Design & Access Statement

Paragraph 84 House

Higher Road

Longridge

Preston

Lancashire

PR3 2YX

Jackson-Crane Architecture

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports a proposal for a Paragraph 84 dwelling on Higher Road, Longridge, Lancashire. The site, situated within the scenic backdrop of the Ribble Valley, offers a unique opportunity to create an architecturally outstanding home that exemplifies exceptional design quality, environmental sensitivity, and integration with the rural landscape. The proposed dwelling aspires to harmonize with its natural setting while showcasing innovative approaches to sustainable design, responding to both the physical and cultural context of the location. The scheme demonstrates compliance with Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework by delivering a design of the highest quality, blending cutting-edge architectural concepts with local vernacular materials to create a distinctive, enduring addition to the landscape.

Paragraph 84(e) Exception

This proposal seeks to make use of the exception under Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework, which permits the construction of isolated homes in the countryside where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. In this instance, the design of the proposed dwelling meets the criteria by being of exceptional quality reflecting the highest standards in architecture and it would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

The development has been subject to a rigorous design review process, having been reviewed by the RIBA Places Matter review panel. This independent panel, known for its critical and expert assessment of design proposals, provided invaluable feedback, which has further refined the project to ensure it adheres to the highest standards of architectural excellence. Their review affirmed that the design is not only outstanding in terms of its aesthetic quality but also sensitive to its rural context, harmonising with the natural landscape and preserving the historical significance of the Roman road.

In addition to the review panel's endorsement, the proposal incorporates sustainable design principles, including the use of low-carbon technologies and energy-efficient solutions. The dwelling is designed to enhance its environment, promoting biodiversity, and minimising its carbon footprint.

Through this rigorous design process and the incorporation of expert feedback, the project demonstrates that it is a unique and carefully considered contribution to the countryside. It satisfies the requirements of Paragraph 84(e) by offering a development of exceptional quality that will set a positive precedent for future rural design.

2.0 WIDER SITE

Site Context

The Ribble Valley is defined by its rolling rural landscapes, distinctive natural features, and agricultural heritage, all of which contribute to its identity as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Higher Road, located on the northern edge of Longridge, sits within this setting, offering a transitional zone between the historic town and the open countryside.

The site benefits from proximity to Longridge Fell, a prominent feature in the landscape and the most southerly gritstone ridge in England. Its wooded slopes and elevated position provide natural enclosure and contribute to the visual character of the area. Nearby Jeffrey Hill, part of the western edge of the fell, adds to the sense of place with its long-ranging views across the Ribble Valley, framing the landscape in which the proposal sits. These features underscore the importance of sensitive design that complements the topography and respects the area's visual and ecological significance.

The landscape surrounding Higher Road is characterized by gently undulating farmland divided by dry stone walls, a defining feature of the local vernacular. The use of locally quarried stone in these traditional walls ties the area's built features to its natural environment, creating a harmonious relationship between human intervention and the rural setting. This relationship informs the materiality and design of the proposed dwelling, which draws inspiration from the dry stone walls and existing natural features to ensure the development integrates seamlessly into its surroundings.

The proposal has been designed with a careful understanding of the site's position within this valued landscape. It sits discreetly within the natural topography, ensuring minimal visibility from Higher Road and respecting the wider views towards Jeffrey Hill and Longridge Fell. Landscaping and material choices further enhance this integration, reflecting the character of the Ribble Valley while prioritising biodiversity and sustainability.

3.0 PROJECT SITE

Site Context

The proposed site is located along Higher Road, a prominent rural route traversing the rolling landscape of Longridge in Lancashire. Nestled within the Ribble Valley, the site benefits from expansive, uninterrupted views of the surrounding countryside, characterised by a patchwork of agricultural fields, mature hedgerows, and woodland. The location offers a serene, secluded setting while maintaining proximity to local amenities and transport links, ensuring practicality for the occupants.

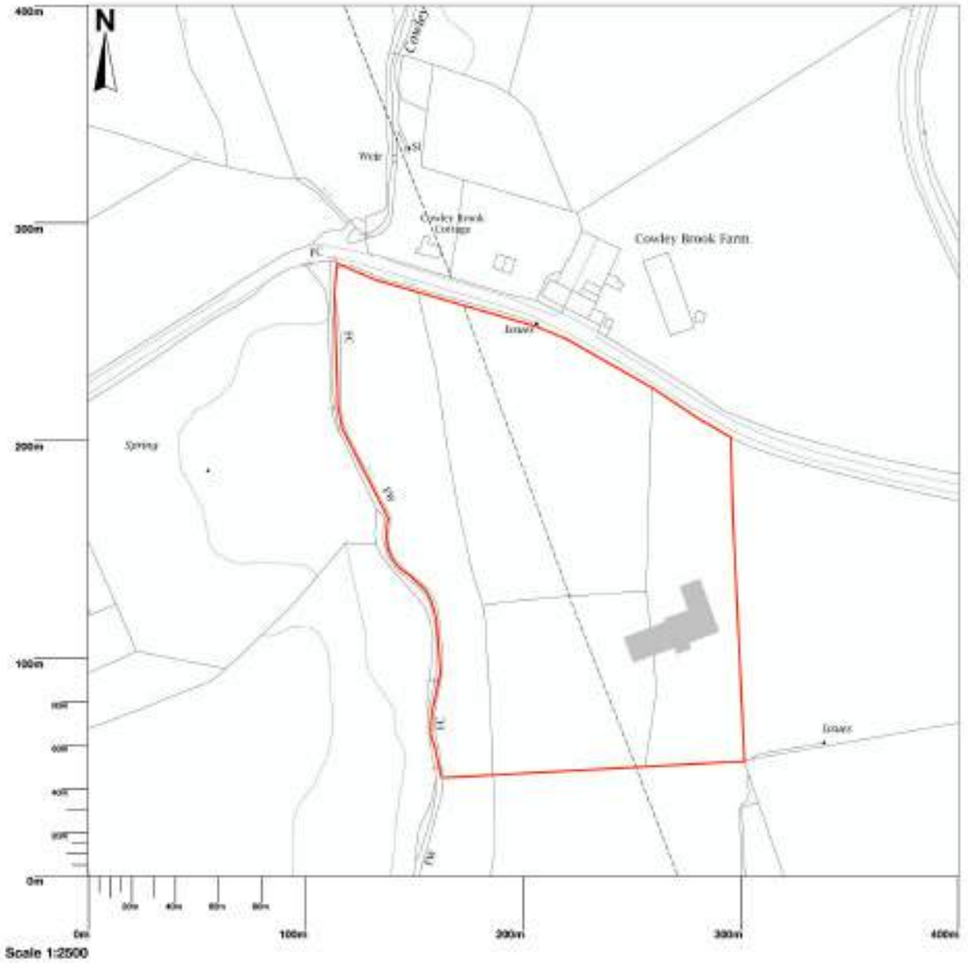
The area's vernacular is defined by a mix of traditional stone-built farmsteads and more contemporary interventions, each responding to the landscape's undulating topography. The proposed design has been informed by a detailed analysis of the site's natural assets, including its orientation, elevation, and biodiversity. Careful consideration has also been given to the cultural heritage of the region, ensuring the design enhances and complements the visual and environmental qualities of this cherished rural environment.

Heritage and Public Engagement

A key feature of the site is the Roman road that traverses the landscape, a historically significant asset that provides a tangible connection to the region's rich past. The design has been carefully developed to respect and preserve this heritage feature, ensuring that no construction or development occurs directly on the road itself. The alignment of the Roman road has been incorporated into the overall site strategy, with the intention of enhancing its visibility and accessibility.

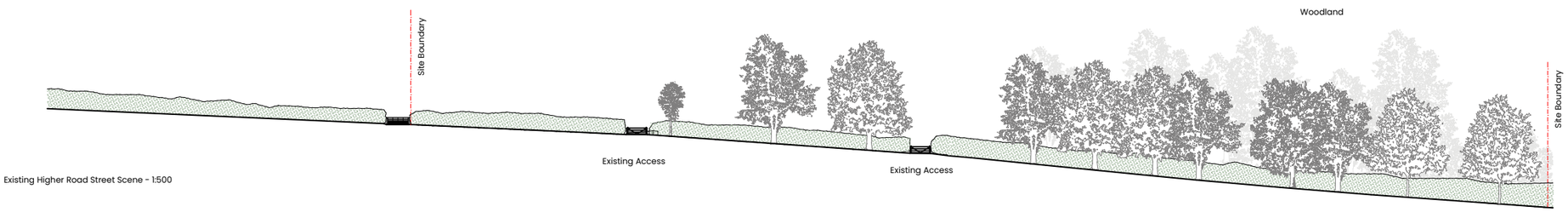
To celebrate this heritage, the proposal includes the provision of a modest, sensitively designed car park adjacent to Higher Road. This car park will offer safe and convenient access for visitors, encouraging engagement with the historic feature while ensuring minimal disruption to the rural setting. Informative signage and discreet wayfinding elements will be introduced to educate visitors about the Roman road's historical importance, fostering a deeper appreciation for the cultural heritage of the area.

The integration of the Roman road into the wider landscaping strategy reflects a commitment to balancing development with conservation, creating a site that not only serves its residents but also contributes to the cultural and educational value of the local community.

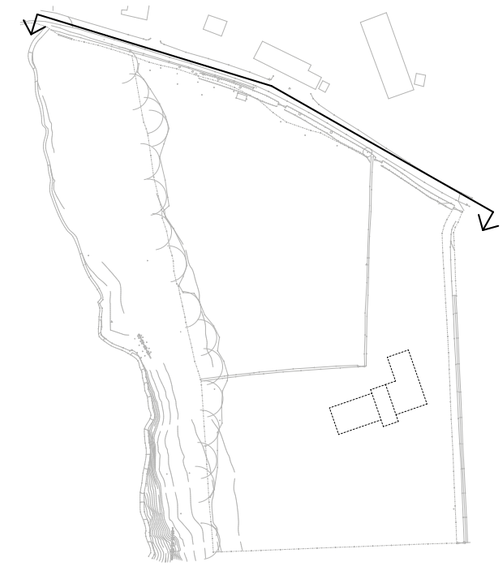


3.0 PROJECT SITE

Existing Street Scene



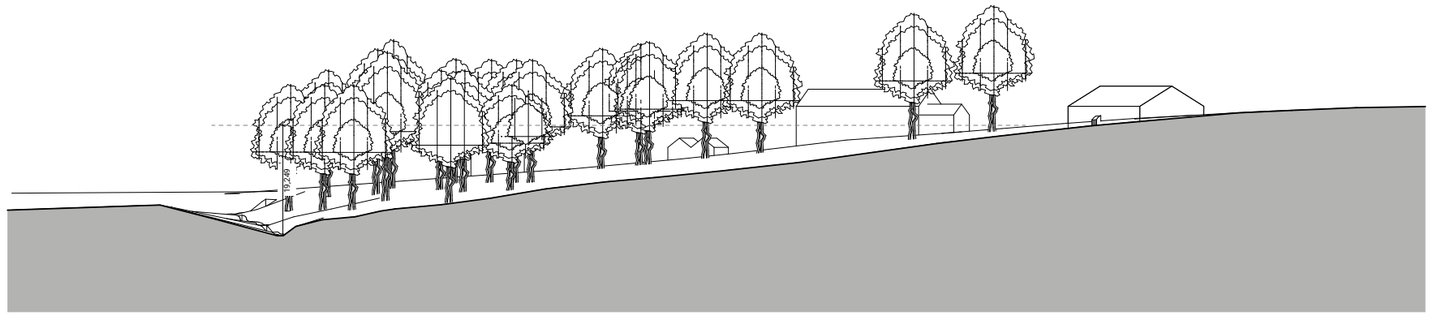
Existing Higher Road Street Scene - 1:500



Street Scene Legend

3.0 PROJECT SITE

Existing Site Sections



A-A Site Section
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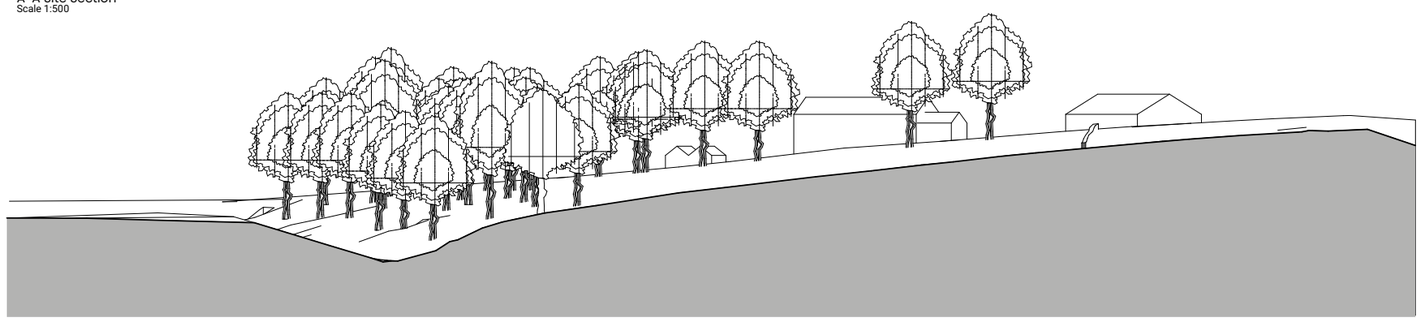

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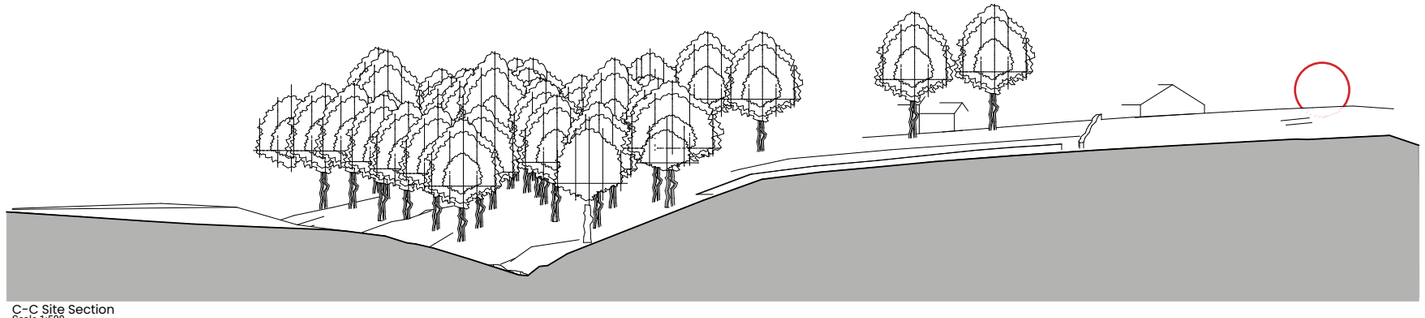

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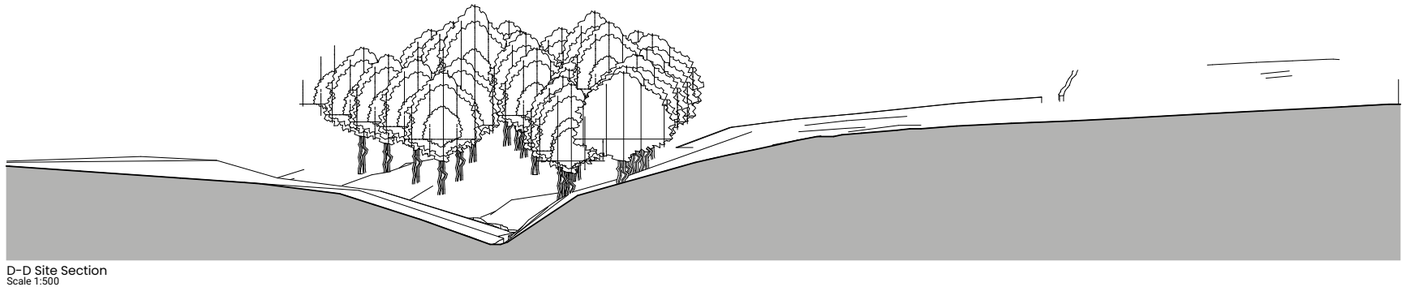

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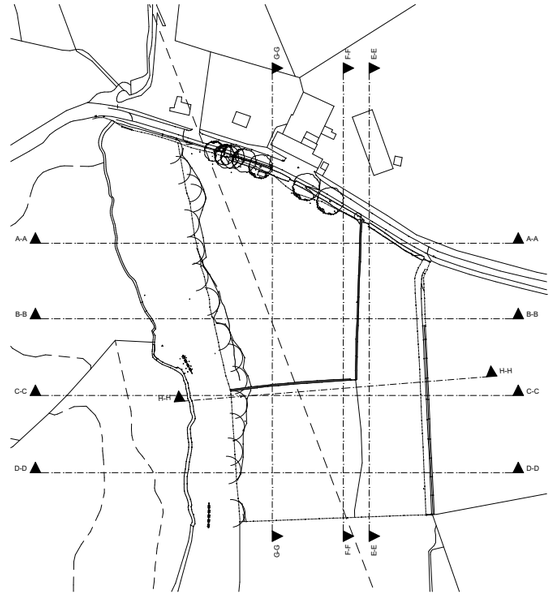
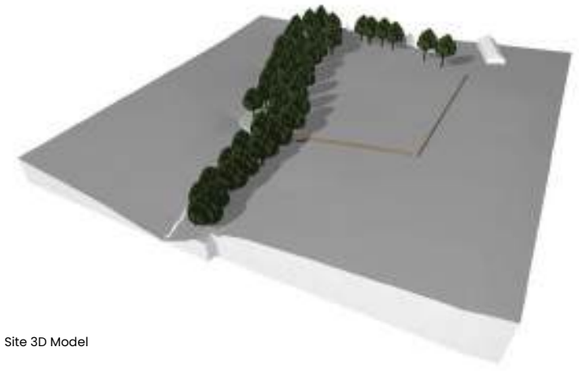


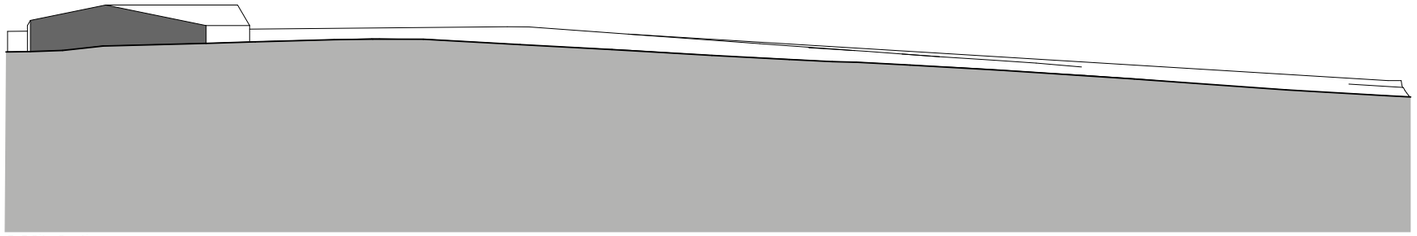
Site Sections Plan



Site 3D Model

3.0 PROJECT SITE

Existing Site Sections



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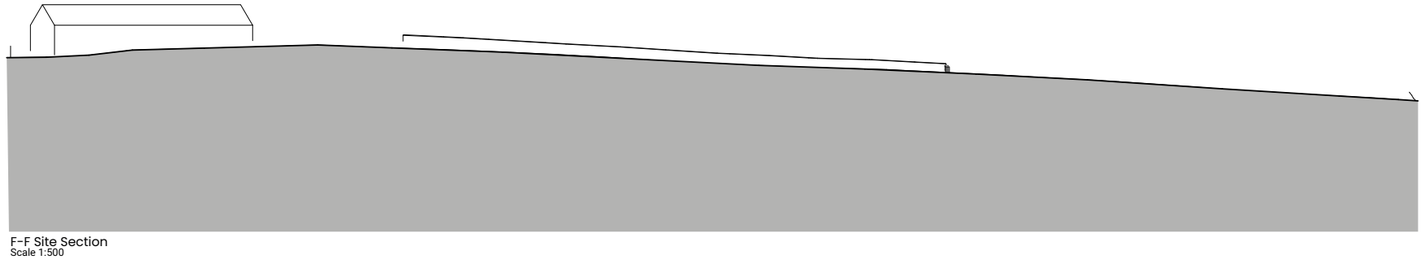

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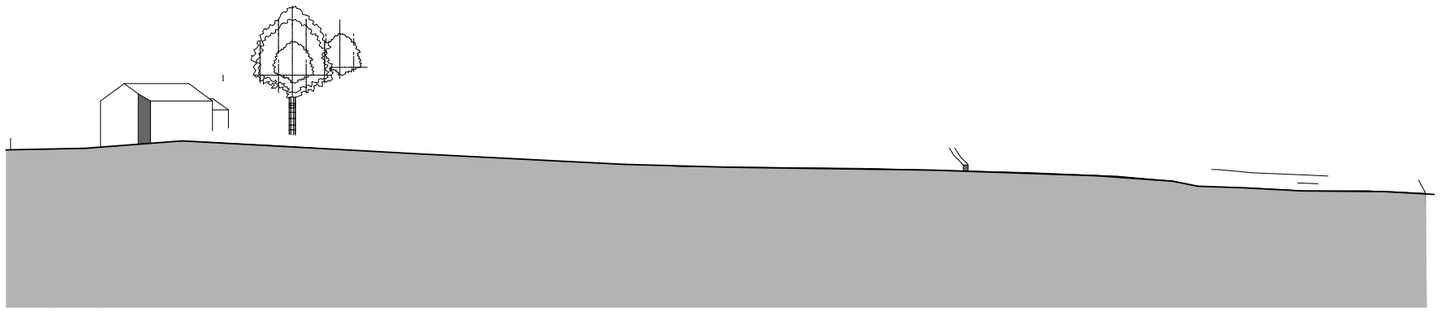

G-G Site Section
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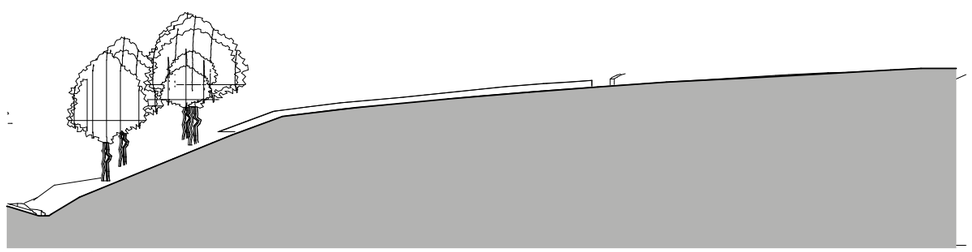

H-H Site Section
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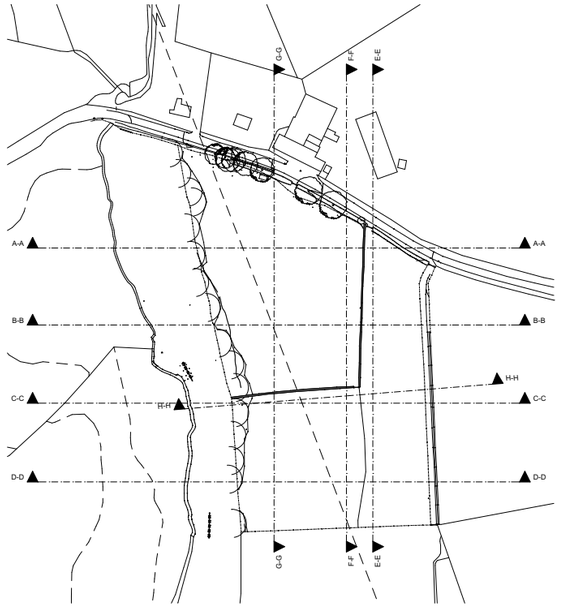
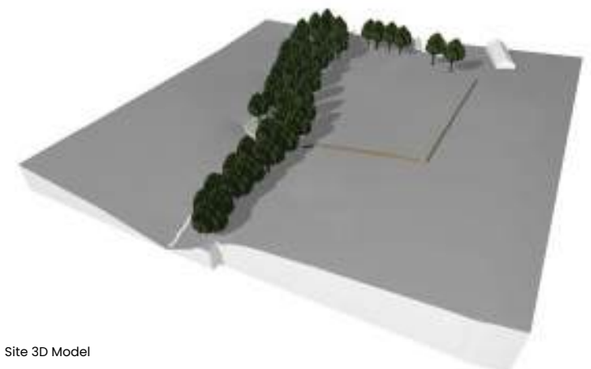


Site Sections Plan



Site 3D Model

3.0 PROJECT SITE

Proposed Site Plan

4.0 DESIGN EVOLUTION

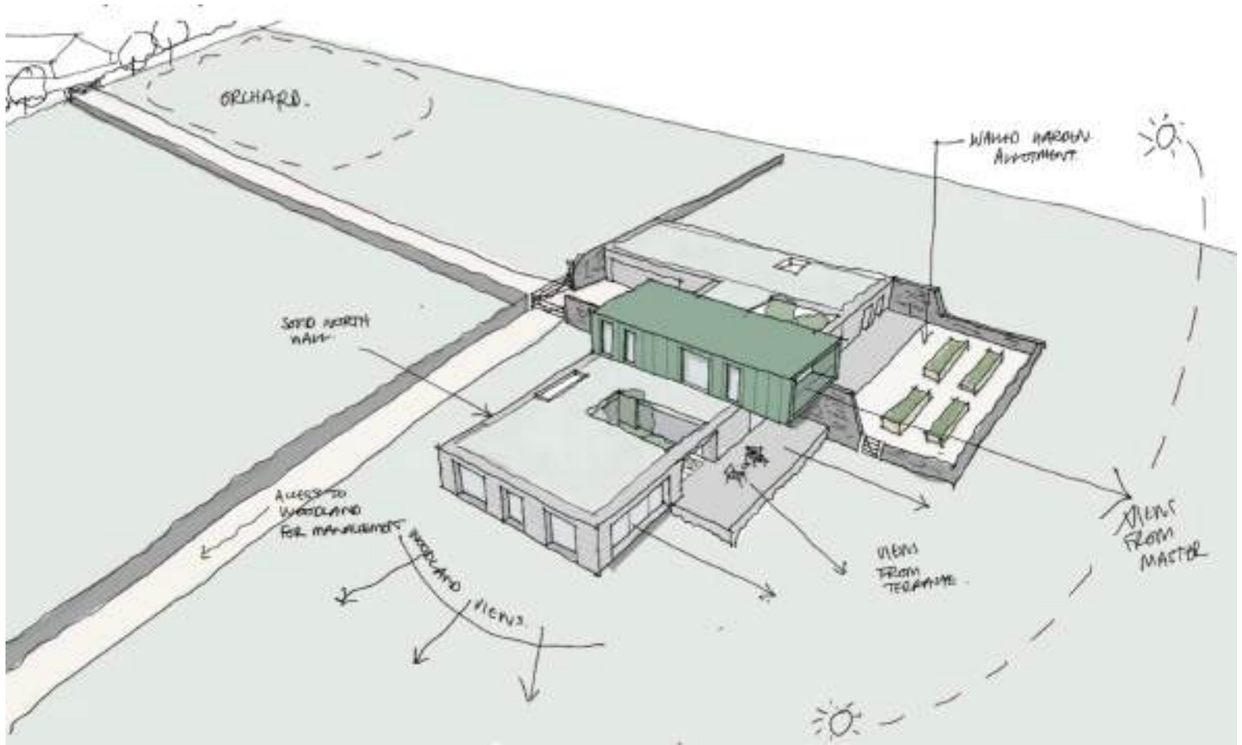
Design Evolution and DR Panels

As part of the design process we presented this scheme to the RIBA Places Matter Design Review Panel four times in total. A summary of this process and how the design evolved is included below.

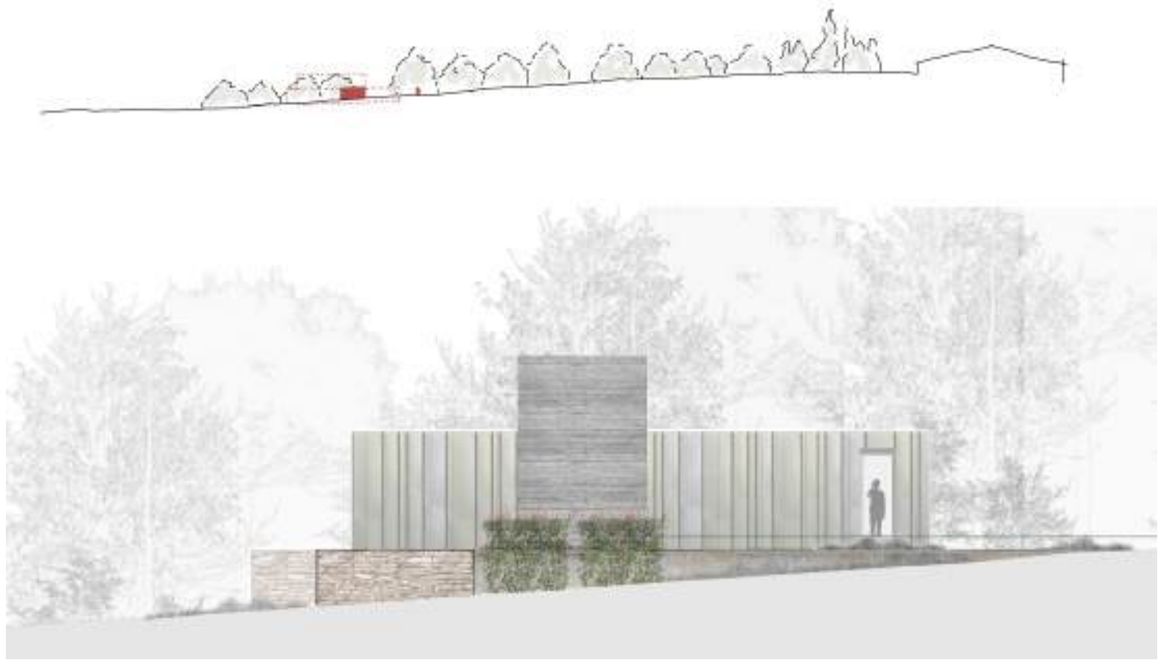
The initial concept began as a partially submerged design, harmonising with the natural contours of the site. This approach was supported by the panel as they said it made the house feel like it was ‘emerging from the ground’. The bio receptive concrete was also felt to be a strong idea in principle.

This first review panel encouraged us to explore the geometry of the proposition and to push and rotate the building North and East, to avoid overhanging the Roman road. It was also felt that the cantilever as presented didin’t quite work conceptually. We discussed the upper box and how that should be the “floaty bit” so this needed more work.

The material choices in this first review were referencing agricultural buildings but these were felt to be quite hard. We were encouraged to explore more natural materials that could be viewed as being softer.



Concept sketch from the first design review



Elevation studies exploring materiality and composition

3d model development

4.0 DESIGN EVOLUTION

Design Evolution and DR Panels

Various configurations were considered in relation to the Roman Road as part of the review process. As highlighted earlier, we were encouraged to rotate the building to sit parallel to the roman road. The design is now oriented to maintain a deliberate distance to respect its historic significance while integrating the house seamlessly into the site.

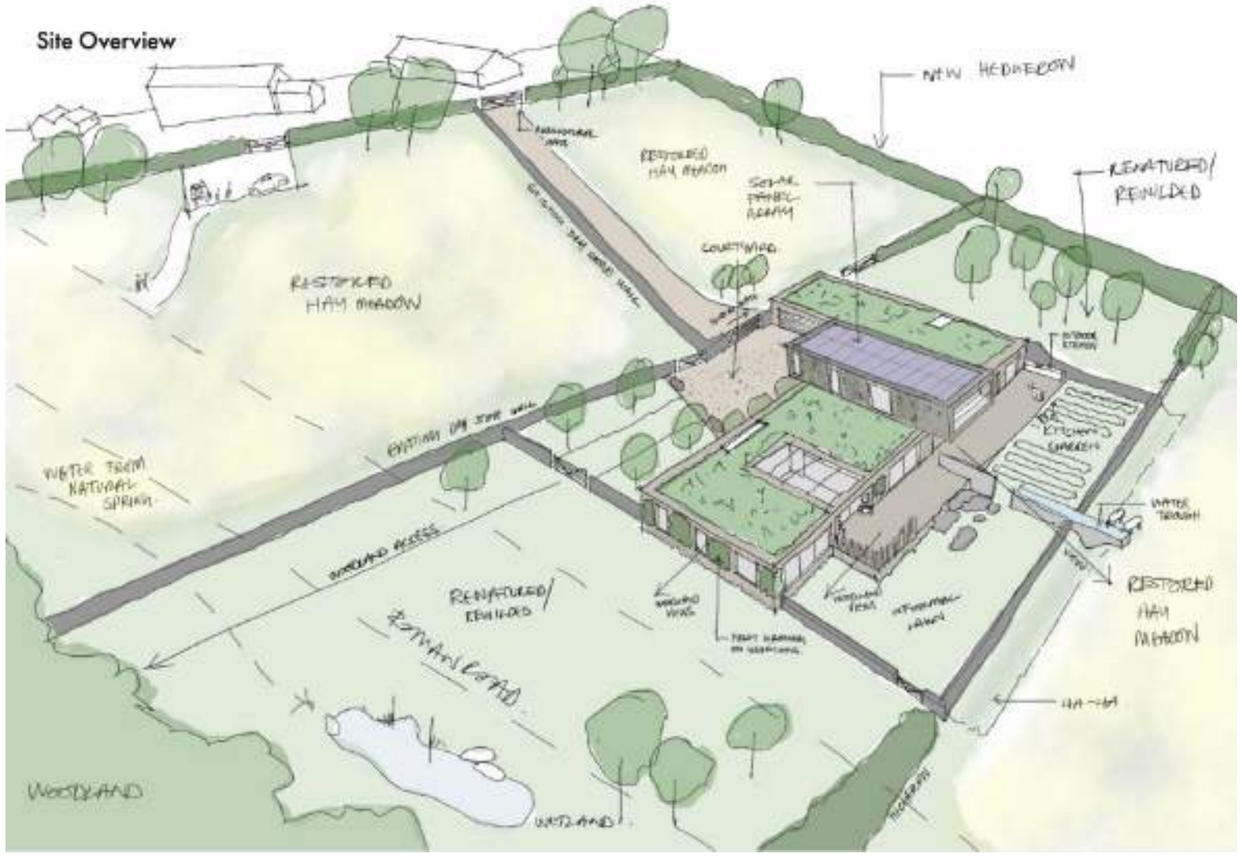
In response to the review panel's feedback on the materiality of the upper 'box' we explored the use of the gabion walling to the upper box. This would soften this element but also improve the biodiversity on site and provides another surface for moss and lichen to grow. We developed this further by designing a bespoke metal cage framework to frame the windows so that it appears very sharp and contemporary rather than a simple gabion cage.

The concept initially included a vegetable garden and simple cubic glazed forms as key features. To address the challenge of drawing light deep into the floor plan, the design originally incorporated glass cubes inset into the structure. These cubes allowed natural light to penetrate the interior spaces, creating a bright and open atmosphere. As the design evolved, these glass elements were reimagined as courtyards, enriching the layout by integrating themes of biophilic design. These courtyards brought nature into the heart of the home, fostering a stronger connection between indoor and outdoor spaces and emphasising well-being through natural elements.

This progression ultimately led to the embrace of the "growing house" concept. Rather than confining greenery to discrete areas, vegetation became an integral part of the building itself. Inspired by the mosses and lichens that thrive on the existing stone wall, the design incorporated planting across the house's surfaces—walls, roofs, and facades—transforming it into a living structure. This approach not only celebrates the natural and historical character of the site but also redefines the relationship between architecture and landscape, creating a home that feels as though it has grown organically from its surroundings.

The review panel felt that all of the changes that have been made were very positive and it was in that context that the panel supports the project. We engaged with the Places Matter process in a very collaborative and cooperative spirit and the Panel commended us for that.

In summary, the Panel undertaking the review considers that the proposal meets the test set out in NPPF Paragraph 84e and is considered to be of an exceptional quality of design.



Sketch showing the rotated building and relationship with the roman road


Visual exploring gabion walling concept to the upper box.

5.0 DESIGN VISION

Design Vision

The design vision for this Paragraph 84 dwelling is to create a home that embodies architectural excellence while demonstrating a deep respect for its rural surroundings. The proposal seeks to deliver a building that is both sculptural and functional, seamlessly integrating with the topography and natural features of the site. The design takes inspiration from the textures, tones, and forms of the local vernacular, reinterpreting these elements in a contemporary language that celebrates craftsmanship and innovation.

A central component of the vision is a robust commitment to enhancing biodiversity. The landscaping strategy has been meticulously developed to create habitats that support local wildlife, with features including native wildflower meadows, species-rich hedgerows, and the planting of native tree species to connect existing ecological corridors. A network of ponds and wetland areas will provide habitats for amphibians and aquatic species, while green roofs and living walls will offer foraging and nesting opportunities for birds and insects.

Additionally, the design incorporates bat and bird boxes, bee hotels, and log piles to encourage a thriving ecosystem. Dark-sky-compliant external lighting will protect nocturnal wildlife while maintaining the rural character of the site. These measures, alongside a commitment to long-term management and monitoring, ensure the proposal not only mitigates its ecological impact but actively enhances the natural environment, setting a benchmark for sustainable rural development.

Sustainability and Environmental Performance

Sustainability is at the core of this Paragraph 80 proposal, aiming to deliver a dwelling that sets new standards for environmental performance. The design adopts a fabric-first approach, ensuring the building envelope maximizes thermal efficiency through high-performance insulation, airtight construction, and low-carbon materials. Renewable energy systems, including photovoltaic panels and an air-source heat pump, will provide clean energy for the home, reducing reliance on non-renewable resources.

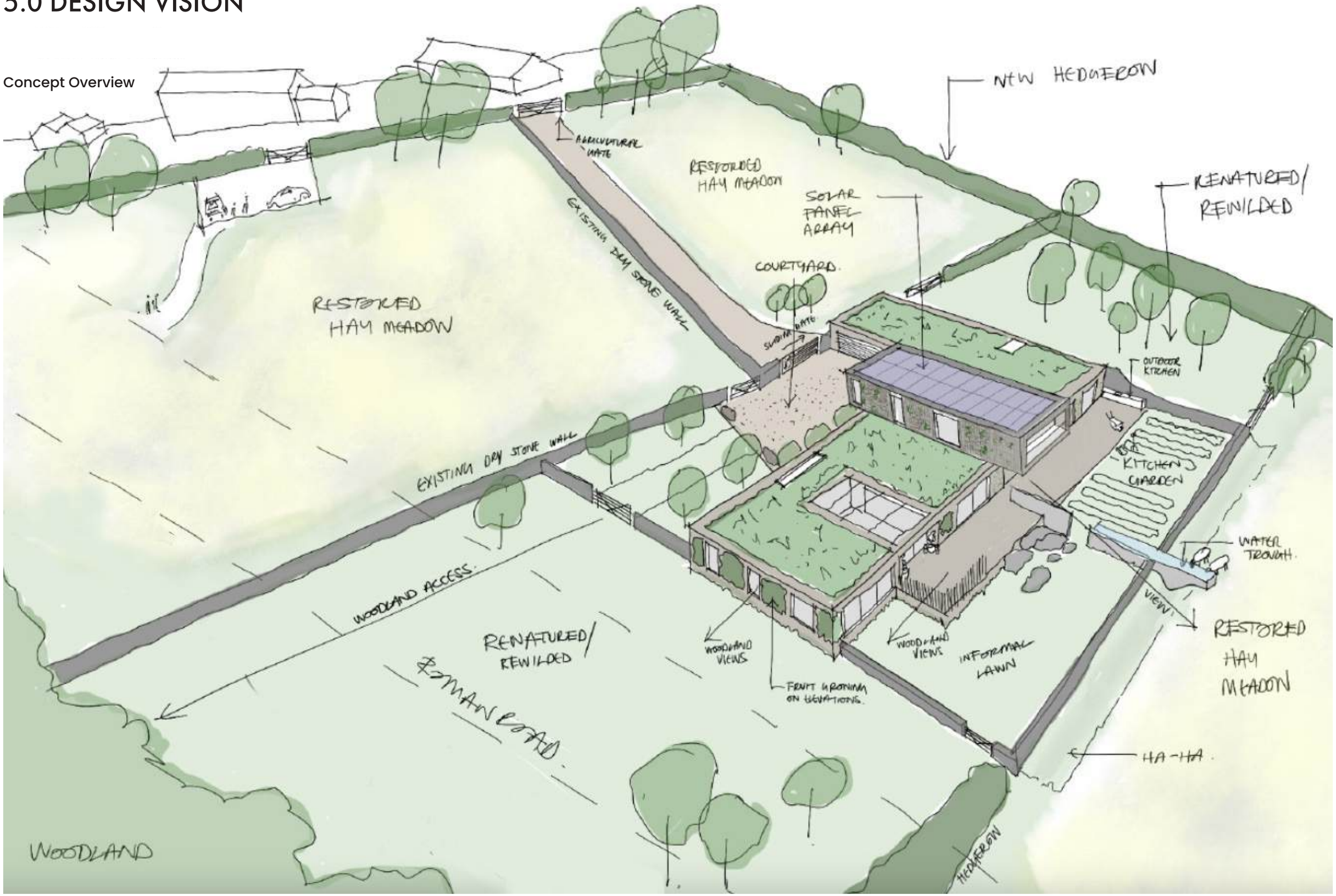
Water conservation is prioritized through rainwater harvesting systems, greywater recycling, and permeable landscaping solutions that minimize surface water runoff. The building's orientation and fenestration are carefully designed to optimize passive solar gain while minimising overheating, ensuring comfortable living conditions year-round with minimal energy use.

The proposal also embraces circular economy principles by integrating reclaimed and locally sourced materials, minimizing embodied carbon, and reducing waste during construction. The landscaping strategy incorporates carbon sequestration elements, such as extensive tree planting and soil regeneration techniques, to offset residual emissions.

By balancing high-performance architecture with regenerative environmental practices, this dwelling demonstrates a holistic approach to sustainability, making a positive contribution to the landscape and setting a precedent for future rural development.

5.0 DESIGN VISION

Concept Overview



5.0 DESIGN VISION

Concept Overview

A key aspect of the design is its integration of food production into the daily life of the occupants. The dwelling will feature dedicated growhouses, allowing residents to cultivate their own food year-round. This self-sufficient model extends to the very fabric of the house, with the elevations designed to support vertical farming. Green walls will be incorporated into the structure, enabling the growth of edible plants such as herbs, vegetables, and fruits. This approach not only enhances the sustainability of the dwelling but also redefines the relationship between the home and the land, offering a sustainable way of living that responds to the modern need for local, organic food production. The grow houses are set into the plan and bring natural light into the building.

Materiality

The material palette for this project has been carefully selected to reflect both the local vernacular and the natural characteristics of the site, ensuring a seamless integration of the dwelling into its rural context while also introducing a modern, sustainable approach to construction.

Bio-Receptive Concrete
The ground floor of the dwelling will be constructed using bio-receptive concrete, a cutting-edge material that invites lichen, moss, and other forms of plant life to grow on its surface. This innovative material responds to environmental conditions, allowing for the gradual establishment of biological life, creating a dynamic, evolving facade. The inspiration for this choice comes from the existing stone walls on site, where natural moss growth has developed over time, blending the man-made structure with the natural environment. By incorporating bio-receptive concrete, the building's ground floor walls will not only blend visually with the landscape but will also support local biodiversity, fostering an environment where nature can take root and grow directly on the building.

Gabion Cages and Local Stone
The first floor is designed using gabion cages filled with local stone, which provides a contemporary interpretation of the traditional dry stone walls found across the region. The use of gabions—steel cages filled with stone—offers a robust and weather-resistant material solution, while the locally sourced stone helps the building maintain a strong connection to the surrounding landscape. The decision to use gabions is both functional and aesthetic, allowing the structure to echo the timeless qualities of dry stone walls while providing a modern twist through the use of an industrial material. The local stone's textures, colors, and patterns are carefully selected to ensure that the building responds sensitively to its environment, further reinforcing the idea of the dwelling as a continuation of the landscape.

Sustainability and Longevity
Both the bio-receptive concrete and gabion stone structures contribute to the sustainability and longevity of the building. The bio-receptive concrete's ability to support moss and lichen growth not only enhances the building's visual appeal but also improves its environmental performance by reducing surface temperatures and contributing to the creation of microhabitats. The gabion cages, filled with durable local stone, offer a sustainable building solution that is low maintenance, resilient to weathering, and naturally integrated with the surrounding rural context.

The chosen materials reflect a deep respect for the site's natural features and regional heritage while embracing contemporary techniques that foster sustainability and environmental synergy. The materials serve as a tangible manifestation of the design's commitment to blending modernity with tradition, creating a harmonious relationship between architecture and nature.

View through one of the growing spaces

4.0 DESIGN VISION