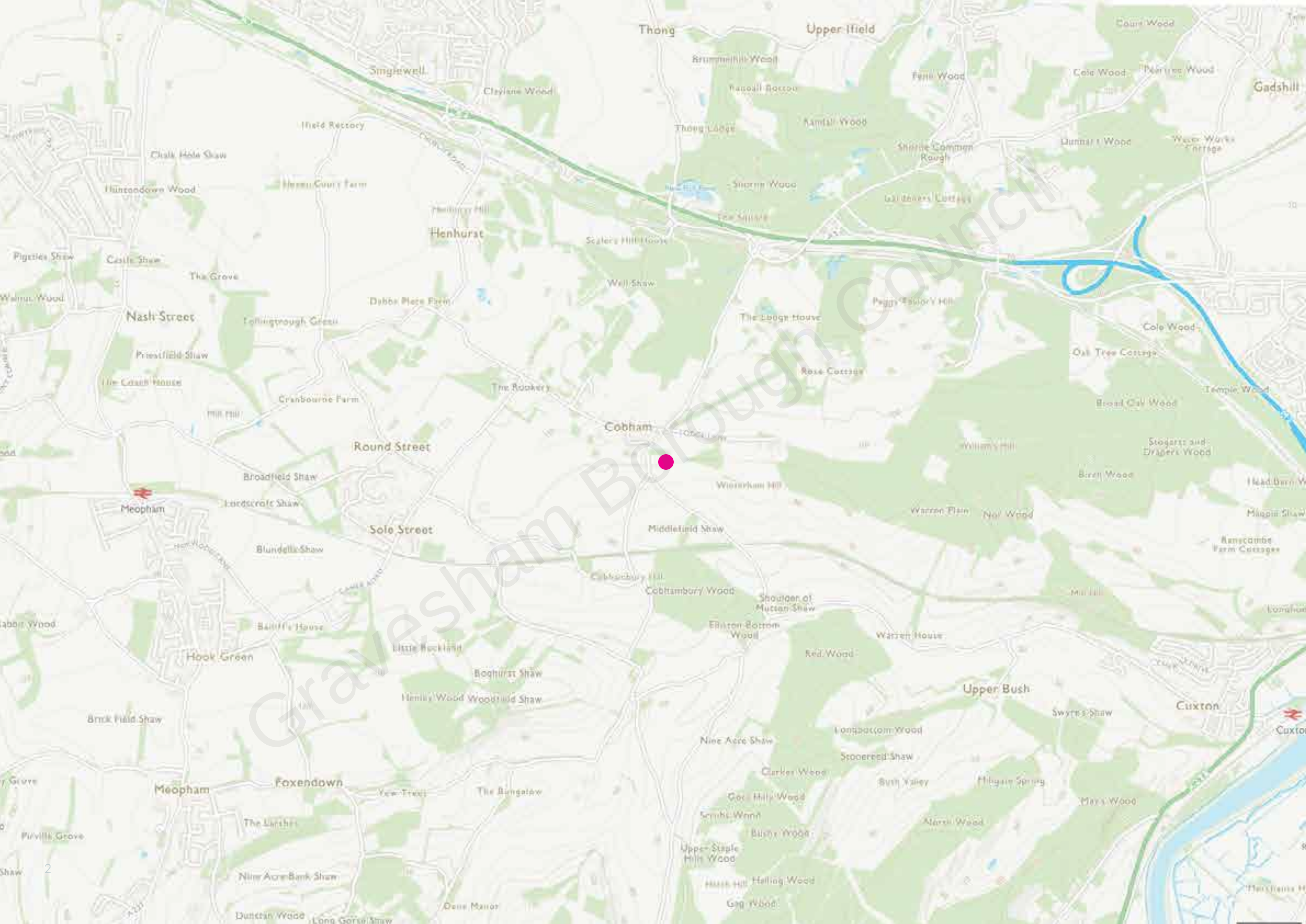


Cobhambury Barn,
Cobhambury Road,
Cobham, Kent

Landscape and visual appraisal

May 2022

Rummey **environmental**



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Cobhambury Barn is a historic farm cluster adjacent to the settlement boundary of the village of Cobham, approx. 5 miles south of Gravesend, Kent. The farm lies partly within the Cobham Conservation Area. Cobhambury Barn and the village of Cobham are located on a ridge in the north-west part of the Kent Downs AONB. The West Kent Downs landscape is typically characterised by deciduous woodland surrounding large arable fields, thick deciduous shaws and hedgerows, village settlements contained by woodland and a network of small, leafy country lanes.

The landscape immediately around Cobhambury Barn comprises commercial orchards to the west with the characteristic pattern of large arable fields and woodlands to the east and south and parkland landscape to the north-east. The site enjoys panoramic views eastwards over fields and woodland, but is contained to the south, west and north by vegetation. There are few footpaths close by and the site is not visible from local public rights of way and roads due to topography and vegetation.



Cobham Hall
School

Cobham Park

Jeskyns Road

Halfpence Lane

The Avenue

Cobham

Lodge Lane

Lodge Farm

Cobhambury
Farm

Lodge Wood

Cobhambury Road

*Cobhambury Farm 'marks' the eastern
end of the village of Cobham....*

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the proposed extension to the barn to provide multi-generational family accommodation within Cobhambury Farm, Cobham, near Gravesend (site outlined red opposite). The report has been prepared by Rummey Environmental and provides landscape and visual baseline information which has been used iteratively to establish integrated design principles for the architecture and landscape on the site.
- 1.2 The site lies within the Kent Downs AONB and therefore the AONB Management Plan is of particular relevance. The principles and goals of sustainable development are at the heart of the management of the Kent Downs AONB and the AONB Management Plan notes that change can reinforce and enhance the characteristics qualities and distinctiveness of the Kent Downs and benefit its community and economy.
- 1.3 The Management Plan notes that *'particular attention should be given to the special characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs'* and supports a landscape led approach to change.
- 1.4 It also notes the potential for cumulative effects of small scale development which can have both negative and positive results. For example development, if inappropriately located can have a detrimental effect even if small scale. Equally enhancements made through carefully judged development can also conserve and enhance the landscape both individually and cumulatively.
- 1.5 We have therefore adopted a landscape-led approach to this project to ensure that the architecture is part of the landscape and so that potential negative impacts are minimised and opportunities for landscape conservation and enhancement optimised within the scheme design.
- 1.6 This appraisal is undertaken in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), 3rd edition, 2013 as published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA).
- 1.7 The report describes the baseline conditions with respect to the landscape character and visual amenity for the site and its surroundings. It then appraises the potential impacts on landscape character, visual amenity and views, arising from the proposed development, amplifying on mitigation measures aimed at enhancing the landscape and visual amenity, as a result of the proposed development.

landscape context and character

2. Landscape context and character

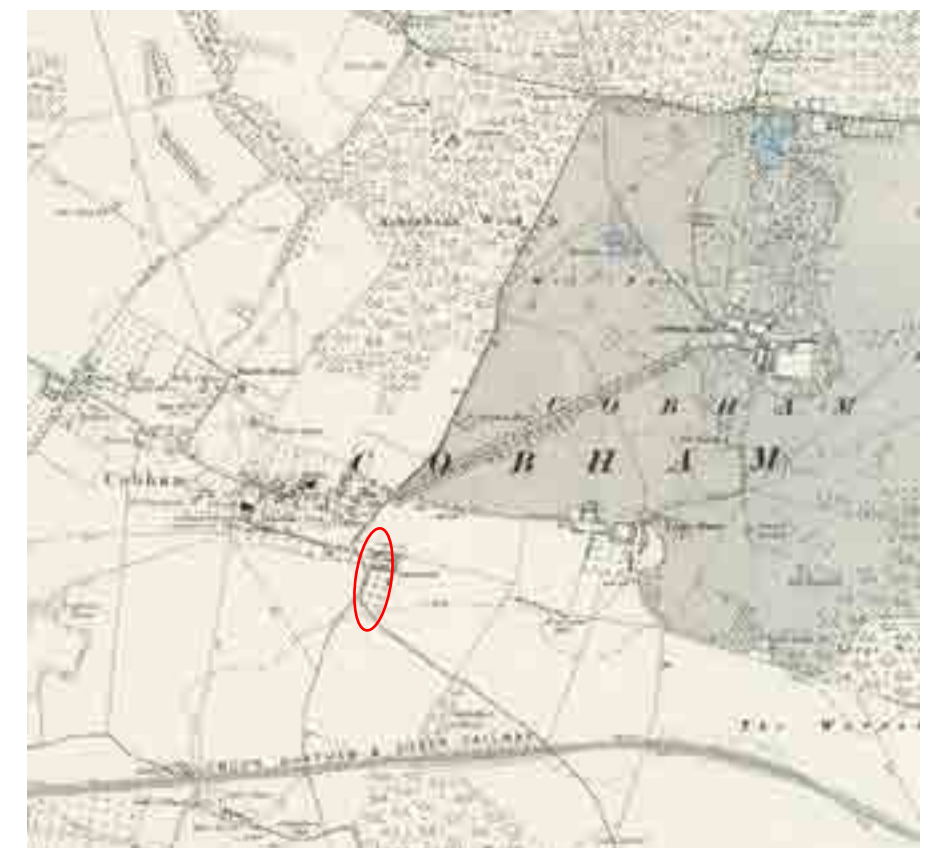
Landscape history

- 2.1 In order to understand landscape context it is important to investigate how the landscape has evolved over time as the present day landscape encapsulates the past. Characteristic features are often lost through a gradual process over an extended period of time. Studies of historic maps and historic landscape characterisation helps to highlight what features should be conserved and where development or change could provide an opportunity to repair the landscape in an appropriate manner.
- 2.2 The part of the Kent Downs around Cobham was historically well wooded. Cobham is located on a localised east-west chalk ridge along a main thoroughfare - the Street. The extensive parkland of Cobham Park, with its impressive avenue, lies to the north-east. The Park is a Grade II* Registered Parkland and Garden, laid out by Humphry Repton. The parkland includes long avenues and merges with Cobham Wood (SSSI), to the east. Cobham had a number of traditional orchards around it and field boundaries were typically hedged with wide shaws in many places.
- 2.3 The village of Cobham lies just south of the old Roman Road, Watling Street. The historic core remains well enclosed, with Owletts (home of renowned architect Sir Herbert Baker) marking the western edge of the village and Cobhambury Farm complex the eastern edge. The War Memorial, also attributed to Sir Herbert Baker, lies at the junction of Halfpence Lane and Lodge Lane but is screened from the site by woodland.
- 2.4 Cobhambury Farm marks the eastern extent of the village and is partly within the Conservation Area. The House dates from the 18th/19th century and is Grade II listed. The 19th century (2 storey residential barn) lies to the east, facing south, but the historic

cattle sheds, farmyard and oast have largely disappeared. A pond occupies the space where the farmyard would have been located. The field to the south of the barn was once a traditional orchard and formed part of the setting of the Farm. The single storey timber clad buildings are now used as offices and as a residence and are inward looking towards the pond. A gravelled storage yard and parking are occupy the eastern side of the barns, adjacent to farmland.

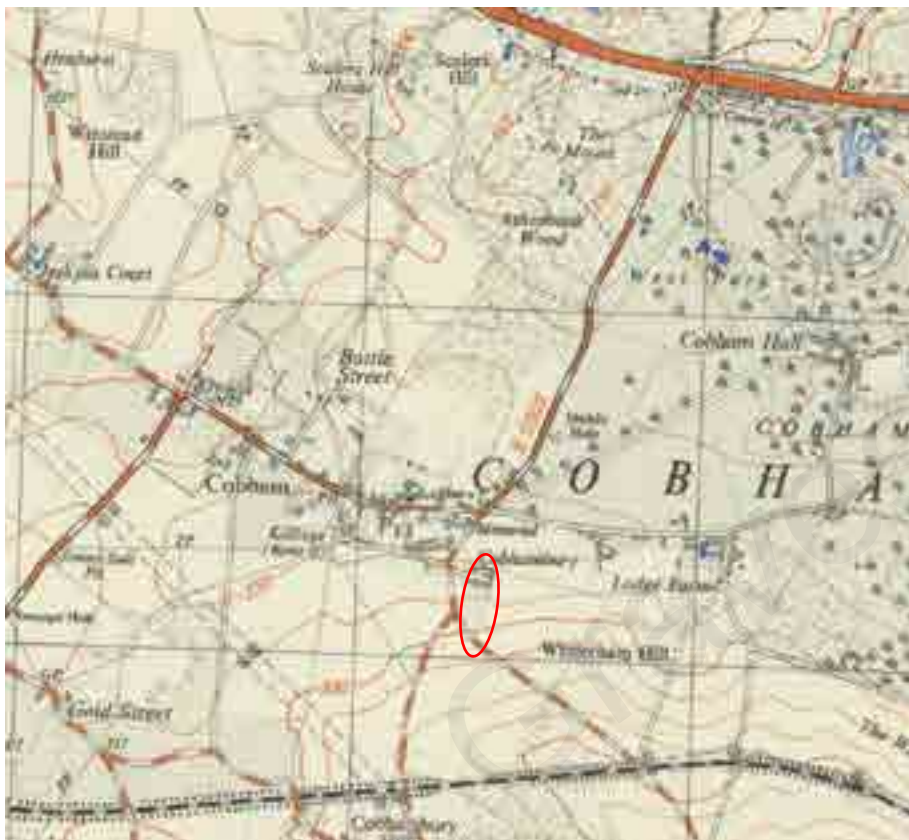


1869 Cobham village is seen with orchards to east and west outside the historic village core. Cobhambury is clearly seen surrounded by large fields to the east and south. The historic Cobham Park lies to the north-east



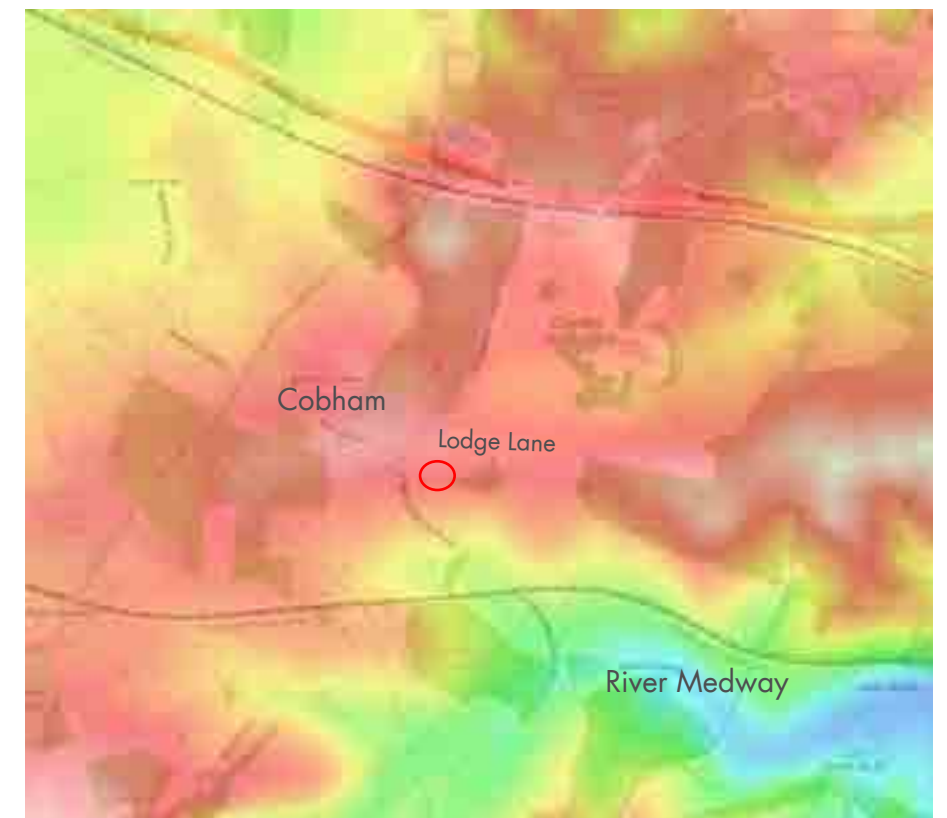
1898 Cobham village has not expanded significantly since the mid 19th century and the pattern of fields and orchards remains largely unchanged

landscape context and character



1957 By the mid 20th century, orchards have expanded around Cobham and pylon lines are now apparent through the southern valley. Development in Cobham village has expanded towards the east and Cobhambury Barn

Present day Cobham village has expanded towards Cobhambury. The field patterns are similar with a mix of commercial orchards and arable. The orchard at Cobhambury has disappeared, replaced by a paddock. Woodland separates the Farm from the village. The proposed site for development lies on the east side of the farm cluster



Topography The above topography map illustrates Cobham located on the east-west ridge with Cobhambury Barn on the south-east edge of the ridge which then falls to the south and east towards the Medway. The land also falls gently northwards from Lodge Lane into the listed parkland

landscape context & character

Present day landscape

- 2.5 The agricultural landscape south of Gravesend and the A2 rises gradually as an undulating landscape on the dip slope of the North Downs. With rising altitude woodland cover tends to increase. Cobham village sits at around 90 -110m AOD at the watershed of the lower part of the Cuxton/Luddesdown valley which slopes down steeply eastwards towards the Medway.
- 2.6 Almost all of the land around Cobham village is within the Kent Downs AONB. The defined settlement is relatively compact, contained to the west by the boundary of St Mary Magdalene Church and 1 and 2 Crockers Place, and to the east by Halfpence Lane and Cobhambury Road.
- 2.7 To the north-east of Cobham the landscape consists of the parkland landscape of Cobham Hall, adjacent golf course and ancient woodlands. Lodge Lane, located on the same east-west ridge as the village, adjoins the southern edge of the parkland and is well vegetated. To the south-east the parkland landscape gives way to large arable fields with treebelts and woodland on the steeper valley sides and ridges. To the north, west and south are extensive commercial orchards and arable land. The orchards are a strong feature in the landscape and have significantly altered the local character. Detractors in the landscape include pylon lines, particularly crossing the valley to the south. The railway also cuts through the landscape to the south although often hidden by trees.

Published character assessments

- 2.8 The National Character Assessment places the site within the North Downs NCA (NCA119) which includes the chain of chalk hills that stretch from the Hogs Back in Surrey to the White Cliffs of Dover. The predominantly rural landscapes are characterised by mixed farming with extensive woodlands. Settlements are generally small-scale nucleated villages and scattered farms. Development pressures and changing agricultural practices are the key forces for change but opportunities also exist to enhance the

landscape and create more resilient ecological networks.

- 2.9 The Kent County landscape character assessment (2004) places the site within Cobham: West Kent Downs characterised by:
- Large scale, open scarp-top landscape;
 - Coppice woodland and historic parkland;
 - Golf course and A2 sever the character area.
- 2.10 The Gravesham District LCA places the site within Ashenbank and Cobham Parklands LCA characterised by:
- 'Slightly undulating topography with a strong presence of man-made landform
 - Historic Elizabethan manor set within Repton parkland landscape
 - Golf course located within parkland landscape
 - Large parkland trees
 - Two large areas of dense ancient woodland
 - Traditional village centre, typical of north Kent landscape
 - Native hedgerows, three bar wrought iron and timber fencing'.

- 2.11 The objectives for the LCA are to Conserve and Reinforce character:

- 'Conserve parkland trees and woodland cover through continued effective woodland management
- Reinforce parkland character by emphasising and co-ordinating locally distinctive features (fencing, highways and rural buildings)
- Reinforce character by planting standard native tree species within parkland to replace older veteran trees, and create and maintain wood pastures
- Manage access arrangements to balance the need for recreation whilst controlling unauthorised access and anti-social uses, and respecting ecological sensitivity
- Conserve and restore historic buildings and their settings
- Encourage the use of vernacular materials and characteristic features within new developments'.

- 2.12 Some of these objectives are more applicable to the designed landscape rather than the arable landscape, in which the site is located. However, the objectives to reinforce character through new planting, to conserve and restore the setting of historic buildings and to use vernacular materials is, however, relevant to the proposal and these objectives are reflected in the design proposals.



'Cobhambury Farm is a historic 'marker' of the end of the settlement'.....

The site seen from Lodge lane through a field gate. The barn provides a visual 'marker' at the edge of the village. The land falls away to the south

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity

- 2.13 The Gravesham Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study, (LUC 2016) includes the site within parcel CO3 and attributes high sensitivity to it and low capacity for further development:

'Cobham has a very contained immediate setting, in which trees and hedgerows play a strong screening role, but its wider setting is for the most part very rural. The open, sloping arable landscape to the south of the village contributes significantly to this, adding to the sense of separation provided by Cobham's ridge-top setting. The pastures to the east of the village are less physically distinct from the settlement, but nonetheless contribute to rural character. The CO3 parcel does not contribute greatly to the separation of settlements, with Henley Street 1km to the south being separated by Cobhambury Hill'.

'Cobhambury House (Grade II listed) and Cobhambury Farm (a converted barn) and surrounding fields in the Conservation Area reflects the historic separation of this farmstead from the village, and the Conservation Area Appraisal notes its role as a historic 'marker' of the end of the settlement'.



The pond is the focus of the internal space between the barns and the Farmhouse, where the farmyard was once located



The central space is linked to the site and its wider views to the east by a gap between the single storey barns and the garden fence of the two-storey residential barn conversion



The view across the site eastwards showing the panoramic view to the wooded horizons over arable land



The site is used as a yard for storage of materials, vehicles and plant and detracts from the setting of the residential barn and farm buildings. The boundary vegetation is weak on the eastern side of the yard where it slopes down to the arable fields



The site as seen from the south access track. The hedge around the barn can be seen to the left. A tree belt lies along the north boundary which curtails views from the north. The east boundary is weak but allows panoramic views eastward. The access track is sunken along much of its length

visibility

3. visibility

- 3.1 The site lies to the east of Cobham and to the east and south of the farm cluster that includes Cobhambury Farm. It is contained by single storey barns to the west and the 2 storey residential barn to the south. The barn faces southwards and a hedged garden lies to the east providing enclosure to the site from the south. This is further reinforced by a north-south mature hedgerow (F).
- 3.2 The levelled platform which forms the site is currently used as a yard for storage of materials and equipment and is open to the east. It is largely screened from the north by a tree belt running east-west (B and C). Lodge Lane (A) is on the east-west ridge so that any views northwards to the listed parkland are screened by topography and vegetation.
- 3.3 The site enjoys panoramic views to the east towards wooded hills. The steeply incised valley to the east is partially hidden from view by landform, but contains pylons lines which detract from its rural character.
- 3.4 The site is not visible from local public rights of way and roads in the area due to topography and vegetation.

NOTES:

- A** Lodge Lane follows an east-west ridge - topography and vegetation along the Lane restrict views from the lane and listed parkland to north-east, except through 2 field gates;
- B** Woodland north of Cobhambury farmhouse and along Cobhambury Road screen the farm and site from Cobham village and the adjacent roads;
- C** Field boundary vegetation screens the site from the north and Lodge Lane except for a small gap in the hedge, which can be replanted;
- D** woodland screens any views to the site from houses along Lodge Lane to the north-east;

- E** Semi-mature vegetation along Cobhambury Road screens views of the Farm and site from the road. The railway line also curtails views from further south;
- F** Hedgerow, together with C frames panoramic view eastwards to the wooded hills;
- G** BiWay 196A runs to the east of the site down into the valley bottom. The BiWay is sunken and lined by hedges along much of its length. Views westwards are curtailed by intermediate landform within the arable fields and vegetation along the track.





View 1 from Lodge Lane through field gate looking south. The roof of the 2-storey Cobhambury Barn can be seen framed by trees. Cobhambury House is screened from view. The proposed house will sit to the east of the Barn. The Village edge is visible and the role of Cobhambury Barn as a 'marker' at the edge of the village is evident.



View 2 from entrance to Cobhambury Farm from Cobhambury Road. Cobhambury house is largely screened from views from the road, as are the other farm buildings. Cobhambury Road is generally lined by a semi-mature trees directing views southwards and screening the site from the south and west.



Cobhambury Road travelling uphill from the south. Semi mature trees screen the site from views from the south and west. Leafy country lanes are a characteristic feature of the area.

visibility



Tree belt on north boundary (C) contains site from most views from the north

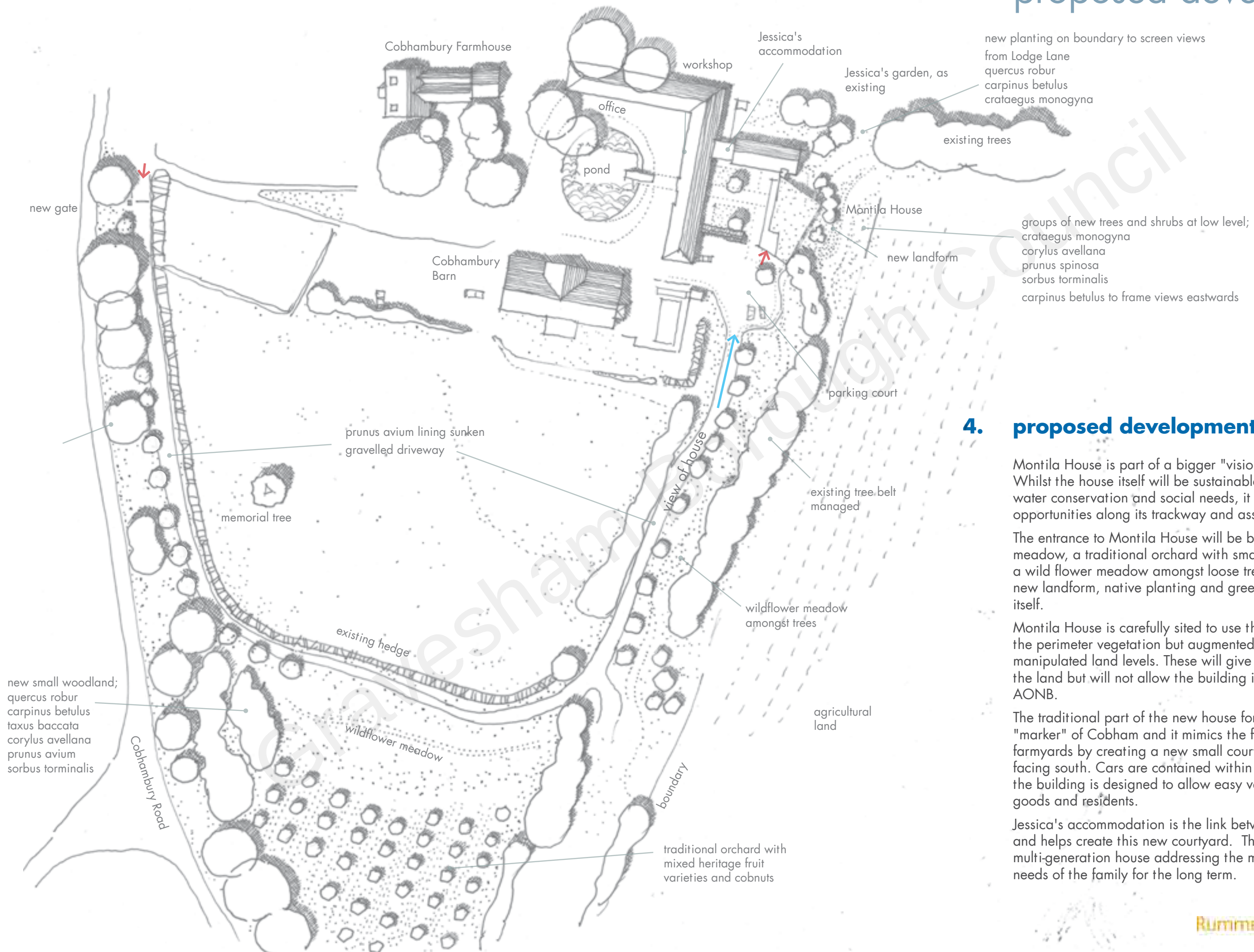


Lodge Lane (A) is lined by trees along much of its southern side and partially to the north



BiWay 196A (G) is sunken and lined by vegetation along much of its length, restricting views on either side

proposed development



4. proposed development

Montila House is part of a bigger "vision" for the land. Whilst the house itself will be sustainable in terms of energy, water conservation and social needs, it creates biodiversity opportunities along its trackway and associated land.

The entrance to Montila House will be by means of a new meadow, a traditional orchard with small copses of trees, a wild flower meadow amongst loose tree planting and the new landform, native planting and green roof of the house itself.

Montila House is carefully sited to use the existing gap in the perimeter vegetation but augmented using carefully manipulated land levels. These will give selected views over the land but will not allow the building itself to intrude on the AONB.

The traditional part of the new house forms the eastern "marker" of Cobham and it mimics the form of Kentish farmyards by creating a new small courtyard, predominantly facing south. Cars are contained within a new landscape and the building is designed to allow easy vehicular access for goods and residents.

Jessica's accommodation is the link between new and old and helps create this new courtyard. The building will be a multi-generation house addressing the medical and social needs of the family for the long term.

development concept



The landscape strategy will integrate the development into the site with the traditional barn connected to and respecting the existing barn

buildings.

Siting and form of the proposed building extension allows a soft edge to the site with the rural characteristics of the AONB and the LCA extended into the site, including:

- access route treated as a sunken leafy lane lined with standard wild cherries (*Prunus avium*); cherry trees were once abundant in Kent.
- site edge defined by enhanced shaw/hedgerow whilst still allowing framed views to east;
- tree enclosure enhanced to south where gaps in vegetation exist, enhancing enclosure, providing wind protection etc;
- eastern edge maintained for biodiversity with wide margins to treebelts and wildflower meadows;
- traditional orchard (with heritage varieties) and wildflower meadow (neutral species rich) reinstated in south of site reflecting historic orchard location and relationship to farmstead (which, in its entirety, provides the eastern 'bookend' to the village);
- planting reinforces connectivity between the woodland to the north and hedgerows and shaws to the east within the arable land; the eastern boundary planting will also enhance and connect to shaws and hedgerows to the south enhancing the inter-connectivity of habitats.

proposed landscape strategy and enhancements

5. landscape and visual appraisal

Appraisal of Landscape Impacts

Landscape Impacts on the Kent Downs AONB

- 5.1 The site lies within the Kent Downs AONB. The principles and goals of sustainable development are at the heart of the management of the Kent Downs AONB and the AONB Management Plan notes that change can reinforce and enhance the characteristics qualities and distinctiveness of the Kent Downs and benefit its community and economy. The Management Plan supports a landscape-led approach to change.
- 5.2 The proposal is landscape-led and provides a modest proposed area of built development integral to which is the restoration of the storage yard and comprehensive landscape enhancement proposals.
- 5.3 As the proposal is in line with the objectives for the AONB, it is assessed that the proposals will be beneficial to the landscape character in this small part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Landscape Impacts on NCA119 North Downs

- 5.4 NCA119 includes the Kent Downs as well as the Surrey Hills. For the same reasons as for the AONB, the proposals are assessed as beneficial to landscape character within this very small part of NCA119.

Landscape impacts on County LCA Cobham: West Kent Downs

- 5.5 The Cobham: West Kent Downs are assessed within the Kent County landscape assessment as having moderate sensitivity with actions proposed to Conserve and Reinforce the landscape character including hedgerows and woodland.
- 5.6 The assessment recognises the positive contribution that the settlement pattern makes to landscape character. The

proposals include reinstating part of a lost traditional orchard which was associated with the farm (in its entirety bookmarking the eastern end of the village). Together with the architectural elements, the integral landscape enhancements including shaws, hedgerows, small areas of woodland, orchard and wildflower meadows will reinforce the landscape character and so are assessed as beneficial to landscape character in the Cobham: West Kent Downs LCA.

Landscape impacts on Ashenbank and Cobham Parklands District LCA

- 5.7 The objectives for the District LCA, as with the County LCA, are to Conserve and Reinforce character through native tree and woodland planting and management, also encouraging the use of vernacular materials and characteristic features within new developments. The enhancement of landscape features within the site including tree and woodland planting reinstatement of a traditional orchard, shaw and hedgerow planting and wildflower meadows will enhance and repair the landscape. The architectural devices such as the green roof and profiling of the proposed building and use of traditional style where it links to existing farm buildings will also integrate the proposed buildings into their context. The design meets the objectives of the LCA and so the overall effect on landscape character is assessed as beneficial to the district LCA.

Impact on landscape features

- 5.8 The impact on landscape features is also assessed as beneficial due to the proposed enrichment and reinstatement of these throughout the site through the comprehensive landscape strategy: particularly the reinstated traditional orchard, proposed small areas of woodland, reinforced shaws and hedgerows and wildflower meadows throughout. These features are also likely to enhance biodiversity so contributing to local ecological networks.

- 5.9 In summary the landscape impacts on landscape features and landscape character are assessed as beneficial.

landscape & visual appraisal

Appraisal of impacts on views and visual amenity

- 5.10 Cobhambury Barn is well contained by vegetation to the north-west and south and proposed planting on the east boundary will enhance enclosure. It is proposed to thicken the northern hedgerow, particularly where there are gaps. The proposed building will be located to the east of the existing barns but is partly earth sheltered and also has a green roof. The height is limited and landscape proposals are integral to the development.
- 5.11 The 3 representative viewpoints identified during field work are assessed as follows:
- 5.12 Viewpoint 1: located on Lodge Lane. The view of the site includes the upper storey of the 2-storey existing barn and is seen through a field gate. Other than at the field gates there are no other views from Lodge Lane or the listed parkland to the north. The lane is used by cars and walkers. The visual effect on views from Viewpoint 1 is likely to be barely discernible, as the building will be considerably lower than the 2-storey barn and screened by intervening vegetation. Landscape enhancements are also likely to further integrate existing development. The visual effect is assessed as Negligible to Minor beneficial.
- 5.13 Viewpoint 2: located on Cobhambury Road at the entrance to Cobhambury Farm, to the west of the site. Since all proposed development is on the eastern edge of the site, with landscape improvements to the east and south, these are unlikely to be visible from the entrance. It is therefore assessed that the impact of development on views from Viewpoint 2 will be Negligible.
- 5.14 Viewpoint 3: located on Cobhambury Road to the south of the site. Enclosing vegetation restricts most views into the site so the likely impact on views from Cobhambury Road are assessed as Negligible.
- 5.15 It has been established that there are no views from nearby public rights of way including BiWay 196E to the east.

- 5.16 In summary it is therefore assessed that the visual impacts on views and visual amenity for receptors at representative viewpoints around the site is Negligible.

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