

Design and Access Statement

Northfield Farm, Withington

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this design statement is to supplement the application drawings and to explain how the proposals have been informed by a process of assessment, involvement, evaluation, and design.

The accompanying Planning Statement addresses the proposals against the context of Planning Policy.

Prior to the submission of this application, a previous application was submitted and withdrawn, planning ref: 22/0605/FUL. The comments received on the previous application have been instrumental in the preparation of this revised scheme.

2.0 Setting

2.1 Site Context

The site is located within the Cotswold AONB, approx. 1.4km north of the village of Withington. The site is in current use as Agricultural Storage, and is surrounded by open countryside, with a scattering of other agricultural buildings, equestrian facilities, and rural dwellings in the local vicinity.

The site boundary includes an area of 0.64 hectares. The farmstead benefits from an existing vehicular access which extends east off the main road which connects Withington to the A436. The access is shared with two existing dwellings, 1 & 2 Northfield Cottages, a pair of semi detached dwellings on the northern side of the track.

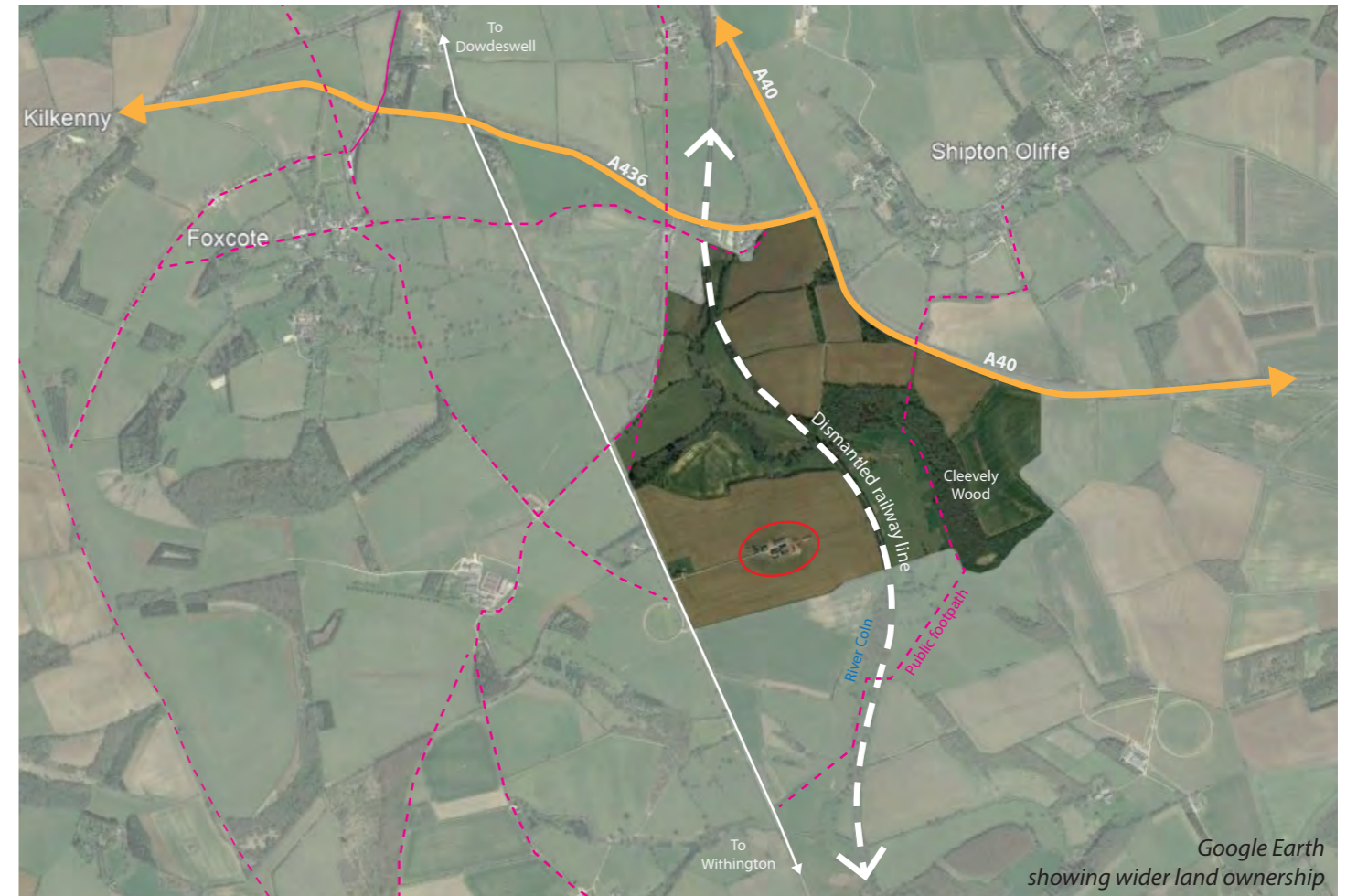
The farm track passes through the site and connects to the dilapidated railway to the immediate east of the site, which provides access to the rest of the applicant's land ownership.

The OS Map and annotated Google Map extract indicate the nearby roads, villages and public footpaths near to the site.

2.2 Existing Site

Northfield Farm is comprised of six farm buildings. The farmyard, as highlighted on the adjacent Google Aerial image, is a sprawling collection of buildings, located within open arable farmland with the track running east/west across its centre.

The field / farmyard edge is ill defined, and over the years farm sprawl from storage of machinery, equipment and the creation of new vehicle routes has eroded the edge of the adjacent fields. In effect, the current farmyard ignores old boundaries and has begun to merge into the open countryside.



2.3 Existing Buildings

The six existing buildings on site are of differing ages and states of repair. The four larger barns to the north and east of the development are modern steel portal frame buildings, with a variety of cladding and roofing materials, including corrugated metal sheeting, asbestos roofing sheets, blockwork and profiled metal roof sheeting.

Two of the existing buildings are traditional stone barns, located to the south west of the group. The larger of the two stone barns is comprised of stone gabled elements, adjoined on their ends forming a long linear structure. The western side is two storey, with an external stone stair on its southern elevation. The eastern end has a small first floor, but is largely double height with large threshing openings on its north and south elevations. To the northern side of this barn, a large modern lean-to structure has been erected and is in a state of disrepair. The stone barn has a number of existing openings, this includes conventional window and door openings, as well as unconventional voids which have been created to accommodate various farm machinery over the years.

The smaller stone building is lean-to in form, however detailing on its eastern elevation suggests this might not be its original form. The barn is formed of three stone walls, with the remaining north side open to the courtyard space created between the two stone buildings.

External spaces of concrete and tarmac hardstanding are defined by a series of disconnected yards squeezed in between buildings. Artificial ground levels have been re-modelled across the site to relate to each building.

The barns are in current use as agricultural storage. The arrangement of the site is typical of piecemeal agricultural development, resulting in a functional but chaotic agglomeration of forms.

Whilst collections of agricultural buildings are not uncommon sights in the open countryside, improvements to the buildings and wider setting of Northfield Farm could improve the site's contribution to the landscape setting of the Cotswolds AONB.



2.3 Existing Site Photographs





Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10

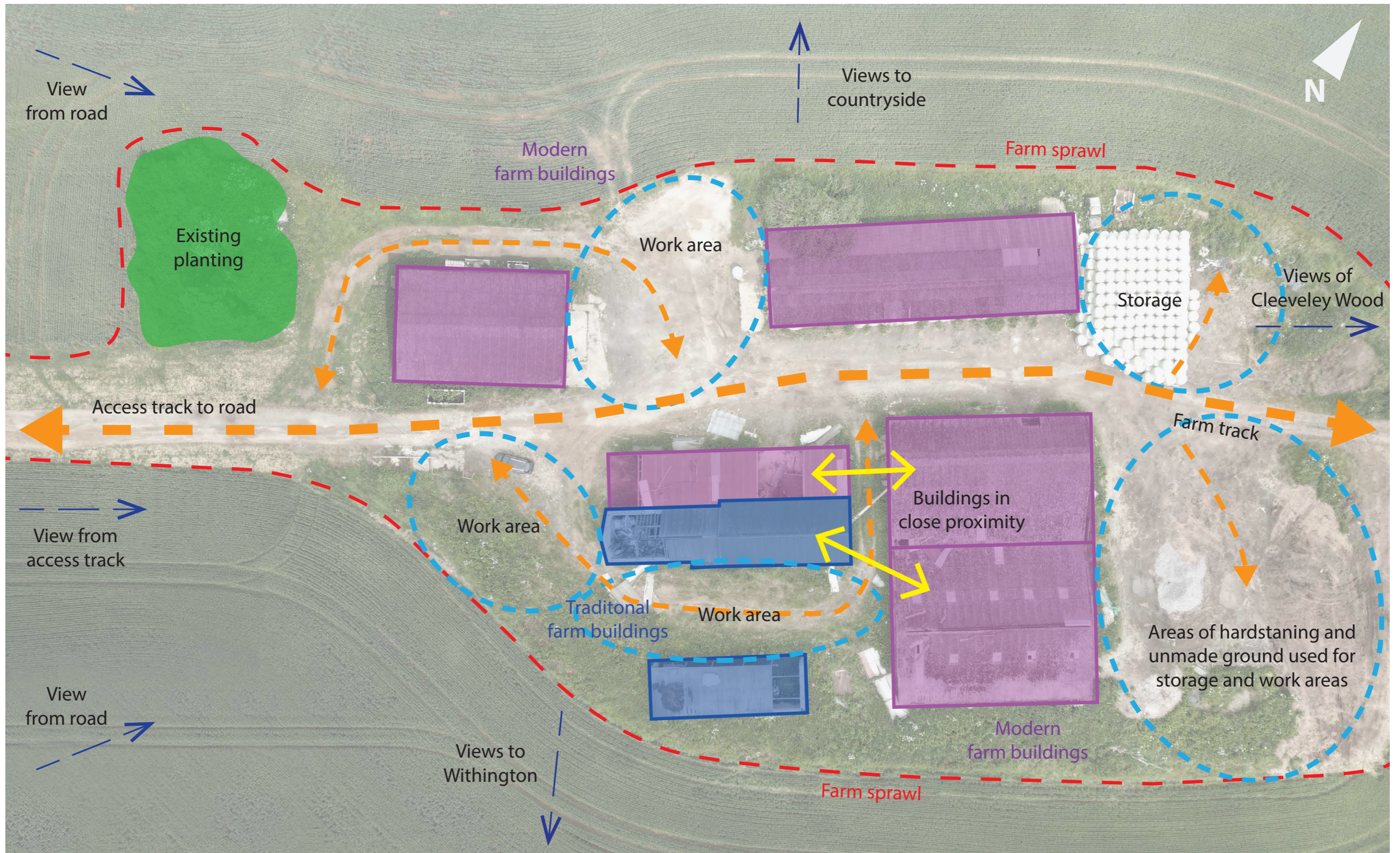


Photo 11



Photo 12

3.0 Site Analysis



4.0 Proposals

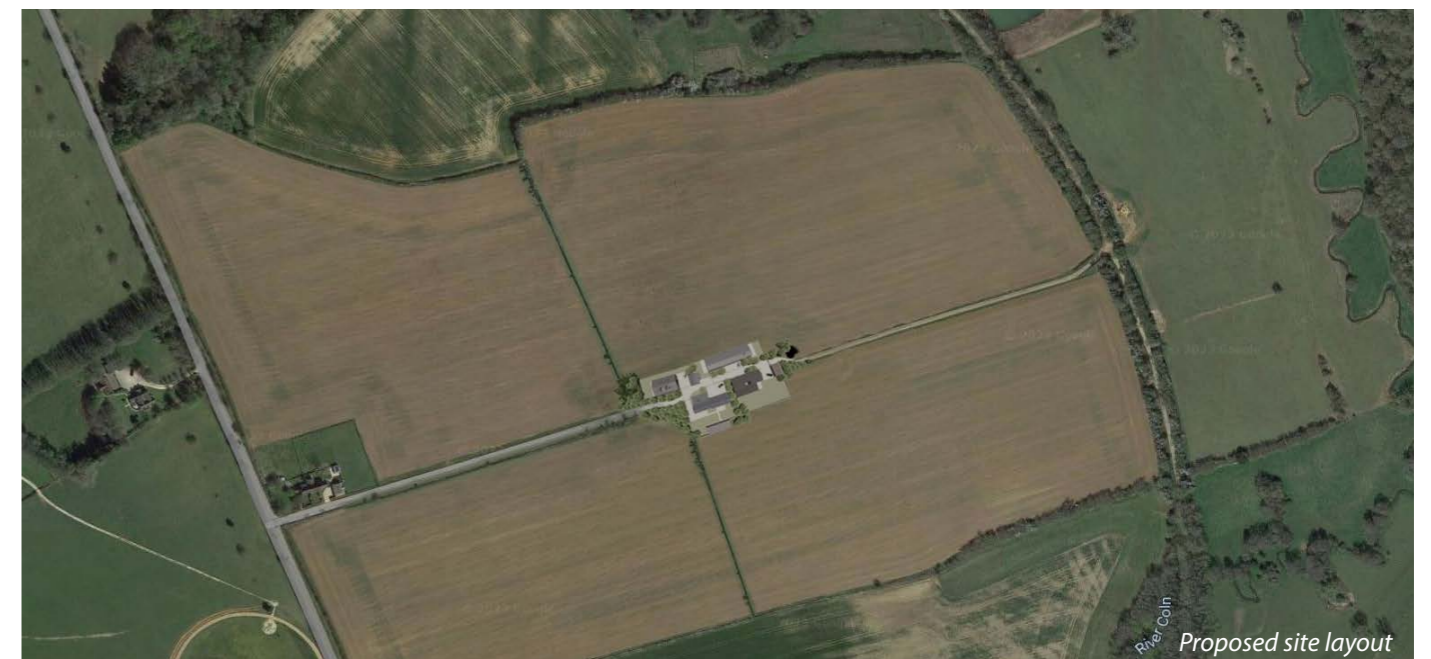
The scheme proposes the conversion of five existing farm buildings at Northfield Farm into five new dwellings.

The finer details of the scheme includes the demolition of one large existing modern barn, and two large lean-to's. The lean-to's are proposed to be replaced with smaller, more appropriately scaled lean-to extensions. Two new outbuildings for the provision of parking and garden storage are proposed.

Landscape proposals within the scheme include the provision of new native tree and hedgerow planting, and the insertion of new boundary treatments.

4.1 Site Enhancements

- Tidying up and improved definition of site boundaries, eradicating farm sprawl
- Demolition of the largest modern barn, located in the south east of the site, improving the setting of the two traditional stone buildings
- Rationalisation of vehicle routes, enclosing vehicles within the built form
- Proposed new pond
- New landscape features anchoring the development into the wider countryside landscape, reinstating historic field boundaries and ecological corridors
- Native tree planting, reinstating recognisable landscape character



4.0 Proposals

4.2 Concept Diagrams



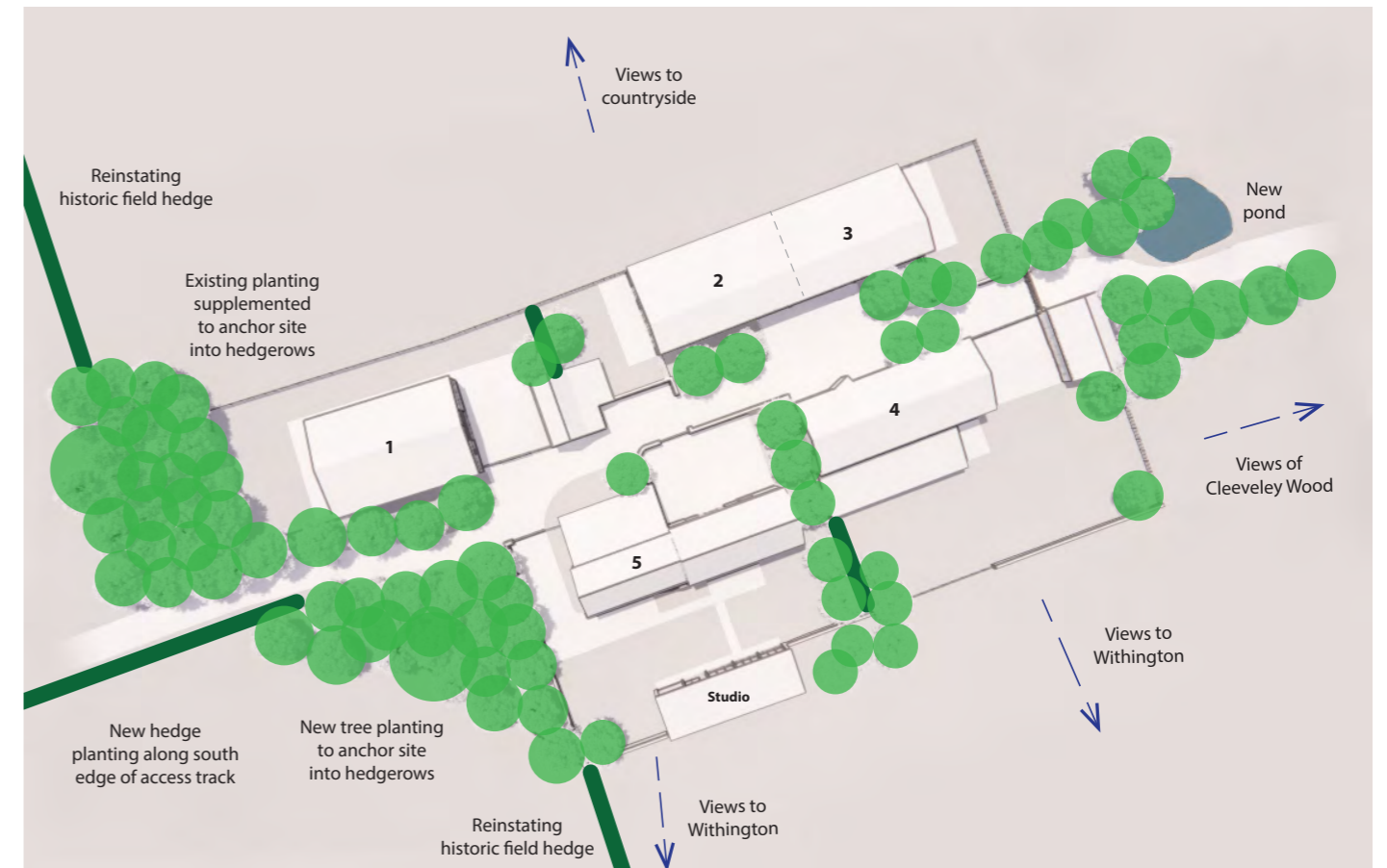
4.2.1 Reduction of Farm Sprawl

It is proposed to remove the two storey lean-to on Building A1, the southern lean-to on Building B, and the whole of Building C. The two lean-to's are proposed to be replaced with smaller scale single storey lean-to structures, which do not stretch the entire length of their host buildings.

The reduction in massing caused by these demolitions and replacements allows for more space to be created in the centre of the site and between Units 4 & 5, and considerably improves the setting and quality of external spaces of both units.

The removal of Building C, and the introduction of new and defined boundaries creates definition for the site and reduces sprawl into the open countryside. This offers a positive enhancement for the site in the wider landscape and allows for surrounding land to be returned to agricultural use.

Proposed new boundaries are a mix of hedging, post and rail fencing and drystone walls.



4.2.2 New planting

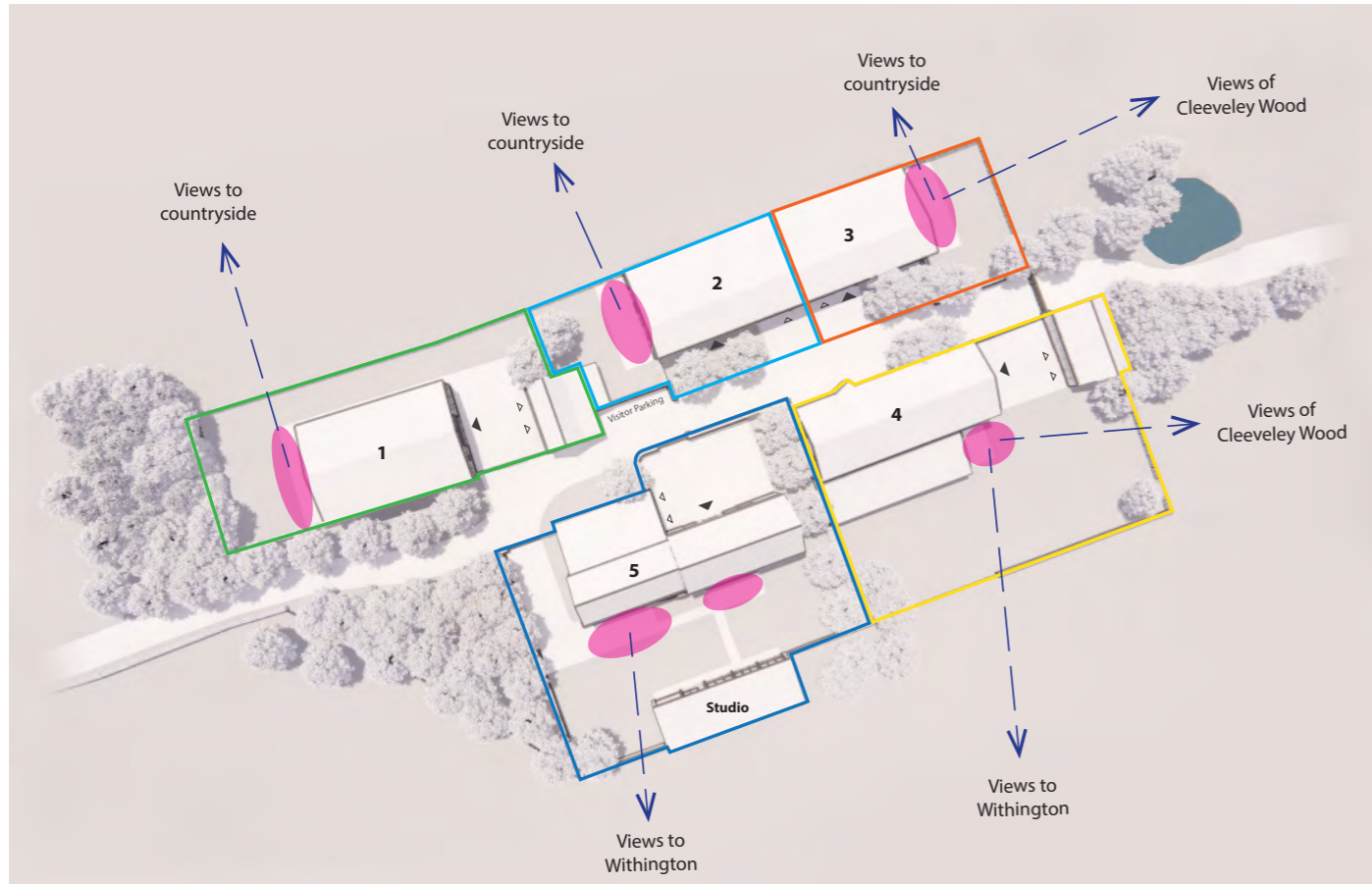
New planting pockets are proposed to the western edge of the site. The existing north western planting is to be retained and bolstered to provide a springing off point for the proposed new hedgerow extending northwards.

A second cluster of trees is proposed to the west of Unit 5, providing a variation in height to the proposed vegetation whilst connecting the two other proposed hedgerows which extend south and west from this corner of the site.

Additional tree planting provides natural and soft screening between units within the heart of the site.

To the east, tree and shrub planting is proposed to the edges of the new pond for biodiversity enhancement.

The arrangement of the planting creates framed views from each dwelling, assists in reducing overlooking between plots and creates a sense of privacy within each dwelling's external amenity spaces.

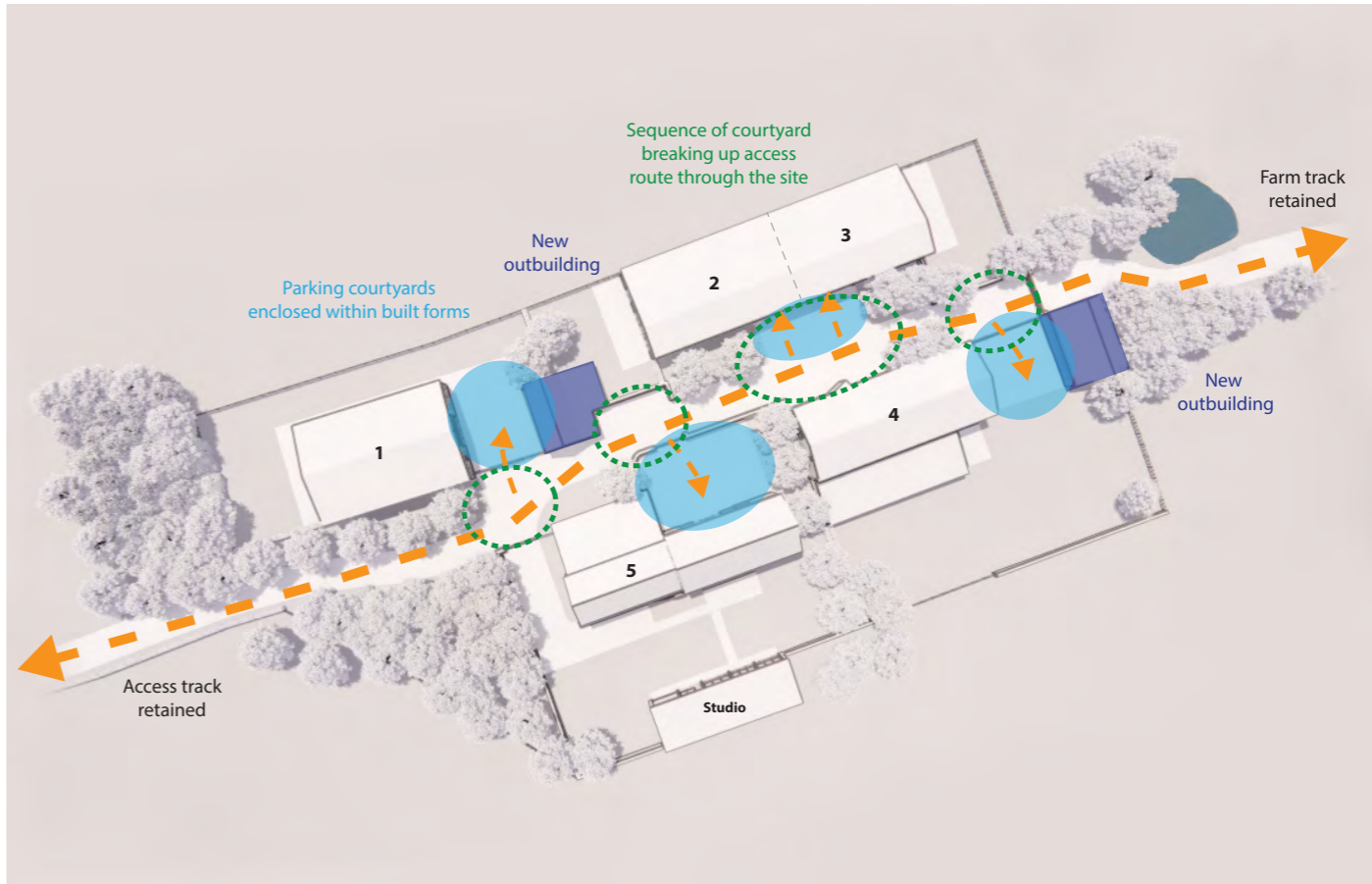


4.2.3 Scale and Layout

The site has been divided into 5 dwellings of varying sizes.

The site layout is centred around a sequence of courtyards, defined by the existing buildings, new boundaries and planting. The sequence of interconnected courtyards breaks down the scale of the large shared by a series of walls, defining access points, lines of movement and boundary enclosures, in a similar way to a typical "planned" farmstead.

Each dwelling's plot is clearly defined and identifiable. The layout and orientation of each unit has been developed with the surrounding landscape and their relationship with other units in mind. This ensures every dwelling benefits from private external amenity space, with private views out, and not overlooked by their neighbours.



4.2.4 Access & Parking

Access to the site will be retained as existing, using the existing gated entrance on the Andoversford/Withington Road. The existing track will be retained and its condition improved, but will remain as gravel so not to appear overtly domestic in the open countryside.

The track extends beyond the farmyard and connects to the dilapidated railway and remainder of the agricultural holding beyond. This track is proposed to be retained for use by the landowner.

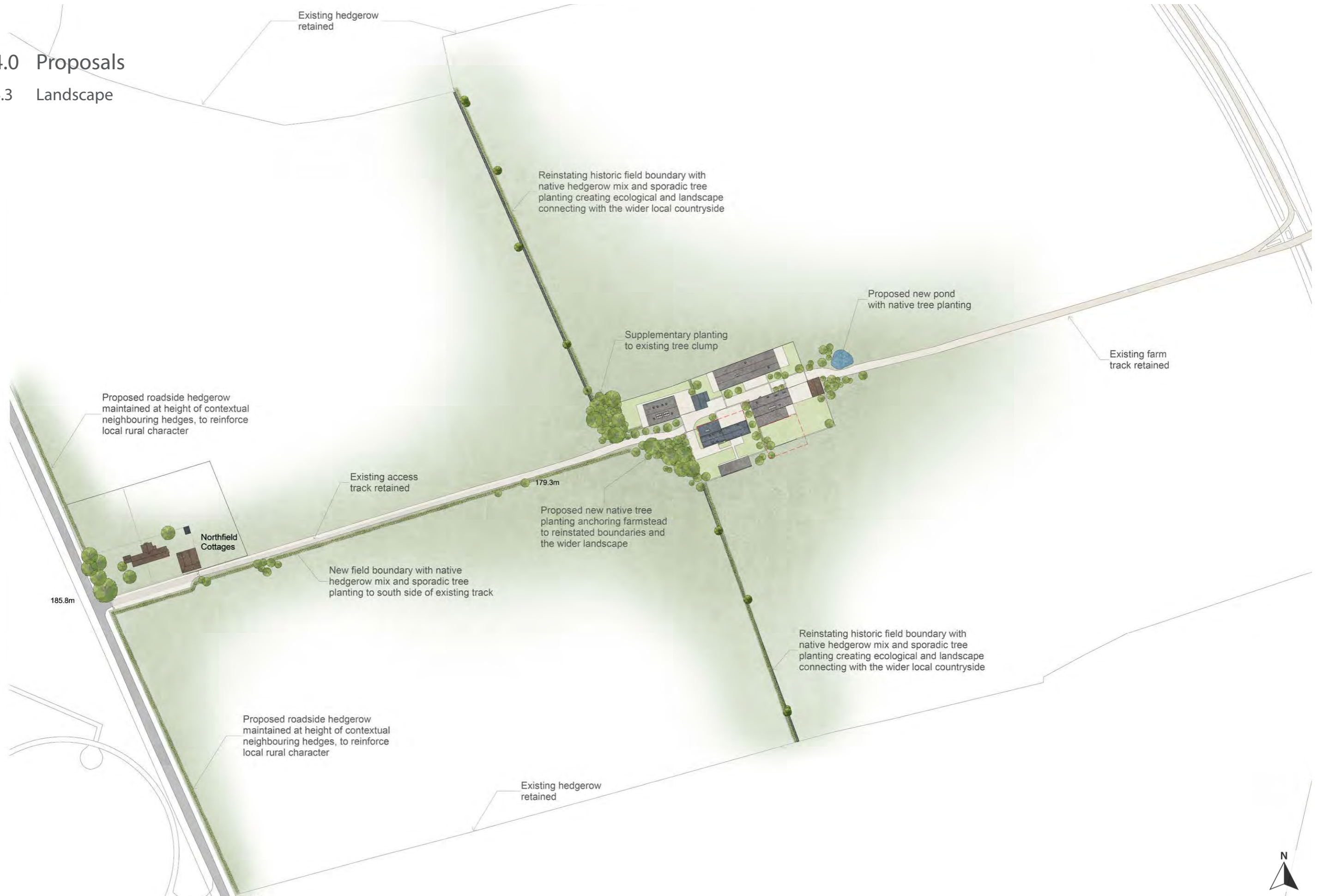
The route through the heart of the site is a sequence of shared courtyard spaces, from which each dwelling peels off and accesses their own private parking areas. The courtyards break up the route through the site and provide structure to the shared spaces between the buildings.

Parking provisions have been designed within the heart of the scheme, keeping vehicles contained within the built form so to limit their impact on wider views of the site.

Allocated spaces and parking areas for each dwelling have been incorporated into the proposals so that all dwellings have ample parking in relation to the scale of their unit. Spaces for occasional visitor parking have also been provided.

4.0 Proposals

4.3 Landscape



4.4 Reinstating Historic Landscape Features

Historically, Northfield Farm has been connected to the wider countryside landscape via established hedgerows and field divisions. Since 1945, these landscape features have been slowly eradicated, leaving Northfield Farm seemingly floating within the open landscape.

It is proposed to re-establish two historic field boundaries with new native mix hedge planting, with sporadic tree planting. These proposed hedges will extend north and south from the western side of the site, connecting to existing established hedgerows within the applicant's ownership.

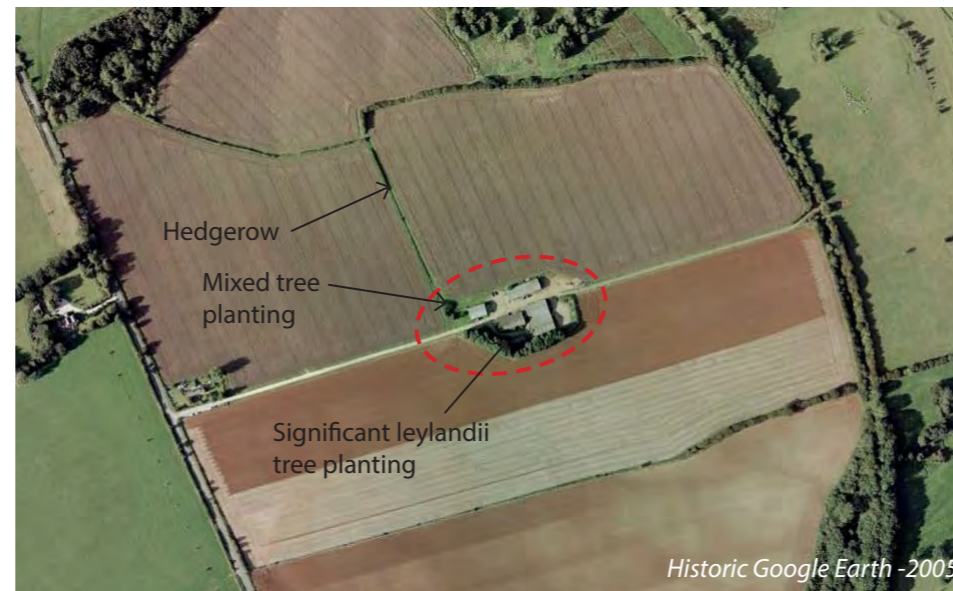
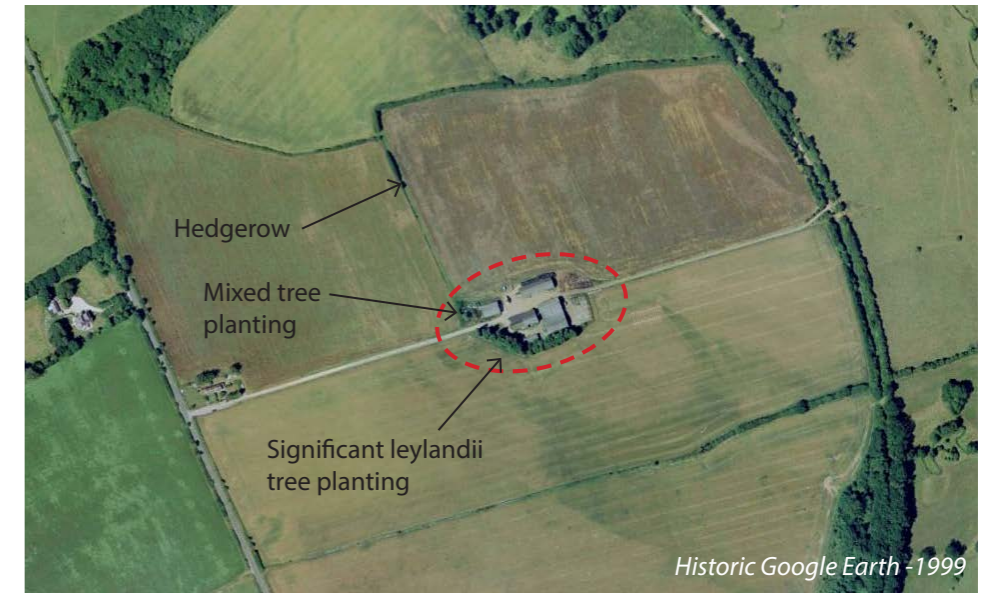
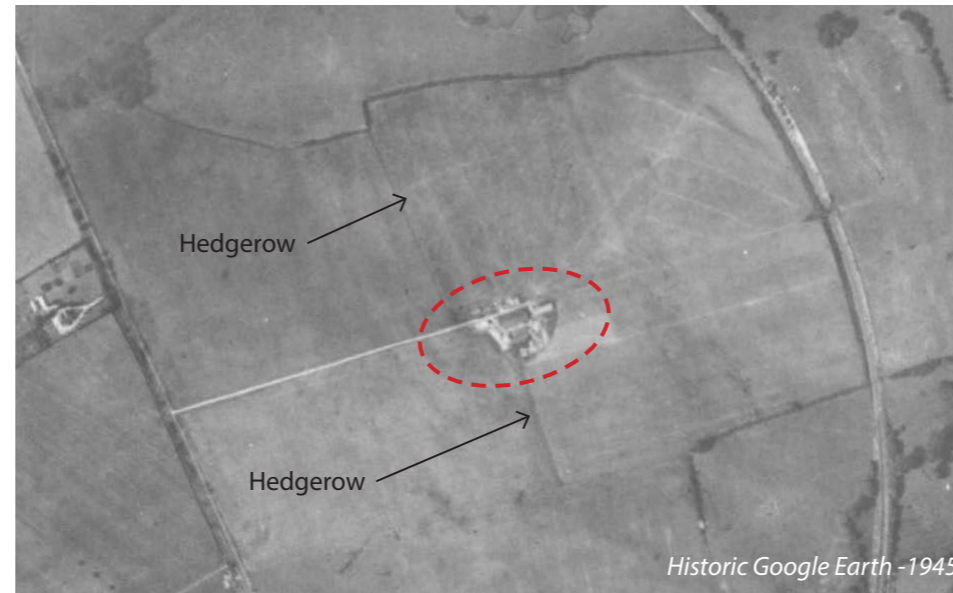
A third new native mix hedge is proposed on the southern side of the access track, connecting the farmyard to the road access.

These proposed hedges will anchor the site into the wider countryside setting, whilst also providing biodiversity enhancement opportunities for local wildlife.

To the west of the applicant's ownership, the boundary to the Andoversford/Withington road, is currently open with remnants of dilapidated post and rail fencing. This is unusual for the local area, where road and field boundaries are commonly hedged.

It is proposed to establish new native mix hedges along the roadside field boundaries, reinforcing the local character landscape feature. The proposed hedges will be maintained at the height of contextual hedges in the wider area so the character of the area is not compromised.

In total over 1000m of new native mix hedging is proposed within the wider site area, which provides considerable landscape and ecological benefits to the scheme.



4.0 Proposals

4.4 Materials

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.

It is proposed to reinstate traditional features and materials to the larger of the stone barns, proposing natural blue slate to the roofs (likely a reinstatement of its original roofing material), and replacing the existing timber frame metal clad rear lean to, with a small stone and timber clad element of a more appropriate size and scale, so not to smother the north elevation.

The approach to the smaller stone barn is slightly different; retaining its evolved lean-to shape and creating glazed and timber infill panels within its open side.

The three remaining moderns barns are proposed to have a mix of complementary materials to their walls; horizontal and vertical timber cladding, and profiled metal sheeting to the walls and low pitched roofs.

Each dwelling has been individually designed; with elements of regularity and repetition in form, materials and opening styles providing a clear pattern between structures and maintaining the character of a coherent farm-style development.

Large expanses of unbroken material finishes – stone, timber boarding and metal – help to reinforce the agricultural/industrial character. The proposals reference the familiar features of agricultural buildings typical of the area e.g. simple, uncomplicated roof forms often with long unbroken eaves lines; upper floor loading doors; dairy-style windows; and the deep recessed shadows of cartshed openings and large threshing barn doors.

The two proposed new outbuildings are to be constructed of a mix of timber cladding and natural stone to the walls, allowing them to tie into the proposed boundaries and provide structure and form to the proposed layout. To their roofs, Unit 1 & 2's shared building is proposed as blue slate in reference to the roof of neighbouring stone barn of Unit 5. The outbuilding to Unit 4 is proposed to have timber shingle roof tiles, their natural silvery finish providing a transition between the timber cladding of Unit 4, and the new tree planting beyond the east boundary.



Vertical timber cladding



Timber shingles



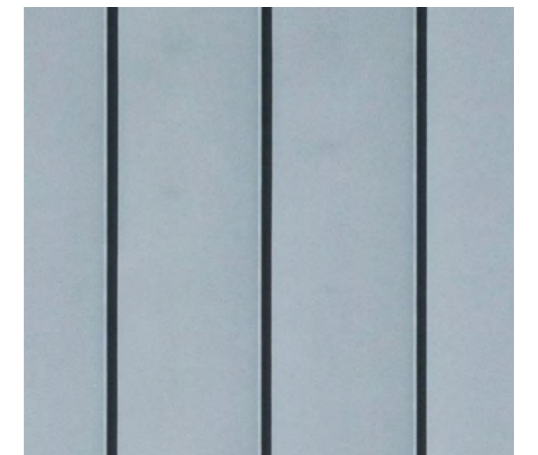
Natural stone



Horizontal timber cladding



Blue slate



Metal cladding

Material palette examples

4.5 Precedent Images

Precedents have been taken from traditional agricultural buildings as well as contemporary interpretations. The images show simple forms, un-fussy detailing and expanses of unbroken natural materials.



4.7 Proposed Dwellings



Existing aerial view from West



Existing aerial view from East



Proposed CGI view from West



Proposed CGI view from East

4.0 Proposals

4.7 Proposed Dwellings



Unit 1 - view from North West



View looking East down the access track, towards Unit 2 & 4



Unit 3 East Garden Elevation



Shared parking courtyard of Unit 2 & 3



Unit 4 East Entrance Elevation and parking courtyard



Unit 5 entrance and parking courtyard

5.0 Sustainability

The scheme intends to target a reduction in carbon emissions over Part L of Building Regulations and also demonstrate the required level of sustainability in its design, construction and operation.

Key opportunities for sustainability features within the development include:

- Achieve a reduction in CO2 emissions over Part L of the building regulations. Insulation in cavity walls, roofs, floors and windows would be increased above the minimum standard required.
- Reduced energy consumption by targeting improved U-Values, airtightness, and low energy lighting. Smart home systems could reduce the energy usage.
- Opportunity for water and space heating from ground source or air source heat pumps. There is ample area to incorporate buried pipework for the system. Plant space has been allocated in each dwelling to store the necessary equipment.
- Opportunities for areas of photovoltaic panels on south facing roof slopes of modern buildings.
- Aim to source local labour throughout the construction phase
- Aim to source natural stone for walling from the farm's resources
- Aim to reduce site waste through effective management plans
- Opportunities for rain water harvesting
- Be efficient and adaptable to future climate changes by installing water efficient sanitary fittings and achieve sustainable water consumption targets.
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems, through landscaping. Permeable paving for areas around the proposed dwelling would be used to reduce the rate of surface water run-off.
- Ensure that there is no net loss of ecological value, protect and improve biodiversity. Introduction of new tree planting, hedgerows and new pond all providing positive contributions.



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