

Blandford Forest

Location

Blandford Forest comprises a scattered block of woodlands located within a 1km radius of the village of Winterborne Strickland. The woodlands all within either the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Tenure

Forestry Commission is the freehold owner of Blandford Forest Woodlands with the exception of Whatcombe, which is held on a number of lease agreements.

Landscape

Blandford Forest is located partly within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and partly within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ranging from small woodlands to large blocks, they sit comfortably within a landscape which is scattered with similar sized and structured woodlands. Providing a shelter and backdrop to this largely rural, agricultural area.

During operational planning, reference will be made to current AONB projects which may be supported by the operation.

Current Woodland Structure

There are areas of Ancient Woodland across the woodlands as shown on the following map. **These range in 'nativeness' but the long-term aim is to restore ancient woodlands to a native structure.**

Beech is by far the dominant species, accounting for around 50% of the area alone. Other broadleaves including Ash and Oak account for around a further 32%. The remaining area consists of a mixture of conifers, including Douglas Fir, Norway Spruce and Corsican Pine.

The age class of canopy trees ranges from 15 to over 100 years old. Over 90% of the woodland is aged between 41 and 80 years old, illustrating a lack of age diversity across the woodland.

There is a good proportion of open space, mainly associated with the north of Shillingstone.

Biodiversity and Conservation

All of the woodlands successfully provide quality habitat for an array of species including protected mammals, birds of prey and insects. Of particular importance in France Down is the presence of high quality shrub management of benefit to some rare moth species. Blandford Forest is also an important feeding area for bats. Coppice restoration is also underway across the block. The diversity of management types provides a mosaic of woodland types of benefit to a large spectrum of wildlife.

During management interventions, opportunities for ride widening and habitat enhancement will be taken to increase the ecotone of the woodland and provide connecting habitats for associated species. Decisions about where such enhancement work will take place will be made at the operational stage of management according to best practice

guidelines.

The woodland blocks contain a number of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs),

highlighting key habitats and species and supporting habitats. Recent records should be checked by operational managers prior to work activity to ensure opportunities for enhancing these sites, within the scope of the operation, are taken.

People

The woodlands are mainly freehold with the exception of Whatcombe Wood (see map). Freehold areas, although not entirely dedicated for open access under the CRoW Act, are open for public use and provide a space for local users for a range of activities including walking/dog walking, mountain biking and horse riding.

The involvement of Milton Abbas School and the Dorset Coppice Group highlight the potential of these woodlands to add value local community groups for education and healthy activities.

Open junctions, wide rides and clear paths enhance the experience of a walk along these paths. During management interventions opportunities to enhance the visual impact of rides and individual trees will be taken by selecting trees for retention based on character as well as widening rides.

Historic Environment

There is one scheduled archaeological feature in Shillingstone, an ancient earthwork known as Crossdyke located at Okeford Hill. This site will be managed according to a detailed five year plan which has been prepared in consultation with Historic England. There are no other recorded archaeological features within Blandford Forest, but the surrounding countryside is rich in archaeological features, including World War II features.

Whatcombe contains a large Scheduled Monument as well as a listed building. Large areas of Milton Abbas woodlands are designated as Historic Park and Garden as well as containing extensive areas of Scheduled Monuments. Forestry Commission will continue to manage these areas in accordance with our statutory responsibilities and decisions about enhancement works will be taken at the Operational Site Assessment (OSA) stage.

Milton Abbas forms part of a designated Historic Park and Garden. Partnerships with local land owners and Historic England have the potential to maintain and enhance the character of these areas in line with their historic interest.

In addition, there are numerous undesignated sites of historic interest. Management will ensure the integrity of these sites is maintained in line with guidance outlined in the UK Forestry Standard.

Continued monitoring will take place to ensure that anything relevant found is recorded and fed into operational planning in line with statutory responsibilities and best practice guidelines.

Soils

The woodlands lie almost entirely on the upper and middle chalk with large areas covered by a mantle of Clay-with-Flints. Thin rendzina soil occurs on the steep slopes, while the Clay-with-Flints overlying the chalk on the plateaus and gentler slopes. Both Field Grove and Bonsley Common occur on areas of deep Clay-with-Flints.

Water

There are no major waterways within Blandford Forest, but the woodlands are situated in a valley and are close to the River Stour.

A large lake, Lake Lodge, is situated adjacent to Milton Abbas woodlands, along with some smaller ponds.

Tree Diseases and Pests

The main diseases of concern currently are *Chalara Fraxinea* (Ash Dieback), *Dothistroma* (red band) Needle Blight on Corsican Pine, and *Phytophthora ramorum* on Larch. Although larch and Corsican Pine are present, their numbers are minimal within the scale of the woodland and so these diseases do not pose a great risk to the current woodland character. However, with Ash being a prominent component, *Chalara Fraxinea* poses a potential challenge to the ideal of maintaining a robust woodland with a strong native character.

Laurel control has been taking place in Milton Abbas in recent years and will continue as part of a drive to restore native habitats, continued monitoring will take place to ensure that those species which pose a threat to native flora do not become established.

Blandford Forest Location & AONB Status

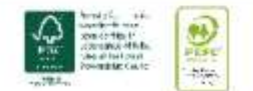


-  Management Area
-  Dorset
-  Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs

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Blandford Forest

Aerial Landscape



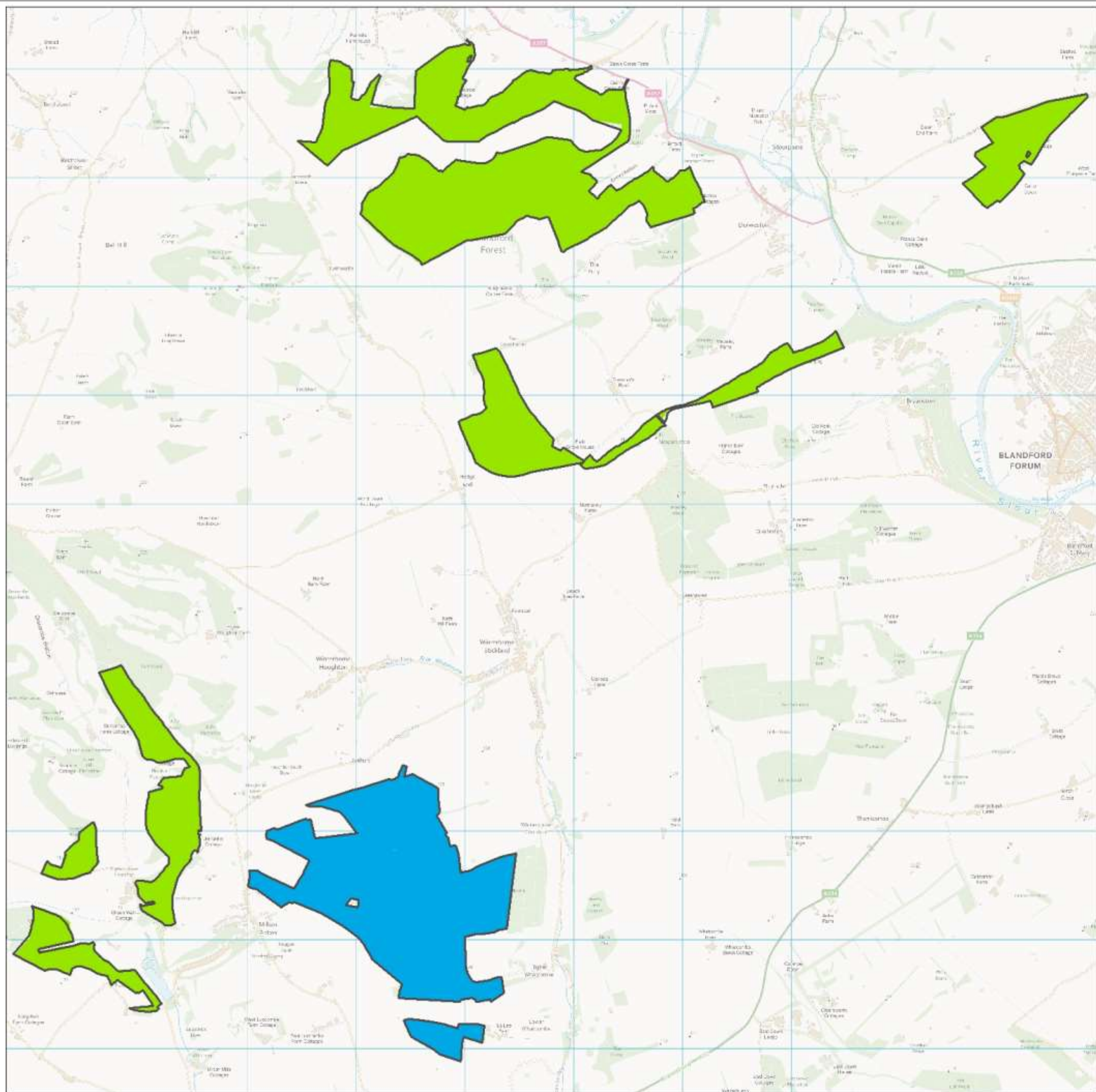
 Management Area

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Blandford Forest

Ownership Status



- Management Area
- Freehold
- Leasehold

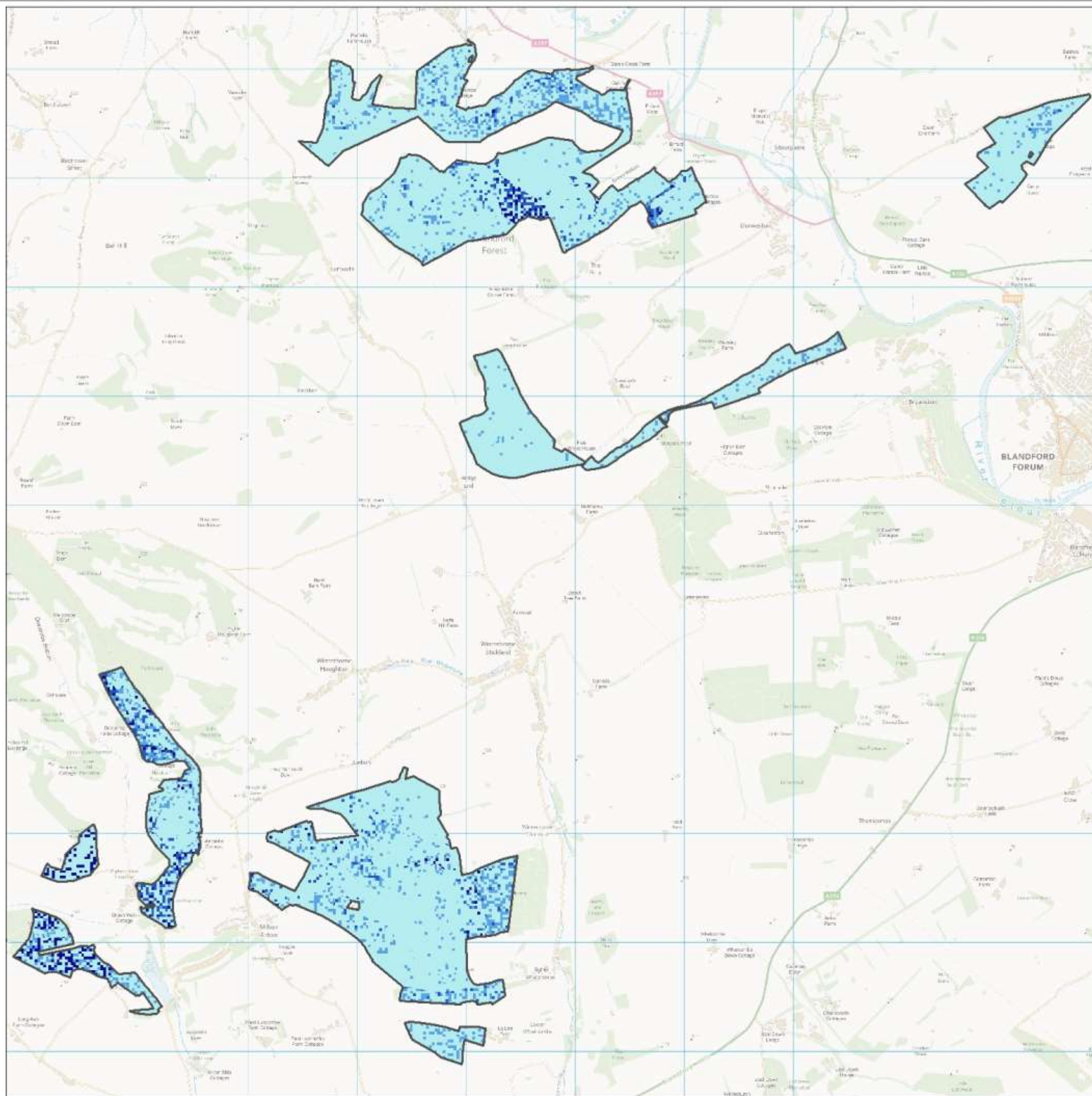
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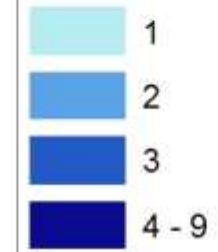
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Blandford Forest Species Diversity



Management Area
Number of component species within the canopy
(including open space)



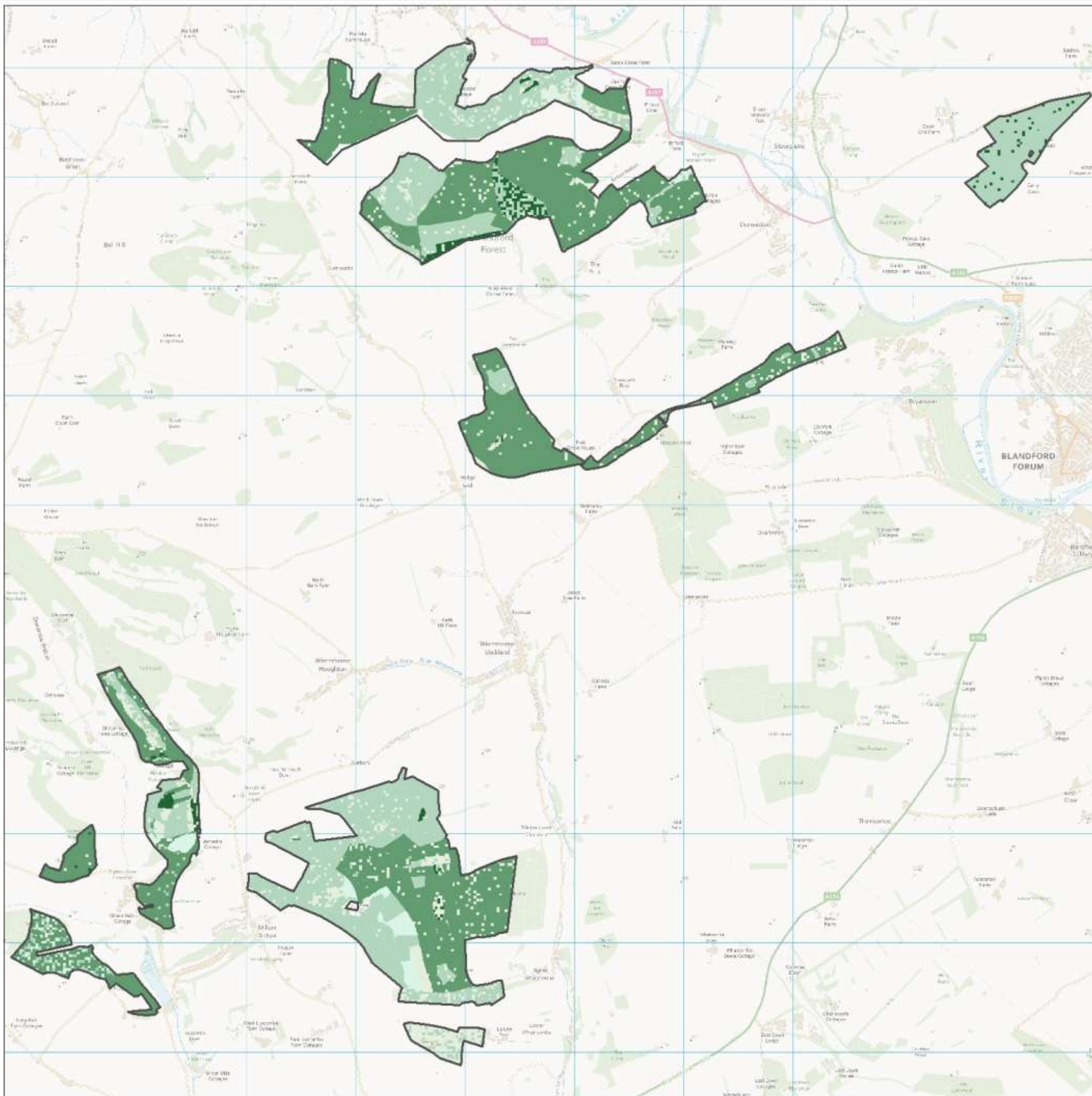
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Blandford Forest Age Diversity



- Management Area
- 1 - 20 Years Old
- 21 - 60 Years Old
- 61 - 100 Years Old
- Over 100 Years Old

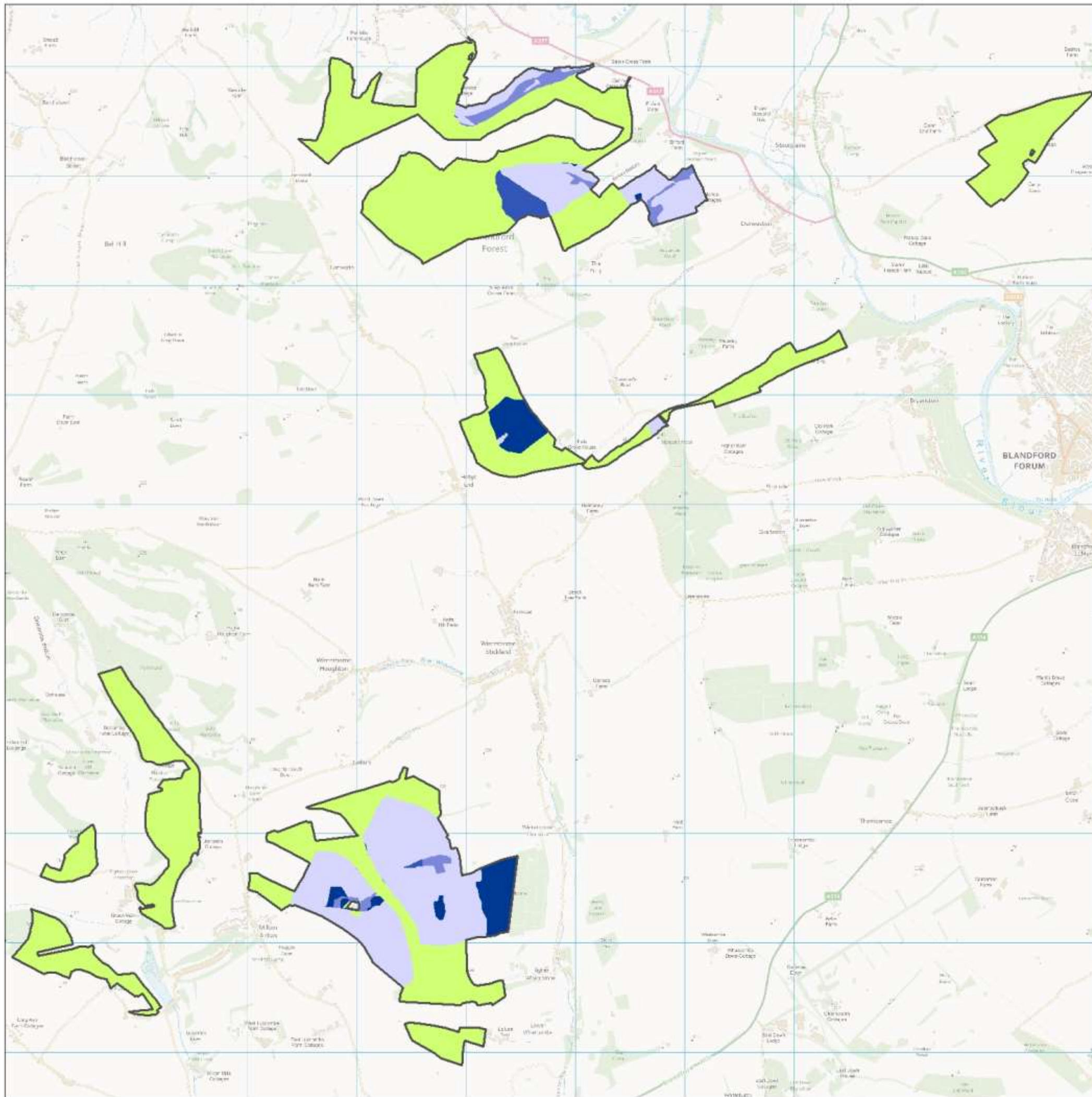
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Blandford Forest Ancient Woodland Native Scoring



Management Area

% of native tree species within the woodland canopy.

- 1 - Over 80% Native
- 2 - Between 50% and 80% Native
- 3 - Between 20% and 50% Native
- 4 - Less than 20% Native
- Not Ancient Woodland

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Blandford Forest



Historic Environment Designations

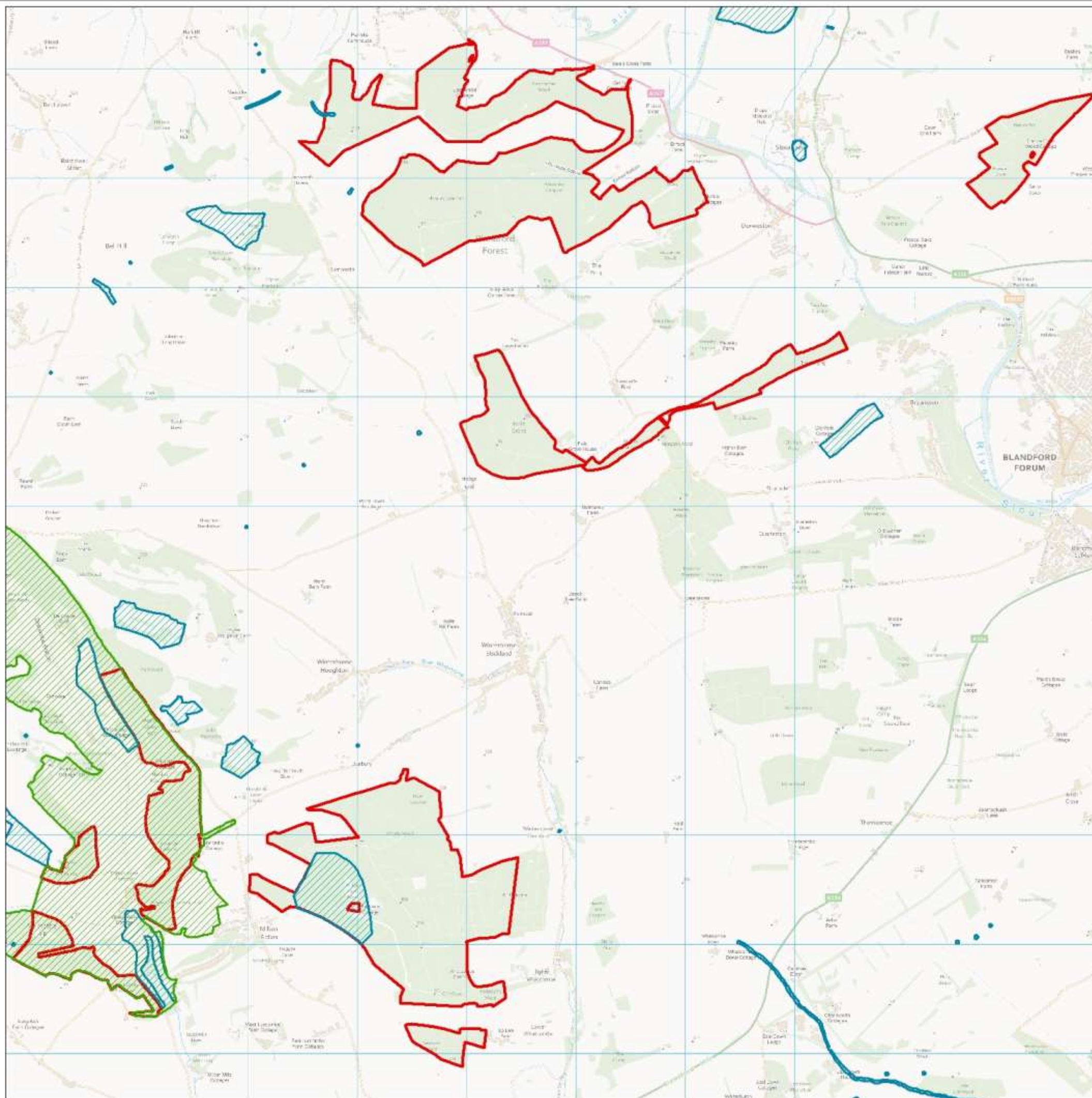
Management Area

Heritage Designations

DESIGNATION TYPE

Scheduled Monument

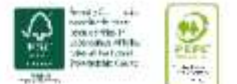
Park and Garden



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Blandford Forest Current Structure



Illustrates the structure of the woodland in 2016.

Legend

-  Management Area

-  Native Woodland.
Woodland which is predominantly (>80%) native species of a high forest structure with well-developed under-storey and areas of transitional open space.

-  Mixed Woodland.
No species type (broadleaf or conifer) represents more than 80% of the canopy.

-  Predominantly (>80%) conifer or other non-native woodland.

-  Open Space.
Area of permanent open space including grasslands, heathlands and meadows. or areas recently felled awaiting restocking.

-  Wildlife Corridors.
A scalloped network of roads, rides and tracks providing migration routes and high quality habitat for associated species.

-  Buildings and Agricultural Land.

-  Not FC Land



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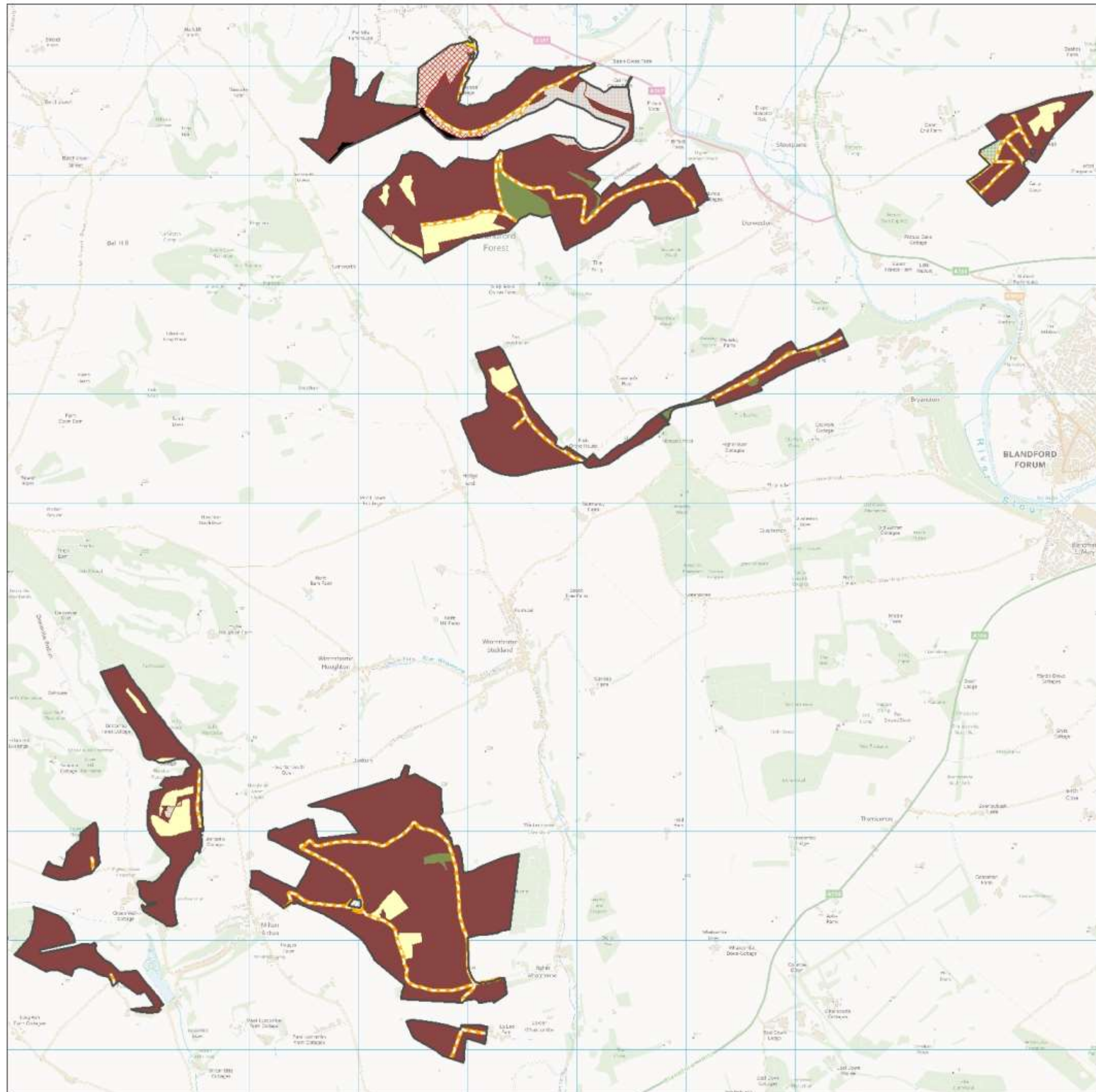
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Blandford Forest Long Term Vision



Illustrates the long-term structure of the woodland.



Legend

-  Management Area
-  Native Woodland.
Woodland which is predominantly (>80%) native species of a high forest structure with well-developed under-storey and areas of transitional open space.
-  Mixed Woodland.
No species type (broadleaf or conifer) represents more than 80% of the canopy.
-  Coppice with Standards.
Thin the canopy to reduce cover to a maximum of 20%. Coppice understorey in an appropriate rotation to benefit biodiversity while taking market opportunities to utilise products.
-  Scrub Mosaic.
A mosaic habitat of scrub and open space.
-  Open Woodland.
Woodland with a canopy cover of 50% at most and well developed, rotational understorey.
-  Open Space.
Area of permanent open space including grasslands, heathlands and meadows. or areas recently felled awaiting restocking.
-  Wildlife Corridors.
A scalloped network of roads, rides and tracks providing migration routes and high quality habitat for associated species.
-  Buildings and Agricultural Land.
-  Not FC Land
-  Natural Reserve.
Intervene only if a specific plant health or health and safety issue arises.

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Blandford Forest Habitat Restoration & Felling


Illustrates the management types to be used over the period of this Plan.


Legend


-  Management Area

-  Native Broadleaved Woodland Management. Manage under an appropriate shelterwood system favouring best native tree and focussing on the production of quality timber.

-  Native Woodland Restoration. Manage under an appropriate shelterwood system. Favour best native tree, focussing on the production of quality timber and the gradual reduction of non-native species to 20% of the canopy or less.

-  Mixed Woodland Management. Manage under an appropriate shelterwood system. Favour best tree, focussing on the production of quality timber and species diversity.

-  Coppice with Standards. Thin the canopy to reduce cover to a maximum of 20%. Coppice understorey in an appropriate rotation to benefit biodiversity while taking market opportunities to utilise products.

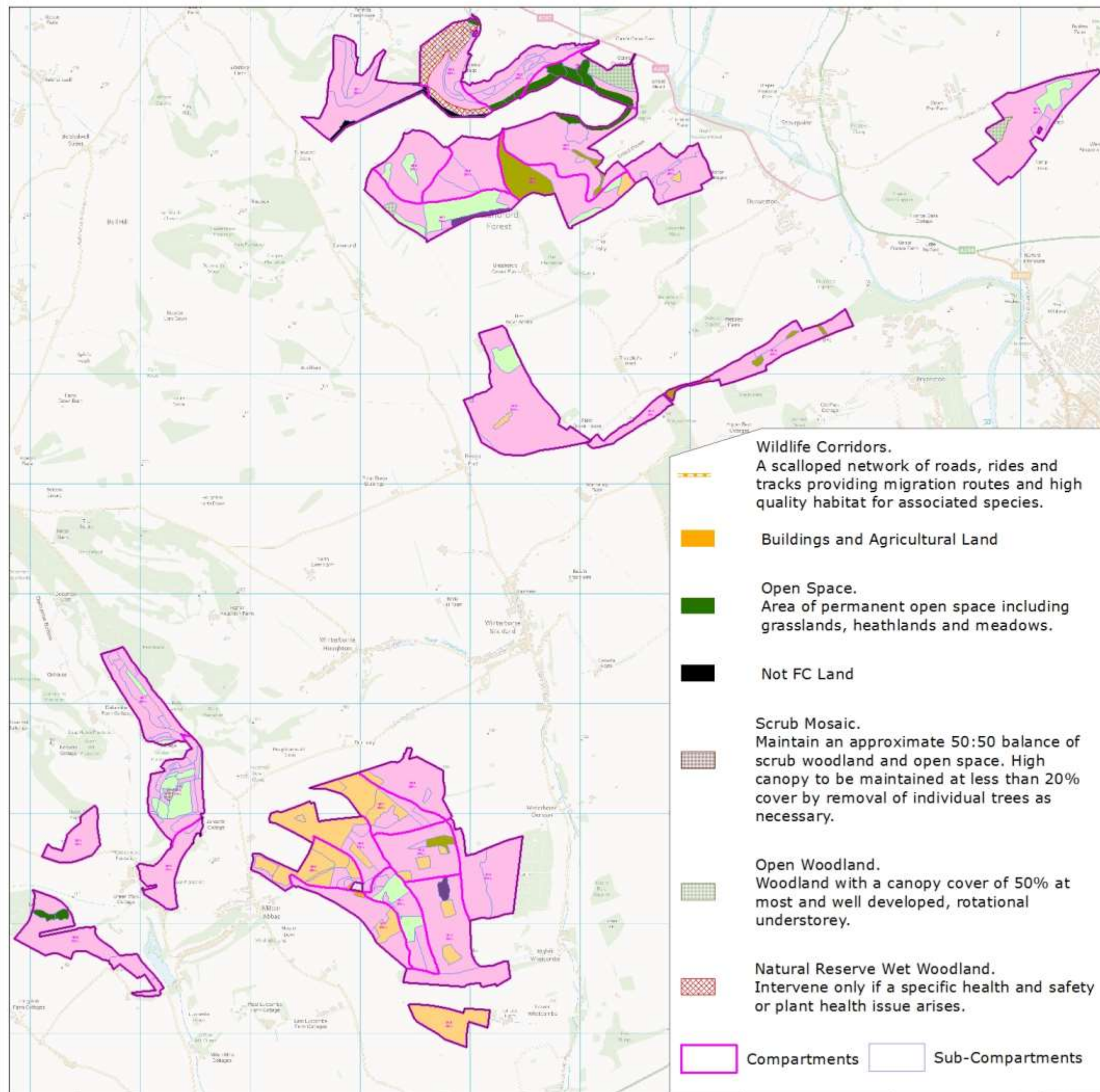
-  Maturing (>90 years old) Oak Management. Manage under an appropriate shelterwood system, favouring best native tree and focussing on the production of quality timber. In addition, implement regeneration fellings no greater than 2 ha in size and up to a maximum of 10% of contiguous native woodland.

Declaration by FC as an operator.
All timber arising from the Forest Enterprise Estate represents a negligible risk under the EUTR (No. 995/210).

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Wildlife Corridors.
A scalloped network of roads, rides and tracks providing migration routes and high quality habitat for associated species.

Buildings and Agricultural Land

Open Space.
Area of permanent open space including grasslands, heathlands and meadows.

Not FC Land

Scrub Mosaic.
Maintain an approximate 50:50 balance of scrub woodland and open space. High canopy to be maintained at less than 20% cover by removal of individual trees as necessary.

Open Woodland.
Woodland with a canopy cover of 50% at most and well developed, rotational understorey.

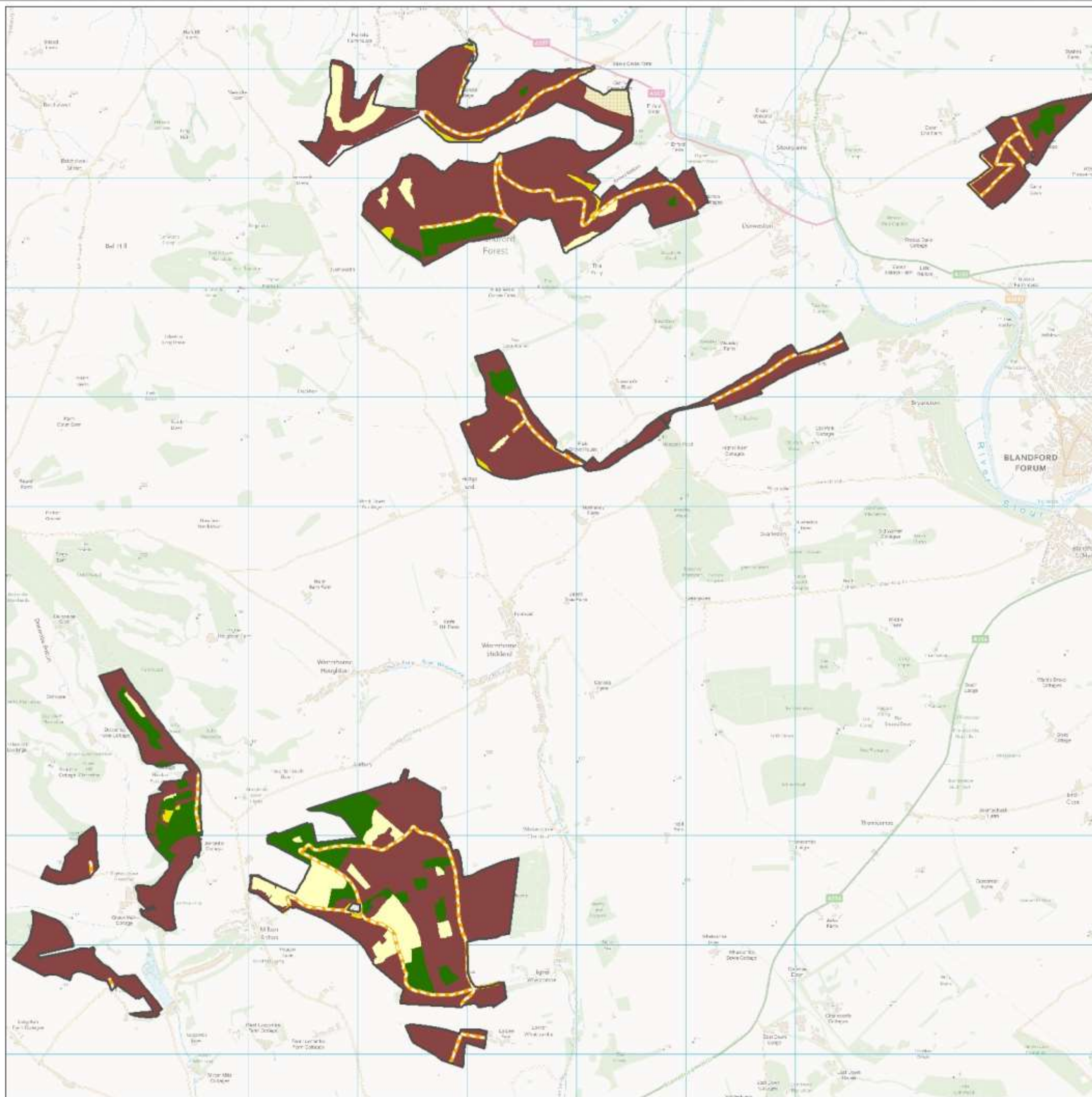
Natural Reserve Wet Woodland.
Intervene only if a specific health and safety or plant health issue arises.


 Compartments  Sub-Compartments


Blandford Forest Medium Term Structure





Illustrates the potential structure of the woodland in 2036.





-  Management Area


-  Native Woodland.
Woodland which is predominantly (>80%) native species of a high forest structure with well-developed under-storey and areas of transitional open space.


-  Mixed Woodland.
No species type (broadleaf or conifer) represents more than 80% of the canopy.


-  Predominantly (>80%) conifer or other non-native woodland.

-  Scrub Mosaic.
Maintain an approximate 50:50 balance of scrub woodland and open space. High canopy to be maintained at less than 20% cover by removal of individual trees as necessary.

-  Open Space.
Area of permanent open space including grasslands, heathlands and meadows. or areas recently felled awaiting restocking.

-  Buildings and Agricultural Land.

-  Not FC Land

-  Wildlife Corridors.
A scalloped network of roads, rides and tracks providing migration routes and high quality habitat for associated species.

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