WHLandscape

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NORTHFIELD FARM
WITHINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
GL54 4LL

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
FOR
PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF FARM BUILDINGS

Prepared by:

WHLandscape

On behalf of:

Rural Solutions

Project Reference: 23.1727

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APPOINTMENT

WH Landscape Consultancy Ltd (**WH**Landscape) has been appointed by Rural Solutions to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed redevelopment of an existing collection of farm buildings at Northfield Farm, Withington, Gloucestershire GL54 4LL.

WHLandscape has an established track record of assessing development proposals. The practice has considerable experience in the field of landscape and visual assessment and uses tried and tested techniques developed and recognised by the Landscape Institute, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, and Natural England.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This LVIA provides an appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed redevelopment of land at Northfield Farm, Withington, Gloucestershire GL54 4LL. The proposals include the conversion of a complex of dilapidated agricultural buildings into five residential dwellings.

1.2 A previous application (planning ref: 22/0605/FUL) was submitted and withdrawn in 2022. The Applicant has proactively considered comments received on the previous application, and these have been instrumental in the preparation of this revised scheme. This LVIA is an update of an earlier report that was prepared to accompany the original application. The collection of barns is a mix of traditional stone and modern portal frame structures which have all been added to over time with a variety of different materials, rooflines, openings and features. The proposed scheme takes inspiration from the existing material palette, whilst also simplifying and rationalising the use of materials. Whilst there will be no extension to the footprint of the existing barns, the demolition of the largest modern barn, located in the south east of the site, will reduce the sprawl of the farm complex, whilst improving the setting of the two adjacent traditional stone buildings. A route of access is maintained through the centre of the complex, gated at either end, to provide access for farm machinery to the agricultural land east of the application site.

1.3 The site is in the administrative area of Cotswold District Council, and is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly known as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The findings of this LVIA have been used to determine the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate the proposals, as well as to suggest appropriate mitigation measures where required.

1.4 The existing farm complex includes six barns, some with *add hoc* additions. Some of the structures are in poor condition. A single barn (Ban 'A') with an adjacent pump is shown on the 1883 Ordinance Survey Six-inch Map of England and Wales. Two further buildings had been added by the 1903 Survey, whilst the remaining structures were added in the late 20th Century (some of these appearing to replace earlier ones). None of the buildings or structures within the complex or near vicinity is Listed (the closest being the bridge over the River Coln, some 1.0Km distant to the north), and there are no designated protected habitats or tree protection orders within the application site. The closest Conservation Area is Withington, just over 1.5k to the south.

1.5 The collection of barns is a mix of traditional stone and modern portal frame structures which have all been added to over time with a variety of different materials, rooflines, openings and features. The proposed scheme takes inspiration from the existing material palette, whilst also simplifying and rationalising the use of materials. Whilst there will be no extension to the footprint of the existing barns, the demolition of the largest modern barn, located in the south east of the site, will reduce the sprawl of the farm complex, whilst improving the setting of the two adjacent traditional stone buildings. A route of access is maintained through the centre of the complex, gated at either end, to provide access for farm machinery to the agricultural land east of the application site.

1.6 Northfield Farm lies within open countryside and must therefore be assessed against policies relating to the protection and enhancement of the Cotswold National Landscape set out in the *AONB Management Plan 2018-2023*, including Policies CE1: Landscape; CE3: Local Distinctiveness; CE4: Tranquillity; and CE5: Dark Skies.

1.7 Additionally, for the purposes of this appraisal, policy context is taken from the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (2023) and the *Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031* (the 'development plan'). Section 3.0 sets out relevant policies from these.

1.8 Baseline landscape character has been taken from *Natural England National Character Area Profile (NCA) 107: Cotswolds (NE420)* (2015), and the *Cotswolds Landscape Character Assessment* (2003).

1.9 This report is for a "non-EIA project". The Landscape Institute has advised in relation to Landscape and Visual Appraisals / Statements outside a formal EIA process in its "Statement of Clarification 1/13" that:

> ***In carrying out appraisals, the same principles and process as LVIA may be applied but, in so doing, it is not required to establish whether the effects arising are or are not significant. […] The emphasis on likely 'significant effects' in formal LVIA stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects. The same principle – focussing on a proportional approach – also applies to appraisals of landscape and visual impacts outside the formal requirements of EIA.***

1.10 This report therefore provides an assessment of the levels of the effect without commenting on their "significance". The assessment process comprises a combination of desk study and field survey, with subsequent analysis, and has included:

- A review of landscape designations and planning policies relating to the landscape, and of other landscape studies relevant to the area, including national and local landscape character;
- A survey of the site and landscape context of the study area and analysis of views of the site from publicly accessible viewpoints, including a photographic survey;
- Evaluation of the features and elements of the landscape and their contribution to landscape character, context and setting, based on these studies;
- Consideration of potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development;
- Examination of the development proposals and analysis of the potential effects on the landscape and visual amenity associated with the scheme's design or operation; and,
- Assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual amenity to the changes likely to arise from the development along with the potential impacts.

1.11 This appraisal only considers the proposed development as described, and its findings should not be considered prejudicial against any other future land use proposals for the site or its surroundings, which should each be assessed on their own merits.

1.12 The effects of the development, whether beneficial or adverse, may vary in nature and degree through its lifecycle. Therefore, where relevant, mitigation measures are proposed to be incorporated into the design of the development principally through native tree and hedgerow planting, and, where relevant, measures such as management of the construction and operational processes to minimise harm to the existing landscape structure. The purpose of mitigation measures is primarily to prevent potential adverse impacts identified, and if that is not possible, to reduce the potential adverse effect or, where adverse effects are unavoidable, to offset or compensate for the effect.

2. SCOPE AND ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

2.1 The LVIA process is based on the following guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd ed. (GLVIA 3).
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

2.2 The LVIA is a tool used to identify and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development, both on the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. Landscape Effects relate to changes to components of the landscape resource as a result of development. Visual Effects relate to the appearance of development, its effect on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by users of the landscape. The study area to be considered includes the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape with the potential to be influenced by the development.

2.3 BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

2.3.1 The baseline study reviews the existing landscape and visual resources to determine and describe the conditions against which changes resulting from the development can be measured or predicted and assessed. The process comprises three stages, namely a desk study, field survey and baseline analysis. The baseline study helps identify the landscape and visual receptors which are considered susceptible to change as a result of the development and includes description, classification and evaluation. It forms the basis against which to assess the Magnitude of Effect and, if necessary, the Significance of Effect of development on landscape and visual resources.

DESK STUDY RESOURCES

2.3.2 The following resources have been used to inform the field survey and the analysis:

Mapping

- Ordnance Survey maps and vertical aerial photography
- Definitive Rights of Way: Public Rights of Way Mapping (Gloucestershire County Council)
- Geology: Geology of Britain Viewer (British Geological Survey)
- Pedology: Soilscapes Map (Soilscapes)
- Designations: Magic Interactive Mapping – Core Strategy Policy Maps (Cotswold District Council)
- Heritage assets: The National Heritage List for England (Historic England)

Planning Policy

- NPPF
- Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031
- Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023

Character Assessment

- NCA: 107. Cotswolds
- Cotswolds Landscape Character Assessment

Additional Documents

- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2016)

FIELD SURVEY

2.3.3 The field survey has been informed by a thorough desk study. Of particular relevance are Ordnance Survey mapping, aerial photography and published Landscape Character Assessments. The field survey is used to gain a full appreciation of the relationship between the site and study area. The field work is supported by mapped viewpoints and photographic records that are representative of, and relevant to, the development.

BASELINE ANALYSIS

2.3.4 The findings of the desk study and field survey inform the baseline analysis, which helps in determining the landscape value of the study area though description, classification and evaluation of the landscape and visual resources relevant to the application site and surrounding study area. Determining the value of the landscape as a resource helps in identifying specific landscape and visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development.

Landscape value

2.3.5 Landscape value is the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society; a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a variety of reasons, however having specific components of value does not mean an area is a valued landscape. Furthermore, while designations can be an indicator of value, the presence of detracting components may mean the value of a designated area locally varies across its geographic extent. Moreover, as identified in GLVIA 3, "*the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value*".

2.3.6 Typically, value is determined against a series of predefined factors, to establish an overall landscape value of either Low, Medium, or High, with the importance of any designations also being taken into account. Additionally, the specific value of the site, as a component of the landscape resource, is also considered.

2.3.7 When determining the value of the landscape resource, the following factors, adapted from Box 5.1 of GLVIA 3, are considered relevant to the assessment process:

- **Landscape Quality (condition):** A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements or features.
- **Scenic Quality:** The term used to describe landscapes which appeal principally to the senses (primarily, but not exclusively, visual).
- **Representativeness:** Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or elements or features, which are considered particularly important examples thereof.
- **Rarity:** The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Area (LCA) and/or Landscape Character Type (LCT).
- **Conservation Interests:** The presence of features of wildlife, earth science, archaeological or historical, and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape, as well as having value in their own right.
- **Recreational Value:** Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity, where experience of the landscape is important.
- **Perceptual Aspects:** A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and/or tranquillity.
- **Associations:** Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or an event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.

Landscape Receptors

2.3.8 Landscape receptors will be selected to help ascertain the specific aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. Potential receptors include individual elements or features of the study area, both on and off site, as well as the distinct landscape character of the study area as a whole.

Visual Receptors

2.3.9 Visual receptors will initially be identified from where the desk study suggests that the proposed development may be visible, before being verified as part of the field survey. Views will primarily be recorded from Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and other areas with public access, as well as public roads with full public and permissive access. Residential views will be considered, where appropriate, through the use of representative viewpoints. It should be noted views may be recorded from areas which the desk study suggests have no intervisibility with the site, moreover not all potential visual receptors will be recorded during the field survey (e.g. if there is an obvious lack of intervisibility).

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

2.4.1 The landscape assessment addresses changes in the fabric, character and/or key elements or features of the landscape resource. The visual assessment addresses changes in visual amenity, and the implication of those changes on specific visual receptors.

2.4.2 The assessment of effects aims to:

- Estimate the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors as a function of their value and their susceptibility to change.
- Identify the Magnitude of Effect of the development.
- Provide an assessment of the effects and, subsequently the Nature of Effect, in a logical and well-reasoned fashion.
- Indicate suitable mitigation measures.

2.4.3 The LVIA will consider the likely effects of the proposed development in the context of Receptor Sensitivity in order to determine the Level of Effect on landscape and visual receptors, with mitigation measures recommended if required. The overall landscape and visual effects of the development will then be reassessed to determine the effectiveness of the recommended mitigation at both implementation and once established.

2.4.4 To be consistent, the determination of sensitivity and the prediction of magnitude have been guided by pre-defined criteria. However, by its very nature, the LVIA process requires a significant amount of interpretation and professional judgement.

2.4.5 Designations which may affect the sensitivity of receptors, or how an effect may be perceived, will be taken into consideration where appropriate. In terms of listed buildings and other designated

heritage assets as receptors, this report will only consider the potential effects on the historic landscape settings of these structures/areas. It should be noted that, although a development may be visible from a listed building or other designated historic asset, this does not automatically mean that there is an effect on its historic landscape setting.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

2.4.6 Landscape Sensitivity is a function of the value of a landscape receptor, both as part of the landscape resource and as an individual component, and its ability to accommodate the development (susceptibility to change) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline condition and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

Table 1a: Landscape Receptor Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity
High	Important landscapes and/or landscape components of high value with a high susceptibility to change.
Medium	Important/moderately valued landscapes and/or landscape components with a medium susceptibility to change.
Low	Moderately valued/relatively unimportant landscapes and/or landscape components with a low susceptibility to change.
Negligible	Degraded landscape tolerant of major change.

2.4.7 The Magnitude of Landscape Effect is based on changes to the baseline condition of the landscape resource and/or specific landscape receptors. Factors such as, the nature of change, extent and scale of change, and the relationship to baseline characteristics are all considered.

Table 1b: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
Substantial	Total loss or alteration of key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition (predevelopment).
Moderate	Partial loss or alteration of one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the predevelopment condition will be partially changed.
Slight	Minor loss or alteration of one or more characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the baseline condition will be similar to the predevelopment circumstance.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key characteristics and/or elements or features of the baseline condition, such that the changes are barely distinguishable.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

2.4.8 Visual Sensitivity takes account of the value of routes/areas used by visual receptors including the extent to which attention is focused on the landscape, and the ability of specific views to accommodate the development. Certain views that are experienced may have a value attached through planning designations or in relation to heritage assets or may be indicated on maps or in guidebooks.

Table 2a: Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity
High	Users of strategic rights of way, cycle paths, etc; important cultural, physical or historic features; views from beauty spots, picnic areas and principal views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor is likely to be focused on the landscape.
Medium	Other public rights of way. Views from principal settlements and secondary views from residential properties. Places where the attention of the receptor may be focused on the landscape.
Low	Receptors engaged in activities other than for the appreciation of the landscape.
Negligible	Views from industrialised areas.

2.4.9 The Magnitude of Visual Effect is based on the overall extent of the visibility. Factors such as distance from the development, duration of effect, screening, angle of view, backdrop to the development and extent of other development are all considered.

Table 2b: Magnitude of Visual Effect

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
Substantial	Fundamental or very obvious change in the character, make-up and balance of the view. The proposals would be prominent or even dominant when considered in terms of the baseline condition. The established visual character would change.
Moderate	Moderate changes in the character, make-up and balance of the view, with the proposals noticeably distinct. This may lead to a change in the established visual character, depending upon the type of development proposed.
Slight	The proposals would be visible as a new feature. Change would be limited and would be unlikely to affect the established visual character as a whole.
Negligible	Virtually imperceptible change in the view. Whilst theoretically visible, the proposals would be faint, not legible or difficult for receptors to discern.

LEVEL OF EFFECT

2.4.10 The Level of Effect can be expressed as a correlation between the Magnitude of Effect and Landscape or Visual Sensitivity in a single matrix to determine level as shown in Table 3. However, it must be noted that the matrix is not in itself a substitute for professional judgement, for which allowances must be made. Although mitigation measures are often proposed where the Level of Effect is Minor or None, it is the Major and Major/Moderate categories which provide the highest Level of Effect in terms of effect on the landscape and visual resources.

Table 3: Level of Effect as a Correlation of Sensitivity and Magnitude Applicable to both the Landscape Resource and Visual Amenity

Landscape or Visual Sensitivity	**Magnitude of Effect**			
	Substantial	*Moderate*	*Slight*	*Negligible*
High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None
Negligible	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor/None	None

NATURE OF EFFECT

2.4.11 Change as a result of development may be Positive or Adverse, to varying degrees, or Neutral. Neutral effects are those where change is considered to have neither a Positive nor Adverse effect on the landscape or visual resource being considered. The calculation of a high Level of Effect does not mean that change is automatically Adverse; Nature of Effect is considered independently to the calculation of Level of Effect. Mitigation can change the Nature of Effect post development, with the aim being to lower the Magnitude of Effect and reduce Adverse effects as far as possible, ideally through mitigation measures that have a Positive effect on landscape and/or visual resources.

3. LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 The following policy has been taken from the planning documents which are pertinent to the development of the site. The following policy extracts and, where applicable, excerpts of explanatory text, are relevant to the application. The policies listed will be used to guide the assessment and the mitigation strategy for the proposed development.

3.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.2.1 Originally published in March 2012, with the most recent revision being in September 2023, the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Of particular relevance to this assessment is Section 15. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, specifically paragraph 174, which states that "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by":

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

and:

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

3.2.2 Furthermore, in terms of the protection given to designated landscapes Section 15, paragraphs 176 and 177, state:

Paragraph 176

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. 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.

Paragraph 177

When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- ***a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy***
- ***b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and***
- ***c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.***

3.2.3 Also of relevance to this project is Section 12. Achieving Well-designed Places, specifically paragraph 130, which states:

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that 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.***

3.3 COTSWOLDS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018-2023

3.4.1 The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds AONB for the period 2018-2023. The Management Plan has two primary purposes:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB.
2. To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.

3.4.2 It contains a number of policies which aim to conserve and enhance the landscape character, scenic quality and geological features of the Cotswolds AONB. Relevant to the application site, these include:

POLICY CE1 LANDSCAPE:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location, as described by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines.

2. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views – including those into and out of the AONB – and visual amenity are conserved and enhanced.

3. Landscape character should be a key component of future agri-environment, land management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds AONB.

4. Rural skills training and the utilisation of those skills – such as dry stone walling, traditional woodland management and hedgelaying – will be promoted, to ensure the long-term retention, creation and management of the key features of the Cotswolds AONB landscape.

POLICY CE3 LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce this local distinctiveness. This should include:

- ***being compatible with the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change;***
- ***being designed and, where relevant, landscaped to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials;***
- ***using an appropriate colour of limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.***

2. Innovative designs – which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale – should be welcomed.

3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board – will be encouraged.

4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the AONB. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the special qualities of the AONB or integrity of existing wildlife sites.

POLICY CE4 TRANQUILLITY:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to this tranquillity, by seeking to (i) avoid and(ii) minimise noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

2. Measures should be taken to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance.

POLICY CE5 DARK SKIES:

1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise light pollution.

2. Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the Cotswolds AONB by (i) removing and (ii) reducing existing sources of light pollution.

3. Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds AONB that are least affected by light pollution.

3.4 COTSWOLD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031

3.4.1 Adopted by Cotswold District Council in August 2018, the Local Plan the planning policy framework for the District for the period up to 2031 in order to ensure that any proposed development is of a high standard and is compatible with the character and visual qualities of the area. Set out below are policies relevant to this LVIA (*note: only relevant extracts are included*).

POLICY EC6 CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS:

The conversion of rural buildings to alternative uses will be permitted provided:

a. the building is structurally sound, suitable for and capable of conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension or re-building;

b. it would not cause conflict with existing farming operations, including severance or disruption to the holding that would prejudice its continued viable operation; and c. the development proposals are compatible with extant uses on the site and existing and planned uses in close proximity to the site.

POLICY EN2 DESIGN OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT:

Development will be permitted which accords with the Cotswold Design Code (Appendix D). Proposals should be of design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality.

POLICY EN4 THE WIDER NATURAL AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE:

1. Development will be permitted where it does not have a significant detrimental impact on the natural and historic landscape (including the tranquillity of the countryside) of Cotswold District or neighbouring areas.

2. Proposals will take account of landscape and historic landscape character, visual quality and local distinctiveness. They will be expected to enhance, restore and better manage the natural and historic landscape, and any significant landscape features and elements, including key views, the setting of settlements, settlement patterns and heritage assets.

POLICY EN5 COTSWOLDS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB):

1. In determining development proposals within the AONB or its setting, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and special qualities will be given great weight.

2. Major development will not be permitted within the AONB unless it satisfies the exceptions set out in national Policy and Guidance.

POLICY EN8 BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY: FEATURES, HABITATS AND SPECIES:

1. Development will be permitted that conserves and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity, providing net gains where possible.

2. Proposals that would result in significant habitat fragmentation and loss of ecological connectivity will not be permitted.

3. Proposals that reverse habitat fragmentation and promote creation, restoration and beneficial management of ecological networks, habitats and features will be permitted, particularly in areas

subject to landscape-scale biodiversity initiatives. Developer contributions may be sought in this regard.

4. Proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats and resources, or which are likely to have an adverse effect on internationally protected species, will not be permitted.

5. Development with a detrimental impact on other protected species and species and habitats "of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity" will not be permitted unless adequate provision can be made to ensure the conservation of the species or habitat.

APPENDIX D – COTSWOLD DESIGN CODE: KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS:

D.67 Key design considerations include the following:

	Development proposal	Key considerations
5.	**Barn conversions** ***In designing a barn conversion the aim should be to preserve the traditional agricultural appearance of the building, and the contribution it makes to the surrounding landscape.***	***a. Barn conversions should be designed sympathetically. A scheme should work around the building, rather than the building being subjected to unnecessary changes. Often a creative approach is required.*** ***b. Barns and other historic agricultural structures should be conserved, and converted where appropriate, in their existing or original form, maintaining their traditional construction.*** ***c. Extensions should be very limited and should not change the overall massing and form of the historic buildings.*** ***d. The building should be capable of conversion without extension or any significant degree of re-building.*** ***e. New openings in exterior walls should be avoided, preserving the often blank character of the walls of many barns and other traditional agricultural structures.*** ***f. Use should be made of existing openings. New glazing should be recessed within these, and should be of a simple, functional design, avoiding domestic styles.*** ***g. Screens within large threshing barn openings should be deeply recessed. Screens within open fronted animal shelter or cart shed structures should be set back to the rear of, and generally detached from, the columns or posts.***

		h. Sometimes new narrow ventilation slit type openings or new small, square pigeon-hole type openings may be permissible. ***i. New openings in the style of single doorways or pitching doors (typically in gable end walls) are occasionally permissible.*** ***j. Roof slopes are typically unbroken expanses of stone slate or blue slate. Sometimes the absolute minimum of modestly scaled, flush set conservation style rooflights is permissible.*** ***k. Dormers should be avoided altogether, as well as other features typical of domestic buildings, such as chimneys, conservatories and porches.*** ***l. l. In minimising new external openings, and maximising natural light to rooms from existing openings, it is usually most appropriate to maintain an open plan to much of the interior of a barn. Smaller rooms might be housed in existing attached structures, and use might be made of galleried mezzanine floors.***

3.4.2 Beyond their relevance to landscape character, historic environment designations have not been considered further in this report, as despite some third party comments in objecting to the proposals, none of the buildings have been formally identified as either designated or non-designated heritage assets. Therefore Policies EN1, EN12 and EN13, as well as Appendix G of the Local Plan, have not been considered further here. This matter can be dealt with by a suitably qualified heritage consultant if later requested by the relevant authorities.

4. BASELINE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL STUDY

4.1 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

4.1.1 The site lies in the countryside, approximately 1.6 km to the north of the small Cotswold village of Withington, to the east of a minor rural road (Withington Road) that links Withington with the A436 and other small settlements to the north. The land surrounding the site is largely open arable farmland broken up in places by a pattern of woodland, riparian vegetation, copses, shelter belts and plantations, with pockets of small-scale settlement, although there are vast areas of land to the west, south west and south east associated with equestrian uses.

4.1.2 The land lies within a broad lowland river valley, enclosed by substantially wooded ridges to the west and east beyond which the pattern of farmland continues. Within the valley floor, despite a larger-scale, more open landscape, the woodlands, copses, riparian vegetation, wooded former railway embankments and some well-treed hedgerows combine to have a visually coalescing effect that restricts visibility and limits longer distance views across the landscape. Conversely, elevated views from the ridges allow views across the valley below, leading to a change in visual character that contrasts with the valley floor.

4.1.3 The site itself consists of a former farm complex, now unused and falling into disrepair, that lies centrally within a surrounding landscape of arable fields. These fields around the application site are within the applicant's ownership. The access track leading up from the minor road to the west is also within the applicant's ownership, and forms part of the application site therefore. This track, at its entrance, also provides permitted access to Northfield Cottages.

4.1.4 There are no public rights of way through the application site, nor on its boundaries. There is a network of public footpaths and bridleways beyond the site's immediate environs, including Footpaths 18, 19 & 21, and Bridleways 17 and 20. Some of these are poorly waymarked, occasionally impassable and in places have been diverted away from the definitive route around equestrian grazing paddocks. Generally there is very little visibility from the local PRoW network, the exception being longer-distance elevated views from the south-east and east (footpaths 21 and 8), and from a short section of Bridleway 20 to the south (again from a long distance). The receptor experience for these public rights of way is captured in the representative viewpoints below (see Section 5.2 – Visual Assessment)

4.1.5 There are no designated heritage assets that are intervisible with the application site, nor does the site lie within the established setting for any of these.

4.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4.2.1 The following Landscape Character Assessments have been used to establish the baseline character of study area:

- National Character Area (NCA) 107 - 'Cotswolds'
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment
- Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA PROFILES

4.2.2 In 2012, Natural England, as part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, revised the National Character Area Profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience. The site and entire study area fall within NCA 129: Thames Basin Heaths.

NATIONAL LEVEL (1:250,000 SCALE) NCA: 107. Cotswolds

4.2.3 In 1996, Natural England (then the Countryside Commission and English Nature) undertook a project to define the character of England, and produced joint character maps which became the Character of England Map. As part of its responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England is currently revising its National Character Area (NCA) profiles. To this end revised profiles for each of the 159 areas were to be published by April 2014. The site remains in (National) Character Area 107: Cotswolds. The full revised profile of NCA 107 (NE 420) was published in 2015, and sets out key characteristics for the area, which it summarises as:

> ***'the best-known section of the predominantly oolitic Jurassic Limestone belt that stretches from the Dorset coast to Lincolnshire. The dominant pattern of the Cotswold landscape is of a steep scarp crowned by a high, open wold; the beginning of a long and rolling dip slope cut by a series of increasingly wooded valleys. The scarp provides a backdrop to the major settlements of Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud and Bath and provides expansive views across the Severn and Avon Vales to the west.'***
>
> ***It continues:***

'The limestone creates a strong sense of place and unity which carries through to the buildings and walls which have been built using local limestone for centuries. The distinctive character of the area is reflected in its designation as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with sixty five percent of the NCA being covered by this designation.

Important habitats include unimproved limestone grassland along the scarp, for example Rodborough Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and wet meadows with alder and willow and springline flushes. Two further SAC are also designated: Cotswold Beechwoods SAC and Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. Steeply-incised stream and river valleys cut through the north-westfacing scarp, flowing westwards towards the Severn. The watercourses of the dip slope provide the headwaters of the Thames and flow eastwards within broad shallow valleys, and these rivers and underlying aquifer are an important supply of high-quality water for populations within and around the area.

The area has a rich history, with nationally and internationally important evidence of prehistoric, Roman, medieval and later settlement in the form of archaeological sites, historic buildings and the wider historic landscape. Roman roads are prominent, including the Fosse Way which extends from north to south through the whole area. It is a notable visitor destination and has a longstanding reputation as the 'quintessential English landscape'.

4.2.4 As smaller-scale studies (generally 1:25,000 to 1:50,000 scale), the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and the later Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (adopted June 2016) have been used in this appraisal as a more appropriate up-to-date sources of baseline information to assist in describing the landscape character and sensitivity of the site's receiving landscape, and to determine its contribution to landscape character and elements or features which define the wider landscape. Only information pertaining to the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in which the site is located has been set out. Due to the geographical extent of individual LCAs, some of the listed information may not be wholly relevant to the site and its receiving landscape. Only information pertaining to the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and Landscape Character Types (LCTs) in which the site is located has been listed. Due to the extent of individual LCAs/LCTs, some of the listed information may not be wholly relevant to the site and surrounding landscape.

LOCAL/REGIONAL LEVEL Cotswold AONB Landscape Character Assessment

4.2.5 In October 2002 the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership together with the Countryside Agency appointed Landscape Design Associates (LDA) to carry out a Landscape Character Assessment of the Cotswolds AONB with supporting Guidelines. The resulting Cotswolds

AONB Landscape Character Assessment subsequently formed the basis for character type (LCT) descriptions in the ensuing Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines which was adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 2016, and forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. The landscape character across the Cotswolds AONB is subdividing it into 19 landscape character types and 68 landscape character areas. The application site and study area falls wholly within landscape character type (LCT) 8: 'High Wold Valley, and within landscape character area (LCA) 8D: 'Upper Coln Valley'.

4.2.6 LCT 8 describes broad, shallow headwater valleys that dissect the High Wold. These have extensive areas of predominantly broadleaved woodland which cloak the valley sides, and areas of open land of mainly grassland pasture with pockets of arable that also extend along the valley floors. The valleys are sheltered and visually contained, giving a general impression of intimacy. Villages occupy secluded locations in the valley bottoms or sides, whilst farmsteads can be found in the more open sections, often linked to farms in the High Wold. Communication routes are generally confined to a single road that runs along the bottom of each valley, with other routes cutting across. The LCT is described as having the following key landscape characteristics, some of which are in evidence within the study area:

- ***'Predominantly dry or ephemeral flow headwater valleys with generally broad valley form and shallow slope profiles forming a rolling gently dissected landform.***
- ***Incised valley form below heads of valleys with often steep, convoluted valley sides dissected by minor watercourses and distinctive convex profile at transition with the High***
- ***Wold and forming dramatic landscape features and contrast to the open landscapes characteristic of the neighbouring High Wold.***
- ***Sections with pronounced valley form meanders with distinctive interlocking spurs, disproportionate to size of rivers and streams indicative of valley formation and conditions prevalent during the glacial periods.***
- ***Extensive areas of predominantly broadleaved woodland cloaking sections of the valley sides, particularly across the steeper sections, create visual containment and add to the secluded, secretive character of many stretches of the valleys.***
- ***Areas of open pastoral farmland extend between the wooded slopes, and along valley bottoms, together with pockets of arable land, particularly on the shallower slopes indicative of a well-settled and long farmed landscape.***
- ***Pasture predominantly comprises improved grassland, together with occasional remnants of unimproved and calcareous grasslands of nationally important nature conservation value***
- ***Intermittent stone villages occupying secluded locations in valley bottoms, often in association with a bridging point, indicate a long history of settlement in the valleys.***

- ***Occasional farmsteads and isolated buildings within the more open valley sections link to farmed areas on the adjacent High Wold.***
- ***Occasional private parklands and gardens associated with country houses add to the wooded and historic character of the valleys.***
- ***Limited road network within valleys generally confined to a single valley bottom road, or routes that cross the valley maintain a quiet, secluded and rural character in the valleys.***
- ***Deeply incised and inaccessible wooded slopes extend across some valley sections, and provide important habitats for wildlife.'***

4.2.7 The descriptions for the Upper Coln Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA 8D) include a number of characteristics which are relevant to the Northfield Farm and its environs. Thes include the following extracts:

> ***'North of Withington the most significant areas of woodland occupy the upper valley slopes, steep landform and riverside locations. These tend to be ancient broadleaved woodlands although coniferous planting is also significant.'***
>
> ***'Between areas of woodland the valley sides are managed as improved pasture and divided up by a network of hedgerows. On areas of gentler landform arable farming is also evident although this is not prevalent. The floor of the valley is flat and represents a narrow alluvial floodplain through which the Coln meanders gracefully.'***
>
> ***'The landscape retains a strong rural character. The main settlements in the area are Withington, which straddles the Coln, and Compton Abdale, located at the head of one of its main tributary valleys. Beyond these settlements the landscape is sparsely settled with a small number of isolated farms located throughout the landscape. These are generally sited along lanes off the main arterial routes through the valley***.'

4.2.8 There are very few areas within the Character Area where habitats are sufficiently important or rare enough to receive a formal designation. Locally, there are pockets of Priority Habitat Inventory deciduous woodland, including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland at Cleevely Wood to the east of the site, and a large swathe of good quality semi-improved grassland new Ravenswick Farm to the south. The impact of these designations on landscape character is of local significance, but nonetheless will be unaffected by the proposals.

Local Forces for Change

4.2.9 The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2016) highlights local 'forces for change' in each LCT. For LCT 8 these include:

- ***[8.2] Isolated development such as new single dwellings and conversion of farm buildings that might compromise rural landscape character and settlement patterns, particularly on valley sides, including farm buildings converted to residential use.***

  POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE IMPLICATIONS:

  - ***Visual intrusions introduced to the landscape***
  - ***Upgrading of minor roads and lanes in areas of new development and introduction of suburbanising features such as gateways, kerbs and street lighting.***
  - ***Introduction of 'lit' elements to characteristically dark landscapes.***
  - ***Suburbanisation and domestication of the agricultural landscape by the introduction of gardens e.g ornamental garden plants and boundary features, parking areas, lighting and conversion of tracks to manicured drives and ornamental gateways***
  - ***Loss of green space between built up areas on the valley slopes that often provide a green backdrop to settlements in the valley***
  - ***Appearance and proliferation of stables and 'white tape' field boundaries for horses and ponies – see 8.5 below***
  - ***Appearance of 'mini parklands' out of context with the surrounding landscape***
  - ***Loss of tranquillity.***

Landscape Strategies and Guidelines

4.2.10 The study sets out a number of landscape strategies and guidelines for each LCT, which respond to forces for change and their potential landscape implications. Relevant to those outlined above, the following strategies and guidelines have been considered in this case:

- ***Conserve the distinctive rural and dispersed settlement pattern.***
- ***Avoid isolated development, that will intrude negatively into the landscape and cannot be successfully mitigated.***
- ***Oppose new housing in the countryside (unless special circumstances apply in accordance with Paragraph 55 of the NPPF and development conserves and enhances the AONB as required by the CRoW Act 2000***
- ***Avoid conversion of isolated farm buildings***
- ***Conserve areas of dark skies and dark valley slopes***
- ***Restore existing stone farm buildings and structures in preference to new built development.***

- ***Where restored or converted to new uses buildings must retain their historic integrity and functional character. Sound conservation advice and principles must be sought and implemented***
- ***Prevent the use of suburban building styles and materials.***
- ***Landscaping schemes accompanying development should encourage the planting of appropriately sized native trees, shrubs and traditional fruit varieties, whilst discouraging large alien species such as eucalypts and conifers and inappropriate cultivars of native species, particularly on fringes of open countryside.***
- ***Respect traditional position of agricultural buildings and their relationship to the surrounding land.***

4.2.11 The proposals are assessed against these strategies and guidelines in Section 5.1 below.

4.3 THE STUDY AREA

4.3.1 Topographically, the dominant landform features are the broad lowland valley and the pronounced hillsides to the west and east. The valley floor is low-lying with a very slightly undulating landform through which the River Coln meanders. This, combined with a high degree of tree cover, creates a flat landscape with high level of visual containment within the valley floor, and contrasts with the more significant open views from the enclosing high ground. The highest point within the study area is located to the west of Thorndale Farm at Foxcote Hill where the OS map shows a spot height of 295m AOD. From here the landscape dips steadily eastwards to around 155m AOD around the Coln River valley floor, before gently rising again towards the hillside around Ravenswell Farm, which lies at approximately 200m AOD. Mattingley which is largely contained within the 65m contour. Withington lies beyond a shallow hill to the south, and no areas with elevated views within the village with across the landscape to the north. The village is generally contained below the 170m contour with the centre of the village lying at <160m AOD.

4.3.2 Although south of the 'southern limit of glaciation', at each retreat of the ice caps, the considerable increase in river discharge arising from glacial meltwater streams would have scoured the existing valleys within the relatively smooth surface of the Dip-Slope and carved deeper and more incised valley profiles resulting in the distinctive valley form meanders that are evident today. While the incised valley forms and pronounced valley meanders remain, they are now occupied by 'underfit' rivers and streams with a much depleted discharge capacity and evidence of ephemeral flow. This was evidenced during the fieldwork which was conducted during an extended period of no rainfall.

4.3.3 The soil types present within the study area broadly reflect the underlying geology of the area, with shallow lime-rich soils supporting grassland. A large portion of the study area, including the site

itself has been identified as Agricultural Land Classification Grade 3, with areas of Grade 4 to the east of the study area on the hillsides around Cleevely Wood.

4.3.4 The prevailing landuse is agricultural, with medium and large-sized post-rationalisation regular-shaped fields predominantly, with predominantly arable and usage. There are some smaller irregular-shaped enclosures adjacent to the River, which are likely medieval in origin, and which support grassland. Some of these have been bisected by the former railway corridor. There are substantial swathes of grazing paddocks associated with large equestrian businesses across much of the study area. In places these have associated gallops.

4.3.5 The landscape within the study area is settled by small pockets of residential development as well as larger equestrian and agricultural landholdings. Extensive woodland swathes, some of which being ancient or replanted ancient woodland, break up the landscape in all directions, but particularly to the east (Cleevely Wood), on the ridge to the west (notably Upcote Plantation and Foxcote Plantation), and along the river and former railway corridor.

4.3.6 Access through the study area is provided by Wilington Road - a minor road aling the valley floor, from which access to individual landholdings and residential properties is provided via tracks and private drives.

4.3.7 The study area is has a PRoW network consisting of several footpaths and bridleways. In most instances these connect with Withington Road creating a broadly accessible landscape. Some of these footpaths are poorly waymarked, and occasionally use a route that differs to the Definitive Rights of Way Map. There are no long-distance recreational routes (long-distance footpaths), within the study area, and no named viewing points.

4.4 BASELINE ANALYSIS

4.4.1 The findings of the desk study and field survey have been used to determine the landscape value of the study area, and subsequently identify specific landscape and visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development. The effect of the development on these receptors has been calculated, leading to an overall determination of Significance of Effect on both the landscape resource and the visual amenity of the study area.

4.4.2 It should be noted that, whilst specific receptors have been identified for consideration, this does not necessarily mean that they will be significantly and/or adversely affected by the proposals. Moreover, where there are Significant and/or Adverse effects on specific receptors, this does not mean that there will be Significant Adverse effects on the study area as a whole.

KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITIES

4.4.3 The Cotswold AONB Landscape Strategies and Guidelines identify the High Wold Valleys as being ***'sensitive to developments that might interrupt the sense of seclusion within them and their rural, pastoral character'.***

4.4.4 However, the proposals will have no bearing on the confined landform and steep slopes within the valleys which, together with many areas of nature conservation interest (including riparian and riverine habitats and areas of ancient woodland), might otherwise form a further constraint to development.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

4.4.5 The application site comprises a disused farm complex (and its access track) in a rural area, surrounded by arable land. The site's landscape setting is of high scenic quality, with views across a lowland river valley towards wooded valley sides, and a high degree of intervisiblity between the higher land. The farm complex is not attractive in its own right, however, does not contain designated or non-designated heritage assets, and the buildings have entered disrepair. Without intervention, the sense of dilapidation will increase over time and will become a feature that detracts from landscape quality.

4.4.6 The wider receiving landscape of the study area is overtly rural and includes small pockets of development, including clusters of residential development or individual houses, farmsteads and equestrian properties. The scenic quality of the receiving landscape is judged to be high, evidenced by its inclusion within the AONB boundary, and the network of footpaths within this area gives the landscape a high potential for recreational value.

4.4.7 The study area contains landscape elements or features which are characteristic of the Upper Coln Valley landscape character area, including a broad valley topography, wooded upper-valley slopes, the disused railway and the retained strong rural character. Whilst these features have little rarity value *per se* they are nonetheless significant for their scenic quality and contribute strongly to

local character and a sense of place and the landscape of the study area is therefore representative of the wider Upper Coln Valley.

4.4.8 There are no listed buildings in the study area, and the application site does not contribute to the setting of any listed heritage assets. There is a distant scheduled monument at Foxcote Hill which is not intervisible with the site, and the proposals will not affect the settings of this.

4.4.9 Given the factors described above, the wider rural landscape within the study area is overall in good condition and of high quality and is assessed as being of National value due to its location within an AONB.

4.4.10 Overall the value of the appraisal site and its receiving landscape is assessed as is *High*, which means that it is a 'valued landscape' *per se* under Section 15, Paragraph 174, Bullet Point a), of the NPPF.

LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

4.4.11 The following landscape receptors have been identified as elements of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by the proposals:

- The disused agricultural complex.
- The established landscape components which define the landscape in which the site is located (i.e. that which contributes to local distinctiveness, the Upper Coln Valley LCA and the special qualities of the AONB).
- The established/characteristic land use of the site as part of the wider study area (overall site character).

VISUAL RECEPTORS

4.4.12 The following visual receptors locations have been identified as having potential intervisibility with the proposals:

- Footpaths 19, 21 and 8.
- Bridleways 17 and 20.
- Withington Road (Minor Road) west of the application site.

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 The Landscape Value of the study area as a whole is *High* as implied by its inclusion within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Nationally Protected Landscape), which confers a national statutory landscape designation onto the landscape. The application site occupies a former (now disused) farm complex, with little vegetation cover on its periphery, save for a small area of early mature scrub on its north western corner (previous coniferous shelter belts around the complex were removed due to storm damage risk).

5.1.2 The *overall sensitivity* of the dilapidated (and partially disused) barns and the application site itself is considered *Low*, whereby it has a moderate to high capacity to accommodate the development proposals for conversion to residential use. The application site has an established built form context, and the proposals will not see a net decrease in this on-site development. The application site's modern era agricultural buildings are at risk of falling into further dilapidation and, with the exception of the removal of the largest modern portal-framed barn, the proposals will retain a complex of buildings with a strong visual link to their past agricultural use through their massing and proposed materials. The *magnitude of change* within this context is assessed as *slight*, with a high-quality design that incorporates a sympathetic use of appropriate external building finishes, carefully considered fenestration and minimal additions to existing built form.

5.1.3 Within the wider landscape, which has an *overall sensitivity* that is considered *High* in the context of its contribution to local distinctiveness and landscape character and the special qualities of the National Landscape, the conversion of the disused farm complex will have a *magnitude of change* assessed as *slight*: the application site lies within a low density of dispersed settlement, characterised by scattered farmsteads, mostly of 19th-20th century origin, and the proposals will retain the scale, structure and form of the existing farmstead, whilst preventing its further dilapidation and without unduly affecting specific elements or features defined as a key characteristic of the LCA, including its sense of seclusion and its rural, pastoral character.

5.1.4 Due to the nature of the proposed development (*i.e.* the conversion of disused agricultural buildings), whilst post-development the site will depart from the established baseline character, and introduce a new small and discreet residential development into a settled farmed landscape, with no net increase of on-site built form, the effect of this should be balanced against the conversion and

preservation of the farm complex – in particular the older two stone-built barns – which otherwise may fall into further dilapidation and become a despoiling feature in the landscape.

5.1.5 There will be no material effects on the historic landscape where the site does not form part of the setting (nor is it intervisible with) any listed buildings, scheduled monuments or other designated heritage assets.

5.1.6 Aside from some wider reaching landscaping proposals, the scheme will not extend beyond the existing farm complex, with no changes required to access, and the small area of boundary vegetation will be retained and supplemented with an appropriate scheme of native tree and mixed native hedgerow planting. The landscape proposals include the reinstatement of two grubbed-out native hedgerows into the valley floor, as well as strengthening roadside hedgerows where required. These with have a positive impact on biodiversity net gain, will confirm to the AONB guidance to restore the landscape, and will therefore make a positive contribution to the setting of the National Landscape (AONB).

5.1.7 The development proposals will not unduly conflict with the relevant key land management and land use and development guidelines set out in the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2016).

- The proposals will not be in conflict with the rural and dispersed settlement pattern: the proposals utilise existing built form massing and footprints, without adding to their mass or scale, and reflect other pockets of development in the area.
- The proposals will not intrude into the landscape and will be accompanied by a scheme of landscape mitigation and enhancements.
- The proposals are not unduly isolated, but lie to the north of Withington close to established residential properties at Northfield Cottages and Thornhill.
- The proposals occupy a former working farm complex that will have had external flood lighting, with late night operations – particularly during harvest time. The proposals can mitigate for light spill and light pollution with appropriate low emittance glazing, shutters, automatic blinds and low-level external lighting. This will protect the intrinsic dark skies and conform to Policy CE5.
- The proposals will avoid the use of suburban building styles and materials.

5.1.8 In particular, the proposals will not create visual intrusion to open views across the landscape, will not affect views to valued local landscape features and named views, and will not add development to the sky line.

5.1.9 In terms of the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect resulting from the proposals, any change must be considered in terms of the landscape components that will definitely be affected and those that will potentially be affected. The importance of these components as part of the wider landscape is also a consideration. Whilst the proposals will see a small, localised change in land use, it will not affect surrounding farm operations, and there will be no notable increase in on-site built form. As such, there will only be a minor change to the receiving landscape's baseline condition and the prevailing character of the wider landscape will remain largely unaffected. In terms of the landscape resource as a whole therefore, the Overall Magnitude of Landscape Effect is assessed as *Slight*. Given the high sensitivity of the study area's landscape, the development proposals have an Overall Level of Landscape Effect of *Moderate*.

5.1.10 The development will not be unduly prominent nor significantly detract from the surrounding landscape, with the proposals partially repurposing the existing farm buildings. However, whilst it cannot reasonably be argued that the magnitude of these changes will have an 'urbanising' effect, as the proposals represent a change in use and will introduce domestic houses into an agricultural landscape, the Overall Nature of Landscape Effect of the proposed development is considered *Adverse*. The overall predicted landscape effects are therefore assessed as *Moderate Adverse.*

5.2 VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.2.1 Recorded viewpoints can be used to predict possible effects from PRoWs, roads, publicly accessible areas and residential properties within the study area. Potential viewpoints are identified where the desk study suggests that the development proposals may be visible (*i.e.* views withing the proposal's 'zone of theoretical visibility' (ZTV)), but are also based on observations made during the field survey, to establish the proposal's actual 'visual envelope'. The recorded viewpoints are considered appropriate for the scale and nature of the development and the prevailing topography and land cover. All photographs were taken using a digital equivalent of a 50mm focal length traditional 35mm SLR lens to represent most accurately the views as seen by the human eye.

5.2.2 For the purpose of this appraisal, close-distance views are between 0m – 500m from the proposed development, medium views are between 500m – 1000m, and long views from further than

1000m. Where appropriate, specific viewpoints have been organised into groups to help better determine the visual impact of the proposed development. Views are representative and not totally exclusive. (See Appendix 2: Viewpoint Photographs for enlarged copies of the selected viewpoints).

5.2.3 The Viewpoints were visited in October 2023 when leaf cover was at its maximum. However, seasonal differences (seasonality), in respect of potential effects arising from the varying degree of screening/filtering of views by vegetation that will apply in summer or winter, have been considered in the appraisal of all recorded viewpoints, in accordance with the recommendations of GLVIA3. The selected viewpoints are identical to those selected during the original 2022 study, the fieldwork for which was conducted in August 2022 when leaf cover was at its maximum. The original selection od these viewpoints was partly in response to those selected by Peter Radmall in his *Representation of Landscape and Visual Matters* (April 2022).

5.2.4 It would appear that Ash Dieback is now more apparent than in August 2022, although this has a negligible material significance in the assessment of predicted visual effects in this instance.

5.2.5 Viewpoint photographs from the earlier field survey can be provided upon written request. It is important to note, however, that the recording of viewpoints during different seasons is NOT a prerequisite of the consideration of seasonality, as GLVIA3 states:

> ***The timing of the assessment work and the project programme will also influence the practicality of covering more than one season.***

Viewpoint 1: Long-distance view north towards Northfield Farm; taken from the minor road, close to the entrance to footpath informal diversion to Footpath 21 (KWG21).

Approximate distance from site: 1120m

OS map elevation: Between 155-160m AOD

Viewpoint 1

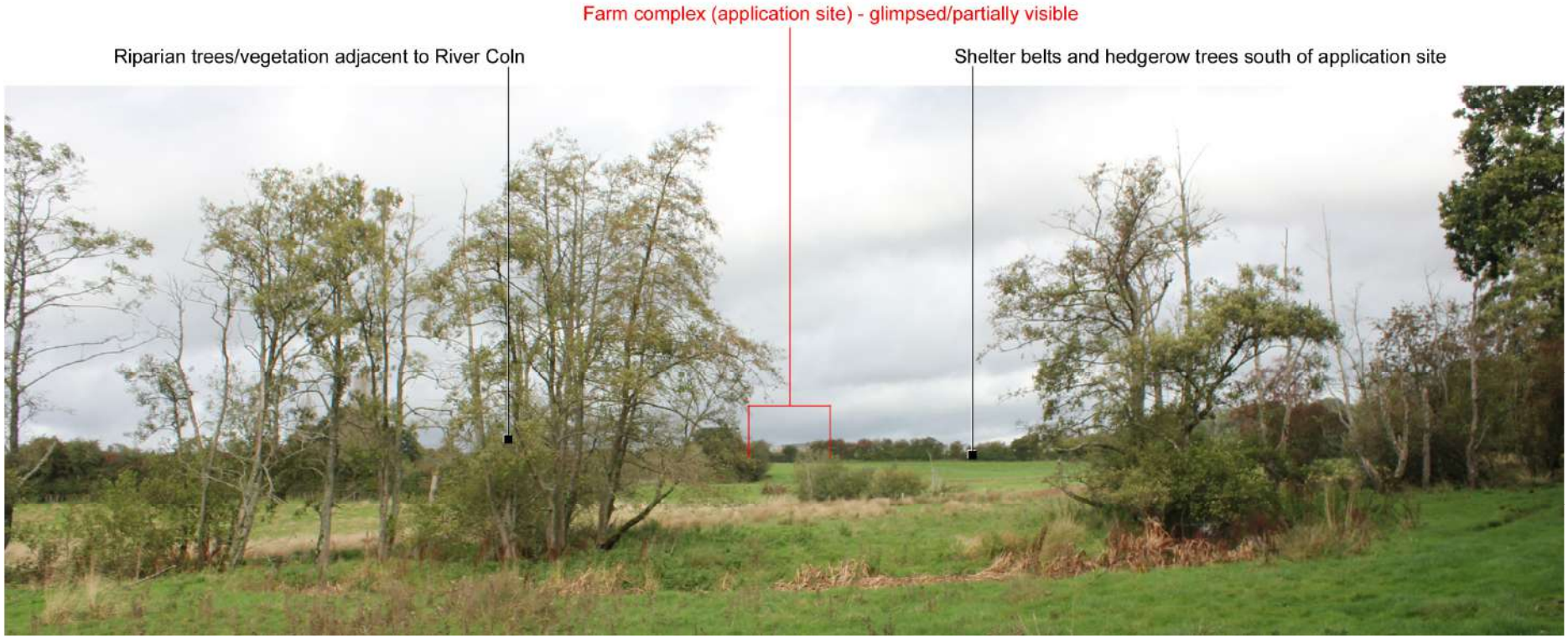
ASSESSMENT:	This viewpoint is representative of long-distance views north on approach from Withington. Primary receptors are therefore road users moving at speed through the landscape and who will only have glimpsed/transient views towards the application

	site. However, walkers accessing Footpath 21 will also use this section of road and, therefore, the overall sensitivity of the view is high. The landscape is relatively open, despite the level of tree cover, where the flat valley bottom allows views towards the wooded upper slopes of the valley sides. The existing buildings at Northfield farm can be seen briefly through the tree cover on the skyline, but are not prominent. The proposals, which retain the massing of the existing farm buildings, will result in little perceivable change to the view, although the removal of the large modern barn on the south-eastern corner of the site will reduce the prominence of the farm complex. In time, with further growth of intervening tree cover, the application site will become less visible, although it should be noted that advanced Ash Dieback is evident in some of the hedgerow trees. There will be a small amount of seasonal vegetation where Winter views will allow slightly more visibility of the site, although the seasonal difference will become less apparent with the continued growth of intervening vegetation. Additional appropriate mitigation planting to the south of the proposed development using native hedgerow species with hedgerow trees will further filter views, and with maturity may largely obscure the proposals, which are relatively low-lying in their setting.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor* reducing to *None* with mitigation.
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will not be readily visible as new features during summer or winter months, although the maturation of mitigation planting will result in a very small change to the overall visual character that will be in balance with the further growth of existing intervening vegetation. The Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral*.

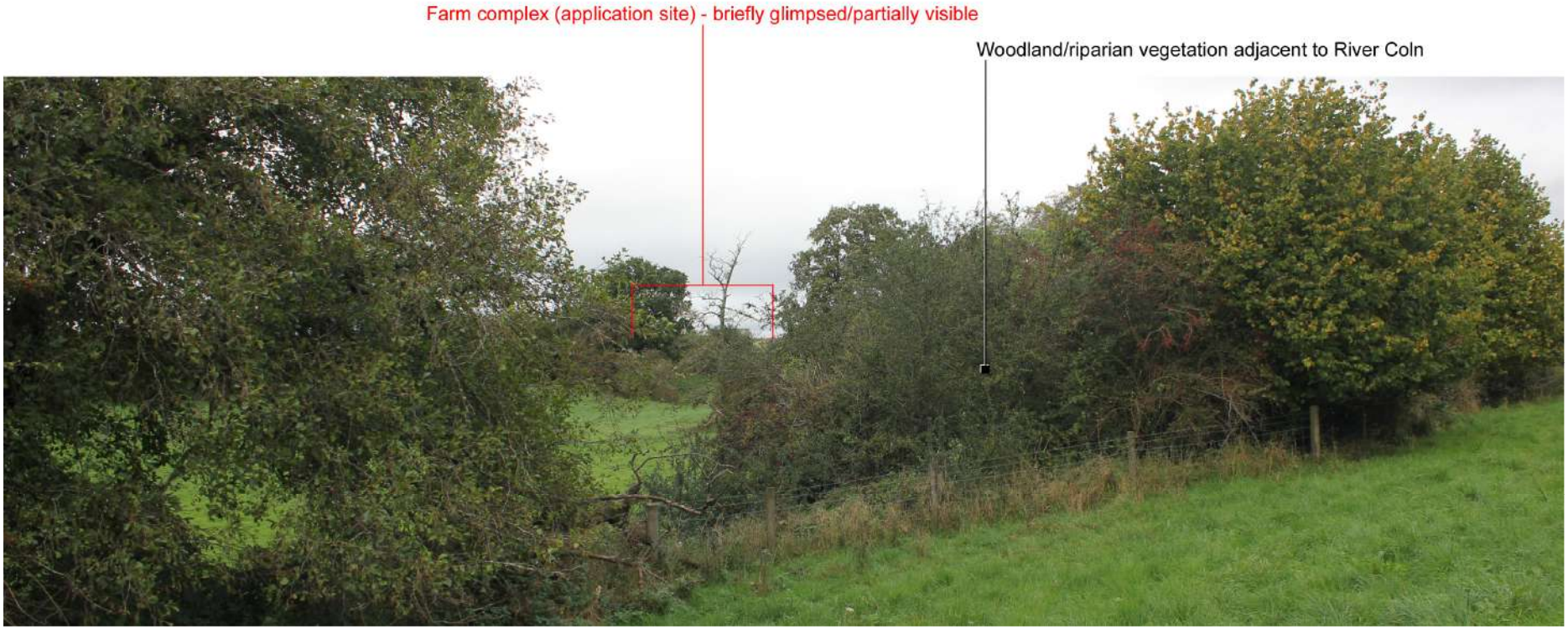
Viewpoints 2a, 2b & 2c: Medium-distance views north (VP2a), north-west (VP2b) and west (VP2c) towards the site; taken from Footpath 21 (KWG21) and Footpath 8 (KSN8).

Approximate distance from site: 965m (VP2a), 595m (VP2b) & 505m (VP2c)

OS map elevation: Between 150-155m AOD (VP2a), 155-160m AOD (VP2b), 160-165m AOD (VP2c)



Viewpoint 2a



Viewpoint 2b

Viewpoint 2c

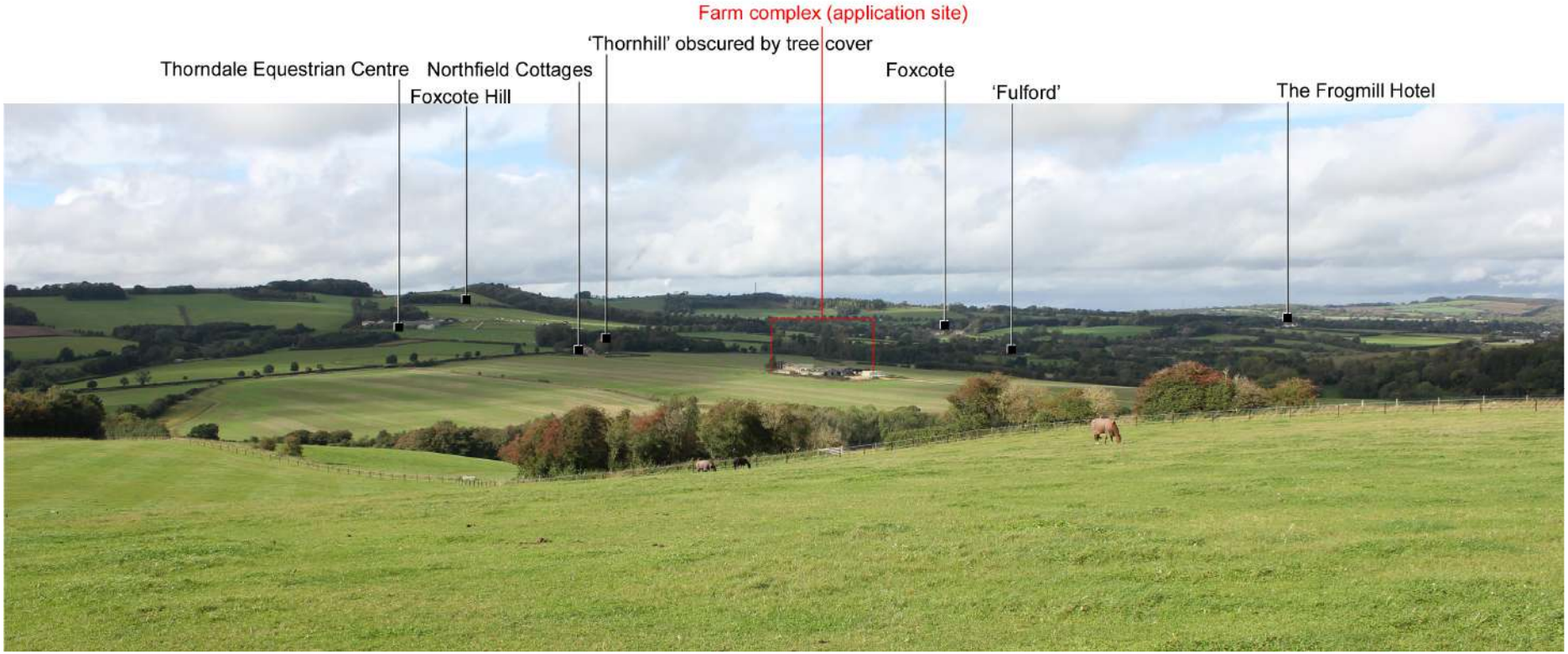
ASSESSMENT:	These viewpoints are representative of medium-distance views from Footpath 21 (and its continuation footpath 8 – VP2c). Primary receptors are therefore recreational walkers using this route who may have a more than passing interest in their surroundings and, therefore, the overall sensitivity of the view is high. Viewpoint 2a replicates a representative viewpoint (5) selected by Peter Radmall in his *Representation of Landscape and Visual Matters* (April 2022). For the vast majority of these footpaths there is no visibility of the application site due to intervening vegetation along the river and former railway corridor.

	The existing complex of buildings is very discreet in the landscape, with only a few glimpses of the upper section available through dense intervening vegetation. The proposals will be no more visible or prominent and, due to the considered design and use of external material finishes, the sections of glimpsed visible built form will not be readily perceived as being domestic in character, and therefore there will be no notable change to the baseline character. There will be little seasonal vegetation where neither Winter nor Summer views will be notably altered, although the addition of tree and hedgerow planting on the site's southern and eastern boundaries will further filter the proposals throughout the year, and with maturity will largely obscure the site throughout the year. The proposals are unlikely to be perceived by users of this footpath. Additional appropriate landscaping using native species may provide minor long-term enhancements to landscape structure and in time may obscure the proposals completely.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor*
NATURE OF EFFECT:	*Neutral*

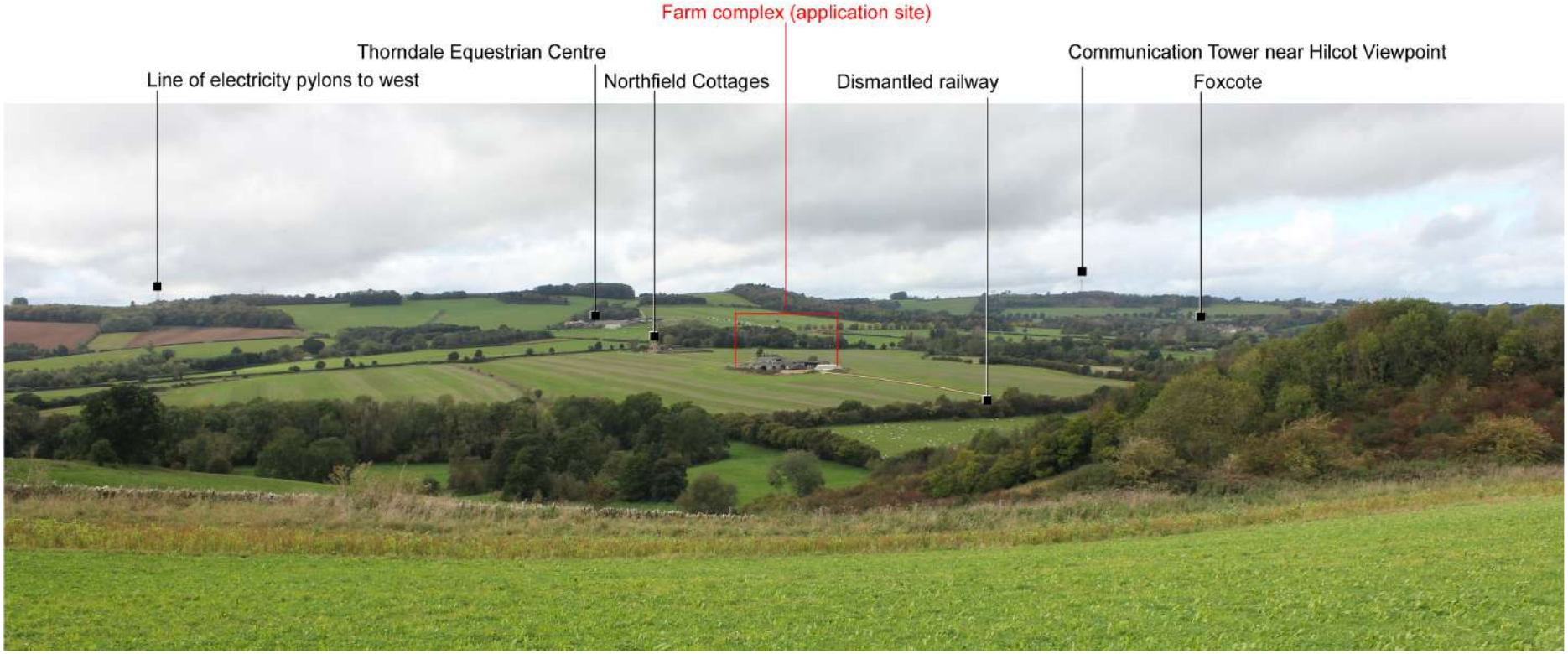
Viewpoints 3a, 3b & 3c: Medim and long-distance views northwest and west towards the site; taken from Footpath 22 (KWG22) and its continuation – Footpath 9 (KSN9)

Approximate distance from site: 955m (VP3a), 900m (VP3b) & 1050m (VP3c)

OS map elevation: Between 210-215m AOD (VP3a), 200-205m AOD (VP3b), 220-225m AOD (VP3c)



Viewpoint 3a



Viewpoint 3b

Viewpoint 3c

ASSESSMENT:	These viewpoints are representative of medium and long-distance views from Footpath 22 (KWG22) and its continuation – Footpath 9 (KSN9). Primary receptors are therefore recreational walkers using this route who may have a more than passing interest in their surroundings and, therefore, the overall sensitivity of the view is high. Viewpoint 3c replicates a representative viewpoint (6) selected by Peter Radmall in his *Representation of Landscape and Visual Matters* (April 2022). Peter Radnall's viewpoint appears to be taken from adjacent to the hedgerow in the foreground,

	which is actually not on the definitive footpath route. The viewpoint presented above is from the actual footpath route, and is therefore considered more accurately representative of the experience of sensitive receptors. For a substantial section of this route the existing complex of buildings can be seen clearly in the distance. The proposals, which will use the existing massing of the farm complex, will be no more visible or prominent, and at this distance may not be clearly perceived as being domestic in character, particularly when considering the carefully selected proposed external finish materials. Therefore, there will only be a small change to the baseline character. There will be little seasonal vegetation where neither Winter nor Summer views will be notably altered, although the addition of tree and hedgerow planting on the site's southern and eastern boundaries, will slightly filter the proposals throughout the year, and with maturity will partially obscure the site throughout the year, reinstating some of the landscape structure that changed when trees were felled to prevent storm damage (the previous shelter-belt was coniferous). The proposed reinstated hedgerows will also have a positive effect on the landscape by reducing the scale and expanse of arable land. The proposals may only result in very small perceived change by users of this footpath, and therefore there will be a negligible impact on overall landscape character. Additional appropriate landscaping using native species may provide minor long-term enhancements to landscape structure and in time partially obscure the site. However, the effect of any perceived change of the site from agricultural use to domestic housing, even if very slight, will be adverse in nature.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor*
NATURE OF EFFECT:	Due to the elevated nature of the views, and the available visibility of the site, the nature of effects are assessed as *Adverse*.

Viewpoints 4a, 4b, 4c & 4d: Close-distance views north-east, east and south-east towards the site; taken from the minor road west of the application site.

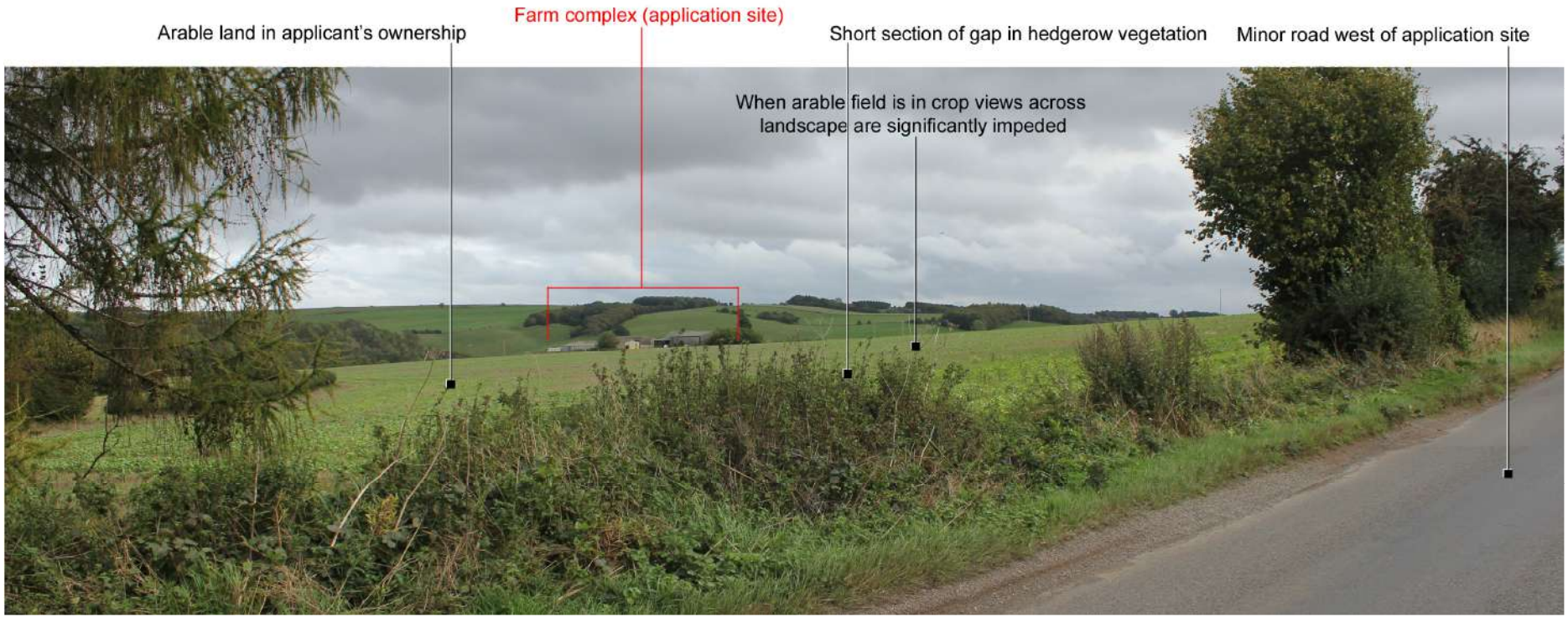
Approximate distance from site: 470m (VP4a), 440m (VP4b), 325 (VP4c) & 440m (VP4d)

OS map elevation: Between 170-175m AOD (VPs 4a & 4B) 180-185m AOD (VPs 4c & 4d)

Viewpoint 4a

Viewpoint 4b

Viewpoint 4c



Viewpoint 4d

ASSESSMENT:	These viewpoints are representative of close-distance views from the minor road (Withington Road) west of the application site. Viewpoints 4a and 4b are representative of views on approach from the south (Viewpoint 4a has been included to be consistent with Peter Radnall's View 3). Viewpoint 4c is adjacent to the site's entrance, whilst Viewpoint 4d is on approach from the north. Primary receptors are therefore road users in moving vehicles who will only have transient/glimpsed views towards the application site. However, walkers accessing the nearby footpaths may also use this section of road and, therefore, the overall sensitivity of the views are high.

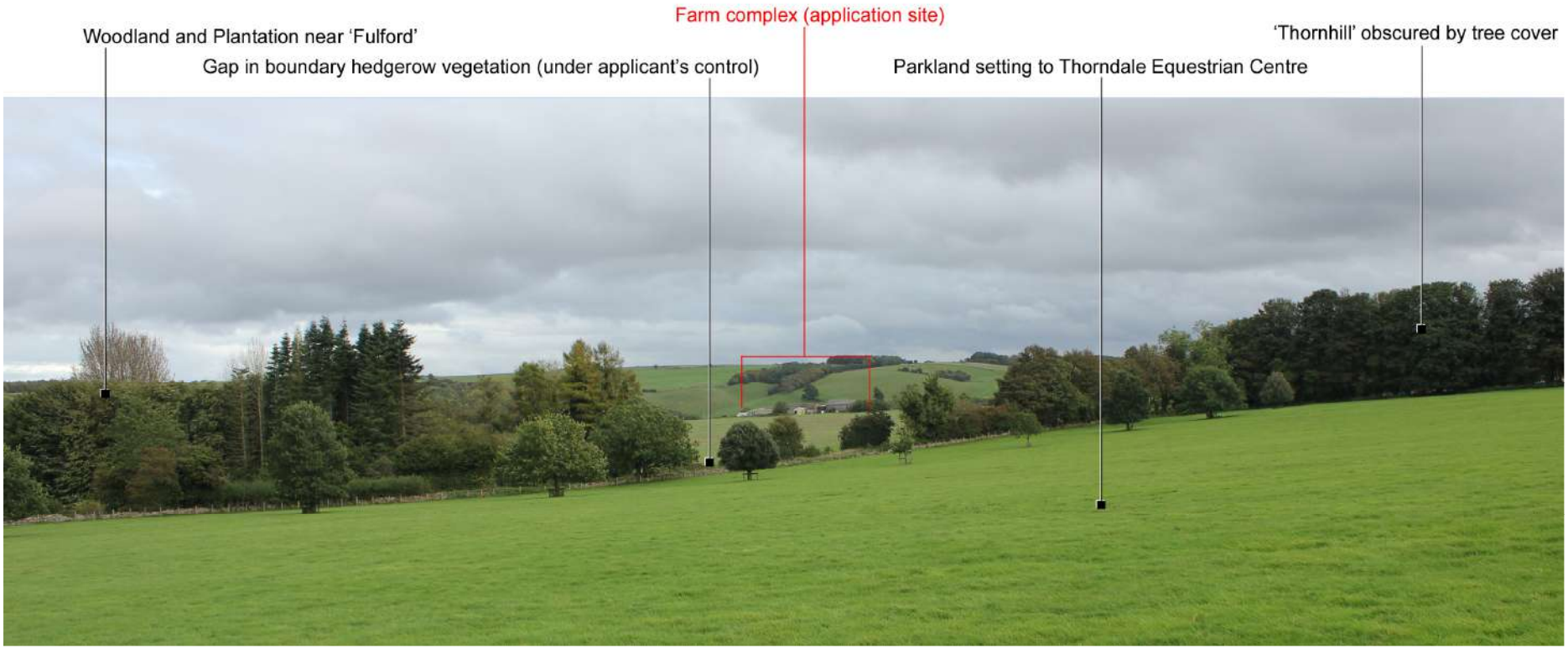
	Viewpoint 4c has been selected as a representative view in preference to that selected by Peter Radmall (View 1) in his *Representation of Landscape and Visual Matters* (April 2022). Peter Radnall's viewpoint appears to be taken from gateway on the access track – beyond the entrances to Northfield Cottages, and some distance from the Minor Road, and is therefore not representative of publicly accessible views. The existing farm complex is mostly obscured in views from the road by intervening tree and hedgerow cover, although in places (as represented by the Viewpoints to demonstrate a worse-case scenario) can be clearly seen in gaps in the roadside vegetation across the arable land. When the fields are in crop the views towards the site through these gaps will be significantly impeded however. Viewpoint 4c is seen in the context of adjacent residential development, and only allows a brief/fleeting view along the track towards the site. Whilst the re-use of the farm buildings massing will minimise the visual effect of the proposals, additional glazing may be perceived as an indication of a change of use to domestic housing. The proposals include the establishment of native hedgerows and trees around the farm complex and along former (grubbed-out) field boundaries – this will obscure much of the development and proposed private amenity space within the site. There will be little seasonal vegetation where neither Winter nor Summer views will not be notably altered, although the addition of tree and hedgerow planting on the former field boundaries (which are within the Applicant's control) will filter the proposals throughout the year, and with maturity will largely obscure the proposals during summer months/heavily filter them during the winter. The gapping up/reinstatement of roadside hedgerow vegetation (also within the applicant's ownership/control) will further obscure views across the arable land towards the application site.

IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Slight* **Level of Effect:** *Moderate*
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals may be perceived as a change of use during both summer and winter months, and this will affect a number of short sections of the minor road where there will be glimpsed views across the landscape towards the proposals. Landscape enhancements/mitigation will be effective in reducing this effect. Nonetheless, the Nature of Effect of the proposed development is assessed as *Adverse*.

Viewpoint 5: Medium-distance view south-east towards Northfield Farm; taken from Bridleway 17 (KWG17).

Approximate distance from site: 650m

OS map elevation: Between 185-190m AOD



Viewpoint 5

ASSESSMENT:	This viewpoint is representative of medium-distance views south-east from Bridleway 17 (which is the access road to Thorndale Farm). Primary receptors are therefore recreational walkers and horse-back riders using the ProW, as well as those accessing the Thorndale Farm, and visual sensitivity is high. The landscape is relatively open,

	although views across the valley are largely interrupted by roadside plantations that create a high level of tree cover in the mid-distance. The existing buildings at Northfield farm can be seen briefly through a gap in the tree cover, but are not prominent. The proposals, which used the existing farm buildings' massing, will result in little perceivable change to the view. In time, with further growth of intervening tree cover, the application site will become less visible. There will be a small amount of seasonal vegetation where Winter views will allow slightly more visibility of the site, although the seasonal difference will become less apparent with the continued growth of intervening vegetation. Additional appropriate mitigation planting on the western side of the application site using native species, in addition to the reinstated field hedgerow to the north, will filter views further, and with maturity may obscure the proposals entirely.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor* reducing to *None* with mitigation.
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will not be readily visible as new features during summer or winter months, although the maturation of mitigation planting will result in a very small positive change to the overall visual character that will be in balance with the further growth of existing intervening vegetation. The Nature of Effect of the proposed development is assessed as *Neutral*.

Viewpoint 6: Medium-distance view south-east towards site; taken from Footpath 19 (KWG198).

Approximate distance from site: 925m

OS map elevation: Between 200-205m AOD

Viewpoint 6

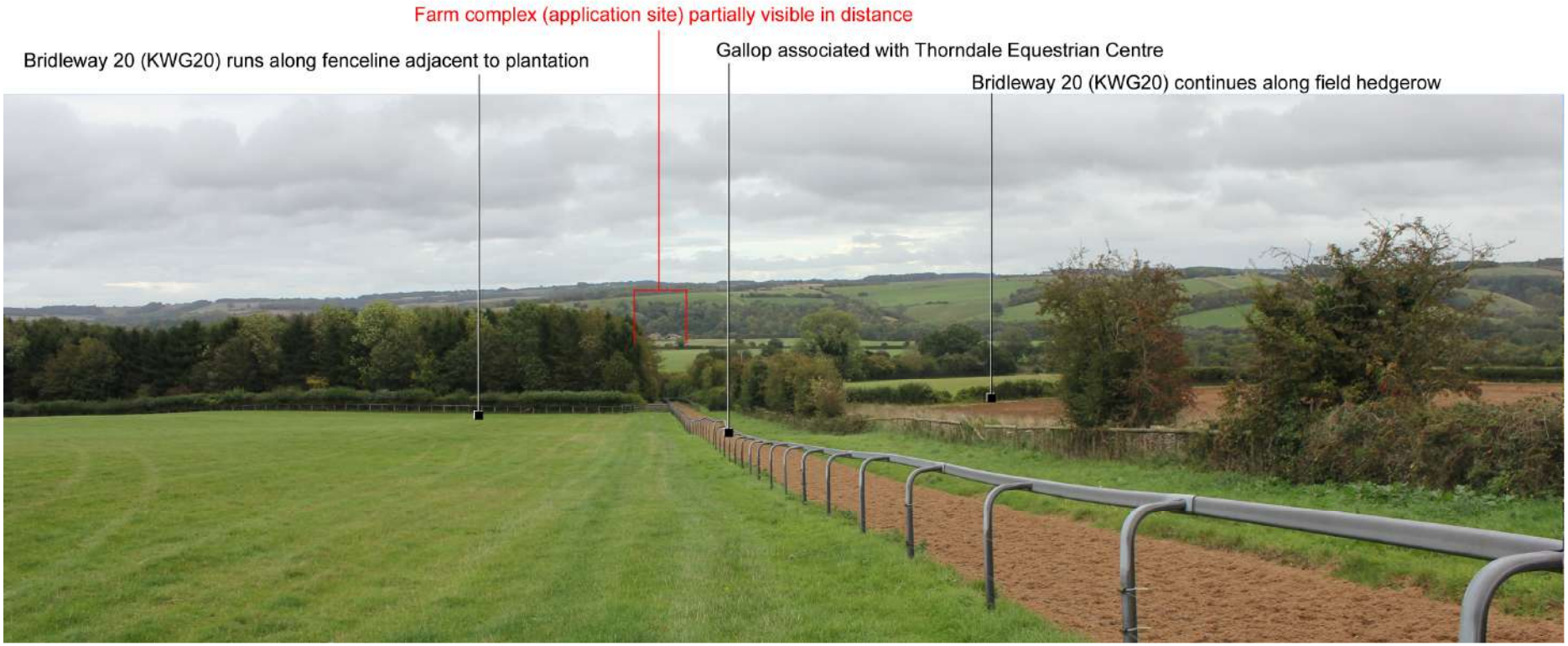
ASSESSMENT:	This viewpoint is representative of medium-distance views south-east from Footpath 19, west of the Thorndale Farm. Primary receptors are therefore recreational walkers, and visual sensitivity is high. The landscape is relatively open,

	although views across the valley are largely interrupted by trees on the adjacent fence and tree cover beyond. The existing buildings at Northfield farm can be seen briefly through a gap in the distant tree cover, but are not prominent. The proposals, which used the existing farm buildings' massing, will result in little perceivable change to the view. In time, with further growth of intervening tree cover, the application site will become less visible. There will be a small amount of seasonal vegetation where Winter views will allow slightly more visibility of the site, although the seasonal difference will become less apparent with the continued growth of intervening vegetation. Additional appropriate mitigation planting on the western side of the application site, and gapping up roadside hedgerow using native species, will filter views further, and with maturity will obscure the site entirely.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor* reducing to *None* with mitigation.
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will not be readily visible as new features during summer or winter months, although the maturation of mitigation planting will result in a very small change to the overall visual character that will be in balance with the further growth of existing intervening vegetation. The Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral*.

Viewpoint 7: Long-distance view north-east towards Blue House Farm; taken from Bridleway 17 (KWG17) south of Thorndale Farm.

Approximate distance from site: 1275m

OS map elevation: Between 220-225m AOD



Viewpoint 7

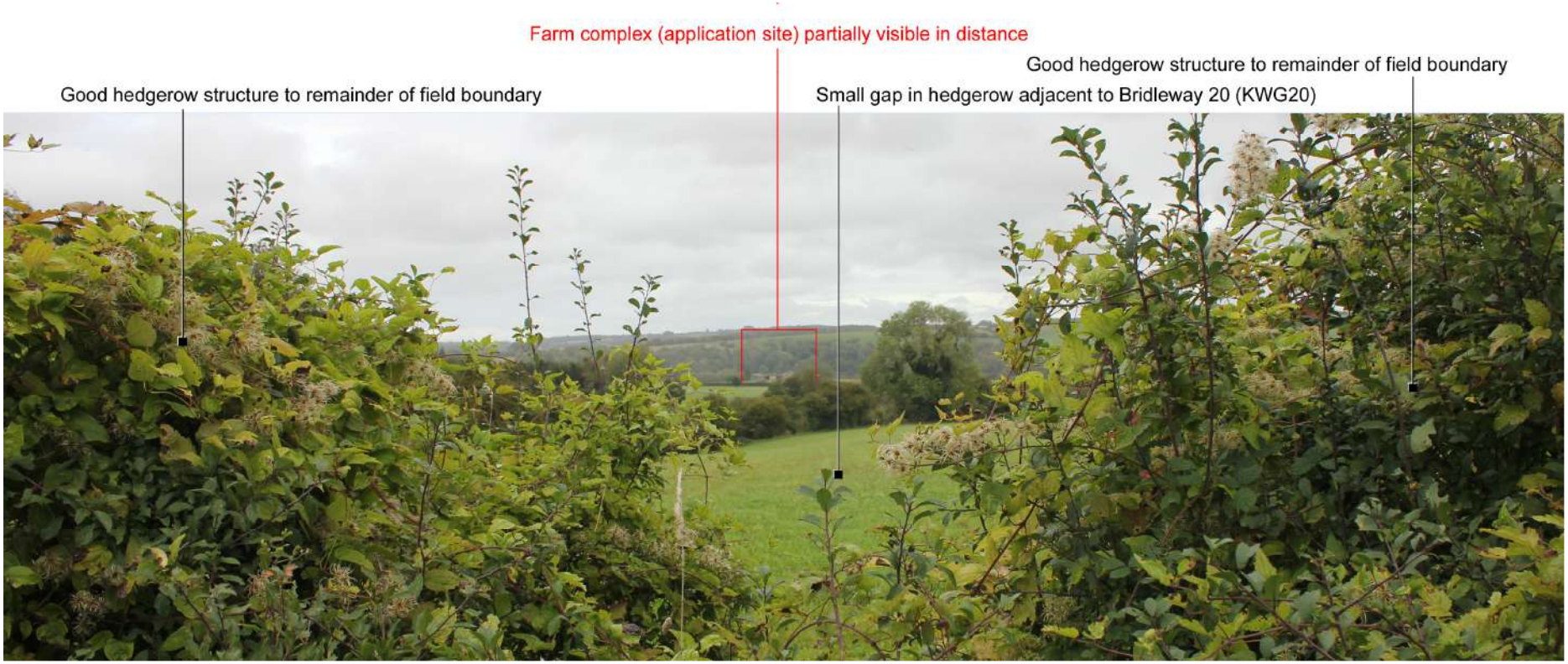
ASSESSMENT:	This viewpoint is representative of medium-distance views north-east from Bridleway 17. Primary receptors are therefore walkers and horse-back riders using the ProW, as well as those using the adjacent gallop, and visual sensitivity is high. The landscape is relatively open, although views across the valley are largely interrupted by a high level of tree cover – particularly

	in the plantation. The existing buildings at Northfield farm can be seen briefly through a gap in the tree cover, but are very discreet in this setting. The proposals, which used the existing farm buildings, will result in very little perceivable change to the view. In time, with further growth of intervening tree cover, the application site will become less visible. There will be a small amount of seasonal vegetation where Winter views will allow slightly more visibility of the site, although the seasonal difference will become less apparent with the continued growth of intervening vegetation. Additional appropriate mitigation planting on the southern side of the application site using native species will filter views further, and with maturity will obscure the site entirely.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor* reducing to *None* with mitigation.
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will not be readily visible as new features during summer or winter months, although the maturation of mitigation planting will result in a very small change to the overall visual character that will be in balance with the further growth of existing intervening vegetation. The Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral*.

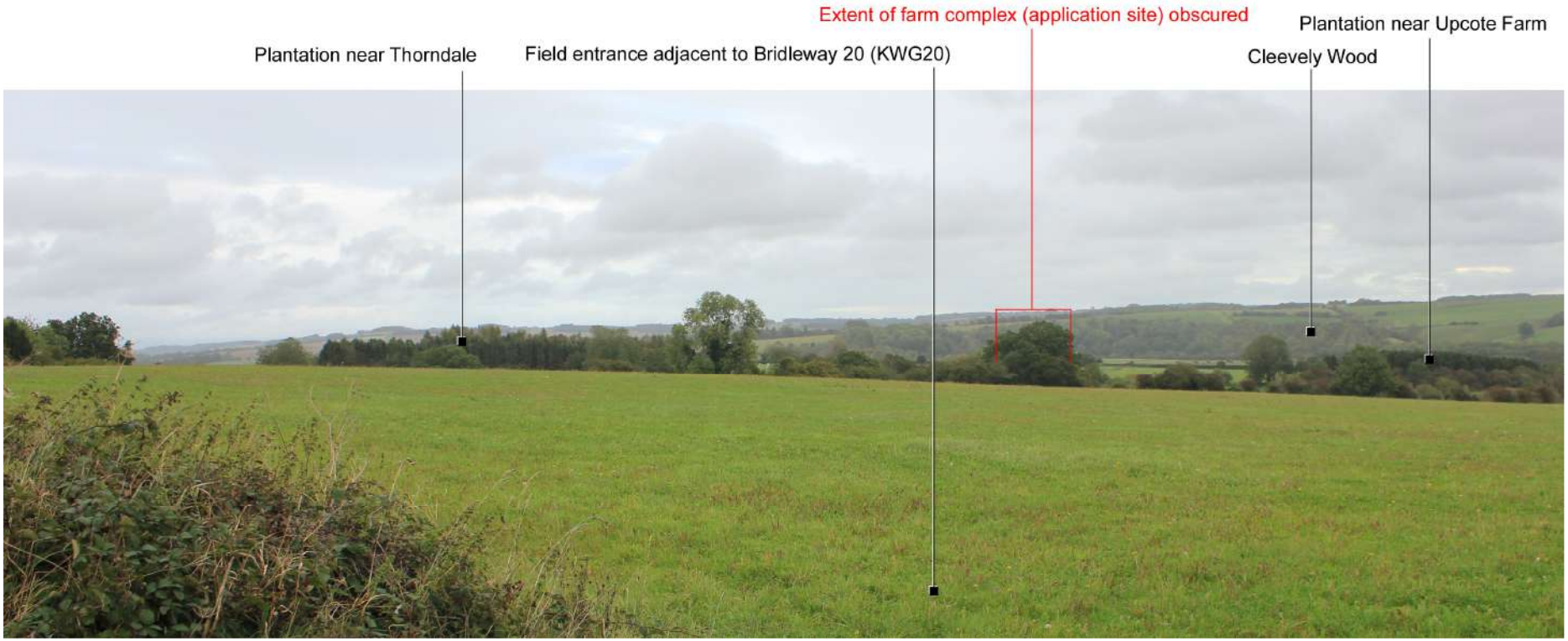
Viewpoints 8a, 8b & 8c: Long-distance views north-east towards the site; taken from Bridleway 20 (KWG20) between Thorndale Farm and Withington.

Approximate distance from site: 1115m (VP8a), 1140 (VP8b) & 1375m (VP8c)

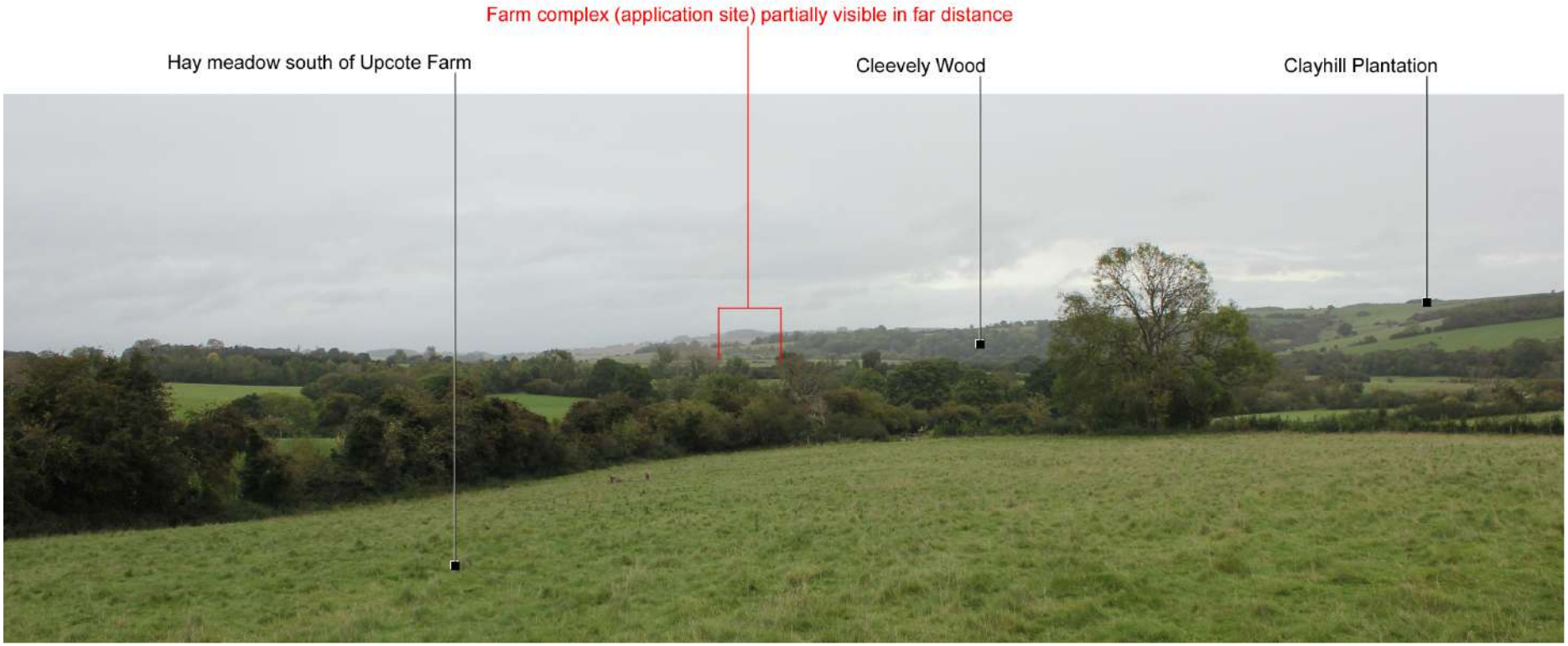
OS map elevation: Between 205-210m AOD (VPs 8a & 8b) & 180-185m AOD



Viewpoint 8a



Viewpoint 8b



Viewpoint 8c

ASSESSMENT:	These viewpoints are representative of long-distance views from Bridleway 20 (KWG20) and its continuation. Primary receptors are therefore recreational walkers and horse-mounted riders using this route who may have a more than passing interest in their surroundings and the overall sensitivity of the view is high. The landscape is relatively open, although views across the valley are largely interrupted by a high level of tree cover. The existing buildings at Northfield Farm can be seen briefly through a gap in the tree cover, but are very discreet in this setting.

	The proposals, which used the existing farm buildings' massing, will result in very little perceivable change to the view. In time, with further growth of intervening tree cover, the application site will become less visible. There will be a very small amount of seasonal vegetation where Winter views will allow very slightly more visibility of the site, although the seasonal difference will become even less apparent with the continued growth of intervening vegetation.
IMPACT OF EFFECT CALCULATION:	**Receptor Sensitivity:** *High* **Magnitude of Effect:** *Negligible* **Level of Effect:** *Minor* reducing to *None* with mitigation.
NATURE OF EFFECT:	The proposals will not be readily visible as new features during summer or winter months, although the maturation of mitigation planting will result in a very small change to the overall visual character that will be in balance with the further growth of existing intervening vegetation. The Nature of Effect of the proposed development is *Neutral*.

POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL VIEWS (NOT RECORDED)

5.2.4 The only residential property with any theoretical view towards the application site is the eastern-most dwelling at Northfield Farm Cottages. In actuality, a recently-constructed garage/annex building obscures views from this property. Thornfield, the owner of which objected to the previous scheme, is largely enclosed by mature trees, purposefully positioned to provide privacy, and the proposals can have no conceivable effect on this property's residential amenity.

OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF VISUAL EFFECT

5.2.5 The Overall Visual Sensitivity of the study area is considered *High*, with its visual character being largely defined by largely unspoilt rural countryside, within an open broad valley with an established wooded landscape structure that restricts the number of potential close and medium-range views. The site is well-contained by existing vegetation cover surrounding the site, with the only available views from short sections of the minor road through gaps in the roadside vegetation (Viewpoints 4a, 4b and 4d), or from more distant hillside locations to the east (Viewpoints 3a, 3b and 3c). Other views are largely partial, glimpsed, or heavily filtered by dense intervening vegetation.

5.2.6 The visual envelope is therefore relatively limited, and the development will result in slight changes to established features in the local area from only a small number of locations, but this will be reduced over time with mitigation. The development will not discernibly change the visual character beyond the immediate local area therefore. Where there are glimpses of the site, the proposals would result in discreet development of land that has an existing built context, will include the redevelopment of existing buildings that are in a poor condition, and will actually result in a reduction of built form within the site. However, the proposal *are* domestic in character, in contrast to their agrarian setting, and will likely be perceived as such, also the architectural design of the proposals – in particular the carefully considered use of external materials – will significantly compensate for this. The magnitude of change overall is *slight*, and the level of effects are therefore assessed as *Minor*. On balance, the Overall Nature of Visual Effect (despite some *Adverse* effects for close-distance views, partially offset by some *Positive* effects caused by reinstated hedgerow which will improve landscape structure) is considered largely *Neutral*. Importantly, landscape mitigation will be effective in further reducing the level of localised adverse effects over time.

5.3 CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS

5.3.1 During construction, plant and materials will be partially visible from close-distance viewpoints. However, the construction effects associated with the development will be temporary and will have

no lasting adverse effects on the recorded landscape and visual receptors. Appropriate storage of construction materials and equipment will help minimise any effects during construction.

5.4 RESIDUAL EFFECTS

5.4.1 Following the construction of the development there will be minor enhancements to the landscape structure as part of the mitigation proposals, whilst existing vegetation will continue to grow at prevailing rates. No other secondary residual effects will result from the proposals. Overall there will be no significant residual effects on landscape and visual receptors.

5.5 DARK SKIES

5.5.1 In order to conform with The AONB Management Plan Policy CE5 Dark Skies, the proposals seek to minimise light pollution through the use of a carefully thought-out lighting strategy.

5.5.2 In preparing for this application the applicant has agreed to utilise established technology used elsewhere in areas with protected dark skies (including National Parks) as part of the development proposals. To this end a combination of suitable appropriate visible light transmission glass (*i.e*. to reduce the emitted light spill), and shutters (and/or louvres) and electronically timed blinds for windows on 'outward facing' elevations.

5.5.3 A lighting strategy can be the subject of a suitably-worded Condition should planning permission be granted.

5.5.4 In assessing the proposals' effect on dark skies, the previous use as a working farm complex should also be considered. When operational the complex could conceivably have used flood lighting and bright farm machinery lighting after dusk, and should the site continue in agricultural use this will continue to be the case.

5.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

5.6.1 GLVIA3 states that existing development, and schemes with extant planning consents, should be considered as part of the baseline conditions (GLVIA, para. 7.13), although current planning applications, yet to be determined should be considered (usually as part of an EIA). At the time of writing there are currently no notable current planning applications, either of a similar type to the proposals or contrasting, that would form the basis for the consideration of cumulative impacts with residential development within the appraisal site.

6. MITIGATION STRATEGY

6.1 The following recommendations are appropriate to reduce the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, with the aim being to further integrate the site into the landscape while providing enhancements to the area's landscape structure through a comprehensive scheme of planting and management. An indicative landscaping scheme has been provided as a part of the application and is largely successful in respect of addressing potential effects, as such it will be incorporated into the mitigation strategy for the site, being adapted and appropriately detailed as necessary. However, details such as internal amenity shrub bed locations and compositions are beyond the scope of this LVIA and as such will be addressed as part of the detailed design or by way of condition.

6.2 Mitigation measures will mainly focus on the retention, enhancement and management of existing boundary vegetation. New planting will supplement the existing landscape structure around the site, in particular gapping up areas of hedgerow fragmentation. The aim is to not only integrate the proposed development into the landscape, but also provide enhancements to the green infrastructure network. Pre-mitigation, the Overall Level of Effect of the proposed development on the landscape and visual resource is considered to be *Moderate* to *Minor*. It is acknowledged that where the proposals will be visible for a short section of the Withington Road there will be a small, localised change to visual character. Landscape enhancements in response to this should replicate the character associated with the strong rural character in line with strategy guidelines set out in the AONB Landscape Strategy and guidelines which states ***'Landscaping schemes accompanying development should encourage the planting of appropriately sized native trees, shrubs and traditional fruit varieties, whilst discouraging large alien species such as eucalypts and conifers and inappropriate cultivars of native species, particularly on fringes of open countryside.'***

6.3 Landscape and ecological enhancement will therefore form a key part of the proposals, with the small area of existing vegetation on the north-west boundary being retained, managed and enhanced as appropriate, as well as new areas of habitat being created to the periphery of the development, including native trees of local provenance, mixed native hedgerows and native shelter-belt planting. New planting will therefore focus on the use of native species, with the aim being to further contribute to the integration of the development and to maximise gains for biodiversity ('biodiversity net gain').

General:

- Low level external lighting should be used across the site to minimise light spill so as not to affect wildlife.
- Low -key materials should be used for external surfaces - e.g. gravels and self-binding gravels in favour of bitumen / tarmaccadam.

Management and Enhancement of Existing Vegetation:

- Existing poor quality/diseased vegetation or invasive species should be removed and replaced if necessary/appropriate.
- Suitable root protection area stand-offs and protection measures should be applied around all vegetation to be retained.
- All retained vegetation should be appropriately managed, with a focus on undertaking remedial work, including thinning, removal of low growth and crown raising as necessary.

Proposed Mitigation and Planting:

- The following recommendations should be taken into account in respect of plants being used for mitigation purposes:
    - All new planting, including planting for the purposes of replacement should comprise appropriate species, with domestic planting being restricted where the site borders the countryside.
    - At planting, a range of tree sizes should be used to create instant impact and structure.
- Feature tree planting, using large native species, should take place within the site, to create interest and serve as visual amenity features, as well as add varied structure to the development.
- Strategic tree planting should take place within and around the site, to create structure and to break up views across the development area.
- Native tree planting should take place within new field hedgerows, to create structure and break up views across the valley bottom.
- mix of domestic and native trees, should be used within the site as appropriate, to create a setting for the development and to offer a level of visual containment.
- Hedges should be grown to and managed at 2.50/3.00m in height, and a dense hedgerow structure maintained by not allowing hedgerow species to grow to tree sized proportions.

NEW TREES

6.4 Trees are to be pit planted in square pits at, at least 7.50m centres. All '*Standard*' trees should be single staked, while all *'Selected Standard'* trees should be double staked. All trees will be mesh guarded to prevent damage by vermin. The species listed below can be used in other locations around the site if appropriate to the aims of the mitigation strategy.

Recommended Feature Tree Species					
Scientific name	**Common name**	**Specification**	**Girth (cm)**	**Approx. height (m)**	**Clear stem height (m)**
Fagus sylvatica	Beech	Heavy Standard	12-14	3.50/4.00	Min 2.00
Quercus robur	English Oak	Heavy Standard	12-14	3.50/4.00	Min 2.00

Recommended Hedgerow Tree Species					
Scientific name	**Common name**	**Specification**	**Girth (cm)**	**Approx. height (m)**	**Clear stem height (m)**
Acer campestre	Field Maple	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75
Malus sylvestris	Crab apple	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Prunus avium	Wild cherry	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Pyrus communis	Wild pear	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Quercus robur	English Oak	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00
Sorbus torminalis	Wild service tree	Selected Standard	10-12	3.00/3.50	Min 2.00

HEDGEROW PLANTING

6.5 All hedging is to be notch-planted. Mixed native and broadleaf hedging is to be planted in a double staggered row at 45.00cm centres using 5 plants per linear metre. Plants will be individually staked with bamboo and guarded with spiral guards to prevent damage by vermin.

Recommended Mixed Native Hedge Species				
Scientific name	**Common name**	**Specification**	**Approx. height (cm)**	**%**
Acer campestre	Field maple	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	5
Corylus avellana	Hazel	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	30
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	40
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	5

Ilex aquifolium	Holly	Pot-grown (3ltr)	40-60	2.5
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	10
Viburnum lantana	Wayfaring tree	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	5
Viburnum opulus	Guelder rose	1 + 1 transplants	60-80	2.5

6.6 A Landscape Enhancements and Mitigation Strategy drawing based on the Architect's landscape plan has been produced as part of this report (WHL-1727-07 - appended). This shows the location of the relevant landscape proposals.

6.7 If required, a full landscape works drawing, including schedules and specifications, can be the subject of a suitably-worded Condition should planning permission be granted.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

7.1 The key considerations when determining the acceptability of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposals are the receptors that will be potentially affected by the development and how far any effects are/can be mitigated. Of particular importance to the consideration of the developments overall effect is whether the redevelopment will have a notable level of effects on the landscape character and visual amenity of the study area, over and above that of the existing disused site which has become dilapidated.

7.2 This assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects has found that due to the site's underlying nature, and the proposed re-purposing of an existing complex, potential effects on landscape and visual receptors will be lessened. Overall, the proposed development, will not be significantly detrimental to any of the key characteristics or descriptions of the surrounding landscape as identified in this document.

7.3 Taken as a whole, the development will have an overall *Moderate* effect on the landscape resource, and a *Minor* effect on visual receptors – levels of effects which are **not** considered substantial under the LVIA methodology used in this assessment. The overall Nature of Effect of the development pre-mitigation will be *Adverse* or *Neutral*, however these should be balanced against the further deterioration to the former farm complex likely to ensue should the proposed development not be carried out. The mitigation and enhancement recommendations detailed in Section 6 have been developed in response to the findings of the landscape and visual assessment, and comments provided by the Landscape Officer in relation to the original (withdrawn) scheme, and seek to reduce the adverse effects of the proposed development, whilst also providing benefits to biodiversity.

EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON LANDSCAPE RECEPTORS

7.4 At Implementation: The Overall Significance of Effect and Nature of Effect will remain largely the same. In both instances, while general remedial work and the planting of new trees and hedgerows will be an improvement to landscape structure in the area, any changes associated with the mitigation will primarily become apparent when planting reaches maturity.

7.5 Once Established: The Overall Significance of Effect will be reduced further, with the development being further integrated into the landscape. While there may still be very limited adverse effects as a result of the development, these will be effectively offset by landscape and ecological enhancements.

The established planting will provide a positive enhancement to the LCA and the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The overall nature of effect will generally be *Neutral*, however there will be some benefits in respect of the provision of additional tree and hedgerow cover, as well as enhancements to the green infrastructure network around the site, with a better hierarchy of tree ages also being established in the area.

EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON VISUAL RECEPTORS

7.6 At Implementation: Effects will be largely the same from the majority of Viewpoints. However, new planting will soften localised views by 'filtering' visibility of the built form during winter months from nearby receptors. Additionally, the use of larger tree stock will help filter glimpsed winter views from further afield and create 'instant' structure around the development.

7.7 Once Established: The overall Significance of Effect will be reduced further with the site being better contained visually within the landscape. Furthermore, additional planting will help further filter views and create an appropriate setting for the development, specifically in respect of views from Withington Road. The overall Nature of Effect will be continue to be *Neutral*.

7.8 Mitigation and enhancement measures will ensure that the development can be acceptably integrated into its landscape setting. Taken as a whole, the proposed development post-mitigation will have reduced landscape effects, with the effect on specific visual receptors also being reduced. There will be localised ecological benefits resulting from the enhancement of the green infrastructure.

EFFECT OF MITIGATION ON DARK SKIES

7.9 A lighting strategy to include visible light transmission glass (*i.e*. to reduce the emitted light spill), window shutters (and/or louvres) and electronically timed blinds for windows on 'outward facing' elevations, and the use of low-level external lighting will effectively mitigate impacts on intrinsic dark skies, and will conform with Policy CE5.

CONCLUSIONS

7.9 Taking account of the proposed landscape mitigation and enhancement recommendations, the proposed development can be undertaken in compliance with the relevant guidance and policies in the NPPF, *Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031*, the *AONB Management Plan 2018-2023,* and *Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines* (2016).

7.10 *An Approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management* (Christine Tudor, Natural England, June 2019) describes landscape sensitivity as follows:

> ***'Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value – such as changes to valued attributes of baseline landscape character and the visual resource.'***

7.11 In the context of this definition, this LVIA has found that the receiving landscape of the application site will be able to acceptably accommodate the proposed redevelopment of Northfield Farm.

7.12 The Landscape Officer as part of his consultation response for the original (withdrawn) scheme stated:

> ***'The conversion of the stone barn is likely to be acceptable, but I have concerns regarding the conversion of the sheds. If the principle of conversion of the sheds can be established, a significantly reduced scheme might be acceptable, but I would recommend that the scheme includes wider landscape enhancements to off-set any perceived harm caused by the development. Any landscape enhancements would need to be characteristic of the High Wold Valley setting.'***

7.13 The proposals seek to convert the stone barn, whilst the scale of the proposals have been significantly reduced when compared to the original scheme. Moreover, the removal of the largest modern portal-framed barn reduces the prominence and sprawl of the existing complex of buildings - a significant material benefit to the receiving landscape. The proposals include wider landscape enhancements, including the reinstatement of former grubbed-out field hedgerows, which will significantly offset any perceived harm caused by the development. This strategy is consistent with the underlying landscape character description which states that between areas of woodland the landscape is ***'divided up by a network of hedgerows'***.

7.14 Landscape strategies and guidance set out in *The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines* (2016) include the following: ***'Restore existing stone farm buildings and structures in preference to new built development.'***

7.15 The proposals will convert, restore and create a better setting for the older, stone-built buildings within the site.

7.16 The Landscape Officer had particular concern with the proposed private gardens of the previous scheme. These have been scaled back significantly, where the curtilages have been 'pulled in' far

tighter to the complex of buildings so as to avoid the risk of domestic paraphernalia causing visual clutter.

7.17 This appraisal of landscape and visual effects has found that, due to the scale and nature of the proposals, the proposed development can be successfully integrated into the receiving landscape of the study area. The most significant effects will be upon a short section of the adjacent minor road, although these effects can be effectively mitigated by a scheme of landscape enhancements.

7.18 There will be no unacceptable effects on protected habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem services, nor upon the historic fabric of the landscape or the special qualities of the National Landscape/AONB.

7.19 This appraisal has comprehensively assessed the impacts of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the landscape. Using the criteria-based methodology derived from Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, along with the application of professional judgement, the overall levels of landscape and visual impacts resulting from the proposed extension are considered acceptable in its effects upon the landscape.

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