

Little Reeds

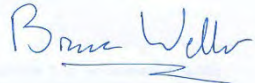
Hickstead, Haywards Heath RH17 5LY

Engineering work. Creation of a five metre high earth acoustic bund to west of Little Reed with associated soft landscaping.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT APPRAISAL

**21st February 2025
Weller Designs Ltd
Compiled by Gareth Weeks BA Dip LA**

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1 Introduction

Weller Designs Ltd have been appointed to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal at Little Reeds. The site is linear in shape and is formed of a residential dwellinghouse and adjacent paddocks. The proposal itself consists of creating a soil based acoustic screen (traffic noise from A23) and visual screen (cars, lorries) to benefit the residential property and work space. It will also be planted with native trees/hedgerow along the boundary. The area of the proposed acoustic screen is currently improved grazing pasture (see ecological appraisal).

The following study is an informal Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) due to it not being part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The report explores and summarises the effects the listed changes above will have on the landscape and visual amenity of the key receptors through detailed desktop and field studies of the application site.

For ease of reference, the land under appraisal will be referred to as the 'Site'.

1.1 History and Appraisal Process

1.1.2 History

The Site under appraisal is currently used for grazing pasture, and one residential dwellinghouse. The land has been used for grazing for at least thirty-five years (see Google Earth historic imagery) and very likely grazed for many years before that. There are no heritage assets on or near the site (the Castle Hotel in Hickstead being the closest (Castle hotel listed grade 2 building). The Site, which occupies 3.01 hectares, is on the edge of the A23 and 0.67 km North of Hickstead village.

1.1.2 Appraisal Process

As mentioned above this appraisal studies the impact of the proposed acoustic screen at Little Reeds and its potential effect on the surrounding landscape, as well as the visual effects that the proposed development will have on the surrounding landscape character.

Throughout the process of producing this appraisal Weller Designs Ltd has been in correspondence with the planning consultant, ecologist and acoustic consultants with regard to the pertinent planning policies and key landscape & visual receptors with regard to the development proposals.

The appraisal methodology is described and the policy context relating to landscape issues is summarised. The baseline landscape conditions of the site and surrounding adjacent areas are also described followed by an assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts of the development, along with and mitigation measures.

The study area was initially established by a desktop study and then verified and adjusted following site visits to the area.

Close onsite investigation within the area of study established the extent to which the Site can be viewed from off-site locations. This information has been used to determine the visual envelope for the development and to define the zone of visual influence (ZVI, see appendix).

2 Landscape and Visual Impact Methodology

2.1 Method

This Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal of the proposed acoustic screen bunding and associated native planting has been conducted in line with the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013, “An approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (LCA) published by Natural England 2014 and TGN 02.21 Assessing landscape value outside natural designations. These documents do not provide a prescriptive approach to appraisal but identify principles and best practices. The methodology for this appraisal is described in the following section.

The GLVIA3 states:

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

Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape.

The description and analysis of effects on a landscape resource relies on the adoption of certain basic principles about the positive (or beneficial) and negative (or adverse) effects of change in the landscape.

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenities, whether adverse or beneficial.

2.1.1 Appraisal and Design are an Iterative Process

An iterative design approach enables the site planning and detailed design for the project to be informed by the ongoing appraisal. The amended proposals then feed back into the appraisal process, until the preferred design solution is reached. This approach has been adopted with this scheme.

2.1.2 Mitigation

The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, reduce and where possible remedy adverse effects on the environment arising from the proposed development.

Mitigation is thus not solely concerned with 'damage limitation' but may also consider measures that could compensate for unavoidable residual effects.

Mitigation measures are generally more effective if they are designed as an integral part of an iterative process of project planning and design. Mitigation is thus used as a design approach that is, where possible, implemented from project inception when alternative designs or site options are being considered.

2.1.3 Impact Appraisal Methodology

Following the baseline landscape studies, the appraisal stage includes the systematic identification of potential impacts, prediction of their magnitude and appraisal of their significance.

In the context of landscape and visual appraisal, the following terms are used.

2.1.4 Landscape character

The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particularly to combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates a sense of place of different areas of the landscape. Sensitivity or capacity of the landscape resource.

The degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character, will vary with: -

- Existing land use
- The pattern and scale of the landscape
- Visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors
- The scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape; Variations of these characteristics within the local landscape and within the site need to be identified.

2.1.5 Scale or magnitude of landscape effects

There is no standard methodology for the quantification of the magnitude of effects. However, it is generally based on the scale or degree of change to the landscape resource, the nature of the effect and its duration.

2.1.6 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will be dependent on:

- The location and context of the viewpoints
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor

2.1.7 Scale or Magnitude of Visual Effects

In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude or scale of visual change is described by reference to:

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development at the Site.
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture.
- The duration and nature of the effect, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous, etc.
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor.
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development.
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.2 Impact on Landscape Character

For this appraisal, the following criteria applies:

Local Landscape character sensitivity or capacity to change:

High	Landscape areas with particularly distinctive or positive characters or with valued landscape features. The areas may be sensitive to relatively small changes.
Medium	Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features. Potentially tolerant of some change.
Low	Landscape areas with a weak character or relatively few features of value, potentially tolerant of significant change.

2.2.1 Magnitude of Landscape Change

High Adverse	Total loss of, or major alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Medium Adverse	Partial loss of or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Low Adverse	Minor loss of, or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
No change	Very minor loss or change to the landscape characteristics or features of the area, compensated by landscape improvements or enhancements.

Low Beneficial	Minor improvements to the key characteristics or features that outweigh any adverse landscape effects of the proposal. Removal of minor incongruous features.
Medium Beneficial	Notable improvements to the key landscape characteristics or features, or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.
High Beneficial	Major landscape improvements, through the creation of a new landscape structure, or the removal of large-scale inappropriate features.

Overall landscape character impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the landscape resource with the magnitude of landscape change. Professional judgement used to determine the overall impact based on these two elements.

Overall levels of effect are classified by Substantial, Moderate, Slight or Negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial visual Impact.

2.3 Visual Sensitivity

For this appraisal, the following criteria applies:

High	Occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including rights of way where interest may be focused on the landscape.
Medium	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities. People at places of work e.g. agricultural workers.
Low	People travelling through the area in vehicles.

2.3.1 Visual Magnitude of Change

High Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the view.
Medium Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the view.
Low Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a minor deterioration in the view.
No Change	Where the scheme overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.
Low Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a minor improvement in the view.
Medium Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the view.
High Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement in the view.

Overall visual impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of visual change. Professional judgment is used to determine the overall effect on the landscape based on these two elements.

3 Baseline Conditions

3.1 Planning Policy Context

Planning policies and guidelines have been considered where these are relevant to landscape and visual matters. Proposals have been examined in relation to the relevant Development Plan, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), County Waste and the Local Plan's Planning Policies.

The relevant policies and guidance are as follows:

3.1.1 National Policy

- Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (Chapter 15)

3.1.2 Mid Sussex District Council – District Plan 2014 to 2031

DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside
DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park
DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution
DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
DP35: Conservation Areas
DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
DP38: Biodiversity
DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage

The relevance of the above policies can be summarised as follows :-

This LVIA addresses the needs of DP12 to study the impact of the proposals on the Countryside (see conclusions).

The site itself has no statutory designations. The South Downs National Park boundary is 4.5km and the High Weald AONB is 2.7Km away both distances where the site has no influence on these important designations.

The proposal centres on reducing traffic noise from the A23 towards the residential property (and by definition some of the landscape beyond its curtilage, see the Anderson Acoustics Noise Impact Assessment).

There are no listed buildings, heritage assets or conservations areas near the site.

There are no trees required for removal to construct the acoustic bund. Existing boundary hedging to the M23 will be retained and enhanced.

4 Existing Landscape Baseline

4.1 Site Location and Context

The Site is currently used for grazing pasture to the north and south and a residential property in the central zone.

It is a narrow longitudinally shaped site (running North / South) and is surrounded on all sides by strong hedgerow and isolated hedgerow Oaks.

The Eastern Adur River runs close to the Northern edge of the site boundary with mainly agricultural pastureland (mainly rural with patchwork arable / grazing and woodland copse) surrounding it but with more light industrial units the West.

The busy A23 borders the site immediately to the West with traffic noise being all pervasive. This traffic noise with light industrial units (within and beyond the site) along with starkly visible large electric pylons and cables (crossing the actual site to the South), provide a more “urban” context than would otherwise be expected, in what is generally a rural landscape surrounding the site.

Figure 1 - Site location plan



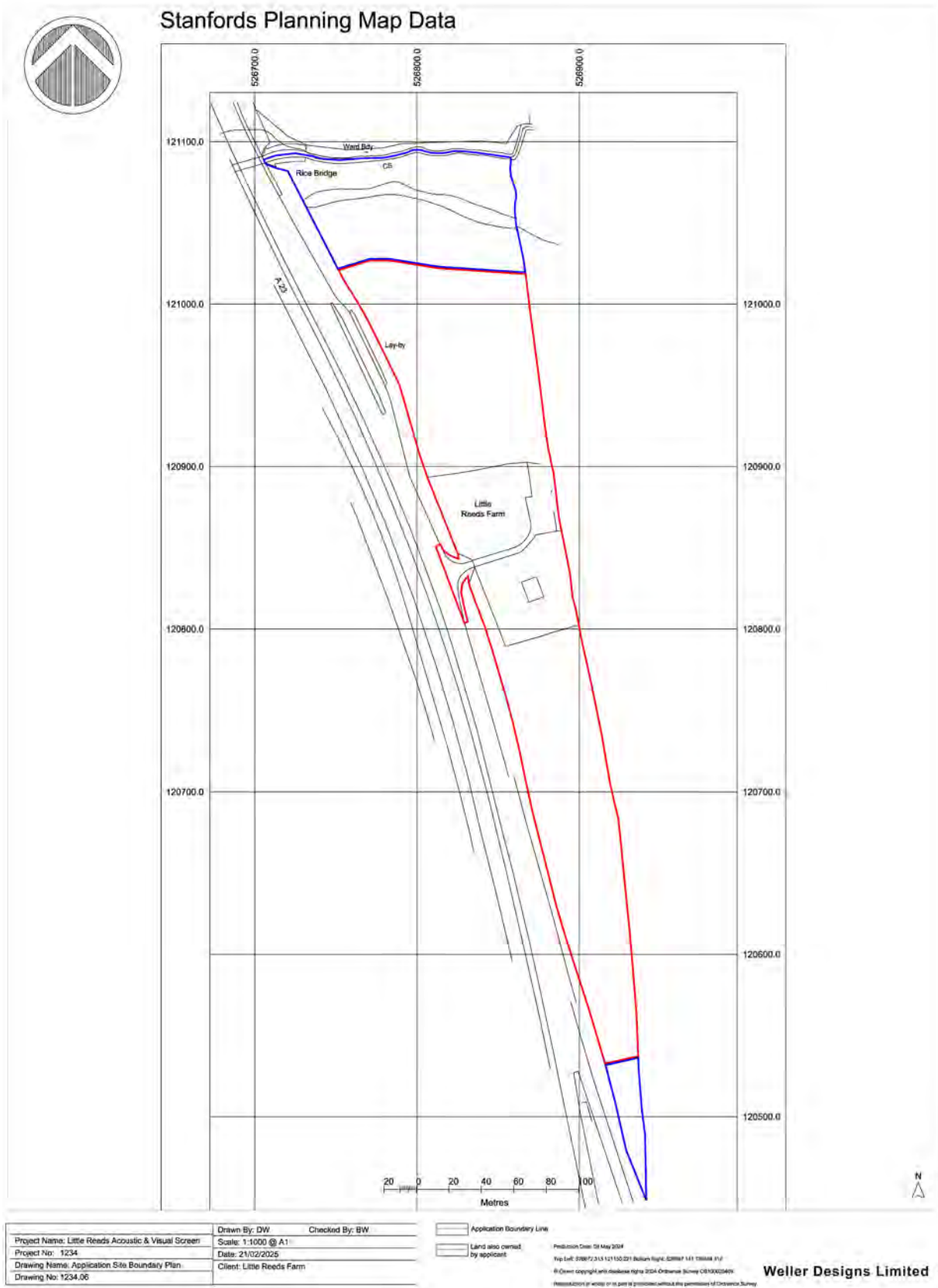


Figure 2 - Site location plan OS Mapping



Figure 3

Figure 4- ZVI

Refer to Figure 4 which indicates the Zone of Visual Influence and the location of the site with its boundary indicated in red. The figure does not consider the existing vegetation that surrounds the Site.



4.2 Landscape Characterisation

The following documents were reviewed in relation to the site and the surrounding area and are summarised below. Refer to the original documents for the complete landscape characterisation descriptions. The following document describes the Site and its surrounding area character on a local and National Level:

- National – NCA 121: Low Weald
- Landscape Character Area 4 Hickstead Low Weald

4.2.1 National & Local Landscape Characterisation

Listed below are the documents that have been referred to and give a detailed characterisation of the land around the site defining the study area including the history, culture, soil types and landscape value of the area.

Character Area (National / Local)	Brief Description
NCA 121: Low Weald	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, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland. Around 23 per cent of the area is identified as greenbelt land. It contains areas of dense urban settlement, notably around Gatwick and Crawley. Development pressure has increased the spread of noise and light pollution from roads, notably the M23 and A24, and urban areas, particularly around Gatwick Airport. The area retains much of its rural and tranquil nature in increasingly isolated pockets with small villages nestled amongst woodland and the farmed landscape. While the Low Weald may be subject to a lower level of development pressure than some NCAs in south-east England, it is nevertheless within an area where demand for new building land is constant, particularly as most of it lies outside the adjacent protected landscapes and within commuting distance of London. Development pressure is focused mainly on the towns and the area on the boundary with the High Weald. New roads and road improvement schemes are also important issues which affect all habitats. There is a recognised need to maintain Gatwick Airport's importance as an international hub. Traditional buildings are often made of brick, with local colour variations, and some flint towards the South Downs. Pre-18th-century buildings were predominantly timber framed and even later buildings are often weatherboarded. The rural character of most of the Low Weald now contrasts against modern, urban centres, most notably the area around Gatwick Airport in the centre of the NCA.

Landscape Character Area 4 Hickstead Low Weald	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. • 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. • 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. • Mix of farmsteads and hamlets favouring ridgeline locations, strung out along lanes. • A modest spread of designed landscapes and major landmark of Hurstpierpoint College. • Crossed by north-south roads including the A23 Trunk Road, with a rectilinear network of narrow rural lanes. • London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area through Burgess Hill. • Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, weatherboarding, Horsham Stone roofing and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging. • Principal visitor attraction is the Hickstead All England Equestrian Showground.
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5 Baseline Landscape Context

5.1 Protected Landscapes & Habitats

5.1.1 Protected Landscapes

The site has no landscape designations lying well outside the boundaries to the South Downs National Park and High Weald AONB. No other statutory designations exist on the site and there are no local nature reserves, SSSI's etc within 5Km of the site.

The Eastern Adur river is to the North of the site.

5.1.2 Historic Statutory Protection

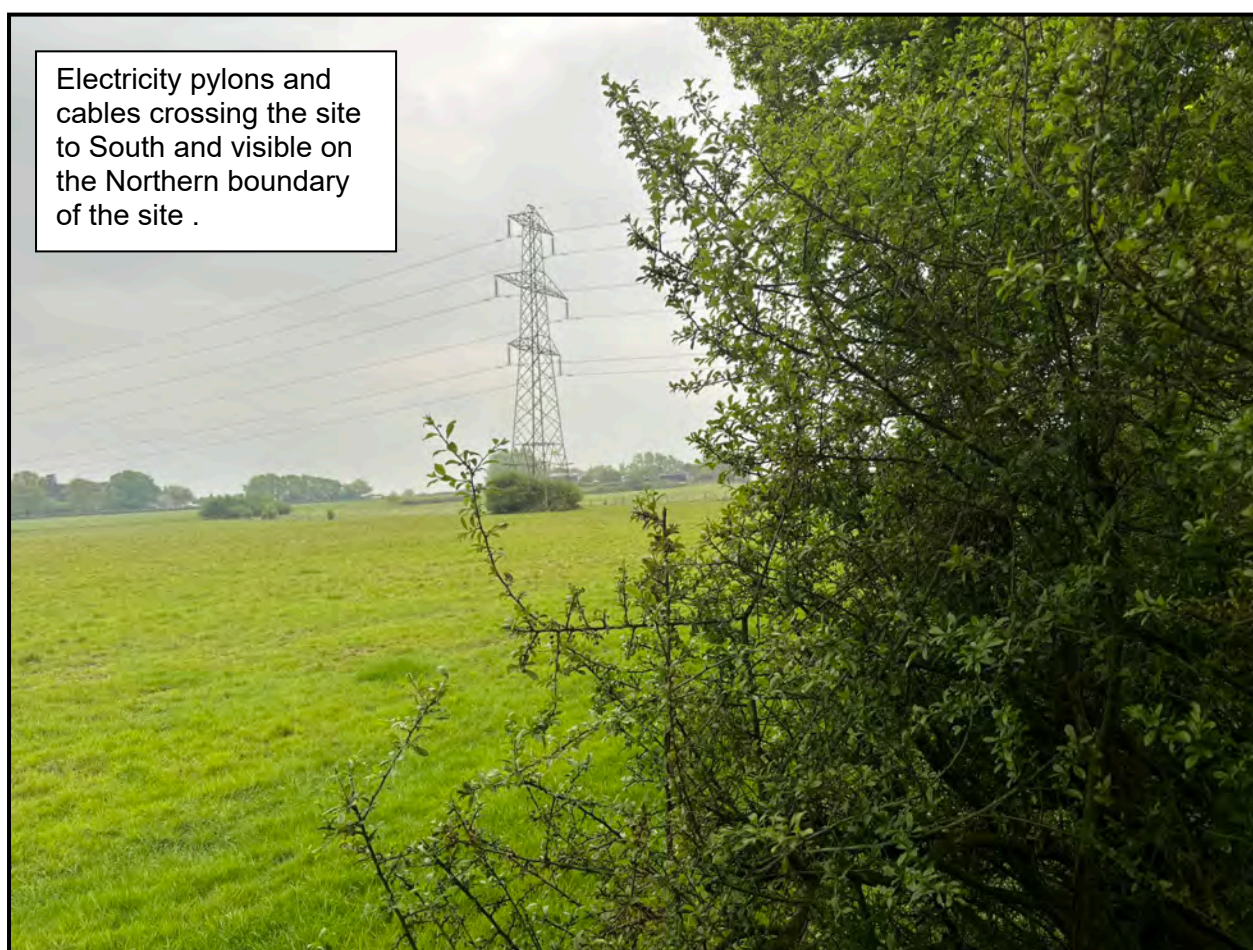
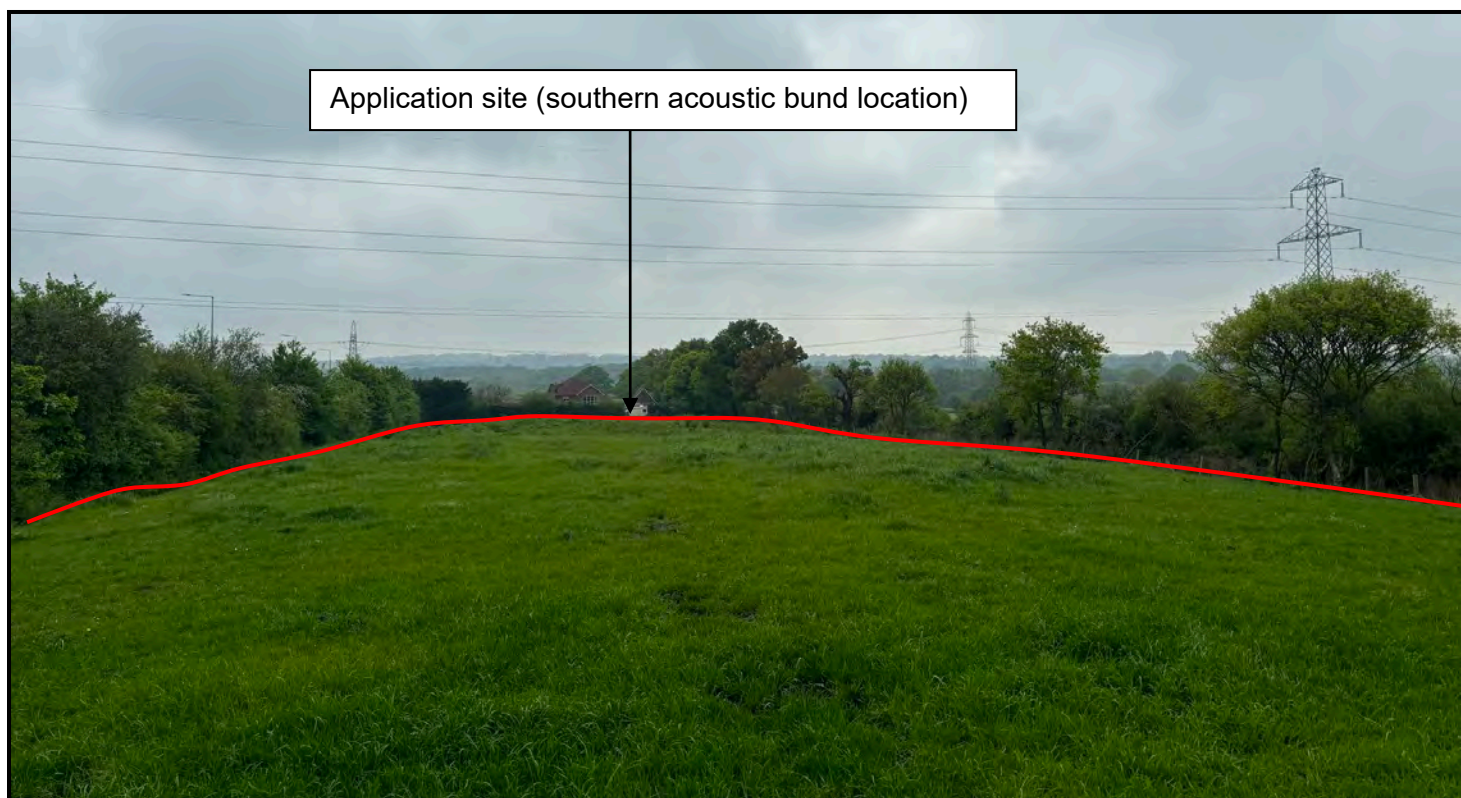
There are no listed parks /gardens near the site (the nearest Grade landscape being over 4Km away).

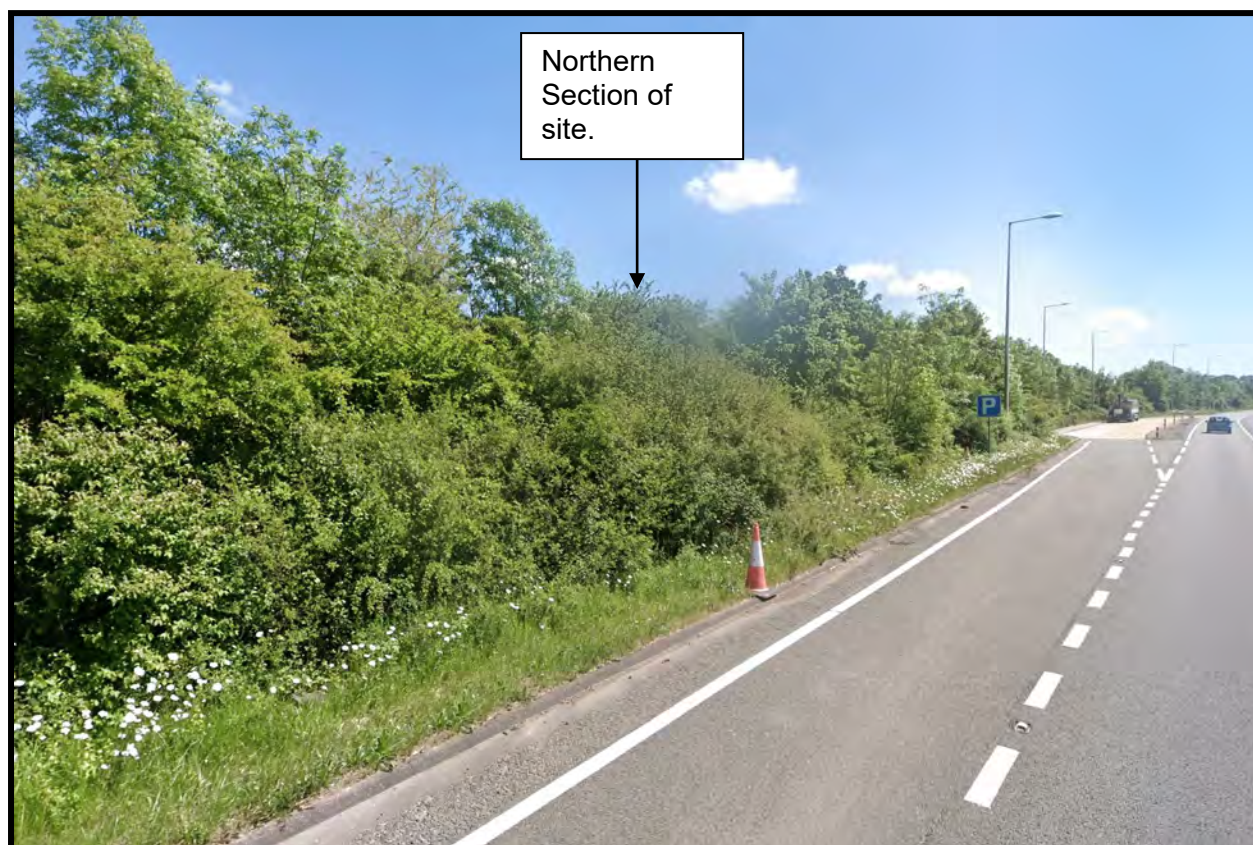
5.1.3 Listed Buildings and Monuments

Within a radius of 1km from the Site there are 6 Listed Buildings (all within the Hickstead settlement) and no listed monuments.









5.1.4 Landscape Habitats & Species

From a desk top study of the open-source data the site lacks ecological diversity (see the accompanying Ecology Co-op Biodiversity Net Gain baseline mapping) as its grazing pasture. Surrounding the site however there is a mixture of Oak trees and strong hedgerow consisting of Ash, Hawthorn Blackthorn, Field Maple, Hazel and Oak.

5.2 Landscape Character of Site

5.2.1 The Site and its Immediate Setting

The Site Description

The application site comprises of an area of land 3.01Ha in size. The land is currently used as a grazing pasture and residential uses. The site can be described as “active” resultant from human occupation.

On virtually all of the boundaries, there is high hedgerow. (4m and over) with mature boundary trees within it (mainly Oaks). Inside the hedge line, the site is mostly free of habitat.

The immediate North, East and South of the site is reasonably rural/tranquil (noise from A23 and pylons aside) with patchwork grazing fields and hedgerows. The immediate West of the site is dominated by the A23 with its associated, engineered structures, signage, traffic movement and intrusive traffic noise. Immediately on the opposite side of the A23 are further light industrial compounds containing varied business activities.

5.2.2 Settlement and Land Use

The residential property in the centre of the site (known as Little Reeds Farm) is a modern family property.

The eastern boundary is more dominated by mature Oaks trees than the western side.

There are no public footpaths either on the site or anywhere near the site. The nearest footpath is to the North circa 0.4km away.

There are small more residential settlements in the area (Hickstead being the closest at half a kilometre away), but isolated farmsteads and compact light industrial units are the norm in the surrounding landscape, apart from the previously mentioned large industrial site (directly opposite) , with lorry parking, construction equipment and storage bays).

5.2.3 Topography & Natural Drainage

The area is low lying and characterised by heavy clays and occasional flooding to the North from the Eastern Adur river (there is a small area of floodplain to the north beyond the application site). There are no ponds on the site, but the immediate area is characterised by ditches and ponds associated with the Low Weald. The general area can be described as fairly flat with the topography to the North gently rising to the High Weald.

The major topographical anomaly to this general topographical character is the A23 which possesses various steep embankments and cuttings.

5.2.4 Vegetation Cover

The vegetation cover within the vicinity of the Site comprises of mixed species native hedgerow, with native trees and grassed pastureland with the occasional woodland copse further away from the site itself.

The trees identified are:

- Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Ash (*Fraxinus*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus*)
- Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*)
- Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)

The central area of the Site is covered with hard standing with no vegetation.

5.2.5 Recreation and Public Rights of Way

There are no public footpaths on site.

5.2.6 Access and Roads

The Site is currently accessible from the West via the A23. There are relatively few roads to the North, East (minor and rural in nature) and West. The main A2300 lies circa 350m to the south of the application site.

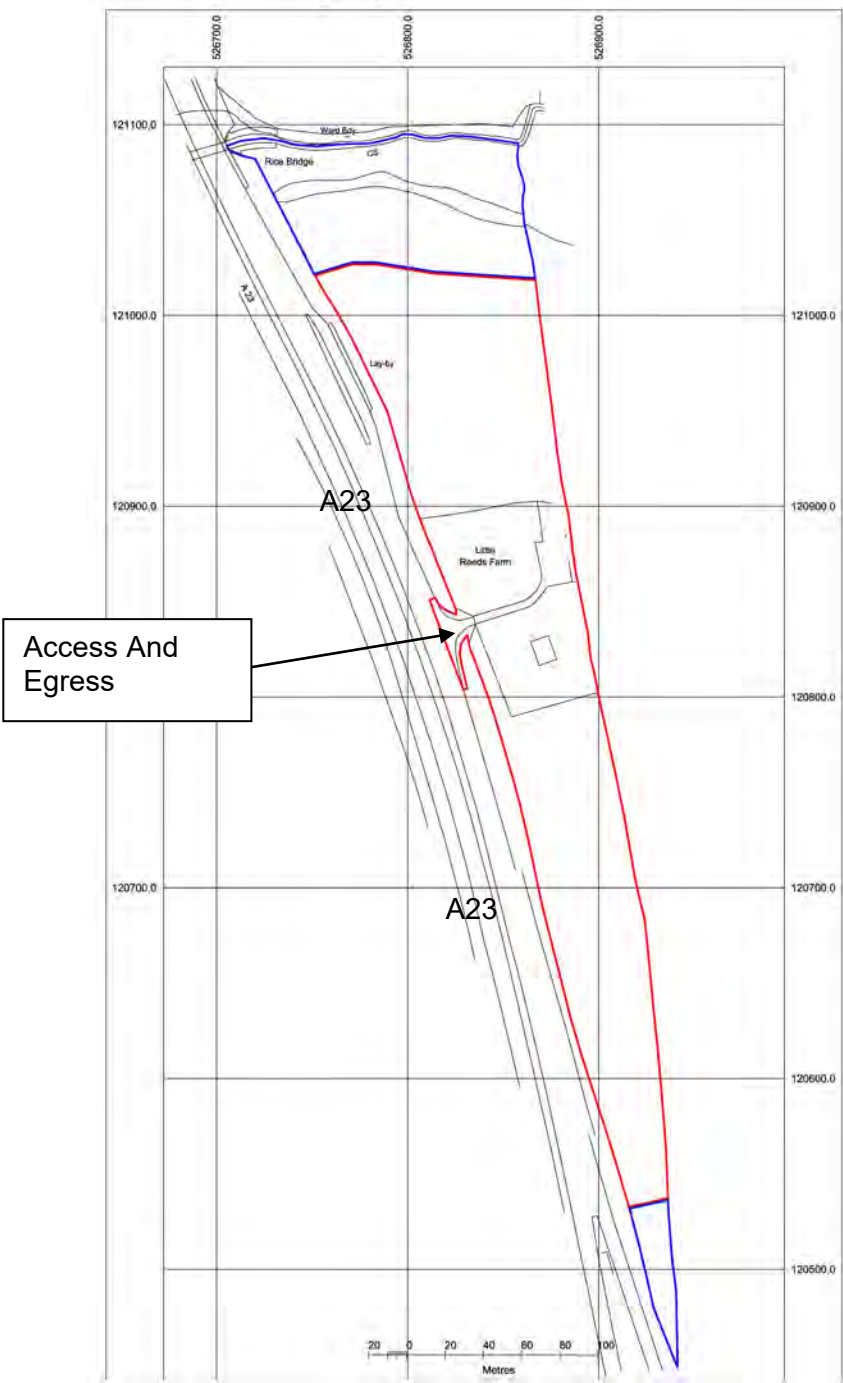


Figure 5- Access & Egress Map



Figure 6- Existing Topographic Context



Figure 7- Existing
Topographic Context

6 Existing Visual Baseline

A review of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps at a variety of scales, desk-based appraisal and knowledge gained from visits to the site (winter months) and the surrounding area was undertaken to identify likely views of the site. The likely views, known as the key visual receptors and their existing views are described in Table 1, Appendix A Visual Impact Schedules.

Visibility within the study area is dictated by landform, screening elements such as hedgerows, woodland blocks and built settlement. Views from the Site out into the surrounding area range in terms of what is visible.

During the site visit, viewpoints from the surrounding area were identified. These viewpoints ranged from on site to 0.5Km away from the development. As outlined previously the Site is located on the Eastern boundary of the A23 with isolated farmsteads and industrial units beyond its immediate curtilage (see appendix D).

Types of Views within the appraisal:

Locations for the viewpoints have been selected from an initial desktop study and during the visit to site. From this a zone of visual influence has been established. See appendix C

NB However the ZVI is theoretical as its generated purely on topographical information and does not account for vegetative screening.

Given the above, the established zone of potential visual influence, a total of 12 viewpoints have been taken which essentially highlight the complete lack of visual access in the ZVI. These are defined below:

- Viewpoints from 500m of the Site
- Viewpoints from within 500m to its boundary
- Viewpoints from within the site, with a view of the development (residential property on site and industrial compound)
- Dynamic Views

6.1 Visual Receptors Identified

The identified sensitive receptor is restricted to one individual residential property (owned by the applicant who resides at this property).

6.1.1 Judging Magnitude of Visual Effects

The visual effect on an identified receptor is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility.

Judging the magnitude of the visual effects identified takes account of:

- The scale of change of the view
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape
- The nature of the view of the proposed development

Visual receptors most susceptible to change and sensitivity are residents at home, and people who engage in outdoor recreation/relaxation including the use of public rights of way.

Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include;_

- People that engage in outdoor sport and recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape.
- People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity and not focused on their surroundings are regarded as less sensitive and less susceptible to change.
- People who are transitory (travelling on roads, motorways etc)

6.1.2 Visual Receptors

Appendices A, D, and E identify, describe and analyse the visual receptors. 12 receptors were identified covering the potential Zone of Visual Influence.

There is a lack of any sensitive visual receptors outside the boundary of the site (all are “dynamic”).

Field work and adding the existing vegetation to the ZVI established the fact that the whole site is virtually invisible from almost all of the receptor points due to existing vegetation and or topography.

Eleven of the twelve receptor points analysed established that there is no visual access to the proposed application bund design

The residential property of Little Reeds Farm is the only sensitive receptor of the twelve and had a degree of visual access to the proposed bunding. NB The Little Reeds property is surrounded by 5m high hedgerow to the North and high wooden fencing to the South so no views of the bunding are available North or South apart from the upstairs bedrooms. See appendix E for montages of views North and South within the application site.

Given the rationale behind the proposal is to abate the traffic noise for the residents of the Little Reeds property from the neighbouring A23 then it can be assumed the owners (the applicant) visual change in the form of bunding is preferable (at least to the residents) than being negatively impacted by traffic noise.

The most significant visual change will be looking out of the Little Reeds residential property / garden to the west where the current boundary view is one of hedgerow, which is to be screened with the earth bund.

6.1.3 Dynamic Views

Users of local roads to the east would see no perceptible visual change (see appendix D). Users of the A23 and industrial compounds opposite the site to the west would also experience no perceptible visual impact due to the high and dense existing boundary hedgerow (see photos from A23 above).

NB Neither road users or places of work can be regarded generally as sensitive visual receptors.

6.2 Baseline Visual Context

Visual impact deals solely with changes in views of a landscape that result as a consequence of development and the effect these changes have on people. The visual impact appraisal deals with the intrusion or obstruction of views of the landscape, the reactions of viewers to this, and the overall impact of this on visual amenities.

The degree or extent of visibility is usually straightforward to establish and record however the level of impact on a landscape is subjective in nature and therefore a matter of professional judgement. As such it is important to recognise the inherent balance that must be achieved to weigh the objective technical description and analysis with the subjective appraisal of the assessor.

The baseline visual context is developed using a verifiable montage view (See Appendix E Primary Visual Representations) of the proposed development. The montage view is compared with the existing view to gauge the visual impact from that viewpoint. The viewing points have been selected around the site along public roads and Little Reeds house itself. Viewing points are taken from ground level unless otherwise stated.

Appendix A, D and E detail the baseline visual context.

7 Limitations or Difficulties

The location of key views is restricted by the limits of public access. In particular, it would not be appropriate to visit the upper storeys of residential properties to record the views available. In these instances, where key views may include those views gained by a residential property an estimation of the view has been made from visiting nearby public vantage points.

Assessing the views from the A23 itself was also impractical so the use of Google Earth Street View was enacted.

8 Scheme Description

The proposals will involve:

- Acoustic and visual screening bund to reduce traffic noise for the residents in Little Reeds Farm property emanating from the adjacent A23.
- Native planting

See appendix B – Proposed Development Plans.

9 Development Potential Effects and Mitigation

Potential effects have been recognised through the desk top study and field evaluation phases of the landscape and visual impact appraisal, the findings of which have fed back into the evolving scheme design as part of an integrative process.

NB Landscapes that have a clear sense of place or conservation, historic or wildlife interest are generally more likely to be sensitive to change and require greater protection than those which are man-made or have experienced change due to development.

9.1 Landscape Character Effects

The impact on identified Landscape Characters are described in Table 2, Appendix A Visual Impact Schedules

Further to on-site fieldwork and the information analysed and summarised earlier in the local character assessment “Hickstead Low Weald” (See Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex 2005) the main component requiring assessment will be the form and height of the acoustic noise screen and potential mitigation planting.

It will be this element that has the potential to affect the perception of landscape character.

Whilst the application site sits within an area which is, for the most part, reflective of the Low Weald Character (see 2005 Assessment) there are landscape elements surrounding the site which are more reflective of an urbanised environment i.e. industrial units, A23 dual carriageway, large electricity pylons and cables.

On a microlevel, the proposed development sits next to a major A road with two very evident electricity routes (pylons and cables) where the traffic noise and activity is neither tranquil nor reflective of the general Low Weald character.

In this context, the occurrence of planted soil bund could be considered neither inappropriate nor particularly unexpected. The proposed main acoustic slope on the roadside is quite steep (1 in 3 for maximum effectiveness). Whilst this slope topographically could be considered somewhat jarring it is behind the strong boundary hedgerow and to a degree is only reflective of what is very close by on the A23 as reference to the topography signatures clearly illustrates.

Whilst the main reason for the acoustic screen is to alleviate traffic noise to the residential property, the added benefit is that it could also screen and absorb traffic noise to the wider landscape to the east.

Landscape Character Mitigation

Planting native hedgerow to screen the western slopes, unify (link with existing hedgerows) and increase ecological interest will preserve the local character of the area (see predicted landscape montages appendix E).

The eastern slopes will taper away more gradually and revert back to grazing once complete. In a sense, there is no change of use with the eastern slopes more reflective of the local topography though slightly steeper.

Reducing traffic noise to the wider eastern Low Weald landscape is a benefit to the general landscape character.

9.2 Visual Effects

The assessment of visual impact is based on the field survey and interpretation of the perceived operational effects accounting for any mitigating features. This is done through the analysis of the verifiable montage views of the development (See Appendix E).

9.2.1 Rights of Way Summary

There will be no change to the views / character from surrounding footpaths.

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9.2.2 Roads Summary

There will be no change to the views / character from users of the A23 and local roads.

9.3 Cumulative Effects

The application site has not changed in its basic use i.e. grazing pasture and there are no additional built elements to the scheme.

The change of topography is adjacent to a highly engineered transport route and as such a feature can be considered part of the engineering expected within its immediate curtilage.

10 Summary

The proposal involves the creation of a soil based, planted acoustic screen.

The Little Reeds property is blighted by the traffic noise from the A23 and to a degree so is the landscape character of the nearby area, which this proposal also benefits indirectly. The proposed creation of an acoustic screen significantly improves this acoustic impact. (see Andersons acoustic report)

The Site is not located within or near any statutory landscape or ecological designations.

The preceding analysis has identified the extent of landscape and visual impact arising from the proposed acoustic screen.

Through an iterative process the scale and height (average 5m) of the screen was determined by Anderson Acoustics to reduce traffic noise and also respect planning policy on landscape and visual impact. NB To this end keeping the bund height below the hedgerow height was an important consideration.

With reference to the landscape character area, it has been determined that the site and its immediate surrounds is not characteristic of what could be considered valuable "Hickstead Low Weald". In this regard whilst there is landscape and visual sensitivity, given its location within the rural Low Weald, the site is not in an immediate area that represents rural Low Weald. In this regard, the immediate landscape is able to accommodate the inclusion of a soil based acoustic screen.

The proposed native hedgerow planting on the site boundary will further reduce the effect of the topographical change (and assist with taking the BNG to over 10%).

10.1 Landscape Character Effects

The summary of the impact on the Landscape Character as a resource is No Change with the potential proposed planting being only appropriate native species that are prominent throughout the surrounding landscape character, the scheme will become more cohesive with its encompassing landscape.

Whilst there will still be topographical changes, the existing surrounding landscape character is generally one of angular contours close to the site (associated with the A23) and in this regard would be considered acceptable, especially given its location within the immediate curtilage of the A23.

Refer to Appendix A - Landscape Character Impact Schedule

10.2 Visual Effects

There are no views of the proposal from beyond the site only from Little Reeds Farm itself.

Refer to Appendix A Visual Impact Schedule .

10.3 Conclusion

It is evident from the appraisal that there is no visual impact from any sensitive receptors. There is a positive but localised impact to tranquillity east of the proposed noise bund.

The immediate area of the site cannot be considered typical of the more valuable landscape and visual attributes associated with the Hickstead Low Weald, given the immediate presence of the A23, industrial units, pylons and traffic noise. In this regard the local landscape is able to absorb the proposed topographical changes.

The inclusion of reinforcement planting to the existing hedgerow will screen the steeper bank on the western side of the bund.

This native hedgerow together with appropriate grass species will increase the biodiversity of the site and ensure it is in line with BNG policy.

In line with the methodology and categories set out in section 2 the impact of the proposals is established as “No Change” for both Visual and Landscape Character.