

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The woodland does not appear on the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Essex, but the diverse ground flora and presence of large Alder coppice stools would strongly suggest the site is at least in part ancient. The Alder and willow carr represents wet woodland which satisfies the HC3 criteria. The criteria SC1 is included due to the large population of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage, an Essex Red Data List species.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

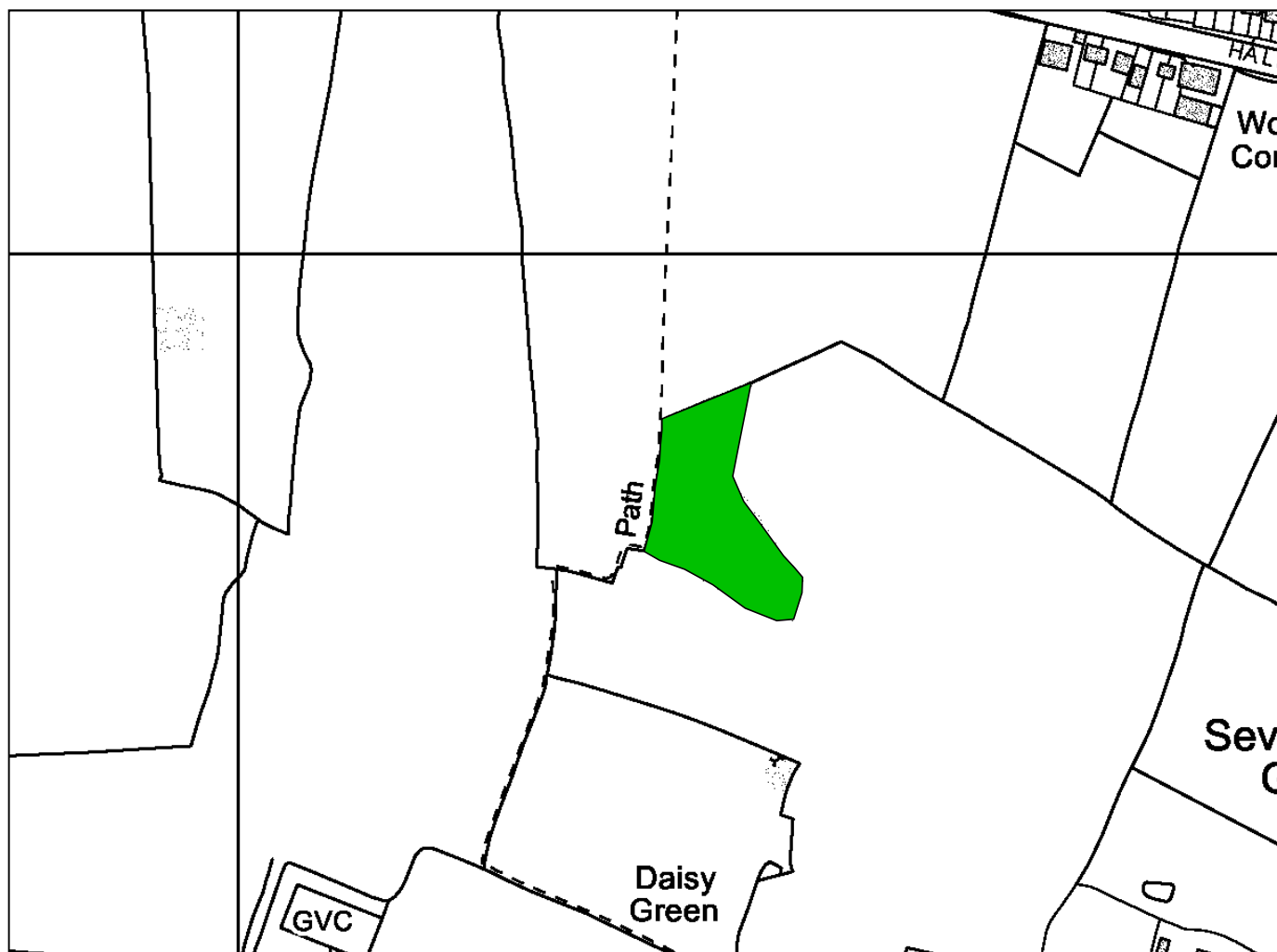
The current management regime appears to be maintaining the site's ecological interest. A general non-intervention policy would be appropriate within the sensitive marshy areas of Aldercar.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co47 Daisy Green Grove, Eight Ash Green (0.7 ha) TL 932258



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This small ancient woodland remnant comprises mainly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice and occasional Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) scrub is frequent throughout.

Amongst the ground flora is Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), a plant with a strong affinity to ancient woodland, whilst Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), additional indicator species, are present.

Ownership and Access

The site is believed to be in private ownership. There is public access along the western site margins along a public footpath, but none within the main body of woodland.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

Although not listed as ancient wood on the English Nature Inventory, the structure and, in particular, the ground flora composition suggests that it is an ancient fragment.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; unmanaged

Management Issues

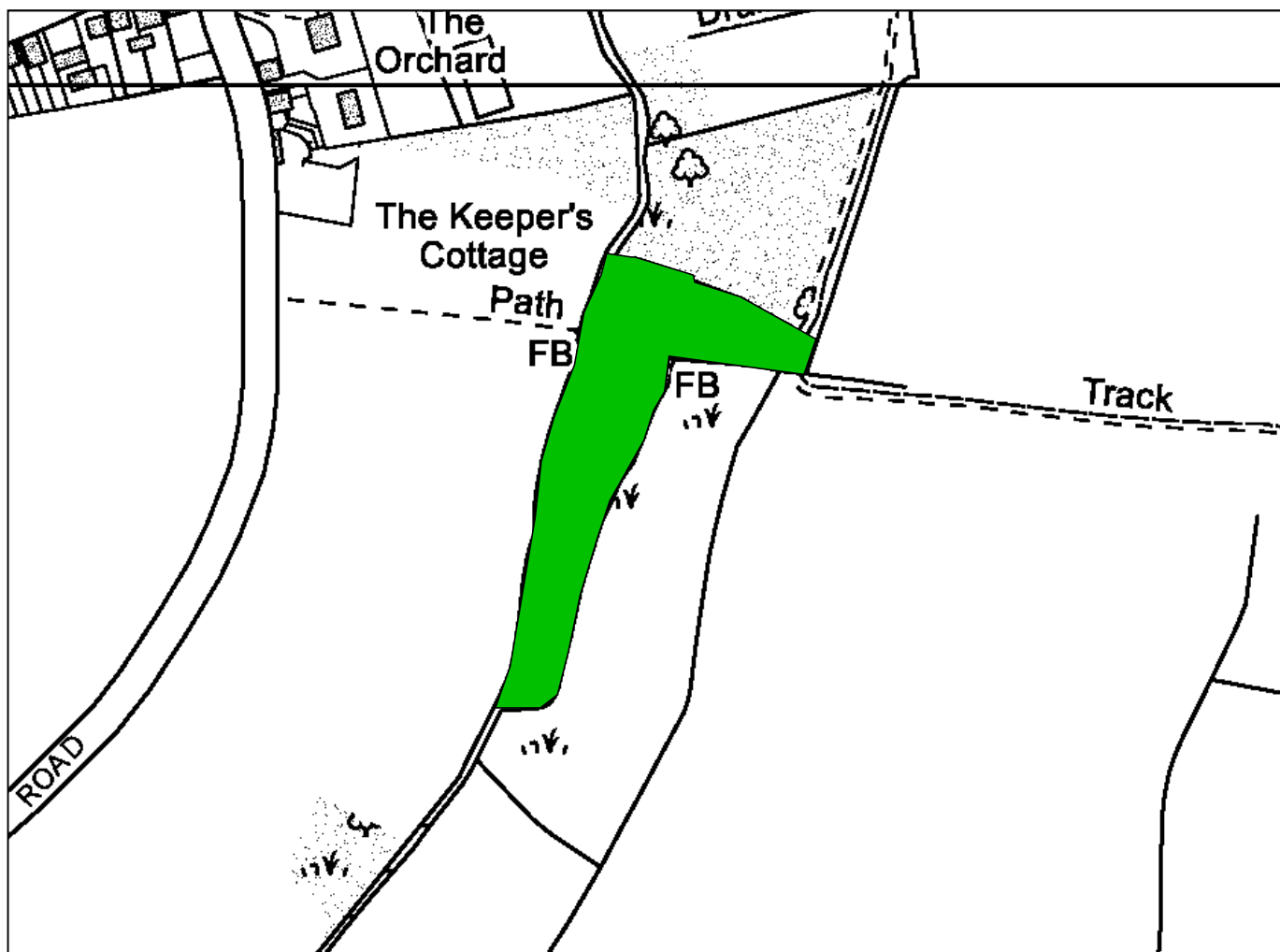
The woodland is too small for any extensive coppicing, although some small scale selective felling and coppicing would be likely to be beneficial within more heavily shaded central areas.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co51 Keeper's Cottage Wood, Copford (0.9 ha) TL 935238



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The main body of this wood comprises two close, parallel and likely ancient watercourse hedgerows that have grown out into the intervening field to form damp woodland with an unusually rich flora.

Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is locally frequent, along with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and, more recently, invasive Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There is some old Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) on drier ground.

The ground flora is unusually rich in ancient woodland indicator species, including Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Giant Fescue (*Schedonorus giganteus*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership. A public footpath crosses the woodland and two watercourses centrally.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

Although this woodland does not appear on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, due to its small size, the presence of several key woodland indicator species strongly suggests the site is derived from woodland that is ancient, possibly as a fragment of a previously larger wooded area.

Condition Statement:

Unmanaged, declining

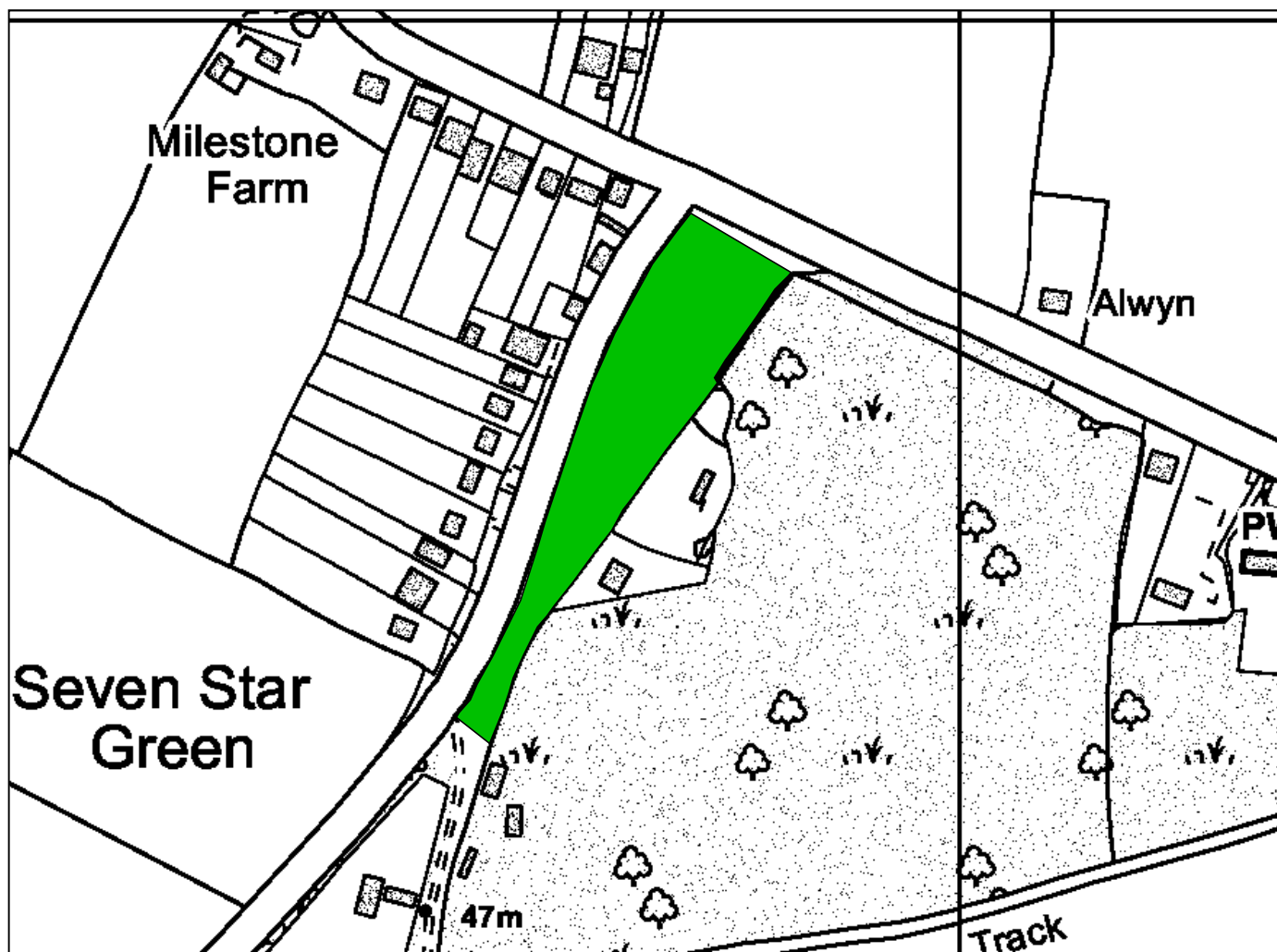
Management Issues

Sycamore has become increasingly dominant with significant regeneration of saplings and management should aim to limit its spread to maintain the overall diversity in ground flora.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)



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This green comprises species-rich grassland with acidic influences and a small pond with surrounding scrub. Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) flourishes in the damp areas near the pond, which itself supports Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Lesser Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*).

The grassland varies in character with areas of freer-draining soils supporting species such as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) and Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*). The Essex Red Data List species Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and Velvet Bent (*Agrostis canina*) have also been recorded.

Other areas including the upper slopes support taller, coarser grasses such as Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) alongside Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*) and Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by the local council. There is public access throughout.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Meadows
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC9 – Lowland Meadows
HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

Rationale:

The site clearly has acidic influences with much of the grassland being consistent with Lowland Dry Acid Grassland communities. However, areas such as the upper slopes, support coarser grasses and herbs including Common Knapweed and Yellow-rattle which match the description of the Lowland Meadows HPIE.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable, declining

Management Issues

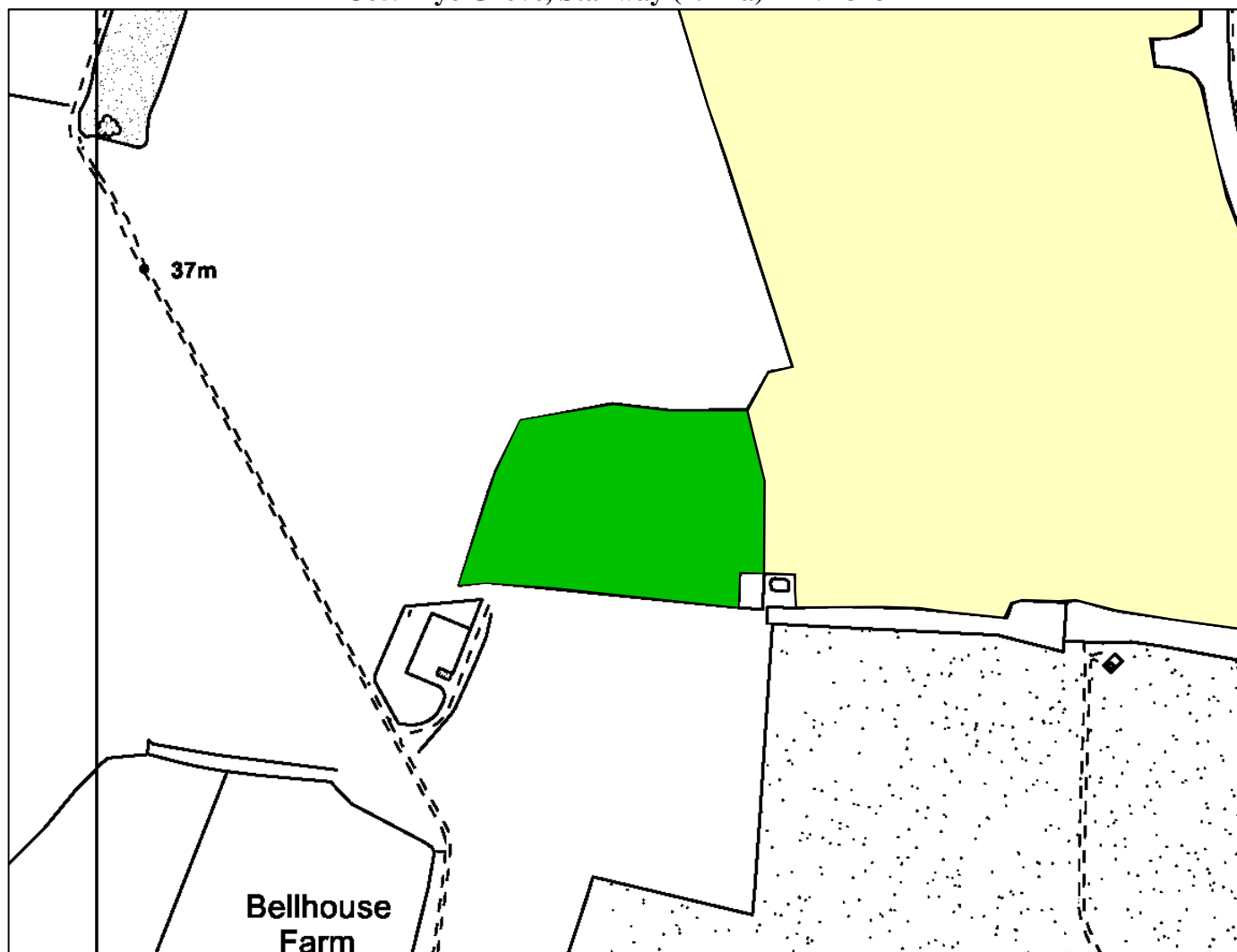
Several planted Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees to the lower northern portion, are now well established and are serving to shade out the grassland vegetation below; their removal would benefit the rare acid grassland flora. In addition a central portion of the site has been disturbed and enriched, possibly due to a fire. Management should aim to enhance the scarce acid grassland vegetation within the site which, in the absence of grazing, may require more frequent cutting with the arisings being removed.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co59 Tye Grove, Stanway (1.7 ha) TL 943234



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Tye Grove is thought to be a small ancient woodland fragment, with a few old Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) coppice stools in a canopy of mainly Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and some Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*). Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is becoming well established with locally abundant growth of saplings.

The understorey includes Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and the ground flora features abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) with Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*) and Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*).

Ownership and Access

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

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

Rationale:

The structure of the wood and its flora suggest that this is an ancient woodland site, although it is too small to be listed on the inventory.

Condition Statement:

Unmanaged, declining

Management Issues

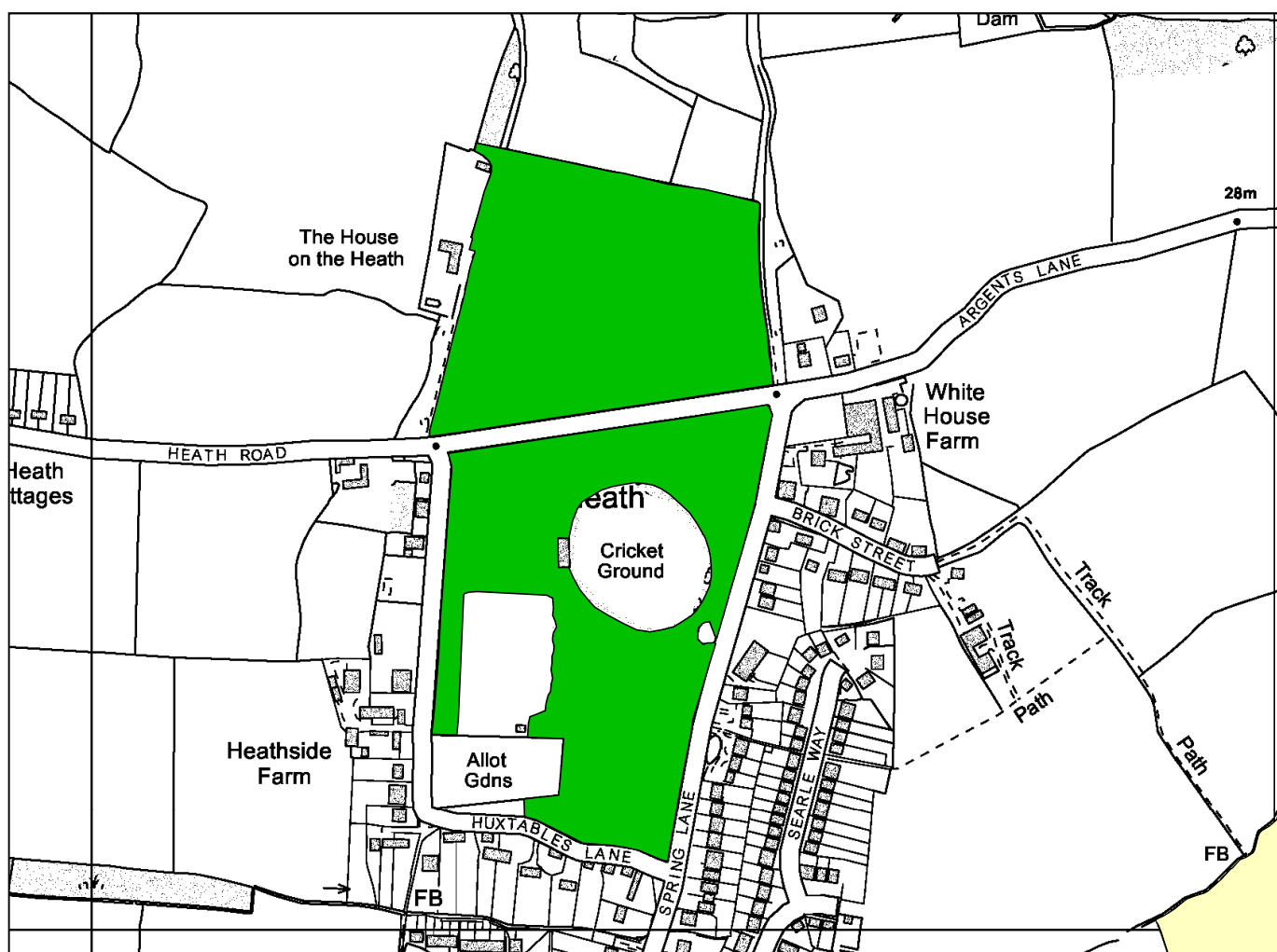
Sycamore invasion is well-advanced and should be controlled to preserve an open woodland structure with a diverse ground flora.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (eastern boundary amended)

Co60 Fordham Heath (10.4 ha) TL 945264



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This site comprises scrubby wood in the northern section and relict acidic grassland and heath to the south. The open area of Fordham Heath to the south supports a wide variety of herbs within grassland types that varies from fine acid grassland and heathland to taller neutral grassland.

In the grassland, there is locally abundant Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) with lesser amounts of Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). The Essex Red Data List species Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) and Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) are present and other notable heathland indicator species include Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) and Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*), concentrated in central and northern portions.

The ponds support other interesting species including Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) are established within dense central compartments.

The woodland section to the north is a mix of young trees including Pedunculate Oak and Silver Birch with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) scrub and dense Bramble scrub. This is mainly a dry habitat, but small wetter areas exist.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by Eight Ash Green Parish Council. There is public access throughout, including to the two sports pitches contained within the site.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Lowland Heathland
Lowland Meadows
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites
HC9 – Lowland Meadows
HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland
SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

Much of the site supports acid grassland and heathland, although the southern grassland and eastern fringe is more akin to the mesotrophic community specified in the Lowland Meadows Habitats of Principal Importance in England (HPIE). The woodland areas are not ancient, but satisfy the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland HPIE. The vascular plant criteria is applied for the presence of populations of two ERDL species: Sneezewort and Harebell

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

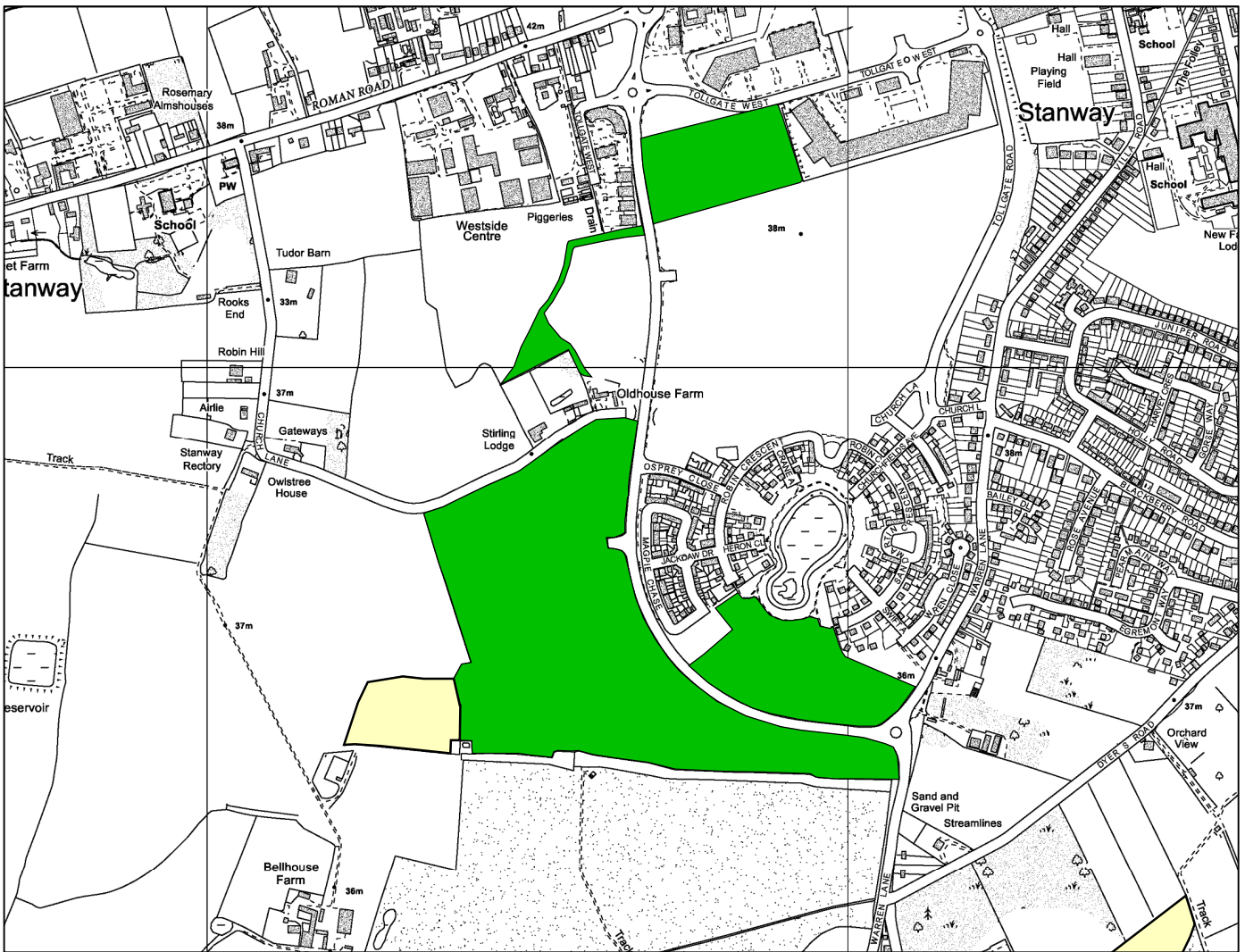
Scrub has steadily encroached onto previously open areas of grassland and heathland in recent decades and management should focus on maintaining and increasing the extent of the areas of acid grassland. This will involve clearance of trees and bushes.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (boundary around football pitch amended)

Co62 Stanway Pits (24.9 ha) TL 946239



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This site comprises what remains of two disused sand pits following recent development within this area. Recent disturbance and landscaping work means that the vegetation and topography is much changed within the remaining areas of the former “Stanway Pit” to the south and “Oldhouse Farm Pit” to the north.

An extensive area of brownfield invertebrate habitat still remains comprising bare ground of nutrient poor sand and gravels alongside two notable sections of sparsely vegetated cliffs to the west, as well as an area of birch (*Betula* sp.) and willow (*Salix* sp.) scrub to the south-west. The disturbed ground has been colonised by short perennial and tall ruderal vegetation such as Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*), Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Wild Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) and willowherbs (*Epilobium* sp.), providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates.

Previous records for the site include the Red Data Book and UK SPIE digger wasp *Cerceris quinquefasciata* (RDB3), its brood parasite cuckoo-bee *Hedychrum niemelai* (RDB3) and the Small Blue Carpenter-bee *Ceratina cyanea* (RDB3), with other notable records including the Small Woodlouse *Armadillidium nasatum*, the Nationally Scarce (Nb) Adonis' Ladybird and the Golden-rod Nomad Bee *Nomada rufipes*, although it is not known how many of these species persist.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned by a housing developer. There is public access along a new landscaped track within the main western portion, which appears to have been set aside as a public open space.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

Selection criteria:

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

Rationale:

The site still presents features and habitats that are likely to support good invertebrate assemblages and the use of the Post-industrial Sites criteria defines the extent of these open mosaic habitats. Based on past records, criteria SC19 has been included as it is likely that a significant invertebrate assemblage still remains.

Condition Statement:

Declining

Management Issues

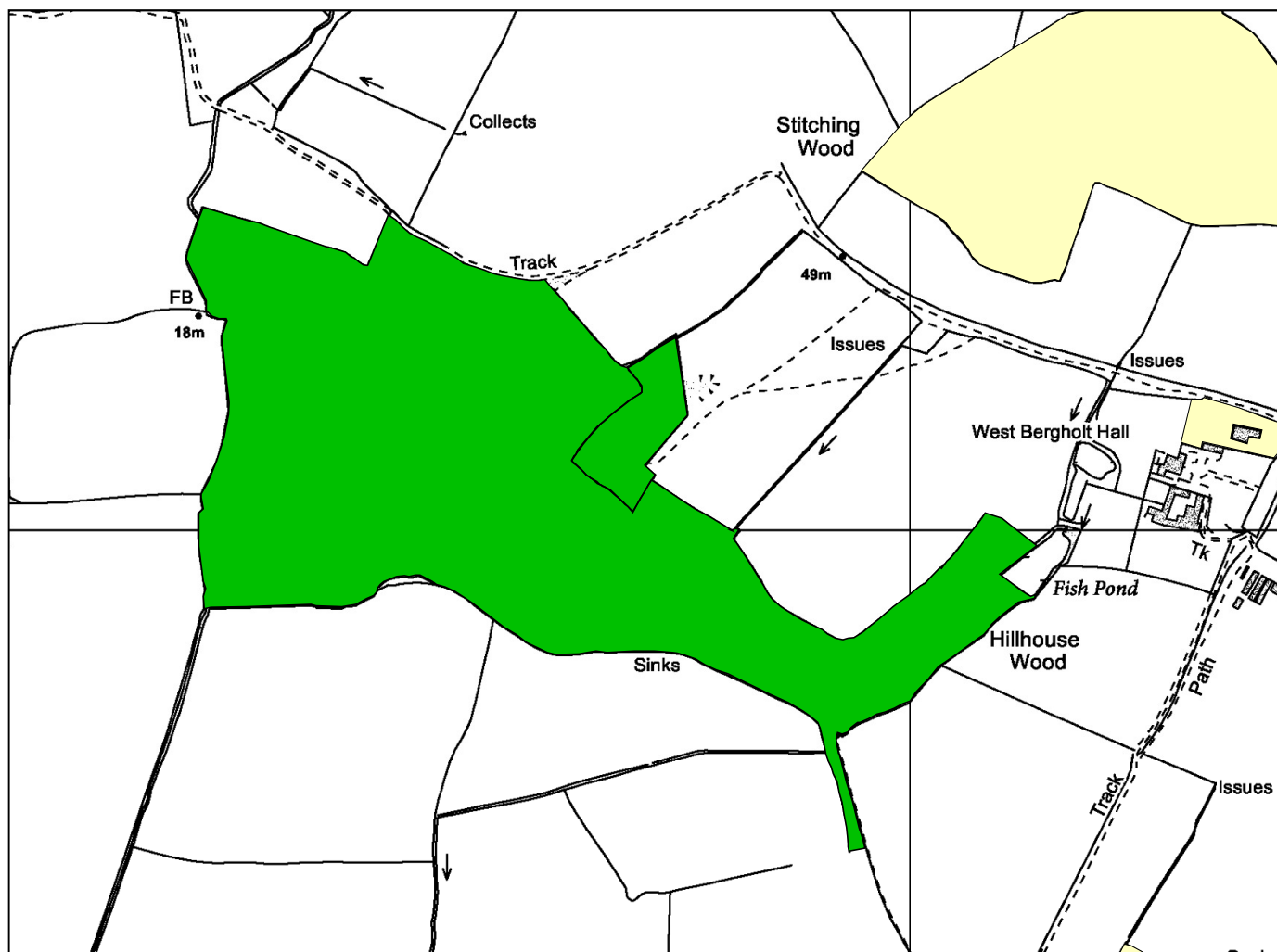
The site is in a state of flux with current development pressures; in terms of conservation management the priority should be to retain remaining brownfield habitats and features. Maintenance should be guided by a Conservation Management Plan which would ensure that scrub encroachment is kept in check, that some level of disturbance is maintained and that the amenity and conservation functions are balanced. Further changes to the site's boundary are likely as development progresses.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (reduced)

Co63 Hillhouse Wood, West Bergholt (16.2 ha) TL 945280



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This large ancient wood is composed predominantly of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards and some Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). The varied understorey includes Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice with both Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Midland Hawthorn (*C. laevigata*) and provides plentiful nesting habitat for birds, including a good population of Nightingale. A free-draining area to the north contains Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) with dense underlying Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and patches of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

An extensive carpet of Bluebell covers the drier slopes, beneath the canopy and in the open cleared areas, replaced by Bracken later in the season. The ground flora also includes Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) as well as the noteworthy Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), confined to a small area on the north edge of the wood. The banks of the western stream support a dense patch of Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*). Otherwise, marshy streamside habitat supports plants such as Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), an Essex Red Data List species, and Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*). The Nationally Scarce Species of Principal Importance in England White-letter Hairstreak butterfly is amongst the invertebrates recorded in this woodland.

Ownership and Access

The site is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust and is crossed by public footpaths, with additional courtesy paths allowing access to all parts of the wood.

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

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The bulk of this woodland appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, which is consistent with the presence of several ancient woodland indicator plants including a significant Bluebell population. A more recent woodland compartment provides a valuable buffer and extension, which satisfies the description of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; neglected coppice

Management Issues

There appears to be little active management at present, and a resumption of small-scale coppicing on a long term rotation would likely benefit the woodland structure and ground flora.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (extended)

Co67 Warren Lane Pit, Stanway (26.5 ha) TL 954228



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This site comprises the less active parts of this large working sand pit, comprising steep, sparsely vegetated cliffs and banks, flower-rich ruderal grasslands, areas of developing scrub and several more or less permanent bodies of water. Older, undisturbed portions of the quarry support willow (*Salix* spp.) scrub, which forms a dense northern block and dominates the margins of the three main lakes. Bramble scrub (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) covers the base of the cliffs in places. Areas of exposed sand and gravels within more recently disturbed areas support short perennials and tall ruderals such as Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*), Common Centaury (*Centaurium erythraea*), Wild Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), Sticky Groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*), Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Marsh Cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*) and Common Evening-primrose (*Oenothera biennis*).

Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), an Essex Red Data List species, occurs on the high eastern bank tops at the original ground level alongside a band of Brambles. The site includes a small woodland compartment south of Furze Hall, which supports some old Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) pollards with abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), which gives way to Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) later in the season.

Brownfield sites such as this in the Colchester area are known to support important and characteristic invertebrate assemblages and past survey work undertaken from the accessible parts of this site revealed this to also be the case here. There are records of ten Nationally Scarce species of solitary bees and wasps, including *Lasioglossum xanthopus*, along with its Nationally Vulnerable (RDB2) brood-parasite *Sphecodes spinulosus* at its only known north Essex location. Smooth Newts, Common Frog and Common Toad (now a Species of Principal Importance in England) have also been recorded in the past together with breeding Sand Martins and Little Ringed Plovers.

Ownership and Access

Tarmac own and manage this operational site and there is no public access apart from along a public footpath that crosses from north to south. Another public footpath runs alongside the eastern boundary.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land
Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC27 – Post-industrial Sites
HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites
SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

Rationale:

The site supports a mosaic of habitats including standing water, sandy cliffs, scrub and flower-rich disturbed ground and is clearly post-industrial, the most active areas, at present, being excluded. The woodland compartment is not ancient, but satisfies the definition of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England and provides a valuable extension. Although there is no recent invertebrate data, the habitats and features present are such that it is likely that a significant assemblage still exists. Although an ERDL species, the Soft Shield-fern population is not sufficiently significant to satisfy the SC1 criteria.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

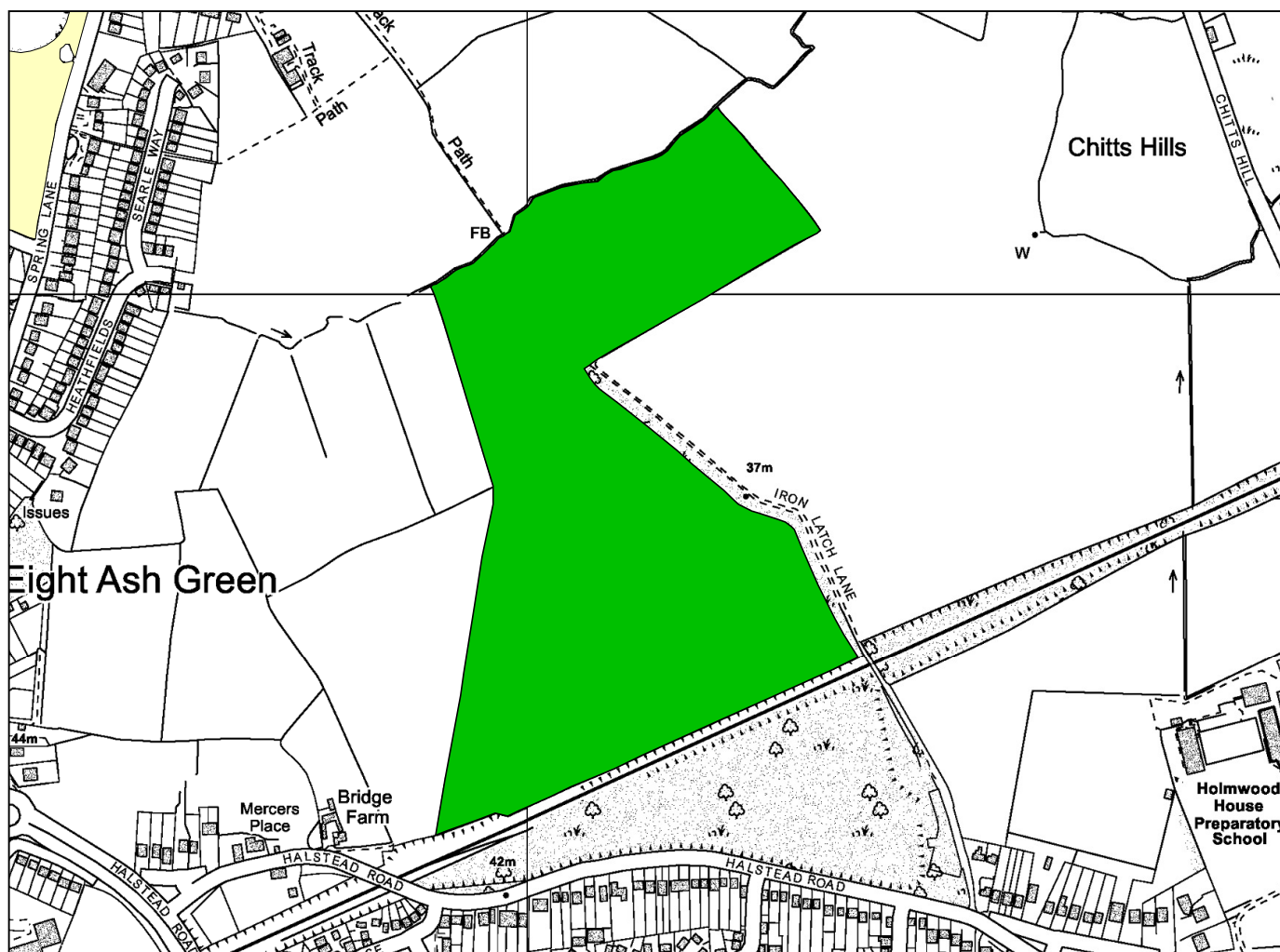
Management Issues

The ongoing operation of the site means that the habitats present are under continual change, with some formerly open areas being overtaken by scrub and other sections subject to physical disturbance. Further changes to boundaries are likely as the site's management continues to change.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008
Reviewed: 2015 (boundary changes)

Co68 Iron Latch Lane Woods and Meadow, Eight Ash Green (18.1 ha) TL 956260



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This large site comprises coppice with standards woodland, an old meadow and an area of former gravel pits now supporting ponds, scrub and secondary woodland. The meadow and coppice woodland make up the Iron Latch Nature Reserve.

The old, unimproved meadow supports a diverse flora including Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and Hairy St. John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*) and also includes herbs of free draining soils including Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*). A small population of the Essex Red Data List Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*) is also present. Rabbit grazing and disturbed ground from burrows is noticeable within the central grassland area which is finer and has acidic influences. Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) and willows (*Salix* spp.) along with shrub species such as Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) are becoming increasingly established within marginal areas where the grassland is taller and coarser.

Adjoining to the west of the meadow is a small block of old woodland with a composition dominated by Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice, except for some scattered Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) standards towards the north edge. A sparse ground flora includes Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*).

The largest block of habitat, to the west of the lane, has developed on the site of an old pit that had its origins in the late nineteenth century. This area comprises predominantly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) alongside Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) with willows (*Salix* spp.) in extensive low-lying areas that hold standing water for much of the year. Higher free draining ground supports Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) scrub. The drier slopes support Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex*

acetosella), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and Heath Speedwell in open situations not dominated by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). New and restored seasonally wet waterbodies to the east support Great Crested Newts and Smooth newts, and exhibit a diverse range of planted and naturally colonised marginal vegetation including Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Ragged-Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*).

Ownership and Access

The site is largely in private ownership. The northern meadow and adjacent wood are managed by Essex Wildlife Trust, and this has a peripheral courtesy footpath accessed Iron Latch Lane, which is a bridleway. The former pits are unofficially frequented by many dog walkers, and mountain bikers who have constructed elaborate tracks.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Lowland Meadows

Selection criteria:

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

HC9 – Lowland Meadows

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

Rationale:

The site includes wet woodland, a Priority Habitat Woodland Type, as well as deciduous woodland which is non-ancient but satisfies the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England description. Portions of the unimproved grassland appear to conform to a MG5 NVC community, with other areas better fitting the criteria for Other Neutral Grasslands.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in part; the meadow is declining

Management Issues

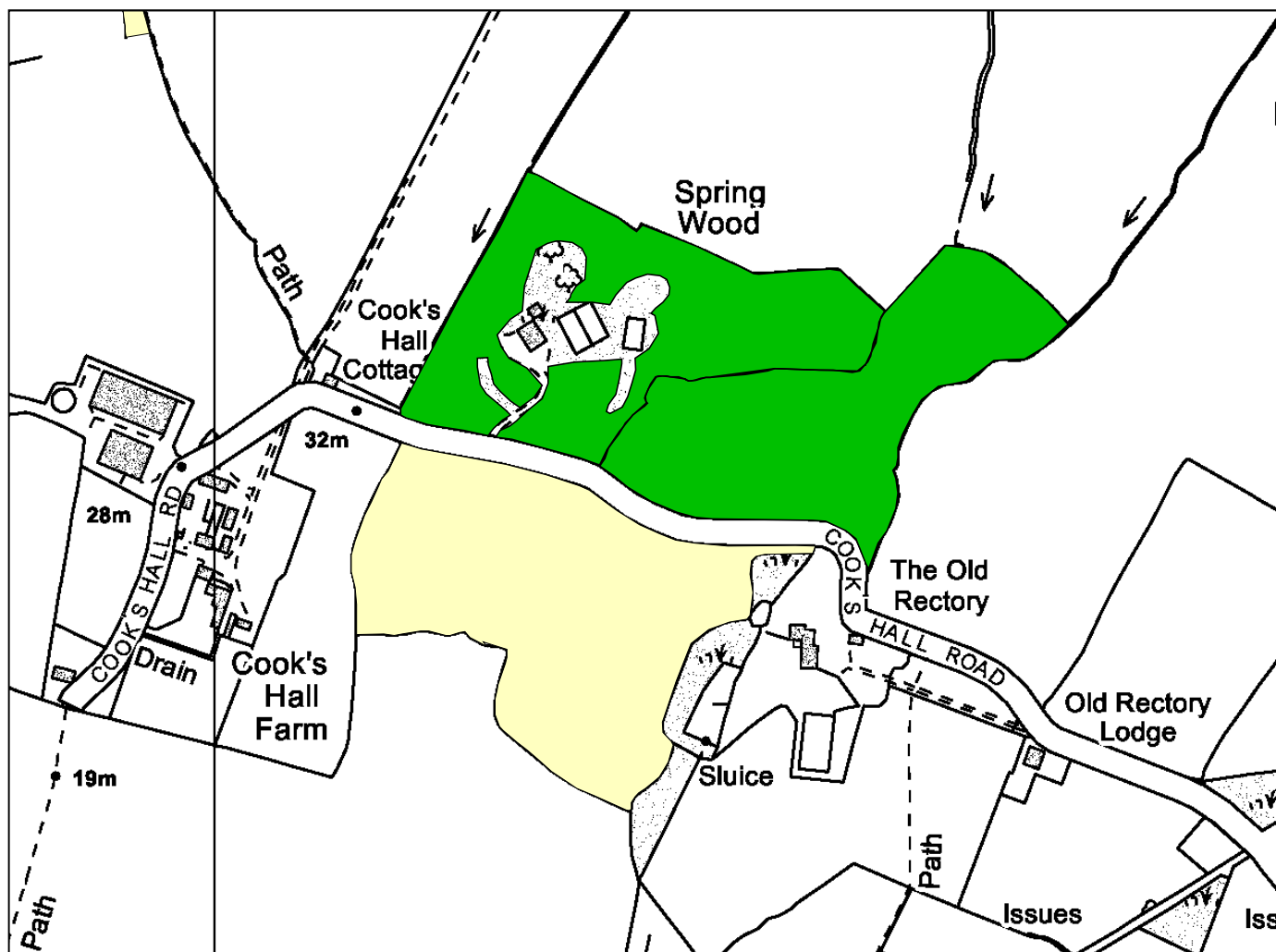
Scrub invasion is a continual problem on the meadow, with current management barely maintaining the grassland area. Intense mountain bike and BMX activity has a localised impact on the ground flora in the former gravel pits. The ponds, some of which have been restored or created as mitigation for Great Crested Newts, should be monitored and managed appropriately to encourage this species and other pond life.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991 (in part)

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (reduced)

Co69 Spring Wood, West Bergholt (4.4 ha) TL 952275



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This secluded woodland is managed as a recreational area for naturists and contains many cabins and several pathways created through the woodland. A high security fence has been erected immediately inside the woodland boundary.

Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) dominates the high canopy, along with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and elm (*Ulmus* sp.), while Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) forms a shrub layer. A limited ground flora includes patches of Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The western woodland margins include Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Hazel coppice.

A more recent wooded compartment to the east contains some large Crack Willow (*Salix fragilis*) along a central drain that supports a small area of marshy vegetation including Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*). On higher ground oak dominates the canopy with Hazel coppice, Blackthorn and Bramble in the understorey, and Dog's Mercury, Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), a currant (*Ribes* sp.) and Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) in the ground layer.

A southern meadow compartment provides a valuable addition to the woodland and scrub within the site, containing relatively unimproved freely draining turf with a number of anthills created by the Yellow Meadow Ant (*Lasius flavus*) in the absence of mowing. The grassland is maintained by Rabbit grazing and supports finer bents (*Agrostis* spp.) and meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.) with Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) amongst the relatively herb-poor sward. The grassland area is flanked by Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Bramble scrub with some large overhanging oaks to the north.

Ownership and Access

The site 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

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC28 – Small-component Mosaics

Rationale:

Spring Wood appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The eastern woodland extension is more recent but contains a varied structure and flora that satisfies the description of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England. The southern grassland and scrub mosaic form a valuable addition to the site and are included under HC28.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable (ancient woodland); favourable in parts (grassland, scrub and non-ancient woodland)

Management Issues

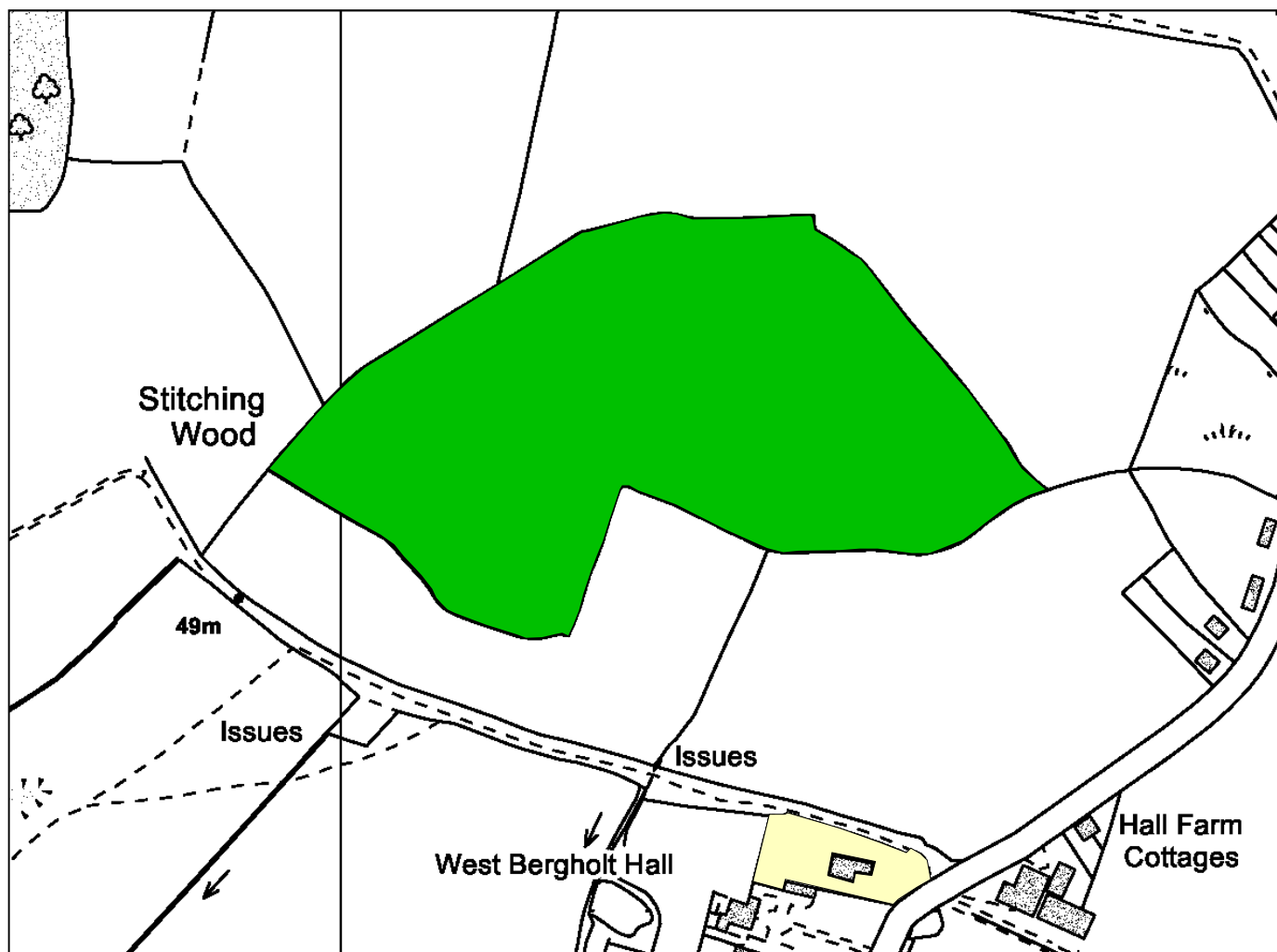
The ancient Spring Wood is heavily used as a naturist retreat, and there are significant associated impacts on the woodland structure and ground layer relating to the ongoing disturbance and infrastructure. Within the grassland compartment, rabbit grazing appears to be largely maintaining the open habitat, although scrub encroachment threatens the current mosaic.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (extended, internal boundary remapped)

Co70 Stitching Wood, West Bergholt (6.7 ha) TL 952284



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Stitching Wood has a broadleaved canopy of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards and mature Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) coppice, with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice dominating most of the sub-canopy layer. Other tree species include Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), whilst scrubby Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) is found on the wood margins.

Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) are frequent in the ground flora beneath with Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) dominating later in the summer. The largest of several glades occurs in the west of the woodland where an open area adjacent to a pheasant pen supports tall grasses and locally dominant Bracken. Other typical species within the ground layer include Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

Ownership and Access

The site 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:

This woodland appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and supports a small number of indicator plants.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

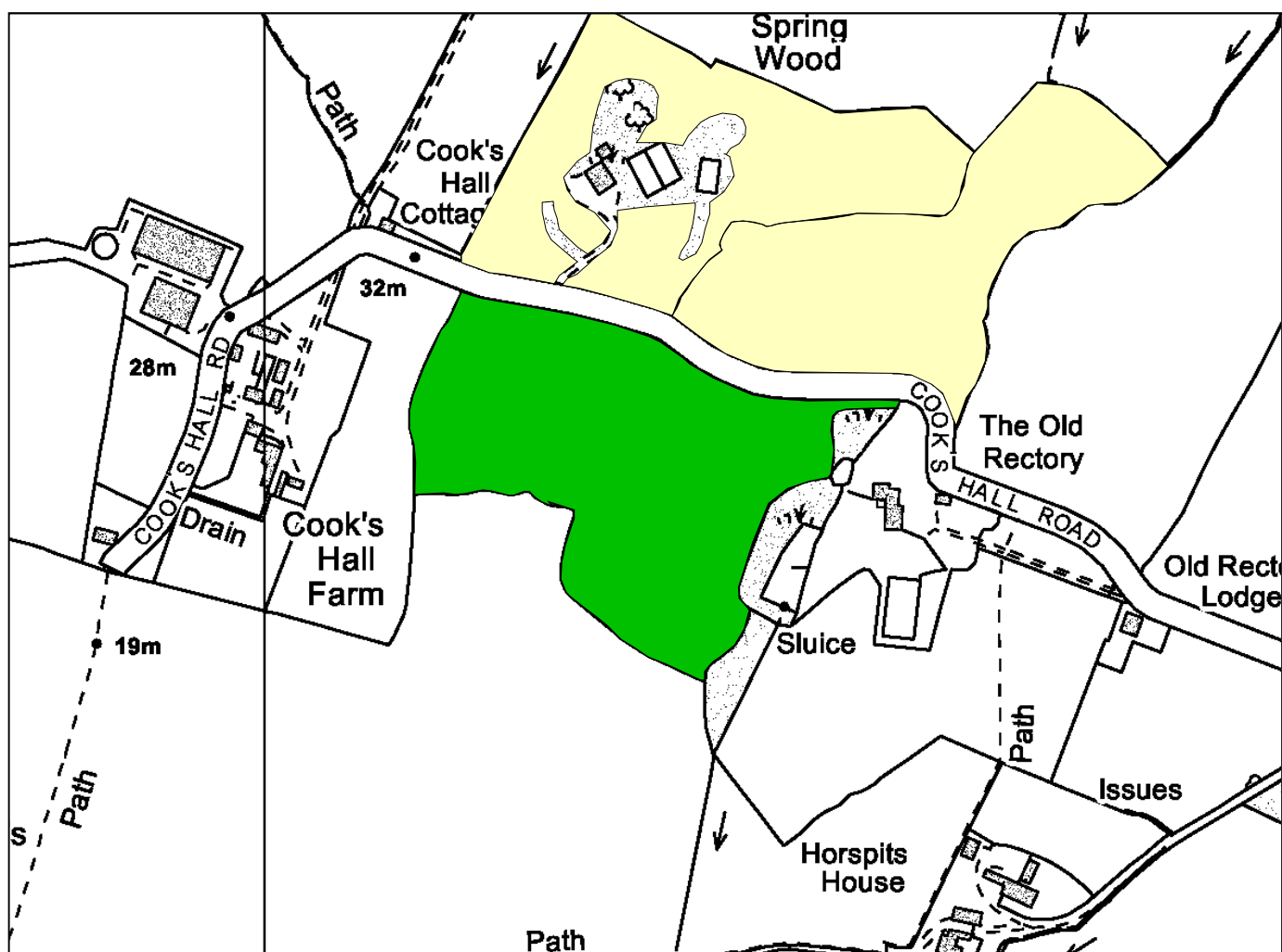
A resumption of small scale coppicing and selective felling in cluttered areas of younger oak and birch would benefit the overall structure and allow light into the ground layer.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)

Co71 Grove Wood, West Bergholt (3.1 ha) TL 952275



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This wood on a gentle south-facing slope is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), with Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) scattered throughout. Coppiced Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) forms a patchy shrub canopy, alongside Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is dominant within the ground layer throughout the majority of this ancient woodland, being replaced later in the season by local Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) is also present, being mostly confined to the northeast corner of the wood.

Ownership and Access

The site 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:

This woodland appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, containing some large oak standards and a small number of indicator plants.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

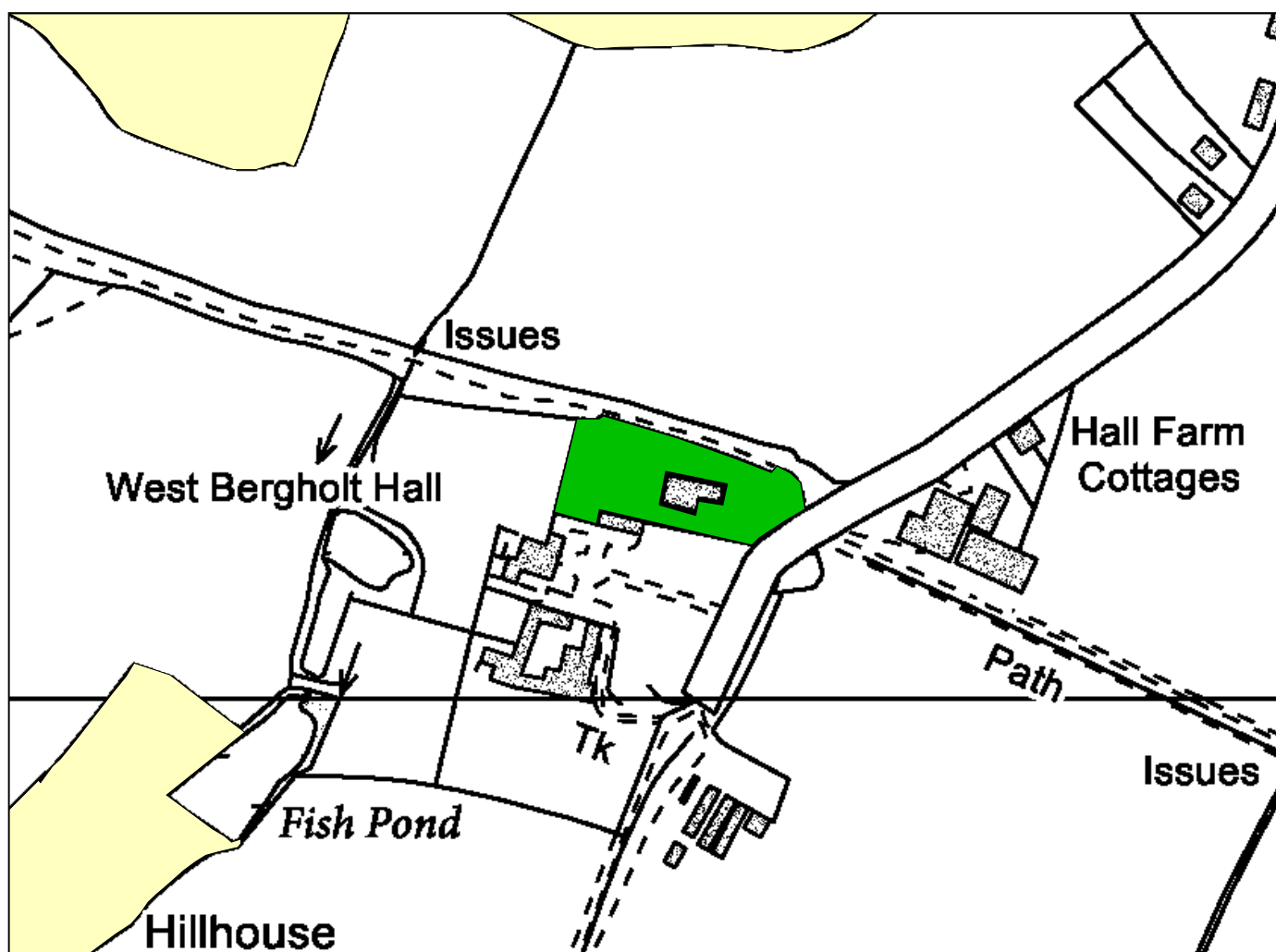
Management Issues

The woodland appears to be well-managed, falling within the grounds of the adjacent property. Small scale tree works is maintaining an open canopy which includes some small glades, although some of these have been planted with young conifers.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (minor reduction)



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This small churchyard, though kept closely mown, contains areas of relict unimproved grass where species of interest survive. Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) is found in a localised area to the north of the church, with Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) nearby. Shining Crane's-bill (*Geranium lucidum*) is found near tombs and marginal bank habitat. During late summer, a number of waxcap mushrooms (*Hygrocybe* sp.) are found within the short grass to the south-east of the church, these being indicative of unimproved free-draining turf.

Ownership and Access

The churchyard is open to the public.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

None

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

Rationale:

As with many churchyards, this site represents a small area of relatively unimproved grassland, although the flora is relatively species-poor. The grassland is included under HC11 as the species do not conform to the NVC MG5 community, as required for Lowland Meadows.

Condition Statement:

Unfavourable

Management Issues

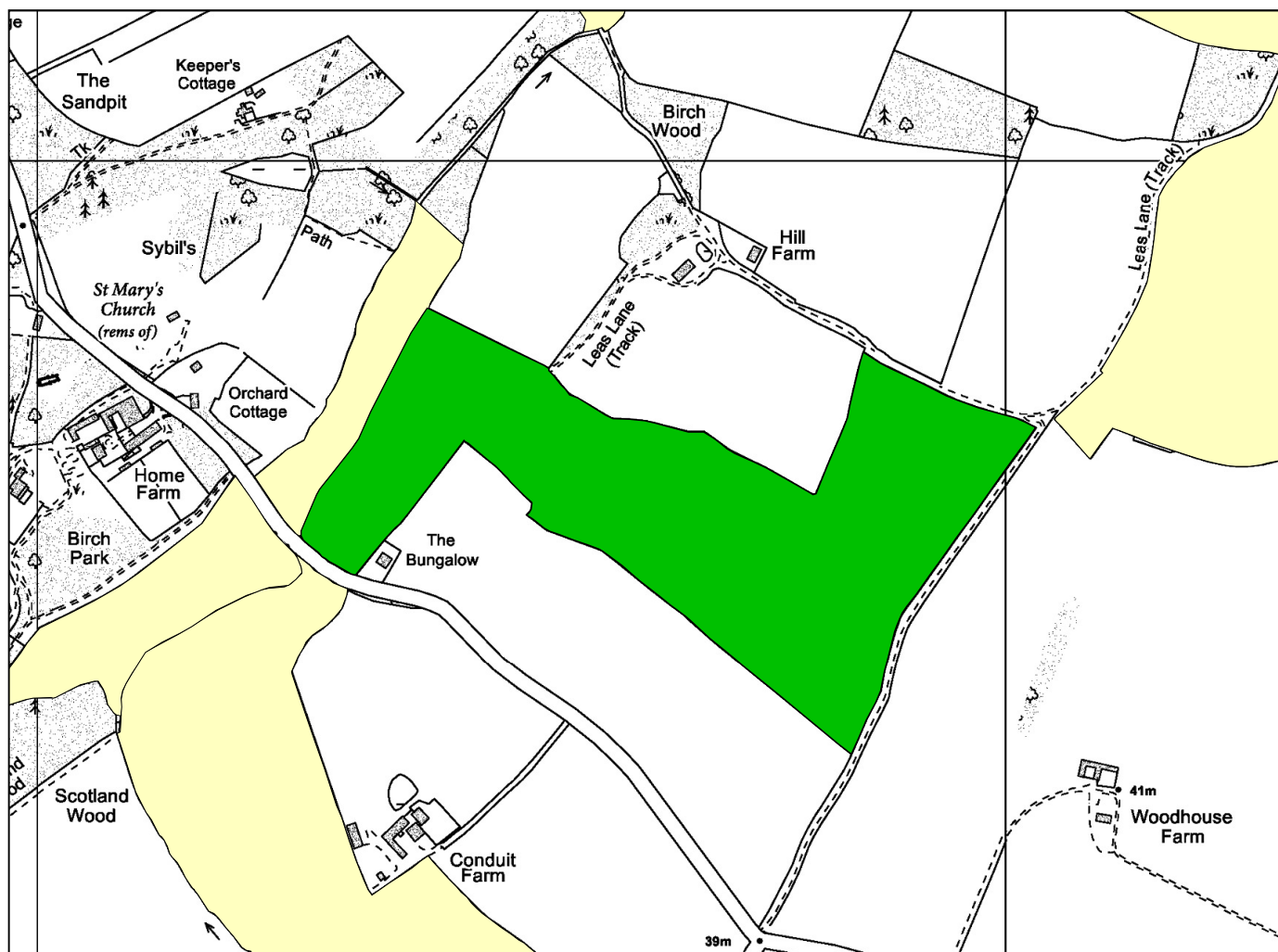
Areas of the churchyard appear to be suffering from nutrient enrichment, resulting in the flora associated with older unimproved grassland being out-competed. Sympathetic management including more frequent cutting, with the arisings removed, would encourage a finer and more diverse sward.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (minor reduction)

Co74 Cooks Wood, Birch (13.2 ha) TL 956206



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This ancient wood is composed of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards, Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees from coppice and Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) over Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The ground flora displays a range of woodland species, including Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), with damper areas supporting Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) and Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*). Species indicative of freely draining acidic soils are also present in drier areas, including Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

An area of sloping woodland adjacent to Coppins Meadow appears to be more recent woodland that comprises mainly elm (*Ulmus* sp.), Hazel coppice, Pedunculate Oak standards, Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), birch (*Betula* sp.) and willow (*Salix* sp.). The ground flora is diverse across both dry upper slopes and damp lower ground, with notable species on the upper slopes including Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*), Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). A number of wet flushes and drains promote a marshy flora which includes Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), an Essex Red Data List species, as well as Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Moschatel.

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership. A public right of way runs within the western woodland margins alongside Coppins Meadow, and skirts the north-eastern margins of Cook's Wood.

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 appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and supports ancient woodland indicator plants. The western compartment adjacent to Coppin's Meadow is not certainly ancient, but has been included as an addition to Cook's Wood for its significant diverse ground flora and structure. Although an ERDL species, the Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage population is not sufficiently significant to satisfy the SC1 criteria.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; neglected coppice

Management Issues

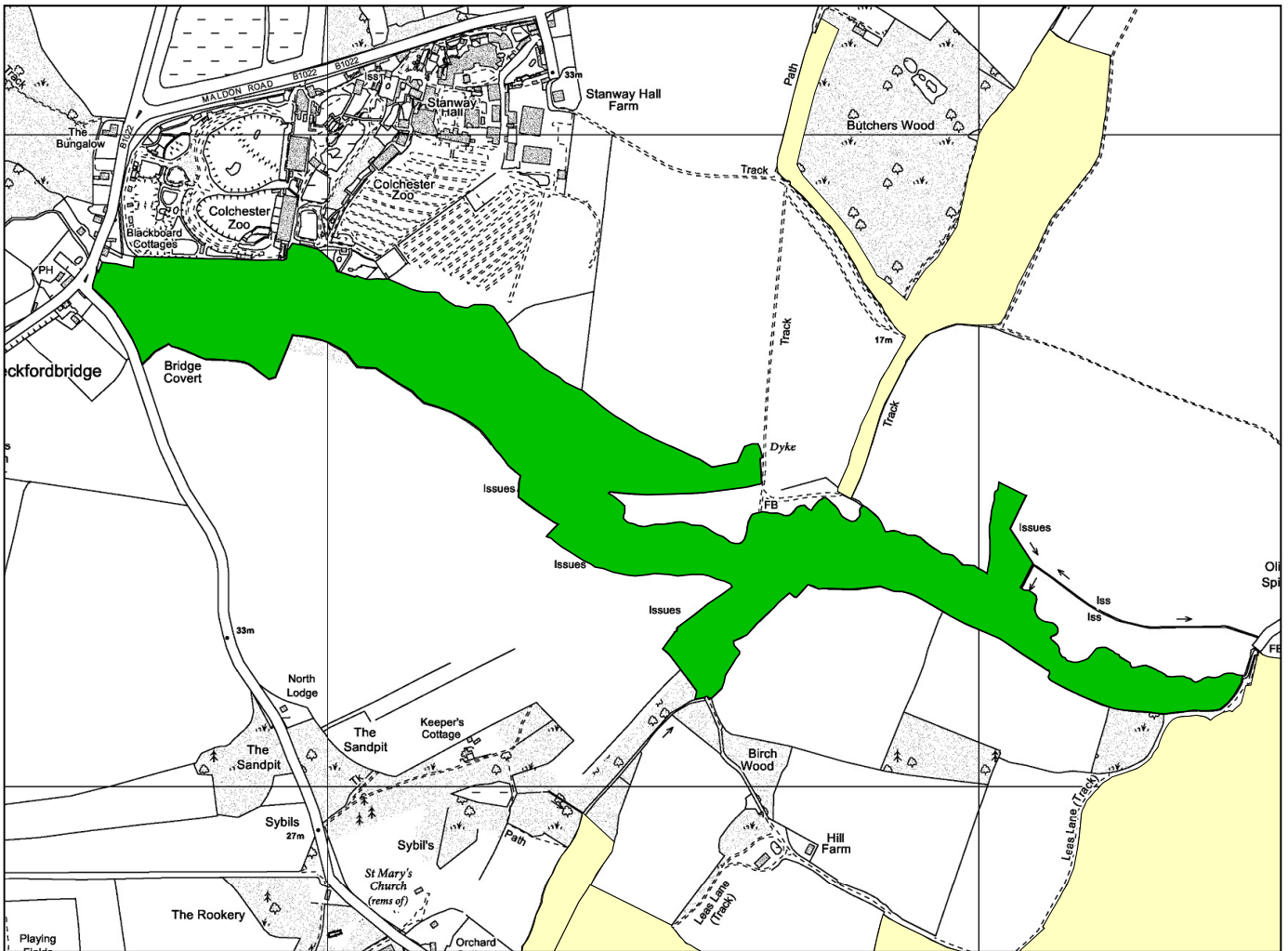
Overall, the current management appears to be maintaining a remarkably diverse flora within this varied woodland site. Selective removal of Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) to the northwest of the site is important before these invasive species become further established. Thinning out the conifers in the northwest would allow the neighbouring oaks to become better established, although some could remain to benefit associated birds such as Goldcrest and Coal Tit.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co75 Ram Plantation, Birch (25.3 ha) TL 955214



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This site includes a series of willow plantations and native wet woodland, comprising a mosaic of semi-natural and planted woodlands over a grassy and marshy ground cover, forming a valuable part of the Roman River Valley wildlife corridor. The sloping banks to the west of Ram Plantation are owned by Colchester Zoo and have been subject to various enhancement works associated with the creation of a new wildlife area, which includes ponds, marshy areas and board walks.

Ram Plantation and Willow Carr

South of the Roman River and west of Ram Plantation lies a large willow carr plantation with Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) and willowherbs (*Epilobium* spp.) dominating much of the ground cover. Some large Alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) line sections of the riverbank along with Crack Willows (*Salix fragilis*). Small Teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*) is locally abundant along the southern margins of the plantation.

Ram Plantation itself includes Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Pedunculate Oak standards, which make way for large Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) which, in turn, are replaced by Alders along the lower slopes. The ground flora is generally sparse and is typified by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) on higher ground and occasional Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage amongst the Alders.

A small area of older elm (*Ulmus* sp.), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) woodland towards Heckfordbridge supports Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) along a small tributary.

Cansdale's Garden and Aldercar

This area of sloping wet woodland contains large areas of Alder carr and a diverse flora associated with the combination of marshy and dry woodland habitats. The upper slopes support a canopy of Pedunculate Oak, Hazel, Ash and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) with Dog's Mercury and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) being dominant amongst the ground flora, which also includes Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*). On lower ground, the wet flushes and damp ground beneath the Alder and willow canopy support a range of flowering plants including Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and Small Teasel with Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage and Dog's Mercury being locally dominant. There are also localised stands of pond-sedge (*Carex* sp.) amongst Yellow-flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*).

Eastern Woods

Much of this area of wet woodland comprises willow and poplar plantation with extensive stands of sedges and tall herbs dominating the ground flora, including pond-sedges (*Carex* spp.), willowherbs, Common Nettle, Bramble, Meadowsweet, Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) and Small Teasel. Amongst the more open areas the plants of interest include Moschatel, Wood Anemone, Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) and Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*). Along the northern slopes there are marginal patches of dense and scrubby woodland comprising Pedunculate Oak, Hazel coppice, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), birch (*Betula* sp.) and Field Maple. To the north of the Roman River is a small but extraordinary piece of Alderwood, which is relatively dry on its lower slopes but has developed a large, very wet and presumably spring-fed sedgebed in the upper, northern section.

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership. There is no public access to the site with the exception of a footpath that crosses the Roman River and follows to the west of Cansdale's Garden aldercar.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Wet Woodland

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The woodland does not appear on the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Essex and most is relatively recent, but the locally rich ground flora and presence of large Alder coppice stools would strongly suggest that Aldercar itself is at least in part ancient. The Alder and willow carr represent wet woodland which satisfies the HC3 criteria. The criteria SC1 is appropriate due to the presence of significant populations of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage and Small Teasel, both Essex Red Data List species.

Condition Statement:

Favourable

Management Issues

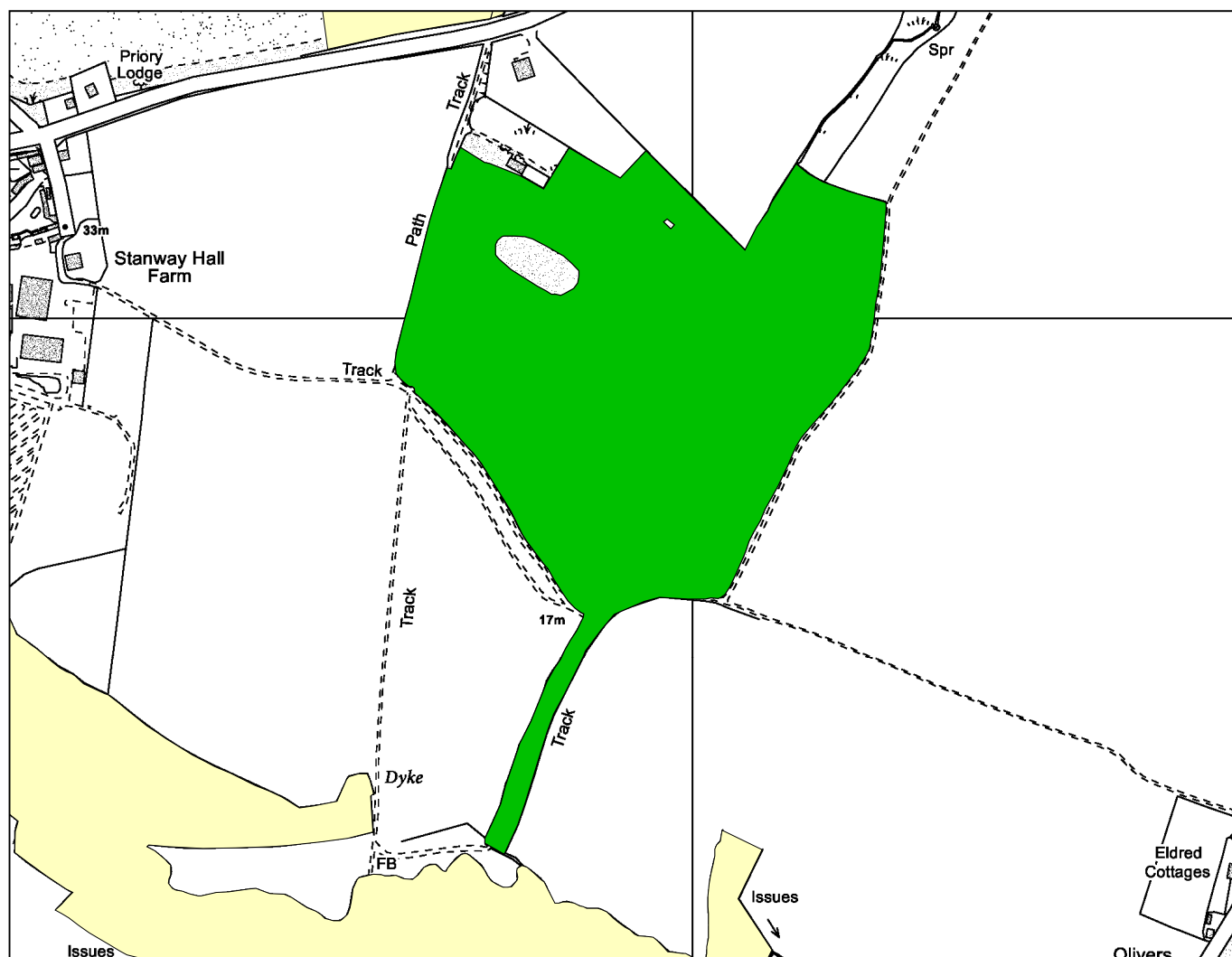
The current management regime, which appears to be concentrated on periodic willow harvesting and planting, appears to be maintaining the botanical interest within the site. Some targeted removal of Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) within Ram Plantation would prevent its further spread.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co76 Oliver's Thicks /Butcher's Wood, Stanway (8.2 ha) TL 959218



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Oliver's Thicks lies on sloping ground and ranges from freely draining Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) wood to the north, down to old, coppiced Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) on wetter ground close to the stream and around spring lines. A significant central portion is dominated by large Alder coppice with lush underlying marshy vegetation including Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and three Essex Red Data List species: Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*) and Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*).

Other canopy trees include some Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) in the understorey. The varied ground flora includes Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) and abundant Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*) and locally dominant Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) are present within freely draining areas of birch woodland.

Butcher's Wood has been extensively cleared and replanted, leaving only a narrow belt of remaining ancient wood along its western and southern boundaries. Here, the canopy cover includes some very large coppice stools of Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) with standards of Pedunculate Oak, Silver Birch and Ash. Holly and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) are found in the understorey and the ground flora is dominated by Bluebells. The central portion of Butcher's Wood represents a valuable addition to the adjacent more established woodland compartments, containing a mosaic of young plantation woodland, extensive Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) thickets and open

grassland glades and rides supporting a free-draining acidic turf that includes species such as Sheep's-sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*).

This site also includes a short section of green lane, providing a habitat link to the extensive woodlands along the Roman River to the south. The tall hedges include Alder and willows (*Salix* spp.) along with Hawthorn, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

Ownership and Access

The site is in private ownership and public access is restricted to public footpaths running alongside all of the site's boundaries, except the northern one.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Wet Woodland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC3 – Other Priority Habitat Woodland Types on Non-ancient Sites

HC29 – Habitat Extension Mosaic

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

This majority of this woodland appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and supports several ancient woodland indicator plants. Non-ancient portions of the woodland satisfy HC2 criteria as Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance for England. The site includes wet woodland, a Priority Habitat Woodland Type. The grassland and scrub components within the central portions of Butcher's Wood provide an extension in habitat to the established neighbouring woodland compartments. The criteria SC1 is included due to the large populations of Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage, Soft Shield-fern and Lady-fern.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in established areas; unfavourable in recent plantation areas

Management Issues

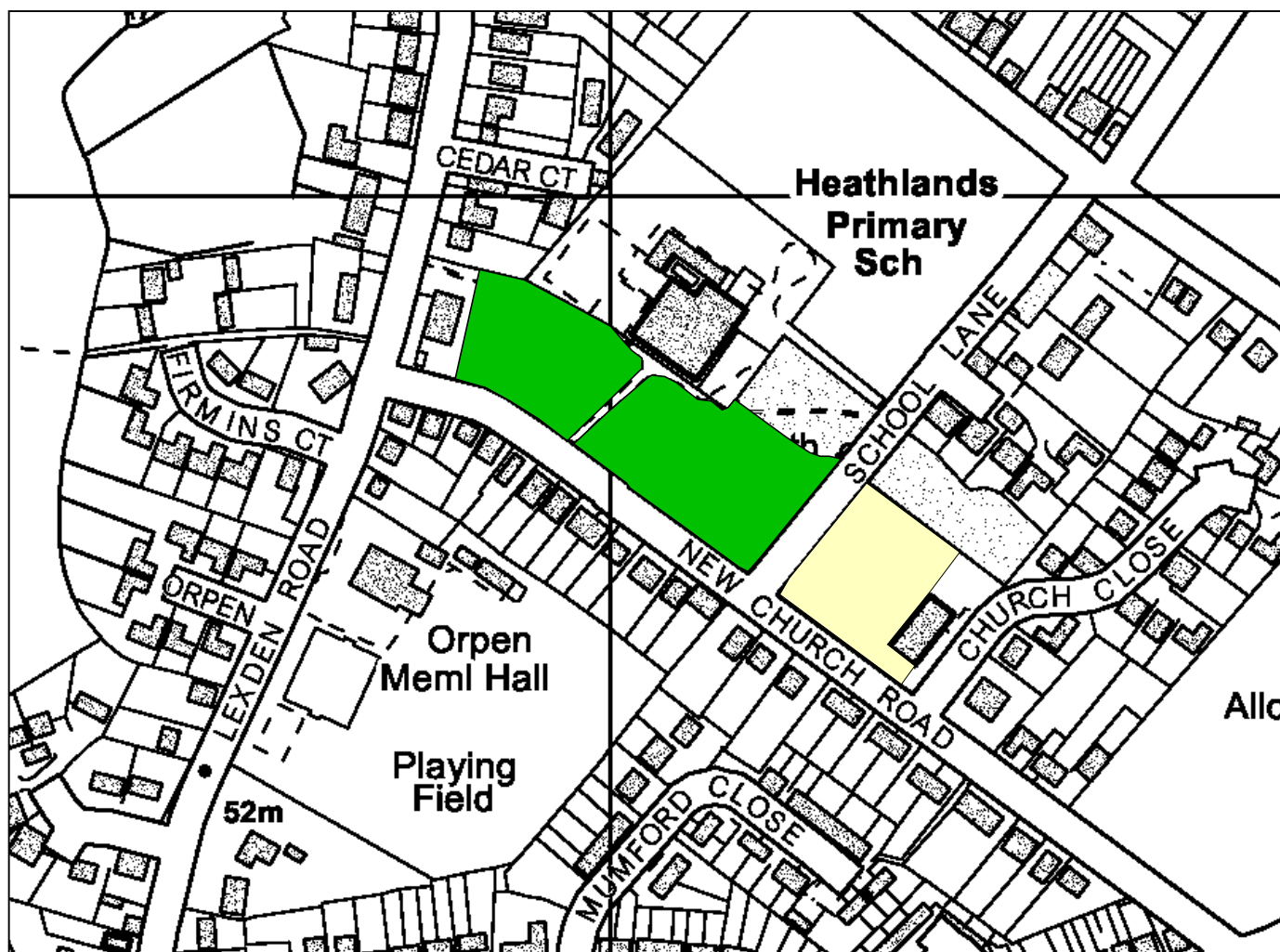
The current management regime for Oliver's Thicks appears to be maintaining the site's ecological interest and non-intervention would be appropriate within the sensitive marshy areas of Aldercar. Butcher's Wood would benefit from the removal of the central conifer plantation and maintenance of open mosaic of grassland, scrub and trees.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (large addition)

Co77 West Bergholt Heath (0.9 ha) TL 961278



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This small species-rich and diverse heath is a relic of Bergholt Heath which once covered most of the area of the village, but has now been replaced by housing. The site has small areas dominated by Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) with other notable indicator species of acid grassland/heathland including Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), an Essex Red Data List species, and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Damper grassland found towards the east of the site has an area dominated by taller tussocks of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), an increasingly unusual species in Essex. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) form two central islands that are left uncut, and also form part of the marginal scrub cover alongside Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). Some large Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*) overhang the heath to the south and east.

Ownership and Access

The site, lying south of West Bergholt Primary School, is a public open space believed to be owned and managed by the local council.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Lowland Heathland

Selection criteria:

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland
SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The site supports acid grassland and heathland consistent with the corresponding Habitats of Principal Importance in England. Heathland is now an increasingly rare Essex habitat and West Bergholt Heath is one of only four non-Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) areas in Colchester Borough recorded in the Natural England Lowland Heathland Inventory. The presence of a significant population Harebell justifies the inclusion of SC1.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

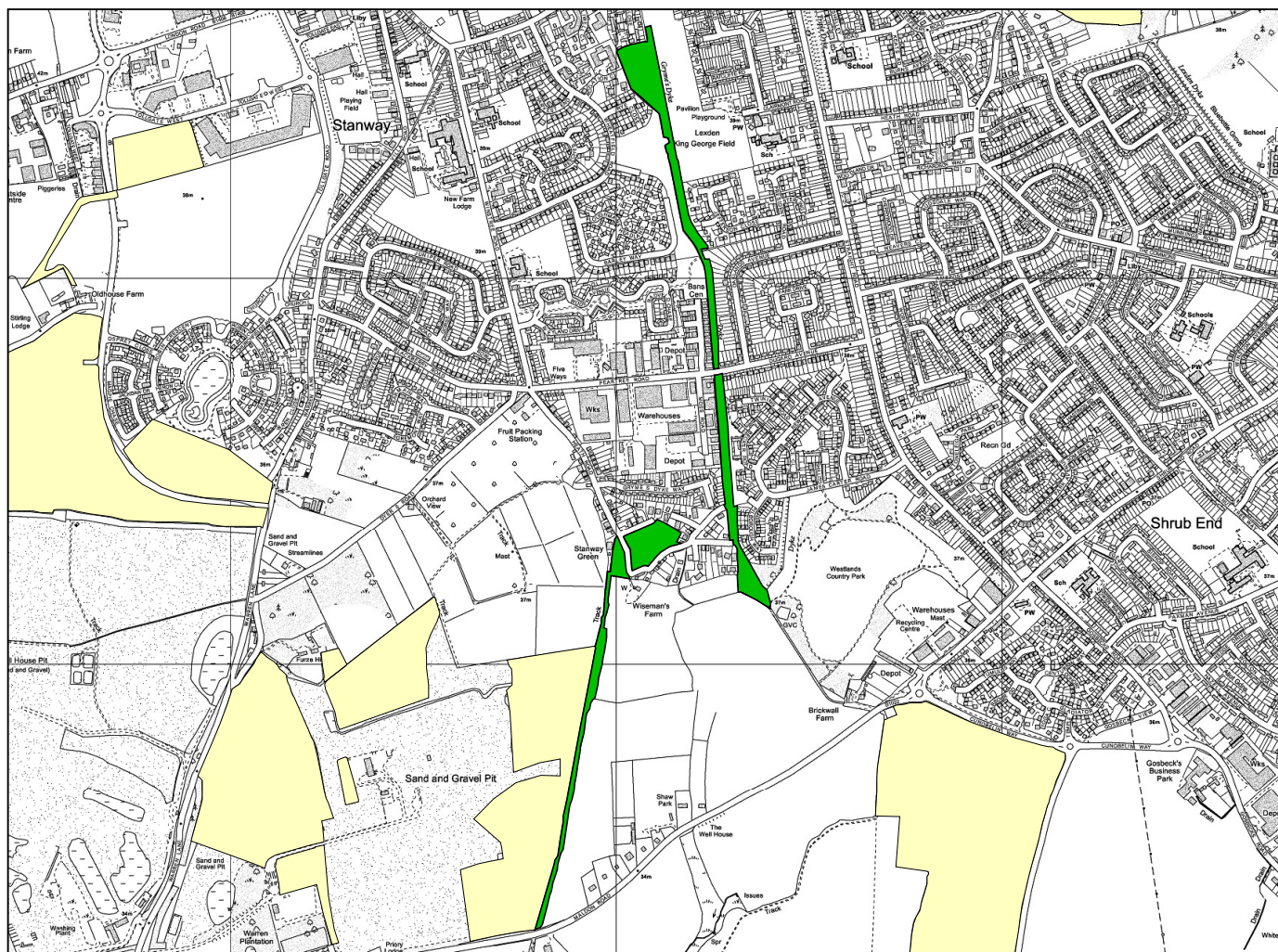
Management issues include the spread of scrub and trees from the margins of the site and the slow process of soil enrichment brought about by leaf litter accumulation and dog fouling. Cuttings should be collected and removed from the site to avoid further enrichment and encourage the sensitive heathland flora.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (reduced)

Co78 Gryme's Dyke, Colchester (7.1 ha) TL 960233



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This site comprises the wooded earthworks of Gryme's Dyke plus Stanway Green and, at the Dyke's northern end, an area of scrub. The linear embankment is largely dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), including some large veteran pollards, alongside Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), and an understorey of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

The ground flora includes locally abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), along with Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). Relict areas of open, sandy ground support species characteristic of acid grassland such as Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and Sticky Groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*); Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) has also been recorded.

There is invertebrate interest associated with both the dead wood and dry sandy ground along the dyke, with the nationally rare (RDBK) digger wasp *Stigmus pendulus* at one of its few Essex locations. Other species of interest that have been previously recorded include the Nationally Scarce (Nb) digger wasp *Ectemnius sexinctus* and the Scarce (Na) mining bee *Andrena labiata*.

Stanway Green is a small remnant of largely unimproved free-draining grassland, comprising Common Bent, Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Cat's-ear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Sheep's Sorrel and Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*), with Sticky Mouse-ear (*Cerastium glomeratum*), Pignut, Parsley-piert (*Aphanes arvensis* agg.), Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) and Blinks (*Montia fontana*) also being previously recorded. A Daubenton's bat maternity roost has been recorded within a large oak adjacent to Stanway Green.

Ownership and Access

The site is believed to be owned and managed by Colchester Borough Council, and has public access throughout along a footpath and cycle route that spans the entire length of Gryme's Dyke.

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

HC30 – Wildlife Corridors

SC19 – Important Invertebrate Assemblages

Rationale:

Extending almost three kilometres in length, Gryme's dyke represents an important wildlife corridor through Western Colchester. The structure and flora suggest that this is at least in part derived from an ancient woodland site, although some portions of semi-mature oak are clearly of younger age matching the criteria HC2. It has previously supported a number of rare invertebrates and habitat features likely to favour such species are still present, hence the inclusion of SC19.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in parts; grassland element declining

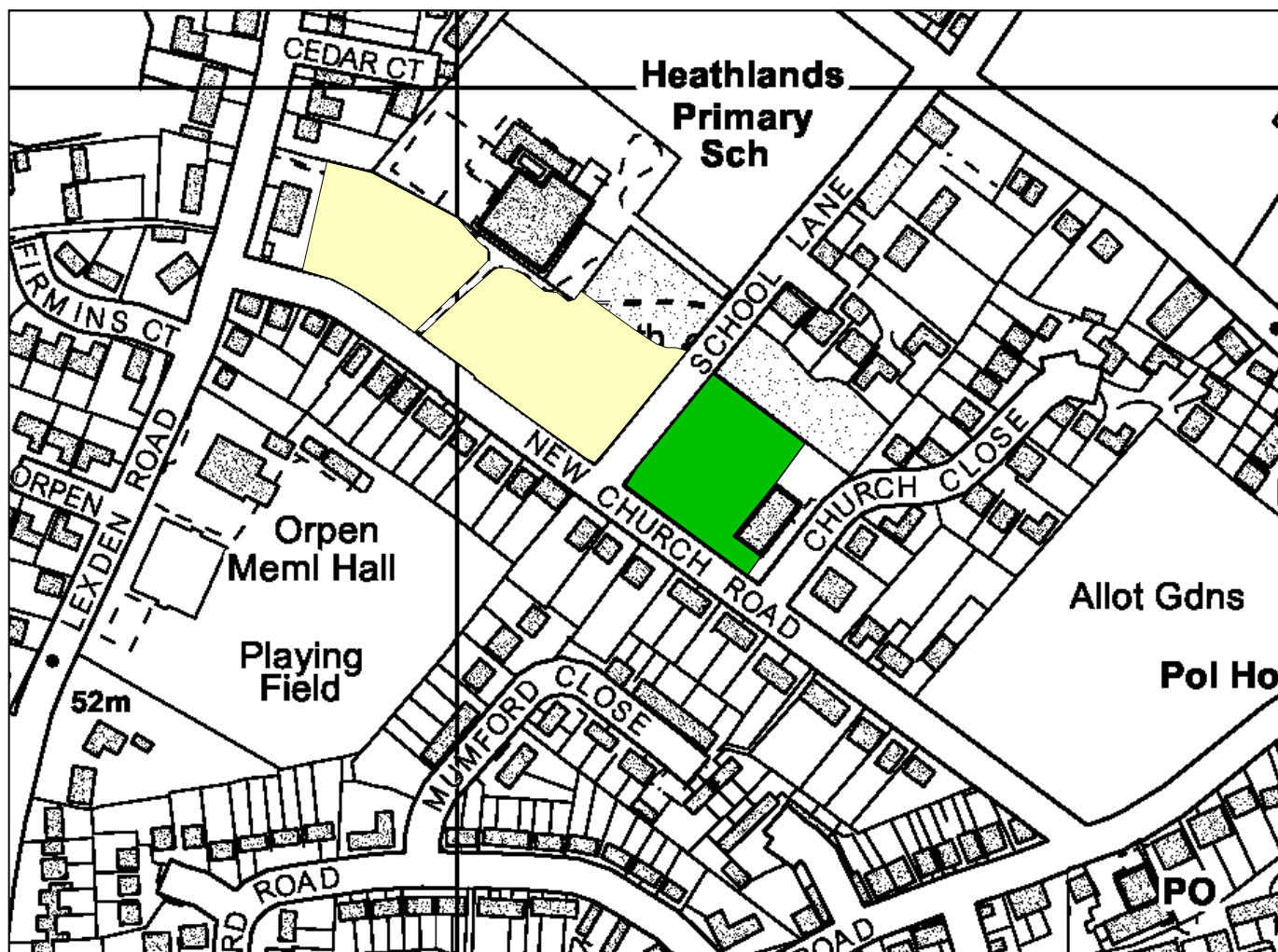
Management Issues

A lack of management in recent years has seen much of the open acid grassland being overcome by dense scrub. Stanway Green, conversely, appears to be over-managed, exhibiting a short sward more akin to regularly mown amenity grassland. A more sensitive management regime guided by a Management Plan would benefit the acid grassland flora.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)



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This small churchyard exhibits acid grassland, with a good mix of species, and heathland and it complements the adjacent West Bergholt Heath, of which it was once a part.

Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) are prominent in the sward with Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*) and Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acris*).

A patch of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is becoming established within the western corner, while Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), an Essex Red Data List species, and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) grow in the more heath-like central area.

To the east of the site, a taller, coarser grassland sward is becoming established featuring Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) is frequent within this area of grassland early in the growing season.

Ownership and Access

The churchyard, owned and managed by the Church of England, is open to the public.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC11 – Other Neutral Grasslands

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The site supports small areas of acid grassland and relict heathland with the associated specialised plant assemblages, which satisfy the corresponding Habitats of Principal Importance in England. The south-eastern grassland portion is more akin to semi-improved neutral grassland and is included under HC11. The presence of a well-established population of Harebell, suggests that criteria SC1 is appropriate.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

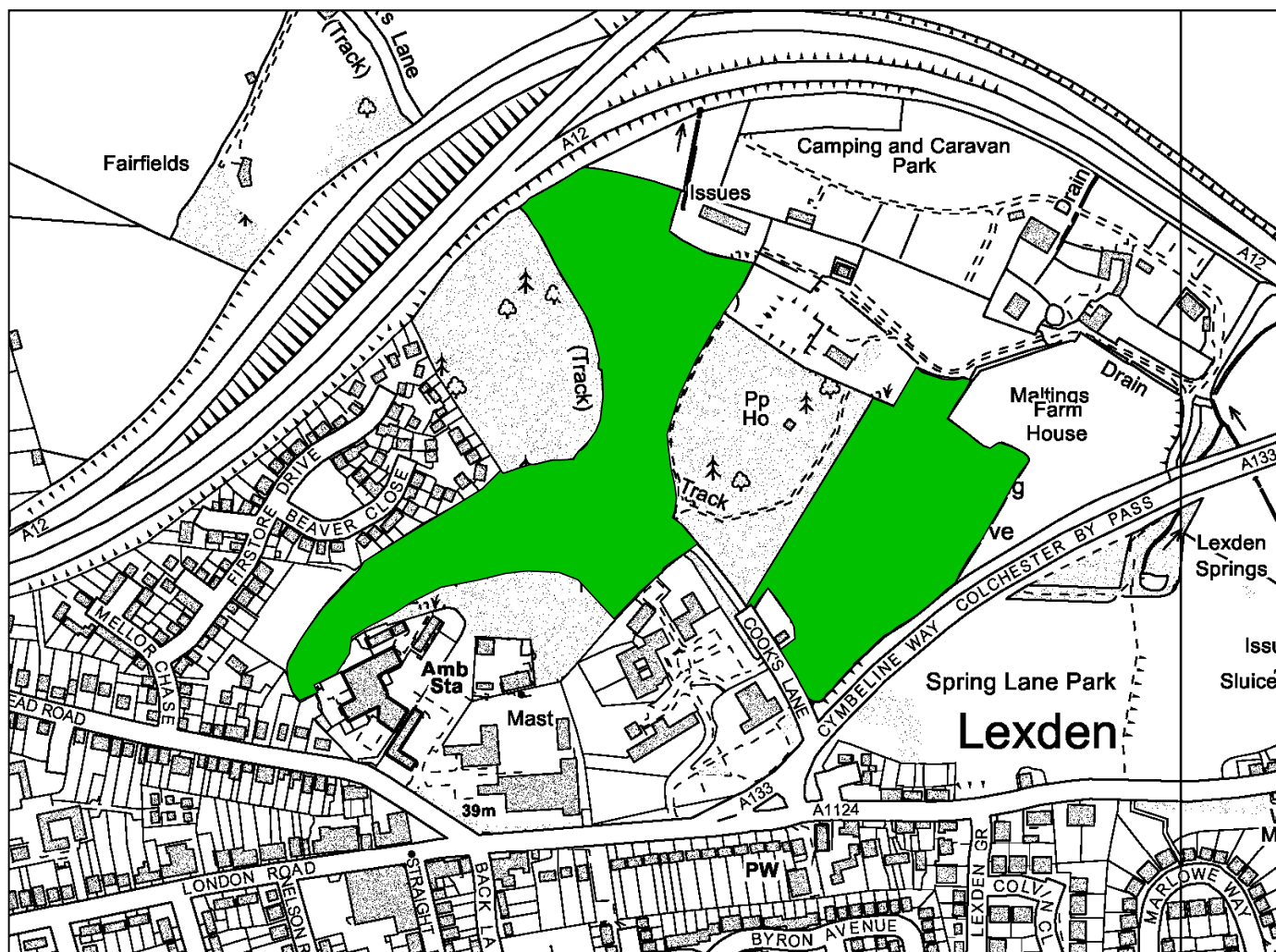
Certain areas, particularly close to the church, are becoming increasingly dominated by coarse grass threatening the sensitive acid grassland flora. Sympathetic management tailored to the acid grassland/heathland community would involve more regular cutting and the removal of arisings. The use of brush cutters instead of mowers would help to avoid impacts on the large anthills present.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (minor reduction)

Co82 Cook's Lane, Lexden (7.5 ha) TL 965253



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This site comprises a mosaic of acidic grassland and broadleaved wood, and includes part of the Essex Wildlife Trust's Lexden Gathering Grounds nature reserve.

The grassland is characterised by Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). Herbs typical of dry acid grassland include Whitlow-grass (*Erophila verna*), Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*). The north-eastern portion of Lexden Gathering Grounds supports a number of waxcap mushrooms (*Hygrocybe* sp.) which require unimproved free-draining turf. Within the grassland there are groups of maturing, self-sown Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*). Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) is encroaching around the grassland margins and there is a small stand of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) within lower lying damp ground. Minotaur Beetle (*Typhaeus typhoeus*), an uncommon species in Essex, has also been seen here.

The western woodland area includes some large, overgrown Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) coppice stools and standards of Pedunculate Oak alongside Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and localised Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). The understorey includes much Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), young Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). The flora includes locally abundant Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), along with Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*) and Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*).

Ownership and Access

The site to the east of Cooks Lane is owned by Anglian Water Services and managed by Essex Wildlife Trust. Cooks Lane is a public footpath and there is wider public access via permissive paths.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland

Rationale:

This woodland appears to be at least in part ancient, based on the presence of some large standards and associated ground flora, although parts of the woodland are more recent satisfying the HC2 criteria for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. Lexden Gathering Grounds contains grassland that satisfies the description of the Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Habitats of Principal Importance in England.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, declining

Management Issues

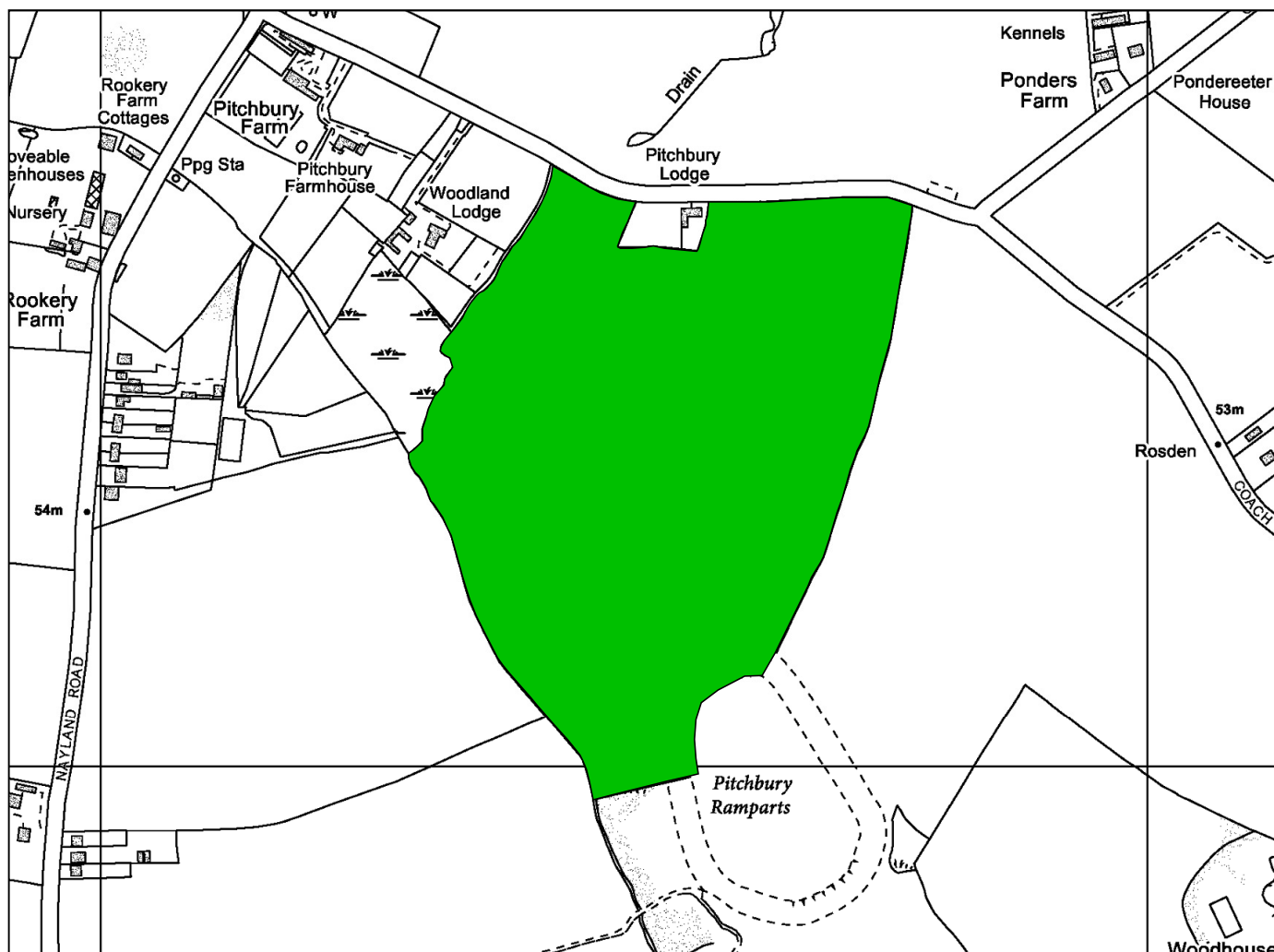
The spread of scrub within the grassland areas should be controlled through targeted scrub clearance, rather than large-scale flailing. Woodland management should aim to remove Sycamore as well as Scots Pines although a small number of the latter could be retained having some value for bird species. Some selective felling would help diversify the age structure of the woodland and scrub and reinstate some open habitats.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991 (in part)

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)

Co83 Pitchbury Wood, Great Horkesley (18.2ha) TL 966293



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Pitchbury Wood is an ancient woodland, the main central core of which has been largely replanted, historically with conifers and in turn replaced by young plantations of Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). The peripheral areas are in marked contrast to the younger plantation, retaining large Pedunculate Oak and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) standards over Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, giving way to old Sweet Chestnut coppice with birch standards towards the south of the site.

The ground flora is typified by Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) within free-draining areas, although Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) dominates large portions of the ground cover. However, the woodland retains a diverse ancient ground flora that is best established within the recent planted woodland, within small glades, narrow rides and wet flushes. These diverse areas include locally abundant Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) alongside Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*) and Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*).

The partial remains of a Neolithic double bank and ditch earthwork, covered with a carpet of Bluebells, survives on the southern edge of the wood beneath some old oak and Sweet Chestnut coppice. Wet Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) wood exists within a small compartment on the lower slopes of the eastern boundary, where old Alder coppice stands over a localised area of marshy vegetation that includes Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Yellow Pimpernel, Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) and the Essex Red Data List species Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*).

Ownership and Access

The site 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:

This woodland appears on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, and this status is supported by the presence of many ancient woodland indicator plants that persist even within areas that have been replanted first with conifers, then with broad-leaved species.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, unmanaged

Management Issues

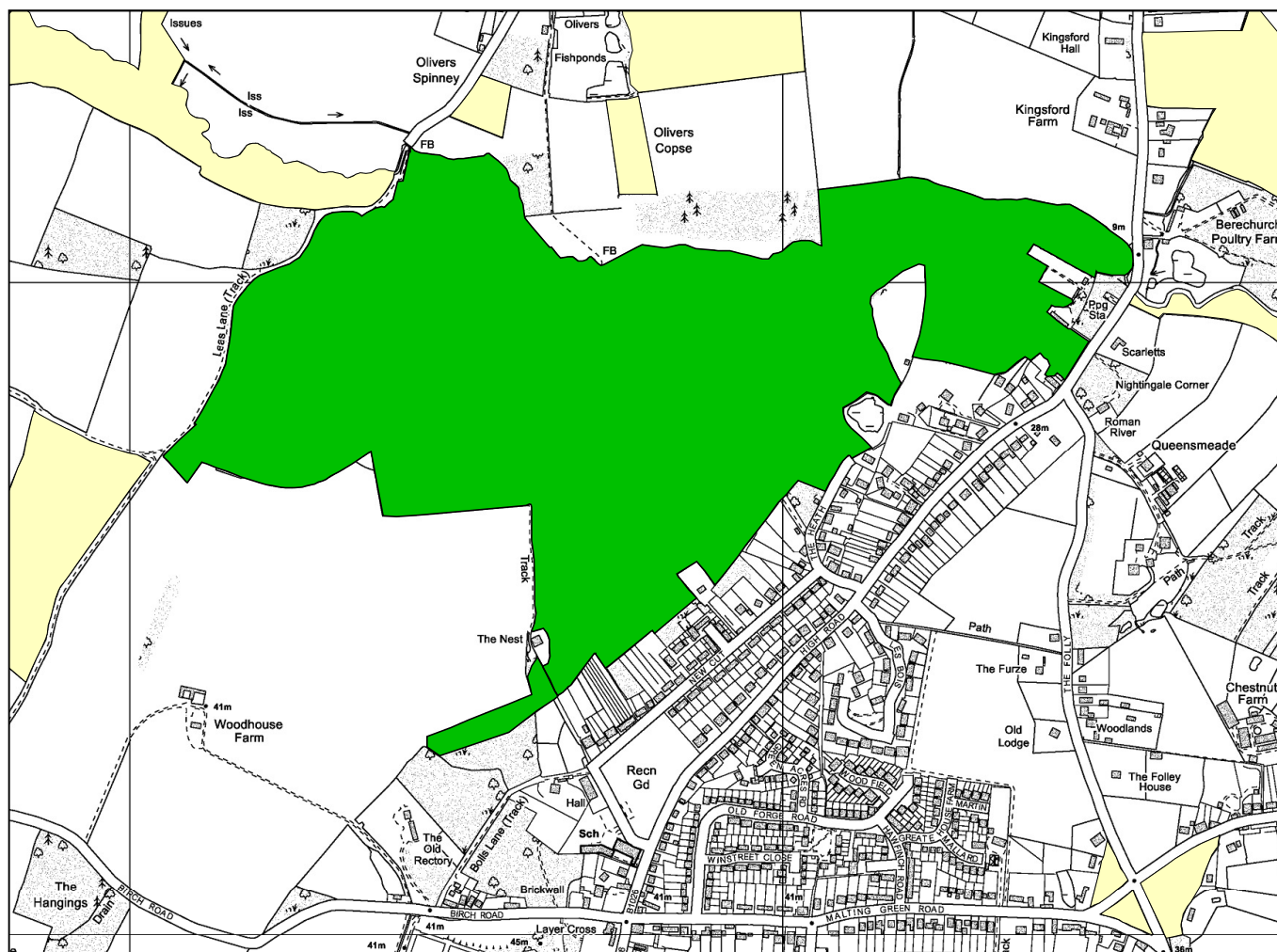
The current low-input management appears to be maintaining a notably rich ground flora. Coppicing or thinning in future years will retain the diverse glades and rides within the closely planted birch and Sweet Chestnut plantation. A resumption of small scale coppicing within the remaining areas of old coppice would be beneficial. A small localised patch of Parrot's feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), an invasive, non-native aquatic plant, occurs to the north of the Neolithic double bank within a low muddy area, and this should be controlled before it spreads further.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (no change)

Co85 Chest Wood and Roman River Complex, Layer de la Haye (56.3ha) TL 967208



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This site includes the Essex Wildlife Trust's Roman River Valley Reserve, Chest Wood, Heather Fields, Charity Wood and Needles Eye Wood, comprising ancient woodland, secondary woodland, plantations, the river and a fen-like marsh, with an additional area of secondary woodland west of High Road.

Roman River Valley Reserve

The Roman River Valley Reserve is a botanically and structurally diverse woodland complex supporting a large range of ancient woodland indicators including Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Three-nerved Sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Red Currant (*Ribes rubrum*). The canopy and understorey is varied between different woodland compartments, but comprises mainly Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), birch (*Betula* sp.) and Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) within the understorey.

The eastern section contains a large marsh and sedge beds overplanted with Cricket-bat Willows (*Salix alba* var. *caerulea*), including stands of pond sedge (*Carex* sp.) as well as Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), Ragged-Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*), Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) and Small Teasel (*Dipsacus pilosus*).

The Roman River corridor supports a diverse range of wildlife, including rare invertebrate species associated with the freshwater habitat. The Roman River is one of only two sites in Essex for the Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*), an Essex Red Data List (ERDL) Species.

Chest Wood

This large ancient wood comprises mainly Sweet Chestnut, including recent coppice, Pedunculate Oak and dense birch over a typical light-soil ground flora dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The understorey includes Hazel, Field Maple and Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) with Blackthorn, Hawthorn and rose (*Rosa* sp.). Chest Wood exhibits a good diversity in structure and habitat types, and supports a correspondingly large woodland flora. The dry and well-drained upper slopes contain Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Climbing Corydalis, Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), whilst damp rides and wet flushes include Ragged Robin, Yellow Pimpernel, Common Marsh-bedstraw and Skullcap. Along with Bluebell, Wood Sorrel and Wood Anemone, the ground flora also includes Wood Spurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and Cyperus Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*).

Heather Fields

This area comprises secondary and mixed planted woodland, within which the remaining density of conifers, such as Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) varies considerably. The dominant broadleaved species are Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Sweet Chestnut and Pedunculate Oak, with Hazel coppice, Blackthorn and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) amongst the understorey. The ground flora includes, Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*), Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Heath Speedwell and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*). A small patch of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) survives amongst encroaching Bramble scrub, which is heavily shaded by overhanging oaks. Skullcap and Common Marsh-bedstraw grow within a shallow damp depression inside the western boundary with Chest Wood.

Charity Wood

Charity Wood in part comprises ancient Sweet Chestnut and Pedunculate Oak woodland, including some large standards, but also includes areas of spindly birch wood with Hazel and a dense Bramble/Elder understorey, as well as remnant patches of conifers. The ground flora is at its most diverse on the lower slopes by the stream and includes Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Wood Anemone, Wood-sedge, Remote Sedge, Moschatel and Common Cow Wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*), an ERDL species. Also recorded are Hairy Wood-rush (*Luzula pilosa*), Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*) and Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*). There is a rich fern assemblage, with Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), Broad Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and Narrow Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*) being recorded alongside the banks of the small southern tributary of the Roman River.

More recent woodland lies on the southern stream-valley side, opposite the ancient wood to the north. It comprises a high forest structure of Pedunculate Oak, Sweet Chestnut and Silver Birch with streamside Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Here the ground flora is largely dominated by Bracken and Bramble but includes Creeping Jenny, Wood Speedwell, Yellow Archangel and Bluebell.

Rifle Ranges Woodland

This recent woodland, situated west of the rifle ranges and High Road, provides a valuable extension to the Roman River woodland complex, containing a variety of woody and herb species and exhibiting the undulating topography which reflects its former use for gravel workings. Hornbeam, Sweet Chestnut, oak, Ash and birch are present within the canopy and Hawthorn, Bramble, Gorse and Blackthorn take over in areas of dense scrub. The upper slopes are sandy, dry and well-drained, being covered in Sheep's Sorrel along with Heath Speedwell, Wood Sage and Foxglove. Notable species are a single shrub of Heather and Wood Small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*). The vegetation along the damper lower slopes is more lush, comprising Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Dog's Mercury, Bluebell, Three-nerved Sandwort and Scaly Male-fern (*Dryopteris affinis*). A small area of Aldercar to the north along the banks of the river contains Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage. A marginal piece of grassland included within this Local Wildlife Site, west of the secondary woodland, shows a good plant assemblage along its lower slopes. Creeping Jenny, Round-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia spuria*), Heath Speedwell, Trailing St John's-wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) are all present and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) persists along the meadow margins.

Ownership and Access

The majority of the site is in private ownership, although Essex Wildlife Trust manages part. There is public access throughout much of the woodland complex via public footpaths and associated permissive routes.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
Lowland Fens

Selection criteria:

HC1 – Ancient Woodland Sites
HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites
HC14 – Lowland Fen Vegetation
SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:

The woodland complex contains both ancient (Chest and Needles Eye woods) and more recent woodland compartments with a corresponding diverse flora and structure matching the description of the Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Habitat of Principal Importance in England. The Roman River Reserve includes damp sedge bed vegetation that corresponds to the Lowland Fens Habitat of Principal Importance in England. The site supports good populations of several Essex Red Data List plants, including Devil's-bit Scabious, Small Teasel, Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage and the ferns: Soft Shield-fern, Lady-fern, Narrow Buckler-fern and Scaly Male-fern.

Condition Statement:

Favourable; declining in places

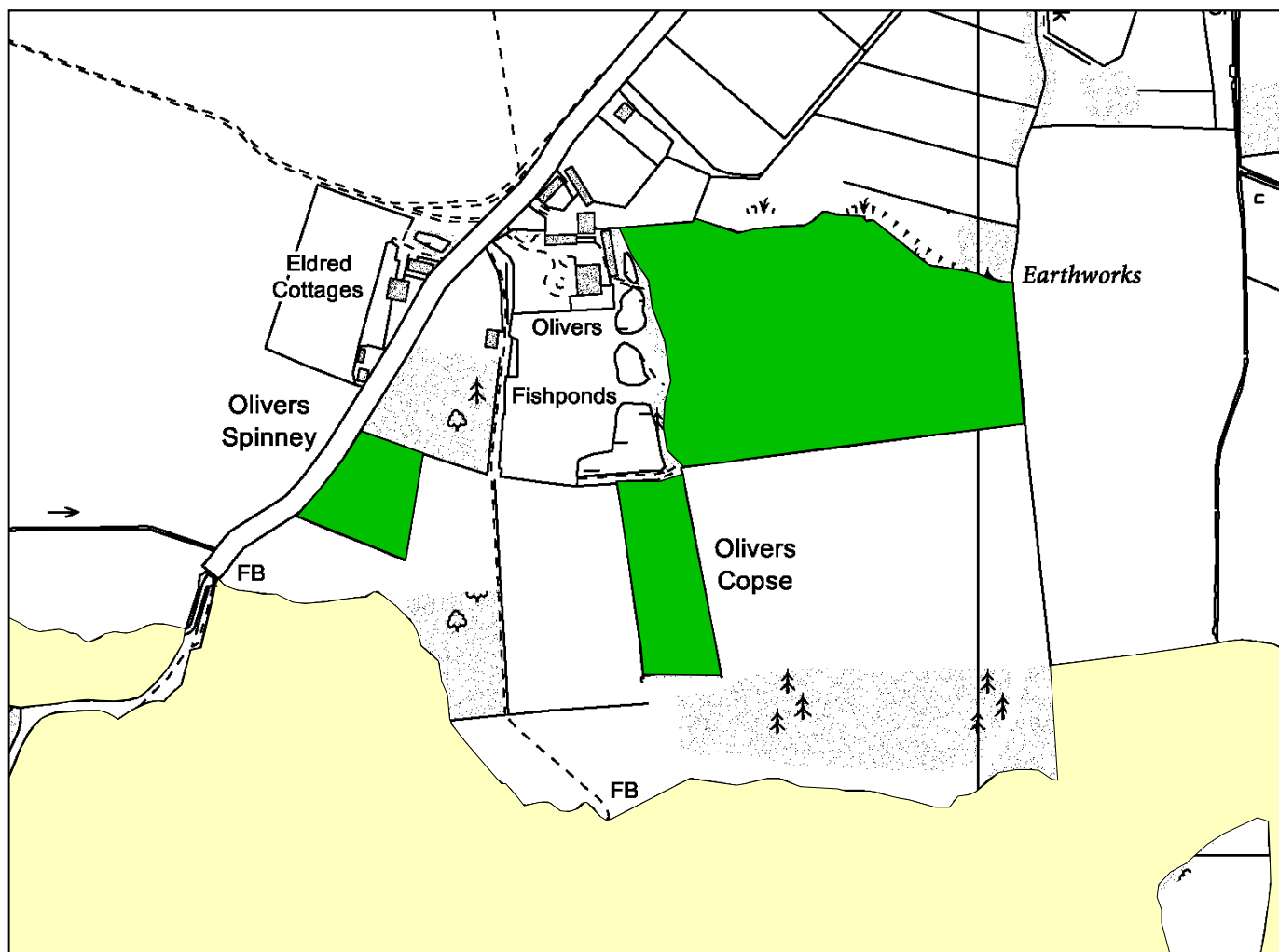
Management Issues

Some woodland management takes place and the Cricket-bat Willows are a commercial crop, but more widespread coppicing is required to maintain the diversity of woodland structure. Heather Fields could be restored to heathland with the removal of conifers and other trees and shrubs. Invasive plants such as Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) adjacent to the gardens of New Cut, Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) within Needles Eye Wood, and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) within the Roman River Valley Reserve should be removed to prevent their spread.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991
Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (minor changes)

Co86 Olivers Woods, Stanway (5.5 ha) TL 968213



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This site comprises Olivers Spinney, Olivers Copse and Walk Wood, all of which exhibit features consistent with remnant ancient woodland. The latter two woods show signs of “gardening” and appear to have long been associated with the formal gardens of the adjacent house.

Olivers Spinney has a canopy of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) over Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. The ground flora is co-dominated by patches of Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), along with some Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*).

Olivers Copse contains mown grassy paths and there has been some planting of herbaceous species along the central stream, as well as some tree planting including Wild Service-tree (*Sorbus torminalis*). It has little understorey and a more open ground layer with species including Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*).

Wall Wood has suffered serious storm damage in the past and has been extensively replanted with broadleaved trees, including Pedunculate Oak, Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) (also surviving as old, wind-blown coppice stools), Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*). There are some very old Hazel coppice stools to the west although otherwise there is almost no shrub layer. The ground flora is species-poor, being dominated by Bluebell.

Ownership and Access

The site 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 structure of these woodlands suggests they are at least derived from ancient woodland, although they are not listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, possibly because of their small size.

Condition Statement:

Favourable in parts

Management Issues

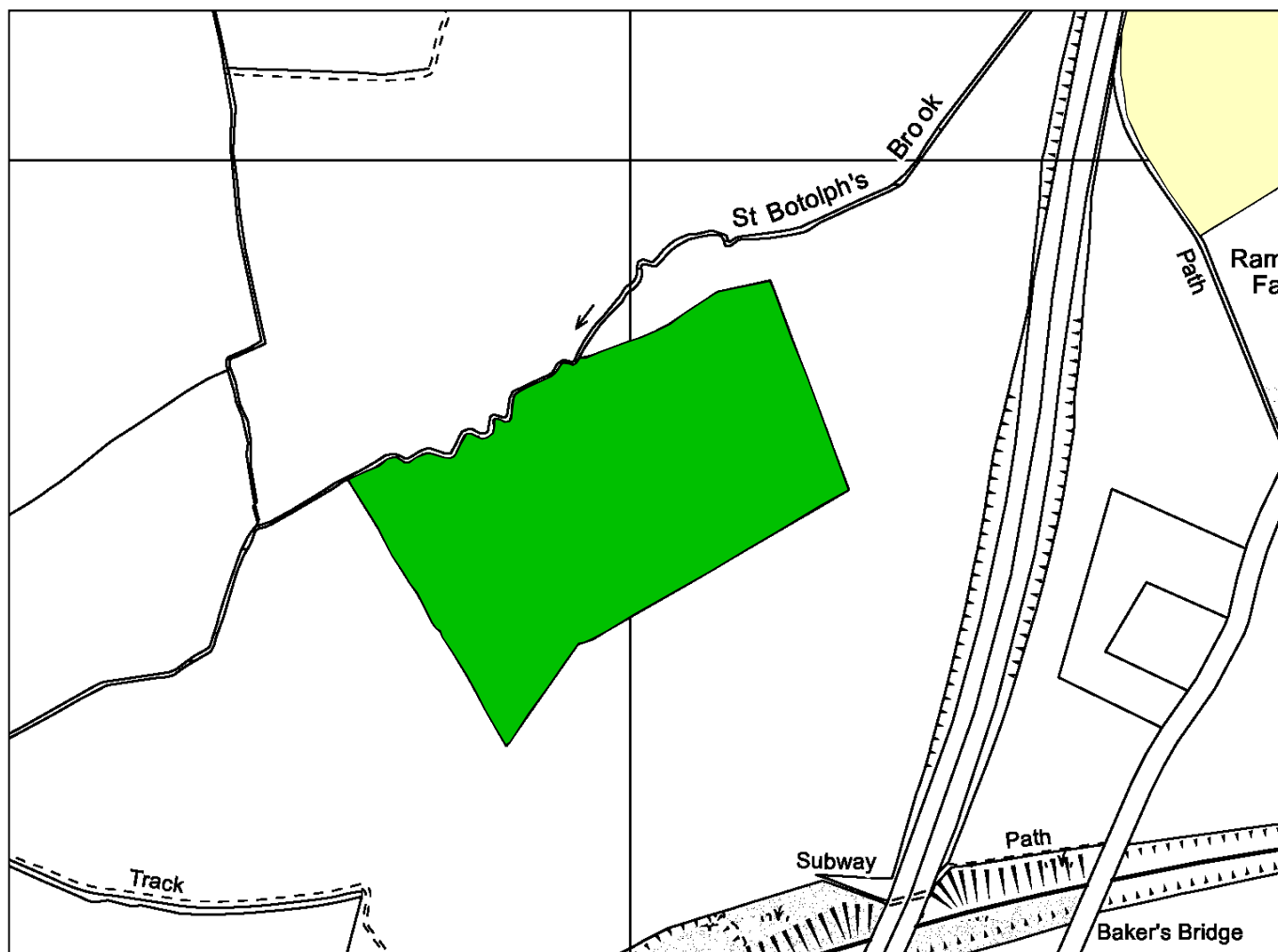
Over-management and a gardening approach within parts of Olivers Copse and Walk Wood could have detrimental consequences on woodland biodiversity. However, the current owners appear to have some conservation interest, with the planting of Wild Service-trees and protective dead hedging preventing deer-browsing on old Hazel coppice stools. An improvement of the woodland structure by enhancing the shrubby understorey would be beneficial.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 2008

Reviewed: 2015 (no change)

Co87 Spring Grove, West Bergholt (6.3 ha) TL 970267



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This site comprises woodland blocks of very different character. The southwest block, formerly known as Cardy's Wood, has a mixed broadleaved canopy of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) standards with Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) coppice and scattered Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice beneath. Upslope, away from the stream, the Hazel forms a high sub-canopy with some Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) coppice mixed in. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is abundant throughout this area of the wood. Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) are found on a narrow internal bank, whilst Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), listed as an Essex Red Data List species, grows on the banks by St Botolph's Brook, alongside small patches of Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*).

In contrast, the larger eastern block of woodland has a structure of Pedunculate Oak standards with scattered Silver Birch and patchy Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). This area, lacking a good coppice structure, is clearly recent secondary woodland. The less species-rich ground flora is mainly Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) with some Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*).

Ownership and Access

The site 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

HC2 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland on Non-ancient Sites

Rationale:

The former Cardy's Wood is likely to be ancient, based on its structure and associated ground flora, but the more recent part satisfies the HC2 criterion for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. Although an ERDL species, the Soft Shield Fern population is not sufficiently significant to satisfy the Vascular Plant criterion.

Condition Statement:

Favourable, unmanaged

Management Issues

There has been no management in recent years and selective coppicing would benefit the woodland structure.

Review Schedule

Site Selected: 1991

Reviewed: 2008; 2015 (no change)