

Land East of Heyford Road
Kirtlington

Woodland Management Plan

August 2023
11136_WMP.001

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1 Introduction

1.1 Instruction

- 1.1.1 Aspect Arboriculture are instructed by Abbeymill Homes, to provide a Management Plan concerning woodland at Heyford Road, Kirtlington. The plan supplements proposals for residential development of Land East of Heyford Road, and sets out a 25 year development-enabled scheme of management focused on positive-intervention.
- 1.1.2 It is Aspect Arboriculture's understanding that this work will be submitted to, and approved by, Cherwell District Council (hereafter the Council). Once approved, the proposed works should be implemented as specified and maintained to the Council's satisfaction.

1.2 Purpose of the Woodland Management Plan

- 1.2.1 This Management Plan has been produced to demonstrate how the structure and condition of woodland within the proposal's application boundary could be improved to enhance its longevity, resilience and contribution to biodiversity, whilst assisting their integration within the development and accommodating new public access.
- 1.2.2 For the purpose of this document the woodland has been separated into two distinct parcels which can be identified as compartment A & B. A scaled drawing showing the coverage of each compartment is available to the rear of this document at Appendix A.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 The key objectives of this Woodland Management Plan are:
- 1) To improve the woodlands' structure, condition, biodiversity and resilience.
 - 2) To improve public access and appreciation of the woodlands, without conflicting with objective no.1.
 - 3) To ensure safe public access through appropriate intervention, without harming the character or appearance of the woodland.

1.4 Woodland Overview

- 1.4.1 The woodland defines the application areas western and southern boundaries, occurring as two distinct compartments which form key features within the extant field pattern. Both compartments are comparable in terms of their species assemblage, although vary in structure and density. Detailed tree survey information is submitted with the residential development proposals Arboricultural Impact Assessment document ref. 11161 AIA 001 Rev A.

- 1.4.2 Both compartments are known to have been present since the late 19th century and are mapped as unnamed woodland on historic OS map series 1892-1914, depicted then as mixed broadleaved woodland with intermittent understory (as shown within Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Aspect Tree Survey with proposed development (left) and 2022 aerial view overlaid with OS map series 25 inch 1892-1914 (right).



(National Library of Scotland online mapping records, cited February 2022).

- 1.4.3 The principal canopy layers of both compartments comprise a similar assemblage of mature English Oak and Ash standards, with the occasional Horse Chestnut, Silver Birch, Beech, Crack Willow and Aspen occurring at lower densities. The understory is varied but sparse, and comprises of young Oak, Ash, Horse Chestnut, and Sycamore, with mixed matrices of Hawthorn, Hazel, Wych Elm, Holly, Blackthorn and Yew often interspersed between dense areas of undergrowth and occasional fallen deadwood.
- 1.4.4 Management of both compartments appears to have been limited to the clearance of storm related damage around their peripheries, leaving interior failures, dead trees and fallen deadwood in-situ. Much of the understorey layer is multi stemmed, consistent with now lapsed management practices and/or herbivore damage/grazing. There are also Ash throughout both compartments demonstrating early symptoms associated with infections of Ash Dieback *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (*H. fraxineus*).

2 Constraints

2.1 Statutory Protection

- 2.1.1 Enquiries to Cherwell District Council confirm that there are no Tree Preservation Orders confirmed on either woodland compartment, although they do site within the Kirtlington Conservation Area (Cherwell District Council, cited June 2023).

2.2 Felling Licence

- 2.2.1 Works required to improve the woodland are not anticipated to require a felling licence. They will primarily comprise the removal of understorey (under 150mm diameter), with any larger trees removed only if they are unsafe; both are exempt from requiring a felling licence.

2.3 Nesting Birds

- 2.3.1 To avoid a potential offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act, clearance of vegetation should not be undertaken during the bird-nesting season (1st March to 31st August inclusive). If this is not practicable, it is recommended that an ecologist is present to advise on any necessary protective measures, and on hand to confirm that tree works are not likely to cause disturbance to nesting birds.

3 Operations

3.1 Woodland Survey

- 3.1.1 Aspect Arboriculture surveyed the site's woodland during November 2022 to provide the necessary British Standard 5837:2012 technical information to inform the development proposals. This work also enabled an opportunity to identify options for enhancement by way of positive woodland intervention, i.e. the actions necessary to achieve the management objectives described at section 1.3. These are detailed in full below, and major on improvements to the understory layer leaving the principal canopy layer and dominant trees fully intact.

3.2 Visual Tree Assessment (VTA)

- 3.2.1 To facilitate safe pedestrian access, it is recommended that all edge trees and those within falling distance of highways and proposed footpaths are entered into a auditable regime of Visual Tree Assessment¹, and inspected on an annual basis thereafter. This is recommended to ensure that any tree related hazards are identified and remedial works are completed as appropriate (if required).

3.3 Deadwood and Hazardous Tree Removal

- 3.3.1 Following VTA inspections, any identified remedial works should be carried out, but priority given to the removal of hazardous trees or deadwood. Works should be completed in accordance with BS3998:2010 by a competent tree contractor, to ensure that cuts are performed correctly and positioned to avoid future structural defects or physiological issues, facilitate growth and maintain aesthetic value.
- 3.3.2 Where practicable, it is recommended that dead trees are retained as standing monoliths to preserve their ecological value and contribution to biodiversity. Where trees or understory are to be felled, their stumps should be left in situ; either to allow their regeneration (as coppice),

¹ The Body Language of Trees, Mattheck and Breloer, 1994

or to allow them to decay naturally. Both options will help improve the woodland's structure and biodiversity.

3.4 Works to Provide and Maintain Safe Resident Access

3.4.1 Proposed footpath routes through compartments A and B to enable resident access will be set out by the project arboriculturist be installed to respect all principal/dominant trees. They will comprise of informal woodchip trails retained with non-invasive timber edges, with woodchip replenished (as appropriate) to prevent areas from becoming compacted or waterlogged and enable their year round use.

3.4.2 Tree works to accommodate footpaths will therefore be restricted to the selective clearance of understory and the lifting of canopies to maintain c.2.4m vertical ground clearance. Crown lifting works should be undertaken in accordance with section 7.6 of BS3998:2010. Again, this work should be undertaken by a competent tree contractor, to ensure that cuts are performed correctly and positioned to avoid future structural defects or physiological issues, facilitate growth and maintain aesthetic value.

3.5 Removal of Litter and Debris

3.5.1 Any litter and existing debris should be removed prior to the provision of resident access. Litter should then be removed on a regular basis thereafter (should it reaccumulate), to ensure the woodland remains an attractive and inviting area to walk through.

3.6 Monitoring Ash Dieback

3.6.1 Ash within compartments A and B should be inspected for signs of Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*). In accordance with current advice², those trees and regenerative saplings which are significantly affected should be felled with all arisings burnt onsite. Trees with minor infections should be retained and monitored on an annual basis as part of the regime of visual tree inspections.

3.6.2 Nationally, it is anticipated that a small proportion of Ash trees (c.1-5%) will naturally show some resistance to the pathogen, and that these trees should be retained allowing for the natural regeneration of tolerant saplings. Therefore, Ash should only be removed from the woodland if they are significantly affected or if they are in hazardous condition.

3.7 Structural Thinning and Restocking

3.7.1 Structural thinning should be undertaken to remove young Sycamore or poor, weak, diseased and overcrowded trees on a five year cycle. This will provide opportunity for principal trees to flourish and increase the availability of light reaching the woodland floor, thereby enhance opportunities for ground flora and natural regeneration.

² Forestry Commission – Operations Note 46, 2018

- 3.7.2 Additional native trees and shrubs in keeping with the woodland's composition should be planted within compartments A and B during the next planting season following any removal works. New planting is recommended to major on English and Sessile Oak, with a smaller proportion of Hornbeam, Beech, Hazel & Field Maple. This will help improve the structure of the understory and provide successional trees for the principal canopy layer in the long-term. Final stocking densities will be determined by available planting space, however as a guide new plantings should be introduced at minimum 5m spacings. Natural regeneration should also be promoted where opportunities arise.
- 3.7.3 The planting of native trees and shrubs should be carried out between November and March, during periods when the ground is not frozen or waterlogged. Topsoil should be added to the immediate area of the planting as required, up to a depth of 50cm. Where practicable, trees should be of British provenance, sourced from an approved supplier.
- 3.7.4 Tree guards or shelters should be used to protect new tree planting from potential grazing damage (e.g. Rabbits and Deer), with weed control and watering undertaken as required to promote their establishment.

3.8 Coppicing

- 3.8.1 It is recommended that multi-stemmed Hawthorn, Hazel, Wych Elm, Holly, Blackthorn and Yew understory components are entered into a cyclical regime of coppicing, i.e. felling c.1/3 of all understorey every 5 years and allowing it to regenerate. These works should be applied to combined areas of woodland compartments A and B. Arisings from coppicing works should be retained within each compartment as brash piles to reduce herbivore damage and provide habitat.

3.9 Faunal Enhancements

- 3.9.1 Bats: No mature trees are recommended for removal at this stage. However, any semi-mature specimens to be thinned will be examined first for features such as rot holes, split limbs and cavities that may support roosting bats. Trees with such features will be retained, unless causing a safety risk. In addition, 10 bat boxes comprising eight General Purpose Wood Concrete Bat Boxes and two Vincent Pro bat boxes, or equivalent, will be erected on retained trees to provide new roosting opportunities for bats across both compartments.
- 3.9.2 Birds: All coppicing and thinning will be completed outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. outside of March to August). Coppicing and thinning will provide enhanced foraging opportunities and new nesting opportunities through understorey regeneration. Ten bird boxes comprising Vivara Pro Seville 28mm WoodStone Nest Boxes, or equivalent, will also be erected on retained trees to provide new nesting opportunities for birds throughout both compartments.
- 3.9.3 Invertebrates: Log and brash piles will be created from management works to benefit invertebrates and provide refuge opportunities for mammals and reptiles. Any dead standing

trees will be retained if not within falling distance of footpaths to provide habitat for invertebrates and birds such as woodpeckers.

3.10 Monitoring

3.10.1 Monitoring visits will take place in years 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 following the commencement of works. Monitoring will be undertaken by a suitably qualified arboriculturist or ecologist with experience of assessing the condition of woodland habitats, and will include the following specific activities:

- Inspection of management works that have been undertaken and with consideration for whether further work or remedial measures are required;
- Monitoring of the vascular plant composition of each compartment, which should include an assessment of the extent of tree and shrub regeneration and ground flora cover;
- Assessment of trees and habitats for evidence of the presence of protected species so as to inform ongoing management;
- Monitoring of bird and bat boxes from ground level, to ensure they remain in suitable condition. Any damaged boxes will be replaced;
- Recording of any invasive plant species, with their location and extent mapped if present, to inform remedial action;
- Recording of any anthropogenic impacts such as waste or vandalism, so as to inform remedial action;
- Review of any animal impacts such as significant deer browsing or squirrel damage.

3.11 Funding and Responsibilities

3.11.1 The Woodland Management Plan will be implemented by a management company duly appointed by the developer.

4 Summary

- 4.1.1 The site's woodland is currently unmanaged, and in this context, it is an overlooked and underperforming asset. Accordingly, there are tangible benefits that can be obtained through intervention as set out within this document.
- 4.1.2 A timeframe for management tasks is provided within Appendix B, which seek to satisfy the objectives described at section 1.3. The timeframe sets out an appropriate management programme extending over a twenty-five year period, including VTA's, removal of hazardous trees and deadwood, pruning, removal of litter, monitoring of Ash dieback, restocking and coppicing.
- 4.1.3 If adhered to, the woodland management plan will facilitate safe resident access to the site's woodland, and can be expected to provide tangible benefits to both the existing and proposed setting, without harming the function or appearance of the combined woodland area.

Prepared By:

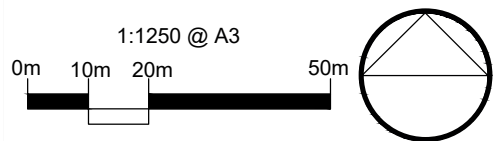
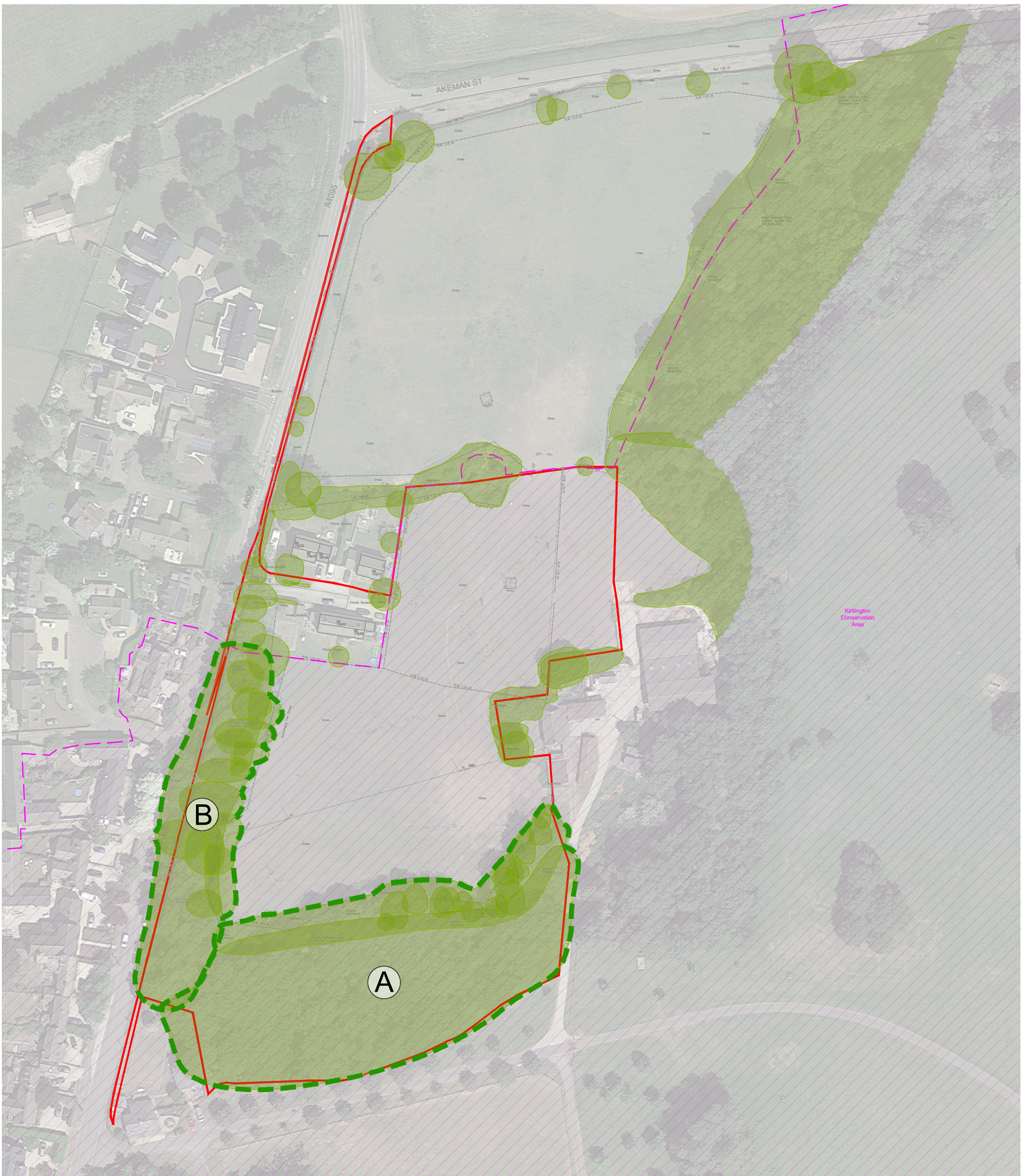
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


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Woodland Compartment Boundary Plan (11136 WCBP 01)



-  Site Boundary
-  Tree Canopies
-  Conservation Area

REV	DATE	NOTE	Drawn	Chkd

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TITLE
**Land East of Heyford Road, Kirtlington
 Woodland Compartment Boundary Plan**

CLIENT
Abbeymill Homes

SCALE 1:1250 @ A3	DATE AUG 2023	DRAWN GW
DRAWING NUMBER 11136 WCBP 01		REVISION

Based on: Kirtlington Topo Survey_160921.dwg

APPENDIX B

Twenty-five Year Timetable of Management

Land East of Heyford Road, Kirtlington – Twenty-five Year Timetable of Management and Monitoring Works

This timetable provides guidance on the timing of operations with respect to woodland management and monitoring at Land East of Heyford Road, Kirtlington, and spans the period of twenty-five years following the completion of site works.

The following management and monitoring schedule has been designed to reduce potential conflicts with faunal species including nesting birds. Following completion of the twenty-five year management regime detailed below, the strategy should be subject to review and revised as necessary to ensure the Woodland Management Plan objectives are delivered appropriately.

Item	Compartment	Season	Action	Comments
WORKS REPEATED ANNUALLY				
Woodland				
1.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Inspection and reporting of any trees/shrubs which are suffering from visible defects likely to cause potential danger, obstruction or nuisance to residents and/or users of pathways. Any trees/shrubs considered dangerous to be felled or pruned as appropriate, including leaving monolith standing deadwood features where possible.	To maintain a safe and accessible environment, in accordance with the Occupiers' Liability Act.
2.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Cut back overgrowing or overhanging shrubs or minor branches from footpaths to provide sufficient access clearance.	To maintain a safe and accessible environment, in accordance with the Occupiers' Liability Act.
3.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Make safe any hung up / partially fallen tree specimens.	To maintain a safe and accessible environment, in accordance with the Occupiers' Liability Act.
4.	A & B	Spring / Summer	Inspection of Ash trees for presence of Ash dieback. Removals to be carried out as necessary, with arisings burnt onsite.	To maintain a safe and accessible environment, in accordance with the Occupiers' Liability Act.

5.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Restocking any failed plantings.	To improve woodland resilience and diversity.
Footpaths				
6.	A & B	Spring / Summer	Removal of weeds, preferably by hand pulling. Avoidance of herbicide use where possible, with preference given to hand pulling/cutting. Where herbicide use is considered necessary, this should be applied in small, controlled areas. No residual pesticides are to be used.	Only using products on the current DEFRA approved list and in accordance with legislative requirements.
7.	A & B	Any	Repair of any defects or safety hazards.	As required, to maintain safe access.
8.	A & B	Winter	Application of additional woodchip to footpaths.	As required during wet conditions, to maintain safe access.
Biodiversity				
9.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Retain large diameter arisings (above 150mm diameter) from management activities to create occasional log (habitat) piles. Low diameter arisings to be removed from site.	To encourage a diverse range of woodland fauna and invertebrates.
10.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Inspection of bat and bird boxes, and replace or repair as necessary.	To encourage and maintain faunal activity throughout the woodland.
General				
11.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Removal and off-site disposal of all litter, any garden waste and other tipped items (if present).	To maintain safe access.

YEAR 1 SPECIFIC TASKS				
Woodland				
12.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Structural thinning to remove poor, weak, diseased or overcrowded trees. Not to exceed more than 5% of each compartments total tree numbers.	To provide opportunity for principal trees to flourish, enhancing the structure of the woodland, and to increase the availability of light to the woodland floor in the interests of promoting natural regeneration and diverse ground flora.
13.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Restock following structural thinning works with a selection of English and Sessile Oak, Hornbeam, Beech, Hazel and Field Maple.	To increase species diversity and woodland resilience.
14.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Coppice 1/3 of multi stemmed understorey components and allow to regenerate.	To promote biodiversity and the woodland's ecological capacity and functions.
YEAR 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 SPECIFIC TASKS				
Woodland				
15.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Structural thinning, removing poor, weak, diseased or overcrowded trees. Not to exceed more than 10% of each woodlands total tree numbers.	To provide opportunity for principal trees to flourish, enhancing the structure of the woodlands, and to increase the availability of light to the woodland floor in the interests of promoting natural regeneration and diverse ground flora.

16.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Restock following structural thinning works with a selection of English and Sessile Oak, Hornbeam, Beech, Hazel and Field Maple.	To increase species diversity and woodland resilience.
17.	A & B	Autumn / Winter	Coppice 1/3 of multi stemmed understorey components and allow to regenerate.	To promote biodiversity and the woodlands ecological capacity and functions.
General				
18.	A & B	Summer	Confirm the suitability of management works completed and identify any remedial measures. Action remedial measures as necessary during Autumn / Winter.	To ensure the objectives of the woodland management plan are delivered.
19.	A & B	Summer	Monitor establishment of vascular plants, and trees and shrubs, checking for evidence of protected species.	To ensure the objectives of the woodland management plan are delivered, and to inform future management decisions at year 10, 15, 20 and 25.
20.	A & B	Summer	Check and record the presence of any invasive species to inform remedial action and remove if necessary.	To prevent the woodlands' from being colonised ensure the objectives of the woodland management plan are delivered.

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