



Buckinghamshire Council and Forestry England Woodland Partnership Scheme – Wing Woods

Stakeholder Consultation Report January 2023

Introduction

Wing Woods is a proposed woodland to be created in Wing, Leighton Buzzard, Buckinghamshire. This is part of Buckinghamshire Council's (BC) commitment to plant 543,000 trees on council-owned land over 10 years up to 2031. BC will be planting in parks and schools as well as planting in fields to create new woodlands. Wing Woods will meet nearly a quarter of the Council's target with around 132,000 trees to be planted. Wing Woods has been developed in partnership with Forestry England (FE) under their Woodland Partnership Scheme.

Figure 1 below shows an image of the woodland creation plan developed by FE for the Wing site; this was presented at a consultation event in November 2022.

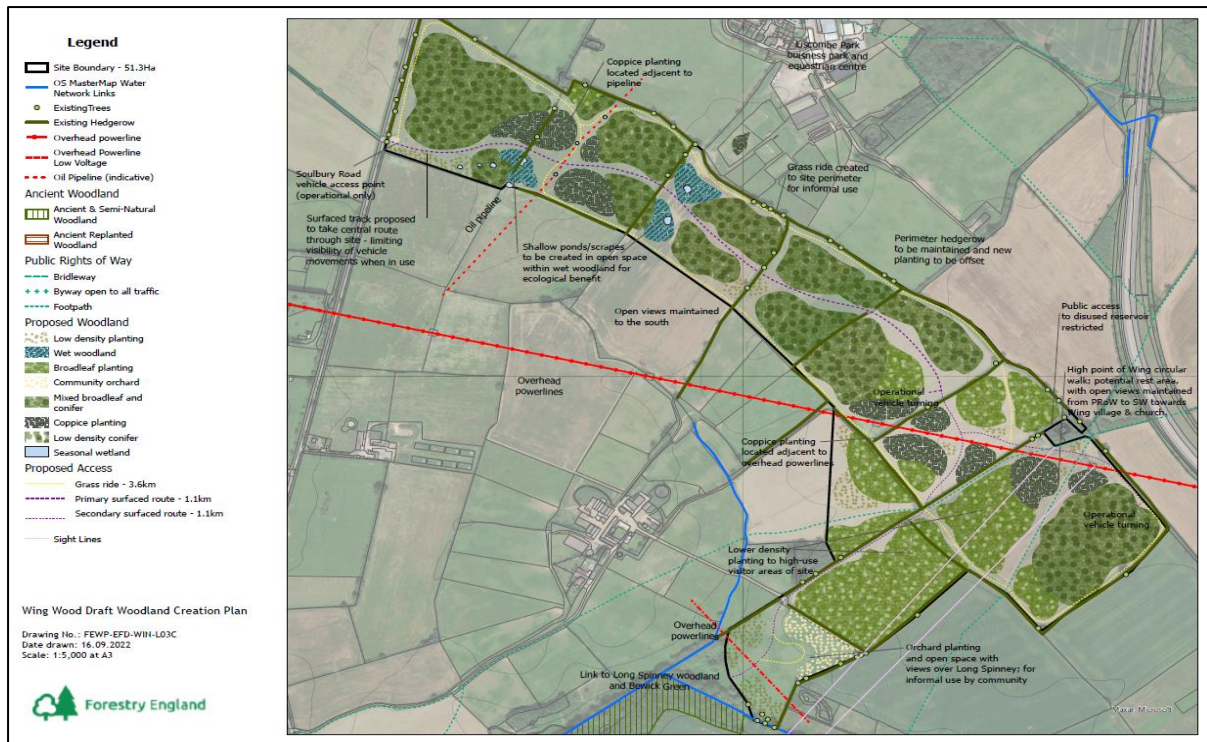


Figure 1: Wing Woods woodland creation plan presented in November 2022

Consultation activity

A Public Consultation Event was held on Tuesday 22nd November 2022 at Wing Village Hall. The event was held from 16:00 to 19:00 with a presentation that was repeated twice to allow for people that work during the day the opportunity to attend. Approximately 70 people attended the event. Engagement was also undertaken with Ward Members and Wing Parish Council in advance of the event.

The woodland creation plans were shared on Citizen Space prior to the event, Citizen Space is an online consultation tool. FE and BC communicated the event by local leafletting, sharing Citizen Space details on the Council's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, NextDoor and Instagram) as well as contacting key stakeholders directly. The list below shows the key stakeholders identified and contacted:

- Buckinghamshire Council Tree Officer
- Buckinghamshire Council Ecologist
- Buckinghamshire Council Archaeologist
- Buckinghamshire Council Landscape Officer
- Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Officer
- Wing Ward Members
- Local Community Board
- Wing Parish Council
- Long Spinney Working Group
- Cabinet Members for Climate Change and Environment and Accessible Housing and Resources

- Deputy Cabinet Members for Climate Change and Environment and Accessible Housing and Resources
- The Greensand Trust
- Liscombe Park Equestrian Centre
- Liscombe Park Business Centre
- Liscombe Park
- Home Farm
- Leighton Linlade Town Council
- Walducks Farm
- Ascott Estate
- National Federation of Coppice workers
- Holmbeck Farm Airfield
- Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Woodland Trust
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Tollgate House
- Ash Farm
- Griffin Farm
- Waterloo Farm Barns

Consultation feedback

The majority of the feedback from the consultation was submitted on Citizen Space, this was open for seven days after the consultation event. There were 49 written responses on Citizen Space. Of those 42 responses were in favour of the proposals, five did not indicate whether they were in favour or not and two were negative towards the proposals. Written responses included: 2 Wing Parish Councillors; representatives from the RSPB; The Greensand Trust; North Bucks Bat Group and Upper Thames Branch of Butterfly Conservation.

Other written and verbal responses included: Historic England; Natural England; National Coppice Federation; Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record; Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC); a local landowner and a member of the Long Spinney Working Group.

Feedback was also gathered via a meeting between FE Representatives and six stakeholders, this was held on the 14th of December 2022 to discuss the woodland creation plan.

Table 1 below shows social media engagement with the Wing Woods proposal below.

Table 1: Data on BC social media engagement for Wing stakeholder consultation event

Twitter:

Date	Impressions/Reach	Engagements	Link Clicks
15/11/2022	1,211	35	17
22/11/2022	1,166	25	10

28/11/2022	1,405	19	12
Total	3,782	79	39

Table 2: Data on BC Facebook engagement for Wing stakeholder consultation event

Facebook:

Date	Impressions/Reach	Engagements	Link Clicks
15/11/2022	6,233	1,317	1,187
19/11/2022	1,735	16	12
22/11/2022	1,493	44	32
27/11/2022	1,124	11	7
Total	10,585	1,388	1,238

Table 3: Data on BC Nextdoor engagement for Wing stakeholder consultation event

Nextdoor:

Date	Impressions/Reach	Engagements	Link Clicks
15/11/2022	345	0	-
18/11/2022	1,106	4	-
22/11/2022	638	1	-
26/11/2022	299	1	-
Total	2,388	6	-

Table 4: Data on BC Instagram engagement for Wing stakeholder consultation event

Instagram:

Date	Impressions/Reach	Engagements	Link Clicks
18/11/2022	547	12	-
28/11/2022	346	12	-
Total	893	24	-

The table below shows the questions asked via Citizen Space, and responses provided:

Table 5: Questions from stakeholders on Citizen Space and responses to questions

Feedback	Response
Access	FE Responses
Will the paths be accessible for bikes too?	Currently it is not intended for the site to be a cycling destination, however, cyclists will be able to use the infrastructure within the site.
Can there be a multipurpose path connecting Wing to the Linslade Bridge and to Liscombe Park?	This is not proposed as part of the woodland creation scheme.
How do the proposals link to Public Rights of Way?	The Public Rights of Way are unchanged, there are two footpaths through the site that will remain. Additionally, the whole site will be accessible to the public. We will also be looking to provide access to Long Spinney from the site.
Will there be a link to Long Spinney?	We will be looking into how we can link the site to Long Spinney and have altered plans accordingly.
Will there be a safe means of access for equestrians in the area	Safe access is provided for the existing equestrian users of the site.

Has there been an accessibility assessment?	All Forestry England developments undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.
Why are there no plans for access by car or those with disabilities?	There are currently no plans for access by car. The concept is to be as light touch as possible in terms of infrastructure for visitors with the focus being on the planting of the woodland, carbon sequestration, habitat creation and the enjoyment of the woodland as a new community resource. The proposals are seeking a balance between public access for enjoyment and quiet areas for nature to flourish and for that reason access on foot is encouraged. To maximise access for all, a link will be provided to Long Spinney. We have nearby sites, such as Wendover Woods that are accessible by car and have additional facilities such as 'changing places' toilets.
Could access by coach for local schools be provided?	There are currently no plans for access by coach. Forestry England has nearby sites, such as Wendover Woods that are accessible by coach and have additional facilities, such as toilets and a café.
The site is too far to walk to from Linslade or Wing for many people	A link to Long Spinney will improve pedestrian access from Wing. The concept is to be as light touch as possible in terms of infrastructure for visitors with the focus being on the planting of the woodland, habitat creation and the enjoyment of the woodland as a new community resource. The proposals are seeking a balance between public access for enjoyment and quiet areas for nature to flourish and for that reason access on foot rather than by car is encouraged.
People will drive and park on Soulbury Road to access the site causing a hazard on an already busy road.	The low-infrastructure nature of the site is intended to encourage people to walk to the woods rather than drive. If this becomes a problem, then we will reassess the need for a small parking area.
The new forest proposal includes a circular riding route for the Burcott Hall and Liscombe liveryies; will the facility be linked into the wider BW and permissive riding network?	At this stage the site will not be linked to the wider Bridleway and permissive riding network. In line with keeping infrastructure to a minimum this wider use could not be supported.
Management & Maintenance	FE Responses
Is the primary purpose of this woodland for timber harvest and will the wood disappear for profit in years to come?	No, timber harvesting is just one of the many objectives of this woodland. All of the proposed woodland will be managed by Continuous Cover Forestry, meaning no area, aside from the Hazel Coppice, will ever be clear felled and there will always be woodland cover.
When will the tree planting start?	We would like to start planting in February, provided the Environmental Impact Assessment and lease from Buckinghamshire Council is approved in time.
Will the local community be involved in planting and aftercare?	Where we are able, we would like the local community to be involved.
I was not clear from the documents who would be the owner of the newly developed wood, or responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the site?	Forestry England will be the leaseholder and manager of the site for 100 years. Buckinghamshire Council will remain the freehold owner.
When the construction traffic is heading to and from the site from the Milton Keynes direction, could they use the A4146 and turn off at the Soulbury roundabout. This would given them access to the site from the Burcott side	There is not likely to be much construction traffic, due to the low infrastructure on site but we can incorporate this into our plans.

of the village (passing Liscombe Park). This would prevent congestion through the village.	
Biodiversity & Species Selection	FE Responses
Has a wildlife survey been done?	Yes, and Preliminary Ecological Survey and a Breeding Bird Survey has been carried out and the results used to inform the design.
There needs to be reassurance that the barn owls who hunt over there, the deer and badgers etc. will not be negatively impacted whilst the woods are established.	Raptors will be encouraged to use the site with the installation of perching posts. Barn owls will not be impacted, and are seen as useful raptors. FE will follow the Badger and Forestry Operations practice Guide. Deer will be allowed to freely graze open areas, but restricted to enter the planting areas whilst the trees are being established
We hope that you can incorporate some ponds too.	Five ponds will be created.
Non-native trees should be kept to a minimum.	Species choice have been made based on the woodland objectives, and the use of Ecological Site Classification using a climate scenario of Med-High 2050, and Med-High 2080, which reduces the availability of native tree options
Have Poplar, Crab apples, and Dog woods been considered?	Black poplar, native poplar, crab apples and willow species have been incorporated into the plan
Elms that are resistant to 'dutch elm disease' should be given space.	Addition of small numbers of resistant elms was considered during the planning process, but there are currently no commercially available options.
What is the benefit of Scots Pine, Red Oak and Sweet Chestnut.	Objectives of the woodland include timber production, which will be achieved by planting these species.
I am not sure that Beech is suitable for this site.	ESC, using the med-high 2050 climate scenario suggests beech will be suitable
The combination of shade tolerant conifers and Beech suggest deep shade, no light penetrating the woodland floor, which equates to low biodiversity and wasted opportunities for wildlife.	Beech and conifers have been selected to achieve the woodland objectives. They will be planted in mixtures initially, with the conifers and other woodland areas being regularly thinned, at which point a ground flora will develop, along with natural regeneration to improve the woodland structure
Despite the statement that you plan planting 'long-lived' deciduous trees, we hope that here will be scope for some smaller, short-lived species in these areas. Blackthorn, Buckthorn, Hawthorn, Spindle and Wayfaring shrubs can provide both food and shelter to many invertebrates that need semi-shade rather than the deep shade that woodlands provide.	Buckthorn, hawthorn, guelder rose and dog rose have been incorporated into the mix, along with large areas of hazel coppice, which will benefit invertebrates. These will be planted on the edge of woodland areas, to create a woodland edge habitat. Some grassland areas will also be fenced to encourage invertebrates.
Has any consideration been given to the fact that there are badger setts right up against the boundary between Long Spinney and the farmlands to be used for planting?	Yes, these have been identified in a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. They will also be surveyed further prior to any planting or fencing being undertaken and the correct measures will be put in place to protect Badger setts.
What is the purpose of this proposed community orchard, and is it really needed. How is it to be managed?	The community orchard has been proposed as an opportunity for community involvement. It is envisaged that the trees will be provided by Forestry England following consultation, and the orchard will be

	managed by a community group. The orchard will only be planted if there is sufficient interest in the opportunity.
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Site Selection	BC Responses
Why is the new woodland going to be planted across a productive farm with a tenant who has been there 22 years with half the land taken away, and rents doubled. There are two empty farms on either side. Considered to be a very disappointing approach with no consultation with the tenant.	The site selected constitutes parts of two tenanted sites that were used for agriculture. The current tenants have still retained two-thirds of each sites to continue farming. The sites are next to one another and can be treated as one land parcel for woodland creation, thus meeting the qualifying criteria for the Forestry England Woodland Partnership Scheme (FEWPS) which at the time was a minimum of 50ha. The land closest to the village is of a higher agricultural quality comprising larger, more accessible and more easily worked fields so these areas were not appropriate for woodland creation.
In addition to the area of the proposed woodland, surrounding land must be protected to ensure any future development does not impact directly and to create a buffer (ideally a mix of scrub and grassland habitats, softening the woodland edge and increasing habitat diversity). Such a buffer could potentially accommodate a cycle / multi-user route corridor as noted in (5) above.	The land to the South and South-East of the site is productive agriculture land and the land to the North of the site is privately owned so there is no scope to expand on the proposed site. Further meetings after the initial stakeholder consultation event took place and some species of plants were changed to increase butterfly habitats and overall biodiversity. The site has public access throughout the whole site that joins up to existing Public Rights of Way.
Is this a smokescreen for a new housing development?	There are no plans for housing development around the proposed woodland
We note discussions around the proposed Wing Bypass - this issue must be clarified as soon as possible to provide certainty for the site. If there is a 'saved' route then the design will potentially need to be significantly modified to both ensure the overall objectives are not compromised, and to ensure any future bypass is adequately screened.	These concerns have been reviewed by Buckinghamshire Council and incorporated into the lease in case of any future requirements for the bypass.

How feedback has helped shaped the project

The feedback gathered through stakeholder engagement has led to amendments in the woodland creation plan. The subsequent list details these changes:

- A list of species beneficial for butterflies supplied by stakeholders to be incorporated into small areas within blocks which are currently designated as open space, this includes replacing hawthorn with blackthorn

- Stakeholder projects underway to provide habitat for great crested newts so more ponds will be incorporated into the woodland creation plan
- Parts of the open space to be managed as a wildflower meadow. Local District staff will explore ways of managing it for the benefit of nature, potentially with plug planting from local volunteer groups and grazing/cutting by the former tenant.
- Concerns were raised over how the community orchard would be managed. FE have amended species to damson, plum and cherry as well as apple which do not require a high degree of pruning and other maintenance and any uncollected fruit would be left for birds and other wildlife in the community orchard. This allows the local community to be as involved as they wish without any constraints.
- FE and Long Spinney Working Group to explore the potential for creating a link from the proposed orchard to Long Spinney.

Below in figure 2 demonstrates adjustments made to the woodland creation map to reflect feedback, as mentioned above, including additional ponds, changes to some plant species as well as exclusion zones for the protection of archaeological relics which will be considered for wildflower meadows.

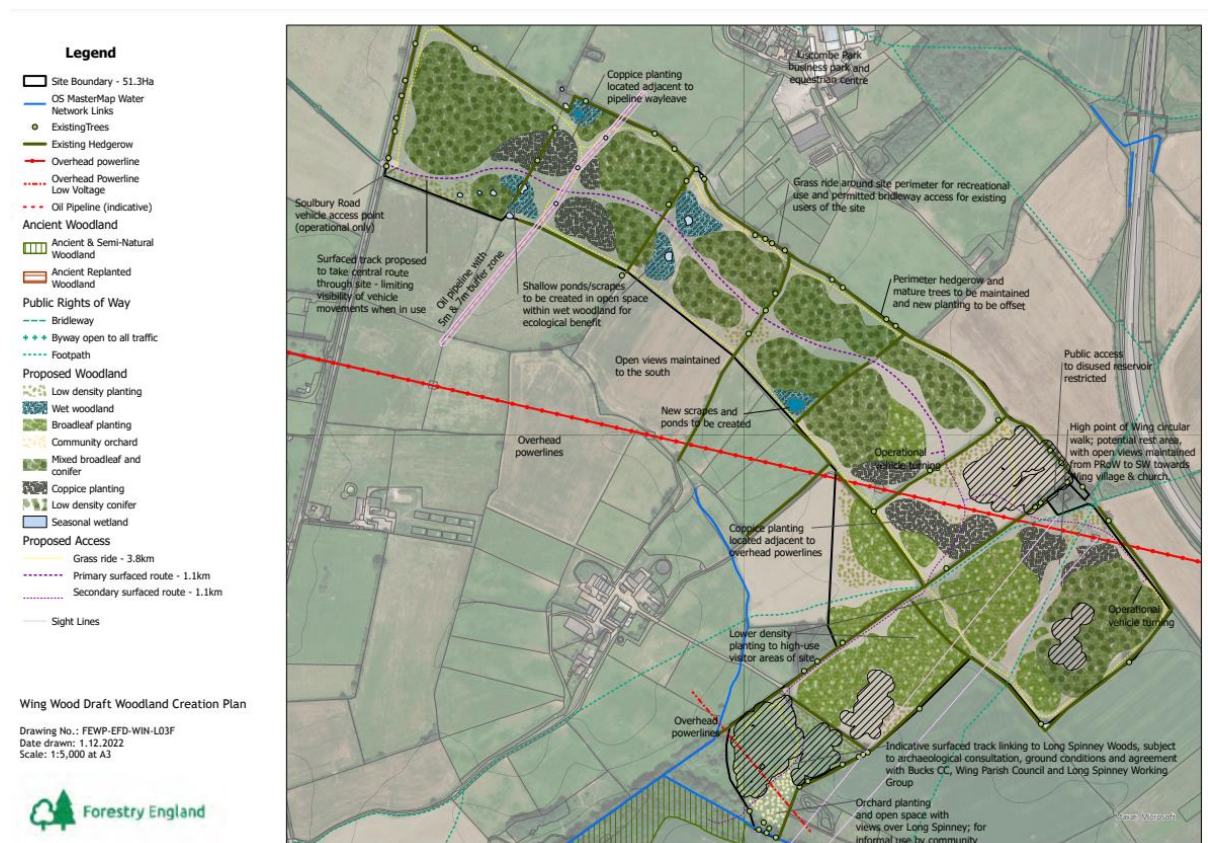


Figure 2: Amended woodland creation plan based on consultation feedback

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was submitted in December, this incorporated all surveys completed, woodland plans as well as collated feedback. The EIA has been approved.

Next steps

FE will work with the Long Spinney Working Group to carry out further work to improve public access through Long Spinney Wood.

FE will present the site to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Minister and the Secretary of State for approval. Once this has been completed then the work to create the new woodland can commence.

BC will monitor the car parking situation as the site develops and will work with local stakeholders to review car parking arrangements at the site.