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#### MAP OF AONBS



How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

# Introduction

How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

Architecture is a practice of art which designs and constructs buildings. However, in Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) a building erected or modified must justify 'exceptional circumstantial' (Green Balance, 2015) reason for it to be upon a (AONB). The origin of these areas arose from the Access To The Countryside Act passed in 1949 by John Dower where they were presented to the nation wholly as a 'recreational gift to British service men and women of the Second World War' (Government Legislation, 1949). The 'national importance and quality' of these areas can not be overlooked (Gove, 2018). Recent announcements in February 2020 outline the creation of more national parks and (AONB) (Johnson, 2020). Through these expanding areas of utmost significance, interior architecture will be procured to maximise the speciality of (AONB). This will be explored with intent, to uncover the potential interior architecture has to work with these protected areas. This exploration will consider the best type of structure, design, purpose and presence a dwelling can have to achieve a successful output. The potential output should magnify these landscapes and provide a gateway into a sustained future for them. Ultimately, the (AONB) designation, through legislation and guidance, requires the conservation and enhancement of these nationally cherished areas. The protection of these spaces does not preclude change and development therefore, interior architecture could be harnessed to recognise the inherent value of these areas (both potential and realised).

Figure 4.
Wall and Roof of holiday cottage in the Costwols (Jarvis, 2020)

# Motivation to Study

Summer 2020 was when (AONBs) were really brought to the forefront of my mind. Like many others, as a result of the pandemic my plans were changed and my holidays abroad were replaced by travelling around the Norfolk Cost, North Devon and The Cotswolds (fig. 5). During my time in the outstanding areas I was exposed to my own ignorance consistently in the face of an array of ceaseless unspoiled landscapes. I had not realised the true enchantment they possessed until my 2020 visits. Succeeding this reaction to the coastlines and vast moorlands, my contemplation began. I realised the important extent of (AONB) and that they are more than just beautiful scenic areas.

The Chairman of the National Association of (AONBs) accounts how the world has significantly changed since Gowers first introduction of (AONBs): 'our fundamental requirement for beautiful, inspiring places in which to live, work, and relax is greater now than ever before' (Hygate, 2018). This indicates the need for new infrastructure creations within these areas. The main incentive behind my proposal is to explore the relationship between natural landscapes and interior architecture's possibility to evoke benefits for (AONB) visitors and inhabitants. Creating or adapting new infrastructure could ensure a continued revenue of success under the increasing pressures of modernity that doubtless lay in the futures of (AONB).



How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

# Motivation to Study

'The relationship of manmade structures to the natural world, has been neglected by architecture. There are many reasons for this. Foremost among them, is the blindness of the contemporary urban world to everything that is not itself, to nature most of all.' Lacking of experience is the main cause for this blindness; it indicates and reveals the illogical and self-defeating results of designing in oppositional relation to the natural environment. (Vincent Scully, 1991:11)

# Norfolk Coast

Figure. 6 Collection of my photographs from various AONBs (Jarvis, 2020)

North Devon

How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

Figure. 7 Breakdown of the small businesses responding to the FSB infrastructure survey (Landscapes for Life, 2011)



The variation of buildings in (fig.7) analyses the correlation between the strength of the financial output and a dwellings purpose. This reinforces the importance of research as it is integral to discover which type of architecture lends itself most successfully to its surroundings. Evidence from the economy of (AONBs) highlights that in these areas, partnerships (within infrastructure) work closely with a section of the rural business communities. This breakdown of the financial success of the varied dwelling types below suggests interior architecture and design can positively impact these areas simultaneously with design. It is also clear they can contribute financially from the image (fig.7) into a continued preservation and future particularly in the hospitality sector.

# How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success? Figure 8. Walking down to Holkham Beach (Jarvis, 2020)

# Topic Overview

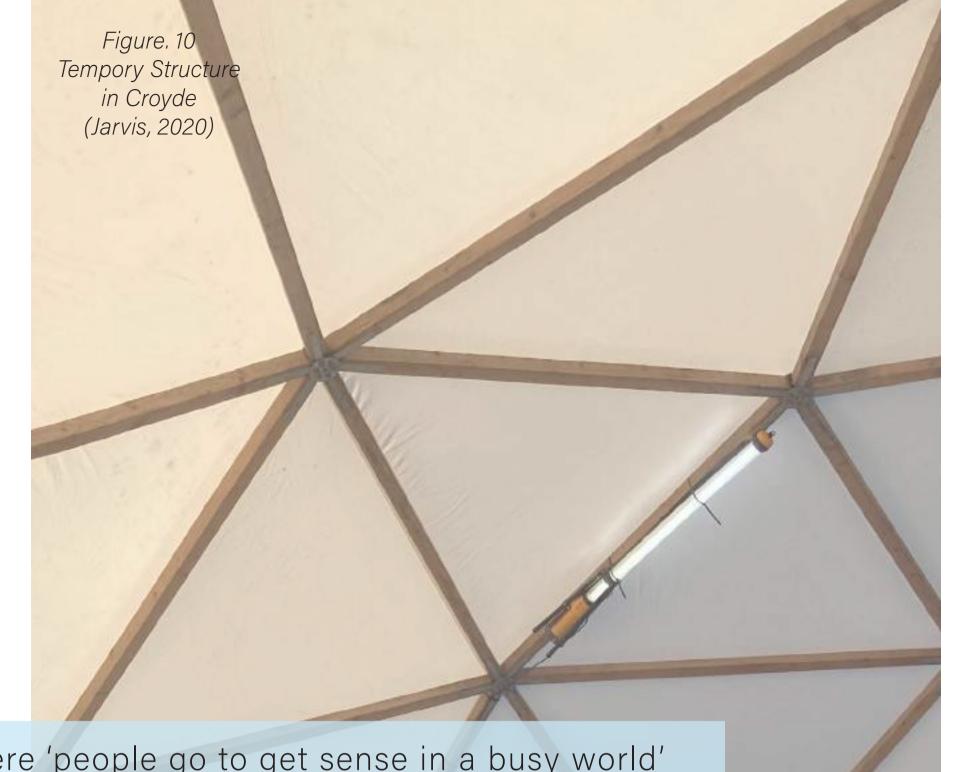
# What really is an oustanding area of natural beauty?

There are forty six Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty covering a total of nearly eight thousand square miles of the UK's rural landscape. The statutory definition of 'Natural Beauty' includes flora, fauna and geological and physiographic features. The natural beauty of (AONB) is partly due to nature, and partly a product of many centuries of human modification. Landscapes, on the contrary, encompass everything -'natural' and human- that makes an area distinctive. These elements are: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it. They are man-made, cultural landscapes and they are also living landscapes. This is both by virtue of the species and habitats within them, and because their special qualities can only be maintained by continuing human activity. Notably, very little in the UK landscape can be described as 'natural', as much is the result of the combined effects of many centuries of human influence creating them into the landscapes of today. Ultimately, (AONB) landscapes cannot be frozen in time, they may and will change. What is important is to understand what makes them special and then develop a vision of how they can be sustained into the future.

There are many ways of imparting nature to architecture, it is necessary to differentiate between these approaches to find the best way to create or adapt buildings upon protected areas. According to the research conducted by (Mahmoud, 2017), it is argued that there are only two general ways to do this: one which 'uses nature as a composing element and one that favors leaving nature untouched as much as possible so it is an element of worship.' This view connotes that interior architecture and design can be used in a positive way to guide change, whether that is to harness the characteristics of nature via organic architecture or influence the separation among the built and unbuilt environment.

The 34 (AONB) and 10 National Parks attract more than 260 million visitors a year and more than 66% of us live within half an hour of a National Park or an (AONB) (Hygate, 2017). The statistics here suggest how the natural setting in our world has the ability to make a difference to many lives (as many live in close proximity). In 2005 a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) was created for (AONB) to support their development partnership and social inclusion. Arguably, the future of protected areas can only be conserved if a large amount of these visitors are impacted by their visits. Using government funding such as the SDF and the 6 billion spent here per annum, new or adapted infrastructure here could be a future solution to preservation. Moreover, according to the research essay (Developing Nature in Architecture, 2018) interior architecture is again highlighted to be a useful tool: 'Humans always connect their senses such as physical, visual, material between interiors and nature. This section of research implies that by creating an indoor-outdoor experience, the visitors will connect more to the areas they visit. This is reinforced by the fact 'more than 70% of a person's lifespan is spent indoors' (Kim, 1998), inferring the importance of inside spaces even in the unspoilt landscapes of (AONB). Evidently, to insure success, it is important to stimulate these visitors' human feelings and thinking to protect these areas. The space surrounding a building can be directly or indirectly complimented by it making the area become more compelling. It could be argued this is 'because (AONB) provides such a rich source of properties' (Developing Nature in Architecture, 2018) which enhances a seamless interior exterior sensory experience.





Overall, as these places are where 'people go to get sense in a busy world' (Shepherd, 2008) our approach to the connectivity between the natural world and architecture needs to be met through high quality development in appropriate locations. It is a requirement that buildings must be appropriate and in the public's best interest. The National Trust (AONBs) and development article tell us that public visitors spend in 'excess of 6 billion per annum' implying the need to meet public and social needs (The National Trust, 2015). This data clarifies the results in (fig.7) as development must compliment the public's interest in spending. However, the statistics from The National Trust and (fig.7) do not fully explain why people spend the money and what draws them to beauty spots or particular buildings there. Despite this, it may be of benefit to ensure new architecture on (AONBs) as intriguing indoor spaces that shelter from the outdoors allows people to spend more time in these protected areas. By providing interlude a wider effect could be achieved for communities, as visitor proceeds spent indoors can be injected back into the local economy to ensure its success.

# Topic Overview

#### Exploring the connection

Symbolically speaking, what lays between nature and architecture can be very complex in the speculative manner. Therefore, understanding the opinion of philosopher Harries is interesting as she depicts, a key task of architecture is 'interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which an individual can find his/her place in the midst of nature and in the midst of a community' (Harries,1993). Harries (1993), argues that, too often, buildings do not respond to the needs of human dwelling because they are made arbitrarily instead of being let to arise out of the real-world requirements of particular people, places and landscapes. Non-arbitrary-architecture could be the solution to consider human life, as the design of this architectural approach can consider and incorporate surrounding nature and culture. One drawback of this approach could neglect pretty aesthetics features in or on buildings and perhaps also functional design as the interior architectural elements would be completely centered there natural transparency within nature.



Figure. 11 Cliff edge in Croyde (Jarvis, 2020)



THE LOOKOUT

Norfolk Coast, Holkham

BROADWAY TOWER

Costwolds, Middle Hill

How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

My chosen case studies were purposefully selected from my visits to the (AONBs) of the Cotswolds and The Norfolk Coast as they both left a long-lasting effect on me. The design of both my chosen case studies in my opinion favoured the surrounding landscapes, by heightening the experience and enjoyment in these beauty spots. However, personal opinion does naturally have many limitations, within the basis of an argument therefore these case studies will be explored further. Broadway Tower was built in 1798 on Beacon Hill, the second highest point in the Cotswolds 312 above sea level (2019, Broadway Tower). This site was chosen by landscape designer Capability Brown to capture a dramatic view over the pre-medieval area for his client George William 6th Earl of Coventry (16 counties can be seen from this spot). Comparatively, the modern Lookout on Holkham Coast in Norfolk, is only raised slightly above the ground's flood level. It opened in 2018 as a 154 square meter visitor centre but it also showcases the National Nature Reserve (Lucas and Western Architects, 2019). Both buildings are in (AONBs) and adjoin architecture with landscape, however it is not clear yet to what extent or how both these buildings do this.

As seen in (fig. 2 and 4), Broadway Tower and The Lookout's structure sit upon their landscapes in opposite extremes of height. The Tower can be spotted from afar due to its impending stance on the landscape, whereas The Lookout was specially designed to sit just above flood level on a new earth mound. In contrast to its delicate presence, it has steel superstructure that follows a rigorous geometrical layout to create the building's cylindrical form. The form of both buildings within context supports the ideas in Holdaway and Smart's (2001) book 'Landscapes at Risk?: The Future for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.' The idea is that there are 'numerous individual landmarks such as hilltop earth works, monuments and tree clumps that help to contribute an individuality and sense of place to the landscapes and localities of where they occur' (Holdaway & Smart, 2001). Although Holdaway and Smart's view that buildings are able to add 'sense of place' to landscapes, sometimes they can appear

#### THE LOOKOUT

Figure 14. The Lookout (Lucas+Western, 2019)



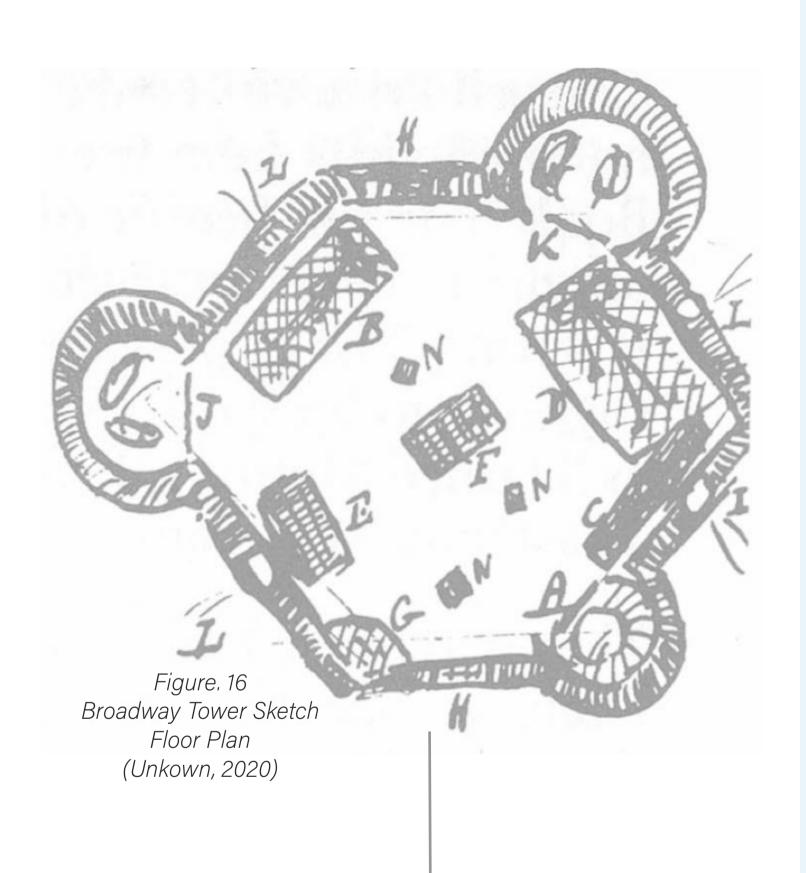
#### BROADWAY TOWER

Figure 15. Broadway Tower (Jarvis, 2020)



as a 'random tower in the middle of the field' (Emily, 2018) as described by a visitor to Broadway Tower. Perhaps the way buildings engage structurally to the landscape depends on the justification and consideration of: if what they can offer is worth the building's impact. Broadway Tower's structural justification derives from the landscape, as it allows visitors to observe panoramic views from the top of the tower. This viewing experience allows appreciation for the complex pattern and textures of the surrounding landscapes. However, there are massive drawbacks to tall buildings in (AONBs) as they are often constructed at a 'high environmental cost' and can be an 'environmental handicap' to the natural skyline (Moore, 2020). Despite this, Moore's interpretation on tower buildings does not fully align with the Grade II listed Broadway Tower, which has been a part of its area's natural landscape since 1789. It is noted however that such a tall building today would likely be comatose. The Lookout's sense of place on the other hand, is created by the outer screen of Larch Fins (see fig.12) that unify the building's appearance whilst screening the human activities from within the Nature Reserve adjacent. The Lookout's sense of place conservation attempts has clearly been projected onto visitors, as visitor Henrilsen believes the building 'teaches everyone some important lessons' (Henrilsen, 2019). For Interior Architecture and Design to work well with surrounding landscapes, much thought is needed to be put into its structural presence on the ground, so it can sit sympathetically yet purposefully, in order to have an impact on society and as a result, encourage continued preservation of these outstanding areas.

In technicalities, both structures unsurprisingly differ as three centuries lay between their construction. James Wyatt (Broadway Tower's architect) coined it his 'Saxton tower' in an eccentric amalgamation of battlements. While The Lookouts designer Feilden



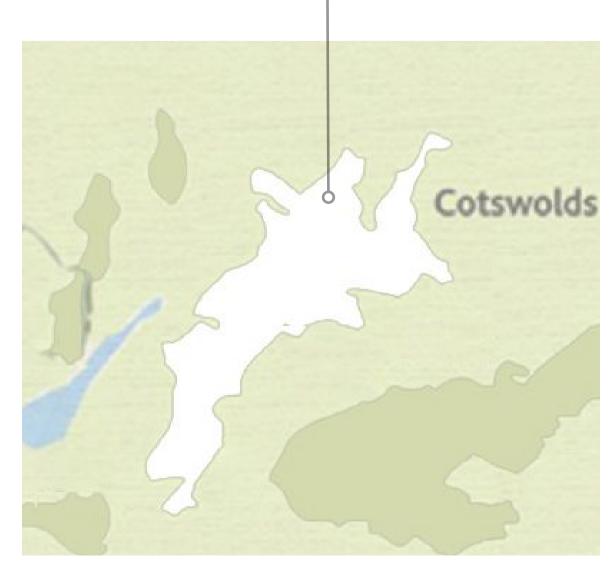


Figure 18. Cotswolds Map (Landscapes for life, 2011)

Bradley's vision immensely differed in form as the simple circular plan and exterior glazed with vertical timber slats provide visual masking to allow people to move around the building without distracting the wildlife on the reserve (see fig. 14). Despite this, both structures in their own right use their architectural styles to compose an impact on visitors whilst maximizing surrounding landscape. To generically think what the lifestyles were in the areas and how they changed throughout the course of time, it is astonishing that both designers similarly considered the impact of their architectural creations upon the landscapes. The site specific architectural design of both structures takes advantage of their distinctive parts of Norfolk and the Cotswolds. This is highlighted by visitor Henrilsen of The Lookout as he believes it is 'a simple but beautiful piece of architecture in great surroundings with amazing views' (Henrilsen, 2019). The level of modern influence on The Lookout by western and international style concepts compared to the accustomed norm of traditional architecture shon by Broadway Tower show how retrospectively different architectural styles: traditional or modern can work with (AONBs) to enhance them. As a result of this, trying to evaluate which building most successfully leans itself to its landscape is disregarded as 'the matter is one of aesthetic taste' (Barker, 2009). Overall, It seems Barker's understanding of aesthetics combined with Wyatt's and Bradley's structural designs of their buildings signifies the possibilities of interior architecture contributing to (AONBs) by maximising surrounding landscapes.

The internal and external design of both structures ,including components such as materiality, contribute to these conservation areas. The report (Developing Nature in Architecture, 2018) outlines that buildings in (AONB) must 'use materials that consist of qualities and features that are derived from the landscape' both structures seem to achieve via different materials. The Lookout does this via incorporating timber hues in the building that match the natural soil colours. Also the planting of marram grass and other Holkham reeds help to enliven The Lookout by creating a breezing movement around the base. This careful consideration in design was rewarded by the (RIBA East Award, 2019) that proclaimed 'The Lookout is a very successful addition to the Holkham experience: Alternatively, Broadway Tower blends into its landscape in a traditional unintentional way. It is built out of a certain variety of the infamous Cotswold's stone, prolific to the special niche of the area's buildings. This stone helps it to appear 'natural' but it only seems it due to the long standing intervention of humans over hundreds of years. Unruh (2018) highlights how 'some natural processes can be mimicked'. The Lookout adopts this concept to a certain extent ,while Broadway Tower only appears natural due to the local stone used by humans for many years. Despite this, the richness of arts and architectural treatments belong to the local traditions. These treatments help buildings appear more 'natural' within landscapes even if that doesn't meet nature's technical definition. What we learn from Unruh (2018) is the possibility to create a sympathetic design that compliments the landscape. One way is to mimic natural features, however, this technique has its limitations, as copying nature is not truly natural, resurfacing concerns over the falsity of human intervention.

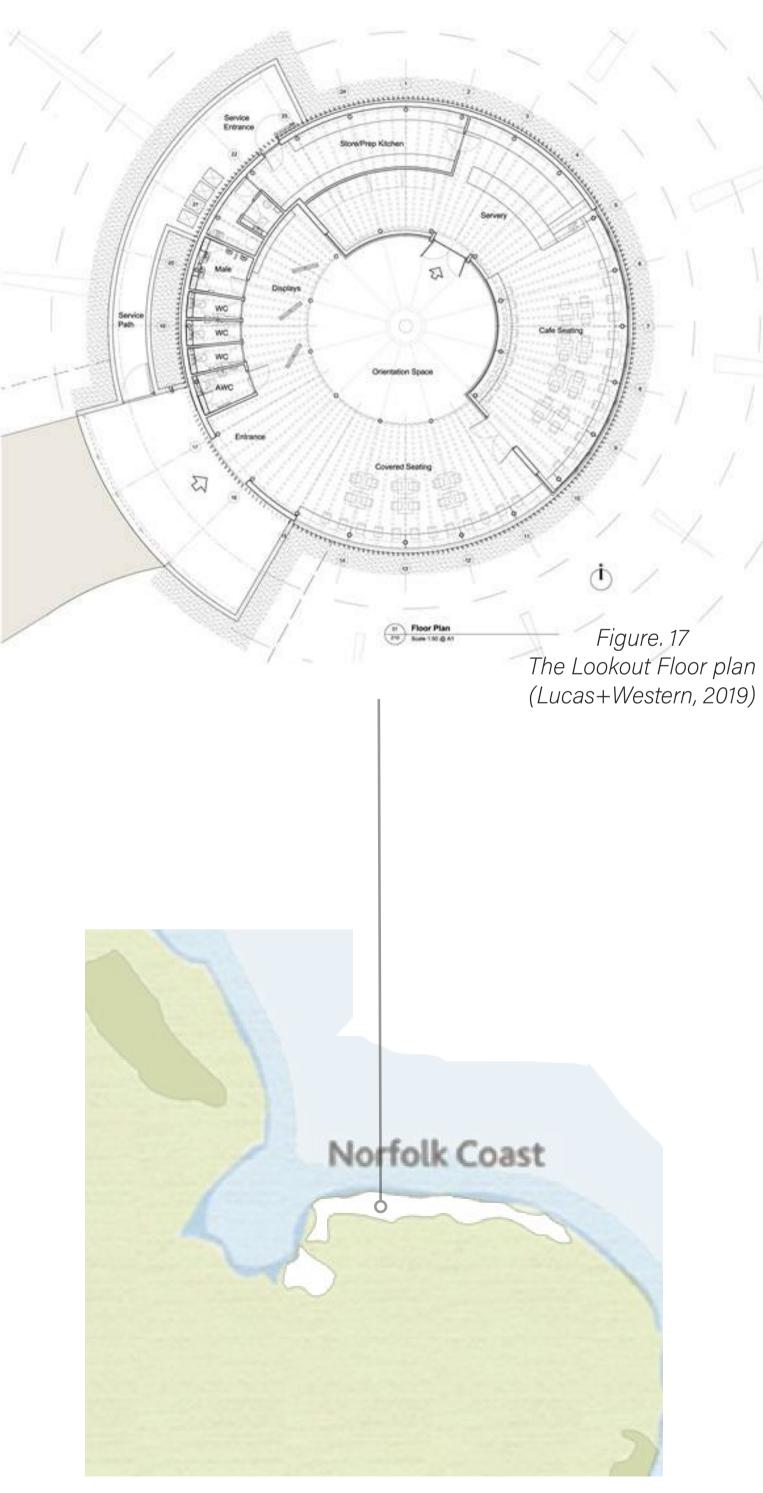


Figure 19. Norfolk Coast Map (Landscapes for life, 2011)

The generic design features of Broadway Tower and The Lookout differ vastly such as the windows which are an important focus in interior architecture. They are often the solution to 'utilise every positive option of environmental conditions and nature like sun air and greenery' (Mahmoud, 2017). The realisation of the significance of windows were catalysed by 'the romantic view movement' in 1816 where large folding doors (now by-folding) became highly sought after (Gore, 1995). Broadway Tower was built prior to this movement yet still has many windows, but they are of an older hindering style which does not capture the outdoors in the same way bifolds would. Windows are an integral feature which should provide the main source of connectivity to the outdoors. Despite this, the effects of the picturesque are still discernible inside Broadway Tower where the windows are not as effective. This enforces how (AONBs) effect on people can never be completely undermined even through poor design. The potential for good design is impactful on visitors, for example when windows are used correctly it is massive. Wright (1954) believes that the 'inside and outside world should inform one another' and 'become whole in design and execution'.. The Lookout aligns more with Wright's (1954) concept than Broadway Tower does, this is because windows frame a much higher percentage of the structure than that of Broadway Tower. The floor plan as (seen in fig.17) shows multiple openings and large windows. The design here is used as a tool for the transition space of inside and outside that enhances the relationship between architectural spaces and environmental surrounds. From the research of Gore (1995), Wright (1954) and Mahmoud (2017) regarding windows it can be learnt that they determine interior architectures success rate in connectivity to the outdoors.

As prior established, both structures have a different presence upon the landscape and intern a varying connection with nature. Both embody special scenic qualities and sense of space in nature within their respective (AONBs). In the book Professional Practice for Landscape Architects (2002), it is exemplified that there is 'a complex nuanced relationship





How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?

# Case Studies

#### THE LOOKOUT

Norfolk Coast, Holkham

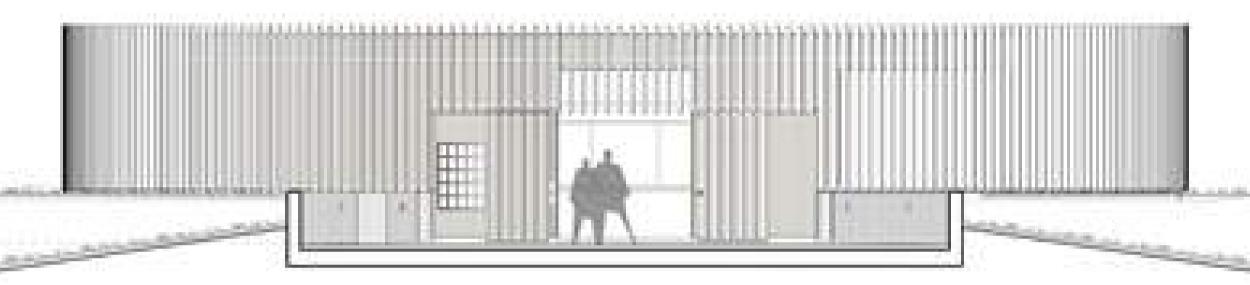


Figure 22. South West Elevation- entrance (Lucas+Western, 2019)



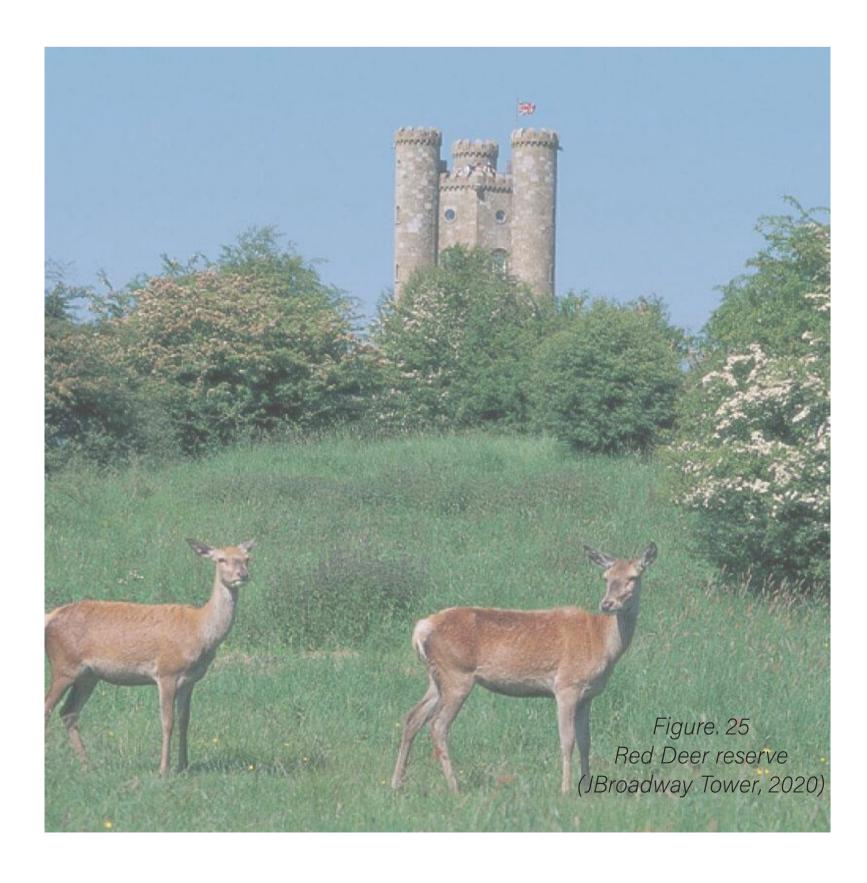
between landscape and interior architecture' (Garmory, Tennant and Winsch, 2007). Neither Broadway Tower or The Lookout try to enforce landscape in their architecture. In both cases, the landscape and nature is heightened as a result of design. Humans do have tendencies in design to make nature artificially natural, where it becomes hyper-natural, which doesn't exist in reality. It is a building's job to reinforce the spirit of the outdoors without copying it. Both structures don't try and recreate nature but instead provide platforms to enlighten it. Broadway Tower's roof terrace and The Lookout's large windows engage the landscape and thus use these features to improve the connection. In consideration of my own visits, both structures relayed a differentiating atmosphere upon myself and the surrounding landscape. Broadway Tower stood proudly on the landscape and although typical in traditional style, it didn't lean itself as sympathetically to the landscape as The Lookout did. The Lookout beautifully co-existed with the nature reserve and the building did not immediately demand my attention in the same way Broadway Tower did. This is notable, as even though both were built as a product of their landscapes, Broadway Tower's presence is there to capture site views, whilst ,The Lookout compliments Holkham beach and nature reserve. Despite this, both buildings do enhance how inhabitants and visitors engage with these retrospective areas. We have to be careful that in not every instance a building's presence is for the better. Mbala and Aigbavboa (2019) outline this: 'mankind has continually manipulated the natural environment in a bid to improve the living' inferring, in some cases, man made structures will not benefit (AONBs). Their views suggest we should not convince ourselves that development is always for the best. Despite this, when entering the development of Broadway Tower, and you begin to ascend the stairs you can peer out windows to see the landscape, but it is not until as a visitor when you reach the top you understand the meaning for its presence on Beacon Hill. It is there to showcase the magnificence of the area and intern aid people to see the message through the far reaching view that these areas should be continually cherished. Broadways Tower's presence is justified by giving the people this moment of realisation. Overall, both insure their landscapes have beautifully diverse and successful views. Interior architecture and design in these cases do maximize the richness of landscapes whilst providing an interior/

exterior function as a platform for happiness and human flourish.

Broadway Tower and The Lookout both have purposes as public visitor centres. This allocated purpose was a result of their local societal needs in their retrospective areas. A building should go hand in hand with its local community and 'Design should demonstrate the background and motive of usage by using local materials' (Mahmoud, 2017). Mahmoud (2017) indicates here how the local community must be considered in not only the design but also purpose of a dwelling. Expectedly, Broadway Tower's long history since its beginning in the 18th century has meant it changed hands many times, and as a subsequent so has its purpose. Broadway Tower's purpose has varied hugely, from a house to a military observer post. It is now in the hands of the Will family who have redefined its purpose to save its future. Now it stands proudly as a 'unique historic monument with a museum over 3 floors' to raise funds for its preservation (Broadway Tower, 1999). Similarly, the main reason behind The Lookout is also to 'preserve' through the generation of funds via under the canopy of the building. Hospitality and leisure amenity services which are open to the public help to do this. What can be inferred from the Will family at Broadway Tower and The Lookout is that the purpose and existence of a building has the potential to teach visitors and inhabitants of (AONB) the value of the area in which they live or visit while raising funds.

Due to the purposes of both buildings being a public one, it is likely this generates a large impact on the area by for example bringing increased footfall. It is important that where these buildings are in the Cotswolds and the Norfolk Coast gain visitation and public exploration for financial revenue. However, it is also of equal importance that a harmonious building of humanity and nature houses visitation activities. One way of achieving this harmony is 'consultation with the local community and special interest groups' (Garmory, Tennant and Winsch, 2007) for example the National Nature Reserves (NNRs) at The Lookout and The British Deer Society at Broadway Tower. Both of these organisations are involved with their local building even though they centre around animals and wildlife. This implies that the wider design of the site has been considered and so has its environmental impact. The Green Flag Award (2018) supports purposeful interior architectural additions to (AONB) sites as 'thoughtful building work can benefit both people and wildlife' opening the concept that interior architecture and design can work with nature to improve what already exists. By comparing The Lookout and Broadway Tower to the statement of The Green Flag Award it is clear a building's purpose needs to be directly derived from what the specific needs of its (AONB). It should also be clear how the local people would benefit, in order to preserve the areas they inhabit. Both The Lookout and Broadway Tower 'facilitate meaningful occurring activities for its inhabitants' which (Petermans, 2014) outlines as integral to architecture in (AONBs). Razjouyan (2015) believes when 'used in terms of consistency with the needs of society' (AONBs) can benefit from their partnerships with purposeful developed infrastructure. Ultimately, to contribute successfully to (AONB's) landscapes via architecture you have to unify a collective purpose for visitors and locals alike, whilst discouraging high impact recreation.





## Research Conclusion

To conclude, the primary statutory purpose of built infrastructure in these 'iconic landscapes' (Glover, 2018) is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape. It is vital through interior architecture 'that these areas are not only conserved but enhanced for the next generation' (Gove, 2018). Through the examination of The Lookout and Broadway Tower, it is conclusive that the importance of my design proposal should be to innovate more connectivity in between the indoor and outdoor world. In addition, a built environment should also seamlessly provide a practical purpose and harness design features. These features should provide channels between inside (architecture) and outside (environmental) that compliment each other's existence. To abide with strict building regulations, my proposal must showcase in profound detail that it will benefit and not hinder its surroundings. In pursuing the primary purpose, accounts should be taken of the needs of rural industries and of the socio-economic needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development, that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment. My conducted research of both infrastructures, through four specific areas, I have drawn primary conclusions from, which will help inform my design. Firstly, the structure of dwellings in these areas should focus on showcasing the landscape and views. Secondly, design should be inspired by the area entangling itself within community values but including some distinctive design features. These should compliment the area by providing a subtle contrast. Thirdly, both Broadway Tower and The Lookout are public premises which in research was the most beneficial. Lastly, a building's presence and wider connection to the environment should feel sympathetic yet not too forced and formulated. Conclusively, through careful planning and a balance between demand of societal and economic needs and the (AONB) itself, interior architecture and design can work together by creating or adapting existing infrastructure which compliments its surroundings.

# Project Brief

'Wow look at that view' is one of the most common terms related to this research, which we do not want to lose...

Our 'protected landscapes are the UK's finest gems' (Glover, 2018). 66% of us live within half an hour of a National Park or (AONB) (Hygate, 2017), meaning their potential going into the future needs to be realised. These areas improve our overall health and well-being through contact with nature. Conservation areas are cherished places for physical, mental and spiritual Rejuvenation.

This is why I have chosen to collate my research to explore how the Plas Meini Estate (finest gentry estate in the Snowdonia National Park) set in over 100 areas of seclusion, can be enhanced to maximise the opportunities of its magnificent surroundings. This will be done through a series of interior architecture and design proposals. These proposals will be carefully curated, in sympathy with the landscape for stressed young professionals or adults in need of detachment from daily life.

Tectonic and structural detail should display the relationship man-made structures have to the natural world, and how they can work together to ensure these protected areas are continually cherished for the benefit of nature and people. As a result of my research, I must cultivate a concept via the creation and adaptation of a building/buildings at the Plas Meini Estate.

Most Significantly, my design response will have to explore bringing the indoor and outdoor worlds together in a way which maximises the ultimate aesthetic of Plas Meini's surroundings. My proposals must stand to reinforce and complement the natural beauty which exists, whilst providing great human functionality for those in need of escapism.

#### Research Questions:

How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure there preservation and success?

'How can my research inform the future of an historic building?'

Figure. 27
The Plas Meini Estate
(Srutt & Parker, 2018)

#### PLAS MEINI ESTATE

Snowdonia , North Wales



# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ASKED TO CO-ESTATE OWNER: SUZIE CATON

Her answers are embedded from this page onwards...

#### PLAS MEINI ESTATE QUESTIONS:

- Q. What is your favourite part about living at Plas Meini?
- Q. In reference to the site plan & what are your favourite spots on site?
- Q. What is the atmosphere like morning, day & night?
- Q. What compelled you to move to Snowdoina National Park?
- Q. What are some of your favourite aspects of the existing buildings? & since plas meini translates to stone place do you know what the stone is called what its made from?
- Q. Since moving to Plas Meini have you felt more connected to the outdoors and as a result any positive benefits?
- Q. Would you mind me telling me about your decision to use a more ambitious and daring architect to carry out your extension?
- Q. What are your goals for plas meini? For example keeping the site well maintained? / holiday retreat business

#### **AONB QUESTIONS:**

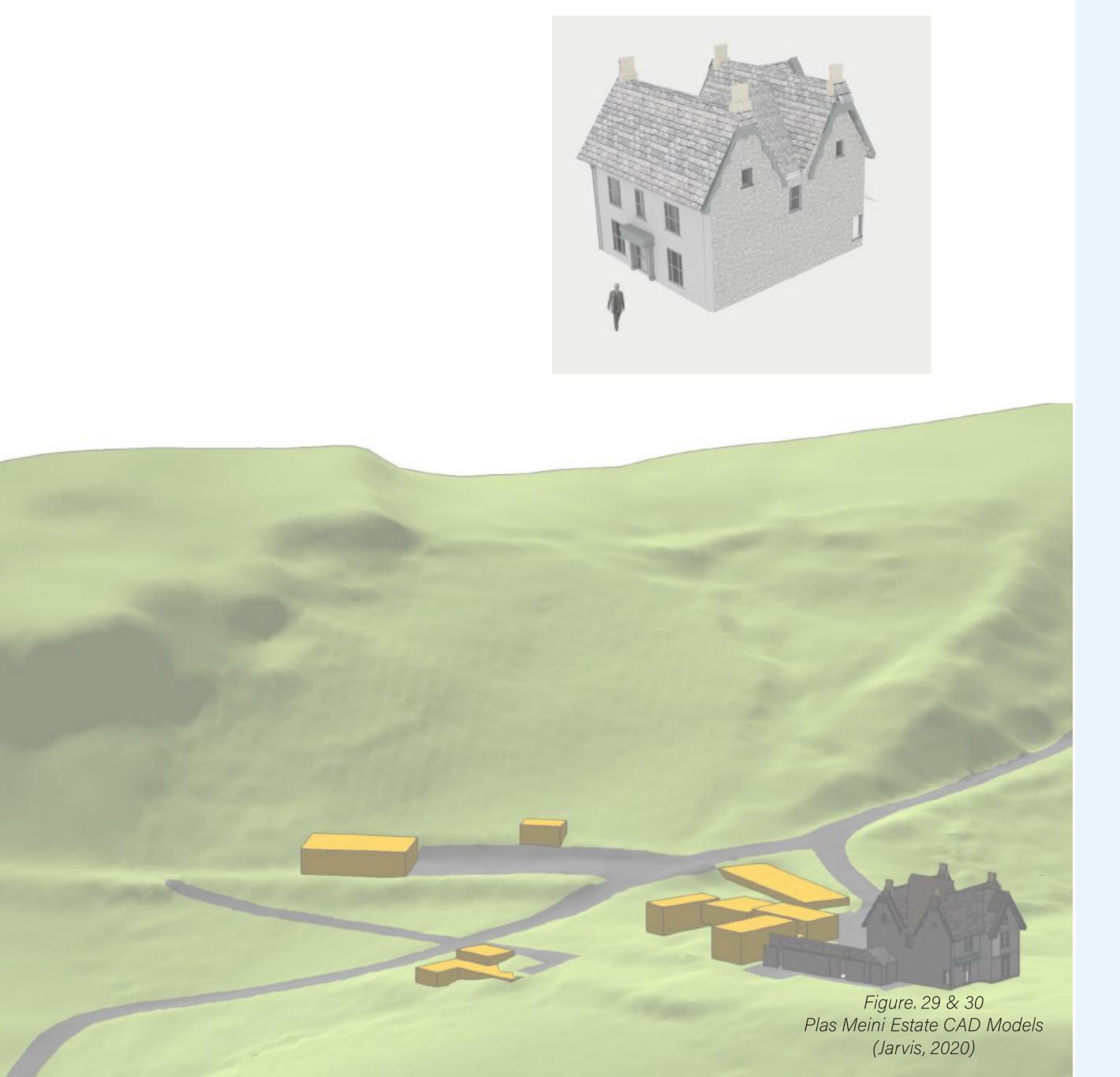
- Q. Do you believe sympathetic architecture and dwelling improvements can actually help to make the most out of protected landscapes? & why?
- Q. Do you agree with the statement that interior architecture and design can work with AONB to insure there preservation and success?
- Q. As 66% of us live within half an hour of a National Park or AONB, do you feel everyone should get a chance at experiencing them?
- Q. What are some notable differences from living in the midlands countryside to living in a national park beauty spot?

#### Overview

To set the scene, my chosen site is nestled in the magnificent heart of the Snowdonia National Park or Eryri (in Welsh). It is the third largest National Park in the UK at 823 sq miles (Go North Wales, 2016) and also the 'most beautiful in europe' (BBC News, 2019). It is clear why I have chosen this site to complement my research and allow me to apply the outcomes of it within a National Park. The area of the Eryri is Llan Ffestiniog (designated as being of Outstanding Natural Beauty) is secluded with a population of 864 in the 2011 census (Ffestiniog Town Council, 2011).

#### Location

The site is the Plas Meini Estate (Welsh stone palace). It is one of the finest estates in Snowdonia with staggering views across 120 acres of pasture, woodland, a small lake and river. It is situated 'halfway up a mountain' and 'looks directly down the valley with huge reaching vistas' from the top of the estate you can see the Irish Sea (Caton, 2021). It has been described as 'a jewel of a property, hidden in the Vale of Ffestiniog' (Strutt & Parker, 2018). The main buildings on site consist of: a Victorian manor house, four holiday cottages and a studio set in an extremely tranquil position. You can discover Plas Meini on the right of the B4391, half a mile from the village Llan Ffestiniog. The entrance is clearly marked with a Plas Meini sign and stone pillars. This is the start of the 0.5 mile private drive lined



with rhododendrons, as you travel down it gradually 'transcends yourself into a different world' where at the end you will reach the cottages and manor house with ample off-road parking in a large courtyard in front of the facade. The atmosphere generated by existing structures and views is truly endearing. So much so that the Caton Family (current owners) use the strap line 'discover the magic' at Plas Meini. The magic and speciality of the site is further captured by my site analysis.

#### Building of Interest: The Manor House

I decided to focus upon the Victorian manor house as it's excellent position on-site allows far reaching views. It was constructed of stone under a steeply pitched slate roof in 1865. Originally, it was a gentry estate for David and Elizabeth Loyld and their son: David Llewelyn Lloyd who was the Mayor of Llan Ffestiniog. The Manor House is made from 'dressed granite stone' at the front and rear but also natural stone on the sides (Caton, 2021). The existing Manor building replaced an original one which was here on site 'at least 300 years prior that which locals say' (Caton, 2021). Once inside the manor house you are able to peer out the various windows to peak at the vastness of fir trees and mountains. The interior possesses an array of original features including original staircases and slate fireplaces. Moving back outdoors, it is surrounded by an acre of well established gardens which reflect the old architecture and landscape which is mirrored across the Snowdonia National Park.







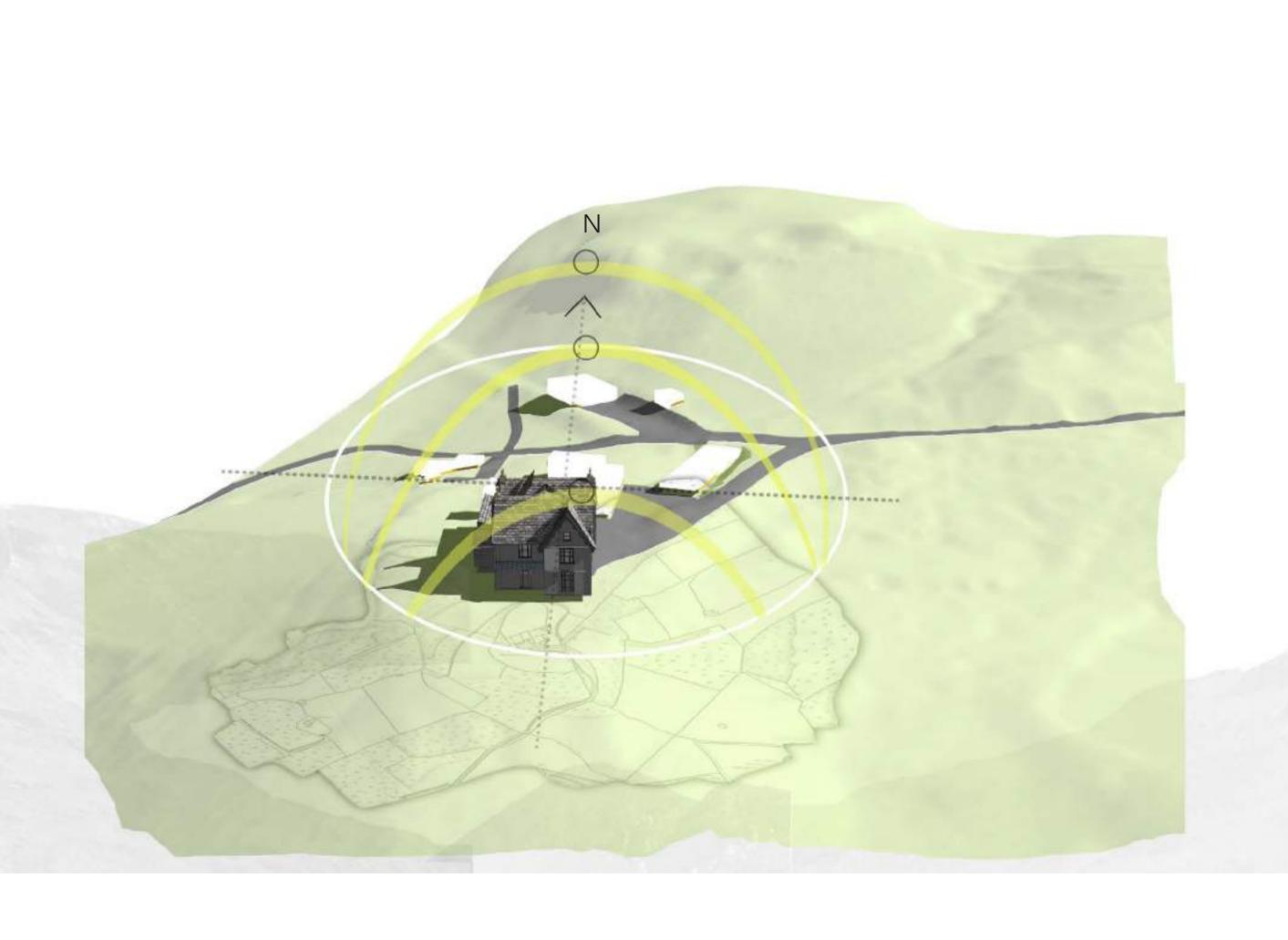


Figure. 31 & 34 Plas Meini Estate (Strutt & Parker, 2018)

#### PLAS MEINI ESTATE

Snowdonia , North Wales





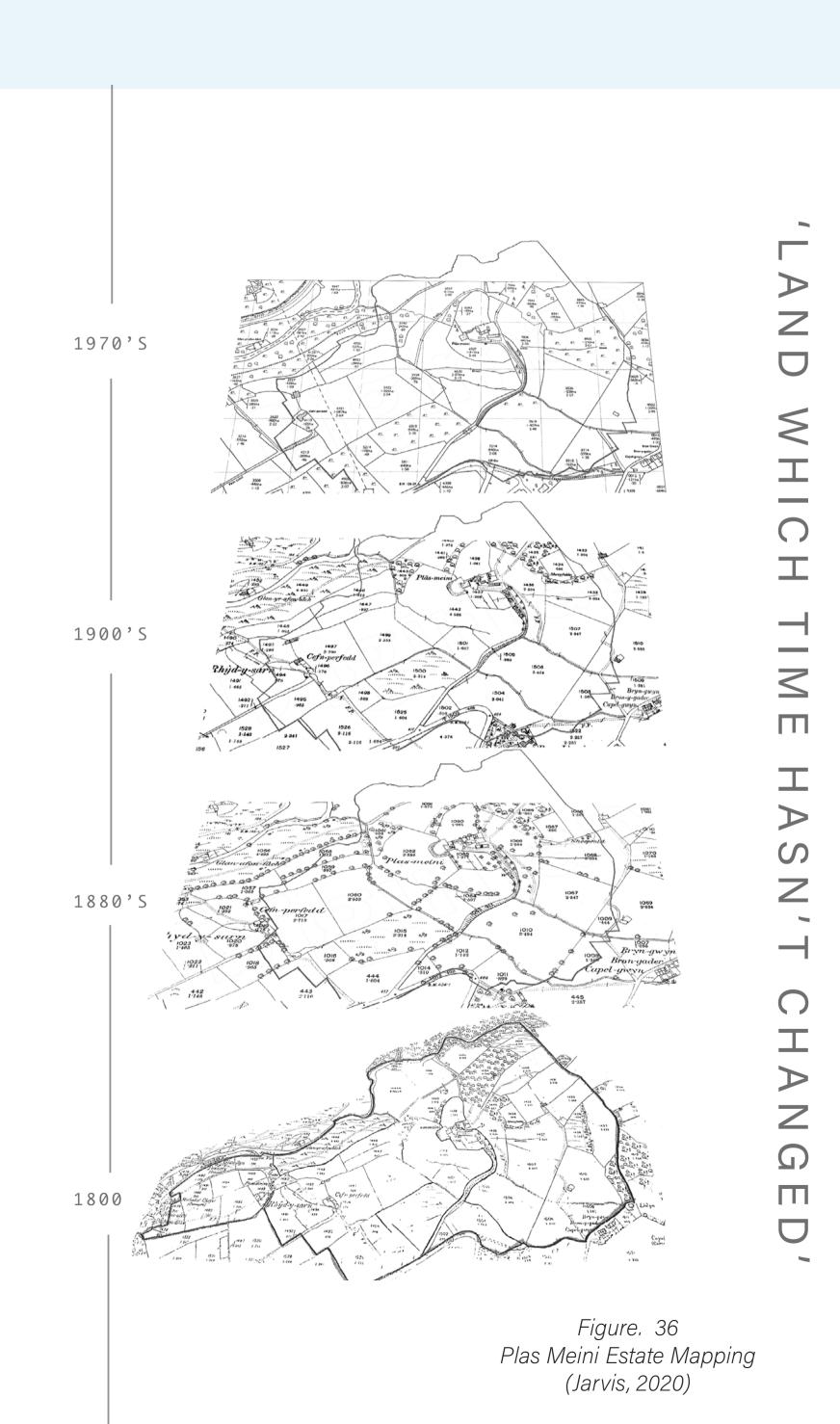
Figure, 36 Plas Meini Estate CAD Model (Jarvis, 2020)

#### Landscape

Plas Meini Estate is designated as being of Outstanding Natural Beauty due to its unspoiled landscape and wealth of wildlife, which 'time hasn't changed' (see fig.36). Bordering the estate is the River Teigl and its dramatic waterfalls that make up the surrounds of the 120 acres of extraordinary and highly protected land. Some prominent examples include: The Post Medieval Special Gardens of Scientific Interest, ancient oaks (predominantly larch and conifers), indegiounous wildflower meadows and The Dark Sky Designated Sanctuary (1 of 11 globally) which conserves the natural fragility of the site from light pollution. The stars are very visible to the naked eye and the bluebell woods in (fig.40) capturing the thriving nature across the site. Notable wildlife on the estate consists of Red Kites, Buzzards, Tawny Owls and Otters. Another interesting speciality of the estate is its microclimate which is capable of growing banana plants and palm trees. Across the far reaching landscape of the Plas Meini Estate 'there is 360 degree views across the: Moelwyn Mountains, Afon Teigl River, Vale of Ffestiniog Valley, all the fields which sweep down to the Afon Teigl River' and if that was not extraordinary enough there is also a coastal view 'from the top of the estate where you can see the Irish Sea' (Caton, 2021). Due to accumulation of speciality and protection attached to this site it is important to conduct in depth site analysis before offering my proposals.

#### Solar and Sun Path Studies

The sun story across Plas Meini is one of rare and extreme natural beauty. Sunsets are part of the splendour of the site and throughout most parts of the year a person can be subjected to them. The sun sets behind the Moelwyn Mawr Mountains in the west which casts a light pink, red hue across the estate. Estate co-owner Suzie Caton proclaims it is comparable to that of 'the Aurora Borealis in Norway'. Caton also explained in my interview with her that this is described as a 'natural phenomenon' among the locals in the Vale of Ffestiniog. Furthermore, Caton painted a captivating image to me where the pink glow and red hues from the sunset enters the buildings, suggesting the outdoor climate is often projected within. This is supported by the knowledge that the seasons in the Snowdonia National Park are far more heightened than the rest of the UK. Caton offers a personal note during the interview as she believes that 'spring is the best season as everything opens up and visually comes to life across the mountainous landscape' (Caton, 2021). This analysis exemplifies my reasoning to understanding the site as Caton relays beautiful complexities of the site. My proposal must take into account these site complexities in order for me to offer a proposal that could help to ensure this (AONB) preservation and success.



#### Locality

Understanding the locality in and around my chosen site Plas Meini is also of significance. This is because for interior architecture to work successfully with special areas, a collective purpose for visitors and locals needs to be established to ensure a building's preservation within the (AONB). Caton gave me a conclusive insight into local thought of the area and their relationship with the local landscape. She explained 'the attitudes of people reflect the architecture' implying a symbiotic relationship between that of the natural world and lifestyle in the area (Caton, 2021). She accounted how 'everyone's work is based around the land' which is credible as the vast slate and mountainous landscape provided a source to the long standing slate mining industry. Even though views may vary slightly from each local, Caton's beliefs are likely to be credible as she and her family have lived in the area now since 2019. It appears they have well immersed themselves into the local landscape and culture by being actively involved as owners and custodians of the Plas Meini Estate. Ultimately, the mining industry plays a large role in establishing local thought in the areas. There are many mines that surround The Plas Meini Estate but Llechwedd Quarry is just five miles away. Slate extraction began here in 1846. At its peak in 1884 it produced 23,788 tons of finished slate per year and had 513 employees. It continues to produce slate on a limited scale (The peoples collection Wales, 2009). It is clear a focus and use of this local natural resource in my design would help to unify a collective purpose. It would also help to preserve the locality and beauty of the area by keeping with existing architectures materiality in the area, by doing this my proposal will be more likely to preserve the existing beauty and aesthetics of the Snowdonia area.

#### The Future of Plas Meini

On average, 350,000 people visit Snowdonia National Park each year (Go North Wales, 2016) and it has been 'its busiest in the last five years' (Caton,2021). This data indicates an increasingly inherent demand for visitors in this (AONB). The positive of this interest means the area and locals can gain financial revenue to maintain the vast landscape. However, recognising the effects of tourism from major all the way to minimal impacts is immediately noticed in this area of such pure unspoiled beauty and others alike. Caton explains this through an anecdote of someone 'dropping a tissue or apple cork' which she feels will leave an effect. Any inflicted change whether that intentional or unintentional will be noticed and felt by the locals and the landscape. This anecdote highlights the fragility and significance of protecting the landscape and wildlife in order to persevere the estate. Caton states she and her husband feel a huge amount of responsibility by owning the estate as they feel more than just owners but 'custodians of the estate.' In addition, she details this sensation by explaining 'there is a much wider picture here as it feels more than just a piece of land you own. Everyone in the area has a sense of ownership to the land and to preserve its beauty which can be very fragile to change' (Caton, 2021).

When I asked Caton what her plans and hopes for the future at Plas Meini were she answered: 'Originally we bought the estate as a home but experiencing the ultimate beauty and magic at Plas Meini we soon realised we wanted other people to as well. An important part of this is keeping the whole site alive with external visitors which now will happen with our plans for the holiday let function in the other buildings onsite. Site wide we want to replenish and conserve this part of the Welsh landscape. We will look at each field and woodland individually over the 120 acres to keep it as natural as possible by replenishing indegiounous wildflower meadows and encouraging wildlife by introducing more hedges whilst maintaining the integrity of the estate (Caton, 2021). The owner's decision making to utilise part of the buildings on the estate as holiday functions suggest interior architecture can work well with these areas, as Caton appears to care much about the protection of the estate but at the same time she believes people visiting would be of benefit.



Plas Meini Estate Drawing (Jarvis, 2021)

# Concept

The concept behind my approach to the Plas Meini Estate is directly derived from the results of my research and in depth site analysis of the estate and its surrounding landscape. In concept and design it will be explained how these conclusive concepts and ideas have been applied at Plas Meini both written and visual. Following are the main conclusive points from my research:

- 1. The structure of dwellings in these areas should focus on showcasing the landscape and views.
- 2. Design should be inspired by the area which entangles itself within local culture.
- 3. Community values should be evident but also some distinctive design features can be used to compliment by providing a subtle contrast.
- 4. There should be a presence and wider connection to the environment. It must feel sympathetic yet not too forced and formulated.
- 5. There should be a balance between the demand of societal and economic needs and the (AONB) itself.

Principally, the primary objective is to implement careful changes to the Manor house so it can reach its full potential. The Manor House could be viewed as a vessel to increase indoor-outdoor connectivity in this specific area of Snowdonia National Park. The quest for nature in our lives is for many a perpetual one. Therefore, connecting the human and natural world through interior architecture and design requires peoples visitation and experience.

Referring to point 5, the purpose behind my concept is to carefully adapt The Manor House in order to maximise it to the beauty of the landscape therefore heighten indoor-outdoor moments. In regards to my fifth conclusive point I will be repurposing The Manor House as a premise open to the public. It will also be branded as an adult retreat for stressed professionals in need of spiritual rejuvenation. The consideration of Plas Meini's societal needs here also compliments the economic needs in Snowdonia National Park, as the hospitality industry thrives most in this area as well as other (AONB). This type of controlled tourism would likely be welcome as the retreat is only seven bedrooms for people paying a high sum, which could be reinvested into the area and maintenance.



# Concept

In terms of the local landscape and site analysis, there were captivating finds that drove a large section of my concept. This was the dark sky designation which struck me as an essential feature of the site to harbour, abide by and protect. The night sky scene is astonishing and feels so special as it is just only 1 of 11 areas like this globally. As a result, showcasing the night sky and creating an experience at night is integral. As previously stated, my concept is a direct result of my site analysis and research into this area of Snowdoina, and therefore large scale annual solar path shadow studies were conducted in order to understand the most beneficial places to propose design changes such as enlarged windows. This was further informed by my extensive mapping research of immediate views but also those across the site into the landscape (see view mapping drawings in my portfolio).

My brief image (fig.38) visually displays how all the site analysis finds came together to represent my concept which is wholly derived from the landscape of The Plas Meini Estate, Snowdonia National Park.



Figure. 39 User Profile (Jarvis, 2021)

# Design

I have proposed four main interventions that have been designed to maximise the experience and showcase the speciality of the site. None of the proposals have a long term impact on the environment and they all interchange via a series of manual shutters to suit varying weather conditions in the Eryi. These also aid the transition from day to night to stop light pollution affecting the night sky (protected by the designated dark sky status). From facing the facade and the rear of the building there is almost no above ground level change (see fig.42). The only above ground change is the slight refiguration of the two floors above ground (to provide ensuite for all bedrooms), a large window cut out with skylight and an integrated hillside viewing house.

The large window cut out replaces small old windows and a door. It spans across the height of the stair cases. I thought this was a worthwhile invention as it floods the ground floor with daylight from the east and increases indoor-outdoor connectivity. In addition, my study of Broadway Tower shows how being able to see the outside scenery while descending or ascending increases human connectivity with nature. Out this window you are able to view the Post Medieval Special Gardens Of Scientific Interest. Other interventions consist of the kitchen extension, The Hillside Viewing House and The Indoor Outdoor pool which extends into the enlarged basement. Collectively, these interventions are designed to make people feel as though they are inside and a part of the landscape. I favoured interior architecture on this project that was completely in awe of the



# Design

views and the outside you can see this via my choice of materiality in my portfolio and my paired back interior style. Much of the design process worked through a paradoxical balancing act. This was to optimize yet protect.

- 1. The Kitchen Extension and The Hillside Viewing House as (seen in fig.41) maximizes the views to the Moelwyn Mountains and some of the Vale of Ffestiniog from indoors. This intertwines with my research outcome number one: that the structure of dwellings in these areas should focus on showcasing the landscape and views. Before my proposals of The Hillside Viewing House and The Kitchen Extension the views to the west were not being used at all.
- 2. The natural earth carvings in the Vale of Ffestiniog where all the fields sweep down to the river and the mountainous landscape means there is a variety of slopes created down the Vale of Ffestiniog. I was inspired to use this existing pattern as a way to integrate my indoor outdoor pool into the topography at basement level. This forms a V shaped valley cut out (see drawings in portfolio). In addition, the kitchen extension follows a similar silhouette to that of The Manor House and other local cultural buildings.
- 3. Argubally, The Hillside Viewing House provides the most subtle contrast to the landscape out of my interventions but it also complements the topography of the hill which itself blends into the wider landscape. The community values have also been noted in



# Design



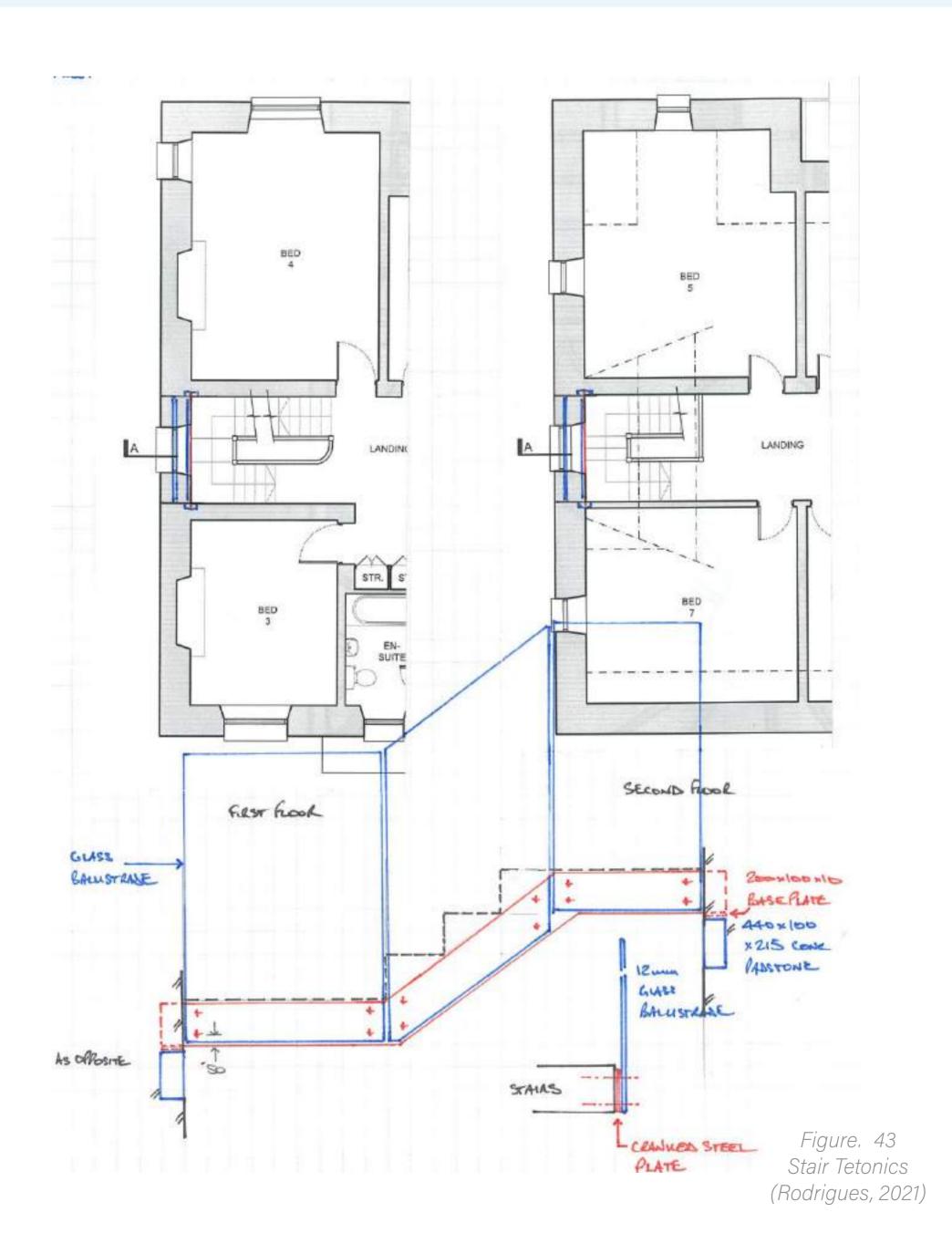
aspects of my basement design as the living roof that protects the pool is on tracks on 4. rollers evocative of the area's mining history. This is further connoted by the small circular skylights in the changing room area which let small beams of light through creating a dramatic atmosphere of being within the landscape underground. The presence and wider connection to the environment through my interventions has given a chance for increased empathy for the landscape as visitors can see further into the distance and now have access to all the views on offer. My hope is that this will subconsciously push them to explore and appreciate more about the wider landscape at Snowdonia.

#### Materiality

All materials and resources used in my design will be found among the Snowdonia National Park. Wood will be reclaimed stained to match the hues of the Welsh slate which will be used from the surrounding area, in particular Llechwedd Quarry. The Kitchen Extension and The Hillside Viewing House will be faced in some wooden cladding along with the manual shutters. Welsh slate will be implemented regularly through my designs but most notably it will be used in the pool and basement area to line the walls and floor with. Inside the manor house suitable and neutral forms of decoration will be used to compliment and provide a canvas for the seasonal exterior changes to project upon. It will also enable a calm escapist atmosphere for visitors to relax and engage with the Snowdoina (AONB) with no distractions.

# Tetonics

One significant feature as a part of my discrete interventions is The Indoor Outdoor Pool. Starting inside, The Manor House at basement level extends out into the landscape. It is 18m long and is 2.5m wide. Inspired by the natural landscape and the shapes created down the Vale of Ffestiniog the pool integrates and connects to the immediate landscape through a mini V shaped valley (see portfolio drawings) it is reinforced by concrete which is 300mm thick. The surround is made from Welsh slate which faces the pool at 100mm thick. At ground level where the V shape connects upwards, a 'Ha Ha wall' is used as a safety feature to prevent anyone at ground level falling in. This is also seamlessly integrated into the landscape. The V shape cut is 6.5m wide. The pool will be used at night as a means to look up and enjoy the night stars while swimming. It also requires protection from any potential harsh weather conditions, which is done via the proposed sliding living roof on tracks and rollers (evocative of the local mining industry) and aligns with local community values. My other interventions also have integrated shutter protections; these occur across the new enlarged windows on flank of the Manor House and kitchen extension. Where possible all shutters will be manually opened, this is a conscious design decision as it is important for all visitors at the Plas Meini retreat to engage with the environment. By interacting with the opening and closing of the shutters they will be more aware of the dangers of light pollution at night, as well as further appreciate the speciality of the area they are staying in.



## Critical Reflection

On reflection, this project Epitomize Eryri has largely achieved what I set out to do as a result of my conclusive research. The changes and new developments I have made to The Manor House do celebrate the landscape whilst complementing them through non-invasive changes. Landscape appreciation in the mid 20th century Britain was greatly influenced by the work of writers and artists, but I feel this project reflects the increasingly wider societal interest of the UK's valuable conservation landscapes. I hope my proposals show a way the 21st century can expand this list to include interior architecture as an innovative way to ensure the preservation and success of (AONBs). Despite this, my research could have been more comprehensive if I had interviewed visitors to Snowdoina and not just permanent inhabitants (Suzie Caton owner of Plas Meini Estate). This could have been a much more systematic approach in identifying how visitors interact with (AONBs) and other variables such as use of buildings when visiting. However, a lot of information was gained from Caton and her involvement significantly enriched my research project. In addition, my proposals could have been further heightened if it had included a heavier focus on how my design encourages wider exploration of the area. This could have been done by including a proposal further into the midst of the 120 acre estate. My proposal overall faced regular challenges but the consistent pressure of designing in an area of important provenance meant my designs had to be extremely well considered and sympathetic. Increasing indoor-outdoor connectivity was hard to achieve without some impact. One example, the large stair window was subjectively bold yet I felt It still maintained the integrity of the estate. Lastly, by making the decision to repurpose The Manor House from private residential to a premise open to the public (retreat for stressed adults) was successful as the estate is in close proximity to major centres of population meaning it has useful access for those in need of an spiritual rejuvenation escape.

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SEE ABOVE FOR EMBEDDED FIGURE REFERENCES^

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#### UREC 1 RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW FOR STUDENT RESEARCH WITH NO HUMAN PARTICIPANTS OR DIRECT COLLECTION OF HUMAN TISSUES, OR BODILY FLUIDS.

All University research is required to undergo ethical scrutiny to comply with UK law. The SHU

Research Ethics Policy should be consulted before completing the form. Answering the questions below will confirm that the study fits this category and that any necessary approvals or safety risk assessments are in place. The supervisor will approve the study, but it may also be reviewed by the College Teaching Programme Research Ethics Committee (CTPREC) as part of the quality assurance process.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), for keeping data secure and if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management. Information on the ethics website

The form also enables the University and College to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

The form may be completed by the student and the supervisor and/or module leader (as applicable). In all cases, it should be counter-signed by the supervisor and/or module leader, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in the appendices of their research projects, and a copy should be uploaded to the module Blackboard site for checking.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Safety Co-ordinator.

#### 1. General Details

Name of student	MOLLY ANN JARVIS
SHU email address	B8011350@my.shu.ac.uk
Course or qualification (student)	Interior Architecture and Design BA
Name of supervisor	Tony Broomhead
email address	t.broomhead@shu.ac.uk
Title of proposed research	How can interior architecture & design work with areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) to insure their preservation and success?
Proposed start date	Oct 2020
Proposed end date	May 2021
Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (250-500 words).	Architecture is a practice of art which designs and constructs buildings. However, in Areas Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) a building erected or modified must justify 'exceptional circumstantial' (Green Balance, 2015) reason for it to be upon a AONB. The origin of

these areas arose from the access to the countryside act passed in 1949 by John Dower where they were presented to the nation wholly as a 'recreational gift to British service men and women of the Second World War' (Government Legislation, 1949). The 'national importance and quality of these areas cannot be understated (Gove, 2018). Recent announcements in February 2020 outline the creation of more national parks and AONB (Johnson, 2020). Through these expanding areas of utmost significance, interior architecture will be procured to maximise the speciality of AONB. This will be explored with intent, to uncover the potential interior architecture has to work with these protected areas. This exploration will consider the best type of structure, design, purpose and presence a dwelling can have to achieve a successful output. The potential output should magnify these landscapes and provide a gateway into a sustained future for them. Ultimately, the AONB designation, through legislation and guidance, requires the conservation and enhancement of these nationally cherished areas. The protection of these spaces does not preclude change and development therefore, interior architecture could be harnessed to recognise the inherent value of these areas (both potential and realised).

I confirm that this study does not involve collecting data from human participants \_\_X

#### 2. Research in Organisations

Question		Yes/No	
1.		e research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, ss, charity, museum, government department, international agency,	No
2.		f you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research?	
If YES,	, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.		
3.	If you	answered NO to question 2, is it because:	N/A
	A.	you have not yet asked	
		you have asked and not yet received an answer you have asked and been refused access.	
Note: \	You will	only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.	

#### 4. Research with Products and Artefacts

Question	
Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	Yes

If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?	
<ul> <li>Notes: 'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.</li> <li>Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.</li> <li>Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.</li> </ul>	
If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.	
If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data?  If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor.	
If you answered NO to question 3, is it because:	N/A
A. you have not yet asked permission	
B. you have asked and not yet received and answer	
C. you have asked and been refused access.	
Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.	

#### Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

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#### Personal statement

I can confirm that:

- I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures
- · I agree to abide by its principles.

#### Student

Name: MOLLY ANN JARVIS Date: 03/10/20

Signature: MOLLY JARVIS

#### Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off

I can confirm that completion of this form has confirmed that this research does not involve human participants. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received and any health and safety measures are in place.

Name: Tony Broombead. Date: 03/10/20

Signature:			
Additional Signature if required: N/A			
Name:	Date:		
Signature:			
lease ensure the following are included with this Research proposal if prepared previously	s form if applicable, tick box to Yes	indicate: No	N/A X
	Yes	No	