

C.A.T. Landscape Consultancy

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Fuel Storage & Distribution Depot Land at Hornton Grounds Hornton

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Introduction

This report, on behalf of Finlay Scott, details the Landscape and Visual Impact of a fuel storage and distribution depot at Hornton Grounds Quarry, Hornton

Scope and methodology

The scope objectives are

- To identify current landscape character
- To identify sensitivity of the landscape and visual situation of the site
- To identify and describe impact of the potential development in so far as they affect landscape and views and evaluate magnitude of change and the overall significance of the impact.
- To provide suggestions for mitigation measures that may be required

The methodology is based on guidelines for GLVIA (3rd edition) published by the Landscape Institute. The information relating to the site was collected during site visits on Wednesday 20.6.20 and Sunday 24.6.20.

The areas of the site were studied and photographs taken from within and around the perimeter. A desk top study was used to provide additional information.

Impact assessment methodology

The assessment stage includes the systematic identification of potential landscape and visual impact, prediction of their sensitivity, magnitude and significance.

General Points

Landscape character

The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place.

Sensitivity or capacity of the landscape resource

The degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character, will vary with

- Existing land use.
- The pattern and scale of the landscape.
- Visual enclosure / openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors.
- The scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape.

Variations of these characteristics within local landscape and within the site need to be identified.

Scale or magnitude of landscape effects

There is no standard methodology for the quantification of the magnitude of effects. However, it is generally based on the scale or degree of change to the landscape resource, the nature of the effect and its duration.

Sensitivity of visual receptors

The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will be dependent on

- The location and context of the viewpoints
- The expectation and occupation or activity of the receptor

Scale of visual effects

In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude or scale of visual change is described by reference to

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development.
- The degree of contrast or integration of any features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture.
- The duration and nature of the effect, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous etc.
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor.
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development.
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

Landscape impact

The following criteria have been used

Landscape sensitivity or capacity

High	Landscape areas with particularly distinctive or positive characters or with valued landscape features. The areas may be sensitive to relatively small changes.
Medium	Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features. Potentially tolerant of some change.
Low	Landscape areas with a weak character or relatively few features of value, potentially tolerant of significant change.

Magnitude of landscape change

High adverse	Total loss of or major alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Medium adverse	Partial loss of, or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Low adverse	Minor loss of, or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
No change	Very minor loss or change to the landscape characteristics or features of the area, compensated by landscape improvements.
Low beneficial	Minor improvements to the key characteristics or features that outweigh any adverse landscape effects of the proposal. Removal of minor incongruous features.
Medium beneficial	Notable improvements to the key characteristics or features or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.
High beneficial	Major landscape improvements, through the creation of a new landscape structure, or the removal of inappropriate features.

The overall landscape impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the landscape resource with the landscape change.

The overall significance is classified as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.

Visual impact

The following criteria have been used

Visual sensitivity

High	Occupiers of adjacent residential properties with open views over the site and into the far distance.
Medium	Occupiers of residential properties with partial or restricted views over the site and or distant views. Users of outdoor recreational facilities where views are less important e.g. views from public footpaths.
Low	Occupiers of residential properties with very limited or restricted views, or very distant views, or people in places of work. People travelling past the site in cars.

Visual magnitude of change

High adverse	Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the view.
Medium adverse	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the view.
Low adverse	Where the scheme would cause a minor deterioration in the view.
No change	Where the scheme overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.
Low beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a minor improvement in the view.
Medium beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the view.
High beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement in the view.

The overall visual impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of visual change.

The overall significance is classified as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.

Site context

The site lies one kilometer to the south-west of Hornton village and is accessed from the A422, Stratford Road. The site area (approximately one hectare) has an existing stone cutting and processing operation on the west side. The proposed site is well contained physically and visually by existing boundary tree belts to the west, established native hedging to the south and east and by substantial bunding to the north and east, combined with new native boundary planting on top of the bunds.

The surrounding area is a mix of arable and pasture farmland with a disused quarry area 750 metres to the north.

The surrounding area historically has been used for ironstone mineral extraction, now restored to agricultural use.

Hornton Grounds Farm is the nearest significant visual receptor, 350 metres to the south-east.



Landscape character

The site lies in the landscape character area of Northamptonshire Uplands (NCA 95)

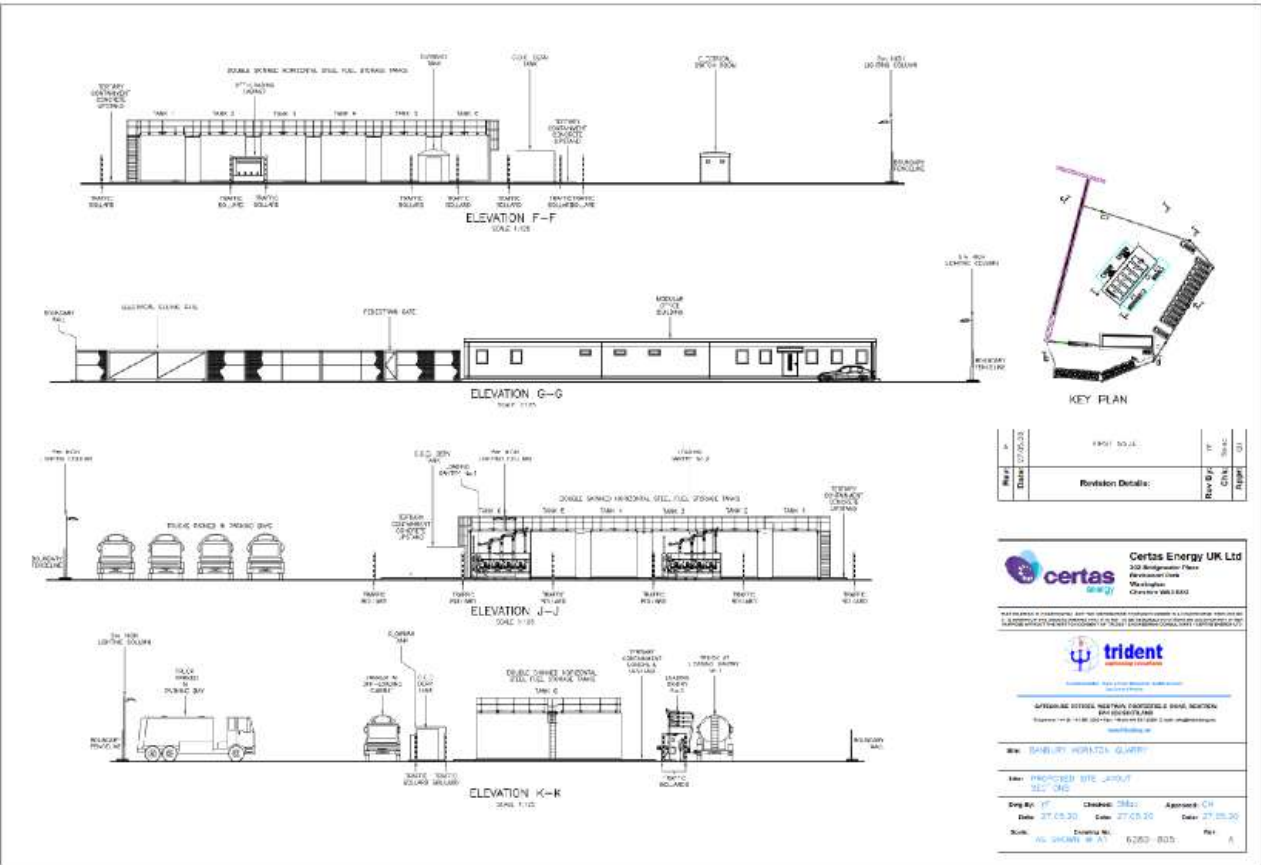
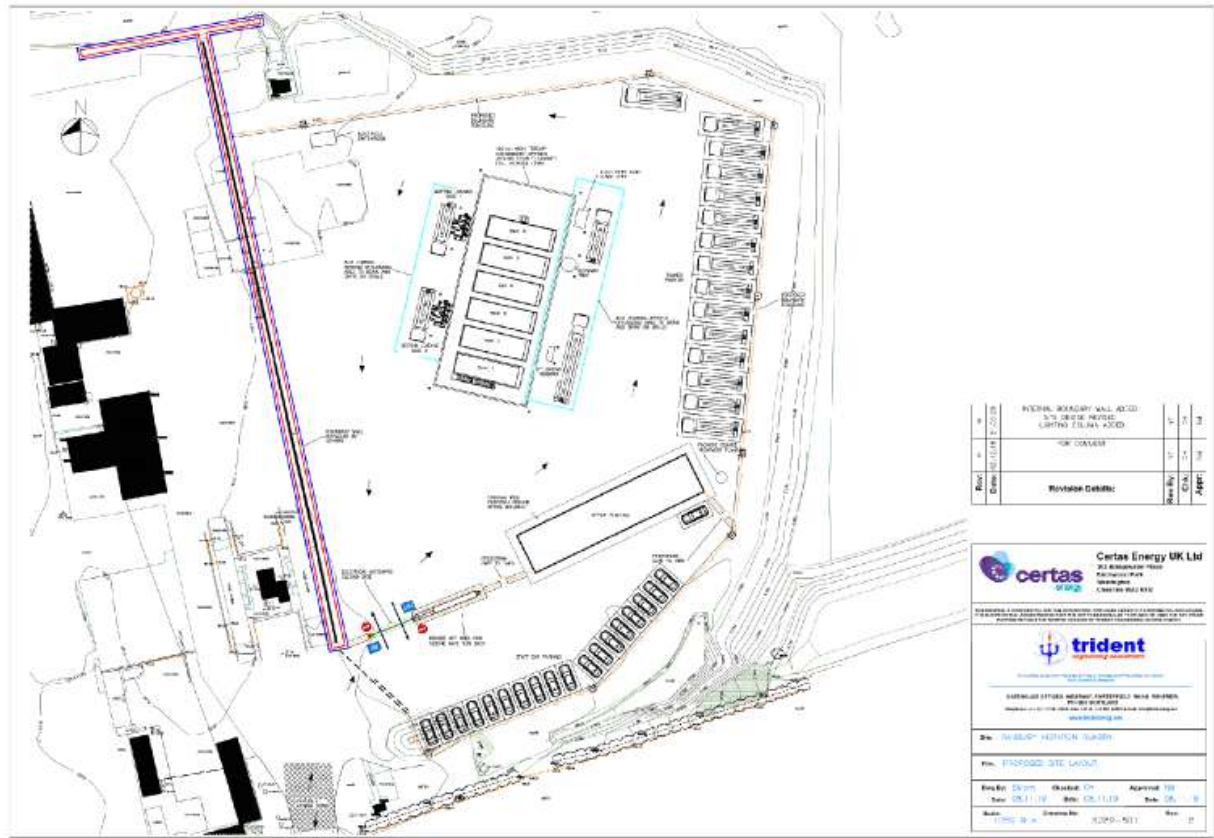
Main characteristics relating to subject site area:

- A mixed agricultural landscape.
- Gently rolling rounded hills with long ridgelines.
- Extensive open field systems with strong enclosure pattern with high 'A' shaped hedgerows with frequent mature Oak and Ash trees, bounding rectilinear fields. Scattered but prominent broadleaved woods and coverts.

Scheme Description and Details of Proposals

The proposal is for a fuel storage and distribution depot with associated equipment, hardstanding, parking for lorries and cars, a modular office building, lighting columns(5m ht) and boundary enclosures. The site will occupy an area of ground(approximately one hectare) which is adjacent to the eastern site boundary of an existing stone cutting and processing operation.

Previously, the proposed site area was ancillary to this operation and was used as a conservation stone compound and for the storage of stone material.



Development Considerations and Potential Effects

Planning context

The site area currently has approval for an industrial building, B2 use, Planning Application 17/02553/CM. The overall height of this building would be 9.7 metres.

The highest proposed built structure on the new proposed development would be 5 metres for the fuel tanks and lighting columns. The modular office building is 3.5 metres in height.

Wording relating to Planning Application 17/02553/CM

2. The Council's Landscape officer has assessed the proposals and raises no objections subject to existing hedgerow systems being retained; commenting: 'For the purpose of mitigating the site and its use for the benefit of visual receptors on PRoW 255/5/10 to the south of the site, the site's southern and eastern boundary hedgerows are to be retained and protected from damage in the long term. The site's western boundary hedgerow should also be retained and protected against damage for the purpose of physically containing the site from views from the highway to the west'. 8.3. Also as noted by the Landscape Officer, the site is within a landscape once deemed to be an Area of High Landscape Value in the CLP 1996, but now rescinded in the current Cherwell Local Plan with policy ESD 13 in favour of seeking to 'conserve and enhance the distinctive and highly valued local character of the entire District', and therefore the retention and protection of the abovementioned hedgerow system is crucial to mitigate the harm to this sensitive landscape. 8.4. Given the context and location of the site, subject to the above mitigation, officers do not anticipate that the wider rural landscape would be significantly affected by the current proposal.

8. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION 9.1. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 requires that the three dimensions to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are not undertaken in isolation, but are sought jointly and simultaneously. 9.2. The proposal is a County Matter and CDC is a consultee only. It is expected that the County Council will make a full assessment into the effects of the proposal, but from the District perspective it is considered that, subject to an assessment of the Ecology and highways of the site being approved and appropriate landscaping being implemented, the proposal would not result in significant harm to the visual amenities of the site and wider landscape within which it sits.

9. RECOMMENDATION 1. Cherwell District Council raises no objections to the proposal subject to appropriate consideration given to ecology and highways matters and the following comments: For the purpose of mitigating the site and its use for the benefit of visual receptors on PRoW 255/5/10 to the south of the site, the site's southern and eastern boundary hedgerows are to be retained and protected from damage in the long term. The site's western boundary hedgerow should also be retained and protected against damage for the purpose of physically containing the site from views from the highway to the west. Cherwell District Council requests that they be informed of the outcome of the application once a decision has been made.

The proposed site area has a terraced area of similar size to the east which is at a level approximately 3 metres higher. This area of ground has planning approval for three agricultural buildings, planning Application 19/01942/DISC.

3. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 (as updated)

Under Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the Natural Environment, Paragraph 170d refers to:

"minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity"

There is an opportunity through establishing new boundary planting and buffer planting to the pond area to create an enhanced ecological environment, one that has greater wildlife value than currently exists.

Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

(Please refer to methodology criteria for details)

Landscape Impact assessment

In general it is not anticipated that any of the key landscape characteristics or features of the site i.e. trees / hedgerows etc are to be removed. The landscape sensitivity of the site area has been classified as **Medium**, as stated below.

The following table outlines the landscape impact assessment as follows

Proposal	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
Fuel oil storage & distribution depot	Medium: Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features. Potentially tolerant of some change	No change Very minor loss or change to the landscape characteristics or features of the landscape area	Negligible

NB The site has the benefit of significant established trees and or hedgerows to the west, south and east boundaries, plus bunding and recent new planting to the north and east boundaries.

Landscape Drawing No HG 05 shows additional new native planting around the small pond, as recommended by the ecologist, Casey Griffin. A small section of infill planting is also included in the southern boundary hedgerow.

Visual Impact Assessment

Visual sensitivity of the receptors and scale of the visual effects is dependent on a number of factors, which include

- Degree of screening
- Distance from the viewpoint to the development
- Whether the view is transient
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor
- Proportion of the development visible in the view

Assessment of visual receptor locations around the site



Viewpoint 1. Site access road, 200m from site location, looking north
Fully screened by southern boundary hedgerow Low sensitivity



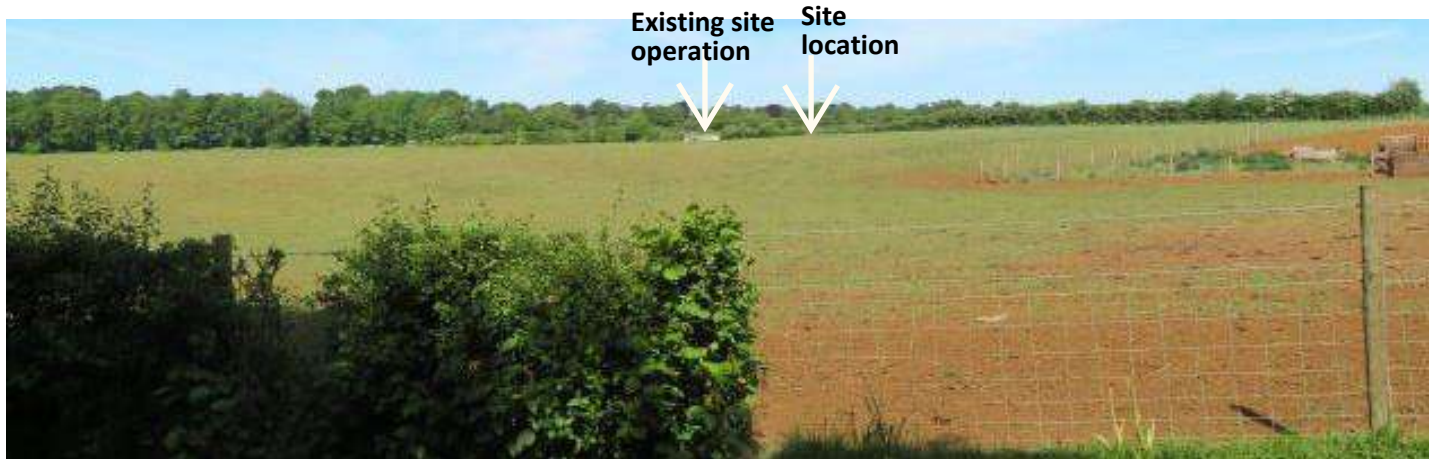
Viewpoint 2. Site access entrance Nr A422, 750m from site location, looking north
Fully screened by southern boundary hedgerow Low sensitivity



Viewpoint 3. d'Arcy Dalton Way, 700m from site location, looking north-west
Fully screened by topography Low sensitivity



Viewpoint 4. d'Arcy Dalton Way, 500m from site location, looking north-west
Fully screened by topography Low sensitivity



Viewpoint 5. d'Arcy Dalton Way, 300m from site location, looking north-west
Hornton Grounds Farm, 350m from site location, similar view potential
Site fully screened by southern boundary hedgerow plus trees in front of Farm house.

Medium sensitivity
High sensitivity



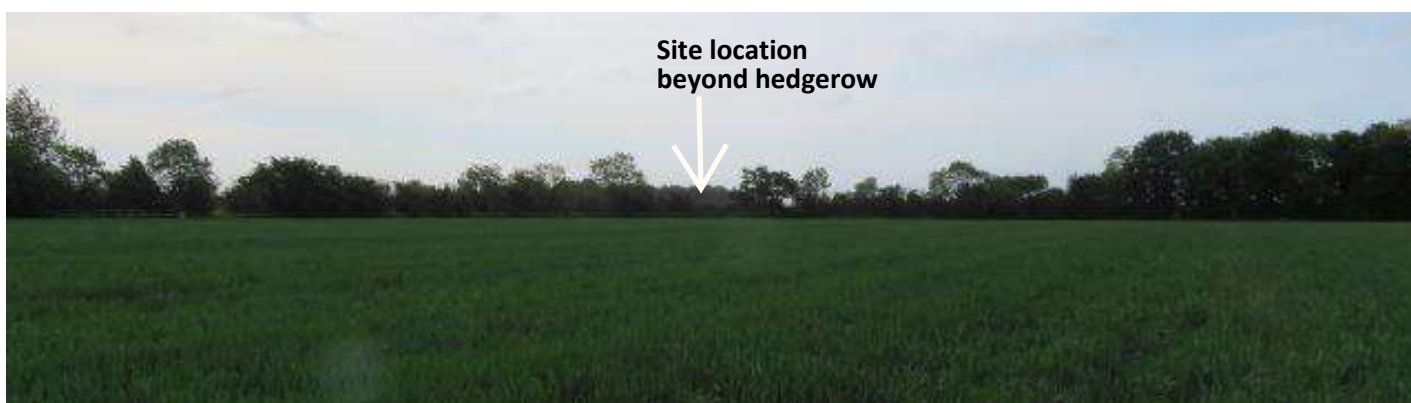
Viewpoint 6. Open field location, 500m from site location, looking west
Fully screened by eastern boundary hedgerow

Low sensitivity



Viewpoint 7. d'Arcy Dalton way/A422, 500m from site location, looking north-east
Fully screened by trees and hedgerow

Low sensitivity



Viewpoint 8. PRoW 256/SM/168/1, 300m from site location looking south-east
Fully screened by trees and hedgerow

Low sensitivity

Site location
beyond trees & hedgerows



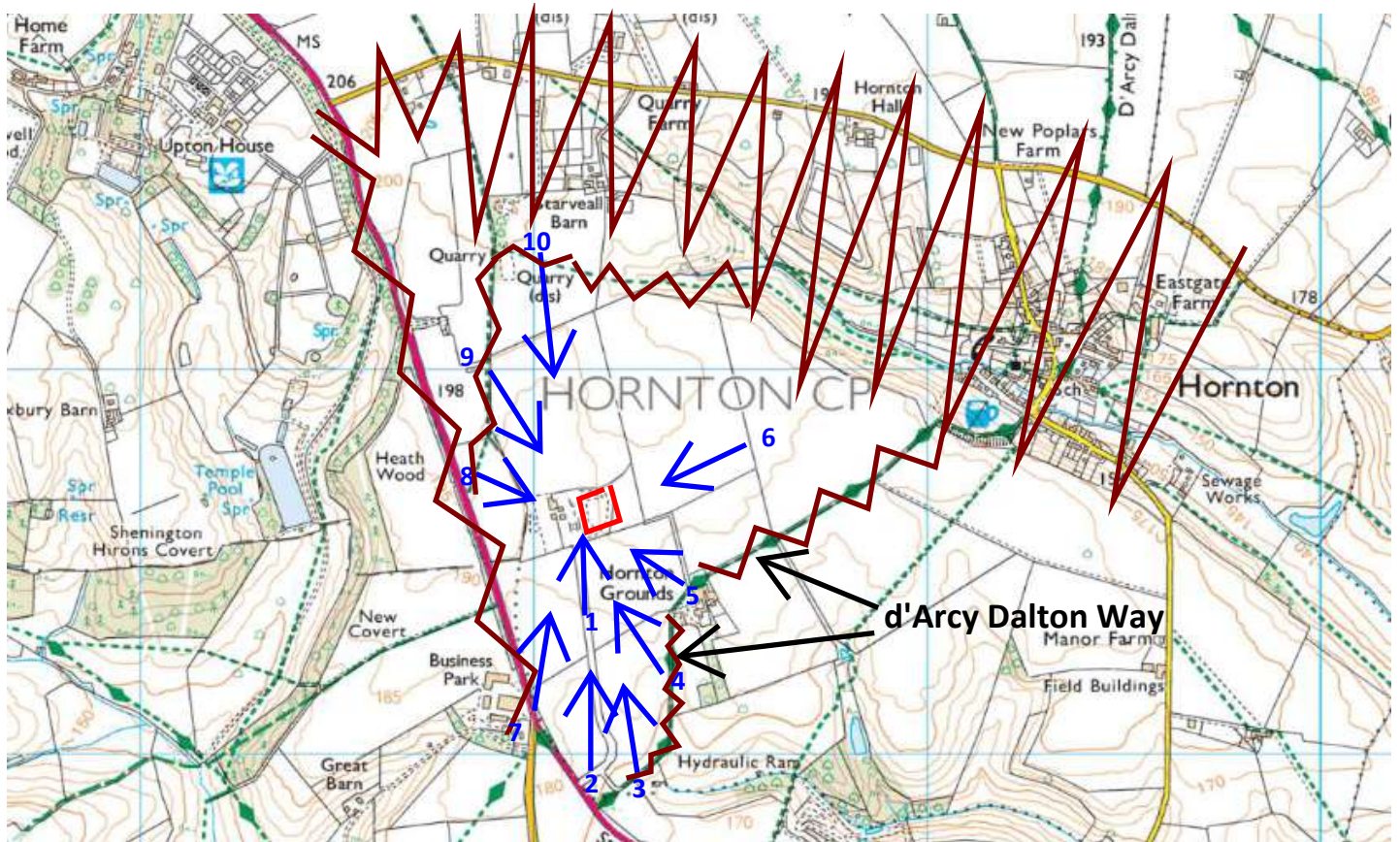
Viewpoint 9. PRoW 256/SM/168/1, 600m from site location looking south-east
Fully screened by trees and hedgerow

Low sensitivity


Site location
beyond sequence
of trees & hedgerows



Viewpoint 10. PRoW 255/6/10 800m from site location looking south
NB Starveall Barn in a nearby location Both fully screened by trees/hedgerows Low sensitivity



Viewpoint locations

 Areas where there is no view of the site location
due to screening & or topography

Visual Impact Schedule

Viewpoint

	Location	Distance from the viewpoint to the development	Is the view transient Yes/No	Duration temporary or permanent	Description of the view of the development	Description of visual receptors and their situation	Sensitivity of receptors High/Medium/Low	Magnitude of change High/Medium/Low/ No change	Adverse or beneficial or neutral	Significance Substantial/Moderate/Slight/Negligible	Mitigation NB The site area already has the benefit of significant existing vegetation, bunding and recent boundary planting
1.	Access road to existing stone cutting operation	200m	Yes	Permanent	Mid distant fully screened	Vehicular traffic relating to the existing stone cutting operation	Low	No change Con/Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
2.	Access road adjacent to A422, Stratford Road	750m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Vehicular & pedestrian traffic relating to d'Arcy Dalton Way	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
3.	PRoW 255/5/10 d'Arcy Dalton Way	700m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian traffic & vehicular access to Hornton Grounds Farm	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con Yr/ 0 & Yr 15	None required
4.	PRoW 255/5/10 d'Arcy Dalton Way	500m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Ditto	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
5.	PRoW 255/5/10 d'Arcy Dalton Way Hornton Grounds Farm	300m 350m	Yes No	Permanent Permanent	Mid distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian traffic Residential Property	Medium High	No change No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
6.	Open field location east of site Not a PRoW	500m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Agricultural operatives	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con /Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
7.	PRoW 255/5/10 d'Arcy Dalton Way A422 junction	500m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian & vehicular traffic	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
8.	PRoW 256/SM168/1 North-west of site	300m	Yes	Permanent	Mid distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian traffic	Low	No change Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con/ Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
9.	Ditto	600m	Yes	Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian traffic	Low	No change Con /Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con /Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required
10.	PRoW 255/6/10 Starveall Barn	800m 900m	Yes No	Permanent Permanent	Distant site area fully screened	Pedestrian traffic Residential property	Low	No change Con /Yr 0 & Yr 15	Neutral	Negligible Con /Yr 0 & Yr 15	None required

NB There are no views of the site area from Hornton village which lies in a low lying valley to the north-east.

Mitigation Proposals

The proposed site area has the benefit of existing recently completed native hedgerow planting on top of the northern and eastern bunds which is now establishing successfully and has reached a height of 2-2.5 metres. Native hedging species have been selected eg Hawthorn and Blackthorn . This planting will provide enhanced visual and physical enclosure which is also attractive to wildlife, providing food, shelter and nesting habitats.

Please refer to Landscape Drawing No HG 05 which shows the extent of established and recent planting. Also, as recommended by ecologist, Casey Griifin, an area of native buffer planting has been shown around the small pond area plus a small section of infill planting in the southern hedgeline.

The existing key landscape features of the boundary hedgerows and trees are very important and their retention, protection and future management will be beneficial in terms of reducing the visual impact of the proposals . They also provide valuable habitats for wildlife, providing, food, shelter and nesting areas.

The existing boundary hedgerows and trees will need to be protected during construction and an arboricultural method statement would be appropriate based on BS5837:2012. Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. It is important to assess root protection areas for retained trees and hedgerows.

Summary and Conclusion

The preceding analysis has identified the extent of the landscape and visual impact arising from the development proposal.

The key landscape features of the hedgerows and trees are to be retained and protected.

The landscape area has a medium sensitivity but the proposed development would be sited in a well contained location adjacent to existing commercial buildings of similar size and scale. Therefore there would be very minor loss or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the area and this would be compensated by recently implemented landscape enhancement planting.

Visually the site location is well screened from all locations by trees and or hedgerows and topography. The site is in a low lying location with significant bunding already in place. Visual significance has been classed as negligible for all receptors for the construction phase, year zero and at year fifteen.

The proposed site area has implemented planning permission for an industrial building, B2 use (Planning Application reference 17/02553/CM). The footprint of this building is similar in area to the to the proposed fuel tank area but at a height of 9.7 metres this building would be nearly twice as high as the highest structures (5 metre height) on the proposed fuel depot.

Also, there is implemented planning permission, reference 19/01942/DISC, for three large agricultural buildings (approximately 8 metres in height) on adjacent land to the east of the proposed site area. This area is on a raised terrace, approximately 3 metres above the level of the proposed site area.

The new proposal for the fuel storage and distribution depot will therefore have less visual impact than the extact consents for the industrial building and agricultural buildings.