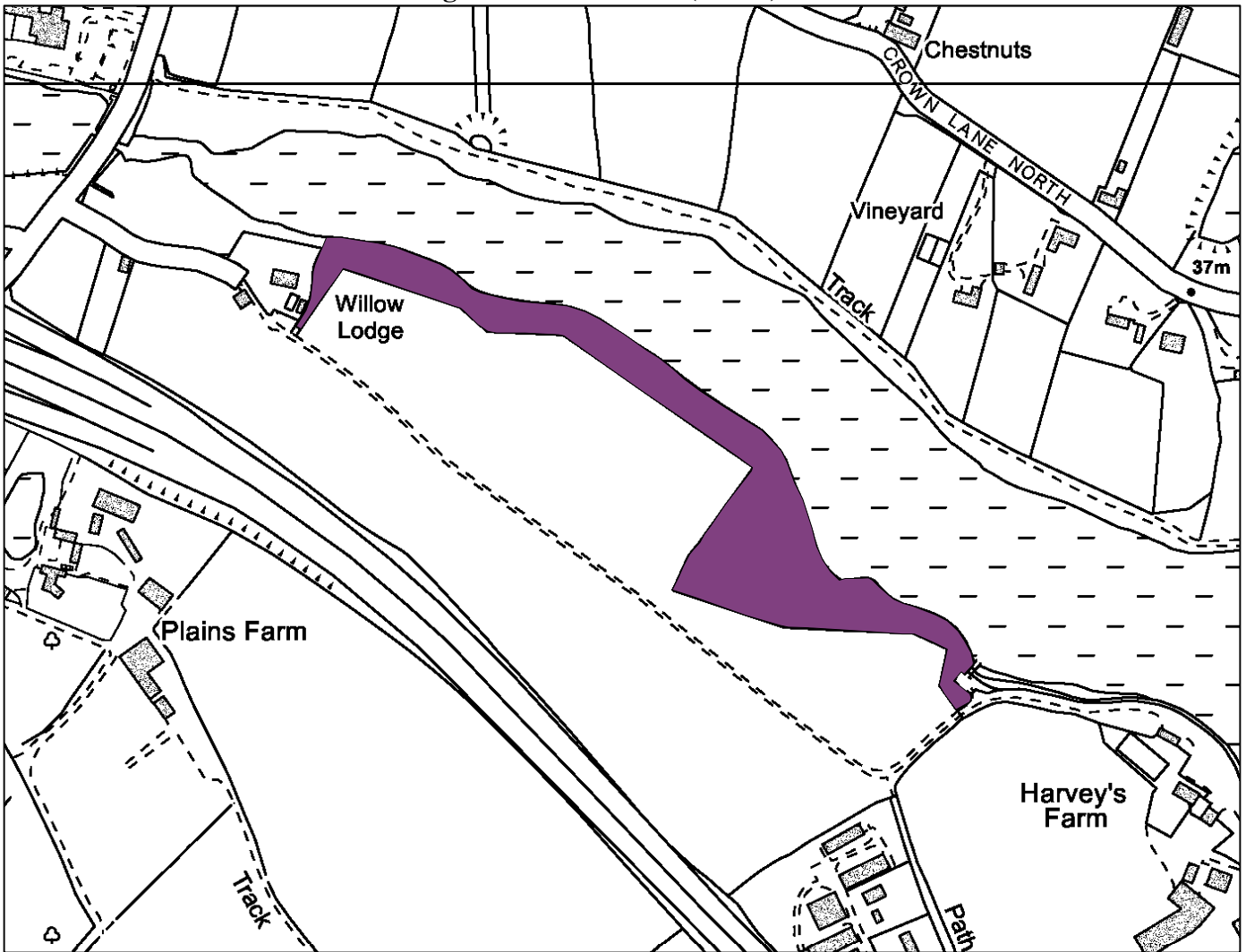


Te1 Ardleigh Reservoir Wood (2.1 ha) TM 026287



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The core of this site is made up of two blocks of old woodland reduced in size by the construction of Ardleigh Reservoir and then extended by a combination of planting and natural colonisation. The result is a linear strip of woodland along the southern shore of the reservoir's western arm, on the bank of the stream valley that existed before the reservoir was constructed.

The woodland canopy comprises Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) with localised Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). The eastern block of woodland also contains Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and there are a variety of conifers planted at the easternmost end. The understorey consists of Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel coppice (*Corylus avellana*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), with coppiced Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow (*Salix* spp.) along the reservoir edge.

The ground flora is typified by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*), Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). Although heavily shaded, the reservoir edge supports some emergent species, with Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) most prominent.

Ownership and Access

The majority of the site is believed to form part of the land associated with the reservoir, but some appears to be in private ownership. There is no public access, although the site can be viewed from a public footpath that runs through the field to the south.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Wet Woodland (UK)

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

There is no evidence to suggest that the wood is ancient, but it conforms to the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE description.

Condition Statement:

Neglected

Management Issues

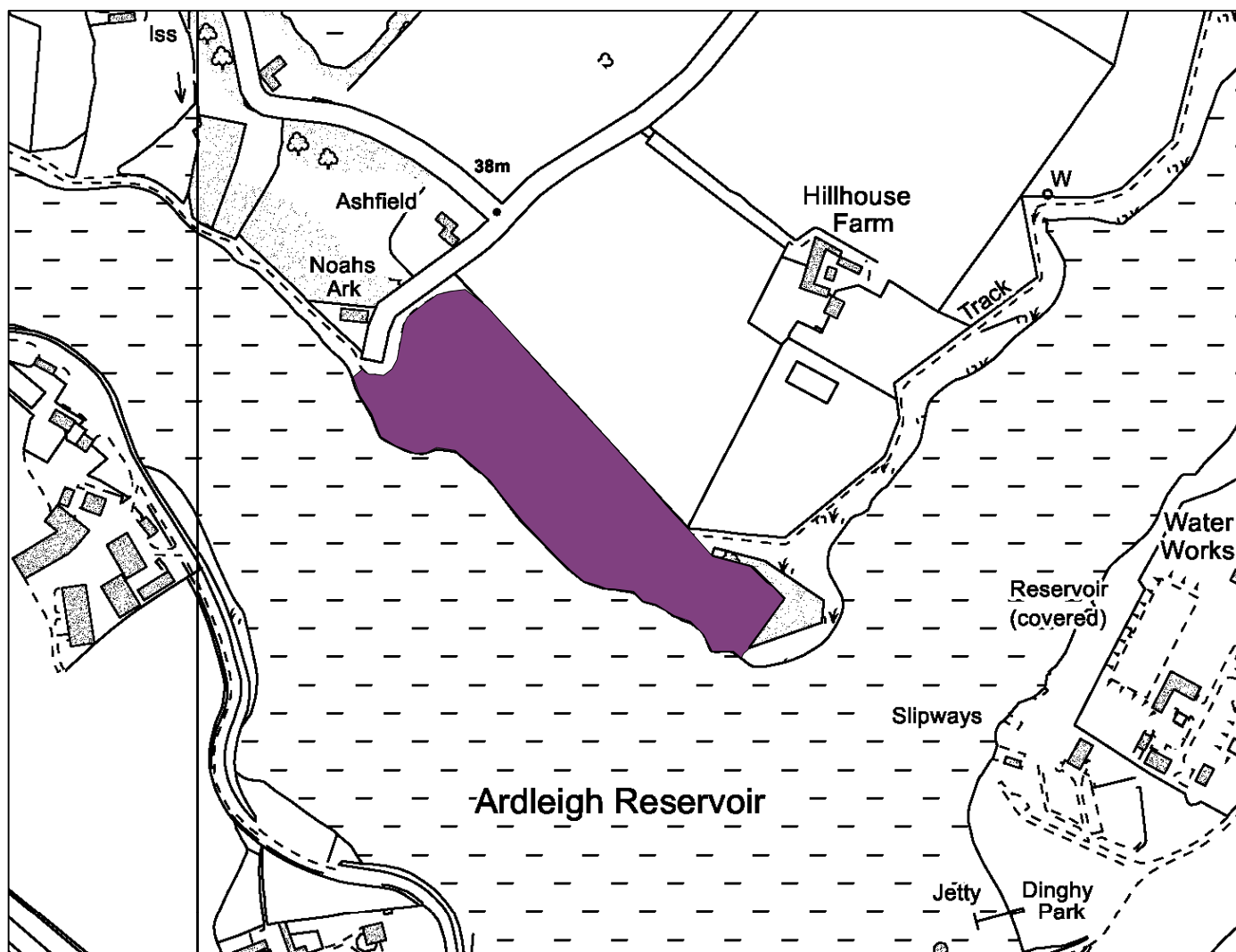
There is no evidence of active management and some of the Hazel coppice, in particular, is over-mature. There is some incursion by Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), which may spread if uncontrolled and small quantities of the invasive, non-native species Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) are present.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te3 Ardleigh Reservoir Grassland (2.9 ha) TM 032284



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Positioned on the edge of reservoir, this mosaic contains grassland, scrub and a small Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willow (*Salix*) wood. The scrub is mainly young Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), willow, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinose*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.).

Remaining areas of open grassland are varied, with some becoming rough and tussocky, but others continuing to support communities that reflect the free-draining soil. Typical species include Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Rough Meadow Grass (*Poa trivialis*), bents (*Agrostis* spp.), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Musk Mallow (*Malva moschata*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). There are also patches of lichen heath, dominated by *Cladonia* lichens, and acid grassland with species such as Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*).

There is also a small colony of the ERDB species, Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*).

Ownership and Access

The habitat is presumed to be part of the Reservoir land holding. There is no public right of way.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

Rationale:

None of the component habitats – scrub, acid grassland and wet woodland – is of sufficient quality to qualify alone, but in combination this is a valuable habitat. Although an ERDL species, the pyramidal Orchid population is not sufficiently significant to satisfy the SC1 criteria.

Condition Statement:

Declining overall, but favourable in parts

Management Issues

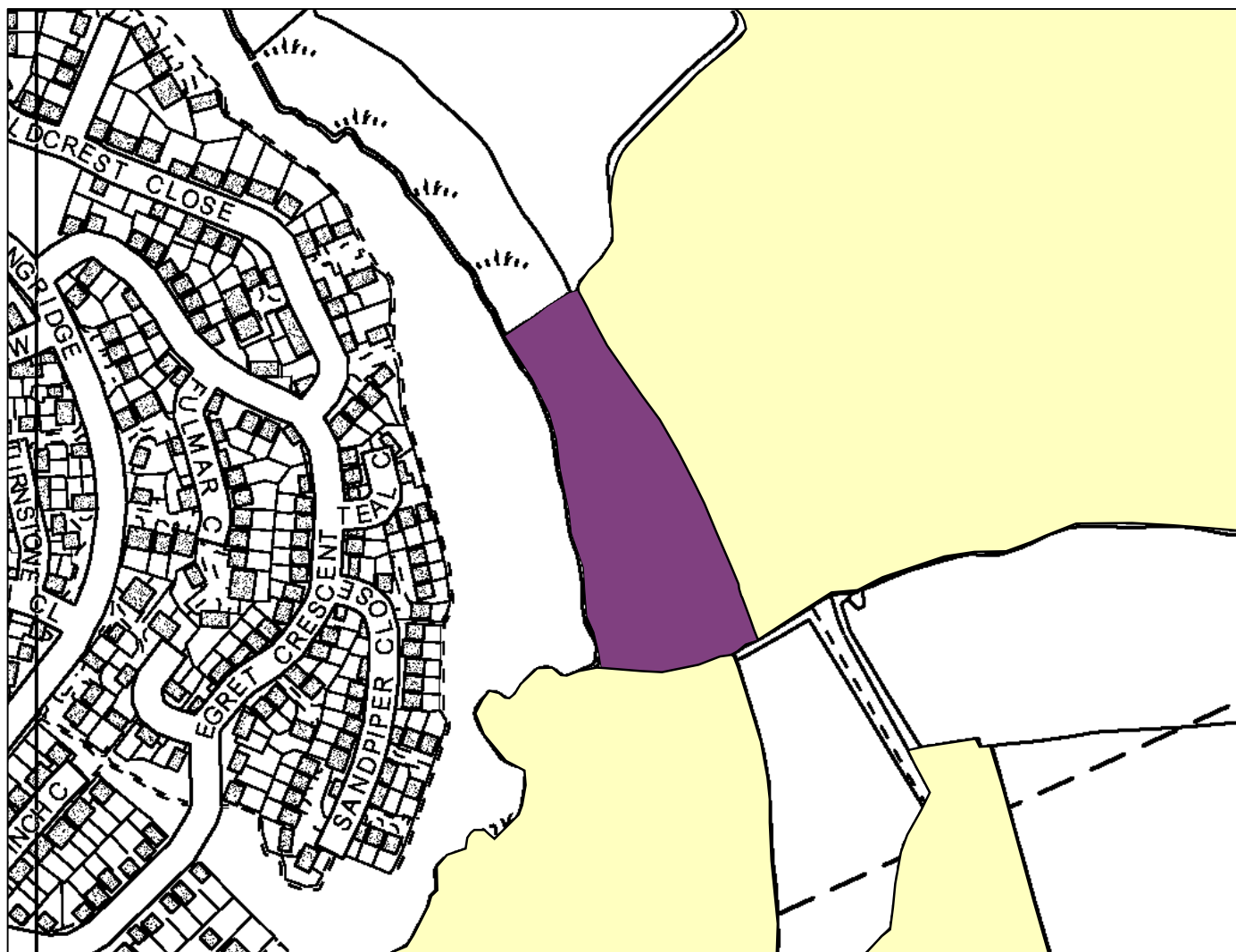
The main issue is the spread of scrub and young woodland, shading out the more interesting grassland. There has been some dumping of material close to the car park area.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te4 Churn Wood Meadow, Colchester (1.3 ha) TM 033256



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This small field on the district boundary forms the northern tip of an important wetland/grassland site along the Salary Brook within Colchester Borough (as Site Co146). Towards the south of the meadow is marshy grassland with Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*). The northern part supports drier grassland typified by Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership. There is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

Rationale:

The site supports grassland that appears to be largely unimproved, but it does not conform to the MG5 NVC community

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

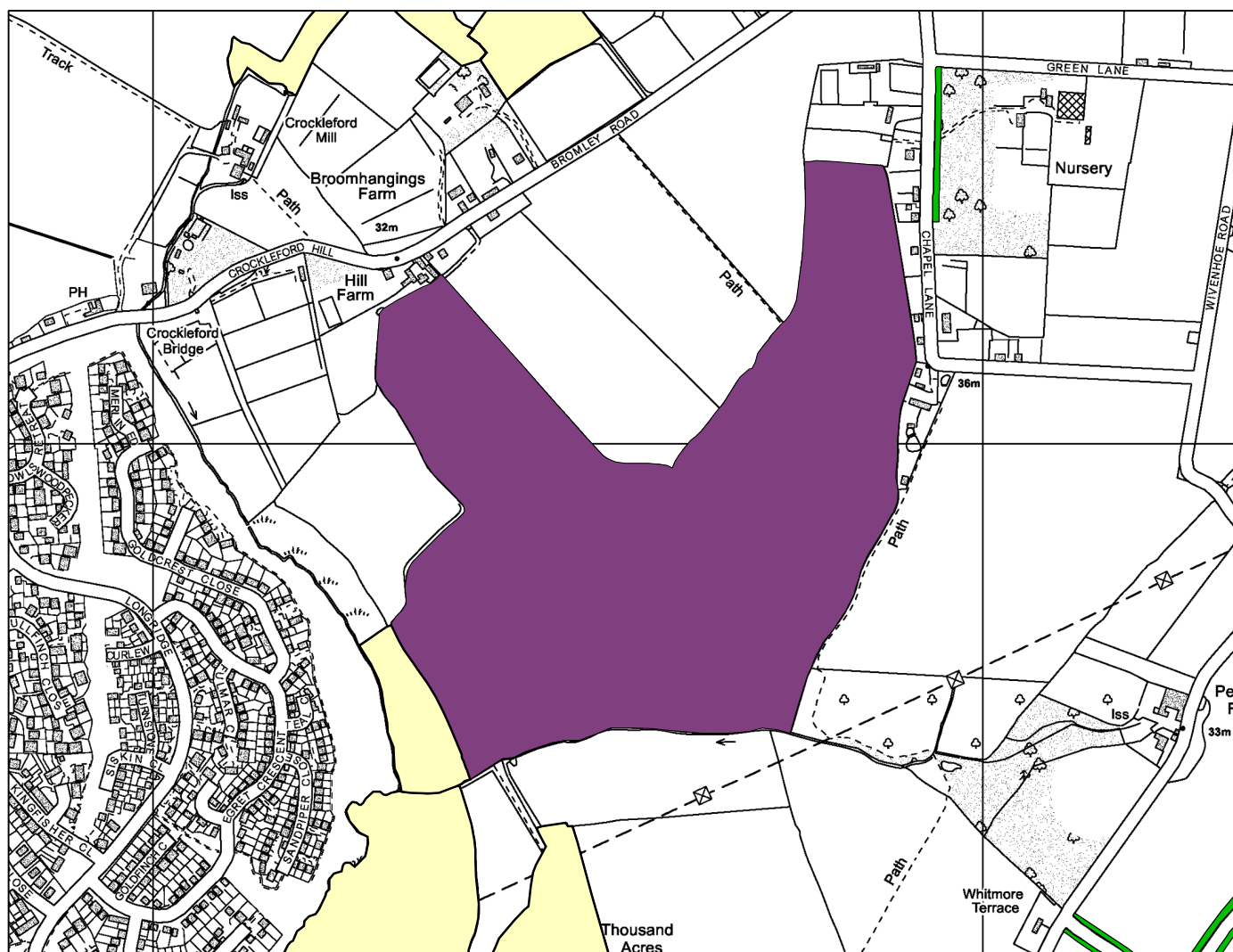
The current management regime is unknown, but appears to be maintaining the site's interest.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te5 Churn Wood, Colchester (26.3 ha) TM 036259



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This large, predominantly ancient woodland has a varied composition including planted conifers in some parts and more recent broad leaf planting. The western half of the wood is more interesting, comprising areas of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) coppice with Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards and an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and, in drier areas, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Other tree species include Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and elm (*Ulmus sp.*). Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is invading in some areas.

The ground flora is rich and varied including: Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervis*) with Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) particularly in the northeast.

Ownership and Access

The wood is under private ownership. A public footpath crosses the wood in its northeast corner and runs along its eastern boundary.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

The majority of the woodland is ancient, although partly re-planted with conifers, but the northeast arm is more recent.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, but partly coniferised

Management Issues

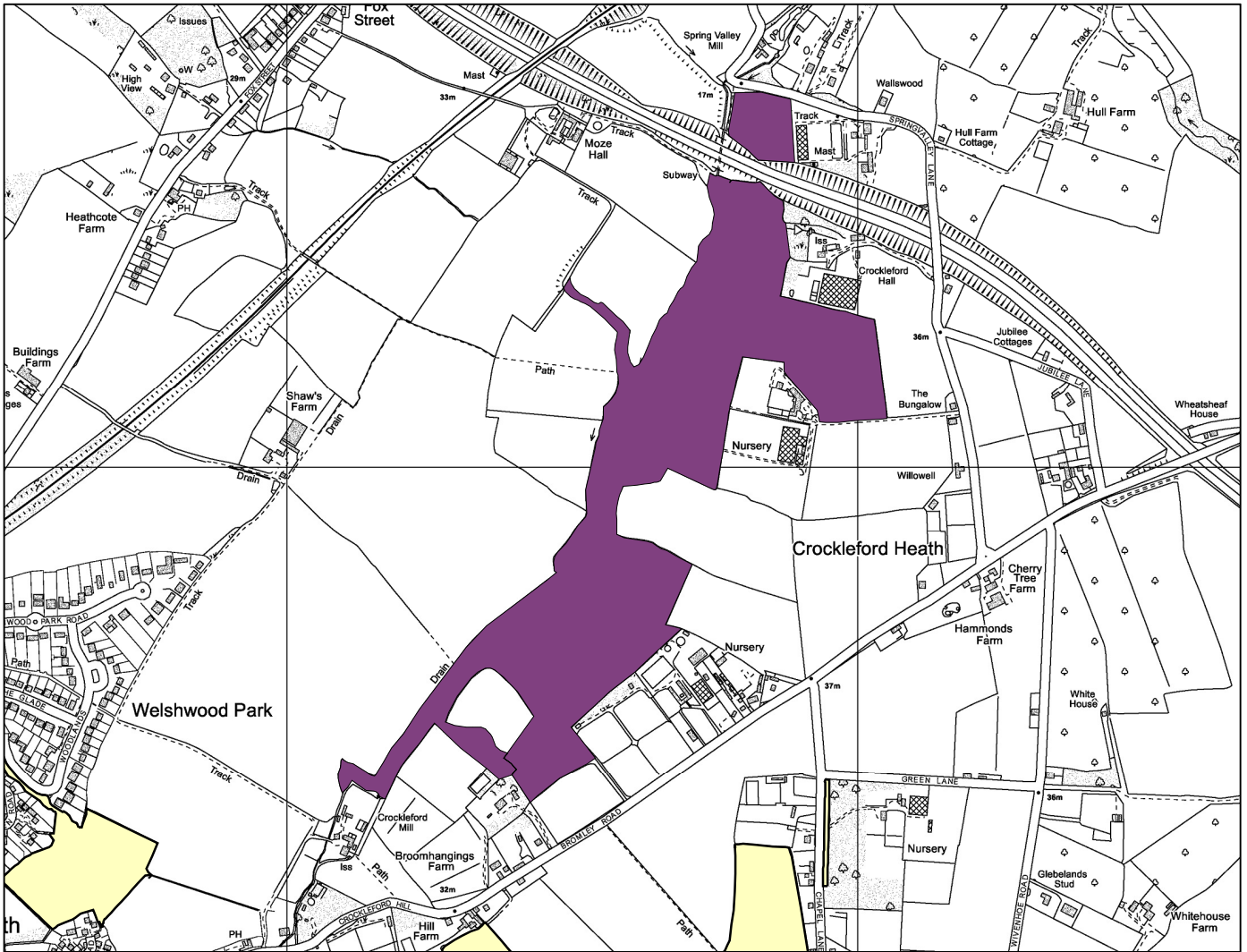
The wood is under active management, but would be improved by the removal of the remaining conifers

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te6 Wall's Wood, Crockleford Heath (26.0 ha) TM 037271



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This site consists of probably ancient streamside woodland with younger woodland blocks of varying ages on the valley sides. In the central part of the stream valley, where there was once a mill, is a complex of marsh and wet woodland habitats.

The stream banks and adjoining woodlands are dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards with Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and occasional Hornbeam (*Carpinus betula*). The ground flora is very rich, including: Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Creeping-jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). A diverse range of ferns is also present including Hart's-tongue (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and the Essex Red Data List species Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*) and Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*).

The upper slopes mainly hold coppiced Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) with occasional Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Pedunculate Oak standards and an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Field Maple, Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). The ground flora includes Bluebell, but is not as diverse as the stream sides. Some spring lines, dropping down to the stream, are marked by Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

The more recent woodland blocks to the east and south – including The Broomhangings – consist of Pedunculate Oak, Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Hawthorn with Bramble. The eastern block includes some small scale gravel workings and the ground flora includes Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*).

In the central part of the stream valley, Alder and Willow (*Salix spp.*) woodland dominates in parts with more open areas of Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Common Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*), Water Chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*) and Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*).

Ownership and Access

The site is believed to be in private ownership, but it is crossed by public footpaths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Wet Woodland

HC30 - Wildlife Corridors

Rationale:

The presence of indicator species suggests that the woodland along the stream banks is ancient, but the majority of the woodland is likely to be more recent. The willow and Alder woodland of the stream corridor matches the description of the Wet Woodland Priority Habitat, although it is not particularly old. The whole site forms a significant block of linear, semi-natural habitat forming a strong natural corridor on the eastern side of Colchester.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

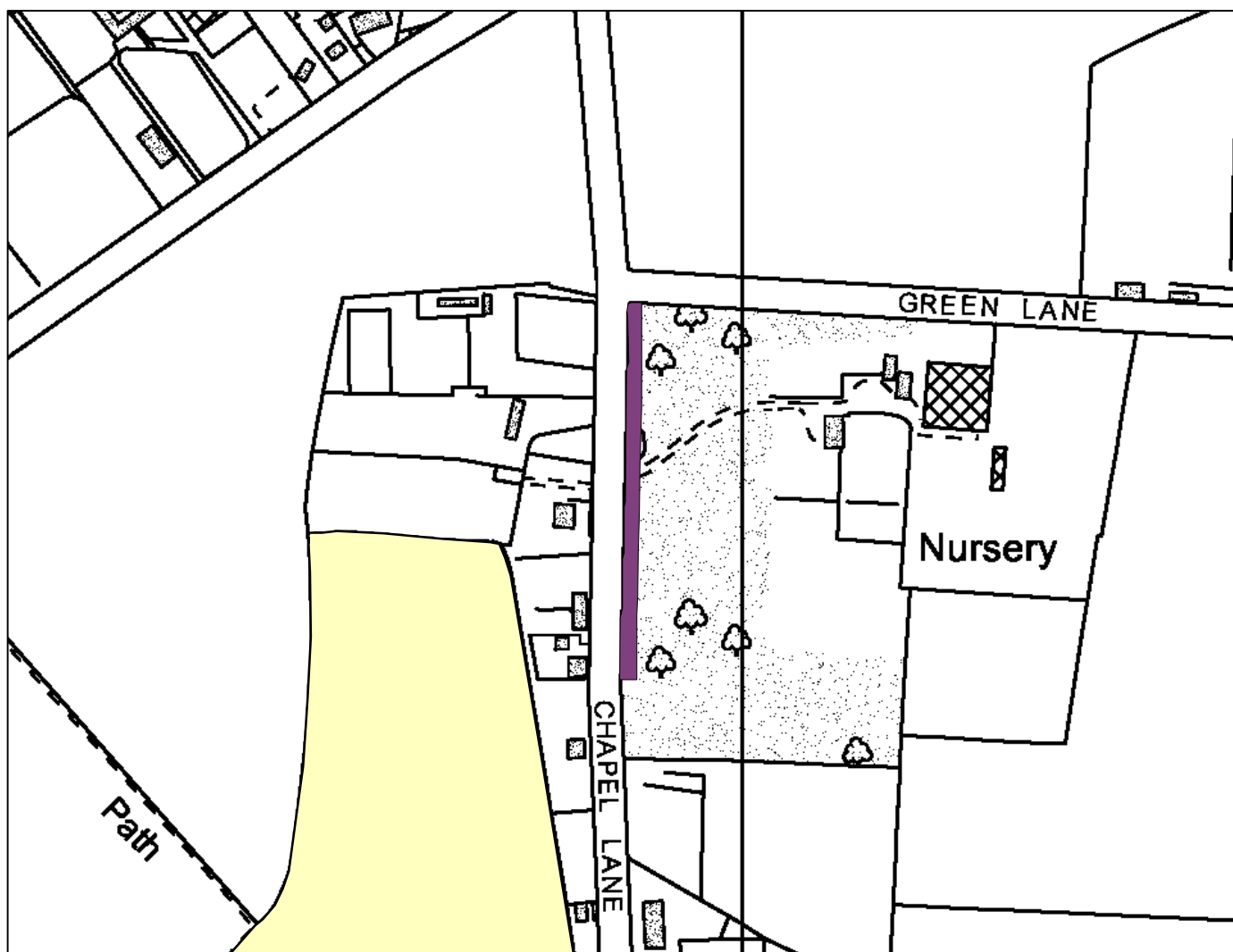
The woodland is under active coppice management, but there has been some invasion by Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), particularly in the northern-most block.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

Te7 Chapel Lane Verge, Crockleford Heath (0.1 ha) TM 039263



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This site includes the roadside verge and the adjacent wood bank and ditch, and it has been designated for its population of Common Polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*), an Essex Red Data List fern. It forms part of a much larger Essex County Council special Roadside Verge, most of which has lost its botanical interest. Other species present include Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Common Bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), a hawkweed (*Hieracium sabaudum*), Dog's Violet (*Viola spp.*) and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*).

Ownership and Access

The ownership of the verge is unknown, but the wood bank is under private ownership. Public access is limited to the carriageway.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

Common Polypody is a rare and declining species in Essex, especially growing in natural situations such as this, as opposed to walls.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

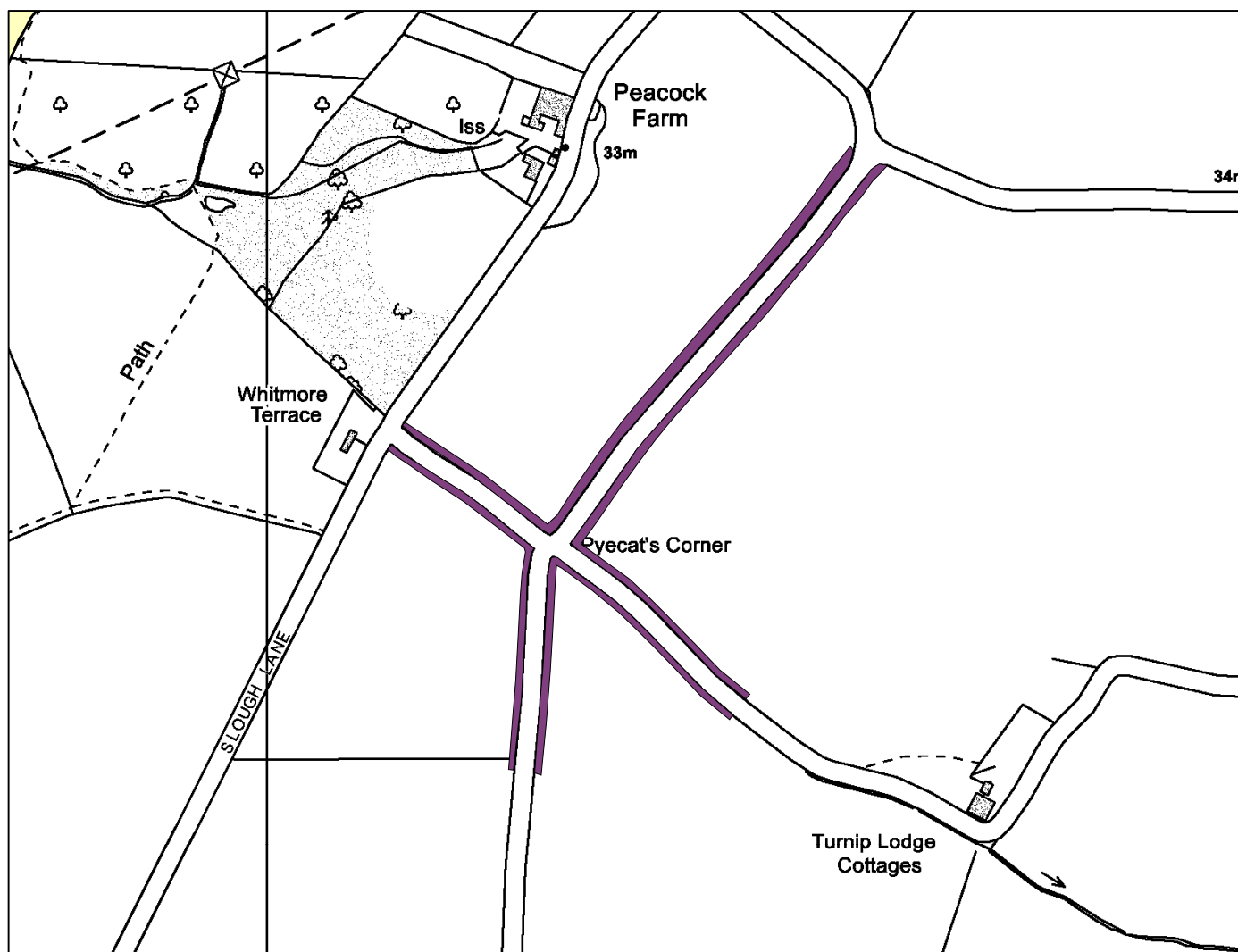
The colony is thriving at present, but it is vulnerable to changes in verge management.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te8 Pyecats Corner Verges, Elmstead Market (1.1 ha) TM 043254



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These narrow verges are located between arable fields and display an interesting flora that reflects the acidic soil-type and the heathland history of this area – the southern verges were once part of Whitmore Heath. The grassland consists of Common Bent-grass (*Agrostis capillaris*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), and cat's-tail (*Phleum* sp.) with (*Hieracium sabaudum*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Barren Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*). The most significant species is the ERDL species Betony (*Stachys officinalis*), present in patches throughout the verges.

Ownership and Access

The verges are in private ownership. Public access is restricted to the carriageway.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grassland

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The species present, include some that are notable in a county context, suggest a long continuity as grassland and, although they reflect acidic soils, the community present does not represent any of the NVC communities associated with the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Priority Habitat. The population of Betony, a species exhibiting drastic decline in the county, is significant enough to justify the Vascular Plants criterion.

Condition Statement:

Variable

Management Issues

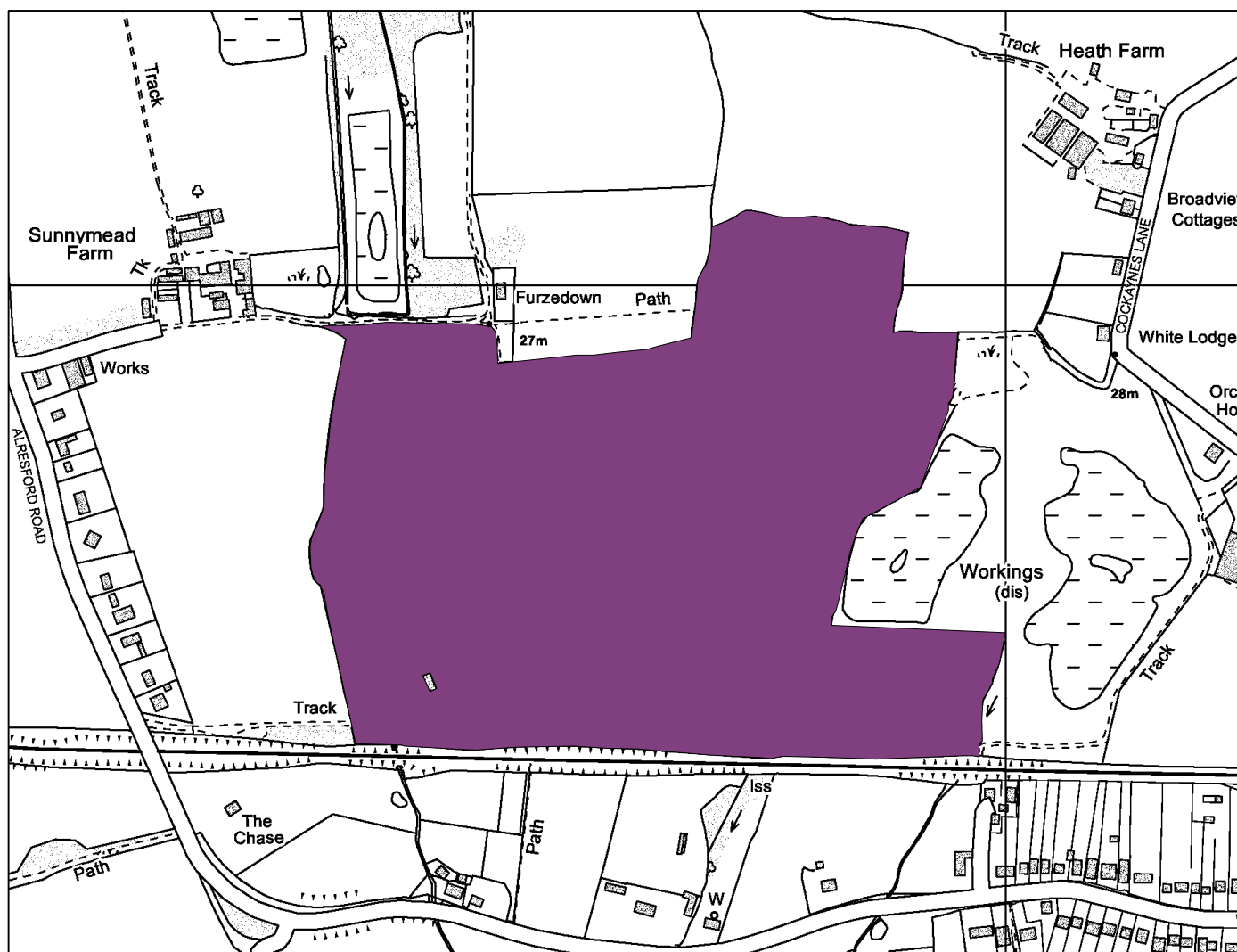
Some sections of the verge have become dominated by Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). The verges are sensitive to changes in management and to any highway maintenance work, especially due to their narrowness.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (extended)

Te12 Villa Farm Quarry, Alresford (25.9 ha) TM 056217



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This disused sand and gravel pit now comprises an extensive mosaic of different habitats, including numerous ponds, acid grassland, exposed soil and cliff, scrub and an area of ancient woodland that has escaped quarrying.

Cockaynes Wood contains Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Aspen (*Populus tremula*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) coppice with a dense understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The sparse ground flora is dominated by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) together with Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*). The southern margin of Cockaynes Wood supports a heathland community that includes Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and the scarce Common Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*).

Along the western boundary is a strip of probably ancient streamside woodland with ponds and a wider band of secondary woodland on the valley side. The topography at the top of the valley is very uneven, with damp hollows and seasonal ponds. The canopy is formed by Pedunculate Oak and Silver Birch, with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Sweet Chestnut, and an understorey of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly and coppiced Hazel. The ground flora includes Bluebell, Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Small Balsam (*Impatiens parviflora*), an introduced species that is spreading rapidly. Along the stream banks, where there are willows (*Salix* spp) and Alder, the flora is more interesting and includes Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*). In more open areas there is swamp vegetation including Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*).

The open grassland flora is typified by Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), bents (*Agrostis* spp.) and Soft-brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), while areas of exposed sands and gravels support patches of lichen heath, dominated by *Cladonia* lichens, Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Trailing St Johns-wort (*Hypericum humifusum*), *Vulpia* fescues, Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*) and willowherbs (*Epilobium* spp), including the newly established alien, Panicked Willowherb (*Epilobium brachycarpum*).

Ponds, some of which are seasonally dry and overgrown, provide good habitat for a range of species including Soft-rush, Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*), Common Reed, Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*).

Significant areas of scattered and dense scrub are interspersed through the other habitats, mainly willow, birch (*Betula* spp.) and Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*).

The open areas also support an important assemblage of breeding birds, whilst the invertebrate populations include the Nationally Rare (RDB3) UK BAP digger wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata*, along with two other RDB3 species: the mining bee *Lasioglossum pauperatum* and the ruby-tailed wasp *Hedychrum niemelai*.

Ownership and Access

Most of the site is leased and managed by the Cockaynes Wood Trust and Essex Wildlife Trust. There are public footpaths across the site and additional permissive paths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Open Mosaic habitats on Previously Developed Land
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites
HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites
HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland
HC27 – Post-industrial Sites
SC18 – SPIE Invertebrates

Rationale:

Cockaynes Wood and the streamside woodland are ancient, but the remainder of the woodland present is more recent in origin. Much of the site consists of acid grassland communities on free-draining soils and a lowland heath community is found on the southern margin of Cockaynes Wood. The site is also post-industrial with notable invertebrate species known to be present, including a population of *Cerceris quinquefasciata*

Condition Statement:

Favourable

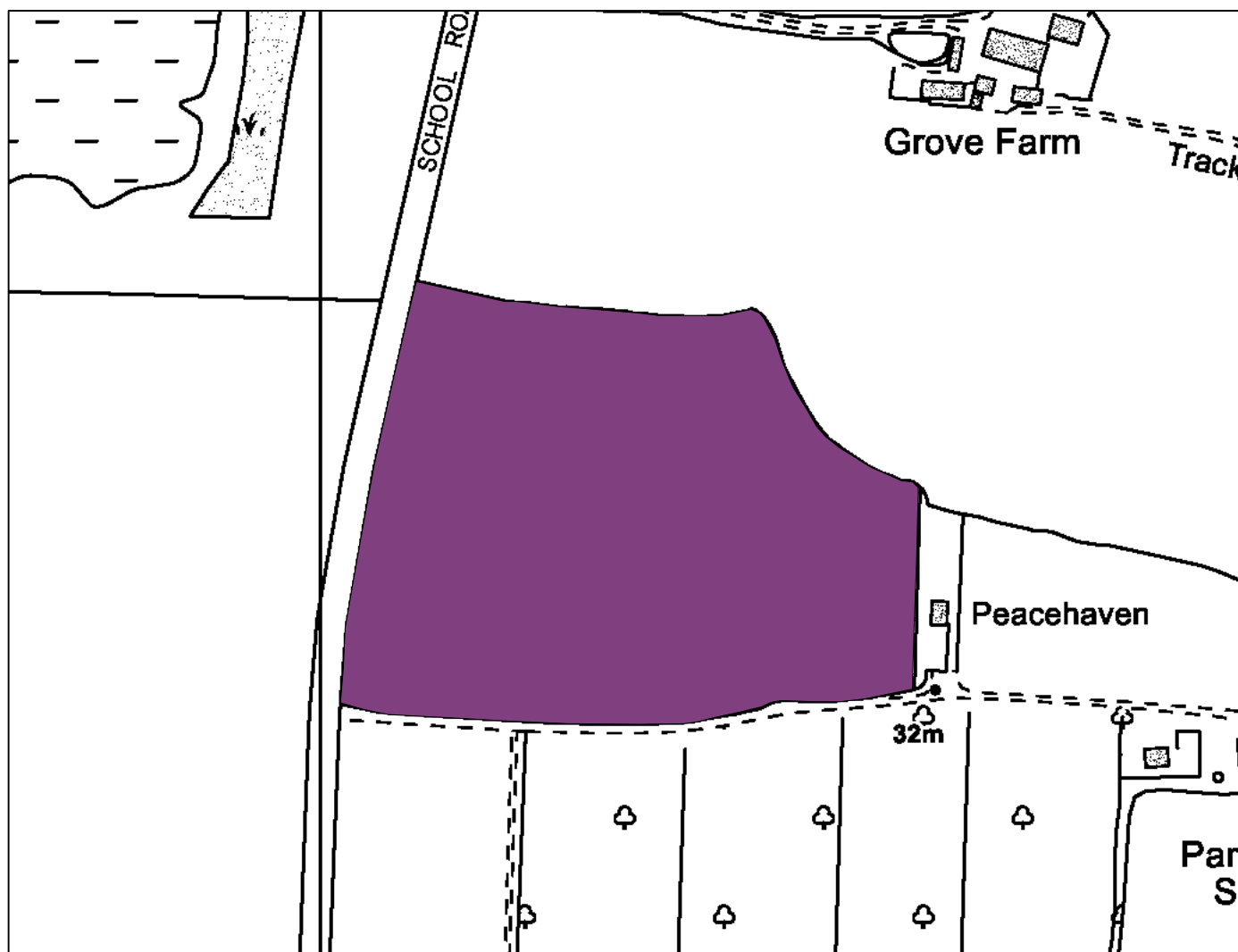
Management Issues

The site is largely under conservation management, but does include the most mature of the fishing lakes at the eastern end of the former quarry. The spread of scrub is a continual pressure and some of the open pools have been colonised by New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*).

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991 (part)
Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te15 Palegate Wood, Elmstead Market (5.8 ha) TM 061235



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Palegate Wood is ancient woodland dominated by Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice with occasional Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) standards. The presence of Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and planted Beech and Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) suggest that the wood has experienced storm damage in the past (possibly in 1987). The understorey also includes Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) with Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) in the generally sparse ground flora.

Ownership and Access

The wood is in private ownership, but can be viewed from the adjacent public highway.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

Maps indicate that the wood is ancient, despite the lack of indicator species.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, but low quality

Management Issues

There is no obvious sign of any recent management and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is present in small quantity.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te17 Park Wood, Elmstead Market (1.4 ha) TM 064230



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Park Wood is a small fragment of neglected ancient wood, with standards of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice, partly grubbed for an orchard extension leaving only a narrow band of woodland.

Ownership and Access

The site is believed to be in private ownership.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

The site is included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory.

Condition Statement:

Neglected

Management Issues

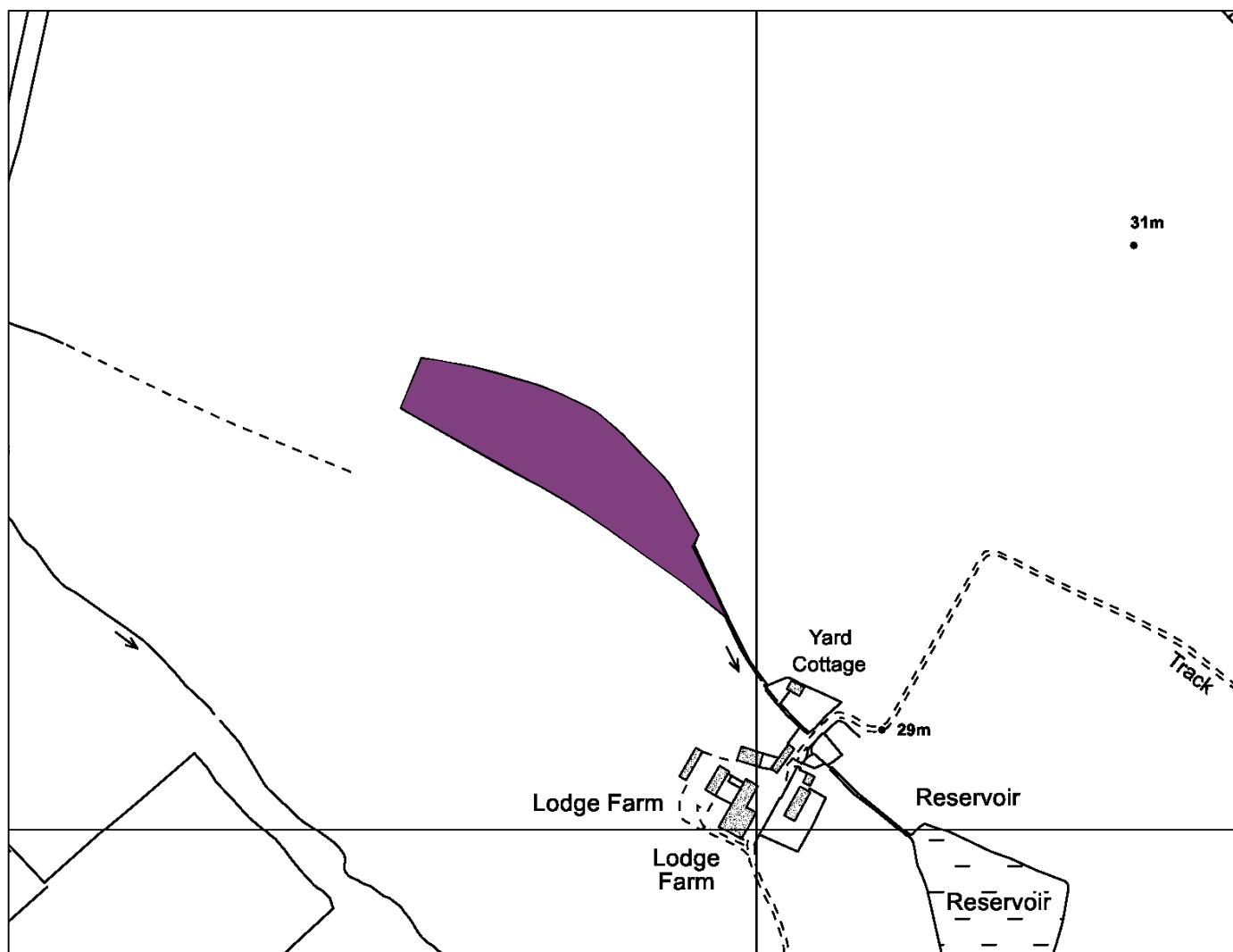
A lack of management will lead to a decline in the quality of this woodland habitat.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Te20 Money Wood, Elmstead Market (1.7 ha) TM 068253



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Money Wood is a fragment of ancient woodland consisting of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice with abundant Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and only occasional Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) are also present with an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). There are Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) on the boundaries. The ground flora is characterised by Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), but with extensive areas of Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

Ownership and Access

The wood is in private ownership and there is no public access.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

The wood features in the Ancient Woodland Inventory

Condition Statement:

Favourable, but low quality

Management Issues

There is some small-scale management taking place. The presence of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) in the canopy is of concern.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)