Briarwood
Landscape Architecture

Gravesham Borough Council

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

LOMER FARM, WROTHAM ROAD, MEOPHAM

On Behalf of Hawkspare Limited

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, on behalf of Hawkspare Limited in respect of a new mixed use scheme at Lomer Farm, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0AN ('the site') . The location of the proposed development is shown on the Site Location Plan at Appendix 1. The site is within the Borough of Gravesham.

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

1.2 The LVA considers the potential effects of the proposed development on:

- Landscape elements and features such as vegetation, topography and water bodies etc.,
- Landscape character and,
- Visual amenity

1.3 The primary objectives of the LVA are as follows:

- To identify, describe and evaluate the current landscape character of the site and its surrounding area
- To identify, describe and evaluate any notable individual landscape elements and/or features within the site
- To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e., people who would be able to view the proposed development) and to evaluate their sensitivity to the type of changes proposed
- To identify and describe any effects of the proposed development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views and to evaluate the magnitude of change owing to those effects

1.4 The visual assessment was undertaken in autumn (25th October 2021) with leaf cover largely still present on the existing deciduous vegetation. Consideration has also been given to the effect on visibility with the vegetation having no leaf cover and maximum visibility.

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2. Methodology

Guidance

2.1 This LVA has been undertaken with regard to the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) – Landscape Institute/Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

2.2 A detailed methodology is given in Appendix 2. As recommended within the published guidance, landscape (elements and character) and visual effects are assessed separately.

Appendix 2 – Detailed Methodology

Nature of Effects

2.3 The nature of effects on landscape, character and visual amenity can be neutral, adverse or beneficial. Neutral effects are those that would maintain, on balance, the existing integrity, quality or key characteristics of a landscape or view.

2.4 For the purposes of this assessment, unless otherwise stated, any change to the landscape and visual amenity as a result of the proposed development is considered to be permanent and non-reversible and adverse in nature.

Photography and Photoviews

2.5 Photographs used as part of the detailed visual assessment have been taken using a Canon E05 Mark III, full frame sensor, digital camera with a 50mm lens. The lens has a standard focal length and is considered to best represent the human eye.

2.6 Photography took place in sunny weather, with good visibility, on the 17th September 2021. The camera was had held at a height of approximately 1.6 metres.

2.7 The Photoviews used for the visual assessment are presented at A3 size as single shots or at A1 (printable size) for panoramic views in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 0/19 Visualisations of development.

Caveat

2.8 It is acknowledged that by virtue of carrying out the 'visual' element of this assessment, the author has an inherent 'bias' against the proposals to which this report relates.

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When carrying out the site visit and taking photos from the chosen viewpoint locations (from publicly accessible areas and vantage points), the report's author is actively and deliberately 'looking' for the 'site' within the local landscape.

2.9 In reality, visual receptors such as users of the public rights of way network and motorists alike will not 'actively' be 'looking' for the site (or the development) whilst traversing the public rights of way and road network. Whilst each visual receptor will have a varying degree of appreciation for their surroundings, depending on what they are doing (playing sport, walking, driving), their efforts will typically not be concerned with 'actively' and 'deliberately' looking for any given 'site' or 'residential development'.

2.10 The photoviews were accurate at the time they were taken. Site conditions can be subject to change, for example garden and field boundary hedgerows can be cut/trimmed by landowners/farmers, trees can be felled by landowners or blown over by adverse weather, and new trees can be planted. Therefore, the extent of visibility can potentially increase or decrease since the photoviews were taken. Such eventualities are not within the control of the report's author. The assessment of visibility within photoviews is accurate at the time of writing.

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3. Baseline Conditions

Site Description

3.1 The site is geometric but irregular in shape. The site includes an access track leading off Wrotham Road. The access track leads to the former Lomer Farm farmstead. The old farmhouse and most of its garden curtilage are outside the redline site boundary. The access track forks with one arm passing to the rear of the farmhouse and another entering a courtyard.

3.2 The site includes two large, 2 storey, brick-built buildings currently housing businesses along with a range of single storey outbuildings and lean-tos that together enclose a courtyard used for parking. (see Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan). The buildings have been identified by the project planning consultant, DHA Planning, as being late nineteenth- early twentieth century. None of the buildings or structures on the site are listed. The buildings and structures themselves, though in use, are slightly dilapidated and have little aesthetic appeal despite being largely constructed of local vernacular materials.

Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan

3.3 A series of context views help illustrate the present nature of the site (see Appendix 4).

Appendix 4 – Context Views

3.4 The northern site boundary and part of the eastern site boundary are located beyond the facades of the existing buildings and are defined by a dilapidated fence and some self -sown vegetation. The southern site boundary follows the edge of the access track and the western site boundary is defined by a low stock proof fence and tall hedgerow.

3.5 The site is entirely private with no public access beyond access to the business premises during working hours.

3.6 Topographically, the egress point off Wrotham Road is the high point of the site at approximately 135. 5 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The access road descends westward into the site. The site varies in height between approximately 129.5 metres AOD on the western boundary and 130.5 metres in the main courtyard.

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Site Context

3.7 The site does not contain nor is it covered by any statutory or non-statutory landscape protection designation (see Appendix 5 – Designations). The site and its surroundings are within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Appendix 5 - Designations

3.8 The site is located close to the centre of Meopham and to the west of the A227 which runs through the settlement. To the north, the site is separated from Meopham Secondary School, Leisure Centre and Library by a pastoral field.

3.9 To the east, a single pastoral field separates the site from the A227. To the east of the A227, residential development extends for approximately 0.5km. Beyond this residential area, the landscape becomes a mixture of agricultural fields and woodland. The boundary of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty runs to the east of the A227 at varying distance from the road but comes within approximately 490 metres of the site boundary at its closest point.

3.10 To the south, a field separates the site from the main residential area of Meopham Green. The latter extends southwards for approximately 0.8km along the A227. To the west of the site, a belt of agricultural fields and woodland extends as far as the settlement of New Ash Green, a distance of approximately 2.5km.

3.11 Topographically, the landscape around the site undulates sharply with narrow ridges of high ground and narrow valleys. To the west, the land undulates between approximately 90 metres AOD and 150 metres AOD. To the east the land undulates between approximately 80 metres AOD and 155 metres AOD.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

3.12 A hierarchy of national/regional, county and borough published landscape character assessments are available. These respective documents describe the host landscape of the site at an increasingly refined level. The published landscape assessments are intended to provide a foundation for understanding the key component elements and features that characterise the host landscape and potential the site itself.

3.13 With respect to scale and geographically extent, the site is considered to be small. Within the site, the proposed development would occupy most of the site and is considered to be large in scale. Consideration has therefore been given to the published District landscape character assessments, which demonstrate a slightly finer grain of assessment but nevertheless cover very large geographic areas relative to the scale of the site.

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District Landscape Character Assessment

3.14 Within the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009), the site is situated in the Meopham Downs landscape character area (LCA).

Appendix 6 – Meopham Downs

3.15 The key characteristics of the Meopham Downs LCA are:

- "Gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Neat pattern of small square fields in the south
- Broader irregular shaped fields to the north
- Narrow lanes and roads lined with hedgerows
- Three large settlements located along A227 running east and west
- Traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular."

3.16 Within the description of the LCA, there are a number of references to local vernacular. Examples include:

- "…Traditional architecture surrounds village greens in both Meopham and Meopham Green, providing a strong sense of place and local vernacular…
- …Small traditional clusters of isolated farmsteads can be found to the east and west. Small traditional Victorian red brick architecture and elements of flint are common, reflecting their locality within the Kent landscape…
- …Both the settlements of Meopham and Meopham Green have distinct traditional village centres. In addition, traditional vernacular architecture can be found scattered across the landscape…"

3.17 The landscape character assessment is now 12 years old. At the time of its publication that the condition of the landscape was considered to be 'good' and the landscape sensitivity 'moderate'.

3.18 In respect of the Meopham Downs LCA to the specific type and scale of development being proposed, it is assessed that the landscape of the LCA has a medium value and a low susceptibility; giving an overall low sensitivity.

Author's Own Assessment of Character

3.19 An assessment of the existing landscape character up to 1km from the site has been undertaken by the report's author. The author's assessment considers the site and its

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immediate surroundings and reviews the sensitivity and the capacity of the local landscape to accommodate the type and scale of development being proposed. The following criteria will be used:

- Landscape scale
- Landform and enclosure
- Landscape pattern and complexity
- Settlement pattern and human influences
- Skylines
- Intervisibility
- Tranquillity

Landscape scale

3.20 Away from the settlement of Meopham, the landscape is predominantly mixed agricultural in nature but with areas of blocks of woodland. The combination of fields and woodland form a generally medium to large scale landscape.

Landscape and enclosure

3.21 Many fields and roadsides are defined by hedgerow vegetation. Where such field and roadside boundary vegetation occur, they create a relatively high level of enclosure. In larger fields, the sense of enclosure diminishes.

Landscape pattern and complexity

3.22 The complexity of the landscape is relatively simple. Meopham is a comparatively large village settlement and urban uses are evident within a corridor of approximately 0.5 km either side of the A227. Outside the area of settlement fields and blocks of woodland of differing sizes intermix.

Settlement pattern and human influences

3.23 Away from the historic cores, the settlement pattern of Meopham is primarily suburban in nature, with fairly recent development based on cul-de-sac streets. Scattered residential properties and farmsteads extend into the wider countryside. The A227 is a busy transport corridor.

Skylines

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3.24 Skylines in the landscape around the site are typically formed by higher ground that is most often completely or partially tree covered. The site, owing to its position on more level and lower ground has little potential to form part of a skyline feature.

Intervisibility

3.25 Intervisibility within the wider landscape varies. Many views are limited to short or medium distances through the restricting effects of a combination of topographical changes and the presence of woodland and vegetated field boundaries.

Tranquillity

3.26 Tranquillity is defined as being the absence of noise and activity. In this context, the area landscape around the site is less tranquil owing to the presence of the A227 and the existing settlement of Meopham .

Local Landscape Sensitivity

3.27 The site and its host landscape contain no rare or unusual landscape features. The condition and quality of the landscape inside the site is considered to be 'fair'. Away from the site boundary, the quality and condition of the landscape varies but is generally considered to be good.

3.28 There is some limited historic interest to the landscape through the presence of some listed buildings and nearby conservation areas. Killicks Mill, is a listed building windmill situated approximately 300 metres to the south of the site but separated from the site by a field and an area of 20th century development. There are no known specific cultural or historic associations with the site itself or the wider landscape.

3.29 The landscape has some limited recreational value with few public rights of way present the landscape.

3.30 Residential and other more urban uses are already a feature of the host landscape.

3.31 Overall, the host landscape is assessed as having a medium value. However, it is considered that the local landscape does have a well-defined ability to accommodate the type of development being proposed without experiencing unacceptable adverse effects. The susceptibility of the local landscape to the proposed development is assessed as low. The overall baseline sensitivity of the local landscape within approximately 1km of the site boundary is assessed as low.

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Baseline Visual Receptors

3.32 A visual assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken to determine how the proposals would have a bearing on the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. This assessment was undertaken in October 2021, when leaf cover was almost complete but consideration has also been given to when leaf cover is absent from deciduous vegetation.

3.33 Having undertaken a visual assessment, it is demonstrable that the visual envelope i.e., the area in which the proposed development would be visible from publicly accessible locations, is a restricted one. Both the highway and public right of way network in the area surrounding the site are limited so that publicly accessible vantage points are similarly restricted.

3.34 Many potential views from publicly accessible locations within the surrounding landscape are themselves restricted by several factors either singularly or in combination. Local topography, existing development and the layering effect of existing vegetation in the intervening landscape, especially on or close to the site's boundaries, between the person viewing (the visual receptor) the proposed development and the site boundary restrict certain views.

3.35 A number of representative viewpoints have been identified on which to base a visual assessment. The choice of representative views was made through an initial desk top study. The exact location of the representative views has been micro-sited in the field. The detailed assessment of these representative viewpoints is given in section 8 (refer to Appendices 7 and 8 – Viewpoint Location Plan and Representative Views).

Appendix 7 – Viewpoint Location Plan

Appendix 8 – Representative Views

Residential Properties

3.36 There a large number of residential properties in close proximity i.e. 500 metres or less of the site boundary. The closest properties are currently those immediate adjoining the site's southern boundary and served by the same access track as the site i.e. The Barns and Lomer Farm farmhouse. These properties have views into the site and would have sight of the proposed development.

3.37 There is also the potential for some intervisibility between the site and those residential properties in Cricketers Drive and Pitfield Drive to the south of the site. Views of the site from the properties and their curtilages are, however, restricted by the presence of rear

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garden boundary vegetation and treatments and field boundary vegetation in the intervening landscape between the particularly property and the site boundary. Views of the proposed development will also be restricted.

3.38 Elsewhere, views of and into the site are typically restricted. Such a restriction is through the orientation of the particular property, a combination of landform and the presence of vegetation and other built form in the landscape between the site and the visual receptor i.e. the occupiers of the particular property.

Public Highways

3.39 Potential views of and into the site from the public highway network are generally limited owing to the orientation of particular routes, changes in topography and the characteristic presence of typically dense roadside vegetation in the form of hedgerows, trees and scrub. Views into the site from the A227 Wrotham Road as it passes by the site are restricted through the presence of dense hedgerow planting in the intervening space between the observer and the site boundary.

Public Rights of Way

3.40 The public right of way network (PROW) within 1km of the site boundary is limited in extent. The very few PROW that pass through the landscape do typically have sections where they cross more open country. Nevertheless there is little opportunity to view the site or the proposed development owing to the orientation of a particular route, and the screening effects of topography, existing built form and vegetation in the intervening landscape between the users of the particular route and the site boundary.

Selection of representative viewpoints

3.41 A comprehensive visual assessment has been undertaken of the study area. In line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition), a number of representative viewpoints (7 in total) have been selected to form the basis of a detailed visual assessment.

3.42 The chosen viewpoints are regarded as being representative of the range of potential views and receptors e.g., users of the public highway and PROW networks, etc. from various distances and directions around the site. A desk top study and field surveys has refined the number and exact location of the representative viewpoints and their locations are ones from which there is anticipated to be an effect. The representative viewpoints are not intended to be exhaustive. A greater number of locations would have demonstrated no visual effect.

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3.43 The following table summarises the overall sensitivity of the representative viewpoints.

Table 1 – Summary of viewpoint susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity

Viewpoint				
	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
Viewpoint 1 – View from A227 Wrotham Road looking west Distance from site: 15 metres	Users of the public highway network	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint 2 – View from Wrotham Road looking south Distance from site: 130 metres	Users of the public highway network	Medium	Medium	Medium
Viewpoint 3 – View from approximate mid-point of public right of way NS258 looking north Distance from site: 140 metres	Users of the public right of way network	High	Medium	High

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Viewpoint				
	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
Viewpoint 4 – View from junction of public right of way NS258 and Cricketers Drive looking north Distance from site: 0 km	Users of the public right of way network	High	Medium	High
Viewpoint 5 – View from public right of way NS283 looking east Distance from site: 400 metres	Users of the public right of way network	High	Medium	High
Viewpoint 6 – View from Shipley Hills Road looking south Distance from site: 490 metres	Users of the public highway	Medium	Medium	Medium

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Viewpoint				
	Type of visual receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Overall sensitivity
Viewpoint 7 - View from Meopham library looking south Distance from site: 83 metres	Users of the public highway network	Medium	Medium	Medium

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4. Description of the Proposed Development

4.1 The proposed development comprises the demolition and removal of the existing commercial buildings together with the former stables and outbuildings and their respective replacement with a new commercial building (containing a series of commercial units) and 3 residential units (see Appendix 9 – Proposed Plans and Elevations).

Appendix 9 – Proposed Plans and Elevations

4.2 The arrangement of the proposed development would be similar to the arrangement of the existing buildings they would replace. A difference would be that the residential uses including parking would be separate and distinct from the proposed commercial units.

4.3 An eastern courtyard, which would be accessed from the south and passing the existing pond, would provide parking spaces for the proposed single storey residential units. A soft landscape area would create a garden space/privacy zone to the properties frontages. There would be opportunity for new tree and shrub planting.

4.4 Lomer Farm farmhouse is outside the redline boundary and would be unaltered with the proposed development in place. A rear garden to the farmhouse would be maintained. To the north of the farmhouse, there would be a parking and delivery area for the proposed commercial units.

4.5 The proposed commercial would be two storeys in height with a pitched roof and gable ends. The building would be an inverted L-shape prescribing an internal courtyard. The courtyard, which would be accessed using the existing track that passes along the site's western boundary, would provide further parking. The main entrances into the building would be from this western courtyard.

4.6 The proposed buildings though modern and contemporary reference the local agricultural vernacular in their styling and use of materials. There would be opportunities for new tree and shrub planting throughout the main part of the site.

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5. Planning Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.1 The latest iteration of the NPPF was published in July 2021 and superseded the previous version. The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10). Specifically, paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that:

> "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:
>
> a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
>
> b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas6, unless:
>
> i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
>
> ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. For decision-taking this means:
>
> c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
>
> d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
>
> i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
>
> ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."

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5.2 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF defines the three dimensions to sustainable development. These dimensions are economic, social and environmental. In detail the environmental dimension is explained in the following terms:

> "an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy…"

5.3 Section 14 of the NPPF, 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change' specifically refers to renewable energy sources such as solar photovoltaic energy schemes. Particularly, paragraph 158 states:

> "When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:
>
> a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
>
> b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas."

5.4 Section 15 of the NPPF refers to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Paragraph 174 states:

> "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
>
> a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
>
> b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
>
> c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

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d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."

5.5 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

5.6 The first line of paragraph 176 expands on the requirements of paragraph 171 by saying:

"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. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

Local Plan Policy.

5.7 Within the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2014) the following policies are relevant to Landscape and Visual matters.

Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure

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"5.7.22 A multifunctional linked network of green spaces, footpaths, cycle routes and wildlife stepping stones and corridors will be created, protected, enhanced and maintained. The network will improve access within the urban area, from the urban area to the rural area and along the River Thames. The key parts of the network are identified on Figure 19: Strategic Green Infrastructure Network.

5.7.23 Sites designated for their biodiversity value will be protected, with the highest level of protection given to internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites, followed by nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, followed by Local Wildlife Sites and then by other areas of more local importance for biodiversity.

5.7.24 There will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough, and opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought, in particular within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas shown on the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network map and within new development.

5.7.25 Where a negative impact on protected or priority habitats/species cannot be avoided on development sites and where the importance of the development is considered to outweigh the biodiversity impact, compensatory provision will be required either elsewhere on the site or off-site, including measures for ongoing maintenance.

5.7.26 The overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The greatest weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting. Proposals will take account of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, and the Cluster Studies where relevant.

Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles

5.15.14 New development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change. This will be achieved through the criteria set out below:

• Using the collaborative approach advocated in Building for Life 12 and in line with the guidance set out in Kent Design, the design, layout and form of new

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development will be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and will make a positive contribution to the street scene, the quality of the public realm and the character of the area. Account will be taken of the scale, height, building lines, layout, materials and other architectural features of adjoining buildings. Account will also be taken of the wider site context, including strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place;

• New development will encourage sustainable living and choice through a mix of compatible uses which are well connected to places that people want to use, including the public transport network, local services and community facilities; encourage sustainable travel; enhance Green Grid links and encourage healthier lifestyles;

• New development will be located, designed and constructed to:

• safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land;

• avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution, and land contamination; and

• not pose an unacceptable risk or harm to the water environment, including the quality and/or quantity of ground waters, surface waters, wetlands and coastal water systems;

• The design and layout of new residential development, including conversions, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines;

• New development will be designed in an inclusive way to be accessible to all members of the community;

• New development will provide appropriate levels of private and public amenity space;

• New development will include details of appropriate hard and soft landscaping, public art, street furniture, lighting and signage and will ensure that public realm and open spaces are well planned, appropriately detailed and maintained so they endure;

• Car parking will be well related to the development it serves;

• New development will protect and, where opportunities arise, enhance biodiversity and the Borough's Green Infrastructure network. Support will be given to environmental enhancements where opportunities arise;

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• New development will be fit for purpose and adaptable to allow changes to be made to meet the needs of users;

• The design and layout of new development will take advantage of opportunities to build in resilience to the effects of climate change. This will include protection against flood risk, where relevant, delivering carbon reduction, provision for low carbon and renewable energy, and minimising energy consumption and water use;

• New development will incorporate appropriate facilities for the storage and recycling of waste; and

• The layout of new development will create a safe and secure environment and provide surveillance to minimise opportunities for crime and vandalism."

Response to Policy

5.8 The siting of the proposed substation development has been carefully considered to minimise any adverse effects on the character and appearance of the host landscape. The proposals are to be located in an area outside of any landscape protection designation such as an AONB. The proposals are to be well-designed so as to make a positive contribution to the site and the wider area by being of their place and reflective of the local vernacular while still being contemporary.

5.9 Consideration has been given to the layout of the proposals to help lessen any potential negative effects on the existing tree and hedgerow resource of the site. Any loss of vegetation is to be mitigated and the majority of the existing tree and hedgerow resource retained and enhanced, as appropriate, with new planting so as to maintain a feature of the site and the local landscape.

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6. Effect on Landscape Elements and Features

6.1 There are no anticipated works associated with the proposed development that would take place outside the site boundary. Therefore, this section assesses the effect of the proposals on those location elements and features that currently characterise the site. Such features are the topography of the site and the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource.

6.2 The site does not contain any other features such as waterbodies, public rights of way etc. There would be no physical effect arising on other physical landscape elements or features outside the site boundary with the proposed development in place.

Topography

6.3 The essential level topography on the site is reflective of the topography of the wider landscape immediately adjoining the site. The proposals would require only minimal and localised changes to the topography of the site in order to construct the footings and foundations for the various compounds and their structures. The level nature of the landform would continue to prevail with the proposed development in place.

6.4 The value and susceptibility of the topography of the site to the type of development being proposed is assessed as low. With a low value and low susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the site's topography is assessed as low. The magnitude of change to the topography of the site at year 1 is assessed as negligible.

6.5 With a negligible magnitude of change and a low sensitivity, the effect of the proposed development on the site's topography is assessed as negligible at both years 1 and 10 of the operational phase. The nature of the effect is assessed as neutral.

Trees, shrubs and hedgerows

6.6 The majority of the vegetation on the site is located around the perimeter . Some more formal tree planting has also taken place in the main courtyard. However, these specimens, which are mainly silver birch, have been 'topped' and pruned and are generally considered to be of poorer quality.

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6.7 The trees, shrubs and hedgerow on the site perimeter are generally native species. An area of trees and shrubs on the northern edge of the site is largely inaccessible owing to the presence of the existing buildings. The taller trees are just visible above the roof tops of the lower structures.

6.8 A substantial hedgerow runs along the site's western boundary and comprises mostly thorn. The hedgerow does not appear to be regularly maintained. A few scattered tree and shrub specimens occur along the boundary with the Lomar Farm farmhouse.

6.9 The existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site is assessed having a medium value. Though considered to be of generally poorer quality, the vegetation along the site's perimeter does contribute to the character of the site and the surrounding area. The susceptibility to the type of development being proposed is assessed as low. The overall sensitivity of the resource is assessed as low.

6.10 At year 1, the majority of the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource on the site's perimeter . Those tree and shrub specimens within the courtyard area and along the northern boundary with the farmhouse would be removed. Any actual loss of vegetation would be mitigated with new tree and shrub planting. The proposals include a net increase of tree planting across the site together with new areas of shrubs and more formal hedgerow planting.

6.11 At year 1, the magnitude of change is assessed as low. With a low sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, the effect on the existing tree, shrub and hedgerow resource of the site would be negligible adverse.

6.12 At year 10, any new tree and shrub planting on the site would have become established and would be thickening up. In addition the retained vegetation would have continued to grow and develop. The magnitude of change would have increased to, medium. The effect at year 10 on the site's tree, shrub and hedgerow resource would be minor beneficial.

Water Features

6.13 There are no water features within the redline site boundary. Nevertheless the site access road adjoins a reasonably large fish pond. The pond is a feature in the landscape and is assessed as having a medium value and medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. Overall, he existing pond is assessed as having a medium sensitivity.

6.14 Measures would be put in place as part of any Construction Design Management Plan to ensure that there would be no direct or indirect effects on the pond during the

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construction phase. The pond is intended to be unchanged during the operational phase of the proposed development.

Summary of the effects on landscape elements and features

6.15 As a result of the proposed development being in place there would be no important adverse effects, i.e., an effect that would result in a total or substantial loss, upon the other landscape elements and features (namely topography, shrubs, hedgerows and trees) that currently characterise the site.

6.16 It is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- The underlining level nature of the site would continue to prevail with the proposed development in place.
- The retained existing tree and shrub resource on the site would form an integral part of the proposed residential development. It is anticipated that the retained vegetation would be reinforced and enhanced through additional tree, and shrub planting. Once established and beginning to mature any new tree and hedgerow planting would help lead to a beneficial effect upon the site's existing tree and shrub resource.
- No physical works are required beyond the site boundary as part of the proposed development. Consequently, the physical fabric of the landscape surrounding the site would remain physically unaffected with the proposals in place.

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7. Effect on Landscape Character

Effect on Local Landscape Character

7.1 The site is comparatively small in geographical extent and the key landscape characteristics of the site are well represented in the surrounding area. Any changes at the site level it is considered, would not impact to any pronounced extent upon those characteristics identified for the local landscape.

7.2 The proposed development would bring about no physical changes to the pattern of the landscape beyond the site boundary. The landscape elements and features in the surrounding landscape would be physically unaltered with the proposals in place.

7.3 The perception of the gently undulating landform across the local landscape would be continue to prevail. The existing field and settlement pattern beyond the site boundary would be entirely unaltered with the proposed development in place.

7.4 The site is already a developed one. The proposed development would introduce new elements of built form onto the site but these would be of a similar scale and form to those existing buildings that they would be replacing. The proposed new buildings would represent modern, well designed features that nevertheless make reference to a local agricultural vernacular through their proposed construction materials and detailing. The new buildings would replace existing built form that also has some vernacular traits but which are not recognised as having any particular architectural or historic merits that might otherwise contribute to the character of the local area. The proposals would broadly utilise the existing built form footprint. Taking all the factors together, it is considered that any perceived changes in the character and appearance of the local landscape would be limited.

7.5 The host landscape is already accommodating of a wide range of human influences including road, settlement and built form. In this context, the proposed development would not appear incongruous or alien. Other features such as the buildings within the nearby area such as Meopham Secondary School and Lomer Farm farmhouse would retain their physical and visual prominence in the landscape.

7.6 In respect of views, features, and landmarks, their perception in the landscape would not be compromised or materially harmed with the proposals in place. The perceived visual presence of the proposed development in the landscape would be constrained from outside the site boundary to fairly limited area owing to changes in local topography and/or where vegetation/built form is present as a screen. The proposed development

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would not appear as a single dominant, large scale entity but only as discrete areas contained within the existing landscape and settlement pattern.

7.7 The level of tranquillity in the local landscape would not change noticeably with the proposals in place. The site is already accommodating of noise and movement associated with commercial and residential uses and activities that influence the perception of tranquillity on the site and in the surrounding area.

7.8 Overall, the magnitude of change to the character of the landscape brought about by the proposed development being in place is considered to be low. The proposed development would have only limited influence over certain aspects of the local landscape but the primarily effect would be a visual and such an influence would be restricted to a comparatively small area surrounding the site. It is assessed that the proposed development would bring about negligible effect upon the local landscape i.e. within 1km of the site boundary that would be neutral in nature.

7.9 A low magnitude of change would translate at the district level to the proposed development having a negligible adverse effect on the Meopham Downs landscape character area. Overall, the proposed development would have a limited effect on the character of the local landscape but its underlying settled and farmed character would prevail and would not be materially changed.

Summary

7.10 The proposed development would not materially change the key landscape characteristics or elements and features, identified in either the published landscape character assessment or the author's own assessment for the local landscape. The existing pattern of arable agricultural fields, woodland and settlement containing the site would continue with the proposals in place.

7.11 The proposals would remove the current existing commercial and storage buildings which, though not uncharacteristic of the local area, makes no appreciable contribution to the landscape. The proposed development would positively contribute to the character of the local landscape. The proposals would introduce a style of residential and commercial development, in the form of new buildings which would represent high quality contemporary design. Through the use of appropriate materials and landscaping the proposed development would help to both conserve and enhance the site and its surroundings in accordance with national and local policy.

7.12 The proposals would be detailed so as to respond to the footprint existing buildings and to the general arrangement of hard and soft features on the site. The existing vegetation along the site's northern, eastern and western boundaries, would be retained as part of

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the proposals and would continue to help provide a degree of visual enclosure to the proposed development. The tree and hedgerow resource on the site would be increased and enhanced through new planting. Once established, this new planting would begin to make a positive contribution to the site and the wider landscape.

7.13 Overall, the physical characteristics of the surrounding wider landscape beyond the site and its predominantly mix of settlement and agriculture would be materially unchanged with the proposed development in place. The landscape is accommodating of a wide variety of human influences including infrastructure and settlement but retains a rural quality. In this context, the sight of the proposed development would not unduly affect the visual experience and perception of the landscape's character. The existing pattern and landcover of the landscape comprising woods, rural lanes and isolated properties and settlements over an undulating topography would all continue with the proposed residential in place.

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8. Effect on Visual Amenity

Detailed visual assessment

8.1 A visual assessment has been undertaken from the representative viewpoints to determine how the proposed development might influence the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape. The assessment was undertaken as part of the site survey, with the photographic assessment recording the nature of the view and the existing visibility of the site.

8.2 The site survey and photographic assessment were undertaken in October 2021. Leaf cover on existing vegetation near its maximum and visibility at its minimum but consideration has also been given to when the vegetation has no leaf cover and visibility at its maximum. The detailed assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the various representative viewpoints is given below.

Viewpoint 1 – View from A227 Wrotham Road looking west

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.3 This view is taken from Wrotham Road opposite the site entrance and looks west in the direction of the main body of the site. Roadside vegetation reduces the amount of intervisibility from the road to the wider landscape. A small gap in the understorey affords a glimpse into the grass paddock to the east of the site but further vegetation along the site's eastern edge effectively screens views into the site of the existing built form .

8.4 Users of the public highway – roads – are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as medium.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.5 At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that the view would be substantially unaltered. Even in winter, with no leaf cover on the vegetation, it is considered that views of the proposed development would be restricted by the layering effect of vegetation in the intervening landscape between the user of the highway and the site boundary.

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8.6 Consideration has been given to the fact that some of the trees along the Wrotham Road are Ash and might potentially have to be removed at some point owing to Ash Dieback. It is considered that the most effective screening of the site comes from lower trees and shrubs and not the taller Ash trees so that even if these were lost, a high degree of screening would be maintained.

8.7 The magnitude of change at year 1 is assessed as negligible.

Scale of visual effect

8.8 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, there would be a negligible effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral.

8.9 At year 10, it is assessed that the visual effect of the proposed development would remain as negligible neutral.

Viewpoint 2 – View from A227 Wrotham Road looking south

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.10 This view is taken from Wrotham Road and looks south along the frontage of the paddock located to the east of the site. The carriageway of the A227 is the dominant feature of the view together with a dense and tall hedgerow within the paddock running along its entire boundary with the road. Some discrete elements of built form is visible in the far distance but views into the site are screened. The site entrance is just discernible in the middle to far distance.

8.11 Users of the public highway – roads – are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as medium.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.12 At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that there would be a limited change to view. During the summer months views of the proposed development would be screened by the layering effect of vegetation both on and off the site. In winter, with no leaf cover, some structural form on the site may be visible. However, it is considered that any such visible built form would be neither prominent nor dominant in the view. The Condimentum factory would remain the dominant feature in the view. The magnitude of change is assessed as negligible.

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Scale of visual effect

8.13 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, there would be a negligible effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral.

8.14 At year 10, it is assessed that the visual effect of the proposed development would remain as negligible neutral.

Viewpoint 3 – View from approximate mid-point of public right of way NS258 looking north

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.15 This view is taken from PROW NS258 which runs diagonally across a field to the south of the site. The view is representative of users of the public right of way network. The views looks northwards across the field, which is currently under grass in the direction of the site. Lomer Farm farmhouse and The Barns residential properties are clearly visible in the middle distance as are other residential properties to the right (east) of the view. The skyline appears wood like. Views into the site are screened by the existing built form and the layering effect of vegetation.

8.16 Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.17 At year 1 of the operational phase, it is considered that the view would be largely unaltered. The layering effect of the existing vegetation both on and off site would continue to filter views of and into much of the site. During winter months when there is no leaf cover it is anticipated that some discrete parts of the proposed development would be visible through the leafless vegetation but any visible elements would not be prominent or dominant. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

8.18 With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a moderate neutral effect at both years 1 and 10. The composition of the view with the proposals in place would be similar to that as currently exists. The field and wooded skyline would remain the dominant elements.

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Viewpoint 4 – View from junction of public right of way NS258 and Cricketers Drive looking north

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.19 This view is taken from PROW NS258 at its junction with the residential street – Cricketers Drive. The view is representative of users of the public right of way network. The view looks northwards across the field, which is currently under grass in the direction of the site. Lomer Farm farmhouse and The Barns residential properties are clearly visible in the middle to far distance as is part of Meopham Secondary School which forms part of the skyline. Much of the site is screened from view but part of the roofs of the existing commercial buildings can be distinguished.

8.20 Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.21 At year 1 of the operational phase, much of the view would be unaltered and the composition of elements would be very similar to the existing situation. The roofs of the existing commercial buildings would be replaced by those of the proposed new commercial building. However, the new built form would be no more prominent than the built form it would be replacing. Most of the proposed development would be screened by existing retained vegetation and built form. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

8.22 With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, it is assessed that the effect on the view with the proposals in place at year 1 would be moderate neutral. It is considered that the effect would remain moderate neutral at year 10. It is considered that there would be no worsening of the view with the proposed development in place.

Viewpoint 5 – View from public right of way NS283 looking east

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

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8.23 This view is taken from the PROW NS283 as it passes through the countryside to the west of the site. The view looks eastward along the farm track which forms this section of the PROW in the direction of the site. The foreground and middle distance comprises a series of mainly pastoral fields. Views of and into the site are screened by the layering effect of existing vegetation in the landscape between the observer and the site boundary.

8.24 Within the apparent woodland belt that forms the skyline, the upper part of Lomer Farm farmhouse can just be discerned. So too, can the roofline of Meopham Secondary School to the left (south) of the view.

8.25 Users of the public right of way network – are assessed as having a high susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.26 At year 1 of the operational phase, the view would be substantially unaltered. The proposed development would be screened in summer by the layering effect of vegetation in the landscape between the observer and the site boundary. With a loss of leaf cover, during winter, it is anticipated that more elements of the proposed development would become visible but the layering of the vegetation would still restrict the view. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

Scale of visual effect

8.27 With a high sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, it is assessed that the effect on the view with the proposals in place at year 1 would be moderate neutral. It is considered that the effect would remain moderate neutral at year 10.

Viewpoint 6 –View from Shipley Hills Road looking south

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.28 This view is taken from Shipley Hills Road. The narrow highway has the feel of a country lane and is typically set amongst steep banks and fairly continuous road side vegetation. There is no footway associated with the lane so view is most likely a transient one experienced by highway users other than those on foot.

8.29 This view is taken from a passing point. The view looks south over a low hedge in the direction of the site. An arable field occupies the foreground and middle distance. A belt of woodland along the eastern edge of the field screens views of and into the site.

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8.30 Users of the public highway – roads – and from places of worship are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as medium.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.31 At year 1 of the operational phase it is considered that views of the proposed development would be screened from view by the presence of the existing woodland and that the overall view would be unchanged. The magnitude of change is assessed as negligible.

Scale of visual effect

8.32 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change, it is assessed that the effect on the view with the proposals in place at year 1 would be negligible and neutral. It is considered that the effect would remain negligible and neutral at year 10.

Viewpoint 7 – View from Meopham Library looking south

Description of the baseline view and sensitivity of receptor

8.33 This view is taken from the footway close to the entrance to Meopham Library. The library affords public access to an area which is more generally private. The view is a framed one with the library building and an adjacent fence focusing the view southwards. The middle distance is dominated by scrub vegetation and trees but part of the roof of the existing commercial building is visible. Most of the site is screened from view.

8.34 Users of the public facility are assessed as having a medium susceptibility to the type of development being proposed. The view itself is assessed as having a medium value Overall, the sensitivity of the visual receptor (those people using the highway) is assessed as medium.

Predicted view at year 1 and magnitude of effect

8.35 At year 1 of the operational phase, the view would experience a limited change with the proposed development in place. The roof of the existing commercial building would be replaced by roof of the proposed new commercial building. It is considered that the proposed new commercial building would be no more prominent or dominant than the existing building git would be replacing. The magnitude of change is assessed as low.

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Scale of visual effect

8.36 With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change, there would be a minor effect at year 1. The nature of the effect is considered to be neutral.

8.37 At year 10 the effect is assessed as remaining minor neutral.

Summary of detailed visual assessment

8.38 A summary of the effects on visual amenity of the 7 representative viewpoints is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Summary of the effects on representative viewpoints

Viewpoint	**Visual Effect**			
	Negligible	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**High**
Viewpoint 1 – View from A227 Wrotham Road looking west Distance from site: 15 metres	√ neutral – year 1 and year 10			
Viewpoint 2 – View from Wrotham Road looking south Distance from site: 130 metres	√ neutral – year 1 and year 10			

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Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**High**
Viewpoint 3 – View from approximate mid-point of public right of way NS258 looking north Distance from site: 140 metres			√ neutral – year 1 and year 10	
Viewpoint 4 – View from junction of public right of way NS258 and Cricketers Drive looking north Distance from site: 0 km			√ neutral – year 1 and year 10	
Viewpoint 5 – View from public right of way			√ neutral – year 1 and year 10	

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Viewpoint	Visual Effect			
	Negligible	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**High**
NS283 looking east Distance from site: 400 metres				
Viewpoint 6 – View from Shipley Hills Road looking south Distance from site: 490 metres	√ neutral – year 1 and year 10			
Viewpoint 7 - View from Meopham library looking south Distance from site: 83 metres		√ neutral – year 1 and year 10		

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8.39 Of the 7 representative views, none are assessed as experiencing a major effect as a consequence of the proposed development being in place. There would be no one view in which all the proposed development would be visible. Where visible in the particular representative view, the proposals would only be seen as discrete elements.

8.40 Of the 7 representative viewpoints, 3 would experience a moderate but neutral effect at years 1 and 10 of the operational phase. These viewpoints are within the site or in close proximity to the site boundary. The remaining 4 viewpoints would experience either a negligible or minor, neutral, effect .

8.41 The proposals represent a replacement of an existing built rather than the introduction of a completely new feature into the landscape. It is considered that the nature of the effects would be neutral rather than adverse. In balance, though there would be a visual effect, the quality, understanding and integrity of the features in the view would be maintained.

Summary

8.42 The opportunity to view the site and the proposed development from publicly accessible locations in the wider landscape is limited. Such views that are afforded are typically in close or very close proximity to the site boundary and from the public highway and public rights of networks. Other locations are private with no public access.

8.43 In general, the proposed development, even from publicly accessible locations would typically be screened from view by the presence of existing built form and/or vegetation in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. From more distant locations, changes in topography would also be a factor in screening views of the proposals. Where it is evident, the proposed development would typically be seen only as discrete elements rather than in its entirety.

8.44 The proposals represent a replacement of an existing built rather than the introduction of a completely new feature into the landscape. It is considered that the nature of any visual effect would be neutral rather than adverse. In balance, though there would be a visual effect with the proposed development in place, the quality, understanding and integrity of the features in the particular view would be maintained.

8.45 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would have a limited visual effect within a confined visual envelope in the landscape surrounding the site. It is considered that the proposals would not give rise to an unacceptable harm to the visual amenity of the wider landscape beyond the site boundary.

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9. Summary and Conclusions

9.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Briarwood Landscape Architecture by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, on behalf of Hawkspare Limited in respect of a new mixed use scheme at Lomer Farm, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0AN ('the site'). The site is geometric but irregular in shape and includes an access track leading off Wrotham Road together with two large, 2 storey, brick-built buildings currently housing businesses along with a range of single storey outbuildings and lean-tos that together enclose a courtyard used for parking.

9.2 The proposed development comprises the demolition and removal of the existing commercial buildings together with the former stables and outbuildings and their respective replacement with a new commercial building (containing a series of commercial units) and 3 residential units. The proposed buildings though modern and contemporary reference the local agricultural vernacular in their styling and use of materials.

9.3 The proposals would remove the current existing commercial and storage buildings which, though not uncharacteristic of the local area, make no appreciable contribution to the landscape. The proposed development would positively contribute to the character of the local landscape. The proposals would introduce a style of residential and commercial development, in the form of new buildings which would represent high quality contemporary design. Through the use of appropriate materials and landscaping the proposed development would help to both conserve and enhance the site and its surroundings in accordance with national and local policy.

9.4 The underlining level nature of the site would continue to prevail with the proposed development in place. The retained existing tree and shrub resource on the site would form an integral part of the proposed development and it is anticipated that the retained vegetation would be reinforced and enhanced through additional tree, and shrub planting. Once established and beginning to mature any new tree and hedgerow planting introduced as part of the proposals would help lead to a beneficial effect upon the site's existing tree and shrub resource and would contribute to the wider landscape.

9.5 No physical works are required beyond the site boundary as part of the proposed development. The physical fabric of the landscape surrounding the site would remain physically unaffected with the proposals in place.

9.6 The physical characteristics of the surrounding wider landscape beyond the site and its predominantly mix of settlement and agriculture would be materially unchanged with

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the proposed development in place. The landscape is accommodating of a wide variety of human influences including infrastructure and settlement but retains a rural quality. In this context, the sight of the proposed development would not unduly affect the visual experience and perception of the landscape's character. The existing pattern and landcover of the landscape comprising woods, rural lanes and isolated properties and settlements over an undulating topography would all continue with the proposed residential in place.

9.7 The opportunity to view the site and the proposed development from publicly accessible locations in the wider landscape is limited. Such views that are afforded are typically in close or very close proximity to the site boundary and from the public highway and public rights of networks. Other locations are private with no public access.

9.8 In general, the proposed development, even from publicly accessible locations would typically be screened from view by the presence of existing built form and/or vegetation in the intervening landscape between the observer and the site boundary. From more distant locations, changes in topography would also be a factor in screening views of the proposals. Where it is evident, the proposed development would typically be seen only as discrete elements rather than in its entirety.

9.9 The proposals represent a replacement of an existing built rather than the introduction of a completely new feature into the landscape. It is considered that the nature of any visual effect would be neutral rather than adverse. In balance, though there would be a visual effect with the proposed development in place, the quality, understanding and integrity of the features in the particular view would be maintained.

9.10 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would have a limited visual effect within a confined visual envelope in the landscape surrounding the site. It is considered that the proposals would not give rise to an unacceptable harm to the visual amenity of the wider landscape beyond the site boundary. With all things considered, the proposed development would result in acceptable effects on the character of the local landscape with the proposed mitigation measures in place. The character of the local landscape and its underlying rural and settled character would prevail and would not be materially changed.

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10. Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan

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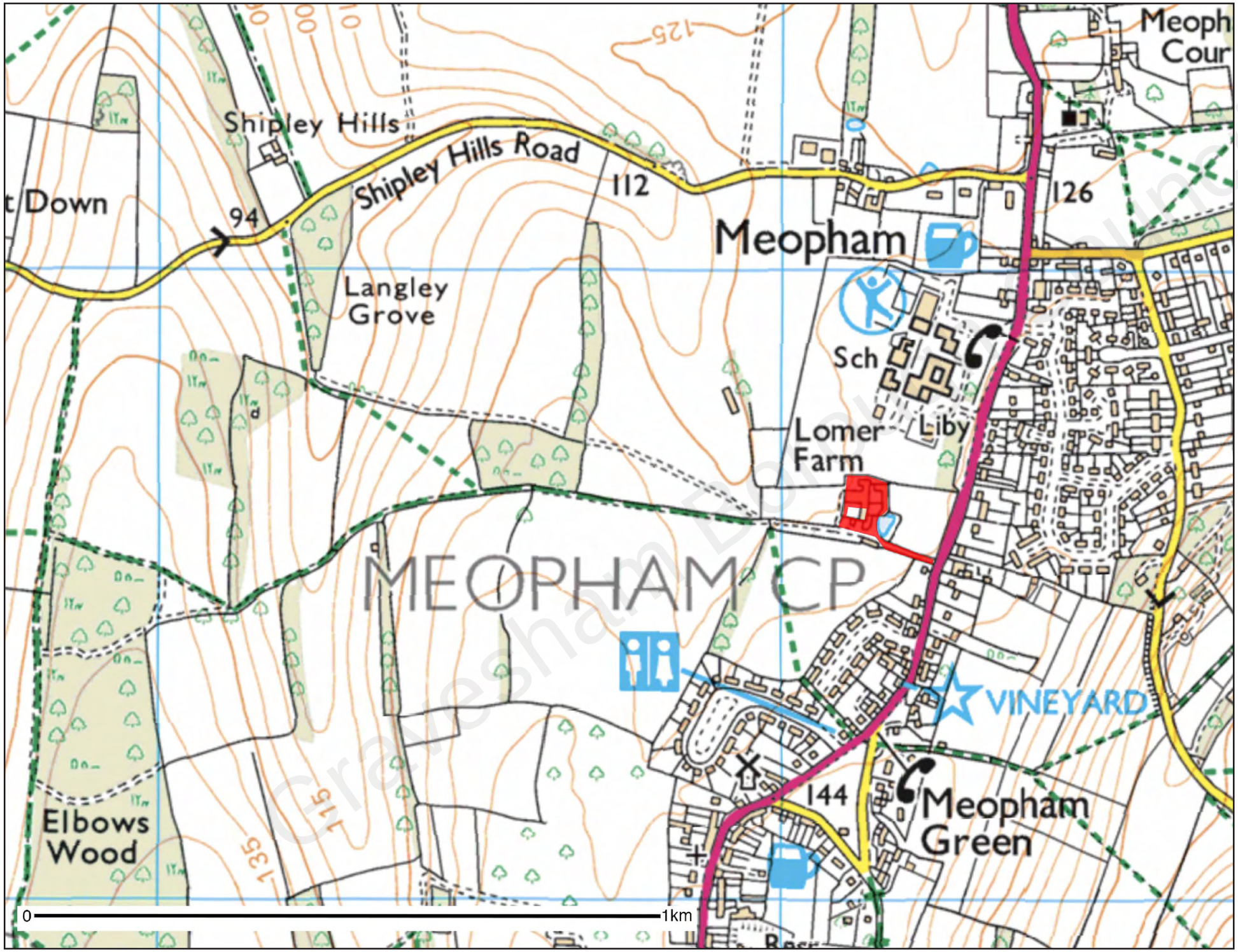

The site

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Briarwood
Landscape Architecture

DRAWING: Site Location Plan			
PROJECT: Lomer Farm Meopham			
CLIENT: Hawkspare Ltd			
SCALE: As shown	DATE: 11/2021	DRAWN: SW	
DRAWING NUMBER: BLA104-001		REVISION:	

Appendix 2 – Detailed Methodology

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DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Introduction

1. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been undertaken with reference to best practice, as outlined in the following published guidance:

    - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute/ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)
    - GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13
    - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment – Natural England (2014)

2. The proposed scheme is assessed for the purposes of the landscape and visual analysis.

Study Area

3. The initial study area for the LVA is taken to be a 5km radius from the site. Unless otherwise stated, the main focus of the assessment is taken as a radius of 2km from the site as it is considered that beyond this distance, even with good visibility, the proposed development would not be perceptible in the composite landscape.

4. The effects on settings of heritage assets or ecological/environmental assets are not considered within this LVA.

Nature of Effects

5. An impact is an action e.g. building a wall. An effect is the consequence of a particular action on the integrity of the landscape, feature or view.

6. The nature of any effect will be adverse beneficial or neutral and are summarised as:

    - Adverse - where on balance there is a negative effect on the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor
    - Beneficial - where on balance there is a positive effect on the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor
    - Neutral – where on balance the effect would maintain the quality, integrity or key characteristics of the landscape or visual receptor or where the change is different but represents neither a deterioration nor enhancement

7. Unless expressly noted, effects are deemed to be adverse in nature.

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Landscape Elements and Character Assessment Methodology

8. A baseline landscape assessment is carried out to determine the current elements and character of the landscape within and surrounding the site. This involved an initial desktop study of but not necessarily limited to:

    - Ordnance survey maps at 1:50,000, 1:25,000 scales
    - Aerial photographs of the site and surrounding area
    - Datasets for rural designations from the MAGIC website (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)
    - Relevant planning policy
    - National and local scale landscape character assessments

Visual Assessment Methodology

9. The assessment of visual effects is undertaken on the basis of viewpoint analysis as recommended in best practice guidelines. The viewpoints which are in different directions from the site and are at varying distances and locations were selected to represent a range of views and visual receptor types.

10. The viewpoints are representational and not exhaustive. They are taken from publicly accessible land and not from any third party, private, land.

11. The viewpoints were used as the basis for determining the effects of visual receptors within the entire study area. The viewpoints were photographed at 1.6 metres above ground level.

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Sensitivity of Landscape Elements and Features

12. The sensitivity attributed to a landscape element or feature is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a particular landscape element feature and the susceptibility of the landscape element/feature to changes that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.

Table 1: Value of Landscape Elements and Features

Low	Ones that: • have no or little rarity and/or, • make no and/or make only a limited contribution to the character and local visual and amenity value and/or • are of such poor condition that the element/feature has lost its ability to contribute effectively to the character of the landscape
Medium	Ones that: • are notable in the landscape, with some visual and/or amenity interest but, • do not make a particularly strong or important contribution to the character of the landscape and/or, • ones that are an intrinsic element of landscape but in poor condition
High	Ones that: • make an important contribution to the character of the landscape and/or • have particular historical or cultural reference and/or • are distinctive or rare and typically of good condition

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Table 2: Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

Susceptibility to change	Criteria
High	A very limited ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – a particular susceptibility. Few opportunities for mitigation and enhancement.
Medium	A moderate ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – some susceptibility. Some opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .
Low	A well-defined ability of the landscape element of feature to accommodate the type of development being proposed – little susceptibility. Good opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .

Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

13. The susceptibility criteria of landscape elements and features is given in Table 2 but a judgement has been made by linking back to the evidence gathered at the baseline stage.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Landscape Elements and Features

	VALUE			
SUSCEPTIBILITY		**HIGH**	**MEDIUM**	**LOW**
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Elements and Features

14. Professional judgement, using the criteria given in Table 4 , and also considering geographic extent and the duration and reversibility of the effect, has been used to determine the magnitude of direct physical impacts on individual existing landscape elements and features

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Table 4: Criteria for magnitude of change for landscape elements and features

NB Alterations may include the addition of new elements and features

Negligible	No loss or very minor alteration to part of an existing landscape element and/or feature
Low	Minor loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape element and or feature
Medium	Some loss or alteration to part of an existing landscape element and/or feature
High	Total/major loss or alteration of an existing landscape element and/or feature

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Sensitivity of Landscape Character

15. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape and the susceptibility of the landscape to changes that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.

16. Table 5 below provides a series of criteria by which the 'value' of the landscape is assessed. Such criteria are based upon Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA3.

Table 5: Value of Landscape Character

Low	An area that is in a recognisably poor condition/quality and/or with a weak strength of character that typically has a clear indication of being damaged and/or contains a high number of detractors, and/or is of limited visual cohesion; rare or distinctive elements and features are not a notable component that contribute to the character of the area. No known associations with cultural/historic people.
Medium	An area is recognisable as being in reasonable condition/quality and/or with a strength of character but likely to exhibit some damage or deterioration and/or some visual cohesion and interest; rare or distinctive elements and features make some contribution to the character of the area. Possible or limited associations with cultural/historic people.
High	Areas with international or national landscape designations, i.e. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or occasionally landscapes non-designated landscape in particularly good condition/quality and/or strong strength of character or of particular local value and/or with few visual detractors; rare or distinctive elements and features are likely to be a key component that contribute to the character of the area. Recorded associations with cultural/historic people may be present.

Table 6: Susceptibility of Landscape Character

Susceptibility to change	**Criteria**
High	A very limited ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – a particular susceptibility. Few opportunities for mitigation and enhancement.
Medium	A moderate ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – some susceptibility. Some opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .
Low	A well-defined ability of the landscape to accommodate the type of development being proposed – little susceptibility. Good opportunities for mitigation and enhancement .

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Susceptibility of Landscape Elements and Features

17. The susceptibility criteria of landscape elements and features is given in Table 6 but a judgement has been made by linking back to the evidence gathered at the baseline stage.

Table 7: Sensitivity of Landscape Character

	VALUE			
SUSCEPTIBILITY		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Character

18. Professional judgement using Table 8, and also considering geographic extent and the duration and reversibility of the effect, has been used to determine the magnitude change on landscape character

Table 8: Criteria for magnitude of change for landscape character

Negligible	No notable introduction of new elements into the landscape or change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape
Low	Introduction of minor new elements into the landscape or some minor change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape
Medium	Introduction of some notable elements into the landscape or some notable change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape

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High	Introduction of major elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, land cover or pattern of landscape

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

19. Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a view and the susceptibility of the receptor to changes in that view that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development as outlined in pages 113-114 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed as high, medium or low.

20. GLVIA3 says a judgement should be made as to the value of a particular view being experienced. In making a professional judgement as to the value attached to a view, the following criteria have helped guide the process. Not all the criteria have to apply to a particular view and the criteria are not in a hierarchy.

Table 9: Criteria for judging levels of visual value

Low	• Views from within or towards undesignated landscapes and/or features of either importance to the site only or of no importance • View has little aesthetic merit e.g. has numerous visual detractors, is badly degraded etc. • View makes a limited contribution to the understanding of the function or wider pattern of the landscape • Views with no known social, cultural or historic associations • Views from locations that are not necessarily destination points or that are infrequently visited
Medium	• Views from within or towards undesignated landscapes and/or features of local importance • View with some limited aesthetic appeal • View makes a reasonable contribution to the understanding of the

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	function or wider pattern of the landscape • Views with some known local social, cultural or historic associations • Views from locations that are locally popular destination points or that are frequently visited by locals but not necessarily by visitors from further afield
High	• Views from within or towards designated landscapes and/or features of importance at district level and above • View with great aesthetic appeal • View makes an important contribution to the understanding of the function or wider pattern of the landscape • Views with some known national or international social, cultural or historic associations especially to art and literature • Views from locations that are popular regional, national or international destination points or that are frequently visited by large numbers of visitors from further afield

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

21. GLIVA3 advises (on page 113) that susceptibility of a particular visual receptor (observer) to change in a view is mainly a function of the nature of the activity or occupation of the person or people experiencing a view at a particular location and the extent to which their interest or attention is drawn to the view.

22. In general, it is considered that occupiers of residential properties and people using public rights of way (where enjoyment is primarily drawn from the view) have a high susceptibility to change. Users of roads, railways and open space or engaged in an activity where an appreciation of the view forms a part of the experience are considered to be of medium susceptibility. People engaged in formal sport or occupiers of commercial premises or in areas of employment, where the view has limited importance to the activity being undertaken, are considered to be of low susceptibility to change.

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Table 10: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

	VALUE			
SUSCEPTIBILITY		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Low
	LOW	Medium	Low	Low

Magnitude of Change on Visual Amenity

23. Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude change on landscape character based upon the criteria outline in Table 11 but also considering the size and scale of change (including the loss or addition of features, changes in visual composition etc.) , the geographic influence of the change (orientation and angle of view in relation to the visual receptor, distance of the viewpoint from the main development, extent of area over which change would occur etc.) and, the duration and potential reversibility of any change (short term 0-5 years, medium term 5-10 years, long term 20 years +, temporary, permanent, intermittent, continuous and whether the views will be full, partial or glimpsed).

Table 11: Criteria for magnitude of change for visual receptors

Negligible	No notable change in the view
Low	Some change in the view that is not prominent / few visual receptors affected
Medium	Some change in the view that is clearly visible and forms an important but not defining element in the view
High	Major change in the view that has a defining influence on the overall view / many visual receptors affected

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Scale of Effects

24. The scale of the landscape and visual effects is determined by cross referencing the sensitivity of the landscape feature, landscape character or view with the magnitude of change. The scale of effects is described as major, moderate, minor or negligible.

Table 12: Scale of effect thresholds for landscape character, landscape elements/features and visual receptors

		Magnitude of Change			
Sensitivity		**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Negligible	Negligible

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Appendix 3 – Landscape Features Plan

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Based upon Google Earth aerial imagery

The site

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DRAWING Landscape Features Plan			
PROJECT Lomer Farm, Wrotham Road, Meopham			
CLIENT Hawkspare Limited			
SCALE NTS	DATE 11/2021	DRAWN SW	
DRAWING NUMBER BLA104-001		REVISION	

Appendix 4 – Context Views

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For Context Only

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Photoview 1 - View from on site looking north into the existing main courtyard

Photoview 2 - View looking east from within the main courtyard along the elevations of the former stables

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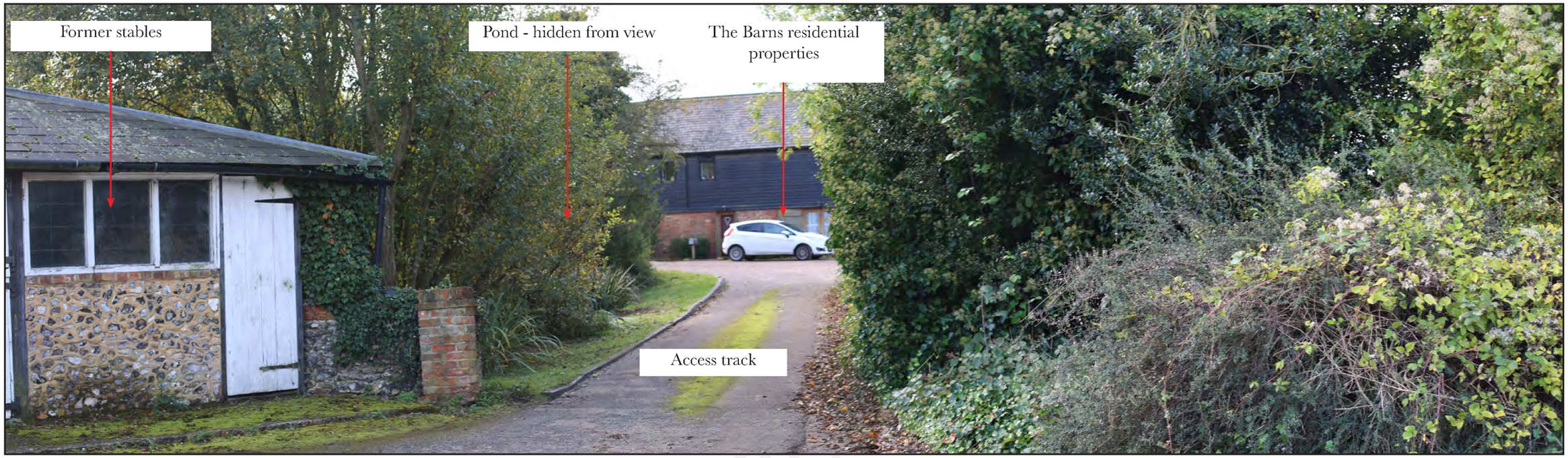

Photoview 3 - View from main coutyard looking south

Photoview 4 - View looking west from main courtyard entrance

For Context Only

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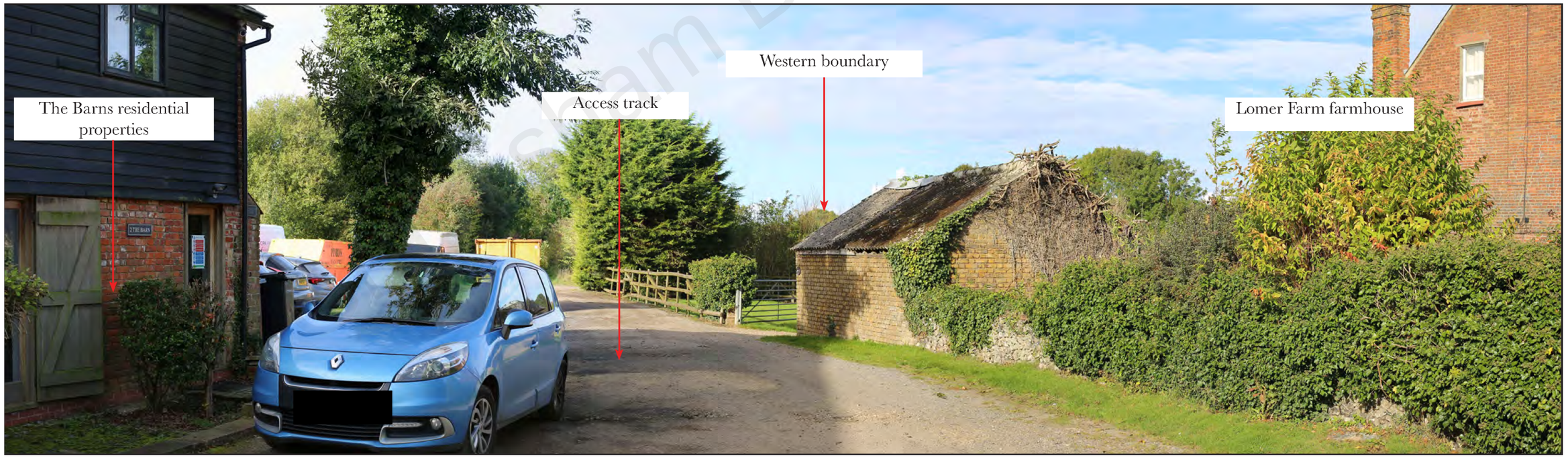
Landscape Architecture

Photoview 5 - View looking north towards the main part of the site from the access road



Photoview 6 - View looking west from the access road

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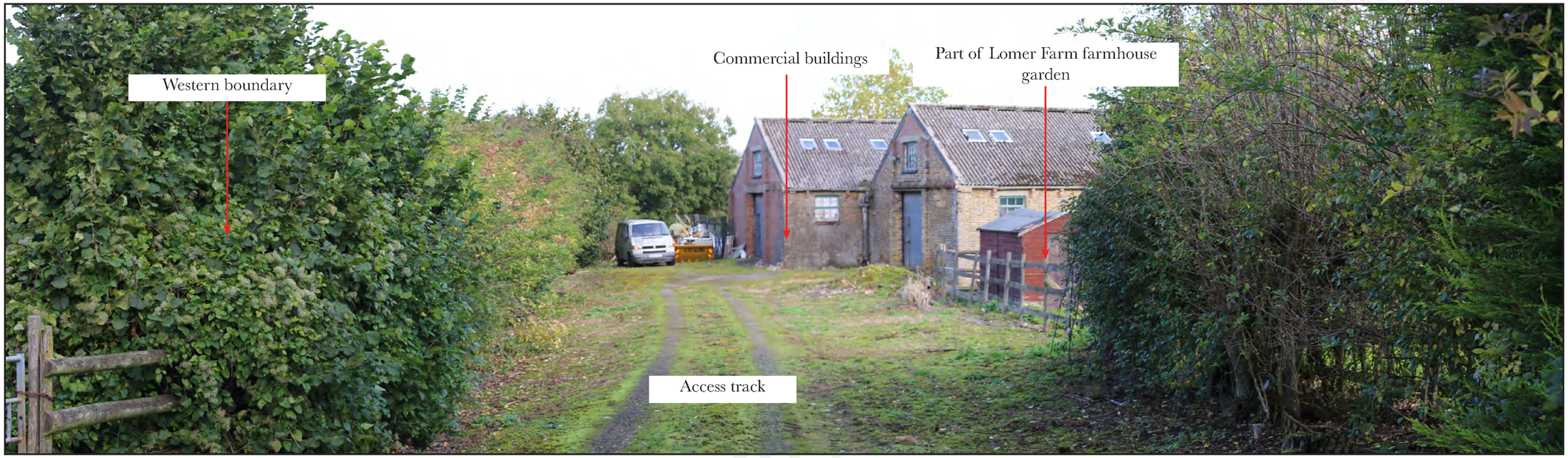
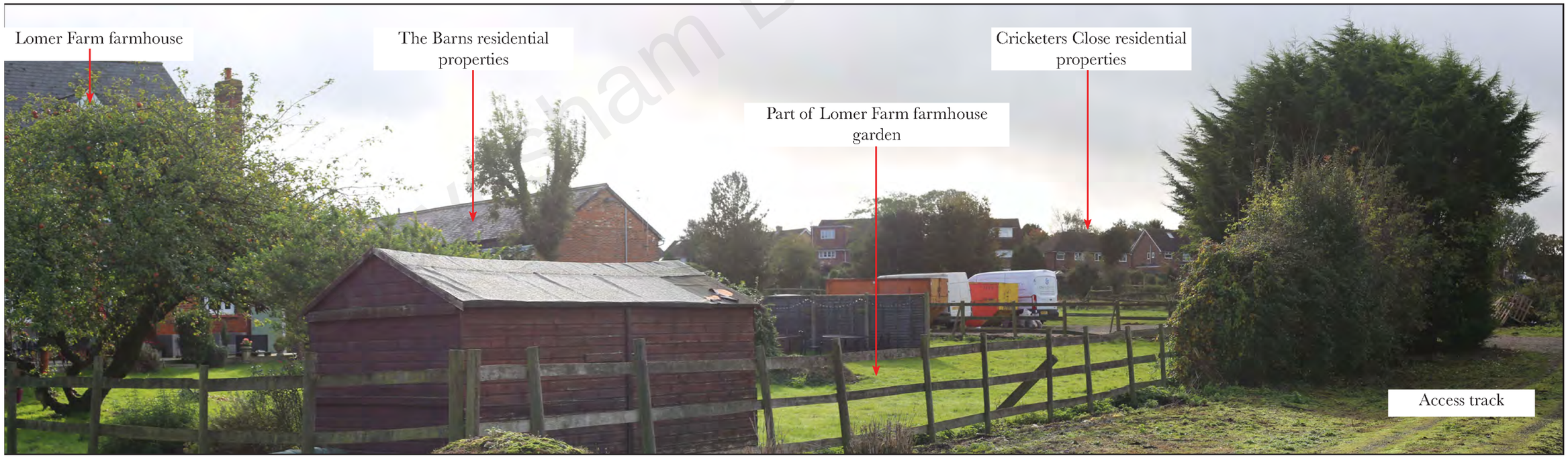


Photoview 7 - View looking north along western site boundary



Photoview 8 - View looking south-east from western site boundary

Appendix 5 – Designations

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Lomer Farm, Meopham - Designations

Legend

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England)
- Scheduled Monuments (England)

World Heritage Sites (England)

- Buffer Zone
- World Heritage Site

Listed Buildings (England)

- I
- II
- II*
- Registered Battlefields (England)
- Registered Parks and Gardens (England)

Projection = OSGB36
xmin = 561300
ymin = 164400
xmax = 568100
ymax = 167700

0 0.2 0.4
km

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Appendix 6 – Meopham Downs

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8. Meopham Downs

Landscape Description

Meopham Downs is a large character area, stretching from the centre to the south of Gravesham Borough along the eastern edge of Sevenoaks District.

The majority of the geology comprises Upper Chalk and a wide band of Clay with Flint, stretching from north to south. An area of Blackheath / Oldhaven Beds sits beneath the large village of Meopham and an area of Claygate Beds sits west of the neighbouring village Meopham Green. Soils across the character area are silty, with loam to clay across high areas.

The topography is gently undulating with clear views across the immediate landscape and occasional wider views from the main road towards the residential settlements of Istead Rise and New Barn. The dominant land use is agricultural, with a mixture of grazed pasture and arable use. Small clumps of woodland, neglected orchards and commercial horticulture exist in parts. There is a presence of horse related activity scattered throughout the landscape.

Field shape and size differs, with a neat pattern of small square fields in the south and broader irregular shaped fields to the north. Field boundaries are distinctly formed by native hedgerows, with hedgerow trees.

The large village of Meopham is located to the north of the area, with Meopham Green located at the centre of the area and Culverstone Green to the far south. Traditional architecture surrounds village greens in both Meopham and Meopham Green, providing a strong sense of place and local vernacular. All three settlements comprise dense clusters of buildings that have formed along the A227 that runs from north to south and links all three villages. In addition the small recent settlement of South Street is located to the north-east.

Small traditional clusters of isolated farmsteads can be found to the east and west. Small traditional Victorian red brick architecture and elements of flint are common, reflecting their locality within the Kent landscape. Meopham Windmill, located along Wrotham Road, provides a unique and

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Neat pattern of small square fields in the south
- Broader irregular shaped fields to the north
- Narrow lanes and roads lined with hedgerows
- Three large settlements located along A227 running east and west
- Traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular

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traditional attraction within the area. Overhead wires run across the landscape near the small settlement of Henley Street.

The A227 is the areas largest highway and acts as a busy link between the north and south. Narrower, winding, hedge lined roads and lanes run east and west from the A227 into the adjacent landscape.

Condition: Good

The pattern of landscape elements is coherent, with few visual detractors. Established hedgerows and small woodland clumps limit the visual impact of detractors. Hedgerows are native and in good condition, providing ecological corridors along field boundaries. Woodland clumps are mostly native and mature and vary in condition, whilst the remains of orchards are in poor condition. In general the ecological integrity of the area varies.

Both Meopham and Meopham Green have Conservation Areas at their centres with traditional buildings and village greens. In general the uses of the landscape are traditional, however the quality of the landscape and land development to the south is of a lower quality than that to the north. Taking into consideration the traditional architecture, land use, coherent pattern of elements and the lack of visual detractors the condition of the landscape can be assessed as being good.

Sensitivity: Moderate

The key characteristic elements of the landscape are distinct, providing coherency and a strong sense of place within the landscape. Although woodland is restricted to small woodland clumps, hedgerows that run along field boundaries are historic and distinct. Both the settlements of Meopham and Meopham Green have distinct traditional village centres. In addition, traditional vernacular architecture can be found scattered across the landscape. The other two remaining settlements have more recent architecture that is less in keeping with the local vernacular. Strength of character and visibility are moderate, providing a moderate sensitivity overall.

Guidelines: Conserve and Reinforce

The key landscape elements characteristic of the Meopham Downs should be conserved and reinforced.

- Conserve and reinforce the traditional landscape structure and where necessary introduce new elements they should respect and enhance the pattern.

- Conserve characteristic narrow winding lanes and dense native hedgerows.

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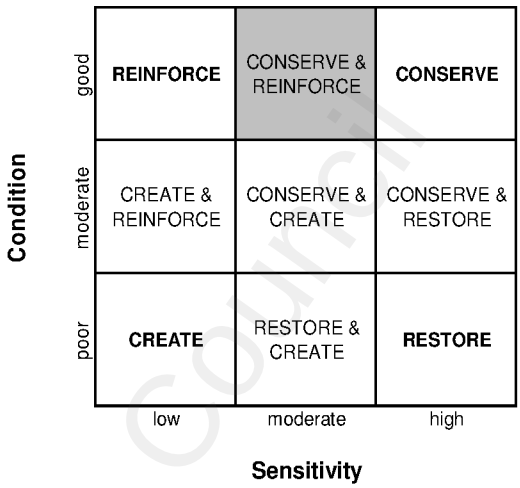
- Conserve traditional character of built environment by drawing on traditional building materials and techniques for new development.
- Reinforce village identity, keeping villages distinct and separate from one another.
- Reinforce the enclosure of settlements within wooded areas.
- Conserve and reinforce broadleaf woodland cover and wooded edges to arable plateau.
- Encourage the use of local produce to support traditional land uses such as orchards.
- Explore new horticultural land uses.
- Conserve and reinforce agricultural land use.



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Appendix 7 –Viewpoint Location Plan

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Appendix 8 – Representative Views

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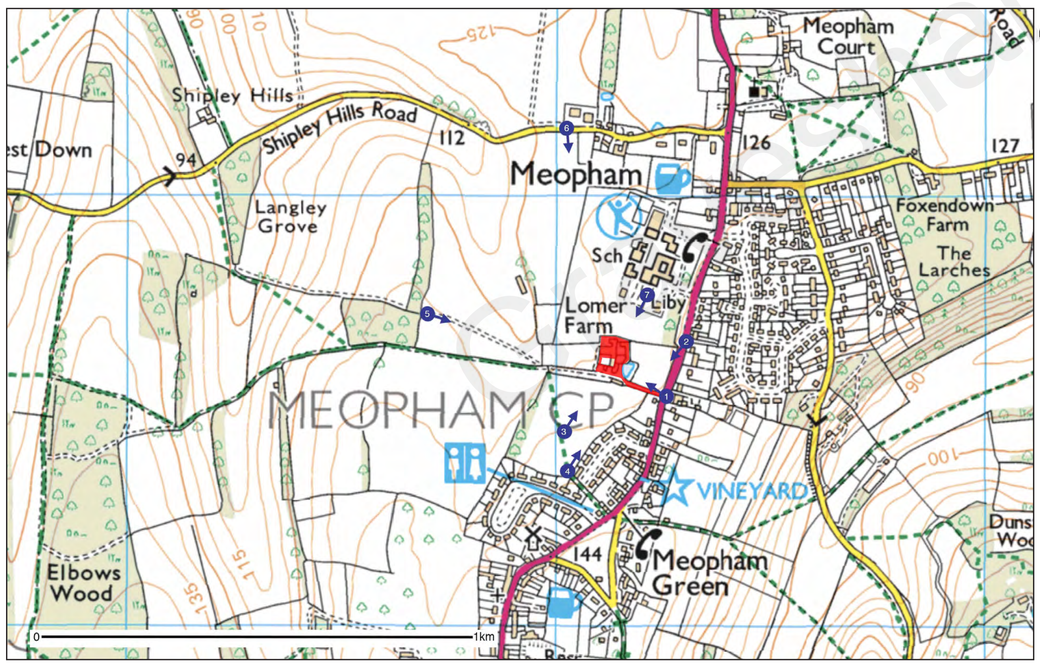
Viewpoint 1 - View from A227 Wrotham Road looking west

Approximate distance to site boundary: 15 metres

Location: 51 degrees 21'54.23"N 0 degrees 21'29.63"E



Panoramic Image - 820mm width x 250mm height when printed at A1

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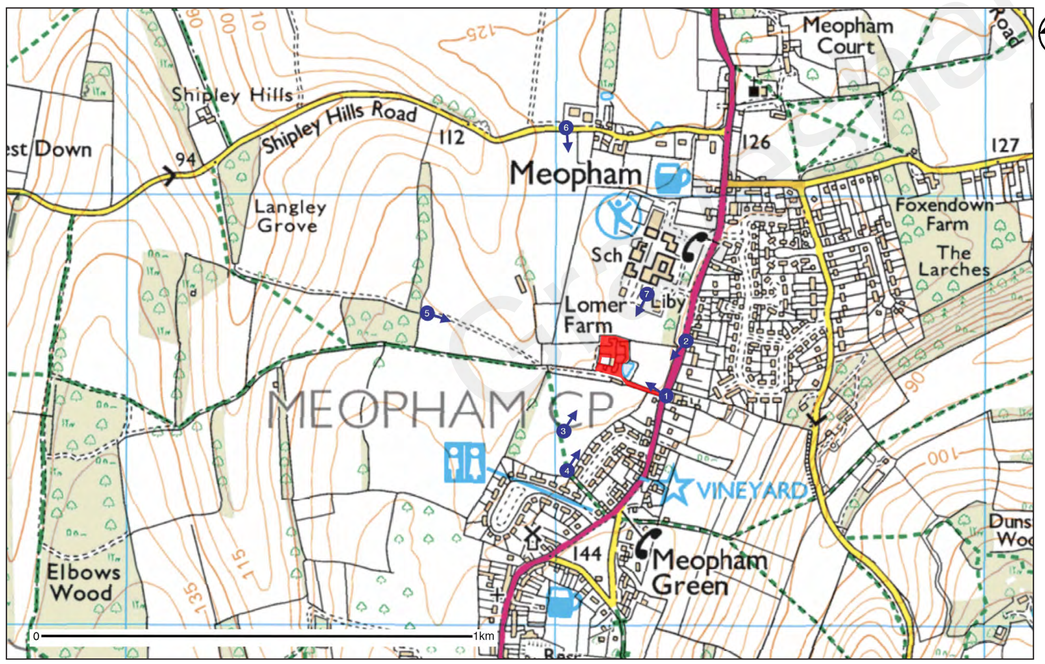
Viewpoint 2 - View from A227 Wrotham Road looking south

Panoramic Image - 820mm width x 250mm height when printed at A1

Approximate distance to site boundary: 130 metres

Location: 51 degrees 21’58.00”N 0 degrees 21’31.77”E



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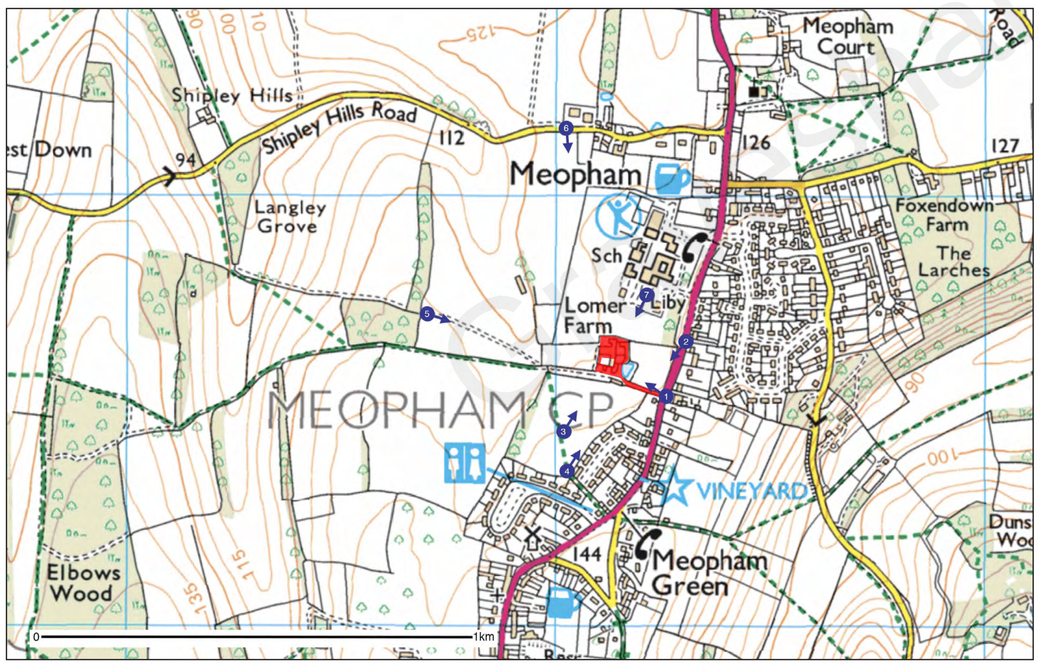
Viewpoint 3 - View from approximate mid-point of public right of way NS258 looking north

Panoramic Image - 820mm width x 250mm height when printed at A1

Approximate distance to site boundary: 140 metres

Location: 51 degrees 21'52.72"N 0 degrees 21'16.07"E



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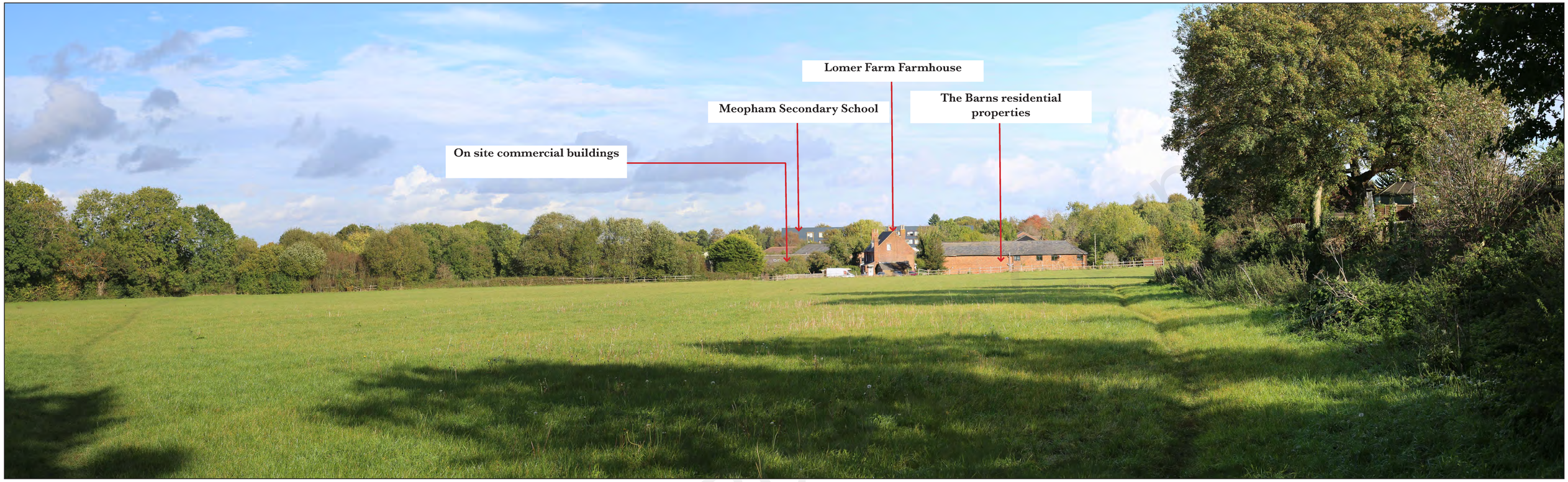
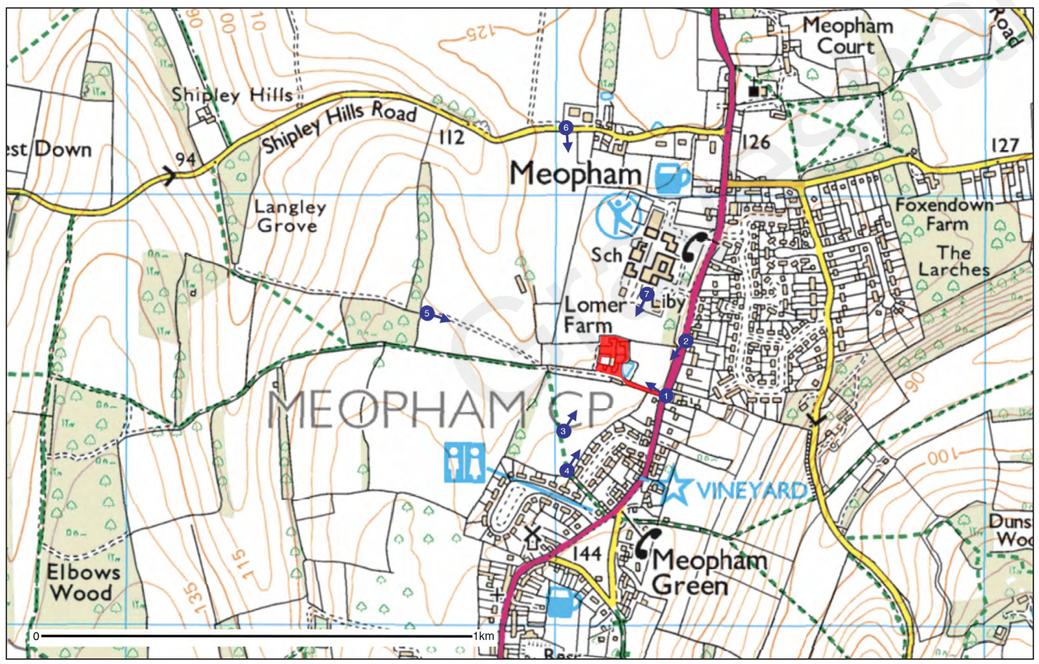


Viewpoint 4 - View from junction of public right of way NS258 and Cricketers Drive looking north

Panoramic Image - 820mm width x 250mm height when printed at A1

Approximate distance to site boundary: 240 metres

Location: 51 degrees 21'48.93"N 0 degrees 21'17.24"E



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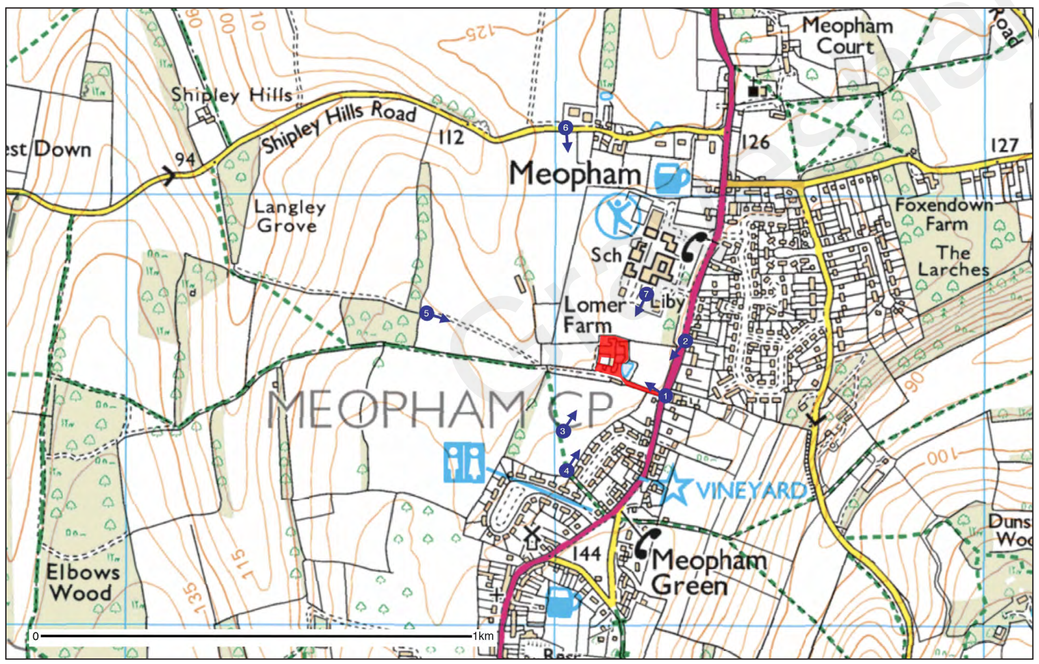
Viewpoint 5 - View from public right of way NS283 looking east

Panoramic Image - 820mm width x 250mm height when printed at A1

Approximate distance to site boundary: 400 metres

Location: 51 degrees 21'58.48"N 0 degrees 20'59.85"E



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