

Blaby Oaks

(Plan period – 2024 to 2029)



WOODLAND
TRUST

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Introduction to the Woodland Trust Estate

The Woodland Trust owns and cares for well over 1,250 sites covering almost 30,000 hectares (ha) across the UK. This includes more than 4,000ha of ancient semi-natural woodland and almost 4,000ha of non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites and we have created over 5,000ha of new native woodland. We also manage other valuable habitats such as flower-rich grasslands, heaths, ponds/lakes and moorland.

Our Vision is:

“A UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife.”

To realise all the environmental, social and economic benefits woods and trees bring to society, we:

- **Create Woodland** – championing the need to hugely increase the UK’s native woodland and trees.
- **Protect Woodland** – fighting to defend native woodland, especially irreplaceable ancient woodland and veteran trees; there should be no loss of ancient woodland
- **Restore Woodland** – ensuring the sensitive restoration of all damaged ancient woodland and the re-creation of native wooded landscapes.

Management of the Woodland Trust Estate

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

The following principles provide an overarching framework to guide the management of all our sites but we recognise that all woods are different and that their management also needs to reflect their local landscape, history and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives.

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene in our woods when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity, safety and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland for all the positive reasons set out in our Conservation Principles, preferably using natural regeneration but often by planting trees, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe. Where possible, we pro-actively engage with people to help them appreciate the value of woods and trees.
4. The long term vision for all our ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The natural and cultural heritage value of sites is taken into account in our management and in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Land and woods can generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We therefore consider the appropriateness of opportunities to generate income from our Estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we encourage our woods to be used for local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the Estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. We maintain a network of sites for long-term monitoring and trials leading to reductions in plastics and pesticides.
10. Any activities we undertake are in line with our wider Conservation Principles, conform to sustainable forest management practices, are appropriate for the site and balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

The Public Management Plan

This public management plan describes the site and sets out the long term aims for our management and lists the Key Features which drive our management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site – their significance is outlined together with our long, 50 years and beyond, and our short, the next 5 years, term objectives for the management and enhancement of these features. The short term objectives are complemented by an outline Work Programme for the period of this management plan aimed at delivering our management aims.

Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and we continually monitor our sites to assess the success of our management, therefore this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

or contact the Woodland Trust

operations@woodlandtrust.org.uk

to confirm details of the current management programme.

A short glossary of technical terms can be found at the end of the plan.

Location and Access

Location maps and directions for how to find and access our woods, including this site, can be found by using the following link to the Woodland Trust web-site which contains information on accessible woodlands across the UK

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/>

In Scotland access to our sites is in accordance with the Land Reform Act (of Scotland) 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

In England, Wales and NI, with the exception of designated Public Rights of Ways, all routes across our sites are permissive in nature and where we have specific access provision for horse riders and/or cyclists this will be noted in the management plan.

The Management Plan

1. Site Details
2. Site Description
3. Long Term Policy
4. Key Features
 - 4.1 f1 Informal Public Access
 - 4.2 f2 New Native Woodland
5. Work Programme

Appendix 1 : Compartment Descriptions

GLOSSARY

1. SITE DETAILS

Blaby Oaks

Location:	Blaby	Grid	reference:	SP574970	OS	1:50,000	Sheet	No.	140
Area:	5.67 hectares (14.01 acres)								
External Designations:	N/A								
Internal Designations:	Woods on Your Doorstep								

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

Blaby Oaks is in Blaby to the south of Leicester, surrounded by farmland and dense urban areas. The 5.7 hectare woodland was planted in 1998 as part of the Woodland Trust's "Woods On Your Doorstep" initiative. It was designed and planted with full consultation and involvement of the local community. The linear woodland was originally two fields; the northern arable field was planted with 2000 oaks grown from locally collected seed sourced from The Outwoods SSSI in Charnwood Forest. These oaks comprise the Millennium Feature and contribute to the woodland name 'Blaby Oaks.' A stream runs from south to north along the centre of the wood, and the mature willows growing along, and partially damming the stream create an interesting focal point. Mature trees and hedges form the boundaries of the site.

Blaby Oaks is a popular wood, and the circular footpaths throughout the site also link Blaby with the neighbouring village of Countesthorpe. The site is flat with heavy ground which becomes waterlogged in the winter, and the paths can become muddy. To improve these conditions, a surfaced path running the length of the wood has recently been laid. Car parking for visitors is available in Oakfield Park where a permissive path leads to the wood.

A diverted public bridleway runs into and through the wood along the northern and eastern boundaries, effectively by-passing a long section of Hospital Road. This diversion agreement forms part of the lease for the property; the Woodland Trust has leased the land for 199 years from Leicestershire County Council.

There is an underground sewer and two overhead power lines running through the site.

The Key Features for this site are Informal Public Access and New Native Woodland.

3. LONG TERM POLICY

The long-term aim is to allow Blaby Oaks to develop into a healthy, resilient, mature woodland through natural succession and intervention. The wood will have a diverse range of native tree and shrub species of varying age and develop a woodland specialist ground flora. Open areas will be maintained with a woodland edge layer encouraged through thinning, coppicing and natural regeneration.

Ash dieback will require monitoring and some intervention where trees become unsafe. Any cleared areas to be allowed to regenerate naturally.

A sustainable level of public access to be maintained through the management of the access features and internal structures, such as entrances, bridges and paths to a safe standard.

4. KEY FEATURES

4.1 f1 Informal Public Access

Description
<p>Access to Blaby Oaks is via the main entrance off Hospital Lane. Parking is available in the Oakfield Park car park where there is an entrance directly into the wood. Roughly 1km of unsurfaced paths are managed throughout the wood, with a newly surfaced footpath measuring a further 720m running centrally along the length of the site.</p> <p>A public bridleway crosses the site from the main entrance following the northern and eastern boundaries, exiting in the south-east corner of the site providing a further 700m of access. This path is enclosed to prevent horse and cycle users straying over into the rest of the woodland.</p>
Significance
<p>Blaby Oaks is a popular and accessible woodland which links the more formal open space of Oakfield Park with the surrounding rights of way network which connect Blaby and Countesthorpe.</p>
Opportunities & Constraints
<p>The Woodland Trust is potentially constrained by the terms of its leasehold agreement which requires the Trust to accommodate the re-routed bridleway. This will offer an additional entrance into the woodland and provide additional possibilities for access to the countryside in this area.</p> <p>The more heavily used paths and entrances tend to become muddy during wet periods; the newly surfaced path should help to improve this.</p>
Factors Causing Change
<p>Ash dieback may cause trees alongside the path network to become unsafe and regular tree safety inspections will continue to be carried out in order to monitor this.</p>
Long term Objective (50 years+)
<p>Blaby Oaks will remain open to the public and we will continue to make the site safe and welcoming for visitors but facilities will remain low key.</p>
Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

Create an inviting and informative entrance by replacing old gate at the southern entrance.

Maintain all public access structures such as entrances, information boards, bridges, bridle paths and paths in a safe, usable condition. This will be actioned through regular inspections and annual management works.

Monitor ash dieback and undertake any necessary safety work along the footpaths.

4.2 f2 New Native Woodland

Description

A native broadleaved woodland consisting of 2000 local provenance oak trees in the northern field sourced from The Outwoods SSSI in Charnwood Forest to commemorate the Millennium. Oak, ash, silver birch, field maple and woody shrubs make up the planting in the remaining area. Several stunning willows grow along the stream and provide a very small patch of riparian woodland within the site.

Significance

There are very few woodlands within this densely populated area on the southern edge of Leicester. Its location beside Oakfield Park both extends the public open space and the potential for wildlife.

Opportunities & Constraints

Vandalism and misuse had some initial effect upon the establishment of the trees – but despite this, the tree stock has established well.

Factors Causing Change

Ash dieback is evident throughout the site and will require monitoring and some intervention where trees become unsafe.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A resilient woodland, where a diverse canopy and age structure with a good shrubby understorey develops through natural regeneration and limited interventions.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

To open up the canopy by thinning the 4.8ha of woodland in 2026. This will allow a more diverse woodland habitat to develop through natural regeneration with standing and fallen dead wood habitat.

Monitor natural regeneration for species diversity to ensure long-term resilience by carrying out a woodland condition assessment prior to writing the next management plan in 2029.

Monitor ash dieback through annual tree safety inspections. Fell trees where necessary but look to tie as much tree safety issues in with site wide thinning operation as possible. Use some of the brash arisings to create a dead hedge along the bridleway.

Diversify habitats by small scale, ride side coppicing of coppicing of hazel, field maple as part of thinning works in 2026. Retain stunning willows along the stream, monitor and where necessary clear culverts and branches to prevent

localised flooding.

Any remaining tree shelters to be cleared from site following on from harvesting works. This is to be completed by 2027.

Creation of a small stacking and uplift area off of hospital lane to facilitate harvesting works.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type Of Work	Description	Due Date
2024	SL - Routine Safety Work	Works associated with undertaking planned visitor and structure safety orientated actions, such as erection/creation or maintenance of safety features such as fencing, rails, re-pointing of retaining walls etc	September
2025	AW - Visitor Access Infrastructure	Works associated with the construction of a new or extension to existing car parking facilities.	January
2025	SL - Routine Safety Work	Works associated with undertaking planned visitor and structure safety orientated actions, such as erection/creation or maintenance of safety features such as fencing, rails, re-pointing of retaining walls etc	September
2025	AW - Visitor Access Maintenance	Works associated with the maintenance of existing visitor access infrastructure and paths. Work could include items such as repairing pot-holes and path surfaces, mowing grass paths, path widening, maintaining footbridges and steps, cleaning signage etc,	October
2026	WMM - General Site Management	Works associated with maintaining conservation and physical features within the sites such as boundary ditches, fences and walls, hedges,	July
2026	SL - Routine Safety Work	Works associated with undertaking planned visitor and structure safety orientated actions, such as erection/creation or maintenance of safety features such as fencing, rails, re-pointing of retaining walls etc	September
2027	SL - Routine Safety Work	Works associated with undertaking planned visitor and structure safety orientated actions, such as erection/creation or maintenance of safety features such as fencing, rails, re-pointing of retaining walls etc	September
2028	SL - Routine Safety Work	Works associated with undertaking planned visitor and structure safety orientated actions, such as erection/creation or maintenance of safety features such as fencing, rails, re-pointing of retaining walls etc	September

APPENDIX 1 : COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Designations
1a	5.7	Oak (sessile)	1998	High forest	Legal issues	
<p>The woodland consists of 4 hectare's of new planting and 1.7 hectare's of open ground. Planting took place in December 1998 with 2000 local provenance oaks in the northern block and oak, ash, birch and woody shrubs in the southern section. 2250 trees were planted per hectare and were protected with 60cm Tubex Sleeves and Shelters on the shrubs.</p> <p>A network of paths has been incorporated around the site, which are generally about 3m in width. These are regularly mown to define them and keep them accessible throughout the year. An information board can be found at the entrance and a seat has been positioned in the southern section.</p>						

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.

Registered Office:

The Woodland Trust, Kempton Way, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL.

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Blaby Oaks Conservation Map



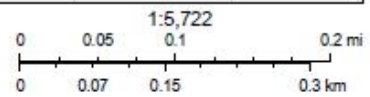
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Estate Habitat

- Open Space
- New Planting
- Estate Water Feature

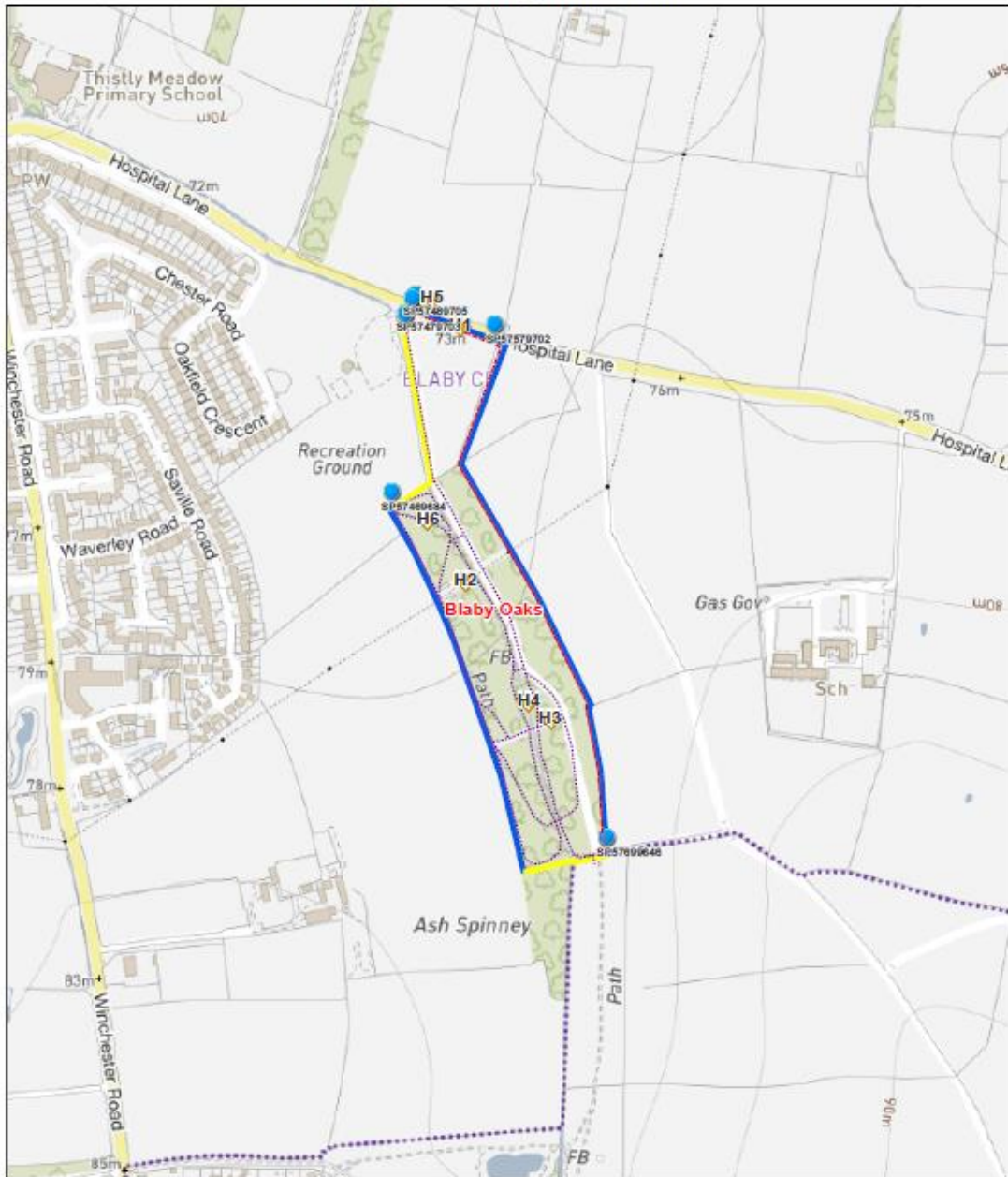
Estate Features - point

- Conservation
- Management Units



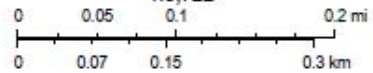
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Blaby Oaks Legal Features



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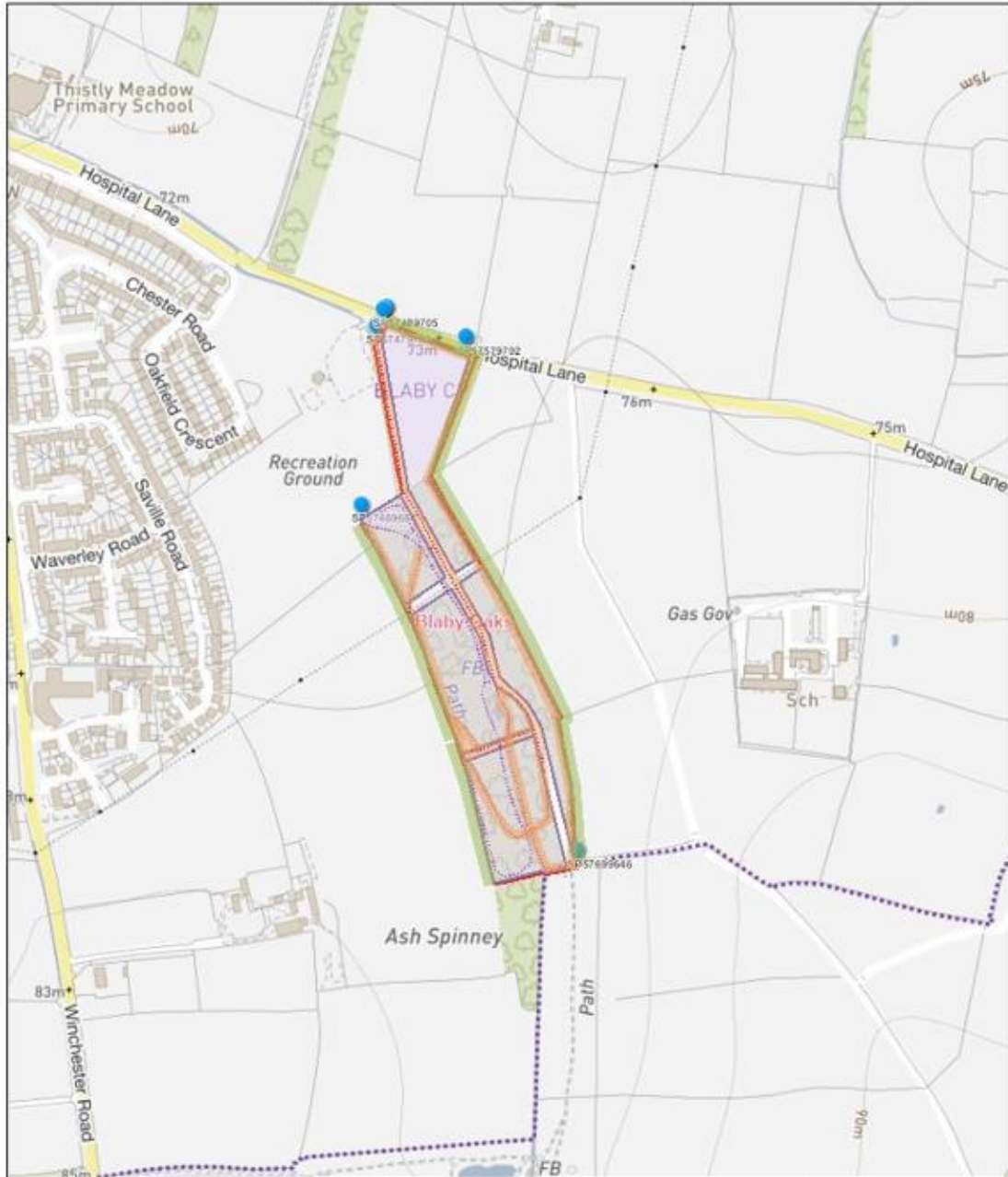


- ◆ Estate Hazards
- ◆ Estate Access Points
- Estate Path Network
- Permissive Footpath
- Legal Bridleway
- Estate Boundary Responsibility
- Neighbours ownership
- Trust ownership
- Management Units

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Blaby Oaks Management Proposals



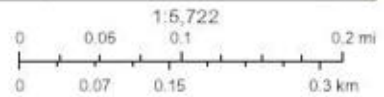
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Lines

- Mow path network
3x annually
- Cut hedgerows late
winter
- Silvicultural intervention -
Thinning

Estate Path Network

- Permissive Footpath
- Legal Bridleway
- Estate Access Points
- Management Units



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