

Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project

Farley Common

Ecological Scoping & Outline Nature Conservation Management Plan



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sevenoaks District Council, working in conjunction with Kent Wildlife Trust, has secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to enhance the natural heritage of eight Commons occurring within Sevenoaks District.

The Commons, which include - Hosey Common, Farley Common, Crockhamhill Common, Bitchet Common, Fawke Common, Seal Chart & Redhill Woods, Sevenoaks Common, and a small Common in Weald village in Sevenoaks – cover an area of nearly 300ha of varied habitats ranging from high forest to coppiced woodland and rare wooded heath. The Commons are connected to the long distance Greensand Way path which runs along the ridge and joins the National Trust properties of Chartwell, Knole and Ightham Mote. An overview map showing the location of each of the Commons is included at Figure 1.

For the purposes of this project the eight Commons are collectively known as the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons. They are some of the most beautiful wild places in the south east, but have become overgrown and undervalued.

The aim of the project is to turn the tide and reignite a sense of value and interest in the natural heritage of the Commons by recruiting and training volunteers and implementing an exciting programme of practical restoration, public participation in scientific research and heritage learning activities. It will see the landowners and stakeholders coming together to engage local people and support a shared effort to restore, protect and manage these Commons. It will also develop Friends of the Commons groups, as well as building the skills and capacity of local people to protect, manage and promote the heritage of the Commons for present and future generations.

Under-pinning this work is the provision of a series of ecological scoping and outline nature conservation management reports which will identify and evaluate the existing biodiversity features (habitats and species) known to occur on the Commons, and make outline recommendations for nature conservation management aimed at maintaining and enhancing the existing biodiversity interest of each Common.

Farley Common is owned by the Squerryes Estate and managed by Sevenoaks District Council.

This report presents the findings of the desktop study and site walkover of Farley Common.

1.2 Survey Location / Area

Farley Common is located on the western edge of Westerham at OS central grid reference TQ437540. It extends to approximately 5.06ha and is bounded by development and associated roads along its eastern, southern and northwestern boundary. The northeastern boundary abuts grassland, whilst the western boundary abuts a former sand pit (Squerryes Sand Pit). The Common is bisected by Farley Lane.

A map and aerial photographic extract showing the general location and boundaries of the Common are included at Figures 2 and 3.

1.3 Limitations and Constraints

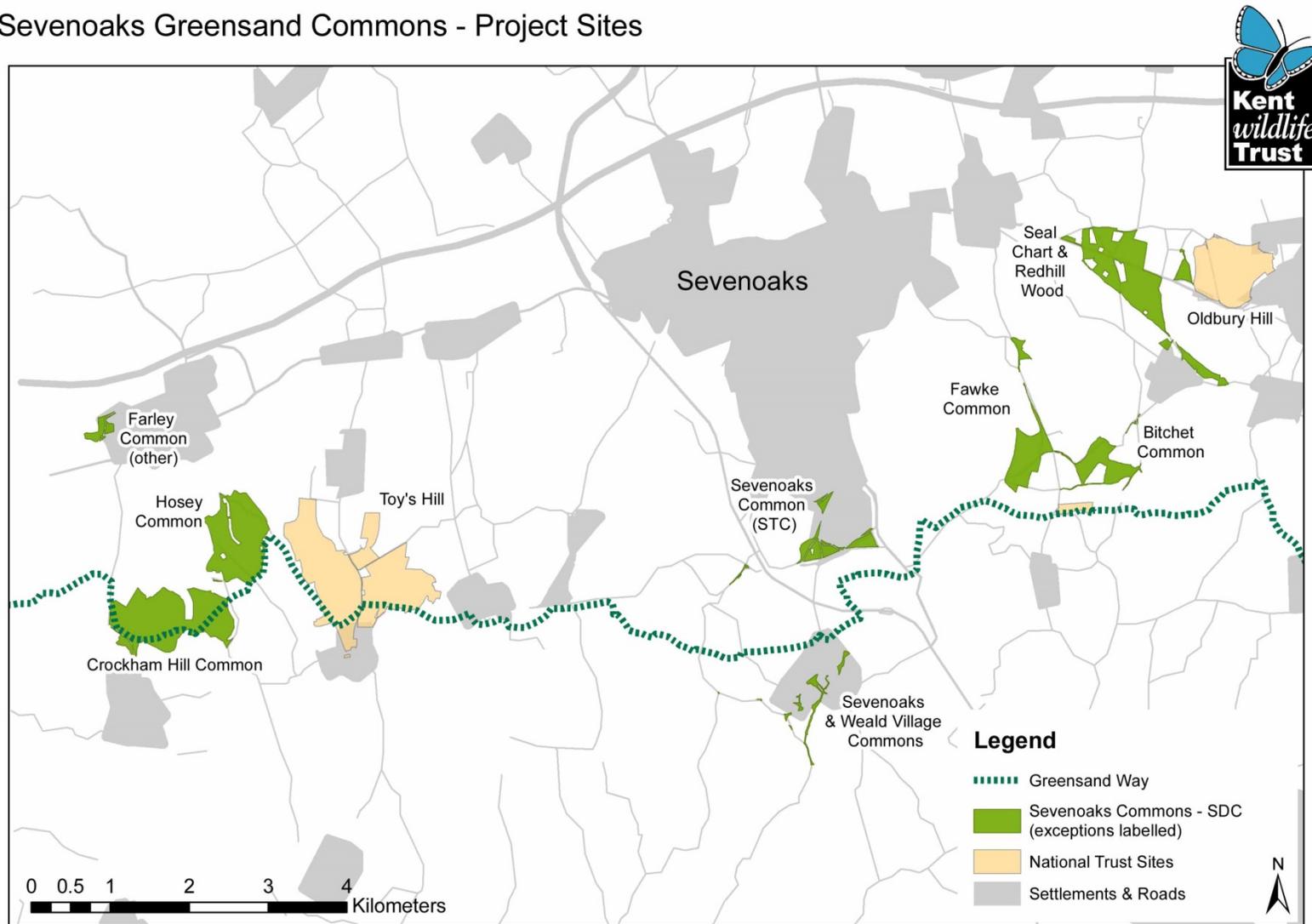
The timing for the delivery of this HLF project has imposed several limitations on this element of the work in terms of seasonality and time.

The main site survey was undertaken at a sub-optimal time of year (March) when many plant species that may occur on the Common will not be visible. Time constraints also meant that it was only possible to make a single site visit to the Common. The combined effect will have impacted the detailed recording of the site and limited the overall number of species recorded. However, it is unlikely to have impacted the identification / evaluation of important habitats or their potential to support protected species.

The remit for the survey was extended following submission of the March 2017 report to include additional areas of Common land to the west and southwest of Farley Lane (Target Notes 7, 8 & 9; Figure 5). These latter areas were visited in June 2017.

It should also be noted that the findings of this report represent the professional opinion of a qualified ecologist and do not constitute professional legal advice.

Sevenoaks Greensand Commons - Project Sites



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Figure 1: Sevenoaks Greensand Commons. Overview Map

Sevenoaks Greensand Charts and Commons - Project Sites - Farley Common

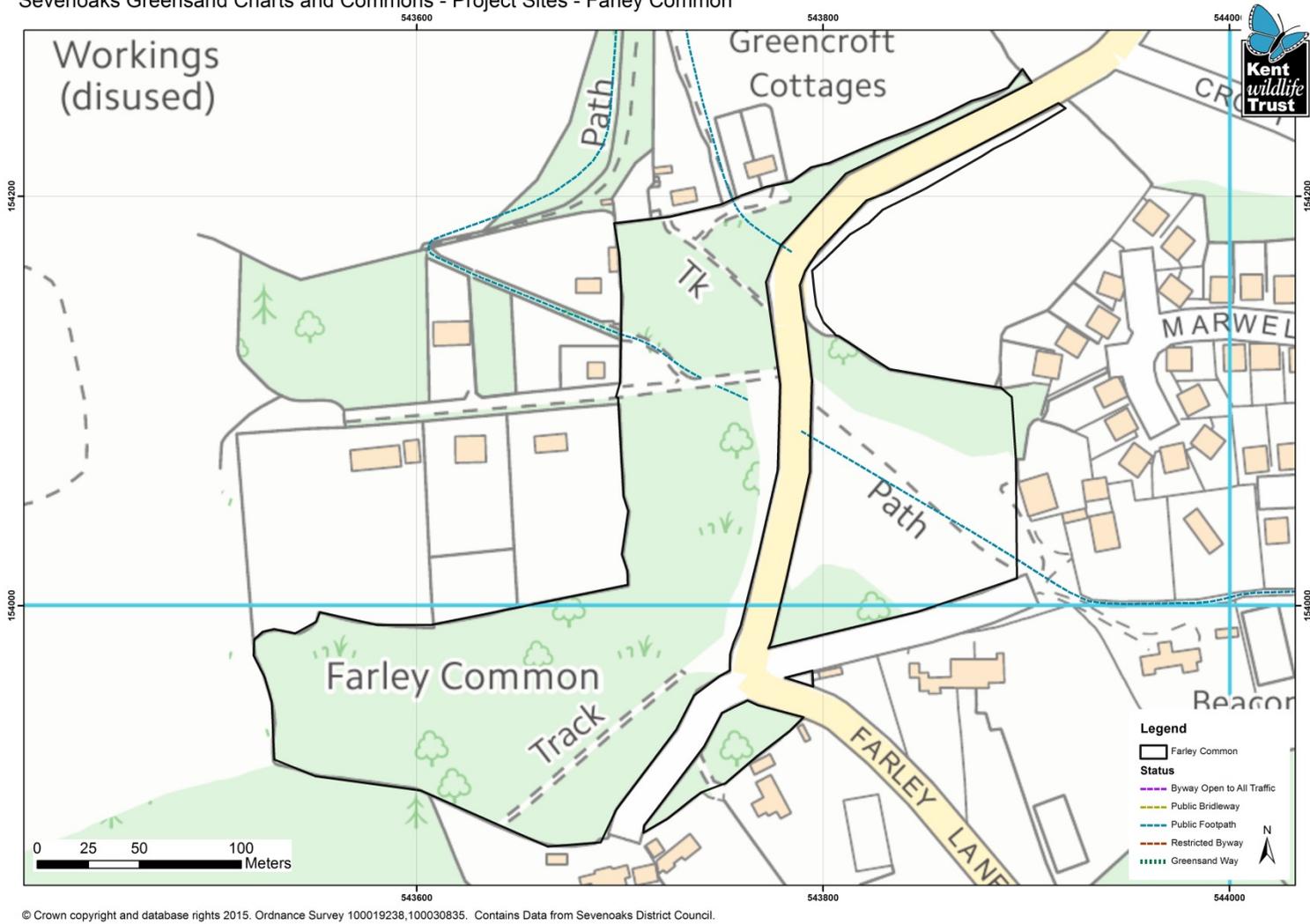


Figure 2: Farley Common. Site Location and Boundary Map



Figure 3: Farley Common. Google Earth Aerial photographic extract (image date 24 May 2009) showing the boundary of the Common (outlined in red). *All boundaries are indicative only. Do not scale*

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desktop Study

A number of sources were consulted for records of statutory and non-statutory wildlife designations, notable habitats and protected / notable species. These comprised:

- Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre ¹ (KMBRC)
- Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group ² (KRAG)
- Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)

KMBRC was asked to carry out a database search of the Westerham cluster of Commons, which included Farley Common³. They were asked to provide information relating to the following:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites
- Identification, distribution and extent of habitats⁴
- Protected Species Inventory
- Conservation Concern Species Inventory (NERC Section 41 & BAP Priority)
- Invasive Non-native Species Inventory
- Kent Rare & Scarce Species Inventory
- Bat records from Kent Bat Group (including map of nearby roost locations)
- Bird records from Kent Ornithological Society, including an indication of breeding
- Habitat data from the Kent Integrated Habitat Survey 2012⁵
- BAP habitat data from the Kent Integrated Habitat Survey 2012

KRAG was asked to provide information relating to the following:

- Inventory of reptiles and amphibians
- Inventory of ponds

KWT carried out a search of its Local Wildlife Sites site files for any relevant habitat, species or management information relating to Farley Common.

In addition, KWT also utilised open source data, such as that provided by the British Geological Society⁶, for information relating to geology and the Soilsapes website⁷ for information relating to soils.

2.2 Site Visit

Farley Common was visited on 1st March 2017 and 20th June 2017 by Neil Coombs CEnv MCIEEM, Land Management Advisor for Kent Wildlife Trust.

Weather conditions at the time of the March site visit were mainly overcast with rain showers; conditions were sunny during the June visit.

¹ www.kmbrc.org.uk

² <http://www.kentarg.org/>

³ Other Commons included within the Westerham Cluster are Hosey Common and Crockhamhill Common

⁴ Identification of habitats are based on the results of the Arch Habitat Survey of Kent – available to view at <http://www.archnature.eu/mapping-tools.html>

⁵ <http://www.archnature.eu/mapping-tools.html>

⁶ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

⁷ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilsapes/>

The walkover survey comprised four elements: a Phase 1 Habitat Survey; a preliminary Woodland Condition Assessment; a preliminary veteran tree check; and a preliminary check for access issues.

2.2.1 Preliminary Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The habitat survey was undertaken in general accordance with Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology, which provides a standardised system for classifying and mapping wildlife habitats (JNCC, 2010). The survey involved mapping vegetation types onto aerial photographs⁸, in terms of some ninety specified habitat types, using standard colour codes. Further information is gained from the use of descriptive ‘target notes’, which give a brief account of particular areas of interest.

2.2.2 Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

The methodology used for the preliminary woodland condition survey was adapted from the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Woodlands⁹ (JNCC, 2004), and the Condition Assessment Monitoring Form for Woodlands¹⁰ (Essex Wildlife Trust). It targeted the main woodland area and provided information relating to:

- Woodland type (i.e. native / secondary / scrub / PAWS / broadleaved / conifer)
- Main species composition and main compartments
- Stand type i.e. coppicing, maiden, plantation
- Age class
- Evidence of historic features i.e. wood banks (limited to what is noted during walkover only)
- Evidence of existing management
- General Condition Assessment i.e. under active management, neglected, unmanaged.

2.2.3 Preliminary Veteran Tree Check

The aim of the preliminary veteran tree check was to:

- Establish presence / absence of veteran trees on site.
- Provide general location data for trees e.g. ‘veteran trees are mainly concentrated in the southern end’, or ‘scattered throughout the site’
- Provide general information about main species noted i.e. oak, hornbeam, ash, etc.

⁸ Using the Phase 1 Habitat Survey Toolkit <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/bms/services/ceec/phase-one-habitat-survey-toolkit/about/>

⁹ Document available to download from http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/CSM_woodland.pdf

¹⁰ Form available to download from <http://www.essexwtrecords.org.uk/sites/default/files/surveyfiles/EWT%20woodland%20condition%20assessment%20form%20amended%2014%2003%2012.pdf>

2.2.4 Preliminary Identification of Access Issues

The preliminary identification of potential access issues was based on what was evident during the site walkover. It included noting the presence of formal / informal paths, existing car parks, apparent use of site i.e. Dog walkers, families, recreation, evidence of fly-tipping or unauthorised vehicular use.

A series of photographs taken during the site visit are included at Appendix A.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Nature Conservation Sites

Farley Common is not included within any statutory designated site for nature conservation; although Westerham Woods SSSI¹¹ is present approximately 430m to the north.

The area of Farley Common to the east of Farley Lane is designated as a Local Wildlife Site¹² (SE63: Farley Common, near Westerham). It has been designated principally for its acid grassland and fringing oak woodland. A copy of the citation is included at Appendix B.

3.2 Geology and Soils

The British Geological Survey website¹³ describes the bedrock geology as, “Folkestone Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 100 to 125 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period.” The superficial geology is described as, “Head - Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel. Superficial Deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period.”

The Soilscales website¹⁴ has identified two soil types on Farley Common. Much of the Common comprises, ‘Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils’¹⁵; while the soils at the extreme southern end of the Common are described as ‘Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils’¹⁶.

Geology and soil maps are available to view on the British Geological Survey and Soilscales websites. Owing to copyright restrictions it is not possible to include map extracts within this report.

3.3 Habitats

The 2012 Kent Habitat Survey shows the site as comprising mainly broadleaved woodland, with an area of acid grassland present to the east of Farley Lane. A small area of neutral grassland is shown bordering the western side of Farley Lane. The habitat map provided by KMBRC is attached at Figure 4.

¹¹ SSSIs are the country's very best wildlife and geological sites. They hold some of our rarest and most threatened wildlife and geology. SSSIs are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

¹² Local Wildlife Sites are considered to be of county wildlife importance. They can contain important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species. Further information is available at <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/localwildlifesites>

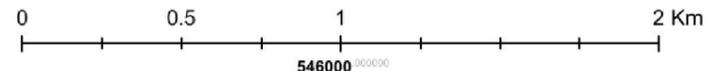
¹³ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/#>

¹⁵ Soilscale 18

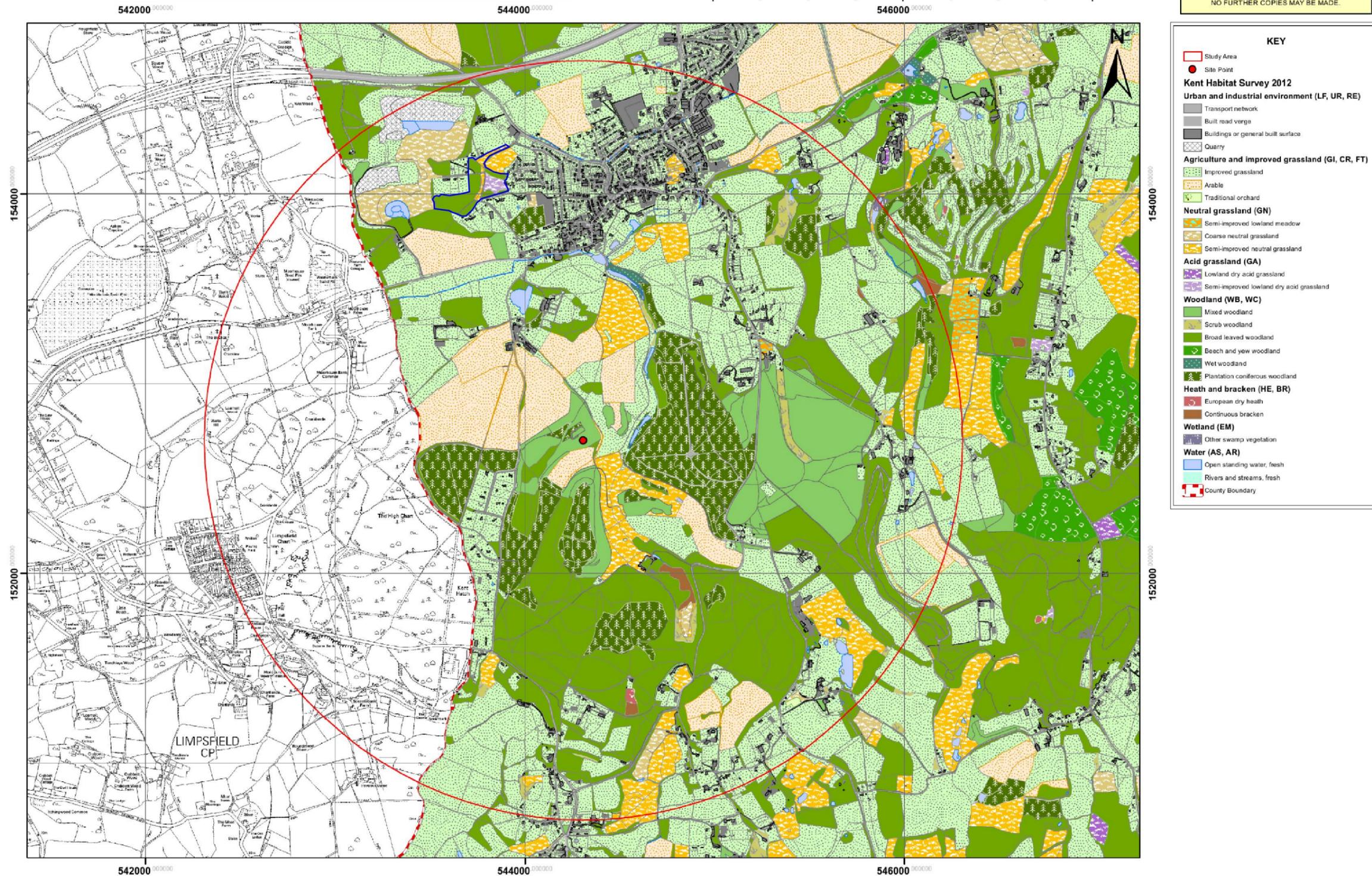
¹⁶ Soilscale 6

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
 Map showing the habitats recorded by the Kent Habitat Survey 2012 at
 Westerham Cluster
 Anne Waite, Kent Wildlife Trust
 ENQ/17/119 17/03/2017



KMBRC would like to acknowledge Kent County Council and the Kent Habitat Survey 2012 for the habitat data used in this map.
 See www.archnature.eu for more information

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KEY

- Study Area
- Site Point
- Kent Habitat Survey 2012**
- Urban and industrial environment (LF, UR, RE)**
 - Transport network
 - Built road verge
 - Buildings or general built surface
 - Quarry
- Agriculture and improved grassland (GI, CR, FT)**
 - Improved grassland
 - Arable
 - Traditional orchard
- Neutral grassland (GN)**
 - Semi-improved lowland meadow
 - Coarse neutral grassland
 - Semi-improved neutral grassland
- Acid grassland (GA)**
 - Lowland dry acid grassland
 - Semi-improved lowland dry acid grassland
- Woodland (WB, WC)**
 - Mixed woodland
 - Scrub woodland
 - Broad leaved woodland
 - Beech and yew woodland
 - Wet woodland
 - Plantation coniferous woodland
- Heath and bracken (HE, BR)**
 - European dry heath
 - Continuous bracken
- Wetland (EM)**
 - Other swamp vegetation
- Water (AS, AR)**
 - Open standing water, fresh
 - Rivers and streams, fresh
- County Boundary

Figure 4: Farley Common. Kent Habitat Survey, 2012. For ease of reference Farley Common is shown outlined in blue

The 2017 Phase 1 Habitat Survey results were broadly similar, confirming the site was dominated by broadleaved semi-natural woodland, with areas of semi-improved acid and semi-improved neutral grassland. The map is enclosed at Figure 5. The accompanying target notes are included within the following table:

Table 1: Farley Common Target Notes

Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded (Abundance (DAFOR ¹⁷)) during 2017 walkover
TN1	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (3.42ha)	Wood pasture habitat to west of Farley Lane. Canopy of mostly oak <i>Quercus</i> spp., and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ; sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> was also present. The understorey was dominated by holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> , with some hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> and ash and sycamore seedlings. Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> was locally abundant in the ground flora. No evidence of ash dieback disease was observed, but is likely to be present. There was some dumping of general garden waste within this compartment. The fenced boundary to the adjacent residential properties is raised, and may represent an original woodland boundary. No deer were observed; birds recorded on the day of the visit included great tit, jay and great spotted woodpecker.	Field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> (O); sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> (O); silver birch <i>Betula pendula</i> (O); hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> (F); hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> (F); beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> (O); ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (F); bluebell (LA); holly (F); wild cherry / bird cherry <i>Prunus avium / padus</i> (O); oak <i>Quercus</i> spp. (D); bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. (F); yew <i>Taxus baccata</i> (O).
TN2	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.4ha)	Included within SE63 LWS. Open roadside woodland compartment to acid grassland. Canopy dominated by oaks, with frequent sycamore.	Sycamore (F); hawthorn (O); beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> (O); ash (O); holly (O); oak (D); bramble (O); yew (O).
TN3	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.64ha)	Included within SE63 LWS. Woodland edge to northern boundary. Blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> was frequent along the woodland / acid grassland interface. Oak was frequent in the canopy and showed evidence of coppice management. Woodland / scrub species were intruding into the open acid grassland along the margins of this woodland block.	Hazel (O); ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> (O); holly (F); honeysuckle <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> (F); blackthorn (F); oak (F); bramble (O); yew (O).
TN4	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.11ha)	Included within SE63 LWS. Woodland fringing eastern boundary. Woodland / scrub species were intruding into the open acid grassland along the margins of this woodland block.	Silver birch (O); hazel (O); rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> (O); yew (O).
TN5	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.14ha)	Included within SE63 LWS. Woodland fringing southern boundary. Woodland / scrub species were intruding into the open acid grassland along the margins of this woodland block.	Silver birch (O); holly (O); oak (F); bramble (O); yew (O).
TN6	Semi-improved Acid Grassland (0.4ha)	Included within SE63 LWS. An open grassland compartment with scrub and	Gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i> (O); sheeps sorrel <i>Rumex acetosella</i>

¹⁷ DAFOR = Dominant; Abundant; Frequent; Occasional; Rare

Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded (Abundance (DAFOR ¹⁷)) during 2017 walkover
		woodland to edge and boundaries. Gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i> , is somewhat invasive within the grassland and woodland is intruding along the margins. A number of mown paths cross the site and it is believed that this area is managed by occasional mowing. Ongoing management will be required in order to maintain this habitat.	(O).
TN7	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.15ha)	Small woodland block dominated by 80% oak with occasional beech standards and some semi-established sycamore. Both standing and fallen deadwood was observed in this compartment.	Fescue <i>Festuca sp.</i> , broad buckler fern <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i> , ivy, bluebell, holly, <i>Primula</i> species <i>Primula sp.</i> , brambles, docks and sorrels <i>Rumex spp.</i> ; common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> .
TN8	Broadleaved Semi-natural Woodland (0.62ha)	Compartment consists of mature ash with very occasional sycamore with bramble scrub at the edge, grading to a wooded sub-compartment of ash standards with some oak saplings and very occasional oak coppice.	
TN9	Semi-improved Neutral Grassland (0.08ha)	Shady grassland verge with occasional trees to Farley Lane. Grassland is dominated grass-dominated, with range of flowering plants characteristic of woodland edge habitats.	Hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> , Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> , perennial ryegrass <i>Lolium perenne</i> , blackthorn, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , brambles <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg., docks and sorrels, goat willow <i>Salix caprea</i> , wood sage <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> , common nettle.

Sevenoaks Greensand Charts and Commons - Farley Common: Phase One Habitat Map



Figure 5: Farley Common. Phase 1 Habitat Map, based on site walkover surveys undertaken in 2017

3.4 Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

A preliminary woodland condition survey was undertaken within the main woodland block located to the west of Farley Lane (see TN1).

The results are presented in Table 2 below. The Species / Structure / Age Class data has also been presented as a bar chart, attached at Appendix C.

Table 2: Farley Common. TN1: Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

Feature	Description
Woodland Type:	Mixed Native Broadleaved Woodland.
Habitat Type: e.g. Coppice woodland; Ride; Glade; Wood Pasture:	Wood Pasture (neglected).
Species / Structure / Age Class: Key to abbreviations Seedling (SE) Sapling (SA) Semi-established (SET) Established (EST) Mature (MAT) Standard (STA) Shrub layer/Understorey (SL/US) Over mature Veteran (V) Coppice <5 years Scrub height Mature (for species) Percentages where given are rough percentages of that feature	Hawthorn (SL/US) 10% Ash (SA) 30% Ash (STA) 50% Holly (SL/US) 90% Hawthorn (SA) 30% Holly (SA)40% Beech (V) to domestic boundary. Oak (STA) 50% Holly (EST) to domestic boundary 80%
Ground Flora:	Bluebells.
Fungi:	None observed.
Decaying Wood:	Some
Standing:	Standing >5%
Fallen:	Fallen 5%-10%
Invasive Species:	None observed.
Deer Damage:	None observed.
Historic Features:	Ditch/earthwork - Short section approximately 40m long at approximate OS grid reference TQ436539.
General Comments:	Overall structure is wood pasture. Oak and Ash form the main standards and canopy trees. In places the ash is double-stemmed. Holly is dominant in the shrub layer with occasional silver birch, and very occasional cherry. Bluebell is present in the ground flora. In places bramble is likely to be dominant. There are one or two veteran / over-mature trees as detailed in Chapter 3.4.

3.5 Preliminary Veteran Tree Check

Several veteran trees were observed within the main woodland block to the west of Farley Lane. Further details are given in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Farley Common. Preliminary Veteran Tree Check

Species	Type	Location	Approx DBH	Photo	Comments
Beech	Boundary coppice.	Domestic boundary.	Multi-stemmed. Mean stem diameter approximately 40cms. Previously coppiced.	Photo 5 (Appendix A).	Good example of boundary/hedgerow tree. Detailed assessment particularly with regard to proximity to boundary recommended. West boundary (TN1).
Field Maple	Coppice. Possible former boundary tree.	To corner of domestic boundary fence.	Multi-stemmed possibly coppiced or damage. Each stem >50cm,	Photo 6 (Appendix A).	Boundary tree potentially may qualify as veteran due to girth, and size for species. Ivy provides Bat Roost Potential. West boundary (TN1).
Oak (considered most likely to be pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i>)	Coppiced, multi-stem at > 1m.	Woodland to west of Farley Lane.	At fork each stem >50cm.	Photo 7 (Appendix A).	Tree in centre of woodland. Multi-stemmed with veteran tree characteristics.

3.6 Species

Table 4 below provides a summary of the species information obtained as part of the desktop study. For the full data set, refer to the KMBRC data search results for the ‘Westerham Cluster’.

Table 4: Farley Common. Protected / notable species which either occur within, or have the potential to occur within or close to Farley Common

Species	Summary of Taxon Interest	Occurrence of protected / notable species on or near site	Status
Plants	Woodland / acid grassland support typical range of species. Acid grassland is characteristically species-poor; five indicator species of unimproved acid grassland recorded within LWS: heath wood-rush <i>Luzula multiflora</i> , heath-grass <i>Danthonia decumbens</i> , heath bedstraw <i>Galium saxatile</i> , harebell <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> , mouse-ear hawkweed <i>Pilosella officinarum</i> .	Bluebell in woodland block to west of Farley Lane Heath-grass	Bluebell: listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended). Protection is limited to ‘sale’ only. ¹⁸ Heath-grass: County Scarce ¹⁹ , being recorded in 28 tetrads (Philp, 2010).
Birds	No bird records attributed to Farley Common. However, datasearch includes a number of woodland species which may nest or forage within the wooded areas including green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, wren, dunnock, robin, blackbird, song thrush, whitethroat, garden warbler, blackcap, chiffchaff, willow warbler, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, nuthatch, jay.	Song thrush ^{+, k, S41}	All species of bird whilst actively nesting are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). ²⁰ Those species marked with ‘+’ are Red List ²¹ species; Those species marked with ‘k’ are Kent Red Data Book species; Those species marked with ‘S’41’ are Species of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Species).
Bats	Eleven species of bat, of the 15 species recorded in Kent, have been recorded in this area. Several bat roosts have been confirmed within a 1km-radius – the closest being confirmed within a residential development approximately 70m south east of the Common. There is also a hibernating bat record approximately 495m to the west of the Common,	Serotine, Alcahloe, Bechstein’s, Brandt’s, Daubenton’s, Whiskered, Natterer’s, Noctule*, Pipistrelle (45kHz), Pipistrelle (55kHz)*, Brown long-eared*	Afforded full legal protection under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended). Also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 ²² and are therefore “European Protected Species”. Those species marked with ‘*’ are considered to be Species of Principal

¹⁸ <http://naturenet.net/law/sched8.html>

¹⁹ Species recorded in between 1 and 5% of tetrads (Philp, 2010)

²⁰ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

²¹ Definition included at http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/status_explained.aspx

²² Further details about the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1379>

Species	Summary of Taxon Interest	Occurrence of protected / notable species on or near site	Status
	and a maternity roost approximately 900m to the southwest.		Importance in England (formerly UKBAP) ²³ .
Badgers	No records for Farley Common itself; no evidence of badgers were observed during the site walkover, however the Common contains suitable foraging habitat and their intermittent presence should not be discounted.		Badgers and their setts are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 ²⁴ .
Hazel Dormouse	No site records; however there is one relatively recent record from Crockhamhill. Farley Common does have physical links into the wider countryside and although too small to support a self-sustaining population of dormice, their potential presence within the wooded areas should not be entirely discounted.		Afforded full legal protection under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended). Also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 ²⁵ and therefore a "European Protected Species". A Species of Principal Importance in England (formerly UKBAP) and is included on Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended) ²⁶ .
Reptiles	No records of reptiles on the Common. Records of viviparous lizard, slow-worm, grass snake and adder within 2km-radius of Common. The closest recorded reptile observation is for grass snake, located at Farley Lane, 0.5km to NE.	The Common supports suitable habitat for supporting reptiles. KRAG considers that there is a high likelihood of grass snake and adder occurring, and that viviparous lizard is also likely to occur.	Protected against killing & injury under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended).
Amphibians	No records of amphibians on the Common. Common frog, common toad and great crested newt recorded within 2km-radius of Common. The closest recorded great crested newt observation is located some 0.5km to the NE. There are five ponds within a 1km-radius of the site, with the nearest pond being some 0.43km distant.	The absence of ponds on site will limit its value for supporting breeding great crested newts. However, individual animals may use the habitats on the Common for sheltering, foraging and/or dispersal and their presence should not be discounted.	Afforded full legal protection under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended). Also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 ²⁷ and therefore a "European Protected Species". A Species of Principal Importance in England (formerly UKBAP) and is included on Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended) ²⁸ .

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<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

²⁴ A summary of the Protection of Badgers Act is available at

<http://adlib.everysite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?doc=18122&id=18124>

²⁵ Further details about the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1379>

²⁶ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

²⁷ Further details about the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1379>

²⁸ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

3.7 Identification of Access Issues

Farley Common is designated as Registered Common Land and has been mapped as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Figure 6).

There are two Public Right of Way crossing the Common (Figure 7). A number of informal tracks and paths crisscross the Common, traversing both the main woodland block to the west of Farley Lane and the acid grassland to the east of the Lane. The informal paths through the acid grassland appear to be maintained by mowing and foot traffic.

Fly-tipping of general garden waste was observed within the woodland block to the west of Farley Lane.

MAGIC

Farley Common. Access Map

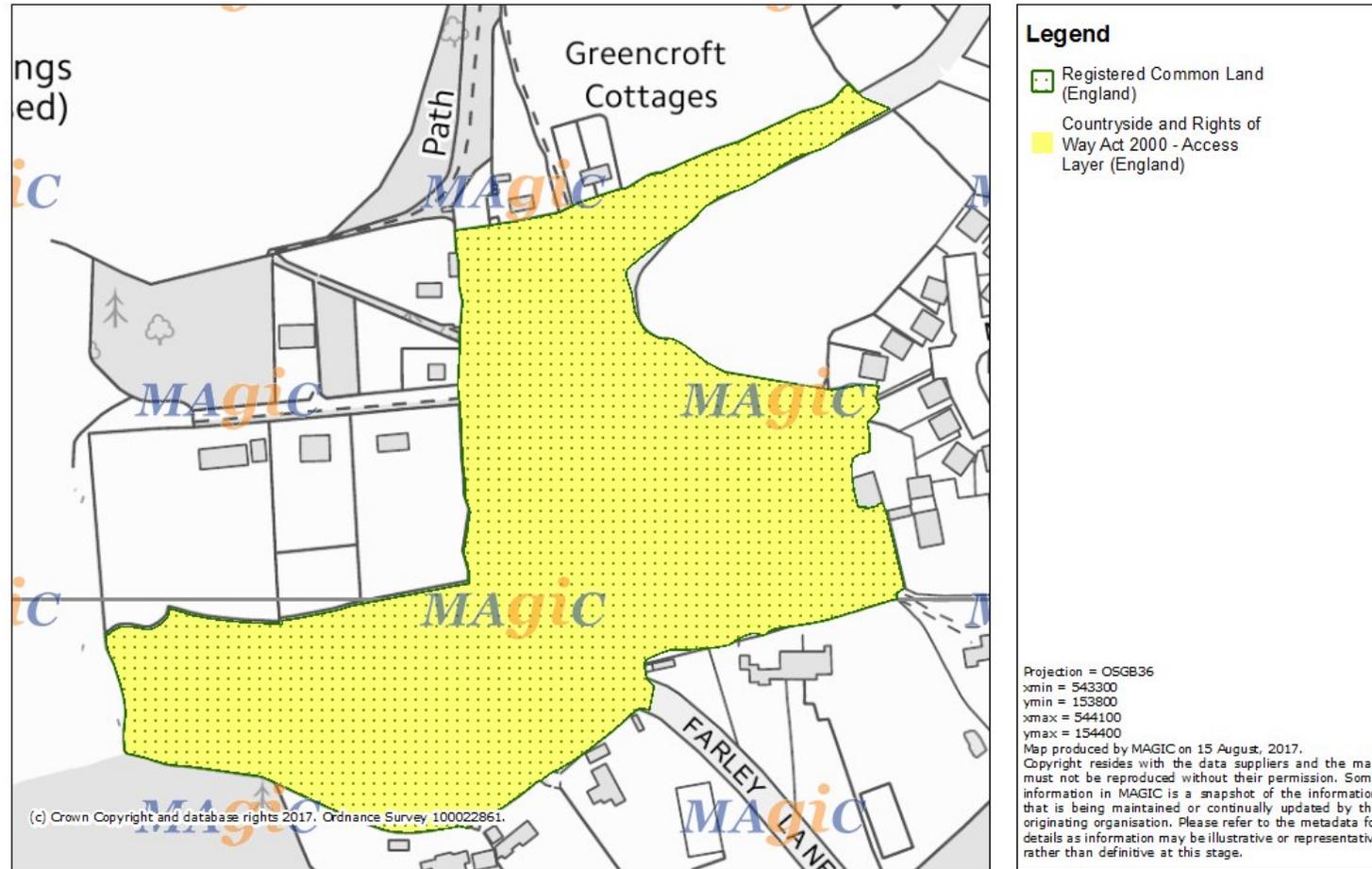


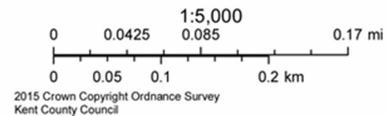
Figure 6: Farley Common. Access Map

Farley Common Public Rights of Way



March 9, 2017

- Public Rights of Way**
- Public Footpath
 - Byway open to all traffic
 - Public Bridleway
 - Restricted Byway



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Figure 7: Farley Common. Public Rights of Way Map

4 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Site Evaluation

Farley Common comprises a mosaic of mixed broadleaved native woodland, semi-improved acid grassland and semi-improved neutral grassland.

The woodland block to the west of Farley Lane comprises mixed deciduous woodland, which was highlighted within the KMBRC data search as being a Priority Habitat i.e. a habitat listed on Section 41 as a Habitat of Principal Importance in England (formerly UK BAP Priority Habitat). The site visit refined this status, concluding that the woodland contained features more characteristic of a wood pasture-type habitat, again categorised as a Priority Habitat, but also included within the 'Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland' Kent Habitat Action Plan (Plan 16, 2005a).

Wood pasture is generally considered to be a vegetation structure rather than a particular plant community, typically consisting of large, open-grown or high forest trees (often pollards) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. The value for this priority habitat type comes from the range of specialised and varied habitats found within the landscape. The presence of ancient or veteran trees provide such microhabitats as old bark, dead or decaying wood, holes and splits that support a range of insects, fungi and lichens. The grassland component of the complex is frequently grazed and provides open vegetation and habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Dung from grazing animals adds a further component to the invertebrate and fungal diversity of this habitat. The importance of this complex comes from the long continuity in the management and/or the structure of the land, with very long-lived trees supporting significant amounts of dead and decaying timber (Kent Habitat Survey, 2012).

The wood pasture at Farley Common is largely unmanaged and is now taking on features of mature mixed deciduous woodland with a good and near complete canopy structure and a reasonably diverse understorey with some ground flora and a considerable amount of standing and fallen decaying wood. With no management intervention it is likely to develop characteristics of high forest, with a corresponding decline in the structure and features of wood pasture.

Given its current status as S41 Priority Habitat, it is recommended that the introduction of some management work should be considered in order to restore the wood pasture habitat. This may include thinning of some of the canopy trees and rotational coppicing of the understorey in order to create 'halos' around some of the mature trees. Ideally grazing would be considered as a tool to create a much more open structure, so important within wood pasture for encouraging the development of flowering plants and shrubs, which provide the nectar and pollen required by the specialist invertebrates whose larvae develop in decaying wood. Without grazing pressure, creation / maintenance of the wood pasture structure is unlikely to be achievable in this compartment.

The wood pasture has few veteran / mature trees (Chapter 3.5); two being recorded on the boundary, and one within the centre of the wood. Only one tree, a field maple, was considered to have bat roost potential; however any management to these trees should consider the potential for bat roosts to be present, particularly as bat roosts have been identified close to the Common (Ch 3.6).

The acid grassland and fringing woodland to the east of Farley Lane is considered to be of County Importance by virtue of its designation as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Acid grassland is a Priority Habitat having been listed as a Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance in England (formerly UK BAP Priority Habitat). It is one of the rarest and most threatened habitats in Kent, with the 2012 Kent Habitat Survey having identified only 260.8ha of priority acid grassland habitat in Kent (0.07% of the area of Kent)²⁹. As such, it is also included within the 'Lowland Acid Grassland' Kent Habitat Action Plan (Plan 12, 2005b).

As is characteristic of this habitat generally, the grassland at Farley Common is generally species poor. Whilst it was too early to identify many species of grasses and flowers during the 2017 walkover survey, the LWS citation has identified a variety of species, including five acid indicator species and one county scarce plant – heath-grass. It is currently managed by cutting, but it was evident that scrub and tree seedlings were intruding into the grassland along the woodland margins. In the absence of a grazing regime the grassland should continue to be cut as required in order to maintain the existing sward structure; however the cuttings should be removed in order to avoid a build-up of thatch and nutrients which will lead to a decline in the biodiversity interest of this area.

Management should also aim to limit any further 'creep' of the woodland edge, whilst maintaining the woodland edge structure given that many species make regular use of woodland edge habitats for feeding due to higher herb layer productivity and larger invertebrate populations³⁰.

The remaining areas of grassland i.e. the grassland occurring along the verge of Farley Lane, is semi-improved neutral grassland, a common habitat type in Kent, occupying some 7.3% of the County (Kent Habitat Survey, 2012). The grassland was immediately adjacent to broadleaved woodland and, although grass-dominated, supported a range of common flowering plants characteristic of woodland edge habitats. No notable species were recorded within these grassland areas and neither can be classed as Priority Habitats. The grassland appears to be managed by mowing, and it is recommended that it should continue to be cut as required in order to maintain the existing sward structure.

Ash was a significant component of the wood pasture, and was also present in the fringing woodland to the east of Farley Lane. Although no evidence of ash dieback was observed during the walkover survey, the Forestry Commission has confirmed that ash dieback disease was confirmed in TQ45 in 2014³¹. Ongoing monitoring will therefore be required.

Rhododendron was recorded within the woodland fringing the eastern boundary of the Local Wildlife Site (TN4). Whilst not currently a problem on Farley Common, rhododendron is an extremely invasive species and, if left unchecked, may form dense, impenetrable thickets with the resulting deep shade and toxic leaf litter suppressing growth of native plants. It is also of limited value to wildlife and may negatively impact some groups e.g. research has shown that bird numbers are lower in mature oak woodlands dominated by rhododendron³².

²⁹ <http://www.archnature.eu/>

³⁰ A greater number of species inhabit the first 10 metres of any woodland edge or ride edge than inhabit the remainder of the woodland ([http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ewgs-on011-ride-manqt.pdf/\\$FILE/ewgs-on011-ride-manqt.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/ewgs-on011-ride-manqt.pdf/$FILE/ewgs-on011-ride-manqt.pdf)).

³¹ <http://chalaramap.fera.defra.gov.uk/>

³² www.nonnativespecies.org/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1018

According it is recommended that steps are taken to eradicate or control the spread of rhododendron at this site.

The data search has no records of any protected species directly attributable to Farley Common, although one species, bluebell, was recorded during the site walkover. However, the site walkover established that the mosaic of grassland / woodland habitats provides suitable opportunities for a number of protected species including reptiles, amphibians, breeding birds, bats, badgers and dormice. It is recommended that survey work should aim to establish the presence / absence of protected species within the Common as their presence would need to be taken into account when planning any management works in order to ensure compliance with all relevant legal obligations with regards to protected species.

There was some limited fly-tipping of garden waste within the woodland to the west of Farley Lane (TN1). Given its location and composition it is presumed likely to have been left by local residents. There may be opportunities to address such issues of anti-social behaviour during the delivery phase of this project.

4.2 Preliminary Habitat Management

4.2.1 Preliminary Habitat Management Suggestions

The objective of this report is to provide a series of outline nature conservation management recommendations aimed at maintaining and enhancing the main habitats and species of nature conservation interest identified within this report. It is anticipated that these initial recommendations will form the basis of additional consultation with the landowners and other stakeholders, prior to the preparation of a bespoke management plan for the Common, which is likely to happen during the delivery phase of this project.

Further details are provided below.

4.2.1.1 Management of Acid Grassland

- Manage by cutting as-and-when necessary in order to maintain current extent of acid grassland. Arisings should be removed. Ideally structural diversity will be maintained by cutting in a weaving or closing fashion so as to leave a small scale mosaic of cut and uncut patches; by adopting a different random pattern each time then some bits will be cut more often than others.³³
- Manage acid grassland / woodland interface by cutting 2m-wide margin on a four-year rotation in order to encourage the development of a tussocky grassland with flowering plants as this will encourage the development of a rich invertebrate fauna including butterflies, bees and hoverflies.
- Consider extending area of acid grassland by creating scallops along the grassland / woodland interface. This may need to be preceded by a bat survey to establish how bats are currently using these areas for foraging / commuting.

³³ Taken from <https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and-publications/advice-on-managing-bap-habitats/lowland-dry-acid-grassland>

4.2.1.2 Management of Semi-improved Neutral Grassland Areas

- Ideally manage by cut-and-collect as-and-when necessary in order to maintain current sward structure.

4.2.1.3 Management of Wood Pasture

The following management recommendations have been taken from the Buglife website page relating to the management of lowland wood pastures and parklands³⁴.

- Retain all existing old trees wherever possible. Wood pasture and parkland differs from other woodland types in that the trees are growing in open sunny conditions. These support different invertebrate species from those growing in closed canopy woodland, so it is necessary to ensure that there is a continuum of trees standing in the open, especially mature and ancient trees. This may involve selectively thinning some younger trees in areas where denser woodland is developing. Structural diversity is also important to provide a range of sub-habitats.
- Ensure continuity of decaying wood habitat. Decaying wood of all ages, both standing and fallen, should be retained. The more decaying wood a tree contains, the more valuable the habitat it provides in the form of a variety of different niches for a range of invertebrates. Continuity of supply of decaying wood in all conditions and situations is vital because many saproxylic invertebrates need very specific conditions; moisture content can be a critical factor.
- Maintain open areas. Open areas are essential in this habitat, providing sunny sheltered places for flowering plants and shrubs which produce the nectar and pollen required by adult flies and beetles whose larvae develop in dead wood. Continuing traditional management of this habitat such as low-level grazing and rotational cutting will ensure the habitat is maintained in a reasonably open state. Natural vegetational succession results in a closing of the canopy, giving more shaded conditions, which would adversely affect many of the invertebrate species on the site.
- Consider introducing low key grazing. Grazing can help to maintain a diversity of species in the sward and keeps down rank vegetation and invasive scrub. Grazing needs to be carefully managed as it is important to retain a range of flowering herb and shrub species and tussocky grasses.
- Ash die-back disease. Wood pasture should be monitored annually for the presence of ash dieback and if any disease is found steps should be taken according to the most up-to-date advice available³⁵.

³⁴ Available to view at <https://www.buglife.org.uk/advice-and-publications/advice-on-managing-bap-habitats/lowland-wood-pastures-and-parklands>

³⁵ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-92pjlx>

4.2.1.4 Management of Woodland areas to east of Farley Lane

Rhododendron Eradication / Control. The following recommendations are taken from the Kent Wildlife Trust Woodland Management Advice Sheet relating to the control of rhododendron and cherry laurel³⁶:

- Cut during the winter (September to March), focussing on older, seedbearing bushes first, and follow up with stump treatment immediately. Seeds dispersal tends to be very low, generally within a few metres of the bush, and research shows that destroying the oldest/core plant is more effective than starting at the edge of the infested area and dealing with younger plants and seedlings.
- Pull up any seedlings if they come out easily and dig out any plants manually where feasible (don't leave any roots behind)
- Treat young bushes, any regrowth from stumps and any remaining seedlings with a foliar spray mixed with an adjuvant (this breaks down the waxy layer on the surface of the leaf) between May to October. Research seems to show that these sprays are most effective on younger bushes that are less than 1.3m tall.
- Treat mature bushes with a stem injection treatment, if available. If not, then apply a foliar spray as for other younger bushes.
- Burn the cuttings but make sure you limit the number of fire sites since any bare ground created will result in more sites being available for the seeds to take hold.
- Some removal of toxic leaf litter may be required since nothing else will grow there.

Ash die-back disease. All woodland areas should be monitored annually for the presence of ash dieback and if any disease is found steps should be taken according to the most up-to-date advice available³⁷.

4.3 Additional Survey Work

The desktop study has highlighted that there is relatively little biological information relating to Farley Common – records are limited even for the area included within the Local Wildlife Site.

Several surveys are therefore recommended:

- Vascular plant survey of the acid grassland to the east of Farley Lane. As a Habitat of Principal Importance it would be valuable to determine the full extent of its current botanical interest.
- Bat Survey. This should concentrate on establishing the bat roost potential of the veteran trees and other mature trees within the wood pasture, and establish the importance of the acid grassland / woodland interface to foraging / commuting bats.

³⁶ http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/kwt_land_mgt_advice_sheet_9_-_woodland_management_-_control_of_rhododendron.pdf

³⁷ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-92pjlx>

The results of the survey work should be used to inform management work and the requirement for any EPS licencing.

- Hazel dormouse Survey. To establish presence / absence of dormice within the Common. The results of the survey work should be used to inform management work and the requirement for any EPS licencing.
- Reptile Survey. To establish presence / absence of reptiles (and amphibians) within the Common. The results of the survey work should be used to inform management aimed at enhancing the Common for these species.

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Appendix A: Photographs taken during the site visit March / June 2017



1. Photograph showing acid grassland and fringing woodland to east of Farley Lane. This area is within SE63 LWS



2. Photograph acid grassland / woodland interface. This area is within SE63 LWS



3. Photograph showing wood pasture habitat to west of Farley Lane



4. Photograph showing wood pasture and informal path to west of Farley Lane



5. Photograph showing beech coppice. Good example of boundary / hedgerow tree. Wood pasture west of Farley Lane



6. Photograph showing field maple coppice, which may qualify as veteran due to girth and size for species. Ivy provides Bat Roost Potential. Wood pasture west of Farley Lane



7. Photograph showing oak coppice with veteran tree characteristics. Recorded in centre of wood pasture west of Farley Lane



8. Photograph showing the triangular woodland to the south of the common (TN7)



9. Photograph showing the grass verge adjoining bramble scrub and woodland area (TN9)

Appendix B: LWS Citation

SE63 – Farley Common, Near Westerham

Page 1 of 1

KENT WILDLIFE SITE

Local Wildlife Site		Site Ref. No:	SE63
Site:	Farley Common, Near Westerham	Central Grid Ref:	TQ 438541
LPA:	Sevenoaks	Natural Area:	Wealden Greensand
Parish:	Westerham	AONB:	No
Owner:	Private	SLA:	Yes
Category:	Grassland, woodland	TPO:	No
Area:	1.30 ha	Protected species:	
First notified:	August 2002		
Last revised:			

DESCRIPTION

A small area of dry acid grassland, fringed by oak woodland, forms part of a larger area of common land.

The acid grassland is dominated by common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, with a variety of other grasses present including squirreltail fescue *Vulpia bromoides*, heath-grass '*Danthonia procumbens*, brown bent *Agrostis vinealis*, sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and red fescue *F. rubra*. Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* is scattered throughout the marginal areas where the soils are slightly deeper. Heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* and sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella* are frequent. Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and heath wood-rush *Luzula multiflora* are also present.

A small area of richer, neutral grassland is present at the southern margin of the site. This supports abundant common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, red bartsia *Odontites vernus* and bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

The wooded fringes have developed over former common land, and the oaks are generally rather small. Blackthorn, gorse and bramble are intruding into the edges of the open common from the margins.

A number of mown paths cross the site, but the rest appears to be unmanaged. Cutting and clearing the grassland annually would retain this unusual habitat and prevent enrichment and the further encroachment of shrub and tree species.

Common butterflies and grass moths were abundant on the day of the visit.

¹ County Scarce. Atlas of Kent Flora. Philp. 1982.

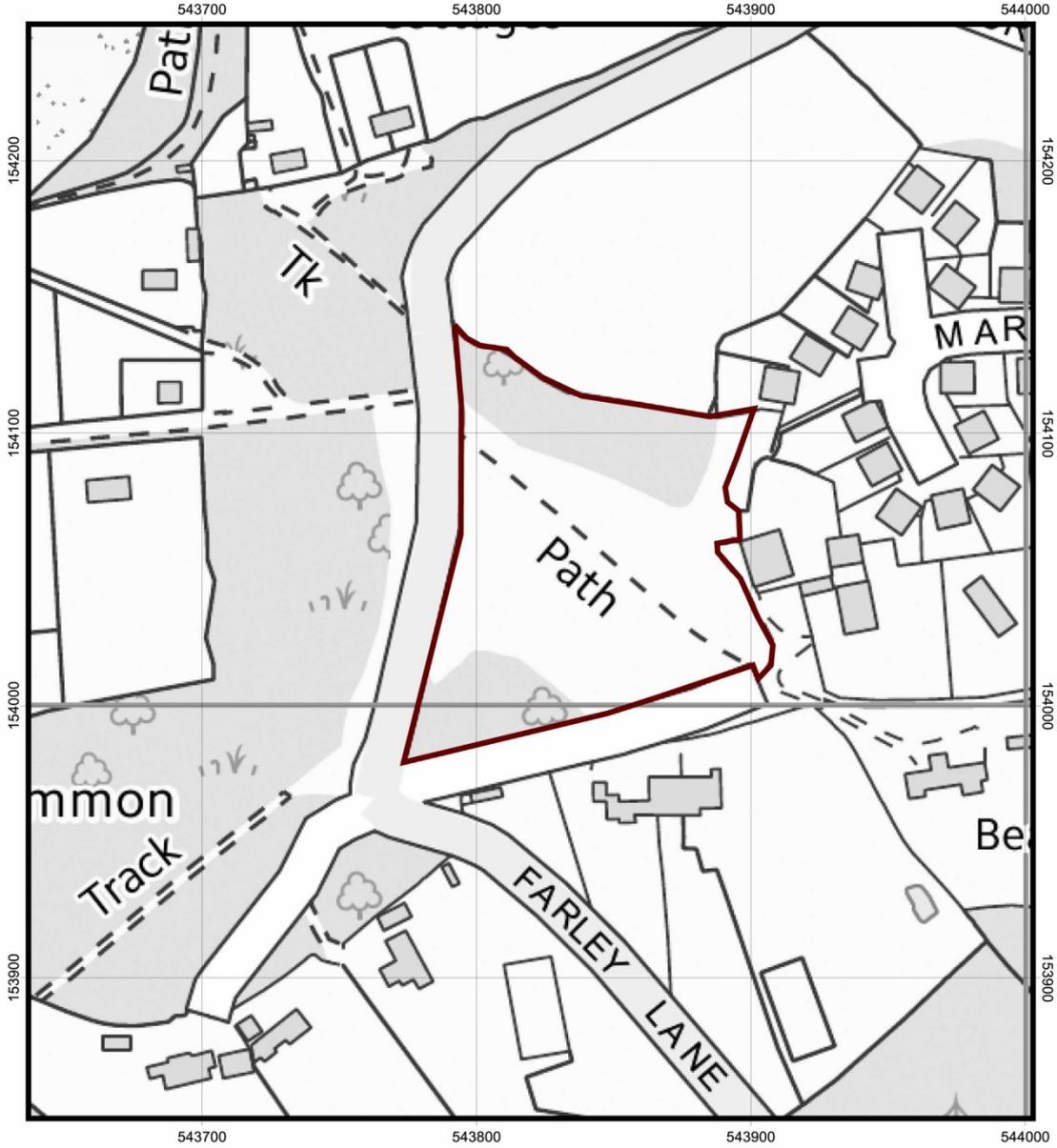


KENT LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE

Site Ref No: **SE63**

Site: FARLEY COMMON, NEAR WESTERHAM

Map ref: TQ 438541



Kent Wildlife Trust © 2014

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Appendix C: Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

The Species / Structure / Age Class data presented in tabular format within Chapter 3.4 is represented here as a bar chart to better illustrate the current structure of the woodland habitat

KEY

DBH	Diameter at Breast Height, used with STA & figure e.g. 40cm
EST	Established
MAT	Mature
PLAN	Plantation
POL	Pollard
SA	Sapling
SE	Seedling
SET	Semi-established
SL	Shrub Layer
STA	Standard
US	Understorey
V	Veteran

TN1

