

Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat

Date (from/to)	2013 – 2023 (reviewed in 2018)
Date of last review [UKWAS 2.1.3]	Not applicable
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 (see map 1)

Nearest town, village or feature	Caversham
Grid reference	470720, 176470
Total area (ha)	5.7

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

Bugs Bottom (or Hemdean Bottom) is a prominent open space on the outskirts of Reading. It comprises a steep chalk bank that runs east west through the centre of the site and slopes to the south in a coombe formation, to the north lies farmland adjacent to Gravel Hill, an old sunken lane now closed to traffic. The wooded areas around the perimeter of the site form a small but important component of the overall public space.

Furzeplat is located to the east of Bugs Bottom and is a small woodland connected to Bugs Bottom via a steep wooded bank at the rear of some gardens.

The area surrounding Bugs Bottom was developed for housing in the 1990's and Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat are the remnants of the previously agricultural landscape.

1.3 History of Management

As part of the housing development in the 1990s, the woodlands and hedgerows around the perimeter of the Bugs Bottom were augmented with new planting. This was in the main native broadleaved species, but some non natives such as snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) appear to have been included in the mix. This planting has never been thinned and is now very dense in places.

Furzeplat is a good example of hazel coppice with oak standard but is out of rotation and almost derelict. One coupe was cut in the winter of 2011/ 12 and used as binders for the restoration of the hedgerow at Gravel Hill. The remainder appears not to have been harvested for approximately 20 years as the stands, although outgrown, are not derelict.

The site, excluding the woodland areas, is under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement. Management prescriptions are the maintenance of the species rich grassland, management of woodland edges, and the restoration of the hedgerow along Gravel Hill, a sunken lane to the north of Bugs Bottom.

The woodland edge option is designed to encourage the woodland edge to grow out into the field and requires 6 m to be left uncultivated from the edge of the wood. The desired outcome is a scrub and grass mosaic and in order to achieve it some trees and shrubs will be cut back, with no more than 1/3rd of the scrub being cut in any one year.

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	X	
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)			
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)			

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TPO / Conservation Area (CA)		X	
<p>Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat are both designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Local Wildlife Site (through the Local Development Framework) and are afforded some protection from the adverse impacts of development through planning policy.</p> <p>The site is subject to a TPO and prior to the commencement of works a TPO application will need to be made to the council's planning department.</p>			
Rare and important species	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Red Data Book or BAP species			
Rare, threatened, EPS or SAP species			
Details			

Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland			
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	2		X
Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			
<p>Details</p> <p>The grassland adjacent to the site is relatively species rich, although not strictly unimproved as it is likely to have been fertilised sometime in the past when the field was last farmed. The woodland edge habitat, particularly between the grassland and the woodland to the west is a good example of this habitat type.</p>			

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Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses			
Lakes			
Ponds			
Wetland habitats			
Details: None			
Landscape	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Landscape designated areas			
Landscape features			
Rock exposures			
Historic landscapes			
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads		X	
Areas of the woodland prominent from settlements		X	
Details: Bugs Bottom and the adjacent woodland is a prominent landscape feature from the adjacent housing estate			
Cultural features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Public rights of way	1	X	
Prominent viewing points			
Existing permissive footpaths			
Proposed permissive footpaths			
Areas managed with traditional management systems			
Details The woodland is owned by the council and is accessible by the public at all times. A bridleway runs through the centre of the site but not through the wooded areas.			
Archaeological Features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Scheduled monument			
Historical feature (Inc. designed landscapes, registered parks and gardens)			
Other			
Details: There no known archaeological features within the woodland			

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Amenity

Bugs Bottom is of significant amenity value and is well used by the public who have permanent access to the site. Furzeplat is quite inaccessible and is less well used by the public.

Biodiversity

Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat are designated as Local Wildlife Sites

Timber and firewood

The woodland is and will be primarily managed for amenity and biodiversity purposes. Thinnings will be sold for firewood where practicable.

2.3 Site description

For the purposes of this management plan the woodland has been split into compartments as shown on Map 3.

Compartment 1 – western boundary of Bugs Bottom

Wooded bank sloping west to east. Mature trees, including oak, ash and horse chestnut towards the back of the bank with a mix of elm, bramble, elder etc., along the eastern boundary. Some deciduous planting where compartment 2 meets compartment 3, including some hazel stools that could be coppiced (target note 1, map 3) and patches of snowberry along the boundary with the grassland.

Compartment 2 – eastern and southern boundary of Bugs Bottom

Strip of broadleaved woodland planted when at the time of the new housing estate in the 1990's. Some mature trees to the rear of the compartment. Planting mix includes Hazel, Hawthorn, Field Maple and Willow, and has not been thinned since it was planted. Some of the hazel stools are now ready to be coppiced and the new planting could be thinned.

Compartment 3 – Wooded bank between Glenrhonnda and Cwmcarn

Steep, inaccessible wooded bank with tall mature oak and ash, good structural diversity with a relatively well developed scrub layer.

Compartment 4 - Furzeplat

Hazel coppice with oak, ash and sycamore standards, good variety of ground flora

including dogs mercury and bluebell. Hazel coppice is mature but not derelict and approx 7 large stools have been coppiced in 2011/12. To the north sycamore is starting to dominate (target note 2, map 3).

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

Hazards

- None identified

Threats

- Without thinning, the planted areas will become dense and of limited ecological and amenity value.
- Sycamore in Furzeplat may start to dominate the woodland shading out the hazel coppice and the herb layer
- Without an active management regime coppice in Furzeplat will become derelict

Constraints

Vehicular access: steep slopes make vehicular access difficult, and there is no vehicular access to Furzeplat

Public use of the woodland: areas where trees are being felled will be cordoned off

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

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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.
- If 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 diverse woodland displaying good structural and species diversity, highly valued by the local community for its amenity and biodiversity with habitats including:

- in-rotation coppice with standards
- woodland edge
- developing plantation woodland

3.2 Management Objectives

- 1 – to manage the woodland edge between the species rich grassland in Bugs Bottom and compartments 1 and 2, so that a graded profile develops with a good mix of habitats.
- 2 – to thin out the areas planted in the 1990s, bringing hazel coppice stools into rotation, where possible, allowing the development of maturing woodland.
- 3 – to manage Furzeplat as coppice with standards
- 4 – to reduce the risk of dominance by sycamore within Furzeplat
- 5 – to control non-native species, in particular snowberry in compartments 1 and 2.

3.3 Strategy

Using a combination of volunteers, council staff and contractors to address the threats identified in 2.4 by implementing the objectives in 3.2. The strategy for each objective is given below and is illustrated on Map 4:

Objective 1

In line with the council's Higher Level Stewardship Agreement a 6m wide strip of woodland edge will be allowed to develop. When and where required, scrub and trees will be cut to ensure that the woodland edge habitat is maintained.

Objective 2

Newly planted hazel stools to be coppiced. Thinning to be undertaken during years 1 – 2.

Objective 3

Following the initial coppicing works the coppice stools in Furzeplat will be divided into coups and coppiced in years 5 and 10. This pattern will continue with one coup being coppiced every 5 years on a 15 year rotation.

Objective 4

Selectively fell sycamore in Furzeplat using council staff or contractors

Objective 5

Remove snowberry when undertaking the coppicing at the site

4 Management prescriptions/operations

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

Continuous Cover Forestry. The woodland is to be managed as low intervention forest with trees thinned and selectively felled in line with the objectives in this management plan.

4.1.2 Phased felling and restructuring of plantations

Not applicable

4.1.3 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

Woodland will be left to regenerate naturally. If natural regeneration does not occur re-planting will be considered when this management plan is reviewed.

4.2 New planting

No new planting will occur over the period of this plan. 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

None planned

4.4 Protection and maintenance

4.4.1 Pest and disease management

There are not many signs of deer (such as obvious browsing damage or lots of faeces) within the woodland but as with most of lowland Britain, muntjac and roe deer are likely to be present. Cut coppice stools will be protected with brash and monitored for signs of damage and if regeneration is poor, deer fencing will be considered.

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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. There is an increased risk of fires in the grassland during dry periods and after the hay cut. In the event of a fire being reported the fire brigade will be contacted immediately.

Bottles, broken glass, illegal fly tipping etc. can all add to the risk that a fire can be started accidentally. Litter will be removed regularly.

Fire rendezvous points are shown on Map 1.

4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution

Litter is not a major problem in the woodland and regular litter picks will be undertaken. Bins and dog bins are emptied regularly.

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

Unauthorised activities have not historically been a major issue in this woodland. There is some dumping of garden waste into compartment 3 and a small BMX track has been observed in compartment 4 in the past. These are not major issues and will be monitored by the council and dealt with in accordance with council policy

4.4.5 Protection of other identified services and values

Regular safety inspection of trees adjacent to paths will be undertaken, remedial action will be undertaken as required.

4.5 Game management

Not applicable

4.6 Protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and special features

4.6.1 Management of designated areas

Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat are both designated as Local Wildlife Sites and grasslands areas are managed under a Higher Level Stewardship agreement.

A major objective of this woodland 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 performance, that is the proportion of Local Wildlife Sites under positive conservation management, known as Single Data List 160, will be increased.

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

Implementation of the management plan will improve 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 significant noticeable impact on the landscape.

4.7 Management of social and cultural values

4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

No sites of archaeological interest or particular cultural have been identified.

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	Quality of woodland edge habitat	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform grass cutting and edge management regime
2, 3	Coppice regrowth	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To decide whether hazel stools need to be protected after cutting
4	Dominance of sycamore	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform ongoing management
5	Snowberry regrowth	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To decide whether or not it should be chemically treated

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 Name	Activity	Year (tick)	
		6-10	11-20
1, 2, 4	Coppicing hazel	X	X
2	Thinning and coppicing trees planted during the 1990s		X
All	Monitoring of non-native / invasive species, undertaking remedial action where required	X	X

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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. Ref / Name	Area (ha)	Main Species	P. Year	Yield Class	Activity	Year				
						1	2	3	4	5
1	2.6	Mixed broadl eaved			Woodland edge monitoring and management	X	X	X	X	X
2	1.2	Mixed broadl eaved			Woodland edge monitoring and management	X	X	X	X	X
1,2	1.2	Mixed broadl eaved			Thinning and first time coppicing of trees planted during the 1990s at Bugs Bottom	X	X	X		
4	1.5	Hazel, Oak, Ash, Sycam ore			Derelict hazel restoration in Furzeplat	X	X			
4	1.5	Hazel, Oak, Ash, Sycam ore			Selective felling of sycamore n Furzeplat	X	X			

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. Money to fund and manage these works will be applied for through the EWGS Woodland Management Grant (WMG) and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG).

There is no vehicular access to Furzeplat and it is considered that the works in this area will be economically unviable without a grant. A Woodland Improvement Grant will be applied-for for the restoration of coppice and selective felling of sycamore in this area.

The thinning / re-coppicing of the 1990s landscape planting is also considered to be economically unviable without a grant due to the poor quality of the timber and this will be undertaken under a Woodland Improvement Grant,

9 Maps

Map no./Title	Description
1	Location and key features
2	Habitats
3	Compartments
4	Geology
5	Management prescriptions

10 Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1 Table A is not applicable to this application

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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. Cpt. / Sub Cpt.	5. Area (ha)	6. % area to be worked	7. Type of felling	8. % of felled area comprising:		9. Felling licence type	10. Change in woodland type		11. Preferred claim year	13. Restock mixture		14. % Estab. by natural regen	Standard proposals	12. Notes / Details
				BL	CON		From	To		Species	%			
1	1.2	25	FC	100	0	C	Nat	Nat		N/A	N/A	100%		Coppicing/ thinning of trees planted in 1990s
2	2.6	100	FC	100	0	C	Nat	Nat		N/A	N/A	100%		Coppicing/ thinning of trees planted in 1990s
4	70	100	FC	100	0	C	Nat	Nat		N/A	N/A	100%		Coppice restoration
4	30	100	SF	100	0	C	Nat	Nat		N/A	N/A	100%		Selective fell sycamore

Appendix 1 - Photographs

Compartment 1 (Bugs Bottom) seen from the east



Compartment 2 (Bugs Bottom) 1990s landscape planting to be thinned/ coppiced



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Compartment 4 – Furzeplat - coppice to be restored



Compartment 4 – Furzeplat sycamore to be selectively felled



Appendix 2 - Maps



TITLE
BUGS BOTTOM AND FURZEPLAT
MAP 2 - HABITATS

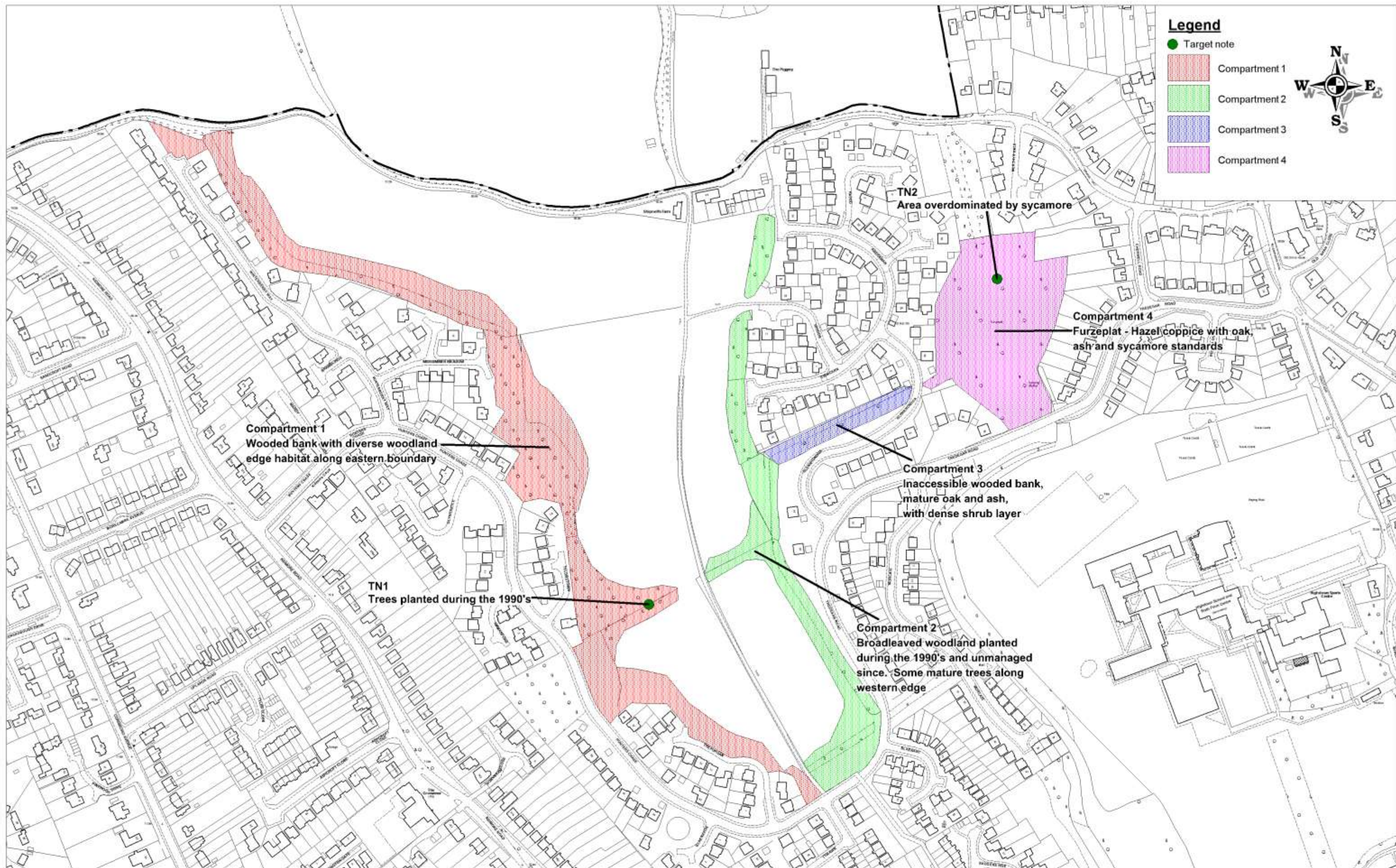
DRG NO 01

DATE 15th May 2012

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

SCALE 1:5000

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TITLE
BUGS BOTTOM AND FURZEPLAT
MAP 3 - COMPARTMENTS

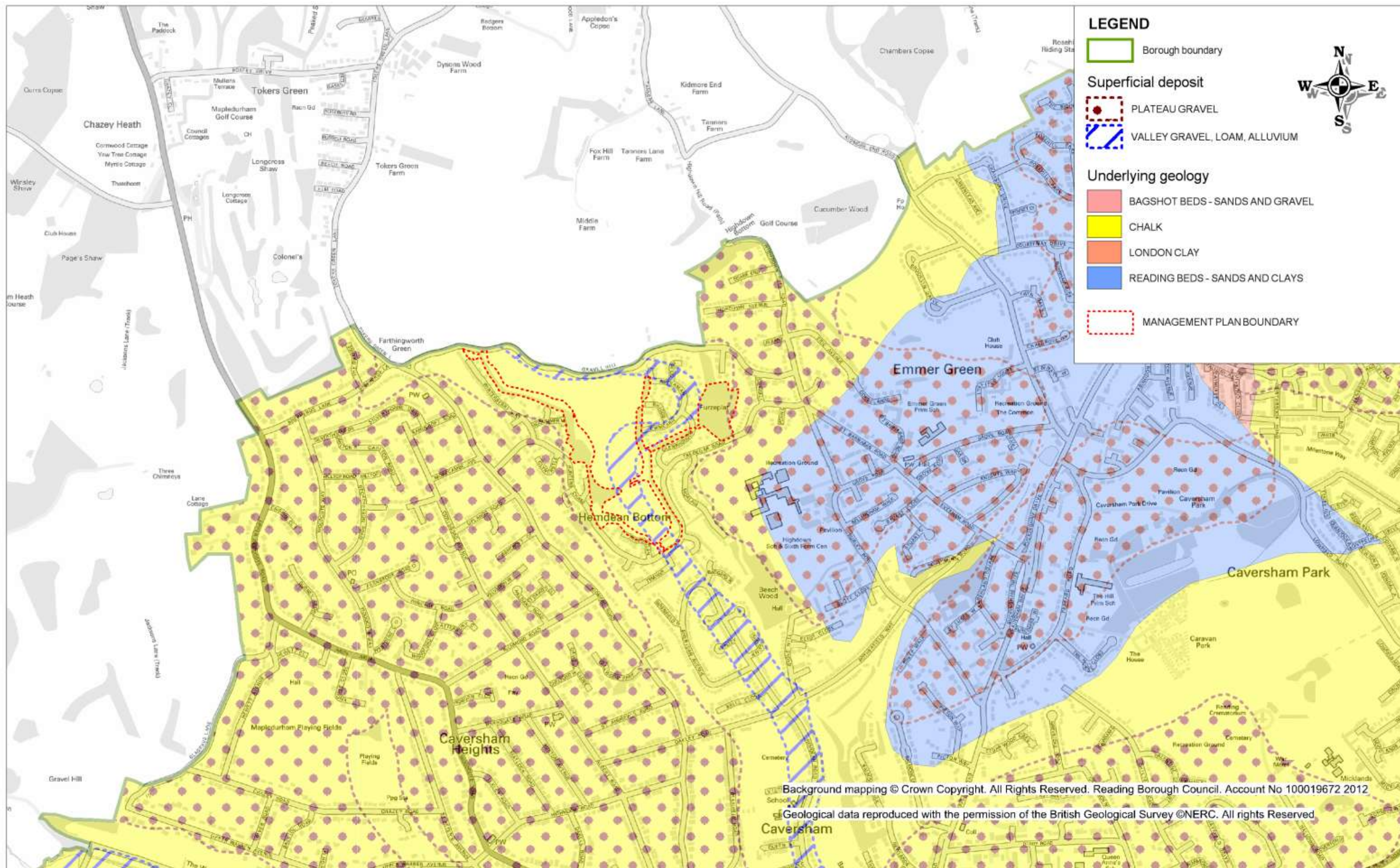
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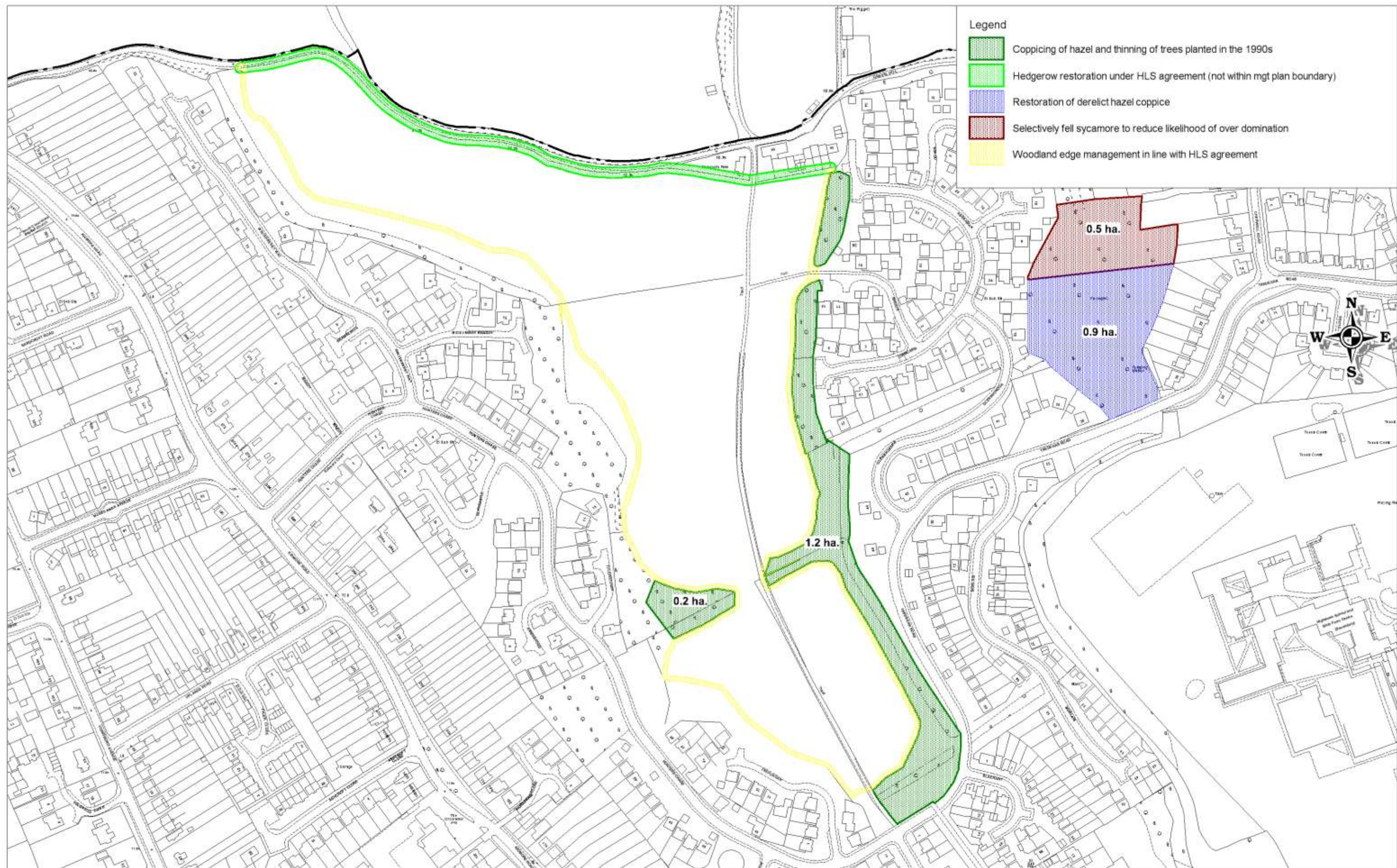
BUGS BOTTOM WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FIGURE 4 - GEOLOGY

DRG NO

DATE 18th May 2012

DRAWN BY GS

SCALE 1:10000



TITLE
BUGS BOTTOM AND FURZEPLAT
MAP 5 - MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

DRG NO 01

DATE October 2012

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

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