



## **New Barn Farm: Proposed Replacement Dwelling**

### **Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

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**Askew Nelson Ltd**

Lower Farm House, Upper Milton  
Oxfordshire OX7 6EX  
max@askewnelson.com  
askewnelson.com

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Assessment matrices

***Cover photo:***

The existing house at New Barn Farm

## 1.0 Introduction

This landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) has been commissioned by the owners of New Barn Farm to accompany an application for a new replacement dwelling. The appraisal is structured as follows:

- a brief outline of the proposals;
- brief summary history of the application site landscape;
- a review of the planning policy background and guidance relevant to landscape character and visual amenity;
- a description of the landscape character and visual context of the application site;
- an appraisal of the landscape and visual effects likely to result from the proposed development.

## 2.0 The proposed scheme and the application site

The proposed design scheme seeks planning permission for a replacement detached dwelling at New Barn Farm. The scheme has been developed around the retention of the existing Threshing Barn, Byre and Garage outbuilding. The proposals look to enhance the existing dilapidated, convoluted and awkward set of buildings by replacing the modern elements with a simple Gentlemen's farmhouse dwelling. [text from the Design & Access Statement]

Externally, the design includes a re-routed driveway that is more sympathetic to the existing topography & also a revised landscape scheme (see Fig. 2) to enhance the immediate and wider setting of the new dwelling.

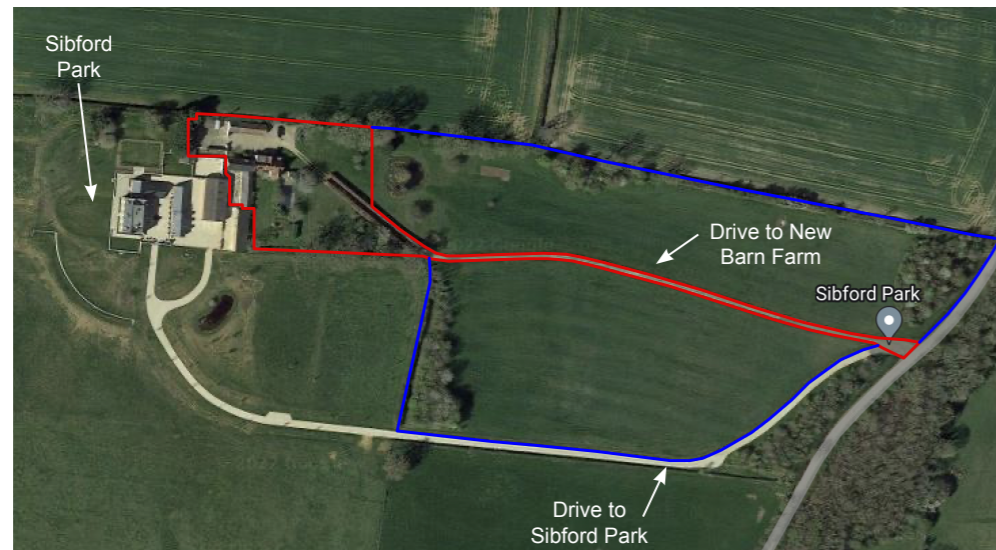


Fig. 1: Context of the application site. Application site outlined in red; wider landholding of New Barn Farm outlined in blue

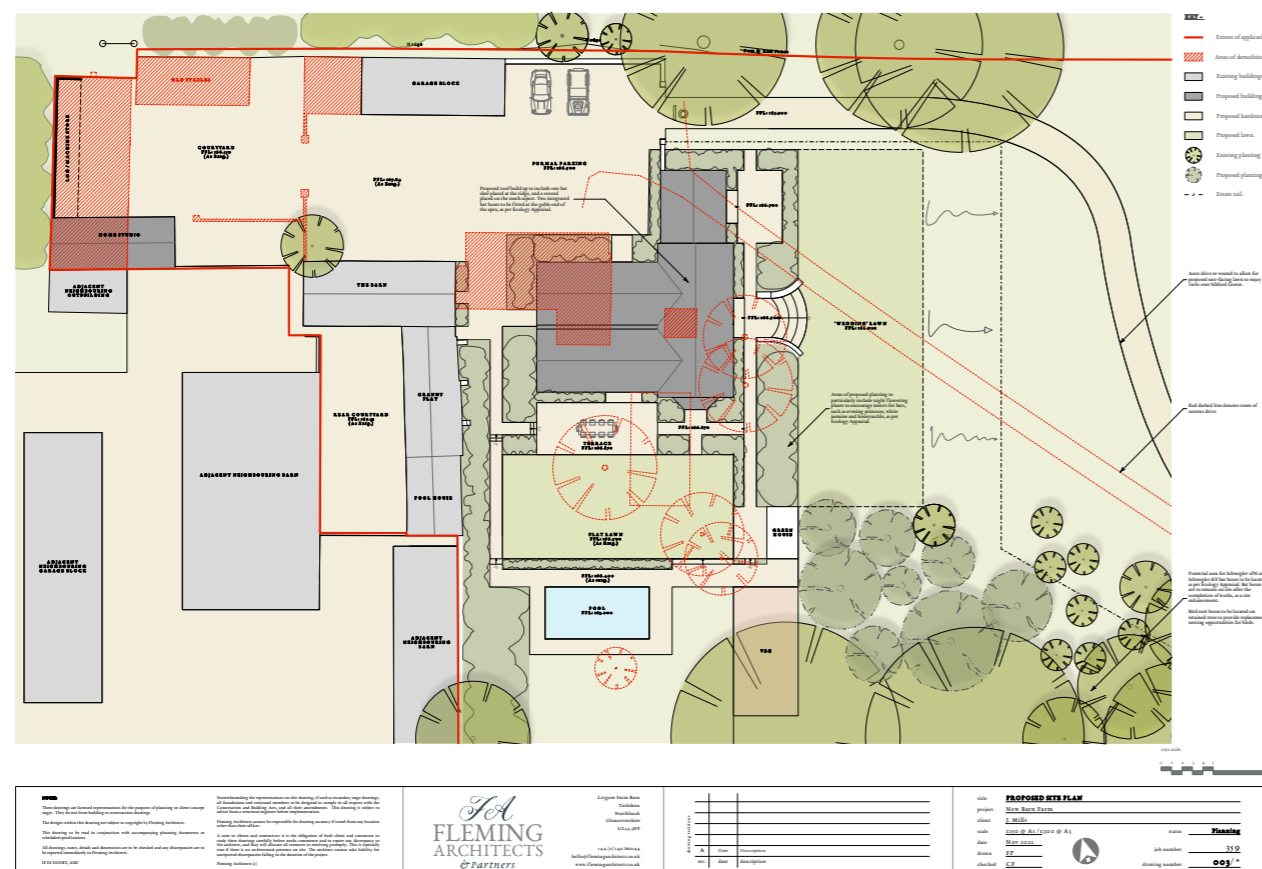


Fig. 2a: Proposed layout (Fleming Architects)





Fig. 3: Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing 1813. Haynes's Barn is shown but New Barn Farm not shown (circled in red)

### 3.0 Summary History of the Application Site Landscape

The buildings at New Barn Farm appear to date from the 19th Century. They are not shown on the 1813 OS survey, which does show Haynes's Barn to the north. 'New Barn' appears on the 1st Edition OS in 1886 with the drive meeting Colony Road where it does now. See Figs. 3 and 4 opposite. The 1st Edition OS shows the existing mature oaks on the southern boundary of the property, also a number of mature trees on the northern boundary.

The 1922 OS map shows the drive realigned to its existing route but does not show trees (Fig. 5). The 1945 aerial photograph (Fig. 6) shows a similar situation to the 1922 OS.

The 2017 aerial photograph (Fig. 7) shows New Barn Farm and the neighbouring property Muddle Barn Farm prior to the construction of the existing new dwelling, now known as Sibford Park. The pond and swimming pool are shown on the 2017 aerial.

The neighbouring Sibford Park was granted planning permission at appeal on 31 October 2017. See Fig 1 with the current aerial photograph.

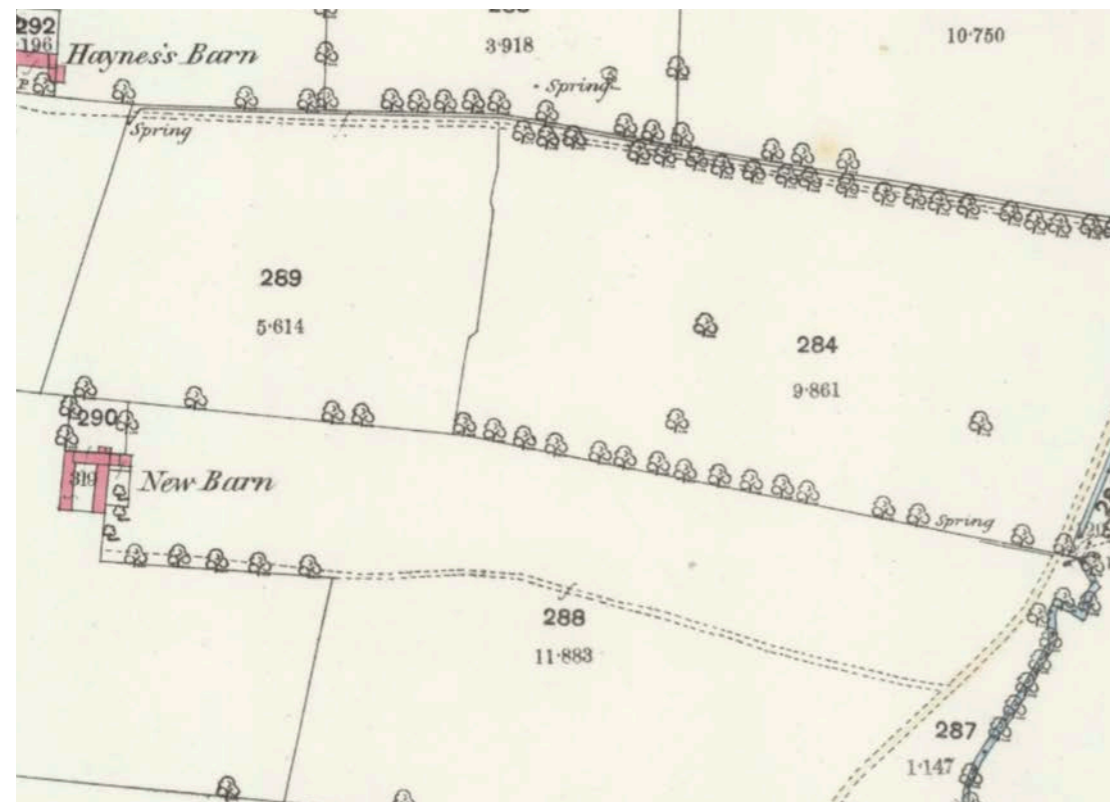


Fig. 4: 1st edition Ordnance Survey (publ. 1886, 25" to the mile) shows 'New Barn'. The access runs along the boundary where the mature oaks are (recently TPO'd).



Fig. 5: 1922 revision of the Ordnance Survey (25" to the mile) shows the drive on its current alignment and modest extensions to the buildings.



Fig. 6: 1945 Aerial photograph



Fig. 7: 2017 Aerial photograph prior to the construction of Sibford Park to the west of New Barn Farm.

#### 4.0 Designations, Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

New Barn Farm lies in open countryside- see extract of Cherwell Local Plan Proposals Map in Fig. 8 below.

The Cotswolds AONB lies c.325m to the west (its boundary follows the Cherwell District boundary with Warwickshire and Stratford District and is shown shaded on Fig 8 below). The Sibford Gower Conservation Area, which includes The Colony, lies 500m to the north east (red hatching in Fig. 8). The Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal notes 'positive views' towards New Barn Farm from the conservation area. Local Plan Policy ESD15 seeks the conservation and enhancement of the conservation area and its setting.

A bridleway 348/2/10 runs east-west 120m north of the property, passing Haynes's Barn. This bridleway meets the MacMillan Way (Warwickshire reference 134/SS63/1) 325m NW of New Barn Farm, which runs along the ridge line (Ditched Lane).

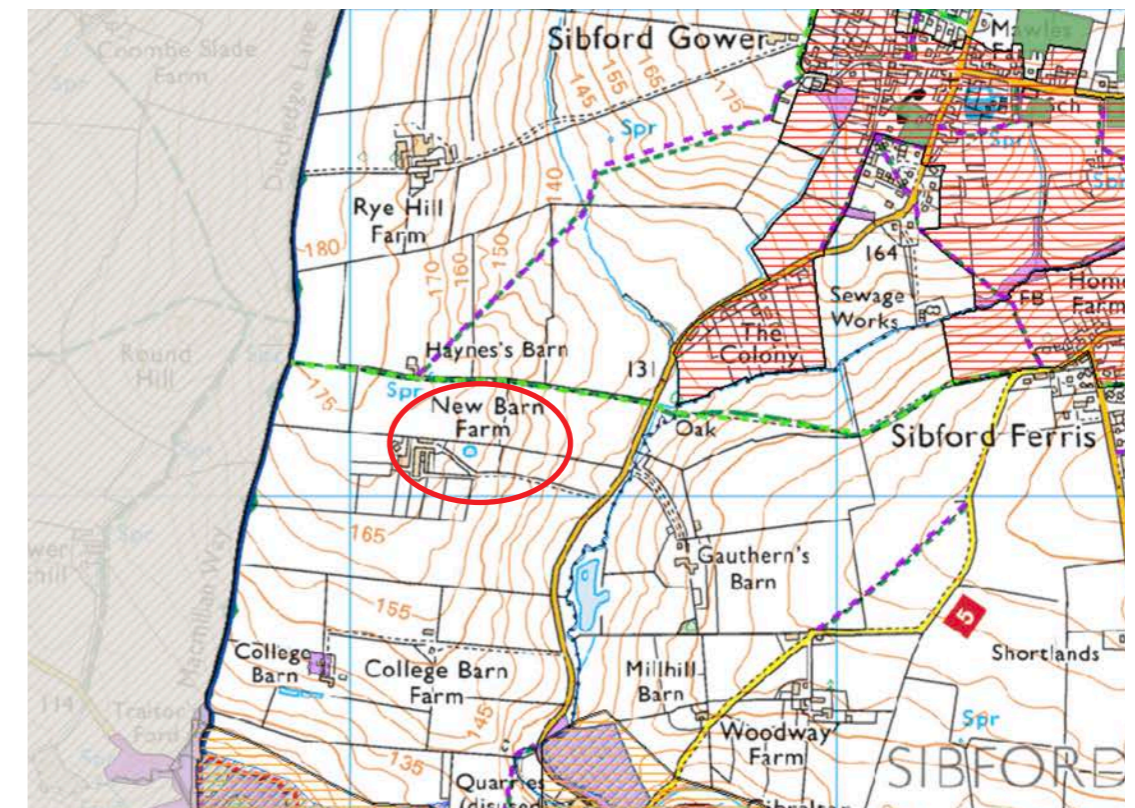


Fig. 8: Cherwell DC Proposals map



Fig. 9: The existing house and outbuildings from the east.



Fig. 10: The drive, with Sibford Park entrance on the left.



Fig. 11: View from the north: the barn on the right is to be retained; modern house on left to be replaced.



Fig. 12: View north towards Haynes's Barn from New Barn Farm.



Fig. 13: The pond to the east of the house with views beyond towards Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower.



Fig. 14: The modern house to be replaced.

### National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021) seeks the conservation and enhancement of the natural and local environment, including “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services...” (para 174).

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in...Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty...” (para 176).

Section 16 of the NPPF sets out policies for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Para 194 makes references to the settings of heritage assets (the Sibford Gower Conservation Area lies 500m to the north east).

The UK Government’s website provides extensive guidance on design and planning (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>). It includes guidance on the conservation and enhancement of landscapes (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721), also guidance on the settings of AONBs (042 Reference ID: 8-042-20190721: “Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.”). Guidance is also provided on managing change in the context of the historic environment. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account.

### Local Planning Policy: Cherwell District Council Local Plan

Local Plan Policy ESD 10 seeks the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment. The policy includes the protection of trees, reuse of soils, requirement for mitigation and compensation for any harmful impacts.

Policy ESD 121 relates to the Cotswolds AONB. The policy includes the protection of its setting from “potentially damaging and inappropriate development”.

ESD 13 seeks to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape. Development is expected to “respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.” The policy makes reference to areas with a high level of tranquillity, the setting of settlements and the historic value of landscape.

Policy ESD 15 refers to the built and historic environment, and seeks to conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated heritage assets (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG (4th bullet in ESD 15). Reference is made to limiting “the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.” (p.118, 5th bullet).

## Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) provides an overview of Oxfordshire's landscape character. The higher ground of the application site (i.e. the location of the existing & proposed dwellings) lies within the landscape type 'Rolling Village Pastures'. The lower ground, i.e. the field to the east of the house through which the approach drive runs, is within the 'Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes' landscape type.

The Rolling Village Pastures landscape type is "characterised by a distinctive landform of small rounded hills and narrow valleys. Unspoilt ironstone villages, with a strong vernacular character, form part of the tranquil countryside. Key characteristics include: a strongly undulating landform of rounded hills and small valleys; small to medium-sized fields with mixed land uses, but predominantly pasture; densely scattered hedgerow trees; well defined nucleated villages with little dispersal into the wider countryside.

More detailed information on the Sibford Gower local character area is provided in the OWLS: medium-sized fields with mainly semi-improved grassland and some arable cropping. The pasture is mainly used for pony grazing and dairy stock. Fields are enclosed by a weak pattern of tall hawthorn hedges, many of which have been replaced by fences or removed altogether, particularly where arable farming is dominant. Mature hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, sycamore and some oak, are prominent throughout the area. They are sparser within field hedges and where arable farming dominates. There are a few mixed plantations with species such as ash, oak and Scots Pine. This area supports only a limited range of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. There are no recorded priority habitats, but gorse scrub is a notable feature.

The OWLS strategy for this landscape type is to conserve and strengthen hedgerows, conserve pasture and plant small woodland blocks.

The Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes' landscape type includes pastoral and wooded landscapes associated with the steep slopes and valleys of small streams and main rivers. Key characteristics include: steep sided valleys and slopes; large, interlocking blocks of ancient and plantation woodland; small pasture fields with localised unimproved grassland; tall, thick hedges and densely scattered hedgerow trees; small, intact villages and hamlets.

More detailed information is provided for the Sibford Gower local character area: small-scale pastureland with some calcareous grassland on the steeper slopes. Fields are enclosed by tall gappy hedges with a range of species including hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood and field maple. Mature, densely scattered trees of ash and sycamore strengthen the hedgerow network. A prominent feature is the dense corridor of willow, some of it pollarded, and scrub bordering the stream. Woodland cover is insignificant and is restricted to a few very small deciduous plantations. Locally important habitats include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There is some calcareous grassland associated with part of the disused quarry to the south of the Sibfords.

The OWLS strategy for this landscape type is to conserve the mosaic of woodland and pasture on the valley slopes, strengthen the field pattern by replanting and gapping up hedgerows, and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.



## 5.0 Landscape and Visual Context of the Application Site

The photographs in Figs. 9-14 show some of the key landscape and visual characteristics of the site.

New Barn Farm lies c.1km south west of Sibford Gower on elevated ground (c.168m AOD) within an agricultural, rural landscape. The drive rises fairly steeply from Colony Road through pasture bounded by hedgerows which include some mature oaks and other trees. The existing house becomes visible near the top of the drive as the ground starts to flatten. It is largely modern with some older parts, including the large barn and southern range of outbuildings constructed in ironstone. The house is constructed in red brick and render with castellation on the north elevation. There are several modern outbuildings to the north and north west of the house.

The gardens include some fine mature oaks with the southern boundary hedge (a mix of native and non native species). These have recently been TPO'd following the planting of an evergreen hedge on the neighbouring property. Within the mixed native hedge along the northern boundary there are some mature ash which are showing signs of Ash Die-back. Young and early mature trees have been planted in the last c.20 years along the north boundary. Elsewhere the gardens include a range of typical garden trees (apple, whitebeam, pine, oak, etc.), mostly to the south east of the existing house, and a copse of native woodland. A mature beech hedge lines each side of the top part of the existing drive.

To the north of the site there is an arable field from which there are open views to Sibford Gower and the valley in between. To the immediate west of New Barn Farm is the recently constructed Sibford Park, with its new parkland to the south. To the east of New Barn Farm is the pasture and approach drive. Further afield there are both arable fields and pasture, bounded by hedgerows. The water course to the east of the property is lined with trees.

### Zone of potential visibility

The elevated position of the house allows for some long views over the surrounding landscape, notably to the north, east and south (Fig. 15 overleaf shows the approximate area of potential visibility) but existing trees on the application site and in the wider landscape limit the views. This is demonstrated in Views 1-14 (see below). New Barn Farm is not visible from the landscape to the west: it is obscured by the buildings at Sibford Gower, existing vegetation and topography.

### Landscape Value and Sensitivity

The landscape of the application site and its context has moderate sensitivity to change. The landscape of the application site is not designated but the Cotswolds AONB does lie 325m to the west and is locally valued. Distinctive elements include its elevated position, mature trees, some older buildings, remnant historic field pattern, all in fair condition. There are good scenic qualities, typical of the local area. There are few landscape detractors; the landscape is fair condition. Given the existing character, existing buildings and surrounding landscape, the site is reasonably tolerant of change. The Sibford Gower Conservation Area lies c.500m to the north east but inter-visibility is restricted by existing vegetation and topography.

### Landscape receptors potentially affected by the proposed scheme

- Mature trees, hedgerows and historic field pattern
- Openness and the rural character of the locally elevated landscape
- Wider rural setting
- The setting of the existing older buildings
- The wider setting of the Sibford Gower Conservation Area
- The wider setting of the Cotswolds AONB

### Visual receptors potentially affected by the proposed scheme

Figures 15 and 16 and the following 14 Views show the potential visibility of the application site from the public domain within the wider landscape. The photographs show how restricted visibility is of the application site and the existing & proposed new dwelling. Visual receptors include walkers, riders and cyclists on the public rights of way, motorists and local residents.

NB: The photographs used in the visual assessment have been taken in December 2021 and January 2022. They have been taken with a Nikon D750 DSLR with full frame sensor and fixed 50mm lens to replicate what the human eye sees.

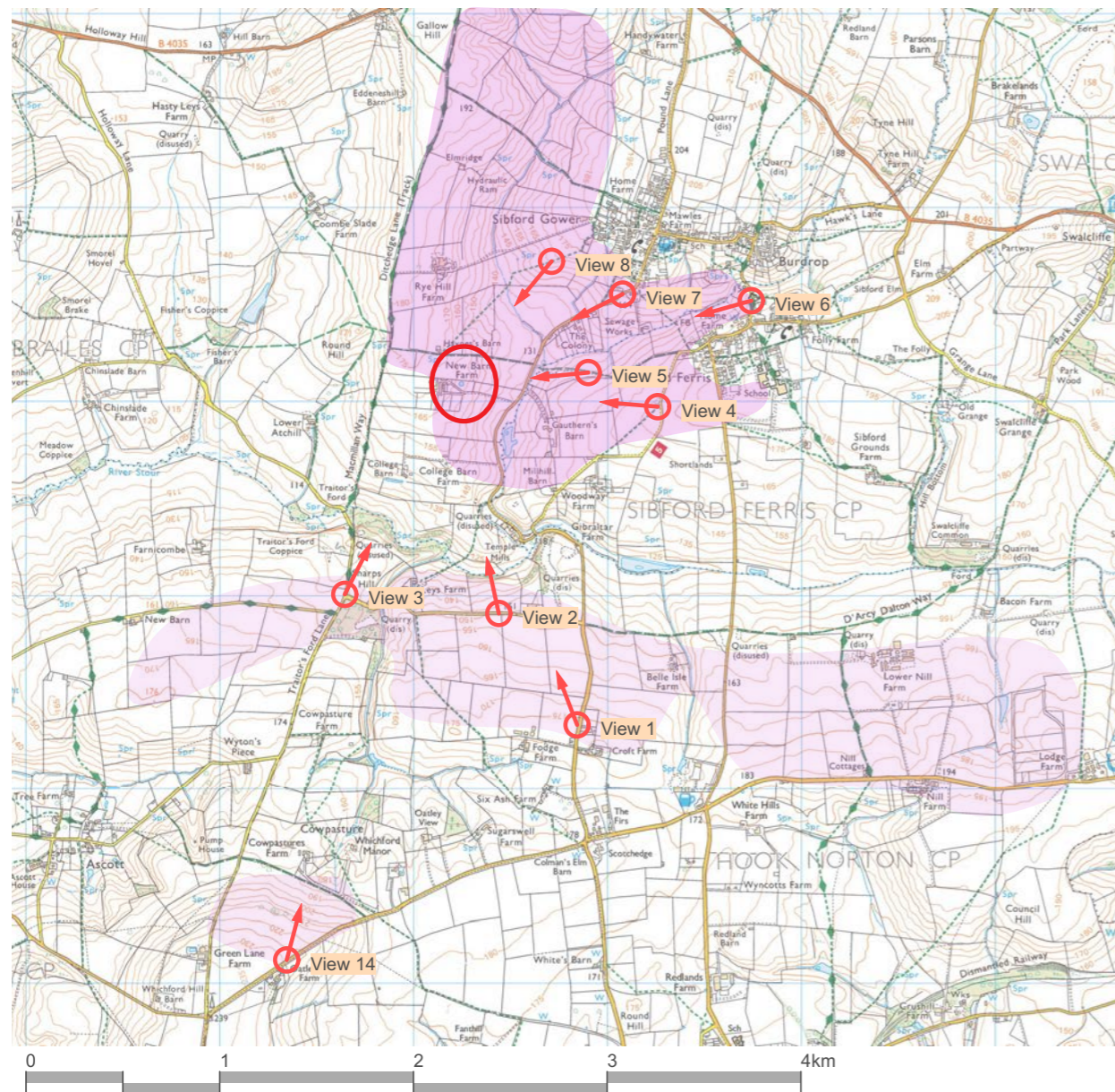


Fig. 15: Zone of theoretical visibility and wider landscape views 1-8 and 14 (730m- 3.09km from the application site).

The approximate extent of land from which New Barn Farm may be visible is shaded purple. These areas do not account for existing vegetation and buildings, also local variations in topography. Visibility of the proposed dwelling will be significantly less than this graphic suggests, as demonstrated in Views 1-14 (see below).



Fig. 16: Closer views 9-13 (ranging from 140m to 480m from the application site)

## 6.0 Potential Landscape and Visual Effects

The proposed scheme is outlined in Section 2 above. Potential effects for landscape and visual receptors are described below:

### Landscape Effects

**Mature trees:** the scheme has no significant impact on mature trees. A multi-stemmed plum with poor health and form (T35, 'U' category- see tree survey report) will be removed, also a young apple (T33, 'C' category) and a young Norway maple (T31- 'C' category). The roots of an 'A' category oak (T35) may be slightly affected by the proposed work but this is likely to be negligible. The scheme includes the planting of new trees within the garden and wider landscape, resulting in a minor beneficial effect.

**Hedgerows:** the scheme requires the removal of two garden hedges (H3 beech) and H6 laurel), also a group of shrubs G3 (privet, leylandii, viburnum, laurel). This will have low impact on the immediate, and negligible impact on the wider landscape character. The scheme includes the gapping-up of existing boundary hedgerows on the land owned by the applicant, resulting in a minor beneficial effect.

**Field Pattern:** the scheme has no impact on the field pattern.

**Openness and the character of the elevated rural landscape:** the scheme will not affect the openness of the landscape around the application site as boundaries are not affected; in fact they will be strengthened as hedgerows are gapped up. Some disturbance is to be expected during the construction with minor adverse effects. The proposed new house will have a very limited residual effect on the character of the local landscape given the fact that it replaces an existing house and the magnitude of change will be moderate to low. The east elevation of the proposed house will be more imposing than the existing house within the landscape to the east where there are relatively open views across the valley (NB there are very few open views of New Barn Farm from public rights of way). The more imposing facade will have a minor adverse effect initially due to the increase in built form within the rural landscape. The effect will become negligible in time given the higher quality architecture, also as the proposed tree planting establishes and the new house settles in the landscape. The proposed re-alignment of the drive will allow a more satisfactory approach to the house and follows existing contours. New trees will be planted in the gardens and wider landscape, and the pasture will be managed as a hay meadow. After the initial disturbance during the construction period and when the new planting has established the landscape effect will be minor beneficial.

**Wider rural setting:** the effects of the proposed new house will have minor or negligible effect on the wider landscape setting due to the limited inter-visibility and the context and character of existing buildings on site and at Sibford Park. Magnitude of change is low or very low.

**Landscape setting of the Sibford Gower Conservation Area:** Sensitivity in the conservation area is high on account of its designated status, however the magnitude of change will be low, very low or imperceptible depending on location within the CA. Effect is likely to be minor adverse during the construction period and the effects will only be experienced from isolated locations from where development may be visible (e.g. parts of the The Colony). Generally the residual effect will be very low or negligible.

**Landscape setting of the AONB:** Sensitivity is high but magnitude of change is very low or imperceptible. Effect is therefore minor or negligible as the development would be almost entirely screened by the buildings at Sibford Park, existing vegetation and the topography. The AONB boundary runs along the ridge line, with the AONB on the west facing side and New Barn Farm on the east facing side.

### Visual Effects

**View 1 from the high ground 1.86km SSE of the site:** Sensitivity is moderate (public highway). Magnitude of change is very low due to existing vegetation and distance to site. Effect (construction & residual) will be negligible.

**View 2 from the minor road 1.19km to the S of New Barn Farm:** Moderate sensitivity. Magnitude of change will be low. Effect during construction and in winter will be low. Residual effect negligible. Visibility limited by vegetation, even in winter (note evergreen vegetation).

**View 3 from the minor road 1.12km SSW of New Barn Farm:** Moderate sensitivity. Magnitude of change low. Effect during construction and in winter will be low. Residual effect negligible. Visibility limited by vegetation, even in winter.

**View 4 from the public right of way 1.06km east of New Barn Farm and c.200m south west of Sibford Ferris:** High sensitivity on the public right of way and within open landscape with wide panoramic views. Magnitude of change low during construction and very low on completion. Minor adverse effect during construction; residual effect negligible. Proposed house will sit below the new house at Sibford Park which is clearly visible on the skyline.

**View 5 from the bridleway 347/1/10:** High sensitivity on the public right of way within the rural landscape. 200m west of Sibford Ferris and 730m east of New Barn Farm. Magnitude of change low. Minor adverse effect become negligible in time. Proposed house will sit below the new house at Sibford Park which is clearly visible on the skyline. Existing and proposed trees obscure much of the proposed house.

**View 6 from Sibford Ferris:** 1.62km east of New Barn Farm. High sensitivity within the Conservation Area. The proposed development will sit below and in context of the existing buildings at Sibford Park. Magnitude of change very low. The white painted render of the existing house is visible in this view; the proposed house will be red brick and so less striking. Possible minor adverse effect during construction, with residual negligible effect.

**View 7 from the Colony and Colony Road:** 1km ENE of New Barn Farm. High sensitivity for pedestrians and residents within the Conservation Area (moderate sensitivity for drivers). The proposed development will sit below and in context of the existing buildings at Sibford Park and New Barn Farm, also largely screened by existing vegetation. The white painted render of the existing house is visible in this view; the proposed house will be red brick and so less striking. Magnitude of change low during construction; very low once complete. Minor adverse effect possible during construction; residual effect negligible.

There are clear views of the proposed house from Gauthern's Barn 530m SE of New Barn Farm. Sensitivity for residents is very high. During construction the visual effect is likely to be moderate adverse but this will reduce to minor adverse, and in time negligible as the existing and proposed trees mature.

**View 8 from public footpath 348/7/20 835m NE of New Barn Farm:** High sensitivity for pedestrians. The proposed development will be partly visible through existing trees (significantly less so in summer), also seen in context of the existing buildings at Sibford Park and New Barn Farm. The ridge of the proposed house will be 3.3m lower than that of the adjacent Sibford Park. Proposed ridge line of the new house will be higher than the existing house ridge by c.3m but the magnitude of change in this view will be low. The white painted render of the existing house is visible in this view; the proposed house will be red brick and so less striking. Minor adverse effect possible during construction; residual effect will be negligible.

**View 9 from Colony Road 350m E of New Barn Farm:** This is the view from the entrance to New Barn Farm. Moderate sensitivity. The proposed development will slightly more visible than the existing house whose ridge is just visible. The proposed ridge line is c.3m higher than the existing one and so will be more visible but it will still sit below the tops of the conifers behind so the magnitude of change will be low. Minor adverse effect during construction; residual effect minor adverse due to increase in visible built form.

**View 10 from bridleway 348/2/10 155m NNE of New Barn Farm:** Photo taken from the junction of the permissive alternative route of footpath 348/7/20 (avoiding the garden of Haynes's Barn) and where it meets 348/2/10. The proposed house will be clearly visible in this view. Proposed ridge line visible in this view will be c.1m higher than the existing house, but some separation provided from the retained stone barn. Red brick of the new house will be visible instead of the white painted render of the existing house. High sensitivity on the public right of way. Moderate magnitude of change during construction; low on completion. Moderate adverse effect during construction but residual effect will be minor beneficial (less built form on the skyline; red brick instead of white render; higher quality architecture).

**View 11 from bridleway 348/2/10 140m N of New Barn Farm:** Photo taken from where the official route of footpath 348/7/20 meets 348/2/10 immediately south of Haynes's Barn. The proposed house will be clearly visible in this view. The proposed house will be clearly visible in this view. Proposed ridge line visible in this view will be c.1m higher than the existing house. Red brick construction instead of the white painted render. High sensitivity on the public right of way. Moderate magnitude of change during construction; low on completion. Moderate adverse effect during construction; residual effect minor beneficial (less built form on the skyline; red brick instead of white render; higher quality architecture).

**View 12 from bridleway 348/2/10 225m NW of New Barn Farm:** Limited visibility of the existing and proposed new dwelling behind the existing outbuilding. Proposed ridge line c.3m higher than the existing house, on a north-south orientation. Proposed house would not break the skyline and would be seen in context of the mature oaks behind. High sensitivity on the public right of way. Low magnitude of change during construction; low on completion. Minor adverse effect during construction; residual effect minor beneficial (red brick instead of white render; higher quality architecture).

**View 13 from Colony Road at entrance to College Barn Farm, 480m SE of New Barn Farm:** Existing house not visible and proposed new dwelling unlikely to be visible from this viewpoint (behind evergreen vegetation). Moderate sensitivity on the public highway. Very low magnitude of change during construction; imperceptible on completion. Minor adverse effect during construction (traffic, noise); residual effect negligible.

**View 14 from the high ground on the road near Oathill Farm over 3km S of the site:** Sensitivity is moderate (public highway). Magnitude of change is very low due to existing vegetation and distance to site. Effect (construction & residual) will be negligible.

## 7.0 Conclusions

In spite of the elevated position of the existing house at New Barn Farm this appraisal has found the proposal to be surprisingly well concealed within the wider landscape and in views from public rights of way.

The appraisal of likely landscape and visual effects resulting from the construction of the new house and associated landscape work has found there to be no significant adverse effects.

The residual landscape effects will at worst be minor adverse, with some elements providing beneficial effects (including the new planting, more appropriate construction materials than the existing house and higher quality architecture). Generally the residual landscape effects are negligible given the proposed house will sit largely on the site of the existing house.

The visual effects are also largely negligible given the limited visibility of the site within the wider landscape from public rights of way. Some visual effects will be beneficial, notably for receptors on the bridleway to the north of the house (348/2/10 & 20).

The effect of the proposals on the Conservation Area at Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris will be minor or negligible. The effect on the AONB will also be minor adverse at worst, generally negligible.

The proposals are compliant with the strategy and guidelines contained in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) including the conservation and enhancement of hedgerows, field patterns, woodland and pasture. They are also compliant with local and national planning policy with respect to the proposals impact on the landscape, views and landscape character.



View 1: from the public highway near Croft Farm, 1.86km SSE of New Barn Farm.



View 2: from the minor road 1.19km to the S of New Barn Farm.



View 3: from the minor road 1.12km SSW of New Barn Farm.



View 4: from the public footpath (ref 347/2/10) where it meets the minor road SW of Sibford Ferris, 1.086km E of New Barn Farm. The roofline of Sibford Park sits above the existing buildings and proposed new house at New Barn Farm.



View 5: from the bridleway (ref 347/1/10) 730m E of New Barn Farm. The roofline of Sibford Park sits above the existing buildings and proposed new house at New Barn Farm.



View 6: from Sibford Ferris 1.62km just north of E from New Barn Farm. The roofline of Sibford Park sits above the existing buildings and proposed new house at New Barn Farm.



View 7: from Colony Road by The Colony, south of Sibford Gower, 1km ENE of New Barn Farm. The roofline of Sibford Park sits above the existing buildings and proposed new house at New Barn Farm.



View 8: from the public footpath (ref 348/7/20) 825m NE of New Barn Farm. Proposed new house will sit a little higher than the existing house at New Barn Farm but lower than the house at Sibford Park.





View 9: from Colony Road at the entrance to New Barn Farm, 350m E of the proposed new house. Existing house ridge is just visible from this location but in front and below the tall conifers behind.



View 10: from the bridleway (ref 348/2/10) 155m NNE of New Barn Farm. In this view the ridgeline of the proposed house will sit c.1m higher than the existing house.



View 11: from the brideway (ref 348/2/10) 140m N of New Barn Farm. In this view the ridgeline of the proposed house will sit c.1m higher than the existing house.



View 12: from the brideway (ref 348/2/10) 225m NW of New Barn Farm.



View 13: from Colony Road at entrance to College Barn Farm, 480m SE of New Barn Farm. Proposed house not visible in this view.



View 14: from the layby on the road near Oatleyhill Farm, 3.09km from the site. Visibility negligible in this view.

## APPENDIX: Methodology for the Landscape & Visual Appraisal

The appraisal methodology has been developed from the following guidance:

1. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd Edition, LI and IEMA 2013;
2. An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014);
3. Landscape Assessment Guidance, Countryside Commission;
4. Landscape Institute Technical Information Note 08/2015 – Landscape Character Assessment (LI, Feb 2016);
5. Landscape Character Assessment- Guidance for England and Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and The Countryside Agency (CA) 2002;
6. Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume II, Section 3, 1993;
7. Guidance on the new approach to appraisal, DETR, September 1998;
8. Practical Approaches to Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity (Landscape Character Network Workshop, October 2009);
9. Topic Pare 6: Techniques and Criteria for judging Capacity and Sensitivity (CA, SNH, 2002)
10. Seeing the History in the View (Historic England, updated June 2012);
11. The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 July 2015);
12. Environmental Impact Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice and Procedures. A Consultation Paper (DCLG 2006);
13. Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and Landscape and Visual Appraisals, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 1/20.

The appraisal process consists of two separate but closely related elements:

- Landscape Character: the effects of the development upon defined character areas and/ or character types; and
- Visual Context: the effects of the development on views and visual amenity.

The process of assessing landscape and visual effects aims to be objective and quantify effects as far as possible. It is recognised that subjective judgment is appropriate if it is based upon professional expertise supported by clear evidence, reasoned argument and informed opinion. Whilst changes to a view can be factually defined, the evaluation of landscape character and visual impact does require qualitative judgments. The conclusions of this appraisal combine objective measurement with informed professional interpretation.

### Baseline Conditions

The assessment of landscape and visual effects results from an evaluation of the landscape and visual resources or ‘receptors’ (Baseline Conditions). The appraisal includes a review of landscape designations, landscape-related planning policy, planning guidance, public rights of way, any restrictive covenants such as TPOs, land management schemes and all other information which may assist an understanding of the landscape character and the aspirations of the relevant planning authorities, statutory bodies and other interested parties. This allows for an understanding of the landscape under consideration, the aspirations for current and future use.

The desk-based assessment is verified by fieldwork, with a review of local character, topography, land-use, vegetation, visual context and general responses to the landscape. All site observations are recorded in accordance with best practice.

The visual and landscape character of the site and its context are described via a series of representative photographic views taken from publicly accessible land or other important viewpoints.

Photographs ideally are taken in winter in accordance with best practice to represent the worst case scenario using a camera with a full frame sensor (Nikon D750 DSLR) with fixed 50mm lens. Winter photos are not always possible if the project programme requires a summer assessment. If this is the case, the sub-optimal conditions will be highlighted in the report.

Viewpoints are considered with regard to their sensitivity to change and capacity for development.

The assessment of landscape and visual effects involves:

- The evaluation of the landscape character associated with the site and its surroundings, its quality and its sensitivity and capacity to change;
- Identification of views in and across the site and its surroundings, and their sensitivity and capacity to change;
- Identification of potential significant changes to the existing landscape character and visual context as a result of the development;
- Description of the mitigation measures adopted in order to avoid, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of the development;
- Evaluation of landscape and visual effects following mitigation, known as residual effects; and
- Assessment of cumulative effects, where other proposals may be proposed.

The assessment of sensitivity of landscape receptors combines judgments of susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape. Landscape value is informed by GLVIA3 which provides a range of factors to help identify value (p. 84), including landscape quality, scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests (e.g. archaeological, historical and cultural features), recreation value, perceptual aspects and associations.

The sensitivity of the viewer likely to be affected is a factor of the value placed on the location of the view and the likely activity of the viewer in that location. The magnitude of change will vary depending upon the amount of view affected and the nature and duration of change. Consequently the assessment of the effect will depend on the degree to which the development:

- Complements, respects and fits into the existing scale, land-form and pattern of the landscape context;
- Enables enhancement, restoration or retention of the landscape character and visual amenity; and
- Delivers planning policy aspirations.

The landscape character types and representative views have been identified following a review of baseline data and field surveys. The visual analysis is based on views from public highways and public rights of way. The photographs used in this appraisal have been taken and prepared in accordance with current and emerging Landscape Institute guidance, and seek to replicate as closely as reasonably possible the human view (fixed 50mm lens with full frame sensor). Panoramic views have been stitched without distortion.

The terms ‘impact’ and ‘effect’ are both used regularly in this appraisal and are often confused. The following definitions, from the 3rd Edition of the Landscape Institute’s GLVIA, have been adopted:

- Impact: the action which is being taken (i.e. the proposed development)
- Effect: the change resulting from that action

Best practice guidelines stipulate that the likely significance of any landscape and visual effect should be evaluated during the construction phase, operational stage and also the decommissioning and reinstatement stage if appropriate. This includes direct effects, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.

The likely significance of any landscape and visual effect is a function of the sensitivity of the affected landscape and visual receptors and the magnitude of change that those receptors would experience.

The significance criteria are illustrated as 'significance matrices' for landscape character and visual effects in Tables 1 & 2.

The following definitions are used in this report.

### **Landscape Sensitivity**

**Very High Sensitivity:** Value: Nationally or internationally designated landscape, feature or character (including National Park, AONB, World Heritage Site, Grade I or Grade II\* landscape); strong and distinctive landscape characteristics with an absence or near absence of landscape detractors.

Susceptibility: Strong and distinctive landscape elements, aesthetic or perceptual aspects; few if any landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity. Very little capacity for change.

**High Sensitivity:** Value: Locally designated or valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas, Grade II landscape) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.

Susceptibility: Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.

**Moderate Sensitivity:** Value: Undesignated landscape or features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors. Locally valued.

Susceptibility: Some distinctive landscape elements, aesthetic or perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is reasonably tolerant of some change.

**Low Sensitivity:** Value: Undesignated landscape or landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.

Susceptibility: Few distinctive landscape elements, aesthetic, perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is potentially able to accommodate substantial change.

**Very Low Sensitivity:** Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled or degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.

Susceptibility: Absence of distinctive landscape elements, aesthetic or perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. Landscape able to accommodate substantial change.

### **Visual Sensitivity**

**Very High Sensitivity:** View is designed, designated (at national or international level) or has intentional association with surroundings (e.g. national park, AONB, setting of scheduled monument or Grade I listed buildings); recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset, designated, recorded or promoted viewpoint; a nationally or internationally designated right of way; protected or recognised in planning policy designation. Examples could include views from residential properties; national trails; promoted holiday routes; designated countryside or landscape features

with public access; visitors to heritage assets of national importance; Open Access Land.

**High Sensitivity:** View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or public right of way. View within regionally designated landscape or setting of Grade II\* listed buildings. Examples might include views from recreational locations where there is some appreciation of the visual context or landscape designated or themed rights of way with a local association; panoramic viewpoints marked on OS maps; roads promoted in guides for their scenic value.

**Moderate Sensitivity:** View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas. Example include people engaged in outdoor sport not especially influenced by an appreciation of the wider landscape e.g. pitch sports; views from vehicles on minor roads passing through rural or scenic areas.

**Low Sensitivity:** View of lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible. Example may include views from major roads; railways; receptor is at a place of work but visual surroundings have limited relevance.

**Very Low Sensitivity:** View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued. Examples include people at work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.

### **Magnitude of Change**

#### **Very High**

Landscape: At complete variance with the land-form, scale and pattern of the landscape.

Visual: Proposals are highly visible destroying (or creating) valued views into and across the area.

#### **High**

Landscape: A significant deterioration ( or improvement ) in landscape character or loss of features over an extensive area. Addition of prominent conflicting elements.

Visual: Changes are evident and would significantly impair (or improve) views of the area.

#### **Moderate**

Landscape: A noticeable deterioration ( or improvement ) in landscape character and landscape elements. Partial loss or alteration to one or more key receptors or characteristics; addition of elements that are evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.

Visual: A noticeable deterioration (or improvement) in the view

#### **Low**

Landscape: A barely perceptible deterioration ( or improvement ) to elements or character. Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape receptors or characteristics; additional elements may not be uncharacteristic within existing landscape.

Visual: Limited change in view .

#### **Very Low**

Landscape: Barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.

Visual: Proposed development will form a barely noticeable change in the view.

#### **Imperceptible**

In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints or receptors will be lower than 'Very Low' and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to negligible effects.

### **Significance of Effects**

The significance of potential and residual effects can be described as being:

**Very High Beneficial:** The development brings very significant enhancements to the landscape; it fits extremely well with the scale, land-form and pattern and significantly improves the landscape quality. The development dramatically improves views and visual amenity.

**Major Beneficial:** The development fits very well with the scale, land-form and pattern of the landscape and brings substantial enhancements. The development creates a significant improvement in views.

**Moderate Beneficial:** The development fits well with the scale, land-form and pattern of the landscape, maintains and/or enhances the existing landscape character. The development creates a noticeable but improved change in the view.

**Minor Beneficial:** The development complements the scale, land-form and pattern of the landscape, whilst maintaining the existing character. The development results in minor improvements to the existing views.

**Negligible:** The development results in very limited or no change to the landscape and/or views but creates no significant impacts.

**Minor Adverse:** The development causes minor permanent and/or temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the landscape but not wholly uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The development causes limited visual intrusion which can be mitigated without an adverse impact on the landscape character.

**Moderate Adverse:** The development causes substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the landscape and may include the introduction of elements that are prominent but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The development is visually intrusive and will have an adverse impact on the landscape.

**Major Adverse:** The development causes total permanent loss or major alteration to certain elements and features of the landscape, including introduction of elements wholly uncharacteristic of the surrounding area. The development is visually intrusive and disrupts fine and valued views both into and across the area.

**Very High Adverse:** The development irrevocably damages, degrades or badly diminishes certain landscape character features, elements and their setting. The development is highly visually intrusive and disrupts fine and valued views both into and across the landscape.

Where reference is made to landscape quality the terminology relates to the following definitions:

**Good:** Recognised landscape structure with characteristic patterns and land uses; possesses features of local value (may be locally designated). Any detracting features are not sufficient to undermine the sense of place;

**Ordinary:** A notable landscape structure and pattern, although the historic character may be masked by the current land use. Scope to improve the character through management of the area. Some detracting features are present and notable in the landscape; and

**Poor:** Weak landscape structure and characteristic patterns are masked by land use. Lack of management has resulted in degradation, some derelict features are present, as are frequent detracting features which harm the sense of place.