

Dale Coppice, Lincoln Hill and Oilhouse Management Plan

Date:	1st April 2006	to	31st March 2025
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This management plan is a revision and amalgamation of three management plans adopted by the Trust in 1999 and 2000. These cover Dale Coppice, Lincoln Hill and Oilhouse Coppice, plus Paradise Meadow and Oilhouse Pastures. Woodside Orchard, previously covered by the Oilhouse management plan, has been removed and is considered under a separate management brief. The amalgamation of the three plans has been undertaken to simplify management planning.

This management plan, therefore, covers Dale Coppice, Lincoln Hill, Oilhouse Coppice, Oilhouse pasture and Paradise Meadow, as well as two small, isolated pockets on the western boundary of Lincoln Hill.

The original management plans contain much invaluable information on many aspects of the sites' history, ecology, geology and management and it is not proposed to repeat this in detail here, unless this has a direct bearing on management proposed in this revision.

The management plan covers a 20 year period and will be subject to review every 5 years.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 Location

Nearest town, village or feature	Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale and Madeley (Woodside).
Grid reference	SJ 673 044
Total area (ha)	26.9 ha (66.47 acres): Dale Coppice – 15.5ha (38.30 acres) Lincoln Hill – 5.6 ha (13.84 acres) Oilhouse Coppice – 3.9 ha (9.64 acres) Oilhouse Pastures – 1.9 ha (4.69 acres)
Ownership	999 year lease from the Borough of Telford and Wrekin.
Agreements	eWGS under negotiation Oilhouse Pastures covered by a Countryside Stewardship agreement (01/10/02 – 30/09/12). Single Payment (Oilhouse Pastures and Paradise Meadow, from 2005).
Local Authority	Borough of Telford and Wrekin.
Parish Councils	The Gorge and Madeley Parish Councils.
Designations	Lincoln Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site The Ironbridge Gorge Conservation Area Wildlife Site

1.2 Description of the site in the landscape

The site encompasses broadleaved ancient and secondary semi-natural woodland, semi-improved and unimproved neutral grassland, a small area of heathland and a newly planted willow bed. It is sited on the eastern side of the Coalbrookdale valley and to the west of Woodside, an area of dense housing (See map 1).

The site is on very steep west and north-facing slopes and as such it is very prominent in the landscape. It is a key landscape and wildlife link between the Gorge woodlands and south Telford and Lightmoor, and includes areas of national geological significance.

The site is of regional nature conservation importance due to its size, the mix of woodland stand types, the woodland ground flora and the presence of areas of heathland and neutral grassland. The site is very well used by walkers and has significant historic and cultural significance (e.g. as the site of Richard Reynold's Workmen's Walks and the Rotunda).

1.3 History of Management

The history of management up to 1999 is discussed in detail in the first management plans for this site, approved in March 1999. Since that time, the Trust has undertaken a wide range of activities. These are summarised on Map 4.

The following major land management activities have been implemented in the intervening years:

Compartment 8a

- 1998/99: Selective thinning
- 2000: Japanese knotweed control
- 2001: Rhododendron control
- 2001: Tree surgery and edge coppicing
- 2001: Japanese knotweed control
- 2003: Japanese knotweed control

Compartment 8b

- 2001: Tree surgery and edge coppicing along footpath corridors

Compartment 8e/8f

- 2002: Barrier installed Park Lane entrance

Compartment 8e

- 2003: Planting of willow bed
- 2004: Hand weed of willow bed

Compartment 8f

- 2003: Construction of hedge bank and ditch, all-weather paddock, shelter and compost bin
- 2003: Fencing and installation of gateways' water supply system installed, fence removed and new hedges planted
- 2004: Hedge laying

Compartment 9a

1999: Cut and treat Rhododendron; treat stumps
2000: Rhododendron control
2001: Rhododendron control
2001: Cut hay meadow strip
2002: Remove ragwort from meadow strip
2004: Cut and chip woody re-growth in heathland

Compartment 9b

1999: Opening of viewpoint
1999: Step construction
1999: Installation of 4 wooden bollards and steel rails to deter motorbike entry
1999: Construction of 310m of surfaced footpath
2000: Opening up Cottage site through tree works
2003: Fell and chip willow to recover view of the Wrekin and along Workers Walks
2003: Construction of 4 seats with local community

Compartment 9c/9d

1999: Selective thinning to select best ash stems
2004: Prune re-spaced ash regeneration

Compartment 10a

2002: Erect 12ft post and rail fencing
2003: Tree surgery along Workmen's Walks
2004: Scrub clearance on geological SSSI

Compartment 10b

2000: Land drainage to control discharge from adit
2000: Construction of 55 steps
2002: Repair and reconstruction of haystore
2002: Track repairs
2002: Japanese knotweed control
2003: Japanese knotweed control

Compartment 10c

2001: Clear scrub, stumps and brash
2002: Topping thistles and rank vegetation
2003: Scrub management
2005: Grass cutting

All

2003: Liaison with BTW, police and Madeley Parish re. off-road motorbikes
2001 – 2005: Twice annual footpath inspections and remedial works programmes
2001 – 2005: Tree safety (all site boundaries) – independent tree safety inspections undertaken and appropriate remedial works undertaken on a 3 yearly cycle
2001 – 2005: Structures: annual inspection programme of identified structures and appropriate remedial works programmed.

2. SITE INFORMATION

2.1 Areas and features

2.1.1 Designated Areas/Features	On Site	Map 3 Comment
Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site	√	
Site of Special Scientific Interest	√	Lincoln Hill geological SSSI
Ironbridge Conservation Area	√	
Broseley Conservation Area		
Scheduled Ancient Monument		
Wildlife Site	√	
Regionally Important Geological Site	√	

2.1.2 Priority 1 habitats and species ¹	On Site	Map 3 Site comment
Ancient semi-natural woodland	✓	W8, W10 and W16.
Secondary semi-natural woodland	✓	
Woodland shrubs	✓	Sparse but diverse mix.
Mature trees	✓	Fine specimens of beech
Deadwood	✓	Status not known.
Heathland	✓	One small area.
Unimproved neutral grassland	✓	Small strip adj. Rough Park
	✓	plus Paradise and Oilhouse.
Hedgerow/scrub	✓	Oilhouse pastures and Paradise
Flowering plants	✓	Diverse woodland and
Bryophytes	✓	meadow flora
Mammals	✓	Some impnt wet heath spp.
	✓	Bat and badger records
Invertebrates	✓	Several butterfly and hoverfly
		spp in heathland and grassland
		Relatively species-poor
Birds		
Reptiles and amphibians	✓	No records but good potential
Oak	✓	Frequent in canopy
Large-leaved lime	✓	2 trees, Lincoln Hill
Wild Service-tree	✓	Seedling found 2004 in Lincoln
		Hill; present in Dale Coppice
Spindle	✓	Rare in Lincoln Hill.
Fly honeysuckle	✓	Rare but probably introduced
Violet Helleborine	✓	Last record `92; status not
		known
Royal fern	✓	Last record `96; status not
		known.
Bilberry	✓	W16, Oilhouse Coppice
Adder's-tongue fern	✓	Oilhouse Pasture (`94).
Bird's-foot-trefoil	✓	Frequent, Oilhouse Pasture
Noctule bat	✓	Present 2000; roosts in mature
Common pipistrelle	✓	trees.
Soprano pipistrelle	✓	Present 2000
Bullfinch	✓	Present 2000
Marsh tit	✓	5 pairs 2000.
Yellowhammer	✓	2 pairs 2000
Dingy skipper	✓	Potential on woodland edge
		Small colony on Rough Park
		(recorded 2005).

¹ As determined in the Biological Monitoring and Recording Review (K. Thorne, 2005) – see appendix 1.

Priority 1 habitats and species (continued)	On Site	Map 3 Site comment
White-letter hairstreak Green hairstreak	√ √	Feeds on wych elm. Last seen 1994 in Lincoln Hill; recorded 2004 Lightmoor.
<p>Discussion: The site is an important and diverse complex of ancient and secondary semi-natural woodland and neutral grassland with a small but significant pocket of heathland. The entire complex is complemented by large numbers of mature trees, the majority of which are beech, plus a diverse woodland and grassland flora. Both Dale Coppice and Lincoln Hill have been heavily influenced by tree planting in the past.</p> <p>The woodland areas are generally in good condition² with high proportions of native species and a good ground flora. Woodland NVC communities identified are W8 (ash-maple-dog's mercury), W10 (oak-bracken-bramble), W12 (beech-dog's mercury), W14 (beech-bramble) and W16 (oak-birch-wavy-hair grass).</p> <p>Of the three woods considered in this plan, Oilhouse Coppice is in the best condition. All three, however, have a high a content of sycamore and beech in the canopy and, of greater concern, in the understorey. While it has been suggested that beech should be treated as a native, because it is susceptible to squirrel damage and drought, it should be present as a minor component of the canopy. Developing dense thickets of holly are an added issue in Lincoln Hill and Dale Coppice. In the long-term, management should seek to reduce the abundance of beech, sycamore and holly and to increase the proportions of site-native species such as ash and especially oak.</p> <p>The small area of heathland is continuously being invaded (and regularly cleared) by scrub and rhododendron, while the heather is generally in the degenerate phase with little evidence of regeneration. The continuing management of the scrub is a priority, while heather regeneration should be promoted through scarification of surface litter.</p> <p>The grassland areas at Oilhouse Pastures and Paradise are examples of neutral grassland, a nationally rare and declining resource. An evaluation of them in 2005 showed that they are in good condition and are being maintained by the current management regime.</p>		

2.1.3 Landscape and Geology	On Site	Map 3 Comment
Landscape designated areas Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site	√	
Geological features SSSI/Regionally Important Geological Site	√	Lincoln Hill
Historic landscapes The Gorge Conservation Area	√	Consent required for any tree felling
Areas of the woodland prominent from roads	√	
Areas of the woodland prominent from settlements	√	

² Monitoring of SGCT sites May and June 2005 (K Thorne, 2005)

Landscape and Geology (continued)		
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Discussion: The site is a fundamental part of the Coalbrookdale valley landscape. This dramatic landscape is dominated by sweeping, heavily wooded valley sides, with tree cover extending to the skyline and a valley bottom characterised by a mix of settlement, industry and the railway and its corridor. The physical division and contrast between the wooded slopes and the settled valley bottom is particularly notable here. Oilhouse Coppice is an important link to the more open, fragmented landscape of the Lightmoor area.

Within the woods, views tend to be short and repetitive due to the narrow path corridors and the dense understorey and canopy vegetation. New/enhanced views were created within the wood during the previous plan and these are being maintained. The most spectacular of these is from the Rotunda which offers a superb view of the Iron Bridge, Ladywood and Benthall Edge Wood.

In addition, Lincoln Hill is historically famous for the fossils visible in the Wenlock Series strata. The abundant shelly fauna have been studied for many years (e.g. Murchison studied the geology here in the 1830's), and this is the type locality for a number of fossil groups. While the exposed strata are not within Trust ownership, the entire area of Lincoln Hill is notified as an SSSI.

The viewpoint from the Rotunda is an important point from which it is possible to interpret many of the key geological events that led to the formation of the Severn Gorge.

Geological instability is a significant issue throughout the Gorge and was a major factor in the Trust's selection of Continuous Cover Forestry as its principal silvicultural technique. This position has been endorsed by the Borough Engineers who believe that any significant change in tree cover/woodland management (e.g. the introduction of large-scale coppicing) could have an impact on the stability of the slopes. Any changes to the silvicultural regime should be discussed with them.

2.1.4 Public Access and accessibility	On Site	Map 3 Comment
Open access	√	
Car parking		
Access points	√	25 on site
Public rights of way		
G47	√	Public footpath
G48	√	Public footpath
G49	√	Public footpath
G50	√	Public footpath
G51	√	Public footpath
G52	√	Public footpath
G79	√	Public footpath
G80	√	Public footpath
G83	√	Public footpath
G84	√	Public footpath
G86	√	Public footpath
G87	√	Public footpath
G88	√	Public footpath
M53	√	Public footpath
M54	√	Public footpath
M55	√	Public footpath
M60 /Rough Park Way	√	Bridleway
Viewing point	√	3 including the Rotunda
Permissive footpaths	√	Limited network
Information Boards		
Car parking		None
Benches	√	5 on site
Leaflets and guide books	√	Coalbrookdale walks book Woodland Health Walks SGCT website

Discussion:

This is one of the most heavily visited sites managed by the Trust with large numbers of walkers from Coalbrookdale, Woodside and Ironbridge exploring its extensive network of Public Rights of Way and permissive paths. The only bridleway passing through the site follows the line of Rough Park Way; there is no other horse access through the sites. Altogether, there are 25 access points into the site and these generally entail welcome posts and a stile.

There are sporadic problems with motorbike and bike riding through the woods and stiles have been used to combat this. Many of the paths are waymarked with fingerposts and have been upgraded through the installation of steps. The viewpoint from the Rotunda has also been enhanced, although a wider view towards Buildwas would be beneficial. Access to the site is promoted through the Coalbrookdale walking book and through the Woodlands for Health booklets/website. There is no formal car parking available.

Given its high levels of use and proximity to residential areas, this holding has significant potential for enhanced access that caters for a wide range of physical abilities. The principal challenges to achieving high quality access are the need to prevent illegal motorbike, bike and horse access, as well as the steep terrain. However, a number of measures can be implemented, including additional seating, the installation of handrails adjacent to flights of steps, and the levelling of areas of crossfall on priority routes. The possibility of establishing a reserved disabled parking space should also be investigated. Detailed proposals are set out in the operations map (Map 5).

2.1.5 Archaeological and Cultural Features	On Site	Map 3 Comment
Scheduled monument		
Historical/cultural features		
Alcove seat		Brick lined alcove (adjacent land)
Atlas cedar	✓	Notable tree, Lincoln Hill
Beech trees	✓	Lincoln Hill and southern end Dale Coppice
Cottage site	✓	Location of former cottage
Cowshed	✓	
Rotunda	✓	
Richard Reynold's Sabbath walks	✓	Site of C18 iron and wood seat
Temple site	✓	Early public walks
Charcoal hearths	✓	Site of C18 Doric temple.
Horizontal shaft	✓	
Community seats	✓	5 seats installed 2003.

Discussion: The site has significant archaeological and cultural interest throughout, with many links to its former history.

The current physical nature of the site has been much-influenced by past woodland management, by industry and by a former owner's efforts to provide amenity and landscaped woodland for local people. This, its notable phase of history, occurred in the late 18th Century when Richard Reynolds laid out a series of landscaped pleasure walks for use by the public. These are some of the earliest public walks and are known as the Sabbath (or Workmen's) walks. These were complemented by the installation of seats (e.g. the Rotunda) and the planting of exotics such as atlas cedar and locust tree, plus many mature beech trees.

Because of this association, this site has very great cultural significance, and this was reinforced in 2003 through a community gateway project whereby 5 local groups were involved in designing and building seats in Dale Coppice and Lincoln Hill.

Evidence of former industry can be found in charcoal hearths, plateways and a horizontal shaft/tunnel in Lincoln Hill between Church Road and Paradise.

The many features are highlighted in the archaeological site alert report and maps prepared by IGMT in 1996.

2.1.6 Community significance	On Site	Map 3 Comment
<p>Adjacent communities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Woodside Coalbrookdale Ironbridge</p>		
<p>Discussion: The site has significant value to the near-by local communities, particularly to those people living in Woodside and Coalbrookdale. They are 2 very different communities.</p> <p>Woodside, for example, has the youngest population of any ward in the Borough (31% under the age of 15) and the highest proportion of households with a lone parent and dependent children (almost 1 in 5). Almost 40% of households do not have access to a car. In contrast, in Coalbrookdale almost 9 in 10 households have access to a car; three-quarters own their own home; and, 1 in 5 of the working population is self-employed. Ensuring that the site is well used and enjoyed by all sectors of the community is a key challenge. This will require the creation of stronger links between the Trust and local communities.</p> <p>Amongst the features particularly valued by local people are the good quality network of very varied paths, open spaces, the site's landscape character, the range of habitats and species present and the archaeological and cultural significance of the landholding. In addition, a series of 5 benches designed by local people, and sited in Dale Coppice and Lincoln Hill, are an excellent example of community involvement.</p> <p>The site has significant potential for greater use/enjoyment by the local community through, for example, guided walks, volunteering activities and demonstrations.</p>		

2.1.7 Structures and geotechnical features	On Site	Map 5 Comment
Reference No.	3	✓ Culverts
	4	✓ Culvert headwall
	5	✓ Timber and concrete footbridge
	6	✓ Security fence around reservoir
	7	✓ Drain gulley
	7a	✓ Drain gulley with grid
	8	✓ Gabions
	10	✓ Restored cowshed
	11	✓ Iron grill
	12	✓ Remains of Rotunda
	13	✓ Safety fence
	14	✓ Line of drain
<p>Discussion: These twelve structures are subject to twice-yearly inspection by qualified engineers, and programmes of maintenance, and repairs are undertaken in response to their recommendations. The management of these features is not, therefore, addressed through this management plan.</p>		

2.2 Woodland resource characteristics

The site divides into three principal woodland units, Dale Coppice, Lincoln Hill and Oilhouse Coppice, and these in turn are sub-divided into 10 sub-compartments.

Dale Coppice is an extensive area of ancient semi-natural woodland where planting has taken place alongside or beneath existing native trees. Although there is some evidence of former coppice, the wood is essentially high forest. Some conifers were included in earlier plantings, but these have now all but disappeared.

The wood is, therefore, mixed broadleaf high forest with beech and oak dominating the canopy, plus the occasional sycamore and ash. Other species present include silver birch, sweet chestnut and wild service-tree. The relative abundances of the different species change from north to south as the underlying geology moves from acidic shales to limestone. These are reflected in the NVC communities for this wood, with W10 (oak-bracken-bramble) and W16 (oak-birch-wavy hair-grass) to the north and W8 (ash-maple-dog's mercury) closer to Lincoln Hill in the south. As beech develops within the wood, W12 (beech-dog's mercury) woodland is developing on limestone areas and W14 (beech-bramble) and W15 (beech-wavy hair-grass) on acidic soils.

Although many trees are in the 100 – 150 year age class, Dale Coppice tends to be dense, even-aged woodland. In the understorey, holly is frequent, often forming thickets, with maple, wych elm, hazel, hawthorn, rowan, and honeysuckle widely distributed. Yew is frequent. There is also frequent regeneration of beech and sycamore with ash and birch occasional. There is little oak regeneration.

Lincoln Hill closely resembles the southern end of Dale Coppice and is essentially W8 (ash-maple-dog's mercury) woodland although as beech develops within the wood, W12 (beech-dog's mercury) woodland is becoming established.

Like Dale Coppice, Lincoln Hill is ancient semi-natural woodland where planting has taken place alongside or beneath existing native trees. Much of the mature beech, for example, is believed to have originated from this planting. Much of the woodland is well-stocked with a mixture of even-aged mature broadleaves with oak, beech, sycamore, ash and grey poplar all present, often in locally dominant groups. Oak, ash, sycamore and beech are, nonetheless, the most frequent species throughout. There is also some large-leaved lime (one of Britain's rarer native trees), sweet chestnut, wych elm, cherry, holly, yew, rowan and whitebeam.

In the understorey, ash regeneration is frequent, as is beech and sycamore regeneration. Oak regeneration is, however, scarce. Wych elm, hazel, hawthorn, yew and holly are also frequent, while rowan, spindle and guelder rose are rare.

Oilhouse Coppice is not recorded in the ancient woodland inventory as ancient woodland. However, the number of ancient woodland indicators and the presence of coppice stools on lower ground as well as in the area to the east of a gully that divides the site strongly suggest that these areas are ancient (ie compartments 8a and 8b). To the west of the gully and as the wood links up to Dale Coppice, the wood is secondary.

In the canopy, oak and birch are frequent to the east of the gully and where W16 (oak-birch-wavy hair-grass) woodland is established. Elsewhere, ash and sycamore are more abundant. Beech is rare except in the area of a beech plantation which should be treated as W14 (beech-bramble) woodland.

Canopy trees in all size-classes up to 100cms dbh are frequent. Beech and sycamore are most abundant in the pole stage, with oak, ash and birch occasional and wild service-tree rare. A diverse range of shrubs are found in the understorey, including holly, wych elm, hazel, hawthorn, rowan, honeysuckle, yew, dogwood and guelder rose all present. These are all widespread, except for wych elm, dogwood and guelder rose which are all rare.

2.3 Site description

The entire site is a complex of ancient and secondary semi-natural woodland adjoined by parcels of semi-improved grassland. There is a small area of heathland within Dale Coppice plus two outlying areas of scrub plus a willow bed. The main grassland area, Oilhouse Pastures, is crossed by mature and newly planted hedgerows. While all of Lincoln Hill and most of Dale Coppice are within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, Oilhouse Coppice and Pastures lies just outside.

The site is extremely prominent in the landscape, towering as it does above the eastern side of the Coalbrookdale valley. It is heavily used by the public.

2.4 Significant hazards, constraints and threats

The terrain is exceptionally steep (particularly Lincoln Hill) with flatter areas still very uneven. It is, therefore, a very challenging site on which to work with machinery, and particularly from which to extract timber. The use of specialist extraction systems (e.g. log chutes) and low impact machinery is essential.

The public and permissive footpaths and bridleway that cross the site are very heavily used by the public and anyone working on the site must take this into account in planning and implementing work.

The locations of powerlines and other services are shown on Map 3.

Muntjac, roe and fallow deer are present in the woods. Though their numbers are not currently significant, the Trust will implement a series of preventative measures such as using mesh fencing and tree guards during all restocking operations. Otherwise, the Trust will continue to monitor levels of damage and will keep this strategy under constant review.

Fire is a threat on the small heathland area and a fire safety plan has been developed in consultation with the fire brigade.

Tree safety is a particular issue, especially given the large number of people walking in the woods and the number of adjoining roads and houses. Regular inspections are undertaken and recommendations implemented.

Motorbikes, bikes and horses are occasionally ridden along paths and up woodland slopes, presenting a significant hazard to other woodland users. This activity is strongly discouraged and in response, the Trust has adopted a variety of strategies. These include liaison with the police, erecting chestnut pale fencing and specially designed gateways.

A number of structures (e.g. retaining walls) associated with the area's former history are found on the site and these are marked on Map 3. These are subject to regular, detailed inspections by engineers. Their management is undertaken in response to these inspections and is, therefore, outside the scope of this management plan.

3. LONG TERM VISION, MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

3.1 Long term vision

The site is to be managed for the benefit of local people and visitors to the Severn Gorge. To this end, management will ensure that the site:

- Continues to offer high quality public access along paths that are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible within the constraints of the site.
- Retains its landscape character of sweeping broadleaved woodland and open grassland.
- Retains enhanced areas/populations of all priority 1 habitats and species.
- Retains all historical and cultural features.
- Continues to be used and enjoyed by local communities.

Management will be based around low-impact methodologies, including Continuous Cover Forestry as the principal silvicultural technique.

The Trust is committed to management of its land in compliance with the UKWAS standard, as is demonstrated by its adherence to the best practice procedures applied throughout the site.

3.2 Management Objectives

No	Objective
1	Maintain and enhance all priority 1 habitats and species.
2	Maintain and enhance all public and permissive rights of way.
3	Maintain all features of historical and cultural significance.
4	Conserve and maintain landscape character.
5	Maintain and enhance features that enable the local community to enjoy and use the site.

3.3 Strategy

The Trust's strategy is based upon an integrated approach to site management, where woodland and grassland management is combined with high quality public access, nature conservation, and archaeology and landscape outputs.

The site is divided into two principal landscape types, woodland and grassland. Of these, the woodland is to be managed under Continuous Cover Forestry with the aim being to transform all stands into mixed size and mixed broadleaf species. Locally native species will be favoured in the long-term with a particular focus on reducing the proportions of beech and sycamore in the canopy and understorey, and of increasing the proportions of scarcer native trees and shrubs such as oak, small and large-leaved lime and wild-service.

The grassland areas known as Paradise Meadow, Oilhouse Pastures and the narrow strip adjacent to Rough Park will be managed as a mix of pasture, hay meadow and scrubby grassland to optimise their value for grassland plants and invertebrates.

Elsewhere, a particular effort will be made to maximise the value of areas of small but significant semi-natural habitats. These include hedgerows, scrub and the small heathland area in Dale Coppice. This last area will benefit from coppicing and thinning of the woodland along its northern boundary to reduce the degree to which it is shaded.

4. MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS/OPERATIONS

4.1 Silvicultural systems

4.1.1 Harvesting

Over the next 20-year period, the principal silvicultural system applied by the Trust will be Continuous Cover Forestry. The intention with this approach is to create an intimate mixed age and mixed species woodland.

The site is divided into ten compartments (in line with the Trust's original Woodland Grant Scheme agreement) and these will each be treated similarly. Thinning of the woods will take place on a 15-year cycle, aiming to transform stands to mixed size and mixed species over two or three thinning cycles. Each compartment will be sub-divided into smaller blocks to reduce the overall

impact of the work. Oak, ash, birch and cherry should be favoured during thinning, retaining reduced proportions of sycamore and beech. Standing and fallen deadwood should be retained in-situ where this does not compromise site safety. Where seeding-age sycamore is present in poor quality stands, fell and treat stumps in line with Trust's policy on the use of synthetic chemicals. Best quality sycamore stems will be grown on for approximately 60-80 years before removing during the on-going thinning cycle.

A 15 metre-wide strip in Compartment 9a, along the northern boundary of the heathland areas will be coppiced and heavily thinned to reduce shading. This will be re-coppiced on an 8-16 year cycle.

Timber harvesting will involve the use of low-impact working systems such as log chutes, horse or mini-forwarder, as appropriate.

Throughout these operations, management will be informed by the Trust's Site Alert System and by the five-yearly Condition Assessment process, as well as taking account of the area's landscape character. Wherever possible on safety grounds, paths and trails will be kept open whenever work is underway and the public kept informed. This will be through notices posted on site, local newsletters and the Trust's website.

4.1.2 Establishment, restocking and regeneration

Where possible, heavily thinned and recently felled areas will be restocked with natural regeneration and will favour oak, ash, birch and any other locally native trees (particularly small and large-leaved lime and wild-service) and woody shrubs to match species to NVC communities. If necessary, natural regeneration will be supplemented with planting of the same species, protecting young trees in tree shelters and with mulch mats. Regeneration of sycamore and beech will be monitored and, if necessary, controlled through the implementation of the Trust's policy on the use of synthetic chemicals.

4.2 Other operations

If resources become available, a major access project will be implemented in Lincoln Hill. This will provide high quality access to the Rotunda (marked on map 5) and will entail changing the design of an entry point (possibly including a disabled access parking space, levelling out cross-fall, reinforcing path edges, installing additional seats and erecting an interpretation panel.

In addition, the Trust will upgrade the popular path from Church Road (see map 5).

4.3 Protection and maintenance

4.3.1 Pest and disease management

The Trust has adopted a deer management strategy (May 2005) and will apply this to this site. The site also support populations of grey squirrels and, while they do not currently cause significant damage to the trees here, this will be kept under continuous review and a control programme will be implemented if necessary.

4.3.2 Fire plan

Fire has not been a problem on the heathland in Dale Coppice but is always a possibility. Fire beaters will be used to extinguish any fire.

4.3.3 Waste disposal and pollution

The Trust has a policy (adopted May 2005) relating to the use of biodegradable lubricants. As well as continuing to apply this policy, the Trust will minimise its use of plastics, tree tubes and planting bags and, where their use is unavoidable, will dispose of them in a responsible manner in line with current best practice.

4.3.4 Protection from unauthorised activities

Motorbike and bike riding, flytipping and general littering are issues on this site and the Trust's underlying philosophy is to respond to such problems promptly. Flytipping and general littering are to be dealt with via a standing contract with a local contractor, while motorbike and bike riding are addressed on a case-by-case basis. Wherever possible, the police are involved but if a problem persists, the Trust will erect appropriate motorbike and bike-proof barriers, taking care to ensure that they do not undermine the Trust's aim of providing high quality access for all for quiet, informal recreation on foot. There is no evidence of illegal horse access away from the bridleway.

4.4 Grassland, heathland and pond management

4.4.1 Grassland management

The site contains three distinct grassland components. These are Paradise Meadow, Oilhouse Pastures and a thin strip of unimproved grassland on Rough Park.

Paradise Meadow is an area of limestone grassland and scrub on the western boundary of Lincoln Hill. Until 2002, it had been neglected for many years. Since that time, management has sought to restore species-rich grassland. Initially, in the absence of livestock, management has focused on twice-yearly flail cutting of the grassland to control vigorous species (one cut in late March and a second in mid-August). Once control of the vigorous species has been achieved, the intention is to manage this area as a hay meadow by cutting, baling and removing grass cuttings. At this time, it will be important to lightly harrow the field in the autumn.

Oilhouse Pastures is an area of semi-improved and unimproved neutral grassland (MG5/MG6) adjacent to the eastern boundary of Oilhouse Coppice, on a north-facing slope. The site was divided up into four fields in 2002 to facilitate better control of grazing pressure. One field includes an all-weather surface and horse shelter to facilitate winter grazing, while another contains scattered scrub and a dense bramble brake. The entire complex is surrounded by newly planted hedges (planted 2002).

Because of the difficulty of obtaining cattle or sheep to graze the fields, the fields are grazed extensively, year round, by two horses. The aim is to create a mosaic of long and short vegetation, but always ensuring that grassland plants are able to flower and set seed through careful management of the four fields. By the end of the growing season, the year's grass growth should have been eaten off.

The grassland strip on the eastern boundary of Dale Coppice is mown annually between the 3rd week of July and the end of August and cuttings removed as bales. This management should continue with the addition of a light annual harrow and autumn cut.

4.4.2 Heathland management

Dale Coppice contains an important area of heathland. This covers about 1 hectare and includes species such as bilberry, heather, and wavy hair-grass. It also contains small numbers of royal fern.

Management should aim to maintain heather across some 80% of the site and to manage this so that all growth stages are present. This will be achieved by promoting heather regeneration through the scarification and clearance of the litter layer to promote the development of young heather seedlings. If this is unsuccessful, alternative means of bringing in heather seed should be investigated.

Management must also concentrate on removing colonising scrub. This will be achieved by cutting and treating stumps in line with the Trust's policy on the use of synthetic chemicals and on reducing the extent to which heathland areas are shaded. This should be undertaken annually.

Reduced shading will be achieved through the removal of shade-bearing trees on the northern boundary of the heathland area as part of thinning regimes and by establishing a coppicing. Regenerating broadleaves in a 15 metre wide band will be managed as coppice on an 8-16 year cycle with the intention of keeping shading to a minimum. The aim must be to create hot, sunny clearings where heathland plants, insects (e.g. green hairstreak butterfly) and reptiles, particularly adders, can thrive.

4.4.3 Pond management

There are no ponds within this complex.

4.4.4 Willow bed management

The willow bed was established in 2003 and should be coppiced on a 6-8 year cycle

4.5 Management of key features

4.5.1 Management of designated areas and protected species

This new management plan will require English Nature's consent to implement as it encompasses Lincoln Hill SSSI. All tree felling proposals within the World Heritage Site will require the approval of the local authority.

4.5.2 Measures to enhance biodiversity

The site contains a number of Priority 1 habitats and species, and measures will be adopted to enhance their status. In particular, general woodland management operations such as thinning and restocking will favour native trees and shrubs and there will be a general presumption to retain standing and fallen deadwood where this does not contradict site safety objectives. Thinning and re-stocking operations will also be an opportunity to reduce the presence of non-natives such as sycamore and beech, and to reduce the prevalence of holly and yew as well as the small quantities of Rhododendron in the understorey. Throughout the site, a number of mature trees will be retained as future veterans

The area of heathland and its associated species (heather, bilberry, adder, slow-worm, grass snake and green hairstreak), the hedgerows and semi-improved grassland areas will all be safeguarded through the implementation of programmes outlined in 4.4 above.

4.5.3 Special measures for ASNW and SNW

The general approach to woodland management outlined in 3.3 above will ensure that the semi-natural character of ancient and secondary woodland areas is maintained and enhanced. In particular, measures to favour native species during thinning and restocking operations will ensure that the woods retain their distinctive stand types.

Continuous Cover Forestry, by maintaining shaded woodland across much of this landholding, will favour the development of shade-tolerant species, particularly sycamore and beech. These species will be selected against during thinning operations, while site-native species will be favoured during restocking programmes.

4.5.4 Archaeology and sites of cultural interest

Features of archaeological and cultural interest will be safeguarded through the Trust's site alert system.

4.5.5 Public access

The Public Rights of Way and permissive paths present on the site are shown on Map 3. The Trust will continue to keep these clear of encroaching vegetation through regular cutting regimes and will continue to maintain/upgrade infrastructure and signage to ensure that the wood is accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. Programmes of work will be developed on the basis of an Accessibility Audit to be undertaken in 2006.

In addition, the Trust will continue to enhance the viewpoint at the Rotunda (e.g. installation of interpretation panel and seat, path levelling plus further opening of the view towards the powerstation) and will continue to maintain viewpoints in Dale Coppice. This will be achieved through further thinning/coppicing work.

In addition to the Trust's 'Welcome' posts at the boundary of the site, a single information board is proposed for the Rotunda.

4.5.6 Landscape and geology

The external view of a heavily wooded gorge will be maintained through the retention of broadleaved woodland across Lincoln Hill, Dale Coppice and Oilhouse Coppice. These will be complemented through the retention of open grassland and scrub/hedgerows in Paradise Meadows, Oilhouse Pastures and the Lincoln Hill outliers. Small-scale woodland working will ensure that the broad sweep of woodland is retained.

Internally, the viewpoint from the Rotunda, from The Beeches and from the upper slopes of Dale Coppice will be kept open, while thinning operations and coppicing around the heath will diversify woodland structure.

4.5.7 Community significance

The programmes of management proposed in this plan will ensure that the features valued by the local community will be retained and enhanced. In particular, the retention of woodland and grassland areas will retain the site's landscape character, while continuing programmes to maintain and enhance access will ensure that people will be able to access the site for quiet, informal recreation. Given the high proportion of pensioner households in both communities, enhanced access provision (e.g. installing benches and levelling paths) is a priority.

4.5.8 Structures and geotechnical features

The management of the structures is addressed through the Structures and Geotechnical Features Action Plan, reviewed twice-yearly.

5. CONSULTATION

Organisation/individual	Comment	Response/action
General public/neighbours		
Barrow Parish Council		
Borough of Telford and Wrekin		
Bridgnorth District Council		
BTCV		
The Gorge Parish Council		
Green Wood Centre		
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust		
Madeley Parish Council		
Shropshire County Council		
Shropshire Wildlife Trust		
Sutton Maddock Parish Council		

6. MONITORING PLAN SUMMARY

Objective number, issue or UKWAS Requirement	Indicator	Method of assessment	Monitoring period	Responsibility	How will information be used
1, Priority 1 habitats and species	Habitats and populations maintained or enhanced	5-yearly condition assessment; annual checks on key species	See left	Contractor	Feedback into management planning.
2, Public access	Paths clear and well-maintained	Inspection	Twice yearly	Contractor	Feedback into management planning.

4, Landscape character	Character outlined in 2.1.3 maintained	Fixed location photography from external viewpoints	Every 10 years	SGCT	Feedback into management planning.
5, Community significance	Community use and enjoyment continues and is enhanced.	Informal feedback on site, during events and through phone calls	On-going	SGCT	Feedback into management planning.
6, Structures	Structures safe	Visual inspection by engineer	Twice yearly	Contractor	Feedback in to Structures and Geotechnical features management plan.

7. WORK PROGRAMMES

7.1 Outline long-term work programme (2006 to 2025)

Compartment or area	Activity	Year		
		2006-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020
8a	Thinning and restocking		*	
8b	Thinning and restocking	*		
	Rhododendron control	*	*	*
8c	Thinning and restocking	*		
8d	Thinning and restocking	*		
8e	Coppice	(*)	(*)	
8f (grassland)	Graze	*	*	*
8f (hedges)	Lay		*	
9a	Thinning and restocking	*		
9a (heathland)	Cut and treat encroaching scrub	*	*	*
	Scarify litter layer	*	*	*
	Coppice 15m band	*	(*)	(*)
9a (hay meadow)	Summer and autumn cuts; autumn harrow	*	*	
9a	Surface path to Rough Park	*		
9b	Thinning and restocking			2027
	Resurface path from Church Road	*		
9c	Thinning and restocking			*
9d	Thinning and restocking			*
10a	Thinning and restocking			2028
	Open viewpoint at Rotunda, install info panel and bench, level path	*		

7.1 (Continued) Outline long-term work programme (2006 to 2025)

10b	Thinning and restocking			2028
10c	Coppice scrub on 8-16 year cycle	*	*	*
	Top grassland twice/year	*		
	Cut hay late summer and autumn, autumn harrow		*	*
Viewpoints	Coppice/thin to maintain	*	*	*
Paths	Clear encroaching vegetation and maintain surfaces and furniture	*	*	*
Structures	Manage through structures and geotechnical features plan	*	*	*
Access points	Keep clear and maintain	*	*	*
Tree safety	Inspect all trees close to roads, paths and houses on three year cycle	*	*	*

7.2 Short-term work programme (2006 to 2010)

Compartment or area	Activity ³	Year				
		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/2011
8b	Thinning and restocking		*			
	Rhododendron control	As required	As required	As required	As required	As required
8c	Thinning and restocking		*			
8d	Thinning and restocking		*			
8e	Coppice				As required	As required
8f (grassland)	Graze	*	*	*	*	*
9a	Thinning and restocking		*			
9a (heathland)	Cut and treat encroaching scrub	As required	As required	As required	As required	As required
	Scarify litter layer	As required	As required	As required	As required	As required
	Coppice 15m band		*			
9a (hay meadow)	Summer and autumn cuts; autumn harrow	*	*	*	*	*
9a	Surface path to Rough Park	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow
8b	Resurface path from Church Road	*				
10a	Open viewpoint at Rotunda, install info panel and bench, level path	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow	As funds allow

³ See operations map 5

7.2 (continued) Short-term work programme (2006 to 2010)

Compartment or area	Activity ⁴	Year				
		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/2011
10c	Coppice scrub on 8-16 year cycle	As required	As required	As required	As required	As required
	Top grassland twice/year	*	*	*	*	*
Viewpoints	Coppice/thin to maintain	As required	As required	As required	As required	As required
Paths	Clear encroaching vegetation and maintain surfaces and furniture	*	*	*	*	*
Structures	Manage through structures and geotechnical features plan	*	*	*	*	*
Access points	Keep clear and maintain	*	*	*	*	*
Tree safety	Inspect all trees close to roads, paths and houses on three year cycle	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)

⁴ See operations map 5

8. MAPS

List all maps here and append to plan.

Map No./Title	Description
1	Site location: 1:25,000 showing location, settlements, roads, SSSIs, World Heritage Site and Conservation Area boundaries, SGCT holdings and Parish and Local Authority boundaries.
2	Unmodified OS map: 1:5,000.
3	Features: 1:5,000 location of paths, public access points, public parking, viewpoints, archaeological and cultural features plus location of key habitats/species, plus neighbouring landowners.
4	History of management: 1:5,000 summary of management in previous 5-year plan.
5	Operations: 1:5,000 compartments, timber storage areas, extraction routes, access and parking points and management summary for 5 year period.

9. Bibliography

- Boardman, P (2005) *Butterfly survey at Severn Gorge Countryside Trust sites – 2005.*
- Borough of Telford and Wrekin (2003) *Borough of Telford and Wrekin census profiles, 1991 – 2001.*
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- Forestry Commission (2003) *The management of semi-natural woodlands: practice guides*
- Hooke, D (1998) *The historic land use and cultural landscape of the Ironbridge and Coalbrookdale area: a study for the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust.*
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- Mayle, B (1999) *Managing deer in the countryside, Forestry Commission Practice Guide.*
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- Price, A & Warnock, S (1998) *Severn Gorge Landscape Assessment.*
- Thorne, K (2005) *Collation of biological data and a framework for monitoring in the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust sites, volumes 1 and 2.*
- Thorne, K (2005) *Monitoring of SGCT sites May and June 2005.*

Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (1999)	<i>Dale Coppice Management Plan.</i>
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (2000)	<i>Lincoln Hill Management Plan.</i>
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (1999)	<i>Oilhouse Coppice management plan.</i>
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (2001)	<i>SGCT management plans: summary of plans and opportunities.</i>
Watson, W (1999)	<i>Survey and management assessment of ponds and hollows at Oilhouse Coppice, Coalbrookdale.</i>
Willoughby, I (2004)	<i>Reducing pesticide use in forestry, Forestry Commission Practice Guide.</i>

10. Appendices

1. Definition and monitoring of Priority 1 habitats and species.

Priority 1 habitats and species are defined as those that are of conservation concern in the Gorge, and that can be influenced by the Trust's management of its landholding. Examples include unimproved neutral grassland and adder.

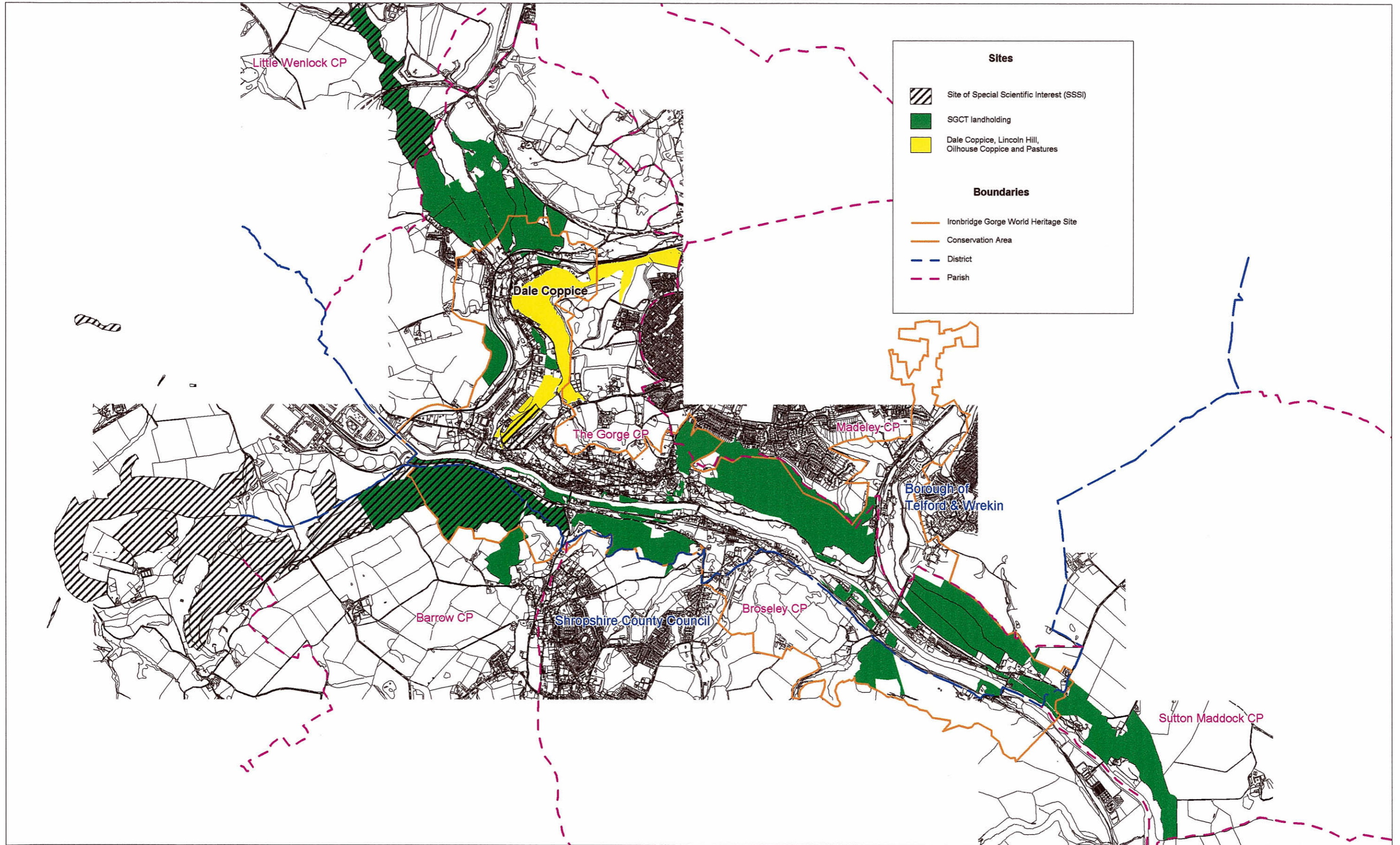
The selection of priority 1 habitats and species was undertaken in 2005 by an independent ecological consultant who undertook a review of all of the known sources of biological data held about the Gorge, and included contact with County Recorders, the Wildlife Trust, biological record offices and recording groups.

By comparing the data compiled through this review with information on the conservation status of each habitat and species (by reference to BTO data, Red Data Books, Biodiversity Action Plans, etc), and by considering the known management requirements of each of these, it was possible to come to a view not only of which species and habitats are of conservation concern, but also which of these should be a priority because their status can be influenced by the Trust's management. These are the Trust's Priority 1 habitats and species.

Monitoring of these habitats and species is a key component of the Trust's programmes, and follows two basic approaches: the 'condition' of key habitats is monitored on a five-yearly cycle, while key species are monitored annually.

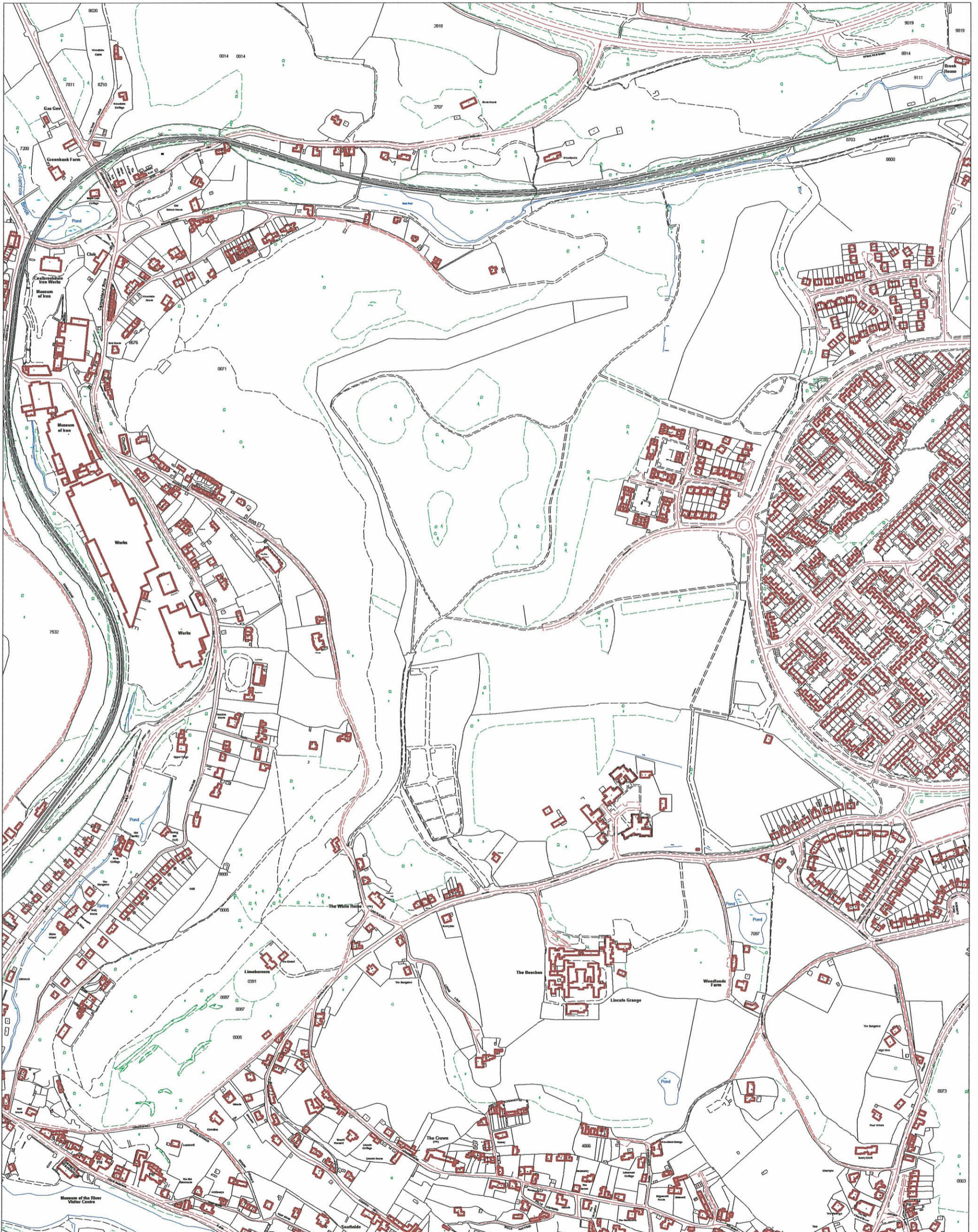
Map 1: Site location

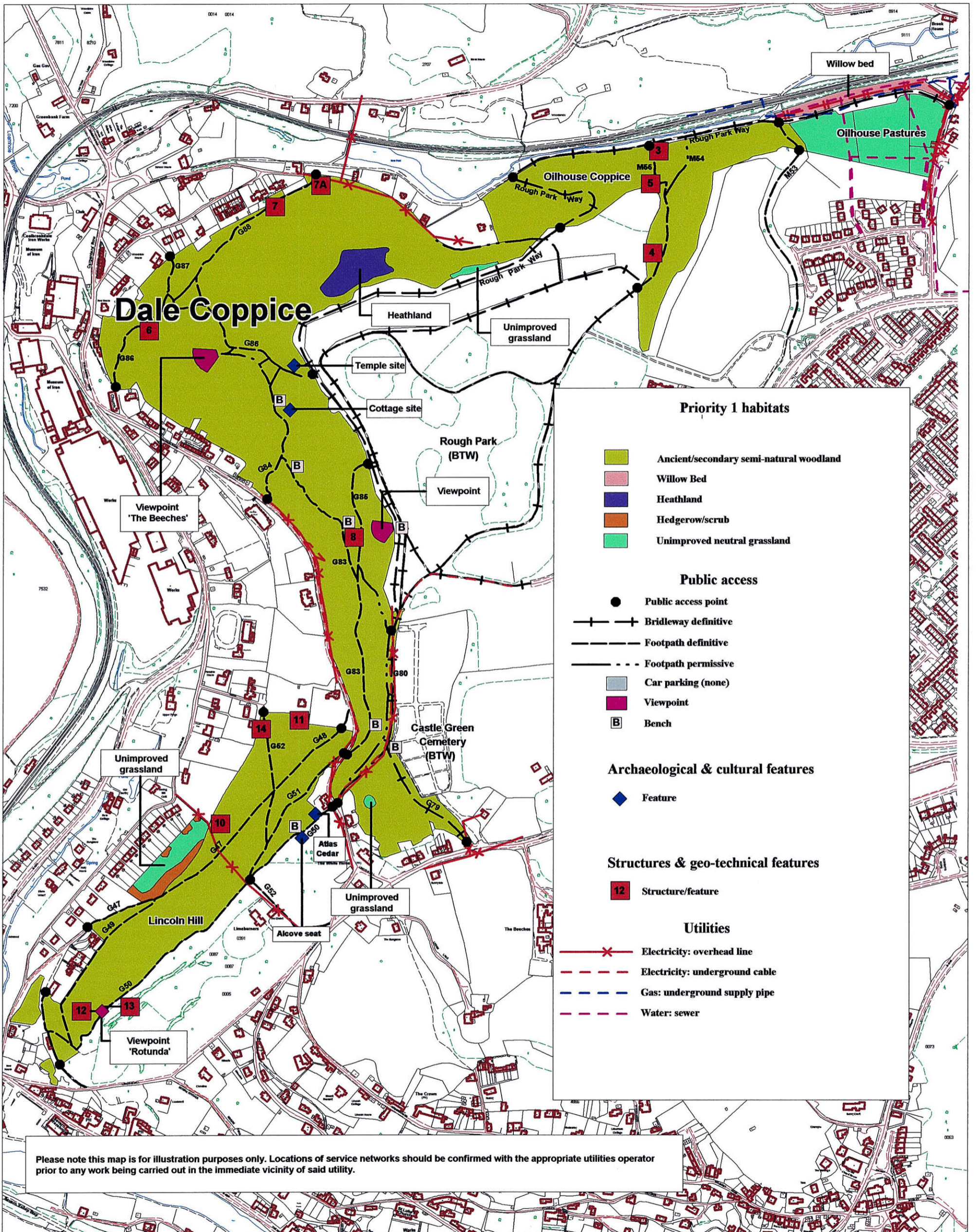
Scale 1:25000



Map 2: Unmodified OS map

Scale 1:5000





Please note this map is for illustration purposes only. Locations of service networks should be confirmed with the appropriate utilities operator prior to any work being carried out in the immediate vicinity of said utility.

Map 4: History of management

Scale 1:5000

