



LAND AT COOMBE FARM, LONDON ROAD, SAYERS COMMON

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Study Background	1
1.2	Report Structure.....	1
2.0	LANDSCAPE CONTEXT.....	2
2.1	Sayers Common.....	2
2.2	Local Landform and Topography	2
2.3	Land Use and Vegetation.....	2
2.4	Connectivity	3
2.5	Separation Between Settlements.....	3
2.6	Designated Landscapes.....	3
2.7	Housing Allocations	4
3.0	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND GUIDANCE	6
3.1	National Level Character Assessment	6
3.2	County Landscape Character Assessment	6
3.3	The Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment.....	9
3.4	South Downs Landscape Character Assessment.....	10
3.5	Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study.....	11
4.0	SITE DESCRIPTION	12
4.1	Introduction	12
4.2	Site Features and Context.....	12
4.3	Site Character.....	13
4.4	Landscape Value.....	13
5.0	EXISTING SITE VISIBILITY	14
5.1	Introduction	14
5.2	Views from the North.....	14
5.3	Views from the Northwest, West and Southwest.....	14
5.4	Views from the South	15

5.5	Views from the Southeast, East and Northeast.....	16
5.6	Views from Public Rights of Way Within the Site	16
5.7	Night-time Views.....	17
5.8	Levels of Visual Amenity	17
5.9	Summary of Site Visibility.....	17
5.10	Visually Sensitive Receptors	17
6.0	THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY.....	19
6.1	Development Vision	19
6.2	Development Master Planning.....	19
6.3	Landscape Strategy.....	19
7.0	LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL.....	22
7.1	Introduction	22
7.2	Landscape Sensitivity.....	22
7.3	Effects on the Physical Landscape.....	23
7.4	Effects on Local Landscape Character.....	23
7.5	Effects on the character and setting of the SDNP	25
7.6	Effects on Night-time character	26
8.0	VISUAL APPRAISAL	27
8.1	Introduction	27
8.2	Effects on views from the north.....	27
8.3	Effects on views from the northwest, west and southwest	27
8.4	Effects on views from the south.....	29
8.5	Effects on views from the southeast, east and northeast	30
8.6	Effects on views from public rights of way within the site	30
9.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	32
9.1	Development Proposals.....	32
9.2	Landscape Effects	33
9.3	Visual Effects	35

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location and Wider Context

Figure 2: Local Landscape Context

Figure 3: Landform and Topography

Figure 4: Local Landscape Aerial Photograph

Figure 5: Local Public Rights of Way

Figure 6: Consultation Draft District Plan Site Allocations

Figure 7: Site Landscape Aerial Photograph

Appendices

Appendix A: Policy DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road, Sayers Common, Mid Sussex District
Plan 2021 – 2039 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)

Appendix B: Site Appraisal and Site Context Photographs

Appendix C: Illustrative Masterplan

Appendix D: Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background

1.1.1 Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP is seeking to develop land for housing (“the Site”) on the southern edge of Sayers Common, a rural village in Mid Sussex District. The site is located approximately 0.8km northwest of Hurstpierpoint and 1km north of Albourne Green. The northern boundary of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) lies approximately 1.75 to 2.5km to the south. The southern boundary of the High Weald National Landscape lies approximately 4.5km to the north. (**Figure 1: Site Location and Context**).

1.1.2 The site has a draft allocation for new housing in the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 – 2039 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18) and is the subject of Policy DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road, Sayers Common (**Appendix A**).

1.1.3 Scarp Landscape Architecture Ltd was commissioned in September 2023 to (a) undertake an appraisal of the site and its surrounding landscape, (b) guide the preparation of the development master plan to help achieve landscape and visual integration, and (c) prepare a landscape and visual impact appraisal (LVA) of the proposed development (the “Development”) to accompany the planning application. This report presents the findings of the appraisal of potential landscape and visual effects that would result from the development proposal.

1.2 Report Structure

1.2.1 The report is set out under the following headings:

- (1) Introduction
- (2) Landscape Context
- (3) Landscape Character and Guidance
- (4) Site Description
- (5) Existing Site Visibility
- (6) The Proposed Development and Landscape Strategy
- (7) Landscape Appraisal
- (8) Visual Appraisal
- (9) Summary and Conclusions

2.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

2.1 Sayers Common

2.1.1 Sayers Common straddles both sides of the B2118 (London Road). The settlement pattern has historically been linear but 20th century housing has been developed in depth to the rear of the original roadside buildings. Sayers Common straddles both sides of. The settlement pattern has historically been linear but 20th century housing has been developed in depth to the rear of the original roadside buildings and along Reeds Lane.

2.1.2 Large-scale commercial buildings at the Avtrade Global Headquarters are located on the western side of the village (**Figure 2: Local Landscape Context**).

2.2 Local Landform and Topography

2.2.1 The site lies on the north and west-facing slopes of a low-lying ridge that extends through Albourne Green and Hurstpierpoint (**Figure 3: Landform and Topography**). A hillock rises up from the north-facing slopes immediately south of the site. Sayers Common lies at a lower level further to the north and northwest. The landform south of the ridge comprises an undulating area of low ridges and clay vales. This area rises up towards the South Downs, the northern edge of which is defined by a steep escarpment.

2.3 Land Use and Vegetation

2.3.1 Land use outside the village predominantly comprises a mix of pastoral and arable agriculture. Field sizes and shapes are highly variable, typically medium or small in scale, including a concentration of small fields on the north-western side of Hurstpierpoint (**Figure 4: Local Landscape Aerial Photograph**). Field boundaries are typically defined by hedgerows with mature trees. Minor rural roads are lined by either trimmed or unmanaged hedgerows. Tree/shrub belts line both sides of the A23. Woodland blocks are well-represented in the local landscape, including Sayers Common Wood on the northern edge of the site; Coombe Wood within the south-western part of the site; and Chloe Wood and an emerging woodland block located on rising land to the south. Other woodland blocks lie both to the east and west of the village. Sayers Common Wood, Coombe Wood and a block of woodland in the south-eastern part of the site are ancient woodland (**Figure 2: Local Landscape Context**).

2.4 Connectivity

- 2.4.1 The B2118 and the A23 both pass north-south through the local landscape. Albourne Road heads east from the B2118, crossing over the A23 to provide access to Hurstpierpoint (**Figure 2: Local Landscape Context**). Henfield Road heads northwest from Albourne Green. The local landscape is criss-crossed by a network of public rights of way. These include Bridleway 86HU and Footpath 34HU, which pass through the site (**Figure 5: Local Public Rights of Way**).

2.5 Separation Between Settlements

- 2.5.1 There is a strong sense of separation between (1) Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint and (2) Sayers Common and Albourne Green as there is no inter-visibility between Sayers Common and these other two settlements on account of the enclosure provided by landform and blocks of woodland in the intervening landscape.

2.6 Designated Landscapes

- 2.6.1 The boundary of the SDNP is located approximately 1.75 to 2.5km south of the site at its closest point, and is located at a distance of up to 12km southwest of the site. The High Weald National Landscape lies approximately 4.5km to the north. The primary purpose of the National Landscape designation for the High Weald is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. The primary purposes of the National Park designation are to (1) conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and (2) promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public. The South Downs National Park is also designated as an International Dark Sky Reserve.
- 2.6.2 The special qualities of the SDNP, as defined by the SDNP Management Plan¹, include *“tranquil and unspoilt places”* and *“diverse, inspirational landscapes and breathtaking views”* (Page 7).
- 2.6.3 Views from and to the SDNP have been analysed in the South Downs National Park Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis Report². Sayers Common forms part of the viewshed mapping for a range of representative viewpoints within the SDNP, including Wolstonbury Hill

¹ South Downs National Park – Partnership Management Plan 2020–2025

² South Downs National Park Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis Report (November 2015)

(approximately 3.5km south of the site). This mapping indicates a potential for visual sensitivity within the SDNP setting.

2.6.4 The site forms part of the distant setting of the SDNP as it a component of panoramic views that are available from the escarpment. The escarpment includes (1) Wolstonbury Hill (located approximately 4km south of the site), (2) Steyning Round Hill (located approximately 12km southwest of the site) and (3) an array of other landforms between these two hills. Wolstonbury Hill is owned by the National Trust and “*brehtaking panoramic views*” are noted in information about the hill on the National Trust’s website. Most views from the escarpment comprise an expansive array of agricultural fields, woodlands, tree belts and scattered settlements within the Low Weald. They contribute to a sense of tranquillity that is imparted from a strong sense of space, their strong rural character and the absence of any intrusive development.

2.6.5 The escarpment of the South Downs is a prominent feature in views from many parts of the low lying agricultural landscape of the Low Weald but is less prominent from settlements due to the enclosure provided by intervening buildings and trees.

2.7 Housing Allocations

2.7.1 Sites that have been proposed as draft housing allocations around Sayers Common in the Consultation Draft District Plan³ 2021 – 2039 are identified on **Figure 6: Consultation Draft District Plan Site Allocations**. These are as follows:

- DPSC2: Land to the South of Reeds Lane, Sayers Common;
- DPH16: Land west of Kemps, Hurstpierpoint;
- DPH19: Land at Chesapeake and Meadow View, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common;
- DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road, Sayers Common (the site);
- DPH21: Land to the West of Kings Business Centre, Reeds Lane, Sayers Common;
- DPH22: Land at LVS Hassocks, London Road, Sayers Common.

2.7.2 Site DPSC2 at Reeds Lane has been included to provide a sustainable urban extension to Sayers Common, bringing new community facilities and services to the area as part of a mixed use development. Five other sites, including DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, have also been

³ Mid Sussex District Plan 2021 – 2039 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)

allocated to ensure that the housing need is met in full. These allocations represent ‘forces for change’ in the local landscape.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND GUIDANCE

3.1 National Level Character Assessment

- 3.1.1 The Site lies in the far southern part of the Low Weald National Character Area (NCA 121), as identified by Natural England's Character Map of England. The assessment states that:

"The Low Weald National Character Area (NCA) is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils....."; and

"Despite its proximity to London and continuing pressure for development, the Low Weald remains essentially rural in character with small-scale villages nestled in woodland...."

- 3.1.2 Key characteristics include:

"Broad, low-lying, gently undulating clay vales with outcrops of limestone or sandstone providing local variation."

"A generally pastoral landscape with arable farming associated with lighter soils on higher ground and areas of fruit cultivation in Kent. Land use is predominantly agricultural but with urban influences, particularly around Gatwick, Horley and Crawley."

"Small towns and villages are scattered among areas of woodland, permanent grassland and hedgerows on the heavy clay soils where larger 20th-century villages have grown around major transport routes."

- 3.1.3 Guidance on how to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future are set out in the assessment, including *"Plan for the creation of high-quality blue and green space and green corridors to provide a framework for new and existing development in urban areas and along major transport routes for the enjoyment and wellbeing of communities and to enhance biodiversity"* (Page 19).

3.2 County Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.2.1 The site lies within the Eastern Low Weald Landscape Character Area (LCA LW10), as defined by the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment⁴. The assessment describes this LCA as "a

⁴ Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003)

lowland mixed pastoral and arable landscape with a strong hedgerow pattern. It lies over low ridges and clay vales drained by the upper Adur streams. In the east, the area has experienced high levels of development centred on Burgess Hill. It also identifies the following key characteristics of this LCA:

- *“Gently undulating low ridges and clay vales.”*
- *“Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north.”*
- *“Arable and pastoral rural landscape, a mosaic of small and larger fields, scattered woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.”*
- *“Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.”*
- *“Biodiversity in woodland, meadowland, ponds and wetland.”*
- *“Historic village of Cowfold and suburban village development at Partridge Green, Shermanbury and Sayers Common.”*
- *“Crossed by north-south roads with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes.”*
- *“Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.”*
- *“Major landmarks include Hurstpierpoint College and St Hugh’s Charterhouse Monastery at Shermanbury.”*

3.2.2 Landscape and visual sensitivities are identified as:

- *“High level of perceived naturalness and a rural quality in the quieter, rural landscape to the west of the A23 Trunk Road.”*
- *“Woodland cover and the mosaic of shaws and hedgerows contribute strongly to the essence of the landscape.”*
- *“Pockets of rich biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change.”*
- *“Parts of the area are highly exposed to views from the downs with a consequently high sensitivity to the impact of new development and the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.”*

3.2.3 The approximate location of the site within this LCA is identified by a red outline on **Plate 1** below.

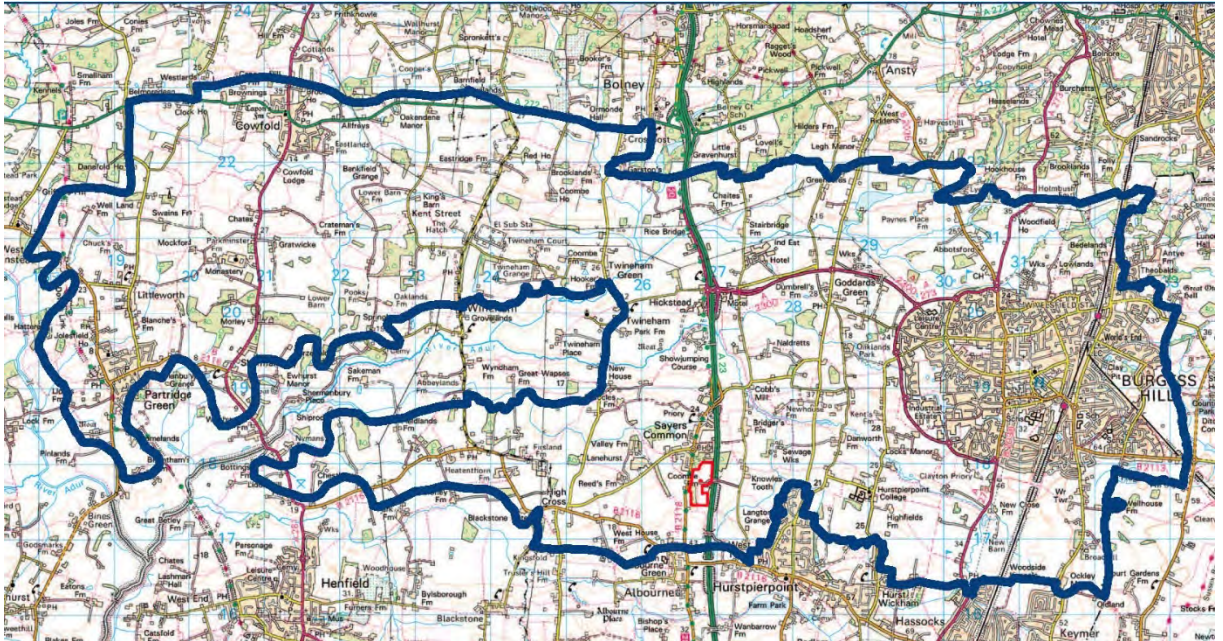


Plate 1: Location of the Site within the Eastern Low Weald Landscape Character Area (extracted from the West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, 2003)

- 3.2.4 The assessment provides the following overall guidance for land management: *“Conserve and enhance the quiet, rural qualities of the western part of the area, encourage landscape restoration and woodland management, and ensure that new development is well-integrated within the landscape.”*
- 3.2.5 Specific land management guidelines for this LCA include:
- *“Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the agricultural landscape including irregular patterns of smaller fields.”*
 - *“Plan for long-term woodland regeneration, the planting of new small and medium-sized broad-leaved farm woodlands, and appropriate management of existing woodland.”*
 - *“Avoid skyline development and ensure that any new development has a minimum impact on views from the downs and is integrated within the landscape.”*
 - *“Where appropriate, increase tree cover in and around villages, agricultural and other development and on the rural urban fringe of suburban areas and Burgess Hill, including along the approach roads to settlements and along busy urban routes including the A23 Trunk Road.”*
 - *“Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.”*

3.3 The Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.3.1 The site forms part of the Hickstead Low Weald LCA (Area 4), as defined by the Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment⁵. The approximate location of the site within this character area is identified by a red dot on **Plate 2** below.

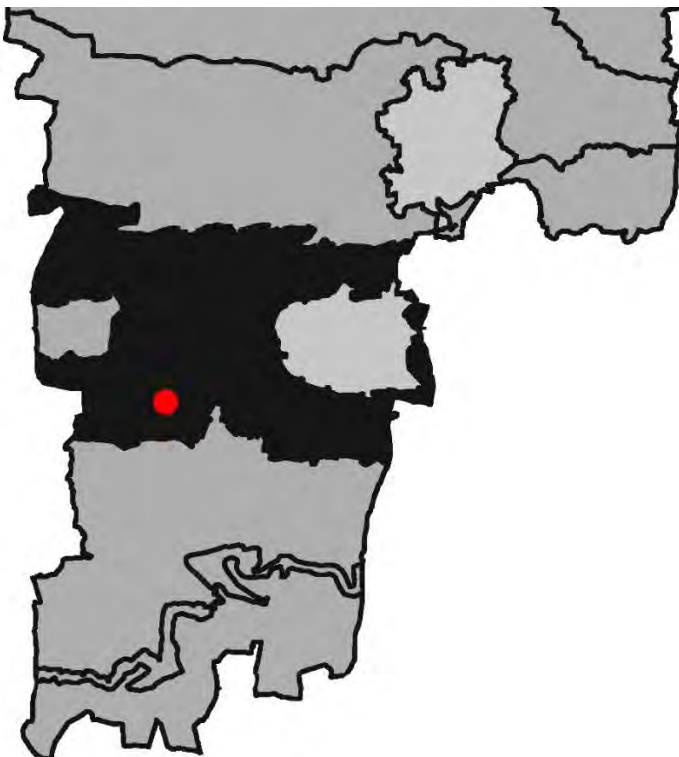


Plate 2: Location of the Site within the Hickstead Low Weald Landscape Character Area (extracted from the Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment, 2005)

- 3.3.2 The assessment describes the LCA as *“Lowland mixed arable and pastoral landscape with a strong hedgerow pattern. It lies over low ridges and clay vales drained by the upper Adur streams. In the east, the area has experienced high levels of development centred on Burgess Hill.”* It identifies the following key characteristics:

- *“Alternating west-east trending low ridges with sandstone beds and clay vales carrying long, sinuous upper Adur streams.”*
- *“Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north.”*

⁵ Mid Sussex District Council, 'A landscape character assessment for Mid Sussex' (November 2005)

- *“Arable and pastoral rural landscape, a mosaic of small and larger fields, scattered woodlands, shaws and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.”*
- *“Quieter and more secluded, confined rural landscape to the west, much more development to the east, centred on Burgess Hill.”*
- *“Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.”*
- *“Crossed by north-south roads including the A23 Trunk Road, with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes.”*

3.3.3 The assessment states that:

“Skyline hedgerows and trees tend to restrict long views. Views south are dominated by the steep downland scarp, with occasionally good prospects of the rising, gently dissected wooded slopes of the High Weald fringe rising to the north” (Para. 7.3).

“The landscape to the west of the A23 Trunk Road is strongly rural, quieter and less frequented (particularly around Twineham and Wineham) compared with the area to the east of the road, where the pervasive impact of modern development has altered landscape character. The dominant change has been the post-Victorian expansion of Burgess Hill including the recent westward expansion of the town. Other modern influences in the landscape include roadside commercial and other development along the old A23; modern, large farm and industrial estate buildings; electricity sub stations, sewage works and pylons; suburban village development at Sayers Common;” (Para. 7.7).

“Much settlement is confined to the lower ridges, above the heavier clay vales.” (Para. 7.14).

3.4 South Downs Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.4.1 The closest SDNP landscape character area to the site is J2: Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes, as defined by the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment⁶. This LCA forms a wide band of lowland at the foot of the scarp. To the north, the character area forms a gradual transition to the landscape of the Low Weald. One of the key characteristics of this LCA is *“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”*.

⁶ South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (South Downs National Park Authority, October 2020)

- 3.4.2 To the north, the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp LCA wraps around the northern edge of the open downs and incorporates the steep scarp slopes. One of the key characteristics of this LCA is *“The elevated landform provides panoramic views both along the scarp and north to the surrounding lowlands, from many locations including popular viewpoints at Devil's Dyke, Ditchling Beacon and Edburton Hill. Features on the scarp, such as the V at Streat, provide local landmarks which are visible from afar.”*

3.5 Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study

- 3.5.1 This study⁷ was commissioned to review the landscape capacity for strategic scale development in Mid Sussex District. It identified locations where development might be accommodated within the District without an unacceptable impact on landscape character. The site is located within the Hickstead - Sayers Common Low Weald LCA (62). The approximate location of the site within this character area is identified on **Plate 3** below. This LCA was assessed as having low / medium landscape capacity on the basis of it being *“Rural and unrelated to settlement”*. However, it should be noted that the site does not form part of the wider rural landscape of LCA 62 that is unrelated to Sayers Common, but adjoins the settlement on its southern side and also abuts the A23.

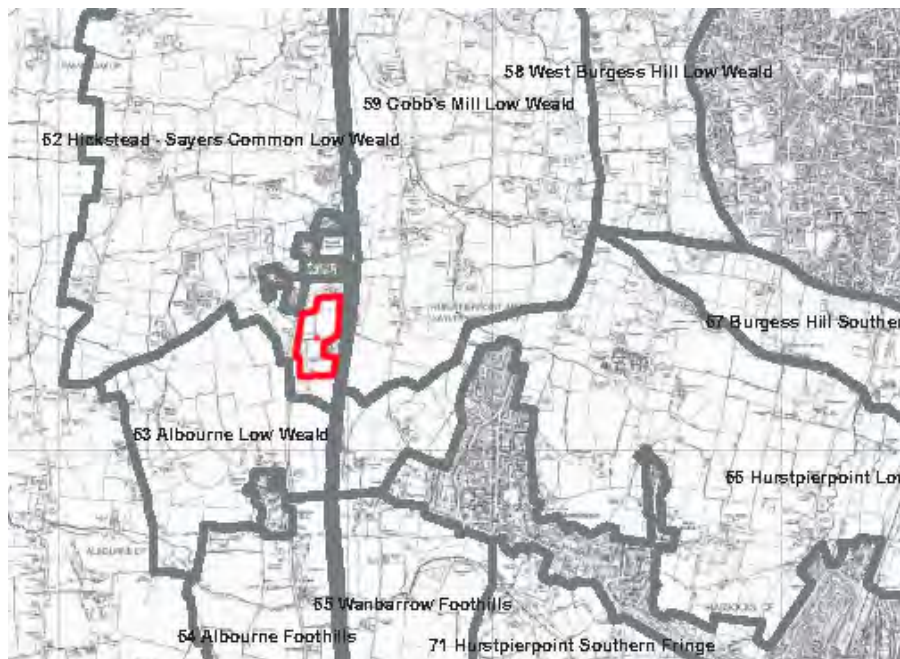


Plate 3: Location of the Site within the Hickstead - Sayers Common Low Weald LCA (extracted from the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007))

⁷ Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (July 2007)

4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The appraisal of existing site conditions set out below makes reference to **Figure 7: Site Landscape Aerial Photograph** and to the set of site appraisal and site context photographs in **Appendix B**. The locations of photographic viewpoints are identified on the viewpoint location plans at the front of this appendix (**Site Appraisal and Near Distance Photographic Viewpoint Locations** and **Middle Distance and Long Distance Viewpoint Locations**).

4.2 Site Features and Context

- 4.2.1 The site comprises four pasture fields (Fields 1 to 4) and several blocks of woodland, including Coombe Wood (**Photographs A to E** and **Figure 7: Site Landscape Aerial Photograph**). The fields are subdivided by trimmed native hedgerows, some with occasional mature trees. Bridleway 86Hu passes east-west through the central part of the site and Footpath 34Hu extends south from this bridleway to connect with Chloe Wood. The bridleway is surfaced and is enclosed by trimmed hedgerows with intermittent mature trees (**Photographs Q and R**). The footpath is unsurfaced and passes through the western part of Field 4 (**Photograph E**). One residential property ("Stonecroft"), with ornamental hedging along part of its boundary, abuts the northern edge of the bridleway and lies outwith the site (**Photograph Q**). Levels within the site generally descend from south to north whilst land in the western part of the site descends to the west and northwest.
- 4.2.2 Sayers Common Wood abuts the northern and north-western site boundaries (**Photograph A**). Village housing lies on the far side of this wood. The eastern site boundary is partly defined by the tree/shrub belts associated with the A23 (**Photographs N and O**) and partly by the garden hedges of an off-site cluster of buildings. This building cluster comprises Coombe Farmhouse (Grade II listed), an associated barn (Grade II listed) and a granary (Grade II listed) (**Photograph S**). A wide belt of agricultural fields and some woodland blocks lie east of the A23.
- 4.2.3 The southern site boundary is defined by a bushy hedgerow with intermittent deciduous trees and a block of emerging woodland on rising land lies to its rear (**Photograph D**). The mature woodland of Chloe Wood lies further to the south. The western site boundary is largely defined by a trimmed hedgerow alongside the B2118 (**Photographs B, F, F1 and H**) but a short section of this boundary is defined by a field associated with a residential property along the

edge of Coombe Wood. Housing in the far southern part of the village lies opposite the western site boundary (**Photographs B and F**). The nearby section of the B2118 has tall lighting columns, road markings, signage and a mini-roundabout at its junction with Furzeland Way.

- 4.2.4 The site is not subject to any local or national designations that serve to protect landscapes with particularly important qualities. The site is also not within or close to any conservation area. There are no listed buildings on the site but there are three listed buildings on its eastern side.

4.3 Site Character

- 4.3.1 The on-site fields and woodland, together with the proximity of the site to existing housing and highway infrastructure (lighting, signage etc) along the B2118, impart a rural settlement fringe character to parts of the site. The on-site trees provide a contribution to the verdant character of the local landscape. The noise of traffic on the A23 and the B2118 detract from site tranquillity.

4.4 Landscape Value

- 4.4.1 There are no national or local designations associated with the local landscape (e.g. a National Landscape or an Area of Local Landscape Value) but the site is likely to be valued locally. It supports some locally distinctive landscape characteristics in the form of well-treed hedgerows and woodland blocks. It is a landscape of moderate aesthetic appeal. The woodland/mature trees/hedgerows on the site are of ecological value and include ancient woodland. Landscape components are generally well maintained. Noise from the A23 detracts from local tranquillity. The skyline is generally well-treed. The site provides countryside access and some attractive views are available from public rights of way that pass through the site. There are no features of cultural interest within the Site but the cluster of buildings at Coombe Farm are listed. The site provides minimal contribution to the visual setting of the SDNP due to the visual containment provided by intervening landform and vegetation and the effects of distance. The site and local landscape is assessed as being of medium/high value based on the above.

5.0 EXISTING SITE VISIBILITY

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section identifies (a) the views of the site that are available from publicly accessible locations and (b) the type and sensitivity of visual receptors (i.e. the people who would be potentially affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places surrounding the site).
- 5.1.2 Reference is made to the set of site appraisal and site context photographs (**Appendix B**), which were taken in September 2023 when vegetation was in leaf. The conditions illustrated by these photographs were verified in May 2025. The locations of photographic viewpoints are identified on the photographic viewpoint location plans at the front of this appendix (i.e. the **Site Appraisal and Near Distance Photographic Viewpoints Plan** and the **Middle and Long Distance Photographic Viewpoints Plan**).

5.2 Views from the North

- 5.2.1 The site is not visible from any publicly accessible viewing positions to the north due to the enclosure provided by Sayers Common Wood and by existing housing. The site is difficult to perceive from the High Weald National Landscape due to the enclosure provided by layers of woodland and other trees in the intervening landscape.

5.3 Views from the Northwest, West and Southwest

- 5.3.1 Site visibility from the B2118 is not available until road users approach the Furzeland Way/B2118 junction. **Photograph F**, taken from a location close to this junction, illustrates how the site may be seen to the side of Sayers Common Wood. **Photograph F1**, taken from a location further to the south (close to the start of Footpath 11Hu) illustrates how Field 2, on-site trees and the off-site Stonecroft dwellinghouse may be seen to the rear of the site boundary hedgerow. Views of the site from most sections of Footpath 11Hu are typically enclosed either by trackside trees and scrub or by the Furzeland Way housing. However, some partial views of the site may be obtained from the far eastern section of this public footpath, viewed in the context of settlement edge housing (**Photograph G**).

- 5.3.2 Views from public footpaths further to the west and southwest are difficult to obtain due to the enclosure provided by intervening vegetation. In the case of elevated views from public footpaths on the northern side of Albourne Green, views of the site are enclosed by Chloe Wood or are restricted to the visual mass of on-site trees associated within Coombe Wood (**Photograph J**). In the case of relatively low-lying viewing locations to the southwest, views of the site are substantially enclosed by visual layers of intervening trees and tall hedgerows but include some skyline views of the upper parts of Coombe Wood (**Photograph K**).
- 5.3.3 Visibility of Coombe Wood becomes difficult to perceive as people move across parts of the Low Weald further to the southwest with the woodland becoming more visually merged with intervening vegetation. Visibility of the site becomes to open up again as the land rises up to the top of the South Downs escarpment on the western side of Steyning. However, these distant SDNP views are located more than 12km from the site and it is difficult to identify the site within the extensive panoramic views that are available across the wider Low Weald (**Photograph V**).
- 5.3.4 Views of the site from sections of the B2118 to the southwest are enclosed in both summer and winter months by roadside hedgerows and mature trees (**Photograph I**) and/or by the visual mass of Coombe Wood.

5.4 Views from the South

- 5.4.1 Views of the site from the section of Footpath 3HU are difficult to obtain due to the enclosure provided by intervening landform and by tree/shrub vegetation associated with the emerging woodland and Chloe Wood. Site visibility from locations between Chloe Wood and Albourne Green is typically enclosed by this landform and woodland. In the case of views from the Albourne Road overbridge (**Photograph L** on the Middle and Long Distance Viewpoint Location Plan), views towards the site are completely enclosed by the A23 tree belts. Additional enclosure is provided by roadside vegetation along adjacent sections of Albourne Road. Views of the site from roads and public rights of way across the relatively low-lying land on the southern side of Albourne Green are enclosed by the village housing and by the east-west ridge on which the village is located.
- 5.4.2 Visibility of Chloe Wood becomes to open up again as the land rises up to meet the top of the South Downs escarpment to the north and west of Pyecombe (**Figure 1: Site Location and Wider Context**). These viewpoints are within the South Downs National Park and are located

3-6km from the site. **Photograph M**, taken from the northern side of Wolstonbury Hill, illustrates an extensive panoramic view across the Low Weald. This view is of a settled rural landscape and is dominated by a mosaic of small and medium scale fields, tree belts and woodland blocks, all seen against a backdrop of the High Weald. Settlements, such as Hurstpierpoint and Albourne Green, may be seen as part of a visual mosaic of buildings and trees. These settlements are well integrated into the view by settlement edge woodland and by roadside and field boundary trees. The large-scale Avtrade Global Headquarter buildings may be seen on the western side of Sayers Common but housing in the village is difficult to identify due to the enclosure provided by intervening landform, woodland and other mature trees. Views of the site are limited to peripheral woodland and are difficult to perceive in the wider visual mass of mature trees around the site.

5.5 Views from the Southeast, East and Northeast

- 5.5.1 Views towards the site from the A23 overbridge are enclosed by the roadside tree/shrub belts (**Photographs N and O**). Rising landform on the western edge of the A23 provides an additional layer of enclosure for views from this relatively low-lying A-road. Views of the site from eastern sections of Bridleway 86Hu are limited to glimpses of the woodland belts alongside the eastern site boundary, as seen above the A23 tree/shrub belts (**Photograph P**). Views become much more restricted from Langton Lane and from public rights of way further to the southeast and east due to the screening effects of intervening field boundary hedgerows and trees. An additional layer of visual enclosure is provided by elevated land along the eastern side of the A23 (**Photograph U**).

5.6 Views from Public Rights of Way Within the Site

- 5.6.1 Field boundary hedgerows and trees are prominent components of views from Bridleway 86Hu, which passes east-west through the site. Glimpsed and partial views of adjacent site fields are also available from the bridleway (**Photographs D, Q and T**). Views are obtained in the context of existing built form at Stonecroft and Coombe Farm and have a rural settled character (**Photographs Q, R and S**).

5.7 Night-time Views

- 5.7.1 The site is typically not visible in night-time views but some partial views of the site are available from the B2118 and are obtained in the context of street lighting and light sources associated with existing houses.

5.8 Levels of Visual Amenity

- 5.8.1 The site is located in an area typified by medium to high levels of visual amenity.

5.9 Summary of Site Visibility

- 5.9.1 The extent of site visibility in the surrounding landscape is heavily restricted:

- **To the north:** by Sayers Common Wood and existing housing;
- **To the northwest, west and southwest:** by housing and mature trees on the western side of the B2118, by Coombe Wood, and by hedgerows and trees associated with the swathe of agricultural fields west of the B2118;
- **To the south:** by Chloe Wood and by rising landform and emerging woodland on the southern edge of the site;
- **To the southeast, east and northeast:** by the A23 tree/shrub belts, by a hillock along the eastern side of the A23 and by field boundary hedgerows and trees east and southeast of Sayers Common.

- 5.9.2 The site is not visible from the SDNP escarpment located to the south due to the enclosure provided by Chloe Wood and by intervening landform. The site landform and woodland are difficult to discern in the long distance panoramic views from sections of escarpment located to the southwest.

5.10 Visually Sensitive Receptors

- 5.10.1 The sensitivity of visual receptors varies according to the degree of interest and attention they would be paying to the views around them and the length of time or frequency with which they would experience the views. The levels of sensitivity of people who potentially will have views of the proposed housing are:

- **High sensitivity receptors:** recreational walkers using the public rights of way and visitors to the SDNP;
- **Medium sensitivity receptors:** users of rural lanes.
- **Low sensitivity receptors:** users of the A23.

6.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

6.1 Development Vision

- 6.1.1 The development vision is to create a new residential area within a wooded landscape, with substantial provision of publicly accessible, multi-functional greenspaces and with ease of movement to the village centre, to public transport and to the wider countryside.

6.2 Development Master Planning

- 6.2.1 The development master planning and design exercise has been led by landscape and visual considerations with careful attention given to the location and layout of the proposed housing and open space with regard to the conservation of landscape character, visual amenity, arboriculture and ecology. A set of development parameter plans have been prepared to define building heights and densities, areas of potential built development and other land uses, green infrastructure, access and movement and other key structuring and placemaking components. The site has the potential to accommodate approximately 210 dwellings, as illustrated by the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan in **Appendix C**.

6.3 Landscape Strategy

- 6.3.1 The aim of the landscape strategy is to create an attractive high-quality residential area that reflects the intrinsic character of the Low Weald and to achieve landscape and visual integration by (1) sensitive location and design of the proposed buildings, roads and hard surfacing within the site; (2) maximising the retention and enhancement of existing woodland, tree and hedgerow vegetation, particularly in peripheral parts of the site and (3) provision of a strong framework of multi-functional greenspaces.
- 6.3.2 The development proposals have been informed by a detailed analysis of existing landscape and visual conditions (landform, vegetation, connectivity, landscape character, views etc) and the need to conserve the setting of the SDNP and its special qualities. A landscape-led approach has been adopted, including the following:
1. Location of the site adjacent to the settlement edge and within an area that has a high degree of visual enclosure afforded by peripheral mature woodland.

2. Substantial retention of woodland, trees and hedgerows within the site and provision of supplementary native tree/shrub planting along the site boundaries and within greenspaces to help ensure that the new built form is visually well-integrated into the local landscape and that the site continues to provide a contribution to the well-treed skyline and rural character of the local landscape.
 3. Set back of housing from ancient woodland with buffers selectively enhanced by supplementary native scrub planting. A woodland management plan would be prepared.
 4. Provision of effective landscape buffers alongside the curtilage of listed buildings at Coombe Farm.
 5. Location of trees alongside the internal roads to help conserve the verdant character of the local landscape.
 6. Adoption of a north-south pattern of housing that responds to the natural fall of the land and reflects the historic pattern of built form in Sayers Common.
 7. Retention of existing public rights of way, upgrading of surfaces, creation of new recreational routes within the site and provision of connections to the existing settlement.
 8. Conservation of the well-vegetated setting of Bridleway 86HU and Footpath 11Hu.
 9. Provision of a significant area of publicly accessible, semi-natural greenspace (i.e. where a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate) for existing and future residents. These greenspaces would provide opportunities for the healthy growth of large-scale trees as a contribution to the well-treed character of the local landscape. They would also include areas of wildflower meadow, species-rich grass with surface water attenuation ponds and new recreational footpaths.
 10. Provision of children's play areas, seats and picnic tables for passive recreation.
- 6.3.3 The greenspace proposed in the northern-central part of the site would form the heart of the new housing area, providing opportunities for informal recreation (including a Local Equipped Area for Play) and a community orchard. These facilities would provide residents with a social and interactive landscape in which they can spend quality time, gather together and hold events.
- 6.3.4 The proposed development layout has been informed by the root protection areas that were identified as part of the BS5837 Tree Condition Survey.
- 6.3.5 It is envisaged that the landscape and ecological resources of the new residential landscape would be enhanced through implementation of a landscape and ecological management plan.

This management plan would set out measures to enhance the quality of the woodland and to minimise public access to it.

7.0 LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section provides an appraisal of the effects of the Development on the physical landscape and on landscape character at Year 1 and Year 15 following completion of the Development. The appraisal of effects has been based on the Parameter Plans. Reference is also made to the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan in **Appendix C** and to the site appraisal and site context photographs in **Appendix B**. The criteria for assessing magnitude of landscape change are set out in **Appendix C**. The methodology for assessing potential landscape effects is set out in **Appendix D**. The overall nature of the landscape change is also identified and this may include both adverse and beneficial components. The appraisal excludes consideration of effects associated with construction works as these would be small-scale and temporary in nature.

7.2 Landscape Sensitivity

- 7.2.1 The site lies on the slopes of a low-lying ridge and its elevated nature imparts a degree of sensitivity. Existing woodland, fields and mature trees impart positive scenic qualities to the site. The ancient woodlands within and adjacent to the site are not replaceable and are high sensitivity components of the site and local landscape. The loss of mature native trees are not readily replaceable and their loss would potentially affect local landscape character. The public rights of way across the site form an important part of connectivity in the local landscape and are susceptible to change. The site forms part of the distant setting of the SDNP and the visual inter-relationship between the site and the escarpment is susceptible to change. The north-western part of the site lies close to existing housing on its northern and western sides, thereby reducing the sensitivity of the site landscape to new housing development. The site has good scope for effective integration into the local landscape and for contribution to the attainment of landscape planning policies and strategies. The site has medium/high susceptibility to new housing on the basis of the above.
- 7.2.2 Landscape sensitivity derives from the combination of susceptibility and value. The site and local landscape is considered to be of medium/high sensitivity based on its medium/high value and medium/high susceptibility to change.

7.3 Effects on the Physical Landscape

- 7.3.1 Four pastoral fields near the southern edge of Sayers Common would be developed for new housing and a substantial area of publicly accessible greenspaces. New areas of wildflower meadow, children's play areas and water attenuation basins with a strong semi-natural character would be created within the greenspaces. Public rights of way would be retained along their existing alignments and new recreational footpaths would be provided within peripheral greenspaces.
- 7.3.2 The introduction of water attenuation basins and individual housing platforms would result in a low-level change to the existing site landform. Existing field boundary trees and hedgerows would be retained through the set-back of housing from the site boundaries and from field boundaries. The proposed housing layout takes into account the Tree Protection Plan that has been prepared on the basis of the BS5837 Pre-Development Tree Condition Survey.
- 7.3.3 All peripheral woodland would be conserved and there would be substantial retention of existing trees and hedgerows. Supplementary tree/shrub planting would be provided. A short section of hedgerow along the western site boundary would be removed to create the new vehicular access but most of the hedgerow would be retained to the rear of vehicular sightlines. There would be an enhancement of the quantity, species range, age and ecological diversity of vegetation within the site.
- 7.3.4 High quality housing and greenspaces would be provided through the Reserved Matters design and approval process. All retained and proposed vegetation would be managed to maximise its biodiversity value and to help ensure its healthy growth and contribution to the character of the site and surrounding landscape.
- 7.3.5 At Year 1, there would be a high magnitude of change on this medium/high sensitivity site landscape. The magnitude of landscape change would fall to medium by Year 15 when the proposed tree and shrub vegetation would be substantially mature and would provide a strong, positive contribution to the site landscape.

7.4 Effects on Local Landscape Character

- 7.4.1 The proposed housing would sit on the lower northern side of the east-west orientated Albourne ridge (**Figure 3: Landform and Topography**) and would be located at a lower

elevation than either Albourne Green or Hurstpierpoint. It would have a close physical and visual relationship with the existing village housing and would reflect the prevailing north-south settlement pattern. The proposed built form would be visually contained by retained/enhanced woodland with the result that it would be well integrated into the local landscape. These woodland areas would continue to provide a positive contribution to local landscape character and its well-treed skyline.

- 7.4.2 The sensitive location and design of the housing and associated green infrastructure would result in a high degree of integration into the local part of the Hickstead Low Weald LCA. It would occupy a small part of the *“mosaic of small and larger fields”* around Sayers Common but within the *“confined rural landscape”* on the western side of the A23, as identified in the Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment⁸. There would be no or negligible change to *“Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north”*. The site does not form part of the core area of *“quieter and more secluded”* rural landscape west of the A23, as it is sandwiched between the busy A23 and the B2118. The Development would abut the *“suburban village development at Sayers Common”* but would have a high degree of visual enclosure. It would reflect existing landscape character whereby *“Much settlement is confined to the lower ridges”* and the historic *“Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.”*
- 7.4.3 It would also conserve the key characteristics of the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes LCA (J2), as defined by the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment⁹ of *“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”*. It would also substantially conserve the key characteristic associated with the Adur to Ouse Downs Scarp LCA, i.e. *“The elevated landform provides panoramic views both along the scarp and north to the surrounding lowlands”* and *“Features on the scarp, such as the V at Streat, provide local landmarks which are visible from afar.”*
- 7.4.4 The valued sense of tranquillity outside the site and away from the A23 would be substantially conserved as the expanded settlement would be contained within a strong wooded framework and with very limited intrusion in the local landscape. Public rights of way across the site would remain well-vegetated and tranquil. There would be no intrusive lighting associated with the Development with the result that valued dark skies would be conserved.

⁸ Mid Sussex District Council, 'A landscape character assessment for Mid Sussex' (November 2005)

⁹ South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (South Downs National Park Authority, October 2020)

- 7.4.5 Although the Development would extend the built-up part of the village into open countryside, it would not be intrusive within the local landscape as it would extend only slightly further south than the existing collection of buildings along the western side of the B2118 and housing on this elevated site would be visually well contained by woodland and the mature tree belts along the A23.
- 7.4.6 The existing strong sense of separation between (1) Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint and (2) Sayers Common and Albourne Green would be conserved as there would be no inter-visibility between the Development and these other two settlements on account of the enclosure provided by landform and large blocks of woodland in the intervening landscape. The separate identity and amenity of the settlements would be conserved on this basis.
- 7.4.7 The Development would result in an overall very low magnitude of landscape change to the local part of the Hickstead Low Weald LCA at both Year 1 and Year 15. The location and design of the new housing would substantially conserve existing on-site vegetation and the proposed housing would have very limited characterising influence on the local landscape due to the enclosure provided by the framework of retained on-site/off-site woodland. The predicted changes would be of slight significance for this medium/high sensitivity landscape.

7.5 Effects on the character and setting of the SDNP

- 7.5.1 As set out in Section 8.0 (Visual Appraisal), the new housing would be difficult to perceive in the distant panoramic views that are available from the SDNP escarpment. Visibility of the new built form is likely to be restricted to the rooftops of some houses, which would form part of a visual mosaic of houses and mature trees. The retained on-site/adjacent off-site woodland would, together with supplementary tree planting, contribute to these elevated views of a well-treed, settled landscape. There would be no harm to the special qualities of the SDNP or key characteristics of the LCAs associated with the SDNP scarp and its footslopes as there would be negligible change to the *“pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic”* associated with the distant panoramic and breathtaking views from the scarp to the Low Weald. The Development would also not result in any obstruction of views of the escarpment from public rights of way surrounding the site. There would be negligible effects on the tranquil setting of the SDNP as the character and scenic quality of existing views would be conserved.

- 7.5.2 Any additional lighting associated with this settlement edge housing would have no perceptible effect on dark skies of the SDNP.
- 7.5.3 The SDNP special quality of “*tranquil and unspoilt places*” would be conserved as the Development would not detract from the strong sense of space experienced along the northern edge of the national park or from the strong rural character of the distant panoramic views with their substantial absence of any intrusive development. The expansive array of agricultural fields, woodlands, tree belts and scattered settlements in these scenic views would continue to provide a sense of tranquillity.
- 7.5.4 There would be no conflict, in the context of the above, between the Development and the purposes of the SDNP, which include the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

7.6 Effects on Night-time character

- 7.6.1 It is envisaged that there would be restrictions on the numbers and luminance levels of external lighting units so that dark skies of the local landscape and the SDNP would be conserved.

8.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This section provides an appraisal of the effects on existing views and visual amenity at Year 1 (winter) and Year 15 (summer) following completion of housing development. The assessment in the summer of Year 15 is intended to take account of the growth of supplementary planting that has been incorporated into the development proposal. The appraisal of effects has been based on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan in **Appendix C**. Reference is made to the site appraisal and site context photographs in **Appendix B**. The methodology for assessing potential visual effects is set out in **Appendix D**. The appraisal excludes consideration of effects associated with construction works as these would be small-scale and temporary in nature.

8.2 Effects on views from the north

- 8.2.1 The Development would not be visible from any publicly accessible viewing positions to the north due to the enclosure provided by Sayers Common Wood and by existing housing. It would be difficult to perceive from the High Weald National Landscape due to the enclosure provided by layers of woodland and other trees in the intervening landscape. The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of recreational footpaths within the National Landscape would be negligible at both Year 1 (winter) and Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of negligible significance in both years.

8.3 Effects on views from the northwest, west and southwest

Views from the B2118

- 8.3.1 From the northern approach to the site along the B2118, the proposed housing would not be visible until road users arrive at the Furzeland Way/B2118 junction (**Photograph F**). Glimpsed views of the new housing would be obtained in the context of existing settlement edge housing. The set-back of the proposed housing from the road would retain uninterrupted views towards the lower western part of Coombe Wood. The new vehicular access arrangement would be seen in the context of the existing mini-roundabout, signage, road markings and street lighting columns. The well-treed, rural settlement edge character of the view would be retained through the proposed provision of a wide belt roadside greenspace.

- 8.3.2 From viewing positions along sections of the B2118 directly opposite the site (**Photograph F1**), the new housing would be seen against the skyline, occupying the upper eastern half of Field 2 (**Figure 7: Site Landscape Aerial Photograph**). The new access road would be seen in the foreground. Views of the new housing would be partially enclosed (summer months) or filtered (winter months) by retained sections of roadside hedgerow and by supplementary tree planting in the proposed roadside greenspace. Views of the Development from sections of the B2118 to the southwest would be enclosed in both summer and winter months by roadside hedgerows and mature trees (**Photograph I**) and/or by the visual mass of Coombe Wood.
- 8.3.3 The magnitude of visual change during the day for medium sensitivity road users would be medium at Year 1 (winter) and low at Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of moderate significance at Year 1 (winter) and slight significance at Year 15 (summer). The nature of the identified effects would be adverse as new housing would be introduced into existing views of agricultural fields and woodland. There would be negligible change to night-time views in the context of street lighting and light sources associated with existing houses.

Views from Public Footpath 11Hu

- 8.3.4 Views of the proposed housing from most sections of Footpath 11Hu would be typically enclosed (summer months) or substantially filtered (winter months) by trackside trees and scrub or would be enclosed by the Furzeland Way housing. However, some partial views of the new built form would be obtained in the context of settlement edge housing from the relatively short, far eastern section of this public footpath (**Photograph G**). The well-treed, rural settlement edge character of the views would be retained.
- 8.3.5 The overall magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of Footpath 11Hu would be low at Year 1 (winter) and very low at Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of moderate significance at Year 1 (winter) and slight significance at Year 15 (summer). The nature of effect would be adverse as additional built form would be introduced into these views.

Views from other public rights of way

- 8.3.6 Views from public footpaths further to the west and southwest would be difficult to obtain due to the enclosure provided by intervening vegetation. In the case of elevated views from public footpaths on the northern and north-western sides of Albourne Green, views of the Development would be substantially enclosed by either Chloe Wood and/or Coombe Wood

(average 24m high), with additional enclosure provided by visual layers of intervening trees and tall hedgerows (**Photographs J and K**). Some highly filtered views of building roofs would potentially be available through the upper canopies during the winter months but the visual mass of the woods would remain the dominant component of these views. The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of these recreational footpaths would be very low at Year 1 (winter) and negligible at Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of slight significance at Year 1 (winter) and negligible significance at Year 15 (summer). The nature of effect would be adverse as additional built form would be introduced into these views.

Views from the SDNP escarpment near Steyning

- 8.3.7 Some glimpses of house roofs, seen above site periphery woodland, are likely to be obtained from the South Downs escarpment on the western side of Steyning. The Development would be seen as part of a visual mosaic of houses and mature trees and it would be difficult to perceive the new built form within the extensive panoramic views that are available across the wider Low Weald due to the effects of distance (approximately 12km from the site) and location of the Development set amongst the visual mass of woodland and mature trees around Sayers Common. The new built form would have negligible effects on the character and scenic quality of these distant views, both during the day and at night (**Photograph V**).

8.4 Effects on views from the south

- 8.4.1 Views of the Development, when approaching from the south along Footpath 3HU, would not be available in either the winter or summer months due to the enclosure provided by intervening landform and by tree/shrub vegetation associated with the emerging woodland and Chloe Wood. The housing would also not be visible in either the winter or summer months from publicly accessible locations near Albourne Green due to the enclosure provided by Chloe Wood, by local housing, by roadside vegetation alongside Albourne Road, by the east-west ridge and by the tree belts alongside the A23 (**Photograph L**).
- 8.4.2 Views towards the Development from Wolstonbury Hill (**Photograph M**) and from the escarpment to the west of Pyecombe, all obtained from within the SDNP, would be substantially enclosed by landform and woodland located at a higher level than the site. Although the roofs of some of the proposed houses would be visible, they would be seen set amongst mature trees in the far distance and in the context of the roofs of other housing at Sayers Common, the large-scale Avtrade Global Headquarter buildings and an array of housing

at Hurstpierpoint. The new housing would occupy a very small proportion these expansive panoramic views across the Low Weald and would form part of the visual mosaic of buildings and trees that are characteristic of these views. Supplementary tree planting in the central and peripheral parts of the site would contribute to these views of a well-treed, settled landscape. There would be negligible changes to the scenic quality and settled rural character of these SDNP views during the day and night at both Year 1 (winter) and Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of negligible significance in both years.

8.5 Effects on views from the southeast, east and northeast

- 8.5.1 Summer views of the new housing would not be available from the A23 or its overbridge due to the enclosure provided by roadside tree/shrub belts (**Photographs N and O**). There may be some filtered winter views of housing at Year 1 but built form visibility would be further enclosed by Year 15 with the partial maturity of the proposed supplementary trees/shrub planting. The magnitude of visual change would be low at Year 1 (winter) and negligible at Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of slight significance (low sensitivity road users) and moderate significance (high sensitivity footpath users) at Year 1 (winter) and minimal significance at Year 15 (summer). The nature of the identified effects would be adverse as new built form would be introduced into existing views of woodland.
- 8.5.2 The proposed housing is unlikely to be visible in either the summer or winter months from viewing positions on the eastern side of the A23 due to the cumulative enclosure provided by intervening vegetation, including hedgerows and trees on both sides of Bridleway 86Hu, the tree/shrub belt along the eastern side of the A23 (**Photograph P**) and hedgerows along Langton Lane. Views towards the Development from public rights of way further to the southeast and east would be further enclosed by the hillock along the eastern side of the A23 (**Photograph U**) and by field boundary hedgerows and trees.

8.6 Effects on views from public rights of way within the site

- 8.6.1 A mixture of partial and open views of the new housing and green infrastructure corridors would be available from the public rights of way that pass through the site, typically replacing existing views of site fields and peripheral woodland. The well-vegetated character of Bridleway 86HU would be conserved as existing trees and hedgerows along the bridleway would be substantially retained, with only a short section removed where the proposed internal access road would cross the route. Views of the new housing would be partially enclosed

(summer months) or filtered (winter months) by existing and proposed vegetation along the route. The introduction of new housing, which would be set back to the rear of field boundary hedgerows and mature trees, would result in views with a rural settlement edge character. The visual change would be experienced in the context of the existing residential property at Stonecroft with its ornamental hedging (**Photograph R**), Coombe Farmhouse and other associated buildings (**Photograph S**).

- 8.6.2 Open views of the new housing would be available from Footpath 34HU as it passes through the greenspaces proposed in the southern part of the site. Walkers would continue to appreciate the character and visual mass of Coombe Wood and would experience open views of a well-vegetated water attenuation basin and areas of wildflower grassland set amongst groups of trees. Views of this broad greenspace would be obtained against a visual backdrop of new housing, which would enclose existing views of peripheral woodland and the barn at Coombe Farm (**Photograph E**). Views of the new housing would be visually softened or filtered by the proposed trees along the route. The views would have a more enclosed, settlement edge character but their well-treed, naturalistic character and amenity would be substantially conserved.
- 8.6.3 The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of recreational footpaths at both day and night would be high at Year 1 (winter) and medium at Year 15 (summer) with resultant effects of major significance at Year 1 (winter) and major-moderate significance at Year 15 (summer). The nature of effect would be adverse as new built form would be introduced into these views.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Development Proposals

Development Vision

- 9.1.1 The development vision is to create a new residential area within a wooded landscape, with substantial provision of publicly accessible, multi-functional greenspaces and with ease of movement to the village centre, to public transport and to the wider countryside.

Development Master Planning

- 9.1.2 The site has the potential to accommodate approximately 210 dwellings. The development master planning and design exercise has been led by landscape and visual considerations with careful attention given to the location and layout of the proposed housing and open space with regard to the conservation of landscape character, visual amenity, arboriculture and ecology.

Landscape Strategy

- 9.1.3 The aim of the landscape strategy is to create an attractive, high-quality residential area that achieves landscape and visual integration and reflects the intrinsic character of the Low Weald. The development proposals have been informed by a detailed analysis of existing landscape and visual conditions (landform, vegetation, connectivity, landscape character, views etc) and the need to conserve the setting of the SDNP and its special qualities. A landscape-led approach has been adopted, including the following:

- Location of the site adjacent to the settlement edge and within an area that has a high degree of visual enclosure afforded by peripheral mature woodland.
- Substantial retention of woodland, trees and hedgerows within the site and provision of supplementary native tree/shrub planting along the site boundaries and within greenspaces to help ensure that the new built form is visually well-integrated into the local landscape and that the site continues to provide a contribution to the well-treed skyline and rural character of the local landscape.
- Provision of a significant area of publicly accessible, semi-natural greenspace (i.e. where a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate) for existing and future residents.
- Provision of children's play areas, seats and picnic tables for passive recreation.

- Set back of housing from ancient woodland with buffers selectively enhanced by supplementary native scrub planting.
- Provision of effective landscape buffers alongside the curtilage of listed buildings at Coombe Farm.
- Location of trees alongside the internal roads to help conserve the verdant character of the local landscape.
- Adoption of a north-south pattern of housing that responds to the natural fall of the land and reflects the historic pattern of built form in Sayers Common.
- Retention of existing public rights of way, upgrading of surfaces, creation of new recreational routes within the site and provision of connections to the existing settlement.
- Conservation of the well-vegetated setting of Bridleway 86HU and Footpath 11Hu.

9.2 Landscape Effects

Effects on the Physical Landscape

- 9.2.1 Four pastoral fields near the southern edge of Sayers Common would be developed for new housing and a substantial area of publicly accessible greenspaces. All peripheral woodland would be conserved and there would be substantial retention of existing trees and hedgerows. Supplementary tree/shrub planting would be provided. New areas of wildflower meadow, children's play areas and water attenuation basins with a strong semi-natural character would be created within the greenspaces. Public rights of way would be retained along their existing alignments and new recreational footpaths would be provided within peripheral greenspaces. All retained and proposed vegetation would be managed to maximise its biodiversity value and to help ensure its healthy growth and contribution to the character of the site and surrounding landscape.
- 9.2.2 At Year 1, there would be a high magnitude of change on this medium/high sensitivity site landscape. The magnitude of landscape change would fall to medium by Year 15 when the proposed tree and shrub vegetation would be substantially mature and would provide a strong, positive contribution to the site landscape.

Effects on Local Landscape Character

- 9.2.3 The proposed housing would sit on the lower northern side of the east-west orientated Albourne ridge and would be located at a lower elevation than either Albourne Green or

Hurstpierpoint. It would have a close physical and visual relationship with the existing village housing and would reflect the prevailing north-south settlement pattern. The proposed built form would be visually contained by retained/enhanced woodland with the result that it would be well integrated into the local landscape. These woodland areas would continue to provide a positive contribution to local landscape character and its well-treed skyline.

- 9.2.4 The sensitive location and design of the housing and associated green infrastructure would result in a high degree of integration into the local part of the Hickstead Low Weald LCA. It would occupy a small part of the *“mosaic of small and larger fields”* around Sayers Common but within the *“confined rural landscape”* on the western side of the A23, as identified in the Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment¹⁰. There would be no or negligible change to *“Views dominated by the steep downland scarp to the south and the High Weald fringes to the north”*. The site does not form part of the core area of *“quieter and more secluded”* rural landscape west of the A23, as it is sandwiched between the busy A23 and the B2118. The Development would abut the *“suburban village development at Sayers Common”* but would have a high degree of visual enclosure. It would reflect existing landscape character whereby *“Much settlement is confined to the lower ridges”* and the historic *“Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes.”* It would also conserve the key characteristics of the Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes LCA (J2), as defined by the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment¹¹.
- 9.2.5 Although the Development would extend the built-up part of the village into open countryside, it would not be intrusive within the local landscape as it would extend only slightly further south than the existing collection of buildings along the western side of the B2118 and housing on this elevated site would be visually well contained by woodland and the mature tree belts along the A23.
- 9.2.6 The existing strong sense of separation between (1) Sayers Common and Hurstpierpoint and (2) Sayers Common and Albourne Green would be conserved as there would be no inter-visibility between the Development and these other two settlements on account of the enclosure provided by landform and large blocks of woodland in the intervening landscape. The separate identity and amenity of the settlements would be conserved on this basis.

¹⁰ Mid Sussex District Council, 'A landscape character assessment for Mid Sussex' (November 2005)

¹¹ South Downs Landscape Character Assessment (South Downs National Park Authority, October 2020)

- 9.2.7 The Development would result in an overall very low magnitude of landscape change to the local part of the Hickstead Low Weald LCA at both Year 1 and Year 15. The predicted changes would be of slight significance for this medium/high sensitivity landscape.

Effects on the character and setting of the SDNP

- 9.2.8 The new housing would be difficult to perceive in the distant panoramic views that are available from the SDNP escarpment. Visibility of the new built form is likely to be restricted to the rooftops of some houses, which would form part of a visual mosaic of houses and mature trees. There would be no harm to the special qualities of the SDNP or key characteristics of the LCAs associated with the SDNP scarp and its footslopes. There would be negligible effects on the tranquil setting of the SDNP as the character and scenic quality of existing views would be conserved. Any additional lighting associated with this settlement edge housing would have no perceptible effect on dark skies of the SDNP.
- 9.2.9 There would be no conflict between the Development and the purposes of the SDNP, which include the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

9.3 Visual Effects

Effects on views from the north

- 9.3.1 The Development would not be visible from any publicly accessible viewing positions to the north due to the enclosure provided by Sayers Common Wood and by existing housing. It would be difficult to perceive from the High Weald National Landscape due to the enclosure provided by layers of woodland and other trees in the intervening landscape. The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of recreational footpaths within the National Landscape would be negligible at both Year 1 (winter) and Year 15 (summer).

Effects on views from the northwest, west and southwest

Views from the B2118

- 9.3.2 From the northern approach to the site along the B2118, the proposed housing would not be visible until road users arrive at the Furzeland Way/B2118 junction. From viewing positions

along sections of the B2118 directly opposite the site, the new housing would be seen against the skyline and the new access road would be seen in the foreground. Views of the new housing would be partially enclosed (summer months) or filtered (winter months) by retained sections of roadside hedgerow and by supplementary tree planting in the proposed roadside greenspace. The magnitude of visual change during the day for medium sensitivity road users would be medium at Year 1 (winter) and low at Year 15 (summer).

Views from Public Footpath 11Hu

- 9.3.3 Some partial views of the new built form would be obtained sections of Footpath 11Hu but views would be typically enclosed (summer months) or substantially filtered (winter months) by trackside trees and scrub. The well-treed, rural settlement edge character of the views would be retained. The overall magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of Footpath 11Hu would be low at Year 1 (winter) and very low at Year 15 (summer).

Views from other public rights of way

- 9.3.4 Views from public footpaths further to the west and southwest would be difficult to obtain due to the enclosure provided by intervening vegetation. In the case of elevated views from public footpaths on the northern and north-western sides of Albourne Green, views of the Development would be substantially enclosed by either Chloe Wood and/or Coombe Wood (average 24m high), with additional enclosure provided by visual layers of intervening trees and tall hedgerows. Some highly filtered views of building roofs would potentially be available through the upper canopies during the winter months but the visual mass of the woods would remain the dominant component of these views. The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of these recreational footpaths would be very low at Year 1 (winter) and negligible at Year 15 (summer).

Views from the SDNP escarpment near Steyning

- 9.3.5 Some glimpses of roofs of the proposed housing, seen above site periphery woodland, are likely to be obtained from the South Downs escarpment on the western side of Steyning. The Development would be seen as part of a visual mosaic of houses and mature trees and it would be difficult to perceive the new built form within the extensive panoramic views that are available across the wider Low Weald due to the effects of distance (approximately 12km from the site) and location of the Development set amongst the visual mass of woodland and mature

trees around Sayers Common. The new built form would have negligible effects on the character and scenic quality of these distant views.

Effects on views from the south

- 9.3.6 Views of the Development would not be available in either the winter or summer months when approaching from the south along Footpath 3HU. They would also not be available from publicly accessible locations near Albourne Green due to the enclosure provided by Chloe Wood, by local housing, by roadside vegetation alongside Albourne Road, by the east-west ridge and by the tree belts alongside the A23.
- 9.3.7 Views towards the Development from Wolstonbury Hill and from the escarpment to the west of Pyecombe, all obtained from within the SDNP, would be substantially enclosed by landform and woodland located at a higher level than the site. Although the roofs of some of the proposed houses would be visible, they would be seen set amongst mature trees in the far distance and in the context of the roofs of other housing at Sayers Common, the large-scale Avtrade Global Headquarter buildings and an array of housing at Hurstpierpoint. The new housing would occupy a very small proportion these expansive panoramic views across the Low Weald and would form part of the visual mosaic of buildings and trees that are characteristic of these views. Supplementary tree planting in the central and peripheral parts of the site would contribute to these views of a well-treed, settled landscape. There would be negligible changes to the scenic quality and settled rural character of these SDNP views during at both Year 1 (winter) and Year 15 (summer).

Effects on views from the southeast, east and northeast

- 9.3.8 Summer views of the new housing would not be available from the A23 or its overbridge due to the enclosure provided by roadside tree/shrub belts. There may be some filtered winter views of housing at Year 1 but built form visibility would be further enclosed by Year 15 with the partial maturity of the proposed supplementary trees/shrub planting. The magnitude of visual change would be low at Year 1 (winter) and negligible at Year 15 (summer).
- 9.3.9 The proposed housing is unlikely to be visible in either the summer or winter months from viewing positions on the eastern side of the A23 due to the cumulative enclosure provided by intervening vegetation and/or landform.



Effects on views from public rights of way within the site

- 9.3.10 A mixture of partial and open views of the proposed housing and green infrastructure corridors would be available from the public rights of way that pass through the site, typically replacing existing views of site fields and peripheral woodland. The well-vegetated character of Bridleway 86HU would be conserved as existing trees and hedgerows along the bridleway would be substantially retained. Views of the new housing would be partially enclosed (summer months) or filtered (winter months) by existing and proposed vegetation along the route. The Development would result in views with a rural settlement edge character.
- 9.3.11 Open views of the new housing would be available from Footpath 34HU as it passes through the greenspaces proposed in the southern part of the site. Walkers would continue to appreciate the character and visual mass of Coombe Wood and would experience open views of a well-vegetated water attenuation basin and areas of wildflower grassland set amongst groups of trees. Views of this broad greenspace would be obtained against a visual backdrop of new housing, which would be seen visually softened or filtered by the proposed trees along the route. The views would have a more enclosed, settlement edge character but their well-treed, naturalistic character and amenity would be substantially conserved. The magnitude of visual change for high sensitivity users of recreational footpaths at both day and night would be high at Year 1 (winter) and medium at Year 15 (summer).

FIGURES



Key

-  Site Boundary
-  South Downs National Park Boundary

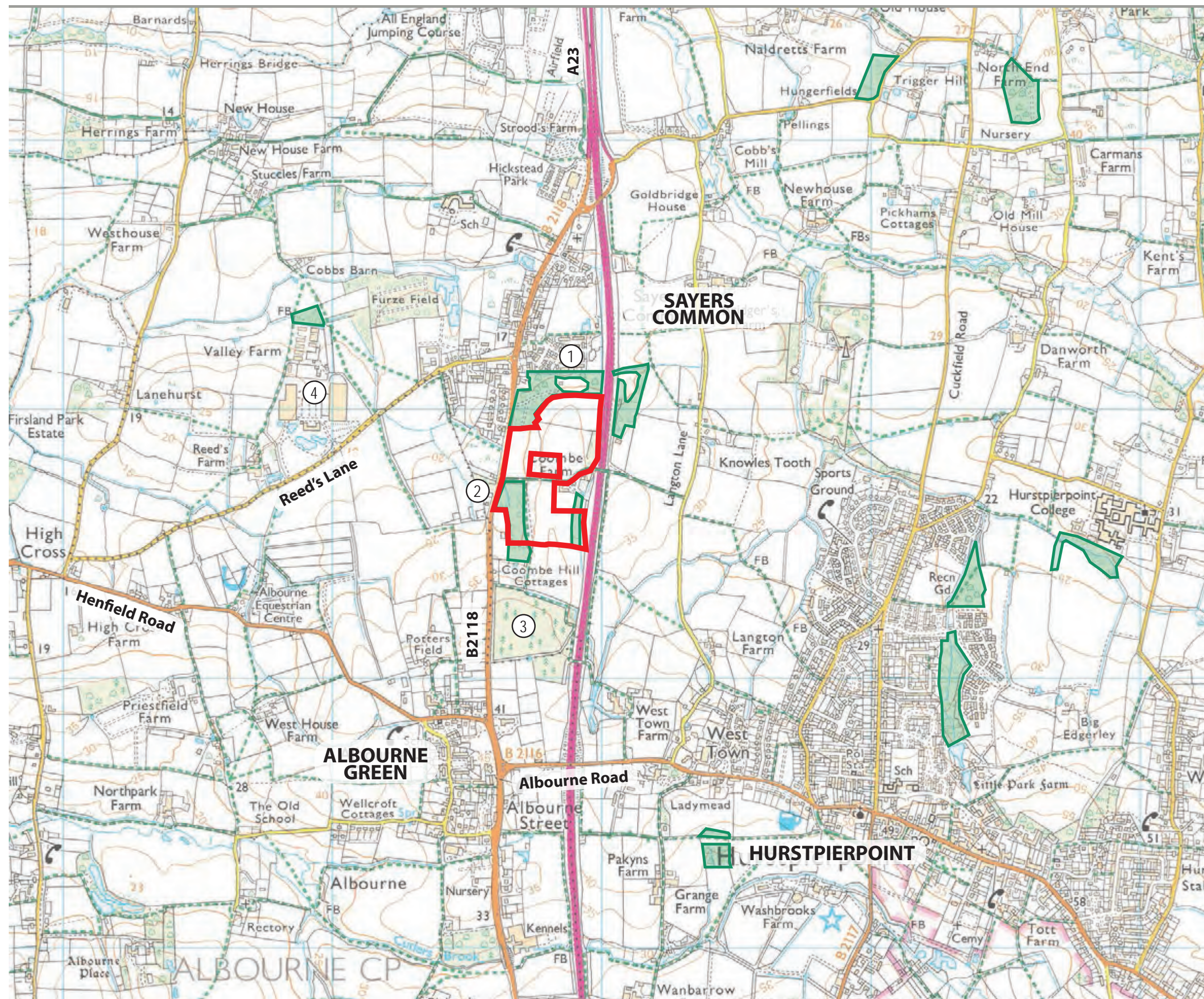
Notes

Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673
*Magic.defra.gov.uk


Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client	Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP
Project	Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common
Dwg Title	Figure 1: Site Location and Wider Context
Dwg No	

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key

-  Site Boundary
 -  Public Footpaths
 -  Ancient Woodland*
- ① Sayers Common Wood
 - ② Coombe Wood
 - ③ Chloe Wood
 - ④ Avtrade Global Headquarters

Notes

Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673
*Magic.defra.gov.uk

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client **Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP**

Project **Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common**

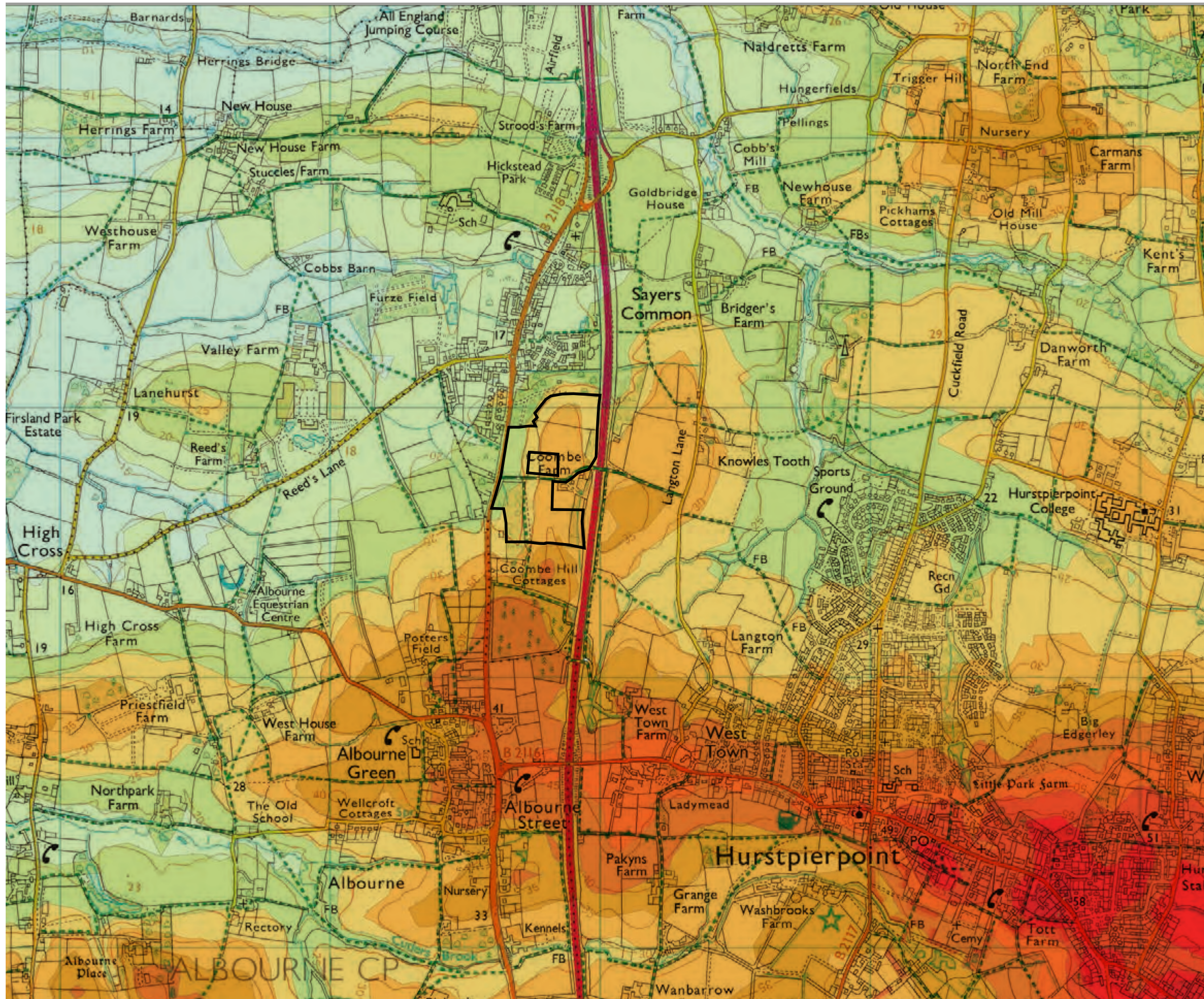
Dwg Title **Figure 2: Local Landscape Context**

Dwg No

NTS

Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key



Notes

Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
 Ordnance Survey 0100031673
 All heights are Above Ordnance Datum

Scarp landscape architecture
 environmental planning

Client
 Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP

Project
 Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common

Dwg Title
 Figure 3: Landform and Topography

Dwg No

NTS

Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key

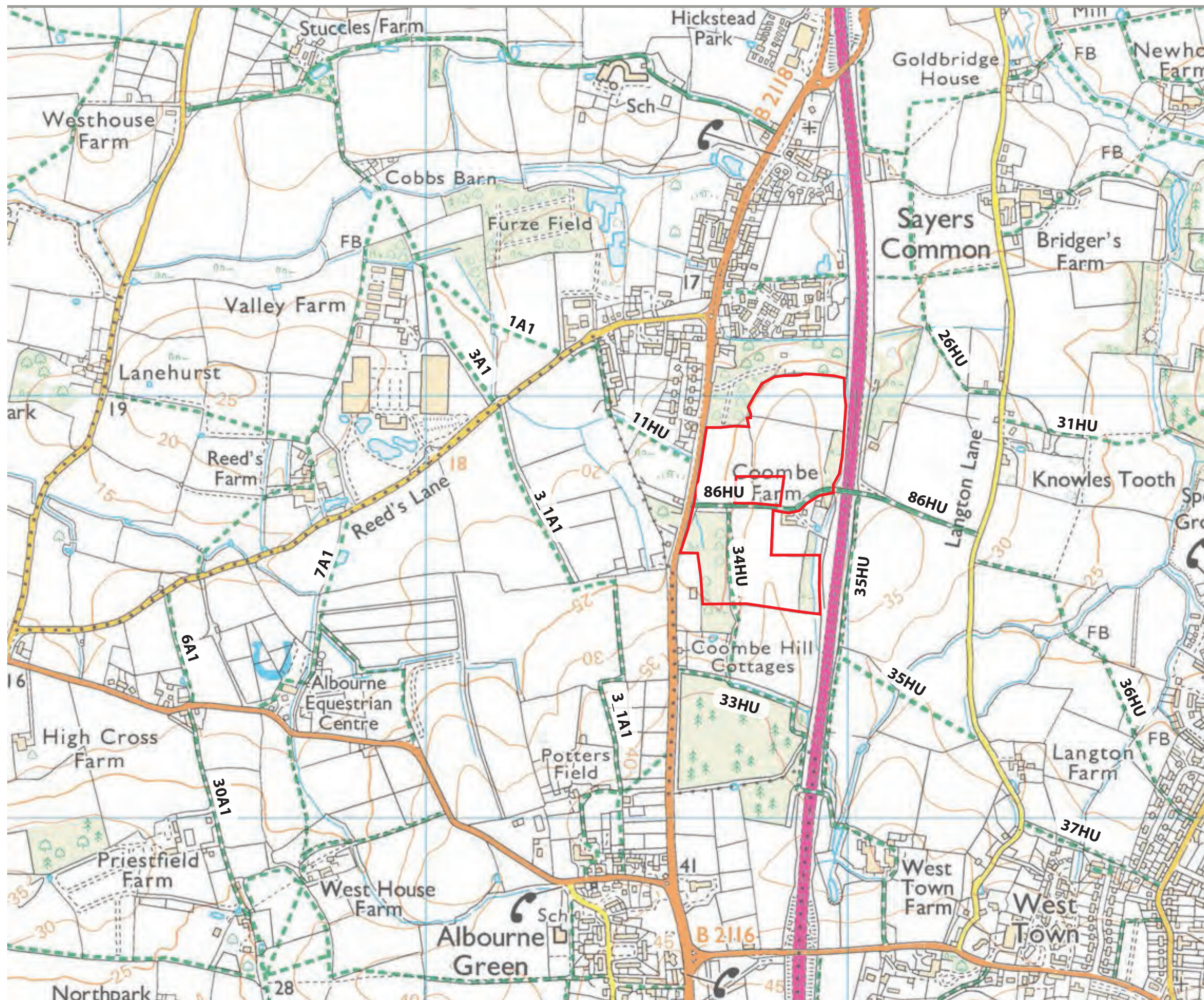
- Site Boundary
- ① Sayers Common Wood
- ② Coombe Wood
- ③ Chloe Wood
- ④ Recreation Ground
- ⑤ Dunlop Close
- ⑥ Avtrade Global Headquarters

Notes
2025 Google Earth/Landsat/Copernicus

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client	Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP
Project	Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common
Dwg Title	Figure 4: Local Landscape Aerial Photograph
Dwg No	NTS Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key

- Site Boundary
- Public Footpaths
- Public Bridleways

Notes

Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client
Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP

Project
Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common

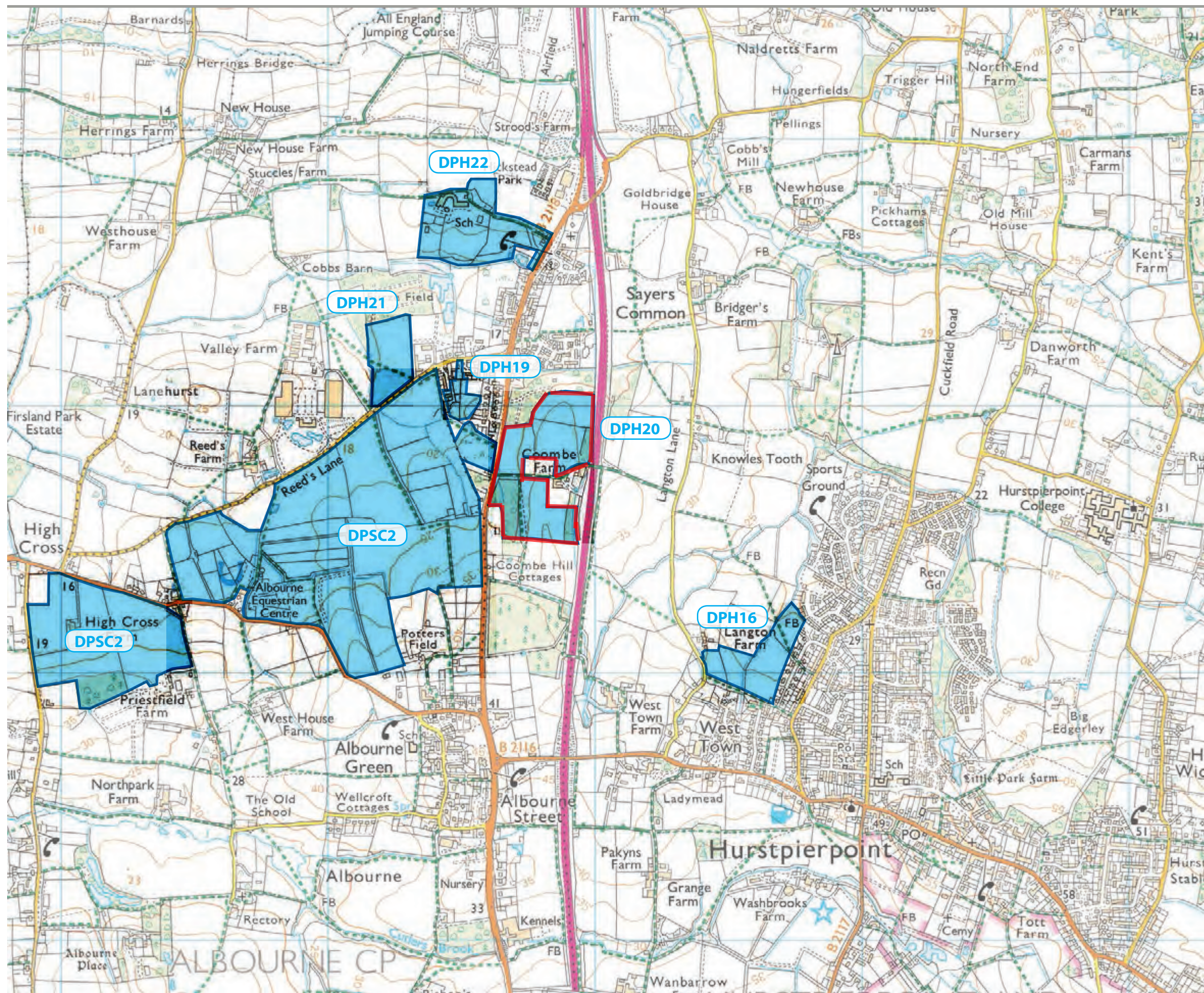
Dwg Title
Figure 5: Local Public Rights of Way

Dwg No

NTS

Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key

Residential and Mixed Use
 Allocations in the Mid Sussex District
 Plan 2021-2039 Consultation Draft
 (Regulation 18)

Notes

Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
 Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scarp landscape architecture
 environmental planning

Client
 Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP

Project
 Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common

Dwg Title
 Figure 6: Consultation Draft District Plan Site
 Allocations

Dwg No

NTS

Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Key

- Site Boundary
- Public Rights of Way
- X Field Reference Numbers
- Ancient Woodland*
- ① Sayers Common Wood
- ② Coombe Wood
- ③ Stonecroft
- ④ Coombe Farmhouse/ Barn at Coombe Farm/ Granary at Coombe Farm
- ⑤ Emerging Woodland

Notes

2025 Google Earth/Landsat/Copernicus
*Magic.defra.gov.uk

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client
Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP

Project
Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common

Dwg Title
Figure 7: Site Landscape Aerial Photograph

Dwg No

NTS

Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON

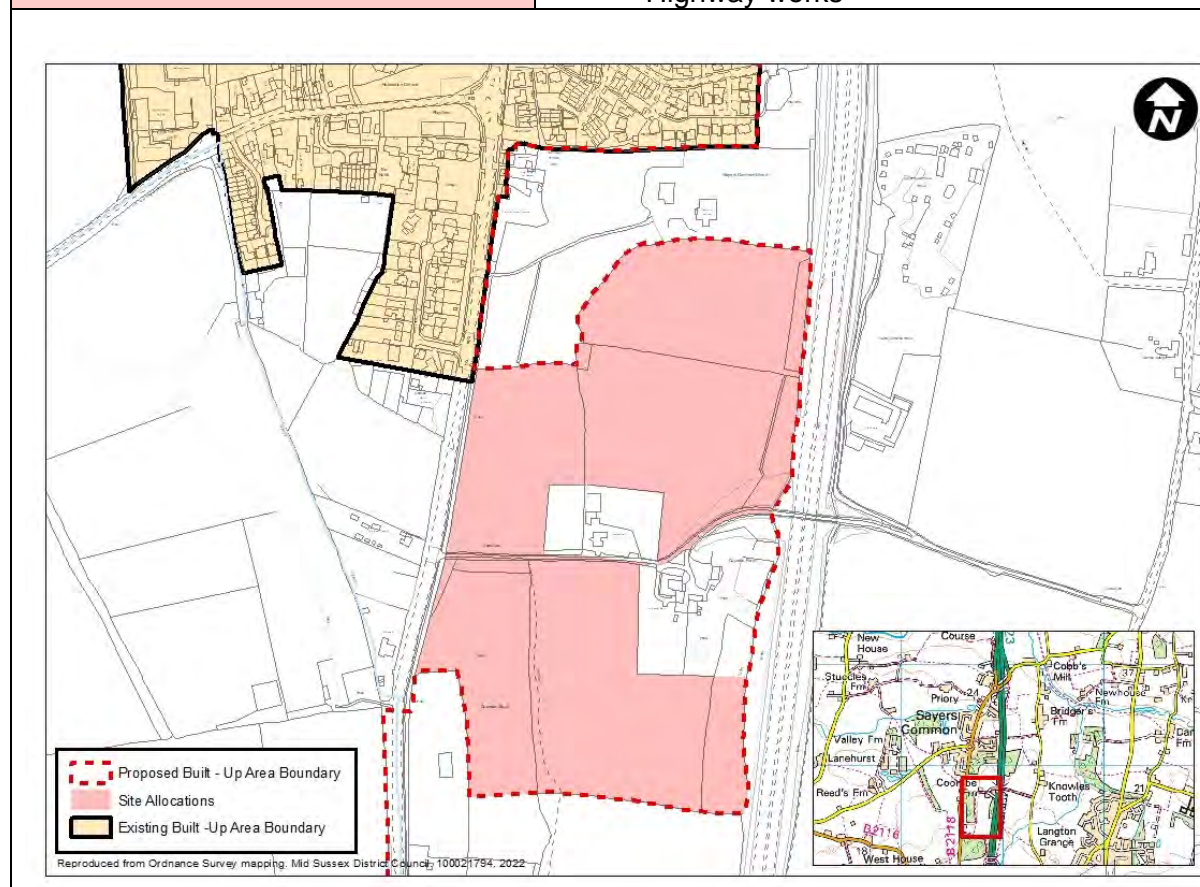
Appendix A

**Policy DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road, Sayers Common, Mid Sussex
District Plan 2021 – 2039 Consultation Draft (Regulation 18)**

DPH20: Land at Coombe Farm, London Road, Sayers Common

Note: the boundary shown on the site map below represents the extent of the site inclusive of all built development and any mitigation requirements (e.g. landscape buffers or open space) listed within the policy requirements.

SHELAA:	601	Settlement:	Sayers Common
Gross Site Area (ha):	14.2	Number of Dwellings:	210
Infrastructure		<p>On-site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% affordable housing <p>Financial contributions towards the provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playspace Sport facilities Community buildings Library Education Sustainable Transport Healthcare Emergency Services <p>Provision of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wastewater treatment and sewerage network upgrades Sustainable transport measures Highway works 	



Policy Requirements

- Refer to Policy DPH4 which sets out the general development principles for all District Plan housing allocations.
- Informed by a Heritage Impact Assessment, provide an appropriate layout and design which protects the setting of nearby Grade II listed buildings 'Coombe Farmhouse' and 'Coombe Barn'.
- Prioritise pedestrian and cycle access throughout the site linking to Significant site allocation DPSC2 and bus stops on the B2118 to the west.
- Upgrade and integrate the existing PROW which crosses the site.
- Comprehensively masterplan development of the site including a main area of open space to create a focal point for the development and provide suitable access onto the B2118.
- Provide necessary buffer, protection and mitigation to areas of Ancient Woodland on and adjacent to the site, including measures to minimise public access to the woodland, provision of a woodland management plan and woodland enhancement package.
- Retain, protect and enhance mature trees across the site and hedgerows along site boundaries and ensure development provides a positive edge to these features and any areas of woodland.
- Avoid developing areas of existing flood risk and mitigate impacts through integration of SuDS.
- Mitigate noise impacts associated with the adjacent A23 to the east.

Appendix B

Site Appraisal and Site Context Photographs



Key

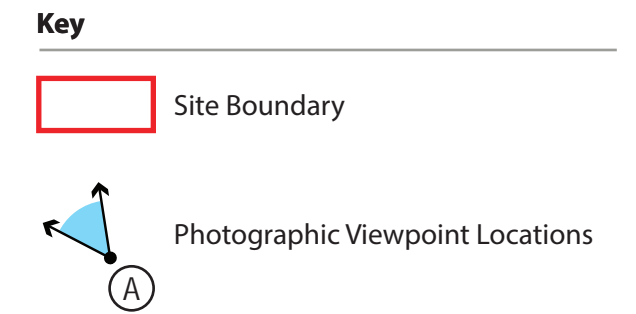
- Site Boundary
- Public Rights of Way
- Field Reference Numbers
- Photographic Viewpoint Locations

Notes
2025 Google Earth/Landsat/Copernicus

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client	Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP
Project	Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common
Dwg Title	Site Appraisal and Near Distance Photographic Viewpoints
Dwg No	NTS
	Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Notes
Crown copyright and database rights (2025)
Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scarp landscape architecture
environmental planning

Client	Welbeck Strategic Land II LLP
Project	Land at Coombe Farm, Sayers Common
Dwg Title	Middle and Long Distance Viewpoints
Dwg No	NTS
	Sept. 2025

LAND AT COOMBE FARM, SAYERS COMMON



Photograph A
View looking northwest across Field 1



Photograph B
View looking southwest to west across Field 2



Photograph C
View looking south across Field 3



Photograph D
View looking south across Field 4 from Bridleway 86Hu



Photograph E
View looking north across Field 4



Photograph F
View looking southeast towards site from London Road



Photograph F1
View looking west towards site from London Road



Photograph G

View looking southeast towards site from Footpath 11Hu



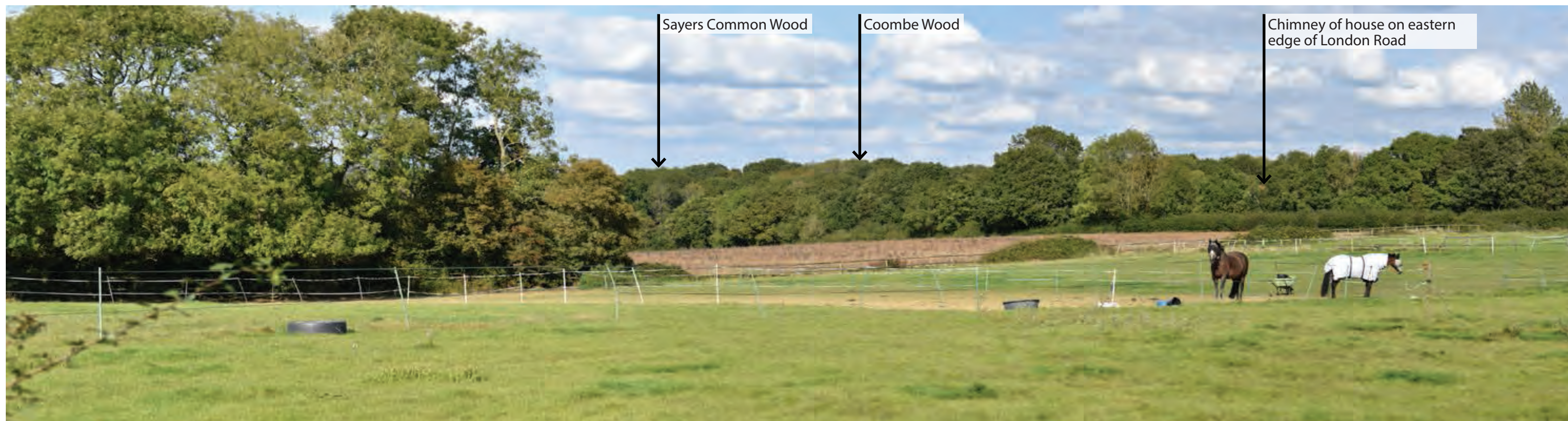
Photograph H

View looking northeast towards site from London Road (1)



Photograph I

View looking northeast towards site from London Road (2)



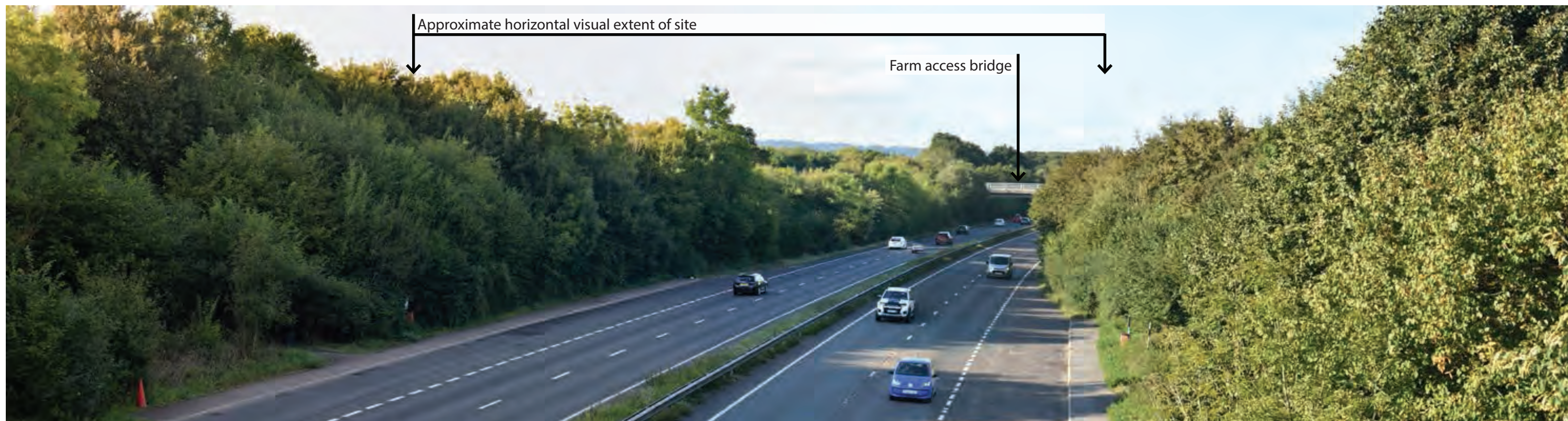
Photograph J

View looking northeast towards site from Footpath 3_1A1 on northern side of Albourne Green

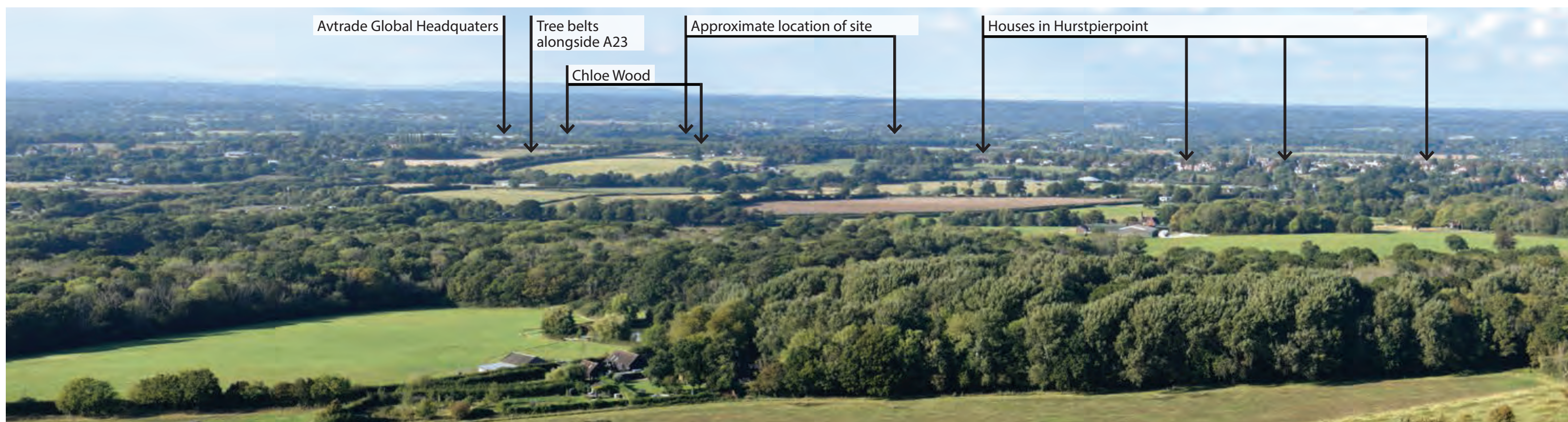


Photograph K

View looking east towards site from Footpath 6A1 heading north from Henfield Road



Photograph L
View looking northwest towards site from Albourne Road overbridge



Photograph M
View looking northwest towards site from Wolstonbury Hill



Photograph N
View looking southwest towards site from bridge over A23 (Bridleway 86Hu)



Photograph O
View looking northwest towards site from bridge over A23 (Bridleway 86Hu)



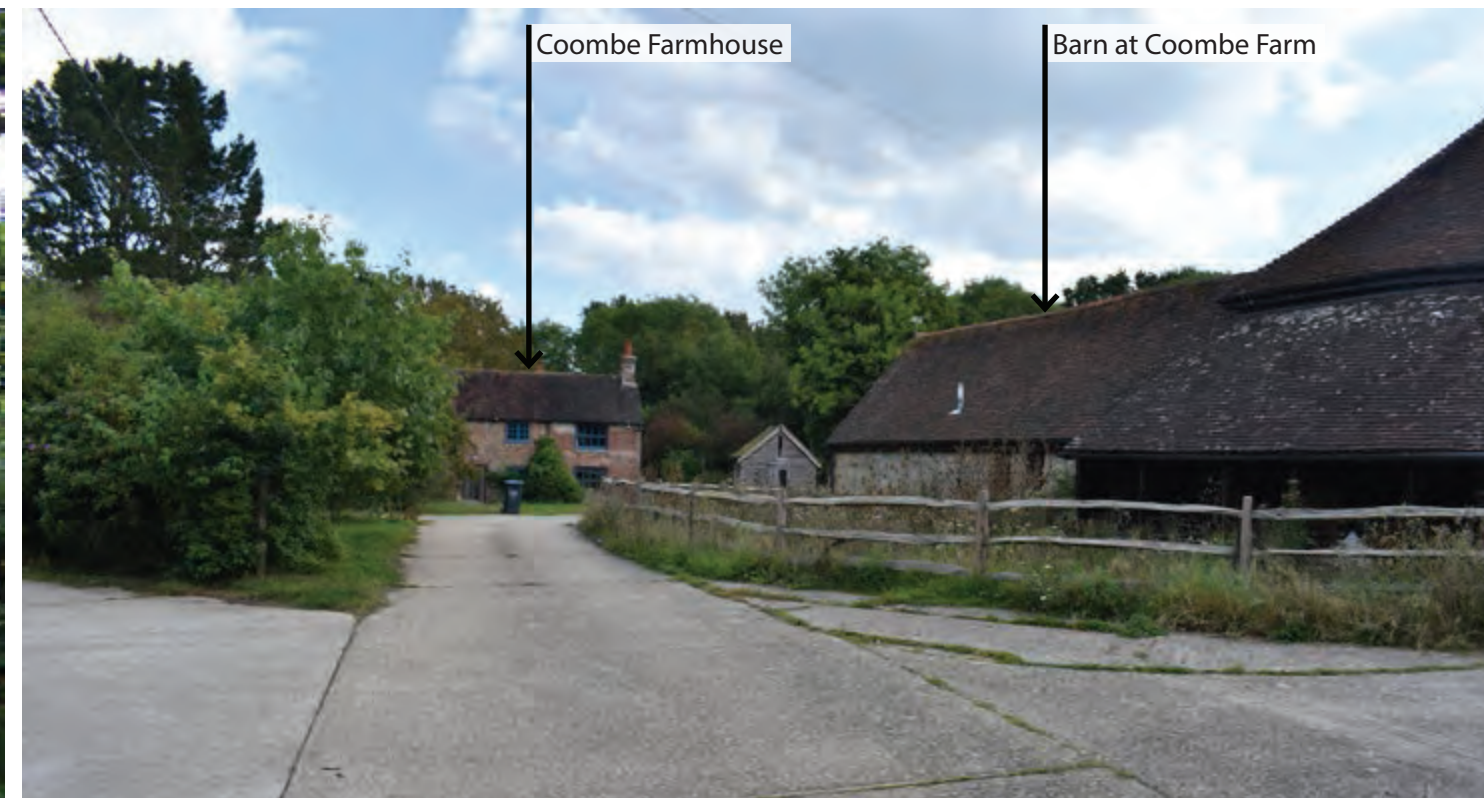
Photograph P
View looking southwest towards site from Bridleway 86Hu east of A23



Photograph Q
View looking northeast across site from western section of Bridleway 86Hu



Photograph R
View looking east along Bridleway 86Hu



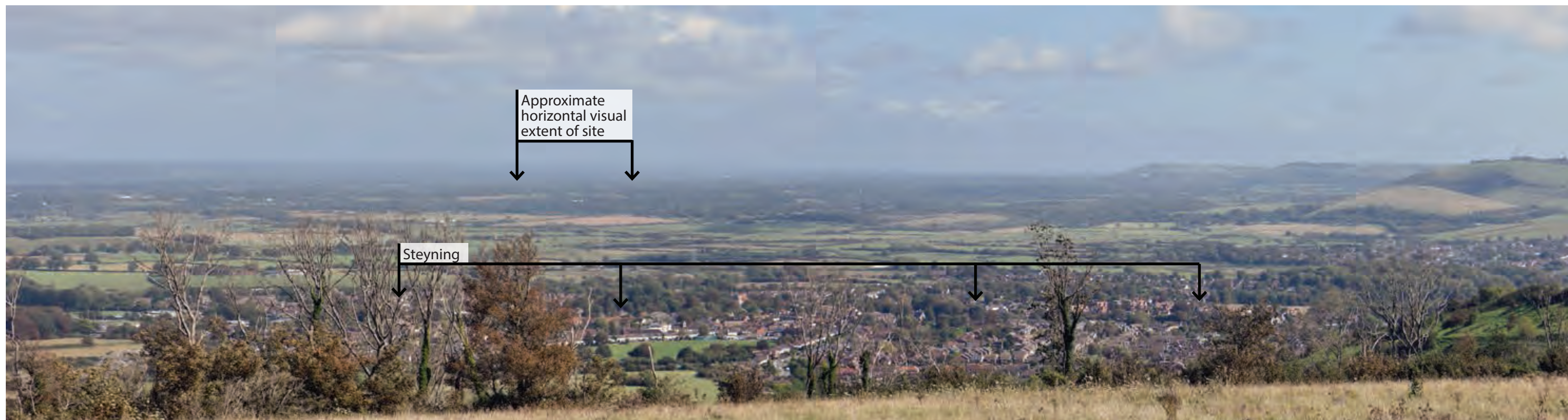
Photograph S
View looking east towards Coombe Farmhouse and Barn from Bridleway 86Hu



Photograph T
View looking west across southern part of Field 3 from Bridleway 86Hu



Photograph U
View looking northwest towards site from Footpath 36Hu on north-western side of Hurstpierpoint



Photograph V














View looking northeast towards the site from Steyning Round Hill

Appendix C

Illustrative Landscape Masterplan



LEGEND:

	SITE BOUNDARY		PROPOSED MEADOW PLANTING		PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY		ALLOTMENT/ GROWING BED AREA
	EXISTING WOODLAND AND TREES		PROPOSED SPECIES RICH GRASS		NATURAL PLAY: PLAY ON THE WAY		COMMUNITY ORCHARD AREA
	PROPOSED TREE PLANTING		PROPOSED RAIN GARDEN/ SWALE		NATURAL PLAY: LOCAL EQUIPPED AREA OF PLAY		
	PROPOSED SHRUB PLANTING		PROPOSED RETENTION BASIN / SWALE				



Illustrative Landscape Masterplan

Appendix D

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal Methodology

Methodology for Appraising Landscape and Visual Effects

Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and appraise the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

The methodology for appraising landscape and visual effects is based on the following best practice guidance:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA 3), by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013;
- 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England (October 2014)
- Assessing landscape value outside national designations, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21

The appraisal considers effects on landscape character and visual amenity, the approach to which is described below.

LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

Effects on landscape character have been assessed by (1) Describing the character of the landscape (and/or townscape) surrounding the site, and evaluating its sensitivity to change and (2) Identifying the main sources of change due to the development and evaluating its magnitude.

Step 1: Landscape Character and Sensitivity Evaluation

Landscape receptors are identified, i.e. the constituent elements of the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the landscape and the character of the landscape in different areas. The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) defines landscape as a 'place' that results from the: *"interplay of the physical, natural and cultural components of our surroundings. Different combinations of these elements and their spatial distribution create the distinctive character of landscapes to be mapped, analysed and described. Character is not just about physical elements and features that make up landscape, but also embrace the aesthetic, perceptual and experiential aspects of the landscape that make places distinctive."* (GLVIA3 p. 21).

The character of the site and surrounding area has been described from published landscape and townscape character assessments and from fieldwork, taking account of attributes such as land-use, the pattern and scale of existing development, and the influence of vegetation on views and openness.

Sensitivity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate change without affecting its intrinsic character (and especially its valued attributes). It is derived from two factors:

- Susceptibility, which defines the physical ability of a landscape to accommodate change; and
- Value, which defines the importance of a landscape, as recognized by relevant designations or by criteria such as scenic quality or recreational use.

GLVIA3 Para. 5.40 describes 'susceptibility to change' as *"the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies."*

Indicators of landscape susceptibility are set out in **Table A1** below.

Table A1: Indicators of Landscape Susceptibility

Sensitivity	Typically where the landscape:
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is highly susceptible to change as components are rare and/or not easily replaced/substituted (e.g. mature trees, distinctive buildings). The landscape is largely unspoilt and of high scenic quality with high levels of positive perceptual qualities (e.g. tranquillity and seclusion) and distinctive elements and features that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. • Highly susceptible to change due, for example, to a high degree of openness or a high density of tree cover (that would require clearing), features such as hedgerows or a relative absence of built development. • Has limited scope for effective mitigation in character with the existing landscape and may offer some opportunities for the proposed development type to contribute to the attainment of landscape planning policies and strategies.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is moderately susceptible / reasonably tolerant to change as components are relatively ordinary and can be replaced/substituted. The landscape displays some positive landscape characteristics / scenic qualities but is generally unremarkable. Is mostly unspoilt albeit with some features or areas detracting from the character of the area (e.g. infrastructure and settlement edges). • Moderately susceptible to change due to a degree of openness or tree cover, but already influenced by built development. • Has some scope for effective mitigation in character with the existing landscape and may offer notable opportunities for the proposed development type to contribute to the attainment of landscape planning policies and strategies.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an overall low level of susceptibility to change as components are commonplace and can be readily replaced/substituted. The landscape displays few scenic qualities and may be degraded in areas. Likely to have some areas/features that are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place. • Low susceptibility to change due to the prevailing influence of built development. • Has considerable scope for effective mitigation in character with the existing landscape and/or notable opportunities for character enhancement
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be readily able to accommodate the proposed type of change as it is a landscape greatly affected by uncharacteristic development eroding scenic

Sensitivity	Typically where the landscape:
	<p>quality. The landscape has few or no distinctive or positive components, or has components that notably detract from character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has considerable scope for effective mitigation in character with the existing landscape, and may offer significant opportunities to both create a new, positive landscape and to contribute to the attainment of landscape planning policies and strategies.

Table A2 below sets out the criteria that are considered for determining landscape value. These are informed by the factors identified in Technical Guidance Note 02/21.

Table A2: Indicators of Landscape Value

Level of value	Criteria for landscape value
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated areas at an International or National level (including, but not limited to, World Heritage Site, National Parks, AONB's) and also considered an important component of the country's character, experienced by high numbers of tourists. • Landscape condition is good and components are generally regularly maintained to a high standard. • Rare or distinctive elements and features are key components contributing to character. • A landscape of high aesthetic appeal and rich cultural associations. • A landscape with rich cultural and/or nature conservation resources. • An elevated level of tranquillity due to enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and absence of major infrastructure. • Extensive and promoted opportunities are available for recreation.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated areas at a Regional or County level (including, but not limited to, green belt, regional scale parks, designated as open space or a Conservation Area in local planning documents) and also considered a distinctive component of the region/county character experienced by a large proportion of its population. • Landscape condition is fair and components are generally well maintained. • Rare or distinctive elements and features are a notable component that contribute to the character of the area. • A landscape of moderate aesthetic appeal and cultural associations. • A landscape with some cultural and/or nature conservation resources. • Moderate levels of tranquillity due to land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and/or major infrastructure. • Opportunities are available for recreation.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No formal designations but a landscape of local relevance (including, but not limited to, public or semi-public open spaces, village greens or allotments) and also green infrastructure and open spaces within residential areas likely to be visited and valued by the local community.

Level of value	Criteria for landscape value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape condition is poor/components generally poorly maintained or damaged. • Rare or distinctive elements and features are not a notable component that contribute to the character of the area. • A landscape of limited aesthetic appeal and cultural associations. • A landscape with limited cultural and/or nature conservation resources. • Limited levels of tranquillity due to land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and presence of major infrastructure. • There are few/no opportunities for recreation.
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape condition is very poor and components are poorly maintained or damaged. • The landscape does not contain any rare or distinctive elements and features. • A landscape of no aesthetic appeal or cultural associations. • A landscape with no cultural and/or nature conservation resources. • The landscape has low levels of tranquillity. • There are no opportunities for recreation.

Step 2: Magnitude of Landscape Change

Landscape effects may include the loss or addition of particular features, changes to landscape quality and changes to landscape character. The main factors that will be considered are as follows:

- Changes to landscape elements: the addition of new elements or the removal of existing elements such as buildings, trees, vegetation, and buildings and other elements which may be characteristic of the landscape character type;
- Changes to landscape qualities: degradation or erosion of landscape elements and patterns, and perceptual characteristics, particularly those that form key characteristic elements of landscape character types; and
- Changes to landscape character: landscape character may be affected through the incremental effect on characteristic elements, landscape patterns and qualities (including perceptual characteristics) and the cumulative addition of new features, the magnitude of which is sufficient to alter the overall landscape character type of a particular area;

Factors that are considered in appraising the magnitude of landscape change are summarised in **Table A3** below. Any combination of factors may be considered when appraising the level of effect. This allows professional judgement to be used when determining the relative importance of different factors and this varies on a site-specific basis. Effects may be adverse or beneficial.

Table A3: Magnitude of Landscape Change Levels

Impact magnitude	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prominent change that may be large in scale and / or extent and include the loss of key landscape characteristics, or the addition of new features or elements that will become the characteristics of the landscape, changing the overall landscape quality and character • Total loss of or substantial alteration to key characteristics of the character area, the setting of the character area, and/or the landscape setting of a heritage feature or area • Addition of new uncharacteristic features or components that substantially alter character and/or a large part of the setting of the character area • Introduction of irreversible change over a substantial area of an LCA or its setting • Introduction of long term or permanent change uncharacteristic of the area
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A noticeable / prominent change of more limited scale and extent including the loss of some key landscape characteristics or elements, or the addition of some new features or elements, that will potentially change the landscape character • Noticeable change or alteration to one or more key characteristics of the character area, the setting of the character area, and/or the landscape setting of a heritage feature or area • Addition of new features or components that form prominent elements of the character and/or setting of the character area, but are largely characteristic of the existing setting • Uncharacteristic changes across only a proportion of the character area or its setting • Introduction of some irreversible changes in parts of a character area or its setting • Introduction of medium to long term uncharacteristic changes and/or permanent changes largely characteristic of the existing setting
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A noticeable change affecting small areas of landscape character where the Proposed Development will not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape or will add new features or elements of limited characterising influence. • Slight loss or alteration to one or more characteristics of the character area, the setting of the character area, and/or the landscape setting of a heritage feature or area • Addition of new features or components that form largely inconspicuous elements of the existing character and/or setting • Introduction of short to medium term uncharacteristic changes and/or long term/permanent changes in a small proportion of a character area or its setting
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change affecting relatively small areas of landscape character where the Proposed Development will largely complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape and existing character and quality of the landscape will be substantially conserved. A change to the landscape

Impact magnitude	Criteria
	setting of a heritage feature or area that is negligible or difficult to perceive.

VISUAL APPRAISAL

The planning system is concerned with the protection of visual amenity as a public asset. Effects on visual amenity have been assessed by (1) identifying representative views from publicly accessible viewing positions and assessing the magnitude of change to each and (2) evaluating the sensitivity of the view on the basis of the types of receptor affected and its contribution to their amenity.

Step a: Assessing the Sensitivity of the View

Visual sensitivity may be defined as the overall degree to which people are potentially affected by changes in views and visual amenity, taking into account their activities, the degree of interest that they may have in views and visual amenity and the value attached to views. The sensitivity of views reflects:

- Receptor sensitivity, based on the assumption that people's sensitivity to visual change varies according to their activity and their proprietorial interest in the views they experience; and
- The contribution the views make to their amenity (e.g. attractive views from identified viewpoints, public open space or gardens).

The sensitivity of different visual receptors to the proposed development is appraised in accordance with the criteria set out in **Table A4** below.

Table A4: Visual Receptor Sensitivity Criteria

Sensitivity	Visual Receptors and Views
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupiers of residential properties. • Recreational users or tourists whose attention may be focussed on the landscape (e.g. visitors to the AONB, users of the PRoW network). • Designated or protected views.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People travelling along scenic roads through the landscape. • People staying in hotels and healthcare institutions. • People walking along residential streets. • People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation, which involves some appreciation of views of the landscape (e.g. cricket). • Users of research facilities, where staff may walk between buildings and expect a high-quality working and living environment
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People at work and in educational institutions. • People engaged in formal sports activities that does not involve appreciation of views of the landscape. • People walking through urban areas (for example commuters).

Sensitivity	Visual Receptors and Views
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People travelling on main roads through the landscape.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People at their place of work or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance (e.g. occupants of some industrial sites or commercial developments). View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.

Step 2: Identifying Magnitude of Impact

The magnitude of effect on views reflects both physical changes (e.g. obstructing or opening up a view) and changes to their composition or character (e.g. introduction of built development where none is currently visible). The factors that are considered in appraising the magnitude of change to views are summarised in **Table A5** below. Effects may be adverse or beneficial.

Table A5: Magnitude of Visual Change Levels

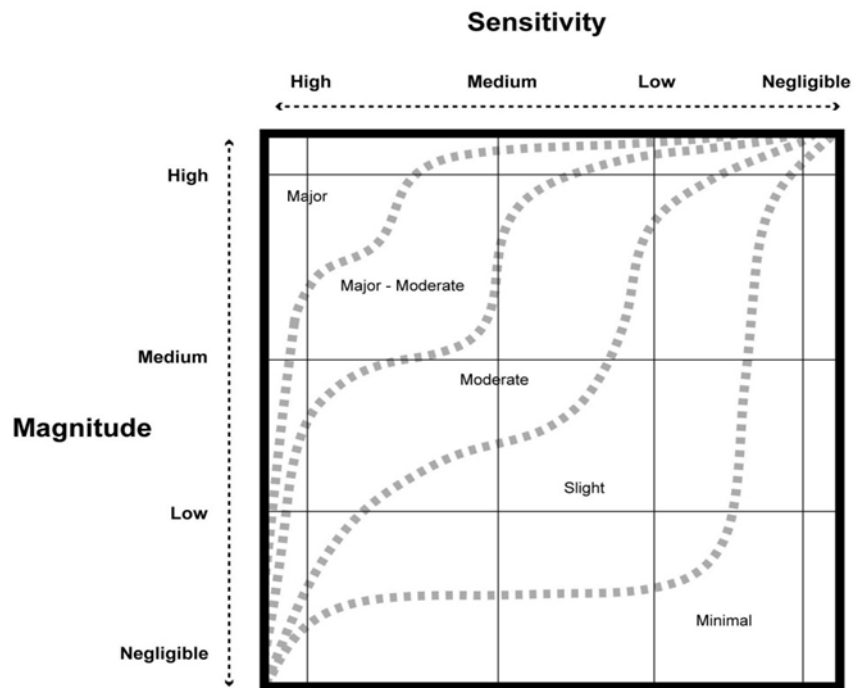
Impact magnitude	Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposals form a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene, appearing as a prominent and contrasting feature Total loss or substantial alteration to key characteristics of the view from a receptor Addition of new features or components that are continuously highly visible across the majority of the view and out of character from a receptor Substantial changes in proximity to the visual receptor, within the direct frame of view Introduction of long term or permanent change uncharacteristic of the view
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A readily noticeable change to the view, where change is evident but is not the key feature in the view Noticeable change or alteration to one or more key characteristics of the view from a receptor Addition of new features or components that may be continuously highly visible across much of the view, but are largely characteristic of the existing view from a receptor Changes a relatively short distance from the receptor, but viewed as one of a series of components in the middle ground of the view Substantial change partially filtered by intervening vegetation and/or built form, or viewed obliquely from the visual receptor Introduction of medium to long term change uncharacteristic of the view and/or permanent changes largely characteristic of the existing view or in a small proportion of the view
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor changes to the view that will not be readily noticeable, affecting a small proportion of the view that may be obliquely viewed or partly screened and/or appearing in the background landscape. May be a

Impact magnitude	Criteria
	<p>transient view obtained over short periods and capable of being missed by casual observers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slight loss or alteration to one or more characteristics of the view from a receptor • Addition of new features or landscape components that may be continuously or intermittently visible in part of the view, but are largely characteristic of the existing view from a receptor • Changes within the background of the view, viewed as one of a series of components in the wider panoramic view from a receptor • Change largely filtered by intervening vegetation and/or built form, or viewed obliquely from the visual receptor. • Introduction of short to medium term change uncharacteristic of the view and/or long term/permanent changes in a small proportion of the view.
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to just a minor element in the overall view where change is barely perceptible. • Very minor or barely perceptible loss or alteration of largely inconspicuous characteristics of the view from a receptor.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

The process of forming a judgment on the significance of an effect is based upon an assessment of the magnitude of change affecting the landscape or the views experienced by people, combined with the sensitivity of the 'receptor' to change of the nature proposed, i.e. the landscape itself or the viewer. Thus, a high level of change affecting a highly sensitive receptor (landscape resource or viewer) will be more significant than a small degree of change affecting less sensitive landscape or visual receptors.

The level of significance will be a factor influencing planning decisions and it is therefore important that judgments on sensitivity, magnitude of change and overall significance of effect are clearly understood, and a measure of proportion established. An indication of the likely level of significant effect is set out in the diagram below.



Levels of Significance for Landscape and Visual Effects [Based on EIA significance evaluation matrix, Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, June 2011]

Significant effects in terms of whether it is a material consideration in the decision making process are those that are Major-Moderate, Major or Moderate.



Scarp Landscape Architecture Ltd Chiltern House Business Centre 45 Station Road Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire RG9 1AT
Tel: 01491 641524 E-mail: info@scarpla.co.uk