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Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

For the proposed development of

Land at Foxdale, Bridstow



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On behalf of

Festival Housing Ltd

March 2014



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Charles Potterton. I am a Chartered Member of The Landscape Institute and Director of Potterton Associates Ltd. I hold a BA Degree in Landscape Architecture (1982), a Diploma in Landscape Architecture (1983) and have been practicing as a Landscape Architect since 1984.
- 1.2 Potterton Associates Ltd was founded in 1992, is a Registered Member of the Landscape Institute and trades as a Limited Company. During this time I have carried out a significant number of visual impact assessments and character appraisals on a wide variety of sites primarily in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.
- 1.3 I am Chairman of the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee which advises Worcester City Council on planning application matters affecting the conservation areas across the city.
- 1.4 I am also currently employed by Bath & North East Somerset Council as a consultant dealing with landscape matters arising through the development control process. I prepare consultation responses for all planning applications that are deemed likely to have an impact on the landscape, including those within the World Heritage Site of Bath City.
- 1.5 This report considers the potential effects of the proposed development on -
- individual landscape features and elements
 - landscape character
 - visual amenity and the people who view the landscape



- 1.6 This report is not intended to set out a wide ranging description of the history or geography of the area. It is very specifically intended to be a working tool that informs the design process and helps the reader (specifically the Local Planning Authority) to understand how the scheme takes account of and responds to the landscape.
- 1.7 The main objectives of the study are as follows:-
- To describe and evaluate the current landscape character of the site and its surroundings and to identify any notable landscape features within the site;
 - To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
 - To identify and describe any changes arising from the project relating to landscape and visual issues. This is determined as the magnitude of change;
 - To identify and describe any mitigation measures that should be included;
 - To evaluate the significance of landscape and visual effects.
- 1.8 During the evaluation and assessment stages, I have used the following research documents –
- National, local and strategic planning policy guidance
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd Edition)
 - Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (SPG 2004 and updated 2009)
 - The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project English Heritage
 - Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Consultation Draft Management Plan 2014-2019



2 The site & its surroundings

- 2.1 Bridstow is a small village and lies 2 km west of Ross on Wye and 17k to the south east of Hereford. The village itself is divided into a number of different clusters and is accessed primarily off the busy A49.
- 2.2 The site lies to the east of the central road and sits on a gently sloping hill. It sits in front of the house known as Foxdale and behind the house known as Burnt House. The site sits at an average OS Datum of approximately 55m AOD and covers approximately 1.4 hectares.
- 2.3 The site, (and Foxdale), are now accessed via a central gravel drive leading from the road to the south of Burnt House. The access was originally located approximately 150m to the north but was moved to provide a safer access point. The driveway is fenced on both sides with post and rail fencing.
- 2.4 The site consists of the two paddocks and the central driveway although there is an area fenced off from the paddock that serves as the garden to Foxdale. This is excluded from the scheme.
- 2.5 The paddocks are currently used for grazing ponies and there is a small, dark green metal shelter located centrally along the eastern boundary.
- 2.6 There is an intermittent hawthorn hedge to the southern boundary. This contains significant gaps and from most parts of the site, it is possible to look over or through the hedge. This hedge is in need of management.



- 2.7 The eastern boundary would properly be described as a line of trees with a post and wire fence at ground level. Grazing animals have removed most lower-level vegetation. This allows some lower views through, but, generally due to ivy growth and some holly bushes, views to Claytons and Ash Meade beyond are filtered. This hedge is in need of management.
- 2.8 The western boundary is set back from the road and is generally formed by the interface with Burnt House. The garden of this property is unusual in shape and takes up the majority of the western road frontage. There is a line of evergreen / laurel shrubs in the centre, a post and rail fence, Oaklands Cottage and the sheds (belonging to both properties) in the north-western corner. This boundary is generally visually 'open' with longer views to the ridge beyond at Whitecross Cottages. All properties to the west side look away from the site.
- 2.9 The northern edge is formed by the house (Foxdale) and its garden with the actual boundary being a dense and mainly evergreen hedge. There are some residential properties to the north, but Tangmere has no view through and hides the views of Abbots Leigh, Warren Cottage and The Galloways. The property known as 'The Cedars' does have a view through the lower level hedges to the east of Foxdale.
- 2.10 The wider landscape is dominated by gently sloping fields and ridges. There are frequent buildings with Clayton to the east and Oaklands Cottages and Whitecross Cottages to the west being the prominent ones when viewed from the site. These are a mix of traditional cottages and more recent generic 'anywhere' type housing development.



- 2.11 There are also, importantly, a large number of brightly coloured buildings (primarily white) and this is a common characteristic of the area.
- 2.12 The school is also visible on the ridge in the middle distance and Poolmill Farm being generally hidden from view in the valley formed by Wells Brook.
- 2.13 There are some houses (including bungalows) between the main access road and Moor Court Farm. These are set at the valley floor and face away from the site. These include Silverdale, The Withies, Helyg, Pool Lodge and The Moors.
- 2.14 There is a group of cottages in the area known as Poolmill and these generally face each other across the road. They are clearly visible from the site.
- 2.15 There are no Public Rights of Way on the site. The nearest one is a 'National Route' called The Herefordshire Trail that runs some 135m to the south of the site entrance. This is a circular route that covers 154 miles (248 km) and forms a tour of the county of Herefordshire.
- 2.16 There is no freestanding vegetation within the site and the land appears to be free draining and in good condition. Whilst we have not carried out or seen any detailed classification, the wider Agricultural Land Classification mapping published by Natural England indicates this general area is Grade 2. Whilst there are obvious exceptions to this broad brush assessment, I would not disagree in this instance. See appendix for an important note from NE.



- 2.17 This area is part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which was designated in 1971 for the combination of breath taking views, impressive geology, historic legacies and diverse wildlife in the valley of the River Wye between Hereford and Chepstow. The Wye Valley AONB covers 92km (58 miles) of the lower reaches of the River Wye totalling an area of 327km² (128 square miles), being 45km North to South and 11.3 km at its widest (East - West) point. It stretches from Mordiford in the north, just east of the city of Hereford, southwards to the outskirts of Chepstow.
- 2.18 The primary purpose of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. A further and no less important AONB purpose states that *'account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of the local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment'*.

3 The scheme

- 3.1 This initial assessment work is based on the layout as shown on Zebra Architects layout Drg ZEB/781/001. As pointed out in the introduction, this overall LVIA process is intended to help to identify and assess the likely impacts and, through an iterative design process, feed that information into the final scheme design.
- 3.2 The proposal is to construct up to 35 dwellings on the site, arranged generally on both sides of a central road that will allow access to Foxdale. It will also allow retained views out from that property. The configuration generally follows the existing land division.



- 3.3 The key landscape design elements of the scheme would be to retain vehicular access in the same place as existing, create a single dwelling at the entrance to create an end or backstop to the existing built form, allow an area of open space behind Burnt House to avoid overlooking and general privacy issues, follow the established building line between Tangmere and Burnt House. The design of the remainder should try to adopt a softer and less urban layout.
- 3.4 The perimeter vegetation must be retained and enhanced and an appropriate buffer zone to the east be created to allow for ongoing management. There must also be a substantial area of open space to the south of the scheme to allow help with a transition to the open fields beyond and to allow for space for additional planting to this otherwise weak boundary.

4 Assessment of Visual effects

- 4.1 I have visited the site and the surrounding countryside on a number of occasions and have carried out an assessment of the effect of the likely visual impact caused when viewed from a number of key viewpoints located within or beside the Visual Envelope. These viewpoints or receptors are representative of the range of views from differing types of location and are located at a different range of distances.
- 4.2 Herefordshire Council has published advice regarding the need to produce a map showing a 'Zone of theoretical visibility'. We have produced such a diagram and this is included as an Appendix. In line with this advice, we have used various radii to illustrate the Zone of Theoretical Visibility.



- 4.3 As a general rule of thumb the visual impacts of the construction phase will be significantly greater than those of the finished development due to the lack of any mitigation planting and the degree of immediate change. I have restricted my comments to the final built development.
- 4.4 It is important to remember that visual receptors are exclusively human beings i.e. landscapes and buildings are not able to see and animals are not included in the discussion. Changes to character are discussed elsewhere.
- 4.5 The surrounding topography and existing vegetation combine to ensure that most views of the site are located in an arc looking generally southwards from the site.
- 4.6 Photographs looking out of the site confirm (see appendices) that whilst there are long distance views in these directions, there are relatively few receptors. It is also important to note that with almost no exceptions, other properties are facing away from this site.
- 4.7 The process of assessing the effect of the impacts can be summarised as follows. Firstly, factual **physical information** is gathered –
- the viewpoint **locations** are identified with the use of a map
 - OS **Datum** above sea level is given for each viewpoint to provide an idea of the height difference relative to the site – the site is set at an average of 115.0m AOD
 - the **distance** to the closest part of the site is given to assist in assessing the impact of the proposal on a viewpoint
 - a **description** of each view is given



- 4.8 Secondly, the **sensitivity** of the receptor is then defined. The most sensitive receptors may include users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape, communities where the development results in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community.
- 4.9 A key category of sensitive receptors are occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development. Views from ground floor windows are given greater weight whilst those from upper floors which would generally be used at night (dark and with curtains drawn) would be given less weight.
- 4.10 The least sensitive receptors are likely to be people at their place of work, or engaged in similar activities, whose attention may be focused on their work or activity and who therefore may be potentially less susceptible to changes in the view.
- 4.11 Sensitivity is set out as follows –

Factor	Description
High sensitivity – Observers whose attention or interest may be focussed on the landscape and recognised views in particular	Recognised / Important Viewpoints, including those identified within and protected by policy. These viewpoints may be tourist destinations and marked on maps. Designed views, including from within historic landscapes. Residential Properties -views from rooms occupied during daylight / waking hours (predominantly ground floor rooms). Users of Rights of Way and Recreational Trails. Users of land with public access (i.e. Open Access Land and National Trust properties)
Medium sensitivity Views of the landscape are part of, but not	Residential Properties - views from rooms unoccupied during daylight / waking hours (1st floor rooms). Those playing or spectating at outdoor sports or undertaking formal outdoor recreation.



the sole purpose of the receptors	Users of local roads where there are clear / open views across the landscape and low levels of traffic.
Low sensitivity - Attention is focussed upon the activity of the receptor and not upon the wider views	Users of main roads travelling at speed, or local roads where the focus is upon the road ahead owing to traffic conditions and the context / composition of views. People at their place of work.

4.12 Thirdly, the visual effects on that view/viewer is described under the following criteria -

4.13 **Proportion of the view** as occupied by the proposed development.

Factor	Description
High	Where the site is close to the viewer and makes up most of the view
Medium	Where the site is close to the viewer but does not make up most of the view, or where the site is a long distance from the viewer but the site is clearly visible in the view.
Low	Where there is a great distance between the viewer and the site, and the site is indistinguishable in the wider landscape, or the site is nearby but well screened
None	The site is not visible so there is no change

4.14 **Activity** i.e. movement of vehicles and light reflection draw the eye

Factor	Description
High	Where the proposal would increase activity significantly.
Medium	Where the proposal would only increase activity slightly/ moderately from existing.
Low	Where the proposal would not increase activity from existing.
None	The site is not visible so there is no change



4.15 The angle of view

Factor	Description
High	Where the proposal would be on the skyline, looked down on from above, or directly in front of the viewer with no screening landscape feature between.
Medium	Where the proposal would be visible but against the backdrop of a similar land use, or landform
Low	Where a screening landscape feature is between the viewpoint and the proposal
None	The site is not visible so there is no change

4.16 The type of view

Factor	Description
High	Full open view with no screening
Medium	Partial view, partially screened, or filtered
Low	Glimpsed view only
None	The site is not visible so there is no change

4.17 Using a combination of the criteria described above, a rating of the **magnitude** of the change can be given as follows -

Range of change	Change experienced
a. Major Changes effect - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large number of receptors A wide area The duration of the view is prolonged, uninterrupted & unavoidable 	Adverse <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals introduce dominant, discordant elements altering the composition and balance of the view. Loss of a highly valued or protected view. Development interrupts or detracts from the focus of a recognised important view or vista. Proposals introduce features not present in skyline views of the area.
	Beneficial <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Development introducing positive elements that enhance legibility and composition of degraded views.



	6. Proposal removing existing visual detractors and introducing development that respects the scale, form and layout of existing visual components.
b. Moderate	<p>Adverse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development is clearly visible, but not prominent in views. 2. Proposals may introduce some uncharacteristic elements that are incongruous in limited localised views. 3. Development may form skyline features amongst existing developments and / or vegetation where such skyline views are not typical. <p>Beneficial</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Proposals enhance the visual setting and complement the composition of the view and the scale and form of development within it.
<p>c. Low</p> <p><i>Changes effect</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A low number of viewers ▪ And / or only over a localised area ▪ and / or the duration of the view may be fleeting or interrupted. 	<p>Adverse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development would result in the temporary or partial loss of a low number of localised features. 2. Mitigation is possible and can maintain or restore losses. 3. The proposals introduce temporary uncharacteristic features into the landscape. <p>Beneficial</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The proposals retain existing key features and respect the pattern of the landscape. 5. Proposals allow for local enhancements through removal of detracting features or implementation of a localised landscape scheme.
d. Negligible	1. The development would introduce barely discernible elements into the landscape.
e. None	1. The site is not visible so there is no change

- 4.18 By combining the results of sensitivity and magnitude conclusions on the **significance** of visual impact can be defined and an explanation of the actual significance of these impacts is as follows -

Impact	Criteria
Major adverse	The proposals would cause total permanent loss



	or major alteration to key elements and features of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements totally uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The proposals would be visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area.
Moderate adverse	The proposals would cause substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape. The Development would be visually intrusive and would adversely effect upon the landscape.
Low adverse	The proposals would cause minor permanent and/or temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the landscape, to include the introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The proposals would cause limited visual intrusion.
Neutral	The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the balance in the existing view
Minor beneficial	The proposals would slightly enhance the existing view, being in scale with the landscape and strengthening existing patterns
Moderate beneficial	The proposals would enhance the existing view, improving the quality of the landscape through the removal of damage caused by existing detractors.



- 4.19 The perceived height of the building or object one is viewing is heavily influenced by the nature of the place from where it is being viewed and the circumstances directly surrounding that place. This is especially important where the landscape is not flat, as in this case.
- 4.20 There follows a detailed description of the view from and likely impact on each of the viewpoint locations. It is important to note that this is a sloping site (generally north to south).
- 4.21 I have taken the midpoint of the site (55m AOD) as the average height of the site. I have also noted the relative height (AOD) of the selected viewpoints to show the relationship between the two. For example, there is a significant and important difference in the views obtained from one viewpoint that may be much closer but much lower than another one that is further away but much higher and therefore has more open views of the site.
- 4.22 Where this difference occurs and is relevant, it forms part of the assessment process. These heights are based on GIS / OS mapping information and not a specific topographic survey.

View Ref	01
Location	At the junction between the A49 and the road leading to Poolmill / the site
OS Datum	53m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)
Description of view	Busy road junction at an elevated position looking across the Wells Brook valley. Claytons are a prominent feature in the view with white / bright coloured house (Burnt House and Oakland Cottages are noticeable.
Distance to site	556m
Sensitivity of viewers	Medium. This is a view generally seen by motorists as they wait to negotiate the busy road junction.
Magnitude of visual effects	1. Proportion of view occupied by the proposed development – medium



	2. <u>Activity</u> – medium 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – medium 4. The <u>type of view</u> – medium
Magnitude rating	Moderate adverse – the development is clearly visible but would be read in context with other existing developments.
Significance of the effects	Low adverse. It introduces elements that are not uncharacteristic and would only cause limited visual intrusion.
Mitigation	Extensive and well designed planting to the southern boundary, strong central spine of trees will help assimilate the scheme into the view.

View Ref	02
Location	Beside Poolmill Bridge as it crosses Wells Brook. Bus stop, seat and village notice-board located here.
OS Datum	39.0m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)
Description of view	Looking north and uphill towards the site which is visible through / over existing vegetation.
Distance to site	286m
Sensitivity of viewers	High.
Magnitude of visual effects	1. <u>Proportion of view</u> occupied by the proposed development – medium 2. <u>Activity</u> – high 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – medium 4. The <u>type of view</u> – medium
Magnitude rating	Moderate adverse as the Development is clearly visible, but not prominent in views.
Significance of the effects	Moderate adverse as the proposals would include the introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.
Mitigation	Extensive and well designed planting to the southern boundary, strong central spine of trees will help assimilate the scheme into the view.

View Ref	03
Location	Located on National Route / PROW 'The Herefordshire Trail' as it passes near to the site.
OS Datum	40.5m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)



Description of view	Looking uphill along roadway looking towards Burnt House. The site is visible with glimpsed views through the trees / hedge alongside the road.
Distance to site	140m.
Sensitivity of viewers	High. Users of PROW's are in the highest bracket of sensitivity. However this is not a recognised or important viewpoint.
Magnitude of visual effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Proportion of view</u> occupied by the proposed development – low 2. <u>Activity</u> – medium 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – low 4. The <u>type of view</u> – low
Magnitude rating	Negligible.
Significance of the effects	Neutral. The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the balance in the existing view
Mitigation	Extensive and well designed planting to the southern boundary will help to block these glimpsed views. Changes in localised hedge management may also be considered appropriate.

View Ref	04
Location	At the site entrance (existing driveway to Foxdale)
OS Datum	50.0m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)
Description of view	Looking eastwards (obliquely from the road) up the sloping entrance to the site. Burnt House and its white walls are prominent the view. Foxdale barely visible.
Distance to site	n/a
Sensitivity of viewers	Medium
Magnitude of visual effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Proportion of view</u> occupied by the proposed development – high 2. <u>Activity</u> – high 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – high 4. The <u>type of view</u> – high
Magnitude rating	Moderate adverse. The development will be prominent but only for a short duration and the views are limited to those properties at the site entrance
Significance	Moderate adverse as the scheme will include the



of the effects	introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.
Mitigation	The design of the main entrance building is critical. It needs to be of the highest quality and local vernacular architecture. The remainder of the development will sit further back into the site and can be softened with appropriately located tree planting.

View Ref	05
Location	At gateway beside Whitecross Cottages.
OS Datum	55m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)
Description of view	Looking east across open fields, over Wells Brook valley towards the site. Bright buildings prominent in view as are Claytons.
Distance to site	456m
Sensitivity of viewers	Medium
Magnitude of visual effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Proportion of view</u> occupied by the proposed development – medium 2. <u>Activity</u> – medium 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – medium 4. The <u>type of view</u> – high
Magnitude rating	Moderate adverse
Significance of the effects	Neutral as the proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the balance in the existing view
Mitigation	Use of muted colours for most buildings but bright to some others together with appropriate alignment and planting can create a scheme that will sit well with existing settlement form and pattern.

View Ref	06
Location	At the road entrance to Claytons.
OS Datum	48.5m AOD (the site sits at an average of 55m AOD)
Description of view	Looking over a trimmed hedge and an open field towards the site. Eastern hedge provides reasonable screen but lower views exist. Burnt House (white) is clearly visible.



Distance to site	200m
Sensitivity of viewers	Medium
Magnitude of visual effects	1. <u>Proportion of view</u> occupied by the proposed development – medium 2. <u>Activity</u> – medium 3. The <u>angle of view</u> – medium 4. The <u>type of view</u> – medium
Magnitude rating	Low adverse.
Significance of the effects	Low adverse. It introduces elements that are not uncharacteristic and would only cause limited visual intrusion.
Mitigation	Additional boundary treatment to the eastern site boundary and allowing this perimeter hedge to grow by 500mm will add to the screening.

- 4.1 As described elsewhere, this is a complex landscape of valleys and ridges and therefore there will always be some longer distance views, but generally, as long as the site / proposed scheme does not sit on the top of a ridge, then these views will be limited to those directly facing it. That is the case here where the primary views are from the south looking north to the site or from the outer group of houses at Claytons.
- 4.2 From my assessment work I conclude that the significance of the effects (in visual terms) would be moderate adverse to those at point 2, as they cross the bridge at Poolmill and again as they pass the site entrance. The significance would be low adverse for all other location points.



- 4.3 It is obvious that there will be an impact on the adjacent residents but in the main these properties actually face away from the site. Burnt House has a very unusual garden in that it occupies a narrow strip (+/- 10m) of land along a long distance (115m) of road frontage. Inevitably there will be a loss of privacy to this garden. I would classify this as a major adverse in significance, but is restricted to this property. Other properties sit on the other side of the road and are aligned to look away from the site.
- 4.4 Properties such as Ashe Rise may be able to see the site, but because of a well established perimeter hedge, the significance of the effects would be low adverse in that instance.
- 4.5 Similarly with the (outer) properties at Claytons, they have lower level hedges and sheds and whilst they can see the site, I would classify this as low adverse in significance.
- 4.6 There is no footpath on this laneway and the lane is set some 1-1.5m below adjacent field level. Users will be primarily focused on road safety and not any miniscule glimpsed view.
- 4.7 Whitecross Cottages are notable in the view from the site, but their primary views are in the opposite direction with the rear area of their properties dominated by car parking and outbuildings. I conclude this is a neutral in significance.
- 4.8 The houses (including bungalows) between the main access road and Moor Court Farm are set at the valley floor and face away from the site. These include Silverdale, The Withies, Helyg, Pool Lodge and The Moors. I do not consider that the development would have any meaningful visual impact on these properties.



- 4.9 Whilst the proposed building on the corner by the main access point would overlook these properties, there are already a number of other houses in this area that are closer and also uphill and in that respect, I consider this to be neutral in significance.
- 4.10 Whilst the site may also be 'visible' from further afield and from locations such as May Hill there is a point at which the site would not be discernible in a view given the distance between the viewer and the site.

5 Assessment of Landscape Impact

- 5.1 The site lies within the Wye Valley AONB and therefore carries a high level of status and protection. The area was designated as AONB for four primary reasons (quoted from the Wye Valley AONB website) –
- 5.2 (1) **Exceptional landscape**- dramatic limestone gorge and some of the most outstanding native woodlands to be found in Britain.
- 5.3 (2) **Impressive geology** - from Silurian limestones to plateaux of Old Red Sandstone: "Like a set of pie dishes, one within the other."
- 5.4 (3) **Historic legacies** - Silure (Iron Age) hillforts; Norman castles; the first Cistercian Abbey in Wales and a pioneering industrial heritage in iron; brass; wire; tinsplate and copper works.
- 5.5 (4) **Wildlife** - A quarter of Britain's population of lesser horseshoe bats, a growing population of peregrine falcons, goshawks, ravens, rare whitebeam, nightjar and lesser known fish like the shad and twaite
- 5.6 It is my opinion that whilst the site lies within the AONB, it does not include any of its primary characteristics.



- 5.7 On the map of 'countryside character' prepared by Natural England / Countryside Agency, the site sits in the middle of Area NCA 104 South Herefordshire and Over Severn, a complex confluence of character areas.
- 5.8 The Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (SPG 2004 and updated 2009) classifies this area as '**Principal settled farmlands**'. It also places the site in the Archenfield sub-regional character area with conservation / enhancement as its primary management objective. See appendices.
- 5.9 Within this document, the character of this area is described as follows

The rolling, lowland area of Central Herefordshire is dominated by this Landscape Type. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the good soils on which they are typically found.

Networks of small winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic. Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses.

The composition of the hedgerow tree cover differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance.

This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.



5.10 The key characteristics are set out as -

Primary - hedgerows used for field boundaries

Secondary - mixed farming land use

5.11 In the same document, the **settlement pattern** is described as follows -

'The dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets is capable of accommodating limited new development if it is in accordance with UDP policy. Low densities of individual dwellings would be acceptable as long as they are not sited close enough to coalesce into a prominent wayside settlement pattern. Additional housing in hamlets and villages should be modest in size in order to preserve the character of the original settlement'.

5.12 It then describes the **enclosure pattern** as follows -

The enclosure pattern varies considerably but is generally of a planned sub-regular nature. The small to medium sized fields are vulnerable to amalgamation through hedgerow loss.

Under the concluding heading of 'Management guidelines and Environmental mitigation', that document states that the overall strategy for this character area

... 'would be to conserve and enhance the unity of small to medium scale hedged fields. Opportunities for new tree planting should be concentrated along watercourses where the linear tree cover pattern could be strengthened.



Additional tree planting in the vicinity of settlement would also be appropriate and would assist in emphasising the domestic quality of the landscape. New woodland should not be introduced as it is out of place and would compromise the landscape character. The mixed farming land use is becoming increasingly arable and the small permanent pastures are gradually declining. These are often species rich and initiatives to safeguard them should be strongly promoted.

New development should remain at a low density with most housing associated with existing hamlets and villages.

- 5.13 In most cases, landscapes of higher quality are more sensitive to change than those of lower quality, although this also depends on the nature of the change. The landscape assessment process looks at a number of criteria to determine the 'quality' of the area.

Landscape quality criteria		
Impact	Criteria	Scale & group affected
Exceptional	Highly distinctive landscape character / structure Distinctive / rare / unique features worthy of conservation Strong sense of place No detracting features Highly sensitive to inappropriate change	International National
High	Highly distinctive landscape character / structure Distinctive / rare / unique features worthy of conservation Strong sense of place Occasional detracting features Sensitive to inappropriate change	National Regional Local Special Interest
Medium	Recognised landscape character / structure Some features worthy of conservation Sense of place Some detracting features	Regional Local Special Interest



	Potentially sensitive to inappropriate change	
Low	Distinguishable landscape character / structure Some features worthy of conservation No particular sense of place Frequent detracting features Scope for positive change	Local Special Interest
Poor	Distinguishable landscape character / structure Some features worthy of conservation No particular sense of place Frequent detracting features Scope for positive change	Local Special Interest
Very Poor	Degraded / damaged landscape character / structure Extensive detracting features Significant scope for positive change	Local Special Interest

5.1 I consider that the wider landscape, within which this scheme may have an impact or influence, is of **high quality**, in that it has a clear and recognised landscape character and is potentially sensitive to inappropriate change. Its designation as AONB confirms this.

5.2 Landscape 'sensitivity' – is a general indication of the extent to which a landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character. This can include existing land use, pattern and scale, scope for mitigation and the general quality of the landscape. In respect of character, the degree of sensitivity can then be defined as –

Sensitivity	Landscape
High	An area possessing a particularly distinctive sense of place, in good condition, or highly valued for its scenic quality and/or landscape character, a landscape with low tolerance to change of the type identified, for example National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, setting of Listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments.



Medium	An area with a clearly defined sense of place and/or character in moderate condition; an area valued at a local or regional level, a landscape which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified.
Low	An area with a weak sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality, an area that is tolerant of substantial change of the type identified.

- 5.3 Bearing in mind the classifications given above and bearing in mind the LCA Figure 10 which classifies this as a landscape for 'conservation / enhancement, I categorise the wider landscape (in this area) is of a high quality, but with a medium sensitivity.
- 5.4 In terms of agricultural production I do not consider this small parcel of land would contribute sufficiently to make this a valid reason for refusal of permission.
- 5.5 The 'Principal Settled Farmlands' category clearly allows for 'limited new development' and suggests that such development should 'remain at low density with most housing associated with existing hamlets and villages'. Importantly this development would very much follow the pattern established with Claytons.
- 5.6 For any development, landscape impacts are likely to include both positive and negative effects. Professional judgment has been used to determine the scale of significance for each impact. The significance of the impacts is then defined as follows –

Landscape impact significance criteria	
Impact	Criteria
Major adverse	The proposals would be at considerable variance with the local landscape. They would degrade, diminish or destroy a highly valued landscape or its characteristics, features or elements.



Moderate adverse	The proposals would noticeably conflict and be at odds with the local landscape. They would leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristics, features or elements.
Minor adverse	The proposals would not quite fit into the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape. They would affect an area or elements of character of recognised quality and importance.
Neutral	The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the character of the existing character and quality.
Minor beneficial	The proposal would slightly enhance the existing quality and character, being in scale with the landscape and strengthening existing patterns.
Moderate beneficial	The proposals would enhance the existing landscape character, improving the quality of the landscape through the removal of damage caused by existing detractors or by adding new element sensitive to the prevailing landscape pattern.

- 5.7 The scheme would not impact on any conservation area or listed buildings and would not affect any TPO's and would not physically effect any PROW's.
- 5.8 It would not affect any of the primary characteristics of the wider landscape area as defined by the SPD.
- 5.9 Importantly, I do not consider that this actual and immediate area displays any of the primary characteristics of the AONB. In other words, I do not think that the development would affect the AONB or the reasons for its designation in any meaningful way
- 5.10 My conclusion in respect of impact on landscape character is that the development will have an **overall neutral effect** on the character area as it would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the character of the existing character and quality.



6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The effects on the landscape and visual environment are only part of the overall consideration in respect of making a decision on the planning balance. In this instance landscape and visual effects need to be balanced against the case for more housing. It should also be acknowledged that any development will give rise to change in the landscape of the affected area and the views of receptors. The degree of change will influence the judgment on acceptability and will need to be weighed against benefits delivered by the scheme.
- 6.2 The significance of the impacts of the scheme can be summarised in the three categories as used throughout this report.
- 6.3 **Physical impact.** There will be very little physical impact and I conclude that this would be categorised as being neutral in its significance.
- 6.4 **Visual impact.** From my assessment work I conclude that the visual impact will be moderate adverse in significance to those looking directly at the site as they wait at or cross at Poolmill Bridge and again as they pass the site entrance. It would be low adverse or neutral in significance for all other location points.
- 6.5 There are actually very few visual receptors and it is a feature of the site that whilst being apparently wide open when one stands in it, it is actually not easily to see when one is walking or driving close to it. The immediate properties actually face away from the site. There is an obvious view into the main site entrance (as one expects on any site, but given that the road is much lower than the site, this is relatively short in extent and duration.



- 6.6 The houses (including bungalows) between the main access road and Moor Court Farm are set at the valley floor and face away from the site. These include Silverdale, The Withies, Helyg, Pool Lodge and The Moors. I do not consider that the development would have any meaningful visual impact on these properties. Whilst the proposed building on the corner by the main access point would overlook these properties, there are already a number of other houses in this area that are closer and also uphill and in that respect, I do not consider this to be an issue. Poolmill Farm would fall into this category.
- 6.7 There are views from Ashe Ridge and Claytons, but these are also partially masked by existing hedges, both around that property and around the eastern boundary of the application site. Clayton is also designed around a village green so it is only the properties on the perimeter than may have any direct view. These buildings (and garages) block the views of the site from other properties.
- 6.8 As a wider group of dwellings, Clayton and Ashe Green also sit on top of a ridge and effectively blocks all potential views from further to the east.
- 6.9 The proposals would need to include for the longer term management of the perimeter hedges to ensure they are retained as tall hedges (the primary views are in the opposite direction) and they will also be enhanced with additional planting (in line with SPD advice).
- 6.10 There are some middle distance views, i.e. from the road junction with the A49 and from beside Whitehouse Cottages, but these are panoramic views that already contain significant number, types and colours of building and I think that this scheme could be assimilated well into the view. I classify these as neutral in significance.



- 6.11 There are some longer distance views, but these would be from significant distance and the impact would be neutral in significance.
- 6.12 My site visit was carried out (and photographs taken) before leaf-break so the site was as visible as it is ever likely to be. I have used professional judgment to assess the likely visibility either with or without leaf cover.
- 6.13 **Landscape Character.** I conclude that the impact would be overall neutral in that 'The proposals would more or less fit in with the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape, maintaining the character of the existing character and quality'.
- 6.14 I do not consider that the scheme would impact on the AONB, or any of its primary characteristics in any meaningful way.
- 6.15 It is my understanding that there is a need to provide new housing in this area. Bearing in mind the advice within the landscape SPD, i.e. that new housing should be allied to an existing settlement, then this is a logical location for it. With good design that allows for retention of the views from Foxdale, a mix of house types, styles and colours that reflect the variety existing locally, then I do not think that the proposed scheme would be out of character. Bearing in mind that Bridstow is in reality at least three separate clusters of buildings (see appendices) then this would be in keeping with the overall settlement pattern.



- 6.16 Through this assessment work I have concluded that the key landscape design elements of the scheme would be to retain vehicular access in the same place as existing, create a single dwelling at the entrance to create an end or backstop to the existing built form, allow an area of open space behind Burnt House to avoid overlooking and general privacy issues and to follow the established building line between Tangmere and Burnt House. The design of the remainder should follow a softer approach i.e. less urban in its formality and possibly adopt a 'village green' type layout. The scheme would sit well on the hillside and quickly become assimilated into the wider view.
- 6.17 The perimeter vegetation must be retained and enhanced and an appropriate buffer zone to the east be created to allow for ongoing management. There must also be a substantial area of open space to the south of the scheme to allow help with a transition to the open fields beyond and to allow for space for additional planting to this otherwise weak boundary. It may be that this space can form the basis for the softer village green approach.
- 6.18 Overall I conclude that this development, when measured against the characteristics of the landscape, would not be inappropriate or out of keeping. When viewed in context of the need to provide new housing, the level of Landscape and Visual Impact is, in my opinion, acceptable.

Charles Potterton BA DipLA CMLI
Chartered Landscape Architect
for and on behalf of [pottertonassociatesltd](#)

13th March 2014

Appendices

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

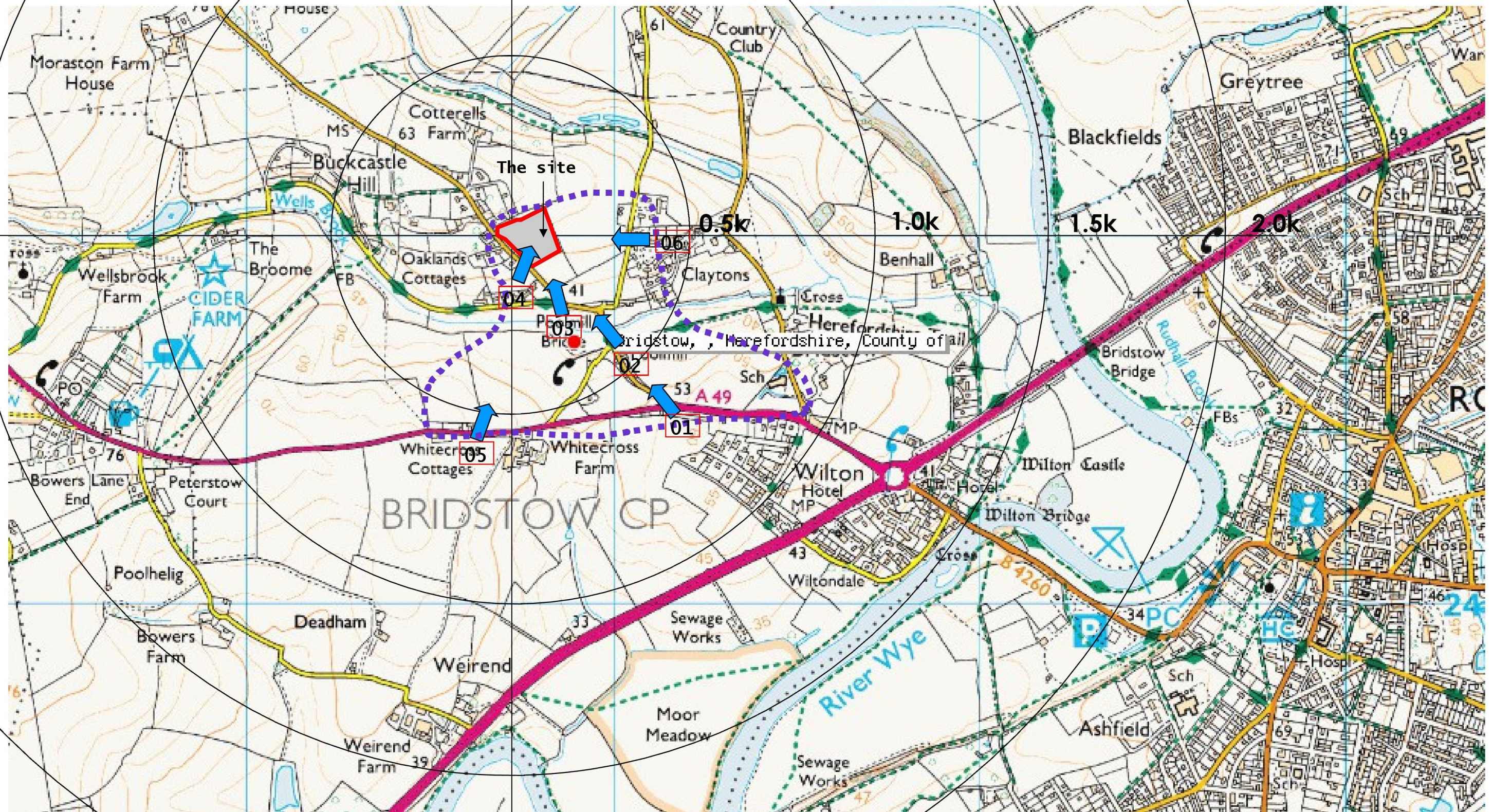
Land at Foxdale, Bridstow





On behalf of

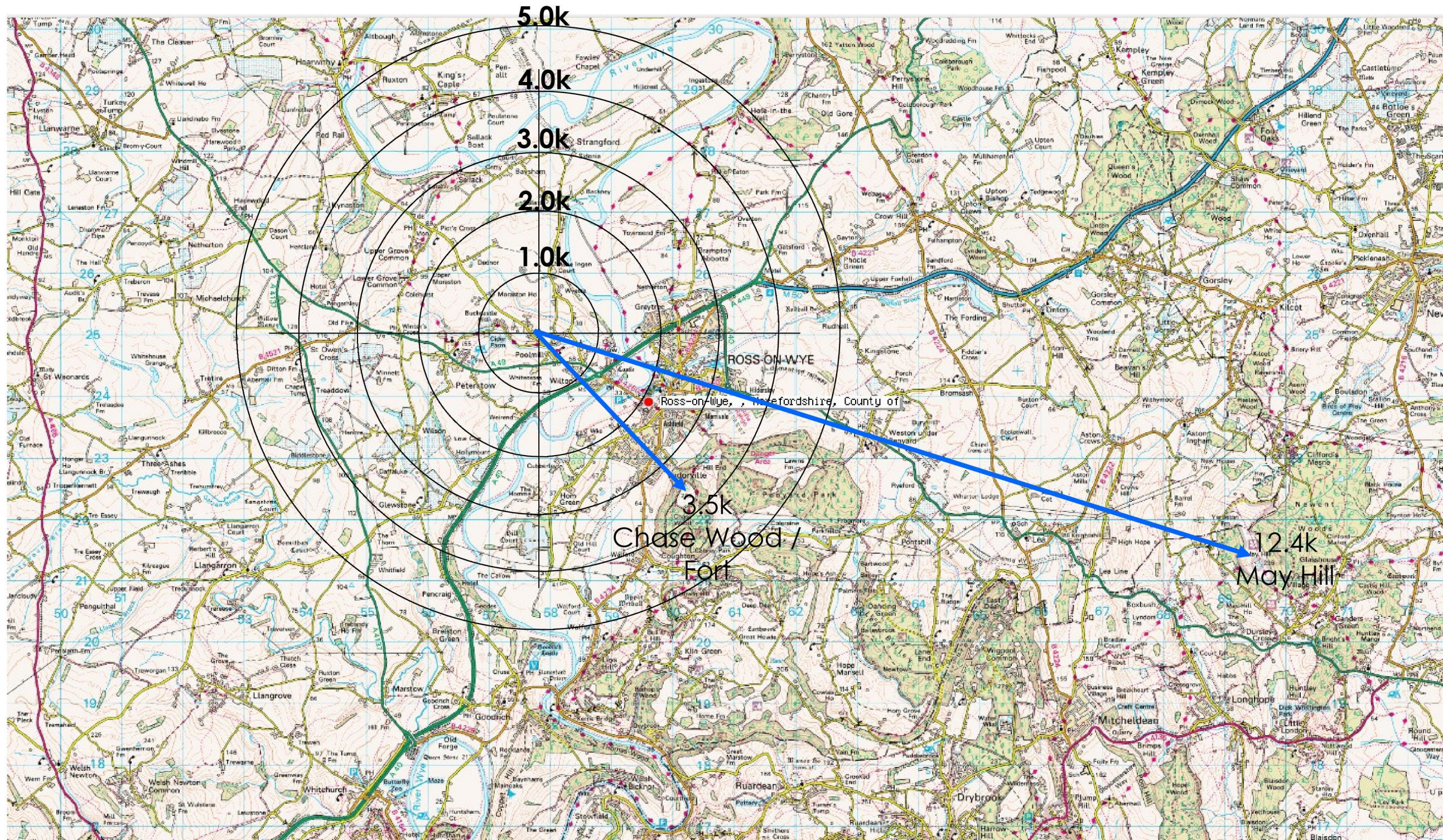
Festival Housing

March 2014



 Illustrative Zone of (Theoretical) Visual Influence
 Viewpoint locations

Land at Foxdale, Bridstow
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Large scale location diagram with relative distances to key landscape features.

Land at Foxdale, Bridstow
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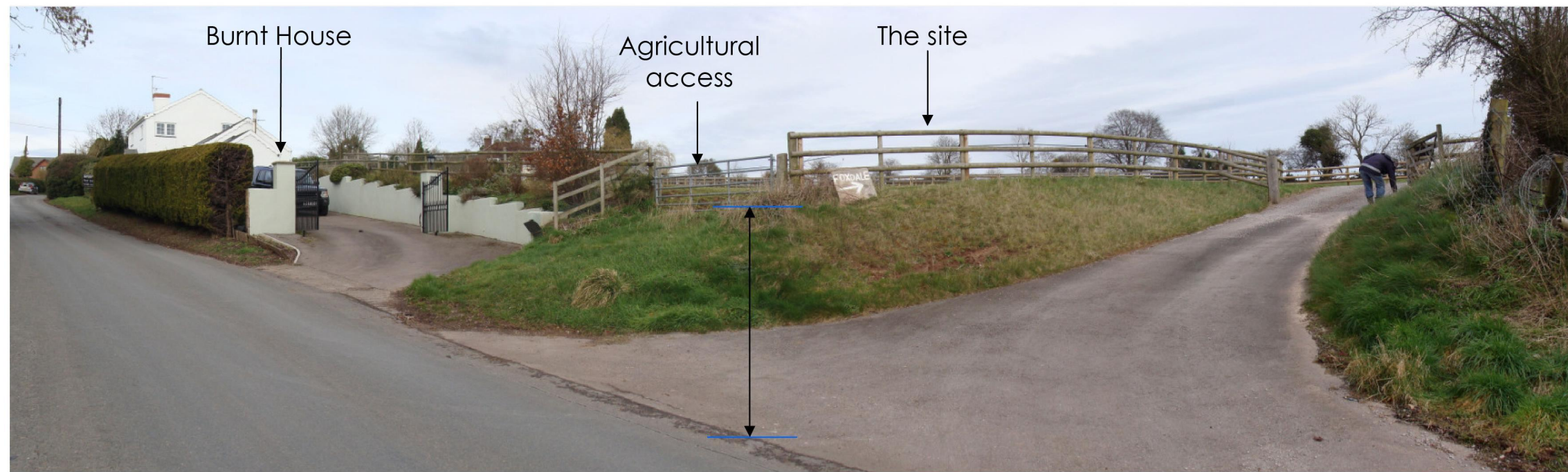
01. Looking from the junction with the A49. Clayton to the right



02. The view from Poolmill Bridge.



03. The view from 'The Herefordshire Way' / PROW



04. The view into the site entrance. Note Burnt House to the left, agricultural access and main site entrance to the right. Note height difference from road to site.



05. The view from Whitehouse Cottages. Note number of white, painted houses. Majority of buildings oriented towards this direction i.e. along the prevailing slope.



06. The view from the entrance to Claytons. Note trimmed hedge. If allowed to grow 500mm taller, would hide majority of the views of the site from this location.



07. The view over a 1.7m hedge, located on the lane to the north of Ash Ridge. Note dense hedge to Ash Ridge perimeter.



08. The northern boundary of the site. The area to the rear of the post and rail fence will remain as the garden of Foxdale. Roof of 'The Cedars' just visible through the hedge.



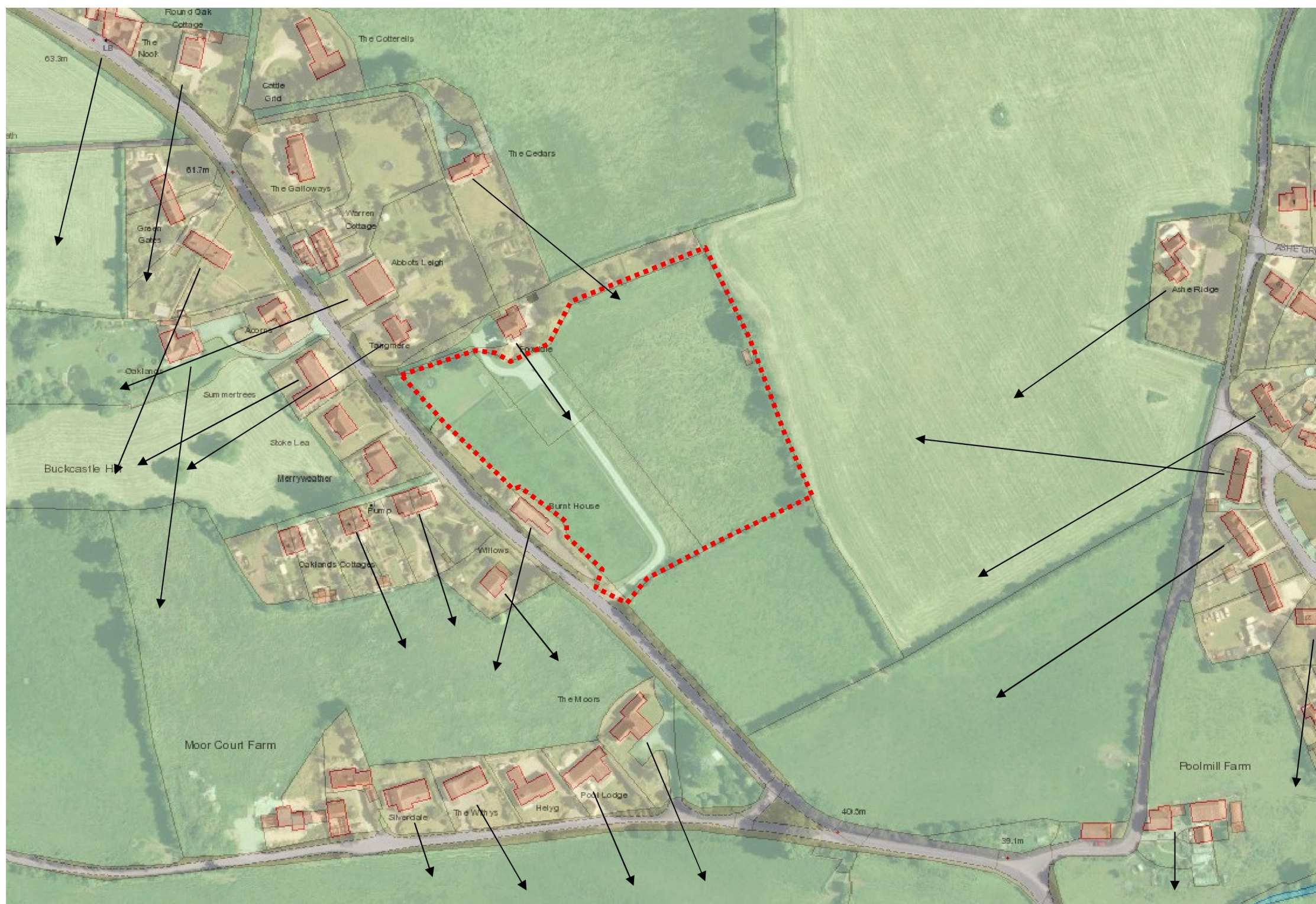
09. The western boundary of the site. The Claytons are visible behind the existing hedge. Ashe Mead hidden by shelter.



10. The view looking south from the site. Main ridge is 3.4k away. May Hill is 12.7k away.

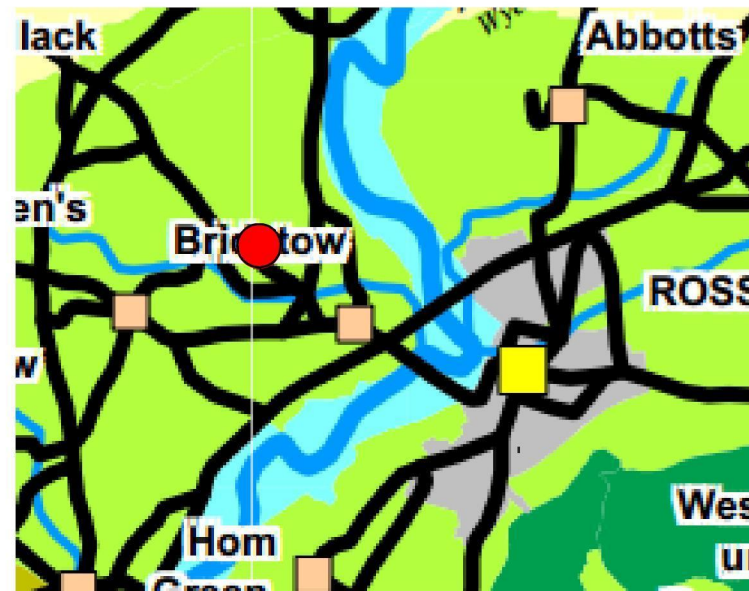


11. The view looking south / south-west. The A49 runs along the ridge in the middle distance but is hidden from view. Note how houses face away from the site and white is the prevalent colour. Silverdale, The Withies, Helyg, Pool Lodge and The Moors are set at a much lower level.



Hybrid photograph / plan showing relationship of the site with adjacent properties. The majority face away from the site.

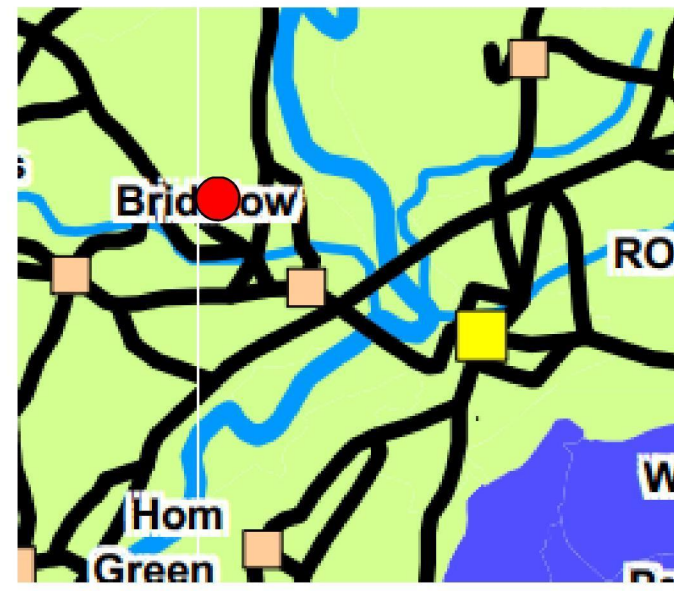
Land at Foxdale, Bridstow
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Landscape types

KEY

- Ancient Border Farmlands Pg 53
- Ancient Timbered Farmlands Pg 51
- Enclosed Moors & Commons Pg 33
- Enclosed Settled Commons Pg 35
- Estate Farmlands Pg 59
- Forest Smallholdings & Dwellings Pg 45
- High Hills & Slopes Pg 29
- High Moors & Commons Pg 31
- Plateau Estate Farmlands Pg 61
- Principal Settled Farmlands Pg 69
- Principal Timbered Farmlands Pg 47
- Principal Wooded Hills Pg 39
- Riverside Meadows Pg 55
- Sandstone Estate lands Pg 65
- Sandstone Farmlands Pg 67
- Settled Farmlands on River Terrace Pg 71
- Timbered Plateau Farmlands Pg 49
- Unenclosed Commons Pg 37
- Urban

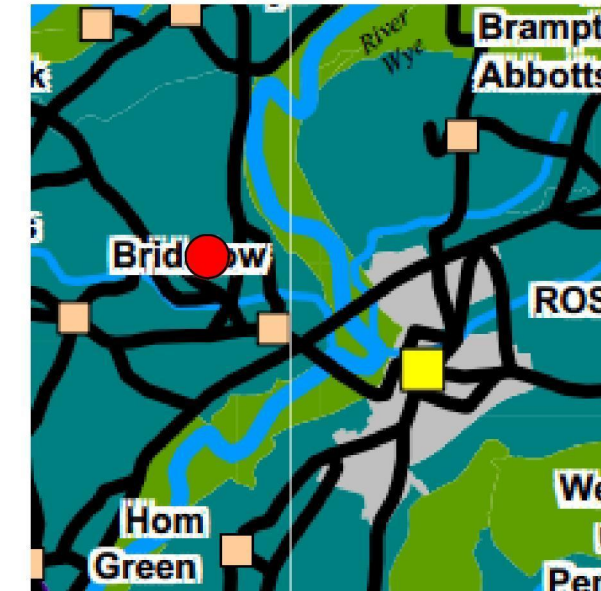


Sub-regional Character Areas

KEY

- Archenfield
- Black Mountains
- Bromyard Plateau
- Central Herefordshire
- Ewyas
- Forest of Dean
- Leadon Vale
- Malvern & Abberley Hills
- North-West Gloucestershire Sandlands
- North-West Herefordshire Hills
- Teme Valley
- Woolhope Dome

Site location



Landscape Management Objectives

KEY

- Conservation/Restoration/Enhancement
- Conservation/Restoration
- Conservation/Enhancement
- Restoration/Enhancement
- Restoration
- Conservation



 Site location

Agricultural Land classification diagram

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Excellent
2	Very Good
3	Good to Moderate
4	Poor
5	Very Poor

IMPORTANT NOTE FROM NATURAL ENGLAND

This is an extract from a map that forms part of a series at 1:250 000 scale derived from the Provisional 1" to one mile ALC maps and is intended for strategic uses only.

These maps are not sufficiently accurate for use in assessment of individual fields or sites and any enlargement could be misleading.

The maps show Grades 1-5, but Grade 3 is not subdivided.

THIS DIAGRAM IS FOR GENERAL CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION ONLY

Land at Foxdale, Bridstow
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Boundary buffer / maintenance zone to include new planting

Retained central driveway treated as an avenue of trees

Southern buffer zone - houses can face this space but must include significant block of native planting to address views from the south

Gateway given status and gravitas with wing walls and gates to match local examples

Outline landscape masterplan - illustrative only

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