



THE NATIONAL  
FOREST

PROPOSAL FOR NEW WOODLAND AT  
PEGGS GREEN  
‘Peggs Pear Wood’  
Draft Design Statement and Consultation  
Document  
August 2024



*Figure 1: Land near Peggs Green – Peggs Pear woodland design proposal*

## Contents

Consultation Process.....	3
Design Statement Summary .....	4
1. Introduction .....	5
2. General Site Survey .....	7
3. Site Appraisal.....	9
4. The Design.....	12
5. Implementation .....	18
6. Maps and Plans .....	19

## Consultation Process

As part of developing the planting scheme for any site that it acquires, the National Forest Company (NFC) seeks to ensure we have taken account of the views of key local stakeholders. These stakeholders include: professionals, such as Local Authority ecology and forestry officers; local decision-makers, such as Parish Councils; and residents living in the immediate vicinity of the site. As one of these consultees, we are inviting your comments on the proposals.

This consultation document sets out the NFC's objectives for the new site, the information that has informed the proposed site design and the rationale for the species choices. It also sets out any constraints that exist on the site that have needed to be accommodated.

This document was published on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and we ask that consultees provide any responses by noon on **27<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

If responding by email, please send your responses to [sgreenhouse@nationalforest.org](mailto:sgreenhouse@nationalforest.org) using the subject header "**Peggs Pear Wood Consultation**".

If responding by post, please mark your letter "**FAO Simon Greenhouse**" and send it to:

**National Forest Company  
Bath Yard  
Moir  
Swadlincote  
Derbyshire  
DE12 6BA**

**Project lead:** Simon Greenhouse, Forest Estate Officer

## Design Statement Summary



*Figure 2: The large arable fields present a 'blank canvass' for woodland creation*

The National Forest Company has recently acquired a 14.85 hectare site near Thringstone, Leicestershire. Referred to in this document as '**Peggs Pear Wood**', the site offers exciting opportunities to enhance the 'edge of Charnwood' landscape with additional tree planting.

### **Site Context**

The NFC proposes a design for the new woodland that complements this landscape character. Located on sloping high ground, the wood will be visible within the local area, particularly from Thringstone.

### **Brief Description of Concept**

The proposed design has a theme based around diversity to improve business opportunities and to spread economic and ecological risk. Planting a wide range of tree and shrub species will increase biodiversity and build in a degree of resilience in the face of increasing threats from tree pests and diseases and climate change. Whilst timber production is not the main objective here, it is yet a consideration and an opportunity. To this end an assortment of timber products are suggested; softwoods planted as a nurse crop and an 'early' return (wood fibre/biomass/fencing etc), short rotation forestry to provide regular biomass (e.g. local firewood markets) and hardwoods for longer term timber producing potential. An orchard is proposed to provide yet another income opportunity. Even here consideration has been given to diversifying potential products with fruit, timber, honey and grass fodder.

Permissive paths have been included to create loops from the existing public footpath network to provide access to the best views.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. About the National Forest

- 1.1.1 The National Forest is one of the country's most ambitious and highly regarded environmental projects with sustainable development at its heart, transforming 200 square miles across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire.
- 1.1.2 Established in the early nineties, it represents the first new broadleaved forest to be created in England for 1,000 years. As a growing environmental, economic, and social asset, the National Forest is helping to enhance the landscape, regenerate local businesses and improve quality of life for communities.
- 1.1.3 The initiative aims to link the two ancient Forests of Needwood in the west and Charnwood in the east, restoring a landscape ravaged by coalmining and heavy industry. It provides a demonstration of the value of the natural environment with opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with woodlands near to where they live and work.
- 1.1.4 The National Forest is a dynamic and vibrant area, with rolling farmland and newly planted woodlands alongside established businesses and start up enterprises. It is also home to some 220,000 people in the four towns of Burton upon Trent (famous for its brewing), Coalville and Swadlincote (formerly associated with the coal and clay mining industries) and the historic market town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

### 1.2. The National Forest Company

- 1.2.1 Since 1995, the National Forest Company (NFC) has driven forward the vision for the National Forest. The NFC operates as a small, highly successful organisation that has recently secured charitable status, whilst also being an Arm's Length Body of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).
- 1.2.2 With around 40 staff, a Chair, and a seven-strong Board of Trustees, together with a wide range of delivery partners, the NFC is well placed to steer the National Forest into the future. Our approach is based on collaboration and demonstration; to support and enable partners to deliver the Forest, including landowners, businesses, public, private, and voluntary organisations, as well as local communities.
- 1.2.3 For more information visit [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)

### 1.3. Satellite Image



Figure 3: Satellite image shows the site's relationship to the surrounding villages

### 1.4. Peggs Pear Wood

- 1.4.1 'Peggs Pear Wood' is a 14.85 hectare site, near Peggs Green village which was purchased by the NFC in 2023 (see Map 1: Location). It was acquired to increase the environmental benefits associated with tree planting and new woodlands, as well as contributing towards the target of a third forest cover within the National Forest boundary by 2045.
- 1.4.2 The land was acquired from a private landowner and is to be developed as part of the National Forest Company's estate.
- 1.4.3 The NFC also owns and manages Swannymote Wood 1.5 miles to the south east and a number of other woodlands around the National Forest that together total over 500 hectares.

## 2. General Site Survey

### 2.1. Site Description



*Figure 4: View looking over the site from the highest point*

- 2.1.1 The site is situated immediately to the west of Thringstone. Grid Reference SK 417 179 (centre). The small village of Peggs Green lies just to the west, but is largely out of sight, being situated down steep bank.
- 2.1.2 The site comprises three agricultural fields separated by mature hedgerows and, between the larger two, by a tree-lined gully, the route of an old trackway. The roadside frontage includes a number of hedgerow trees, notably mature ash. There is a single field gate access point off the Loughborough Road (A512).
- 2.1.3 Currently the land is let on a short-term farm business tenancy and is growing a wheat crop.
- 2.1.4 The remnants of a small field pond is situated in the middle of the eastern field.
- 2.1.5 The sloping site dips down to a shallow valley on the opposite side of which is the village of Thringstone (extending towards Whitwick). This means that there are many dwellings within a mile which will overlook the new wood.
- 2.1.6 Extensive 240 degree views can be enjoyed from the high point which extend northwards towards Castle Donington and beyond to the Peak District. Eastwards lies Charnwood Forest, beginning with Grace Dieu woodland, that forms a backdrop to Thringstone village.
- 2.1.7 There is an old 'trig point' on site, about 417 foot above sea level.

## 2.2. Site History and Archaeology

- 2.2.1 Recently farmed as part of a local farming estate, the site has long been managed as pastureland and, in more recent years, under arable cultivation. The surrounding area has a rich heritage of 'early technology' coalmining operations, evidenced by surviving infrastructure such as the Swannington incline. A similar tracked incline was also planned for this site to take coal from the pits, down the hillside to the Charnwood canal, with the empty carriages due to be hauled back up to the top by horses. Like the ill-fated canal however, although excavated, the rail track was never completed or put into use.
- 2.2.2 The local countryside is criss-crossed by numerous public footpaths, many of which started as walking routes between the small settlements and the mines.

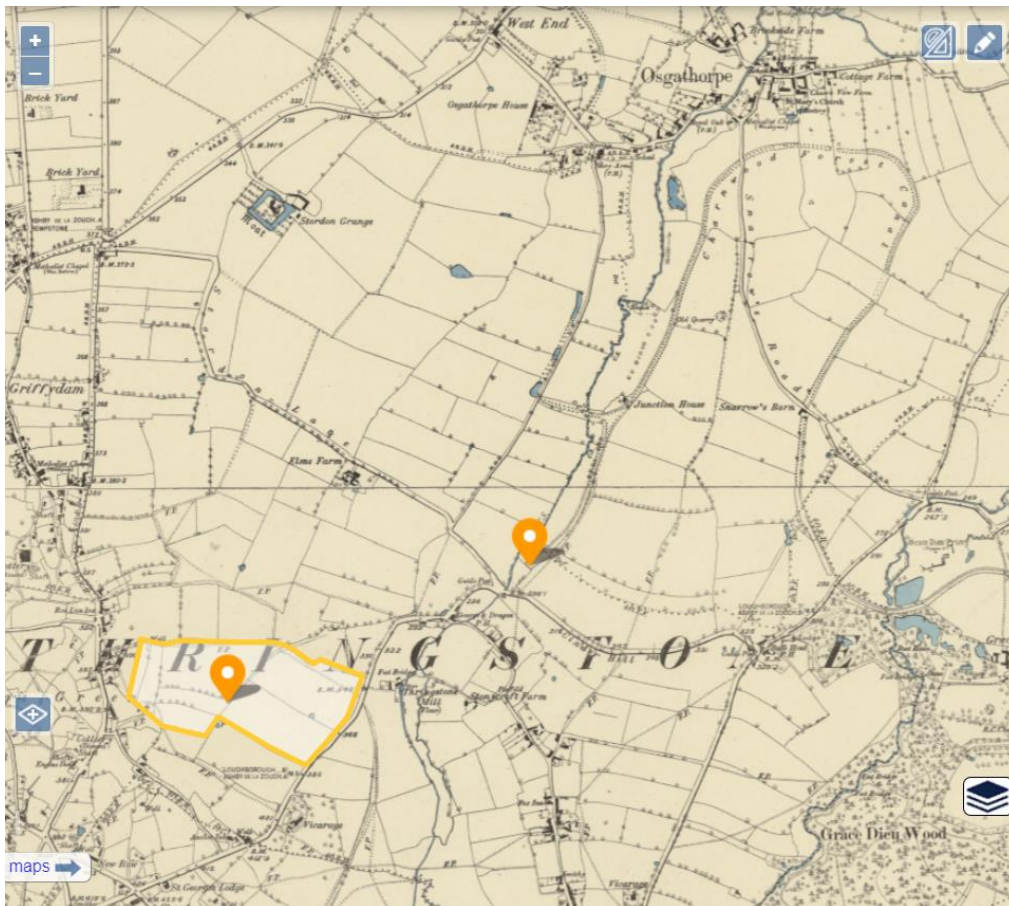


Figure 5: 1840's OS map with a pin at the top of the gravity railway and another indicating the start of the Charnwood Canal



### 3. Site Appraisal

#### 3.1. Soils and geology



Figure 6: Impeded drainage of the clay soils, particularly where compacted

- 3.1.1 The soils are slightly acidic, loamy and clayey with impeded drainage and moderate to high natural fertility.
- 3.1.2 The underlying bedrock formations across the majority of the site is Shepshed Sandstone Member – Sandstone (sedimentary bedrock).
- 3.1.3 The site sits within the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield landscape zone (Coleorton Historic Settlements and Enclosures), an area characterised by *relatively unspoilt landscapes with an ancient enclosed character and a dispersed settlement pattern typified by cottages that have encroached on former common land. Significant heritage features including medieval bell pits and the Swannington incline.*

### 3.2. Public Access



*Figure 7: The steps off the A512 where the public footpath enters the site*

3.2.1 Although well connected by the footpath network there is a sense that the land is not frequently visited other than by those passing through on the Ivanhoe Way. The design extends the reach of the footpaths to the high point of the site from where 240 degree views can be appreciated.



*Figure 8: Public footpath link to Peggs Green village*

### **3.3. Existing habitats and environmental factors**

- 3.3.1 A habitat survey was undertaken (BSG Ecology) and the subsequent report submitted in August 2024. There were no notable findings highlighted.
- 3.3.2 There are no designations or known priority habitats. The most significant existing features being an occasionally wet field pond (non-priority in poor condition) and the hedge/tree belt associated with the old tramway. The grass verges are very narrow and these, the pond and the hedges are all described as being species poor.

### **3.4. Administrative Areas**

- 3.4.1 Peggs Pear Wood lies in the North West Leicestershire administrative area, and is split between the parishes of Swannington (southern field) and Osgathorpe.

## 4. The Design



Figure 9: Sketch map of the draft design

### 4.1. The National Forest 25-year vision

4.1.1 The NFC is currently working to the National Forest 25-year vision which is centred on developing a more sustainable future for the Forest area supporting mitigation and adaptation to climate change, including through tree planting and habitat enhancement. Key aims are to maximise the environmental benefits of trees through carbon sequestration, improving soil, air, and water quality, and enhancing biodiversity. The NFC will work with partners to do this across all landscapes both rural and urban, it will work with communities and businesses to ensure that improved public benefit (e.g. 'access') is provided, and that the changing landscape supports new and diverse low carbon enterprise opportunities.

4.1.2 For more information on the 25-year vision visit:  
<https://www.nationalforest.org/about/our-vision>

4.1.3 The design set out in this document has specifically been developed to offer a farm diversification proposal.

### 4.2. Site Design aims

4.2.1 The main aims of the design are to:

- i. To create a woodland on a prominent hillside that complements the local landscape and provides viewpoints out across the wider countryside that have not been publicly accessible beforehand.

- ii. To demonstrate how trees could be included in their farmscape and provide an income.
- iii. To show how woodland can be brought close to housing for walks and recreation without appearing intimidating or ‘view-blocking’.
- iv. To help determine how orchards fit in terms of Forest cover reporting, promotion of agroforestry models and the NFC Farming and Forestry Grant; also with biodiversity monitoring (particularly for pollinating insects).

#### 4.3. Landscape Character area



Figure 10: Roof tops of Thringstone village with Grace Dieu woods and the hills of Charnwood beyond

- 4.3.1 The site lies within the ‘Charnwood landscape character’ area of the Forest which is described as... *“a unique landscape, marked out by its geology and upland qualities, which contrast with the surrounding gentle lowlands.... Situated between Coalville, Loughborough and Leicester, Charnwood is surrounded by large, urban areas, but retains a rural character.”*
- 4.3.2 Notes on appropriate planting design for ‘historic settlements and enclosures’ landscape type in the National Forest Strategy includes:
  - i. Plant to landform where this is dominant
  - ii. Design with irregular shapes and margins to reflect irregular shape of field pattern. Avoid straight edges and geometric shapes

#### 4.4. Landscape



*Figure 11: Looking northwards to Ratcliffe power station*

- 4.4.1 The design considers the balance between creating a 'productive' woodland with various options for income-producing potential, fitting in and enhancing the local landscape, and improving biodiversity and ecological function.
  - 4.4.2 By strategically positioning the layout of the woodland compartments and including groves of low-growing shrubs and short rotation forest, strategic views will be framed and retained.
- #### 4.5. Access
- 4.5.1 Once developed, the site will provide public access for walkers throughout the woodland areas. Existing footpaths will be interlinked by the development of an extensive permissive path layout.
  - 4.5.2 There are no aspirations to create horse routes as there are no existing bridlepath links and the Loughborough Road access is entirely unsuitable for horse riding.
  - 4.5.3 There are no plans to include car parking facilities. However some hardstanding and, potentially, stone tracking, could be included in order to facilitate ongoing maintenance access and for future management and harvesting operations.
  - 4.5.4 There are no thoughts to develop tourism-based options on the site. Although set in a pleasant location, poor road access limits opportunities for camp sites etc.
- #### 4.6. Community
- 4.6.1 The main beneficiaries of the woodland are likely to be those living in, and walking from, the Peggs Green and Coleorton community itself. This is significant because the existing public footpaths that emerge from that direction are directed close by quiet, fairly isolated residences. The new wood will not be widely promoted to visitors, however it will be available to local residents as an 'on the doorstep' facility. Those accessing the new wood are likely to be local residents who have regularly used the public footpaths in the past, or those walking the Ivanhoe Way.

#### 4.7. Wildlife



*Figure 12: The remnants of a field pond in the middle of the lower field is one of the few habitat features to be found*

- 4.7.1 A broad range of tree and shrub species (the majority of them British native), different habitats (orchard, woodland, open ground etc) and a diversity management techniques (including short rotation forestry) are proposed which will all boost biodiversity over an area which is currently limited in these terms, being under an intensive arable farming system.
- 4.7.2 The proposed design plan includes lengthy woodland edge habitat created by internal paths and rides and the inclusion of small planting blocks. Woodland edge (woody shrubs and herbaceous plants) is an excellent habitat as this tends to be where the majority of woodland fauna and flora finds food, light and shelter.
- 4.7.3 An orchard is included in the design as another aspect that will provide multiple benefits for wildlife. Flowering fruit trees provide an early nectar source for pollinating insects; and underplanting the orchard trees with a grass and wildflower meadow mix will create a habitat and food source for insects and ground nesting birds.
- 4.7.4 Existing habitats including the tree belt associated with the gully, existing hedgerows, and the pond will be enhanced and managed predominantly to promote wildlife.

#### 4.8. Woodland Creation

- 4.8.1 A total of around 11 hectares of new woodland will be created. 'Mixed' woodland planting (broadleaved trees interplanted with conifers) is to be established mainly on the upper reaches providing landscape continuity, habitat links and, ultimately, a timber resource.

- 4.8.2 The inclusion of numerous species will build resilience into the planting design, spreading the risk in the face of potential threats to tree health posed by pests, disease, and climate change. The species have been selected not only for their ability to absorb carbon, but also care has been taken to match the species to the soils, site conditions and their ability to adapt to a changing climate.
- 4.8.3 Trees will be planted within large, fenced compartments with smaller groups protected with individual tree guards. Efforts will be undertaken to seek sustainable options for the tree guards.
- 4.8.4 Plants will be sourced from nurseries that guarantee British-grown stock.
- 4.8.5 The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 highlights the many benefits of planting trees, including their vital role in absorbing carbon to help achieve Government net zero targets.
- 4.8.6 The table below illustrates the species mix and approximate proportions being proposed at this stage:

Tree species	% of total
Aspen	4
Beech	3
Bird Cherry	1
Common Alder	6
Douglas Fir	3
English Oak	13
Field Maple	4
Hawthorn	2
Hazel	5
Hornbeam	8
Japanese Red Cedar	3
Norway Maple	2
Red Oak	1
Rowan	3
Scots Pine	8
Serbian Spruce	3
Silver Birch	10
Small Leaved Lime	6
Sycamore	0.5
Wild Cherry	7
Wild Pear	0.5
Wild Service	1
Wych Elm	3
Other native shrubs	3
	100



Breakdown	
Native broadleaf trees	69.5
Native shrubs	10
Non-native broadleaves	3.5
Conifers	17

- 4.8.7 Overall, the plantation woodland (excludes the orchard) would comprise approximately 80% native trees and shrubs, and these are located predominantly in the 'native woodland' compartments. The conifer component (c. 17% of total) will be irregularly interspersed in the 'mixed woodland' compartments which would include Norway Maple and Red Oak (amongst a range of native trees) for hardwood timber options and to add colour, texture and diversity. Sycamore is included as a short rotation timber species.
- 4.8.8 Advantages in selecting a broad range of tree species include improving the resilience in the face of climate change, planning for a future timber crop and increasing habitat diversity.



Figure 13: There is an opportunity to include an orchard into the design on the hill away from frost pockets

#### 4.9. Farming and Forestry

- 4.9.1 It is generally agreed that many UK farms would benefit from more tree planting. Aside from providing shelter for crops and livestock, trees can help reduce run-off and diffuse pollution and facilitate recycling of nutrients.

4.9.2 Whilst income generated from farming is not seen to be the priority at Peggs Pear Wood, the design could be translated on to other farms where the tree crops themselves could provide long term income, and fruit farming an alternative to cereals. The option to include up to 2 hectares of Perry Pears as an orchard to produce fruit, (and honey) also potentially produces pear timber for niche cabinetry markets and for making musical instruments. Orchards are a traditional form of agroforestry where timber and/or fruit is grown alongside grass for livestock grazing.

<b>Habitat breakdown</b>	<b>hectares</b>
Mixed broadleaf / conifer woodland	4
Native broadleaf woodland	5
Short rotation forestry	2
Orchard	2
Wetland	0.1
Other habitats (open ground, rides, existing hedges etc)	3.75
<b>Site total</b>	<b>14.85</b>

## 5. Implementation

### 5.1. Timing

- 5.1.1 The NFC is currently planning to commence the planting programme in the 2024/25 planting season. Ground preparation, fencing etc. will start as soon as the arable crop is removed in late summer.
- 5.1.2 On-going management of the site will be overseen by the NFC's estate maintenance programme.

### 5.2. Funding

- 5.2.1 The NFC is ineligible for national woodland creation grants i.e. through the Countryside Stewardship grant structure. Funding the creation of the woodland will therefore be delivered through a variety of sources, summarised below:
- i. NFC core funding
  - ii. Government Nature for Climate funds
  - iii. Charitable donations

### 5.3. Stakeholders

- 5.3.1 It is usual practice that the NFC works in association with partner organisations and individual stakeholders to develop a woodland site; some in a funding capacity, others who could provide advice and support, and those who will hopefully benefit from the proposals. Feedback from the consultees will help to steer and refine the design and works programme.

## 6. Maps and Plans

### 6.1. Site Design Draft



52.756245, -1.381968



