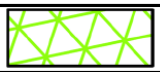
We have been examining the planting proposed in PL/25/6639, bringing into use between Leather Lane and the Wendover Dean viaduct, in particular the woodland areas. The proposal leaves several questions unanswered :-

1. ***What type of woodland are the 'Generic Woodland' areas WL01-WL11 intended to produce on maturity ? Would these be typical of the Lee and Buckland Common Landscape Character area ?***

   The tree and shrub species specified in the 'Generic Woodland' for the two planting plots referenced are based on typical native species that naturally occur in the Chiltern Hills character area.

   This mix is designed to create an Oak and Beech woodland at maturity. Tree species make up 60 percent of the mix as listed in the plant schedule. Species are also selected to provide a woodland edge at maturity.

   These species include Field Maple, Wild Cherry and Hazel. These have been included to generate a graduated structure in the tree canopy. Birch (Betula Pendula) acts as a nurse species, as it is fast growing and will provide height and shelter to the woodland blocks in the early years of establishment. The plant schedule from the planning application PL/25/6639 can be seen below:

WL: Generic Woodland - Long Term Effect		Planting typology graphic					
							
		Total Area (m²)					
Planting areas	LA-SHC-WL-01	**253**					
	LA-SHC-WL-02	**1201**					
Herbaceous Planting Seed Mix	**Mix**	EW1					
	SR	10					
	Area m²	Same as per Planting Area					
Species	**Height (cm)**	**Age**	**Root / Container / Cell**	**%**	**Pot Size (ltr)**	**Group size range (Number of plants)**	**Species Density (Plants/m²)**
Trees - Whips - 20% of total area							
Quercus robur (Pedunculate oak)	60 - 80	1+2	B	4	-	6 - 9	0.44
Acer campestre (Field maple)	60 - 80	1+2	B	3	-	8 - 13	0.44
Fagus sylvatica (Beech)	60 - 80	1+2	B	3	-	7 - 11	0.44
Tilia x europaea (Lime)	60 - 80	1+2	B	4	-	7 - 11	0.44
Fagus sylvatica (Beech)	60 - 80	1+2	B	3	-	7 - 9	0.44
Betula pendula (Silver birch) multistem	60 - 80	1+2	B	3	-	7 - 13	0.44
Trees - Transplants - 40%							
Fagus sylvatica (Beech)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	6 - 9	0.44
Acer campestre (Field maple)	40-60	1+1	B	6	-	5 - 9	0.44
Ilex aquifolium (Holly)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	5 - 9	0.44
Prunus avium (Wild cherry)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	5 - 9	0.44
Tilia x europaea (Lime)	40-60	1+1	B	9	-	5 - 9	0.44
Betula pendula (Silver birch) multistem	40-60	1+1	B	4	-	6 - 9	0.44
Shrubs - 40%							
Cornus sanguinea (Dogwood)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	5 - 12	1
Viburnum opulus (Guelder rose)	40-60	1+1	B	10	-	3 - 9	1
Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	4 - 9	1
Rosa canina (Dog Rose)	40-60	1+1	B	7	-	4 - 9	1
Corylus avellana (Hazel)	40-60	1+1	B	9	-	5 - 9	1

Typically, woodland areas in the Chilterns and throughout the UK have an understory and the woodland edge will include woody shrub species; these are listed as making up 40 percent of the mix.

Final percentages of induvial plant species at maturity will be based on local or site-specific influences on plant establishment such as soils, geology and aspect.

2. ***If this is the case, what balance of species was taken to be representative of such a woodland ? What was the source of this specification ?***

The plant specification has been chosen to be a balance between planting that has climate resilience, ecological benefit and is typical of local character.

A number of specific considerations have also been taken into account in the planting design and species selection. These include:

- The existing landscape character, habitat types and tree distribution including hedgerows has been assessed by HS2 and this forms part of the criteria for integration of the railway into the existing landscape, which includes the proposed planting design. The plant species list, directly relates to the Community Forum Areas (CFAs) identified in the Environmental Statement. They are also prescribed to the National Vegetation Class (NVC).
- The Detailed Design Principles of the Chiltern AONB, HS2 Chilterns Enhancement and Integration Plan (CEIP) Part 1. This can be found at the following link: https://www.chilterns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/6974-Chilterns-AONB_HS2-CEIP_Part-1_Detailed-Design-Principles_Low-res_compressed.pdf
- HS2 design 'Technical Standards' including planting. These include the specific constraints for planting in proximity to a High Speed rail line and the inherent technical and safety requirements.

3. ***What motivates the variation in planting proposed for the different areas ? For example, Rowan is included only in WL04,05 & 10.***

The specific species list referencing individual plots is based on the principles described above for 'Generic Woodland'.

Additionally, these plant mixes respond to different locality, character site aspect and ecological needs.

The use of Rowan in the mix is based on its fast initial growth and ability to establish itself in a variety of ground conditions. The inclusion is to generate a woodland edge and relates well to Field Maple and Birch in this respect. It is also a valuable fruiting tree for wildlife and biodiversity enhancement.

4. When will the planting take place ?

The specific timeframe for the planting is being withheld under Regulation 12(5)(a). Please see **FOI-26-6148 - Annex B** for a full explanation of the legislation applied.

The current programme is contingent on civil engineering operations, earthworks and suitable weather in respect to best practice for plant supply, handling and planting operations during the industry recognised planting season.

5. Who will be responsible for maintaining the planted areas, and for how long ?

The planting will be subject to a two-year defects period under the main works contract and a further three-year plant establishment period. This includes specified maintenance operations.

Subsequent maintenance and longer-term management responsibilities will pass to HS2 Ltd (or a successor company) or local landowners or the Local Authority.

Long term management and site specific maintenance is subject to an agreed Landscape Management and Maintenance plan to meet the mitigation targets in the Environmental Statement.