowing trees, particularly important for invertebrate and fungal communities (apart from where a tree poses a significant tree safety risk along paths and road edges). The tree planting in Cpt.2a will have been managed through consecutive thinning interventions and will now be a mixed native woodland with an important ride edge habitat and a thriving understorey.

Observations will continue to be carried out to record any factors causing change to the overall woodland that may be detrimental to the structure and long-term biodiversity. These include tree diseases, invasive or dominating plant species and herbivore impacts. It is expected that in 50 years' time active control of invasive plant species will be minimal and herbivore impact will be low due to on going methods of control.

Archaeological features such as the wood banks and saw pits will have been mapped and protected from damage during woodland management operations.

Visitors will continue to enjoy a safe and enjoyable woodland experience when visiting to College Wood, taking walks along the maintained paths/tracks through the varied age woodland habitats, observing wildlife and immersing themselves within the large expanse of woodland throughout the changing seasons.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description
College Wood is typical of ancient semi natural woodland within the Chilterns with the majority of the feature consisting of beech and oak high forest planted around 1900. The National Vegetation Category (NVC) woodland type is W14 Beech-oak woodland with bramble. In addition, other tree species present include, cherry, birch, willow, sweet chestnut (one notable tree located at SU 66424 80687), whitebeam, larch, spruce and Douglas fir. Geology type is known as the Satwell Gravel formation formed by the meandering Thames River, overlying Seaford Chalk, Newhaven Chalk and Lewes Nodular Chalk Formations. Topography is gently sloping with an above ordnance datum (AOD) of 124m. The resultant soils are slightly acid, loamy and clayey with impeded drainage resulting in a moderate to high fertility suitable to a wide range of woodland types. In 2008, pockets of Norway spruce, Douglas Fir and larch (likely planted in 1960), were clear felled leaving areas of open habitat that has largely been colonised by bracken and bramble with some natural broadleaf (birch, beech and oak) and conifer regeneration (spruce). Approx. 7 mature Douglas fir have been left in one area to add additional diversity and habitat. The mature beech was last thinned in 2012 and subsequently 1000 mixed broadleaf trees were planted in small groups within the clearings, though little (as at 2025) has been successful in getting established. The understorey is dominating by holly under the closed canopy and bracken and bramble where light levels are high. The northern section of the site, beyond the circular ride, contains a large carpet of bluebells in the spring. Invasive non-native species of rhododendron and snowberry were present in low numbers across the site at the time of our acquisition and are in the process of being eliminated. Along the route of the gas pipeline (installed 1966) and water pipe line (1960's) in the north western area (compartment 1b) natural regeneration has occurred with birch, willow and oak present. This area plus some contiguous woodland measuring approx. 4.5ha will be min-intervention. Compartment 2a (2.8ha). An area once mostly open habitat (within the ancient woodland) and located in the south-east corner of the site was planted in 2006 with mixed broadleaves plus yew. A deer fence around the whole compartment was installed at this time. The main species was ash with cherry as a secondary species, plus shrub planting including hazel and privet. Other species include oak, birch and willow. All ash was felled due to ash dieback in 2018 and subsequently the gaps were replanted with mixed broad leaves (2020-22). Species planted in this later phase included a large proportion of small leaved lime plus sweet chestnut. The derelict deer fencing was removed in 2024. A small pond is present to the west of the stoned track which is known to sometimes dry up completely during the summer. A water trough attached to the mains water supply can be found nearby though is currently not functioning.

Neighbouring landowners have the rights to extract timber along the improved stone track (615m) that runs through compartment 2a. At SU 66416 80266 there is a locked metal double vehicle gate (owned by the Woodland Trust) that leads into private ownership and a concrete hard standing and a further locked vehicle barrier alongside Deadman's Lane (B4576). There is a right of access to the Woodland Trust for forestry operations along this route to Deadman's Lane (B4576).

Compartment 3a. The circular improved track (2.7km) has been managed as a 3 zone ride and this form of management will continue. Natural regeneration including a high component of birch and secondary willow occurs along the woodland edge. Heather (*calluna vulgaris*) is also present along some of the northeastern ride and is also present in the Douglas fir area. These heathland remnants are rare in the local area and so will be retained and protected.

Roe, muntjac and fallow have been recorded, and the current impact level is medium with numbers likely to be increasing. Deer numbers have been managed prior to the Woodland Trust taking ownership. Deer impact assessments and thermal drone counts data have been collected and impact monitoring will continue.

Management access is off the A4074 where there is a locked two gate vehicle barrier. A large concrete hard standing just inside the gates is what remains of a Second World War structure. Another of these concrete plinths is present further north but does not have vehicle access links. There are outlines of another 3 of these plinths visible on the ground and using LIDAR. There is also a water storage container (alongside the A4074) and possibly a blast wall also dating from WW2 (alongside Deadman's Lane, B4526). An old wood bank is present on the east, southern and western boundaries.

Significance

The amount of ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) left in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century and ancient woodland is irreplaceable. Approximately 40% of England's ASNW is found in the south-east of the UK.

The Chilterns Landscape in particular is one of most heavily wooded landscapes in England with 23% woodland cover concentrated in the central and southern areas; 56% of the woodland is Ancient a particularly rich, distinctive and prominent feature, including the Chilterns Beech Wood Special Area of Conservation; significant box, juniper and beech yew woods; many veteran trees and relict wood pasture.

ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites.

A key aim of the Woodland Trust is to prevent any further loss of ancient woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities;
To use the site to demonstrate the Trust's approach to woodland management and to influence neighbouring landowners and other key stakeholders.

Constraints:
- Archaeology is present and damage must be avoided during any management operations or wear and tear through public use.

- Success of natural regeneration is likely to be hampered by increasing numbers of deer if control is not undertaken on a landscape scale.
- Squirrel numbers are very high which has caused significant damage to the canopy of the mature trees and damage by bark stripping to planted and natural tree regeneration.

Factors Causing Change

- Increased damage to woodland ground surface due to motorbikes, plus disturbance to wildlife due to noise.
- Herbivores damaging established trees, new planting and natural regeneration by bark stripping and consumption of seeds.
- Spread of non-native plant species and noxious materials and liquids due to fly-tipping along road boundaries - especially at informal lay-bys.
- Spread of tree diseases.
- Increasing dominance of holly in the understorey.
- Long term climate change - impacting suitability of current flora in this location.
- Storm episodes.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

In 50 years' time, the ancient semi-natural woodland will show significant structural complexity providing a high diversity of microclimates benefiting a wide range of species. The planted beech and oak will be over 170 years old and over time will have either been felled (as part of light intervention thinning operations) or senesced naturally leaving living beech and oak veteran and notable trees scattered throughout the site providing niche habitats for specialist wildlife. Deadwood will have reached at least the recommended 20-45 cubic meters of deadwood per hectare and will be in the form of standing, fallen and heartwood (occurring within veteran trees) will be crucial for nutrient recycling, increased biodiversity including fungi, saproxylic beetles and habitat for birds and bats. Temporary open spaces created by the loss of the mature trees will provide constant recruitment of new trees by natural regeneration, varying the age of the trees across the woodland. Through planting after storm events, natural colonisation within temporary open spaces, a greater diversity of tree species will be present including those that are likely to be more resilient to climate change and offer vertical structural complexity. Holly will be present throughout the understorey but will not dominate ground flora and natural tree regeneration. 4.5ha of minimal-intervention woodland will have been left to natural processes.

Based on the existing woodland management routes, a cycle of ride edge cutting will have provided a varied developmental woodland edge habitat within the site, benefiting a wide variety of bird, bat, invertebrate species that are dependent on a mix of vertical structural diversity including short swards of grasses and herbs, fruiting scrub, shrubs and young trees. Along this ride and within adjoining large scallops and glades, lowland heath habitat will be present. Bracken will be present but will not dominate.

The A4074 and Deadman’s Lane (B4576) boundaries will contain fewer mature trees next to the highway and instead include a gradated mix of managed short sward roadside verges moving to woody shrubs further into the site. This will occur through consecutive thinning operations. Establishment of woody shrubs will have primarily been through natural regeneration and additional planting if required. The road corridors will exhibit a varied wavy edge structure that is managed by cutting sections beyond the initial road verge on rotation. The dense vegetation will provide a barrier to noise, pollution and winds that decreases woodland humidity.

Compartment 2a will exhibit a range of established tree species, evenly spaced and showing minimal browsing damage. A well-maintained, improved/stoned management track will provide access for forestry and management machinery and will be a managed ride, with scalloped/wavy edges with sheltered, warm short sward vegetation where a range of ground flora and grasses flourish providing rich nectar sources for invertebrates. The gradated woodland edge will be host for nesting birds, foraging bats and birds of prey. A well-established pond inhabited by amphibians, invertebrates and wetland plants will be present.

Historical features such as the World War 2 structure bases will be allowed to weather naturally or maintained if they are useful to the site management. The structures will be clear of encroaching vegetation and therefore also visible to visitors.

Threats to the long-term objective will be actively managed using regular observations and landscape partnership working.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Increasing structural and species diversity by breaking up the dominance of the even aged beech and oak woodland canopy trees. Climate change mitigation and adaptation by establishing tree species not currently found on site, are suited to the geology and will be resilient with the predicted future warmer and unstable climate.
- Two areas of mature beech to be thinned by up to 20% have been mapped measuring 7ha and 8.7ha. This is planned to occur in 2028 / 2030. Prescription is to halo thin around trees identified as the future veterans focusing on light demanding species such as the oak. Leave a proportion of felled timber as dead wood habitat. Roadside (A4074) thinning to reduce risk to road users and work towards the long-term objective of a gradated woodland edge. Supplementary planting of woody shrubs will be considered if natural regeneration fails with annual monitoring observations when trees are in leaf (July).
- Where holly has grown tall, dense and is preventing natural regeneration and woodland flora from growing then cut, chip and remove from site. Nine areas ranging in size from 0.2 – 0.6ha have been mapped. Operations to coincide with beech thinning and additional years – 2027, 2028, 2030, 2033.
- Fell to waste the remaining Norway spruce throughout compartment 1a in 2027. Estimated to be no more than 12 small trees.

Maintenance of the planted trees
- Remove tree shelters from unsuccessful plantings. Re-stake fallen shelters which have a live sapling. Protect young saplings where possible with re-used shelters. These ongoing tasks will occur throughout the plan period using volunteer assistance and waste removed from site by licenced waste removal contractor.

Maintenance and improvement of the rides and glades.
- During the plan period a 3-zone wide ride habitat with short rotation coppiced edges is to be maintained along approximately 600m of ride in Cpt. 2a and 3.6km of rides in Cpt. 3a. Zone 1 is 6m wide including a stoned track, Zone 2 is 6m either side of zone 1 and Zone 3 is 6m+ beyond Zone 2. Cpt. 2a = 12 sections. Cpt. 3a = 22 sections. The sections are approximately 100m in length and 30m wide and the cutting will aim to create varied age habitats with a wavy scalloped edge character and will work with the terrain and mature trees present. There will be an annual programme of works to cut the vegetation as follows; Zone 1 annually, Zone 2 a 4-year rotation and Zone 3 an 11 year rotation. The following number of section cuts will be undertaken per year; Cpt. 2a Zone 2 = 3, Zone 3 = 1; Cpt. 3a Zone 2 = 11, Zone 3 = 4. The cutting scheme aims to create variability in vegetation age along the ride.

- Maintain a glade habitat (0.65ha) beneath the mature Douglas Fir (SU 66387 80613) as a mosaic of open habitat with a mix of thinly spaced birch, sweet chestnut and heathers. This is area is to expand and enhance the heathland habitat and for deer management.
Initially remove 95% of the birch apart from a select few examples within the glade leaving a margin alongside the mature woodland. Any planted trees should not be cut and instead maintained. Work to be undertaken in 2026 and repeated in 2034 to remove any new natural regen.
Cutting once every two years of the bracken and scrub with a reciprocating cutter or similar cut and collect machine. Avoid cutting the heather and instead haloing to assist expansion of the plants. Use contractors and/or volunteers to rake any arisings that are not collected. To reduce the bracken thatch, volunteers should rake dead fronds into piles every year.
- A second semi-open area (0.65ha) (SU 65748 80992) will be managed as a mosaic of coarse vegetation and short managed grasses and herbs. Cutting once every two years using a reciprocating cutter or similar cut and collect machine. Use contractors and/or volunteers to rake arisings. To reduce the bracken thatch, volunteers should rake dead fronds into piles every year. This area is to be used for deer management and maintenance of the non-wooded habitat.

Improvement to the pond area in Cpt. 2a.
- Fell trees to the east/south/west of the pond that are shading the water and margins - 2027 (combine at the same time as the ride management).
- Fence the 3 sides of the pond (50m) to prevent access by dogs - post and rail with stock netting - 2028

Maintenance of the management access to be able to facilitate the movement of machinery throughout the site.
- Road infrastructure improvement - scrape off build-up of soil along 140m of track - from A4075/hard standing to main loop track. As part of woodland thinning operation – 2028
- Maintain the vehicle entrance track (20m) from the A4074 and connected hard standing by periodically scraping off soil and cutting back vegetation. Use volunteers and task is likely to occur every 3-4 years.

Reducing external pressures - herbivores (deer, squirrel and edible dormouse) and control and eradicate invasives.
- Undertake a full deer herbivore impact assessment to document the level of browsing impact- 2026
- Undertake a thermal drone survey to record deer numbers - 2030
- Using Woodland Trust staff, undertake abbreviated deer impact assessments to monitor effectiveness of control - annually
- Management of deer numbers using the evidence of impact levels upon the woodland and its habitats - seasonal
- Undertake a full squirrel impact assessment to document the current impact on existing trees – 2030. If impact is high, undertake management of the squirrel population to reduce the negative impact they have on developing and mature trees – annually from 2031.

Manage invasive plants.
- Cut the two rhododendron plants within the woodland to ground level using volunteers - 2025
- Treat the rhododendron with herbicide - spray all regrowth once it gets to 1m in height and has good amount of foliage – 2028. Monitor regrowth and retreat if required in 2031.
- Remove plastic from where the snowberry was growing and pull any regrowth - 2029 - annual vegetation regrowth pulling/cutting thereafter until clear.

Remove historical waste.
- Currently recorded is an old burnt-out car, rusty metal vehicle parts, white goods in the water tank, small metal waste dump on site. These need to be removed by a licenced waste carrier in 2026
- Maintain boundaries with neighbours and survey for encroachment. Work with police forces to reduce the occurrence of motorbikes using the site. Ongoing.
- Undertake a woodland condition assessment to inform the next 5-year objectives - 2029/2034

Increasing our knowledge of the flora and fauna both endemic and seasonal at College Wood
- Create a knowledge base of the flora and fauna using experienced ecologists to help inform site management and to monitor the results of the habitat management. The key surveys should include; ground flora, fungi and lichens, birds, bats, butterflies and species associated with the pond habitat.
Commence surveys in 2026 and again in 2034. The promotion of opportunities for volunteers to undertake additional annual surveys will be promoted through local advertising and on the Woodland Trust volunteering web page.

4.2 f2 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

There are almost 7km of paths and tracks which are made up of 1.6km of public bridleways, 3.6km of improved vehicle accessible track and 1.7km of maintained permissive footpaths. The woodland is an integral part of the wider countryside access network with public and permissive routes reaching out from the site boundaries.
There are 3 entrances on the western boundary including two public bridleways (SU 66416 80266 and SU 65427 80791) and a permissive footpath (SU 65901 80548), a bridleway entrance on the north-eastern corner. The bridleway entrance on the A4074 has a horse stile to dissuade access by motorcycles. A further squeeze gap entrance on Deadman's Lane (B4576) alongside an unofficial lay-by and an unofficial squeeze gap entrance alongside the metal field gate in the southeastern corner (SU 66416 80266). There are large and small Woodland Trust branded welcome signs at all entrances but not including the unofficial entrance as this leads onto private property and should not be promoted.

The public's enjoyment of the woodlands will be enhanced by maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides, in line with the recommendations for category B for access (which implies regular usage, with 5 – 15 people using one entrance per day). On-going monitoring will ensure access and boundaries remain as safe as possible. This will be achieved through a managed path and entrance network and regular safety inspections of site infrastructure and of higher risk tree zones.

There is no public car parking provided, however there are two informal lay-bys on Deadman's Lane (B4576)(SU 66541 80338) and the A4074 (SU 65958 81468), both are not on Woodland Trust property and are instead on Highway verges.

Significance

Lying just 6 miles north of Reading city, College Wood provides a relatively peaceful and free natural space for visitors to enjoy. One of the largest publicly accessible woodlands in the west of the Chilterns, this is a demonstration site on how to manage long established beech/oak woodlands and has immediate connectivity to neighbouring woodland

habitat of high amenity value. The public can visit College Wood as a part of a much larger landscape exploration along an extensive network of public rights of way.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities;
Engagement with wildlife interest groups, geologists, historians and the local community.
Improve access for those with limited mobility at the public bridleway entrance on the A4074. Install a large accessible kissing gate.

Constraints;
Lack of public car parking.

Factors Causing Change

Increasing anti-social behaviour - motorbikes, fires, fly tipping.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

College Wood will retain its network of existing paths and tracks in a safe and accessible condition so the public will be able to continue to access for informal and quiet recreation in perpetuity.

- The woodland will be kept as safe as reasonably practical for visitors and there will be a managed network of paths, together with visible and clearly signed entrances.
- An on-going programme of maintenance will ensure as much as possible safe and uninhibited access along clearly defined routes.
- Provision of infrastructure will be kept low key as appropriate for the Woodland Trust grading of this site and woodland designations, taking into consideration accessibility for all.
- The Woodland Trust will manage threats from anti-social behaviour as and when they occur.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (10 years)

Maintenance of paths and entrances
- Cut the surface vegetation and cut back encroaching vegetation on all permissive and public bridleways and entrances - annually
- Litter pick along the paths and at the entrances - using volunteers and contractor - annually
- Remove the two horse stiles and derelict fencing on the western boundary - SU 65821 80609 / SU 65429 80796 - 2026
- Install one 150cm x 10cm x 10cm post at all three of the western access points and affix small welcome and exit signs and prohibitive activity discs - 2026
- Remove current 2 strand barbed wire fence along the boundary with Deadman's Lane (B4526). Construct 30m of stock fence with high tensile plain gauge wire alongside the unofficial lay-by (SU 66612 80456) to prevent access into the woodland and dissuade fly-tipping - 2026
- Refresh the site signage due to deterioration/age – 5 free standing wooden large welcome signs and posts - 2035

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2025	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	June
2025	WC - Shelter Supply / Erection	Works associated with the supply, erection, maintenance and removal of tree shelters	August
2025	WC - Invasive Plant Control	Works associated with noxious or invasive weed control on woodland creation sites	August
2025	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	September
2025	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	December
2025	AW - Management Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of management access infrastructure and tracks such as repairs to vehicle entrance points, maintaining vehicle bridges and repairing / reinstating surfaced management access routes.	December
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	June
2026	WC - Shelter Supply / Erection	Works associated with the supply, erection, maintenance and removal of tree shelters	August
2026	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	September
2026	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	September

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2026	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	September
2026	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	October
2026	LC - Initial Site Clearance	Works associated with the clearance/removal of site debris / rubbish	October
2026	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	November
2026	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	November
2026	NWH - Initial Creation Work	Works associated with the creation of new non-woodland habitats such as ponds, ground prep and seeding of grassland areas etc	December
2027	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	June
2027	WC - Shelter Supply / Erection	Works associated with the supply, erection, maintenance and removal of tree shelters	August
2027	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	September
2027	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	October
2027	WMM - AWS silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within ancient woodlands to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing viewpoints and providing welcoming sites for visitors	December
2027	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and	December

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
		promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing viewpoints and providing welcoming sites for visitors	
2028	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	June
2028	WC - Invasive Plant Control	Works associated with noxious or invasive weed control on woodland creation sites	August
2028	WC - Shelter Supply / Erection	Works associated with the supply, erection, maintenance and removal of tree shelters	August
2028	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	September
2028	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	September
2028	WMM - AWS silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within ancient woodlands to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing viewpoints and providing welcoming sites for visitors	October
2028	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	October
2028	WMM - Secondary Silviculture	Works associated with silvicultural operations within secondary woods to meet our primary aims of conserving woodlands and encouraging public enjoyment– such as the removal of non-natives, thinning and promotion of native trees and shrubs, creating and managing viewpoints and providing welcoming sites for visitors	October
2028	NWH - Initial Restoration Work	Works associated with the initial restoration or significant reinvestment works of existing non-woodland habitats to improve or protect their conservation value	November
2028	AW - Management Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of management access infrastructure and tracks such as repairs to vehicle entrance points, maintaining vehicle bridges and repairing / reinstating surfaced management access routes.	December

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2028	AW - Management Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of management access infrastructure and tracks such as repairs to vehicle entrance points, maintaining vehicle bridges and repairing / reinstating surfaced management access routes.	December
2029	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	June
2029	WC - Shelter Supply / Erection	Works associated with the supply, erection, maintenance and removal of tree shelters	August
2029	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing potholes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc.	September
2029	WMM - Ride Management	Works associated with the management of existing rides/open areas for biodiversity - ride edge coppicing and thinning programmes, ditch works	October
2030	CS - Ecological Survey & Assessment	Use of external consultants to support the provision of ecological surveys, assessment and biodiversity / species monitoring	January
2030	CS - Ecological Survey & Assessment	Use of external consultants to support the provision of ecological surveys, assessment and biodiversity / species monitoring	January

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	57.3	Beech	1900	High forest		

Designated ASNW with main species beech and secondary species oak, planted in around 1900.

Mixed broadleaved planting along the route of the gas pipeline (installed 1966) in the north-western area has had no thinning operations recorded. This area plus adjacent woodland will be non-intervention measuring approx 4.5ha. Approximately 20 small areas (0.2-0.4ha) were planted with conifer (likely Sitka spruce and Douglas fir in the 1980's, as a timber crop. These areas were clear felled in around 2009. In 2011 the coupes had just 17% regeneration cover and so supplementary planting of 1,000 mixed broadleaves with temporary deer fencing (plastic netting on posts) occurred in 2012. The fencing was found to be inadequate and the trees were mostly browsed with birch and a few beech that survived. The fencing has been removed. There is a dozen or so conifer trees remaining from conifer planting. A small number of larch are also present.

Breaks in the tree canopy and open habitat are dominated by bracken and bramble scrub. Gorse is present but infrequent. Birch natural regeneration predominates and is very successful as a pioneer species in open spaces. Heather has also been recorded within the central woodland area, alongside the bridleway.

Holly is the dominant understorey shrub beneath the closed canopy and has grown to dominate in areas where deer browsing at the time was less intensive.

Invasive non-native species include rhododendron which is primarily just two individual plants (SU 65657 80727,SU 66049 81053) which will be cut regularly to prevent spreading and treated with herbicide to kill the plant. A small 12m x 6m area of snowberry which has been cut and covered (2024) with black plastic sheeting to prevent regrowth.

Ground flora is not very diverse with a distinct change in the northern section beyond the circular track, where bluebells are prolific in the spring. Recorded ground flora include; rushes, remote sedge, honey suckle, bluebell, raspberry, ladies bedstraw, heather (caluna vulgaris), St John's wort, it is therefore recommended that a botanical and fungi survey is undertaken to establish the breadth of species present and help inform management. Woodcock and purple emperor butterfly are also notable species observed.

1b	5	Beech	1965	Min-intervention		

Mixed broadleaved woodland. This area is minimal-intervention and there are no plans to actively manage this woodland other than that required to maintain visitor safety along the path network and adjoining property.To the south west beyond the site boundary is contiguous mature beech woodland, to the north is an arable field and a coniferous woodland, and the internal boundary is marked by the circular visitor and management access track.

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
Within this compartment approximately 1.3ha (3.2 acres) was left unplanted after the installation of the gas and water mains services in the 1960's. Since then birch, oak and pussy willow have naturally colonised. The remaining area including the old wood bank along the western edge has older mature beech and oak trees dating back to around 1910. Trees species include across the this compartment include; beech, oak, birch (downy and silver), wild cherry, ash, holly, hazel, hawthorn, rowan, willow sp. Ground flora species include; wood millet, wood figwort, remote and wood sedge, bracken, bramble, yellow archangel, curly dock, scaly male fern, hairy woodrush, soft brome, false oat grass, common storksbill, ground ivy, wood avens.						
2a	2.84	Birch (downy/silver)	2006	Wood establishment		
With half a dozen existing older oaks, the remaining open habitat was planted in 2006 with mixed broadleaves and yew, the main species were ash with cherry as a secondary species. Also planted were oak, sweet chestnut, hazel, willow (goat) and birch. Privet and gorse are also present. All ash was felled due to ash dieback in 2018. Replanting using small leaved lime, sweet chestnut and hazel occurred in 2020-22. Deer browsing damage is evident once the trees leave the tree shelters. Squirrel damage by bark stripping/ring barking is very high and has reduced the successful establishment of the trees. Cherry is doing well as they are not as palatable and are fast growing. A small pond is present to the west of the stoned track which is known to dry up completely during the summer. Frogs utilise the pond for spawning. A water trough attached to the mains water supply can be found nearby though is currently not functioning. Neighbouring woodland owners have rights to extract timber along the track to Deadman's Lane (B4576) so access must be maintained to allow the movement of forestry vehicles.						
3a	8.93	Birch (downy/silver)	2024	Non-wood habitat		
A 4-6m wide, 3.6km long circular stoned/improved vechile width track is to be managed as a 3-zone ride with glades at main path junctions. Mature oak and beech trees are also present within this area. Natural regeneration including a high component of birch, bracken and bramble occurs in well lit areas along the woodland/track edge. Heather (calluna vulgaris) is present alongside the ride from where the eastern access track meets the main loop (SU 66150 80771) heading north to the junction with the bridleway track (SU 65960 81318). A concrete area is present at SU 66004 81268 which was in use during the second world war as a building base.						

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
A more open area is present at SU 66388 80613 with approx 8 mature Douglas fir that have been retained plus small numbers of planting which include oak and sweet chestnut (2009). A mature multi stem sweet chestnut can be found on the western edge, close to the A4074 boundary and is unique for the site. The planting has not been very successful and the tree shelters that are no longer needed are being collected in. This area has large amounts of birch regeneration around the perimeter and bracken within the open habitat. Heather (calluna vulgaris) is also present in small patches but much of the open habitat is dominated by bracken and bramble.						

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland
Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland
Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site
Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up
Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf
A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy
The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell
Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment
Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer
A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry
A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice
Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species
Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer
Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell
The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention
Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention
Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland
Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)
A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species
Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration
Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also, regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance
The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking
Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer
Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand
Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment
Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning
The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes
Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding
The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

Windblow/Windthrow
Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.

SubCompartments

College Wood Compartment Map

0 190 380 m

Scale: 1:9,668 @A4

Date: 03 June 2025

Author:

Path Network

- Legal-Bridleway
- Permissive-Footpath
- SubCompartments
- Woodland Trust Site Boundary

College Wood Glades

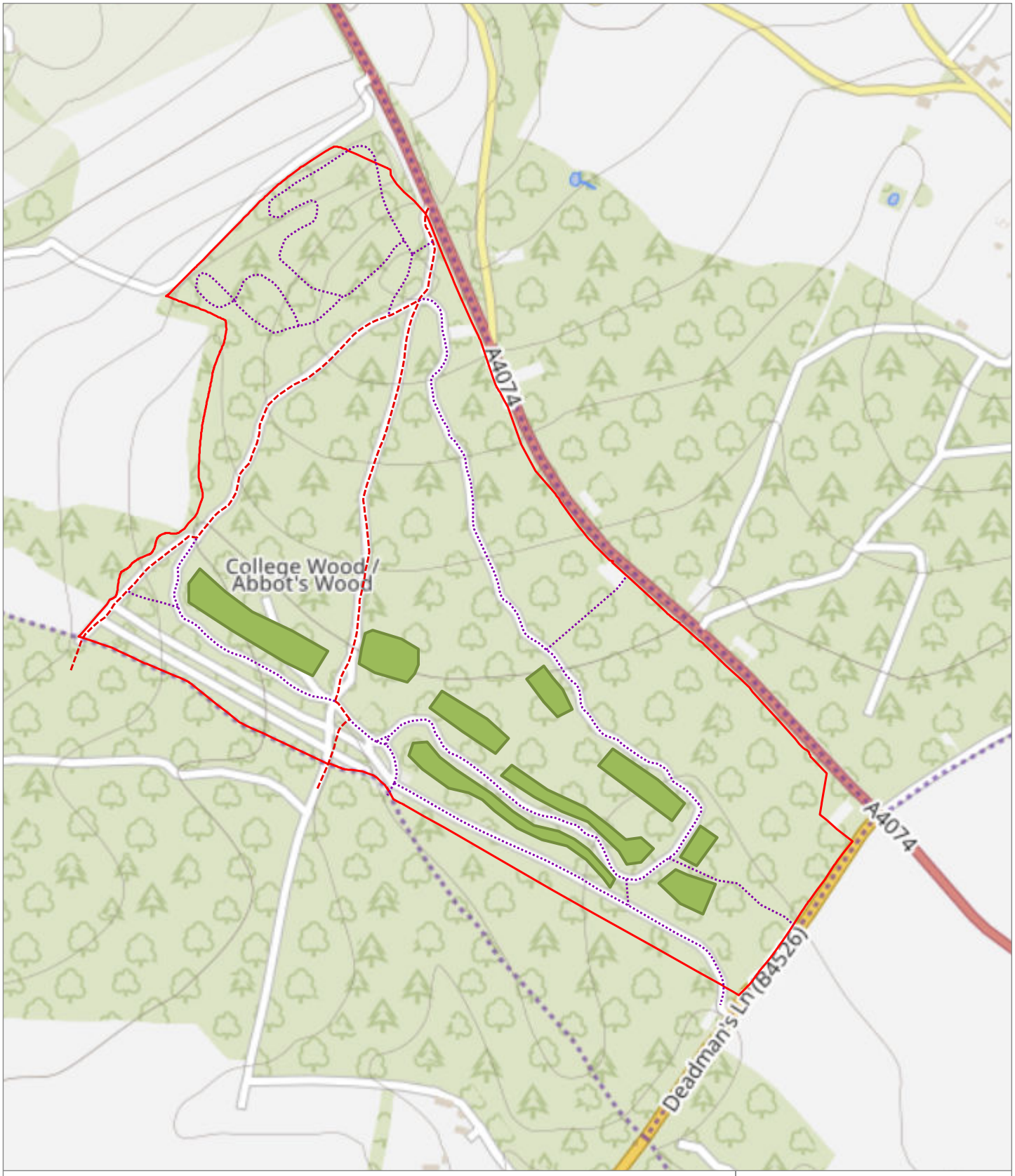
0 200 400 m

Scale: 1:10,399 @A4

Date: 19 March 2025

Author:

WOODLAND TRUST



Path Network

Legal-Bridleway

Permissive-Footpath

Woodland Trust Site Boundary

College Wood Holly Map

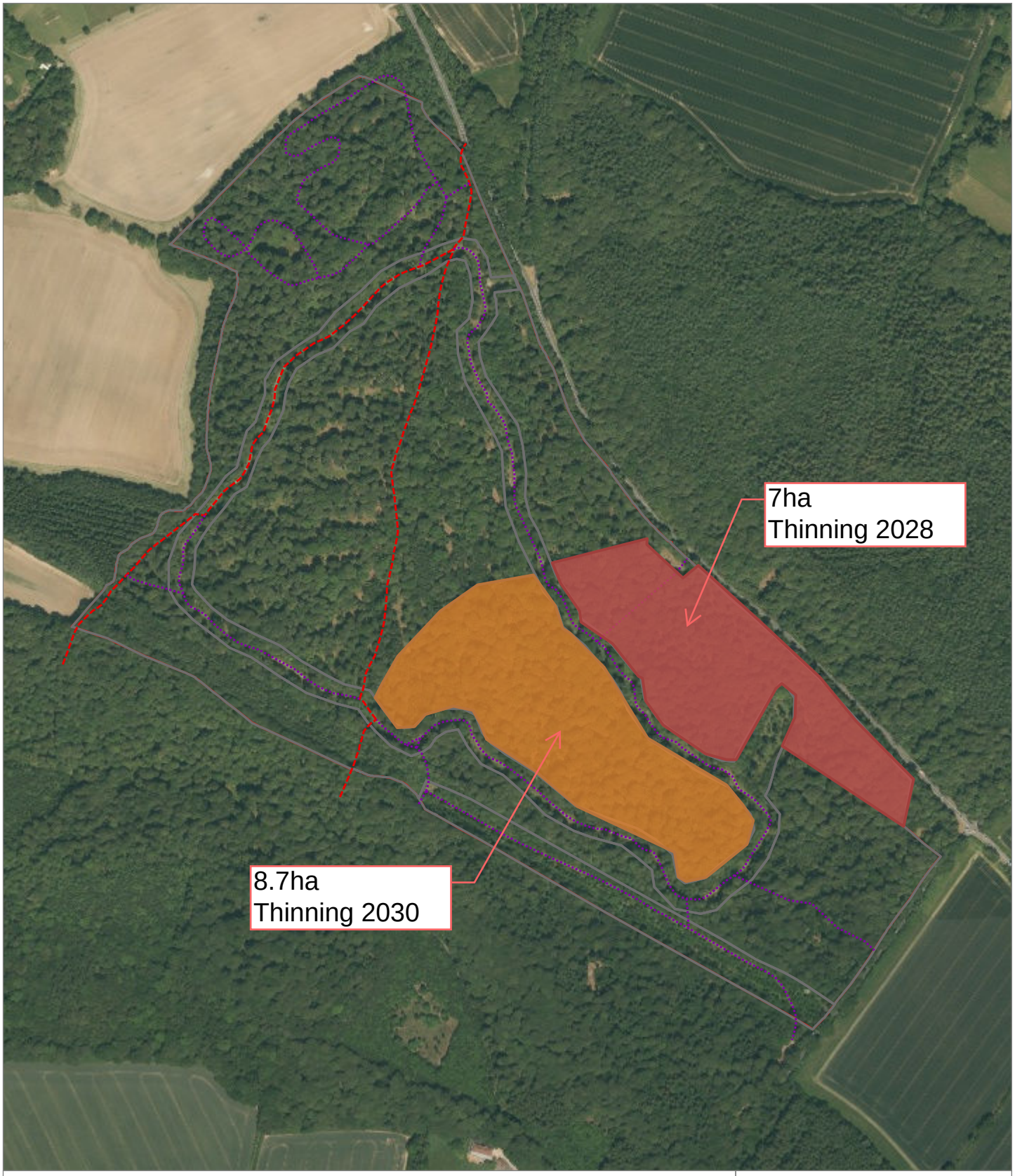
0 160 320 m

Scale: 1:8,254 @A4

Date: 18 March 2025

Author:

WOODLAND TRUST



Path Network

- Legal-Bridleway
- Permissive-Footpath
- SubCompartments
- Woodland Trust Site Boundary

College Wood Thinning Map 2025-2035

0 140 280 m

Scale: 1:7,352 @A4

Date: 19 March 2025

Author:

WOODLAND TRUST

Path Network

- Legal-Bridleway
- Permissive-Footpath
- SubCompartments
- Woodland Trust Site Boundary

College Wood Compartment 3a Ride Management Sections Map

0 110 220 m

Scale: 1:5,801 @A4

Date: 25 April 2025

Author:

WOODLAND TRUST

Path Network

Permissive-Footpath

SubCompartments

Woodland Trust Site Boundary

College Wood Compartment 2a Ride Management Sections Map

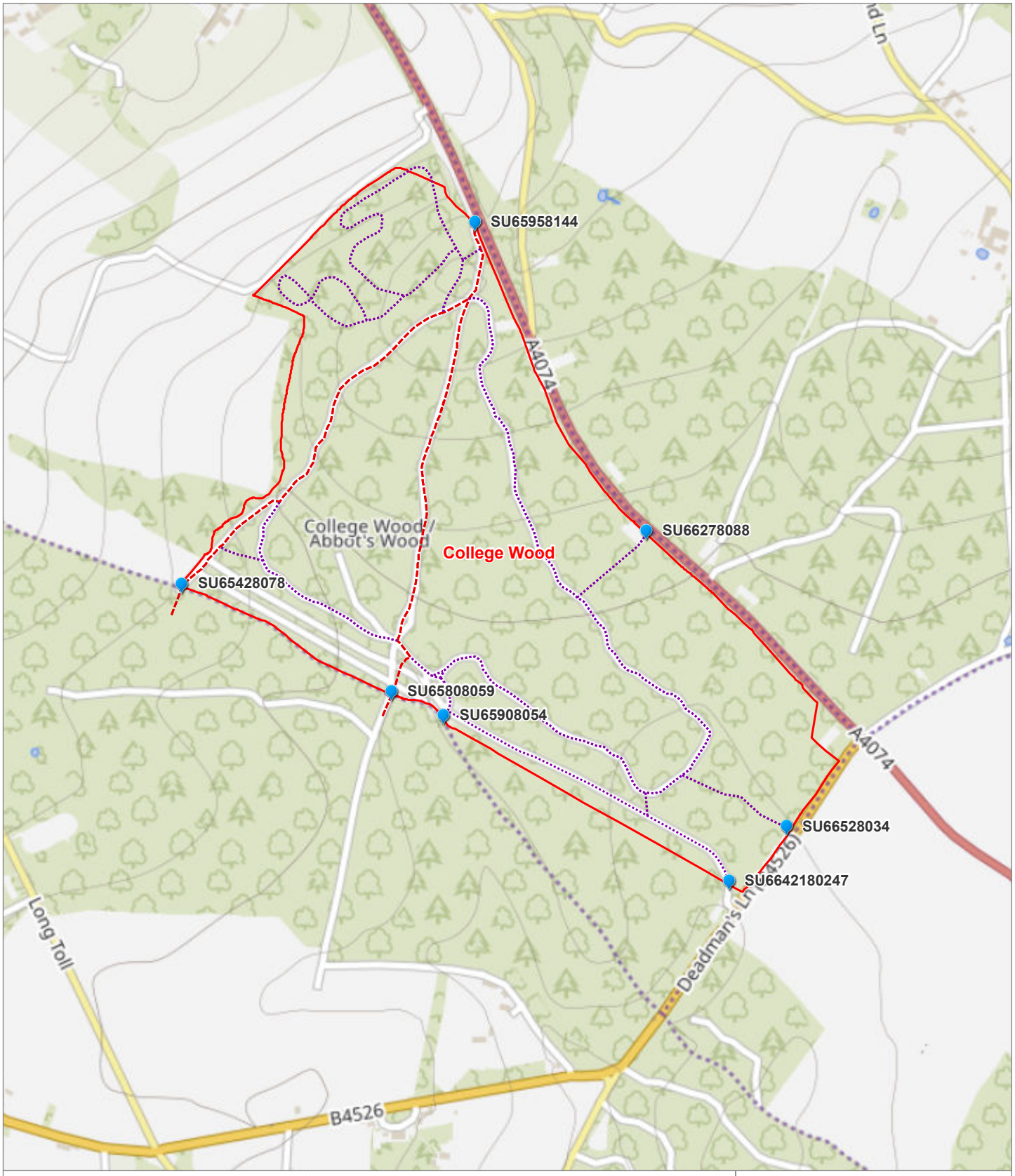
0 60 120 m

Scale: 1:3,480 @A4

Date: 25 April 2025

Author:

WOODLAND TRUST



Access Points

Access points

Path Network

Legal-Bridleway

Permissive-Footpath

Woodland Trust Legal Boundary

College Wood Access Map

0 190 380 m

Scale: 1:9,668 @A4

Date: 03 June 2025

Author: