Stanford in the Vale Community Wood

The Oxfordshire Woodland Project early discussion draft (#2)

The woodland is intended as a community wood for the village of Stanford in the Vale. It is intended to be broadleaved in nature, making use of a range of mixed native shrubs as woodland cover and of open space in the form of rides and modest glades. The shrubs will be placed mainly at the edges of the planted areas and adjacent to rides. The main tree species (eg oak, ash, beech) will be planted in clumps of between 20 and 70 trees to give a varied woodland mosaic. Minor tree species (eg field maple, birch, thorn, willow, lime, poplar, crab) will be distributed throughout as single trees and occasional clumps to mimic natural distribution.

The density of planting will be the minimum recommended by the Forestry Commission: 1100plants per hectare (3m x 3m square spacing).

Trees may be protected from browsing by deer and rabbit by fencing or individual treeshelters and at this scale, costs are comparable with each other.

The woodland is intended as a resource for present and future residents of the village. Consideration should be given to the present and likely future values. If possible the school should play a role in the design, development and ongoing use of the wood, within stated practical limits. Similar community woodland elsewhere in Oxfordshire may be inspected.

Community woodland elsewhere in the county has been designed to help the host village take steps toward sustainability by combining biodiversity with elements of woodland produce and this theme may be pursued here. Fruiting species may be planted with a view to late summer foraging and coppice may be established in such a way as to provide the community with an ongoing supply of pea sticks and bean poles for the garden and allotment. Longer term management of the woodland will invariably produce firewood and its management should be anticipated from the start.

A typical sequence of work, assuming no fencing on site:

- Confirm permissions, designs, funds, grants and aftercare
- Modify entrance way to allow temporary parking for vehicles but not unrestricted access
- Mow grass sward
- Lay out the gross planting/ride patterns, refer to distant views for on-site ‘tweaking’
- Rip the ground at the row spacing before land becomes wet, avoiding the ride formation. Rows thus created should be curved or undulating
- Spray glyphosate herbicide on the rip-lines before late autumn
- Plant 45-60cms or 60-90cms bare-root forest transplants into suitable tree shelters, strongly staked
- Arrange for weeding to take place using a herbicide spot treatment twice in the first growing season and once thereafter until established.

Subsequent community activities might include planting additional semi-domestic species to bulk up the ride edges, eg traditional varieties of apple, wild gooseberry, filberts and/or cobnuts. Others might include an annual BBQ event, building a record of all species seen on site, harvesting treeshelters for re-use, regular ride mowing according to a conservation recipe, pruning, pollarding, planting of ground flora and sundry associated activites. The harvesting of timber should be anticipated from the start, as should the creation of deadwood and ‘less tidy’ habitat. Distribution of any produce should be considered in advance.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY
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Stanford Community Wood
Mr Craig Blackwell & Mr Gerry McMorrow
~2.4ha

Scale 1:1616.5 (Approximate)
Plot Date: 22 July 2009

Stanford in the Vale Community Wood –footpath belt

The Oxfordshire Woodland Project early discussion draft July 09

This area is a long and narrow belt which naturally limits the scope for design.
It should be manageable in such a way as to maintain some visual and wind shelter despite management activity such as periodic thinning or felling. Planting on the centre of the flooded area is not recommended at present until the issue has been resolved.
The belt should comprise strongly coppicing species so that periodic cutting will enable the canopy to be brought back to ground level without the need for replanting. This would avoid the well-known 'windy bottom' fault of so many overdeveloped shelterbelts. Many native broadleaves will achieve this, though beech is a species to avoid. One stable form of planting would be to establish a form of coppice with standards, based loosely around hazel and oak with variation along the belt. The intention would be to allow the oak to grow to provide height and presence, while allowing sufficient light through to drive a vibrant hazel-based coppice system. If the hazel is to be cut regularly, this may be achieved without affecting the landscape and shelter value of the belt if just one third (or possibly one half) of the width of the belt is cut at any one time. Given the presence of deer, it may be wise to undertake pollarding of the hazel to ensure that the stools are not overwhelmed by severe browsing.

A variation on this theme would allow for the cutting of ash coppice in place of –or in addition to – hazel, where some demand for small diameter firewood in the medium term future might be expected. Coppicing/pollarding lends itself to management with hand tools or chainsaw working and would be in scale with the limitations of access imposed by the unsurfaced right of way.

Plant hazel or ash coppice on a 3.0m staggered square spacing. This spacing is the lowest density allowable by the Forestry Commission. Allow 10% of the planting to be mixed native species and a further 10% of the planting for standard (eg oak) trees, half of which will be thinned out at year 20 to leave the most vigorous and shapely, the remainder contributing to the coppice matrix.

The planting sequence will be similar to the community wood, however it will be impractical to opt for curved rows. Long thin plantings can be visually distracting when first planted, this can be ameliorated by using treeshelters of varying hues, employed in clumps. Very small numbers of very fast growing species (~1% of planting) such as hybrid poplar in groups of 3 would alleviate the regularity of the belt in the early days and may be felled along with the first or second coppice cuts.

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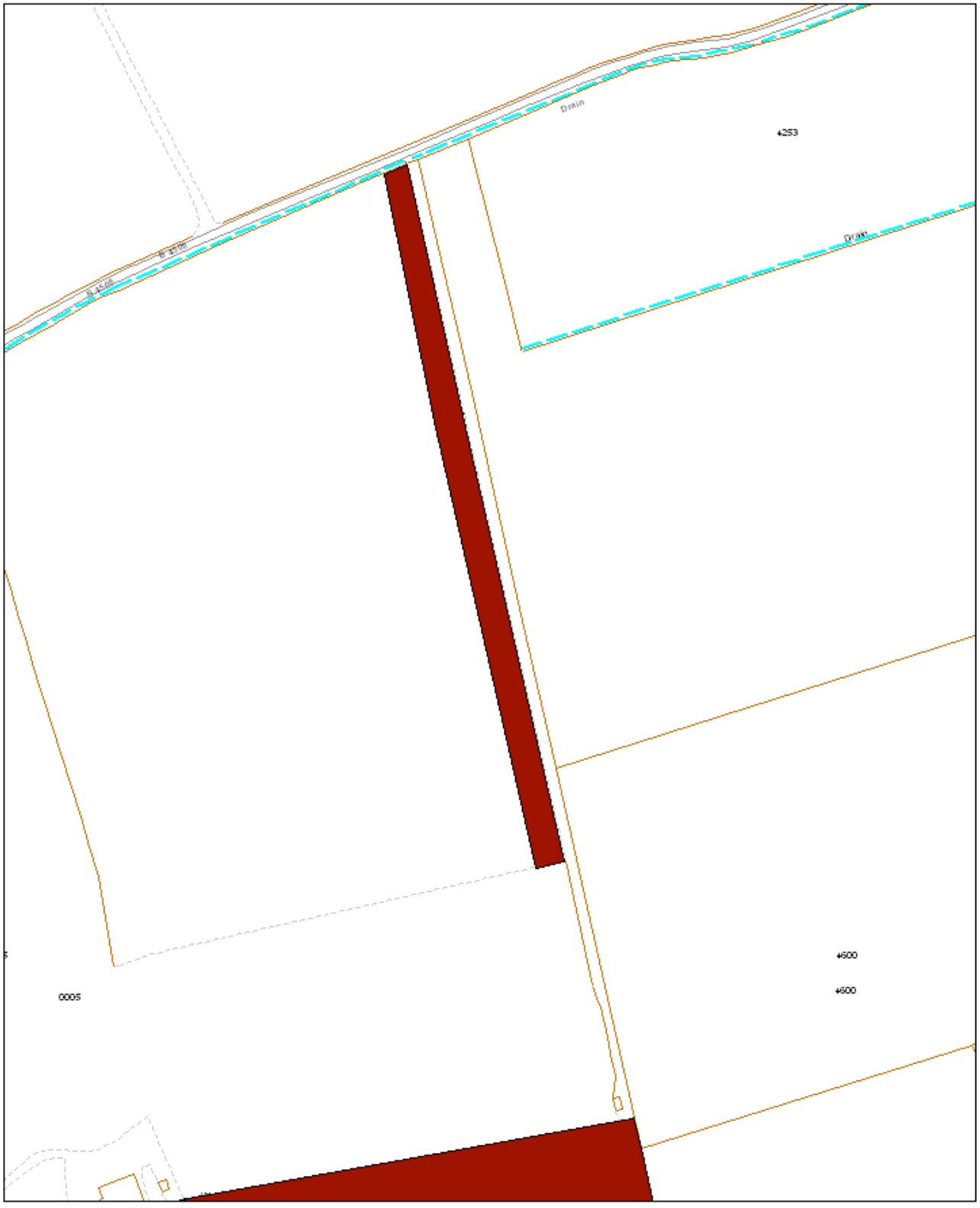
Stanford-in-the-Vale Community Wood
Mr Craig Blackwell & Mr Gerry McMorrow
~0.6ha

THE OXFORDSHIRE WOODLAND PROJECT



Scale 1:3232.5 (Approximate)
Plot Date: 22 July 2009