

Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project

Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons

Ecological Scoping & Outline Nature Conservation Management Plan



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Protecting Wildlife for the Future

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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 to enhance the natural heritage of eight Commons occurring within Sevenoaks District.

The Commons, which include - Hosey Common, Farley Common and Crockhamhill Common, Bitchet Common, Fawke Common, Seal Chart & Redhill Woods, Sevenoaks Common, and the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons – 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.

The Village Green area of Sevenoaks Weald Common is owned by the Knole Estate and managed by Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council.

This report presents the findings of the desktop study and site walkover of the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons.

1.2 Survey Location / Area

The Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons lie approximately 1.5km south of Sevenoaks and 1.3km south of Sevenoaks Common. Together they cover an area of approximately 5.24ha.

The Village Commons comprise a series of discrete blocks of woodland and grassland scattered in and around Sevenoaks Weald. The Magic website¹ has clustered them into four separate Commons as follows (Refer to Figure 5 for location of Compartment Numbers and Target Notes):

- Wicket Common (Compartment 1)
- The Village Green and The Hurst (Compartments 3, 4, 5, 6)
- Area of Land Situated at Long Barn (Compartments 10, 11)
- Four Pieces of Land in the Parish of Sevenoaks Weald (Compartments 7, 9 & TN9)

Compartments 2 and 8 are not depicted as Registered Common Land / Open Access Land on the Magic website (Figure 6).

The Village Commons are surrounded by a mix of broadleaved woodland, grassland, roads and residential properties.

The broadleaved semi-natural woodland abutting the south eastern boundary of Compartment 6, and the eastern boundary of Compartment 8 is included on the ancient woodland inventory².

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

1.3 Limitations and Constraints

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

The time constraints have meant that it has only been possible to make a single site visit to the Common. This 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.

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.

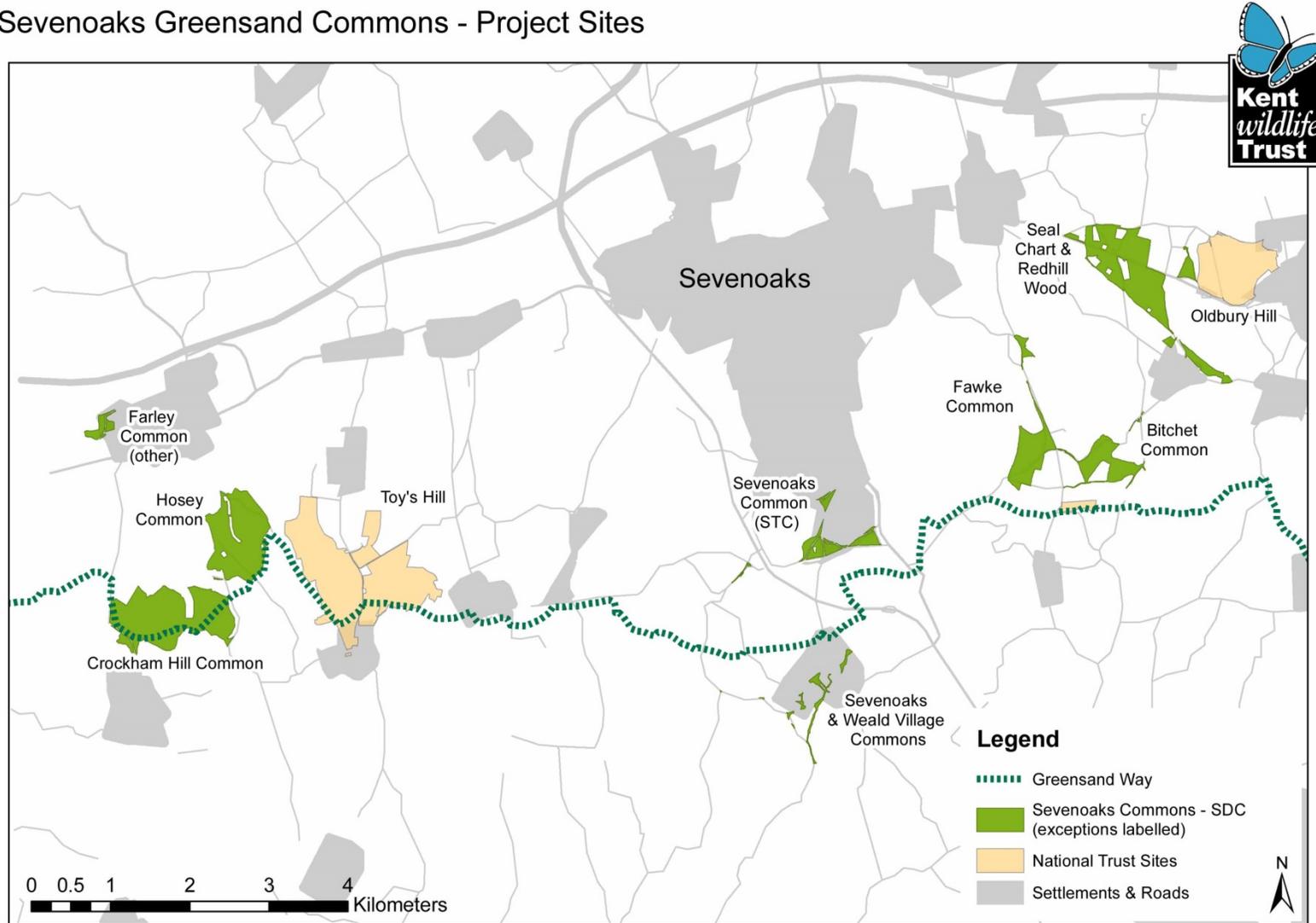
1

<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=commlIndex,crowIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europelIndex,vmIBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=550503:149423:553845:151852&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>

² See map at

<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=commlIndex,crowIndex,ancwoodIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europelIndex,vmIBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=550546:149448:553887:151877&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false> Ancient woodland in England is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. Woodlands classed as ancient are irreplaceable, with ancient woodland being considered important for its wildlife, soils, recreation, cultural value, history and contribution to landscapes.

Sevenoaks Greensand Commons - Project Sites



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Figure 1: Sevenoaks Greensand Commons. Overview Map

Sevenoaks Greensand Charts and Commons - Project Sites - Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons

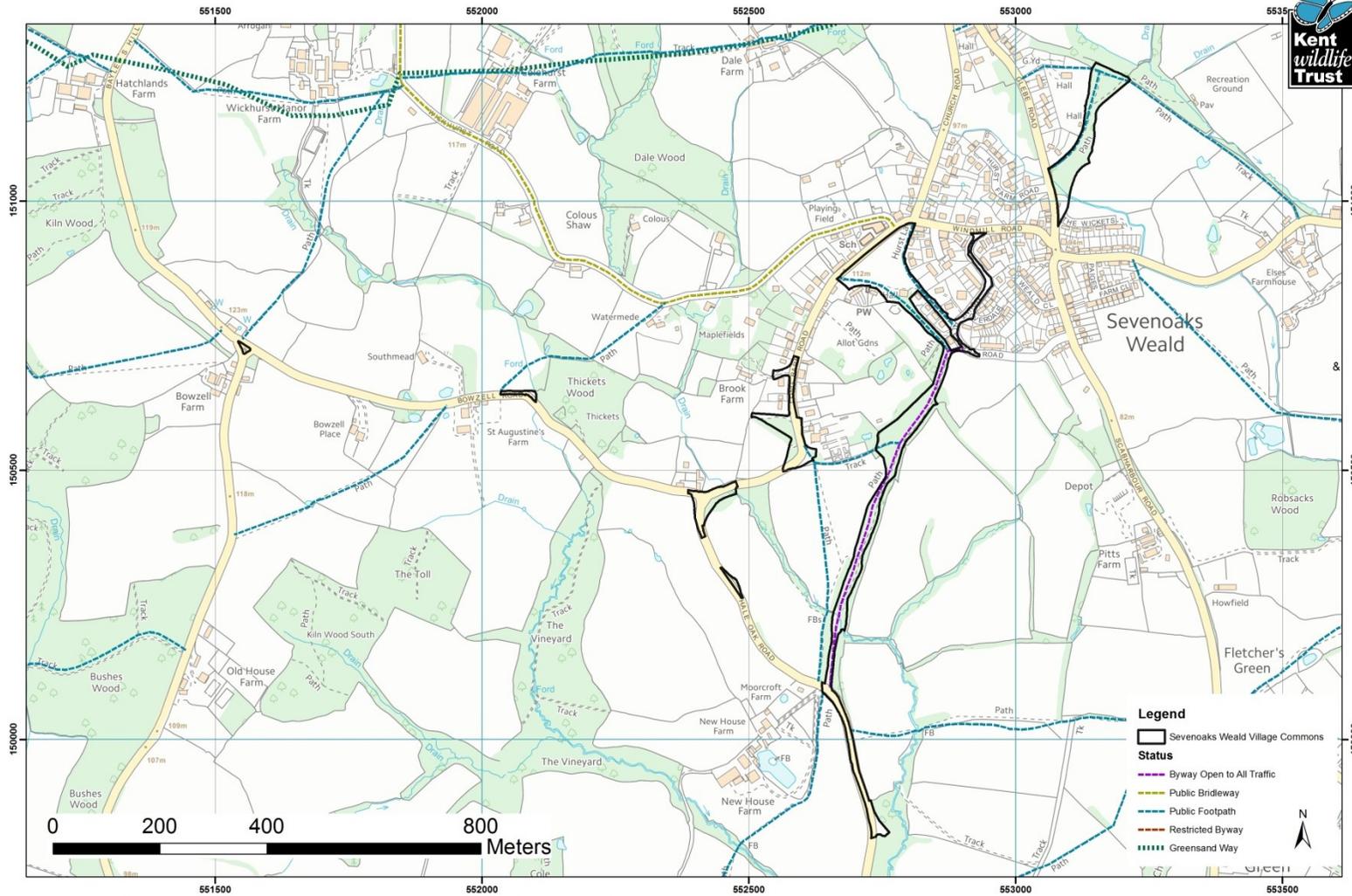


Figure 2: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Site Location and Boundary Map



Figure 3: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Google Earth Aerial photographic extract (imagery date 6 June 2013) 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 ³ (KMBRC)
- Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group ⁴ (KRAG)
- Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)

KMBRC was asked to carry out a combined database search of Sevenoaks Common and the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons⁵. They were asked to provide information relating to the following:

- Statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites
- Identification, distribution and extent of habitats⁶
- 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 2012⁷
- BAP habitat data from the Kent Integrated Habitat Survey 2012

KWT utilised open source data, such as that provided by the British Geological Society⁸, for information relating to geology and the Soilsapes website⁹ for information relating to soils.

2.2 Site Visit

The Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons were visited on 21st and 23rd June 2017 by Neil Coombs CEnv MCIEEM, Land Management Advisor for Kent Wildlife Trust. Weather conditions at the time of the survey visits were sunny.

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.

³ www.kmbrc.org.uk

⁴ <http://www.kentarg.org/>

⁵ The two Commons lie adjacent to each other and it was deemed appropriate to include both within a single data search

⁶ 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>

⁷ <http://www.archnature.eu/mapping-tools.html>

⁸ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

⁹ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilsapes/>

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 photographs¹⁰, 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 Woodlands¹¹ (JNCC, 2004), and the Condition Assessment Monitoring Form for Woodlands¹² (Essex Wildlife Trust). It targeted the woodland areas only and provided basic 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.

2.2.4 Preliminary Identification of Access Issues

The preliminary identification of potential access issues was based on what is 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.

¹⁰ Using the Phase 1 Habitat Survey Toolkit <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/bms/services/ceec/phase-one-habitat-survey-toolkit/about/>

¹¹ Document available to download from http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/CSM_woodland.pdf

¹² Form available to download from <http://www.essexwtrecords.org.uk/sites/default/files/surveyfiles/EWT%20woodland%20condition%20assessment%20form%20amended%2014%2003%2012.pdf>

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Nature Conservation Sites

The Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons are not included within or adjacent to any statutory designated nature conservation sites.

A Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR)¹³ is located to the north of Morley's Road, immediately to the east of Sevenoaks Weald and approximately 210m southeast of Wicket Common (Compartment 1). The reserve was designated because it contains an important population of sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* (County Scarce) and other neutral / acid tolerant species such as betony *Stachys officinalis*, burnet-saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca* and false fox-sedge *Carex otrubae*.

The south eastern boundary of Compartment 6, and the eastern boundary of Compartment 8 lie immediate adjacent to ancient woodland inventory¹⁴.

3.2 Geology and Soils

The British Geological Survey website¹⁵ indicates that the bedrock geology underlying the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons is "Weald Clay Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 125 to 134 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. Local environment previously dominated by swamps, estuaries and deltas."

Superficial deposits are limited to the area around Compartment 3 only and are described as, "Head - Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel. Superficial Deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Local environment previously dominated by subaerial slopes."

The Soilscales website¹⁶ has identified the soils within the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons as being, 'Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils'¹⁷. These soils are described as supporting habitats that comprise seasonally wet pastures and woodlands.

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.

¹³ Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) may include a number of scarce and threatened wildlife habitats and / or locally scarce or nationally rare animals or plants. They can also link existing wildlife areas, helping to reconnect and restore landscape so that wildlife is no longer struggling to survive in isolation. RNRs are identified, protected and managed by the Kent and Medway Road Verge Project, a partnership between Kent Highways Services and Kent Wildlife Trust.

¹⁴ Ancient woodland in England is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. Woodlands classed as ancient are irreplaceable, with ancient woodland being considered important for its wildlife, soils, recreation, cultural value, history and contribution to landscapes.

¹⁵ <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/#>

¹⁷ Soilscale 18

3.3 Habitats

The 2012 Kent Habitat Survey shows the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons as comprising ‘WB3 broadleaved woodland’¹⁸ and ‘GI0 improved grassland’¹⁹.

The habitat map provided by KMBRC is attached at Figure 4.

The Kent Habitat Survey has also identified that the broadleaved woodland areas within Compartments 1, 4, 6, and 7 (Figure 5) are included on Natural England’s Priority Habitat Inventory as ‘Lowland mixed deciduous woodland’. This is further confirmed by the Magic website²⁰.

The 2017 Phase 1 Habitat Survey results has provided a more detailed picture of the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons – in addition to the broadleaved semi-natural woodland and improved grassland, the survey identified areas of semi-improved acid and neutral grassland. It also identified a number of boundary hedges.

The Phase 1 Habitat map is enclosed at Figure 5.

Compartments 1 – 11 and Target Notes 1 – 9, included at Table 1, provide descriptions of the habitats and other features encountered during the site walkover. Photograph numbers referred to are included at Appendix A.

¹⁸ WB3: ‘Dry’ woods predominantly composed of broadleaf and yew species (i.e. with >80% broadleaves and yew (*Taxus baccata*) in the canopy).

¹⁹ GI0: vegetation dominated by a few fast-growing grasses on fertile, neutral soils. It is frequently characterised by an abundance of rye-grass and white clover. Improved grasslands are typically either managed as pasture or mown regularly for silage production or in non-agricultural contexts for recreation and amenity purposes

²⁰ Priority Habitat Inventory Habitat – Deciduous Woodland

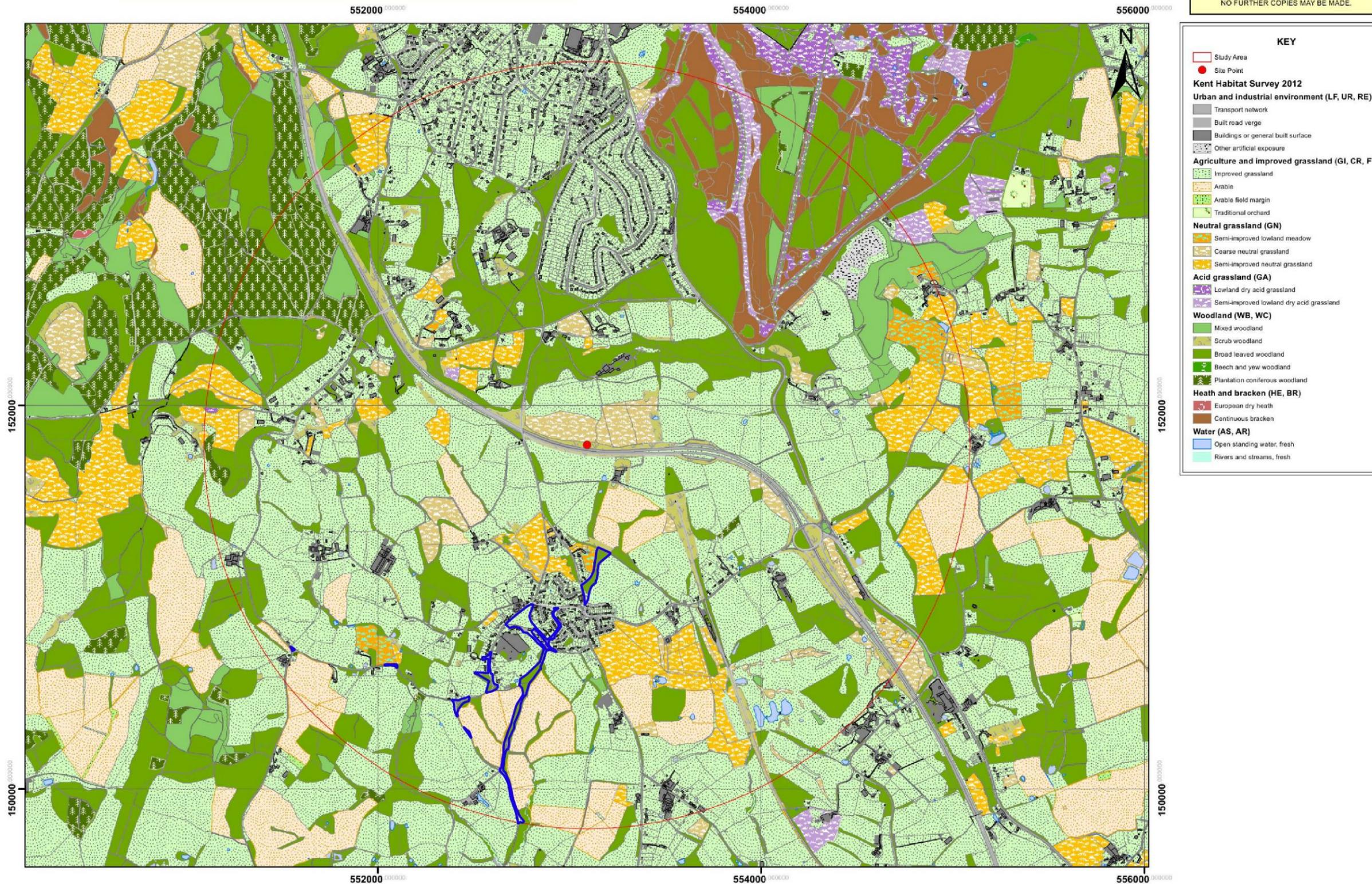
<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=bapdeIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=550696:149284:554038:151713&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre
 Map showing the habitats recorded by the Kent Habitat Survey 2012 at
 Sevenoaks & Weald Commons
 Anne Waite, Kent Wildlife Trust
 ENQ/17/129 28/03/2017



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
 - Other artificial exposure
- Agriculture and improved grassland (GI, CR, FT)**
 - Improved grassland
 - Arable
 - Arable field margin
 - 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
 - Plantation coniferous woodland
- Heath and bracken (HE, BR)**
 - European dry heath
 - Continuous bracken
- Water (AS, AR)**
 - Open standing water, fresh
 - Rivers and streams, fresh

Figure 4: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Kent Habitat Survey, 2012. For ease of reference the Commons are shown outlined in blue

Table 1: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Compartment Descriptions / Target Notes

Cmpt No / Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded during 2017 walkover
Cmpt 1	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (1.04ha)	<p>Narrow woodland that follows a PROW slightly rising from a stream at Glebe Road (Photo 1 & 2). Mature oak <i>Quercus</i> sp. woodland dominates the canopy over abundant holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> and frequent hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> with bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> and bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. in the ground flora (Photo's 3 and 4).</p> <p>The fine condition of the mature oaks could perhaps indicate that this area was once more open – perhaps formerly wooded heath.</p> <p>A small glade is present (Photo 5).</p>	False brome <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i> , ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> , bluebell, bramble.
Cmpt 2	Poor semi – improved grassland (0.34ha)	Compartment consists of a section of Mount Pleasant Road and adjoining PROW (Photo's 6, 7, 8). Grades to pavement and boundaries to properties with occasional small grass verges, some of which support a variety of herbaceous flowering plants (Photo's 9 and 10).	Red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i> , autumn hawkbit <i>Scorzoneroideis autumnalis</i> , common daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i> , creeping cinquefoil <i>Potentilla reptans</i> , dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg., willowherb <i>Epilobium</i> spp., false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> , Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> , ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> , perennial sow-thistle <i>Sonchus arvensis</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , wood avens <i>Geum urbanum</i> , annual meadow-grass <i>Poa annua</i> .
Cmpt 3	Acid grassland – semi-improved (1.21ha)	Close mown semi-improved acid grassland, maintained as school sports field and village green, with lines of trees and scattered field oaks (Photo 11).	
Cmpt 4	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (1.56ha)	<p>A linear compartment that almost entirely follows the PROW (Photo 12). A raised wood bank and associated ditch is intermittent along both boundaries. These features are shown on historic maps (Appendix C).</p> <p>Some areas of the field boundary show signs of coppicing i.e. the field maple in photo 13 and could be considered as a separate hedgerow.</p> <p>There are a number of fine standard oaks within this Compartment (Photo 14); one in particular is leaning towards the PROW.</p> <p>Some standing dead wood was observed (Photo 15).</p> <p>A small stream crosses the woodland at one point and continues to meander for a short distance through the</p>	False brome, ivy, bluebell, bramble.

Cmpt No / Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded during 2017 walkover
		compartment (Photo 16). The widest section of the compartment is dominated by ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> .	
Cmpt 5	Neutral grassland – Semi-improved (0.22ha)	Semi-improved grassland verges to hedgerow (Photo 17, 18 and 19).	Cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> , common knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i> , willowherbs <i>Epilobium</i> spp., meadowsweet <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> , Yorkshire fog, wood-rush <i>Luzula</i> spp., docks and sorrels <i>Rumex</i> spp., common nettle.
Cmpt 6	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (0.14 ha)	An indeterminate area of woodland of mostly oak and bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> (Photo 20).	
Cmpt 7	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (0.32 ha)	A small area of woodland on two sides of a road junction between Hale Oak Road, Long Barn Road and Bowzel Road (Photo 21). There is a depression within the compartment which given the proximity of a stream could perhaps have been a cart pond (Photo 22). The woodland has a high canopy of oak and some ash with an understorey of mixed native broadleaves. Dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> is the most dominant species in the ground flora. There is considerable garden waste. Two verges, which are broad hedgerows or narrow woodland shaws are included as there are no significant differences from the main compartment.	Dog's mercury (D), cleavers, herb Robert <i>Geranium robertianum</i> , brambles, common nettle.
Cmpt 8	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (0.05 ha)	A small woodland shaw on the edge of Thickets Wood. Comprises oak standards with field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> , hazel and holly and a understory of rose <i>Rosa</i> spp. (Photo 23).	
Cmpt 9	Cultivated / disturbed land – amenity grassland (0.04ha)	Small triangle of improved (amenity) grassland. Maintained by mowing with arisings left in situ (Photo 24).	
Cmpt 10	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland (0.27 ha)	A small woodland compartment on sloping ground where tall canopy oaks dominate. Dog's Mercury is dominant throughout the ground flora. (Photo's 25 and 26). There is considerable garden waste. On the opposite side of the road from the woodland is a small triangle of mostly improved grassland which is also included within this compartment.	Dog's mercury (F), brambles, common nettle.
Cmpt 11	Neutral grassland – semi – improved	Small area of grassland situated	Bird's-foot-trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> , ribwort plantain,

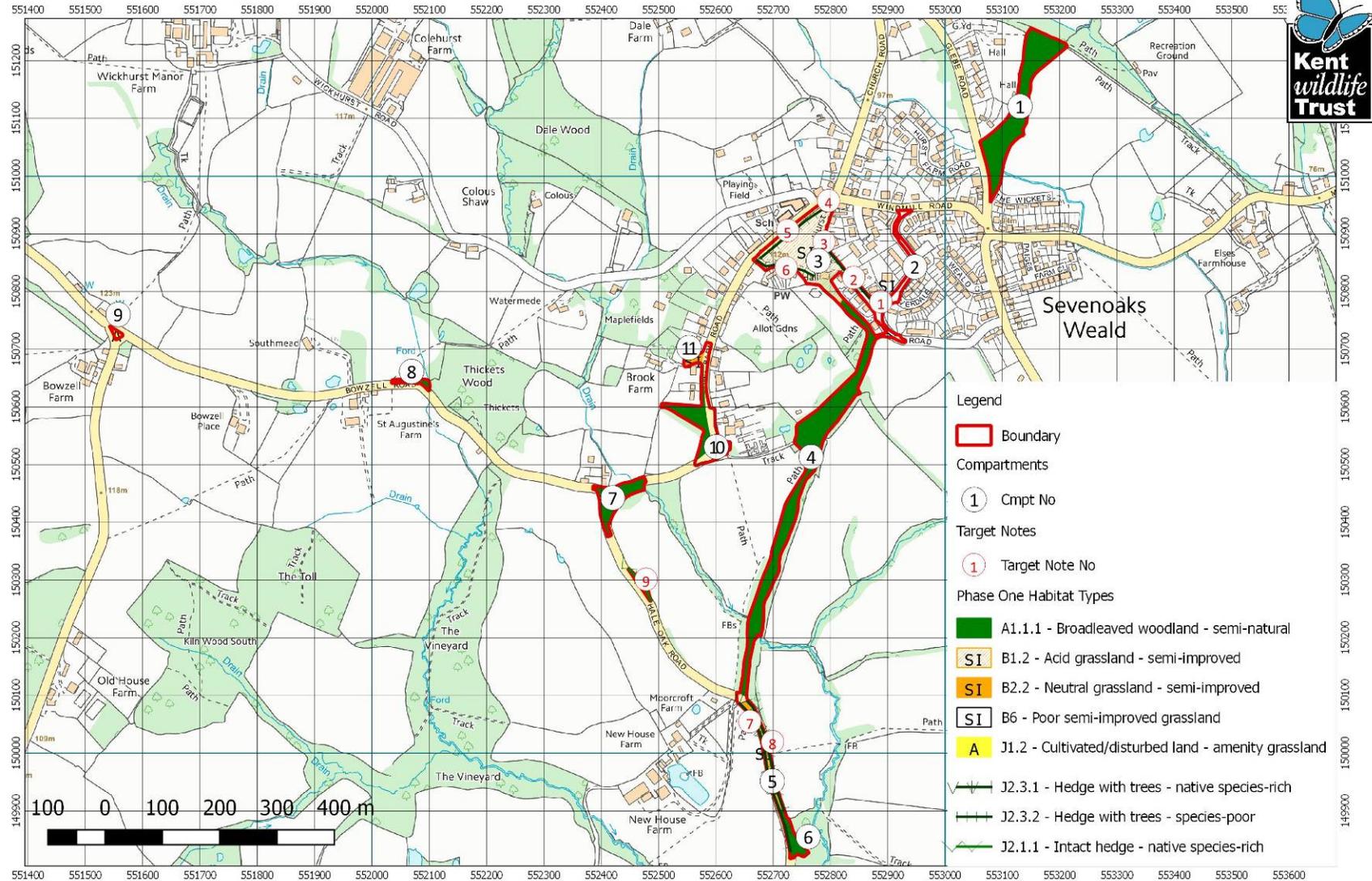
Cmpt No / Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded during 2017 walkover
	(0.05ha)	between properties (Photo 27).	common knapweed, white clover, meadow-grass <i>Poa</i> spp., spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , self-heal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> , docks and sorrels, bracken, dandelion.
TN1	-	Compartment 2. TQ526 500. A veteran oak, possibly a boundary oak with a girth of 2m, possibly hollow. It has a decayed branch to footpath. This oak, known locally as the 'Hollow Oak', is mentioned in local walk guides (Photo 28)	
TN2	-	Compartment 2. TQ528 508. Native species-rich hedge with trees forming boundary to gardens. Contains holly, bramble, Leyland cypress <i>X Cuprocyparis leylandii</i> , silver birch <i>Betula pendula</i> , bracken, overhanging cherry <i>Prunus</i> sp., hawthorn, hazel and copper beech <i>Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea</i> (Photos 29 and 30). Hedgerow is S41 Habitat of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Habitat) ^{21, 22} .	
TN3	-	Compartment 3. TQ527 508. Two fine field oaks (Photo 31) with signs of possible soil compaction (Photo 32).	
TN4	-	Compartment 3. TQ527 509. Village Green with two fine field oaks with spreading canopies (Photo 33). Some crown dieback on one of the oaks (nearest Pub) possibly from soil compaction (Photo 34).	
TN5	-	Compartment 3. TQ527 509. Avenue of lime, <i>Tilia cordata</i> . May have been pollarded previously – would be suitable for future pollarding (Photo 1413).	
TN6	-	Compartment 3. TQ527 508. Double row of planted trees not yet mature comprising maple species (Norway maple?), cherry and ash. Inner row, mostly cherry, is being out- competed by outer row and canopy is leaning towards the village green (Photo 36).	
TN7	-	Compartment 5. TQ526 500. Native species- rich hedge with trees to west of Hale Oak Road (Photo 37). Hedgerow is S41 Habitat of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Habitat).	

²¹ There are 56 "habitats of principal importance" on the S41 list. These are the habitats in England identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which continued to be priorities in the new UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

²² All hedgerows consisting predominantly (i.e. 80% or more cover) of at least one woody UK native species are considered to be UKBAP priority habitat jncc.defra.gov.uk/Docs/UKBAP_BAPHabitats-17-Hedgerows.doc

Cmpt No / Target Note	Phase 1 Habitat Type (Area)	Description	Species recorded during 2017 walkover
TN8	-	<p>Compartment 5. TQ526 500. Native species- rich managed hedgerow to east of Hale Oak Road with a few fine hedgerow oak trees (Photo 37).</p> <p>Hedgerow is S41 Habitat of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Habitat).</p>	
TN9	-	<p>Northeast of Hale Oak Road. TQ524 502. Intact hedge, Native species hedgerow with oak and ash standards, one wild service-tree <i>Sorbus torminalis</i>, blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i>, hawthorn, rose, dogwood <i>Cornus sanguineus</i>, holly and hedge bedstraw <i>Galium album</i> (Photo 38).</p> <p>Hedgerow is S41 Habitat of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Habitat).</p>	

Sevenoaks Greensand Charts and Commons - Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map



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Figure 5: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Phase 1 Habitat Map, based on site walkover survey June 2017

3.4 Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

A preliminary woodland condition survey was undertaken for the main wooded compartments 1, 4, 7 and 10 (Figure 5). The results are presented in Tables 2 - 5 below. The Species / Structure / Age Class data has also been presented in a series of bar charts, attached at Appendix B.

Table 2: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Compartment 1. Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

Feature	Description
Woodland Type:	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland.
Habitat Type: e.g. Coppice woodland; Ride; Glade; Wood Pasture:	
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	Oak STA 90cms dbh 10% Oak STA 70cms dbh 80% Holly STA 20cms 10% Ash STA 5% Ash SA 1% Cherry STA 20cms dbh 1% Beech EST 1% Sycamore SET 1% Field Maple STA 10% Field Maple SA 10% Hawthorn EST 1% Hawthorn US 1% Hazel US 10% Spindle US 5% Blackthorn US 1%
Ground Flora:	See Table 1 Ch 3.3.
Fungi:	
Decaying Wood: Standing: Fallen:	
Invasive Species:	
Deer Damage:	
Historic Features:	
General Comments:	Narrow woodland that follows a PROW slightly rising from a stream. Mature oak woodland dominates the canopy over abundant holly and frequent hazel with bluebell and bramble to the ground flora. Historic maps show this area as more open, possibly supporting more heath-like vegetation and this would seem to agree with the condition of the oaks which would be very fine if they had originated from woodland trees. At least one standard oak had a girth of 1.1m dbh.

Table 3: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Compartment 4. Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

Feature	Description
Woodland Type:	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland.
Habitat Type: e.g. Coppice woodland; Ride; Glade; Wood Pasture:	
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	<p>Main Compartment</p> <p>Oak STA 80cms dbh 1% Oak STA 60cms dbh 1% Oak STA 50cms dbh 10% Oak STA 20cms dbh 30% Ash STA 60cms dbh 1% Ash STA 30cms dbh 1% Ash EST 1% Ash SET 1% Ash COP 4/30cms dbh 1% Ash SA 5% Cherry STA 40cms dbh 1% Cherry STA 30cms dbh 1% Cherry STA 20cms dbh 1% Cherry SA 5% Silver Birch STA 30cms dbh 1% Elm SA 5% Hawthorn US 10% Holly US 10% Rowan SA 5% Field Maple SA 5% Elder SA 5% Hazel US 30%</p> <p>Wider Ash-dominated area</p> <p>Ash STA 60 cms dbh 100% Field Maple SA 40% Midland Hawthorn SA 1% Spindle US 20% Hazel US 30%</p>
Ground Flora:	See Table 1 Ch 3.3.
Fungi:	
Decaying Wood: Standing: Fallen:	Standing dead wood is present.
Invasive Species:	
Deer Damage:	
Historic Features:	Intermittent raised wood bank and associated ditch present along both sides of the wood. These boundaries are shown on historic mapping (Appendix C).
General Comments:	A linear woodland compartment. In places the field boundary shows signs of coppicing. There are a number of fine standard oaks. There is a wider section of the compartment that is dominated by ash.

Table 4: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Compartment 7. Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

Feature	Description
Woodland Type:	Broadleaved semi-natural Woodland.
Habitat Type: e.g. Coppice woodland; Ride; Glade; Wood Pasture:	
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	Oak STA 50 cms dbh 50% Oak STA 70 cms dbh 3% Oak STA 30 cms dbh 10% Oak COP 2/50 cms dbh 10% Ash STA 50cms dbh 10% Ash STA 40cms dbh 10% ASH SET 1% Field Maple COP 2/20 cms dbh 5% Elder US 1% Blackthorn US 5% Hazel US 5% Field Maple SA 5% Hawthorn US 10%
Ground Flora:	See Table 1 Ch 3.3.
Fungi:	
Decaying Wood:	>5%
Standing:	
Fallen:	100%
Invasive Species:	
Deer Damage:	
Historic Features:	Possible relict cart pond at road junction.
General Comments:	A small area of woodland on two sides of a road junction between Hale Oak Road, Long Barn Road and Bowzel Road. The woodland has a high canopy of oak and some ash with an understorey of mixed native broadleaves. Dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> is the most dominant species in the ground flora.

Table 5: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Compartment 10. Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

Feature	Description
Woodland Type:	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland.
Habitat Type: e.g. Coppice woodland; Ride; Glade; Wood Pasture:	
Species / Structure / Age Class: Key to abbreviations Seedling (SE) Sapling (SA) Semi-established (SET) Established (EST) Mature (MAT) Standard (STA)	Oak STA 70 cms dbh 30% Oak STA 40 cms dbh 30% Ash STA 40 cms dbh 20% Sycamore STA 30 cms dbh 1% Beech STA 20cms dbh 1% Beech EST 5% Holly SET 1%

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	
Ground Flora:	See Table 1 Ch 3.3.
Fungi:	
Decaying Wood: Standing: Fallen:	
Invasive Species:	Occasional rhododendron.
Deer Damage:	
Historic Features:	
General Comments:	Small woodland compartment on sloping ground where tall canopy oaks, probably <i>Quercus robur</i> , dominate. Dog's mercury is dominant throughout the ground flora.

3.5 Veteran Tree Survey

One veteran tree was observed within Compartment 2. Further details are given in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Preliminary Veteran Tree Check

Species	Type	Location	Approx DBH	Photo	Comments
Oak	Boundary	Compartment 2 (TN1) TQ526 500	2m	Photo 28 (Appendix A).	Hollow. Decayed branch to footpath. Requires ongoing specialist management. Suggest expert input and provision of a bespoke management plan for this tree.

3.6 Species

Table 7 below provides a summary of the species information obtained as part of the desktop study.

Table 7: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Protected / notable species which either occur within, or have the potential to occur within or close to Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons

Species	Summary of Taxon Interest	Occurrence of protected / notable species on or near site	Status
Vascular Plants	One protected species – bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> was recorded during the survey visit.	Bluebell	Bluebell: listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (as amended). Protection is

Species	Summary of Taxon Interest	Occurrence of protected / notable species on or near site	Status
			limited to 'sale' only ²³ .
Birds	<p>There are no bird records directly attributed to the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons.</p> <p>The wooded areas and boundary hedgerows are however likely to support a range of nesting common birds.</p>		All species of bird whilst actively nesting are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) ²⁴ .
Bats	<p>Ten species of bat, of the 15 species recorded in Kent, have been recorded within the search area. There are three identified roost sites within or very close to the Common: Residential area to west of Church Road and just to northwest of Village Green; within or very close to Village Green (Compartment 3); within or very close to Compartment 8 - southwest corner of Thickets Wood. There is also a record of a flying bat from Moorcroft Farm, close to the southwest boundary of Compartment 5.</p> <p>Bats are likely to use the Common for foraging and commuting and it is likely that some of the mature trees may have bat roost potential. Their presence on site should not be discounted.</p>	Serotine, Daubenton's, Whiskered, Natterer's, Leisler's, Noctule*, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Pipistrelle (45kHz), Pipistrelle (55kHz)*, Brown long-eared*	<p>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 2010²⁵ and are therefore "European Protected Species".</p> <p>Those species marked with "*" are considered to be Species of Principal Importance in England (formerly UKBAP)²⁶.</p>
Badgers	<p>No records and no evidence observed during the site walkover.</p> <p>The nearest record relates to New House Farm, to the south of Bowzell Road and southwest of Compartment 7.</p> <p>The Commons contain suitable foraging habitat and has good links to the wider countryside. Intermittent use of the Village Commons by badgers should not therefore</p>		Badgers and their setts are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 ²⁷ .

²³ <http://naturenet.net/law/sched8.html>

²⁴ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

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

²⁶ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605090108/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

²⁷ A summary of the Protection of Badgers Act is available at <http://adlib.eversite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?doc=18122&id=18124>

Species	Summary of Taxon Interest	Occurrence of protected / notable species on or near site	Status
	be discounted.		
Hazel Dormouse	<p>The nearest KMBRC records relate to dormice recorded within a hedgerow approximately 2km to the northeast and separated from the Commons by the A21 Sevenoaks Bypass.</p> <p>It is considered that the Commons are too fragmented and small to support dormice and that the A21 provides a significant physical barrier to the movement of this species through the countryside.</p> <p>The Commons are considered unlikely to support hazel dormice.</p>		<p>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 2010²⁸ and therefore a “European Protected Species”.</p> <p>A Species of Principal Importance in England (formerly UKBAP) and is included on Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended)²⁹.</p>
Reptiles	<p>The data search has no records of reptiles occurring on the Commons. Slow-worm has been recorded from Kenley Moor, approximately 220m to the east of the Common.</p> <p>There are areas of the Common – such as woodland / hedgerow edges, grassy verges and clearings which may be suitable for reptiles – and it is considered that species such as viviparous lizard, slow-worm and possibly also grass snake may occur here. Their potential presence should not be discounted.</p>	<p>Slow-worm Viviparous lizard Grass snake</p>	<p>All reptile species likely to be encountered at Bitchet Common are protected against killing & injury under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended) and are also Species of Principal Importance (formerly UKBAP Priority Species).</p>
Amphibians	<p>The data search has no records of amphibians occurring on the Village Commons. There are historic records of smooth newt and common frog located to the north of Morley’s Road, approximately 750m to the east.</p> <p>The closest recorded great crested newt observation is a historical record again located to the north of</p>	<p>Common frog Smooth newt Great crested newt</p>	<p>Great crested newts are afforded full legal protection under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended)³⁰. Also listed under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010³¹ and therefore a “European Protected Species”.</p> <p>Great crested newts and common toads are Species of Principal Importance in</p>

²⁸ Further details about the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1379>

²⁹ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

³⁰ Further information about the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is available at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>

³¹ 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
	<p>Morley's Road.</p> <p>There are no ponds on the Common, although a number are shown on the KMBRC habitat map within a 1km-radius.</p> <p>Whilst no suitable breeding habitat was identified, amphibians may use the Commons for foraging, sheltering and commuting and their potential presence should not be discounted.</p>		England (formerly UKBAP).

The KMBRC datasearch has no records of non-native vascular plant species that are directly attributable to the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons.

Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* was recorded in Compartment 10 during the 2017 site walkover. This species is included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended), which makes it illegal to 'plant or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild'.

3.7 Identification of Access Issues

Most of the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons are designated as Registered Common Land and have been mapped as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Figure 6). The exceptions are Compartments 2 and 8 which are not shown on the Magic map³².

Two Public Footpaths cross Wicket Common (Compartment 1) and two cross 'The Village Green and The Hurst' (Compartment 3). A Byway Open to All Traffic runs the length of 'The Village Green and The Hurst' (Compartment 4). A Public Footpath also skirts the western edge of 'Four Pieces of Land in the Parish of Sevenoaks Weald' (Compartment 8) – see Figure 7.

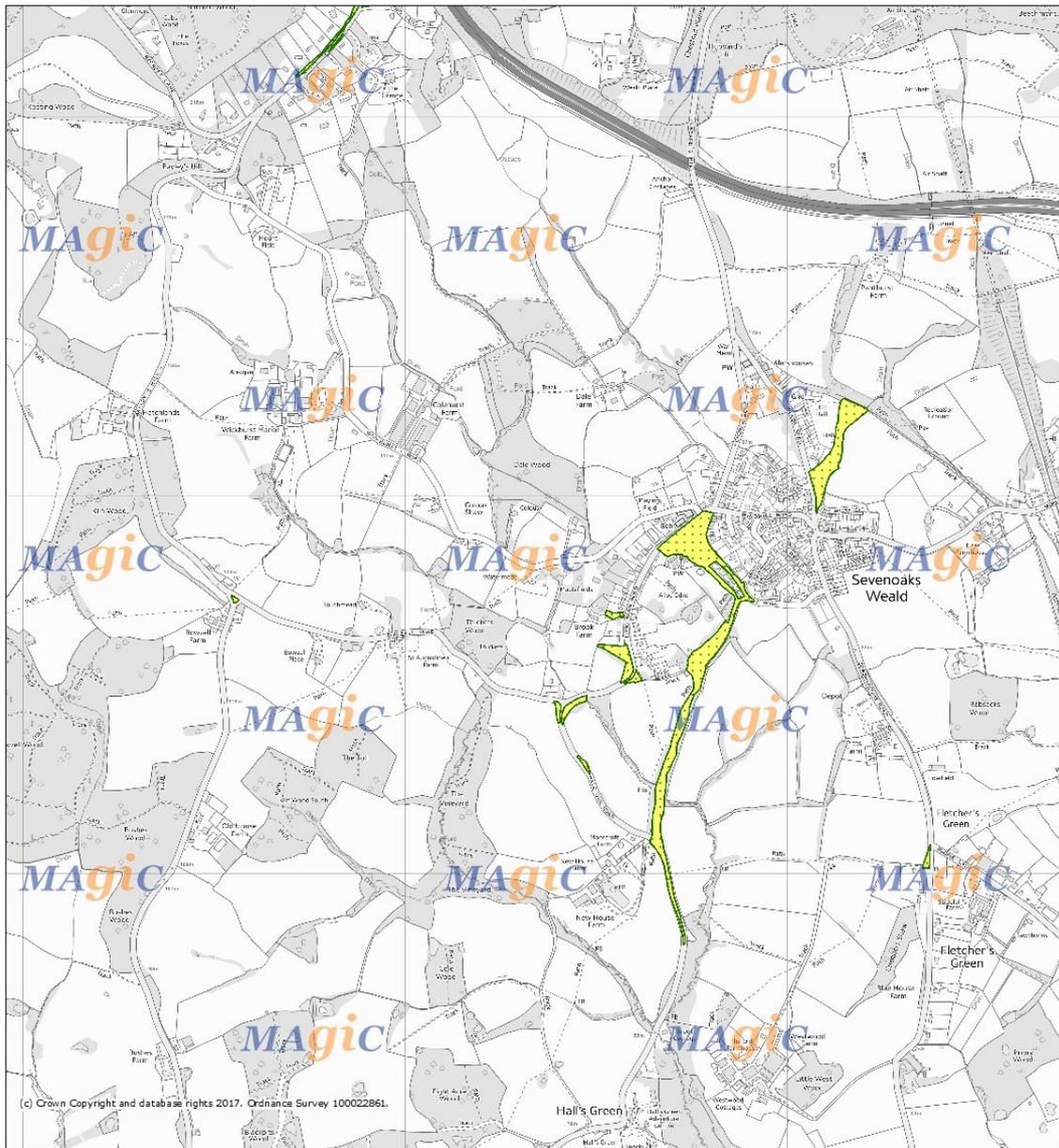
Walkers, with and without dogs, were observed during the walkover survey.

Garden rubbish was noticed in both Compartment 7 and Compartment 10.

³²

<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=commlIndex,crowIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europelIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=549938:149470:553280:151899&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>

MAGIC Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Access



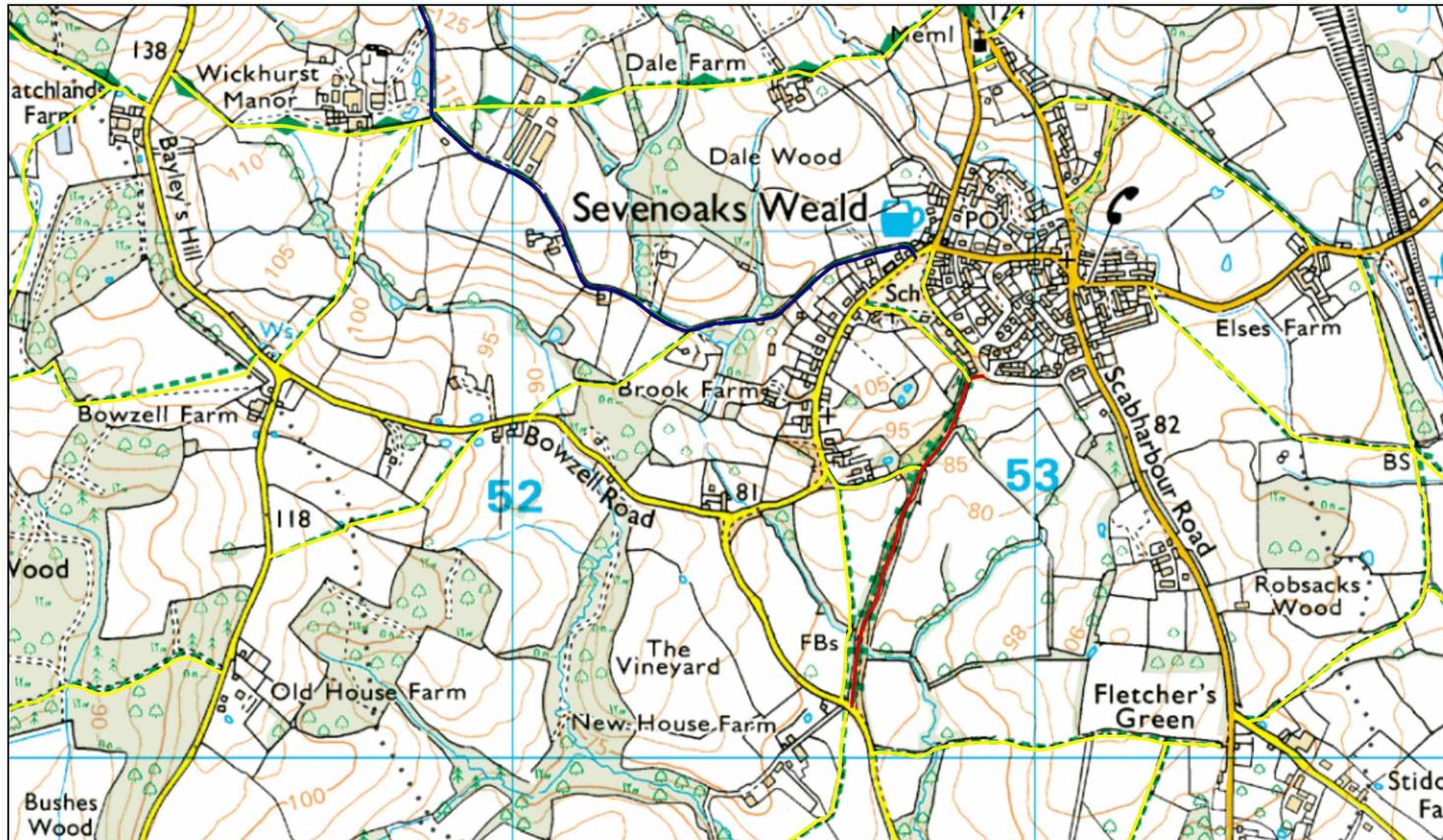
Legend

- Registered Common Land (England)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 - Access Layer (England)

Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 550700
 ymin = 149600
 xmax = 554000
 ymax = 152000
 Map produced by MAGIC on 27 July, 2017.
 Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission.
 Some information in MAGIC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

Figure 6: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons. Access Land

Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons PROW



July 24, 2017

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

1:10,000
 0 0.075 0.15 0.3 mi
 0 0.125 0.25 0.5 km
 2015 Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey
 Kent County Council

Produced by: KCC GIS Development Team
 Copyright Kent County Council 2017

Figure 7: Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons Public Rights of Way Map.

4 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Site Evaluation

The Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons were found to comprise a complex of broadleaved semi-natural woodland, hedgerows and improved, semi-improved acid and neutral grassland.

The woodland within Compartments 1, 4, 6, and 7 (Figure 5) has been identified as lowland mixed deciduous woodland, a Priority Habitat i.e. it is listed on S41 as Habitats of Principal Importance in England (formerly UK BAP Priority Habitat).

None of the woodland is shown as ancient woodland on the Magic website, and the site walkover survey found no features to suggest that the woodland within the Commons is of ancient origin. However, there is ancient woodland abutting the boundaries of Compartments 6 and 8 and it is possible that a number of ancient woodland indicators will slowly colonise these areas.

There is evidence to suggest that Compartment 1 may once have been more open. The site walkover highlighted the presence of a number of fine, mature oaks of a size and condition that indicate they are more likely to have developed in open conditions rather than in established woodland. This is further evidenced in historic maps, which suggest that Wicket Common was more open, possibly supporting a heath-like vegetation.

The woodland areas of Compartments 8 and 10 are of more recent origin, with historic mapping from 1871-1890 showing these areas as being open ground. There was no evidence to suggest that they have been planted, so it is considered likely that these areas have developed from natural colonisation – either from an existing hedgerow or shaw (Compartment 10), or from the adjacent Thickets Wood (Compartment 8).

The woodland in Compartment 4 in particular was observed to support standing dead wood. Dead wood provides a habitat for many species of bryophytes, lichens, fungi, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, with standing dead wood often providing opportunities for specialist invertebrates, hole-nesting birds and roosting opportunities for bats.³³

The stream which runs through Compartment 4 further has led to the development of damp woodland, increasing the ecological niches available to woodland wildlife, and enhancing the overall wildlife value of this small area. The higher humidity in such areas can support the growth of mosses and ferns not found in drier woods, and may also encourage the development of plants more normally found in fens and marshes. Areas of damp woodland may also support a different assemblage of invertebrates and may be important for species such as craneflies. This may be worth investigating further through targeted survey work.

Ash is a component within the broadleaved woodland areas. Although no evidence of ash dieback was observed during the walkover survey, the Forestry Commission has confirmed

³³ Further information on the value of deadwood is available from Buglife at <https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Deadwood.pdf>

that ash dieback disease was confirmed in TQ55 in 2014³⁴. Ongoing monitoring will therefore be required.

All the wooded compartments are small and fragmented and do not lend themselves to large scale, intensive management programmes which otherwise might be considered, such as the restoration of more open conditions within Compartment 1. To that end, it is recommended that consultation should consider low-intervention management, based on maintenance of the existing broadleaved woodland and its veteran / mature trees. Given the woods are fairly even-aged, this could involve encouraging natural regeneration to increase the age structure of the dominant tree species in order to ensure long-term continuity.

The site walkover identified several hedgerows in Compartments 2, 5 and TN9 (northeast of Hale Oak Road). These hedgerows comprised more than 80% native species and are therefore considered to meet the criteria for being considered a S41 Habitat of Principal Importance in England (formerly UKBAP Priority Habitat). The hedgerows are considered likely to support nesting birds and consultation could include the possibility of traditional hedgerow management here.

In addition to the hedgerows, a number of other possible historic boundary features were observed during the site walkover. These included a number of mature oaks, and woodbanks / associated ditches. An additional feature of possible historic interest is a depression identified within Compartment 7. This compartment lies at the junction of Bowzell Road, Hale Oak Road and Long Barn Road, with a stream running in close proximity to its eastern boundary. Given its location and the proximity of the stream, the surveyor considers that this depression may possibly be the location of a former cart pond i.e. a pond where carts were driven in and out to wash the wheels. Consideration could be given to undertaking more comprehensive surveys to research, map and record such features.

One veteran tree – an oak, known locally as the ‘Hollow Oak’ – was identified in Compartment 2 during the site walkover, although it is considered likely that there are more. This veteran tree will require specialist management to retain it in good condition for the long-term and it may benefit from the preparation of a bespoke tree management plan. The survey also identified a number of mature / very mature trees, some of which are likely to have bat roost potential. Any management to these trees should consider the potential for bat roosts to be present.

The Commons support a number of scattered trees and lines of trees (mostly notably the avenue of limes (TN5) and the double row of maple, cherry and ash (TN6)), mainly concentrated on the Village Green (Compartment 3). These form an important and popular part of the landscape as well as providing a habitat for many wildlife species. Many bird species need trees as song posts, lines of trees may be used by commuting / foraging bats, and some may well have potential for bat roosts / hole-nesting birds.

The lime trees within the avenue show signs of previous pollarding and may be suitable for similar management in the future. The double row of planted trees has some issues with shading wherein the inner row of predominantly cherry trees are being densely shaded by the outer row of maples. The effect of this is that the canopy is leaning significantly towards the

³⁴ <http://chalaramap.fera.defra.gov.uk/>

Village Green, leading to the development of some odd-shaped trees. Consideration could be given to balancing these two rows to create a better ratio of light / shade.

Several of the field oak trees on the Village Green were also showing signs of stress such as crown dieback, possibly from soil compaction (TN3, TN4). It is recommended that an arboriculturist should be consulted for further advice.

The grassland within the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons is primarily amenity grassland i.e. managed for public recreation or is located along road verges, etc.

The most extensive block of grassland is found on the Village Green (Compartment 3), comprising an area of close mown semi-improved acid grassland. Acid grassland is a rare habitat in Kent, with only 512ha recorded; covering just 0.13% of the county, generally in highly fragmented small blocks (Kent Habitat Survey, 2012). There is nothing to suggest that this grassland is of UK BAP quality and it is not considered to be a Priority Habitat. The Village Green is an amenity area for Sevenoaks Weald and traditional management techniques are unlikely to be a realistic option. Management is currently by mowing; consideration could perhaps be given to relaxing the mowing regime over parts of the site to encourage development of a more diverse sward and to allow some of the plants to set seed.

The remaining areas of grassland i.e. in Compartments 2, 5, 9 and 11 is semi-improved neutral grassland / improved grassland. Both are extremely common habitat types in Kent, occupying 7.3% and 29.7% of the County respectively (Kent Habitat Survey, 2012). Both grassland types were found to be grass-dominated, supporting a restricted range of common herbaceous plant species characteristic of high recreational usage. No notable species were recorded within these grassland areas and neither can be classed as Priority Habitats. The grassland is currently managed by mowing, and it is recommended that it should continue to be cut as required in order to maintain the existing sward structure. It was noticed that the arisings are left in-situ. Consideration could be given to doing a cut-and-collect, as cuttings left in-situ can form a thick mat, effectively smothering the growth of delicate grasses and flowering plants whilst encouraging the growth of more aggressive species.

With the exception of several bat roost records within or very close to Compartments 3 and 8 (Table 7, Ch 3.6), the data search has no records of any protected species directly attributable to the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons, although one species, bluebell, was recorded during the site walkover. However, there is good habitat connectivity throughout the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons facilitating species mobility, and the mosaic of woodland and grassland habitats is considered to provide suitable opportunities for a number of protected species including reptiles, amphibians, breeding birds, bats and badgers. The potential presence of protected species will 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.

Some rhododendron was recorded in Compartment 10. It is an extremely invasive species and 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 rhododendron³⁵. Whilst the rhododendron identified here was not considered to be a particular problem at this time, it is recommended that it should be monitored and steps taken to eradicate or control this species as appropriate.

There was some fly-tipping of garden waste within Compartment 7 and Compartment 10. 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 Existing Woodland Areas

- Maintain structural diversity as a good variety of woodland and scrub at different ages and structure will be beneficial to species known to inhabit the Commons, or which may have the potential to be present, such as breeding birds, invertebrates, small mammals and bats, and reptiles.
- Maintain all traditional woodland features such as internal woodbanks and associated ditches.
- Retain all existing veteran / mature trees wherever possible.
- Consider opportunities for increasing the number of potential veteran trees by selecting standards for bespoke management which may include pollarding and coronet cuts.
- Maintain a range of both standing and fallen dead wood. A continuity of dead wood at all stages of decay is vital in providing optimal habitats for species groups such as fungi, invertebrates, hole-nesting birds and roosting bats. When deadwood occurs naturally, this should be left in situ where it is found (including within freshwater habitats). If this conflicts with other land use (e.g. restricts access or presents health and safety risk in amenity woodland), fallen dead should be moved only as far as is absolutely necessary. If necessary, log piles may be created. Standing dead should be left if at all possible—if it

³⁵ www.nonnativespecies.org/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1018

presents a health and safety hazard it may be possible to secure it safely in a standing position.

- 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 available³⁶.
- 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 laurel³⁷:
 - Cut during the winter (September to March), focussing on older, seed-bearing 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.

4.2.1.2 Management of Veteran Trees / Field Trees / Tree Lines

- Consult with a veteran tree expert concerning long-term management of the veteran oak in Compartment 2. Consider preparation of a bespoke tree management plan for this specimen.
- Consider the possibility of managing the avenue of lime trees in Compartment 3 by pollarding.

³⁶ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-92pjlx>

³⁷ http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/kwt_land_mgt_advice_sheet_9_-_woodland_management_-_control_of_rhododendron.pdf

- Consider managing the double row of planted maple, cherry and ash trees to reduce the dense shade which is impacting the normal growth of these trees.
- Consult with an arboriculturist with regards to field oaks on the Village Green, which are showing signs of stress i.e. crown dieback.

4.2.1.3 Management of Hedgerows

Undertake consultation to explore the feasibility / desirability of traditional hedgerow management³⁸ to maintain and enhance the wildlife value of the S41 hedgerows.

4.2.1.4 Management of Grassland Areas

- Semi-improved acid Grassland (Compartment 3). Explore options for relaxing the mowing regime over parts of the site to encourage development of a more diverse sward and to allow some of the flowering plants to set seed.
- Semi-improved neutral grassland / improved grassland. Ideally manage by cut-and-collect as-and-when necessary in order to maintain current sward structure.

4.3 Additional Survey Work

The desktop study has highlighted that there is relatively little biological information relating to the Sevenoaks Weald Village Commons.

Several surveys are therefore recommended:

- **Bat Survey.** Surveys are recommended in order to establish the bat roost potential of the veteran trees and other mature trees / tree lines within the Commons. Survey work should also establish how bats are using the Commons for foraging and for commuting. 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 Commons. The results of the survey work should be used to inform management aimed at enhancing the Commons for these species.
- **Invertebrate Surveys.** Consult local experts to establish whether the Commons would merit targeted invertebrate survey work to establish potential invertebrate interest. Priority areas may include for example the damp woodland areas within Compartment 4.
- **Historic Features.** Explore potential for undertaking research / surveys to record and map potential historic features of the Commons including wood banks, boundary trees and a possible cart pond.

³⁸ For example https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Englishhedgerows1_tcm9-133255.pdf

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Appendix A: Photographs taken during the site visits June 2017



1. Compartment 1: Photograph showing general view of compartment



2. Compartment 1: Photograph showing general view of compartment



3. Compartment 1: Photograph showing mature oak



4. Compartment 1: Photograph showing general view of compartment with fine standard oak



5. Compartment 1: Photograph showing standing dead oak within small glade



6. Compartment 2: Photograph showing view to road



7. Compartment 2: Photograph showing view to byway



8. Compartment 2: Photograph showing junction to Mount Pleasant Road



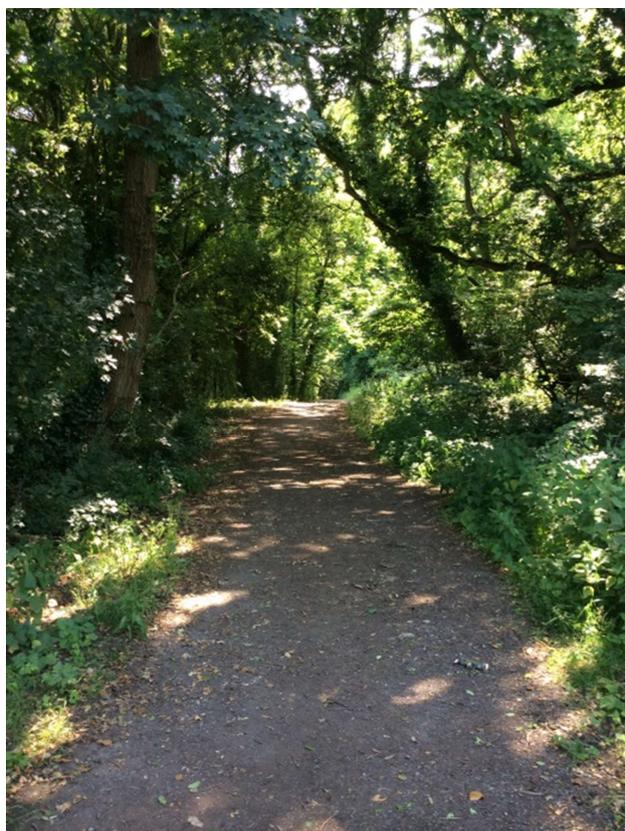
9. Compartment 2: Photograph showing verge to house



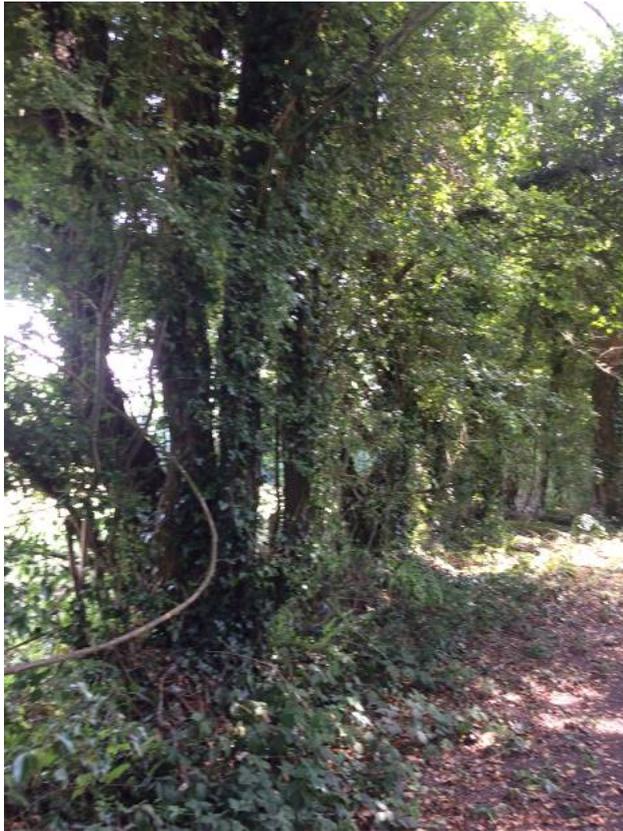
10. Compartment 2: Photograph 1441 showing typical verge vegetation



11. Compartment 3: Photograph 1403 showing semi-improved acid grassland managed as amenity grassland



12. Compartment 4: Photograph showing linear compartment following PROW



13. Compartment 4: Photograph showing field maple coppice



14. Compartment 4: Photograph 1449 showing fine oak standard



15. Compartment 4: Photograph showing standing deadwood



16. Compartment 4: Photograph showing small stream meandering through woodland



17. Compartment 5: Photograph showing grass verge



18. Compartment 5: Photograph 18 showing grass verge



19. Compartment 5: Photograph showing grass verge



20. Compartment 6: Photograph showing general view into compartment



21. Compartment 7: Photograph 1445 showing general view of compartment



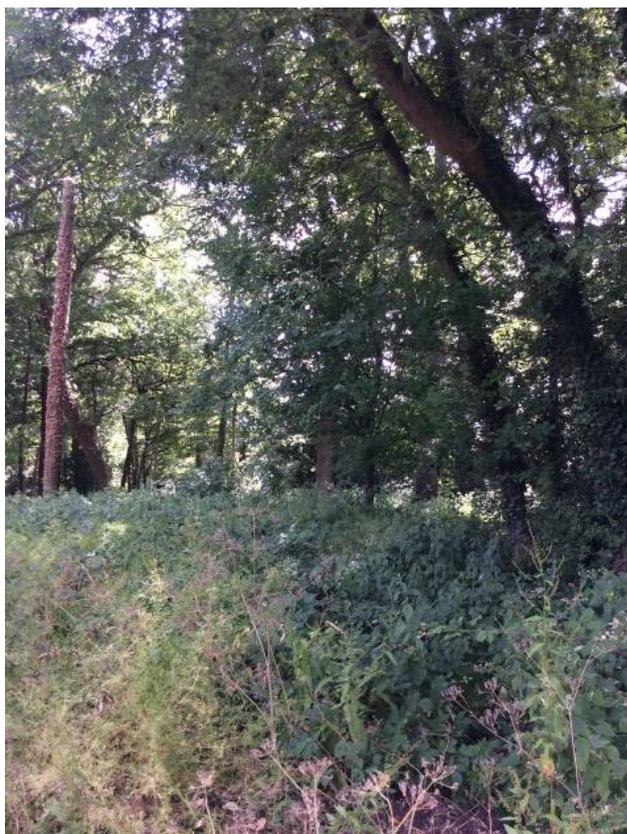
22. Compartment 7: Photograph showing shaw with possible relict cart pond.



23. Compartment 8: Photograph showing woodland shaw on edge of Thickets Wood



24. Compartment 9: Photograph showing amenity grassland maintained by mowing (the arisings have been left in-situ)



25. Compartment 10: Photograph showing general view of compartment



26. Compartment 10: Photograph showing wooded area at entrance to PROW



27. Compartment 11: Photograph showing small area of semi-improved neutral grassland



28. Compartment 2 (TN1): Photograph showing veteran oak with decayed branch to footpath



29. Compartment 2 (TN2): Photograph showing hedgerow with view to Mount Pleasant Road



30. Compartment 2 (TN2): Photograph showing hedgerow with over hanging trees



31. Compartment 3 (TN3): Photograph showing Village Green with two fine field oaks



32. Compartment 3 (TN3): Photograph showing possible soil compaction around field oaks



33. Compartment 3 (TN4): Photograph showing village green. Two fine field oaks are visible in the centre of the photograph



34. Compartment 3 (TN4): Photograph showing crown dieback on oak nearest pub



35. Compartment 3 (TN5): Photograph showing village green with avenue of lime



36. Compartment 3 (TN6): Photograph showing double row of planted trees



37. Compartment 5 (TN7 and TN8): Photograph showing hedgerows to east and west of Hale Oak Road



38. TN9: Photograph showing intact hedgerow

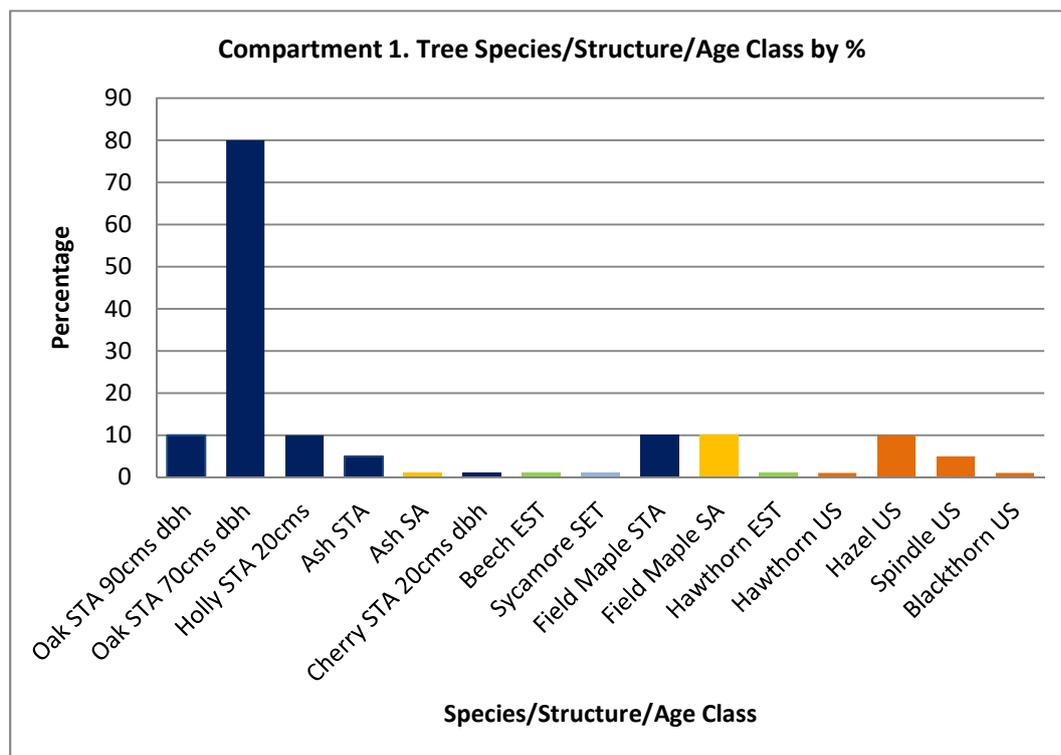
Appendix B: Preliminary Woodland Condition Survey

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

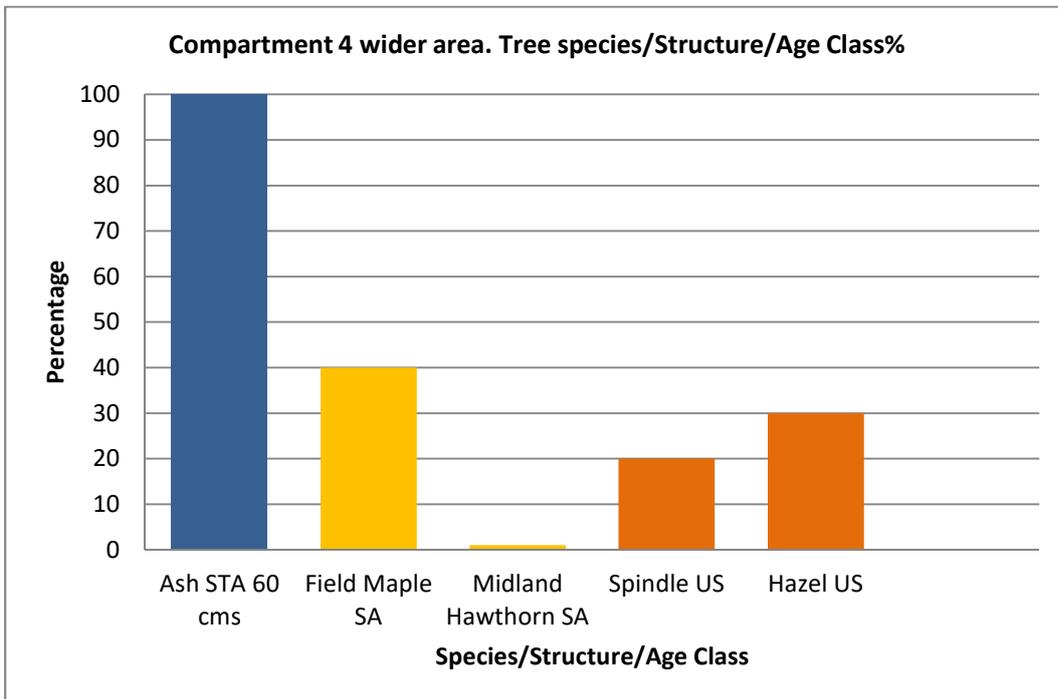
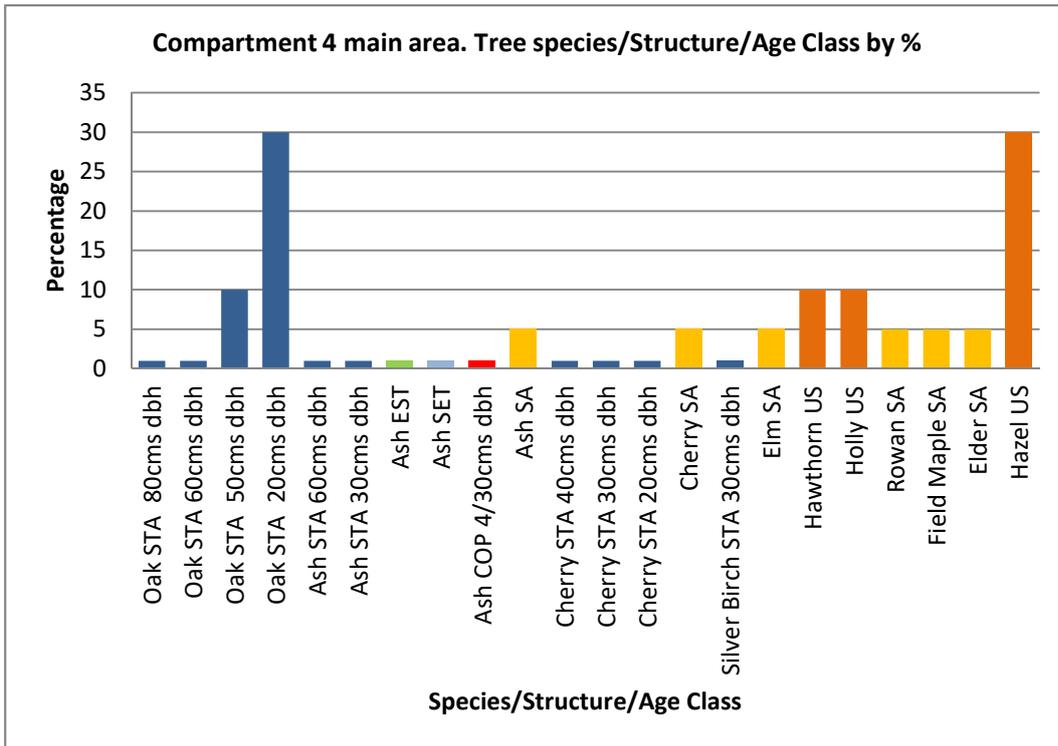
KEY

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

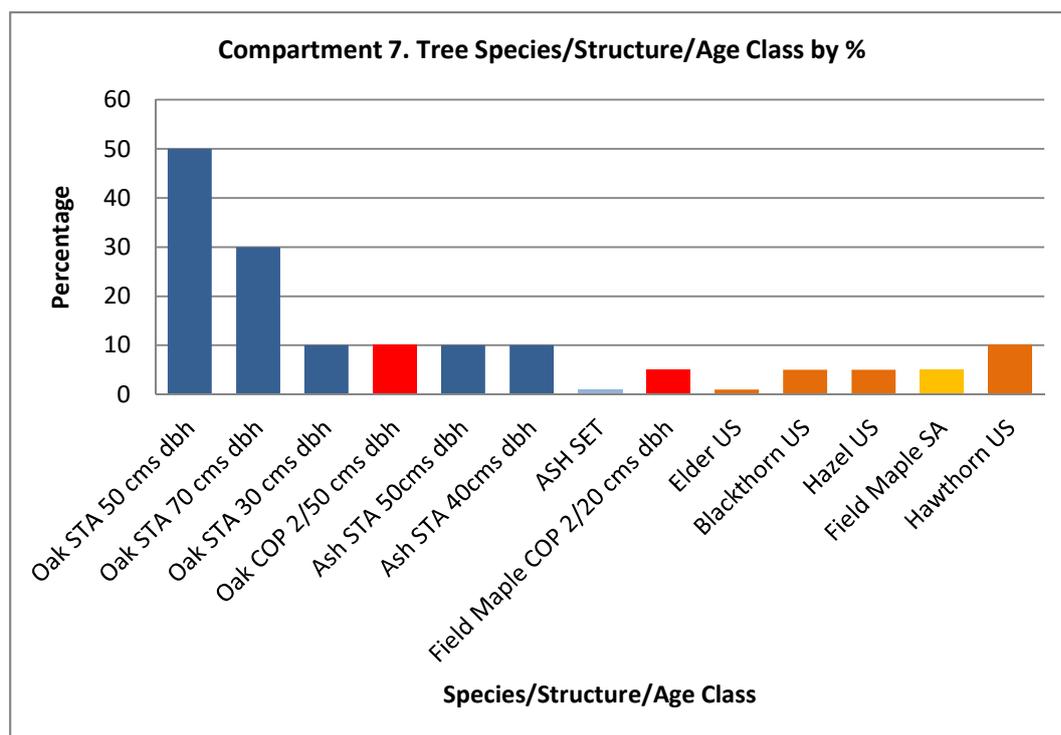
Compartment 1



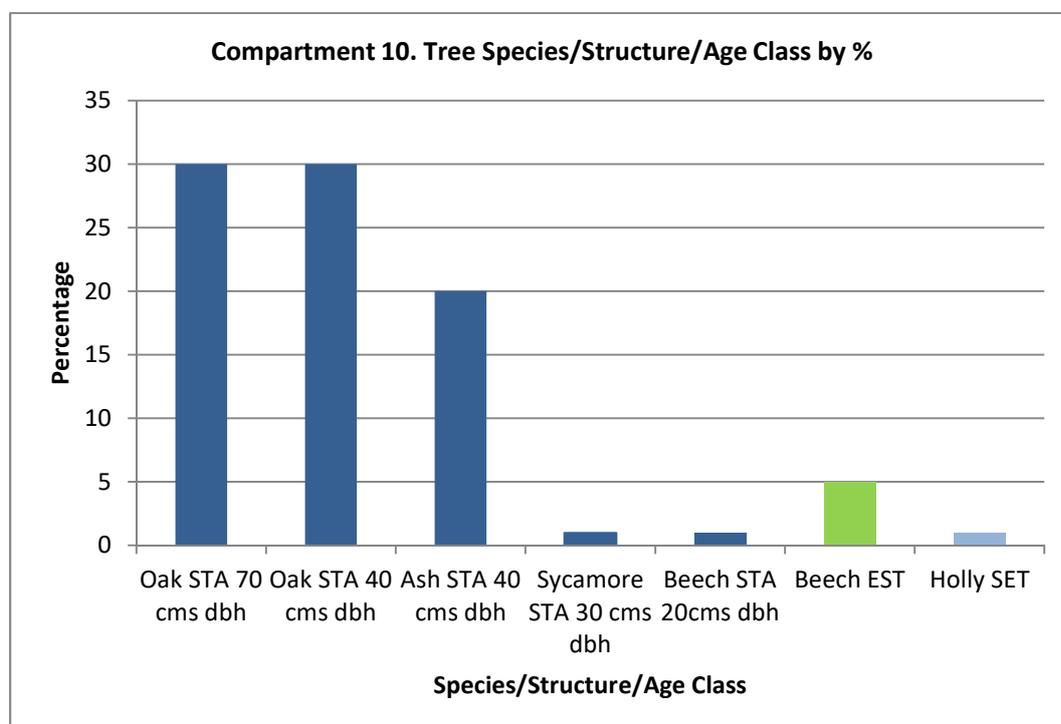
Compartment 4



Compartment 7

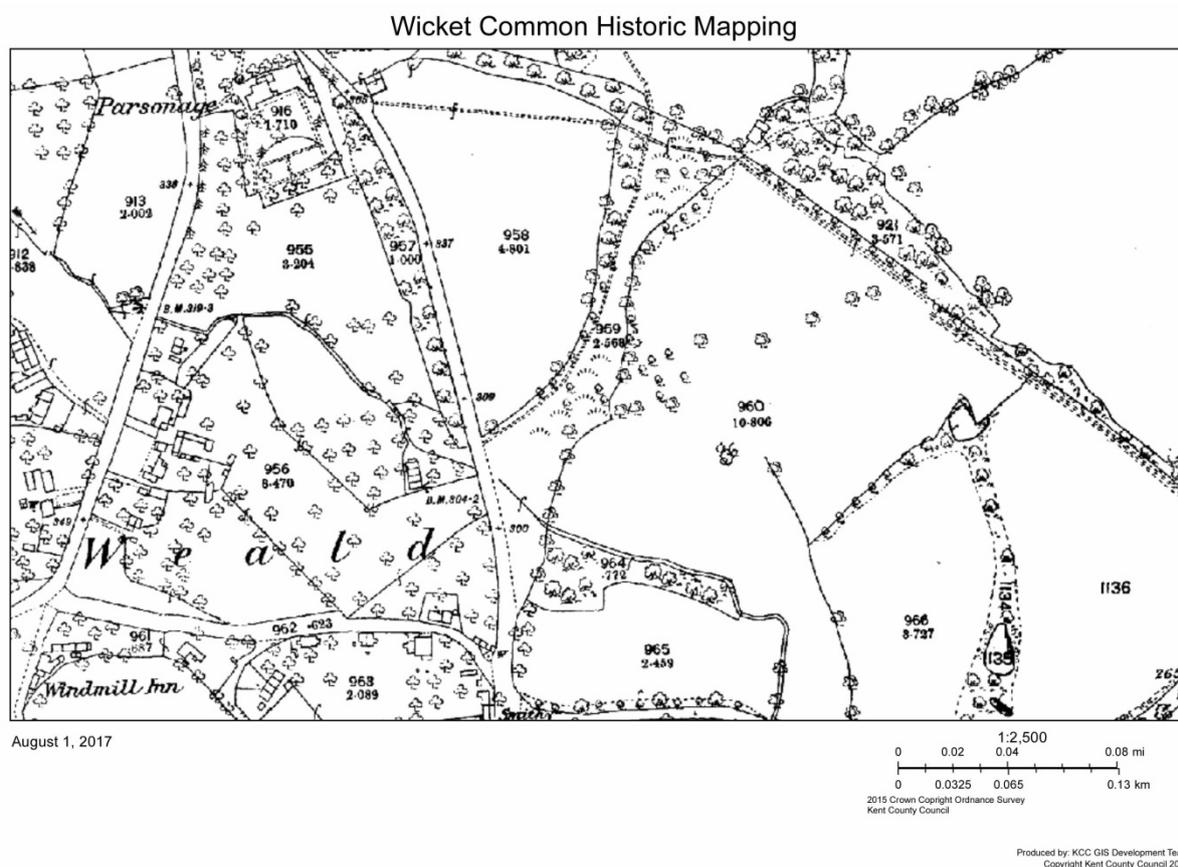


Compartment 10



Appendix C: Historic Mapping

The historic maps shown below are taken from the Kent Landscape Information Service (KLIS)³⁹ and both show mapping covering the period 1871 – 1890.



Wicket Common (Compartment 1). Historic mapping indicates this compartment was once more open, possibly heathland / wooded heath

³⁹ Historic maps available to view at <http://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.KLIS.Web.Sites.Public/ViewMap.aspx>

Compartment 4 Historic Mapping

