

5.4 Concept Development

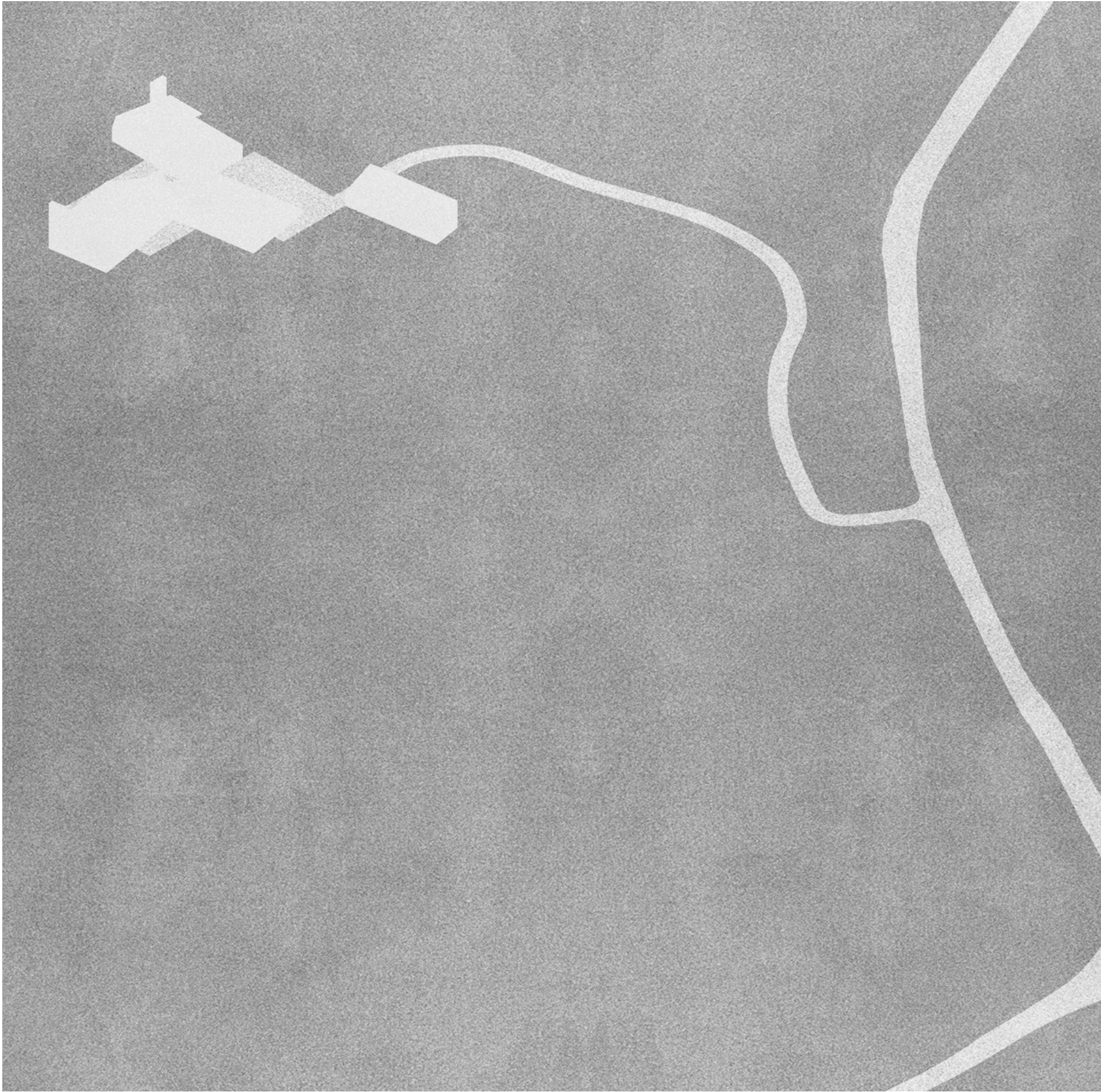
The proposal emerged through a close reading of the settlement patterns and agricultural structures characteristic of the High Weald. Across the landscape, buildings are rarely conceived as singular objects. Farmsteads instead appear as small groups of structures gathered around yards, edges and sheltered spaces, gradually revealed within clearings formed by woodland and pasture.

Rather than placing an isolated building within the field, the project developed from the idea of a dispersed arrangement of forms embedded within the landscape structure of the site. Early studies explored how the house might sit within the wider pattern of woodland edges, tracks, assarts and neighbouring farm buildings, allowing the proposal to feel discovered rather than imposed.

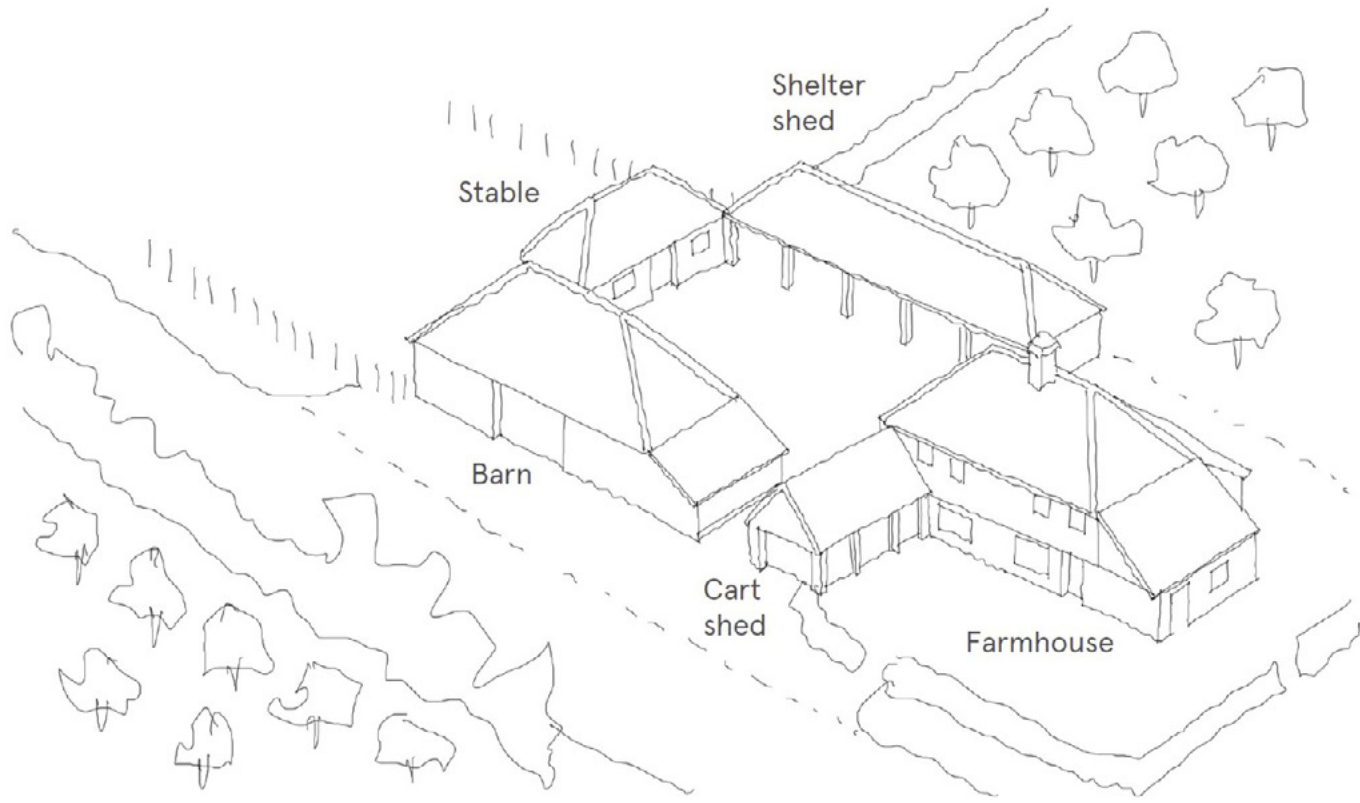
Research into local farmsteads revealed a recurring spatial logic: modest agricultural and domestic buildings arranged incrementally around working courtyards. This informed the organisational strategy of the proposal, which breaks the accommodation into a series of smaller volumes grouped around a sheltered courtyard garden. The arrangement reflects the scale and grain of surrounding rural structures whilst creating protected external space and reducing travel distances across the home.



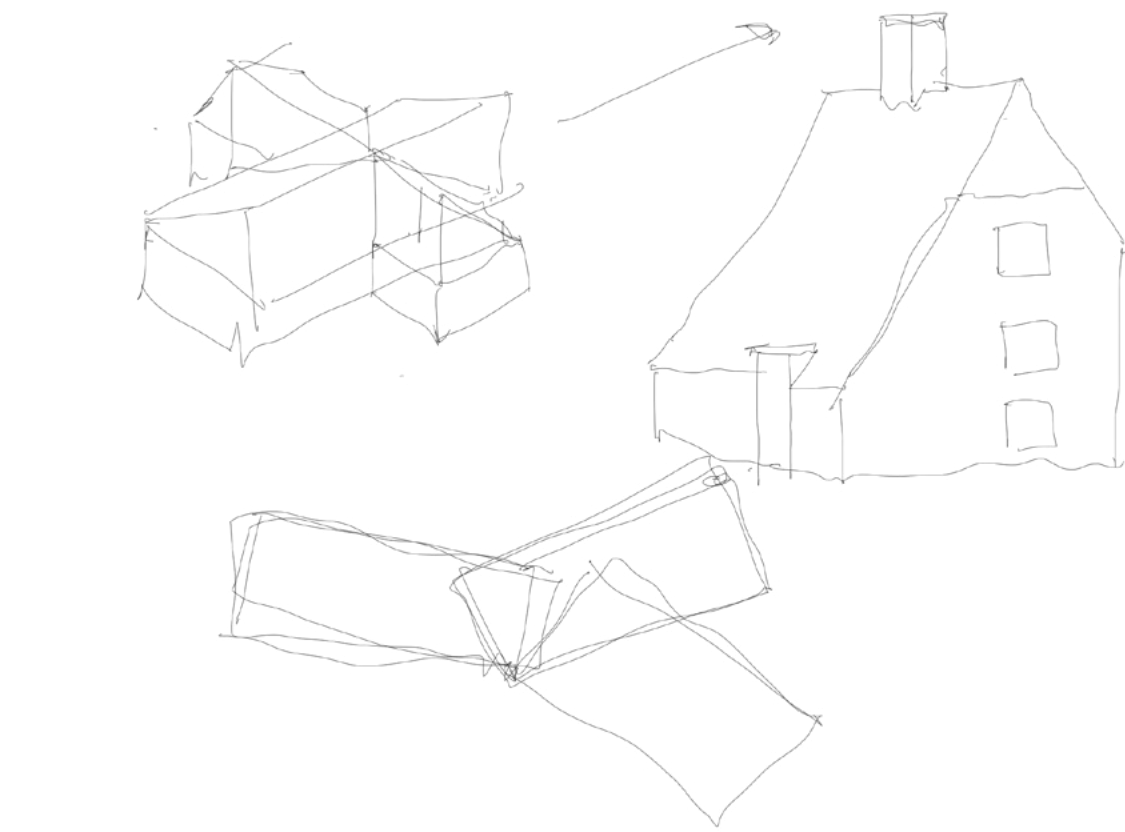
Sketch exploring and interpreting the formal aspects of a local farmstead



Digital collage exploring the atmosphere of a typical local farmstead at the site



Sketch exploring the component parts of a typical local farmstead



Sketch exploring and interpreting the formal aspects of a local farmstead



Sketch exploring the component parts of the High Weald landscape

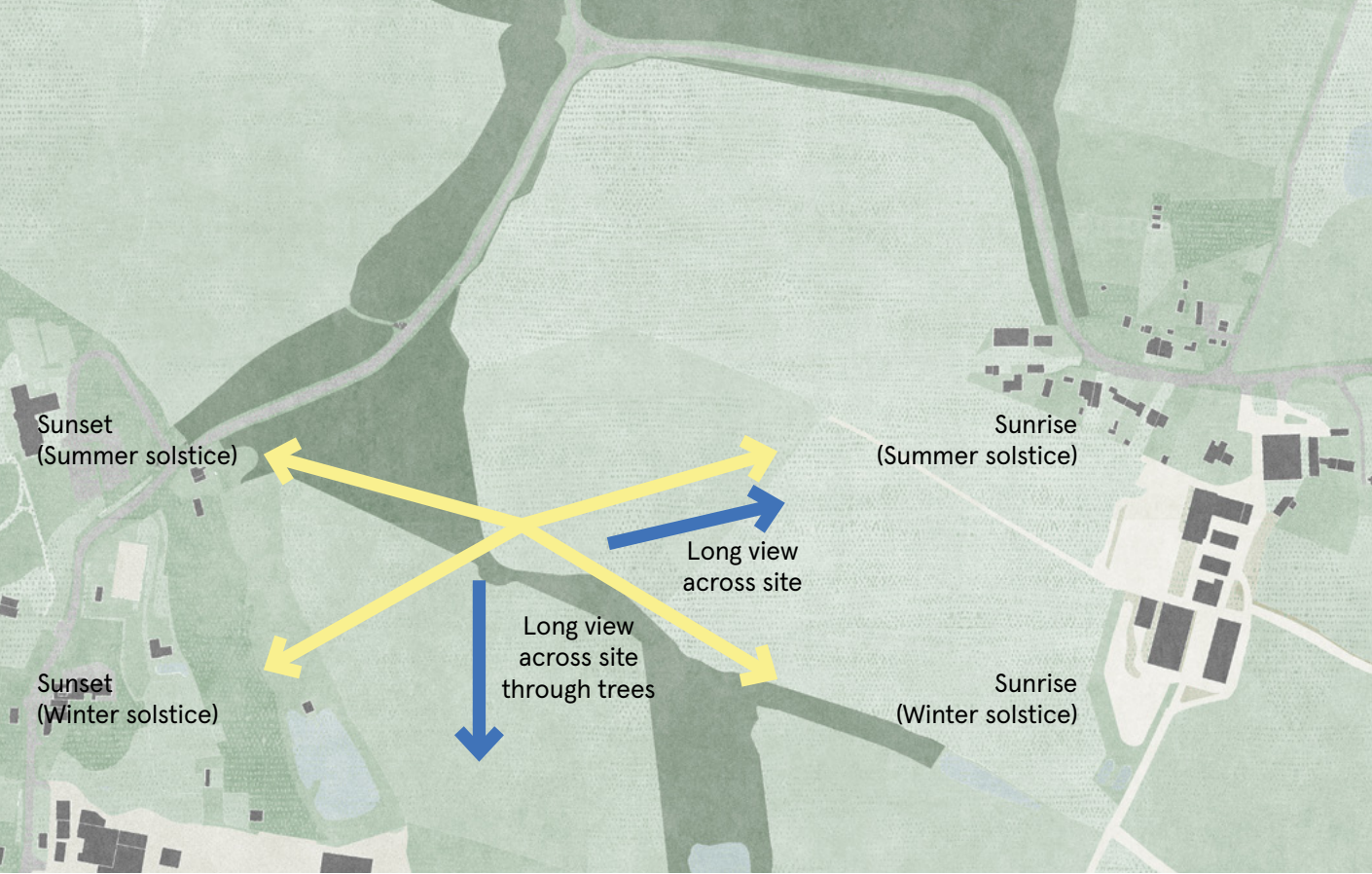
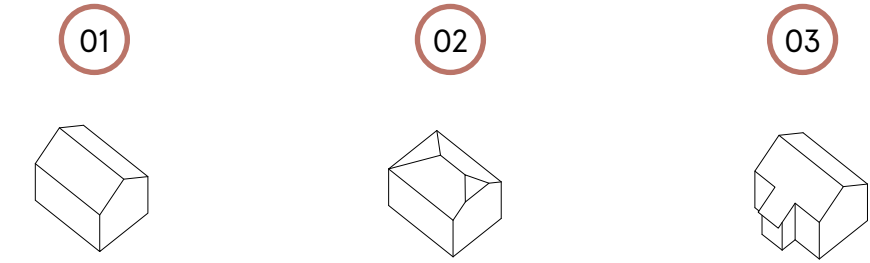


Diagram denoting the approach towards siting the house relative to the movement of the sun

The courtyard forms the compositional centre of the project, providing shelter from prevailing winds whilst establishing visual connections to the wider landscape. The open arrangement allows long views across the falling topography towards the valley beyond, reflecting the relationship between enclosure and openness characteristic of the High Weald landscape.

Architecturally, the proposal draws from the restrained forms of agricultural buildings found throughout the region. Simple pitched roof volumes were studied and reinterpreted through a contemporary architectural language rooted in clarity, proportion and construction. Roof forms are adapted in response to orientation, shelter, accessibility and environmental performance whilst maintaining a coherent relationship to local building traditions.



Key to roof form types



Dual-pitched (gable) roof form



Half-hipped roof form

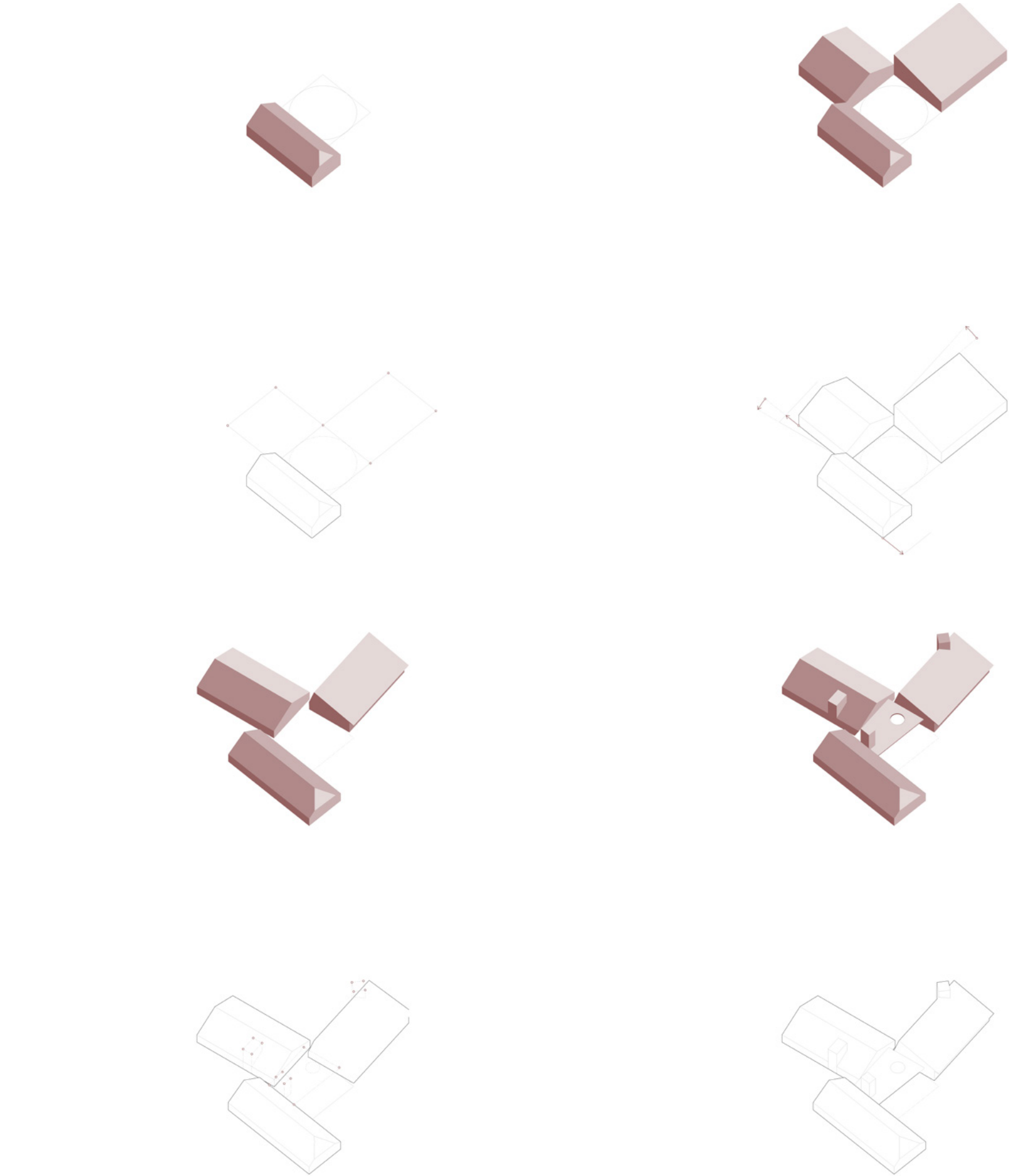


Extended catslide roof form

The resulting composition is therefore not a direct reproduction of vernacular forms, but a contemporary interpretation of the local farmstead condition — a small cluster of buildings arranged within the landscape, shaped by climate, topography, movement and long-term inhabitation.



Reference of a pitched roof set within a rural landscape



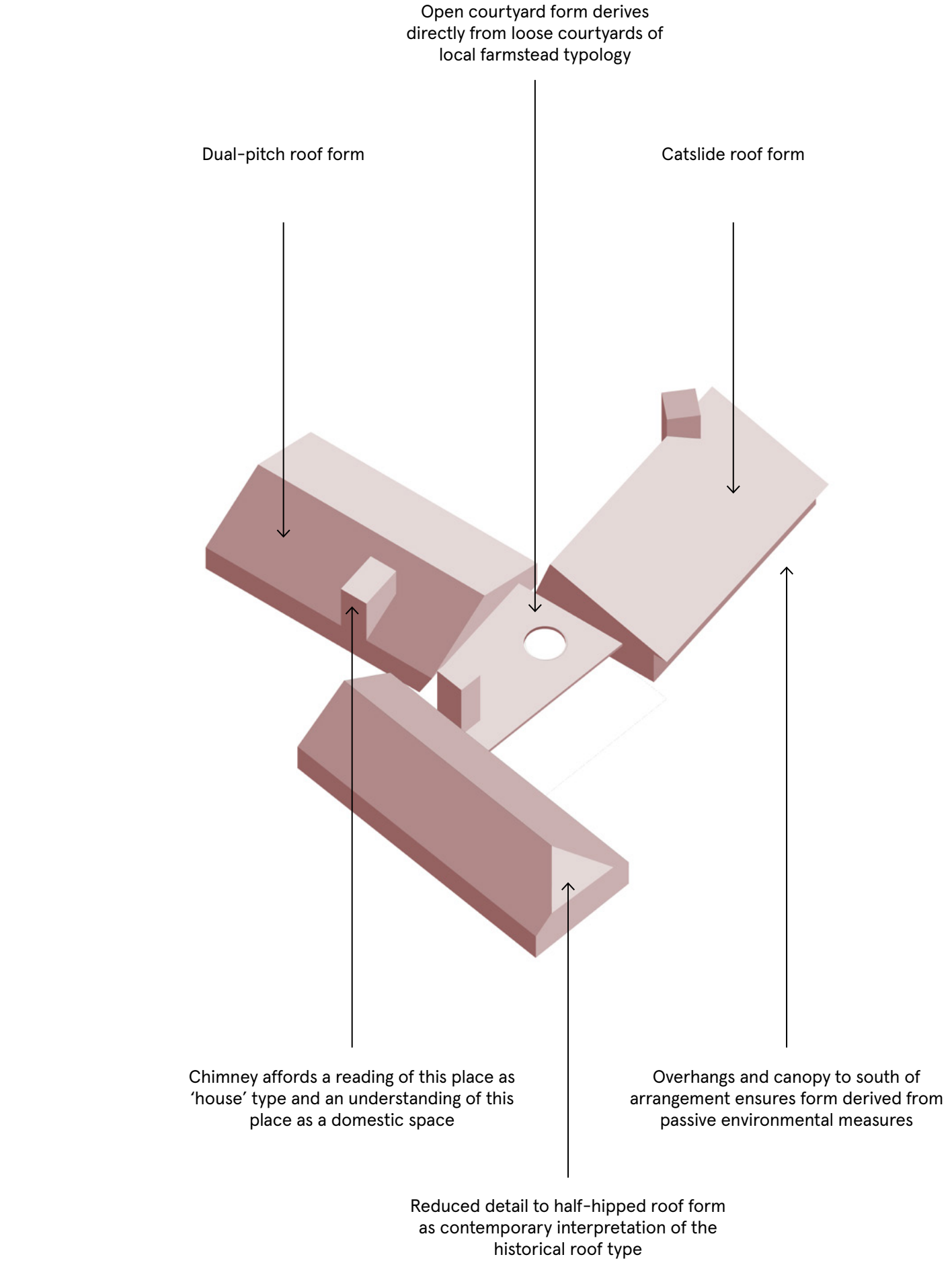
Sequential diagram explaining the formal translation of the archetypal local farmstead type into a contemporary home for a family



Historical aerial photograph denoting the farmstead as collection of vernacular forms



Sussex farmstead as collection of vernacular roof form types



Axonometric overview of form and mass intrinsically borne of referring to local types and incorporating formal idiosyncrasies of them

5.5 Pre-Application Advice and Design Review Panel
(Initial Consultation)

The proposal was developed through an early programme of consultation with Mid Sussex District Council and the Mid Sussex Design Review Panel. Initial pre-application advice was received in June 2023, followed by a Design Review Panel session in September 2023. Together, these formed the first stage of review and refinement of the emerging scheme.

The Council confirmed that the proposal should be assessed against Policy DP15 and Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework, requiring a dwelling of exceptional quality that responds positively to the character of the High Weald landscape. Early discussion focused on the relationship between the proposal and its wider countryside setting, including the visibility of the site from the Public Right of Way and surrounding landscape.

Particular attention was given to how the proposal might avoid appearing as a singular or visually dominant object within the field. The relationship to woodland edges, access routes and neighbouring farm structures formed an important part of this discussion, alongside the need to reinforce the existing landscape structure rather than weaken it.

The Design Review Panel supported the ambition of the project, including the intention to create a contemporary home derived from local farmstead typologies and shaped by the character of the High Weald. The use of natural materials, the courtyard arrangement and the integration of landscape and architecture were recognised as positive aspects of the emerging scheme.

The Panel advised that the proposal required further refinement in several areas. These included strengthening the relationship between the arrangement of buildings and local farmstead precedents, simplifying aspects of the roofscape and developing a clearer environmental strategy from the outset of the design process.

Landscape impact and long-term stewardship were also emphasised. Recommendations included reinforcing woodland boundaries, improving ecological integration and ensuring that movement through the site responded carefully to existing landscape patterns and views.

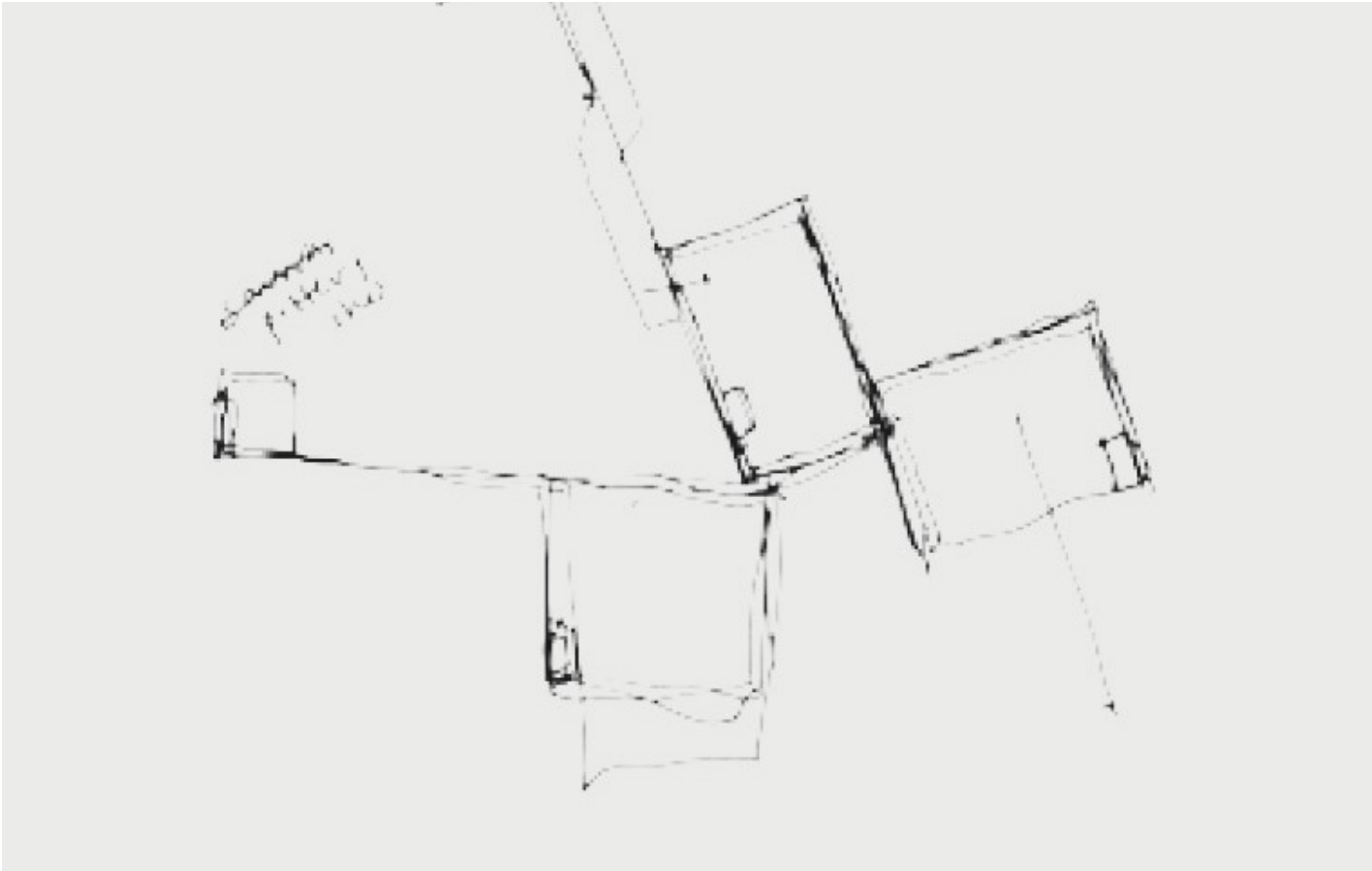
Overall, the initial consultation established a clear framework for the continued development of the proposal. The feedback informed a substantial period of refinement to the siting, scale, organisation and environmental approach of the scheme.



Pre-application advice site meeting held on site on 08.06.23



Concept plan of proposal presented at initial consultation



Development sketch presented at initial consultation



Site plan of proposal presented at initial consultation

5.6 Design Development following Initial Consultation

Following the first round of consultation, the proposal was carefully refined in response to comments from both the Council and the Design Review Panel.

The overall composition was simplified and clarified through the development of a more coherent courtyard arrangement. The proposal moved further away from the reading of a singular house and instead became understood as a small group of related volumes arranged within the landscape. This reduced the apparent scale of the development and reinforced its relationship to local farmstead precedents.

The siting of the house was further refined in response to topography, existing vegetation and key views. The building was positioned lower within the field structure, allowing the surrounding landform and tree cover to contain the proposal more effectively within wider views. Additional boundary planting and orchard areas were developed to strengthen this integration and reinforce the wooded character of the site.

Access and movement through the site were reconsidered in relation to existing agricultural patterns and the Public Right of Way. The arrival sequence was simplified to reduce visual impact whilst maintaining clear and accessible movement routes across the site and between the buildings.

The environmental strategy was developed alongside the architectural proposals rather than applied retrospectively. Orientation, shelter, daylight, ventilation and low-energy construction principles informed the refinement of the plan and massing. Roof forms and openings were adjusted to improve environmental performance whilst maintaining the clarity and restraint of the overall composition.

Further ecological and landscape studies were undertaken during this period, including biodiversity assessment, planting strategies and visual analysis. These studies informed the development of woodland edges, meadow management and habitat enhancement proposals across the wider site.

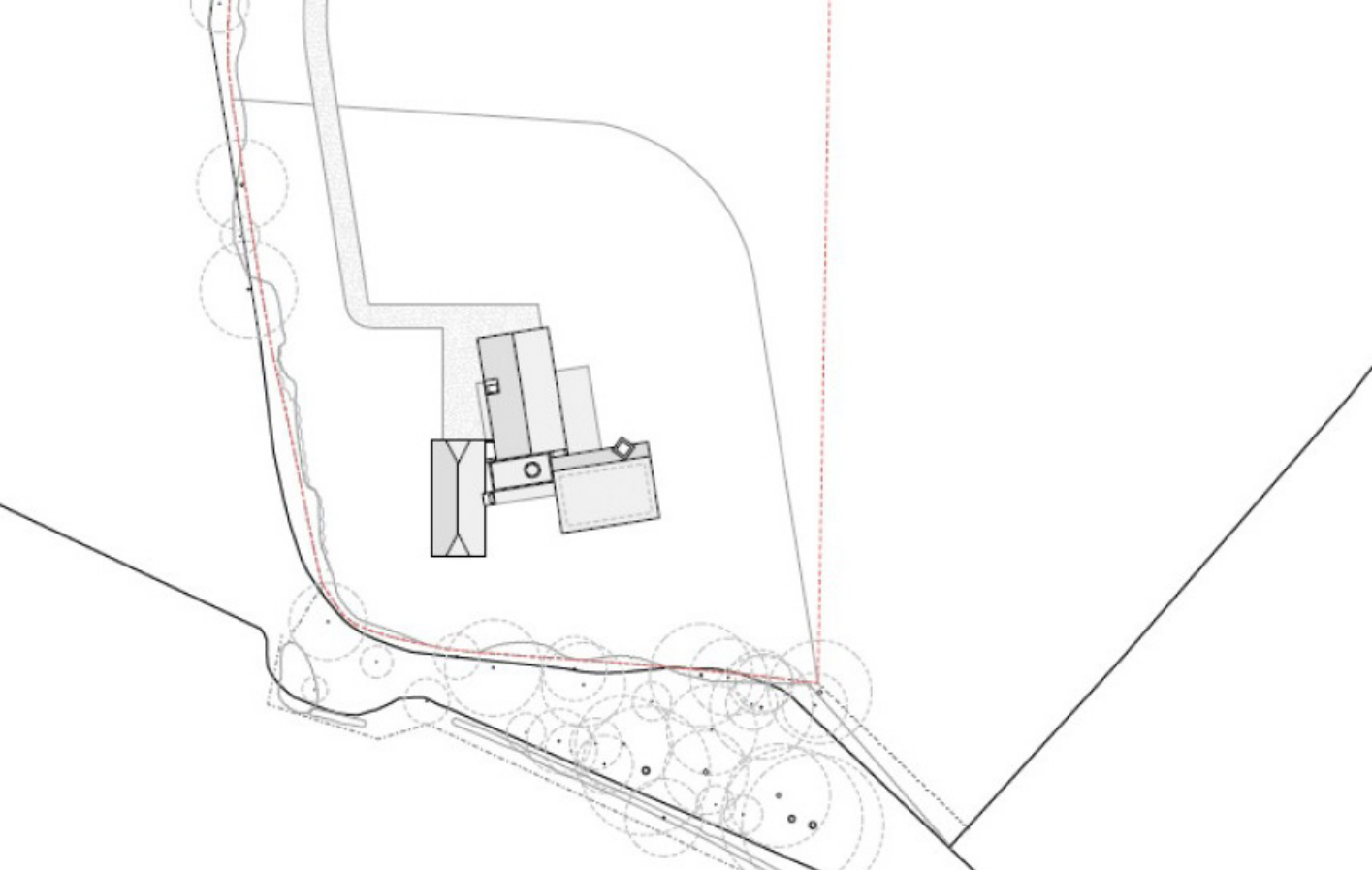
The revised scheme therefore emerged through a sustained process of testing and refinement. The proposal presented at the conclusion of this stage represented a more resolved and site-specific response — one more closely embedded within the landscape structure and settlement character of the High Weald.



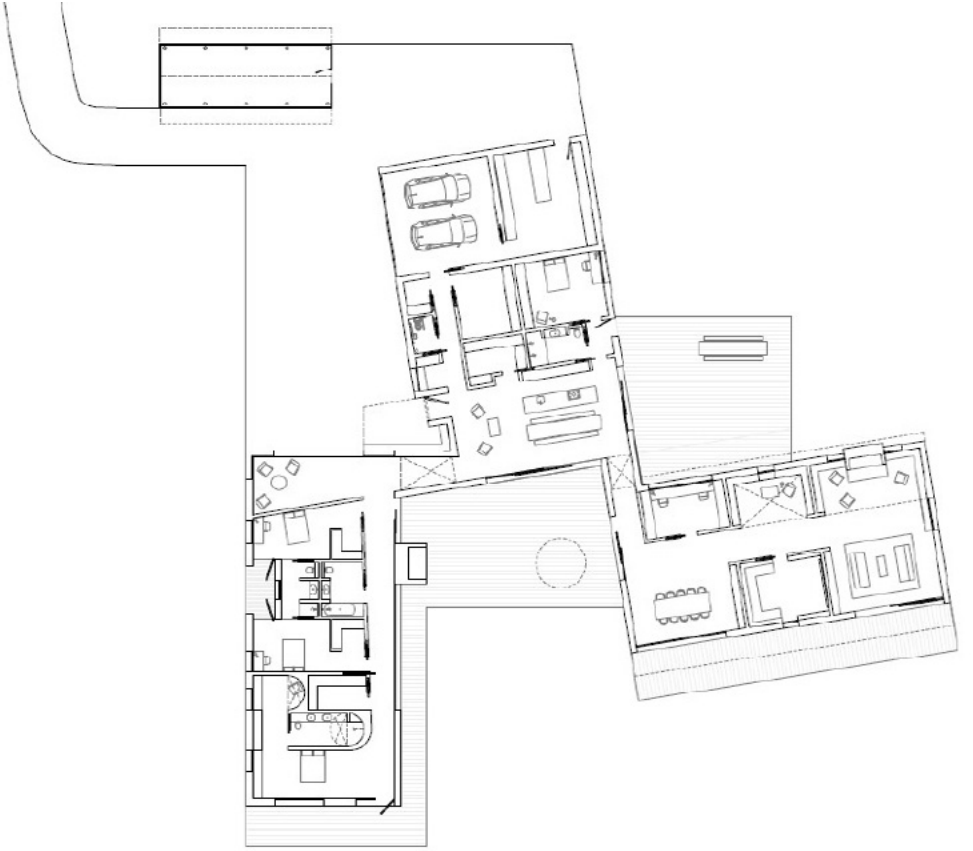
Development studies into the scale of the house against farmsteads in the local context



Site plan of proposal presented at initial consultation



Site plan of proposal developed following initial consultation



Ground floor plan of proposal presented at initial consultation



Ground floor plan of proposal developed following initial consultation

5.7 Pre-Application Advice and Design Review Panel
(Following Further Design Development)

Following the further development of the proposal, the revised scheme was presented to the Mid Sussex Design Review Panel in March 2024.

The Panel recognised that the project had responded positively to the earlier comments and that the revised proposal demonstrated clearer relationships between architecture, landscape and settlement pattern. The evolution of the scheme was understood as a continuation and refinement of the original concept rather than a fundamental redesign.

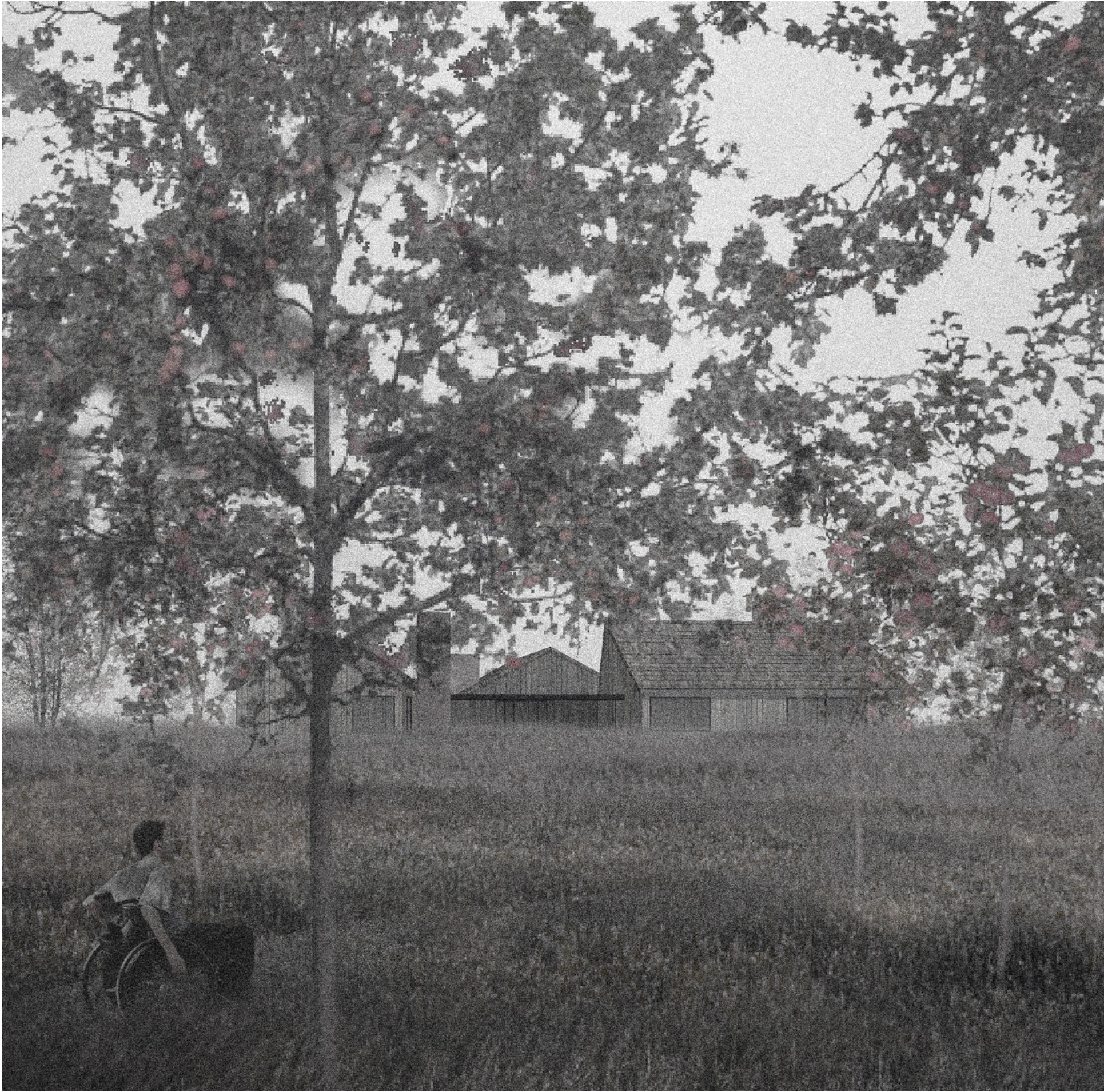
Particular support was expressed for the way the proposal engaged with the landscape and Public Right of Way. Rather than attempting to conceal the building entirely, the revised scheme was recognised as carefully embedded within the wider landscape structure through planting, topography and the fragmentation of built form.

The architectural approach was supported for its clarity and restraint. The Panel recognised the proposal as a contemporary interpretation of local farmstead typologies rather than a literal reproduction of vernacular forms. The simplified roofscape and refined arrangement of volumes were noted as significant improvements.

The reduction in overall floor area was also welcomed, particularly in relation to sustainability and proportionality within the landscape setting. The Panel advised that environmental performance should continue to form an integral part of the architectural strategy, supported by further technical analysis relating to overheating, energy demand and long-term operational performance.

The importance of long-term landscape management and stewardship was again emphasised. Recommendations included securing woodland and meadow management through the application process to ensure that the landscape structure supporting the proposal would mature successfully over time.

Overall, the Panel expressed support for the revised scheme and acknowledged that the proposal had developed into a coherent architectural and landscape response appropriate to its setting. The scheme was encouraged to progress towards planning submission.



Collage of proposed exterior from south



Collage of proposed interior



Physical model of proposed house

6.0 Landscape Statement

6.1 Landscape Concept

The landscape strategy is fundamental to the proposal and establishes the conditions from which the architecture emerges. The house is not conceived as an isolated object placed within a field, but as part of a wider landscape structure characteristic of the High Weald.

The proposal works with the existing qualities of the site – irregular pasture, woodland edge, hedgerow structure and topography – reinforcing and extending these conditions rather than replacing them. Existing landscape patterns are retained and intensified to create a more coherent and ecologically robust setting.

The building is positioned within this structure so that it is gradually encountered through movement across the landscape. Woodland planting, meadow, orchard and garden spaces form a sequence of conditions that mediate between architecture and open countryside.

The landscape strategy therefore performs ecological, spatial and experiential roles simultaneously. It reinforces biodiversity, strengthens the existing field structure and establishes a legible relationship between cultivated and uncultivated land.

Taken together, the proposal seeks to create a landscape that appears continuous with its surroundings whilst quietly intensifying the environmental quality, ecological value and spatial character of the site.



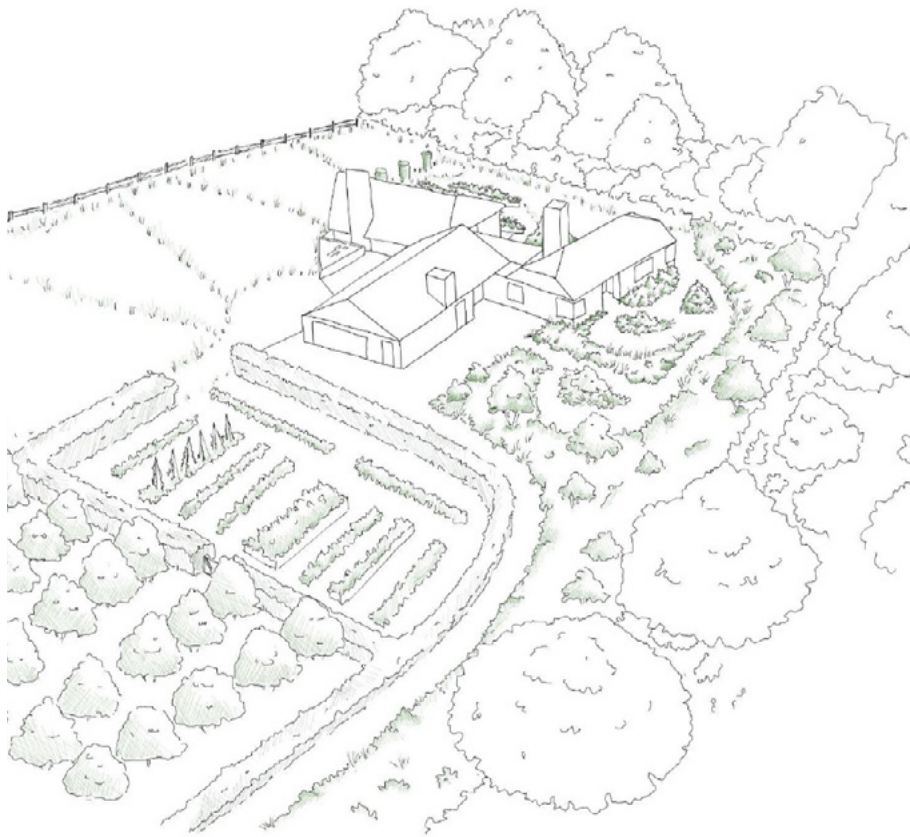
Reference image of High Weald landscape

6.2 Landscape Structure

The site sits within a wider pattern of irregular fields, woodland edges and hedgerow networks characteristic of the High Weald landscape. The proposal reinforces this structure rather than disrupting it, working with existing patterns of enclosure, vegetation and movement already present on the site.

The landscape strategy is not conceived as a decorative setting around the house, but as the primary spatial and ecological framework through which the proposal is organised. Each landscape zone emerges from a close reading of the existing site and develops conditions already present – extending woodland edges, reinforcing field boundaries, enriching pasture and strengthening relationships between cultivated and uncultivated land.

These elements organise movement, define enclosure and establish a legible relationship between building and landscape. The house is set within this structure rather than placed upon it. It is partially concealed within a strengthened woodland edge and revealed gradually through movement across the site.



Early collage from southern flower garden denoting accessible



Collaged site plan denoting the proposed landscape elements and their integration with the architecture

Woodland Buffer

To the south and west of the site, the relationship with Brock Shaw ancient woodland is strengthened through the introduction of a managed woodland buffer. This zone extends the ecological reach of the woodland edge into the site using native species including hazel, birch and sweet chestnut, reinforcing habitat continuity and shelter whilst strengthening the existing wooded character of the site boundaries.

The woodland edge is intended to feel gradual and natural rather than abrupt, allowing the house to sit within an expanded tree structure rather than in open isolation. Long-term coppice management and ecological stewardship form part of the strategy, reflecting local woodland practices whilst supporting biodiversity over time.

Woodland Garden

Immediately surrounding the house, the woodland buffer transitions into a more intimate woodland garden. Here, layered planting, understorey species and accessible winding paths create a sheltered and immersive landscape condition closely associated with the daily occupation of the house.

The intention is for the building to sit within vegetation rather than against it, softening the relationship between architecture and landscape whilst creating opportunities for close interaction with planting throughout the seasons. This zone also supports accessibility and long-term occupation, with gently winding step-free routes allowing movement through planted areas in a calm and informal manner.

Wildflower Meadow

To the east of the house, the existing pasture landscape is reworked as a species-rich wildflower meadow. This retains the openness and pastoral character of the field whilst significantly increasing ecological value through the introduction of diverse native grasses and flowering species.

The meadow is intended to feel continuous with the wider landscape rather than ornamental, reinforcing the broad open grain of the High Weald setting. Mown paths and subtle changes in topography structure movement through the meadow, encouraging slower occupation of the landscape and framing views back toward the house and woodland edge.

Kitchen Garden and Orchard

To the north of the house, a productive kitchen garden and heritage orchard establish a cultivated landscape closely tied to the working character of the site. Positioned adjacent to the

principal living spaces, these areas support seasonal occupation, food cultivation and everyday interaction with the landscape.

The orchard reflects traditional patterns of land use within the High Weald, combining productive planting with meadow grazing beneath widely spaced trees. Together these spaces reinforce the relationship between dwelling and land, allowing cultivation and domestic occupation to sit naturally within the wider pastoral setting.

Flower Garden

A more intimate flower garden is positioned immediately around the house, introducing a cultivated landscape condition directly associated with the domestic life of the building. This area provides seasonal colour, texture and sensory variation whilst remaining visually connected to the surrounding meadow and woodland conditions.

The garden is conceived as a softer and more sheltered counterpoint to the wider landscape, creating moments of enclosure and occupation close to the house without becoming formally separated from the pastoral character of the site.

Transitional Planting

Between these principal landscape zones, meadow edge and transitional planting soften boundaries and avoid abrupt spatial divisions across the site. Native grasses, shrubs and understorey planting allow the landscape to dissolve gradually between woodland, garden and pasture conditions, strengthening ecological continuity and helping the proposal sit comfortably within its setting.

These transitional areas are intentionally loose and adaptive in character, allowing seasonal change and natural succession to become part of the long-term identity of the landscape.

Accessible Path Network

All landscape areas are connected by a continuous network of permeable, step-free paths designed to provide full accessibility across the site. These routes are conceived not simply as circulation, but as a slower and more experiential movement through different landscape conditions.

Their arrangement encourages gradual occupation of the landscape and supports long-term independent use of the site, ensuring that accessibility is embedded within the structure of the proposal rather than treated as a secondary technical requirement.

Taken together, these landscape zones form a coherent and interconnected framework that strengthens the existing character of the site whilst significantly increasing its ecological and spatial richness. The proposal can therefore be understood not as the introduction of a new landscape condition, but as an intensified and more resolved version of what is already there – an evolved landscape structure shaped through careful observation, long-term stewardship and direct response to place.