Marlbrook Hall
Proposed Barn Egg Laying Unit

(APP No: 193911)

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

February 2020

Viento Environmental Limited
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Landscape and Visual Assessment

INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of a landscape and visual impact assessment that has been undertaken to identify the likely effects of the proposed barn egg laying development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the locality.
2. The assessment has concentrated on a 3.0km radius study area for landscape character, landscape designations and visual amenity, which is considered sufficient to identify all likely impacts on landscape character and visual amenity given the limited height and extent of the development (see **Figure LV1** for the extent of the study area).
3. The assessment is illustrated by **Figures LV1 – LV3, Appendix 1** and by **Viewpoints 1 - 6**.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment Approach

4. The assessment is a study identifying the key views towards the proposed development and describing how these views could change as a result of the proposal. In addition, the study identifies the landscape character of the site and surroundings and sets out the potential changes to landscape character that could occur as a result of the proposal.
5. The methodology used in this study conforms to the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). GLVIA3 recommends that for non-EIA development, an assessment of significance is not required and that the assessment should also be proportionate to the scale of the project and the nature of its likely effects.

Good Practice Guidance and Data

6. As mentioned above, the assessment has utilised guidance set out within the GLVIA3. The assessment has also taken account of Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Photographs illustrating views from each viewpoint have been taken using a Canon EOS 6D digital camera using a fixed lens with a 50mm focal length. Some viewpoints are illustrated within the report as single frame images where no set viewing distance should be ascribed to each view. The photomontages provided have a set viewing distance and are to be produced at A3 size, with the viewing distance indicated in the photomontage booklet. The viewpoint images are provided for information purposes and are labelled with relevant notes and should not be considered as a substitute to visiting a viewpoint in the field.

Assessment Process

7. The assessment has involved information review, fieldwork observations and photography, and has been undertaken in several stages, as presented in the following sections of this report:
    - Predicted effects and mitigation – a review of the visual characteristics of the proposed development to identify the aspects with the potential to give rise to visual effects and a description of the measures incorporated into the design to mitigate these effects.
    - Landscape and visual context – a review of the existing landscape and visual baseline of the study area, to identify landscape character, landscape designations and visual receptors in the study area.
    - Viewpoint analysis – to illustrate typical local views and to predict the changes to views as a result of the proposed development from a selection of viewpoints that represent the main visual receptors in the study area.
    - Landscape assessment – an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development on landscape fabric, landscape character and landscape designations in the landscape study area.
    - Visual assessment – an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development on the visual amenity of receptors in the visual study area.
    - Conclusions – a summary of the findings of the landscape and visual assessments.

Prediction Methodologies

8. The prediction methodologies for the viewpoint analysis, landscape assessment and visual assessment are provided at the beginning of these sections.

PREDICTED EFFECTS AND MITIGATION

9. A detailed description of the proposed development and information on the installation of the various components of this proposed development are provided in **the Design and Access Statement** of the Planning Application**.**
10. It is the visual appearance of the proposed development and associated activities and any proposed changes to the existing landscape fabric of the site that are the main aspects of the development with the potential to affect landscape and visual amenity and these are summarised below.
11. The main elements of the proposed development that would be visible would be:
    - Built form – a series of three buildings linked on the western end. Each building would measure approximately 98m by 15.5m and the three units together with their interlocking

structure would cover an area of 98m by 68.3m. Each building would measure 5.23m to the ridge of the roof with an eaves height of approximately 2.9m. Six extraction fans would be located along the ridge of the roofline at a height of 0.89m above the roof, with further extraction fans and inlets on the side walls and rear gable end walls of the buildings. Two silos would be located adjacent to the southern corner of the building, with a further two located between two of the buildings as shown on the floor plans (RB-MZ398-03) and would be of a height of up to 8.44m. The building, roof and silos/hoppers would all be moorland green (or similar) in colour. (Final colours to be agreed with the Council).

- Access track – access to the new building would be via an existing field access point to the field, incorporating a very short section of proposed track and hardstanding surrounding the building. Access from the public highway would be through the existing farmyard at and along an existing track to the site field. This access would require no alterations or removal of any hedgerows or trees.
- Deliveries to and from the site (as set out within the Design and Access Statement).
- Earthworks – the landform across the site would be levelled to create a flat finished floor level for the building. This would predominantly involve movement and levelling of soils across the floor plan area rather than any significant cut or fill earthworks. This information is shown on Plans RB-MZ398-05 and RB-MZ398-06.
- Landscape enhancement proposals – a detailed planting scheme would be submitted post permission. **Figure LV3** indicates the proposed landscaping measures such as the new native tree belts/woodland areas within the site field to the north and south of the proposed development, and the woodland area to the northeast. These measures are proposed to aid in the integration of the building into the area as well as adding enhancements to local landscape fabric.

12. From a landscape and visual perspective, the number of elements visible has been minimised by the positioning of the proposal adjacent to the existing poultry unit at the farm, so that existing access and tracks can be utilised. In addition, the proposed colour for the building is moorland green to match with the existing adjacent building. The proposal has been located within a field with mature existing boundary hedgerows and a comprehensive set of landscape enhancements associated with the proposal aim to integrate the application well into its locality.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

13. The proposed development would be situated within a large pasture field to the northeast of the existing farm. As part of the current farming operation, an existing poultry unit is located immediately northeast of the farm (built just over ten years ago), with an earth bund and existing trees located immediately east of this building. As part of this application a large part of the earth bund and some of the existing trees would be removed so that the proposal could be situated adjacent to the existing poultry unit. However, the southern part of the earth bund and tree planting would be retained.
14. Within the existing farmstead, a number of large barns and agricultural buildings currently exist, including large units to the west of the main farmyard which house pigs and two large barns to the southeast of the main farmyard used for farm storage. Currently the existing farm buildings as a whole spread across a width of approximately 450m, east to west.
15. As mentioned above, the site field is laid to pasture. It is broadly oblong in shape, with hedgerows along its northern, eastern and southern boundaries, with a number of mature trees located within these hedgerows and a single mature tree within the field itself. The western field boundary is currently delineated by an earth bund with poplar trees on it. As mentioned above, the northern and central portion of this bund and trees would be removed to accommodate the new proposal. The site field very gently slopes up towards the southeast corner. A public footpath enters the site field approximately a third of the way along the southern field boundary, follows the inside of this field boundary within the site field as it travels due east and then turns north, exiting the site field in the northeast corner.
16. The nearest residential properties to the proposed building are Marlbrook Hall itself, approximately 250m west from the closest part of the proposed development. Beyond this, Brick Barn is located approximately 360m north of the proposal, Willows Cottages are located nearby; approximately 500m to the north and The Willows is approximately 700m to the northwest. The villages of Leinthall Starkes, Elton and Burrington are the next nearest main residential areas at distances of over 1km from the proposal.

Landscape Fabric

17. The field within which the proposed development would be located is currently used for pasture. As mentioned above, the field is mainly bounded by hedgerows with several hedgerow trees, especially on the northern boundary. A footpath runs along parts of the southern and eastern boundaries of the site, and then follows a route east to join the Herefordshire Trail.
18. The farm track which runs from the local road to the site currently includes a dense hedge with trees along its northern boundary. The local road itself is characteristically bounded by

hedgerows along its length, with some hedgerow trees and only very occasional small breaks in the hedges. Typically the roadside hedges local to the site are approximately 1.5m – 2m in height.

19. In general there is a wealth of vegetation within the local landscape. Hedgerows form the typical field boundary, with regular hedgerow trees, as well as occasional trees within fields themselves. Tree belts are common along watercourses and associated with farm buildings within the centre of the study area. Across higher ground within the north, east and south of the study area mixed woodland blocks are a common feature, giving this local landscape a well vegetated feel. Woodland in the study area includes Sasel Wood, Gatley Long Coppice, Limekilm Coppice, Barn Coppice, Oxleasow Coppice, Oldfield Coppice and Petchfield Copse to the south, Evenhay Plantation, Brush Wood, Kingacre Wood, Hall Wood and Ashton Copse to the east, Long Larches, Monstay Rough, Nunfield Gutter, Bringewood, Burrington Hays, Downton Walks, Owney Wood and Standledean Wood to the north. Beyond these large woodland blocks, tree belts are a regular feature, commonly associated with watercourses.
20. The landform of the site field itself very gently rises to the east. The finished floor level for the building is to be approximately 127.5m AOD. Currently the location of the proposed building within the site field is at between approximately 126m and 130m AOD, and the wider site field then gently rises to approximately 135m AOD to the east. Beyond the site field the local landscape gently undulates within the centre of the study area, but is a lower elevation to the west (approximately 110m AOD), with a series of hills and ridges to the south, east and north rising to high points of between 240m and 335m AOD.
21. It is worthwhile to note that one other existing poultry development was identified within the 3km radius study area beyond the existing unit at Marlbrook Hall itself. This additional poultry development is at Burrington Farm, approximately 1.3km north of the proposed development and is a development of four poultry buildings. These buildings are of a similar style and mass to the proposal.

Landscape Character

22. Within the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (HCC SPG 2004, updated 2009) the proposed development would be entirely located within the Principal Settled Farmlands Landscape Character Type (LCT), as indicated on **Figure LV2**.
23. The Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment describes the key characteristics of the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT as:

    Primary

    - Hedgerows used for field boundaries.

Secondary

- Mixed farming land use.

24. The descriptive text associated with the LCT further describes the characteristics of the LCT, such as noting that this is a rolling lowland area and a settled agricultural landscape of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. Management guidelines for the LCT include conserving and enhancing the unity of small to medium scale hedged fields. It notes that additional tree planting in the vicinity of settlement would be appropriate.
25. Within Herefordshire, seven LCTs fall within the 3km radius study area, as indicated on **Figure LV2** (Principal Settled Farmlands, Wooded Forest, Principal Wooded Hills, Riverside Meadows, Enclosed Moors and Commons, Wooded Estatelands and Wet Pasture Meadows LCTs). These are discussed in greater detail later within this report and descriptive extracts of these LCTs are included within **Appendix 1**.

Landscape Designations

26. There are no national or local landscape designations in the 3.0km radius study area.
27. Two historic parks and gardens are located within the 3.0km radius study area; Downton Castle is located approximately 1.5km north of the proposed development at its closest point and Gatley Park is located approximately 2.3km south of the proposal at its closest point, as indicated on **Figure LV1**. These areas are discussed in more detail later within this report, but are assessed in more detail within the archaeology/cultural heritage assessment.

Visual Receptors

28. The visual receptor locations within the 3.0km radius study area include:
    - Settlements – Leinthall Starkes, Elton, Burrington, Downton on the Rock and Wigmore.
    - Individual residential properties – scattered houses and farmsteads.
    - Long distance recreational routes – the Herefordshire Trail and National Byway.
    - Local public rights of way – footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic (BOATs).
    - Public highways – a network of minor roads.
29. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Access Lands Maps on the Natural England website [1] have been checked and show a few areas of access land within 3.0km of the site. These are mainly formed by Evenhay Plantation in the far southeast of the study area, Long Larches and Monstay Rough in the northeast and Burrington Hays and Bringewood in the north.

1 www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Theoretical Visibility Analysis

30. **Figure LV1** includes a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the proposed buildings, indicating the locations within a 3.0km radius where topography would theoretically allow visibility of the proposed development. This has been based on two of the highest points of the proposed poultry unit buildings; the ridge of the roofline (Points A and B). These points have been used at a height above ground level relating to the height of these built elements within the design, taking the earthworks on the site into account. The ZTV has been generated using a computer-based intervisibility package and the Ordnance Survey Digital Terrain Model (DTM) with height data at 50m intervals.

31. The ZTV is based on bare terrain topographical data only. It does not take into account the screening effects of any minor topographic features, vegetation such as woodland, tree belts and hedgerows or built structures and therefore tends to over-emphasise the extent of visibility in this type of well vegetated landscape, providing a worst case scenario. In reality, these surface features would fragment and reduce the extent of most of these zones of theoretical visibility, and, in a well vegetated landscape such as this, would also reduce the amount/proportion of the proposed development visible from any given location.

32. The ZTV does not illustrate the decrease in the scale of the proposed built development with increased distance from the site which is better illustrated by viewpoints. As a result, fieldwork and the viewpoint analysis are essential as a way of verifying the ZTV and undertaking a thorough assessment.

Viewpoint Analysis

33. Six viewpoints were selected as representing and illustrating some of the most open and/or key locations or receptors within the 3.0km radius study area and have been located in positions where the ZTV has suggested that potential visibility of the proposed building may be available. These viewpoints are listed below and the locations of these viewpoints are shown on **Figures LV1 and LV2**. A detailed description of these viewpoints and the potential changes that would occur through the introduction of the proposed development are contained below. The viewpoint images are provided for information purposes and are labelled with relevant notes and should not be considered as a substitute to visiting a viewpoint in the field. The photomontages that have been provided have a set viewing distance at A3 size which is indicated in the photomontage booklet. The photomontages illustrate the potential visibility of the main poultry unit buildings and grain silos only. It should also be noted that the existing

trees on the earth mound immediately between the existing poultry unit and the proposed poultry units have not been removed within the photomontages. The photographs were taken during winter months when no leaves are on these trees and it was impossible to differentiate between these trees and nearby trees on photographs. The main location where these trees are discernible is Viewpoint 1.

Table LV1 – List of viewpoints

Vp	Viewpoint Name	NGR	Distance from proposed poultry building	Landscape Character Type	Visual Receptor
1	Footpath east of site	344280 271135	0.36km	Principal Settled Farmlands	Walkers
2	Footpath southwest of site	343455 270660	0.52km	Principal Settled Farmlands	Walkers
3	Local road near The Willows	343475 271455	0.53km	Principal Settled Farmlands	Motorists
4	Leinthall Starkes	343870 269840	1.16km	Principal Settled Farmlands	Residents, motorists
5	Herefordshire Trail east of Elton Hall	345995 271050	2.06km	Principal Wooded Hills	Walkers
6	Local road south of Downton on the Rock	342840 273040	2.1km	Wooded Estatelands	Motorists

Prediction Methodology

34. The following viewpoint analysis has described the existing view from each viewpoint and has identified the visual receptors at each viewpoint. In accordance with GLVIA3, the sensitivity of each visual receptor group at each location is a function of the susceptibility of visual receptors to change at that location and the value attached to these views.

35. All visual receptors are people and are assumed to be equally sensitive to change. However, the location and activities of visual receptors influence the way in which they currently experience the landscape and views, the extent to which views of the surrounding landscape may contribute to their existing visual amenity, the value they place on these views and their susceptibility to changes in these views. Accordingly, at any one location there may be different levels of sensitivity for the different receptor groups, the sensitivity may vary depending on the direction of the view, and any one receptor group may be accorded different levels of sensitivity at different locations.

36. Receptor susceptibility levels of susceptible, moderate susceptibility and slight susceptibility are used taking into account the following factors:

- Receptor location, occupation or activity,
- Movement of receptor and duration and frequency of view experienced,
- Focus of attention and interest.

37. The judgement of value is based on a five point scale – National value, County/Borough/District value, Community value, private value, unvalued. The value attached to a location or to a particular view at a location can influence the purpose and expectation of receptors at the location and the judgement of value takes into account:

- Recognised value – for example by the presence of planning designations or designated heritage assets,
- Indicators of value – to individuals, communities and society generally, such as the popularity of a location.

38. Accordingly, within this assessment visual receptor sensitivity is determined in terms of the sensitivity of each location for each receptor type (rather than the sensitivity of the receptors *per se*), using a five point relative scale (high, high/medium, medium, medium/low and low).

39. The magnitude of the change in the views from the six viewpoints has been assessed based on the assessor's interpretation of largely quantifiable parameters, including:

- Distance and direction of the viewpoint from the development.
- Extent of the development visible from the viewpoint.
- Field of view occupied by the development (horizontal and vertical angles of view) and proportion of view (as a percentage of the panorama).
- Context of the view and degree of contrast with the existing landscape and built elements (background, form, composition, pattern, scale and mass, line, movement, colour, texture, etc).
- Scale of change with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view.

- Duration and nature of the effect, eg direct/ indirect, secondary, cumulative, temporary/ permanent, short term/ long term, intermittent/ continuous, reversible/ irreversible, etc (as related to the nature of the development).

40. This magnitude of change scale is a relative scale and is not an absolute scale.

41. The resulting overall degree of impact is a combination of receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change and is divided into eight levels of impact (major, major/moderate, moderate, moderate/ minor, minor, minor/ negligible, negligible and imperceptible) as indicated in the matrix below.

Table LV2: Assessment of overall impact

Location sensitivity	Magnitude of change			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor
High/ medium	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor
Medium	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible
Medium/ low	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible	Imperceptible

Viewpoint 1 – Footpath east of site (see A3 photomontage)

42. This viewpoint is located at approximately 138m AOD and 0.4km east of the proposed development on a footpath within the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT. The footpath runs through the site field and the viewpoint is located on the footpath at the northeast edge of the site field.

43. The north and south boundaries of the site field are visible within the photograph as intact hedgerows with several trees, and the existing poultry building at the farm can be seen within the centre of the view. Currently a low earth bund and a line of poplar trees are located in front of the existing poultry building. Behind this a number of trees within the farmstead (including several conifers) can be seen, with distant higher ground beyond the study area to the west forming the skyline of the view.

44. Initially post construction the three proposed buildings would be clearly visible in the near distance where they would be seen end on, in conjunction with the existing farm buildings and the existing poultry building, although this would be partially screened by the proposal. As part of the application three areas of tree planting are proposed within the site field, along the north and south field boundaries. Over time these tree belts and woodland areas would start to establish and link visually with the existing vegetation backdrop in the view, although they would not screen or filter this particular view of the proposal from this location.

45. The viewpoint represents views of walkers (high/medium sensitivity). The eastern ends of the proposed buildings, silos and hardstanding would be visible in the foreground field where the magnitude of change in the view would be *substantial*, resulting in a *major/ moderate* impact for walkers at this point.

Viewpoint 2 – Footpath southwest of site (see A3 photomontage)

46. This viewpoint is located at approximately 128m AOD and 0.5km southwest of the proposed development on a local footpath within the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT. The main farm buildings at Marlbrook Hall can be seen in the left of the view, with some of the agricultural barns visible within the right of the view. The existing poultry building is entirely screened at this location by mature vegetation within the farm complex. The woodland across the higher ground within the north and northeast of the study area can be seen forming the skyline of the view.

47. The photo-wireframe overlay indicates that the proposed development would be entirely screened from this location by the existing vegetation within the farm complex which already entirely screens the existing poultry unit.

48. The viewpoint represents views of walkers on a local footpath (high/medium sensitivity). There is no view of the proposal and so the magnitude of change in the view would be *none*, resulting in no impact for walkers at this point.

Viewpoint 3 – Local road near The Willows (see A3 photomontage)

49. This viewpoint is located at the junction of a local road with access to The Willows at approximately 127m AOD and 0.5km north of the proposed development within the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT. The local road is characteristically bounded by high hedgerows although this viewpoint is taken at a field opening where there is no hedgerow for approximately 2 metres. The view looks out across the local agricultural fields towards higher wooded hills to the south of Leinthall Starkes. An intermediate tree line is evident and this is associated with the nearby watercourse which runs south of The Willows and Brick Barn. The view also shows

a grouping of mature, largely coniferous, vegetation within the centre and right of the view and this is vegetation at Marlbrook Hall. The regular pattern of hedgerow field boundaries with hedgerow trees can be seen within the middle distance of the view.

50. Initially post construction, the proposal would be partially visible in the middle distance, with some western parts of the buildings and the silos filtered or screened from view by existing vegetation. The eastern parts of the proposal would be discernible, although predominantly only the northern of the three buildings would be seen from this angle, as the wireframe indicates, where it would be seen in association with filtered views of the existing poultry building. The colour of the buildings has been chosen as a suitable fit with the typical surrounding colours. As part of the development proposal tree belts and woodland areas within the site field are proposed which would add further height and depth to the vegetative screening from the north, but as the photomontage illustrates, at five years growth, this planting would not yet be fully established.

51. The viewpoint represents views of motorists (medium sensitivity). Initially the eastern part of the proposal would be visible in the middle distance where the magnitude of change in the view would be *moderate*, resulting in a *moderate/minor* impact for motorists at this point.

Viewpoint 4 – Leinthall Starkes (see A3 photomontage)

52. This viewpoint is located on a local road on the eastern edge of the village at approximately 137m AOD and 1.2km south of the proposed development within the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT and on the boundary with the Principal Wooded Hills LCT. Views are generally open to the north across the Principal Settled Farmlands at this point due to the slightly elevated position of the village with the backdrop of wooded hills behind. Parts of the existing farm at Marlbrook Hall are discernible from this location amongst existing mature vegetation.

53. Initially post construction, limited parts of the roofline of the proposal would be discernible above and amongst existing vegetation within the farm. The grain silos would be screened behind intervening trees and in most seasons and weather conditions the colour of the roofline would blend in with the local colour palette. Over time the proposed tree belt and woodland planting would add further height to the vegetative screening from the south, but as the photomontage illustrates, at five years growth, this planting would not be immediately obvious.

54. The viewpoint represents views of residents (high sensitivity) and motorists (medium sensitivity). The roofline of the southern of the three proposed buildings would be discernible from this location, partially screened by intervening vegetation which also screens the grain silos and the hardstanding areas. The magnitude of change in the view would be *slight*, resulting in a *moderate* impact for residents and a *minor* impact for motorists at this point.

Viewpoint 5 – Herefordshire Trail east of Elton Hall (see A3 photomontage)

55. This viewpoint is located on a long distance footpath to the east of Elton at approximately 164m AOD and 2.1km east of the proposed development, located within the Principal Wooded Hills LCT. At this location the foreground view is quite enclosed by mature vegetation and the built form of Elton Hall, although higher distant hills to the west form a panoramic element within the view. Middle distance landform is predominantly filtered by the layering of vegetation across lower lying areas.

56. The proposed development would be located within the middle distance landscape seen immediately above Elton Hall, although the intervening landform itself would partially screen large parts of the proposal, as indicated by the wireframe image. In addition to this, the layering of intervening mature vegetation would further screen the proposal so that it would barely be discernible.

57. The viewpoint represents views of walkers on a long distance footpath (high/medium sensitivity), where the proposal would be barely visible, resulting in a *negligible* magnitude of change and *minor* impacts on walkers at this point.

Viewpoint 6 – Local road south of Downton on the Rock

58. This viewpoint is located on a local road at approximately 150m AOD and 2.1km northwest of the proposed development, within the Wooded Estatelands LCT. Vegetation lines the road, although from a gap in the vegetation, this view is available showing distant visibility of the

Leinthall Starkes windmill and the distant wooded hills. The intermediate lower lying farmland is entirely screened from view by mature woodland on nearby hills. The proposed site forms a part of this intermediate farmland that is screened from view, as is Marlbrook Hall itself. Therefore, the proposal would also be entirely screened from view.

59. The viewpoint represents views of motorists (medium sensitivity), where no visibility of the proposal would be available, resulting in no impacts on motorists at this point.

Table LV3 – Summary of visual impacts

Vp	Viewpoint Name	Distance from proposed building	Predicted Visual Impacts
1	Footpath east of site	0.4km	Walkers – major/ moderate impacts
2	Footpath southwest of site	0.5km	No impacts
3	Local road near The Willows	0.5km	Motorists – moderate/ minor impacts
4	Leinthall Starkes	1.2km	Residents - moderate impacts Motorists – minor impacts
5	Herefordshire Trail east of Elton Hall	2.1km	Walkers - minor impacts
6	Local road south of Downton on the Rock	2.1km	No Impacts

Further Photographs

60. It is noted that the ZTV in **Figure LV1** suggests that the proposed development may potentially be visible from a range of parts of the 3km radius study area. However, the ZTV does not take account of the screening effects of vegetation and built form. In this type of landscape where the site is located within a gently undulating landform with rising land surrounding, the ZTV will tend to over emphasise the potential visibility of the proposal, especially within a well vegetated study area such as this. This has been indicated by the viewpoints. Fieldwork has suggested that even in many locations where the ZTV suggested visibility of the proposal could potentially

be available, in reality good levels of vegetation combined with the local topography would regularly screen the proposed development from view. The photographs below have been provided as evidence of this extremely limited potential visibility, but also to give an illustration of the character and typical views available from a number of local footpaths and roads within the local area.

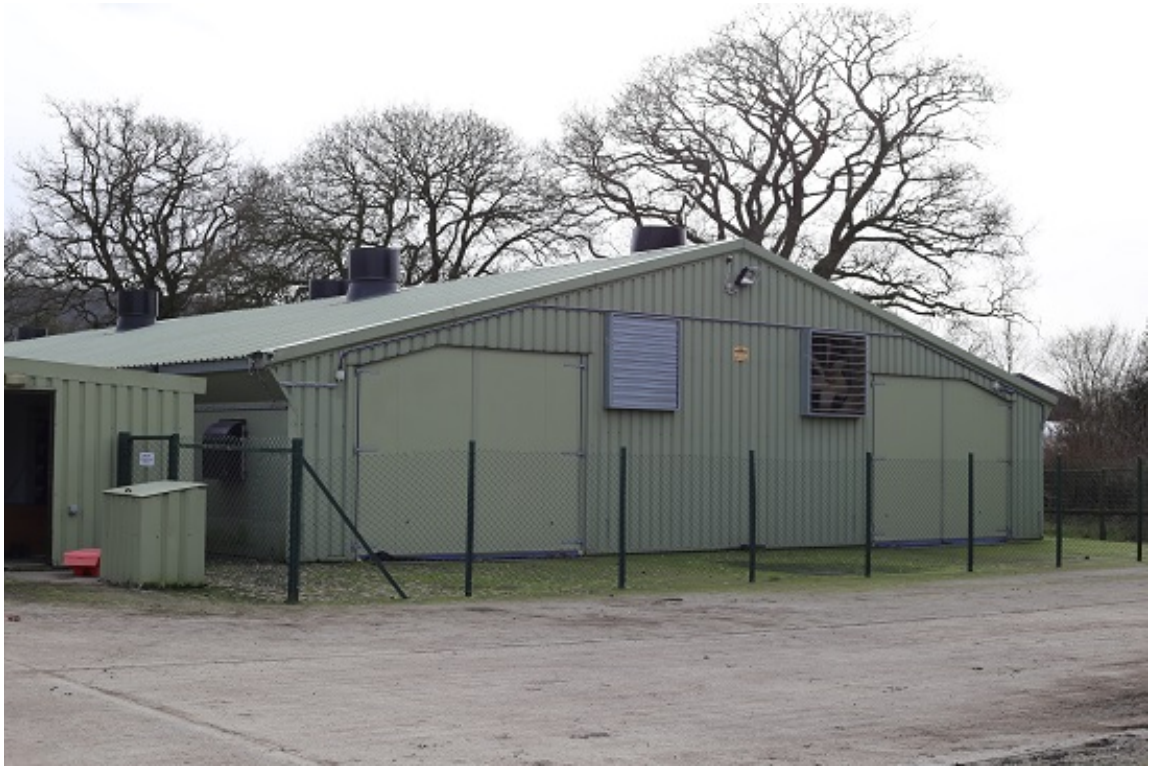

Plate 1 – Existing poultry building at Marlbrook Hall.

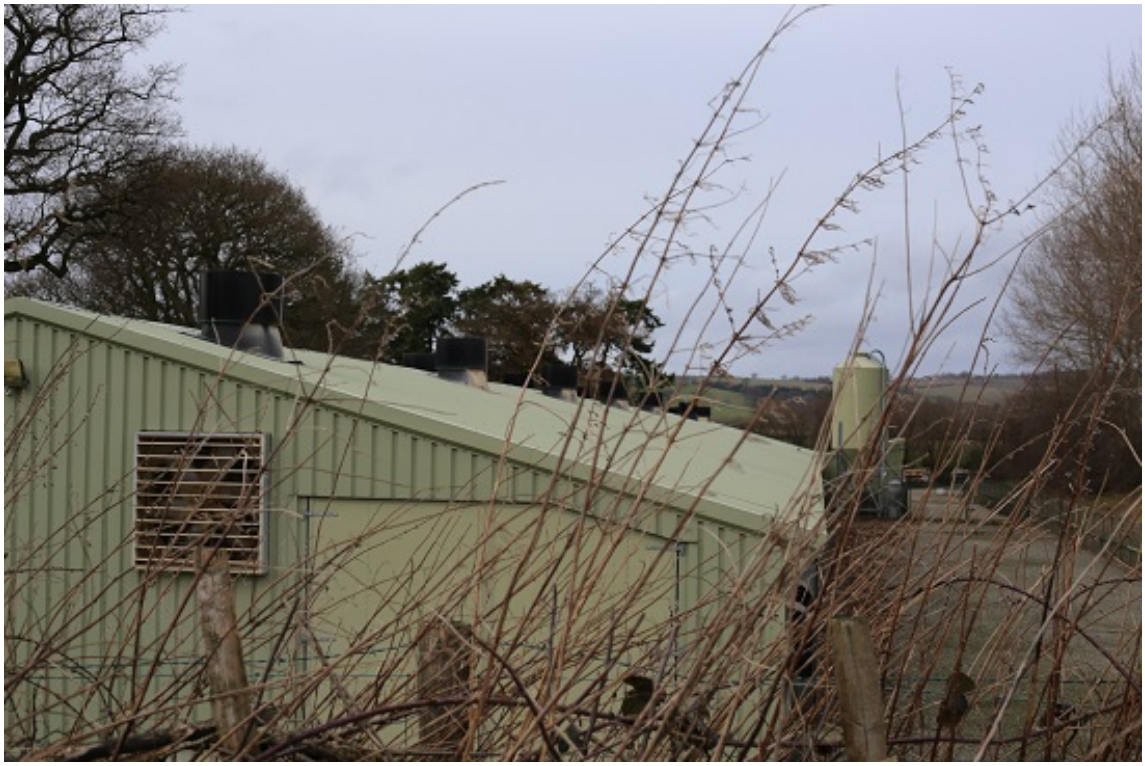

Plate 2 – Existing poultry building at Marlbrook Hall.

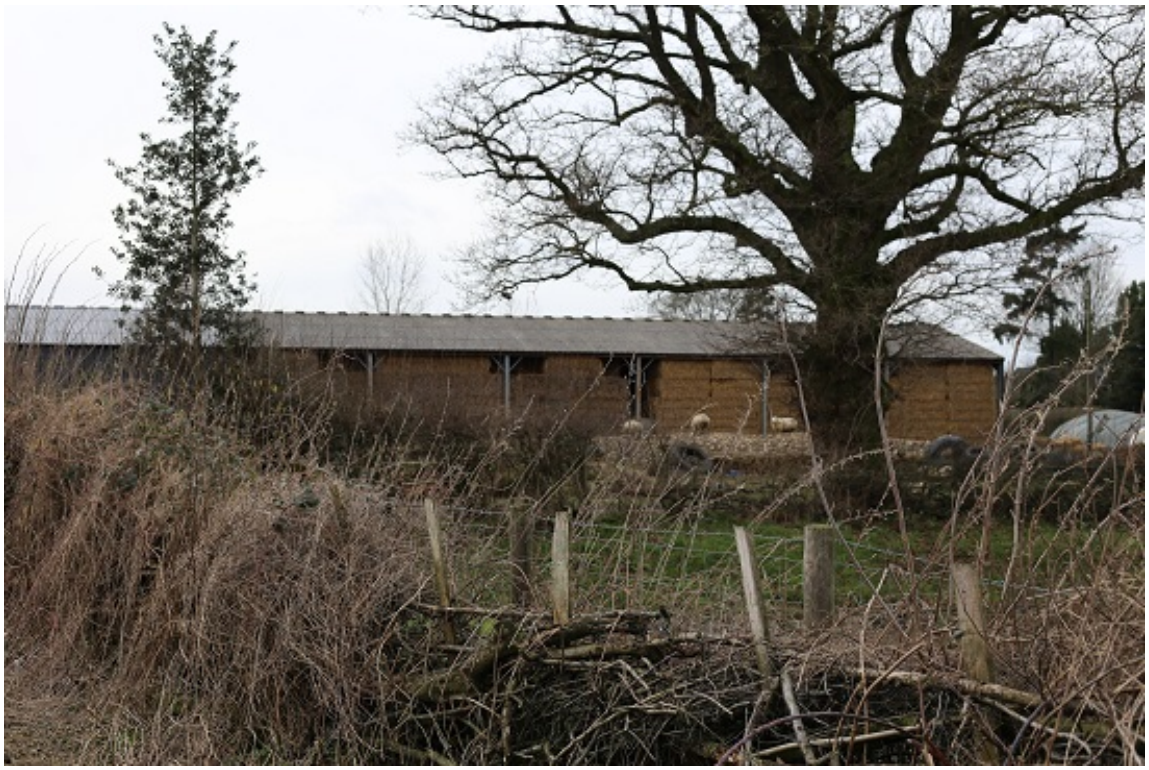

Plate 3 – Example of existing large scale agricultural barns at Marlbrook Hall.

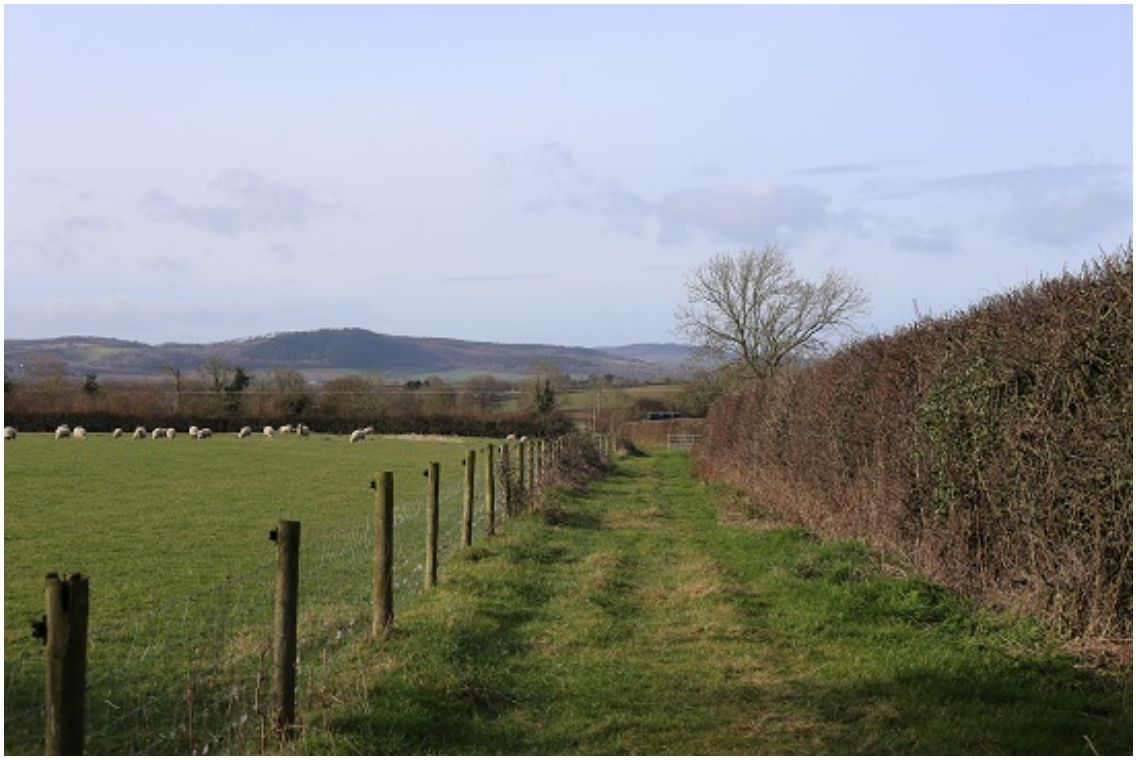

Plate 4 – View west towards Marlbrook Hall from Herefordshire Trail through Elton. 345745 271130.

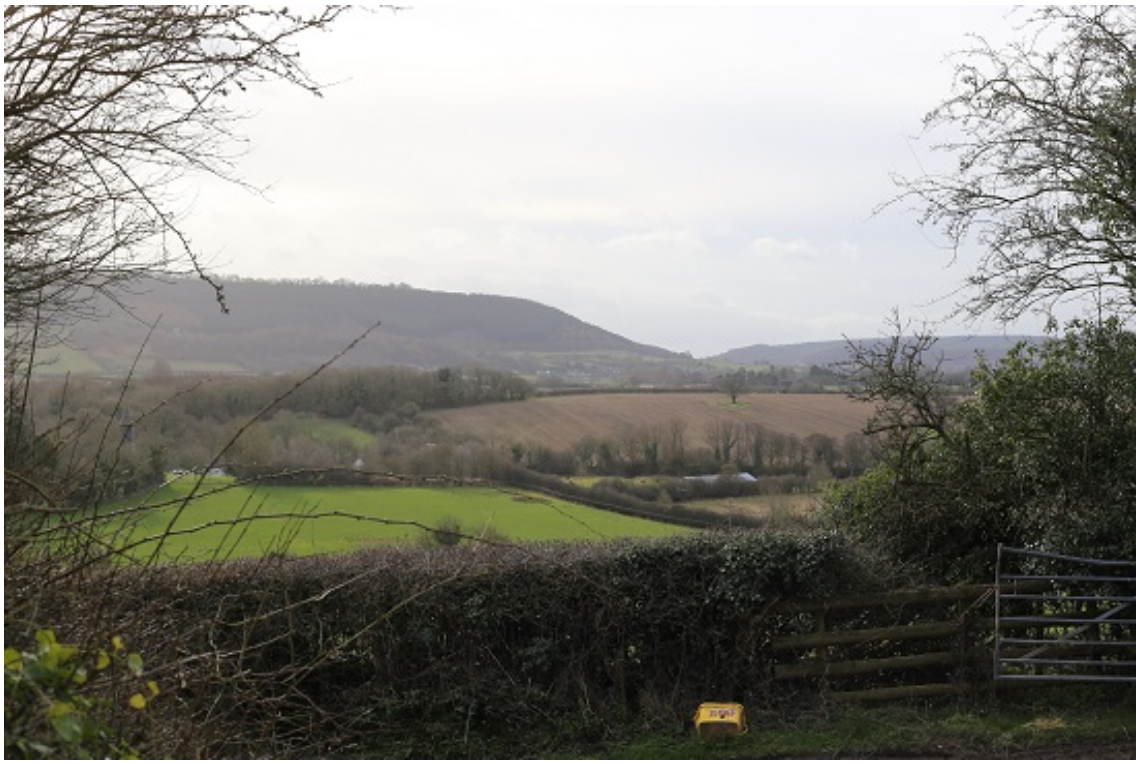

Plate 5 – View south from high land above Burrington at 344175 272590. Marlbrook Hall is entirely screened from view and proposed development would also not be visible.

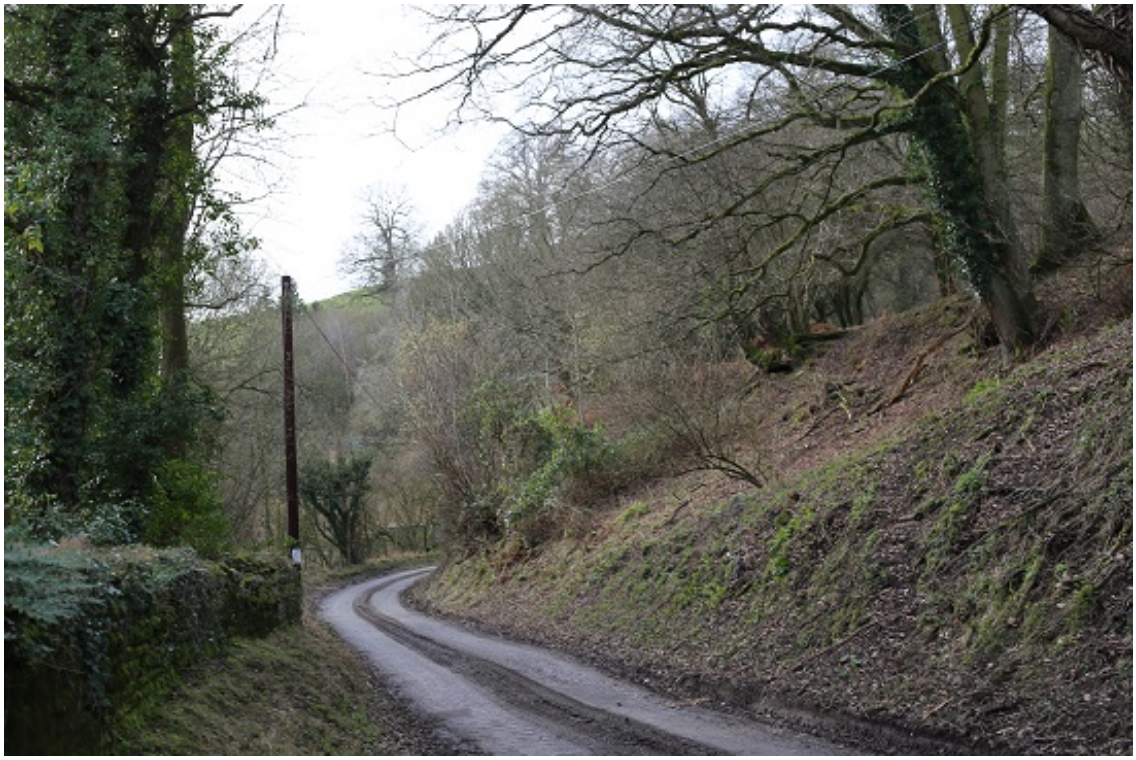

Plate 6 – Typically enclosed views along roadside near Downton on the Rock at 342840 273040.

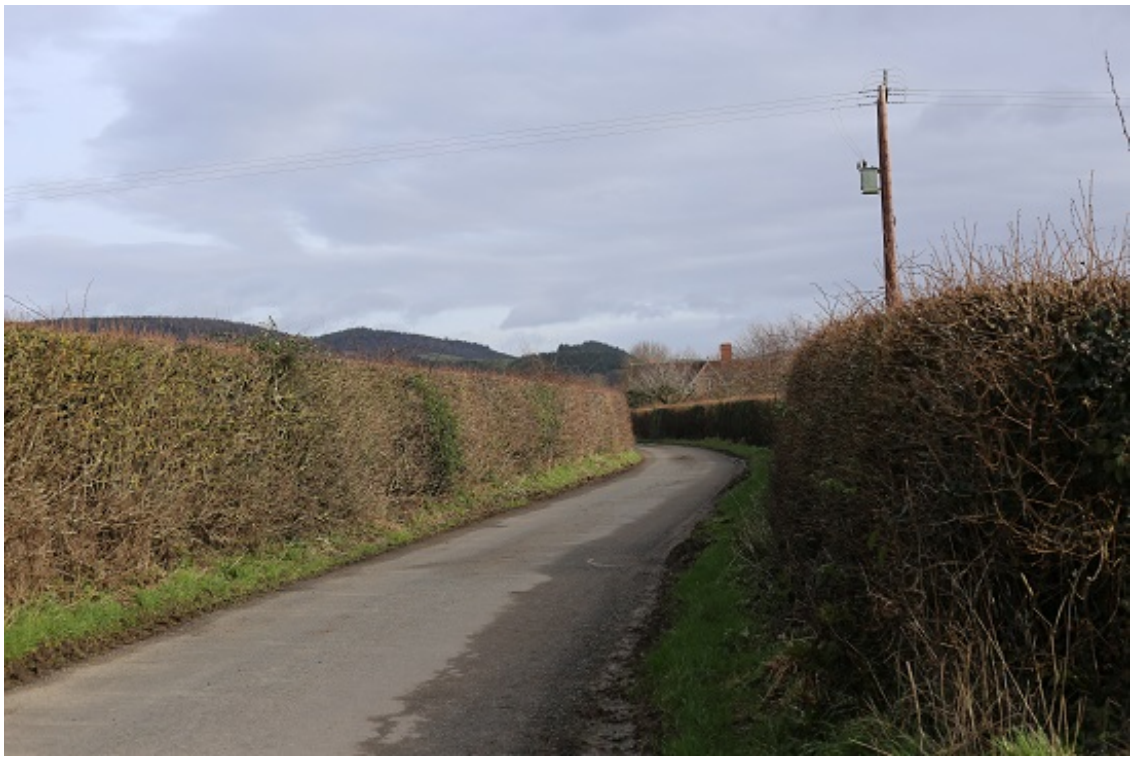

Plate 7 – Typical roadside vegetation along roads local to the site at 343475 271455.

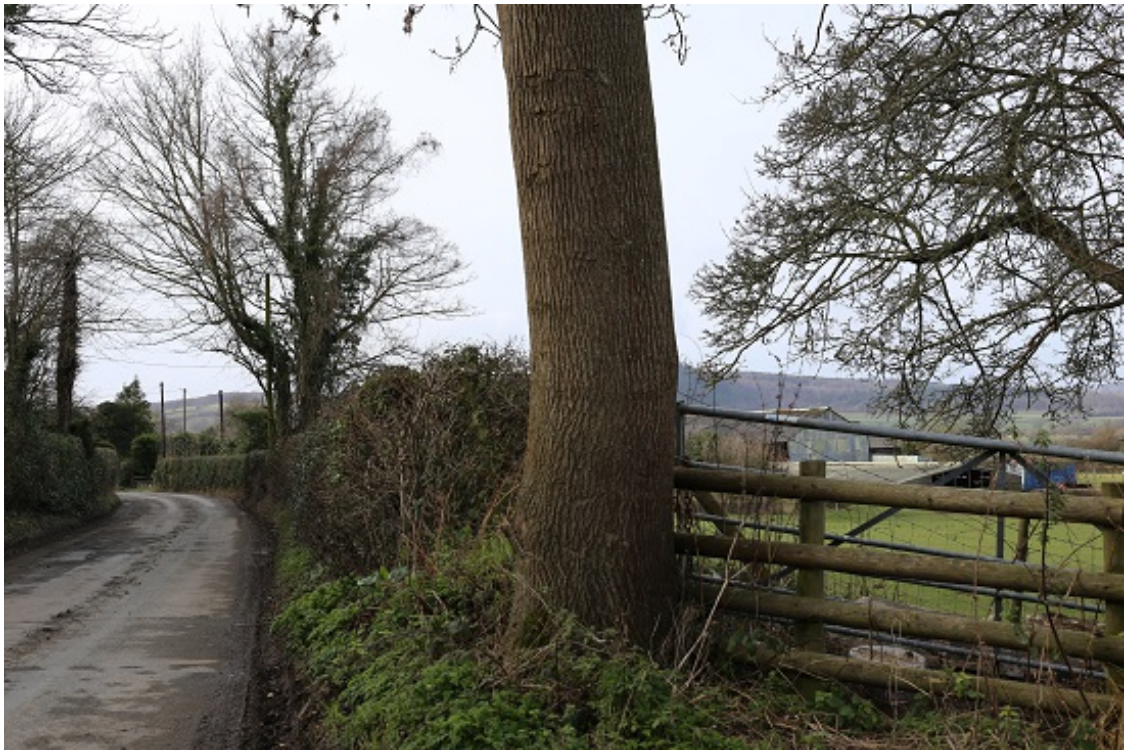

Plate 8 – Typical roadside vegetation along road through Leinthall Starkes at 343870 269840.

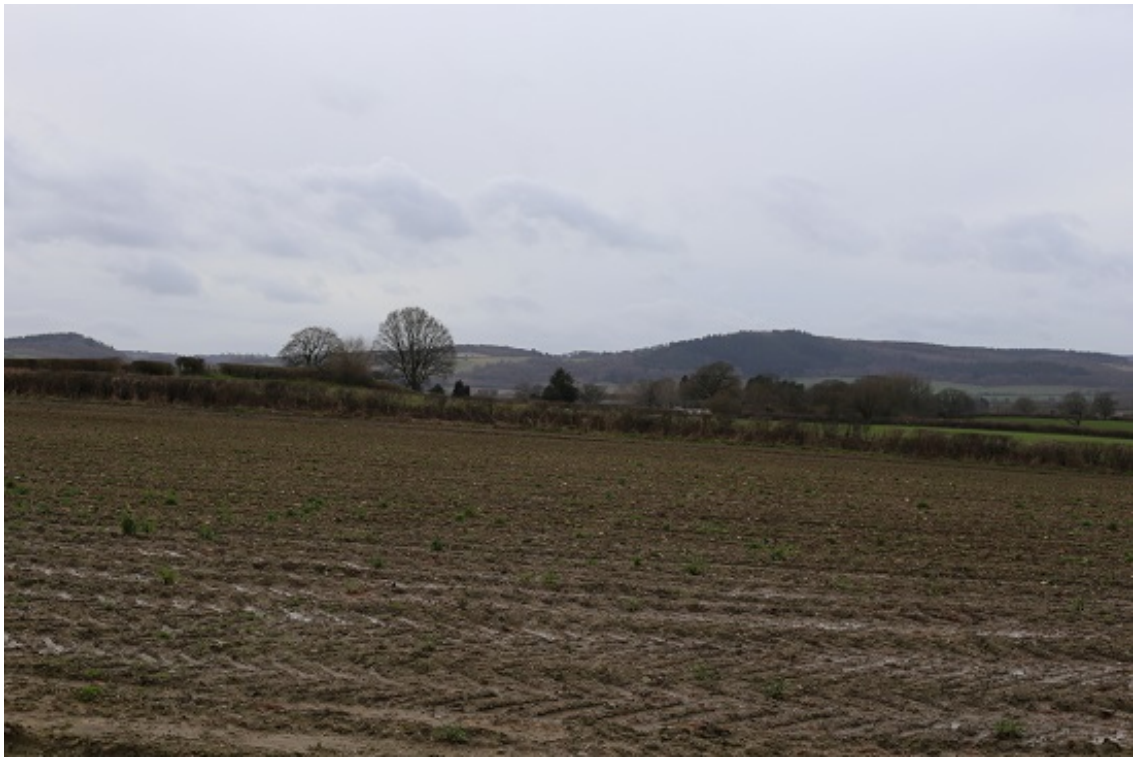

Plate 9 – View towards the site screened by intervening vegetation from Herefordshire Trail at 344570 271310. Note that existing poultry building is not visible.

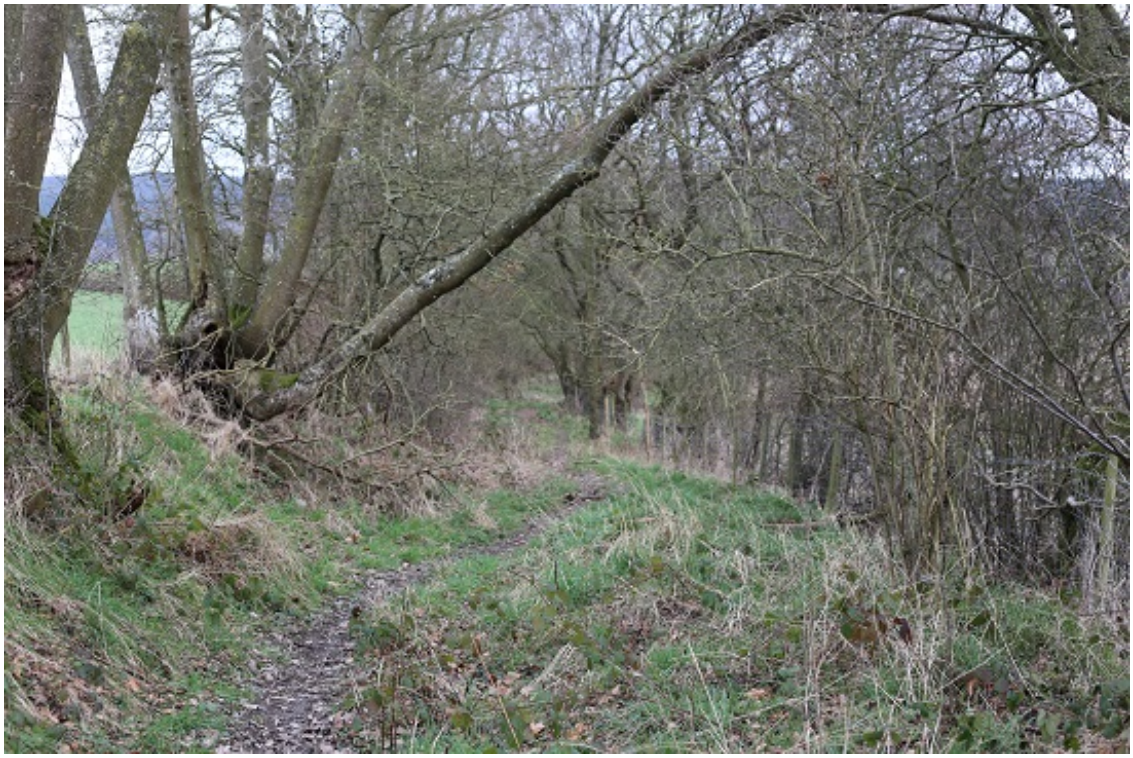

Plate 10 – Several parts of the Herefordshire Trail are enclosed by vegetation at 344625 271160.

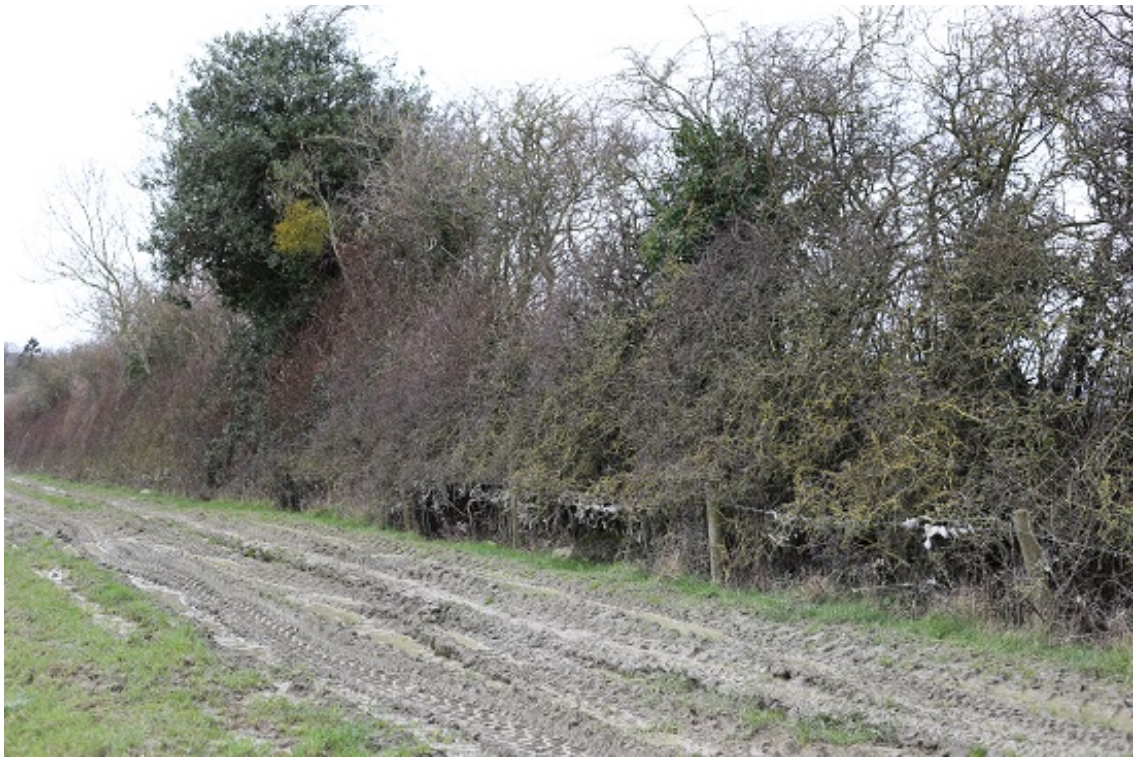

Plate 11 – Existing vegetation along the southern field boundary of the site field at 344005 271005.

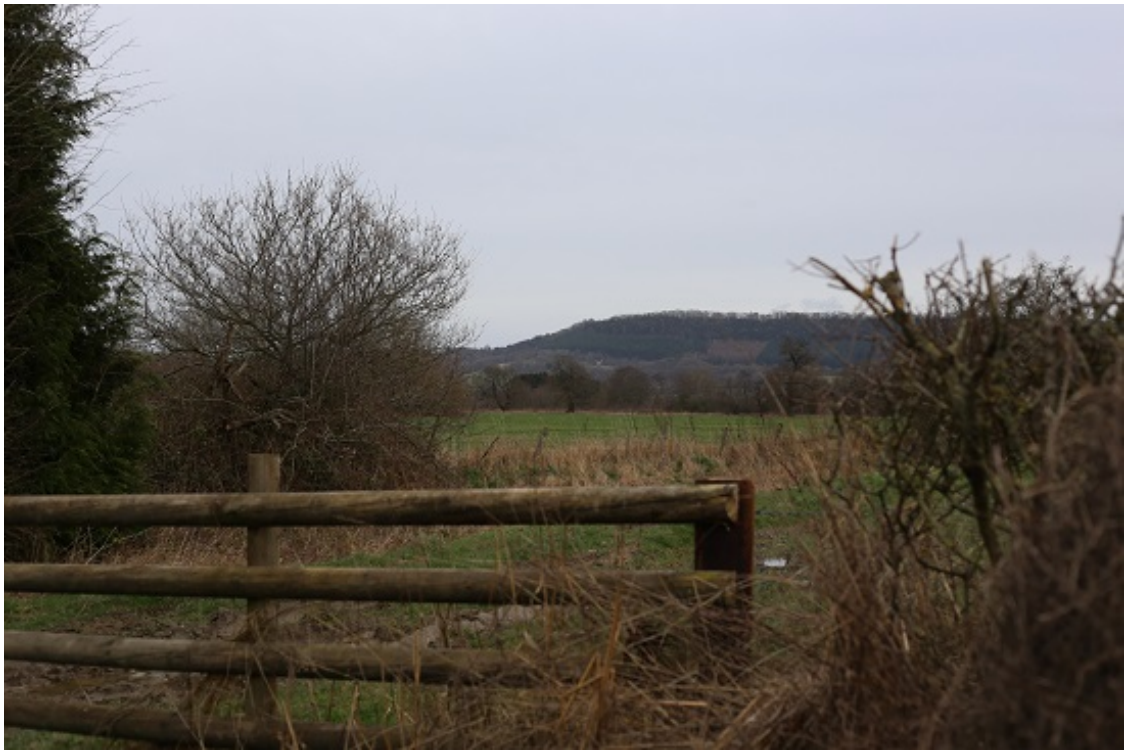

Plate 12 – View towards the site from local road near Paytoe Hall at 341570 271870. Marlbrook Hall is entirely screened from view and proposed development would also be screened completely.

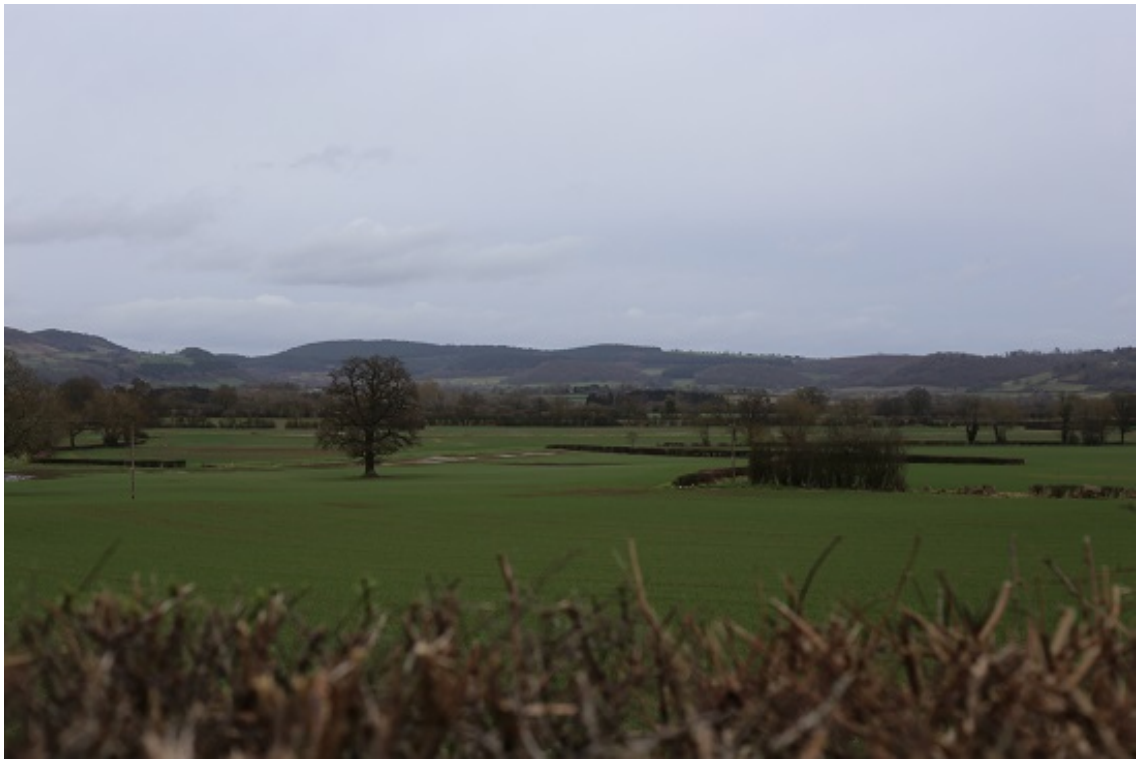

Plate 13 – View towards the site from A4110 Adforton junction at 340455 270665. Proposal would be entirely screened from view.

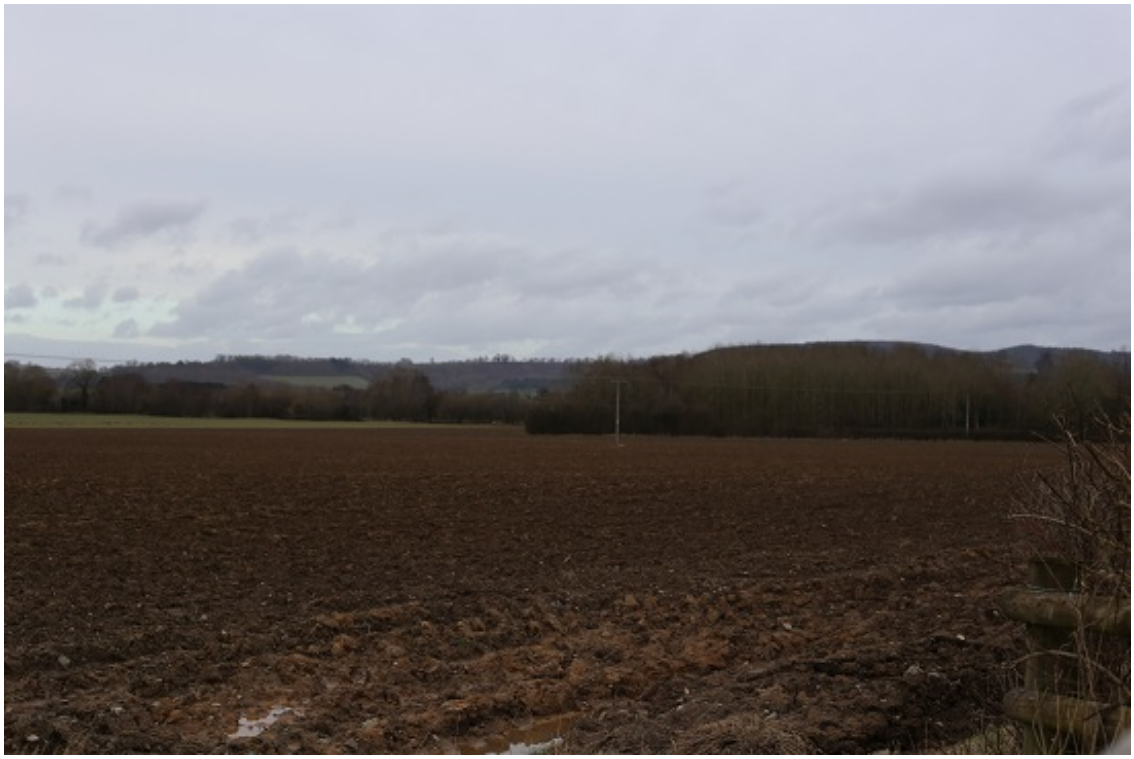

Plate 14 – View towards the site from National Byway near Wigmore at 342245 269210. Proposal would be entirely screened from view.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

61. This assessment draws on the review of the predicted effects of the development, the landscape fabric of the site, the key characteristics of the landscape character units, the purposes/objectives of the landscape designations, the viewpoint analysis and fieldwork observations.

Effects on Landscape Fabric

Prediction Methodology

62. Landscape fabric is composed of the physical components of the landscape (eg landform, land cover and landscape elements and features). Developments can bring about both direct and indirect effects on landscape fabric. Direct effects occur where changes to the fabric of the landscape arise as the result of physical disturbance, for example, the loss of landscape elements such as hedgerows, walls and trees. Indirect effects are consequential changes that are separated from the source of the change in a temporal or spatial manner, for example changes in vegetation downstream as the result of modifications to surface water patterns upstream in a catchment area.

63. This assessment of effects on landscape fabric considers the existing landscape fabric of the site and the predicted effects of the development, and makes a judgement as to whether there are likely to be any beneficial or adverse changes to landscape fabric.

64. The proposed development would be located across a single pasture field where the access to the field would not require the removal of any existing vegetation, hedgerows or isolated trees. However, the proposed footprint of the building and hardstanding directly adjacent to the existing poultry building would require the removal of part of an existing earth bund and approximately twenty Poplar trees on the bund which were planted approximately 13 years ago. We have been informed that the leaf fall onto the existing poultry building roof results in distress and welfare issues for the poultry and so in the interests of safety the majority of the trees are intended to be removed. If it is possible to transplant them successfully, then they would be moved to form part of the planting proposals associated with this application.

65. No hedgerows would require removal as part of the proposal either within the site field or at the highway access point.

66. A range of landscape enhancement measures are proposed as part of the development including a tree belt along part of the northern field boundary of the site field and two woodland blocks on the northern and southern field boundaries.

67. Overall there would be beneficial effects on landscape fabric as a result of the proposal.

Effects on Landscape Character

Prediction Methodology

68. In accordance with GLVIA3, the sensitivity of each landscape unit is judged on the basis of its value and its susceptibility to change arising from the specific type, scale and location of development proposed.

69. The susceptibility to change of a landscape unit is based on a three point scale (susceptible, moderate susceptibility and slight susceptibility) and depends on:

- The key characteristics of the landscape, and the clarity and robustness of these characteristics,
- Nature of views (visual enclosure/openness of views and extent to which views contribute to landscape character),
- Landscape planning policies and strategies for the landscape unit,
- The nature of the changes to landscape character and views that could be brought about by the type, scale and location of the proposed development and the compatibility of these with the above factors.

70. Judgements on landscape value are based on those given in published landscape character assessments (where given) and/or checked in the field from fieldwork observations.

71. Accordingly, the assessment of landscape sensitivity for each landscape unit is derived from the judgement of value and combined with the judgement of susceptibility to give a level of landscape sensitivity as part of a five point scale – high, high/medium, medium, medium/low or low sensitivity.

72. The magnitude of the change in landscape character is assessed using a four point scale – substantial, moderate, slight and negligible. This magnitude of change scale is a relative scale and is not an absolute scale. It is based on the assessor's interpretation of largely quantifiable parameters, those of which have already been set out within paragraph 39 above.

73. The sensitivity of the LCU is then combined with the magnitude of change to predict the potential impacts on landscape character as set out within the matrix below (the same as illustrated in **Table LV2** above).

Table LV2 – Assessment of overall impact

Location sensitivity	Magnitude of change			
	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
High	Major	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor
High/ medium	Major/ moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor
Medium	Moderate	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible
Medium/ low	Moderate/ minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor/ negligible	Negligible	Imperceptible

Principal Settled Farmlands LCT

74. Both fieldwork and the viewpoint illustrations have indicated that the proposed site is located within a moderately vegetated landscape with gently undulating topography. The Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment describes the Principal Settled Farmlands LCT as a rolling lowland area and a settled agricultural landscape of dispersed, scattered farms, relic

commons and small villages and hamlets. However, the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment does not ascribe a sensitivity to this landscape type.

75. This is a development of limited height which has been positioned within a sizeable farmstead of several similar sized existing buildings. The proposal has been colour matched to the neighbouring existing poultry unit and has been positioned so as to take advantage of the existing vegetation in the vicinity as a suitable natural screen. This natural screening is evident across the farmstead as a whole within this LCT where the range of farm buildings are not clearly evident as a whole unit from within the LCT due to the existing mature vegetation interspersed within the farm area. Proposed planting as part of the application seeks to replicate this filtering and screening of views in relation to the proposed development whilst also integrating the proposal and proposed planting into the Marlbrook Hall farm complex through a similar balance of built form and vegetation.

76. Good levels of boundary vegetation on the site field and within the farmstead would result in the proposal being quite visually contained, given its limited height. The proposed planting measures would increase this visual containment over time. This is illustrated by the existing poultry building which has extremely limited visibility within the LCT and was built approximately 13 years ago.

77. None of the key characteristics of this LCT would alter or be lost as a result of the proposal (key characteristics – hedgerows used for field boundaries, mixed farming land use), and four of the viewpoints are located within this LCT at distances from the proposal of between 0.4km and 1.2km (Viewpoints 1 – 4).

78. Overall, as already discussed, this is a moderately vegetated landscape where views across the LCT are often interrupted but consistently retain views to higher distant ground as the backdrop. These views to higher land form an important part of the character of this LCT and are an important skyline to its views. As a result, only part of the character of the LCT is derived from its intrinsic characteristics and features, with a proportion also derived from its backdrop of neighbouring hills. Mature vegetation is characteristically associated with farmsteads in the area which means that built form is typically filtered or partially screened in views across the LCT. As a result of all these considerations and the proposed position of the application, the susceptibility of this LCT to the type and location of development proposed is considered to be moderate and the overall sensitivity of the LCT to the proposal is considered to be medium.

79. Within many parts of the LCT within the study area, the proposed development would not be visible, screened by intervening vegetation, topography and built form, as indicated by the ZTV, where no impacts on landscape character would occur. This is also illustrated by Viewpoint 2.

From some other locations within the LCT some partial visibility of the proposed building would be available, similar to the views indicated by Viewpoints 3 and 4, where the partial visibility of the proposal would result in a moderate or slight magnitude of change (respectively) and a moderate/minor and minor impact on landscape character respectively. Tree belt and woodland planting is proposed as part of the application and over time, once these have established, visibility of the proposal within the LCT would reduce further.

80. From some parts of the LCT most proximate to the site, within approximately 400m of the site (mainly to the east) some more open visibility of the proposal is expected where local vegetation allows, as indicated by Viewpoint 1. This would predominantly be contained within the site field itself by field boundary vegetation, further reinforced over time by the proposed planting measures. The mature vegetation along the boundaries of the site field would serve to limit visibility of the proposed development, particularly from the north, south and west. However, some proximate and open views of the proposal would initially be available post construction from the site field itself, where a substantial or moderate magnitude of change is expected, resulting in moderate impacts on landscape character.

Wet Pasture Meadows LCT

81. This LCT is located to the south, north and west of the proposal as indicated on **Figure LV2**, at a distance of approximately 150m from the proposal at its closest point and 3.0km at its furthest point within the study area. The extract from the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment describes the area as '*flat, low lying and largely uninhabited landscapes…..These are secluded, pastoral landscapes characterised by a regular pattern of hedged fields and ditches fringed by lines of willow and alder*.' None of the viewpoints are located within this LCT and fieldwork found no publicly accessible locations where the proposal would be visible from within this LCT.

82. Nevertheless, given the proximity of the LCT to the proposal, it is expected that some views of the proposal would be available, however partial, from those closest parts of the LCT to the site. These locations are north and south of the proposal and are located on low lying land where watercourses run through the area and mature vegetation is associated with these water courses. Therefore, any visibility of the proposal is expected to be partial where impacts are expected to be moderate/minor or minor levels. These impacts would be contained to areas of the LCT close to the site, with parts of the LCT to the west not expected to gain any visibility of the proposal. It is worth noting that much of the western portion of the LCT is shown to gain no visibility of the proposal on the ZTV due to intervening topography.

Principal Wooded Hills LCT

83. This is probably the largest LCT within the study area, found within the southern, southeastern, eastern and northern parts of the study area at distances of between 1.2km and 3.0km from the proposal within the study area. The ZTV indicates that the proposal may theoretically be visible from some parts of this LCT, but due to the hilly nature of the LCT, these potential views would be variable across the LCT. Viewpoint 5 is located within this LCT at a distance of 2.1km from the proposal.

84. The LCT is described as (Extract from Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment) '*upstanding, densely wooded, hilly landscapes with a steeply sloping topography*'. Therefore this is a landscape where views out are often screened by the wealth of vegetation within the LCT itself and this was a finding from fieldwork where views towards the proposal were predominantly screened either by foreground vegetation or by vegetation within the intervening landscape. Viewpoint 5 is a good example of this, where the proposal is barely discernible due to the screening effects of the combination of topography and intervening vegetation. As a result, a negligible magnitude of change is predicted from this location within the LCT. Viewpoint 4 is located on the northern boundary of this LCT at one of the closest parts of the LCT to the proposal and at 1.2km away, a slight magnitude of change is predicted with the proposal only partially visible in the middle distance as part of the Marlbrook Hall farm complex. These two viewpoints give a good representation of the most visible examples of the proposal from this LCT and the limited impacts that the proposal would have on the LCT as a whole within the study area.

Riverside Meadows LCT

85. The Riverside Meadows LCT is described as '*linear, riverine landscapes associated with a flat, generally well defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. They are secluded pastoral landscapes, characterised by meandering tree lined rivers, flanked by riverside meadows which are defined by hedge and ditch boundaries*'. At its closest point this LCT is located at approximately 0.75km from the closest parts of the proposed development. The ZTV suggests that the proposal would only be visible from some parts of the LCT, due to localised topography, although fieldwork has indicated that the proposal would be entirely screened from the LCT due to the mature vegetation within the intervening landscape. As a result, no impacts on the character of this LCT are expected to occur.

Wooded Estatelands LCT

86. The Wooded Estatelands LCT is described as '*wooded agricultural landscapes of isolated farmsteads, clusters of wayside dwellings and occasional small estate villages. Mixed farming is the dominant land use, with woodland comprising about 30-40% of the land cover. This LCT relies heavily upon its woodland component as the critical element in defining its character'.* At its closest point, this LCT is located approximately 1.9km north of the proposed development. The ZTV suggests that the proposal would be visible from some western parts of the LCT, in the vicinity of Downton on the Rock, although fieldwork has indicated that the wealth of vegetation within the LCT itself and also within the intervening landscape would screen the majority of these potential views. Any visibility of the proposal would be very partial and distant and would not alter any of the key characteristics of this LCT (large discrete blocks of woodland, mixed farming land use, hedgerows used as field boundaries, ancient wooded character, medium distance framed views, clustered settlement pattern often of small estate villages, large country houses set in parkland and ornamental grounds). Viewpoint 6 is located within this LCT at a distance of 2.1km from the proposal and illustrates that no visibility of the proposal would be available from this part of the LCT.

Effects on Historic Parks and Gardens Designation

87. As set out earlier within this report, two historic parks and gardens are located within the 3.0km radius study area; Downton Castle is located approximately 1.5km north of the proposed development at its closest point and Gatley Park is located approximately 2.3km south of the proposal at its closest point, as indicated on **Figure LV1**.

88. Whilst these designations are also dealt with in more detail within the cultural heritage/archaeology report, it is worth noting from the ZTV that the proposed development would be entirely screened from Gatley Park by intervening topography. The ZTV also indicates that the proposal would not be visible from the vast majority of Downton Castle RHPG due to the screening effects of topography. However, the ZTV does suggest some very limited potential visibility from the southern boundary of the RHPG at distances of over 1.6km away. Viewpoint 6 is located on the boundary of this RHPG and indicates that vegetation within the intervening landscape would entirely screen the proposal from view, as well as the current complete screening of Marlbrook Hall itself. It is expected that this intervening vegetation would also screen the majority of other potential views from the RHPG.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Prediction Methodology

89. Visual amenity arises from a visual receptor's experience of the visual world around them and the value they place on a particular view or views. This assessment draws on the predicted effects of the development, the viewpoint analysis and fieldwork observations, and discusses the predicted effects on the visual amenity of receptors at a range of visual receptor locations within the study area. Within this study area these include settlements, individual residential properties, long distance recreational routes, the local public rights of way network and public highways.

Settlements

90. Leinthall Starkes, Elton, Burrington, Downton on the Rock and Wigmore are the main settlements within the study area. The ZTV in **Figure LV1** indicates that topography would potentially allow visibility of the proposal from parts of each of these settlements except for Burrington where intervening topography would entirely screen the proposal.
91. Nevertheless, fieldwork found that the layering of mature vegetation within the study area, as well as the good levels of deciduous and coniferous vegetation associated with Marlbrook Hall would entirely screen views of the proposal from Wigmore and Downton on the Rock. The vegetation within the intervening landscape to the west would also screen the majority of views from Elton, as indicated by Plate 4 above and Viewpoint 5, which shows only very limited potential visibility of the proposal from higher ground above Elton to the east, resulting in a negligible magnitude of change in the view.
92. Viewpoint 4 is located within Leinthall Starkes and represents the type of visibility of the proposal available from some parts of this settlement, although some properties may gain no view of the proposal at all and those properties within the western part of the village are expected to have more oblique and more partial visibility than the viewpoint illustrates. The viewpoint predicts a slight magnitude of change which would result in a moderate impact for residents with a similar view at distances of over 1km from the proposal.

Individual residential properties

93. The nearest individual residential property to the proposed buildings are Marlbrook Hall itself, approximately 250m west from the closest part of the proposed development. Beyond this, Brick Barn is located approximately 360m north of the proposal, Willows Cottages are located nearby; approximately 500m to the north and The Willows is approximately 700m to the northwest.

94. Currently from the rear of Marlbrook Hall looks northeast over eastern parts of the farm complex including large agricultural barns and an existing poultry building (see Plates 1 – 3 for these buildings). The proposed buildings would be added to this view, but as the most distant built form within the grouping of existing buildings, located directly behind and partially screened by the existing poultry building, where at worst a slight magnitude of change and a moderate impact on residents would be expected. It should be noted that the residents of Marlbrook Hall are the applicants for this proposed development.

95. Brick Barn is located approximately 360m north of the proposal with an open aspect (and a north/south orientation), and just north of Brick Barn are Willows Cottages (approximately 500m) north of the proposal, with an east/west orientation. Viewpoint 3 is located nearby and represents the type of views that these residents would gain, as well as the views that residents in The Willows 700m northwest of the proposal) may also gain, although a greater amount of intervening vegetation exists in the view from The Willows towards the site. Viewpoint 3 illustrates that the northern of the three proposed buildings would be visible as part of the middle distance view, with western parts of the proposal screened by intervening vegetation, even in winter months. A moderate magnitude of change is predicted, which would result in a major/moderate impact on the visual amenity of residents with views similar to this. A 12-15m wide tree belt is proposed along the northern field boundary near to the proposed building and once this has established and has begun to screen views of the proposal further, the impacts of the proposal would begin to reduce.

96. Other individual residential properties are located at greater distances from the site, generally over 1.0km away where the majority of views of the proposal are expected to be screened.

Long distance recreational routes and public rights of way

97. **Figure LV1** indicates the long distance routes within the study area are the Herefordshire Trail and the National Byway cycle route. The Herefordshire Trail at its closest point is located approximately 0.7km east of the proposed development in the vicinity of the view illustrated by Plate 9 above, which indicates that the existing poultry building is entirely screened from view and the proposal is also expected to be screened by a combination of topography and mature intervening vegetation. The Herefordshire Trail travels through the north, northeast and east of the study area, and the ZTV indicates a number of locations where the proposal would be entirely screened by topography. Fieldwork has also found that intervening mature vegetation would further screen the proposal from several parts of the route, especially as it travels through woodland areas north and east of the proposal. Plate 10 above also indicates that some parts of the route are also bound on either side by tree planting which would further

limit views out. Viewpoint 5 is located on this route at a distance of 2.1km from the proposal where the proposed development would barely be discernible beyond intervening topography and vegetation and a minor impact on walkers is predicted. As a result, whilst occasional visibility of the proposal is expected from some limited parts of this route, this is expected to be partial and intermittent, even from the closest parts of the route to the site.

98. The National Byway cycle route is located within southwestern, southern and eastern parts of the study area as indicated by **Figure LV1** which also indicates that the proposal would be screened from several parts of the route by intervening topography. Plate 14 above also indicates that vegetation within the landscape would further screen the proposal from view, and fieldwork was unable to find any locations on the route where the proposal would be clearly visible. Given the distance of the route from the proposal (1.6km at its closest point) it is considered that the impacts of the proposal on cyclists on the route would be negligible.

99. Viewpoints 1 and 2 are located on the local public right of way network between 0.4km and 0.5km from the site, where receptor sensitivity is high/ medium. At greater distances from the site, as illustrated by Viewpoint 5, the proposed development would regularly be entirely or largely screened from view from public rights of way. However, from routes close to the site, mainly the footpath within the site field, as illustrated by Viewpoint 1, more open and proximate views of the proposal would initially be available from within the site field, resulting in moderate and major/moderate impacts. However, beyond this immediate view, the footpath travels east out of the site field and the combination of topography and mature vegetation would predominantly screen the proposal from view from the majority of the route. The proposed woodland planting within the site field would further strengthen the screening of these views from parts of the footpath to the east. Furthermore, the footpath exits the site field through a field gate on the southern field boundary approximately 80m from the proposed development. Plate 11 illustrates the mature and tall field boundary vegetation to the south of the proposal, which would largely screen the proposal from the section of the footpath which then travels west in the neighbouring field. Further woodland planting is also proposed in this area (within the site field) and as a result, no views of the proposal are expected from this section of the footpath within the immediately adjacent field. Viewpoint 2 also illustrates the view from the footpath west and southwest of the proposal, at a distance of 0.5km away, where existing vegetation not only entirely screens the existing poultry unit from view, but also is expected to entirely screen the proposal, even in winter months. As a result, whilst the proposal will be visible from a short section of footpath (approximately 350m in length), beyond this, the

proposal is expected to predominantly be screened from view, with proposed woodland and tree belt planting further reinforcing this screening.

Public highways

100. The ZTV suggests potential views of the proposal would be available from the majority of roads in the study area. However, roads in this landscape are characteristically bounded by mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees, as indicated in several photographs above. As a result, views of the proposal would be extremely limited in reality, with fieldwork suggesting that visibility of the proposal would mainly only be available from limited parts of the minor road network in the vicinity of the site (such as Viewpoint 3). This visibility would be very intermittent and mainly limited to sections of these routes in proximity of the site.

CONCLUSIONS

101. The ZTV has suggested much greater potential visibility of the proposed development within a 3km radius study area than would be available in reality. This is illustrated by the viewpoints and the photographs set out above, which have all been chosen from locations where the ZTV suggested visibility of the proposal would be available. However, in the majority of cases the viewpoints and the photographs illustrate that the screening effects of local vegetation would vastly reduce the areas where the proposal would be visible from that which is indicated on the ZTV.
102. Whilst the introduction of the proposed development may be a noticeable addition within the landscape immediately surrounding the site, the limited height of the development and the good levels of existing localised vegetation would assist in integrating the proposal into the local landscape. This has been the case for the neighbouring existing poultry unit building. Overall it is considered that the proposal could be accommodated within the local landscape context.
103. In landscape character and visual amenity terms, in combination with the planting proposals, the proposed development would be a suitable fit within the context of its immediate surroundings and would result in limited changes to views and landscape character within the local area as illustrated by the viewpoints associated with this study.