

Lousehill 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	SU681734
Total area (ha)	12.6

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

This site consists of three parcels of broadleaved semi-natural woodland separated by roads within the urban area of Reading. The woodland lies on an escarpment south of the Thames and slopes sharply to the north-east. The woodland is an important feature in the landscape and is a prominent feature from the River Thames to the north and the nearby residential areas. The Dee Park Estate is located at the base of the slope to the north of the site and the English Martyr's primary school at the top of the slope to the south.

Woodland Management Plan

1.3 History of Management

In the last ten years there has been some limited maintenance of paths, minor coppicing work, and tree works for health and safety reasons.

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)	Entire site	X	
TPO / Conservation Area (CA)			

Details: Lousehill Copse is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Local Wildlife Site (through the Local Development Framework).

Lousehill 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.

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

The table below lists rare and notable species recorded within or adjacent to Lousehill Copse (based on records held by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Year recorded
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	2006
Smooth Newt	<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	2007
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	2004
Stock Pigeon	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1994
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	1985
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	2003
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	1994
Hedge Accentor	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	1994
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1994
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1994
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	1994
Common Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1985
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	2005

Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland	3	X	
Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)			
Semi-natural features in PAWS			
Woodland margins and hedges			
Veteran and other notable trees			
Breeding sites			
Habitats of notable species			
Unimproved grasslands			

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Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			
Details: See map 3			

Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses	3	X	
Lakes			
Ponds	3	X	
Wetland habitats			
Details: Four streams flow north south across the site and there is a large woodland pond within the woodland, half way up the slope from the Dee Park estate.			

Landscape	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Landscape designated areas			
Landscape features			
Rock exposures			
Historic landscapes			
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads			
Areas of the woodland prominent from settlements	1	X	
Details: Lousehill is prominent from Dee Park to the north east, Dee Road to the south and Norcot Road to the north			

Cultural features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Public rights of way		X	
Prominent viewing points			

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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.			

Archaeological Features	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Scheduled monument			
Historical feature (Inc. designed landscapes, registered parks and gardens)			
Other		X	
Details: The clays in Tilehurst used to be used for bricks and tiles (hence the name) and there are some pits within the woodland indicating this past use.			

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Amenity

Lousehill Copse is of significant amenity value and is well used by the public who have permanent access to the site. It has a network of paths which are in a poor state. There are few steps despite the steep banks and those that remain are almost unusable, the bridges across the streams need to be replaced. Lousehill Copse has an active friends group. It is located in an economically deprived part of Tilehurst and it is important piece of green infrastructure.

Biodiversity

The woodland is dominated by Oak and Ash, but with a variety of other species including sweet chestnut and lime. The woodland structure is limited with the canopy layer tending to dominate. In places, particularly to the north of the site (Comparts Plantation) there are larger more mature oaks with an understorey of hazel coppice.

In a survey carried out in 2006 31 Ancient Woodland Indicators were found, however the woodland is not listed on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory. There is a large woodland pond, which appears to be suitable habitat for Great Crested Newt, and the site hosts a population of badgers. The grassland adjacent to the north of the site (which is not managed by the parks department) appears to be relatively species rich.

Timber

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

2.3 Site description

This site can be split into three parcels of broadleaved semi-natural woodland separated by Dee Road to the south and Birch Drive (a pedestrian road) to the north. The geology is Plateau Gravel at the top of the slope with London Clay elsewhere and there are steep slopes running south west to north east (Map 2 shows the Geology and Topography of the site). There are at least three pits which were most likely excavated for clay in the past.

Compartments 1 and 2 are the most florally and structurally diverse and there are areas of coppice and small streams, a pond and an associated wet woodland flora. Further descriptions of the compartments are given below:

Compartment 1

A remnant hazel coppice with standards to the south of the site.

Compartment 2 – Lousehill Copse

The canopy layer is dominated by oak, ash, birch with frequent cherry, and occasional willow, sycamore and horse chestnut. There is limited understorey, although the woodland on the steepest slopes are young secondary birch dominated woodland. There is a stand of larger, more mature oaks on a plateau at the top of the slope accessed from Elvaston Way. There is a large pond in the woodland south of Tay Road and there are two streams running through the compartment

Compartment 3 – Compart Plantation

The canopy layer is dominated by oak, ash and birch, but cherry, willow, sycamore, lime, sweet and horse chestnut are also present. There are some large coups of semi-derelict hazel coppice. There are a number of large oaks in excess of 2.5m girth, and some specimen sweet chestnut, and there is a small lime plantation of approximately 30 trees 1.5m in girth.

Compartment 4

This compartment is largely inaccessible and slopes north from Birch Avenue to Northcourt Road.

Paths

There is a good network of paths across the site with paths running east-west and north-south. The paths, bridges and steps are in a poor state of repair.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

Hazards

Steep slopes

-

Threats

- The most significant threat to the woodland is ongoing under management. If this continues the structural and species diversity of the woodland will continue to decline and hence its amenity and wildlife value. There is an urgent need to undertake thinning and felling works to allow more light into the woodland.
- There is a risk that unless the path network is improved that the woodland will be used less by local people.

Constraints

Narrow paths that do not accommodate vehicular access

Public use of the woodland (during felling operations) – areas 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 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 well known, and well used local woodland, valued and respected by the local community for its amenity and wildlife value.

3.2 Management Objectives

- 1) To have a well maintained and accessible network of paths used by locals for through traffic and recreation
- 2) To enhance the woodlands value for wildlife through appropriate management of the woodland structure and ecology by:
 - a) thinning the canopy layer
 - b) restoring areas of coppice
 - c) enhancing the existing pond and creating two new ponds
 - d) to control non-native and over dominant species
- 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 (map 5)

Improve the network of footpaths (including steps and footbridges). 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 and consideration may be given to re-siting paths away from wet areas. *This work will only be undertaken if funds become available (e.g. through the Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant)*

Objective 2a) thinning the canopy layer

A 30% selective thin of the canopy layer will be undertaken over the first 5 years of this plan. The thinning will not be uniform and some glades will be cut in appropriate locations. The secondary woodland on the steep slopes north of Tay Road will not be thinned.

Objective 2b) coppice restoration

The derelict coppice coups of will be cut in years 1 and 2.

Objective 2c) ponds

Some of the willows around the existing pond will be coppiced and the pond will be re-profiled to increase the length of pond edge and the length of the draw down zone. This will increase its flood storage capacity.

Two new ponds will be created.

Objective 2d) non-native and over dominant species

Species, such as sycamore and horse chestnut will be selected for felling over other species where appropriate.

Objective 3 unauthorised activities

Maintain entrance gates, motorcycle barriers and fencing in appropriate places

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.

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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 obvious browsing damage or faeces) 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, deer fencing may be considered.

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.

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.

The rendezvous points for the fire brigade are shown on Map 1.

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4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution

Litter is a problem in parts of the woodland and regular litter picks will be undertaken. There are no bins or dog bins.

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

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

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 success, 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]

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 significantly enhance the site for biodiversity

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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 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	The	Site	Twice	Park	To identify problem

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	state of rides and paths	walkover	yearly	manager	areas and remediate paths as appropriate
2	Hazel regrowth	Site walkover	Annual	Park manager	To decide whether re-coppicing has been successful and if so to consider its use elsewhere
2	Sycamore regrowth	Site walkover	Annual	Park manager	To inform future woodland management plans

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
All	Selective felling		X
2, 3	Coppicing	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 Specie s	P. Year	Yield Class	Activity	Year				
						1	2	3	4	5
1,2	NA	NA	NA	NA	Path resurfacing / restoration (only if funding becomes available)	X	X	X	X	X
1,2	3.4	Oak, ash, sycam ore	NA	NA	30% thin	X	X	X		
1,2	1	Hazel	NA	NA	Restore coppice	X	X	X		
1,2	0.2	NA	NA	NA	Create 2 x new ponds	X	X	X		
1	0.1	NA	NA	NA	Restore woodland pond, coppice adjacent willow	X	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 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 in the Councils Woodland estate as a whole.

9 Maps

Map no./Title	Description
1	Location and fire access points
2	Geology and topography
3	Habitats
4	Woodland management prescriptions
5	Path improvements

10 Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1 Table A (not included as 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 g	8. % of felled area comprising:		9. Felling licence type	10. Change in woodland type		11. Preferr ed claim year	13. Restock mixture		14. % Estab. by natural regen	Standard proposals	12. Notes / Details
				BL	CON		From	To		Speci es	%			
1	6.5	35%	T	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Thinning
1	6.5	5%	T	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Pond works
1	6.5	15%	FC	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Coppice restoration
2	3.2	40%	T	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Thinning
2	3.2	5%	T	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Pond works
2	3.2	15%	FC	BL	BL	C	Nat	Nat	NA	NA		100%		Coppice restoration

Appendix 1 - Photos

Photo 1 – view of Lousehill Copse from Dee Road



Photo 2 – tall oak and ash woodland with little understorey (compartment 2)



Woodland Management Plan

Photo 3 – Woodland Pond (Compartment 2)



Photo 4 – Site for one of the new woodland ponds

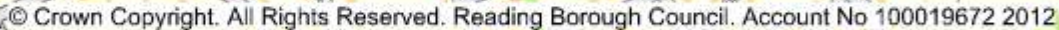


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Photo 5 – Outgrown hazel coppice (compartment 3)

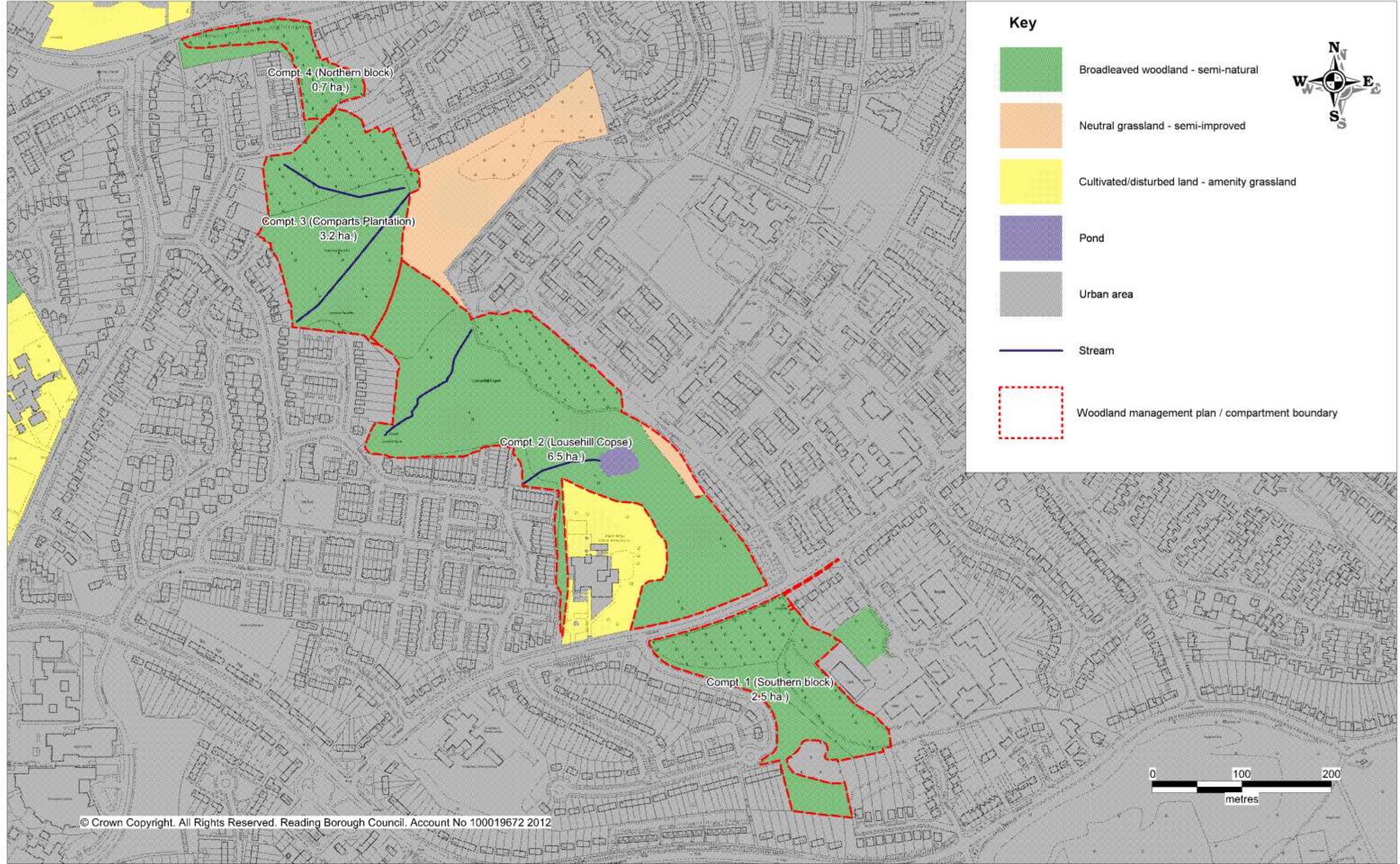


Appendix 2 - Maps



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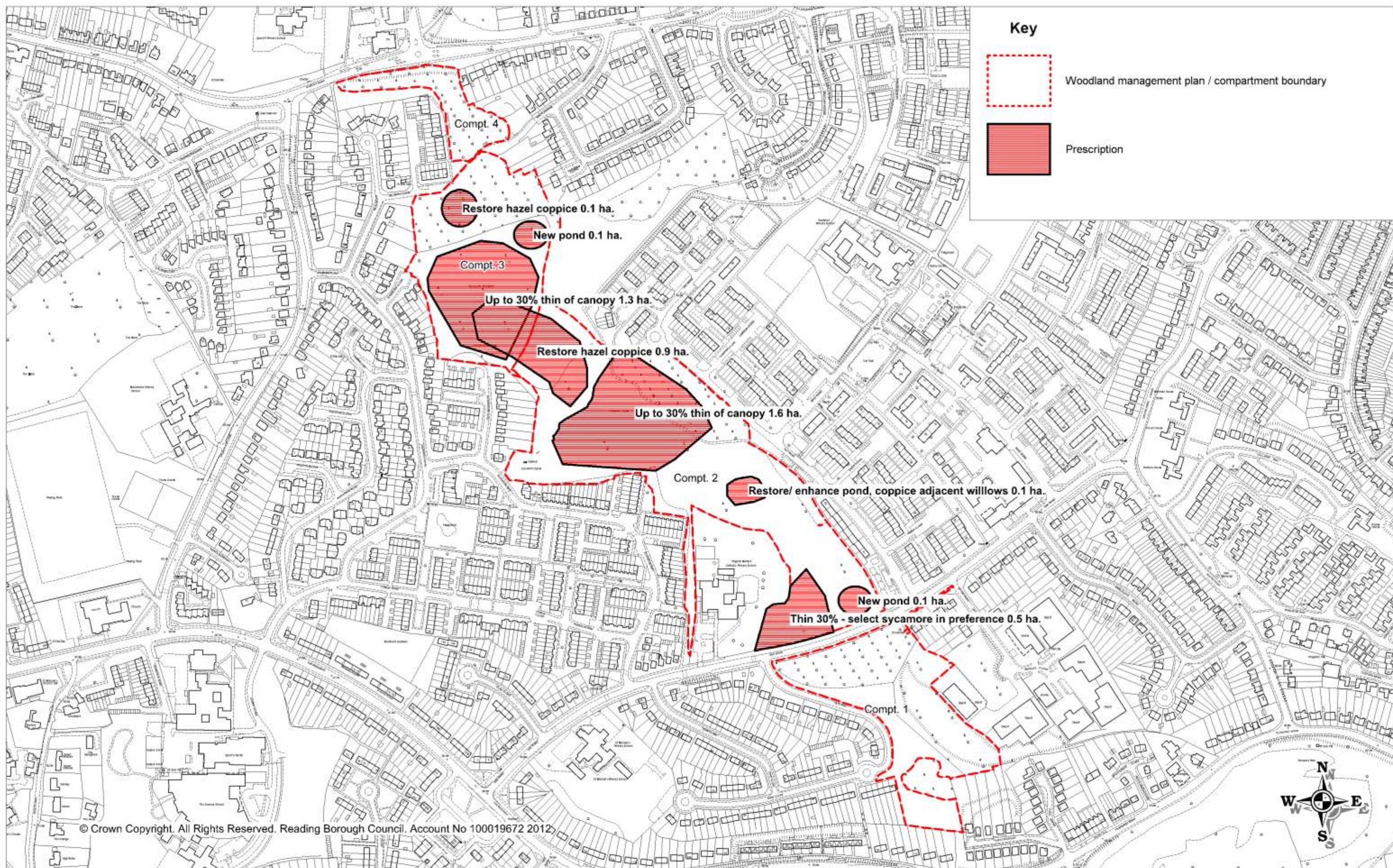
TITLE
LOUSEHILL COPSE - WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MAP 3 - COMPARTMENTS AND BROAD HABITAT TYPES

DRG NO 01

DATE 7th December 2012

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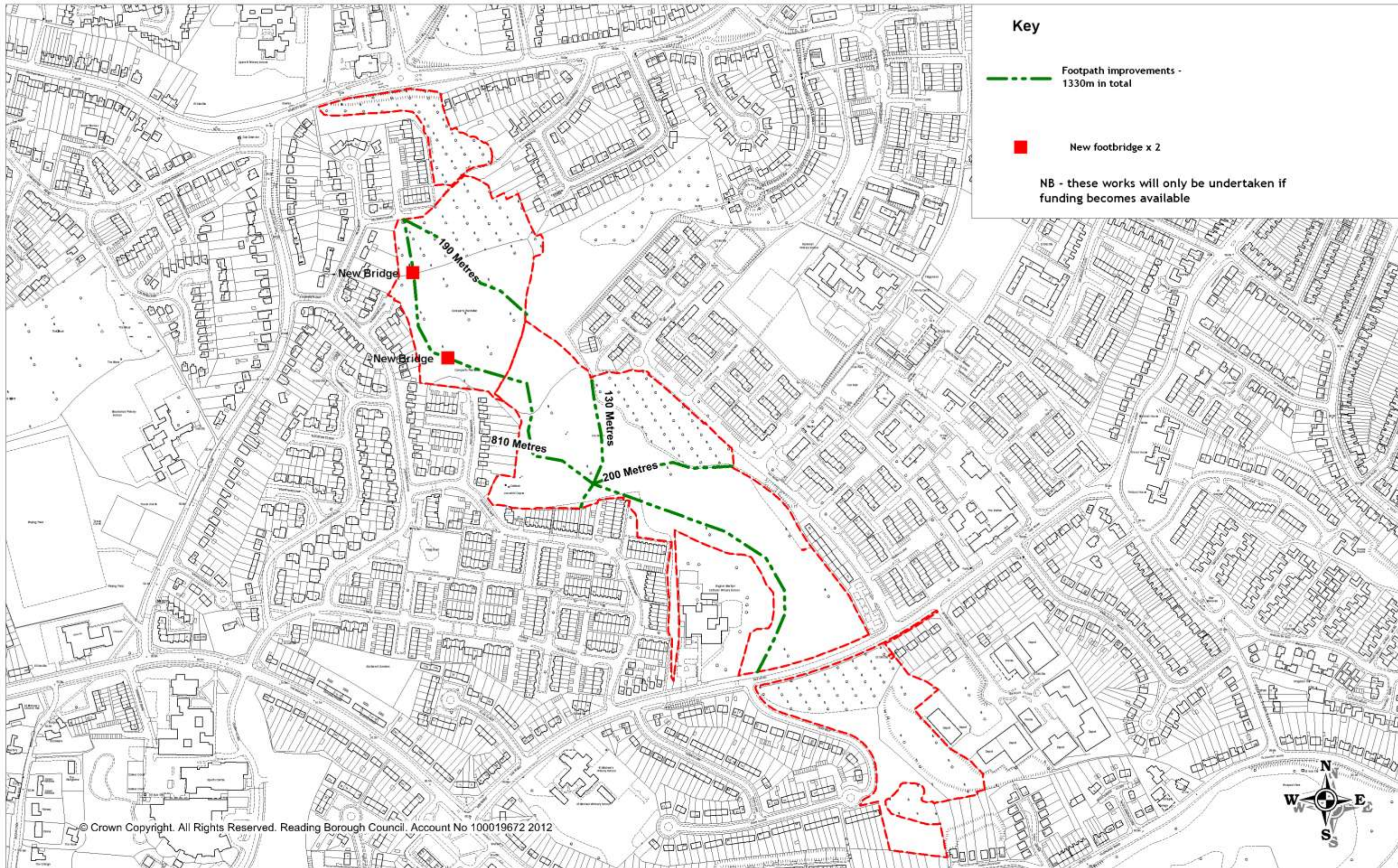
TITLE
LOUSEHILL COPSE WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MAP 4 - WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

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TITLE
LOUSEHILL COPSE WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MAP 5 - PATH IMPROVEMENTS

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