

Leighfield Forest Plan 10 year review 2017 - 2027

Leighfield Forest Plan

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Leighfield Forest Plan - 10 year review

To ensure compliance with OGB36 – Forest Design Planning this is a brief review of the previous plans written in 2002 for Owston and 2003 for Wardley. The plans will continue to meet the standards set by the UKFS and UKWAS as well as the local consultees. The previous plans were written under the old Northants Forest District with an emphasis on the policy and procedures in existence at that time. As a lot has changed since 2002/2003 the policies and procedures have since been superseded by the current district and national policies.

On reviewing the old plan there needs to be a better link between the new plan and the SSSI plan for Owston as well as conserving the ecological interests in Wardley. There has also not been the amount of timber harvested as was anticipated.

The Leighfield Forest Plan Brief

The Leighfield Forest Plan consists of two woodlands blocks, known as Owston and Wardley. They are situated east of Leicester and are bounded by the A606 in the North and the A47 on the south. The plan covers 168.1 hectares, Owston is leasehold and Wardley is freehold. Wardley is managed by the Forestry Commission and is open to access by the public under the Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) scheme.

The woodlands are predominately broadleaved with a small mix of conifer through both blocks. Both blocks are Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) and approximately half of Owston is Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW). Owston is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This has its own specific management plan which will be discussed in the plan. There is minor access by members of the public in both woods due to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Wardley being CRoW dedicated. There are heritage features present in both blocks.

This brief for the Leighfield blocks has been written to highlight the three key areas within our district strategic plan. These three key areas are economy, environment and social benefits. The approved plan will provide sustainable forest management by becoming an operational plan. It will provide the right forest management by using the economic, environmental and social drivers within the forest and surrounding landscape.

Terms of Reference for the Leighfield Forest Plan

	Important Themes	Particular Issues to be addressed
Economy	Timber production	<p>Demonstrate a structured and sustainable programme of timber harvesting to include infrastructure requirements (roads and main drains).</p> <p>Select suitable species and appropriate Silvicultural techniques to regenerate (either naturally or through planting) commercially productive but more structurally and species diverse and resilient crops.</p>
Environment	Statutorily Designated Sites and Non-Designated Priority Habitats Trees of Special Interest Deadwood Species and Habitats	<p>Demonstrate appropriate management to maintain the current extent and ecological value of the non-designated priority habitats.</p> <p>Make appropriate provision within the Forest Plan for the particular requirements of these sites as detailed in the SSSI Management Plans.</p> <p>Identify existing locations of TSIs and demonstrate appropriate management to both maintain the current resource and to recruit future veteran replacements.</p> <p>Identify appropriate areas to increase deadwood habitat and propose management to maintain a sustainable resource</p> <p>Identify key species and site and make appropriate provision for their requirements.</p>
People	Landscape Informal Public Access	<p>Diversify species composition and structure, and plan sympathetically designed and appropriately scaled interventions to improve and maintain the visual integration of the forest into the wider landscape.</p> <p>Recognise the location and scale of demand in making appropriate provision for public access.</p>

Application for Forest Plan Approval

1. Plan area identification

Forest District: Central England Forest District
 Beat: Northants North Beat
 Name: Leighfield Forest Plan
 Nearest Town: Uppingham
 Total Plan Area: 168.1 hectares
 OS Grid Ref: SK81010355 (Centre point between woodlands)
 Local Planning Authority: Rutland County Council

2. Designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Notable plant, insect, mammal and fungi species.

3. Date of commencement of plan

As soon as possible after the approval date.

4. Planned operations within 10 year period of the plan

Area (ha)	Conifers	Broadleaves	Total
Felling	1.8	0.2	2
Coppicing	0	22.5	22.5
Restocking*	0	2	32

*Restocking refers to that area that may be under planted if conditions are suitable, as well as that area which has recently been clearfelled. It also covers natural regeneration of widened rides and coppiced areas.

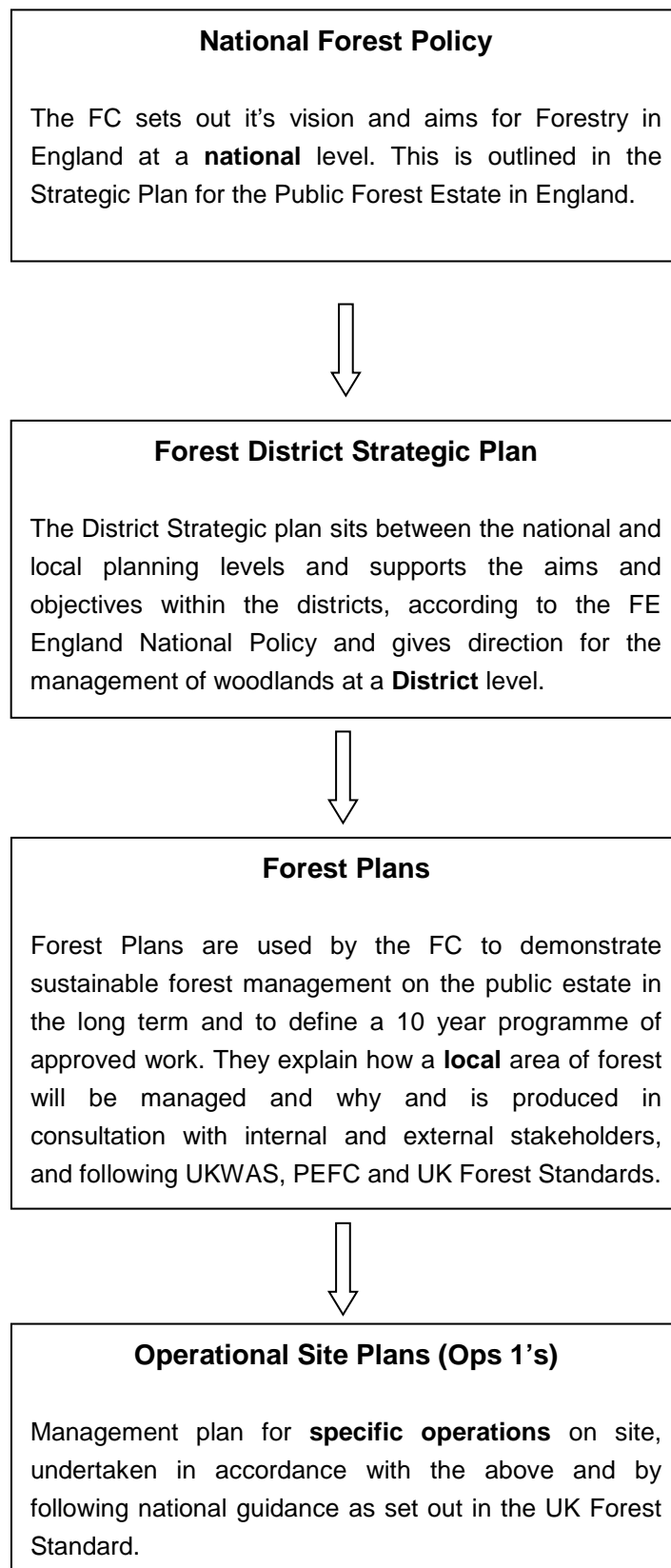
Signed.....
 Forest Management Director (FE) Field Manager (FS)
Date

Introduction

This plan updates the two plans approved in 2002 and 2003. This plan provides approval for felling and thinning for the next two years as well as our management proposals for the next 50 years.

This Forest Plan is guided and directed by a number of policies and strategies, the main points of which are summarised below (Fig.1). Delivering this plan will require the Forestry Commission to be responsive to shifts in our operating environment, and to be increasingly flexible in our approach in order to sustain this responsiveness over decades to come.

Fig 1. Forestry Commission England's Planning Strategy



1.0 Key Characteristics and Survey Data

1.1 Location

The Leighfield FP is located to the west of Uppingham in Rutland and on the border to Leicestershire, around the A47 and A606. See location map for more detail.

OS Grid References:

	Owston	Wardley
Nearest Village	Owston SK77740770	Wardley SK83280019
Access Point	SK79710669	SK84190063
Centre of Wood	SK78860655	SK83999980

The area covered by the Forest Plan amounts to 168.1 ha of which 157.98 ha is woodland. Of the planted area, 77% is broadleaved woodland and 14% is conifer (See Fig.2). 9% of the plan area is currently open space; this element will increase and decrease rotationally due to usual clearfelling, thinning and restocking operations and natural regeneration.

1.2 Geology and Soils

The underlying geology for the Leighfield FP is Whitby mudstone formation bedrock, with slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils.

The wider area is underlain with ironstone rich Jurassic marlstone rock formation and Lincolnshire limestones. The area has a quarrying history within the area. This area is renowned for its limestone, clay, iron and other minerals.

Local research has found that the soil types for Owston and Wardley are generally typical surface water gley. The most southerly part of Wardley, close to the Eyebrook river is a brown earth soil type.

1.3 Aspect and Natural Character Area

The plan is made up of two separate blocks of woodland and lies on the boundary of Rutland and Leicestershire. The two blocks are remnants of the old Leighfield forest mediaeval hunting forest.

The local area is defined as the High Leicestershire Natural Character Area with Wardley being in a sub area of High Rutland. The assessment by Natural England describes the area as “a landscape of broad rolling ridges and secluded valleys” and “interspersed by small thickets, copses and woodlands”. The area is predominately farmed, mainly arable with little urbanisation.

Rutland council have further divided the character area into sub areas, Wardley falls into the Eyebrook Valley sub area. Owston is covered by the Harborough District Landscape character areas and is kept as the High Leicestershire landscape area. The Eyebrook Valley for Wardley is described as rural, most

densely wooded part of Rutland and a feeling of antiquity with plenty of heritage features. The High Leicestershire area is very similar with well-established hedgerows and more arable in its farming nature.

The woods lie within an area of relatively steep sloping valleys, caused by fluvio-glacial action. The area is predominately agricultural with arable on the shallower slopes and more pastoral farming on the steeper slopes. The area has a scattering of traditional villages and hamlets. The nearby transport links are the A47 and A606. The nearest towns are Oakham and Uppingham. The woodlands are predominately broadleaf and are 86-210m above sea level.

The nature of the landscape around these two woods provides very few viewpoints for either wood. The most northerly part of Wardley is partially visible from the busy A47 heading West as the wood slopes away from the road. There are minor roads around Owston so there are minimal external views.

1.4 Hydrology

Both woods contain forest drains and have areas where water can flow. The local area receives an average of 585mm rainfall per year and on average it rains on 236 days a year (according to worldweather.com). With both woods having gley soils the woods themselves are wet.

1.5 Archaeology and Heritage

Both woods have similar heritage features of woodbacks and ditches. Owston also has enclosures and is next to the Owston Medieval Deer Park. Wardley also has evidence of fish ponds, barrows and ridge and furrow.

1.6 Designations, Habitats and Species

1.61 Designations

Owston is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for being a wet woodland.

Both of the woods are either Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and/or Plantation Ancient Woodland (PAWS). Owston is approximately 50/50 ASNW and PAWS. With Wardley being predominately PAWS with a small area of ASNW.

1.62 Species of Note

The following are species of note in either Wardley or Owston

- Badger (*Meles meles*) setts.
- Orange Footman moth (*Eilema sorocula*), Owston Only.
- Dark Triangle Button moth (*Acleris literana*), Wardley Only.
- Ancient oak and small leaved lime, Owston only.

Plant, Tree & Fungi Species of note include (Owston only unless otherwise stated):

Broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*)

Common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*)

Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) **Wardley**

Early purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*)

False fox sedge (*Carex ortubae*) **Wardley**

Greater butterfly orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*)

Hard shield fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*) **Wardley**

Hybrid geum (*Geum x intermedium*)

Hybrid sedge (*Carex x pseudoaxillris*)

Lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*)

Marsh valerian (*Valeriana dioica*)

Narrow buckler fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*)

Scaley male fern (*Dryopteris affinis subsp borreri*)

Scarlet elf cup (*Sarcoscypha coccinea*)

Thin spiked woodsedge (*Carex strigose*)

Toothwort (*Lathraea clandestine*)

Trailing tormentil (*Potentilla anglica*)

Wood horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*)

1.7 Social and Community Interest

Owston is a leasehold wood and Wardley is freehold. Wardley is dedicated under the Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) act so has public access. Owston has limited public access; access is via the Public Right of Way (PROW) footpath which runs through it. There is also PROW footpath through Wardley. Neither have vehicular access or car parks. There are no formal recreation facilities in either of these woods.

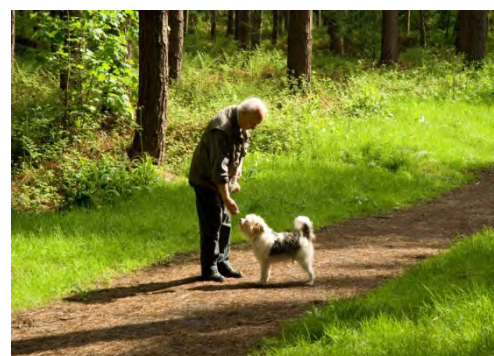
2.0 FC Management Objectives

Economic - produce sustainable timber yields, encourage and support new and existing business activity associated to the public forest estate and to make the economic potential of our forests and woodlands more resilient in the face of a changing climate. Growing and diversifying our income from a wide range of sustainable activity on the estate, including non-forestry activities.



Environmental - To increase where possible the environmental contribution made by the Estate to the range of ecosystem services delivered and to protect and enhance its overall biodiversity and heritage value at both the landscape and local level.

Social - Enable everyone, everywhere, to connect with the nation's trees and forests so that they understand their importance and act positively to safeguard forests for the future.



3.0 Forest Plan Objectives

3.1 Woodland

Owston has a very long history of being wooded; a mention of a wood in this area was mentioned in the doomsday book. The wood has had a greater proportion of coniferous trees than broadleaf, especially in the early 1900's. Since then most of the conifer has been removed.

Wardley has a history of being forested and was replanted in the early 60's with conifers, only a few areas of older broadleaf remain. The management of these conifers has been previously to remove all conifers from ancient woodland sites.

The woodlands will be managed using a variety of silvicultural systems to allow for the commercial harvesting of conifer and broadleaved species. All forest operations will be carried out in accordance with current best practice and will be assessed at the Operational Planning stage. Operations comply with UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS), UK Forest Standard (UKFS) and Forest District Strategic Plan to ensure that the woodlands are managed sustainably.

3.11 Current Species, Age Structure and Yield Class

The plan area is predominantly broadleaf woodlands with a small component of conifer. Owston has a minor component of conifer with 85% as broadleaf and 4% conifer. Wardley however is 66% broadleaf and 32% is conifer. There is currently approximately 9% open space in the plan area. The cycle of clearfelling and restocking provides rotational open space which will be restocked or naturally regenerate in due course. Of the total planted

area in the plan 77% is broadleaf and 14% is conifer. See Fig. 2 Current Forest Structure. Table 1 shows a breakdown of species composition.

Fig. 2 Current Forest Structure

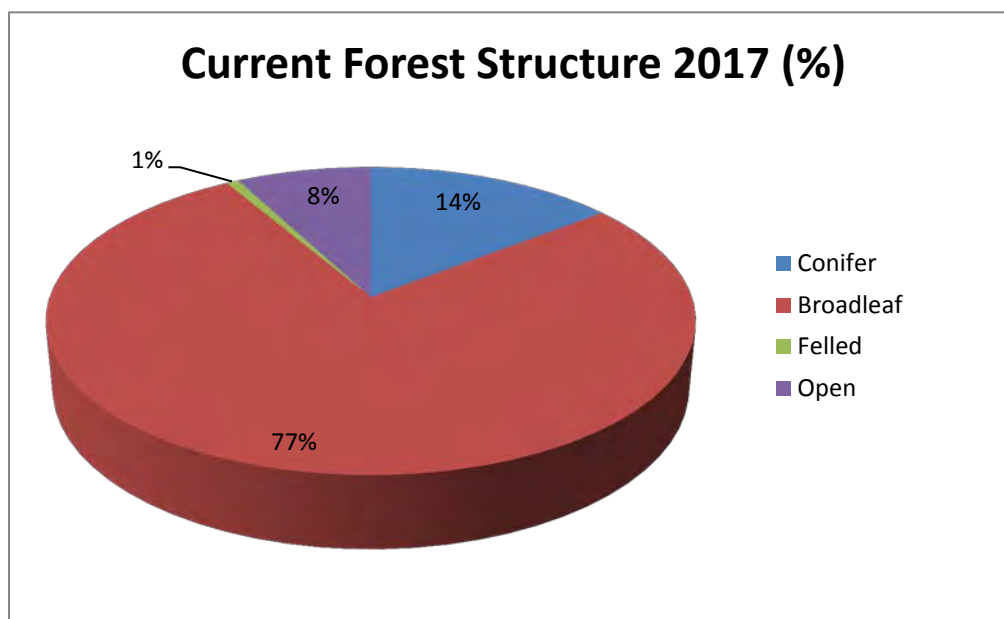


Fig. 3 Current Land Use

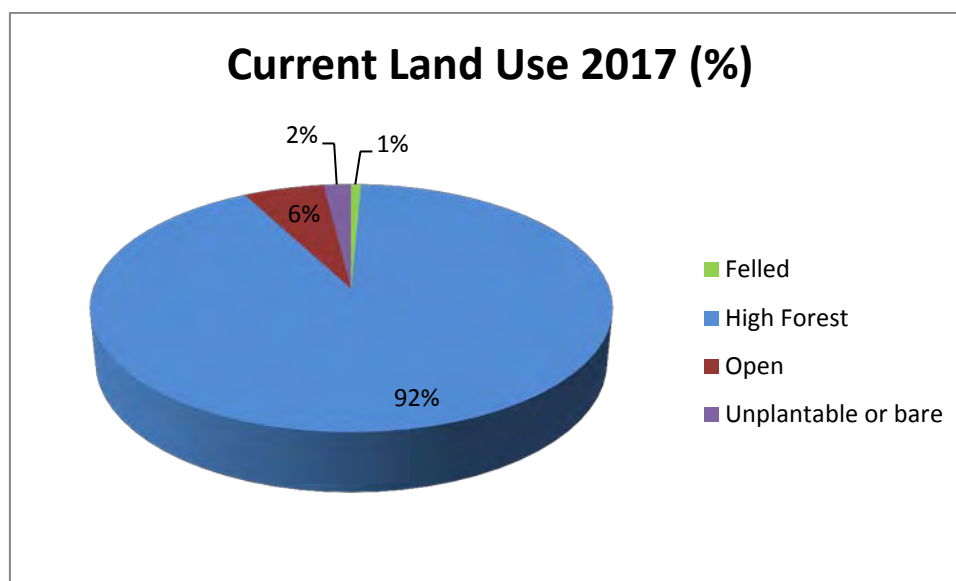


Table 1 – Current Species (as of 2017)

Species	Area (ha)	Percentage of Total Area
Conifer		
Scots Pine	0.37	0.2%
Norway Spruce	5.42	3.14%
Douglas Fir	0.29	0.2%
Western Red Cedar	16.62	9.6%
Hybrid Larch	2.26	1.3%
Total Conifer	24.96	14%
Broadleaf		
Ash	68.29	39.6%
Oak	18.53	10.7%
Beech	10.61	6.2%
Sycamore	16.87	9.8%
Other broadleaves	18.72	10.9%
Total Broadleaf	133.02	77%
Open	14.65	9%
Total Area	172.63	100%

The woodland has been managed sustainably in the past and this will continue. Table 2 shows the current production forecast from the previous plan.

Table 2 – Current Production Forecast

	Period Forecast Period	All Species All Species	All Conifer All Conifers	All Broadleaf All Broadleaves
Volume to 7cm	2017- 2021	542	197	345
	2022- 2026	872	320	552
	2027- 2031	126	2	123
	2032- 2036	981	319	662
	2037- 2099	922	324	598

Note: values given are for m³ per year for each year of that period.

Fig. 4 – Planting Area by Period

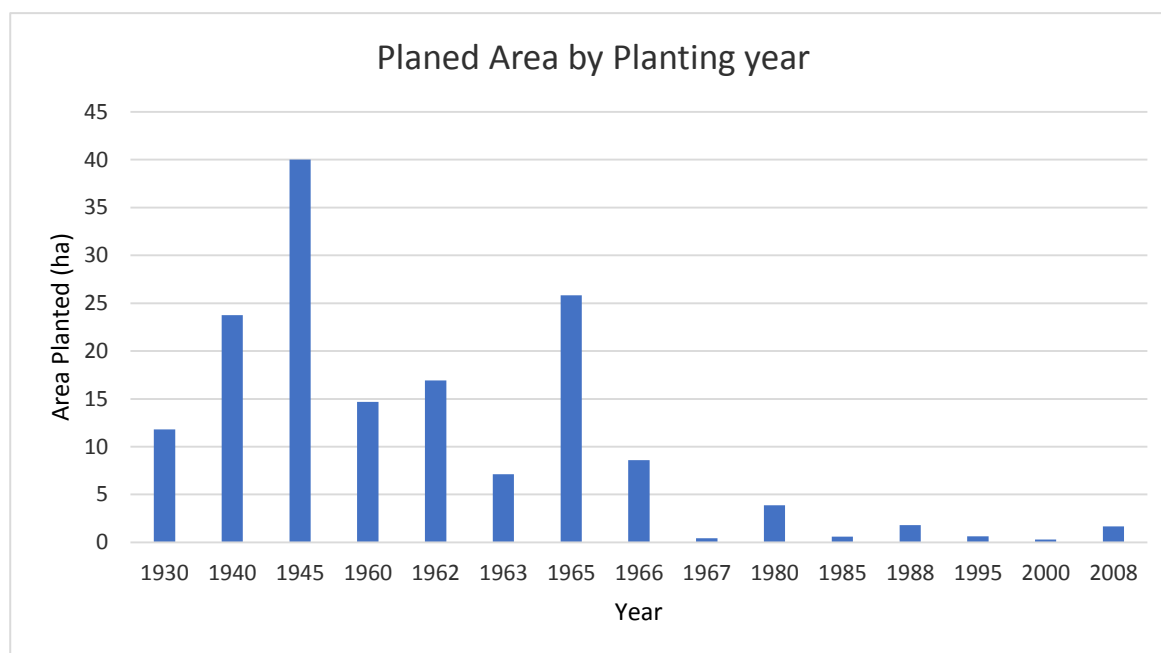


Figure 4 above shows how much area was planted in which time period.

- 31% of the plan area is designated ASNW.
- 69% of the plan area is designated PAWS.

3.2 Environmental

3.21 Retentions

Deadwood will be retained where appropriate, working towards the Forestry Commission's policy on retention and creation; which is set out in the Forestry Commission's Practice Guide – Managing deadwood in forests and woodlands. One way of achieving this would be leaving brash on site from felling, thinning and coppicing operations as well as retention of veteran trees or trees of special interest (TSIs).

3.22 Biodiversity

Management for biodiversity, habitats and species in Owston will follow and adhere to the SSSI plan following the objectives and recommendations set out within that plan.

The Forestry Commission holds and maintains records on biodiversity which are consulted at the operational planning stage. Important species will be identified and protected during this operational planning stage. We also welcome records from organisations and groups that can help us improve our understanding of biodiversity within our woodlands.

The Forestry Commission has its own rigorous policies and standards in addition to the United Kingdom Forest Standard (UKFS); to which management and operations within the Leighfield woods will adhere. The plan currently does not meet the UKFS target of 10% open space as it currently sits at 9% open space. This 9% will increase during the plan duration with ride widening and rotational open space created by coppicing and felling.

The Forestry Commission's good working relationship with Natural England will continue. This and the input of our district environment & heritage team will hopefully help identify and adapt management operations in Owston. The changes will create positive changes for wildlife as well as achieving the desired timber production and level of public access, where appropriate. This will be in line with our district strategic plan objectives.

3.3 Social

The scope for access at Owston is limited by the lack of provision of access in the lease. There is potential for access at Wardley however with the access being off a busy road and no parking limits the scope for recreation. We will maintain access through the PRow. We will continue to promote access where possible; as well as actively engaging and encouraging local groups and individuals where there is mutual benefit from their involvement in these woods.

3.4 Archaeology and Heritage

A number of features have been identified and outlined in section 1.5. These will be identified at the operational planning stage. Any protection or preservation strategies required for these features will be actioned if they are likely to be adversely impacted by the operations. Heritage features and operations in their vicinity will be managed in line with Forestry Commission and UKFS policy. If there are any new finds of importance, the County Archaeologist will be informed.

3.5 Landscape

With the lack of viewpoints for both of these woods any changes would not have an impact on the local landscape. Any changes that will happen are small, subtle and mainly internal. The internal landscape changes will include ride widening in both sites, a section of road in Owston, coppicing in Owston and a felling coupe in Wardley. The biggest landscape impact will be the new section of road in Owston. There will also be the normal cycle of thinning planned within both woods.

These management techniques should improve light and access within the woods. They will provide an income from timber as well as providing open space and rotational habitats for species. There will also be the opportunity to identify final crops and to make changes to the areas that have been over thinned or have not done as well as expected.

4.0 Restocking and Future Management

Of the 168.1 ha plan area:

4.1 Felling & Thinning

The clear fell and restock part of the forest plan will be 3ha over the next ten years. Both planting and natural regeneration will be used with broadleaves being favoured as both woods are ASNW and or PAWS.

In Owston 22ha will be managed as coppice. This management is the preferred option in the current SSSI plan; however external factors such as availability of contractors/markets constrain our ability to achieve this. Throughout the plan the other coupes will be thinned on an 8 year cycle. The objectives of the thinning operations will be to provide timber volume, diversity in age and canopy structure and to open areas for succession of under planting.

4.2 Natural Regeneration & Restocking

The clear fell coupe in Wardley will be restocked after felling. Natural regeneration will be used elsewhere in the plan area. Due to the high level of deer the establishment of this regeneration may be hindered. If this happens then the areas may be fenced or supplementary planting or full restocking will be used with appropriate species to ensure woodland cover in the future.

4.3 Other Management

10ha of woodland within Owston will be managed as a Natural Reserve. As Owston is a wet woodland, and is designated a SSSI for being wet, the area is being retained to allow the natural processes that occur on wet woodland. Wet woodland is of national importance and mentioned in the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan.

In order for Owston to be effectively managed, as stated by the objectives in the SSSI plan, a new section of road is required. The first section of road will be 300m long from the access point with the possibility of extending the road further into the wood. The extension further into the wood could open up the opportunity to effectively manage the conifer, so meeting the SSSI objectives again. The area of minimum intervention in Wardley is the area surrounding a gully which contains a broadleaf element.

The amount of open ground within the plan will increase as a result of rotational open space and widening of roads and rides. The widened rides will benefit wildlife by creating edge habitats. The rides themselves will be allowed to regenerate over time, creating more transitional open space as well as timber volume. Table 3 and figure 5, 6 & 7 show a breakdown of future forest structure.

Table 4 shows how the forest plan contributes to the whole of Central England Forest District's compliance against UKWAS, PEFC and UK Forest Standards.

Figure 5 - Future Forest Structure (2066)

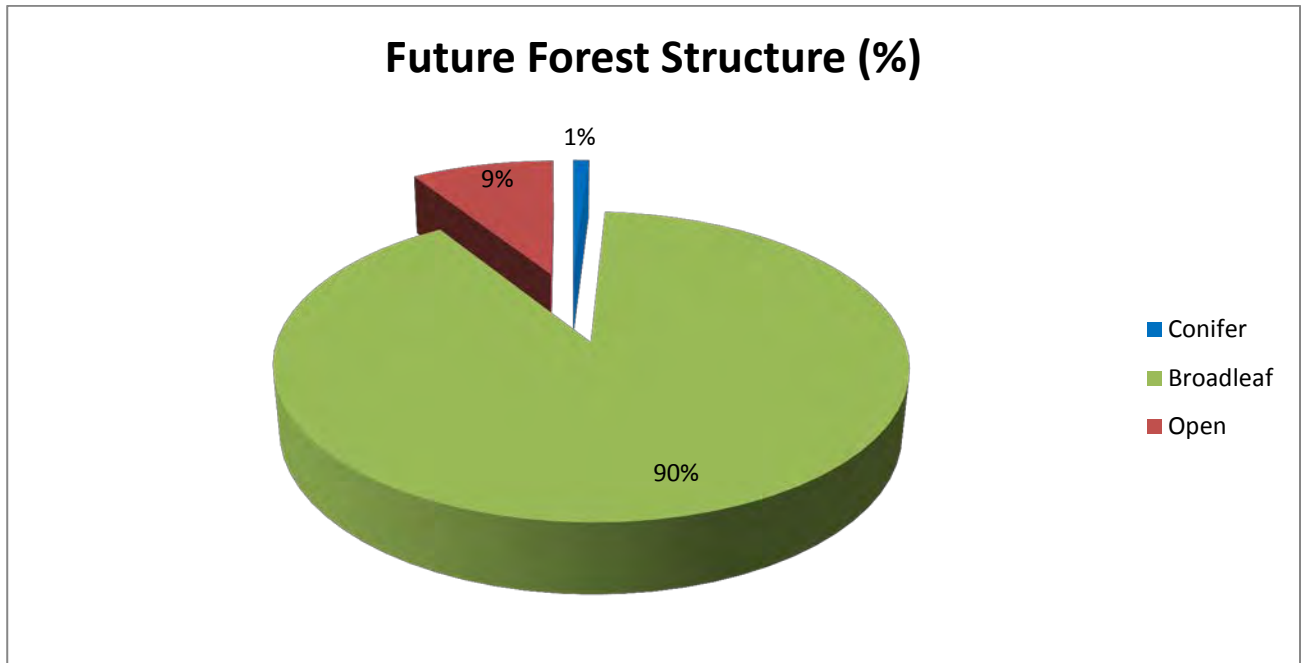


Figure 6 - Future Land Use (2066)

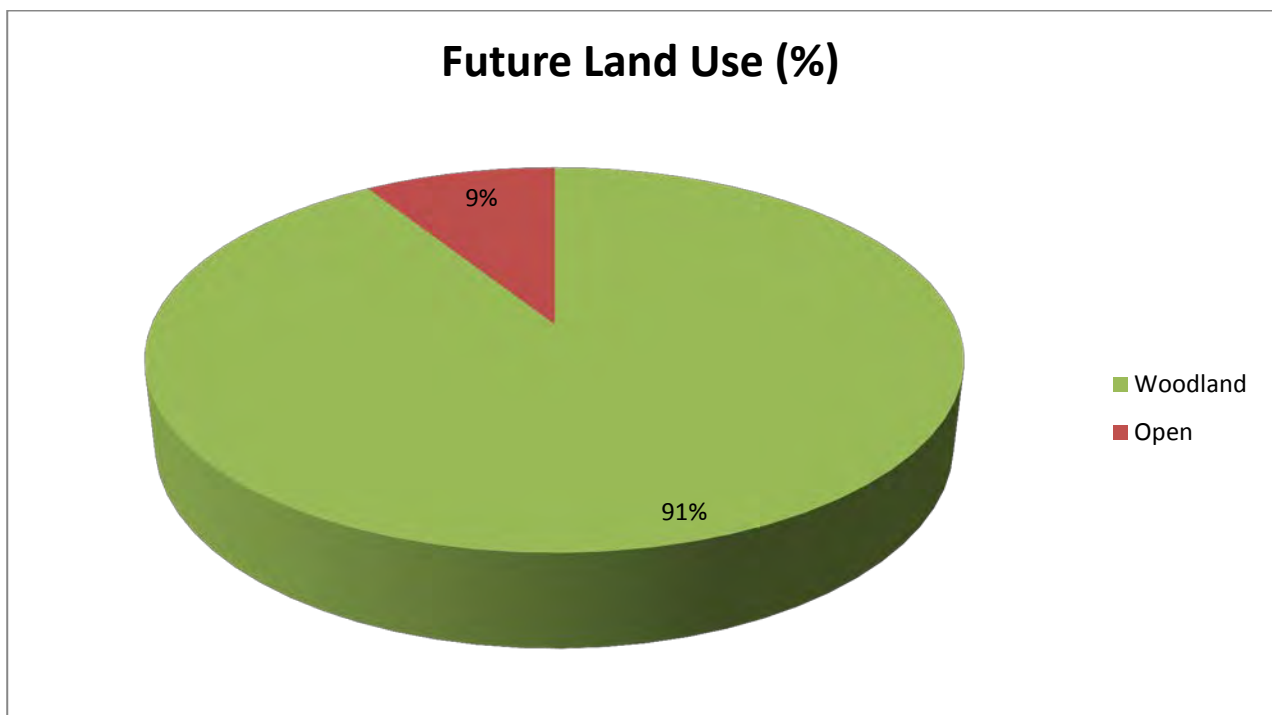


Table 3 – Future Species (as of 2065)

Species	Area (ha)	Percentage of Total Area
Conifer		
Scots Pine, Hybrid Larch, Western Red Cedar		
Total Conifer	1.7	1%
Broadleaf		
Mostly Ash, Beech, Hazel, Oak, Sycamore & Mixed Broadleaves		
Total Broadleaf	151.3	90%
Open	15.1	9%
Total Area	168.1	100%

The aim is to achieve restocking by a mixture of planting and natural regeneration as appropriate; because of this proportions of species have been estimated. On a coupe by coupe basis, the decision may be taken to opt for planting rather than natural regeneration, if that offers the most effective means of achieving the plan objectives. This gives us the flexibility to counter threats such as pests and diseases; as viable regeneration may not lead to canopy cover in the future.

Section 8.6 Future Species suggests species making up the majority of each coupe based on the species that are currently dominant in each coupe and management proposals such as diversification.

Table 4 – UKWAS Compliance Table

	Forest Plan Area	Forest Plan Percentage	Forest District Area	Forest District Percentage
Total Area	168	100%	27,195	1%
Total Wooded Area	153	91%	21423.74	1%
Open Habitat (>10%)	15	9%	3742	0%
Natural Reserves - Plantation (1%)	0	0%	172	0%
Natural Reserves - Semi Natural (5%)	10	6%	350	3%
Longterm Retentions & Low Impact Silvicultural Systems (>1%)	126	75%	11292	1%
Area of Conservation Value (>15%) including designations, PAWS, AW, ASNW, NR, LTR and LISS	168	100%	15,122	1%

5.0 Meeting and Monitoring Objectives

Objective	Description	Proposals	Methods of Monitoring
Woodland	The woodland will be managed to produce high quality commercial conifer and broadleaved timber using a variety of silvicultural systems which will be chosen to meet the other management objectives.	The timing, scale and shape of future felling operations will be designed to create a diverse woodland structure whilst being sympathetic to environmental objectives.	Monitored through our Geographical Information System (GIS) database and review of operations as part of the operational planning process.
Biodiversity	These woods contain many species and habitats of local and natural interest.	All management within SSSIs will be in line with the relevant SSSI plan for these areas. Other constraints will be highlighted and mitigated for during the operational planning process.	Operational planning process by beat planning and environment/heritage teams. Consultation with Natural England on matters concerning SSSIs and NNRs when appropriate.
Biodiversity	Open space.	The current areas of open space will be managed to maintain their value to wildlife. New open spaces will be created by ride widening and rotational clearfell/coppicing.	Beat team to monitor regeneration on open ground and manage in a way that's sustainable, but will provide positive outcomes for relevant species.

Recreation	Public Rights of Way	Current features will be managed, e.g. PRow to maintain access.	Beat and RPA teams to monitor in line with operational objectives throughout the plan period.
Heritage	Protect and conserve designated and non-designated features.	Protect, preserve and restore features as appropriate, in line with the heritage management plan.	Beat team review all known heritage features at the operational planning stage and to liaise with local/national historical bodies as and when appropriate.
Forest Standards	The woods will continue to be managed in a sustainable and productive way.	Guidelines set out by UKWAS, UKFS, and Forest District Strategic Plan will be adhered to.	Mid-term monitoring of the FP, UKWAS and SGS audits and Beat staff.

6.0 Economic forecast

The woodland will continue to be managed sustainably as set out in previous and current objectives relating to Forest Standards. Table 4 shows the future production forecast which takes into account changes in silvicultural systems and felling years.

Table 4 – Future Production Forecast

	Forecast Period	All Species	All Conifers	All Broadleaves
Volume	2017-			
	2021	746	358	388
to	2022-			
	2026	1390	633	756
7cm	2027-			
	2031	192	46	145
	2032-			
	2036	877	266	611
	2037-			
	2099	1003	320	683

Note: values given are for m³ per year for each year of that period.

7. Consultation

7.1 Consultees

Even Forestry

Historic England

J Weatherby Esq

Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Mendip Forestry

Natural England

Owston and Newbold Parish Council

Rutland County Council

Tilhill Forestry

Wardley Parish Council

Other interested parties will be directed via on site signage to Uppingham and Oakham libraries where copies of the plan will be held.

All of the Forestry Commission's woodlands are assessed against the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS) and as a result, Forestry Commission woodlands now carry the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) stamp of approval.



Forestry Commission woodlands have been certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.

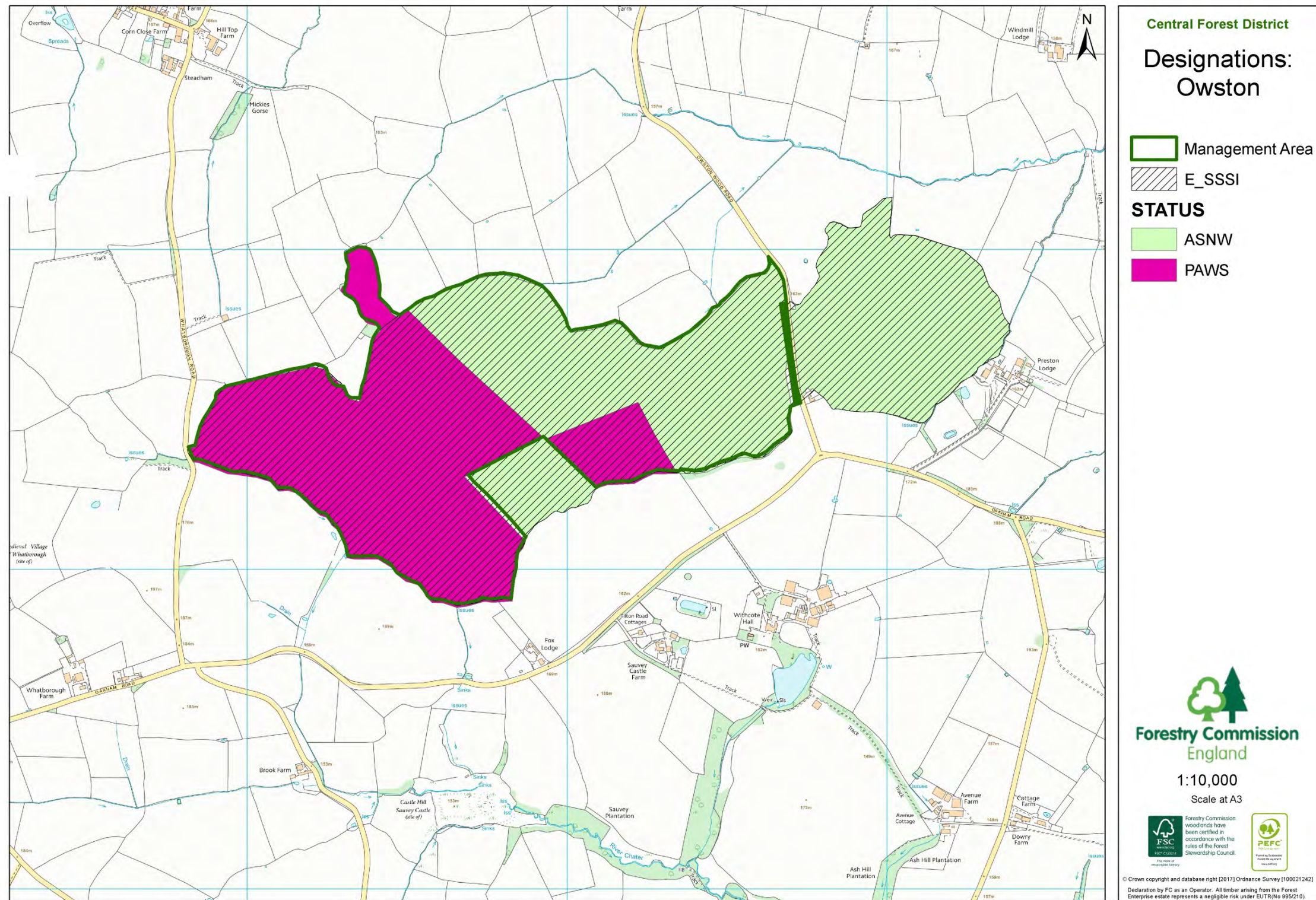


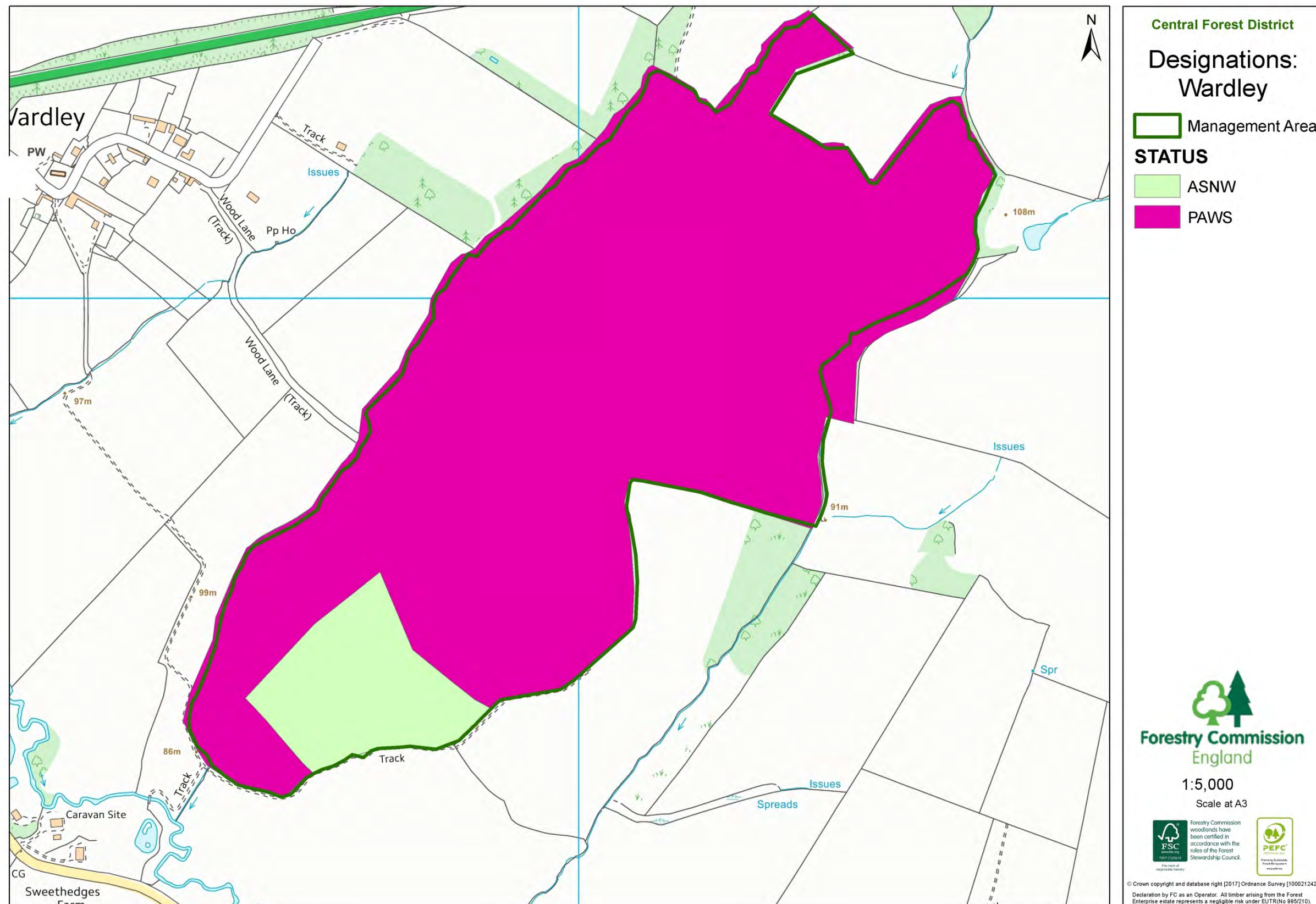
8. Maps

8.1 Location

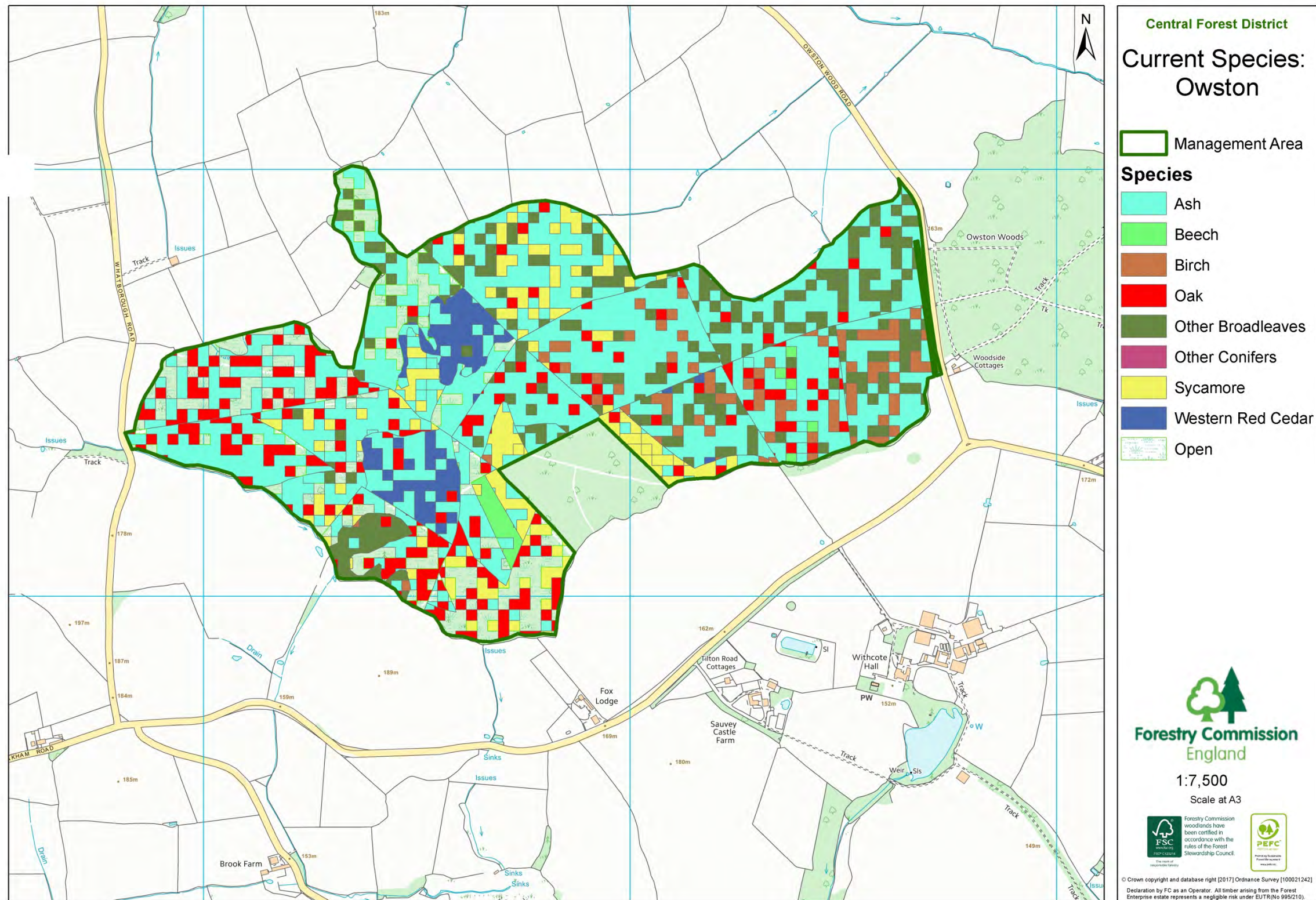


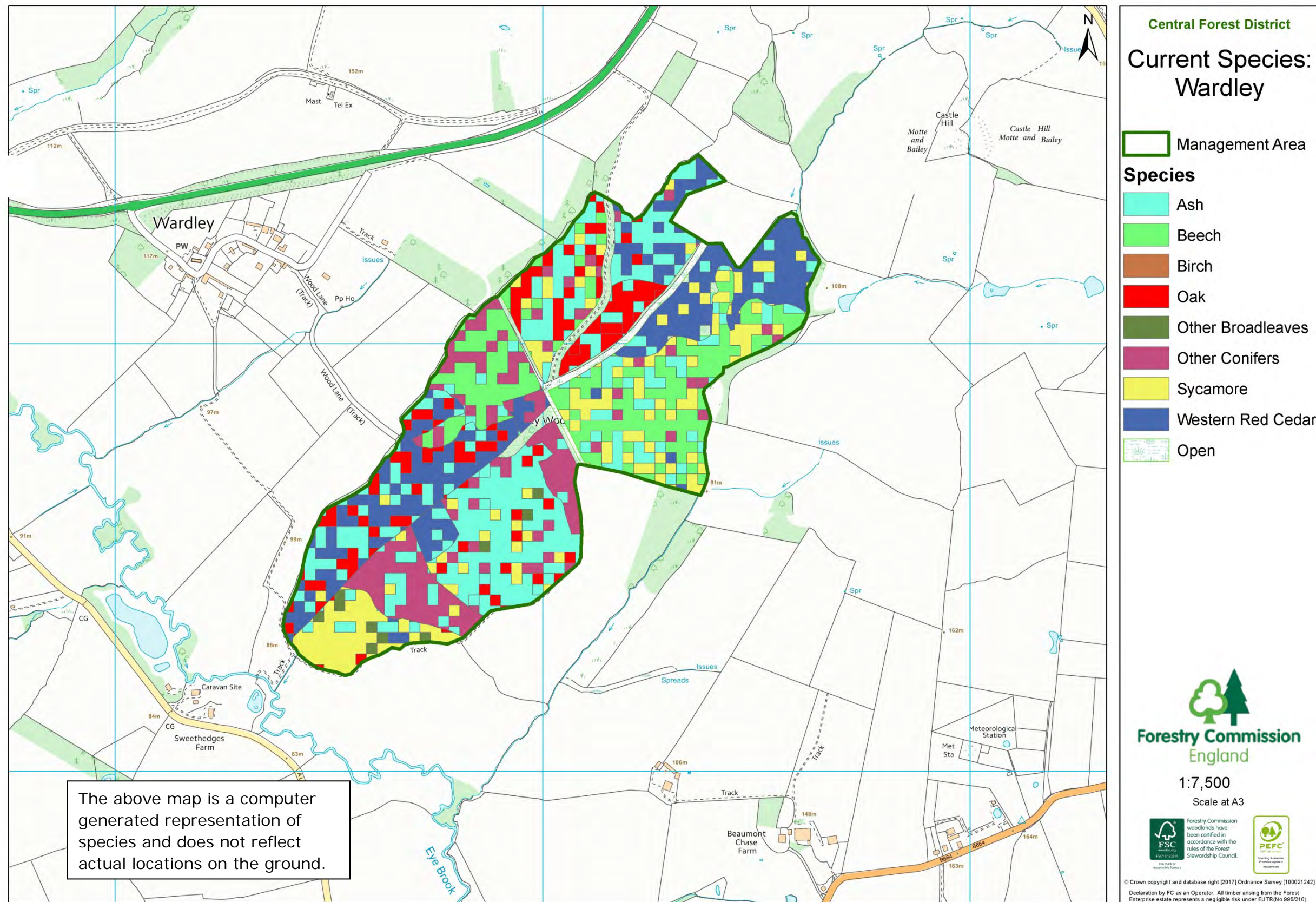
8.2 Designations



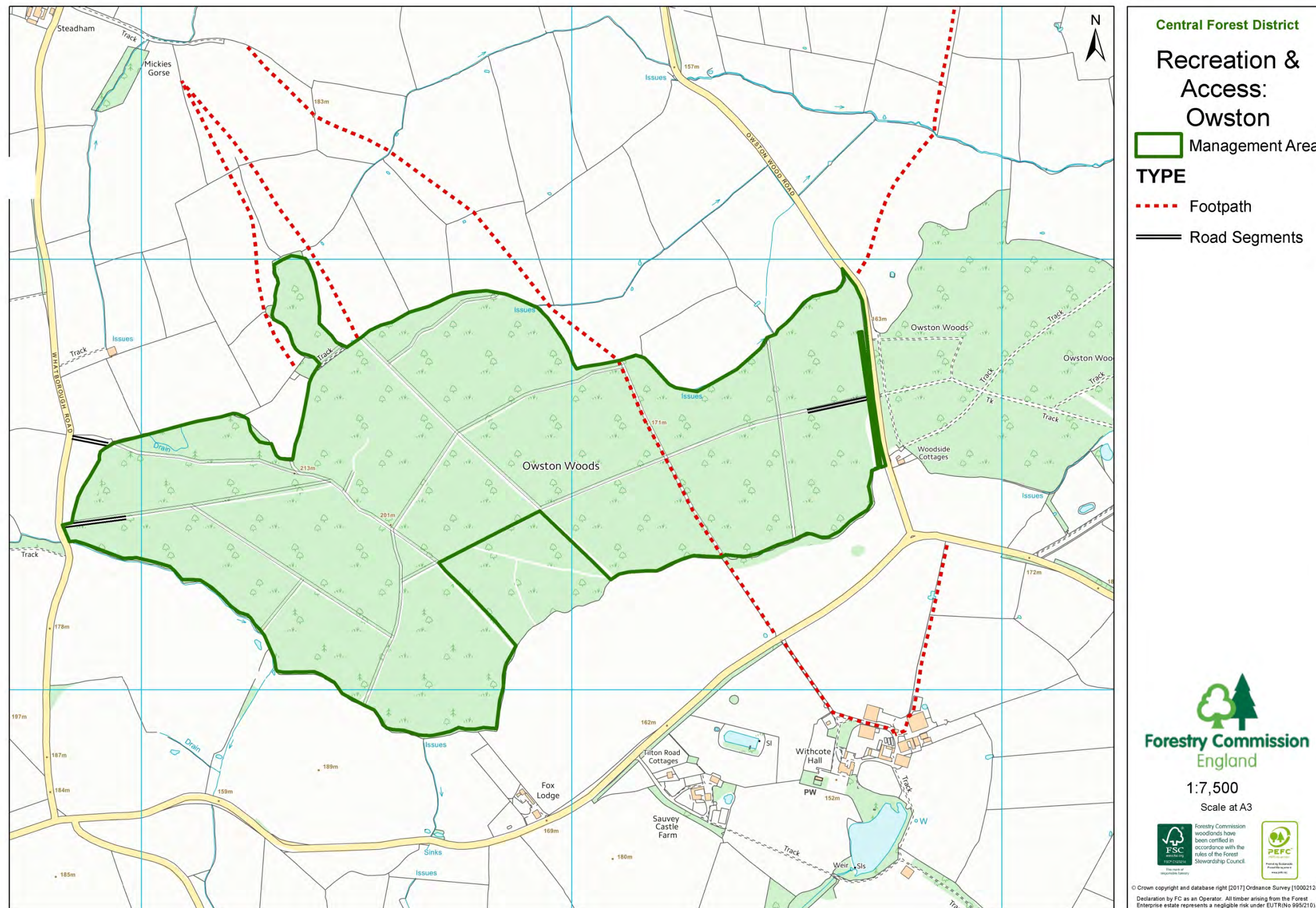


8.3 Current Species



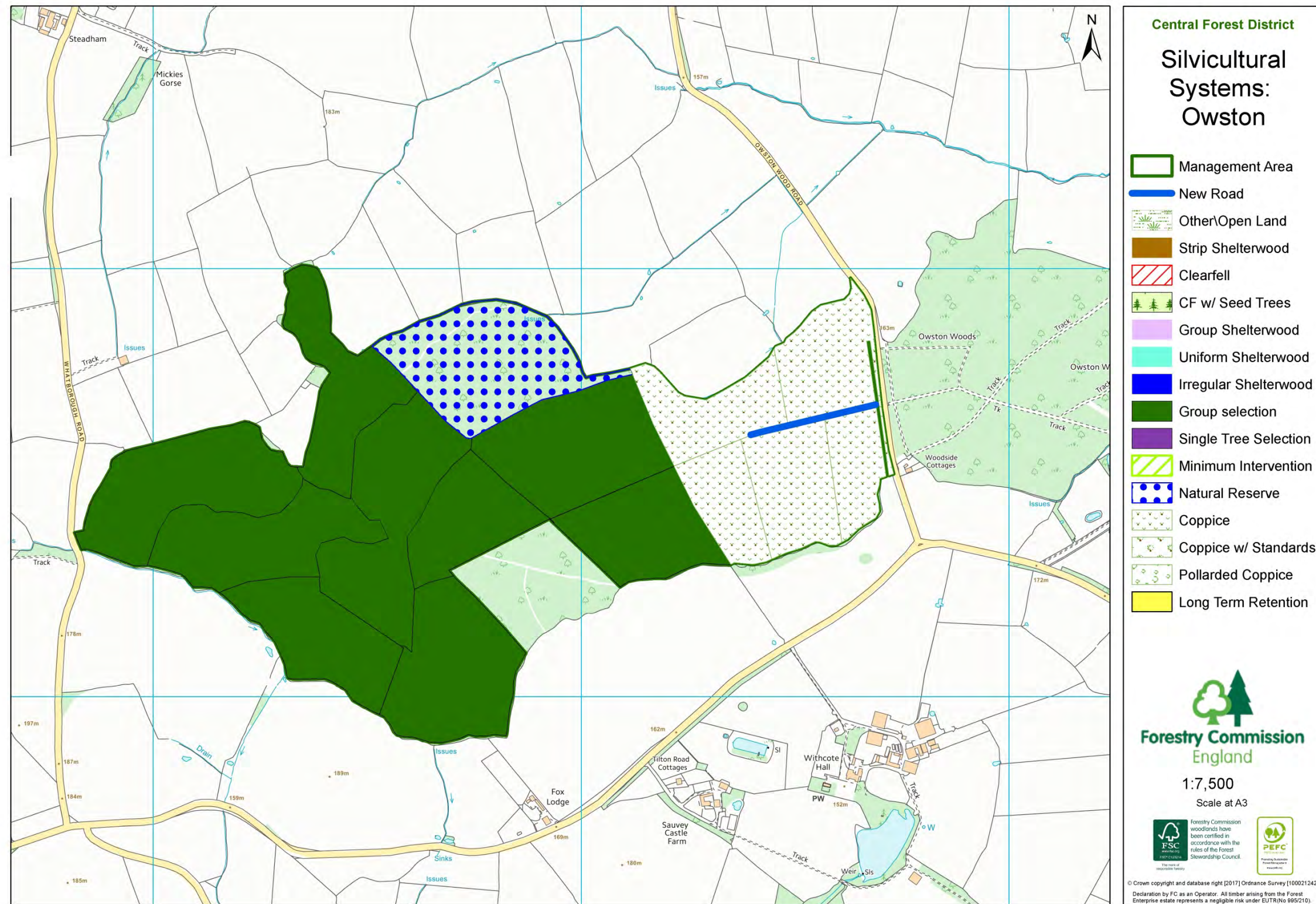


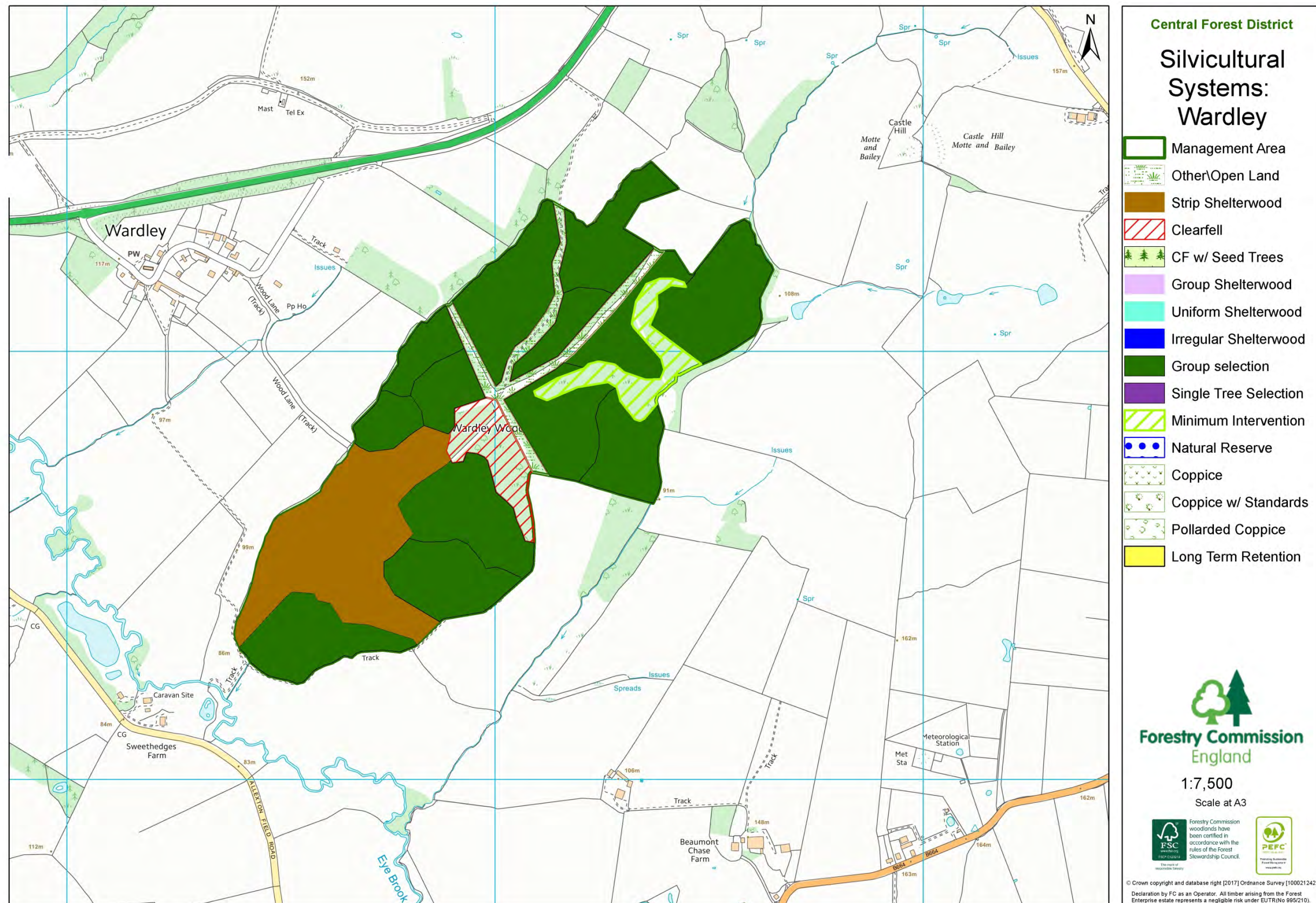
8.4 Recreation & Access



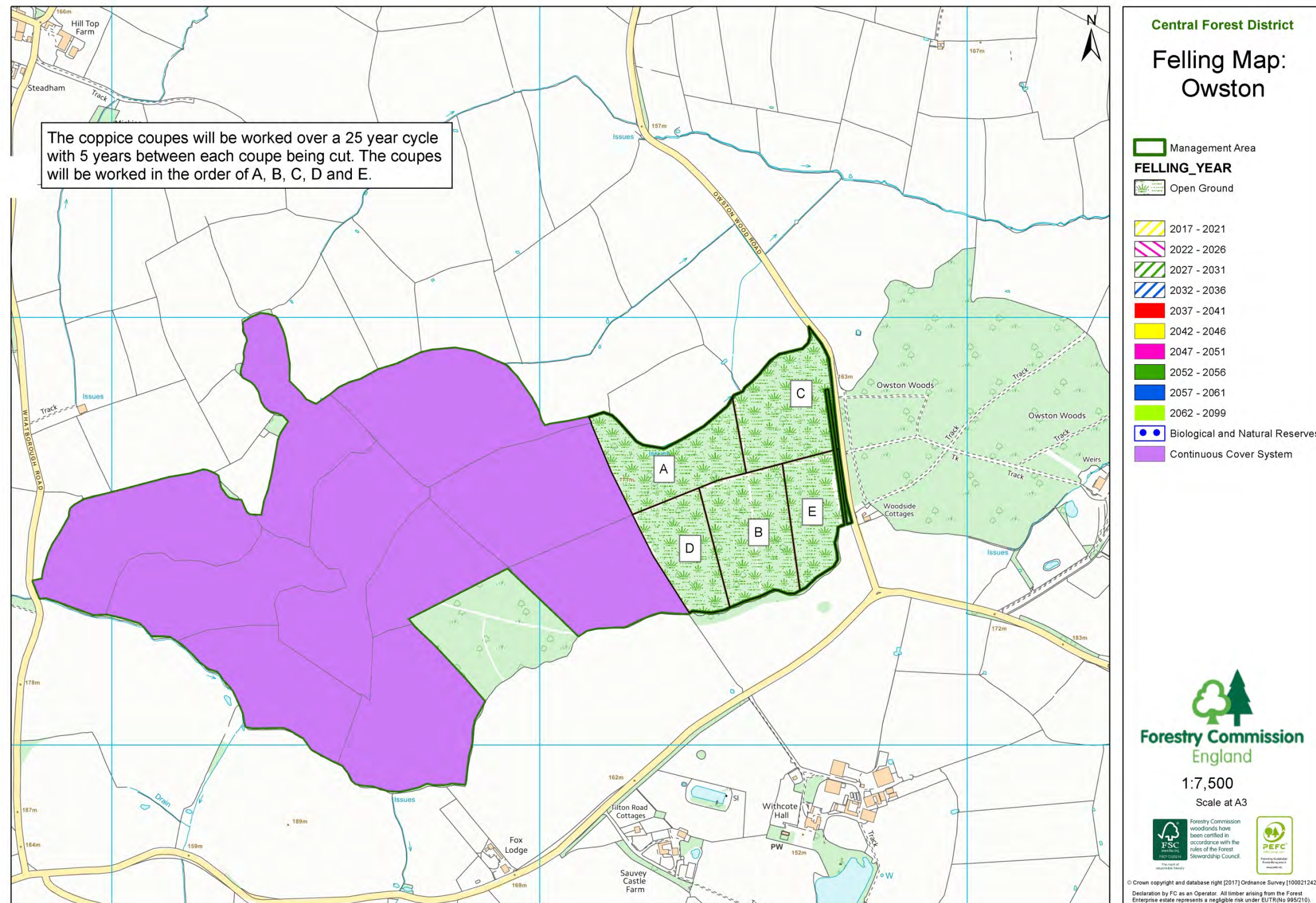


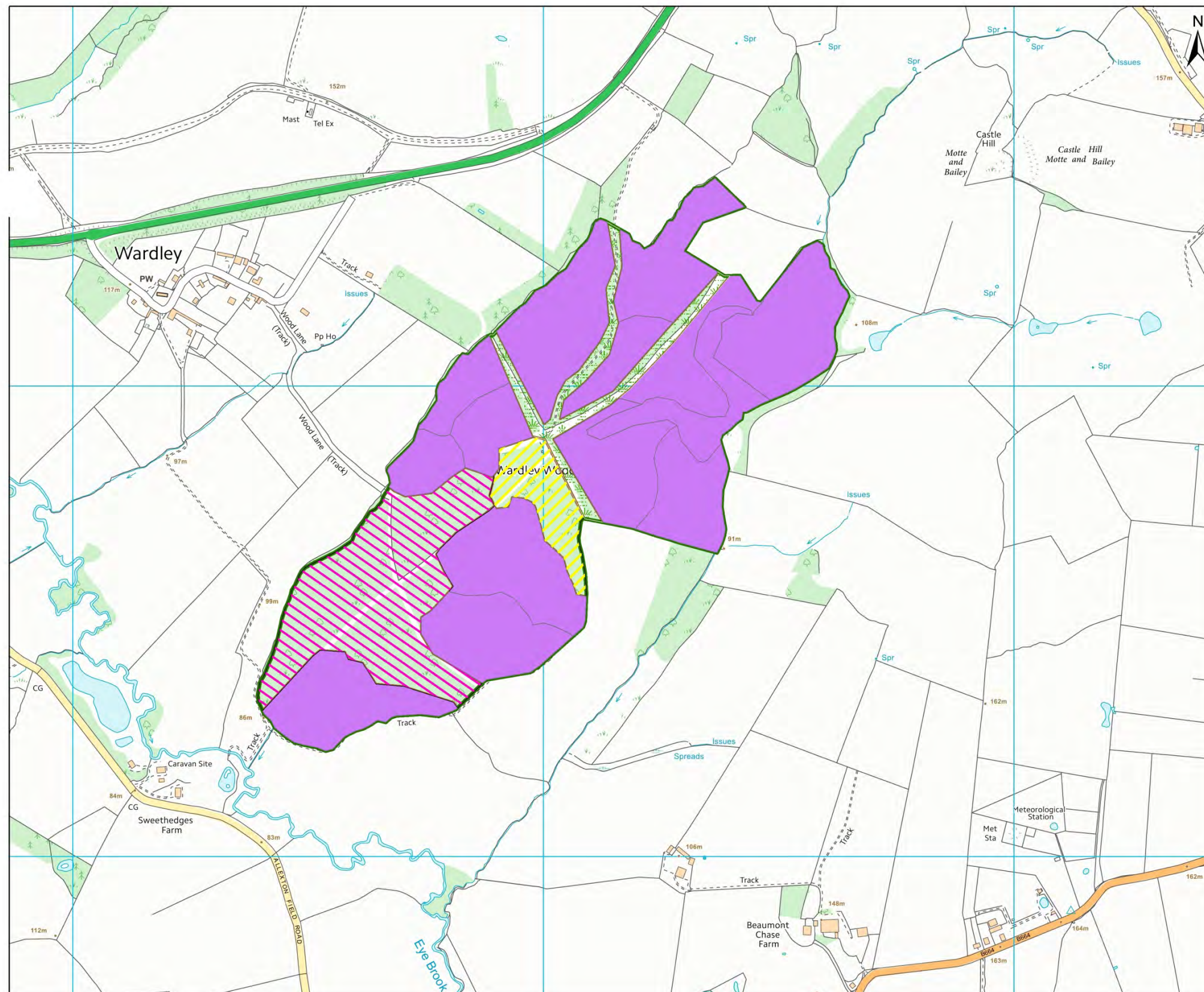
8.5 Silvicultural Systems





8.6 Felling Map





Central Forest District

Felling Map: Wardley

Management Area

FELLING_YEAR

Open Ground

2017 - 2021

2022 - 2026

2027 - 2031

2032 - 2036

2037 - 2041

2042 - 2046

2047 - 2051

2052 - 2056

2057 - 2061

2062 - 2099

Biological and Natural Reserves

Continuous Cover System

Forestry Commission
England

1:7,500

Scale at A3

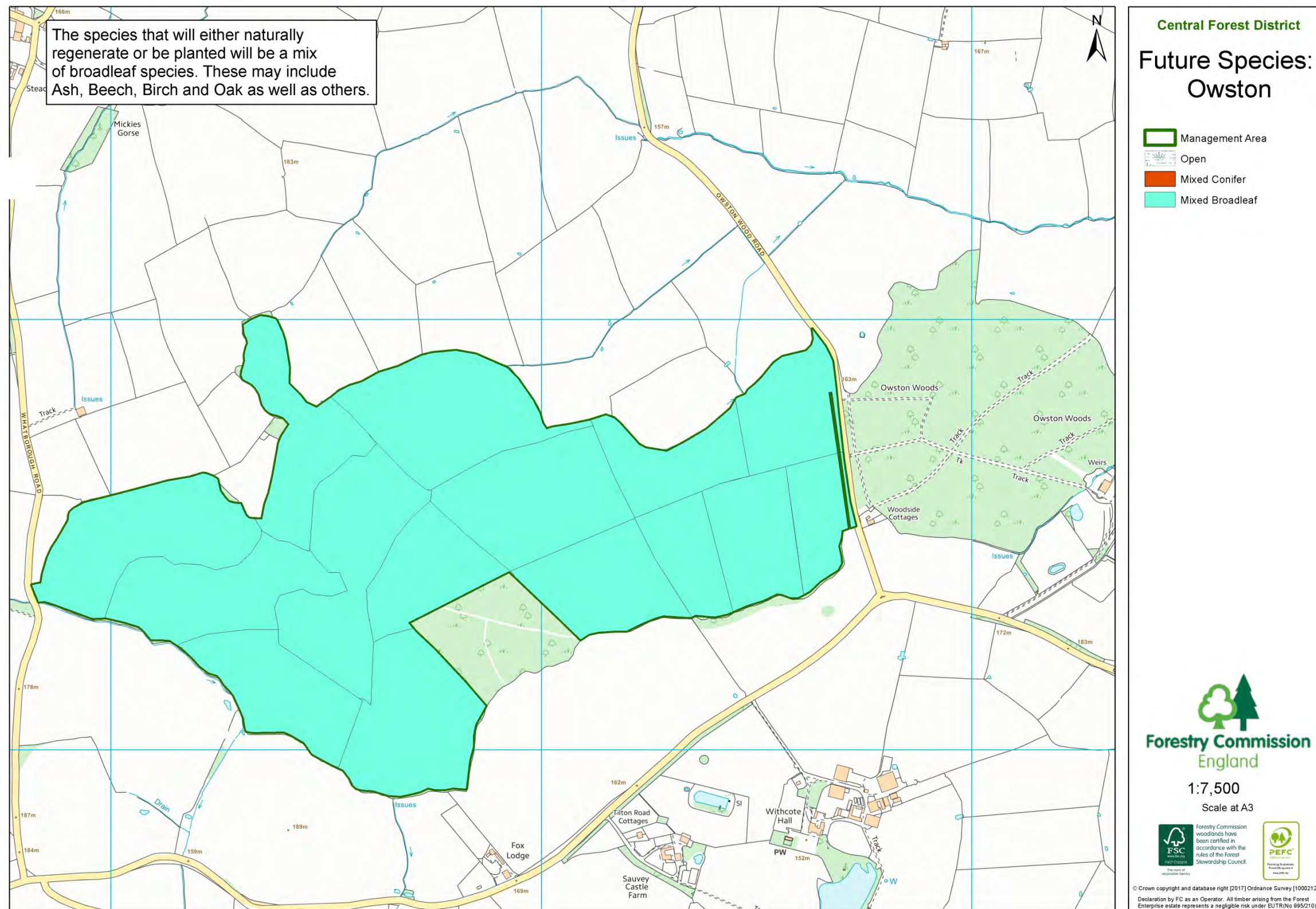


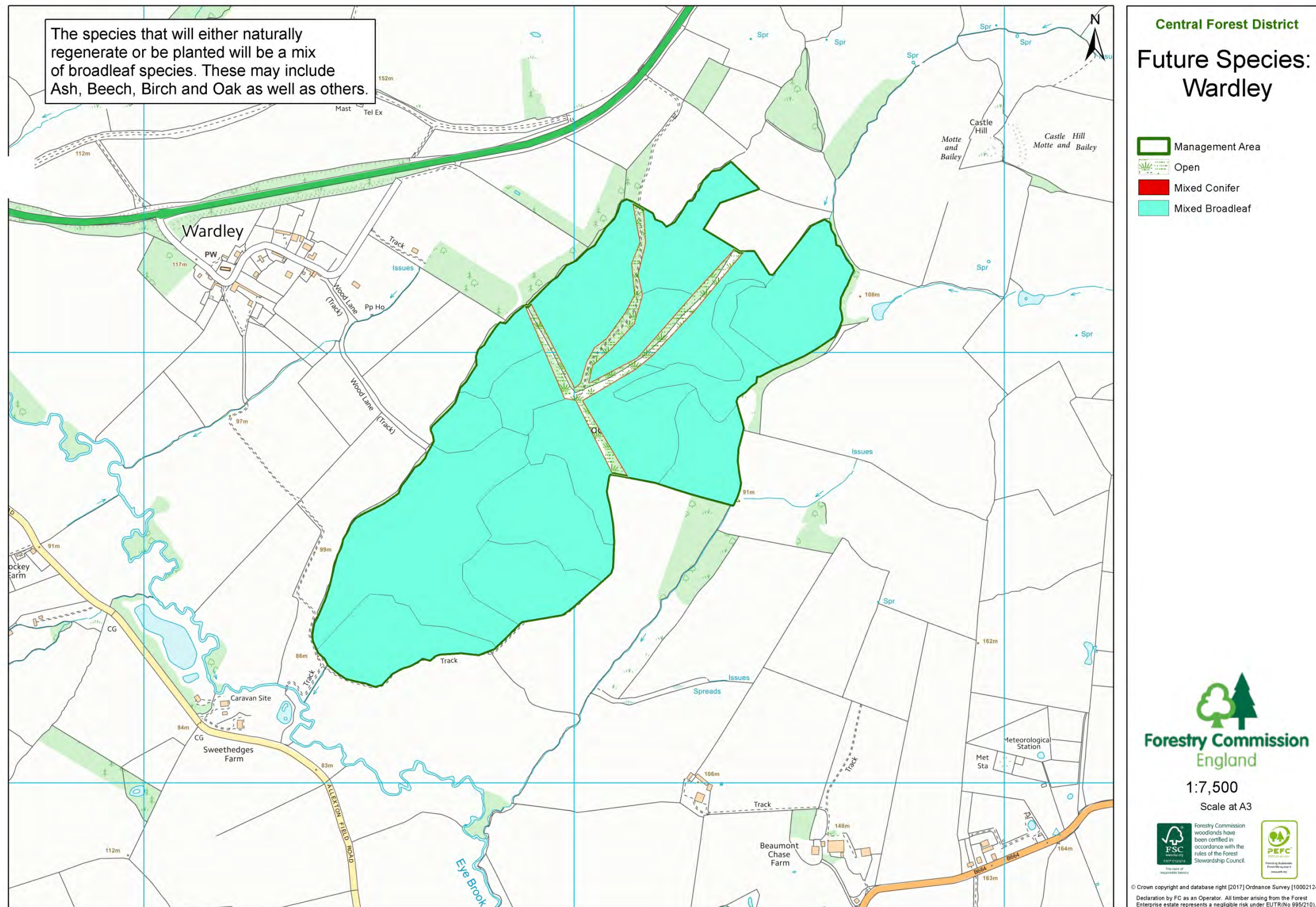
Forestry Commission
woodlands have
been certified in
accordance with the
rules of the Forest
Stewardship Council.



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Declaration by FC as an Operator. All timber arising from the Forest
Enterprise estate represents a negligible risk under EUTR (No 995/210).

8.6 Future Species





9. Relevant Forestry Commission & Government Policies

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan. Viewable at <http://www.lrwt.org.uk/what-we-do/biodiversity-action-plan/>

Market Harborough Landscape Character Assessment. Viewable at http://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/490/landscape_character_assessments

Natural England 2013 "NCA Profile: 93 High Leicestershire (NE497). Viewable at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5911470780973056>

Rutland Landscape Character Assessment. Viewable at http://www.rutland.gov.uk/local_plan/evidence_base/1_-_landscape_character_assess.aspx

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