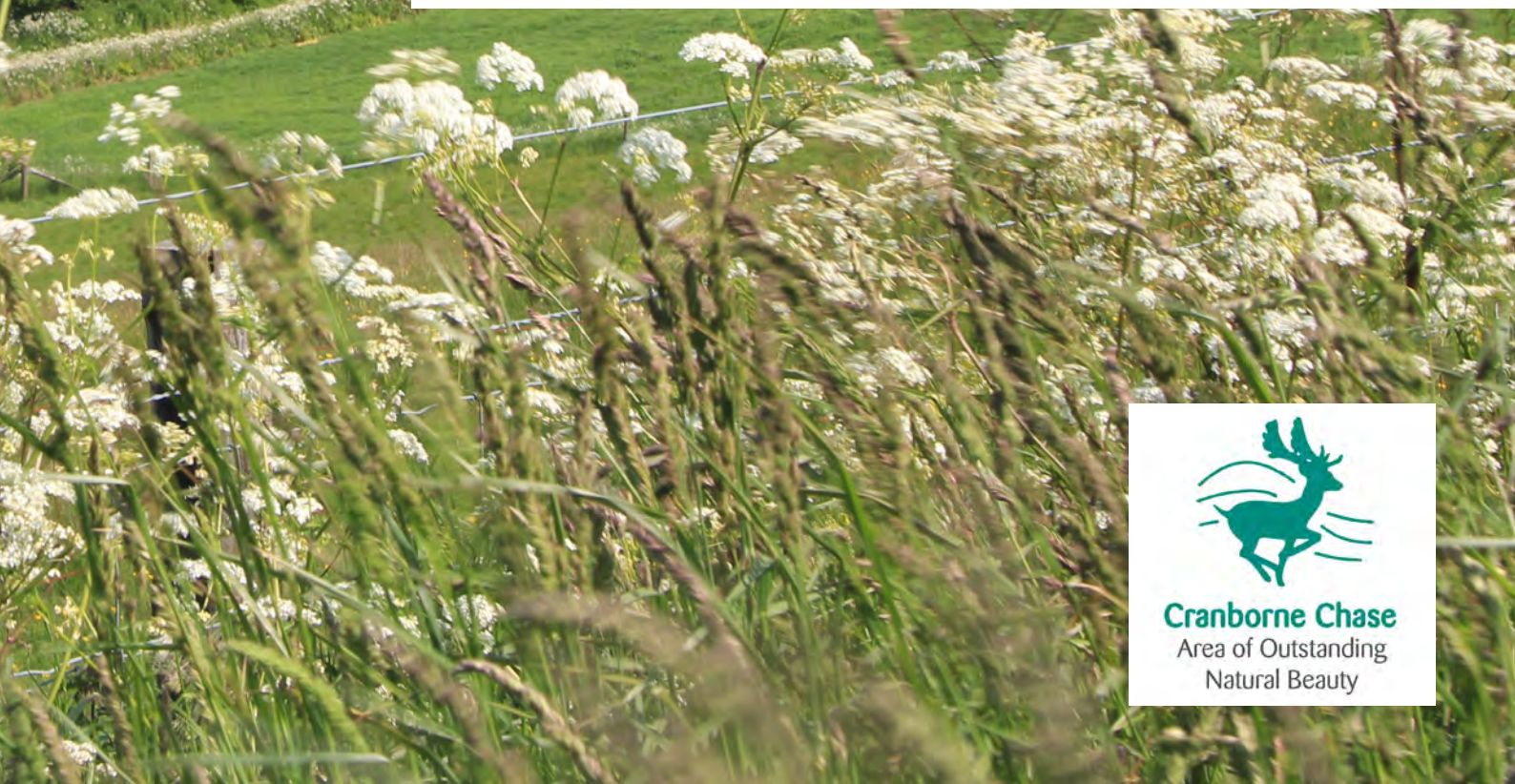
Right Tree Right Place

Guidance for communities, individuals and landowners who wish to plant trees, hedgerows or small woodlands in Cranborne Chase AONB



Cranborne Chase
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This guidance is intended for communities, individuals and landowners who are interested in planting trees in Cranborne Chase AONB. It shows you how to maximise the benefits from planting trees and hedgerows, takes you through the stages needed to get the right tree in the right place, and provides specific advice relating to planting trees in four particular types of landscapes. It also provides a list of sources of further information.

Following the advice should help to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place, and unintended negative consequences are avoided. If the right trees are planted in the right places, in harmony with the landscape, then benefits for biodiversity, flood management, carbon storage and landscape character follow.

This guidance is primarily intended for schemes under 2ha. Although the principles still apply to larger schemes, schemes above 2ha must be compliant with the UK Forestry Standard 2017, and are subject to additional regulations and approvals.

Contents

***Win Green Clump** Photo: T. Rich*

Planting trees has many benefits...

Trees are a vital part of the Cranborne Chase AONB landscape. They contribute to its landscape character and 'sense of place', and also to the diversity of landscapes which make the Cranborne Chase AONB so varied and interesting.

Trees and hedgerows are vitally important for biodiversity, providing habitats for animals, birds, insects and fungi. They also contribute to the network of habitats which enable wildlife to move through the landscape. They act as a store of carbon, so are a vital part of our measures to reduce and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Tree planting is therefore a key component of meeting the UK target to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Planting trees and hedgerows can have other benefits too, such as reducing soil loss, supporting pollinators, and slowing surface water flow to help prevent flooding.

Abundant hedgerows contribute to the landscape, provide wildlife habitats and also help to prevent flooding. Photo: Tracy Adams

...As long as the right tree is planted in the right place

In some places, such as this chalk escarpment, trees are not typical of the landscape. The chalk grassland found here is an important habitat in its own right which would be damaged if trees were planted in this location. Photo: Tracy Adams

The trees we plant today will be a part of the landscape for decades – possibly centuries – to come. It is therefore essential that we get it right.

Planting the wrong kind of tree, or planting it in the wrong place, can result in unintended negative consequences: for nature, heritage, views, and the appearance of the landscape.

For example, it could be easy to plant trees on a patch of chalk grassland, but doing this would destroy chalk grassland habitat which supports rare and valuable plants, insects and birds. Earthworks and buried archaeology are easily damaged by tree roots, so valuable sites could be destroyed by tree planting. Views from our roads and footpaths can be blocked by continuous lines of hedgerows, making it impossible for users to see or appreciate the wider landscape. Trees planted in environments which are not right for that species will not thrive. Woodlands and hedgerows which are planted, but not subsequently managed, will not reach their potential in terms of growing onto healthy trees and supporting abundant wildlife.

Trees and woodlands in Cranborne Chase AONB – the story so far

The interrelationship between people and trees goes back thousands of years. It is likely that the chalk areas of Cranborne Chase AONB were cleared for farming in the Neolithic period, as the chalk soils are relatively easy to work.

Because so many tools and structures required wood, and wood was also needed for fuel, woodlands were already being managed in prehistoric times. Some trees would have been felled for timber, but most would have been cut down every few years and then allowed to regrow – a process known as coppicing. Animals, particularly pigs, grazed in woodland, eating nuts and seeds such as acorns.

Traditional coppice management at Garston Wood. *Photo: T.Rich*

Woodland management remained widespread until the 20th Century, but is now becoming rarer, with less and less woodland being actively managed because the use of UK-grown timber has declined. As a result, woodland is becoming old, and less varied in terms of its age structure and the species it contains. Loss of diversity in the ages and species of trees means it supports less wildlife. A further threat currently facing woodland is from pests and diseases, which affect various species of trees. One of the most prevalent at the moment is Ash Dieback disease, which is causing widespread death of ash trees, particularly in woodlands where ash trees grow close together.

Although much of Cranborne Chase AONB has an underlying geology of chalk, heavier clay soils are found in the Vale of Wardour, and also on the 'clay cap' which covers the higher parts of the chalk. It is these areas which are most wooded, partly because clay soils are harder to plough, and partly because the deeper and more fertile soils support the growth of larger trees. There is also significant woodland and tree cover in the Greensand areas of the AONB, particulalry associated with estates such as Longleat and Stourhead.

Woodlands have also survived on some of the steepest slopes and escarpments, as clearance or ploughing was impractical. These are often known as 'hanging' woodlands.

Did you know?...

Hazel is fast growing and traditionally coppiced for hurdles, thatching spars, and bean poles.

Spindle wood is hard and dense. It was used to make spindles for spinning, and also sharp narrow objects such as pegs, knitting needles, and skewers.

Willow branches are very flexible, making them ideal for basketry, hurdles, fish traps and other woven items. Willow also has medicinal qualities.

Crab apple wood is particularly good for carving and turning. The tree is also important as a pollination partner for cultivated apples.

Bands of woodlands known as 'ivers' sometimes occur at the base of scarp slopes, at the junction between the steepest ground and the flatter land below.

This is a landscape pattern which is many centuries old; many of the AONB's current woodlands existed before 1750, and are known as 'ancient woodland'. Some were part of the medieval hunting forests, such as Cranborne Chase itself, which covered much of the area. They are therefore often rich in woodland archaeology such as woodbanks (which controlled the movement of animals in/out of the forest), and compartment banks which separated zones of different uses (for example coppice and timber trees) within the woodland.

The 18th Century saw the expansion of many estates within the Cranborne Chase AONB. One of their main influences on the landscape, which can still be appreciated today, was the planting of additional woodlands, copses, shelterbelts, parklands, and avenues.

In the 20th Century there was an increase in commercial forestry, either on former open land, or through replanting areas of ancient broadleaf woodlands with conifers, creating mixed woodlands. Some estates developed large-scale forestry operations to supply the timber trade. This is particularly true for estates in the Greensand Hills area of the AONB (for example Longleat) which grow some of the best commercial timber in the country.

Estate parkland at Rushmore Park near Tollard Royal.
Photo: Tracy Adams

Smaller woodland plantings have taken place throughout the AONB in the form of game coverts to support game shooting. They can often be identified by their straight edges, and many contain non-native coniferous trees.

The 20th Century also saw intensification and mechanisation of farming, and conversion of grazing land (known as sheepwalks) to arable use. This has resulted in a loss of habitats including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, field margins, chalk grassland, and meadows.

Holly wood is very white and strong, often used for walking sticks. Holly boughs are traditionally used for Christmas decorations.

Hornbeam is the hardest of all European woods. Its many and diverse uses include ox yokes, mill cogs, furniture, piano hammers, chariot wheels and chopping blocks.

Alder is a tree which thrives in damp soils. It was traditionally used for making gunpowder and clogs. Alder wood becomes harder if kept wet, so was used in boats and piling.

Beech wood is particularly suitable for making kitchen utensils, tool handles, furniture, and sports equipment. It burns well and was used to smoke herring.

Key principles for planting trees

Fit into the landscape

- **Respect the variations in landscape character** and look at where trees are already present in the landscape. For example, are they hill-top woodlands, valley-floor wet woodlands, in hedgerows, alongside streams, along the base of scarp slopes, or in copses? Try to enhance existing patterns through new planting. Remember that some areas (such as open downland) are characterised by a lack of trees and hedgerows. Further advice is provided later in this document.
- **Avoid straight edges to woodlands and copses**. These look far more natural if the edges have a gradual transition from woodland to open land, and it is also better for wildlife, which thrives in 'woodland edge' habitat. If you have an existing woodland or game covert with straight edges, consider planting shrubby species (e.g. guelder rose, spindle, hawthorn, wayfaring tree) or allowing natural regeneration to soften edges.
- **Work with the landform** by following the contours for woodland edges and hedgerows. Not only will this emphasise the landform, it will also reduce flooding and soil loss.
- **Keep it natural** by avoiding planting trees in straight lines (unless it's a hedgerow) and leave spaces within new woodland planting. Open glades have great value for wildlife, particularly birds and butterflies.
- **Choose native species** of trees for woodlands, copses, and hedgerows. Dark, monotonous conifers in woodlands/ copses look particularly out-of-place in the landscape, as do leylandii hedges. Ornamental species generally do not support such a good range of wildlife or native ground flora, and should be limited to gardens and parklands. You can use new native species planting, or natural regeneration, around the edges of conifer plantations to help them blend into the landscape and increase their biodiversity.
- **Restore re-planted ancient woodlands.** As conifer plantations on former ancient woodland sites reach maturity, they should ideally be replaced by native tree and shrub species. The seeds of native ground flora can survive in the soil for many years, and native woodlands can often be successfully re-established.

Ancient Woodland at Rushmoor Estate Photo: T. Rich

Work with nature

- **'Bigger, better, more joined up'** is a good principle for all habitats, including woodland and trees. Think about how your scheme could connect or expand existing woodland, copse or hedgerow habitats. This will help wildlife to move around the countryside more easily, as well as increasing the availability and resilience of existing habitats.
- **Don't plant trees on existing valuable habitats,** such as wet meadow, chalk grassland, grassland which has never been ploughed, or cultivated field corners rich in flowering plants. These are already providing habitats and foraging opportunities for a huge range of birds, animals (including bats), butterflies, pollinators and plants. Ground-nesting birds which need grassland habitat include corn bunting, grey partridge, yellow wagtail, skylark, lapwing and wheatear. The soils present in some pastures can absorb and retain more carbon dioxide than woodland, so get expert advice before planting in pasture.
- **Think about aspect.** Try to avoid planting trees on warm, sunny sites which are likely to be favoured by insects and flowering plants. For example, if doubling a hedge, put the new line of plants on the shady side.
- **Consider hedgerow management.** Are there opportunities to allow hedgerows to grow out and become more abundant, rather than being tightly flailed? This will increase their value for wildlife. Laid hedges create stronger and more stockproof boundaries, and are longer lasting, while hedgerow trees provide shade for livestock. Remember that access will be required for hedgerow management.

Aim for multiple benefits

- **Maximise the potential** of your tree planting. Are there any other benefits which could be gained from it? For example, if you are planting a hedge primarily to provide screening, could you extend it to link with existing hedgerows or woodlands to increase benefits for biodiversity?
- **Think about people.** Could the scheme be a community project? Could it provide training opportunities in traditional woodland or hedgerow management? Could public access be provided?
- **Consider natural flood management.** Trees and hedgerows have a really important role to play in reducing flooding and water pollution. They can also strengthen river banks, reducing erosion. Trees provide a physical barrier which slows water and means it takes longer to reach the river system, reducing downstream flooding and siltation. Hedgerows running parallel to the contours are particularly effective at this. Trees and hedgerows also absorb water through their roots, reducing soil waterlogging.
- **Consider carbon storage.** Fast-growing trees, such as willow and coppiced hazel, can potentially absorb the most carbon in the short term. However, in the longer term, timber from larger trees keeps carbon locked up whilst new trees grow. Woodlands not only store carbon in their timber; they also contribute to deep soils which themselves store carbon.

Respect the past

- Don't plant trees over earthworks or buried archaeology. You will need to check for heritage constraints before you start planting, as some cannot be seen on the ground.
- Seek opportunities to restore lost landscape features. Use old maps to identify former hedgelines which have been removed, and the sites of old woodlands and orchards. Reinstating historic features helps to enhance the pattern of the landscape. It is also likely to have practical benefits, such as linking habitats and reducing flooding.
- Develop Parkland Management Plans for estates, planting new trees to become the specimen trees of the future. Restore historic features such as avenues and copses.

Think about the future

- Consider the future management of the trees. You cannot simply plant a tree and walk away. Woodlands and hedgerows need care to get them established, then careful management if the benefits are to be maximised.
- Consider future views. Will hedgerows block views from footpaths and roads as they grow? Is it therefore necessary to leave gaps, or to space trees more widely? What about views from summits – would leaving a gap in the planting enable views to be enjoyed in the future?
- Factor-in climate change. Climate change is already affecting our weather, our growing seasons, habitats, and the tree pests and diseases which can survive here. Together, these will have big impacts on our trees and woodlands. For example, beech trees (which are intolerant of severe drought) will no longer thrive in south-facing chalk sites, and alternative species should be used. If existing trees are looking stressed on a site, do not plant more of that species. Guidance is available on climate change-resistant species. Longer growing seasons and more rapid growth rates may mean that coppicing cycles will need to be shorter (or uses found for bigger timber).
- Think about tree pests and diseases. Planting a range of species (rather than single-species stands) will reduce the impacts of tree pests or diseases which target specific species. When replacing lost ash trees, use a range of species, including oak, aspen, disease-resistant elm, field maple and small-leaved lime. These will replace the many different woodland functions and ecological habitats provided by ash trees.

What is Natural Regeneration?

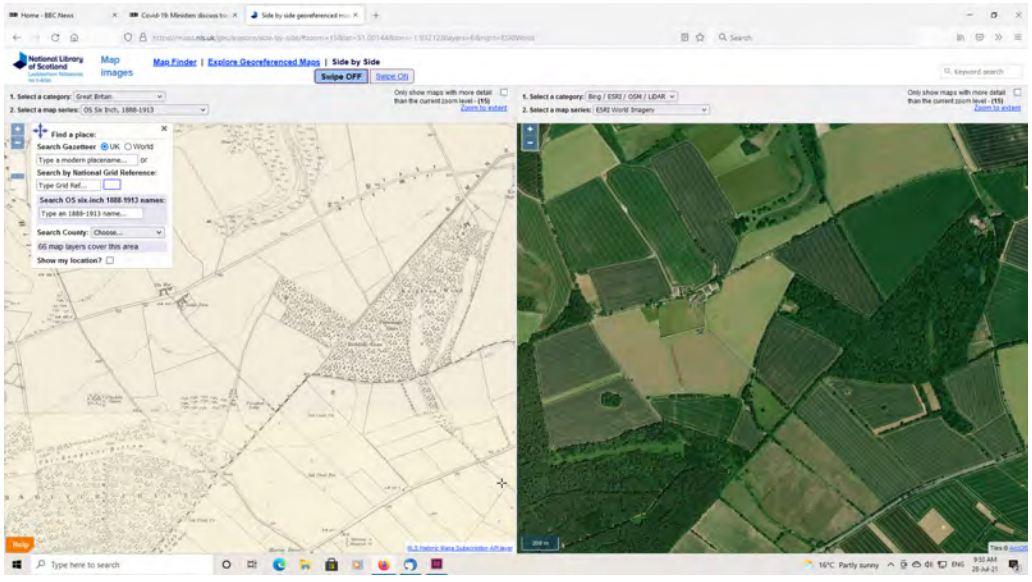
Natural regeneration is when trees are allowed to seed and establish naturally, rather than through planting. However, it may be necessary to fence off the area first to prevent damage to young trees by deer and rabbits. It can help natural selection as only the strongest trees, which are best adapted to the local conditions, survive. The trees that grow will reflect the species present in the seed bank, or those which are brought in naturally via birds or animals. Before allowing natural regeneration, you still need to check that there are no designations or habitats which will be damaged by tree growth, and that the area is clear of underground and overground services.

How to plan and plant your tree-planting scheme

Stage 1: Choose your site and scheme

What to do	How to do it
Look at the ground and identify which parts of your land are most suited to planting trees. Use the following sections of this Guidance, which contains detailed guidance for: Chalk farmland; Chalk escarpments and steep valley sides; Vales and river valleys, and Villages and roads.*	Refer to this Guidance Refer to Cranborne Chase AONB *A Landscape View of Trees and Woodlands* for greater detail. If your land is close to an adjacent Protected Landscape (Dorset AONB or New Forest) check their guidance too.
Think about the scale and form you could achieve, and identify types of tree planting likely to be most appropriate (e.g. woodland, hedgerow, riverside trees, orchard, game covert).	
Refer to historic maps to identify opportunities to restore lost landscape features such as hedgerows, woodlands and orchards.	Go to www.maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side Set the left window to OS Six Inch, 1888-1913. Set the right window to ESRI World Imagery, and zoom in to your site
Check that there are no services above or below ground	Look carefully on site ensuring no overhead wires or cables are in the vicinity of the planting area. Check with local utility companies if there is a possibility that underground services may run in the area.
Undertake wider research	Check if your Local Authority has a Tree Planting Strategy, Nature Recovery Strategy or similar broad policy which you can help to implement on the ground.

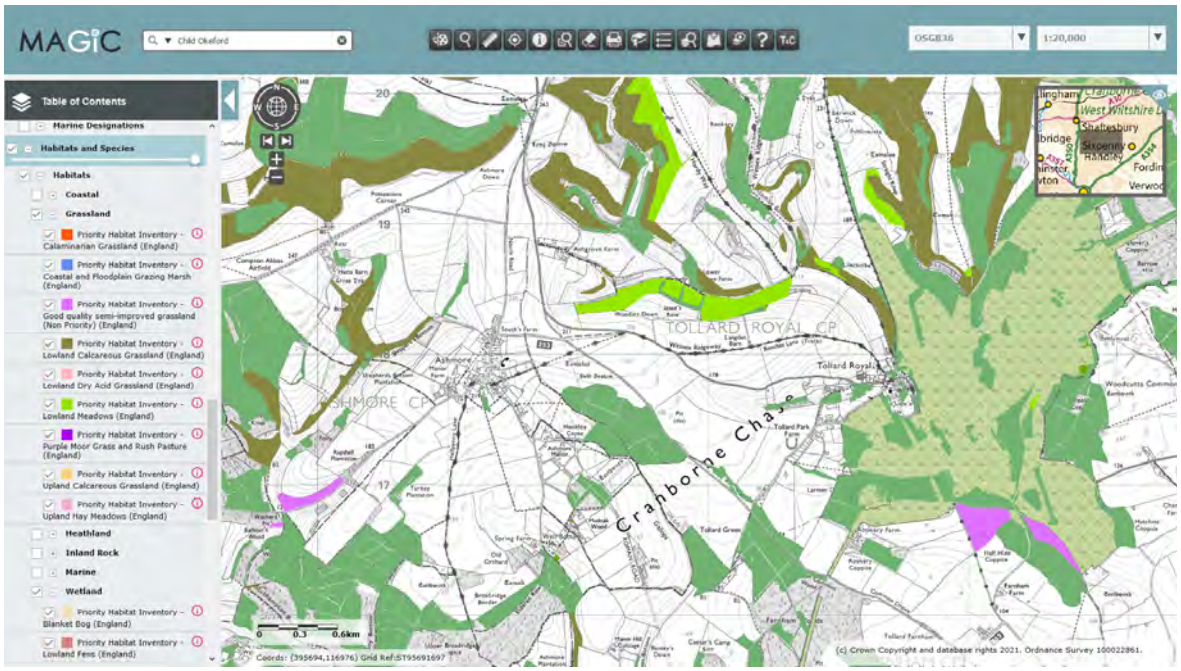
* The detailed guidance does not specifically cover the Greensand Ridges. This is because they are mostly in the ownership of large estates and already used for forestry. They therefore have limited opportunities for further tree planting.



Screenshot from National Library of Scotland www.maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side showing historic map and modern aerial photo for the same location.

Stage 2: Check for ecological constraints

What to do	How to do it
Identify any national nature conservation designations on your site which may prevent you planting trees (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserves).	Use the interactive map at www.magic.defra.gov.uk (land-based designations/statutory tab)
Identify any local nature conservation designations on your site which may prevent you planting trees (e.g. County Wildlife Sites)	Contact your local authority natural environment team or Wildlife Trust
Identify any priority habitats on your site which should not be planted on.	Use the interactive map at www.magic.defra.gov.uk (habitats and species tab)
Look carefully for any local-level constraints, for example cultivated field corners rich in flowering plants (cornflower and corn marigold are rare examples); grassland which has never been ploughed, and flower-rich grasslands. If you are unsure whether a grassland site is flower-rich, wait until summer and check.	Use your local knowledge, and check on site. The more variety there is within it, the more likely a site already has some habitat value.
Consider aspect, and try to avoid tree planting on warm, sunny sites favoured by flowers and insects. If doubling a hedge, plant on the shady side.	
Check that there are no restrictions on planting near watercourses	Contact the Environment Agency if your scheme involves planting on river banks.



Screenshot from Defra 'Magic' website www.magic.defra.gov.uk showing priority habitats present around Ashmore

Stage 3: Check for heritage constraints and opportunities

What to do	How to do it
Identify any national-level heritage designations on your site (e.g. Scheduled Monuments; Registered Parks and Gardens; Battlefields; Listed Buildings)	Use the interactive map at www.magic.defra.gov.uk (Land-based designations/ historic statutory and historic non-statutory tabs.)
Identify any Historic Environment Record sites	Contact your Local Authority Historic Environment Team
Check if there are opportunities for restoration of ancient woodland, wood pasture or parkland on your site.	Use the interactive map at www.magic.defra.gov.uk (Habitats and species/ woodland tab.)

Stage 4: Selecting the right species
(Remember that planting a mixture of species is preferable)

What to do	How to do it
Identify which native species are growing and thriving locally.	Undertake fieldwork on site and in the local area. It's usually easiest to identify trees when they are in leaf. Books and apps are available.
Choose native species which fit with the landscape character and contribute to biodiversity.	Refer to *A Landscape View of Trees and Woodlands* for greater detail.
Check that the species you have identified are still likely to thrive in the area in 50 years time, allowing for climate change.	Go to http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/ Zoom in on the map window and click on your site. Scroll down to see a list of trees and whether they are suitable to plant there, based on predicted temperature, exposure, soil moisture and soil nutrient conditions.

Stage 5: Ordering your plants

What to do	How to do it
Calculate the number of plants of each species that you will need, based on the mix of species, and the size of your site. Factor-in leaving some unplanted glades within woodland, as these are very valuable for wildlife.	If planting woodland, aim for 2-2.5m between trees and plant in wavy lines, leaving some south-facing glades for wildlife if possible. Hedgerow plants should be 30cm apart if it's a single row. Double rows should be planted in a zig-zag pattern, with about 45cm between plants.
Decide on the size of plants that will be best suited to your site, and whether you want them bare root or with rootballs. For example, if planting a hedgerow you may go for bare root whips, with occasional standard trees which will become the hedgerow trees of the future.	There are advantages and disadvantages to using different sizes of plants, so the best option will depend on your site and type of planting scheme. Bare root trees can only be planted in the winter, when they are dormant. They are generally cheaper than container-grown trees, but need to be planted quickly and with care so that the roots are not damaged. Contact the Woodland Trust or your local tree nursery for advice.
Source your trees with care to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with importing plants (some tree diseases have been introduced into the country in this way).	Ensure that the nursery you use grows their trees within the UK and uses locally-sourced seed. Look for the UK and Ireland Sourced-and-Grown-Assurance (UKISG-A) scheme. Use a local tree nursery if possible or order your trees from the Woodland Trust. Alternatively, you could collect your own seed from existing local woodlands and hedgerows, and grow it in pots until it is ready for planting (about 50cm high).
Remember to order additional items such as mulch mats, stakes and tree guards (plastic-free biodegradable tree shelters are now available)	These will be available from your tree nursery or the Woodland Trust. See www.green-tech.co.uk for Bio-earth plastic-free biodegradable tree shelters.

Stage 6: Planting

What to do	How to do it
Plan your planting days carefully, thinking about access, the tools you will need, and the safe storage of the trees. This is particularly important if they are bare root plants, as the roots are very vulnerable to exposure to wind or sun. Removing existing vegetation where the trees will be planted will reduce their initial competition for water and nutrients, and help them to establish quickly.	See the Woodland Trust website for planting guidance https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/how-to-plant/

Stage 7: Managing your trees

What to do	How to do it
If you plant in summer, you may need to water your trees while they establish, especially if they are larger size trees. Generally though, watering should be avoided as it can limit downward root growth.	See the Woodland Trust website for guidance on managing trees https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/care/ Use a biodegradable mulch mat, or straw / bark mulch around the base of the trees. Chemical weedkillers can be used, but subject to guidance and by qualified personnel. Avoid strimming or mowing under trees as this tends to make grass grow back stronger. Removing side branches will encourage woodland trees to grow upwards rather than outwards, promoting a diverse canopy structure. Pruning is generally best undertaken in winter, when trees are dormant.
Supressing grass and weed growth around the bases of trees will help to reduce competition for water and nutrients. This will need to be done for 2-3 years, while they establish.	
Pruning will help create a good shape to the tree.	
After about 10 years you will need to thin your woodland trees, taking out the weakest and allowing the larger ones to thrive.	
You will also need to think about longer-term management such as coppicing or pollarding.	Consult local experts, or refer to advice from the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and other organisations.

***Woodland Management, Rushmoor Estate** Photo: T. Rich*

Frequently asked questions

Q1. I would like to see more wildlife in my garden/ farm. Which trees should I plant?

A1: Trees and shrubs which provide flowers and fruit attract insects and birds. If you can plant a range of native trees and shrubs which flower and fruit at different times, you will attract wildlife to your garden throughout the year. Examples of flowering and fruiting trees and shrubs are blackthorn, hawthorn, bird cherry, crab apple, elder, guelder rose, holly and spindle tree. You could also plant fruit trees such as apples, pears, plums and cherries to create a mini-orchard. These will provide wildlife habitat, as well as fruit for you to enjoy.

Q2. I keep horses. Which species of tree should I avoid?

A2: You should avoid yew, sycamore, oak, buckthorn, laburnum and spindle tree, as these are all poisonous to horses. To protect young trees from being browsed you will need a fence / enclosure that keeps the horses at least 1m from the tree.

Q3. My ash trees are dying from Ash Dieback. What should I plant instead?

A3: There is no single tree that can replace all the visual and ecological functions of ash. It is therefore a good idea to replace it with several different trees. The exact mix will depend on the soil type, but potential substitutes are oak, aspen (in woodlands), sycamore, disease resistant elm, hornbeam, field maple and small-leaved lime.

Initial research suggests that isolated ash trees are less susceptible than those in woodlands. The current advice is not to cut down healthy mature ash trees as some may have disease resistance, and will form the stock from which future ash trees can be grown.

Blackthorn Photo: T. Rich

Q4. I need some quick-growing trees to hide an ugly building. What should I plant?

A4: Please avoid the temptation to plant non-native conifers such as leylandii cypress. Although they grow fast, their height, form and dark colour makes them highly visible in the landscape. Sometimes they can be even more obvious than the building they were planted to screen!

A good native alternative is hornbeam (a fast growing tree which keeps its leaves over the winter and can grow up to 25m if unchecked) and which makes a good thick hedge. Privet is not native, but is evergreen, quick growing and forms an effective screen. Holly is slightly slower growing but screens effectively and its sharp leaves can aid security. If the building is not high, then shrubs such as blackthorn and hawthorn will establish quickly and form a dense screen, even in winter. Hazel is also quick-growing once it is established.

Q5: Do I need to get any permission to plant trees?

A5: Usually you only need permission from the landowner before you plant trees. However, there are some exceptions to this. Additional permissions will be required if the site is covered by nature conservation or heritage designations. For example, permissions for works affecting SSSIs must be approved by Natural England, and permissions affecting Scheduled Monuments or Historic Parks and Gardens must be approved by Historic England. If you would like to plant trees close to a water course then you may need to obtain permission from the Environment Agency.

If the area to be planted is larger than 2ha you must inform the Forestry Commission and obtain the necessary permissions. To do this you will need to submit a detailed Forest Management Plan and an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Q6. I manage shoots. Is there anything I can do to enhance biodiversity in my game coverts?

A6: Game coverts offer excellent opportunities for tree planting to enhance both biodiversity and the landscape. If you have existing coverts with straight edges, consider new planting or natural regeneration around the edges to make their shape less regular, and try to link them with existing hedgerows and woodlands. If your coverts are currently planted with coniferous trees, plant (or allow natural regeneration of) native trees around the edges, to help the covert blend into the landscape. New coverts should be irregular in shape, dominated by native species and include open glade areas.

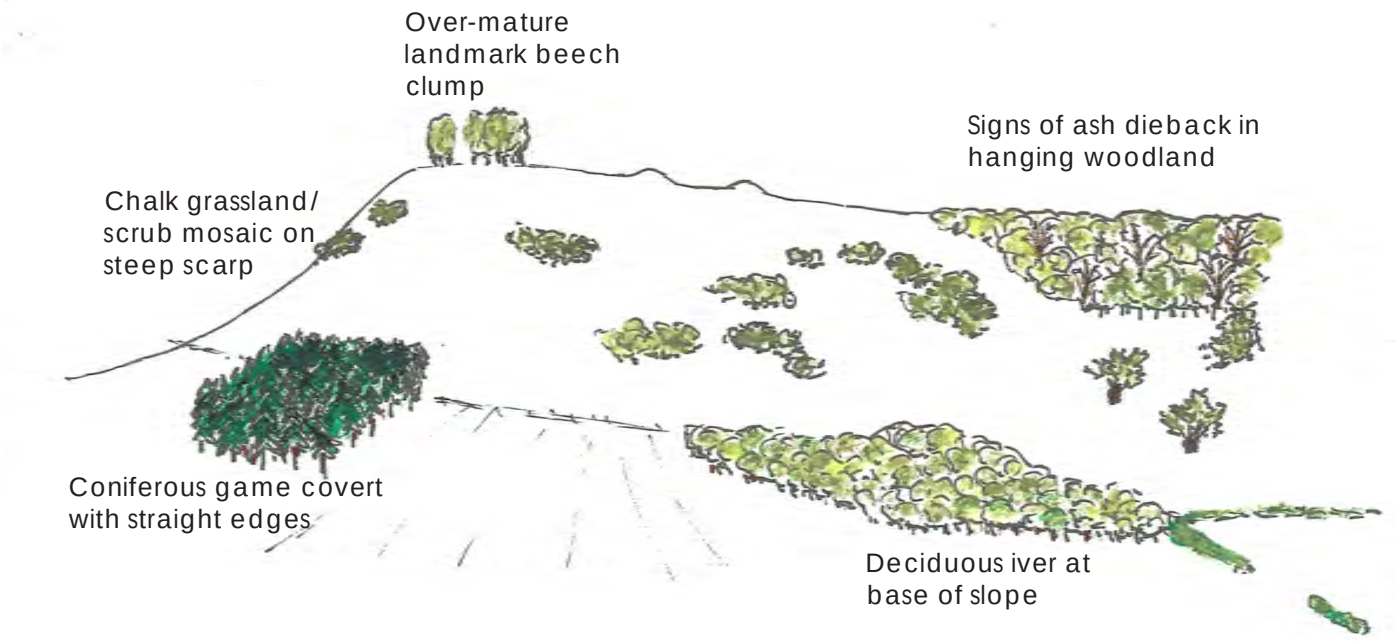
Laying the boundary hedges not only keeps the coverts warm for your birds but for other wildlife as well. More advice on managing woodland for the benefit of game and wider biodiversity is available from the Game and Wildlife Trust for Conservation (GWTC) and British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC).

Specific guidance for chalk escarpments and steep valley sides

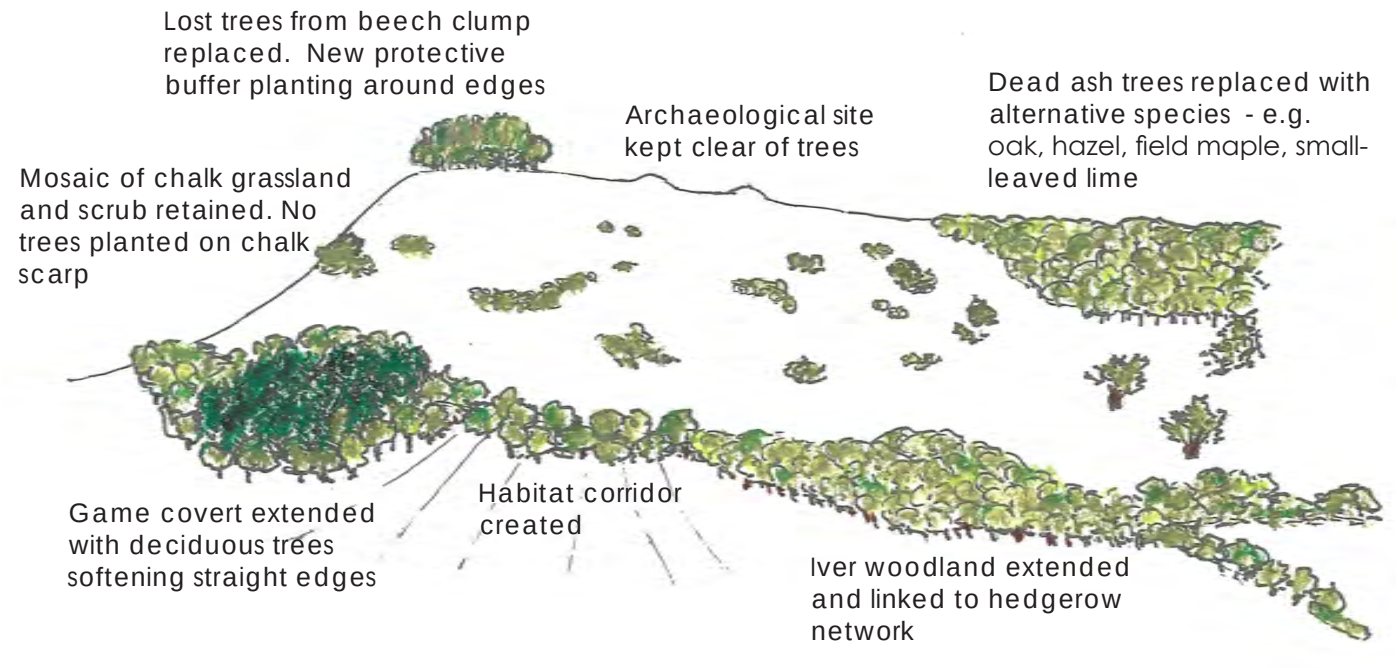
These are the steepest chalk slopes between higher land and lower valleys. Traditionally they have been open grazing land, where flower and herb-rich grassland provides habitat for a wide range of insects, butterflies and birds. The diversity of habitats is enhanced by patches of trees and scrub, and by the varying aspects of the slopes. Warm, south-facing slopes are particularly rich in wildlife. Most chalk grassland sites are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or County Wildlife Sites. They may also be Nature Reserves.

Woodland has been limited to linear 'hanging' woodland on the steepest slopes (often north-facing), and linear 'ivers' along the base of the escarpments at the junction with flatter land. Many of these are ancient in origin, and both the hangers and the ivers run parallel to the contours, emphasising the dramatic landform. Some isolated trees (for example thorns, oaks and field maples) are also of great age. Typical woodland species include beech, oak, and ash. Scrub species include thorn and hazel, with rarer examples of juniper, field maple and oak. There are occasional game coverts and plantations at the base of the slope, often with straight edges and coniferous trees. Where the highest land is covered by a layer of clay, there may be larger woodlands or isolated beech clumps, which form landmark features on the scarp crest.

Chalk escarpment at the Fovant Badges. Note the 'hanging' woodland in the foreground and along the top of the scarp, the 'iver' woodland at the base, and occasional patches of scrub within the grassland. ***Photo: Tracy Adams***



A typical chalk escarpment scene today



The same scene in 30 years time with additional tree planting

! Chalk Grasslands and Steep Valley Sides: Considerations

- Trees cannot be planted on designated sites (SSSIs, County Wildlife Sites and Nature Reserves) without permission from Natural England and/ or the Local Authority.
- Avoid planting trees on unimproved or semi-improved chalk grassland sites, or any grassland which has not been ploughed.
- If you think grassland may be flower-rich but are not sure, check in the summer.
- Avoid planting trees on burial mounds and other archaeological earthworks, including strip lynchets.
- Avoid planting hedgerows on open escarpments or valley sides, especially where the land has only previously been divided by fences.
- Control tree/scrub regeneration (ideally by grazing, but cutting if grazing is not possible) to retain a mosaic of grassland, scrub and woodland habitats.
- Avoid planting conifers in scarp-foot game coverts, as they stand out in the landscape, and may not be resilient to climate change.

✓ Chalk Grasslands and Steep Valley Sides: Opportunities

- Link or extend areas of 'hanging' beech/ oak woodland on the steepest scarps (but don't plant over grassland).
- Retain a mosaic of woodland, grassland and scrub on steep slopes, keeping proportions similar.
- Enhance habitat connectivity by extending or linking linear woodland 'ivers' at the base of the escarpment using existing native species. The existing linear pattern (parallel to the contours) should be retained. Don't expand woodland up the scarp.
- Manage existing woodlands and re-plant where trees have been lost, for example due to ash dieback. Seek opportunities for co-operation between landowners with regard to woodland management.
- Use new planting to soften the edges of conifer plantations / game coverts at the scarp-foot, and give them a more natural appearance.
- Manage landmark copses on the crest of the scarp, replacing lost trees where necessary. If beech trees appear stressed, plant other native species around the edges to protect them.
- Protect isolated thorns, field maples, oak and ash trees which may be of great antiquity

***Winkleberry Hill, Berwick St John** Photo: Tracy Adams*

Specific guidance for chalk farmland

Farmland covers the majority of the AONB, and is associated with large-scale landscapes of broad, rolling chalk hills, with smaller bands of greensand terrace and ridges. The higher parts of the chalk have a cap of clay-with-flints geology, creating fertile loamy soils, and it is here that most of the woodland occurs. Therefore woodland is generally found in elevated locations. It may take the form of blocks, linear belts or copses. In some areas, particularly in the central part of the AONB, the woodland is derived from ancient hunting forest and contains substantial areas of ancient woodland established pre-1750. It is therefore rich in archaeology.

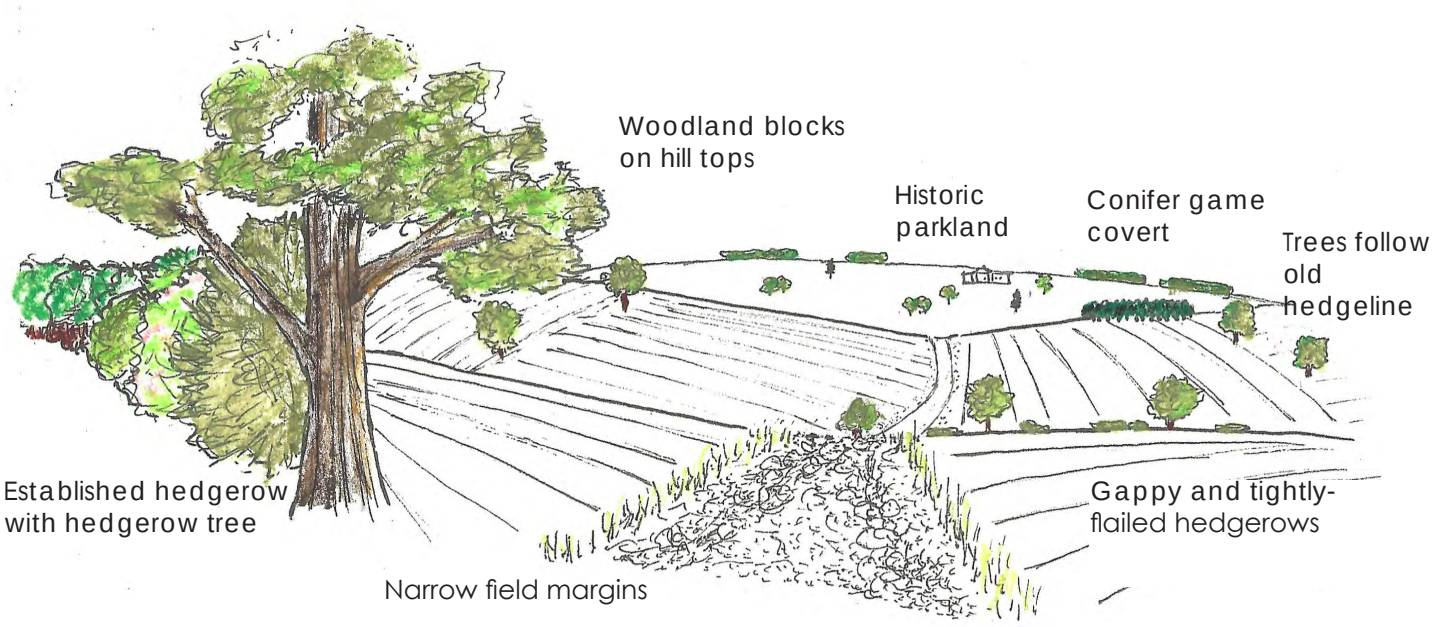
Native woodland generally consists of oak/ash/hazel on heavier soils and ash/field maple on lighter soils. There are also extensive deciduous plantations (mostly planted in the 18th Century and associated with estates), and pockets of rarer woodland types, such as yew woods. Sadly the prevalence of Ash dieback disease is now affecting many native woodlands. The broadleaved woodlands have a long history of management, particularly coppicing, but this is now declining in many areas. In the 20th Century, large blocks of ancient native woodland were replanted with commercial conifer crops, creating mixed woodlands.

Outside woodlands, trees are found in game coverts (often geometric conifer blocks which break the flowing lines of the chalk landscape), copses, shelterbelts, hedgerows, roadside avenues (usually beech) and historic parklands. There are many opportunities to enhance the appearance and biodiversity of game coverts. Arable farming is the dominant land use, within an open patchwork of large, regular fields. The intensification and mechanisation of farming, and the expansion of arable cultivation in the 20th Century resulted in a loss of hedgerows, as well as grassland and woodland habitats. However, field corners can still be a valuable reservoir of arable plants (e.g. cornflowers), and there are some established hedgerows and hedgerow trees, particularly in lower-lying areas. Hedgerows are not generally associated with higher or steeper areas, which were traditionally open sheep pasture. Here, trees follow the contours, in bands along the crests and bases of the slopes, which emphasise the landform.

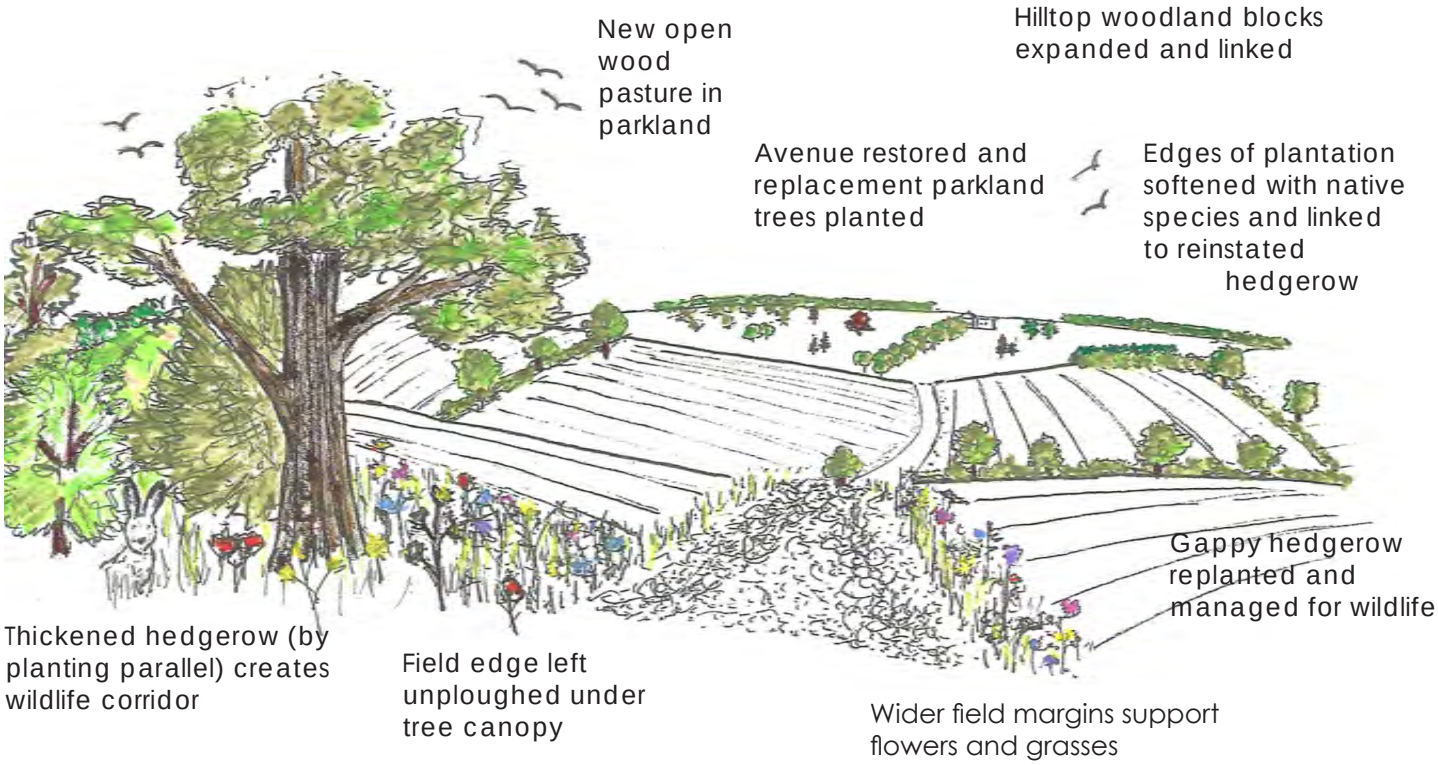
Estates are fairly frequent, and contribute to the character of the farmland. They are associated with plantation woodlands, and also designed landscapes of parkland, isolated specimen trees, avenues and landmark copses.

Despite the predominantly open feel of the chalk farmland, distinctive patterns of woodland and trees are fundamental to its character. Sensitive tree planting can therefore enhance its character and sense of place.

Chalk farmland at Boveridge Farm. Hill-top woodland blocks are linked by hedgerows. ***Photo: Tracy Adams***



A typical chalk farmland scene today



The same scene in 30 years time with additional tree planting

! Chalk Farmland: Considerations

- In open downland areas, don't plant hedgerows up/ down steep slopes. Instead, keep them to the base of the slope and parallel with the contours. This emphasises the landform, and retains the distinctive open character.
- Avoid planting continuous dense hedgerows or thick woodland alongside roads, as this blocks views. Instead leave gaps in hedgerows at viewpoints; plant avenues with trees at a sufficient distance to allow views between them, and consider low-density wood-pasture planting (with single trees and small clumps) near to roads.
- Watch out for existing valuable habitats, and avoid planting over them. These include the corners of cultivated fields which are rich in flowering plants, and grassy banks (for example alongside hedges). Aspect is an important consideration, so ideally try and avoid planting on sunny and warm sites which will be richest in herbs and grasses. If doubling an existing hedge, plant on the shady side.
- Avoid planting game coverts and other woodlands with straight edges. Instead create a more naturalistic look and encourage woodland edge habitat.
- Avoid damaging earthworks and buried archaeology when tree planting. Chalk farmland contains a wealth of prehistoric archaeology, particularly in areas without a long history of ploughing. Before you commence planting check for archaeological designations. Use the Defra 'magic' website to check for Scheduled Monuments, and your Local Authority Historic Environment Officer to check for Historic Environment Record sites. Many woodlands have not yet been surveyed, so an archaeological survey is an important step to avoid damaging woodland archaeology.
- There are many things to consider when planting a woodland, so employ a specialist Chartered Forester or Chartered Landscape Architect to design large woodlands, especially if they will have a commercial element.

***Blackbush Down and Yew Woods** Photo: T.Rich*

Chalk Farmland: Opportunities

- There are opportunities for further woodland planting in elevated areas with clay-with-flints geology and deeper soils.
- Ideally, new woodland planting should extend and link existing woodland.
- Use native species planting or natural regeneration to soften the edges of existing conifer plantations. This will help them 'fit' into the landscape and also provide valuable woodland edge habitat.
- Where conifers were planted on Ancient Woodland sites (check using the Defra 'magic' website), aim for a gradual reversion to native species of trees and ground flora.
- Where ash trees have been lost to Ash Dieback, replace with a mix of alternative trees, including oak, hazel, field maple, aspen, hornbeam and small-leaved lime. Leaving some open areas as glades will aid biodiversity, particularly butterflies.
- In response to climate change, pure beech stands should gradually be replaced by mixed species, incorporating oak and small-leaved lime. Natural regeneration can help to increase structural diversity of beech woods.
- Aim for landowner collaboration with regard to woodland planting and management. Consider the long term management of woodland and promote traditional management such as coppicing.
- Support the currently declining coppice industry through training, community engagement and identifying uses for harvested timber.
- Seek opportunities to develop woodland access and recreation where appropriate.
- Seek opportunities to enhance the appearance and biodiversity of game coverts, for example through planting native shrub species or allowing natural regeneration to create a softer edge, or by laying boundary hedgerows. GWCT and BASC can provide advice.
- Protect veteran trees in woodlands and hedgerows, for example by avoiding compacting roots with heavy machinery.
- Reinstate lost hedgelines to enhance landscape pattern and habitat connections. Use existing field trees as a guide or consult historic maps.
- Consider adding new hedges parallel to existing ones to create 'green lanes' for wildlife, flowers and farmland birds.
- Retain historic parklands and designed landscapes as features. For example by replacing lost avenue trees, and planting new specimen trees ready for when existing specimen trees become over-mature.

***Farmland from Ox Grove** Photo: Tracy Adams*

Specific guidance for vales and river valleys

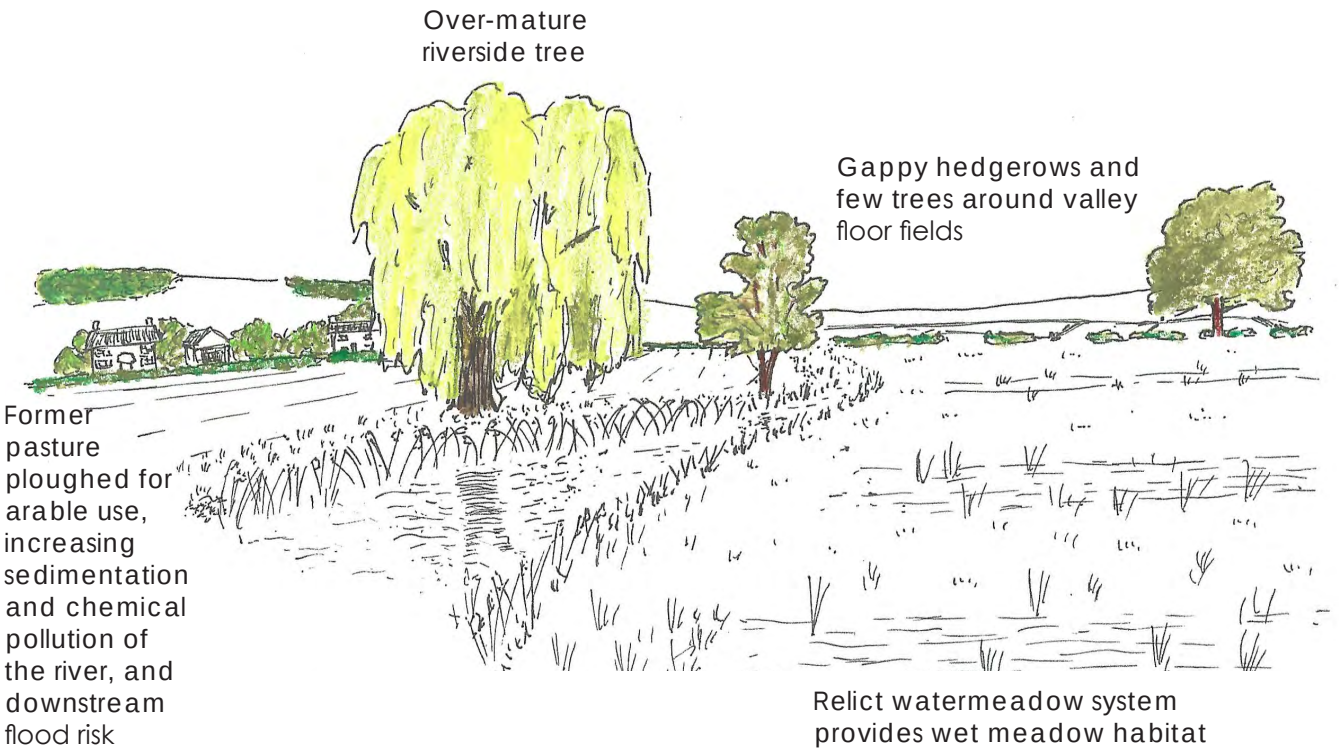
These are the low-lying areas associated with river valleys – chalk streams such as the Wylye and Ebble, and also the broader clay vale associated with the River Nadder. They contain distinctive patterns of trees and woodland.

Their central features are the watercourses which wind across the valley floors, through floodplain pastures. In the past, the valley floors contained productive wet woodland habitat such as osier beds (where willow was grown for basketry) and alder carr. In most places this woodland is now limited to ribbons of riparian (riverside) willows and alders, and the occasional poplar plantation. The remains of watermeadows survive on the floodplain, but most have ceased to be in traditional management.

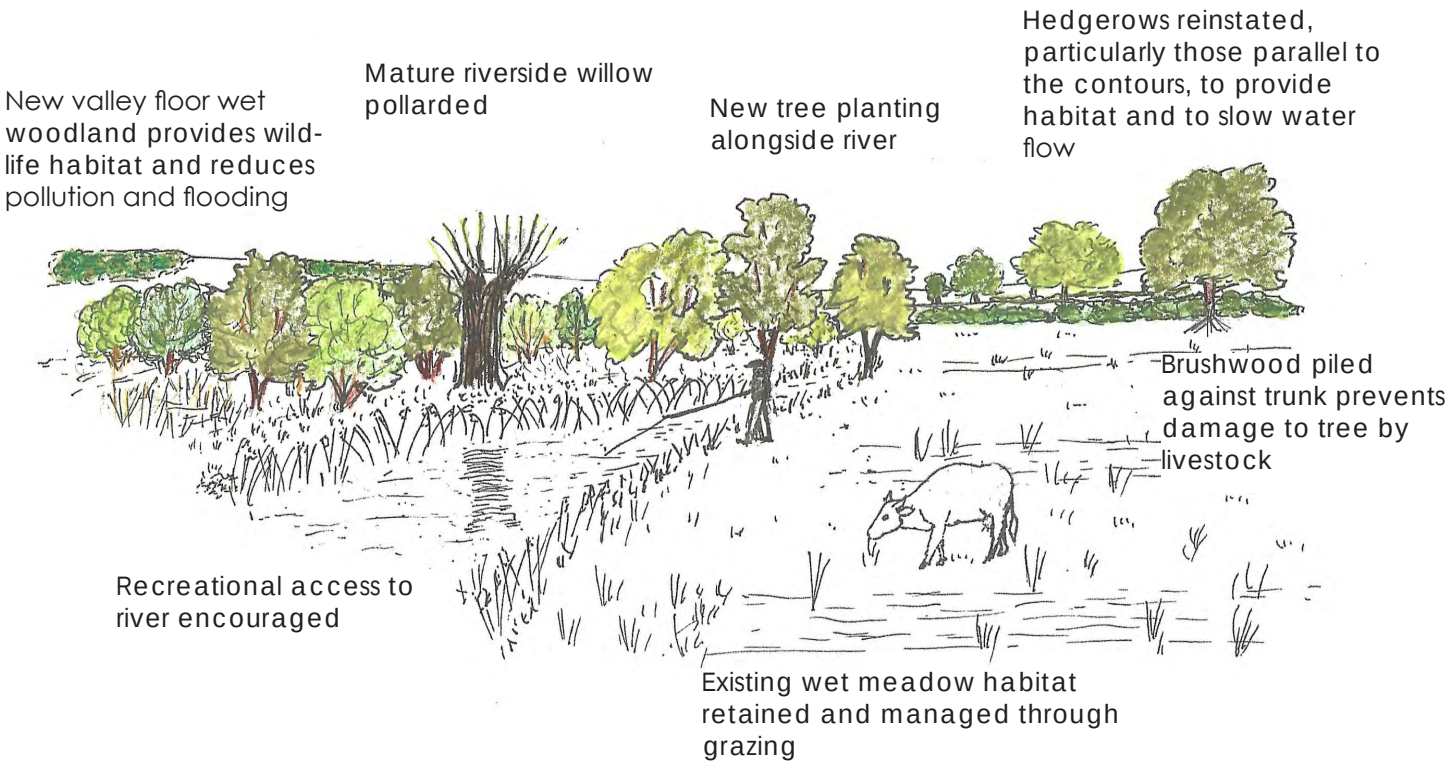
Just above the floodplain is a network of small pastoral fields, often irregularly shaped and ancient in origin. Many are bounded by species-rich hedgerows containing mature hedgerow trees. These, combined with the riparian trees, and the parkland trees often found on the lower valley sides, create the impression of a lush and verdant landscape, even though the proportion of land under tree cover is relatively low, and many trees and hedgerows have been lost.

Villages are sited along the springlines at the edges of the valley floors, and trees contribute to their character and setting. Avenues, shelterbelts and occasional woodland blocks are found on the valley sides, often associated with estates. In the clay vale, these merge with the enclosing wooded Greensand Hills.

The River Wylye near Fisherton de la Mere. Occasional trees suited to damp soils grow along the river bank. A band of trees mark the edge of the floodplain.
Photo: Tracy Adams



A typical river valley scene today



The same scene in 30 years time with additional tree planting

! Vales and River Valleys: Considerations

- Avoid tree planting on surviving valuable habitats, such as unimproved grassland and wet meadow. Where possible, promote linkage between these habitats.
- Avoid planting trees on archaeological sites, including former watermeadows and cress beds.
- Avoid conifer planting, including Leylandii, to screen roads and buildings. Use native species such as beech, hornbeam and hawthorn instead.
- Permission may be required from the Environment Agency if planting close to watercourses.

✓ Vales and River Valleys: Opportunities

- Retain trees along river banks, pollarding old/ large willows rather than removing them. Plant new riparian trees of similar species. Shading rivers helps to keep the water cool, so is an important contribution in mitigating the effects of climate change on fish populations. Riverside trees also help to reduce flooding and pollution, and stabilise river banks. Remember to leave access to river banks for fishing and maintenance.
- Restore alder carr and wet woodlands on valley floors to provide wildlife habitat; slow flood water; retain summer river levels, and reduce pollution from silt and chemicals.
- Mature poplar plantations could be clearfelled and planted with alternative species (e.g. willow, alder, dogwood).
- Enhance the hedgerow network, replanting gaps in hedgerows, and reinstating lost hedgerows (use field trees as a guide or consult old maps).
- Plant additional hedgerows along valley sides (parallel to the contours). This will enhance landscape character, but also help to slow flood water, and reduce soil loss.
- Plant/ single out a new generation of hedgerow and parkland trees which will become future mature specimens.
- Protect existing mature trees from damage by livestock by fencing, or putting brushwood around the base.
- Enhance connectivity between woodlands, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats.
- Plant native deciduous species such as willows, alder, poplar, dogwoods and oak. The species mix will depend on how wet the site is. Avoid coniferous planting in woodlands and hedgerows. Exotic species should be limited to gardens and parklands.
- Plant trees around villages to enhance their character and setting, and also to provide physical and visual separation between villages. See ‘Villages and roads’ guidance for more information.

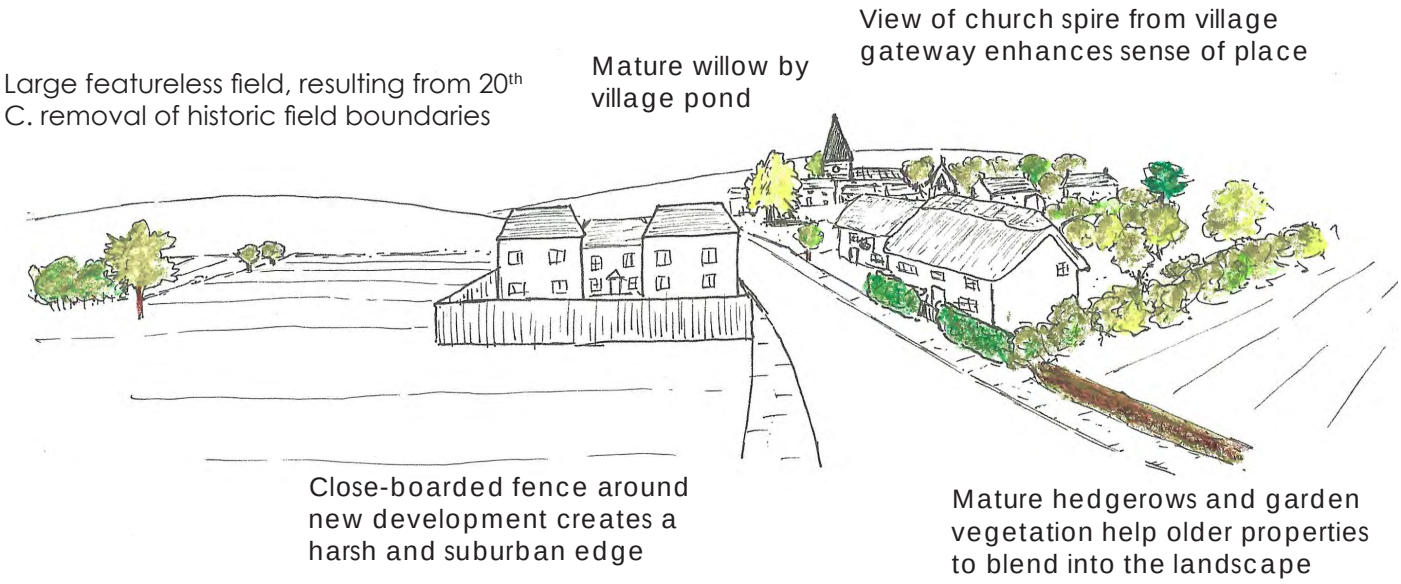
Specific guidance for villages and roads

Cranborne Chase AONB contains many historic villages. Each has a distinctive character based on its relationship with the surrounding landscape: locally-available building materials; prominent buildings such as churches, and the presence of country estates influencing architecture and layout. Part of a village's character comes from its distinctive 'treescape' which adds to its sense of place, and influences its setting and landscape context.

Some villages may be nucleated around a green or pond, which is likely to be a focus for trees. Other villages may be dominated by estate planting, avenues or parkland. Some have so many trees in their surroundings that they seem to blend into woodland, whilst others appear much more isolated within the landscape, with garden trees making them appear as a green 'island' in a sea of fields. There are many opportunities to enhance a village's treescape, and to promote a positive transition between the village and its surrounding landscape. This can include tree planting associated with new development. Paragraph 131 of the new National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the use of trees in developments, their need for long term maintenance, and how important it is 'that the right trees are planted in the right places'.

Trees also have a screening function, creating a physical and visual gap between villages, particularly where they are located close together along roads or springlines. In the past, orchards would have been a part of the village environment. Trees alongside roads have a big impact on how the road is experienced, and how it is seen within the landscape. Such trees can include roadside planting such as avenues, and trees screening roadside buildings. Trees can also help to distinguish the approaches to settlements. Road verges can be important grassland habitats which need to be managed, and should also be considered in tree and hedgerow planting schemes.

Trees along Hindon High Street enhance the character of the village. The wooded hill behind is also part of the village's 'treescape'
Photo: C. White



A typical village scene today

The same scene in 30 years time with additional tree planting

Villages and Roads: Considerations

- Avoid conifer planting, including Leylandii, to screen roads and buildings. Use native species such as privet, hawthorn and blackthorn instead.
- Avoid continuous hedgerows or densely-planted trees alongside roads, as it prevents views out. Allow gaps to open up viewpoints, or plant avenues of trees far enough apart to enable views between them.
- Avoid 'suburban' styles of property boundaries, such as ornamental hedges, close-boarded fencing, elaborate gateways and tarmac driveways. Instead use native species hedging, wooden gates, and gravel surfaces to fit into the rural landscape.
- Consider verge habitats when planting hedges alongside roads, and avoid flowers and grasses becoming too shaded by unmanaged hedges.

Villages and Roads: Opportunities

- Consider preparing a village tree-planting strategy. Look carefully at how trees currently contribute to the village's 'sense of place' and 'treescape' and what needs to be done to retain and enhance it in the future. Think about species, size and location.
- Integrate tree planting (and future management) into the design of new development.
- Use native species hedges to screen new properties, softening settlement edges and helping new development to integrate with older buildings.
- Existing close-boarded fences could be replaced or supplemented with native hedges to soften the village edge.
- Use flowering trees and shrubs (e.g. blackthorn, bird cherry, hawthorn, crab apple, elder and privet) to create linkages between villages and the surrounding woodlands. These plants promote rural character, look attractive, and also provide habitat for pollinators and birds.
- Keep key views open and free from planting (e.g. views to church towers, distinctive hill tops or historic houses). This helps to retain sense of place.
- Consider planting replacements for prominent mature trees (for example those on village greens, around ponds or in churchyards) to ensure their continued presence in the landscape.
- Consider village orchards for community tree-planting projects.
- Consider reinstating lost field boundaries around villages. These were often older and more irregular than those further away from villages, and can enhance village settings and wildlife habitats. Use field trees as a guide, or consult historic maps.
- Use tree planting (including orchards) to retain separation between villages.
- Use native planting and wildflower verges to enhance village gateways and approaches along roads. Remember that verges will need some management.

Where to go for more information

Local Authorities	
Dorset Council Wiltshire Council Hampshire County Council New Forest District Council Somerset County Council Mendip District Council South Somerset District Council	Information on: Local nature conservation designations (e.g. County Wildlife Sites; Local Nature Reserves) Heritage designations (e.g. Conservation Areas, and Historic Environment Record sites) Some Local Authority information may need to be accessed through the Local Environment Record Centre Some Local Authorities may also have relevant Tree Planting Strategies, Nature Recovery Strategies, or other resources.
Governmental Organisations	
Environment Agency (Wessex area and Solent and South Downs area)	Information/ permissions regarding planting trees near watercourses
Forestry Commission	Information on planting schemes larger than 2ha
Natural England	Information/ permissions if tree planting potentially affects a nationally-designated nature conservation site
Historic England	Information/ permissions if tree planting potentially affects a nationally-designated heritage conservation site
National Organisations	
The Woodland Trust	Lots of advice and guidance on woodland and tree planting. Trees can also be purchased from the Woodland Trust
British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) **Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust** (GWCT)	Guidance on managing game and designing coverts to maximise biodiversity and minimise landscape impacts
Orchard Network **The Orchard Project**	Guidance on traditional orchards and community orchards
Institute of Chartered Foresters **Landscape Institute**	Where to find specialist consultants to design larger woodland planting schemes

Local Organisations	
Cranborne Chase AONB	Local landscape information
Cranborne Chase AONB Historic Environment website	Detailed information on the historic landscape
Dorset AONB	Advice and guidance on tree planting close to the boundary with Dorset AONB
New Forest National Park	Advice and guidance on tree planting close to the boundary with New Forest National Park
Wildlife Trusts: Dorset Wildlife Trust Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Somerset Wildlife Trust Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	Information on County Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves
Government Guidance	
Guidance on planting trees to extend existing woodland	See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plant-trees-to-extend-existing-woodland

This guidance prepared by Fiona Fyfe Associates on behalf of Cranborne Chase AONB.
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'Tree Hugging' Photo: Cranborne Chase AONB