# Horsham Football Club

# Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan

## Version 2.0

## April 2025

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# 1. Management Summary

This document discusses the overall nature of Horsham Football Club's Hop Oast ground. It identifies the various landscaping elements. These are defined as:

- The 3G football pitches
- Buildings and structures
- Internal Hardstanding areas
- The car park and external hardstanding areas
- The grassed and planted areas of the ground
- The surrounding woodlands

For each area the objectives of the maintenance programme are identified and the strategy to achieve those objectives is detailed. This will include the necessary activities, the timescales when they should happen and an indication as to whether this will be by the Club's volunteer staff or external contractors.

# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 Purpose of this Document

This document sets out how the existing landscape and ecology at Horsham Football Club's (HFC) Hop Oast ground will be managed and maintained. It includes a plan of the Hop Oast ground and defines the various areas which need to be considered. It defines the objectives of the management of each area and the processes and mechanisms which will be put in place to ensure its delivery.

This document was a required deliverable for the planning application - reference DC/16/2856 – under which the construction of the Hop Oast ground was approved, but owing to an oversight was never submitted.

This document now seeks to retrospectively rectify this omission. Despite being created somewhat late, it has the advantage that the ground and its environment is now mature and we more fully understand the requirements of its various elements.

## 2.2 Description of the Site

HFC's new ground at Hop Oast, Worthing Road, Horsham, RH13 0AX consists of a number of elements.

These include:

- Two 3G (artificial) football pitches, one full sized and one two-thirds sized.
- Associated buildings including a clubhouse, covered stands, turnstiles, press box, scoreboard and a utility building including equipment storage, toilets and laundry.
- Hardstanding within the ground's boundary, providing safe standing for spectators and entrance and exit routes.
- Car parking and other external hardstanding providing access and parking.
- Grassed areas and other planting around the borders of the two pitches.
- An area of woodland, part of which is designated as Ancient Woodland

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## 2.3 History of the Site

The area now occupied by the football club was traditionally an area of pasture for Home Farm, associated with Denne Park, and was thus grassed, bordered by hedging and woodland. In the 1980s this area became part of the Horsham Golf and Fitness golf course. As such it remained largely grass, though with the inclusion of certain golf features such as bunkers, green and tees. Some hedging was removed at this period. In 2019, the new Horsham Football Club ground was opened on the site.

The site is bounded to the south and west by woodland. Part of this is now designated as Ancient Woodland, which suggests that it has been in existence since before 1600. Despite this it shows clear signs of having been a managed woodland, probably providing wood for fencing and building materials for the nearby Home Farm.

# 3. Management and Maintenance

## 3.1 Overall Objectives for the Hop Oast site.

The management and maintenance of the Hop Oast site seek to achieve a number of objectives. These are:

1. The safety of all staff, visitors and users of the ground, including the Club's own volunteers, and of the general public who may attend matches and events.

2. Cleanliness of areas used by staff and the public.

3. Fitness of the ground to be used by HFC and all other users for the purposes for which it was constructed.

4. Compliance with all legal requirements and with those of the Football Association and Isthmian League (and any other leagues in which HFC teams may play).

5. A good general level of maintenance so that the ground presents as well used and cared for.

6. The general ecology of the entire site, encouraging existing planting and wildlife and introducing new items where appropriate, aiming to restore a diverse culture appropriate to the local environment.

The relative priority of the above aims will vary between the various areas of the ground. The specific objectives and maintenance procedures to be followed are defined below for each area:

- The 3G football pitches
- The buildings on site
- Hardstanding within the ground's boundary
- Car parking and other external hardstanding
- Grassed areas and other planting around the borders of the two pitches.
- The woodland and ancient woodland.

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## 3.2 The 3G Football Pitches

Indicated as "A" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

HFC has installed two 3G artificial pitches. One, a full-sized pitch has been constructed to the FIFA Quality Performance standard, meaning it can be used for matches up to Step 3 of the non-league pyramid. A smaller, two-thirds sized pitch has also been installed with an artificial carpet suitable for community use. The main pitch carpet has an expected life of seven years and the community pitch, ten years.



Photo 1 – The Main 3G Pitch



Photo 2 – The Community 3G pitch

Objective for these areas:

- Safety off all users
- Compliance with FA and League regulations
- Cleanliness
- To achieve the full expected life of the pitches

Strategy for these areas:

Maintenance for each is similar. Each week the pitches will be cleaned and all litter and other detritus removed. Each week, both pitches will be brushed according to the manufacturer's instructions. Once a year a more in-depth cleaning and de-compacting process will be undertaken by the manufacturer themselves.

In addition, each year the main pitch will be tested by an FA approved organisation to ensure it still complies with the Football Association regulations for artificial surfaces.

If during the weekly cleaning and brushing process any damage to the 3G pitches is found, this should be notified to the Stadium Manager, who will arrange for the manufacturer to attend and repair the damage.

### 3.2.1 3G Rubber Crumb

3G pitches are made up of a shock-absorbing layer, a matting of plastic fibres, sand and rubber infill, typically made from recycled car tyres. Rubber infill is a source of microplastic pollution if it travels and spreads, therefore, the following procedures will be followed to prevent loss.

1. Deliveries of crumb will be made in large bulk bags and stored in an area which is constructed so as to prevent loose crumb from escaping into the surrounding area.

2. When used, the crumb will be transferred carefully to the surfaces where it is to be applied.

3. When applying crumb to playing surfaces, over application will be avoided, using only the required amounts to achieve a compliant performance and optimum maintenance.

4. Regarding the risk of crumb spillage from each playing surface:

**Main playing surface**: This location has a surrounding fence and hardstanding, all of which is surrounded by a further 2 metre-high wooden fence with gravel boards. Regular monitoring of the hardstanding will ensure any minimal crumb which does escape to the hardstanding will be swept up and reused if clean or processed if

contaminated (see point 6).

**Community playing surface:** This location is also surrounded by a tall fence to retain crumb and circa 50% of the surface is surrounded by a retaining wall which prevents the spread of any crumb in these locations. Kick boards approximately 20 cm in height will prevent any spread of crumb to natural zones. Any crumb which does escape to the surrounding hardstanding will be swept up and reused if clean or processed if contaminated (see point 6).

5. At all gated entry points, boot brushes are provided to remove crumb from boots. Measures to contain crumb to be in place at these brush locations.

6. Any debris which is picked up from the pitches during the regular maintenance processes, or from surrounding hardstanding, and which contains elements of rubber crumb, will be sifted in a designated area, with leaves and other debris being caught and transferred to rubbish or composting bins. The rubber crumb will be allowed to fall through and this will be recycled.

7. Plant, machinery and equipment used in the maintenance of the surfaces, and liable to become contaminated with crumb, is to be cleaned after each use in a designated zone eliminating the risk of contaminating natural areas. Any crumb which is removed from machinery will be swept up and reused if clean or processed if contaminated (see point 6).

8. Ground staff and associated volunteers are to receive regular training on the most up to date techniques for maintaining the 3G surfaces, efficient use of rubber crumb as well as care and maintenance techniques for machinery and equipment used. All other staff and volunteers to be trained on the risks to the environment from rubber crumb, the importance of reporting spillage and procedures for reporting.

9. Horsham FC will maintain contact with the 3G matting providers to discuss future alternative products to replace rubber crumb.

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## 3.3 Buildings and Structures

Indicated as "B" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

A number of buildings and structures have been installed on site. These range from the clubhouse and utility building to covered stands, a seated stand, turnstiles, a press box and team dugouts. The brick-built clubhouse and utility buildings have a very long expected life, and normal repairs will be undertaken as required.

The stands, dugouts and turnstiles are built of prefabricated metal parts and are expected to last for twenty-five years plus.



Photo 3 – The main clubhouse




Photo 4 – The utility building




Photo 5 – The Main stand

Objectives for these areas:

- Safety off all users
- Compliance with FA and League regulations
- Cleanliness
- Maintenance of these buildings in a good state of repair to achieve their expected life-time.

Strategy for these areas:

Any defects to the ground's buildings and structures should be notified to the Stadium Manager to arrange repairs.

Normal maintenance will consist of weekly cleaning involving the removal of all litter and the washing away of any spillages etc, and the cleaning of windows.

From time to time other repairs may be necessary as prioritised by the Stadium Manager. If these are small in nature, or where internal expertise is available, they can be undertaken by the volunteer maintenance team. Larger or more complex repairs needing professional intervention will be assigned by the Stadium Manager to a suitable external contractor.

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## 3.4 Internal Hardstanding Areas

Indicated as "C" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

The main pitch is surrounded by hardstanding for spectators to watch the match and to allow access from the turnstiles to all parts of the ground.

This is expected to have a long maintenance free life.



Photo 6 – Hardstanding at Entrance to ground



Photo 7 – Pitch Side Hardstanding

Objectives for these areas:

- Safety off all users
- Compliance with FA and League regulations
- Cleanliness
- Maintenance of all hardstanding in a good state of repair

Strategy for these areas:

On a weekly basis all litter will be removed from hardstanding areas, and any damage reported to the Stadium Manager to arrange a repair.

## 3.5 Car Parking and External Hardstanding Areas

Indicated as "D" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

In front of the clubhouse is a car parking area which provides match day parking for players and officials. On other days it provides car parking for users of the clubhouse. There is also a tarmacked access road which runs externally to the ground to an area behind the main stand.

These areas are expected to have a long, maintenance free life.



Photo 8 – the club car park



Photo 9 – Hardstanding access road

Objectives for these areas:

- Safety off all users
- Cleanliness
- Maintenance of all hardstanding in a good state of repair

Strategy for these areas:

On a weekly basis all litter will be removed from the car parking and access road areas, and any damage reported to the Stadium Manager to arrange a repair.

## 3.6 Grassed and Other Planted Areas

Indicated as "E" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

In the car park area and outside the confines of the ground itself are a number of planted and grassed areas. These include planting within the car park, grass around the car park, grassed areas outside the fencing of the main pitch and along-side the community pitch. There are also areas of trees planted in specific areas and smaller areas given over, hopefully, to wild-flower cultivation.

In addition, much work has been done along the access lane to the club from Worthing Road where new hedges have been laid.

These areas vary in their requirements and each will have a specific approach to maintenance.

Objectives for these areas:

- Safety off all users of the ground and its surroundings
- Cleanliness
- To present a pleasant aspect to those arriving at and using the ground
- To maintain good relations with all near neighbours
- To improve the ecological diversity of the ground by improvement of existing planting and sympathetic additions to provide food and cover for wildlife.

Strategy for these areas:

As the maintenance requirements for each area differ widely, they will be discussed separately.

### 3.6.1 Car Park and Surrounds

The hard landscaping of the car park is surrounded mainly by grass, and additionally by planted hedges, other plants and trees.

Strategy for this area:

On a monthly basis during the growing season, or more often if required, grassed areas will be mown.

The planted hedges which are now starting to mature will be kept cut to a height of approximately 1.5 metres to ensure visibility and to encourage growth in the lower part of the plants to avoid gapping cutting at least once per growing season

Trees will be monitored and all supporting posts and straps will be loosened as the trees grow and removed once they are not required. The tree specimens in this area have been chosen to be appropriate in size to their surroundings and should be allowed to reach their natural height. If, however, any trees require pruning, re-shaping or thinning, this should be reported to the Stadium Manager to engage professional advice and assistance.

Planting in this area is now five years old and well established. It should not require regular watering, but if this should be needed in periods of extreme drought, refer to the procedures in section 3.8.

The areas will be monitored for weeds at least monthly during the growing season, and if intervention is required, the procedures for weeding covered in section 3.8 will be followed.

At least monthly during the growing season the planting in these areas will be inspected for damage or defects. Any dead branches which are within easy working height will be dealt with by the club volunteers. Any issues noted above a safe working height will be notified to the Stadium Manager for professional intervention.

Any planting noticed during these inspections which has failed will be noted and suitable replacements will be sourced and installed at the next planting opportunity. Investigation should be carried out as to the likely cause of the plant's failure. This could be caused by accidental damage, an inappropriate environment or plant failure. If the cause can be established, this should be considered in the choice of any replacement.

Any grass in this area which becomes damaged, defective or bare should be inspected and if feasible reseeded with a similar grass.

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### 3.6.2 Surrounding Grassed Areas

The ground is surround by grassed areas.



Photo 10 – Grassed area to west of main pitch



Photo 11 – Areas give over to wild-flower cultivation

Strategy for this area:

These will be monitored and will be mown monthly during the growing season. At the far western end of the ground is a wide strip of grass and part of this will be left unmown to encourage other plants to establish themselves.

Any grassed areas which are mown should be cut to a minimum of three to four inches. Cuttings will be left in situ to mulch the areas. If cuttings become excessive, they will be added to the compost heap for recycling.

In addition, two small areas have been prepared for the growth of wildflowers. The turf has been removed and seeding has taken place. If successful these areas may be extended to increase the biodiversity of the site. We have been advised that the wildflowers may not emerge for up to two years. At the end of this period, the experiment will be reviewed and if successful, seeds will be taken and a wider are seeded. Once plants are expired, they will be allowed to compost.

If the experiment does not produce the expected wild flowers, expert advice will be sought as to the reasons for this and remedial actions. Other areas may need to be considered.

All grass areas to be inspected monthly. Any areas which suffer damage or loss should be reseeded with a similar grass seed at the next sewing period.

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### 3.6.3 Fir Trees

To the north of the community pitch, two areas of fir trees have been planted at the request of our neighbours in Denne House. These are actually planted outside of the border hedge line on land owned by Horsham Golf and Fitness, with their permission. Although the fir trees are of low ecological value they should grow to decrease the visibility of the floodlights from residents.



Photo 12 – Planting of areas of Fir Trees

Strategy for this area:

These trees have been nurtured through their first two seasons by watering in times of drought, mulching and the removal of weeds. They now seem to be well established and surviving. Further watering will only be carried out in periods of exceptional dryness, but weeds will continue to be cut back during the growing season following the procedures in section 3.8

As the whole purpose of these trees is to provide screening for our neighbours in Denne House, they will be allowed to reach their normal height so that they match the adjacent similar trees around the golf driving range.

These trees will be monitored monthly for damage or dying branches. Any work required which is within a safe working height will be undertaken by club volunteers. Anything which is above a safe working height or which requires arboricultural expertise should be notified to the Stadium Manager to engage external professionals.

Any emergency issues which occur outside of the normal inspection cycle, should also be reported to the Stadium Manager.

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### 3.6.4 Tree Planting

There have been a high number of trees planted around the ground, mainly to the southern, western and north boundaries. These have now become well established and require little maintenance.

Strategy for these areas:

During the growing season, brambles and weeds will be cut back to allow the new plants to thrive and grow. All planting posts and tree guards will be removed once the trees are able to survive un-aided. In addition, any supporting ties will be loosened as the trees grow to ensure that they have space to expand.

In addition, following a visit from Sussex Wildlife Trust, it was established that the area around the pond in the north-west corner of the site would be ideal for the cultivation of Black Polar trees.

These are an endangered species, once populous in Sussex but now rarely found in the wild. This drastic decrease is due in part to the replacement of the black poplar with faster growing pine as a building material and to ecological changes which have removed the tree's optimal growing conditions of wetlands and flood plains. The club has planted eight specimens of Black Poplar, both male and female plants, and is endeavouring to cultivate them successfully.



Photo 13 – Black Poplar

Strategy for this area:

The saplings have been protected with tree guards and supports. They have also been marked to indicate that they should not be touched.

Each spring the plants will be mulched to prevent moisture loss and to feed the roots. Any surrounding foliage will be cut back to increase the light reaching the saplings. They will be monitored at least monthly throughout the year to ensure that they are not shaded, have not been damaged and to provide them with water in period of drought.

This approach should continue until they become young adult trees and are able to survive unaided.

The Black Poplars are young and will take many years to reach maturity. During that time they should not require pruning, reshaping or thinning. When mature, any work required will be reported to the Stadium Manager for the engagement of external expertise. Whilst young they will be inspected in the normal monthly cycle and any damage removed by club volunteers. If any of the saplings appear to fail totally, advice will be taken from Sussex Wildlife Trust as to the possible reasons and feasibility of replacement.

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### 3.6.5 Hedging

There are two main areas of hedging at Hop Oast, the first to the north of the site on the border with Horsham Golf and Fitness, and a second along the access lane to the Club from Worthing Road.



Photo 14 – Hedge line at north of ground



Photo 15 – New hedge planted in access lane to the club

Strategy for this area:

The first area is now maturing and needs little maintenance. It will be monitored and in future may need to be managed by laying to revitalise growth, but this is not likely to be for many years.

The second area is made up of relatively new planting and the approach to this is detailed in the section of this document covering the Surrounding Woodlands (3.7)

The hedging which has been planted in these areas should take several years to thicken and mature. During this time it will be inspected monthly. Any branches which grow away from the main stems and which threaten to encroach upon nearby pavements will be cut back. Plants may also be trimmed in spring to encourage additional growth from their base.

The intention is to allow these hedges to grown to their natural height, approximately two metres, to match the hedging which is already in place and matured.

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## 3.7 Surrounding Woodlands

Indicated as "F" on the attached site plan in Appendix 1.

The football ground is surrounded on the western and southern boundaries by mature woodland. Approximately half of this is designated as "ancient woodland". This designation means that the woodland has been in existence since at least 1600 and probably longer.

The area which is not designated as ancient woodland, the triangular portion directly adjacent to Worthing Road, was until the eighteenth century part of a larger field, the boundaries of which can still be made out on Google Maps. When the Worthing Road was built in the early eighteenth century, this parcel of land was detached from the rest of the field. Presumably too small to be economically productive, it was seemingly abandoned and eventually was taken over by the woodland. Despite this it is still possible to see a difference in the areas as the non-ancient woodland is much flatter and more regular in topography.

Despite being partly ancient woodland, this does not mean that the area has not changed over the centuries or is in a natural state. The woodland displays clear signs of having been a managed woodland with hazel trees grown for coppicing purposes beneath a canopy of deciduous trees. This is evidenced by the very regular spacing of the hazel trees. They would have been coppiced on a cycle of about seven years, their wood used for construction, fencing and multiple agricultural purposes.

At some point, probably mid twentieth century, perhaps in the wake of World War 2, this practice ceased and the hazel coppice was abandoned. Today most of the hazel trees in the woodland are overgrown and would be deemed "overstood" or "derelict" in coppicing terms.

Unfortunately, it was found that many of the Ash trees in the woodland had been infected with Ash Die-Back disease. To prevent danger to the public from falling trees, those ash trees along Worthing Road were removed.

Objectives for this area:

- To improve the ecological diversity of the woodland
- Safety off all users of the ground and its surroundings
- Cleanliness
- To prevent incursion into the ground either by trespassers or fly tippers

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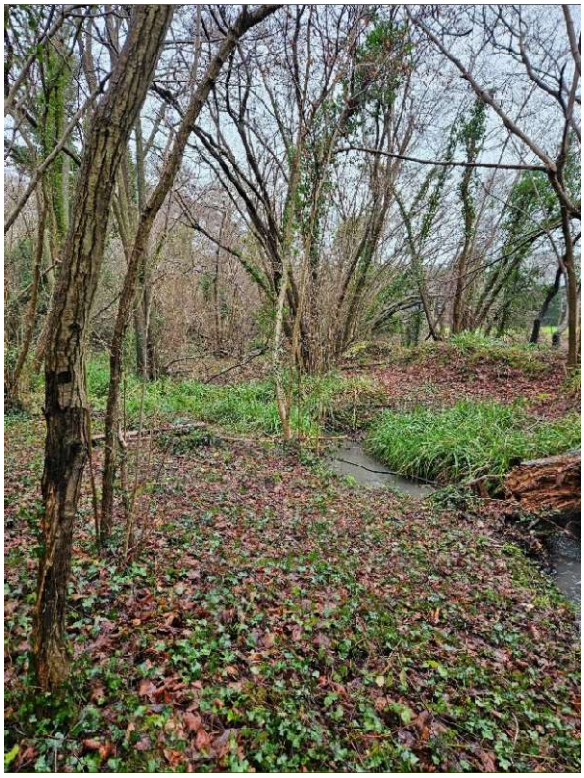


Photo 16 – Ancient Woodland to the south of the ground



Photo 17 – Non ancient woodland, formerly pasture, showing level ground and overstood hazels.

Strategy for this area:

As we have been advised, nature is rarely tidy, so we will be careful to not remove all fallen trees and dead wood or to over manage the woodland.

The main approach will be to monitor the woodland and use a light touch to increase its biodiversity.

The woodland will be walked on a monthly basis to remove any litter found.

A programme of light coppicing of certain area of the hazel trees will be undertaken to allow more light into the woodland. This will increase the biodiversity of the areas by allowing other species to thrive in the increased light.

Where some hedges already exist, these will be maintained by "laying" to reinvigorate them providing refuge for birds, mammals and other wildlife.

Where no hedges exist, to safe-guard the woodland and prevent incursion and damage, either new hedges will be laid or dead hedges constructed. These both have the advantage of creating habitats for wildlife and creating corridors through which they can safely move.

The planting used to create these hedges comprises only English native species such as Blackthorn and Hawthorn, together with the pre-existing holly and hazel which has been pleached and laid to create a hedgerow. All new plants used have been sourced from local suppliers of accredited UK sourced and grown stock. Any replacements needed must also be sourced in this way.

Most of the woodland is well established and requires little ongoing maintenance. Only where new hedges are planted will the plants be kept watered through periods of drought. They will also be kept mulched and weeded during the growing season.

Dead hedges will be kept maintained by topping up the dead material as it slowly rots down.

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## 3.8 Watering and Weeding

Most of the planting at the Hop Oast ground is now mature having been in place for at least five years and does not require additional watering.

However, where certain plants are vulnerable or have been replaced, some additional watering may be required. This particularly concerns hedging plants in the new hedging along the access lane and the young Black Poplars. These will be monitored and if prolonged periods of dry weather occur they will be manually watered. Once established this need will drop away.

Any planting which is introduced to replace failed plants will be monitored and watered manually in the early stages of their lives until established.

An outside tap is provided at the utility building in the ground and a number of hoses are provided which can be linked into order to reach most of the ground. For those extreme areas which cannot be reached in this way, a mobile water roller is provided which together with watering cans can be used to water isolated areas.

If during periods of extreme drought waterpipe bans are introduced, three large water butts have been installed which are harvesting rainwater from roofs. This water together with the watering cans and water roller will be used to irrigate the most vulnerable of plants, if they require watering.

Any manual watering which is required should be carried out during the cooler parts of the day to reduce evaporation and should be sufficient to soak the soil thoroughly around the base of the plants. In addition to this the most vulnerable plants, new hedging plants and the Black Poplars are mulched annually using organic material to retain moisture and feed the plants.

No chemical fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides are to be used in any part of the Hop Oast ground. Any weeding which is required will be undertaken using manual means, such as hoes and scythes or in some cases mechanical strimmers.

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## 4. Maintenance Operations Matrix

| Section | Area/Task | Weekly | Monthly | Annually | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3,2 | Remove Litter from Pitches | ✓ | | | |
| 3.2 | Brush 3G Pitches | ✓ | | | |
| 3.2 | In depth cleaning and de-compacting | | | ✓ | By supplier |
| 3.2 | Inspect for damage to pitches and notify Stadium Manager | ✓ | | | |
| 3.2.1 | Top up pitch rubber crumb following procedures in 3.2.1 | | | ✓ | Or as required |
| 3.3 | Inspect Buildings and Structures for defects | ✓ | | | |
| 3.3 | Remove Litter, clean spillages and windows | ✓ | | | |
| 3.3 | Complete repairs as notified by Stadium Manager | | ✓ | | Or as required |
| 3.4 | Remove Litter from internal hardstanding areas | ✓ | | | |
| 3.4 | Inspect for damage and notify stadium Manager | ✓ | | | |
| 3.5 | Remove Litter from Car Park and external hardstanding areas | ✓ | | | |
| 3.5 | Inspect for damage and notify stadium Manager | ✓ | | | |
| 3.6.1 | Mow grass in Car Park area | | ✓ | | During growing season; more often if required |
| 3.6.1 | Monitor trees in Car Park area for defects or damage and inform Stadium Manager | | ✓ | | |
| 3.6.1 | Monitor grass in Car Park area for bare patches; re-seed when feasible | | ✓ | | |

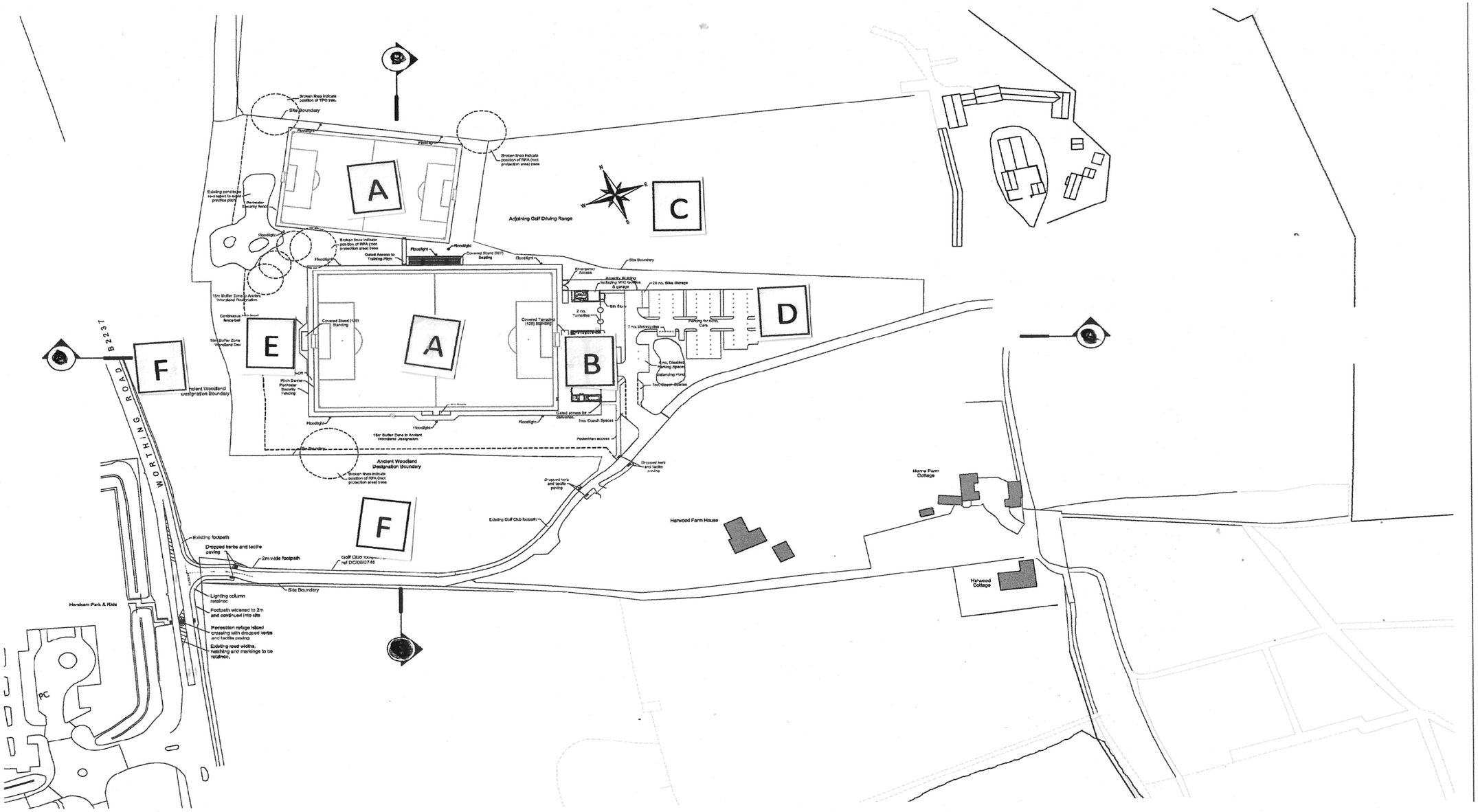
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| 3.6.2 | Mow grass in surrounding areas | | ✓ | | During growing season; more often if required |
| 3.6.2 | Monitor grass in surrounding areas for bare patches; re-seed when feasible | | ✓ | | |
| 3.6.2 | Monitor wild flower areas; weed as necessary | | ✓ | | During growing season |
| 3.6.3 | Monitor Fir Trees for health; remove any damaged branches | | ✓ | | |
| 3.6.4 | Monitor Black Poplar saplings and other trees. Cut back intrusive weeds | | ✓ | | During growing season; more often if required. |
| 3.6.4 | Take advice from SWT in the event of any failures | | | ✓ | As required |
| 3.6.5 | Inspect new hedging; trim as required | | ✓ | | During growing season |
| 3.6.5 | Weed and mulch new hedging plants | | | ✓ | At beginning of growing season then as required |
| 3.6.5 | Replace any failed hedging plants with similar examples | | | ✓ | As required; replacements to be planted in winter. |
| 3.7 | Walk ancient woodland; remove litter or signs of fly tipping | | ✓ | | |
| 3.8 | Water any delicate or vulnerable plants especially during first two years of life | ✓ | | | Only as needed |
| 3.8 | Weed any areas where brambles etc threaten to suffocate planting and especially around younger plants | | ✓ | | As required |

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## 5. Ongoing Changes to this Document

This document describes the landscape elements of the Hop Oast ground as they currently exist. As years go by and the landscape matures, other elements may be added and they should be included in this document with appropriate objectives and strategies for their management.

## Appendix 1 – Site Plan of the Hop Oast Ground




# Horsham Football Club – Hop Oast Ground