

Project

Following the successful purchase by Ide Parish Council of Weir Meadow and the Northern Fields in 2022, plans have been evolving for a new community woodland on the Northern Fields.

The primary objectives of the project are:

- To create a diverse and accessible community woodland that can be enjoyed by all ages.
- To create a seating area to view the sports pitch below.
- To create a path that is as accessible as reasonably possible.
- To create a woodland that is resilient to future climate change.
- To preserve key views for the community to enjoy e.g. St Ida's Church.
- To create a diverse woodland that will benefit wildlife.

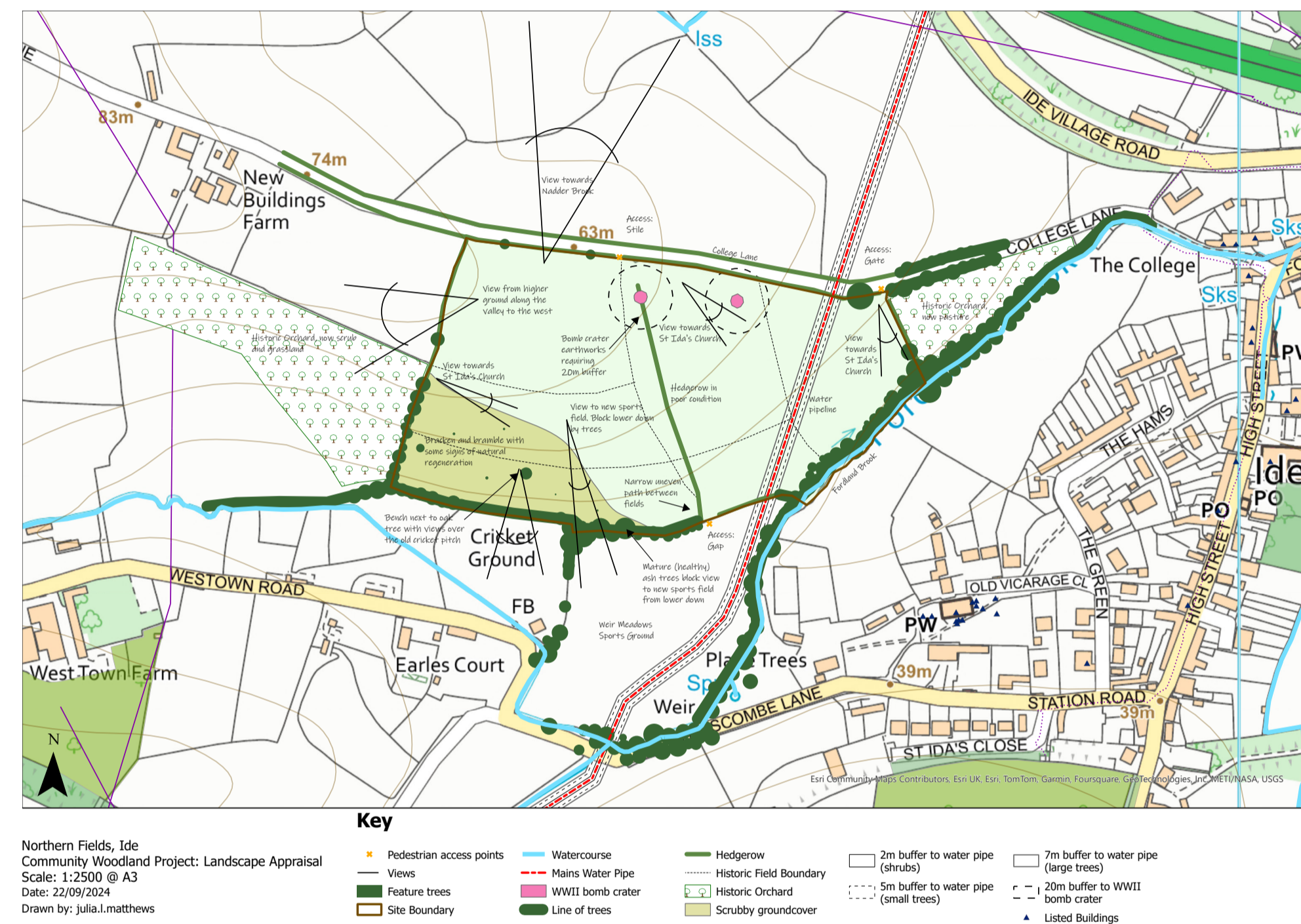


Fig.1 Landscape Appraisal

Existing Site

The 17 acres/7 hectares of the Northern Fields is on sloping ground between Weir Meadow and College Lane. The surrounding land is predominantly farmland with fragments of deciduous woodland and traditional orchards. Towards the west, along the Fordland Brook valley, woodland dominates the landscape with a mix of deciduous, conifer and ancient and semi-natural woodland. The Northern Fields present an opportunity to extend woodland habitat along the Brook and introduce woodland into a less wooded area.

The plan above shows the key considerations that have been taken into account when designing the new woodland. Of note are the two World War II bomb crater earthworks in the north of the site that were mapped by the Devon County Historic Environment Records. These have become filled in over time but below ground archaeological features may survive. Therefore a 20m unplanted buffer has been recommended, which will provide open space and a viewpoint from within the woodland.

There is a rough grassland and scrub area, known as Oak Bank, where a few oak sapling have established themselves. There are also some fantastic views of St Ida's Church and along the valley to the west.



Fig.2 Artists Impression of the Existing Site

Process & Planning

In April 2024 we submitted a Stage 1 Woodland Creation Planning Grant Application to the Forestry Commission (FC), which was to determine if the site was suitable for woodland creation. After meeting with our local FC Woodland Creation Officer, in July 2024, we heard that our stage 1 application had been successful and we were given the go ahead to move on to Stage 2.

We are now in the process of completing our Stage 2 application for which we need to submit a Woodland Design Plan that is compliant with the UK Forestry Standard. This consultation is part of that process.

We have engaged a local Landscape Architect who specialises in woodland creation schemes, Julia Matthews, to carry out this work.

Once the Stage 2 application is submitted in early November, we expect to hear back in Spring 2025 as to its success. Following this we will then explore our options for funding, with a view to hopefully start planting in the Winter of 2025/26.



Fig.3 View south from the top of Northern Fields



Fig.4 View of Northern Fields from Weir Meadow



Fig.5 Concept Design

Concept Design

The proposed design consists of mainly deciduous woodland with some areas of mixed woodland where the conifers will provide diverse texture and winter colour. Through these woodland blocks a path weaves its way around the site to form a circular walk following the contours of the slope. Along the path, there are seats at key viewpoints and play features. Other grass paths will naturally create themselves in areas that have been left open for views or utilities. There are woody shrubs along the edges of much of the woodland and paths to provide additional habitat and create a feathered edge to the woodland.

Across the site there are small areas of orchard trees where lower density planting is needed to retain a view. These also provide a reference to the historic orchards that have been lost in the adjacent fields. The design includes a number of 'groves' where trees will be planted with wider spacing to fully show their splendour. Oak Bank has been left for natural regeneration, to continue providing valuable habitat for moths, butterflies and insects.

Open space has been left to preserve historical features (WWII bomb craters) in the north of the site and to provide a viewing area for the sports field below.



Fig.7 Examples of some of the tree species we plan to plant

Tree Species

We hope to plant a diverse and resilient woodland that will survive for generations to come. Using a combination of Forestry Commission ecological site classification tools, and extensive knowledge within the Northern Fields project working group, we will plant a mix of native broadleaf trees and some underused tree species such as cricket bat willow, London plane, Monterey pine, tulip tree, Atlantic cedar and red oak.

The trees will need protecting from deer while they establish. This will be done using a mix of deer fencing and tree tubes that will be recycled as far as possible.

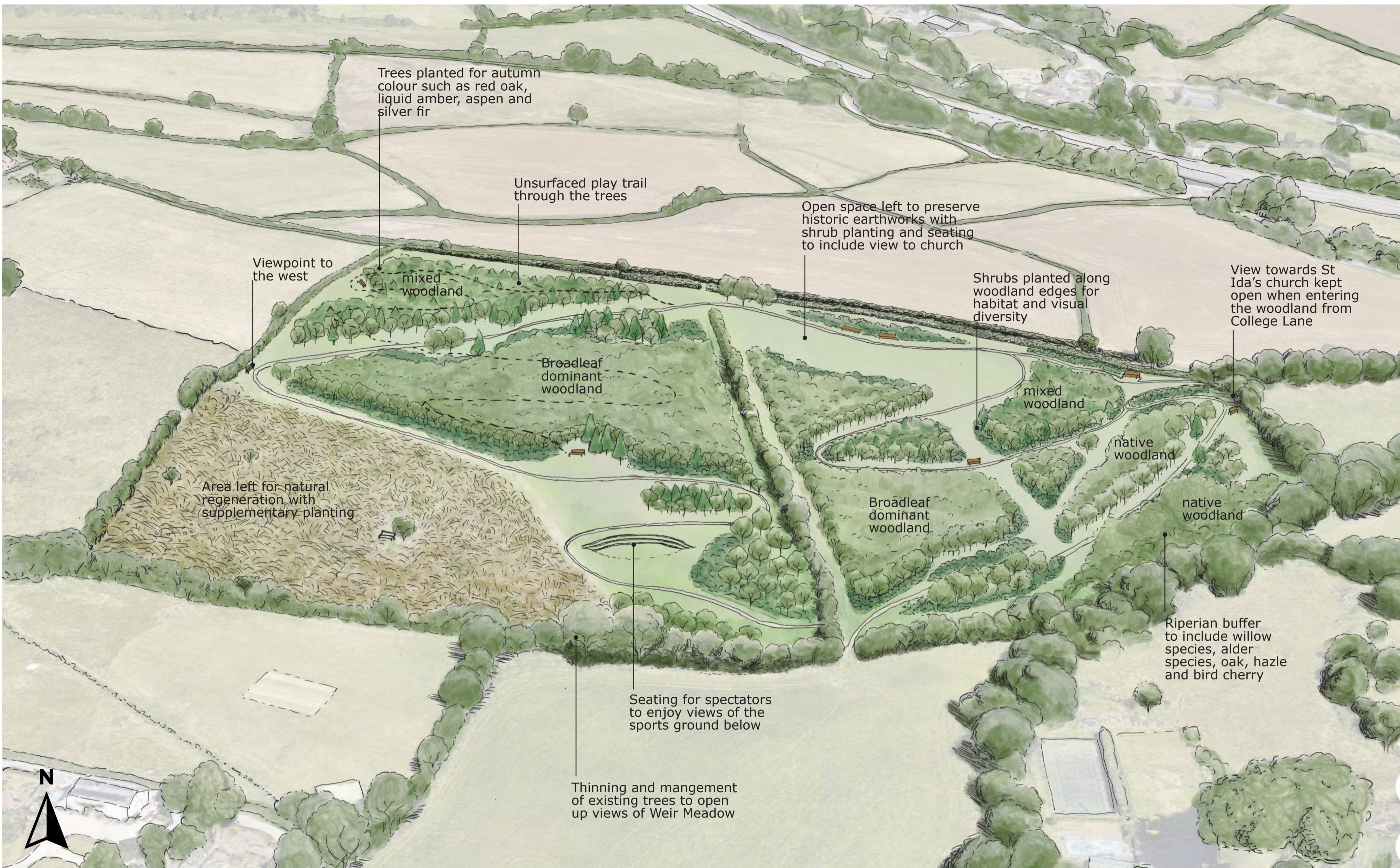


Fig.6 Artists Impression of Proposed Woodland Design

Access

Our aim is to make this woodland as accessible as possible. We hope to include a surfaced trail that is a maximum 1in12 gradient. The length of this will be subject to funding and maintenance costs.

We will include benches or other types of seating around the site for people to rest and enjoy the view.



Play

We plan to include some playful elements within the woodland. These will be designed to encourage play within the woods rather than as traditional play structures.

Some ideas are shown in the images below.

