



Muddle Barn Farm, Sibford Gower, Oxfordshire

Landscape and Visual Assessment for a
Replacement House

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Colvin and Moggridge have been instructed by Mr and Mrs Besterman, the owners of Muddle Barn Farm, Sibford Gower, Oxfordshire OX15 5RY to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in support of an application for planning permission to replace the existing house at Muddle Barn Farm.
- 1.2 This report will address the landscape and visual effects of the proposed house and comprises a baseline study of the existing landscape character and visual amenity of the local area and an assessment of the potential effects without mitigation, and an assessment of the residual effects following mitigation.
- 1.3 The site is located on the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire border, 7.5 miles from Banbury, and approximately 1 mile to the south west of the village of Sibford Gower (see Figure 1). The 12.3ha land holding includes pasture, paddocks and equestrian facilities. Muddle Barn Farm is approached by a long driveway that crosses a yard (A) and leads around to the existing farmhouse (B). In addition to the farmhouse there are three barns converted for livery and the exercise of horses (C, D, E) and one barn currently used for storage (F). South of the yard there is a round lunging pen and separate lunging lanes both protected by 3.3m tall Lawson Cypress hedges (G). To the east of the house there is a manege measuring 60 x 20m (H) and a grass dressage arena of similar dimensions (I). These features are shown on Figure 2. Hedges along its north, west and south sides, and part of the east side bound the property. The remaining east boundary comprises walls and fences. Within the site there are four further Lawson cypress hedges but all other field/paddock boundaries within the site are fenced. Photographs of the site are shown in Figure 3.
- 1.4 The proposal is to replace the farmhouse with a new house to the design of Yiangou Architects. Associated with this will be the removal of barns C, D and E and the lunging pens. The area studied for this assessment extends to a 1.5km radius around the farm, centred on the site of the proposed new house.
- 1.5 There is no public access to the farm. The nearest public routes are shown on Figure 4 – Landscape Designations and Public Rights of Way.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) follows the general guidance of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment contained in the publication “Assessment Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (Third Edition) IEMA/LI 2013.
- 2.2 The LI/IEMA Guidance states that:
‘The two components of LVIA are:
1. assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;
 2. assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general amenity experienced by people.’
- 2.3 The assessment of the effects of proposed development on the landscape and visual resource are based upon the prediction of the potential impact in relation to the baseline conditions. The assessment of landscape and visual impacts relies upon common sense, experience and reasoned judgement, supported by substantiated evidence. In assessing an effect therefore, an assessor may for example consider changes of a relatively low magnitude to be significant if they relate to a highly sensitive (or ‘important’ or ‘vulnerable’) landscape or visual resource.
- 2.4 This assessment has comprised both desktop and field studies to gain information on the character, sensitivity and potential of the study area to accommodate the proposed development. A desktop study of landscape designations and analysis of zones of visual influence was carried out using maps, aerial photographs and site survey information. The site was visited on 24 August 2014 and 3 October 2014 to walk local footpaths and bridleways and take photographs from key viewpoints. The photographs were taken with a digital camera using a focal length equivalent to a 50mm lens on a 35mm SLR film camera.

3.0 EXISTING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL RESOURCE

- 3.1 The study area has largely been determined by the anticipated visibility of the proposed dwelling. Theoretical visibility covers an inaccurately wide area when determined by topography alone. In reality it is a combination of the lie of the land, intervening vegetation (mature woodland, clumps of mature trees, hedgerows and roadside tree belts) and buildings that provide screening and significantly reduce the extent of visibility of the proposed development. Visibility from public rights of way and private houses is illustrated on Figure 5.

Landscape Designations

- 3.2 Muddle Barn Farm lies in a good quality landscape and this is reflected in its local designation as an Area of High Landscape Value. Designated landscape areas within or close to the study area are shown on Figure 4.

Topography

- 3.3 The farm is located at between 160 – 175m OD in undulating countryside on a gentle ridge that falls to the east, to the south and to the west (Figure 6 – Topography). The existing house sits at 170mOD close to the northern boundary of the property. The yard to the south rises from 188mOD to 189mOD. The proposed house will be at a ground level of 167.6mOD.

Land use

- 3.4 Existing site land use is identified on Figure 7.

Landscape Character Assessments

- 3.5 Muddle Barn Farm lies within the Cotswolds Character Area (Area 107) as identified in the National Character Area profiles that have been recently revised by Natural England. In the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004), which is the current landscape assessment for Oxfordshire, the study area includes two Landscape Types, Rolling Village Pasture and Wooded Pasture, Valleys and Slopes. In the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995, still current supplementary planning guidance for rural areas in the district), it lies within the Ironstone Hills and Valleys Landscape Character Area.
- 3.6 Landscape character areas are shown on Figure 8.

Ecology

- 3.7 An ecological survey and assessment was undertaken by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in April 2014. Their report finds that the existing gardens, hard standing and horse paddocks are not of ecological interest. The species rich hedgerows along some of the boundaries, particularly the northern boundary are considered to meet the definition of a hedgerow that is a UK priority habitat. Precautionary measures are recommended for bats, nesting birds and badgers.
- 3.8 There is great scope for habitat conservation and enhancement at Muddle Barn Farm.

4.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposed replacement house has been designed to meet Mr and Mrs Besterman's brief. The uplift in the scale of the house over the existing house led to a consideration of ways to reduce its visual effect on the landscape at the outset of the project. By changing the position of the house in its plot and partly embedding it into the ground it has been possible to retain the same ridge height as the existing house. Moving the house approximately 50m to the south of the existing dwelling increases its distance from the nearest public viewpoint (from 120m to the existing house to 170m to the main part of the new house) reducing the potential prominence of the proposal on the view. Retaining rising ground levels to the southwest and northwest of the proposed house sets the house into the landscape and the location takes advantage of existing mature trees to offset some of the wider visual effects. Visual effects do remain and the landscape proposals below incorporate planting designed to address these effects.

Architectural proposals

- 4.2 A Georgian Regency style property is proposed, constructed from local stone (main house) and brick (lower range). See Yiangou Architects Design and Access Statement (November 2014) and drawings for a full description.

Landscape proposals

- 4.3 Figure 9 shows the landscape masterplan to be developed with the proposed replacement house.
- 4.4 The existing access to Muddle Barn Farm will be replaced with a new gravel drive positioned away from the neighbour's garden boundary to give a sweeping approach to the replacement house. Open-fenced along its south side to allow countryside views, to the north side a wildflower meadow will be established on the area of the former drive and retained grassland. Tree planting between the house and meadow will conceal the house from view until the entrance gate is reached.
- 4.5 Within the garden boundary, the proposed house sits in an informal framework of trees that whilst helping to shape the garden areas will also be carefully positioned to tie the house into the landscape and reduce its visual effect. Large trees will include native Oak, Beech, Sweet Chestnut and Hornbeam. Trees and shrubs reaching a lesser ultimate size will also be planted and will include both native and ornamental species. Ornamental species will not be used near the garden boundaries where they may be visible from the surrounding landscape.

- 4.6 As it approaches the house, the access drive will divide to give primary access to a forecourt which leads on to a turning area with garage access. The secondary drive leads to a maintenance yard and the stables. With the exception of the forecourt that may be partly paved with flagstones, the other areas described are expected to be gravel-surfaced.
- 4.7 The southeast, southwest and northwest elevations of the main house will be paved with a low retaining wall between the southwest and northwest elevations. At the front of the house (southwest), a paved terrace will step up to a mown lawn which will rise gently to a ha-ha, forming a stock-proof edge to the lawn and allowing countryside views without obtrusive fences. To either side of the lawn, meadow/bulb lawns are proposed, planted with trees and shrubs.
- 4.8 To the northwest of the house the garden will rise to existing levels at the retained manege. All trees and hedging within the existing garden will be retained to help soften and frame the new building. A combination of hedge and shrub planting will screen the manege, and new trees will bring balance to the overall design. Shrub planting and different mowing regimes will further define the garden spaces.
- 4.9 Within the wider landscape the design objectives are to restore a simpler pastoral landscape with features reflecting the positive attributes of local landscape character; to enhance the nature conservation interest of the site, and ensure that existing site features that already have value in terms of landscape character are retained and enhanced.
- 4.10 The landscape plan shows a simplified field pattern, with the numerous horse paddocks and associated fences that clutter the existing landscape removed. Across the southern half of the site a single rectilinear field as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey will be restored with new hedgerows planted along the north and east field boundaries. Across the northern half of the site, the dressage arena and manege will be retained and the remaining area divided into two fields.
- 4.11 All existing boundary hedges will be reinforced by the planting of a native shrub belt to the inside. Hedgerow trees, a feature currently lacking from these hedges, will also be planted. It is suggested that the fenceline protecting the new boundary planting is set back from it to allow a strip of tall grassland to establish as well. Some small native woodland plantations are proposed to provide further habitat diversity and reduce the effect of the replacement building on the wider landscape. Combined these measures will consolidate the ecological interest of the hedges, and strengthen landscape character and cross-site connectivity.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscape Character

5.1 As referred to in Section 3.5, the study area has been considered in several landscape character studies carried out at regional, county and district levels. In view of the detailed information available, the large-scale study of Character Area Profile 107 Cotswolds, which covers an area extending from near Banbury in the northeast to Frome in the southwest, will not be considered further in this assessment.

5.2 The key characteristics of the other landscape character studies are distilled in the following table which also considers how well the study area and Muddle Barn Farm itself reflect those characteristics. The key characteristics for each type are shown in full in Appendix D.

Key characteristics	Study area characteristic	Muddle Barn Farm characteristic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly undulating landform of farmed, rounded hills and small valleys 	Yes	Yes, the farm sits at the southern end of a rounded ridge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed land uses, mainly pasture in the valleys and slopes but where the landscape opens out land is under arable cultivation 	Yes, although some arable land use extends to the valley floor	Yes, the farm is under permanent grassland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small grazing fields on valley floors and sides Medium/large rectilinear fields over hilltops 	Not clear cut: some bigger fields are grazed, and although there are small grazing fields on the valley floors and sides, there are also larger arable fields present here too.	No. Historically the current farm comprised two medium rectilinear fields but as a result of use of the site for livery the land is now subdivided into numerous small fields and paddocks, demarcated by fences, and uncharacteristic of the wider landscape.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Densely scattered hedgerow trees Fields divided by mature, thick hedges Many hedgerows unmanaged and growing out. Hedges in areas of arable more closely trimmed Some medium/large arable fields now have a fairly open landscape, with fields sometimes lacking even fences 	Yes. The overall impression is of a patchwork of fields divided by hedgerows. In areas of arable, boundary hedges have been lost. Many hedgerows are grown out. The density of hedgerow trees varies across the area.	No. Native hedges at Muddle Barn Farm are confined to the farm boundary on the north, south and west side, with a short length of hedge remaining on the east side. These hedges are mature and typically outgrown and lack Hedgerow trees. Interior boundaries are fenced or Lawson cypress-hedged
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-defined nucleated villages with little dispersal into the wider countryside Settlement pattern of intermittent nucleated hamlets, isolated farmsteads, and individual buildings 	Broadly yes. The settlement pattern is of nucleated villages but with dispersal into the wider countryside, settlement extending southwards from Sibford Gower along Colony Road plus isolated farmsteads and individual buildings	Yes, the farmstead is one of numerous farmsteads and individual dwellings scattered across the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinctive local vernacular with buildings constructed in Hornton Stone 	Vernacular buildings constructed in Hornton Stone can be found within the study area along with houses constructed in different limestone or brick	No. The existing farmhouse is modern and brick built. The adjacent farmhouse at New Barn Farm has a red tiled roof and is rendered a pale colour. Outbuildings appear to be stone, others are timber.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow stands of trees along road verges gives impression of being well-treed, the area lacks larger woodlands. 	Yes	Yes. The farm has no woodland

- 5.3 From this it can be concluded that the study area landscape has many of the characteristics identified by the published landscape studies but the proposed development site reflects landscape character less well.

Determining the landscape effect

- 5.4 Landscape effects are changes in the character, quality and fabric, (collectively the landscape resource) of the landscape as a result of the development.
- 5.5 To determine the effect of the proposal on the landscape, the proposal is first described and then the existing situation explained: this is based on field survey and where appropriate, is related to the key characteristics of the local character area descriptions. The current condition of existing elements is assessed using the definitions set out in Appendix B.
- 5.6 The sensitivity of the landscape resource affected is determined by considering it in three aspects:
Significance: cultural consensus about the importance of the landscape resource at either national or local level,
Vulnerability: how scarce or sensitive to change the resource is, and
Replaceability: ease with which the resource can be replaced or recreated.
- 5.7 The magnitude of the change or the amount of change anticipated arises out of consideration of the scale, extent and duration of the change.
- 5.8 The criteria used in this assessment are summarised in Appendix A. The implication of the proposed change is determined by combining a score for the sensitivity and the magnitude according to the scoring matrix shown in Appendix C.

Landscape effects during construction

- 5.9 During construction, the landscape impacts would be construction noise, noise of construction traffic, increased traffic movement on the drive shared by Muddle Barn Farm and New Barn Farm, and on local roads. These impacts would be local and temporary. The potential landscape effects during the construction phase are summarised below.

Summary of potential landscape effects during construction phase

Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Effect
Construction of replacement house and demolition of existing house and barns	medium	low	Slight negative

Construction of new length of drive and making good replaced section	medium	low	Slight negative
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Landscape effects on completion

5.10 Proposal 1: The demolition of the existing farmhouse and associated equestrian buildings and replacement with a dwelling

Description of the proposal: Removal of red brick, chalet-style farmhouse (gross internal floor area 2,232.1 sq.ft., ridge height 177.58m AOD), two existing concrete breeze-block/corrugated metal asbestos-roofed agricultural barns converted for equestrian use and part of a third concrete rendered barn. Full details of the proposed house and outbuildings are available in Yiangou Architects' Design and Access Statement and drawings, submitted as part of the application.

5.11 Existing situation: An equestrian business is no longer run on the property and the barns are not in use. The house is empty (condition – good) and at its current size is unsuitable for Mr and Mrs Besterman.

5.12 Sensitivity: The existing buildings are familiar elements of the modern farmed landscape, but they have no intrinsic qualities and could be replaced very quickly. Removal of the buildings would not be detrimental to landscape character. At the site level, the sensitivity of the landscape resource is assessed to be very low. In the context of the wider landscape, the landscape contains many isolated dwellings but these are typically traditional farmhouses or modern plain replacements. The proposed replacement dwelling will have a different character that may affect the way the landscape is perceived but it is considered that the wider landscape can accommodate small changes without detriment to landscape character. Overall, the sensitivity of the landscape resource is assessed to be **low**.

5.13 Magnitude: The proposed change would be permanent and the domestic character and larger scale of the new building will make it more evident in the landscape than the low-key existing house which is generally well concealed by other farm buildings. In that another dwelling of similar style to that proposed is not openly visible in the landscape, the scheme introduces an element that is not characteristic of the surrounding landscape but, through use of local materials in hues that harmonise with the countryside, it is one that will fit in the landscape without reducing its overall quality: The amount of change is assessed to be **high**.

5.14 Combined effect: Moderate. This would be a positive impact with the quality of the landscape reflected in the quality of the built design. Landscape proposals include a framework of trees that will set the replacement house into the landscape and lessen

its effect on the landscape. Planting will include 'instant' mature trees (minimum height 7m) in selected key positions that will reduce the overall effect to **slight** at the earliest opportunity.

5.15 Proposal 2: Removal and replacement of the existing access track

Description of the proposal: Removal of the existing access track which lies at the boundary between New Barn Farm and Muddle Barn Farm and replacement with a new gravel surfaced track located at its furthest point, 35m to the south. The proposal includes reinstatement of grassland over the area of the removed track.

5.16 Existing situation: The access track to Muddle Barn Farm is shared with New Barn Farm over a distance of approximately 130m where it divides to give access to the individual properties. The track to Muddle Barn Farm lies along the south garden boundary of New Barn Farm. The existing track has become worn (condition - average). To the south of the track, over a timber fenced boundary, is species-poor pasture (condition - good).

5.17 Sensitivity: This is a mixed-use agricultural landscape in which permanent grassland is abundant and access tracks an accepted feature of landscape character. The grassland concerned is improved and species poor and could be recreated in a very short timescale. It is considered that the landscape can accommodate the proposed change without detriment to local character or the quality of the setting. Overall, landscape sensitivity is assessed to be **low**.

5.18 Magnitude: The amount of change of is assessed to be **low**. The reversion of the existing track and part of the area of the adjacent lunging pen offsets the loss of grassland caused by the new track.

5.19 Combined effect: **Negligible**. This would be a positive impact because it moves the access drive away from the neighbour's boundary and provides an opportunity to establish by seeding and over-seeding an area of species rich wildflower meadow.

5.20 Proposal 3: Removal of Lawson Cypress hedges

Description of the proposal: Removal of four Lawson Cypress hedges and replacement with lawn, native tree planting and circulation space.

5.21 Existing situation: Four Lawson Cypress hedges measuring 113m, 68m, 22m and 25m in length and varying in height between 2.8m and 4m, encircle the two lunging pens and provide shelter within the yard.

- 5.22 Sensitivity: The hedges are not a part of the recognised landscape character and their presence detracts from the quality of the wider landscape. Landscape sensitivity is assessed to be **very low**.
- 5.23 Magnitude: The hedges can be seen from the surrounding landscape and are prominent in views from within the site. Their removal will make a noticeable difference but will not cause loss of landscape character. In the context of the wider landscape, their removal is a minor loss and the amount of change is assessed to be **low**.
- 5.24 Combined effect: **Insignificant**. It is felt that this would be a positive effect, removing a feature that detracts from landscape character and replacing it with native trees and grassland that will integrate more naturally with the wider landscape.
- 5.25 Proposal 4: Creation of gardens and provision of access around the house
Description of the proposal: The conversion of paddock, lunging pens, extensive concrete hard-standing and part of the area currently occupied by farm buildings to gardens and hard-standing around the house. The removal of four established Lawson Cypress hedges is described separately above.
- 5.26 Existing situation: The area concerned comprises ground that lies mainly within the area of the existing farmyard but also includes a small part of the paddocks (condition – good) and the lunging pens. Within the farmyard the land affected is mainly either surfaced with loose stone or concrete, or is occupied by the redundant equestrian buildings.
- 5.27 Sensitivity: The elements affected contribute little to the quality of the wider landscape character. All elements described could all be recreated in a very short timescale: the grassland is improved and of low ecological value and the farm buildings generic. Taking land out of grazing will cause a small loss of character but pasture is not scarce and the landscape context can accommodate a small amount of change without detriment to character. Overall, landscape sensitivity is assessed to be **low**.

- 5.28 Magnitude: The proposed change would be permanent and at the site level would see the area of domestic landscape character increased and in sharp contrast to existing character. An objective of the garden design is to keep the layout to the southeast and southwest of the house, which may be visible in distant views, simple. Planting will be of native trees and shrubs to tie the proposed house into the landscape, integrating it in a natural way and respecting the wider context of the development. The amount of change is assessed to be **medium**.
- 5.29 Combined effect: **Slight**. The nature of the change is considered to be positive as it removes features associated with horsiculture which is not a characteristic landuse of the local area.

6.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Visual Amenity

- 6.1 The study area for the visual assessment is largely defined by the locally undulating topography, mature hedges, hedgerow trees and roadside tree belts. These features restrict views of the proposed development site to the locations shown on Figure 5. Figure 5 also identifies the location of houses that could have views of the proposed development. Actual views from these houses could not be ascertained but site survey suggests that there may be intervisibility between them and the proposed development.

Viewpoints

- 6.2 The viewpoints chosen are representative of views that will be gained from public rights of way at various orientations to, and distances from, the site. All views are transient, experienced fleetingly when moving: the development does not affect any formally recognised viewing positions. The viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 5. The views are described below and their sensitivity defined according to the criteria set out in Appendix A.

Visual effects during construction

- 6.3 The localised and temporary visual effects would relate to the removal of the existing buildings and hedges, and to the construction work associated with building the replacement house. The site of the new house is overlooked by New Barn Farm and the construction traffic using the drive passing the garden boundary will be visible from the house. From this sensitive receptor there will be a perceivable alteration to the view of medium magnitude resulting with a 'substantial negative' effect whilst works are ongoing. Work during the construction phase will be seen from BW348/2 and FP348/7 (see Figure 4), and possibly from more distant public rights of way.

Visual effects on completion

- 6.4 At completion of the replacement house, the existing house and most of the associated barns would be gone. Visual effects of the proposal would be determined by any modification of views. These potential effects are identified and assessed in the written descriptions below. Figures 10 to 17 show the viewpoint photographs. To help visualise the proposal, these photographs are accompanied by the same image showing the buildings to be removed and the profile of the replacement house. These images have been prepared by Yiangou Architects.

6.5 Receptor location 1A – Footpath 348/7 (Figure 10)

Description of receptor location: This footpath is a well-used public right of way which extends from the edge of the village of Sibford Gower in a south-westerly direction over a distance of approximately 1km where it ends at Bridleway 348/2. The proposed development site can be seen from this footpath when walking southwest though it disappears from view as the footpath crosses a stream valley. Two viewpoints are considered, location 1A and 1B (see 6.10 below).

6.6 Description of the view: As the footpath turns to the south around the corner of a woodland block a wide view of gently undulating countryside is revealed. At this position, the development site is at a distance of about 1km from the footpath and the buildings comprising New Barn Farm and Muddle Barn Farm though indistinct, can be seen against a backdrop of agricultural land and wood.

6.7 Sensitivity: As a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at a position where the quality of the view can be appreciated, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **high**.

6.8 Magnitude of change: The proposed development will be a permanent change but because it affects such a small proportion of the view at the distance being studied, and it affects an area in the view already occupied by buildings, the amount of change is assessed to be **very low**.

6.9 Combined effect: **Slight**. Proposed tree-planting around the house will grow to break up and soften the north-east and north-west elevations, the buildings ultimately glimpsed between trees, much like New Barn Farm is now. Due to distance this planting will be hard to perceive, so the effect will be neutral, that is, amounting to a situation of no change.

6.10 Receptor location 1B – Footpath 348/7 at junction with Bridleway 348/2 (Figure 11)

Description of receptor location: At this location footpath 348/7 meets Bridleway 348/2. At this position the proposed development site is 150m due south and can be seen when facing south.

6.11 Description of the view: At this position near the top of the ridge the view in the direction of travel is of an arable field, and forming the skyline: the boundary hedge between the field and New Barn Farm and Muddle Barn Farm; New Barn Farm house and its outbuildings, and some of the Muddle Barn Farm barns. The buildings and telegraph poles are prominent and the view not particularly engaging. The existing Muddle Barn Farmhouse can be just glimpsed through the tree canopy.

- 6.12 Sensitivity: Although a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at this position the quality of the view is unremarkable, and contains detracting features. The sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **medium**.
- 6.13 Magnitude of change: The proposed replacement house will occupy the space of the barns to be removed and will be seen against the skyline. The existing house is inconspicuous and the proposal will introduce a prominent element larger in scale than the existing buildings. The area is already occupied by buildings: New Barn Farm is clearly a dwelling so the proposal is not uncharacteristic of the existing landscape, and the close association with existing buildings will help to bed the replacement house into the landscape. The amount of change is assessed to be **high**.
- 6.14 Combined effect: Substantial. On completion, new 'instant' native trees, measuring upto 7m in height will be planted between the house and the boundary of the property which will break up the elevation of the house immediately. Additional planting of smaller tree stock will ultimately reduce the view of the house to glimpses. After establishment of mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **slight**. The effect of the proposal on the view is considered to be positive because the proposed new tree planting will in the longer term also soften the appearance of the New Barn Farm range of buildings, towards its west end, providing backdrop and framing canopy.
- 6.15 Receptor location 2A - Bridleway 348/2 (Figure 12)
Description of receptor location: This bridleway is a well-used public right of way which extends east west from Colony Road to the south of Sibford Gower to Ditchedge Lane (public right of way SS63) at the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire boundary over a distance of approximately 750m. The proposed development would be seen from much of the western half of the bridleway. Two viewpoints are considered, location 2A and 2B (see 6.20 below).
- 6.16 Description of the view: At this near-hilltop position the view looking west is dominated by an arable field which extends across the plateau to its boundary hedge and hedges nearby which form the skyline. To the southeast, the distant landscape can be seen over the top of the boundary hedge. The roof of the existing house is just visible above the hedge to the left of the ash tree at a distance of 275m.
- 6.17 Sensitivity: Although a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at this position the view lacks interest. The sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **medium**.

- 6.18 Magnitude of change: The proposed development will be seen to the right of the ash tree against a backdrop of distant landscape. The existing house is currently quite inconspicuous and at this position the viewer could be unaware of a domestic building being nearby. The domestic character of the replacement building will be apparent but will not be imposing and will affect a small proportion of the view. The amount of change is assessed to be **medium**.
- 6.19 Combined effect: Moderate. Hedgerow tree and shrub planting proposed along the inside of the existing ash-dominated hedge on the north boundary of the property will grow to screen the replacement house from the view. Selected trees will be planted at a large size (7m) to reduce the visibility of the proposed house from completion. Additional planting of smaller tree stock will ultimately reduce the view of the house further to levels similar to the current situation. After establishment of mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **negligible**. The effect is considered to be positive, new trees ultimately concealing the presence of a domestic building and screening more distant cross-valley views of modern farm buildings.
- 6.20 Receptor location 2B – Bridleway 348/2 (Figure 13)
Description of receptor location: At this location the viewer is approximately 200m to the northwest of the site of the proposed replacement house.
- 6.21 Description of the view: At this position the view from the bridleway becomes more open and the undulating character of the landscape more evident. A gap in the hedge next to the bridleway allows views around to Sibford Ferris in the northeast. The existing farmhouse is seen in a view oblique to the direction of travel and is incidental to the main view to the east.
- 6.22 Sensitivity: As a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at a position where the quality of the view can be appreciated, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **high**.
- 6.23 Magnitude of change: The proposed development will occupy a position to the right of the existing house, the roof and parts of the first floor visible against a distant backdrop of trees and arable land. The boundary hedge that currently screens much of the existing house will screen most of the replacement dwelling. Though taking up an approximately equivalent area of the view, the proposed development will be architecturally more imposing than the existing dwelling and different in built style to New Barn Farm however, the colour of the proposed construction materials will pick up the light coloured render and slate roof of New Barn Farm providing a visual link

between the dwellings that will help tie the proposed house into the landscape. The change actually affects only a small part of a wider view with the area of built development similar to the current situation but because the change is long-lasting and the new house likely to be eye-catching the amount of change is assessed to be **medium**.

6.24 Combined effect: Substantial. Hedgerow tree and shrub planting proposed along along the north boundary of the property will grow to mitigate the effect of the replacement house on the view. Selected trees will be planted at a large size to reduce the visibility of the proposed house from completion. Additional planting of smaller tree stock will reduce the view of the house further. Ultimately the replacement house will be less visible than the existing house. After mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **negligible**. The effect is considered to be positive because the planting proposals associated with the development will break up the roofline of the replacement house where currently the roof is conspicuous in the view.

6.25 Receptor location 3 – Bridleway 347/1 (Figure 14)

Description of receptor location: A public right of way to the east of the proposed development site which extends 850m from Sibford Ferris westwards to the Sibford Gower road where it ends opposite BW 348/2.

6.26 Description of the view: The development site can be seen when travelling westwards in views close to the direction of travel over a distance of approximately 150m. Before and after this outgrown hedges, roadside trees and low topography obscure the view. The representative viewpoint is approximately 750m from the development site and Muddle Barn Farmhouse is visible, quite well framed by and positioned behind intervening vegetation, but just breaking the skyline. The view is contained by tall vegetation either side of the bridleway.

6.27 Sensitivity: As a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at a position where the quality of the view can be appreciated, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **high**.

6.28 Magnitude of change: When moving westwards the proposed development will be seen in the direction of travel affecting a small proportion of the view. The new house will be nestled into the landscape by mature trees and intervening hedges. The appearance of the new building would be different, though its materials would be in keeping with local residential character. The building style would be different and the country house character evident at this distance, but detailing, for example the tall

chimneys which break up the roofline, would give it a finer appearance. As the proposed change will be permanent but will affect a small proportion of the view in an area of existing built development, where existing vegetation will soften and embed the replacement house from the outset, the amount of change is considered to be **low**.

6.29 Combined effect: Moderate. On completion, new 'instant' native trees, measuring up to 7m in height will be planted on the east side of the house and will reach the height of the single storey element and break up the elevations of the house almost immediately. Additional planting of smaller tree stock will further reduce the visibility of the house. After establishment of mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **slight**. The effect is considered to be positive because the proposal is unimposing yet adds interest to the view.

6.30 Receptor location 4 – Minor road between Sibford Ferris and Millhill Barn (Figure 15)

Description of receptor location: This is a quiet lane providing access to Millhill Barn and Woodway Farm. The development site is visible in oblique views to the west when travelling north and south over a distance of approximately 100m.

6.31 Description of the view: Although a transport corridor this is likely to be used by walkers as a link between public rights of way. The focus of drivers will be in the direction of travel but the tall hedge along the east side of the road encourages non-vehicle users to look out at the view to the west. In this representative viewpoint at approximately 1200m from the proposed development site, Muddle Barn Farm and New Barn Farm can be seen at the centre of the image though not in much detail. The light catches the roof of one of the stable blocks. The view shows the mixed landuse characteristic of the landscape and contains attractive elements such as hedgerows and a strong presence of trees as well as detracting features such as the row of poplars, the uniform Lawson cypress hedges and fenced field boundaries.

6.32 Sensitivity: As a route likely to be used for recreation in an Area of High Landscape Value, at a position where the quality of the view can be appreciated, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **high**.

6.33 Magnitude of change: When moving along this lane, the east side is closed in by the tall hedge. The west side is open and wide views can be seen from here across the adjacent arable land. The proposed development will see the removal of the existing farmhouse and most of the barns currently visible, together with the Lawson cypress hedges. The replacement house will be partly screened by existing mature trees but part of the north and the northwest elevations will be visible against the skyline and

the distant landscape. Design details would be difficult to discern at this distance but the receptor would be aware of the different character of the building to the existing buildings. As a permanent change affecting a small proportion of the view in an area already characterised by built development, set partly into existing vegetation, the amount of change is considered to be **medium**.

6.34 Combined effect: Substantial. On completion, new 'instant' native trees, measuring up to 7m in height will be planted between the house and the boundary of the property which will break up the elevations of the house immediately. Additional planting of smaller tree stock will further reduce the visibility of the house to glimpses. After establishment of mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **slight**. Until then the replacement house is not particularly intrusive or imposing and adds interest to this view rather than detracting from it: the effect on the view is considered to be positive.

6.35 Receptor location 5 – Footpath 347/2 (Figure 16)

Description of receptor location: A public right of way to the southeast of the proposed development site. The site is intermittently visible in oblique views when travelling southwest.

6.36 Description of the view: The representative viewpoint is 980m to the southeast of the proposed replacement dwelling. Beyond the field's boundary hedge, the opposite ridge can be seen with Muddle Barn Farm, New Barn Farm and Haynes Barn (currently being converted to a dwelling), set amongst trees, hedges and farmland. The roof of the existing dwelling breaks the skyline but this is difficult to discern clearly from this distance. The Lawson cypress hedges read less noticeably than in the previous view, sitting immediately above the outgrown hedge of the foreground arable field.

6.37 Sensitivity: As a public right of way in an Area of High Landscape Value, at a position where the rural view can be appreciated, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed to be **high**.

6.38 Magnitude of change: In this view the replacement house is more removed from the existing mature vegetation which has helped to embed into the landscape the proposed new house in the previous views considered. Most of the new roofline will be visible against the sky and the proposed development will be seen as a prominent building of a scale and form distinct from the surrounding landscape. Taking this and the small proportion of the view affected into consideration, the amount of change is assessed to be **high**.

6.39 Combined effect: Severe. To the east of the proposed house (below the house in the image) there is a young plantation of mixed native trees: within 10 years this will have grown sufficiently to start to obscure the first floor of the new building from view and in the future could grow tall enough to obscure the second storey. However these trees are not in the ownership of Mr and Mrs Besterman and provision must be made within the property to reduce the effect. This will be achieved by the planting of an area of woodland inside the existing east boundary hedge, the planting of further trees to the east of the house and, to lessen the effect of the roofline, the planting of additional trees along the northern boundary hedge and new hedgerows and specimen trees to the west of the new house. Included in this planting will be 'instant' native trees (not less than 7m in height) carefully positioned to frame and soften the elevations of the house immediately. After establishment of mitigation planting, the combined effect will reduce to **slight**. The changes proposed will have a positive effect on the view: the Lawson cypress hedges will be removed from the skyline, replaced by new planting that will integrate more naturally with the landscape. The replacement house, set amongst trees, will add interest to the view.

6.40 Receptor location 6 – Traitor's Ford Lane/SS63 (Figure 17)

Description of receptor location: For a length of 500m, bridleway SS63 follows Traitor's Ford Lane, a public highway to the south west of Muddle Barn Farm.

6.41 Description of the view: When moving in a northerly direction, over a distance of about 75m, a distant oblique view (1150m to the north east) of the Muddle Barn farmhouse and New Barn Farm can be seen on the skyline over the roadside hedgerow between hedge trees. Another dwelling, College Barn Farm can also be seen.

6.42 Sensitivity: Although a recreational route at the edge of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, when taking into account that this stretch of the route is on a narrow rural road where the main visual focus of the receptor will be on the road, and the long distance from the receptor to the proposed development, the sensitivity of the receptor is assessed to be **low**.

6.43 Magnitude of change: The replacement house will occupy a larger proportion of the skyline and will be more conspicuous in character than the plain modern house it replaces and the other isolated dwellings already part of the view. It will be a permanent change but at the distance studied, the proportion of the view affected by the change will be small and the hues of the new building will tone with those of

existing buildings in the landscape (e.g. College Barn Farm) reducing its potential prominence. The amount of change is assessed to be **low**.

6.44 Combined effect: **Negligible**. From the outset the replacement dwelling will be framed by retained trees adjacent to the north boundary hedge. These, along with the outgrown hedge along the southern boundary of the property will bed the house into the landscape. The proposed intermediate hedgerow and planting around the house will reinforce this and the long-term effect (assuming little change in the height of the intervening hedges and trees) will be intriguing glimpses of the house through trees. This is a positive effect, enhancing the view by the replacement of the generic farmhouse and barns with a house of traditional design, well-suited to its isolated position.

6.45 Receptor location: New Barn Farm

Description of receptor location: A private dwelling lying at its closest point 32m to the north east of the proposed development.

6.46 Description of the view: The property's principal views appear to be to the north and south but, it is speculated, views of the development site may be gained from first floor windows facing south and west.

6.47 Sensitivity: As occupiers of a residential property the sensitivity of the visual receptors is **high**.

6.48 Magnitude of change: There will be a great change to the existing view as the composition of the Farm will be transformed but Muddle Barn Farm is already a residential property and it's yard extensively built upon. The replacement house will occupy a larger proportion of the site and will be more conspicuous in character than the existing house, but fundamentally these prominent elements are not wholly uncharacteristic of the site. The amount of change is assessed to be **medium**.

6.49 Combined effect: Substantial. Mitigation measures comprising the planting of 'instant' trees (not less than 7m in height) between the two properties will break up the view of the replacement house and as they mature should substantially screen or, in winter, filter views of the replacement dwelling, reducing the effect to **slight**. The proposal will have a positive effect on New Barn Farm, replacing the unused generic farm buildings with a well-detailed house of traditional design and removing other features of the existing landscape such as the Lawson cypress hedges that impose on other views from New Barn Farm.

Consideration of other possible views

6.50 Actual views from private properties were not ascertained.

6.51 Possible receptor location: College Barn Farm

Description of receptor location: A private dwelling lying approximately 325m to the south of the proposed development.

6.52 College Barn Farm was not observed when looking out from the area of the proposed development and it is thought that the outgrown hedge along the southern property boundary combined with landform restricts visibility of the development site. Placing the replacement house south of the existing house may increase its visibility but it is thought that framework tree planting within the curtilage of the new house will partly screen the house and wider landscape proposals to restore the east-west hedge within the site and plant new hedgerow trees along this and the southern boundary will increase the vegetation between the properties and reduce any visibility.

6.53 Possible receptor location: Haynes Barn

Description of receptor location: A derelict barn undergoing conversion to a private dwelling lying approximately 180m to the north of the proposed development.

6.54 A length of dense, outgrown hedge immediately to the south of Haynes Barn screens the proposed development site from view. Glimpses may be possible in winter but the replacement house will be less prominent in the view than the existing farmhouse which is closer.

6.55 Possible receptor location: Rye Hill Farm

Description of receptor location: A private dwelling lying approximately 600m to the north of the proposed development.

6.56 Mature trees and shrubs to the front of the farmhouse narrows the view from the property. It is thought New Barn Farm may be visible but Muddle Barn Farm lying a little further to the west is probably not. If it is visible, the mitigation planting proposals described elsewhere should be effective in screening the proposed house from view.

6.57 Possible receptor location: Colony Road and adjacent properties

Description of receptor location: Colony Road extends southwest from Sibford Gower. The length of road affected lies between 1km and 650m from the proposed development site. Most houses have views to the north and south but some have west facing windows in their gable ends and may have visibility of the proposed development.

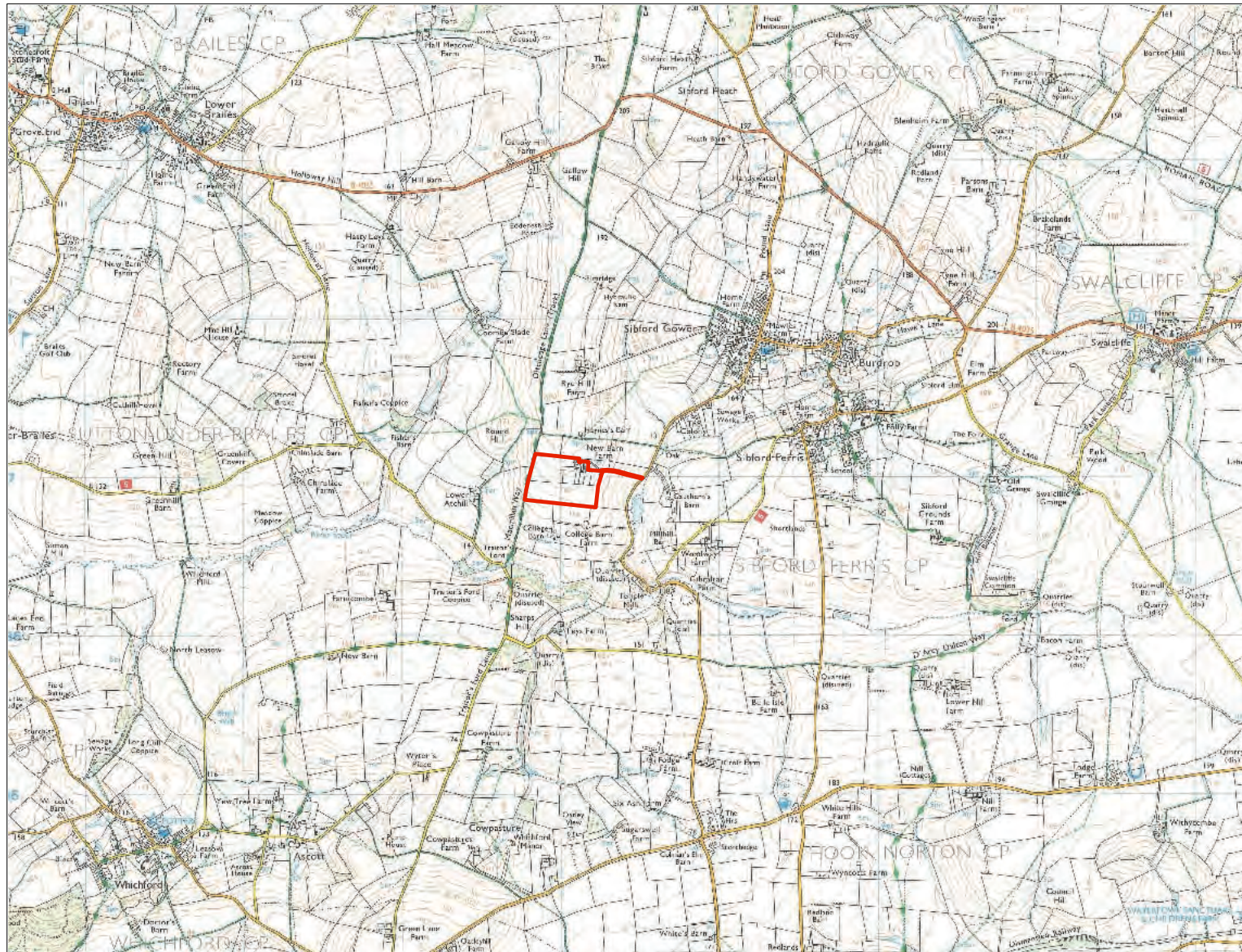
- 6.58 Visibility of the development site is intermittent, reduced by intervening hedges, roadside and hedgerow trees. Where it can be seen, the upper parts of the development will be visible behind the range of existing buildings comprising New Barn Farm, nestled into the landscape by the same existing mature framework vegetation, all to be retained. Planting proposals will further blend the development into the landscape. It is considered the development will have a negligible effect on views from the road and adjacent affected properties and in all likelihood would be missed by the casual observer.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The landscape assessment has found that the effect of the development proposals range from moderate to insignificant. It is accepted practice that where the assessment process has identified elements of the proposal to have a moderate or greater than moderate impact on the landscape mitigation measures are described. Accordingly the planting of advanced nursery stock trees is proposed to quickly establish an informal native tree framework around the replacement house which will help to integrate the development into the wider landscape character and reducing the overall effect from moderate to slight.
- 7.2 The development is considered to be positive because it will bring about an enhancement of landscape character by:
- The removal of the small paddock landscape and associated fences
 - The removal of prominent Lawson Cypress hedges
 - The restoration of hedged field boundaries, and
 - The planting of hedgerow trees
- 7.3 Once these changes are implemented and planting has established, the site will really exemplify wider landscape character.
- 7.4 The visual effect assessment has found that the effect of the development proposals on views ranges from severe to negligible. Implementation of the tree planting within the curtilage of the replacement dwelling together with tree and hedge planting proposals in the wider landscape will mitigate this effect reducing the overall effect to levels of slight or negligible. The proposed building does not detract from or block any noteworthy views.
- 7.5 The development is considered to be positive because it will bring about an enhancement of landscape views by:
- the removal of an everyday farmhouse and redundant modern farm buildings and replacement with a finely-designed Georgian style house, set amongst trees, adding interest to cross-countryside views;
 - the removal of uniform Lawson Cypress hedges which are prominent in views, and
 - incidentally establishing backdrop planting to New Barn Farm, softening its impact on the skyline

- 7.6 The proposal acknowledges that trees take time to grow and be effective visually by suggesting the planting of some large trees to help integrate the built development and into the landscape as soon as planted. Planting of additional smaller nursery stock will in time enhance this effect. Three viewpoint photographs have been selected and the development of the planting over 15 years visualised (Figures 18-20).
- 7.7 It is the conclusion of this study that both in terms of landscape character and visual effect, the proposed construction of the replacement house could proceed with little long-term effect on landscape character or visual amenity.
- 7.8 As well as creating a setting for the replacement dwelling, helping it to blend into countryside views and reinforcing landscape character, the landscape proposals will provide net biodiversity gains. New hedgerows will create cross-site connectivity where it currently does not exist; shrub planting will strengthen and sustain existing hedgerows, and areas of tall grassland, copses and hedgerow trees will add further habitat diversity.

FIGURES



Key

— Site Boundary



Scale 0 50 100 200m

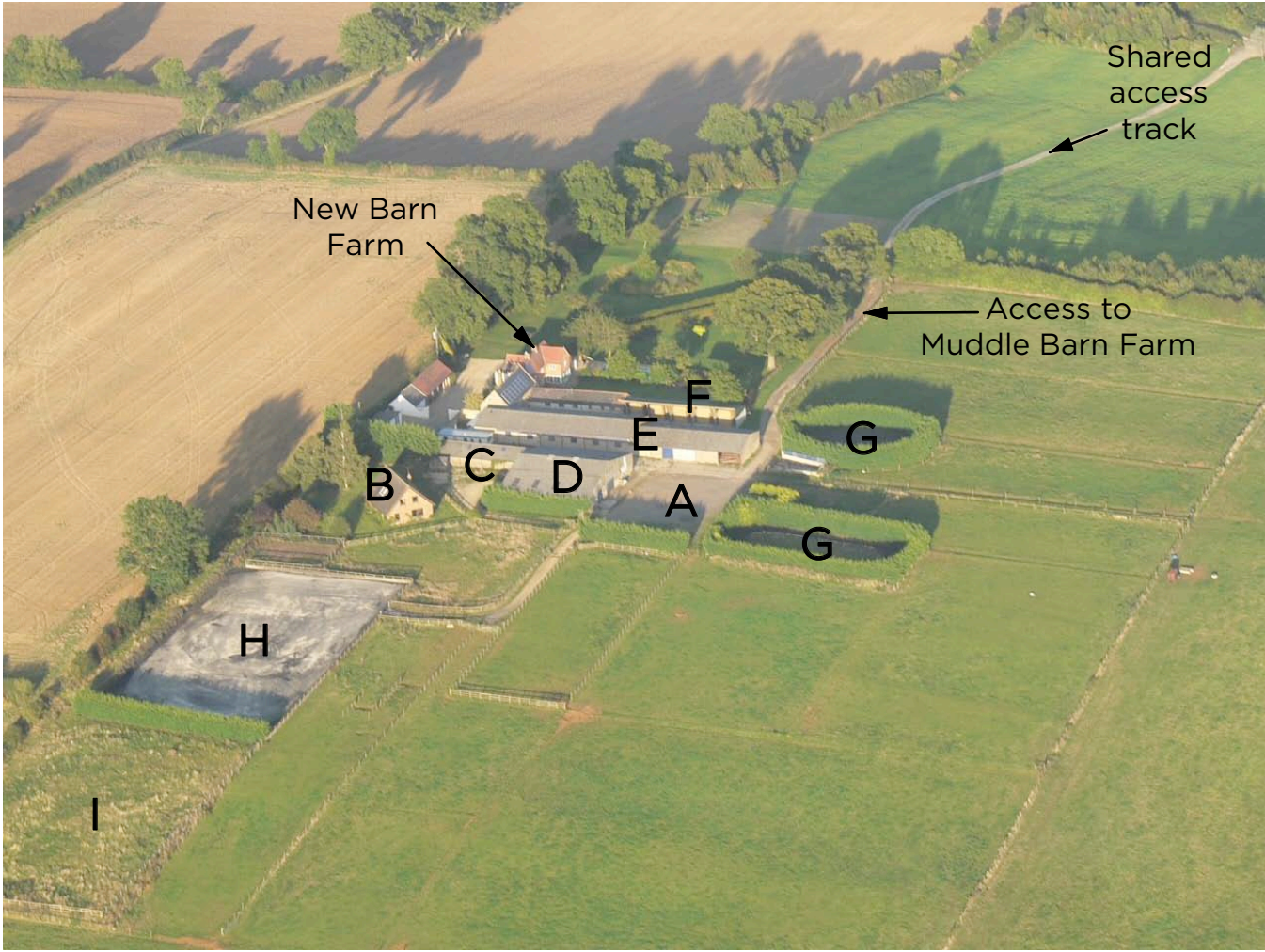
Muddle Barn Farm

Site Location

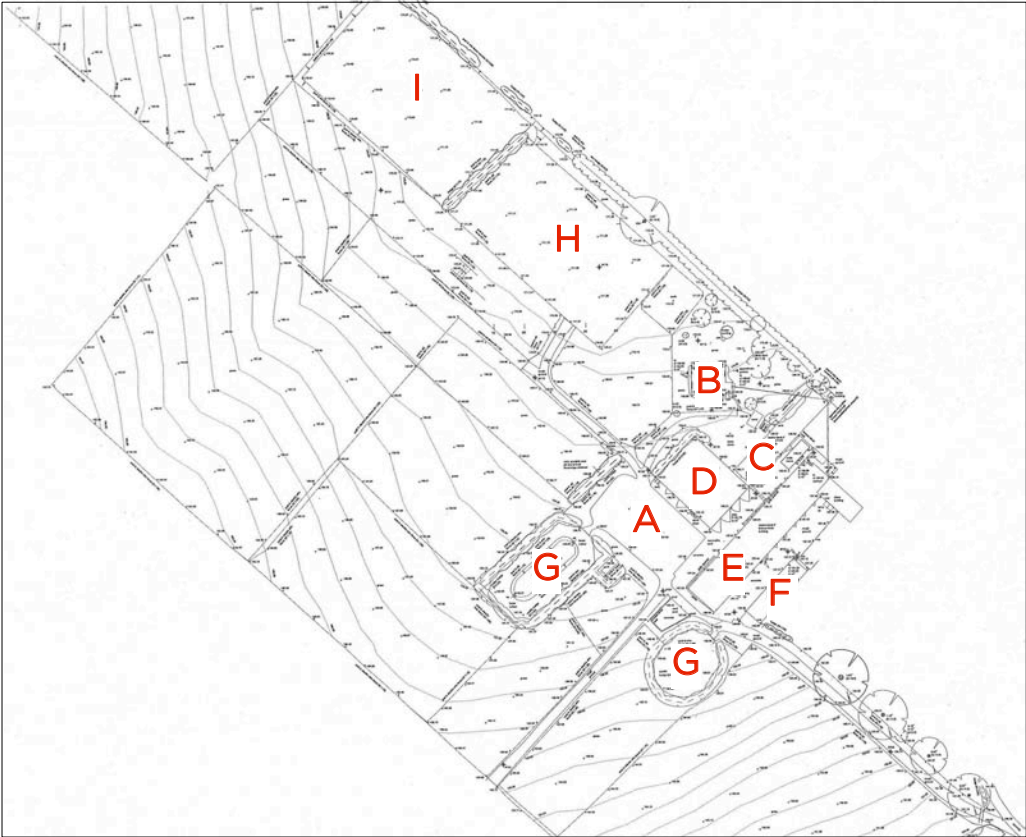
Figure 1

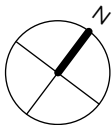
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South west aerial view





Muddle Barn Farm	
Existing site layout	
SCALE: NTS DATE: Sept' 2014 DRAWN: CLP/IH	Figure 2

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1. Existing access drive



2. Part hedge part fenced east boundary



3. Existing barns to left and right.
New Barn Farmhouse at centre.



4. Boundary wall. New Barn Farm out buildings
to north of wall



5. Existing barn at north boundary



6. Existing farmhouse



7. Existing yard looking east



8. Horse paddock fencing, looking southeast



9. Horse paddock, looking west.
Manege to right of picture.



10. Outgrown hedge along north boundary.
Manège leylandii hedge on skyline to right.



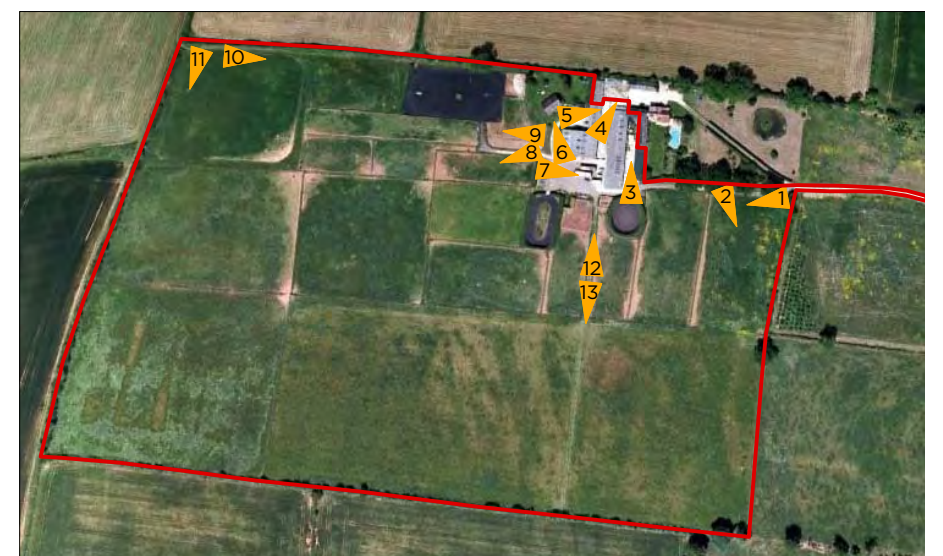
11. Outgrown hedge along west boundary



12. View from south to yard with lunging pens to left and right



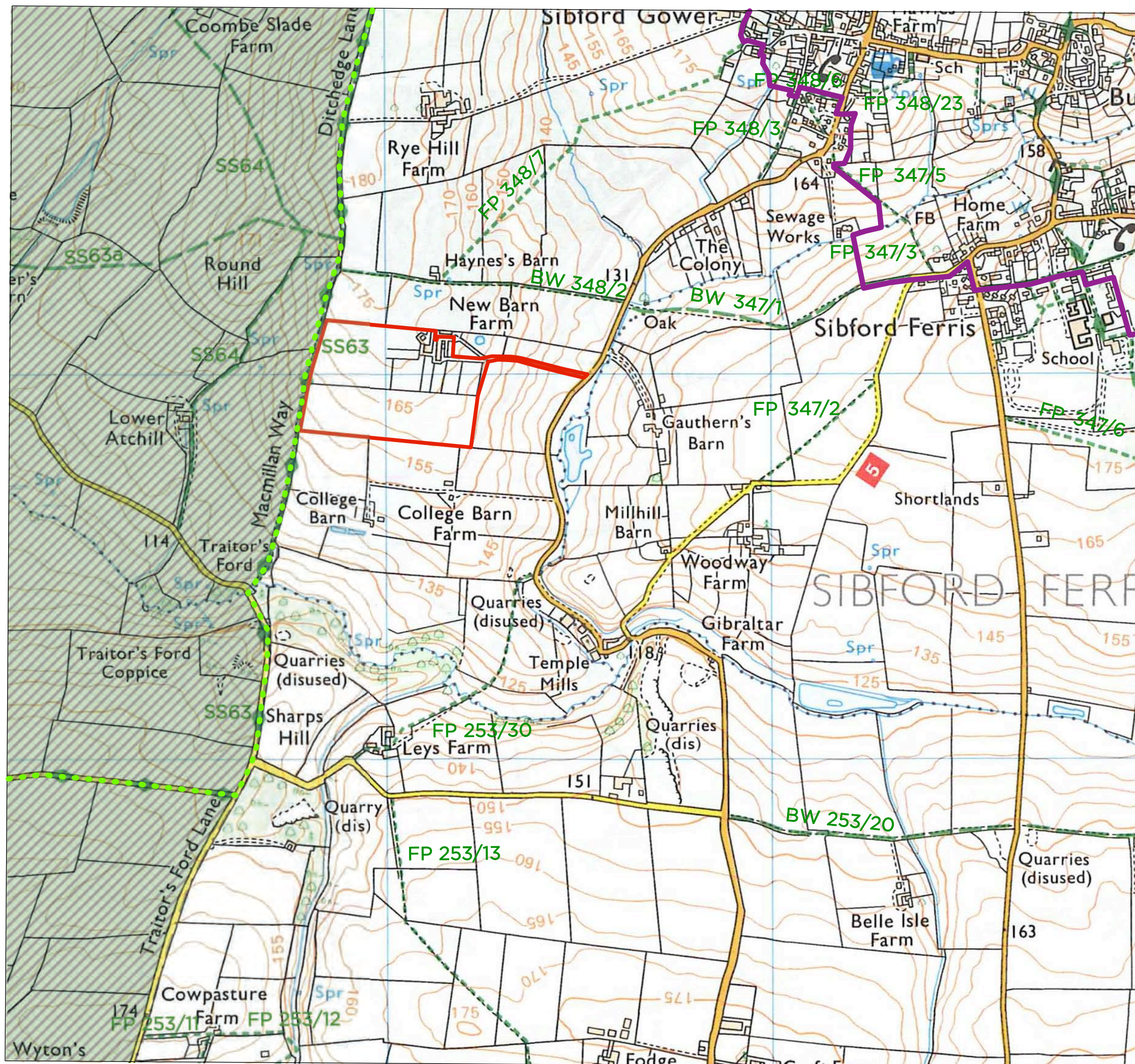
13. Outgrown hedge along south boundary



Location of photographs

Muddle Farm Barn
Existing Site Photographs

Figure 3



Key

 Site boundary

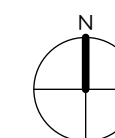
 Cotswolds AONB

 Conservation Area -
Sibford Gower
Sibford Ferris

The whole of the site
is in Cherwell District
Area of High
Landscape Value

 FP 348/23
BW/348/2 Public Rights of way

 Macmillan Way



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m

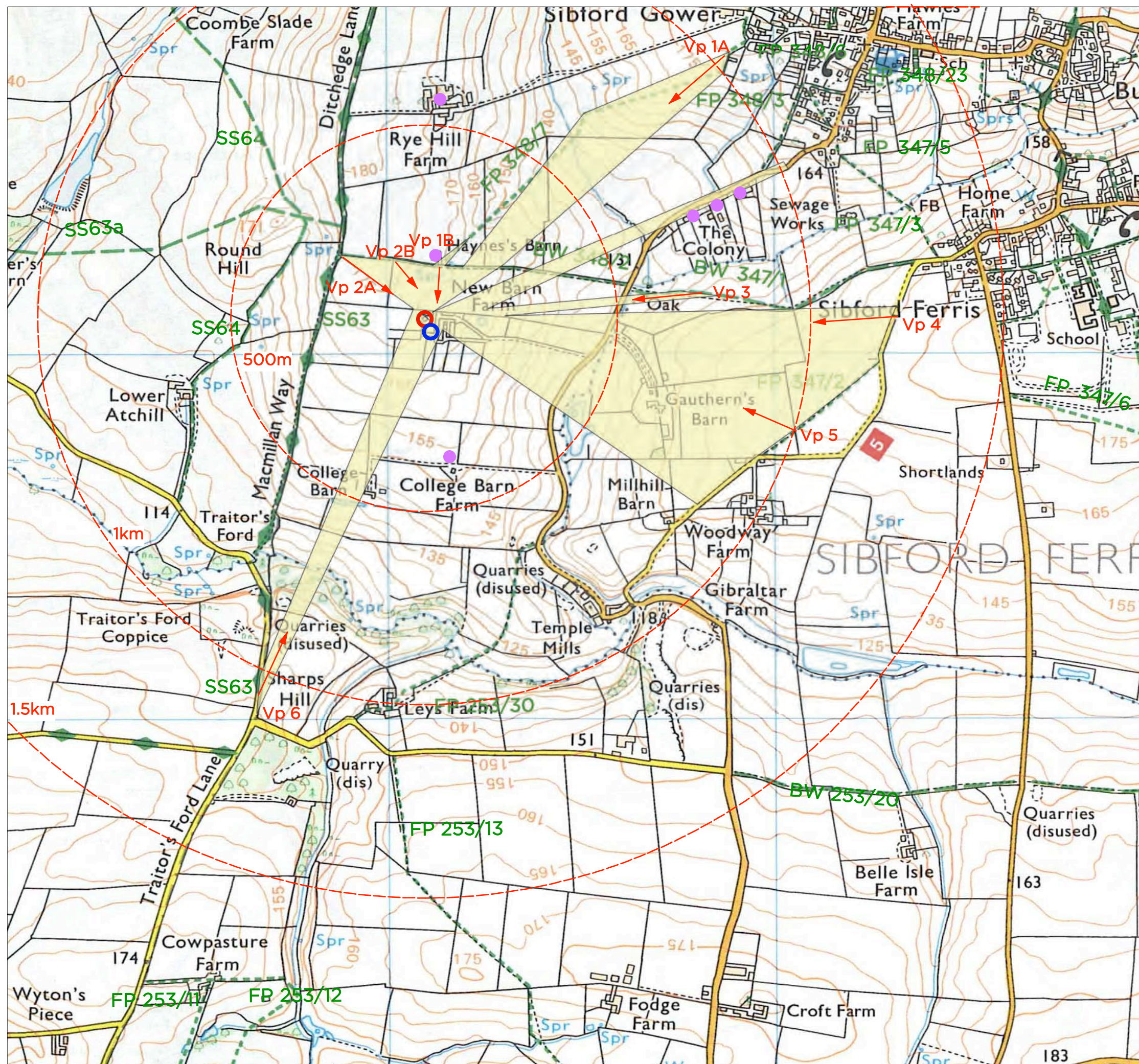
Muddle Barn Farm

Landscape
Designations and
Public Rights of Way

Figure 4

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Key



Existing house



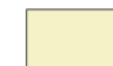
Proposed house



Direction of view

Vp 3

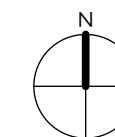
Viewpoint



Visibility from footpaths/roads



Houses with potential visibility



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m

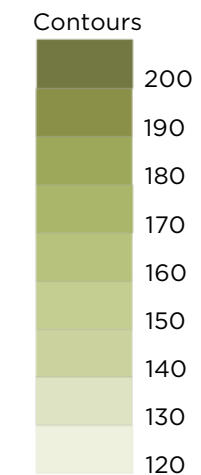
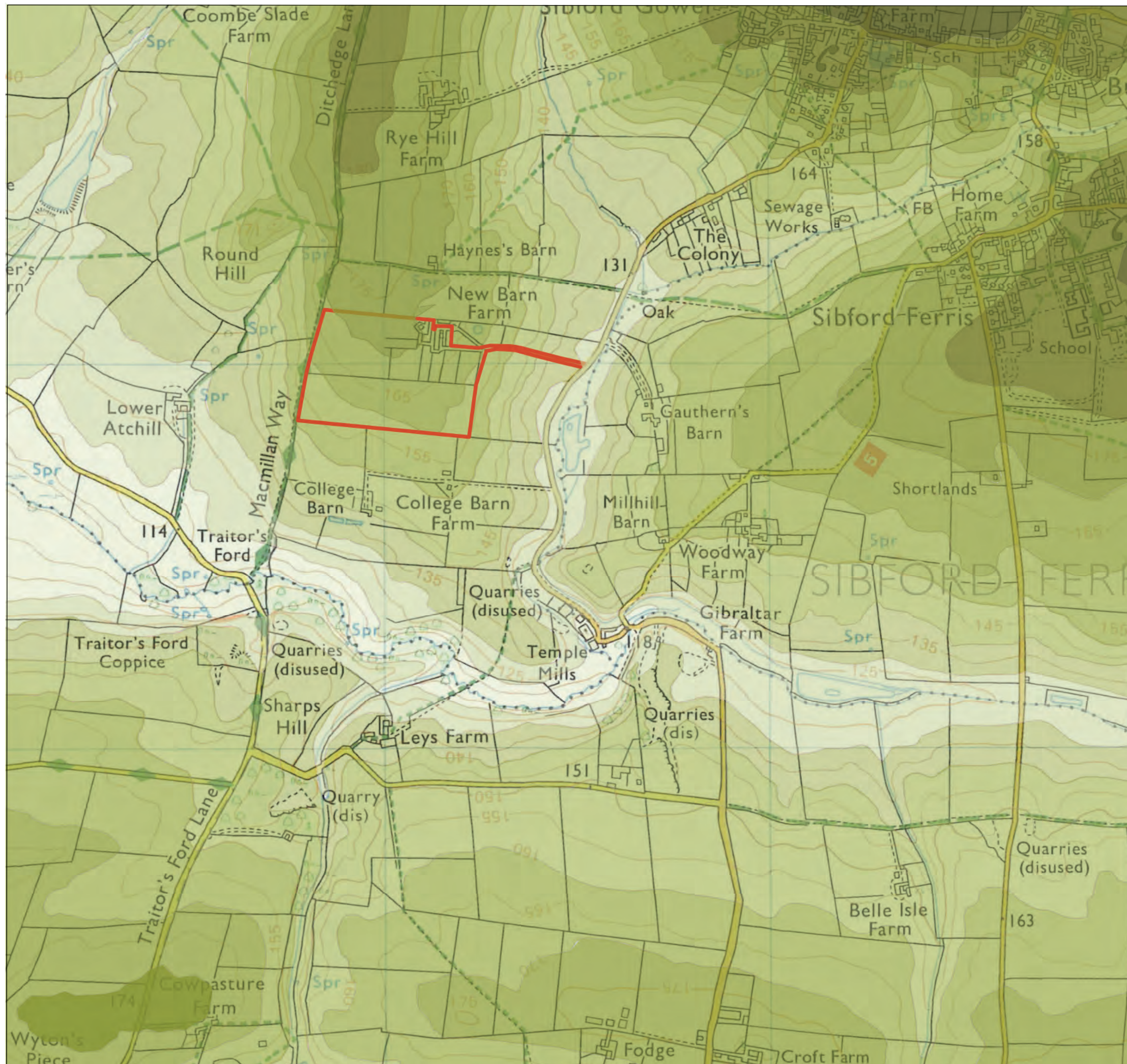
Muddle Barn Farm

Site Visibility and
Viewpoints selected

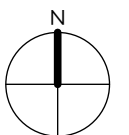
Figure 5

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— Site boundary



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m



Muddle Barn Farm	
Topography	
SCALE	1:10000@A3
DATE	Sept' 2014
DRAWN	CLP/IH
Figure 6	

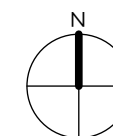
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Key

— Site boundary



Muddle Barn Farm

Landuse

SCALE

NTS

DATE

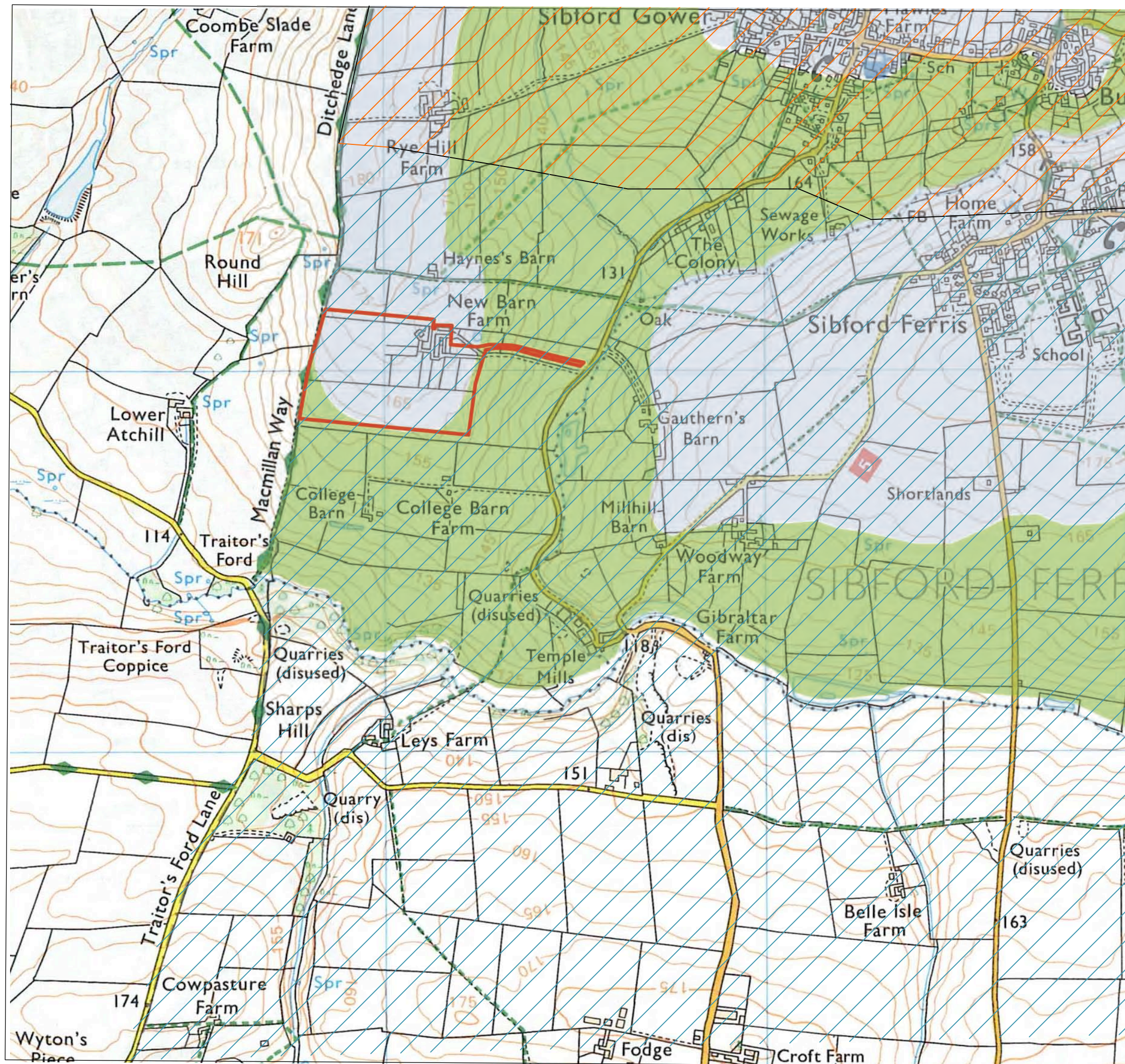
Sept' 2014

CLP/IH

Figure 7

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Key

— Site boundary

Oxfordshire Wildlife Landscape Study Cherwell Landscape Types:

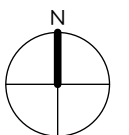
Rolling Village Pasture

Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes

Cherwell District Council Landscape Types:

R2a - Large Scale Undulating Farmland
Rolling arable landscape with
weak field pattern and isolated
trees

R4a - Small Scale Enclosed Farmland
Strongly undulating complex of
farmed hills and valleys



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m



Muddle Barn Farm

Landscape
Character

1:10000@A3

Sept' 2014

CLP/IH

Figure 8

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Muddle Barn Farm	
Landscape Proposals	
Scale: 1:1000@A1	Figure 9
Date: Nov'14	
Drawn: CLP/IH	