

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

Proposed Residential Development

Land South of Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood, West Sussex,
RH19 3GY

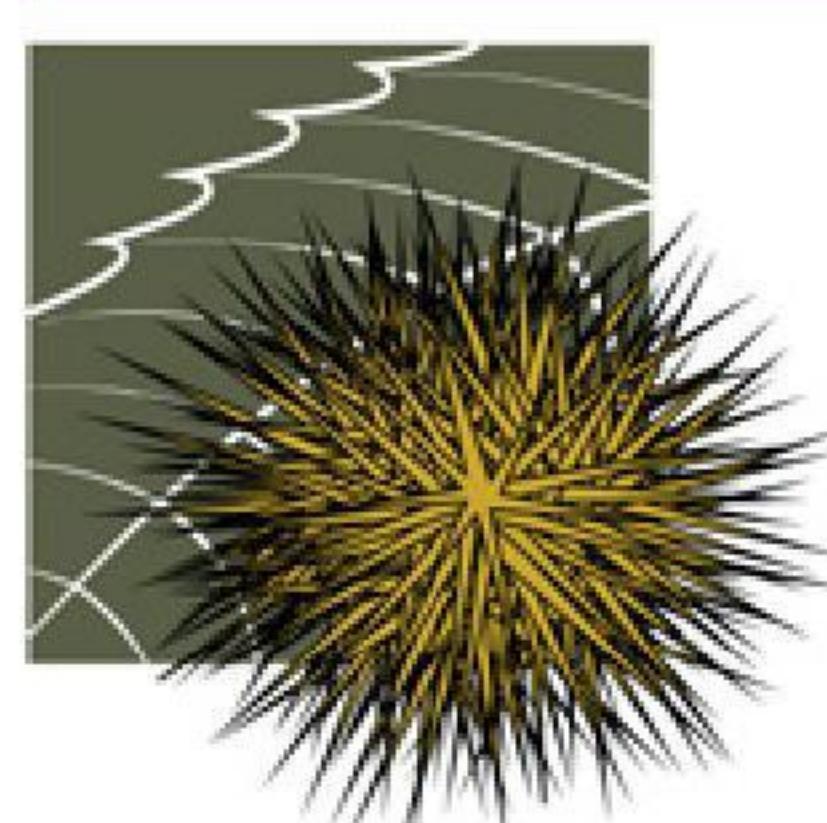


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Brief and Background

- 1.1.1 Ramsay & Co has been commissioned by Virtue Land to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) for a proposed residential scheme to land south of Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood, West Sussex, RH19 3GY.
- 1.1.2 The proposed development site is allocated for housing in the current Mid Sussex District Council Site Allocations DPD: SA 26 - *Land south of Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood*. The proposed scheme layout comprises 12 no. residential units with a new access off Yewhurst Close to the eastern edge.
- 1.1.3 The requirement for a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal was identified within the MSDC site allocation [AONB Section]. This report will assess and identify the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development scheme on the landscape character and visual amenity of the identified parcel of land and surrounding area.
- 1.1.4 This report has been prepared by Andrew Ramsay (BA Hons) MALA who is a Landscape Architect and Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI). All the relevant photographs and figures are included with this report.
- 1.1.5 This report considers the potential effects of the proposed development on:
 - *Landscape character*;
 - *Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape*.

1.2 The Purpose of the Report

- 1.2.1 Within the Guidelines for landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) it makes clear there is a difference between Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments which are conducted as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure and a standalone 'Appraisal'. GLVIA 03 states: *as a standalone appraisal the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity in the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies*.
- 1.2.2 The main objectives of this report are to:
 - *evaluate and describe the baseline conditions of the proposed development site*;

- *identify the relevant landscape character of the proposed development site and surrounding area as well as any notable landscape features within (or adjacent) to the site;*
- *identify the key views and visual receptors in relation to the proposed development site;*
- *assess the sensitivity of the existing landscape character and visual receptors;*
- *assess the size and scale of the landscape and visual effects - magnitude of change;*
- *describe any potential mitigation measures;*
- *predict and evaluate the overall degree of landscape and visual effects with regard to the proposed development.*

1.2.3 The assessment and scope of work has been identified in accordance with the relevant guidance (Refer to Section 3.0 - Methodology) and includes:

- *A desktop study and review of the relevant national and local planning policies together with statutory and non-statutory landscape designations;*
- *An identification and assessment of the study area (where appropriate) and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV);*
- *An identification and assessment of the relevant existing landscape character assessments, landscape components and landscape receptors;*
- *An identification and assessment of the key visual receptors and representational viewpoints in relation to the proposed development site;*
- *A description and assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects and whether they are adverse, beneficial or neutral.*

2.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.1 Proposed Residential Scheme

2.1.1 The proposed development comprises a total of 12 no. new residential units arranged north and south of a new vehicular access off Yewhurst Close [to the eastern edge].

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Principles and Overview

3.1.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013;*
- *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment published by Natural England 2014;*
- *Visual representation of Development Proposals: Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Published by the Landscape Institute.*

3.1.2 This Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal will follow the guidelines for assessment as contained within GLVIA Third Edition.

3.1.3 The following Landscape Character Assessments and digital resources were referred to - underlined text include a digital link to the original document:

- *Natural England - National Character Areas Profile: 122 – High Weald (2013);*
- *West Sussex District Council: Landscape Character Assessment: HW1-High Weald;*
- *High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-29).*
- *Mid Sussex District Council; Landscape Character Assessment: 06 High Weald;*
- *Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood plan: Landscape Character Assessment [2015];*
- *Magic Interactive Map, Defra and Natural England.*

3.1.4 The following planning documents were referred to:

- *The National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024);*
- *Mid Sussex District Plan [2018];*
- *Mid Sussex District Council: Site Allocations Development Plan Document [June 2022];*
- *Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan [2015-2031].*

3.1.5 Within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) it states: *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of, and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity. This report will assess and describe these two elements separately.*

3.1.6 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third edition) defines the four essential components which should be included within a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA):

- *Project Description;*
- *Baseline Studies;*
- *Mitigation;*
- *Identification and Description of Effects.*

3.1.7 GLVIA3 recognises that professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA and within the guidelines it states that: *whilst there is some scope for quantitative measurements of some relatively objective matters..... much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements.*

3.2 Baseline Studies

3.2.1 The initial step in LVIA is to establish the baseline landscape and visual conditions. The landscape baseline aims to provide an understanding of the landscape context of the area that may be affected; its constituent elements, character, condition and value. The visual baseline aims to define the area where the development may be visible, the nature of the views and the types of people who may experience the views. The anticipated landscape and visual effects can then be assessed against the existing baseline conditions.

3.2.2 The overall degree of landscape and visual effects can be predicted by making judgements regarding two main components:

- *The value and susceptibility of the visual and landscape receptors to change (sensitivity);*
- *Nature of the effect likely to occur (magnitude of effect).*

3.2.3 Assessment of the above criteria is combined to allow the overall degree of landscape and visual effects to be assessed and predicted.

3.3 Assessment of Landscape Effects

3.3.1 GLVIA 03 recommends that: *An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource. The baseline landscape is described by referring to existing landscape character assessments and by a description of the proposed development site and the surrounding area: Landscape is an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of action and interaction of natural and / or human factors.*

3.3.2 Landscape character assessments identify and describe the physical influences (geology, soils etc.), human influences (land use, management, etc.) and aesthetic and perceptual qualities providing an overall character of the landscape. They also classify the overall character, including any distinctive landscape types and the particular combinations of aesthetic and perceptual qualities that make them distinctive.

3.3.3 Development can give rise to a variety of landscape effects and can include:

- *Change or loss of features and elements which contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;*

- *Addition of new features / elements which influence or change the existing landscape character;*
- *A combination of the above.*

3.4 Sensitivity and Susceptibility to Change of Landscape Receptors

3.4.1 Predicting the overall degree of landscape effects is based on an assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape receptor combined with the magnitude of the effect.

3.4.2 Sensitivity of a landscape receptor is based on its susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed combined with the value attached to the landscape. Within GLVIA 03 it states that sensitivity is; specific to the particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question. Sensitivity is judged on a scale of *High, Medium or Low*.

Table 01: Criteria for Assessing Landscape Character / Receptor Sensitivity

High Sensitivity	<p>Landscapes which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>of national importance and which are particularly distinctive with elements that are likely to be substantially changed by the development proposals;</i> • <i>assessed to be in good condition, intact and particularly vulnerable to disturbance;</i> • <i>valued and have little potential for replacement.</i>
Low Sensitivity	<p>Landscapes which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>either by designation or assessment have no value / importance attached to the landscape area and/or features;</i> • <i>have few features or qualities susceptible to change;</i> • <i>have features which could be improved and enhanced;</i> • <i>have good potential for replacement or substitution.</i>

3.4.3 Susceptibility to change is expressed on a scale of High, Medium or Low and is an assessment of the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development or change without undue consequences for the maintenance of the existing baseline conditions. Within GLVIA 03 the guidelines state: *It is possible for an internationally, nationally, or locally important landscape to have relatively low susceptibility to change resulting from the particular type of development in question, by virtue of both the characteristics of the landscape and the nature of the proposal.*

Table 02: Criteria for Assessing Landscape Character / Receptor Susceptibility	
High Susceptibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The landscape effects, as a consequence of the development would change the quality or condition of the overall character of a landscape type / area;</i> <i>As a consequence of the development, the landscape effects would alter or remove landscape elements or components, change aesthetic or perceptual qualities important to that landscape character or introduce new elements which would be inappropriate to the existing landscape character;</i> <i>The development would be contrary to current landscape planning policies and strategies relating to the landscape.</i>
Low Susceptibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The changes as a consequence of the development proposals would not affect the existing character / quality / condition of the existing landscape character;</i> <i>the aims of existing planning policies / strategies would not be compromised by the proposed development;</i> <i>The development proposals would not remove or alter landscape components / receptors which are important to the existing landscape character or introduce new elements incongruous to the existing landscape character.</i>

3.4.4 The value of the landscape is expressed on a scale of High, Medium or Low and is defined by assessing the information which contributes to understanding landscape:

- Information about areas recognised by statute such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty etc;*
- Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant;*
- Local planning documents for local landscape designations;*
- Information on individual or groups of features such as conservation areas, listed buildings, special historic or cultural sites;*
- Art and literature identifying value attached to particular areas or views;*
- Material on landscape of local or community interest.*

3.4.5 The following factors can also contribute to understanding the value of landscape:

- Landscape quality (condition);*
- Scenic quality;*
- Rarity;*
- Representativeness;*
- Conservation interest;*
- Recreation value;*
- Perceptual aspects;*
- Cultural Associations.*

Table 03: Criteria for Assessing Landscape Value

High Value	Landscapes which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have existing, recognised national or local designations;</i> • <i>are judged to have scenic / wildness / tranquil qualities;</i> • <i>have cultural heritage features or cultural / artistic associations;</i> • <i>are not designated but which are assessed as being intact and in good condition;</i> • <i>are particularly representative of a typical landscape character;</i> • <i>have specific landscape components which are identified as being important to the landscape character.</i>
Low Value	Landscapes where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the character is assessed to be in poor condition;</i> • <i>key characteristics such as scenic quality / cultural heritage features / wildness or tranquillity / rarity are absent;</i> • <i>cultural / artistic associations are not in evidence.</i>

3.5 Magnitude of Landscape Effects

3.5.1 GLVIA 03 states: Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. For the purposes of this report the magnitude of landscape effects in relation to the size or scale of the change is expressed as major, moderate, minor, or none. The size or scale of change in the landscape is judged in terms of:

- *The extent of existing landscape components that will be lost;*
- *The degree to which perceptual or aesthetic aspects of the landscape are changed - either by the removal or the addition of components;*
- *Whether the effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape character.*

3.5.2 The geographical extent over which the landscape would be changed is categorised as:

- *At the site level – within the development site itself;*
- *At the level of the immediate setting of the site;*
- *At the scale of the landscape type or character area within which the proposal lies;*
- *On a larger scale – influencing several landscape types or character areas.*

3.5.3 The duration and reversibility of the proposed development are separate but linked. The duration of the proposed development would be considered in relation to the expected life span of the scheme and is expressed as:

- *Short term: zero – five years;*
- *Medium term: five – ten years;*
- *Long term: ten – thirty years;*

- *Permanent: greater than thirty years.*

3.5.4 The reversibility of the scheme would consider the practicality of the change being reversed within thirty years.

3.6 Assessment of Visual Effects

3.6.1 The assessment of visual effects describes the changes in the character of the available views as a result of the development proposals and the change in visual amenity available to visual receptors. Predicting the overall degree of visual effects is based on an assessment of the sensitivity of the visual receptor combined with the magnitude of effect.

3.6.2 Viewpoint locations are selected as objectively as possible with the aim of providing a range of representational views which will demonstrate long-distance, medium distance and near distance views (where possible and appropriate) of the proposed development site.

3.7 Sensitivity and Susceptibility to Change of Visual Receptors

3.7.1 The sensitivity of visual receptors is dependent on location, importance of view and expectation or activity of viewer. The overall sensitivity of a visual receptor is assessed by combining the susceptibility to change with the value of the view. Overall sensitivity is expressed on a scale of High, Medium or Low.

Table 04: Criteria for Assessing Visual Sensitivity

High Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Visual receptors in residential properties with open views of the proposed development site;</i>• <i>High quality views experienced by many visual receptors;</i>• <i>A view which is valued nationally for its visual / scenic quality.</i>
Low Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A view of low importance or value with little scenic quality;</i>• <i>A view from a landscape which has little value and existing, detracting features;</i>• <i>Glimpsed or intermittent views from highways;</i>• <i>A view available to few visual receptors.</i>

3.7.2 For the purposes of this report the susceptibility to change is expressed as High, Medium or Low. The visual receptors most susceptible to change and therefore with a susceptibility to change likely to be High could be:

- *Residents at home;*
- *Views experienced by many viewers;*
- *Recreational walkers whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on landscape and the available views;*

- *Visitors to heritage assets where views form an important part of the experience.*

3.7.3 The susceptibility to change of visual receptors travelling on road, rail or other transport routes would tend to fall into the *Low / Medium* category however if the route were to feature recognised scenic views then *High* may be more appropriate.

3.7.4 Visual receptors likely to be less concerned with change and therefore with a susceptibility to change assessed to be Low could include:

- *People engaged in sport or external activities where views are less likely to be appreciated;*
- *Intermittent or glimpsed views from transport routes;*
- *Workers where attention is likely to be focused on an activity not connected with the surroundings.*

3.7.5 Judgements on the value of the selected viewpoints are expressed as High, Medium or Low and assessing the value attached to a view takes account of:

- *The nature of the view eg a panoramic view of open countryside from an elevated location as opposed to a constrained urban viewpoint;*
- *Recognition of the value of views eg. scenic viewpoints within Areas Of outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- *Viewpoints where the views have been noted on maps, guidebooks, websites etc.*

3.8 Magnitude of Visual Effects

3.8.1 Each of the visual effects identified is assessed with regard to size or scale, geographical extent and where appropriate duration / reversibility:

3.8.2 The magnitude of visual effects in relation to the size or scale of the change is expressed as major, moderate, minor, or none. The size or scale of change in the view is judged in terms of:

- *The degree of the loss or addition of features in the view;*
- *The extent of the changes in the view, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *The degree of contrast or integration of the changes with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics;*
- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, whether full, partial or glimpsed, or the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced.*

3.8.3 The geographical extent of the visual effects is concerned with an assessment of:

- *the angle of the view;*
- *the distance involved;*

- *the extent of the area over which the change would be visible.*

3.8.4 The duration and reversibility of the proposed development are separate but linked. The duration of the development would be considered in relation to the expected life span of the development scheme and is expressed as:

- *Short term: zero – five years;*
- *Medium term: five – ten years;*
- *Long term: ten – thirty years;*
- *Permanent: greater than thirty years.*

3.8.5 The reversibility of the scheme would consider the practicality of the change being reversed within thirty years.

3.9 Overall Degree of Landscape and Visual Effects

3.9.1 The overall degree of landscape and visual effects are assessed by combining the separate judgements of sensitivity and the magnitude of effects on landscape and visual receptors. Table 05 defines and describes the range of landscape and visual effects which can be expressed as *adverse, beneficial or neutral*.

Table 05: Overall Degree of Landscape and Visual Effects: Definitions and Descriptions

NEUTRAL	
No Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No part of the development would be discernible;</i> • <i>There would be no effect within the context of the existing landscape;</i> • <i>The development proposals would be appropriate to the existing landscape scale, character, pattern and quality of the existing landscape resource.</i>
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Only a very small part of the development would be discernible;</i> • <i>There would be little effect within the context of existing landscape character.</i>
ADVERSE	
Low / Slight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The proposals would constitute only a minor component within the existing landscape character;</i> • <i>Awareness of the proposals would not have a marked effect upon the existing landscape quality, pattern and landform.</i>
Moderate	<p><i>The Proposals would:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>form a visible and recognisable new element within the existing landscape;</i> • <i>negatively affect the existing landscape character.</i>
Substantial	<p><i>The proposals would:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>form a significant part of the existing landscape;</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>be unable to be fully mitigated;</i> • <i>substantially and negatively affect an existing high-quality landscape.</i>
Severe	<p><i>The proposals would:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>become a dominant feature within a high-quality landscape;</i> • <i>be entirely inappropriate to the existing landscape pattern, scale and landform;</i> • <i>permanently degrade or damage the existing landscape.</i>
BENEFICIAL	
Low / Slight	<p><i>The proposals would:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>improve the landscape quality and character;</i> • <i>be appropriate to the landscape scale, quality and pattern;</i> • <i>provide some restoration of lost or degraded landscape features.</i>
Moderate	<p><i>The proposals would:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Integrate very well within the existing landscape character;</i> • <i>Improve the overall landscape quality through restoration of missing or degraded landscape features due to other uses or neglect.</i>

3.10 Field Survey Methodology and Viewpoint Images

3.10.1 The on-site survey visit was carried out by Andrew Ramsay BA (Hons) MALA CMLI on the 24th September 2025 and undertaken from Public Rights of Way and Public Highways surrounding the proposed development site. Weather conditions were fair with some sunny spells. It should be noted the site survey was conducted during Autumn when deciduous vegetation was generally in leaf - views would be more open during late Autumn, Winter and early Spring when deciduous vegetation would generally be out of leaf.

3.10.2 The photographs were all taken with a Canon EOS R [Full Frame] digital camera with a 50mm lens approximately 1.5 - 1.7m above ground level.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

3.10.3 The ZTV is the area from within which any future development is anticipated to be visible. It is mapped by means of desktop research which was then refined and clarified with on-site investigations – refer to: Section 7.3 Visual Effects and RCo594 / Figure 01 / Viewpoint Locations & PRoWs.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 National Planning Policy Context

- 4.1.1 A desk top study assessment of the relevant planning policy designations and statutory landscape designations surrounding and including the proposed development site has been carried out by Ramsay & Co. This desktop study has been undertaken at a national and local planning level and relevant planning and landscape designations are shown on *RCo594 / Figure 03 / Relevant Landscape and Planning Designations*.
- 4.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated in December 2024. The NPPF has introduced a presumption in favour of sustainable development and reaffirmed that: *Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.....*
- 4.1.3 In Section 2, paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework it states the following: *The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*
- 4.1.4 The NPPF promotes sustainable development through:*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;.....*

National Planning Policy Framework: Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 4.1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework states: *Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.*
- 4.1.6 There are no designated PROW routes adjacent or within the identified parcel of land. The nearest PROW is a Footpath [Ref: 16aEG] which runs north from School Lane [north of Hammerwood Road].

4.2 Mid Sussex District Plan [2014-2031]

- 4.2.1 The Mid Sussex District Plan [2014-2031] is intended to:*shape the future of Mid Sussex up to 2031 by providing a framework for new development, employment growth, infrastructure, and measures to ensure the protection of the*

countryside. The District Plan will also guide other planning documents, such as Neighbourhood Plans and Site Allocations Plans.

4.2.2 The following planning policies are considered relevant to the proposed development site with regard to landscape character and visual amenity:

Mid Sussex District Plan: Policy DP12

4.2.3 *The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:*

- it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.*

Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.

Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council.

Mid Sussex District Plan: Policy DP16 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

4.2.4 The proposed development site lies close the High Weald National Landscape [AONB] Boundary: *Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;*

- the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.*

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.

Mid Sussex District Plan: Policy DP 26 Landscaping Within Developments

4.2.5 *All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:*

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;*
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;*
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;*
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);*
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;*
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;*
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;*
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.*

4.3 Mid Sussex District Council - Site Allocations Development Plan Document [2022]

4.3.1 The Mid Sussex District Council - Site Allocations Development Plan Document: *is required to ensure the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting the housing and employment requirements established in the District Plan and plan for development accordingly. In addition to the site allocations, it plans for the provision of supporting infrastructure and sets out mitigation measures to minimise any impacts.*

SA 26: Land south of Hammerwood Road, Ashurst Wood

4.3.2 Within SA 26 the objective is stated: *To deliver a sensitive extension to Ashurst Wood which reflects local distinctiveness which conserves and enhances the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB, retaining the sylvan, Parkland landscape character and semi-rural character of this section of Hammerwood Road.*

4.3.3 The Urban Design Principles are as follows:

- *Retain and protect the rural character of Hammerwood Road by retaining the existing hedgerow and trees along the northern boundary and compliment and integrate the positive characteristics of Ashurst Wood in the design and layout.*
- *Concentrate development towards the northern part of the site, creating a soft transition with the countryside to the south.*
- *Orientate development to have a positive edge to Hammerwood Road and to the wider countryside to the south to avoid the use of hard boundary treatment along these boundaries.*

4.4 Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan [2015-2031]

4.4.1 Within the Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan, the following policy is considered relevant to landscape character and visual amenity with regard to the proposed development scheme:

Policy ASW 1 - Protection of the Countryside

4.4.2 *Outside of the Built Up Area Boundary, which is defined in Map 1, priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the countryside from inappropriate development. A proposal for development will only be permitted:*

- a. in exceptional circumstances for essential utility infrastructure where no other feasible alternative site is available, or where*
- b. Specific provision has been made in this Plan or the proposal is in accordance with other planning policies applying to the area, and*

- c. *The proposal would conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty having regard to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan, and*
- d. *It would maintain the character and appearance of the countryside and its distinction from the Built Up Area, and*
- e. *It demonstrates good quality design, which respects the existing character and appearance of the surrounding area, and meets the criteria set out in Policy 14 where appropriate.*

5.0 EXISTING BASELINE CONDITIONS

5.1 Landscape Context

5.1.1 The proposed development site lies south of Hammerwood Road to the eastern edge of Ashurst Wood. It comprises an area of land with trees and a dense understorey, to the east lies several residential dwellings which lie off Yewhurst Close and to the north, residential dwellings lie to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road. Further north off School Lane lies Ashurst Wood Primary School.

5.2 Proposed Development Site: Baseline Topography

5.2.1 The immediate site area is generally even however to the southern edge the landform falls away over Home Wood to Wallhill Farm and the northern edge of Forest Row. To the east and west the topography is also fairly even with limited variation, to the north, there is a gradual rise to Culver Farm which lies east of Maypole Road.

5.3 Existing Vegetation

5.3.1 The proposed development site benefits from a number of early mature tree specimens as well as a dense understorey comprising mainly Cherry and Portuguese Laurel [non-native evergreen and likely self-seeded].

5.4 National Landscape Character: Natural England – National Character Areas Profile (122): High Weald

5.4.1 The top tier of landscape character assessments is the National Countryside Character assessment comprising of 8 Regional Volumes which are subdivided into 159 distinct, natural areas.

5.4.2 The proposed development site lies within Volume 7: South East and London and is located within National Character Area Profile (122): High Weald which: *encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 78 per cent of the NCA. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wild flower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.*

5.4.3 The relevant key characteristics are summarised below:

- *A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers – the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway – which flow in broad valleys;*
- *High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances;*
- *A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber- framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier;*
- *Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham;*
- *An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths;*
- *Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long-term management;*
- *Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland;*

- *Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing;*
- *A predominantly grassland agricultural landscape grazed mainly with sheep and some cattle;*
- *There is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry which started in Roman times, until coke fuel replaced wood and charcoal. There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today;*
- *An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.*

5.5 The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan (2024-2029)

5.5.1 The proposed development site lies within the High Weald Area National Landscape [formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty] boundary. The current High Weald AONB Management Plan was published in 2024 and provides: *policy documents for the whole of the protected landscape. They are evidence based, locally owned and democratically accountable strategies for looking after these beautiful places in the interests of both people and natural systems. They are formulated to coordinate ambition, policy, investment and action to achieve the legal purpose of 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' for the benefit of current and future generations, and to set out how people's enjoyment of the area's special qualities can be fostered. The Management Plan is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes of the protected landscape are met.*

5.5.2 The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan states: *The High Weald is an outstandingly beautiful landscape cherished by people and celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife. Its ridges and valleys are clothed with an intricate mosaic of small fields interspersed with farmsteads and surrounded by hedges and abundant woods, all arranged around a network of historic routeways. One of the best surviving medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, the High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years. Covering 1461 sq. km and close to London, this extensive area offers millions of people the opportunity to experience the beauty of nature within working countryside. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983, and is now known as the High Weald National Landscape.*

5.5.3 The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan identifies 8 no: *Core Character Components of the High Weald's natural beauty*.....

- 1) ***Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)*** – *a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable,*

relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate.

- 2) **Settlement** - dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.
- 3) **Routeways** - a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).
- 4) **Woodlands** – an abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws.
- 5) **Fieldscapes and Heath** – small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland).
- 6) **Dark night skies** – intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible.
- 7) **Aesthetic and perceptual qualities** – arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape.
- 8) **Land-based economy and rural living** – with roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.

5.5.4 The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan is intended to: ...be used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the AONB. Where the ambition is to achieve environmental net gain, or assess potential harm, the Plan provides a framework for identifying actions that may enhance or damage the AONB's natural and cultural assets. Key characteristics for each component of natural beauty identify what is special about the High Weald's landscape and beauty that should be afforded 'great weight' in planning decisions.....

5.6 Regional Landscape Character: West Sussex County Council Landscape Character Assessment 2003: HW1 – High Weald

5.6.1 The proposed development site areas lies within WSCC Landscape Character Area: HW1 – High Weald which is described as follows: *The High Weald Forest Ridge within West Sussex. Numerous gill streams have carved out a landscape of twisting ridges and secluded valleys. The ancient, densely wooded landscape of the High Weald is seen to perfection in the area. Includes the township of East Grinstead.*

5.6.2 The key landscape characteristics are summarised as follows:

- *Wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).*
- *Plateau, ridges and deep, secluded valleys cut by gill streams.*
- *Headwater drainage of the Rivers Eden, Medway, Ouse and Mole.*
- *Long views over the Low Weald to the downs, particularly from the high Forest Ridge.*
- *Includes major reservoir at Ardingly and adjoins Weir Wood Reservoir.*
- *Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*
- *Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields, some larger fields and small pockets of remnant heathland.*
- *Pockets of rich biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.*
- *Dense network of twisting, deep lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.*
- *Dispersed historic settlement pattern on high ridges, hilltops and high ground, the principal settlements East Grinstead and some expanded and smaller villages.*
- *Some busy lanes and roads including along the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.*
- *London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area.*
- *Mill sites, hammer ponds and numerous fish and ornamental lakes and ponds.*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber framing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile hanging.*
- *Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.*
- *Visitor attractions include Wakehurst Place, Nymans Gardens, the South of England Showground and the Bluebell Line Steam Railway.*

5.7 District Landscape Character: Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment: 06 High Weald

5.7.1 Within the Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment, the proposed development site lies within the landscape character area 06 – High Weald. The introduction and key characteristics are the same as the WSCC HW1 High Weald landscape character area and [to avoid repetition] have not been included.

5.7.2 Within the *Land Management Guidelines* section the following are considered relevant to the proposed visitors centre scheme:

- *Avoid skyline development and ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on long and other views and is integrated within the landscape, paying particular attention to the siting of telecommunications masts.*

- *Increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe, along the approach roads to settlements, and along busy urban routes including within the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.*
- *Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost.*
- *Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.*

5.8 Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan: Supporting and Evidence Base Documents [2015]

5.8.1 As part of the Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan process, the Ashurst Wood Character Assessment was produced: *This document has been prepared by members of the Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as part of the evidence base for the Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan. Following training and advice from Planning Aid experts, the group analysed the character of the village with reference to a number of considerations:*

- *Landscape setting*
- *Layout*
- *Topography*
- *Spaces*
- *Roads and routes*
- *Green and natural features*
- *Buildings and details*
- *Streetscape features*
- *Land uses.*

It is intended that the document will be used as a tool by residents, developers and planners when preparing development proposals, in order to ensure that new development is of high quality and appropriate in character to the existing environment and context.

5.8.2 The proposed development site lies within the Southern Ridge: *This area covers the area of Hammerwood Road to the east of the War Memorial, the parts of the Hammerwood Road/ Camsiron Lane “triangle” that are within the parish and John Pears Field.*

Layout

5.8.3 *This character area comprises three distinct sections:*

1. *Land south of Hammerwood Road, an area comprising a scattering of dwellings of mixed sizes set well back from the road and John Pears Field.*

2. *Yewhurst Close, a cul-de-sac of new homes built immediately adjacent to the previous area.*
3. *Cansiron Lane and Hammerwood Road east. Cansiron Lane properties are mainly linear with some houses set further back along long drives and a spur off the Lane with houses along either side. Plots along these roads are wide and houses are generally set back from the road with large gardens. Towards the junction where the two roads meet, the plot sizes are smaller and houses closer to the road, including the dwellings in the grounds of Ashurst Wood Abbey.*

Topography

5.8.4 *Hammerwood Road rises slightly from west to east. Cansiron Lane is mainly level with a slope downwards as it reaches the parish boundary. Hammerwood Road and Cansiron Lane are set along a ridge so many houses have steep, sloping gardens.*

Spaces

5.8.5 *John Pears Field with pavilion and tennis courts is situated south of Hammerwood Road, but access is from Wall Hill Road (although some residents have access from properties in Hammerwood Road). A former resident donated the land to the predecessor of Mid Sussex District Council for the benefit of the community. It was once part of the estate of the property now known as Ashurst Wood Abbey and was later used as a rugby and football ground by the then Abbey School.*

Roads / Streets / Routes

5.8.6 *Hammerwood Road is a village road with no footpath for much of its length. Cansiron Lane is narrow, single track in some places, with no footpaths. It is a ridgeway dating back over 2000 years and is a bridleway. Well--used public footpaths cross the lane, connecting with Forest Row.*

Green & natural features/ecology

5.8.7 *Generous frontages to most houses are bordered with trees and hedges. Large oak trees to the north--eastern part of Hammerwood Road, including one with a Protection Order at Thornhill Farm. A high, long tree and hedge border extends along Hammerwood Road from Yewhurst Close to the west. A protected sycamore with six stems sits in the front garden of Redwoods and is a feature at the start of Cansiron Lane. There are also protected trees at Ashurst Wood Abbey and near Ashurst Wood House.*

Landmarks

5.8.8 *Ashurst Wood Abbey is a distinctive building at the junction of Hammerwood Road and Cansiron Lane. It was built as a private home in around 1867 on the site of a former farm. It has housed two different schools and was converted into 20 flats in 1985 when the outbuildings were also restored and turned into dwellings. Much of its land has been sold off over the years for housing.*

Buildings & Details

5.8.9 *There is a wide variety in housing types and styles but a general consistency in materials (bricks, chimneys, tiled roofs) and heights (1 and 2 storey dwellings). The Hammerwood Road and Cansiron Lane “triangle” is made up of mixture of houses, bungalows and chalet bungalows. Most are detached, with three pairs of older, Victorian era semi--- detached houses. The Grade II listed Grove Farm which dates from the 1600s,with later additions, sits at the far end of the parish and is visible from public footpaths to the east. Most houses around the triangle were built between the 1920s and the 1960s. Most are red brick, although some are rendered and painted white.*

The 12 dwellings at Yewhurst Close (left) were built during 2014 to a design reflecting the local character, with walls constructed of red brick with hanging tiles and with false chimneys.

Ashurst Wood House is a large property set in extensive grounds to the south of Hammerwood Road together with a small group of dwellings of mixed size and type and car parking areas.

Dilapidated nursery buildings remain on the old Mount Pleasant Nursery site.

Streetscape Features.

5.8.10 *Yewhurst Close has streetlights and there is one streetlight nearby in Hammerwood Road. Otherwise the area has little street furniture, apart from a prominent red letterbox at the junction of Cansiron Lane and Hammerwood Road.*

Land Uses

5.8.11 *Mostly residential. Land at the old Mount Pleasant Nursery is derelict and unused. Some land to the south of Hammerwood Road is unused having been used in recent years as an off--- road driving business.*

Views

5.8.12 *Views in to properties to the south of Hammerwood Road are mostly screened from the road by hedging and high trees. Several of the properties, including Ashurst Wood House and Chartin, are visible from parts of Forest Row, particularly from the Ashdown Forest. Ashurst Wood Abbey and the properties sitting along the southern side of Cansiron Lane are also visible or partly visible from Forest Row.*

Views along Cansiron Lane and Hammerwood Road show the rural nature of the area with a large amount of greenery. The gaps between the houses allow views from the roads to the countryside and forest beyond. The views to the north of Hammerwood Road are over open fields (recently divided by post and rail fencing to form paddocks for livestock) across to the Primary School and distant countryside in one direction and the old house at Thornhill and the farmland surrounding it in the other direction.

There are views from the eastern boundary of John Pears Field across neighbouring land to the Forest.

Summary

5.8.13 *An area of low density, residential development with a mix of building styles and sizes, including a higher density rural exception site and a large Victorian property divided into flats. Trees and frontage hedgerows contribute to the rural character and properties are set back from the roads and separated from each other, adding to the sense of space. The southern part of Hammerwood Road has a very different, more rural character to the northern side. Although built form extends to the narrow eastern point of the parish boundary, it is surrounded by fields and open countryside, which prevent coalescence with the neighbouring parish of Forest Row. The ridge---top position of many of the properties means that they are visible from far away, and it is important that these views are not compromised by inappropriate development in the future.*

5.9 Proposed Development Site: Landscape Character

5.9.1 The proposed development site landscape receptors / components are illustrated in Appendix A.

5.9.2 The proposed development site comprises a number of tree specimens with a dense understorey of mainly Cherry / Portuguese Laurel, the fairly even topography falls steeply from the southern edge. To the northern edge is Hammerwood Road and associated residential dwellings which lie to the northern edge of the highway. To the west is an open [private] area of grassland with some hard standing, several buildings lie to the western edge of the site which are used for the storage of vehicles and assorted bric-a-brac, further west the settlement pattern is more dispersed with detached dwellings set back off Hammerwood Road

5.9.3 To the eastern edge lie residential dwellings off Yewhurst Close which are of comparatively recent construction, dense vegetation lies to the southern edge with woodland beyond.

5.9.4 The site is considered to be in a relatively poor condition with a number of trees which are scheduled to be removed due to poor overall condition and a dense [non-native] understorey of *Prunus sp.* inhibiting natural, native species succession. The dense vegetation means the site has a constrained and enclosed character, perceptions of tranquillity are impacted by the proximity of traffic [Hammerwood Road] and existing residential dwellings.

5.9.5 The main landscape receptors would be summarised by:

- *Existing tree specimens;*
- *Hammerwood Road & residential dwellings;*
- *Yewhurst Close & residential dwellings;*

- *Agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge.*

5.10 Landscape Receptor Value

5.10.1 The elements of landscape character which may be affected by the proposed residential scheme were identified from existing landscape character assessments and the site visit. The characteristics and guidelines within the landscape character assessments were assessed and provided indicators as to which elements were important to landscape character.

5.10.2 The value of the proposed development site landscape character and landscape receptors / components are assessed below:

- *The existing tree specimens and shrubs enclose the site and delineate the boundary edges, therefore the existing trees and native species shrubs are assessed to be of high value;*
- *Hammerwood Road & the associated residential dwellings are assessed as having a low value as the highway is not considered a historical route and none of the dwellings are listed;*
- *Yewhurst Close and the associated residential dwellings are of comparatively recent construction and therefore have a low value;*
- *The agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge are modern constructions which do not enhance landscape character and are therefore of low value;*
- *The proposed development site is judged to be of medium value as although it lies within the High Weald National Landscape and there are some A grade tree specimens, dense non-native evergreen understorey predominates [limiting natural regeneration/succession] and a number of [ornamental, non-native] trees are in a poor condition.*

5.11 Statutory Landscape Designations

Ancient Woodland

5.11.1 A woodland block south of the proposed development site is designated as: *Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland*.

High Weald National Landscape [Formerly AONB]

5.11.2 The proposed development site lies within the High Weald National Landscape [formerly AONB].

5.12 Visual Baseline: Potential Visual Receptors

Residential Receptors

5.12.1 Views of the proposed development site from existing residential dwellings are constrained to the northern and eastern edges [Hammerwood Road and Yewhurst Close]. There are also partial views of the western edge from locations to Badgers' Sett residential dwelling [to the west].

Recreational Users

5.12.2 There is a constrained view of a limited section of vegetation to the northern boundary from the northern end of a PRoW: Footpath which heads north along Dirty Lane.

Road Users

5.12.3 Hammerwood Road edges the northern boundary of the proposed development site and therefore there are near-distance views of the northern edge of the proposed development site from a limited section of the highway. There are views from the Yewhurst cul-de-sac to the east of the proposed development site.

5.13 Visual Analysis: Representational Viewpoints

5.13.1 This section of the report provides an analysis of the existing baseline visual condition. The locations demonstrate the views available of the proposed development site [and viewpoints which demonstrate a lack of visibility due to the prevailing landform and/or intervening vegetation]. Views are shown in Appendix B: Viewpoint Photographs.

Viewpoint 01: Private Land [Badgers' Sett] Looking East

5.13.2 This viewpoint lies close to a private residential dwelling: Badgers' Sett and looks east across a mown grassland area. The view shows the trees and shrubs which line the western edge of the proposed development site, there are partial views of a random collection of old cars, cement mixer and the agricultural/storage buildings which house vehicles, machinery and general bric-a-brac. The view also demonstrates the generally even landform which characterises the landscape immediately west of the site area.

Viewpoint 02: Hammerwood Road Looking South-East

5.13.3 Viewpoint 02 lies to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road and looks south-east along the northern edge of the proposed development site. The view demonstrates the dense vegetation and tree specimens which characterise the northern boundary of the proposed development site and which constrain views further south. The view also shows the sylvan character of the Hammerwood Road highway corridor.

Viewpoint 03: PRoW: Footpath looking North

5.13.4 This viewpoint lies to the northern end of a PRoW: Footpath which runs north along Dirty Lane. The view looks north and a very constrained section of the proposed development site is perceptible framed by vegetation and buildings to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road. The view shows the dense vegetation which characterises the northern boundary of the proposed development site and which limits views further south.

Viewpoint 04: Hammerwood Road Looking South-West

5.13.5 Viewpoint 04 lies to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road opposite the access to Yewhurst Close and looks south-west. The view demonstrates the dense vegetation which lines the eastern edge of the proposed development site and constrains views further west, there is a partial view of the close board timber fence line which edges the boundary between Yewhurst Close and the proposed development site.

Viewpoint 05: Yewhurst Close Looking West

5.13.6 This view lies to the eastern edge of Yewhurst Close and looks west to the boundary of the proposed development site. The view demonstrates the dense vegetation which characterises the proposed development site as well as the suburban character of Yewhurst Close with timber close boarded fencing and pre-cast concrete brick surfaced areas prominent in the view.

Viewpoint 06: John Pears Field Looking North-East

5.13.7 Viewpoint 06 lies to the John Pears Field [Recreation Ground] and looks north-east - the view demonstrates the gradual fall to the south. To the left of the contextual image, a timber pavilion building is perceptible beyond extensive mown grass areas, views north-east are constrained by dense trees and shrubs which lie to the edge of the recreation ground boundary.

6.0 MITIGATION AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

6.1 Proposed Mitigation

6.1.1 Where feasible all the existing boundary trees and shrubs would be retained maintaining the enclosed and constrained landscape character and limiting perceptibility from publicly accessible locations, any gaps would be infilled with native species shrubs and tree specimens. New residential frontages would be softened with native species hedgerows and tree specimens.

6.2 Potential Effects: Construction Phase

6.2.1 Construction phase activities would involve the standard operations associated with any construction scheme – adverse effects would be temporary in nature and comprise:

- *Tree & shrub removal;*
- *General groundworks;*
- *Delivery of construction materials / construction traffic movements;*
- *Construction site activities and site operations.*

6.3 Post Construction / Operational Phase

6.3.1 Post construction, effects would be limited to views of the proposed residential dwellings and associated hard standing / infrastructure – effects would be permanent.

7.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

7.1 Landscape Effects

7.1.1 This section will deal with the potential effects of the proposed development scheme on the landscape character and fabric of the proposed development site.

Landscape Features: Potential Effects

7.1.2 The existing landscape features / components which are important to the proposed development site have been identified as follows:

- *Existing tree specimens;*
- *Hammerwood Road & residential dwellings;*
- *Yewhurst Close & residential dwellings;*
- *Agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge.*

Landscape Character: Potential Effects

7.1.3 Landscape character is partly derived from the combination and pattern of landscape elements within any view and therefore there is an overlap between visual amenity and landscape character.

7.2 Effects on the Landscape

Sensitivity

7.2.1 The sensitivity of the identified landscape receptors / components has been assessed as follows:

- The existing trees & shrubs are assessed as having a high value being important to landscape character. Susceptibility to change would be medium as some tree specimens would be removed – Sensitivity is assessed to be **Medium** overall;
- Hammerwood Road & the associated residential dwellings are judged to have a low value and there would be a medium susceptibility to change - overall sensitivity is assessed as being **Medium**;
- Yewhurst Close and the associated residential dwellings to the cul-de-sac are assessed as having a low value - none of the buildings are listed. Susceptibility to change is judged as medium due to the proximity of the proposed development and access - the overall sensitivity is assessed to be **Medium**.
- The agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge are assessed as having a low value. Susceptibility to change would be low due to existing, intervening boundary vegetation - sensitivity is assessed as being **Low**.
- *Proposed Development Site: Landscape Character - value has been assessed as medium, the susceptibility to change is judged to be high. The proposed development site is judged to have a **High** sensitivity to the type and scale of the proposed development.*

Magnitude of Change: Construction Phase

7.2.2 During the construction phase of development, there would be short term, adverse effects in relation to enabling works, ground works, construction deliveries and general construction site activities.

Magnitude of Change: Proposed Residential Scheme

7.2.3 Following completion of the proposed residential development scheme, effects would be permanent and primarily related to the perceptibility of new dwellings.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

7.2.4 The proposed development site is roughly square in plan with trees and a dense understorey of mainly Cherry & Portuguese Laurel, both non-native evergreen shrub species.

Existing Trees & Shrubs

7.2.5 The magnitude of change in relation to the trees and shrubs is assessed as being **Moderate** as some tree specimens would require removal. There would be a **Moderate Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect in relation to existing trees and shrubs.

Hammerwood Road & Associated Residential Dwellings

7.2.6 There would be a **Minor** magnitude of change with regard to the setting of Hammerwood Road and the associated residential dwellings and a **Low / Slight Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect.

Yewhurst Close and Associated Residential Dwellings

7.2.7 The new access off Yewhurst Close would result in a **Major** magnitude of change. There would be a **Substantial Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect on the setting of cul-de-sac and the associated residential dwellings as a result of the proposed scheme.

Agricultural / Storage Buildings

7.2.8 The agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge are existing man-made components which are considered to detract from landscape character. The proposed scheme would result in a **Minor** magnitude of change and **Negligible Neutral** overall degree of landscape effect.

Proposed Development Site - Landscape Character (Construction Phase)

7.2.9 The magnitude of change in relation to landscape effects arising as a result of the proposed development scheme during the construction phase would be short-term and **Major**. The overall degree of landscape effect would be temporary and **Substantial Adverse** as localised ground-work operations, deliveries and construction site activities would negatively affect the landscape character of the proposed development site south of Hammerwood Road.

Proposed Development Site - Landscape Character (Post Construction)

7.2.10 Following completion of the proposed development scheme, the magnitude of change is anticipated to be **Major**. The overall degree of landscape effect would be permanent and **Substantial Adverse** due to the type and scale of the proposed residential scheme.

Conclusion

7.2.11 The proposed development site comprises a number of trees and dense understorey which is dominated by non-native, evergreen species. Boundary tree specimens and shrubs would be retained, maintaining the enclosed and constrained character with some opportunities for new tree and hedgerow planting to residential frontages. It is considered adverse landscape effects would be largely limited to the context of the proposed development site due to the constrained character.

7.3 Visual Effects: Extent of Visibility - Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

7.3.1 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrating the anticipated perceptibility of the proposed development scheme has been mapped by means of desktop research which was then refined and clarified with on-site investigations. It is intended as indicative with judgements constrained by the limitations of the mapping and transient nature of deciduous vegetation. The ZTV is illustrated within: *RCo594 / Figure 01 / Viewpoint Locations and PRoW*.

- 7.3.2 The ZTV is constrained to the north by the retention of existing trees and shrubs and the residential dwellings which lie to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road. To the west, the ZTV would extend across an open [private] grassland area however it is likely views would be softened with retained vegetation to the western edge of the proposed development site.
- 7.3.3 Dense trees and shrubs to the south of the proposed development site would constrain views from locations to open grassland fields and a PRoW: Footpath which runs to the eastern edge of Home Wood.
- 7.3.4 To the east, the ZTV would include Yewhurst Close but would be constrained by residential dwellings and existing vegetation.

7.4 Visual Effects: Viewpoints and Visual Receptors

- 7.4.1 The viewpoint photographs are shown in Appendix B: Viewpoint Photographs.

Viewpoint 01: Private Land [Badgers' Sett] Looking East

- 7.4.2 This viewpoint lies to private land east of Badgers' Sett and looks east. The value is assessed as being medium as there is limited scenic quality but located within a designated landscape, the location would be representative of residents who would be anticipated to have a high susceptibility to change - the resulting overall sensitivity is **Medium**. The magnitude of effect is assessed as being **Minor** as the proposed dwellings would be only partially visible in seasonal, near-mid distance views.
- 7.4.3 Proposed residential dwellings may be partially perceptible in views from this location however retained boundary vegetation would soften and filter views. It is anticipated there would be a **Low / Slight Adverse** overall degree of visual effect.

Viewpoint 02: Hammerwood Road Looking South-East

- 7.4.4 Viewpoint 02 lies to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road and looks south-east across the highway to the dense vegetation which lies to the northern edge of the proposed development site and which would be retained. Value is assessed as medium as although within the High Weald National Landscape there is limited scenic quality. This view would be most representative of residents who would be likely to have a high susceptibility to change - the resulting sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**. The magnitude of effect would be **Moderate** as existing, retained vegetation would constrain perceptibility of the proposed scheme.
- 7.4.5 It is anticipated there would be a **Moderate Adverse** overall degree of visual effect as perceptibility of the proposed scheme would be limited by intervening retained [and proposed] vegetation.

Viewpoint 03 – PRoW: Footpath looking North

7.4.6 This viewpoint lies to a PRoW: Footpath which runs north along Dirty lane and offers a framed view of a very constrained section of the northern edge of the proposed development site. The value is judged to be medium due to the location within the High Weald National Landscape. Susceptibility to change would be high as the view would be representational of recreational walkers, the resulting sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**. The magnitude of change is anticipated as being **Minor** as views of the proposed development site would be limited by existing, intervening vegetation.

7.4.7 The visibility of new dwellings would be constrained by intervening vegetation and existing buildings, therefore there would be a **Low / Slight Adverse** overall degree of visual effect as a result of the proposed development scheme.

Viewpoint 04 – Hammerwood Road Looking South-West

7.4.8 Viewpoint 04 lies to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road and looks south-west across the north-east corner of the proposed development site. Although the viewpoint is located within the High Weald National Landscape there is little in this view which reflects any of the special qualities, value is assessed as medium. Susceptibility to change would be high as the view would be representational of residents – the resulting sensitivity is therefore judged to be **Medium**. The magnitude of change is anticipated as being **Moderate** as views of the proposed scheme would be constrained by intervening vegetation.

7.4.9 New dwellings would be partially perceptible in views from this location and therefore there would be a **Moderate Adverse** overall degree of visual effect as a result of the proposed development scheme.

Viewpoint 05 – Yewhurst Close Looking East

7.4.10 This viewpoint looks east from a location to Yewhurst Close, value is assessed as being medium, whilst within the High Weald National Landscape there is little scenic quality, the view location would be primarily representational of residents therefore susceptibility to change is assessed as high. The resulting sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**. The magnitude of effect would be **Major** as there would be near-distance views of the proposed access and residential dwellings.

7.4.11 The proposed access would be clearly visible although views of new dwellings would be partially softened by retained vegetation, the new access would open up views into the proposed development site and therefore there would be **Substantial Adverse** overall degree of visual effect.

Viewpoint 06 – John Pears Field Looking North-East

7.4.12 Viewpoint 06 lies to the John Pears Field [Ashurst Wood Recreation Ground] and looks north-east. The value of this view is medium as the landscape is designated although there is limited scenic quality. This view would be representative of

recreational users and therefore susceptibility to change is assessed as high with sensitivity judged to be **Medium** overall. The magnitude of effect would be **None** as the proposed development scheme would not be perceptible in views from this location.

7.4.13 The proposed development site is not visible in views from this location and therefore there would be **No Change** in the overall degree of visual effect as a result of the proposed scheme.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

8.1.1 The proposed development site has a constrained ZTV with a combination of existing vegetation and the generally even landform [to the east, west and north] resulting in a compact ZTV. Although the topography falls away from the southern edge of the proposed development site, existing woodland would limit perceptibility of new dwellings from private fields and publicly accessible locations [including PRoWs and highways].

8.2 Mitigation

8.2.1 Where feasible, existing trees and shrubs have been retained with losses restricted to specimens which have been graded 'C' and 'B', the proposed layout would retain much of the vegetation to the boundaries and introduce new tree and hedgerow planting to new residential frontages.

8.3 Landscape Effects

8.3.1 The sensitivity of the landscape receptors is summarised in the table below.

Table 06: Summary of Sensitivity of Landscape receptors

Landscape Receptor	Value	Susceptibility To Change	Sensitivity
Existing Trees & Shrubs	High	Medium	Medium
Hammerwood Road & Associated Residential Dwellings	Low	Medium	Medium
Yewhurst Close & Associated Residential Dwellings	Low	Medium	Medium
Agricultural / Storage Buildings	Low	Low	Low
Proposed Development Site	Medium	High	High

8.3.2 The overall degree of landscape effects with regard to the proposed residential scheme are summarised below in Table 07.

Table 07: Anticipated Overall Degree of Landscape Effects (Landscape Character / Landscape Components)

Landscape Receptors	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Overall Degree of Landscape Effect
Existing Trees & Shrubs	Medium	Moderate	Moderate Adverse
Hammerwood Road & Associated Residential Dwellings	Medium	Minor	Low / Slight Adverse
Yewhurst Close & Associated Residential Dwellings	Medium	Major	Substantial Adverse
Agricultural / Storage Buildings	Low	Minor	Negligible Neutral
Proposed Development Site: Landscape Character (Construction phase)	High	Major (Short Term)	Substantial Adverse (Short Term)
Proposed Development Site: Landscape Character (Post construction)	High	Major (Permanent)	Substantial Adverse (Permanent)

8.3.3 The proposed development site lies immediately south of Hammerwood Road and within the High Weald National Landscape. The parcel of land is roughly square in plan and is allocated for housing within current Mid Sussex District Council planning policy.

8.3.4 The existing trees and shrubs to the boundaries would be retained however some trees and shrubs would be removed to facilitate the proposed scheme resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect.

8.3.5 Existing residential dwellings already form part of the Hammerwood Road character, there would be a **Low / Slight Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect on the setting of the highway to the northern edge and associated residential dwellings.

8.3.6 The new access off Yewhurst Close would result in a **Substantial Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect on the setting of the existing residential dwellings to Yewhurst Close.

8.3.7 There would be a **Negligible Neutral** overall degree of landscape effect on the existing agricultural / storage buildings to the western edge.

8.3.8 There would be a short-term **Substantial Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect with regard to the proposed development site landscape character due to associated ground works, deliveries and construction site activities during any construction phase. Long-term and post construction, it is anticipated there would also be a permanent **Substantial Adverse** overall degree of landscape effect as the site would have new dwellings and associated hard standing for parking etc.

High Weald National Landscape

8.3.9 The proposed development site lies within the High Weald National Landscape and is allocated for new residential housing within current MSDC planning policy. It is considered the proposed layout retains existing boundary vegetation maintaining the enclosed and constrained character. The proposed elevations would reflect an existing High Weald architectural vernacular style with contextual materials whilst the access would ensure the sylvan character of the southern edge of Hammerwood Road is also retained.

Existing Landscape Character Assessment Areas

8.3.10 It is considered the scale and type of development to the southern edge of Hammerwood Road as well as the retention of existing boundary vegetation would mean there was a negligible effect on the National Character Area (122): High Weald, WSCC Landscape Character Area: HW1 – High Weald, Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment: High Weald and Ashurst Wood Character Assessment: Southern Ridge.

8.4 Visual Effects

8.4.1 The sensitivity of the Viewpoint locations are summarised in the table below.

Table 08: Summary of Sensitivity of Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Value	Susceptibility To Change	Sensitivity
Viewpoint 01 - Private Land [Badgers' Sett] Looking East	Medium	High	Medium
Viewpoint 02 - Hammerwood Road Looking South-East	Medium	High	Medium
Viewpoint 03 - PRoW: Footpath looking North	Medium	High	Medium
Viewpoint 04 - Hammerwood Road Looking South-West	Medium	High	Medium
Viewpoint 05 - Yewhurst Close Looking East	Medium	High	Medium
Viewpoint 06 - John Pears Field Looking North-East	Medium	High	Medium

8.4.2 The overall degree of visual effects in relation to the proposed residential scheme and selected representational viewpoints are summarised below in Table 09.

Table 09: Anticipated Overall Degree of Visual Effect

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect	Overall Degree of Visual Effect
Viewpoint 01 - Private Land [Badgers' Sett] Looking East	Medium	Minor	Low / Slight Adverse
Viewpoint 02 - Hammerwood Road Looking South-East	Medium	Moderate	Moderate Adverse
Viewpoint 03 - PRoW: Footpath looking North	Medium	Minor	Low / Slight Adverse
Viewpoint 04 - Hammerwood Road Looking South-West	Medium	Moderate	Moderate Adverse
Viewpoint 05 - Yewhurst Close Looking East	Medium	Major	Substantial Adverse
Viewpoint 06 - Ashurst Wood Rec. Looking North-East	Medium	None	No Change

8.5 Visual Receptors

Private Land

8.5.1 *Viewpoint 01* lies to the edge of a mown grass area close to a residential dwelling: Badgers' Sett and is anticipated to have a ***Low / Slight Adverse*** overall degree of visual effect.

Hammerwood Road

8.5.2 There are two viewpoint locations to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road: *Viewpoint 02* is assessed to have a ***Moderate Adverse*** overall degree of visual effect. *Viewpoint 04* lies east of *Viewpoint 02* and is anticipated as also having a ***Moderate Adverse*** overall degree of visual effect.

Yewhurst Close

8.5.3 *Viewpoint 05* is located to Yewhurst Close, the new development access would mean there would be a ***Substantial Adverse*** overall degree of landscape effect.

Recreational Users

8.5.4 *Viewpoint 03* lies to a public right of way which follows Dirty Lane – north of Hammerwood Road. This viewpoint is anticipated to have a ***Low / Slight*** overall degree of visual effect. *Viewpoint 06* is located to the John Pears Field however intervening vegetation limits perceptibility and therefore there would be ***No Change*** in the overall degree of visual effects.

Residential

8.5.5 There would be partial views of new residential dwellings from existing properties to the west [Badgers' Sett], dwellings to the northern edge of Hammerwood Road and properties to Yewhurst Close however existing and proposed vegetation would soften and filter views.

8.6 Conclusions

8.6.1 The proposed scheme would comprise a total of 12 no. residential units with a new access to the eastern edge off Yewhurst Close. Where feasible existing trees have been retained however a number of predominately 'C' grade [and several 'B' grade] specimens would be removed to facilitate the proposed scheme. The interior of the proposed site is dominated by invasive and non-native Cherry and Portuguese Laurel limiting natural succession and biodiversity.

8.6.2 The proposed development site is allocated for housing within current Mid Sussex District policy and it is considered the proposed layout is a sensitive and considered response to the existing landscape constraints, providing a more open arrangement to the south adjacent to the more rural landscape character. The proposed elevations would feature contextual materials and reflect a traditional High Weald architectural vernacular style.

8.6.3 The proposed layout offers opportunities for new tree and hedgerow planting to the residential frontages softening and filtering near-distance views from Yewhurst Close. The retained vegetation to the boundaries would be reinforced with new planting to infill any gaps maintaining and enhancing the constrained landscape character. The proposed access off Yewhurst Close would maintain the sylvan character of the Hammerwood Road southern edge.

8.6.4 Perceptibility of the proposed scheme would be limited by the retention of existing boundary vegetation to the western, northern and eastern edges. To the south, existing woodland and trees would limit visibility from locations to the rural landscape which falls to low lying land north of Forest Row. It is considered adverse landscape character effects would be largely limited to the immediate context of the proposed development site.

8.6.5 It is therefore considered the proposed residential development could be accommodated to the proposed site south of Hammerwood Road without causing undue harm to the setting of the High Weald National Landscape, existing Ashurst Wood landscape character and visual amenity.

9.0 REFERENCES

9.1.1 This report has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013;*
- *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment published by Natural England 2014;*
- *Visual representation of Development Proposals: Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Published by the Landscape Institute.*

9.1.2 The following Landscape Character Assessments and digital resources were referred to - underlined text include a digital link to the original document:

- Natural England - National Character Areas Profile: 122 – High Weald (2013);
- West Sussex District Council: Landscape Character Assessment: HW1-High Weald;
- High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-29).
- Mid Sussex District Council; Landscape Character Assessment: 06 High Weald;
- Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood plan: Landscape Character Assessment [2015];
- Magic Interactive Map, Defra and Natural England.

9.1.3 The following planning documents were referred to:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024);
- Mid Sussex District Plan [2018];
- Mid Sussex District Council: Site Allocations Development Plan Document [June 2022];
- Ashurst Wood Neighbourhood Plan [2015-2031].