WPG Management Plan

Blundell's Copse

Date (from/to)	2013 - 2023 (reviewed in 2018)
Date of last review [UKWAS 2.1.3]	
Owner/tenant	Reading Borough Council
Agent/contact	Giles Sutton/ Dave Booth
Signed declaration of tenure rights and agreements to public availability of the plan [UKWAS 1.1.3/1.1.5/2.1.2]	

1 Background information

1.1 Location

Nearest town, village or feature	Tilehurst
Grid reference	SU673735
Total area (ha)	5.7

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

Blundells Copse is a small woodland located close to Tilehurst, near Reading. It is an important landscape feature on the slope down from Tilehurst Centre to the river Thames to the north.

1.3 History of Management

A management plan for the site was produced in 1992. A number of projects were completed including the building of a footbridge across the stream, improving of paths, digging of ditches, the planting of 800 trees and coppicing across the site. In 1998 a survey and updated plan was produced and some of the management tasks have been undertaken by the council and voluntary groups.

A circular path around the woodland was re-surfaced and made suitable for wheelchair use in 2003, this path is now heavily worn and very muddy and impassable in places

particularly during wet weather and needs to be replaced.					

2 Woodland Information

2.1 Areas and features

Designated Areas	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Special areas for conservation (SACs)			
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)			
Ramsar Sites (see note on Guidance)			
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)			
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)			
Other designations (e.g. National Park (NP) / World Heritage Site)	Entire site	Х	
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)			
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	Entire site	Х	
TPO / Conservation Area (CA)			

Details: Blundells Copse is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Local Wildlife Site (through the Local Development Framework) and is afforded protection from the adverse impacts of development through planning policy.

Blundells Copse also forms part of the West Reading Woodland's Biodiversity Opportunity Area. The implementation of this Management Plan will help ensure that Biodiversity Opportunity Area is enhanced for wildlife.

Rare and important species	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Red Data Book or BAP species			
Rare, threatened, EPS or SAP species			

Details: The following rare/ notable species have been recorded within Blundells Copse (data from Thames valley Environmental Records Centre species list):

Bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta) - 2006

Welsh Poppy (Meconopsis cambrica) - 1986

Common Frog (Rana temporaria) - 2004

Grass Snake (Natrix natrix) - 2008

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) - 2000

Mistle Thrush (Turdus viscivorus) - 1994

Willow Warbler (Phylloscopus trochilus) - 1994

This list is not particularly comprehensive and it is likely that the site supports other notable species.

Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland	2	Х	
Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)			
Semi-natural features in PAWS			
Woodland margins and hedges	2	X	
Veteran and other notable trees			
Breeding sites			
Habitats of notable species			
Unimproved grasslands			
Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			

Details: See map 2

Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses	2	Х	
Lakes			
Ponds			

Wetland habitats	2	Х			
welland habitats	2	^			
Details: A stream runs through the site from east to west and associated with this stream are a number of					
wetland areas – see map 2					
Landscape	Мар	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland		
	No.				
Landscape designated areas					
Landscape features					
Rock exposures					
Historic landscapes					
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads					
Areas of the woodland prominent from	1	Х			
settlements					
Details: Blundells is prominent from adjacent urban areas					

Cultural features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Public rights of way	5		
Prominent viewing points			
Existing permissive footpaths			
Proposed permissive footpaths			
Areas managed with traditional management systems			

Details: The woodland is owned by the council and all areas are accessible by the public at all times.

Archaeological Features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Scheduled monument			
Historical feature (Inc. designed landscapes, registered parks and gardens)			
Other			

Details: No known records of archaeological features

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Biodiversity

The site is of significant biodiversity value and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (through the Local Development Framework) and a Local Nature Reserve (under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949). It hosts a stream and two UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats; lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland. A botanical survey in 2006 found 29 Ancient Woodland Indicator species (however the woodland is not listed on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory).

Amenity

Blundell's Copse is of significant amenity value and is located close to an economically deprived part of Tilehurst. It has an established path system and is well used by the local community, it has an active friends group who undertake small scale management works in the woodland. The condition of the paths has deteriorated over recent years, particularly during wet periods, and this has constrained public and disabled access to the site.

Timber

The woodland is and will be primarily managed for amenity and biodiversity purposes. Access is difficult and the quality of timber is likely to be poor and will therefore only have limited value as firewood.

2.3 Site description

A small broadleaved woodland in a shallow valley. It is located on the boundary between the London Clay and the underlying Reading Beds with a layer of Plateau Gravel at the top of the hill to the south (see map 2).

A wide and, in places, fast flowing stream runs through the site from the south-west to the north-east. The wet woodland adjacent to the stream is dominated by alder, ash and willow.

Lighter more freely drained soils occur on Plateau Gravels on the valley sides and these areas are dominated more by Oak with Hazel understorey. There is a large impenetrable patch of bracken on the southern edge of the woodland.

Figure 3 shows the location of compartments and the broad habitat types found on the site. Figure 4 gives further details from a detailed habitat survey undertaken in 2012.

A description of each of the compartments is given below:

Compartments

Compartment 1 – small meadow area to west of woodland. Previously cut and collected annually, now cut on a regular basis with arisings left in situ

Compartment 2 – Mainly tall sycamore and oak with a limited understorey, sycamores are beginning to dominate this compartment

Compartment 3 – Mixed woodland dominated by oak and hazel, some holly in the understorey. Stream runs along the southern boundary of this compartment. Problems with dumping of household and garden waste into woodland to the rear of the houses along Teviot Road

Compartment 4 – Mixed woodland dominated by alder, ash and hazel, some holly in the understorey. Stream runs along the northern boundary of this compartment.

Compartment 5 – Mixed woodland no dominant species dense understorey in places. Some problems with dumping of garden waste and the main path is wet and overshadowed. Stream runs along southern boundary

Compartment 6 – Mixed woodland, oak, ash hazel with a diverse woodland structure in places. Woodland adjacent to stream dominated by alder and willow, some of which have been previously pollarded. A mixed native hedgerow along the eastern boundary was laid in 2003. The sloped glade to the south of the compartment is now completely covered in bracken making it almost entirely inaccessible and bracken is now beginning to block the main path along the northern boundary.

Paths:

There are a series of paths on the site with the main path running around the perimeter. The main path was resurfaced and made suitable for wheelchairs in 2003. However this path has now become inaccessible in places due to water, mud caused by leaf litter and overshadowing by bracken. Figure 5 shows existing and proposed paths and management prescriptions for the paths should funding for the works be available.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

Threats

Deterioration of the path due to water damage, overshadowing and leaf litter – this will limit access to the woodland. If path sightlines are not maintained this may increase the fear of crime.

Over domination by bracken, sycamore and exotic non-native species (from garden debris)

Dumping of garden and household waste

Constraints

As with all old woodland sites there is a risk that bats may be present within mature trees and badgers are known to inhabit the woodland. As such operations will need to be assessed in order to ensure that these protected species are not harmed.

The approach to the protection of bat roosts will be as follows:

• Trees to be felled will be checked from ground level, using binoculars if

- appropriate, for features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats and categorised according to the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Survey Guidelines.
- Category 1* Trees (that is trees with multiple, highly suitable features capable of supporting larger roosts) and Category 1 Trees (that is trees with definite bat potential, supporting fewer suitable features than category 1* trees or with potential for use by single bats) will be retained unless it is unsafe to do so.
- If trees cannot be retained further inspections (e.g. if they represent a significant hazard to the public), comprising either climbing inspections and or emergence or dawn surveys will be undertaken and as a last resort the relevant licence from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation will be obtained (NB it is not anticipated that this step will be necessary as the majority of Category 1 and 1* trees will be retained.)
- Care will be taken when felling Category 2 trees (that is trees with no obvious potential, although the tree is of a size and age whereby features may not be visible from ground level; or trees that support some features which may have limited potential to support bats) will be felled with care and if at any point bats or signs of bats are found works will stop until expert ecological advice has been obtained and if necessary the relevant licences obtained.

The above approach will ensure that individual bats are not harmed, that their conservation status is not affected, and that legislation is complied with.

The approach to badgers will be as follows:

- Prior to commencement of felling works all areas will be checked for badger setts.
- If a badger sett is present works adjacent to the sett will not occur unless expert
 ecological advice has been sought and it has been confirmed that works are
 unlikely to result in disturbance to the sett
- If it is concluded that works might disturb the sett then if at all possible trees will not be removed.
- It disturbance cannot be avoided (e.g. if trees to be felled represent a significant hazard to the public) the relevant licence will be obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation

The above approach will ensure that individual badgers are not harmed and that legislation is complied with.

Notable and veteran trees will be identified on site and will not be felled unless it cannot be avoided (e.g. if they represent a significant hazard to the public). Where appropriate thinning and felling operations will aim to free up notable and veteran trees by for example creating a halo around them aiming to increase their longevity.

3 Long term vision, management objectives and strategy

3.1 Long term vision

A well known, and well used local woodland, valued and respected by the local community for its amenity and wildlife value, with a well maintained network of paths and clear entrance and exit signs.

3.2 Management Objectives

- 1) To have a well maintained and accessible network of paths used for travel and for recreation
- 2) To encourage the development of a structurally and ecologically diverse woodland by:
 - a) controlling bracken
 - b) controlling non native, and over dominant species
 - c) creating a number of glades
 - d) restoring areas of coppice
 - e) laying boundary hedges where appropriate
 - f) maintaining and enhancing the wet woodland and stream
- 3) To manage and control unauthorised activities including flytipping, dumping of garden waste and the use of motorbikes

3.3 Strategy

Objective 1 – Access and recreation

Re-surface and restore to 1.2m wide the circular path as soon as money becomes available. The path is to be suitable for wheelchair users. Trees and scrub adjacent to the path are to be selectively felled to improve site lines and reduce leaf litter (and associated build up of mud). Preventative drainage works may be required. The path is to be kept clear of bracken and overhanging vegetation and vegetation is to be cut three times between April and September.

Encourage and facilitate events that publicise the woodland and its value to local communities.

Ensure that benches are maintained.

Objective 2a) Control of bracken

Control bracken by mechanical means by crimping/ cutting early in the summer

Objective 2b) control of non-native and over dominant species

Control sycamore where it is starting to dominate, selective felling sycamore over other species elsewhere. Use local volunteers to remove Spanish Bluebell.

Objective 2c) create a series of glades and widen rides

Create a total of 3 glades across the woodland, one every 5 years. Widen rides as appropriate in the woodland

Objective 2d and 2e) coppice restoration and hedgelaying

Use TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) and other volunteer groups to restore coppice areas and lay hedges

Objective 2f) maintain and enhance stream

Selective thinning and pollarding of willow, poplar and alder adjacent to stream. One of the glades detailed in 2c will be adjacent to the stream

Objective 3 unauthorised activities

Maintain entrance gates and fencing in appropriate places

Leaflet residents about the problems caused by fly tipping and the dumping of garden waste and seek to prosecute persistent offenders

4 Management prescriptions/operations

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

Continuous Cover Forestry. The majority of the wood is to be managed as low intervention forest with trees thinned and selectively felled to allow greater structural diversity.

There will be some opening up of glades and coppice coupes, to a maximum of 0.25 hectares.

4.1.2 Phased felling and restructuring of plantations

Not applicable

4.1.3 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

There are no plans to re-stock the woodland. It is anticipated that natural regeneration will occur at an increased rate once the canopy has been opened up. If natural regeneration does not occur re-planting will be considered when this management plan is reviewed.

4.2 New planting

None planned. Woodland will be left to regenerate naturally. If natural regeneration does not occur re-planting will be considered when this management plan is reviewed.

4.3 Other operations

See section 7

4.4 Protection and maintenance

4.4.1 Pest and disease management

There are not many signs of deer (such as browsing damage or faecal pellets) within the woodland but as with most of lowland Britain, muntjac and roe deer are likely to be present. If regeneration is poor or coppice re-growth is limited, the use of deer fencing will be investigated.

4.4.2 Fire plan

In general this wood represents a low fire risk and as with most broadleaved woodlands arson is the most likely cause of fire. However there is no history of serious fires in this wood. In the event of a fire being reported the fire brigade will be contacted immediately. The rendezvous points for the fire brigade are shown on Map 1.

4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution

Litter is a problem in parts of the woodland and regular litter picks will be undertaken.

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

Maintain entrance gates and fencing in appropriate places

Leaflet residents about the problems caused by fly tipping and the dumping of garden waste and seek to prosecute persistent offenders

4.4.5 Protection of other identified services and values

Regular safety inspection of trees adjacent to paths and boundaries will be undertaken by the council, remedial action will be undertaken as required.

4.5 Game management

None

4.6 Protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and special features

4.6.1 Management of designated areas

Blundells Copse is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site.

A major objective of this management plan is to enhance the woodland for biodiversity. This will contribute to Local, Regional and National Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

Implementation of this management plan will also ensure that one of the indicators used by the council to measure its success, that is the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites under positive conservation management, known as Single Data List 160, will improve.

4.6.2 Measures to enhance biodiversity and other special features [UKWAS 2.1.1/6.1.1]

It is not proposed to include any specific measures, such as the installation of bird and bat boxes, within the woodland. Implementation of the management plan will enhance the site for biodiversity

4.6.3 Special measures for ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and semi-natural woodland (SNW)

Not applicable

4.6.4 Special measures for plantation on ancient woodland site (PAWS)

Not applicable

4.6.5 Measures to mitigate impacts on landscape and neighbouring land [UKWAS 3.1.2]

The woodland will be managed as continuous cover forestry and as such there should be no noticeable impact on the landscape.

4.7 Management of social and cultural values

4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

Works that could potentially impact upon old earthworks will be avoided or if this is not possible advice will be sought from the archaeological service at Reading Museum.

4.7.2 Public access and impacts on local people

There is full public access to the woodland. Where tree felling or woodland work could represent a safety risk, signs will be erected and access prohibited during works.

5 Consultation

A series of public consultation events were held over the summer of 2013 and modifications to the plans were made. For more information on the consultation and the changes that were made please contact the council.

6 Monitoring plan summary

Objective number, issue or UKWAS Requirement	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
1 – path network	State of paths	Visual check	Monthly	Park supervisor	To inform path management
2 - structurally and ecologically diverse woodland	State of habitats	Local Wildlife Site Survey	Approxima tely every five years	Thames Valley Environmenta I Records Centre	To identify any changes and to inform management decisions
2 - structurally and ecologically diverse woodland	Monitor bracken	Visual check	Monthly during growing season	Park supervisor	To inform the bracken control programme
2 - structurally and ecologically diverse woodland	Woodlan d regrowth	Fixed point photograph y	Yearly	Ecologist	To determine the success of woodland regeneration and to inform management decisions
3 - unauthorised activities	Complai nts	Regular walkover	When site is visited	All	To manage activities in line with council policy



WPG Management Plan

7 Work programmes

7.1 Outline long-term work programme (2018 - 2033)

(Use this table to outline medium to long term areas of work)

Cpt. Ref or	Activity		Year (tick)	
Name		6-10	11-20	
All	Thinning / selective felling	Х	Х	
6	Hazel coppice restoration	Х	Х	
All	Path management	Х	Х	

7.2 Short-term work programme (2013 - 2018)

(Use this table to collect basic inventory data for the woodland areas you propose to work during the next 5 years)

Cpt.	Area	Main	P.	Yield	Activity				Year					
Ref / Name	(ha)	Specie s	Year	Class		1	2	3	4	5				
1	0.32	Grassl and			Annual hay cut, path to be retained	X	Х	Х	Х	X				
2	0.16	Sycam ore			50% thin of sycamore	X	Х	Х						
3	0.03	Virgini a creepe r			Remove	X	X	X						
4	0.1	Mixed			Creation of new glade	Х	Х	Х						
5,6	1.4	Mixed			Up to 50% thin of canopy	Х	Х	Х						
4	0.14	Mixed			Creation of new glade	X	Х	Х						
5,6	0.34				Bracken control	X	Х	Х						
6	0.2	Hazel			Thin canopy and attempt hazel coppice restoration (thin canopy years 1 – 3, assess coppice regrowth and coppice if appropriate year 5)	X	Х	Х		Х				
5	0.02	Laurel			Fell laurel	X	Х	Х						
6	0.07	Mixed			Coppice boundary trees	Х	Х	Х						

5, 6	0.09	Mixed		Lay hedgerow					Х
All				Major path works, clear sight lines, install gates, bridges, paths etc as per Map 5 (only if funding is available)	Х				
All				Ongoing path maintenance (monthly cut of bracken over the summer)	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х

8 Costing Operations

The strategy for Reading's woodlands is to use volunteers, council staff and contractors to undertake management tasks throughout the woodland, following the detailed prescriptions given in table 7.2.

Due to access issues and the limited availability of timber it is not anticipated that there will be any income from the sale of timber from Blundells Copse. However the timber to be removed is likely to have some value as firewood and the thinning / selective felling operations are therefore likely to be cost neutral.

Money to fund other works will be applied for through the EWGS Woodland Management Grant (WMG) and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) with any outstanding costs paid for through income from the sale of timber elsewhere in the Councils Woodland estate.

9 Maps

It is recommended that you show as much information on subject based maps as possible. For example, a map showing site constraints or a concept map showing the main proposals.

List all maps here and append to plan:

Map no./Title	Description
1	Location
2	Geology and contours
3	Habitats
4	1998 detailed survey map
5	Path and access prescriptions
6	Woodland management prescriptions

10Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1 Table A (not applicable to this application)

10.2 Table B

This section must be fully completed by the applicant if they wish to gain felling licence approval from the Forestry Commission. The work detailed below must match the proposals set out in the plan. For details on how to complete this table, please refer to **EWGS4 – Woodland Regeneration** for guidance and Tree Felling guidance.

4.	5.	6.	7.	8.		9.	10.		11.	13.		14.		12.
Cpt.	Area (ha)	% area	Type	area			Preferr ed	mixture		% Estab.	d Is	Notes / Details		
Sub Cpt.		worked	fellin g	compr	ising:	type			claim year	Speci	%	by natural	Standard proposals	
•				BL	CON		From	То	•	es		regen	Standard proposals	
All	5.7	40	SF	100	0	С	NAT	NAT	NA	NA	NA	100%		Up to 40% of the
														woodland will be worked
														– see map 6
All	5.7	5%	Т	100	0	С	NAT	NAT	NA	NA	NA	100%		
All	5.7	5%	SF	100	0	С	NAT	NAT	NA	NA	NA	100%		
All	5.7	5%	FC	100	0	С	NAT	NAT	NA	NA	NA	100%		Coppice restoration

Appendix 1 - Photographs

Photo 1 -Area of bracken on southern boundary



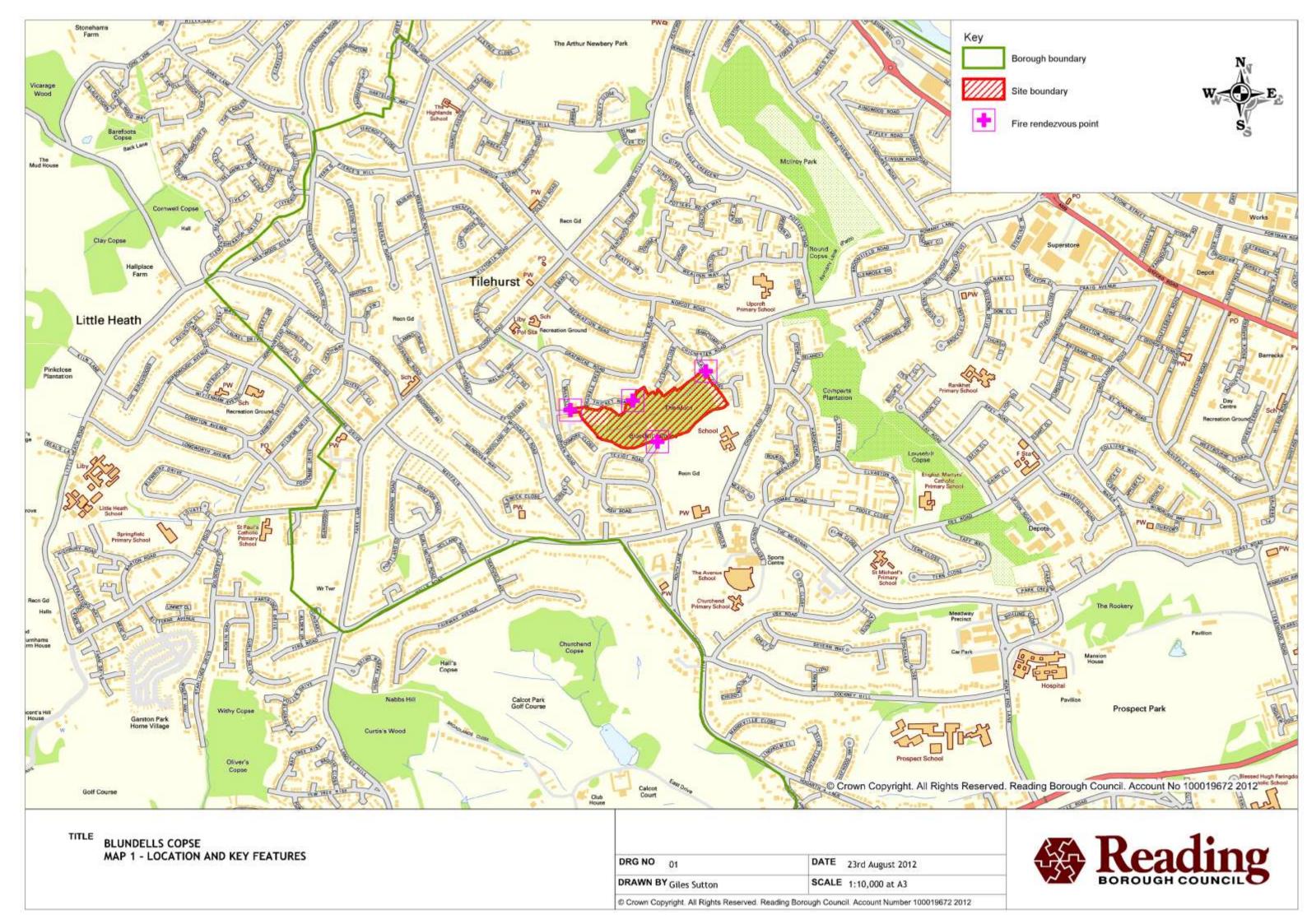
Photos 2 to 7 – Circular path in very poor condition (photos supplied by Tilehurst Globe)

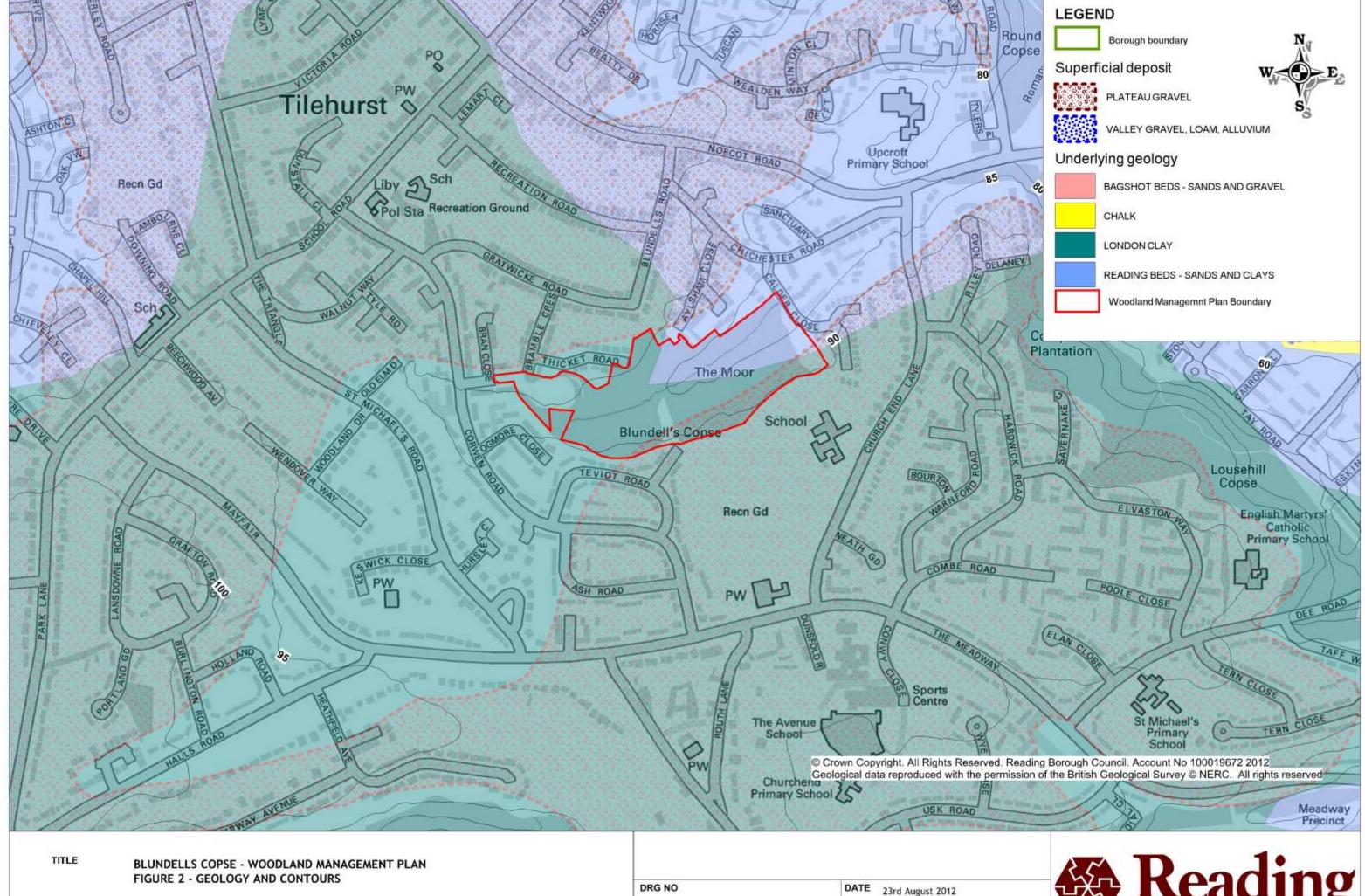












DRG NO	DATE 23rd August 2012	
DRAWN BY GS	SCALE 1:5000 at A3	



