

Landscape and Visual Appraisal Report

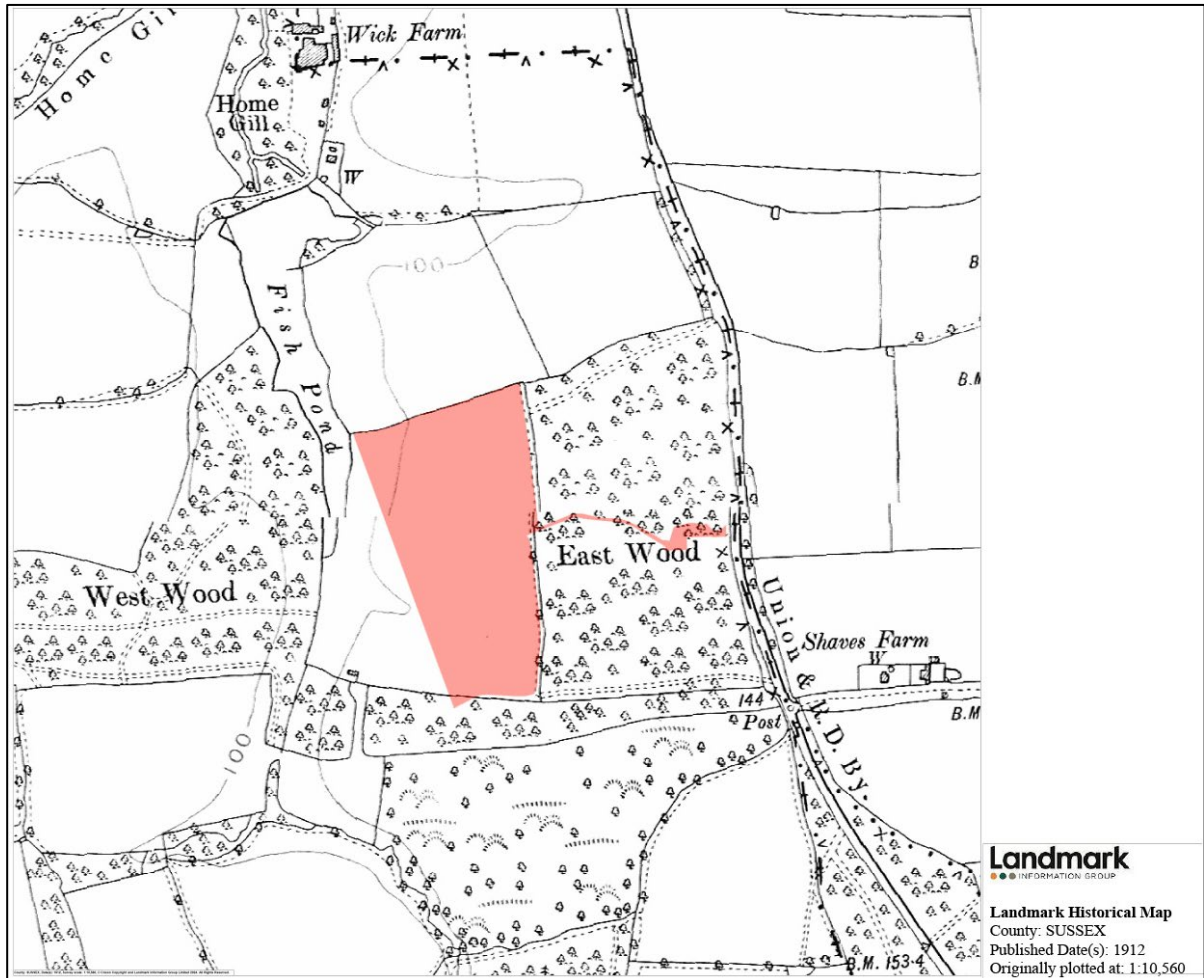
For: Proposed New Eastwood Park Private Equestrian Facilities
At: Eastwood Farm, Shaves Wood Lane, Albourne, West Sussex

Client: Mrs A Cullum Cina and Mr T Cullum Cina

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Rev: A

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Methodology and Approach

2. LANDSCAPE SURVEY

Physical and Biological Landscape

Human and Cultural Landscape

Landscape Planning Policy

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Methodology and Approach

Potential Landscape Impacts

Potential Visual Impacts

4. MITIGATION AND RE-EVALUATION

Proposed Mitigation Measures

Conclusion

APPENDIX A

Photographic Viewpoints

Plan No.	Title	Scale	
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-001	General Arrangement	1:500	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-002	General Arrangement South	1:250	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-003	General Arrangement North	1:250	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-006	Topographic Survey North	1:500	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-006	Topographic Survey South	1:500	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-008	Drainage and Rainwater Harvesting South	1:250	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-009	Drainage and Rainwater Harvesting North	1:250	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-010	Lighting Proposals	1:250	@A1
FLA-EAS-EQ-LS-011	Site Location & Context Footpath Route & Photograph Locations	1:2500	@A1

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 **The Site.** The site is located at approximately 2.2km to the southwest of the village of Albourne West Sussex (OS Ref: TQ24741500) and is part of the wider client's landholding of Eastwood Farm consisting of 120 acres of pasture, woodland and lakes. The main farmhouse and associated farmyard buildings are located directly adjacent to Shaves Wood Lane. The main farm and farmhouse access and egress is out onto Shaves Wood Lane through a gated entrance adjacent to the farmyard. This is to be utilised by vehicles servicing the new equestrian facilities via an existing trackway which runs westward, past the farmyard and onward along the edge of a block of Ancient Woodland. Approximately 250m from the entrance, the trackway emerges out into a large paddock where the proposed new equestrian facilities are to be located. In terms of planning authorities involved, although the majority of the site is within Mid Sussex the access and existing parking area is within the South Downs National Park
- 1.2 **The Background.** As identified within the Sadler Planning Statement it highlights that Mrs Abi Cullum Cina (the Applicant) and her son both own and ride show jumping horses. The applicant's currently rent equestrian facilities locally for their horses but are looking to build purpose-built facilities at their own property. Her son is a competitive up and coming show jumper whose horses have taken him towards competing at international and national horse shows. The goal is to support him to a level where he could be selected to undertake the Step Up to Gold programme through the British Show Jumping Association (BSJA). The programme runs annually and is funded by Sport England. It supports riders aiming to establish themselves at the 1.40m – 1.50m level as well as supporting riders that are aiming to be selected for the World Class Performance Pathway Programme.
- 1.3 In order to support high level calibre horses and riders, top class facilities are vital for their training and development. It is imperative that the horses can be kept fit all year round in all weathers. The indoor arena and covered horse walker are essential for exercising horses especially in the winter when the ground becomes too wet to turn horses out. The outdoor arena enables the development of a full BSJA and Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) standard showjumping course allowing the riders and horses to practice all year around.

- 1.4 **The Brief.** The scheme involves the change of use of the land to equestrian, erection of equestrian facilities which includes an indoor arena, stables, outdoor arena and a covered horse walker, re-surfacing of the existing track, creation of balancing / ecology pond, associated earthworks and provision of a soft landscaping scheme. Following instruction from Matthew Comber of Gould Baxter, the architects for the project, Furse Landscape Architects Ltd (FLA) were asked to review the initial comments received from the Planning Authorities involved through the pre-application consultation for which an initial development plan was prepared by the architects with landscape proposals by PJC.
- 1.5 **The Alternative Design.** Following this review, it was evident that any development proposals for the site needed to respond to the site's topography, lakeside environment and the wider changing landscape character where farms are being fragmented up and the historic connection between the Farmhouses and the land is being broken through a process of gentrification. FLA have prepared an alternative scheme which responds positively to the comments made during the pre-application consultation seeking to maintain the connection between the farmhouse and the land by taking the approach of looking back at the historic development of the significant landscape features since 1887 on the site and adjoining land. Thereby respecting the historic landscape character of the old agricultural style buildings courtyard form, wetlands and ponds that have been formed along the valley floor.
- 1.6 The proposals now extend out past the trackway (circa 1990s) that bisects the historic open field allowing, for a less rigid cramped layout. The previous pre application proposals would have required a significant number of retaining walls and structures to achieve the development within the confines imposed by the Ancient Woodland and its buffer. The new proposals accomplish the required levels by using soft landform embankments that reflect those used to form the adjacent ponds together with a new balancing pond and SUDS systems, ensuring that drainage discharge from the site does not exceed the natural field run off rates.
- 1.7 The new indoor arena and separate stable block are now orientated to reflect typical historic arrangements of stable barns and other functional facilities around a central courtyard thereby encompassing the majority of equestrian stabling activities within a secure private central space. The ménage is at the same level as that of the courtyard allowing for ease of access for horses, riders and maintenance equipment.
- 1.8 Due to the levels design and proposed native species shrub planting, the lower parts of the stable block and the ménage will not be visible from the house. However, the proposals do allow for glimpsed views of the separate stable block with its Cupola from the main house.

- 1.9 This LVA will now assess the potential impacts, on both the landscape resource and visual receptors of the alternative design, considering the measures taken during the development of the design to respond positively to the site's history and character. The design includes incorporating a suite of initial mitigation measures developed by the design team in terms of general layout, massing, levels, drainage and native species planting.
- 1.10 **Landscape Consultants.** This assessment has been undertaken by FLA Ltd, a Landscape Institute registered consultancy with offices in West Sussex and Hampshire, providing landscape and arboricultural services across the south of the UK. The practice covers landscape design, management and arboricultural assessment. The Principal of the practice has been involved with built development in the countryside for over 30 years. Trevor Furse has prepared this assessment, a professional with extensive knowledge of landscape and visual impact measurement techniques.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

- 1.11 **Guidance.** The Landscape and Visual Impact study is based on the principles of good practice in the third edition of "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment" published 2013 by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).
- 1.12 It will take note of the guidance set out in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England & Scotland 2002 produced by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage and Landscape Character Assessment Guidance Topic Paper 1 Recent Practice and the Evolution of Landscape Character Assessment (2002) Countryside Agency, and Scottish Natural Heritage by C Swanwick.
- 1.13 Photographic information within this report is presented in accordance with the Landscape Institute's technical guidance note TNG 06/19.
- 1.14 As provided for in paragraph 3.2 of the GLVIA guidance, due to the smaller scale and nature of the project, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is suitable, as compared with a larger and more extensive scheme, requiring a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an LVIA.

1.15 **Process of Assessment.** The organisation of the study has followed the recommended approach in the guidance documents above and has been divided into five main sections:

- (i) a baseline study of the existing environment to determine the character and quality of the local landscape and to identify the sensitive receptors
- (ii) a brief description of the proposed development
- (iii) recognition of the potential sources of landscape and visual impact and an assessment of their significance
- (iv) identification of mitigation measures to reduce the acknowledged impacts and effects through avoidance, reduction, remediation or compensation
- (v) re-assessment of the reduction in impact and effects achieved by the mitigation measures

The landscape survey presents the baseline position in Section 2. A description of the development and potential landscape and visual impacts are contained in Section 3, whilst if assessed as being required, suitable mitigation measures and re-evaluation of the effects of the development are set out in Section 4.

1.16 **Desk Study.** The baseline study commenced with a desk study of available source material covering the existing landscape including:

- Ordnance Survey maps
- overhead aerial photographs
- statutory prescriptions and designations for landscape and wildlife
- definitive Public Rights of Way maps
- the development plan landscape context
- review of pre application discussions with both the Planning Authorities involved

1.17 **Site Survey.** Several site visits were undertaken during initial discussions with the design team and clients with the main site surveys taking place on 18th September 2024. The surveys were broadly divided into three distinct aspects:

- On-site record of significant landscape features
- On-site analysis of the views out from the site in all directions
- Off-site survey from the Public Rights of Way and local roads

Detailed field investigations included the:

- (i) main spatial components of the wider landscape - landform, vegetation, farming patterns and field boundaries, built development and roads – together with the nature of skylines or intermediate skylines
- (ii) slope morphology and topographical detail of the local area
- (iii) identification of important viewpoints in the surrounding area and the preparation of a photographic record of the current situation
- (iv) nature, extent and quality of views into the site

1.18 **Determining Visibility.** The survey phase adopted mainly physical techniques to determine the extent and nature of visibility. Visual impact decreases with distance from the site, as a result not just of the greater distance, but also the influence of climatic factors on visibility at various times through the year.

1.19 An initial desk study was made of the 'back' views out into the landscape from various points within the site. This allowed the identification of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) or 'visual envelope' for proposed development. The extent of visibility was then refined by a visual appraisal from the surrounding areas.

1.20 Due to the site's location with long distance views of the South Downs to the south of the site effectively screened by the adjacent large block of Ancient Woodland which extends around the site's western edge along and adjacent to the western side of a series of lakes / ponds which have historically been created along the valley bottom.

1.21 There are only 2no directions from where potential direct views are available of the proposed new facilities. Firstly, from the north where the adjacent Honeybourne Farm is located approximately 550m from the site. Potential direct views may be possible from the upper windows of Oatfield Cottage located on the southern edge of the farmyard complex. These potential views for visual receptors are partially screened by mature hedgerows and oak trees along the site's northern boundary. During the winter months they will be more apparent to receptors in this dwelling.

1.22 Secondly, the Ancient Woodland is generally seen to extend along the eastern side of the paddock where the proposed development is to be located. However, it is bisected by an open area with scattered mature oak trees directly around the farmhouse and down to the paddock allowing direct close to intermediate distance views of the site.

- 1.23 Therefore, a distance of 550m has been chosen in terms of defining the limit of the potential visual envelope of the proposals in the LVA.
- 1.24 A number of photographs were taken during the site visit to enable a comparison with the original baseline conditions. These photographs are set out as viewpoint photographs at the end of Appendix A.



Photo 1 Looking north from centre of the paddock towards Honeybourne Farm with the dwelling (Oatfield Cottage) clearly visible (Arrowed) beyond the site northern hedgerow and partially screened by mature oaks along the hedge line.



Photo 1 Looking east from same location as Photo 1 towards the Farmhouse with existing trackway on the right running along the edge of the Ancient Woodland.

2. LANDSCAPE SURVEY

PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 Landform and Drainage.

The British Geological Society (BGS) geology map states that the geology of the area is formed of “...*Gault Formation - Mudstone. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 113 and 100.5 million years ago during the Cretaceous period...*” The Landis Soilscape mapping classify the soils as “...*Soilscape 18: Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage and moderate fertility...*”. The lands Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is provisionally identified on Natural England Open Data Set as being Grade 3.

2.2 It is evident from the visit that the topography focuses on the valley form following the historic route of the stream that runs south to north along the western edge of the site. The stream has been historically dammed up to form several lakes and ponds, to such a degree that the northern fishpond on Honeybourne Farm now extends into our client's land holding. This is first evidenced on the 1910 OS mapping that the fishponds were created around the turn of the century (as they are not showing on the 1899 OS) See Figure 1. The extent of this fishpond is consistent up until the 1974-1993 OS mapping. The upper part of the northern fishpond is separated on the property boundary alignment and a further pond/lake is formed further south by a bund, with a track providing access to the western side of the pond/lake. These were created by the previous landowner during the 1990's

2.3 The trackway bisecting the historic large paddock/ field which forms the application site is consistent with the creation of the latest pond i.e. 1990's and is a relatively recent introduction see photo 3.



Photo 2 West along trackway from same location as photo 1 & 2

- 2.4 In general, the site lies on the eastern side of the rolling valley form with the site gently falling to the northwest at an average gradient of 1:45 from 36m AOD, increasing to approximately 1:8 as the contours tighten the closer you get to the ponds in the valley bottom at approximately 27.5m AOD. One further topographic feature is visible on site to the south of the access trackway and is reflected in the contour mapping. It is a small shallow ephemeral pond, which is separated from the main pond in the valley bottom by a raised embankment



Figure 1 Historic Mapping Timeline 1879 to 1993 showing the extent of changes of the land use and development of the Fishing Ponds

- 2.5 **Tree and Shrub Species.** Locally the Ancient Woodland and field boundaries are dominated by *Quercus robur* (Oak) *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam) *Fraxinus excelsior* (Ash), with small groups of *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch) and a mixed understory of *Corylus avellana* (Hazel), *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn), *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly) and *Prunus spinosa* (Blackthorn). Hedges are generally mixed containing thorn species, most notably *Crataegus monogyna* (Hawthorn) and *Corylus avellana* (Hazel) with a small infrequent amount of *Acer campestre* (Field Maple). *Salix fragilis* (Crack Willow) and *Salix caprea* (Grey Willow) can be found along the banks of the lakes and ponds.

- 2.6 It is clearly evident that the woodland to the east of the site was reasonably intact, as seen on the 1993 OS mapping and it is only in the intervening period that the woodland has been cleared for the development of the farm buildings and farmhouse resulting in an assartment of the woodland. It is understood the Ancient Woodland designation was made post construction of the Eastwood Farm agricultural buildings.

HUMAN AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

- 2.7 **Land Use and Built Development.** It is evident from the historic mapping that there were buildings, probably agricultural in nature due to their location and arrangement, noted on the 1887 mapping (see Figure 2) remnants of which are noted on current OS mapping and the remnants of which are visible on site (see Photo 4) The planning history of the farm highlights the recent history where it is identified as a separate entity, circa 1979, when an application for Agricultural Barns were approved and in 1986 permission for erecting a Farmhouse was approved.

- 2.8 The adjacent landholding, Wickwoods Country Club, Hotel and Spa, on the southern edge of the Ancient Woodland, has been developed as a health and fitness wellbeing Club providing a County Club and Spa experience. It has a series of large buildings, indoor tennis courts and other facilities which are visible from within the client's Ancient Woodland.



Photo 3 View of the remnants of the agricultural building to the southwest of the site

- 2.9 The creation of the ponds and new trackway across the site are clear evidence of farm diversification through the provision of angling facilities and lakeside cabins to complement the regular pheasant shoot which takes place on the farm. This is evidenced by several pheasant pens located within the ancient woodland.

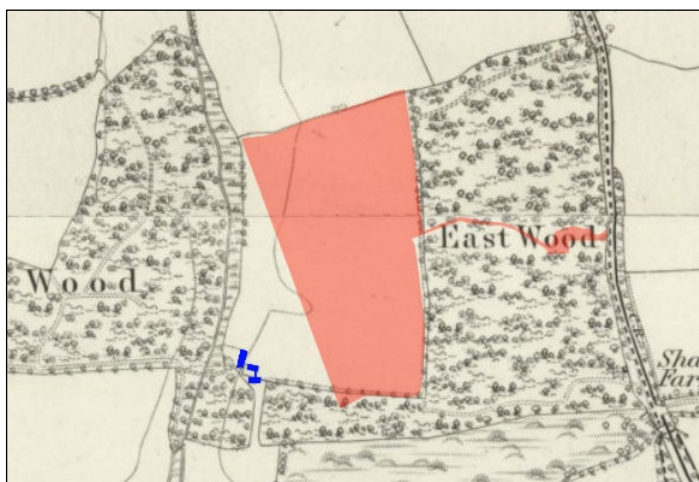


Figure 2 Extract from 1879 OS country Series Mapping showing buildings (In Blue) in southwest corner of the field within which the site is located

- 2.10 The diversification complemented the continued decline of profitable agricultural use of the land especially due to Soil Type 18 which can support “...*Mostly suited to grass production for dairying or beef, some cereal production often for feed. Timeliness of stocking and fieldwork is important, and wet ground conditions should be avoided at the beginning and end of the growing season to avoid damage to soil structure. Land is tile drained and periodic moling or subsoiling will assist drainage...*”¹. This reflects the provisional ALC classification of the land as being Grade 3.
- 2.11 The recent removal of the Section 52 Agricultural tie which required the dwelling to be occupied in conjunction with the use and occupation of the whole of the land as an agricultural unit has now served the historic link of the dwelling to the agricultural land use.
- 2.12 **Public Rights of Way.** The public rights of way with potential view of the proposed new equestrian facility are limited to footpath 2545, located to the north of the site and follows the entrance road to Honeybourne Farm, travelling approximately 280m westward from its egress out onto Shaves Wood Lane before turning south passing through Honeybourne farmyard and past Oatfield Cottage. The footpath then runs towards the southwest as it crosses the embankment which forms the large Fishing Pond, created circa 1900, before dog legging southwards around the end of the pond where a small carpark is provided for anglers. The path then turns westward before egressing out on to Blackstone Lane approximately 580m to the west.
- 2.13 The only other Public Right of Way that could give rise to potential views of the new equestrian facilities is Shaves Wood Lane, which runs north to south and directly passes the eastern side of the Ancient Woodland and subsequently the main entrance into the farm which will be used as the access for the new equestrian facilities. There will be minimal potential views through the entrance to the farm. The gated entrance is narrow with 1.8m high brick walls either side of a set of metal gates and being at a level of approximately 39.9m AOD and the proposed level of the main plateau on which the new equestrian facilities will sit is at 33.8m AOD, results in 6.1m level difference. This change in levels and the existing mature trees on site will effectively minimise any potential views of the equestrian facilities through the gated entrance.

¹ Extract from LandIS Soil Type 18

2.14 **Visibility of the Site.** In terms of visibility of the site for visual receptors using public footpath 2545, the first westward running section of the footpath router is located on a small ridge of land that runs parallel with the farm's access road, providing the potential for high level views of the site at approximately 650m to the south, however the access road is sunken in nature with a high bank and hedge running along its length, effectively precluding any opportunity for views of the site being available to visual receptors using this footpath.

2.15 However, where the footpath turns southwards doglegging around the end of the Fishing Pond, the footpath climbs up the valley side past the car park for the Fishing Pond there are potential glimpsed intermediate distance views into the northern end of the site through the intervening vegetation (see Photo 5).



Photo 4 Looking south from footpath 2545 through the entrance to the Fishing Pond car park where there are potentially intermediate distance views of the northern end of the site.

This view will be more apparent during the winter months, albeit that these potential views are only available for a short approximate 20m length of the footpath route.

2.16 Visual receptors using Shaves Wood Lane will have views screened by the block of Ancient Woodland that is directly adjacent to the lane and extends in and around the Farmhouse and Farmyard. Due to the significant width of the woodland being over 200m, the views of the proposed new equestrian facilities will not only be effectively screened by the woodland during the winter months but the rolling topography of the valley form down to the stream and ponds will also aid screening of the facilities.

2.17 Any remaining potential visual receptors viewpoints will be screened by the extensive Ancient Woodland surrounding the site on three sides and the design intent utilising a low-level plateau at 33.5m AOD to enable the surrounding landform embankments to aid screening and assimilate the new equestrian facilities into its wider topographic context.

LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY

2.18 **Designations.** The site lies within Mid Sussex District Council's area and is the Planning Authority for the proposal, however the South Downs National Park boundary encompasses the area of Ancient Woodland within which the Farmhouse and Farmyard are located. It also includes the existing access trackway which runs down to where the proposed new equestrian facilities are to be located. Therefore, both Planning Authorities will need to be consulted and their individual policies addressed with regard to landscape and visual terms; not only due to the access trackway but the wider proposals being located directly adjacent to and within the setting of the National Park.

2.19 The site, albeit adjacent to the South Downs National Park boundary, is not within an area covered by a national or local landscape designation, however as noted in paragraph 5.26 of the GLVIA 3rd Edition where it states "...the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value..." paragraph 5.27 goes on to identify the Landscape Character Assessment stating "... planning policies and/or landscape strategies and guidelines may give indication of which landscape types or areas, or individual elements or ascetic or perceptual aspects the Landscape are particularly valued..."

On this basis the Character Assessment relevant to this planning application are identified and examined in the following paragraphs dealing with Landscape Character.

National Planning Policy.

2.20 In National Planning Policy terms, the updated 'December 2024' National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 Achieving well-designed places' states in paragraph 135 that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are:

- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

(f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

2.21 Paragraph 136 goes on to highlight the importance of trees stating:

“...Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible...”

2.22 Within Section 15 ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’, paragraph 187 sets out the National Policy towards natural and local environment states:

“... Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment...” sub paragraph (b) states *“...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...”* and sub paragraph (d) *“...minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;...”* and are relevant to these proposals.

2.23 Paragraph 189 and 190 which covers National Landscapes and recognises them as having an equal status and protection given to National Parks states:

“...Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or

minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas...” and “...When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁰ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated...”*

2.24 Local Planning Policy. Mid Sussex District Plan (2014-2031) has the following relevant policies that will apply to the proposals:

2.25 MSDC Policy DP12 Protection and Enhancement of Countryside. *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, 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.

2.26 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.

- 2.27 MSDC Policy DP14 Sustainable rural development and the rural economy.** The clauses relevant to these proposals include:

Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside and DP13: Preventing Coalescence:

- *new small-scale economic development, including tourism related development, within the countryside (defined as the area outside of built up area boundaries as per the Policies Map) will be permitted provided:*
- *it supports sustainable growth and the vitality of the rural*
- *economy; and where possible, utilises previously developed sites.*

diversification of activities on existing farm units will be permitted provided:

- *they are of a scale which is consistent to the location of the farm holding; and*
- *they would not prejudice the agricultural use of a unit.*

- 2.28 MSDC Policy DP 18: Setting of the South Downs National Park**

Development within land that contributes to the setting of the South Downs National Park will only be permitted where it does not detract from, or cause detriment to, the visual and special qualities (including dark skies), tranquillity and essential characteristics of the National Park, and in particular should not adversely affect transitional open green spaces between the site and the boundary of the South Downs National Park, and the views, outlook and aspect, into and out of the National Park by virtue of its location, scale, form or design.

Development should be consistent with National Park purposes and must not significantly harm the National Park or its setting. Assessment of such development proposals will also have regard to the South Downs Partnership Management Plan and emerging National Park Local Plan and other adopted planning documents and strategies.

- 2.29 MSDC Policy DP 26: Landscaping Within Developments**

The relevant clauses within this policy include:

“.... 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;*
- *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;*
- *positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;*
- *optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.*

2.30 **MSDC DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows**

The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected. Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.

Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of suitable species, usually native, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose. Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- *incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and*
- *prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open*
- *space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and*
- *has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and*
- *takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and*
- *does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets.*

2.31 **MSDC Policy DP38 (Biodiversity)**

Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- *Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and*
- *Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or*

- compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and*
- *Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and*
- *Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and*
- *Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.*

Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks. Valued soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, and development should not contribute to unacceptable levels of soil pollution. Geodiversity will be protected by ensuring development prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.

Neighbourhood Plan.

2.32 The Local Parish Council has prepared its Albourne Parish Neighbourhood Plan (APNP) in 2016 which includes several policies which are relevant to the proposals:

2.33 APNP Policy ALC1: Conserving and enhancing character

Development, including formal sports and recreation areas will be supported in the countryside, defined as the areas outside the Built-up Area Boundary shown on the policy map where the following criteria are met:

- 1. It is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, or some other use which has to be located in the countryside;*
- 2. It maintains, or where possible enhances, the quality of the rural and landscape character of the Parish area;*
- 3. It is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in this Plan.*
- 4. It is necessary for essential infrastructure and it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative sites suitable and available, and that the benefit outweighs any harm or loss.*

2.34 APNP Policy ALC2: Conserving and enhancing character

Development in the parish that contributes to the setting of the SDNP will only be supported where it enhances and does not detract from the National Park's visual qualities and essential characteristics.

2.35 South Downs National Park. Although the proposed built form does not lie directly within the National Park, the proposals access route and use of the existing Farmyard for parking of Horse Boxes lies within the National Park.

2.36 The National Park adopted the South Downs Local Plan (2014-33) on 2 July 2019 where there is a clear re-emphasis on Landscape Led approach to design in strategic policy SD 4: Landscape Character, Policy SD7 relative tranquillity and Policy SD8 dark night skies.

2.37 Further policies relating to Biodiversity and Historic Environment relevant to the site and the proposed development includes strategic policies SD 9: Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Policy SD 11: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows and Policy SD12: Historic Environment.

2.38 Landscape Issues.

It is evident from the planning policies at national and local level that protection of the countryside in Landscape and Visual terms the SDNP attracts the highest level of protection and includes:

- Landscape led approach to any development within the National Park;
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the character of the area; and
- Development shall not have a significant adverse effect upon the landscape or visual receptors.

2.39 Development within the countryside is not necessarily precluded, albeit the policies set a high bar to any development that is not directly associated with the historic use of the land and agricultural activities that effect the character of the site and its influence over the neighbouring land.

2.40 Ancient Woodland is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Where the site abuts the Ancient Woodland the relevant guidance from government bodies, Natural England (NE) and the Forestry Commission (FC) requires that a minimum 15m buffer zone be maintained to the woodland edge. This has been identified within the baseline constraints of proposals and is not directly impacted upon by the development.

2.41 Landscape Character

MSDC – Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2005)

Eastwood Farm lies within LCA Area 3- Hurstpierpoint Scarp Footslopes Landscape which is described at the district level as:

“...To the west, the footslopes between the scarp and Albourne comprise broad, rolling clay vales drained by a network meandering streams (including streams in narrow valleys flowing from under the chalk) draining westwards to the Adur Valley. This area contains some major woodlands (for instance, Shaves Wood and Park Wood) including ancient woodland, mainly on the Gault Clay. This has created an undulating, wooded, mixed arable and pastoral rural landscape, the woodland and hedgerows of variable quality, based on medium-sized and some larger fields...”

2.42 The key landscape characteristic concurrent with and are identified at the countywide scale within the West Sussex County Council Landscape Character Assessment (WSLCA)(2003) and consists of following elements are relevant to the current proposals:

- *Undulating Lower Greensand sandstone ridges and gentle Gault Clay vales drained by the River Adur, most of which lie within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)².*
- *Concentration of ancient woodland lying on the Gault Clay.*
- *Arable and pastoral rural landscape, secluded in places, a mosaic of small and larger fields, woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.*
- *Pockets of biodiversity limited to woodland, ponds and stream valleys.*
- *Characteristic spring-line villages and dispersed farmsteads, some historic.*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including flint, timber-framing,*
- *Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile- hanging.*
- *Dominance of painted render and a wide range of modern styles and materials from the Victorian period onwards.*

2.43 The MSDC LCA is over 19 years old and WSCLCA over 21 years old. These have never been revised to assess the current conditions found in this area nor the creation of the South Downs National Park which superseded the AONB in 2010. In 2007 the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study was undertaken on behalf of MSDC by Hankinson Duckett Associates, however the study did not include the local area surrounding the site.

² Now subsumed into the South Downs National Park (SDNP) as of 31st March 2010

- 2.45 However, with the creation of the National Park in 2010, the Park Authority has updated the LCA for the Park by preparing the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment 2020 (SDNP LCA). The site lies in the area described as '*J2: Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes*' and is described as:

Location and Boundaries

The *Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes* form a wide band of lowland at the foot of the northern scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs*, between Upper Beeding and Lewes. The southern boundary of this character area is defined by the steep scarp of the *Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp* and has been drawn along the southern edge of the arable fields that form part of the scarp footslopes. To the north the character area forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald.

2.46 Key Characteristics:

- *Complex geology comprising of bands of chalk, mudstones and sandstones giving rise to a locally undulating lowland landscape at the foot of the northern scarp of the Adur to Ouse Downs.*
- *Large, fertile straight-sided arable fields on the Lower Chalk geology at the foot of the scarp, enclosed in the 20th century from open fields and earlier piecemeal enclosures.*
- *Small irregular fields of pasture on the less productive clay soils, which originated as woodland assarts, represent a largely intact late medieval landscape.*
- *Frequent but small blocks of ancient woodland of pre-1600 date, as well as more recent post-1800 plantations and game coverts (e.g. Foxhole Shaw near Hurstpierpoint).*
- *Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks link closely with the woodland, forming an interlocking network that is of high biodiversity value as well as creating a sense of seclusion and enclosure.*
- *Sandstone outcrops give rise to locally sandy soils, e.g. at Truleigh Sands, which support areas of acid grassland, bracken and coniferous plantations.*
- *Streams, arising from springs at the foot of the chalk flow northwards in narrow, hidden stream valleys, some enshrouded in woodland. Field ponds, mill ponds and designed water bodies are common features of the clay.*
- *Villages, located on the springline, are often associated with springs, mill ponds and mills – Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham are all linked by an underhill lane. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to these villages.*
- *Secondary row of settlements located on the sandstone outcrops further north e.g. Ditchling, Streat, and East Chiltington.*
- *Historic picturesque parkland landscapes at Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks, although the small size of these suggests that the character area was too valuable for agricultural use to waste on unproductive aesthetics.*

- *A well-developed network of rights of way, and Stonewish Country Park on the edge of Ditchling, provide opportunities for countryside access.*
- *A consistent palette of building materials (a mixture of flint, brick, rendering and half-timber, with clay tile roofs) provides unity across the area.*
- *Visually dominated by the steep chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic.*

2.47 Specific Characteristics Unique to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes

The SDNP LCA describes the character area's unique characteristics as:

The Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes cover a relatively large area at the foot of the northern scarp of the Adur to Ouse Downs, between Upper Beeding and Lewes. The footslopes extend some way north of the scarp, and include parts of the Low Weald, exhibiting a number of different geological bands. These include Lower Chalk, Upper Greensand, Gault Mudstone, and Lower Greensand. The area also includes a small area of Weald Clay at its very northern boundary, north of Ditchling.

The Lower Chalk at the base of the steep scarp has been eroded into a smooth concave form with large modern arable fields replacing the former medieval open field systems. These chalk slopes support some remnant chalk grassland, e.g. a small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI. North of this is a narrow band of Upper Greensand bench. Moving away from the scarp slope, the older Gault Mudstones are revealed. Here, irregular enclosed fields represent a largely intact late medieval landscape with many fields originating as woodland assarts – this area has a more 'Wealden' character. Frequent but small blocks of ancient woodland of pre-1600 date, as well as more recent plantations and game coverts (e.g. Foxhole Shaw near Hurstpierpoint). Many of these woodland blocks are classified as ancient woodland, and a number carry non-statutory designation, for example Tottington Wood SNCI. Ecologically they are notable for supporting a range of ancient woodland plant species, as well as providing important habitat for breeding birds.

Woods Mill Countryside Centre and Nature Reserve is located in the north west of the character area and is the headquarters of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, an environmental education centre comprising coppiced woodland, meadows and a lake, which attracts a wide variety of wildlife, including nightingales, woodpecker, turtle doves and warblers.

Within the clay vale are outcrops of sandstone which give rise to locally sandy areas, such as around Ditchling which support pasture and coniferous plantations, for example Ashurst

Meadows - Plumpton SINC. There are also a number of sand quarries associated with this geological formation, demonstrating the economic value of the sands.

Typical of the scarp footslopes, the junction between the chalk and clay is marked by springs and a string of nucleated villages. Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham are all typical springline villages, some developing on areas formerly occupied by Roman villa estates (Danny, Clayton and Plumpton). The villages are linked by an underhill lane, indicating the course of the ancient coaching lane at the scarp foot. The steep chalk scarp forms a dramatic backdrop to these villages, such as at Fulking.

This area of scarp footslopes is typical of its type in that it contains a number of picturesque parkland landscapes were developed at Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks, although the small size of these provides an indication that the character area was deemed too valuable for agricultural use to waste on unproductive aesthetics.

This area supports a well-developed network of rights of way with a north-south orientation providing access between the downs to the south and the Low Weald to the north.

2.48 Sensitivities Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes

All of the landscape and visual sensitivities listed in the SDNP LCA landscape type evaluation apply to this character area. Specific to this character area are:

- *The intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.*
- *The form of springline villages (Edburton, Fulking, Poynings, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham) at the scarp foot.*
- *Remnant chalk grassland, for example the small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI.*
- *Ancient woodland, for example Tottington Wood SNCI.*
- *Areas of acid grassland on sandstone.*
- *The historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks.*

2.49 Forces for Change Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes

Past change specific to this area identified within SDNP LCA includes:

- *20th century quarrying of sand.*
- *Planting of coniferous species in woodlands during the inter-war and post-war periods.*

As a result of the area's designation as an AONB and the final designation of the area as National Park, there is unlikely to be further extensive built development or quarrying. Future restoration of conifer plantations on ancient woodlands to native species is a potential positive change.

2.50 Landscape Management/Development Considerations Specific to the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes

In addition to the generic landscape management and development considerations for this landscape type, the following landscape management considerations are specific to this character area:

- *Conserve the intact medieval landscape on the clay, particularly the fields originating as woodland assarts.*
- *Conserve the historic picturesque parkland landscapes of Plumpton, Danny and Newtimber Parks - encourage reversion of arable to pasture in these landscapes.*
- *Conserve areas of chalk grassland, for example the small area of Beeding Hill to Newtimber Hill SSSI and seek to extend such habitats on areas of Lower Chalk at the scarp foot.*
- *Conserve and seek to extend, areas of unimproved acid grassland on sandstone outcrops.*
- *Conserve ancient deciduous woodland, for example Tottington Wood SNCI, and support the restoration of conifer plantations to native species.*

2.51 The following development considerations are specific to this character area:

- *Conserve the settlement pattern of nucleated springline villages (Edburton, Fulking, Poyning, Westmeston, Plumpton, and Offham) at the scarp foot.*
- *Ensure urban fringe land uses, such as garden centres, nurseries and sewage farms, do not erode the rural character of the landscape.*
- *Consider views to and from the adjacent scarps, such as the panoramic views from Devil's Dyke and Black Cap, when planning any change in this and adjacent landscapes.*

- 2.52 I would suggest that it is prudent that the 2020 SDNP LCA clearly provides a basis upon which the proposed new equestrian facilities should be judged. Although the assessments of the landscape character are specific to the SDNP and only apply directly to the area of Ancient Woodland, the sites close proximity although lying within the MSDC area, validates its review within the setting of the SDNP.
- 2.53 One major issue in the landscape character of the local area that has not been recognised during the intervening period since the previous LCA's have been prepared, is the continued break up and gentrification of farmsteads into smaller units. Land is sold off piecemeal and thereby reducing the size of agricultural landholdings and their sustainability, with some for example, being converted into vineyards. Vineyards have clearly a separate character of their own and can be seen as intensification of a land use which is new and expanding in the local area. This is being driven by the change in climate and combined with suitable soil conditions found in the local area enabling successful wine production. Indeed, Albourne Wine Estate borders the Applicants land to the east of Shaves Wood Lane.
- 2.54 This site is also an example of a farmstead being broken up and the land sold off from Shaves Farm. The original Shaves Farmhouse located to the southeast of East Wood Farm has been gentrified with its historic relationship to its landholding lost. However, unlike the increasing trend in changing to a fragmented vineyard landscape character, a more positive outcome arises from the client purchasing the 120-acre estate and associated buildings. This will provide for an extensive Parkland estate in keeping with the local characteristics of the area. This is resisting the trend of creating smaller and smaller disconnected landholdings which are degrading the cohesiveness of the historic landscape character of the area.

3. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 **Landscape and Visual Impacts.** It is important at the outset to distinguish between landscape and visual impacts. The definitions adopted in this assessment are as follows:

- (i) **Landscape Impacts** - changes in the fabric, character and quality of the landscape as a result of the development
- (ii) **Visual Impacts** - relate solely to generally available views of the landscape and the effects of changes on people; specific impacts may result from intrusion or obstruction and the effect on visual amenity can range from degradation to enhancement

3.2 The landscape appraisal has included the impacts on land use, landscape features, local distinctiveness and special interests. The visual appraisal focuses on the variation in impacts when compared with the current situation and the effect of possible mitigation measures. The degree of impact depends on the sensitivity of the resource or receptor and the magnitude of change which, when taken together, determine the effect.

3.3 **Sensitivity, Magnitude and Effect.**

There has been a consensus in recent landscape assessments concerning the recognition of three thresholds of effect derived from different combinations of sensitivity and magnitude. The criteria for these two aspects preface the later detailed consideration of landscape and visual effects. Effects can be either adverse (leading to a deterioration in landscape resources or visual amenity) or beneficial (resulting in a degree of improvement). The assessment of effect has been undertaken on a qualitative basis, as a scoring system does not avoid subjectivity and suggests a certainty that may not be present.



Photo 5 Looking north from the ancient woodland to the southwest of the site with the entrance trackway arrowed entering from the east. The proposed new indoor arena and horse walker will be within the foreground

POTENTIAL LANDSCAPE IMPACTS

- 3.4 Sensitivity measures whether the local landscape can accommodate development without longer term harm or degradation. It reflects the existing land use(s), pattern and scale of the landscape, degree of enclosure and value placed on the landscape. A hierarchy is useful in categorising sensitivity and the following has been used in this case.

Table 1 Sensitivity of Landscape	
Sensitivity	Typical Descriptors
High	Landscapes which by nature of their character would be unable to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically, these would be: a) of high quality with distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place; b) likely to be designated but the aspects which underpin such value may also be present outside designated areas, especially at the local scale; c) areas of special recognised value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and d) likely to contain features and elements that are rare and could not be replaced.
Moderate	Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically, these would be: a) comprised of commonplace elements and features creating generally unremarkable character, but with some sense of place; b) locally designated, or their value may be expressed through non- statutory local publications; c) containing some features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and d) likely to contain some features and elements that could not be replaced.
Low	Landscapes which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate change of the type proposed. Typically, these would be: a) comprised of some features and elements that are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place; b) not designated; c) containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception or historic and cultural associations; and d) likely to contain few, if any, features and elements that could not be replaced.

- 3.5 In landscape character terms the site characteristics are common within the local vicinity, where changes in landform since the early 1900's have created ponds along the valley floor which have continued to be expanded and developed into the early 2000's. The creation of Eastwood Farm from the breakup of Shaves Farm landholding and the gentrification of the Shaves Farmhouse is indicative of the recent trends found in the local vicinity where agricultural activities are becoming less and less viable, with farm diversification and alternative land uses being seen across the wider character area.

- 3.6 The close proximity of Wickwoods Country Club, Hotel and Spa adjacent to the southern edge of the Ancient Woodland (approximately 120m from the site) with its industrial shed type structures covering indoor tennis courts and other facilities, extends large built forms within the Ancient Woodland towards the site. This being extended further to the south by the recent approval by SDNP for the construction of 8no eco-friendly sustainable retreat lodges (Ref SDNP/20/01944/FUL) within the woodland directly to the south of the client's landholding, intensifying the use of the woodland for accommodation purposes.
- 3.7 On this basis It is considered that the site should be classed as having a **Moderate** sensitivity overall even though it is considered to be located within the setting of the SDNP.
- 3.8 The extent (area) and duration (time) of effects are important in determining their overall effect. The basis for assessing the magnitude of effects is as follows:

Table 2 Magnitude of Landscape Effect	
Magnitude of Effect	Typical Descriptors
Major Adverse	Total loss or large scale damage to existing character or distinctive features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic conspicuous features and elements.
Moderate Adverse	Partial loss or noticeable damage to existing character or distinctive features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic noticeable features and elements.
Minor Adverse	Slight loss or damage to existing character or features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic features and elements.
Negligible Adverse	Barely noticeable loss or damage to existing character or features and elements, and/or the addition of new but uncharacteristic features and elements.
No Change	No noticeable loss, damage or alteration to character or features or elements.
Negligible Beneficial	Barely noticeable improvement of character by the restoration of existing features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic features and elements, or by the addition of new characteristic elements.
Minor Beneficial	Slight improvement of character by the restoration of existing features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic features and elements, or by the addition of new characteristic elements.
Moderate Beneficial	Partial or noticeable improvement of character by the restoration of existing features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic and noticeable features and elements, or by the addition of new characteristic features.
Major Beneficial	Large scale improvement of character by the restoration of features and elements, and/or the removal of uncharacteristic and conspicuous features and elements, or by the addition of new distinctive features.

- 3.9 The proposal changes and intensifies the overall land use by introducing new buildings, hard surfacing and associated paraphernalia into what is currently an open field at some distance from the main Farmhouse and Farmyard. The large block of Ancient Woodland and its buffer that runs along the eastern boundary of the site restricts the development from being positioned closer to the road or within the existing farmyard. The SDNPA advised that they would like to see the farm buildings retained and used for storage of machinery and hay (no intensification of use). However, intensification and change of use can be seen on the neighbouring property to the south, where over the years Wickwoods Country Club Hotel & Spa have been continuously extending their facilities, including the most recent approval for 8no Lodges within the woodland directly to south and southeast of the site.
- 3.10 As part of the initial design process following review of the pre-application comments the alternative proposals have removed the need for retaining walls, ramps and structures and integrates a drainage scheme for the management of both sub surface and surface water. The changes in landform required to achieve the desired level plateau for the new facilities reflect those which have been historically used to form the series of ponds within the base of the valley. Therefore, the overall magnitude of change and the effect of the alternative proposals upon the landscape would be recorded as Moderate Adverse.
- 3.11 When combined together, the matrix of effect below can be used to assess the overall landscape effect. Therefore, a Moderate Adverse is recorded against the landscape resource condition at year 1 after completion.

Table 3 Overall Landscape Effect						
Magnitude of Effect						
Sensitivity		No Change	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major
	High	Neutral	Slight	Slight/ Moderate	Moderate/ Large	Large/ Very Large
	Moderate	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
	Low	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate

POTENTIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

Assessment Criteria.

- 3.12 The sensitivity of visual receptors and views depends on the location and context of the viewpoint, the expectation and activity of the receptor and the importance of the view. The hierarchy used gives priority to where people live, then where they go for recreation and leisure and finally where they work or travel, as follows (Table 4):

Table 4 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	
Sensitivity	Typical Descriptors
High	a) Residential properties. b) Users of Public Rights of Way ("PRoW") or other recreational trails (e.g. national trails, footpaths, bridleways, etc.). c) Users of recreational facilities where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside (e.g. country parks, National Trust or other access land).
Moderate	a) Outdoor workers. b) Users of scenic roads, railways or waterways or users of designated tourist routes. c) Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas.
Low	a) Indoor workers. b) Users of main roads (e.g. trunk roads) or passengers in public transport on main arterial routes. c) Users of recreational facilities where the purpose of that recreation is not related to the view (e.g. sports facilities).

- 3.13 Although the visual receptors refer to land uses, buildings and communications, the assessment has focused on the respective occupants, users or visitors. Not all of these categories apply to the proposal and those that are relevant have been looked at in turn in the assessment. The magnitude of change has been based on the following categorisation (Table 5).

Table 5 Magnitude of Visual Effect	
Magnitude of Effect	Typical Descriptors
Major (Adverse or Beneficial)	The project, or a part of it, would become the dominant feature or focal point of the view.
Moderate (Adverse or Beneficial)	The project, or a part of it, would form a noticeable feature or element of the view which is readily apparent to the receptor.
Minor (Adverse or Beneficial)	The project, or a part of it, would be perceptible but not alter the overall balance of features and elements that comprise the existing view.
Negligible (Adverse or Beneficial)	Only a very small part of the project would be discernible, or it is at such a distance that it would form a barely noticeable feature or element of the view.
No Change	No part of the project, or work or activity associated with it, is discernible.

3.14 In terms of Effect Table 6 defines what would need be considered when making the judgement.

Table 6 Scale of Effect	
Effect	Typical Descriptors
Very Large Beneficial (Positive) Effect	The project would create an iconic new feature that would greatly enhance the view.
Large Beneficial (Positive) Effect	The project would lead to a major improvement in a view from a highly sensitive receptor.
Moderate Beneficial (Positive) Effect	The project would cause obvious improvement to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor or perceptible improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Slight Beneficial (Positive) Effect	The project would cause limited improvement to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity or would cause greater improvement to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.
Neutral Effect	No perceptible change in the view.
Slight Adverse (Negative) Effect	The project would cause limited deterioration to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity or cause greater deterioration to a view from a receptor of high sensitivity.

Moderate Adverse (Negative) Effect	The project would cause obvious deterioration to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor or perceptible damage to a view from a more sensitive receptor.
Large Adverse (Negative) Effect	The project would cause major deterioration to a view from a highly sensitive receptor and would constitute a major discordant element in the view.
Very Large Adverse (Negative) Effect	The project would cause the loss of views from a highly sensitive receptor and would constitute a dominant discordant feature in the view.

- 3.15 As a result of making the judgment the following matrix details and records the overall visual effect.

Table 7 Overall Visual Effect						
Magnitude of Visual Effect						
Sensitivity		No Change	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major
	High	Neutral	Slight	Slight/ Moderate	Moderate/ Large	Large/ Very Large
	Moderate	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
	Low	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate

3.16 Effects on Visual Amenity.

The specific visual receptors are identified in 2.12 and 2.17 above. As an intrinsic consideration of the alternative design, the visual envelope of the proposed new equestrian facilities were revisited and confirmed through site visits. The extensive areas of Ancient Woodland provide a major barrier to visual receptors using the Public Rights of Way, apart from the north, where there are potential views from Honeybourne Farm and Oatfield Cottage. There are also potential views from Shaves Wood Lane through the gated entrance into the farm.

3.17 Public Rights of Way:

a) Footpaths:

Public Footpath 2545 route runs along the access road that serves Honeybourne Farm and Oatfield Cottage and onward crossing over the embankment which allowed the Fishing Pond to be created in the early 1900's, before turning south where there are potential views of the northern end of the site through the intervening vegetation which will be more apparent during the winter months after leaf fall. These potential intermediate distance views of the ménage, at an approximate distance of 370m, are limited to a short 20m length of the footpath route, prior to the footpath turning westward to cross an open field towards Blackstone Lane.

The visual receptors using the footpath are of High sensitivity with a scale of effect being recorded as Slight Adverse in Table 6 and a magnitude of Negligible Adverse at year 1 following completion of works. This results in an overall visual effect of Slight Adverse for the unmitigated condition at year 1 following completion. The remaining length of the footpath route would be recorded as being Neutral effect in terms of scale and overall effect with magnitude recorded as No Change.

b) Roads.

Views from Shaves Wood Lane which runs directly along the eastern edge of the farm are screened by the Ancient Woodland with only potential views of the site limited to glimpsed intermediate distance views through the gated entrance. Therefore, the scale of the effect in Table 6 is recorded as Neutral with a magnitude in Table 5 recorded as No Change resulting in an overall effect of Neutral being recorded in Table 7 on the basis that the receptors are of Low sensitivity.

3.18 Residential.

i) Oatfield Cottages

Located approximately 400m to the north of the proposed separate stable block within the site, which is potentially more visible than the ménage. Potential views will be limited to upper storey windows on the southern façade of the dwelling. These views will be filtered by the mature hedgerow which contains mature Oak Trees with views being more apparent during the winter months. Being residential properties, they are considered as being of High sensitivity, albeit that visual receptors within the upper stories of a traditional cottage layout would see views from the bedrooms which are generally considered less sensitive.

The proposed new facilities will therefore result in a scale of effect in Table 6 being recorded as Slight Adverse with the magnitude of Negligible Adverse being recorded in Table 5. This results in an overall scale of effect of Slight Adverse in table 7 for the year 1 condition following completion of the works.

3.19 **Summary Discussion.**

In terms of the resulting overall effect upon the landscape resource, the residual Moderate Adverse categorisation recorded in Table 3, is a direct result of the inherent mitigation measures taken during the development of the alternative design now being assessed. When compared to the pre-application submitted design, these include:

- Repositioning the main indoor arena, courtyard and separate stable block on a southeast northwest alignment which responds positively to the existing topography.
- The reduction in height of the new buildings within the landscape, by placing them on a single level plateau at 35.5m AOD thereby tucking the large indoor arena building into the corner of the plateau and taking advantage of the Ancient Woodland backdrop for potential visual receptors from the north.
- Allowing the existing access track to flow past the edge of the Ancient Woodland down into the courtyard, visually presenting both the indoor arena and separate stable blocks as a traditional historic form of Stable / Coach House arrangement.
- Providing an arched access through the separate stable block from the courtyard allowing access to the existing trackway across the embankment created to form the larger southern pond on the site, allowing direct access to the areas of the Parkland estate to the west of the stream and ponds.
- A comprehensive drainage strategy has been developed to incorporate SUDS principles and the creation of a balancing pond to ensure that discharge into the lower northern pond does not exceed the site's natural field run off rate.
- Incorporation of a Rainwater Harvesting System to enable stored water to be used for non-potable uses such as washing down horses and surfaces.
- Levels design that provides a level plateau for the development, which utilises a soft engineered embankment with a maximum gradient of 1 in 3 allowing for the establishment of native species ground cover and wildflower meadow.

- The design intent of the lighting scheme for the project overall is to minimise potential for light pollution to affect adjacent ancient woodland and emit light spill into the wider landscape thereby addressing SDNP dark skies policies and reducing the overall visual impact of the proposals.
- This will be achieved by using modern LED luminaires in fixtures and fittings externally that will direct light downward with limited light spill. The stable blocks including the isolation stable have substantial eaves where light fittings will be located illuminating the walkway that surrounds the courtyard areas only. This will be reinforced within the courtyard with low-level bollard lighting around the individual landscape areas within the courtyard.
- The main indoor arena entrance area will be similarly lit with down lighters from the entrance canopy and supported with small individual LED luminaires within the steps washing over the steps surfaces leading up to the entrance area. Internally the arena floor will be lit to the relevant 500 Eave (LUX) for Professional Standard Use. The southern façade of the indoor arena will be free of glazing due to the close proximity of the Ancient Woodland.
- Windows within the ends of the indoor arena are to be kept to the minimum and the glass shall include solar control coatings that can be applied to glass units to change the light transmission performance of the glass. Using coatings are the most common and effective way to reduce the light transmission of a glazing in a controlled way that minimises impact of internal light spill into the wider landscape.
- The use of the rural agricultural style materials with earth toned colours are to be used on the building reflecting their rural location.

4. PLANTING MITIGATION AND RE-EVALUATION

Mitigation Measures.

- 4.1 The mitigation measures (planting proposals) incorporated within the alternative design which are perceived to have an immediate effect from year 1 following completion of the construction phase of the works, consist of:
1. New native species woodland and woodland edge planting to reinforce the exsisting Ancient Woodland targeting NVC- W10 Woodland species for any new planting to allow their eventual integration and extension of the Ancient Woodland. Plants used shall be of local provenance or grown on site through seed collection within woodland and or vegetative production within an area set aside for small native species nursery.
 2. Areas designated within the 15m buffer are to be identified for natural regeneration of Ancient Woodland edge habitat from existing soils seedbank.
 3. Large semi-mature native tree planting within the courtyard area to provide shade and aid formation of courtyard microclimate.
 4. Extensive wildflower seeding with local provenance shall be used to create wildflower meadows, pond edge and woodland edge habitats where areas of the site are not directly for equestrian facilities or turn out paddocks.
- 4.2 The proposed mitigation planting will take time to establish in its design intent, in terms of screening and assimilation of the site into the wider landscape context. The wildflower meadow areas will become established within the first 5 years with the deployment of a suitable management plan. The new pond will also develop quickly due the rapid growth of aquatic and emergent species; however, the individual trees and hedges will take between 5 to 10 years to establish sufficient stature to start to fully perform as designed. The Woodland buffer planting will take the longest to establish ranging between 10 and 15 years and will substantively integrate the development into its surrounding character with an increase in habitat types and improved conditions.
- 4.3 The overall effect of the proposed mitigation measures are detailed in Summary Table 8, where it shows that in landscape resource terms, a neutral landscape and visual effect will be achieved at year 5 and 10 and a slight positive achieved at year 15, once the mitigation planting has had time to establish.

4.4 Response to MSDC, APNP and SDNP Policies

The policies of both Planning Authorities and Neighbourhood Plans confirms the need to conserve and enhance the existing landscape. The proposals include a suite of mitigation measures, in terms of the alternative design improvements over that submitted at the pre-application stage. The mitigation measures and habitat enhancement, aid the overall reduction in the residual harm identified within this LVA in both landscape and visual terms, once planting has had time to establish.

4.5 Therefore overall, the scheme responds positively to MSDC Policies **DP 18**: Setting of the SDNP, **DP26**: Landscaping within Developments, **DP37**: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows, Policy **DP38**: Biodiversity and APNP Policy: **ALC1** Conserving and enhancing character, albeit that there will remain some minimal residual adverse effects on landscape character and visual terms due to the change in topography, land use and introduction of built forms initially at year 1 following the construction phase of the project. These residual adverse effects will be effectively mitigated by the end of years 5-10 of planting establishment.

4.6 In terms of the SDNP, policies relevant to the current proposals (albeit the site is only located with the setting of the National Park) include policies **SD 9**: Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Policy **SD 11**: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows, by providing extensive habitat enhancement over the site as a whole which is referenced in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) being prepared by Environmental Assessment Services Limited (EAS). The proposed planting, wildflower meadow and provision of a new pond have been developed in co-ordination with the ecologist to ensure that the desired Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is secured and established for the long term.

4.7 The proposal also responds positively to SDNP policy **SD7** Relative Tranquillity by the location of the new equestrian facilities adjacent to Wickwoods Country Club, Hotel and Spa, resulting in Tranquilly score of -7.97³. Therefore, the proposals seek to keep the activities within this value, primarily by being a private equestrian facility as compared to the adjacent Wickwoods Country Club, Hotel and Spa which continues to expand their public facilities and activities.

³ SDNP Tranquilly Mapping Web Site <https://sdnpa.maps.arcgis.com>

- 4.8 In terms of SDNP Dark Skies policy SD8, the site lies within a transition Zone E1b as mapped on the SDNP Dark Skies mapping data set. It is defined as “...*areas that lie between the larger urban settlements and the surrounding darker skies notably vulnerable to light pollution...*”. The indoor arena has been designed to have a blank façade with no windows facing the ancient woodland in order to prevent light spill into the ancient woodland and towards the National Park. Any external lighting has been kept to a minimum and would be low level and directed downwards. The private operational use of the site and the courtyard nature of the development combined with its low-level lighting proposals reduces the potential for additional light pollution, especially adjacent to Ancient Woodland edge. Therefore, the proposals respect the Dark Skies policy SD8.
- 4.9 SDNP policy SD12 is defined to conserve and enhance the historic environment, where the proposals secure and maintain the historic Ancient Woodland and reinstate the overall historic large single field pattern.

Conclusion

- 4.10 Having now prepared the alternative design based on the findings of the LVA, I consider that the scheme now responds positively to its setting, both in topographical and visual terms. New woodland planting enhances the existing edge of the ancient woodland and provides a buffer zone within which natural regeneration of the woodland edge habitat will be encouraged, thereby protecting the ancient woodland and SDNP boundary.
- 4.11 The focus of the scheme around a courtyard development aids the containment of regular equestrian activities within the enclosed courtyard space thereby minimising potential activity and light spill disturbing wildlife and visual receptors to the north. The ménage activities will be potentially visible and this has been addressed by the proposed hedge planting and landform design that separates the ménage area from the open fields/paddocks.
- 4.12 The style and form of the proposed buildings combined with the materials to be used, reflect modern agricultural buildings found within the landscape character area. Similar detailing is going to be used in a second planning application that is currently being prepared for a replacement farmhouse and garage block on the current farmhouse location.

- 4.13 The Summary Table 8 clearly demonstrates that the overall effect of the proposals can be successfully mitigated through a combination of the implementation of the alternative design and a comprehensive suite of mitigation planting. This results in an overall neutral effect being recorded for the visual receptors at year 5 to 10 whereas a slight positive effect upon the landscape resource can be achieved by year 15.
- 4.14 This project combined with the new farmhouse development can be seen as a good example of maintaining the historic relationship between the farmhouse and its landholding. This in part is due to the scale of the landholding and the sustainable equestrian use as a family-owned private estate which is reflected in the proposed name change of the property to Eastwood Park.

Summary Table 8	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Scale	Overall Effect Year 1	Overall Effect Year 5	Overall Effect Year 10	Overall Effect Year 15
Landscape Effect	Moderate	Moderate Adverse	N/A	Moderate Adverse	Neutral/Slight Adverse	Neutral	Slight Positive
PROW							
Public Footpath 2545 (20m) Section	High	Negligible Adverse	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse	Neutral/Slight Adverse	Neutral	Neutral
Public Footpath 2545 Remaining Route	High	No Change	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Roads							
Shaves Wood Lane	Low	No Change	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Residential							
Oatfield Cottage	High	Negligible Adverse	Negligible Adverse	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse	Neutral/Slight Adverse	Neutral