

Planning Statement

Wyllies Wood, Prior approval, entrance adjustments

Introduction

Wyllies wood is an ancient woodland site that has previously been planted with non native conifers known as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). This ancient woodland site is in need of woodland restoration works, and management to protect and restore the woodland habitat for the long term future.

The landowner is working with The Woodland Trust on the Lost Woods of the Low Weald and Downs project (Lost Woods) that aims to assist landowners in the management of woodlands throughout the project area. The projects aims are to restart management works to restore ancient woodlands through reinstating woodland management (forestry), and improving infrastructure enabling appropriate sustainable woodland management into the future.

Wyllies wood currently has 2 small existing access points, one on each side of the ghyll stream that prevents vehicle access across so entrance points are needed on each side of the steep sided ghyll stream. One entrance is narrow and has a large woodbank feature either side making it unsuitable for widening. The other access point is currently degraded, overgrown with brambles and has a small gate not currently suitable for larger vehicle access or timber extraction. A small number of existing piped culverts along the exiting track are in need of repair as have collapsed or are unstable.

Description of proposal

The proposals involve the adjustment of the existing gateway entrance to widen the existing entrance creating a bell mouth area for lorries to reverse into the site. Replacing the single gate with a double gate arrangement widening the entrance.

The existing entrance has an old stone surface which will be reinstated to fit the newly adjusted gateway. The current woodland track has previously been surfaced and will be improved, approximately 40-50m in length being resurfaced to a width of approximately 4m, with natural stone and a stoned stacking area adjacent to the track.

The adjusted entrance will enable the extraction of large volumes of timber from the woodland. also enabling the PAWS restoration of this ancient woodland site.

4 Culvert repairs will be undertaken in the existing locations, and will involve installation of new pipes where necessary and regrading of the track once installed.

The proposed methods of construction would minimise disturbance to surrounding areas, by working largely from within / on the tracks existing footprint. Limited excavations would be needed, with preparation works involving removing small vegetation, levelling stacking area, before installing a weed barrier if required, with imported aggregate. To be compacted and levelled creating the surfaced track. Machinery used will be as small as practicable. Stone material will be sourced responsibly with no use of recycled materials, preventing potential introduction of contaminants to the ancient woodland.

The timing of the track installation would also be considered with construction only occurring when ground conditions are dry enough and suitable, without causing additional compaction or damage to the surrounding woodland areas.

Justifications

Site analysis

The woodland site is in need of forestry management, which the proposals will enable. The works identified in the Forestry Commission approved woodland management include the harvesting and removal of non-native conifer species, currently not practicable with the current infrastructure.

The existing gateway and track only requires reasonable adjustments to make it suitable for the operations required. No new access points will be created. The road that reaches the woodland is not a classified road.

The surfacing would only be to enable lorries to back off the road and collect stacked timber.

Reinstating the 4 small culverts will enable appropriate scale forestry works vehicles access along the existing woodland track and enable to long term management and restoration of the woodland.

The first stage of timber extraction planned includes the removal of Spruce species. The site is currently within the forestry commissions proactive spruce removal zone which has been established to prevent the spread of a recent pest, the eight toothed spruce bark Beetle (*Ips typographus*)

Compliance with local planning policies

It is believed the proposed track complies with the requirements for permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 6 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. The pertinent extract is Class E - forestry developments:

The purpose of this application is to confirm the planned works would comply as above.

The Forestry Commission will be consulted on the proposal as to whether a full Environmental impact assessment would be required, through the standard EIA screening process

The East Sussex Historic Environment team will also be consulted, as the works take place on existing features there are no historic features affected.

Wildlife and protected species have been considered. With no adverse impacts envisaged. A local biological records centre report has been obtained for reference and to aid in the careful planning of the works when undertaken.

Summary

The proposed access improvements will have beneficial impacts on the sustainability of woodland management / forestry operations of Wyllies Wood. The works proposed are appropriate and proportional for the site.

The current state of the existing infrastructure prevents the extraction of the timber that will be harvested. If timber cannot be extracted from site it is very unlikely to be cut, which prevents the woodland restoration and blocks forestry operations.

Enabling woodland management operations will restore and protect the ancient woodland habitats into the future. Woodland product (timber) will also be generated through forestry management operations.