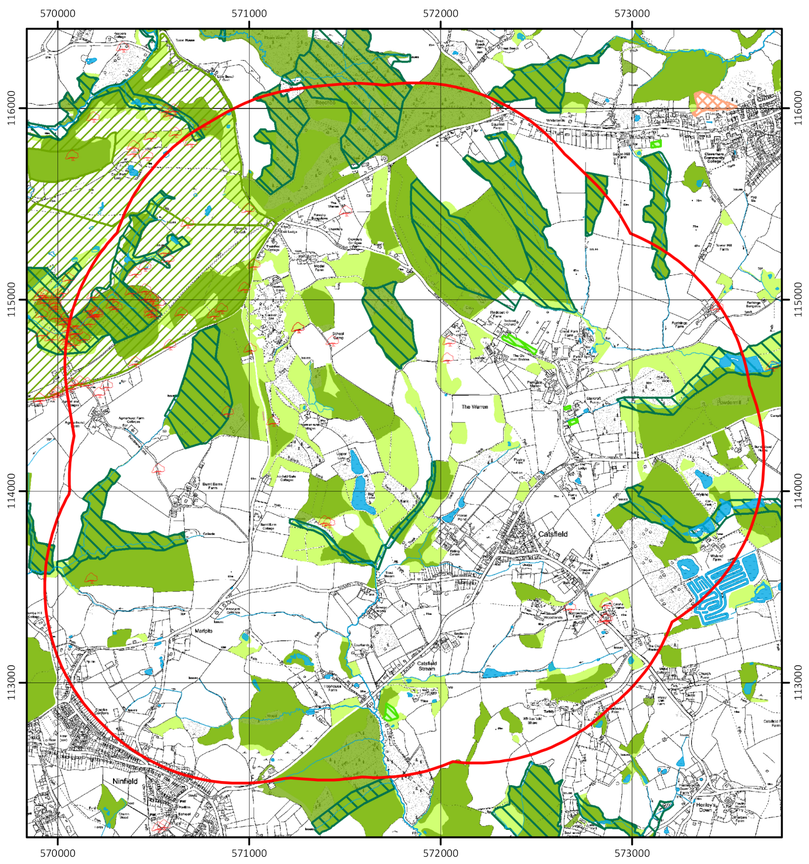
7. CONSERVING, PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THE ESTATE



RECONNECTING AND EXPANDING WOODLANDS:

Larger integrated and connected woodlands hold more biodiversity than small isolated scraps and residues. The scheme provides an opportunity to create extensive new woodlands in locations where they will better connect existing blocks. This will promote expansion and interchange of species, especially woodland specialists that find it hard to spread and disperse such as ancient woodland flowers.

TREE MANAGEMENT:

The varied and diverse woodland is a significant feature of the site and one to be treated as an asset. There will also inevitably be some tree loss incurred due to the nature of construction and development. What must be balanced and considered is: the protection of ancient woodland alongside significant and healthy trees; the removal of invasive or diseased specimens; and the replanting of native woodland to mitigate for any tree loss in the long term. It is proposed that through active management and controlled development the loss of trees will not impact the arboreal quality of the estate and viable development can help secure the long-term future of the protected ancient woodland and other habitats.

TACKLING THE ESTATE'S RHODODENDRON PROBLEM:

While rhododendrons in flower are undeniably pretty, this is such an invasive species and so damaging to native woodlands that it has been included on a list of species that it is now against the law to plant or spread in the wild. Many of the woodlands at Normanhurst, and particularly the non-ancient woodlands impacted by the Great Storm of 1987, have been heavily invaded. The scheme will implement a management plan including a gradual control and eradication strategy for rhododendron, progressively returning these woodlands to their former diversity and glory.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE THROUGH NATURAL REGENERATION:

In some places where an immediate landscape effect is important or desirable, active planting of new and expanded woodlands will form part of the scheme. In many others, however, there is scope to employ a 'rewilding' approach by fencing out grazing animals and deer and letting nature take its course. Windborne seed and the site's populations of jays and squirrels will rapidly create woodlands of precisely the right balance of species in these places, with minimal intervention needed. In their interim phases they will provide rewilded scrub and tall grassland habitats, with consequent benefits for a large range of flora and fauna.

NEW AND RESTORED WETLANDS:

Protected species inhabit some of the existing lakes and to mitigate and compensate for any effects on them via the restoration of these features, new lakes and ponds will be dug and existing ones restored and enhanced, creating a net increase and wider diversity of wetland habitats.

TRAVEL AND ACCESS:

The development proposals have been subject to detailed Transport Assessment and discussion with the local highway authority. This includes consideration of traffic impacts on the local roads (supported by traffic counts undertaken outside school holidays) at the A271 / Catsfield Road junction and the A269 junction in Ninfield. Traffic flows from the site are expected to be modest and reflect the proposed leisure usage.

New access junctions will be designed to ensure they meet the necessary standards in terms of visibility splays and capacity.

The application will include a Travel Plan to set out initiatives to reduce car borne travel including use of local buses and Liftshare strategies. The site is also clearly accessible by foot and cycle for more local access by staff.

IN NUMBERS:

349	Average number of journeys per day to the estate
475	Maximum number of journeys per day
5000	Current maximum number of journeys on Catsfield Road
9.5%	Development flows will be less than 10% of current traffic levels and will have no material impact on highway congestion or safety

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY:

The scheme will provide for the enhancement and improvement of existing networks of public rights of way across the site. In particular the integrity of the 1066 way will be maintained and improved. No vehicular access along it for new development traffic will be allowed. There will need to be two carefully designed crossing points over the 1066 for service and other vehicles. These will ensure that priority of use remains with the users, pedestrians and horses on the 1066 way.

THE NORMANHURST ESTATE

A team of specialist consultants have been assembled to investigate, analyse and ultimately advise on the various ecological environmental and hydrological constraints found on the estate.

For the development of the land to be successful it must be ensured that the special conditions of Normanhurst are conserved and where possible enhanced. Utilising the results of in depth surveys and reports the team has been able to design a scheme which can address this particular task successfully. A number of images and examples from these reports are illustrated above and will be submitted as part of any planning application.

1 A habitat survey completed to inform design parameters; Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre for Bioscan
2 An example specimen tree on site to be protected
3 Great spotted woodpecker; a species present on site - habitats will be protected and expanded
4 Tawny owl; a species present on site - habitats will be protected and expanded