

## **Design and Access Statement**

(As required by Article 8 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010) relating to a proposed dwelling on land at Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye.

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This is a D & A Statement relating to the resubmission of an outline planning application, with all matters reserved, for the erection of a single storey dwelling on a plot of land adjoining Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye.

1.2 The first application, ref.S120304/O, was withdrawn to enable the applicants to give further consideration to a requirement by the Council's Senior Ecologist that an ecological survey be commissioned to establish the potential impacts on habitats and protected species. The applicants subsequently employed ecologist Janet Lomas, CEnv. MIAgrE to carry out this study, the scope of which was first agreed between Janet and the Council's Senior Ecologist. The resulting Reptile Survey is submitted in support of this application (Document HP8).

1.3 Whilst no signs of slow worms, other reptiles, or amphibians were discovered the Survey does include recommendations designed to maintain and enhance the wildlife habitat of the site. These recommendations are fully accepted by the applicants and would be incorporated into the proposed development. They include the retention of a mature ivy clad apple tree as a potential bat habitat and the planting of native species boundary hedges.

1.4 This revised D&A Statement also seeks to address the landscape issues raised by the Council's Senior Landscape Officer.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 The application site is the last remaining building plot formed following the closure and redevelopment for residential purposes of the intensive poultry business established by the applicants' parents and operated from Harwell on this and adjoining land until the 1980s. During this time a large portion of the application site was occupied by a very large wooden poultry brooder building. Photograph 1 illustrates how the

plot and adjoining land was laid out at that time. Subsequent to the poultry business ceasing outline planning permission was granted on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec 1986 for the residential development of the former poultry farm land to the south of the plot. All the poultry buildings were then removed and 3 dwellings erected on the permission land. The remainder of the land, the application plot, was partially cultivated as a vegetable patch in connection with Harwell. It is currently unused and somewhat unkempt in appearance.

### 3.0 The Local Context

3.1 Brampton Abbots is a dispersed settlement with groups of dwellings located in clusters along the roads within the village. Groups of dwellings are sited around the church and former primary school, close to the former rectory, down Ross Road, at The Grove and on the lane leading to Harwell. Through infilling the group on the lane to Harwell has increased from 4 just after World War 2 to 12 in number now.

3.2 The village benefits from a village hall and children's` nursery, whilst the Primary School is located on the road between Ross and the village. Ross, a substantial retail and employment centre, lies within walking and cycling distance approximately 11/2 kilometres to the south. Public transport between Ross and the village is limited to one return bus trip a week, on a Thursday.

### 4.0 The Planning Policy Context

4.1 Herefordshire Council planning policies relevant to residential development are the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 2007.

4.2 Policy H6 "Housing in smaller settlements" permits the infilling of small gaps between existing dwellings, subject to various criteria being met, within a number of named villages. Brampton Abbots is not listed.

4.3 Policy H7 "Housing in the countryside outside settlements" seeks to limit residential development outside settlements to special circumstances, such as where dwellings are essential to meet the needs of agriculture and forestry. Whilst the explanatory text in the UDP (paragraph. 5.4.66) indicates that this policy should apply outside the settlements identified in the preceding housing policies and in the wider countryside, this text no longer forms part of the adopted plan; rather it is `relegated` to background information. The wording in Policy H7 does not define the term "smaller settlements" as being limited to those listed

in Policy H6 and therefore the applicants' opinion is that development within Brampton Abbots, clearly a small settlement, cannot fall to be assessed under Policy H7. In the absence of a specific and relevant residential policy the proposal should therefore be determined on its own individual merits.

4.4 One of the overall objectives of the Council's residential spatial strategy is to secure sustainable development. Policy DR2 seeks to ensure that development is located so as to facilitate a genuine choice of modes of travel, whilst Policy S6 seeks to ensure access by means other than the private car.

4.5 It is noted that Brampton Abbots does not score highly in the Hierarchy Matrix within the Rural Settlement Hierarchy Paper (July 2010). However, the matrix does indicate that community facilities, such as the primary school, successful village hall and children's nursery, do exist to serve and support the village. Equally the village is served by a weekly bus service (Service 459) and is located within a very short distance of Ross, a substantial service and employment centre, which can be easily reached by car, cycle and walking, the latter option being both quicker and safer by the use of some off road public footpaths.

4.6 The Brampton and Foy Parish website indicates that the Parish Council (PC) adopted a Community Led Plan (CLP) at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012, following the results of a survey, including a questionnaire and a 'Planning for Real' day. With regard to action on housing the PC has accepted the wishes of its parishioners to maintain the "rurality" of the parishes, and that if housing were to be considered the PC would take account of the type of housing that would be accepted by the parishioners and carefully consider its location. The CLP indicates that "if additional housing should be built overwhelming support" (from parishioners) "was for family homes together with starter homes and affordable houses".

4.7 The site falls within the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character type. This is characterised by "settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets" and a landscape "with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlements and its traditional land uses". [Landscape Character Assessment SPG 2004 (updated 2009)] (LCA). The LCA indicates that this landscape is capable of accommodating limited new development and "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". (LCA).

4.8 Prior to its development as a poultry farm the application site and adjacent land formed part of the adjoining field that historical maps (and photograph 1) indicate was at one time planted as an orchard. It is clear from this photograph that the permanent poultry buildings replaced any orchard use at that time, including on the application site. The orchard trees on the adjoining farmland were subsequently grubbed up by the owners of Townsend Farm. Thus, unlike land further to the south (beyond the dwellings located off the lane), the application site and its surroundings no longer maintain the essential character of an orchard and this former use is of only historical interest in the landscape assessment of the application proposal.

4.9 The application site lies within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), designated in 1971. The statutory purpose of the AONB designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, coupled with the obligation of local authorities regarding the social and economic well-being of local communities. (AONB Management Plan 2009-2014) (March 2010). Within the AONB UDP Policy S7 states that there is a requirement to protect, restore or enhance the beauty of the landscape whilst UDP Policy LA1 states that priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the area, with development only being permitted where it is small scale, does not adversely affect the intrinsic natural beauty of the landscape, is necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of the designated area or can enhance the quality of the landscape or biodiversity. Exceptions to this policy include where any detrimental effect upon landscape, biodiversity and historic assets can be mitigated adequately.

4.10 Reference has also been made to UDP Policy HBA9 (Protection of open areas and green spaces) by the Council's Senior Landscape Officer, in her consultation response to the previous application. This policy seeks to prevent the loss of important open areas or green spaces which contribute to the distinctive spatial character, form and pattern of a settlement or neighbourhood and identifies particular 'elements' that would be worthy of protection. In her response the Landscape Officer indicated that the application site should be protected as an open area under this policy as it provides: - relief within the linear development; a distinctive setting to historic buildings (Abbey Haven and Townsend

Cottage); and a view out of the settlement towards the attractive landscape of the AONB. It is believed that in making these observations she was relying on support from the following numbered 'elements' identified in the policy text:

- 1) "provide relief within an otherwise built up frontage or within developments.
- 4) "provide important views into or out of settlements and of attractive buildings and their settings, or of attractive landscapes."

4.11 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 provides Government guidance on planning matters. If UDP Policies are silent on development in smaller villages such as Brampton Abbots, as argued above, NPPF paragraph 17 indicates that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts outweigh the benefits, or unless specific policies in the Framework indicate that the development should be restricted. There are no adverse impacts associated with the proposed development (and if any they are outweighed by the benefits) and no relevant or specific policies restricting development in smaller settlements. Whilst Paragraph 55 states that LPAs should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside, this description could not be fairly applied to the application site.

4.12 The NPPF guidance requires LPAs to have available a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, with an additional 5% buffer over established requirements. Where there has been a persistent under delivery there must be a 20% buffer. The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (Second Review March 2012) appears to indicate that the anticipated completion of deliverable sites up to 2016 would fail to meet the identified demand for housing. This shortfall adds to the merits of the application site's development.

4.13 Additionally, and given the case set out in this Statement, the applicants are not aware of any NPPF guidance relating to the conservation of landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, or the conservation/enhancement of the natural or historic environment, that would indicate that the application should be refused as being in material conflict with the NPPF.

## 5.0 Physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings

5.1 The application site lies near the northern end of an access lane serving a substantial group of dwelling. (See photographs 3 & 4). The plot is located between two single storey dwellings, Harwell to the north and Hatchers to the south. It has an average width (north to south) of approximately 26 metres and depth (east to west) of 35 metres. Its total area is approximately 900 sq. metres.

5.2 The land slopes very gently across its width, with an approximate overall fall of 1 metre. It is relatively flat across the majority of its depth but with an approximately half metre fall close to its rear boundary where it abuts agricultural land.

5.3 The plot is currently best described as an open, roughly (and irregularly) mown area of grass with several shrubs, piles of wood brash/debris and 3 small apple trees, two of which are dwarf garden varieties and the third believed to be an over mature ivy clad cider apple (see photographs 6 & 7). A small derelict green house is sited near the rear of the site, close to its northern boundary. Along the site's front (eastern) boundary is an Ash tree, together with a number of regenerating sycamore tree stumps.

5.4 There is an existing steeply sloping vehicular access to the site from the adjoining single vehicle width metalled highway on the eastern boundary, with the lane approximately 1.4 metres below the level of the plot. (See photograph 5). Abbey Haven and Townsend Cottage, a semidetached pair of traditional two storey properties, abut the lane to the east, approximately 7.6 metres from the plot boundary, with windows at both ground and first floors facing the plot (see photographs 4, 6 & 13).

5.5 To the south of Hatchers, following the line of the lane falling to the south and on lower land, are 4 modern substantial two storey detached dwellings, (see photograph 3) whilst to the east of the lane, grouped around Abbey Haven and Townsend Cottage, are 3 further modern single storey properties (see photograph 2).

5.6 Harwell itself is a large and much extended bungalow with its principal elevations facing east and west, and with a gabled elevation containing one secondary window (serving a lounge) facing the plot (See photographs 7 & 8). This elevation is approximately 5.5 metres from the plot boundary, which is defined in part by a low shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera Nitida*) hedge. Hatchers lies close to the southern boundary but with its principal elevations facing away from the plot (See photograph 9).

5.7 The Site Survey Plan (Drawing No. HP2) illustrates the existing layout of the site.

## 6.0 Evaluation and Proposal

### 6.1 Use and Amount

6.1.1 It is considered that the erection of one residential dwelling on the application site, most certainly the last available infill plot in this part of the village, would be the most appropriate form of development, entirely in keeping with the layout, style and character of the surrounding development. This small gap in the existing linear development along the lane is barely discernible within the wider landscape and its residential development would merely reflect and reinforce the existing settlement pattern as can be seen from the recent aerial photograph of the area (Photograph 2). This form of development would be entirely at one with the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape character type as set out in the LCA SPG (2004), with no adverse impacts upon the wider landscape.

6.1.2 A single dwelling would not be in conflict with the relevant residential policies in the Development Plan, would have no significant adverse impact upon the Council's overall residential spatial strategy, and would not conflict with the local community and Parish Council's expressed wishes concerning housing development as set out in the CLP, resulting in no adverse impact on the rural character of the area.

6.1.3 It is also considered that a single storey dwelling would sit well on the site, reflecting the scale, character and height of the immediately adjoining properties. A single storey dwelling would not introduce a new or incongruous element and it would be consistent with other features in the landscape. It would not impinge upon the skyline when viewed from the west and would be seen as an integral part of the existing group of dwellings from this direction. Public views of the wider countryside to the west from the adjoining lane are already very limited by the lie of the land and existing vegetation and a single storey dwelling on this infill plot, located within a complex of other dwellings, would have no significant adverse impact upon the special qualities, landscape character or natural beauty of the AONB, [as described in the LCA SPG (2004)] or upon the wider public's enjoyment of this designated area. It should be noted that the majority of properties off the lane have been permitted since the designation of the AONB, presumably also having been assessed as not being harmful.

## 6.2 Layout.

6.2.1 To ensure that the residential amenities of Abbey Haven and Townsend Cottage are protected it is appropriate that any dwelling should be set back from the front boundary. The recognised standard distance of 21 metres between facing elevations could easily be achieved or, as illustrated on the submitted drawing, exceeded, and this, together with the incorporation of a front boundary hedge, would overcome any privacy concerns. A single storey dwelling located towards the centre of the site would have no adverse impact upon the sunlight or daylight reaching these two properties.

6.2.2 Given the generous plot width, a desire to minimise the impact of any new building upon the two neighbouring properties (Harwell and Hatchers), the orientation of the site, and the views to the west, it is considered that a dwelling with its ridge line running north to south and with its main outlook to the west would be most appropriate. The southern gable to Harwell lies well within its own site and a dwelling with a gable in close proximity to the northern plot boundary and facing this property would not impinge unacceptably upon the outlook, sunlight or daylight reaching Harwell's secondary lounge window. However, if considered necessary a hipped roof design could be incorporated to further minimise any impact. On the southern boundary any building would be to the north of Hatchers and unlikely to be detrimental to its residential amenities. However, the roof to the garage could be hipped if necessary.

6.2.3 To achieve a desirable drive gradient from the lane of 1 in 12, any parking/turning/garaging would need to be located well within the site. To facilitate the retention of the standard apple tree located near to the northern boundary as recommended by the applicants' ecologist (see ecology report) the existing access would need to be permanently stopped up and a new access constructed elsewhere along the eastern boundary. This new access, ideally located near the southern boundary (see photograph 12), would serve a double garage and associated turning/parking area constructed at this end of the site.

6.2.4 The indicative 1:200 scale block plan (drawing HP3) illustrates a potential layout for the plot.

## 6.3 Scale

6.3.1 An evaluation of the topography and character of adjoining development indicates that a single storey dwelling would be most



appropriate on the plot. A ridge height falling somewhere between that of Harwell and Hatchers would reflect the gradual fall in the land and ensure that the property was not prominent in the landscape when viewed from the west. (See photograph 11). Depending on the detailed design the property would have an overall height of between 5 and 6 metres, and a floor area, excluding the garage, of approximately 100 square metres.

#### 6.4 Landscape

6.4.1 Given that the application plot is a small infill site within a substantial group of buildings where the erection of a single storey dwelling would have minimal impact upon the wider landscape it is not considered that the proposal would have any significant adverse impact upon the intrinsic character or appearance of the AONB. The modest scale and location of the development within the group would also preserve the character of the village in accordance with the area's Principal Settled Farmlands landscape designation.

6.4.2 The plot is not "an old orchard" as described by the Council, any orchard use having been superseded by the poultry farm development. The original orchard on the adjoining field has long since been grubbed up and neither the plot nor the adjoining field retain the appearance or character of an orchard. Only one possible orchard tree remains on the plot and this is to be retained within the development.

6.4.3 The proposal meets the requirements of UDP Policy LA1 in that it is small scale and would not be harmful. However, the policy does in any event allow exceptions where any detrimental effect upon landscape, biodiversity or historic assets can be mitigated adequately. Whilst the applicants do not consider that any harm would be caused, they believe that the suggested additional landscaping outlined below would adequately address the concerns raised by the Landscape Officer, and could indeed result in significant enhancement.

6.4.4 With regard to UDP Policy HBA9 the applicants cannot agree that this small and insignificant private plot of land can in any way be described as an important open area or green space contributing to the distinctive spatial character, form and pattern of the village and therefore worthy of protection under this policy. The aerial photograph 2 amply shows how inconsequential the plot is within the development off the lane. Rather, relief within the existing settlement pattern is provided by, for instance, the open land, including an existing orchard, between the group of 12 dwellings off the lane and the development beyond the village

hall. Further, given the site's elevated position relative to the adjoining public right of way and intervening vegetation, public views out over the plot towards the wider AONB landscape are limited.

6.4.5 With regard to the Landscape Officer's policy objection based on the proposed development's adverse impact on the setting of Abbey Haven and Townsend Cottage, this is a mis-interpretation of the wording of Policy HBA9. The actual wording refers to "important views .... of attractive buildings and their settings", which can only mean, in this instance, views across the plot from the lane towards such buildings. There are no such attractive buildings within the AONB to the west of the site. Whilst Abbey Haven and Townsend Cottage are both traditional buildings, neither is listed as being of special architectural or historic interest and their setting is therefore accorded no special protection either as listed buildings or by reason of Policy HBA9. The LPA's lack of concern for the setting of these two properties is amply illustrated by its decisions to allow building within their curtilages. The erection of a modest single storey dwelling on the application site, as illustrated, would cause no further harm to their setting.

6.4.6 All the trees fronting the plot bar one were felled in 2010 as it was considered that they were unneighbourly, leaving a small twin stemmed ash located close to the existing access. This should be retained as a feature and for its wildlife value, and protected during the construction stage of the development. If this tree succumbs to Ash dieback, it should be replaced with an alternative wildlife rich species such as Rowan (*Sorbus Aucuparia*).

6.4.7 There are also 3 small apple trees within the plot. Two of these are modern cultivars on dwarf rooting stock believed to have been planted by members of the applicants' family, are of no consequence, and would be removed. The third tree, heavily covered in ivy, is believed to be a cider apple and would be retained for its nature conservation value as recommended by the applicants' ecologist. The applicants would accept a planning condition requiring the retention of this tree, together with any protective measures to safeguard it during the course of construction.

6.4.8 The front boundary hedge, currently overgrown, would need to be replanted to create an attractive and wildlife rich frontage. This would also increase privacy for the occupants of the new property and also to residents on the eastern side of the lane. The lane verge would be planted with native bulbs. The boundary with Hatchers would require the erection of a 1.8 metre fence to maintain privacy and planted with a wildlife

species rich hedge along part of its length. The western boundary would require a replacement stockproof fence and would also be planted with a wildlife species rich hedge.

6.4.9 Additional tree planting would also be undertaken within the site. This would be consistent with the character of the surrounding properties and landscape, whilst helping to integrate the dwelling into the landscape and adding wildlife value. The tree species chosen would be appropriate to this locality and their position in close proximity to dwellings in order to avoid adversely impacting upon residential amenity.

6.4.10 the proposed landscaping of the site would not only result in an enhanced wildlife habitat but further integrate the development into the wider landscape, such that overall it would have no adverse impact upon the wider landscape, protecting the character and appearance of the AONB as required by UDP Policy S7.

## 6.5 Appearance

6.5.1 The properties within this area of the village exhibit an eclectic mix of styles and external appearances. The aim should be to ensure that the appearance of the proposed dwelling does not result in it standing out, particularly when viewed from the west, whilst also reflecting the palette of materials and colours prevalent in this part of the AONB. The use of a red/brown brick rather than a white render, and brown tiles would appear appropriate. However, a palette of materials and finishes would be agreed with the LPA at the detailed application stage.

## 6.6 Access

6.6.1 The site itself is relatively level, allowing the design to provide for inclusive access to the property meeting the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations 2004. The surfacing of the vehicular and pedestrian access and turning areas to the property would be suitable for wheelchair users, etc. Access to public transport would be limited, owing to the restricted bus service timetable, although the bus stop is within easy walking distance. However, the site lies within reasonable walking/cycling distance of Ross allowing accessibility to service and employment opportunities by means other than the private car, meeting the requirements of UDP Policies DR2 and S6.

## 6.7 Energy Conservation and Sustainable Drainage.

6.7.1 The property would be designed to meet or exceed Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Consideration would also be given, where cost effective, to the installation of cost effective renewable energy measures such as solar or photovoltaic panels, air or ground source heat pumps, etc. The site does not lie within a flood risk area and surface water drainage from roofs would be contained within the site by the use of soakaways designed to meet EA standards and with capacity to ensure that no off site flooding occurred during extreme weather events. Consideration would also be given to the installation of rainwater harvesting and reuse. Hard surfaced external areas would be constructed using permeable materials. Foul drainage would be to the main sewer, located in the adjacent lane.

## 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The erection of one, single storey dwelling, sensitively designed and using external materials in character with the locality and the AONB, would be the most appropriate form of development on this infill site, part of a former intensive poultry farm. Such a property would have no unacceptable adverse impact upon the area's housing distribution strategy or upon the character and appearance of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposal would not be in conflict with UDP Policies LA1 or HBA9. An ecological study has determined that the development of the site would cause no harm to wildlife habitats or protected species, subject to mitigation measures being incorporated into the scheme, and the illustrated landscaping would enhance the wildlife value of the plot.

7.2 It is believed that small scale infill development of this type, located within an existing group of dwellings, would satisfy and meet the aspirations of the majority of parishioners and the Parish Council as set out in the Community Led Plan. The Parish Council raised no objection to the previous outline planning application. From the number of positive letters previously submitted by residents living off the lane, there appears to be significant support for the erection of a dwelling on the site rather than allowing it to continue as an unutilised and unkempt plot of land.

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Document HP5 dated 10/11/2012

Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye

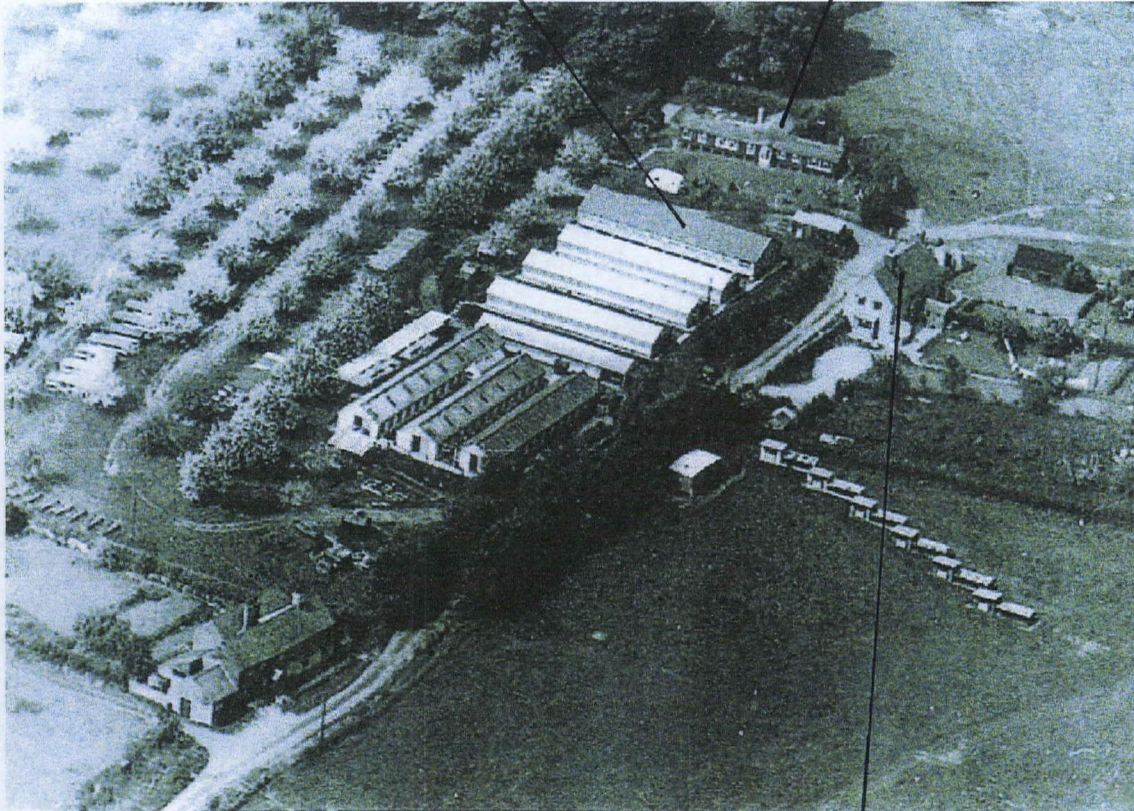
Photographs

### **Photograph 1**

Aerial photograph showing extent of former Harwell Poultry Farm and large "brooder" building on application plot. Note originally undeveloped garden areas of Townsend Cottage and Abbey Haven (formerly Marloes).

Large "brooder"  
building on  
application plot

Adjoining property Harwell  
prior to renovation and  
extension



Abbey Haven (formerly  
Marloes) & Townsend  
Cottage prior to the  
residential development of  
their gardens.



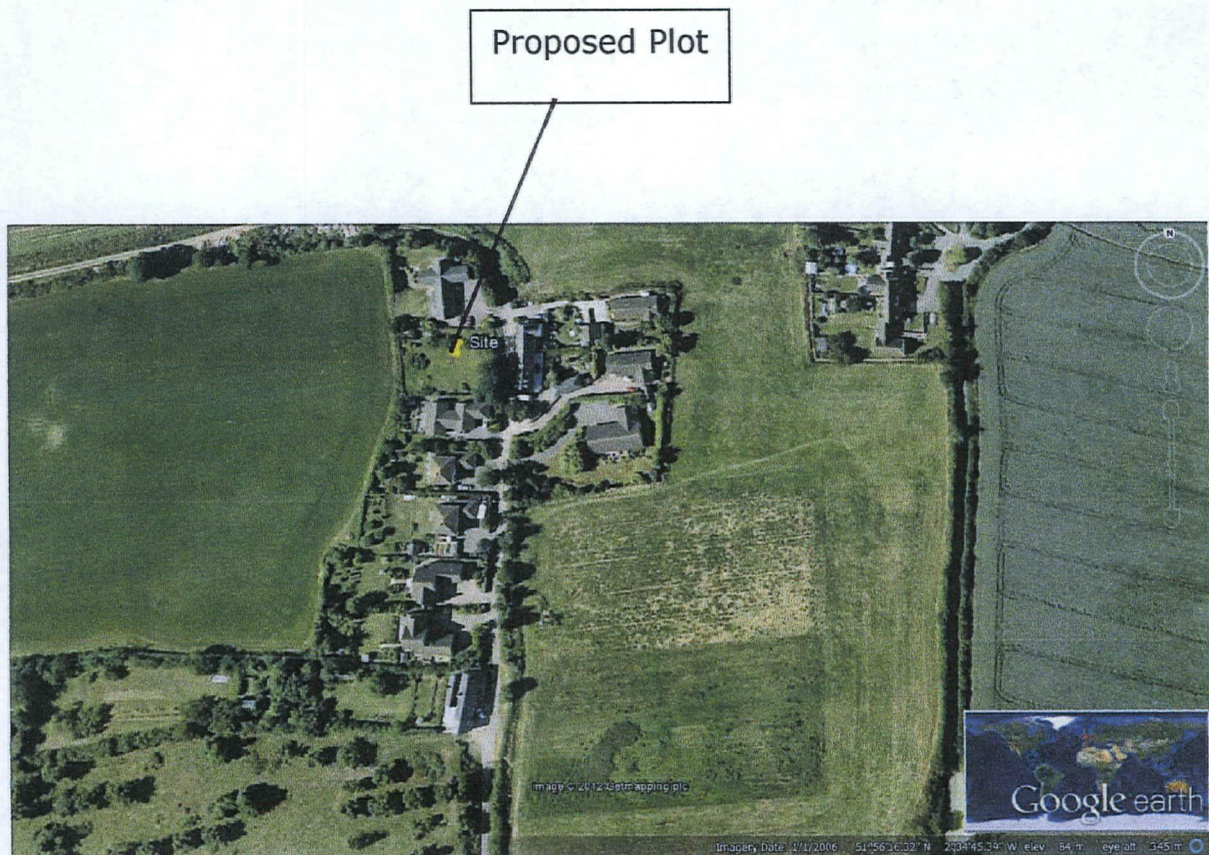
Document HP5 dated 10/11/2012 continued

Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye

Photographs

## Photograph 2

Aerial view of proposed plot in the context of adjoining development





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Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbotts, Ross-on-Wye

### Photographs



**Photograph 3**

Access lane  
serving the plot.



**Photograph 4**

Access lane with  
Abbey Haven and  
Townsend Cottage on  
the right.



**Photograph 5**

Existing access to  
plot and ash tree to  
be retained.



Document HP5 dated 10/11/2012 continued

Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye

Photographs



**Photograph 6**

View of the plot with Townsend Cottage and Abbey Haven in the background. Ivy clad apple tree in top centre to be retained.



**Photograph 7**

View of plot northwards with Harwell in the background. Also in view are 2 garden apple trees (to be removed) and ivy clad apple tree (to be retained).



**Photograph 8**

Southern gable end to Harwell and northern hedge boundary to site.



Document HP5 dated 10/11/2012 continued

Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye

### Photographs



**Photograph 9**

View of Hatchers  
from the plot.



**Photograph 10**

View showing some  
other dwellings located  
off the access lane.



**Photograph 11**

View of plot and  
adjoining development  
from the West .



Document HP5 continued 10/11/2012.

Plot adjacent to Harwell, Brampton Abbots, Ross-on-Wye

Photographs



**Photograph 12**

Proposed access location  
adjacent to Hatchers.



**Photograph 13**

View of Abbey Haven from  
Plot.