

Swift Farm Stable yard

KCC – Biodiversity

I will provide a EclA and have contacted several specialist surveyors. To date, I have found no local provider available, but will keep trying.

The area seen by the Biodiversity Officer on Google maps is several years out of date and was taken when I had first cleared the back garden of dense Dogwood scrub, by hand digging. My work on this area is now complete and the rear garden is now restored to wild flower meadow. This is maintained by hand pulling of any wild herbs and flowers dominating, to maintain a good natural mix. All plants are naturally sown. Only ragwort has been removed in it's entirety.



Wild flower meadow forming rear garden of Swift Farm

Roots from log fallen trees have been placed to benefit wildlife.

Badgers have not been seen on the land since 2003, when the former owners stopped feeding them peanuts. There are no badger sets within the boundary of the garden, only rabbit holes. There are foxes in the neighbouring woodland.

Bird boxes have been placed on the property, with one being used by blue-tits and another by great tits. Suet pellets and peanuts are provided for wild birds, twice daily.

During the summer drought I placed water trays in the rear garden and field behind, to sustain wildlife. During hard frost, water is also provided.

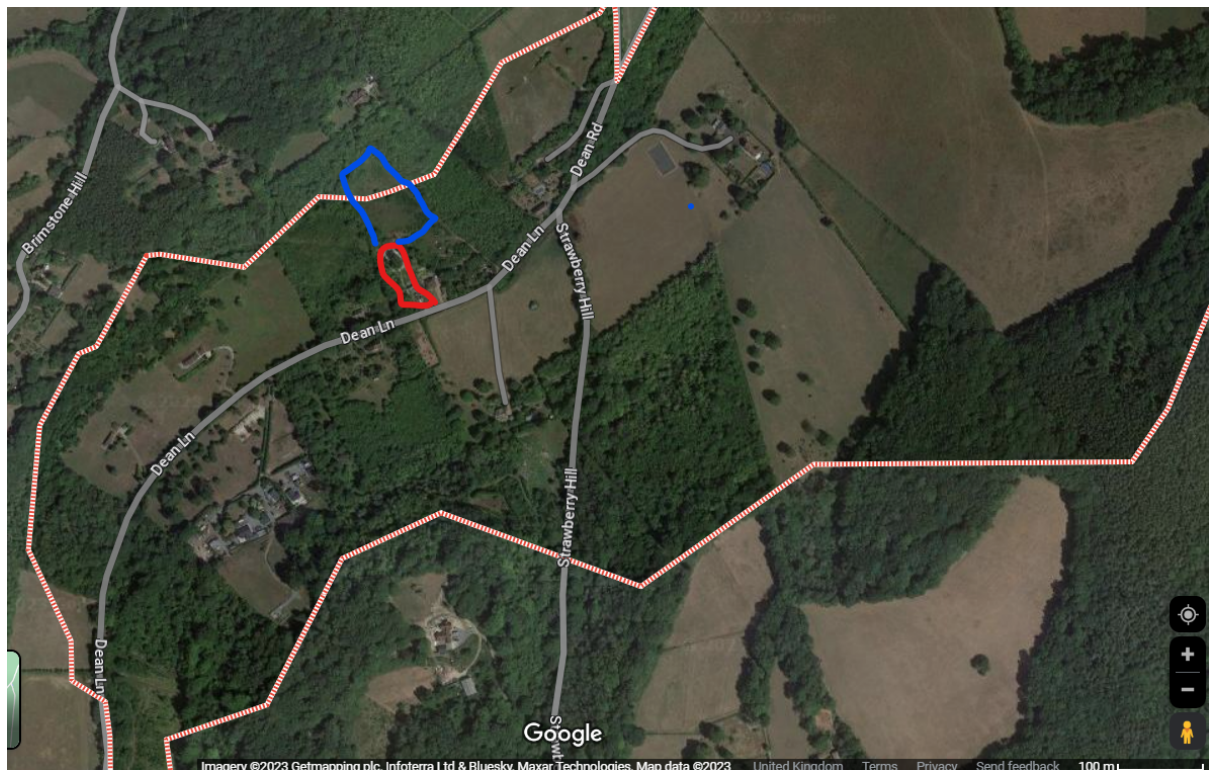
When the stable block is complete, it is my intention to divert rainwater from the gutter of the rear of the building across to the bank, into a large shallow Belfast sink. This will provide a ready water supply for wildlife, in addition to creating a wildlife friendly bog area in the centre of the bank.



Bank on which a rainwater water supply and bog area will be created

Fencing will be wildlife friendly, allowing animals and birds to pass through easily. Hedging will be selected that provides useful habitat and food.

The Google map below illustrates local topography, showing a mix of woodland, grazing, meadows and scrubland. The Swift Farm site is marked in Red and the area to be used for grazing is marked in blue. The grazing of horses is well-documented as having a beneficial impact on wildlife, attracting insects.



Grazing land

It is my understanding that Planning Consent is not required to cut back overgrown boundaries and to restore fencing. The field was used for grazing horses between the 1980s to early 2000s. From the 1940s to 1970s it had been used for chickens and pigs.

Nearly all fencing has fallen over, due to rotted fence posts and fallen trees. When boundaries have been cleared new fence posts will be installed and will be attached to existing wire. Additional hedging will be planted.

This work has commenced, in a way to maximise natural diversity. Wild flowers and wild herbs are not being removed and are being provided more space to expand. Groups of plants such as briars and hazel are being left in place, as are mature trees within the field and on the boundary. Ragwort is being removed.

All work is being undertaken manually and without the use of chemicals. Only a fork, loppers and secateurs are being used. Each unwanted scrub, root propagated from boundaries is being individually dug out, with wild herbs and flowers heeled back into the soil. No additional soil or fertiliser will be applied. Scrap metal materials found buried under grown will be removed.



Image of work commenced within field (left side completed/right side not completed)



Image showing an area of the field cleared by hand digging of dogwood – the scrap metal items uncovered will be removed.



Image showing boundary cut back, leaving wild flowers – cutting back boundaries will encourage them to thicken to provide an effective fence.



The public footpath crossing the field on a diagonal has been cleared of Dogwood and Brambles, as required to provide clear public access.



All removed roots and plants taken to one area for burning when birds are not nesting.



Disused rabbit holes in field



Dogwood, brambles and wild privet, being thinned



Boundary being cleared to enable the boundary fence to be repaired.



Boundary being cut back to enable fencing to be repaired



Boundary through woodland to be cleared as fence posts have rotted and trees have fallen on the wire.

GBC – Environmental Protection

Straw bedding will be used, which will be stored as a well-managed heap, to the rear of the stable block. When rotten, the manure produced will be used within the garden. In my experience of keeping horses, the manure created by the over-wintering of two horses in stables can sufficiently meet the growing and fertilisation requirements of a garden of the size of this plot.

The manure heap will be a good distance from neighbouring residential properties and at a safe distance from all buildings due to risk of combustion.

The horse and pony for which the stable yard will be used will be for domestic use. They will not be used for any commercial purpose and Licencing will not be required.

Lighting

Lighting will be provided within the building. Any spread of light to outside areas will be minimised by the overhang at the front sides of the building. Lighting will only be used when tending to horses when it is dark. It is not beneficial to leave stabling lit for long periods as this had a detrimental impact on horses seasonal coat changes.

GBC – Highways Officer

The stables will be for private use only.

It is not my intention to purchase a horsebox or to store one on site. The horse and pony will be used for private local hacking and schooling, rather than competition. Should horse transport be required for any emergency situation, I would hire a vehicle or engage the services of a horse transporter.

Current Status of site

No further work on the construction of the stabling has been carried out, beyond that described in the Planning Statement, to excavate to reveal the original concrete base and to shore-up soil edges.

Work to restore fencing and hedges has continued as Planning Consent is not required for that work.

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As soon as I can get the