# Applebys, Tonbridge Road, Chiddingstone Causeway. TN11 8JH

# Landscape Appraisal.

**1.0 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND SETTING.**

1.1 The residential site containing Applebys together with The Big and Little Barns is on the south side of the B2027 road around 400m to the east of its junction with the B2176 road on the southern fringe of the Charcott Farmlands and North Leigh Farmlands as identified in the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment. Geologically the head deposits are of clay, sand and stones over Wealden clay formation mudstone. A low ridge outcrop of Lower Greensand lies just to the south. Whilst the Assessment refers to mature oak standards and remnant hedgerows as typifying the area, and this is certainly true to the south of the B2027, the land to the north of the road is unusual having been cleared for the Penshurst airfield in the early 20th century and remaining clear of any significant hedgerows or trees.

1.2 The Grade II Applebys house itself is located at grid reference TQ522465 just to the south of the B2027. Land to the north of the road is third party arable land crossed by a public footpath SR417 from Charcott. This footpath continues as SR418 in a southerly direction along the eastern boundary of Applebys and The Little Barn with third party arable land and Leigh Rugby Football Club ground beyond. To the south of Applebys is the private paddock, laid to grass, but at one time orchard. The Tonbridge-Redhill railway line runs east/west in a cutting about 80m to the south of the main house on the far side of the paddock and is marked by a strong line of mature and semi mature trees. A third party residence and garden lies to the west.

1.3 Applebys boundaries to the north, east and west are generally formed of hedging with stock wire reinforcement to the east. The southern boundary to the paddock is of post and rail fencing with stock wire reinforcement. The road hedge is mostly of hawthorn, mature at the west end, over mature at the east with some holly and hazel and backed by a close boarded fence. There is some remedial new planting of hawthorn across the house frontage. The east boundary is of over mature hawthorn and blackthorn with some hazel again with a close boarded fence to The Little Barn. Mature and semi mature oaks mark the eastern paddock boundary. The northern part of the western boundary is open to the shared driveway and close boarded 1.8m oil tank enclosure for No1 Knotley Hall Cottages whilst the southern part is of a semi mature beech hedge.

**2.0 APPRAISAL.**

2.1 The primary view of Applebys from the public domain is in a wide arc from the roadway between Charcott and the corner of Blackhoath Wood and from the public footpath SR417 crossing the old airfield. There are secondary screened views looking north-west from the footpath SR418 through the partially hedged paddock eastern boundary fence line and oblique easterly and westerly views from the B2027. In all these views Applebys is clearly the predominant structure.

2.2 Views out from Applebys are north across the old airfield towards Charcott and Blackhoath wood and southwards to the railway line trees constrained by the Big Barn to the east and the paddock boundary trees to the east. Easterly views are restricted by the existing brick wall within the site and the SR418 boundary trees beyond. In a similar fashion views to the west are constrained a 2.6m high privet hedge within the site and No1 Knotley Cottages.

2.3 Within the site there is a strong 2.6m high 30m long privet hedge running north/south separating Applebys from a parking area with an 8m long east/west yew hedge return to an 11m long north/south 2m high brick wall linking Applebys and the Big Barn. A further 2m high section of brick wall runs 12m east/west between Applebys and The Little Barn with an 11m long spur running north/south from a brick built and tile roofed gazebo at the midpoint of the east/west wall. The spur wall and a 2.1m high trellis separate Applebys garden from that of the Little Barn. A line of semi mature trees runs roughly east/west across Applebys garden some 20m to the south of the house defining the line of an old hedgerow.

**3.0 EXISTING SITE LANDSCAPING APPRAISAL.**

3.1 The area of lawned garden to the north of Applebys fronting the road containing fruit frees of various age provides an attractive setting slightly compromised by a shed to the east and an accumulation of bins and bin storage to the west.

 3.2 Enclosed domestic scale gardens to the east of the main house provide a pleasant approach between raised beds to what is now the main access door, use of the original front door in the centre of the north elevation having ceased once the road became busier and the parking area was formed beyond the privet hedge. An enclosed gravel surfaced area to the south has potential for improvement.

3.3 An extensive paved area to the south and east of Applebys containing a brick ringed well and protected by brick walls to the north, east and west provides good sitting out space and open views to the paddock but there are privacy issues between the main house gardens and those of The Big Barn.

3.4 Remaining parts of the gardens lack any sense of coherent design treatment excepting the wall and light trellis defining the current extent of the Little Barn garden. The Little Barn itself stands only 3.5m from the B2027 verge shielded on all sides but the south by overgrown hedging.

3.5 The access and parking area to the west of Applebys is visually unattractive containing electrical switchgear, two oil tank enclosures and various bins relieved only by a single semi mature oak and the topiary arch formed in the eastern privet hedge. Immediately to the south the area of garden between The Big Barn and the western beech hedge is scarcely more attractive with much of the hedging being obscured by a line of sheds.

**4.0 PROPOSALS.**

4.1 The proposals to construct a new garage for Applebys and to replace the existing Little Barn are seen as **an opportunity to strengthen and enhance the setting of the Grade II listed building within a landscaped setting rather than a formal garden.**

4.2 The prime views of are those which show Applebys within the wider landscape. From the north the visual ‘no man’s land’ between Applebys and No1 Knotley Cottages detracts from this otherwise harmonious setting by opening up an ugly gash in the road frontage. The proposed garage and associated screen planting will help to repair this. To the east the overgrown mixed native species hedging is to be re-invigorated by careful trimming and selective cutting back to be maintained at a height of 1.5/1.8m. The removal of The Little Barn and the close boarded fence from the immediate proximity of this section of hedge on its south side will facilitate this process.

4.3 The proposed relocation and re-orientation of the Little Barn will not impinge on the view from SR418 to the south.

4.4 The extension of the existing dividing screen wall between Applebys and The Big Barn will tend to emphasise the subservience of the barn structure and will be entirely outside the vision arc of Applebys from SR418. It is suggested that the extended wall should terminate 10m from the southern boundary from which point a 1.2m high post and rail fence matching the existing paddock fence will complete the division whilst maintaining the open garden space fringing the paddock.

4.5 The provision of bin storage space within the proposed garage will provide an opportunity to remove clutter from the front garden combined with the proposed relocation of the garden equipment shed will make the front garden shed redundant and allow its removal thus returning this part of the garden to its simple historic form.

4.6 The repositioning of the mowing equipment shed from the west of the Big Barn to a location within the eastern and southern arms of the existing screen walling close to the Little Barn will reduce the growth of visual clutter towards the paddock. The proposed use of Clematis Montana Alba screening will ensure that the shed roof does not intrude in the view out from the upper floors of Applebys.

4.7 More intimate enclosed garden spaces are to remain unaltered; restricted to the existing area immediately to the west of the house and the adjoining gravelled area developed as a parterre for the production of cut flowers or herbs. The parterre enclosure is to be completed by a short section of yew hedging across the current path opening to the south. The remaining generally open surroundings to the Grade II listed house will be maintained.

**5.0 CONCLUSIONS.**

**5.1 The proposals will conserve and enhance the character of the landscape in accordance with Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy EN5-Landscape.**

**5.2 The proposals will strengthen and enhance the significance and setting of Applebys Grade II Heritage Asset in accordance with Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan Policy EN4- Heritage Assets.**