

**Application for the
Erection of Polytunnels
at
Homme Farm,
Ross on Wye,
Herefordshire.**

**LANDSCAPE &
VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Report has been prepared to support a Planning Application for erection of polytunnels for the production of soft fruit on farmland at Homme Farm, Hom Green, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7TF. For full details of the application to supporting statement by Antony Aspbury Associates, issued under separate cover.
- 1.2 The Homme Farm landholding is spread over approximately 377ha to the south of Ross on Wye. The detailed site location is illustrated on plans DLA 1226/0 to 06. Drawing sequence DLA – 1226/07 to 11 shows polytunnel siting each season, up to 2011, with the maximum area covered given in hectares, (up to 60ha with the maximum block size up to 10ha). The area tested assumed a ‘worst case’ scenario, i.e. polytunnels on all the land available under rotation.
- 1.3 This Landscape and Visual Assessments have been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 1988 & 2002 (2ND Ed.

2.0 THE SITE

2.1 Physical Characteristics of The Project (See dwg. DLA 1226/0, 00, 01 & 02).

2.1.1 The northern site boundary is sited approximately 0.5kms from the south western urban edge of Ross on Wye. The application area consists of a number of smaller farms, now amalgamated into single ownership. The main farm units and offices are located at 'The Homme' within the northern section of the application area. Contained within the site are four areas not included within the Homme Farm land ownership, the most significant of which is Hill Court, approximately 30ha in area and currently the administrative Headquarters for a Rehau Ltd (polymers). Other enclosed areas not within the application boundary are the hamlet of Hom Green, Balls Farm and Old Hill Court. The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference for Hill Court is SO 572 216. This is located towards the geographical centre of the application area.

2.1.2 In local and distant views it is important not to confuse rotational polytunnels with plastic sheeting that is laid on the ground as a 'fleece' in order to warm soils or protect 'row' crops. This method does not require planning permission, however both have the potential to reflect and catch the eye. There are a number of parcels of land immediately adjacent to Homme Farm where this occurs.

2.2 Site Context

2.2.1 The Site

The site is located within the River Wye Valley immediately to the south, and downstream of Ross on Wye. The site is contained within a wide meander of the River Wye to the north west and southern site boundaries. The site also contains and encloses a number of isolated farm units and dwellings.

2.2.2 On the Northern Boundary

The northern boundary is established along existing field boundaries stretching from the River Wye to the west, and Arbour Pig Farm to the east. The field pattern is partially wooded and semi-enclosed farmland of medium scale fields. This includes a large isolated dwelling of Cubberley, screened from the site, and an isolated modern housing development of Green Meadows. Three minor unclassified public roads run south out of Ross on Wye, both into and through the site. Footpaths WA1, WA2 and WA3 also run through and close to the northern boundary.

2.2.3 To the South

The southern boundary runs partly along the bank of the River Wye. It is predominantly open agricultural land with a medium scale field pattern within and adjacent to the site boundary. There are occasional small tree groups/copses and sparse hedgerows. Off-site, the land rises towards Goodrich and its Castle on a steep wooded ridge. Goodrich castle overlooks the application site. The villages Walford and Kerne Bridge and the valley of the River Wye are located to the south east. The nearest properties are predominantly screened to the south by topography and woodlands, including Goodrich village and Flansford Priory, sited close to a break in a ridgeline but screened by both vegetation and low ridges at approximately 1km distance from the site.

2.2.4 To the East

The eastern site contains a medium scale semi-enclosed field pattern. A dismantled railway and railway embankment runs within, and on the site boundary, from south to north. To the east of the embankment, within the site, Coughton Marsh and an electricity substation are located.

To the east of the B4234 (running north south through Coughton and Walford) the land rises (to approx. 200m AOD) and contains a matrix of open fields, mature vegetation and dense woodlands. The area contains a number of elevated individual properties, farmsteads numerous footpaths and small settlements.

The southern urban edge of Ross on Wye is sited approximately 1km to the north east. On the eastern boundary from north to south respectively are Arbour Pig Farm, Balls Farm, Old Hill Court and Warryfield Farm.

2.2.5 To the West

The western site boundary runs along the eastern bank of the River Wye. It is lined with intermittent, mature trees and associated scrub. The land within the application boundary rises gently to a ridgeline running through Home Farm itself and the western section of Hill Court towards Callow Farm.

To the west of the ridgeline, the site consists of medium to large scale open fields patterns with intermittent low and mature hedges. To the south and north the field boundaries contain a larger proportion of mature hedgerows and individual and small tree groups/copses. Many of the field boundaries have been re-established with recent hedge planting and inter-planting. The lower sections of the site adjacent to the river are within the flood plain.

Beyond the site boundary on the western banks of the River Wye the land rises to the ridgeline where the villages of Glewstone, Pencraig and Peterstow are located.

The A40 runs north-south along the lower elevations of the river valley to the west of the river. To the north-west the land rises more gently and views towards the site are relatively open, while to the south the steep wooded embankment and ridgeline largely screen views from the A40 and associated properties along its route.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Topography (See DLA 1226/02)

- 3.1.1 Homme Farms land holdings are located within the Wye Valley floor to the south west of Ross on Wye. The site lies between approximately 60m AOD and 30m AOD. It contains two gentle ridgelines running through the site in a north east to south west direction terminating close to the River Wye to the south of the site. Within and adjacent to the site the landform is gentle and undulating. The River Wye runs south and loops around and encloses the Homme Farm application area to the north, west and south, in a wide meander in the river Wye.
- 3.1.2 To the south of the site the river has cut through more resistant rock. This has created a deep river valley/gorge cutting through ridgelines and spurs as the river meanders towards Symonds Yat, approximately 6km to the south. Here the topography rises steeply in many places, from below 30m up to approximately 200m AOD. The river flows northwards around Symonds Yat in a sharp meander to approximately 1km south of Goodrich and then flows southwards again.
- 3.1.3 Goodrich is sited on a low point in the ridgeline to the south of the site at a distance of approximately 1km. The ridgeline varies in height up to approximately 100m AOD running south to north west of the River Wye. The ridge encloses the site to the south west, west and north west. The river has cut into the ridgeline to the south to create a steep bluff on which Goodrich Castle is located, set against a backdrop of steeper valleys associated with Symonds Yat.
- 3.1.4 To the north the landform is gentler with the exception of some steep river cuttings in the low ridgelines to the west boundaries of Ross on Wye. The town is sited around a ridgeline up to approximately 60m AOD. The gentler more open landscape allows views to open up northwards along the river valley towards the Herefordshire plains and a ridgeline running westwards away from Ross on Wye.
- 3.1.5 The site is enclosed to the eastern side of the valley by land which rises sharply to a series of steep spurs up to approximately 200m AOD and approximately 2km distance. The spurs are created by a series of steep valleys (of various orientations and scales) running towards the meandering River Wye. The most significant of which runs westwards towards the village of Coughton.

3.2 Geology and Soils

- 3.2.1 Homme Farm is in the Herefordshire Lowlands. The Old Red Sandstone forms the outer ridge of the Forest of Dean Plateau. To the west The Wye isolates a block of the sandstone to form the Gwent Border Hills. To the East at Dean Edge are found carboniferous limestone and further east beyond the AONB the land falls to the coalfield and iron deposits of the central Forest of Dean. At the southern edge of the plateau is found the Welsh-English border with a steep ridge on the English side and a gradual transition on the Welsh side giving way to the alluvium of the Severn Coastal Plain.
- 3.2.2 The river valley of the Herefordshire Lowlands is more gentle than the unique landform of the Wye Gorge. Large loops in the river were probably formed when the river flowed in an area of low relief. The sea level would have fallen in stages, causing the channel to become incised and leaving distinctive shelves of land. The fertility of the lowland landscape has given rise to a distinctive settlement and farming pattern.
- 3.2.3 The Lower Wye Gorge landscape was formed as the River Wye acted upon various geological formations in the surrounding landscape ranging from Silurian Limestones in the north to Triassic Mudstones in the south producing a vast variation in structure with steep limestone cliffs giving way to the gentler scarp slopes and plateaux.
- 3.2.4 The Herefordshire lowlands are largely made up of sandstone, brownstones and red mudstones formed from the underlying Lower Old Red Sandstone. These rocks are softer than the limestone and have allowed the river to cut the characteristic valley and floodplains that can be seen along this section of the River Wye. Combined with the fluvio-glacial deposits within the floodplain, this has produced the characteristic high agricultural quality red and brown soils, which in many cases is the Grade 1 or 2 land (Agricultural Land Classification), that runs throughout the Lower Wye Valley.
- 3.2.5 The Forest of Dean and lower Wye area is composed of a central plateau consisting of a syncline of young rocks, mainly Pennant Sandstones, interspersed with coal seams and shales. The nature of the underlying rock has had a direct impact on the landscape character through the resulting land uses and exploitation of minerals with coal and iron ore being extracted at shallow levels. To the south of Ross are outcrops of Tintern sandstone forming a notable group of steep sided hills. Small rivers feed into the Wye from the north and west.

3.3 Human Influences

- 3.3.1 There is evidence of settlement within the Wye Valley dating from as far back as the Upper Palaeolithic times, with continued evidence of settlement through the ages. Although natural features dominate the area, the landscape, which is visible today, has mainly been created by the clearance of the woodlands for settlement, agriculture and mineral extraction during the Bronze Age. This continued into the Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods when the smaller settlements, developing along the river, became more permanent with the building of churches and mottes, a landscape pattern that has remained constant throughout the following centuries.
- 3.3.2 By the end of the Middle Ages, the area comprised of largely cleared landscape with churches, several large manor houses/farms and parklands were established which altered the farmed landscape, such as at Fawley Court and Hill Court, providing a mix of woodlands, copses and open formal parklands.
- 3.3.3 The agricultural slump at the beginning of the C20th saw the decline in maintenance of the hedgerows and orchards, many of which have now disappeared. This has continued and since the war has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the visual boundaries around fields. Hedgerow trees are either managed at a low level, left to become over-mature tree lines or not replaced once they have died, so whilst the hedgerows themselves have not been physically removed their appearance within the landscape, and the lack of small copses/woodlands has led to a considerably more open landscape.
- 3.3.5 The change and diversification in the use of land has changed dramatically over the last 10-20 years. This is beginning to show new patterns of development within the existing framework.

3.4 Historic Landscape and Site Designations (See dwg DLA1226/04)

- 3.4.1 The site is located within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 3.4.2 The River Wye is classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as well as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) due to its linear ecosystem and wildlife corridor, which support many species of flora and fauna.
- 3.4.3 There are two Scheduled Monuments close to the application boundary. Goodrich Castle is sited on a steep bluff to the south at 0.3kms and overlooks the site. The monument dating to the mid 12th century is constructed from red sandstone and

includes earthworks which incorporate an early a motte castle, a keep, courtyard and gatehouse. It is currently open to the public and run by the National Trust.

- 3.4.4 The other Ancient Monument, is the remains of an Iron Age hill fort 1.5.kms to the north east of Coughton on a steep hill at 203m AOD. This is screened within Chase Wood.
- 3.4.5 There are three national nature reserves (NNRs) close to the site. One is within the north west section of Hill Court. The woodland north of Goodrich Castle on the western bank of the River Wye, and a woodland adjacent to Luke Brook at Whitfield to the west of the A40.
- 3.4.6 There are a number of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) sited within the steep wooded hillsides to the east and south of the site and a small area on the site boundary within the Coughton Marsh area.
- 3.4.7 The site contains a Special Wildlife Site (SWS) within the area of Homme Farm and the Cubberley.
- 3.4.8 Hill Court is designated as a Historic Park and Garden. There are a number of both registered and locally registered gardens near the site boundary. Theses are at Upper Wythall, to the west of Goodrich Castle, Hill Court and areas around the sewage works to the north of the site. There are a number of gardens registered on the statutory list of Historic Parks and Gardens within the area. In addition there are a number of non-statutory parks and gardens that are in the local Herefordshire list, in particular Hill Court and Upper Wythall.
- 3.4.9 There are two listed buildings within the site at Werryfield Farm and the Callow. There are a number of listed which could be effected by the development adjacent to the site and these have been identified on DLA 1226/04. In particular, the church at Hom Green, the area of Walford Court, Old Hill Court and buildings in and around Coughton.

3.5 Landscape Character (DLA dwg. 1226/01)

- 3.5.1 The site is covered by three character assessments – The Countryside Commission “The Character of England” assessment, a broad countryside-based character assessment and a further in-depth assessment commissioned by ‘The Countryside Commission and Countryside Council for Wales’ in 1996 for the Wye Valley Landscape – An Assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’. In

addition, 'The Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2004 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)' provides detailed character assessments for the site and environs. The SPG provides strategies and recommendations to enhance and preserve the character and vernacular whilst incorporating the need for the sustainable evolution of the landscape. These have been incorporated in to the Landscape Strategy.

3.5.2 The Countryside Commission Character Assessment includes the site within Character Type 104 – '**South Herefordshire and Over Severn**' which has been sub-divided into three further categories. The site is within '**The Lower Wye**' sub-character area. The southern boundary of the site falls within the '**Forest of Dean and Lower Wye**' sub-character area.

3.5.3 The key characteristics of the '**Lower Wye**' are:

- Fertile undulating farmland with extensive arable farming
- Substantial red sandstone farmsteads
- Large to medium scale fields with variable commonly low hedges
- Ageing hedgerow trees
- Numerous churches with manor houses in small hamlets
- Clusters of parkland trees
- Narrow, meandering floodplain together with low hedges, ditches and scattered mature trees and pollarded willow
- Contrasting steep wooded slopes with gentle and Riverside slip off slopes

3.5.4 Bounded by the Garoway Hills to the west and by the Woolhope Dome to the north east, the undulating landscape is of good agricultural quality, with much of it being used for cereals and grass Leys, but also with a wide variety of other uses including horticulture, potatoes, pig and poultry rearing and dairying.

3.5.5 It is a landscape of large weathered sandstones farmsteads standing in their own arable fields and numerous hamlets formed around a manor house and church, there are a few villages. Woodland is confined almost entirely to the steeper the upper slopes of the river bends, while hedges are very variable.

3.5.6 Some hedges are lush and overgrown with large hedgerow trees. Many more are severely cut back. In other cases, only a scattered line of trees and the individual shrubs survive. The hedgerow trees are generally mature or over-mature.

- 3.5.7 The landscape, with its many trees around the largely intact parkland of Hill Court, the adjacent, imposing Old Hill Court, the views to Goodrich Castle and the isolated church and Walford are of particular interest.
- 3.5.8 North of Glewstone the landscape is gently undulating. Orchards and the protective screens of poplars are apparent and small patches of common survive.
- 3.5.9 Further north and to the west of the Wye the land has a gently undulating character with narrow lanes dropping down to settlements in small valleys on the rivers edge.
- 3.5.10 The floodplain of the Wye itself is quite narrow except in the north where the isolated church of Whome Lacey is a landmark in a landscape otherwise characterised by regularly spaced hedgerow trees and sparse hedges. Along the waters edge and some ditches there are sporadic pollarded woodlands. This pattern continues for most of the floodplain.
- 3.5.11 Hamlets and farms are spaced out along rising ground at its edges and the landforms a steep, commonly wooded slopes and more gentle Riverside slip slopes dominate the view.
- 3.5.12 The key characteristics of the '**Forest of Dean and Lower Wye**' character area to the south are:
- A well wooded plateau of ridges and valleys, contained by an outer rim of more open landscape on limestone and sandstone ridges.
 - Small-scale varied industry and the industrial artefacts intermixed with settlements and large broadleaved and coniferous woodland.
 - Ever present evidence of history, with artefacts and elements from many historic periods still visible.
 - Scattered and sprawling settlements and small-holdings retaining the feel of clearances from the forest.
 - Mixed building materials and sporadic developments give an amorphous and disorganised feel to the settlements.
- 3.5.13 The forest of Dean is adjacent to the Wye gorge to the west, and the plains of south Herefordshire to the north. This physical location determines much of its character. It is in essence an undulating plateau, folded into three main ridges, surrounded by ridges of limestone and sandstone forming an outer rim to the central basin. This landform, coupled with the isolation created by being bounded by two large Rivers, has led to a feeling of containment and remoteness, and this

exaggerates a sense of exclusion. The area has a very strong sense of history and identity. Extensive broadleaved woodlands and other coniferous plantations covered much of the central plateau.

3.5.14 Within the forest itself there is an enhanced sense of secrecy; Lanes twist off into the woods and, constantly, there are glimpses of past industrial activity tips, quarry faces and disused railways. Stretches of oak woodlands and bracken contrast to the more dense and dark coniferous plantations; open rides contrast with contrast with tree canopies. The forest encloses and obscures the landform. There are occasional glimpsed views out over further tree covered ridges. Around the edge of the forest of a number sprawling settlements, warehouses and industry which are interspersed with open grazing land, occasional dereliction and Woodland. The settlements have developed in a formless way as a result of sporadic development over time, often with development along the roads.

3.5.15 The Wye valley provides the most dramatic scenery and the area, with thickly wooded slopes dropping steeply down to the winding river, from vertical gorges of up to 200 m at Symonds Yat. Here the river makes a series of meanders through the rock, and then flows south down through a narrow, twisting and steep sided valley, the slopes covered with broadleaved Woodlands.

3.5.16 The strong sense of containment and introversion of the central plateau contrasts with occasional extensive and impressive views outwards. To the west these views look towards rolling hills of the Welsh borders and to the north over the flatter lands of south Herefordshire.

3.5.17 The application area consists of two distinct landscape character types as described in Herefordshire Councils 'Landscape Character Assessment 2004 SPG'. The majority of the site comes under '**Principle Settled Farmland**' whereas the corridor along the River Wye is classified as '**Riverside Meadows**':

3.6 Principal Settled Farmlands

Key Characteristics:

- Primary: Hedgerows used for field boundaries
- Secondary: Mixed farming land use

3.6.1 Character Description

The rolling, lowland area of Central Herefordshire is dominated by this Landscape Type. These are settled agricultural landscapes of dispersed, scattered farms, relic commons and small villages and hamlets. The mixed farming land use reflects the

good soils on which they are typically found. Networks of small, winding lanes nestling within a matrix of hedged fields are characteristic.

Tree cover is largely restricted to thinly scattered hedgerow trees, groups of trees around dwellings and trees along stream sides and other watercourses. The composition of the hedgerow tree cover differs from that of Timbered Farmlands in its lower density and lack of oak dominance. This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields together make up the rich patchwork which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.

3.6.2 Forces for Landscape Change

The pattern of small to medium sized hedged fields is vulnerable to change as the tendency towards arable dominance reduces the functional need for hedgerows. In spite of the Hedgerow Regulations, inappropriate maintenance is still resulting in the degradation and loss of the hedgerows, which are one of the most significant features of the landscape. Intensification of farming practices is also resulting in a simplistic visual uniformity as landscape character is eroded. Development pressure in many of these areas has resulted in a distinctly nucleated or clustered settlement pattern which is contrary to the landscape character.

3.6.3 Settlement Pattern

The dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets is capable of accommodating limited new development provided it is in accordance with UDP policy. Low densities of individual dwellings would be acceptable as long as they are not sited close enough to coalesce into a prominent wayside settlement pattern. Additional housing in hamlets and villages should be modest in size in order to preserve the character of the original settlement.

3.6.4 Enclosure Pattern

The enclosure pattern varies considerably but is generally of a planned sub-regular nature. The small to medium sized fields are vulnerable to amalgamation through hedgerow loss.

3.6.5 Woodland or Tree Cover Pattern

Tree cover is most notable along stream sides and watercourses, with only scattered tree cover along hedgerows. Groups of trees and orchards are often

associated with settlements. Woodland is not a characteristic feature of this Landscape Type although some small farm woodlands exist.

3.6.6 Management Guidelines and Environmental Mitigation

The overall strategy for Principal Settled Farmlands would be to conserve and enhance the unity of small to medium scale hedged fields. Opportunities for new tree planting should be concentrated along watercourses where the linear tree cover pattern could be strengthened. Additional tree planting in the vicinity of settlement would also be appropriate and would assist in emphasising the domestic quality of the landscape. New woodland should not be introduced as it is out of place and would compromise the landscape character. The mixed farming land use is becoming increasingly arable and the small permanent pastures are gradually declining. These are often species rich and initiatives to safeguard them should be strongly promoted. New development should remain at a low density with most housing associated with existing hamlets and villages.

3.7 **Riverside Meadows**

Key Characteristics:

- Primary pasture land use
- Well-defined linear patterns of willow and alder
- Tree cover and represented by stream side and hedgerow trees
- Unsettled landscapes

3.7.1 Characteristic description

These are linear, riverine landscapes associated with a flat, generally well-defined, alluvial floodplain, in places framed by steeply rising ground. They are secluded pastoral landscapes, characterised by meandering tree lined rivers, flanked by Riverside Meadows which are defined by hedge and ditch boundaries. Settlement is typically absent.

Throughout these landscapes, the presence of extensive areas of seasonally grazed waterside meadows has in the past provided a strong sense of visual and ecological unity. These are landscapes that accommodate a degree of annual flooding, a factor which has been reflected in the traditional patterns of land use, the lack of settlement and development for the occasional water mill, and the representation of species and habitats tolerant of such waterlogged conditions. The natural fertility of Riverside Meadows has often been maximised by employing devices such as sluices to control and direct the silt laden flood waters. The unique meadows border bordering the river Lugg at Hereford are an excellent example of

traditionally managed Riverside Meadows where the historic pattern of cutting and grazing has been continued for centuries. Tree cover is a notable element of Riverside Meadows, usually in a linear pattern along the hedge and ditch lines and to the banks of watercourses. Typically, species are alder and willow, the latter often pollarded.

3.7.2 Forces for landscape change

The strongly consistent visual and ecological character that has arisen through traditional methods of land management has been noticeably, in part impoverished, during the post war period. A rapid increase in arable cropping, in Herefordshire notably potatoes, has disrupted the classical patchwork of water meadows and pastures. The decline in the traditional practices of seasonal grazing and hay making, together with flood alleviation works which involve the controlled channelling of flood waters with associated straightening and bank re-profiling have all led to a reduction in ecological and visual interest. Elsewhere, built development has been undertaken and the resulting risk of flooding has often been overcome by the construction of uncharacteristic structures such as bunds, flood walls or flood relief channels. These are linear landscapes where the sense of unity relies heavily on extensive views along the length of river corridors. Added features such as roads or embankments which dissect the river corridor have resulted in numerous instances of visual fragmentation.

3.7.2 The Settlement Patterns

These are essentially unsettled landscapes with occasional mills or other buildings directly associated with the river.

3.7.3 Enclosure pattern

Pattern of enclosure is that of a planned nature where regularly laid out fields are hedged, ditched and traditionally managed.

3.7.4 Woodland or tree cover pattern

Tree cover is typically that of lines of alder and willow along the banks of the river and wet ditches. The grazing meadow land use has forged the landscape character and woodland is generally therefore not a feature of Riverside Meadows, although there may be some limited opportunity for wet woodland creation.

3.7.5 Management guidelines and environmental mitigation

Built development should be actively discouraged as it will always lead to a conflict with flood water as well as being contrary to the landscape character. Similarly, arable cropping not only leads to loss of landscape character but also to erosion

and river pollution through silt and nitrate rich run off, particularly in flood conditions. Wetland habitats are becoming more scarce, therefore opportunities to conserve and restore them and to enhance biodiversity and landscape character by returning the land to a controlled annual flooding regime should be encouraged.

3.7.5 Conservation restoration enhancement

Conserve, restore and enhance continuous linear tree cover along hedge lines, and ditches and watercourses.

3.7.6 Summary of recommendations

- Concern for wetland habitats and seek opportunities for further wetland habitat creation.
- Seek opportunities to return arable areas to pasture.
- Seek to retain strongly linear form of landscape.
- Explore opportunities to return to traditional patterns and processes of natural flooding cycles.
- Discourage further drainage of waterside meadows.
- Seek opportunities to restore natural riverbank and features and resist further loss of river habitat.
- Discourage built development.
- Discourage construction work that would interrupt the linear unity of the landscape.

3.8 **Site Survey**

An initial site visit was carried out in April 2007 to assess and photograph the landscape and character of the areas surrounding the site and identify typical viewpoints. The site was revisited in August 2007 to reassess viewpoints and extend the survey to covers area within and adjacent to the site boundaries.

3.9 **Public Rights of Way** (See DLA 1226/05 –Detailed Analysis)

3.9.1 For the purposes of this assessment only footpaths that may have possible views towards or over the proposed development site have been included. Hereford Council has supplied the footpath numbers.

3.9.2 There are 3 Public Rights of Way or permissive access routes through the application area, footpath numbers WA1, WA5 and WA8.

3.9.3 To the north of Area 1, Footpath WA1 runs northwards past the sewage works towards Ross on Wye. Footpath WA2 and WA3 run westwards from the southern edge of Tudorville.

- 3.9.4 The Wye Valley Walk runs past the length of the site, approximately 1km to the west, on the elevated valley side, MO20. Footpath MO20a links to the A40 towards the centre of the western site boundary.
- 3.9.5 To the east footpaths WA5 and WA6 run westwards out of the site boundary. There is a network of more distant footpaths running through and down from the steeper hills to the east and south east.

4.0 VISUAL AND SENSORY QUALITIES

4.1 Sensory Qualities

- 4.4.2 The site is generally enclosed to the south east and west by steep wooded valleys which limit the sensory experiences to 1 to 3kms. However more distant but limited views to high wooded ridgelines along the river Wye Gorge are possible to the south and south east. To the north and north west the sensory experience is less limiting as the landscape is gentler, undulating and less enclosed. However, due to the large scale of and complex mixture of land use, scale and enclosure within the river valley combined with its undulating topography, locally experiences can vary considerably from area to area. Generally, the areas to the south and east are enclosed and wooded and the landscape opens out progressively to the north and north west.
- 4.4.3 The northern and eastern areas have less rural characteristic due the proximity to Coughton, Walford and the urban edge of Ross on Wye. The A40 is a significant feature along the river corridor to the west. Goodrich castle above a wooded bluff to the south creates a dramatic and imposing structure from many areas in particular along the river corridor. The mature willow and scrub along the riverside create a partial sense of enclosure and a particular sensory character within the area. Although the proximity of the A40 is evident to the north the enclosure by woodlands and ridgelines create a greater sense of tranquillity along the river corridor in the south.
- 4.4.4 Within the site a network of narrow partially enclosed roads offer both open and glimpsed views towards a network of pasture, fruit farming and woodland belts. The hamlet of Home Green, Hill Court and have a sense of isolation due both to gently rolling topography and mature tree screening. The disused railway also provides a distinct buffer separating the rural character of the site from the more urban developments of Coughton. Medium scale agricultural farmsteads and structures are locally evident in particular Homme Farm, Callow Hill, and Balls Farm.
- 4.4.5 This enclosure, associating with the steep wooded hillside and traditional architecture provide the area around Walford with a rural village character.
- 4.4.6 The rolling topography associated with the low ridgelines and hedgerows and tree groups provide a visual buffer between the main urban areas to the south of Ross on Wye.

4.2 Visual Qualities (Photo/Viewpoint Sheets 1 -26)

4.2.1 Views/viewpoints (VP's) have been selected during the desk studies and field surveys, which are typical or representative of a given area within and around the site and generally from public places such as footpaths. More often than not, views from private dwellings or gardens do not have public access and are assessed by professional judgement from looking towards the potential viewpoint from other areas. This section identifies existing views towards the Areas and what might be seen without mitigation in place. Section 3 identifies the mitigation and compensation measure/s required to:

- Remedy, reduce or remove predicted negative effects on landscape character and visual amenity;
- Enhance the visual appearance of the site and its landscape character

4.2.2 While not wholly exclusive, the principal factors which affect visual impact are:

- Landform
- Backdrop
- Landscape Scale
- Vegetation Cover
- Building Design – scale, mass, form, colour and texture
- Seasonality
- Lighting
- Height of eye

4.3 Landform

The existing landform is a dominant feature within the local landscape. The site is located on a gently undulating valley floor below elevated hillsides and ridges to the south east and west. Alteration of the landform is not proposed as this would detract from the existing rural character of the site. This means that the polytunnels are potentially visible where the land rises above the height of the boundary planting and ridgelines. This can give both wide and occasional views, distant and close to the west and north west on the opposite side of the river. This is particularly relevant of views of the site adjacent to the river as it rises up to the low ridgeline running through Hill Court, from the Homme to Callow Farm. However, there are limited opportunity for elevated views on the more distant horizons from the east, south and south west. The same is also true of lower level views from the east the north and north east due to intervening elements such as a disused rail embankment, low ridgelines and vegetation. The erection of polytunnels does not have any effect on the existing landform.

4.4 Backdrop

Visual impact will be strongly influenced by the backdrop against which it is viewed. A building or structure will be at its most prominent when viewed against an open skyline and at its least intrusive when a darkened object is viewed against a landscape background i.e. embankments, fields, woodlands, mature hedgerows and other development features. Features such as polytunnels may contrast against darkened backdrops and draw the eye towards them.

4.5 Landscape Scale

Impacts can increase as a result of developments being out of scale with their surrounding landscape. The areas are consistent with the shape and size of surrounding field patterns. The polytunnels are low in height but large in mass once the plastic has been stretched over the frames.

4.6 Vegetation Cover

4.6.1 The magnitude and eventual significance of impact can be reduced by utilising existing groups of trees and hedgerows and strategic new planting to screen views towards development from sensitive locations.

4.6.2 The site benefits from remnants of tall mature hedges and trees and larger woodland blocks/copses, which help to filter and screen views into the site in particular from lower elevations. Some hedgerows are gappy, missing or recently planted allowing higher magnitude views. The landscape strategy provides for continued infilling and substantial replanting works in mitigation against significant visual impacts.

4.7 Building Design

Building design, mass, colour and texture will all individually influence visual impact. There is limited opportunity to significantly change the design of the polytunnels. Poly tunnels have not been cited as typical features in the character area, but they are becoming increasingly common as temporary features in the agricultural landscape across Hereford, Worcester, Gloucester and the south of England, because of the benefits to crop quality and quantity and the rising demand for home grown fruit and vegetables.

4.8 Seasonality

Winter views are often more exaggerated than in summer due to lack of leaf cover, but there is generally little reduced effect where there are dense hedges and

woodlands screening views. The poly tunnels coverings would be removed before leaf fall and winter views are considered important in this case.

4.9 Lighting

Lighting is not necessary within the operation of the polytunnels and not considered important in this case.

4.10 Height of eye

The magnitude of impact is normally increased the higher the viewpoint, which affords views over low-lying features such as hedgerows. Some elevated views are available towards the gentle slopes adjacent to the River Wye from public footpaths, the A40 and potentially properties in and around Pencraig, Glewstone and Wilson. There are potentially views from the wooded ridges to the east from elevated upper windows of the isolated properties within and around Leys Hill, Upper Wythall, Howel Hill and properties within Thomas Wood. These are generally not considered as significant as views from gardens, public footpaths or living rooms.

5.0 VISUAL ANALYSIS

(See Photo view point sheets (vp's) 1-26 & dwg. DLA-1226/03 & 05)

5.1 General findings:

5.1.1 Long Views (+ 1km).

Long distance views are generally intermittent or filtered and restricted to elevated positions in the south, properties on ridgelines to the west and north west and potentially from western areas of Ross on Wye and Wilton to the north.

5.1.2 Middle Distance Views (500m-1km)

These views are restricted to more open views from the A40 road corridor to the north west. Potential middle distance views to the south and east are general intermittent and/or filtered and limited to localised areas.

5.1.3 Close views (0-500m)

Many of the close views are from areas enclosed within the application area such as Hom Green and Old Hill Court. There are further filtered close views from open location on the A40 and the River Wye footpath, Goodrich Castle and potentially properties around Pencraig. Other potential close distance filtered views are possible from location to the east through and over the disused railway embankment around Walford and Coughton.

5.2 Detailed Analysis of views towards the site

5.2.1 Views from the North

- The majority of potential views available from the north are from the A40 road corridor, footpaths WA1 and M20 and from more elevated properties and southern facing ridgelines around Peterstow. See viewpoint 4 (VP4).
- A steep ridgeline screens many properties from the site towards the west of Ross on Wye although potential views will be limited to extreme western section of the town along the river valley to the south (VP1). There are potential views from properties in the Wilton area close to the A40 to the west of Ross and the River Wye (VP3). Views from footpath WA1 are restricted until it drops over the ridgeline close to the sewage station (VP2).
- Where the A40 passes close to the site boundary. Close distance elevated views are afforded intermittently over the site through road site vegetation (VP5).

- Views from footpath MO20 are similar to views from the west (see below and VP22), however at a greater distance.
- There are potential views from footpath WA2 and WA3 although the ridgelines, intervening vegetation and farm building such as Arbour Pig farm form a visual buffer (VP11).
- A small modern housing development at Green Meadows is sited on the boundary with close distance views from properties into the site (VP13).

5.2.2 Views from the west

- Views from the west are limited to higher elevation on the ridgelines, northern sections of the A40, footpath MO20 and potentially some of the eastern facing properties adjacent to the A40 at Pencraig.
- Footpath MO20 runs to the east and at lower elevations to the A40 along the western bank of the River Wye. Although at a close distance views are intermittent towards the site due to; riverside trees and scrub and intermittent copses, mature hedgerows and tree belts. Further more the low elevation restricts views to the lower slopes of the ridgeline to the east of the river. There is further screening by mature vegetation around Hill Court together with mature hedgerows in the north west section of the site (VP22).
- Potential views into the site from the A40 become increasingly restricted as the footpath runs over the ridgeline to the south and the boundary to the west becomes increasingly wooded. However, properties to the east of the road, around Pencraig, potentially afford elevated views over the site.
- Properties and roads along the ridgeline to the west around Glewstone have more distant elevated views. The views are predominantly of the ridgeline west of Hill Court following the wide sweep in the river valley (VP 6).

5.2.3 Views from the South

- Views to the south are predominantly from higher elevations such as the intermittent views from elevated properties in Thomas Wood on the southern slopes of the River Wye valley (VP9).
- A more notable view is from the higher section of Goodrich Castle overlooking the site to the south (VP 7/8). This view is at approximately 0.3kms over the western slopes of the site above the flood plain.
- Due to the low ridgeline around Goodrich and Flansfor Priory potential views are screened from the site. The more distant views from Symonds Yat at approximately 5 kms to the site boundary, potential impacts are not discernible within a composite landscape due to both distance and the intervening lower ridgelines and structures (VP15).
- There are potential elevated views from upper windows of detached properties on western and northern facing slopes within woodlands at Lay Hill and Kerne Bridge although from ground level and footpaths views are generally screened by dense mature vegetation and topography (VP24).

5.2.4 Views from the East

- Views from the west consist of potential views from the semi-enclosed and wooded slopes above Caughton and Walford to the east, and lower level, partially filtered views from the lower slopes and valley floor around Walford.
- There are a number of properties around Upper Wythall affording elevated views over the eastern sections of the site. Here the woodlands are generally less dense therefore views potentially more extensive. However, property numbers are less dense than areas around Lay Hill, and at lower elevations. Roads are generally set back from the ridgeline or enclosed in a cutting. Footpaths are also fewer in number and generally at lower elevations (VP19 and 23).
- Closer views are possible from roads, footpaths and properties in Walford and Caughton and from footpaths WA5 and WA8. The disused railway embankment and associated vegetation forms a liner screen along and through a substantial length of the eastern boundary of the site combined with a number of intervening woodland blocks and mature hedges. The low ridgeline within the site additionally screens further distant views (VP 10, 12 and 17).

5.2.4 Views from within the site.

- There are a number of areas enclosed within the site outside of Homme farm land ownership. These are the hamlets of Home Green, Balls Farm, Old Hill Farm and Hill Court.
- Hom Green is an isolated hamlet with extensive immediate views from properties to the surrounding farmland. Views are screened to the south by Hom Plantation and the village is enclosed within the low ridgelines to the west and east therefore views are restricted. Many of the surrounding narrow lanes are set within hedgerows and occasional mature vegetation with partially filters and screens more distant views (VP21).
- The listed church set on the edge on the village to the south, has more extensive views over adjacent fields to the low ridgeline to the east (VP20).
- Old Hill farm and the listed Old Hill Court are largely enclosed by built structures and vegetation to the east south and west. Footpath WA8 runs along the north boundary of the site and affords more open views towards to the north and towards Hom Plantation to the west (VP16).
- Balls Farm is a farmstead allowing close views over the adjacent farmland.
- Hill Court is a large mansion house with associated peripheral buildings and offices contained within extensive mature woodland and parkland. It is currently the headquarters of an international polymers company. To the north and east the site is enclosed by Hom Plantation. The main built structures are well contained and views out of the site are limited. Mature trees within and on the site boundary afford occasional glimpses to the surrounding farmland particularly to the southern boundary of the site (VP25 & 26).

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS .

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section assesses the effects of the development upon the landscape character and visual appearance within and adjacent to the Areas in order to:

- predict any significant effects of the proposals on the landscape and its character, which may directly or indirectly arise from the development of the site;
- determine the sensitivity of the landscape to change and its ability to accommodate this type of development;
- develop a landscape strategy that will prevent, remove or reduce any adverse effects of the proposals without adversely affecting the landscape character of the area and its local distinctiveness;
- determine appropriate enhancement measures in compensation for any effects

6.2 Methodology

6.2.2 The approach has been to use recognised evaluation techniques in accordance with “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment” (1st and 2nd Editions 1995 & 2002) – Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and Landscape Institute. This methodology determines the significance of impacts through a combination its magnitude and sensitivity of the receptor. Impacts can be both positive and negative. Most adverse impacts associated with development arise during the construction period with fewer adverse and sometimes positive effects arising during the operation period, that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.

6.2.3 Impacts are assessed during the project life, from construction through to management identifying in a systematic manner, the direct, indirect or residual effects and their duration. An important part of the process is the recommendations to remedy, remove, reduce or avoid adverse effects through mitigation. Where this is not always possible, appropriate compensation should be proposed. The effectiveness of mitigation measures has been calculated at 5, 10 and 20 years of age, based on normal growth rates on normal soils.

6.2.4 The following thresholds have been used in evaluating the significance of landscape effects.

Neutral

Magnitude: Imperceptible change. No part of the proposal, or activity associated with it, causes any noticeable effect.

Sensitivity: No part of the proposals affects any landscape features.

Low

Magnitude: Virtually imperceptible change. Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the landscape.

Sensitivity: An unimportant landscape feature tolerant of substantial change.

Moderate

Magnitude: Moderate changes. Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the landscape.

Sensitivity: Moderately valued elements or characteristics tolerant of some change.

High

Magnitude: Noticeable change in landscape elements or characteristics over a wide area. Total loss of or major alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the landscape in a more limited area.

Sensitivity: Important components, protected or designated, susceptible to change.

- 6.2.5 Visual Effects have been based using the following thresholds in evaluating the significance of effects. It should also be noted that the evaluation has assessed the potential placing of development in all plots.

Neutral

Magnitude: No part of the proposal, or activity associated with it, causes any noticeable effect to any observers.

Sensitivity: No part of the proposals affects any observers.

Low

Magnitude: Minor changes in the view, few people affected.

Sensitivity: Such as, people at places of work, from roads or moving in cars.

Moderate

Magnitude: Moderate changes in the view. Many observers affected.

Sensitivity: Such as, persons observing from homes at middle distances or during passive recreational activities, who would be distracted.

High

Magnitude: Major changes in views. Large majority of a high numbers of observers affected.

Sensitivity: Such as, frequently used public rights of way close to or within the site. Residential properties with close open views from frequently used rooms or gardens.

6.2.6 The significance of the effects and mitigation has been assessed using the following table:

Impact Magnitude	Sensitivity of Receptors			
	High	Moderate	Low	Neutral
High	High Impact	High Impact	Moderate Impact	Low Impact
Moderate	High Impact	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	Low Impact
Low	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	Low Impact	Low Impact
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

6.2.7 The effect of the mitigation is then further assessed to test its impact using the following values:

Negative		Positive	
- H	High Negative Effects	+H	High Positive Effects
-M	Moderate Negative Effects	+M	Moderate Positive Effects
-L	Low Negative Effects	+L	Low Positive Effects

6..2.8 The mitigation and enhancement measures are combined in a landscape strategy, which will:

- Minimise, remove or reduce the negative effects of the proposals.
- Enhance the visual appearance of the site within the landscape.
- Provide compensatory measures where adverse impacts are permanent or cannot be removed.

6.3. Landscape Impact Mitigation Tables

<i>Receptor</i>	<i>Description of Impact Type</i>	<i>Magnitude</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Mitigation/ Compensation/ Enhancement</i>	<i>Sig. after 5years</i>	<i>Sig. after 10years</i>	<i>Sig. after 20years</i>
Direct Effects -								
Existing planting & Landscape								
<i>North boundary</i>	No adverse effects predicted	Mod	Mod	Mod	Enhance, interplant and reinstate historic field boundaries with native hedge planting. Maintain buffer/exclusion polytunnel zones.	+ L	+ M	+ M
<i>East boundary</i>	No adverse effects Predicted	Mod	Mod	Mod	Enhance, interplant and reinstate historic field boundaries. Exclude polytunnels to the east of the disuse railway line.	+ L	+ M	+ M
<i>South Boundary</i>	No adverse effects predicted	Mod	Mod	Mod	Enhance, interplant and reinstate historic field boundaries with native hedge planting. Maintain buffer/exclusion polytunnel zones.	+ L	+ M	+ M
<i>West Boundary</i>	No adverse effects predicted	Mod	Mod	Mod	Reinstate historic field boundaries. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion within the flood plain.	+ L	+ M	+ M
<i>Within the site. Hom Green</i>	Impact upon the setting on the village	High	High	High	Recent and additional hedge planting. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones around the village	+ L	+ L	+ L
<i>Within the site. Hill Court</i>	Impact upon the setting of the park and listed building and Homme Plantation	High	High	High	Reinstate historic field patterns. Maintain polytunnel buffer /exclusion zones	+ L	+ L	+ L
<i>Within the Site. Old Hill Court</i>	Impact upon the setting of the listed building	High	High	High	Reinstate historic field boundaries. Maintain polytunnel buffer exclusion/zones to the South west and north	+ L	+ L	+ L
<i>Within the site. The Callow</i>	Impact on the setting of a listed building	High	Mod	High	Introduce substantial buffer planting	- M	- L	- L
<i>Within the site. Balls Farm</i>	Impact upon the setting of the farm	High	Mod	High	Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zone to the farm buildings	- L	- L	- L
<i>Footpaths WA1, WA5 and WA8.</i>	Impact upon the setting on the footpaths within localised areas	Mod	Mod	Mod	Maintain buffer exclusion zones together with. Polytunnel rotation	- L	- L	- L
<i>Warryfield</i>	Impact upon the setting of a listed building	Mod	Mod	Mod	Reinstate field boundaries introduce substantial buffer planting.	- M	- L	- L

Indirect Effects -									
<i>Coughton Marsh SSSI and Parish Fields LNR</i>	No adverse effects predicted	Neu	Neu	Neu	Exclude polytunnels east of the disused rail line	N	N	N	
<i>Land within flood plain</i>	No adverse effect predicted	Neu	Neu	Neu	Exclude polytunnels from areas at risk of flood. Reinstatement historic field boundaries	N	N	N	
<i>River Wye (SSSI and SAC)</i>	No adverse effects predicted	Neu	Neu	Neu	Exclude polytunnels from areas adjacent to the River Wye	N	N	N	
<i>Land within 'Principle Settled Farmland' & 'Riverside Meadows'</i>	Impact on the landscape character on the areas	Mod	High	High	Reinstatement historic boundary. Reintroduce characteristic landscape elements, screen planting. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones and rotation.	-M	-L	-L	
<i>AONB Character</i>	Impact on the character of the AONB	Mod	High	High	boundary. Reintroduce characteristic landscape elements, screen planting. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones and rotation.	-M	-L	-L	
<i>Listed building around the site</i>	Impact upon the setting of the buildings	Mod	Mod	Mod	Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones. Introduce additional characteristic landscape/screening elements	M L	N	N	
<i>Registered Gardens and Parks</i>	Impact upon the setting of registered parks and gardens adjacent to the site	High	High	High	Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones. Introduce additional characteristic landscape/screening elements	-M	-L	-L	
<i>Goodrich Castle (SAM)</i>	Impact upon the setting of the castle.	Mod	High	High	Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zones. Break up the massing of the polytunnels with characteristic landscape/screening elements	-M	-L	-M	

6.4 Visual Impact Mitigation Tables

Receptor	Description of Impact Type	Magnitude	Sensitivity	Significance	Mitigation/ Compensation/ Enhancement	Sig. after 5years	Sig. after 10years	Sig. after 20years
Views from the north								
<i>Views from Peterstow and environs (VP 4)</i>	Long distance, glimpsed, transient and partially filtered views from an elevated position. Views are limited to south of the ridgeline. Potentially from properties, footpaths and glimpsed views from roads.	Low	Mod	Mod	Hedgerow/copse planting, to screen and partially filter views to polytunnels to the west of the site	- M	- L	- L
<i>Views from Wilton and environs (VP3)</i>	Middle distance views largely screened and filtered by intervening hedge tree belts. Potential views from properties to the south of Wilton.	Low	Mod	Mod	Exclude polytunnels from the north west corner of the site. Reinstate historic hedge lines with tree and hedge planting to screen potential views	N	N	N
<i>Views from footpath WA1 (VP2)</i>	Short distance eye level views screened and filtered by intervening hedge tree belts.	Low	Mod	Mod	Exclude polytunnels from the north west corner of the site. Reinstate historic hedge lines and reinforce northern boundary with tree and hedge planting	N	N	N
<i>Views from the western regions of Ross on Wye (VP3)</i>	Screened and largely filtered distant views restricted to the western site areas by topography	Neu	Low	Neu	Exclude polytunnels from the north west corner of the site.	N	N	N
<i>Views from the A40 North west of the site (VP 5)</i>	Slightly elevated open views from close distance and restricted to the western sections of the site	Mod	Low	Mod	Exclude polytunnels from the north west corner of the site. Strategic roadside screen planting	- M	- L	- L
Views from the south								
<i>Elevated views from within the Wye Valley to the south (VPs 9 & 15)</i>	Long distance views predominantly screened by vegetation and topography. Limited to filtered/ glimpsed transient views	Low	Mod	Mod	Introduce tree groups and proposed hedging to screen break up distant views. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zone to the east of the disused railway line.	- L	N	N

<i>Views from Leys Hill and environs (VP24)</i>	Middle distance views from elevated ridgelines. Predominantly screened by topography and vegetation at ground level. Potential views from upper storey windows of properties.	Mod	Mod	Mod	Introduce tree groups and proposed hedging to screen break up distant views. Maintain polytunnel buffer/exclusion zone to the east of the disused railway line.	- L	- L	- L
<i>Views from Goodrich Castle (VPs 7 & 8)</i>	Close distance elevated views, limited in location and partially screened by vegetation at lower level.	Mod	High	High	Maintain buffer/exclusion zones within the flood plain. Screen, filter and break up views with woodland block and hedge planting	- M	- L	- L
Views from the East								
<i>Views west of the railway line, Lower Warryfield (VP10)</i>	Open close /partially screened close distance views towards the eastern site boundary over a low ridgeline.	Low	Mod	Mod	Reinstate interplant boundary hedgerows together with woodland block planting on the low ridgeline	N	N	N
<i>Views from Walford Court (listed) (VP 18)</i>	Potential views to areas within the site at Coughton marsh to the north. No views over the rail line embankment to the west	Low	Mod	Mod	Exclude development from east of the rail line	N	N	N
<i>Views from Walford (VP 12)</i>	Generally middle distance and screened by intervening topography and vegetation and low level views	Low	Low	Low	Exclude development east of the rail line and reinstate hedges	N	N	N
<i>Views from Coughton</i>	Close distance views. Potential views from properties to the west of Coughton and WA7, WA5 and WA97	Low	Mod	Mod		N	N	N
<i>Views from the southern urban edge of Ross on Wye (VP 11)</i>	Generally screened by intervening topography and vegetation and built structures. Views at low level	Neu	Mod	Neu		N	N	N
<i>Views from Lower and Upper Wythall and environs (VPs 19 & 23)</i>	Middle distance views. Lower views screened by intervening vegetation and built structures. Potential views from properties at higher elevations	Low	Mod	Mod		- L	- L	- L
Views from the West								
<i>Views from footpath BW23 & MO20 (VP 22)</i>	Close, low level riverside views partially filtered and screened by riverside vegetation and screening within the site. Views limited to the western sections of the site	Mod	Mod	Mod	Enhance/reinstate existing hedgerows within the site together with woodland block planting. Maintain polytunnel exclusion/buffer zone	- L	+ M	+ M

<i>From the A40 west of the site (VP 5)</i>	Close distance occasionally screened views by vegetation. The road become increasingly screened from the site to the south.	Mod	Mod	Mod	Strategic roadside planting to the A40. Enhance/reinstate existing hedgerows within the site together with woodland block planting. Maintain polytunnel exclusion/buffer zone	- L	+ L	+ M
<i>Views from Glewstone and higher ridgelines to the west (VP 6)</i>	Middle /long distance elevated and potentially panoramic views from elevated properties	Mod	Mod	Mod	Reinstate hedgerows with copse planting, to screen and partially filter views to polytunnels to the west of the site. Exclude polytunnel from within the floodplain.	- M	- L	- L
Views from areas contained within the site								
<i>Views from Hom Green and listed church(VP 21 and 20)</i>	Short distance open and partially screened views to the site from the village perimeters.	High	Mod	High	Maintain polytunnel exclusion zone around the site and reinstate and interplant historic hedge to middle distance views to protect the setting of the village	N	+ L	+ L
<i>Views from Hill Court (VP 25 & 26)</i>	Short distance largely screened views by vegetation at ground level. Potential views over the site to the south from built structures	Mod	Mod	Mod	Maintain polytunnel exclusion zone to the south of the site. Reinstate historic field patterns and tree groups to screen	+ L	+ L	+ M
<i>Properties on the northern boundary, Green Meadows(VP 13)</i>	Short distance open and partially screened views to the site southwards from properties.	High	Mod	High	Maintain polytunnel exclusion zone around the site and reinstate and interplant historic hedge to middle distance views	N	N	N
<i>Old Hill Court (VP16)</i>	Potentially short distance open and partially screened views to the site from the property.	High	Mod	High	Maintain polytunnel exclusion zone around the site and reinstate and interplant historic hedge patterns	N	+ L	+ L
<i>Callow Farm</i>	Potentially short distance open and partially screened views to the site from the property.	High	Mod	Mod	Reinstate historic hedge patterns and woodland block planting to the west of the property	- L	N	N
<i>Warryfield Farm (VP17)</i>	Potentially short distance open and partially screened views to the site from the property.	Mod	Mod	Mod	Reinstate historic hedge patterns and woodland block planting to the west of the property	- L	N	N
<i>Balls Hill Farm</i>	Potentially short distance open and partially screened views to the site from the property.	Mod	Mod	Mod	Polytunnel exclusion zone to the farm building on the northern boundary	N	N	N

7.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS (See DLA 1226/06)

7.1 The principles for the landscape design derive from detailed examination of the physical characteristics of each Area and its surroundings. The landscape proposals masterplan has been developed to take account of the findings in this statement and the recommendation given in The Wye Valley Landscape – An Assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The key aims of the proposals are:

- Identify opportunities for carefully sited areas of semi-natural and natural woodlands.
- Improve the diversity and management of the existing field boundaries, concentrating on field boundary trees rather than hedges.
- Minimise the adverse visual effects of modern farming practices.

7.2 Landscape Strategy and Proposals.

7.2.1 The aim is to provide a setting for the development that will not only mitigate any potential sensory/visual effects to adjacent property, the landscape character and sensitive receptors such as listed buildings, but also enhance the overall ecological benefits of existing landscape within the area, creating an infrastructure for the future that will both protect and enhance the existing character. This is further and substantially achieved through the provision of 'polytunnel exclusion/buffer zones' and the rotation plans which substantially limit impacts.

7.2.2 In addition to the above, these aims will be achieved by providing a range of structural landscape elements. The principal landscape elements are outlined in the illustrative Landscape Proposals (See DLA 1226/06) and broadly are:

- 1 Native woodland screening and structure planting blocks
- 2 Reinstatement of historic hedgerows and tree blocks
- 3 Native hedgerow planting

7.2.3 In addition, the existing 'best practice' for plant establishment of using black polythene as a weed suppressing mulch will be extended to these proposals for hedgerow establishment. The species and mix proposed have been considered following studies of species and densities within the locality and species guidance given by Herefordshire Council.

7 3 Native Woodland Screening Blocks. – (See DLA 1226 /12 & 13)

7.3.1 Continuation and enhancement of the existing woodland blocks to the western south, and west areas running through the site.

Objectives:

- Filter views from significant viewpoints from receptors along the Wye Valley Walk, riverside footpaths, the A40 and Goodrich Castle.
- Break up the mass of polytunnels.
- Provide new wooded copse typical of the landscape type that will continue the species and densities.
- Extend the habitat interest and provide further links to hedgerows by extending existing wooded corridors.
- Oaks to be planted as advanced nursery stock.

7.3.2 Woodland block canopy species to include:

35%	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)
10%	Lime (<i>Tilia cordata</i>)
10%	Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)
8%	Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)
7%	Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)
7%	Wild cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)
7%	Birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)
6%	Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)
6%	Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>)
4%	Crack Willow (<i>Salix fragilis</i>)

7.4. Native Hedgerows with Trees

7.4.1 The reinstatement of historic field boundaries within on the site boundary and the enhancement and gapping up of existing hedgerows to include advanced nursery stock trees.

Objectives:

- Reinststate historic hedgerows and reverse the decline in hedgerows.
- To contain and absorb the proposed development in the composite landscape.
- Reinforce the landscape type and character of the area.
- Create further habitat interest and provide links to green corridors and off-site habitats.

7.4.2 Hedge plant species to include:

60%	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>)
20%	Field Maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>)
10%	Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)

5%	Gelder Rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)
5%	Holly (<i>Ilex</i> sp.)

Tree species to include:

30%	Oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i>)
25%	Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)
20%	Lime (<i>Tilia cordata</i>)
15%	Walnut (<i>Juglans regia</i>)
10%	Wild Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i>)

7.5 Planting within riverside meadows

7.5.1 Enhancement of existing planting within riverside meadows along existing and historic field boundaries.

Objectives:

- To contain and absorb the proposed development in the composite landscape.
- Reinforce the landscape type and character of the area.
- To replace trees and hedgerows that have been lost through agricultural practices.
- Enrich the existing habitat along the river.
- Identify and retain Ancient/veteran trees
- Continuity and management of habitat resource.

7.6 Identify and retain existing vegetation

Objectives:

- Continuity and management of habitat resource.

7.7 Identify and retain Ancient/veteran trees

7.1 Continuity and management of habitat resource.

Objectives:

- Safeguard the genetic resource
- Perpetuate maturity and continuity within landscapes
- Increase the landscape value

- 7.8 If required a comprehensive 10-year Management Plan will be drawn up, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, and 'conditioned' as part of any approvals, to ensure the successful establishment and maintenance of the landscape proposals.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Landscape Effects Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The development has a high impact on the character of the AONB. Whilst the landscape character of the Herefordshire Farmlands is dictated by agricultural practices these are predominately traditional and visually accepted. The sensitivity of the tunnels is classified as high due to their location within the ANOB, whilst the magnitude is moderate due to the limited impact on the surrounding areas as result of location and topography. No polytunnels are placed in the sensitive Riverside Meadows Character Area.
- 8.1.2 There will be no landscape impacts either directly or indirectly upon any SSSI, SAC's or SINC's within the area.
- 8.1.3 There are no predicted direct, indirect or residual adverse landscape effects associated with the use of polytunnels in any of the Areas.
- 8.1.4 Taken as a whole the compensatory enhancement measures offer a significant positive benefit in replacing lost landscape features, which importantly contribute towards the local distinctiveness and character of the area.
- 8.1.5 The polytunnels reduce the need for pesticides by 40% compared to crops grown solely outdoors. Increased productivity and quality over a longer period reduces the need for imports from foreign markets ('food miles' issues). There are no harmful chemical residues associated with the poly tunnel operation either directly or indirectly. Polytunnels can be recycled.
- 8.1.6 The Drainage Appraisal prepared by specialists JDIH, under separate cover, demonstrates that there are no detrimental impacts on drainage when compared to alternative land use, which would be 'row' crops.
- 8.1.7 The proposals have been developed to incorporate management and enhancement of the existing character of the Herefordshire Lowlands. The strengthening of the infrastructure will provide positive benefit to the ecology of the area by increasing and improving existing habitats and the network of green corridors around and off the site.
- 8.1.8 The strategic landscape proposals will provide further screening to the development from present receptors, mitigating or reducing any possible impact on local character.

8.2 Visual Effects Conclusion

- 8.2.1 The views towards the polytunnels are limited to a small visual envelope, which is contained to less than approximately 20sq. kilometres. The river spurs, local topography and vegetation screen any further views.
- 8.2.2 The majority of the potential residential receptors are within Leys Hill and Upper Wythall, to the south-east of the site, often at some elevation.
- 8.2.3 The open mid to long distance views are restricted to elevated positions on the ridgelines to the west of the river. Mid-distance to close views are typically from the A40, Pencraig Court Manor and Goodrich Castle further south.
- 8.2.4 The views along and in the Wye Valley from public footpaths and rights of way are close distance, transient and filtered by riverside vegetation. The mitigation will greatly decrease the impacts whilst improving the character as experienced from the footpaths.
- 8.2.5 There are no unbroken long views between the north or south across the entire landholding.
- 8.2.6 The impact of the polytunnels within the wider landscape is less visually intrusive when viewed from lower levels directly to the north, east, west or south, as they are viewed against minor ridge lines running through the site breaking up the potential mass of the polytunnels. From the west and the east, there are open views across the site as it gently rises up to the low ridgelines within site. This is less so from the east due to strong intervening vegetation. Potential impacts are greatly reduced at local level within the site, especially when travelling in the network of local lanes due to close proximity of hedges, banks and intervening landscape elements.
- 8.2.7 The landscape proposals will screen views from the lower receptors, partially mitigate views from the A40 and break up the mass when viewed from elevated positions. After ten years it is predicted that the wooded belts and enhanced hedgerows will have a positive factor within the overall surrounding context and reiterate the character types set out within the 'Landscape Guidelines'.

8.3 Summary Conclusions

- 8.3.1 The Landscape & Visual Assessment concludes that the impact of polytunnels sited on Homme Farm on the AONB is high, although very localised. The 'Zone of Visual

Influence' is greatly reduced by the local topography and by the presence of extensive areas, both on and off-site, of mature vegetation, including, woodlands, orchards and hedgerows. The vegetation is a particularly significant contributor to screening and mitigation.

- 8.3.2 The Landscape & Visual Assessment recognises that the introduction of Spanish polytunnels is part of the evolving character of the agricultural landscape; that their visual impact tends to be localised (and can be further mitigated with the proposed structural landscape both within and to the margins of the fields); is felt most strongly only during that part of the year when they are covered with plastic; and, that such impact is not in any event permanent, as they are continually being removed and re-erected according to cropping cycles and the rotation plans. The limitation on maximum coverage under rotation and maximum block size within it, greatly assists this.
- 8.3.3 The application offers the opportunity of providing substantial mitigation measures, to reduce the localised visual impact of the polytunnels, including the approval and implementation of a scheme of indigenous landscaping to augment and reinforce existing, degraded and lost natural features, and a 10-year Management Plan for the whole farm and providing for the long term stewardship of the countryside, including this part of the Wye Valley AONB.
- 8.3.4 Further, there are considerable wildlife benefits compared with conventional arable farming and the contribution they make to biodiversity and sustainable landscapes.
- 8.3.5 As well as mitigating the local impact of the development, these measures will have a significant incidental positive benefit by replacing lost landscape features and sustaining existing ones, which importantly contribute towards the local distinctiveness and character of the area.
- 8.3.6 No polytunnels are placed in the area of the sensitive Landscape Character Area 'Riverside Meadows' defined in the interim draft Hereford Landscape Character Assessment 2004. There will be no landscape impacts, either directly or indirectly, upon any SSSI, SAC's or other wildlife protection designations within the area.
- 8.3.7 The development proposals fully accord with Structure Plan, Local Plan Policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance given in the Hereford Landscape Character Assessment as well as the recommendations given in the County Biodiversity Action Plan.