



**Muddle Barn Farm,
Sibford Gower, Oxfordshire**
Landscape and Visual Appraisal
for a new access drive

April 2018

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REFERENCES

- Cherwell District Council, Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1
Cherwell District Council, Countryside Design Summary, June 1998
Cobham Resource Consultants for Cherwell District Council, Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995
Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004
www.magic.gov.uk

ISSUE INFORMATION

- First draft issued 16.4.18
Final report issued 20.4.18

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning consent for a replacement dwelling at Muddle Barn Farm, planning reference 16/O1563/F, was given on 31 October 2017.

1.2 Colvin & 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 Appraisal in support of an application for planning permission to change the line of the approved access drive to Muddle Barn Farm.

1.3 This report addresses the landscape and visual effects of the proposed access drive.

1.4 The site is located on the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire border, 7.5 miles from Banbury, and approximately 1 mile to the southwest of the village of Sibford Gower (Figure 1).

1.5 There is no public access to the land. The nearest public routes are shown on Figure 2, Landscape Designations and Public Rights of Way.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal is guided by the publication "Assessment Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment" (Third Edition) IEMA/LI 2013.

2.2 The appraisal has comprised both desktop study of landscape designations and published landscape assessments and field study to gain information on the character, sensitivity and potential of the study area to accommodate the proposed development. The site was visited on 4 April 2018 to walk the line of the proposed access drive and to walk local footpaths and bridleways to establish the visual envelope.

2.3 Weather conditions were poor on the day of the site visit. In some instances, and only where they fairly reflect current views, clearer photographs taken during the preparation of the LVIA for the replacement house have been used to illustrate views. 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

Study area

3.1 Colvin & Moggridge prepared the LVIA for the replacement dwelling so the study area for this proposal was determined by its likely visibility based on map information, informed by existing knowledge of the site and the surrounding landscape.

Landscape designations

3.2 Muddle Barn Farm lies in a good quality landscape but there are no local, regional or national landscape designations upon the site. Designated landscape areas near to the study area are shown on Figure 2.

Topography

3.3 Muddle Barn Farm is located in undulating countryside on a gentle ridge that falls to the east, to the south and to the west (Figure 3 - Topography). Access is gained from Colony Road which lies in the valley to the east, at 130mOD. From here land rises first moderately steeply to 155mOD then becomes shallower as it reaches the broad ridge. Muddle Barn Farm lies at between 165 and 170mOD.

Site features and land use

3.4 The route of the proposed access drive crosses two fields. The lower field is agricultural grassland managed by cutting. Young deciduous plantations lie at the lower east side and upper west side of the field. Boundaries are hedged. The upper field is grazed and is characterised by fenced paddocks and landscape features that detract from the local character of the landscape but these are to be removed anyway, part of the wider landscape enhancement proposals associated with the approved replacement house. The existing drive across the lower field serves New Barn Farm and Muddle Barn Farm. It divides at the west field boundary to access the individual properties. From here the drive to Muddle Barn Farm lies next to the south garden boundary of New Barn Farm. Existing site features are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Landscape Character Assessments

3.6 Muddle Barn Farm lies within the Ironstone Hills and Valleys Landscape Character Area in the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (Cobham 1995). In the Countryside Design Summary (Cherwell District Council June 1998) the district is divided into four character areas: the site lies within the Ironstone Downs area. In the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS, 2004), the current landscape assessment for Oxfordshire, the study area includes two

Landscape Types, Rolling Village Pasture and Wooded Pasture, Valleys and Slopes. The site also lies within the Cotswolds National Character Area (Area 107).

4.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

Approved proposal

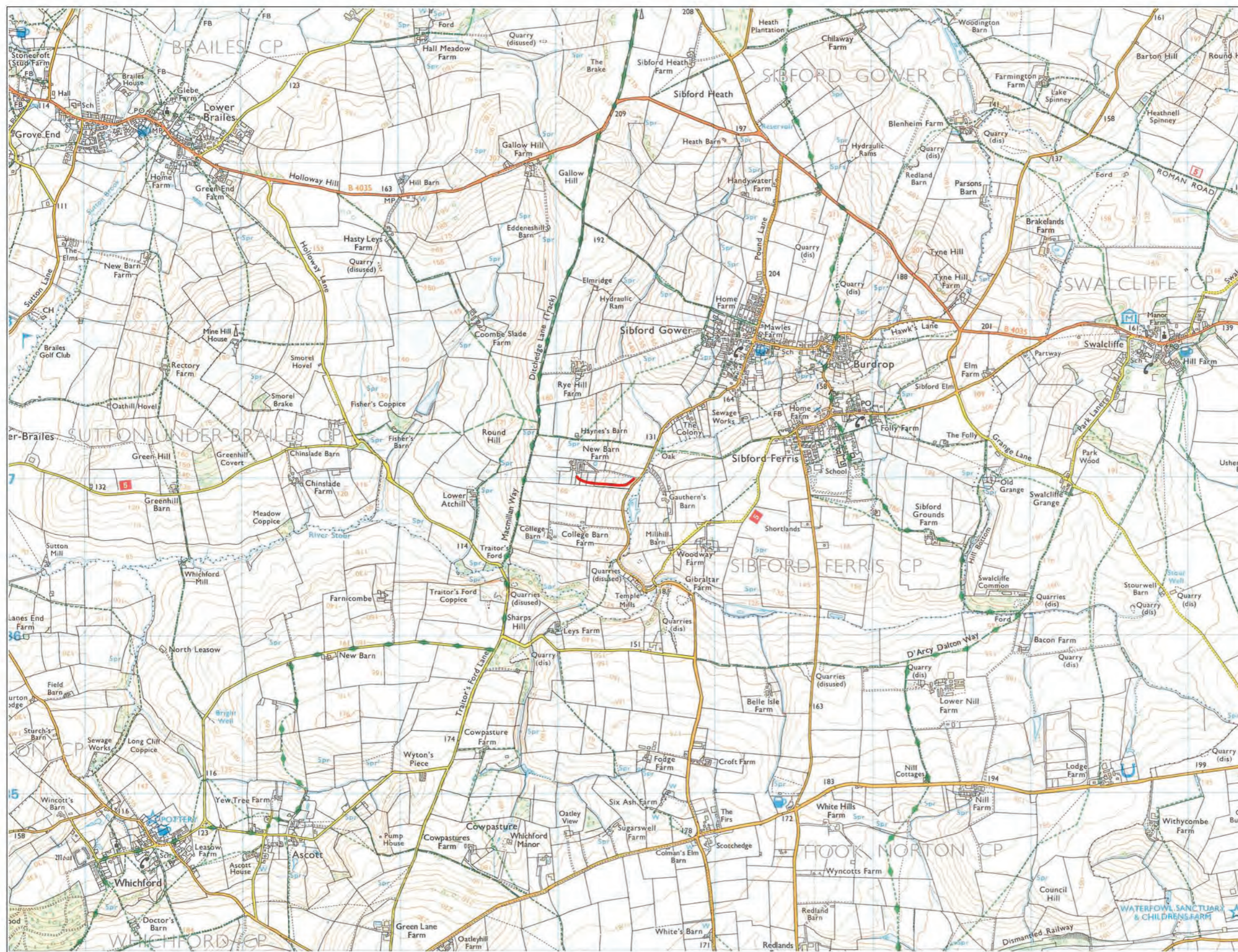
4.1 The approved proposal follows the existing drive up across the lower field to the field boundary on the west side. From there it diverges from the existing route along the south boundary of New Barn Farm, turning southwest the northwest to enter the curtilage of the replacement house on its south side. Figure 6 illustrates the approved access drive layout. The 3m wide gravel drive is to be open-fenced along its south side to allow countryside views, to the north side a wildflower meadow is to be established on the area of the former drive and retained grassland.


Revised proposal

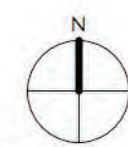
4.2 The revised proposal, also 3m wide and gravel, uses the existing access from Colony Road. After approximately 10m it diverges, turning south to follow the edge of the plantation for 120m; it then follows the field boundary west for 160m, passing the edge of the upper plantation before crossing the hedge line into the upper field where it sweeps northwest to access the curtilage of the replacement house in the same place as the approved drive. Figure 7, Yiangou drawing 1759.151A, illustrates the proposed arrangement.

4.3 In addition to the landscape proposals shown on Figure 6 (which will be modified to accommodate the alternative line of the drive), hedgerow trees will be planted at intervals along the hedge on the south side of the lower field: this hedge, which is relatively young, lacks trees. The existing gateway to the upper field will be removed and the gap closed by extending the adjacent hedge across the opening to the garden boundary of New Barn Farm.

4.4 Soil excavated in the construction of the proposed drive would be spread next to it, marrying in with existing levels and seeded.



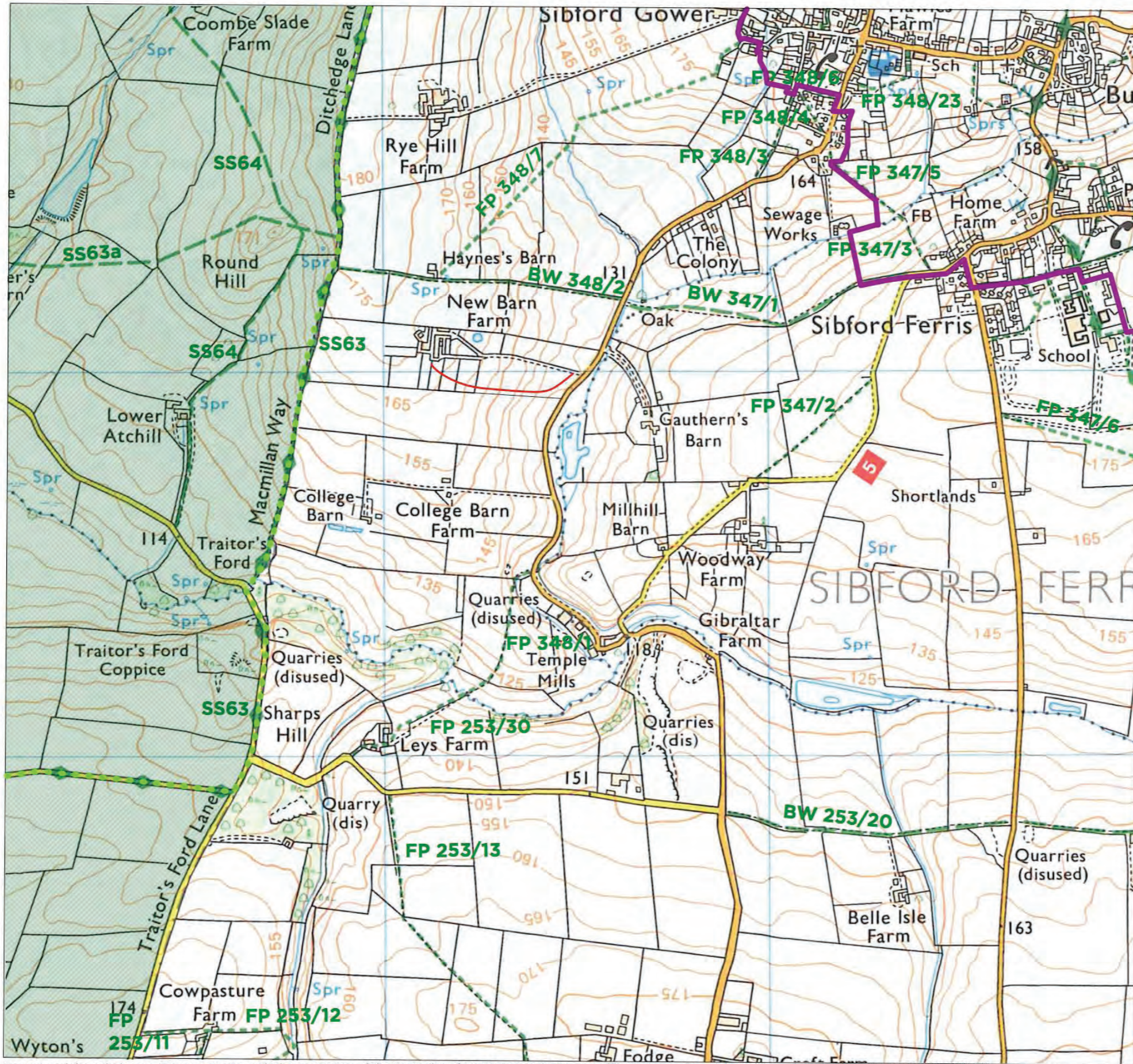
Key
 Proposed Access Drive



Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive	
Site Location	
Planning	
SCALE 1:25,000 @ A3	Figure 1
DATE 13/04/18	
PROJECT NO. CLP/LS	

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- Key
- Proposed Access Drive
 - Cotswolds AONB
 - Conservation Area - Sibford Gower Sibford Ferris
 - FP 348/23
BW/348/2 Public Rights of way
 - - - - - Macmillan Way



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m

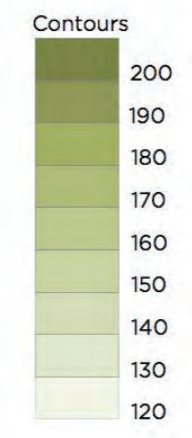


Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive				
Landscape Designations and Public Rights of Way				
Planning				
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">SCALE 1:10000@A3</td> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">Figure 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">DATE 13/04/18</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">DRAWN BY CLP/LS</td> </tr> </table>	SCALE 1:10000@A3	Figure 2	DATE 13/04/18	DRAWN BY CLP/LS
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DATE 13/04/18				
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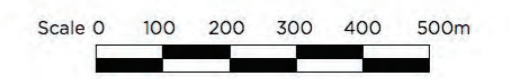
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— Proposed Access Drive



Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive	
Topography	
Planning	
1:10000@A3	Figure 3
13/04/18	
CLP/LS	

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Key
 1 → Views refer to Figure 5 photographs of the existing site



Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive	
Existing Site Features	
Planning	
Scale	Not to scale
Date	13/04/18
Drawn by	CLP/LS
Figure 4	

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1. Entrance and existing drive to New Barn Farm and Muddle Barn Farm from Colony Road.



2. The lower plantation at the foot of the lower field.



3. View west from just inside the field entrance. The proposed access drive is shown with a dotted line (indicative).



4. View looking east along the line of the proposed access drive (indicative).



5. Upper plantation. The proposed drive lies between the plantation and the hedge. Approximately 9 edge trees will be lost.



Edge trees in poor condition (deer damage).



6. Hedge at boundary between upper and lower fields; a 2.5m wide opening will be created for the proposed drive.



7. View from where drive enters upper field. The indicative route of the proposed access drive, which lies to the south of the approved drive, is shown with a dotted line.



8. View looking south from the existing track. The indicative lines of the approved (short dash) and proposed (long dash) tracks are indicated.



9. Existing drive at the point where it diverges to lead to Muddle Barn Farm (L) and New Barn Farm (R).



10. Existing drive to Muddle Barn Farm.

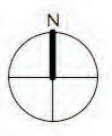
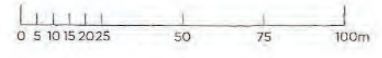


11. View east down and along the existing drive to Colony Road.

FIGURE 5 - EXISTING SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



- Key**
- Existing tree
 - Proposed tree
 - Existing hedge
 - Proposed hedge
 - Proposed stock proof fence
 - Proposed park rail fence
 - Proposed wall
 - Proposed tree planting
 - Proposed shrub planting
 - Existing contour



Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive	
Approved landscape masterplan	
Planning	
1:2000@A3	Figure 6
13/04/18	
CLP/LS	

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P4	29.01.18	Issue For Comment	NQ
P3	26.01.18	Issue For Comment	NQ
P2	25.01.18	Issue For Comment	NQ
P1	24.01.18	Issue For Comment	NQ
Rev	Date	Notes	Drawn

Scale
1:1000 @ A1 0 20 40 60m

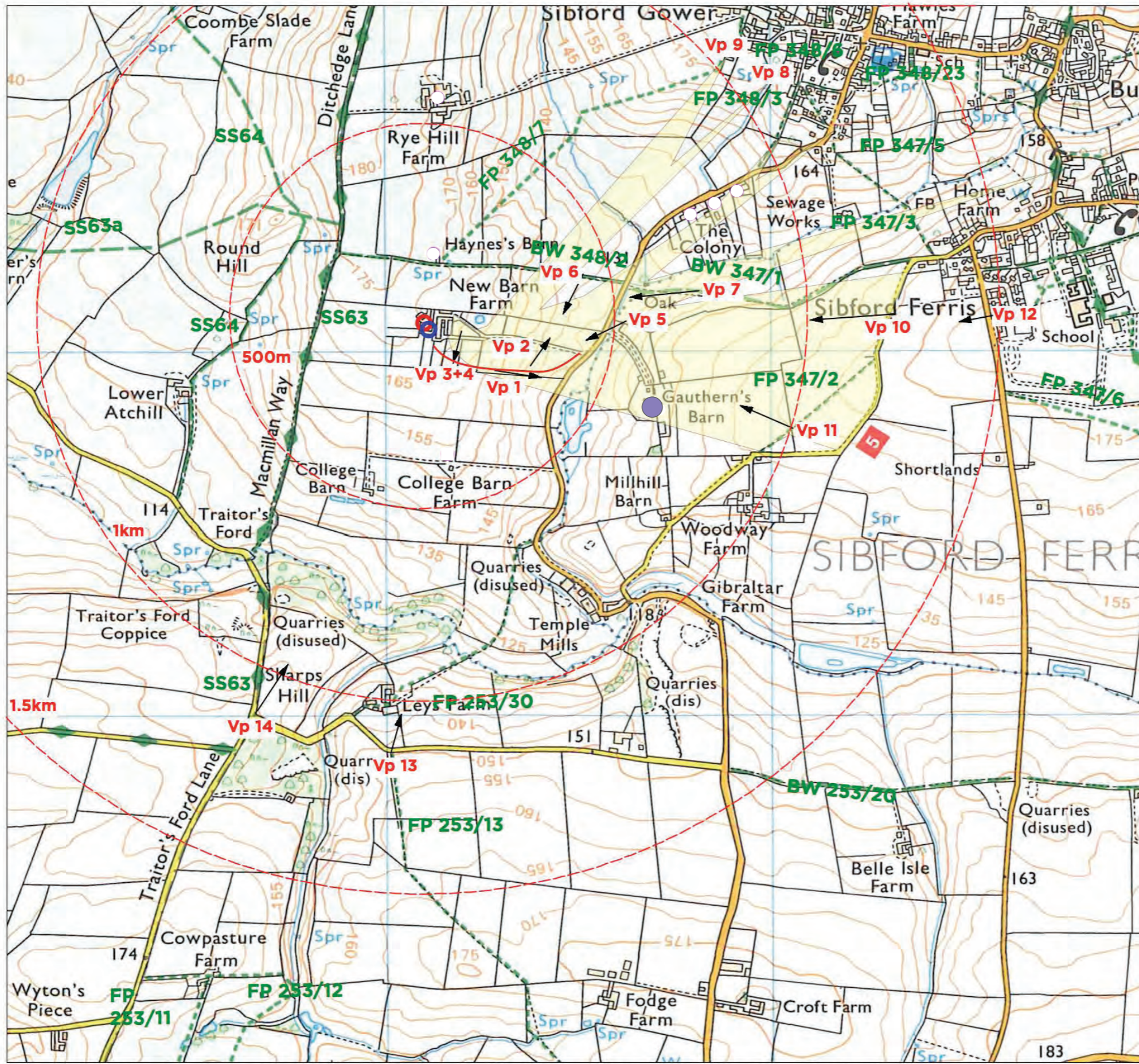
QA Serial Number
40824

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Client	Mr & Mrs. Besterman
Project Address	Middle Barn Farm, Sibford Gower, Oxon, OX15 5RY
Project Description	Amended Planning Scheme
Drawing Title	Proposed Driveway
Drawing No.	1759.151
Rev.	P4

FIGURE 7 - PROPOSED ACCESS DRIVE



- Key
- Existing house
 - Proposed house
 - ↖ Direction of view
 - Vp 3 View reference
 - Visibility from footpaths/roads
 - Houses with potential ground floor visibility
 - Proposed access drive



Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500m

Muddle Barn Farm Proposed Access Drive	
Site Visibility and representative viewpoints	
Planning	
Scale 1:10000@A3	Figure 8
Date 13/04/18	
Author CLP/LS	

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

Landscape Character

5.1 The published landscape character assessments identify the following to be key characteristics of the local landscape:

- Strongly undulating landform of farmed, rounded hills and small valleys
- Mixed land-uses, mainly pasture in the valleys and slopes but where the landscape opens out land is under arable cultivation
- Small grazing fields on valley floors and sides
- Medium/large rectilinear fields over hilltops
- Densely scattered hedgerow trees
- Fields divided by mature, thick hedges
- Many hedgerows unmanaged and growing out/gappy.
- Settlement pattern of intermittent nucleated hamlets, isolated farmsteads, and individual buildings
- Narrow stands of trees along road verges gives impression of being well-treed, the area lacks larger woodlands.

5.2 The landscape affected by the proposal contributes to the character of the wider setting in a broadly positive way. There are detracting features within the upper field (e.g. the Lawson cypress hedges and pony paddocks) but the removal of these features, together with planting proposals to enhance landscape character is already planned as part of proposals for the approved replacement house. The lower field looks part of the working landscape with an unrefined field entrance and simple farm track.

5.3 Although not a defining characteristic and therefore not listed above, access tracks are a recognised feature and necessity of the farmed landscape. It is characteristic that where not lying on the main through route, farmsteads or farm buildings are located at the end of access tracks. Typically tracks come off the main through route at 90 degrees, entering a field at its a corner, and following field boundaries to reach the building. Nearby examples that have evolved in this way include Hayne's Barn, Woodway Farm, College Barn and Rye Hill Farm. The track to New Barn Farm, though old (appearing like the others listed on the first edition 25 inch OS of 1886), looks not to have been associated with a field boundary.

Landscape effects during construction

5.4 During construction, the landscape effects will be noise associated with construction and increased traffic movement in the fields affected, and on local roads. These impacts would be local and temporary.

Landscape effects on completion

Approved Proposal: Removal and replacement of the existing access track

5.5 The principle of relocating the existing access track away from where it lies next to the garden boundary of New Barn Farm has been established with the approved layout. The proposal includes reinstatement of grassland over the area of the removed track.

Proposal 1: Removal of grassland to create the proposed access track

5.6 The creation of the 3m wide track will require the permanent removal of approximately 1260m² agricultural grassland. This is a mixed-use agricultural landscape in which permanent grassland is abundant. The grassland concerned is improved and species poor and could be recreated in a very short timescale: it is not considered that its removal will be detrimental to local character or ecology.

5.7 The closest views of the site are of the lower field rather than the upper field. These views are most vulnerable to character change. By following the field boundaries, in the way characteristic of farm tracks, the proposed access drive will integrate sensitively. The drive will only be seen, to any significant extent, from Gauthern's Barn, a private residence which overlooks the lower field: the simple access drive will read as a farm track following the south field boundary. Given the low-key nature of the drive and its limited visual effect the proposal is not considered to be detrimental to local character.

5.8 In the upper field the track will hardly be visible from a distance and has no impact on landscape character.

Proposal 2: Removal of 2.5m hedges

5.9 The track will narrow at the field boundary where it will be necessary to make a 2.5m wide gap in the hedge between the upper and lower field to accommodate the proposed access drive. The hedge is mature, approximately 2.5m tall and dominated by blackthorn. Mature hedges are characteristic of this farmed landscape but removal of this short length will not be detrimental to landscape character. Its loss will be mitigated by the establishment of a hedge across the line of the redundant gateway on the existing drive.

Proposal 3: Removal of trees

5.10 It will be necessary to remove an estimated nine young cherry and oak trees from the south end of the upper plantation in order to widen the existing space between the hedge and plantation and

accommodate the proposed access drive. The trees are thought to be between 15 and 20 years old and the plantations are starting to read as a landscape feature: however removal of this small number will not be sufficient to affect landscape character.

6.0 VISUAL IMPACT APPRAISAL

Visual Amenity

6.1 The study area for the visual assessment is largely defined by the locally undulating topography, hedges, hedgerow trees and roadside tree belts that restrict views of the proposed development site. Site visibility is shown on Figure 8. Figure 8 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. The viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 8.

Visual effects on completion

6.3 Commentary on the views and the effect of the proposal on completion is described next to each viewpoint photograph on the photo sheets that follow.

Visual effects during construction

6.4 During construction work there will be an increase in vehicle movements within the area of the upper and lower field that will affect the visual envelope as reduced by intervening vegetation and topography. Visual effects will be localised and temporary.



Gauthern's Barn

View 1 - View looking E from the site to Gauthern's Barn (300m from site)

Site intervisibility suggests that the proposed drive will be visible from the dwelling on the left at the Gauthern's Barn property. Intervening trees will obscure the lower length of the track but it may come into view about half way up the field and remain visible until it turns northwest where it will become screened by the upper plantation. The addition of carefully positioned new hedgerow trees in the hedge adjacent to this length of the drive will grow to break its line of the drive and reduce the visual effects.



Sibford Gower

View 2 - View looking N from the site to Sibford Gower

Site intervisibility suggests that the site may be in the view of some private houses in Sibford Gower. Gauging by views from footpath 348/3 (View 9) in the village, views of the lower field are filtered through winter trees but will be fully screened when trees are in leaf. In winter there may be glimpses of vehicles moving across the upper field, below the skyline but this will be a distant view and will not be detrimental to the whole view.



View 3 (stitched) - View from existing track adjacent to New Barn Farm looking S towards the site

New Barn Farm, the property neighbouring Muddle Barn Farm is unlikely to have visibility of the proposed access drive but will see a fenceline along it and vehicles using the drive. This will be the same situation as the approved access drive but set further away in this view. The existing drive and the field between the proposed access drive will be converted to wildflower meadow. Overall the revised proposal will have no more effect than the approved proposal. College Barn Farm a private dwelling lying at its closest approximately 250m to the south of the proposed development is screened by conifers lying at the property boundary.



View 4 - View from the line of the proposed drive looking north towards New Barn Farm



View 5 - View looking SW from Colony Road

The existing drive is barely visible in this glimpsed view from the road; the proposed drive will not be visible but like the existing drive, vehicles using it will occasionally be briefly seen between gaps in vegetation.



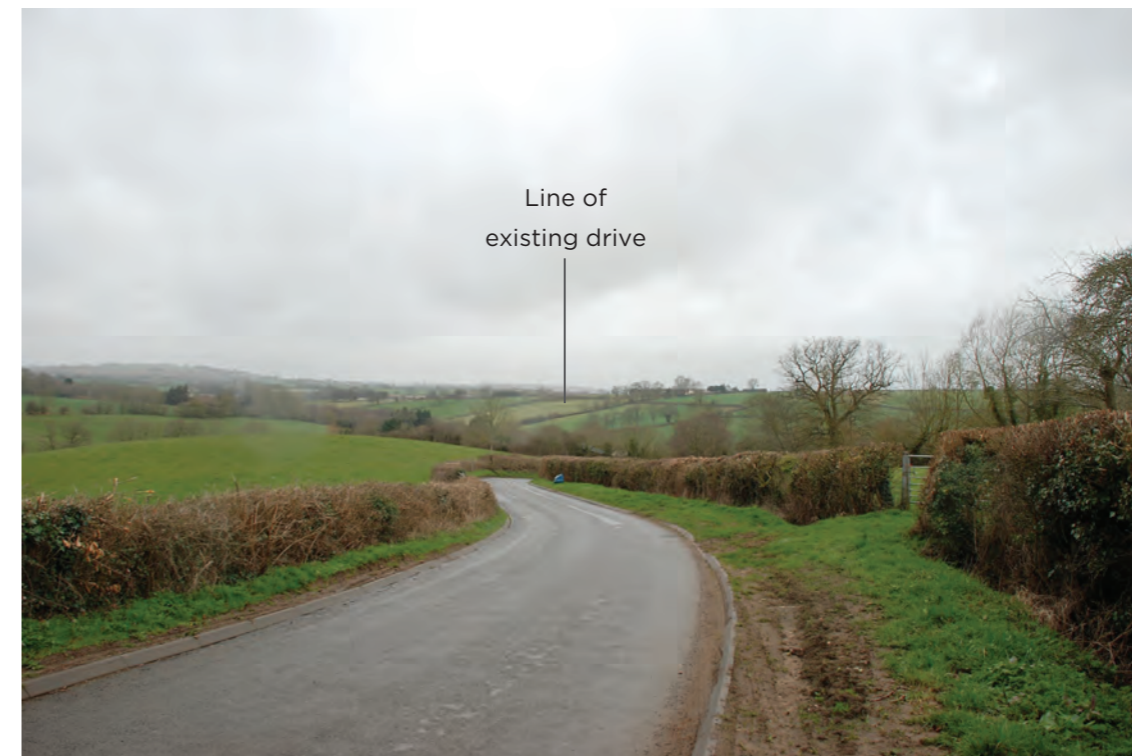
View 6 - View from Bridleway 348/2 looking south

Existing boundary vegetation and shared topographical character will screen the proposed access track from the parallel public right of way. Occasional moving vehicles may be glimpsed, much as they are now, and overall the proposed drive will have negligible effect on the view.



View 7 (stitched) - View looking WSW towards the site from Bridleway 347/1

From this viewpoint the existing access drive is visible but the proposed drive is hidden by boundary vegetation and topography. The proposed access drive would have a positive effect on this right of way, by reducing vehicle movement in this view.



View 8 - View looking SW towards the site from Colony Road

From this position the proposed drive would not be visible but the occasional vehicle movement would be. Vehicles would be seen below the skyline, against the adjacent hedge and have very little visual effect. 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.



View 9 (stitched) - View looking SW towards the site from the FP348/3

The existing drive is visible as a narrow thread across the lower field. The proposed access drive would be difficult to see lying along the hedgeline. Occasional moving vehicles will be seen, as they are on the existing drive and total traffic movement will not increase compared to the approved scheme. Overall, the proposal will have negligible effect on the character or quality of the view.



View 10 - View looking W from Woodway Road between Sibford Ferris and Millhill Barn

The proposed access drive will be glimpsed between trees as it crosses the south side of the lower field. Occasional vehicle movements will be seen, crossing the upper field as the drive turns northwest to the curtilage of Muddle Barn Farm, similar to the approved drive. The proposed change will have negligible effect on this transient view and in the long term, growth of the upper plantation, bolstered by a new woodland plantation to its west, will hide the drive from view.



View 11 - View looking WNW from the FP347/2

The proposed drive is screened by intervening vegetation until it crosses the upper field where, over a short length, moving vehicles may be seen above the top of the upper plantation and across to the area of the lawson cypress hedges (which will be removed) where it enters the curtilage of the replacement house. This amounts to a situation of no change as vehicles on the approved access drive will be equally visible and in the long term traffic movements will be screened by growth of the upper plantation strengthened by the new woodland plantation to its west.



View 12 - View looking W towards the site from road near Sibford School

The road is hedged along its west side but a gap reveals the site and although the view will hardly register with road users, houses located on the road may have similar views from first floor windows. The viewpoint is on higher ground than the site. The access drive will not be visible. Vehicles may be seen, on the skyline as the drive crosses the upper field but at this distance will have a negligible effect on the view.



View 13 - View looking N towards the site from north end FP253/13

The site is screened by intervening trees and hedges.



View 14 - View looking NNE towards the site from Traitor's Ford Lane

There will be no visibility of the drive; if looked for, moving vehicles may just be glimpsed through vegetation during winter months but this will have no impact on the overall view.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The proposed new access drive for the approved replacement house at Muddle Barn Farm is intended to be read as a farm access track: the proposed route follows field boundaries in the lower field and will lie at a new field boundary in the upper field. It is to be a simple drive and will retain the informal character of the Colony Road entrance. The landscape fabric affected - grassland, hedge, trees - contributes positively to landscape character but the small losses involved can be accommodated without detriment to it. The gapping up of the redundant gateway will mitigate the removal of the section of hedge and the planting of hedgerow trees will enhance landscape character.

7.2 With the exception of Gauthern's Barn and from the Colony Road entrance itself, the proposed drive will have no effect on views. In the lower field, moving vehicles may be eye-catching but no more so than along the existing drive. Having two drives will not result in an overall increase in traffic movement, the movements will be split and for most of the time there will be no vehicle movements at all.

7.3 It is thought that existing vegetation to the west of the buildings on the Gauthern's Barn site will screen much of the length of the proposed access drive. If and where it can be seen, new hedgerow trees planted along the south field boundary will grow to reduce the visibility of the drive and of vehicles using it. The proposed changes viewed through the Colony Road entrance will be seen fleetingly and have negligible effect on their views.

7.4 Vehicle movements across the upper field may also just catch the eye in more distant views from the east and south. Again, for most of the time there will be no vehicle movements at all. Planting proposals in the upper field (associated with the approved replacement house), in conjunction with the maturing of the upper plantation, will in time screen vehicle movements in these distant views.

7.6 It is the conclusion of this appraisal that the landscape effects of the proposed replacement drive are very localised and will not be detrimental to overall landscape character and visual amenity. The changes, viewed from public rights of way and roads, will in all likelihood be missed by the casual observer.

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