



Lister Wilder Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

For the modernisation of the
Lister Wilder Site
at

White House Farm

February 2026

Lister Wilder Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

For land at
White House Farm

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Site location

The site is located in Wokingham Borough, South of Reading and close to the smaller urban developments of Shinfield and Spencers Wood.

To the west of the site is the A33 and agricultural land with scattered development and small settlements. To the south is an arboretum with a research remit that has approval for expansion/improvement works. To its immediate east is Spencers Wood village comprising a relatively new housing estate. (see Figure 1)

1.2. Commission

Illman Young Landscape Design Limited has been commissioned by Bourne Valley Associates, on behalf of Lister Wilder Ltd. to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Its purpose is to assess the potential effects of a range of works around the site to upgrade and improve the site's facilities, and to extend the range of works undertaken.

Works include:

1. A new workshop building
2. Changes to one existing building (demolition, rebuild and extension)
3. An extension to the yard space
4. Demolition of some smaller existing buildings and their replacement with parking,
5. Relocation and extension of an existing landscape bund into a 15m wide landscape buffer zone.

This assessment will therefore consider how any adverse effects arising from the proposed development can be effectively mitigated.

1.3. The current site

The site consists of existing light industrial/agricultural style workshops and shops supplying a range of agricultural machinery. The buildings are clustered closely together with an adjacent large yard area for the storage and display of agricultural machinery, ground care and construction equipment/small plant, to serve the existing agricultural business. The yard also provides customer and staff car parking. Adjacent to the yard (to the east) is a planted bund that blocks views and noise occurring within the site. White House Farm is outside the site boundary to the west, but immediately adjacent to it, and comprises a series of buildings and static caravans. Beyond the site to the north and northeast of the extended yard are

further agricultural fields where no development is proposed. (see Figure 1). To the north and east of the site's perimeter is a c. 2.5m solid wall, painted green with security wire.

1.4. The proposed development works

The works comprise the following:

1. Demolition and replacement of an existing building, with a slight increase in footprint (which allows its connection to the adjacent buildings)
2. Demolition of buildings along the boundary with White House Lane and its replacement with parking spaces
3. Erection of a second large barn/workshop adjacent to the existing developed area
4. Expansion of the hardstanding area to the north and east
5. Removal of the existing landscape buffer with a new, and larger planted bund, to the eastern boundary of the site.

1.5. Scope of the study

Due to the potential visibility of the buildings, a LVIA has been undertaken to consider the effect of the proposed development, although it was not requested in the pre-application advice letter (18.3.24).

Concerns relating to this LVIA are summarised here:

1) Principle of Development: the application site falls outside defined settlement limits and is within the countryside. Further comments from the Council were:

'The proposal will have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area and impact on the surrounding countryside' 'The proposed use would also have characters that are alien to the countryside, including the increase in retail and distribution centre nature of parts of the development'.

2) Landscape and trees: encroachment into adjacent agricultural land would negatively impact the rural character and appearance of the countryside.

Trees in small pockets of woodland to SE require demonstration that these will not be detrimentally impacted. (see separate arboricultural impact assessment report and tree protection drawing).

The LVIA will therefore consider both the character of the local landscape and the visibility of the site from the surrounding areas. This includes public footpaths, roads, and areas of public open space, and the effect of the development upon them.

Illman Young have wide experience in the preparation of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, and the development of both design criteria and detailed designs on sensitive sites.

1.6 Approach & Methodology

Where landscape and visual survey and assessment have been carried out, this has generally been completed in accordance with the guidance offered by both the Countryside Commission¹ and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment². The latest version of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) places an emphasis on a discursive approach to analysis, an approach which has been undertaken in this document.

It has been prepared by the collation of background and research material followed by a range of desktop studies and mapping exercises that established the key features of the existing landscape. This was supplemented by fieldwork within the site and the surrounding area.

1.7 Limitations, Constraints and Assumptions

The survey of the site and local land was undertaken during August and early September this year, when there was good foliage cover on the trees and shrubs. It should be noted that the assessment was undertaken on site and recorded through the photographic viewpoints. Photographs are intended to be illustrative and are not meant to replace the experience of visiting the site in person.

Site observations involved walking the PRoW, travelling along local roads and visiting any significant public viewpoints to determine the likely visibility of the development. Photographs from selected viewpoints were taken using a Nikon D780 SLR camera.

These were taken using a 50mm camera lens, to create the view which is generally accepted as being closest to that seen by the human eye.

¹ Countryside Commission (1993) *Landscape Assessment Guidance*

² Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and Landscape Institute (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual impact Assessment*

Panoramic views consist of photographs taken by the criteria outlined by the Landscape Institute and merged together with Adobe Photoshop software. No other photographic manipulation has been undertaken.

2. LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1. Planning policy context

1) National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives to sustainable development which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental objectives. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10).

Chapter 6 ‘*Building a strong, competitive economy*’ is particularly relevant. In respect to the ‘rural economy’, paragraph 84 states as follows:

Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) The retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

Paragraph 85 continues as follows:

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that for sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).

2) The Development Plan Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) (CS)

The policies of the Council are currently out of date, pending the decision regarding the acceptability of their new plan that has been submitted to government, and is currently being reviewed by the two appointed Planning Inspectors.

The relevant aspects of the local plan that currently exists, pending this change, are as follows:

Policy CP1 – states that Sustainable development Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- 1) Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment
- 2) Minimises the emission of pollutants into the wider environment.
- 3) Limits any adverse effects on water quality (including ground water)
- 4) Ensures the provision of adequate drainage
- 5) Minimise the consumption and use of resources and provide for recycling
- 6) Incorporate facilities for recycling of water and waste water to help reduce per capita water consumption
- 7) Avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land
- 8) Avoid areas where pollution (including noise) may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers
- 9) Avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater)
- 10) Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes
- 11) Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6; and
- 12) Contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible by:
 - a) Including appropriate on-site renewable energy features; and
 - b) Minimising energy and water consumption by measures including the use of appropriate layout and orientation, building form, design and

construction, and design to take account of microclimate so as to minimise carbon dioxide emissions through giving careful consideration to how all aspects of development form.

Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality. Proposals should not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring land uses or lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation. It also states that proposals should have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscaping or geological features or water courses.

Policy CP7 seeks to protect habitats or species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors).

Policy CP11 states that Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
 - 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
 - 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or
 - 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
 - 5) In the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal must: i) Bring about environmental improvements; or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 29 January 2010) 54 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building.

Policy CP1 Best and most versatile agricultural land: states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that avoid areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. BMV agricultural land is grades 1,2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. The NPPF (Section 15) states that planning decisions should recognise the wider benefits of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Natural England's Guide to Assessing Development Proposals on Agricultural Land outlines that BMV land comprises land in grades 1 to 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification and that proposals to develop on such land should be made after considering Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) (England) mapping records.

Natural England ALC records show the application site to be Grade 3 agricultural land quality, although there is no information whether the land is 3a (good quality agricultural land) or 3b (moderate quality agricultural land). The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England)) Order (DMPO) 2015 only requires planning authorities to consult Natural England on applications that would result in the loss of more than 20 hectares (ha) of BMV land.

- 2.2.** Generally, the site is compliant with these policies, having been established here for ~30 years, and is currently looking to improve both the visual aspects of their buildings, and their setting, whilst increasing its overall capacity to run its business. The area of land that would be taken out of agricultural use is well within the guidelines as stated above.

2.3. Designations

There are no designated heritage assets close to this site. However, there are a small number within the wider study area – see figure 2. The nearest listed buildings are located to the north-east, and one to the south-west, around 7-800m away, with no intervisibility between them and the site. All of these are listed as Grade 2. A small number of other listed buildings are scattered around the area at a greater distance, with two grade 1 listed buildings approximately 1.2km to the south-east.

2.4. Planning history

- “ Pre-application advice was sought by Bourne Valley Associates (application number 240644) and a letter of advice from Wokingham Borough Council was received on 18 March 2024. The report covered all potential aspects of the scheme in some detail, the contents of which are considered within this report.

3.0 LANDSCAPE BASELINE

3.1 Local Character Area

The site sits within Landscape Character Area J3: Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay.

'The LCT is characterised by a shelving and undulating landform underlain by London Clay. There are large tracts of post-war settlement, connected by both major and minor roads cutting across the landscape. Areas of large arable fields remain, as well as tributaries draining towards the Loddon.'

3.2 Local Settlement

The local settlement is Spencers Wood, a relatively new part of which is located close to the site, along its eastern boundary. This area of relatively new housing forms a southerly extension to Spencers Wood along Beech Hill Road and Basingstoke Road.

3.3 Topography

The site is located on a long, relatively flat plateau, that is elongated in shape, running from north to south, that falls gradually from this localised high point to the east, and more steeply for a short distance to the west beyond the site area (see figure 3).

3.4 Existing Vegetation and Land Use

The development area consists largely of existing light industrial buildings of corrugated metal and blockwork, alongside associated containers, hardstanding, stored machinery and plant (see figure 4). There is a bund to the east on which some poor-quality planting has established (potentially naturally).

The site is well enclosed from the north by fields, trees and woodland, and from the east by the existing landscape buffer, but also by a high wall and band of trees bordering the adjacent housing estate along its eastern boundary. To the south, along White House Lane there are brief views of a number of the buildings within the site when close to it, (the building closest to the road to be demolished) however, the line of trees bordering the road filter those inward views.

The closest public right of way runs northwards along Whitehouse Farm driveway (see figure 5) leading into the adjacent woodland to the north and Spencers Wood beyond. The footpath crosses a bridleway connecting to Grazely to the west, and the local village to the east. To the east of the site is housing, approximately 5-7 years old, from which the site is screened by tall fencing and an established hedgerow and a continuous line of trees.

To the south is Bartlett Arboretum, which has planning permission for expansion, including new buildings, which appear to be already underway.

3.5 Landscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the site is a combination of the site's value and its susceptibility to change in relation to the proposed development.

As there is no formal sensitivity assessment provided by the Council relevant to the study area, an analysis of its elements to establish its level of sensitivity has been undertaken. Value can be established by considering how the landscape and its contextual setting reflect a range of landscape factors:

- **Landscape quality:** The site consists of light industrial/agricultural workshop buildings and associated storage area, with the fields to the north, laid to grass. The closest field has some encroachment of various plant within the grassland, whereas the field further north is in good condition and bounded on most sides by good quality hedgerows, typical of the area. The proposed development area includes the section of field south of the closest hedge. Therefore, the landscape quality of the site overall is **assessed as low**.
- **Scenic quality:** This is a light industrial landscape with associated plant, storage, with most of the hard surfaces laid with either tarmac or stone. Whilst grass forms the periphery to the north, and to a lesser extent to the east, much of the site, and woodland can be seen beyond the walls, or across vehicles towards the grass and woodlands to the north. However, overall, the area is predominantly industrial in character. A number of the buildings are generally low quality/functional structures giving a somewhat unsightly yet agricultural impression with the two adjacent fields used for agriculture. Therefore, taken as a whole, the **scenic quality of the site is considered to be low**.
- **Rarity:** The small arboretum adjacent to the site, may be considered as a rare landscape feature, but with its heavily wooded boundary has little connectivity with the site. Elsewhere, there are no rare landscape features locally or within this site, so it is assessed as having a **low value for its rarity**.
- **Representativeness:** Whilst grassland is part of the local landscape, apart from the two adjacent field, the immediate area to the north is predominantly woodland, with more open fields with hedgerows located to the south, on the land beyond. The grass is not particularly representative of the site, or the local landscape to the north, which is substantially wooded. It is therefore assessed as **low for its representative qualities**.

- **Conservation interest:** There are no specific conservation or heritage features of interest within the site boundary, as it contains an existing business adjacent to simple agricultural fields enclosed in part, by woodland. The grass appears to be simple species, and so has a **very low conservation value**.
- **Recreation value:** The site has no public access and therefore has **no recreational value**.
- **Perceptual qualities:** The site has no notable wilderness qualities, and generates a minor to moderate level of noise when visitors or staff access the site. Its perceptual qualities are therefore assessed as **low**.
- **Associations value:** There are no associations of note relative to the site or the local area, such as associations with local history, artists or writers, with the exception of the (developing) arboretum close by, although there is no physical relationship (albeit a minor visual relationship with a small part of its site boundary) between the two. It is therefore considered to have a **low associative value**.

Overall, the factors combine and confirm that the site itself has few landscape qualities of value, such that the site is considered to have a **low landscape value**.

In terms of susceptibility to change, the existing agricultural fields have a low susceptibility to change with a moderate to low value, which suggests that overall, the site is considered to have a **low sensitivity to change**.

Constraints and Opportunities – overall the site is considered to have a low sensitivity to change. As such, the scale and location of any development, whilst requiring careful consideration of its location, mass and scale, should be capable of appropriate integration within the landscape.

3.5 Summary of key issues

The existing landscape local to the site, is a mix of woodland (mainly to the north) and agricultural land (mainly to the south) with the agricultural fields immediately to the north, being the exception. The character of the landscape changes close to the site and its southern boundary, where the areas of woodland change to fields with high, good quality hedgerows.

However, the visibility of the existing buildings above the boundary walls or through the two gates, whilst only seen for a short duration, are atypical of the internal industrial nature of the site.

It should also be noted that the existing light industrial business use of the site has been in existence for many years, with full approval from the LPA, and preceded the construction of housing to the east of the site for even longer. During that time, it has been considered an important source of local employment.

3.6 Potential for Change

The planned redevelopment of the site, will replace many of the older, low-quality structures and provide a new building that relates to the retained buildings, and is more compact with a much smaller overall footprint – see figures 9 and 10. This will also ‘tidy up’ the various uses around the site into a cohesive grouping, and will enable the hardstanding/storage area to expand.

The change will also allow most of the existing structures within the site (close to the north entrance) to be removed, as their replacements will be set further back within the site, reducing their visibility. Additionally, the boundary walls will be planted to reduce their visual effect.

Whilst there are no particularly sensitive viewpoints towards the site, the consideration of how development could be assimilated within it is important, both in its relationship to the village edge (to the east), and with the adjacent natural landscape.

The proposed site arrangement, in rationalising its layout, can provide capacity for staff and visitor parking within the site, and space to enable substantial new planting to buffer the eastern site boundary from the existing housing to the east, with a separation area between the development boundary to the internal field hedge, which will still be set back from the actual site boundary. Elsewhere, on the western side, the existing range of buildings around the northern gate will, almost all, be removed, with a waiting bay for the HGVs to park when they arrive (removing the problem of vehicles waiting on the road outside).

4 VISUAL BASELINE

4.1 Methodology

To assess the potential visual constraints of the application site, it is first necessary to establish the area of surrounding land over which the existing site exerts a visual influence – *see figure 6*. This is done through the use of information gained from desktop and field based visual survey techniques, the purpose of which is three-fold:

- It allows the existing visibility status or baseline condition of the site to be established.
- It provides information that can be used to direct and determine an appropriate design for the development that causes least visual disturbance.
- It allows an effective range of mitigation measures to be developed and tested.

The area around the site was visited and all relevant PRow travelled to establish the broad Zone of Visual Influence. All routes of significance were visited to establish the visual effects of the site, and the necessary mitigation required. The photographs included within this report are not intended to be exhaustive or to replace the need to visit the area in person but rather, are intended to give a good representation of the visual influence of the proposal site from all key locations.

4.2 Visual Analysis

A visual survey was undertaken during August, when the screening potential of the planting (in full leaf) was fully evident. This illustrates the general scenario and extent of visibility, but not the situation when all the deciduous trees drop their leaves during the winter months.

At the time of the survey, visual conditions were good and dry but somewhat overcast. The overall visibility of the site and key viewpoint locations are identified on *Figure 6*.

A hierarchy has been established to enable the views to be categorised relative to their effect and importance as follows:

Clear views – where a substantial part of the development site can be clearly seen from distant viewpoints or, where a lesser part can be seen from a very close viewpoint.

Partial, intermittent or filtered views – where clear views of the site are obtained for a limited part of the site only, or where a greater part is seen but filtered by intervening vegetation or topography.

No views – either where topography or the density of the intervening vegetation is such that the site is either not visible, or where such a minor part is visible that it is not readily discernible, or where the filtering effect of the intervening vegetation is such that the site is similarly not readily discernible.

4.3 Sensitivity of the Receptors

It is important to identify who the key visual receptors are going to be and their degree of sensitivity to the existing views and the proposed changes. Whilst public viewpoints are of prime importance, private viewpoints must also be considered. The main groups of receptors are as follows:

- The key receptors for the site are the pedestrians using the rights of way and footpaths due to their limited speed. These are considered to be of **high sensitivity**, as they will be moving at a slow pace and therefore have the greatest opportunity of viewing the site.
- Receptors of **medium sensitivity** include those within their place of work or residence and users of outdoor recreational spaces, where the landscape is not their primary focus.
- Receptors of **medium to low sensitivity** include those travelling on the roads around the area; as such their experience of the landscape is transitory, with much of their focus being directed along the roads themselves.

4.4 Overall Visibility

The visibility of the site can be broadly broken down into the following areas:

Near distance views: from footpaths and roads in close proximity to the site

viewpoints 1-3

Middle distance or glimpsed views: where views are blocked or filtered by vegetation

viewpoints 4-5

Long distance views: there are no long-distance views.

4.5 Near distance views

Near distance views are primarily seen when immediately adjacent to the site's northern entrance, and continues southwards to past the southern entrance, until screened by the roadside vegetation.

Viewpoint 1: looking towards the southern entrance through which various buildings, parking and storage areas can be seen when the solid gates are open. Views further into the site are blocked by the existing building and fencing. The mature trees to the side of the entrance gates, reduces the effect of the walls and building to an extent.

Viewpoint 2: along White House Lane looking south-east, the backs of the existing (poor quality) buildings can be seen above the boundary wall, or through gaps in the vegetation along the road. Views further into the site are blocked by the existing buildings. Mature roadside vegetation and the curvature of the lane, limits the forward view to a short section of White House Lane.

Viewpoint 3: from the junction of White House Lane, looking east into the site through the metal mesh gates. A partial view of site is seen, with much of the site obscured by the buildings. Existing mature vegetation to either side of entrance gates, with the entrance not located directly on the lane, reduces views into the site (unless walking along the adjacent footpath).

4.6 Glimpsed views from relatively near distance locations

Viewpoint 4: along the PRoW to the north-west of the site, there is no direct view of the site. However, if standing very close to the field boundary, beyond the footpath, there is a view down the field where the hedgerows that divide the agricultural fields can just be seen, but not the land beyond. It is unclear whether the proposed building would be seen from this location, but if so, it would only be of a very minor part as the ground falls to the south and the hedgerows are dense and relatively high.

Viewpoint 5: along the PRoW to the north of the site, looking due south, where it's possible that the new development, may just be glimpsed through the near hedgerow and above the boundary hedgerow in the field beyond. The distant views would be of taller elements within the site but would be largely obscured by the mature hedgerow that divides the two intervening fields, and the fall of the land.

It should also be noted that there are potential views from some of the mobile homes along the western boundary of the site, although only those closest are potentially affected, and the hedgerows within the site filters their view in this direction.

4.7 Summary separate general

Generally, views of the site are limited to a small number of nearby locations. There are two slight glimpses of part of the site from two specific viewpoints adjacent to, but not from the PRoW through the woodland, which are due to less dense sections of hedging, specifically over field gates. These two views are largely already mitigated by existing mature hedgerows within the site. It is only from the lane where the three closest viewpoints are located, that views of the site are visible. From these locations, the nature of the works is not particularly evident due to the height of the boundary fencing along the lane, although it is clearly agricultural.

There are no views from the adjacent housing to the east of the site (No views 2 & 3) due to the tall fencing and existing tall and dense, hedgerow and trees adjacent to the housing estate.

5 DESIGN CRITERIA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Evaluation of the Baseline Studies

The purpose of the landscape evaluation is to provide a rationale and series of design constraints to help guide an appropriate form and massing of development. This allows the proposals to be tested against established criteria as the design is developed to ensure a suitable final form. In this instance, the design had already been developed for a Planning Application but had not been evaluated to ensure that it is well assimilated within the local countryside, in accordance with the LVIA assessment process.

The development criteria therefore need to address issues of landscape character and visual impact as follows:

EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Whether the new development affects the typical character of the area and in what way.
- The extent to which the existing local tree cover, and hedging will provide screening of the proposed development.
- How locally typical styles of planting can be used to mitigate potential adverse effects.
- Which materials would blend best with the local landscape and reinforce local character.

IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE RESOURCE

- The extent to which the existing resource of hedgerows and trees around the site can be retained both within the site, and adjacent to it.
- The extent to which any features of specific interest can be retained and integrated within the layout.
- The ability to increase both the landscape resource and its diversity through the design, planting and species choices within the landscape plan.

VISUAL IMPACT

- The change in visibility from the key viewpoints which will result from the new development.
- The relationship of the new building to the existing vegetated boundaries.
- The scale of the development and how that relates to key viewpoints.

- Consideration of materials that are both typical of the area, and which will blend seamlessly within the landscape
- How planting can be used to mitigate potential adverse effects.

5.2 Design Parameters

These development criteria can be further refined to provide the following guidelines:

ITS VISIBILITY FROM LOCAL ROADS AND FOOTPATHS

- The visibility of the site from local roads is not major, and is also brief, being limited to a close view of the entrance area to the west, and a view from close to the current main site entrance along White House Lane, and along the lane between. Internally, the existing building closest to the boundary will be demolished, along with the adjacent cycle shelter and replaced by a single building set back further into the site, allowing a substantial area of parking to be provided around the internal boundary wall, with the majority of parking spaces located where previously there were buildings.
- Whilst views from the public footpath are not a current issue, the extension of the parking area for machinery to the north, is likely to affect those living in the static caravans closest to the site. Additional boundary planting should therefore be used to increase the height and density of any existing planting, and to infill any gaps. Tree planting could also be included (in consultation with the occupants) to provide higher screening along the edge of the hedge to further mitigate any potential inward views. This will assist in filtering or screening views of the machinery above the height of the existing hedge, with the hedge itself being allowed to grow taller.
- Substantial tree and shrub planting is also required to replace that lost in the expansion of the plant parking area.

ITS COMPOSITION IN THE LANDSCAPE FROM NEAR AND MIDDLE-DISTANCE VIEWS

- The existing hedgerow to the north of the extended storage yard should be strengthened with a line of tree planting to further filter the brief views from the areas identified adjacent to the public footpath and by the gate to the north. This will allow the scheme to be effectively integrated within the landscape.

- The boundary along White House Lane is planned to be changed to a wall that will be painted green with hedgerow planting around its outer boundary, that will improve both its visual quality and along the lane generally.

SITE DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

- SuDS on the surface should be prioritised where possible, with continuous gradients down to the storm water attenuation pond, echoing the existing natural drainage pattern (to be confirmed by others). The use of stone as a surface material will allow water to infiltrate into the ground, and is intended to be used on much of the site, that will enable the storm water attenuation pond to be sized relative to the land's infiltration capacity (to be confirmed by the engineers). *See figure 8.*

5.3 Preferred Layout, Principals of the Landscape Strategy and Mitigation

On the basis of the above design parameters and the nature of the boundaries and key views, a landscape strategy is provided on *figure 9*, which illustrates the key issues that have been identified.

The proposed new workshop building sits within the existing developed area, however the extension to the yard area and the relocated landscape buffer bund will extend onto part of the adjacent grass area along the site's eastern boundary.

6 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

6.1 Layout of the Built Form and the Landscape Strategy

1. **Access** by vehicle is to be changed so that the entrance to the north becomes the main access point for visitors and deliveries, whilst the southern entrance will only be used by staff.
2. **Parking** for staff and visitors will be provided within the site boundary.
3. **Storm water** will be conveyed to a detention basin in the north-east corner of the site, following the natural fall of the land. Much of the additional parking area will be surfaced with stone/shingle, which is also a permeable surface.
4. **Planting strategy** the entirety of the planting will be native species, to ensure that the building's setting is appropriate within the local landscape. The existing hedgerow to the north of the extended yard area will be reinforced with native tree species. To the east of the site a 15m wide landscape buffer zone will be established within the site boundary, adjacent to the existing hedgerow planting and will consist of native trees with native understorey shrub species. This will provide additional noise attenuation for the area of housing beyond it. Existing planting located on the landscape bund (to be demolished) will also be relocated to this zone if in good condition.

These proposals are illustrated on **figure 9**.

7 ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

7.1 Landscape Effects

The existing landscape resource comprises the physical elements of the site; the grass, shrubs, hedgerows and trees, alongside its sensitivity, which considers its quality, contribution to landscape character and the degree to which that characteristic can be replaced or substituted.

Effects are a product of the scale or magnitude of change, and the sensitivity of the receptor, and may be adverse or beneficial. A judgement that summarises these factors, will establish the importance that the proposed changes will make. The landscape effects will be caused by the loss of areas of agricultural field but mitigated by extensive new planting in the form of the landscape buffer zone, hedgerow reinforcements and new hedgerow planting around both the new main entrance, and the staff parking area to the south.

7.2 Effect on the Landscape Resource

Existing vegetation to be removed

- The existing planted bund is to be removed, and replaced by a new bund, which will use the original planting (where of sufficiently good quality) and new plants as required
- Removal of part of an agricultural field (grassland) for the extension of the yard area

Vegetation to be planted as part of the Landscape Strategy

- The new 15m wide landscape buffer along the eastern boundary of the site, to be planted with native tree and shrub species (and any plants suitable for translocation)
- Reinforcement of the existing hedgerows to the north of the extended yard area, including a line of trees on its northern side
- Hedging and trees shall be planted to the eastern side of the static caravans and along the entirety of the new road-side boundary, between the entrance areas
- Suitable planting around parts of the SuDS basin proposed at northeast part of the site

Existing vegetation to be retained

- The field boundaries to the north will be retained
- The existing trees around the roadside boundary to the east of the current site entrance will be retained
- The tall hedgerows and trees along the southern boundary will be retained

Overall effect – whilst a large amount of grassland will be removed, the site will be planted with a large landscape buffer and a diverse range of tree and shrub species around the site and its boundaries.

7.3 Effect on Landscape Character

The character of the internal area of the site will change, with its enlarged internal area, and a more organised layout, with most of the small buildings being removed and their function relocated within the new buildings. The existing uses will become better integrated such that the new arrangement will be clustered close together, and the yard area extended further into the agricultural field.

Overall effect – the loss of agricultural land to parking space for machinery will change the character of this specific area of land, but the land has always been part of this industrial site and is not visible by anyone other than those who work there, those who visit to purchase equipment from the sales office or for servicing and repairs of their equipment.

The changes alter the site substantially, with the changes enhancing the quality of the built form and its setting. This includes the detailed consideration of its location, access by the public, and its location adjacent to the (relatively new) housing estate, as the proposal is an extension of the existing land use. The proposed development will be visible from only a very limited number of locations close to the site itself, and removes all the buildings that currently form part of the boundary wall.

7.4 Summary

The character of the landscape of the site is primarily experienced from the entrance area and a small section of White House Lane only. There are two distant glimpsed views from land adjacent to the public footpath due to gaps in the hedgerow field boundary, or where there is a gated field access, both of which are minor (and only likely to be seen in the summer months)

all of which can be enhanced. There is no view into the site from the adjacent housing estate due to the existing tall wooden fence and its well-established tall trees and hedgerow planting. Overall, the effect on the quality of the landscape should improve.

8 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

8.1 Relevant Visual Locations and Receptors

Generally, the baseline studies have established that visibility of the site is seen from very few locations, with the key views being immediately adjacent to the main developed area of the site. These views were recorded in late August and therefore represent vegetation in full leaf. **(See Appendix 3 for the figures containing the single shot images).**

Those travelling on the lane are considered to be of medium sensitivity, as their focus will be primarily on the road. Those walking on the PROWs are considered to be of high sensitivity, as being on foot, they have time to observe the views. The assessment of change therefore considers the areas as determined within the baseline study as follows:

- Clear views of the site - **viewpoints 1**
- Partial or heavily filtered views – **viewpoints 2-5**
- Distant views – there are no distant views

8.2 Assessment of clear views

Viewpoint 1 – from the south-east entrance on White House Lane

Assessment of effect: This view is seen from the south-east corner of the site into the new staff entrance and will primarily be seen by motorists on this relatively quiet lane. The proposals provide improved access for staff and a ‘tidier’ entrance with a grass verge, hedge planting and the new concrete wall. However, the new building will now be seen through the eastern gate and above the boundary wall, but set back further into the site increasing the extent of development. However, the existing buildings along the boundary wall will be removed, so that views of the buildings are set back into the site. A 15m planted bund will be seen between the eastern boundary and the new building and the southern boundary, which will be used for staff parking. The receptors will be primarily those in vehicles who are of medium sensitivity.

Overall effect: *these views will be minor / moderately adverse in the short term as this part of the site adopts a more organised and coherent layout, and whilst industrial in nature will present a more considered site arrangement. The view down the site to the planted bund will provide a more substantial amount of planting than is currently found. Externally, the new boundary wall and hedgerow planting will provide a more attractive view towards the site than is currently seen.*

The boundary planting, will, as it grows over time, improve the quality of the view around this boundary.

8.3 Assessment of partial or filtered views

Viewpoint 2: from White House Lane between the two entrances

Assessment of effect: At present the buildings along this section of the site boundary screens the building behind, which is set back from the boundary. However, the boundary buildings are to be removed, but the one beyond retained, and will only be partially seen when those on the frontage are removed. Considering the angle of the view, and the height of the proposed new boundary wall, it is possible that very little of the other retained buildings will be seen from this viewpoint. The internal parking will also be screened behind the wall so that the built development will be seen set back into the site. The new hedging and boundary wall will create a more neat and tidy effect, with the hedging covering a substantial part of the wall as it matures.

***Overall effect:** the removal of the nearest redundant buildings will reduce the effect of the built form generally, such that its effect will be moderately beneficial from this location (by comparison), in the short and long term. Whilst the existing vegetation along the road will be removed, this will be replaced by the proposed hedging, and will over time, create a new, dense hedgerow that is appropriate for this location, such that its effect will be both moderate and beneficial.*

Viewpoint 3: From White House Lane at the northern entrance to the site

Assessment of effect: This view is seen from White House Lane, on the section close to the new visitor site entrance. It will primarily be seen by customers, delivery vehicles, and those accessing the footpath to the north. This view will be greatly improved by the removal of various 'untidy' buildings that are currently visible from the site entrance, with the gate itself, being an unattractive feature, that appears to be in poor condition, and will be replaced. The installation of a new gate, quality fencing, the hedge and the grass verge will offer a neater and more attractive solution. Space for delivery parking will replace the various small buildings around the northern boundary with visitor parking to the south of the entrance, where products can also be displayed, all being screened by the proposed boundary hedge and wall.

Overall effect: *The receptors will be primarily those in vehicles, the substantial proportion of which will be staff and a much smaller number of site visitors as well as those using the lane. The former being of low sensitivity whilst the visitors will be a mix of low or medium sensitivity, depending on their interest in the products produced on site. Local people using the lane, will be used to the site and its activities and so should view the new development as a positive improvement, however their sensitivity will be minor / moderate depending on the frequency on which they pass by. Generally, the effect will be a minor / moderate positive effect on this existing view by both those working on site, site visitors and local people.*

8.4 Assessment of partial or heavily filtered viewpoints

Viewpoint 4: From land adjacent to the footpath to the north of the site

Assessment of effect: Generally, this view is similar to viewpoint 5 in that it is unlikely to be seen by those walking on the footpath, unless they wish to step off the footpath to look down the field to the fields and buildings beyond. As this location provides access into the field it is possible that those walking along the adjacent path, may enter the field (although this is considered unlikely).

Overall effect: *The receptors will be those on foot who are of high sensitivity. The view looks across the field towards its eastern side, but if viewed southwards down the field towards the site, the view is mainly blocked by the existing hedgerow across the field further along its length. There is potentially a view above the hedgerow along the site's northern boundary, if machinery is parked in close proximity. However, this boundary will be enhanced by a line of trees along its length which, over time, will block any inward views.*

Viewpoint 5: on the edge of the woodland to the north of the site, looking south towards a gate through which, there is a distant view (220m) to the field beyond

Assessment of effect: This view is screened by the well-established hedgerow that divides the field and a further hedgerow which surrounds the site, and is taken from the gap in vegetation on the PRow. Through the gate, there is a heavily filtered view which will be reinforced by the proposed tree planting along the northern site boundary.

Overall effect: *The receptors will be primarily those on foot who are of high sensitivity, but the likelihood of them diverting off the footpath is relatively low. It is possible that the top of any machinery that is stored further down the site, may be visible from this viewpoint. However, the view of machinery is less likely as the ground slopes slightly to the south beyond the distant field boundary. Additionally, the existing field boundary to the north of the site will have a line of trees planted along its northern edge that will provide a greater heightened density to the screening*

Within the Appendix are highlighted views where the site cannot be seen. No view 2 and 3 demonstrate that the site cannot be seen from the housing to the east of the site.

8.5 Summary

The existing site is generally not widely visible from the surrounding local area, with its key viewpoints being from the area of White House Lane immediately surrounding the site entrances.

There are minor, heavily filtered views for two short sections from the field boundary adjacent to the footpath. These are brief views from over field gates and not directly on the adjacent footpath, but from which a hedgerow north of the site can be seen. It is possible that the proposed development may be distantly visible from this location, however there are two intervening field hedgerow boundaries and a distance of over 200m but if so, the hedgerow can be reinforced by a line of tree planting to further filter such a view, if this is considered necessary.

Overall, there are a number of minor, localised views, but generally, the development, due to the clustering of the built form, the lack of change to the existing use, and the proposed landscape treatment throughout, can ensure that the new site arrangement can be successfully incorporated within the local landscape without any major adverse effects.

Where development is seen, it will be substantially filtered by the onsite planting with the exception of the entrance area where views into and out of the site are necessary for traffic safety, but there will be a significant improvement to the layout and nature of the site access once the proposed works are complete

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary

Consideration of the perceived character of the site, and its visibility within the landscape has strongly influenced the approach to the site's layout. The built structures are clustered closely together and largely within the footprint of existing structures, thus reducing the potential impact on the visual character of the local landscape. The existing landscape resource of trees and hedgerows around the boundaries will be retained, and their location relative to the existing development and adjacent housing will not be affected. The extent of development is contained within the existing development footprint as far as is possible; where it encroaches onto adjacent agricultural land within the site, the usage is mainly as part of the yard rather than built structures, thus minimising the impact on the landscape setting in this rural-edge location.

The proposals have been carefully considered throughout the design process ensuring that they respond to the identified constraints on both the local landscape character, and their visibility from near and more distant, filtered viewpoints.

Almost no vegetation, other than areas of existing agricultural grassland and the self-sown vegetation along part of the southern boundary wall, will need to be removed to accommodate the proposals. The existing landscape bund and its associated planting will be moved to the new 15m landscape buffer strip. This wide, new strip of native planting will provide a substantially diverse flora, enhancing the local landscape.

As has been demonstrated, due to the location and extent of the proposed modernisation, there will be a minor-moderate beneficial effect on all views from external places due to the more coherent and organised arrangement and use of the site, that will allow it to function more effectively.

9.2 Conclusion

The production of a LVIA to support this application, has allowed the necessary landscape character and visual issues that are relevant to this site to be properly identified and evaluated.

The proposed development has been carefully considered to ensure that it will be assimilated within the local landscape over time, in a manner that will contribute to the quality of the local landscape and its character appropriately. Therefore, whilst potentially having a short-term minor/moderately adverse effect on small number of close-range views from local roads and nearby footpath, as the hedgerows mature, there will be a minor-moderate long-term beneficial effect in external views.

