



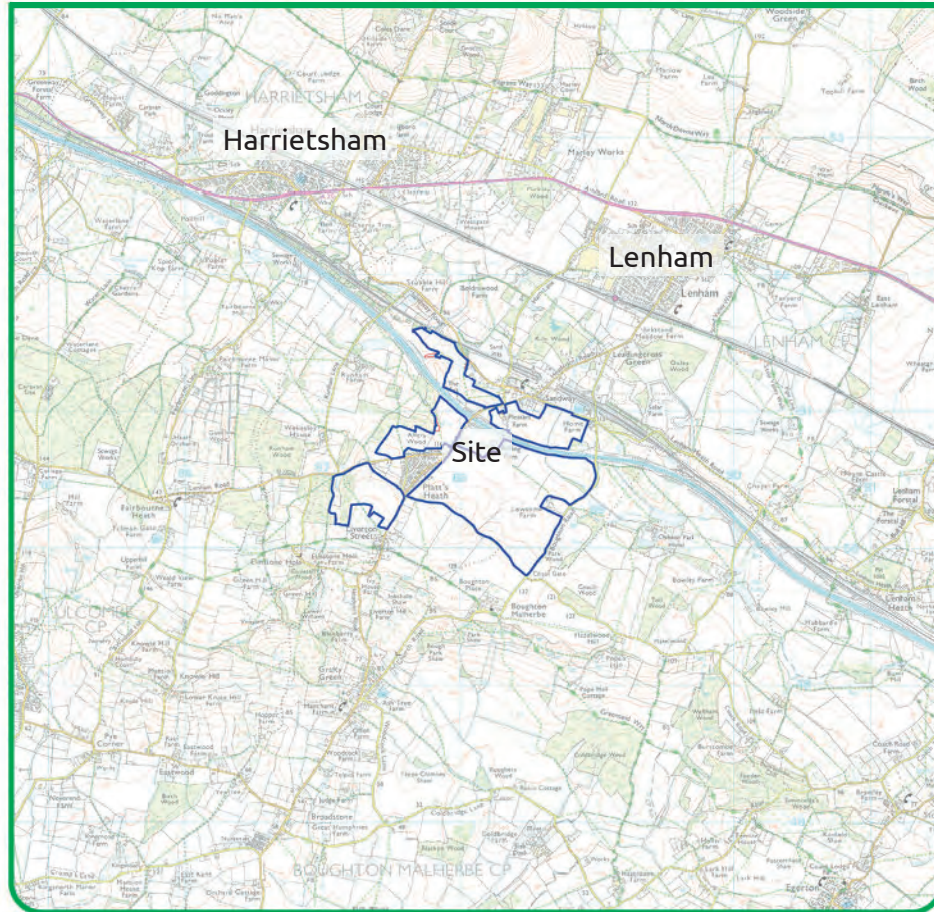
Forestry England

Pleasant Farm Woodland

Final Design Consultation



Site Location



In January 2020, Forestry England bought Pleasant Farm near Lenham in Kent. This multi-million pound investment is part of our contribution to increase the nation's forest.

This document reveals our vision for a new woodland for timber, wildlife and people.





View looking south from Pilgrims way

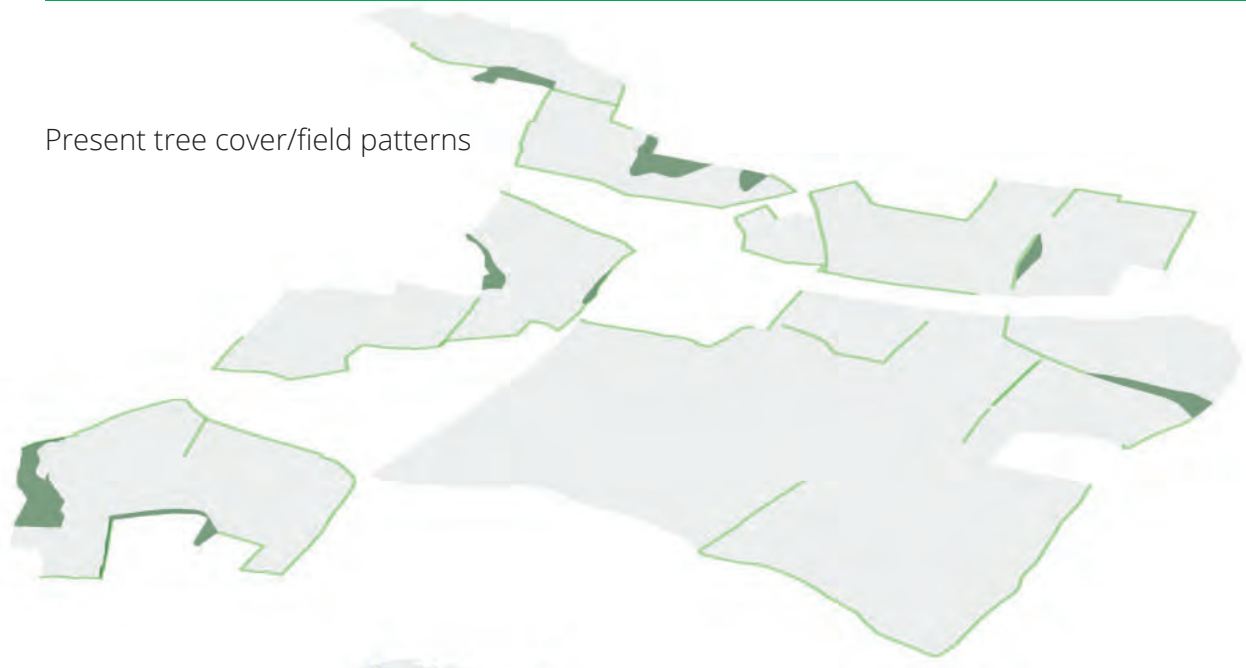
As this photograph shows, the site sits within an area of low lying land that is obscured even from higher vantage points in the surrounding landscape by trees, hedges and woodland.

The site is set within a context that features significant areas of woodland cover. The site sits within a Landscape Character area broadly characterised by extensive areas of arable farming and Ancient Woodland of mixed species.

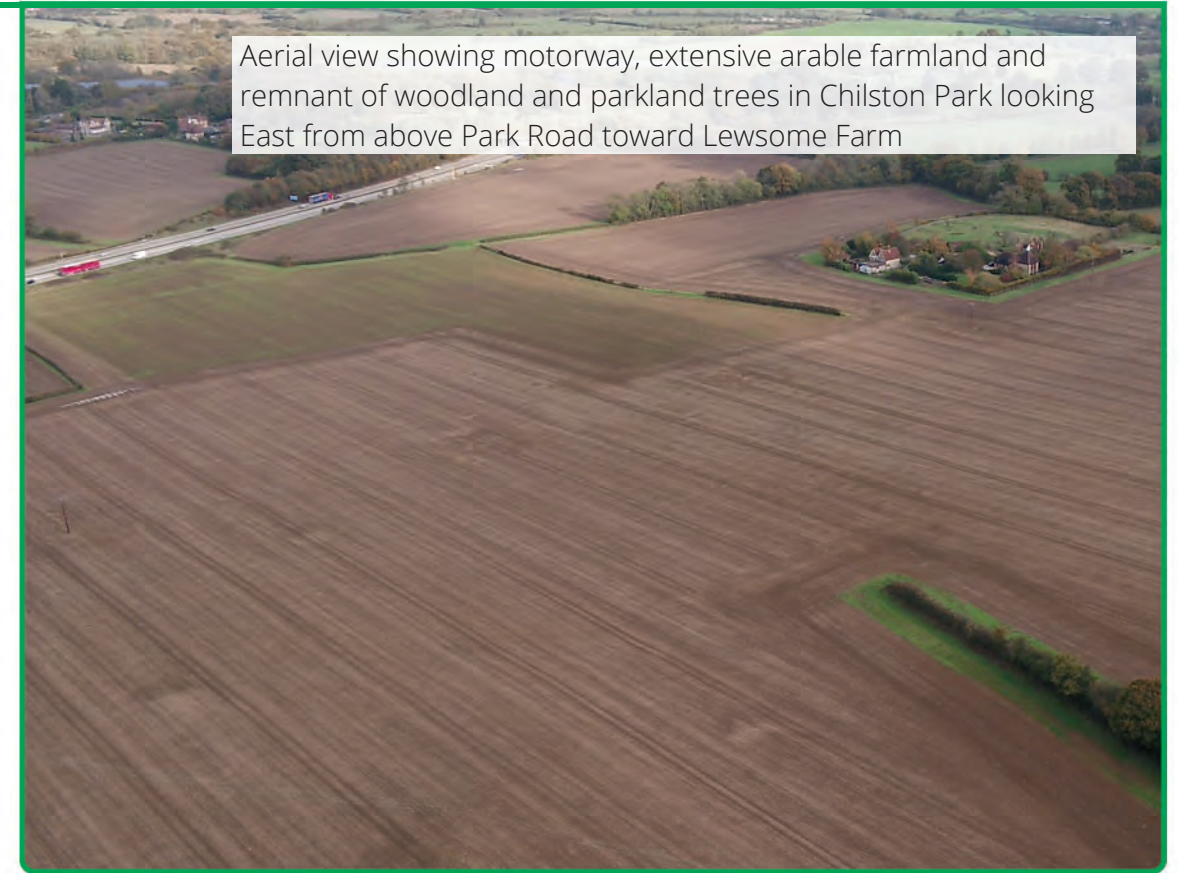
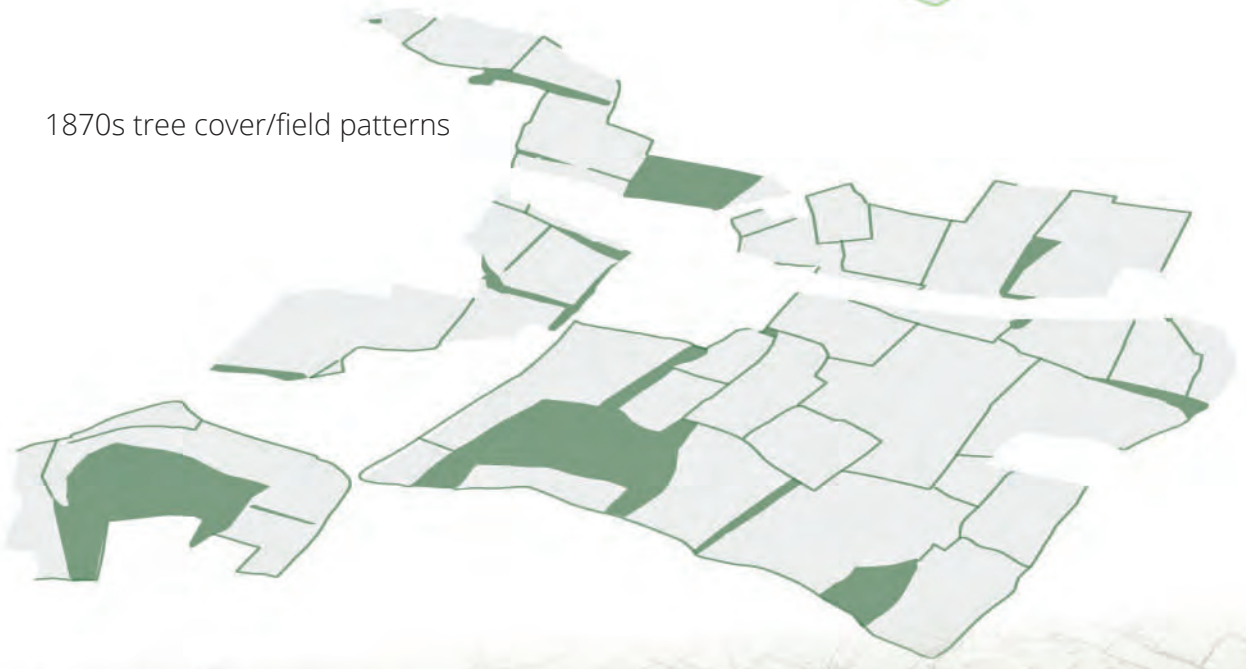
Pleasant Farm has mostly freely-draining deep loamy soils that are well suited to woodland creation. The presence of areas of nutrient poor sandy soils, and areas of shallow soils provide excellent opportunities to provide a mixed habitat while existing drainage lines offer some potential for wet habitats.

Landscape Change

Present tree cover/field patterns

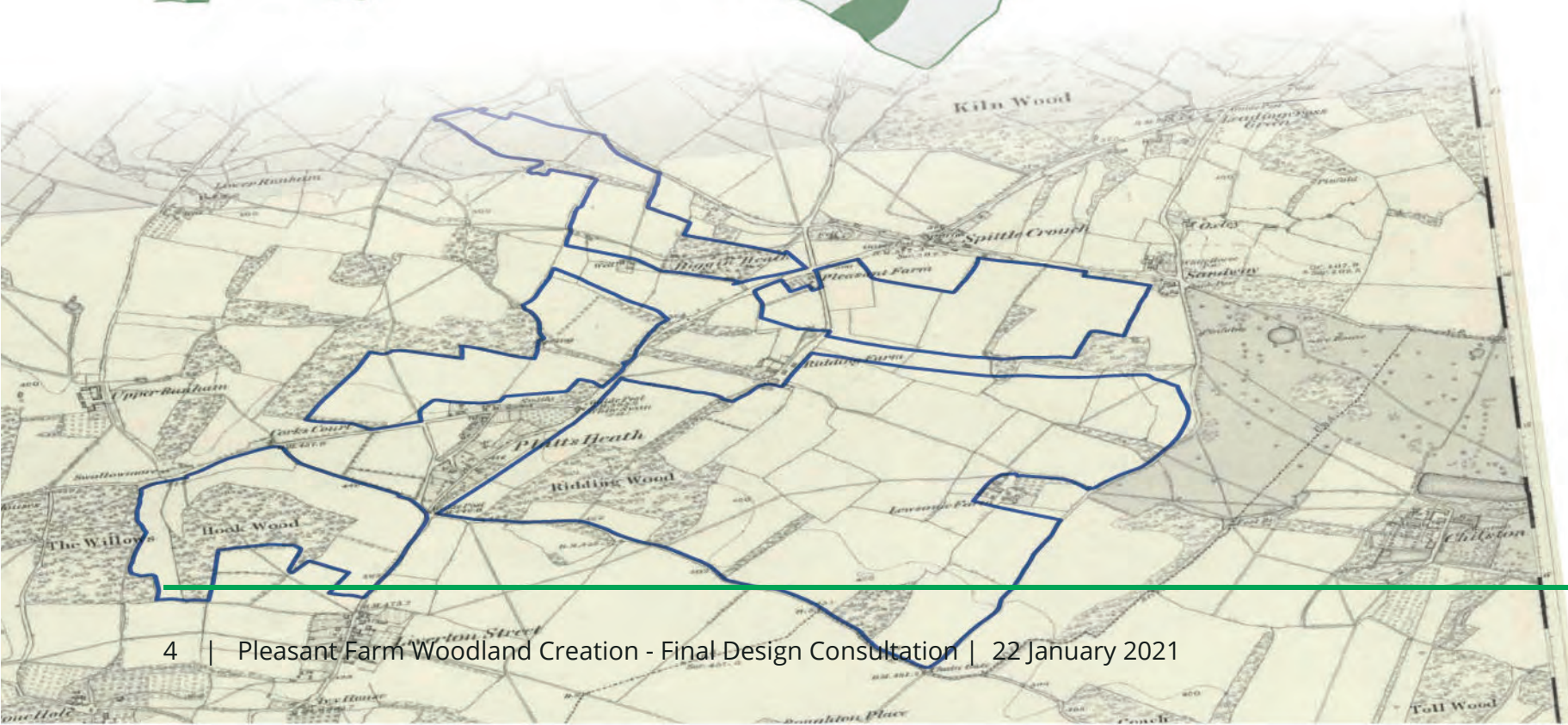


1870s tree cover/field patterns



Aerial view showing motorway, extensive arable farmland and remnant of woodland and parkland trees in Chilston Park looking East from above Park Road toward Lewsome Farm

As with so much of the British landscape, the small field pattern with hedgerows and woodlands has receded in the last 150 years. Large scale modern transport and utilities infrastructure has had a significant effect on the character of this landscape as has intensive agricultural production. Woodland has been lost and field boundaries removed with the consequence that habitat has been lost, fragmented and become disconnected.



Objectives



At Forestry England, we are excited to be creating a new woodland for people, nature and the economy. It will make a significant contribution to locking up carbon, becoming a great place for wildlife, and growing sustainable timber.

Spread across 5 plots, our woodland at Pleasant Farm will:

- Contribute to increased woodland cover and carbon capture through sustainable timber production
- Restore and connect habitats
- Increase woodland resilience to prepare for future climate change
- Enhance biodiversity
- Provide a space for you to relax and enjoy the outdoors

Each of the plots will have a focus that builds upon its key features:

Plot A
Access for All

Plot B
Woodland for the Community

Plot C
Peacefulness and Nature

Plot D
Sustainable Timber Production

Plot E
Research woodlands



View of existing trees in hedge boundary of plot A

In November 2020, we held an online public consultation to engage with local residents and neighbours of the site. A short explanatory video and consultation document were produced to explain our initial concept design plan. We collated the comments and concerns from those who participated in the online questionnaire and consultation calls, and the project team has adapted the concept design plan in response.

Opportunities and activities

A strong majority of respondents (88.9%) agreed that Pleasant Farm would accommodate opportunities to exercise, relax and learn. An easy access trail in plot A and grass footpaths across all 5 plots will allow pedestrian access to the site all year round. Events held on site, such as community tree planting, pond restoration, wildlife spotting and creative arts, will provide opportunities to learn.

If you are interested in getting involved with any of these activities, please get in touch at pleasantfarm@forestryengland.uk

Wildlife, biodiversity and animals on site

Respondents were positive that Pleasant Farm would be beneficial for wildlife and specifically mentioned butterflies, bats, buzzards, hedgehogs, barn owls, badgers, great crested newts and dormice. One respondent mentioned horse-riding and bridleways. Information from TROT, the local bridleway licensing authority, led to a decision by the project team against putting in bridleways. The fast-moving traffic on roads between plots, lack of bridleway specification tracks and lack of de-boxing facilities nearby informed this decision.

Landscape

Local residents were concerned that the noise pollution from the M20 would spoil the tranquillity of the site for both people and wildlife. Our tree planting proposal can only mitigate some of the noise pollution from the motorway. However in response to the consultation we have adjusted the planting adjacent to the M20 corridor in Plot B to include faster growing conifers to provide year round screening of views of the motorway.

The concerns relating to noise pollution contributed to plot C being selected as the most popular plot to visit for recreation (66.7%). The wildflower meadow, large pond and seed orchard will provide opportunities for interpretation and engagement with local schools and residents.

Car park and traffic management

The car park location and traffic management were common concerns raised. We would like to reassure everyone that the aim is to maintain a low-key site primarily for local residents rather than creating a large scale attraction. The location of the small (15-20 spaces) car park in plot A will be directly accessible from the A20 via East Street. This aims to minimise traffic flow through Sandway and Platts Heath.

Crime Prevention and Safety

We have a duty of care to both visitors and staff, so we want to ensure that Pleasant Farm is a safe, clean, and enjoyable place to be. Our final design plans and ongoing management of the site has been reviewed by a local crime prevention officer. On their advice, and with the results from the questionnaire, we will lock the car park at night, add a height barrier and plant thorny shrubs along key borders.

If you would like to get in touch with the local crime prevention liaison regarding our plans please email CSU.Maidstone@Kent.Police.Uk (Note this should not be used for reporting crime).

Outline Woodland Creation Plan

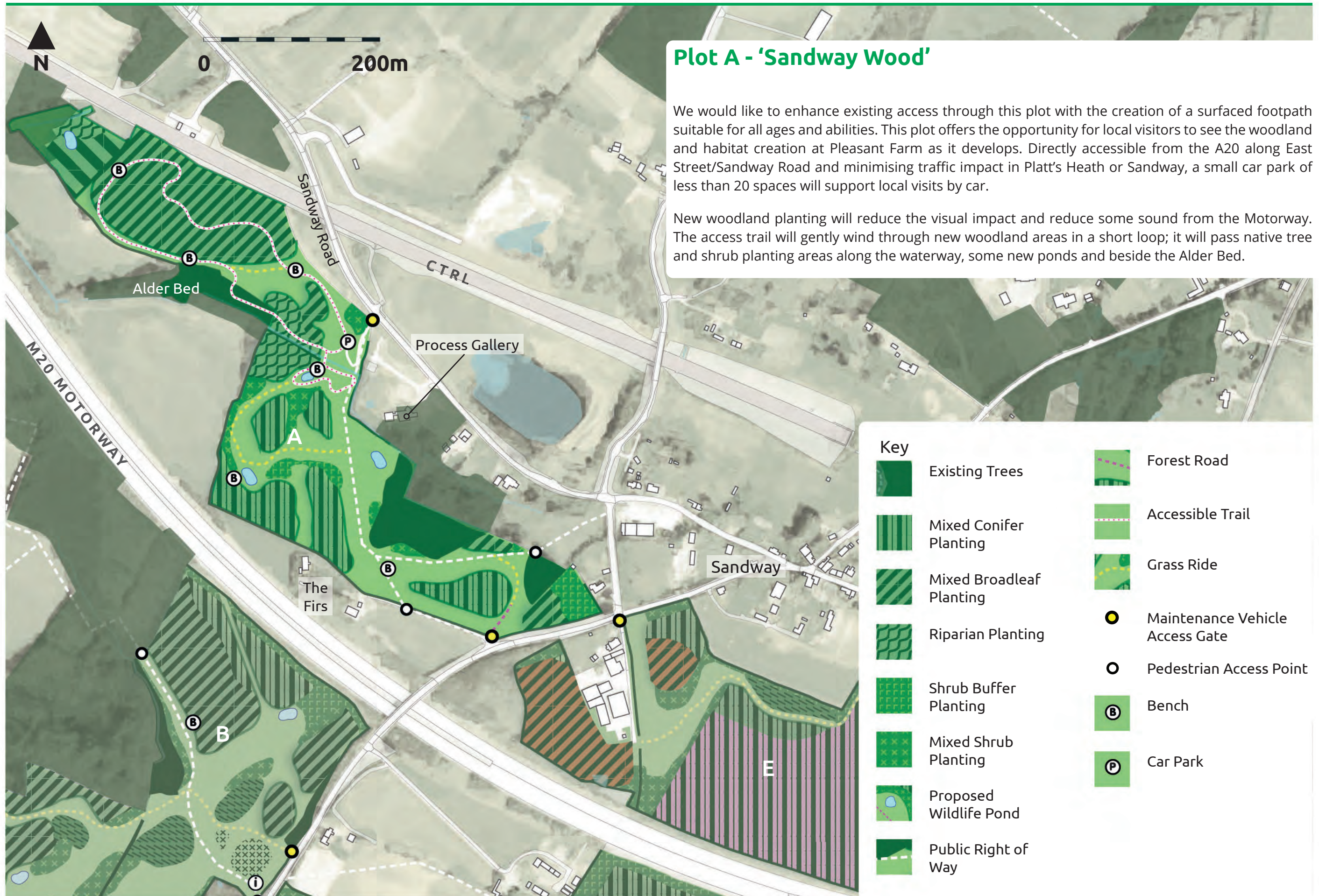


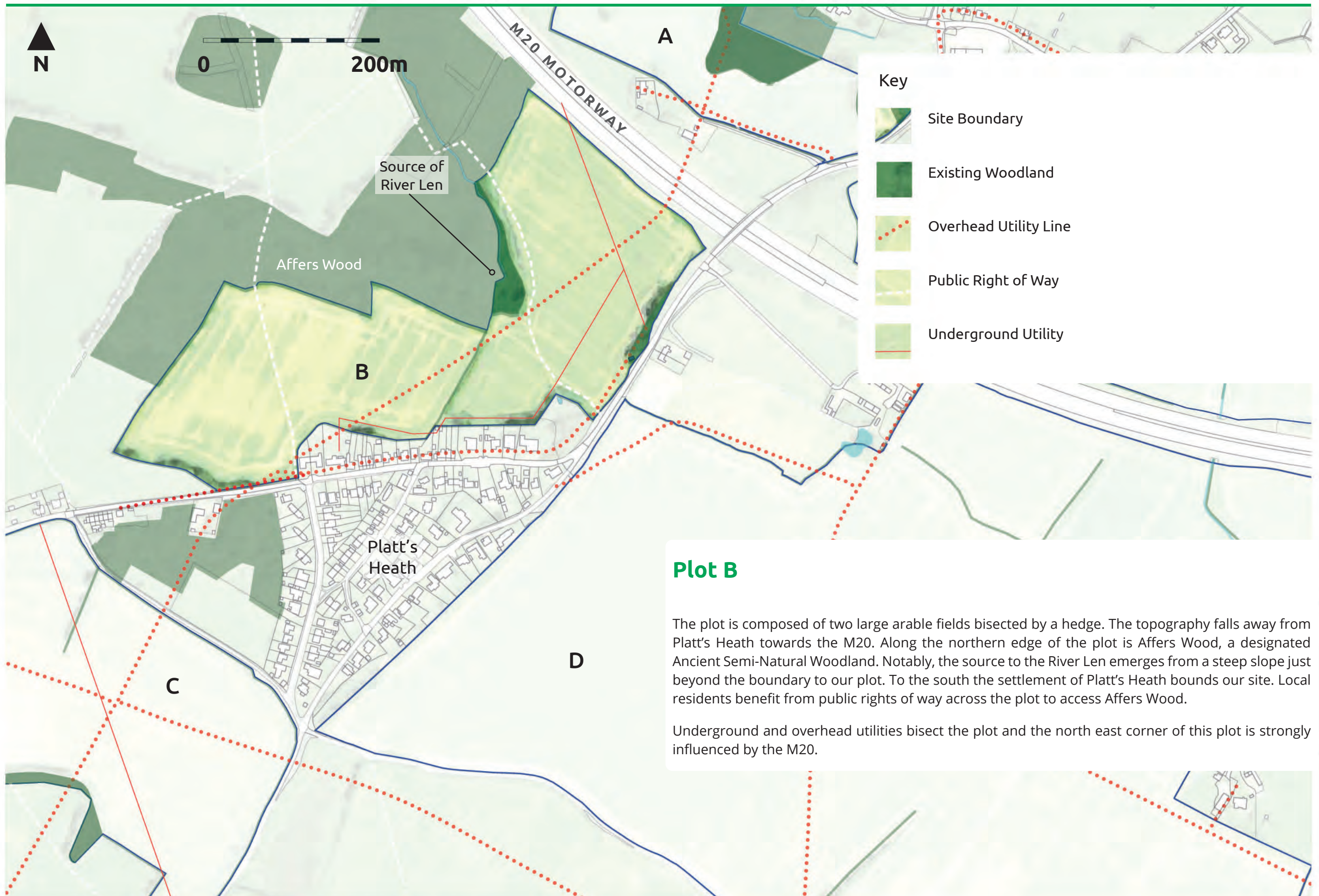


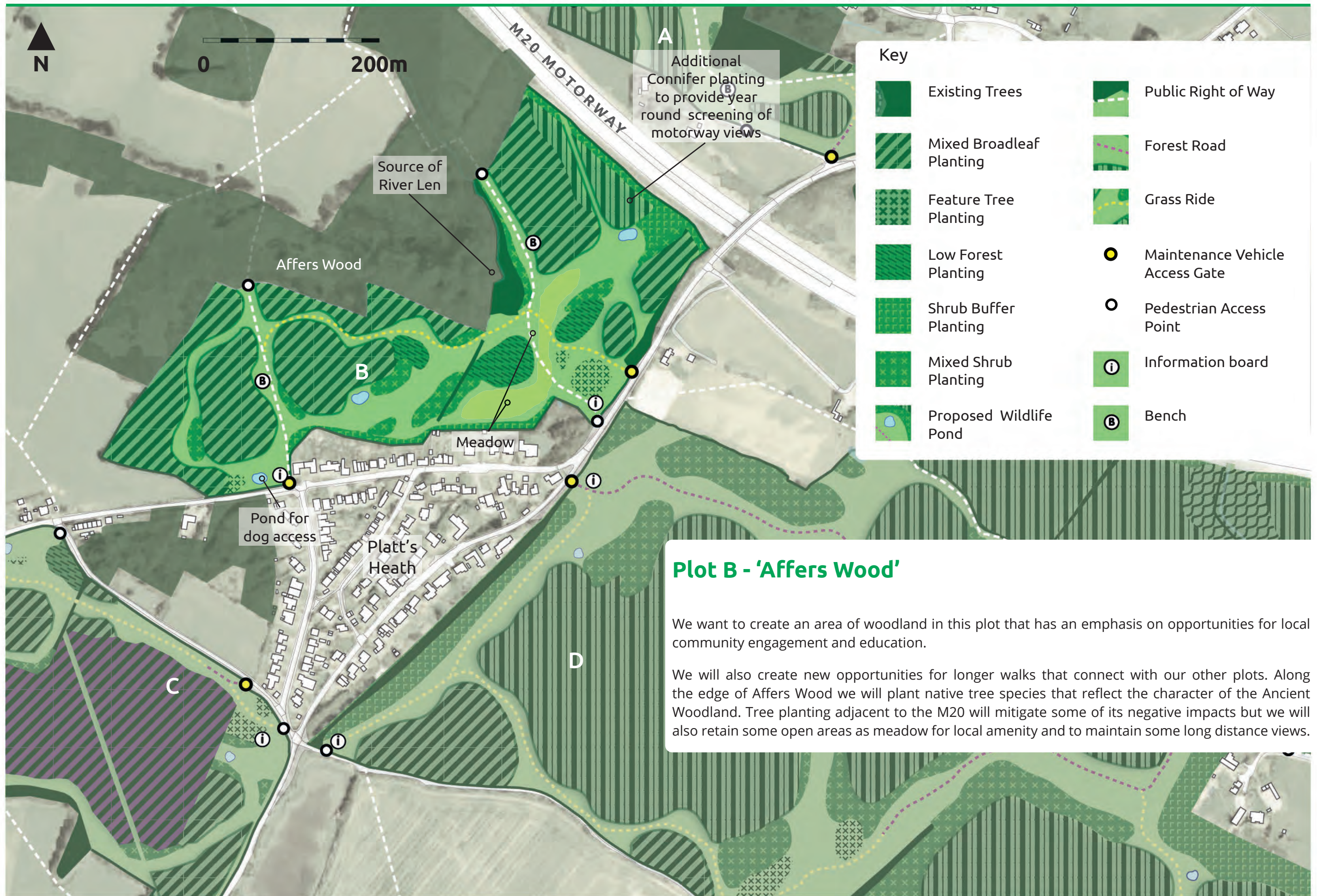
Plot A - 'Sandway Wood'

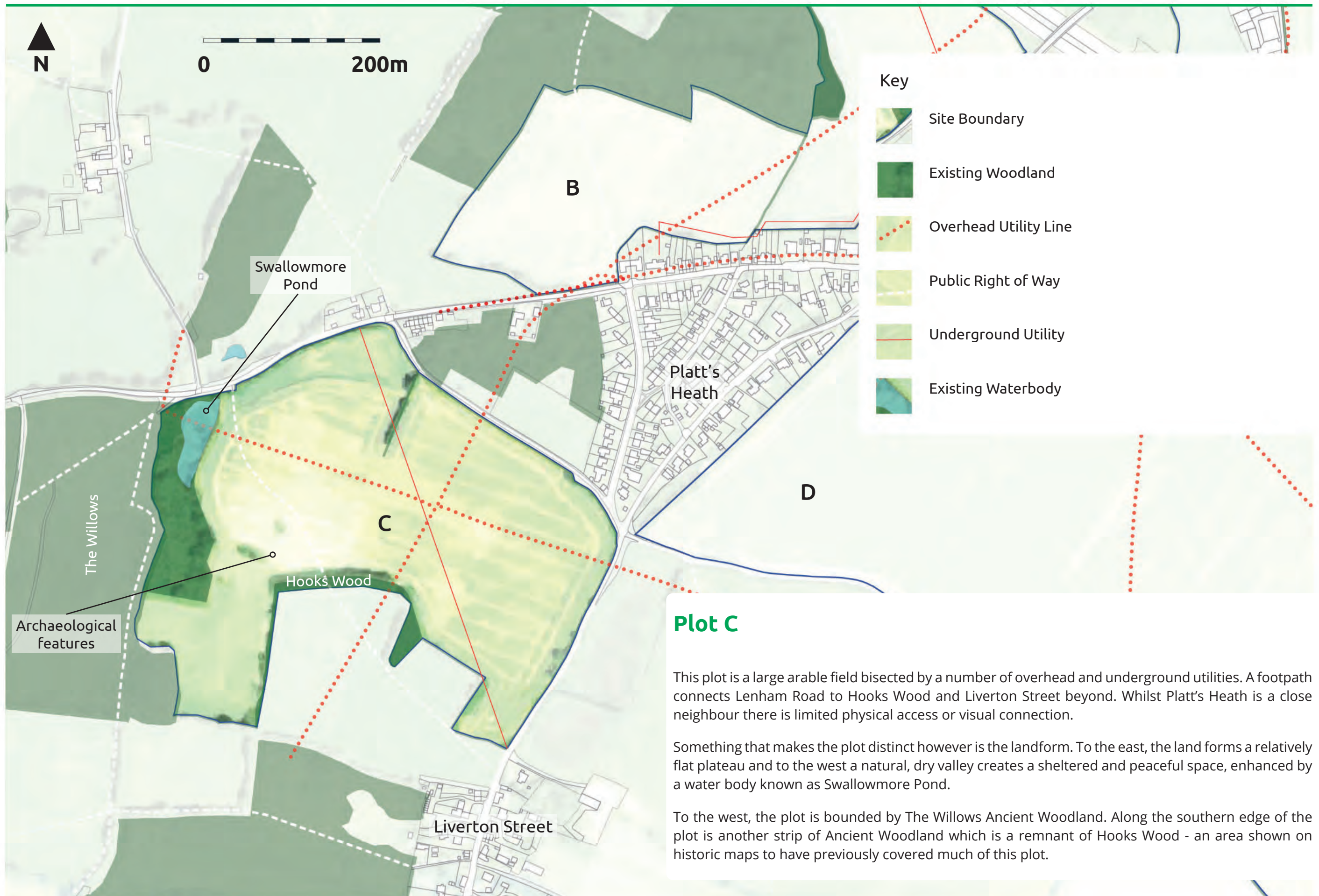
We would like to enhance existing access through this plot with the creation of a surfaced footpath suitable for all ages and abilities. This plot offers the opportunity for local visitors to see the woodland and habitat creation at Pleasant Farm as it develops. Directly accessible from the A20 along East Street/Sandway Road and minimising traffic impact in Platt's Heath or Sandway, a small car park of less than 20 spaces will support local visits by car.

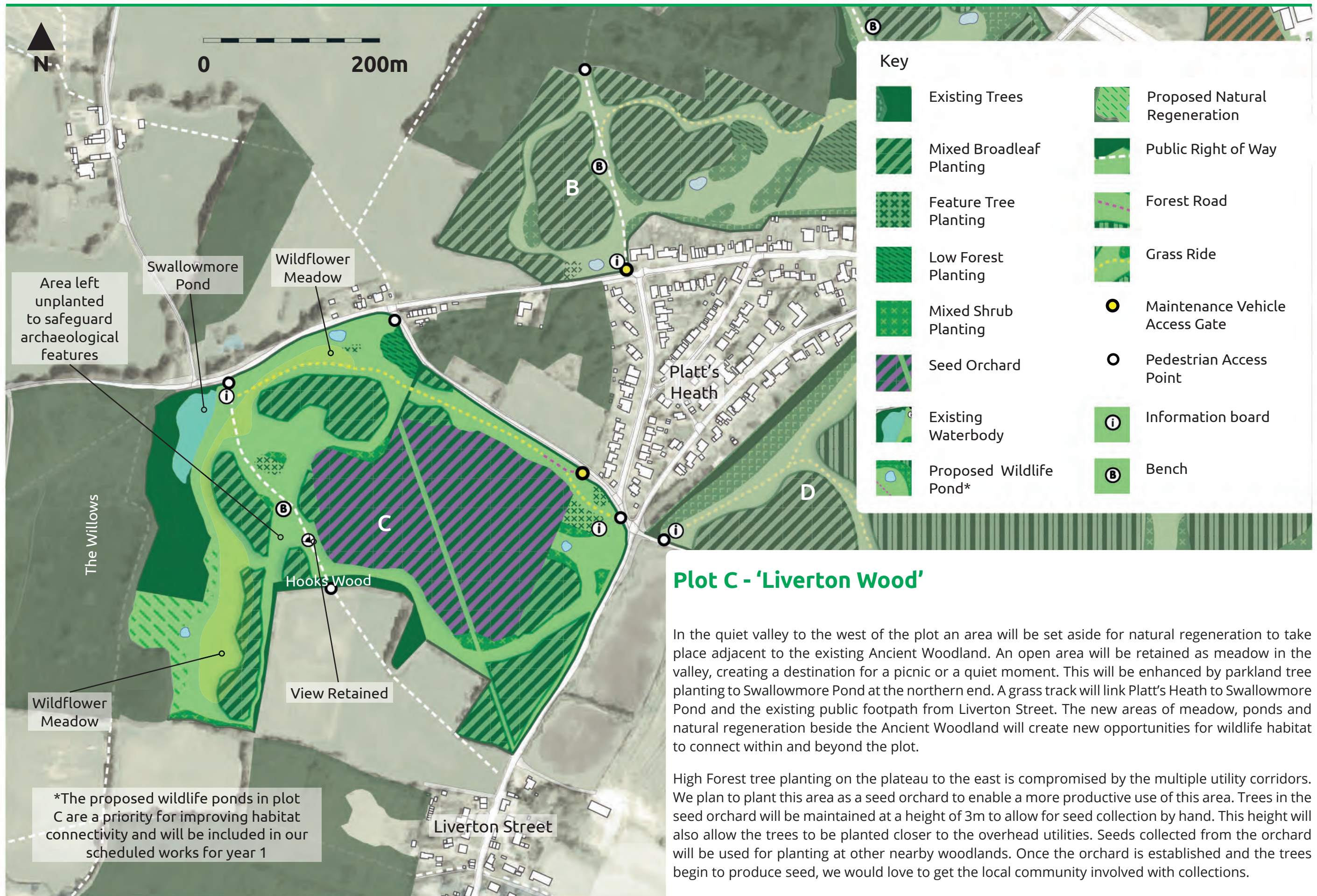
New woodland planting will reduce the visual impact and reduce some sound from the Motorway. The access trail will gently wind through new woodland areas in a short loop; it will pass native tree and shrub planting areas along the waterway, some new ponds and beside the Alder Bed.











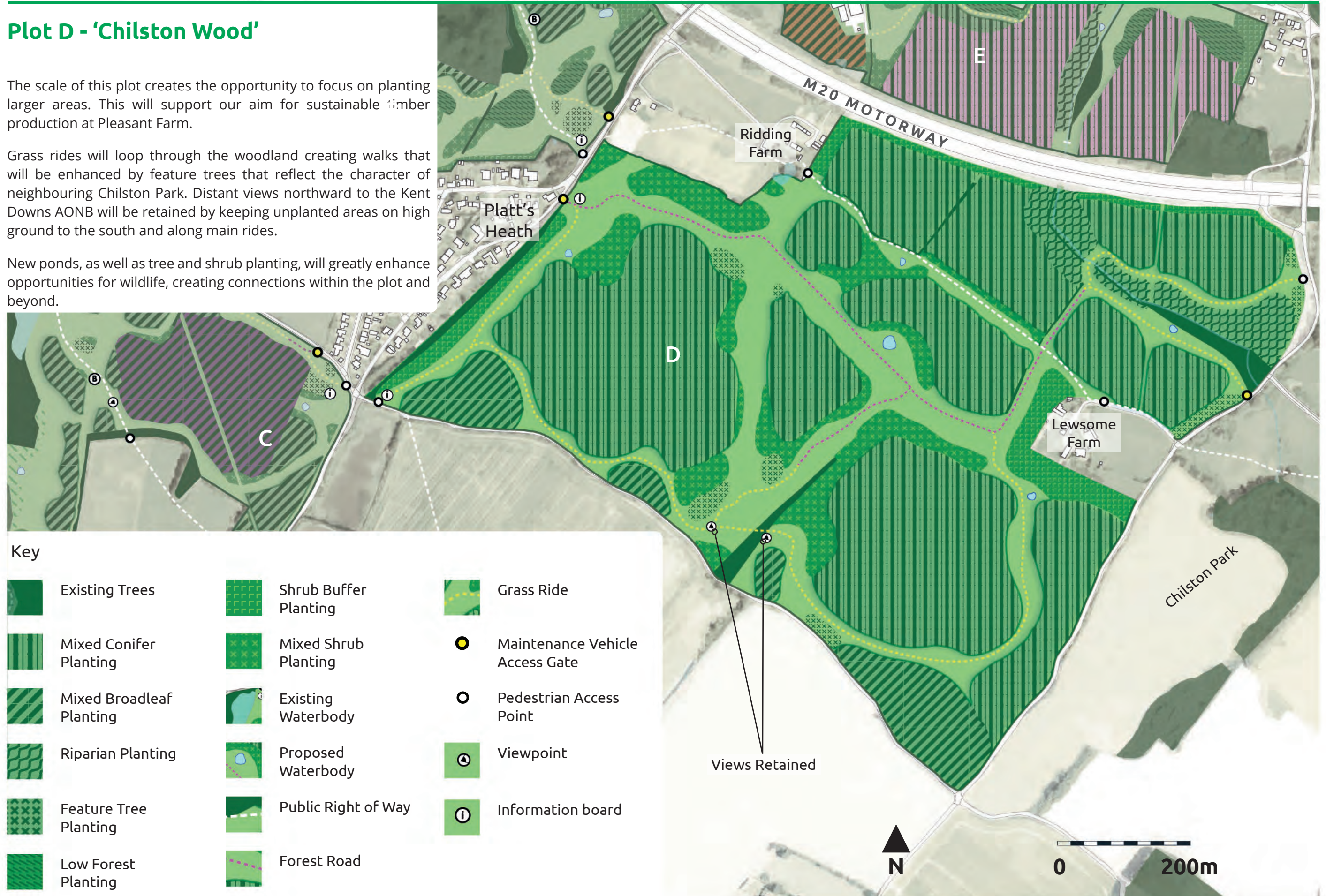


Plot D - 'Chilston Wood'

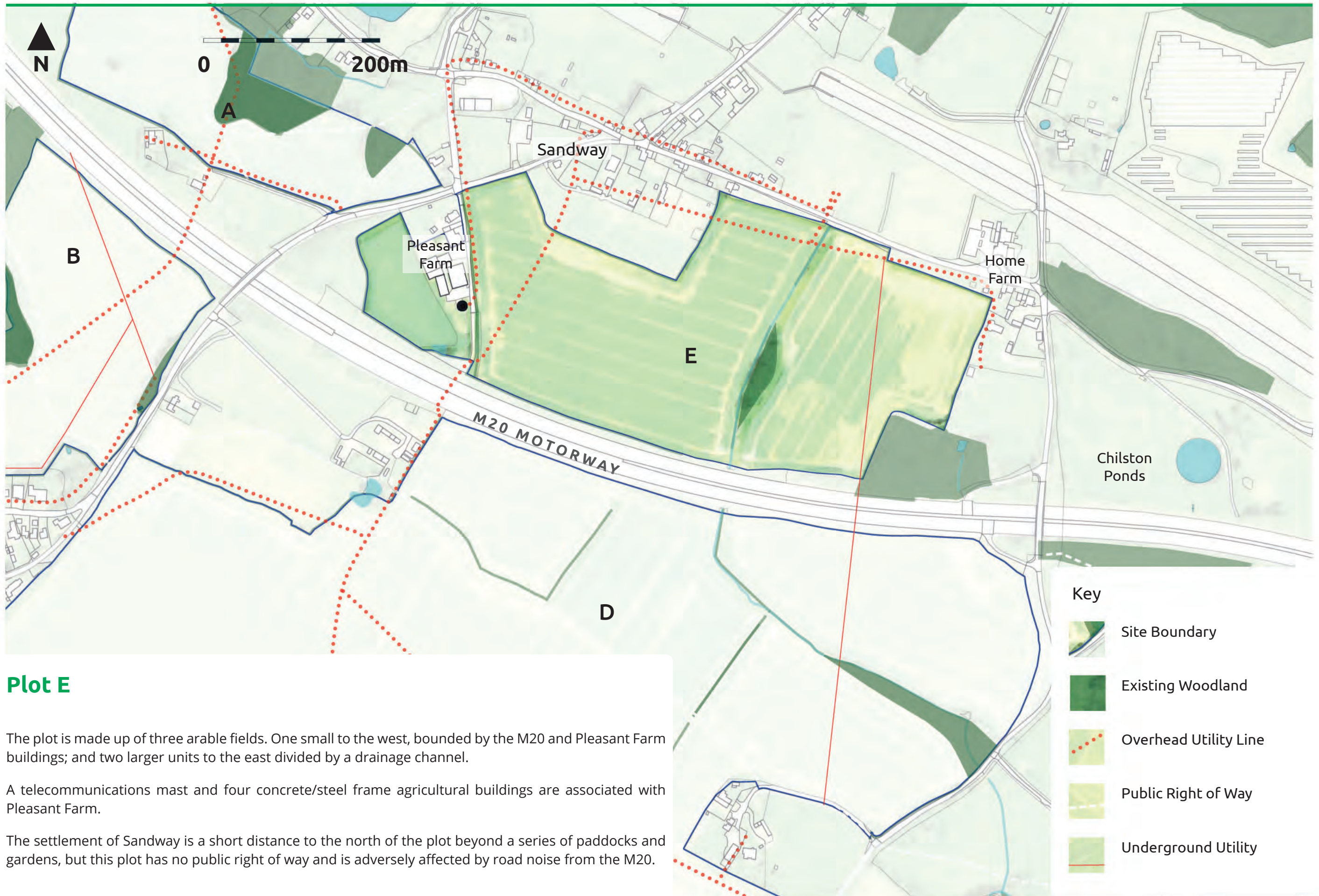
The scale of this plot creates the opportunity to focus on planting larger areas. This will support our aim for sustainable timber production at Pleasant Farm.

Grass rides will loop through the woodland creating walks that will be enhanced by feature trees that reflect the character of neighbouring Chilston Park. Distant views northward to the Kent Downs AONB will be retained by keeping unplanted areas on high ground to the south and along main rides.

New ponds, as well as tree and shrub planting, will greatly enhance opportunities for wildlife, creating connections within the plot and beyond.



Key			
	Existing Trees		Grass Ride
	Mixed Conifer Planting		Maintenance Vehicle Access Gate
	Mixed Broadleaf Planting		Pedestrian Access Point
	Riparian Planting		Viewpoint
	Feature Tree Planting		Information board
	Low Forest Planting		
	Shrub Buffer Planting		
	Mixed Shrub Planting		
	Existing Waterbody		
	Proposed Waterbody		
	Public Right of Way		
	Forest Road		

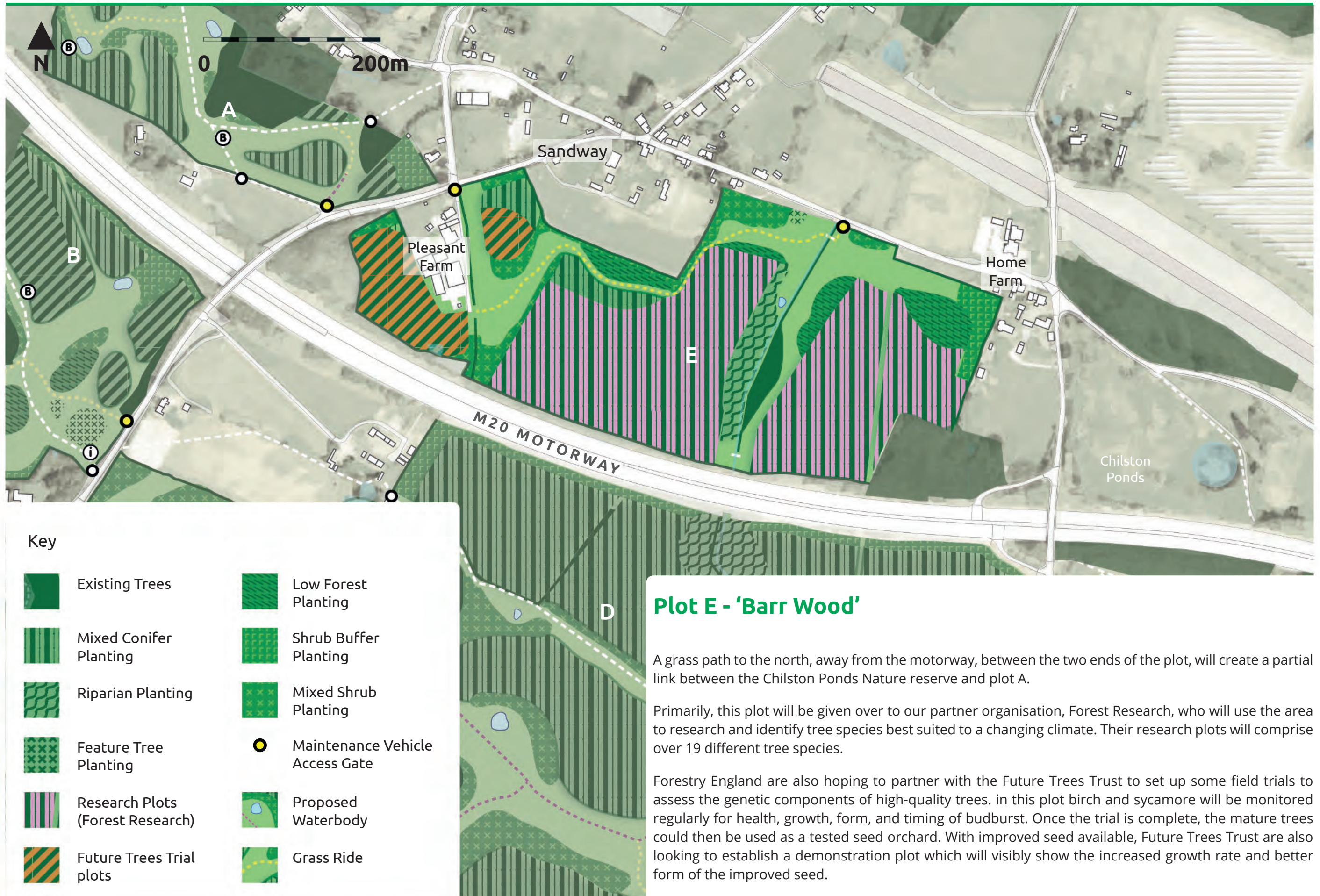


Plot E

The plot is made up of three arable fields. One small to the west, bounded by the M20 and Pleasant Farm buildings; and two larger units to the east divided by a drainage channel.

A telecommunications mast and four concrete/steel frame agricultural buildings are associated with Pleasant Farm.

The settlement of Sandway is a short distance to the north of the plot beyond a series of paddocks and gardens, but this plot has no public right of way and is adversely affected by road noise from the M20.











Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles

NOW



Many of the field boundaries to our land are marked by hedges of varying condition, with gaps in places and some lengths entirely missing.

FUTURE



We will establish new hedgerows at our field boundaries. We will also conserve, enhance and restore remaining hedgerows, filling gaps with diverse native tree and shrub species to create strips that establish robust habitat reserves and corridors for nature.

Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles

NOW

FIELD BOUNDARY HEDGE COMPOSED OF VERY LOW TREE/SHRUB SPECIES DIVERSITY

NARROW FIELD MARGINS OF GRASS/WEED

ARABLE CROP

The land at Pleasant Farm will continue to be put to productive use, however the annual rotations of arable crops will be replaced by long rotations of trees harvested for construction timber, fencing material, paper and card products and wood fuel a long time in the future.

FUTURE

DIVERSE SHRUB PLANTING TO CREATE GRADED EDGES FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT

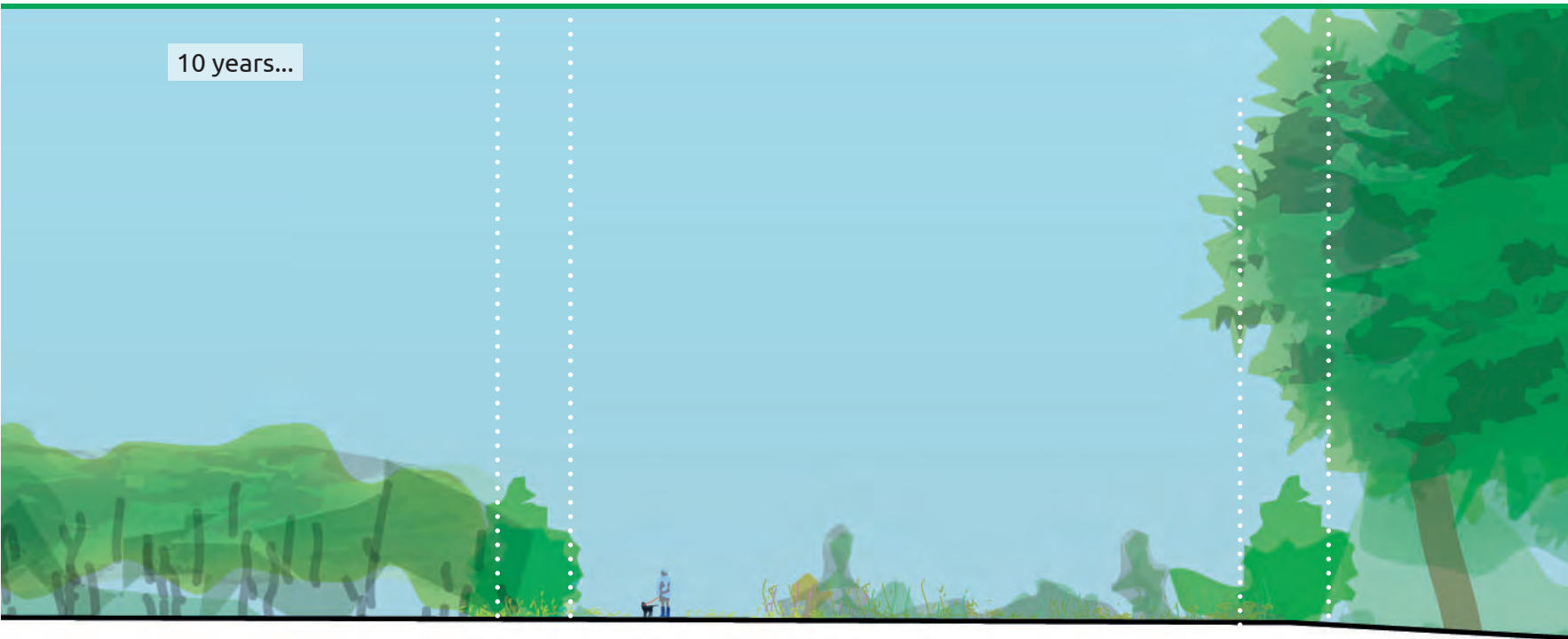
OPEN SPACE MANAGED AS MEADOW

The open character of the site will change slowly over a long period of time, but we have incorporated open space into our design so that views and habitats are maintained.

We will manage woodland edges for a graduated transition between woodland and open meadow.

We will also manage paths, rides and clearings to create sinuous margins with ecologically rich, native shrub species. These will form a network of habitat corridors that encourage wildlife.

Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles



Around the outer edge of our tree planting areas we will plant native shrubs to create a graded edge to the woodland blocks. This will soften the appearance of woodland blocks and also create a network for the benefit of small mammals, invertebrates and reptiles, connecting them to habitat areas within and beyond Pleasant Farm.

Where our site bounds Ancient Woodland we will soften the transition between our tree planting and native woodland by planting with native broadleaf species, or leaving areas unplanted to allow them to regenerate naturally.



Tree planting

Shrub planting

Natural regeneration or Native species tree planting

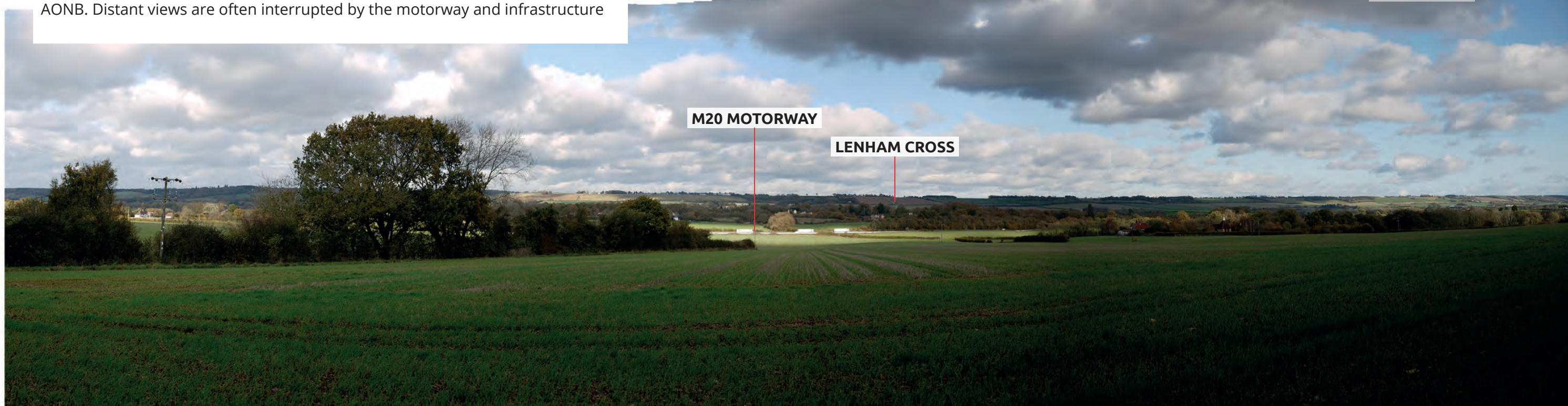
Existing hedge

Ancient Woodland

Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles

The open character of the arable land affords distant views toward the Kent Downs AONB. Distant views are often interrupted by the motorway and infrastructure

October 2020

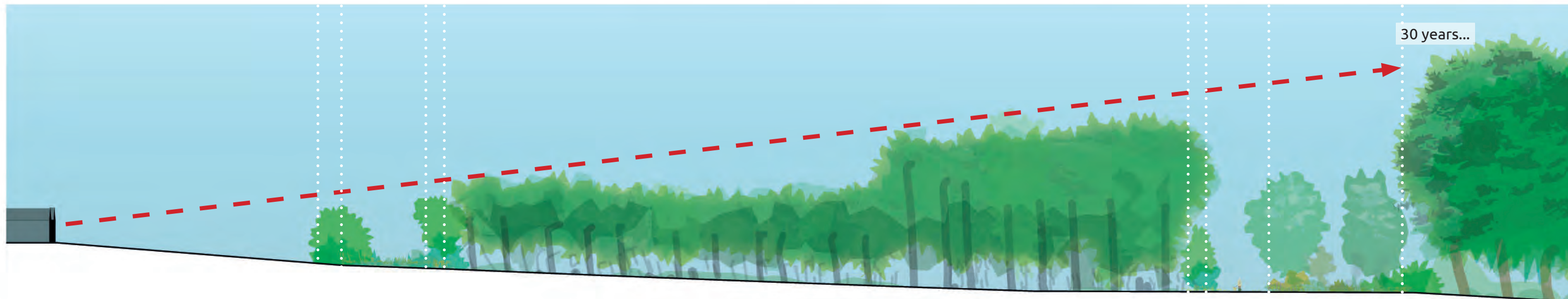
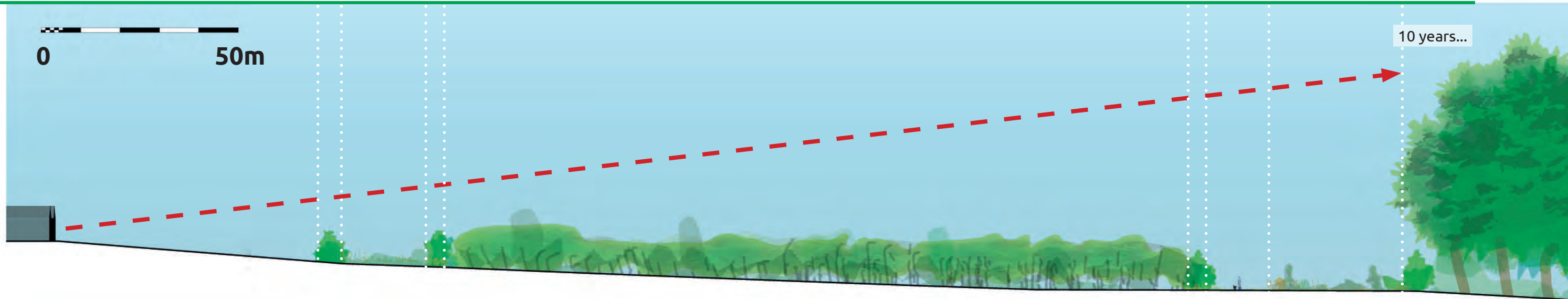


Our paths and rides will create new access around the woodland. The tree and shrub planting offer the opportunity to screen views of motorway and transport infrastructure but we will also create clearings and add benches to make the most of views.

This is a long distant view but it is difficult to pick out individual features



Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles



Neighbouring property

Shrub planting

Shorter tree species chosen to maintain view toward Affers Wood

Tree planting

Shrub planting

Natural regen

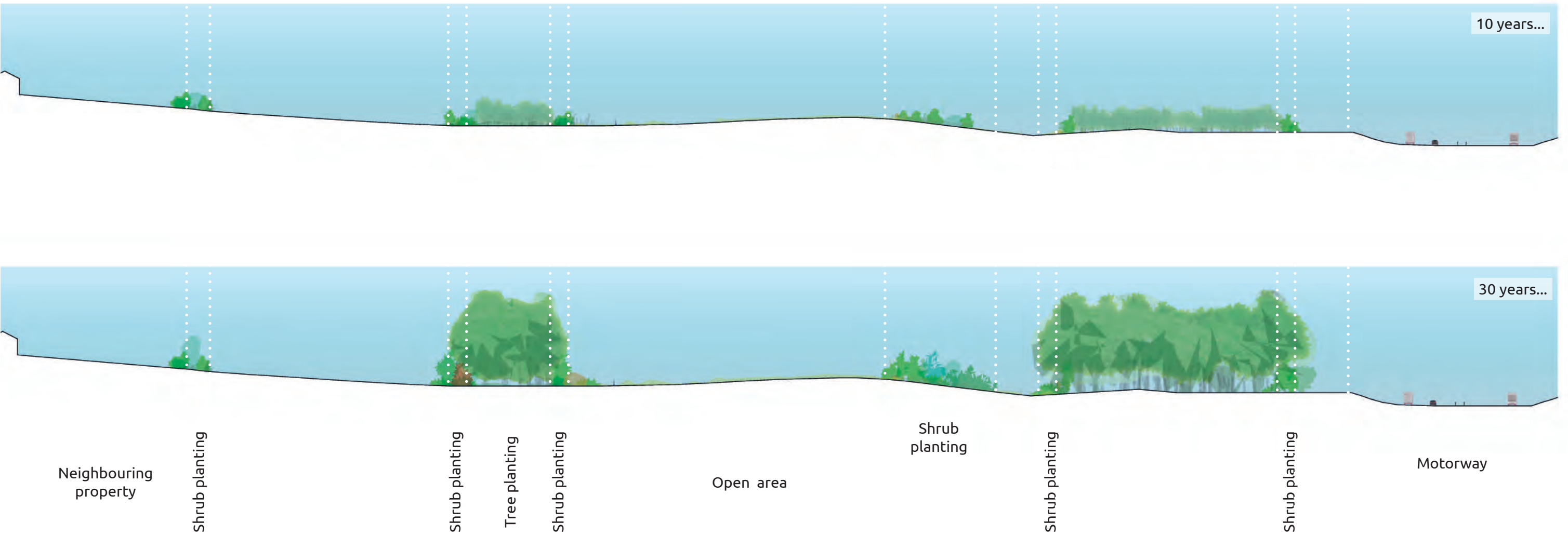
Ancient Woodland



Typical section from houses on Lenham Road across Plot B toward Affers Wood.

We will endeavour to design the tree planting to respond to neighbouring residences concerns.

Woodlands, Hedges and Trees - Design Principles



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Typical section from houses on Lenham Road across Plot B toward the M20 motorway.

Tree planting will mitigate some of the influence of the motorway.



Common dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
© Stuart Sutton

To create a site that works for wildlife we have first considered what is there already by carrying out a preliminary ecological assessment. This gathered the biological records, not just for the farm, but also the surrounding area to consider the wildlife context. We have also carried out some walk-over surveys and wintering and breeding bird surveys.

The biological records show that the arable farm is currently of limited wildlife value, with the remaining species-poor hedgerows being where most wildlife has been found. There are also some small areas of woodland, small streams and two ponds. The headline protected species found in the surveys and records include Badger, Dormouse, Great Crested Newt and Bats.

To guide our site development for wildlife we are following the principles of 'Better, Bigger, Connected and More', outlined in the [Making Space for Nature](#) report. 'Better' means creating a diverse range of habitats and micro-habitats. 'Connected' means ensuring habitats are within easy travelling distance for a range of wildlife, that they work at many different scales, and that they connect with neighbouring sites: a stepping-stone network for wildlife across the local area.

By creating a range of habitats for Great Crested Newts and Dormouse we will be enhancing the populations for some of the rarest animals in the local area. These two species will act as 'flagship' species, creating opportunities for a much wider range of other species.

New habitats to be created will include broadleaved and mixed woodland areas and diverse shrub and scrub belts. A significant extent of flower-rich grassland will be created throughout the plots and new ponds will be created over several years. The diverse range of shrubs will work for wildlife in the same way the hedges have done, but in a much-improved way and should provide dense cover, pollen, nectar, and fruits throughout the year.

By enriching the farm with a wide range of planted species and diverse habitat structures that connect across the plots, we will give wildlife the greatest opportunity not only to move in and thrive, but also to move around the site and into the wider landscape.

Neal Armour-Chelu
Forestry England, East England Forest District, Ecologist.

Substantial evidence suggests that improved biodiversity and improved ecosystem services, such as carbon capture and flood mitigation, go hand in hand. Increased diversity improves an ecosystem's resistance to disturbances, such as pests and background climatic change.

Forest Research advised the project team on species selection with the aim to create a diverse planting mix resilient to climate change. In support of their work the species underlined in the table (right) will be included in a Forest Research operational trial area to identify species best suited to a warming climate.

The main productive conifer species are Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar and Western Hemlock as advised by Forest Research for the soil types present at Pleasant Farm. Scots Pine will also be planted to reflect the character of the Chilston Pines park and other fragments of heath that neighbours the site. Many of these productive species are shade tolerant and can therefore be grown in a planting mix with other faster growing species.

The main broadleaf species, which will be predominantly for recreation areas, are Sessile Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Aspen and Small-leaved Lime. Some areas of broadleaf planting will be clumped areas or widely spaced to create a more open parkland feel.

Mature trees already on site will be retained and where planting is adjacent to existing ancient woodland it will reflect the existing native species. Along the boundaries of neighbouring properties will be thorny shrubs, including gorse and hawthorn, to provide security and privacy whilst preserving views from and light into the properties.

The table (right) lists the species that will be planted at Pleasant Farm and the proportional use of space on site. In area, the mixed conifer planting will account for 44% whilst broadleaf and shrub planting cover 15% and 12% respectively. 25% will be maintained as open space, including water bodies and wildflower meadows, whilst the existing 3% woodland cover will be maintained. The design, including the proportions of the use of space at Pleasant Farm, is in compliance with the [UK Forestry Standard](#).

Conifer		Broadleaf		Shrubs	
Species	Number (k)	Species	Number (k)	Species	Number (k)
<u>Atlas Cedar</u>	0.81	Aspen	3.30	Alder Buckthorn	4.12
<u>Coast Redwood</u>	0.81	Black Walnut	1.18	Blackthorn	6.96
Corsican Pine	7.77	Common Alder	0.95	Dogwood	4.12
Dawn Redwood	0.04	Crab Apple	0.29	Elder	4.06
Douglas Fir	42.74	Hornbeam	3.16	Gorse	7.71
European Larch	12.58	Italian Alder	0.91	Guelder Rose	2.15
<u>European Silver Fir</u>	0.81	Native Black Poplar	0.88	Hawthorn	6.84
<u>Grand Fir</u>	0.81	Pig Nut	0.71	Hazel	6.96
Japanese Red Cedar	1.40	Red Oak	0.93	Privet	4.06
<u>Leyland Cypress</u>	0.81	Rowan	1.27	Purging Buckthorn	4.12
Macedonian Pine	13.39	Scarlet oak	0.93	Rose	6.96
Maritime Pine	8.58	Sessile Oak	17.27	Spindle	7.02
<u>Noble Fir</u>	0.81	Silver Birch	1.40	Wild Cherry	4.06
<u>Norway Spruce</u>	0.81	Small-Leaved Lime	1.71	Willow	2.27
Oriental Spruce	5.28	Sweet Chestnut	3.54		
<u>Pacific Silver Fir</u>	0.81	Tulip Tree	0.71		
Scots Pine	7.29	Whitebeam	0.17		
<u>Serbian Spruce</u>	0.81	Wild Cherry	1.18		
<u>Wellingtonia</u>	0.81	Wild Service Tree	1.02		
Western Hemlock	9.78				
Western Red Cedar	9.78				
<u>Weymouth Pine</u>	0.81				
Total	127.52	Total	41.49	Total	71.46



We hope you have found this information useful and we welcome any comments you have. These plans are also being reviewed by local councils and other stakeholders.

If you'd like any further information or have specific questions, please get in touch with Naomi at pleasantfarm@forestryengland.uk