



Principle Guidance

The 'Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal' (Jacobs, 2011) locates the site within the Blean Woods West landscape character area (LCA),

The Woodland Landscape Type is described as: "As a whole this area represents a mosaic of ancient seminatural woodland with mixed coppice with oak standards, sweet chestnut coppice and conifer plantation. The unusual close proximity of these large woodlands to the sea creates a distinctive sense of place, unique within the context of the Kent landscape."

The woodland landscape guidelines include:

- This land is mainly suited to grass with occasional arable crops - the yields of which are variable.
- Conserve the landscape character and biodiversity through continued sensitive woodland management practice,
- Important woodland and trees within the landscape, especially ancient semi-natural woodland should be protected, appropriately managed and, where possible, expanded at their margins. Veteran trees should be protected and appropriately managed,
- Areas of conifer plantation and the extensive areas of sweet chestnut re-planting should be sensitively replaced by native broadleaf woodland planting,
- Conserve the woodland fringe which provides the unique interface between open and wooded areas.

The Blean Woods West LCA key characteristics include; gently to steeply sloping landscape supporting ancient woodland, heavy clay soils, ancient woodland designated as SSSI, SAC and NNR, part of the most extensive seminatural woodlands in the south east of England, areas of woodland cleared for grazing with extensive views, fragmented mature hedgerows along lanes, A and B roads and narrow winding lanes with few passing places, linear village, scattered isolated cottages and farms, 20th century residential dwellings, flint church, Victorian red brick cottages and farm buildings.

The guidelines for the Blean Woods West LCA are aimed at conserving and reinforcing the character. The landscape related guidelines include:

- Conserve the largely undeveloped and heavily wooded character of the landscape which forms part of the wider Blean Woods complex,
- Resist further woodland clearance,
- Create stronger ecological networks by linking Ancient Woodlands with new woodland planting and hedgerow restoration,
- Conserve the distinct, tranquil landscape character of ancient and semi-ancient woodland complex, together with its setting of wood pasture, open slopes (inc. views) and the rural character of the area's network of narrow winding lanes, enclosed by mature hedgerows.

Use local and vernacular materials appropriate: for boundaries- red or yellow stock brick or brick and flint, iron railings, timber paling or picket fences or hedgerows, for roofs- Kent peg tiles and occasional slate for roofs and for building walls- weatherboarding, red or occasional yellow stock brick or occasional brick and flint. For new hedges and hedgerow trees- hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn, dog rose, field maple and dogwood, for mixed-woodland or other planting- pedunculate oak, alder, holly, beech, sweet chestnut, hornbeam, beech, hazel, ash and birch. Mature oak across open farmland. Additionally, within developed areas - beech for hedging. Other – isolated orchards.

Other Important Guidance

• Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development

From: Forestry Commission (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission>) and Natural England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/naturalengland>)

Published: 13 October 2014

Last updated: 5 November 2018,

• Planning for Ancient Woodland Planners' Manual for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees

From: Woodland Trust

Published : July 2019

Recent Case Law

■ APPEAL MADE BY BLOOR HOMES AND SANDLEFORD FARM PARTNERSHIP LAND AT SANDLEFORD PARK, NEWTOWN ROAD, NEWBURY

■ Application Reference: 20/01238/OUTMAJ

■ Appeal Reference: APP/W0340/W/20/3265460

■ Decision date: 6 May 2022

■ This was an outline application for:

■ Outline planning permission for up to 1,000 new homes; an 80 extra care housing units (Use Class C3) as part of the affordable housing provision; a new 2 form entry primary school (D1); expansion land for Park House Academy School; a local centre to comprise flexible commercial floorspace (A1-A5 up to 2,150 sq m, B1a up to 200 sq m) and D1 use (up to 500sq m); the formation of new means of access onto Monks Lane; new open space including the laying out of a new country park; drainage infrastructure; walking and cycling infrastructure and other associated infrastructure works. Matters to be considered: Access.

■ In the appeal, the Secretary of State and Inspector both agreed that the proposed 15 metre buffer will be sufficient to safeguard the rooting areas of the trees within the ancient woodland.

■ In relation to the increase in public access to the woodland, both agreed that any adverse impacts could be managed through the Strategic Landscape and Green Infrastructure Plan without leading to a loss or deterioration of ancient woodland – Confirming the impacts are still manageable even if the buffer is linked to existing footprints.

■ In terms of the impacts on the veteran trees, both Secretary of State and Inspector agreed this could be addressed in the Reserved Matters.



Winterbourne Fields

Woodland Buffer

Scheme considerations in line with Guidance

- Consider any new development in relation to the landscape character and value of the AHLV, designated ancient woodland and the statutory designations of the neighbouring Blean Woods complex (SSSI, NNR, SPA),
- Any new development should follow a landscape-led approach, utilising landform and natural contours to sensitively contain and provide boundaries to built form; and conserving and reinforcing the existing network of woodland, shelterbelts and hedgerows, which provide landscape structure, enclosure and screening. Consider the creation and restoration of such features, where these have been lost. This landscape-led approach should extend to the consideration of green infrastructure (GI), and opportunities to incorporate existing valued landscape features within a network of multi-functional, accessible green and blue spaces and routes, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- Ensure any new development is sensitive to local character and context in terms of building scale, massing, style and materials, incorporating sensitive lighting design and native plant species of local provenance.

Current edge to Ancient Woodland

The current farming edge is 2m from the boundary, which can lead to both airborne particles and run off from spraying being dispersed into the ancient woodland. The potential deleterious effects of this necessary agricultural process will be eliminated with the development of Winterbourne Fields.

Masterplan response to the Ancient Woodland

The development of a new garden village, totally enclosed by woodland, with central stream and entry from the higher ground, provided the perfect site for natural permeability and the creation of a neighbourhood, rather than 'just a place to live'.

Winterbourne has been focused on creating a sustainable, modern, community focused development which will support all generations across education, work and residential.

The incorporation of a Village Centre around a Village Green will provide an additional, more formal opportunity for gatherings and event space for the community. The Village Green will look over the wider River Park and provide a clear view across the subject site to the southeast towards the Ancient Woodland.

A key vista runs across the site, northwest to southeast, and west to east.

The Village Centre boasts avenues of fruiting / flowering trees at tight spacing to create a large impact for all users. This is to reflect the site's history, and its location within the 'Garden of England'.

Entry into and out of the River Park have been designed to encourage the view towards the retained Ancient Woodland on the western and eastern boundaries.

All entrances will be areas of large grass fields, which offer multiple uses; informal and formal play, dog walking, informal kick about space and provide clear permeability for all users of the site.

The closer the user gets to the connection with the Ancient Woodland from a River Park entrance / exit, the more the proposed properties will appear set back and separated from the walkway. This is to focus the user's attention and sense of place on the Ancient Woodland itself.



SHAPTOR CAPITAL





Design Team Recommendations

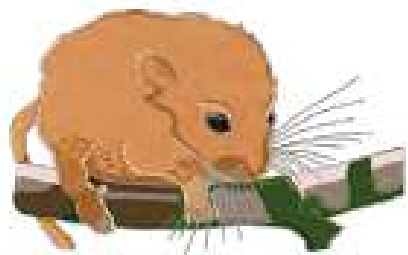
The following is a brief summary of some of the recommendations prepared by consultants within the design team which has influenced the Landscape Masterplan of the site.

Ecology:

- Buffer zones to the Ancient Woodland planted with native shrubs and suitable wildflower grassland to create a gradual ecotone between woodland and the site.
- Creation of a traditional orchard - this is a Borough-wide priority.
- Retained hedges should be reinforced with native species such as blackthorn, hazel, honeysuckle, holly, dogwood and yew.
- The use of flowering plants as listed within the RHS
- 'Plants for Pollinators' within the soft landscape scheme.
- The use of seed and fruit bearing species of tree such as cherry, rowan, birch and crab apple to provide a foraging resource for birds and insects.
- Creation of permanent waterbodies within the scheme. The ponds should have an extensive area of shallow water which is favoured by invertebrates. Native plants should be used within the pond, with non-native invasive species to be avoided.
- Green walls and roofs wherever possible.

Arboriculture

A number of important oak trees and other species were identified within the Tree Report. Many of these will be retained, with particular care taken with the proposed slip road engineering works amended to ensure a veteran oak tree could be retained. A number of native and climate change resilient species are being proposed across the scheme to reflect the existing site character and provide the next 50-100 years of tree canopies across the site.



FAUNAL MONITORING

Increased foraging and commuting corridors to strengthen existing species numbers



FLORAL DIVERSITY

Increased floral diversity and long term management to promote biodiversity

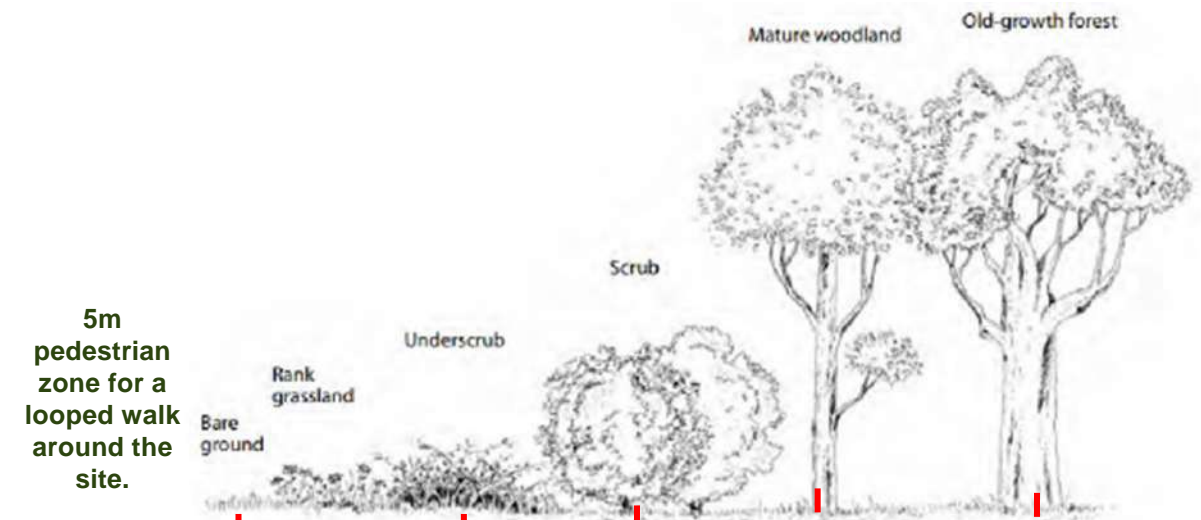
Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone

Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone

The Ancient Woodland will be protected by a minimum of a 20m buffer zone, plus a 5m pedestrian zone for a looped walk around the site.

The 20m buffer zone along the boundaries will be planted up with thorny species to reduce human and domestic pet infiltration.

The proposed woodland on the western boundary will create extended connectivity across the site.





Development relationship with Ancient Woodland

Mews B

Mews B

The secondary street type is recorded as Mews B.

Mews B are located with indirect access to the Riverside Park or the Outer Perimeter Walk adjacent to the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones.

Mews B streets provide all fronting residential dwellings with a private garden with associated footpath. Within the street there will be a SUDs network, which will support a variety of fauna and flora whilst encouraging the positive interaction between humans and the water cycle. A number of human interaction points have also been incorporated into the design. The design encourages movement of all users within the main strip of surfacing, encouraging interaction with all neighbours and users. There are multiple opportunities to sit, talk, work and play within the street.

Due to the site wide concept of limited parking by properties, the streets are proposed to be surfaced with largely 'grasscrete' or similar. This softens the site and enables the streets to be used as mini greens.



Private Driveway

Private Driveway

There are a number of private driveways across the site. Many of these are located neighbouring the Riverside Park or the Outer Perimeter Walk adjacent to the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zones.

A mixed native hedge with interspersed tree planting is proposed as a boundary treatment separating the private driveway from the Public Open Spaces.

This boundary creates a positive green treatment separating the houses and their associated cars from the open space and users of the Open Space Walkways.

Defined crossing points will be created to encourage circulation routes between the Public Open Space and residential streets.





Development relationship with Ancient Woodland

River Park and connection with perimeter walkway and wide PROW Network

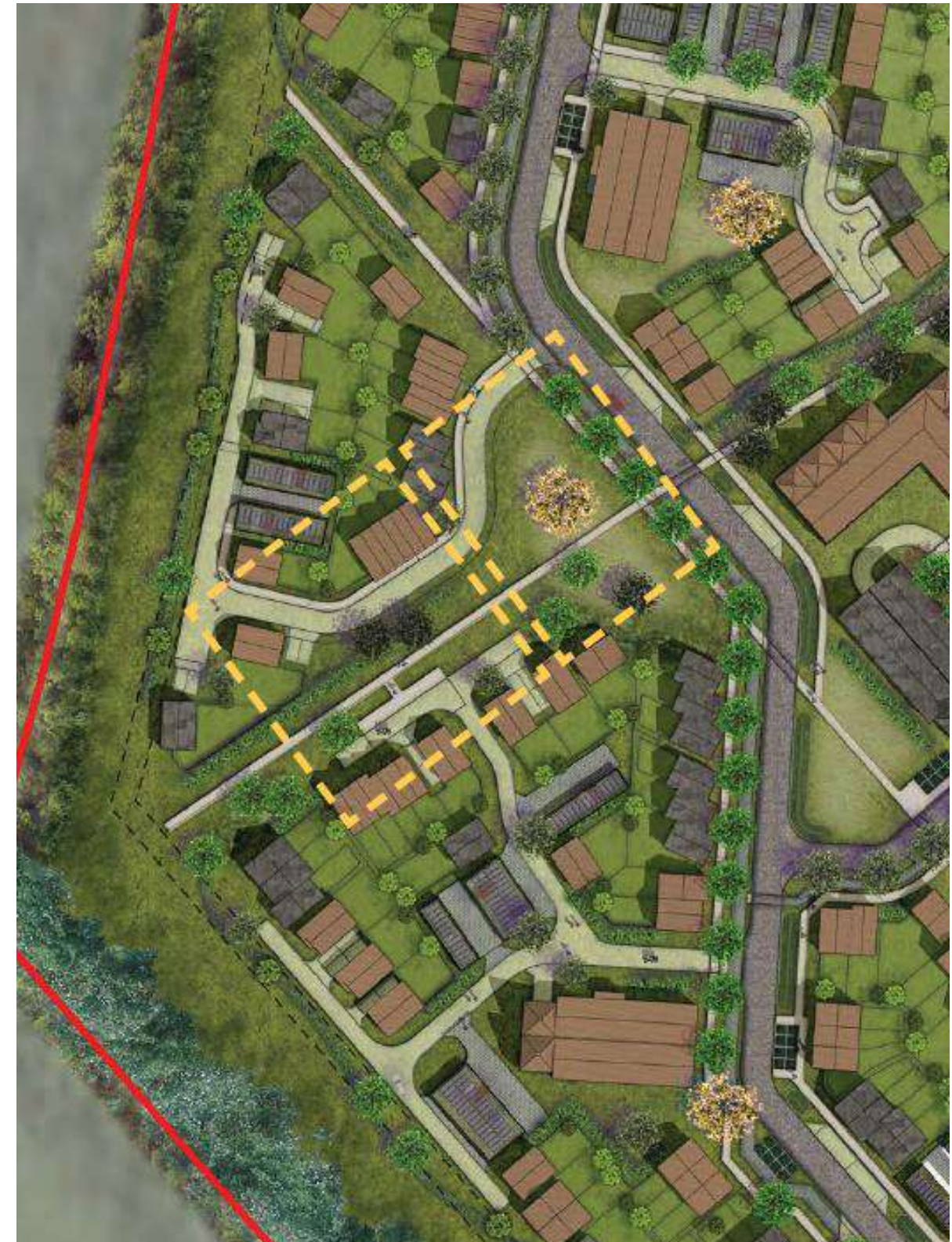
River Park

Entry into and out of the River Park have been designed to encourage the view towards the retained Ancient Woodland on the western and eastern boundaries.

All entrances should be areas of large grass fields, which offer multiple uses; informal and formal play, dog walking, informal kick about space and provide clear permeability for all users of the site.

The relationship of the proposed dwellings near these entrance / exit points, have been focused to front the dwellings onto the green spaces. This is reflective of the findings within the Common Themes.

The closer the user gets to the connection with the Ancient Woodland from a River Park entrance / exit, the more the proposed properties will appear set back and separated from the walkway. This is to focus the user's attention and sense of place on the Ancient Woodland itself.





Biodiversity Enhancements

Forest Research notes :

"The climate in England is changing, and these changes will impact on England's trees, woodland, and forests." It has been recorded in the South East of England, that Oak is now typically coming into leaf a month earlier now, than in the 1950's.

Climate Change Projections:

- Regional changes in tree species suitability
- Drier and warmer summers
- Rising CO2 concentrations
- Changes in the seasonality of rainfall, impacting the water table, limiting rooting depth and tree stability
- Increase wind speeds and frequency of storms
- Increased growth cycles of tree pests and pathogens
- Secondary impacts, such as drought and wildfire

The opportunities available when creating new areas of woodland across the site are to incorporate a mixed species, climate resilient Woodland. This can reduce the risk of projected climate change impact on the site and will create a more diverse and resilient woodland cover across the landscape.

This will reduce the risks of devastating impacts of climate change on the existing majority single species woodland across the subject site and wider area.

Planting will be designed to complement the existing pattern of topography, drainage, landscape and historical setting of the site. It will also be designed to incorporate an increase in permissive footpaths, and additional connection and looped routes with existing footpaths. There will be a considerable increase in habitat foraging and commuting corridors within the site. These will enhance opportunities for flora and fauna across the entire subject site.

Working alongside Stantec and their work on the masterplan of the residential, public realm and education facilities proposed on this scheme, HW&Co have incorporated guidance as provided in the following documents:

Public Health England 2020, Key Themes Improving Access Green Space

Natural England, Rapid Scoping Review





Management

The development of this land provides an opportunity to upgrade the contribution the suppressed features of the site offer; and introduce greater human, flora and fauna connectivity with the surrounding Ancient Woodland and PRoW network. The development focus' open water management to connect residents of the site with the natural valley of the site. The landscape design responds to the character area opportunities by increasing Woodland, protecting Ancient Woodland, increased connectivity with mixed native hedgerows offering ecological connectivity around the site. Broadleaf trees have been proposed throughout the design reinforcing the historical character of the area.

Aims and Objectives:

New Woodland

Connection between the northern Ancient Woodland and the southern Ancient Woodland around the site. Made up of mixed native trees with native bulbs at base.

Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone

Protective barrier restricting human and domestic pet encroachment into the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone.

Scrub

Create a tiered habitat from woodland, through scrub, to underscrub and grassland. This will be achieved through mixed native shrubs.

Grassland

Wildflower Meadow- the aim is to create a biodiverse wildflower meadow with a mixture of native wild flowers and slow growing grasses. These areas are to be managed to restrict access by residents, creating habitats and supporting dwindling populations of native pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

Informal playing fields and footpaths

Areas of grassland for informal use by residents as alternative play opportunities and walking routes. A strong grass mix such as EG22 to create a strong grass sward, regularly mown and arisings removed.

Mixed Native Hedgerows

The aim of the hedgerow creation is to reflect the landscape character of the area, increase foraging corridors, retain and enhance existing / historical field boundaries whilst providing habitats to attract a diverse variety of wildlife.

SUDS

Creation of permanently wet and occasionally wet habitats, increase species variety and seasonal interest, plus the support of a number of increased fauna and flora habitats.

Parkland Trees

Mix of native and climate change resistant species to provide the next 50-100 years of tree cover.

Orchard

Reflect history of the site and the Garden of England. Connect residents and users of the open space with food and fruit production within the environment.

