



## **BONCHESTER BRIDGE, SCOTTISH BORDERS**

Landscape Appraisal

November 2017

RP1177 RP001 REV A



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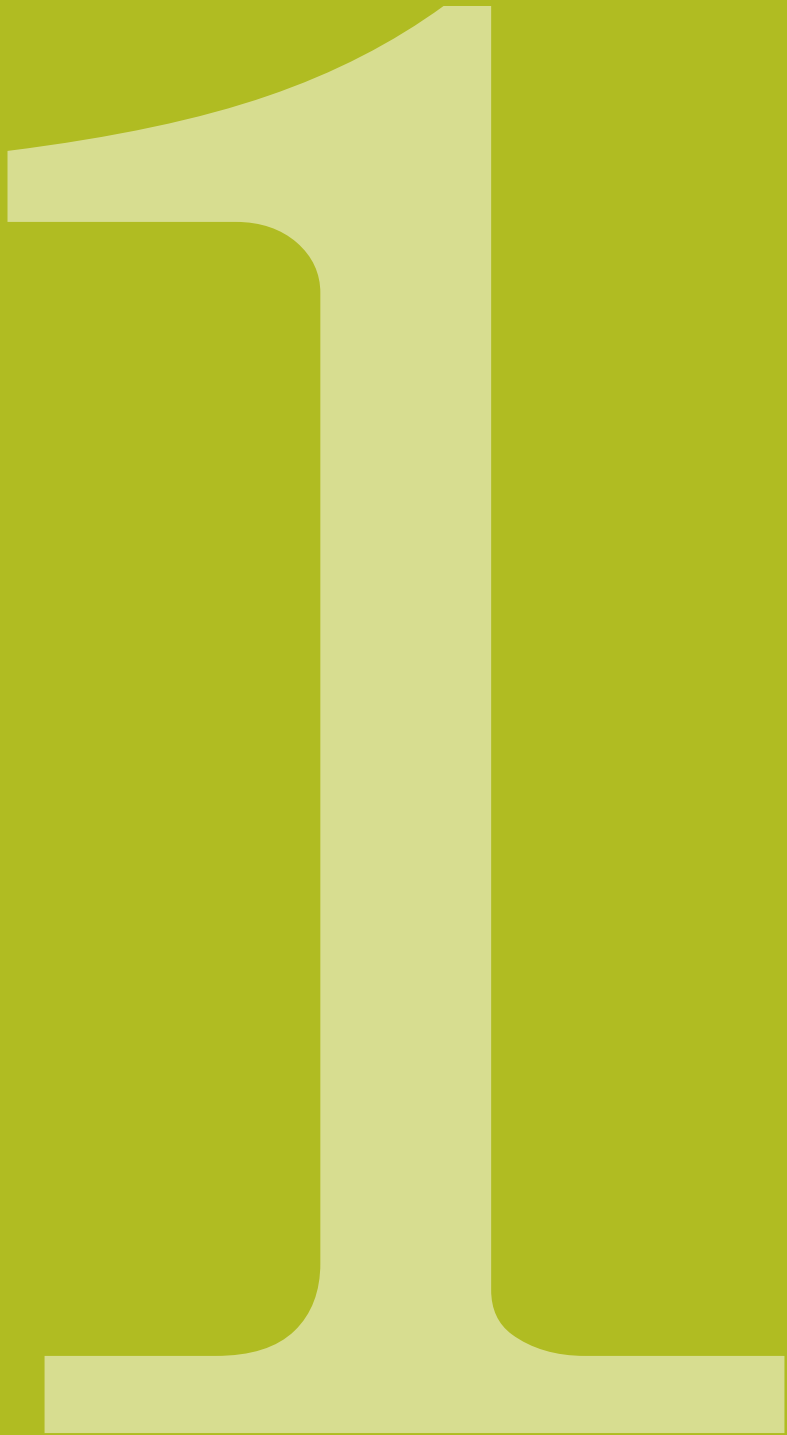
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# Introduction

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

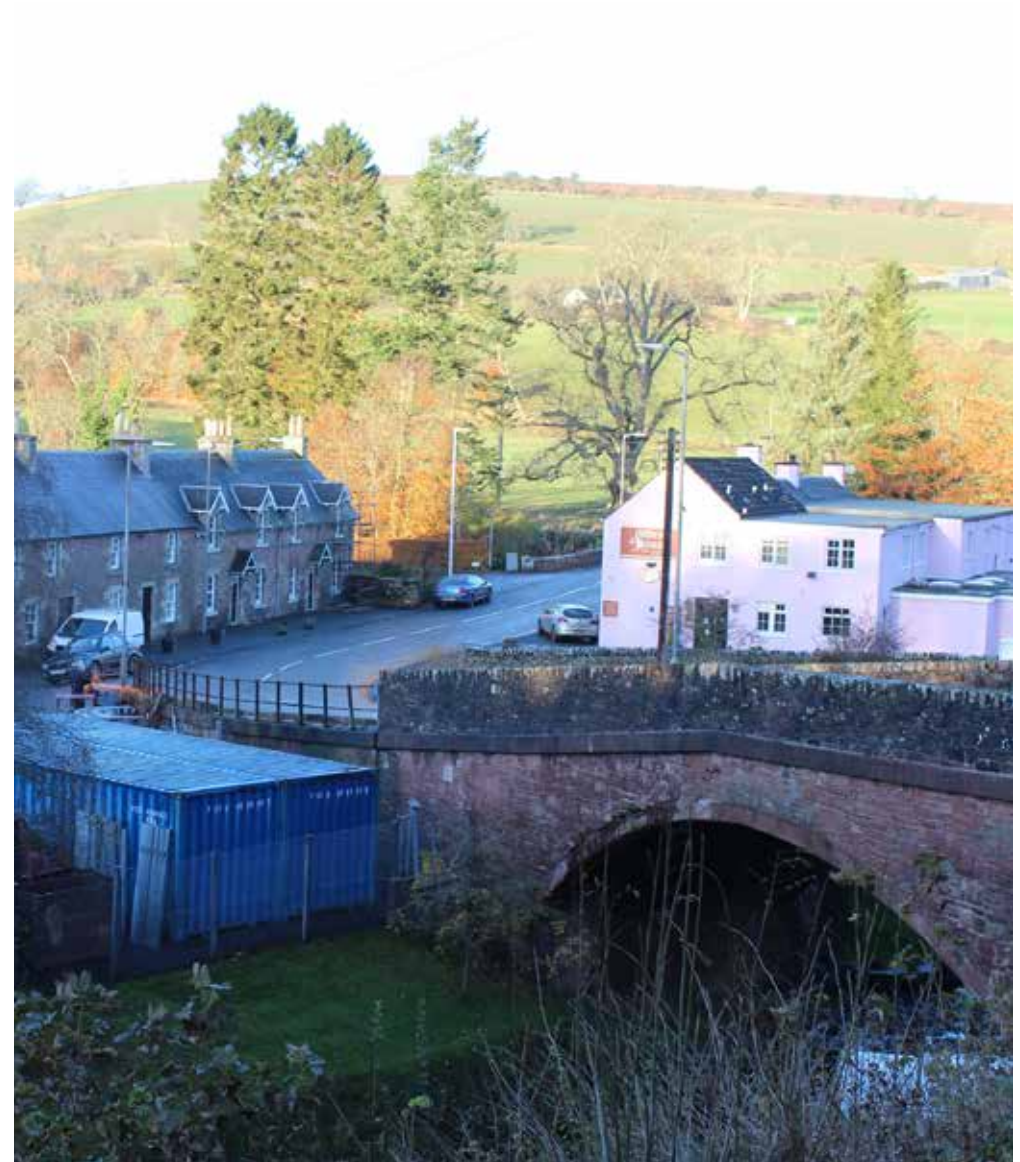
The Landscape Agency has been commissioned to undertake an initial Landscape Appraisal for a site located west of the B6357 and approximately 2 miles north of Bonchester Bridge within the Scottish Borders.

The site known as Town-o'-Rule covers an area of 5 acres and consists of several agricultural buildings surrounded by agricultural land. Aspirations are to convert the collection of buildings into a single dwelling and unify the surrounding landscape.

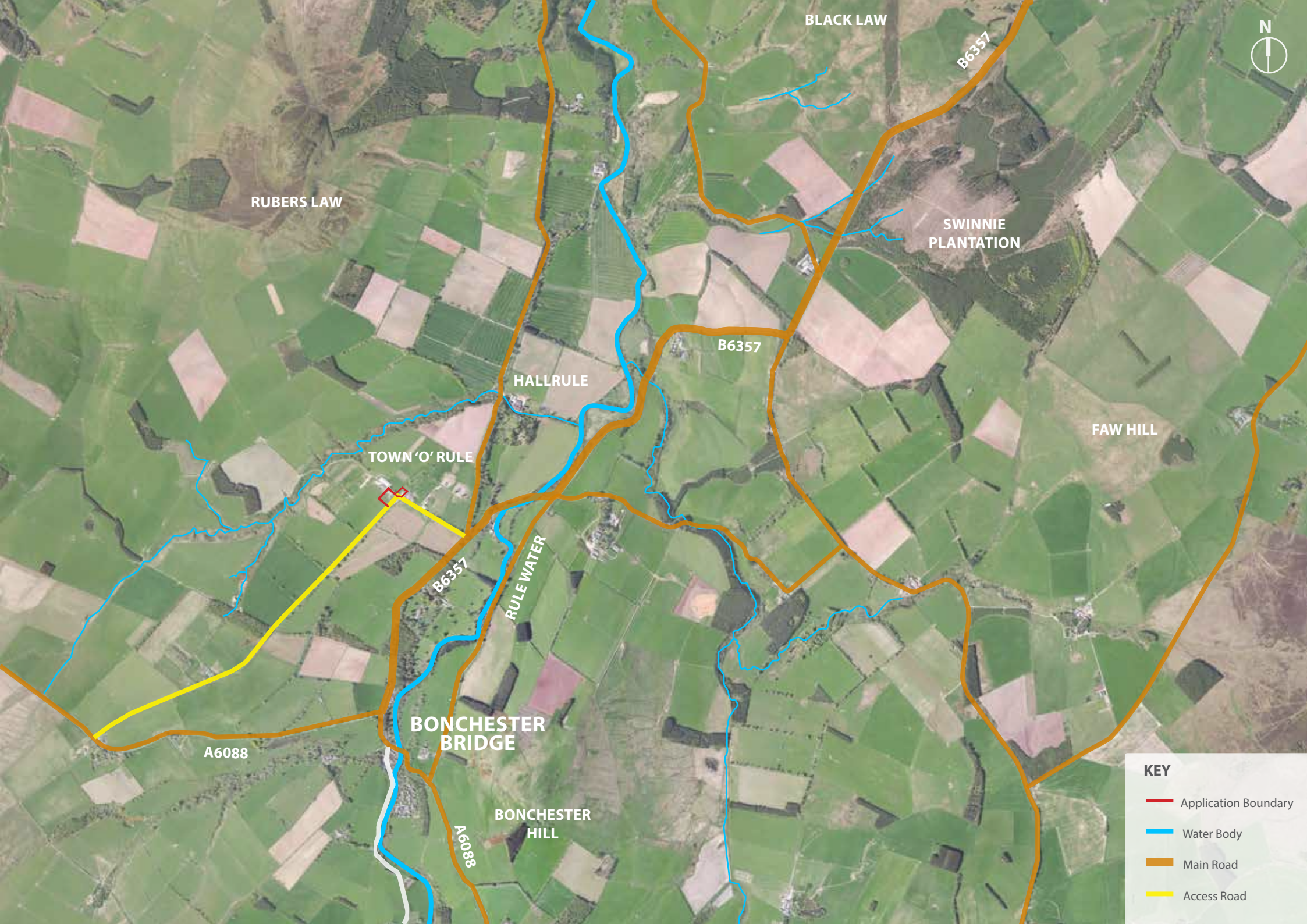
The main aims of this report are to:

- Develop an understanding of the context, including any landscape designations in and around the site;
- Carry out an initial site appraisal of the landscape, documenting existing site features such as key views, structures, access and vegetation;
- Develop early concepts for the landscape and develop distinct character areas within the site working closely with architects Sadler Brown Architecture.

A site visit was conducted in November 2017 in order to gather information and carry out on site analysis.



▲ Bonchester Bridge



RUBERS LAW

BLACK LAW

SWINNIE  
PLANTATION

B6357

HALLRULE

FAW HILL

TOWN 'O' RULE

RULE WATER

BONCHESTER  
BRIDGE

A6088

BONCHESTER  
HILL

A6088

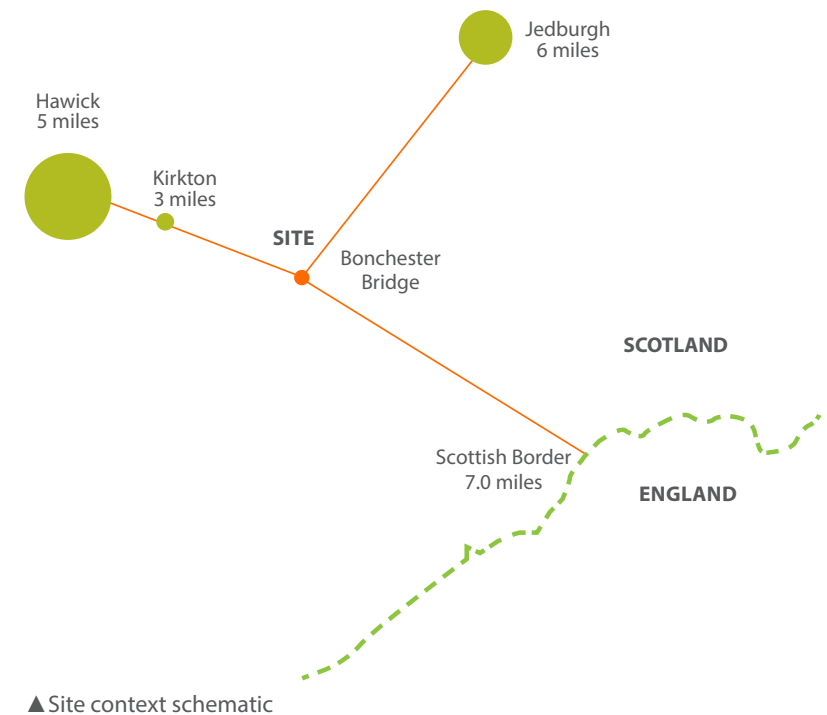
**KEY**

-  Application Boundary
-  Water Body
-  Main Road
-  Access Road

## 1.2 THE SITE

Bonchester Bridge is a village located just north of the Scottish border between Hawick and Jedburgh. The village originally received its name from the bridge which runs over Rule Water. Situated west of the river, the proposal is located within the river valley of Rule and is surrounded by several hills including Rubers Law and Bonchester Hill. These local landmarks are designated locations of former Roman signal stations with an elevated position of 424m and 323 AOD. These landmarks will have clear intervisibility with the site and require consideration.

The site lies upon a steady slope which rises from the north east to the south west boundary and contains localised undulations. As an exposed site in an elevated location, climate conditions will heavily influence the landscape proposals.





▲ View from the site to Rubers Law



## 1.3 DESIGN ASPIRATIONS

Aspirations of this project are to convert the collection of agricultural buildings into a single dwelling and provide a landscape proposal that ties in the new house with surrounding setting and existing outbuildings. The proposed house will have two key landscape components which include:

*1. A central south facing courtyard* which provides protection and enclosure from the extreme weather. Within the courtyard the private domestic uses are contained, proposed uses include a natural swim pool, lawns, planting, seating areas and potential space for a hot tub.

*2. A large natural landscape and setting* which extends north of the property. This setting forms a key visual vista from the primary living, sleeping and indoor pool spaces, with panoramic views to the wider landscape beyond.

A future phase of the wider landscape setting will also require leisure development which will include stables, a tennis court and paddock.

***Proposals could bring about significant enhancement of the immediate setting as follows:***

- Create a strong relationship between the house and landscape responding to place and existing best remaining landscape features.
- Sensitively respond to and retain views and vistas.
- Respect the surrounding designations.
- Use vernacular materials and planting to respond to and reinforce the surrounding landscape character and enhance existing biodiversity.
- Restore, maintain and manage existing planting.
- Create new spaces and characters to give the landscape relevance to the proposed uses.



Landscape Context

## 2.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

There are a number of statutory landscape designations in close proximity to the site which should be considered during subsequent design development work.

### Scheduled Ancient Monument

- ① Rubers Law, Fort & Roman signal station - (SM2129)
- ② Bonchester Hill, Fort - (SM2173)
- ③ Bonchester Hill, Earthworks - (SM2172)

### Listed Buildings/Features

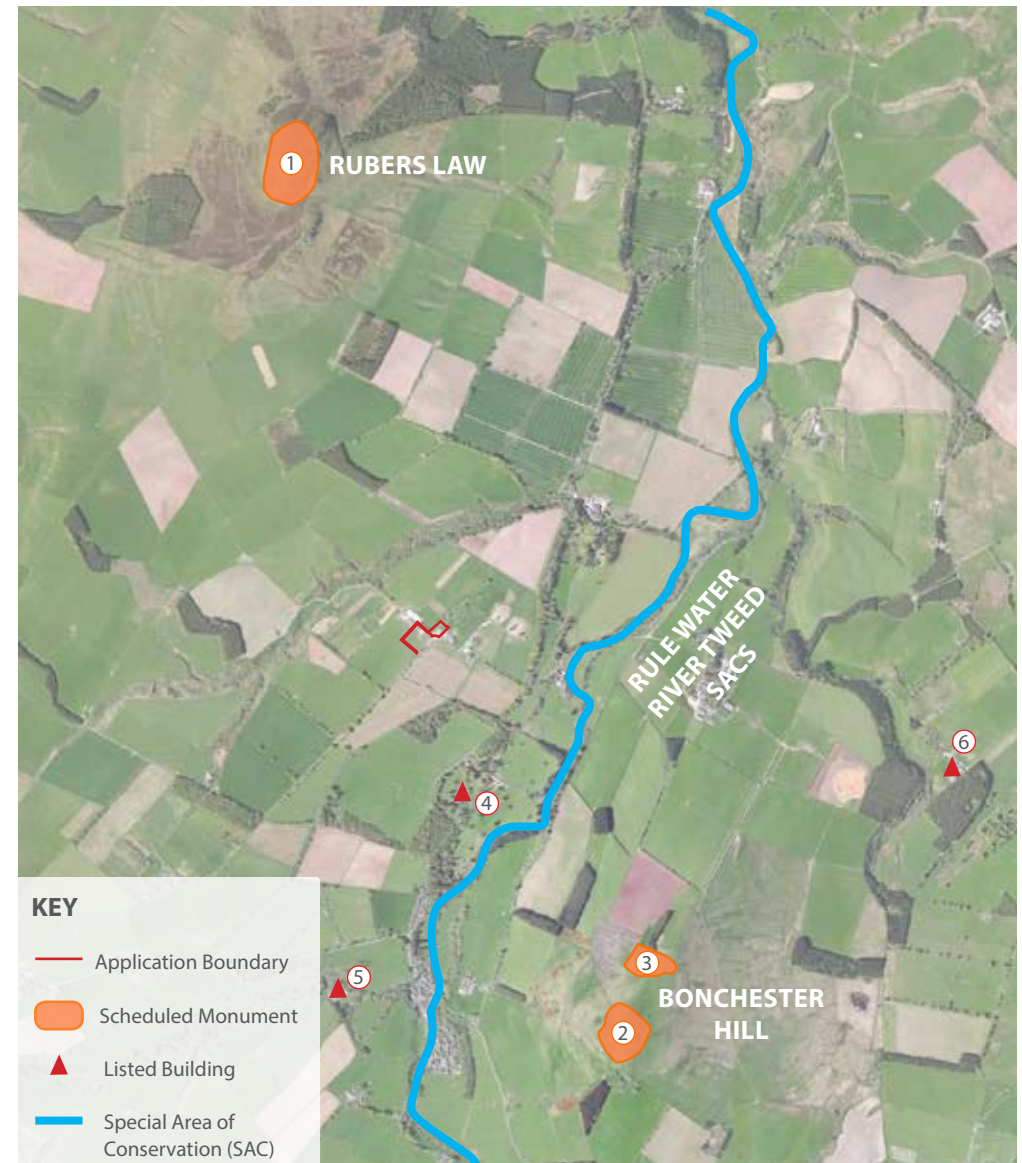
There are no Listed Buildings or features within the site however there are a number of Listed Buildings and features which surround the site and sit within the wider vicinity including:

- ④ Weens - Category B Georgian Mansion (LB10791)
- ⑤ Hobsburn - Category B building (LB8367)
- ⑥ Abbotrule Church - Category B building (LB15457)

It is important to consider any visual impact upon the surrounding Scheduled Monument and Listed Buildings. Proposals should aim to preserve the rural nature of these views. There is the potential to enhance the setting, with positive development and sensitive design.

### Special Area of Conservation (SAC)- River Tweed

A Special Area of Conservation is a statutory designation given to prime wildlife conservation areas considered important on a European level. The extent of the SAC is limited to the River Tweed itself. This particular SAC has been identified as a wildlife site of international importance due to its ecological diversity and range of habitats due to the variation in geology within its catchment. Any design impacts upon Rule water should be considered.





### Special Landscape Area (SLA) 5 - Teviot Valleys

An SLA is a local designation that intends to protect against inappropriate development and encourage landscape enhancement. Based upon an assessment of landscape qualities within the Scottish Borders, 9 SLA's were identified. The site is located within a Special Landscape area 5 - Teviot Valley, which runs between Hawick and Jedburgh and covers sections of the Teviot, Jed and Rule Valleys. Key landscape qualities which define the SLA should be considered and may inform landscape design and management.

#### Special Landscape Area (SLA) 5 - Teviot Valleys | Designation statement of importance:

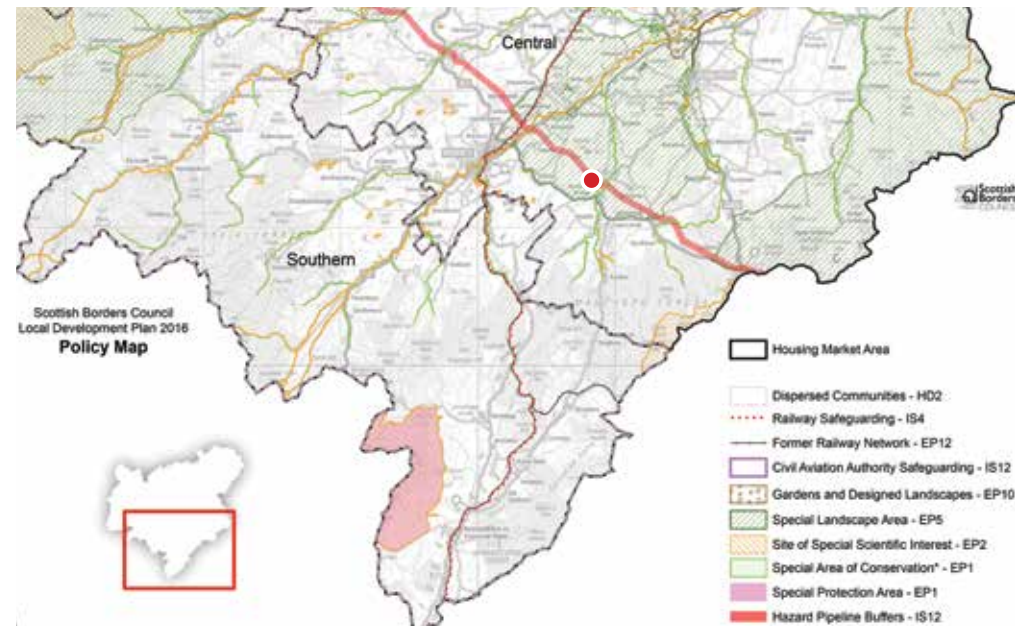
(Text highlighted in *green italics* indicates Key Characteristics of the Teviot Valley SLA relevant to the site. Text highlighted in *green italics underlined* indicates suggested Management recommendations of the Teviot Valley SLA relevant to the site.)

- This area covers a series of *distinctive Borders valleys and hills*, and has been defined to draw together a number of landmark features with their *pastoral and woodland settings*. *Visually prominent hills* include Minto Crags, Peniel Heugh, Dunion Hill, Minto Hills and *Rubers Law*, each of which has a *strong relationship with the adjacent valleys* and the wider landscape. The three valleys each have their *own distinctive character and scale*.
- *Rubers Law* has a *distinctive craggy summit*, dissected and rocky. *Bonchester Hill* is almost a *reduced version of the same*, while Dunion Hill is a landmark above Jedburgh.
- The *Rule Water* is smaller in scale than the Jed valley, and is *densely wooded* with *beech trees* along the road. It is *an intimate, picturesque valley* with *traditional stone buildings and bridges*, and *intriguing gateways into estates*. There is evidence of management which suggests a *well-established and well-loved landscape*.

#### Special Landscape Area (SLA) 5 - Teviot Valleys |

##### Suggested management recommendations:

- Continue to *promote sustainable land management* to balance the needs of *biodiversity, recreation* and tourism.
- Encourage the *sustainable management of hedges*, and where possible seek the *reinstatement of hedges and hedgerow trees*.
- Promote the restructuring of forests, and the use of forest design plans for new areas of afforestation
- Consider the effects of development on hilltops, such as masts or wind farms, which may be visible within the valleys



▲ Special Landscape Areas within the Local Development Plan Policy Map 2016

● Site Location

## 2.2 TOPOGRAPHY & VIEWS

As the site sits within the Rule Valley topography varies greatly. Summits of surrounding hills stand 200m+ taller than the ground levels found on site. The following section documents views towards the site from local statutory designations and key public routes in order to appreciate intervisibility with surrounding sensitive receptors.

Views were taken from designations within a 2.5km radius of the site with the exception of views taken from the Borders Abbeyes Way. Views beyond 2.5km become difficult to clarify however the elevated profile of Black Law and relationship to the site along the Rule Valley allows for views from the Borders Abbeyes Way. This particular route is considered a significant circular route of the Scottish Borders.

### 1. View looking south towards the site from Rubers Law

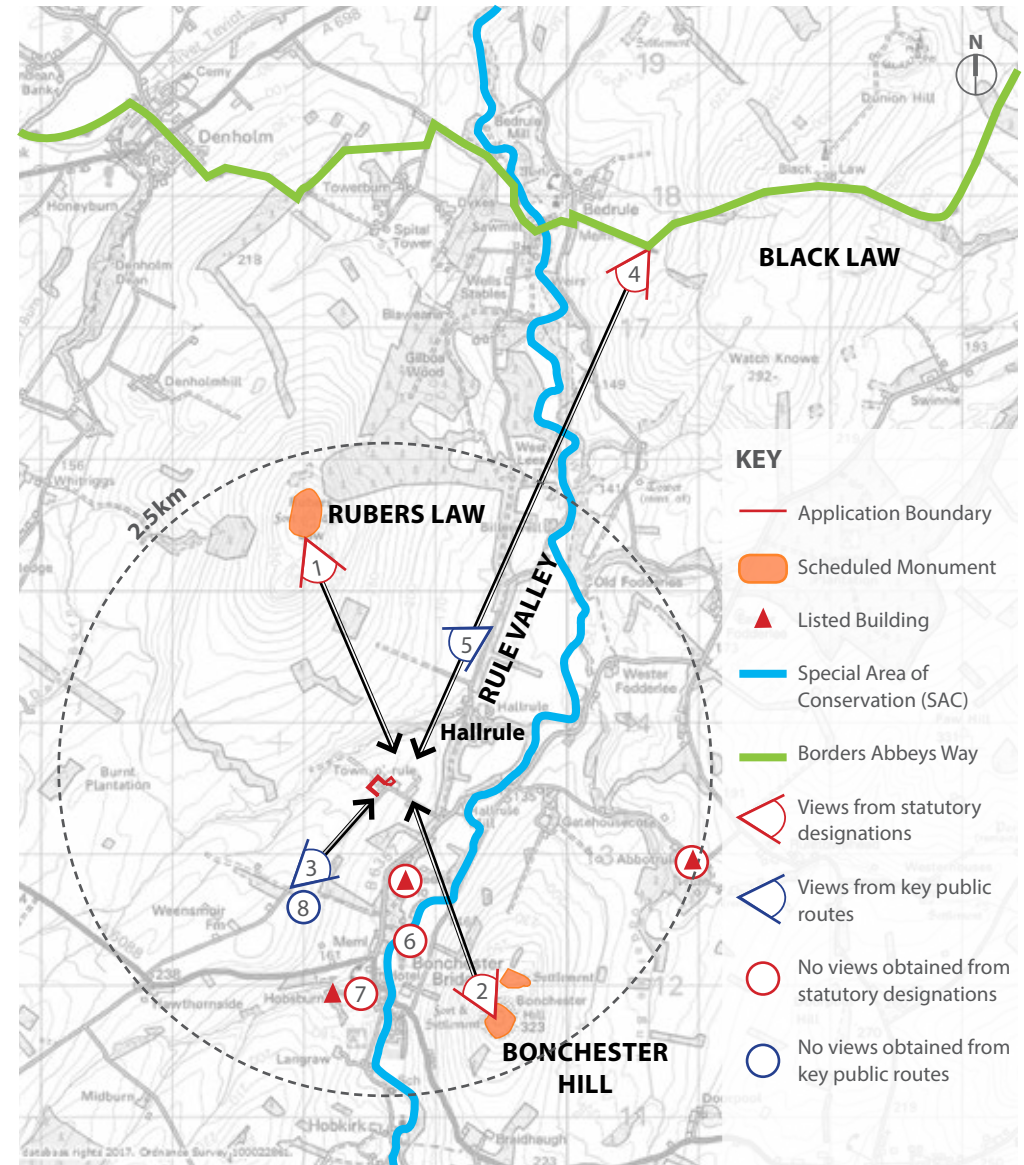
Views of the Site could be obtained from certain locations within the Scheduled Monument area of Rubers Law however these were highly limited by difference in elevation as well as the vegetative northern boarder of the Site.

### 2. View looking north towards the site from Bonchester Hill

Views of the Site could be obtained from the Scheduled Monument area of Bonchester Hill however these were limited by the neighbouring property and south-eastern facade of the remaining stone barn.

### 3. View looking north towards the site southern access road

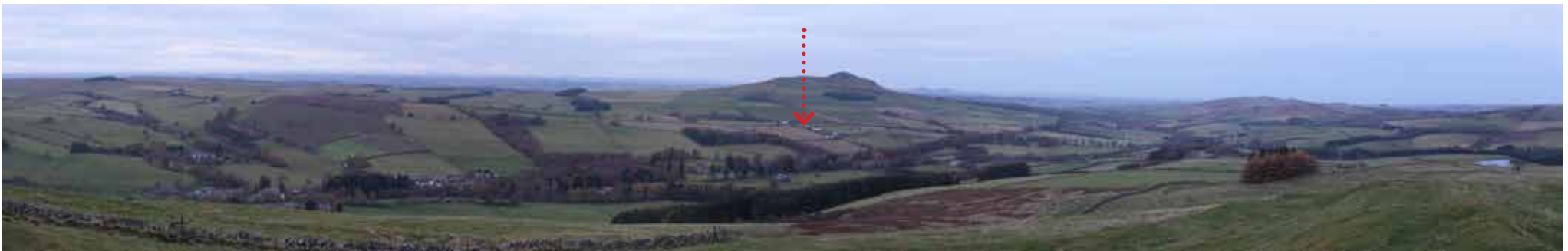
Views of the Site could be obtained from the high point of the southern access road however this was limited by the Beech tree avenue.



▲ Wider landscape views \*Numbers reference photographs on subsequent pages



▲ 1. View looking south towards the site from Rubers Law



▲ 2. View looking north towards the site from Bonchester Hill



▲ 3. View looking north towards the site southern access road

Site location

#### 4. View looking south towards the site from Borders Abbeys Way

Views of the Site could be obtained from the Borders Abbeys Way however these were highly limited due to distance. Surrounding dwellings and out buildings were clearer due to scale and lack of tree cover.

#### 5. View looking south towards the site from the Hallrule Road

Views of the Site could be obtained from the Hallrule Road however these were limited due to tree cover. Surrounding dwellings and out buildings were clearer due to scale and lack of tree cover.

#### 6. Rule Water

No views of the Site could be obtained from Rule Water due to dense tree cover and level change between the Site and river.

#### 7. Hobsburn Listed Building

As Hobsburn is located within a small valley its anticipated no views of the site could be obtained.

#### 8. Loaning public footpath

No views of the Site could be obtained from the Loaning footpath due to rolling fields and woodland between the public route and the Site.

No views could be obtained of the Site from either the Listed Abbotrule Church or the Weens Georgian Mansion due to either dense woodland or topography.



▲ 4. View looking south towards the site from Borders Abbeys Way (Note view is taken with a 55mm focal length)



▲ 5. View looking south towards the site from the Hallrule road





▲ 6. Rule Water



▲ 7. Hobsburn Listed Building



▲ 8. Loaning public footpath



Site Appraisal

## 3.1 KEY LANDSCAPE FEATURES

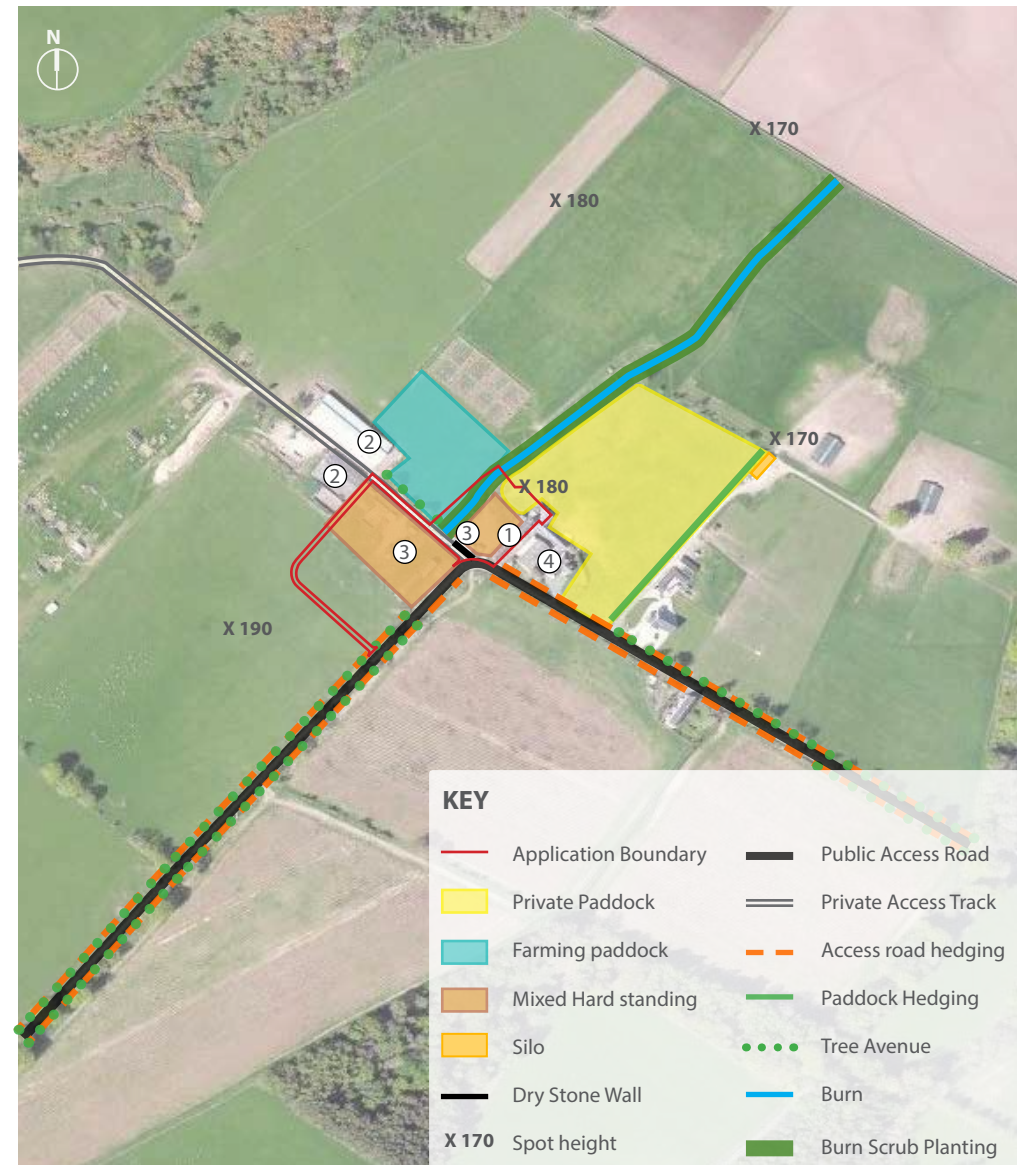
- The landscape is primarily composed of open agricultural fields used for livestock and worn hard standing.
- A burn lined with overgrown scrub planting runs through the site and out to the north.
- Tree cover is limited to various boundaries and along the burn leaving much of the wider landscape open and exposed to views and the elements.
- Tree species on site is primarily Beech which carries on within the hedging and tree avenues along both access roads.
- Boundary treatment is primarily post and wire fence and Beech & Hawthorn hedging.
- Ground level across the site is currently uneven and undulating with the private paddock sloping down towards the burn and northern boundary.

## 3.2 EXISTING BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES

- The Sites current character is defined by its functional history as a farmstead.
- There is a combination of derelict stone buildings belonging to the original farmstead and temporary storage facilities surrounding the site.
- Various storage buildings which are currently in the process of being taken down, appear to be built with practicalities in mind as appose to architecture aesthetics. The stone barn itself however has more traditional farmstead aesthetic qualities.

Buildings and structures which contribute to the existing character include:

1. The old stone barn
2. Large timber clad storage barns
3. Mixed material temporary storage structures
4. Neighbouring stone farmhouse
5. Dry stone walls (refer to key)



▲ Key landscape features

\*Numbers reference photographs on subsequent pages





▲ Existing stone barn and auxiliary buildings



▲ Existing stone barn



▲ Eastern facade of stone barn



▲ Existing storage shelter



▲ Dry stone wall



▲ Large storage Barn



▲ Assorted storage facilities

### 3.3 ACCESS, BOUNDARIES AND SURROUNDING BUILT FORM

#### ACCESS

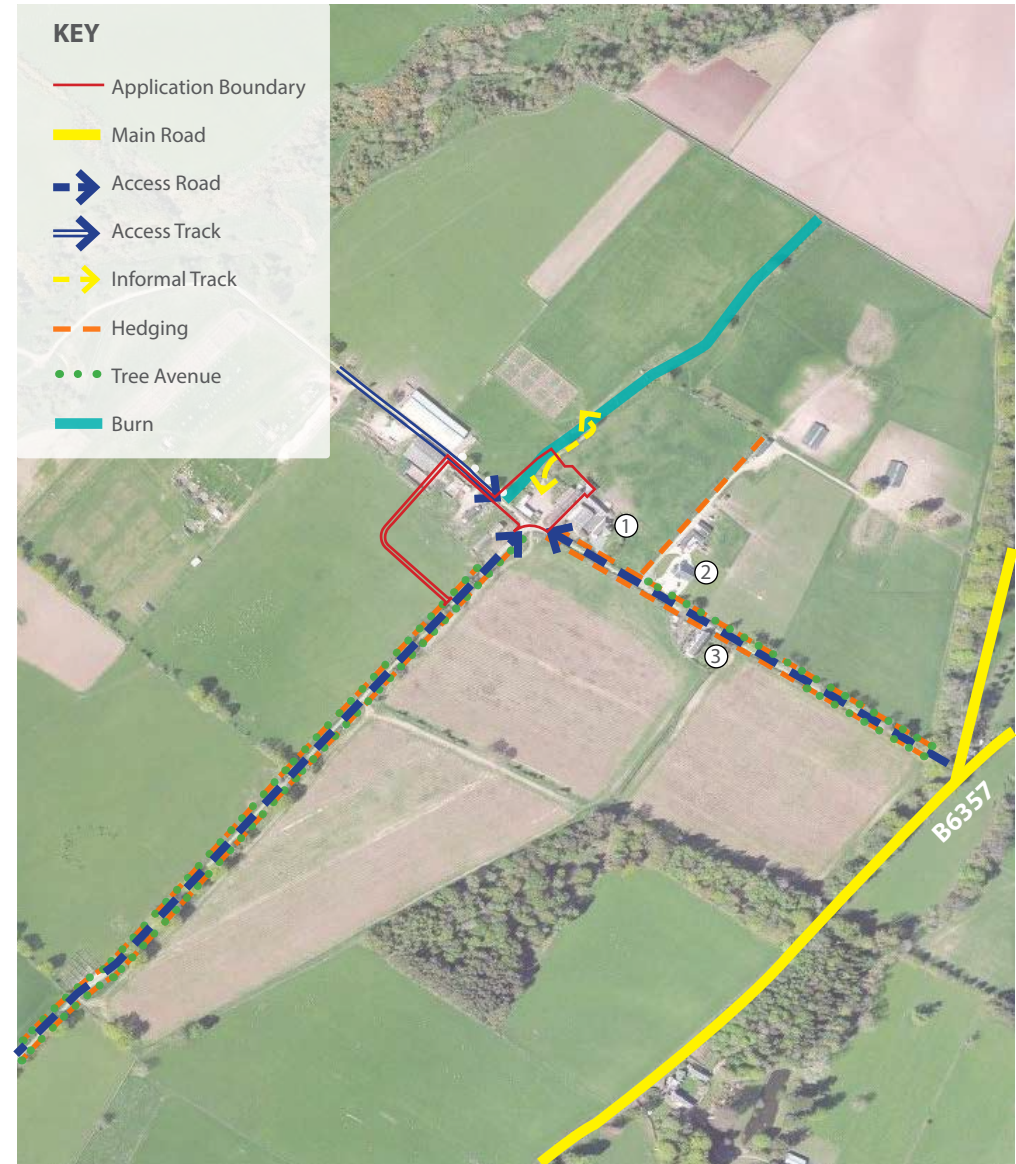
- Vehicular access to the Site can be obtained from the A6088 along the southern access road or from the B6357 along the eastern access road. The access road itself is a single lane lined with Hawthorn, Beech and Gorse mixed hedgerows and Beech tree avenues.
- Two tracks used for farming purposes run through the site and lead to the fields beyond. One access track to the north-west runs between two large storage barns and out to the surrounding fields and a second small track runs through the site, over the local burn and to the fields beyond.
- The main point of entry to the site is located where the two access roads and access track converge.

#### BOUNDARIES

- Site boundaries are post and wire fence throughout with the exception of beech hedging along the eastern edge of the private paddock to the north.
- The burn acts as boundary however this is also lined with dense scrub and post and wire fencing.

#### SURROUNDING BUILT FORM

- Neighbouring built forms are all of similar architectural style and scale to one another.
- Views of the site from the neighbouring dwellings are likely to be limited to the private paddock due to topography and existing surrounding buildings.





▲ Southern access road



▲ Eastern access road looking away from the Site



▲ Eastern access road looking towards the Site



▲ 1. Neighbouring dwelling



▲ 2. Property along eastern access track



▲ 3. Properties along eastern access track

### 3.4 LOCALISED VIEWS

Due its location within the Rule Valley the Site has panoramic views to the surrounding hills including Rubers Law and Bonchester Hill. These views are a defining characteristic of the site and should be incorporated appropriately.

- 1. Panoramic views from the Site to the south** look over the Rule Water Valley towards Bonchester Hill and the rolling fields surrounding Bonchester Bridge.
- 2. Panoramic views from the Site to the south-east** look over the Rule Water Valley to the rising profile of Bonchester Hill and hills beyond.
- 3. Glimpsed views from the Site to the south-west** look down towards the southern access road through the Beech tree avenue. Glimpses of higher ground can be seen through various pockets of woodland.
- 4. Panoramic views from the Site to the north west** are dominated by Rubers Law along with some glimpses across the burn to surrounding storage barns.
- 5. Panoramic views from the Site to the north** look along the Rule Valley and its peripheral hills including Faw Hill and Black Law.
- 6. Panoramic views from the Site to the north-east** look along the Rule Valley and its peripheral hills including Faw Hill and Black Law. Various types of farm storage such as silos can be seen within the foreground of this particular view.
- 7. Direct views towards the Site from the south-east access road** are limited by the topography found on site. As the steading is at the top of a hill even views of the site entrance are limited.



▲ Key views \*Numbers reference photographs on subsequent pages





▲ 1. Views south



▲ 2. Views south-east



▲ 3. Views south-west



▲ 4. Views north west



▲ 5. Views north



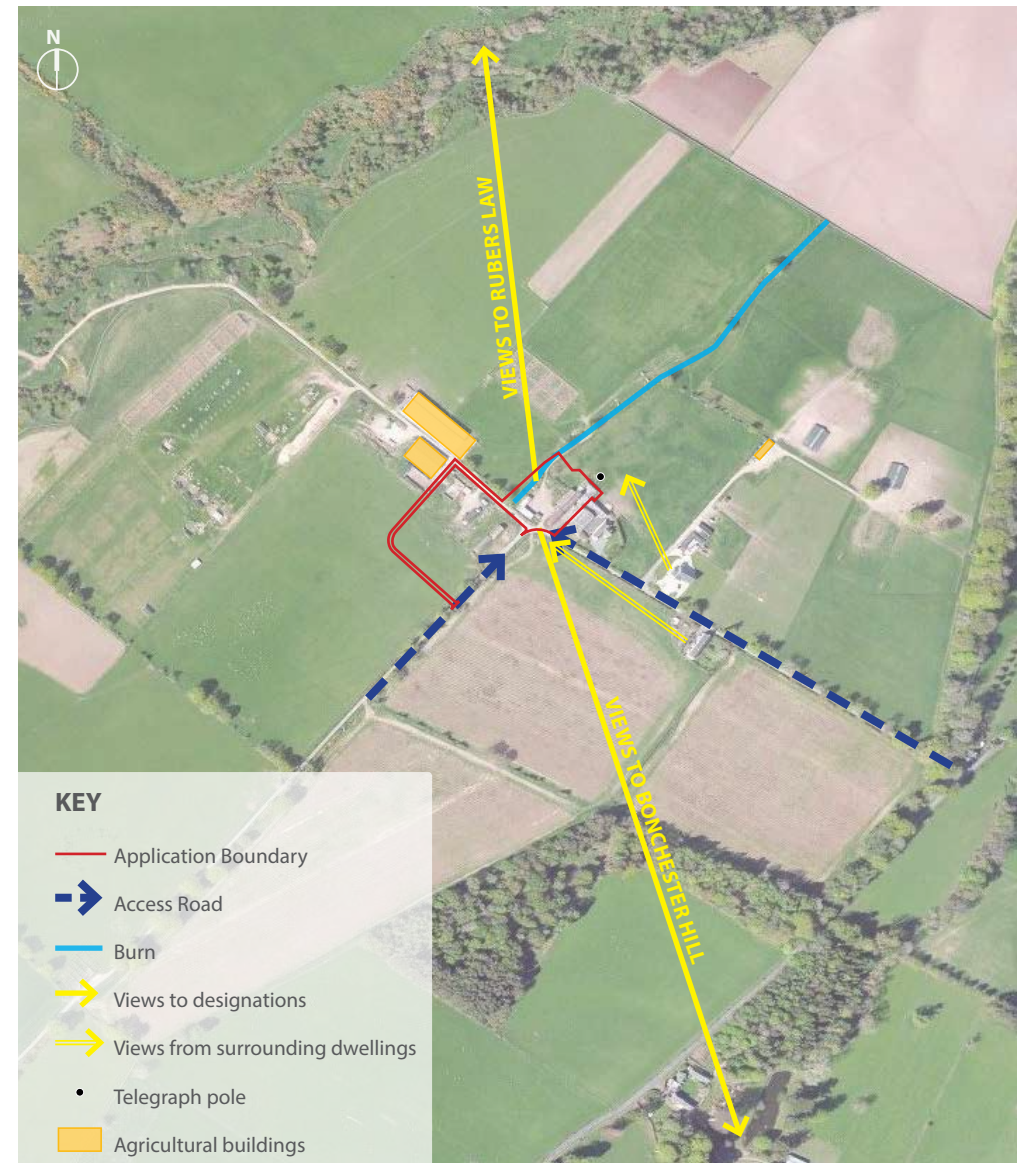
▲ 6. Views north-east



▲ 7. Views towards the site Site from the south-east

### 3.5 CONSTRAINTS

1. **Visual connection to surrounding sensitive landscape designations** - Although these are very much limited and effected currently by other larger buildings, views should be considered when producing a proposal.
2. **Visual connection to neighbouring dwellings** - Views to the exiting stone barn from surrounding buildings are currently limited due to the topographical context however views of the private paddock are likely to be visible. Landscape proposals should consider how the wider setting may be overlooked.
3. **Neighbouring Boundary** - It is intended for a new boundary to be introduced to the neighbouring settlement which was once part of the same farmstead however this is currently a seperate private dwelling. This will limit privacy along the eastern edge.
4. **Accessibility** - Accessibility is limited to a single carriageway.
5. **Burn** - The effects of a water body limits planting typology and has potential to flood. Any proposed planting should consider soil conditions surrounding the burn.
6. **Topography** - The site consists of uneven ground which slopes quite dramatically toward the burn and northern boundary. Appropriate accessibility and landscape features within these areas should be well considered.
7. **Utilities (telegraph pole)** - Currently a telegraph pole is a visual and physical barrier.
8. **Visual impact of agricultural activity** - Views of surrounding agricultural buildings can be obtained throughout the site. It is important proposals try to minimise any views to agricultural buildings such as the silos to the north-east of the site.
9. **Light pollution** - Due to its exposure proposals within this location are likely to be seen at distance. Light at night is clearer than during the day therefore lighting proposals within the landscape should be kept within the immediate setting of the house to minimise wider landscape effects.
10. **Microclimate** - Due to the Sites location on higher levels of the Rule Valley and lack of tree cover, the land is exposed to high winds which limits what is likely to grow on site.



▲ Landscape Constraints

### 3.6 OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Redevelop a brown field site** - The proposal gives the opportunity to enhance a currently worn landscape as well as clearing a series of temporary storage buildings.
- 2. Views** - As well as being a limitation for consideration, panoramic views surrounding the site are a great opportunity that could drive design composition.
- 3. Accessibility** - Existing accessibility consists of well maintained established planting which is characteristic of the Teviot Valley Special Landscape area. Planting materials should seek to compliment and reinforce existing vegetation significant to the area. Access roads are also strong view lines which can be used to frame site access.
- 4. Burn** - Opportunity to link any proposed water features into an existing drainage system. Soil conditions provide the conditions to introduce aquatic planting.
- 5. Topography** - Undulating topography across the site provides the opportunity to conceal and reveal landscape elements.
- 6. Existing materials palette** - The site currently contains various materials found traditionally within a farm setting such as dry stone walls. Proposals should aim to compliment the existing palette and tie in with any planting characteristic of this landscape such as Beech hedge and tree planting and biodiversity enhancements.
- 7. Bury Utilities** - Opportunity to bury the existing telegraph pole which currently limits views and act as a physical barrier within the landscape.
- 8. Site boundaries** - Redefining and clarifying new boundaries to provide formal and aesthetically appropriate borders to a house setting.
- 9. Sustainability** - Opportunity to integrate sustainable drainage solutions and increase native flora and fauna species diversity appropriate to localised microclimates.
- 10. Microclimate** - Due to the sites exposure much of the land will have sun light for most of the day with the exception of areas in close proximity of any buildings. Creation of south facing enclosed courtyard spaces will create a more sheltered and warmer climate.



▲ Landscape Opportunities

### 3.7 LANDSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to guide the masterplan as architectural proposals evolve.

- Provide a landscape design which **enhances the Site and respects views from surrounding historical designations**.
- Use **views** to the surrounding landscape as a **key design driver**. Introduce design strategies which **build up** to and **frame key views**.
- Utilise **existing access** and introduce a **circulation strategy** which identifies a **hierarchy** of paths and vehicular routes.
- Use **topographical opportunities** on site to create a **variety of interesting spaces** which **conceal and reveal landscape elements** and **architectural form** as you navigate throughout the Site.
- **Integrate** the **external landscape** with **internal spaces** in order to **unify** overall **aesthetics**.
- Use **existing materiality** on site and within the local context to inform **colour, texture** and **form** of any proposed materials such as the use of dry stone walls
- **Reference and complement plant species** which are characteristic of this landscape such as **Beech hedge and tree planting**.
- **Sensitive placement** of vegetation to limit visibility of the proposed dwelling from neighbouring dwellings as well as limiting views from the proposed building to surrounding agricultural buildings such as the Silos.
- Enhance the Burn both ecologically and aesthetically by **clearing invasive species** and planting appropriate **riparian species** as well as providing a **sustainable solution** to **drainage** on site.
- Introduce **planting species** which are **appropriate** to the various **microclimates** found on site. Vegetation should provide **year round interest** and **respond to colours** and **texture** within the **surrounding context**.
- Redefine and **clarifying** new **boundaries** to provide **formal** and **aesthetically appropriate boarders** to a house setting.



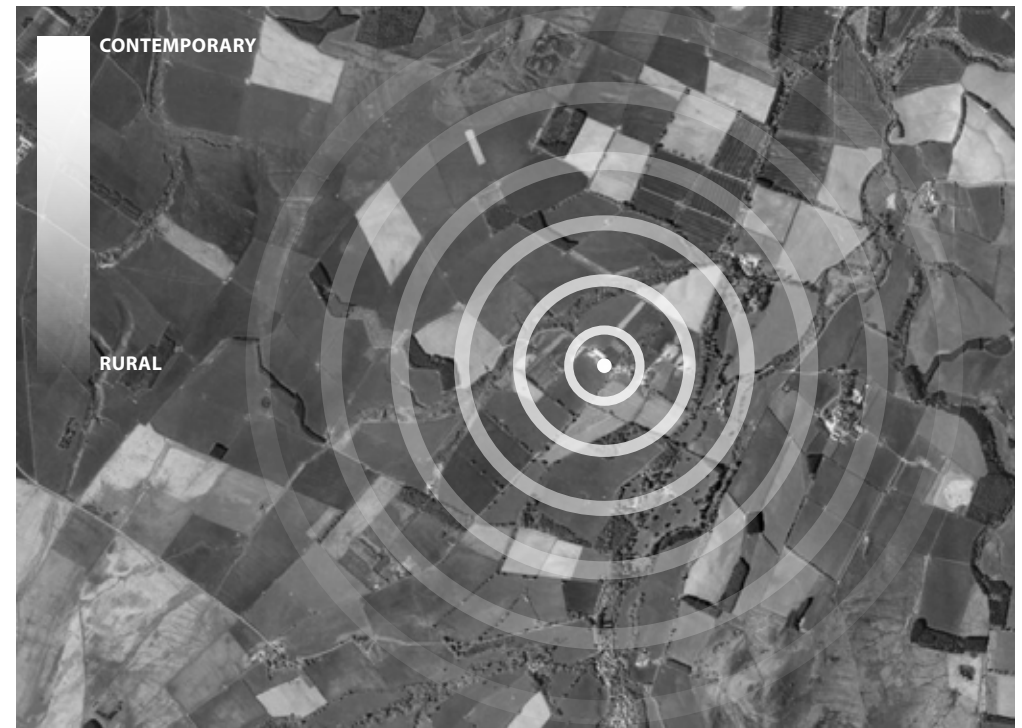
Design Concepts

## 4.1 DESIGN CONCEPTS

Design concepts are driven by inherent landscape assets found on site including panoramic views to the surrounding Rule Valley and rural characteristics of the Scottish Borders such as colours textures and patterns within the landscape.

Due to the Sites exposure to the surrounding rural setting any proposal will be visually connected to the wider landscape. It is intended that the landscape proposals draw in the textures, colours and field patterns and respond to this within planting, materiality and composition.

As the architectural proposal is likely to be a contemporary interpretation on farm steading buildings, it is intended that the landscape diffuses contemporary style in order to integrate the dwelling appropriately within its rural context. Landscape proposals surrounding the proposed dwelling will initially be contemporary and in keeping with proposed architectural form. The further you travel from the dwelling the more informal the setting will become in order for landscape to naturally bleed into the surrounding rural context.



▲ Concept Diagram





## 4.2 INDICATIVE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

The plan illustrates the proposed Landscape Character Areas for the site. Each character area will have unique values and features which contribute to creating a rich and varied landscape.

Key Character Areas to include:



Courtyard



Immediate Setting

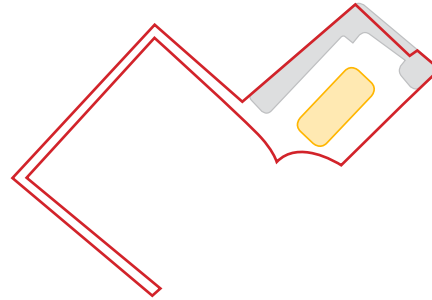


▲ Proposed indicative character areas

## 4.3 CHARACTER AREA 1 | COURTYARD

### DESCRIPTION

A contemporary partially enclosed formal courtyard which frames the architectural proposal and combines the function of accessibility with social spaces in a high quality landscape setting.



▲ Location of Courtyard

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create space for vehicular use which sets the tone of a high quality private setting. Ensure this area does not impede upon privacy within courtyard social spaces.
- Circulation and spatial composition to respond to the internal uses of the property.
- Introduce a contemporary natural pool which provides visual interest within the courtyard and utilises potential reflection of its context.
- Introduce a mixture of structured planting and ornamental grasses suited to partial shade. These should provide contrast and year round interest.
- Use of consistent planting and materials to unify the house and landscape setting. Materials used to define thresholds and provide leading lines across the courtyard.
- Reinstate a formal access and entrance boundary to the site using appropriate materials.
- Utilise views out to Bonchester Hill and along tree avenues at the courtyard point of entry.



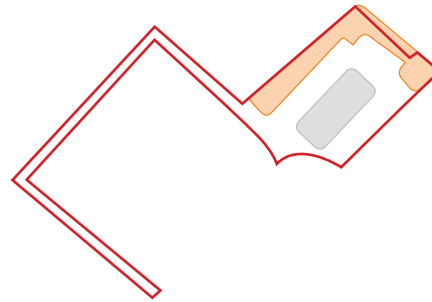


▲ Indicative images of proposed character

## 4.4 CHARACTER AREA 2 | IMMEDIATE SETTING

### DESCRIPTION

The immediate setting to the house excluding the courtyard space. This landscape will be less formal in content than the courtyard however still provide a structured complementary setting to the architectural proposal.

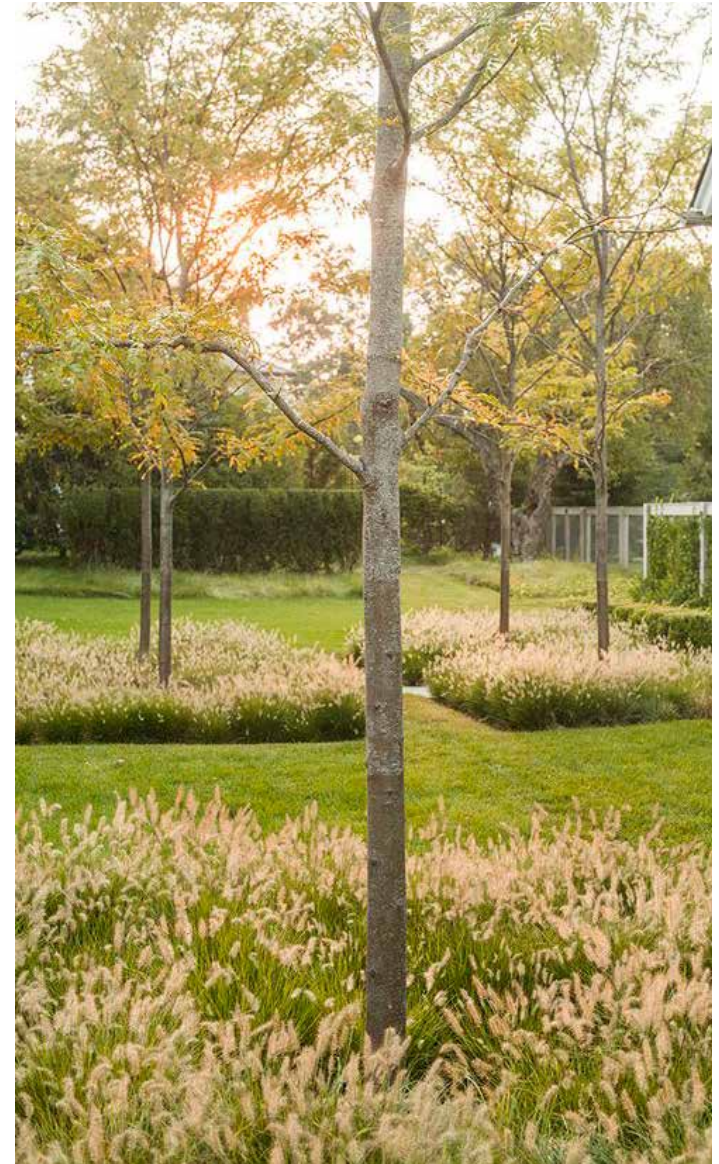


▲ Location of Immediate Setting

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- A private garden setting which compliments panoramic views to the wider landscape.
- A combination of ornamental grasses and perennial planting which reference texture and colours within the wider landscape and frame key views. Structured planting to be robust in order to withstand exposure while providing year round interest.
- Introduce informal access routes which lead you to smaller private spaces within the wider setting. These may be a combination of mown paths and steps which integrate seamlessly with undulations in the landscape.
- Immediate setting west of the dwelling to integrate the natural setting of the burn with more formal structure surrounding the property. Use of riparian species which treat any surface water run off before entering the burn.
- Reinforce visual barriers to the surrounding agricultural buildings using vegetative borders.





▲ Indicative images of proposed character



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