

Thames woodlands (Hills Meadow, Kings Meadow and View Island)

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
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	Reading
Grid reference	472100, 174,200
Total area (ha)	3.2

1.2 Description of the woodland(s) in the landscape

Three small woodlands adjacent to and on an island of the River Thames in Reading. Prominent from the river and its towpath and from the surrounding urban areas.

Hills Meadow Woodland

A small (0.7 ha.) plantation woodland within a riverside natural park, prominent from the B3345 Road to the east.

View Island

A partially wooded island in the Thames adjacent to Reading Lock, an important and prominent landscape feature in the locality, visible from the Thames and its tow path

Woodland Management Plan

and from Reading Bridge

Kings Meadow Woodland

A narrow riverside woodland adjacent to the south of the Thames and west of the Kennet Mouth (where the River Kennet meets the River Thames). A prominent landscape feature from the River Thames, the Railway line to the north.

1.3 History of Management

Hills Meadow Woodland

With the exception of some of the more mature poplars the majority of trees appear to have been planted over the last 20 – 30 years, with some recent (in the last 5 year) tree planting . Management has been for health and safety and amenity purposes only.

View Island

The island was taken over by Reading Borough Council in 1998 having previously been a boatyard which had fallen into disrepair. Some management of the site for access, amenity and conservation has been undertaken including the restoration of the pond, pollarding of willows, the improvement of paths and the provision of seating areas. The meadow has not been cut for several years.

Kings Meadow Woodland

This woodland is located adjacent to a large Tesco hypermarket and some additional woodland planting occurred when the supermarket was constructed and volunteers have undertaken some management at the site including the removal of sycamore and buddleia from the compartment adjacent to the railway (referred to locally as 'the Coal').

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)			

Woodland Management Plan

Other designations (e.g. National Park (NP) / World Heritage Site)	X	X	
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)			
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)			
TPO / Conservation Area (CA)			
<p>Details</p> <p>The Kings Meadow woodland is designated as 'The Coal, Kennetmouth and Kings Meadow East' Local Wildlife Site. However the site was last assessed in 2004 and it is not clear whether it would still fulfil the criteria for designation as a local wildlife site under the new (2009) criteria.</p>			
Rare and important species	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Red Data Book or BAP species			
Rare, threatened, EPS or SAP species			
<p>Details</p>			

Habitats	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW)			
Other semi-natural woodland	3	X	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			
Rides and open ground			
Valuable wildlife communities			
Feeding area			
Lowland heath			
Peatlands			
Others			
<p>Details:</p> <p>See map 3</p>			

Woodland Management Plan

Water	Map No.	In Woodland	Adjacent to woodland
Watercourses	3		X
Lakes			
Ponds			
Wetland habitats			
Details: The woodland are adjacent to the River Thames. See map 3 for habitats in and around the Thames woodlands			
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: The woodlands are important landscape features visible from Reading and Caversham and from the River Thames			
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			
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

The three woodlands are of significant amenity value and are well used by the public who have permanent access to the sites. They have a well-developed network of paths, some of which are surfaced, and there are a number of benches in the woodlands. Being so close to the town centre makes these woodlands of particular importance for recreation.

Biodiversity

The woodlands are of some biodiversity value, however there are no particularly significant wildlife features

Timber and firewood

The woodland is and will be primarily managed for amenity and biodiversity purposes, there is unlikely to be any valuable timber within the woodlands.

2.3 Site description

The Coal

Semi-mature mixed deciduous woodland with no dominant species. Canopy layer includes: horse chestnut, sycamore, poplar, willow, ash, birch, field maple, lime. Shrub layer includes hawthorn, elder, apple, dogwood, hazel, blackthorn. The woodland structure is generally well balanced but there is a risk of dominance by sycamore, horse chestnut and buddleia particularly adjacent to the railway track to the south. There is a good network of paths, several of which are tarmac and several benches (in a good state of repair). Some new landscape planting was planted when the supermarket was constructed.

View Island

The island was taken over by Reading Borough Council in 1998 having previously been a boatyard. The site comprises a mixed broadleaved woodland, with a meadow and a wildlife pond in the centre. The woodland is dominated by sycamore towards the centre and the west, with a number of large pollard willows adjacent to the river bank.

Hills meadow

Semi-mature parkland trees planted over grass, approx 30 years old. Species include ornamental acer, whitebeam and some larger streamside poplars. Stream along northern boundary with a moderate flow and with some Japanese knotweed along northern side. 2 poplar trees appear have been recently planted adjacent to the stream.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

Hazards

- None identified

Threats

- Sycamore and horse chestnut at The Coal may start to dominate the woodland
- Litter and vandalism at View Island
- Japanese knotweed adjacent to the stream at Hills Meadow

Constraints

Public use of the woodland: areas where trees are being felled will need to 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

Woodland Management Plan

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

- Three diverse woodlands displaying good structural and species diversity, highly valued by the local community for their amenity and biodiversity value

3.2 Management Objectives

- 1 – To manage sycamore, horse chestnut and buddleia in The Coal and View Island to stop over dominance
- 2 – To pollard riverside willows on a rotational basis
- 3 – To develop a species rich meadow on view Island
- 4 – To allow the development of large parkland trees at Hills Meadow
- 5 - To discourage and manage litter and vandalism at View Island
6. To encourage wildflowers in the hills meadow grassland area

3.3 Strategy

Generally speaking intervention in these woodlands will be limited. Sycamore, horse chestnut and buddleia will continue to be controlled on an ongoing basis, rotational pollarding of riverside willows will occur and the meadow on View Island will be cut and the arisings raked up on an annual basis (if volunteer labour is available). Specific prescriptions are shown on Map 4.

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

There are no plans to re-stock the woodland as no significant tree felling is proposed.

4.2 New planting

If funding becomes available consideration will be given to planting new trees in Hills Meadow to ensure other than that no new planting will occur over the period of this plan.

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 within the woodland but as with most of lowland Britain, muntjac and roe deer are likely to be present.

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 a problem on view island in particular and regular litter picks will be undertaken. Bins and dog bins will be emptied regularly.

4.4.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

Unauthorised activities have not historically been a major issue in this woodland.

4.4.5 Protection of other identified services and values

Regular safety inspection of trees adjacent to paths will be undertaken by the council, 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

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	Dominance of sycamore/ buddleia	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform cutting regime
2	Pollard regrowth	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To inform pollarding regime
3	Grassland floral diversity	Visual	Annual	Parks supervisor	To determine success or otherwise of cutting regime
5	Litter check	Visual	Weekly	Parks supervisor	To inform litter picking regime and to clear up any large litter problems

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 (<i>tick</i>)	
		6-10	11-20
All	Ongoing selective felling	X	X

Woodland Management Plan

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
Kings Meadow	1.1	See description	NA	NA	Ongoing management of sycamore and buddleia by volunteers	X	X	X	X	X
View Island	1.4	See description	NA	NA	Litter picking	X	X	X	X	X
View Island	1.4	See description	NA	NA	Thin sycamore adjacent to hardstanding to allow a selection of the trees to grow on to maturity	X	X			
View Island	1.4	See description	NA	NA	Re-pollard riverside willows	X	X			X
	0.7	See description	NA	NA	Control Japanese Knotweed adjacent to stream	X	X			
	0.5	NA	NA	NA	Cut grass, rake up and remove arisings if volunteer labour is available	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. 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 anticipated income through timber or firewood sales from these 3 woodlands due limited accessibility.

9 Maps

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

10 Thinning, felling and restocking proposals

10.1 **Table A is not applicable to this management plan**

Woodland Management Plan

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	%			
				Kings Meadow	1.1		40%	<i>T</i>		100	0			
View Island	1.4	5%	<i>SF</i>	100	0	C	Nat	Nat	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%		Sycamore adjacent to Hard Standing

Photos

Kings meadow woodland



Woodland Management Plan

View Island from weir over River Thames



View Island - Pond



Woodland Management Plan

View Island - Hardstanding with sycamore to be thinned

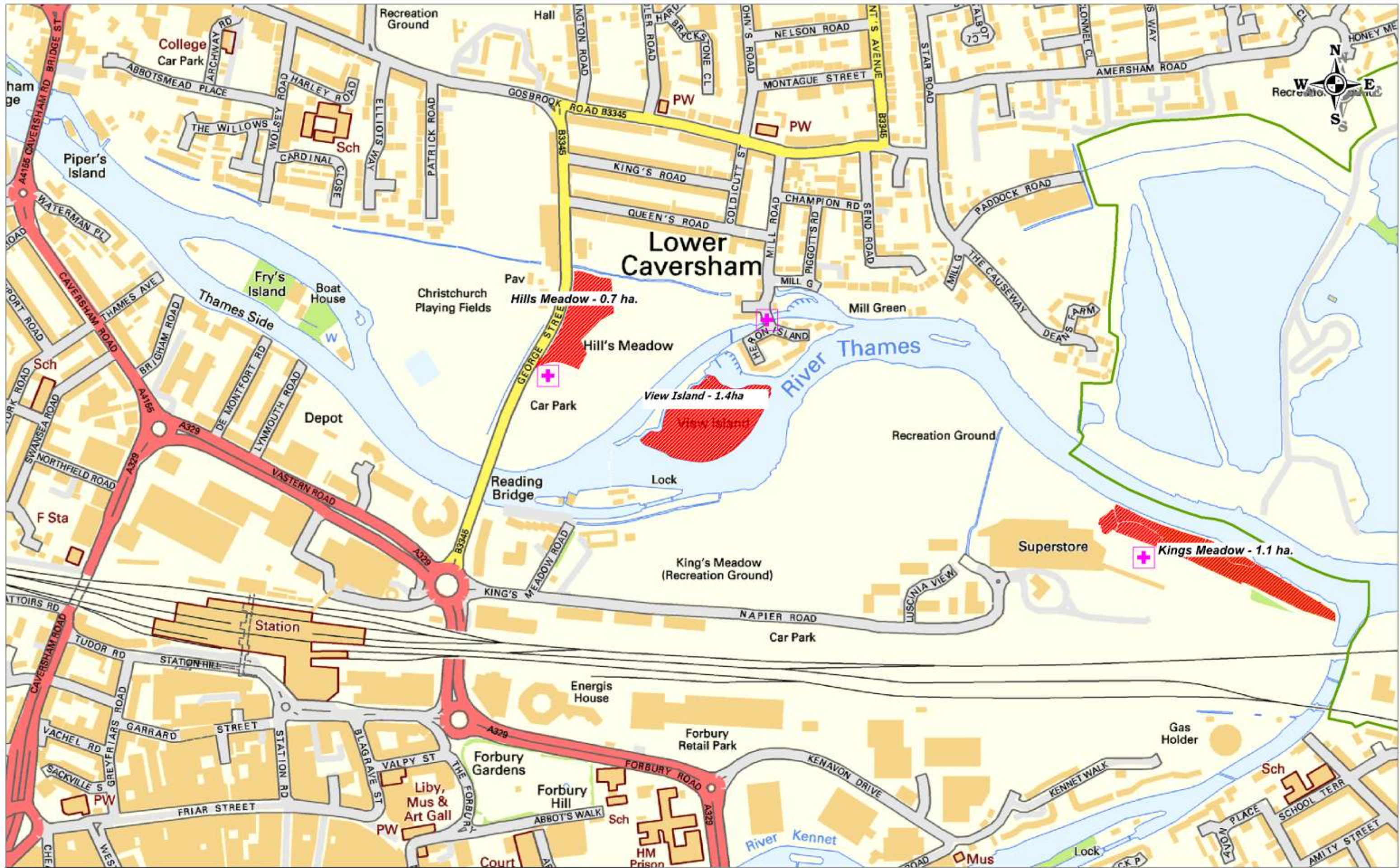


Hills meadow woodland



Maps





TITLE THAMES WOODLANDS
MAP 1 - LOCATION AND KEY FEATURES

DRG NO 01

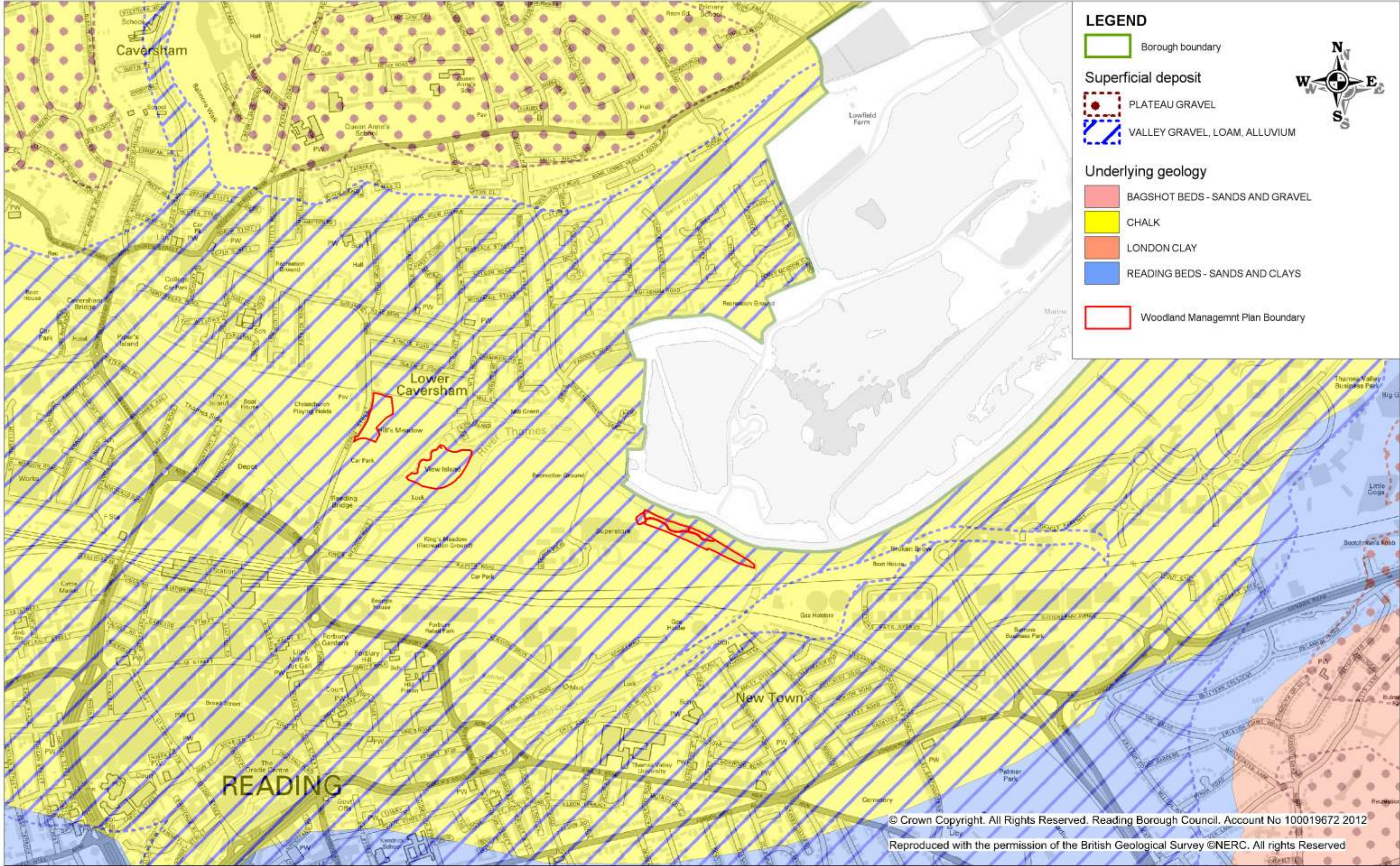
DATE 8th June 2012

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

SCALE 1:10,000 at A3

© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account Number 100019672 2012





TITLE
 THAMES WOODLANDS - WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
 FIGURE 2 - GEOLOGY

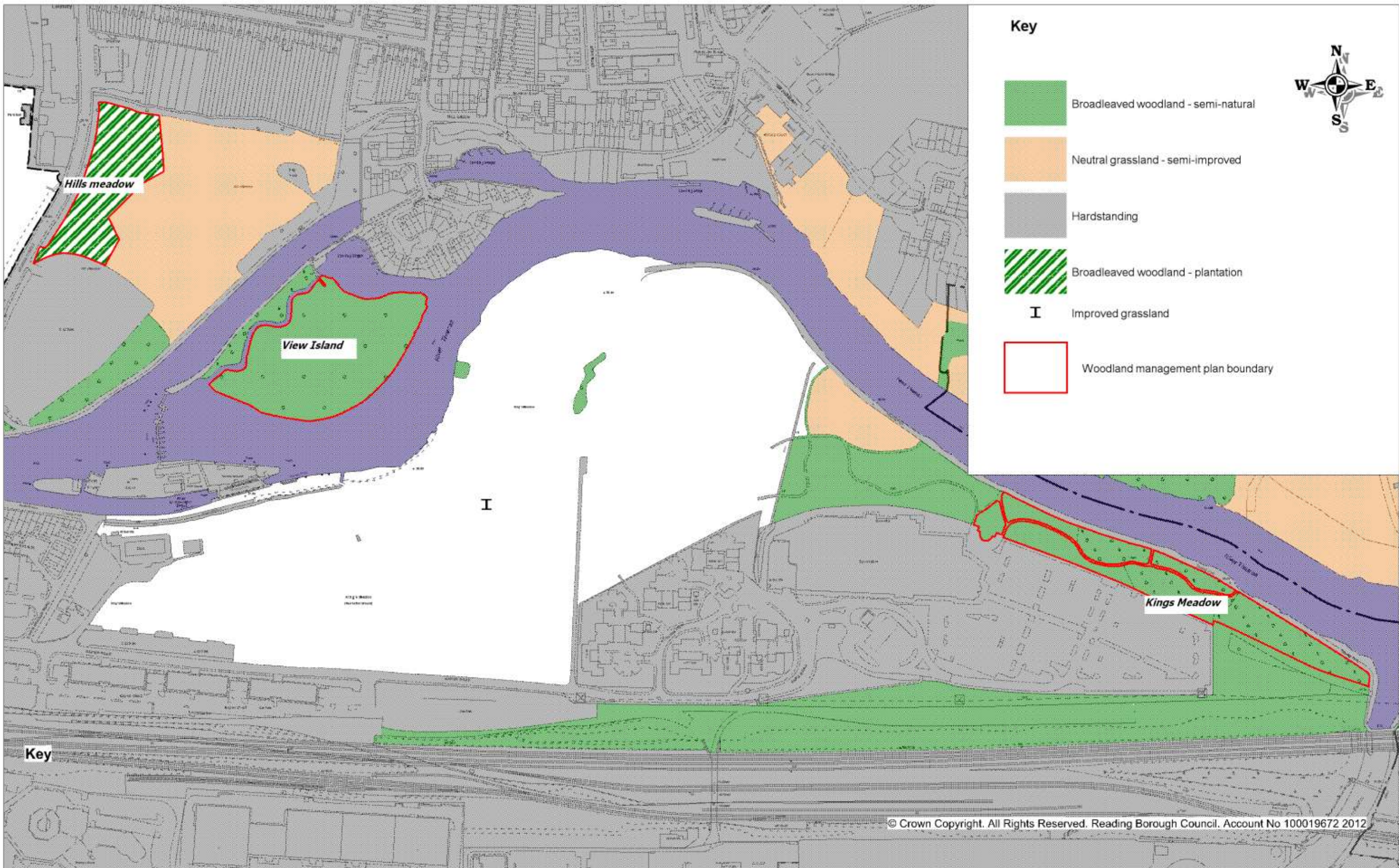
DRG NO

DATE 8th June 2012

DRAWN BY GS

SCALE 1:10000





Key

- Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
- Neutral grassland - semi-improved
- Hardstanding
- Broadleaved woodland - plantation
- I** Improved grassland
- Woodland management plan boundary



Key

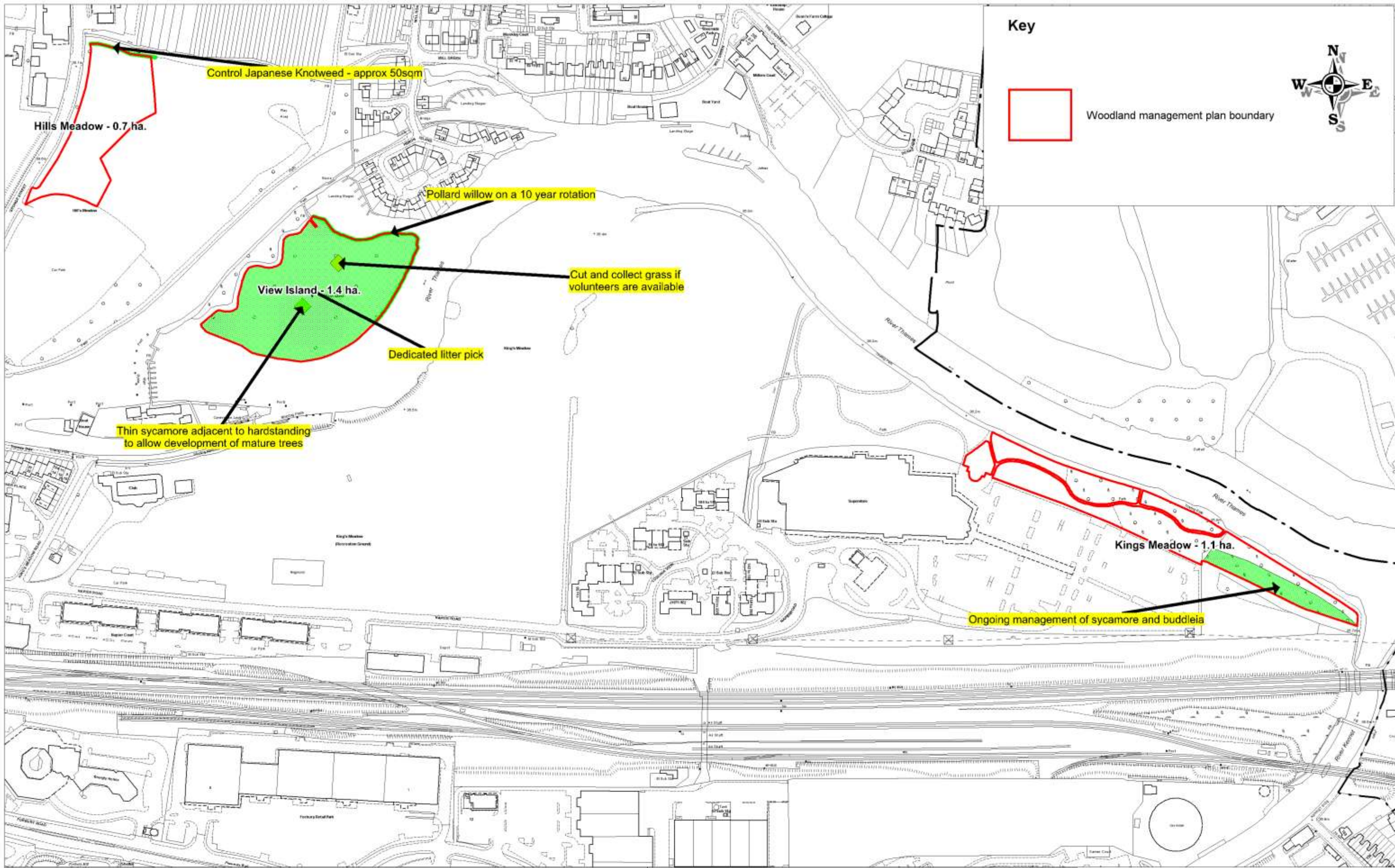
© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account No 100019672 2012

TITLE THAMES WOODLAND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MAP 3 - ADJACENT HABITATS

DRG NO 01	DATE 15th May 2012
DRAWN BY Giles Sutton	SCALE Not to scale

© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account Number 100019672 2012





TITLE THAMES WOODLAND WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN
MAP 4 - PRESCRIPTIONS

DRG NO 01

DATE November 2013

DRAWN BY Giles Sutton

SCALE Not to scale

© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account Number 100019672 2013