
University of Kent: Sites BCD

Ancient Woodland Policy Matters

August 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This note forms part of representations submitted to Canterbury City Council in response to its Local Plan Vision and Preferred Options Consultation. It addresses national planning policy matters relating to Ancient Woodland (and Veteran Trees) associated with the proposed allocation of Sites BCD for residential led development.
- 1.2 It is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** sets out the planning policy context;
 - **Section 3** discusses the Ancient Woodland Inventory and the results of survey work;
 - **Section 4** sets out the wholly exceptional reasons why the loss of Ancient Woodland (and/or Veteran Trees) would be acceptable in this instance; and
 - **Section 5** considers compensation measures.

2. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

Definition of Ancient Woodland

- 2.1 Within its Glossary, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) defines ‘ancient woodland’ as follows:

“An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)”.

- 2.2 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF further sets out that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the various principles, including the following:

“Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists”.

National Planning Practice Guidance

Definition of Ancient Woodland

- 2.3 The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2021) provides further clarity concerning the definition on ‘ancient woodland’. It defines ‘ancient woodland’ as being ‘*any area that’s been wooded continuously since at least 1600AD*’. It includes:

- *Ancient semi-natural woodland mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration.*
- *plantations on ancient woodland sites - replanted with conifer or broadleaved trees that retain ancient woodland features, such as undisturbed soil, ground flora and fungi.*

- 2.4 The PPG also clarifies that the term ‘wooded continuously’ does not “mean there’s been a continuous tree cover across the whole site”. It further states that “not all trees in the woodland have to be old. Open space, both temporary and permanent, is an important component of ancient woodlands”.

- 2.5 The PPG further identifies that “an ancient tree is exceptionally valuable” and that its attributes can include its ‘great age’, ‘size’, ‘condition’, ‘biodiversity value (as a result of significant wood decay and habitat created from its ageing process)’ and its ‘cultural and heritage value’.

Making Planning Decisions

- 2.6 The PPG aligns with the NPPF insofar as it states that Local Planning Authorities “should refuse planning’ permission if development will result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees unless:
- There are wholly exceptional reasons; and

- There's a suitable compensation strategy in place.

2.7 The PPG further states that, when making planning decisions, LPAs should consider:

- Conserving and enhancing biodiversity; and
- Reducing the level of impact of the proposed development on ancient woodland and ancient veteran trees.

2.8 Planning decisions should also be made in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the NPPF, as set out above.

Local Plan

2.9 Policies LB8/LB10 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to protect ancient woodland and ancient trees. Areas of ancient woodland are not identified on the adopted Local Plan proposals map (therefore they are not subject to a local plan policy designation), instead it cross refers to the Ancient Woodland Inventory as being the mechanism to define land that may be Ancient Woodland and to which Policy LB10 would apply.

3. The Ancient Woodland Inventory

- 3.1 The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) identifies land that may comprise Ancient Woodland. The AWI was originally compiled by the Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England) in the 1980's and 90's, and subsequently digitised by the Forestry Commission in the 1990's.
- 3.2 More recently, it has been subject to a localised update in 2012 in the Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey as set out in 'A Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Kent and Canterbury District, Kent - Report and Inventory Maps': <http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/project-reports/weald-a-down-ancient-woodland-survey/1072-canterbury-district-ancient-woodland-inventory/file.html>
- 3.3 The process of determining entrants into the AWI is based on 3 stages:
- Desk based mapping (capture dataset);
 - Research using historical maps and documents (refine dataset); and
 - Field survey (further refinement of dataset). Note that only a limited number of sites were subject to field work, which was based on a 'rapid/quick' survey only.
- 3.4 Inclusions in the AWI does not mean that the land comprises ancient woodland (for the purposes of the NPPF definition). It is made explicitly clear that the Inventory's content should be treated as provisional only, as it incorporates significant inaccuracies and assumptions.¹

The Long Thin Woodland

- 3.5 Land within the southern part of Site B referred to as Long Thin Wood is included in the AWI. The extent of this land is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, below:



Figure 1: Extent of land included in the AWI (excerpt from Natural England's 'MAGIC' online mapping tool)

¹ Paragraph 3.2.7 (Page 26), of the 'A Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Kent and Canterbury District, Kent - Report and Inventory Maps', prepared by the Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey, August 2012

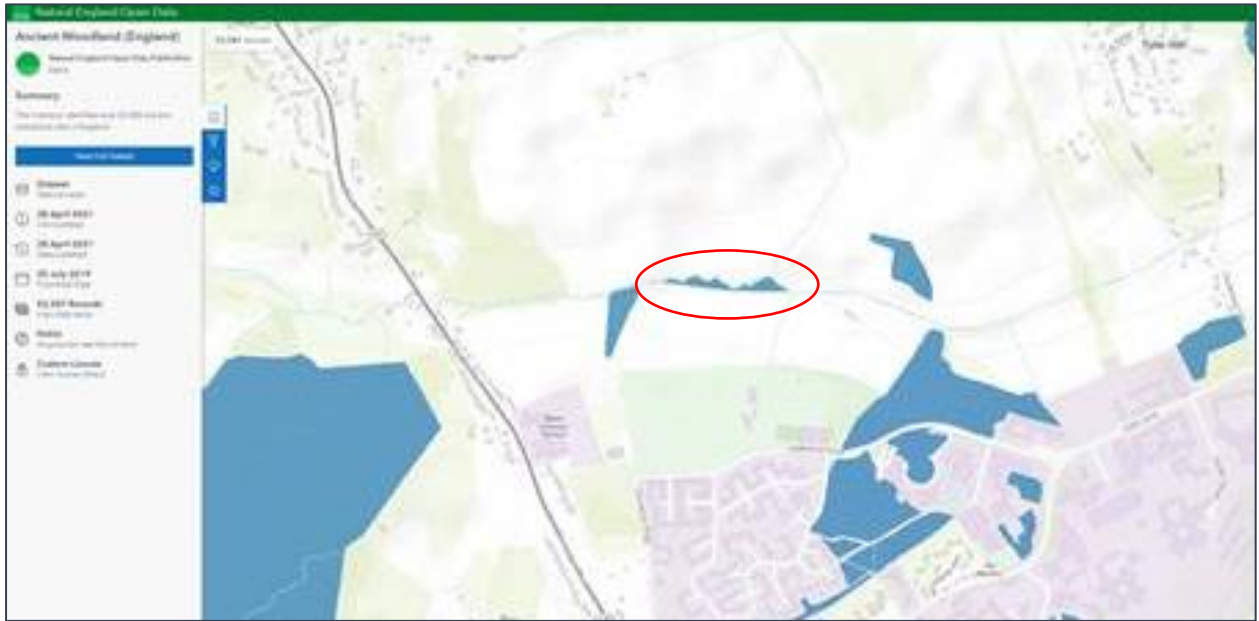


Figure 2: Image showing areas of potential ancient woodland on, or in proximity, to Site B (extracted from Natural England's website)

- 3.6 The land was added to the AWI in 2012 (previously the AWI only included areas of woodland in excess of 2ha, the 2012 update lowered the threshold to 0.25ha). As set out previously, however, this does not mean that this land comprises ancient woodland – however, there is logical reason to suggest that it might.

Survey Work (Evidence)

- 3.7 In order to help clarify whether the Long Thin Wood comprises ancient woodland, UoK's Arboricultural Consultant (WSP) has undertaken field survey work concerning this land. As set out in further detail within Appendix I, this indicates that:
- None of the trees within Long Thin Wood are likely to be over 400 years old; and
 - None of the coppice stools are considered likely to be over 400 years old.
- 3.8 WSP's Technical Note (Appendix I) also outlines that we have been unable to source accurate historic mapping dating back to 1600AD to confirm whether the wood has been continuously wooded since this time, with the oldest accurate maps we have been able to source only dating back to 1877.
- 3.9 The above suggests that despite being included in the AWI, the Long Thin Wood does not meet the definition of Ancient Woodland. However, in order to reach a conclusive view it will be necessary to investigate what, if any, evidence existed to inform its addition to the Inventory in 2012.
- 3.10 Notwithstanding the above, WSP's review and field work has indicated that the Long Thin Woodland may include Veteran Trees. Further investigations and surveys are required to confirm this.

Policy Implications

- 3.11 Further investigations are required in order to determine if the Long Thin Wood comprises Ancient Woodland (or contains Veteran Trees).
- 3.12 If it is concluded that neither apply, there are no policy issues (ref. NPPF para 180(c)).
- 3.13 If it is concluded that the land does comprise Ancient Woodland and/or contains Veteran Trees, development should avoid their loss or deterioration unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
- 3.14 Our review of available historic mapping and on-site fieldwork to date has yet to confirm that Long Thin Wood meets the NPPF definition of 'Ancient Woodland'. Whilst further work is required, at this stage it is currently questionable whether the policy restrictions concerning development which impact Ancient Woodland (set out in NPPF Paragraph 180(C)) would apply.

4. Wholly Exceptional Reasons

- 4.1 The attached note prepared by WSP presents the provisional access strategy for Sites BCD. This demonstrates how this has been designed to theoretically avoid harm to the Long Thin Woodland (as well as the woodland area to the west). Please see Figure 3 below for further details.
- 4.2 In summary this options includes the provision of a primary road aligned through a gap between the two areas of land included in the AWI. The road is offset a minimum of 15 metres from the western woodland area. However, it is aligned within 15 metres of a small part (a 2 metre strip) of the eastern area. While it is intended to avoid the identified land itself, its proximity (albeit only at a 2 metre pinch point) is within the 15 metre 'buffer zone' distance recommended by the Woodland Trust (for Ancient Woodland) and therefore could pose a risk of harm to the woodland. We note that where the road would encroach into the 15m buffer zone, the encroachment will comprise a bridge elevated above the land – there will be no pillars or any other physical connections to any land within 15m of the land included in the AWI.
- 4.3 Any risk of harm could be minimised through detailed design and other mitigation measures, however further Arboricultural survey work and technical design work will be required to confirm this.

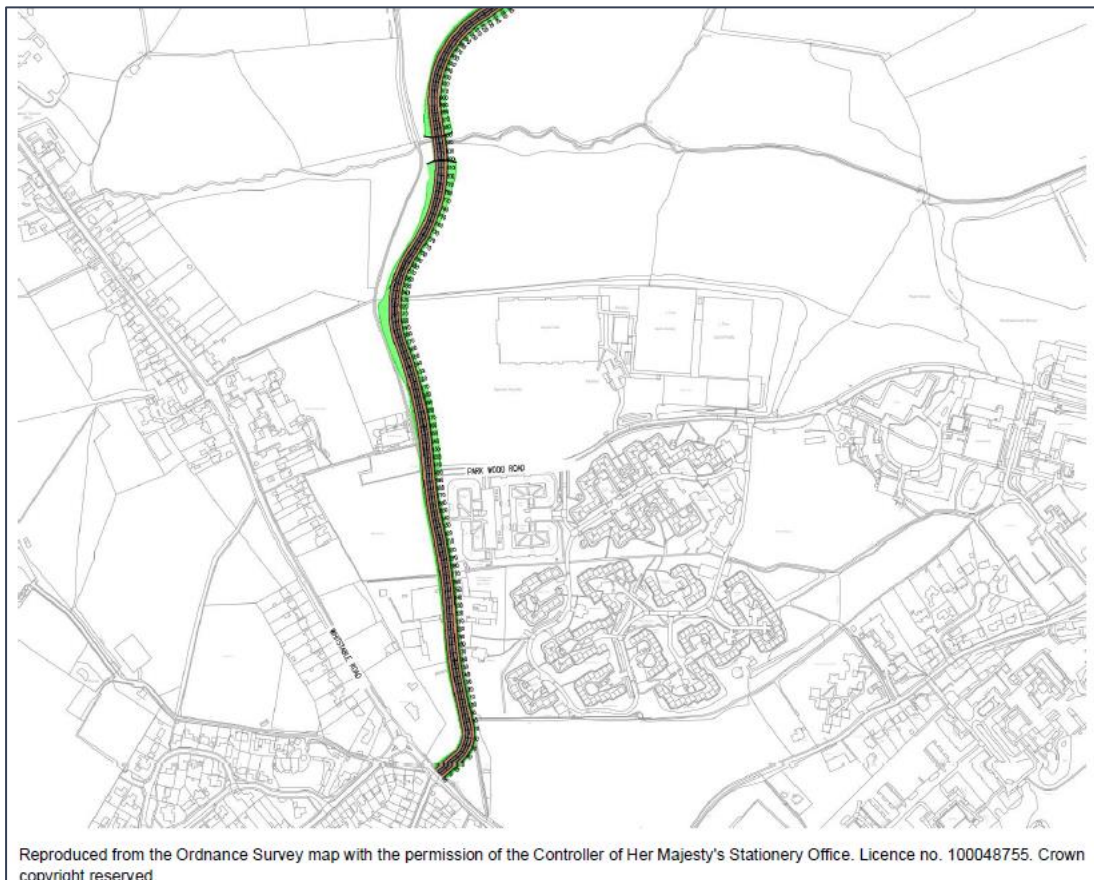


Figure 3: Indicative Access Road Location

- 4.4 It is uncertain whether the Long Thin Wood meets the definition of Ancient Woodland or not. However, if it is concluded that the Long Thin Wood does comprise Ancient Woodland and/or if veteran trees would be lost/harmed then 'wholly exceptional reasons' would need to be demonstrated to justify the proposals. It is our view that these exceptional reasons exist, as explained below:

Severity of Harm

Arboricultural Value

- 4.5 Any harm to Ancient Woodland or Veteran Trees is by definition harmful in planning terms. Bearing in mind that the area of potential harm would comprise part of a 2 metre wide slither of woodland only, it would be reasonable to conclude that the severity of any harm to Ancient Woodland would be limited (this will need to be clarified via further Arboricultural survey work which would also determine the severity of harm to any Veteran Trees).

Biodiversity and Ecological Value

- 4.6 As set out within Appendix I, WSP has undertaken an assessment of the biodiversity and ecology considerations associated with the Long Thin Wood area on Site B. In summary:
- The ground flora of the woodland habitat is not considered to be very diverse or to have much variation throughout the site, given that it is mostly made up of ground Ivy. However, ground flora north of the watercourse running across the woodland does have greater species diversity and flora cover than the habitat south of the watercourse.
 - Although mostly dominated by ground ivy there are two small sections of Hyacinthoides sp in the south of the woodland. Due to the time of year and the plant not being in flower, it cannot definitely be identified down to species level, with it possibly being Common bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta which is an ancient woodland indicator or Spanish bluebell Hyacinthoides hispanica and Hyacinthoides hispanica x non-scripta (the most common hybrid) which have little ecological value as they are not native. Red campion which is also a species which is an ancient woodland indicator was also recorded throughout the Site in all areas. In addition to this another ancient woodland indicator Guelder rose was located on the woodland border on the south of the Site in very small quantities.
 - Throughout most of the habitat and at the woodland edge bramble and cleavers were present while garlic mustard was seen closer to the watercourse south west of the woodland. Areas of bracken made up the interior of the wood close to the watercourse embankment. Ash dieback was evident in the north and east of the area, but as of present was not seen in the ash trees in the south and east. Species were mostly native with Himalayan balsam heavily present in the north east of the Site which has replaced most of the native ground flora present within the inhabited area.
- 4.7 Given the above, WSP do not consider that the Long Thin Wood area generates any pronounced/noticeable biodiversity value as a result of significant wood decay and habitat creation from its ageing process.

Cultural and Heritage Value

- 4.8 In our view, the current Long Thin Wood area generates little cultural and/or heritage value. It comprises a thin strip of woodland, largely unused/accessed by the public currently.

The Need for Development

- 4.9 NPPF para.7 confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Para.8 clarifies that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social, and environmental – and that these are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 4.10 The economic objective focusses on helping to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The social objective focusses on supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations. The environmental objective focusses on protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment.
- 4.11 There is a site-specific interdependent economic, social, and environmental need for land at the UoK to be brought forward for development. This land can only be developed via the provision of a new access road along the proposed alignment (as per the attached WSP note).
- 4.12 Meeting this need will deliver the sustainable development objectives of the planning system. This is a unique opportunity for the district which cannot be achieved via development elsewhere. As a consequence, it is our view that this opportunity should be a significant consideration in determining the Vision, Strategic Objectives, and preferred policy options for the new local plan, and would constitute the wholly exceptional reasons that would be necessary to justify harm to Ancient Woodland or Veteran Trees should this be the case.

Economic Need

- 4.13 Underpinning this opportunity is a significant site-specific economic need for development.
- 4.14 The Higher Education sector delivers significant economic and social value to the UK. Sustaining and growing the sector is a key component of cross-departmental UK Government policy and is accounted for in national planning policy which requires Local Plans to give significant weight to the need to support the sector.
- 4.15 Locally, the University of Kent delivers significant economic and social value to Canterbury and Kent and significant weight should be placed on the need to sustain and grow the University in preparation of the new Local Plan.
- 4.16 The University has a continuous need to invest in its core business, that being teaching, research and student experience to allow it to compete effectively in the UK Higher Education Market. This requires continual investment in its estate. Compounding this is the continual drive for innovation and sustainability in a changing social and technological world which requires one off investments in facilities and infrastructure.

- 4.17 There is a broader local economic need for the University to invest in related developments, such as hotel/conferencing facilities to help optimise the potential for add-on complimentary benefits to the wider local economy that can spin-off from the University.
- 4.18 The University's ability to make these necessary investments is constrained by its high operating costs (including costs of staffing and delivering services across its extensive estate) combined with the way it is funded. The University's income is principally based on funding from the UK Government for domestic students² (which is capped and loss making), combined with fees from international students, research income, student accommodation and spin-off commercial activities.
- 4.19 This income stream has been impacted by Covid-19. Whilst the University has weathered the impacts of the pandemic relatively well, there remain significant economic pressures on the University and the sector as a whole as a consequence. These include:
- Those relating to income generated from the University's student accommodation. Due to the lockdowns enforced by Central Government, together with international travel restrictions and social distancing measures, many students have had to move and / or remain at home during term-time. There are concerns that these changes could have a longer-term effect, with students choosing to remain at home in the long-term rather than renting accommodation on or in close proximity to the University. This could result in a reduction to the University's current income (outside of course fee income streams).
 - In addition to the above, courses have also been delivered virtually which has necessitated investments and improvements to the technology used by the University, supporting online learning and assessment, student support and IT equipment for staff to enable them to work at home. Buildings have also had to remain operational, which has been at the cost of the University.
- 4.20 These financial pressures are currently reducing the University's ability to invest in its estate and facilities. It follows that there is a need for the University to increase its income in order to meet the economic need to sustain and grow the University.
- 4.21 The University plans to increase its income via the disposal of surplus land (Sites BCDEF) for housing development. Subject to the land being allocated for development in the new Local Plan, this will generate a significant one-off receipt.
- 4.22 This receipt will help the University release itself from debt obligations, increase the resilience of its balance sheet, and help to overcome the financial pressures it is currently facing. In turn this will open up opportunities for reinvestment back into the University, including the acceleration of essential investment in the development of the institution necessary to support its core business functions (teaching, research and the UoK student experience). This will allow it to not only remain competitive as a thriving UK Higher Education Institution but to also continue to grow its substantial economic, social and cultural impact on the district and wider region.

² It is likely that funding from domestic fees is likely to be reduced further following the publication of the Augar Report (May 2019) which provides recommendations to review post-18 education and funding structures.

Housing Need

- 4.23 The need to allocate extensive land to meet the district's future housing needs is clearly set out in the Local Plan Vision and Preferred Options document.
- 4.24 As explained in the proceeding sections of this document , surplus land at the University is demonstrably suitable, available and achievable for housing development and therefore is capable of meeting part of the district's future housing need.
- 4.25 There may be other sites in the district that may also be suitable, available, and achievable for housing development, however no other sites are capable of mutually addressing both housing and the unique economic needs set out above.

Environmental Need

- 4.26 Achieving the environmental objectives of the NPPF is dependant on meeting the district's development needs in a manner that protects and enhances the district's natural, built and historic environment.
- 4.27 Much of the theoretical land supply in the district is significantly constrained by landscape, heritage, and other environmental constraints. Land at the UoK is sustainably located, subject to comparatively few substantial environmental constraints, and is capable of being brought forward for development in a manner that will deliver the environmental policy objectives of the NPPF. The alternative to allocating land here would be to direct development to less sustainable locations subject to greater environmental constraints.

5. Compensation Measures

- 5.1 For the reasons explained above, it is not clear whether any Ancient Woodland or Veteran Trees would be harmed by the proposed development. Further investigations and survey work is required to determine this, however, at this point in time it is anticipated that potential harm to Ancient Woodland (and/or Veteran Trees) could at best be avoided or at worst be limited.
- 5.2 Should it be concluded that there would be any harm, then a compensation package will be prepared in line with best practice.

Appendix 1:

WSP Technical Note - *University of Kent, Canterbury Campus Access Road Alignment*



TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE:	06 August 2021	CONFIDENTIALITY:	Public
SUBJECT:	University of Kent, Canterbury Campus Access Road Alignment		
PROJECT:	70080896	AUTHOR:	Sarah Thomas
CHECKED:	Alan Heatley	APPROVED:	Justin Sherlock

INTRODUCTION

WSP has been appointed by the University of Kent (UoK) to provide transport and environmental advice for the development of proposals on land at their Canterbury Campus that has been identified as being surplus to requirement.

Disposal Sites BCD lie to the immediate north of the University Campus with vehicular access currently provided from Tyler Hill Road, a rural single carriageway road that connects Blean and the A290 in the west with Tyler Hill and Canterbury Hill in the east.

This Technical Note provides a summary of the access strategy for Sites BCD and the work undertaken to define the alignment of the access road proposed within the concept masterplan.

ACCESS STRATEGY

When considering vehicular access to Sites BCD the starting point was to investigate where the current sites connect with the public highway. The only existing point of connection to the public highway is Tyler Hill Road. Tyler Hill Road is a single carriageway road that connects the A290 Whitstable Road in the west with the village of Tyler Hill and Hackington Road in the east. In the vicinity of Sites BCD Tyler Hill Road is subject to national speed limit (60mph), varies in width between approximately 4m and 6m, is subject to a 7.5t weight restriction and in places features limited forward visibility.

In its current form Tyler Hill Road is not currently considered suitable to accommodate a significant increase in volumes of traffic. Due to the University's limited frontage onto Tyler Hill Road, constrained highway boundary extents and multiple land ownerships fronting the highway, the University has limited potential within its own land ownership to improve the existing Tyler Hill Road.

Consideration was given to whether access could be achieved through third party land acquisition. However, the multiple land ownerships restrict the ability to achieve this at this early stage (although opportunities may arise in due course). In addition, significantly increasing traffic volumes on this road could result in unacceptable impacts on the neighbouring village of Tyler Hill and upon the two junctions at either end (A290 and Hackington Road) which have been highlighted by Kent County Council during initial discussions as a concern.

On the basis of the above, the access strategy for unlocking Sites BCD recommended developing a new north-south route through the University Campus achieving access onto Whitstable Road. To discourage increased usage of Tyler Hill Road it was recommended that the existing road was downgraded where it passed through University owned land and the highway incorporated into the masterplan where design measures could be incorporated to manage through traffic and limit access from the development out onto the retained sections of road. Further benefits would be the ability to re-prioritise Tyler Hill Road as a

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sustainable transport link and improve crossing conditions for the Crab and Winkle Way. Further information on this access strategy is provided within the accompanying WSP Transport Strategy.

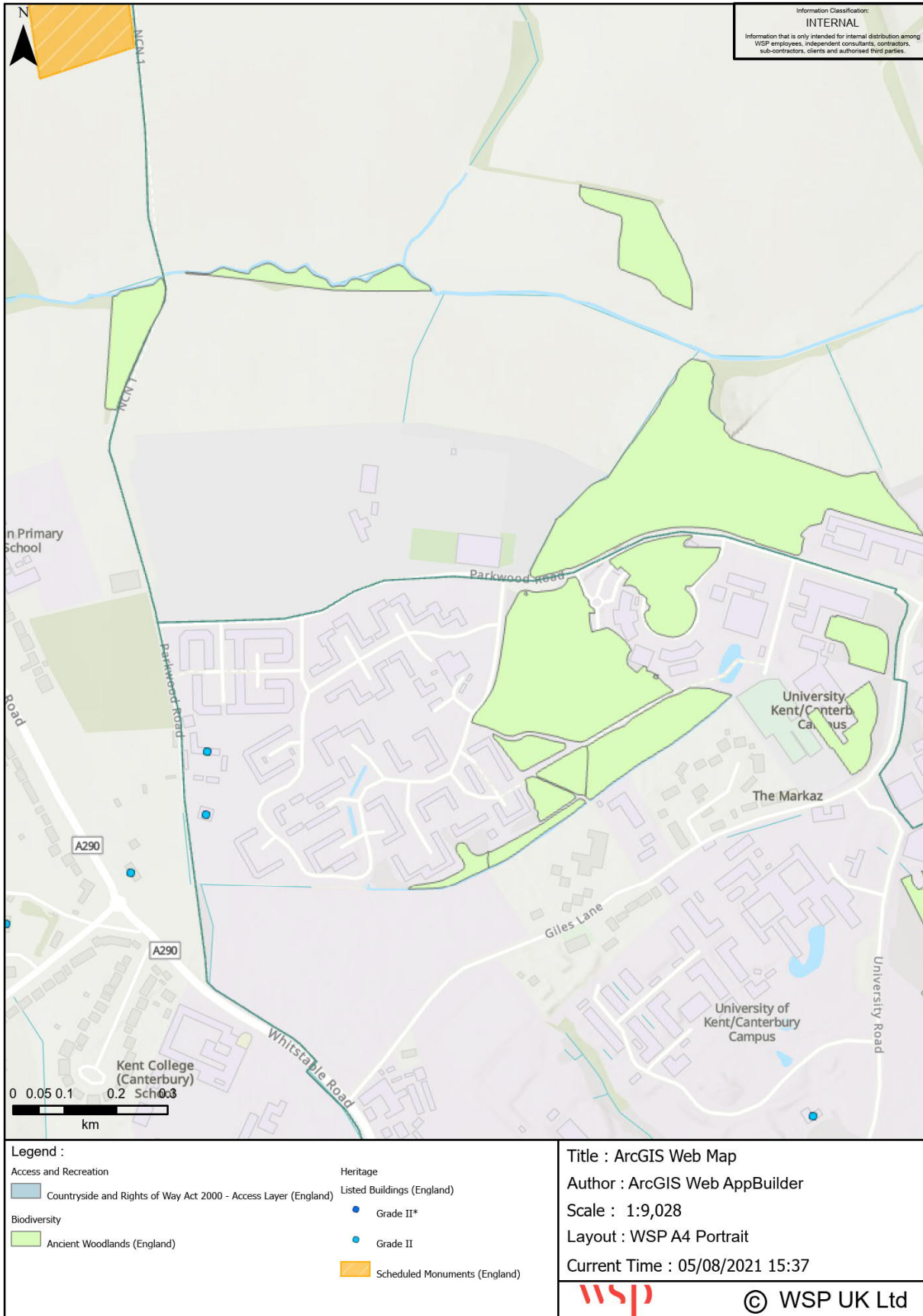
ACCESS ROAD CONSTRAINTS

Discussions with the UoK and outputs from the environmental constraints and opportunities analysis informed the constraints to provision of a new north-south access road through the University Campus. The key constraints identified and considered in the alignment options developed were as follows:

- The areas of ancient woodland identified in the south of Site B. Two parcels of ancient woodland were identified from information contained on the Magic Database and are shown in **Figure 1**;
- The Crab and Winkle Way which forms part of National Cycle Route 1;
- The watercourse that runs adjacent to the ancient woodland and would need to be either bridged or culverted to achieve access through Site B;
- The sports pitches on the University Campus which form part of the University of Kent Sports Centre;
- The various buildings and land uses on the University Campus to the south of Park Wood Road that might be impacted by provision of a new access road;
- The Oaks Nursery and adjacent car park;
- The playing fields to the south of The Oaks Nursery which are identified in the University Masterplan for car and coach parking; and
- The listed buildings of Hothe Court, Barn Adjoining Hothe Court and Blean House.

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Figure 1 – Constraints Plan



ACCESS ROAD OPTIONS

Taking account of the constraints identified above a range of alignments were considered for the new access road (**Figure 2**) to determine the potential impacts these may have on the existing University Campus and other constraints identified as part of the environmental studies such as the ancient woodland and watercourse. These access road options are described in more detail below.

Figure 2 – Access Road Alignment Options



OPTION 1

The alignment seeks to utilise the Crab and Winkle Way through the southern part of the University Campus to Park Wood Road where a new junction would be formed. At this point the alignment would head to the east across the University Sports Pitches and into the southern part of Site B. The alignment would enable development parcels both to the west and east on the southern section of Site B before crossing the watercourse. Further north the alignment would cross Tyler Hill Road to enable access to Site D.

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OPTION 2

The alignment seeks to avoid the Crab and Winkle Way through the University Campus by following the western boundary of the site and then heading across the playing fields to form a new junction with Park Wood Road. At this point the alignment would head to the east across the University Sports Pitches and into the southern part of Site B. The alignment would enable development parcels both to the west and east on the southern section of Site B before crossing the watercourse. Further north the alignment would cross Tyler Hill Road to enable access to Site D.

OPTION 3

The alignment seeks to follow the Crab and Winkle Way through the University Campus to Park Wood Road where a new junction would be formed. It then continues north on an alignment immediately to the east of the Crab and Winkle Way to minimise impacts on the University Sports Pitches before heading into the southern part of Site B. The alignment would then stay in the west of Site B, maintaining a buffer to the north-south aligned section of ancient woodland known as West Triangle Wood. The road then seeks to cross the east-west section of ancient woodland known as Long Thin Wood in the far west where the woodland is at its thinnest and at a point potentially within the buffer zones of the ancient woodland rather than impacting the ancient woodland itself. North of the watercourse the alignment ties back into that of Option 1 and 2 described above.

OPTION 4

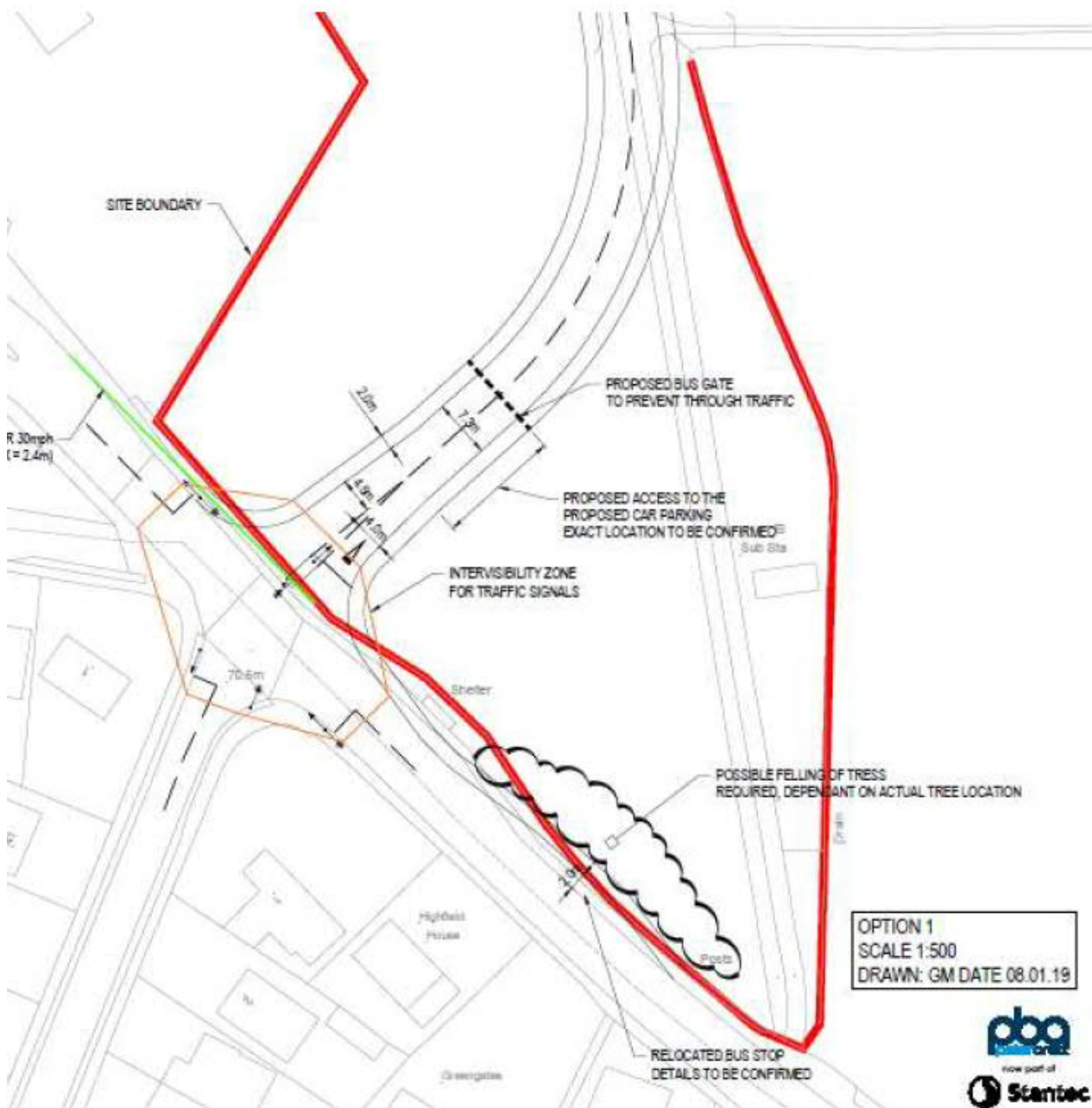
This option is a variant of Option 1 which seeks to minimise impacts on Long Thin Wood by crossing the watercourse in the west at the approximate location of the Crab and Winkle way. North of the watercourse the alignment ties back into that of Option 1 and 2 described above.

JUNCTION WITH WHITSTABLE ROAD

The access road junction with Whitstable Road would take the form of a traffic signal junction. Proposals for a traffic signal junction were previously developed by Stantec (formerly PBA) as part of the University Masterplan. The proposals for the Whitstable Road junction as previously developed are shown in **Figure 3**.

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Figure 3 – Whitstable Road Junction (Source: PBA Access and Movement Study)



IMPACT ON ANCIENT WOODLAND

All of the options identified for the road involved passing through or close to (within the buffer zones of) the area of ancient woodland that runs parallel to the watercourse within Site B (Long Thin Wood). A review of the ancient woodland was undertaken by WSP's Arboriculture and Ecology Teams to identify the potential status of the woodland. This review is contained within **Appendix A**. Whilst their review did not identify any trees that would indicate the woodland was ancient (defined as an area of woodland which has been continuously treed from before 1600AD) several trees were noted to have veteran characteristics, and

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these were located throughout the band of woodland. The alignment of the road was therefore guided towards the narrowest part of the woodland, located close to where the Crab and Winkle Way passes through.

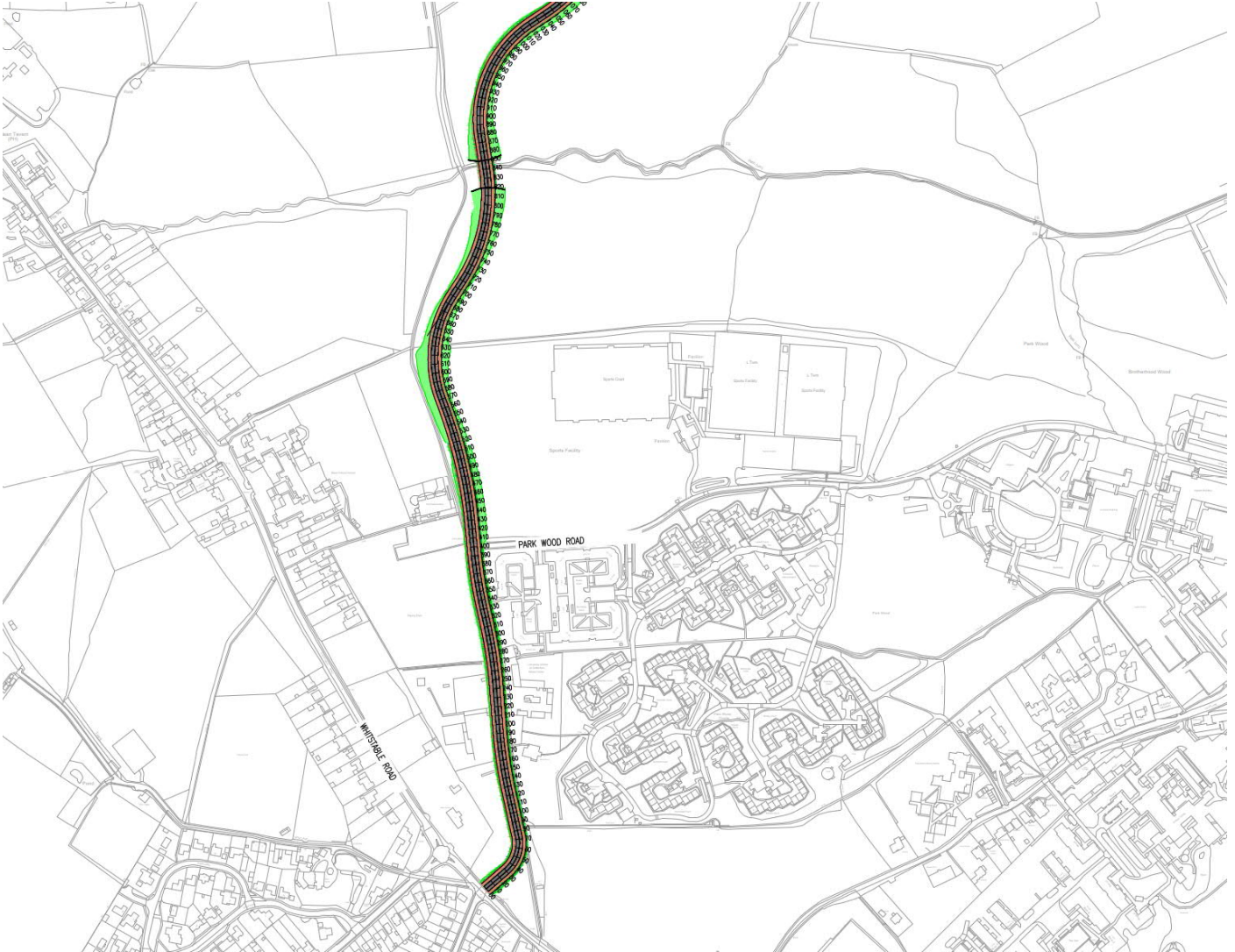
The preferred access road option selected for inclusion within the concept masterplan was Option 3. This alignment was selected for the following reasons:

- Minimised impacts on the University Campus including the Sports Pitches;
- Facilitated the University Masterplan by providing an access from Whitstable Road for provision of new car parks and amended bus routes;
- Minimised potential impacts on listed buildings when compared to other options explored;
- The road alignment, once consideration was given to likely earthworks could maintain a buffer to West Triangle Wood ancient woodland; and
- Through refinement of the design the road could potentially cross through the gap between the West Triangle Wood ancient woodland and the Long Thin Wood ancient woodland. To further minimise impacts in the vicinity of the ancient woodland a bridge could be used rather than a cheaper culvert type solution to narrow the alignment of the highway and potentially prevent any loss of ancient woodland.

Figure 4 shows the proposed preferred alignment of the access road including the indicative location for a bridge crossing the watercourse.

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Figure 4 – Site BCD Access Road Option C Alignment



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Appendix A – Woodland Site Visit Technical Note

TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE:	05 August 2021	CONFIDENTIALITY:	Public
SUBJECT:	University of Kent: Long Thin Wood – Technical Summary		
PROJECT:	70080896	AUTHOR:	Howard Booth and Daniel Stewart
CHECKED:	Alan Heatley	APPROVED:	Justin Sherlock

INTRODUCTION

WSP has been appointed by the University of Kent (UoK) to provide transport and environmental advice for the development of proposals on land at their Canterbury Campus that has been identified as being surplus to requirement.

The access strategy for the masterplan identifies that an area of potential ancient woodland, referenced as Long Thin Wood could be impacted by the Proposed Development. This Technical Note provides a summary of the findings from a walkover survey undertaken on 16 July 2021 by Howard Booth and Daniel Stewart of WSP to assess the general characteristics of the woodland.

The walkover survey was a general survey of the site without sample plots. Throughout the walkover survey observations were made and evidence of past management such as earthworks were looked for along with recording tree species, size and evidence of tree work. The survey was not detailed and only sizes of the largest trees were recorded.

Long Thin Wood runs east west along the alignment of a stream. Woodland extends both side of the stream. As the woodland area to the south of the stream is potential ancient woodland this area is the main focus of this Technical Note.

LOCATION AND SCOPE OF SURVEY

Figure 1 illustrates the areas of Woodland surrounding and within the University Sites known as BCD. Long Thin Wood is identified as area two on **Figure 1**.

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DATE:	05 August 2021	CONFIDENTIALITY:	Public
SUBJECT:	University of Kent: Long Thin Wood – Technical Summary		
PROJECT:	70080896	AUTHOR:	Howard Booth and Daniel Stewart
CHECKED:	Alan Heatley	APPROVED:	Justin Sherlock

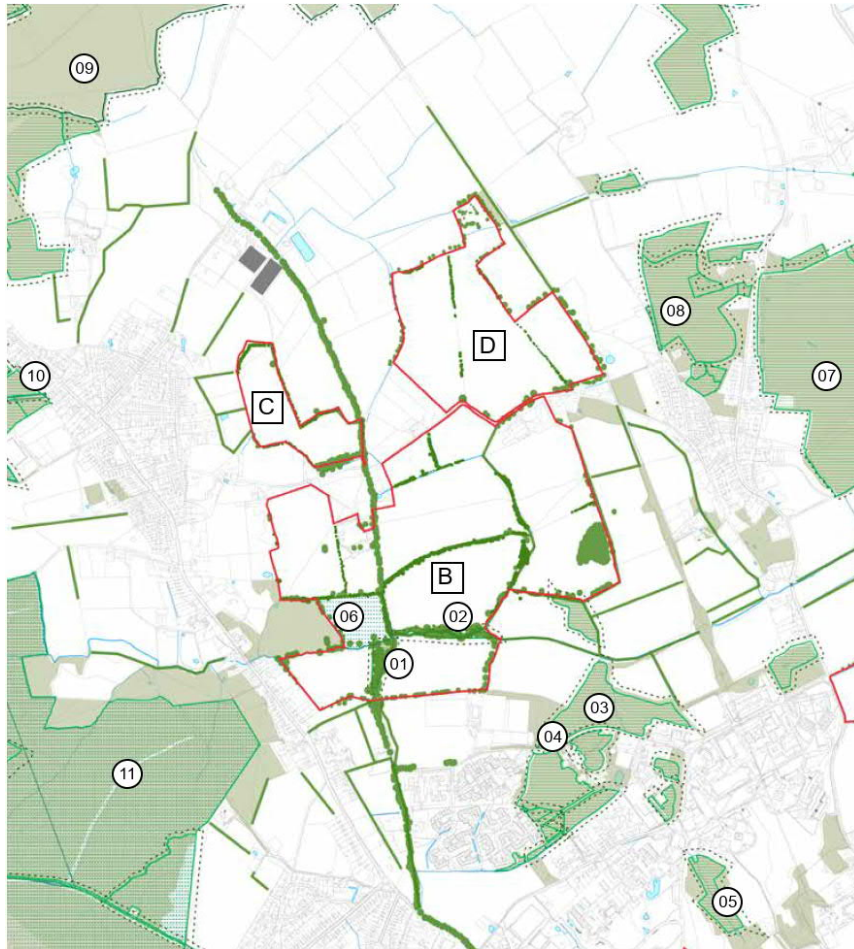


Figure 1: Woodland within vicinity of Site (Source: PRP)

The survey focused on the area of Long Thin Wood within the boundary of Site B only.

TREES

SPECIES

The woodland south of the stream is predominantly oak and ash. Common through the woodland is hazel and holly. Other trees present within the woodland include hawthorn, field maple, wild cherry, sweet chestnut, downy birch, willow, yew and alder.

Woodland north of the stream is dominated by willow and ash, other trees include oak, hazel, poplar, wild cherry, downy birch, hawthorn, field maple and elder.

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PAST MANAGEMENT

The oaks are maiden trees with the exception of one that was multi-stemmed at ground level and had probably been coppiced. Several ash trees have been coppiced but not for many years and these trees form part of the closed canopy of the mature woodland.

Along the southern edge of the woodland is evidence of hedge planting. These trees are suppressed by the larger woodland and herbaceous weeds from the field perimeter, the relatively small size of these plants and style of planting indicates this hedge is relatively modern.

Within the woodland there are several large trees that have collapsed, typically with root plate failure. Some have fallen across the stream and remain in-situ. There are two areas along the southern edge where wood chips were present within the woodland, it is assumed that these are arisings from branches that fell into the field and may have been in-situ for only a few years.

Along the southern side of the woodland there were two sections where barbed wire was present and attached to trees. No earth banks or mounds indicating historic boundaries or earth work were observed.

The ash trees appear to be infected with ash dieback. One stem of a coppiced tree is dead and other ash have sparse crowns. This disease could cause gaps within the woodland should more ash die or develop secondary infections reducing their safe retention.

Long Thin Wood is included within a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) which was made in 1970 and protects the site with an Area designation. Species scheduled in the TPO are oak, ash, poplar and willow, trees of these species present in 1970 are protected by the TPO. Work to those trees is restricted and would require consent from the local planning authority.

AGE

Establishing the age of trees can accurately be done if there are records of tree planting or core samples taken of the tree. In the absence of accurate information, estimates for age can be made based on the girth (circumference) of the tree. A method developed by Alan Mitchell assumes an average tree increases girth by 25mm each year for an open grown maiden tree. For trees in woodlands that value would be halved as they grow more slowly.

In the southern side of the woodland the oak were the largest diameter trees. The tree that appeared the largest was measured to have a girth at 1.5m above ground of 3420mm. The age of this tree would therefore be between 137 and 274 years old.

As the oak trees in Long Thin Wood typically have full crowns they are not typical of closed canopy woodland trees, that is to say their growth has only been slightly restricted. The nature of the site is such that using the woodland growth rate would overestimate their age, a more likely age range is in the region of 150 to 200 years old.

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Establishing the age of coppice stools is complicated by the centre of the stool having decayed away many years ago and unknown coppicing cycles. In his book *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* Oliver Rackham references aging of coppice stools. He gives an example of an ash stool on a poor quality waterlogged site being 0.6m diameter and 300 years old whereas an ash on a good site at 300 year old could be 1.5m diameter.

The ash coppice were approx. 1m in diameter, this was estimated as shapes were irregular and vegetation obstructed access around the base. Ground conditions on site appear to be good and based on the examples of Oliver Rackham the age of the ash coppice stools is likely to be much younger than 300 years, potentially younger than 200 years.

Other less common trees with multiple stems from the ground and indicative of coppice management were one sweet chestnut and a field maple. The sweet chestnut and field maple are of a similar size to the ash at approx. 1m diameter and may therefore be of a similar age to the ash.

Other tree species on site, given their sizes, are younger than the oak and ash. For example, a wild cherry is between 43 and 87 years old. Yew trees are particularly slow growing species, the two yew trees have diameters of 50mm and are relatively young.

ANCIENT WOODLAND

Ancient woodland in England is a classification used for an area of woodland that has been in continuous existence from before 1600AD.

Natural England owns the Ancient Woodland Inventory which is publicly accessible on DEFRA's MAGIC website and it was first developed in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2018 Natural England published *Ancient Woodland Inventory Handbook for England* which provides an overview of the inventory, its history and methods for improving its accuracy. At several points through the handbook it is referenced that the inventory is provisional by the nature in which it was compiled. It should therefore not be assumed that because a woodland is in the Ancient Woodland Inventory that it must be ancient and pre-date 1600AD.

Archives such as maps or estate records could be used to establish whether the site was woodland at different points of history.

It should be noted that if the site is confirmed not to be ancient woodland that there are several trees within it, especially the oak and ash that have some characteristics of being veteran trees. Further inspection is required to establish if they are veteran trees.

QUALITY ACROSS THE WOODLAND

Long Thin Wood does not appear in the Forestry Commission's woodland inventory as its area is less than 0.5ha. With regard to the area recorded as potentially ancient woodland, this only covers the south side of the stream and does not extend to the full extent of trees to the west.

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The woodland varies in width along its length and this appears to be influenced by the route of the stream. The narrowest part of the woodland is the western end and the widest is towards the middle.

While there is some variation in species and tree size through the woodland the general quality is relatively consistent. Areas of particular note highlighted in Image 1 are:

- A- The narrowest point of the woodland, the frequency of trees is reduced with gaps in the woodland canopy on the south of the stream
- B- Several coppiced ash with some veteran characteristics but also evidence of decline and disease
- C- Area of greatest variety of tree species

It should be noted that throughout the woodland, in areas A, B and C there are trees which have some veteran characteristics. There are several factors that influence whether a tree is a veteran; it is not based solely on size or age. A more detailed inspection of these potentially veteran trees is required to establish whether they should be classified as veteran trees.

Image 1 – Woodland overview



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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Long Thin Wood has a mixture of native broadleaf trees with ash and oak the dominant species. There is evidence of past management of Long Thin Wood with coppice stools of predominantly ash. A more recent intervention was the planting of a hedge along the southern edge.

There is variation in the size of trees across the site and the largest oak are likely to be between 150 and 200 years old. There are several coppiced ash stools, the age of which is more difficult establish than maiden trees and those present are likely to be much younger than 300 years.

Long Thin Wood is shown in the Ancient Woodland Inventory, an inventory that records sites that have potential of being ancient. An ancient woodland is an area of woodland which has been continuously treed from before 1600AD. None of the trees within the woodland show signs of being in-situ prior to 1600AD. Other evidence such as maps or estate records Would be needed to confirm the status of Long Thin Wood as an ancient woodland.

Irrespective of the status of the woodland as ancient or not it has several trees which have some veteran characteristics. Further assessment of these trees is advised to ensure they are suitably considered in any potential work in or near the woodland.

Long Thin Wood is a mature woodland with typically closed canopy and the woodland varies in width. The western end of the woodland has the lowest frequency of trees relative to the rest of the woodland and includes trees which have some veteran characteristics.

ECOLOGY

Ground flora of the woodland habitat was not very diverse or had much variation throughout the site, mostly made up of ground Ivy. However, ground flora north of the watercourse running across the woodland had greater species diversity and flora cover then the habitat south of the watercourse. Although mostly dominated by ground ivy there were two small sections of Hyacinthoides sp in the south of the woodland. Due to the time of year and the plant not being in flower, it cannot definitely be identified down to species level, with it possibly being Common bluebell Hyacinthoides non-scripta which is an ancient woodland indicator or Spanish bluebell Hyacinthoides hispanica and Hyacinthoides hispanica x non-scripta (the most common hybrid) which have little ecological value as they are not native. Red campion which is also a species which is an ancient woodland indicator was also recorded throughout the Site in all areas. In addition to this another ancient woodland indicator Guelder rose was located on the woodland border on the south of the Site in very small quantities.

Throughout most of the habitat and at the woodland edge bramble and cleavers were present while garlic mustard was seen closer to the watercourse south west of the woodland. Areas of bracken made up the interior of the wood close to the watercourse embankment. As previously mentioned, Ash dieback was

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During the site visit a number of rabbit warrens and birds were observed throughout the site. There were multiple nests observed throughout the woodland in the canopy. In addition to this the woodland could support roosting bats due to splits, cracks and rot holes in the trunks and limbs, and ivy on the trees. Further information on protected species is found within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

An older map published in 1769² by A. Dury and W. Herbert also does not indicate the woodland's presence at that time.

Further analysis of mapping available from the National Library of Scotland³ identified a map produced by Ordnance Survey that was surveyed between 1872-73 and published in 1877. This map⁴ does indicate the area of woodland referred to as Long Thin Wood.

The review of publicly accessible historic mapping indicates that the woodland dates back to at least the 1870s and this finding is commensurate with findings of the site visit. The earlier maps do not necessarily confirm the absence of the woodland as the scale of the mapping and cartography do not permit detailed analysis. However, they do suggest that the woodland may not have been present prior to the 1870s. Further work would be required to confirm this.

1

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/ll/detailView.html?&manifestUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.davidrumsey.com%2Ffluna%2FServlet%2Fiiif%2Fm%2FRUMSEY~8~1~253703~5519088%2Fmanifest&os=0&lc=RUMSEY~8~1&baseUrl=%2F%2Fwww.davidrumsey.com%2Ffluna%2FServlet%2Fas%2Fsearch&mediaType=Image#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&r=0&xywh=29397%2C11263%2C3071%2C1307> accessed 21/07/2021

² https://biblio.unibe.ch/web-apps/maps/zoomify.php?pic=Ryh_1806_34.jpg&col=ryh accessed 22/07/2021

³ <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=14&lat=51.27718&lon=1.09406&layers=102&b=1&z=1&point=51.28003,1.08025>
accessed 21/07/2021

⁴ <https://maps.nls.uk/view/102343537> accessed 21/07/2021

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SUMMARY

WSP has been appointed by the University of Kent (UoK) to provide transport and environmental advice for the development of proposals on land at their Canterbury Campus that has been identified as being surplus to requirement.

A potential area of ancient woodland located within Site B has been identified as being impacted by the masterplan proposals.

A site visit was undertaken to help establish the quality of the woodland (both from an arboricultural and ecological perspective) and the likely age.

The site visit found that the oldest tree (an oak) was likely to be between 150 and 200 years old, whilst coppiced ash stools are likely to be less than 300 years old.

Long Thin Wood is shown in the Ancient Woodland Inventory, an inventory that records sites that have potential of being ancient. An ancient woodland is an area of woodland which has been continuously treed from before 1600AD. None of the trees within the woodland show signs of being in-situ prior to 1600AD. Other evidence such as maps or estate records would be needed to confirm the status of Long Thin Wood as an ancient woodland. The review of publicly accessible historic maps confirms that the woodland was in existence around 1870 but may have not been present prior to this. Further work will be required to confirm this.

Irrespective of the status of the woodland as ancient or not it has several trees which have some veteran characteristics. This will need to be taken into account as the proposals are developed further.