

Ecological Land Co-operative

**TREE AND HEDGE  
PLANTING PROPOSALS**

Field to the south of Copyhold  
Cottages,  
formerly part of Wilbees Farm,  
Arlington, Hailsham, BN26 6RU

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*For a Living, Working Countryside*

This document has been prepared by the Ecological Land Co-operative Ltd. It is written to be read in conjunction with the planning application, plans and other documents accompanying the application.



## TREE AND HEDGE PLANTING PROPOSALS

Location: Field west of the Street, Arlington

Map Reference: TQ 541(95) 070(38)

We propose, with our application for planning consent, to plant a hedge along the full length of the northern boundary of the Arlington field which adjoins land owned by Copyhold Cottages and Wilbees Farm. The total length of this section would be 292 metres. We are also proposing a new tree group of 350m<sup>2</sup> (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Proposed areas of new hedgerow and tree group

We are proposing this to:

- Create a visual barrier to screen the three proposed temporary agricultural workers' dwellings for both our direct neighbours and from longer views from the north and east of Arlington.
- To improve biodiversity by creating a shrub / tree wildlife "corridor" between: the mature species-rich hedgerow forming the western boundary of the site; and the woodland and wetland areas in the north- eastern corner.
- To allow the potential for developing a 'productive' hedgerow and tree group providing craft materials and food for future smallholders.
- To mitigate for the loss of hedgerow that will result from the creation of a new highway access on the western boundary.

The soils are clay loam, neutral to base-rich and seasonally waterlogged. The site for the hedge slopes gently to the south and west, and will enjoy full sunlight during the growing season, but may suffer some exposure from the prevailing south-westerly winds at the top of rising ground.

The whole of the northern boundary is currently fenced from the neighbouring properties of Copyhold Cottages, and the Wilbees Farm Field to the north-east. As the smallholding plot owned by Copyhold Cottage (south) would potentially become shaded by any large trees, or dense planting, some consideration has been made in the design to maintain a low shrub cover in the most westerly section. It is intended that actual eventual height is to be agreed in consultation with the cottage owners.



**Figure 2:** Fenced boundary with neighbours in Copyhold Cottages to the north

A public footpath crosses the northern boundary running north-west to south-east, and a stile is installed at either end where it enters / leave the property.



**Figure 3:** Public footpath crossing fenced northern boundary of field. Copyhold Cottage land is beyond the fence.

The intention to create smallholdings on this provides the opportunity to consider the hedges bounding the property as part of the growing system, as well as providing the visual screening and connecting wildlife habitats. Conventional wildlife corridor design would promote the use of trees and shrubs of species or varieties that are found locally. This provides the new planting with the greatest chance of being adopted quickly as new habitat, and supports the existing populations of insects, birds and mammals in the vicinity with additional niches for food, cover and for nesting. A tree / shrub selection which would match the Low Weald landscape character in Arlington would include:

- Trees: Oak, Hornbeam, Field Maple, (Ash), Holly, Crab apple, and possibly willow / alder on wettest areas.
- Shrubs: Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Spindle, Dogwood, Dog Rose.

None of these would provide evergreen cover, so the addition of some holly may be considered, but these are sometimes difficult to transplant.

A permaculture or forest gardening approach to hedge planting may offer the chance to introduce non-native species to the hedgerow, especially those which have potential for food production (nuts, seeds, berries). However, this would not be implemented immediately as it would be up to the smallholders to select and implement by enrichment planting amongst / alongside the boundary hedge. Some examples of options for designing a productive hedge can be found in *Trees for Gardens, Orchards and Permaculture*, Martin Crawford (2015). In this Scheme, tree and shrub species and varieties should be selected from climatic Zones 7, 8 and 9, and varieties chosen for tolerance to growing in neutral, seasonally-waterlogged clay-loam soils.

In future, additional hedges and tree groups could also be planted between, or within, the smallholder plots to further break up the large field pattern.

In the first instance, in order to establish a visual screen, a standard agricultural hedge will be planted in a double staggered row, with 50cm between rows, using 5 plants per linear metre. In this scenario, a single-species hawthorn hedge (*Crataegus monogyna*), designed to become a dense stock-proof barrier, would require 1,460 plants. To achieve an even denser visual screen, more akin to the established roadside hedge, and also to increase its diversity as a habitat, the new hedge may be extended over some sections to double this width, and include a wider variety of native trees and larger shrubs interspersed along the length.

Creating a mixed height along the length of the hedge can be achieved by use of trees planted in clumps, or interspersed as regular “standards” along the hedge-line. Opportunities also exist in the future to pollard trees to constrain height, and traditionally this approach works well with, for instance, willow on damper ground.

In addition to the linear hedgerow feature, a new tree group is to be planted in the north east corner of the proposed development area. This will be located and the

planting layout designed to provide visual screening from the north, and break up the outline of the barn when viewed from a distance.

The species choice will be drawn from a selection of “productive” broadleaved trees including wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), walnut (*Juglans spp.*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), wild service (*Sorbus torminalis*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), medlar (*Mespilus germanica*), elder (*Sambucus niger*) and plums (*Prunus spp.*).

As this field at Arlington was most recently under arable cultivation, the tree planting will be into existing stubble / weed growth.

As pre-planting spraying with herbicide is considered not to be appropriate on a site that might be entered into organic production, some alternative ways of reducing competition for the new plants will be required. One approach would be to prepare the ground by running a cultivated strip along the boundary with a Rotavator to turn in the weed growth and thereby break up any compacted surface layer, making planting easier, and provide the opportunity for mound planting in damper areas.

Hedge plants used will be bare-root stock (45cm – 60 cm) planted during the dormant season (end November – end March), or as container / cell-grown plants (30cm – 40 cm), which extends the planting season by 2 – 3 months.

The first option will require larger holes to be dug at planting. The cell-grow option is simpler and quicker, but as plants are initially somewhat smaller, they may take an extra season to become established.

The site is adequately fenced on the northern side which will minimise the risk of damage should livestock in the Copyhold smallholdings or Wilbees Fram attempt to get in. Unless ELC plan to raise livestock in the field, the southern side of the hedge would not require fencing.

The woodland and hedges surrounding the field and are likely to host rabbits, and deer slots have been seen on the site, indicating there may be some risk of the

young hedge / trees being browsed. At a low browsing level this would not be fatal, and would encourage bushy shrubs, but if attacked repeatedly this pressure could result in gaps in the hedge that would need to be replanted. If high levels of browsing are anticipated plastic rabbit spirals minimum 45cm high (for bare-root plants) or corrugated polypropylene quills (for cell-grown stock), would be used to protect individual plants, each supported by a cane.

There will be a requirement to keep competing weeds under control to stop the new plants being swamped and being starved of water in the growing season (May – July) during their formative first three years. This will secure a good establishment and rapid growth from then on. Sheets, mats or chip / compost, will be practical way of achieving this. Unless there is a drought in the spring immediately after planting, watering should not be necessary. Once established the hedge can be made thicker by annual trimming and formative pruning, or allowed to grow away vertically for eventual hedge-laying after 10 years or so.