

Outline Design Statement and Visual Impact Report

For

An Agricultural Water Storage Pond

At

**Lodgelands Farm, Crawley Lane,
Balcombe, West Sussex**

RH176JZ

7th April 2026

Compiled by Bruce Weller

Version 1

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 Weller Designs were asked by Lodgelands Farm Ltd to look at the feasibility of creating a water storage pond at Lodgelands Farm, Crawley Lane, Balcombe, West Sussex RH176JZ, to provide an onsite water security in the event of a mains failure.
- 1.1.2 The site is in a landscape sensitive area and therefore the first phase of the study involved modelling the land to see if such a feature was practical given the topography and the need to keep the grading sensitive to the National Landscape classification. This initial modelling determined that a reasonable scheme could be undertaken without creating inappropriate banks / grades and engineered features in a rural landscape within the National Landscape.
- 1.1.3 The grading study determined that the most advantageous (scenically and practically) location for the storage pond was on a flatter area towards the top of the hill. It was also felt the proposed location would link in better to the landscape if it were placed not too far from the boundary tree lines / woodland copse (well away from Root Protection Zones), so as to allow it to link in with its surrounds and benefit from a degree of screening from drying winds, without shading the water feature too which maintains its health. .
- 1.1.4 The rationale behind the proposed native woodland planting is fourfold:-
- 1.1.5 - To link the water feature in with its surrounds
- 1.1.6 - To provide a degree of screening from drying winds (reduce evaporation)
- 1.1.7 - To provide cover for fauna and flora that is attracted to water features.
- 1.1.8 - To screen and assimilate that grading works associated with creating the pond and breaking up / semi screening it from the visual receptors to the East and South.
- 1.1.9 The second phase of this report provides visualisations of the proposals to illustrate the degree of visual sensitivity employed with the design.
- 1.1.10 Montages and CGI has been used to portray this, see below.
- 1.1.11 The study was undertaken in the winter 2025 with no leaves on the deciduous trees / shrubs, in line with Landscape Institute Guidance, so that full visual access was exhibited.
- 1.1.12 Through the use of Civils 3D, 3D studio Max, D5 rendering software and photoshop a number of illustrations have been presented to show how the proposal impacts the landscape visually.

1.2 Background To Proposal

- 1.2.1 The proposal seeks to create a water storage pond to provide access to water in the event of a mains failure.
- 1.2.2 As can be seen from the contouring proposal the contours are spread out and gradual so as to key into the landscape very slowly and also create a degree of water harvesting / capture to charge the pond. NB It maybe that a borehole is sunk to gain the 20m³ of water allowed per day without the need for an abstraction licence , again to charge the pond and supply irrigation water.
- 1.2.3 As can be seen from the photos the field possesses a large amount of sedge which is an indicator of waterlogged conditions throughout the year. The bank batters created by lifting the eastern side of the field gradually to support the pond, will improve the drainage of the field to the East. Lifting of the surface slightly to the Northwest of the field (the catchment zone for water harvesting) will also improve the current poorly drainage conditions and as such can be considered agricultural improvement.
- 1.2.4 The pond measures in area 2500m² and is circa 2m deep (so would hold circa 3,500m³ of water). NB There is a degree of flexibility as regards the water feature size, but this needs to be set against visual impact and reservoirs Act.
- 1.2.5 2m depth is the minimum recommended unless circulators will be used which will require power.
- 1.2.6 The whole field slopes at between 1 in 4 and 1 in 8 and therefore with the brief to build the pond with imported soil (i.e. fill only) the bank batters on the lower slope spread out quickly but also needed to key in very gradually hence the area the batters take up down the hill to the east. Whilst this increases fill quantities (a good thing) it means the area that affected and stripped is quite a lot larger than the pond itself.

1.3 Executive Summary

- 1.3.1 The visual envelope is quite restricted due to topography and surrounding dense woodland much of which is evergreen to the to the South and East of the site (even in winter).
- 1.3.2 Whilst there is open visual access to the site from the North and partly to the South, the visual receptors can be considered non sensitive being open horse fields and a distant working farm. NB There are no residential properties nearby or formal parks, heritage assets or public footpaths etc. See below.
- 1.3.3 That said the landscape has a sensitive designation High Weald National Landscape =so any engineered feature must be in keeping with the landscape. The brief has its difficulties given the whole field slopes from North to South and it requires fill to enable its build.
- 1.3.4 The existing site is grazing land It's therefore of low ecological value.
- 1.3.5 The grading proposals will improve the poor draining nature of the field by lifting the land slightly above the naturally high water table and by re-directing some surface water into the pond feature .
- 1.3.6 As can be seen from the visuals provided below the view is going to be changed but not in an unexpected manner given the rural landscape.
- 1.3.7 There is a loss of some natural gently flowing topographical beauty (which the High Weld is known for). However, the proposed slow keying in of the pond banks and the proposed native tree, shrub and wildflower planting assists with assimilating the pond into the landscape even if a water feature on the side of a hill is not a natural occurrence. The long batters help remove the risk of the pond looking unnaturally perched on the side of a hill whereas ordinarily they obviously tend to naturally sit in low areas.
- 1.3.8 There are no heritage assets near the site.
- 1.3.9 There are no public footpaths on the application site or nearby although clearly public access is available in the woodland to the east which looks over the site on an escarpment (Monks Forest) . However this woodland is dense and for the most part evergreen so views out towards the site are very limited.
- 1.3.10 Within this report the visual assessment includes montages and CGI of how the pond will look in the landscape when complete. We feel in principal it works based on the verified visuals and sections.
- 1.3.11 Turning part of a fairly "sterile" pasture / arable field into pond with improved drainage and water harvesting is robust in terms of need. Additionally, given the envisaged views below, we feel the proposal would have a good chance of approval although nothing is certain in planning.
- 1.3.12 At this stage we can't comment on other constraints that might affect its approval. Eg lorry movements, archaeology , utilities etc.



Figure 1 Existing Site Location



Proposed Location of
Pond

View 1: South facing



View 2: East facing. Note : Evergreen Trees on Eastern Boundary (strong visual screen)



View 3: West facing . Strong Visual Screen on Boundary (semi Evergreen)

Note the large amount of sedge indicating water logged conditions



View 4:North east facing . NB Whilst the site is “looked onto” from the East (Monks Forest) , the escarpment is entirely covered in trees many of which are evergreen and therefore screening views of the site all year around

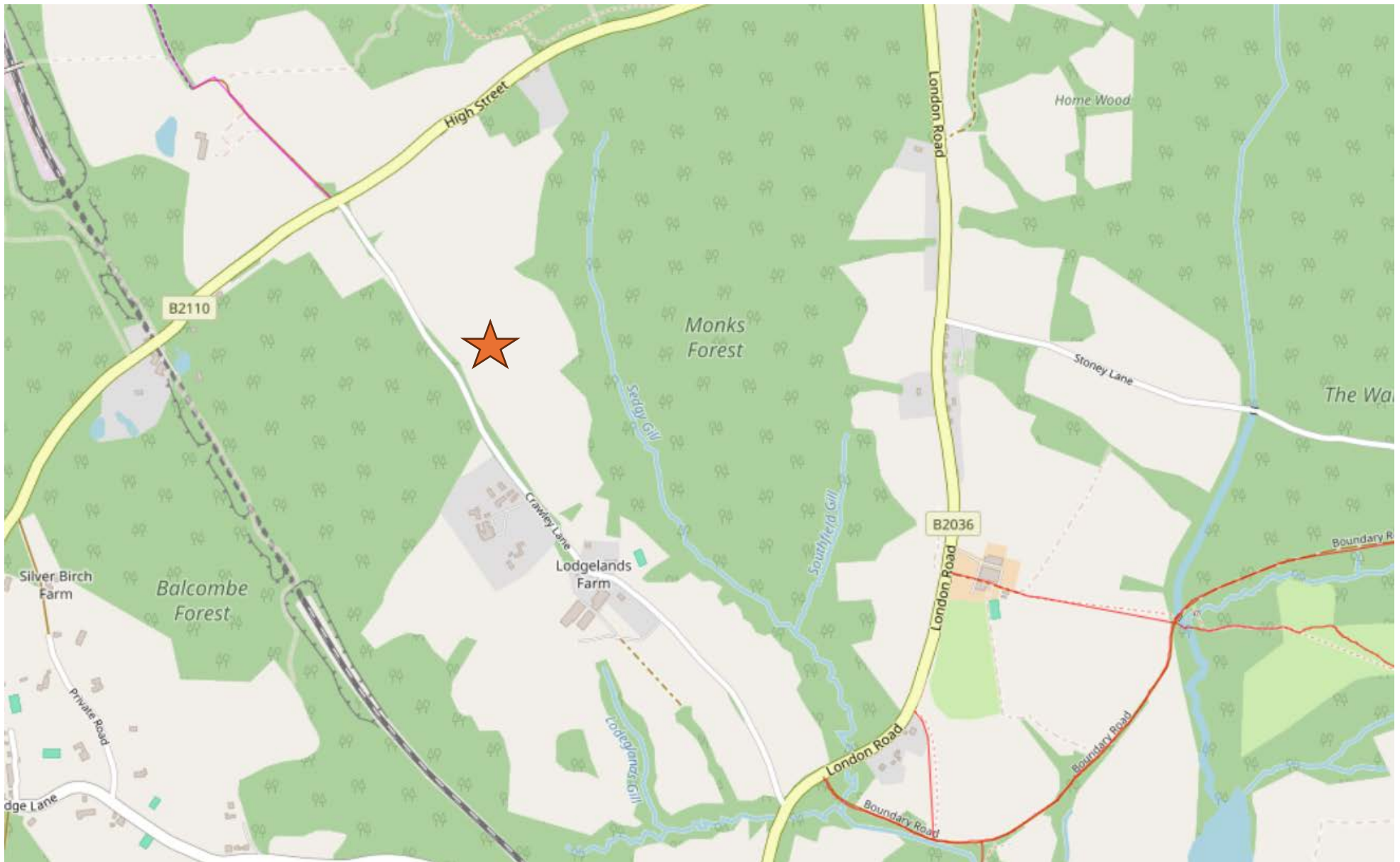


Approximate Location of Pond

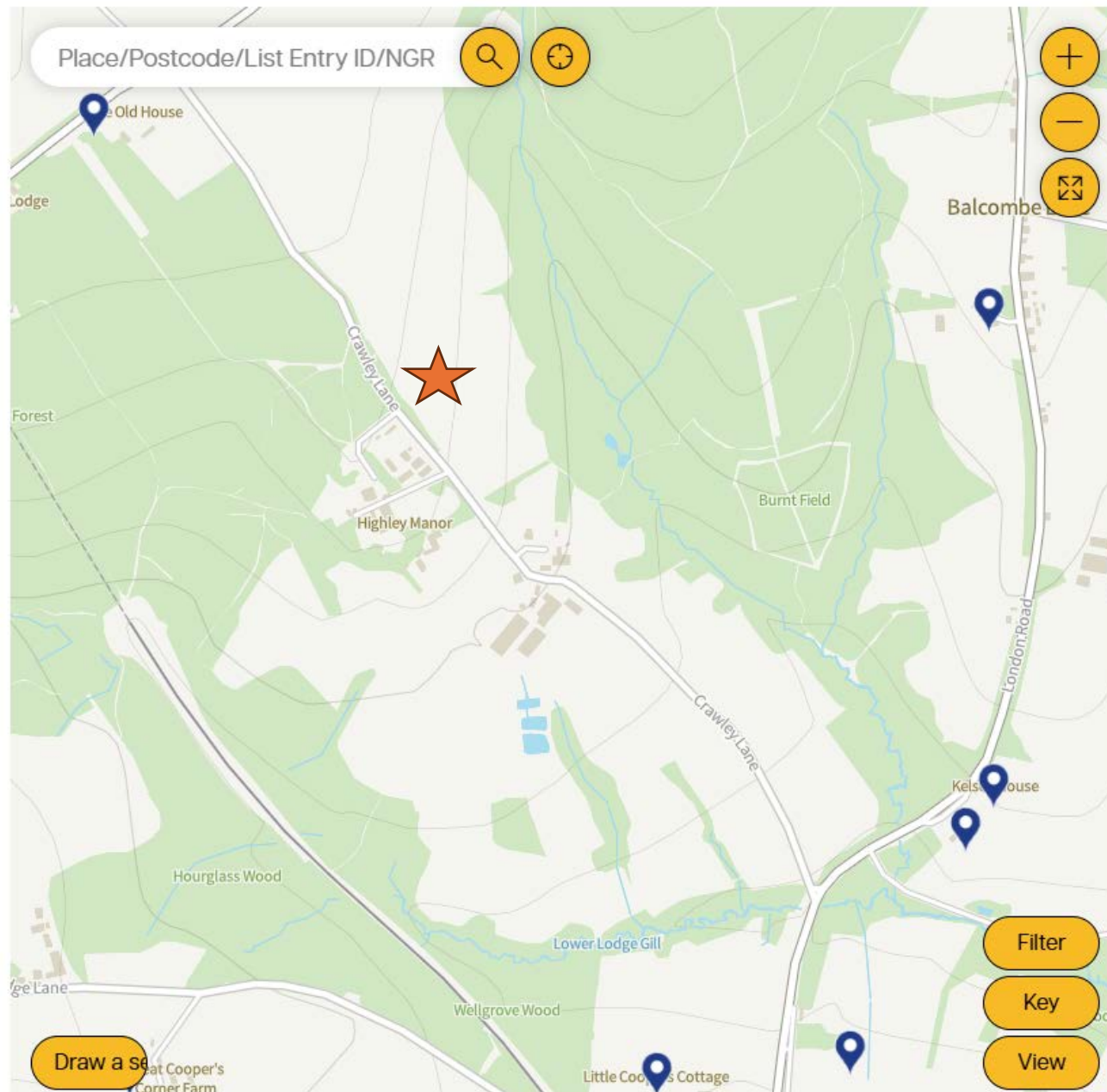
View 5: South -facing near entrance



View 6: x1 Distant Sensitive Receptor (Residential Property / Farm – Lodgelands Farm



View 7: Public Footpaths Aren't in the vicinity of the site although it is assumed the general public can access Monks Forest for Walks etc .
No view available from Balcombe Forest.



View 8 Heritage Assets – None Near the Site

2 Visuals Of Proposed Landscape

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The following CGI's show the visual impact of the proposed landscape. As referenced previously, due to the topography and intervening vegetation medium to long views of the site location are extremely restricted and are essentially limited to local views from the North and South.
- 2.1.2 The CGI 's are verified images which were established using a combination of Civils 3D, 3D studio Max, D5 rendering software and photoshop.

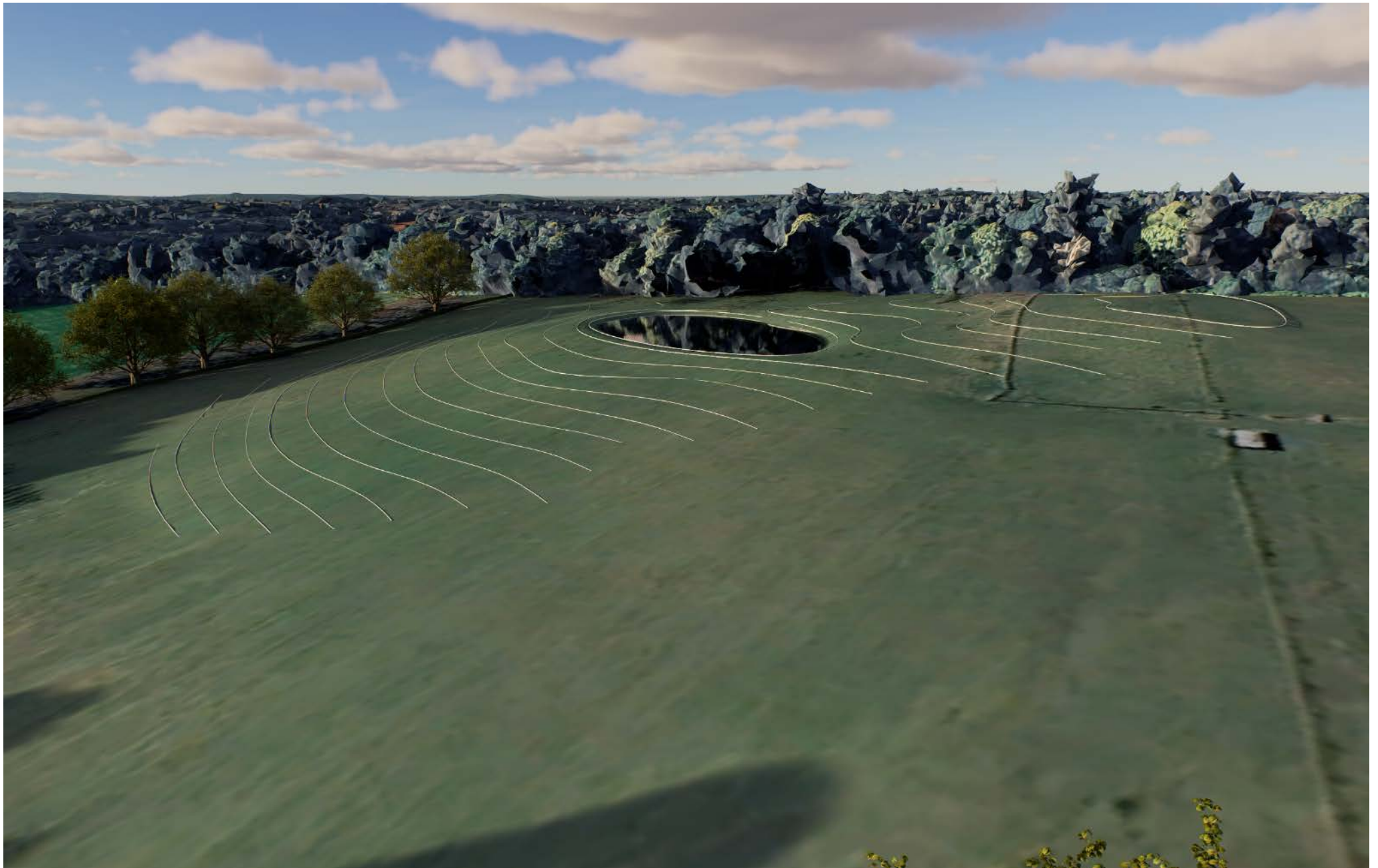


Figure 1: Axio of proposed site

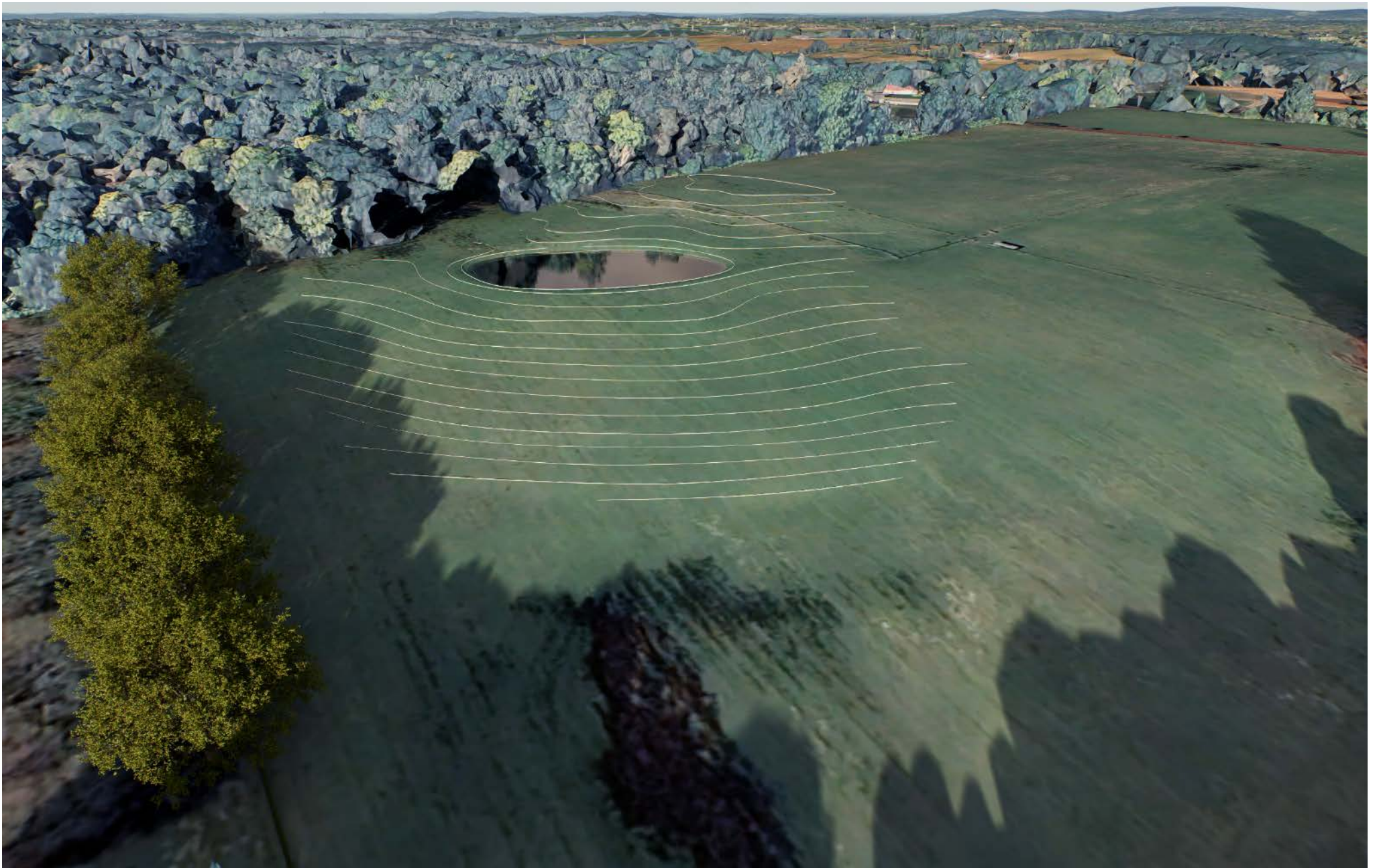


Figure 2: Axio of proposed site



Figure 3: Axio of proposed site from the North . Grading and pond cant be seen

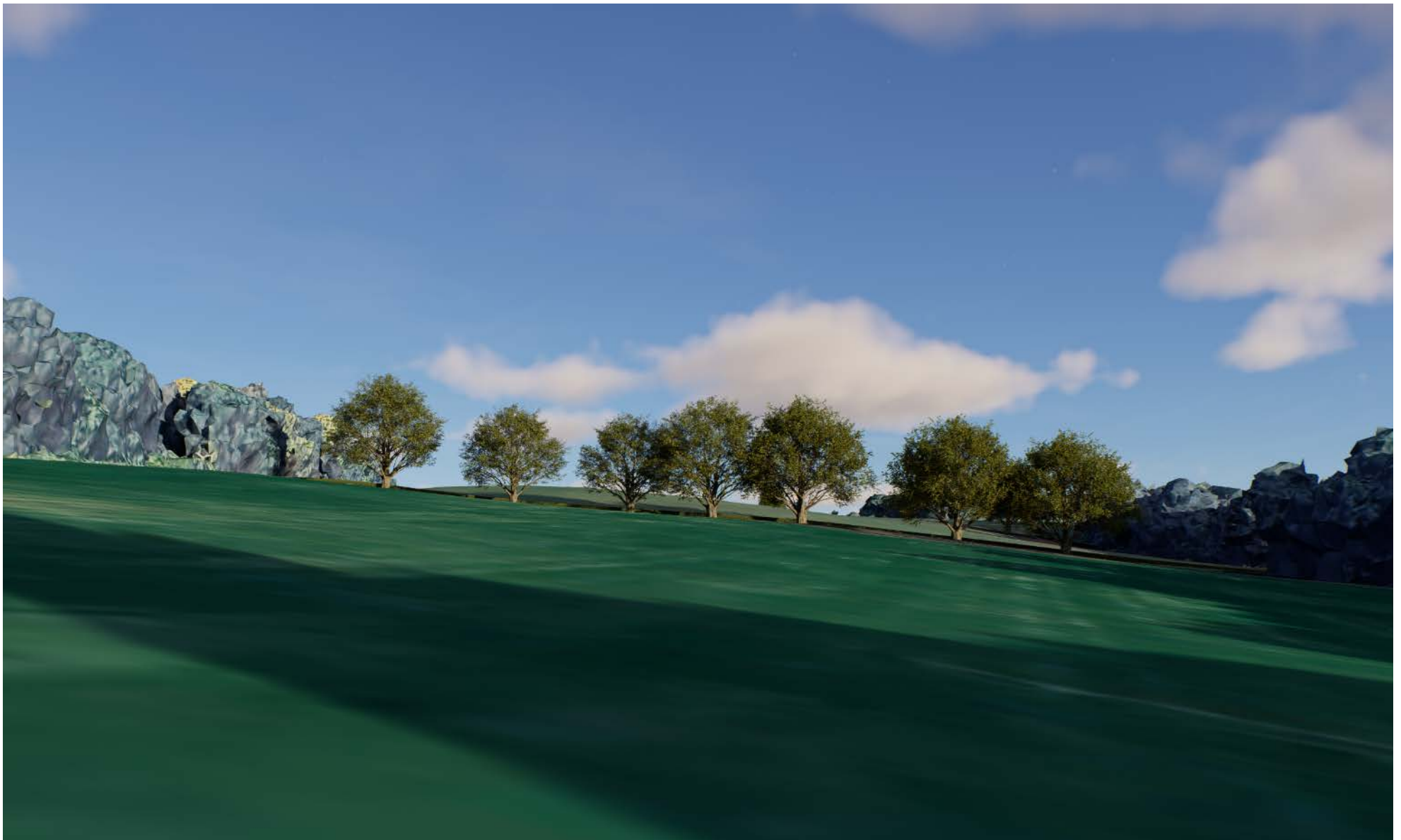


Figure 4: Axio of proposed site from Farm to the South.



Figure 4: Axio of proposed site from Farm to the South.

3 Visual Comparisons

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The montage show the visual impact of the proposed landscape as existing and proposed visualisations.
- 3.1.2 The CGI 's are verified images which were established using a combination of Civils 3D, 3D studio Max, D5 rendering software and photoshop.
- 3.1.3 **Note on Existing Vegetation:** Proposed Planting not shown.

