



Forestry Commission
England

THETFORD FOREST DISTRICT

KINGS FOREST DESIGN PLAN

Total Plan Area: 2334 Hectares

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES:

Suffolk

St Edmundsbury BC

Forest Heath DC

Date – July 2006

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1. Description

King's is a large block of forest (2334 ha) situated approximately 6 miles northwest of Bury St Edmunds and a similar distance southwest of Thetford. The forest is wholly within the county of Suffolk and within the administration areas of St Edmundsbury Borough and Forest Heath District Councils. It is bisected by the B1106 and there are a number of dwellings within the forest.

The whole area has been mapped by the Soil Survey of Great Britain, which has identified a number of different soil types. However, for all practical purposes the area is sand over chalk and the greatest influence on management is depth of sand with the shallower, more alkaline soils supporting a limited range of tree species.

Corsican pine has been the most widely planted species in the past but there are also areas of Scots pine often planted in a intimate mixture with beech. Broadleaf belts and roadside planting are a feature of the forest.

The Forest District Conservation Plan identifies a wide range of archaeological and wildlife conservation sites with the whole of Kings Forest included within the Breckland Forest SSSI and pSPA, Beeches Pit SSSI is an interglacial tufa site and there are also two heathland SSSIs adjoining the forest. Kings has a range of habitats from secondary woodland to lowland heath and there are three barrows that are notified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

There are several ponds, two of which contain populations of Great Crested Newt. Notable flora includes sites for the nationally rare; Blue fescue, Breckland thyme and Wild Grape hyacinth. There are also two sites for the declining butterfly species Dingy skipper.

The main recreation site is on the east side of the B1106 where a car park, way-marked walks, picnicking and play furniture are available. Limited access is possible at other points along the B1106 but is not encouraged. Considerable local usage occurs in the south: via a small car park at Forest Lodge, informal parking beside the minor public road and overspill from the West Stow Country Park. The Icknield Way has byway status and is part of a designated long distance path. There is a further byway along the eastern forest edge. Horse riding takes place throughout the area. The sporting rights are leased for the majority of the area and compartments 5218 and 5233 are used for archery.

The forest is not highly visible from the outside with mainly distant views of a largely wooded horizon. Internal views are seen from the B1106 and the minor road in the south. The mature broadleaf belt along the B1106 is a locally important feature, particularly in autumn. A system of rectangular Breckland shelterbelts merges into the forest from the heathland to the west and arable land to the north. Extensive arable farmland abuts to the east. The southern forest boundary is slightly more broken and falls away gently down to the river Lark Valley.

2. Original FDP – Assessment

The FDP process has changed in a number of ways since the original plan was drafted five years ago and this is reflected in the new areas that the FDP needs to address. These new areas are listed below with a description of their potential impact.

The UK Forest Standard – This is a Forestry Commission document that sets the standard that both public and private owner should meet to demonstrate good forest practice. One of the main impacts of the standard on this plan is the requirement to have at least a 7 year gap between adjacent felling coupes. The issue of “adjacency” of coupes does occur within this plan.

The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) – The Forestry Commission has received accreditation under this standard so that it can sell its timber as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. This standard is very rigorous and covers a wide range of issues that affect the way the forest is managed. The main effect of UKWAS on this plan is the requirement for the new FDP to meet certain minimum design thresholds including the amount of open space that is created during the life of the plan and the area managed as natural reserves.

East Anglia Forest District Strategic Plan – This plan was recently revised by the forest district to show how it will deal with strategic issues and how it will carry forward some of the objectives of the East of England Regional Woodland Strategy. There are three strategic objectives that will effect this FDP these are;

“P1.3.iii) To collate and prioritise the ideas/objectives of all teams to fully inform the FDP.”

“P1.3.iv) Take into account the internal and external landscape considerations for the area.”

“En 2.2) To manage and monitor SACs, SPAs and SSSIs.”

The first two objectives are part of the normal forest design plan process and the third objective is tested when the revised FDP undergoes an appropriate assessment for its impact on the Breckland Forest SSSI

3. Design Brief

The issues that the forest design plan should address are set out below under three broad headings, which relate to the structure of the English Forestry Strategy. The sensitivity classification gives a guide to the most important aspects of a design plan area.

Sensitivity Classification (scale 1-5): Landscape 2, Conservation 3, People 2.

Economic

- The felling plan should aim to smooth production from crops in cyclic clearfell but also meet market commitments for 2007-11.
- Design felling coupes that are economical to restock.
- Restocking should aim to maximise production but also to increase species and habitat diversity.
- Restocking should take into account the threat posed by Red Band Needle Blight.

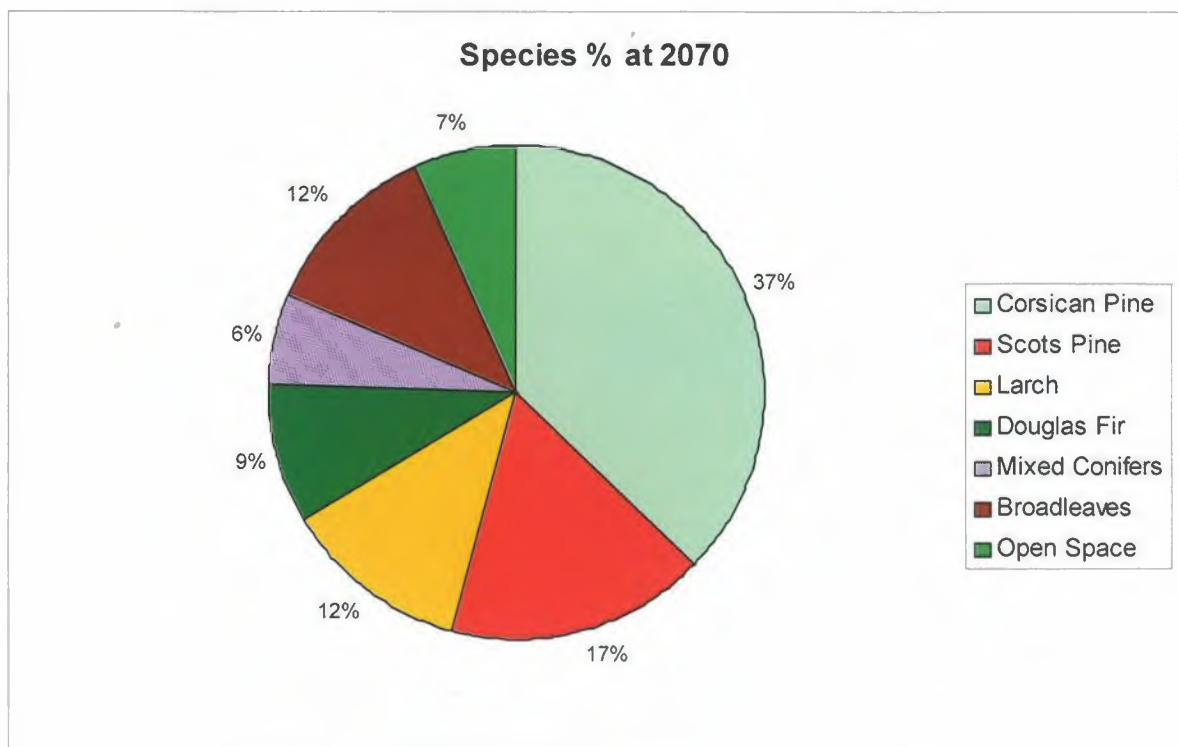
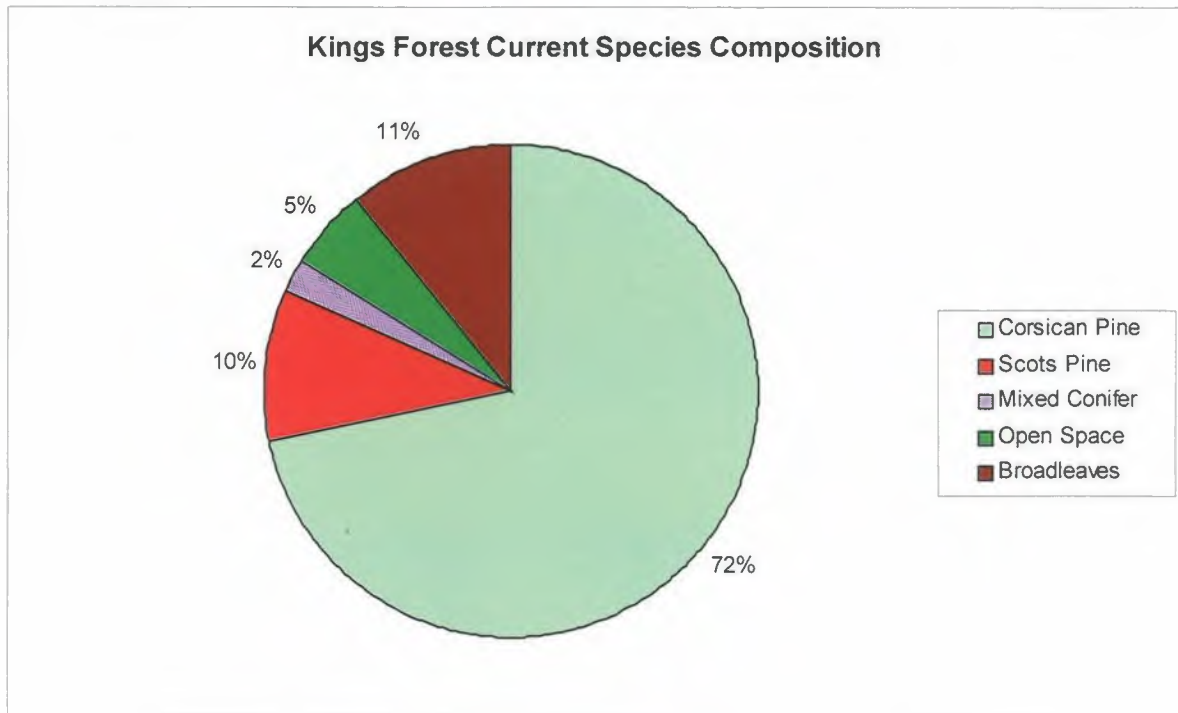
Social Issues

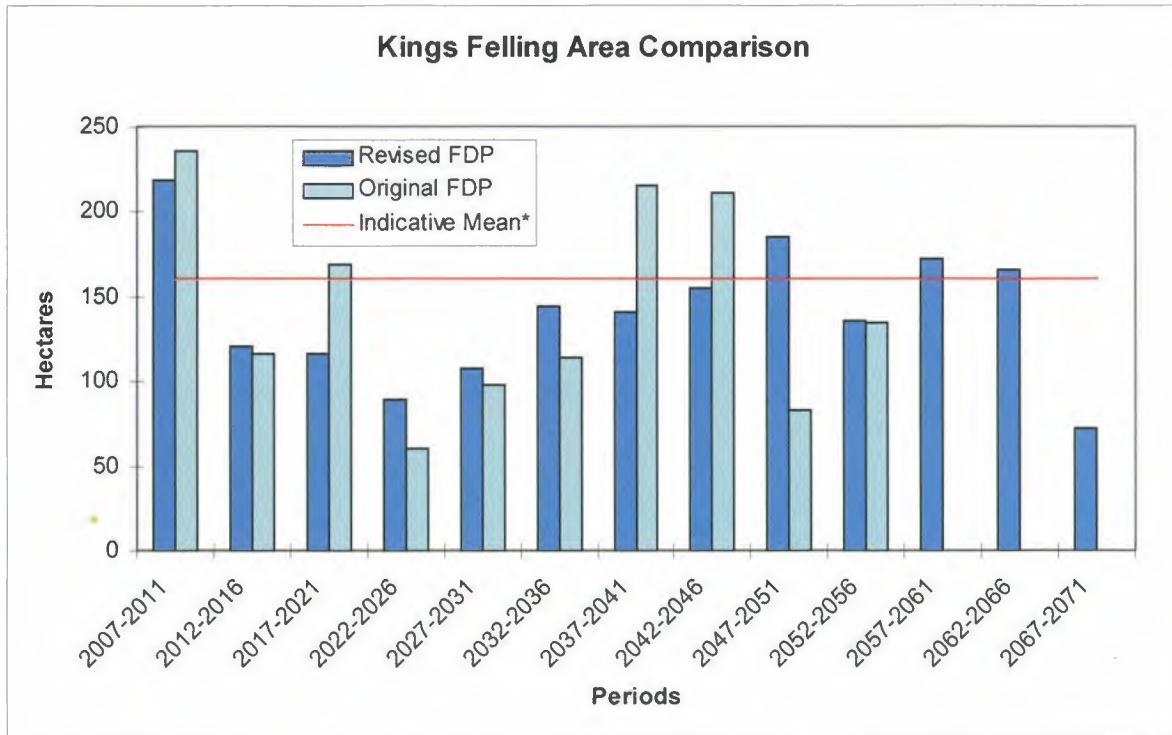
- Maintain a pleasant woodland environment for use by local dog walkers and horseriders.
- Reduce the size and shape of felling coupes to fit into the landscape

Environmental Issues

- Felling plans should aim for a more even distribution of felled area for Woodlark/Nightjar habitat under the pSPA.
- Link open spaces and widen conservation rides.
- Increase amount of open space to 10% of plan area.

4. Species and Felling Area





* The indicative mean is an estimated value based on the area of cyclic clearfell within the FDP divided by 57. The 57 represents an average rotation length of 55 years plus 2 years of fallow while the ground is prepared for the next crop.

5. Plan Appraisal

The appraisal of the revised plan is measured against the design brief on page 5, this has three separate sections and the appraisal relates to these sections:

Economic Issues

The relationship between timber volume production and felling area is close enough for the bar chart above to illustrate the smoothing effect that the revised plan has had on volume. The production of timber volume has been levelled significantly but it will take another rotation before the actual felling area is closer to the indicative mean value. It is also noticeable that the felling area for the current period (2007-11) is above the indicative mean as this level of felling is required to meet existing market commitments that were agreed five years ago.

A comparison of the pie charts on page 5 indicates that species diversity will increase over the life of the plan. The plan shows a decrease in the amount of Corsican Pine that will be planted. This is partly as a response to the threat posed by Red Band Needle Blight but also as a result of matching species to the appropriate soil type. The future management of the mixed conifers and broadleaved areas will be by continuous cover systems, with 1% of the total area managed by minimum-intervention.

Social Issues

The revision of the plan has maintained the best features of Kings Forest including the roadside broadleaved belts and the patchwork of Scots Pine retentions that help give the forest its structure and age diversity.

Kings Forest is one of the larger blocks in Thetford Forest Park and therefore has the landscape scale to include large clearfell areas of up to thirty hectares in some places but after this revision the average felling coupe size has come down from 13 hectares to 11.5 hectares.

Environmental Issues

As mentioned earlier, the felling area bar chart (p6) shows how the revised plan has “smoothed” the creation of felling area so that Woodlark and Nightjar habitat is more evenly distributed. The effect of the revised plans on the cyclic felling area across the whole pSPA has been calculated on GIS (Geographic Information System). The analysis of this data shows that the current cyclic clearfell area is 13,319 hectares but this will increase to 13,409 hectares by 2066. This is an increase of 90 hectares so there will be 652 hectares of cyclic clearfell above the pSPA minimum threshold area of 12,757 hectares.

The pSPA regulations require that no more than 10% of the annual felling area is in coupes under 5 hectares in size, as felled coupes smaller than this are judged to be less attractive as breeding habitat for Woodlark and Nightjar. The revised Kings plan has 3% of the felling area in coupes of under 5 hectares.

The pie chart on page 5 shows an increase in open space of 2% when compared to the original plans. This increase in open space has been created, largely, by widening rides that link existing open space. The resulting effect is a network of wide rides of high conservation value. The creation of this network can be hastened by widening the rides at the time of next thinning. It has been difficult to increase the area of permanent managed open space as the best conservation gain would be to create an area of managed heathland but the funding is not in place to achieve this.

In mitigation for the lack of permanent managed open space the cycle of clearfelling produces an abundance of ephemeral open space, which is particularly used by Nightjar and Woodlark. If the felled area in each period is added to the 7% of managed open space that will be created then the total amount of open space in any period will vary from 10% to 16%. This is a conservative estimate, as the clearfell areas will remain as suitable habitat for more than five years for Nightjar.

6. Monitoring

Once the felling of a coupe has been completed, the shape of that coupe is captured on the ground using a GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver and the data is uploaded into GIS. The resulting point data is then compared to the original coupe shape to confirm that the felling coupe has been accurately laid out on the ground.

A felled coupe is usually restocked two years later, when all the ground preparation and weed

control has been completed. At this point the forest district database is updated to show the newly planted species and their proportions. As part of this updating process the restocking information is compared with the FDP restock plan to confirm compliance. The restocking can vary slightly from the FDP as physical features, such as banks and pits, come to light after felling, which were not picked up during the planning process. Most of these minor changes are within the tolerances agreed between Forest Enterprise and the Forestry Commission – see Appendix I.



7. Plan Review

This FDP will be reviewed internally after 5 years and formally revised before 31 March 2016.

8. Approval

Forest Enterprise seeks approval from the Forestry Commission to fell and restock 340 ha and for selective felling within 402 hectares for the purpose of continuous cover forestry during the period 1/4/2006 to 31/3/2016 as shown on the enclosed plans.

Maps included with this document are as follows –


Analysis & Concept	Felling	Restocking
Signed:  Date: 6.7/06	Approved:  Date: 7.8.06	
Forest District Manager	Conservator	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">STEVE SCOTT CONSERVATOR EAST ENGLAND CONSERVANCY</div>

FOREST ENTERPRISE - Application for Forest Design Plan Approvals

Forest Enterprise - Property

Forest District:	East Anglia
Woodland or property name:	Kings Forest
Nearest town, village or locality:	Bury ST Edmunds
OS Grid reference:	TL826744
Local Authority district/unitary Authority:	Forest Heath DC & St Edmundsbury BC

1. I apply for Forest Design Plan approval for the property described above and in the enclosed Forest Design Plan.
2. I confirm that the scoping, carried out and documented in the Consultation Record attached, incorporated those stakeholders which the FC agreed must be included. Where it has not been possible to resolve specific issues associated with the plan to the satisfaction of consultees, this is highlighted in the Consultation Record.
3. I confirm that the proposals contained in this plan comply with the UK Forestry Standard.
4. I undertake to obtain any permission necessary for the implementation of the approved Plan.

Signed  Forest District Manager	Signed  Conservator
District <u>EAFD</u>	Conservancy
Date <u>6/7/06</u>	Date of Approval <u>7.8.06</u>
Date approval ends: <u>6.8.2016</u>	

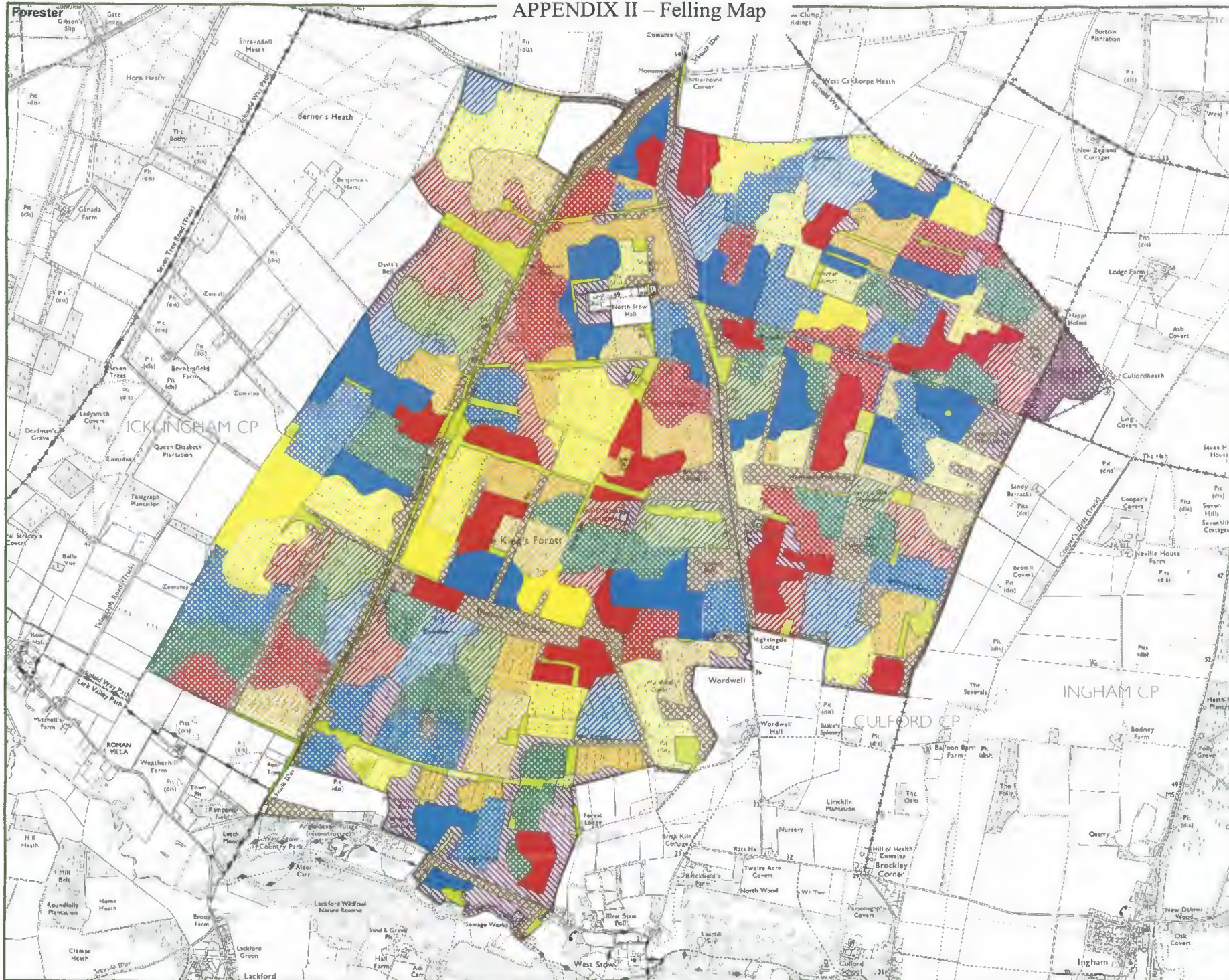
STEVE SCOTT
 CONSERVATOR
 EAST ENGLAND CONSERVANCY

Appendix I

Tolerance Table

	Adjustment to felling coupe boundaries	Timing of Restocking	Changes to species	Windthrow clearance
FC Approval normally not required	0.5 ha or 5% of coupe	Up to 3 planting seasons after felling	Change within species group e.g. evergreen conifers; broadleaves	Up to 2ha
Approval by exchange of letters and map	0.5ha to 2ha or 10% of coupe	Up to 4 planting seasons after felling	Change from other conifers to Corsican Pine	> 2ha to 5ha
Approval by formal plan amendment	> 2ha or >10% of coupe	Over 4 planting seasons after felling	Change from broadleaves to conifers	> 5ha

APPENDIX II – Felling Map



Forestry Commission
England

East Anglia Forest District
MANAGEMENT MAP
Scale: 1:17,500
Date: 31 July 2008

Legend

- Clearfell 2002-2006
- Clearfell 2007-2011
- Clearfell 2012-2016
- Clearfell 2017-2021
- Clearfell 2022-2026
- Clearfell 2027-2031
- Clearfell 2032-2036
- Clearfell 2037-2041
- Clearfell 2042-2046
- Clearfell 2047-2051
- Clearfell 2052-2056
- Clearfell 2057-2061
- Clearfell 2062-2066
- Clearfell 2067-2071
- CCF - Conifer
- CCF - Broadleaves
- Coppice
- PAWS Reversion
- Minimum Intervention
- Natural Reserve
- Open/Other

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APPENDIX III – Restock Map



Forestry Commission
England

East Anglia Forest District
Future Species & Habitat
Scale: 1:25,000
Date: 31 July 2008

Legend

- Corsican Pine
- Scots Pine
- Douglas Fir
- Larch
- Mixed Conifers
- Mixed Broadleaves
- Permanent Open Space
- Temporary Open Space



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