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## Local Strategic Vision & Proposals

This paper has been written by **Sompting Estate(SE)** and **Sustainable Sussex (SSx)**.

The purpose of this paper is to support the Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan and its consultation, and to encourage community feedback and participation.

The paper also represents work in progress towards a South Downs National Park Authority Whole Estate Plan for Sompting Estate.

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23.5.2019

## The Vision in Context:

### The South Downs National Park & Adur Local Plans

This is an aspirational document produced for the Parish Neighbourhood Plan and a supporting document for its policies where related. As such, the emphasis is on changes which may be of broad interest to the local community.

This Local Strategic Vision has also been produced in the context of the emergence of the Adur Local Plan. So where relevant, eg as regards meeting housing need, it has been guided by that plan.

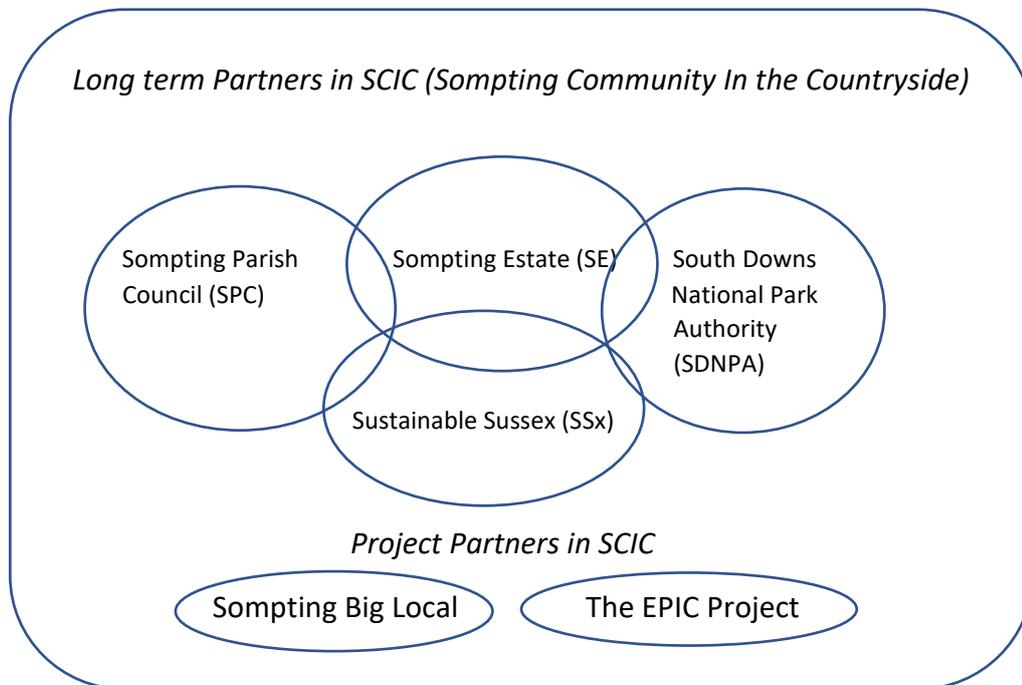
When Sompting Estate produces a Whole Estate Plan for the South Downs National Park Authority, this will give much more detail, for example, on what ecosystems services will be delivered across the Estate, and how, and will include that small part of the Estate which is in Worthing. The ideas offered in this document are oriented towards the Park's landscape-led Local Plan, as well as towards the Adur Local Plan.

The National Park's Purpose 1 (conserve and enhance the landscape) and Purpose 2 (understand and enjoy the landscape), and its socio-economic Duty for communities, have been and will through this Vision be applied by the Estate, both within and without the actual Park boundary, delivering progress in Sompting as *a place where people and nature thrive*.

The 7 'Special Qualities' in which the Purposes and Duty of the Park are realized, are:	These special qualities can be furthered through the Vision in these Sections: (+ notes)
1. Diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views	1.4; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3: 1-12, 15; 2.3.3 + 35 years of landscape restoration in the Park landscape north of the A27
2. A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species	2.1; 2.2; 2.3: 1, 4, 9, 15, 16 + 35 years of habitat restoration in the Park landscape north of the A27
3. Tranquil and unspoilt places	2.1; 2.2; 2.3: 1,4,9,16,17; 2.3.3
4. An environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise	1.1-4; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3.1: 3,4,5,6.1-3,7,8,9, 2.3.2: 10,11,12,13,14,15
5. Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences	1.3, 1.4, 2.3.1: 1,2a,2b,3,5,6.4,8.2,9 2.3.2: 12,13,16,17; 2.3.3;+10yrs DownsBarn courses
6. Well-conserved historical features and a rich cultural heritage	2.3.1: 5,7,9,12,17 + 15 years working with Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders + 12 yrs restoring trad'l buildings & fields + 8 years local projects with Worthing Archaeological Soc + 4 years founding & sponsoring Sussex Traditions charity.
7. Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area	P3; 1.1-4; 2.1-3; 2.3.1: 1-9; 2.3.2: 10-17; 2.3.3. + support for Sompting Community in the Countryside, Sompting Festival.

## About the 'Sompting Community in the Countryside' initiative (SCIC)

- A partnership for health and wellbeing of community and countryside
- A partnership that has been growing for 5 years
- Six organizations currently involved



**Sompting Parish Council (SPC)** and **Sompting Estate (SE)** began working together in 2013, with the aim to encourage more Sompting residents to get to know and enjoy the Parish's countryside, and to help look after it. Activities so far include: annual Parish Walk; project to restore Beggars Bush flowermeadow (a public access chalk grassland with car parking); wildlife courses at the Downs Barn; wildflower planting events. SPC appointed groundsman Leighton Clay as part-time conservation officer.

SPC+SE then led a series of guided walks and talks in 2017 and 2018, in which they were joined by **Sustainable Sussex (SSx)**, a charity partnering with Sompting Estate. The **South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA)**, and **Sompting Big Local (SBL)**, contributed grants. At the same time the **EPIC Project** [www.somptingestate.com/EPIC](http://www.somptingestate.com/EPIC) was approved for Heritage Lottery Fund support.

Anne Godley of SPC, in summer 2018, initiated a strategic review discussion with Sompting Estate, Sustainable Sussex, Sompting Big Local and SDNPA about aims and opportunities for SCIC. The partner organisations agreed an aim, to:

Develop joint action programs including more stakeholders and bringing together health and wellbeing, education and the experience and conservation of nature.

*Sompting Estate and Sustainable Sussex have gone on to develop a local strategic vision as set out in this paper, with the proposals through which they would like to contribute to the aims of Sompting Community in the Countryside.*

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## 1. Sustainable Sussex CIO = registered charity no. 1182997

### 1.1 About Sustainable Sussex

#### Projects

Sustainable Sussex began as a grass-roots community garden project based at Worthing Leisure Centre. All of the projects aim to be sustainable and are based around growing fruit and vegetables, other plants and trees, the environment, community engagement, health and wellbeing, mindfulness and access to opportunities including the SDNP, supporting the 5 ways to wellbeing: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give.

#### Volunteers

The organisation works with mixed needs groups including people with learning disabilities, those with mental and physical health problems, people who have been long term unemployed and anyone else who may find accessing the workplace difficult, or anyone who wants to support the project's activities. SSx volunteers are either self-referred through picking up a leaflet, seeing us at events or on social media, through recommendations or are referred through various organisations including The Aldingbourne Trust (WorkAid scheme) Worthing Job Centre Plus, West Sussex County Council Adult Learning Disabled and Autism Services, The Langford Centre in Bexhill and others.

#### Approach

The mixed ability nature of SSx groups is key to the success of the projects as it encourages people to accept, support, teach, grow and learn from each other. SSx are also able to help more people with their needs as there is more support for everyone. Offering people who may have low self-esteem, for instance the opportunity to help and support others who may have learning disabilities and to learn from them, is a great boost to all. What is often missing in our communities is our own sense of place. Where is our place in our community? How do we fit? SSx offers the opportunity to understand, find and grow into that space.

#### Location

Sussex Chilli Farm is now based on Sompting Estate, supporting the vision of the Estate, SCIC, SPC, SBL and the SDNP by bringing groups who would not usually access the countryside into the heart of the SDNP. A donation of a minibus by Sompting Big Local (SBL) has enabled SSx to bring volunteers to its various sites on Sompting Estate.

#### Sustainability and legacy

SSx has registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organization and aims, in collaboration with the Estate, to be permanently in Sompting. So it fits with the charity's mission to act, if requested, as a legacy body for other voluntary initiatives in SCIC area partnership.

SSx is working with SE and the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART) to develop the community legacy aspects of the EPIC Broadwater Brook restoration project. The legacy will tie closely with the development of Sompting Community Farm, enabling resource sharing including classrooms, boardwalk and pond dipping areas and workshops, and assisting SE with the expanded LWS.

## 1.2 Current activity – Sussex Chilli Farm (SCF)

Sustainable Sussex's first big project was to create Sussex Chilli Farm, a social enterprise which engages volunteers and offers experiential learning in a wide variety of tasks, from sowing seeds to chilli jam and infused oil production and selling the products at markets and chilli fairs, with income being reinvested in the projects. Sustainable Sussex inherited a conventional chilli business and is in the process of making it more sustainable, so it is now pesticide and artificial fertiliser free and run by the community.



Sussex Chilli Farm is currently situated in a 30 ft glasshouse at Lychpole Farm on Sompting Estate in Adur, and in 2 smaller glasshouses at Worthing Leisure Centre. A 36ft poly tunnel has been built by the volunteers at Decoy Lane which will also house chickens in the winter. Here volunteers are growing fruit and vegetables and planning a small perennial and annual therapeutic

polyculture garden around the polytunnel which will house plants from Sussex Chilli Farm. Sessions run 3 days a week and attendance varies between 5 and 16+ volunteers per day.

Sussex Chilli Farm does not currently have a kitchen to produce their chilli jams and oils, so they are building up a stock of frozen produce ready for when a kitchen becomes available, or once their own is built at the Community Farm.



## 1.3 Current Activity - The Sustainable Mind (TSM)

Sustainable Sussex also runs The Sustainable Mind (TSM) – a project bringing mindfulness education and meditation to people who often do not have access to such training. Mindfulness is presently at the forefront of neuroscience with proven benefits for people with mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression, chronic illness, pain and addictions.

This project gains direct GP referrals from Ball Tree and Kingfisher surgeries as well as from Adur and Worthing Councils' social prescribing pilot, Going Local, and Mind. Ball Tree Surgery support this service and the community farm. TSM also works with Worthing Homes - The Community House and gains referrals from CGL, Sussex NHS Partnership, Worthing Churches Homeless Project, National Probation Service and Strive.

TSM is running 18x 6 week adult mindfulness courses a year. One course per school term plus one drop-in a week is funded by and takes place at the SBL Hub on Cokeham Road and another two courses and one drop-in per term take place at Worthing Homes – The Community House in Dominion Road.

TSM also runs a meditation class at the Harriet Johnson Centre in Sompting every Monday evening. This is an affordable charged for event with monies covering costs and being available to subsidise people who may not be able to afford attendance.

## 1.4 Sompting Community Farm, Nature Trail & Orchard

Sustainable Sussex and Sompting Estate are working together to create Sompting Community Farm and Nature Trail at 'The Fen', a Community Orchard north of West Street.

Core funding to enable these will derive from the Estate's sales of development land under the Adur Local Plan. As developments are approved, Sompting Estate will be enabled to confirm their commitment of land and finance to these projects.

The projects aim to support local needs of the community as expressed in the Sompting Neighbourhood Plan and Adur Local Plan and the Sompting Big Local Plan 2017-2020, as well as supporting the growth of Sustainable Sussex's current volunteers and projects.

Subject to finance and any timescale that may be set for delivery, Sompting estate and Sustainable Sussex will link the farm and countryside as widely as possible with the community through:

- a community café, class rooms, meeting places, meditation spaces and offices, in addition to the food production areas.
- a teaching kitchen to make products 'community-made in Sompting' and workshops for carpentry and traditional crafts.
- built using sustainable methods and technologies, and with plenty of community engagement at each stage.

The above all require a countryside location to effectively connect people, farm and nature. The Nature Trail will include

- a board walk with pond dipping platform.
- ecological interest on the site includes Flushed Fen, a rare and valuable habitat.
- Sustainable Sussex will engage in wetland education, and support the legacy work of the HLF funded EPIC (Enhancing Places, Inspiring Communities) Broadwater Brook project.

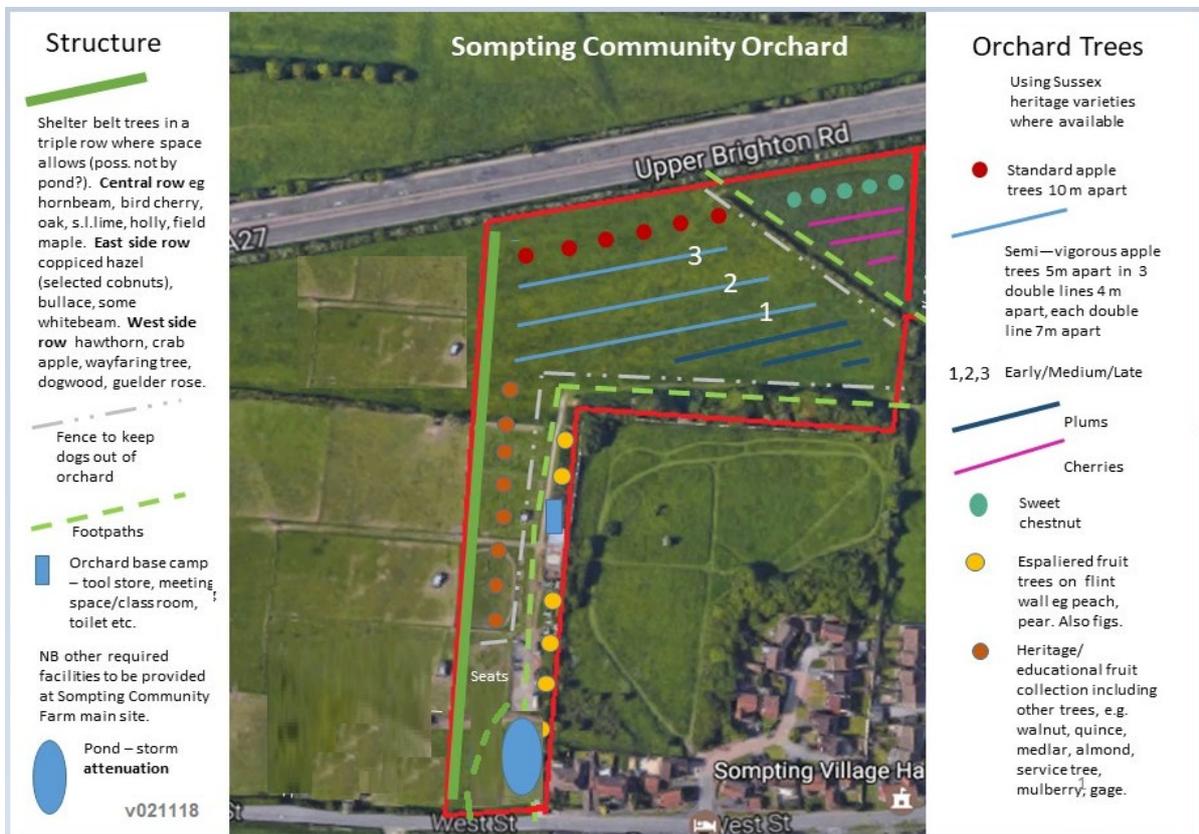
The benefits of creating Sompting Community Farm, Nature Trail and Orchard will include:

- Health and wellbeing
- Experience and Education
- Strengthening community
- Inclusivity, and Reducing inequality
- Improved Natural Environment
- Improved local food resilience

This is an artists impression of the Community Farm and Nature Trail at 'The Fen', Test Road:



This is the SE/SSx draft plan for the Community Orchard in Malthouse Field, north of West Street:



## 2. Sompting Estate

### 2.1 About Sompting Estate (SE)

Much of the countryside in Sompting Parish is owned by the **Sompting Estate (SE)**. Landscape, wildlife and community involvement in the countryside were all impacted by the agricultural intensification that occurred under postwar Agricultural Holdings Act tenancies. Sompting Estate and its tenant farmers have been working to restore landscape and biodiversity alongside productive farming since the 1980s. More information can be found on [www.somptingestate.com](http://www.somptingestate.com).

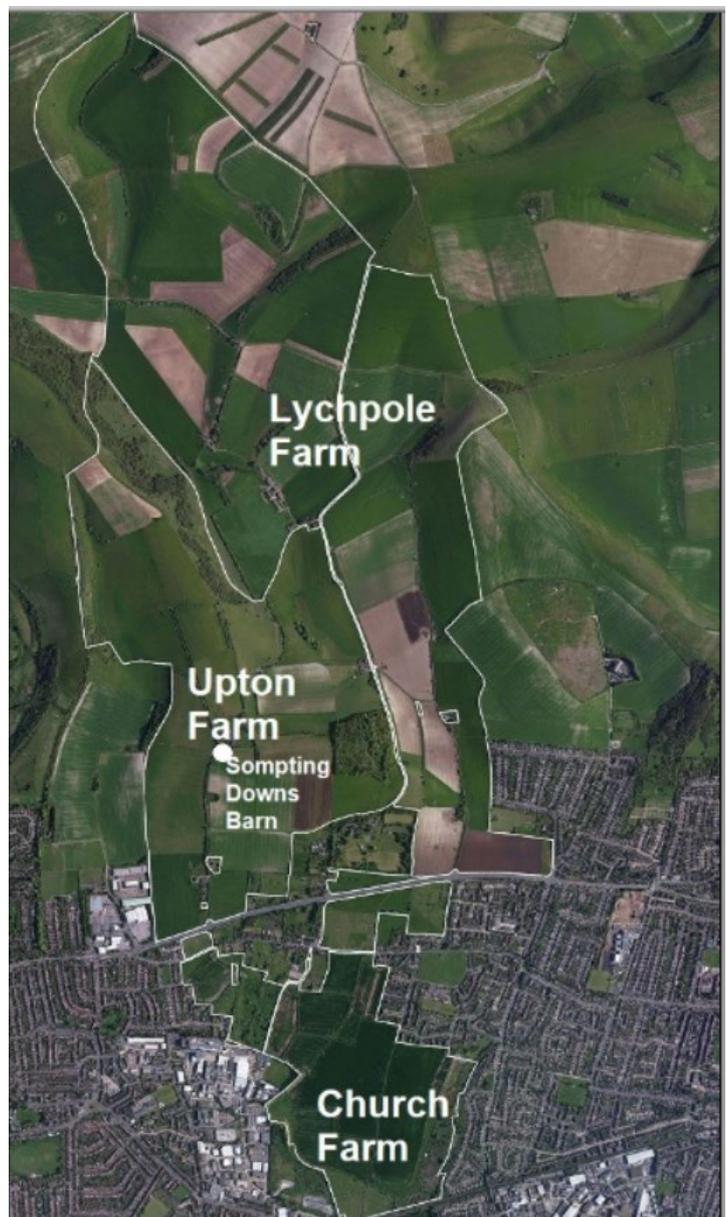
#### Farming and the Estate

Sompting Estate (outlined in white) owns a large part of Sompting's land. There are now three main farms:

- *Church Farm* is farmed by the Estate in hand, working with Frank Grantham as contractor. It is currently mainly arable, with some conservation grazing pasture which Frank grazes as tenant with sheep and cattle.
- *Lychpole Farm* is farmed by Caroline and David Harriott. Its core business is a mixed sheep and cattle farm. It is looking at diversifications too, such as the pumpkins grown in 2018.
- *Upton Farm* is farmed by Philip and Claire Bower. It is also a sheep and cattle farm. It is distinguished by running a suckler herd, and uses its own breeding rather than buying in stock to fatten.

Street Barns conversion sale enabled the Estate to build the *Sompting Downs Barn* on Upton Farm.

It's a beautiful meeting place for the farms, the estate, the environmental community, wildlife courses and small group visits.



## Twentieth Century Changes

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Estate employed many local people on the land and was an integral part of the community. Early C20th changes altered this. Between 1950-1990, farmland had by law been put into three-generation tenancies, making the landowner a mere rent-taker. Tenant farmers, guided by the government priorities of the day, intensified the farming. This meant more arable, fewer animals, fewer hedges, fewer flowery grasslands, loss of traditional buildings, less wildlife, car-dependant life, fewer people working on the land or connecting with it.

## Twenty-first Century Changes

Since 1990, SE Trustees have been developing a vision to restore traditional practices features and wildlife habitats, and to find appropriate ways for the community to enjoy it more. In common with other Estates they have learned that their economy needs to change. SE has begun to diversify from purely agricultural rental income to a mixed portfolio of business activities. These will aim to be compatible with objectives of Parish and Park and to create more local employment.

### Developments: Opportunity to fund the new local strategic vision

The Adur Local Plan development opportunities have potential to support a once in 3 generations opportunity for the Estate to invest in a more vibrant, sustainable future for the countryside of the Parish and the Park. If the ideas and land use changes proposed outside of the development areas are realized, it will be largely thanks to this source of funds enabling investment by the Estate at the same time as meeting housing needs.

## 2.2 Sompting Estate Vision

SE Trustees have a vision which aims to:

- restore wildlife, landscape features and habitats in an enhanced landscape,
- create a more vibrant and sustainable economy, and
- promote wellbeing in the community through reconnection with the countryside.

This vision is summed up by Sompting Estate as (Sompting being):

**a place where people and nature thrive.**

The Sompting Estate Trustees intend to draft a **'Whole Estate Plan'(WEP)** for submission to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), and consult the parish on it. The SDNPA WEP will give more detail on eg ecology and ecosystems services. This local strategic vision could be a foundation document for the WEP, especially if adopted through the SPNP process.

The other key enablers for Sompting Estate's local strategic vision will be individuals with enthusiasm and ideas for Sompting, and, partnership working with organizations especially through the Sompting Community in the Countryside (SCIC) initiative.

## 2.3 Sompting as “a place where people and nature thrive”

**Proposals** are here described under site numbers 1-17. These are marked indicatively on aerial photographs, first south of the A27 (sites 1 - 10), and then north of the A27 (sites 11 – 17).

### 2.3.1 Sompting South of the A27 as “a place where people and nature thrive”



#### Proposals for sites in Sompting south of the A27

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## 1. The EPIC Project Site

This is a partnership project between Sompting Estate and the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust. Funded mainly by Heritage Lottery Fund. Creation of a new Broadwater Brook route will make a beautiful and wildlife-enhancing stream through farmland, instead of going through a too-small culvert under the old landfill site picking up pollutants.



The project includes hedge and tree planting and creation of a 4m wide river trail from the West Sompting development site boundary along the stream to view and enjoy it. It also includes supported opportunities for community involvement; ecological surveying and volunteering; oral and local history research; education; water quality and sustainability themed events and learning. The project has commenced in 2019 and is looking to the Sustainable Sussex Community Farm as a legacy resource.

## 2. The West Sompting housing development Sites

The housing and public spaces associated with this Local Plan allocation will be described and determined in the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan and application process.

There is potential for Sompting Estate to supply local garden plants ([tristramplants.co.uk](http://tristramplants.co.uk)). Also, to work with the developers' landscapers on design and maintenance for the farm edges to provide a rural ambience and farmland setting to this part of the village.

### 2a. West Sompting – South Area – Countryside connections

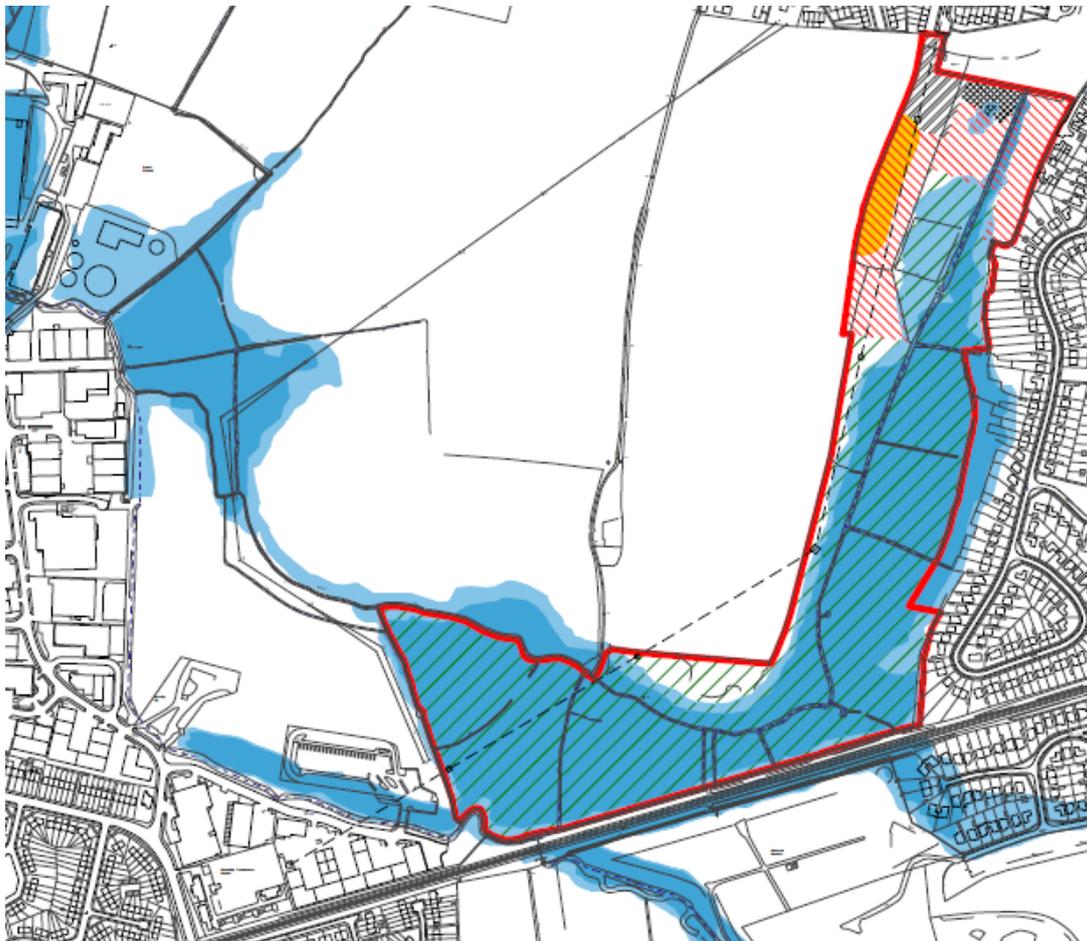
- *New footpath*: The EPIC project will provide a river trail footpath to its stream.
- *Cycleway*: When a crossing is provided through to Deacon Way (once the future of Decoy Farm WLP A4 is determined), the Estate aims to provide land in Adur for a cycleway connecting the West Sompting development to East Worthing.
- *Links to the Community Farm*: Links will be provided within the development area for foot and cycle access to the Community Farm/Test Road. The farm track access in the South East corner of the West Sompting development area, connecting the Community Farm to Church Farm, should be retained as a farm track to give the Community Farm scope to grow food (eg for PYO) on a wider land area in the future.



Activities and facilities at the Community Farm will include

- Agriculture, horticulture and conservation;
- working together to turn seasonal farm and community orchard products into food and drink;
- café and small farm shop for feeding the farm and countryside volunteers and for offering the produce of the farm;
- well designed replacement buildings of rural design on the site;
- a nature trail open to the public at daytimes;
- sustainability workshops relating to the rural environment;
- opportunities for countryside and farm volunteering, work experience, education, employment skills training, building of confidence and relationships, mindfulness courses.

#### 4. Cokeham Brooks Local Wildlife Site (LWS): Flushed Fen Habitat



The Community Farm will play an important role in helping with the conservation grazing management of the extended Local Wildlife Site, enabling the sustainable operation of grazing regimes and methods which would not be viable on a simple commercial basis.

It is proposed to more than double the area designated as LWS, to include all the area hatched green in the plan above.

Detailed ecological surveys have been carried out and experts have advised a low-intensity conservation grazing regime by cattle. This would help restore the diversity of flowers and insects that would have been seen in these brookland meadow fields in the early twentieth century. Birds using these wet areas to feed in the winter include snipe, lapwing and teal.

A **Local Environmental Management Plan (LEMP)** is being produced to guide future management of the site. Through the community farm there will be opportunities for volunteers to be involved.

The Nature Trail managed by the community farm will give daily access with a boardwalk to a beautiful wet area at the northern end of the LWS, whilst leaving most of the area relatively undisturbed for nature.

## 5. West Street Fields Site: Working Horses

Currently the field on the north side of West Street is divided up into small horse paddocks with shelters sheds and haybarn. The north field is pasture, the south side field is arable.

Under the Adur Local Plan's West Sompting development scheme, the strip bordering the west side of Malthouse Meadows, which is currently occupied by Sompting Paddocks' haybarn and parking, will temporarily be required for a construction haul route, so as to minimise village impact. Later, this area will be used for landscaping, public access and stormwater attenuation.

These two fields are at a defining point in the village, in between the old village Conservation Area, and the more built up areas in east Sompting and Cokeham. Here, residents walking cycling riding or driving on West Street can look south into Church Farm, and north towards Sompting's iconic church and the downs.

The fields on both sides of West Street at this location, traditionally part of the farm, were used in 1936 for the first South of England Show – marquees and the show on the north side, car parking on the south side of the road.

Sompting Estate has therefore identified these two fields as a site where (a) the village's historic character and traditional farm and landscape values are important, and



(b) outdoor seasonal events, through which the public can enjoy their countryside and rural heritage, may be appropriate.



There is growing public interest in traditional and sustainable farming methods. For instance: the Weald & Downland Museum, or the Dorset Heavy Horse Farm Park.

Some Sompting people with working horses locally have an interest in partnering Sompting Estate, in a project to use these fields primarily as the base for a small scale Working Horse centre.

Young people and volunteers would be involved with the animals and learn skills, and the horses would do work on the Community Farm and Church Farm generally.

These activities will also provide opportunities for partnership working with Sompting Estate sponsored charity, Sussex Traditions, which has drawn inspiration and valued local material from Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders.

To enable these uses, in the north field, the current Paddocks field layout will be altered. The defunct Sompting Paddocks stables and buildings would need to be replaced, in either the north or the south field, with a beautiful and traditional (but also functional) barnyard for the horses. A traditional style cartshed will also be needed to house and preserve vintage farm wagons and horse drawn implements, of which Sompting Estate and friends already have a small collection. In the south field, conversion to permanent pasture, and some improvement of farm track accesses and gateways, will be required.

Regard will be had to the remains of the old Malhouses in the north field, which the Estate's research partners, the Worthing Archaeological Society, have been investigating.

## **6. Loose Barn Site: restored barnyard, and, field use east and west of Loose Lane farm track**

**The Loose Barn site** is at the bottom of the farm track which runs south from Loose Lane. This barnyard was demolished by farmer Peter Phillips in the 1960s when it became unsafe. It was not replaced because the farm was occupied, following Mr Phillips' retirement, predominantly with wheat and other arable crops. Within the new conservation management plan (LEMP) for the enlarged Cokerham Brooks Local Wildlife Site (Site 4 in this Appendix), conservation grazing by cattle is a key requirement. To achieve this sustainably, the old barnyard will need to be rebuilt so that there is somewhere to pen cattle in shelter off the fen when it is wet. Also somewhere to store winter food, and for protected calving when we get a small resident breeding herd.

A similar barnyard scale, layout and overall landscape appearance as the historic barnyard might be achieved using contemporary materials.



**In the large arable field east of the Loose Barn site**, Sompting Estate envisages a future environmentally friendly land use with opportunities to involve the Community Farm (site 3), working horses (site 5), and the wider community eg through PYO. One approach under consideration is a system variously described as Restoration Agriculture, Permaculture, or Agroforestry: a mixed row cropping system with trees for fruit/nuts, soft fruit bushes, vegetables herbs and salads.

**In the large field west of the Loose Barn site**, Sompting Estate envisages that standard arable cropping will be replaced by permanent pasture in order to support the conservation grazing of the Local Wildlife Site with some pastures on higher ground.

**In the arable fields northwest of Loose Barn**, a rotation of arable and pasture leys. The leys, the pasture and the barnyard will make the conservation grazing of the Cokeham Brooks Flushed Fen LWS (Site 4) more sustainable, by providing some drier pasture and more varied feeding opportunities for the animals.

Currently, the Middle Yard Barn Grainstore on upper Lambleys Lane is used by Church Farm. As Sompting Estate Vineyard develops, Church Farm will need to move to its own facilities south of the A27, reducing travel. The Lambleys Lane grainstore, which has been used by Church Farm, is a very building. It is envisaged that several smaller barns are likely to be needed in the future, to accommodate more diverse cropping on Church Farm, and to promote the sense of a traditional and village-scale living landscape around Sompting Village. These would be proposed at sites 6 and 7 and potentially further west.

## 7. Decoy Lane Site: small arable fields, and the Decoy Lane smallholding

7.1 **Farm changes** Sompting Estate envisages eventually diversifying these small arable fields for more varied and interesting cropping such as vegetable/salad/fruit growing. These crops would require some protected growing/handling/seasonal PYO facilities at the north end of these fields and potentially in the Decoy Lane smallholding site. The Decoy Lane smallholding site is currently in use by Sustainable Sussex, prior to the Test Road Community Farm site becoming available, for Sussex Chilli Farm protected cropping activities and some vegetable growing.

7.2 **Leisure access** Local horse riders have asked for access to an off-road riding route south of the A27. Sompting Estate is considering making a private bridleway for local riders available on the route shown below subject to consultation by Sompting Estate with the riding community. At the south end, the horse course would run parallel to Sompting Estate's suggested footpath along the southern boundary of the site with GSK. The route is approx. 1 mile long.



## 8. Sompting West Brooks site: grazing, woodland and wetland wildlife

These beautiful small, undulating pasture fields traversed by streams are important to wildlife and will be conservation-grazed in tandem with the Cokeham Flushed Fen LWS (Site 4). Sompting Estate has planted a small woodland at the south end. Views up through this landscape to the village and the downs would be available, if a footpath as shown below, in Adur but partly also in Worthing, north of GSK, were to be created.



2.3.2 Sompting North of the A27 as “a place where people and nature thrive”



Proposals for sites in Sompting north of the A27

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## **9. Vineyard site/s**

The first Sompting Estate vineyard will be planted at site 9a in May 2019. The second, in site 9b on the plan, will be planted when finance allows, perhaps in 2021. The vineyard will be run by Alex Tristram, a first step to involve the next generation in the Estate and keep looking to the future. Seasonally and as the vineyard business grows, the number of related employment opportunities will increase.

The vineyard will initially be selling all its grapes to Ridgeview Wine Estate at Ditchling but once enough grape juice is being produced, it is intended that named Sompting Estate branded sparkling and still wines will be made.

The vineyard's initial facility needs, for securely storing vineyard equipment, for handling the harvest, and for staff welfare and management, will be met at Middle Yard Barn. At this later stage a vineyard barn will be required at site 9b, just north of Hillcroft. This would service staff and small tools on site. It would incorporate a vineyard tasting and talks room offering breath-taking views across the vineyards to the Church and the Abbots, the Mountain, and the sea with its white cliffs in the distance.

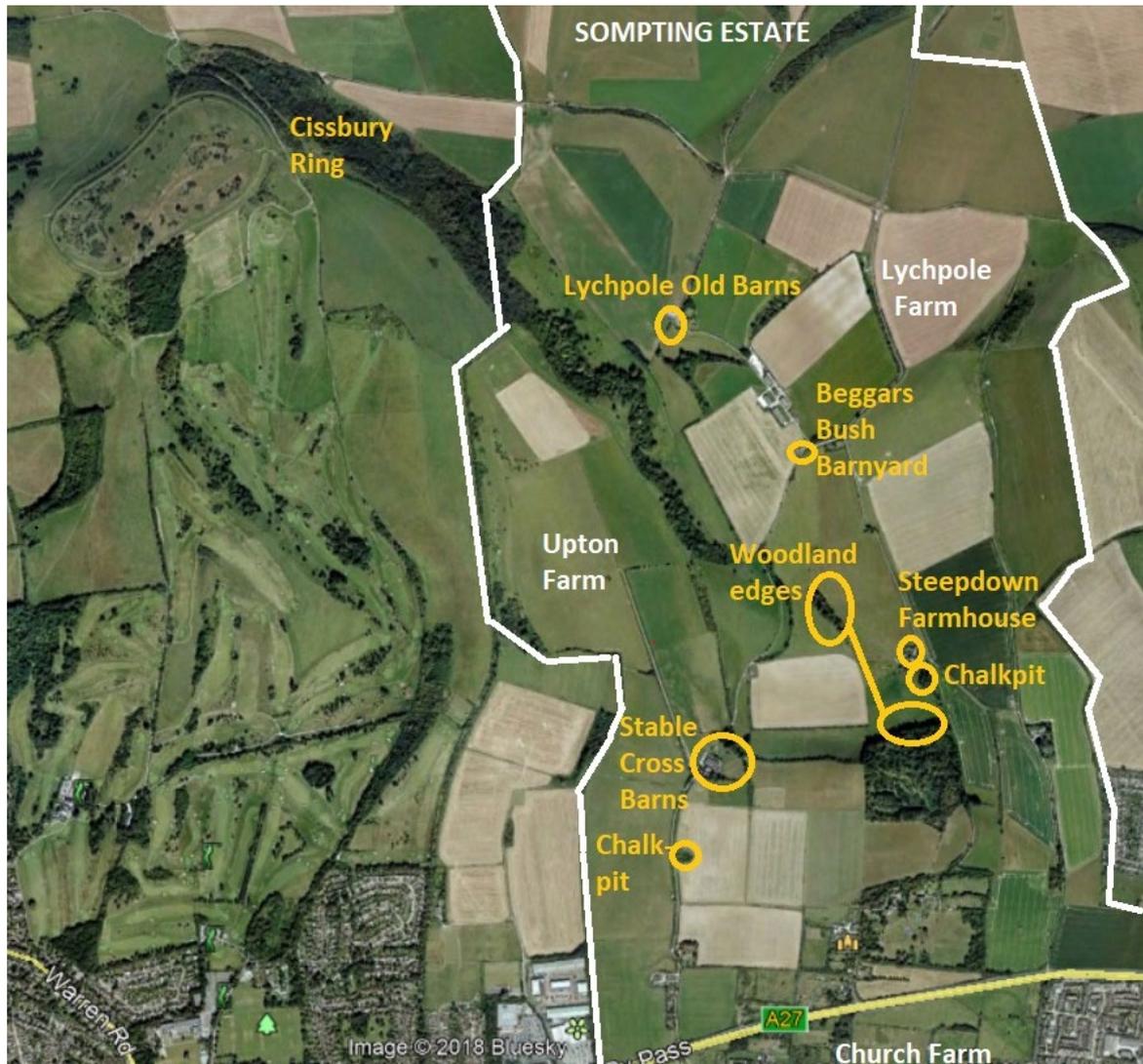
For a successful Sompting vineyard business, engaging people with experience of the landscape so they are 'drinking and eating the landscape' will need to be an integral part of our offering. We will aim to provide tours and to link the vineyard, and the surrounding traditional landscape use and heritage, to a beautifully designed tourism/arts facility incorporating and protecting a limekiln we have excavated, within the chalkpit about 200 metres up Lambleys Lane from the proposed vineyard barn site.

## **10. Sompting Tourism sites: Holiday accommodation and activities**

Farmers and landowners in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) are encouraged to derive income from providing enjoyable experience and understanding of the landscape, rather than just focussing on food production. The history traditions and nature of the farm, the parish and this part of the SDNP in Sussex, are valued assets which can be shared with holidaymakers. Economic sustainability will then go hand in hand with sustaining the natural beauty of the Sompting landscape.

The Estate sees a holidays business not just as an important diversified future income stream but also as a key part of its mission to enable more people to sustainably experience, understand and appreciate the history, traditions, nature and beauty of our landscape.

Sompting Estate envisages group holiday opportunities and courses. Education, heritage, health and wellbeing, local food and drink, the environment, ecology, sustainable living, skills and the arts, can all be targeted holiday themes. The beauty of the natural and farmed Sompting landscape is the primary attraction. Design of holiday facilities and management of their surrounding landscape will be in keeping with this and have low visual impact on local users walking the paths.



**At site 10a, Steepdown Farmhouse** is a large family farmhouse put together in the 1940s from two older farm cottages. As a first step towards providing opportunities for holidaymakers to stay overnight and for longer periods in Sompting's beautiful part of the South Downs National Park, this house will be made available for furnished holiday lets. Groups using the house will be encouraged with information and activities to explore the downs around the farmhouse, and given opportunities to participate in the courses at our Sompting Downs Environment Education Centre.

Around the farmhouse, a wider range of holiday opportunities on Upton Farm, as appropriate within the landscape, would include:

- Holiday units in the small stables and small flint barn south of the farmhouse with communal cooking and shower and recreation/performance/course room in the barn opposite; suitable for yoga retreats, workshops and course or wellbeing groups.
- Uniquely designed eco-accommodation for groups in the small farmhouse chalkpit south of the barn
- Glamping pods/shepherds huts or similar in small woodland edges

**At site 10b (in the numbering on map 2.3.2), Lychpole Old Barns** are beautiful traditional buildings which are no longer used in modern agriculture but are redolent with history. This site had planning permission for holiday accommodation about 10 years ago, but this permission was not implemented, due to lack of funds to commence it. Sompting Estate will submit a new, improved application, which will deliver high quality holidays and better landscape connection in this unique location. We store traditional horse-drawn farm equipments in the cartshed opposite the old stable barn which was built to house four pairs of working farm horses; these barns offer great opportunities to theme holidays experiences around the traditional buildings uses.

Due to the cost of sustaining these traditional buildings we will need to offer a higher-end holiday experience here for it to be viable. Whilst holidaymakers will learn about sustainable livestock farming today through their proximity to the adjacent modern livestock handling barn, their main movements around the old farm buildings will need to be separated from those of herds, tractors and livestock transport lorries, for comfort and for safety.

South of the Lychpole Old Barns, the Beggars Bush barnyard might in the future provide a further opportunity for holiday accommodation with beautiful views facing south toward Titch Hill Wood. This barnyard has mid twentieth-century buildings on the site of an earlier threshing barnyard with flint buildings.

**At site 10c (in the numbering on map 2.3.2), the Stable Cross Barn area**, with its small hedged fields which open to great views but are not overlooked, will provide opportunities for summer season camping, so that we can offer access to stay within the National Park at Sompting for those on lower budgets and who want to be closer to nature.

As with the furnished holiday let accommodation, camping holidaymakers will be offered opportunities to participate in courses and events which draw them in to understanding and enjoying the special qualities of our parish's downland landscape.

## **11. or 12 'The Crofts' Sites: South Downs Produce Shop, Café and Visitor Centre**

The Sompting Downs are difficult for many people in this well-populated area to access. For those who have cars, parking in the Sompting Downs is limited, and for those who do not, crossing the A27 is for most a difficult barrier. (See Site 15 for a relevant proposal.)

Under the working name of 'The Crofts', the Estate envisages providing a rural SDNP 'gateway' facility for refreshment, information about the downs and walk routes, and buying produce from Sompting and the South Downs counties.

The facility would also host courses events and resources, and be a setting off point for farm, woodland, agroforestry and vineyard tours. It would also offer a physical downland base for our sponsored partner charities 'Sussex Traditions' and 'Sustainable Sussex'.

Seasonal produce from Sompting Estate's future diversified output – eg lamb, beef, honey, wine, vegetables, fruit, plants, woodland and agroforestry produce and more – would be featured. The capacity for the Estate to sell own farm products at retail margins, will make it more economically sustainable to use less-intensive, village-scale, more environmentally friendly methods in the parish. There would also be opportunities for the Community Farm to participate in this venture in ways which further the social and charitable objectives of Sustainable Sussex.

'The Crofts' could potentially be located at either of sites 11 or 12; there are pro's and con's including Highways considerations. In either location, perhaps particularly at site 12, 'The Crofts' could be integrated with other facilities meeting community needs in harmony with the Purposes of the National Park, such as those related to health and wellbeing.

## **12. Health and Wellbeing Sites**

Whilst some health and wellbeing use has been suggested above as an option for the Lower Dankton Lane paddock area, a downland health and wellbeing facility could be combined with The Crofts proposal in a mixed land use plan connected with local homes and countryside. This could contribute to furthering the aims of the National Park and the Parish in north Sompting.

Complementary to what the Community Farm can offer, options need to be considered, including perhaps on Sompting Estate land, for medical and other wellbeing facilities for a growing and ageing population. Ball Tree Surgery are considering expansion of their current site, for the short to medium term. For the longer term, site and design options will need to be identified for a new GP surgery facility. One option might be to combine a satellite health and wellbeing facility at site 12 with a principal surgery site south of the A27 where most people live.

## **13. Upper Dankton Lane site: small fields south and west of Dankton Barnyard**

Sompting Estate envisages that in the long run some of these fields, sheltered from westerly wind, may be suited to a mixture of Estate or Community Farm permaculture agroforestry, combined with viticulture on some south facing slopes. Dankton Barnyard, whose farm buildings were demolished as unsafe in the 1970s, would be restored as a sub-centre for farming in this area. Being adjacent to North Sompting may make this area suitable to include more PYO, as was popular with Lychpole Farm's 'Pumpkin Patch' in 2018.

## **14. Open Access Sites: Beggars Bush, and Lychpole Side Hill**

14.1 **At Lychpole Side Hill**, Sompting Estate has hosted occasional Forest Schools, non-intensively so as to retain the undisturbed character. The Estate is supporting the development of a different version suited to this landscape called 'Forest and Field (or Farm) School' or 'Wild School', with a local partner organization. This can help introduce families to engage positively with sites such as these.

14.2 **The Beggars Bush open access flowermeadow** next to the little car park on top of the Sompting Downs, is many people's first point of access to this landscape. The Estate and Parish Council, with other SCIC partners, are working to enhance the value of this site for wildlife, for the community and for National Park visitors.

To foster more flowers, SBL and SDNPA have funded winter grass removal, and SPC volunteers have sown grass-parasitic yellow-rattle for the Estate. Fencing will be needed to permit seasonal sheep grazing, with kissing gates to allow continued public access.

## 15. **St Mary's Church Sompting, and, access to the National Park**

For more than a millennium, Sompting's iconic church has been a centre for Sompting's community in the countryside. It is the most widely recognized symbol of the special character of historic, beautiful Sompting Parish.

Farming and fishing, family life and funerals, faith and doubt, peace and war, nature and nurture, music meditation and worship, have all come together here. This is where the community can come to access 1000 and more years of its heritage and roots. For a quarter of that time the Crofts/Tristram family and their tenants have managed the countryside.

It will benefit SCIC purposes if this church building, considered by some to have best claim to the title 'Cathedral of the Downs', becomes more accessible to the local and wider community, as a place where people can reconnect with, understand and respond spiritually to their countryside, landscape and heritage.

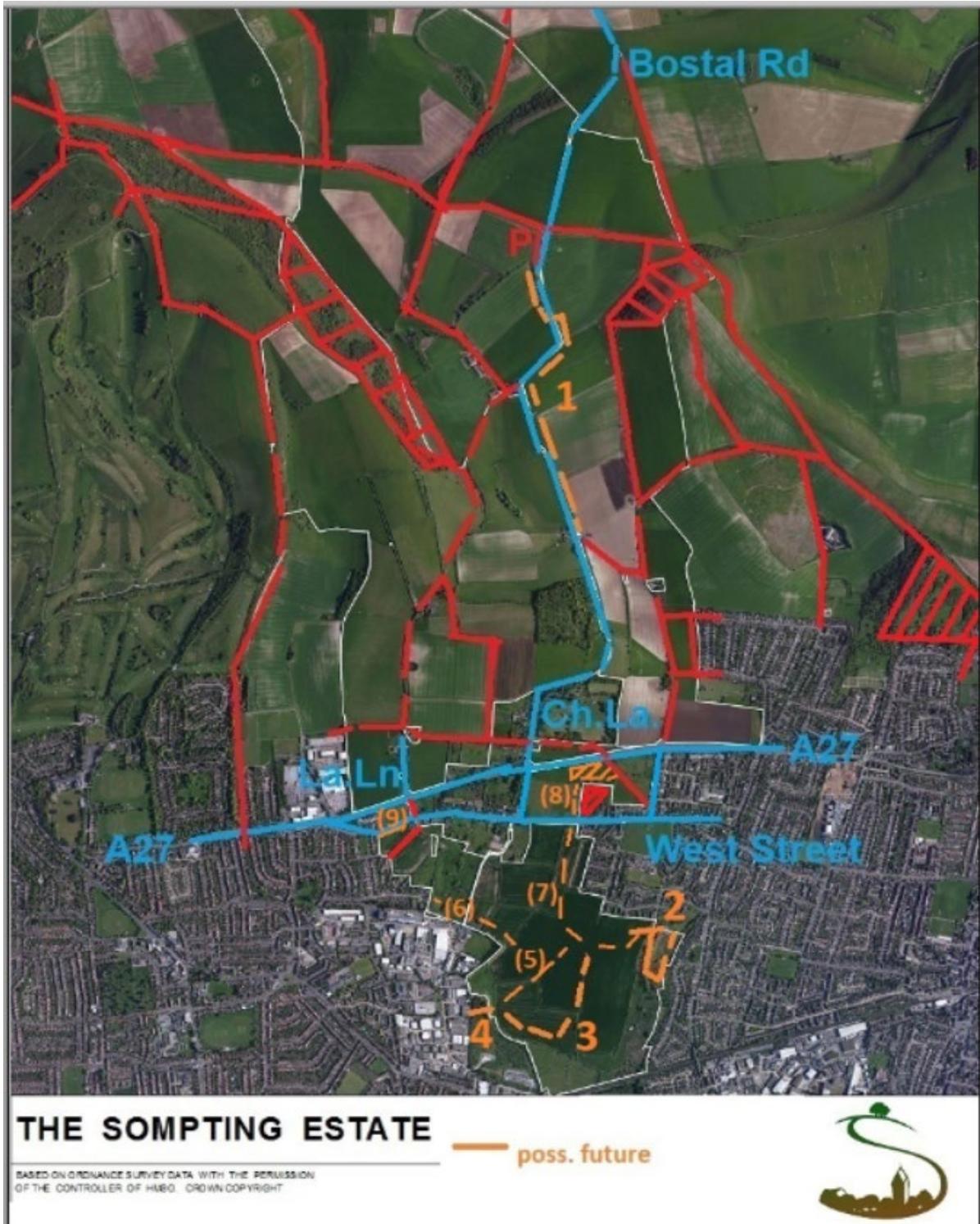
- A large part of that is intangible, about what people do and say there and how it relates to this unique church's unique rural setting.
  - Tangibly, in planning terms: a safe crossing of the A27 for non motorized users, and improved disabled access at the church, should also be identified and supported.
- The land on the east side of Church Lane, immediately north and immediately south of the A27, is available if required for that purpose.



*The path up into the Sompting Downs ascends on the west side of the St Marys and the Abbotts*

### 2.3.3 Access opportunities

Sompting parish's access network is already good north of the A27, so opportunities for improvement are mainly to be sought south of the A27.



- Red** = Existing public rights of way (including 'permissive paths' west of N.Sompting)
- Hatched Red** = Open access areas
- Orange** = Potential new access routes. See next page.

Following the orange numbers on the map above, potential new access routes are:

1. A SCIC project with the National Park Authority: running north from Steepdown Farmhouse to the Beggars Bush carpark and public access flowermeadow. This will bring walkers off the narrow road, and enable a safer circular walk from N.Sompting including upper Dankton Lane.
2. The proposed circular Nature Trail within the Community Farm and Local Wildlife Site.
3. The footpath that will be created as part of the HLF supported EPIC project.
4. If Worthing Borough Council in the future permit: a link across the old tip to Deacon Way,
5. A connected cycle route from the W.Sompting development could be added.
6. A path linking to Clarendon Road is also under consideration for the future.
7. This indicates foot and cycle path within the West Sompting development area (south)
8. New footpath and community orchard within the West Sompting development area (north)
9. New footpath along south side of Upper Brighton Road

*End*