Southcote Linear Park

Date (from/to)	2013 – 2023 (reviewed in 2018)
Date of last review [UKWAS 2.1.3]	
Owner/tenant	Reading Borough Council
Agent/contact	Dave Booth / Giles Sutton
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	Reading
Grid reference	SU691796
Total area (ha)	3.5

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

Two blocks of wet woodland adjacent to the Holy Brook (a tributary of the River Kennet) and the Reading to Newbury railway line

1.3 History of Management

There has been little recent management except the management of trees adjacent to the paths for safety reasons and the pollarding of willows directly adjacent to the Holy Brook.

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)			
TPO / Conservation Area (CA)			
Details: The site forms part of the Kennet Valley East Biodiversity Opportunity Area, an area identified at a county level because of its floodplain habitats as having significant opportunities for ecological enhancement and the site and adjacent Holy Brook is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and is therefore afforded protection from development through Planning Policy.			

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		X	X

Detail: The following species have been recorded in and around Southcote Linear Park (data from records held by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Year of record
A beetle (Coleoptera)	*Gyrinus urinator*	1994
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	1985
Cetti's Warbler	*Cettia cetti*	2004
Common Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	2003
Common Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	2003
Common Frog	*Rana temporaria*	1985
Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	1985
Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	2003
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	2004
Common Whitethroat	*Sylvia communis*	2004
Eurasian Teal	*Anas crecca*	2003
European Water Vole	*Arvicola amphibius*	2000
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	*Margaritifera (Margaritifera) margaritifera*	1985
Green Woodpecker	*Picus viridis*	2003
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	2004
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos minor*	2003
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	2005
Northern Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	2003
Reed Bunting	*Emberiza schoeniclus*	2003
Sky Lark	*Alauda arvensis*	2003
Whorled Water-milfoil	*Myriophyllum verticillatum*	1985
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	2005

Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland		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			X
Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			X
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			
Details: Much of the adjacent floodplain is classified as floodplain grazing marsh, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat. The woodland is classified as wet woodland a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat			

Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses		X	
Lakes			
Ponds			
Wetland habitats			
Details: The Holy Brook flows through the woodland			

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		X	

Details: Then woodland is a prominent landscape feature from Southcote			
Cultural features	**Map No.**	**In Woodland**	**Adjacent to woodland**
Public rights of way		X	
Prominent viewing points			
Existing permissive footpaths		X	
Proposed permissive footpaths			
Areas managed with traditional management systems			
Details: The land is owned by Reading Borough Council and is accessible by the public at all times. However compartment 2 is only accessible via the adjacent allotments or by crossing the Holy Brook and is therefore inaccessible to the majority of the public.			
Archaeological Features	**Map No.**	**In Woodland**	**Adjacent to woodland**
Scheduled monument			
Historical feature (Inc. designed landscapes, registered parks and gardens)			
Other			
Details: None known			

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

Amenity

The woodland and adjacent floodplain is of considerable amenity value and is well used by the public who have permanent access to the site.

Biodiversity

The woodlands are of considerable biodiversity value and are designated as a Local Wildlife Site and can be classified as wet woodland, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitat. The adjacent floodplain supports a number of rare and endangered species and Water Vole have been recorded nearby on the Holy Brook.

Timber

There is an need to undertake thinning of the woodland if its ecological and amenity value is to be retained. There is a significant quantity of timber to be removed and this will be of some commercial value as firewood.

2.3 Site description

A wet woodland with the Holy Brook (a tributary of the river Kennet) running through the centre of the site and with a railway track to the south.

Compartment 1 is wet woodland dominated by relatively uniform aged tall and leggy willow and ash with a relatively sparse understorey and ground layer. Ground conditions are wet. There is a small block of crack willow south of the houses of Hatford Road

Compartment 2 comprises a plantation of poplar, with an approximate girth of 50cm. This compartment has virtually no understorey.

Paths running along the site are in a poor condition and the willows adjacent to the Holy Brook have recently been pollarded.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

The main threat to the woodland is under management which is likely to result in a dark woodland with very little ecological or amenity value.

Access is an issue, the paths are waterlogged and muddy and harvesting will need to be undertaken when soil conditions allow.

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 biodiverse, productive and accessible woodland.

3.2 Management Objectives

Objective 1 – to open up the canopy in compartment 1, thereby improving the site's structural diversity
Objective 2 – to improve the condition of paths running through the site
Objective 3 – to pollard willows adjacent to the Holy Brook and to the south of Hatford Road

3.3 Strategy

Objective 1
Thin trees in compartment 1 by up to 30% with timber extracted and sold for firewood.
Objective 2
To resurface the path that runs through the site only of monies (for example through the Woodland Improvement Grant) become available
Objective 3
To implement a pollarding cycle for riverside willows

4 Management prescriptions/operations

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

Timber will be stacked and transported from the southern end of Circuit Lane.

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

See section 4.1.3

4.3 Other operations

None planned

4.4 Protection and maintenance

4.4.1 Pest and disease management

Management of ash dieback in line with national guidance

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.

4.4.3 Waste disposal and pollution

Litter is generally not a problem in this woodland and regular litter picks are undertaken

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

The parks department's offices are located in Prospect Park. Unauthorised activities are managed in line with council policy.

4.4.5 Protection of other identified services and values

Not applicable

4.5 Game management

Not applicable

4.6 Protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and special features

4.6.1 Management of designated areas

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]

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]

None anticipated

4.7 Management of social and cultural values

4.7.1 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest
Works that could potentially impact upon earthworks will be avoided. Advice will be sought from the Council's archaeological service team at Reading Museum if required.

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	Structural diversity of woodland	Visual check	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform future management plans
1	Local Wildlife Site Survey	Ecological survey	Approximately every 5 years	Council Ecologist (via Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre)	To inform future management plans
3	Pollard re-growth	Visual check	5 years	Parks supervisor	To determine when re-pollarding is required

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	Selective thinning		X
1,2	Pollarding willow	X	X
1	Path resurfacing		X

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	2.2	Willow, Ash	NA	NA	30% thin	X	X	X		
1	2.2	Willow	NA	NA	Pollard willows adjacent to Hatford Road	X	X	X		
1	2.2	NA	NA	NA	Re-surface paths (if funding is available)	X	X	X	X	X
2	NA	Poplar	NA	NA	Essential safety works to trees adjacent to railway	X	X	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.

There will be some value for the timber removed. This will help to subsidise works elsewhere across the council's woodland estate. Money to fund other works, such as the path improvement works, will be applied for through the EWGS Woodland Management Grant (WMG) and Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG), path works will only be undertaken if this funding is available.

9 Maps

Map no./Title	Description
1	Location
2	Geology and contours
3	Prescriptions

10 Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1 Table A – not required for 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. 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	2.2	80	T	100	0	C	NA –Nat	Nat	NA	NA	NA	100%		Thinning
1	2.2	10	FC	100	0	C	NA –Nat	Nat	NA	NA	NA	100%		Coppice / pollard willow

Appendix 1 - Photos

Photo 1- willow and ash trees to be thinned (compartment 1)

Photo 2- poplars adjacent to the railway (compartment 2) showing footpath in poor condition

Photo 3- recently pollarded willows adjacent to the Holy Brook

Appendix 2 - Maps

Key

Borough Boundary

Management Plan Boundary

Fire Rendezvouz point

N

W E

S

Compartment 1 - 2.2 Ha.

Compartment 2 - 1.3 Ha.

Southcote

Southcote Junction

Southcote Primary School

Recreation Ground

Car Park

Southcote Linear Park

Southcote Mill

Southcot Lock

Milkmaids Bridge

Posts

Ppg Sta

Dismantled Railway

Kennet and Avon Canal

River Kennet

Brook

GAINSBOROUGH ROAD

SOUTHCOTE LANE

VIRGINIA WAY

CORONATION SQUARE

CIRCUIT LANE

SILCHESTER ROAD

SHEPLEY DRIVE

ASHAMPSTEAD ROAD

HATFORD ROAD

BRUNEL ROAD

FRILSHAM RD

BRAY RD

BRIMPTON R

LYTHAM

GLENNON

BEFIELD RD

AINSDALE CR

HOLYBROOK C

DWYER ROAD

APPLEFORD ROAD

WORCESTER CLOSE

BUTE STREET

MAKER CT

ALDWORTH CLOSE

STAPLEFORD RD

BARN CL

COWPER W

TALLIS LANE

VINE CRESCENT

SHRUBLAND DRIVE

LEA CLOSE

PW

Sch

Liby

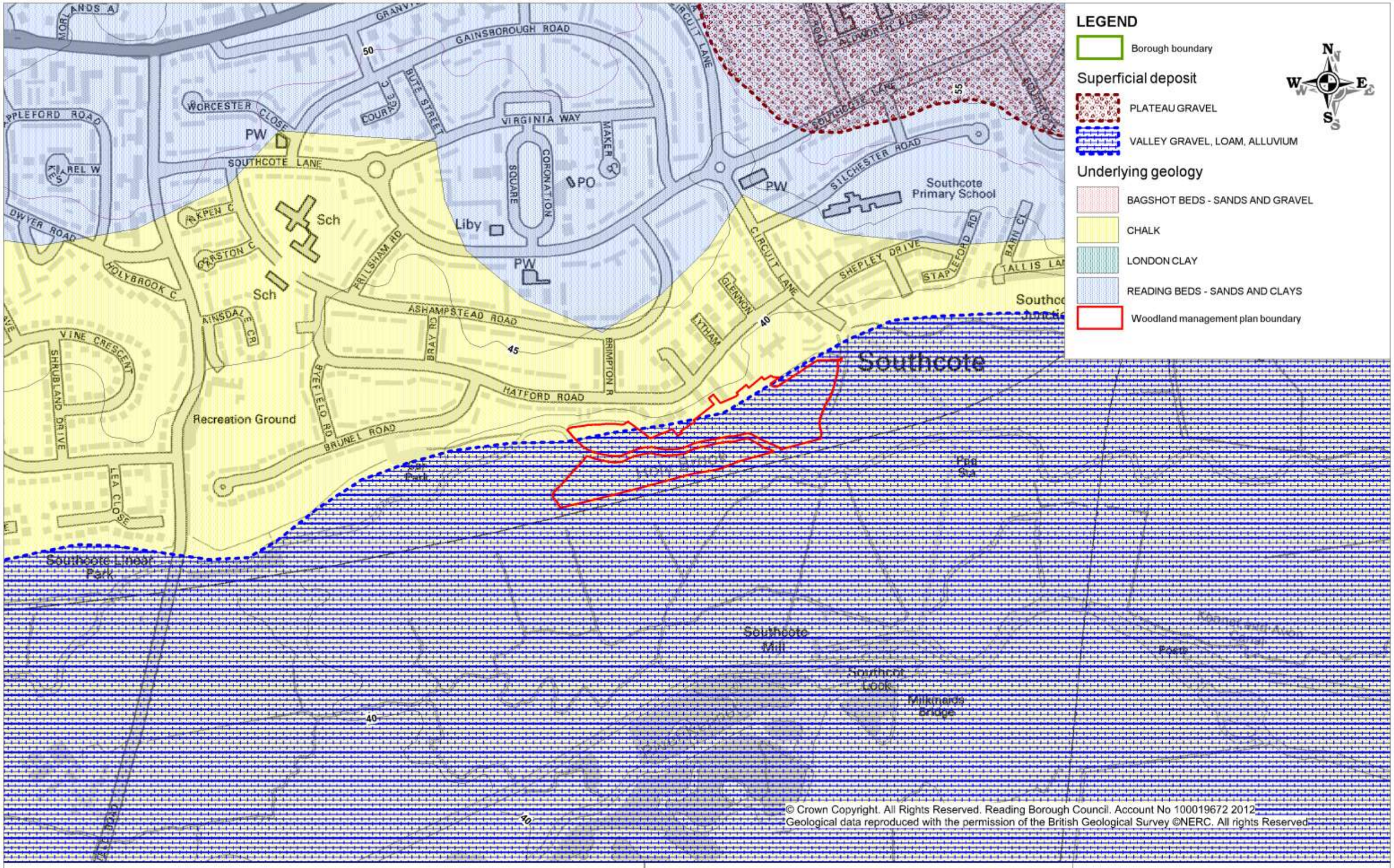
PO

TITLE

SOUTHCOTE LINEAR PARK
WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN - FIGURE 1 - LOCATION

DRG NO 01	DATE 23rd August 2012
DRAWN BY Giles Sutton	SCALE 1:5,000 at A3

Reading BOROUGH COUNCIL

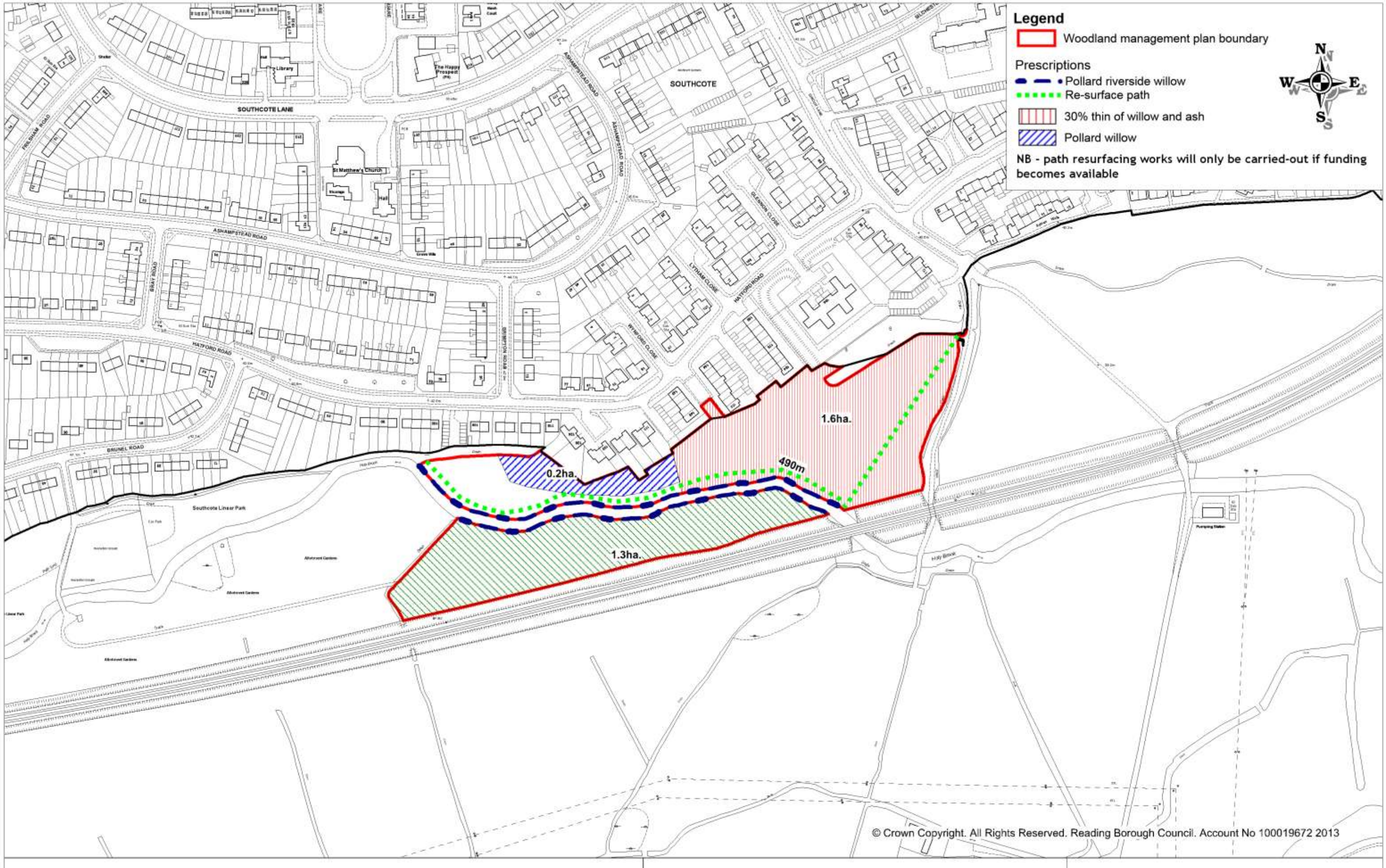


TITLE

SOUTHCOTE LINEAR PARK
WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FIGURE 2 - GEOLOGY AND CONTOURS

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

Reading BOROUGH COUNCIL
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TEAM



TITLE

SOUTHCOTE LINEAR PARK
WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
FIGURE 3 - PRESCRIPTIONS

DRG NO 01	DATE 31st January 2013
DRAWN BY Giles Sutton	SCALE 1:2500 at A3

Reading BOROUGH COUNCIL