Design and Access Statement

Date
November 2022

Project Number
237

Client
Mr & Mrs Cornes

Project Name
Longview

Contents

1.0 The Process

Arthur's Stone – Herefordshire

Longview – Howle Hill

1.1 Evaluation

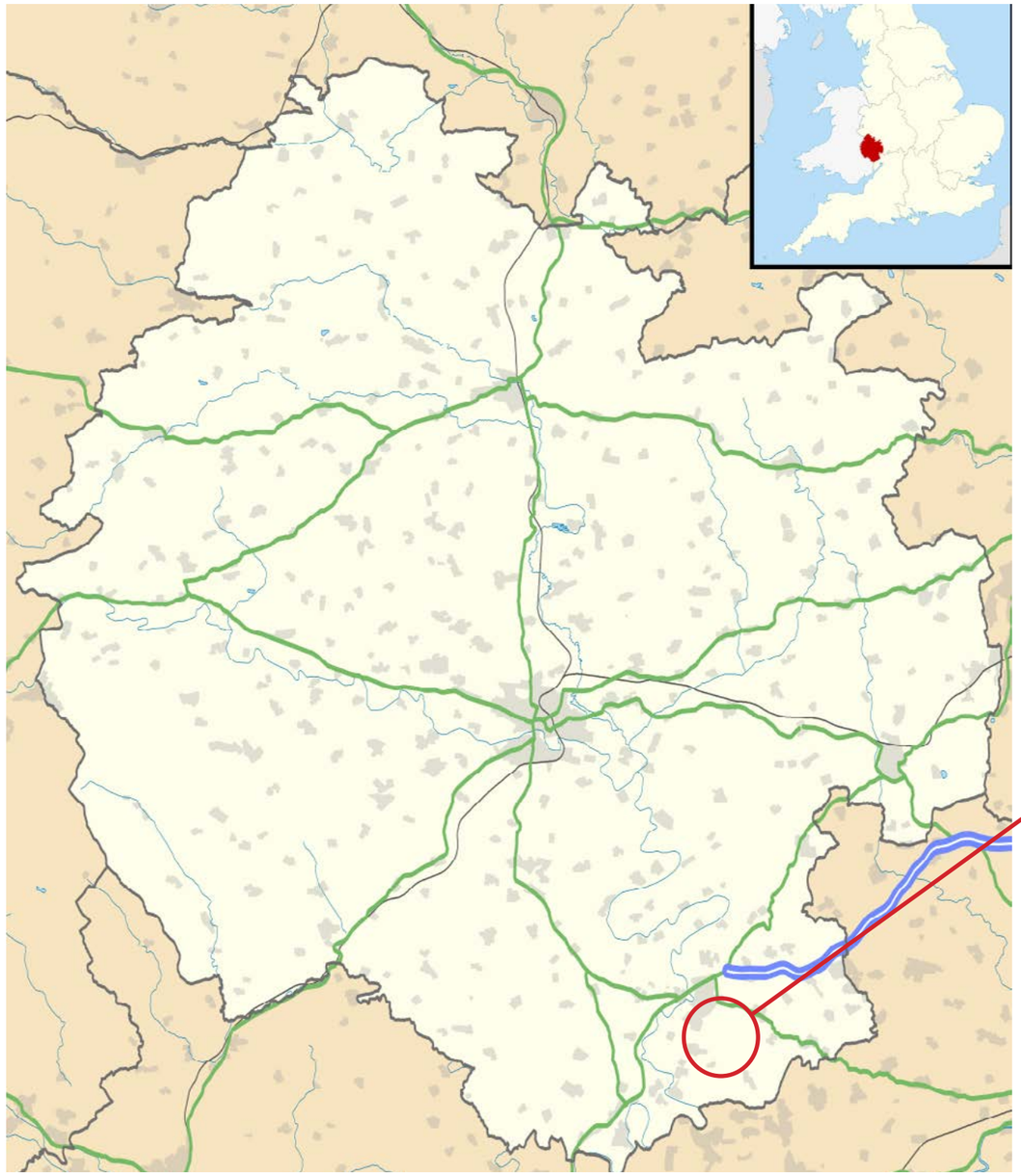
The paragraph-80 design proposed is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area and represents the highest standards in architecture and sustainability.

The house will push forward the boundaries of energy efficiency by including a research project in partnership with De Montfort University and the associated landscape plan will ensure the house is settled in the landscape and that enhancements deliver increased biodiversity.

The combination of future sustainability and the "look out" inspired views from the property inspire the name: **Longview.**

2.0 The Site

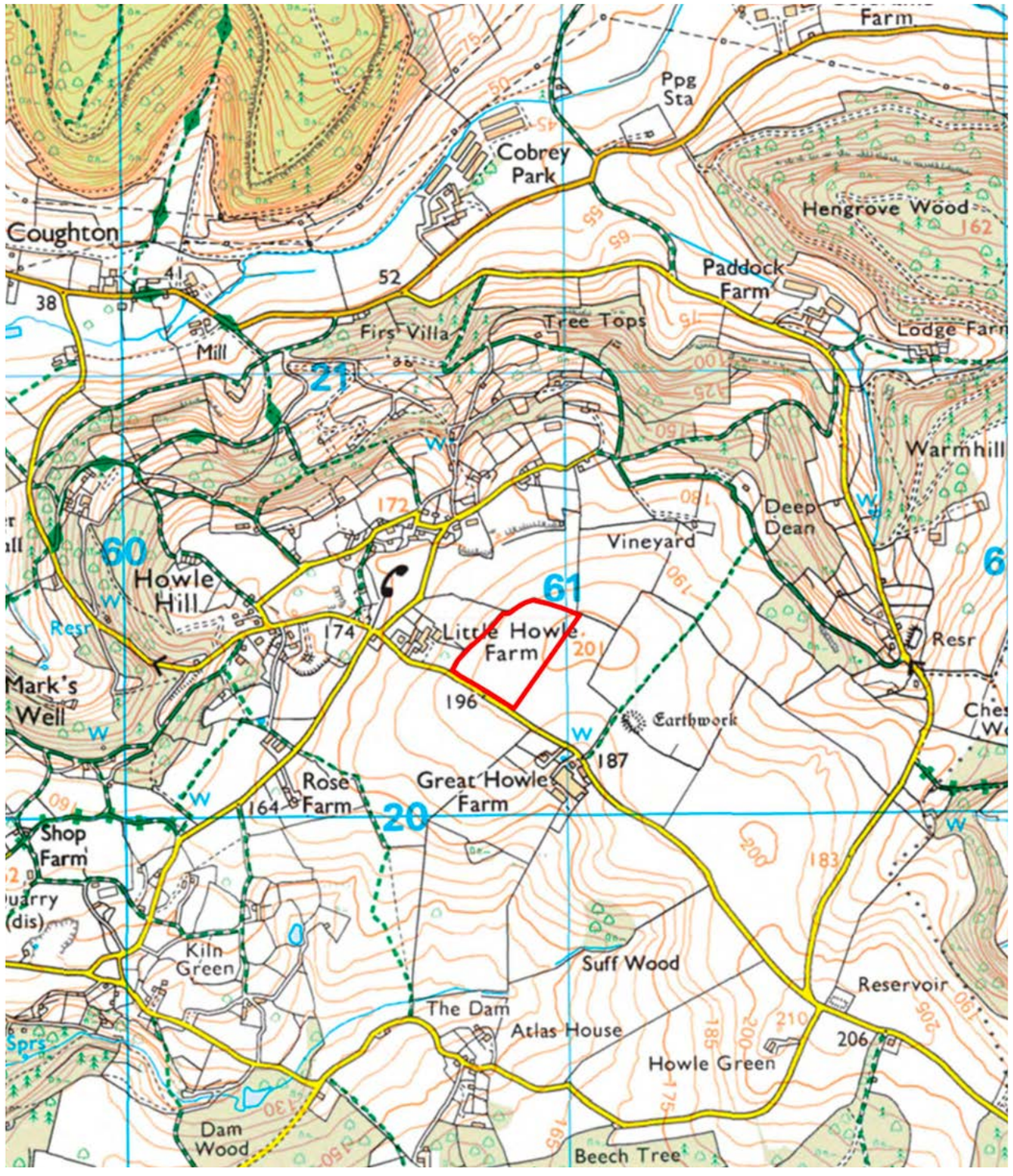
Map of Herefordshire



Location of site in context

2.0 The Site

Image – OS Landranger Series Map Location



2.1 Setting

The site occupies an isolated hilltop location, set just outside of the settlement and adjacent to Little Howle Farm. It comprises a partially enclosed arable field, including access from the adjacent lane (Sharman Pitch), and the adjoining development Little Howle Farm.

The hilltop location poses unique challenges such as the need for wind shelter and integration into a visible landscape to enhance visual amenity, whilst embracing viewing opportunities to the Norman Hill Fort – Great Howle Camp, the Welsh Mountains, the Brecon Beacons, and the Malvern Hills.

Within the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2004, the site is placed within the 'Wooded Hills and Farmlands' Landscape Character Type (LCT). Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd have undertaken a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), and in accordance with industry guidance have included an assessment of the site at a finer grain. (Refer to the attached document)

The site area (Red Line Boundary), is located outside the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) located further to the West. The LVIA has concluded that there would be no adverse effects arising from the proposed development in relation to the AONB, its designation, its special qualities or its setting.

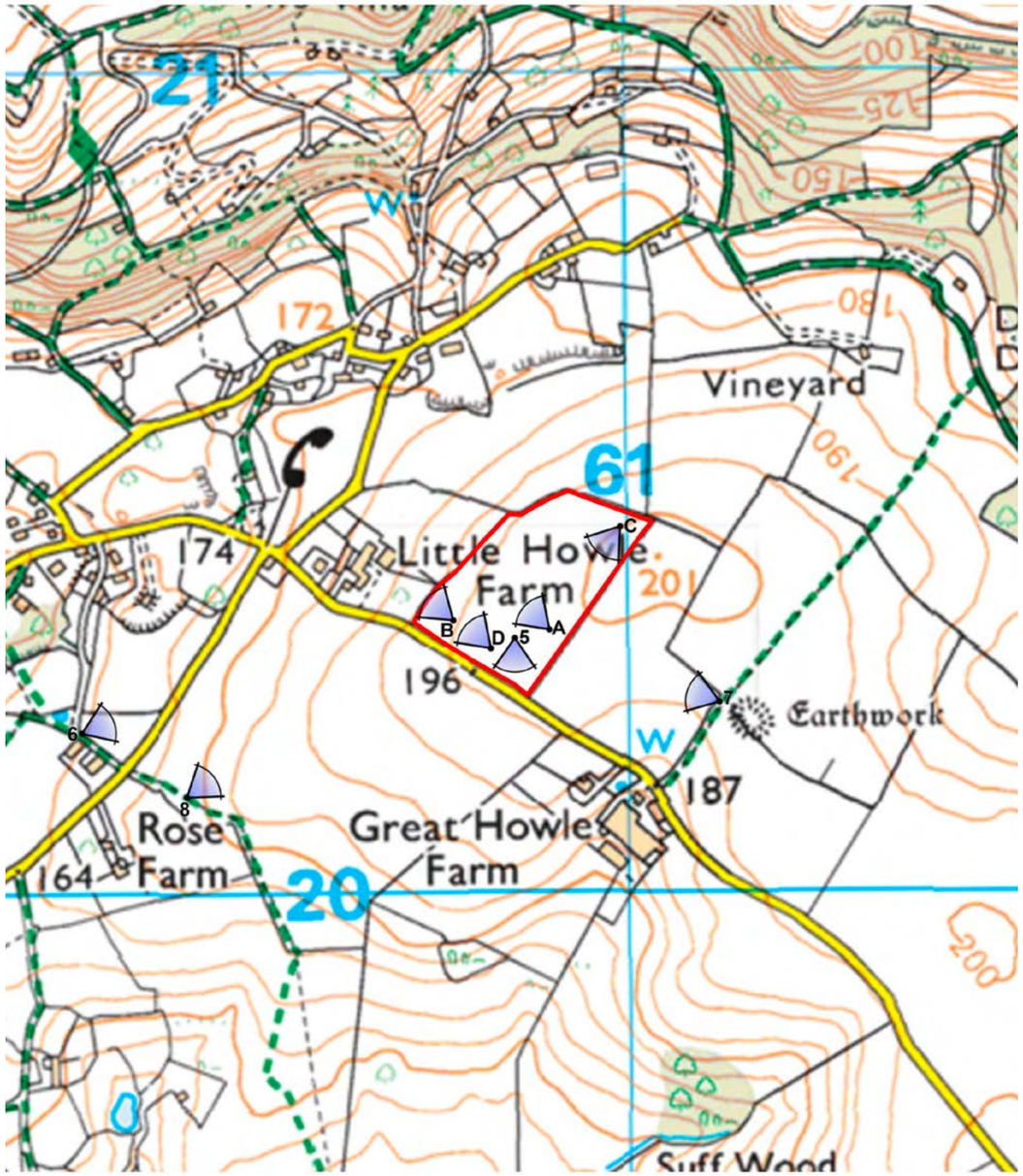
The first pre-app identified the optimum site area as laying within the Northwest corner of the site (see section 3). Adjacent to this area along the North-western boundary, the site falls away and opens to views towards the horizon. Views are towards the North and Northwest and are distant views of the Welsh Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Chase Woods and around to the Malvern Hills. The hedge along the Northwest boundary obscures any nearfield views and the settlement of Howle Hill is not visible from the chosen site area.

Located in the Southern boundary of the site, adjacent to the lane is an existing native hedgerow and an adjoining single storey stone and wood field shelter structure, which is retained as a useful utility structure.

Access to the site is at the Southeast corner, via an existing access visibility splay.

2.0 The Site

Image Reference - Key Map (Images page-7)



An overhead power line crosses the centre of the site, in an East / West direction. The proposals seek to work with Western Power to bury this cable and remove it from the skyline, which they have agreed in principle.

Further to the East is Great Howle Camp, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, which is from the Norman era and associated with Goodrich Castle as an outlying look-out post. All that remains is an earthwork which has been colonised by self-set trees, but this would originally have been a prominent structure within the landscape. The important views to the Hill Fort are maintained and the proposals orient any landscape intervention to embrace these views.

Along the Eastern boundary is a low-level native hedgerow that is maintained at a height to preserve views to the Hill Fort.

Overall, the site is unique in that it presents long distant views, yet it is largely invisible from the settlement of Howle Hill and the surrounding area.

2.0 The Site

Image Reference - Site Images (Key map page-6)

3.0 Site Analysis

Image – Pre-App 1 Location Study

3.1 Local physical context

The site lies on land that has been restored to agricultural use following mining activity. For detail refer to the 'Coal Mining Risk Assessment' October 2022 (CMRA) report that has been undertaken by Earth Environmental and Geotechnical Ltd. This assessment has been informed by Coal Authority records and other geological data.

The Trenchard Coal Seam lies beneath and stretches extensively beyond the site area. The site is located within an area of 'Probable Shallow Coal Mine Workings.' Almost the entire site was subject to open cast mining operations between 1972 and 1977. Upon completion the site was 'resoiled,' handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture and then returned to farming activity. No further detail is known about the fill material, suffice to say the site has been successfully farmed ever since.

Within the wider context, mixed farmland and woodland overlie a hilly terrain with scattered settlement patterns with historic references to past activities such as orchards, quarry and lime kiln sites and areas of disturbed land, since colonised by vegetation but marking past quarrying activity.

3.1.1 Choice of location within the site

The specific location and building orientation have been chosen to provide the following criteria in the project:

- embrace and maximise distant views from the property
- provide a degree of wind shelter
- use the existing good access from the road and access to the settlement
- to deliver good landscape integration opportunities

The location chosen (Black dot - D) maintains most of the spectacular outward views of other locations at A and C and provides significant positives for other important design criteria. Location D is also confirmed as the best location by Herefordshire Council during Pre-App 2 (See section 9) and during the first Design Review Panel workshop.

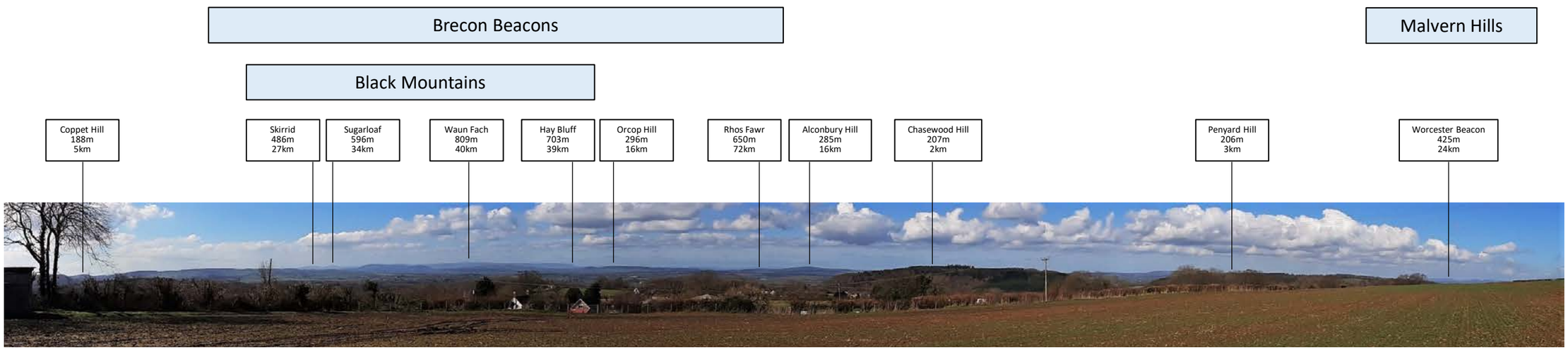
In addition, location D is not visible from the surrounding area, or from the AONB which is 150m to the North at its nearest point.

3.0 Site Analysis

Image – Historic Map Study

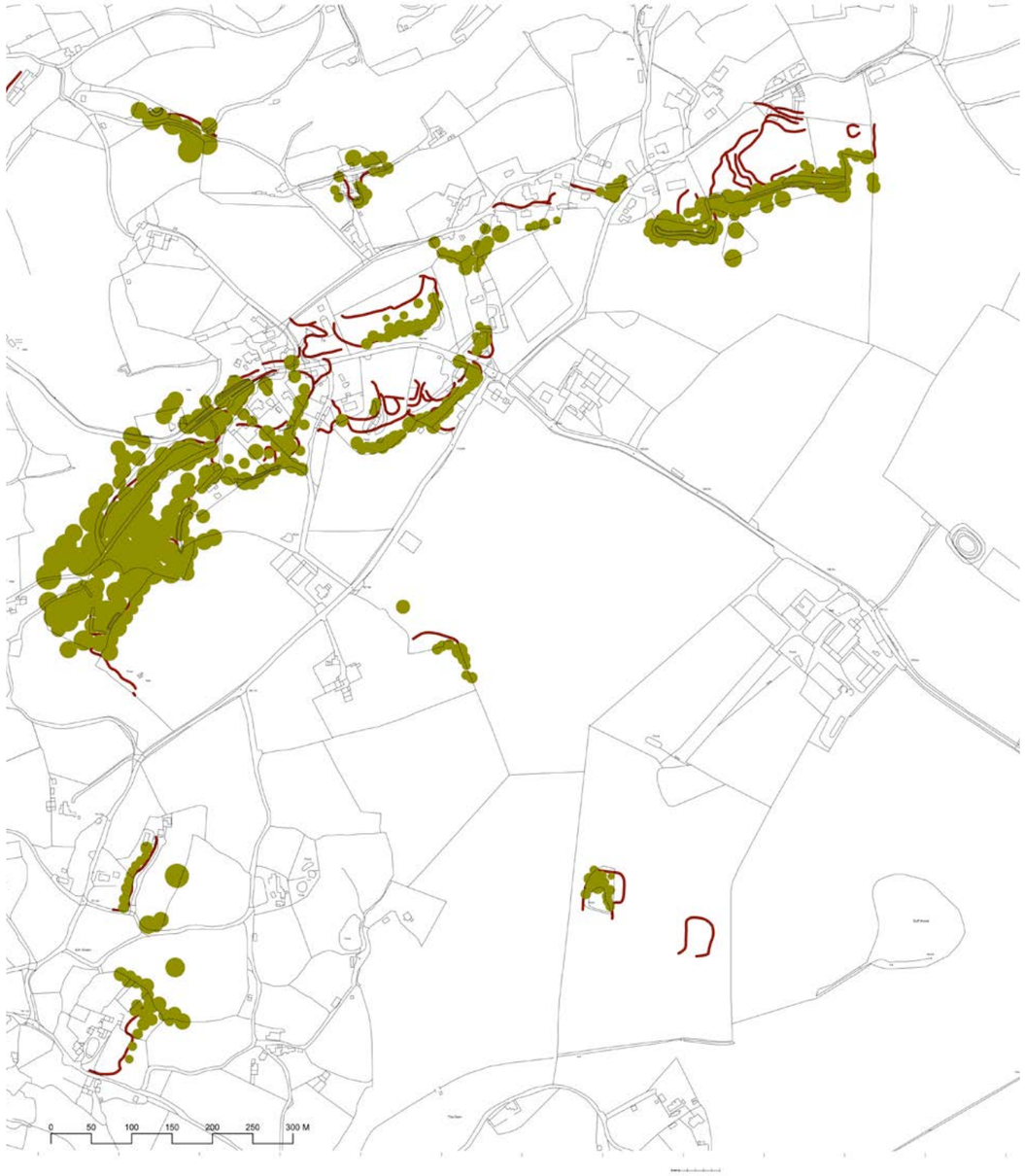
As part of the historical analysis study, it was discovered that the field was part of the Great Howle Hill Opencast Coal Mine and was operational from 1972-1977 during the era of miners strikes and the 'winter of discontent'. Reference to the Coal Authority Online Interactive viewer shows the site to be located within a Development High Risk Area but not within an area of Probable Shallow Coal Mine Workings. Maps of the coal workings have been obtained and these show the historic levels, and the extent of re-grading that took place at the site when the mine was closed.

A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been carried out by Earth, Environmental and Geotechnical Ltd. (Refer to attached documents: Appendix B - A4392 Little Howle Farm CMRA; Appendix 1 Coal Authority Mining Report). This reveals there could be a risk to the development foundations from past opencast mining, the report supports the granting of planning permission but, with conditions that additional work is carried out to further understand the ground conditions beneath the development area by drilling boreholes and conducting a geotechnical survey to inform the foundation design.



3.0 Site Analysis

Image – Quarries and Landscape Study



3.1.2 Site and Context Analysis

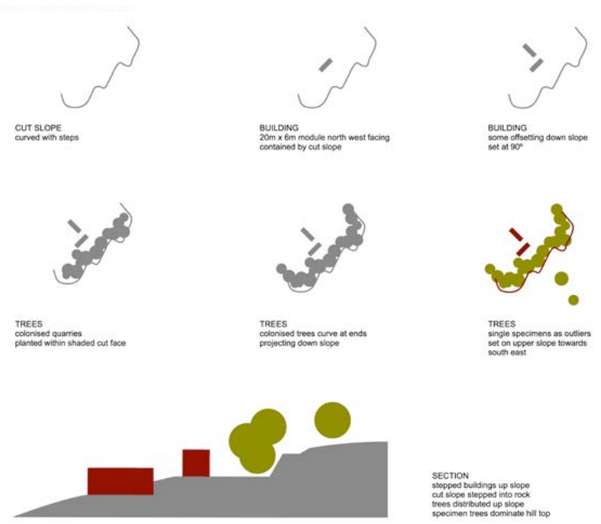
A detailed survey of the surrounding area was carried out to assess the local character of the surrounding built form and landscape character, views, historical features and topography.

The survey identified historical quarrying on Howle Hill which resulted in a landscape where old quarry works provided shelter for traditional workers cottages and native trees subsequently colonised within shaded hollows cut into the slope.

Other than the older workers cottages there are no distinct design features to the housing on Howle Hill, which is very mixed in character, being a combination of much altered traditional cottages and new properties, which reflect the time period over which they were built. Properties are almost exclusively individual detached buildings with road side proximity.

Detailed analysis of the size and orientation of traditional cottage development identifies a distinct pattern. The average footprint of a traditional workers cottage is 20m x 6m in size, located facing Northwest and often at right angles to this when located in clusters. These single, or clustered developments, are set below quarries and are generally surrounded by trees.

Image – Summary Landform Typologies



4.0 The Concept

Image – Hill Top "Look Out"

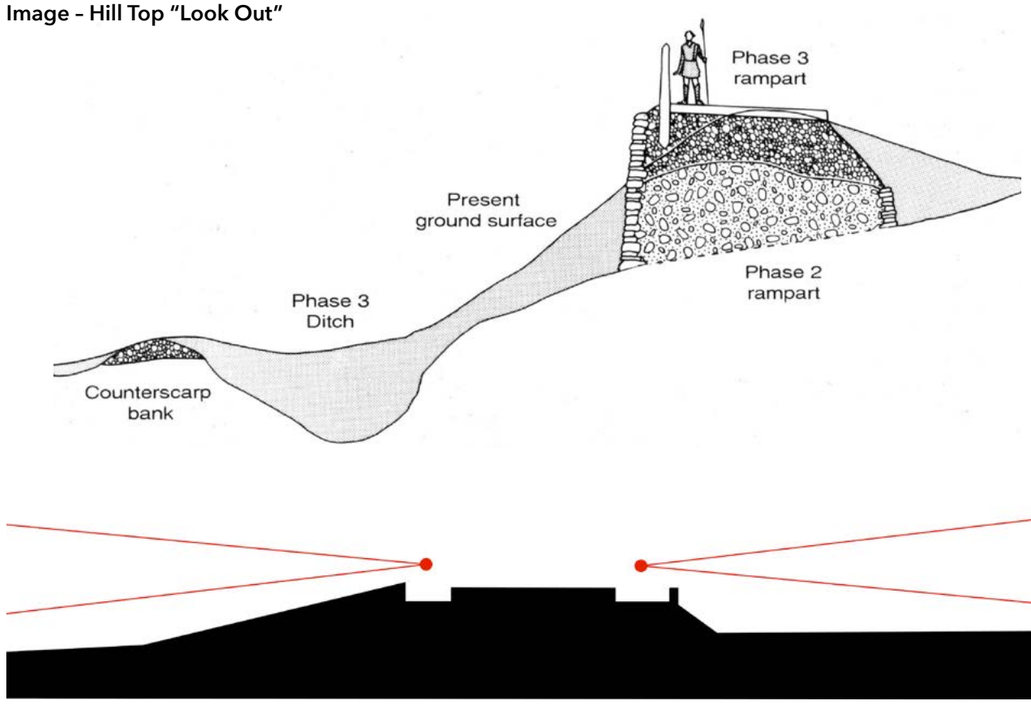


Image – Forest of Dean Wall Typologies

4.1 Rationale for design

A list of factors important to the design were identified during a series of design briefing meetings. The key aspects identified were:

1. Distant views from all parts of the building should be fully embraced as part of the proposals.

2. The building should integrate into the landscape and improve the diversity and ecological value.

3. The architecture is important and should reflect and be inspired by the hilltop location. Burying into the ground is not desirable.

4. Wind shelter is important in the hilltop location and sheltered areas are essential to enable sustainable development.

5. Any landscaping should be in keeping with local character and enhance the landscape and restore the setting where possible.

6. The property should have a carbon neutral or better energy footprint.

8. Build costs need to be reasonable to meet with the design constraints.

9. Work with the Local Authority and other stakeholders to create a responsive design that meets with policy and identified community interests.

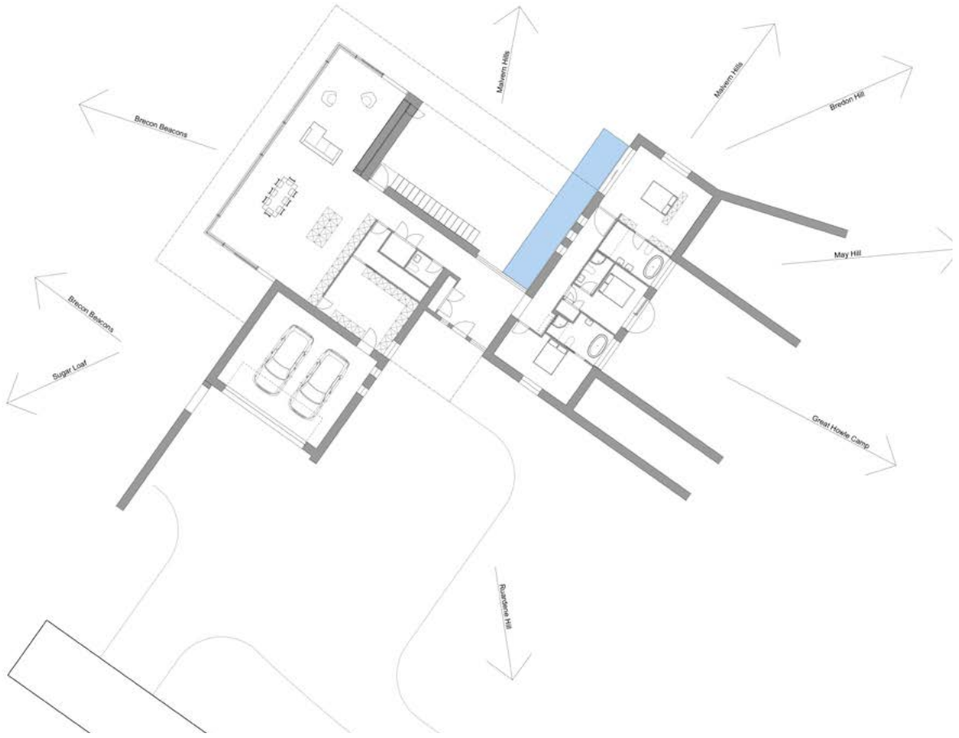
The proposed design has fully addressed each of the above points in an exemplary and fully iterative process, to produce a truly outstanding design.

4.2 Justification within physical context

The old quarry infrastructure of this area of the Forest of Dean provided inspiration for the use of stone walls within the context of a disrupted topography. Angled stone walls have been used to connect the building seamlessly to the hillside without the need to bury the structure in the ground.

4.0 The Concept

Image - Proposed Floor Plan with views



Historic analysis of Great Howle Camp and its association with Goodrich Castle provided inspiration to create not just a "look-out" from roof terraces but to incorporate "look out" views from all parts of the building. It also provides the inspiration for the external facings of the new house that are oriented to enable distant viewing directions. Furthermore, angular forms speak to hill top vectors that are apparent when 360° views are appreciated from vantage points within and above the proposed design.

Without burying the structure, the design also provides wind protection for outdoor areas, on a relatively exposed site.

Image – "Look Out" View directions ground plane

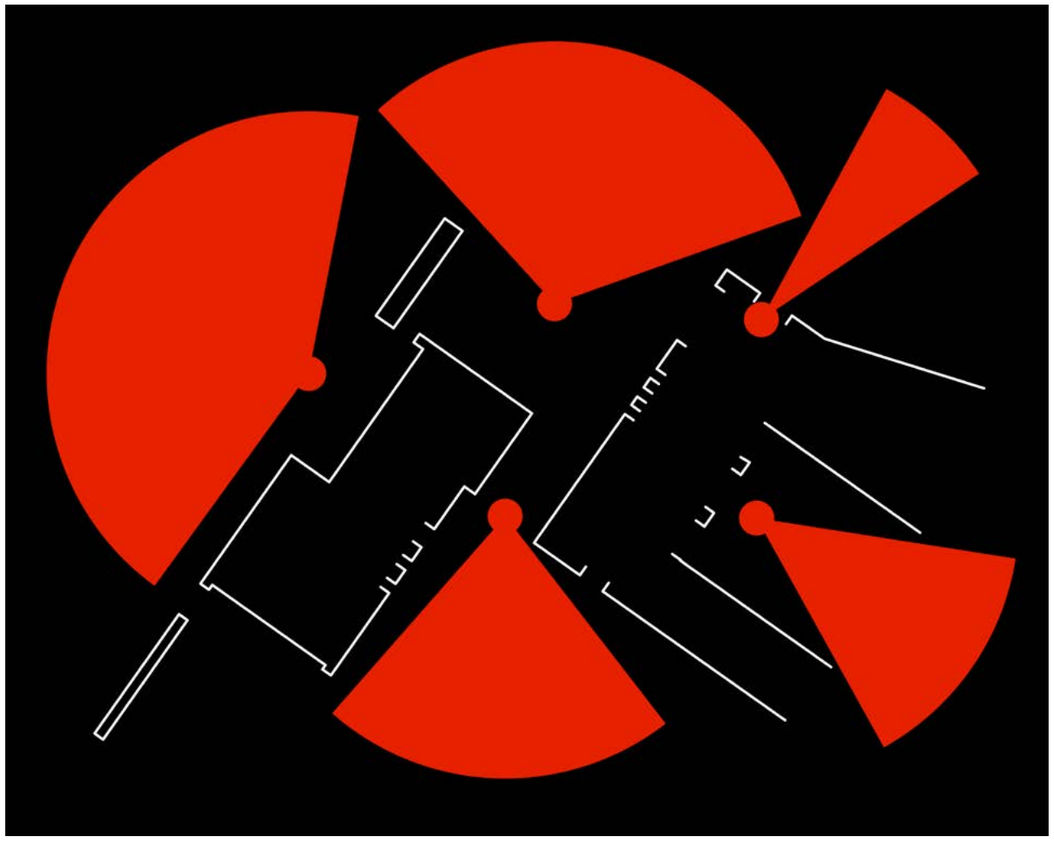
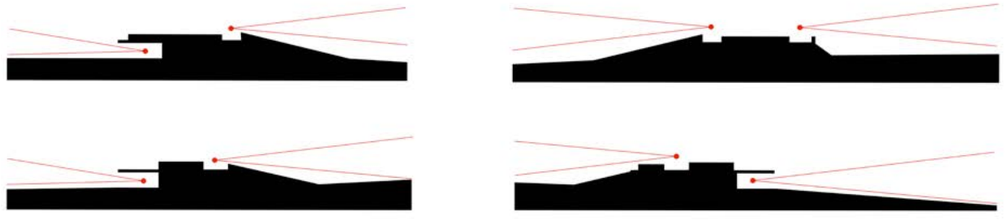


Image - "Look Out" massing shapes evokes landform and hill fort



5.0 The Proposal

5.1 Proposal within physical context

The design considers the dominant North views in its orientation and the need for outdoor wind sheltering by enclosing a courtyard, which provides an outdoor living area sheltered from the prevailing South and Southwest winds.

The layout consists of two angular blocks which create a ‘zenith form’ on the hill and forms the arrival area to the dwelling. These block forms each reflect the typical 20m x 6m footprint of traditional workers cottages found all over the Forest of Dean. A flat roof slab connects the two block forms together and extends over the glass walled, living / dining room, which gives the design its sense of enclosure. The roof form frames the courtyard and provides wind shelter.

The plan form is arranged and oriented to embrace views in all directions. Day spaces embrace views fully and, more private spaces provide glimpsed views that are framed by windows oriented in the direction of key landmarks.

The sloping roof form to the East is splayed in the direction of Howle Camp and this connects with the wider landscape to continue the framing of views. Stepped levels on the splay allow for people enjoying the gardens.

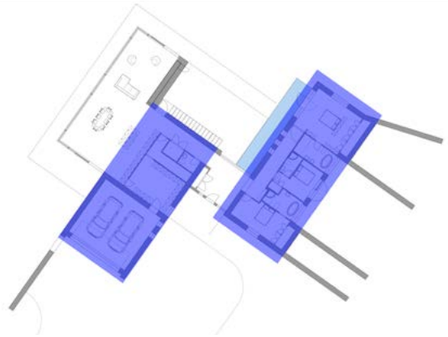
The rectangular blocks are faced in local stone, or render, to further connect with the traditional cottage vernacular. The feedback from Herefordshire Council during Pre-App 2 was render should be a more earthy colour than the traditional lighter renders on the hill, this has been adopted.

A basement, under the “garage block” will accommodate areas benefiting from an underground location such as a music studio, gym and plant room, and minimise the overall visible footprint. The basement construction also provides an opportunity to include technology required for an inter-seasonal-heat-store. (More on this below)

Sedum has been selected for the flat roof area and wildflowers for the sloping roofs to connect to the wildflower meadows along the Eastern elevation. This provides further biodiversity, reduces water run-off, and reduces heat-loss from the building.

Massing Study – Block forms, courtyards, “Look Out” spaces, green and solar integration

Block forms based on 20m x 6m vernacular



Block forms integrate courtyards and voids

Block forms enable green bio-diversity

Raised roof solar collector integrated

5.0 The Proposal

The sloped roof above the garage is an ideal location to integrate solar thermal / PV panels into the design as it is Southwest facing and provides the optimum orientation. It also provides an ideal connection to the basement plant room area via the vertical riser.

The Design Review Workshop did not consider the visibility of the building to be a major issue. However, the applicant is keen to minimise visibility from the main Howle Hill settlement, based upon local anecdotal evidence.

To test the visibility a technique used by the Swiss was again adopted to demonstrate the visibility of the development. Poles with flags were placed in the field at the high points of the proposed building (See Appendix C - Longview project study). This influenced the proposed height of the dwelling and helped to inform the landscape design to ensure views close to hand were supported by landscape intervention and distant views to landmarks could also be accommodated within the design.

5.2 Building form evolution on site

Appraisals of the initial design via a second pre-planning application (Pre-App 2), suggested the original concept of a house structure detached from the proposed sunken “quarry walls” could be improved by better connection to the hillside.

This suggestion was taken on board and, a new design proposed, which enhanced the appearance. The building was set into the hillside by creating a “quarry like” setting. This semi-burying of the structure was examined during the Design Review Workshop and found to be limiting the potential to exploit views. The design has evolved to embrace the opportunity to make connections with distant views and to enjoy the fact that the hill top location should be an “outpost” similar in character to the medieval Great Howle camp “look-out” hill fort.

5.3 Massing and Height

The proposals are arranged around two sloping blocks which frame the entrance. The blocks are connected with a roof plane that encloses living space and shapes the courtyard at the centre of the house.

Image – Landscape Study

5.0 The Proposal

The storey height has a consistent internal ceiling height of 3m throughout.

The external stone walls taper as they extend into the landscape where they are eventually absorbed by the contours of the surrounding landscape.

The proposal is for a single storey dwelling with upper look-out terrace level which is reached via the courtyard steps.

5.4 Landscape and Biodiversity

Landscape design is a fundamental aspect of the whole scheme. The initial landscape proposal at pre-app 2 and during the Design Review Workshop was well received but a few areas were identified where improvements could be made. These suggestions were taken on board and incorporated into the proposal.

The building will now mesh seamlessly with the hill and the landscape. The entire field will be converted to a species rich wildflower meadow with a small amenity area of close-cut lawn close to the house. Native trees will be planted in a way to frame views to Great Howle Camp while the distant views towards the Malverns, the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains are left uninterrupted.

An orchard of local fruits will be planted along the driveway to frame access into the site, reflecting local character. The established hedge on the South-western edge of the field will remain and this effectively screens the structure from the road (Sharman Pitch). The hedge on the Northwest edge of the field will be enhanced and any gaps filled. The hedge will then be maintained at a 3m height to reduce inward views, but not impede the outward distant views. Small wooded copses have been included on high ground within the landscape design in order to reflect this local characteristic, to provide shelter and to frame views of Great Howle Camp. They are then connected back to the dwelling via a series of linear treed features.

A swale is placed at the lower end of the site to intercept water run-off, improve land drainage and provide an opportunity to enhance biodiversity. (Refer to the attached drainage report).

Image - Proposed Massing with Landscaping

5.0 The Proposal

A simple palette of hard and soft landscape materials is proposed around the dwelling that defines the external spaces while accommodating informal connectivity to the wider landscape to experience the views, enjoy outdoor shelter, and enjoy different new landscape typologies in an enhanced naturalistic setting.

The LVIA together with the Landscape Strategy Plan and Insert of the Landscape Masterplan can be found within Appendix A

A Provisional Ecological Appraisal was carried out by Acer Ecology (Refer to attached document: Appendix D - P1855 Howle Hill, Herefordshire Preliminary Ecological Appraisal). This concluded that the development would have a low impact on the site ecology and that further enhancement of the hedgerows, planting of native tree species and adding a wildflower meadow, as proposed, will improve the ecological value. This is supported by a report by Herefordshire Meadows and findings have been used to inform the development of the landscaping plan.

The Biodiversity & Ecology measures compliance checklist has been completed (Appendix E).

A soil analysis has been carried out by Herefordshire Meadows, to test the soil (which was found to have poor structure and a poor ability to retain water) and to analyse nutrients levels across the site (which were found to be high), and has helped to inform the restoration strategy to deliver the species rich wildflower meadow. This replaces the arable field and delivers a grazing pasture that is to become a semi-natural grassland. Herefordshire Meadows have produced a 'Grassland Management Plan' for the site and this is included in Appendix L.

5.5 Aspect

The proposals embrace the "look out" theme and take advantage of the exceptional and panoramic views. Furthermore, the gentle sloping nature of the site enables the roof slope to absorb the surrounding landscape and bring this up onto the roof area. The desire to provide shelter is captured at the centre of the plan form via the courtyard that opens up to a roof top viewing terrace as well as providing easy access to all areas of the ground floor plan.

The exact siting and orientation of the building has evolved from that reviewed at the first Design Review Workshop. It is now situated slightly to the Northwest, slightly closer to the road and the existing storage building. The orientation of the main living area has moved from NNW to WNW. This enables views past the existing structure and takes in a panorama from the Welsh Mountains, the Brecon Beacons, Chase Woods around to the Malvern Hills. Views from the proposal towards the Northeast and Southeast embrace Great Howle Camp. Near views to the West and Northwest, including the main settlement of Howle Hill are not possible given intervening landscape features.

Domestic paraphernalia is constrained within the inner courtyard space, created by the block-massing wall that frames the living room, so that clutter can be tucked away and not visible to the wider area. Items such as

Material Palette – Sedum, Render, Timber, Local Stone, Meadow planting





5.0 The Proposal

mowers, bikes and the bin store are housed in the existing storage building along the roadside, which is now closer to the main house for ease of access. This structure will be restored and secure doors added to the north elevation.

The overhanging roof canopy ensures the property will not overheat from direct solar gains and helps to prevent light-spill towards the sky from windows at night-time, which would also be prevented by internal blinds. The desire to use the roof terraces for astronomy drives the desire to maintain dark skies.

5.6 Schedule of Areas

Redline area = 1 Hectares; Blueline area = 3.8 Hectares
Ground Floor Area Gross Internal = 335 sqm (includes garage)
Ground Floor Area Gross Internal = 278 sqm (excludes garage / ancillary)
Basement Floor Area Gross External = 85 sqm

5.7 Materials

The proposal would be constructed as a lightweight insulated timber frame construction with a very high standard of airtightness, over a concrete basement. Some of the walls are clad in local stone, and others would be rendered. Where walls and eaves are rendered, these would use a K-rend system to allow flexibility and to ensure coloration can maintain dark earthy tones, as required.

Glazing would be triple glazed to a high air leakage standard, and the interior temperature would be maintained by Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery.

5.8 Energy efficiency / Climate Change

In response to increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change, Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency on 8 March 2019. The Council has resolved to set a target of zero carbon by 2030. An integral part of the approach is to “work with strategic partners, residents and local organisations to develop a revised countywide carbon dioxide reduction strategy aspiring for carbon neutrality by 2030” www.herefordshire.gov.uk/climate-2/climate-change

The Applicant is keen to help the Council to work towards this objective by taking a lead in the research and development of technologies that can be practically used, at a sensible cost, to enable net zero energy use for day-to-day living. This will be achieved by establishing a research partnership with De Montford University (DMU). The objective set by the Longview project is to produce enough solar heat and electricity to be a net producer of electricity / energy.

The house will be highly insulated, with a high level of airtightness and with high-specification-triple-glazed windows. Passivhaus standards have been considered but are found to be too prescriptive and would restrict both the design opportunities and the ability to respond to site conditions in an environmentally appropriate way. Passivhaus places energy consumption at

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

5.0 The Proposal

the heart of its parameters to the detriment of other important factors such as context, orientation, ecology, site constraints, landscape etc.

The design team firmly believes that the objective of a carbon neutral house can be achieved in other, less limiting, less expensive, and therefore more widely applicable, ways that are more relevant to the site and context.

Hybrid solar-thermal panels will be used to provide electricity and hot water. A new type of ground source heating will be used called an Earth Energy Bank (EEB) and batteries will be used to store generated electricity.

EEBs have been used in a small number of houses in the UK but the system has not been fully optimised. Longview proposes to incorporate a research and development project which will examine several developments aimed at improving the efficiency and cost of an EEB system. This will be facilitated by sponsoring an MSc research project with De Montfort University. This work is ground-breaking, and some aspects would be a world first for a domestic development.

The energy system and the research project are outlined in more detail in Appendix F.

Preliminary Energy efficiency calculations based on the design and using conservative values was carried out by MES Building solutions and classify the EPC value to be A+. This indicates that the development will produce more energy than it consumes. (Appendix G)

The Climate Change Compliance Checklist has been completed (Appendix H)

5.9 The Plan

Longview is approached from the existing site access that is located to the Southeast of the site. The driveway would meander along the Southern boundary via the fruit orchard providing partial cover from wider view.

The driveway arrives at the entrance, which is framed by the two sloping block forms, constructed with local stone and in render - colours and

Proposed Landscape / Access

5.0 The Proposal

textures familiar in the immediate landscape setting. The garage is towards the lefthand side and a covered porch area is at the centre of the massing. It is possible to view through the dwelling to the distant views beyond. This is achieved via a framed viewing opening in the garage wall, and via the glazed screens to the entrance that view through the courtyard towards the Malvern Hills in the distance.

The main living area is open plan and contains a kitchen, dining room and living space. It is contained in a Northwest facing block with three triple-glazed sides. This presents a wide panoramic view from The Welsh Mountains around to the Malvern Hills.

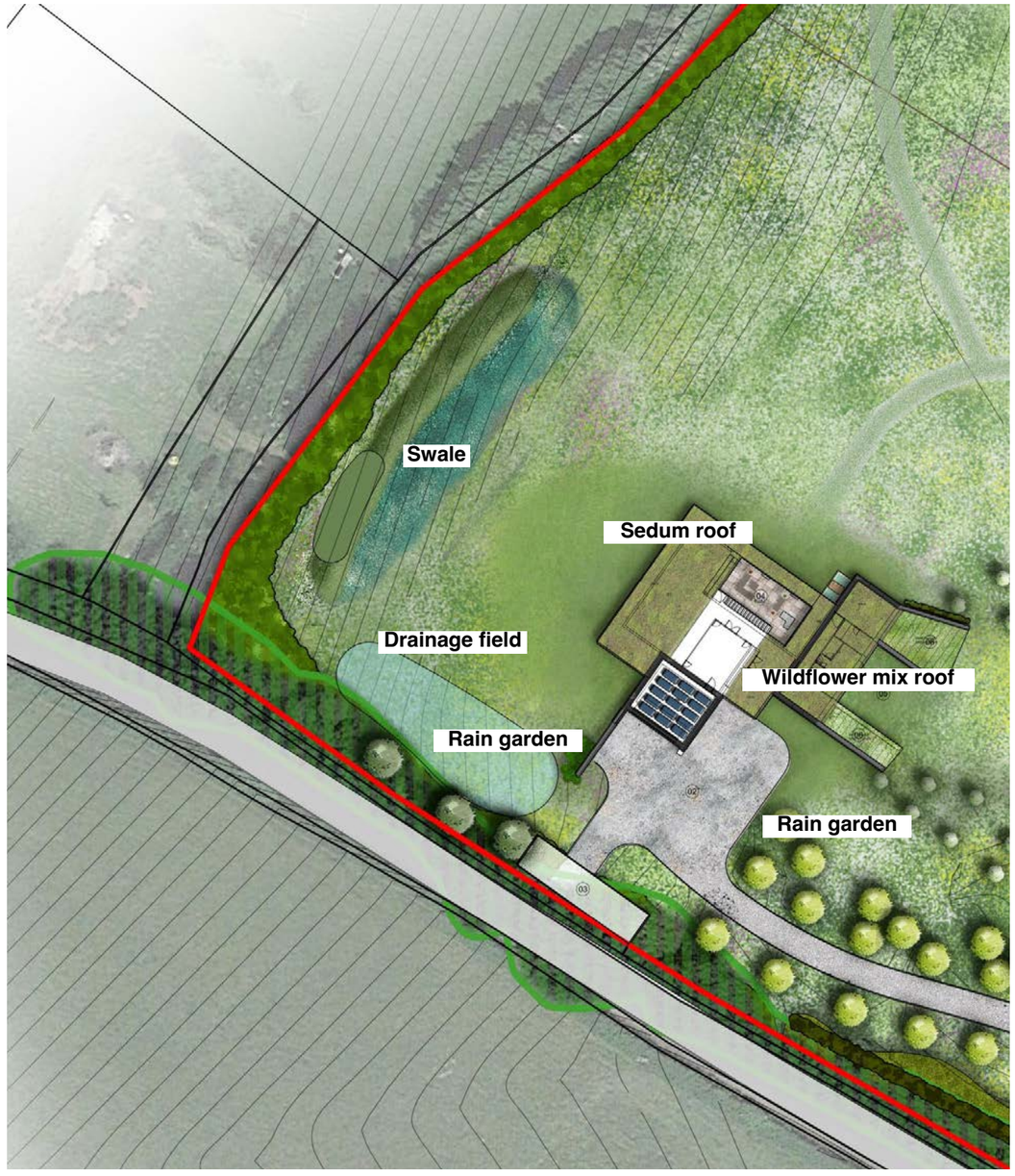
The master bedroom is located to the Northeast side of the dwelling and this area is contained within one of the main “blocks” of the proposal. Glazed doors frame distant views of the Brecon Beacons and Chase woods. A side window frames the Malvern Hills. The guest bedrooms frame views towards Great Howle Camp through the new avenue created by tree planting.

An internal hallway moves around the courtyard to connect the two “blocks” together. These areas connect to the external terrace and amenity areas.

A basement area under the “garage block” can be accessed from the hallway via a concealed internal staircase. The plantroom is centralised within the plan and located in the basement area. This is an important part of the proposal as it will provide ample area for all the energy efficiency equipment to maintain the Earth Energy Banks (EEB) and support the high level of sustainable design within the proposals.

The EEB, are located under the building, to maintain thermal performance, good access to the plantroom within the basement and sufficient depth in the ground to stabilise seasonal thermal fluctuation.

Proposed Landscape / Drainage Field & Swale



5.0 The Proposal

Image – Elevation Drawings

Image – North West Elevation

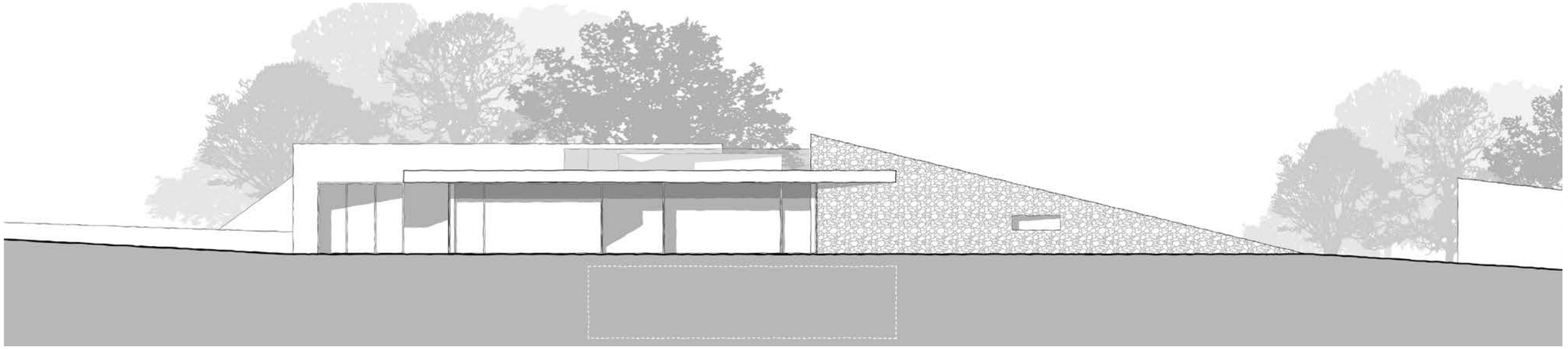
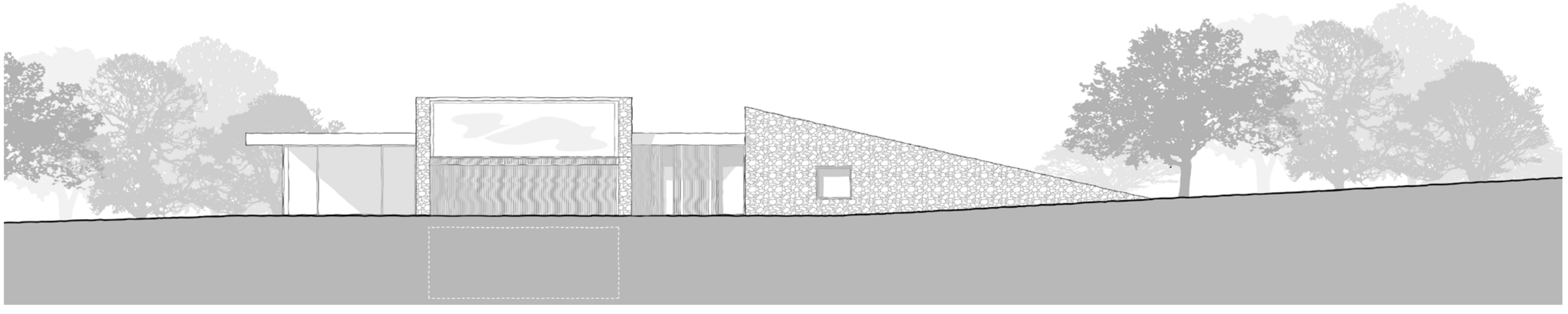


Image – South West Elevation



5.0 The Proposal

Image – Elevation Drawings

Image – North East Elevation

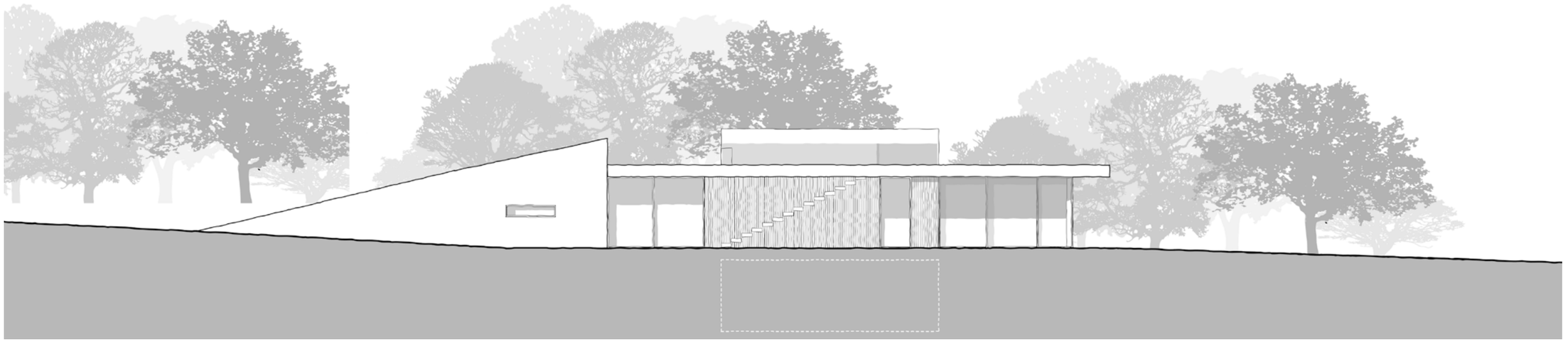
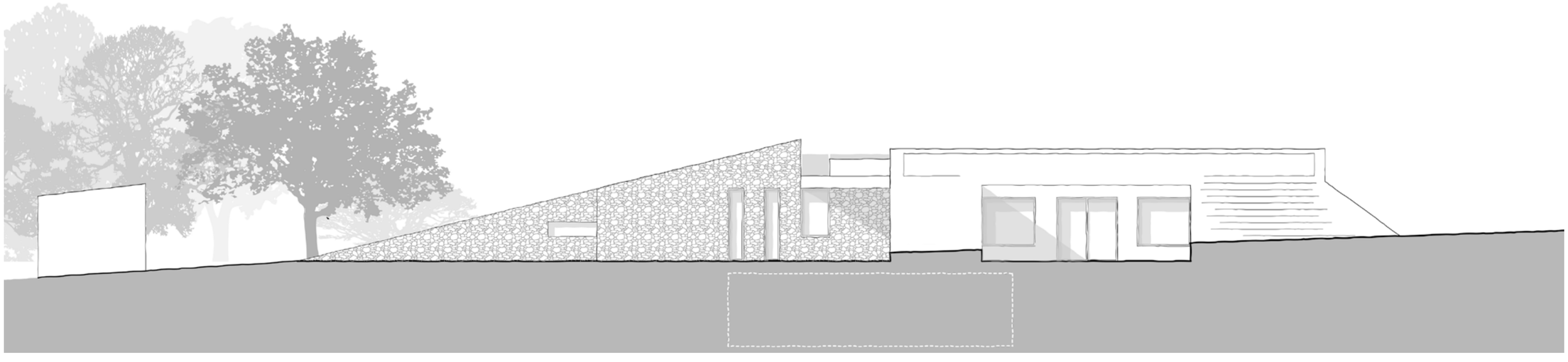


Image – South East Elevation



5.0 The Proposal

Image – View Looking North / Photomontage

5.0 The Proposal

Image – Aerial View Looking North / Photomontage

5.0 The Proposal

Image – View Looking South East / Photomontage

5.0 The Proposal

Image – View Looking South / Photomontage

6.0 Drainage

6.1 Drainage

The site is currently farmland with no existing surface or foul water drainage.

The plot size will allow for use of a sustainable drainage scheme (SUDS).

Surface water from the site will be managed by the green roof, an interception storage, and then discharge into a raingarden set into the land South of the development area. In addition, a swale will be incorporated into the landscaping at the Northwest corner of the site to mitigate any excess run-off from the site. Refer to drainage reports. Appendix I. and Aspect Landscape Strategy Plan within the LVIA.

Foul water flows will be managed by a package treatment plant followed by a drainage mound.

As the foul water flows are treated and disposed of on-site and there are no water courses nearby there would be no phosphates entering the River Wye catchment as a result of the dwelling or the people living there. In addition, the construction of the dwelling and creation of a wildflower meadow will result in the removal of farmland from intensive arable production while reverting to occasional animal grazing (areas controlled by electric fencing). To be successful the wildflower meadow will require nutrients to be depleted and the development should, over time, reduce the phosphate load on the environment. In addition, there would be less soil loss due to reduced run-off from existing ploughed fields.

See Hydro-logic Services drainage report (Refer to attached document: Appendix I - L0352 SWMP-FDS Little Howle Hill_28/10/2022 Rev 4) for more details on the sustainable drainage design.

7.0 Access

7.0 Access

The site will be accessed via the existing gateway at the South of the field. A visibility splay would be formed at the gateway entrance with a new hedge set back to maintain good visibility with the highway where sight lines require.

The parking area at the entry to the building allows for an adequate turning circle to ensure movement by vehicle can enter and leave in a forward gear.

A two-car garage is incorporated into the building, which will include an electric car charging point. Cycle storage, and areas for storage of waste for collection for recycling are located in the existing storage building that has been included into the design proposals.

7.1 Accessibility

The internal layout will comply with Part M of the Building Regulations for new dwellings.

Principally compliance will be achieved through:

- Door widths to accommodate wheelchair access
- Level door access at least at one location
- Contrast in colour of walkways
- Largely single storey living
- The ability to accommodate lifetime homes standards
- Ensuring a design that can support adaptation for later in life years

8.0 Precedent / Consultations

8.1 Learning from past projects

The design team were encouraged by Herefordshire Council Planning Officer Carl Brace who stated: 'Para-79 [80] is about creating the listed buildings of tomorrow'.

It is apparent from the above, within Herefordshire, paragraph-79 [80] projects have been encouraged by Herefordshire Council and result from an iterative process working closely with officers of the Local Authority. This is evidenced in the projects referenced during the first Pre-app (200736/CE letter dated 13th March), where the following applications were cited as being good examples of design and process leading to the development of a successful paragraph-79 [80] project.

150962 – Hope End
162041 – Coombe Farm

Hope End (now named Hope View House) was investigated as part of the process. Contact was made with Roman and Tracey Iwanczuk, the developers of Hope View, who gave excellent feedback as to the process followed. Their experience, encouragement and guidance has been extremely useful in understanding the long and costly journey required to produce such an outstanding building.

This advice is nicely encapsulated in a quote from an interview they gave to House Planning Help magazine:

"It was a matter of coming up with a way of doing something that is a benefit for our environment, our area, and maybe even the people who live around here that makes sense."

They also emphasised the iterative nature of the design process and the value of working with the Local Authority to bring about a paragraph-79 project in Herefordshire. Unfortunately, during the Longview design process Covid-19 eliminated any opportunities for site visits and discussions with the Authority at the early stages of the project but Local Authority input and Design Review processes have progressed well since.

Hope End – Planning Ref: 150962

Coombe Farm – Planning Ref: 162041

8.0 Precedent / Consultations

8.2 Consultation Sessions with Howle Hill community

Households falling within the settlement of Howle Hill and considered to be relevant for consultation, were identified and invited to consultation sessions.

Of the 55 households identified, responses were received from 31 households and 28 households attended one of 12 consultation sessions held at Little Howle Farm between 30th September 2021 and 11th October 2021. A total of 47 people were consulted.

The Ward Councillor, who lives on Howle Hill, was consulted but she did not feel it was appropriate to be involved, at this time, until after a Planning Submission has been made.

Each session was 1½ to 2 hours and consisted of: a presentation of the project, a question-and-answer session, and voluntary completion of an anonymous questionnaire.

A booklet explaining the project was handed out to households attending and to 3 households who could not attend but were interested.

As an overall summary, 59% of households thought that the development would have a positive impact on the settlement, 29% a neutral impact and only 12% thought that it would be negative.

A report on the sessions is included at Appendix J, the booklet handed out included at Appendix C.

8.3 Midland Design REVIEW – Undertaken after Pre-App 3

The Design Review Workshop, as an independent design review panel, provided robust design comment during two design review events: the first held on the 24th February 2022; and the second event held on the 15th September 2022.

The proposal has embraced all the comments received such that the Design Review Panel confirms *"a paragraph-80 compliant proposal"* as follows:

"The panel believe that, subject to minor refinements, the proposals promise an exemplary building, which will enhance its immediate setting and raise the standard of design in rural areas."

The areas for refinement suggested are:

- Explore opportunities for the lookout concept to be evident on arrival;

- Further consider the need and design approach of the two (potentially conflicting) lookouts;

– Explore opportunities for the building to further bleed / integrate with the landscape meadow planting to the banked areas, a seed mix for the roof which compliments the meadow, greening / softening the walls of the house / brise soleil with climbers etc.;

- Further develop the landscape strategy including the form and species of the orchard, extending the copse and ensuring the Swale does not run-off into the neighbouring site;

- Utilise the Malvern Hills Guide to inform the colour of render;

- Explore opportunities to use the materials to link the internal and external spaces; and

- Develop and promote the energy strategy which is key to the exceptional nature of the scheme.

The above considerations have been included in the proposals.

9.0 Planning

9.1 Justification within planning context

This Design and Access Statement gathers together the iterative design process, identifies the key issues, in relation to current Herefordshire Planning Policy, and identifies the supporting factors for the proposed development.

The settlement of Howle Hill comes under the RA2 policy in Herefordshire's Local Plan Core Strategy:

"To maintain and strengthen locally sustainable communities across the rural parts of Herefordshire, sustainable housing growth will be supported in or adjacent to those settlements identified in Figures 4.14 and 4.15. This will enable development that has the ability to bolster existing service provision, improve facilities and infrastructure and meet the needs of the communities concerned."

The proposal also makes a strong reference to policy SS7 in regard to addressing climate change and meeting high standards in regard to a low energy consumption and low natural resource consumption. The substantial effort made to promote the development of new energy systems is also supported by paragraph 134(b) of the NPPF which states: "Significant weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs, which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings".

The site area is located outside of the village settlement area boundary, and it is agreed by Herefordshire Council during Pre-App 1 that the site is 'isolated' in the open countryside.

Core Strategy policy RA3 – Herefordshire's Countryside is most relevant, and in particular sub heading 6, which states:

"…development will be limited to proposals which satisfy one or more of the following criteria: 6. Is of exceptional quality and innovative design satisfying the design criteria set out in Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework and achieves sustainable standards of design and construction,"

There has been a recent review of the Communities and Local Government document National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), in July 2021, and now Longview falls under Paragraph-80 (formerly Paragraph-79), where isolated homes in the countryside are encouraged if the proposal demonstrates:
"the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
– is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.
– and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area."

In addition, the new Framework states at paragraph-79:

"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby."

New Framework paragraph 134 states:

"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

The proposals would help to promote high levels of sustainability and raise the standard of design in the area with a strong fit within the landscape character and setting."

Longview will assist the Local Authority to deliver housing under policies RA2, RA3 and is compliant with Framework paragraphs 79, 80 and 134.

9.0 Planning

9.2 Pre-Application response

9.2.1 The First Pre-Application

The Council highlighted a number of issues. In summary they comprise:

'Policy RA3 are not a back door route or simple alternative for housing development where it has been found previously unacceptable. Your client if they pursue such an application will be committing significant resources with no guarantee…';

'It is for you and your client to set out why the site selected is suitable for a Paragraph-79 dwelling and ultimately this should be evidenced out of a detailed landscape assessment.';

'This should identify how or why the landscape, or development can be assimilated with the net neutral impact or enhancement where there is no quantifiable degradation.';

'In order to assess any potential impact upon the landscape a landscape appraisal should be carried out which encompasses the following:

Justification/reasoning for site selection;

Explanation of how the design of the proposal has evolved from the landscape setting;

Analysis of the site and its surroundings with respect to the landscape character type as defined within Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment;

Visual impact from sensitive receptors including PROW and Listed Buildings;

Mitigation proposed should be consistent with the strategy for the LC type.';

We suggest this [Design Review] is undertaken only when the Council is satisfied it has reached such a stage that paragraph 79 might be met and the relevant assessment of MADE is required to confirm or otherwise this position.'.

Response to first pre-application

This advice formed the core of our design approach as highlighted earlier in this document.

9.2.2 Response to Second Pre-Application

The Council highlighted a number of issues, summarised as follows:

Landscape design is a fundamental aspect of the whole scheme, and the proposal should be presented on the basis of the whole site and its context;

Surface water and hydrology management should be incorporated into the scheme;

An orchard should be placed lower in the site to avoid detracting from the ancient camp;

Enhancing hedgerows and planting would be welcomed;

Private amenity space should be limited to reduce sprawl of domestic features;

The scheme should not detract from the setting;

The design should be aided by scrutiny with an independent design review panel;

Great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area;

Walls should adjoin the dwelling to reduce separation of built form and to aid continuation of built form into the landscape;

Darker earthy colours should be considered given the isolated rural agricultural character;

An informal public local consultation event should be held to consider the exceptional nature of the proposals;

9.0 Planning

The Swiss flagpole exercise should be incorporated into the Landscape Value Impact Assessment (LVIA);

Further pre-app stages would be welcome;

Visibility splays should be set out in a full application;

A report must be supplied demonstrating appropriate sizing of a private treatment system for foul drainage;

Net gain enhancement of local ecology is required;

Climate change checklists are required for the proposal and should demonstrate high standards in the design.

The Second Pre-Application – Site plan

As highlighted in this document, the points made in feedback from pre-app 2 have been very valuable in evolving the design of the proposal.

The further studies proposed have also been carried out to a level which would normally permit a full planning application.

9.2.3 The Third Pre-Application

The Council gave a positive response to pre-app3 but highlighted a number of issues, summarised as follows:

i) A full planning application should include the following amendments/ additions to landscape related documentation, in addition to that provided under this submission;

The landscape and visual briefing note updated to a final LVIA;

ii) The Landscape Strategy Plan, updated with any changes;

iii) A more detailed landscape plan for around the house, as mentioned above;

iv) A landscape and ecological management plan (either as a short indication or a fully detailed 10-year plan, which could be conditioned if not provided at the planning stage).

The previous comments from the Landscape Officer have been taken into account in this submission which has been positively received. Following the site meeting the Landscape Officer has provided a number of points for further consideration and clarification detailed below:

i) Clarify the red line boundary. This will explain the domestic curtilage and clarify the long-term use of the remaining two thirds of the site;

ii) Clarify existing and proposed levels, adding an 'existing' line on the section drawings and / or spot heights on a plan;

iii) Clarify the cut and fill balance and how it will be distributed around the building without being removed from site;
iv) Integrate the drainage scheme into the landscape design - ensure no conflict between trees and underground pipes / tanks or consider whether a wetland ecosystem treatment would be suitable to the site;

v) Clarify ownership and management of eastern boundary hedge;

vi) Include undergrounding of overhead power cables within the landscape assessment;

vii) Assess the impact of the highway visibility splays in relation to the existing hedgerow;

viii) Include details of restoring the existing building for use as a 'shed', together with any required footpath or hardstanding area;

ix) Clarify location of bin store and cycle store;

x) Clarify any external low-level lighting and light levels from the building, taking account of Herefordshire's Dark Skies;

xi) Provide a landscape scheme at 1:500 / 1:200 for the drive, house and 'garden' setting. Ensure that it shows: - location of the PV panels;
- driveway and paving materials (ideally to integrate with the walling stone);
- intended use and design of the internal courtyard area;
- external seating areas;
- informal mown paths.

9.3 Walford Neighbourhood Development Plan

The site lies within the parish of Walford, where the Neighbourhood Development Plan June 2022 (NDP), is not yet 'made' but has progressed to examination stage during the lifetime of this application.

Although the site lies outside of the defined Howle Hill settlement boundary, the NDP states...*"Development outside of the development boundaries will be determined in accordance with Core Strategy policies, especially Policy RA3 – Herefordshire's Countryside – which limits housing development to proposals which meet one or more specific criteria".*

Meeting the conditions set out in Paragraph 80 of the NPPF clearly satisfies this criterion.

Furthermore, the proposal will help to fill the 'windfall' category within the NDP, which requires 18 new dwellings.

Moreover, the draft NDP has been used as guidance in the development of the proposal, especially in the LVIA (Appendix A).

10.0 Summary

10.1 Summary

An exemplary, landscape character driven design process has been followed to produce an outstanding, forward looking, sustainable design in a unique location.

Longview is completely inspired by the location, landscape character and historic land use. This inspiration is expressed in a contemporary way, to achieve a unique, low-impact and innovative approach to integrating a highly sustainable home into an enhanced and more bio-diverse landscape.

The applicant's life-long interest in horticulture, agriculture and ecology is intrinsically linked within the evolution of the design, making the proposals truly outstanding and exemplary.

Taking a long view, it is equally important new technologies are investigated to enable sustainable living and, the possibility for research to be incorporated into the project. This would result in the development of new energy systems in the UK that are more efficient and, more affordable than the current state of the art as a unique opportunity to be embraced. This research will help to inform current and, future generations on how sustainable construction in a sensitive landscape can be developed and, measured over time to achieve climate conscious housing development not only in Herefordshire but also more widely in the UK.

Appendices