Proposed Farmhouse
at

Marriage Hill Lane
Whittonditch
Ramsbury
Wiltshire
SN8 2FW

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Prepared by:
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For:
Mr D Brown

Ref: ACLA/BTN

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CONTENTS:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. METHODOLOGY
3. BASELINE CONDITIONS
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS
5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT
6. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
7. VISUAL AMENITY
8. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES
9. MITIGATION STRATEGY
10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - PLANS
ACLA/BTN-01 Site Context
ACLA/BTN-02 Planning Context
ACLA/BTN-03 Visual Analysis
ACLA/BTN-04 Landscape Mitigation & Enhancement

APPENDIX 2 - VIEWPOINT PHOTOGRAPHS 1-13

APPENDIX 3 - DETAILED METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is prepared by ACLA Ltd on behalf of Mr. D Brown to accompany a planning application for the construction of a new farmhouse at Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, SN8 2FW.

1.2 The application site (referred to as the Site in this report) is located on the eastern edge of an existing farmstead comprising of three modern livestock barns and associated hardstanding, together with a temporary mobile home for an agricultural worker. A mature deciduous tree belt runs close to the south-western edges of the barns. There is a hedge to the north-west and elsewhere the boundaries are open to the surrounding arable field. Recent native hedge planting to the east and south and native tree planting to the north of the barns has recently been carried out.

1.3 The Site is in a relatively isolated and elevated location on the eastern edges of a valley. The surrounding landscape is rural with medium to large scale pastoral and arable fields and woodland blocks. Beyond the valley the surrounding rural landscape is characteristic of an undulating semi-wooded chalk downland. The barns are accessed via a farm track leading from a narrow rural lane running up the valley side at approximately 300m to the east.

1.4 The Site is centred at Ordnance Survey grid reference SU 28710 73489 within the central parts of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in eastern Wiltshire. The border with Berkshire is located at approximately 3km to the east.

1.5 The village of Ramsbury is located beyond a ridge in the Kennet Valley at approximately 2km to the south-west and the village of Aldbourne is located on the valley floor at approximately 3km to the north-west. The small settlement of Whittonditch is located on the valley floor at 1km to the south. Elsewhere settlement in the surrounding rural landscape tends to be in the form of scattered farmsteads and occasional larger country houses.

1.6 The nearest towns are Hungerford about 7.0km south-east and Marlborough about 10km to the south-west. The much larger town of Swindon is about 18 km to the north-west.

1.7 The proposals consist of the construction of a single-storey 3-bedroom farmhouse located approximately 30m east of the barns near the Site with parking and turning to the west leading from the existing farm access track.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 LVIA is a tool used to identify and assess the significance and effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right, and on people's views and visual amenity. This LVIA considers the potential effects of the proposed development upon:

- Landscape elements and features such as vegetation and topography;
- Landscape character;
- Planning polices and landscape designations; and
- Visual amenity.

2.2 The main objectives of the LVIA are as follows:

- To identify, evaluate and describe the current landscape character of the Site and its surroundings and also any notable individual landscape elements and features within the study area;
- To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
- To identify and describe any effects of the development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views of it and to evaluate the magnitude of change due to these effects; and
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e. people who would be able to see the development) and evaluate their sensitivity to the type of changes proposed.

2.3 This LVIA also outlines a mitigation strategy to reduce any potential adverse effects on the landscape or views of the proposed development. Mitigation measures will be incorporated within the proposed layout at the design stage and provide the framework for the development

2.4 The Council has not been consulted on the location of key viewpoints and the cumulative impacts of other similar proposals in the area have not been assessed.

2.5 The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with best practice and encompasses the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) – Third edition April 2013' - published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental

Management and Assessment. A detailed LVIA methodology is outlined in Appendix 3.

3. BASELINE CONDITIONS

Description of the Existing Site & its Immediate Setting

3.1 The Site and adjacent barns are located on the eastern middle valley side with a south-westerly aspect. The Site has far-reaching views to the south across the lower-level rural landscape and ridges and is contained by the rising valley sides to the north and a low ridge to the east. A mature tree belt on a bank is located within approximately 20m south-west of the barns. This tends to screen views across the valley landscape to the west and a mature field hedge and more distant tree belts tend to screen views along the valley sides to the north. A low ridge partially screens views from the east.

3.2 The three recently constructed livestock barns are utilitarian structures with grey pitched roofs and timber side cladding. The north western barn is for housing sheep and measures approximately 30m x 22m. A linear sheep/feedstore barn of 7m x 45m and rectangular milking parlour barn measuring 37 x 15m is located to the south-east. The barns have been cut down into the valley sides on a level platform with recent native tree planting above an embankment to the north. The mobile home for an agricultural worker is located behind the tree belt immediately to the south-east of the barns.

3.3 The Site is located at approximately 30m south-east of the linear barn on the southern central parts of the open arable field.

3.4 Recent planting has been carried out in the form of a native field hedge mix and individual trees such as oak, beech and lime across the arable filed and along the eastern boundary of the Site. This continues southwards and then runs west along the access track to join the tree belt the south. This tree belt has been extended with new woodland planting and new native tree planting has taken place close to the northern edges of the barns. This recent planting will provide additional screening over time from the south, north and east. For details see the inset on plan ACLA/BTN 04 at the end of this report.

The Study Area

3.5 The area of search for the LVIA was determined by desk study and field observation. The extent was set to enable a general understanding of the wider landscape context within which the Site is located, while limiting information to that which is most relevant and to avoid excessive analysis of elements which do not directly benefit the appraisal. As such it conforms to best-practice guidance.

3.6 The tree screen adjacent to the barns tends to screen views from the west. A low ridge running down the arable field at approximately 100m to the east tends to increasingly screen views towards the site, particularly when travelling northwards along the nearby rural lane at a close distance. From the north, potential views tend not to extend much beyond 600m as the Site becomes increasingly screened by the intervening ridge on the upper valley sides.

3.7 The Site is open to the south-east and elevated. This allows for longer distant views up to approximately 2.5km to the south from a localised area on the southern River Kennet Valley side. Further views have been identified from an elevated open ridge at just over 1km to the south/south-east. Open and localised views are also possible from the valley floor just north of Wittonditch at approximately 800m south due to the open nature of parts of the Site boundary. Partial views may also be possible from the western valley sides south of the Site at just under 1km where sections of the Site could be visible at the end of the adjacent tree belt.

3.8 Elsewhere, in the wider surrounding landscape intervening ridges, roadside hedges and woodland blocks tend to provide screening.

3.9 The study area has been set at approximately 1km to 2km from the Site to take in the identified views and illustrate the Site in the landscape setting and its relationship with other man-made and natural elements in the surrounding landscape. A further outlying partial and long-distance view has also been identified south of Ramsbury on the upper valley side at around 2.5km south of the Site.

Description of the Surrounding Area

3.10 The key features in the study area surrounding the Site is the undulating higher chalk downland landscape interspersed with woodland blocks. Valleys are located to the west and south of the Site which converge at Whittonditch and then continue southwards towards the River Kennet valley, located approximately 2km south of the Site.

3.11 The sense of enclosure varies considerably from locally more open, where far-reaching views are possible to distant ridgelines to the south, and locally semi-enclosed to enclosed, where the woodland blocks and other vegetation are more prevalent.

3.12 The main settlement in the area tends to be within the valley floors with occasional farmsteads and larger country houses and stud farms scattered across the higher

downs. Some of these are in a more formal landscape setting, such as Eastridge House at approximately 1.5km to the east.

The main road in the area is the B4192 in the valley floor at approximately 600m west of the Site, running past Whittonditch towards Aldbourne to the north-west. Elsewhere in the downland landscape, a series of narrow rural roads link the small settlements.

3.13 More detailed descriptions of the elements forming the landscape surrounding the Site are outlined below.

To the North

3.14 The northern Site boundary is open to an arable field rising up the valley side. A block of recently planted native trees above an embankment is partly located north of the barns near the Site. A PRoW (public right of way) runs past the western edges of the barns along the western edges of the open field up the valley sides. An intervening ridge in the field increasingly screens views towards the Site at distance. As the recently planted trees mature they will also screen views.

3.15 The rooflines of the adjacent barns disappear below the ridge towards the northern edges of the arable field at approximately 600m distance from the Site. The eastern edges of the field fall down towards Shell's Wood (300m to the east) with the narrow lane along its eastern edges in an enclosed wooded shallow valley.

3.16 The northern edges of the arable field are defined by a dense hedge and tree belt with a PRoW within it. A small field lies beyond with a narrow and enclosed rural lane located on the upper valley sides at approximately 900m north of the Site. Marridge Hill is a small loose rural settlement located across the upper ridge at between 0.9km to 1.5km north of the Site. This includes Marridge Hill Farm, Marridge Hill Chicken Farm and Baydon Manor and several other scattered dwellings in a semi-enclosed partly wooded landscape. The rural landscape beyond comprises of a westward facing chalk escarpment running towards the rural village of Baydon and the route of the M4 motorway, located at approximately 4.5km north of the Site.

3.17 Due to the intervening ridges of the upper valley side and the dense wooded corridor, views towards the Site do not extend beyond the arable field in which the Site is located up to approximately 600m.

To the East

3.18 A recently planted mixed native field hedge is located close to the eastern Site boundary running across the open arable field north to south. A narrow rural lane is located beyond a low ridge at just over 200m east of the site. This runs up the valley sides and is partly enclosed by roadside hedges. It becomes increasingly enclosed by woodland blocks further up the valley sides and an intervening ridge further north. More open views are possible at the Site entrance track and further down the valley sides to the west, where the lane side hedges are gappy or absent.

3.19 Further east the land falls down into a valley, located at approximately 1km to the south-east. The rural valley runs from Whittoditch north-eastwards and contains a narrow rural road with scattered development in the valley floor, including Whittonside Farm and Whitcha Farm. The valley landscape locally near Whittonditch has an open chalk downland character with larger-scale open fields divided up in places by smaller paddocks with post and wire fencing.

3.20 Ballard's Copes, Marridge Hill Copse and Hunt's Copse are larger-scale woodland blocks located on the upper valley sides at between 0.35km to 1.2km north-east of the Site. Beyond the valley landscape to the east, the land rises steeply towards a partly open ridge at approximately 1.2km south-east of the Site. A large linear woodland block runs along the edges of south-eastern valley side below the ridge. A narrow rural lane runs across the top of the ridge running past Eastridge House, located in a partly formal landscape grounds and woodland blocks.

3.21 The land further east continues as a series of rural rolling chalk ridges and upper chalk downland with scattered woodland blocks north of the Kennet valley. The rural village of Chilton Foliat is located in the valley floor adjacent to the River Kennet at 4.5km south-east of the Site.

3.22 Due to elevated and open nature of the eastern Site boundary, view towards the Site extend to around 1.2km to the south-east. Directly to the east at closer distance, the views tend to be screened to varying degrees by an intervening ridge and woodland blocks.

To the South

3.23 A mature deciduous tree belt on a bank runs along the majority of the south-western Site boundary near the barns. This has been extended to the east with new woodland

and hedge planting that is not yet established. The deciduous trees belt tend to provide a relatively high level of screening from the south-west. The south-eastern boundary is open to the arable field and therefore the Site is visible within the more open valley landscape immediately south.

3.24 The land to the south drops down the valley side relatively steeply across an open pastoral field towards a narrow watercourse and route of the B4192 and a narrow watercourse, located on the valley floor at approximately 700m from the Site.

3.25 The small settlement of Whittonditch is located on the valley floor at 950m south of the Site adjacent to the B4192. This is a traditional settlement with several larger brick and flint buildings, scattered thatched cottages and a discreetly located small industrial area. The settlement and its boundaries contain areas of mature trees with a semi-enclosed character. The B4192 continues southwards along the semi-wooded valley floor towards the Kennet Valley and then turns east towards Chilton Foliat. The River Kennet chalk stream is located at 2km to the south in a broad valley and semi-enclosed to enclosed valley with belts of riparian vegetation and other woodland blocks. The large village of Ramsbury is located beyond a ridge on the northern valley sides of the River Kennet at 1.5km south-east of the Site.

3.26 Further south the land rises up the valley sides supporting large areas of woodland blocks and parkland-style landscape associated with Littlecote House on the southern edges of the Kennet valley at 3.5km to the south-east.

3.27 The south-eastern boundary of the site is open, whereas the tree belt running along the south-western edges of Site and the nearby barns tends to screen views directly from the south-west. Open views are possible within the valley floor directly south of the Site and from an open ridge at approximately 1.2km to the south. Localised distant and partial views from the upper valley sides south of Ramsbury at 2.5km to the south have also been identified.

<u>To the West</u>

3.28 The western Site boundary is partly defined by the tree belt. The land beyond is formed by medium-scale fields on the valley sides with a wider woodland block running westwards from the south-western corner of the barns near the Site. The tree belts tends to screen most views from the west, with just partial and glimpsed views towards sections of the barns near the Site from the upper valley side at approximately 600m

to the south-west. A PRoW runs up the eastern edges of the woodland block and passes close to the western edges of the barns and runs northwards.

3.29 The valley side immediately west of the Site tends to be open with medium-scale pastoral fields with hedges and occasional tree belts. The B4192 runs along the valley floor at 700m west of the Site with a narrow watercourse close to its eastern boundary.

3.30 The western valley sides are more enclosed with large woodland blocks on the upper valley sides and a patchwork of medium to small-scale pastoral fields. Crowood Farm and The Fox and Hounds (a pair of semi-detached cottages) are located on the valley floor at 600m south-west and Crowood House appears to be a large country house located adjacent to woodlands on the middle/upper valley sides at 750m to the south-west.

3.31 The landscape further west, beyond the valley landscape, is an undulating patchwork of medium to small-scale arable and pastoral fields with occasional woodland blocks and dense hedgerows north of the village of Ramsbury.

Topography

3.32 The topography within the study area centres on the relatively wide and locally steep-sided valley landscape to the west of the Site. The side valley to the south-east of the Site is shallower and less pronounced. This landscape beyond the valleys comprises of higher rolling chalk downs with a complexed series of undulating low hills and ridges north of the Kennet Valley.

3.33 The Site itself is located on the middle valley side rising from 166m AOD (above ordnance datum) on its western edges and rising to over 170m AOD to the east. The upper chalk ridges rise to over 200m AOD at approximately 700m north-east and the valley floor falls to approximately 110m AOD just south of Whittonditch.

Historic Landscape

3.34 The National Heritage List for England has not identified any listed buildings of scheduled monuments on or adjacent to the Site

3.35 A milestone on the B4192 in the valley floor at 550m south-west of the Site is Grade II listed. Crowood House is a Grade II* Listed on the valley side at 750m west of the Site. This is a late 17th-century brick country house set is a semi-wooded grounds with associated buildings.

3.36 Four properties at Whittonditch are listed, including Whatton Dyke Cottage, a detached Grade II listed 17th-century brick and flint thatched cottage, located east of the B4192 in the valley floor on the northern edges of Whittonditch at 850m south of the Site.

3.37 Whittonditch House, Old Smithy Cottage and Elm Bank at all Grade II listed dwellings located in Whittonditch with the valley landscape further south.

3.38 Witcha Farm and a 'Primitive Methodist Chapel at Witcha House' are Grade II located on the valley at approximately 1.3km east of the Site.

3.39 The nearest Scheduled Monument is a long barrow on a ridge south of Ballard's Copse located beyond Shells Wood at 550m north-east of the Site.

Soils and Hydrology

3.40 On the Geology Viewer website, the Site is shown as located over Cretaceous chalk, a sedimentary bedrock. No superficial surface deposits are identified on the Site.

3.41 The valley to the west of the site is identified as at risk of flooding on the government's Long Term Flood Risk map. The Site is elevated on the valley side and no ditches or watercourses have been identified on or adjacent to the Site and it is not located in a flood risk area.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 The proposals on the Site have been prepared by A D Draughting Architectural Services for a new detached farmhouse on the Site. This will be a single-storey three-bedroom dwelling constructed in brick and flint with cedar cladding and a slate roof. The new farmhouse will be located at its closest approximately 30m south-east of the nearby barns in the arable field north of the current farm access. The farmhouse will be partly cut down into the valley side to the north and accessed via the current farm track with parking adjacent to the south-west of the farmhouse.

4.2 The potential impacts on the rural landscape in the location of the Site has been recognised and the use of natural muted colours and setting the farmhouse down into the valley side will aim to reduce its prominence.

4.3 To further reduce the potential prominence and reduce the impacts on the landscape character, a landscape mitigation scheme has been prepared. This will include the retention and extension of the tree belt to the south-west, together with the extension of the recent tree planting north-east of the barn past the new farmhouse to provide screening in the local landscape to the north. Recent native hedge and individual tree planting has taken place across the arable field close to the east of the Site and east of the mature tree belt to provide additional screening over time. Further native hedge and individual tree planting will also aim to break up the mass and screen the new farmhouse.

4.4 The recent and proposed planting will aim to further reduce the potential landscape and visual impacts on the rural landscape surrounding the Site as a result of the introduction of a new farmhouse in an elevated and partially open rural landscape.

4.5 A secondary effect of the landscape mitigation proposals will be to further screen the existing modern barns near the Site and reduce their prominence in the local landscape. Mitigation is discussed in greater detail in chapter 9.0 of this report.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Planning History

5.1 In 2018 a barn was constructed to the north-west of the Site to house the sheep and the milking parlour (application number 18/04664/APD) and an access track was put in (application number 18/06818/FUL). The linear barn was approved in March 2020 (application number 0/00238/FUL) and the larger sheep barn to the north-west was approved in October 2021 (application number PL/2021/10052).

5.2 In December 2019 planning permission was granted for a mobile home for a period of 3 years until 16th December 2022, located to the south-east of the barns. This was to house an essential agricultural worker, a sheep/dairy herds person (application number 19/09899/FUL). As part of the planning approval condition 1 states:

'Permission has been granted on a temporary basis to establish whether there is a functional need for permanent on-site residential accommodation on this agricultural holding.'

National Planning Policy

5.3 National planning guidance was completely revised with the issue of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012. This has been updated several times with the latest revision being issued in July 2021.

5.4 Section 2 '*Achieving sustainable development*' in the revised framework document has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The environmental objectives aim to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a *'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.*

5.5 Section 12 *'Achieving well-designed places'* aims to create high-quality buildings and places. In particular, planning policies and decisions should ensure developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'

5.6 Section 15 *'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*' section of the revised NPPF outlines the way the planning system should *'contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment'*. The relevant key objectives protect and enhance valued landscapes; recognise the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside; minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible and remediate and mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate. Paragraph 179 aims *'to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity*'.

5.7 Paragraph 176 in Section 15 of the NPPF states: '*Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which has the highest status of protection in relation to these issue*s' and *The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'*

5.8 Section 16 *'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*' aims to ensure heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance including listed buildings, registered parks or gardens and World Heritage Sites.

5.9 In September 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the *'National Design Guide- Planning Practice Guidance for Beautiful, Enduring and Successful Places'*.

Regional Planning Policy

5.10 The principal adopted document of relevance to this development is the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted in January 2015. The relevant policies have been extracted below.

Core Policy 50 -Biodiversity and geodiversity protection

Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services.

All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.

Any development potentially affecting a Natura 2000 site must provide avoidance measures in accordance with the strategic plans or guidance set out in paragraphs 6.75-6.77 above where possible, otherwise bespoke measures must be provided to demonstrate that the proposals would have no adverse effect upon the Natura 2000 network. Any development that would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European nature conservation site will not be in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity enhancement

All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gainsnthrough opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services. Such enhancement measures will contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or River Basin/Catchment Management Plan, particularly through landscape scale projects, and be relevant to the local landscape character.

Local sites

Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will

generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts:

i. cannot reasonably be avoided

ii. are reduced as far as possible

iii. are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest

iv. where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements.

Development proposals affecting local sites must make a reasonable contribution to their favourable management in the long-term.

Core Policy 51: Landscape

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have an unacceptable impact upon landscape character, while any adverse impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:

i. The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and water bodies.

ii. The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings.

iii. The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe.

iv. Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features.

v. Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value.

vi. Important views and visual amenity.

vii. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.

viii. Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate.

Core Policy 57: Ensuring high Quality Design and Place Shaping

A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complimentary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the exiting pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced.

ii. the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, (for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses), in order to take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife and recreational corridors, effectively integrate the development into its setting and to justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development.

iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

iv. being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes.

v. making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area.

vii. having regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy,

overshadowing; vibration; and pollution (such as light intrusion, noise, smoke, fumes, effluent, waste or litter).

viii. incorporating measures to reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour on the site and in the surrounding area through the creation of visually attractive frontages that have windows and doors located to assist in the informal surveillance of public and shared areas by occupants of the site.

ix. ensuring that the public realm, including new roads and other rights of way, are designed to create places of character which are legible and accessible.

x. taking account of the needs of potential occupants, through planning for diversity and adaptability, and considering how buildings and space will be used in the immediate and long term future.

'xii. the use of high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping, including the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate.

xiii. in the case of major developments, ensuring they are accompanied by a detailed design statement and master plan, which is based on an analysis of the local context and assessment of constraints and opportunities of the site and is informed by a development concept, including clearly stated design principles, which will underpin

Core Policy 58 - Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

i. nationally significant archaeological remains

ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire

iii. buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest

iv. the special character or appearance of conservation areas

v. historic parks and gardens

vi. important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage

assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with.

Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications. Historic environment policy?

Kennet District Local Plan - Adopted April 2004

5.11 Two policies in the former District Council Local Plan have been saved which may have relevance to the proposals.

Policy HC26 -Housing in the Countryside

Outside of the Limits of Development defined for the villages listed in Table H.4 and outside of the existing built-up area of the villages listed in Table H.5, new residential development will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

a) To provide accommodation for the essential needs of agriculture or forestry or other employment essential to the countryside as established in Policy HC27;

b) To provide holiday accommodation from the conversion of an existing building; or

c) Where the conversion of a listed building to residential use is the only economic means of retaining the historic structure.

Provided that the development does not affect the character of the local landscape.

Policy NR7 -Protection of the Landscape

Where development is acceptable in principle, through other policies of the Plan, outside the Limits of Development, the Council will seek to protect and enhance the character and quality of the environment and will not permit development which is likely to have a significant adverse effect upon the landscape. In particular, development proposals will be considered against their potential effects upon:-

a) landscape character, quality and distinctive features; and

b) views and visual amenity.

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024

5.12 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the local authority members of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership have a statutory duty to produce a Management Plan for their designated landscape. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan set out a vision and long-term ambitions for the North Wessex Downs and the legal and policy framework for the Plan.

5.13 The plan explains the special qualities that make this landscape unique and key issues which are intended to guide and inform the policies and actions of all members of the North Wessex Downs Partnership.

Key issues with the potential to have a significant influence on the AONB's landscape include; the need to conserve and enhance the remoteness and expansive open scale of the downland landscape; the need to conserve and enhance the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of more enclosed and intimate landscapes, including the character of the lanes and the need to maintain the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape.

5.14 Further issues include the intense pressure for development throughout the AONB that threatens the character and quality of its landscape; changes to the scale and nature of development boundaries and the need to protect and enhance historic sites, buildings and landscapes and their setting.

5.15 Landscape policies include the use of North Wessex Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to inform policy and decision-making across the AONB and its setting and support and promote good practice across all sectors that conserves and enhances the character and qualities of the North Wessex Downs landscape.

Site-Specific Designations (see plan ACLA/BTL-02)

5.16 Core Policy 50 aims to protect features of nature conservation value. Core Policy 58 aims at ensuring that the historic environment is conserved, protected and enhanced and that there should not be an unacceptable impact on the historic environment including listed buildings and scheduled monuments present within the study area. The site–specific relevant designations within the study area are described below and will only be taken forward for assessment if there are likely to be direct impacts or impacts on the integrity or setting of the designated feature.

Listed Buildings

5.17 The National Heritage List for England identifies several listed buildings and structures within the valley landscape near the Site. A milestone on the B4192 in the valley floor at 550m south-west of the Site is Grade II listed. This is set behind belts of trees along the road corridor, and together with the tree belt near the Site provides screening. It is therefore, unlikely that the proposals will impact upon the landscape setting of the milestone at this distance.

5.18 Crowood House is a Grade II* Listed dwelling on the valley side at 750m west of the Site. This is a late 17th-century brick country house set is in semi-wooded grounds. A belt of mature trees along the nearby lane provides screening. Together with the woodland belt near the Site, this provides screening. At this distance, it is unlikely that the proposals will impact the wider landscape setting of Crowood House.

5.19 Four properties at Whittonditch are listed, including Whatton Dyke Cottage, a detached Grade II listed 17th-century brick and flint thatched cottage, located east of the B4192 in the valley floor on the northern edges of Whittonditch at 850m south of the Site. Due to the mature garden boundary vegetation and distance to the Site, it is unlikely that the proposals will have an impact on the wider landscape setting of Whatton Dyke Cottage.

5.20 Whittonditch House, The Old Smithy Cottage and Elm Bank at all grade II listed dwellings located in Whittonditch with the valley landscape further south and within mature garden vegetation providing screening. Again, at this distance, and due to intervening vegetation there is unlikely to be an effect on the wider landscape setting as a result of the proposals.

5.21 Witcha Farm and a ‘Primitive Methodist Chapel at Witcha House’ are located in the valley at approximately 1.3km east of the Site. Due to the intervening ridge and woodlands, there is unlikely to be an impact on the wider landscape setting as a result of the proposals.

Scheduled Monuments

5.22 The nearest Scheduled Monument is a long barrow on a ridge south of Ballard's Copse located beyond Shells Wood at 550m north-east of the Site. The monument does not appear as a readily noticeable feature on the ground and is not publicly accessible.

Due to the distance, intervening woodlands and a ridgeline, it is unlikely that the proposals on the Site will impact the landscape setting of the monument.

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

5.23 The North Wessex Downs landscape is of national significance and was designated as an AONB in 1972. It stretches from Devizes, in Wiltshire, in an arch towards Swindon, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire to Reading in the east. The Site is located in the far western sections of the AONB covering the surrounding Malborough Downs chalk landscape.

5.24 The Ste is within the far western sections of the AONB which covers both the rolling lower-level landscape around Cherhill and the elevated downland to the south. As the Site is located in an elevated and partly open rural chalk downland landscape, there is the potential that the proposals could impact the local landscape character in this part of the AONB.

Ancient Woodlands & Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitats

Numerous Ancient Woodlands & Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitats are scattered across the study area. The nearest Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat is located across Hails Grove at approximately 200m east of the Site and the nearest ancient Woodland is located at Marridge Hill Wood, at its closest, 360m north-east of the Site. Due to the distance, and the lack of any direct relationship, it is unlikely that there will be a direct or indirect impact on the integrity of the woodland habitats in the study area.

Compliance with Planning Policies

5.25 The Wiltshire Core Strategy contains policies aimed at protecting, conserving and enhancing landscape character. Core Policy 51 requires that development should consider locally distinctive character, landscape setting and take regard to relevant character assessments. Core Policy 57 is primarily aimed at ensuring that a high standard of design is achieved by responding positively to local character, respecting the landscape setting and enhancing bio-diversity. Saved policy HC26 allows for housing in the countryside to provide accommodation for the essential needs of agriculture providing that the development does not affect the character of the local landscape. Saved policy NR7 aims to protect and enhance the character and quality of the environment in particular relating to landscape character, views and visual amenity.

5.26 To ensure that the proposed development meets the requirements of the policies above, siting and layout of the development have been designed to reduce any potential adverse landscape and visual effects on the landscape by utilising and retaining the dense boundary vegetation and setting the farmhouse down into the valley side to reduce its prominence. This will help contain, absorb and reduce any potential adverse impacts from the proposed development on the local landscape character.

5.27 Further measures should aim to ensure that the detailed design and construction of the farmhouse responds to the rural context of the Site and uses appropriate sympathetic building materials which respond to the historic context of the area. The surface finishes will be low-key such as gravel to respond to the rural setting edge context.

5.28 Further to this, proposed landscaping using native species will aim to increase biodiversity on the Site as well as providing a high-quality enhanced landscape setting to screen and filter views and assimilate the proposals into the rural landscape setting.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Designations

North Wessex Downs AONB

5.29 The sensitivity of the AONB to development is high, as reflected in the weight given to it in national, regional and local planning policies and the inherently high sensitivity of the rural landscape around the Site.

5.30 The new farmhouse on the Site is likely to represent a minor alteration to a key characteristic of the AONB with the removal of the mobile home and the addition of a new farmhouse within the context of the established barn on the valley side. The new farmhouse and adjacent barns would be perceived as an isolated farmstead found elsewhere across the downland landscape and partially screened by both intervening ridges a belt of mature trees and other woodland blocks in the wider landscape. However, the Site is in a locally prominent rural and elevated location when viewed from the south. The potential magnitude of change brought about as a result of the proposals on the character and integrity of the AONB is likely to be **low**. The potential degree of effect on the wider character of the AONB as a result of the development is therefore, assessed as potentially **moderate** in terms of LVIA assessment methodology, without considered mitigation.

5.31 Measures should be incorporated within the built form aimed at reducing the impacts on the character of the local landscape and responding to the rural context of the proposals. The built form will take advantage of the existing screening by the tree belt to the north-west. The new farmhouse will have a high standard of design using materials to reflect the local vernacular. It will also be modest in size and single-storey and set down into the hillside to reduce its prominence.

5.32 Landscape proposals will further aim to reduce the prominence of the farmhouse and adjacent barns by enclosing the built form with new native field hedges, woodland belts and individual native deciduous trees to extend the degree of screening and filter other views. This should ensure the quality and character of the wider landscape is preserved and any potential impacts are minimised.

5.33 An assessment of the effects on the local landscape character and sensitivity to change within this part of the AONB will be undertaken in the next chapter and a landscape mitigation plan is included in the appendices of this report.

6. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

6.1 Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy document states that the *'Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies'.*

6.2 Landscape character assessment is a technique used to develop a consistent understanding of what gives a landscape its character to ensure future development is well situated, sensitive to its location and contributes to environmental, social and economic objectives. The assessment identifies distinctive features, recognisable and consistent patterns of elements and natural and/or human features in the landscape that makes one area distinctive from another. An assessment of pressure for change, the ability of a given landscape to accommodate change and landscape sensitivity to change may also be undertaken. The assessment can also include strategies and guidelines for future development and management, to retain and enhance particular aspects of the landscape.

National Character Map of England

6.3 The National landscape character is set out in Natural England's Character Map of England. The study area is located centrally within **NCA 116 – 'Berkshire & Marlborough Downs**', an area of vast arable fields stretching across the sparsely settled, rolling Chalk hills of the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area (NCA). There are extensive views from the escarpment in particular, punctuated by landmarks including chalk-cut horse figures, beech clumps and ancient monuments. Some of the relevant key characteristics of the NCA which are evident in the wider landscape of the study area have been extracted from the published document and include:

- *Uplifted mass of Chalk dipping south-east into the London Basin and edged by an extensive, complex escarpment. Rolling hills of the dip slope defined by the River Kennet valley and its tributaries, many of which are dry 'combes'.*
- *Sarsen stones are prominent in prehistoric monuments, in historical buildings and in the countryside.*
- *Chalk rivers, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland in the major chalk valleys, supported by groundwater. River Lambourn displays exemplary chalk river ecology.*
- *Woodland and hedgerows concentrated on clay-with-flint soils of the lower dip slope where Savernake Forest is the nucleus of ancient woodland. Isolated beech clumps and shelterbelts stand out on the hills.*

- *Huge arable fields managed in very large holdings stretch across the chalk soils of the uplands, bounded by post-and-wire fencing and grass baulks. In the valleys and around Savernake, agriculture is more mixed and boundaries are irregular and hedged, often with oak trees. Savernake farmsteads are small scale.*

- *Gallops and stables of large horse-racing establishments, with a nucleus in the Lambourn Valley.*

- *Small areas of species-rich chalk grassland scattered on the scarps and steep slopes of dry valleys display colourful and rare plants such as early gentian.*

- *Mosaic of farmland habitats supports established populations of farmland birds, arable plants, harvest mouse and brown hare.*

- *High density of monuments, many being prominent landmarks across the arable uplands including stone circles, hill forts, barrows, chalk-cut horse figures and historic routeways. Avebury World Heritage Site is internationally significant.*

- *Traditional building materials include thatch, red brick, flint and sarsens.*

- *Settlement is sparse on the high Downs, offering experiences of tranquillity, dark skies and far-reaching views. Villages cluster in valley bottoms and near springs, often associated with historical mills, watercress beds and watermeadows, and farmsteads at low densities.*

- *Recreation focused on limited areas of open access land, well-known heritage features including Avebury and historic routeways, including the Ridgeway National Trail and Kennet and Avon Canal. Private fishing interests dominate access to chalk streams.*

- *The Vale of Pewsey is a low-lying corridor of Upper Greensand enclosed by chalk escarpments. Villages are densely scattered across high-grade agricultural land supporting mixed agriculture.*

6.4 The relatively small scale of the proposed development in a locally semi-enclosed area on a valley side has a very limited influence on the landscape in relation to the large scale of the NCA. Potential impacts on the key landscape characteristics and elements or the overall integrity of the wider NCA are unlikely to occur. Landscape character impacts will be discussed at a more detailed district and local level below.

Regional and District Landscape Character

There are a number of comprehensive landscape character assessments and guidelines covering the study area and application site published by the local authorities summarised below.

<u>Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005)</u>

6.5 This is the most recent of the published character assessment. The main purpose of the Landscape Character Assessment was to assess the current status of the Wiltshire landscape and give indications to areas in need of enhancement and conservation to

enable better informed decisions to be made on future management and provide an objective basis for developing policies.

6.6 The assessment sets out 16 landscape character types within Wiltshire. Each of the generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity and historical evolution. The landscape types can be further subdivided into component landscape character areas.

6.7 The proposed development is located within the far northern edges of Landscape Type **1-Open Downland**, sub-category **1B-Marlborough Downs.** Key characteristics of the broader Open Downland include:

- *Elevated plateau formed by the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. Soils are predominantly thin light, free draining calcareous and nutrient poor black or brown soils.*
- *Open, smoothly rolling downland, dissected by a network of dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps.*
- *Sarsen stones are a locally distinctive feature.*
- *An expansive and simple rural landscape, with strong sweeping skylines with a strong sense of exposure and remoteness.*
- *A landscape largely devoid of water due to the porosity of the chalk bedrock.*
- *Dominated by intensively managed arable farmland with a few hedgerows and occasional wooded areas. Woodlands are virtually absent apart from the occasional linear shelterbelt and distinctive beech clumps crowning the summits.*
- *Varied field patterns including 'ladder' fields and large rectangular fields.*
- *Extensive, isolated blocks of chalk grassland survive along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides.*
- *Very sparsely populated, generally restricted to scattered farms and equestrian establishments contributing to strong sense of isolation.*
- *Varied built character including traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed weather-boarded aisled barns and large scale modern farm buildings.*
- *Numerous tracks, byways, green lanes and drove roads.*
- *Strong cultural resonance with visible features from many periods of history, but with particularly strong associations with the prehistoric in the form of dramatic visible field monuments.*

6.8 The detailed description of the Marlborough Downs has been extracted below.

1B: Marlborough Downs

The Marlborough Downs forms an expansive landscape of smoothly rolling downland, mostly under arable cultivation. Internally, the landform is topographically complex and includes the dramatic long sinuous scarps interlocking gently rounded summits such as Overton Down and Ogbourne Down, with the intersecting valleys. Barbury Hill (268m) and other elevated points along the top of the northern escarpment provide distant views across the adjacent lower lying vale.

This is a very open landscape with long views, revealing the subtle curves and undulations of the underlying landform. The absence of field boundaries and woodland, combined with the elevation, creates a remote character. To the east of the Og valley land cover is more diverse with scattered woodland blocks within arable farmland. Distinctive features include the beech clumps which crown the open summits. The Marlborough Downs have strong cultural resonance visibly expressed by the sarsen stones, round barrows and hill forts. The sarsen stones, scattered across the landscape at Fyfield Down and Overton Down are an outstanding feature. Surviving areas of permanent pasture are concentrated along the scarp slopes to the north and west of the area, with some sections of the scarp slope beginning to be covered by regenerating scrub.

The Ridgeway, an important prehistoric route runs along the top of the northern escarpment. The downs are very sparsely settled with Baydon on a scarp edge in the north-east part of the Downs and the tiny clustered hamlets of Rockley and Upper Upham sheltering in dry valleys. The larger nucleated settlement of Aldbourne is isolated, nestled at the head of a winterbourne valley. Elsewhere settlement is limited to occasional isolated farms, with a concentration of equestrian establishments and gallops on the western part of the downs. Traditional building materials include brick, flint, sarsen and clunch with roofs of thatch or clay tile.

- EVALUATION
- Positive landscape features of significance

    - *Large scale open landscape with little settlement and sweeping skylines*
    - *Strong sense of remoteness and isolation*
    - *Important tracts of chalk grassland along the steep scarp slopes and dry valley sides, several of which have been designated SSSIs*
    - *Numerous sites of immense historic interest with field monuments particularly relating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age*
    - *Dramatic chalk-cut white horses*
    - *Distinctive beech clumps*
    - *Occurrence of Sarsen stone, with important lichen and moss colonies.*

Forces for change

- *In the past intensive arable agriculture has resulted in loss of biodiversity (chalk grassland) and ploughing up of important historic monuments. Schemes such as the Environmental Stewardship Scheme aim to make farming techniques more sustainable.*

- *Further reduction in livestock, so that there is no longer the means to maintain existing areas of pasture. Some marginal areas are regenerating with scrub.*

- *Requirements for new large scale farm buildings plus other farm units becoming redundant with potential for conversion.*

- *Demand for new crops and land uses which would break up the simple open landscape.*

- *Climate change may affect the distinctive beech clumps crowning the open summits with changes in the level of the water table impacting on the health of these shallow rooted trees.*

- *Potential impact of tall structures - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.*

- *Small scale incremental development (signage, fencing, road improvements) that would impinge on the simple, open character.*

Condition

The Open Downlands are an intensively managed landscape type, with vast swathes of arable farmland. There are however several extensive surviving areas of chalk grassland, which have been recognised for their importance and designated as SSSIs. There are also numerous sites of historic interest; several protected as scheduled ancient monuments, although in the past a number of sites have been lost though ploughing and are not visible on the ground. The overall condition of the landscape is perceived to be moderate.

Strength of character

This is a landscape of strong character. The steep scarps rise up to form an extensive plateau of rolling chalk downland. The distinctive landform, simple arable land cover, absence of settlement and large skies create a landscape with a sense of remoteness and exposure. The strong character also relates to the historic associations visible in the form of dramatic field monuments, extensive areas of chalk grassland and special features such as the chalk cut figures and concentrations of sarsen stones.

Inherent landscape sensitivities

- *The sense of remoteness and isolation.*

- *Areas rich in arable biodiversity, unimproved chalk and neutral grassland found on the steeper slopes which are an important ecological and landscape resource.*

- *Clumps of trees crowning the hilltops forming prominent landscape features.*

- *Surviving historic monuments are sensitive to intensive agricultural practices*
- *The openness of the downland plateau and long views have a high visual sensitivity to change*
- *Strong skylines and scarp tops are also particularly visually sensitive*

Strategy

The overall strategy Open Downland Landscape Type is to conserve the inherent remoteness, isolation and simplicity of the downland landscape and its important ecological, historic and geological features.

Broad Management Objectives

- *Conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation, with sparse settlement and road network and limited visible development.*
- *Conserve the areas of chalk grassland and pasture, encourage management to improve species diversity and prevent scrub encroachment. Consider opportunities for extending and linking chalk grassland along the scarps and dry valley sides, and creating mosaics of chalk grassland and ecologically rich arable land.*
- *Manage gallops to favour chalk grassland species and minimise the use of intrusive fencing or signage.*
- *Protect the remaining sites of historic interest and above ground archaeological features. Consider opportunities for extending areas of pasture around archaeological monuments.*
- *Minimise small scale incremental change such as signage, fencing or improvements to the road network which could change the simple open character of the landscape.*

Kennet Landscape Character Assessment – Parts 1 & 2 (1998)

6.9 The report was prepared by the former district council and identified the degree of intervention required to maintain the quality and condition of the landscape. The district council character assessment identified the site and surrounding areas to the north as located on the far south-eastern sections of Character area **2 –' Marlborough Downs'**

6.10 The relevant sections relating to the wider character of the Marlborough Downs in the assessments have been extracted below:

'An area of high chalk uplands which sweeps across the north of the District, defined on its western and northern edges by the crest of a prominent, steep chalk scarp, to the south by the valley of the River Kennet and to the east by the District boundary. The high chalk plateau forms an expansive landscape of open, smoothly rolling downland, mostly under intensive arable farming but with areas of remnant chalk grassland on steeper slopes and on conservation sites such as Fyfield Down. It is heavily dissected by a network of dry chalk valleys, or combes, and the valleys of the

Rivers Og, and Aldbourne which cut through the area from north to south. Horse gallops and other features of the racing industry are distinctive features of the area.

Further south east these rocks give way to the Upper Chalk. The chalk gives rise to a strongly rolling landscape which includes long sinuous scarps and dry valleys in addition to open downs and ridges.

Landcover varies across the area with a general progression toward more vegetation cover in the east.

It is visually diverse as a result of the vegetation cover over landform so that the open rolling downs of the west and northern areas are contrasted with more enclosed and well-wooded areas in the east. These eastern areas also reflect characteristics of large farm estates where intensively farmed arable land occurs in a mosaic with woodland managed for sporting purposes. Settlements nestling in intimate valleys within the chalk such as Rockley, the Ogbournes and Aldbourne are important and attractive features of the landscape.'

6.11 Some of the relevant guidelines for the Marlborough Downs landscape which may have relevance to the Site include:

- *discourage intrusion of further signage, structures, tracks or fencing in areas of open chalk upland landscape, and site essential features as discreetly as possible to minimise visual intrusion.*

- *plant large blocks and belts of native broadleaved woodland on arable or cultivated land within the eastern part of the Marlborough Downs, to link with existing woodlands and to restore or reinforce the typical mosaic of woodland and farmland;*

- *follow traditional pattern of shelterbelt planting to soften the impact of prominent buildings or structures in more exposed parts of the chalk uplands;*

6.12 Development sensitivities include:

- *the whole area has an essentially rural, agricultural character and large parts are devoid of settlement with a remote and inaccessible character, within which built development would be out of place;*

- *the open arable landscapes which dominate this area are very visually exposed and development of any kind, but particularly large-scale or tall structures such as communications masts, would be highly visible over long distances …*

Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy – (May 2005)

6.13 Kennet District Council produced the Landscape Conservation Strategy which was adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the Kennet Local plan 2011.

6.14 The strategy section of the report states: *'This Strategy should be used in all cases where the conservation and/or enhancement of the landscape is an issue. The following are the general principles which under-pin the enhancement strategy.*

6.15 The Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy developed a Landscape Enhancement Strategy framework for the District. This classifies the District into three enhancement or intervention levels as follow:

Conserve - Landscapes of high scenic quality, with a strong sense of place are generally unspoilt, have an intact structure and are generally in good condition. They may also contain rare or uncommon landscape types and areas of ecological and cultural significance. These landscapes may require management to maintain their quality and condition but no significant intervention.

Strengthen - Landscapes with attractive qualities and where character, structure and sense of place are comparatively strong. These landscapes are important to conserve but would benefit from some modest enhancement to strengthen character, structure, and to reinforce local distinctiveness.

Repair - Landscapes which have been more substantially weakened by intensive farming, Dutch elm disease and non-agricultural activity. These landscapes require more significant intervention to repair landscape structure and features and may require mitigation of detracting land uses or features.

6.16 The sites are located within an area identified as 'Enclosed Downland with Weak Hedgerow Structure' and identified as an area to repair.

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (March 2002)

6.17 The application site is located in the eastern sections of Landscape character Area **1A – Marlborough Downs** with character Area **2C –Lambourn Wooded Downs** at approximately 200m west of the Site.

6.18 In addition to the character assessments above, the following information has been extracted from the AONB assessment.

Marlborough Downs

Relevant key issues;

- *increasing intensification within this already very large scale landscape with further loss of peripheral features including field boundaries and habitats;*
- *inappropriate woodland planting which would impact on the open, expansive, remote character and views particularly in the western part of the Downs;*
- *future requirements for visually intrusive large scale farm buildings, plus other redundant farm buildings with potential for conversion and associated range of issues, e.g. traffic;*
- *cumulative impact of small-scale incremental change, (e.g. signage, fencing, kerbing of rural lanes) on the remote qualities of the chalk upland landscape.*

Key Management Requirements

The overall management requirement is to conserve the character of the Marlborough Downs with their special qualities of remoteness and isolation and tangible sense of history. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the surviving chalk grassland habitats, views and archaeological sites, notably the sarsen stones, Bronze Age round barrows and scarp top Iron Age hillforts. The sparse settlement pattern and general absence of development should be maintained, including the clear ridges and skylines. There are particular opportunities to consider restoration of the chalk grassland habitats to extend and link existing isolated and fragmented sites.

Lambourn Wooded Downs

6.19 Relevant key issues;

- *loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;*
- *localised visual intrusions - potential future demand e.g. for wind turbines, on the open downland summits and skylines, would impact on the secluded rural character;*
- loss of tranquillity

Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Lambourn Wooded Downs. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are the open downland summits and views contrasting with the strong wooded horizons, historic features including archaeological sites, the historic field pattern and road and lane network. The wooded pattern and character of the landscape is a key characteristic and there are opportunities for reintroduction of management (coppicing) to the ancient and semi-natural woodlands, sympathetic management of commercial forestry plantations and restoration of hedgerows. Remnant chalk grassland is a feature along steep slopes and should be conserved with opportunities for habitat restoration to link existing isolated sites. The distinctive pattern of settlements with dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and loose collections of buildings should be maintained.

6.20 The field survey findings across the surrounding wider landscape are broadly consistent with the published character area assessments. The Site is not located in a more open expansive area but in a semi-wooded area on the middle valley sides with localised long-distance views to the south. Pastoral fields associated with the smaller-scale valley landscape are in close proximity to the west and woodland blocks are scattered across the local area providing wooded backdrops on the ridgelines and containment. The valley landscape to the south is locally more open and more reminiscent of the wider chalk downland but enclose by a backdrop of wooded ridgelines with relatively few longer-distance views.

The Local Landscape Character

6.21 This section will examine the local landscape character within approximately 1km of the Site. The local landscape is open to the south of the Site. From the upper valley sides on and near the Site far reaching views southwards to distant ridgeline south of the River Kennet are possible. Pastoral fields associated with the smaller-scale enclosed valley landscape are in close proximity to the west. The site is enclosed by a woodland belt to the west, a hedge to the north-west and ridgeline and woodlands to the north and east.

6.22 The local landscape is part of the eastern valley sides running from Aldbourne to the north towards the Kennet Valley to the south. The area is predominantly rural with the small rural settlement of Whittonditch set out either side of the relatively straight route of B4192 on the junction of minor rural side lanes in the valley floor to the south. The settlement has a traditional character with several older larger red brick and flint houses, some thatched dwellings and small areas of sympathetic more modern infill development, together with a discreetly located small industrial area. The settlement is not prominent in the local landscape due to the presence of mature trees, both within and around the settlement.

6.23 The valley landscape has a pastoral and semi-enclosed character within the valley floor with the road corridor running alongside a small watercourse with occasional belts of trees and hedges. The valley landscape is framed by woodland blocks on the higher valley sides adding to a sense of enclosure in places. The landscape to the east on the rising valley side is generally more open with larger arable fields.

6.24 Elsewhere, in the surrounding rural local landscape are several scattered dwellings and farmsteads. Crowood Farm is a modern farmstead with utilitarian barns associated with semi-detached cottages. These are located west of the B4192 at 570m south-west of the Site. Formal but neglected gate posts and a formal trees lined private road running past the farm up the valley sides towards Crowood House. The large country house and its outbuildings are located in semi-wooded grounds on the upper valley sides at 770m south-west of the Site with larger woodland blocks on the upper valley sides to the west. Due to the containment by vegetation, the house is not readily visible or prominent in the valley landscape.

6.25 Shellswood Dairy itself represents a modern working farmstead with utilitarian barns cut down into the middle valley sides in close proximity to a woodland belt.

6.26 Some of the positive elements in the local landscape include:

- The overall rural landscape surrounding the Site, ranging from semi-enclose to open with localised far-reaching views for elevated open area. Often there is a sharp contrast between the intimate pastoral valley, enclosed wooded ridges and locally more open areas of arable landscape.
- The low-key traditional character of Whittonditch with traditional brick and flint dwellings within a setting of mature trees.
- The scattered large country houses in a wooded or formal landscape setting.
- The enclosed and semi-remote rural setting of the valley to the west of the Site.

6.27 Some of the few negative elements in the local landscape include:

- The corridor of the B4192 to the west of the Site reduces the tranquillity of the rural landscape. This is a relatively fast straight road corridor. Elsewhere, the roads tend to be narrow and enclosed single-track slower low-key lanes.
- Some locally prominent larger modern utilitarian agricultural sheds, including the Site itself.

6.28 Due to the varying degree of enclosure and valley setting it is assessed that the local landscape could accommodate minor to moderate degrees of change. The open areas surrounding the Site are assessed as having a higher sensitivity to change with the more enclosed areas having less sensitivity. The site itself displays a combination of these two characteristics and the sensitivity to change of the local landscape within approximately 1km of the site is assessed as ranging from high to medium.

Nature of Effects

6.29 Landscape and character effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of built form in the landscape are typically considered to be adverse unless otherwise stated within the assessment.

Summary of Effects on Landscape Character

The Wider Landscape Character –Marlborough Downs and Lambourn Wooded Downs

6.30 In the published assessments the overall condition is as assessed as moderate. The steep scarps, rolling chalk downland arable land remoteness and exposure monuments, and extensive areas of chalk grassland are assessed as having a strong character the openness and long views have a high visual sensitivity.

6.31 The Site is small in scale and not in the more sensitive remote open downland. It is located in a semi-enclosed area on a valley-side landscape and in a close association with existing agricultural barns with a varying degree of openness with longer distance views possible to the south.

6.32 It is assessed that the wider character area could accommodate a moderate degree of change without impacting on its overall integrity and the potential sensitivity to change is assessed as medium.

6.33 The proposals are likely to represent a minor alteration to a feature of the wider character area and the overall magnitude of potential change is likely to be low. The potential degree of character impact is therefore assessed as **slight**.

6.34 Although the Site is not in a more remote exposed location, some of the aims in the published character assessment are to conserve the sense of remoteness and isolation with limited visible development and to locate essential features as discreetly as possible. The use of the traditional pattern of shelterbelt planting to soften the impact of prominent in buildings in more exposed parts is encouraged. The site is also located within an area identified as having a weak hedgerow structure as an area to repair.

6.35 In response to the character assessment guidelines and the field observations mitigation is considered important to further reduce the potential impacts of the development, particularly where it is more open on the valley side.

6.36 The new farmhouse will be set down into the valley side with the use of traditional and muted building materials to reduce its impacts on the landscape. Further to this, the existing tree screen will be retained and supplemented with additional woodland planting, new native field hedges and individual native deciduous trees to further reduce the potential impacts on the landscape character.

The Local Landscape Character

6.37 The sensitivity to change of the local landscape has been assessed as ranging from high to medium depending upon the varying level of enclosure in the local landscape.

6.38 The changes are relatively small in scale and located in close proximity to the existing barns and in context with the existing mobile home which will be removed and replaced with a higher-quality farmhouse. Where the Site is readily visible, the proposals are likely to represent a farmstead, found scattered throughout the local landscape, but visually more prominent to the south and more enclosed elsewhere.

6.39 The magnitude of change is likely to represent a minor alteration to a key characteristic of the area and the perception of an isolated farmstead with varying degrees of prominence. The potential magnitude of change is therefore assessed as low. There will be no direct or indirect impact on any valued landscape features nearby. The overall degree of effect on the local landscape character is therefore, assessed as potentially ranging from **moderate** to **slight.**

6.40 As discussed above, mitigation measured, both within the initial design and through landscaping is considered an important aspect in reducing the potential moderate character effects.

Specific mitigation measures to address impacts on the landscape character will be discussed in section 9.

6.1 **Table 2 –Effects on Landscape Character Summary** (see the Landscape & Visual Impact Methodology in Appendix 3)

Receptor	Distance from Site	Predicted Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Effect and Type
Marlborough Downs wider Character Area	1 to 5km	The Site is small in scale and not in the more sensitive remote open downland. It is located in a semi-enclosed area on a valley-side landscape and in close association with existing agricultural barns with a varying degree of openness. The wider character area could accommodate a moderate degree of change without impacting on its overall integrity.	Medium	Low	**Slight**

Receptor	Distance from Site	Predicted Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Effect and Type
Local Landscape Character	1km	The changes are relatively small in scale and located in close proximity to the existing barns and in context with the existing mobile home which will be removed and replaced with a higher-quality farmhouse. The proposals are likely to represent a minor alteration to key characteristics of the area with the perception of an isolated farmstead with varying degrees of prominence.	High to Medium	Low	**Moderate to Slight**

7. VISUAL AMENITY

Introduction

7.1 This section examines the influence of the landscape on the visual amenity in the area and the visual effects will be assessed from a series of representative viewpoints taken within the study area. Visibility of the Site is illustrated on the Visual Analysis plan ACLA/BTN 03 and key viewpoints selected for the LVIA are illustrated on photo sheets 1 to 13 contained within the appendices of this report. The viewpoints have been selected to represent key visual receptors.

The Existing Zone of Visual Influence

7.2 The potential 'zone of visual influence' of the proposed development is limited to the west with glimpsed and partial views only towards sections of the Site up to approximately 900m on western to south-western valley sides. To the north-west from the PRoW the intervening ridge increasingly screens views at distance, and together with dense tree belts screens the Site at distances over 700m. The recent tree planting near the barns will also increasingly screen views from the north over time.

7.3 To the north the hedge close to the barns and more distant vegetation screens views from roads and other publicly accessible areas.

7.4 The most extensive views are to the south where the site boundary is open and elevated. Open views from the valley floor are possible at approximately 800m to the south as well as elevated more distant open views from a ridge to the south-east at approximately 1.2km

7.5 Partial views are also possible from localised area on the valley sides south of Ramsbury at approximately 2.5km.

7.6 Based on the desk study and field observations, the distance boundaries for the assessment have been set at:

- Up to 0.5km Close Distance – the development and associated proposals are likely to be recognisable and prominent new elements where open views are possible.

- 0.5km to 1km Middle Distance – the development and associated proposals could potentially be a readily noticeable but not a prominent new element in views.

- 1km and over Long Distance – The proposals may be noticeable but increasingly less so at distance.

7.7 The combination of topography, vegetation and built form determines the overall potential zone of visibility of the Site within the study area. Visual containment is provided by a tree belt to the west, the high ground to the north and rolling ridges to the east. This resulted in the potential zone of visual influence of the development ranging to up to approximately 2.5km on the elevated land to the south, partial views up to 900m to the west, no more than 700m to the north and north-west due to the rising valley sides and limited by the intervening ridge and woodland block to approximately 200m to the east.

Brief Description of Key Viewpoints

7.8 The key viewpoints were selected from a number of locations assessed in the field and based on an initial desktop evaluation of the topography. They have been selected to provide a typical range of receptors, distances and directions of views. All viewpoints are from publicly accessible roads, public rights of way or other recreational or open access land. No private residential properties were accessed.

7.9 The key viewpoints within 0.5km can be identified as:

- The user of the rural lane to the east.
- A PRoW running up the valley sides west of the barns.

7.10 The key viewpoints between 0.5km and 1km can be identified as:

- From the B4192 in the valley floor to the south.
- Partial views from roads and PRoW on the valley side to the west.

7.11 Views from over 1km have been identified as:

- From a PRoW on the upper ridge at 1.2km to the south-east.
- Partial localised views from the valley sides south of Ramsbury.

<u>Selection of Representative Viewpoints</u>

7.12 The selected viewpoint photographs are presented in Appendix 2. They are not intended to cover every single possible view but are intended to be representative of

a range of views at a range of distances to the Site. The site assessment was undertaken on the 3rd May 2023 and represents summer views due to the full leaf cover. They do not represent a worst-case scenario as experienced in winter views where some of the taller boundary vegetation is likely to be more open. However, the dense understorey is likely to retain a relatively high degree of screening in winter views, particularly when maintained as dense hedges.

Viewpoint 1 –From the lane at 250m south-east

7.13 This close-distance view is largely screened at low-level by the intervening ridge. Small sections of the upper rooflines of the barns are visible. The view becomes increasingly screened by the ridge and intervening vegetation when travelling north along the lane and opens out to the south. The view demonstrates the screening afforded by the intervening ridge to the east of the Site. From this location, the majority of the Site will be screened.

Viewpoint 2 – From the access track & lane at 320m south-east

7.14 A further partial close distance view from the lane to the south. The intervening ridge is less prominent and views towards the Site and the adjacent barns are more open with just partial screening by the intervening ridge at low-level. The view illustrates the open character of the Site to the south-east.

Viewpoint 3 – From the lane at 340m south-east

7.15 A localised view through a gap in the lane side hedge further down the valley side. An open and close distance view towards the Site. The earth mounds in the view are temporary.

Viewpoint 4 – From the lane at 720m to the south

7.16 A localised middle-distance view through a gap in the lane side hedge. An open view towards the Site from within the valley floor. The view also illustrates the elevated valley side setting of the Site.

Viewpoint 5 – From the B492 at 820m south

7.17 A further open middle-distance view from within the valley floor. The view also further illustrates the wider setting of the Site and the valley side setting.

Viewpoint 6 – From a PRoW at 300m south-west

7.18 A close distance but partially screened view from a PRoW on the lower valley side. The view is partially screened towards the Site at low-level by the intervening valley side and the tree belt to the north-west of the barns.

Viewpoint 7 – From a PRoW 150m south

7.19 A similar view to above, but at a closer distance. From this location, the valley side and tree belts increasingly screen the view towards the Site.

Viewpoint 8 – From a PRoW at 250m north-west

7.20 A close distance and partial view towards the Site with the barns prominent in the foreground.

Viewpoint 9 – From a PRoW at 420m north

7.21 A partial close-distance view. The Site and barns are becoming increasingly screened by the intervening ridge on the upper valley side. The view also illustrates the elevated location of the Site and the far-reaching panoramic views southwards. The recently planted trees will also screen views to the barns over time.

Viewpoint 10 – From a lane on the western valley side at 850m south-west

7.22 A middle-distance localised and largely screened view. The tree belt to the north-west provides a high degree of screening towards the Site and the existing barns.

Viewpoint 11- From a lane on the western valley side at 700m south-west

7.23 A similar middle-distance view to above but a little further north along the lane. A more open view but the Site is increasingly screened by the intervening woodland belt from this location.

Viewpoint 12- From a PRoW at 1.2km south-east

7.24 A long-distance open and elevated view towards the Site. The site is readily visible in the wide panoramic and rural view in front of the barns. The barns are partially screened by the tree belt to the north-west. The view also demonstrates the much wider rural context of the Site with the valley to the west, more extensive areas of

woodland covering the higher ridges to the east and the locally open landscape south of the Site.

Viewpoint 13- From a PRoW on the southern valley side at 2.5km south

7.25 A long distance, elevated and partial view. From this location, partial views across the site may be possible with small sections of the barns visible between the tree belt close to the north-west. Other areas of development associate with the eastern edges of Ramsbury are more prominent in the foreground. The view also illustrates the wider context of the Site with partially wooded ridgelines.

Nature of Effects

7.26 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. Visual effects are subjective as the human perception of development can vary considerably from negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects, the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects. Unless otherwise stated, this will assume that all effects involving additional built form will be adverse and long-term unless otherwise stated in the text, thus representing the worst-case scenario.

7.27 The assessments below have not taken into account specific landscape mitigation measures which are intended to reduce the potential adverse visual effects. This will be discussed later in this report.

Summary of Visual Effects

7.28 The highest degree of visual effects has been assessed as **moderate** for views 4 and 12. Viewpoint 4 is from the lower valley sides where the new farmhouse will be viewed in an elevated rural view against the skyline at middle distance. For viewpoint 12 the smaller mobile home will be replaced by the larger farmhouse in front of the barns in an open panoramic landscape at a distance from a more sensitive rural footpath on a ridge but at a long distance. **Moderate** to **slight** degree of effect have been assessed for viewpoint 6, a close-distance rural view where the new farmhouse will be viewed on the skyline.

7.29 **Slight** degrees of effect have been assessed for viewpoints 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 13. Viewpoints 2 and 3 are from the lane to the east of the site where the proposals are likely to represent a minor component in the wider view in context with the existing barns. For viewpoint 5 from the B4192, the new farmhouse is likely to be readily visible

but the relatively fast road corridor is assessed as a low-sensitivity receptor. Viewpoints 8 and 9 are from the PRoW at close distance to the north of the Site. For the close distance views, the barns are more prominent and will partially screen the proposed farmhouse. At a further distance to the north, the intervening ridge will partially screen views and the wider panoramic views beyond will remain uninterrupted. For viewpoint 13, at a long distance to the south, the proposals may just be visible but it is likely to constitute a very minor new element in a long distance view in context with other more prominent areas of built form.

7.30 The degree of effect for viewpoints 1, 7, 10 and 11 have been assessed as **negligible**, mainly due to the screening by intervening ridges or the tree belt near the Site.

7.31 Based on the above visual impact assessment, the mitigation measures have primarily been aimed at retaining boundary vegetation and introducing new boundary planting to provide screening for the more sensitive views from the south and south-west where potential views to the new farmhouse could be direct and open.

7.32 **Table 1 – Summary of Visual Effects** (see the Detailed Assessment Methodology in Appendix 3)

Receptor	Distance from site	Predicted Change	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Effect and type
Viewpoint 1 Users of the lane	265m south-east	Potentially the introduction of small sections of roofline in the foreground of the barns. The view is largely screened by the intervening ridge. The changes are likely to represent a very minor new component in the view in context with the existing rooflines.	Medium	Negligible	**Negligible**
Viewpoints 2 Users of the lane	320m south-east	The removal of the mobile home and replacement with a new larger single-storey farmhouse to the right but partially screened at a low level by the ridge. The proposals are likely to represent a minor component in	Medium	Low	**Slight**

		the wider view in the context with the existing barns.			
Viewpoint 3 Users of the lane	370m south-east	Similar to above, the removal of the mobile home and replacement with a larger new farmhouse to the right. The proposals are likely to represent a minor component in the wider view in the context of the existing barns.	Medium	Low	**Slight**
Viewpoint 4 Users of the lane	720m south	The introduction of a new farmhouse in an elevated rural view against the skyline at the middle distance. The adjacent barns are largely screened by the nearby tree belt and therefore the view appears as predominantly rural. The proposals are likely to be readily visible without landscape mitigation measures to screen views.	Medium	Medium	**Moderate**
Viewpoint 5 Users of the B4192	125m east	A similar view to above where the barns are largely screened by the tree belt and the new farmhouse is likely to be readily visible in an elevated location in a rural view. The view is from a relatively fast road corridor and is likely to be less sensitive to change.	Low	Medium	**Slight**
Viewpoint 6 Users of a PRoW	330m south-west	A close-distance view partially screened by the tree belt and intervening ridge. Sections of rooflines of the new farmhouse may be visible on the open sections of the ridge against the skyline. The proposals are likely to be a recognisable to minor new component in the rural view.	Medium	Medium/Low	**Moderate to slight**

Viewpoint 7 Users of a PRoW	150m south	From this location, the Site is largely screened by the tree belt and intervening ridge. Sections of the new farmhouse may just visible through the tree trunks in the foreground. The changes are likely to represent a very minor new component in the rural view and not casually perceived.	Medium	Negligible	**Negligible**
Viewpoint 8 Users of a PRoW	250m north-west	Sections of the new farmhouse may be visible behind the barns in the foreground. The new farmhouse is likely to represent a minor addition of new built form in context with the much more prominent barns in the foreground.	Medium	Low	**Slight**
Viewpoint 9 Users of a PRoW	420m north	Upper sections of the new farmhouse may be visible over the intervening ridge in a predominantly rural long-distance view. The Site and the barns are becoming increasingly screened by the ridge further north in the field. The proposals are likely to form a very minor component in the view at a low level and largely screened by the intervening ridge at a low level in context with the rooflines of the existing barns. The long-distance rural views will not be impacted.	High	Moderate	**Slight**
Viewpoint 10 Users of the lanes	850m south-west	Small sections of the new farmhouse may just be visible and largely screened by the adjacent tree belt and a localised and oblique view. Winter views may be more open. The proposals will be a very minor new element in the view in	Low	Low	**Negligible**

		conjunction with the existing barns.			
Viewpoint 11 Users of the lane	700m south-west	The proposed farmhouse will be screened by the nearby tree belt with very minor glimpse views although winter views may be more open.	Low	Low/ Negligible	**Negligible**
Viewpoint 12 Users of the PRoW	1.2km south-east	The smaller mobile home will be replaced by the larger farmhouse in front of the barns in an open panoramic landscape at a distance. The proposals are likely to constitute a minor new component in a long-distance wide panoramic rural view in context with the nearby barns.	High	Low	**Moderate**
Viewpoint 13 Users of a PRoW	2.5km south	Small sections of the new farmhouse may just be visible but largely screened by the adjacent tree belt. The proposals are likely to constitute a very minor new element in a long-distance view in context with other more prominent areas of built form at a closer distance.	High	Negligible	**Slight**

8. EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES

8.1 The mature boundary trees and hedges, together with the recently planted young trees and hedges, will be retained and protected from the building and earthworks during construction in accordance with BS5837:2012 ‘Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations’ where necessary. The Site forms part of the arable field and is therefore, likely to be of little ecological value.

8.2 The mitigation strategy will primarily aim to retain a strong landscape framework and strengthen boundary vegetation to reduce the impact on the local landscape character and views. It will also include new native hedgerows and woodland planting, together with individual native trees. The landscape mitigation strategy is outlined in section 9 of this report.

9. MITIGATION STRATEGY

9.1 The potential sensitivity of the Site in a rural and partly open elevated location has been recognised within the initial design of the farmhouse. The dwelling will be single-storey and constructed in brick, flint and timber with a slate roof slate to respond to the local vernacular architecture and reduce the potential prominence of the farmhouse. It will also be cut down into the valley side to further reduce its prominence.

9.2 The aim of the landscape mitigation outlined in this section is to further integrate the development within the local landscape setting and reduce impacts on the visual amenity as far as is practical. See plan ACLA/BTN 04 in the appendices of this report for further details.

9.3 The Site-specific landscape mitigation proposals aim to retain and strengthen the boundary vegetation. The existing tree belt in particular provides an important visual screen, as well as helping to assimilate the development into its setting and will be retained. The recent planting over time will also provide additional landscape structure and screening. The key aspects of this mitigation are:

- New native field hedge planting along the garden boundaries to the farmhouse to screen low-level views from the south.
- New tree planting along boundary hedges and elsewhere within the proposals where space allows to provide higher level screening.
- Extend the existing tree belt and recent native tree planting to the north with a new native woodland mix to provide additional screening.

9.4 At a later date, a detailed landscape plan can be conditioned as well as a landscape management plan to ensure that the proposed vegetation matures.

10. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

10.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is prepared to accompany a planning application for the construction of a new farmhouse at Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, SN8 2FW.

10.2 The Site is located on the eastern edge of an existing farmstead comprising of three modern livestock barns and associated hardstanding, together with a temporary mobile home for an agricultural worker. A mature deciduous tree belt runs close to the south-western edges of the barns, there is a hedge to the north-west and elsewhere the boundaries appear open to the surrounding arable field.

10.3 Recent planting has been carried out in the form of a native field hedge mix and individual trees such as oak, beech and lime across the arable filed and along the eastern boundary of the Site. This continues southwards and then runs west along the access track to join the tree belt the south. This tree belt has been extended with new woodland planting and new native tree planting has taken place close to the northern edges of the barns. This recent planting will provide additional screening over time from the south, north and east.

10.4 The Site is in a relatively isolated and elevated location on the eastern edges of a valley approximately 1km north of the rural settlement of Whittonditch. The surrounding landscape is rural with medium to large scale pastoral and arable fields and woodland blocks. Beyond the valley the surrounding rural landscape is characteristic of an undulating semi-wooded chalk downland.

10.5 The proposals are for a single-storey three-bedroom dwelling. The new farmhouse will be located at its closest approximately 30m south-east of the nearby barns in the arable field north of the current farm access. The farmhouse will be partly cut down into the valley side to the north and accessed via the current farm track with parking adjacent to the south-west of the farmhouse.

10.6 This assessment has concluded that there will be no impacts of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments or woodlands of conservation value in the surrounding landscape as a result of the proposed farmhouse.

10.7 The new farmhouse on the Site is likely to represent a minor alteration to a key characteristic of the sensitive AONB landscape with the removal of the mobile home

and the addition of a new farmhouse within the context of the established barn on the valley side. The potential degree of effect on the wider character of the AONB as a result of the development is assessed as potentially moderate in terms of LVIA assessment methodology, without considered mitigation.

10.8 The proposals are likely to represent a minor alteration to a feature of the wider character area and the overall magnitude of potential change is likely to be low. The potential degree of character impact is therefore assessed as slight.

10.9 The magnitude of change is likely to represent a minor alteration to a key characteristic of the local landscape with varying degrees of prominence of the proposed farmhouse. The overall degree of effect on the local landscape character is therefore, assessed as potentially ranging from moderate to slight.

10.10 The highest degree of visual effects has been assessed as moderate for views 4 and 12. Viewpoint 4 is from the lower valley sides where the new farmhouse will be viewed in an elevated rural view against the skyline at middle distance. For viewpoint 12 the smaller mobile home will be replaced by the larger farmhouse in front of the barns in an open panoramic landscape at a distance from a more sensitive rural footpath on a ridge but at a long distance. Moderate to slight degree of effect have been assessed for viewpoint 6, a close-distance rural view where the new farmhouse will be viewed on the skyline.

10.11 Slight degrees of effect have been assessed for viewpoints 2, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 13. Viewpoints 2 and 3 are from the lane to the east of the site where the proposals are likely to represent a minor component in the wider view in context with the existing barns. For viewpoint 5 from the B4192, the new farmhouse is likely to be readily visible but the relatively fast road corridor is assessed as a low-sensitivity receptor. Viewpoints 8 and 9 are from the PRoW at close distance to the north of the Site. For the close distance views, the barns are more prominent and will partially screen the proposed farmhouse. At a further distance to the north, the intervening ridge will partially screen views and the wider panoramic views beyond will remain uninterrupted. For viewpoint 13, at a long distance to the south, the proposals may just be visible but it is likely to constitute a very minor new element in a long distance view in context with other more prominent areas of built form.

10.12 The degree of effect for viewpoints 1, 7, 10 and 11 have been assessed as negligible, mainly due to the screening by intervening ridges or the tree belt near the Site.

10.13 The potential sensitivity of the Site in a rural and partly open elevated location in the AONB has been recognised within the initial design of the farmhouse. The dwelling will be single-storey and constructed in brick, flint and timber with a slate roof slate to respond to the local vernacular architecture and reduce the potential prominence of the farmhouse. It will also be cut down into the valley side to further reduce its prominence.

10.14 The aim of the landscape mitigation outlined in this section is to further integrate the development within the local landscape setting and reduce impacts on the visual amenity.

10.15 The Site-specific landscape mitigation proposals aim to retain and strengthen the existing boundary vegetation. The existing tree belt in particular provides an important visual screen, as well as helping to assimilate the development into its setting and will be retained. The key aspects of this mitigation are:

- New native field hedge planting along the garden boundaries to the farmhouse to further screen low-level views from the south.
- New tree planting along boundary hedges and elsewhere within the proposals where space allows to provide higher level screening.
- Extend the recent native tree planting with a new native woodland mix to provide additional screening to the north.

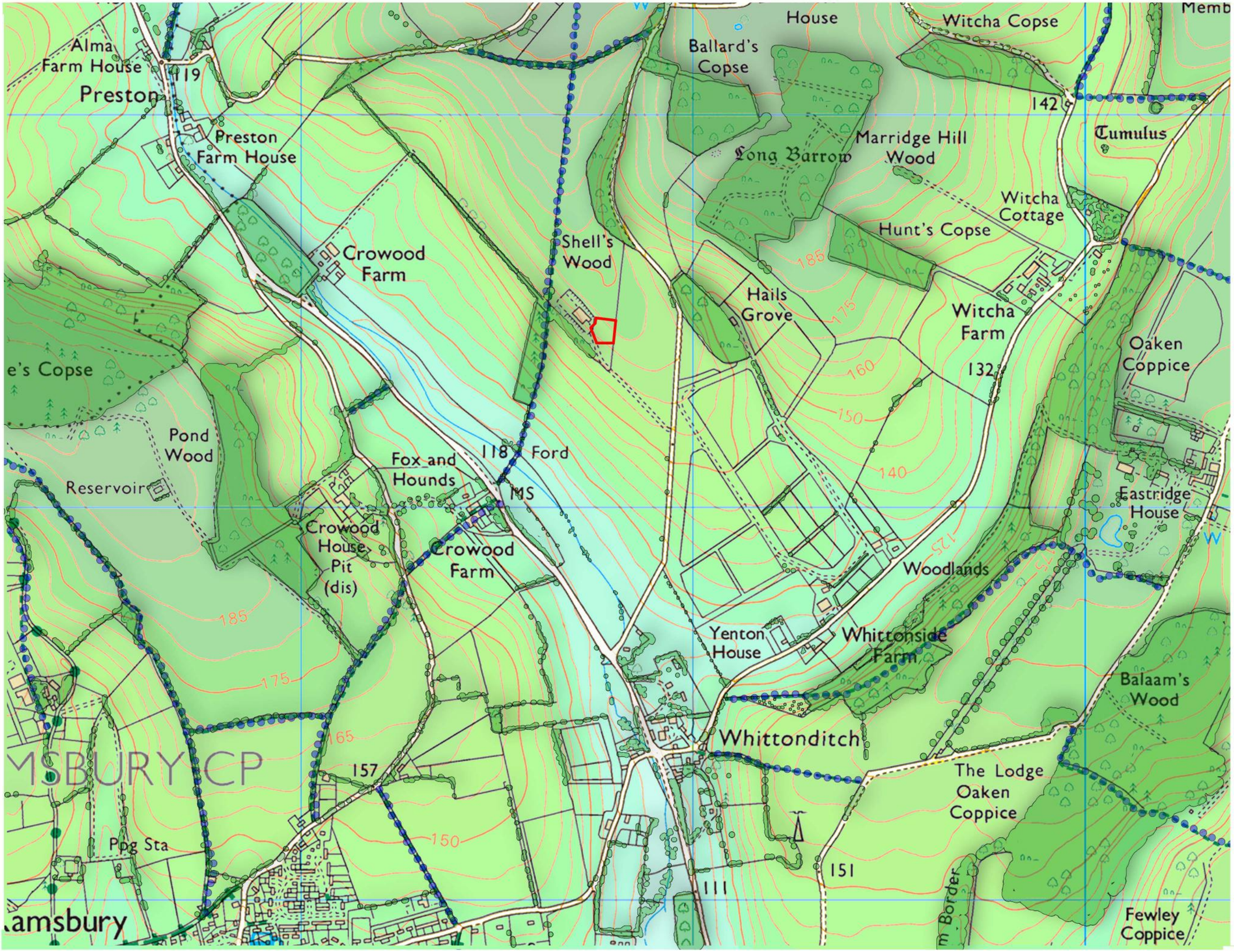
10.16 The proposals aim to be in line with national, regional and local planning guidelines and policies and ensuring that the proposals respects and enhances the environment in its scale, location and design, as well as responding to the rural AONB landscape setting.

Anthony Clarkson(BA hons Dip LA) - ACLA Ltd **13th July 2023**

APPENDIX 1

Plans

ACLA/BTN 01	Site Context
ACLA/ BTN 02	Planning Context
ACLA/ BTN 03	Visual Analysis
ACLA/ BTN 04	Landscape Mitigation & Enhancement



Application Boundary

Public Rights of way (PRoW)

Significant Vegetation

NOTES:
Significant vegetation has been gathered from a combination of on the ground observations & online mapping (Google Earth).

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch

Drawing:
Site Context

Dwg No:
ACLA/BTN 01

Scale: NTS Date: May 2023

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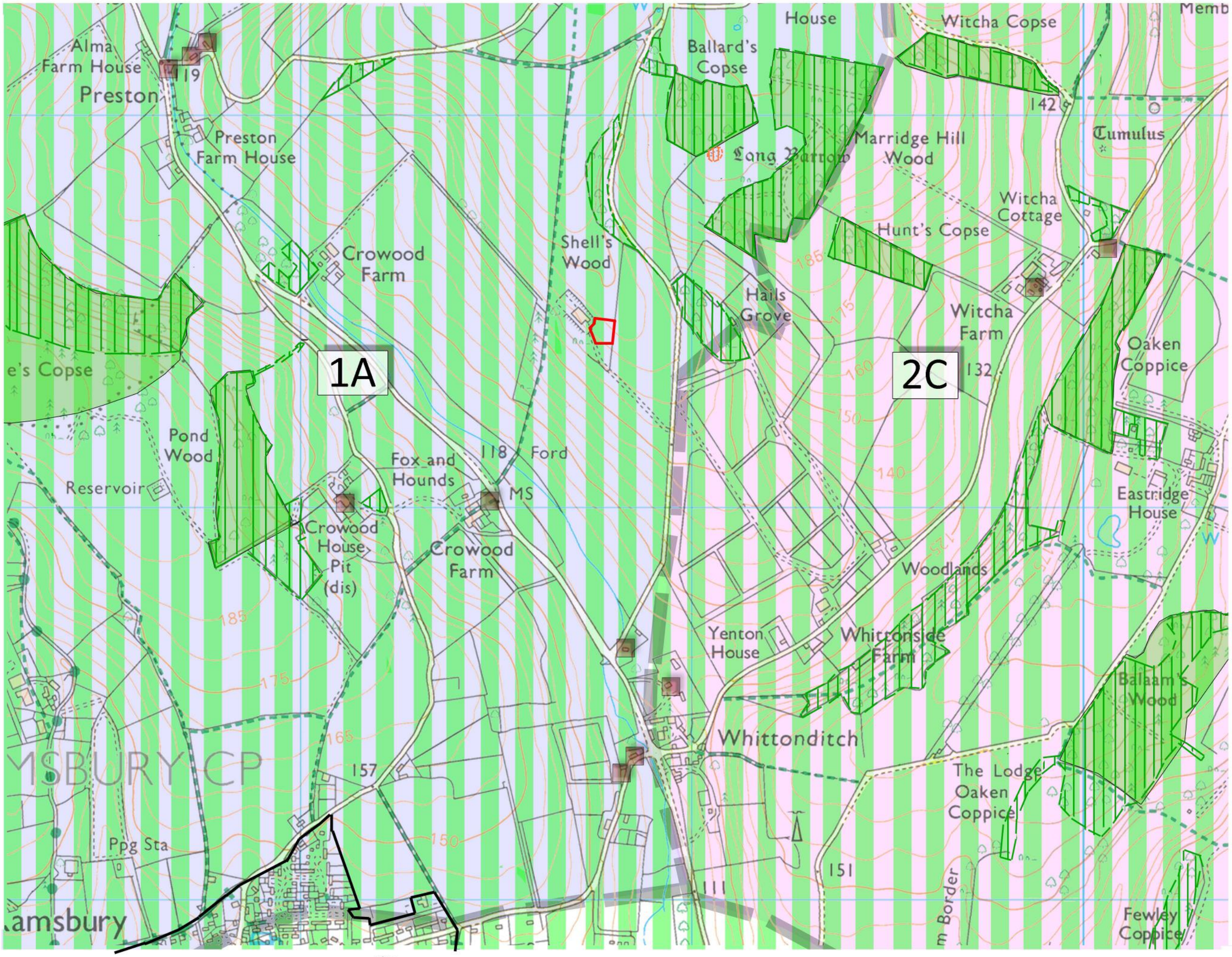

Application Boundary

North Wessex Downs AONB

Ancient Woodlands

Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitats

Ramsbury Settlement Boundary

Listed Buildings

Scheduled Monuments

North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

1A Marlborough Downs

2C Lambourn Wooded Downs

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch

Drawing:
Planning Context

Dwg No:
ACLA/BTN 02

Scale: NTS Date: May 2023

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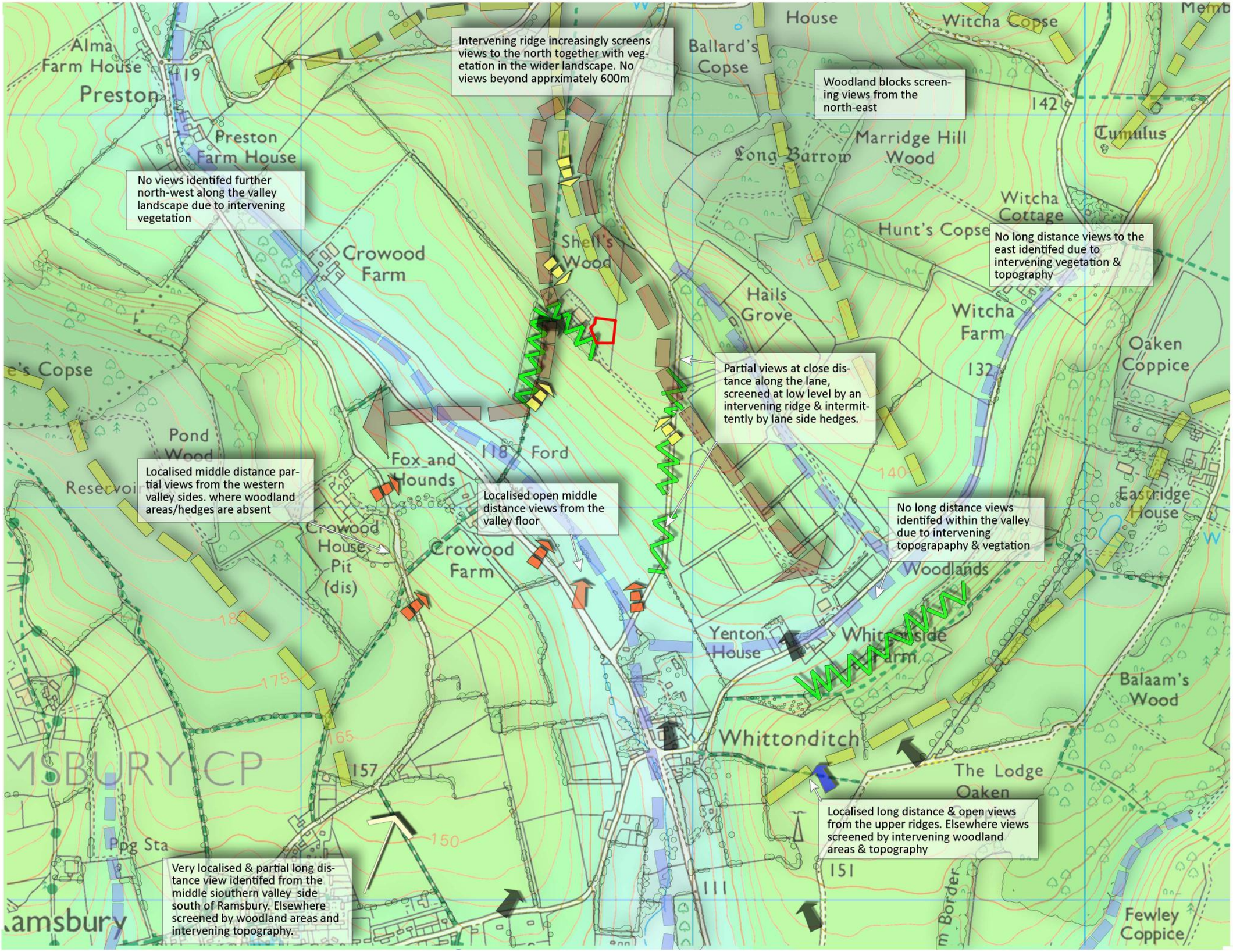

- Application Area
- Ridges
- Valleys
- Potential Extent of the Visual Envelope
- Partial Close Distance Views
- Partial Middle Distance Views
- Middle Distance Open Views
- Long Distance Open Views
- Screened Views
- Other Long Distance partial Views
- Screening by Vegetation (A broken symbol indicates partial views)

0m 1km

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Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch

Drawing:
Site Context

Dwg No:
ACLA/BTN 03

Scale: NTS Date: May 2023

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Hedge to the north-west

Public footpath

Sheep barn

Arable field

Recent native deciduous tree planting

Feedstore

Milking parlour

Extend tree belt to provide screening from the north

Recent mixed native hedge planting with individual beech & lime trees

Existing tree belt on bund providing screening from the west

Remove mobile home

Arable field

Proposed farmhouse

Gravel

New native field hedge with individual trees to provide screening/filter views from the south

Existing access track

Proposed Farmhouse

Existing Tree Belts & Hedges

Proposed Individual Trees (Native standards)

Native Hedges (mixed field hedge)

Native Woodland Belt (8 to10m wide)

Proposed Lawn (manage as species rich lawn)

NOTES:
Existing mature vegetation beyond the topographical survey is indicative only and has been estimated from on-site observations & Google imagery. Recent planting is in line with information supplied by the client.

N

0m 5m 10m

Recent native tree planting

Ex. barns

Public footpath

Proposed faemhouse

Arable field

Existing tree belt

Recent native hedge mix with individual trees

Existing tree belt running down the valley side

Recent tree planting to extend belt

Pastoral field

INSET - Recent Planting -not to scale

Drawing prepared for planning purposes only.

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Client: David Brown

Project: Shellswood Dairy, Whittonditch

Dwg Title: Landscape Mitigation & Enhancement

Scale	Date	DB	Dwg No	Rev
1:500@A3	07/23	AC	ACLA/BTN 04	

APPENDIX 2

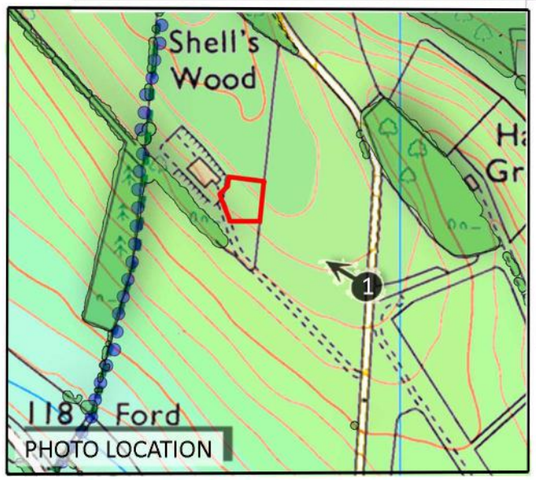
Photo Viewpoints 1-13

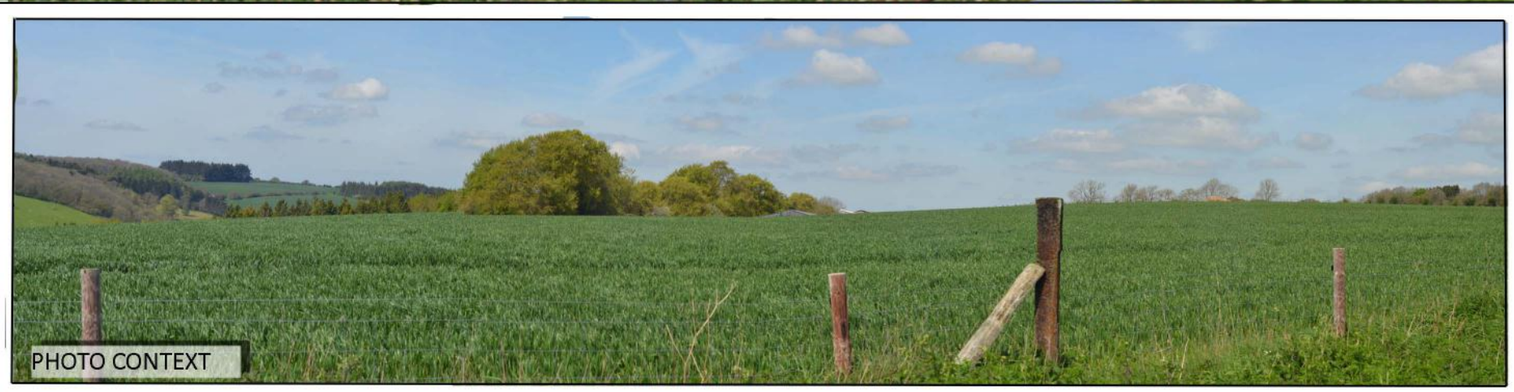
Viewpoint 1 From the lane at 265m south-east of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28975 73326

Rooflines of barns at Shellswood Dairy

Site (in front of the existing barns & screened at low-level by intervening ridge)





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 1

Date: June 2023

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Viewpoint 2 From the access track & lane at 320m south-east of the Site

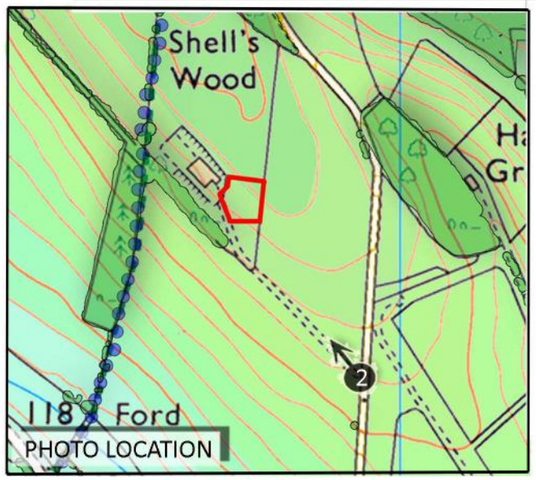
Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28963 73194

Tree belt along the south-western boundary of the dairy

Access track

Approximate extent of the Site (in front of the barns)

Upper sections of the barns at Shellswood Dairy





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 2

Date: June 2023

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Viewpoint 3 From the lane at 370m south-east of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28945 73072

Tree belt along the south-western boundary of the dairy

Approximate extent of the Site (in front of the barns)

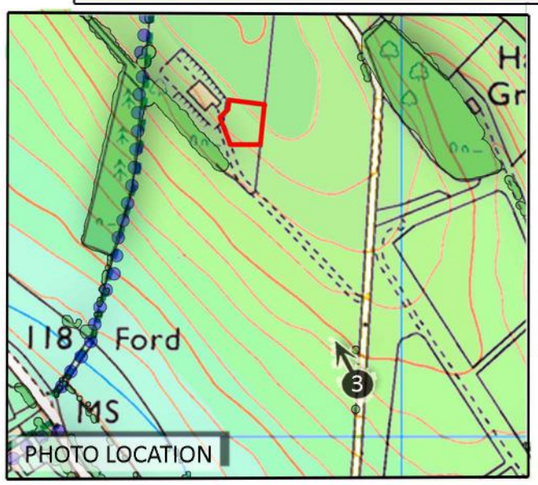

PHOTO LOCATION



PHOTO CONTEXT

Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 3

Date: June 2023

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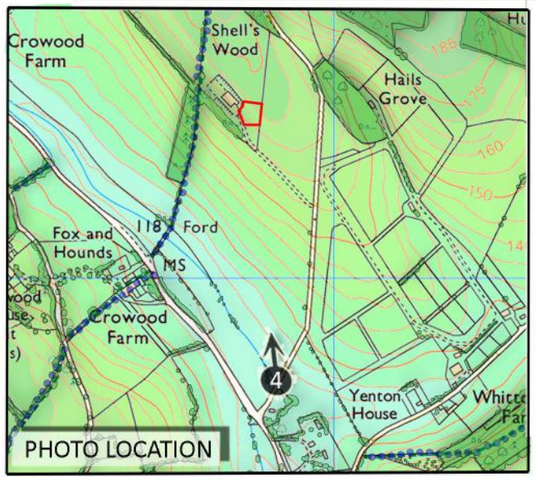
Viewpoint 4 From the lane at 720m south of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28851 72714

Tree belt along the south-western boundary of the dairy

Approximate extent of the Site

Eastern barn





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 4

Date: June 2023

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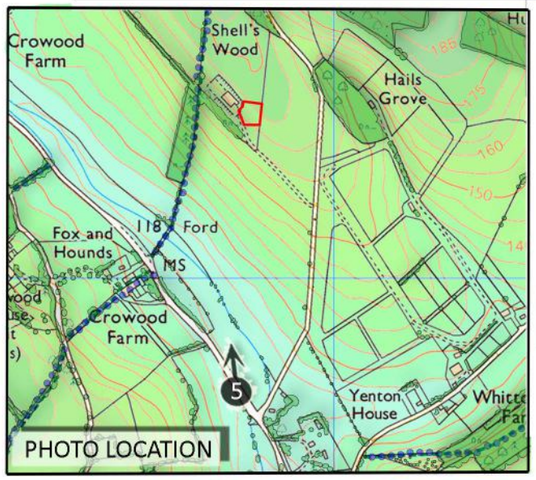
Viewpoint 5 From the B4192 at 820m south of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28805 72781

Tree belt along the south-western boundary of the dairy

Approximate extent of the Site





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 5

Date: June 2023

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Viewpoint 6 From a PRoW at 330m south-west of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28584 73223

Tree belt along the south-western boundary of the dairy

Approximate extent of the Site (partially below ridge)

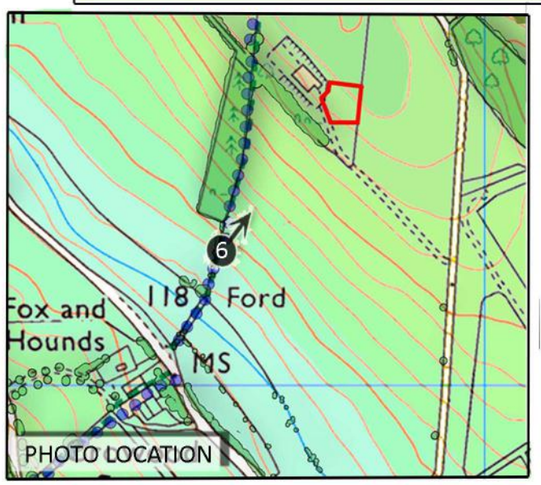

PHOTO LOCATION



PHOTO CONTEXT

Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 6

Date: June 2023

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Viewpoint 7 From a PRoW at 150m south-west of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28629 73410

Approximate extent of the Site (partially below ridge)

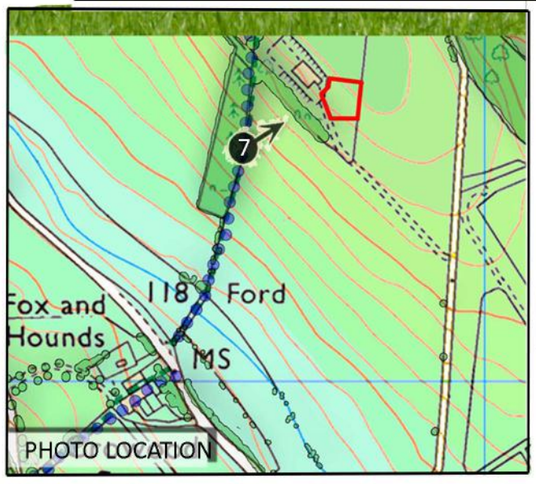

PHOTO LOCATION



Sections of bund & barns at Shellswood Dairy (partially visible behind tree screen)

PHOTO CONTEXT

Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 7

Date: June 2023

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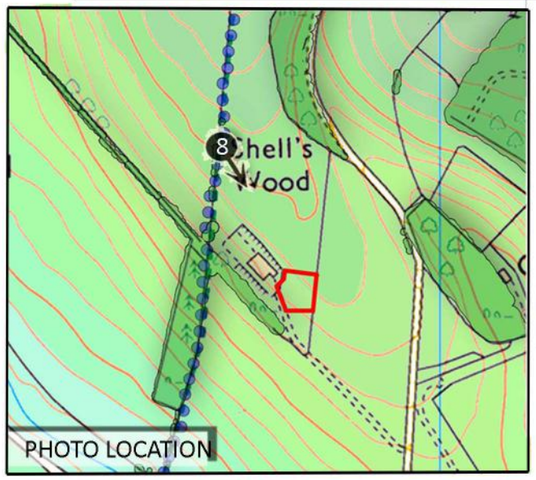
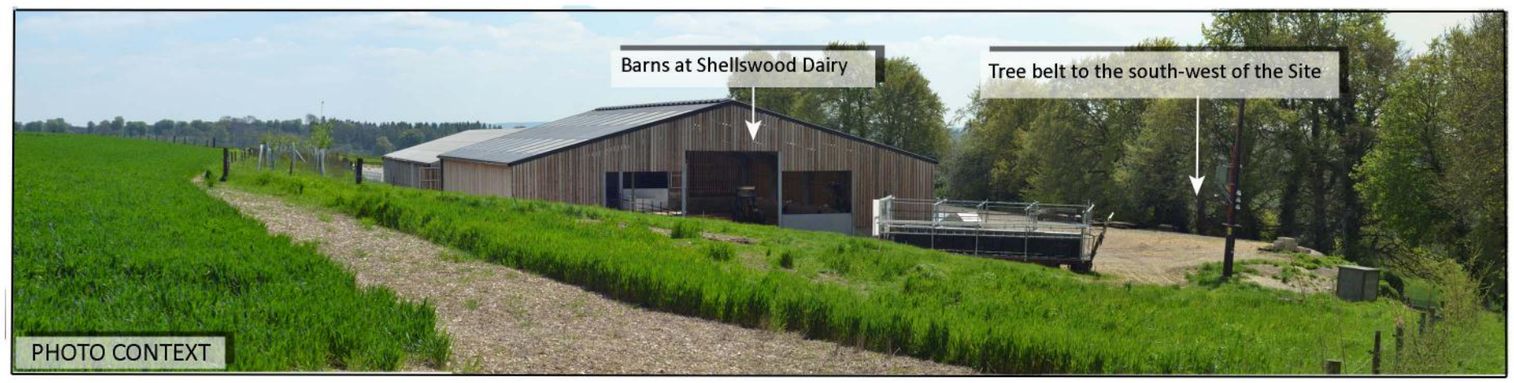
Viewpoint 8 From a PRoW at 250m north-west of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28653 73631

Approximate extent of the Site (partially behind barns)

Recent tree planting





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 8

Date: June 2023

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Viewpoint 9 From a PRoW at 420m north of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28653 73631

Approximate extent of the Site (partially below intervening ridge)

Barns at Shellswood Dairy

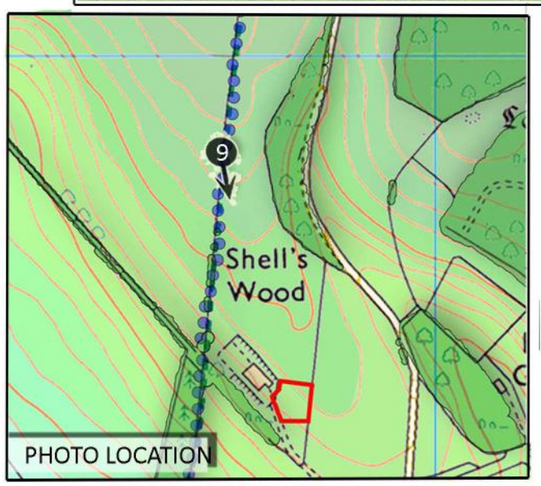

PHOTO LOCATION



PHOTO CONTEXT

Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 9

Date: June 2023

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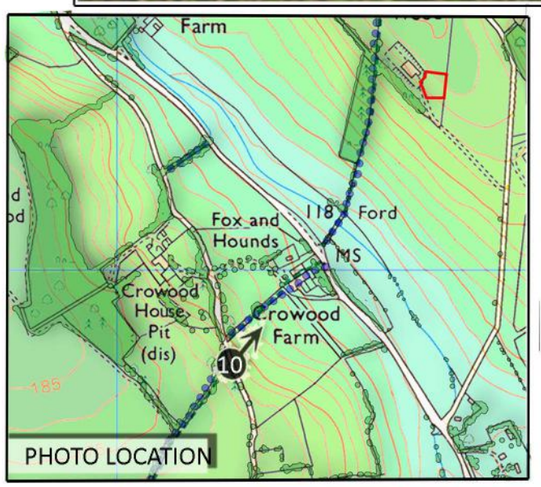
Viewpoint 10 From a lane on the western valley side at 850m south-west of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28296 72765

Barns at Shellswood Dairy (largely screened by tree belt)

Approximate extent of the Site (largely behind tree belt)





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 10

Date: June 2023

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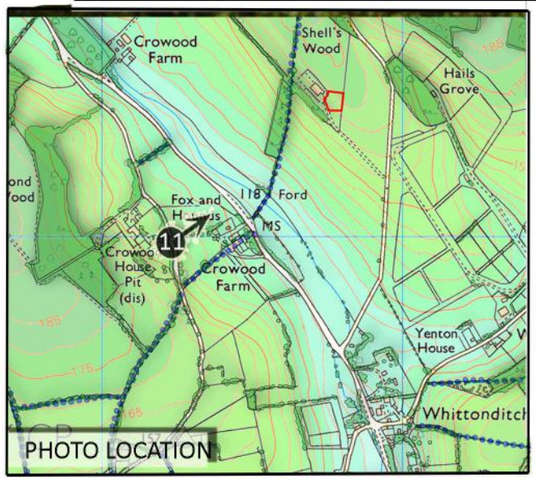
Viewpoint 11 From a lane on the western valley side at 700m south-west of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 28232 73017

Barns at Shellswood Dairy (largely screened by tree belt)

Approximate extent of the Site (behind tree belt)





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 11

Date: June 2023

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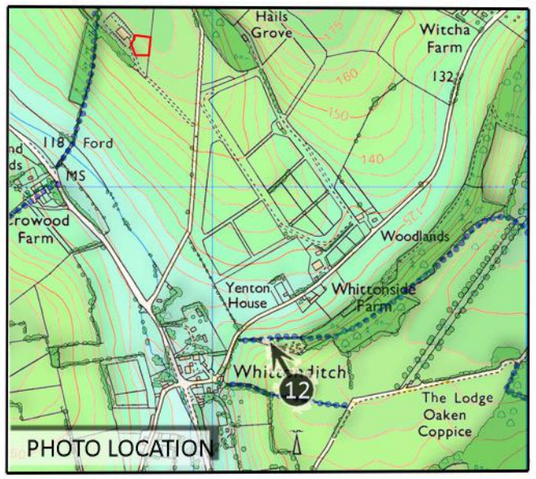
Viewpoint 12 From a PRoW at 1.2km south-east of the Site

Date: 12th May 2023. OS Grid reference: SU 29269 72341







Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 12

Date: June 2023

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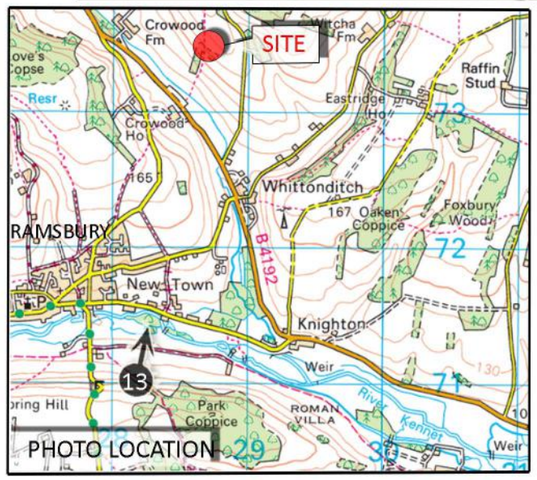
Viewpoint 13 From a PRoW on the southern valley side of the River Kennet at 2.5km south of the Site

Date: 23rd September 2021. OS Grid reference: SU 28251 71001

Partial views of the rooflines of barns at Shellswood Dairy

Site location

Lane to the east of the Site





Camera - Nikon D3100 DSLR - 50mm fixed focal lens. Sheet size A3 landscape.
Visualisation type 1. Full frame single image 390 x 260mm & context panorama.

Client:
David Brown

Site:
Shellswood Dairy, Wittonditch

Drawing:
Photosheet 13

Date: June 2023

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APPENDIX 3

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT - METHODOLOGY

1. LVIA

The LVIA methodology is based on the principles outlined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – 3rd Edition (April 2013) which is widely accepted as the industry standard, together with the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland - (2002) Countryside Agency / Scottish Natural Heritage and the Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment - (2011) Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment. The LVIA report covers:

- Evaluation of the existing landscape character, designation and visual baseline and based on this, identification of potential landscape and visual receptors within the study area;
- Evaluation of the sensitivity of potential landscape and visual receptors;
- Evaluation of the magnitude and nature of likely changes resulting from the proposals;
- Conclusion on the overall effects of the proposals on the landscape character and key views within the study area.

2. Landscape Elements and Character Assessment Methodology

A baseline landscape assessment was carried out to determine the current elements and character of the landscape within and surrounding the site. This involved an initial desktop study of:

- Ordnance survey maps at 1:50,000, 1:25,000, 1:10,000 scales
- Aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area
- Datasets for rural designations from the MAGIC website (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)
- Published relevant planning policies
- National and local scale landscape character assessments
- Historic England online map of listed buildings and parks
- Public rights of way mapping online

3. Visual Assessment Methodology

The assessment of visual effects was undertaken on the basis of viewpoint analysis as recommended in best practice guidelines. The viewpoints which are in different directions from the site and are at varying distances and locations were selected to represent a range of views and visual receptor types.

The viewpoints are representational and not exhaustive. They are taken from publicly accessible land and not from any third party, private, land.

The viewpoints were used as the basis for determining the effects of visual receptors within the study area. The viewpoints were photographed at 1.7 metres above the ground level in accordance with the 'Photography and photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' - Landscape institute Advice Note 01/11.

4. Assessment Criteria

The significance of effects is ascertained by cross referencing the sensitivity of the baseline landscape or visual receptor and the magnitude of change as a result of the development.

5. Receptors

Landscape receptors are things, those landscape elements, character areas or designations potentially experiencing a change as a result of the proposals.

Visual receptors are contemporary humans, users of the landscape and residents potentially experiencing a change to their views and visual amenity.

Though intrinsically interrelated, landscape character and visual receptors are therefore considered as separate entities.

Landscape character can be defined as the combination of the inherent physical elements – geology, soils, topography, vegetation and land cover, built form, field pattern, water bodies – and perceived elements – time depth or connection to history, tranquillity, scale, texture, coherence – that make an area of land different to the next. Landscape character receptors are therefore the key components that define an area's overall character, or the areas themselves.

Visual appraisal is related to this in that character is part of what defines a view, but the experience of that view is also influenced by subjective personal values and interpretation, weather, distance, time spent exposed to the view etc. A visual impact therefore needs a viewer to perceive it and those viewers are separate visual receptors.

Essentially landscape character exists whether or not it is seen, as do any impacts upon it e.g. if you clear a glade in an area of dense woodland it's character will change regardless of whether it can be viewed from a public path. If there are no points from which the glade can be viewed the clearance cannot result in a visual impact, if there are the effects on visual receptors should be considered.

6. SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTORS

6.1 Landscape Sensitivity

The judgement of landscape sensitivity varies, can be influenced by subjectivity, and is often based on landscape character. A number of studies have been carried out to identify a common definition, notably a combined commission from Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage concentrating principally on the clarification of landscape character sensitivity building on advice in Landscape Character Assessment Guidance Topic Paper 6i. The Paper does not attempt to define sensitivity instead noting that judging it requires professional judgement based on whether significant characteristics elements of the landscape, and as a result its amenity value, will be lost as a result of the development. It is understood that the revisions will provide a concise definition of landscape character sensitivity that reflects the nature and perception of change to landscape character and is flexible to incorporate the type of development being assessed.

For this assessment, landscape sensitivity is a reflection of a landscape element, designation or character area's condition, value, and location in relation to the proposed development. Table 1 outlines the parameters used to define categories. The assessor should always consider a number of the scenarios given in the table to choose the most appropriate sensitivity rating within the given landscape and site context. Designated areas are considered to be of higher sensitivity due to the public perceptions and often cumulative pressures for change attached to them and should never receive a low sensitivity rating.

The overall consideration for a sensitivity rating should be the amount of change that can be accommodated by a given receptor, without it being devalued or unacceptably changed in the long-term, thereby damaging the overall landscape resource. High sensitivity receptors would either be those in pristine condition, where change would be very obvious and distracting, or those that have already been significantly damaged so that further change would result in the receptor being totally devalued in the long-term removing the option for restoration.

Medium sensitivity would be mainly associated with average receptors of good

condition, with some damage or distraction, but generally still able to accept more change without irreversible damage. Low sensitivity receptors would be for example those in a changing environment, where change is a defining element, those of low quality, where change would lead to improvements or those of good quality and condition, where there is plenty of capacity to accommodate more change without irreversible damage.

This LVIA will reference the published character assessments undertaken by the local authority which can also include an assessment of landscape sensitivity. If this has not been carried out the assessor will draw their own judgement on the landscape sensitivity of the wider character area. But it should be noted that these can cover a larger area which can encompass a range of landscape elements and areas of varying sensitivity, therefore a further assessment of the sensitivity of the local landscape character will also be carried out.

Table 1 Sensitivity of Potential Landscape Receptors	
Sensitivity	**Receptor Category**
High	Only minor changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or no more than moderate changes can be compensated by replacement or substitution, for example: Value may be expressed as a national designated area or may be an element that is rare or in pristine condition. Intact historic landscapes with great time depth and no or very limited modern intrusions. Valuable, but damaged landscapes, where further change would result in complete loss of their integrity and quality (in this scenario high sensitivity is based on the assumption that any further change would result in unacceptable long-term damage to a resource, which makes it highly sensitive to further change, although its condition at the point of assessment may not be favourable). The landscape receptor to be assessed has a small area, where the proposal would affect much or all of that area.
Medium	Minor to moderate changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or moderate changes can be reduced or eliminated by replacement or substitution, for example: Value may be expressed through a regional or local designation or element that is in good condition and occurs relatively frequently within the landscape context. Good quality landscapes with preserved integrity, but modern influences apparent. The landscape receptor to be assessed has a medium sized area significantly exceeding that of the proposal area so that any change would not affect the whole landscape receptor.

Low	Moderate to substantial changes can be accommodated without impact on value and / or loss of character or substantial changes can be reduced by replacement or substitution, for example: There is no value defined through designations or clear local use or definition and the receptor does not display specifically valuable properties within the context of the wider landscape area. The landscape receptor is devalued already through character changes etc and restoration is not an option. Proposals would contribute to improvements of the receptor. The receptor is of such a large area that a change would only affect a minor part of that area without any consequence for the remainder of the receptor area and it is not a nationally or regionally designated area. The receptor has plenty of capacity to accommodate change, for example plenty of key elements and features are present so that the loss of a minor percentage would not be significant and can be replaced or visual characteristics can be successfully retained and improved.

6.2 Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is a reflection of a combination of the receptor's type, the context within which the view is perceived and the importance of the view.

Visual sensitivity should be assessed in both terms of the susceptibility to change and also the value attached to a particular view. Susceptibility of a view to change is mainly a function of the occupation or activities of people as a particular location and the extent to which their interests may be focussed on the view or the visual amenity experienced. Landscape value is a judgement made about value given to views. i.e. does the view have any particular heritage value (such as a planning designation where views are considered as integral to its value) or does the view have any other value such as appearance in literature, art or guide books. Sensitivity is inherent to the receptor and not influenced by weather conditions, distance etc. Factors like prevailing weather, distance and extent of the view are reflected in the magnitude assessment for each receptor. Table 2 outlines the general parameters and categories used for this appraisal.

The tables below are not exhaustive but are representative of a range of common visual receptors.

Table 2 Sensitivity of Potential Visual Receptors by Type

Sensitivity	Receptor Category
High ↓	Visitors to nationally designated areas of public and private open space where landscape appreciation is a primary function of their use or where landscape and visual quality is integral to that part of the designated areas value e.g. AONBs, Heritage Coasts, National Parks, etc
	Users of well used or recognised rural PRoW - long distance footpaths and routes with direct view of the development for long sections of path.
	Visitors to designated areas of historical importance such as SAMs, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens where landscape is recognised as an integral to the area's importance.

Table 2 Sensitivity of Potential Visual Receptors by Type	
Sensitivity	Receptor Category
Medium ↓	Visitors to locally designated areas of public and private open space where landscape appreciation is a primary function of their use or where landscape and visual quality is integral to that part of the designated area e.g. AGLVs, Country Parks etc.
	Users of PRoW – national trails, local trails and footpaths with partial or glimpsed views from sections of the path or direct views from short sections of the path.
	Users of rural roads where the surrounding views are an intrinsic part of the appreciation of the route.
	Users of areas of public and private recreational space where landscape is not a primary function of use i.e. sports grounds, golf courses etc.
Low ↓	Users of PRoW associated with highways or local routes the primary function of which is access between two points or users of paths with partial or glimpsed views from short sections of the path.
	Employees.
	Users of fast moving or main roads/motorways/rail.
	Urban areas where built form is prominent in the view.

7. Effects

Landscape effects are described in the GLVIA ‘as effects on the landscape resource in its own rights’. These can include changes as a result of the proposed development to the landscape elements within the site or indirect impacts such as changes to key landscape character elements of the study area, the integrity of landscape designations within the study area or the overall landscape condition of the study area.

Visual effects are described by the GLVIA as ‘effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people’. This includes direct effects on the visual amenity or views available to visual receptors located within publicly accessible areas and residential dwellings resulting from changes to that view as a result of the proposed development such as introduction, removal, obstruction, or modification of elements within the view. The assessment of visual impacts is

informed by the use of a series of viewpoints. The viewpoints are selected to provide a comprehensive range of visual receptors, types and angles of view and distances from the development site. If possible they should represent more than one visual receptor category e.g. locating a viewpoint at the junction between a PRoW/cycleway and road would illustrate the view experienced by road users and pedestrians/cyclists at a point where they are more likely to pause and be more aware of their surroundings and view.

Cumulative impacts are described by the LI as those which result from changes as a result of the proposed development in conjunction with other development, of intervisibility of a range of developments or elements of the proposed development, and of actions that occurred in the past, present or foreseeable future.

8. Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of change is a measure of the level of an effect on potential receptors arising from addition, alteration, or removal of baseline resources as a result of the proposed development and is classed as high, medium, low or negligible. The parameters and categories used for this appraisal are outlined in Table 3. Magnitude is based on professional judgement and determined by a combination of:

- The scale of the change in relation to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition;
- The degree or contrast or integration of any new features or changes in relation to remaining landscape feature, including scale, mass, height, colour etc..
- The nature of the view and the amount of time it will be experienced and whether the view will be direct, full, full partial or glimpsed.
- The duration and reversibility of the change.

The magnitude of change of potential impacts on visual receptors is assessed through a process of analysing the change in the visual envelope of the existing site. This assessment is informed by the photo record (Appendix 2).

In addition to nature, scale, and duration of the change, the magnitude of change to visual receptors takes into account the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development as this will determine visibility of the site, its landscape elements and proposed structures and the context in which the view is experienced. It is another

assessment tool which is evaluated for each project based on site location, context and size, as well as the character and scale of proposals.

Table 3 Landscape and Visual Effects Magnitudes

Magnitude of Change – landscape		Magnitude of Change –Visual
Total loss of or major alteration to key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	HIGH ↓	Proposals form a significant and immediately apparent part of the view with often long-term and irreversible changes to its overall character. Often associated with close distance or direct and open views.
Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	MEDIUM ↓	Proposals form a visible and recognisable new element within the overall view which are readily noticed by the observer or receptor. Often associated with middle distance or partial views and often possible to mitigate.
Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	LOW ↓	Proposals constitute a minor component of the wider view, which might be missed by the casual observer or receptor. Often associated with long-distance or glimpsed views or can be short-term, reversible effects.

Table 3 Landscape and Visual Effects Magnitudes		
Magnitude of Change – landscape		Magnitude of Change –Visual
Very minor, localised, loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics identified in the baseline study	NEGLIGIBLE ↓	Proposals constitute such a minor component of the view as to only be visible when deliberately sought out and not casually perceptible, or are severely restricted so that proposals can be barely perceived. Can be associated with any distance from site, usually middle to long.
No loss or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline (pre-development landscape) and / or no introduction of new elements / features / characteristics	NO CHANGE NB: this level is normally scoped out in the baseline and not carried forward to the assessment	No part of the development, or work or activity associated with it, is discernible or they are at such a distance that they are scarcely appreciated

9. Assessment of Effects

An effect is the result of an impact at a certain magnitude combined with the sensitivity of a receptor. For example, a moderate magnitude impact on a low sensitivity receptor may be considered differently to such an impact affecting a high sensitivity receptor.

10. Degree of Effect

The degree of effect of the proposed development on potential landscape and visual receptors is measured as a combination of receptor sensitivity and magnitude of change using the matrix in the table below.

Whilst degree of effect is determined for any project, a consideration of a significance threshold is only applicable to projects falling under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations in accordance with the Town and country Planning

Act and the European Union Directive 2011/92/EU. This project was not subject to EIA Regulations.

Table 4 Degree and Significance of Effects				
		Sensitivity		
		High	Medium	Low
Magnitude	High	Substantial	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate
	Medium	Moderate/Substantial	Moderate	Slight
	Low	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	Negligible	Slight	Negligible	Negligible

11. Nature of Effects

Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies if they exist. Changes involving the addition of built form in the landscape are typically considered to be adverse unless otherwise stated within the assessment.

Visual effects are more subjective as the human perception of development can vary considerably from negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects as a result of the introduction of new built form are adverse, thus representing the worst case scenario.

12. Mitigation and Enhancement

For certain adverse / negative impacts it may be possible to identify mitigation measures to reduce the magnitude of change and consequently lower the overall (residual) level of effect. ‘Mitigation’ refers to measures which are proposed to avoid, prevent, reduce or where possible offset or remedy any significant adverse / negative effects. Potentially significant effects identified during the design process have been prevented or reduced through design changes and embedded mitigation prior to the LVIA assessments.

The identification of additional mitigation measures in order to avoid, reduce, manage or compensate potential significant effects identified have been outlined within the LVIA.

Enhancement goes beyond mitigation of adverse landscape and visual effects such as proposals that seek to improve the landscape and / or visual amenity of the proposed development and its wider setting beyond its baseline condition. In practice enhancement is not specifically related to mitigation of adverse landscape and visual effects but means any proposals that seek to improve the landscape and / or visual amenity of the proposed development site and its wider setting beyond its baseline condition. The Indicative landscape mitigation and enhancement plan in the LVIA outlines the proposed enhancements alongside the landscape and visual mitigation proposals.