



Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Stonyhurst College PV Array | August 2025

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose and structure of the report

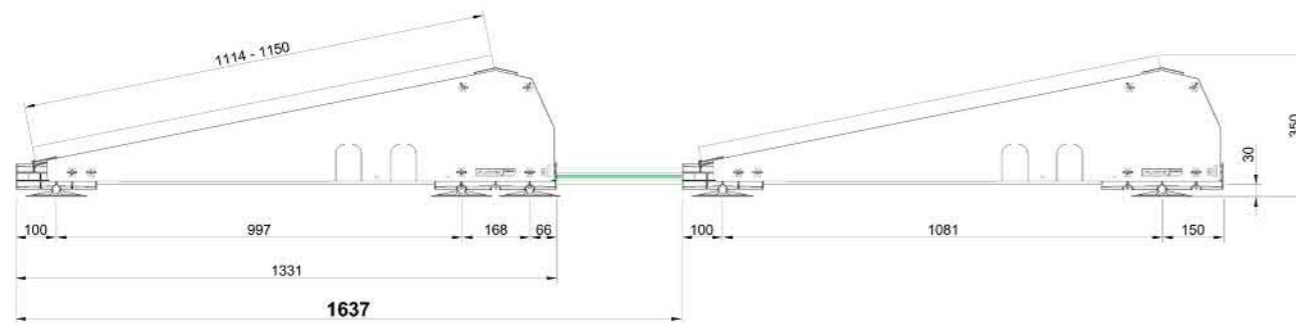
The purpose of this report is to produce a high level landscape and visual appraisal of the impact of proposed rooftop photovoltaic panels at Stonyhurst College, as recommended in pre-application feedback from Ribble Valley Borough Council (reference RV/2025/ENQ/00024)

Supporting the full planning application, the report includes the following:

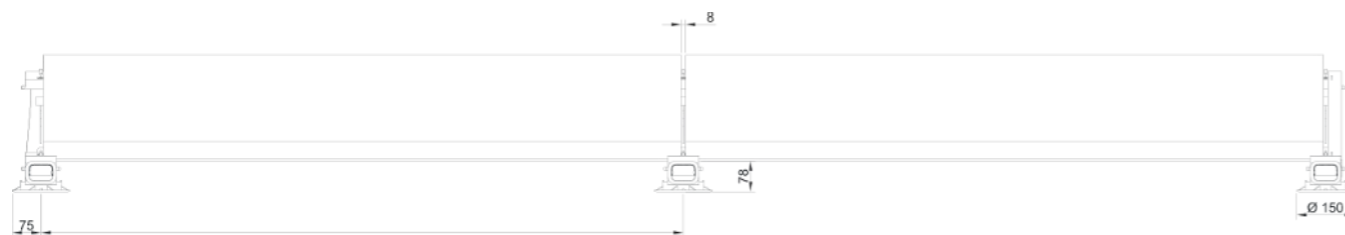
- Understanding the setting of the site and its wider and local context
- Evaluation of identified key views to establish the significance of the effect
- Summary



Single landscape configuration with row distance of 1,637 mm



Rear view



01. Low profile solar panel to minimise visual impact - manufacturer's drawing of system

1.1 Methodology

This appraisal evaluates the likely landscape and visual effects from three identified key views. The appraisal is carried out using photographs of the views in the existing condition. The appraisal is kept as objective as possible.

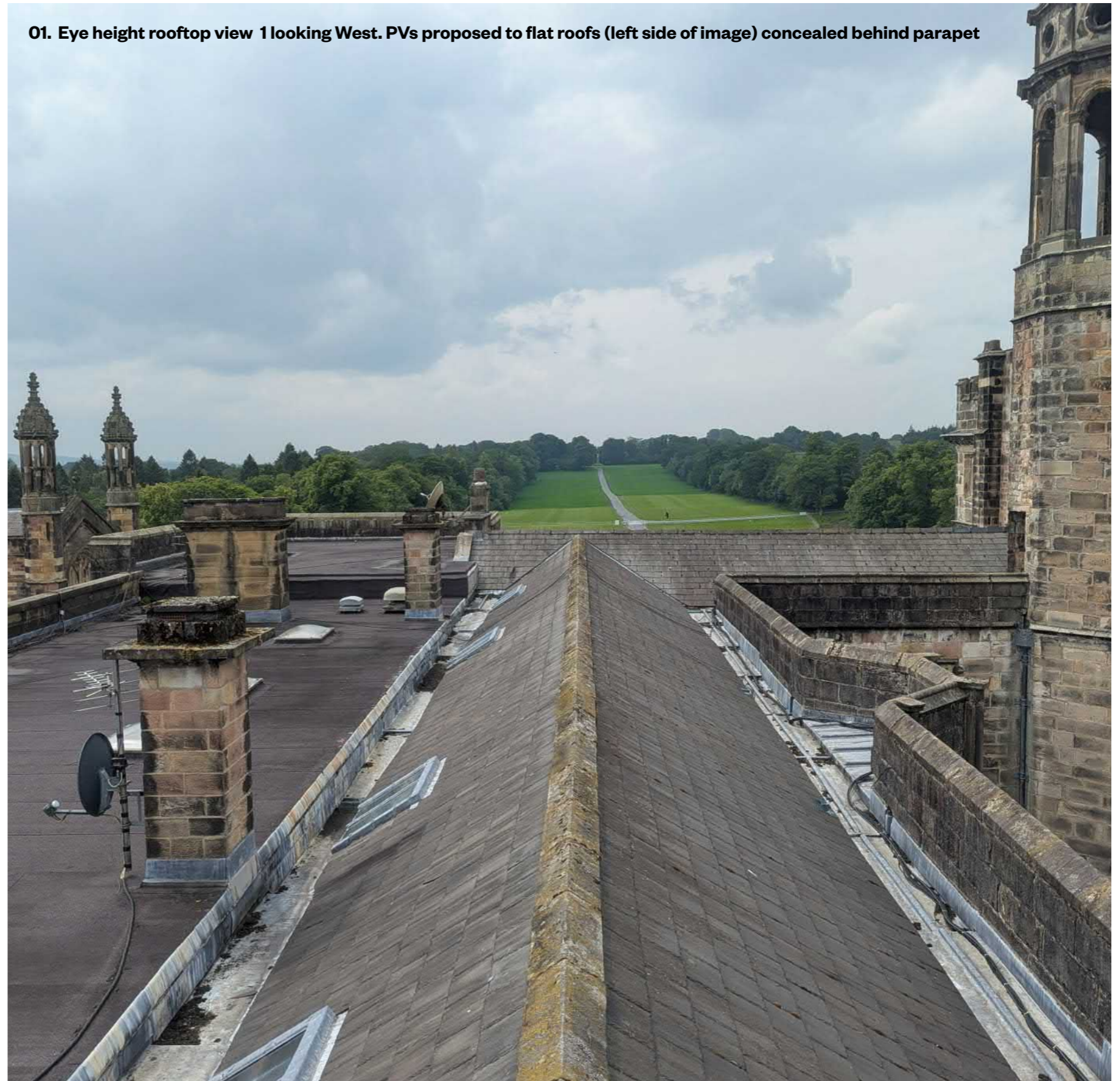
Information used within the report includes content from previous studies and photographs from a site visit on Wednesday 25th of June 2025. Photographs were taken using a Nikon D3500 camera and Nikkor AF-P 18-55mm lens.

Two site visits were undertaken in total. The first visit on Monday 9th June was a general inspection of the proposed PV locations to see what was visible looking down into the surrounding landscape, and in response to the pre-application feedback reference RV/2025/ENQ/00024. This visit, combined with the feedback, informed the specific location of key ground level views (identified as more general locations within pre-application feedback). These views were then rigorously captured during the site visit of 25th June 2025.

Key plan



01. Eye height rooftop view 1 looking West. PVs proposed to flat roofs (left side of image) concealed behind parapet



02. Eye height rooftop view 2 looking West. PVs proposed to flat roofs (centre of image)



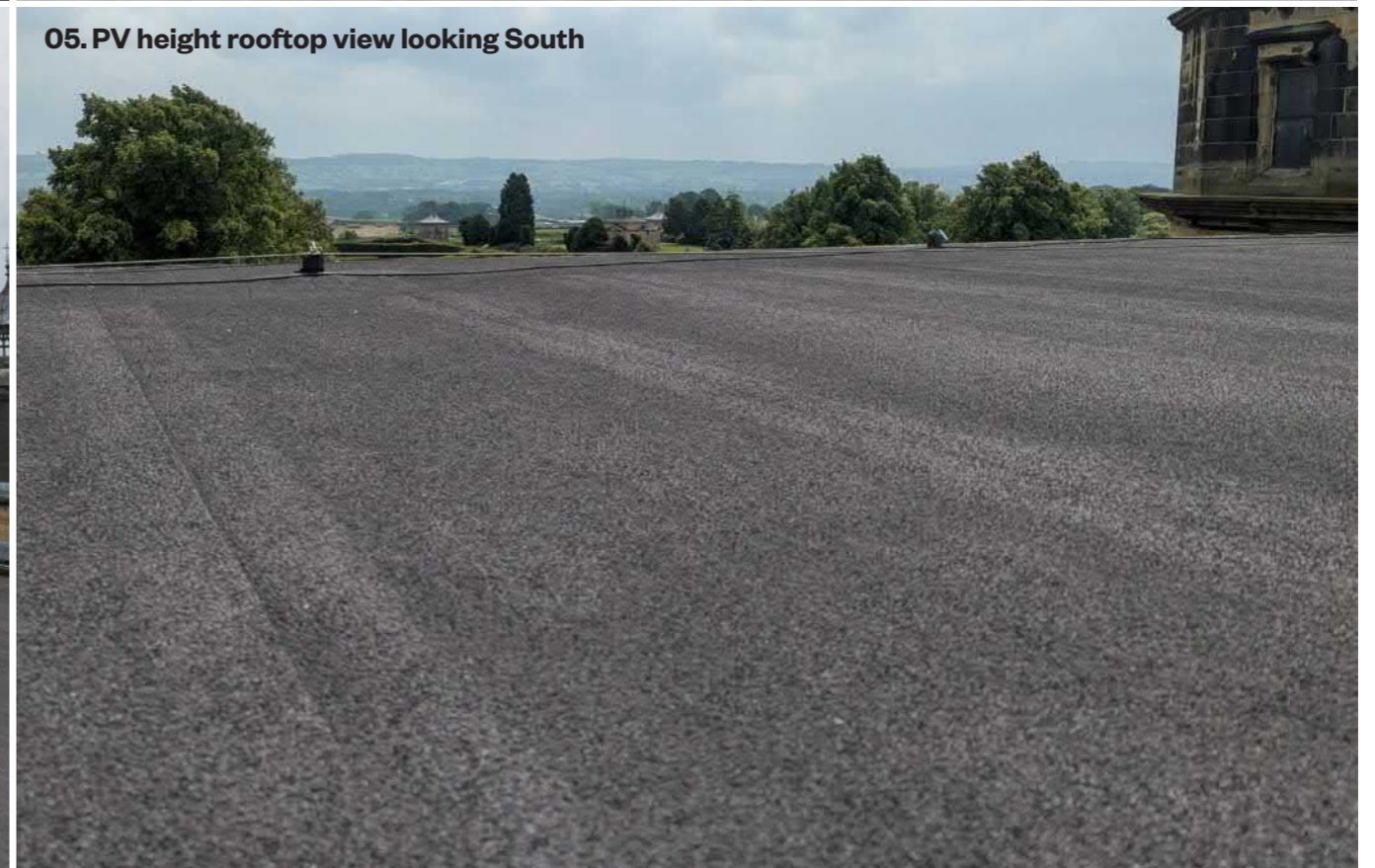
03. PV height rooftop view looking West



04. Eye height rooftop view looking South



05. PV height rooftop view looking South





2.0 Landscape Setting

2.1 Landscape Context

The Setting







The application site is located within the wider Stonyhurst Estate, situated in the Ribble Valley area of Lancashire, England and set within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

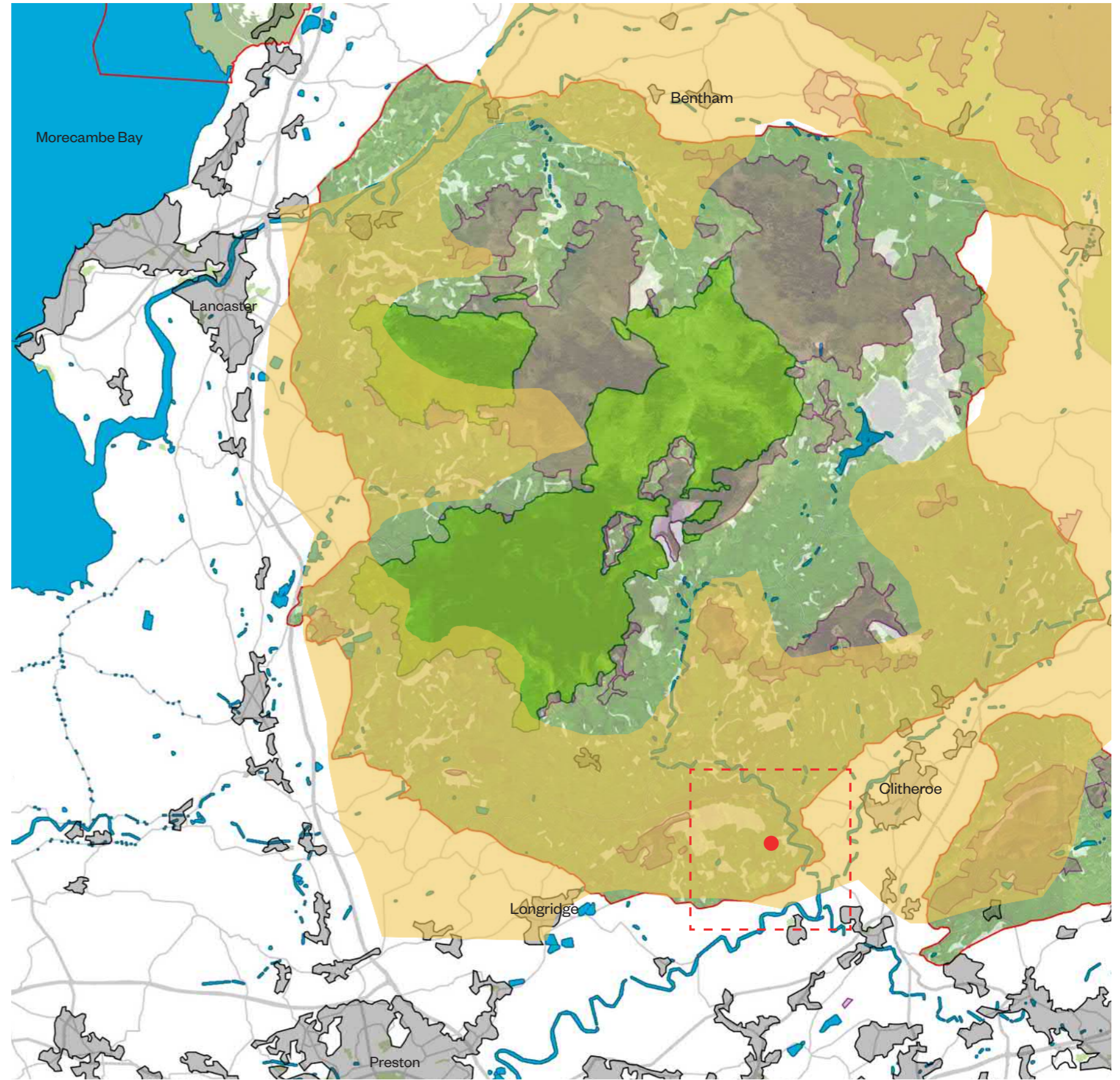
The Countryside Agency, English Nature, RDS, English Heritage, (updated 2006) place Stonyhurst College within the Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill national character area, whilst the Lancashire Landscape Classification places it within the Undulating Lowland Farm land character area, more specifically, the Undulating Lowland Farmland with Parkland classification area (Hurst Green).

The Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill character area is classified as a transitional landscape that wraps around the dramatic upland core of the Bowland Fells, underpinned by Carboniferous geology. The influence of human habitation and activity, and the areas long farming history, contribute significantly to its character. In contrast to the characters predominantly rural feel, there are several relatively urban areas including Clitheroe, Bentham and Longridge.

Surrounded by a mixture of Open Moorland plateau to the north and valley farmlands, Stonyhurst College is located in the upland fringes and ridges area.

Key

-  Forest of Bowland AONB
-  Bowland Fells SSSI
-  Moorland
-  Built Up Areas - 2011 England and Wales
-  National character area 33 : Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill
-  Stonyhurst College



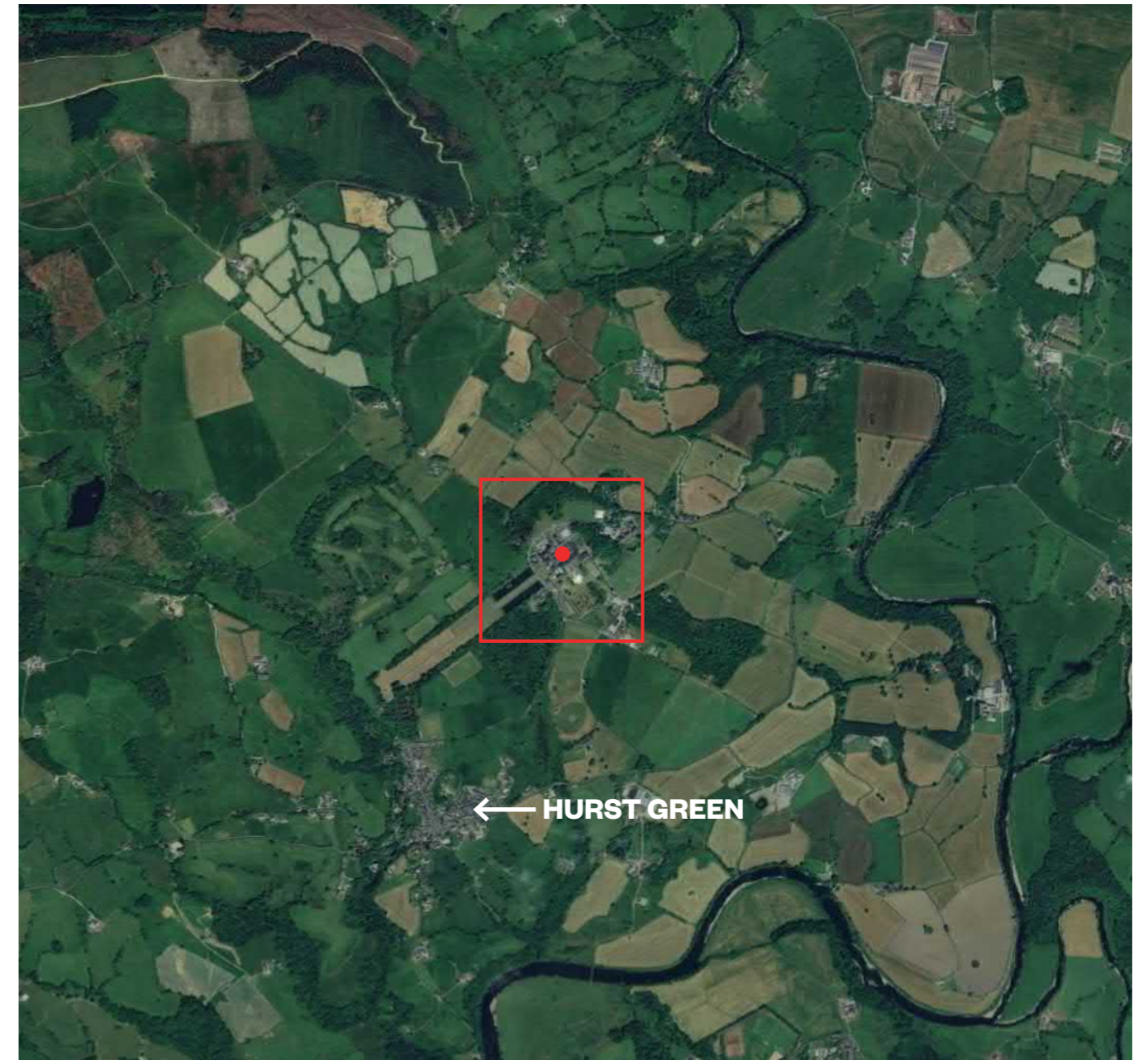
Regional context

2.2 Local Context

Located to the West, Hurst Green is a small village with a close historical relationship to the College. The population of approximately five hundred has grown from a small Hamlet, and its historical expansion is closely linked to the establishment of Shireburn House and subsequently, the College.



OS map showing the local context



Aerial view of the local context



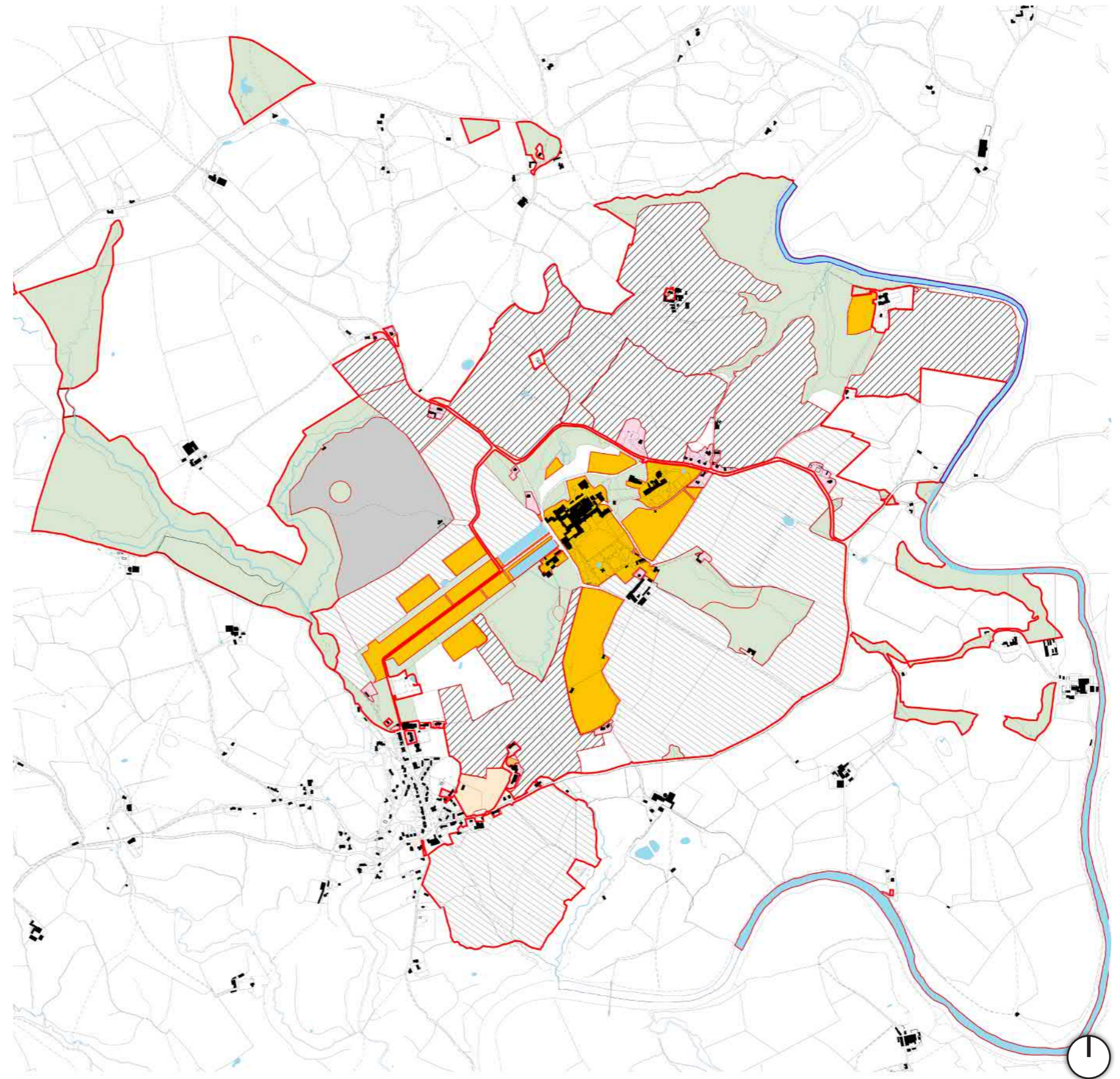
2.3 Ownership

Stonyhurst Estate Ownership

The PV panels are proposed on the rooftops of a number of main college buildings which are located centrally within of the wider College Estate which includes significant areas of general open space, farms and woodland.

Key

- Farms
- General open space
- Woodland in hand
- College Estate
- Golf course
- Residential
- Buildings



Stonyhurst estate ownership

2.4 Heritage Context

Heritage Designations

The Stonyhurst site contains a number of Grade I, II* and II listed buildings and landscape features, as itemised below. Much of the College resides within a Grade II* Historic Park and Garden, as illustrated on the diagram.






Buildings

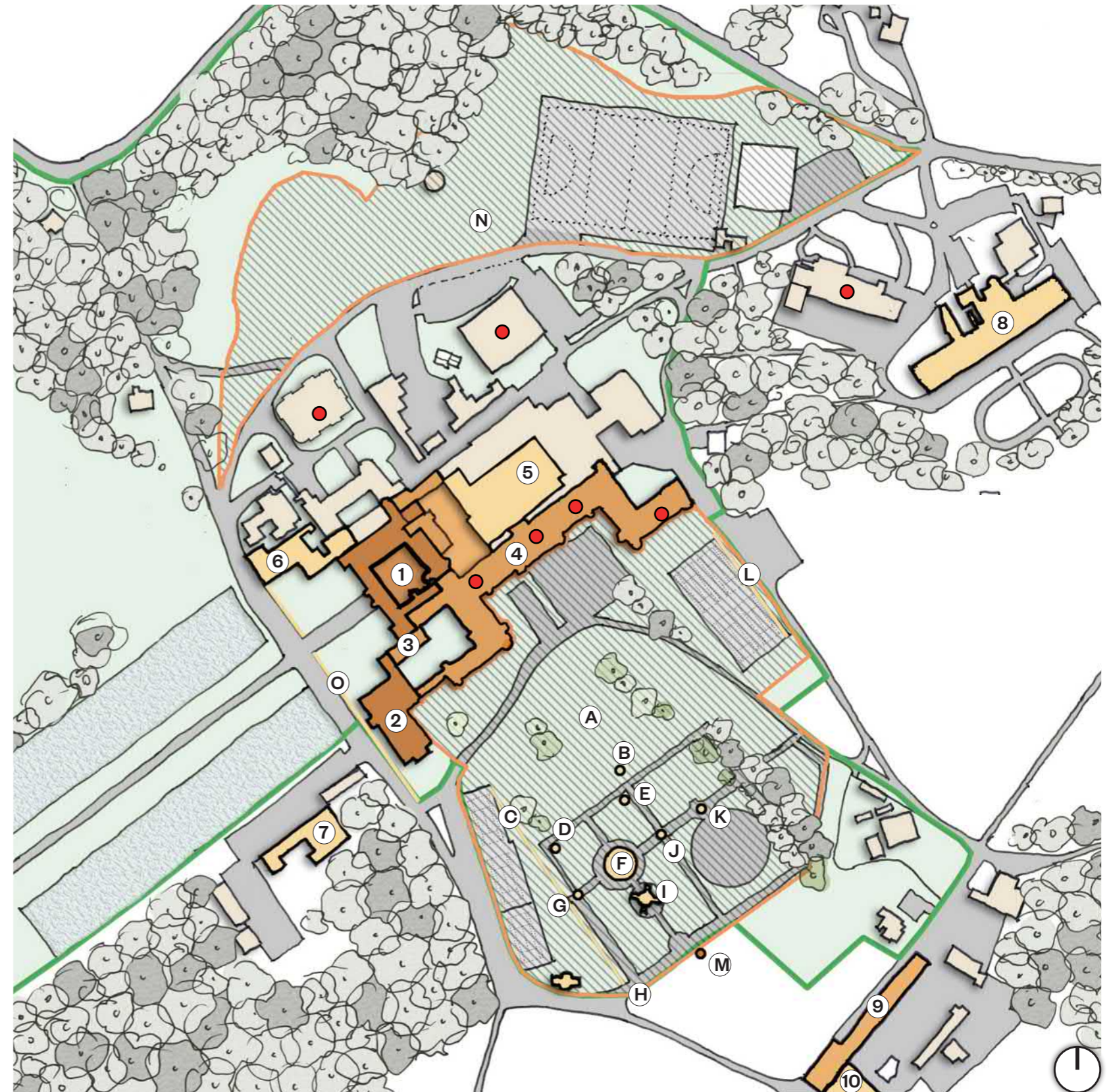
- 01. Old Quadrangle
- 02. St. Peters Church
- 03. Shirk
- 04. South Front and Boy's chapel
- 05. Shireburn Quadrangle, Ambulacrum and former laboratories
- 06. Old Infirmary
- 07. Corn mill and Granary
- 08. St. Mary's Hall
- 09. Barn on north west side of farmyard
- 10. Barn at south east side of farmyard
- 11. Woodfields Farmhouse and No. 8L

Landscape features

- A. Gardens (character area)
- B. Gate piers
- C. Wall and gateway door
- D. Statue of St Jerome
- E. Statue of St Mary Magdalene
- F. Retaining wall, statue and observatory pond
- G. Garden steps walls and piers
- H. Gate piers
- I. Observatory
- J. Garden steps and walls
- K. Former font
- L. Wall
- M. The garden pavilions and connecting wall
- N. Harry Meadow (character area)
- O. Two piers and wall

Key

-  Grade I
-  Grade II*
-  Grade II
-  Registered Historic Park & Garden (Grade II*)
-  PV locations

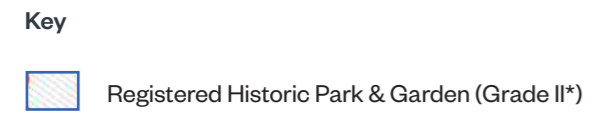
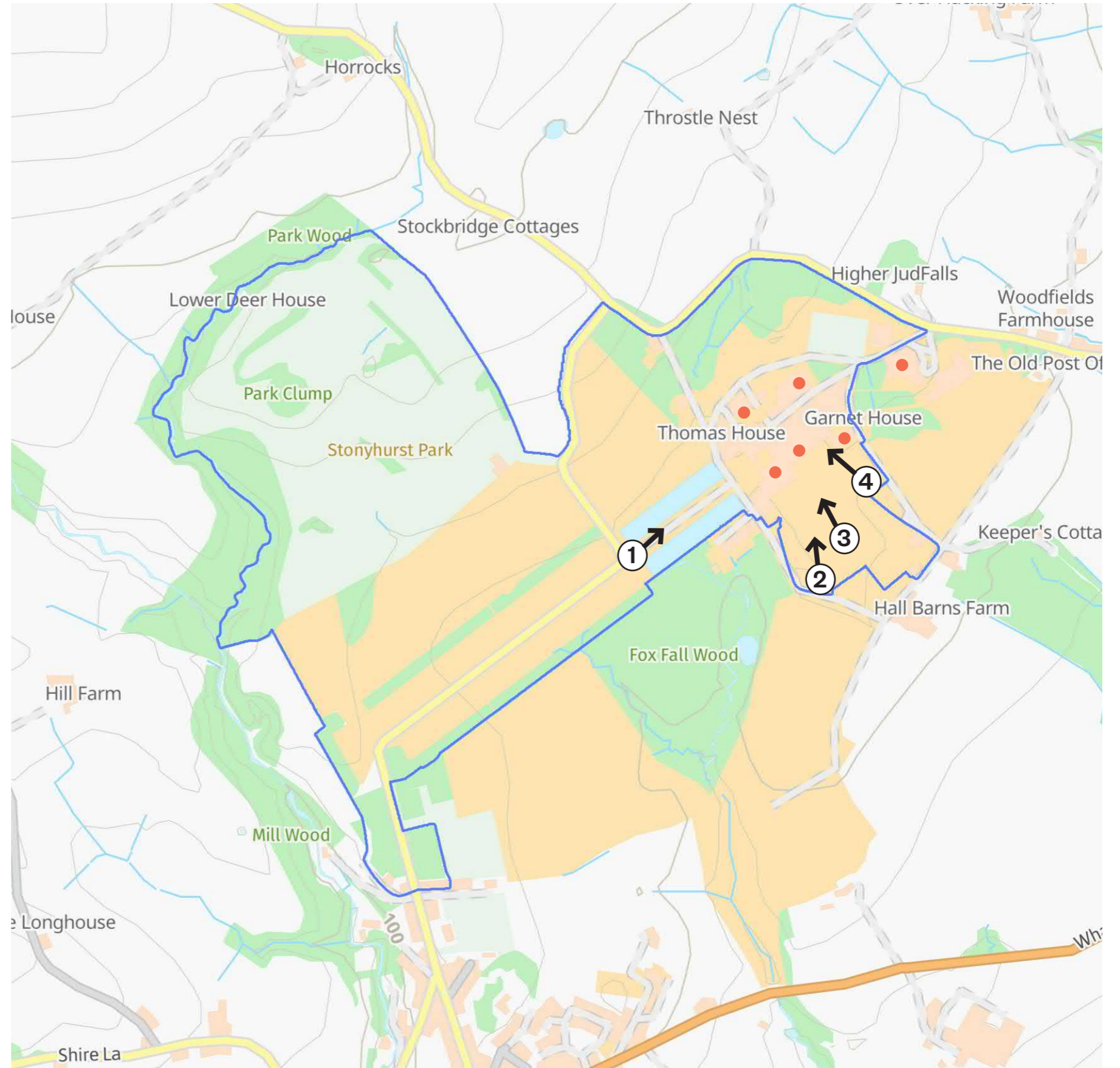


Listed buildings and structures at Stonyhurst - not to scale

2.4 Heritage Context

Registered historic park and garden (Grade II*)

The extent of the Grade II* registered Historic Park and Gardens is shown on the diagram adjacent. Most of the proposed PV panels are sited within this boundary. All of the proposed locations are rooftops ranging from two to four stories in height.



Extent of registered Historic Park & Garden (Grade II*)

01



03



02



04



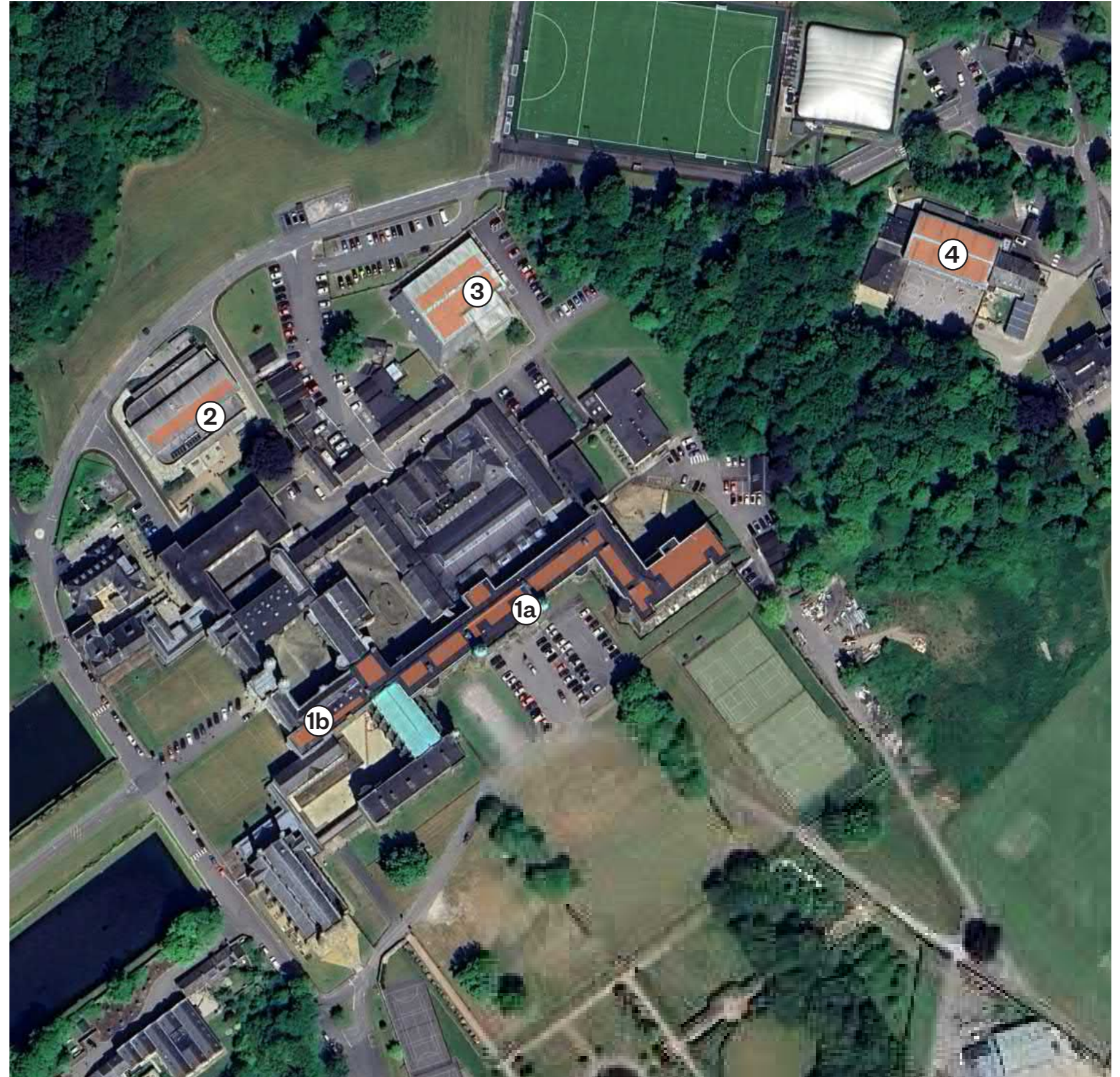
2.5 Built Context

Proposed PV locations

PVs are proposed to rooftops with locations influenced by building orientation, potential solar gain and structural capacity to support the panels and facilitate future maintenance. The proposed locations are as listed below and highlighted on this adjacent map:

- 1a South Front (Grade II*) - 1877
- 1b West Front (Grade I) - 1593
- 2 Refectory (unlisted) - 2013
- 3 Swimming pool (unlisted) - 1987
- 4 St Mary's Prep School Sports Hall - 1984 (unlisted but adjoining Grade II listed former gym with origins from 1847)

 PV panels



Key to photos overleaf

- 01. South Fronts (view from South)
- 02. The Refectory (view from north west)
- 03. Gym and Swimming Pool (approach from East)
- 04. Prep Sports Hall with pre-prep behind (view from South East)

Diagram showing the proposed rooftop locations of the PV panels

01



03



02



04



2.6 Visual Envelope

Site edge condition

Established woodland surrounds/screens much of the site from the public eye, and the main College buildings are a significant distance from public road and routes. Topography falls significantly across the estate from the North west down towards the winding River Hodder in the valley below but views back to the College are limited due to the extensive woodland screening.

There are limited pedestrian views from a public right of way running west to east; a route that affords limited glimpses of the Main College buildings through the Jesuit gardens. Dramatic long views both towards the school from the river and across the valley are some distance away. Due to topography falling sharply from North West to South East and the relative elevated position of the College, views towards the parapets and roofscape are generally oblique.

- PV panel locations
- > Public right of way / footpath
- Established woodland



Diagram showing the existing features which form a visual envelope around the estate





03 Potential Effects of Change

3.1 Key Views








Location of views to be considered

The following key views have been selection for consideration due to their historical significance and strategic locations and through their identification within pre-application feedback from planners.

- View (1) is taken along the main approach from the top of the vista where the main college building comes into view upon arrival from the South West entrance.
- View (2) is taken from the top of the ponds along the formal driveway towards to Main College building.
- View (3) towards the South Fronts is taken from the listed, historical and formal Jesuit gardens.

- ① Main approach
- ② The ponds
- ③ The Jesuit Gardens

Key

-  Registered Historic Park & Garden (Grade II*)
-  PV panels of most significance
-  PV panels of less significance
-  Main approach
-  Formal driveway
-  Formal gardens
-  Historic Park & Garden (Grade II) Boundary

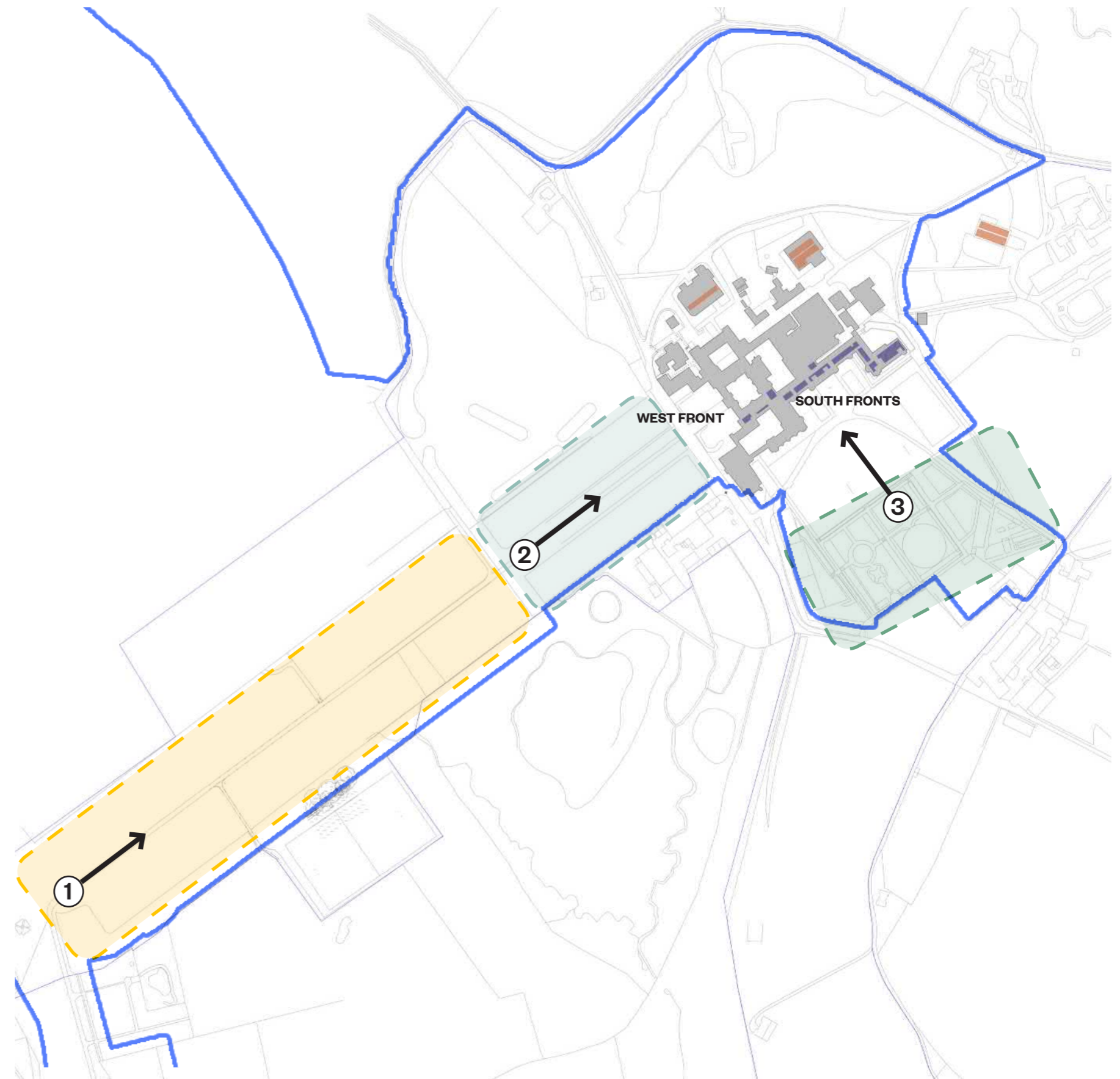
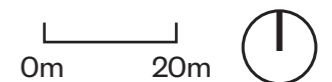


Diagram showing the location of the key views





Aerial showing the location of the key views



View 1 - Main Approach



Existing view from the top of the main approach drive. The zoomed in view marked in dashed red is shown overleaf.

View Assessment

The main approach follows the formal procession along the driveway and provides the first and principle view of the West Fronts. The highest point on the main drive approach is at the start of the drive, from which the Grade 1 listed elevation is formally experienced. As the viewer moves towards the college the approach reduces in elevation and the symmetrical view is framed by the lawn and the woodland beyond.

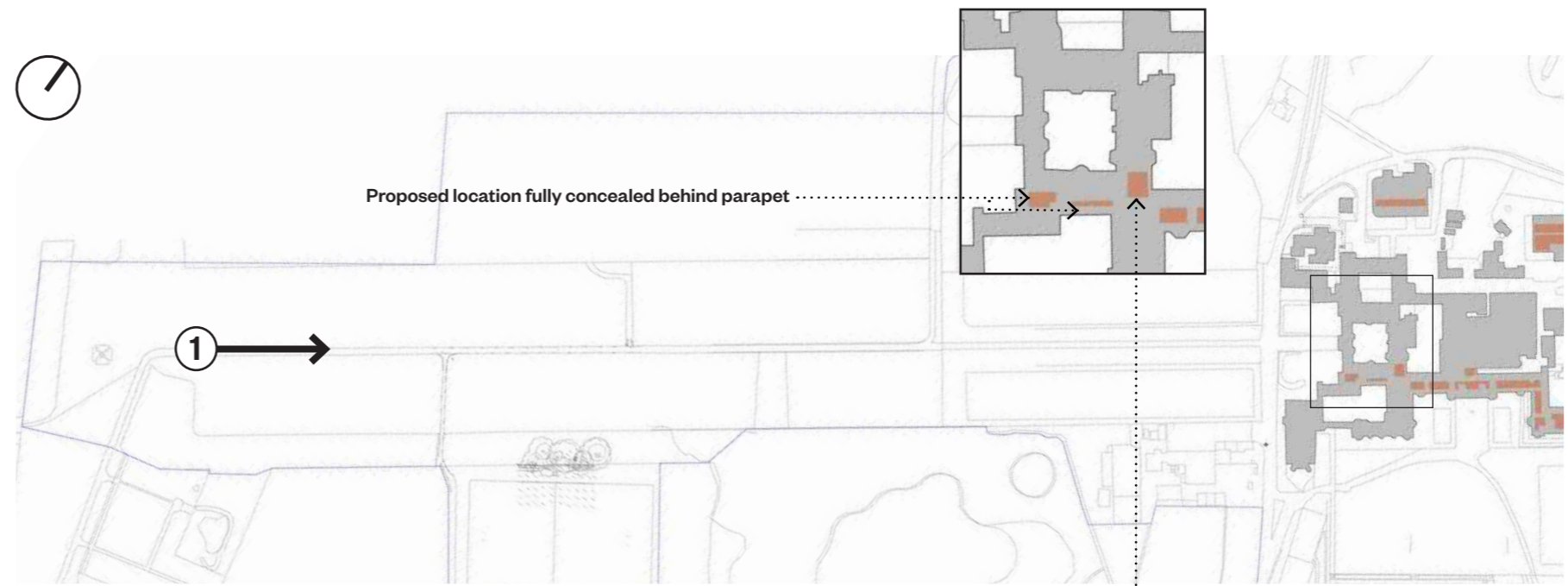
Even in a zoomed-in perspective, the majority of the roofscape remains unseen from this distance, and the rear rooftop is barely perceptible.

Sensitivity of the landscape

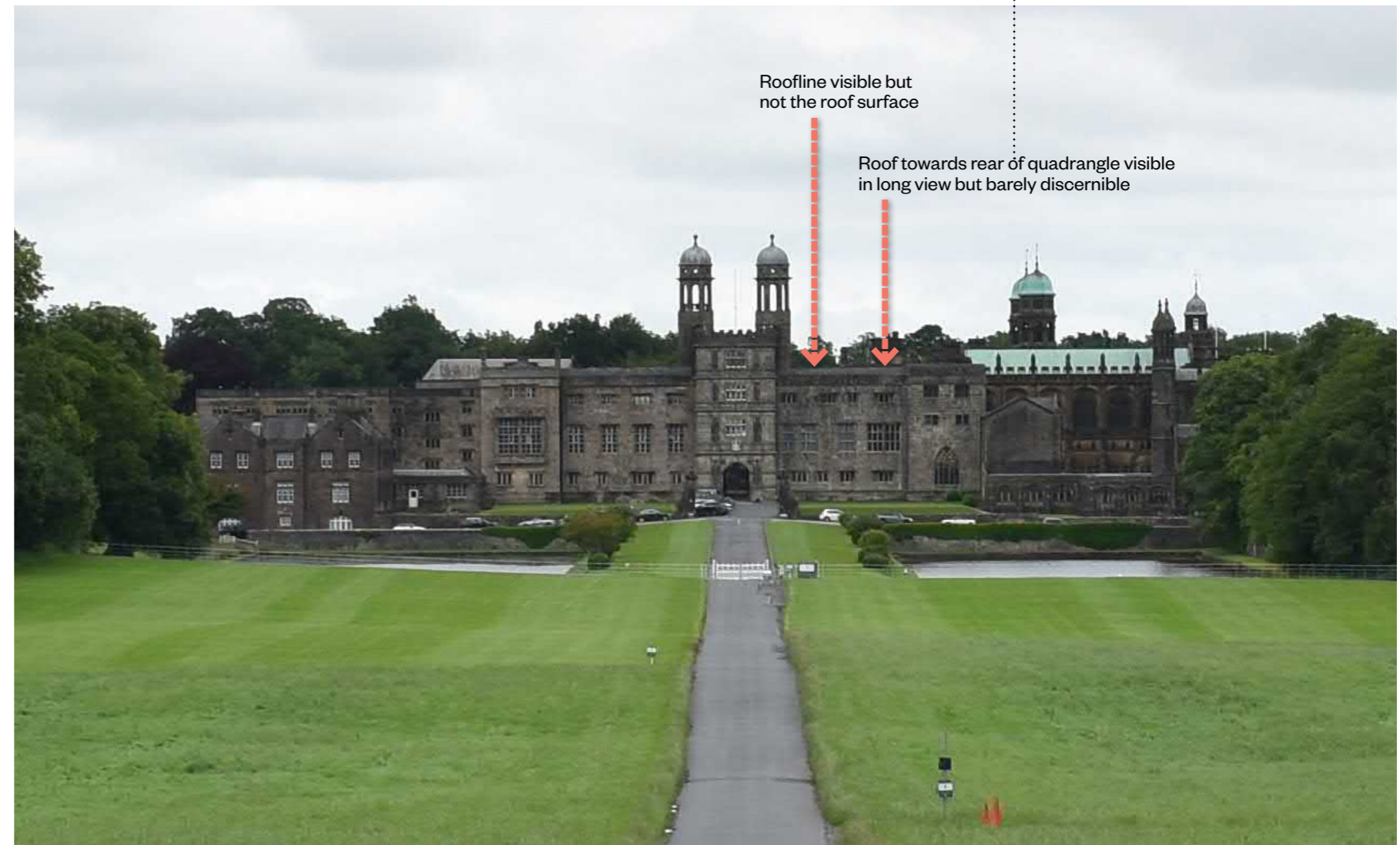
The sensitivity of the view is High, owing to the Grade 1 listing of the building and location on the formal approach view.

Significance of effect

The magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible, owing to the small dimensions of proposal at roof level, which is barely perceptible within the view and would require telescopic magnification for any sort of slight visibility. On this basis, the impact of the proposed changes is inconsequential.



View location



Existing zoomed-in view from the top of the main approach drive.

PVs here will be completely concealed by parapets

PVs here will be barely discernible due to distance



Reverse view from rear quadrangle roof

View 2 - From the Ponds



Existing view from the top of the ponds along the main drive approach. The zoomed in view marked in dashed red is shown on the next page.

View Assessment

As the viewer progresses along the main drive towards the West Fronts, the view is further framed by two long symmetrical ponds. The wider college becomes visible at this point, however due to the reduced elevation and the proximity to the buildings it is not possible to see the roofscape.

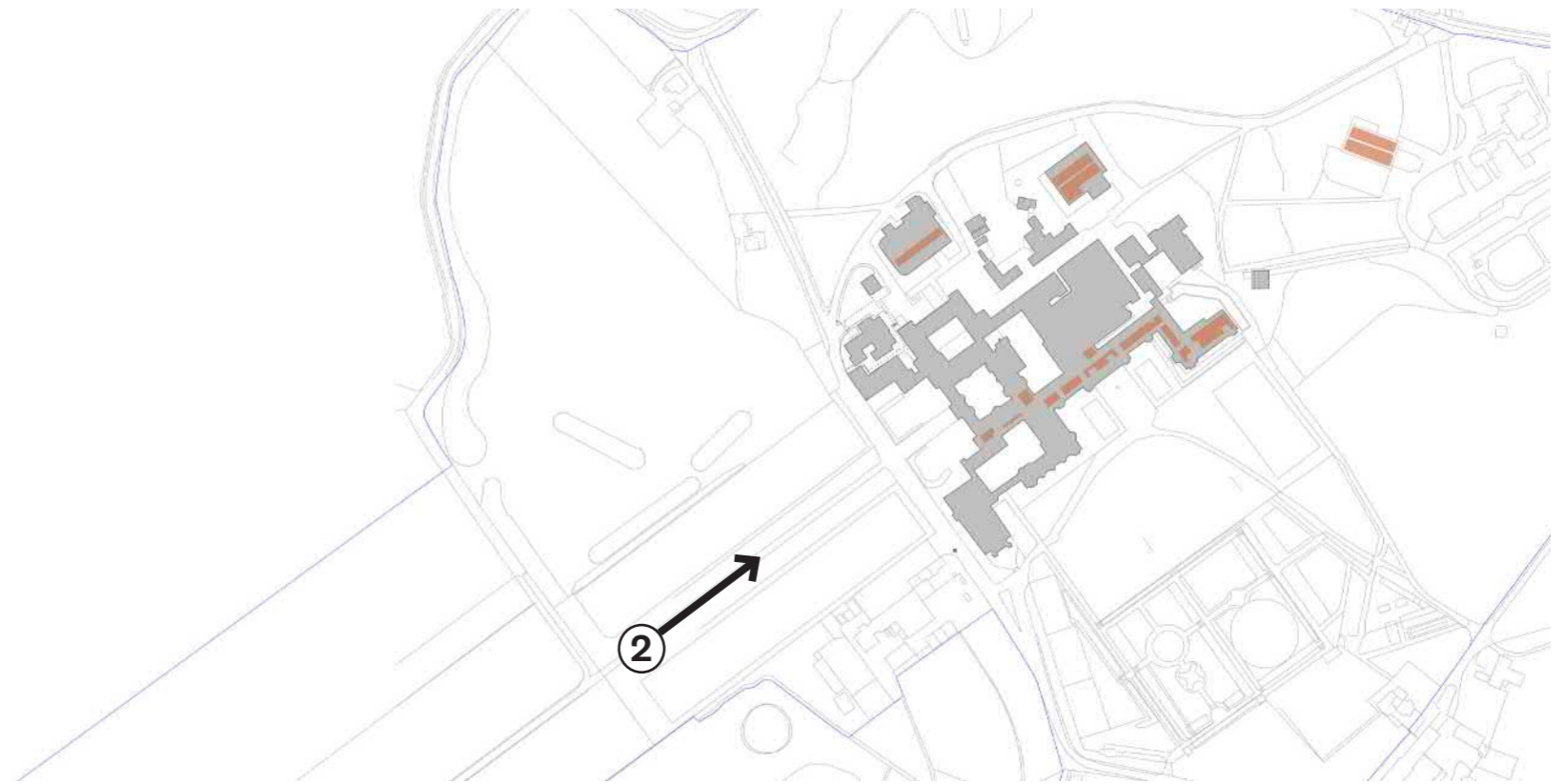
The chimneys to the south fronts are visible (Refer to Chimneys A and B on picture below) due to their increased height from the roof. The PV panels, however, would not be visible due to the significantly lower height from the roof and further obscuring from the parapet.

Sensitivity of the landscape

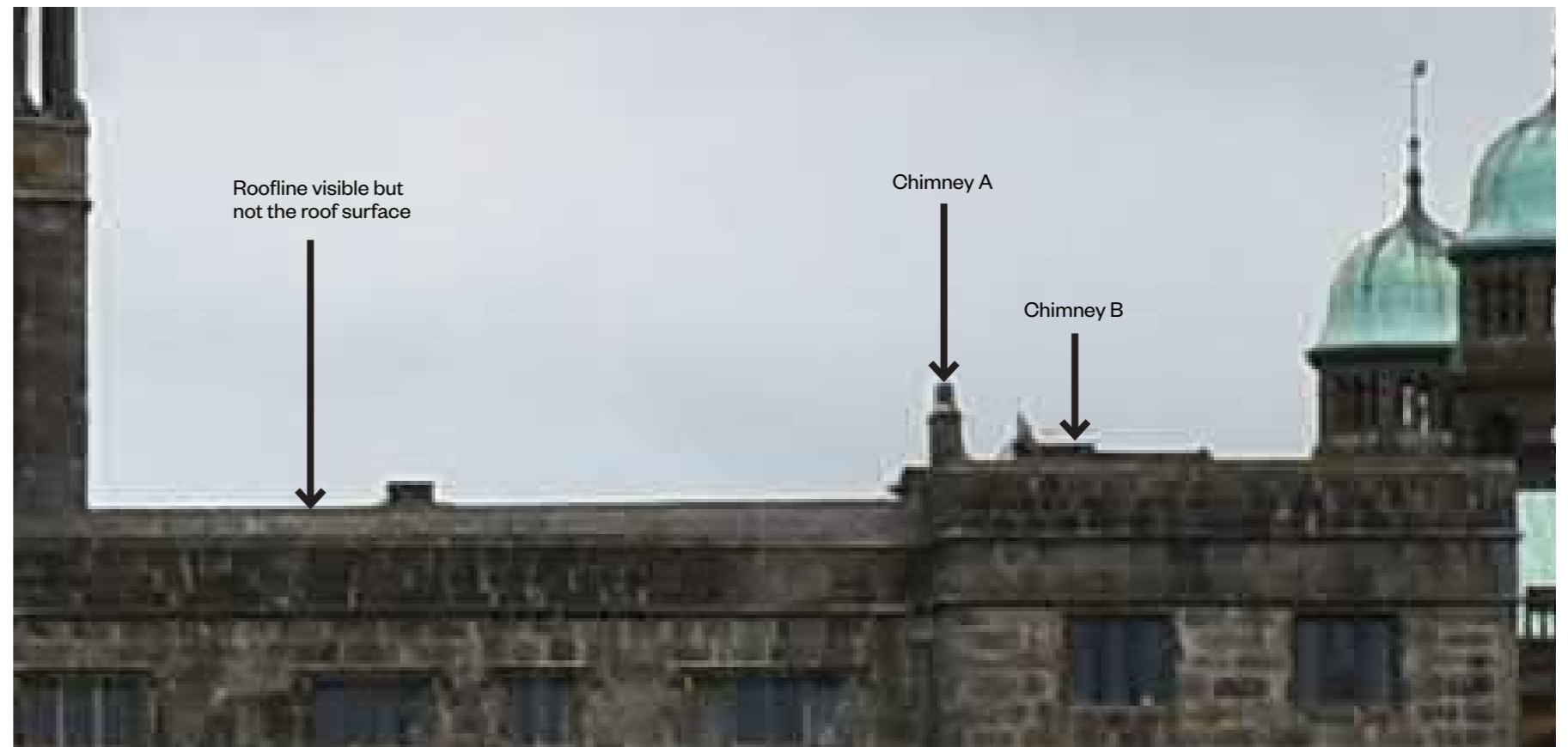
The sensitivity of the view is High, owing to the Grade 1 listing of the building and location on the formal approach view.

Significance of effect

The magnitude of change considered from this view is No effect owing to the small dimensions of proposal at roof level, which is will not be visible from this view. On this basis, the impact of the proposed changes is No effect.



View location



Existing zoomed-in view from the top of the ponds along the main drive approach

View 3 - From the Jesuit Gardens



Existing view from the historic gardens. The zoomed in view marked in dashed red is shown on the next page.

View Assessment

To the south side of the school grounds the principle viewback to the Grade II* listed South Fronts is from the Jesuit gardens.

As can be observed in the photograph below, even when zoomed in the roofscape is not visible from this distance. The PV panels are low profile and 350mm high maximum. Set back over 2 metres from the edge and with the first row pitched away from the parapet, they will not be visible in this view as they will not break the 'view sightline'.

Sensitivity of the landscape

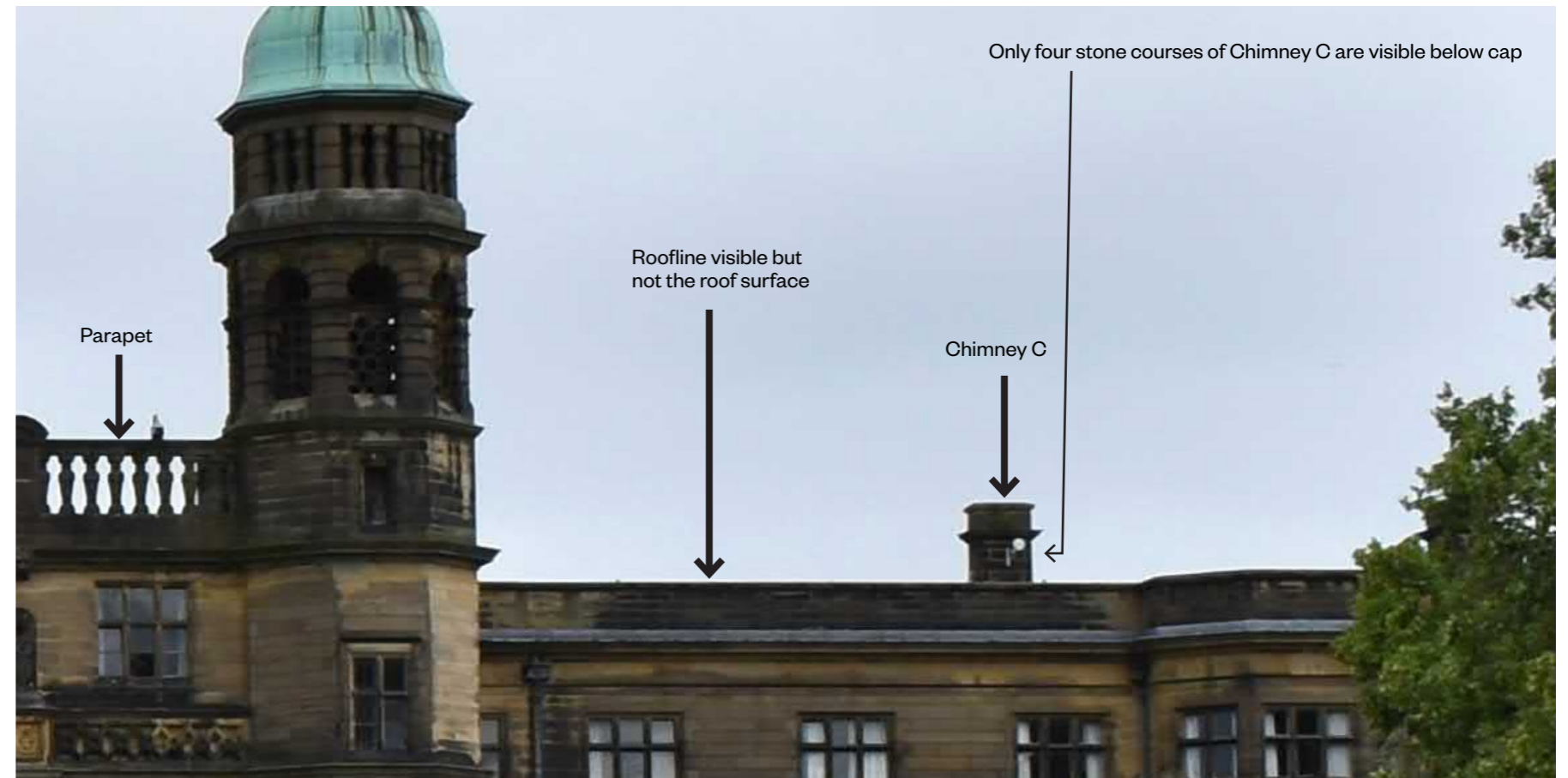
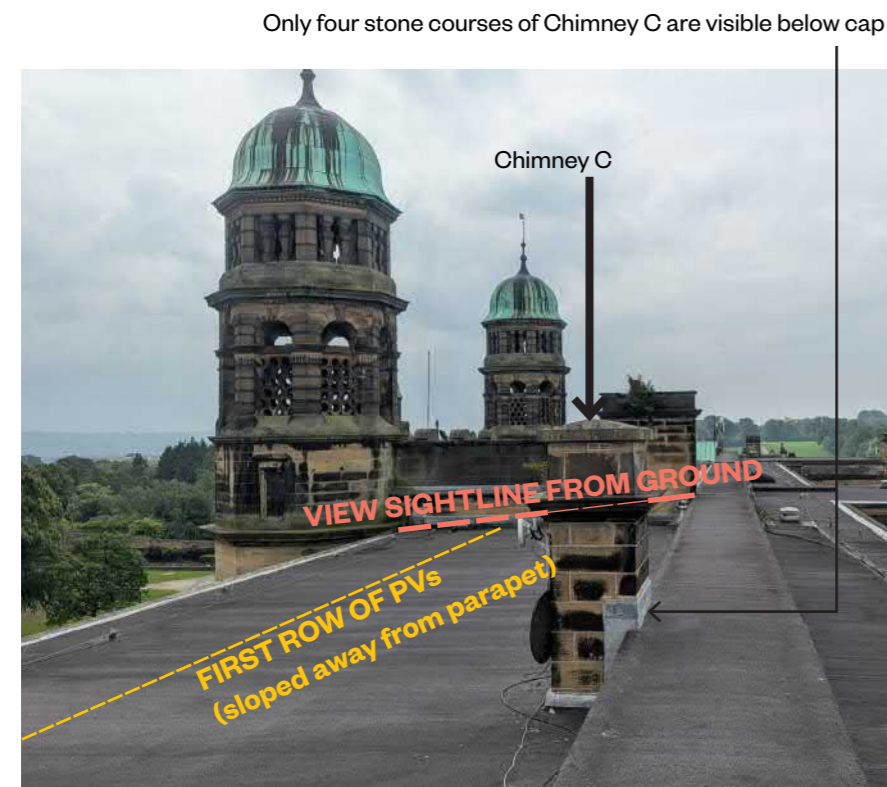
The sensitivity of the view is High, owing to the Grade II* listing of the building and location at college main visitor entrance

Significance of effect

The magnitude of change is considered to be negligible, as the solar panels will fall below the sightline indicated below on the South Fronts. This is because in mitigation, the first row of solar panels has been slanted away from the parapet, despite being less efficient in terms of solar gain (refer to drawings accompanying application). In winter, it is possible that the top of the panels may be visible on the 'East Wing' through the branches of the trees (right hand side of image). However, the height of the duct behind will ensure they are never in silhouette against the sky, as evidenced on the image below. On this basis, the impact of the proposed changes for this view is Negligible.



View location



Existing zoomed-in view from the historic gardens

Additional views from Jesuit Gardens and the Observatory

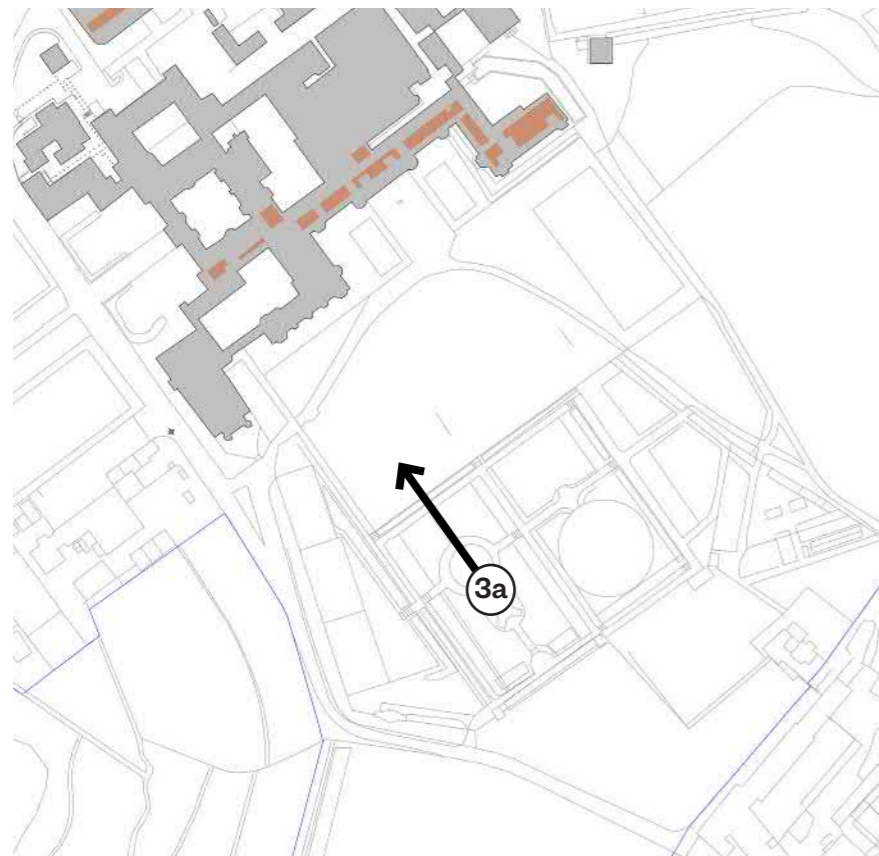
The South Fronts can be seen from multiple locations across the Jesuit gardens, however due to the level nature of the land there is no height or sight-line advantage from these locations.



Aerial showing the location of other view from in and around the Jesuit gardens

3a - From the Jesuit Gardens pond

The view from the Jesuit Garden Pond provides views of the chapel and the south fronts beyond. However, due to the consistency in elevation and the additional cover from the trees on site, both deciduous and evergreen, views of the roofscape are limited and the rooftop is barely perceptible. Further, the height of the clad ductwork on the roof will ensure that even in the long view, the panels will never be seen in silhouette against the sky, and the overall impact is therefore determined to be inconsequential.



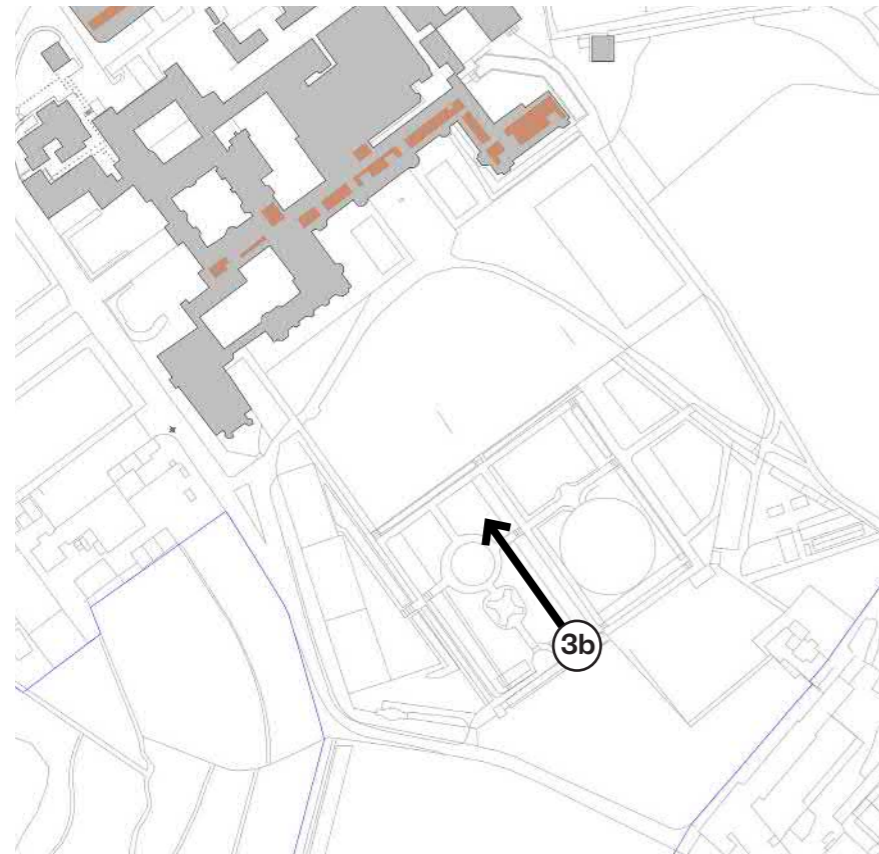
View location



View from behind ornamental pond. South Fronts largely screened by trees.

3b - From the Jesuit Gardens boundary wall

The view from the garden boundary, to the south of the Old observatory also provides no clear view of the roof of the south fronts. The location where the PV panels are located is almost entirely obscured by deciduous and evergreen tree cover. In addition, the topography reduces in elevation from this point further reducing the possibility of meaningful observation of the roofscape from this distance. As with other views from the South, the height of the clad duct behind ensures that even if glimpsed, the PV panels will not be in silhouette against the sky and would be barely perceptible. On this basis the impact is determined to be inconsequential.



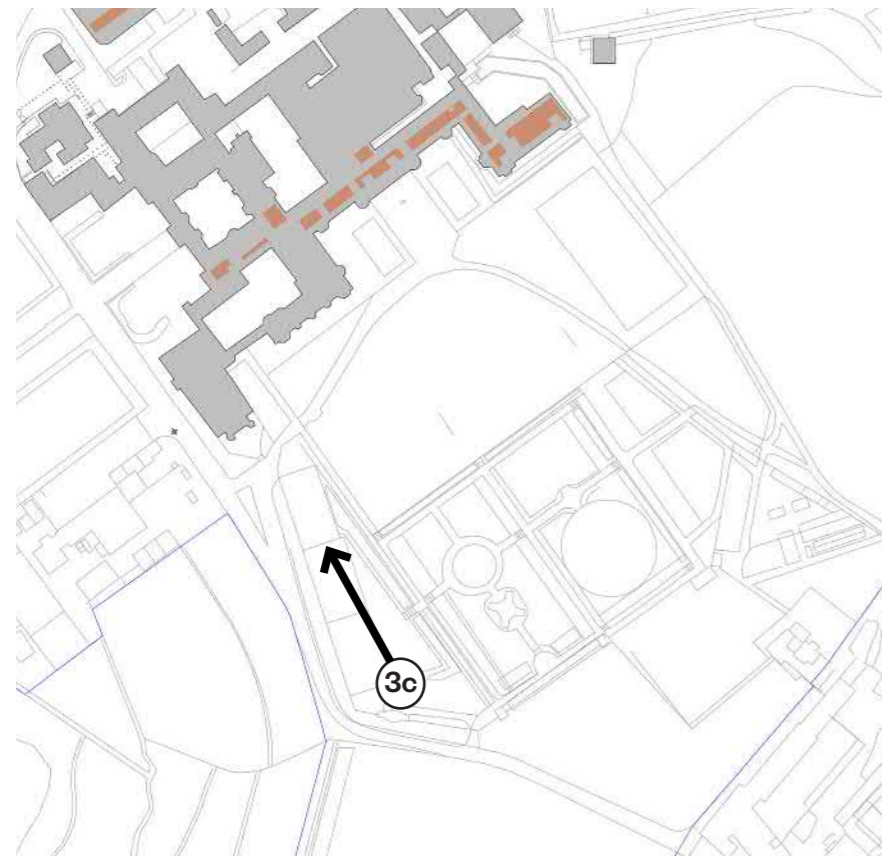
View location



View from garden boundary path, South of Old Observatory

3c - From the Observatory

The view from the new observatory, set behind the tennis courts, has a completely obscured view of the south fronts elevation due to the evergreen as well as deciduous tree cover. Any view from the west fronts roofscape is also obscured from view by buildings located in the foreground.



View location



View from Observatory - South Fronts completely screened by tree cover

04 Summary



Summary

Conclusion

In conclusion, the magnitude of change is considered to be negligible owing to the small dimensions of proposal at roof level, which is barely perceptible or concealed by parapets within the considered views.

The woodland buffer and topography sufficiently obscures the roofscape from view from the south, and the duct behind ensures the panels will not be read in silhouette against the sky in the long views. In mitigation, the first row of panels on the South Front roof are pitched away from the parapet, ensuring no visibility sightline from the front of the Jesuit gardens. Additionally, on the highest part of the topography on the main approach, the distance from the West Fronts obscures the view of the roofscape, with views to the south being obscured by buildings located to the front of the designated roofs.

The proposal, comprising of photovoltaic panels and associated plant at roof level is necessary to achieve sustainability requirements and provide a low carbon energy source and resilience to the school. This will contribute to reducing the school's energy burden and promote a sustainable energy transition to help meet the UK's net zero targets by 2050.

There has also been a glint and glare study undertaken concluding a low impact. The study has been submitted along with this application and should be read in conjunction with this landscape and visual appraisal.

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