

Agricultural Supporting Statement

To Justify the Raising of Soil Levels

at

Land Adjoining Thistleworth Farm, Grinders Lane, Dial Post, West Sussex RH13 8NR

The Writer on leaving Agricultural College worked for the then MAFF on land drainage issues. Having worked in Suffolk and Kent for Agricultural Chartered Surveyors, the writer joined Henry Smith of Horsham, West Sussex as a qualified agricultural surveyor working on reinstatement of gas pipelines in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s when large diameter gas pipes were being laid in Kent and Sussex across agricultural land. The Writer was a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (Chairman of the Sussex Branch) and is now retired but acts as a Consultant to White & Sons (Chartered Surveyors) having nearly 50 years experience of land drainage and reclamation as well as Rural Planning issues.

1. Background

1.1 I visited the site on 25th June 2020 to inspect the property having received instructions to advise on the sustainability of the land for agriculture.

Formerly the land was part of the West Grinstead Estate and/or Knepp Castle Estate. Parts of both Estates were taken for the widening and improvement of the A24 when a new road boundary was formed with land drainage to take both highway run off and to redirect existing ditches and watercourses. A new boundary with the improved A24 was created with post and rail timber fencing and a new mixed species hedge planted. The West Grinstead Estate has been broken up into small farm units and much of the southern area bordering the A24 is in Equestrian use. There are small "left over bits" of fields bordering the A24. The application site is one of the small areas that was part of the West Grinstead Estate. The land to the North of the application site is possibly in the ownership of Christ's Hospital.

These small areas of land cannot be easily managed and cropped as noted with the land North of the application site which is low lying and has not been in agricultural production for many years possibly since the construction of the A24.

1.2 The Applicants purchased the remains of Thistleworth Farm that abuts the A24 and have obtained consent for a new agricultural building. They have also been using the southern corner of the land for the recycling of hardcore material.

1.3 The recycling process results in fine sands and soils being sieved out.

1.4 The land to the north of the recycling area and along the eastern boundary has a large bund, the origin possibly being surplus soil from the A24. It has certainly been in situ for many years.

1.5 The result is a long narrow strip of land of approximately five acres sandwiched between the A24 and the bund.

1.6 I further re-visited the site on Monday 28th September 2020. The Weather over the past three weeks has been exceptionally dry as has the past six months.

1.7 The area is approx area that has been raised since 2017/8 is approximately 1560m². (1.3 acres). The surface material is a fine particle with grit.

1.8 I have been informed that all the material forming the enlarged area is either part of the agricultural building site to the north of the workings or screenings from the on site plant and no additional soils have been brought onto site. The screenings are porous in nature.

1.9 I further understand that an Agricultural Contractor has carried out cultivations to sow grass seed.

1.10 The work appears to the naked eye to be clean and tidy with no other debris and careful modelling of the levels has taken place which has increased the height but has married the area with the bund to the East. I have seen the drawings to be submitted with the application for the agricultural improvement.

1.11 I also understand that drainage engineers are preparing plans of the drainage of the main screening plant to incorporate a balancing pond. Any drainage required of the "Agricultural Improvement" can be incorporated into that scheme but little will be needed due to the porous material which has been used.

1.12 The work has improved the site for walkers using the public footpath to a level gradient across its width and makes the path more commodious.

I attach photographs taken of the work. The grass seed should take and grow well once there has been rain.

2. Soils and Farming in the Locality

2.1 By reference to "Soilscapes" and the Soil Survey of England and Wales; the soil in the area is Soilscape 18 (Appendix 1) and a Wickham 1 clay "Curisden Series", slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged. It is a heavy clay common to the area. The soil is known for waterlogging and poor fertility.

2.2 Traditionally the farming in the area was summer grazing of beef cattle/dairy herds. There are now fewer than 40 dairy herds in West Sussex and much reduced beef production. Thus many active farms have converted to arable cropping by making soil improvements with composts and waste from AD plants as well as improving the drainage but many small farms are now Residencies with a few fields used for Equestrian or a few sheep.

2.4 The pattern of rainfall in the area has been one of long wet periods followed by long dry periods but the average over the year is approximately 70 mm.

2.5 Thus small units require fields that can carry stock all the year around .

3 The Proposed Scheme

The proposed Scheme is to raise the level of the land as shown on the application drawings numbered 20-08-02 & 20-08-03 (Appendix 2) for the purpose of livestock (cattle, sheep, horses or alpacas) could graze the land throughout the year and, in particular, the winter months.

4 Method of Soil Improvement

The proposal is to raise the land by approximately 2-3m incorporating some of the clay from the bund with screening silts thus improving the drainage. The fine sand/silt from the adjoining screening plant to then be placed onto the surface . Subsoiling would be undertaken to break any compaction and the field sown to a rye grass mix with clover. Following establishment of the grass a light covering of Mushroom compost to be added. Initially the grass sward would be topped to encourage good root growth or lightly grazed by sheep . Additional Phosphate and Potash would be applied when the grass was germinating to stimulate growth. It was noted on the site visit that there was a heap of mushroom compost for this purpose.

5 Comment on the Scheme

The Writer is aware of a similar scheme carried out on Millfields Farm, Rowhook, by P. J. Brown in the 1990s on one field which was raised representing about 15% of the Farm. Millfields is also Soilscape 18 , Wickham Series 1, a clay soil.

The land is fully capable of being grazed in the winter months and is the driest field on the Farm. There are many other examples in West Sussex where land raising has increased the use of the land by extending the grazing period or converting to arable production.

Bearing in mind the small size of the unit , to have a field that can be grazed at any time of the year will bring this land into beneficial use .

Conclusion

This small area unimproved is very limited for agricultural use, not only by the size but due to the poor ground as evidenced by adjoining land owned by a third party. The raising of the land with land drainage and silt/sand small aggregate will enhance its agricultural value in that the field can then be grazed all the year around.

The site would be waste ground sandwiched between the A24 highway boundary and the 1990s bund which is approximately five metres above the adjacent land level to the east. The bund is steep sided making use and maintenance very difficult .

The raising of the land being contoured into the bund brings the land back into beneficial use. As previously reported the land can then be used for grazing purposes throughout the year.

It is my opinion that the small scale nature of the proposal will have a good and beneficial use for all year round grazing of livestock . There is existing stock net fence around most of the land.

In my opinion, the work undertaken has been well thought out and will have a beneficial agricultural use when the grass has been established .

28th September 2020

J. A. Farquhar FAAV (rtd)
Former Fellow of Royal Institution
of Chartered Surveyors (Agricultural
Division)



① VIEW TOP OF EXISTING BUND OVER SCHEME



② contour to include original Bund.



③ View East from A24 boundary




④ contour to include original Bund.

Get Soils Data for your GIS



Developed by Cranfield University and sponsored by DEFRA
 For more detailed soil information visit [Soil Site Reporter](#) For soils education visit [soil-net.com](#)

 The Site.

Habitats:
 Seasonally wet pastures and woodlands

Landcover:
 Grassland and arable some woodland 

Carbon:
 Low

Drains to:
 Stream network

Water protection:
 Main risks are associated with overland flow from compacted or poached fields. Organic slurry, dirty water, fertiliser, pathogens and fine sediment can all move in suspension or solution with overland flow or drain water

General cropping:
 Mostly suited to grass production for dairying or beef; some cereal production often for feed. Timeliness of stocking and fieldwork is important, and wet ground conditions should be avoided at the beginning and end of the growing season to avoid damage to soil structure. Land is tile drained and periodic mowing or subsoiling will assist drainage

Project:
THISTLEWORTH FARM
 GRINDERS LANE
 DIAL POST
 WEST SUSSEX RH13 8NR-
 PROPOSED
 LAND-RAISING

Drawing Title:
SITE PLAN @ 1:1000

Client:
A HYATT CONTRACTORS LTD

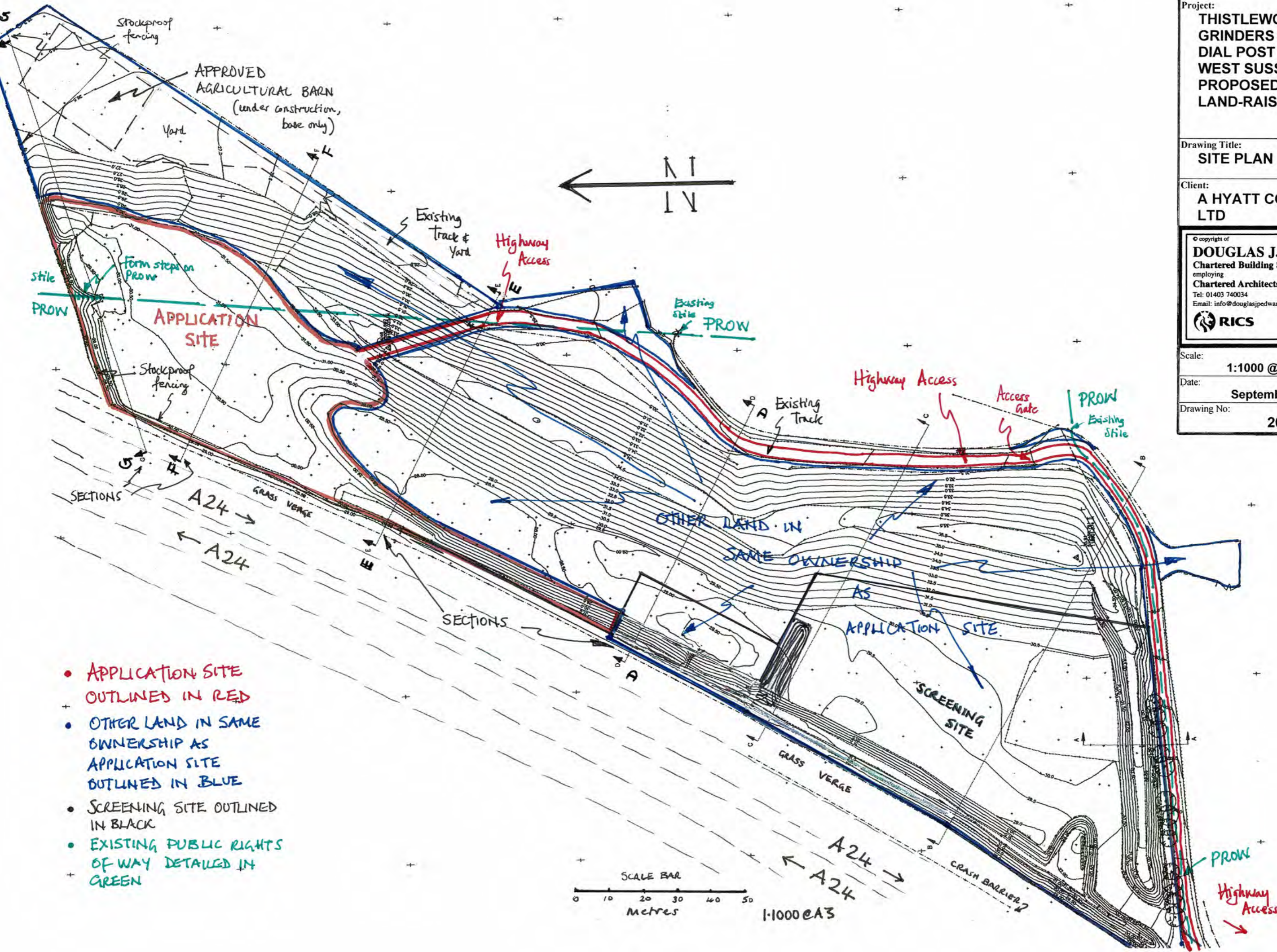
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 Chartered Building Surveyors
 employing
 Chartered Architects & Surveyors
 Tel: 01403 740034
 Email: info@douglasjpedwards.co.uk

RICS

Scale:
1:1000 @ A3 size

Date:
September 2020

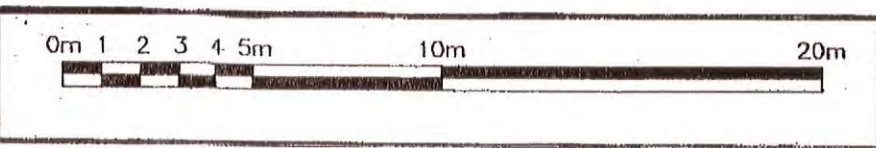
Drawing No:
20-08-02



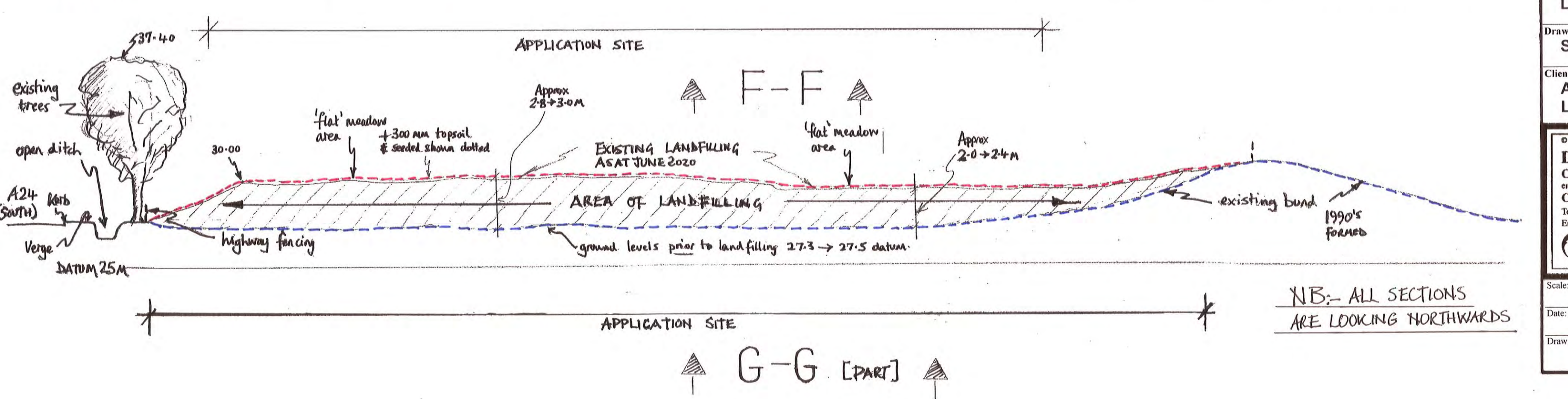
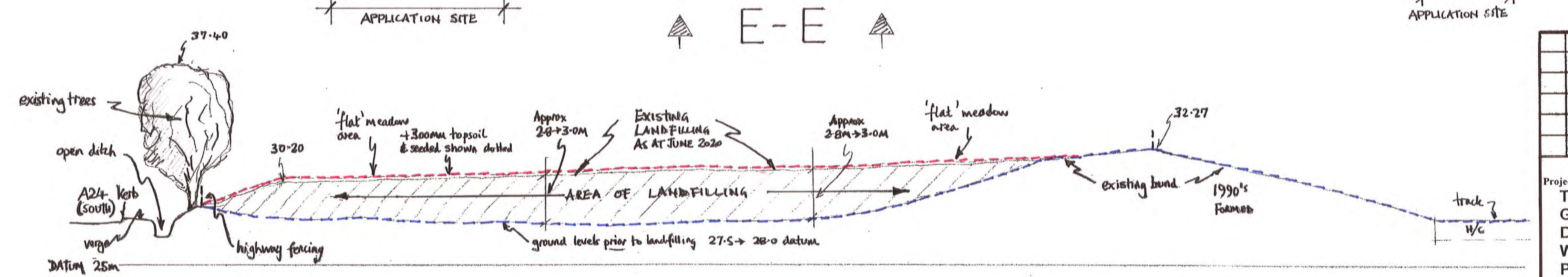
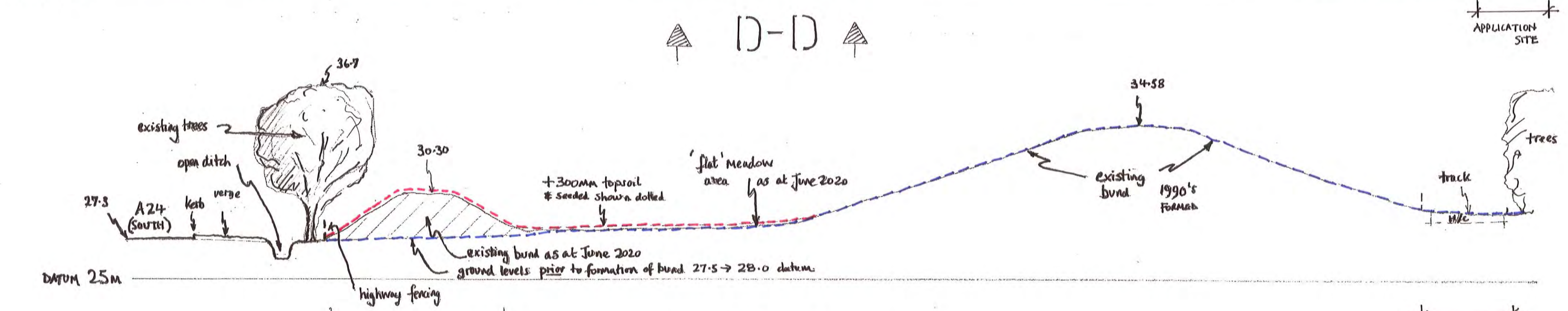
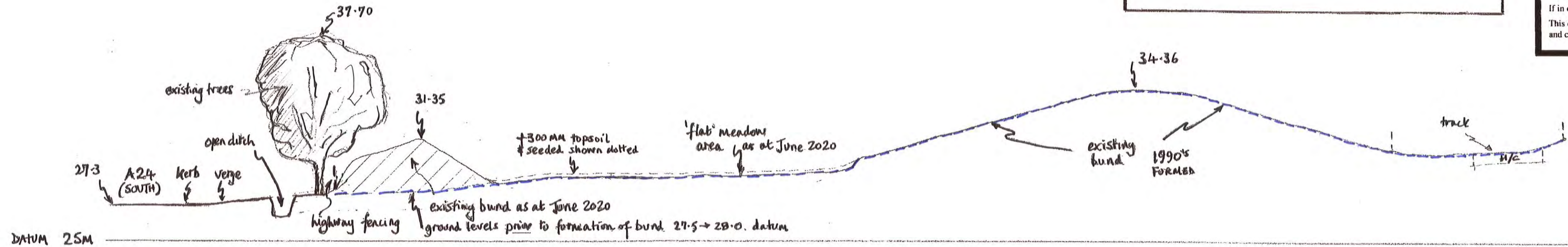
- APPLICATION SITE OUTLINED IN RED
- OTHER LAND IN SAME OWNERSHIP AS APPLICATION SITE OUTLINED IN BLUE
- SCREENING SITE OUTLINED IN BLACK
- EXISTING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY DETAILED IN GREEN

SCALE BAR
 0 10 20 30 40 50
 Metres

1:1000 @ A3



Notes
 All dimensions must be checked on site and not scaled from this drawing.
 If in doubt, please ask.
 This drawing to be read in conjunction with all engineers and consultants drawings and specifications etc.



LEGEND

	EXISTING GROUND LEVELS
	PROPOSED GROUND LEVELS
	FILLED AREAS

Project:	THISTLEWORTH FARM GRINDERS LANE DIAL POST WEST SUSSEX RH13 8NR- PROPOSED LAND-RAISING
Drawing Title:	SECTIONS D, E, F & G (part)
Client:	A HYATT CONTRACTORS LTD
© copyright of	DOUGLAS J. P. EDWARDS Chartered Building Surveyors employing Chartered Architects & Surveyors Tel: 01403 740034 Email: info@douglasjedwards.co.uk
Scale:	1:200 @ A2 size
Date:	September 2020
Drawing No:	20-08-03

NB:- ALL SECTIONS ARE LOOKING NORTHWARDS