

# HORNCASTLE CARE CENTRE

## LANDSCAPE & VISUAL STATEMENT

JULY 2024 | DD666\_LVS | REV. A





  
Sussex Health Care  
**Willow Lodge**

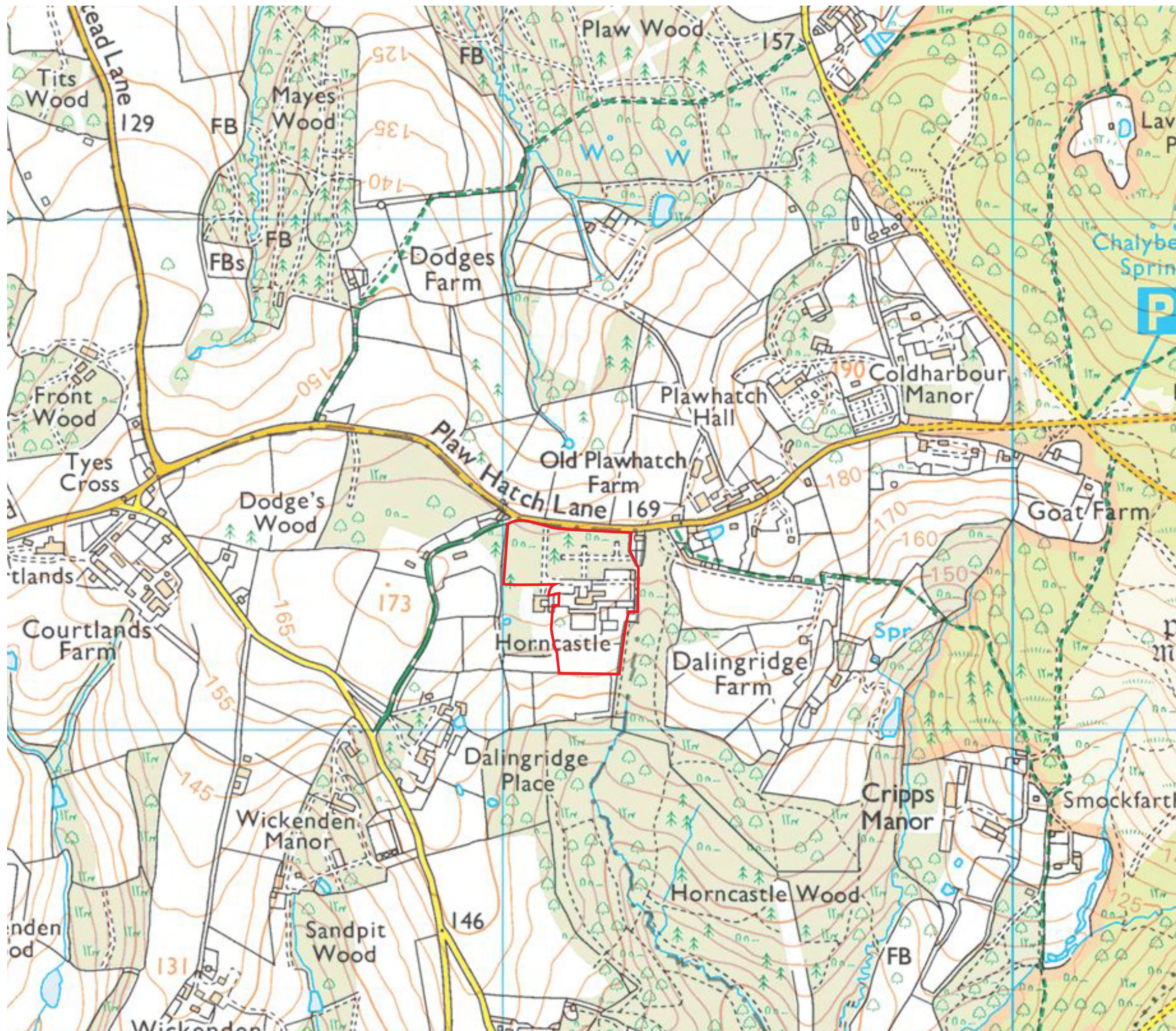
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0 100m 300m 500m

# INTRODUCTION

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## OUTLINE

Deacon Design Ltd was appointed in February 2024 by Carless & Adams Partnership to provide landscape architectural consultancy support and help inform the proposed landscape design for the construction of new care home facilities in East Grinstead.

## SCOPE

This Landscape and Visual Statement (LVS) comprises an appraisal of landscape and visual sensitivities, including local landscape character, visibility, designations and key views. It also proposes potential landscape mitigation measures, and provides conclusions on how the proposed development would affect the current landscape and visual baseline.

The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition recommend that assessments are 'proportionate' and focus on those impacts that are likely to be material in planning terms. Whilst this report is not intended as a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) due to a limited potential impact of the proposals, it follows the key principles of establishing a landscape and visual baseline, and focuses on key potential impacts of the proposal, rather than detailed assessment of every landscape or visual receptors.

## STUDY AREA

The contextual study area covers the map extents as shown on page 4 and is proportional to the likely impacts of the proposed development, which would be limited to a very small geographical area due to the existing visual containment of the site and the nature of the proposals. However, the study area provides enough context to understand the wider implications on landscape character and visual amenity of the local area.

## SITE LOCATION

The site is located south of East Grinstead and is accessed via a single width driveway from Plawhatch Lane. A private residential dwelling leads off of the driveway before the care home is reached. The site is surrounded by woodlands and agricultural land.

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

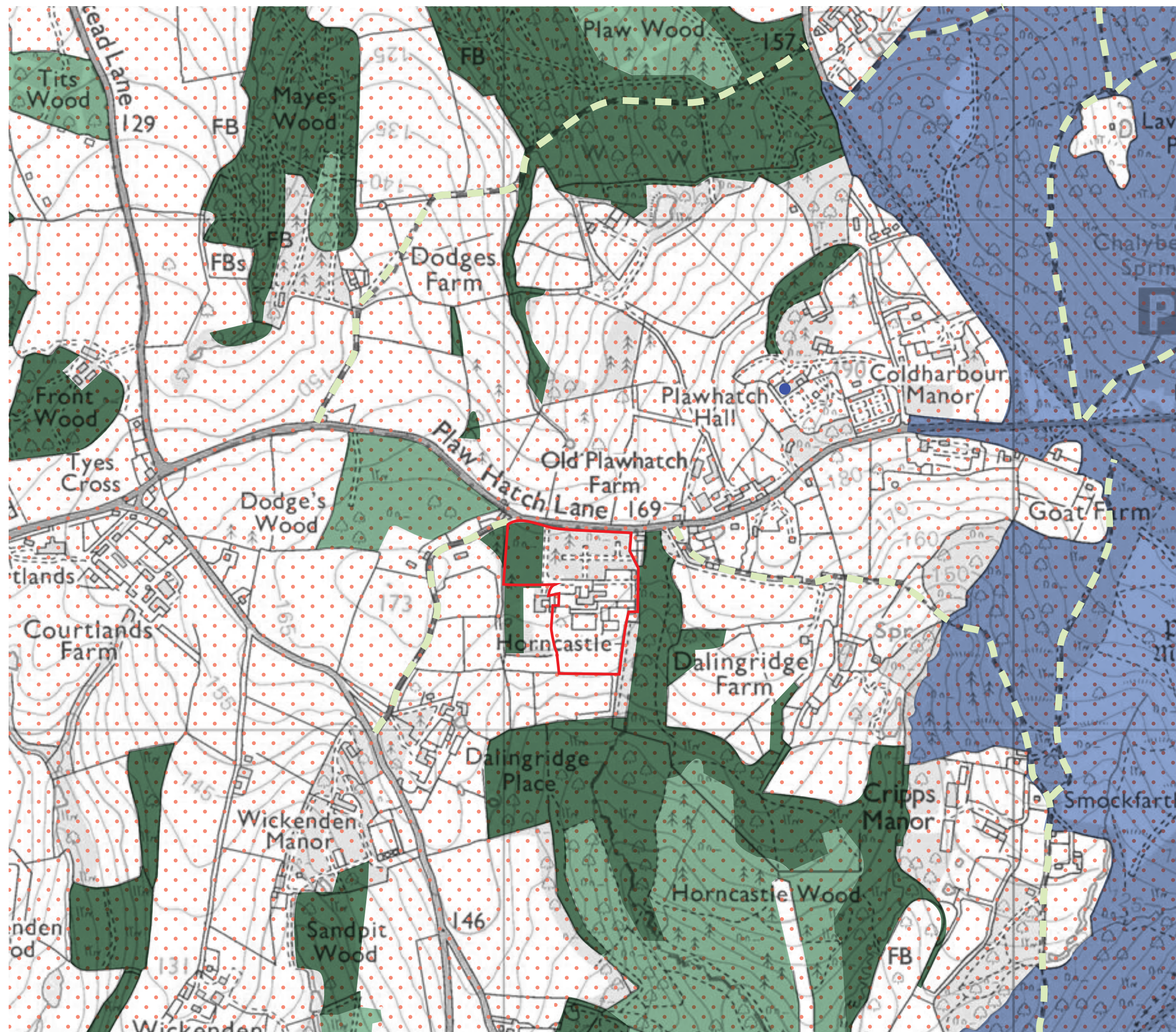
The proposed development is for the construction of a care home building. Part of the existing care home development, comprising four one- and two-storey buildings, will be demolished and a single two-storey care home will be erected in their place.



Above: Willow Lodge from the site entrance



Above: Horncastle House was destroyed by a fire in 2023



## Legend

 Site boundary

### Landscape

 The High Weald AONB

### Nature conservation

 Ancient Woodland

 Ancient Replanted Woodland

 Ashurst Wood SSSI

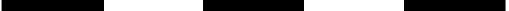
### Heritage

 Listed Buildings

### Other

 Public Rights of Way

0 100m 300m 500m



# SITE CONTEXT

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## INTRODUCTION

This section provides an analysis of designations that are relevant to landscape and visual issues. It also analyses the local landscape character and key landscape features.

## DESIGNATIONS

The key relevant landscape, heritage, nature conservation and other designations are set out below. Whilst it is not the objective of this LVS to specifically assess the effects on the setting of Conservation Areas, ecological and/or heritage assets, the presence of these designations/features can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right. This baseline appraisal seeks to obtain an understanding of heritage features only insofar as they contribute, or give an insight into, the character and value of the landscape of the site and its context.

The landscape planning context within the study area is shown in Figure on page 6.

### Landscape

The site is located entirely within The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers the entire study area and which, alongside National Parks, forms the highest level of protection to the landscape and associated setting.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan states on page 3 (emphases by Deacon Design):

*"The High Weald is an outstandingly beautiful landscape cherished by people and celebrated for its scenery, tranquillity and wildlife. Its ridges and valleys are clothed with an intricate mosaic of small fields interspersed with farmsteads and surrounded by hedges and abundant woods, all arranged around a network of historic routeways. One of the best surviving Medieval landscapes in North West Europe, the High Weald has remained a unique and recognisable area for at least the last 700 years."*

The Management Plan outlines the five defining components of the AONB character that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogeneous:

*"1. Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.*

*2. Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.*

*3. Routeways – a dense network of historic routeways (now roads, tracks and paths).*

*4. Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.*

*5. Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inner river valleys."*

### Nature Conservation

The study area contains a patchwork of woodland areas, of which several are designated as ancient woodland. One of these areas of ancient woodland is located within the site boundary, however it is outside the development area and will remain untouched. The Ashurst Wood SSSI sits approximately 600m to the east of the site.

### Heritage

There is one Grade II listed building and no conservation areas within the study area.

### Public Rights of Way

There are several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the study area. The nearest PRoW is public footpath FOR/46/2, within the adjacent county council, East Sussex. Bridleway no. 38WH runs to the west of the site.

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

This report draws information on landscape character predominantly from field appraisal but also existing landscape character appraisal studies.

The analysis of the existing landscape character takes account of the following documents:

- National Character Area Profiles;
- A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex 2005;
- Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study 2007.

### National Character Areas (NCA)

On the national level, the site is located within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA) 122 which encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald.

It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald AONB covers 78 per cent of the NCA.

The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wild flower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.

The NCA Profiles are undertaken at the national level and provide guidance for communities regarding landscape character to help inform decision-making. They are integrated studies providing information on a broad range of factors. Due to the large scale of the NCAs and the local context of the proposed development, the information on NCAs is mainly contextual. For this reason, the LVS focuses on the local landscape character appraisals which provide far greater level of detail and are more relevant in relation to the scale of the proposed development.

On the district level, the site and the study area are located entirely within the Landscape Character Area (LCA) 6 High Weald, as described in the Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment 2005.

This LCA has the following Key Characteristics:

- *“Wooded, confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity, perceived as attractive, locally secluded and tranquil.*
- *Complex sandstone and clay hilly landscape of ridges and secluded valleys centred on the western end of Forest Ridge of the High Weald plateau deeply cut by numerous gill streams and with sandrock crags.*
- *Headwater drainage of the River Medway originates here, the southern part of the area drained by the deep, sinuous*

*gill streams running to the River Ouse.*

- *Long views over the Low Weald to the downs, particularly from the high Forest Ridge.*
- *Includes major reservoir at Ardingly and adjoins Weir Wood Reservoir.*
- *Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, including some larger woods and a dense network of hedgerows and shaws, creates a sense of enclosure, the valleys damp, deep and secluded.*
- *Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields, some larger fields and small pockets of remnant heathland.*
- *Pockets of rich biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.*
- *Dense network of twisting, deep lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.*
- *Dispersed historic settlement pattern on high ridges, hilltops and high ground, the principal settlements East Grinstead and some expanded and smaller villages.*
- *Some busy lanes and roads including along the Crawley–East Grinstead corridor.*
- *London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area.*
- *Mill sites, hammer ponds and numerous fish and ornamental lakes and ponds.*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber framing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile hanging.*

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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- *Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses.*
- *Visitor attractions include Wakehurst Place, Nymans Gardens, the South of England Showground and the Bluebell Line Steam Railway."*

## Local Character

The Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study 2007 uses the district wide landscape character assessment as a baseline and identifies landscape types and areas at an appropriate scale to understand the localised variation in character.

The site is located in Zone 3: East Grinstead, Ashurst Wood, Forest Row, and Surrounding Areas, partially covered by the High Weald AONB.

The Capacity Study describes East Grinstead as a large town lying in the High Weald, to the northeast of the study area. The centre of the town is located at the convergence of several ridgelines and spurs, which run out from the centre of the settlement to the surrounding landscape and results in a fairly complex topography surrounding the town.

The site sits south of Worth Way, which is described in the Capacity Study as a valley which the south-western side of East Grinstead falls towards. The ridge running parallel with the south-western edge of East Grinstead curves and splits

towards its end, to the north of Weir Wood Reservoir. The valley adjacent to the town has some significant scattered settlement within it and contains mainly pasture and arable fields.



Above: Views of the landscape to the south of the site



Above: The driveway into the site separates it entirely from the surrounding context

# INITIAL VISIBILITY ANALYSIS

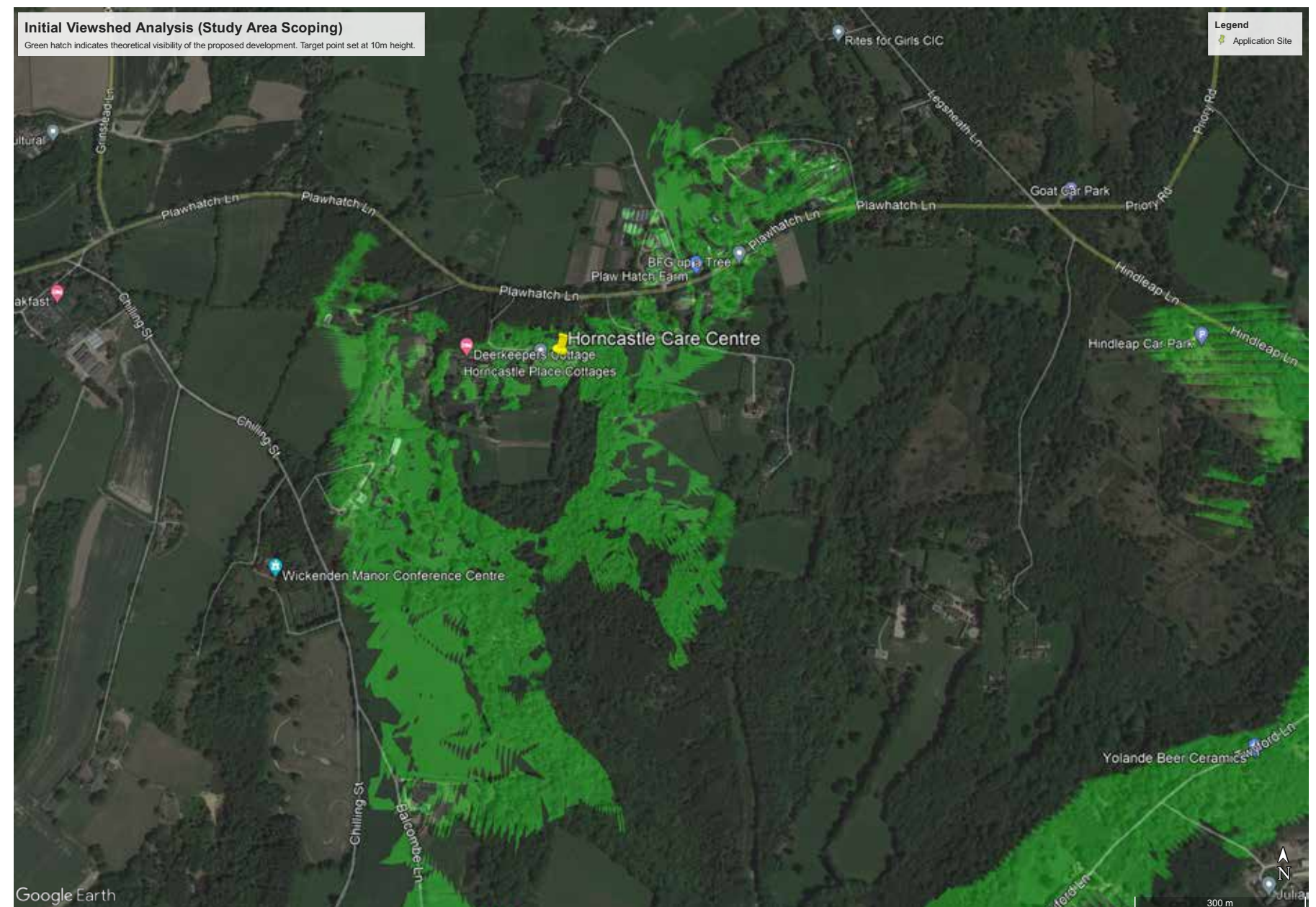
## INITIAL DESKTOP STUDY

The site's visibility in the local context has been established through a desktop study, including initial viewshed analysis, and then followed by a field survey carried out by a qualified landscape professional.

The initial viewshed analysis was carried out using Google Earth Pro Viewshed tool, which allows creating a viewshed from a single target point using a digital surface model (DSM).

The viewshed analysis was undertaken using a single target point set at 8 meters height.

The initial viewshed analysis indicated that the site would be completely screened from Plawhatch Lane by the woodland within the site boundary. The analysis indicated that there could be potential views from Public Rights of Ways 38WH and FOR/46/2, however, viewpoints will show that there are no views of the site from these public vantage points.



# VISUAL SURVEY

## VISUAL SURVEY

A visual survey was carried out on 16 February 2024 to verify the results of the viewshed analysis on site and understand the landscape and visual character of the local area.

The areas of potential visibility were visited in winter conditions, which represent the worst case scenario in terms of visibility. It is assumed that summer views will be substantially more screened due to the presence of foliage.

Site photographs were taken using a full frame digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with 50mm lens and, where necessary, stitched into panoramic views using Image Composite Editor 2.0 (cylindrical projection).

The visual survey confirmed that the actual site visibility is far more limited than the theoretical visibility shown on the initial viewshed analysis.

## VISIBILITY

The site is very well screened by existing vegetation and woodland around it which obscures views of the existing buildings from public vantage points, but not the private land to the south of the site. Even in winter, when vegetation is not in leaf, the surrounding woodland areas provide a substantial visual barrier.

While the site sits at the crest of a hill, all views from the landscape beyond are screened by woodland and topography.

To the north, east, and west, including views from Plawhatch Lane, the site is also screened by mature vegetation; the private lane into the development is curved and runs through mature woodland, obstructing any views into the site. The land southwards from the site declines substantially, which obscures views from Chilling Street.

## VIEWPOINTS

Following the analysis of the site context, landscape character and a visual survey, we have selected the following locations to illustrate the typical visibility of the site, which includes the existing care home buildings:

- Viewpoint 1: Plawhatch Lane site access (OS grid ref.: 539116, 132315);
- Viewpoint 2: Public Right of Way FOR/46/2 to the east of the site (OS grid ref.: 539505, 132280);
- Viewpoint 3: Public Right of Way 38WH to the west of the site (OS grid ref.: 538872, 132206);
- Viewpoint 4: Public Right of Way 38WH, close to Chilling Street, to the southwest of the site (OS grid ref.: 538796, 132043);

Viewpoint panoramas are presented on the following pages.

LOCAL FEATURES AND VIEWPOINT LOCATIONS



# VIEWPOINTS

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Viewpoint 1: Plawhatch Lane site access



Viewpoint 3: Public Right of Way 38WH to the west of the site



Viewpoint 2: Public Right of Way FOR/46/2 to the east of the site



Viewpoint 4: Public Right of Way 38WH, close to Chilling Street, to the southwest of the site

# APPLICATION SITE

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## SITE FEATURES

The site is occupied by an existing care home and comprises four buildings; one Edwardian (Horncastle House), the other three mid-20th Century. Horncastle House is currently derelict, having been destroyed by a fire in 2023. The remaining buildings within the site remain intact. A small portion of the site comprises hardstanding, forming a courtyard between the buildings that is used as a car park. Much of the site has become overgrown with vegetation, including the planting beds that surround the mid-20th Century buildings.

Immediately to the north of the buildings is a large area of woodland that separates the development from Plawhatch Lane and forms part of the woodland that surrounds the site, screening it from public vantage points; a brick wall separates Maple Lodge and the woodland. To the south of the buildings lies an open field which slopes down to the south, with a row of trees defining the site boundary.

The site shares an access road with a residential development (Horncastle Place) which sits outside of the site boundary. Vegetation and walls create a clear sense of separation between these two sites,



Above: Plan Showing Locations of Site Photographs

# SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

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Image A: The entrance to the site is blocked by a large wooden fence



Image B: Entrance to the care home from the car park



Image C: A derelict building within the site, Horncastle House



Image D: Existing care home buildings, Maple Lodge (left) and Willow Lodge (right)

## SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

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Image E: The planting around the staff car park is overgrown



Image F: The view from the central courtyard to the south



Image G: View of the derelict Horncastle House



Image H: The view over the field to the south of the site, within the site boundary

## SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

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Image I: A view of the rear of Willow Lodge against the woodland buffer to the east of the site



Image J: The corridor behind Maple Lodge



Image K: The corridor behind Maple Lodge looking toward the courtyard



Image L: The private drive leading to the care home

# EMERGING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

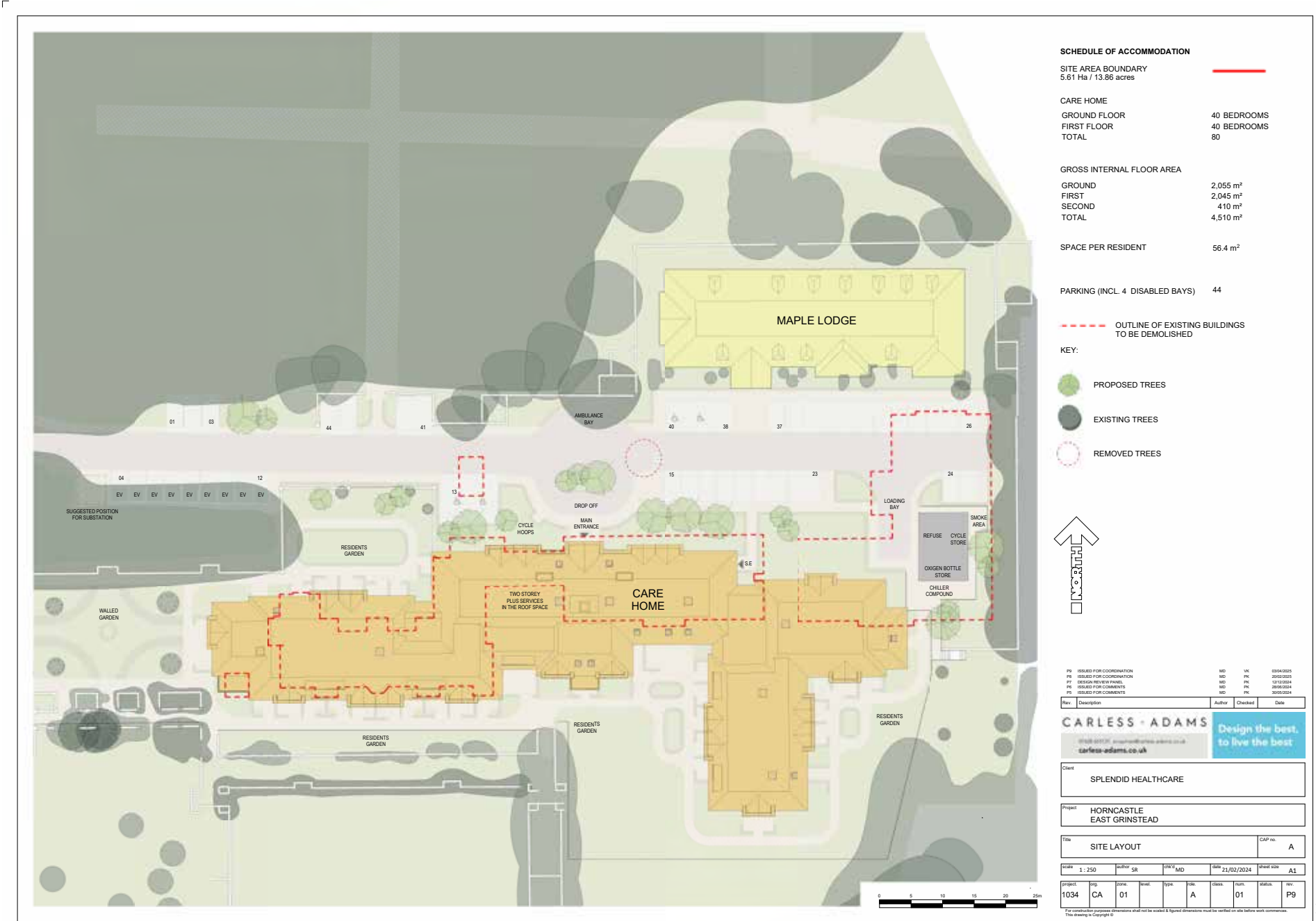
## PROPOSED SITE PLAN

The proposed development is for a care home building and associated unit (Maple Lodge) with external community areas, including landscaping. Three of the existing buildings on site will be demolished, one of which is derelict, to make way for the care home. Maple Lodge will be retained to be converted into a supporting unit.

The proposed care home will be larger than the existing buildings and be set further to the south. The empty field will be incorporated into the new development, becoming a garden for the residents.

All ground floor rooms within the development will have semi-private terraces with planting beds and access to the footpaths and green open spaces that surround the building.

These proposals include the retention of all woodland trees within the site boundary and include additional tree and shrub planting. While the layout and massing of the new development will increase slightly, the retention of perimeter vegetation on this heavily enclosed site ensures a similar level of visibility to the existing buildings and very low impact of the proposals on the surrounding landscape.



# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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## KEY SENSITIVITIES

Whilst the site is located entirely within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), its visibility in the surrounding landscape is very limited, even in winter conditions, therefore its contribution to the AONB landscape is limited to a small geographical area (predominantly the site itself and adjacent private fields/properties).

There are no landscape conservation or heritage designations within the site itself. The nearest nature conservation designation is the area of ancient woodland that runs along the eastern boundary of the site. The nearest heritage designation is a listed building approximately 500m to the north-east of the site, however, there is no visibility between this heritage asset and the site.

There are several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) around the site, with the footpath FOR/46/2 to the east and footpath 38WH to the west, both of which are separated from the site by areas of ancient woodland. There are no PRoW crossing the site.

## VISIBILITY

The site is very well screened by existing vegetation which obscures views of the existing buildings from almost every direction. Even in winter conditions the surrounding woodland areas provide a substantial visual barrier.

To the south of the site, the topography of the landscape and areas of woodland restrict views of the site from public vantage points. The massing of the residential development to the west obstructs views into the site from PRoW 38WH.

## KEY POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Due to the limited visibility of the site the potential impacts on the landscape character of the High Weald AONB and on visual amenity are likely to be very low to negligible and will be limited to a very small geographical area.

As illustrated by the viewpoints recorded during the field survey, the proposed development will be glimpsed from privately owned land adjacent to the site. Due to the topography of the surrounding area and screening by existing vegetation the proposed development would not have any material impact on views from public vantage points in the wider landscape.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the potential visual impacts associated with the proposed development would be very low we recommend limited landscape mitigation measures to further minimise the potential landscape and visual impacts.

The existing woodland surrounding the site is to be retained and provides a substantial buffer. The ancient woodland to the east of the site will provide a similar buffer, but lies outside of the site boundary. Native trees and hedgerows should be planted along the site boundaries to mitigate views from private properties.

The architectural design should carefully consider the appearance and materials of Horncastle House and the adjacent Horncastle Place. Structural and woodland planting should be proposed within the development itself, both to increase the amenity of the site and for its residents and to better absorb the proposed development into the surrounding landscape and to soften the appearance of the proposed buildings.



[info@deacondesign.co.uk](mailto:info@deacondesign.co.uk)