

Burridge Copse

Ancient Woodland Assessment

South West England

21/12/2022

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On Behalf Of



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Site Overview

Site Details

Details













Area - 1.39 (Ha)

The western end of Burridge Copse has been woodland since at least 1840 according to Tithe mapping, and although not registered on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) the woodland is very likely to be considered ancient, that is at least present since 1600. The name Burridge Copse suggests that the wood was historically used for coppice material, which was probably oak for either charcoal, tannin or firewood. This is reflected in the high levels of oak within the canopy of the western block which might otherwise on the same soils of the area naturally contained more ash than is present now. In 1840 the rest of what is now woodland was agricultural and was clearly separated by a wood bank which can still be seen within the wood (feature 1). The upper area adjoining the old woodland was planted with conifers at some point during the late 1800's which had been felled and allowed to revert to secondary woodland by the 1920's and 30's. Since that time the area, along with the adjoining land to the east (orchard or possibly arboretum) in the 1800's has also reverted to secondary woodland.

Location

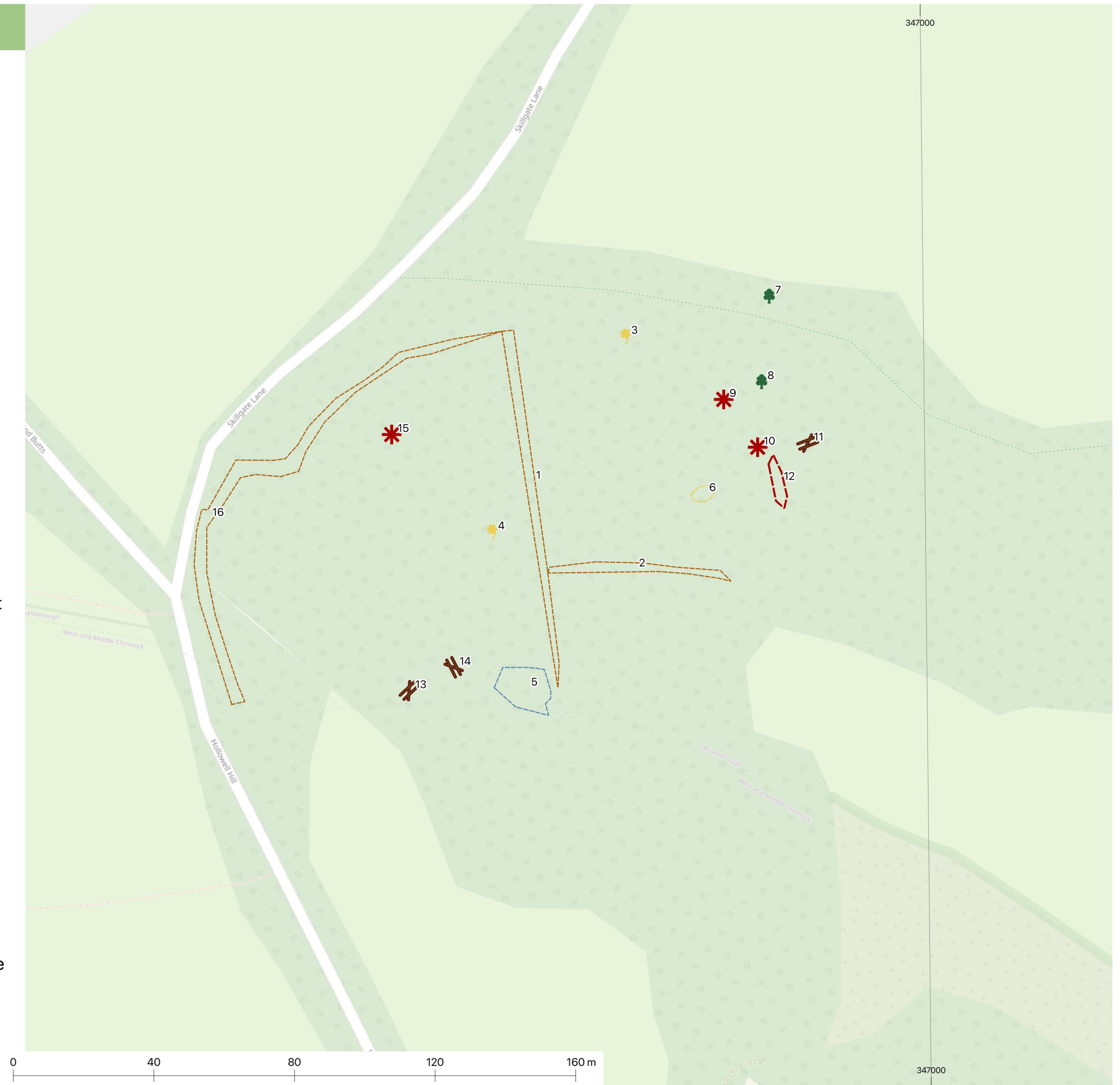


Features of Ancient Woodland

- Entire Woodland (not shown on map)
- Single Point Features
 -  Archaeology
 -  Deadwood
 -  Woodland Specialist Flora
 -  Other Feature
 -  Relic Native Trees
- Area Features
 -  Archaeology
 -  Relic Clearing
 -  Deadwood
 -  Woodland Specialist Flora
 -  Other Feature
 -  Relic Native Trees
 -  Specific Species Habitat

Summary




Ancient woodland features here are rare due to the dominating holly understorey. Some woodland specialist plants are present in small patches inc. Bluebell and Moschatel. The overstorey is quite old and contains some impressive spreading canopies which will contain standing (dry) deadwood features. The woodland has the potential to be vastly more interesting in terms of habitat with the removal of most (not all) of the dense holly understorey. This will allow dappled light to the ground in spring and stimulate the colonisation of more woodland specialist plants. This character should spread to the eastern part of the woodland once the trees here have had a chance to develop more fully, and suppress the bramble which dominates the understorey. As it is this part adds structural diversity to the woodland but as there is increased incidence of ash dieback tit will be a few decades in this stage before this area becomes properly established as woodland. Other trees in the adjacent plot are noted specifically due to their slightly unusual species composition (poplar, cherry, lime), suggesting some previous landscaping plan. Some of these specimens area fallen due the unstable nature of the ground here.



No	Feature	Assessed	Description	Coverage	Condition
1	Archaeology* - Post-Medieval	2022-06-20	Historic wood bank running down woodland seperating oak from more recent secondary woodland	0.02Ha;Over the exact area (as mapped)	Low bank steeper on non-ancient side suggesting ditch on field side. The bank is weathered possibly due to gradual loss of rooting plants as canopy has extended top the east.
2	Archaeology* - Hedgebank	2022-06-22	Bank seperating upper part of wood from lower.	0.01Ha;Over the exact area (as mapped)	Very steep slope
3	Woodland Specialist Flora* - Flowering Plants	2022-06-22	Moschatel (<i>Adoxa moschatela</i>)	0.01Ha;20.0 % Cover;At the single point	A small patch of the specialist woodland plant Moschatel. Small and sometimes insignificant but a true early flowering woodland specialist
4	Woodland Specialist Flora* - Flowering Plants	2022-06-22	Gooseberry (<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>)	0.0Ha;At the single point	Single gooseberry shrub - may have been introduced or otherwise, but a woodland specialist shrub
5	Specific Species Habitat - See Notes	2022-06-22	Badger Sett	0.02Ha;Over the general area	Extensive badger sett
6	Woodland Specialist Flora* - Flowering Plants	2022-06-22	Bluebells	0.0Ha;Over the exact area (as mapped)	A small area of bluebell dominated ground flora in a small patch under some dominant canopy where bramble has been suppressed
7	Relic Native Trees*	2022-06-22	Ash dieback	0.0Ha;At the single point	Dying ash - heavily affected by ash dieback
8	Relic Native Trees*	2022-06-22	Lime	0.0Ha;At the single point	Lime tree - leaning. Unclear if this is small leaved lime potentially not. Appears to be associated with boundary
9	Other Feature - See Notes	2022-06-22	Notable tree - black poplar	0.0Ha;At the single point	Black poplar - again likely to have been introduced
10	Other Feature - See Notes	2022-06-20	Wild Cherry	0.0Ha;At the single point	Appox 60cm diameter large wild cherry
11	Deadwood* - Fallen	2022-06-22	Wild cherry	0.0Ha;At the single point	Fallen and dead wild cherry
12	Other Feature - See Notes	2022-06-22	Lime	0.0Ha;Over the general area	Fallen but living lime
13	Deadwood* - Fallen	2022-12-23	Recently fallen boundary oak	0.0Ha;At the single point	Oak fallen away from the bank into neighbouring field. Broken short roots in the rootplate suggest fungal root disease might be a factor
14	Deadwood* - Fallen	2022-12-23	Large fallen oak, dead for several years	0.0Ha;At the single point	Valuable deadwood feature, whole tree provides both damp and dry deadwood supporting much invertebrate and fungal habitat
15	Other Feature - See Notes		Sycamore	0.0Ha;At the single point	Heavily squirrel damaged sycamore, the crown is deformed and though the tree has attempted to recover the regrowth has clearly suffered repeated bark stripping and failed
16	Archaeology* - Post-Medieval	2022-06-20	Quarry and road cutting	0.05Ha;Over the general area	Very steep bank associated with quarry and road cutting. Exposed rock faces can provide important habitat fro various lower plants and lichens

Threats to Ancient Woodland

- Entire Woodland (not shown on map)
- Specific Area (mapped)

-  Exposure
-  Disease
-  Forestry Operations
-  Browsing
-  Dense Native Underwood
-  Dense Deciduous Canopy
-  Light Coniferous Canopy
-  Dense Coniferous Canopy
-  Lack of Canopy
-  Invasive Scrub
-  Persistent Coarse Vegetation
-  Invasive Ground flora
-  Other

Summary

The primary threat to woodland habitat here is the density of the holly understorey. Holly as a native shrub under purely natural processes would not normally dominate in this way. Prehistoric conditions would have included large herbivores which would trash understorey and then browsing mammals such as deer would have kept the regrowth low. Historical woodland management tended to mimic natural processes with human activity gleaning firewood and managing for coppice would have continued this theme and co-incidentally maintained a dynamic cycle of habitat creation within woodlands. As woodland products have become less common due to the availability of cheaper materials, woodlands are now relatively undisturbed and this can reduce bio-diversity. In this case the over-dominance of the understorey has actually suppressed the ground flora layer beneath it. Holly is an important native plant with many associated invertebrates and fungal species, but mature holly should only normally occupy a small percentage of the woodland habitat.



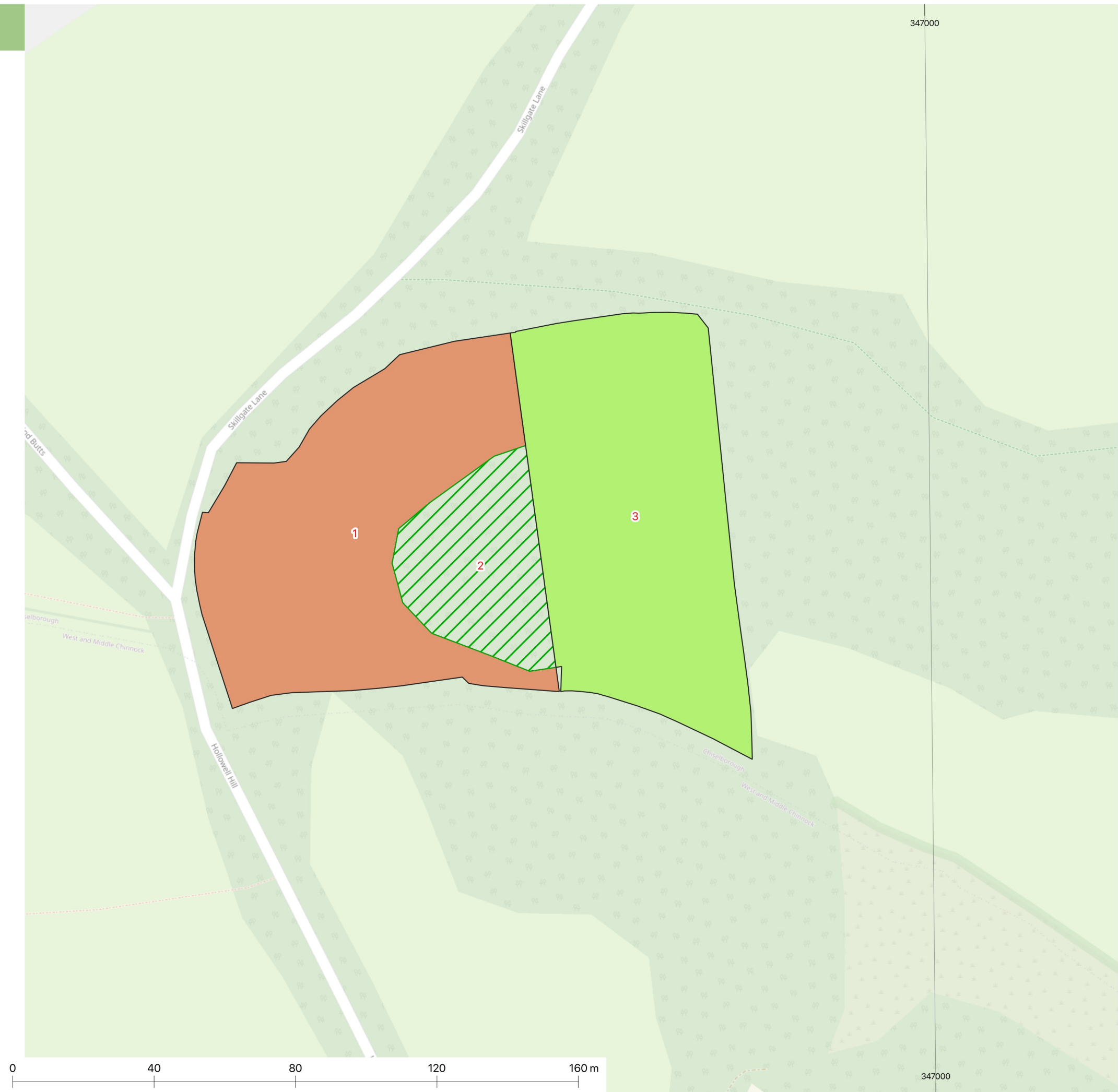
No	Threat	Threat Level	Detail	Coverage	Impact
1	Dense Native Underwood	Critical	Holly	0.39Ha;80.0;Over the general area	Holly dominated understorey heavily suppressing native flora
2	Other	Threatened	Sycamore seeding	0.57Ha;50.0;Over the general area	There is no problem specifically with sycamore itself, in fact it can be analogous to ash in terms of bark and leaf litter pH and so long as it is not allowed to dominate the canopy (causing heavy shade, and persistent leaf litter). However, here the problem is its susceptibility to grey squirrel damage, all of the seedling trees observed have deformed crowns and will not reach a stage where they can be part of a mature canopy, therefore, they are simply taking up space where other more useful species e.g. hazel or eventually ash dieback resistant ash could successfully seed.

Work Proposals

- A - Trackside/Edge management
- B - Streamside management
- C - Light selective thinning
- D - Standard thinning
- E - Variable density or selective felling
- F - Restock/regeneration management
- G - Scrub/Shrub management
- H - Management of open canopies or open ground
- I - Minimal intervention
- Non-Standard

Summary

The work proposals are mainly concerned with the reduction of the dense holly understorey. Hand cutting, leaving the resultant debris in piles to break down and increase the levels of deadwood and organic matter, and also to provide protection for recolonising species. It is important that some areas are left completely clear in the ratio of approximately 2/3 clear and 1/3rd brush piles. These brush piles will attract small mammals that will scarify the ground beneath the piles, and perching for birds, whose seed laden droppings will find a fertile and weed free bed for germination. The clear areas should slowly colonise with bluebell and associated flora in the meanwhile. Long term, some management will be required to prevent the holly from becoming dominant again



Zone	Zone Description	Prescription	Area	Constraints	Priority
Zone 1	Oak canopy with dense holly understorey which has caused suppression of what would be native woodland ground flora. This is usually associated with a lack of browsing activity by deer that would naturally keep holly from becoming over-dominant. Its possible that the position of the woodland in relation to the road and the frequent use of the wood by walkers keeps deer away from the site.	Standard Prescription-G;Scrub Clearance;Details - Remove 80% of holly	0.59Ha	Access onto site for operations only possible on foot	2-High
Zone 2	Oak canopy with hazel understorey - ground flora present here in patches, inc Herb Bennet, Ivy, Harts tongue fern and Dryopteris fern species	Standard Prescription-I;Details - No intervention	0.19Ha		2-High
Zone 3	This zone is mostly made up of secondary woodland relatively recently developed and still has a low canopy in places and a bramble dominated flora. Time is needed for this to develop a proper woodland structure. There are some very impressive hazel stools forming most of what there is of canopy, these are quite old and in some parts derelict. Sycamore has colonised in places, but for the most part these trees have been deformed and stunted by grey squirrel bark stripping. Ash is present in places. Ash and hazel are the natural canopy species for woodlands on richer soil, and though ash is present here, some are diseased, and in time the resilient individuals will survive and seed resistant individuals to re-colonise the woodland. Ground flora as for Zone 2.	Standard Prescription-C;Thinning;Details - Minimal intervention, some removal of squirrel damaged sycamore could be undertaken.	0.61Ha	None	4-Low