

18th December 2025
LLD3731-ECO-LET-001

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LIZARD

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Dear Ralph,

59 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham – Off-site woodland proposals

Thank you for approaching our practice to undertake the ecological assessment work for the development at 59 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham. We understand that further information is required to support woodland enhancements as part of the relevant Habitat Creation, Management and Monitoring Plan (HCMMP) works. The off-site woodland is covered by Tree Preservation Order *TPO-1798-2021 W1* and *A1*; therefore, any tree works require prior approval from Wokingham Borough Council before they can commence. This letter report has been prepared to provide the necessary information on which specific trees and areas within the woodland will be impacted and how, including areas of thinning, felling, and veteranisation.

A site visit was undertaken on the 12th of December 2025 by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (Max Day ACIEEM, 3 years professional experience). Weather conditions were mild (c.11°C), with a light southerly wind (Beaufort Scale 2), 75% cloud cover with sunny spells. The purpose of the visit was to assess suitable areas for creation of glades and to identify which trees would be most suitable for implementation of veteranisation techniques, in accordance with the measures set out in the approved *Habitat Creation, Management and Monitoring Plan* (LLD2538-ECO-REP-004-08-HCMMP).

Creation of Glades and Rides

Suitable areas for selective thinning were identified (see attached image 01 - 03). The location of these areas deviate slightly from the approved plans; however, they are roughly the same total area (see Figure No. 01 below). Overall, the total woodland area is not sufficiently large to achieve 'true' glades and rides. Rides should ideally be a width of 1.5x - 2x the height of surrounding trees to ensure that sufficient light can reach the ground layer, and glades are often even larger (*Managing Woodland Open Space for Wildlife*; Forestry Commission, 2005). Given the size of the on-site woodland this would essentially break the site into entirely separate woodland parcels rather than create temporary open space. As the intention behind the creation of these parcels was to provide sunlight to promote ground flora colonisation and allow understory shrub planting, a pragmatic approach was sought within the HCMMP. No major alterations to the HCMMP are sought at this time, but consideration to how and where the proposed measures can be implemented in a realistic or successful way is essential to achieving the desired outcomes.

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The specified areas of thinning will primarily look to remove trees in an east - west direction to maximise the amount of light reaching the ground. Larger and shady trees such as semi-mature oaks and beeches or those directly competing for resources would be most suitable to remove in the first instance. In addition, a range of younger and smaller trees such as birch and holly should also be prioritised for removal. The selected glade areas will then seek to expand existing gaps within the woodland. A small selection of ground flora was already visible in such sections, and by expanding the area of these gaps this will promote colonisation into currently densely shaded areas, achieving the desired aims. The selected areas are identified within the images below:



Image No. 01 – Area selected for felling and thinning within the north of the site. Area of open space identified immediately off-site to the north.



Image No. 02 – Area selected for felling and thinning within the centre of the site. Area of open space identified immediately off-site to the west.

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Image No. 03 – Area selected for felling and thinning within the south of the site. Existing canopy is already sparse, so further clearance and removal of rhododendron will support colonisation.

A Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) survey was undertaken as part of the field survey assessment by the suitably experienced surveyor (Max Day; accredited agent under 2016-20460-CLS-CLS). All trees were subject to a ground-level inspection to identify if any potential roosting features, or other important ecological features were present. No such features were identified within any of the trees within these areas (all trees were assessed to have **negligible** bat roosting potential in accordance with best practice guidance).

Once thinning, felling, and clearance has taken place, planting with understorey shrubs and coppicing tolerant species is proposed within the HCMMP. Species such as spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, and hazel *Corylus avellana* are considered appropriate for the verges of these glades as they will create an ecotonal edge and improve structural diversity within the woodland. Whilst evidence of a ground layer was already present this was dominated by shade tolerant species (solely comprising tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, primrose *Primula vulgaris*, a woodland sedge *Carex* sp., and ivy *Hedera helix* at the time of the winter visit). The specified measures to diversify the ground layer in the HCMMP with EW1 mix would only be appropriate to implement once thinning has taken place. Ongoing management can then seek to manage open woodland areas through coppicing and pruning shrubs.

Creation of Veteran Trees

A mature oak tree suitable for veteranisation was identified within the south of the woodland and already had several dead limbs and deadwood features (see Image No. 04). Ideally veteranisation techniques would look to implement coronet cuts on the upper limbs, and creation of woodpecker holes over this winter. However, ring-barked branches, plunge cuts, hanging branches, and vertical fissures are quite dramatic measures which need to be sensitively applied based on the experience of a professional arborist or tree surgeon. Given the quality of the specimen, it is recommended that only small, low-impact measures are implemented initially to assess the tree's response and avoid accidentally and unnecessarily killing the tree.

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Image No. 04 – Tree selected for veteranisation within south of the site. This tree already had failed limbs visible at the base, and standing dead limbs within the crown.

No other mature specimens were identified across the woodland that were considered good candidates for veteranisation. Therefore, it would be most suitable to monitor the growth of other tree species such as several mature birches, which are already developing expanded girths, and sensitively manage and maintain the longevity of these trees into the future. This is a deviation from the HCMMP which specifies that 2no. veteran trees are required to be created through intervention. Given these measures are already approved then monitoring of several other semi-mature oaks present within the centre of the site should be undertaken. These would require more major works such as creation of broken branches, coronet cuts, and woodpecker holes. However, this is not considered appropriate to implement within Years 0-5, as the trees are not of a suitable age and health to successfully veteranize.

The location and area of these measures are annotated with the figure from the approved HCMMP below:

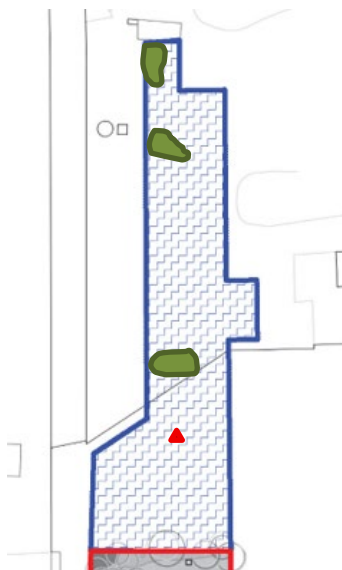


Figure No. 01 – Location of Proposed Glades (light green) and Veteran Trees (red triangle).

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Additional Notes on Management Regime

Clearance and initial rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* removal had been successful in removing all mature shrubs and had involved minimal ground disturbance within the off-site woodland (such as the area seen within Image No. 03 above). Further management must look to remove regrowth and seedlings through pulling, with foliar glyphosate spray spot treatment used where required. This is in accordance with the agreed management measures within the HCMMP. Additional pest species such as a species of bamboo had also emerged, which will require ongoing clearance and monitoring. Additionally, areas of bamboo and rhododendron were identified immediately off-site along the east boundary and outside of the client's ownership, within California Country Park. Therefore, the land managers should be contacted to try and simultaneously eradicate this species to minimise the need for ongoing invasive species removal.

The number of native tree species within the woodland was higher than originally identified within the PEA and HCMMP. Presence of sweet chestnut (a naturalised achaeophyte), rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, and a localised area of willow *Salix* sp. were all noted on-site and so the species diversity condition is considered to have already been met. Management should look to be sensitive to these localised areas and try to expand and improve the range of these species across the woodland wherever possible.

We hope you are satisfied with the attached photographs, proposed areas for habitat enhancement and management, and that all initial management measures taken have been in compliance with the approved plans. These further measures will ensure that off-site lowland mixed deciduous woodland remains on-track for enhancement to 'fairly good' condition within the 30+ year monitoring period. Please contact us if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Max Day MSci (Hons) ACIEEM

Consultant Ecologist

Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology

Approved and proofed by

Catherine O'Reilly BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Principal Ecologist

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