Clatford Hall, Marlborough, Wiltshire

For Rym El Asmar

Landscape Statement

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Portus + Whitton
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1.

Appraisal

Introduction

This application relates to an existing complex of agricultural buildings associated with Clatford Hall. The proposal is to convert the existing redundant agricultural / equestrian barns into a cookery school with three guest cottages. It is proposed that when the Cookery school is in use, one of the cottages may be used by a travelling chef and as such would not be full time usage as a permanent dwelling

To assess the impact of the proposed changes to the character of the landscape and the visual impact of the buildings, Portus + Whitton have been appointed to review the impact of the new building and the removal of the steel barn.

Site Location, Designations and Planning Guidelines

The site lies approximately 3 km west of Marlborough and approximately 100 metres south of the River Kennet. It is part of a wider farmstead of barns and yards that are associated with Clatford Hall, a Grade II* Listed building. The Gate Piers, to the south east corner of the application site, are also listed as Grade II. See Fig 1 for site location.

In terms of designations, the site is located within the North Wessex AONB. As part of their landscape assessment documentation, the landscape is divided into Character Areas, each defined by type. In a similar manner, Wilshire County have also assessed the Landscape Character. Within the constraints of graphic map quality, in both cases, the application site lies on the cusp and within the river valley designations. This is judged to be Area 5A (see Fig.2 for location) in the case of the Wiltshire LCA and area 7A in the case of the AONB LCA. The relevant characteristics are described as follows:

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment and Broad Management Objectives - Type 5

Type 5 Key Characteristics:

- Strongly enclosed valleys with an intimate scale contrasting with the surrounding open upland landscape.
- Level, often narrow valley floors with relatively steep sides.

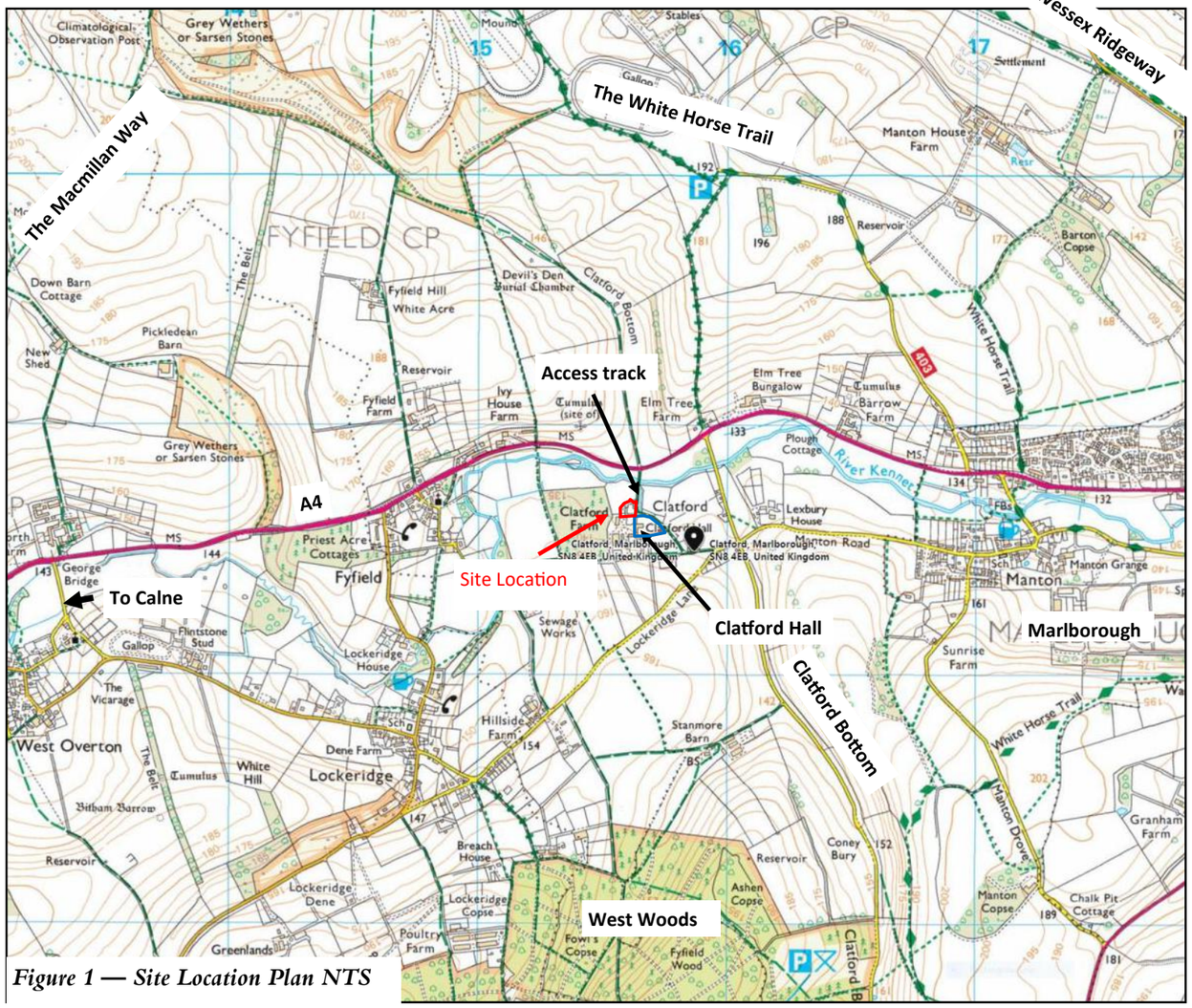
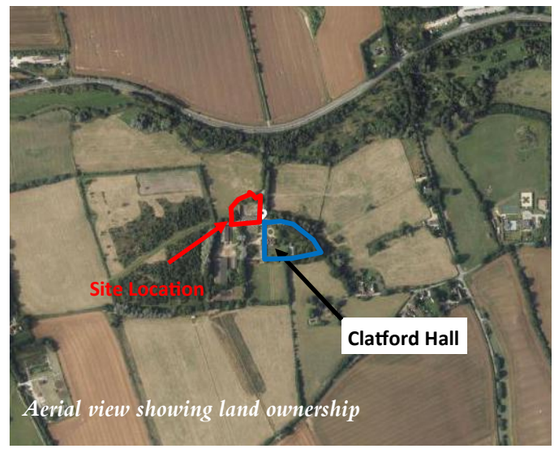


Figure 1 — Site Location Plan NTS



View from a field gate looking south west towards the application site



Aerial view showing land ownership

- Pastoral land use along the valley floor with small scale fields contrasts with arable farmland on the valley sides with medium to large geometric fields.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valleys.
- Riparian woodlands, lines of poplar along ditches and willow pollards.
- Diverse mosaic of land cover and habitats includes meadows, fen and wet woodland on valley floor.
- Clear fast flowing chalk rivers and streams a key habitat.
- Valleys contain a concentration of settlement in contrast to the adjacent unsettled downs.
- Many long established villages, sited along the spring line and built of a rich variety of vernacular materials.
- Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, Bronze Age round barrows and water meadow channels on the valley floor contribute to the visible archaeology.
- Valley used as transport corridors with major roads and railway lines along valley sides.
- Rural landscape sometimes interrupted by the large volume of traffic.

5A: Kennet Chalk River Valley

- The Kennet Valley Chalk River Valley has relatively steep sides and a narrow valley floor, providing a strong sense of enclosure.
- Alluvium and gravel deposits line the valley floor which is dominated by pasture while the valley sides are generally under arable cultivation.
- The valley has a varied and attractive landscape with tracts of lush floodplain pasture, marsh and reedbeds, lines of willow pollards and poplars plus hedgerows enclosing the fields and stands of regenerating alder, birch and oak along the river banks
- It is well wooded, with sinuous belts of woodland lining the valley sides and some larger broadleaved woodland blocks on the valley floor particularly in the east. Further diversity is provided by the historic parklands, which include Ramsbury Manor and Chilton Foliat.
- The River Kennet is an important chalk river habitat and designated as a SSSI. The rich biodiversity of the floodplain is reflected in its status (with the floodplain of the River Lambourn) as an SAC.
- Providing a main east-west communications corridor, the route of the A4 road follows the valley west of Marlborough. Elsewhere minor roads follow the lower valley sides. Settlements, from manor houses and hamlets to the market town of Marlborough include those of Saxon and Medieval origins

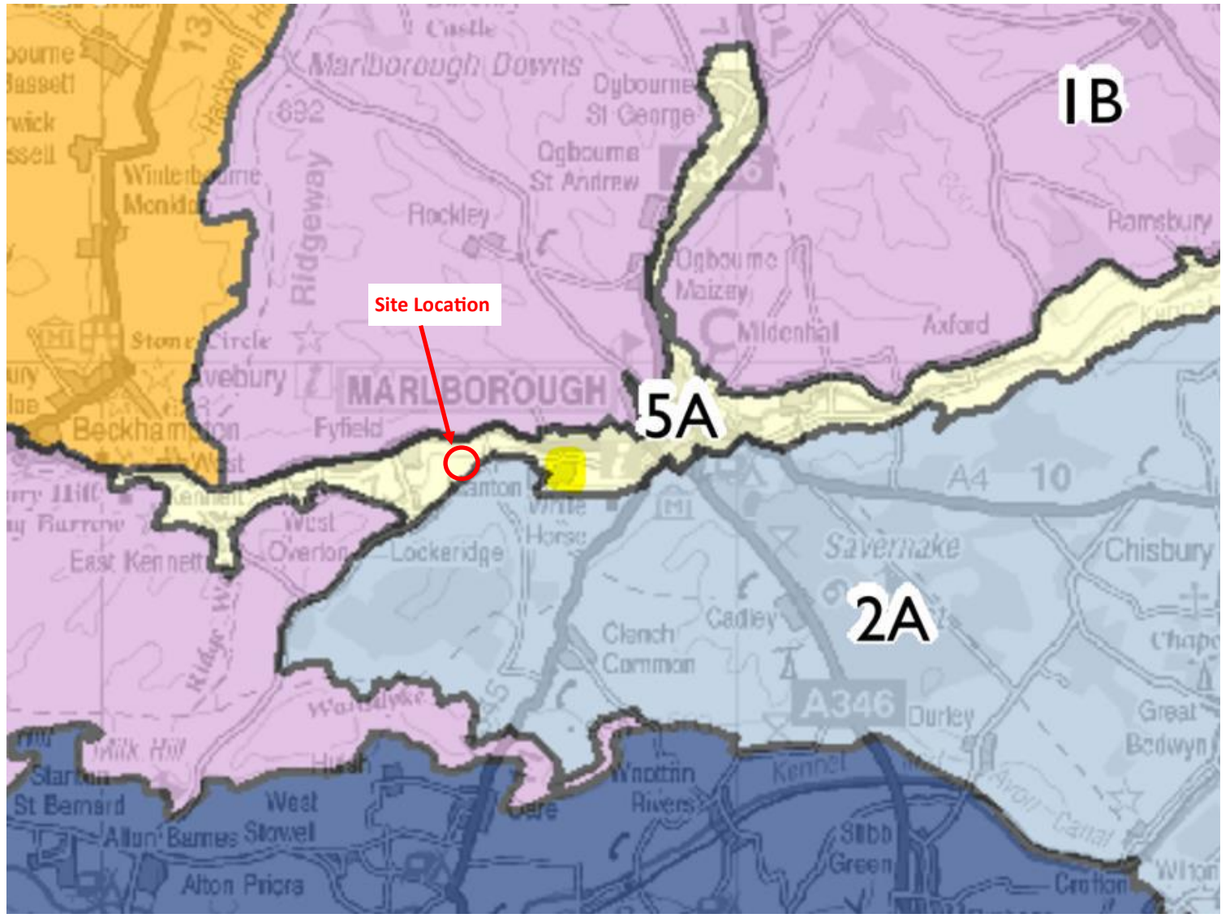


Figure 2 — Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment Map NTS

- Building materials generally reflect the local geology, with brick/flint and clay tile dominating east of Marlborough, and sarsen stone and brick dominating to the west. Mills and churches are distinctive built features within the valley. In the upper reaches of the river, archaeological monuments associated with Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) including The Sanctuary stone circle, are a prominent feature.

Broad management objectives

- Consider opportunities for re-planting hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have been lost. In particular, the comparatively dense structure of willows, poplars and other moisture loving trees should be retained along field boundaries and the course of the river.
- Identify, conserve and restore remnant water meadow systems that are an important historic landscape feature - and consider opportunities for reinstatement of traditional management techniques.

- Identify, conserve and consider opportunities for reconnecting and recreating wetland habitats such as wet woodland, fen, marsh and swamp.
- Resist excessive signage associated with new development along the trunk roads and maintain a sense of landscape scale when planning new road junctions - junctions that are too large will disrupt visual unity along the valleys.
- Monitor road engineering to safeguard the rural character of the lanes.
- Conserve the pattern of tight knit villages, maintaining the physical and visual gap between them.
- Consider developing guidance for built development to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings are designed to integrate with the existing character and structure of settlements.

North Wessex AONB LCA

7A - Kennet Valley Key Characteristics:

- relatively steep sides and a narrow valley floor providing a strong sense of enclosure in its upper reaches, broadening out to a wider lowland landscape east of Hungerford.
- valley floor dominated by pasture, although east of Hungerford pasture is intermixed with arable fields. Valleys sides are generally under arable cultivation.
- diverse vegetation including lush floodplain pasture, marsh and reedbeds, lines of willow pollards and poplars.
- varied field pattern including some small fields with sinuous boundaries near Overton, which may date to Saxon enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows.
- remnants of valley floor floated water meadows.
- historic parklands, based on medieval sites, are a particular feature of the middle section of the valley.

- sinuous belts of woodland line the valley sides and some larger broadleaved woodland blocks on the valley floor. More wooded character east of Marlborough.

- an important lowland chalk river - much of the length downstream from Marlborough is designated as a SSSI. Many important wetland and woodland habitats within the wider valley which includes four SSSI.

- many archaeological features, including the Sanctuary (part of the Avebury monument complex). Continuity of settlement e.g. Saxon settlement at Marlborough.
- the Kennet and Avon Canal is a dominant feature merging with the river east of Hungerford and includes industrial archaeological sites (sluices, locks and warehouses etc.) and World War II military structures.
- many attractive settlements of detached houses are located at regular intervals along the whole length of the valley, typically on the south facing side and range from tiny hamlets to the two market towns.
- varied built form reflects the local geology including brick/flint and clay tile dominating the area east of Marlborough, and sarsen stone and brick dominating the west. Mills and churches are a distinctive landmark and feature.
- overall, an intimate, pastoral rural valley character.

Local Plan policies of relevance include those retained from the Kennet Local Plan Saved Policies document, September 2007 and which relate to the protection and enhancement of the landscape and countryside. These are as follows

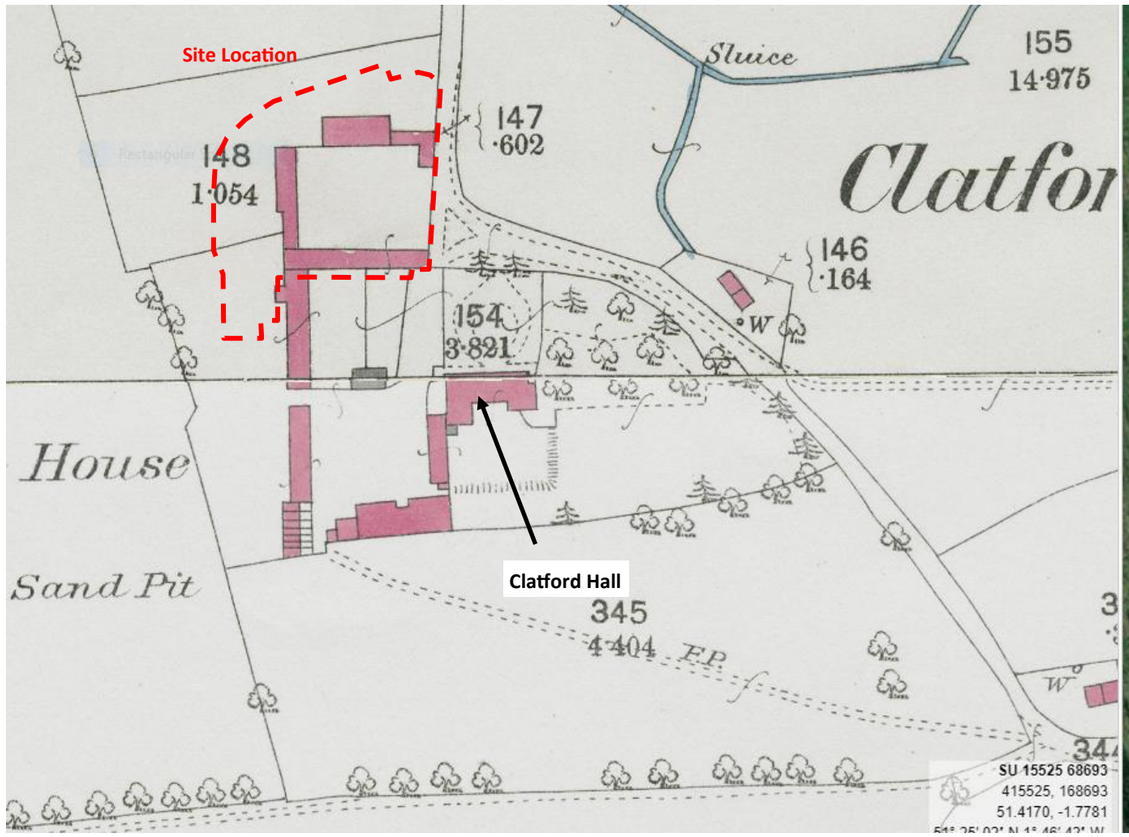
NR6 Sustainability and protection of the countryside. This policy is a fundamental part of the spatial strategy as it defines where housing policies in the rural areas apply to make sure new development is confined within the existing built up area of appropriate settlements. It also defines the area for the application of countryside and landscape protection policies. Without this policy it would be harder to resist peripheral development in villages.

NR7 Protection of the landscape. A fundamental policy to protect the distinctive landscape character of the district. It is supported by a landscape character assessment to help implement the policy. It complements the development strategy.

Historic Map

The following page shows a 25 inch OS Map from the period 1873-1888 (not to scale). This clearly shows the existing courtyard with an additional two buildings to the north boundary of the site, compared to the present day.

The following pages provide photographs of the site with accompanying site location plan



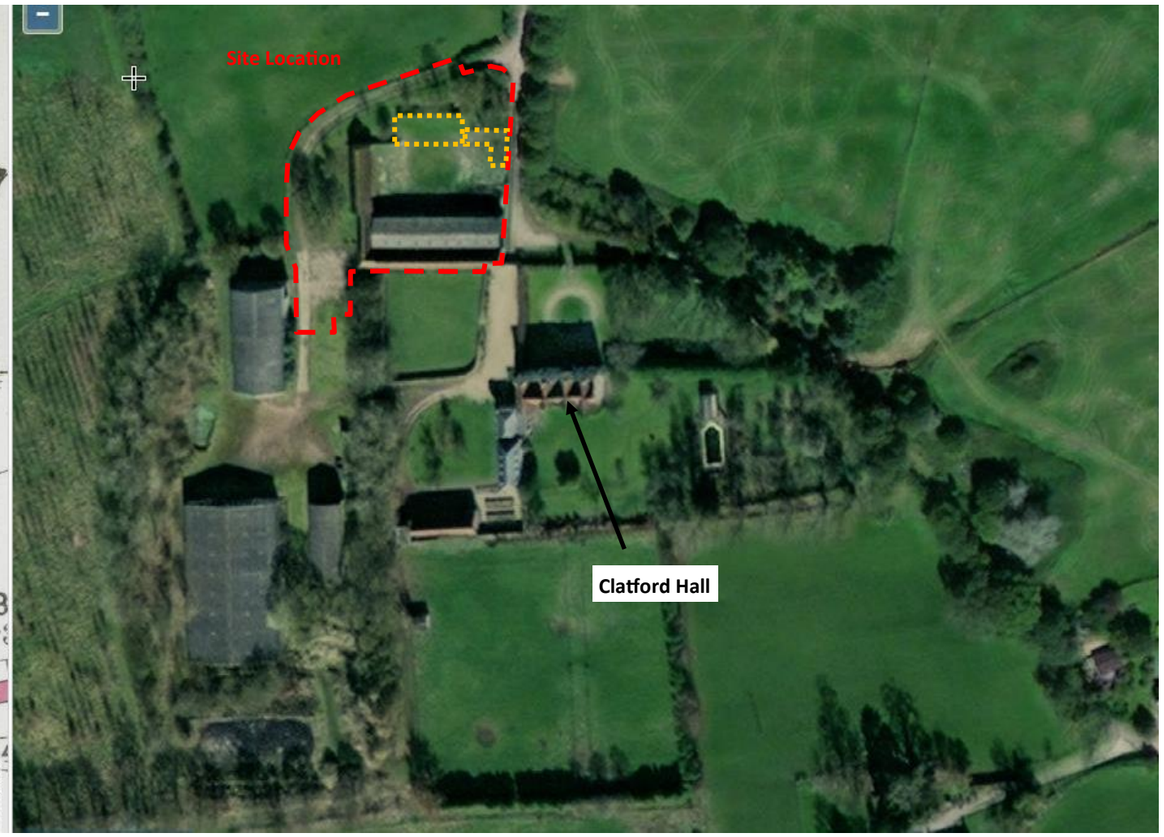


Figure 3 — 25 inch OS Map 1873-1888 and Present Day Aerial Photograph NTS

Site Photographs











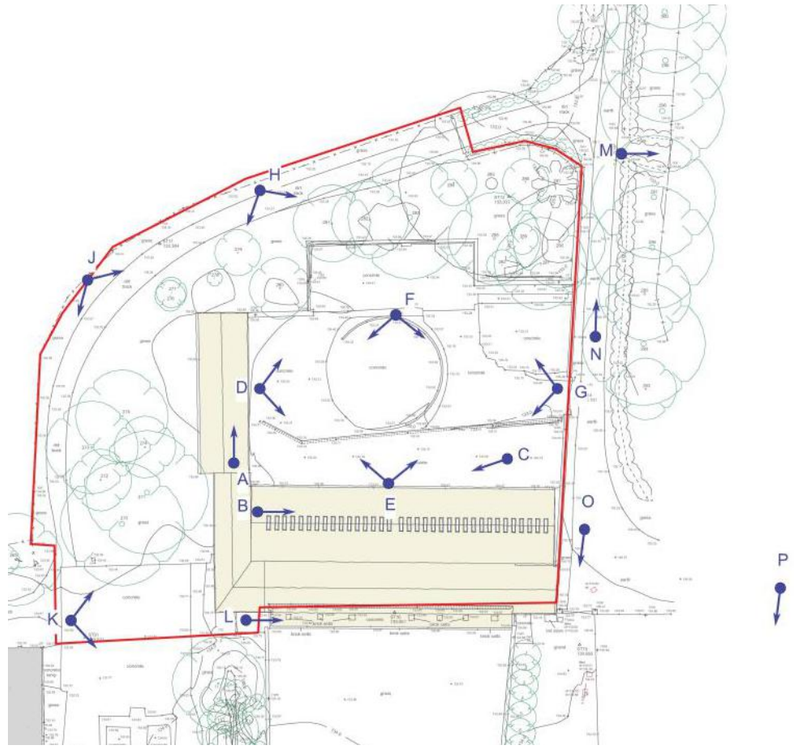


Figure 4 — Application Site Location Plan and On-Site Photo Locations NTS

Site Photographs





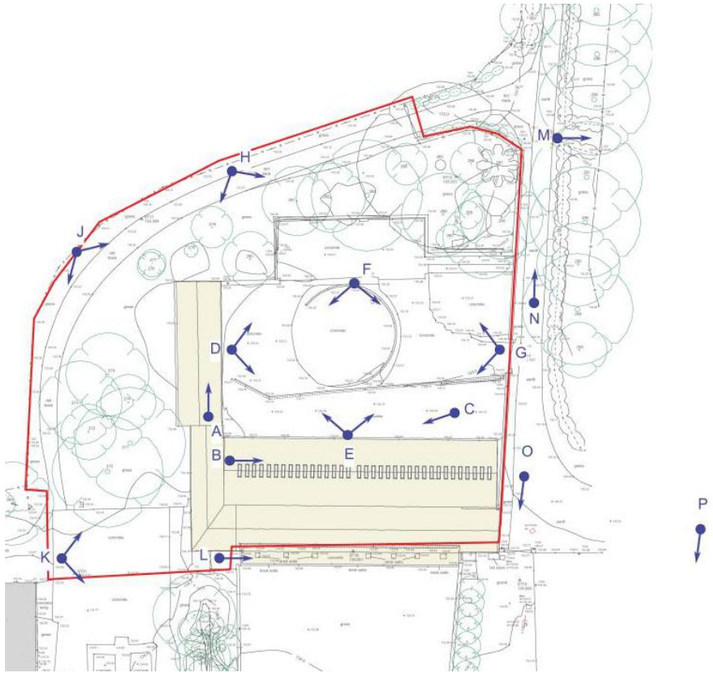
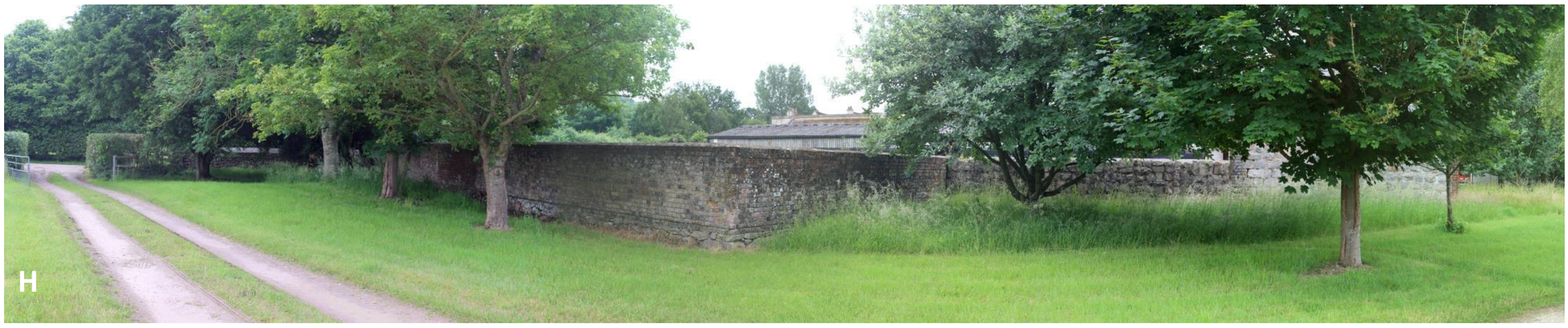


Figure 4 — Application Site Location Plan and On-Site Photo Locations



Site Photographs













2.

Proposals

The Proposed Works

With reference to Fig.5, Fig.6 and Fig.7, building proposals to each boundary of the application site are summarised as follows:

Southern boundary: The courtyard side of the Southern (modern stabling) wing will be re-clad in the same style, out of brickwork with a clay tile roof and simple stable openings. This will form the entrance, with a staff office, store and WC. To the south east corner will be a modest two bedroom holiday let cottage.
The stable openings face south towards the main farmstead and Clatford Hall beyond, looking out onto an enclosed walled garden space. These are retained with new glazing set behind the stable doors. On the north elevation, currently obscured by a steel framed barn, the walls are block construction with corrugated sheet roofing, punctured by the steel legs of the Dutch barn. This elevation is to be rebuilt with brick walls and a pantile roof to match the south elevation. Full length glazed windows are located to correspond with the stable door openings with the original stable doors retained in addition.

Western boundary:

To the west side of the courtyard are the original elements of the barns, At the southern end, the existing sarson stone wing will house the proposed kitchen school. The existing stone walls are retained as are the original window openings. The open sided cart sheds (facing the courtyard), retained at the northern end and are to be converted to two holiday lets. A short section of new track will lead off the main refurbished track to two parking spaces servicing the lets. This will not affect existing trees.

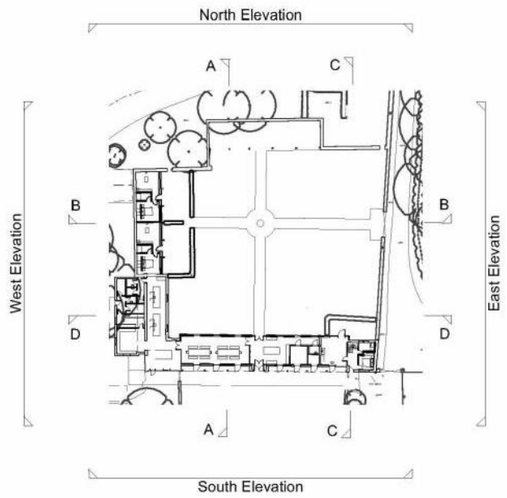
A further extension to the south west corner is also proposed. This will provide accommodation for an additional kitchen, storage and lavatories. The elevations for this will be horizontal timber boarding where, in this discreet location, this material sits appropriately within the hierarchy of structures. This is anticipated to require the removal of two Ash trees. A refurbished access road provides access to this area along with eight parking spaces within the existing yard to the south.



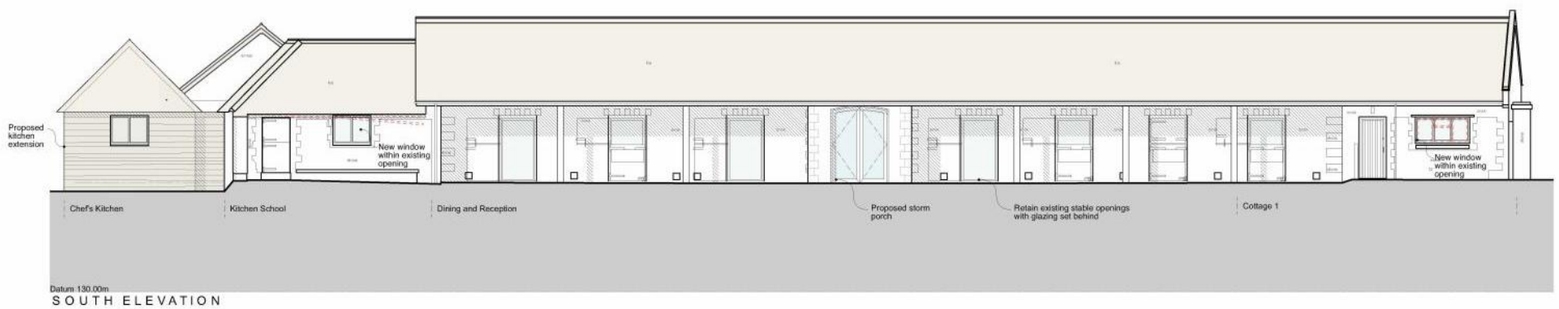
Figure 5 — Architect's Proposed Site Plan NTS

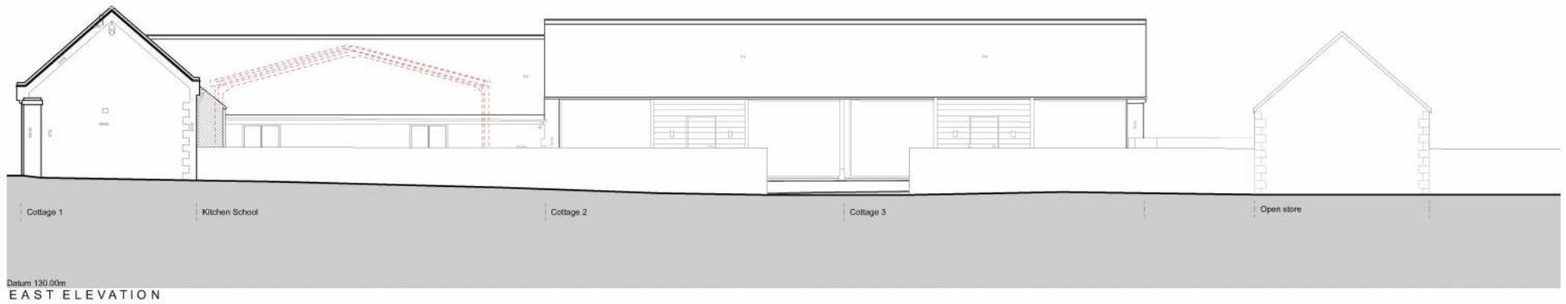
Northern boundary: This boundary is currently defined by a wall comprised of brick for approximately half its length and stone for the remainder. A reinstated open fronted store is proposed which will follow the line of the wall and occupy the same footprint as the former building. The materials are to match the existing retained barns with stone and brick with pantile roofing. The construction of the store will be sensitively managed to ensure no existing trees to the north boundary are effected.

Eastern boundary: This is a stone wall, approximately 1.2 metres high with a twice weathered stone capping detail and is to remain as its current condition.









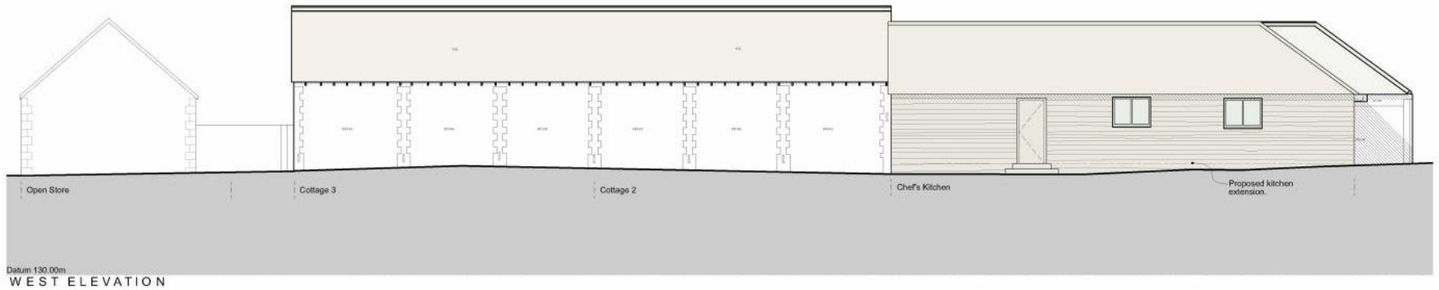
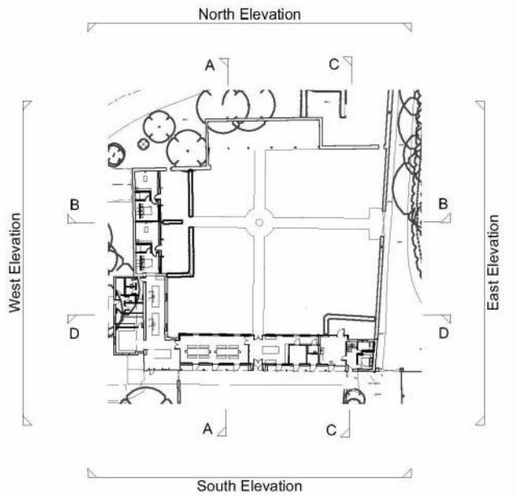
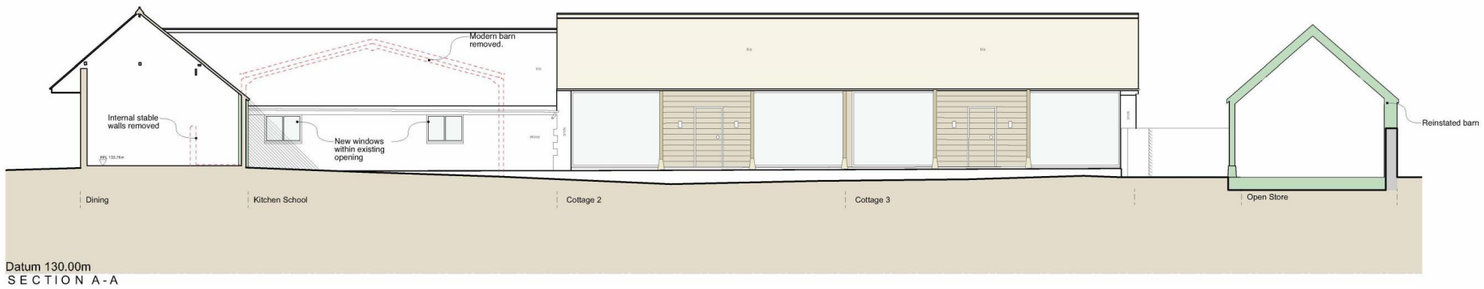
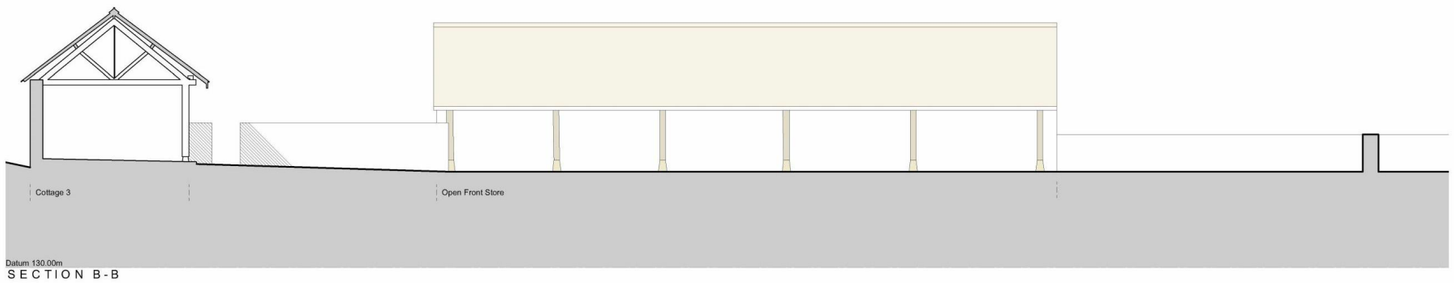


Figure 6— Architect's Elevations NTS

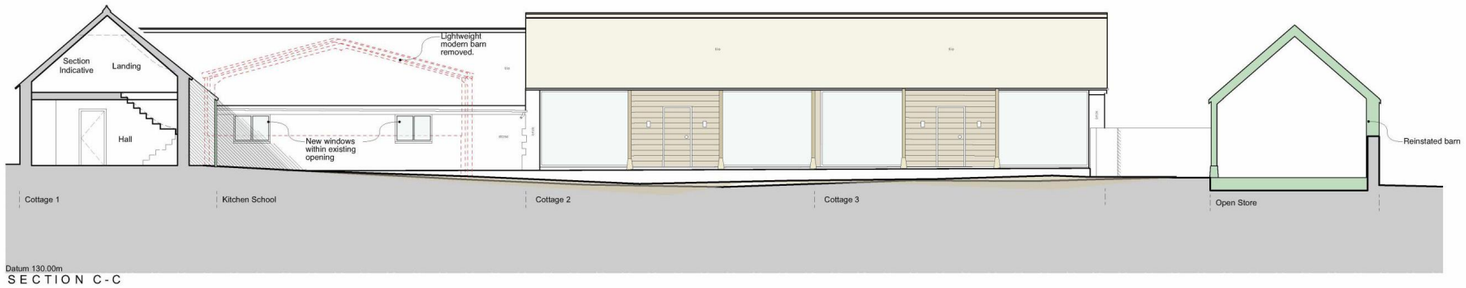




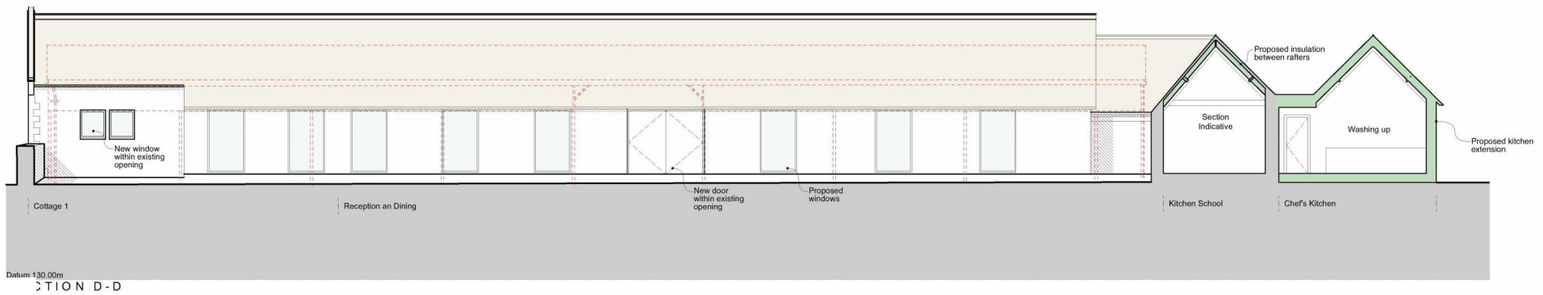
SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B



SECTION C-C



CTION D-D

Figure 7— Architect's Sectional Elevations NTS

Constraints and Opportunities

Constraints:

- Site location on edge of open countryside
- Site location within the Cotswolds AONB
- Landscape potentially sensitive to large-scale development
- Limited points of access and space for parking vehicles
- Bridleway runs down the east boundary of the site
- Several high vantage points with potential views of the site in all directions around the site

Opportunities:

- The development can re-use the good condition existing buildings and structures forming an already established enclosed farmyard courtyard character
- Well screened from surrounding footpaths and bridleways by existing trees and hedges
- Landscape and biodiversity opportunities (fruiting trees, biodiverse lawn)
- A strong landscape character and sense of place (traditional farmstead enclosed courtyard)
- Potential to create local business, leisure and job opportunities
- Potential to remove and/or renovate existing dilapidated sheds and structures
- Potential for new hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting in line with the Wiltshire LCA management objectives
- Potential to safeguard the rural character of the lane leading around the site to the west
- Potential for new buildings designed to integrate with character and structure of existing settlements
- Potential for new buildings to use materials which reflect the local geology (brick, Sarsen Stone, flint and clay tile)
- Potential to enhance the existing tree groups with the introduction of native species more resistant to disease and the removal of those which are likely to be effected in the future, or are of less ecological value and local provenance.

Landscape Strategy

Two separate areas of parking for eight and two vehicles respectively, are included as part of the proposals.

With regard to the 2 spaces, these have been located to the west of the proposed holiday lets leading off the existing track to be upgraded. No existing trees will be effected by the construction of this parking area.

In the case of the eight parking spaces, these are located to the west of the buildings on the site of an existing concrete hard standing. The existing track that provides vehicle access to this area is retained and is proposed to be resurfaced with gravel. In order to safeguard the rural lane character of the area the proposal recommends retaining a central grassed strip along parts of its length as part of the upgrade.

The route of the existing track lies within the root zone of a small clump of trees, six no. in total; two no. Whitebeam and four no. Ash. The existing site conditions indicate that re-surfacing works can be achieved.

With regard to the 4 ash trees, it is anticipated that these are vulnerable to the symptoms of ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus) identified on other specimens nearby. Inevitably, therefore, these trees will not survive and their removal now and subsequent replacement, would be both prudent and in accordance with well established woodland planting principles. As a result of the proposed kitchen extension, 2 ash trees will be required to be removed and in the context of possible pathogen failure, the opportunity will be taken to replace all four ash trees with native deciduous specimens, 3 no. hornbeam and 1 no. lime. These species are in line with the recommendations set out in the Wiltshire LCA Broad Management objectives.

In accordance with the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment management objectives ‘that hedgerows and hedgerow trees add to the lush and enclosed feel of the valleys’ the existing predominantly mixed species hedge will be interplanted with quick thorn and extended along the northern side of the access track with a mixed native species hedge.

The four central fruit trees will be Black Mulberry, Walnut and two no. Bramley Apples.

In total, there are two trees to be removed due to construction, two recommended for removal for sound arboricultural management and nine trees proposed.

Refer to Fig.7 for the Landscape Strategy.

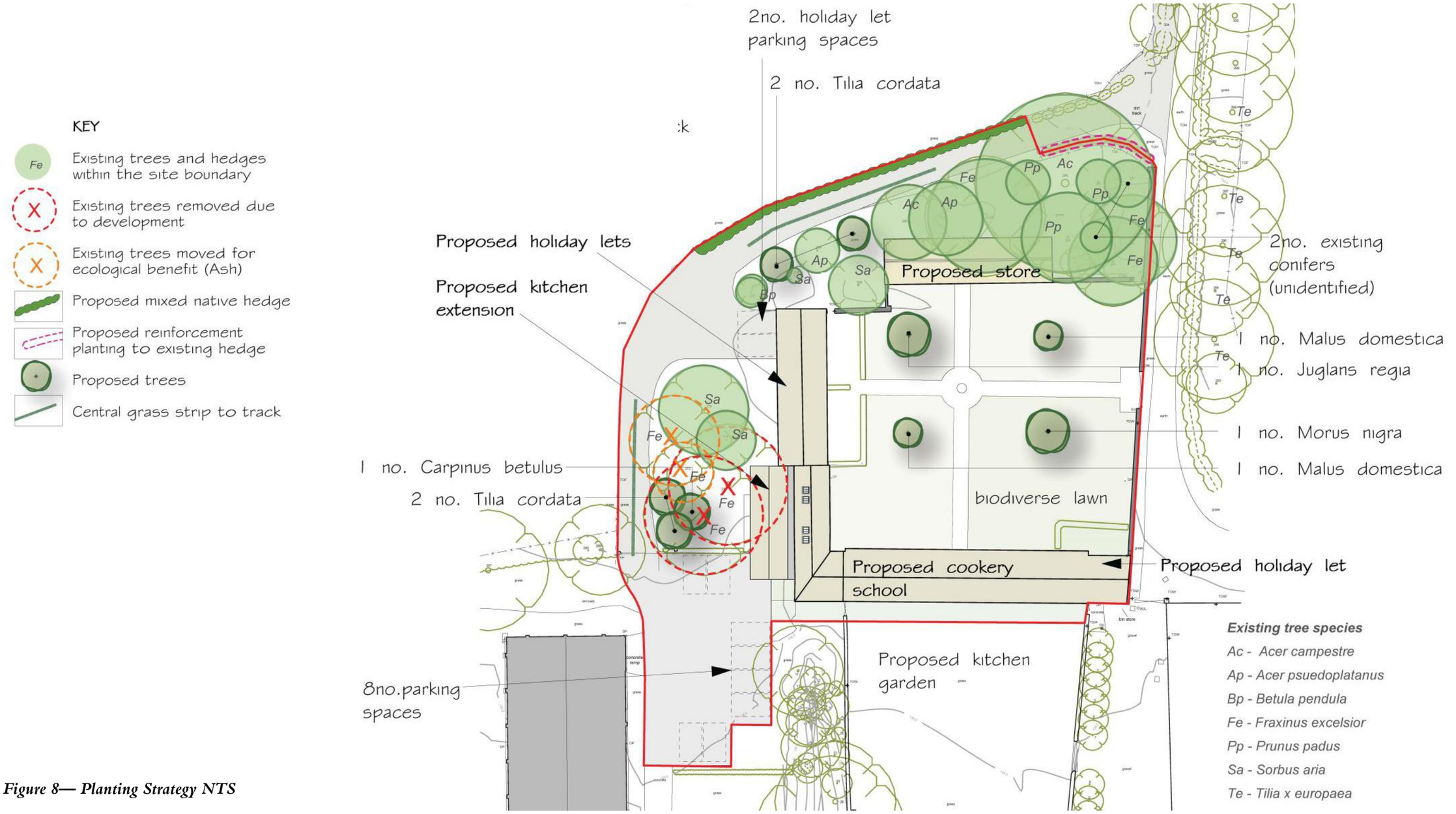


Figure 8— Planting Strategy NTS

3.

Landscape impact

Landscape Character and Visual Impact

The key issues arising are the degree to which the proposed development would be visible when compared with the existing built development, whether it would be in scale and in keeping with its setting, and the degree to which the site and its setting will be harmed or enhanced.

While there are clear views of the application site, these are essentially restricted to the bridleway that lies immediately to the east. From this close viewpoint, the proposal to remove the incongruous steel frame barn will have a positive impact by restoring the proportions and spatial qualities of a traditional courtyard space. Restoring the existing stables and developing additional buildings, sympathetically designed to complete a third boundary will contribute positively to the character of the space and create an appropriate sense of enclosure.

The use of brick and stone for the proposed building will be complementary to the existing retained buildings on the south and west boundaries. Also, in a similar manner to the existing buildings, the new building will have a stepped building line and variations in ridge and eave height.

Views from public footpaths of the proposed changes are assessed in three groups, categorised by distance. These are summarised as follows:

Close proximity viewpoints from the public footpath. Approximately 10-40 metres from the application site, ***numbered 1 to 4*** in the photo sheets.

These view points are restricted to the public footpath and bridleway that follows the track located immediately to the east of the application site. These viewpoints, offer clear and open views of the application site, the removal of the existing barn, the refurbished stable block, the new store to the north and the clump of trees and hedge to the northern boundary. The timber clad extension to the west will not be visible. The impact of change is beneficial in that the removal of the Dutch barn which sits incongruously within the courtyard space will, in itself, be an enhancement. A further significant benefit will be to reveal the existing stable building which is to be refurbished as part of the proposals. The introduction of the new store, sympathetic in scale, character, material and detailed design to the retained buildings, will be beneficial. Further enhancement derives from the removal of the broken courtyard concrete surface to lawns and the introduction of specimen fruit trees to define each quarter of the space.

As the footpath runs north, it crosses the river Kennett and the A4, before giving access to Clatford Bottom. When traveling southwards, from the river, views of the north elevation of the new store will be restricted by the existing and, in time, proposed hedge. There are no windows, doors or skylights proposed to the north elevations of the store or the gable ends of the cottages and kitchen which could present visual impacts of illumination at night.

Because of the beneficial impacts these viewpoints imbue, no screening is proposed from the footpath as views of the building and its setting are assessed as a positive enhancement. The existing hedge to the north boundary is to be enhanced with additional planting which will offer a more dense screen once established.

Medium distance viewpoints from public viewpoints. Approximately 400 metres from the application site, ***numbered 5 to 8*** in the photo sheets.

As a result of the existing vegetation and existing built form, the removal of the barn and the new development to the north and west will be completely screened by the existing tree cover and mature hedgerows. The removal of the four Ash trees will have a negligible impact on the mature treescape.

Long-distance views. These are viewpoints which are approximately 1 to 1.5 km from the site and are shown in the photo sheets ***numbers 9– 13.***

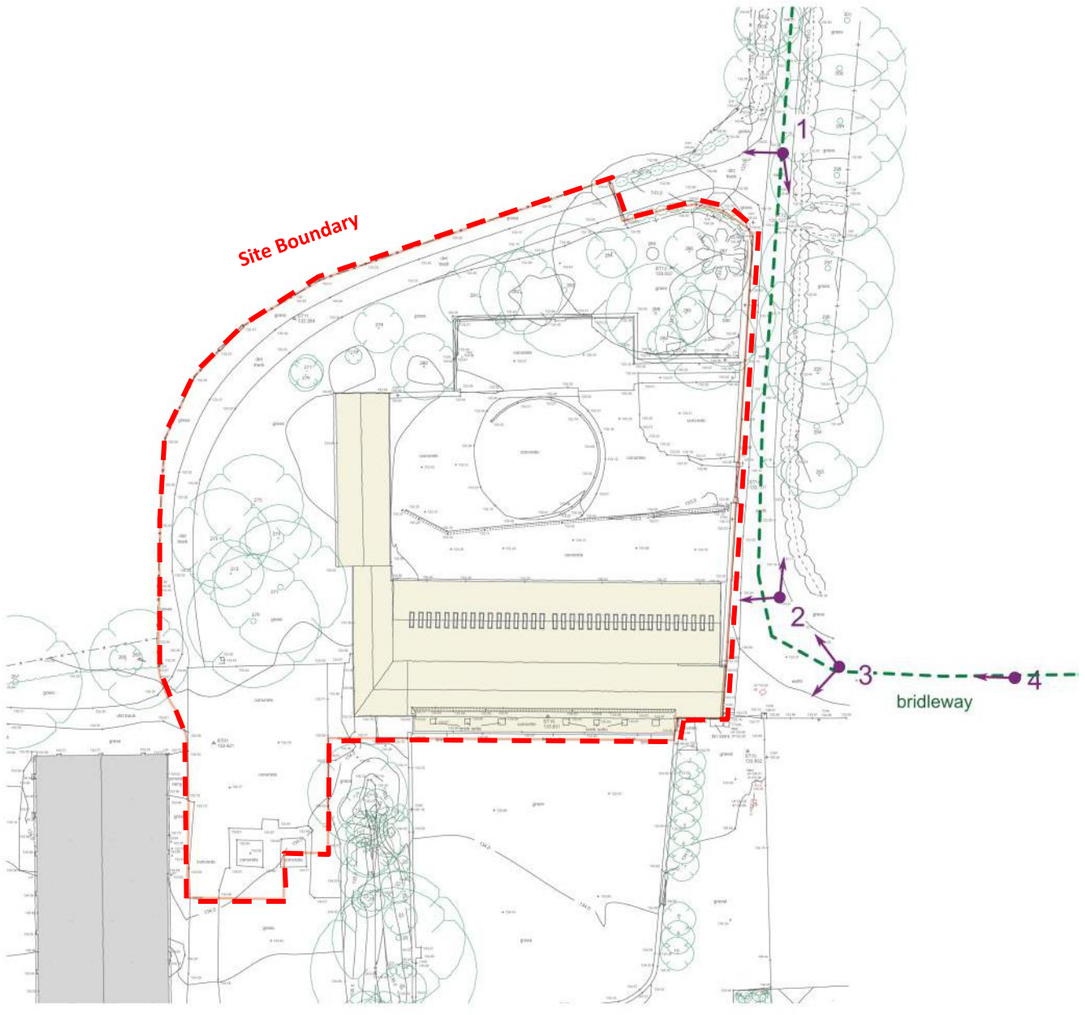
As with the previous panoramas, the changes to the building form are completely screened and changes to the treescape are of negligible impact.

Listed buildings.

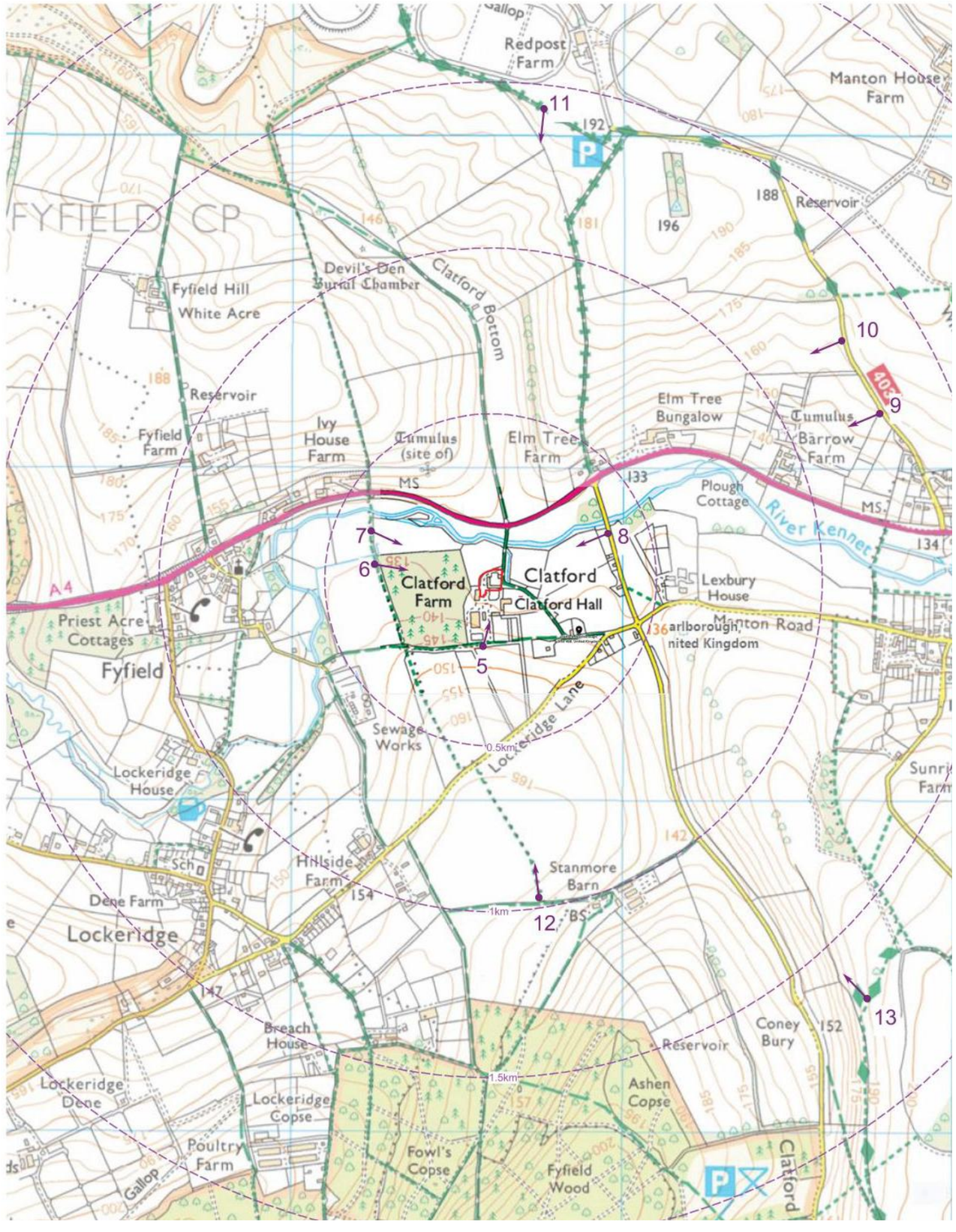
Clatford Hall, Grade II* Listed building. As a result of the upper windows on the north elevation of the building being infilled, intervisible views to and from the Hall to the application site are not possible.

The Gate Piers, which are located to the south east corner of the application site, are also listed as Grade II. These are located immediately next to the existing stables and the Dutch barn. The proposed refurbishment of this building will be beneficial to the setting of the piers.

Viewpoint Photographs

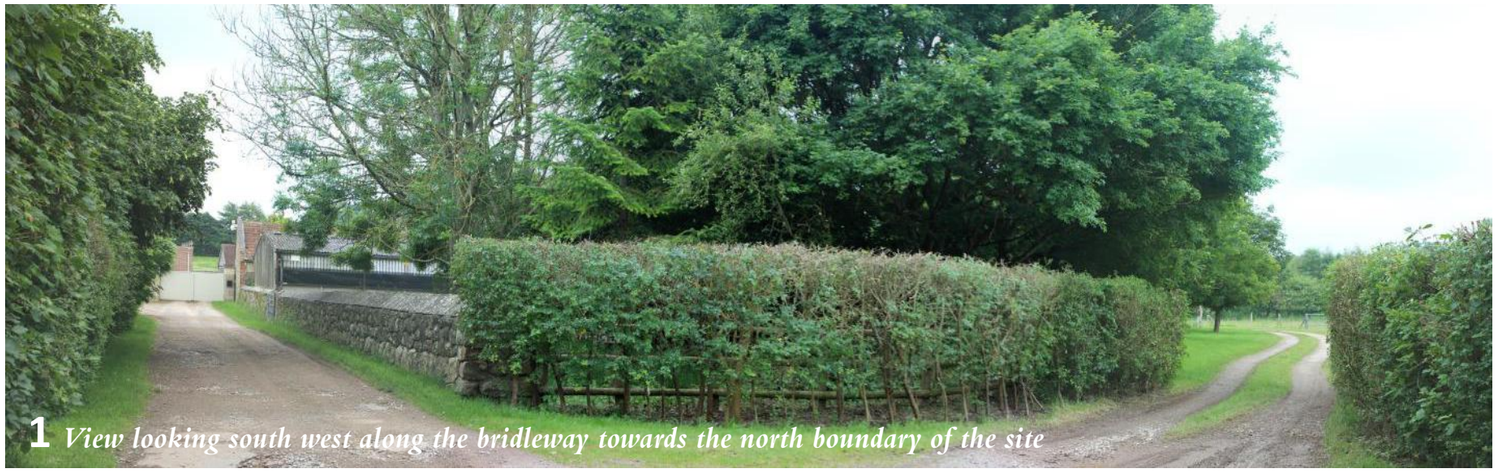


^ *Figure 9 — Viewpoint Location Plan - Site NTS*



> *Figure 10 —Viewpoint Location Plan - Wider Area NTS*

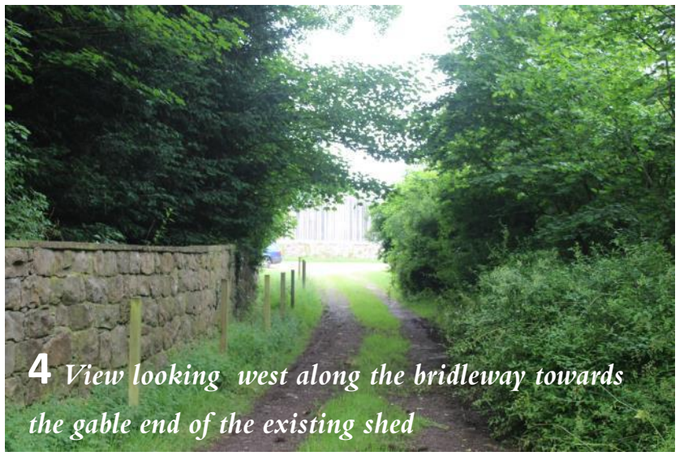
Viewpoint Photographs



1 *View looking south west along the bridleway towards the north boundary of the site*



2 *View looking north west from the bridleway towards the east boundary of the site*

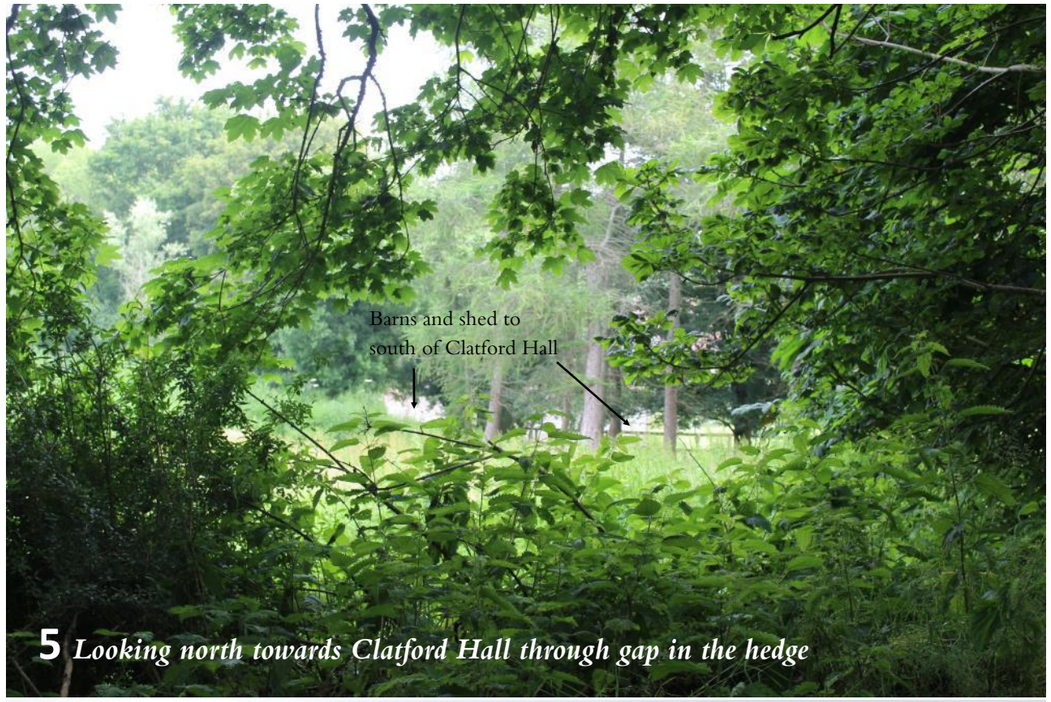


4 *View looking west along the bridleway towards the gable end of the existing shed*



3 *View looking west from the bridleway towards the gable end of the existing stable block and shed*

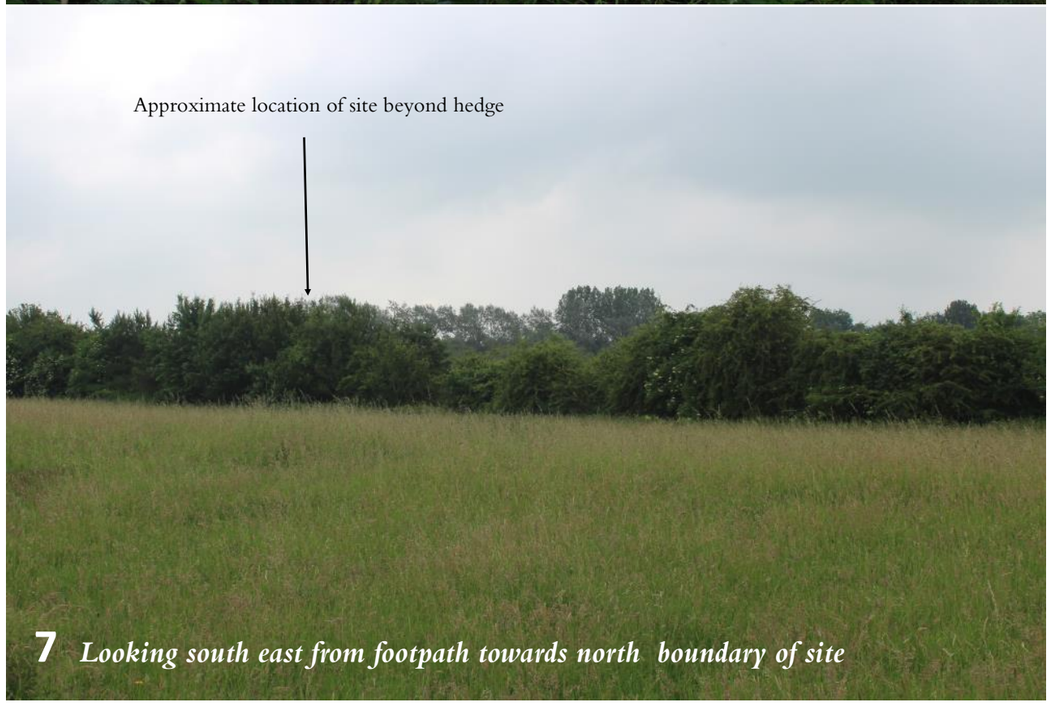
Viewpoint Photographs



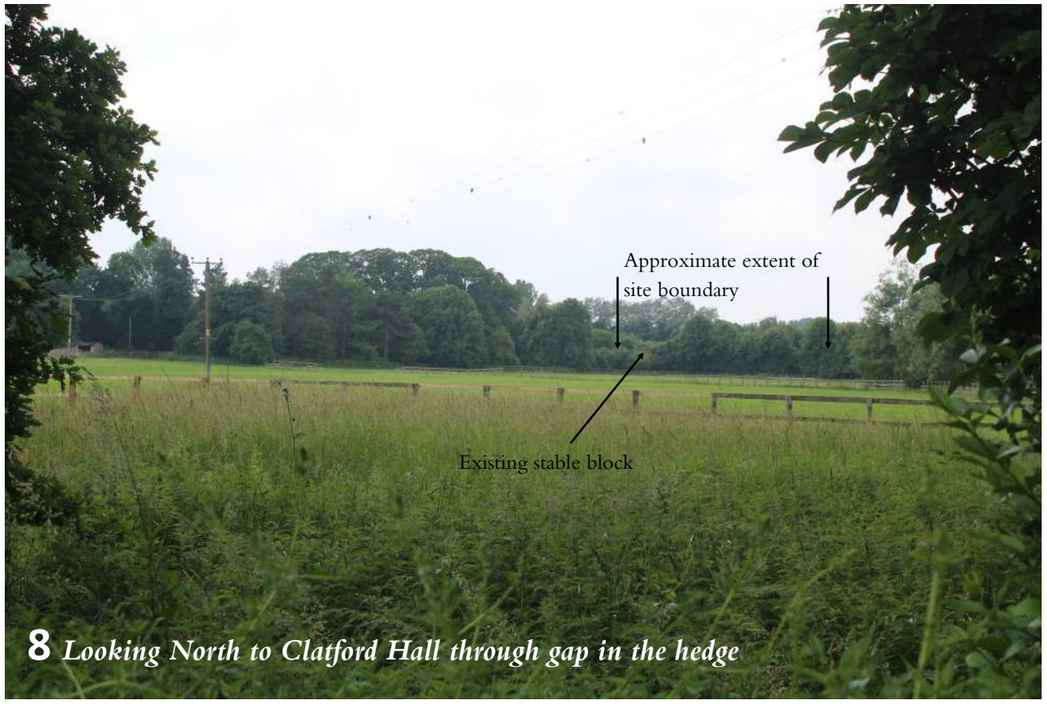
5 *Looking north towards Clatford Hall through gap in the hedge*



6 *Looking east from footpath towards north boundary of site*



7 *Looking south east from footpath towards north boundary of site*



8 *Looking North to Clatford Hall through gap in the hedge*

Viewpoint Photographs



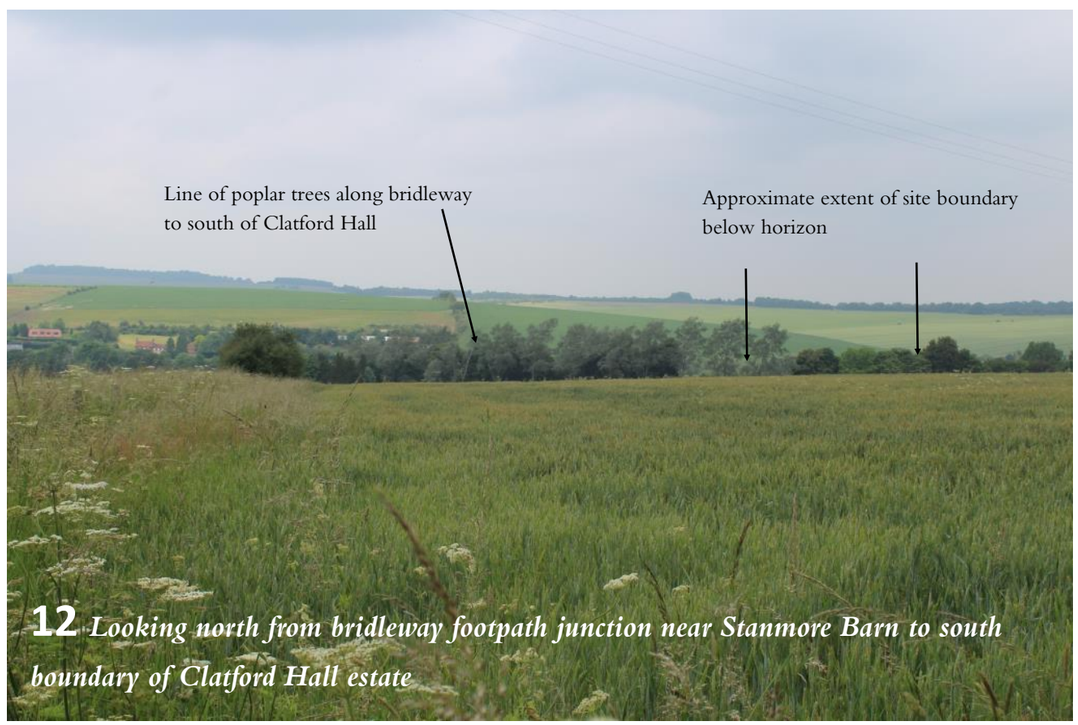
9 *Looking south west from road towards Clatford Hall across fields*



10 *Looking south west from road towards Clatford Hall across fields*

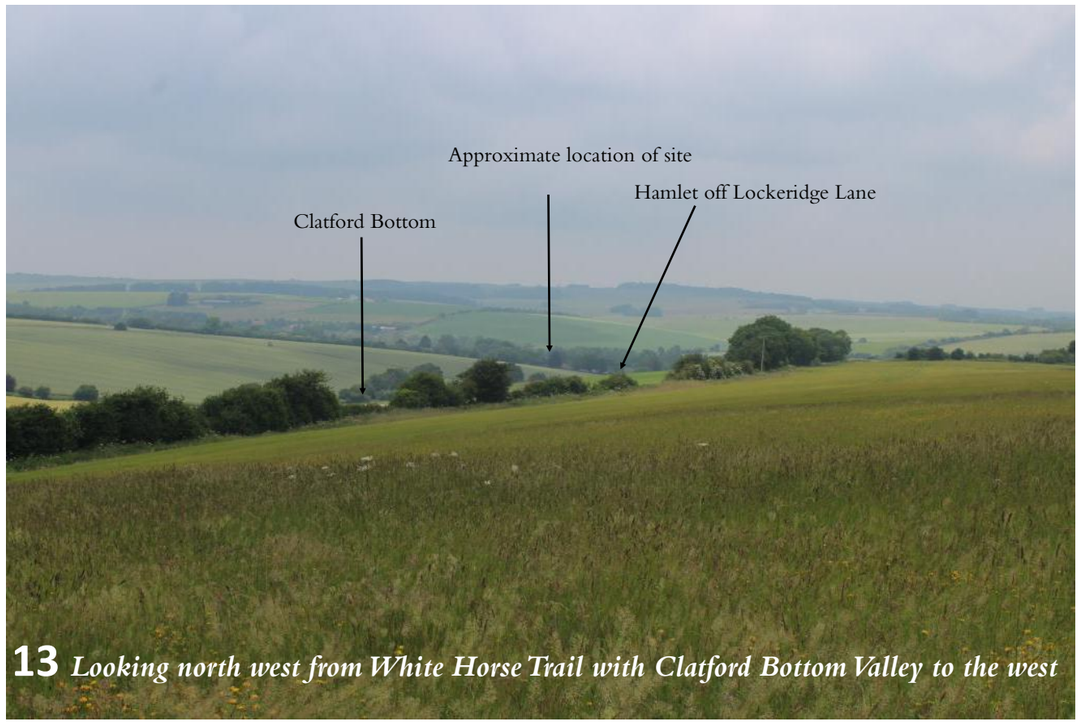


11 *Looking south from White Horse Trail near Redpost farm*



12 *Looking north from bridleway footpath junction near Stanmore Barn to south boundary of Clatford Hall estate*

Viewpoint Photographs



13 *Looking north west from White Horse Trail with Clatford Bottom Valley to the west*

Conclusion

The application site already expresses many of the fine qualities of a designed farmstead and sets a high architectural standard for both refurbished and additional buildings. The proposal to remove the incongruous steel frame barn will have a positive impact by restoring the proportions and qualities of a courtyard space. Restoring the north elevation of the stables and developing an additional store to complete a third boundary to the north of the courtyard, will contribute positively to the character of the space and to an appropriate sense of enclosure.

The use of brick and stone will be complementary to the existing buildings on the south and west boundaries and be in accordance with the The Kennet Valley Chalk River Valley LCA. In a similar manner to the existing buildings, the new building will have a stepped building line and variations in ridge and eave height.

Whilst, as a result of the loss of four mature Ash trees the overall short-term ***Visual Effect of the proposal is likely to be initially Neutral-Slight beneficial***, this would be balanced by the long-term ***beneficial Landscape Effect*** as the new tree planting develops. This should also be seen in the context of the high probability that the Ash trees would be lost in the near future regardless of any development.

The level of sensitivity that has been demonstrated in the architectural response to the existing setting have produced a sympathetic addition to the farmstead . While there is ample room to introduce screening between the courtyard and the bridleway, it is proposed that the interests and amenity of the bridleway users are best served by retaining the full views of the open east side of the courtyard.

4.

Conclusions