

LAND AT NORTH COLWELL FARM, HAYWARDS HEATH

Design and Access Statement





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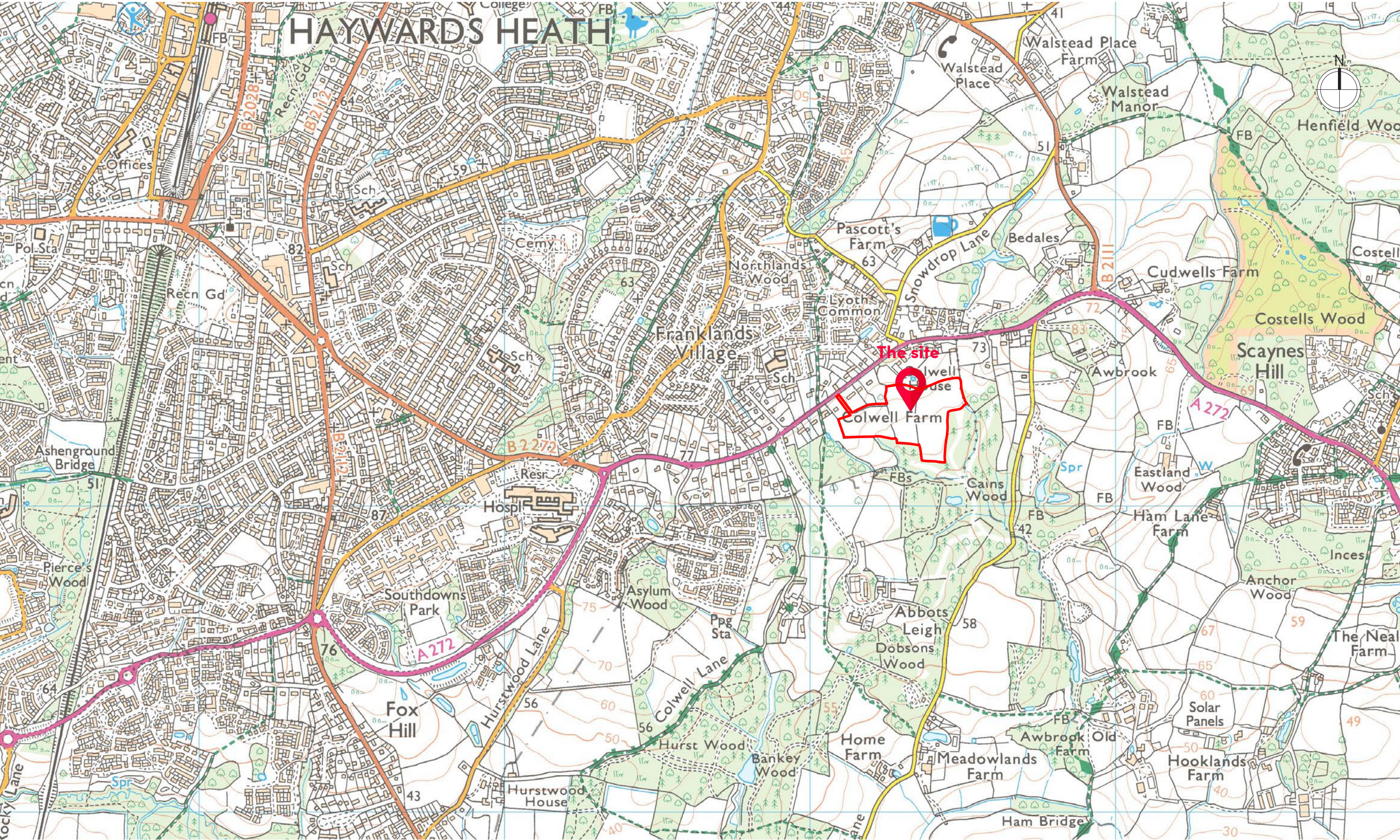


FIGURE 01 | Plan showing the site in context of Haywards Heath Town and the wider area

01 INTRODUCTION

“A design and access (DAS) statement is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.”

Planning Portal - What is a Design and Access Statement? (2019)

Summary

This design and access statement describes the outline planning application by Miller Homes on land at North Colwell Farm. The application is outline with all matters reserved except for access. Details of layout, design, scale, and landscaping will be subject to subsequent reserved matters applications. The outline application will establish the principle of development, a framework for the sites development and full details of the access arrangements into the site from Lewes Road.

The description of development is:

“Outline application with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 80 dwellings with associated landscaping, open space, infrastructure and vehicular and pedestrian accesses.”

The site lies adjacent to the existing built up area of Haywards Heath Town and is well connected to the public highway at Lewes Road which provides a direct connection to the town centre to the west. There are good pedestrian / cycle links to existing facilities and services which can be achieved via Lewes Road to Franklands Village to the north of the site and the town centre to the west. The development will therefore deliver a logical, integrated and sustainable extension to the built up area of the town.

The proposals described in this document respond to the constraints and opportunities for the site. This design response has been supported by a strong vision which will reinforce the character of Lewes Road, Haywards Heath and the wider Mid Sussex area. The proposed amount, layout and mix of housing will deliver both market and affordable market housing, for which there is a known demand in the town and which will make a worthwhile contribution toward the ever growing housing requirement of this area and the district including a mix of house types and sizes ideal for starter homes and families.

Structure of the document

This statement sets out an assessment of the site from a design, access and planning perspective and follows guidance provided by national and local policy. It illustrates the analysis of the site, the way the design has evolved and the process of engagement, before showing how the approach chosen for the application offers the best solution in terms of use, access and design.

Section 02 of the document provides a thorough assessment of the site including the immediate context of the site together with its relationship to Haywards Heath and the wider area.

Section 03 provides a summary of the relevant policy framework for the site at a national and local level. A separate supporting planning statement has been prepared and submitted as part of the planning application.

Section 04 provides an evaluation of the site. This includes a review of the technical considerations alongside the constraints and opportunities for the site. Section 04 also sets out the vision for the new place with key objectives and a design rationale which will help create its distinct character and appearance.

Section 05 describes the engagement process and its outcomes which have informed the design process.

Section 06 provides details of the design and access solutions being adopted, using illustrations and plans to show how the vision and objectives will be achieved.

Section 07 is a summary of the proposals and concludes the document.



FIGURE 02 | Aerial photograph of the site and local context

02 SITE ASSESSMENT

“An understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.

National Design Guide (2021) Para 38

Land ownership

The land (edged red on Figure 03.) is in the control of Miller Homes who are the applicants for the site.

The applicant

Miller Homes was established in 1934 and is one of the UK’s largest, privately owned national homebuilders with a focus on building new homes in attractive regional markets.

Their purpose is to ‘create great places where people and planet prosper’. This is achieved by building homes and developments that create communities with an emphasis on placemaking and design.

Miller Homes are proud of their reputation for delivering desirable high-quality homes and delighting their customers throughout their home buying journey with an award-winning personalised customer experience, both digitally and in person.

Background and context

Figure 01. shows the location of the site in its wider setting. Figure 02. is an aerial photograph of the site in its local context.

Haywards Heath is a town in West Sussex, England, located about 36 miles (58 km) south of London, 12 miles (19 km) north of Brighton, and 15 miles (24 km) south of Gatwick Airport. It is part of the Mid Sussex District and falls within the South East region of England.

The town is strategically situated on the London to Brighton railway line, making it a key commuter town for those working in London, Gatwick, and Brighton. The town is surrounded by the beautiful Sussex countryside, providing a blend of urban and rural living.

Services

Healthcare: The town is served by the Princess Royal Hospital, which provides a range of healthcare services including emergency care, maternity services, and various specialist clinics. There are also several GP practices, dental clinics, and pharmacies including nearby Walnut Park area to the north.

Shopping and Retail: Haywards Heath offers a variety of shopping options, including the Orchards Shopping Centre, which hosts numerous high-street retailers. There are also several supermarkets, independent shops, cafes, and restaurants. A convenience store and pharmacy are found at Northlands Avenue, within walking distance of the site.

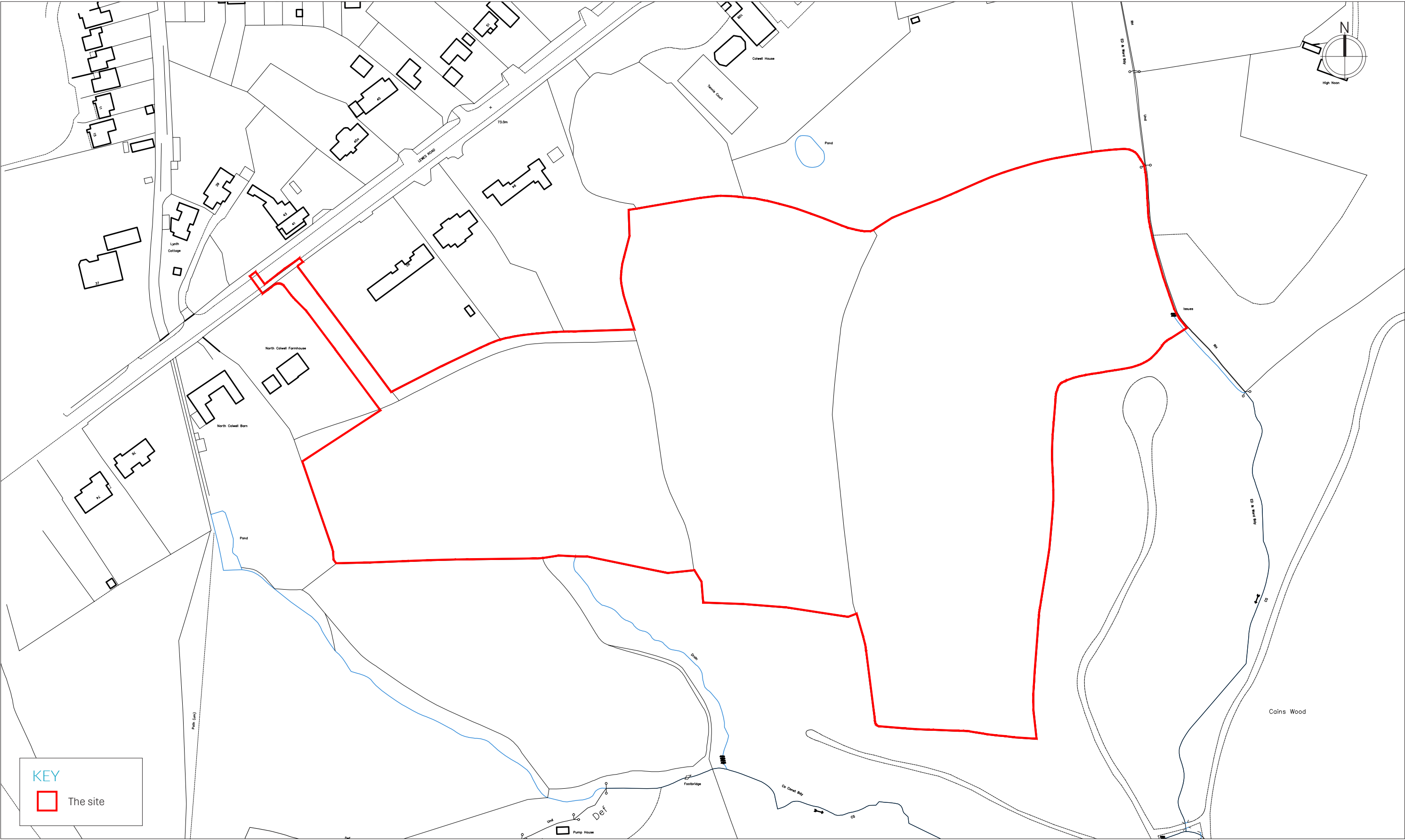


FIGURE 03 | Site location plan



Public Services: The town has a well-equipped library, a post office, and various community centres. The Haywards Heath Town Council and Mid Sussex District Council provide local governance and services.

Education

Primary Schools: Haywards Heath has several primary schools, including Harlands Primary School, St. Wilfrid’s C of E Primary School, and Bolnore Village Primary School. In addition, Northlands Wood Primary School is within walking distance of the site. Secondary Schools: Oathall Community College and Warden Park Academy are the main secondary schools serving the town.

Further Education: Central Sussex College offers a range of courses for further education and vocational training. Nearby towns provide additional options for higher education.

Facilities

Parks and Recreation: The town boasts several parks and recreational areas, including Victoria Park, which features a children’s playground, tennis courts, and a skate park. Beech Hurst Gardens offers miniature golf, a bowling green, and scenic walking paths. Walnut Park lies closest to the site and incorporates a children’s play area and all weather mini pitch.

Sports: Haywards Heath has various sports facilities, including the Dolphin Leisure Centre, which has a swimming pool, gym, and sports courts. The town also has football, cricket, and rugby clubs.

Arts and Culture: The Clair Hall is a multipurpose venue that hosts concerts, theatre productions, and community events. There are also several local art groups and societies.



Description

The site measures 6.2 ha / 15.3 acres and comprises three field parcels to the south of Lewes Road. The site also includes a section of land adjoining North Colwell Farm House to form the access.

The land lies on the southern side of a ridge in the wider landscape which broadly aligns with Lewes Road and continues to fall to Pellingford Brook. Accordingly there is a gentle slope across the site from north to south of with a gradient of circa 1:25.

The northern boundaries of the field parcels are defined by the rear gardens of houses in Lewes Road with an extended paddock area associated with Colwell Barn creating the western boundary. To the south and east of the site is mature woodland, defined as Ancient Woodland, part of Cains Wood.

The land was formerly part of Colwell Farm and has been managed over time within the field boundaries. The boundaries have grown over time from hedgerows and now comprise a mix of trees and shrubs.

Landscape

Designations

Figure x shows the Landscape Designations in relation to the site. It can be seen that the site is not covered by any specific landscape designations, however the proposed access road into the site would run through part of the Lewes Road Conservation Area.

The wider study area extending to 2.5km around the site contains both statutory and non- statutory designations. Within the study area is part of the High Weald National Landscape, Scrase Valley Local Nature Reserve, Ancient and semi-natural woodland, Ancient replanted woodland, and Registered Commonland. The Sussex Border Path long distance walking routes passes within one kilometre of the site. There are three listed buildings or structures within 500m, including North Colwell Barns adjacent to the site.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The site is set behind several detached houses on large plots on the south side of the A272 Lewes Road, most of which feature mature vegetation and/or low walls along the roadside boundary as shown in Photograph 4. The built form and roadside vegetation effectively obscure views of the site from the road. The existing vegetation surrounding the site, and comprising the internal field boundaries, and the drop in level of between three and sixteen metres away from Lewes Road also contribute to its visual separation.

The proposed site entrance would be located perpendicular to the A272 and would follow the boundary between North Colwell Farmhouse and its immediately neighbour to the north east, no. 90 Lewes Road. Here, where the vegetation fronts a paddock, it is sparser and more natural, featuring native trees and understorey shrubs as seen in Photograph 5. The new site entrance would alter the appearance of the roadside from this viewpoint, however the visual impact

would be mitigated by replacement tree planting and hedging sympathetic to the surrounding landscape. The proposed housing is unlikely to be visible from the access road.

To the south and south-east is the dense woodland of Cains Wood which has no public access; to the south west is a smaller copse with a public footpath running north to south (see Photograph 6). The rear garden of North Colwell Barns separates the westernmost parcel of the site from the public footpath, a distance of approximately 60m. Tree belts to either side of the garden and the woodland itself provide effective visual barriers to the site.

Slugwash Lane passes to the east of the site, separated from it by further detached properties and paddocks, and part of Cains Wood. There are no views into the site from this lane. Several elevated locations were visited during the visual assessment, however none had views into the site due to the quantity of mature trees and boundary vegetation in the local landscape.



PHOTOGRAPH 1 | The location of the proposed site entrance. Panoramic view comprised of 6 images.

KEY

-  Site boundary
-  2.5km radius
-  Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Access Layer - Chawton Park
-  Registered common land
-  Local Nature Reserves
-  Long distance public footpath (Sussex Ouse Valley Way)
-  AONB - High Weald
-  Ancient Woodland (replanted)
-  Ancient and semi-natural Woodland
-  Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
-  Traditional Orchards
-  Conservation Areas
1.

Lewes Road Conservation Area

2.

Franklands Village Conservation Area

3.

The Heath Conservation Area

4.

Mill Hill Close Conservation Area

5.

Linfield Conservation Area
-  Village Greens circa 1994

1.

Anchor Green, Scaynes Hill

2.

Muster Green
-  Listed Buildings (within 500m of the site)

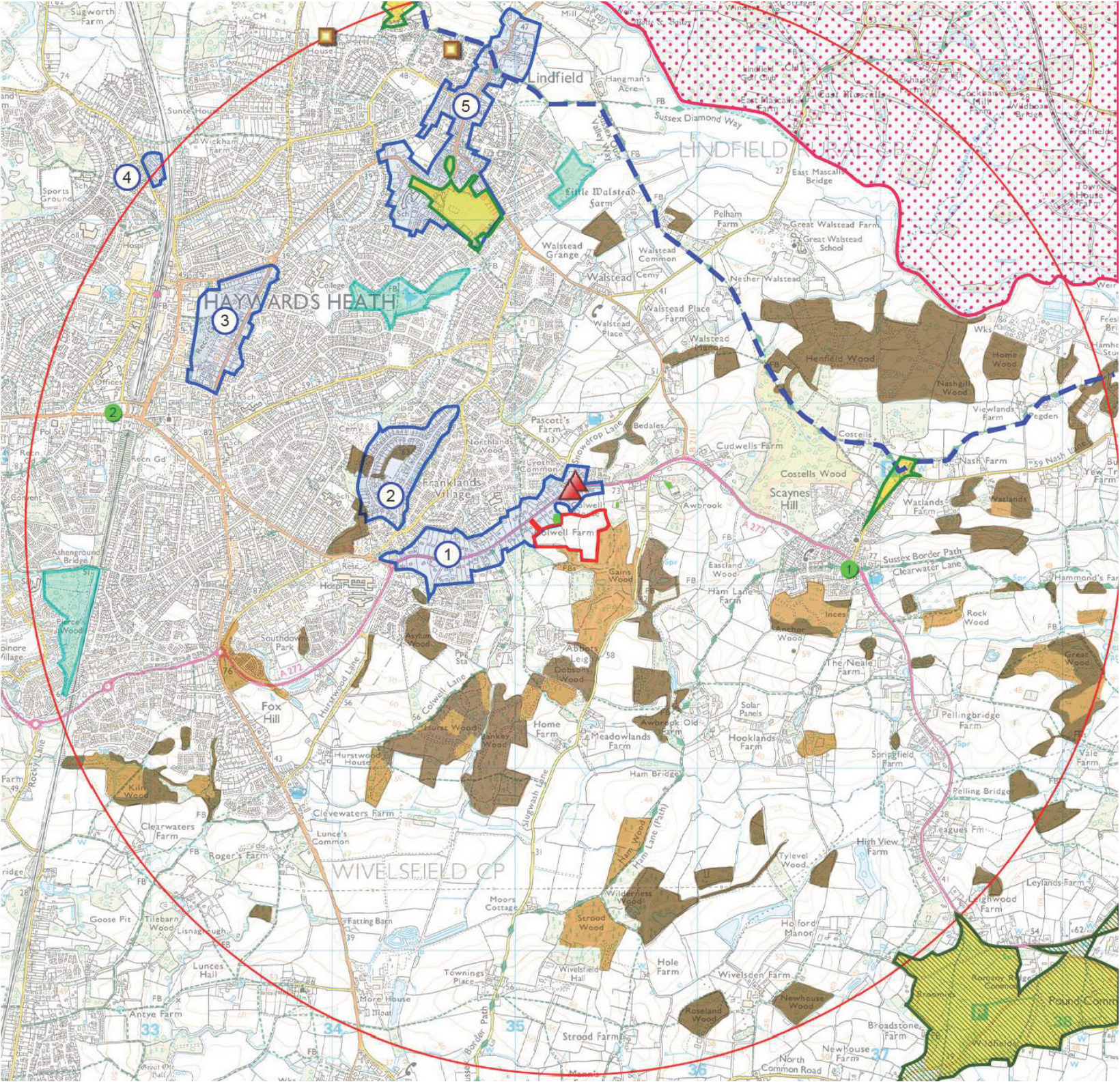


FIGURE 05 | Landscape Designations (ACD Environmental)



PHOTOGRAPH 2 | View looking north towards the back of existing properties in Lewes Road



PHOTOGRAPH 3 | View looking north east from within the western part of the site

Lewes Road Conservation Area was designated in 1989 for its value in creating a gradual transition from the urban to the rural landscape as one leaves Haywards Heath on the Lewes Road. The key characteristics of the Conservation Area are large dwellings in spacious grounds, framed by trees and hedges, and fingers of agricultural land between dwellings which contribute to the rural character of the area. The eastern part of the Conservation Area includes two relatively recent developments which appear to have been built within the grounds of individual properties: 5 detached houses with garages at The Rushes off Snowdrop Lane and 13 houses with garages at Oldfield Drive (constructed 2015).

Although the access road would cut through the eastern part of the Conservation Area, the development itself would be outside the boundary. Whilst visibility of the site from Lewes road and other public areas is already limited due to the topography and existing planting, it will be important to ensure that design for the new development incorporates significant buffer vegetation to further mitigate effects on the Conservation Area.



PHOTOGRAPH 4 | Typical street scene along Lewes Road close to the proposed site entrance, illustrating the dense evergreen hedgerows and mature trees which front many dwellings. This view is taken approximately 80m from the proposed site entrance, looking south-west.

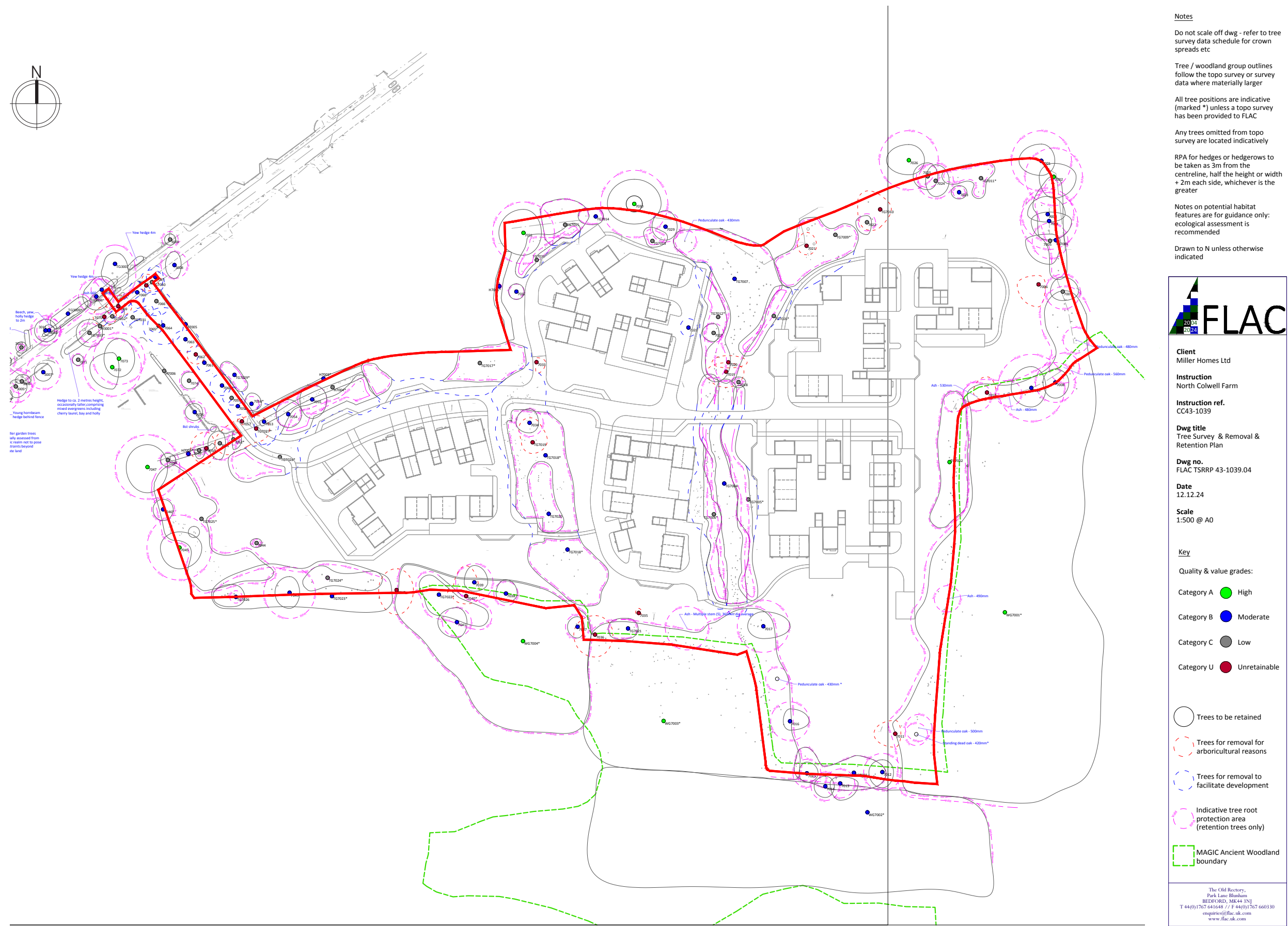


FIGURE 06 | Tree survey plan (FLAC)

Arboriculture

An assessment of the proximal ancient woodland has been undertaken by FLAC,, which has directly informed scheme design, including with regards to ancient woodland buffer zones. These all meet and in many places significantly exceed the minimum recommendation of 15m.

A tree survey has been undertaken separately by FLAC, compliant to BS5837:2012. This survey has identified that the trees within the site can be categorised into four key groups:

Trees which form the boundaries of the site

These trees are generally a mix of Category B (moderate quality) and C (low quality) trees with some category A (high quality) trees to the south of Colwell House and on the western boundary of the site, to the paddock south of Colwell Barn. With appropriate offsets to development it is considered that these trees can be retained and protected without harm.

Trees which form the boundaries of the field parcels

The field boundaries comprise a mix of pedunculate oak, ash, field maple, gean, hazel and blackthorn. The majority of the Ash trees show signs of decline related to ash dieback with occasional trees in obvious terminal decline.

These trees have mainly been assessed as groups, though with some individuals picked out, and are generally Category B, moderate in value. There are however some specific Category U trees identified within the groups.

There is potential for limited tree removal within the groups to allow for connections between field parcels and further detailed assessment will be required to ensure that the impact is minimised. Where feasible, existing breaks in the tree groups will be utilised, and/ or diseased ash trees targeted.

Trees within Colwell Farmhouse where access to the site is proposed

Access to Lewes Road is proposed through the eastern part of the garden of Colwell Farmhouse. Within this part of the garden there are a number of trees of different species including Hornbeam, Norway maple, Scots Pine and Pedunculate oak. Trees near to the access vary in quality from Category B to Category U.

To facilitate the access, a small number of trees will need to be removed. Significant replacement and additional native tree planting is proposed within the site and in this area to ensure that tree cover over time can be upheld and the character of the Conservation Area be retained.

The Ancient Woodland to the south of the site

To the south of the site is Cain Wood which is identified as Ancient Woodland. With appropriate setbacks of (at least) 15 metres and additional planting to provide a semi-natural buffer to the woodland, it is considered that development can be accommodated on the site without this resulting in deterioration to this irreplaceable habitat; there would be no loss.



PHOTOGRAPH 5 | North Colwell Barns

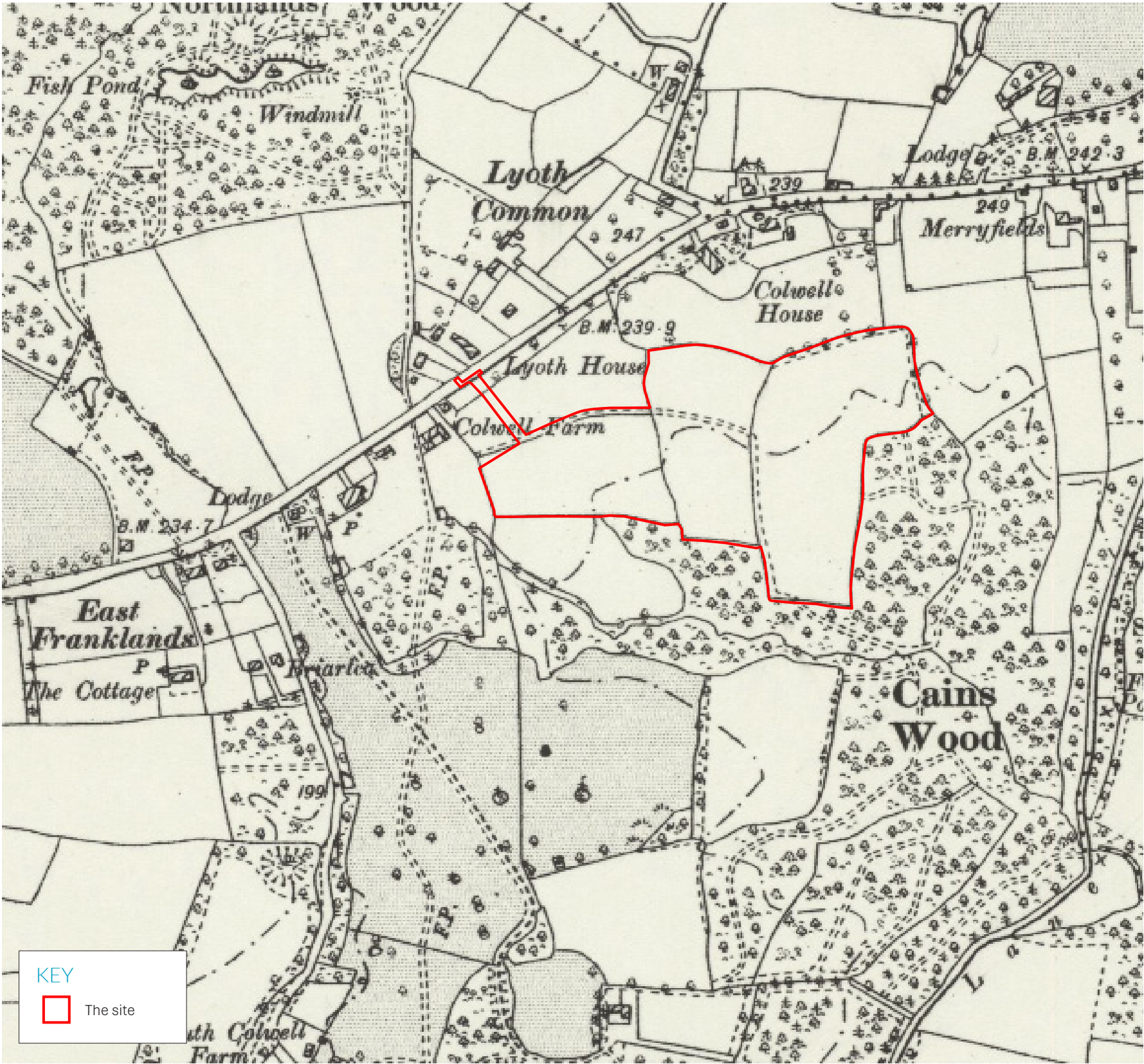


FIGURE 07 | Historic map (1896) showing Colwell Farm and Farmhouse and the former track which runs through the site

Heritage

Archaeology

The site has comprised three or four agricultural fields since at least the post-medieval period and includes no known archaeological sites. The site's archaeological potential is concluded to be low for all periods and residential development is unlikely to have an impact on any archaeological heritage assets.

Built Heritage

Potentially affected built heritage assets around the site include the Grade II listed Colwell House to the north of the site's north-eastern corner; the non-designated former later nineteenth-century farmstead of Colwell Barns (now converted to residential use) to the northwest of the site's western corner; and Lewes Road Conservation Area. The former two assets are unlikely to have their significance notably affected by the form of the proposed development. They are currently well-screened by existing planting of both depth and maturity. This screening will be strengthened, as shown in the current master plan, by extensive further planting and the setting back of the proposed built development from the western half of the western field; and from the northern edge and north-eastern corner of the eastern field.

Lewes Road Conservation Area

Figure 06 shows the extent of the Lewes Road Conservation Area. This includes both the access into the site and a small part of the site (a former trackway along the northern edge of part of the site's western field) and abuts the small western section of the central field's boundary (otherwise the Area is set away from the site), consequently there is a greater potential for the Area's significance to be affected by the proposed residential development. Lewes Road Conservation Area is a heritage asset of high local significance. The character and appearance of the Area is primarily defined by the long central axis of Lewes Road with the large residences immediately off it in spacious, discrete and greened grounds. The Area was designated in 1989 when Lewes Road marked the point of transition from the urban and suburban edge of Haywards Heath to the then rural landscape beyond, the

southern setting to the Area. In the subsequent 35 years there has been extensive infilling development within the Area and in its setting. There is no longer any perception of open countryside from Lewes Road.

There will also be no perception of the proposed development of the site from Lewes Road (excepting the proposed access road) and minimal, if any perception, of the proposed development (again excepting the access road) from within the Conservation Area. The Area is mainly enclosed by dense, later residential development. The only open fields forming the immediate setting to the eastern half of the Conservation Area comprise the site's western field and, to a lesser extent, the central field, together with the fields forming the outer grounds to Colwell House. The Area's setting provides only a secondary level of contribution to its significance, the primary contributor being the morphology, character and appearance of the Area itself.

The former track is now much overgrown and forms a very small part of the Conservation Area. This feature and area will be suitably conserved as part of the proposed scheme. Proposed built form will be set further to the south and screened by a new row of tree planting.

Across the whole site, the northern boundary with the Conservation Area is currently strongly planted both in depth and maturity. The nearer buildings within the Area are well set back from the boundary in large, discrete and mature domesticated plots. There currently is only a small quantum of glimpsed partial views of any of these buildings from the site. These are mainly experienced from the western field of Colwell Farm (a later twentieth-century residential house rather than a former farm); and the central field of those residences immediately to the west of Colwell House. This screening has been strengthened in the current master plan by extensive further planting and the setting back of built development from the western half of the western field; and from the northern boundary edge of the site.

The greater impact on the Conservation Area from the proposed development will be derived from the access road. This will be positioned against an existing boundary and the easement will be well planted with buffer vegetation to mitigate, to a degree, the resultant impacts. The overall leafy character and appearance of Lewes Road will be maintained.

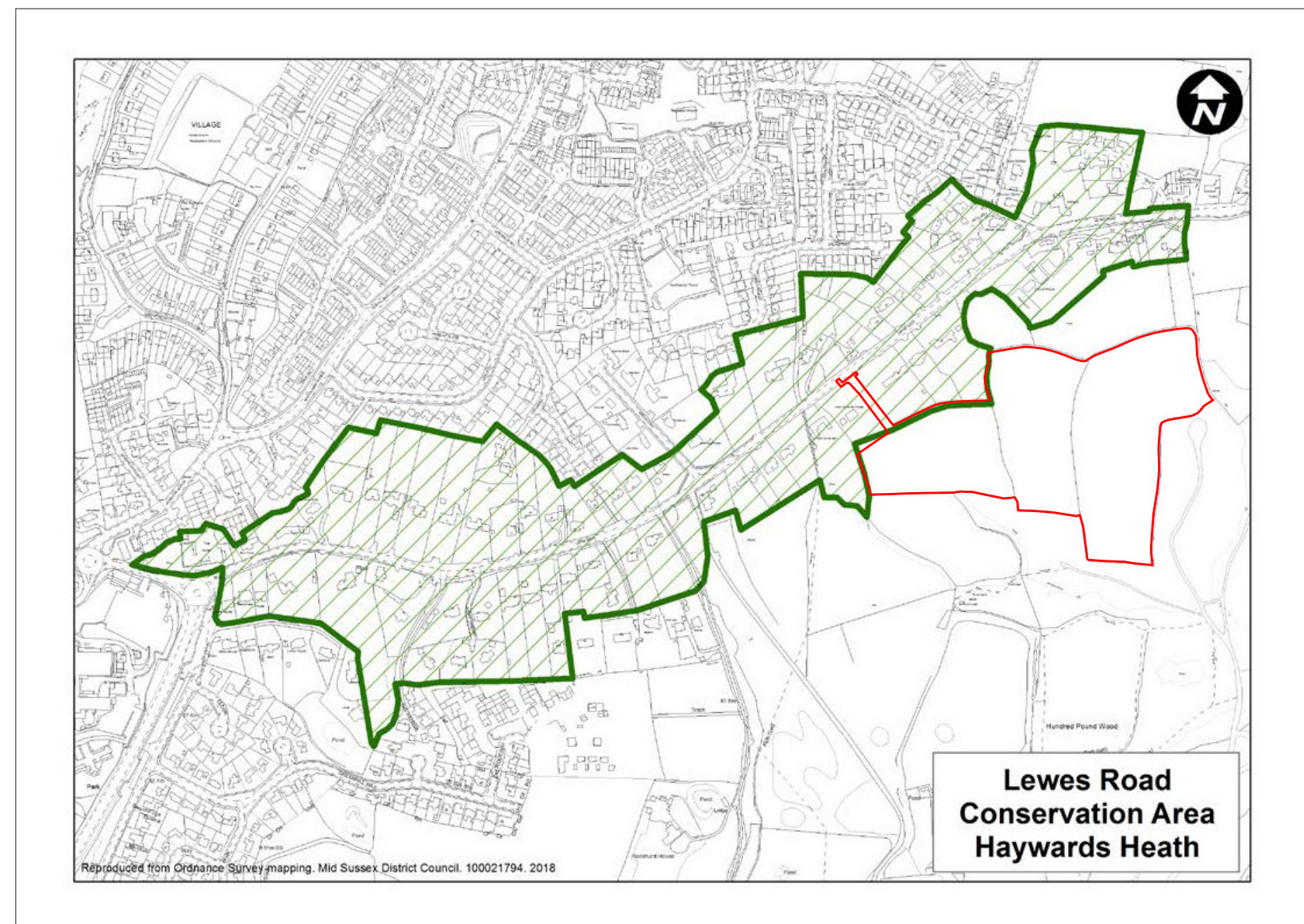


FIGURE 08 | Lewes Road Conservation Area

KEY

- The site
- Lewes Road Conservation Area

Ecology

Ecological surveys have been undertaken on the site in 2024 by Eco Support. Figure 07 shows the ecological constraints in relation to the site.

Habitats

The site is dominated by grassland with interspersed treelines valued at the local-county level. The site is bounded by ancient woodland on south and eastern boundaries. All ancient woodland have a minimum of a 15m buffer incorporated into the scheme.

Protected species

A likely main Badger sett is present within the ancient woodland to the south of the site. The scheme has been designed to incorporate at least a 30m ‘no dig’ buffer around the sett, with no dwellings or gardens proposed within this area either.

The site supports a likely breeding population of Dormice. Surveys have so far been completed between April and July this year, with a maximum of 3 structured nests found and one individual. The scheme has been designed to both minimise habitat loss by utilising natural gaps within the treelines for parcel access roads, and incorporating new woodland and scrub planting to shield and enhance retained woodland. New planting will utilise plants such as Hazel, Dogwood, Oak and Hawthorn to provide a protracted food source through the seasons.

Breeding bird surveys found a small number of birds of conservation concern. In addition, retaining woody vegetation minimises impact on nesting birds.

Ecological Opportunities

Extensive landscaping around the boundaries of the development, including new woodland planting, scrub planting and wildflower planting have resulted in a net gain for biodiversity on-site. To ensure the project reaches a 10% gain, offsite credits will also be purchased.

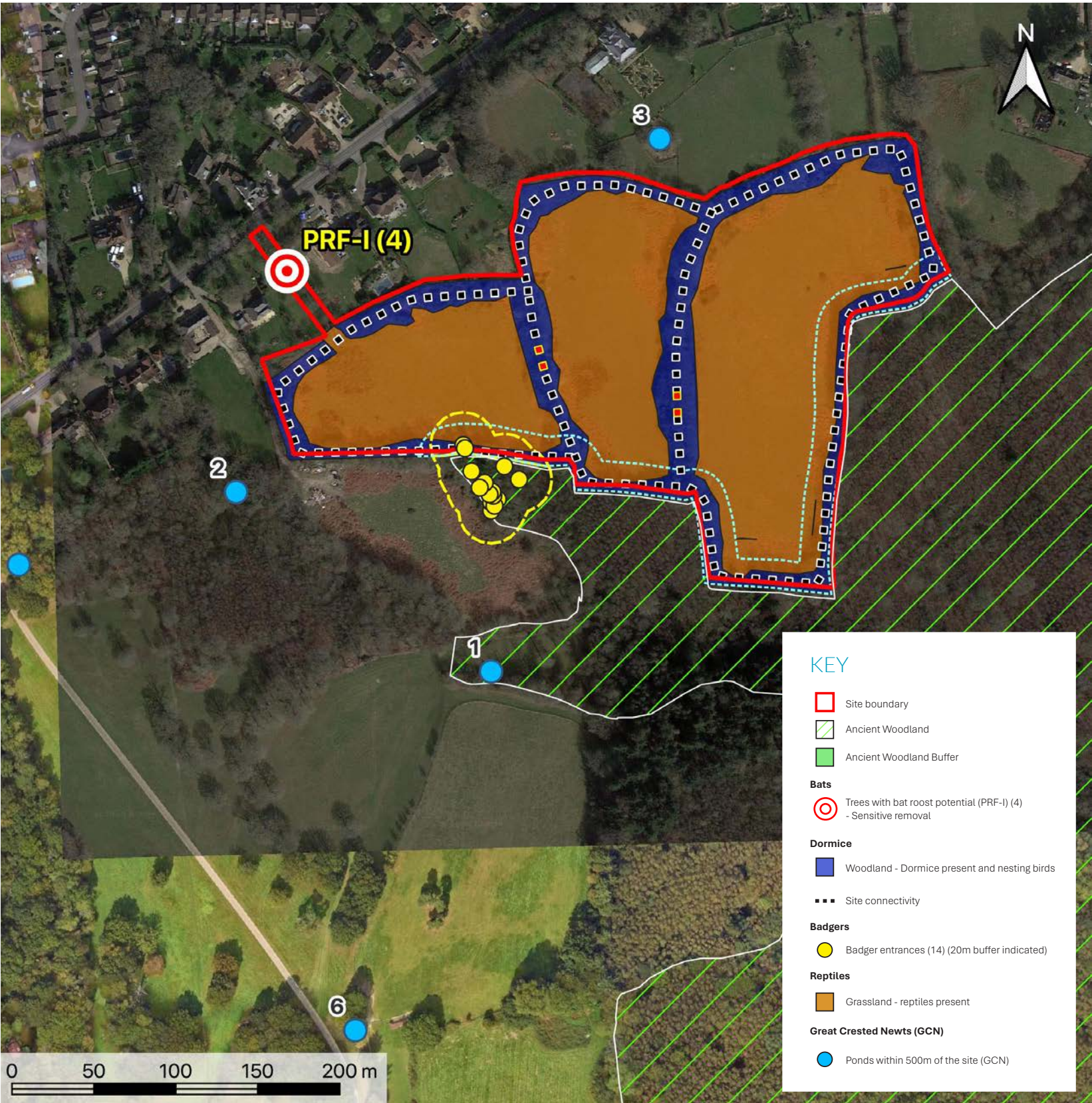


FIGURE 09 | Plan showing ecological constraints at the site

Flood risk and Drainage

An initial flood risk assessment for the site has been carried out by Mayer Brown.

There are no watercourses or ponds within the site and surface water generally flows across the site to the south eastern boundary via shallow ditches which follow the boundaries of the site.

The whole of the site lies within Floodzone 1 and therefore is not subject to flooding from rivers and seas. There are small areas of the site which are at risk of flooding from surface water.

Figure 10 shows the areas at risk from surface water flooding which shows a series of channels which run from the end of flow routes which eventually connect to Pellingford Brook, south of the town.

The land falls to the south across the site (see Photograph 7), away from the existing housing and there are opportunities to use a gravity based sustainable drainage system to provide drainage for any new development. A pumping facility will need to be provided to return the water to the existing mains which are located in Lewes Road. Movement and accessibility

KEY

 The site

Extent of flooding from surface water

-  High (Greater than 3.3% risk of flooding each year)
-  Medium (Between 1% and 3.3% risk of flooding each year)
-  Low (Between 0.1% and 1% risk of flooding each year)



FIGURE 10 | Plan showing surface water flood risk areas in relation to the site

Movement and accessibility

The site has been assessed with regard to access to core local amenities/facilities, including education, employment, retail and health facilities. The proposed development is for residential homes only, so other than public open space / local areas of play, all other amenities will be off site.

The core local amenities and services are presented in Figure 09 (along with walking catchment isochrones) - the core facilities are listed below:

- Primary school – the main primary school is Northlands Wood Primary Academy to the north west. Other primary schools include, Saint Wilfrid’s C of E Primary School, St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School and Warden Park Primary Academy;
- Secondary school – the main secondary school one is Oathall Community College (11 – 16). There is also Haywards Heath College (16 plus);
- Supermarket or local grocery shop (selling fresh food) – Tesco Express at Walnut Park is the closet. The Shell petrol garage sells some food items, a Co-Op is located on B2272, with an Iceland and M&S in the town centre;
- Doctors surgery – Northlands Wood Practice, at Walnut Park, with a Pharmacy (Kamsons) adjacent;
- Employment – Princess Royal Hospital is to the west of the site and Haywards Heath Town Centre a bit further along the B2272; and
- Leisure / Recreation – Walnut Park and Forest Fields Play area is the closet to the site to the north west. Other nearby leisure includes the Snowdrop inn pub to the north east, St Francis swimming pool, Rangers football club and bowls club to the south west of the site.

Walking

As shown at Figure 11, there are a good number of local facilities / amenities within a reasonable walk distance of the proposed homes – including food shops, a primary school, doctors / pharmacy and Princess Royal Hospital, and many of these facilities are just over the 800m distance i.e. closer to 800m than 1,600m. The town centre and Oathall Community College are within a maximum usual walking distance.

Cycling

The Walnut Park area / facilities, Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath town centre, Oathall Community College and Haywards Heath Station are within a reasonable cycle distance of the site. Other areas including Burgess Hill are within the maximum cycle distance of the site.



PHOTOGRAPH 6 | Lewes Road with a footway on the northern side of the road.