

The Warren Heritage Project

The project is to bring different elements of a unique estate into a settled relationship and permanently reverse its division and decline in the interests of the community.





The Warren Estate

These black and white photographs were not taken in 1895 when the first house was built here, nor in 1913 when it was extended as the First World War was about to begin, but in 2022 as the Covid epidemic ended and once again, we were able to look to the future with hope and optimism.

The Warren Estate has not always looked so impressive. After and because of World War Two, the 650-acre estate was divided into lots and sold. In the 1960s the house was converted to flats. By the 1990s it was decrepit, separated from its parkland gardens, facing ruin. Yet it is still one of the finest country houses in Sussex.

In 1994 a grandson of the last owner inherited the remains of the estate - about 30 acres – and purchased a substantial portion of the house with the intention of restoring and reintegrating the whole. Hundreds of thousands have been invested over the past 30 years but there is still more to do.



The heritage project

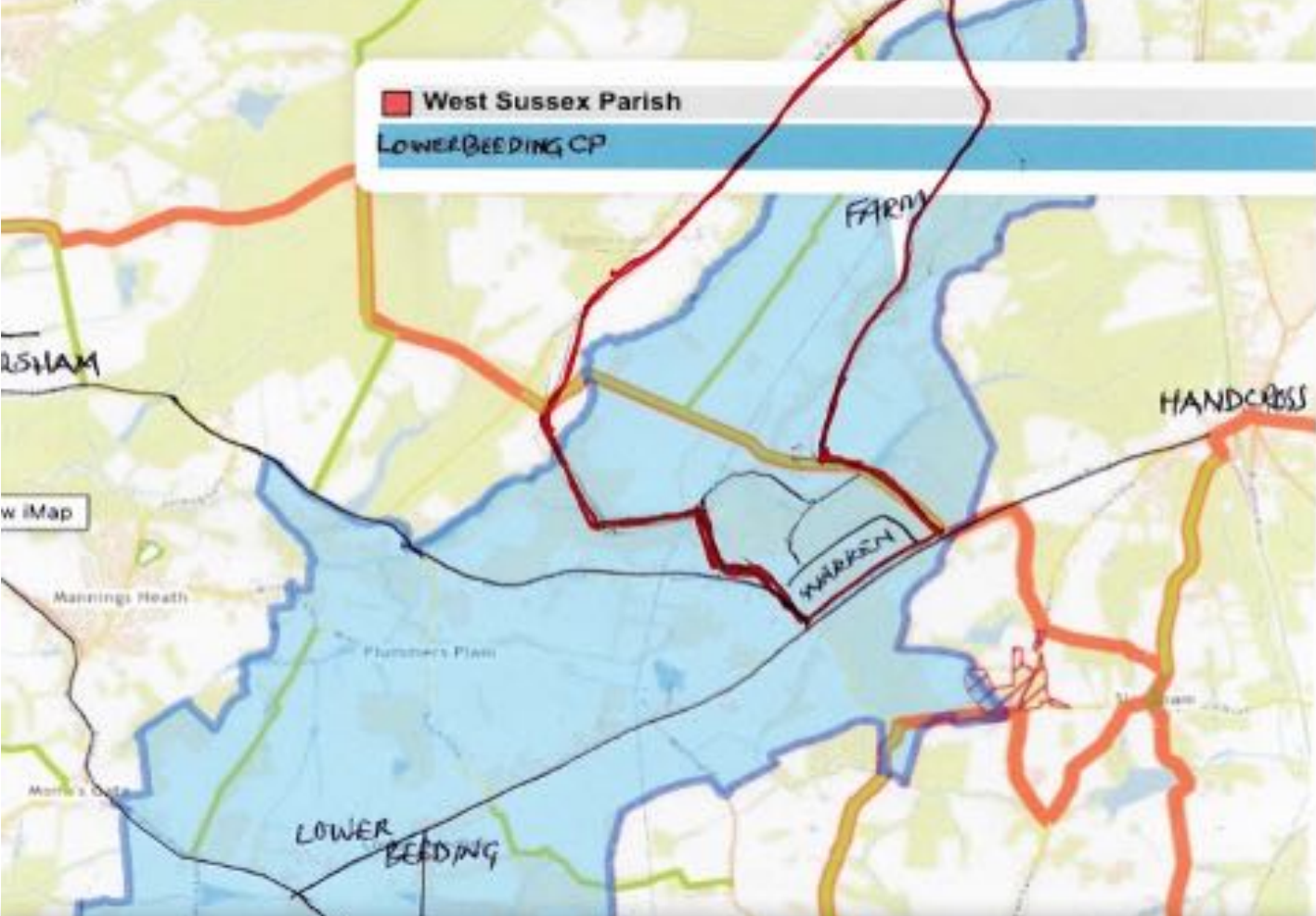
The aim is a sustainable new economic model to complete the restoration of heritage assets and the landscape, improve public access to rights of way across the original estate, provide a centre of local interest and rural innovation, and permanently save them from further division and decline.

The focus of the project is The Warren, bottom right on the plan, in Lower Beeding Parish at the western end of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It includes parkland gardens, outbuildings, 18 dwellings and a population of some 50 people.

In accord with the Parish Neighbourhood Plan and National Planning Policy, the project has been devised in the public interest to be fully funded from minimal enabling development within previously consented parts of the estate.

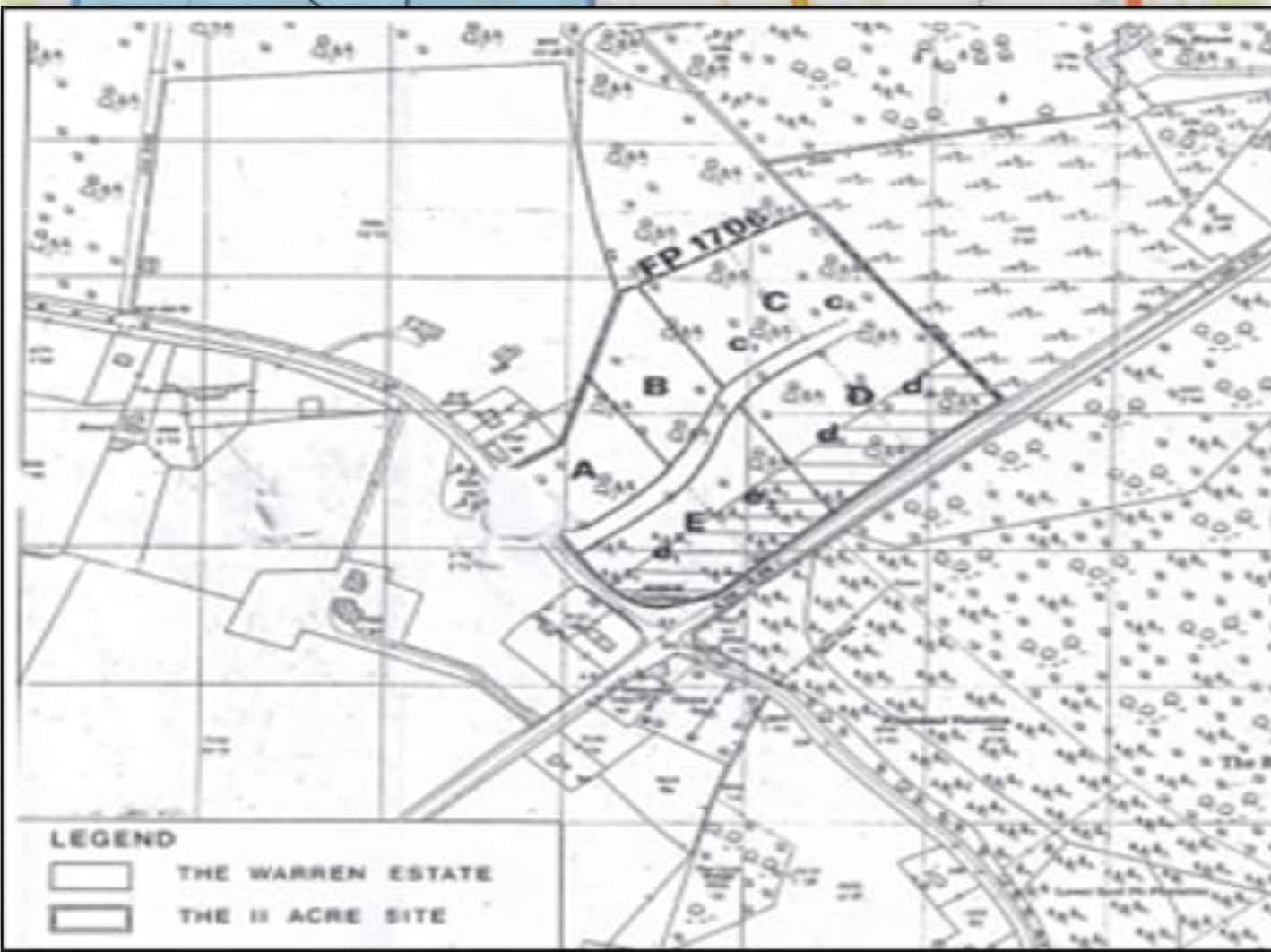


The Warren Estate in 1952 – Historic England Archive



Lower Beeding Parish and the High Weald

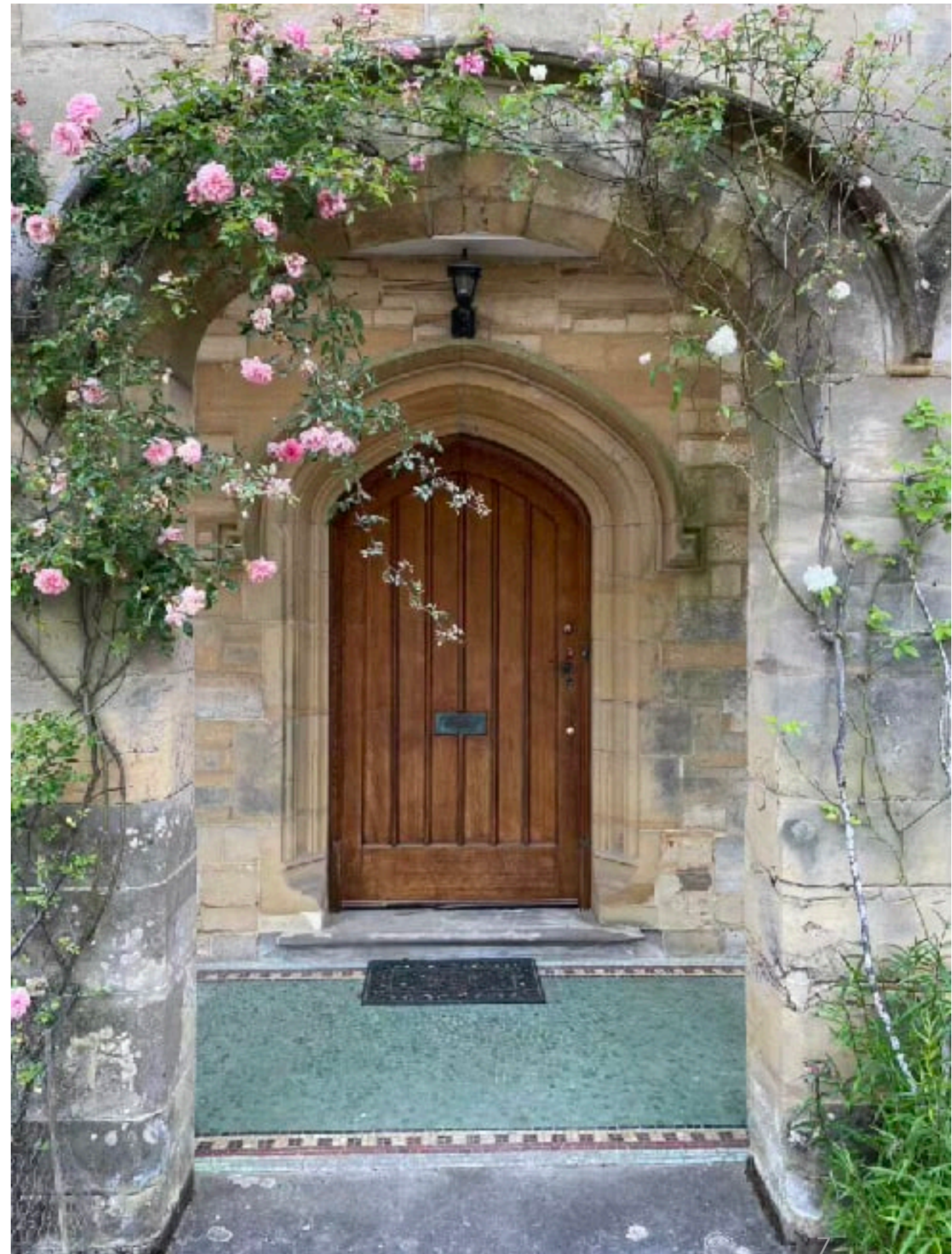
The whole of the Warren Estate is almost 15% of the Parish of Lower Beeding and forms the western border of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The neighbouring Hyde Estate is a smaller percentage of Slaughtam Parish and between them they form the borders of East and West Sussex and the County Constabularies.



Between 1965 and '75, five houses were built in 11 acres granted Building Consent by Horsham District Council. In 1975 the estate was excluded from a government-planned Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty because it “did not merit inclusion”. But Horsham District Council lobbied to include the whole of Plummers Plain. By 1983 the estate border was finalised as “the most convenient solution” to “the problem of defining a suitable boundary in Plummers Plain, where there is a difference between us”.

Heritage

The house, built and substantially extended between 1895 and 1913, is a particularly fine example of a Sussex country house of that style “when the Gothic Revival gave way to a further classical revival, based on carefully considered historical sources from 17th Century neo-vernacular traditions” (Historic England). It was home to Leicester Morgan Reed, Justice of the Peace for Sussex and later head of Crawley-based William Reed Publishing, still a family-owned, world-leading industry media business. The architect, E P Warren FRIBA, also designed Shelley House in Chelsea, connected with Horsham’s famous poet. He restored Lamb House in Rye for American author Henry James, whose life-long amanuensis Theodora Bosanquet, was 5th cousin to Eveline Louise Emmeline Bosanquet, wife of Colonel J R Warren, whose family still own The Hyde estate at Handcross, 'next door' to The Warren, with a similarly divided Grade II Listed mansion. Eveline's elder sister, Cicely Alice Colquhoun Bosanquet, married Major George Edward Shelley, cousin once-removed to Percy Bysshe Shelley. Such is the web of connection, through space and time, which shapes and brings us all to the present moment. Heritage reminds us who we are, and of life’s most intricate meaning.



Division and decline

Whilst the main body of the original Estate remains intact as Newstead Farm and Carters Lodge, The Warren was divided into flats in 1965 and from its parkland in 1983. A 100-acre wood between the farm and The Warren was divided by speculators no less than five times between 2011 and 2025 (red outline). On average, a subdivision every six years. The mansion went into swift decline between 1983 to 1994 and in 1987 a hurricane devastated the remaining parkland. The public footpaths became impassable.



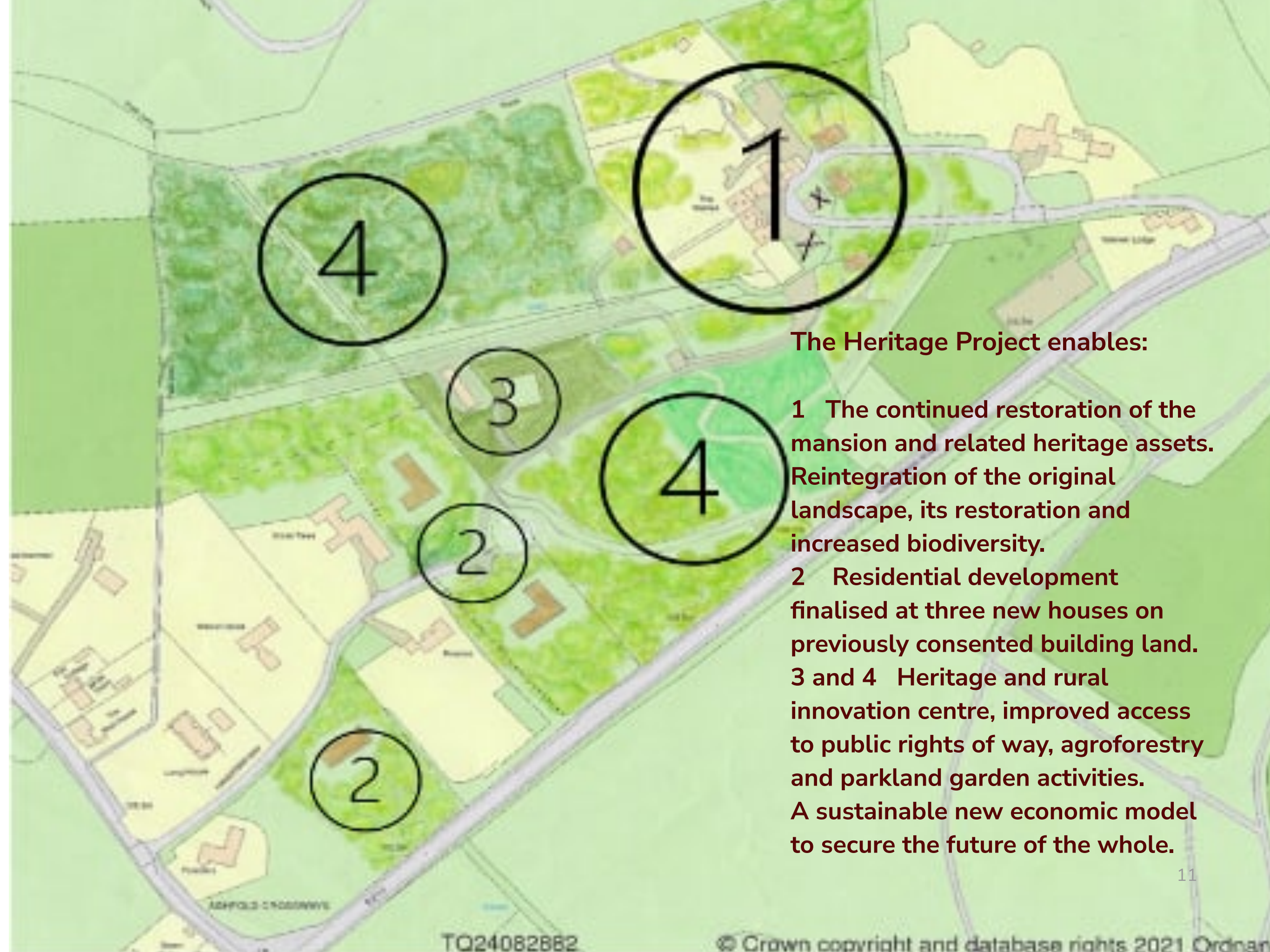
Recovery

Today the contrast is stark. With other leaseholders, sound management and significant investment, much has been done to restore the mansion and reintegrate it into its surroundings. Now it remains to establish a new economic model for the whole the estate to survive and prosper as an asset for the community. The means to achieve this is the Heritage Project.





As a predominantly residential estate, home to 18 dwellings and some 50 people, without new capital resources and a sustainable model to continue its restoration and upkeep, it remains vulnerable to continuing disintegration and decline. Urgent action is needed if this is to be reversed.



The Heritage Project enables:

1 The continued restoration of the mansion and related heritage assets. Reintegration of the original landscape, its restoration and increased biodiversity.

2 Residential development finalised at three new houses on previously consented building land.

3 and 4 Heritage and rural innovation centre, improved access to public rights of way, agroforestry and parkland garden activities.

A sustainable new economic model to secure the future of the whole.

The Warren Estate

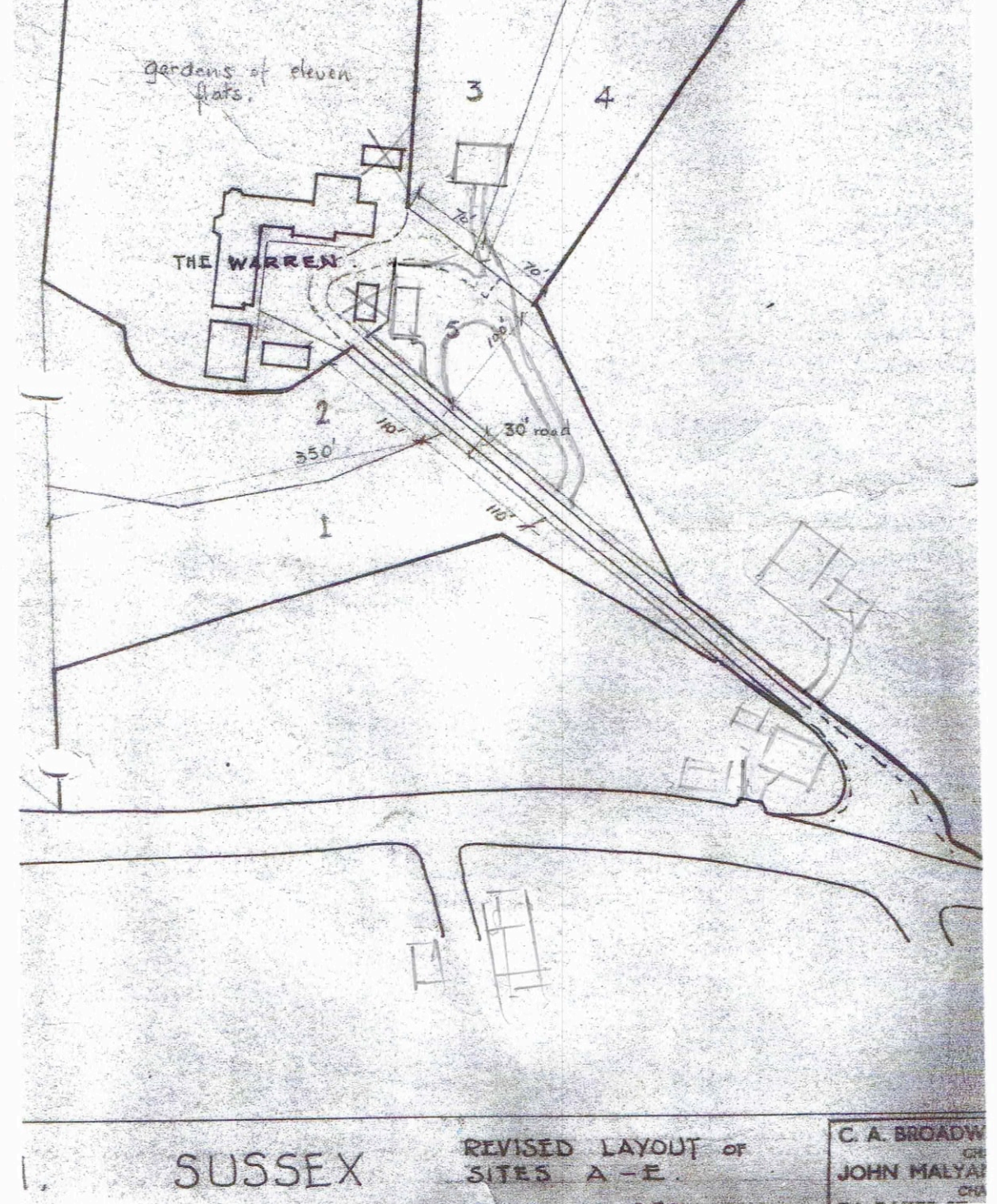
What is going to happen and where?

The mansion and its immediate curtilage

Restoring the heritage mansion involves the relocation of 3 garage blocks constructed around the main courtyard in 1965, whilst new garages must provide safe and easy access from the mansion flats. The largest number of garages for the five flats at the rear of the building (flats 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) would be accommodated in a new 'coach house' building shown just below the no. 3 to the right of the rear of the main building (shown brown, Project plan p12).

The courtyard building, in the style of the mansion, replaces the original coach house, now Warren Wood, a private residence set in four acres to the right below areas 3 and 4, near the drive. It would include nine garages and stores for the flats and four enabling dwellings.

Replacement of four more garages would be provided in area 5 for the four flats at the front of the house (flats 3, 4, 5 and 6). This would also be well-screened from the house and combine two additional new amenities to resolve traffic congestion, damage, and safety problems.



The existing drive is shown extended in an arc to provide new facilities for refuse collection and delivery vehicles to safely park and deliver, without entering and damaging the courtyard, avoiding the daily run of vans and lorries.

Replacement and restoration

The dotted lines through the main courtyard in front of the house show the original arc which once returned to the old coach house, now Warren Wood.

The new arc at no. 5 provides for a single refuse collection next to the garages, replacing three separate bin collection points behind each of the old garage blocks, which meant dragging twenty-two 'wheelie bins' across the gravel courtyard.

The land in area 5 would be shared with the existing heritage asset management company, subject to rights of way and maintenance arrangements, garages and amenity replacement, and a fund for restoration provided from the new coach house building.

The final four old garages above and to the left of the no. 2, would combine with a replacement dwelling shown immediately right of 2, to serve flats 1, 2, 4 and the replacement dwelling.



This resolves another requirement - for safer access to large liquid-gas storage tanks behind the existing garage block left of 2. A large tanker currently has to turn in the main courtyard, blocking the garages whilst delivering.

Minor amendment to the original driveway, including a passing space on the main approach and possibly gated entry will remove congestion and improve security.

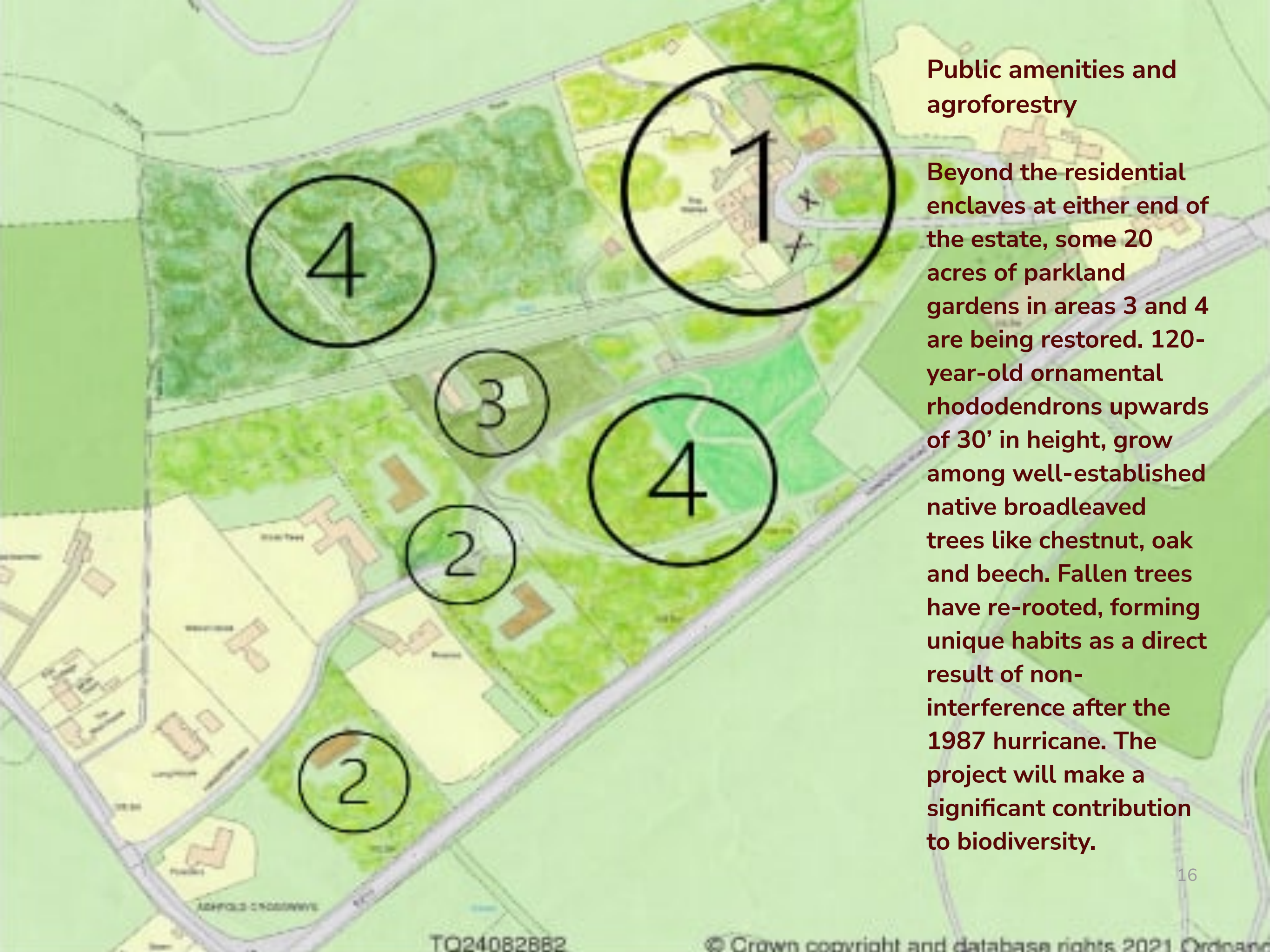


The Summer House and water storage

A second replacement dwelling in a restored thatched summerhouse built between 1895 and 1910, immediately to left of the large circle 1 does not increase the total number of dwellings, by converting two flats to a single dwelling in the mansion. It has no ancillary restriction, remaining beyond the demise of the leasehold mansion flats. The heritage restoration project includes an artesian well which collects surface water from the roofs of the mansion.

The effect of these proposals is to help remove some £200,000 of estimated future costs from the mansion and establish a Heritage Restoration Fund from the proceeds of enabling development. The result is a sustainable economic model to ensure the maintenance of the principal heritage asset from a realistic service charge.





Public amenities and agroforestry

Beyond the residential enclaves at either end of the estate, some 20 acres of parkland gardens in areas 3 and 4 are being restored. 120-year-old ornamental rhododendrons upwards of 30' in height, grow among well-established native broadleaved trees like chestnut, oak and beech. Fallen trees have re-rooted, forming unique habits as a direct result of non-interference after the 1987 hurricane. The project will make a significant contribution to biodiversity.

Restoring the landscape will ensure its future

The project aims to restore an appropriate balance of native plant and animal species in natural heathland to the west, steep wooded elevations in the north, and more level ground to the south. Hundreds of native trees have already been planted, including oak, hornbeam, English and Irish yew, and with the Conservation Foundation, disease-resistant elm as part of David Bellamy's 'Great British Elm Experiment' in 2010. But in the past 12 years invasive deer have more than quadrupled, wreaking havoc on new planting.

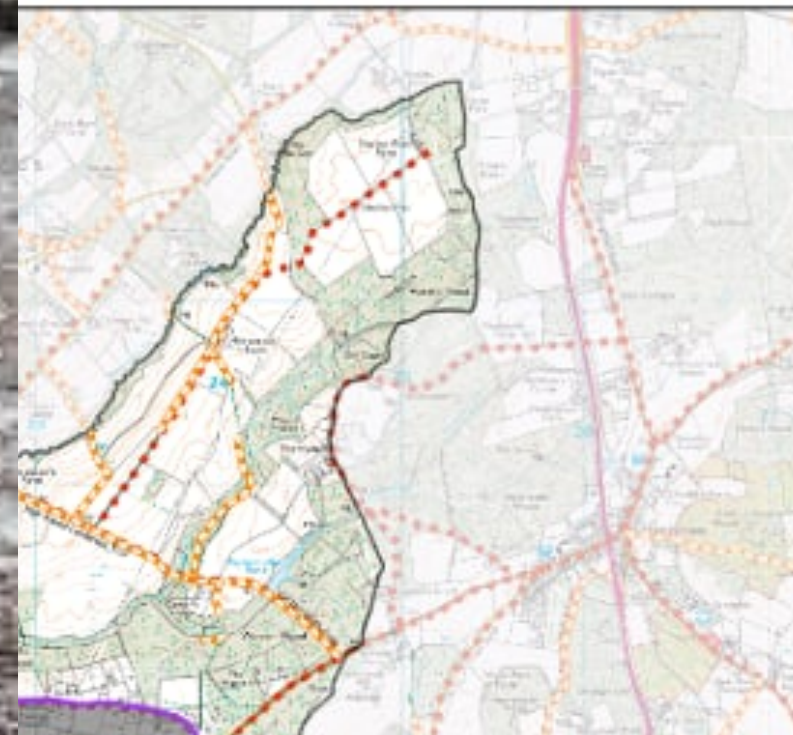
Protection will be afforded by grids, hedges and hollows to enable the movement of other species whilst allowing the extensive re-planting necessary to ensure sustainable biodiversity and integrate a variety of agroforestry activities. With neighbouring landowners, the Project will aim to replace plantations with native woodland and engage in heritage projects including the restoration of a 19th century pumping station which until 1952 fed water to the mansion and electricity to its farm.





Enjoyment and reconnection

A heritage garden is being added to footpath 1706, used by 19th-century Handcross children walking to a schoolhouse in Hammer Pond Road. A small car park off the B2110 Horsham Road improves public access to the valuable network of historic rights of way from Lower Beeding to Horsham, Pease Pottage, Slaugham, and all the way through East Sussex to the harbour at Rye - and Lambs House - on the south coast.



High Weald AONB
Landscape Character:
Historic routeways
**Lower Beeding
Parish**

Key

- Historic routeways - roads (R1)
- Historic routeways - PROW (R1)
- Area of parish outside the High Weald AONB for which data is not displayed or not available (NB: only applicable where parishes straddle the AONB boundary)
- High Weald AONB boundary

A centre for heritage and innovation

An existing outbuilding at no. 3, constructed on an old tennis court, will be extended to include a heritage centre with controlled public access. It houses the estate office and part of the estate owner's business in human nutrition and agroforestry, conducting research and development with UK universities, research and medical establishments, manufacturing industries, and farms and estates at home and abroad.



It conducts research using our native European seaweeds to seed and stimulate commercial projects at sites elsewhere in the countryside and in a variety of industries. These might range from replacing salt in manufactured foods, to reducing methane emissions in dairy cattle; growing mushrooms on oak logs, to improving conventional means of composting. The building is being repurposed to provide electricity generation from solar panels, return power to the national grid, and store rain from roofing run-off to minimise estate use of mains water.

Enabling new homes in Handford Way

The Heritage Project requires a substantial capital investment from the sale of three new homes, each set in some 1.5 acres at no. 2 within the area granted Building Consent in 1963 by Horsham District Council. From Handford Way, a private road on the estate, a mile-long woodland walk will be created for these houses and 13 dwellings at The Warren, providing residents new access to a bus stop and public footpaths.



Each house and its gardens will be individually designed and built to enhance the estate, reflect the best examples of the architectural vernacular, and conform with local and national guidelines for building in the National Landscape. Improvements will be made to Handford Way to allow for passing and turning, retaining the privacy and unassuming nature of the local community. Upkeep will be improved and maintained by a service charge from the enabling development.



1994

The next 130 years and more

The remaining park and woodland will provide for the long term upkeep and integrity of the estate. A small number of synergistic agroforestry projects under estate management will work with the indigenous species including oak trees, mushrooms, bamboos, brackens, ferns, bees and vines to explore the mineral and micronutrient input of marine nutrition and its well-established benefits for human and animal health and regenerative agriculture.



There will be no further residential development. Access to the tree and plant nursery, and to the heritage and innovation centre will be via existing access from the Horsham Road. Just as gates, walls, windows, doors and drainage have been and continue to be restored throughout the estate, so these activities will sustain its beautiful and functional surroundings. The Warren will remain among the finest estates in the south of England.

2024

