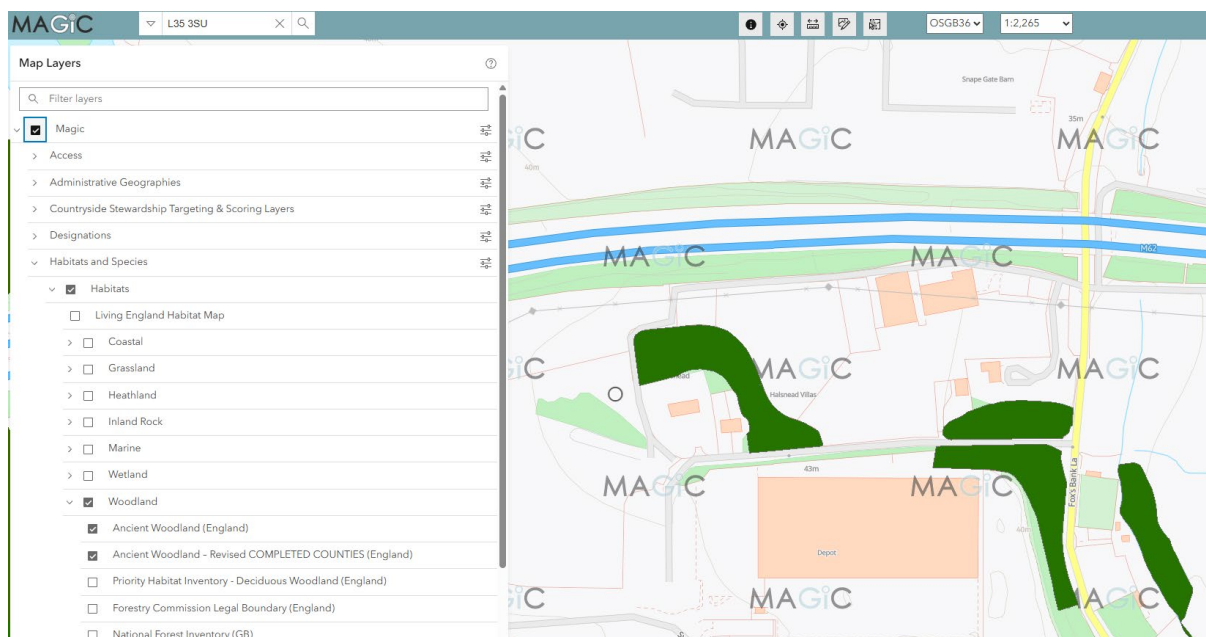


Halsnead Farm- Ancient Woodland Mitigation Statement

Ancient woodland status.

There are two areas of woodland outside the planning application boundary. One woodland parcel lies on the western boundary, and the other lies in the south-east corner of the site.

The DEFRA Magic mapping GIS interface does not confirm that these areas are ancient woodland; however, this is because the specific ancient woodland tab in the GIS system only identifies sites over 2 hectares. The completed counties section of DEFRA ancient woodland does confirm that these two areas are indeed ancient woodland (0.25-2 hectares) as shown below.



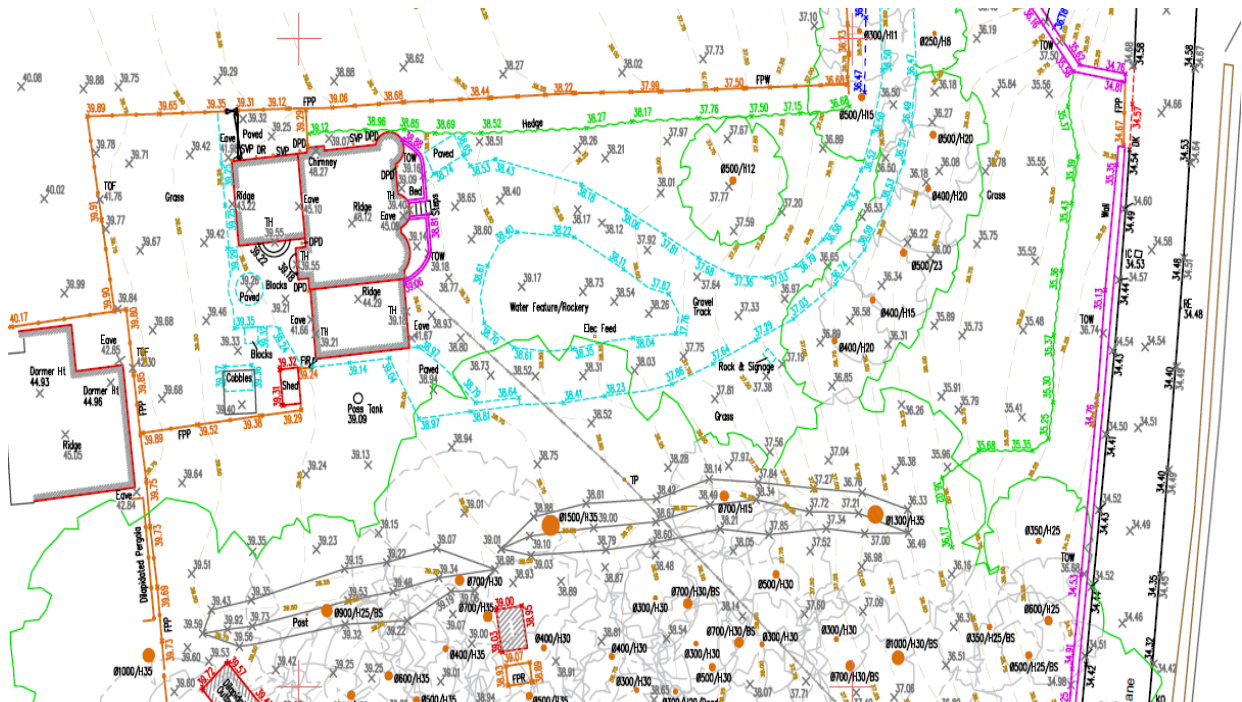
Halsnead Garden Village Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document

The Halsnead Garden Village Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document June 2017 Section 5.25 of this document states (in relation to the masterplan site) that:

Several areas of broad-leaved woodland, which include some areas of ancient woodland, are located within the site. These habitats are of importance and should be retained wherever possible, whilst recognising that the retention or any selective removal of trees shall be subject to tailored management regimes and appropriate mitigation proposals.

Baseline position

The existing baseline position for the site, in the south-east corner, already contains built form, hard surfacing, and an area of disturbed ground within the buffer zone, as shown below.



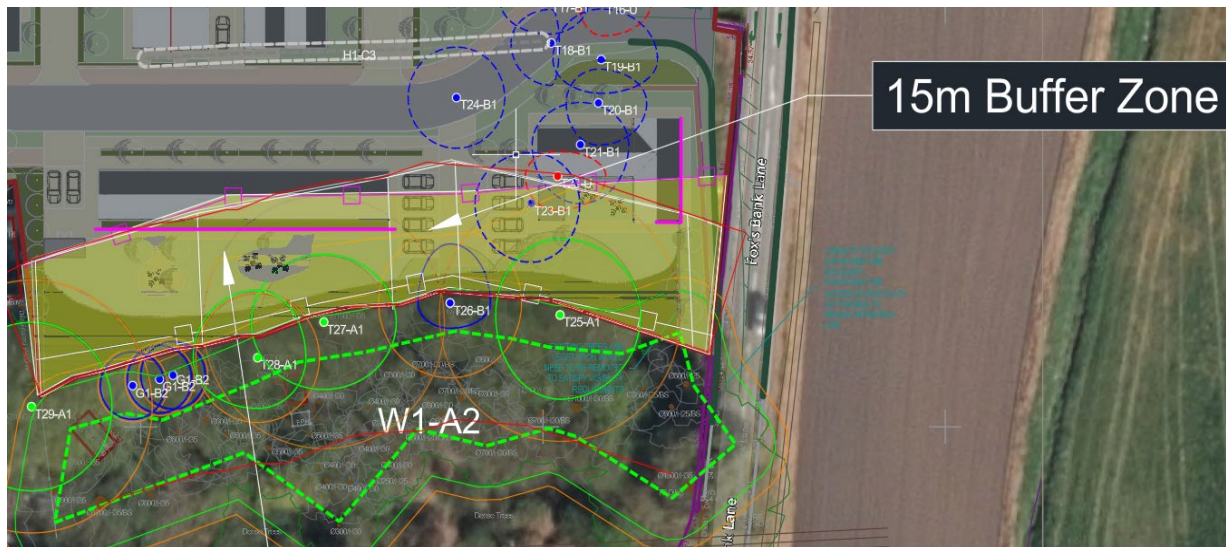
The application does not introduce development into the buffer zone; rather, it reconfigures the baseline position to deliver an improved outcome, ensuring no tree loss and maintaining the buffer zone's integrity through specialist arboricultural techniques, while enhancing the zone's long-term ecological functionality.

Designing for ancient woodland

As a result of the presence of the ancient woodland and the identified buffer zone associated with this designation, changes to the design layout have been made to avoid any loss of the designated woodland and to minimise impacts within the buffer zone. The following changes have been applied to mitigate the presence of ancient woodland are as follows:

In the western parcel buffer zone, the proposed design has managed to exclude all housing proposals and very limited infrastructure proposals.

In the southeast corner parcel, the proposals include housing and access to car parking. The scheme has been designed in this area to minimise housing proximity to the ancient woodland, resulting in an approximate 10 m stand-off distance for the housing proposal. The new surfacing is 4m from the designated area and does not require tree removal, as shown below.



The mitigation proposed for the incursion into the buffer zone is detailed in the supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIAV2) and consists of a Special Measure Area as detailed in BS5837:2012, which will require the following mitigation methods to be secured by way of planning condition:

- Minimising excavations is required in the buffer zone. It is proposed that the use of non-invasive foundations for housing be included to avoid the impact of a standard excavated strip foundation. A detailed engineer's drawing can be used to support an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) to provide the details of a raft and pile foundation arrangement
- No-dig methods for the new surfacing, as detailed in BS5837:2012, will be used to minimise excavation depths. The widely accepted excavation depth for no-dig surfacing is typically around 200-300 mm of existing soil. This exercise will be undertaken using air-spade techniques and an on-site Arboricultural Clerk of Works (AcOW). This technique allows the practical implementation of the scheme to an agreed AMS, thereby avoiding typical construction-related damage to the root systems.
- Secondary placement of tree protection fencing is contained with the AIA to manage the demolition phase and construction phases to avoid plant and machinery movement in the buffer

The total area of the southeast buffer zone is 1,279 SqM. There is broadly no incursion into the westerly zone. The area of the buffer zone in the southeast that remains unaffected is 850 SqM, or 66.5%. This area is proposed for ecological enhancements suited to the presence of ancient woodland. The landscape proposal details a woodland fringe planting immediately adjacent to the designation, including suitable tree species such as Common Spindle and vascular plant species such as snake's head fritillary, devil's bit scabious, and Lambs ear. In addition, wildflowers are proposed between the woodland fringe planting and the housing and new surfacing areas. The wildflower proposal will use Emorsgate seed mix EM4, which can be considered a neutral grassland mix; it includes 21 flowering species. In addition, native tree planting is also proposed.

The proposals in this area allow for the creation of an “eco-tone”, or an area that acts as a transition between ecosystems of great ecological significance. The proposals allow for increased biodiversity compared with the existing baseline. The creation of an eco-tone increases species diversity and improves ecological functionality compared with the existing

baseline, primarily because it includes a mix of proposals relevant to the ancient woodland designation.

Whilst development encroaches into the buffer zone on the southeastern corner, this will not result in the “loss or deterioration” of the ancient woodland, which is the key policy test.

Broadly similar proposals apply to the redevelopment of the western parcel, with woodland/screen fringe and tree planting and neutral grassland habitats all included in the proposed landscape plans.

It is therefore considered that the mitigation for the incursion into the buffer zone is appropriate, given that there is an improvement from the baseline position and that a greater level of ecological enhancement in the buffer is proposed.

The proposals in this area are extracted below.





Baseline position

The existing baseline position for the site, in the south-east corner, already contains built form, hard surfacing, and an area of disturbed ground within the buffer zone. The application does not introduce development into the buffer zone; rather, it reconfigures the baseline position to deliver an improved outcome, ensuring no tree loss and maintaining the buffer zone's integrity through specialist arboricultural techniques, while enhancing the zone's ecological functionality.

Protection of the Ancient Woodland designation during the construction phase

The ancient woodland can be protected during the operational phase by the following means

- The AIA provides details of specialist measures to mitigate construction in the buffer zone, including the erection of a Construction Exclusion Zone to protect trees, with clear and appropriate signage; no-dig surfacing; an invasive foundation for the housing; and the appointment of an AcOW to manage these aspects, with regular reporting to the LPA when works are occurring in this area. In addition, no storage of materials will be allowed within the CEZ areas, and the AMS can specify where excavation is needed. This will be undertaken by air spade to avoid machine-related compaction and the inclusion of temporary ground boarding.
- A Householder Information Pack (HIP) can be provided, as suggested by MEAS in consultation responses, which can be made a suitably worded planning condition.

- It is anticipated that a suitably worded planning condition will be used to secure a Construction Environmental Management Plan CEMP, as recommended in the MEAS consultation documents (dated Thursday 9th April 2026), which will practically manage potential negative effects on the designation, such as ecology and wildlife, dust, waste management, and methods to manage storm water run-off, erosion and pollution to the designation. Hydrology/drainage remains unchanged from the baseline.

Dwelling construction

Starship Hub has a unique approach to dwelling construction, using factory-based ultra-low-energy housing systems that deliver high performance, zero bills, and on-site assembly, enabling significantly shorter build programmes. There are several environmental benefits to this approach, including quick, clean, quiet, and safe construction, with a significant proportion of work completed off-site, reducing noise, disruption, site traffic, congestion, and construction waste. Compared with normal construction techniques, the impacts of these matters will be reduced and reflected in a CEMP.

The Starship hub approach has a significant advantage in foundation design. It has been successfully installed in some of the most challenging environments, for example, from the wooded hillsides at Glentress Forest in Peebles. The designated areas of the ancient woodland are due to be protected by the techniques and recommendations provided in the AIA. In environmentally sensitive and heavily wooded areas, they have utilised concrete-free solutions such as screw piles and RapidRoot foundations to minimise site disturbance. The system can also be connected to driven piles, concrete piles, and traditional shallow trench foundations, providing the LPA with confidence that the AIA recommendations can be achieved.

Conclusions

Natural England is the UK governing body for nature conservation. Their consultation response has raised no objections to the application based on the previous design layout, and prior to the design change that is now proposed to safeguard and improve ecological functionality in the buffer zones. Hydrology/drainage remains unchanged from the baseline.

The proposal will not result in any loss or deterioration of the ancient woodland; instead, an improvement on the baseline position is proposed through the techniques and deliverables outlined in the statement, which can be secured by way of a planning condition.