

# VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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Conversion of vacant barn into its former use as cottage and garden. Works to include small side extension, construction of domestic stable block, stand alone bat house, and restoration of historic landscape to include restoration of field boundaries and orchard.



*Figure 1 - Site photo*

# CONTENTS

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1	Introduction	P.3-4
2	Site analysis & Context	P.5-11
3	View Analysis	P.12-25
4	Mitigation Measures	P.28
	4.1 Photomontages	P.29-31
5	SAB Objectives	P.32
6	Integration into the countryside	P.33
7	Conclusion	P.34

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This visual impact assessment has been prepared in support of a planning application for the conversion of an existing barn into a residential dwelling, as well as the construction of new stables for horses. The proposed development is located in the countryside and is intended to provide a sustainable use for the site, while also enhancing the surrounding landscape.

The development site is situated in a rural location and is surrounded by open fields, farmland, and woodlands. The proposed development seeks to preserve the character and appearance of the area, while also providing much-needed facilities for the keeping of horses. The barn conversion will provide a new residential dwelling that blends in with the surrounding landscape and contributes to the rural character of the area.

The visual impact assessment will assess the potential effects of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape, views, and visual amenity. The assessment will consider a range of factors, including the design of the buildings, the use of materials and finishes, the layout of the site, and the potential for visual intrusion or disturbance.

The assessment will also identify any potential negative effects on the landscape and visual amenity of the area and will propose appropriate mitigation measures to minimise any adverse impacts. The aim of this assessment is to ensure that the proposed development is designed and constructed in a manner that is sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and enhances the visual environment, while also providing a sustainable and functional use for the site.

## 2. PLANNING STATEMENT

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This application is a resubmission following a refusal of the original application that was dismissed at appeal. Valuable feedback and comments were raised at both stages, these comments have helped shape the new revised application and overcome the concerns.

In this revised visual impact assessment, new photographs have been taken to replace the previous screenshots from Google Street View, viewpoints have also been analysed from further afield to fully assess the likely impacts of the proposal on the landscape.

One of the concerns of the previous application that resulted in its refusal was “the proposal would result in a prominent and intrusive encroachment into the countryside unsympathetic to its rural setting.” This visual impact assessment has been prepared to overcome this concern and justify the proposal within its setting.

## 2. SITE ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT



Figure 2 - Site Location

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## SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is 1730 sq. meters and currently used for grazing. It is located on the Eastern Outskirt of Newport, slightly to the North East of Parc-Seymour / West of Llanvaches . It is less than 1 mile north of the A48 which gives it easy access into Newport and the wider road network.

The site is currently served by an existing access onto the land at the East that has a metal gate set back from the road with good visibility looking up and down the lane.

The parcel of land is located in a rural area, and is surrounded by open fields, farmland, and woodlands. The surrounding landscape is characterised by hedgerows and grassed fields, Its is outside of the defined urban boundary and is therefore relevant to Policies H10/H11 of the Newport Local Development Plan.

The site is also located within Wentwood Special Landscape Area.

The land uses surrounding the site is predominantly agricultural land, with the nearest residential property being Pen-Y-Worlod Farm which is 0.2 miles away.

The site is sloping, grassland making it unsuitable for the practical farming of any crops. The surrounding landscape is also characterised with sloping fields and rolling hills.

The site is surrounded by dense hederows with potential for nesting birds. There is also a maternity bat roost identified in the existing building.

There is an existing stone barn structure on the site include. The proposed development seeks to conserve and convert the existing building into a 1 bed dwelling and construct and new stable block and bat house adjacent to it.

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As mentioned, the site is located within Wentwood special Landscape Area.. This designation reflects the high quality of the landscape and the need to protect its character and visual amenity. The surrounding landscape is characterised by rolling hills and hedgerows, which contribute to the scenic quality of the area.

There are several heritage assets in the vicinity of the proposed development site, which contribute to the historic and cultural value of the area. These assets include nearby 'Castell Prin Camp' and Talgarth settlement earthworks. These assets are protected by law, and any development in the area must take into account their significance and impact.

The site is located in an area that is rich in biodiversity and ecological value. There are several areas of ecological importance in the vicinity of the proposed development site, including the Parc Seymour Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest. These areas are home to a range of species and habitats, and any development in the area must take into account their potential impact on the natural environment.

Overall, the features that contribute to the site's visual quality and sensitivity are an important consideration in the visual impact assessment, as they can help to identify potential impacts and inform appropriate mitigation measures. The assessment will take into account these features, as well as any relevant planning policies and guidance, in order to ensure that the proposed development is designed and constructed in a manner that is sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and enhances the visual environment.

# HISTORIC CONTEXT

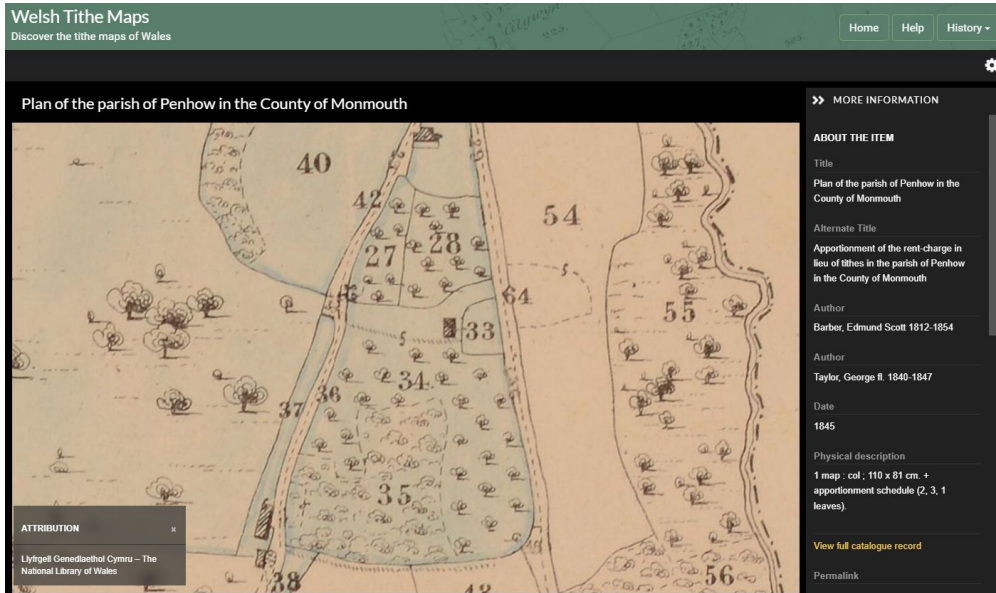


Figure 3 - Tithe plan

The existing building was listed as a cottage and Garden in the 1845 Tithe map, which clearly shows that the site historically had a domestic use and therefore returning the building to its original use is restoration of the historic landscape and therefore appropriate.

The map also shows a former Orchard to the South, a section of this is proposed to be replanted to further return the site to how it was historically used. As well as restoring reinstating original field boundaries, the planting of the orchard will also help to screen the development from VP4 to the South.

The map below shows the historic field boundaries, some of which are to be reinstated, it also shows that there was formerly two buildings on the site, with the second not far from the proposed position of the bat house, justifying the new cluster of buildings.

Plan of the parish of Penhow in the County of Monmouth

Evans, John	19	Meadow	3 2 22	0 7 4	
	20	Arable	2 0 0	0 1 3	
	21	Pasture	5 1 99	0 2 6	
	22	Roads	0 2 5		
			11 2 26	0 11 1	
Godwin, George	106	Pasture	0 3 37	0 1 6	
	107	Road	0 0 11		
			1 0 8	0 1 6	
Harris, Thomas	26	Cottage and Garden	0 1 17		
	27	Orchard	0 1 6		
	28	Ditto	0 1 34		
	29	Roads	0 0 20		
	33	Cottage and Garden	0 0 18		
	34	Orchard	1 2 28		
	35	Brake	1 0 17		
	36	Roads	0 0 24		
			4 1 4		

Handwritten notes on the right side of the table:  
CR6696  
CR5341  
CR6496  
CR47

Figure 4 - Tithe appointment

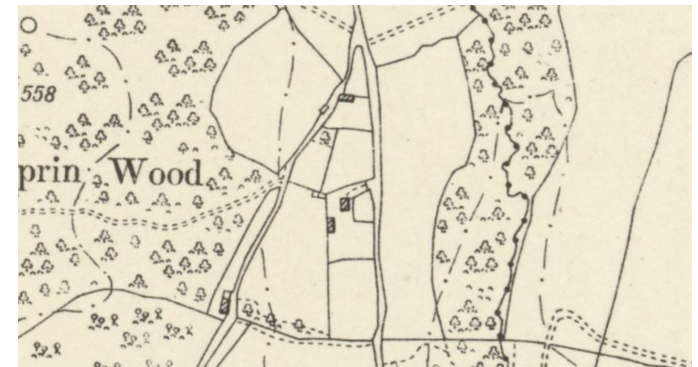


Figure 5 - 1888 map

# SURROUNDING CONTEXT

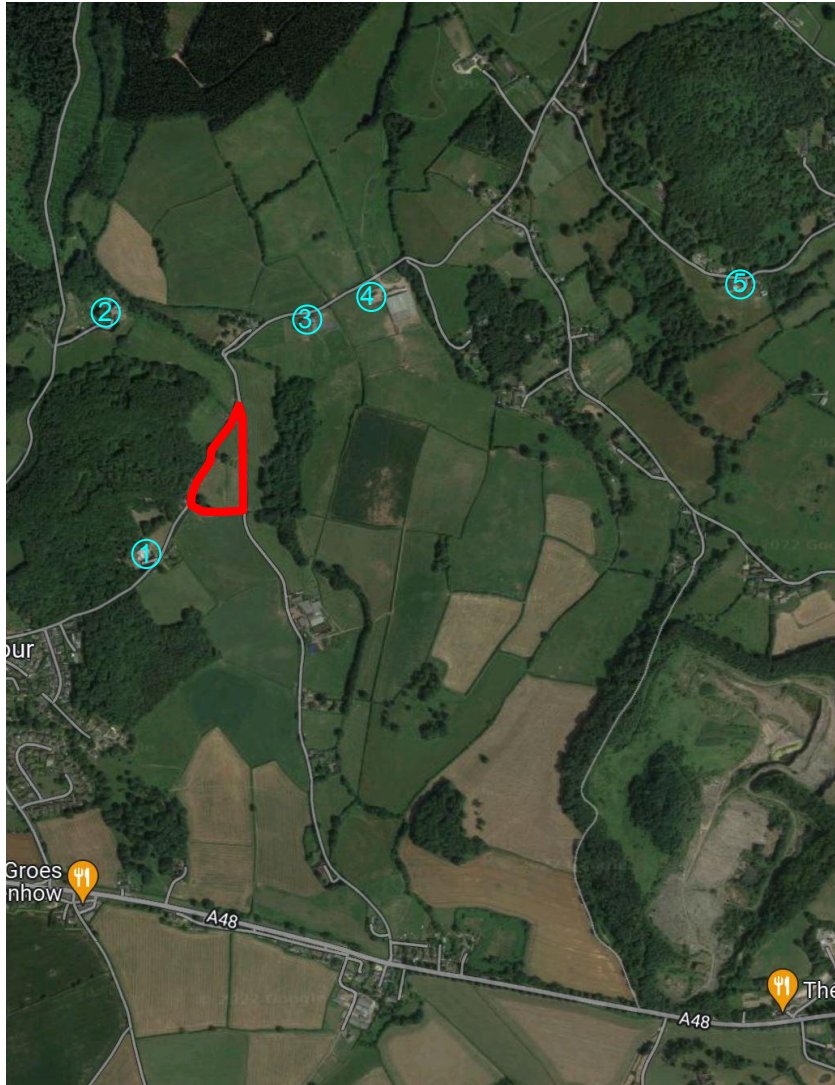


Figure 6 - Prominent buildings

In the conclusion of the officers report of the original application it says "The proposal, by reason of the site's prominent and exposed position in open countryside and the isolated nature of the buildings themselves, will result in an urban intrusion into open countryside and the Wentwood Special Landscape Area and an accumulation of domestic accoutrements and associated works to the detriment of the area's rural character and appearance."

While it is true that the barn currently sits in the middle of an open field, its 'prominent' position is well screened by the surrounding topography and hedgerows. It is also worth noting that the wider rural landscape is defined by stand alone dwellings that are very prominent to see, and therefore this minor development would not be detrimental to the areas rural character or appearance.

The following page has several examples surrounding building that are much more prominent in the landscape compared to the proposed barn, which is only visible from VP3, VP4 and VP13, when the barn is visible from VP3 and VP13, it blends into the landscape due to the use of natural materials and your eye is naturally drawn to Rock Cottage behind it which captures your attention with its white render and complex shape, rather than the barns itself.



*Example 2 looking NW from VP9  
(zoomed in)*



*Example 4 looking N from VP10  
(zoomed in)*



*Example 1 looking SW from VP13  
(zoomed in) Note the barn blends  
into the landscape and the white  
rendered dwelling is prominent.*

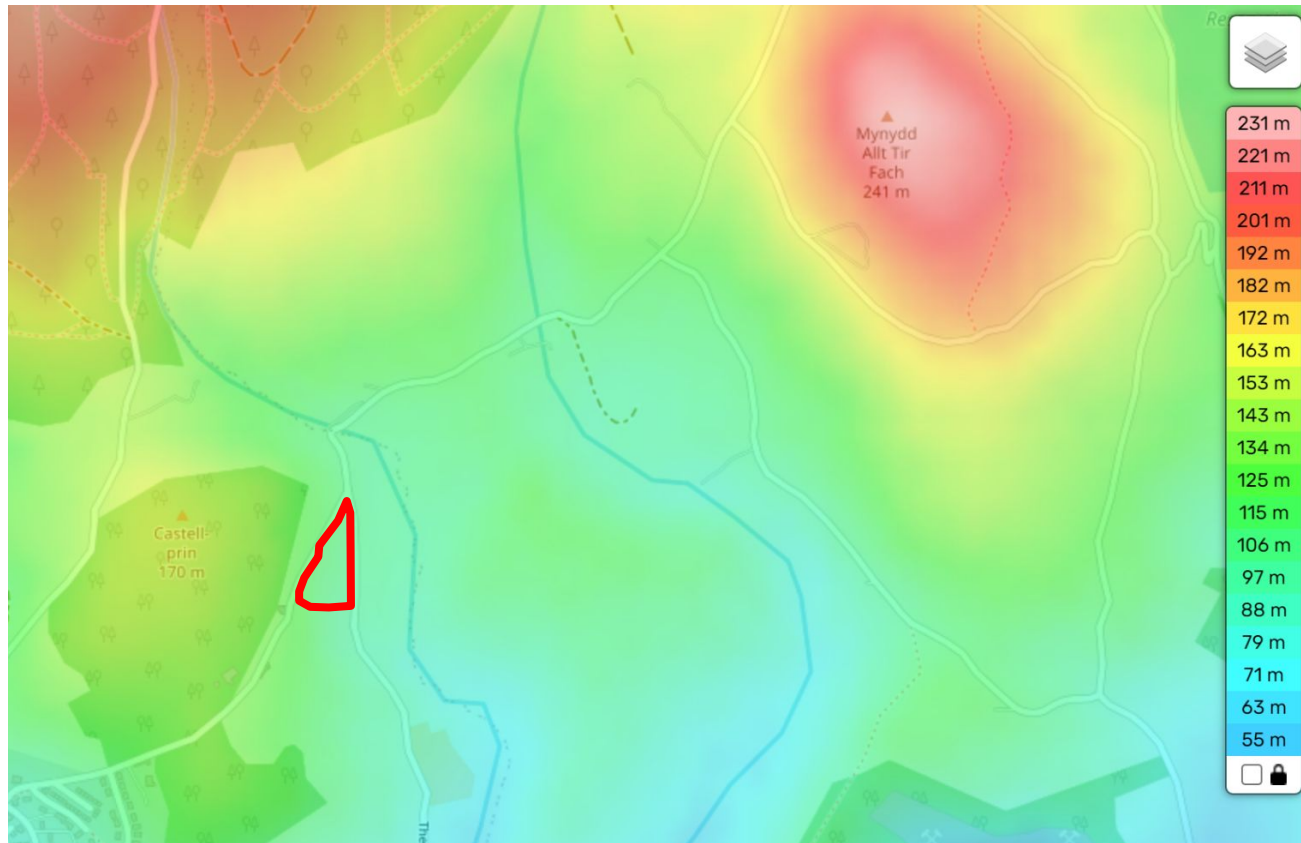


*Example 3 looking NE from VP8  
(zoomed in)*



*Example 5 looking NE from VP10  
(zoomed in)*

# SURROUNDING TOPOGRAPHY



The site is situated in a valley surrounded by hills to the north, east, and west, which block any potential views from further than them. The topography slopes downward to the south, and the extensive areas of trees and tall hedgerows further obscure visibility. Consequently, despite being in an open field, there is very limited visibility of the barn as shown on the following viewpoint analysis.

Given this natural screening, the proposed modest barn conversion will have minimal visual impact on the surrounding landscape. The dense vegetation and strategic location within the valley ensure that the barn remains well-concealed.

Figure 7 - Topography map

# 3. VIEW ANALYSIS

Key viewpoints of the site from the surrounding area have been identified on the map and the visibility of the proposed area of development has been assessed.

Due to the position in a dip within the surrounding topography, and the large hedgerows surrounding it, the visibility of the site from both close and far is generally well screened.

VP4, 5, 9 & 10 have been taken from the surrounding Public Right of ways to analyse what impact the development would have on walkers whilst the other viewpoints have been taken from key moments along the road where the site could have been visible.

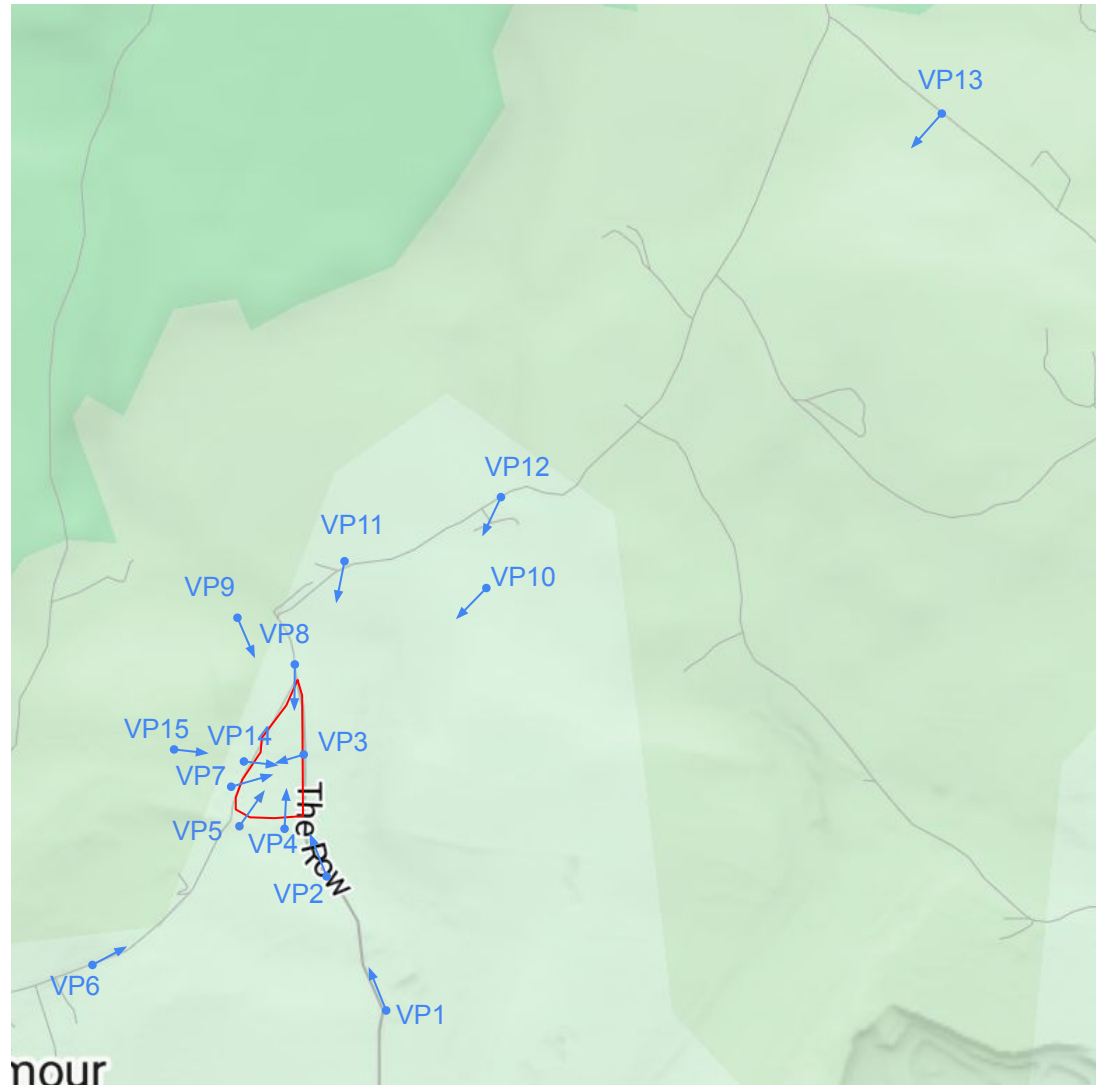


Figure 8- Viewpoint locations

## VIEWPOINT 1

290m South of the barn facing North.  
Easting - 341402  
Northing - 192038  
Elevation - 106m

No view of development due to screening from high hedges.



## VIEWPOINT 2

177m South of the barn facing North.  
Easting - 341341  
Northing - 192127  
Elevation - 98m

No view of development due to screening from high hedges.



## VIEWPOINT 3

35m East of the barn.  
Easting - 341341  
Northing - 192127  
Elevation - 104m

Clear view of site. The existing barn is looking forgotten and derelict on the landscape, however the development will preserve and enhance its appearance due to careful design and material selection. The new bat house behind the barn will be built into the slop and be visually screened by the barn. The proposed stables in front of the barn will partially screen with new hedge planting and will create the appearance of a rural cluster



## VIEWPOINT 4

115m South of of barn looking North.  
Easting - 341321  
Northing - 192164  
Elevation - 104m

The gable of the barn is visible, due to the proposed location of the extension continuing the elongated appearance of the barn, this view would remain relatively unchanged, hower the newly planted orchard will mitigate against the extension, stables and bat house by obscuring the view with trees.



## VIEWPOINT 5

140m South West of Barn looking North East.  
Easting - 341309  
Northing - 192162  
Elevation - 129m

No view of development due to screening from high hedges and trees.



## VIEWPOINT 6

300m SW of of barn looking NE.  
Easting - 341169  
Northing - 192111  
Elevation - 133m

No view of site at all due to screening from vegetation and topography.



## VIEWPOINT 7

120m South West of of barn looking North East.  
Easting - 341225  
Northing - 192233  
Elevation - 128m

No view of site from Rock Cottage due to screening from high hedges.



## VIEWPOINT 8

140m North of of barn looking South.  
Easting - 341324  
Northing - 192414  
Elevation - 110m

No view of site due to screening from high hedges and trees.



## VIEWPOINT 9

206m NNW of barn looking SSE.  
Easting - 341276  
Northing - 192454  
Elevation - 127m

No view of site due to screening from high hedges, trees and topography.



## VIEWPOINT 10

200m North East of barn looking South West.  
Easting - 341395  
Northing - 192456  
Elevation - 102m

No view of site due to screening from high hedges, trees and topography.



## VIEWPOINT 11

334m NNE of barn looking SSW.  
Easting - 341395  
Northing - 192599  
Elevation - 115m

No view of site from road due to screening from high hedges.



## VIEWPOINT 12

425m NE of barn looking SW.  
Easting - 341522  
Northing - 192628  
Elevation - 120m

No view of site due to topography and trees in the distance.



## VIEWPOINT 13

1,000m NE of barn looking SW.

Easting - 342107

Northing - 192970

Elevation - 180m

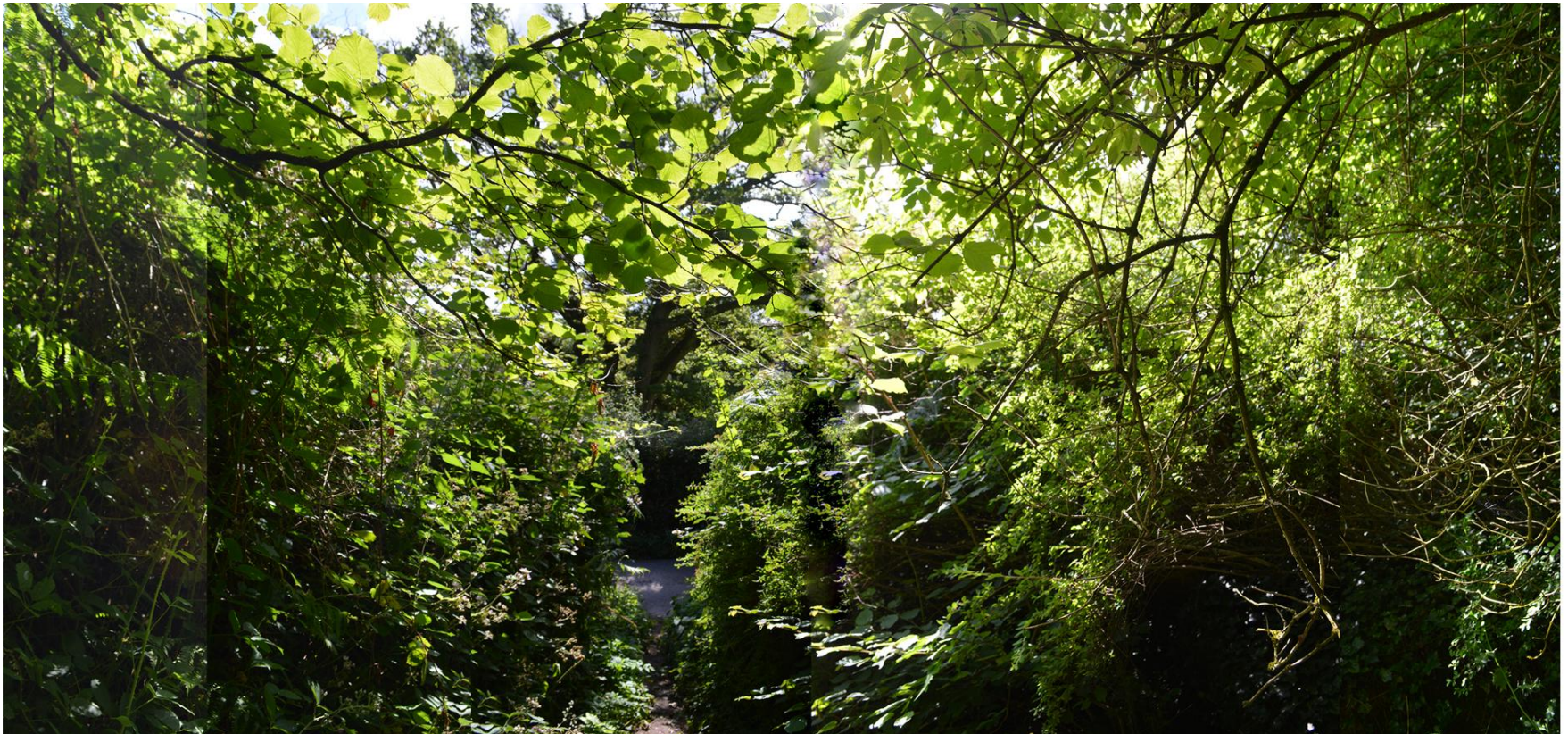
The barn is just visible above the top of trees, however blends into the landscape due to use of natural materials. The new stables have been positioned forward of the barn so that from this viewpoint they appearance will be block by the woodland in front. Although visible from this viewpoint, the position of the barn is not proposal is not prominent, and there are several large dwellings that capture your focus before seeing the barn.



## VIEWPOINT 14

60m W of barn looking E.  
Easting - 341253  
Northing - 192299  
Elevation - 136m

The site is not visible from the start of the PROW due to screening from trees and hedges.



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## VIEWPOINT 15

170m W of barn looking E.  
Easting - 341166  
Northing - 192321  
Elevation - 156m

There is no visibility of the site from the footpath towards Castell Prin due to screening from the thick forest.



# 4. MITIGATION MEASURES

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1. Landscape screening: Planting trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to help screen the development from view and blend it into the surrounding landscape. Replanting of the historic Orchard to the South to creating a buffer zone around, using native species that are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions, and ensuring that the vegetation is regularly maintained.
2. Using natural materials that are compatible with the natural surroundings can help the development blend in. The effectiveness of this approach can be seen from VP13 when the barn is compared to surrounding rendered dwellings.
3. Careful lighting design to be done to minimise the impact of the development at night, including shielding lights so that they only illuminate the necessary areas, using low-glare fixtures, and ensuring that lights are turned off when not in use.
4. The design of the buildings themselves will also help reduce the visual impact. By cutting into the slope of the site and using a low pitched roof the, stables will blend into the landscape.
5. New hard landscaping areas will be integrated into the landscape to hide their appearance. Access tracks to be 150mm lower than surrounding ground levels with raised berms used to screen the appearance of patio to prevent the appearance of a domesticated landscape.

# 4.1 PHOTOMONTAGES



Figure 9 - Existing/ proposed photomontages from Viewpoint 3

Viewpoint 3 is where the proposed works are mostly visible from. The photomontage demonstrates how the proposed works will not have a negative impact on the special landscape. Natural materials will be used for the access and parking as per drawing (TG2203-23) these will be in place of the existing cracked concrete and broken stone and will be a visual enhancement.

From this view, the proposed stables are screen by the existing boundary hedge and the proposed bat house would be screened by the Cottage.

# 4.1 PHOTOMONTAGES



Figure 10 - Existing/ proposed photomontages from Viewpoint 4

There is a break in the hedge along the PROW to the South of the site creating a viewing opportunity of the proposed site, A native hedgerow is proposed along the historic field boundary, (as per drawing TG2203-25) which will visually screen all aspects of the proposal from this view.

# 4.1 PHOTOMONTAGES



Figure 11 - Existing/ proposed photomontages from Viewpoint 13

The new hedgerow proposed on drawing TG2203-25 wraps around the proposed site and blends it into the forest in front from this view. Without zooming in, the site is very hard to identify, and after zooming in, you can see the building which is mostly existing and the small extension which blends seamlessly into the landscape and existing building due to the use of natural materials.

The proposed stables are not visibly from this viewpoint due to screening from the forest to the East of the site. The very ridge of the bat house is visible (when zoomed in on a computer) however, again due to the use of natural slate, the roof does not distract from the special landscape. When considering the impact of the proposed from this view, it is worth noting that the large white dwelling behind the site (Rock Cottage) is very prominent in the landscape in comparison.

# 5. SAB OBJECTIVES

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SAB objectives will be met with a combination of the permeable surfaces shown and underground soakaway crates to be sized and agreed in a separate SAB application subject to planning being approved.

The soakaway crates will be below ground with no long term visual impact. The disturbed soil will be turfed over with grass after installation, returning the appearance of the land to its existing state in a timely manner.

# 6. INTEGRATION INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE

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Great care and consideration have gone into the selection and use of materials in the proposal to ensure they respond to the sensitive location and blend in. However, it is acknowledged that despite good intentions, initially the new materials will contrast with the appearance of the existing site until they have weathered over time, which will take 5-10 years.

To mitigate this and obscure the new materials from public view as much as possible, several steps are proposed. A combination of translocated and newly planted native hedgerows will surround the barn and stables. Over time, these hedgerows will be maintained to a height of 2m, effectively obscuring the view of the development from a distance.

The new access track and driveway will be cut into the landscape by 150mm, placing it lower than the surrounding grass. This design choice aims to obscure the new materials from public view.

Additionally, soil from the excavation of the stable block will be used to create a raised berm along the hardstanding outside the stables and the new patio surrounding the barn. This raised berm will be seeded with a mixture of grass and wildflowers, further obscuring the view of the hardstanding areas from the South/East.

As part of the soft landscaping scheme, a new orchard will be planted, containing a mixture of traditional Apple, Pear, Plumb and Cherry trees that will be planted in offset rows that will obscure the view of the development and restore the historic landscape. The orchard will be predominantly to the south of the site, but will continue to the East of the stables and barn for further screening.

# 7. CONCLUSION

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It can be concluded that the proposed development would be very well screened within the landscape, and the restoration of elements of the historic landscape should be encouraged and supported to preserve the local character. The visual impact assessment revealed that the development is well screened from the surrounding environment, and the proposed mitigation measures would effectively reduce any potential negative impacts.

Furthermore, the development would provide much-needed housing and economic benefits to the local community, and the design of the development would be sympathetic to the existing landscape and character of the area. Additionally, the proposed landscaping and planting schemes would enhance the visual appeal of the development, and the retention of existing trees and hedgerows would contribute to the preservation of the local ecosystem.