

Woodland Creation Project – Westacre Farms

04/01/2021

Project Overview

Westacre Farms are putting forward a proposal for 77 hectares of new woodland planting which is being designed and developed through the Forestry Commission planning grant process.

The plantation will contain around 75% Paulownia, a fast-growing hybrid (phoenix 1) hardwood originating from Asia, planted at a very low density with staggered harvesting of half the plantation every 5 years. Plantation management includes low levels of irrigation in the first 2 years to assist establishment and 2-3 fertiliser applications, annual hand pruning and regular monitoring.

The remaining 25% of the planting areas will be made up of a combination of open space and native tree species intended to mimic existing local woodlands. This aspect of the project won't be harvested and will instead be dedicated to maximising environmental benefit, buffering non-native species from important viewpoints and protecting important historic features including existing in field boundaries and hedgerows. An understorey of grasses, clovers and wildflowers will also be planted across the whole area to encourage a wide range of insects, pollinators, butterflies and bees.

Purpose of this Consultation

At this non-statutory stage of the consultation process, we wish to gain feedback from a range of stakeholders including Natural England, Historic England, RSPB, local authority archaeology and local residents.

To allow stakeholders to make an informed response to the project, we are issuing you with Concept Design Plans, the rationale behind the project layout, responses from previous consultation and a range of supporting information and reports covering biodiversity, water use, and sterility on non-native species.

How to Respond

Preferably, responses should be submitted via email to william.higgins@brown-co.com, however written responses may be posted to;

Brown & Co
The Fairways
Wyboston Lakes
Great North Road
Wyboston
Bedfordshire
MK44 3AL

Site Context

Please see Appendix 1a attached, the Site Context Map outlines the original proposed planting areas, selected through a screening exercise which filtered a much wider potential land area on the grounds of environmental, landscape and historic environment designations, known archaeology as well as site specific operational and agronomic suitability.

Design Concept Plan

Please see Appendix 2a for the Design Concept Plans. This plan offers a UK Forestry Standard compliant woodland creation proposal which has been influenced by the various constraints and opportunities identified throughout the project planning process. The concept plan development process has considered existing habitat, treatment of archaeological features, PROW, and protection of important views.

Appendix 3a expresses the visual appearance of Paulownia through a photo montage. The specific species of Paulownia being planted is Phoenix One, a non-flowering sterile hybrid, bred from Elongata and Fortunei.

Appendix 2b sets out the projects species mix and proportions, as well as demonstrating the edge treatment of native woodland, including phased planting density and canopy height feathering.

Further Supporting Information

Appendix 3c – Biodiversity report including site specific targets

Appendix 3d – Phoenix One Invasiveness and Sterility Report Summary