LAND AND PARTNERS



PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, HOOK NORTON ROAD, SIBFORD FERRIS.

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been instructed by Land and Partners to review the landscape and visual matters relating to proposed development of 25 dwellings on land at Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris. The location of the site is illustrated on Plan ASP1 and ASP2.
- 1.2. This Landscape and Visual Appraisal is not a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) but seeks to introduce the principle of development into the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy to assess the ability of the site to integrate future development.
- 1.3. This appraisal should be read alongside the other supporting material which accompanies this submission.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The Site and its Setting

- 2.1. The application site is located on the southern settlement edge of Sibford Ferris, to the west of Hook Norton Road, approximately 1.5km east of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A Conservation Area which extends to cover the settlement cores of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower is located approximately 150m to the north of the site. The site location is illustrated within its wider context on Plan ASP1 and ASP2.
- 2.2. The site is of a largely rectangular shape of approximately 3.7 hectares in size, comprising the northern half of an arable field to the south of the existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris, with existing residential development located to the north and north east, and Sibford School located to the east. The eastern and western site boundaries are defined by Hook Norton Road and Woodway Road respectively, which when combined with the existing development to the north and north east reinforce the settlement fringe character of the site. The northern, eastern and western site boundaries are defined by mature mixed native hedgerows, which afford a strong degree of containment to the site from the east. The southern site boundary is not delineated by any physical feature, with the field parcel extending to the south.

Topography

2.3. The application site is located on a west facing slope, falling from approximately 181m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD) in the east to approximately 171m AOD in the north west. The site's localised and wider setting is characterised by an undulating landscape within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, with the localised landform ranging between 210m AOD and 120m AOD. The landform continues to fall to the west of the site to approximately 120m AOD upon the approach to a localised watercourse and road corridor, before rising to approximately 170m AOD at Round Hill within the Cotswolds AONB.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

2.4. The site is not accessed by any Public Rights of Way, however multiple PRoW's are located within the immediate and localised site context to the east, south east and

west. The existing Public Rights of Way connect the site and settlement of Sibford Ferris to the wider countryside setting to the east, south and west, including the wider setting of the Cotswolds AONB. The D'Arcy Dalton Way extents broadly north to south, to the east of the site, approximately 0.5km at its closest point, whilst the Macmillan Way is located to the west, forming the boundary to the AONB.

Landscape Related Policy

- 2.5. The application site is located within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB. The NPPF emphasises the importance of conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of nationally important designated landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Paragraph 172 states that "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues." As such new development in close proximity to designated landscapes which are afforded the highest level of protection should be carefully considered to ensure that there will be no detrimental impact upon the landscape character or scenic beauty.
- 2.6. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2013-2018 sets out a vision for future management of the area, together with clear objectives and policies which will guide the Cotswolds Conservation Board in exercising its responsibilities. As noted the application site is located within the setting of the AONB, which is located approximately 1.5km to the west and as such the management plan has been considered.
- 2.7. The Conservation Board have produced a Position Statement of Development in the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB (revised 2016) which provides guidance to local planning authorities, landowners and other interested parties regarding the consideration of the impact of development and land management proposals which lie outside the AONB but within its "setting".

"The priority to the Board, when responding to development within its setting, will be to express impact, positive or negative, on the special qualities and character in the designated AONB"

National Landscape Character

2.8. In terms of the wider landscape character, within the Natural England National Character Assessment, the site is located within NCA107: 'Cotswolds'. This assessment provides a useful introduction to the landscape of the region but does not take on board the subtle changes in landscape and a site-specific context.

Localised Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.9. Within the Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study the site is located within the 'Rolling Valley Pastures' landscape type, and within close proximity to the 'Wooded Pasture Valleys & Slopes' landscape type which is located approximately 200m to the south.
- 2.10. The key characteristics of the 'Rolling Valley Pastures' landscape type are identified as being:
 - 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.
- 2.11. The Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study also identify a number of Landscape Strategy Guidelines for the character type. Guidelines considered to be of relevance to the site include:
 - Strengthen the field pattern by planting up existing gappy hedges and replacing fences using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
 - Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
 - Contain the size of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that are appropriate to this landscape type.
 - Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak, ash and field maple.

- 2.12. As noted, the application site is located within close proximity to the Wooded Pasture Valleys & Slopes' landscape type which is located approximately 200m to the south. The key characteristics of this character type are identified as being:
 - 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.

Cotswolds AONB: Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.13. The Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board have prepared a Landscape Character Assessment which covers the entirety of the AONB designation. Whilst that the application site is not located within the AONB, it is acknowledged that it does form the setting to this designation, and as such the landscape character of the AONB has been considered. The AONB is located approximately 1.5km to the west and does share a limited degree of indivisibility with the application site.
- 2.14. At its closest point, the AONB is identified as being located within landscape character area 6: Ironstone Hills and Valleys, within sub area 6A: Whichford Hills and Valleys. The key characteristics of landscape character area 6 are identified as being:
 - Complex topography of steeply sided convoluted valleys and rolling rounded ridgelines and hills;
 - intermittent isolated rounded hills;
 - mainly fertile iron-rich red-brown loams interspersed with occasional bands of calcareous soils derived from intermittent outcrops of limestone bedrock;
 - distinctive local vernacular with buildings constructed in the 'warm' brown 'Hornton Stone' derived form the iron bearing Marlstone Rock Formation;
 - settlement pattern of intermittent nucleated hamlets, isolated farmsteads, and individual buildings;
 - area principally under arable cultivation, together with some improved and permanent pasture, mainly on the valley slopes and bottoms;
 - medium to large scale regular rectilinear fields, mainly enclosed with hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees;

- limited woodland cover with exception of occasional larger stands of ancient woodland:
- linear network of local roads following ridgelines and dropping down into valleys to connect rural settlements; and
- evidence of long period of occupation of the area

Aspect's Landscape Character Appraisal

- 2.15. Whilst it Is acknowledged that the site currently represents an undeveloped arable field, the immediate presence of the existing settlement edge to the north and north east, combined with Sibford School to the east and the road corridors to the east and west form detracting features within the site's immediate setting. The existing built presence within the setting of the application site detracts from the perceived remoteness and tranquillity, reinforcing a settlement edge character. The existing mature vegetation structure which defines the site boundaries affords a strong degree of containment to the site, however it is acknowledged that a degree of indivisibility does exist between the site and the wider AONB landscape setting to the west. It is noted that the site is located within the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, which is considered to be a 'valued landscape' within the NPPF, however the site itself is not covered by this designation.
- 2.16. Given the above assessment, it is considered that the site itself is of limited landscape value given its settlement edge nature. It is therefore considered that the site is of medium landscape value.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSALS

- 3.1. The proposed development is illustrated within its context on the Concept Schematic included within Appendix 2. The layout has been carefully developed to complement the receiving landscape setting and seeks to provide suitable development offsets and additional planting along the site boundaries to assist in the successful integration of the proposals into the receiving visual environment.
- 3.2. The proposals comprise the erection of 25 residential dwellings on the southern settlement edge of Sibford Ferris. The proposed layout has been carefully considered to enhance and respect the existing settlement edge, with the proposals not extending any further south or west than existing built form within the village. The properties will comprise a mixture of detached, semi detached and terraced dwellings and will incorporate natural stone and local vernacular features to ensure the built form responds to the localised context and wider village setting.
- 3.3. The proposed layout seeks to retain and enhance existing boundary vegetation where appropriate, with only a short section of hedgerow on the eastern boundary being lost to facilitate vehicular access and associated visibility spays. Existing boundary hedgerows will be gapped up with species appropriate to the setting in accordance with the Landscape Strategy Guidelines in the Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study. Extensive additional tree, shrub and hedgerow planting will define the southern site boundary, assisting in the successful integration of the proposals and existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris into the wider landscape setting.
- 3.4. A significant development offset will be maintained from the western site boundary, comprising clumps of native tree planting with understorey shrub, providing opportunities for habitat creation and biodiversity enhancements. The additional planting in the western half of the site will provide a high quality landscape setting to the proposals, which will assist in the successful integration of the proposed dwellings in views from the Cotswolds AONB to the west.
- 3.5. The proposed open space within the layout is largely located in the western half of the site, comprising pockets of tree, shrub and hedgerow planting set within areas of amenity and wildflower grassland. A proposed attenuation basin will be located in the north western corner of the site, which will be seeded with a wet grassland mix and planted with marginal species. Proposed allotments will also be provided in the

- southern half of the site, with areas of designated parking reachable through the proposed site access off Hook Norton Road.
- 3.6. Alongside the proposed tree and shrub planting in the western half of the site, a proposed community orchard will also be provided. The orchard will include varieties of apple, pear, plum and cherry, with the opportunity for a community beehive within the orchard to assist in pollination and enhance biodiversity within the site.
- 3.7. A proposed footpath link will be provided across the site, running broadly east west, connecting to the existing Public Rights of Way within the site's immediate setting. The footpath link will also provide links to a proposed children's playscape within the centre of the site and a central green at the heart of the proposed developable area.
- 3.8. The development of the site has been informed by the landscape and visual assessment. The proposals have been developed to ensure that a carefully considered and sensitive approach is achieved. The extensive landscape proposals within the site will connect to the existing green infrastructure within the locality, and assist in the successful integration of the proposals into the wider landscape setting.
- 3.9. The landscape proposals have been informed by the site constraints and opportunities, and local policy objectives to ensure that an appropriate and high quality landscaped setting is achieved.

4. POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal does not include a detailed assessment of effects, but seeks to assess the principle of introducing the development of the site to a residential use. This will be considered within the context of the receiving landscape and visual environment as identified within the baseline assessment.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 4.2. As identified within section 2 of this appraisal, it is considered that the application site represents a settlement edge character, with the existing built form and road corridors within the immediate setting reducing the remoteness and tranquillity of the application site itself. As such, the introduction of sensitively designed residential development into the site will not introduce new or alien features that do not already exist within the localised receiving landscape context or receiving Rolling Valley Pastures landscape character type. The application site itself is located immediately adjacent to existing settlement edge and as such, the proposals will be seen within this context. It is considered that alongside the proposed development, a robust landscape strategy will be implemented, ensuring that the proposed built form is successfully integrated into the receiving landscape character.
- 4.3. In reviewing the effect of the setting of the Cotswolds AONB to the west of the site, the sensitively designed development has provided a significant development offset from the western site boundary, comprising additional tree, shrub and hedgerow planting. The proposed landscape mitigation will assist in the successful integration of the proposals into the wider receiving landscape context, with any built form being seen within the context of the wider village setting of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower. Built form is already a feature within the site's immediate context, forming the existing setting to the AONB. As such, the introduction of the proposals will not significantly impact the qualities or key characteristics of the wider Cotswolds AONB designation.

Effect upon Visual Environment

4.4. In reviewing the effects upon the visual environment, the existing mature vegetation which defines the site boundaries affords a strong degree of visual and physical containment. However, the undulating nature of the wider landscape setting does

allow for glimpsed views towards the site from key viewpoints within the receiving context. The visual assessment can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

- 4.5. Viewpoint 1 is taken from Woodway Road, adjacent to the north western corner of the application site. The viewpoint illustrates the extent of mature vegetation which defines the western site boundary, affording a strong degree of visual and physical containment to the site from this location. It is considered that the proposals will retain and enhance the existing vegetation along the western site boundary, with the proposed built form not being perceptible from this location.
- 4.6. Viewpoints 2 and 3 are taken from the south west of the site, further illustrating the extent of vegetation associated with the western site boundary. The existing boundary vegetation affords a strong degree of containment to the site, largely restricting views from the localised setting to the west. Viewpoint 2 illustrates a break in the boundary vegetation, allowing for glimpsed passing views into the site whilst travelling along the Woodway Road corridor. It is considered that as part of the proposals, a significant development offset will be maintained from the western site boundary, comprising extensive tree and shrub planting, which will afford an enhanced degree of containment to the site. However, heavily filtered views of the proposals will still be perceptible from these locations. Whilst views of the proposals will be available they will be seen within the context of the existing settlement edge, and as such will not introduce new or alien features into the receiving visual environment.
- 4.7. Viewpoint 4 is taken from a Public Right of Way to the north west of the site. The viewpoint looks south east and illustrates the extent of intervening vegetation associated with localised road corridors and the western site boundary. It is considered that the proposed development will be largely contained from this location, with heavily filtered views being barely perceptible.
- 4.8. Viewpoint 5 is taken from Hook Norton Road to the south east of the site. The viewpoint illustrates the extent of vegetation along the eastern site boundary, which affords a strong degree of containment to the site from the road corridor. A break in boundary vegetation exists for agricultural access, allowing for passing glimpsed views into the site. It is noted that alongside the proposals, extensive additional planting will define the southern site boundary, providing an enhanced degree of containment to the site. It is however considered that glimpsed views of the proposed built form will be perceptible from this location.

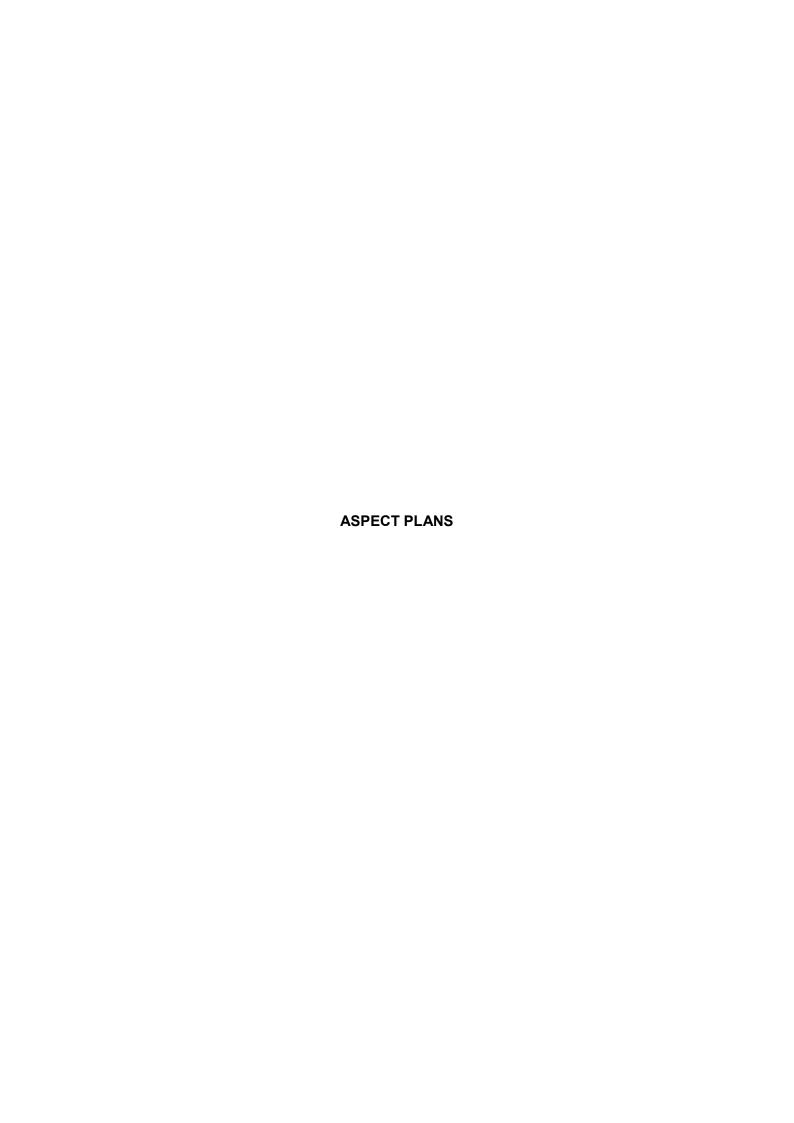
- 4.9. Viewpoint 6 is taken from a Public Right of Way to the south east of the site, illustrating the degree of containment afforded to the site by intervening vegetation associated with the southern extent of Sibford School grounds. It is considered that the extent of vegetation entirely contains views of the site from this location.
- 4.10. Viewpoints 7 and 8 are taken from the Sibford Ferris / Sibford Gower Conservation Areas, to the north of the site. The viewpoints illustrate the undulating topography which characterises the site's wider setting and the degree of containment that it affords to the site. The extent of vegetation associated with the village setting of Sibford Ferris affords a strong degree of containment to the site, largely restricting views from this location. It is however considered that filtered and glimpsed views of the proposals will be perceptible, seen within the context of the wider village setting.
- 4.11. Viewpoint 9 is taken from a bridleway to the west of the site. The viewpoint illustrates the undulating nature of the site's wider setting, which allows for views towards the site from this location. It is considered that alongside the proposed development, additional planting will be implemented in the western half of the site, providing an enhanced degree of containment to that which currently exists. It is however considered that glimpsed views of the proposed built form will be perceptible from this location, seen within the context of the existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris.
- 4.12. Viewpoint 10 is taken from the D'Arcy Dalton Way recreational route to the south east of the site. The viewpoint illustrates the extent of vegetation within the site's localised setting to the south east, affording a strong degree of containment to the site from this location.
- 4.13. Viewpoints 11 and 12 are taken from Public Rights of Way to the south west of the site, with viewpoint 12 being located within the Cotswolds AONB. The viewpoints illustrate the undulating topography which characterises the site's localised and wider setting, allowing for views towards the site and existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower. It is considered that alongside any proposed development, a suitable development offset would be provided from the western site boundary, with additional tree and shrub planting being implemented, providing an enhanced degree of containment to the site. It is however considered that glimpsed views of the proposals will be perceptible from these locations. Whilst the proposals

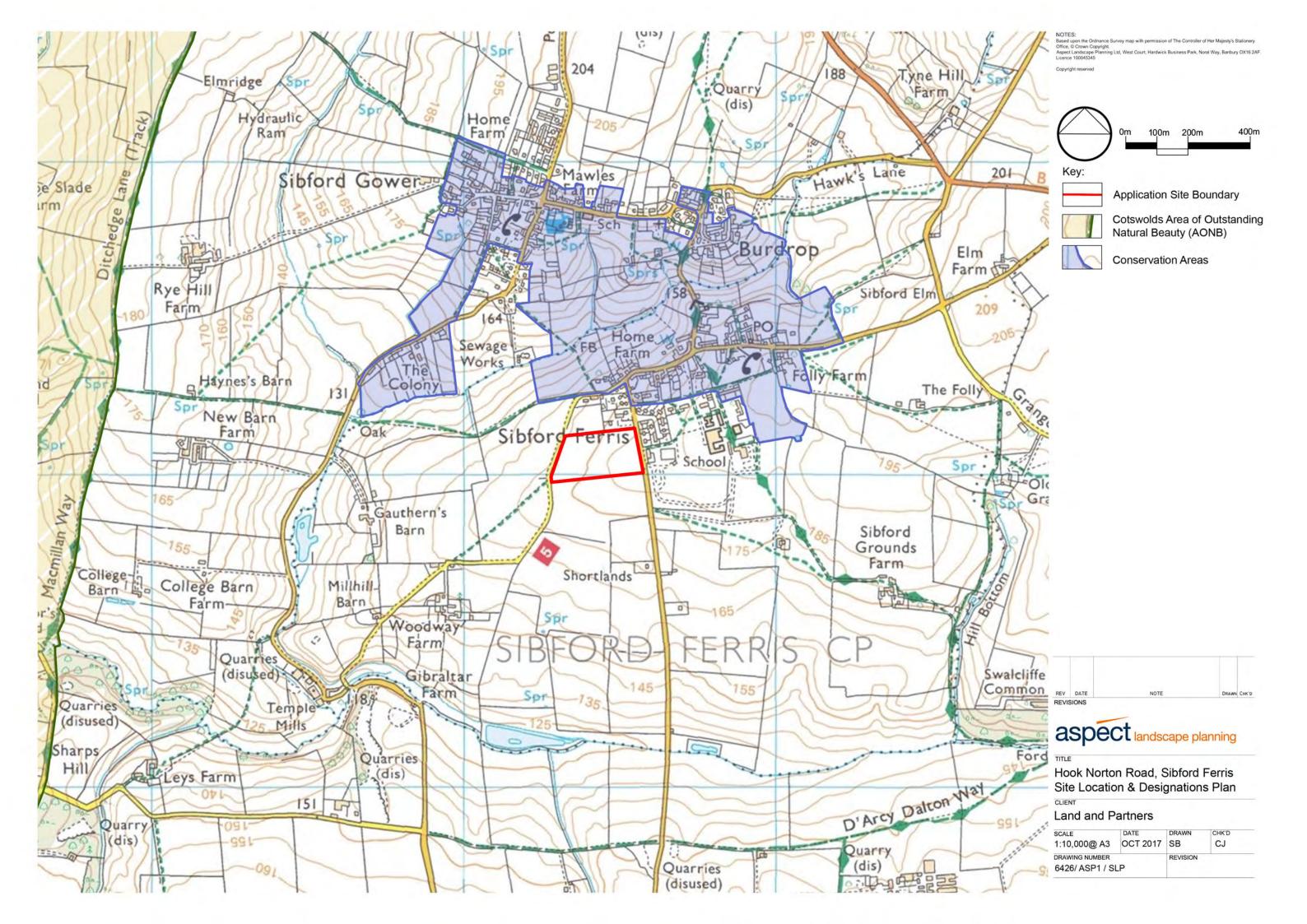
will be apparent, they will be seen within the context of the existing settlement edge which already forms a notable feature within the receiving visual environment.

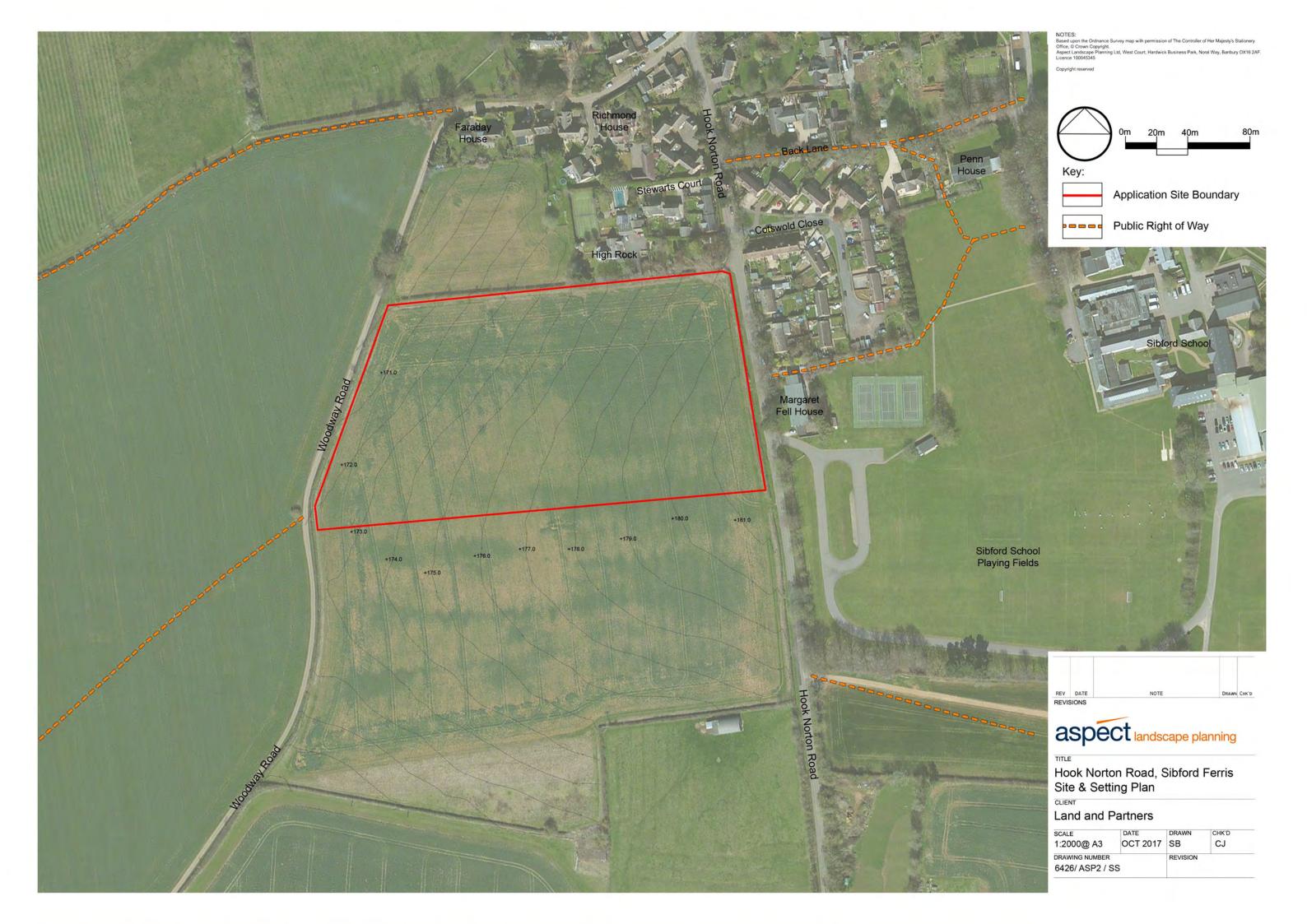
- 4.14. In summary, the existing vegetation associated with the site boundaries and localised setting affords a strong degree of containment to the application site, largely restricting views within the site's immediate setting. However, the undulating topography which characterises the site's wider setting allows for longer distance views, more notably from the south and west. Within these views, the application site is seen against the backdrop of the existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris, which forms a perceptible feature within the landscape and visual environment, and as such, the proposals will not introduce new or alien features into the landscape setting.
- 4.15. It is considered that alongside any proposed development, a robust landscape strategy will be implemented, comprising a suitable development offset from the western site boundary and extensive additional tree and shrub planting in the western half of the site. This proposed landscape mitigation will assist in the successful integration of the proposals into the receiving visual environment and once matured will provide a robust, defensible and green edge to the site and settlement edge of Sibford Ferris.
- 4.16. It is considered that the introduction of the proposals into the receiving landscape setting will not detract from the overall qualities or characteristics of the Cotswolds AONB. The proposals will be seen within a mature green setting, and within the context of the existing settlement edge, which already forms a notable feature in views from the AONB. The proposals will not detract from the special character of the AONB.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been instructed by Land and Partners to review the landscape and visual matters relating to proposed development of 25 dwellings and proposed open space on land at Hook Norton Road, Sibford Ferris.
- 5.2. The main landscape conclusions are that given the site specific character and location of the site, alongside the robust landscape strategy, the principle of development of the site for residential use would be appropriate and would not cause significant harm to the site and localised or wider setting. The main findings of the assessment are listed below:
 - The application site is already characterised by the existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris to the north and west, which when combined with the road corridors within the immediate setting reinforces a village edge character;
 - Due to the sensitively designed proposals, the development of the site will not result in significant impacts upon landscape character;
 - Where perceptible, the new proposals will be seen within the context of the existing settlement edge of Sibford Ferris, which forms a notable feature within the receiving visual environment;
 - The introduction of the proposals into the receiving landscape setting will not detract from the overall qualities or key characteristics of the Cotswolds AONB;
 - A robust landscape strategy would provide mitigation to potential visual effects;
- 5.3. It is therefore considered that the site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate sensitively designed development that will respond to the localised context and will not result in significant harm to the landscape character, visual environment or key principles of the AONB and is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

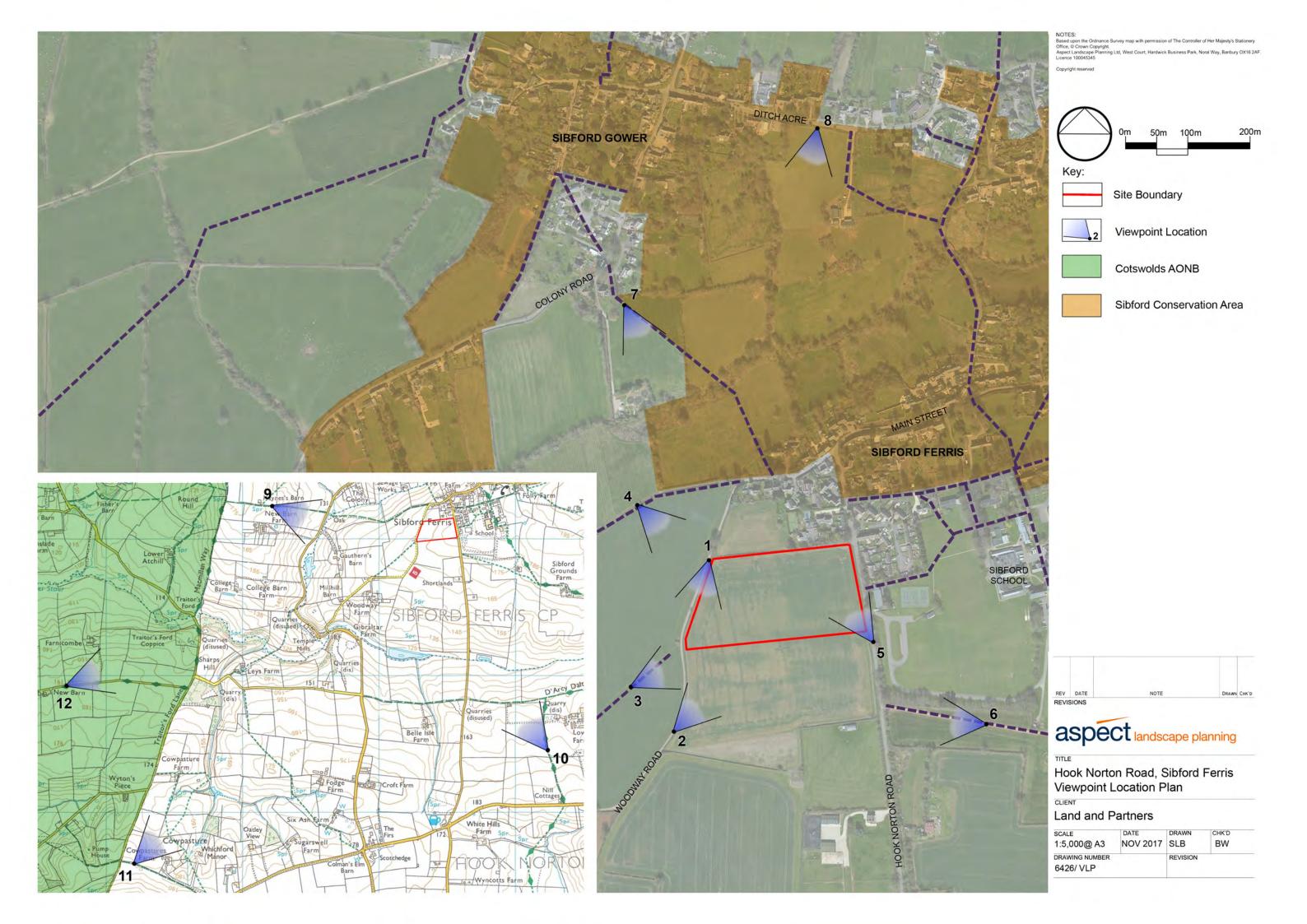






APPENDIX 1

VISUAL ASSESSMENT









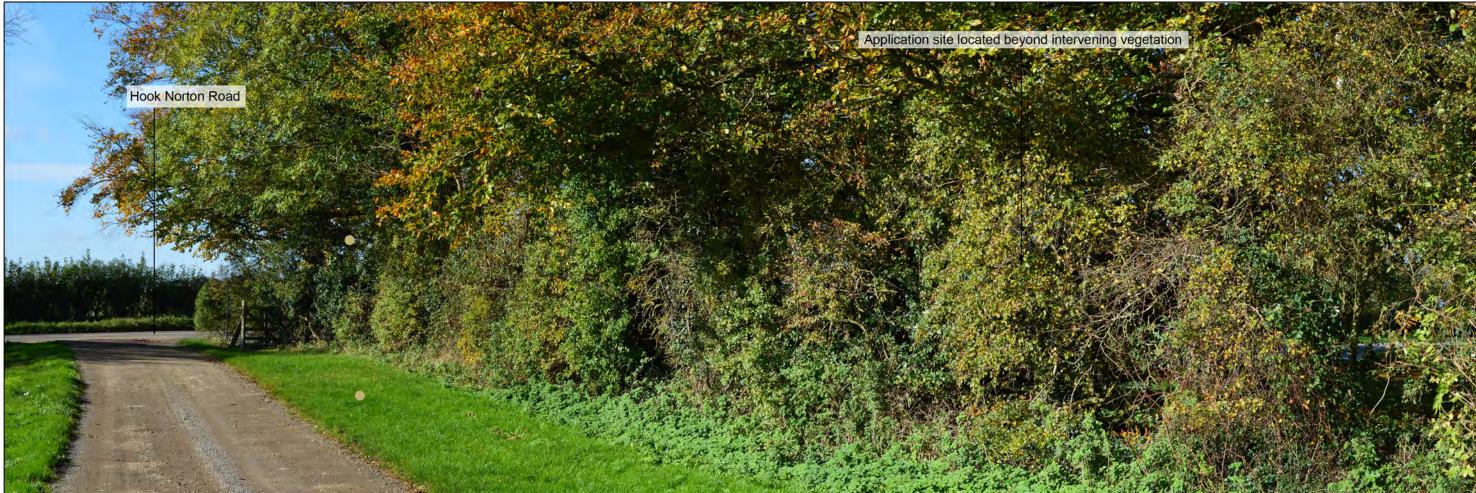






N.B. IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera with 50mm lens in line with best practice and current guidance. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 330mm curved through the same radius in order to correctly illustrate the existing landscape context. To ensure considered judgements are accurately assessed, images should not be substituted for visiting the viewpoint.



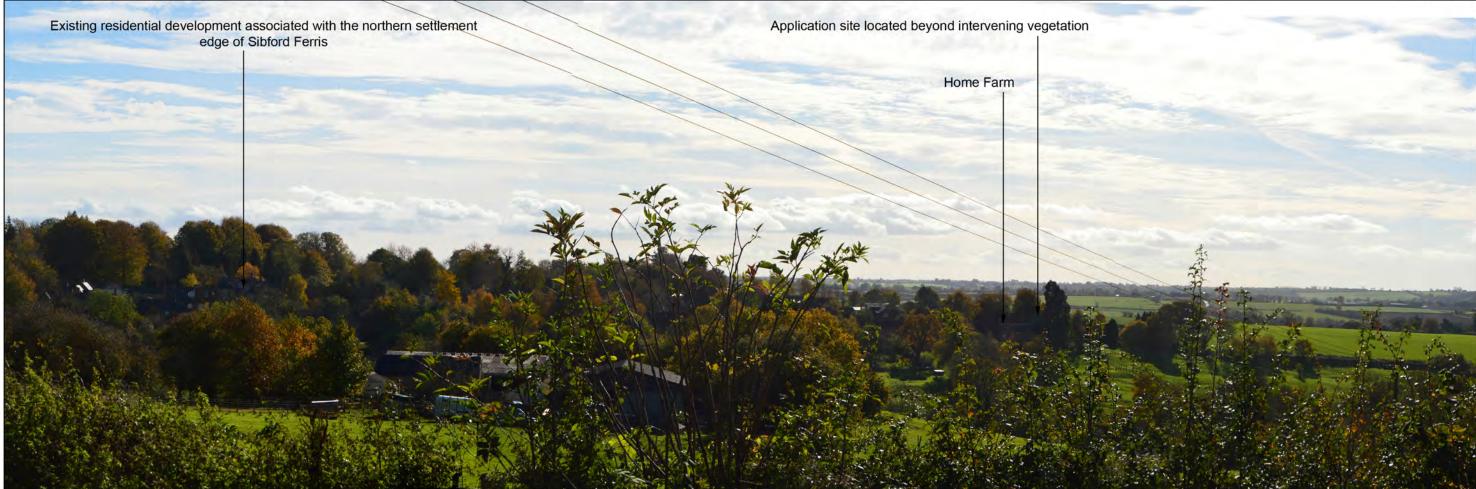




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Wider settlement setting of Sibford Ferris Sibford School Application site



APPENDIX 2

CONCEPT SCHEMATIC



landscape planning ecology arboriculture



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