

Foxbury Plantation

Appendix 1:

Summary of the reasons for the Forestry Commission's decision to give consent:

1. Overview:

1.1. The National Trust bought Foxbury plantation which comprises approximately 150 hectares of predominantly plantation woodland in 2005. Their objective is to convert the woodland into a mosaic of semi-natural habitats including dry and wet heath, acidic grassland and native woodland. The plans would result in the conversion of approximately 100 ha of woodland to open habitats which is classed as 'deforestation'.

2. Legislative Background:

2.1. The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 prohibit the carrying out of any work or operations in relation to a 'relevant project' unless consent has been obtained from the Forestry Commissioners or, on appeal, the appropriate Authority (in England the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

2.2. Regulation 3 defines a "relevant project" as one of four types of forestry project:

- Afforestation,
- Deforestation,
- Forest Roads, or
- Forest Quarries.

which does not constitute development regulated by the legislation on town and country planning but which is likely by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location to have significant effects on the environment.

2.3. In December 2005 the Forestry Commission advised the National Trust that the proposals were likely to have a significant impact on the environment and hence constituted a relevant project. In order to seek the FC's consent the National Trust proceeded to prepare a detailed application supported by an Environmental Statement detailing the likely impacts of their proposals.

3. Summary of the applications evolution:

3.1. In preparing their application the National Trust carried out a range of surveys of the site and consulted widely with local people and organisations. The details of this process and the findings are documented in the application and Environmental Statement submitted to the Forestry Commission in June 2006. Following clarification of several queries the FC initiated formal consultations on the proposals in late November 2006.

3.2. Environmental Impact Assessment Process – Key dates:

- 28 November 2005: National Trust asks Forestry Commission whether proposals constitute a relevant project.
- 22 December 2005: Forestry Commission advises that proposals do constitute a relevant project.
- 5 April 2006: National Trust holds a formal scoping meeting to identify the key issues to be considered in preparing their Environmental Statement
- 10 May 2006: The Scoping Report produced.
- 28 June 2006: Draft Environmental Statement submitted to FC.
- November 2006: Revised Environmental Statement accepted by FC.
- 27 November 2006: Formal consultations initiated by FC.
- 27 December 2006: Formal consultation period ends.
- 2 February 2007: FC publishes formal decision on the application.

3.3. Summary of consultation responses:

Organisation	Comment	Resolved
Natural England	Fully supported the proposals	n/a
National Heritage	Supported in principle but – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raised issue relating to vehicular access and reducing impact. 2. Raised issue of re-surveying felled areas before any scraping is undertaken. 	Conditions added to cover these comments in FC decision.
National Park Authority	Supported in principle but – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raised concerns about unknown archaeology and potential damage. 2. Raised concerns about designed landscape feature which have not been covered in ES. 3. Raised concerns about woodland species and further surveying. 	Agreed at meeting on 18 January 2007 the way forward regarding all of the concerns. Condition included in approval requiring identification and protection of archaeological features.

4. **Explanation of the Forestry Commission's decision and the conditions attached:**

4.1. The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations require the competent authority (in the case of afforestation, deforestation, forest roads or forest quarries this is the regulatory arm of the Forestry Commission) to consider the impacts of the proposals on:

- i. human beings, fauna and flora;*
- ii. soil, water, air, climate and the landscape;*
- iii. material assets and the cultural heritage; and*
- iv. the interaction between the factors mentioned in i. to iii. above*

4.2. The following paragraphs outline:

- (a) the conditions which are attached to the approval;
- (b) the main reasons and considerations on which the decision is based; and
- (c) a description, where necessary, of the main measures to avoid, reduce and, if possible, offset the major adverse effects of the project.

4.3. **Policy Context:**

4.3.1. The Government's approach to sustainable forestry is underpinned by the ***UK Forestry Standard*** (2nd edition, 2004). The Standard provides the benchmark for judging the performance of the UK forestry sector. It defines criteria and indicators that enable progress in delivering sustainable forest management to be assessed. The Standard includes a series of Practice Notes which help to identify acceptable options for forest and woodland management and the siting of new woodlands.

4.3.2. The Government's priorities for forestry in England are outlined in the ***England Forestry Strategy*** (also published in 1998) and focus on four key themes:

- **Forestry for Rural Development** - *this covers forestry's contribution to the rural economy. The programme considers how both new and existing woods can be managed to deliver more benefits to local economies, by creating jobs in the forest industry.*
- **Forestry for Economic Regeneration** – *this programme looks at the opportunities for woodlands to play a more strategic role in land-use planning through restoring former industrial land and creating a green setting for future urban and urban fringe development.*
- **Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism** – *this describes what can be done to promote more and better-quality public access to woodlands. The programme looks at opportunities for woods and forests to be used for a wide range of recreational pursuits as well as supporting the tourist industry.*

- **Forestry for the Environment and Conservation** – *this programme covers the role that woodlands can play in conserving and enhancing the character of our environment and our cultural heritage, and in delivering the Government’s nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change objectives.*

4.3.3. In respect to the potential loss of woodland the Strategy states: *‘We will continue to exercise a general presumption against the conversion of woodland to other land uses unless there are overriding public benefits, for example to restore important semi-natural habitats’* (page 23 final paragraph).

4.3.4. Forests and woodlands can provide a rich and diverse habitat for wildlife, much of which benefits from the varied conditions associated with normal management activity. Some species and habitats require special consideration however, and these include those associated with open ground and water. In areas where open ground habitat is rare, it can sometimes be successfully restored by clearance of plantations. Restoration of these habitats may form part of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (page 21).

4.3.5. The Biodiversity Strategy for England (Working with the Grain of Nature, DEFRA, 2002) includes the stated aim of protecting biodiversity-rich woodland from external threats, from industry and surrounding land uses (page 50). However, it also recommends that appropriate opportunities to re-create or restore open-ground habitats, such as heath and moorland, by the removal of largely coniferous plantations that were established on them in previous decades are considered (page 51). Under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it is the duty of the Forestry Commission along with other Government Departments in carrying out its functions, to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to conserve biological diversity.

4.3.6. There is currently no Local Biodiversity Action Plan written for the New Forest. We understand the recently appointed National Park Authority will be preparing one in due course.

4.4. Analysis of proposals in relation to above policies:

4.4.1. The proposals for Foxbury plantation outline the conversion of 150 ha of woodland which currently comprises mainly plantations of conifers to a mosaic of semi-natural habitats which are priorities outlined in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan:

- (a) **Dry Heath** approx. 55 ha (37%)
- (b) **Wet Heath** approx. 10 ha (6%) (including retained ponds)
- (c) **Acidic Grassland** approx. 35 ha (23%)
- (d) **Native woodland** approx. 50 ha (34%) (including existing broadleaved areas, creation of wood pasture and rotational ‘scrub’ woodland plus internal rides and glades).

4.4.2. In respect of the Government’s objectives for woodland:

4.4.2.1. **Rural Development:** while the proposals do represent a loss of productive woodland, they also result in the provision of additional grazing for New Forest Commoners. The proposals would also provide additional resources for access and tourism. Consequently we conclude that the overall impacts on rural development will be neutral.

4.4.2.2. **Economic Regeneration:** the proposals relate to a rural location where the impacts on economic regeneration are limited.

4.4.2.3. **Recreation, access & tourism:** the proposals encompass the provision of an additional 150 ha of access land in the internationally popular New Forest National Park. While such access could be provided if the site remained fully wooded the diversity of habitats provided will create a more attractive environment for access and allow much greater freedom of access across the site than would be possible as woodland. Hence we conclude the proposals provide significant benefits for recreation, access and tourism.

4.4.2.4. **Environment and conservation:** Lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland, fen and wood pasture are priority habitats in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. A considerable proportion of these semi-natural habitats have been lost over the last 200 years due to development, cultivation, and afforestation through woodland planting or natural colonisation by trees (as a result of the decline in grazing). The information provided in the Environmental Statement confirms that the site has comprised a mosaic of these priority habitats in the past. We conclude that the conversion of approximately 100 ha of the site to priority semi-natural habitats will result in significant benefits to biodiversity. The restoration of the retained area of woodland to native and semi-natural woodland also enhances the biodiversity of the site. The collective mosaic of habitats provides greater biodiversity than any one habitat in its own right.

4.5. **Time scale of the Work:**

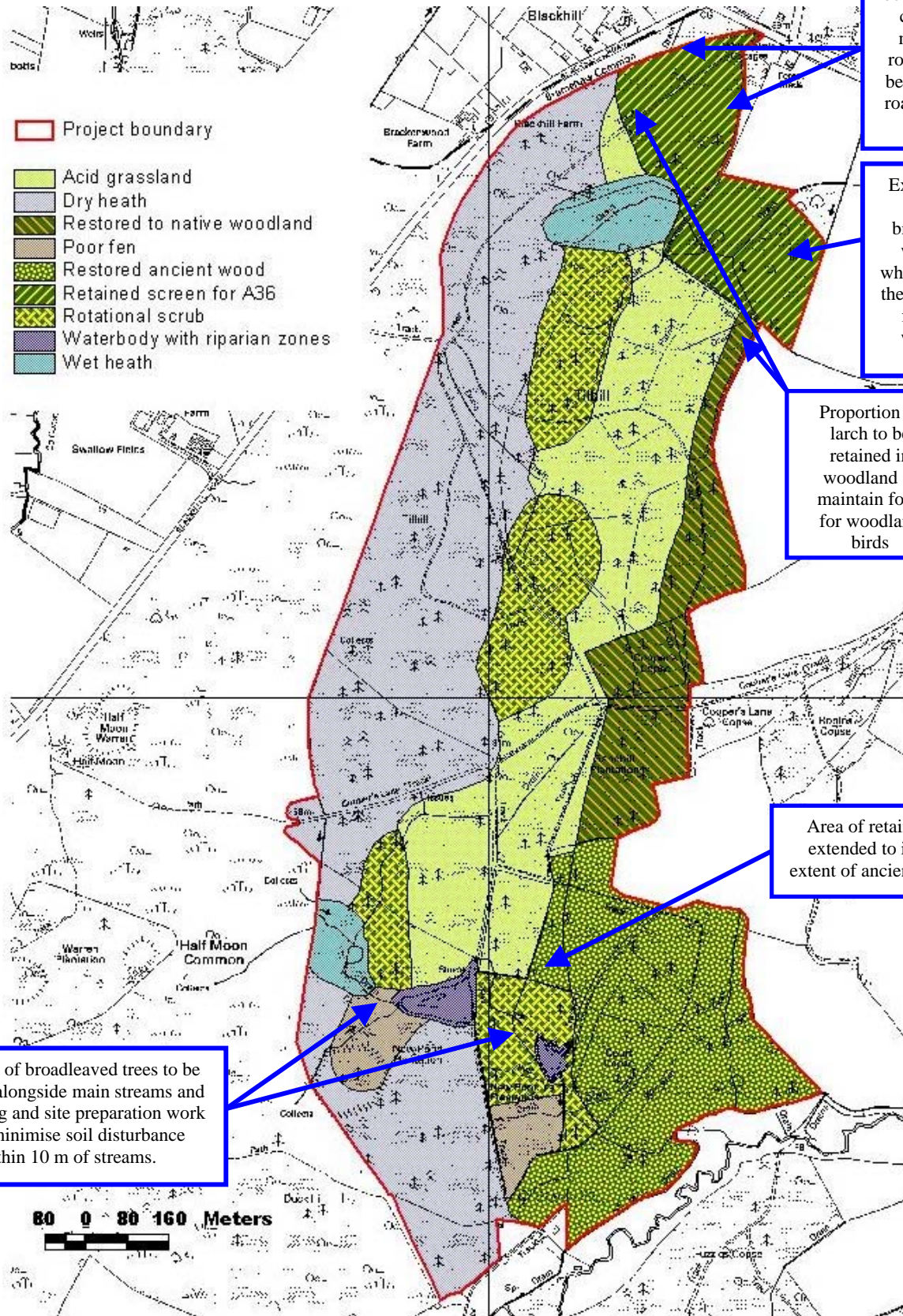
4.5.1. The Regulations require that the approval is time limited therefore the approval is subject to the following conditions:

Condition (a): 'The work must be started between the 2 February 2007 and 2 February 2012'; and

Condition (b): 'No work shall be carried out after 2 February 2017'.

4.6. **Area approved for deforestation:** Appendix 2 comprises a plan of the area accepted for deforestation and conversion to other semi-natural habitats. This is similar to that outlined on Page 22 of the applicant's Environmental Statement because many issues affecting the site have been considered within the Environmental Statement. The annotated plan on the following page indicates the areas where changes have been agreed and the reasons for them.

Habitat mosaic to be created on the Foxbury Plantation site:



Condition (c): Deforestation should only be carried out on the areas outlined on the plan attached at appendix 2. Deforested areas will be converted to dry heath, wet heath (including poor fen) and acidic grassland. Retained woodland will be converted to native woodland.

Condition (d): A detailed management plan will be produced within 1 year of commencement of felling operations which will detail the ongoing management of the site to establish and maintain the matrix of habitats described above while maintaining archaeological and landscape features detailed in subsequent conditions

4.7. Impacts on human beings:

General Populous:

4.7.1. One of the objectives of the proposals is to provide greater access to open space for local people and visitors for their health and wellbeing in this part of Hampshire. It will also provide an additional resource within the New Forest National Park and reduce pressure on the adjacent SSSI's fragile habitats.

4.7.2. The proposals include ideas and suggestions raised by local people during the scoping meeting in 2006.

4.7.3. Interpretation will be provided on site during the restoration phases to explain the reasons and value of undertaking this project.

Commoners:

4.7.4. Additional areas for stock grazing will become available later in the restoration process. This will reduce the pressure of stock on the adjacent Half Moon Common (SSSI), which is at present over grazed. This additional grazing will improve the welfare of Commoners' stock during winter months when available grassland is more limited.

Traffic Noise:

4.7.5. Traffic noise was raised during the scoping meeting as an issue. The applicant subsequently adjusted the woodland retention in the northern part of the site to take account of this concern to offset the effect the clearance might have on noise levels for those people living south of the A36. To accommodate this it has been agreed that a substantial area of mixed woodland will be retained and maintained adjacent to the A36.

4.7.6. There are plans to slow traffic down on the A36 with a roundabout adjacent to Foxbury Plantation's northern edge. This may also reduce present levels of noise issuing from the traffic on the A36 at this point by slowing the traffic.

4.7.7. The application is approved subject to the following condition;

Condition (e): The woodland area to be retained along the northern edge of the site (as shown at appendix 2 detailed as 'Retained screen for A36') will be managed to maintain continuous tree cover with a robust woodland understorey of native species to provide a screen for light pollution from the A36 and a filter for road noise and road pollution.

4.8. **Impacts on fauna and flora:**

- 4.8.1. The site is currently dominated by commercially mature or middle aged coniferous woodland planted following extensive felling post World War II. A high proportion of these areas have an understorey dominated by rhododendron. This species out competed the native woodland plants, which resulted in the loss of much of the semi-natural flora from the majority of the woodland area.
- 4.8.2. Surveys included in the Environmental Statement identified that parts of the site are currently used as nesting areas for woodland bird species such as Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Hedge Sparrow, various tits and Blackcap and home to woodland invertebrates such as wood ants. The best woodland habitat for priority woodland bird species was found to be the mixed woodland area in the NE corner of the site. The applicant intends to maintain this area as woodland and manage it towards native woodland over many years. The overall retention of 50 ha of woodland and its conversion to native species will increase the habitat available for native woodland fauna. The proposed design also maintains and enhances connectivity between ancient woodland sites and ancient and semi-natural woodland. This will further enhance the ecological diversity of the project area.
- 4.8.3. The native and priority habitats which will be re-established on the site will extend the 'open forest' mosaic of the New Forest. This existing habitat is internationally important and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation and a Ramsar Site. Increasing the collective area of such important habitats will have a major positive impact on the rare flora and fauna which they support.
- 4.8.4. Subject to appropriate seed beds being established following tree clearance typical flora of these open habitats will be established through colonisation from native species currently found on the adjacent heathland (to the west) and from flora surviving on ride sides.
- 4.8.5. **Woodland retention:** Significant sections along the eastern boundary of the site are ancient woodland meaning they have been wooded since at least the 18th century. Consequently their soils retain some of the flora and fauna of native woodland. The importance and irreplaceable nature of ancient woodland are increasingly being recognised and supported in Government Policies. In addition broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland is also a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The application incorporates the retention of woodland in all the areas designated as ancient woodland sites and details management that will convert them to native woodland. In addition to the ancient woodland sites a further section along the eastern boundary of the project area will be retained as a wooded strip and gradually converted to native woodland. This will maintain habitat corridors between the ancient woodland sites within the proposal area and connectivity with ancient and native woodland on adjacent properties to the east.
- 4.8.6. **Wood Pasture:** The proposals also indicate that the retained woodland area will include approximately 15 hectares of deciduous pasture woodland. This would create further habitat diversity on the site and comprise a major contribution to the restoration of the 'Wood Pasture and Parkland' Habitat Action Plan (another UK priority HAP).

However, the details of which part of the retained woodland area this would comprise have not been determined yet.

4.8.7. **Deer:** Concern was raised at the scoping meeting about deer forced out of the woodland running on to the A36. Consequently the applicant has agreed to revise the order of felling phases to encourage deer to move away from this busy road during periods of greatest disturbance. The original phases 2 and 3 were switched around to facilitate clearance of trees at the northern end of the wood ahead of those at the southern end. Felling phases 1 and 2 will start in the north and work in a southerly direction.

4.8.8. The application is approved subject to the following conditions:

Condition (f): Areas designated for restoration to dry heath, wet heath and acidic grassland will be:

- i. cleared of lop and top and non-native species following tree felling and the site prepared to facilitate colonisation by species appropriate to this habitat;*
- ii. tree stumps will either be cut low to the ground (i.e. < 15 cm) or be ground down to ground level; and*
- iii. managed appropriately to create and maintain these priority habitats.*

Condition (g): Areas to be maintained as woodland will be:

- i. Managed to facilitate their conversion to predominantly native woodland over a 10 year period following the guidelines outlined in the Forestry Commission publication: 'Restoration of Native Woodland on Ancient Woodland Sites';*
- ii. Conversion to native woodland (including 'scrub') will include the removal of all rhododendron;*
- iii. Within the area to be retained as woodland, where the current plantation consists of larch a proportion of the existing larch trees (10-15%) will be retained to provide food (seeds) for woodland birds; and*
- iv. Areas to be maintained as 'scrub' woodland (located as designated on the plan comprising appendix 2) will consist of primary coloniser native trees and shrubs (including willow, blackthorn and birch) be cut intermittently to maintain this discrete habitat type.*

Condition (h): Deforestation will be carried out in three phases as outlined in the plans shown in appendix 3a, b & c. These phases will be carried out in sequence. The felling of phases 1 & 2 will begin against the retained woodland adjacent to the A36 shown as 'Retained screen for A36' on appendix 4 and work will continue in a southerly direction to encourage deer to move away from the road during the felling and extraction phase.

4.9. **Impacts on soil and water:**

4.9.1. The objective of the proposals is to restore the site to a mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Protecting the soil structure from damage through compaction or deep disturbance is consequently very important.

4.9.2. Felling of the current woodland will result in lower water use by the site immediately after the site is cleared. Water use will increase as the new semi-natural habitats are

regenerated but will still remain lower than at present. Consequently the quantity of water draining from the site will increase and due care will be required during the implementation phase to reduce the potential for soil erosion and flood flows.

4.9.3. The re-establishment of wet heaths on the site will provide a buffer to flood flows. Their re-establishment will require the drainage system which was created to facilitate tree establishment and growth to be blocked. Heather bales will be the main tool used to block appropriate drains.

4.9.4. Careful planning of harvesting and site preparation will mitigate adverse impacts.

4.9.5. The robust forest road system within the site will enable efficient harvesting and allow machines to run on a metalled surface for a lot of the time avoiding damage to the soil structure.

4.9.6. Consequently the application is approved subject to the following condition:

Condition (i): A harvesting and extraction plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of each phase of woodland clearance. This will include:

- i. identifying stacking areas, extraction routes and harvesting methods to avoid soil compaction, protect water courses, minimise soil erosion and protect archaeological features (see condition 1);***
- ii. harvesting and site preparation work will be carefully managed, and if necessary stopped, during conditions when the soil structure becomes waterlogged;***
- iii. all operations will be undertaken in compliance with all applicable Regulations (with particular reference to protection of species outlined in the Wildlife and Countryside Act); this will include robust systems to prevent inadvertent disturbance of nesting birds, roosting bats and badger sets;***
- iv. providing training and 'cab cards' for operators on required operational practice (including recognition of archaeological features as per condition 1)***

4.10. **Impact on air quality:**

4.10.1. Loss of tree cover may reduce the filtering effect of dust and pollutants from the A36. However there is a screen of trees being retained against the A36 so any reduction will be minimal.

4.10.2. Burning of residue will be limited as much as possible and every effort will be made to chip the residue for removal from the site to a power station. Where burning is the only option use of modern day burning systems will reduce the smoke and debris released into the atmosphere.

4.11. **Impacts on climate:**

4.11.1. The ongoing and average carbon storage of the existing woodland is estimated at approximately 50 tonnes carbon per hectare. The proposals will result the net loss of approximately 5,000 tonnes of carbon. This is mitigated by the National Trust's establishment of new woodlands on other properties and the increased use of wood in both construction of new buildings (sequestration) and use of wood as a renewable fuel (instead of fossil fuels).

4.11.2. Consequently the application is approved subject to:

Condition (j): Within 2 years of commencement of work the Trust will constructively review the opportunities to mitigate the loss of 5,000 tonnes of carbon sequestration across their properties within the SE Region.

4.12. **Impacts on landscape and visual environment:**

4.12.1. Removal of around 100 hectares of woodland from the 150 hectares available will influence the landscape of this area in a dramatic way. During the scoping exercise a request was made to retain woodland along the eastern boundary to maintain a wooded fringe to the farmland as a transition zone between the farmed land and the proposed open heath. This was agreed and the proposals amended. This amendment helps to satisfy not only the landscape issue but also as stated at 4.8.5 maintaining a link between the ancient woodland copses, namely Cooper's Lane and Robin's copses with Court Copse.

4.12.2. The overall mosaic of habitats to be created is likely to provide a more pleasing landscape to the majority of local people and visitors. Effectively the objective is to recreate a landscape which is similar to the adjacent habitat mosaic of the 'open forest'. One of the characteristics of this open forest landscape are clumps of trees, often pines, in prominent locations. The proposals seek to retain clumps of pine trees to create this effect but it is has not been possible to identify the exact locations of such clumps due to the existing woodland cover and dense rhododendron. Following discussions with the New Forest National Park Authority it has been agreed that specialists from the authority will assist the National trust in identifying the most appropriate location for such 'landscape retentions'.

4.12.3. The application is approved subject to the following conditions;

Condition (k): Single and groups of trees of landscape value will be identified in close consultation with specialist officers from the New Forest National Park Authority. These will be marked for retention in advance of tree felling in the areas proposed for open heath management by National Trust managers and agreed with the Longford Estates managers supervising the felling.

4.13. **Impacts on material assets:**

4.13.1. There appear to be no negative impacts on material assets such as neighbouring properties. In fact with the removal of the conifer edge along the western part of the site will provide new panoramic views from some properties to the north of the project area which may enhance property values.

4.14. **Impacts on cultural heritage (Archaeology):**

4.14.1. Surveys on the project area highlighted that there are a considerable number and diversity of known features which require protection during the felling and extraction of the timber and residue and in the subsequent management of the site.

4.14.2. Overall the restoration of open habitats which include fewer trees and lower potential for ground disturbance during management will have a significantly positive impact on the protection of known and currently unknown archaeological remains.

4.14.3. Condition (i) above requires the preparation of a harvesting plan prior to work commencing to help ensure that damage to the soil structure is minimised during harvesting and site preparation. In order to avoid inadvertent damage to archaeological remains approval is also subject to:

Condition (i): Prior to harvesting commencing a phased protocol of archaeological evaluation will be agreed between the National Trust, The New Forest National Park Authority, English Heritage and the Forestry Commission. This will include:

- i. Details of how features of known archaeological interest will be physically highlighted***
- ii. Details of how features of archaeological interest will be clearly brought to the attention of site operators (to include briefings for site operators on the importance of archaeological features, how to recognise them and how to avoid damage to them and the issue of 'cab cards');***
- iii. Clear operating procedures for tree removal on features of archaeological interest;***
- iv. Details of how the operations will be monitored to identify and record any features of archaeological interest which are revealed during the operations;***
- v. Details of how harvesting residue (lop and top) and shrubs such as rhododendron will be removed from the site in a manner which protects, both known and unknown, archaeological features;***

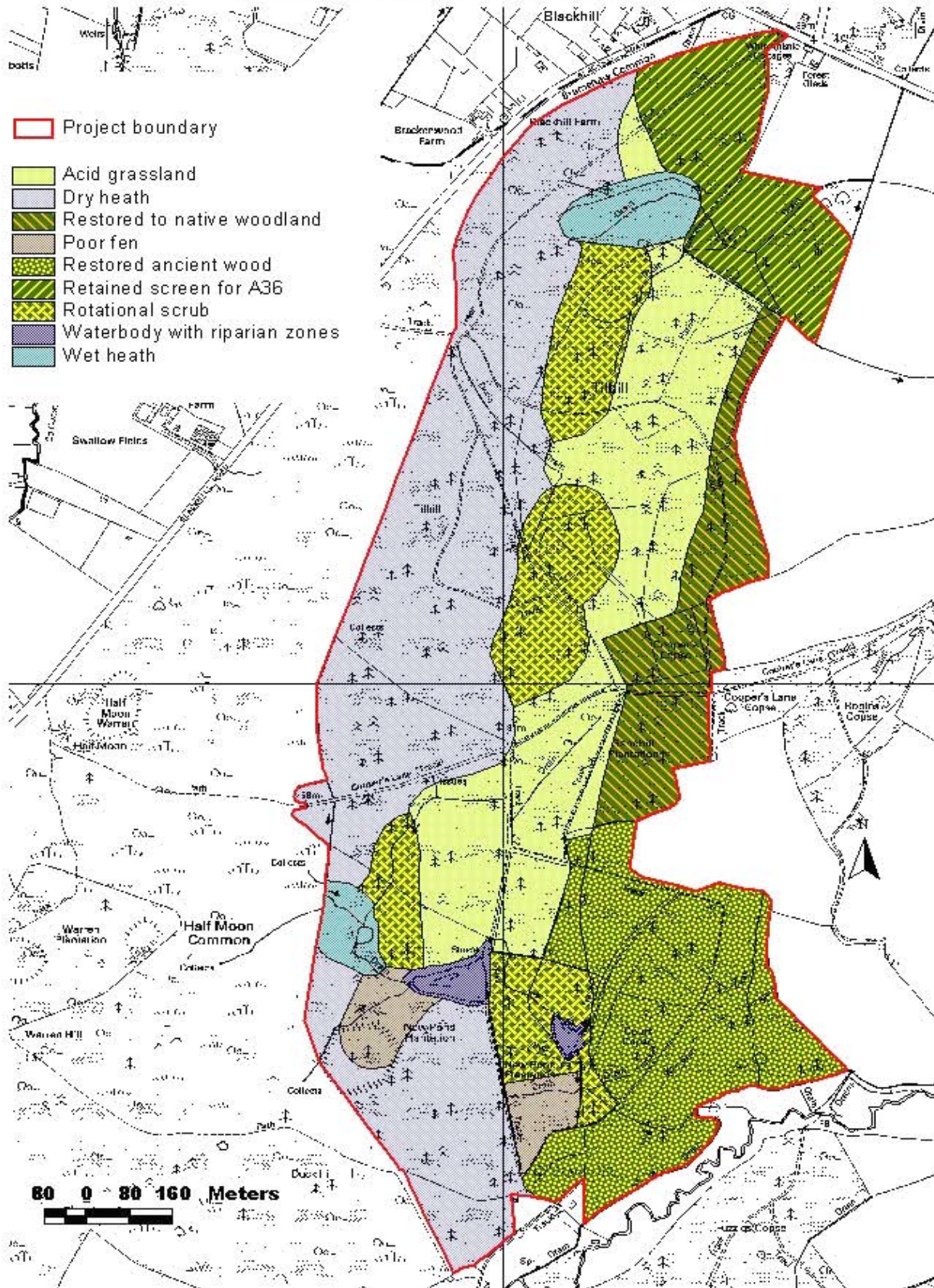
The outcomes of the evaluation will be incorporated into the harvesting plan to ensure that the potential for damage to known and unknown archaeological remains is minimised.

4.15. **Interaction between these factors:**

4.15.1. **Public access vs fauna:** There is a potential conflict between the use of the site by the public and the disturbance this may bring, particularly from dogs, to fauna using the site in the future. In particular the uncontrolled roaming of dogs could lead to disturbance of ground nesting birds and once grazing is introduced, to the cattle and ponies. The majority of the public is sensitive to the needs of wildlife and stock if they understand what these are. Hence the potential for disturbance can be reduced significantly by providing information to users and seeking their support in controlling dogs during the bird nesting season.

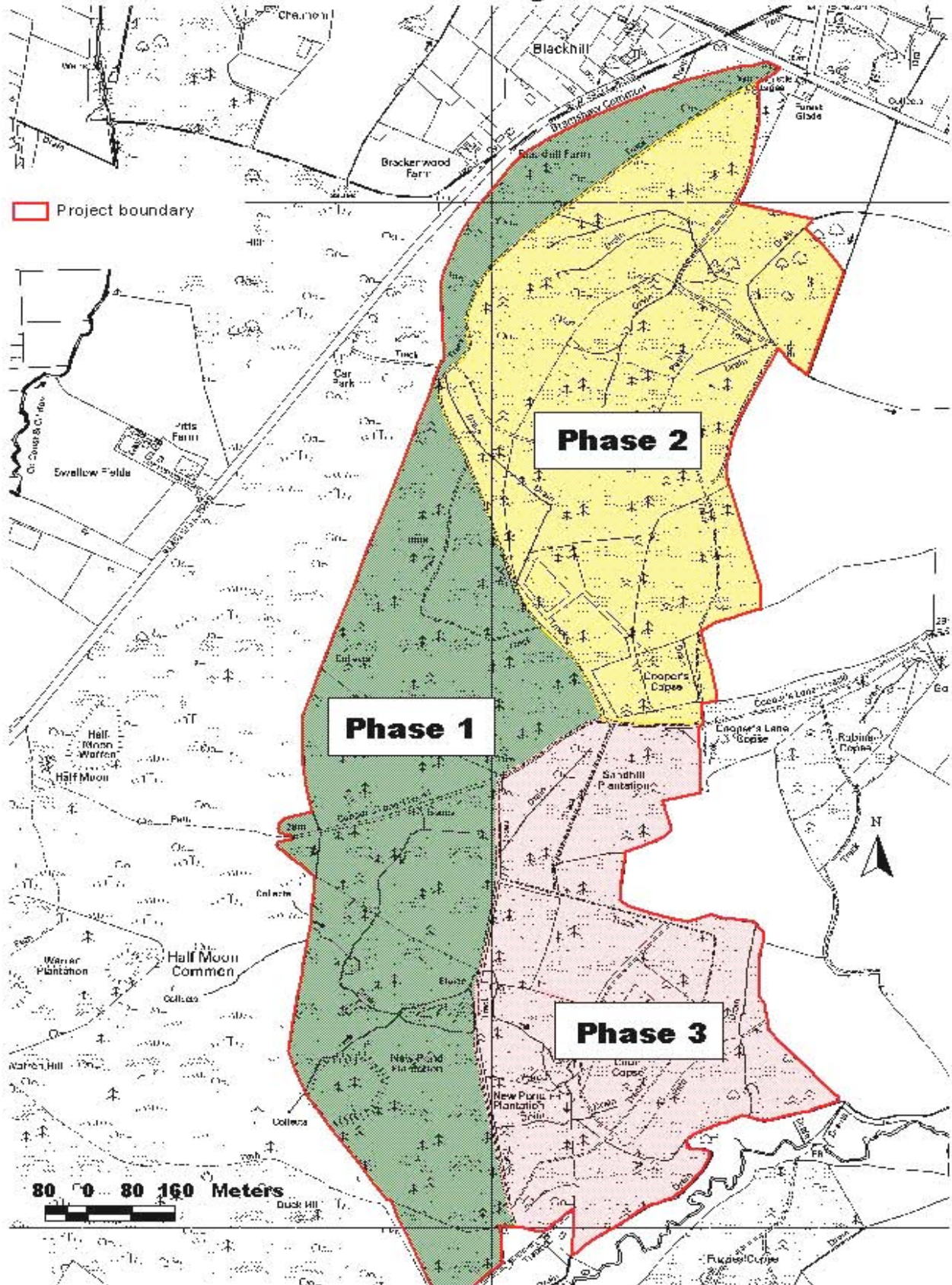
Foxbury Plantation - Appendix 2

Habitat Restoration Proposals



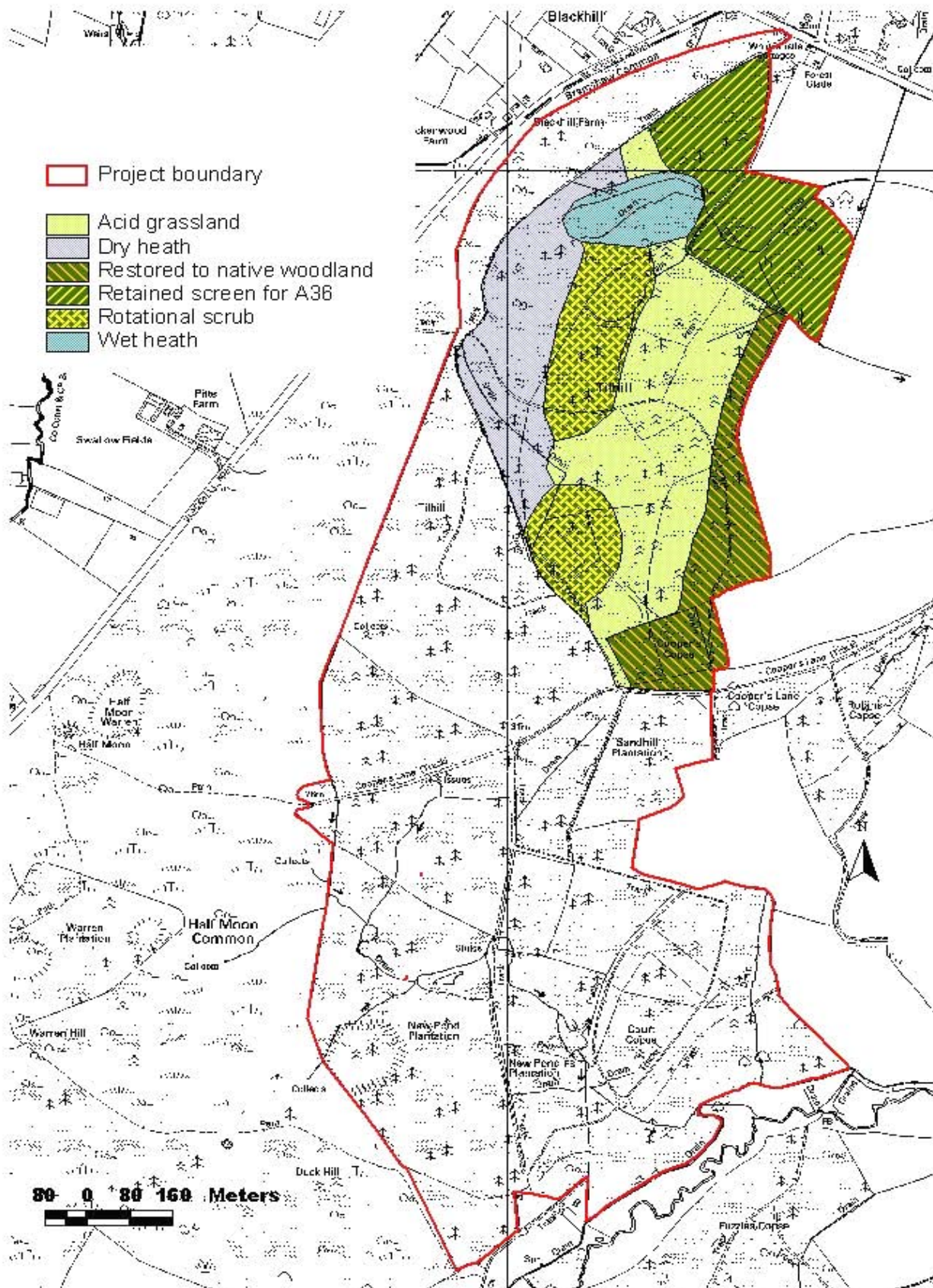
Foxbury Plantation - Appendix 3

Order of Felling



Foxbury Plantation - Phase 2 Restoration - Appendix 3b

Habitat Distribution Following Completion of Phase



Foxbury Plantation - Appendix 6

Landscape After Restoration

- Heath
- Wooded heath, woodland & scrub

