

Initial reactions to the site appraisal are the key themes of **REFLECTIONS** and **CONTRASTS**

REFLECTIONS of trees and the sky in the water:



CONTRASTS:

the very vertical young ash trees

versus

the knarly old oaks around the site's perimeter



the very regular views down the rows of ash trees

versus

the random views when not looking down the rows



intimate views within the site

versus

distant views out of the site



open meadow

versus

enclosed woodland



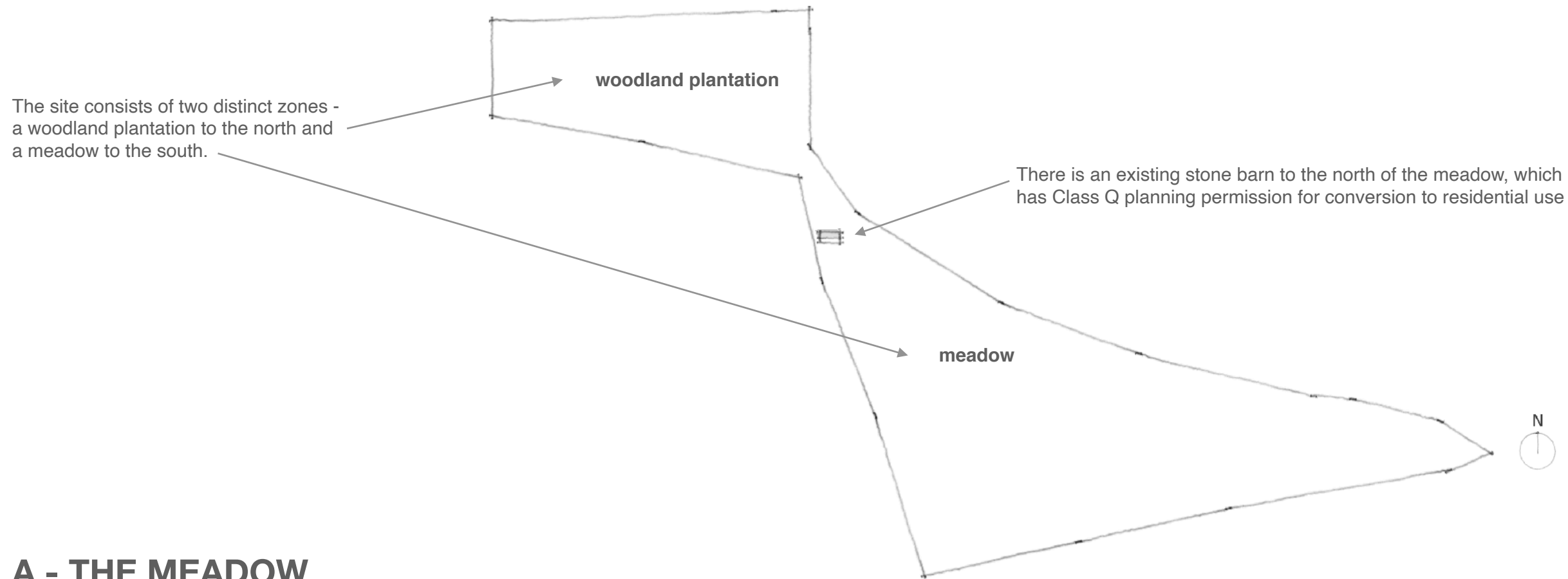
light

versus

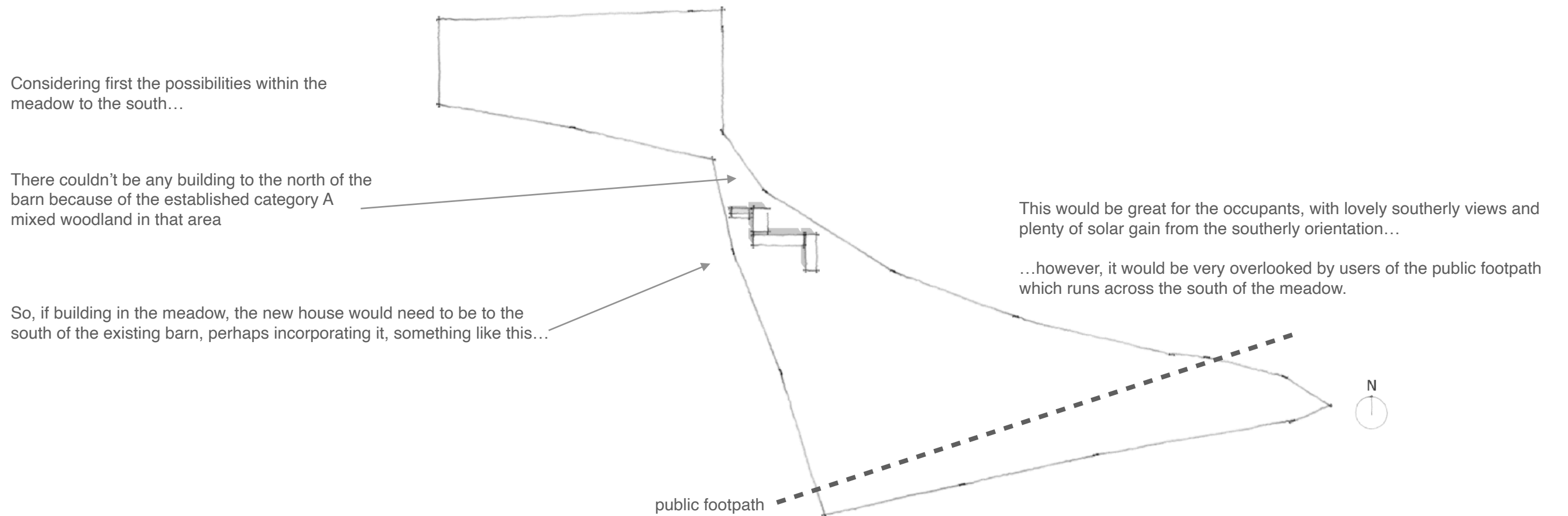
shade



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT: SITING

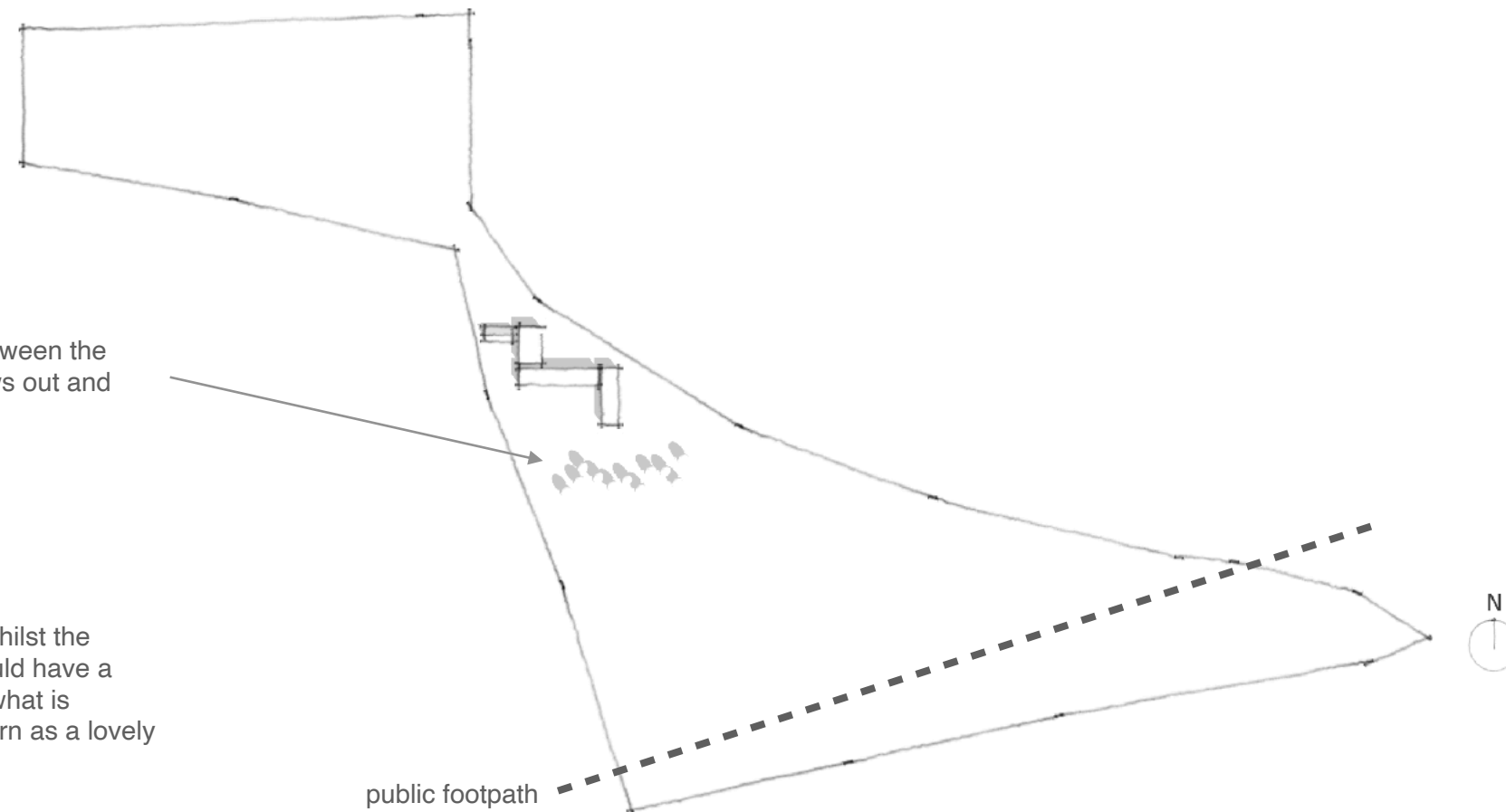


A - THE MEADOW



Some tree planting could help prevent inter-visibility between the footpath and the house - but that would reduce the views out and therefore the benefit of the location.

From the point of view of users of the public footpath, whilst the building may be of high quality, a new building here would have a large impact, and could not be considered to enhance what is already a very special setting, with the original stone barn as a lovely focal point at the apex of the meadow.



public footpath

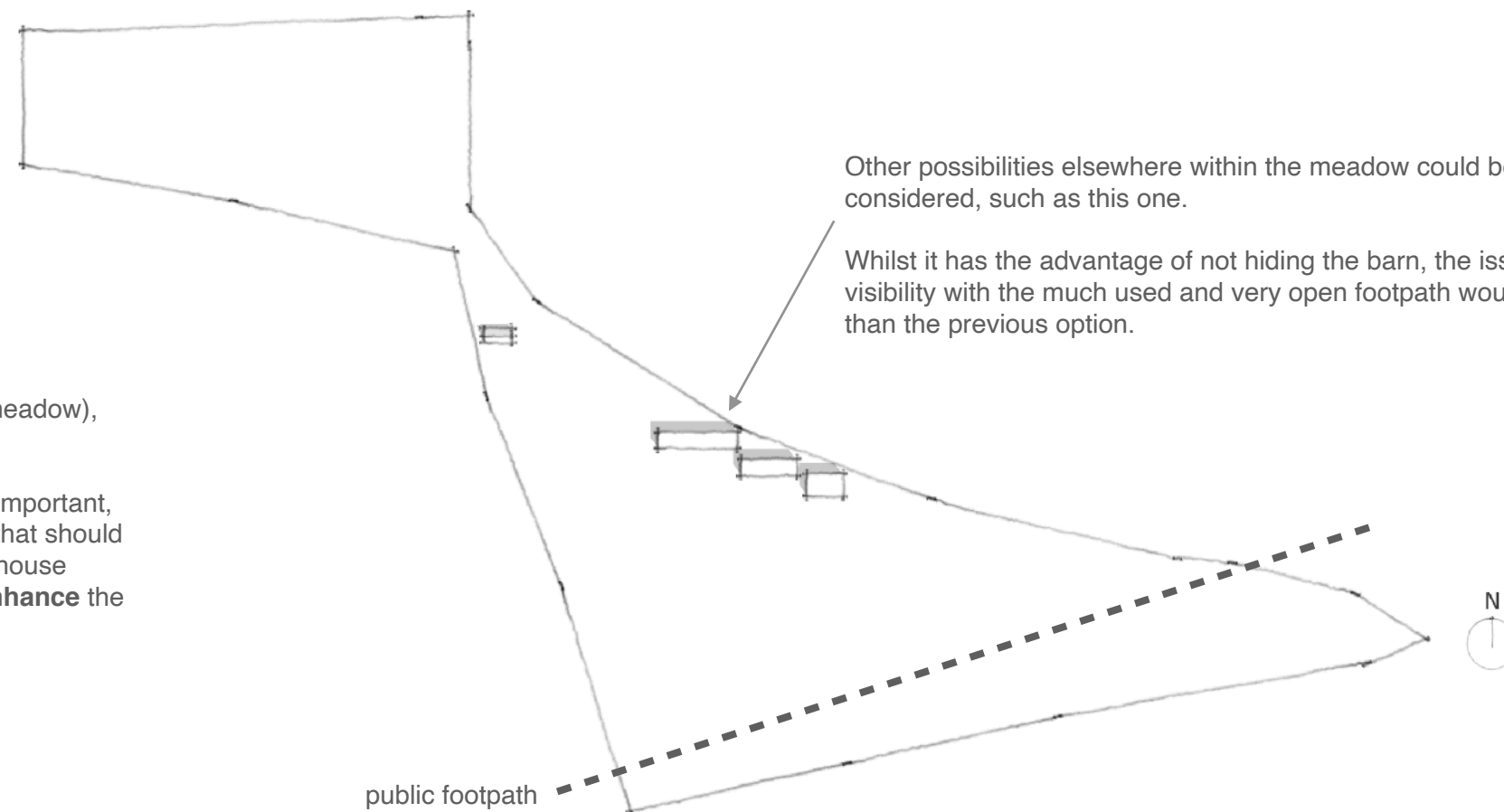


In both of these options (and indeed, anywhere in the meadow), **ecology** is a really important consideration.

The meadow is beautiful, species rich and ecologically important, and any building on it would harm an important habitat that should be protected. It is difficult to see how proposing a new house anywhere within the meadow could be considered to **enhance** the setting in any way.

Other possibilities elsewhere within the meadow could be considered, such as this one.

Whilst it has the advantage of not hiding the barn, the issue of inter-visibility with the much used and very open footpath would be worse than the previous option.



public footpath



Instead of proposing any building within the meadow, it is proposed that the meadow and barn remain largely unchanged. The meadow is an important habitat that should be protected, and the barn is a lovely and well-preserved example of a typical traditional agricultural building, and makes a beautiful focal point at the apex of the meadow.



Various options have been considered for the barn, which has permission in place for a Class Q conversion to a 1-bedroom house. We have concluded that it should remain largely unchanged, and would be perfect as a storage space for garden equipment and machinery. This would only necessitate slightly widening the existing doorway to the north side for machinery access. The openings would all have boarded timber doors added and the roof would be replaced and movement cracks in the walls made good.

The barn would also double up as a habitat for a variety of species, most notably bats and barn owls. The ecologists have advised on detailing for bat boxes in the eaves, on top of the existing wall plate, as well as slots within the boarded up doorways with bat boxes fitted on the inside. The barn will also accommodate a barn owl roost in the apex of the roof, accessed via the existing arrow slot window in the eastern apex.

B - THE WOODLAND PLANTATION

Having concluded that it would be inappropriate to develop the meadow, we next looked at the woodland plantation to the north.

This is essentially an artificial man-made landscape, a poorly managed regimented monoculture which would benefit from intervention, and which is ripe for enhancement.



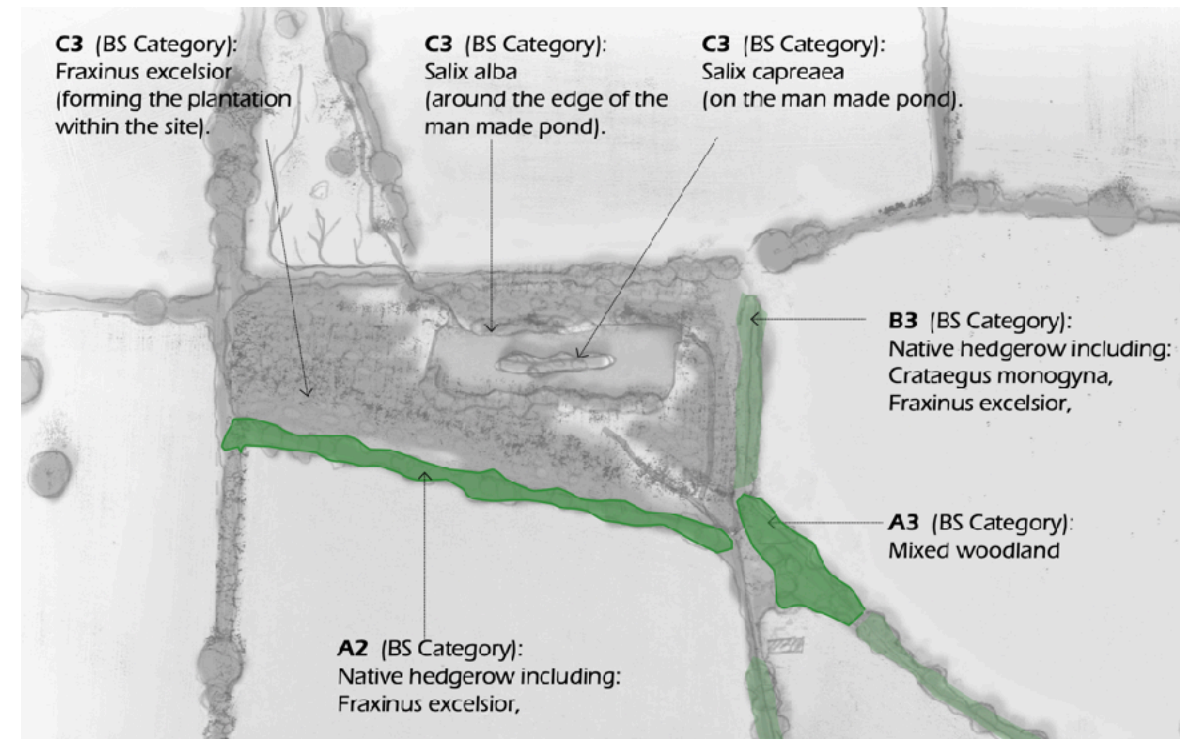
1945 (Source: Google Earth)

This area of land was once a field, with a watercourse running through it, and was surrounded by native hedgerow trees, which are now mature and of great value. This should be considered as the base / starting point.

Two important elements were then introduced in the mid 1990s, which vastly changed the character of the site - **the plantation of ash trees and the lake**. Taking each of these in turn...

1 - The Trees

The arboricultural survey identified the important trees to retain - shown here in green, with the monoculture ash plantation shown grey.



The survey also identified ash dieback already present in several trees on the site, and advised that the ash plantation was of poor quality, having been poorly conceived and poorly managed over the years.

We therefore concluded that whilst there is some value in the current state of the trees, having reached a certain maturity, they are highly likely to die within the next few years. We know from records that the trees planted here are from the UK rather than elsewhere in Europe, and are therefore not resistant to ash dieback.

We should therefore a) not be too constrained in the siting of the dwelling by trees that are unlikely to survive and b) should allow to gradually replace them as they die with more appropriate native mixed woodland.