

MOWLEM LAND TRUST AND GIFT OF PUBLIC PLEASURE GROUNDS TRUST PROPOSED TRANSFER OF LAND: CONSULTATION

In order to undertake well-publicised ground stabilisation works along Swanage seafront the ownership of two parcels of land (Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field) needs to be transferred from two charitable trusts to the Town Council. This issue has been previously publicised through the Council's two rounds of public consultation on the proposed stabilisation works in 2023 and 2025.

To transfer this land the charities require the consent of the Charity Commission. An application will be lodged with the Commission within the next month. In support of this, the charities must be able to demonstrate that they have taken into consideration the views of local residents, who are the beneficiaries of the Trusts.

If you have any comments to make on these proposals, please either fill in a survey form, send an email to admin@swanage.gov.uk or write to Swanage Town Council at Town Hall, High Street, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2NZ.

WEATHER STATION FIELD



Image 1: Weather Station Field, looking to the South



Image 2: Weather Station Field, looking to the North



Image 3: Weather Station Field, looking to the East

SANDPIT FIELD



Image 1:
Sandpit Field,
looking to the
West

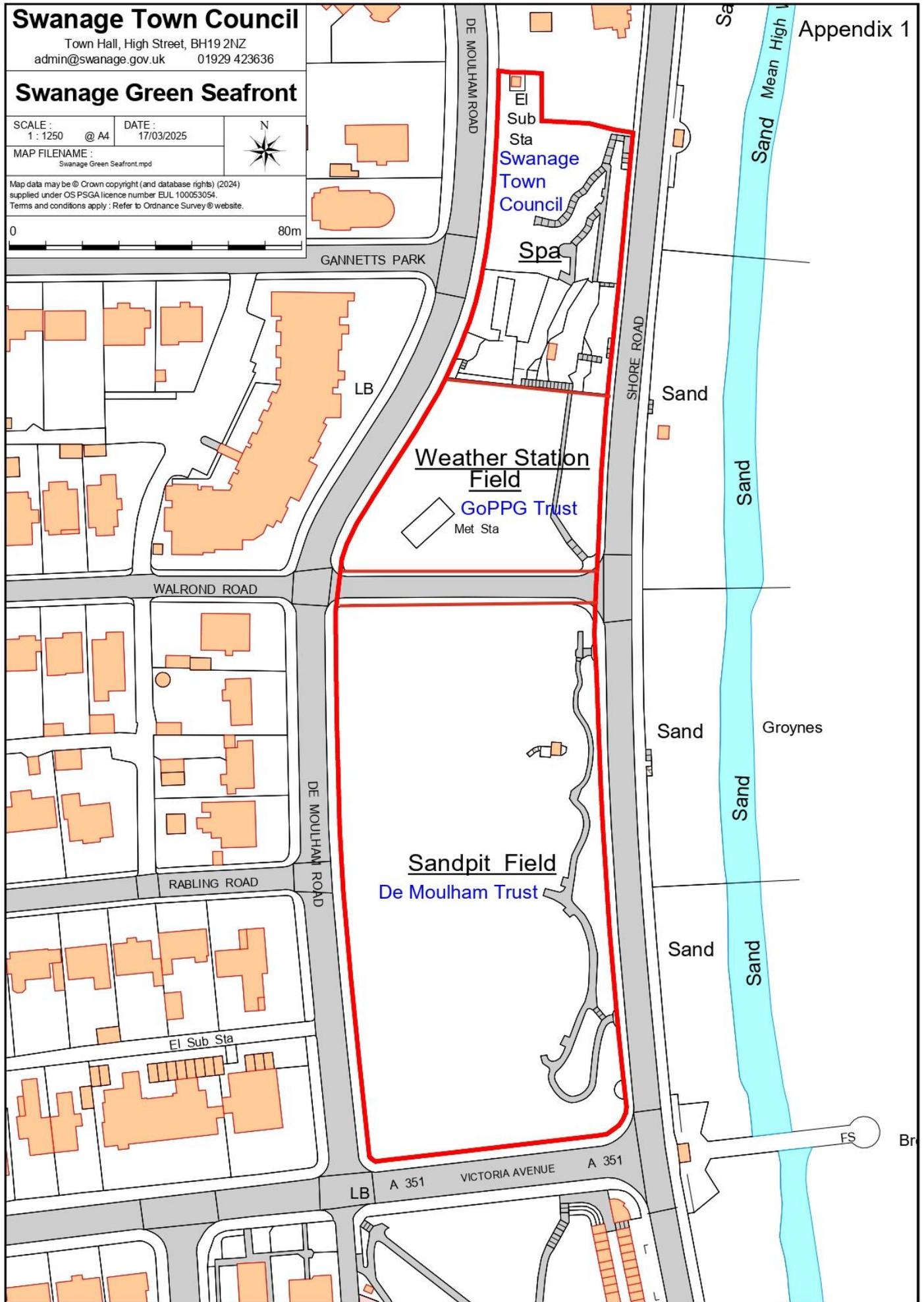


Image 2:
Sandpit Field,
looking to the
South

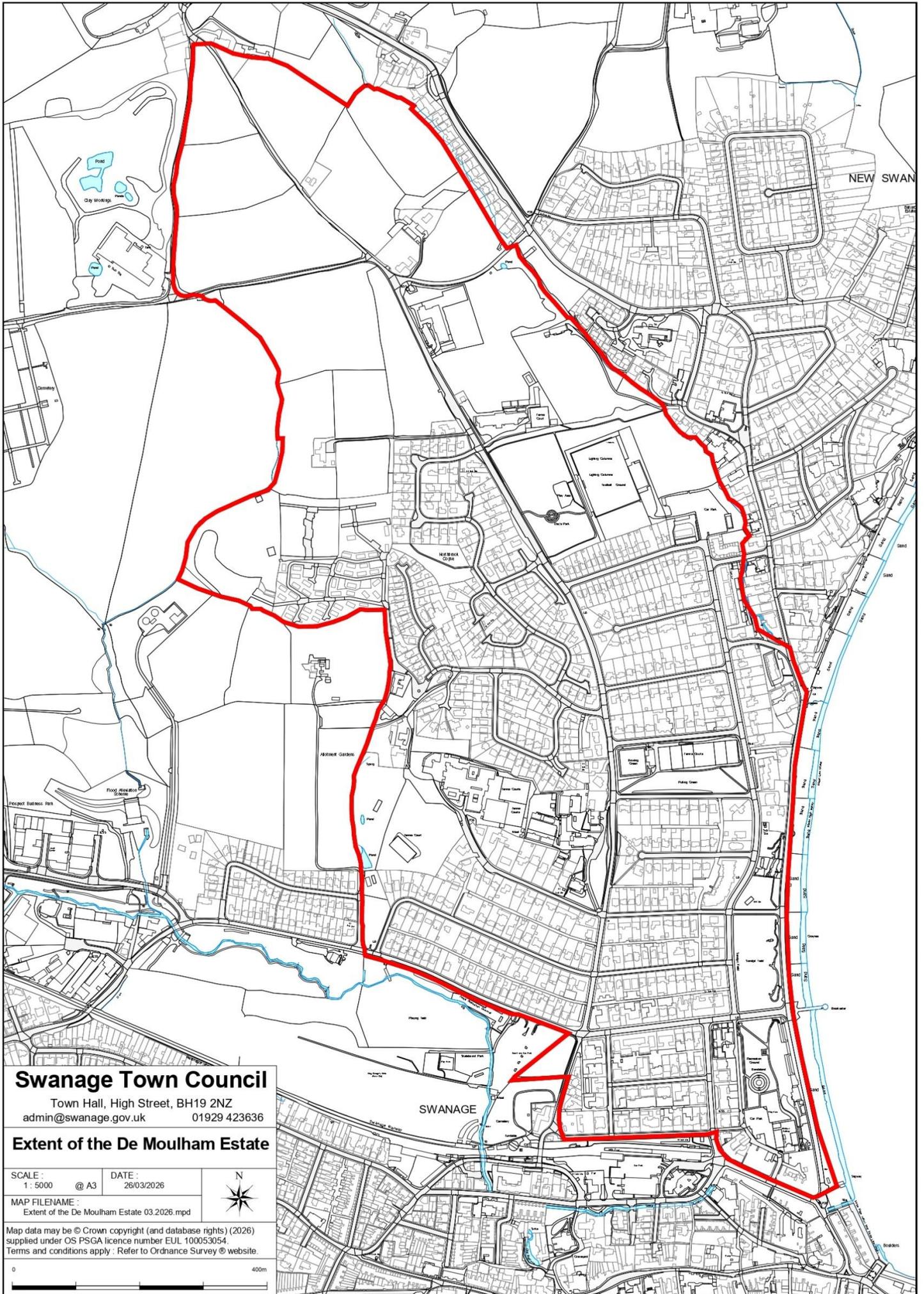


Image 3:
Sandpit Field,
looking to the
North

MAP DESCRIBING CURRENT OWNERSHIP OF THE GREEN SEAFRONT LAND



EXTENT OF THE DE MOULHAM ESTATE



Swanage Town Council

Town Hall, High Street, BH19 2NZ
admin@swanage.gov.uk 01929 423636

Extent of the De Moulham Estate

SCALE : 1 : 5000 @ A3 DATE : 26/03/2026

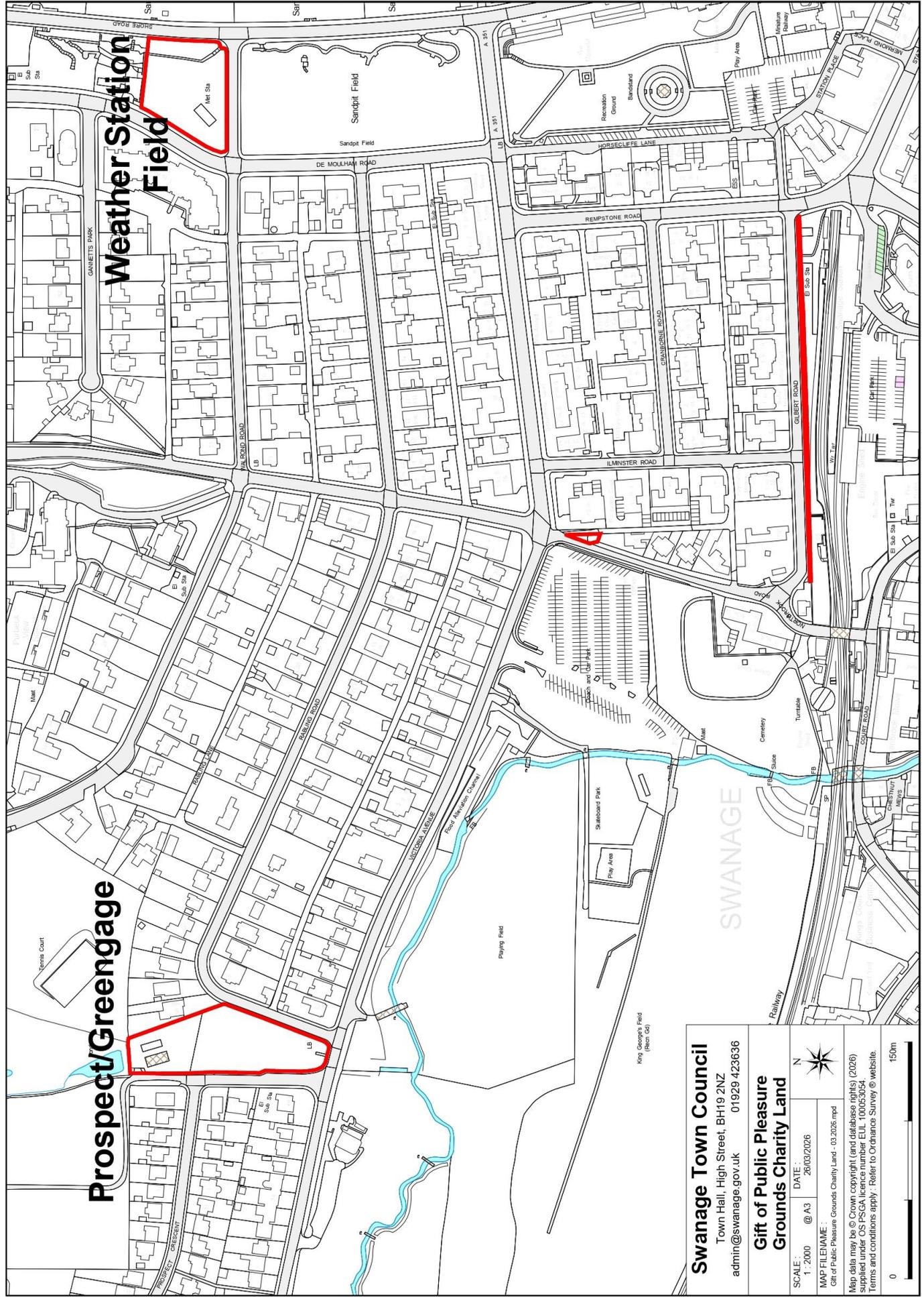
MAP FILENAME : Extent of the De Moulham Estate 03.2026.mpd



Map data may be © Crown copyright (and database rights) (2026) supplied under OS PSGA licence number EUL 100053054. Terms and conditions apply : Refer to Ordnance Survey @ website.

0 400m

MAP OF THE GIFT OF PUBLIC PLEASURE GROUNDS CHARITY LAND



Swannage Town Council
 Town Hall, High Street, BH19 2NZ
 admin@swannage.gov.uk 01929 423636

**Gift of Public Pleasure
 Grounds Charity Land**

SCALE: 1:2000 @ A3 DATE: 26/03/2026

MAP FILER NAME: Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Charity Land - 03.2026.mpd

Map data may be © Crown copyright (and database rights) (2026)
 Supplied under OS PSMA Licence from Ordnance Survey
 Terms and conditions apply - Refer to Ordnance Survey @ website.

0 150m

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Isn't this land already managed by the Town Council?

Yes, this land has been managed by the Town Council since its creation in 1974, and before that by the former Urban District Council. The Town Council already owns the property, but in its capacity as the corporate trustee of two charities. Sandpit Field is held by the Mowlem Land Trust (otherwise known as the De Moulham Trust) and the Weather Station Field is held by the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust. Being a corporate trustee means that the Council itself is the trustee, not individual councillors.

The two trusts have an obligation to retain the land as public open space, and the Town Council has always managed it on their behalf, alongside all of its other parks and gardens. However, although the Town Council has the power to undertake routine grounds maintenance it cannot invest significant amounts of public funds into property which is the subject of a charitable trust.

What is the role of the two charities?

The **Mowlem Land Trust** was established in the mid-1990s to manage the property gifted by Arthur Rainsford Mowlem to the Town Council under his will. The Trust's principal function has been to manage the covenants put in place by the Mowlem family between the 1890s and 1970s as building plots were sold for development on the estate.

Where permission is granted for the redevelopment of plots on the estate (the Trust cannot unreasonably refuse such permission) then a fee is negotiated by a RICS qualified surveyor. These sums are then held by the Trust, independently of the Town Council, and given as grant funding to organisations that benefit local residents. Grant applications have been closed since January 2024 pending resolution of the Trust's liability for the ground stabilisation works.

The Weather Station Field is held by the **Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust**. This also has its origins in the Mowlem family's benevolence; it having been gifted to the town by John Ernest Mowlem in 1924. The Trust also owns the green space between Prospect Crescent and Rabling Road (including Greengage Community Garden) and two small parcels of land along Gilbert Road and on Northbrook Road, south of its junction with Victoria Avenue. It has no sources of income.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why are the charities looking to transfer the property to the Town Council?

These parcels of land are experiencing ground movement and slope instability. This can be seen in cracks in walls, pathways and uneven ground which are putting the safety, usability and long-term future of these spaces at risk. Reports commissioned by the Town Council have identified that significant ground stabilisation works are required. Extensive background information is available on the Town Council's website: www.swanage.gov.uk/green-seafront-scheme.

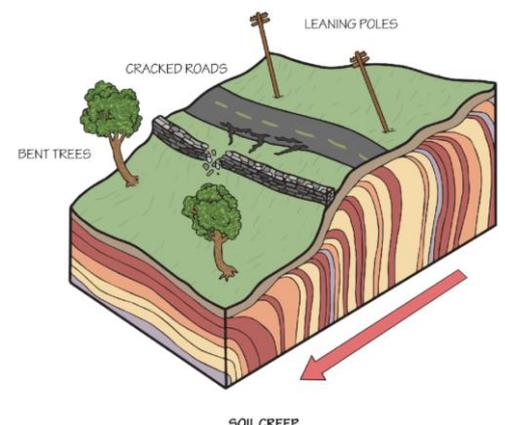
The Town Council has developed an essential design scheme that will address these issues. An approximate cost apportionment between the two parcels of land is £3m in respect of Sandpit Field and £850k in respect of the Weather Station Field.

The primary reason for the Trusts seeking to dispose of the land to the Town Council is that neither Trust has access to funds to undertake the stabilisation work required (see graphic below detailing the ground movement issue). The Mowlem Land Trust currently has a bank balance of £66,000 and the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust has no source of income. Both Trusts met to consider the financial options open to them but concluded that they could not access external grant funding or borrowing to fund the work. Only the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust had other assets which could be disposed of, but this was rejected as this would mean the commercial disposal of land at Prospect Park which is also protected as public open space.

In order to spend public funds on this project, the Town Council must own the land outright in its capacity as a local government body not as a charitable trustee.

Is the transfer of the land linked to one of the Council's stabilisation options?

No, the transfer will need to take place regardless of which stabilisation scheme is ultimately implemented by the Town Council.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What process has been followed by the charities to reach this decision?

Both the charities and the Town Council have sought expert legal advice to identify the most appropriate way forward. In 2024 the charities also contacted the Charity Commission to set out the potential transfer of the land as a way forward and received helpful guidance on the process that would need to be followed.

Because the proposed transfer is from the charities to the body which acts as the corporate trustee measures have been taken to ensure that the proposed way forward is in the best interest of the charities and their beneficiaries (local residents) and has not been unduly influenced by the interests of the Town Council as a corporate body. A key measure has been the appointment of an advisory committee of former town councillors who had experience in managing the charities' affairs. Their advice was considered by the charities prior to a final decision to proceed with the disposal being made.

On what terms is it proposed that the property will be transferred to the Town Council?

Both the charitable trusts and the Town Council have commissioned independent valuation reports from qualified valuers to inform the terms of the proposed transfer. The reports commissioned by the charities had to meet specific requirements under charity law and are referred to as Designated Advisor Reports.

Both valuers concluded that the land can be disposed of for a nominal sum (e.g. £1). The principal factor is that the cost of stabilising the land outweighs its value. Even once stabilised the value of the land is highly constrained due to its use as public open space. This is guaranteed by planning policy and by a commitment made by the Town Council at its meeting in April 2025 that if it acquires the land it will provide it with the same level of protection as it currently has from its charitable status.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Will the removal of this land from charitable ownership leave it vulnerable to future development?

No, the combination of planning policy, which seeks to preserve this land as public open space, and the commitment made by the Town Council to protect the land for the same purpose, means that the removal of charitable status will not have any detrimental impact on the long-term future of these important green spaces.

What will happen to the Trusts after the transfers?

Looking to the future, both the Mowlem Land Trust and Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust have agreed to merge. This will streamline the Town Council's administration of its charitable trusts and ensure that the new charity has an up-to-date governing document. The Mowlem Land Trust is seeking to retain a small strip of land at Sandpit Field to ensure that it can continue to enforce the estate covenants and thereby generate funds for local good causes. This, together with the remaining parcels of land currently owned by the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust will continue to be managed as public open space.

What happens next?

The Trusts will meet to consider the feedback received from this consultation exercise. An application will then be lodged with the Charity Commission for authority to transfer the ownership of Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field to the Town Council. It is anticipated that this process will take between 6 to 9 months. If the Charity Commission are minded to agree these proposals, then they will require the Trusts to give public notice of this for a period of one month. If no significant objections are received, then the proposed land transfer and merger can proceed.

Where can I find out more information about the charities?

The Town Council website has further information available at: www.swanage.gov.uk/Charities. The Charities Register available at: register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search holds further information on both the Mowlem Land Trust (charity number: 1049323) and the Gift of Public Pleasure Grounds Trust (charity number: 231052).