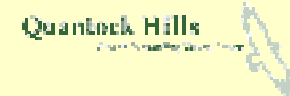
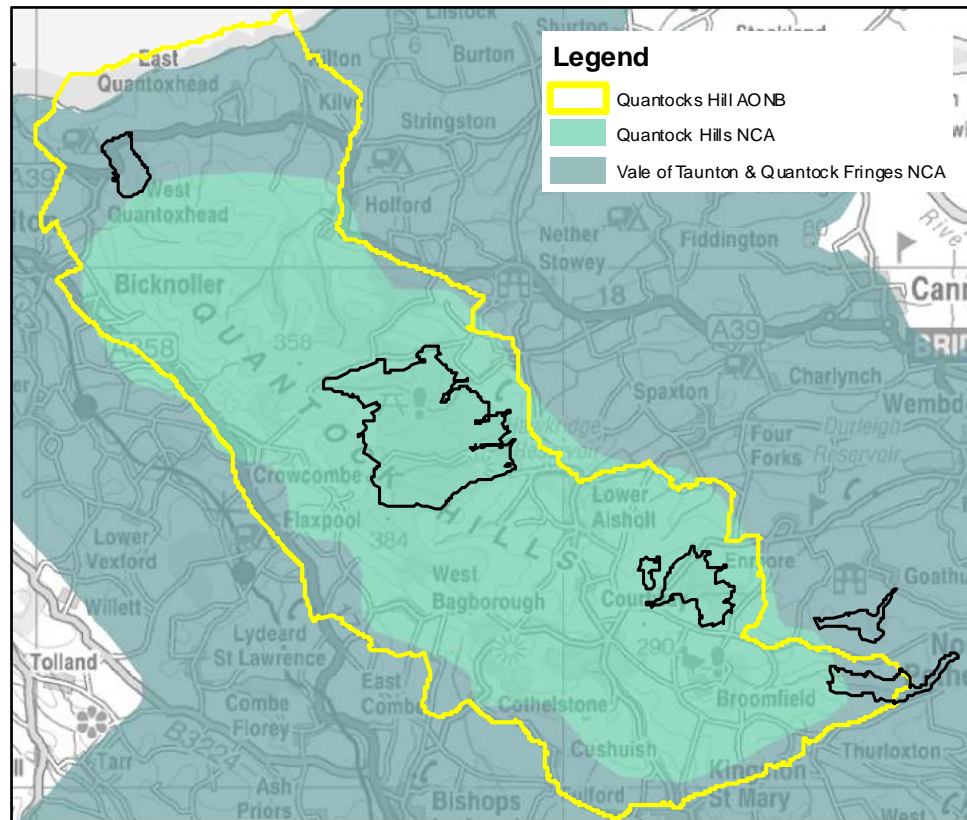


Landscape Character



The majority of the Plan area lies within the **Quantock Hills AONB**, the specific qualities, which are identified below (Quantock Hills AONB, 2014), can be directly delivered and enhanced by the proposals of this Plan:

- Upland oak-woods to the north-east AONB that include deep stream-cut combes that climb towards small flower-rich bogs in the extensive high heathland common of gorse, heather, bilberry, bracken and thorn.
- The Quantocks comprise one of the few remaining moorland landscapes in southern Britain of national importance for the legible survival of monuments these include defended Iron Age enclosures such as Ruborough Camp.
- Distinctive beech hedgebanks separating the upland commons from surrounding conifer plantations and historic parkland.
- Populations of nightjar over 1% of the total UK population
- The Ash-hazel woodland mix more common in the southern hills allows good light levels at the woodland floor leading to a healthy ground flora in some cases including extensive bluebell cover
- The Quantock Hills AONB offers extensive opportunities for quiet outdoor recreation the area has 3,000 hectares of public Access Land and approximately 250 kilometres (150 miles) of rights of way.
- The Quantock Hills are a living, working landscape with a distinct cultural heritage and varied village communities.

The Plan area sits within the **Quantock Hills** and **Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes National Character Areas (NCA)** (Natural England, 2013). The proposals made in this Plan are in keeping with the characteristics of these areas and look to enhance the landscape character where appropriate.

NCA 144 - Quantock Hills

- The Quantock Hills tops provide important habitats of sessile oak woodland with a wealth of lichens and bryophytes; and lowland heath, which includes heather, whortleberry, bell heather, western gorse and cross-leaved heath. A high heathland ridge below which much of the dip slope, and particularly the valleys and combes, are cloaked in woodland, which in turn is surrounded by a mantle of rural agricultural land.

- A well-wooded landscape with large areas of ancient woodland and coniferous forestry plantation. Beech hedgebanks bound the rectangular fields around the edge of the open plateau and on the lower agricultural land in the south. Mixed hedgerows are used elsewhere to enclose smaller, irregular fields.

- Iconic species for the area include red deer and buzzards. The NCAs also provide habitats for rarer species such as Bechstein's bat, pied flycatcher, Dartford warbler, and nightjar.

- Bronze-age burial mounds, iron-age hill forts, standing stones, medieval manor houses and industrial heritage contribute to a strong historic environment.

- The Quantock Hills are a popular destination for day-trippers from around the region. The upland areas are most popular for visitors who enjoy the natural and historic landscape, the views and heritage assets of the NCA.



NCA 146 - Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes

- A number of tree-lined streams and rivers wind through the area. The River Tone and its tributaries drain the area to the south, while in the north Doniford Stream, fed by tributaries arising from the Quantocks and Brendon Hills, drains into the sea at Watchet. To the east many streams drain off the Quantock dip slopes and flow into the River Parrett. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal runs across the south of the area.

- Woodland cover is generally low, at 6 per cent, although the area has a wooded feel as there are many hedgerow trees (such as oak), orchards, remnants of parkland, small woodlands with ash and oak and bankside trees such as alder and, rarely, black poplar.

- Scattered patches of floristically rich lowland meadow and limestone grasslands characterised by lesser knapweed, field scabious, milkwort and thyme; coastal and flood plain grazing marsh; intertidal sand and mudflats; parkland; maritime cliff and slope; and small patches of heath, fen and marsh.

- Sweeping views from the coast across the bay to Wales; to Hinkley Point power station in the east; and to Minehead in the west. Exmoor, the Blackdown Hills and the Quantock Hills provide a backdrop to the area and expansive views from these uplands emphasise the lush pastoral nature of this area.



St Audries - Analysis & Concept

St Audries woodland (also known as 'Deerpark') lies at the extreme north end of the AONB, 800m from the Bristol Channel. The majority of the woodland has a north-western aspect with slope rising dramatically towards the south-eastern corner where it reaches an altitude of around 270m. The woodland is therefore quite exposed and experiences some strong coastal breezes and salt exposure as well as being prominent on the landscape, particularly from southern and western aspects.

Historically the area formed part of the Quantoxhead Estate and was planted in the late 18th Century and by 1911 supported 120 fallow and 25 red deer.

St Audries is now a conifer dominated productive woodland which experiences low intensity recreational use in the form of public footpaths and bridleways. St Audries hosts a number of significant ecological features namely nightjar, deer, owl and adder. A number of considerable beech trees are found within the woodland block, which are a key feature of the AONB (2014).

Into the future, the woodland will continue to be a conifer dominated productive woodland, containing some broadleaf components for amenity and biodiversity value.

Analysis: The woodland borders the upland heath SSSI common land which is a key feature of the AONB. This hard edge has created a step on the landscape between productive high forest and managed lowland heath.

Concept: A well designed coupe of permanent open space to compliment the SSSI has been created and will be maintained through stump grinding followed by a cutting programme. A gradated edge, of upto 20% cover, will be allowed to natural regenerate to better integrate the forest with the heathland. The iron boundary fence will be retained for visual and cultural value.



Photo 3

Analysis: Douglas fir crops, planted in 1980, have suffered from lack of active management in the past this is now in the process of being rectified.

Concept: Crops will continue to be cleaned and respaced to bring on crop to full economic maturity in order to maximise productive capacity.

Analysis: The woodland border the St Audries House, Registered Park and Garden, Grade II.

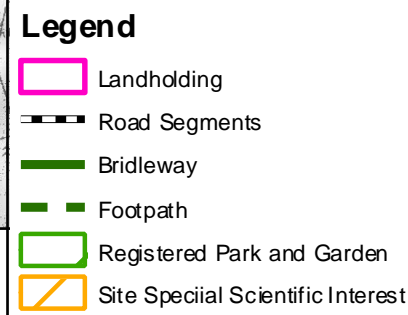
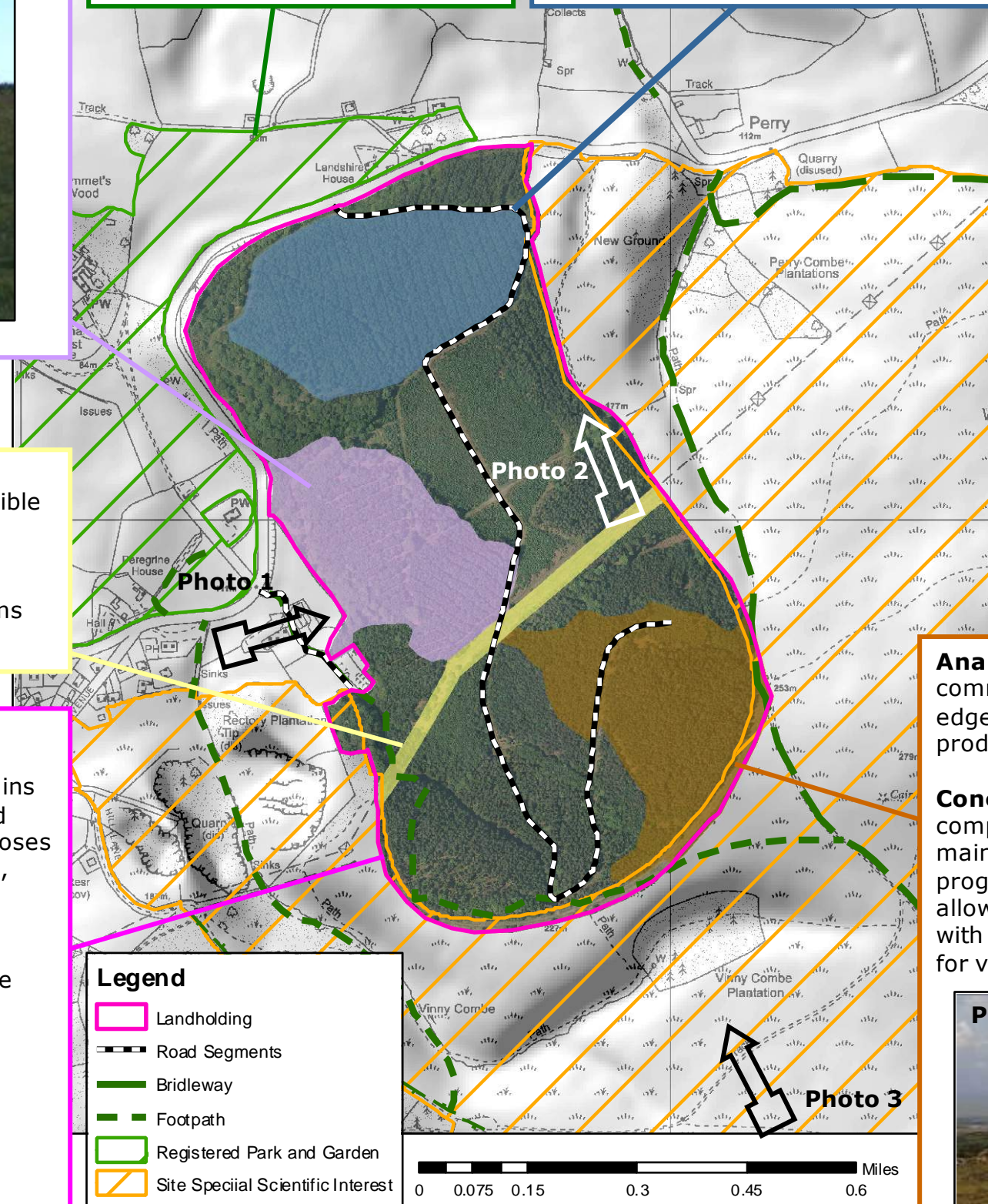
Concept: Consideration will be made of this designation so that proposals for the woodland, compliment the neighbouring heritage landscape.

Analysis: Western edge forms a fine backdrop to the village of West Quantoxhead. Conifer dominated crops currently cover this steep slope with beech and oak riparian zones found towards the more northerly end.

Concept: A mixture of staged clearfells and shelterwood system will create an operationally achievable management regime whilst retaining the high landscape value.



Photo 1



Analysis: The linear powerline and its wayleave are prominent features of the skyline and are particularly visible from the west and the Brendon Hills.

Concept: Open space creation and diversification of the forest structure through thinning and shelterwood systems will minimise the impact of this hard feature.



Photo 2

Analysis: An iron boundary fence remains as a feature of the old Deerpark, which encloses much of the southern, eastern and western woodland boundary.

Concept: This feature will be retained and maintained, clear of scrub, to preserve its visual and cultural significance for perpetuity.

Great Wood - Analysis & Concept

Great Wood is located in the middle of the Quantock Hills and within the AONB, between the north and south lowland heath grazed commons (SSSI). Defined by its distinct landscape of three deep combes running west to east from the high point ridgeline on the western boundary, Great Wood is in close proximity of Taunton (7 miles) and Bridgwater (6 miles).

There are records of planting of Scot's pine, beech, larch and sycamore as early as 1797 and at this time the older oak and elm timbers were used for shipbuilding while the traditional woodland management technique of coppicing was practised. Between 1857-1860 the last Lord of Taunton had Quantock Lodge built and the woodland provided a sporting venue. After gradual decline the house and forestry land was put up for auction and many parts of the forest were clearfelled during the Great War.

Great Wood is a conifer dominated block, delivering quality Douglas fir and Sitka spruce within shelterwood systems. Broadleaf components are made up of beech stands and oak in mixture together with ash, sycamore and birch. The woodland is ecologically diverse and home to numerous fauna species, particularly red deer, badger, owl, nightjar, lepidophora and bats as well as a number of veteran trees and beech hedge banks. Great Wood experiences a high level of low intensity recreation walks and horse riders together with informal mountain bike tracks. A number of free and paid facilities are available to the public which sees approximately 22,000 car visits per year.

Great Wood will go through a period of significant transformation over the coming decades towards a more native broadleaved dominated woodland. The block will continue to be a productive woodland, renowned for its 'big trees', with a strong recreation, cultural and ecological value.

Analysis: The majority of the woodland is designated PAWS, much of which is nearly pure conifer and thus limited by minimal broadleaf regeneration. Majority of ancient remnants are found in the bottom of combes and towards the north end of the woodland where soils are more fertile.

Concept: The conifer dominated stands will be managed through thinning to favour broadleaves with restoration work concentrating in the bottom of combes to ensure effective resource allocation. Group selection and replanting together with regeneration where evident, will be used to restock.

Analysis: Some clearfell sites managed through 'successional' restock are under performing either due to weed encroachment or the regeneration of undesired species.

Concept: Proactive restocking of these areas which will occur when 'successional' prescription is not delivering with parameters for initiating intervention.

Analysis: Dead Women's Ditch SM currently 'At Risk' due to mature DF and WH stands. However its exact location is currently unknown.

Concept: Establish exact location of SM through survey with expert input and then remove trees, whilst being sensitive to landscape and maintain as open space.

Analysis: Quality Douglas fir continuous cover systems being realised throughout the woodland.

Concept: Continue to manage these stands to economic maturity, favouring broadleaf regeneration where possible.



Photo 1

Analysis: Overstood beech hedge banks, key features of the AONB landscape, border the northern and southern woodland edges.

Concept: Manage in line with AONB Restoration Plan and in agreement with AONB



Photo 2

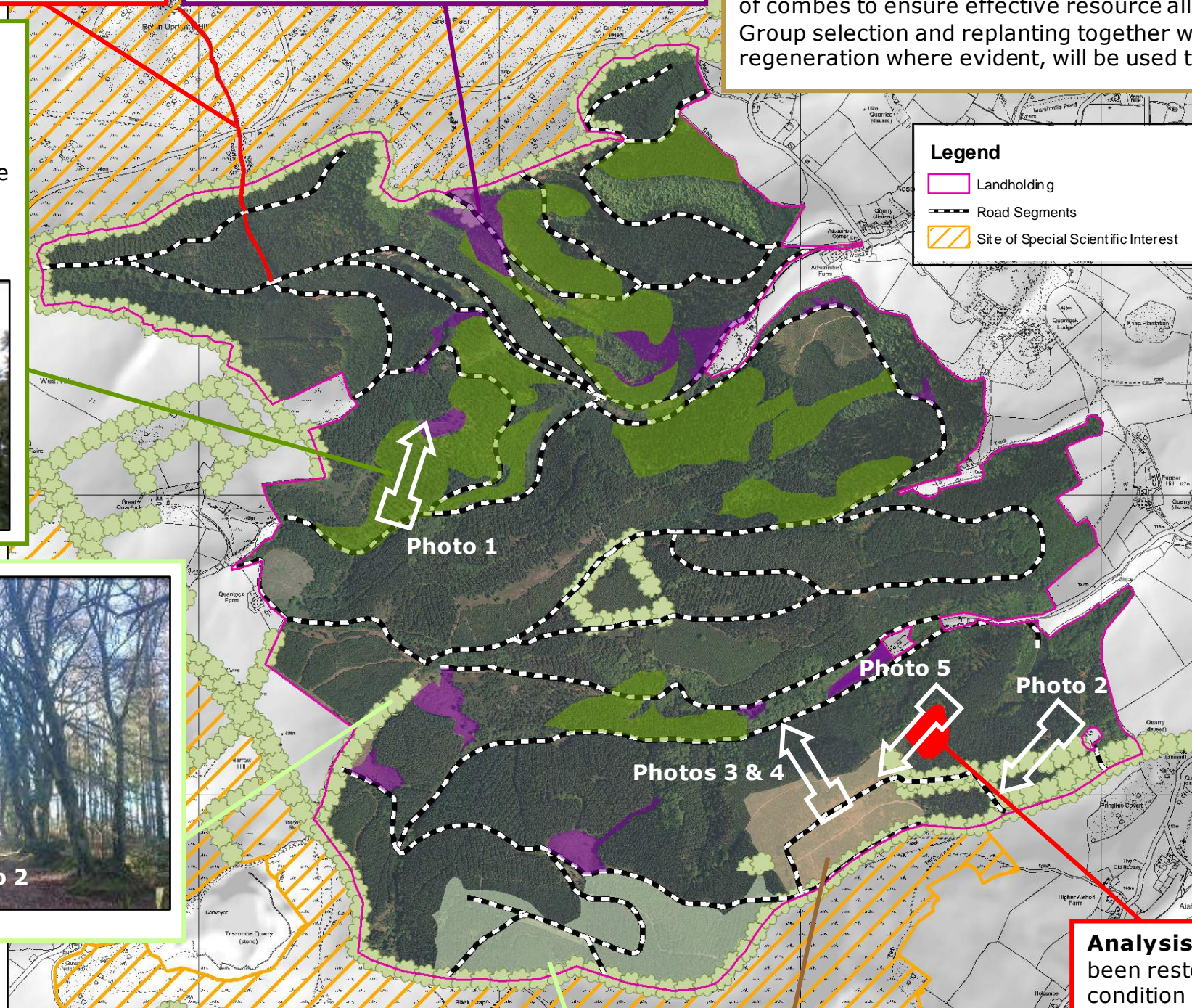


Photo 1

Photo 5

Photo 2

Photos 3 & 4

Analysis: Proposals for area of high forest on poor upland soils proposed to be converted to open space in previous plans to create linkage with open space created in previous Plan period.

Concept: Remove trees permanently using stump grinding and annual cutting programme. Maintenance will need to be ongoing and targeted following experience in adjoining site.



Photo 3



Photo 4

Analysis: Plainsfield Camp has been restored to a stable condition with minor encroachment on banks from surrounding seed source.

Concept: Continue to manage accordingly, with the removal of upturned tree stumps together with encroachment removal possible where considered appropriate.



Photo 5

Analysis: The woodland sits in a prominent position within a lowland landscape and is visible from many local focal points including Bridgwater.

Concept: The high quality coupe design and principles will be retained to ensure the woodlands prominent external value is not damaged.

Photo 1



Analysis: Significant beech hedge banks are found both as external and internal edges of the woodland in varying condition, from stable to declining.

Concept: Where appropriate and apply prescriptions which favour and enable the perpetuity of these culturally significant features.

Analysis: Quality p.1860 beech/ash woodland sits well in the basin of this small valley and provides a fine back drop to the dwelling here.

Concept: The majority is currently managed under minimal intervention or natural reserve and this will be extended so as to protect this valued area of woodland

Wind Down - Analysis & Concept

Wind Down and Little Great Wood are located on the northern slopes of the Quantock Hills, within the AONB. They are seen in longer views as part of the general pattern of woodland agricultural land that is characteristic of the area, as is the mix of broadleaved and conifer woodland species.

It is assumed that Wind Down was part of the Enmore Estate associated with Enmore Castle located within a mile of the woodland. The Estate had a large mixture of diverse woodlands with a strong productive capacity with species including, Spanish chestnut, hornbeam and witch elm, most of these woodlands have now been cleared

Wind Down is a mixed woodland with large areas of productive broadleaf and conifer shelterwoods. In recent years felling of larch due to *Phytophthora ramorum* has significantly altered the felling programme and crop structures. The majority of recreational use is through walkers and horse riders on the network of tracks and paths. Wind Down is home to live badger setts, owl and night jar roosts as well as red and roe deer.

The vision of Wind Down is for a mixed woodland of a variety of broadleaved species and management systems, delivering cultural, ecological and recreational value as well as significant timber yields.

Analysis: A large extent of the valley bottoms are designated as AWS. Planted with conifer these sites are Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) delivering quality timber within continuously cover system

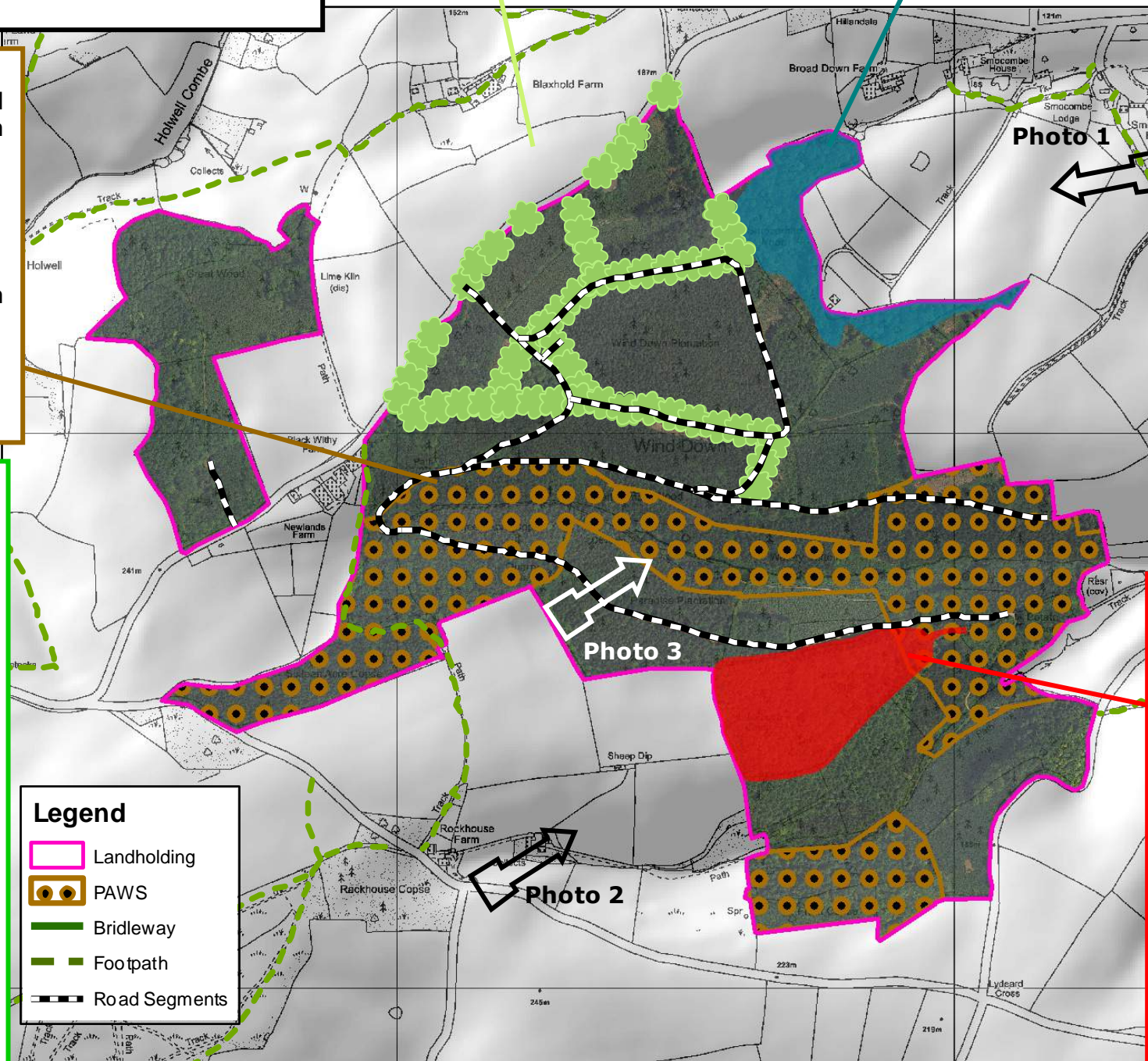
Concept: Crops will continue to be managed on a shelterwood system, with focus on removal of conifers through thinning and group felling. Enrichment planting will be considered where appropriate.

Analysis: Trees of significant interest are found throughout the crops providing cultural and ecological value.

Concept: Where appropriate these will be managed for perpetuity through crown thinning and minimal ground disturbance



Photo 3



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Ordnance Survey [100021242]

0 0.075 0.15 0.3 0.45 0.6 Miles

Analysis: Ruborough Camp Scheduled Monument is registered as 'At Risk' from rooting damage of forestry. This risk has increased due to stand instability following recent felling.

Concept: Removal of the unstable beech together with older broadleaved woodland in agreement with Historic England and managed to a condition to keep it from risk.

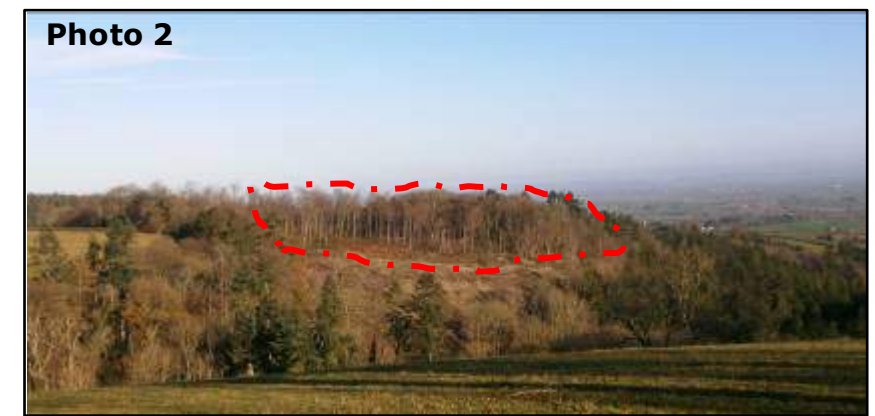






Photo 2

Analysis: Halswell Park and Garden is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Goathurst (or the Thickets) is an important historical feature of the Park, providing a backdrop to Robins Wood Hut. The woodland was also part of the Woodland Riding which traverses the landscape, much of which is still intact today. The Park is currently on the 'At Risk' register.

Concept: A transformation towards a more mixed woodland composition of conifer and broadleaves, together with the maintenance of the dark backdrop to Robins Wood Hut, in the context of normal forest operations (i.e. periodic clearfelling with retention of edge trees) will enhance the impact the landscape. An aspiration will be to maintain and restore the Woodland Riding overtime, in concurrence with programmed forestry operations.

Legend

-  Landholding
-  Road Segments
-  Footpath
-  Woodland Riding

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Ordnance Survey [100021242]

Analysis: Trees of significant interest are found throughout the crops providing cultural and ecological value. These are most likely part of the historic parkland landscape.

Concept: The very old native veteran oak trees will be retain for perpetuity. When crops are thinned it will be done to favour the regeneration of native broadleaf species but will also release the veterans crowns slowly on so to minimise the impact of sudden exposure to desiccating winds and sun scorch.

Goathurst - Analysis & Concept

Goathurst, or locally known as The Thickets, is a small woodland which occupies the upper slopes and undulating plateau of the ridge of land overlooking Halswell Park and Goathurst. The woodland lies just outside the AONB but is a very important part of this landscape being visible from local villages, minor and trunk roads to the north, and also from 20 miles away while travelling south on the M5 motorway. It lies approximately 3km west of the village of North Petherton and 5km to the south west of Bridgwater.

Goathurst was planted as a back drop to Halswell House in the early 18th Century and is now a part of the Halswell Park Registered Park and Garden. The designation covers a larger area of features, noted for its parkland and structural assets as well as its woodland. Individual unscheduled features such as stone tablets and veteran tress are found within the woodland as remnants of a rich heritage

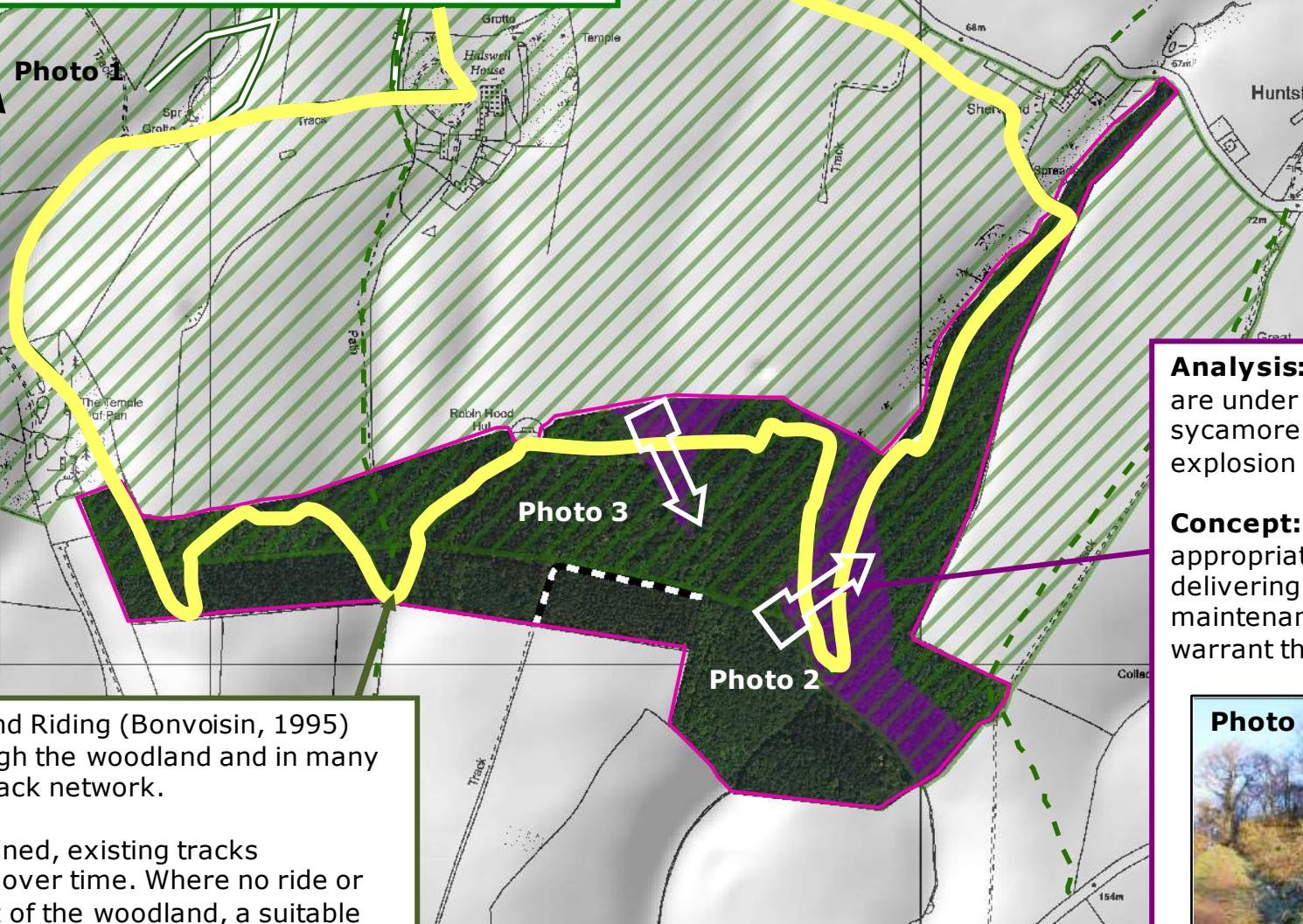
The woodland comprises of more than 59% broadleaf species consisting of very old remnant oak. This is a quiet wood with public access in the form of a few local dog walkers and occasional horse riders. There is a differing wildlife in the woodland from the smaller bugs and beetles and bats associated with the veteran oak trees, to the raptors, roe and occasional red deer and also live badger setts.

Goathurst's value to the wider landscape will be preserved and enhanced into the future. A greater proportion of broadleaves will create a species diverse mixed productive woodland.

Photo 1



Photo 1



Analysis: The woodland sits in a prominent position and is visible from many local focal points including Bridgwater. The internal landscape has been going through a period of improvement through areas of temporary open space and ride side management.

Concept: The high quality coupe design and principles will be retained to ensure the woodlands external prominent value is not damaged. The improvement of the internal landscape principles will remain ongoing.

Analysis: The conjectured Woodland Riding (Bonvoisin, 1995) created by Arthur Young runs through the woodland and in many places follows the existing ride or track network.

Concept: Existing rides will be retained, existing tracks insufficient in width will be widened over time. Where no ride or track already exists, i.e. at the west of the woodland, a suitable ride will be created in conjunction with forest operations as the opportunity arises, i.e. following a felling operation.

Analysis: Some clearfell sites managed through 'successional' restock are under performing. Regeneration is reliant on ash seed trees with sycamore and beech also present. The site also suffers from an explosion of bramble following felling operations, stifles regeneration.

Concept: Proactive restocking of these areas with historically appropriate species will occur when 'successional' prescription is not delivering with parameters for initiating intervention. A significant maintenance regime would be required but the extent of these sites warrant this proactive approach.

Photo 2



Photo 3



Analysis: Corsican pine, originally due for clearfell in 2012-2016 is now worked as a shelterwood through heavy thinning to reduce the threat of *Dothistroma Needle Blight*. Regeneration of beech and sweet chestnut most likely but evidence of hazel understorey too.

Concept: The regenerating broadleaf understorey will be enabled and released where evident. Bramble control may be required. Targeted underplanting will proactively achieve greater diversity in the species structure and restore PAWS.



Photo 1

Analysis: Extensive areas of beech p. 1950-51 are delivering fairly monocultured stand conditions on an Ancient Woodland Site. Any natural significant regeneration is comprised of beech or Sweet chestnut.

Concept: Break up the stands' age and species structure through group felling programme with natural regeneration to diversify the woodland age and species structure, further resilience and restore PAWS.



Photo 2

Analysis: Some areas of planned and existing open space are suffering from encroachment due to operational constraints.

Concept: Work to a internal, temporary open space regime which is operationally achievable.

Kings Cliff- Analysis & Concept

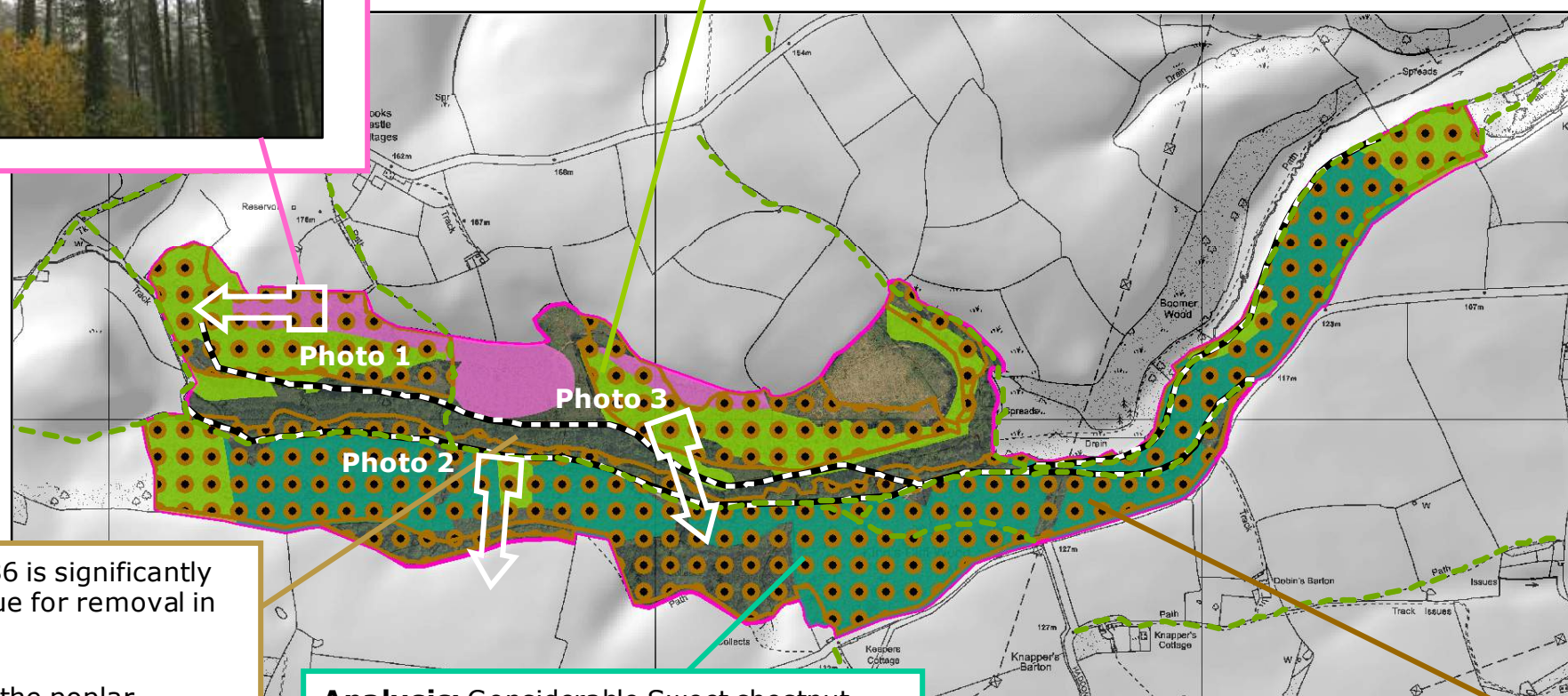
Kings Cliff is a valley bound woodland, the majority of which lies within the AONB, 3km west of the village of North Petherton and 6km to the south-west of Bridgwater. This woodland takes the form of two opposing reasonably steep north and south facing valley sides that lie parallel with and adjacent to the stream that runs east/north-east towards North Petherton. The woodland is only seen in the landscape as glimpses from the roadside edge and from a couple of adjacent farmhouses.

The woodland comprises of more than 80% broadleaf species consisting of old remnant oak, Sweet chestnut planted and coppiced with standards since the 1930's, together with more recent plantings of beech and Corsican pine in the 1950's.

This is a quietly popular wood with public access in the form of quite a number of local dog walkers, horse riders and cyclists. There are raptors in the woodland, roe and red deer and a couple of live badger setts together with a Forest Research plot investigating Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp.

Kings Cliff will remain a broadleaved woodland, with a greater diversity of native tree species delivering a resilient woodland from which all can benefit.

- Legend**
- Landholding
 - ASNW
 - PAWS
 - Road Segments
 - Bridleway
 - Footpath



Analysis: Poplar p. 1986 is significantly underperforming and due for removal in 2040.

Concept: The felling of the poplar component will create corridor linkages, through temporary open space with restocking through natural regeneration from surrounding broadleaf seed source.



Analysis: Considerable Sweet chestnut components on north facing valley side are delivering fairly monocultured conditions on an Ancient Woodland Site. Any natural regeneration is dominated by SC. This high proportion of SC together with larch is under significant threat as a result of *Phytophthora ramorum*, of which these species are susceptible.

Concept: Break up the stands' age and species structure through targeted felling programme with native species planting to diversify the woodland species structure, further resilience and restore PAWS.

Analysis: Historic beech, oak and yew hedge bank exists internally within the woodland and appears to be in a managed and stable condition.

Concept: These will continue to managed for perpetuity through crown thinning.

