



Application PL/2023/033359

Construction and operation of anaerobic digestion facility, ancillary infrastructure, and construction of new access from Ashton Road, SN6 6QT

Applicant's Response to Wiltshire Council's Landscape Officer Appendix A supplementary consultation response dated 13.05.2026

This response has been prepared by Mr Neil Furber (BSc Dual Hons) PGDip CMLI, a Senior Director at Pegasus Planning Group and the author of the updated LVIA for the above Application. Mr Furber is a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 25 years' experience in all aspects of landscape planning and design across the U.K.

The Landscape Officer's consultation response responds to two separate submissions by the Applicant (summarised below) that amended the scheme to reduce the landscape and visual impacts arising from the Proposed Development:

- The 2024 Design Changes, submitted in October that year, which significantly reduce the Proposed Development's scale, bulk and mass, lowered ground levels and substantially expanded the proposed landscape screen planting; and
- The 2025 Design Refinements, submitted in October of this year, reflect the outcome of on-site discussions between the Council's Planning/Landscape Officers and the Applicant/Pegasus. The nature and rationale of all the design amendments are explained in full in the Planning Design and Access (PDAS) Addendum submitted by the Applicant with the October 2025 Design Refinements.

In general, whilst it is accepted that professionals can reach different judgements on landscape and visual effects, it is surprising to read the many instances where the Landscape Officer appears not to have understood or read significant parts of the LVIA. A summary of our response to the main issues raised by the Landscape Officer is set out at Table 1. A more detailed response to all of the comments made by the Landscape Officer is set out at Table 2 for completeness.

A plan showing the limited areas of theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development from the Cotswold Water Park Lakes is included at the rear of this report which represents a negligible visual impact.

Table 1: Summary of Main Issues

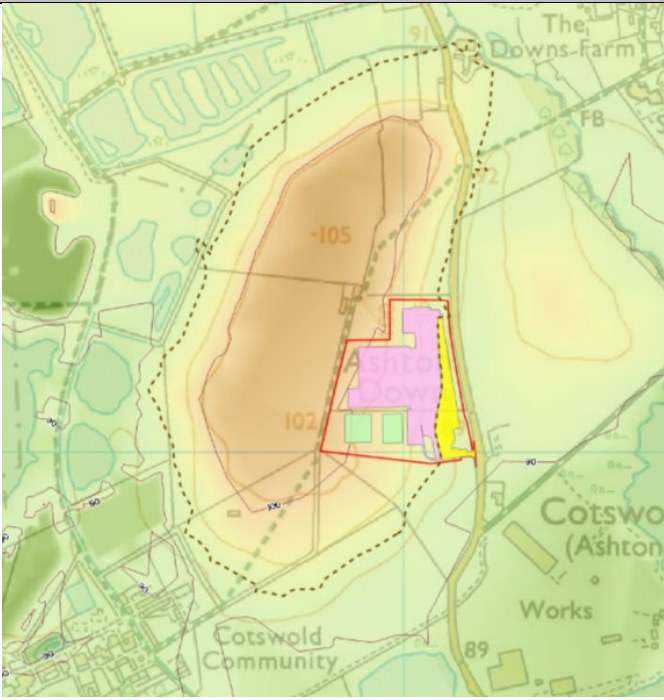
Summary of Landscape Officer Main issues raised	Applicant's Summary Response
Additional significant effects claimed on landscape receptors comprising: a) Topography of the Site during all development phases. b) Landscape Character of the Site at decommissioning; and c) Landscape Character of the immediate locality at Year 1 operation and decommissioning.	Topography: The Cotswold Water Park over the past few decades has been subject to much more extensive and pronounced landform changes as a result of quarrying for sand and gravel. The area around South Cerney is identified as a Mineral Resource Zone, meaning that it is an important area for mineral extraction. Only 7.38% of the area of Hillock would be affected by the excavation for the Proposed Development, and the Site would be restored to the original landform profile after the temporary use ceases. Landscape Character: The proposed planting would have matured significantly (even more so than the Year 15 photomontages), and as a result, the most visible decommissioning activities taking place on the site could not be experienced from the immediate locality. Any planting on soil bunds would be removed as part of the final landscape restoration stage after buildings and hardstanding have been removed from the Site.
Additional significant effects on visual receptors claimed, comprising users of Ashton Road and Public footpath AKEY4 at Year 15, following the growth of mitigation planting.	The photomontages at Year 15 taken from the Ashton Road and public footpath AKEY4 (Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) do not illustrate significant visual effects as the development is screened. Elevated views from the public footpath are also largely unaffected.
To ensure the planning certainty of land restoration after the projects 25-year operational life span, the LPA should seek further clarity and certainty.	Further information was provided to the Council on 13th May 2026. In summary, 96% of the Site's top soil will remain on-site for re-use and stored within the proposed screening bunds and 81% of the cut and fill material will also be retained on site. This allows reinstatement and restoration back to agricultural use after 25 years,

Table 2: Detailed Response to Wiltshire Council's Landscape Officer Appendix A supplementary consultation response dated 13.05.2026

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
Study area	
<i>The 2km study area is considered proportionate to the task at hand</i>	Noted.
Landscape Value	
<i>In my opinion the assessment doesn't properly analyse the value of the landscape at a site or local level or recognise the local value of the hill feature as a notable landscape component in its own right or recognise this to represent a rare opportunity to experience wide elevated middle and longer distance views over and across the landscape in a unique and dynamic landscape of the Cotswold Water Park (CWP)</i> <i>GLVIA3 guidelines in relation to considering local value at Box 5.1, clearly identifies that landscape quality (condition), scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests (wildlife, archaeological, historical and cultural interest, add value to the landscape as well as having value in their own right), recreation value, perceptual aspects and associations are all factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes.</i>	It appears that the Landscape Officer has not fully read the LVIA as all of the factors cited in Box 5.1 from GLVIA3 considering local value were explained to be covered at paragraph 7.3.33. Then under the sub-heading of landscape value at paragraphs 7.3.34 to 7.3.39 of the LVIA each component is considered, concluding at paragraph 7.3.40 that the value of the Site is medium. For the avoidance of doubt landscape quality (condition) is dealt with at paragraph 7.3.36, scenic quality at 7.3.37, rarity and representativeness at 7.3.39, conservation interests at 7.3.34 and 7.3.35, public access at 7.3.39. The hillock and topographical context including available views is covered at 7.3.38. It is unclear if the Council disagree with the LVIA conclusion that the Site is of Medium value or consider it should be assigned a higher level, that would be akin to a NPPF valued landscape (despite having no demonstrable physical features to indicate that this is the case). It is unclear if a NPPF valued landscape case is being made by the Council. In such a scenario it would be expected that similar landscapes deemed to have reached a valued landscape threshold by a Government Inspector would be cited by the Council. In the authors extensive experience of 'valued' landscapes across England, the Site and locality is nowhere near the threshold. It is also noted that valued landscapes have been removed from the consultation draft of the NPPF, the final version of which will be published shortly. There is no specific claim by the Council that the value of the landscape (at 'medium') has been underassessed and it should be assessed as a 'high' value, it is noted that landscapes of high value using GLVIA3 criteria are typically, but not exclusively designated, either by statutory designation e.g. National Park, AONB/National Landscape or by non-statutory designation e. Special Landscape Area. The Site and surrounding

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
	area are not subject to any landscape designations and do not meet the NPPF valued landscapes threshold.
<i>The assessment seems to distance itself from the unique nature of the CWP landscape, the various indicators of value mentioned in previous landscape consultation responses are not referenced as collectively contributing to increased local value.</i>	Following review of the previous consultation responses from the Council we are unclear which “indicators of value mentioned in previous landscape consultation responses are not referenced” in the LVIA.
<i>The LVIA simply defers matters of heritage or ecological value to the separate supporting assessments without further consideration of how such components can individually or collectively add value to the landscape as a resource.</i>	This is a misrepresentation of the LVIA as the contribution of ecology and heritage value to landscape value has been clearly considered at paragraphs 7.3.34, 7.3.35 and 7.7.39 of the LVIA.
<i>The landscape value of the site and its context cannot be evaluated in isolation or by an arbitrary 250 metre concentric circle drawn around it.</i>	This is a misrepresentation of the LVIA. At paragraph 7.4.5 it is stated that localised effects on landscape character would occur <u>up to approximately</u> 250 metres from the Site boundary – there is no mention of a concentric circle. This distance defines what was considered to be the immediate context of the Site from ZTV and field analysis including consideration of the places where people were most likely to perceive the greatest indirect changes to landscape character. As advised by GLVIA3 at paragraph 5.50 the assessment should consider changes at the level of the site, the immediate setting (context) of the site, and the wider landscape (at the scale of landscape type or character area). All of these geographical extents are covered in the LVIA at paragraphs 7.4.4. to 7.4.6.
<i>The value of elevated panoramic/wide views over the Cotswolds Water Park available from public footpath AKEY4 traveling up and down and along the central ridge of Ashton Down to a highpoint destination close to the northwest corner of the site are judged within the LVIA to be of the same receptor value as the lower-level transient views gained by car users travelling along Ashdown Road.</i>	The overall judgement of Medium value in the LVIA inevitably reflects slightly different values of component key characteristics, however there is nothing in the narrative explanation of the component landscape characteristics to suggest that any are either particularly elevated or particularly low. As there is a requirement by best practice guidance to reach a single judgement on landscape value there is no evidence in the baseline research to suggest that the landscape character of the Site and immediate locality should be considered anything other than of medium value.

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
<i>This in my opinion illustrates the lack of sufficiently detailed considerations informing judgements of receptor value at the local level and clearly illustrates that the assessment methodology is relatively coarse and high level as it is unable to differentiate with the current criteria used within the assessment (Table2) to inform judgements of value within the landscape assessment.</i>	GLVIA3 advises at paragraph 3.27 that “word scales, with ideally three or four, but a maximum of five categories are preferred” It is clear that the addition of extra categories of value as suggested by the Council to result in five categories not three e.g. by adding Very High and Very Low value, would result in no change to the determination of significant effects which is the purpose of LVIA. This can be simply observed by reviewing the assessment conclusions that records landscape effects on the Site and locality at the highest possible level i.e. Major, during construction and Year 1. The only possible influence of an underassessed landscape value is the long term effect on landscape character in the immediate context e.g. if Sensitivity was High and Magnitude was considered Medium (instead of Low) then the effect would be Significant. This is not a tenable assessment conclusion and not even one the Council is claiming will occur.
<i>The LVIA’s considerations of susceptibility doesn’t appropriately consider the existing site topography within its rationale informing judgements on sensitivity (nature of receptor) to change arising from the development proposal, or how development of this scale and nature typically requires large footprint areas for its storage clamps, digester tanks, covered lagoons, storage sheds & associated level areas for vehicle loading/unloading and manoeuvring, or how these requirements are not well suited to the site’s existing topography, which generally slopes down in height circa. 10m (west to east) across the site.</i>	There are no practical restrictions to the proposed layout from an engineering or access perspective. The LO’s response contains several typographical errors. Firstly we assume the LO is considering susceptibility (not “sensitivity”) to change and the “nature of receptor” is considered to reference the overall susceptibility of a gentle hill slope to excavation. We cannot see the justification for increasing the sensitivity (medium susceptibility and medium value) of the topography to a ‘high’ level. During the last round of consultation responses a map inset was produced which illustrated the Site in the context of the wider landform and this is reproduced below.

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
	 Site Boundary Development Area Lagoon Development Area (Outside of Hillock) No reference is made by the Landscape Officer to the supporting Technical Appendices that accompany the LVIA e.g. Appendix 7.4 Landscape Receptor Assessment states in terms of topography that: <i>“The design of the Proposed Development, is cut into the slope, however the prevailing topography of the wider landform would be retained, noting that the landform acts as an important back ground to the development and restricts views of the proposed development from the Cotswold Water Park to the west. The would be notable excavation of the Site to form development platforms and utilisation of some of the excavated material to form low level earthmounds around the perimeter of the Site. These earthworks would have gentle outer slopes and would be planted with woodland as illustrated in the landscape strategy plan and photomontages.”</i>
<i>This is considered particularly invasive, and not particularly sustainable, given the amount of earthwork movement and concrete</i>	We do not consider that the LO comments represent an appropriate description of the landform changes proposed as described above. The proposed changes also need to be considered in the context of historical changes of landform

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
<i>being proposed, especially for a temporary permission of 25 years.</i>	established over many decades in the local landscape. It is noted that the Cotswold Water Park over the past few decades has been subject to much more extensive and pronounced landform changes as a result of quarrying for sand and gravel, with eventual restoration to a different landform. By contrast the Site would be restored to the original landform profile. The area of the Hillock (shown as a dashed line on the extract above) is 47.55 ha. The Site area within the boundary of the Hillock is 5.78ha The area of the Hillock affected by excavation and accommodating hardstanding and built development is 3.51ha. This only comprises 7.38% of the area of the Hillock. No reasonable judgement would consider this to represent the highest magnitude of change to a landscape feature, especially given that the changes are temporary and the topography would be restored.
<i>The LVIA considers the mitigating planting to be consistent with the "Pattern and species composition of local planting" which is not correct. The landscape importance of the site is that it comprises an integral part of an undeveloped rolling Hillock landscape feature, with rising fields, delineated by a mix of low and high native hedgerows.</i>	It is assumed that the species composition is not being challenged as the proposals reflects species found on site and in the locality. In terms of the pattern, this replicates the high native hedgerows that already exist along parts of Ashton Road.
<i>The proposed bunding and woodland planting will lead to permanent loss of currently open longer views to the east and southeast from a section of public footpath AKEY4 running parallel to the western edge of the application site.</i>	All views to the east and south east from footpath AKEY4 will not 'be lost' Review of the photomontages at Appendix 7.3 from Viewpoints 3, 4 and 5 illustrate this, noting the following: Viewpoint 3: views to the east and northeast will be foreshortened however the view in this direction is of no particular importance or elevated value and views to the south would be unaffected from this location. Viewpoint 4: This is a gap in the hedgerow that has already been planted up with shrubs so the view would be 'lost' regardless of whether the development went ahead or not. Viewpoint 5: No view is lost and visibility to distant skyline maintained.

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
	Finally, an existing hedge runs along the western edge of the Site boundary which already prevents views from footpath AKEY4 to the east across the Site.
LO concern that there is not a full assessment of decommission stage at ES Appendix 7.5	Appendix 7.4 with respect to landscape character states: <i>The Decommissioning Phase, would take place once the proposed planting brought forward as part of the Proposed Development has matured significantly, as a result, whilst the activities taking place on the site could not be experienced because there is no public access, due to the retainment of the mature perimeter planting the influence of the decommissioning activities across the wider landscape would be reduced (as reflected in the assessment of the effects upon the immediate context and wider landscape below).</i> Appendix 7.5 does not cover a detailed and unnecessary assessment of decommissioning effects for visual receptors as it has already been established there would be no potential for significant views of the decommissioning activities beyond the site boundary.
To ensure the planning certainty of land restoration after the projects 25-year operational life span, the LPA should seek further clarity and certainty on this specific matter from the applicant. If the LPA is minded to support the application on planning balance, then I would consider and recommend that a specific requirement for a planning condition or unilateral undertaking via a Section 106 legal agreement to require land restoration back to baseline (before development) topographical levels would be necessary for reasons of planning certainty.	Further information has been provided on restoration as requested: see the Applicant's submission to the Council on 13 May "The Applicant's Response to Deliberations of the Strategic Planning Committee on 21 April 2026, Section 5 and Appendix 2
The LO sets out the differences between his judgements upon landscape receptors and the assessment in the LVIA. The LO considers that the following significant effects would occur (that the LVIA considers would be non-significant):	We consider that the LO's analysis of effects upon topography is robust and the landform changes proposed affecting a relatively small part of the hillock cannot reasonably be described as the highest level of magnitude and effect (see previous comments above). Pegasus stand by our original assessment. The changes to the Landscape Character of the Site at decommissioning will be quicker than at construction and will be set in the context of

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
• Topography of the Site during all development phases. • Landscape Character of the Site at decommissioning; and • Landscape Character of the immediate locality at Year 1 operation and decommissioning.	retained new planting (now mature) to the perimeter of the Site. Pegasus stand by our original assessment. The changes to the landscape character of the immediate locality as assessed are justified as the proposed planting brought forward as part of the Proposed Development would have matured significantly (even more so than the Year 15 photomontages), and as a result, the most visible decommissioning activities taking place on the site could not be experienced from the immediate locality and any planting on soil bunds would be removed as part of the final landscape restoration stage after buildings and hardstanding have been removed from the Site. Pegasus stand by our original assessment.
The LO sets out the differences between his judgements upon visual receptors and the assessment in the LVIA. The LO considers that the following significant effects would occur (that the LVIA considers would be non-significant): • Users of Ashton Road at Year 15. • Users of Public footpath AKEY4 at Year 15	It is incomprehensible that the LO could identify major significant adverse visual effects upon road users and footpath users passing the site boundary, once mitigation planting has established. Members are encouraged to review the photomontages taken from the Ashton Road and public footpath AKEY4 (Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) and to also evaluate the impact of the proposed development on the elevated views from the footpath, which are considered to be largely unaffected by the Proposed Development (see analysis above).
LO requested an additional viewpoint very close to one that was already provide (Viewpoint 10). The LO states he doesn't anticipate that the visual effects would be Major adverse for this section of the route.	The new path was not accessible during the field survey due to construction works associated with Cotswold Community, however a view was taken nearby where access was possible (see photowire at Viewpoint 10) and is located in an area of the ZTV that indicates a similar proportion of the proposed development would be visible to the new path. It is clear that any oblique and distant visibility of the proposed development may comprise glimpses of the top of the digester tanks. There is clearly no potential for significant visual effects as demonstrated from the wireline at nearby Viewpoint 10.
The LO states: <i>"I find the LVIA's approach to identifying and assessing landscape character receptors unusual. It would be typical for the site to be assessed</i>	Initially the landscape character of the Site is assessed, then the landscape character of the immediate context and finally the landscape character of the wider context. This fully complies with GLVIA 3 paragraph 5.50 – extract below:

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
<i>alongside and with its immediate and close adjoining landscape context, as in landscape character terms the development sites character is typically integrally influenced by its adjoining context.”</i>	<i>Geographical extent</i> The geographical area over which the landscape effects will be felt must also be considered. This is distinct from: the size or scale of the effect – there may for example be moderate loss of landscape elements over a large geographical area, or a major addition affecting a very localised area. The extent of the effects will vary widely depending on the nature of the proposal and there can be no hard and fast rules about what categories to use. In general effects may have an influence at the following scales, although this will vary according to the nature of the project and not all may be relevant on every occasion: 5.50 • at the site level, within the development site itself; • at the level of the immediate setting of the site; • at the scale of the landscape type or character area within which the proposal lies; • on a larger scale, influencing several landscape types or character areas.
<i>I don't understand the logic for the inclusion of an arbitrary 250 metre donut drawn around the site perimeter as a specific landscape receptor for specific and separate assessment of landscape character.</i>	As already raised above this is a misrepresentation of the LVIA. At paragraph 7.4.5 it is stated that localised effects on landscape character would occur <u>up to approximately 250 metres</u> from the Site boundary – there is no mention of a concentric circle. This distance defines what was considered to be the immediate context of the Site from ZTV and field analysis including consideration of the places where people were most likely to perceive the greatest indirect changes to landscape character.
<i>The application states on one hand the site and land will be restored back to full agricultural use after 25 years but makes no allowance for soil stockpiling within the site or any other identified location. It states that some of the stripped soil will be used to create the earth bunds (subsequently planted with trees).</i>	Further information has been provided on restoration as requested, see the Applicant's submission to the Council on 13 May "The Applicant's Response to Deliberations of the Strategic Planning Committee on 21 April 2026, Section 5 and Appendix 2
<i>The proposed development is still considered to result in unacceptable significant adverse localised landscape and visual harms, contrary to the requirements of WCS, Core Policy 51:Landscape.</i>	The LO attempts no analysis against the policy that contains a number of detailed criteria and merely asserts the proposed development is contrary to CP51. The policy requires conservation of the following features (and where possible enhancement). i) locally distinctive pattern and species composition of hedgerows. The low quality hedgerow to be removed is not particularly distinctive, is of low quality and is species poor, ii) there would be no impact on the distinctive character or setting of settlements, iii) no impact on the separate identity of settlements, iv) no impact upon visually sensitive skylines, v) no impact on features of cultural, historic or heritage value, vi) no impact on any important views and localised impact on visual amenity that is mitigated by planting, vii) no significant effect upon tranquillity and viii) no impact on landscape functions – PRoW is maintained and separated from the proposed development by low level mounding and/or new planting.

Landscape Officer comment	Pegasus Response
Additional policy analysis missing	The LO in the last consultation response asserted that the landscape and visual impacts of the Proposed Development were contrary to a number of additional planning policies and a rebuttal to this was provided which is reproduced again at Appendix A. It appears the revised position the LO is now taking relates to is conflict with a single policy CP51, as covered above. For the avoidance of doubt a refusal on landscape and visual grounds needs to be carefully justified in relation to development plan policy.

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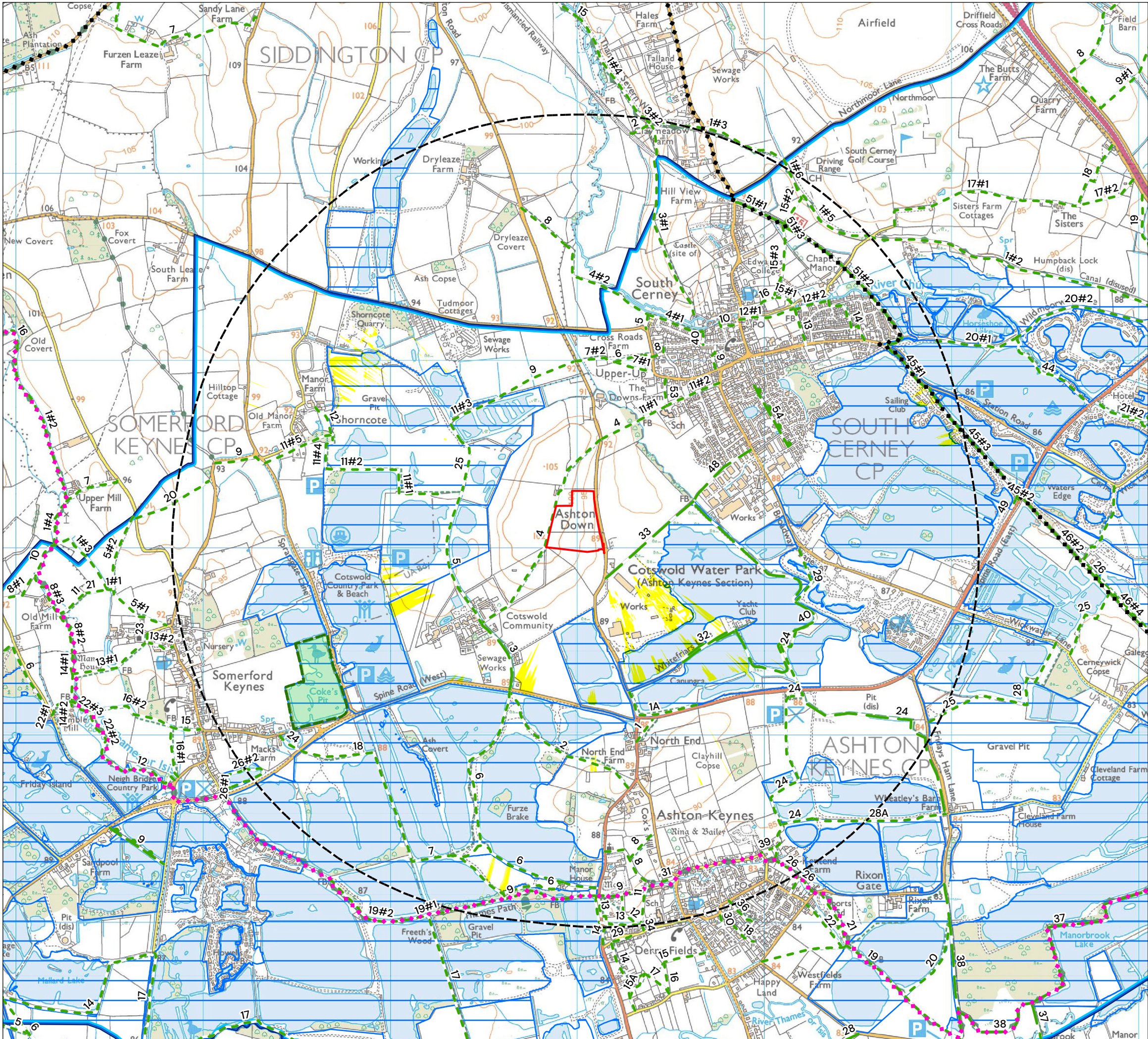
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Appendix A: Landscape Planning Policy Review

Policy that the Landscape Officer alleges conflict with	Pegasus response
Section 15, Para 180 (a & b) of the NPPF - in the updated NPPF 2024 it is Para 187 a) and b).	As stated above with consideration of recent appeal decisions, the Site has no physical landscape features that would elevate it to be legitimately considered a valued landscape under paragraph 187 a). In terms of paragraph 187 b) the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside have been recognised in the retention of the more valuable hedgerows and trees and the mitigation planting. For the avoidance of doubt, the paragraph does not state there shall be no new development in the countryside.
Core Policy CP42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy	The policy requires 'impacts to be satisfactorily addressed,' which the applicant believes has been achieved with respect to the landscape from a reduction in the built development quantum and introduction of appropriate mitigation. The policy criterion 'the landscape, <u>particularly in and around AONBs</u> ,' is not relevant to this Site.
Core Policy CP51 (i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy	The policy requires conservation of the following features (and where possible enhancement). i) locally distinctive pattern and species composition of hedgerows. The low quality hedgerow to be removed is not particularly distinctive, is of low quality and is species poor, ii) there would be no impact on the distinctive character or setting of settlements, iii) no impact on the separate identity of settlements, iv) no impact upon visually sensitive skylines, v) no impact on features of cultural, historic or heritage value, vi) no impact on any important views and localised impact on visual amenity that is mitigated by planting, vi) no significant effect upon tranquillity and viii) no impact on landscape functions – PRoW is maintained and separated from the proposed development by low level mounding and/or new planting.
Core Policy CP57 (i, ii, iii, iv, vi) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy	The policy requires the proposal to make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire by i) relating positively to the landscape setting and existing development, which is achieved by necessary separation from settlements and retaining and reinforcing perimeter planting, appropriate to the locality, ii) all existing <u>important</u> hedgerows are retained and losses of the poor quality hedgerow would be mitigated, iii) the proposal responds to the landform by utilising it to restrict views of the built structures from the wider landscape around the lakes to the west and southwest, iv) there are no historic buildings or historic landscapes that the Proposed Development is affecting, and vi) the proposal would make efficient use of

	the land whilst retaining the important field boundary vegetation and the overall integrity of the landform.
Saved Policy NE14 of the North Wiltshire District Local Plan	The Proposed Development would comply with the policy that states: <i>Permission will not be granted for proposals that would result, or be likely to result, in the loss of trees, hedges, lakes/ponds or other important landscape or ecological features that could be successfully and appropriately incorporated into the design of a development</i> In the first instance the hedgerow lost is species poor and low quality and secondly its loss is unavoidable to accommodate the Proposed Development.
Policy ENP3 of the Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan.	The Policy states: <i>“Developments in the Parish should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character. Developments should also retain the character of the settlement including the tranquillity of its setting and its sense of place”</i> The policy does not suggest that any development in the countryside should be avoided and it is noted that the proposals whilst having an inevitable adverse impact on the landscape character of the Site would retain and enhance the most valuable perimeter hedgerow vegetation. The proposed native planting would include offsite species rich meadow that would contribute to BNG and enhance landscape character. There would be no material impact upon the setting of any settlements.

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KEY

Site Boundary

2km Buffer

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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VISIBILITY FROM COTSWOLD WATER PARK
RECREATIONAL AREAS

ASHTON KEYNES AD FACILITY

ACORN BIOENERGY LIMITED

DATE	SCALE	DRAWN	APPROVED
27/05/2026	1:20,000@A3	EN/EH	NF
SHEET	REV	N	O
-	A	▲	L