



LIZARD
Landscape Design and Ecology

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

LAND WEST OF LONDON ROAD HANDCROSS

Welbeck Land

Project Reference	LLD3685-LPL-REP-001
Approved:	Josh Peacock
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Revision	02

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i Introduction

Lizard has been commissioned by Welbeck Land Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, for land west of London Road, Handcross, (NGR TQ 26124 30698).

ii The Site

The Site is 2.8 hectares, (some 6.9 acres) of pasture field, enclosed with vegetation, associated and maintained as part of the wider curtilage to Hyde Lodge.

The Site includes part of a belt of deciduous woodland to the west, comprising of scrub and trees about an embankment and ditch. The belt extends to the eastern edge of the wooded cutting to the A24, which falls away beyond to the west towards the heavy traffic of the A road.

A belt of hazel coppice extends along the southern edge of the Site, with some dispersed mature trees within. The boundary beyond is substantially defined by a coniferous treeline to the northern edge of a tree'd area.

The eastern edge of the Site comprises of a more historic shaw of mixed trees, including hornbeam with an understorey of holly and more occasional yew. A ponded area is situated to the southern end of this, with a gated access through the trees to the south-eastern corner. The pavement to London Road, (B2144) extends along the main eastern edge of the Site.

The northern edge of the Site is defined by a mixed species hedgerow, including holly, hazel, wild privet and blackthorn, with a dispersed line of mature oak trees with veteran features within. There is a clump of rhododendron along a section of the hedgerow.

The private access drive outside of the northern Site boundary leads over the A23 as a road bridge into the Hyde Estate. Hyde Lodge has a vehicular access off this private drive. Hyde Lodge is located outside of the Site to the north eastern corner of the field. However, the modern barn to the south of Hyde Lodge is within the Site. A dispersed line of maturing trees extends across the Site in a westerly direction off the north western corner of the modern barn.

iii The Scheme

The Scheme comprises of a residential development of up to 52 homes, across detached, semi-detached, terraced and apartment units, accessed off London Road. A large attenuation basin would be provided to the south western corner of the Site.

The modern barn to the north eastern corner of the Site would be demolished. Trees about the access drive into the Site would be felled under the guidance of an Arboriculturalist.

iv Summary Appraisal

Landscape Character

The Study Area is located within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122, 2022) and the High Weald National Landscape. At District scale the Site is located within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005) described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest. Within the Site there is not a strength of expression of the distinctive qualities characterised at District scale within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005). The special qualities of the High Weald AONB within the wider Study Area of assorted field systems and ancient woodland would be maintained, with no adverse effect. There would be a local contribution to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 further to the recommendations provided within this report, including diversification of grassland swards, and control of invasive species.

Regarding settlement pattern and contribution to field pattern, the fields north of Handcross have been progressively subject to development throughout the late C19, mid C20 and more recently C21, which has resulted in a continuous extension of settlement between London Road and the A23 cutting up to the southern boundary of the Site. The dwelling to the north eastern corner of the Site named The Lodge was in place by the late C20th. The remaining field pattern, between the A23 cutting and London Road tapers towards a roundabout and slipway off the south bound A24 some 1km to the north.

The development of the Site would be contiguous with that to the south, whilst not substantially disrupting the more dispersed settlement pattern of cottages along London Road, north of the village of Handcross, including The Lodge, Nashlands Cottages and Oak Cottage. There is a local contribution from the field to a pattern of three fields which extend north of Handcross along the western edge of London Road, which are historically characterised as resulting from formal enclosure. The field, beyond its eastern and northern boundary vegetation features does not have time depth within the landscape, having been separated from its former extent and association with woodland by the A24 in the 1980s.

A Moderate adverse effect would result on local field pattern and semi-rural character from the substantial loss of the grassland area within the Site and replacement with residential development.

Visual Amenity

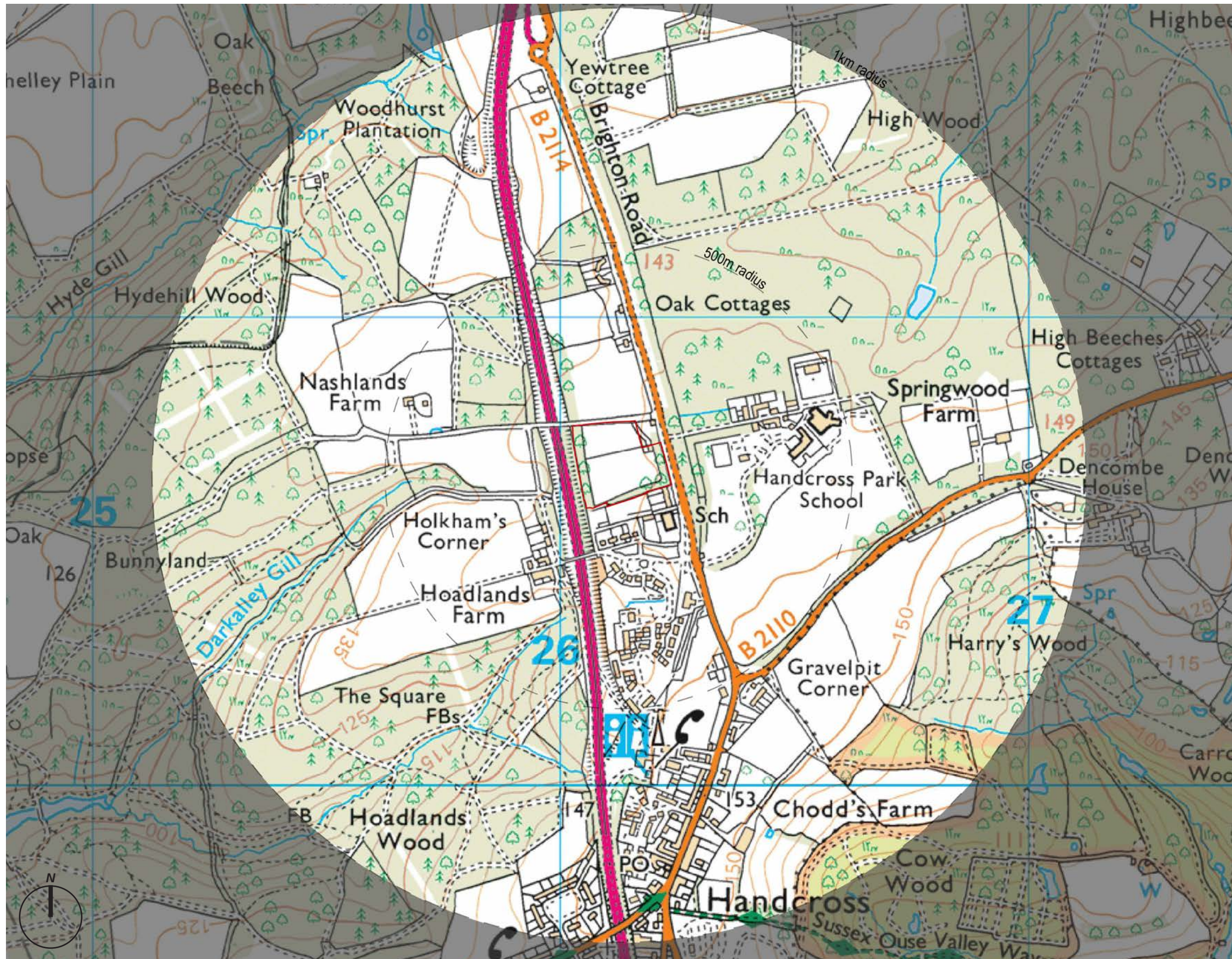
There would be a localised Minor adverse effect on glimpsed views from the adjacent extent of London Road to the east, but without an overall adverse effect on the appearance of the area due to the density of the trees and undercanopy of holly within the woodland shaw to the eastern edge of the Site.

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Legend

Development Site Boundary

Figure 1.1. Development Site Location



Legend

Development Site Boundary

Designations

The High Weald National Landscape / Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Belt extends across this area.

Ancient Woodland

Veteran Tree

Deciduous Woodland UK Priority Habitat

Tree Preservation Order

Figure 1.2. Site and Surrounds



Site Photograph A. North-westerly perspective from inside of the south east corner of the Site.



Site Photograph B. North easterly perspective from inside of the south eastern corner of the Site.



Site Photograph C. North-easterly perspective from the south western corner of the Site.



Site Photograph D. Ponded depression within the eastern mixed tree belt dominated with hornbeam with an understorey of holly and more dispersed yew.



Site Photograph E. Habitat pile within hazel coppice stools inside of the southern edge of the Site.



Site Photograph F. Mounds within the south western corner of the Site.



Site Photograph G. Various native species within the woodland belt upon a mound inside of the western edge of the Site, defined with a post and rail fence.



Site Photograph H. Mixed species native hedgerow along the northern edge of the Site, with some rhododendron suckering out.



Site Photograph I. Coniferous treeline outside of the southern edge of the Site.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

General

1.1 Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology, (Lizard) has been commissioned by Welbeck Land Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, (LVA) for land west of London Road, Handcross, (NGR TQ 26124 30698), (see **Figure 1.1**).

1.2 The LVA has been undertaken by Josh Peacock, Technical Lead of Landscape Planning and Strategic Design at Lizard and a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 20 years professional experience in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

Report Structure

1.3 The LVA presents an understanding of the Site and its context, published landscape characterisation, relevant planning policy and designations. The field survey and review then enables an analysis of the physical and experiential aspects of the landscape and visual amenity against which the Scheme can be appraised. This is further informed by a review of time depth within the landscape through a historic map regression.

1.4 The appraisal takes into account avoidance and reduction measures integrated into the design of the Scheme, whilst identifying further opportunities. An overall understanding of effect is provided, supported by a tabulated assessment informed by the LVA methodology.

1.5 The structure and approach taken by Lizard enables the LVA to be used as a Strategic Design Tool, which is outcome focused.

The Site and Surrounds

1.6 Through reference to **Figure 1.2**, the proposed development site, (the Site) is 2.8 hectares, (some 6.9 acres) of pasture field, enclosed with vegetation, associated and maintained as part of the wider curtilage to Hyde Lodge, (see **Site Photographs A - I**).

1.7 The Site includes part of a belt of deciduous woodland to the west, comprising of scrub and trees about an embankment and ditch. The belt extends to the eastern edge of the wooded cutting to the A24, which falls away beyond to the west towards the heavy traffic of the A road.

1.8 A belt of hazel coppice extends along the southern edge of the Site, with some dispersed mature trees within. The boundary beyond is substantially defined by a coniferous treeline to the northern edge of a tree'd area.

1.9 The eastern edge of the Site comprises of a more historic shaw of mixed trees, including hornbeam with an understorey of holly and more occasional yew. A ponded area is situated to the southern end of this, with a gated access through the trees to the south-eastern corner. The pavement to London Road, (B2144) extends along the main eastern edge of the Site.

1.10 The northern edge of the Site is defined by a mixed species hedgerow, including holly, hazel, wild privet and blackthorn, with a dispersed line of mature oak trees with veteran features within. There is a clump of rhododendron along a section of the hedgerow.

1.11 The private access drive outside of the northern Site boundary leads over the A23 as a road bridge into the Hyde Estate. Hyde Lodge has a vehicular access off this private drive. Hyde Lodge is located outside of the Site to the north eastern corner of the field.

1.12 A dispersed line of maturing trees extends across the Site in a westerly direction off the north western corner of the modern barn.

The Scheme

1.13 Through reference to the ECE Architecture produced Illustrative Site Layout, (see **Extract A**) the Scheme comprises of a residential development of up to 52 homes, across detached, semi-detached, terraced and apartment units, accessed off London Road. A large attenuation basin would be provided to the south western corner of the Site.

1.14 The modern barn to the north eastern corner of the Site would be demolished. Trees about the access drive into the Site would be felled under the guidance of an Arboriculturalist.



Extract A. ECE Architecture - Illustrative Site Layout

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

General

2.1 The following relevant policy has been taken into account by the assessment:

- *National Planning Policy Framework, (December 2024);*
- *Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, (March 2018);*
- *Mid Sussex Site Allocations Development Plan Document (June 2022);*
- *Mid Sussex Design Guide (November 2020);*
- *Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (September 2019).*

2.2 The key planning policies considered relevant to the Scheme's landscape and visual considerations are summarised below:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

2.3 Regarding achieving well-designed places, Paragraph 131 within Chapter 12 identifies that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

2.4 Paragraph 135 identifies that planning decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Albeit, not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change, (such as increased densities).

2.5 Regarding the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, Paragraph 187 within Chapter 15 identifies that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

2.6 Regarding National Landscapes, Paragraph 189 identifies that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing their landscape and scenic beauty, whilst development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (March 2018)

2.7 Policy DP12: (Protection and Enhancement of Countryside) - Identifies that: *'...the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, [...] provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, [...]*

2.8 Policy DP16: (High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) - Identifies that: *'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;*

- *The identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- *The traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- *Character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- *The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.'*

2.9 Policy DP26: (Character and Design) - Identifies that: *'All development and surrounding spaces, [...] will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:*

- *Is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace; [...]*
- *Creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- *Protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area; [...]*

2.10 Policy DP29: (Noise, Air and Light Pollution) - identifies that: *'The environment, including nationally designated environmental sites, nationally protected landscapes, areas of nature conservation or geological interest, wildlife habitats, and the quality of people's life will be protected from unacceptable levels of noise, light and air pollution [...]*

Mid Sussex Design Guide (November 2020)

2.11 The Mid Sussex Design Guide is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and looks specifically at enhancing local distinctiveness, as well as ensuring high quality, sustainable development.

2.12 The design principles within this SPD are treated as a material consideration, including the following:

- *'[...] DG3: Work with the site's natural features and resources;*
- *DG4: Establish a landscape and green infrastructure network;*
- *DG5: Water features and sustainable drainage systems;*
- *DG6: Design to enhance biodiversity;*
- *DG7: Respond to topography and strategic views;*
- *DG8: Establish a clear movement network that connects with the surrounding area; [...]*
- *DG11: Respond to the existing townscape, heritage assets and historic landscapes;*
- *DG12: Deliver a clear and connected structure of streets and spaces;*
- *DG13: Provide positive frontage to streets;*
- *DG14: Provide enclosure;*
- *DG15: Use markers, landmarks, vistas and street hierarchy to aid legibility;*
- *DG16: Create a positive development edge;*
- *DG17: Provide attractive streets and spaces defined by buildings rather than the highway, that encourage low speeds and that are safe to use by everyone;*
- *DG18: Integrate parking to support attractive streets and spaces; [...]*
- *DG25: Enhance the environment and sense of place through open spaces; [...]*

Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (September 2019)

2.13 Policy 1 (Protecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), repeats Policy DP16.



Legend

 Development Site Boundary

Designations

The High Weald National Landscape / Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Belt extends across this area.

 Ancient Woodland

Listed Buildings

 Conservation Areas

 Site of Special Scientific Interest

Figure 2.1. Planning Designations

Landscape Planning Designations

- 2.14 Landscape planning designations within the Study Area are described below and their location shown on **Figure 2.1** or **Figure 1.2** where appropriate.

National Landscapes, (former AONB)

- 2.15 National Landscapes (NL) (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB)) alongside National Parks comprise nationally important areas of countryside designated by the government. The designation protects landscape character and the wildlife, natural systems and cultural associations on which it depends in order that people, now and in the future, can enjoy its natural beauty.
- 2.16 The Statement of significance, (hosted online) identifies that: The High Weald is one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe. The natural beauty of the High Weald is derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features.
- 2.17 The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 is relevant to decisions made within the High Weald AONB. The Management Plan describes how natural beauty within the High Weald NL is articulated through eight core character components, as follows:
- **'1. Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)** - A deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with highly variable, relatively undisturbed soils and numerous headwaters (gill streams) functioning under an oceanic climate;
 - **2. Settlement** - Dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads, hamlets 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** - An abundance of ancient woodland mostly in small holdings, highly interconnected with hedges and shaws;
 - **5. Fieldscapes and heath** - Small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths and inned river valleys (reclaimed marshland);

- **6. Dark night skies** - Intrinsically dark at night with our own galaxy (the Milky Way) visible;
- **7. Aesthetic and perceptual qualities** - Arising from the interaction of people with the landscape, including the notion of a quintessential English pastoral landscape, intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity; glimpsed long views; freedom to explore and make connections with the natural world, and a rich legacy of features and ideas left by writers, poets and gardeners inspired by the landscape;
- **8. Land-based economy and rural living** - With roots extending deep into history, and which has visibly and culturally shaped the landscape.'

Cultural Heritage Designations

- 2.18 Listed buildings and Conservation Areas have statutory protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 2.19 There is a Grade II Listed Building located some 400m north west of the Site beyond intervening tree belts, named Nashlands. The National Heritage List for England, (NHLE) provides the following description: 'Restored C17 or earlier timber-framed building with plaster infilling and curved braces, ground floor rebuilt in red brick. Hipped tiled roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Three windows.' There are further Grade II Listed Buildings within the Handcross Conservation Area some 700m to the south.

Nature Conservation Designations

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 2.20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, (SSSI) are notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as an area of land which is 'of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiological features'.
- 2.21 The Cow Wood and Harry's Wood SSSI is located some 650m to the south east of the Site, described as an ancient woodland with several steep sided stream valleys (ghylls) and a rich community of breeding birds.

Ancient Woodland

- 2.22 Ancient Woodland is recognised as a material consideration in the planning process by the National Planning Policy Framework, but does not have statutory protection.
- 2.23 Much of the woodland within the surrounding Study Area is designated as Ancient Woodland including Highbeeches Forest which extends at an offset east of the B224 London Road.

Habitats of Principal Importance

- 2.24 Habitats of Principal Importance are included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.UK Priority Habitats are recognised as a material consideration in the planning process by the National Planning Policy Framework, but do not have statutory protection.
- 2.25 Through reference to **Figure 1.2** there is a relatively substantial coverage of woodland within the immediately surrounding landscape, which is identified as UK Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland, including within the western edge of the Site.

Protected Trees

- 2.26 Tree Preservation Orders are made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning, (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 by a local planning authority to protect trees which bring significant amenity benefit to the local area.
- 2.27 Through reference to the Mid Sussex District Council Web GIS for TPOs, visited on the 13 January 2026, there are areas offset to the east and the south of the Site which are subject to Tree Preservation Order Areas SV/01/TPO/60 and SV/02/TPO/92 respectively.

3.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS - PUBLISHED EVIDENCE

Published Landscape Character Studies

3.1 A review of published Landscape Character Assessment information within the Study Area has been undertaken to provide an understanding of the landscape character context for the Study Area. This includes the following relevant documents:

- *National Character Areas (September 2022);*
- *Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003);*
- *A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape (2005);*
- *A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005);*
- *Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (HDA, 2007);*
- *High Weald Landscape Character Assessment (Countryside Commission, 1994);*
- *Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development (Waygood Colour, September 2017);*
- *Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (2010).*

National Character Areas (2022)

3.2 The Study Area is situated within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122) described as a faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers. Landscape attributes, (and their justification) are identified including:

- *'Dispersed historic settlement pattern, farmsteads and hamlets with late medieval villages. Strong vernacular architecture characterises the NCA. (Justification: Dominance of traditional timber framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped [...] Timber, tile, brick, Kentish ragstone and sandstone are traditional building materials. [...] The rich and varied colours of locally derived building materials reflect the diversity of geology underpinning the area and add significant interest to the landscape generally;*
- *Ancient routeways in the form of ridge-top roads and a dense system of radiating droveways often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks.*

- *Small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows, shaws and woodlands. (Justification: These form part of the landscape and habitat mosaic and an essential component of what is a rare, surviving essentially medieval landscape. Hedgerows and shaws are important to landscape character and ecological connectivity, often giving the area a feel of a small-scale landscape and a 'patchwork quilt' effect.[...];*
- *Woodlands – ancient woods, gill woodlands, and shaws. (Justification: The area remains one of the most densely wooded areas in England with abundant semi-natural ancient woodland as well as chestnut coppices and conifer plantations [...];*
- *A landscape rich in heritage assets and historic environment features and elements. (There is a legacy of sites associated with the iron industry [...];*
- *Tranquillity. (Justification: The largest areas of tranquillity lie away from the main transport corridors and major settlements. Nevertheless, the pastoral, heavily wooded, medieval character of the landscape has a strong sense of tranquillity, further accentuated by the traditional character of villages, sunken lanes, the wooded ghyll (gill)s and intimate views, which together also create a strong sense of timelessness.*

3.3 Landscape opportunities are identified including:

- *[...] Maintain and enhance the distinctive pattern of dispersed settlement of historic farmsteads, hamlets and villages, to promote sustainable development in rural locations and meet local needs for affordable and where possible land based workers, and enhance the design and quality of new development in the landscape meeting local distinctiveness and design guidance; [...]*
- *Manage existing and future developments to ensure that sense of place is maintained by making reference to local vernacular building styles and materials, and settlement patterns and distributions. Ensure that proposed growth is sustainable and protects and enhances the character of the area with new building sympathetic to local styles. Where development is permitted, ensure good green infrastructure is included to bring about multiple benefits for people and the environment; [...]*

Landscape Character Assessment of West Sussex (2003)

3.4 The 2003 Study identified 42 landscape character areas of West Sussex with subsequent land management guidelines for each character area. The Study Area is located within the High Weald Forests Landscape Character Area (HW2). The overall character description for LCA HW2 is provided as follows:

'Heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest. Includes the western end of the High Weald Forest Ridge within West Sussex and the ridge and valley landscape of St Leonards Forest. Adjoins Crawley, Horsham and the M23 Motorway.'

3.5 Landscape and Visual Sensitivities for LCA HW2 are identified including:

- *'Woodland and forest cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity;*
- *Unobtrusive settlement pattern in most parts;*
- *Large blocks of assart pastures on the ridges and valley sides impart breadth and depth to the scenic quality to the landscape;*
- *Heathland remnants and significant areas of rich woodland biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change;*
- *Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature;*
- *The few long views from open ground have a high sensitivity to the impact of new urban development, modern farm buildings, masts and pylons and new roads;*
- *Settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.; [...]*

3.6 Key issues for LCA HW2 are identified including: *'Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing; Spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron; Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials; Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.'*

3.7 Land Management Guidelines for LCA HW2 include the following headlines:

- *'Increase tree cover around agricultural, ridgetop and other development and maintain and extend woodland cover on the rural urban fringe including within the Horsham-Crawley corridor;*
- *Conserve and replant single oaks in fields and hedgerows to maintain succession;*
- *Conserve woodland biodiversity and the landscape of the gills including wet woodland, protecting rare and uncommon woodland plant communities associated with them;*
- *Enhance the biodiversity of woodland rides and glades and reduce rhododendron invasion and bracken cover;*
- *Protect the tranquil and historic character of rural lanes and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value;*
- *Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.'*

A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape (2005)

3.8 The 2005 Strategy seeks to guide and direct landscape change and development. The 'guidelines for residential development on the rural urban fringe' includes the following guidelines:

- *'Ensure that buildings and infrastructure are located to avoid loss of important on-site views, and off-site views towards features such as church towers, fine buildings, historic and archaeological monuments or the wider landscape, as well as avoiding intrusion onto sensitive ridgelines, prominent slopes, and damage to settlement settings;*
- *Seek new development of high quality which fits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness and characteristics in terms of settlement form, height, scale, plot shape and size, elevations, roofline and pitch, overall colour and texture and boundary treatment (walls, fences, hedges, gates);*
- *Make the most of opportunities for conservation, restoration and enhancement of existing buildings in keeping with local and historic character;*

- *Retain where possible on new development sites key landscape features such as woodland, watercourses and hedgerows, as a basis for the new landscape structure and setting of the site;*
- *Conserve and enhance green corridors into settlements when development is being considered and retain where possible existing wildlife habitats, hedgerows, shelterbelts, orchards, and trees and shrubs;*
- *Ensure that the design, layout and ground modelling of new development takes account of the nature (grain) of the adjoining landscape;*
- *Integrate new development on the edges of settlements into the wider landscape. Use open space and planting in keeping with local character to provide a visual link to the countryside and an attractive backdrop and foil to new development;*
- *Incorporate where possible intact historic landscape and visible archaeological features within landscaping schemes.'*

A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex (2005)

3.9 The Site falls within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8). This is described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest. Key characteristics are identified including:

- *'Densely wooded, confined, dissected plateau landscape with extensive coniferous and mixed afforestation;*
- *The Worth forests mark the plateau-like western end of the High Weald Forest Ridge, drained by the Rivers Mole and Ouse;*
- *Long views over the Low Weald to the downs but fewer long views north;*
- *Large, regularly-enclosed and some smaller, irregular, assart fields within a woodland setting comprising an arable and pastoral landscape enclosed by shaws, hedgerows and fencing;*
- *Despite the closeness of Crawley to the north, a secluded, tranquil nature exists in many parts of the forests;*
- *Clearance and re-planting of large tracts of ancient woodland;*
- *Heathland remnants and significant areas of rich woodland biodiversity;*
- *Spares network of ridge-top roads and lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths;*
- *Sparse, dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads;*

- *Bounded to the west and north by the M23 Motorway and to the south east by the B2110;*
- *The London to Brighton Railway Line crosses the area via the Balcombe Tunnel;*
- *Sizeable hammerponds, lakes and ponds;*
- *Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timberframing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging;*
- *Exotic treescapes in places including rhododendron hedgerows.'*

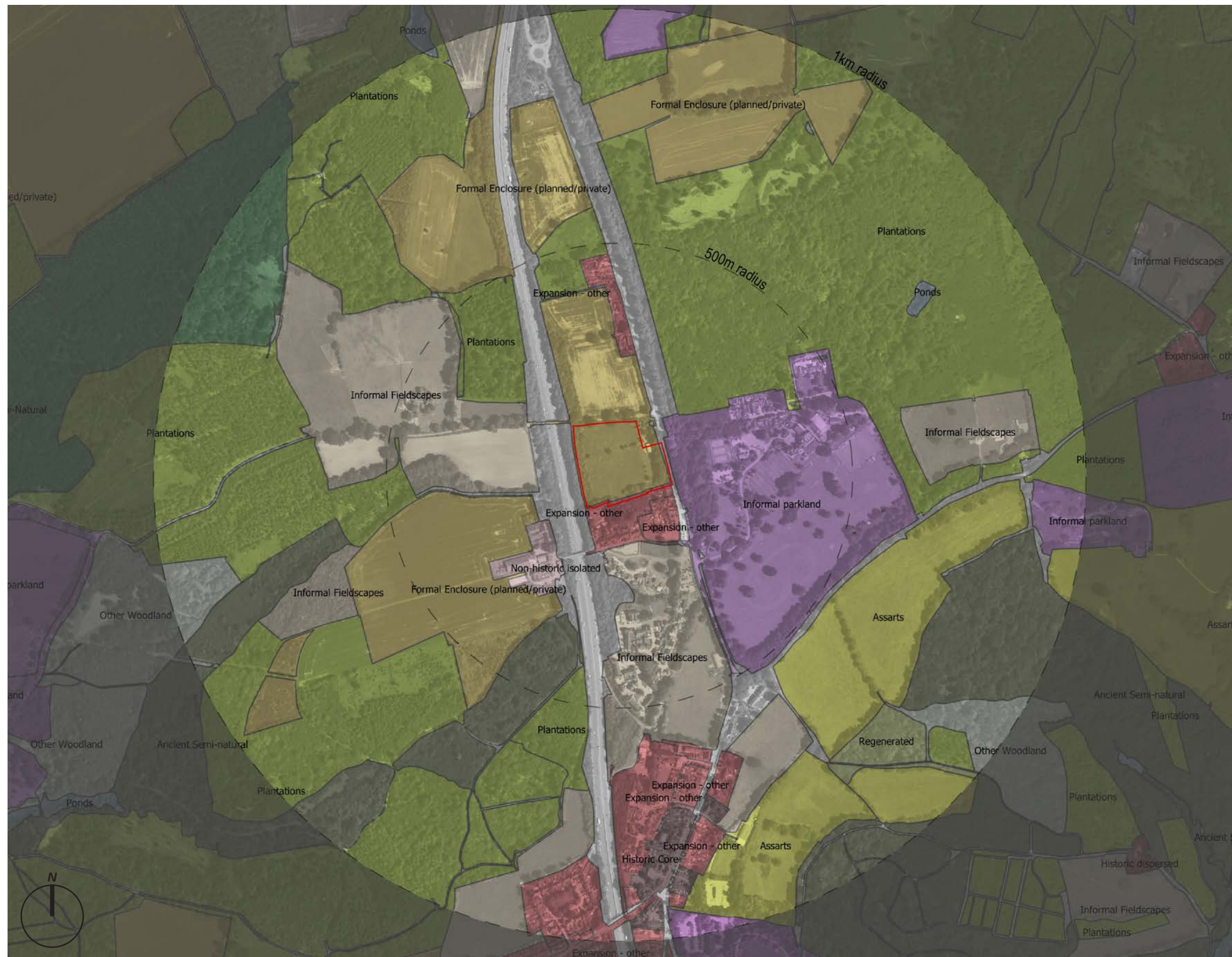
3.10 Landscape and visual sensitivities identified within LCA 8 include the:

- *'Woodland and forest cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity;*
- *Large blocks of assart pastures impart breadth and depth to the scenic quality to the landscape;*
- *Heathland remnants and significant areas of rich woodland biodiversity are vulnerable to loss and change;*
- *Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths provides a rich terrain for horse-riding, cycling and walking and for the appreciation of nature;*
- *Sparse settlement pattern currently sits well within the rural landscape although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.'*

3.11 Key issues and trends for LCA 8 include the:

- *'Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing;*
- *Extensive planting of coniferous forest on former ancient woodland;*
- *Spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron;*
- *Reduction of heathland to a few pockets due to cessation of grazing management and subsequent woodland invasion and woodland re-planting;*
- *Continuing pressures for urban development on the northern fringes of the area and an attendant increase in the pervasiveness of traffic movement and noise;*

- *Visual impact of pylon lines and modern farm buildings;*
 - *Increasing pressures for a variety of recreational activities;*
 - *Perceived increased traffic levels on rural roads with consequent demands for road improvements.*
 - *Gradual loss of locally distinctive building styles and materials;*
 - *Gradual suburbanisation of the landscape including the widespread use of exotic tree and shrub species.'* (Ibid, p95)
- 3.12 Land management guidelines are headlined with: 'Conserve and enhance the secluded, tranquil nature of the forest and the agricultural landscape, and the unobtrusive settlement pattern throughout the area.' The following guidelines are presented:
- *'Conserve the forest and its seclusion for scenic, nature conservation and recreational purposes, plan for long-term woodland regeneration, and promote a diverse mosaic of woodland types;*
 - *[...] Maintain and restore the historic pattern and fabric of the agricultural landscape;*
 - *Conserve, strengthen and manage existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees and re-plant hedgerows where they have been lost;*
 - *[...] Enhance the biodiversity of woodland rides and glades and reduce rhododendron invasion and bracken cover;*
 - *[...] Maintain and manage all lakes and ponds and their margins for their landscape diversity and nature conservation value;*
 - *Protect the character of rural roads and manage road verges to enhance their nature conservation value;*
 - *Minimise the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.'*
- Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (HDA, 2007)**
- 3.13 The aim of the Hankinson Duckett Associates produced Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study was to: 'inform the Core Strategy by identifying where strategic development might be accommodated within the District without an unacceptable impact on landscape character in general...'
- 3.14 The 2007 Study identifies broad Zones within which areas surrounding settlements are defined. The Study Area falls within Zone 7- Handcross and Balcombe, described as follows:
- 'Handcross is situated on a high point to the south of Crawley, at the western edge of the study area. The busy A23 road cuts north-south through the settlement. The surrounding land slopes quite steeply away from village in most directions and features a substantial amount of woodland. North facing slopes to the northeast of Handcross are gentler and feature pasture, paddocks and recreation in between the surrounding blocks of woodland. Gaps in the woodland to the west are mainly occupied by arable fields. [...]'*
- 3.15 The 2007 Study undertook a landscape character assessment to identify landscape character types and areas, focused on areas surrounding existing settlement, to provide a framework for the subsequent identification of landscape sensitivity, value and capacity.
- 3.16 Assumptions have been made in the Study as to the likely built form of any new development areas, to assess the landscape sensitivity. *'It has been assumed that buildings would be largely 2 or 3 storeys in height with occasional landmark buildings of 4-5 storeys. There would be open space provision and a strong landscape framework with tree planting of appropriate scale, area and design to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape.'*
- 3.17 The Site is located to the eastern edge of an area characterised as the Pease Pottage - Handcross High Weald Landscape Character Area, (LCA 19), (see extract within **Appendix E**). This area is judged by HDA to have a Low landscape capacity for their scenario of development.
- 3.18 The Sensitivity criteria, description and score are identified as follows:
- *'Inherent Landscape Qualities: 'Significant woodland blocks. Moderate hedgerow network.'* (Substantial);
 - *Contribution to distinctive landscape settlement: 'Fairly indistinct setting to Pease Pottage and Handcross.'* (Slight);
- *Inconsistency with existing settlement form / pattern: 'Overall inconsistent with Handcross and Pease Pottage.'* (Substantial);
 - *Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape: 'Moderate-low due to urban influence.'* (Moderate);
 - *Contribution to separation between settlements: 'Overall separation between Crawley, Pease Pottage and Handcross..'* (Moderate).'
- 3.19 As a result of these factors the 2007 Study identifies LCA 19 as having overall Substantial sensitivity to new development. This results in a Low capacity further to consideration of Moderate value on page 35 of the report, due to the overlying AONB, significant Ancient Woodland, and presence of Conservation Area. The Study suggests that in a landscape with Low capacity:
- '[...] development would have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the landscape as a whole and, or, on the setting to existing settlement or outstanding assets within the District. Development in these character areas should only be small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or wider landscape.'* (Ibid, p49)
- 3.20 The 2007 Study provides a caveat within its conclusions that:
- 'Where capacity for development within the identified character areas varies, proposals would need to respond to site-specific constraints. In such cases development proposals should respond to the character areas inherent landscape sensitivity and take account of its setting and potential impacts on the surrounding landscape'* (Ibid, p54).
- The Capacity of Mid Sussex to accommodate Development (LUC, June 2014)**
- 3.21 Mid Sussex District Council produced an updated capacity study to form part of the evidence base for the emerging district plan. The Land Use Consultants (LUC) 2014 Study aim was to: 'provide a detailed and robust assessment of the constraints to development in Mid Sussex District, in order to understand the capacity of the District to accommodate development and identify the most sustainable areas for development.'

**Legend**

Development Site Boundary

Figure 3.1. Sussex Historic Landscape Character Types

3.22 The 2014 Study reviews the earlier capacity levels, with the seven point scale simplified to five. The Negligible and Low capacity ratings in the 2007 Study are combined into one level of Low capacity, described as indicative that *'development is likely to have a significant and adverse effect on the character of the landscape area as a whole and is thus unsuitable for strategic scale development.'*

3.23 Following the simplified capacity rating scale, the 2014 Study defines an improved Low / Medium capacity to accept change. This rating is described as follows:

[...] indicates that development is likely to have an adverse effect on most of the character area and while smaller development may be possible in a very few locations within the character area, it will not be suitable for strategic scale development.' (Ibid, p47)

High Weald Landscape Character Assessment (Countryside Commission, 1994)

3.24 Through reference to the 1994 Characterisation, the Study Area is located within the Western High Weald Character Area. Key characteristics are identified as follows:

'Landform - This area is dominated by the forest ridge in the north, which is itself broken up into a series of smaller ridges and valleys. On the northern and western fringes of this ridge, the land flattens out as the sandstone of the High Weald runs into the clays of the Low Weald. Elsewhere there is a network of intimate ghylls and ridges, through which the smooth-sided valley of the River Ouse runs eastwards.'

'Shaws with pines - Thick shaws, along roadsides and around field edges, are a common feature across most of the AONB, but in the Western High Weald these are distinguished by the abundance of Scot's pine and holly within them. This is particularly noticeable around Slaugham and Warninglid.'

'Purple Rhododendron - The vigorous purple rhododendron, (Rhododendron ponticum) first made its escape from local gardens into the Sussex countryside, in the nineteenth century. It has become so well established that in places such as between Handcross and Turners Hill, it lines the roadsides, giving a formal, park-like feel and a vivid splash of purple blossom in early summer.'

'Hedgerow Trees - Where the traditional pattern of thick shaws between fields does not exist, it is typical to find narrow hedgerows regularly punctuated by mature oaks, or sometimes ash, trees. In some areas the hedgerows themselves have been lost and these great, spreading trees may be all that remain to indicate the old field boundaries, isolated in a sweep of grass or corn.'

'Sandstone outcrops - The soft nature of the underlying sandstone in this area has allowed considerable erosion to occur, especially where tracks or streams have worn deep into the ground over the centuries. This has resulted in the frequent exposure of sandstone outcrops, varying in colour from pale yellow to dark brown and often netted over by a thick web of tree roots.'

'Large tracts of dense woodland - Most of the woodlands which dominate the northern sandstone ridge are commercial conifer plantations, interspersed with sweeps of birch or beech woodland. These woods form a dense, dark belt of trees, which confine views and displace farmland as the major land-use in the north.' (Ibid, p12-13)

Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development (Waygood Colour, September 2017)

3.25 The purpose of the Guidance produced on behalf of the High Weald AONB Partnership is to provide direction and guidance on the selection and use of colour in development within the High Weald AONB.

3.26 The Guidance provides an analytical approach to the identification of: *'... 'developed palettes' of colour appropriate to a range of building materials and finishes, which will help integrate new development into the landscape.'* Principles of exterior colour design are identified including the following:

'Is the development 'background architecture' or 'signature architecture'? - Small scale domestic development, village expansion, and developments associated with farming and rural industries will often be designed to fit within the grain, colour and texture of the local environment. / Signature buildings may have a presence and scale which allows a more dynamic use of colour and materials, interacting with, and complementing the landscape setting, but also standing out against it [...];'

Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (Bannister, August 2010)

3.27 The Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation, (2010) comprises a GIS data set together with a set of supporting reports and technical guides. The data provides a broad-brush approach to interpreting the historic time-depth of areas, which was based on a desk-based exercise with no checking in the field. Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) identified across the Study Area are shown within **Figure 3.1**.

3.28 This shows that the Site area comprises the southern of three fields along the western edge of London Road, resulting from formal enclosure. An area of settlement expansion extends to the south of this, and about the north eastern corner of the northern field, with an area of plantations intervening before the third more northerly offset field.

3.29 Further settlement expansion is offset to the south about the historic core of settlement within Handcross. The intervening area is characterised in 2010 as an informal fieldscape. However, since the characterisation was undertaken this intervening area has been developed by 2020 with commercial development to the south, housing and a Primary Care Centre to the north eastern corner.

3.30 The transport corridors of the A23 to west and London Road to the east are not characterised. A patchwork of woodland characterised as Plantations extends beyond to east and west with some belts and blocks of Ancient Woodland offset to south east and south west. There are various fieldscapes resulting from assarts, informal and formal enclosure between the patchwork of woodland.

3.31 Offset east of the Site beyond London Road is an area of Informal Parkland.

**Legend**

-  Development Site Boundary
-  Watercourse, (Source: OS Open Rivers)

Level above Ordnance Datum, (aOD)

-  110-150m aOD
-  150m aOD

Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is an airborne mapping technique, which uses a laser to measure the distance between the aircraft and the ground. Up to 100,000 measurements per second are made of the ground, allowing highly detailed terrain models to be generated.

The content of this LiDAR plan is sourced from the Environment Agency as digital elevation data supplied as a Digital Terrain Model to 1m, (2024) through QGIS.

Figure 4.1. Landform

4.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS - FIELD SURVEY AND REVIEW

Landscape Character Baseline

- 4.1 At National scale the Study Area is located within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122, 2022) and the High Weald National Landscape. Identified positive landscape qualities of NCA 122 include strong vernacular architecture; small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows, shaws and woodlands; ancient woods and gill woods; heritage assets and historic environment features and elements; and tranquillity.
- 4.2 Regarding proposed development within the High Weald NCA opportunities are identified including, to ensure that sense of place is maintained by making reference to local vernacular building styles and materials, and settlement patterns and ensuring green infrastructure is included to bring about multiple benefits for people and the environment.
- 4.3 Within The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029, the High Weald National Landscape is described as one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features, including: Dispersed historic settlement; Small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods; Dark night skies; and perceptual qualities including intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity.
- 4.4 At County scale the Site is located within the High Weald Forests Landscape Character Area (HW2, 2003) described with landscape and visual sensitivities including a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity resulting from woodland cover, unobtrusive settlement pattern in most parts, large blocks of assart pastures on the ridges and valley sides which imparts breadth and depth to the scenic quality to the landscape and settlement pattern which sits well within the rural landscape.
- 4.5 At District scale the Site is located within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005) described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest.

4.6 The woodland and forest cover is described as limiting the visual sensitivity of the landscape, whilst resulting in a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity, whilst large blocks of assart pastures are described as imparting breadth and depth to the scenic quality to the landscape. The sparse settlement pattern is described as currently sitting well within the rural landscape, although there is a danger of the cumulative visual impact of buildings and other structures.

4.7 Management guidelines are provided for development within LCA 8 to conserve and enhance the secluded, tranquil nature of the forest and the agricultural landscape, and the unobtrusive settlement pattern throughout the area, whilst minimising the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.

Landform, Soils and Hydrology

4.8 Through reference to **Figure 4.1**, landform across the Study Area falls from a ridge of high ground about the 150m contour to the south east westwards and north westwards towards a series of sunken gill landforms which extend in a south westerly alignment named Hyde Gill to the north west and Darkalley Gill to the west. These gills fall to some 110m to the south west of the Study Area.

4.9 Landform within the Site falls from some 146m aOD along the eastern edge of the Site along London Road to some 143m aOD in the south western corner of the Site and 142m aOD in the north western corner of the Site. A ditch extends along the western edge of the Site east of an earth embankment which defines the western boundary, both of which are located within a belt of deciduous woodland associated with the A23 cutting beyond to the west.

4.10 Soil type across the Study Area is understood through reference to the Soils Map, (produced by Cranfield University, with support from Defra) to comprise: '*Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils*'. A general indication of the plant communities and habitats with which this soil type is associated with include: '*Neutral and acid pastures and deciduous woodlands*'. Through reference to the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification, the land within the Site and surrounds to the north east is provisionally classified as Non agricultural, with that to the south west of the Site and beyond classified as Grade 3.

Field Pattern and Time Depth

- 4.11 Through reference to the Ordnance Survey Maps provided within **Appendix A**, the boundaries of the field to north, east and south were in place by 1879, forming part of a series of fields resulting from formal enclosure, which extended along the western edge of London Road, within which there were dispersed dwellings and farms accessed off London Road and a large dwelling within designed landscape labelled Handcross Park offset south east of the Site.
- 4.12 By 1899 the large dwelling was replaced with a range of large buildings offset north east of this, whilst cottages offset south of the Site are shown increased in number named Hoadlands Cottages, with an adjacent school. By 1963 further complexes of built form occurred in proximity to these two clusters of built form.
- 4.13 Within the late 1980s the A23 cutting extended offset west of London Road subdividing the landscape, albeit with access bridges in places. By 2025 built form extended north from the village of Handcross to connect with those about Hoadlands.

Settlement Pattern and Built Form

- 4.14 The historic settlement pattern of Handcross is focused about London Road, offset some 800m to the south of the Site. The area about the Site has been subject to development within the late C19, when the Hoadlands Cottages and Handcross Primary School were built off the south-eastern corner along London Road, and Wykeham Hall, (later Handcross Park School) was rebuilt offset to the east along College Close.
- 4.15 Expansion of residential built form occurred by the 1960s west of the Primary School and offset to the south, north of the historic core of settlement within Handcross. The intervening area was developed by 2020 with a mixture of commercial and residential development and a Primary Care Centre to the north eastern corner, (see the Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (Bannister, August 2010), (see **Figure 3.1**) and the historic map regression, (**Appendix A**). The dispersed settlement pattern of cottages along London Road, north of the village of Handcross, and its C19/20/21 settlement expansion to Hoadlands Cottages include The Lodge, Nashlands Cottages and Oak Cottage.



Context Photograph A. Hyde Lodge, offset from the north east of the Site.



Context Photograph B. Dwelling offset some 200mm north of the Site along London Road.



Context Photograph C. Dwellings offset south of the Site along Hoadlands, with ivy cloaked box and beech hedge.



Context Photograph D. Hoadlands property - Showing cleft chestnut post and rail fencing delineated boundary alongside of solid steel parkland railing.



Context Photograph E. Hoadlands property - Showing orange clay tile hung upper and narrow brick lower, with sage green window frames and doors.



Context Photograph F. Hoadlands property - Showing mottled tile hung and brick facade.



Context Photograph G. More recent clipped hedgerow of beech with dispersed yew hedgerow



Context Photograph H. Modern dwellings tile hung with varied roof lines south of Hoadlands.



Context Photograph I. Ornate stone pillars to either side of the private gateway entrance to Handcross Park School.

4.16 At District scale diverse materials including timber framing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging are noted within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area, (LCA8, 2005). Wider context is provided within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122) including timber framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and traditional building materials of timber, tile, brick, Kentish ragstone and sandstone, which reflect the diversity of geology underpinning the area and add significant interest to the landscape generally.

Landscape Receptors

- 4.17 Existing character assessments are reviewed and interpreted for the Site. This review informs the identification of key characteristics associated with the character area that are most relevant to an appraisal of the proposal, (as recommended within GLVIA3, p79, Para 5.15).
- 4.18 The application Site forms part of a valued landscape in relation to Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework due to the location falling within the High Weald National Landscape.
- 4.19 However, there is not considered to be a strength of expression, or presence of distinctive characteristics associated with the relevant published landscape character areas or the High Weald National Landscape within or associated with the Site.
- 4.20 Components, which may include elements, features and areas where appropriate are defined to provide an understanding of the landscape both within the Site and at a wider landscape scale context, as follows:

Landscape Areas, Features and Aspects within the Site

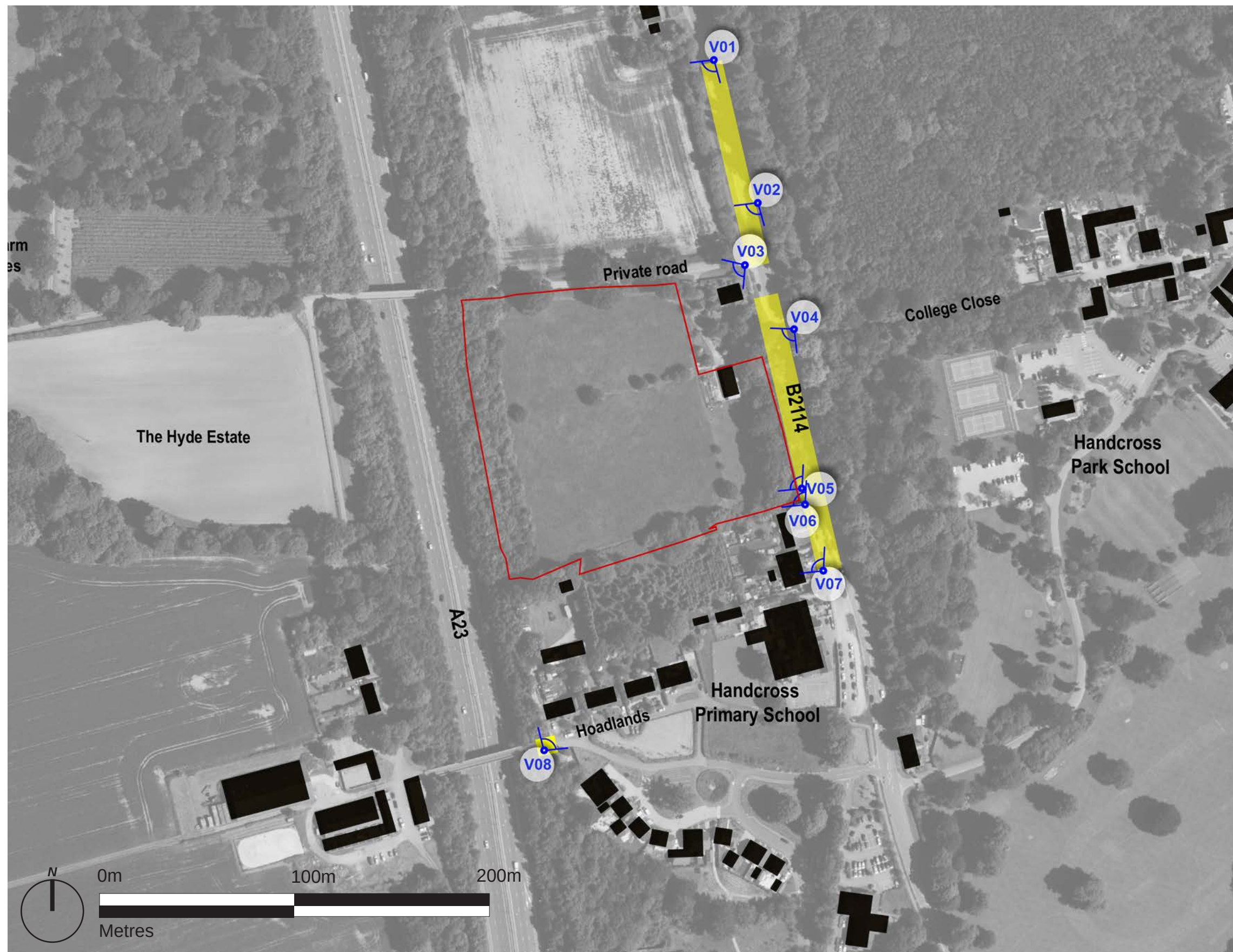
- Landform / Hydrology - The relatively level ground within the Site, falling by some 2 - 3m from the eastern to western edge, along which drainage ditches extend;
- Natural Heritage Character - The belt of hazel coppice which extends along the southern edge of the Site, with some dispersed mature trees within;

- Natural Heritage Character - The shaw of mixed trees along the eastern edge of the Site adjacent to London Road, including hornbeam with an understorey of holly and more occasional yew, and ponded area to the southern end of this;
- Natural Heritage Character - The mixed species hedgerow, including holly, hazel, wild privet and blackthorn along the northern edge of the Site, with a dispersed line of mature oak trees with veteran features along the verge of the access drive beyond;
- Natural Heritage Character - The belt of deciduous woodland to the west of the Site, comprising of scrub and trees about an embankment and ditch;
- Landscape Pattern - The local contribution of the field within which the Site is located to a pattern of two / three fields which extend north of Handcross along the western edge of London Road, identified by (Bannister, 2010) as resulting from formal enclosure, bisected from their earlier western extent by the A23 cutting in the 1980's.

Landscape Character and Wider Context

- Perceptual Qualities - The contribution to semi-rural character as perceived from London Road from the vegetation to north and east of the Site through which there is filtered glimpses of grassland and / or vegetation beyond;
- Settlement pattern / setting - The dispersed settlement pattern of cottages along London Road, north of the village of Handcross, and its C19/20/21 settlement expansion to Hoadlands Cottages including The Lodge, Nashlands Cottages and Oak Cottage;

- Landscape Character Distinctiveness - The distinctive character of the District Level - Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005) described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest, forming large blocks of assart pastures which impart depth to the scenic quality to the landscape;
- Distinctiveness / Special Qualities - The character and qualities of the High Weald National Landscape, (AONB) described within The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029, as one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features, including: Dispersed historic settlement; Small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods; Dark night skies; and perceptual qualities including intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity;
- Perceptual Aspects - The limited contribution from the brighter skies within the Site of some 1 - 2 Nanowatts, to offset areas of darker skies of some 0.5 - 1 Nanowatts some 300m east of the Site, (through reference to the CPRE night blight website). The Site area is influenced by the A23 corridor, which is well lit, (see **Appendix D**);

**Legend**

- Development Site Boundary
- Public Footpath
- V01 Viewpoint Location and Direction

Zone of Visual Influence, (ZVI)

- Areas of publicly accessible land where there is filtered visibility (when out of leaf) into the area above or within part of the Site or visibility of vegetation surrounding part of the Site.

Figure 4.2. Viewpoints and Zones of Visual Influence - Short Distance

Visual Amenity Baseline

- 4.21 Viewpoint locations referred to below are shown through reference to **Figures 4.2**. Viewpoint Photographs are provided within **Appendix B**. Receptors are identified as the persons experiencing the view, their occupation and any values associated with the view.

Nature of Visual Receptors

- 4.22 Southbound vehicular and pedestrian users of London Road, (B2114) are represented from offset south east of Nashlands Cottages to the north by **Viewpoint No. 01**, with glimpses through the roadside hedgerow when vegetation is out of leaf in places south of this leading south towards The Lodge, represented by **Viewpoint No. 02**. An illustrative glimpse where adjacent to The Lodge, on the junction with a private lane along the northern edge of the Site is provided by **Viewpoint No. 03**.
- 4.23 Those along the eastern edge of the Site along London Road are represented from the western end of College Close, (private) by **Viewpoint No. 04**, adjacent to where the proposed access to the north eastern corner of the Site would be located.
- 4.24 Where there is a gap in the vegetation about the south eastern corner of the Site, there is a glimpse into the Site, illustrated by **Viewpoint No. 05**. A further two viewpoints are provided south of the south eastern corner of the Site adjacent to the Hoadlands Cottages, illustrated by **Viewpoint's No. 06** and **07**, where there is visibility of the mature tree belt vegetation along the eastern edge of the Site.
- 4.25 A further glimpse towards the area above the Site when vegetation is out of leaf is provided from Hoadlands off the south western corner of the Site, illustrated by **Viewpoint No. 08**.

Susceptibility (based on occupation and expectation)

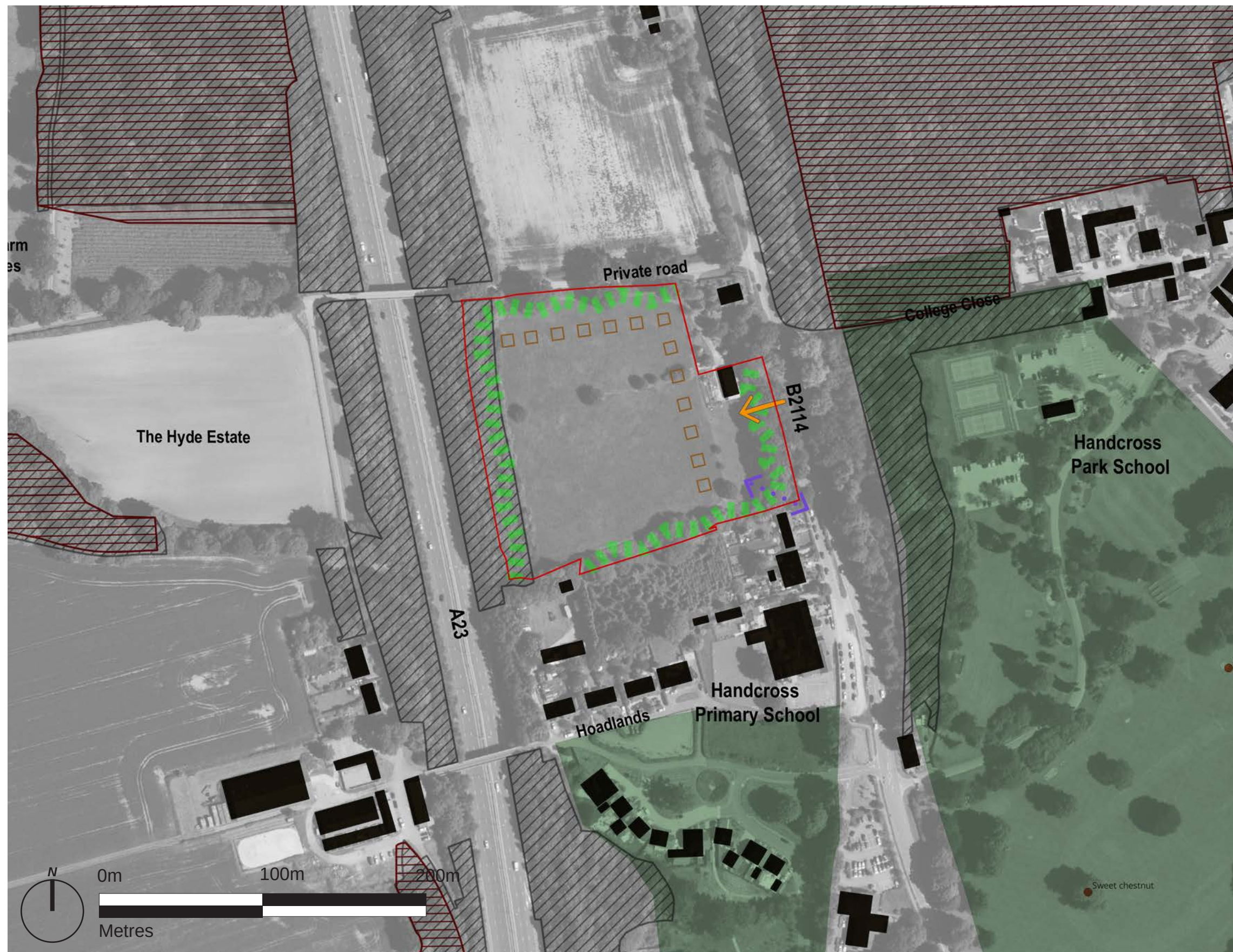
- 4.26 Road users or pedestrians which experience incidental views within a rural context have a **Medium-Low** expectation of visual quality, reduced where travelling at speed with a focus on the road or within a more suburban context.

Value (based on visual quality)

- 4.27 These users experience views of **Medium-Low** value primarily associated with the naturalistic elements of fields, hedgerows and trees.

Zone of Visual Influence

- 4.28 The Zone of Visual Influence, (ZVI), (see **Figure 4.2**) for the Site was derived from a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) determined as part of the field appraisal and desktop analysis of Ordnance Survey mapping, through reference to the Viewpoint photographs.
- 4.29 The ZVI is indicative of the areas of publicly accessible land where there is filtered visibility towards the Site area beyond perimeter vegetation. The following ZVI threshold is described within the key for **Figure 4.2**:
- The zone defined in yellow represents areas of publicly accessible land where there is filtered visibility (when out of leaf) into the area above or within part of the Site or visibility of vegetation surrounding part of the Site*
- 4.30 Filtered visibility towards the grassland area within the Site is substantially confined to the adjacent extent of London Road, (B2114) when vegetation is out of leaf and of the proposed location for the access road where more immediately adjacent.

**Legend**

Development Site Boundary

Designations

The High Weald National Landscape / Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Belt extends across this area.

- Ancient Woodland
- Deciduous Woodland UK Priority Habitat
- Tree Preservation Order

Landscape Analysis

- Anticipated vehicular access into the Site.
- Existing vegetation maintained, (other than for access road) and reinforced.
- Built facades to the northern and eastern edges of the Site would be provided with varied rooflines, to provide a softer edge to built form along the countryside boundary;
- Pedestrian and cycle path link provided to south east.

Figure 5.1. Landscape Analysis - Schematic Diagram

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

General

- 5.1 This section appraises the landscape and visual impacts which would result from the Scheme described in **Section 1.0**.
- 5.2 The appraisal considers the likely effects using the criteria provided within **Appendix C**, taking-into-account the value of the receptor and susceptibility to the magnitude of impact anticipated.
- 5.3 The appraisal is undertaken descriptively to maintain the narrative and present the logic as clearly as possible, supported by a tabulated assessment of effect for landscape character within **Table 5.1**, and visual amenity within **Table 5.2**.

Landscape Approach

- 5.4 The following measures present the contextual analysis and distinctive approach taken as part of the Scheme, defined through reference to **Figure 5.1**.
- 5.5 The contextual approach taken to avoid and reduce potential adverse effects from the Scheme are identified as primary measures, whilst additional opportunities are recommended as secondary measures to both further mitigate and enhance the approach taken.
- 5.6 The residual effects from both time dependent primary mitigation, and secondary mitigation (including enhancement measures) are considered within the appraisal of landscape and visual effects.

Contextual Approach Taken:

- **Avoid** - The access roads and built footprint of development would be maintained outside of the root protection areas of existing trees to the boundaries and the dispersed line across the Site;
- **Reduce** - A grassed attenuation basin would extend to the south western corner of the Site, forming part of an area of Open Space, including a Play Area and mown grass pathways;

- **Enhance** - The existing access through the woodland shaw to the south east of the Site would be modified to become a pedestrian and cycle path;
- **Reduce** - Built facades to the northern and eastern edges of the Site would be provided with varied rooflines, (such as half hipped / cat slide) and muted materials such as tile hung upper facades to provide a more deferential approach to the countryside boundary, and as glimpsed within filtered views from along London Road to the east, (see **Viewpoint's 01 - 06 within Appendix B**); This would reflect the principle of exterior colour design for 'background architecture' within the High Weald AONB provided within the Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development (Waygood Colour, September 2017)
- **Reduce / Enhance** - Built form would be of high quality and positively contribute to the character of the area, making reference to surrounding valued built vernacular, including timber framing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging highlighted within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122) and informed by the High Weald Housing Design Guide, (2019);

Additional Opportunities recommended by Lizard:

- **Reduce** - Any limited impact upon the dark night sky, relative to the Site location within an area of brighter skies should be limited by keeping lighting to a minimum and where required the use of lighting fixtures that direct light downwards below the horizontal, through reference should be made to the High Weald National Landscape Planning TAN: Dark Skies in the High Weald;

- **Enhance** - The clump of rhododendron along a section of the northern boundary hedgerow should be grubbed out with native species replanted, where removal occurs. This would reduce the spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron noted as an issue within LCA HW2, (2003) and LCA 8, (2005);
- **Enhance** - The belt of hazel coppice which extends along the southern edge of the Site could be partially extended out towards the open space about the play area, whilst rotational coppicing of the stools could be undertaken to maintain this characteristic habitat and the ground flora and fauna which it supports;
- **Enhance** - Hedgerow planting should be specified using mixed native species to support resilience to threats from pests and diseases, specified to include lower water demand species, (National Landscape Management Plan objective FH3);
- **Enhance** - Diversification of the grass sward could be undertaken, which would increase ecological diversity and sources of nectar for invertebrates in line with the Objectives of The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029;
- **Enhance** - Local timber materials from within sustainably managed woodlands within the High Weald National Landscape could be used for poles of post and wire fencing or chestnut cleft post and rail fencing where required, (which would support AONB Management Plan Objective W4).

TABLE 5.1 - ASSESSMENT SUMMARY TABLE - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER					
RECEPTOR	ASSESSMENT				
	VALUE	RECEPTOR SUSCEPTIBILITY	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	POTENTIAL EFFECTS / RESIDUAL EFFECTS
LANDSCAPE AREAS, FEATURES AND ASPECTS WITHIN THE SITE					
<i><u>Landform / Hydrology</u> - The relatively level ground within the Site, falling by some 2 - 3m from the eastern to western edge, along which drainage ditches extend;</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	MINOR ADVERSE / NEGLIGIBLE
<i><u>Natural Heritage Character</u> - The belt of hazel coppice which extends along the southern edge of the Site, with some dispersed mature trees within;</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE / MINOR BENEFICIAL
<i><u>Natural Heritage Character</u> - The shaw of mixed trees along the eastern edge of the Site adjacent to London Road, including hornbeam with an understorey of holly and more occasional yew, and ponded area to the southern end of this;</i>	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW	LOW	MINOR ADVERSE / NEUTRAL
<i><u>Natural Heritage Character</u> - The mixed species hedgerow, including holly, hazel, wild privet and blackthorn along the northern edge of the Site, with a dispersed line of mature oak trees with veteran features along the verge of the access drive beyond;</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE / MINOR BENEFICIAL
<i><u>Natural Heritage Character</u> - The belt of deciduous woodland to the west of the Site, comprising of scrub and trees about an embankment and ditch;</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
<i><u>Landscape Pattern</u> - The local contribution of the field within which the Site is located to a pattern of two / three fields which extend north of Handcross along the western edge of London Road, identified by (Bannister, 2010) as resulting from formal enclosure, bisected from their earlier western extent by the A23 cutting in the 1980's.</i>	LOW	HIGH	MEDIUM	HIGH	MODERATE ADVERSE
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND WIDER CONTEXT OF THE SITE					
<i><u>Perceptual Qualities</u> - The contribution to semi-rural character as perceived from London Road from the vegetation to north and east of the Site through which there is filtered glimpses of grassland and / or vegetation beyond;</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	MINOR ADVERSE - NEGLIGIBLE
<i><u>Settlement pattern / setting</u> - The dispersed settlement pattern of cottages along London Road, north of the village of Handcross, and its C19/20/21 settlement expansion to Hoadlands Cottages including The Lodge, Nashlands Cottages and Oak Cottage</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	MINOR ADVERSE
<i><u>Landscape Character Distinctiveness</u> - The distinctive character of the District Level - Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005) described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest, forming large blocks of assart pastures which impart depth to the scenic quality to the landscape;</i>	HIGH	LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
<i><u>Distinctiveness / Special Qualities</u> - The character and qualities of the High Weald National Landscape, (AONB) described within The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029, as one of the best-preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, derived from the essentially rural and small-scale landscape character, rich in wildlife and cultural features, including: Dispersed historic settlement; Small, irregular and productive fields, bound by hedgerows and woods; Dark night skies; and perceptual qualities including intimacy of scale, a sense of history and timelessness; rurality and tranquillity;</i>	HIGH	LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
<i><u>Perceptual Aspects</u> - The limited contribution from the brighter skies within the Site of some 1 - 2 Nanowatts, to offset areas of darker skies of some 0.5 - 1 Nanowatts some 300m east of the Site, (through reference to the CPRE night blight website). The Site area is influenced by the A23 corridor, which is well lit, (see Appendix D).</i>	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	MINOR ADVERSE / NEGLIGIBLE

Landscape Character Appraisal

- 5.7 The Study Area is located within the High Weald National Character Area, (NCA 122, 2022) and the High Weald National Landscape. At County scale the Site is located within the High Weald Forests Landscape Character Area (HW2, 2003). Regarding proposed development within the High Weald NCA opportunities are identified including to ensure that sense of place is maintained by making reference to local vernacular building styles and materials, and settlement patterns and ensuring green infrastructure is included to bring about multiple benefits for people and the environment.
- 5.8 At District scale the Site is located within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005) described as a heavily-afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest. Management guidelines are provided for development within LCA 8 to conserve and enhance the secluded, tranquil nature of the forest and the agricultural landscape, and the unobtrusive settlement pattern throughout the area, whilst minimising the effects of adverse incremental change by seeking new development of high quality that sits well within the landscape and reflects local distinctiveness.
- 5.9 Regarding settlement pattern and contribution to field pattern, the fields north of Handcross have been progressively subject to development throughout the late C19, mid C20 and more recently C21, which has resulted in a continuous extension of settlement between London Road and the A23 cutting to the west up to the southern boundary of the Site. The dwelling to the north eastern corner of the Site named The Lodge was in place by the late C20th.
- 5.10 The remaining field pattern, between the A23 cutting and London Road tapers towards a roundabout and slipway off the south bound A24 some 1km to the north. The field is enclosed by a tree belt along London Road to east, a mature clipped hedgerow with mature oak trees along a private access drive to The Hyde Estate to the north, part of the woodland and scrub belt about the A24 cutting to the west, and a coniferous treeline along the curtilage of Hoadlands Cottages to the south.

- 5.11 There is a local contribution from the field to a pattern of three fields which extend north of Handcross along the western edge of London Road, which are historically characterised by (Bannister, 2010) as resulting from formal enclosure. The field, beyond its eastern and northern boundary vegetation features does not have time depth within the landscape, having been separated from its former extent and association with woodland by the A24 in the 1980s.
- 5.12 **A Moderate adverse effect** would result on local field pattern and semi-rural character from the substantial loss of the grassland area within the Site and replacement with residential development.
- 5.13 Regarding settlement pattern, the development of the Site would be contiguous with that to the south, whilst not substantially disrupting the more dispersed settlement pattern of cottages along London Road, north of the village of Handcross, including The Lodge, Nashlands Cottages and Oak Cottage.
- 5.14 The tree belt along the eastern edge of the Site would be maintained other than the clearance required to provide a vehicular access to the north east. There would be benefits to green infrastructure connectivity with reinforcement of boundary vegetation and a pedestrian and cycle path provided through the woodland shaw to the south east, re-purposing an existing informal gate access here.
- 5.15 Additional beneficial effects would result from the diversification of the grass sward within the Site, which would increase ecological diversity and sources of nectar for invertebrates in line with the Objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029. The clump of rhododendron along a section of the northern boundary hedgerow should be grubbed out with native species replanted, where removal occurs. This would reduce the spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron noted as an issue within LCA HW2, (2003) and LCA 8, (2005).
- 5.16 Within the Site there is not a strength of expression of the distinctive qualities characterised at District scale within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area (LCA 8, 2005).

Visual Amenity Appraisal

- 5.17 The assessment is undertaken through reference to the Viewpoint Photographs within **Appendix B** and the Zone of Visual Influence and Viewpoint Photograph Locations provided on **Figure 4.2**.
- 5.18 Filtered visibility towards the grassland area within the Site is substantially confined to the adjacent extent of London Road, (B2114) when vegetation is out of leaf and of the proposed location for the access road where more immediately adjacent.
- 5.19 Those along the eastern edge of the Site along London Road are represented from the western end of College Close, (private) by **Viewpoint No. 04**, adjacent to where the proposed access to the north eastern corner of the Site would be located. The density of the vegetation of the tree belt with understorey holly would heavily filter visibility into the Site area. At the point of the proposed access road however there would be a **Minor adverse effect** on visual amenity for pavement and road users of London Road.
- 5.20 Where there is a gap in the vegetation about the south eastern corner of the Site, there is a glimpse into the Site, illustrated by **Viewpoint No. 05**, where a further Minor adverse effect would occur from the replacement of the field with a glimpse of the proposed apartment block, albeit with legibility improved from the proposed cycle and pedestrian path through the woodland and onto the public open space to the south and south west of the Site.

Conclusion

- 5.21 A Moderate adverse effect would result on local field pattern and semi-rural character from the substantial loss of the grassland area within the Site and replacement with residential development.
- 5.22 The special qualities of the High Weald AONB within the wider Study Area of assorted field systems and ancient woodland would be maintained, with no adverse effect. There would be a local contribution to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 further to the recommendations provided within this report, including diversification of grassland swards, and control of invasive species.

TABLE 5.2 - ASSESSMENT SUMMARY TABLE - VISUAL AMENITY					
RECEPTOR	ASSESSMENT				
	RECEPTOR SUSCEPTIBILITY	VALUE	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	POTENTIAL EFFECTS / RESIDUAL EFFECTS
<i>VISUAL AMENITY FROM PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE LAND</i>					
Visual amenity for pavement and vehicular users of London Road, (B2114) offset south east of Nashlands Cottages, illustrated by Viewpoint No. 01;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
Visual amenity for pavement and vehicular users of London Road, (B2114), represented from offset north east of The Lodge by Viewpoint No. 02;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
Visual amenity for pavement and vehicular users of London Road, (B2114), where adjacent to The Lodge, on the junction with a private lane along the northern edge of the Site, illustrated by Viewpoint No. 03;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
Visual amenity for those along the eastern edge of the Site along London Road, represented from the western end of College Close, (private) by Viewpoint No. 04;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MINOR ADVERSE
Visual amenity where there is a gap in the vegetation about the south eastern corner of the Site, illustrated by Viewpoint No. 05;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MINOR ADVERSE
Visual amenity for those south of the south eastern corner of the Site adjacent to the Hoadlands Cottages, illustrated by Viewpoint's No. 06 and 07;	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
Visual amenity from Hoadlands off the south western corner of the Site, illustrated by Viewpoint No. 08.	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
The contribution of the Site to visual amenity from the southern corner of the Lawford Football Club Pavilion is illustrated by Viewpoint No. 08.	MEDIUM - LOW	MEDIUM - LOW	LOW	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE