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Wildshark Vineyard, Mount Farm,
Greenway Forstal, Harrietsham,
Maidstone, Kent ME17 1QA

Design & Access Statement

11-13 High Street | Tunbridge Wells | Kent | TN11UL
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1.0 Introduction

This document has been prepared by John Bullock Design on behalf of our clients in support of proposals for the removal of the existing use and commercial buildings on the site, for the construction of a building to be used as a winery and visitor centre, and to upgrade and extend the existing dwelling to be used as a 19-bedroom hotel.

Historically, the land forming Wildshark and Mount Farm were part of one farm, based around cattle farming, The site was divided approximately 30 years ago, leaving part of the land as farmland, and developing part of the land (Mount Farm) as an industrial site. It is proposed to bring these farms back into one unit.

During recent years, the English wine industry has seen significant expansion, particularly in the South-East of England, due to the rise in temperatures that have been experienced. The chalky, well drained soils found in Kent are ideal for cultivating grapes used to produce sparkling wine.

Vines have been planted on the adjacent site, Wildshark Vineyard, which is agricultural land. Agriculture, in particular fruit growing, represents a significant element of the Borough and County's economy. The proposed new winery building is in association with this agricultural process, namely the growing, crushing, processing and bottling of wine made from grapes grown in the surrounding fields. The proposed tasting room is an important element of the proposal and will provide a major boost to the local tourist economy. Sustainability is at the heart of the proposal, and it is proposed to generate energy from the waste created by the wine.

In order for the vineyard to succeed, the following facilities are required:

- Facilities for processing, bottling and storage of the wine;
- Facilities including an office, a laboratory for testing the grapes and wine, staff room with kitchenette and toilet facilities;

- A visitor centre for wine tasting and wine tours, which includes a shop selling wines and local produce, a wine tasting area, with the facility to serve food and drink at events. It is our client's ambition to provide an experience to their visitors, whereby they will feel connected with the process involved in producing the wine.
- A full catering kitchen to serve the wine tasting area,
- Ancillary hotel;
- Parking for staff and visitors;

Our client has recently purchased additional land (Mount Farm). This parcel of land is a brownfield site, comprising 14 businesses, including a breakers yard, commercial vehicle repair companies and a residential dwelling. This originally formed part of a working dairy farm, with the land at Wildshark vineyard, where approximately 200 cows were milked twice daily. It is now proposed to amalgamate the units back into one, and restore the land to an appropriate rural use.

2.0 Site Location

The site is located on the northern side of Greenway Forstal Lane in Harrietsham. Greenway Forstal Lane is a single-track road with occasional parking places, running to the north of and parallel with the A20 Ashford Road, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and mainline railway line, and the M20

The site lies close to bus links along the A20, which run between Ashford and Maidstone. The site lies 1 mile from Harrietsham mainline railway station, which provides connections to mainline London stations. The railway line runs across the application site to the north.

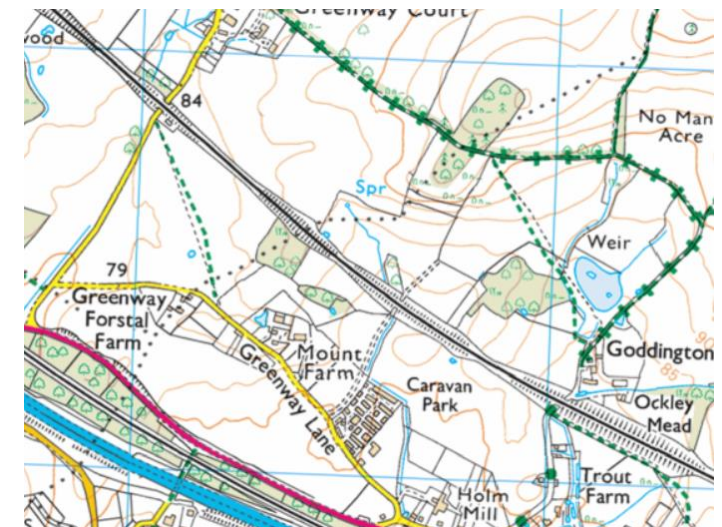
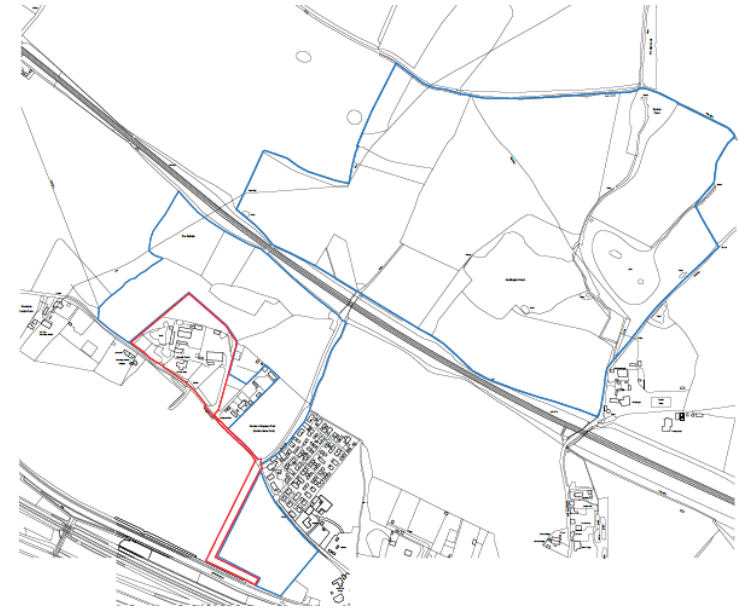
The site lies within designated countryside and within Flood Zone 1. The site opposite Mount Farm is a Grade II Listed property (Greenhills).

To the north of the railway line, lies land within the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are a number of footpaths to the north of the site, including KH221 and KH273.

Our client also owns the adjacent 42 ha agricultural land, known as Wildshark Vineyard, including 12.5 ha woodland and 2.5 ha of lake. This agricultural land has been planted out as a vineyard.

There is sporadic development in the surrounding area along Greenway Forstal Lane, including gypsy traveller sites and a caravan park.

There is a small pocket of Ancient Woodland within the northern part of the site. The part of the site that lies south of the railway line lies within the Low Weald and the land north of the railway line lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



3.0 Existing Buildings

The site comprises a number of light industrial, industrial and sui generis uses, along with 2no. Mobile home residential uses, and the dwelling to the front of the site. Most of the land surrounding the buildings comprises hardstanding. There are a number of buildings of various scale and appearance present on the site, along with outdoor storage.



The aerial photograph below is dated May 2022, and shows the existing site to be occupied by a number of businesses, including external storage uses



The aerial photograph below is dated April 2015 and shows the existing site to be in a similar level of occupation, occupied by businesses that are generally not considered as appropriate uses within the countryside



4.0 Proposals

Due to the recent success of producing English wine in Kent, afforded by the excellent climate conditions and similar soils found on the North Downs to the successful wine regions in France, it is proposed to erect a winery building with ancillary tasting room on Mount Farm to replace the existing hardstanding, open storage and buildings. The winery will process fruit grown on the site into wine (sparkling, white, rose and red), with bottling, aging and disgorging processes taking place. Packaging and labelling will take place on the site also.

The proposed winery will be a low-level, organically designed building, which will sit comfortably within the context of the surrounding rural locality and in the context of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is proposed to retain the existing dwelling to the front of the site, which has extant planning permission for an extension(21/500190/FULL) and conversion of an outbuilding to an annexe (22/500987/FULL), but to extend it to the rear, and carry out external alterations to improve the overall visual appearance of the building within its countryside setting. It is proposed to change the use of this dwelling into a 19-bedroom hotel, which will be linked to the overall winery experience.

It is estimated that wine tourism accounts for 30% of all sales, and therefore a tasting room is paramount to being able to operate to full potential. If the wine is only sold through the internet or on to other stockists, this could only be sold at trade prices. Customers naturally want to be able to taste before they buy wine and therefore a visitor centre, comprising a tasting room, small shop and a dining area would allow this to take place on site.

Work has taken place at Wildshark Vineyard to plant 25 ha of vines (98,000 plants). By autumn 2025, 150 tonnes of grapes will be picked (120,000 bottles of wine). By 2026, 220 tonnes of grapes will be picked (170,000 bottles of wine). Our client has also acquired 60ha of additional land along the Pilgrims Way, which will allow for another 45ha to be planted with vines (100,000 vines being planted in spring 2025, with a further 50,000 vines being planted in spring 2026).

It is important to note that the planting out of the vineyard did not require planning permission as the land was previously agricultural land, and within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, fruit growing of any type is considered to be an agricultural use. Case law has established that the processing of grapes

on the same agricultural unit as where they are grown does not require planning permission, the storing of wine made from grapes from the same agricultural holding does not require planning permission, and the selling of wine grown on the premises, including public visits and tastings are considered ancillary agricultural activities and therefore do not require planning permission (Millington v Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and Another, 1999).

The location of the proposed winery is of paramount importance, and for practical reasons needs to be located in close proximity to the vineyard, requiring the grape pressing process to take place as soon as possible after harvest to minimise oxidation and potential damage. The location of the vineyard has been chosen due to the climate and soil conditions of the North Downs being similar to that of the wine regions in France.

The appearance of the building is largely dictated in terms of scale and dimensions, by functional requirements, and has been designed to drop into the ground, which not only keeps the height of the proposed buildings to a minimum, but ensures that the buildings blend in seamlessly with the surrounding rural landscape. Our client is committed to improving biodiversity and enhancing the surrounding landscape. They are keen to make a significant visual improvement to Mount Farm, by ensuring that the design of the proposed buildings sit comfortably within and enhance the surrounding rural landscape. In addition to the vines that have been planted, 1000 trees have been planted around the vineyard, and another 1000 are due to be planted shortly. Additional plants have also been planted.

The principal use of the building would be for the production of English wine, by using vines grown on the site.

It is also proposed to provide a visitor centre, with a modest retail area, along with a wine tasting area, with the facility to serve food, and provide wine tours (all year around), to allow visitors to learn about the process of producing the wine that is made on the site. It is also proposed to make the vineyard accessible to visitors, and provide seating areas around the vineyard to enjoy picnics, whilst enjoying the outdoor space.

In addition to this, it is proposed to convert and extend the existing dwelling, which lies adjacent to Forstal Lane, into a 19-bedroom hotel. There is planning permission for the demolition of the conservatory, erection of a single storey extension with catslide roof and 2 no. dormers (21/500190/FULL). Work has started with implementing this consent, but it is yet to be completed. The design of the existing building is not considered to be sensitive to the surrounding rural locality, and the proposals will upgrade the building to allow the elevations to be significantly improved through the introduction of high-quality local materials, to sit more comfortably within its rural setting.

6.0 Use

The proposal would remove the existing commercial buildings from the site and result in the loss of the existing industrial and sui generis businesses, which include a car breakers, scaffold company, spare car part trader, skip hire, mechanical vehicle repairs, and waste disposal businesses. These businesses are not considered appropriate for this rural area. The proposal maximises the opportunity that the adjacent vineyard has presented to return the landscape back to a more contextually relevant function.

The winery is required to be located in close proximity to the vineyards, to allow the grape pressing process to take place as soon as possible after harvest, to minimise oxidation and potential damage. This is particularly important to producing high quality wine. The winery will be used for the processing of grapes from Wideshark vineyard , an ancillary process to the agriculture on the land.

An associated Visitor Centre is also proposed, which will combine tourism and employment. This would be ancillary to the winery.

It is proposed to change the use of the dwelling to the front of the site, into a 19-bedroom hotel, also to be used ancillary to the winery, to create a whole winery experience for visitors. It is proposed to use this opportunity to create a visitor attraction, which will attract visitors to the area and create investment into the local area. Visitors will be able to tour the vineyard, visit the winery, taste and purchase the wine in the visitor centre, as well as stay in the hotel, to allow time to truly connect with the wine and surroundings.

The proposed uses would enhance the local distinctiveness of the locality.

7.0 Quantity

The proposal will result in removal of a number of existing buildings from the site and construction of two new buildings, along with the conversion and extension of the existing dwelling into a 19-bedroom hotel, ancillary to the winery.

8.0 Layout

The siting of the proposed development is where the existing development is located, on brownfield land, and to incorporate the existing dwelling. The proposed development has been planned to relate to the existing vineyard, to allow it to sit comfortably within the context of the surrounding landscape.

The proposed winery will be located to the north of the site. To the west of that will be the Visitor Centre. These have been positioned to the north of the site to replace the existing buildings on the site and to allow the design of the buildings to take advantage of the topography of the site and the views to the north, towards the North Downs AONB.

To the south of these buildings lies the existing dwelling. It is proposed to extend and convert this building into a 19-bedroom hotel. This layout allows the impact on the streetscene to be minimised.

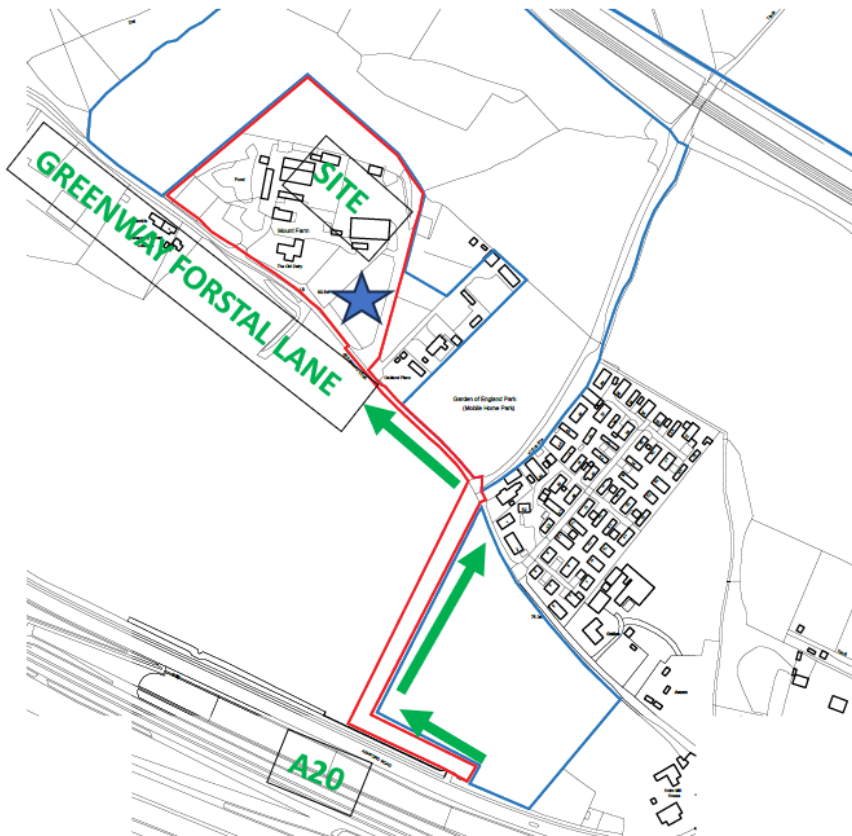
The proposed car parking will be located to the east of the site, to avoid harm to the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings, and to also to reduce the distance that visitors will be travelling along Greenway Forstal Lane.



9.0 Access

The application site is located within close proximity of the A20 trunk road and is therefore easily accessible from the surrounding primary road network.

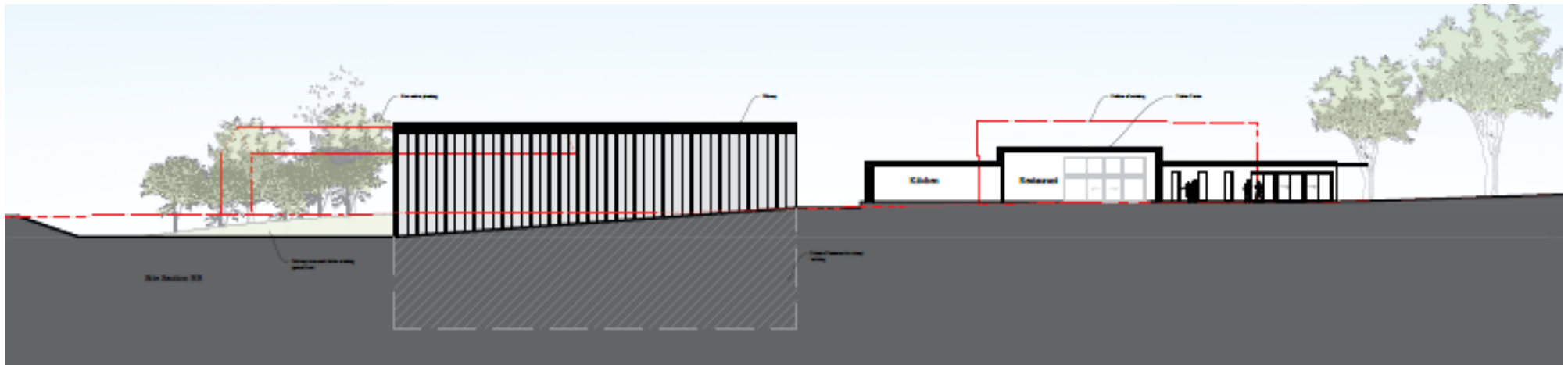
Planning permission has recently been granted for a new hard surfaced agricultural access track (22/502301/FULL), connecting Forstal Lane with the London Road. This access track has made it easier for agricultural traffic, associated with the vineyard, to access the vineyard from the A20 Ashford Road, without the need for traffic to travel along Greenway Forstal, and the lower southern part of Greenway Lane, which has limited passing places. The access from this track onto the A20 is good. It is proposed to direct traffic in association with the proposed winery along this new access road. This will improve highway safety along Greenway Forstal and will also allow a safe exit onto the A20. A Transport Assessment has been prepared to accompany this planning application and pre-application advice has been obtained from Kent Highways.



Access to the proposed buildings has been planned to ensure that there is disabled access to all buildings. Whilst parking will be provided to the east of the site, the proposed universally accessible parking will be provided to the west of the site, to allow access from the parking spaces to the buildings, whilst taking account of the topography of the site.

10.0 Scale

The dimensions, footprint and height of the winery has been driven by the wine-making process and functional requirements of the building. The footprint has been based on the minimum requirement of floorspace required to store and maintain the vineyard equipment (ie, the presses and the tanks, as well as providing spaced to manoeuvre around the plant and machinery. The mass and scale of the development is compatible with the site and will enhance local distinctiveness, including landscape features.. The height of the proposed winery will be minimised by constructing the proposed winery into the ground, with the height being no greater than the existing buildings. This will allow it to blend in seamlessly with the surrounding rural landscape.



The proposed winery will be shorter than the existing shed on the site.

11.0 Landscaping

Proposed scheme will reverse the considerable harm caused by past alterations on the sensitive landscape, and re-establish the natural, rural character of the surrounding locality and allow for ecological enhancements.

Landscaping and biodiversity enhancement is very much at the core of our client's ethos and has been a core component of the proposals. It is proposed to carry out extensive planting of native species across the site, as a continuation of the planting that has been carried out to complement the vineyard. This will further soften the impact of the proposed development within the surrounding landscape. The proposal will result in a significant visual improvement to the site and its surroundings, and would enhance the local distinctiveness of the locality. A Landscape and Visual impact Assessment has been carried out to support the proposals.



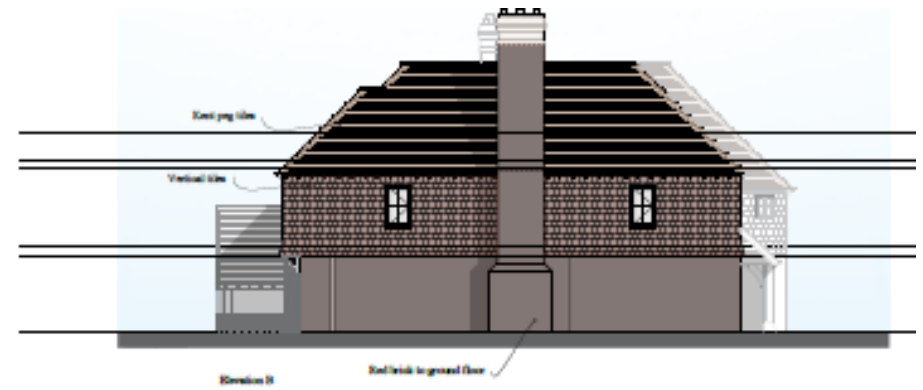
It is proposed to install low intensity manually controlled timber post lighting across the site. Whilst ensuring that the site is safe, this will ensure that there is minimal overspill, and restricting the impact on the surrounding rural area.

12.0 Appearance

The proposal will have a greater sense of cohesion with the surrounding rural area, and will allow the site to be returned to a function that is more suitable to the surrounding rural area. The proposal grasps the opportunity to the visual harm that has been caused by the existing development, and visually enhance the site, creating a development that responds to the surrounding rural landscape and that sits comfortably within the context of the surrounding buildings. The proposed development represents a high-quality unique development, that has been specifically designed to take into account the characteristics of the site. The proposed design and materials would enhance the local distinctiveness of the landscape and the surrounding streetscene.

It is proposed to sensitively extend the existing dwelling, and to re-clad the existing building with high quality materials more appropriate to the surrounding rural locality, using reclaimed red brick, oak cladding, clay vertical tiles, kent peg tiled roofs and timber fenestration. These materials are reflective of the colour and material palette of the adjacent Kent Downs AONB.

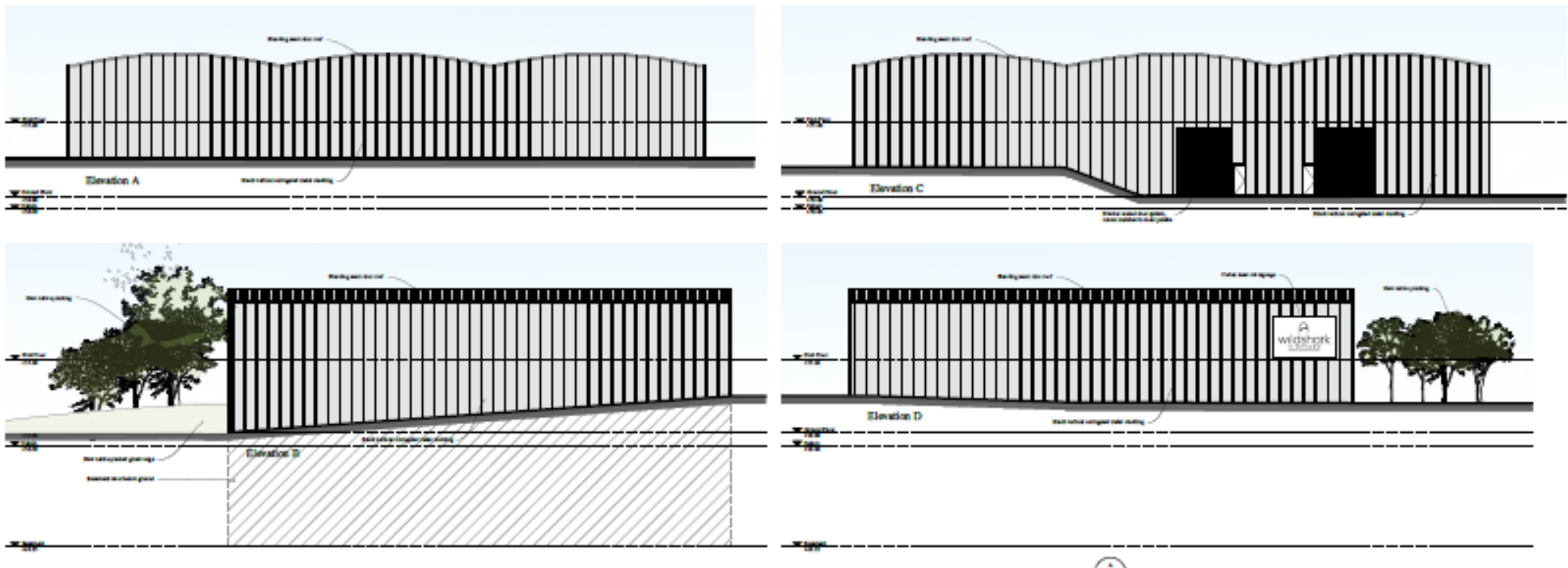
Proposed Hotel



Proposed Winery:

The proposed winery will be constructed using black corrugated metal elevations and a sheet metal roof, reflective of the character and material palette of the adjacent Kent Downs AONB.

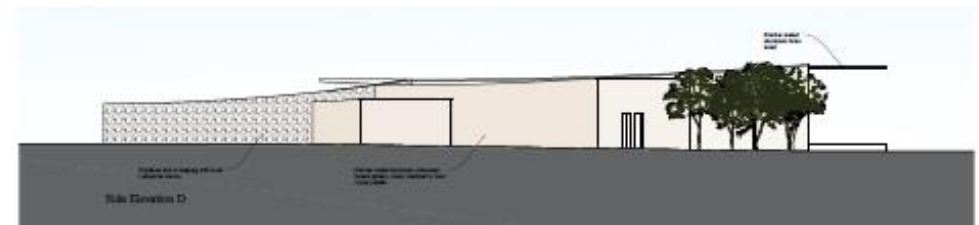
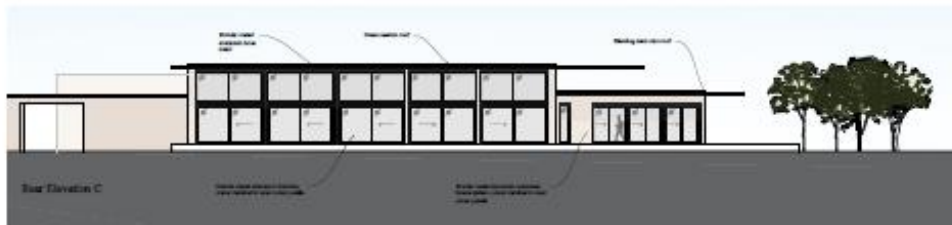
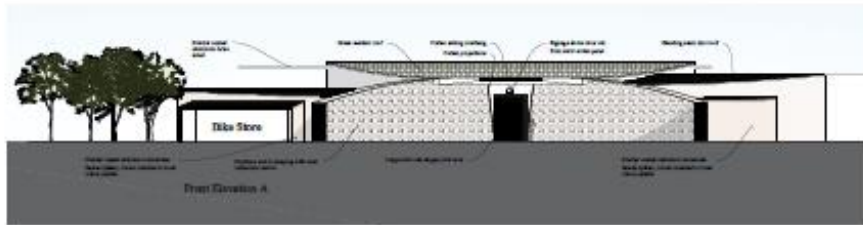
The building has been positioned on site to have minimal visual impact on the surrounding landscape. It is proposed to drop the proposed winery building into the ground to respond to the surrounding landscape. By dropping the winery into the ground will provide the ideal environment for storing the wine. The proposed buildings will also be softened with extensive native planting across the whole site. By creating the delivery zone sunk below the existing ground level will ensure that it is screened from the wider landscape.



Proposed Visitor Centre:

The proposed visitor centre is proposed to be constructed with a drystone wall, in-keeping with the local vernacular, a green sedum roof, and aluminium/oak joinery (of a colour to match the local colour palette, as set out within the Kent Downs Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development).

The sedum roof is proposed for environmental reasons, to increase habitat provision, and will also blend the building into the surroundings, and will aide water management by reducing run-off, and assisting in reducing carbon and air pollutants.





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