

Comments and maps prepared by Diana and Richard MacMullen

We have considered in some detail the Bradenham area of the project; specifically to mitigate the landscape impact of the project and to enhance biodiversity gains.

There are some *immediate* Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) by changing arable land to grassland:

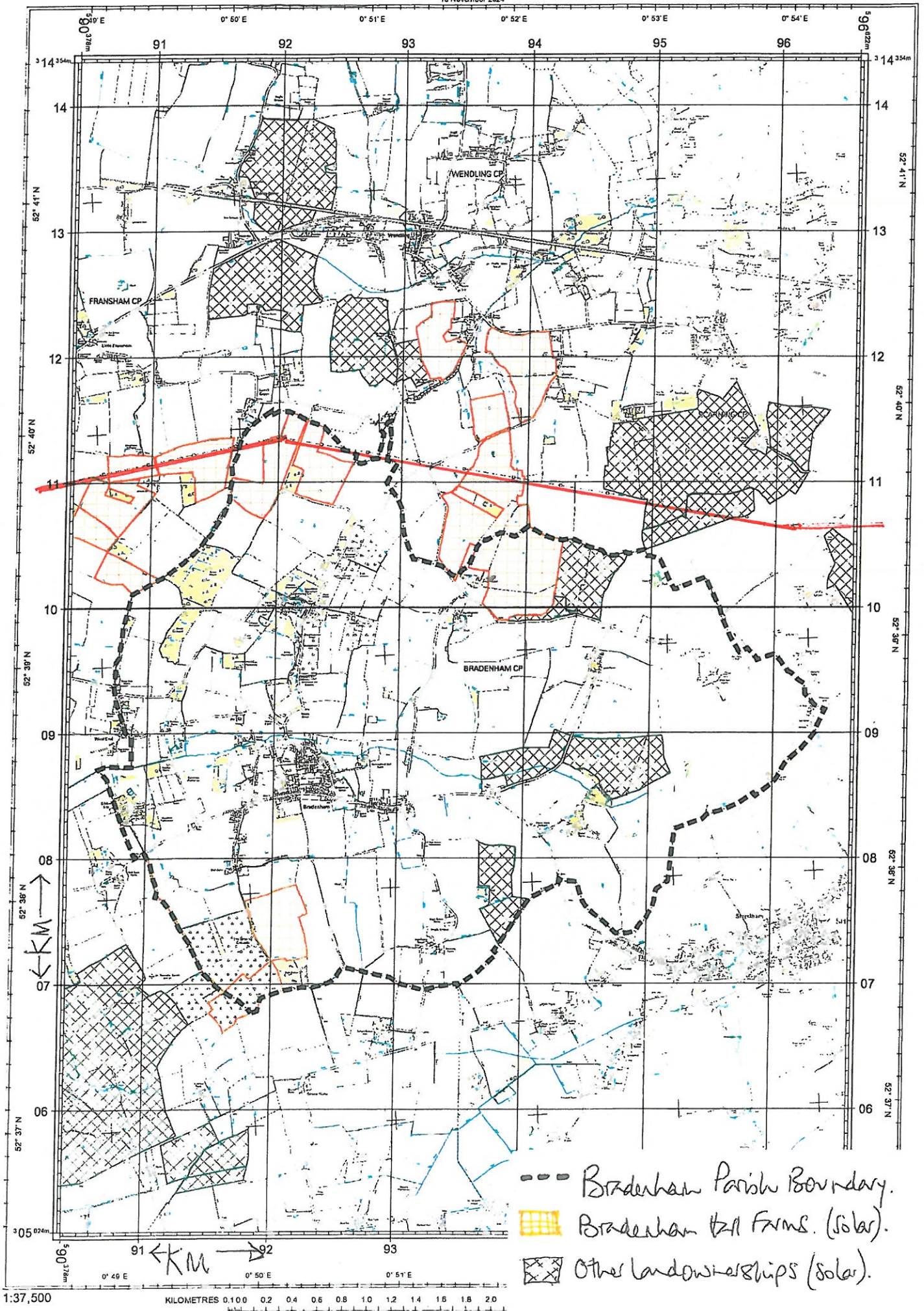
- Run off from grassland will be slower and carry less sediment into the watercourses and the Wissey
- The use of pesticides and fertilisers will be reduced or eliminated
- Grassland, particularly when sown with a wild-flower mix and grazed with sheep will provide new and improved habitat for insects and pollinators, ground nesting birds, bats, owls and raptors, small mammals.

We have proposed buffering, extending and linking existing habitats through:

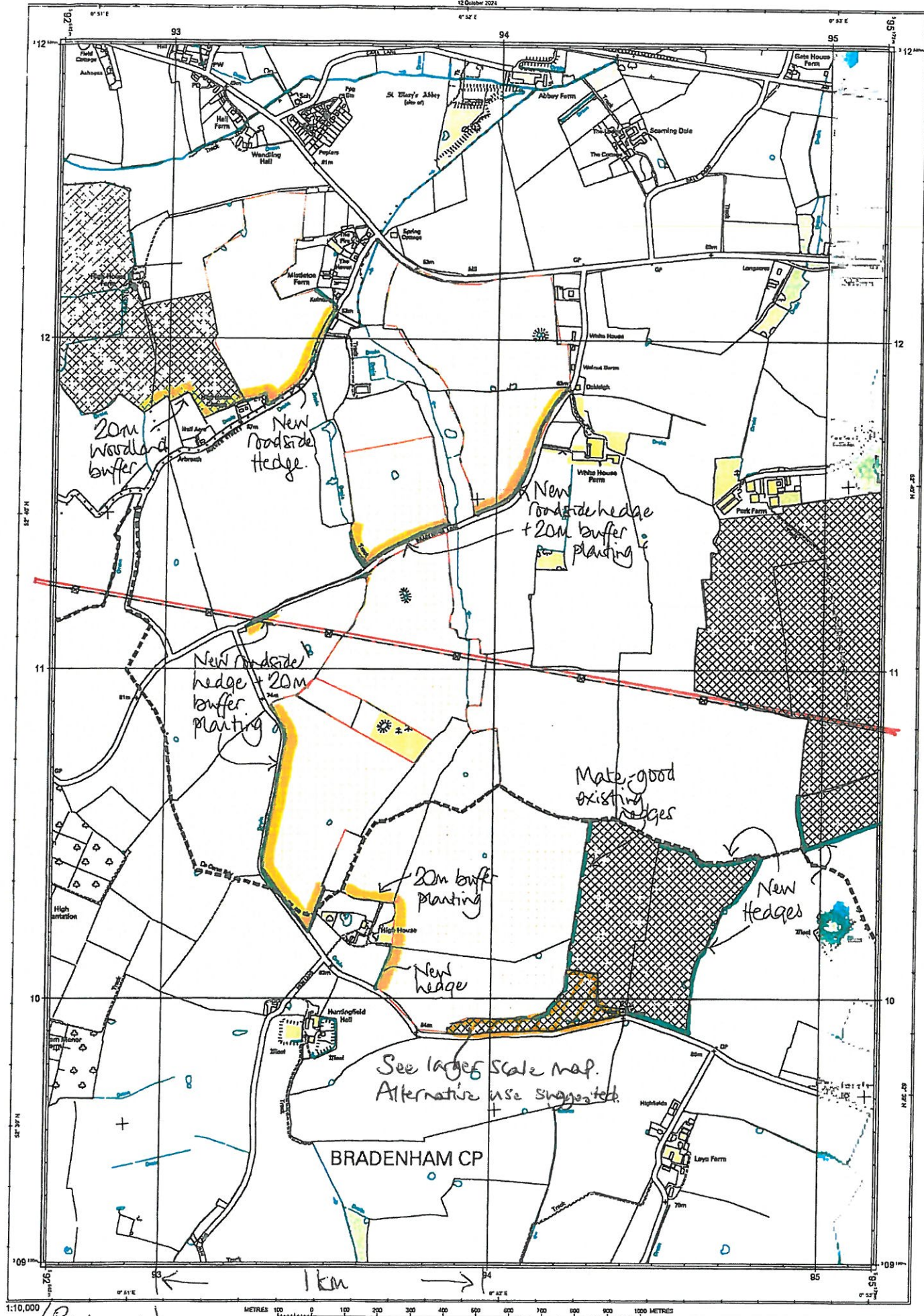
- the planting of new hedges and woodland screens to provide additional feeding and nesting opportunities including 'off-site' areas to maximise screening.
- the planting of wet woodland at the headwaters of the Wissey (Keeping Rivers Cool initiative).
- buffering Ancient Woodlands (High Grove, Necton Wood and Sporle Wood) with 30 or 40m edges with natural regeneration and direct planting of local seed.
- the creation of new ponds and wetland areas, with cross drainage on hard tracks to reduce run-off and silt down Southend and the proposed Green Lane access.
- the restoration of existing ponds.

LOCATION

13 November 2024

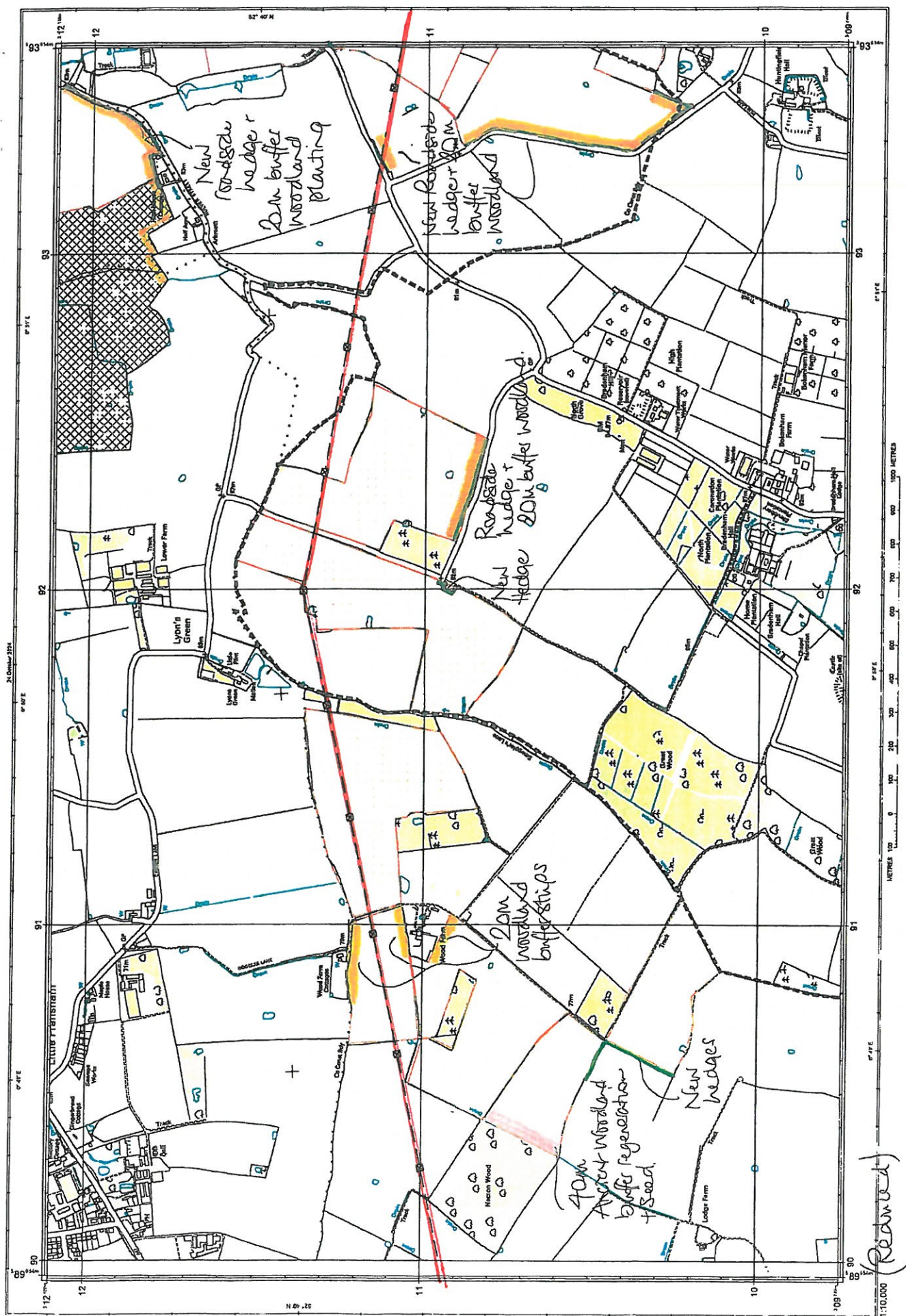


12 October 2024

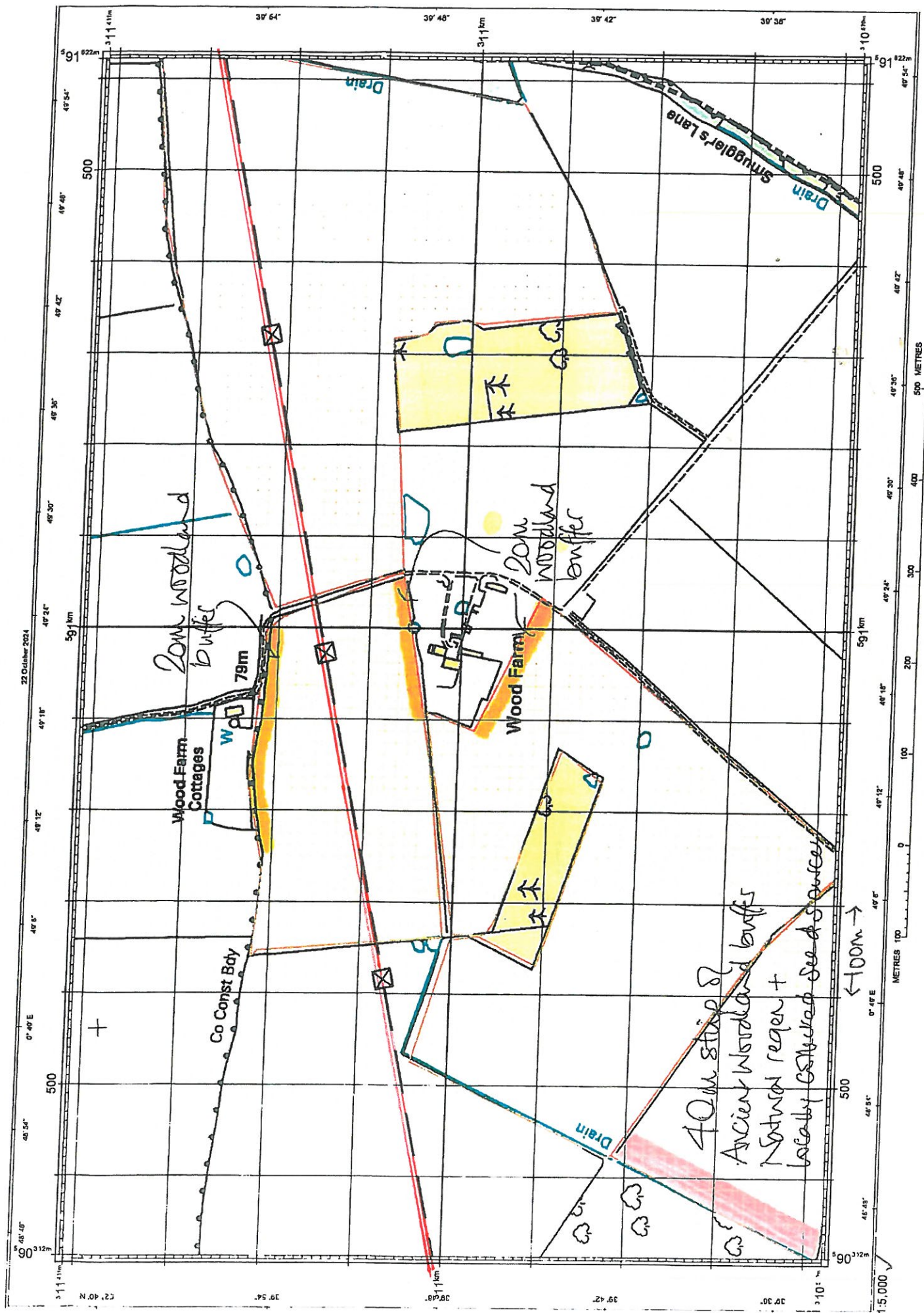


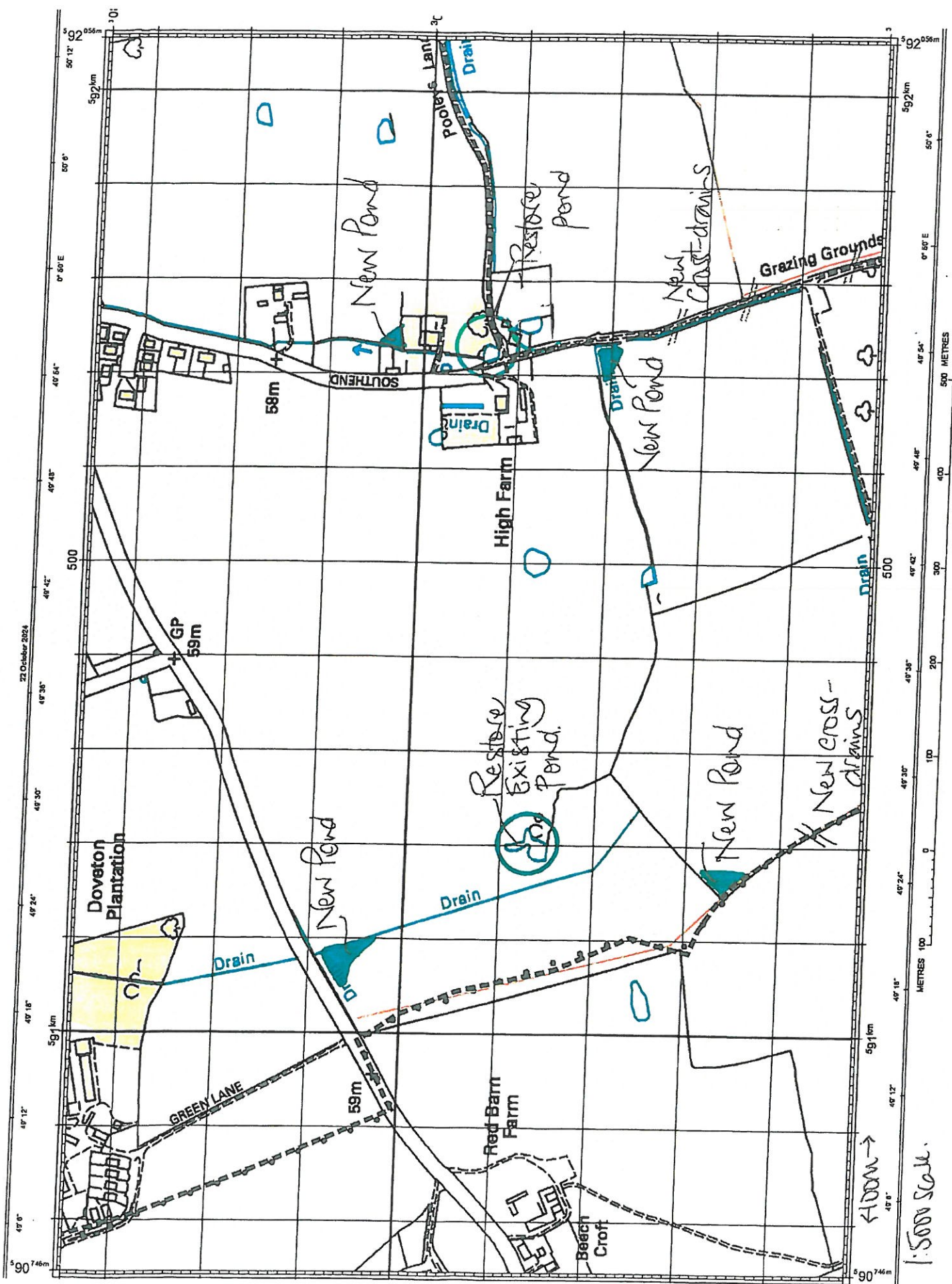
1:10,000
(Reduced)

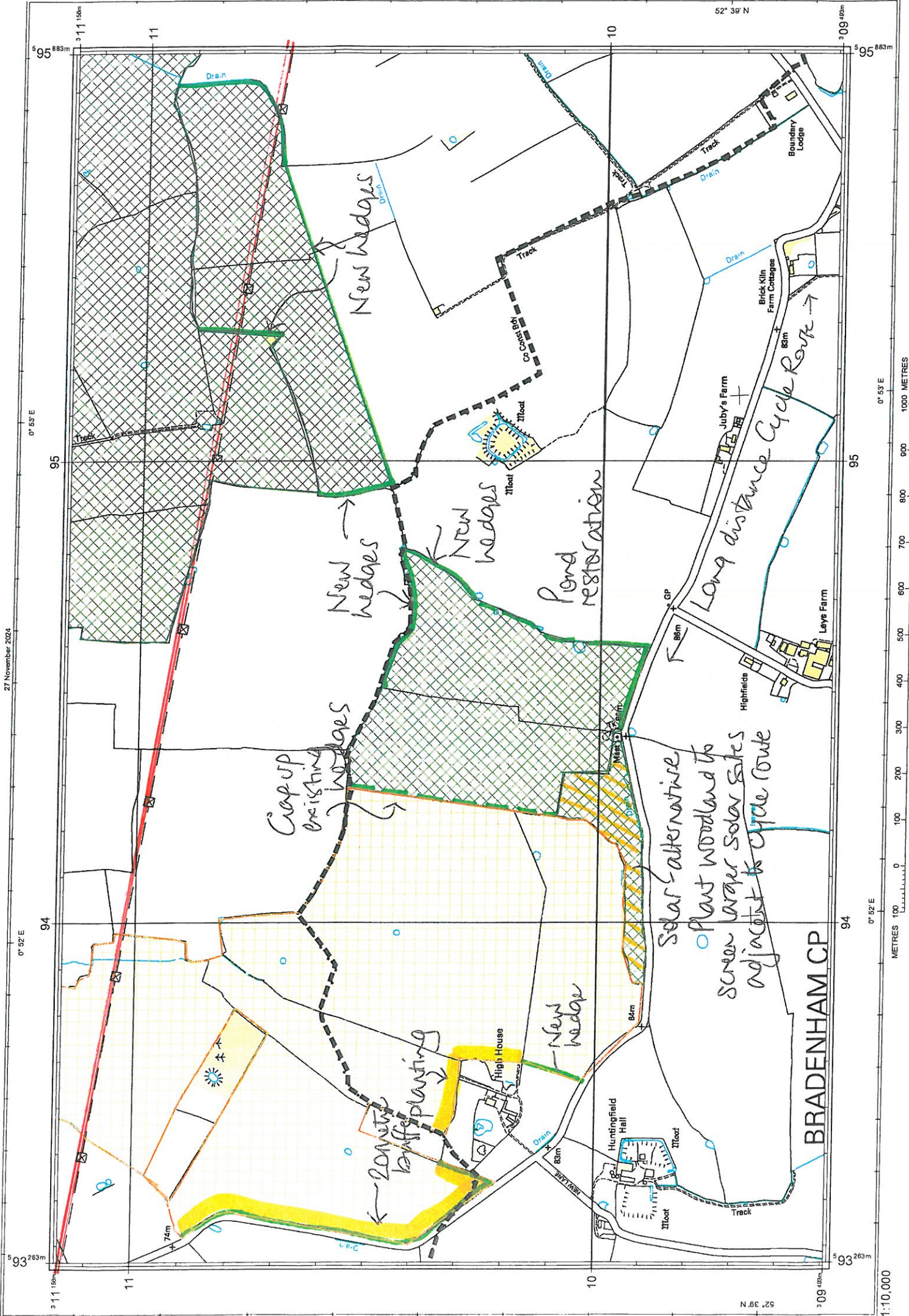
METRES 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 METRES

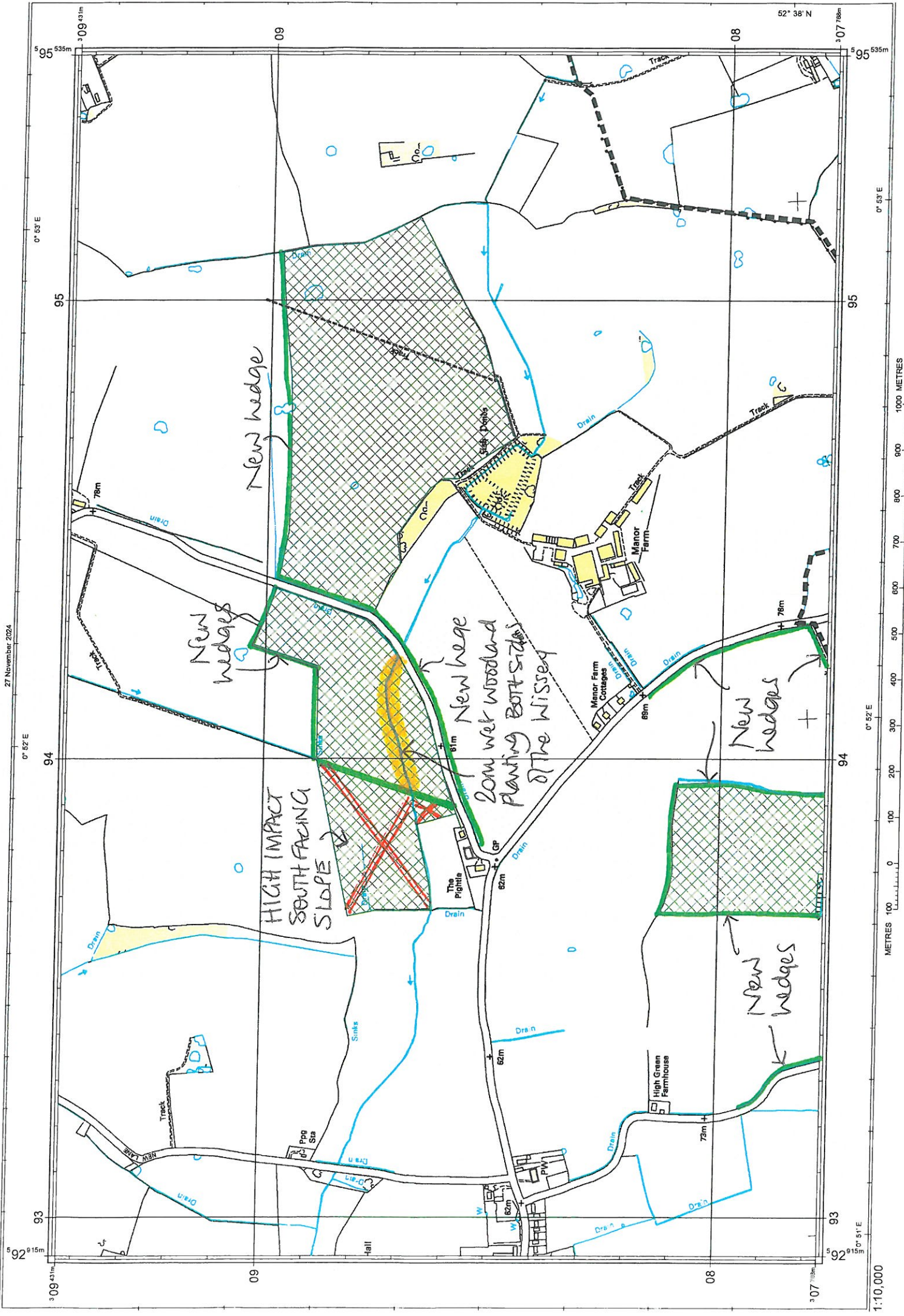


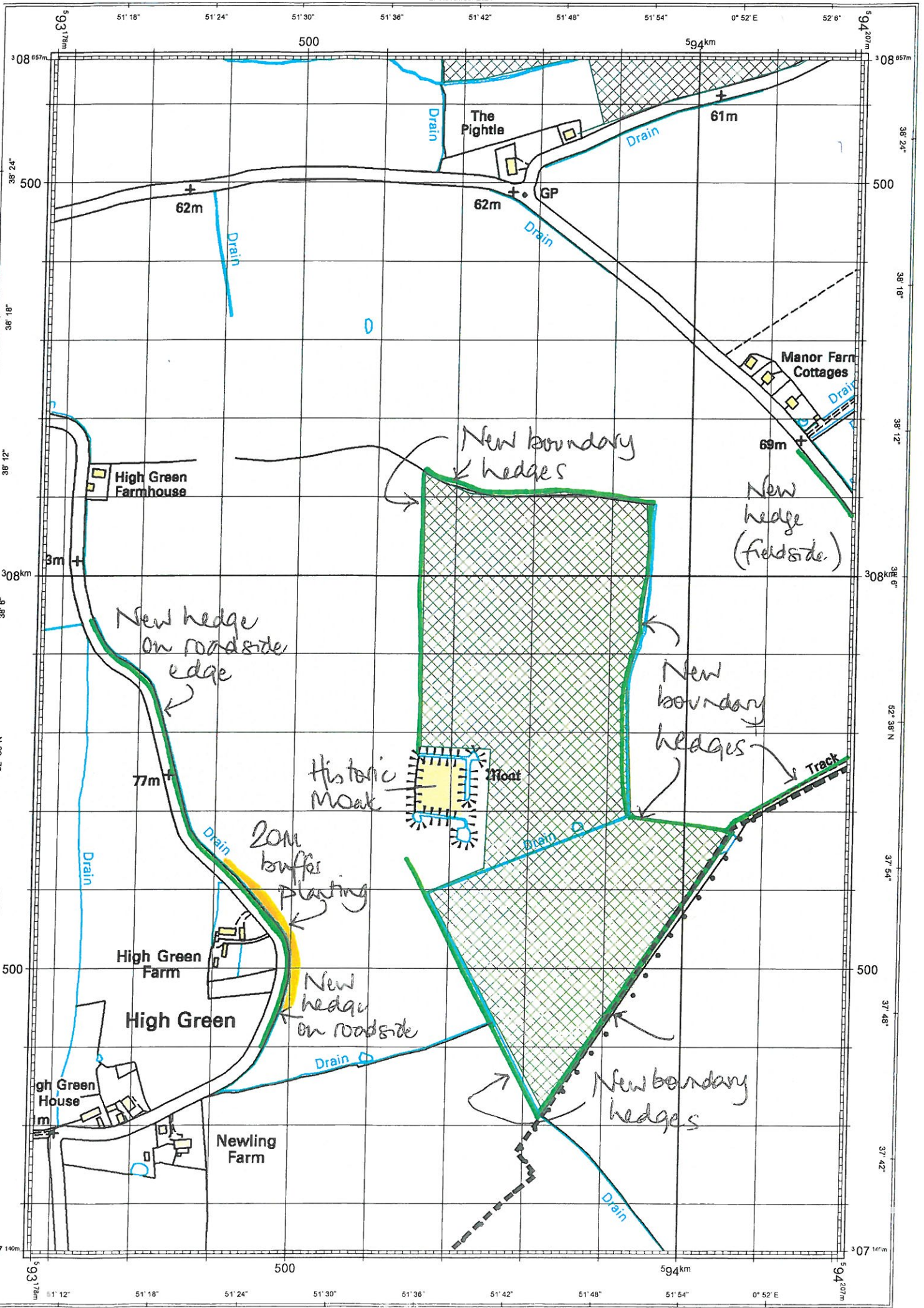
(Reduced)











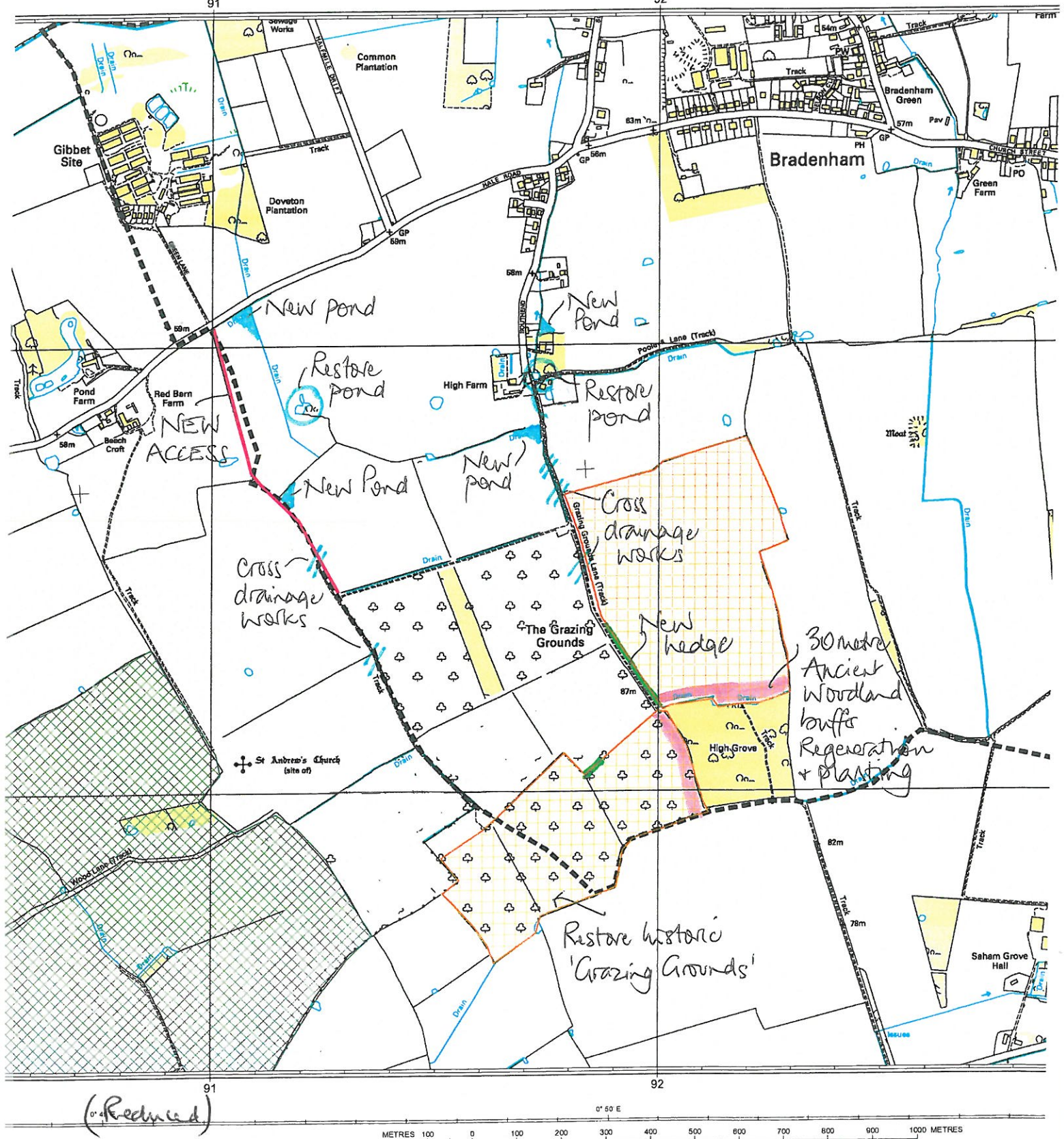
27 November 2024

0° 49' E

0° 50' E

91

92



(Reduced)

METRES 100 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 METRES

Ecological, Biodiversity Net Gain and Landscape Enhancements

Tony Juniper Chair Natural England wrote: *Well-designed and well-managed solar farms deliver clean, affordable energy. They can also offer additional benefits to the local environment, meaning that the UK's solar farms can make a significant contribution to both local and national biodiversity targets. For example, **significant ecological gain can be achieved through establishing wildflower meadows and grasslands, hedgerows, woodland scrub, wetland habitats.***

The potential for biodiversity improvements will vary from site to site but there are some easy wins which deliver significant ecological gain that can be applied to most solar farms.

Seeding a diverse wildflower and grass mix over part or all of the sites. This can be done under the whole panel area, especially where the site was previously arable or there are areas of bare ground. The seed mix should be selected to reflect soil type and fertility to ensure success.

UK provenance, native seed mixes should be used, appropriate to soil type and nutrient levels, and this may need to be best done in stages. The seed mix should be designed so that the height of the grasses and wildflowers does not cause shading of the panels.

Sheep grazing: The proposals in the RWE Consultation documents are most welcome particularly when a diverse seed mixture of grasses and wild flowers are established. This would be particularly relevant on the parcels adjacent to High Grove (ancient semi natural woodland) in Bradenham known as the Grazing Grounds. Neither grass cutting, nor sheep grazing should take place during the late spring/ summer to maximise insect nectar feeding and allow plants to set seed. Conservation grazing is a regime where livestock are removed between April and July or where the grassland is grazed at a low intensity to leave a varied and tall sward with flowering plants present.

Main Source : **Natural Capital Best Practice Guidance** Increasing biodiversity at all stages of a solar farm's lifecycle. Solar Energy UK (2022) Natural Capital Best Practice Guidance report