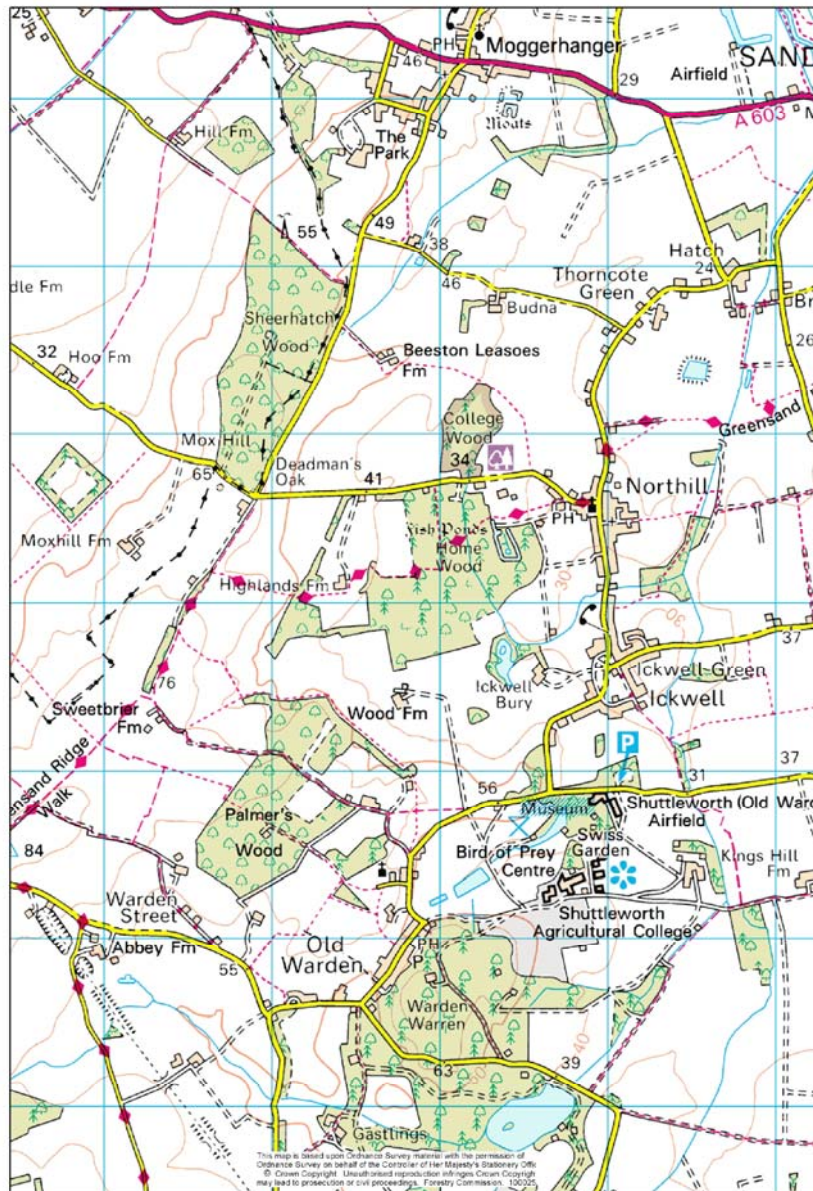


## HOME WOOD

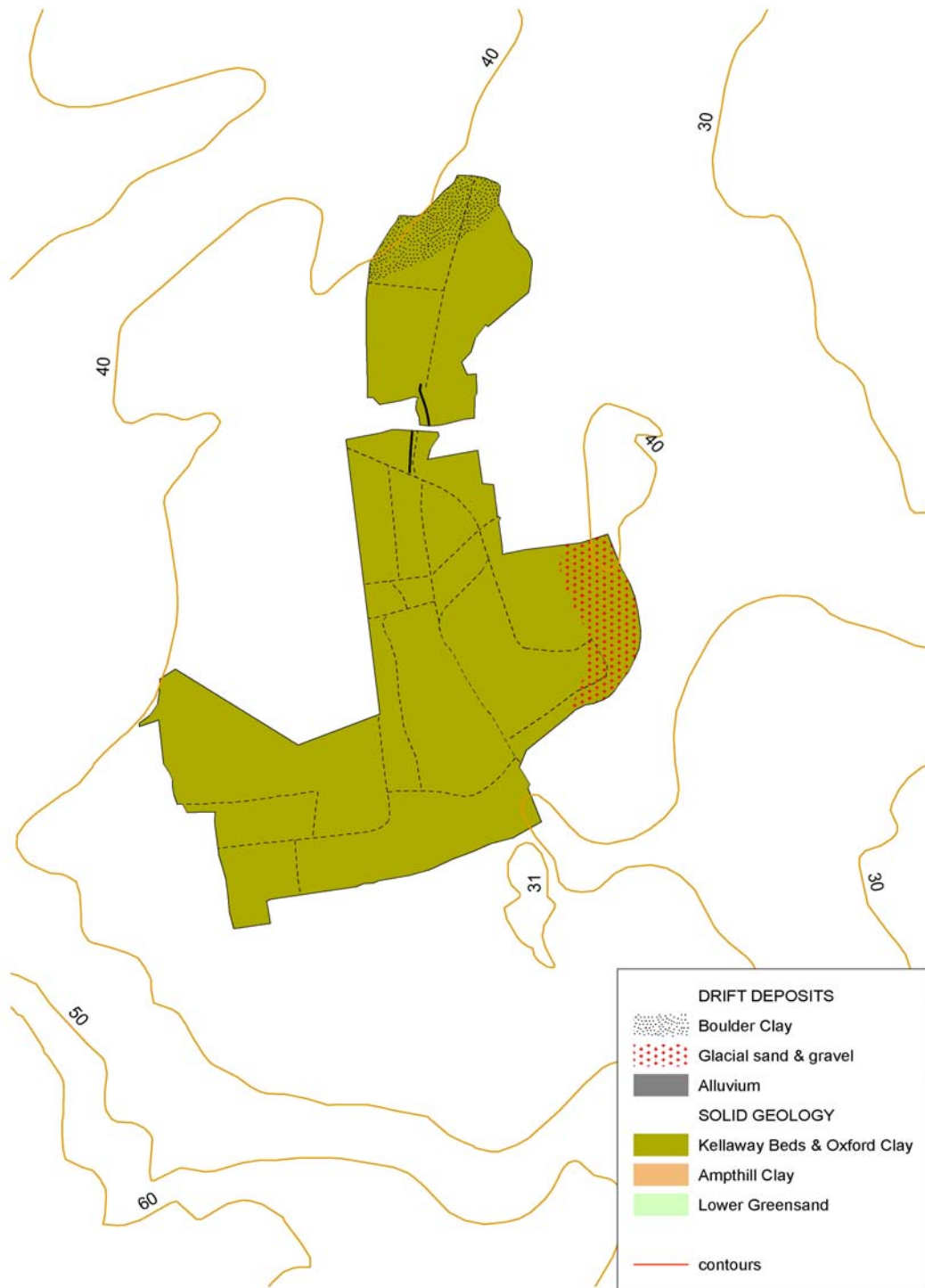
Size: Home: 56.5ha Parishes Northill  
District: Central Bedfordshire Council County: Bedfordshire  
OS grid ref: TL 143463 Legal ref: L3/5/5

Tenure: Home Wood: Leased from the Shuttleworth Trust for a period of 999 years, from 1955.



### **Geology and Soils**

The woodland lies on Oxford Clay, a brown fissile mudstone formed in shallow warm seas, which in places, is overlain with patches of boulder clay. The soils are typically calcareous which is also reflected in the vegetation found across the site. In addition are patches of sand and gravel. These are especially prevalent in the eastern arm of Home Wood.



## **History**

At Domesday, Northill was recorded under 4 separate holdings. The principal manor of 6½ hides was held by William Speke, and contained woodland for 200. Ralph, of Eudo son of Hubert also held 1½ hides, with woodland for 100 swine.

The name 'Home Wood' indicates the close association, geographically and tenurially, with the manor of which it was a part. The capital messuage of Northill Manor lay west of the church.

Northill Manor formed part of the barony of Warden and was held as a dower manor in 1185 by Mary de Trailly, widow of Geoffrey de Trailly. Several generations of the family held the manor until Reginald, the last of the Traillys, alienated it in 1401 to Sir Gerald Braybrooke, the younger. In 1428 Henry Godfrey held the property as part of the inheritance of his wife Joan, who was daughter of John de Meppershall. It was held by several of his family until it came into the possession of Richard Harding in 1584. A free fishery was enumerated as part of the manorial rights in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

In 1802, the estate came into the hands of John Harvey of Ickwell Bury, whose family still owns it today. The area of Home Wood gradually became incorporated in the designed landscape around his mansion. Ickwell Bury Park is listed grade II on the English Heritage Gardens Register (HER 6995) and was first mentioned in 1820. On Bryant's map of Bedfordshire, 1826, it is confined to the area around the house, but Home Wood itself underwent considerable alterations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the construction of a mile-long avenue leading north-west.

The enclosure map of 1781 (Beds RO: MA 2) shows a large block of old enclosures south of the Northill-Cople road. Woodland is shown in the western and southern parts of the present wood, but the layout of the closes, field names, and strips of apparently relict wood along boundaries suggest that the early medieval woodland covered a much more extensive area. The area of the fishpond complex is wooded though it would have been open in the medieval period and a small rectangular close, 'Snake Close', is cut into the south boundary of the wood.



## **Archaeology**

In 1845, Roman burials, accompanied by glass vessels and samian pottery, were discovered 'in Church Field, about one furlong from Ickwell Bury' (*Gents Mag* ns 24, 1845, 64-7; HER 425). From the evidence of field names, this places them at c.TL 145 458, south-east of the present wood. The quality of the finds suggests a high status Roman site, possibly a villa, exists in the area. Roman pottery, found in 1949, was recorded in the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Record at TL 1454 4628 (HER 430), within the wood and east of the fishpond complex. This area (1) shows extensive evidence of burning, possibly representing industrial activity associated with the as yet unlocated villa. Pottery and tile can still be seen on the surface across a wide area, as far west as the outer enclosure of the fishponds.

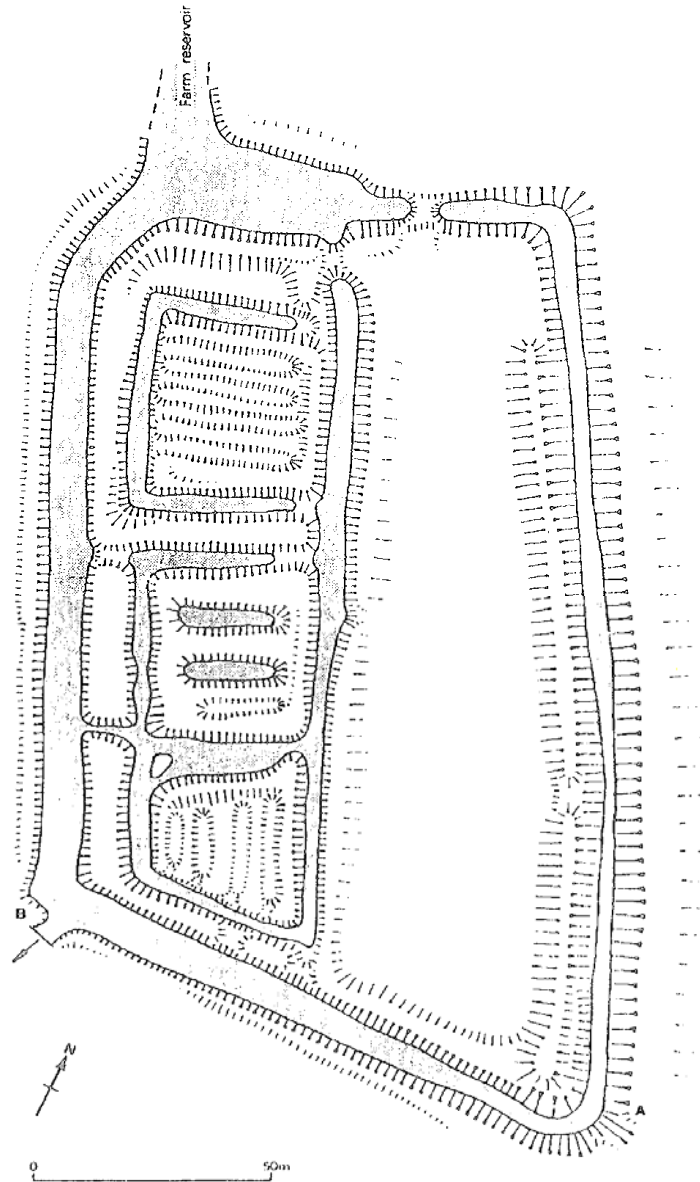
A flint blade picked up during field survey near the north-eastern corner of the wood may derive from earlier prehistoric occupation, though it may also have been a stray loss.

### *Fishponds*

The roughly rectangular earthwork complex at TL 144 463 (2) comprises an inter-linked arrangement of fish breeding stews in its western part, and an open enclosure with a long mound to the east which probably functioned as a rabbit warren (HER 429). The whole is defined by a large outer moat, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It was presumably attached to the principal manor, whose capital messuage lay close by, to the west of Northill Church. A broad hollow way, up to 2m deep, runs eastwards from the north-east corner of the complex, and may be the medieval access route.

A measured survey of the fishponds was carried out by Bedfordshire County Council in 1988 to assist the Forestry Commission in drawing up a management plan for the site, which is formerly agreed with English Heritage. The current plan is approved until the end of February 2011.

Another rectangular pond survives at TL 1407 4618 (3). Immediately to its south is a deep rectangular hollow with a mound along its north side. Its base is dry, in spite of being lower than the water level in the adjacent pond. It may be the remains of a fishpond, although there is a gradual slope leading down into it from the west which is more typical of a quarry ramp.



Home Wood Medieval Fishery and Warren Scheduled Ancient Monument  
Bedfordshire County Council

### *Woodbanks*

The complex and fragmented history of Home Wood, and its dense vegetation, limit identification and interpretation of the linear earthworks. A bank and external ditch (4) can be traced entering the present wood just south of the Lodge at TL 1398 4657. It then appears to turn and run southwards on the line of the wood edge shown on the 1781 map. At TL 1408 4616 it meets, or is possibly cut by, the line of a silted ditch which can be equated with a boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of c.1960. This ditch connects with the rectangular pond (3), to the south of which there are further traces of a slight bank running southwards (again approximately on the edge of the 1781 wood). Where accessible, the bank is up to 5m broad, but very low.

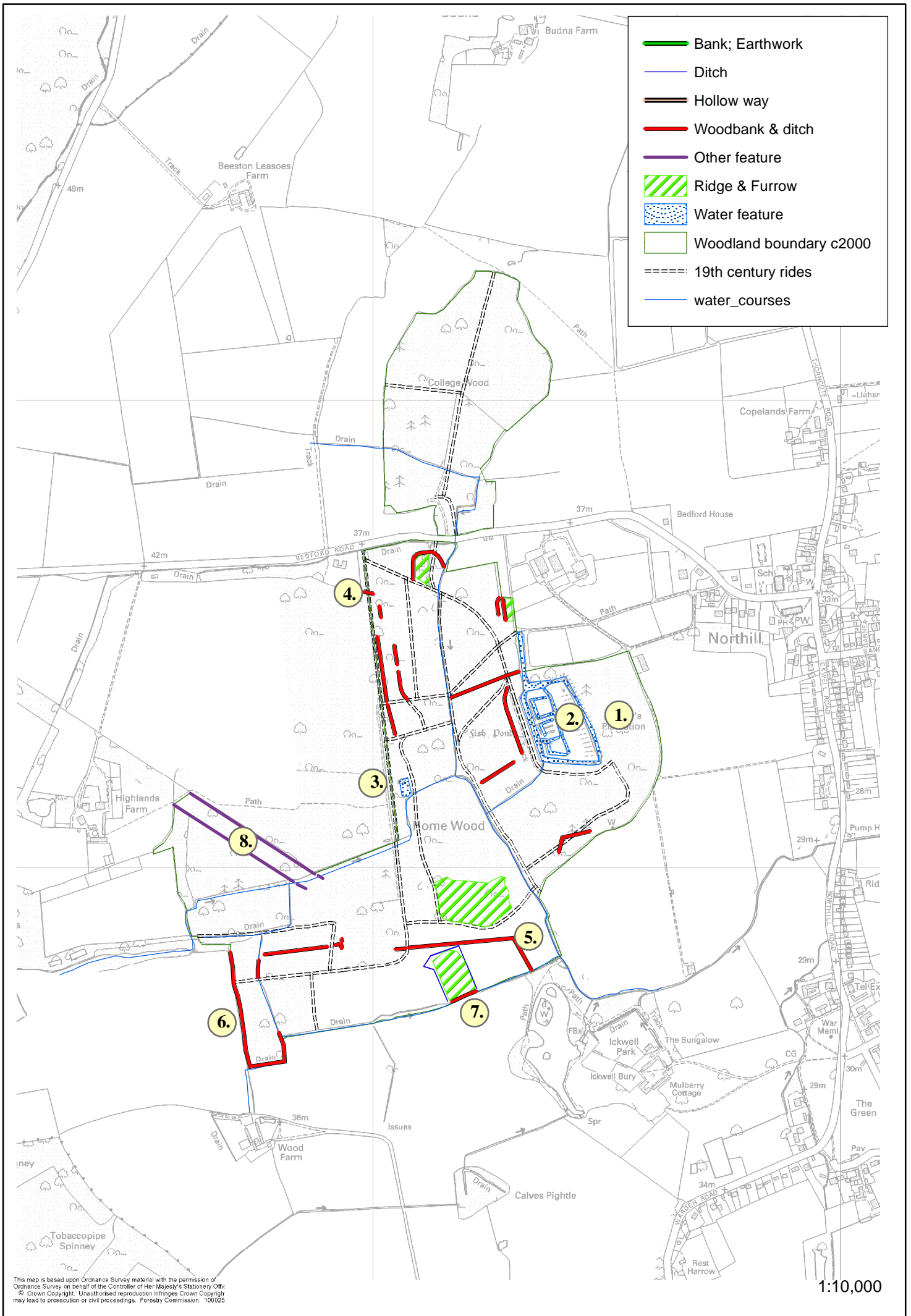
In the south end of the wood, the remains of a more substantial bank (5) run northwards from the boundary near Ickwell Bury. It is up to 6m x 1m in places, and has the appearance of a typical woodbank. After 90m it turns west and can be traced intermittently until it turns south at a drain line and peters out. Its accompanying ditch is on the south side; its layout bears no relation to the historic map evidence, and its function within the development of the woodland landscape is difficult to determine on present evidence.

The south-west corner of the wood is defined by a bank (6) which is fairly substantial along the west boundary (5m x 0.75m) but becomes progressively slighter as it turns round the south and east sides of the small salient in the south-west corner.

### *Closes and ridge & furrow*

The other linear features (banks and ditches) can be related to close boundaries shown on the 1781 map or the 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey. 'Snake Close' (7) in the south is of particular interest.

'Snake Close' is recorded on the 1781 map as pasture. It was still unwooded by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map, but its north-west and south-east corners had been altered to accommodate the avenue which carved across it. The ditched boundaries of the close are still visible as earthworks. Ironically, the southern boundary is formed by a substantial bank (4m x 0.75m) which does not continue as a woodbank to east or west. Natural woodland regeneration took place in the close in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but well-defined ridge and furrow is still clearly visible.



- Bank; Earthwork
- Ditch
- Hollow way
- Woodbank & ditch
- Other feature
- ▨ Ridge & Furrow
- ▨ Water feature
- Woodland boundary c2000
- 19th century rides
- water\_courses

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Ridge and furrow is also preserved in a former close south-west of the modern entrance, and in a small pocket north of the fishpond complex. Two or three parallel ridges in the overgrown compartment through which the Greensand Ridge Walk passes may be ridge and furrow. There is also a large block north of Snake Close in an area which, on the historic map evidence, would otherwise seem to be a core part of the surviving ancient woodland; this serves to underline the complexity of Home Wood's history.

### *The Avenue*

The avenue (8) can be traced for 300m after it enters the wood from the north-west. Many mature trees are still standing, and the north-east boundary of the avenue is marked by an outgrown laid hedge. The avenue drive crossed the east-west drain by a culvert, but to the south-east of this point the area was inaccessible for survey. As noted above, the alteration of 'Snake Close' to accommodate the line of the avenue can still be seen in the surviving earthworks.

### **Discussion**

Early occupation in the area of Home Wood is evident by the Roman site in the east of the wood, which itself has associations with the wider landscape of the period. After the end of the Roman occupation it is likely that woodland was resurgent and probably formed a continuous belt that ran along the crest of the Greensand Ridge further west (as surviving in Sheerhatch Wood, Willington). During the medieval period, this woodland was intermittently cleared to form an irregular layout of small closes, with the fishpond/warren complex serving the needs of the controlling manor. Regeneration and replanting have altered the shape of the woodland over subsequent centuries, culminating in its adaptation as part of the landscaped setting of Ickwell Bury Park.

College Wood, with its remains of possible medieval occupation, adds to the interest of the area. Taken together, these are among the most fascinating of Bedfordshire's ancient woodlands, representing a complex and varied history of which many visible traces remain.

### **Woodland & Vegetation**

Home Wood is a mosaic of Ancient Woodland and Secondary plantation established on former pasture. Most of the native woodland is typical of the W8 Ash-maple-Dog's mercury community, but the character of the woodland was severely altered during the 1950's and 1960's as a result of afforestation, chiefly with Norway spruce, although sometimes in association with Pendunculate Oak (Quercus robur).

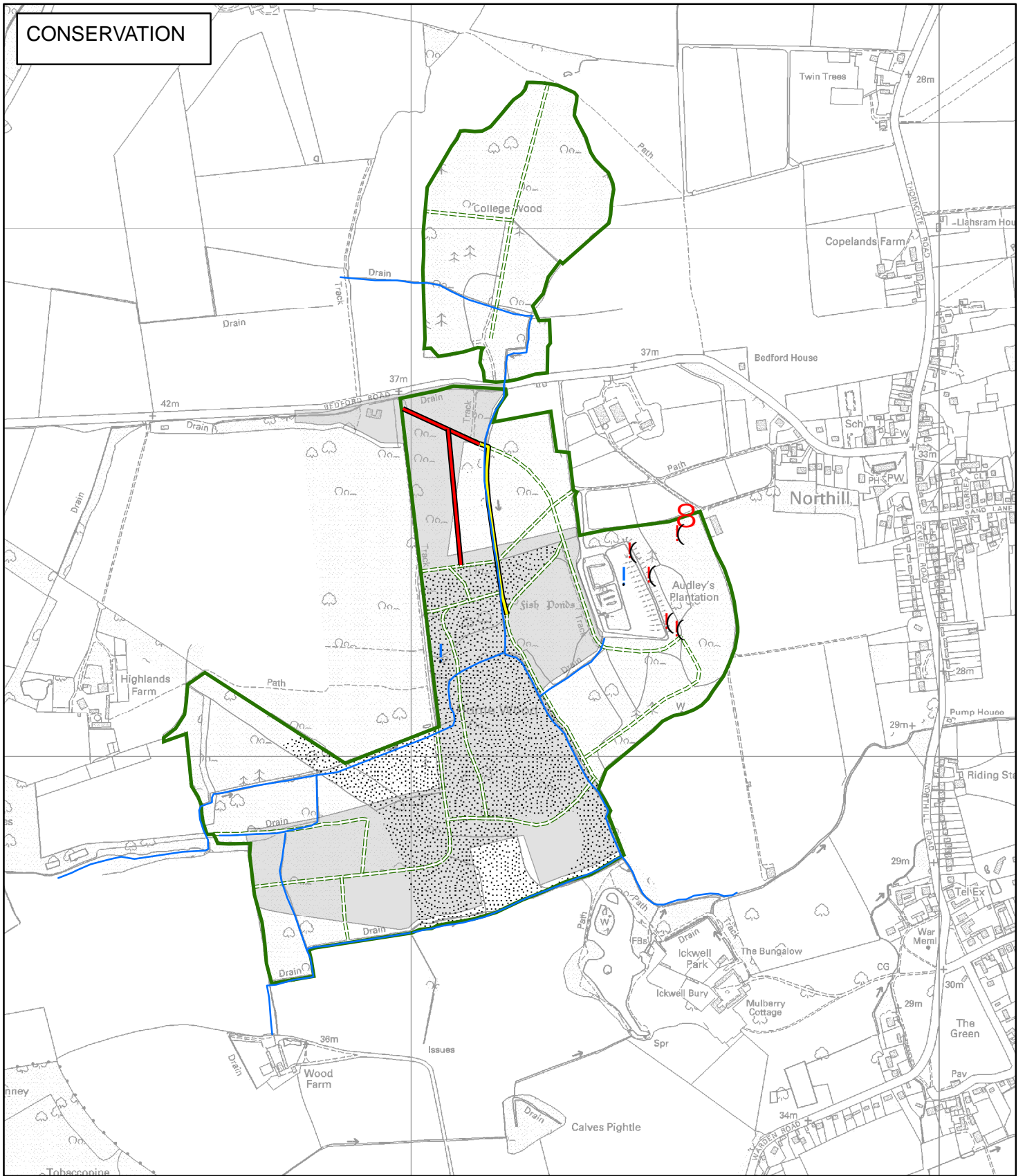
The Norway spruce has been less than successful, succumbing to heavy competition from native species and climatic problems. Many stands are moribund or looking very unhealthy and in more exposed areas of the wood, particularly the western edge, windblown. Disturbance of the wood during afforestation has also contributed to the prominence of invasive elm











Towards the south-eastern corner, the woodland extended onto more acidic soils and the field layer is distinctly different to the rest of woodland where Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) is dominant. Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus) is a common evasive species on these types of soil, although sporadic throughout the heavier clay soils that dominate most of the wood.

Native woodland is dominated by Ash, Field Maple, Sallow, Hawthorn, and Hazel with Privet, Blackthorn and Dogwood. There are extensive stands of suckering Elm (Ulmus procera) through the central core where the woodland has been disturbed and replanted. Other scattered trees and shrubs include Wych Elm (Ulmus glabra), Birch (Betula pendula), Wayfaring Tree (Viburnum lantana) and Guelder Rose (Viburnum opulus). The ground flora is typically dominated by Dog's mercury with Bramble (Rubus fruticosus), Herb-Robert (Geranium robertianum), Ground Ivy (Glechoma hederacea), Wood spurge (Euphorbia amygdaloides) and Primrose (Primula vulgaris).

Of note are a number of large, old Smalld-leaved lime (Tilia cordata) coppice trees located along the boundary of the ancient wood and the former Church Field (see 1781 map above).

# CONSERVATION



-  Conservation sites
-  Badger
-  ancient tree
-  Ponds
-  Species rich grassland with very good structural diversity and/or biological important
-  'Intermediate' quality grassland communities with extensive woodland edge habitat
-  water\_courses
-  rides
-  Woods with an 'intact' understorey
-  Ancient Woodland

### Habitats & Fauna

The ride system is of particular note and in places is probably a good representation of the former land use as pasture and MG1a grassland of False Oat-grass (Arrhenatherum elatius) and Red Fescue (Festuca rubra) sub-community and a taller luxuriant vegetation of MG1c, False Oat-grass with Meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria). Other common species include Hogweed (Heracleum sphondylium), Cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata), Tall fescue (Festuca arundinacea), Giant fescue (Festuca gigantea), Annual meadow-grass (Poa annua), Smooth meadow-grass (Poa pratensis) and Rough meadow-grass (Poa trivialis).

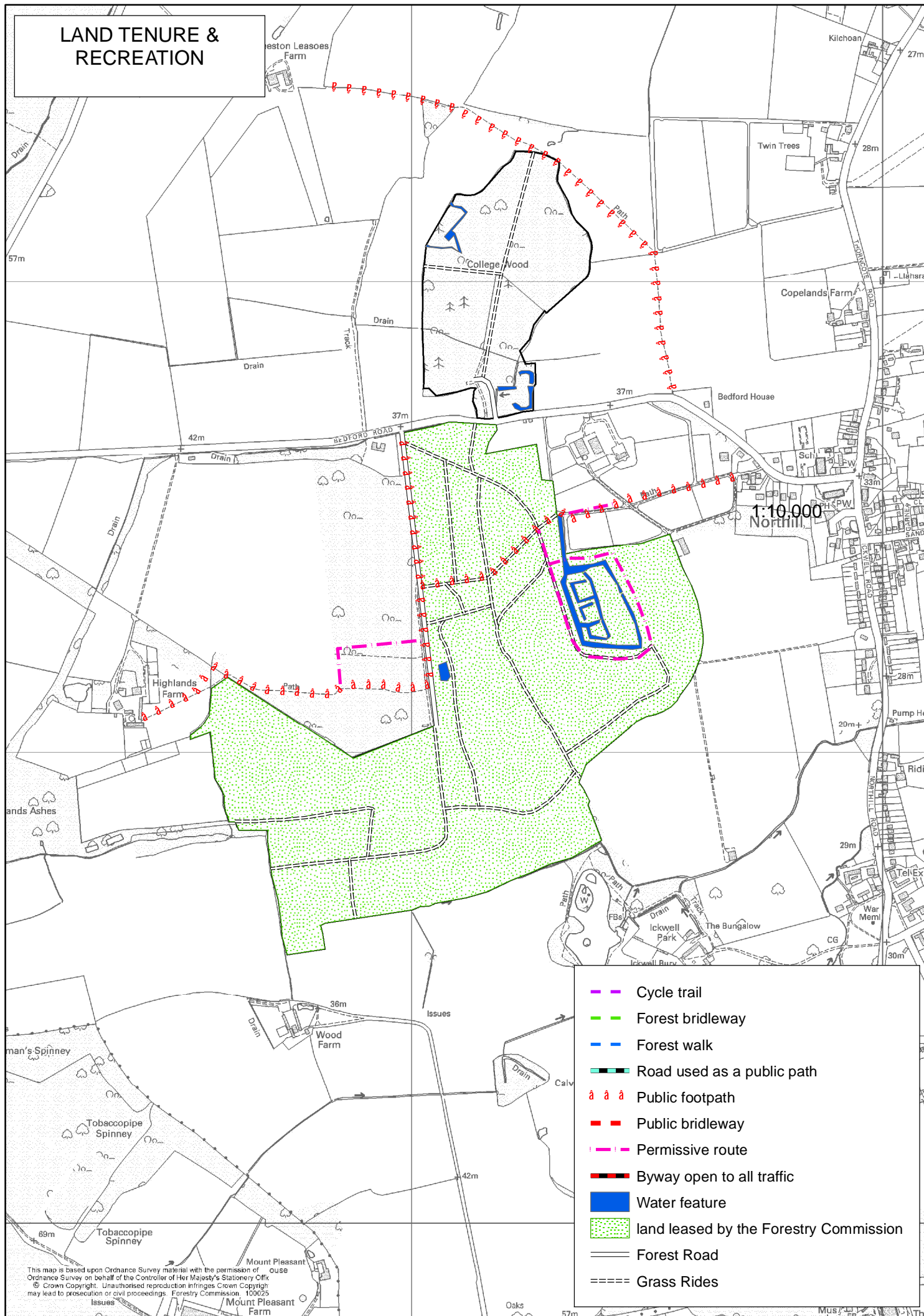
On the stone surfaces a shorter vegetation zone can be found consisting of Scarlet pimpernel (Anagallis arvensis), Daisy (Bellis perennis), Crested dog's-tail (Cynosurus cristatus), Common spotted orchid (Dactylorhiza fuchsii), Cut-leaved cranesbill (Geranium dissectum) and Hairy tare (Vicia hirsuta).

\*BoCC: Birds of Conservation Concern

### **Access and Recreation**

This is a leasehold wood with restricted public access. In recent years the Shuttleworth Estate, from whom the woodland is leased, have granted permission for a permissive walk around the Fishery complex complete with information boards and waymarkers.

# LAND TENURE & RECREATION



1:10,000

- Cycle trail
- Forest bridleway
- Forest walk
- Road used as a public path
- a a a Public footpath
- Public bridleway
- Permissive route
- Byway open to all traffic
- Water feature
- land leased by the Forestry Commission
- Forest Road
- Grass Rides

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**HOME WOOD  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **Aims and objectives of management**

- Restoration of Ancient Woodland Sites by systematically removing and replacing conifers and non-native species with native species, where possible through natural processes.
- To maintain and enhance the nature conservation of the site, perpetuating the present mixture of locally native trees, shrubs, fauna and other flora, through management practices such as coppicing and ride management.
- To maintain and enhance the population of rare and locally uncommon animals and plant species and other important woodland habitats including rides, glades, ponds, old trees and deadwood.
- Restoration and management of woodland to reflect the cultural and historic environment.
- To grow and harvest marketable timber and other native woodland products using traditional and/or continuous cover silvicultural management systems that regenerate native woodland through natural processes, where possible.
- To make provision for and to encourage scientific research and survey.

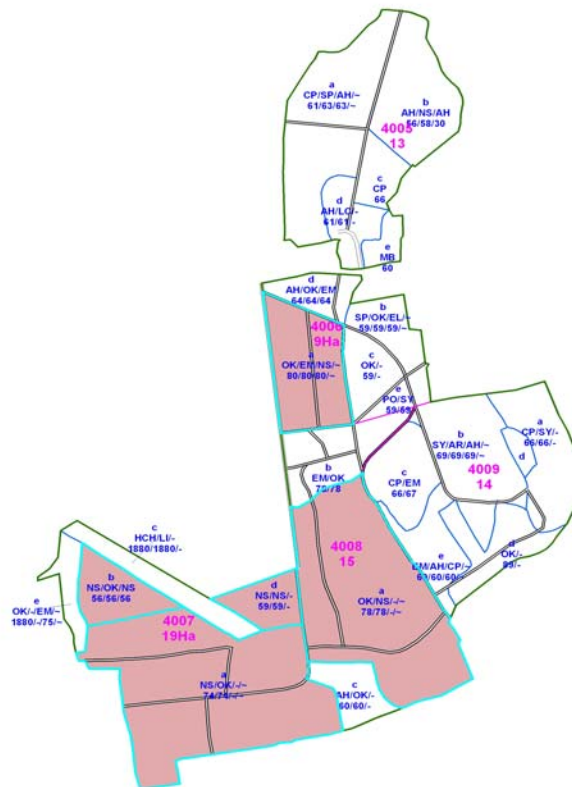
**Short term management (for the plan period 2010 – 2020)**

**Ancient Woodland Restoration**

*Conifer removal*

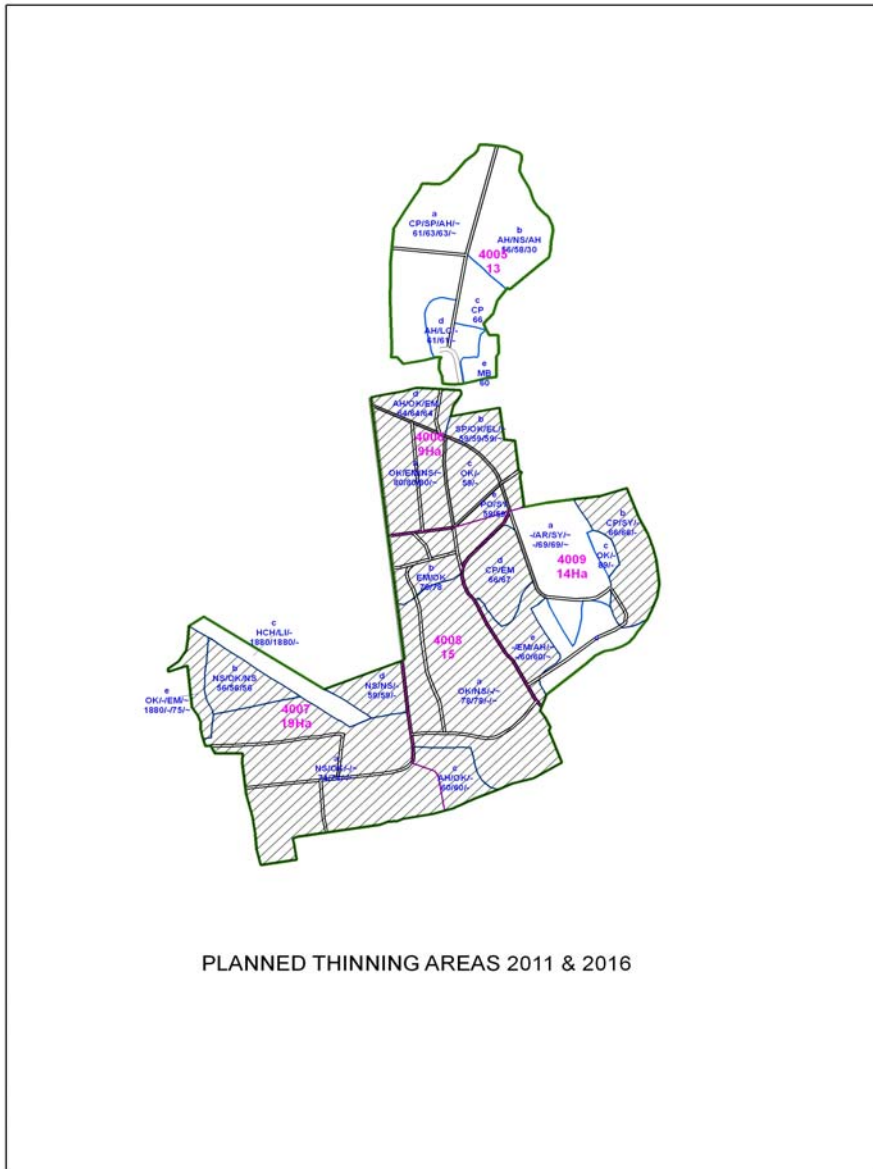
The removal of non-native trees, particularly conifers, continues to be one of the main priorities for the next ten years of this plan and during this period the woodland will hopefully be thinned twice, once in 2011 and again in 2016. The long-term aim is to recreate mixed species native woodland reminiscent of the local semi-natural character.

The greatest impact will come with the removal of the 1980's plantings of Spruce, which is due to take place within the plan period, probably as part of the 2011 thinning operation. These areas are shown below and the aim is remove all the spruce leaving the single row of oak and other any other broadleaved trees.



Spruce/oak mixtures

Areas currently planted with pine, particularly Corsican pine, will be heavily thinned to assist in the process of restoring the woodland back to native broadleaved species. This process should also help to slow the effect of Red Band Needle Blight. Overall a scattering of conifer trees will be left to enhance the overall bio-diversity of the wood and these may form small clumps especially where broadleaved tree cover is sparse.



### **High Forest Broadleaved Woodland Management**

In areas restored to Native broadleaved woodland these would be managed in the future using a system of thinning and group selection continuous cover silviculture.

#### *Group selection silviculture*

##### *Introduction*

Group selection is a silvicultural system that utilises and promotes natural regeneration through the creation of small clearings or coupes. The size of coupes will vary according to the light requirements of individual species and may also be determined by the extent of advanced regeneration. Several coupes can be developed at the same time eventually providing a mosaic of uneven aged small groups across the area.

Group selection has been successfully used in woodland dominated by oak, ash, wild cherry, sycamore, lime and beech, at times supplemented by the introduction of artificial regeneration (planting). It is considered the most appropriate low impact system for use in the District, and can be adapted for use in the conversion of conifer plantation to broadleaved woodland and also in the management of existing high forest broadleaved woodland.



#### *Management for group selection*

The general essence of securing success with our dominant species, oak and ash, is that any regenerated trees should be allowed to grow in full light. There is some flexibility inherent in the selection system, in so much as it is not totally reliant on one good mast year, but can be adapted to allow for a gradual regeneration process over time.

As with all continuous cover systems however, the only guarantee of success, in most instances, is to secure advance regeneration and then only fell once this is well established. On many sites, specifically those well suited to ash such as the boulder clay soils, a heavy thinning is often required as a precursor to achieving natural regeneration. Up until the regeneration phase, the woodland is regularly thinned to develop the stand and increase the quality of trees.

Regeneration can be sporadic and difficult to predict but it is vital that the groups are enlarged once regeneration is established, particularly when managing coupes for moderate to strong light demanding species such as oak and/or ash. In most instances it will also be essential to protect emerging natural regeneration against browsing animals, especially deer.

Further guidance concerning broadleaved group selection silviculture is provided as part of a suite of documents entitled Forest District 'guidance' notes.

### **Ride Management**

The other substantial short-term priority is ride management and although felling and thinning will help address some of the unfavourable issue, such as shading, the overall ride structure to the wood needs to be addressed.

#### *Ride/Wood edges*

In particular, the linear area of herbaceous grassland ride edge habitat needs to be restored by systematically removing the encroaching wood edge further back. This could be carried out during normal harvesting work and would involve cutting and removing all woody growth from the ride edge and coppicing all the trees and shrubs in a zone roughly 5 – 10metre back from the drain edge. The programme of restoration and management should concentrate initially on restoring all the high to medium priority conservation rides, as shown on the conservation map, and if resources are limited, those of an east – west orientation should be first.

#### *Cutting regime*

Future management regimes concerning the herbaceous edge should be tailored towards maintaining or enhancing populations of butterflies, as an indicator of habitat quality. But the basic prescription should be as follows:

All ride centres will be cut twice a year, once between June and July and once in late August to early September. Cutting of the herbaceous edges should be staggered

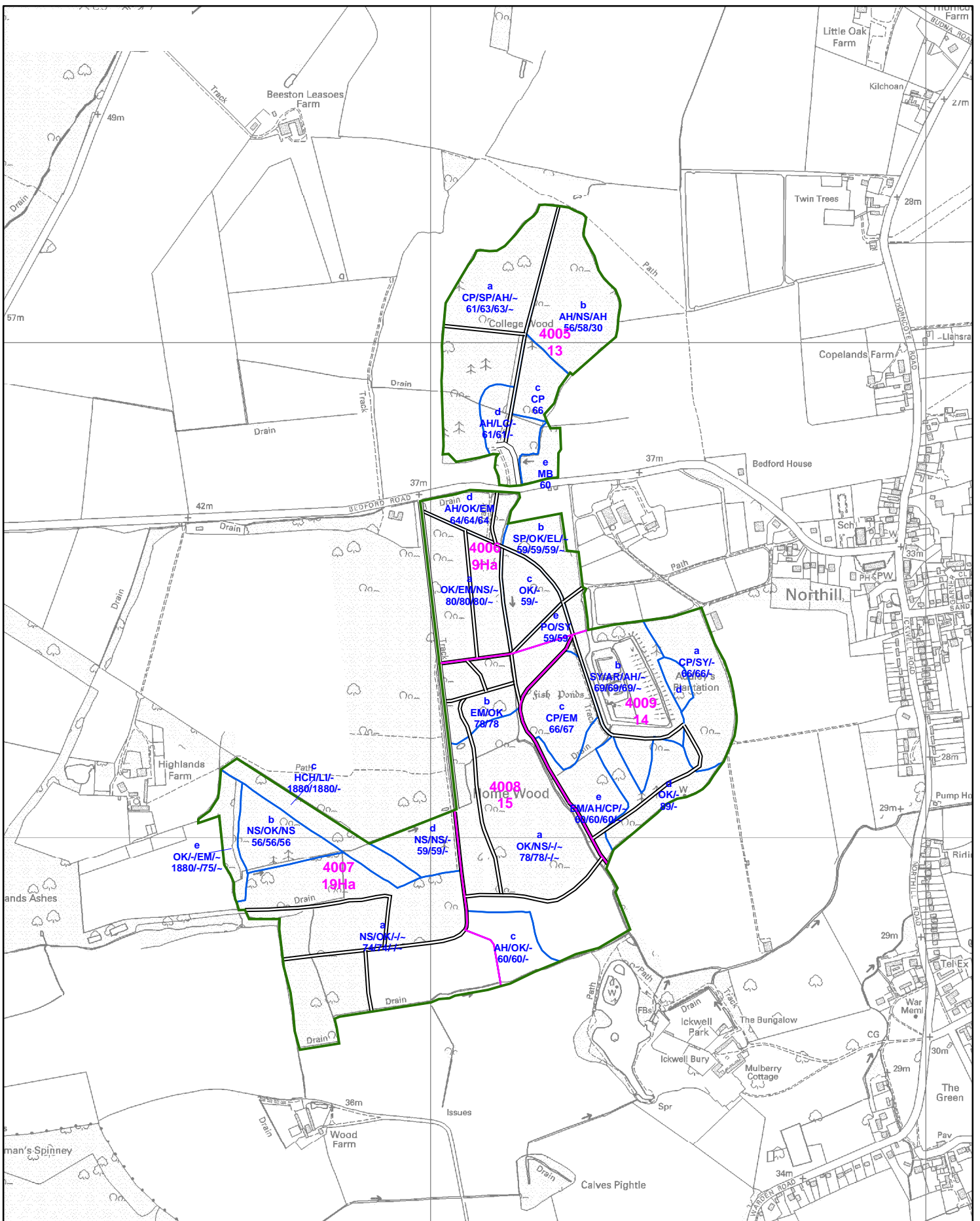
so that 50% of each side is cut each year. The need to develop a system of removing cuttings from floristically important rides needs to be addressed, as the build up of mulch will lead to a dominance of grassland species and a reduction in important herbaceous plants. However at the present time this is prohibitively expensive.

#### Box junctions

Box junctions and ride scalloping are useful additions to the development of permanent and successional open space management and should be considered, where possible, as part of the overall ride management regime.

#### Archaeology

The Scheduled ancient monument is managed as part of a separate management plan agreed by English Heritage. This is due for renewal at the end of February 2011.



**Forest District**  
**Title**  
**Type of Map**  
**Scale**  
**Date**

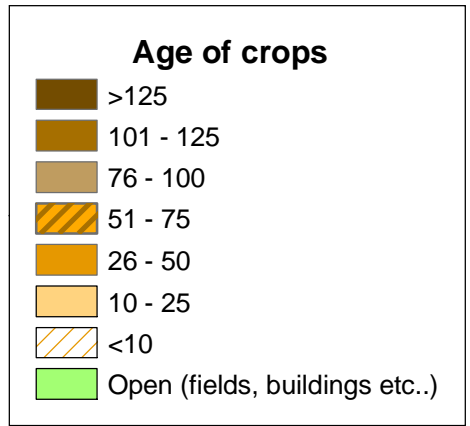
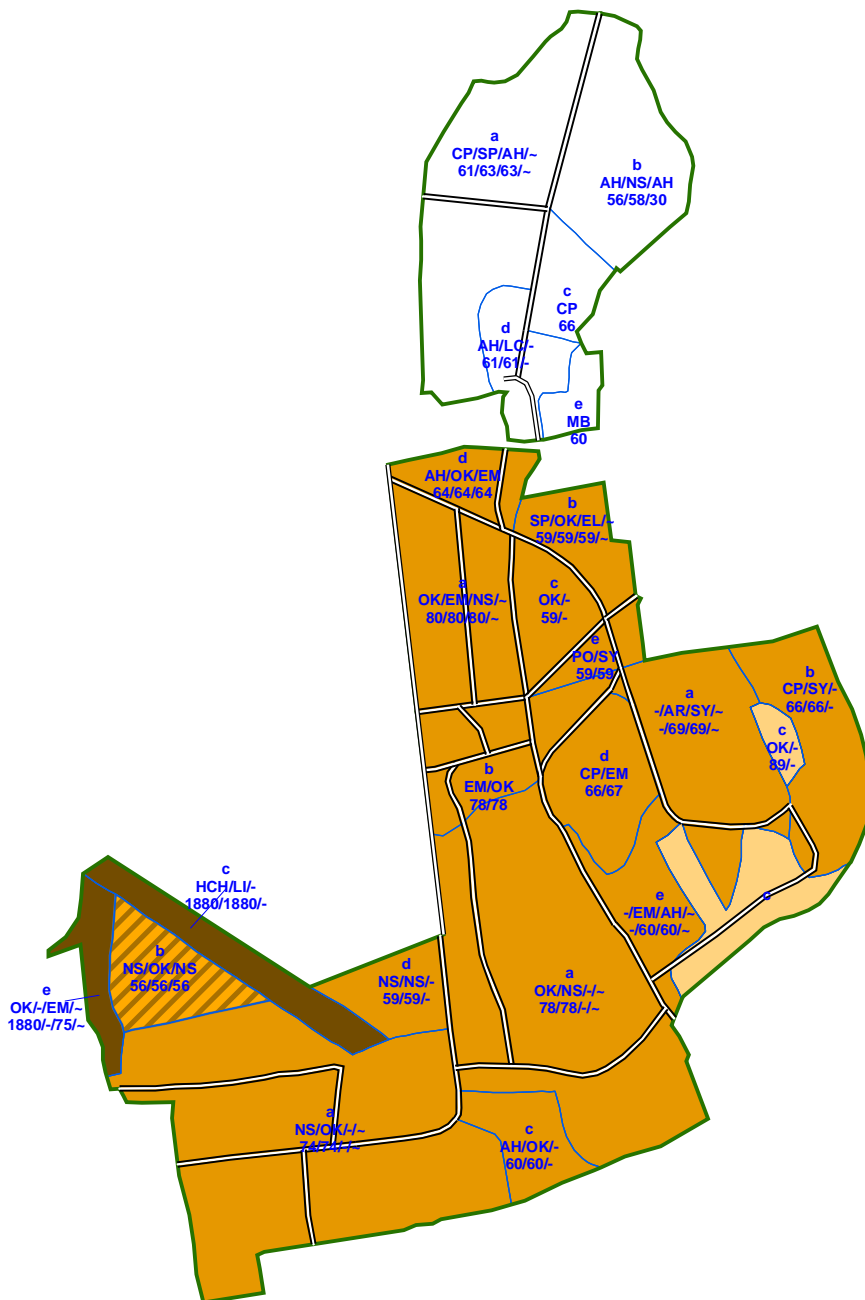
**Northants FD**  
**Home & College**  
**Stock**  
**1:10,000**  
**April 2010**

Management Area  
 Compartment Bdy  
 Compartment No, and area (ha)  
 Sub-Compartment Bdy  
 Sub-Compartment, Species & Planting Year

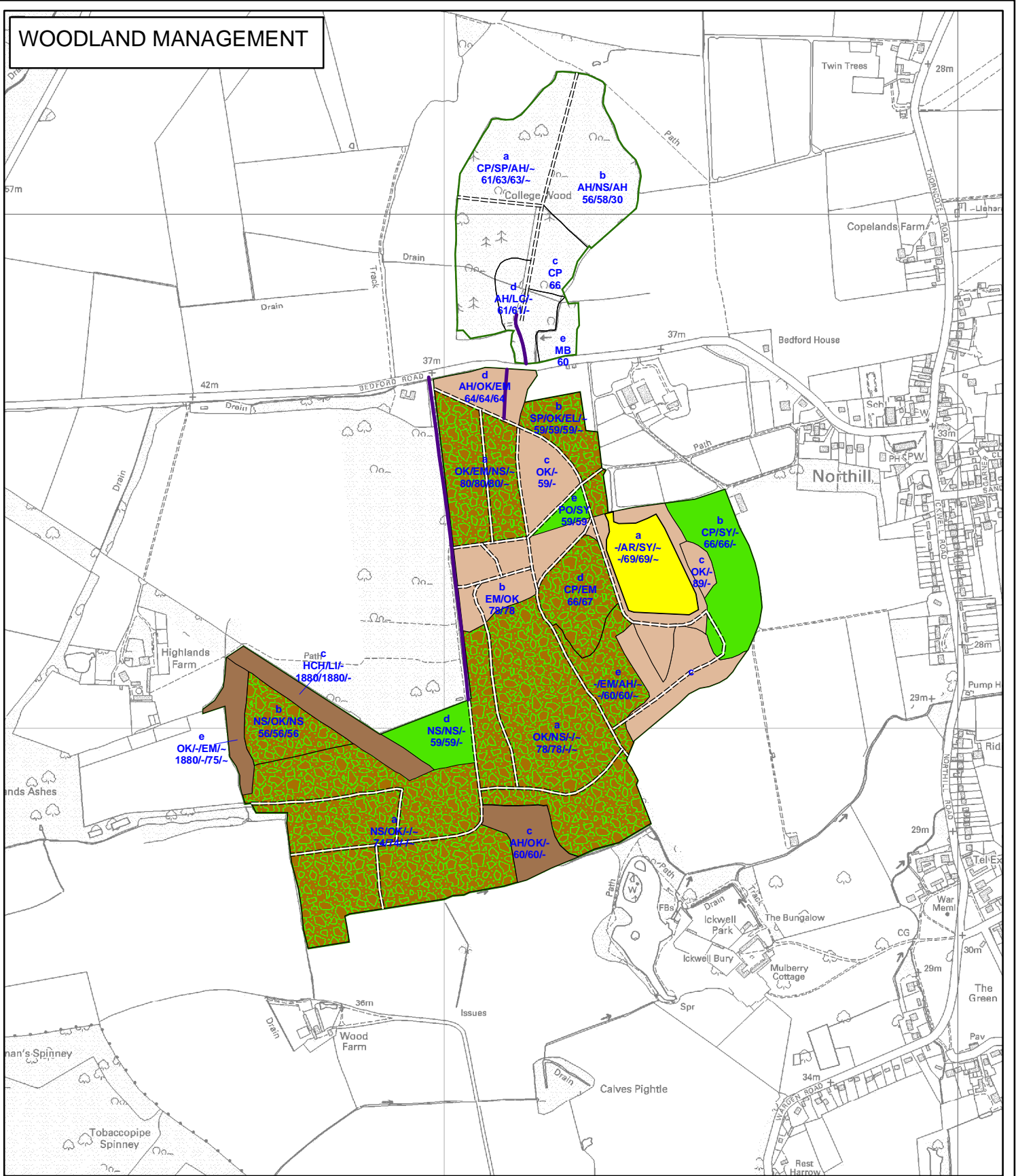
FC Road  
 Ride  
 OH Powerline  
 UG Powerline



# Age classes of crops

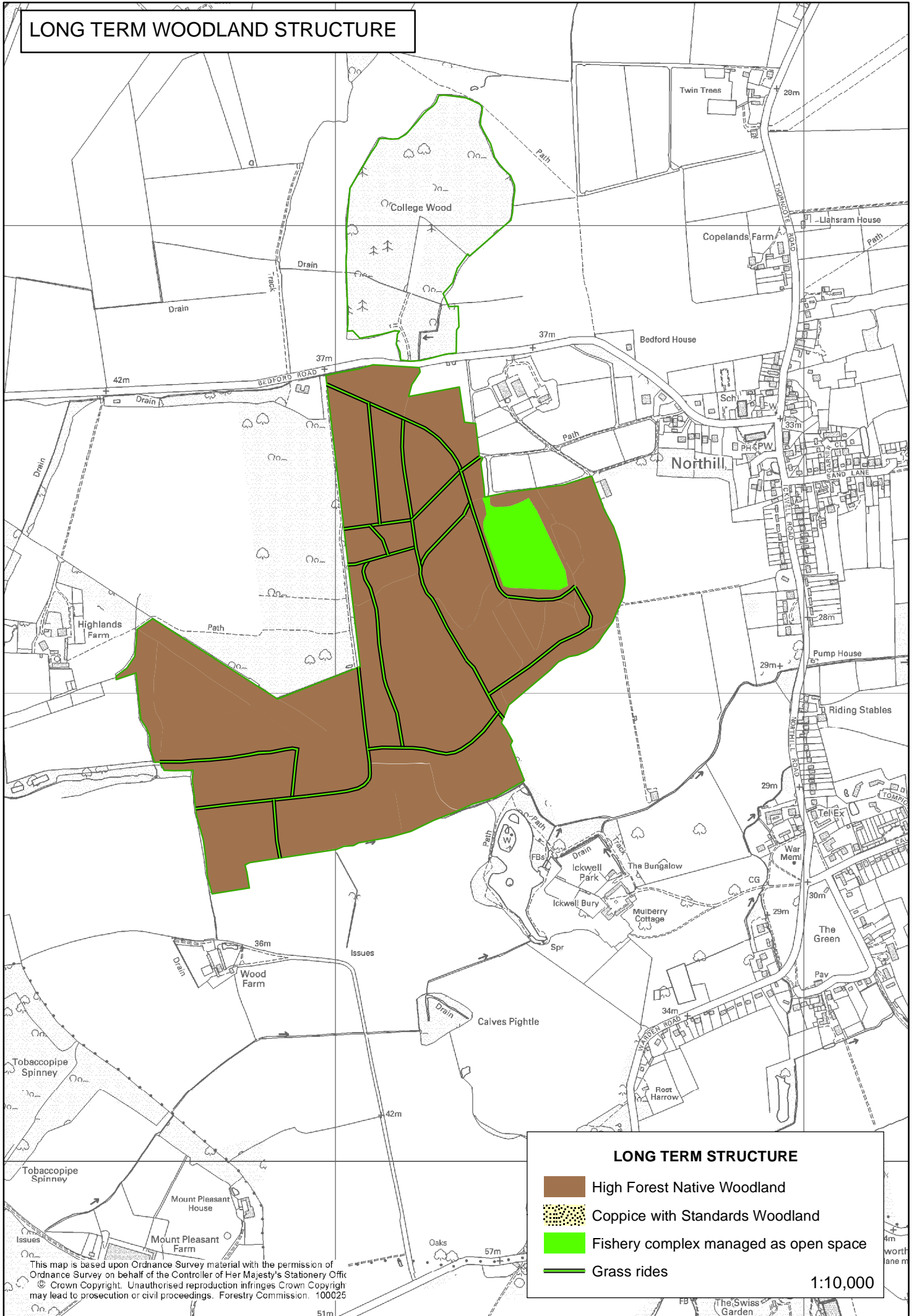


# WOODLAND MANAGEMENT



- High Forest Native Broadleaved Woodland over 50yrs old managed using selection continuous cover
- High Forest Broadleaved Woodland under 50yrs old thinned to encourage natural regeneration, assist timber quality and promote biodiversity
- Woodland to be managed as Coppice with Standard
- Mixed Woodland stand thinned to remove non native trees
- Heavy restoration thinning of plantation stand to develop any native species and encourage natural regeneration
- Felled Woodland left to regenerate
- Managed permanent open space/ Scheduled monument
- Road Segments
- Rides

# LONG TERM WOODLAND STRUCTURE



**LONG TERM STRUCTURE**

- High Forest Native Woodland
- Coppice with Standards Woodland
- Fishery complex managed as open space
- Grass rides

**1:10,000**

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