1 Urban and community woodlands

1.1 A new small community woodland on the edge of an urban area

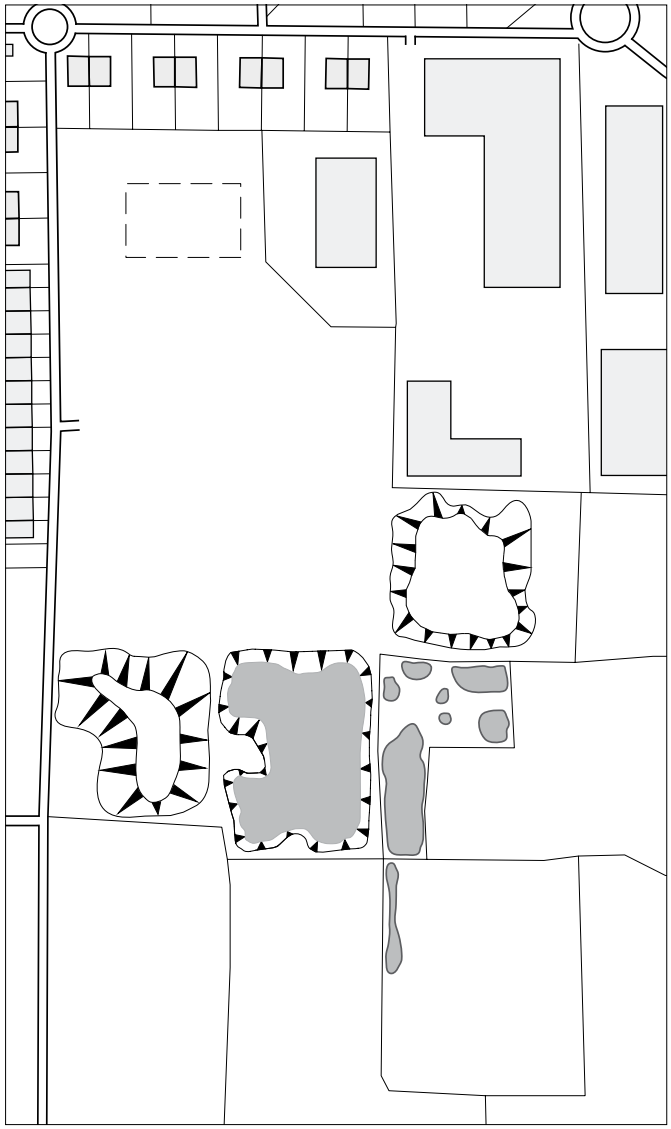
This example represents a typical area of semi-abandoned land in the urban fringe of an industrial town, where remnant agricultural land, disturbed land from mining and small patches of unmanaged scrub woodland form the basis for an area of community woodland. This kind of landscape and woodland project can be found all over the UK, although with different former industrial issues to be incorporated into the design. There are many nearby residents, the area is affected by service corridors, poor soils in parts and a lot of recreational pressure. The main objectives are to provide a recreational resource for the whole community, to improve the landscape and to enhance the biodiversity of the area. Educational benefits are also sought and the project should also help to strengthen the community (by building social capital through the process). The mainly flat topography means that the edges and internal spaces will be the main visual impacts and the woodland is able to screen out unsightly elements while maintaining views to key landmarks. The design of internal spaces is a key aspect of the design.

Objectives

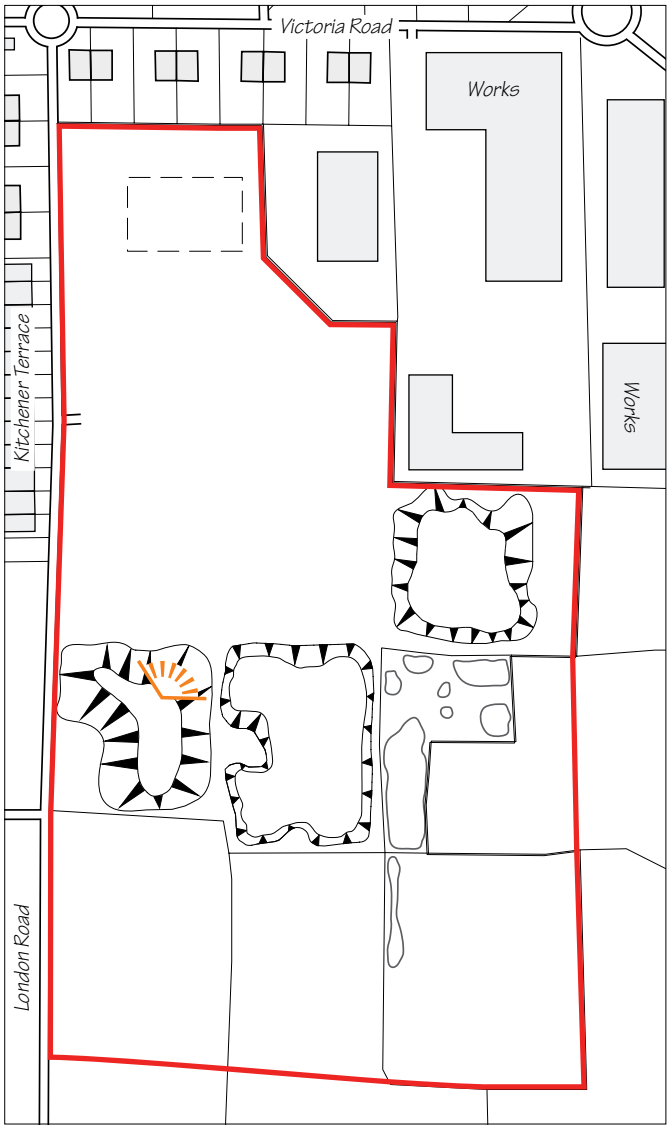
Resource	Objective	Indicator of objective being met
Landscape	To improve an unattractive derelict site and rehabilitate it	The landscape greens up and becomes an asset to the area
Community	To improve the strength of the local community and to improve quality of life	Different groups of the local community are involved in all aspects of the process of planning, implementation and management
Biodiversity	To restore and improve the habitat and wildlife values of the site	A range of habitats are created and many species of wildlife colonise it
Access	To provide appropriate access for people, including for the management/ maintenance of the site and emergency services	All areas of the site are confirmed accessible
Recreation	To provide a range of recreational activities suitable for the local community	A diverse group of local residents use the site frequently for recreation purposes

Base – perspective

Base – plan



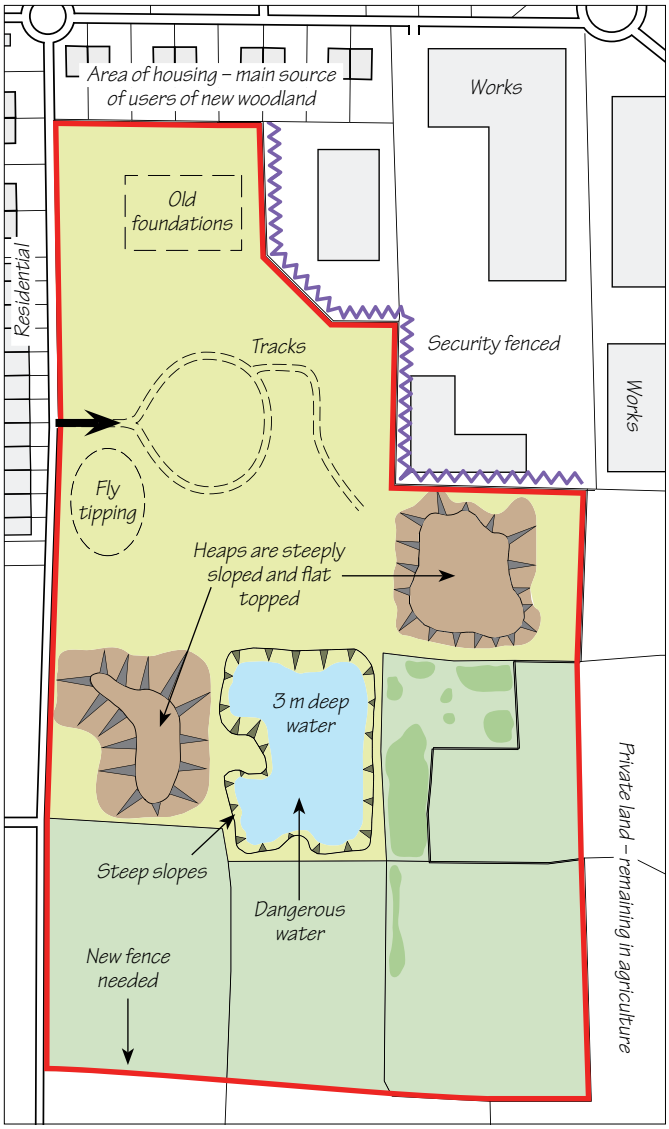
Location and viewpoint



Site boundary

Viewpoint direction and angle

Site survey



Site boundary

Main entrance from public road

Views of industrial buildings

Patches of woodland and shrub

Old gravel pit, steep slopes, 3 m water

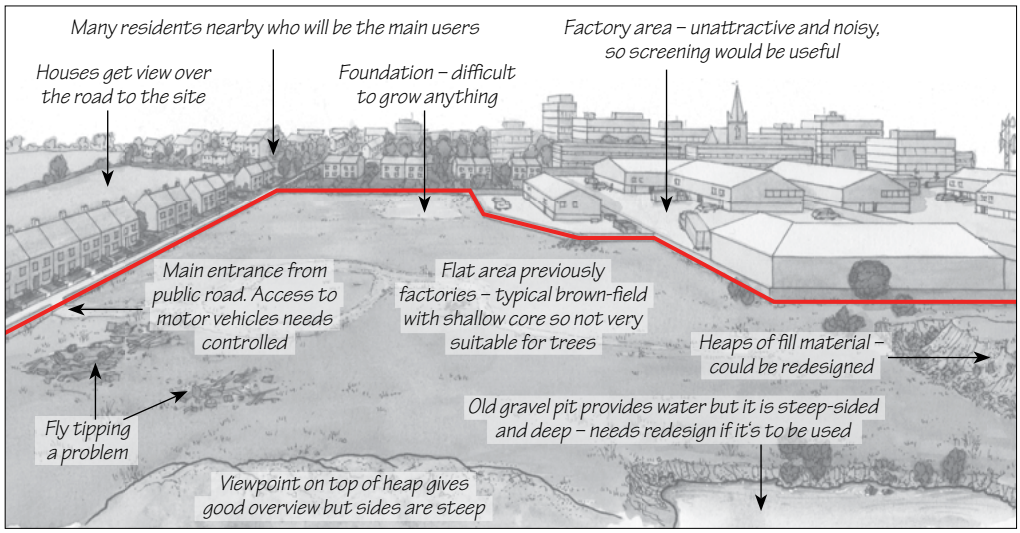
Heaps of subsoil and demolition rubble

Greenfields, undisturbed, fertile, free-draining soils

Area of demolished industry, partly covered in rubble, subsoil and some topsoil

Site analysis

Site boundary



The survey of the area includes many physical aspects due to the brownfield nature of much of the site, its limited accessibility and the few habitat elements remaining on the site. The constraints and opportunities analysis highlights the problems of the site, its inherent lack of soil and presence of debris and water as well as the positive aspect of there being nearby residents.

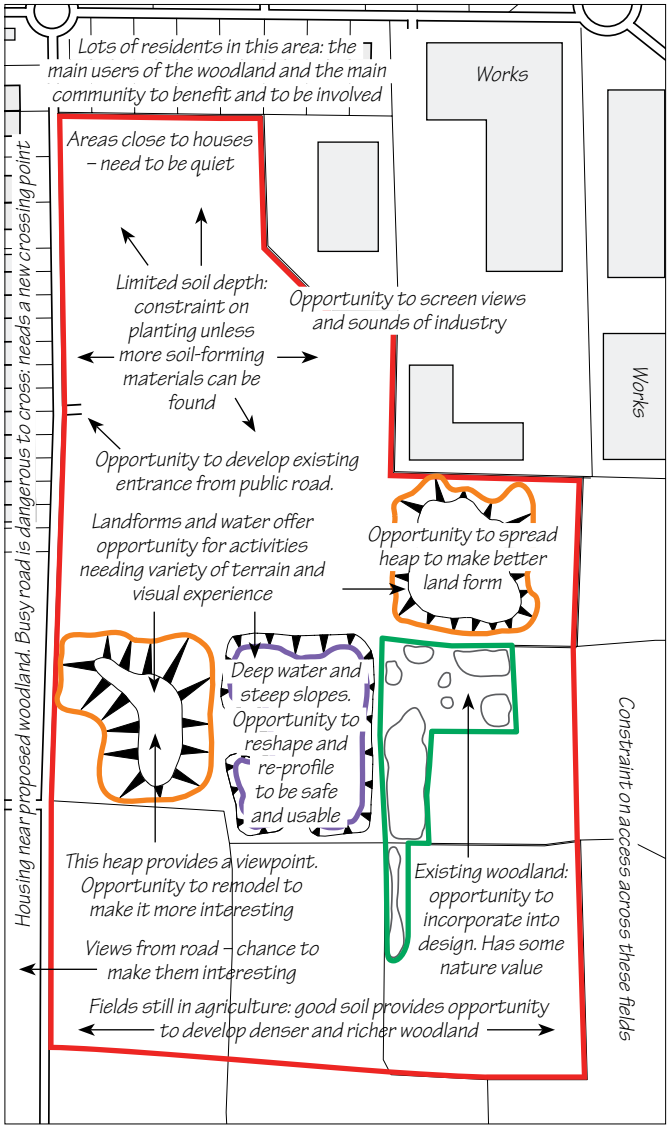
Constraints and opportunities analysis

Factor	Constraint	Opportunity
Soil depth and quality	Shallow areas and poor soils limit plantability	To use areas with shallow soils for open parts of the site
Spoil heaps	Compacted and steep-sided, no soil on them	To reshape them and use them for active sports or viewing opportunities
Gravel pit	Deep water, dangerous steep sides, possibly polluted	To reshape the profile and make it safe as well as to ensure vegetation colonises it
Old fields	Flat, full of weed seeds	Good soil and easier to establish woodland on them
Residential areas	Access from them is not very good	To make better access and to encourage residents to participate in the project
Existing woodland	Not very big in area, isolated and unmanaged	Provides a nucleus of woodland on which to build
Visual context	Many intrusive sights of industry and dereliction	To screen them and to create an attractive alternative internal landscape

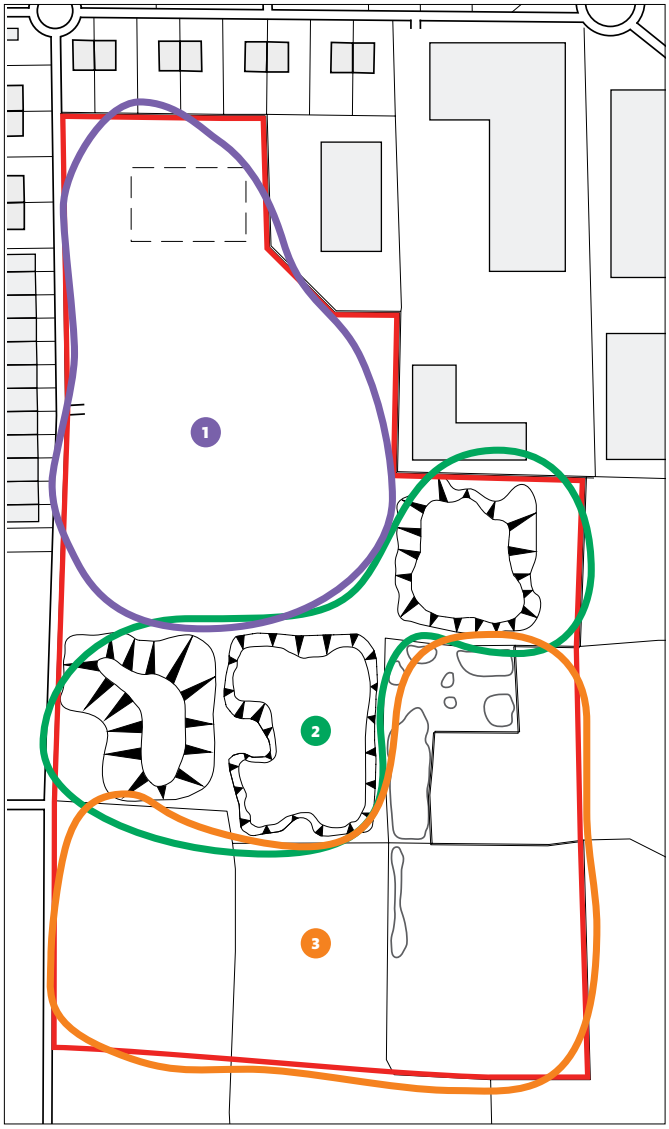
In this type of project a separate landscape character analysis is not relevant because a wholly new landscape will be created and there is nothing particularly significant in the surroundings which needs to be incorporated. Visual issues are identified in the site analysis from the single internal viewpoint. There is no need to do a landform analysis either as the landform will be altered.

From the objectives and the analyses a concept can be developed where a number of zones based on a combination of the balance of woodland to open ground and the appropriate mix of functions and accessibility are identified. These also make the best use of the terrain and the problems of soil and plantability. The design is then developed to show the layout, the paths and the different facilities in some detail, with a focus being on the internal design of spaces experienced from paths or viewpoints. The graphic presentation is also designed to ensure that local residents can understand it. The scale of 1:2000 allows for the details to be readable. The illustration from the single viewpoint also conveys the design effectively.

Constraints and opportunities analysis



Design strategy



Site boundary

Strategic zones

1 *Parkland*

This zone, being on difficult soils and closer to housing and the entrance, is suited to a more open character, with patches of trees, areas for sports, events and other activities needing space. It should be quiet normally but can be noisy when events are on.

2 *Active landscape*

This zone, being away from the residential area and with landform and water, offers the possibility of activities to give excitement, exercise and maybe noise too. Redesign of land and water is needed.

3 *Woodland*

This zone, being further away from residential areas and a good soil but with no interesting landform, is suitable for denser woodland with higher biodiversity value, some glades and paths and a wilder character. Quiet and a place where people can find more solitude.

Sketch design – perspective

Sketch design – plan