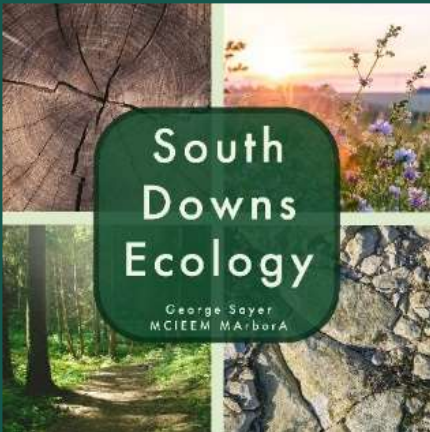




Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

Proposals at Combelands
Equestrian



South
Downs
Ecology

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Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

Proposals at Combelands Equestrian, Pulborough

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Summary

The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for the proposals at Coombelands Equestrian, A29, Pulborough.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment was carried out on the 5th March 2024 by George Sayer (BSc (Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MArborA, MCIEEM, NE Licence Holder – Bats Level 2 and GCN - Ecologist).

The proposal areas consist of existing poor modified grassland and unsealed unvegetated surfaces, and small areas of developed land surrounded by a native hedge, with line of trees.

The proposals are not anticipated to have any significant impact upon ecology; the grassland offers very limited potential for reptiles and small mammals with better potential for birds and commuting and foraging bats; the proposed works stand a 'negligible' chance of disturbing wildlife further.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was completed to confirm that the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Horsham Local Plan Policies, and the Environment Act (2021) within which a 10% net gain is now required.

The proposals would result in a 10.57% net gain in habitats and a 11.85% net gain in hedgerow features on-site.

The following Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy Details how habitats on-site will be retained, enhanced, created and managed for the next 30 years. The implementation timetable details when such works will be instigated.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for the proposals at Coombelands Equestrian, A29, Pulborough. The following strategy report details the background, rationale, habitat retention, enhancement, creation, and management of the enhancements on the proposal site. This strategy has been produced by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MCIEEM, MArborA).

Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.2 The site consists of part of the existing Coombelands Equestrian facility, comprising an access drive, horse gallops, and grassland areas for equestrian uses. The site is accessed off Stane Street/A29 to the east.
- 1.3 Coombelands Equestrian lies to the north of Pulborough, on the edge of Codmore Hill. Land to the west consists of further equestrian land. Land to the north consists of farmland, pastures and patches of woodland. Land to the south consists of equestrian land and paddocks before hitting the railway line and A29. Land to the east consists of residential areas and paddock.

Proposals

- 1.4 The proposals are for construction of a new Premier Inn hotel on the site; the proposal has outline approval and this application is for reserved matters. This would consist of an L-shaped building with access and parking running round the eastern boundary from the north-east corner, to the south-eastern corner and round to the west where a carpark is proposed. A deliveries area is proposed to the north. The proposal is accompanied by landscape proposals of native tree, hedge and thicket planting and ornamental planting.

2.0 Scope of Plan

1. *Outline the purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures.*
 2. *Provide detailed designs to achieve stated objectives.*
 3. *Indicate locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans.*
 4. *Identify persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures.*
 5. *Provide details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).*
- 2.1 This strategy is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of one year due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site. Should the site conditions or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the assessment is still valid.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The site is given over to habitats of **low value** which are discussed further below.

U1b 839 – Developed Land; Sealed Surface (Track)

- 3.2 The site is accessed along a track. Parts of this are formed of tarmac. In addition there are several small paved paths throughout the site. The habitat offers negligible ecological value.

U1b5 – Buildings

- 3.3 The site contains a small building which appears to be a café/kitchen. The habitat offers negligible ecological value.

U1c 839 – Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface (Track)

- 3.4 The site is accessed along a track. This appears largely unsealed but formed of earth and compacted aggregate. There are some areas of bare earth, a parking area as well as three existing horse arenas, formed of unsealed materials. The habitat offers **negligible ecological value**.

G4 108 - Modified Grassland (Regularly Mown)

- 3.5 The gallops and surrounding areas are dominated by a grassland which is generally well-maintained, dominated by perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*, with few forbs such as white clover *Trifolium repens* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* noted.
- 3.6 The grass is generally well-used and lacking in diversity with an average across 10, 1sqm random quadrats of 4.3 species per sqm. The margins contain some taller ruderal forbs such as nettles *Urtica dioica* and cleavers *Galium aparine*. The habitat offers **site ecological value**.

H2a6 – Other Native Hedgerow (Priority Habitat)

- 3.7 There are several rows of hedging between the gallops and several other areas. The hedge is entirely formed of well-maintained hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. The northern hedgerow contains several semi-mature lime trees. The hedges are a priority habitat but do not connect to other habitats at either end, and are of **site ecological value**.

H2b – Ornamental Non-native Hedgerow

- 3.8 There is a neat coniferous hedge separating the arenas. The hedges are of **negligible ecological value**.

W1g 34 Ecologically-valuable Line of Trees (Priority Habitat)

- 3.9 The access drive is lined with a long continuous line of lime trees *Tilia sp.* Several mature oaks *Quercus robur* are interspersed. The treeline contains mature trees and is therefore ecologically-valuable, but the treeline does contain gaps and does not connect to other habitats at either end, and as such is of **site ecological value**.

3.10 Protection of Wildlife and Habitats During Works

- 3.11 There is very limited potential for wildlife to be disturbed by works; however, the following details the relevant mitigation measures recommended during the works.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.12 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was completed to confirm that the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Horsham Local Plan Policies and the Environment Act (2021) within which a 10% net gain is now required.
- 3.13 Based on the habitats as they stand on-site, and the current site proposals. the proposals would result in a 10.57% net gain in habitats and a 11.58% net gain in hedgerow features on-site. Please refer to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (GS316.Combelands.BNGMetric.v4) and assessment (GS316.Combelands.BNG.v3) for more information.

4.0 Purpose and Conservation Objectives

4.1 The purpose of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy is to detail how the proposals will comply with local and national policy with regards to ecology and biodiversity.

4.2 The objectives of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy are:

1. *Enhance the existing low baseline of the site without compromising the existing and proposed uses of the site*
2. *Create new connectivity across the site by linking hedgerows*
3. *Create new wildflower margins providing space for a range of wildlife*
4. *Allow the continued use of public rights of way without this being detrimental to wildlife*

5.0 Detailed Designs and Prescriptions for Biodiversity Enhancements

5.1 The proposals involve the following habitat enhancement creation and management prescriptions:

1. Planting of new moderate condition native hedgerow;
2. Enhancement of modified grassland to neutral grassland in moderate condition;
3. Provision of Biodiversity Features.

5.2 To ensure the above habitats are created and maintained, the following prescriptions should be adhered to.

Prescription 1 – Planting of New Moderate Condition Native Hedge

Site Preparation and Planting

5.3 The ground shall be prepared by clearance of any ruderals, roots, stumps, larger stones and prepared to form a level bed and even tilth. Whips shall be planted at a density of five whips per linear metre, planted in double-staggered rows, with rows 30.0 cm apart. Species shall either be specified by a landscape architect, or shall include at least three from the following list:

- Common Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Field Maple
- Dogwood
- Crab Apple
- Guelder Rose
- Dog Rose
- Hazel

5.4 Whips shall be at least 90/120cm stock to ensure rapid establishment. The whips shall have a slot or small pit hand-dug, the whip planted up to the root collar and then heeled back in with a boot. Bamboo canes can be used in exposed areas to support the whips. Biodegradable rabbit guards can be fitted to the whips if deemed necessary, to prevent herbivore damage.

5.5 The whips shall be watered as required for the first season or until well-established; 5l of water per linear metre shall be provided fortnightly between June-August, during any period when there is no significant precipitation for more than one week.

5.6 The whips shall not require any pruning until they are established and at least 2.0 m tall. Any encroaching bramble may require periodic pruning-back to ensure the whips are not overcrowded

Management Once Established

- 5.7 Once established, the hedgerow shall be maintained at an appropriate height suited to the development. This should be at least 1.5 m height. The hedge shall be pruned into an 'A-frame' shape, allowing a dense, tall inner hedge with shelter for birds and mammals, and graded out to the edges to create edge habitats for reptiles and invertebrates. The hedge shall be cut over winter to prevent the risk of harming nesting birds.

Prescription 2 – Enhancement of existing modified grassland to neutral grassland in moderate condition;

Site Preparation and Planting

- 5.8 The area proposed for enhancement shall be cut as short as possible, then harrowed or tined heavily to open up at least 50% of the sward in late summer. The habitat shall then be seeded with an appropriate mix (Wildflower Lawns and Meadows 'Economy Seed Mix for Clay, Loam or Sandy Soils with Wild Orchid' suggested) at the appropriate density in October.
- 5.9 The grassland shall be subject to an initial cut in April to reduce vigorous grasses and weeds. Following this it is unlikely to need a further cut until August or September, when a 'hay cut' is undertaken. The grassland can be managed more regularly over winter if necessary to prevent a thatch developing.

Management Once Established

- 5.10 Once established, the grassland shall be cut once late in summer and the arisings removed. The grassland shall then either be left until the next summer, or subject to more frequent cuts (e.g. monthly) over the winter until March.
- 5.11 Every April and September (as necessary) an area of 1% of the habitat shall be scalped using machinery or hand tools, to turn over fresh soil and allow annual plants to grow. The areas selected shall be varied to create a patchwork of habitat.

Prescription 3 – Provision of Biodiversity Features;

5.12 The site shall be enhanced with the following features. These are detailed by the Appendix E - Ecological Enhancement Plan:

- New Standard Bird Box - 1no. CJ Wildlife CJ Alicante 32mm Nest Box and 1no. CJ Wildlife Seville 32mm Nest Box;
- New Robin / Wren / Blackbird Open Boxes: 3no. CJ Wildlife Barcelona Open Woodstone Bird Boxes;
- New Tree Mounted Bat Box: 1no. Greenwoods Half and Half Bat Box;
- New Habitat Piles – 3no. 1m x 1m x 0.5m high piles of logs, branches, leaves and stones, buried at least 100mm.

5.13 The features shall be installed as per the manufacturer's instructions and shall be determined on-site.

5.14 All features shall be installed immediately upon project completion.

5.15 The features shall be checked annually and replaced if they fail or fall. Any bat boxes must be inspected by a licenced bat ecologist if they require movement or cleaning.

5.16 Habitat piles shall be replenished annually with locally-sourced native logs, brash, arisings or leaves from native species.

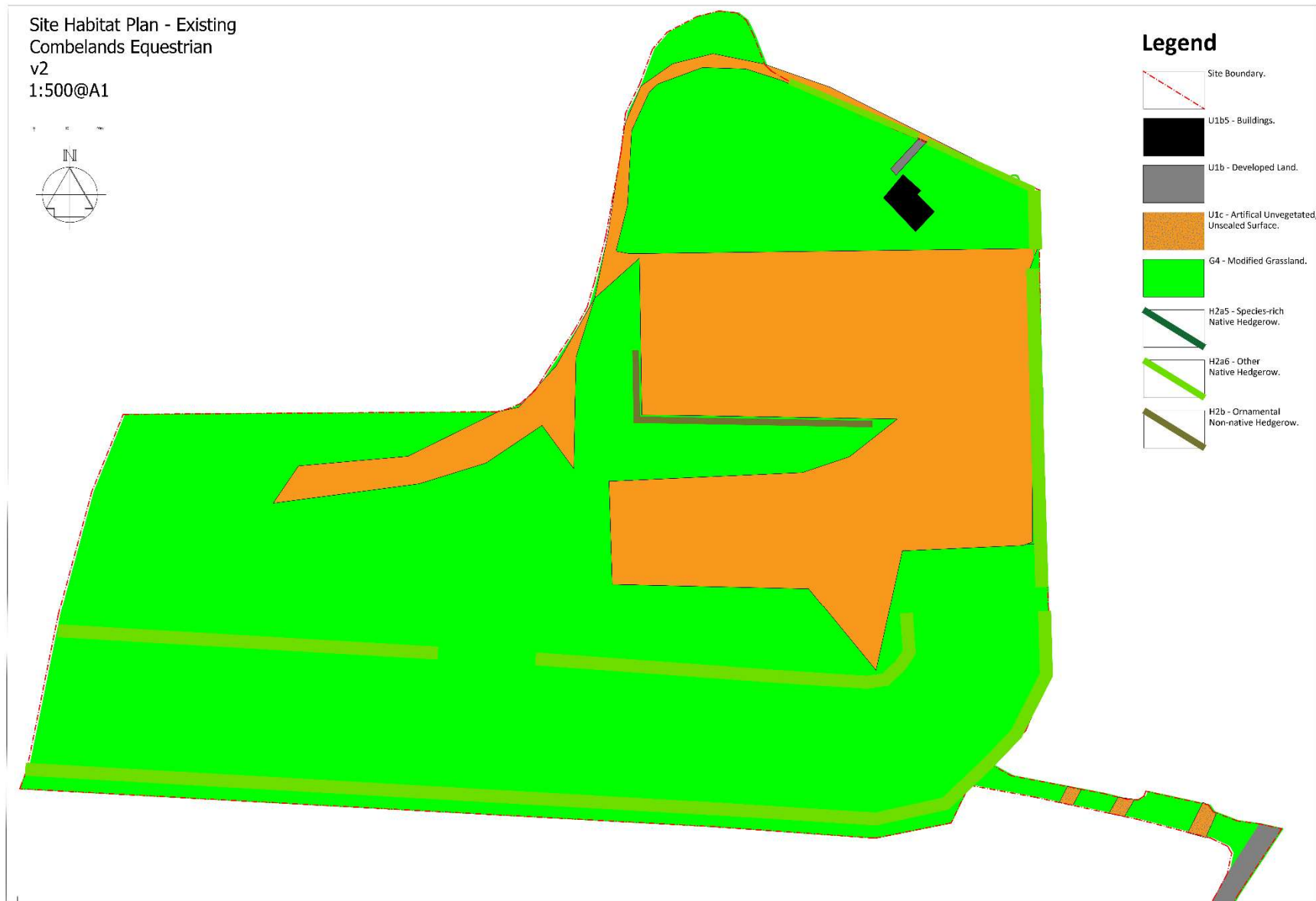
6.0 Responsibilities for Management

- 6.1 The applicant as the landowner and manager will be responsible for enacting the biodiversity measures or for appointing appropriate contractors to undertake this.
- 6.2 Following the establishment of the habitats, the responsibility will ultimately remain with the applicant. It is assumed that funding for ongoing management will be provided by the applicant.
- 6.3 The applicant will undertake (or will appoint appropriate contractors to undertake) at least annual checks of the site, and management as required. They will also appoint an ecologist or landscape consultant to confirm the habitats and enhancements are achieving the proposed habitat types and conditions.
- 6.4 The ecologist, landscape consultant or the contractor shall notify the applicant of any non-compliance as soon as possible, and a plan for rectification devised which shall be approved by the management company. The management company may seek at any time an alternative opinion on any such plans.

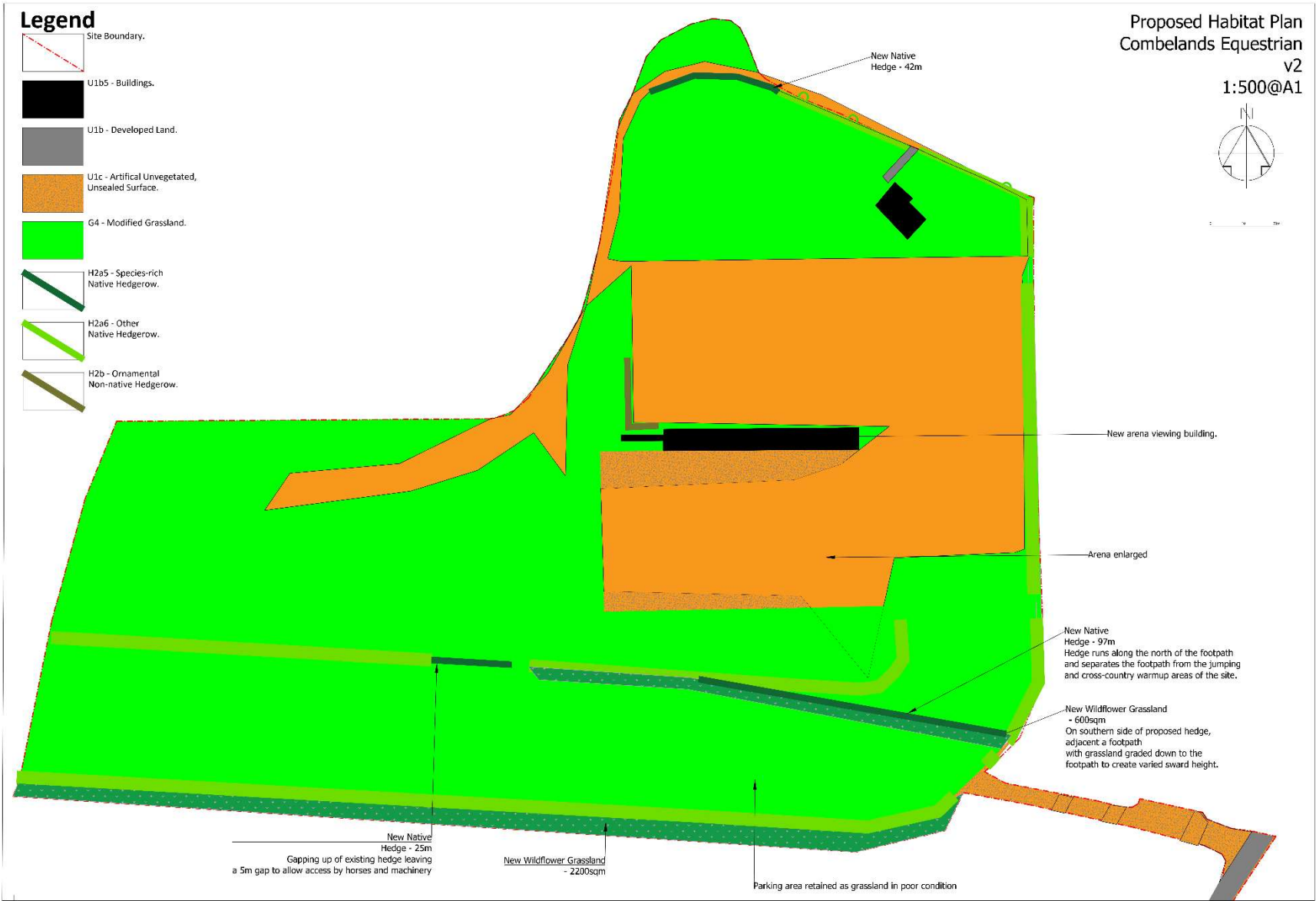
7.0 Appendix A – Timetable for implementation

Prescription	Year 1 (autumn 2026 or spring 2027)	Spring or Autumn 2027	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing to Year 30
Planting of new native hedge	Prepare ground and plant whips.	Keep whips free of brambles and competition.	Keep whips free of brambles and competition.	Keep whips free of brambles and competition. Cut if over 2.0 m height.	Trim hedge to desired height and domed form in early spring.	Trim hedge to desired height and domed form in early spring.	Ongoing cutting in winter/late spring every 1-5 years to desired height and domed form.
Enhancement of grassland to neutral grassland	Prepare ground by cutting and harrowing; seed soil.	Initial cut to reduce weeds and grasses.	Hay cut in August-September.	Hay cut in August-September. Opening-up of 1% of the area to create bare soil.	Hay cut in August-September. Opening-up of 1% of the area to create bare soil.	Hay cut in August-September. Opening-up of 1% of the area to create bare soil.	Hay cut in August-September. Opening-up of 1% of the area to create bare soil. Re-seed any larger bare or denuded patches. Remove dense stands of nettles or other ruderals by hand.
Provision of Biodiversity Features	Install Habitat Piles and support stakes for other boxes within hedge. Install bat, bird and insect features (assuming habitat has established sufficiently).	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter.	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter.	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter.	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter.	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter.	Inspect Habitat Piles and replenish as required. Check bird and bat boxes for position and any debris or damage in late winter. Repair, re-site or replace any boxes that are damaged or not being used after year 5.

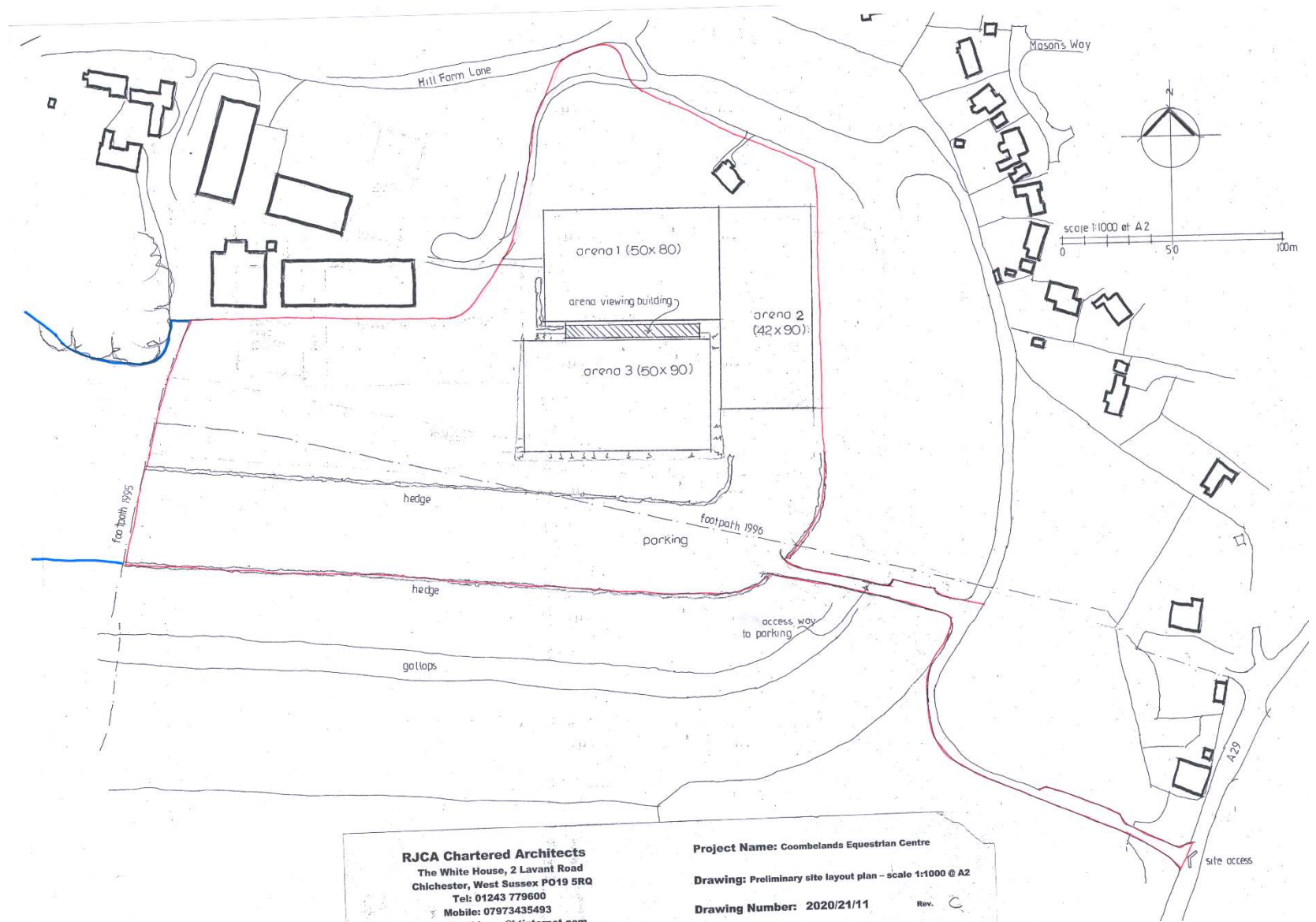
8.o Appendix B - Baseline Habitat Plan



9.0 Appendix C - Proposed Habitat Plan



10.0 Appendix D - Proposed Site Plan



11.0 Appendix E - Proposed Ecological Enhancement Plan

