



Forestry England

Growing the nation's forests

Blackwell Wood - A proposed new woodland near Luxborough, Exmoor National Park

Forestry England are planting new woodlands to expand the nation's forests

We are working on designs for a new woodland, Blackwell Wood, near Luxborough in Exmoor National Park, Somerset. We would like your comments on our initial proposals. Your feedback will inform our final designs for the woodland.

Working with public and private landowners, we're choosing the right places for woodlands to grow and flourish, carefully planting a mix of tree species to be resilient in our changing climate.

Every new woodland will have public access so you can explore and enjoy them to support your health and wellbeing.

They will be valuable places for wildlife, often linking other

woods and hedgerows to provide green corridors for wildlife to move and thrive across the landscape.

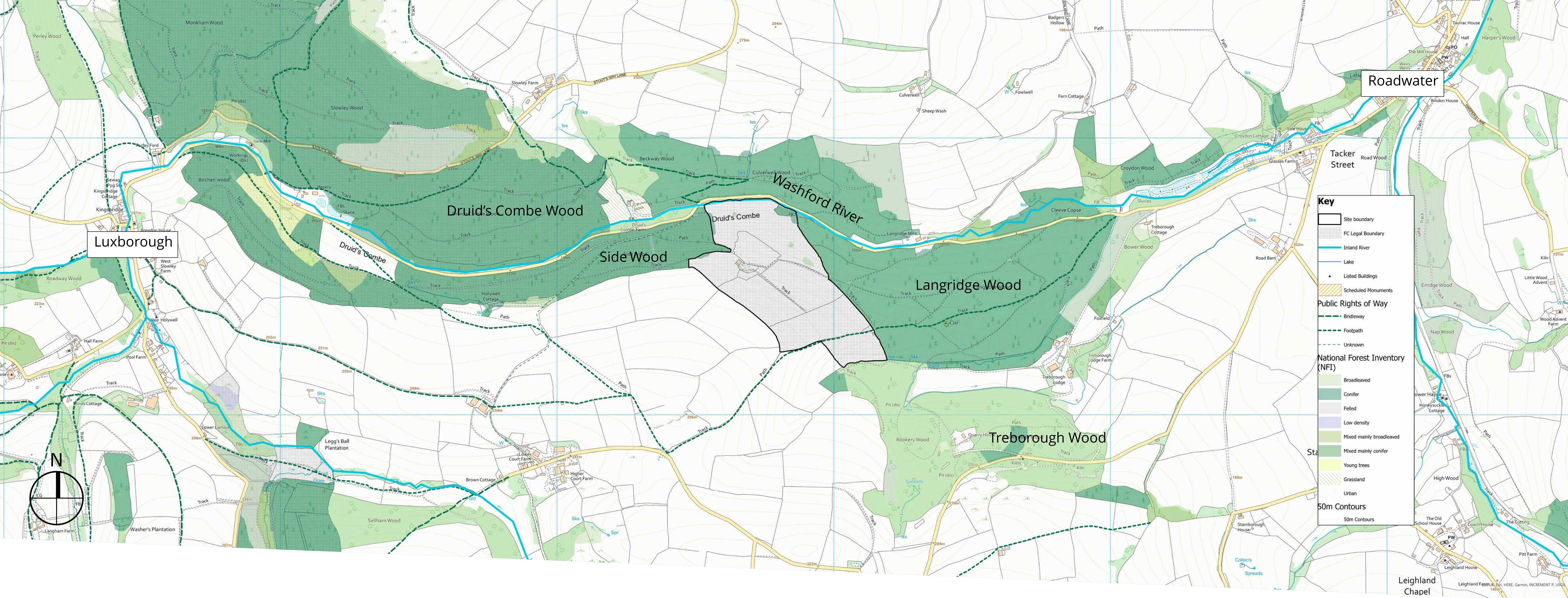
In time, each new woodland will provide sustainable timber, contributing to the rural economy. And they'll have wider environmental benefits including absorbing carbon, improving soil health and air quality, and water management.

Forestry England is creating these woodlands through the government's Nature for Climate Fund programme.

Scan the QR code to find out more:

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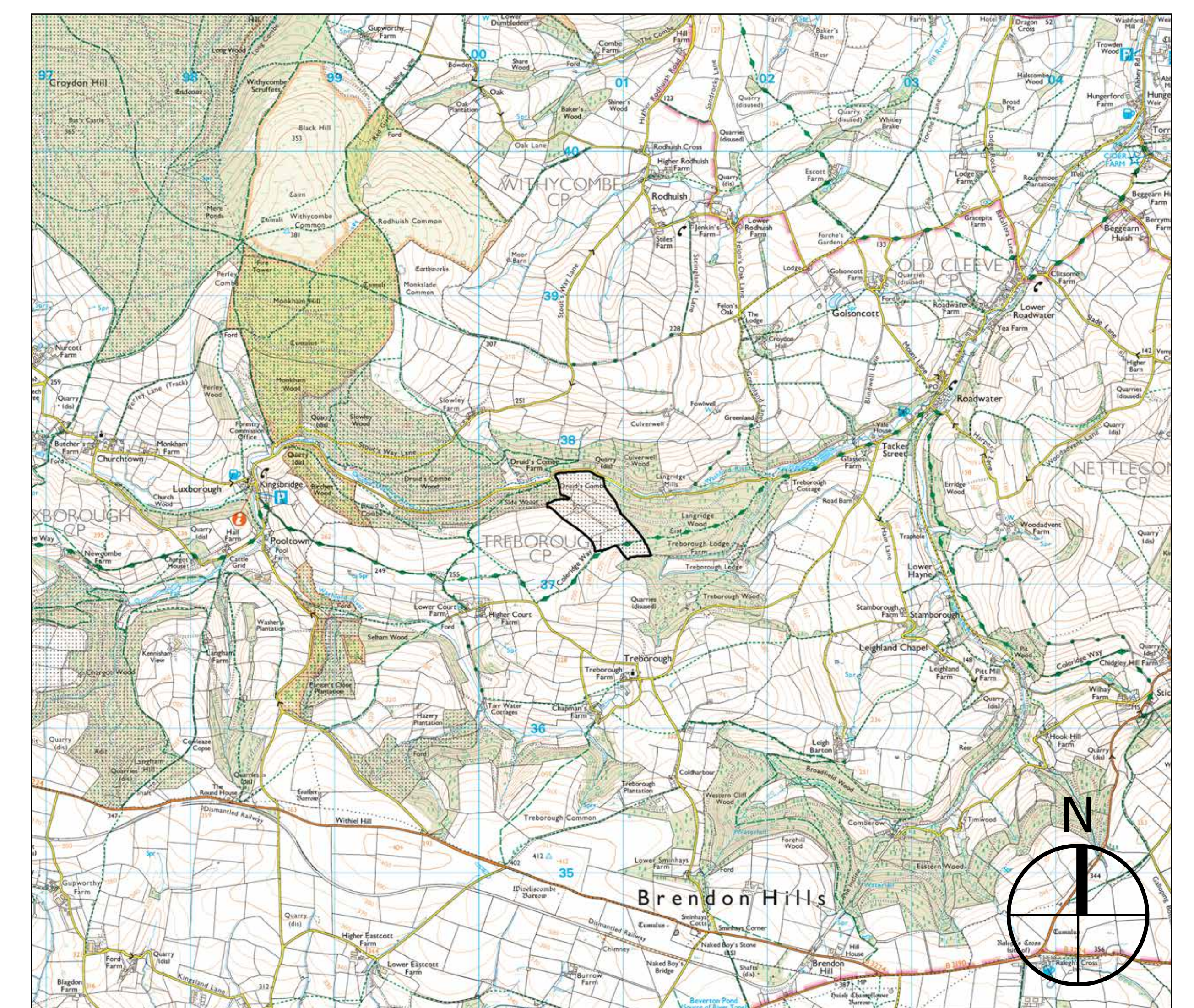


Site location & context

The proposed new woodland is located towards the eastern tip of Exmoor National Park, east of Luxborough in Somerset. The Washford River flows eastwards from Luxborough, passing the northern boundary of the site, towards Roadwater.

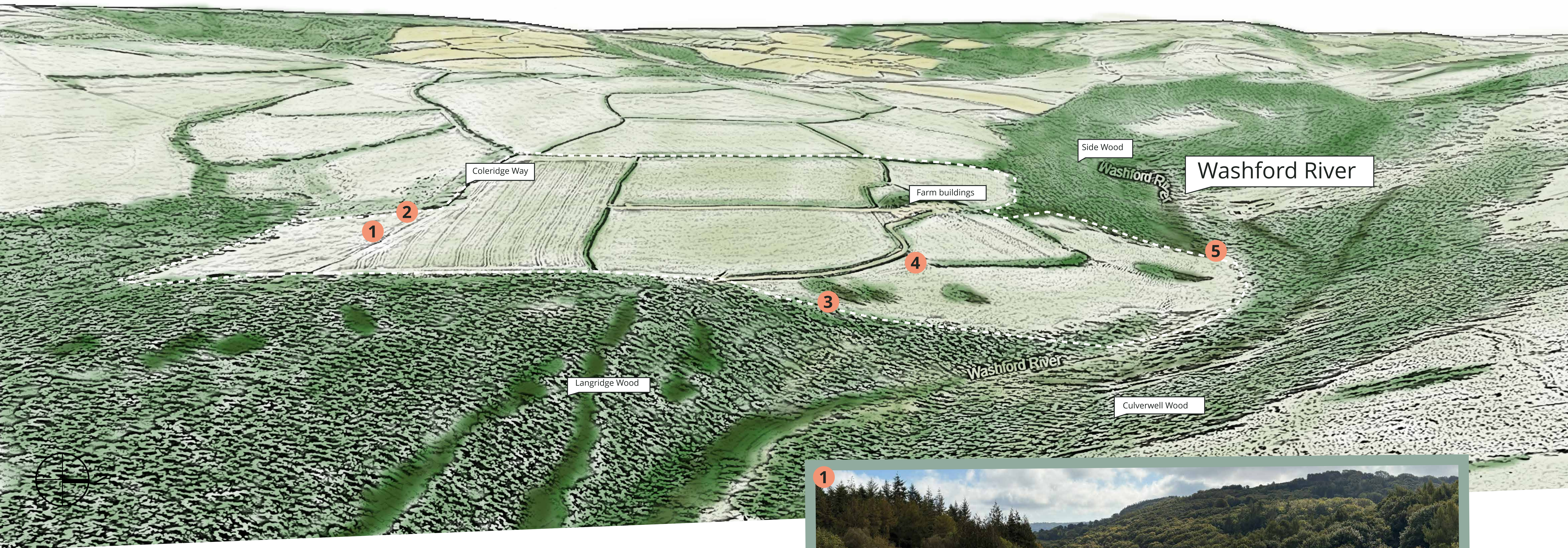
The site for the new woodland lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) '145 Exmoor National Park', described as a 'diverse upland landscape, rising abruptly out of the surrounding lowlands. Central high, treeless moorlands used for rough grazing, incised by steep wooded valleys and combes with occasional grass and arable fields'. The site lies within Druid's Combe, a steep, mostly wooded valley along the Washford River.

Exmoor National Park NCA features rich wildlife habitats including grassland, heathland, traditional orchards and woodland; nationally important assemblages of woodland birds and butterflies; internationally important woodland, river and bat sites; and a range of other rare flora and fauna.



Site Location 1:24,000

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The existing site

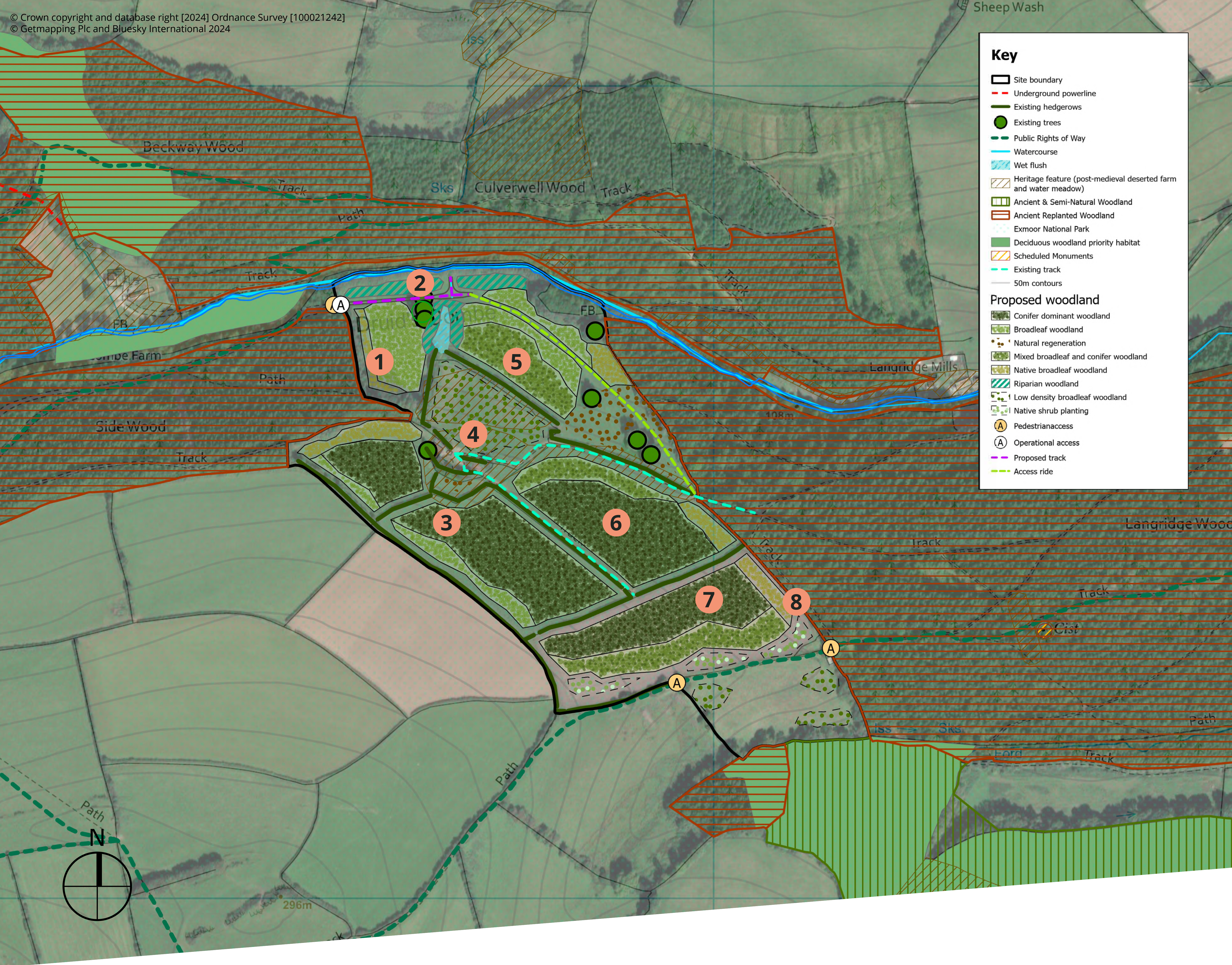
The 21 hectare site consists of pastoral fields and is divided by a network of hedgerows and clusters of trees. There are a number of mature trees within some fields. There are areas of Ancient Replanted Woodland and Ancient Semi Natural Woodland to the north-west, north, east and south-east of the site that largely follow the valley formed by the Washford River. The site slopes steeply from north to south with the Washford River forming its northern boundary.

Public Rights of Way are extensive in the vicinity of the site and Coleridge Way long-distance public footpath crosses at its southern end along the ridge. A deserted farmstead lies at the centre of the site, part of which now forms a cattle shed.

There are heavily wooded scenic views along the valley to the east and west from within the site. These views open up into the longer distance from higher up on the ridge and Coleridge Way.



Photos: 1. View east along Coleridge Way 2. View west along Coleridge Way. 3. View north west along Washford River valley. 4. View west into field. 5. View east at the entrance in the north west corner of the site.



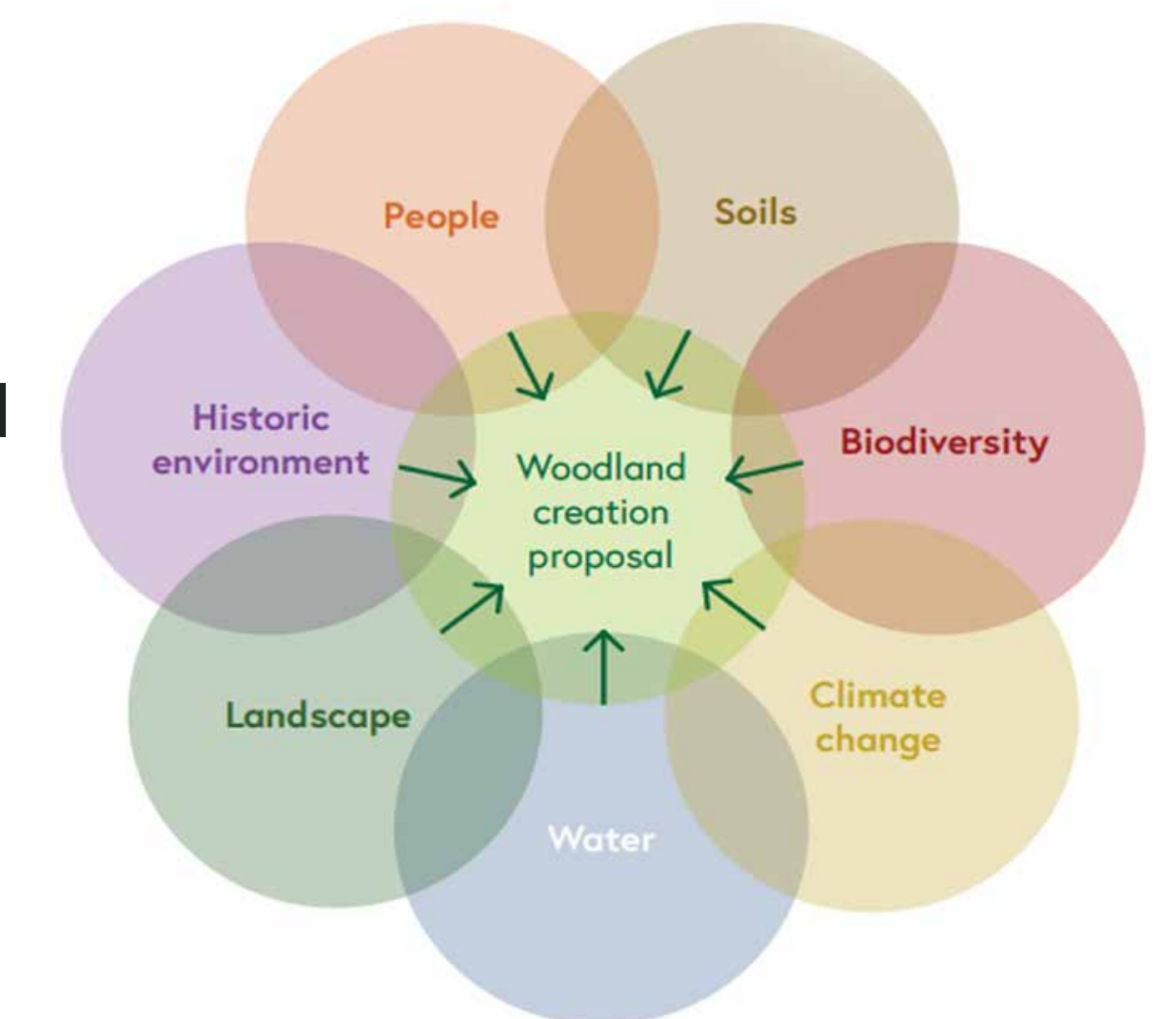
Draft design

How we design new woodland

We are designing the new woodlands to benefit people, the economy, climate, wildlife and the wider landscape. Our design meets the UK Forestry Standard, which takes into account the following elements (Forestry Commission, 2021):

Detailed desktop surveys, site surveys and analysis will inform our design. This includes:

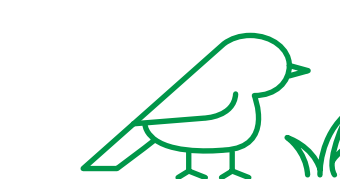
- Preliminary ecological appraisal
- Historic environment records
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Local environment records
- Soil mapping
- Ecological site classification
- Utilities searches
- Responses to initial consultation



Objectives for the new woodland



Establish a productive, mixed resilient woodland: plant a mixed species woodland that complements the adjacent Forestry England leasehold woodlands to produce a lasting supply of certified sustainable timber.



Improve woodland connectivity and enhance existing ancient woodland: link adjacent ancient woodlands to improve habitat connectivity. Preserve hedges and create open spaces and areas to regrow naturally (natural regeneration) within the woodland for wildlife to thrive.



Opportunity to create riparian woodland which could mitigate flooding and help to reduce agricultural run-off.



Maintain the landscape character of Exmoor National Park: Ensure woodland creation complements the distinctive landscape features, cultural heritage and visual aesthetics of Exmoor.



Sequester atmospheric carbon: help meet government net zero emissions goals by planting and managing woodland that will thrive in future climates and store carbon.



Public access for health and wellbeing: provide low-key recreation opportunities by improving access to the countryside for local residents and visitors.

Tree species we could plant



1 Small leaved lime in mixes with Norway maple, sessile oak and wych elm



2 Alder in mixes with aspen, black poplar and grey willow



3 Western red cedar in mixes with dawn redwood, Norway maple and sweet chestnut



4 Sessile oak in mixes with wild cherry and black walnut



5 Scots pine in mixes with Corsican pine, sessile oak, wild service tree and wild cherry



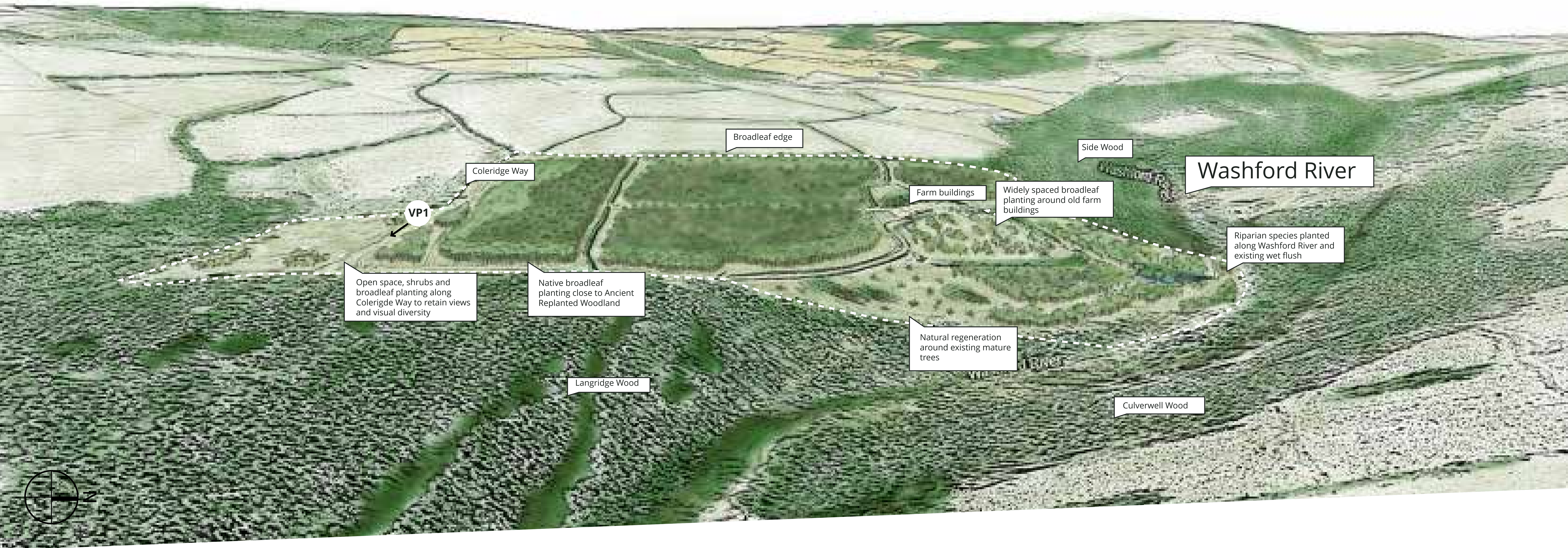
6 Douglas fir in mixes with Lawson cypress, small leaf lime and red oak



7 Oriental spruce in mixes with Douglas fir, small leaf lime and Norway maple



8 Shrubs including hazel, hawthorn, dogwood and guelder rose



How the new woodland could look

Our initial designs include proposals to:

- Plant riparian (riverside) woodland on the floodplain adjacent to the Washford River and next to an existing wet flush. As this develops, it may help to slow the flow of water, which could play a role in reducing local flood risk.
- Protect the surrounding Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland by planting native broadleaf buffers.
- Use the new woodland to frame views along the Coleridge Way using shrub planting, mixed species and open space.

- Use broadleaf planting at the edges of conifer stands to provide a wind firm buffer and to create a feathered edge to the woodland that helps to blend with the surrounding landscape.
- Provide areas of wider spaced planting, open space and natural regeneration to create an ecologically diverse woodland that benefits wildlife.

Artist's impressions:

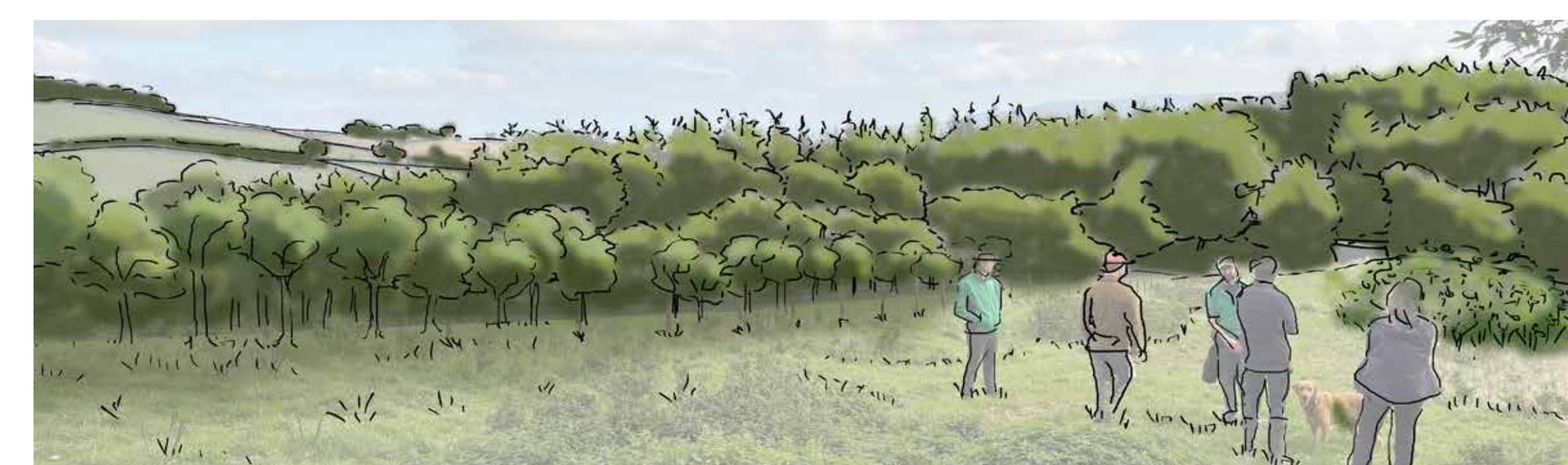
Coleridge Way at viewpoint 1 How it looks now



How it could look after planting



How it could look in 10-15 years



Your views are important to us - let us know what you think



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Responding to this consultation

We encourage you to submit your response online. You can view our plans and submit your views by completing the online feedback form at:

- <https://bit.ly/blackwellw>
- If you are unable to do this, you can respond via email at woodland.creation@forestryengland.uk

All views should be received by midnight on Friday 30 January 2026

What's next ?

- Review of consultation feedback and additional surveys
- Further design work to refine our proposals
- Application to the Forestry Commission for permission to create the new woodland
- Initial planting (Winter 2026/27)

**Scan the QR code
to find out more:**

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Forestry England

A new woodland at Blackwell - our response to key themes from early engagement

In October 2025, we invited local people to share their initial views about our plans to create a new woodland on Exmoor. We've set out our responses to this feedback below:

Public access

The new woodland will be open to the public and provide a quiet space for local people to enjoy and connect with nature. Once we have finished planting the woodland, we will dedicate it under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act so that people can access and explore the site.

Pedestrians will be able to visit the new woodland via the network of existing public rights of way, including the Coleridge Way, a 51-mile public footpath that runs through the south-eastern part of the site. We will also be creating a network of new, unsurfaced grass routes through the new woodland. There are no plans to include surfaced trails for cycling, horse riding, or motorised vehicles.

Visitors will be welcome to walk their dogs in the new woodland, but we have no plans to add infrastructure such as bins. We expect all dog walkers to be responsible and keep their pets under control in the new woodland, in line with our forest dog code.

Traffic and parking

We want to avoid a significant increase to car traffic on local roads and inconsiderate parking that may cause problems for neighbouring properties. The new woodland has been designed primarily for local people to enjoy, which is why our proposals do not include a public car park. We have no plans to include visitor or other recreational facilities, including signage that might direct visitors to the new woodland from the road. The new woodland is a short drive away from our Nutcombe Bottom site, which provides parking, a picnic area, and play area, and the spectacular Tall Trees Trail — and we anticipate that those who wish to visit a woodland by car will choose to visit this site over Blackwell Wood. However, if inconsiderate parking does become an issue, we will consider signs in appropriate locations to discourage this.

Our forestry vehicles need to be able to access the new woodland from the road so that we can manage and maintain the site. We plan to use an existing access point to the north of the site, where there is already a large layby, and another through Langridge Wood — the existing woodland neighbouring the site to the east. Within the new woodland, we will be creating a new track from the northern access point and upgrading an existing track to allow us to access the site with our vehicles.

In time, this woodland will provide a sustainable source of timber. However, it will be about 10-20 years before any timber is harvested from the site, and transport routes will be agreed with the local highways authority as required.

Tree species

We have decades of experience and the latest scientific evidence to help us plan in detail the trees we will plant in the new woodland. We have carried out surveys to help us choose the trees most suitable for the site, both now and as the climate changes. Our local foresters have considered factors including the soil quality and how quickly the trees will grow, as well as the important habitat, species, and geographical features within the area. We also consider tree pests and diseases and future climate conditions to keep the woodland as healthy as possible and ensure the trees we plant will visually complement pre-existing woodlands in the area.

The species we plant in the new woodland will be a mix of broadleaf and conifer, with groups of shrub species along the edges of the site to increase the variety of species and provide seasonal colour and texture. Specific species we are considering planting on Blackwell Wood include small-leaved lime, alder, western red cedar, and Douglas fir. These species have been chosen to provide a range of benefits for wildlife while contributing to the timber industry once the woodland is established.

At the north of the site, where the woodland runs next to the Washford River, we will be planting riparian species that will thrive in wetter conditions and help with flood prevention. We will also be preserving the mature trees already on the site, leaving space around them to protect them.

Wildlife

The new woodland will increase biodiversity by providing rich, varied habitats for wildlife. Our draft designs include open spaces and widely spaced trees to create a diverse environment that will benefit a wide range of species. This may include foraging and commuting bats, badgers, otters, small mammals, foraging and nesting birds, reptiles, common amphibians, and invertebrates. The woodland will also help connect the pre-existing woodlands in the area — Forestry England's Side Wood and an area of woodland owned by the Fairfield Estate. The new woodland will act as a wildlife corridor between these two sites, making it easier for species to move across the landscape.

As part of our planning, we carried out surveys to tell us more about the plants and wildlife in the area, and these surveys have guided our draft designs. We currently have no plans to install bird or bat boxes, as the focus is on establishing the woodland itself. Over time, new trees will create natural roosting and nesting opportunities for birds and bats. We will be planting outside of the bird nesting season, following standard guidance.

We have no current plans for a species reintroduction programme at Blackwell Wood.

Planting on agricultural land

We understand concerns around food security, and we want to keep the best-quality land in agricultural production. This is why we do not create woodlands on the most productive land (grades 1 & 2). None of the land at Blackwell Wood has been found to be of agricultural quality.

Forestry England's role is to manage and expand the nation's forests to ensure they are healthy and sustainable and benefit wildlife, people, and the economy. The new woodland will capture carbon, connect existing woodland habitats for wildlife to move between, and provide a sustainable source of timber, which is crucial for the UK's green economy.

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