
Ansty Garden Community

Environmental Statement

November 2023



ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT VOLUME 3: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ANSTY GARDEN COMMUNITY

ES VOLUME 3: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
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1.0

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by Fairfax Properties Ltd to carry out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the Environmental Statement prepared for the Proposed Development within the Ansty Garden Community Site and its surrounding area, in order to consider the likely physical and visual impacts arising as a result of the Proposed Development. This LVIA on its own forms Volume 3 of the Environmental Statement submitted as part of the Outline Planning Application for the Site.

This LVIA sets out landscape policy (together with any related policy on ecological and heritage assets) and any supporting guidance documents / informatives and then goes on to describe the constituent baseline landscape elements (the existing geology, soils, landform, drainage, vegetation cover, land use, settlement, the history of the landscape and the way that landscape is experienced) which together inform landscape character, landscape condition and value. The LVIA then describes the baseline character and amenity of the identified visual receptors (considering the visual envelope, the different groups of people, places affected, the nature of the view and the visual amenity). Any mitigation measures and assumptions which have informed the assessment of effects are set out after the description of the Proposed Development. The effects of the Proposed Development are then considered against each of the landscape and visual receptors relative to the particular stages of the Proposed Development.

The location of the Site is shown on Figure 1.1 on the following page. The study area for this LVIA is identified by the full extent of mapping illustrated on Figure 1.1. The Site is split into two parts:

- The Ansty Garden Community Site (98.75 ha). This is the land to the east of Ansty and south of the A272, which would accommodate the residential-led, mixed-use element of the Proposed Development; and
- Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve (103 ha). This is the land to the north of Ansty and west of Cuckfield, which is proposed as a Parkland Reserve.

The proposals for the Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve are anticipated to be minimal, involving the management of degraded habitats on the existing land, including the development of woody scrub and grassland areas, as well as regeneration within woodlands and pond restoration. Areas for dog walking, woodland trails and wildflower meadows will be provided. Once the initial management has been completed, the Parkland Reserve will be left to rewild, with close monitoring to evaluate habitat value and wildlife population requirements, creating a species and wildlife-rich habitat. This LVIA will, therefore, focus on the Ansty Garden Community part of the Site to the east of Ansty and south of the A272, which is proposed to accommodate the residential-led, mixed-use Proposed Development (hereafter referred to as the Site). Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve forms part of the study area for this LVIA as identified on Figure 1.1 on the following page.

A full methodology for this LVIA is set out at Appendix V3.1.

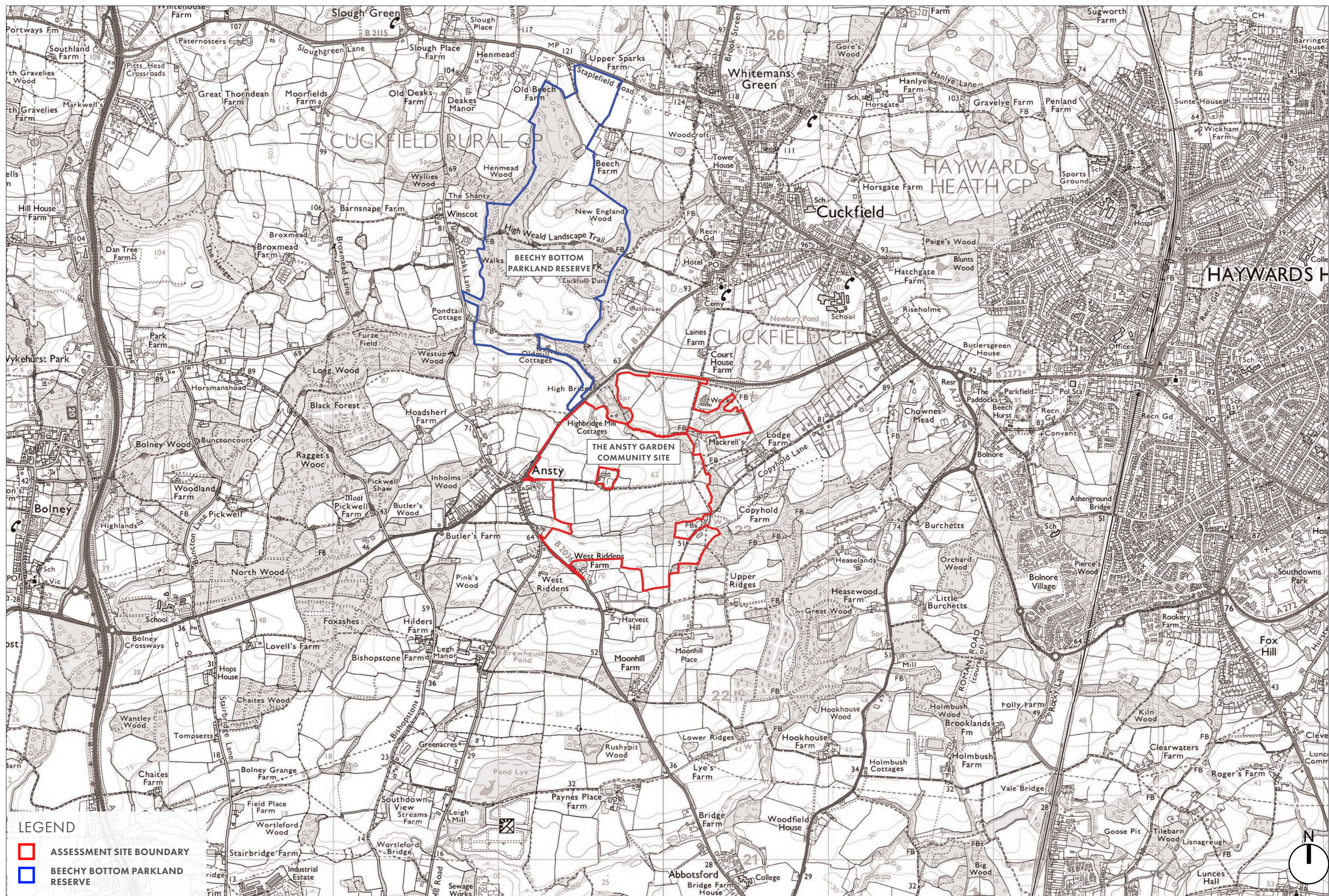
1.2 DESKTOP RESEARCH

The desktop survey carried out as part of the LVIA included the review of Ordnance Survey maps, interactive maps, aerial photography, published landscape character assessment documents, planning policy and the emerging development proposals. The extent of the baseline and therefore the impact appraisal is broadly defined by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) as determined by the initial desk study and verified in the field and therefore extends up to 3km from The Site as illustrated by the full extent of the plan shown at Figure 1.1.

The desk top assessment also identified any likely changes to the current baseline situation which are likely to be in place prior to the Proposed Development proceeding.

1.3 FIELD WORK

The field work was carried out on 9th February and 2nd March 2023 and recorded the existing landscape elements within The Site; the contextual landscape elements; and identified a series of key visual receptors. The visual assessment element includes a photographic survey of The Site taken from a series of representative key views, chosen to represent a range of locations including both public and private views, distances and directions around The Site. The selection of representative key views has been based on the professional judgement of the author. The weather conditions and camera lens were also recorded.



KEY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Legislation

The following are pertinent to landscape and visual matters:

- European Landscape Convention (ELC, 2000) - ratified by the UK confirming the importance and role of the landscape as used and enjoyed by the public. The ELC has informed GLVIA3 and professional guidance regarding LVIA;
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 - This sets out the general duty of public bodies *“in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty”*; and
- Section 89 of the CROW Act 2000 (as amended by the NERC Act 2006) - sets a requirement for a conservation board to *“prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it”*.

2.2 PLANNING POLICY

2.2.1 LEGISLATION AND LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

Designations

The Site lies within the District of Mid Sussex. Figure 2.1 illustrates the landscape related policies and designations of relevance to The Site and study area. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a designation of national significance, is located immediately to the north west of The Site. The boundary of which is defined by the A272 corridor, which also forms the north western boundary of The Site.

There are no landscape designations within The Site at the national, regional or local level, and it does not lie within a strategic viewing corridor covered by planning policy. The Site contains approximately 7.3 ha (18 acres) of Ancient Woodland Inventory as ‘Ancient and Semi-natural woodland’ listed by Natural England. Much of the remaining woodland is identified as deciduous woodland that is in the Priority Habitat Inventory, which identifies the locations and extent of habitats of principal importance for biodiversity conservation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

A Local Wildlife Site (LWS) abuts the south eastern boundary of The Site. Within the wider study area, the Local Nature Reserves of Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow are located 1.3km/0.8 miles and Ashenground Road and Bolnore Woods are located 1.6 km/0.9 miles to the east of The Site.

Historic and Cultural Landscape:

The Place and the Barn to the North of Forsyth’s Farmhouse are both Grade II listed and located centrally to The Site but are excluded from the red line boundary. The Barn is now in a separate residential use, having been converted in the 1980s. The former farmstead group now comprises three distinct residential properties: The Place, the Barn to the North of Forsyth’s Farmhouse (both Grade II listed) and The Grainloft (not listed).

There are a number of other listed buildings situated within the study area at varying distances from The Site. These are as follows:

- Listed building Group at Ansty Cross: The Old Cottage, the Ancient Farm and Mount Noddy Cottage (Grade II) approximately 90-100m to the west of The Site;
- Highbridge Mill (Grade II) approximately 50m to the north west of The Site;
- Cuckfield Park and its Gatehouse (both Grade II*) and its associated Summerhouse, Gazebo, Walls and Lodge (all Grade II) within its grounds approximately 400m to the north of The Site;
- Numerous listed buildings of varying grades within Cuckfield approximately 600m to the north of The Site. Most notable in relation to The Site is the Grade I listed Parish Church of Holy Trinity approximately 580m from the northern Site boundary;
- Mackrell’s Cottage (Grade II) and Lodge Farmhouse (Grade II) approximately 40 - 90m to the east of The Site;
- HarvestHill (Grade II) approximately 230m to the south, Upper Ridges / Moonhill Place (Grade II) approximately 415m to the south and West Riddens Farmhouse (Grade II) approximately 40m to the south of The Site.

Cuckfield Conservation Area lies to the north of The Site and comprises unique features of Sussex villages with Victorian, Regency and medieval architecture. There are numerous listed buildings within the village.

Heaselands Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden is located approximately 590m to the south east of The Site. A house and garden have been present here since 1874 and the listing is described as *“a mid to late C20 plantsman’s garden with formal elements and extensive ornamental woodland.”*

Public Rights of Way Context

A number of public rights of way cross The Site and provide foot and cycle connections between Ansty, Cuckfield and the surrounding landscape. Within The Site, routes include:

- PRoW Footpath 62CR, running east-west through the centre of The Site;
- PRoWs Footpath 8bCU, 65CR, 69CR, 71CR, 72CR, 103CR and PRoWs Bridleway 68CR and 73CR all running north - south through the eastern part of The Site and connecting to the wider landscape beyond.

Within the surrounding landscape of the study area, the following routes are of note:

- PRoW Footpath 9CU, which runs adjacent to the north eastern boundary of The Site;
- PRoW Bridleway 67CR and 50bCU along Copyhold Lane and Footpaths 66CR and 49CU to the east of The Site;
- PRoW Bridleway 78CR and Footpaths 72CR, 74CR, 79CR, 80CR and 77CR to the south of The Site;
- PRoW Footpaths 75CR, 76CR, 60CR, 58CR and Bridleway 59CR;
- PRoW Footpaths 3aCU, 5CU, 6aCU and 8aCU to the north of The Site.

Ansty Cricket Ground and Recreation Ground are located to the west of The Site with Cuckfield Cricket Ground located to the north west of The Site.

2.2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The September 2023 NPPF seeks the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following issues and policies of the NPPF are pertinent to the

Proposed Development and this LVIA.

Section 2 deals with achieving sustainable development. At para 8, subsection c relating to an environmental objective, it states: *“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change...”*

Section 8 deals with promoting healthy and safe communities, para 98 under the open space and recreation sub-heading states that: *“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support effects to address climate change...”*

Para 100 goes on to say that: *“Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”*

Section 12 sets out the requirements for achieving well-designed places. Para 126 states that: *“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities...”*

Para 127 states that: *“Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics.”*

Para 130 goes on to state that: *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

Para 131 deals with trees and states that: *“Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to*

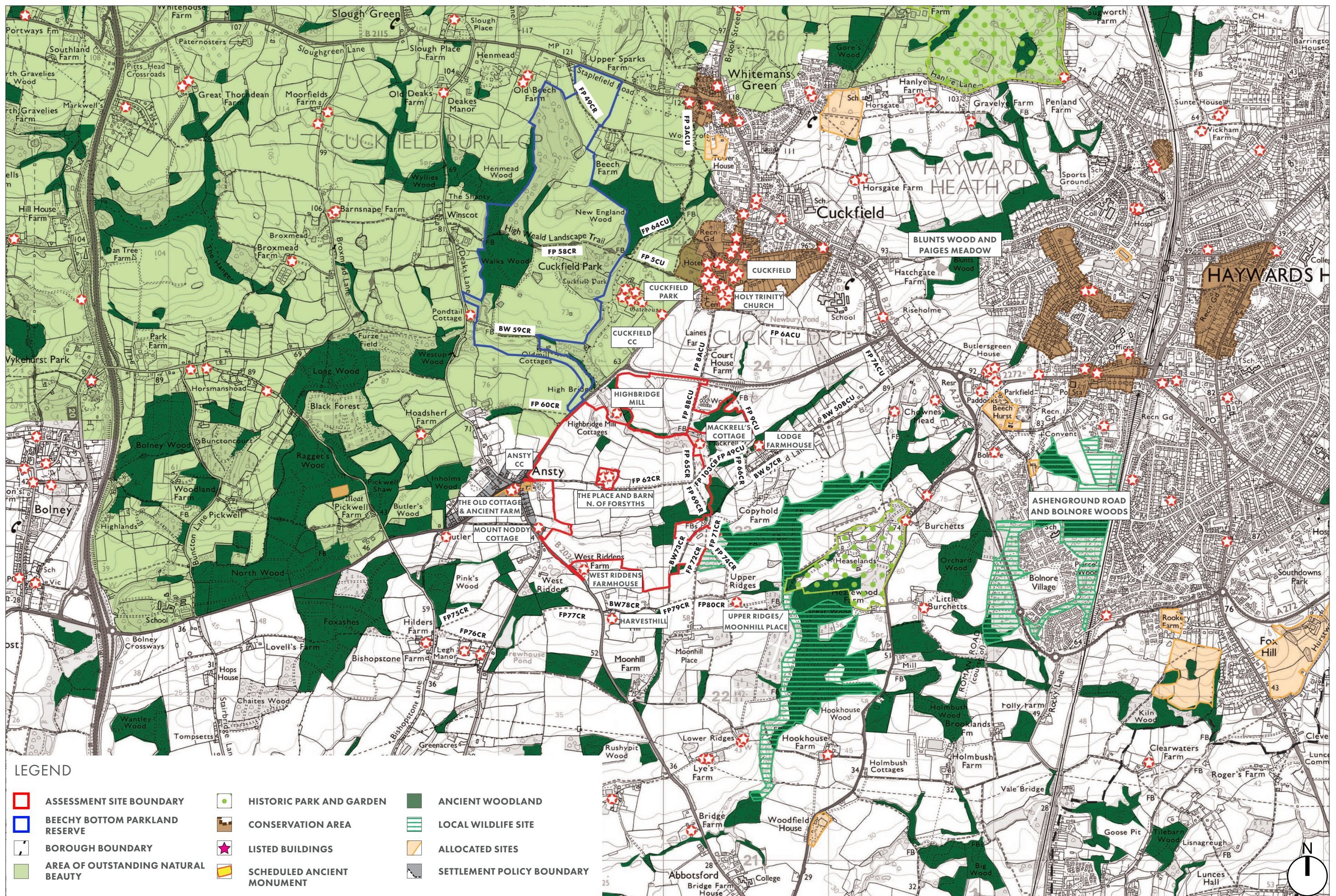


FIGURE 2.1 – LANDSCAPE RELATED POLICIES AND DESIGNATIONS PLAN (FABRIK, 2023)

KEY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSIDERATIONS

secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planed in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.”

Para 132 sets out that: “Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals.”

Section 14 covers meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The elements relevant to landscape matters include para 154 states that: “New development should be planned for in ways that:

- a Avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure;...

Para 141, subsection c goes on to state that: “using opportunities provided by new development and improvements in green infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, (making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques as part of an integrated approach to flood risk management.”

Section 15 deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Para 174 states that: “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the nest and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
- c maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it...”

Para 176 states that: “Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”

With regard to the sub-section on ground conditions and pollution, para 185 states that: “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- b Identify an protect tranquil areas which have remaining relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason;

c Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

Section 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Para’s 199 states that: “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation...”

Para 200 states that: “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks and gardens, should be exceptional;
- b assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and grade II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.”

2.2.3 PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) There are a number of sections that relate to this LVIA as set out below.

Climate change is considered in Section ID 6-001-20140306 (Revision date :15 March 2019). Paragraph 001 states that: “local planning authorities should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development. Addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking”.

Guidance on the natural environment is set out within Section ID 8-20190721 (Revision date: 21 July 2019). Paragraph 029 relates to trees and woodlands, and states that: “Well-placed and well-chosen trees on streets and in urban spaces can provide a range of benefits: encouraging walking and enhanced physical and mental health; contributing to local environmental character and distinctiveness; providing habitats for wildlife; reducing noise and excessive heat; and supporting sustainable drainage. Changing climate, in particular hotter summers and more frequent periods of dry weather, and unknown pests and diseases, will place new pressures on green infrastructure in the long-term, so trees of the right species and age profile are essential”.

Guidance on the historic environment is set out at Section ID 18a-20190723 (Revision Date: 23 July 2019). Paragraph 013 sets out that: “The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual / physical considerations Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places....The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights of way or an ability to otherwise access or experience that setting. The contribution may vary over time”.

Paragraph 036 of this section considers landscape and identifies that: “The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence...The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully”.

The guidance on design is set out at Section ID: 26-20191001 (Revision date 1 October 2019). Paragraph 001 under this section reiterates paragraph 130 of the NPPF and identifies that: “permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development”.

2.2.4 NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE

The National Design Guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. Paragraph 20 sets out the components of good design, including layout, form and scale, appearance, landscape, materials and detailing. The 10 characteristics of a well designed place are described in paragraph 35 as follows:

- “Context - enhances the surroundings.
- Identity - attractive and distinctive.
- Built form - a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement - accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature - enhanced and optimised.
- Public spaces - safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses - mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings - functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources - efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan - made to last”.

2.2.5 NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODE

The National Model Design Code forms part of the PPG expanding on the characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide.

2.2.6 LOCAL

Mid Sussex District Council’s relevant development plan policy is set out below.

2.0

KEY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSIDERATIONS

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN 2014 - 2031 (ADOPTED MARCH 2018)

The Plan sets out a vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved. It supports the NPPF’s ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. As such, it sets out broad guidance on the distribution and quality of development in the form of ‘higher level’ strategic policies. The following policies are of relevance to The Site and surrounding area:

Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

- Policy DP12 aims to deliver on the following Strategic Objectives:
- 3 “To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
- 11 To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination; and
- 15 To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations”.

The policy states: “The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:

- it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or
- it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment, the West Sussex County Council Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, the Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study and other available landscape evidence (including that gathered to support Neighbourhood Plans) will be used to assess the impact of development proposals on the quality of rural and landscape character.

Built-up area boundaries are subject to review by Neighbourhood Plans or through a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council.

Economically viable mineral reserves within the district will be safeguarded.”

Preventing Coalescence

Policy DP13 aims to deliver on Strategic Objective 2: “To promote well located and designed development that reflects the District’s distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence.”

The policy states: “The individual towns and villages in the District each have their own unique characteristics. It is important that their separate identity is maintained. When travelling between settlements people should have a sense that they have left one before arriving at the next.

Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements, and would not have an unacceptably urbanising effect on the area between settlements.

Local Gaps can be identified in Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council, where there is robust evidence that development within the Gap would individually or cumulatively result in coalescence and the loss of the separate identity and amenity of nearby settlements. Evidence must demonstrate that existing local and national policies cannot provide the necessary protection.”

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Policy DP16 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:
- 3 “To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and
- 11 To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination”;

The policy states: “Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, 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.

Small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.

Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.”

Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes

- Policy DP22 aims to deliver on the following Strategic Objectives:
- 5 “ To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes; and
- 15 To create places that encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle by the provision of first class cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure space and the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.”

The policy states:“Rights of way, Sustrans national cycle routes and recreational routes will be protected by ensuring development does not result in the loss of or does not adversely affect a right of way or other recreational routes unless a new route is provided which is of at least an equivalent value and which does not sever important routes.

Access to the countryside will be encouraged by:

- Ensuring that (where appropriate) development provides safe and convenient links to rights of way and other recreational routes;
- Supporting the provision of additional routes within and between settlements that contribute to providing a joined up network of routes where possible;

Where appropriate, encouraging making new or existing rights of way multi-functional to allow for benefits for a range of users. (Note: ‘multi-functional will generally mean able to be used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders).”

Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

- Policy DP37 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:
- 3 “To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
- 4 To protect valued characteristics of the built environment for their historical and visual qualities; and
- 5 To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes.”

The policy states: “The District Council will support the protection and enhancement of trees, woodland and hedgerows, and encourage new planting. In particular, ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees will be protected.

Development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that contribute, either individually or as part of a group, to the visual amenity value or character of an area, and/ or that have landscape, historic or wildlife importance, will not normally be permitted.

Proposals for new trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of suitable species, usually native, and where required for visual, noise or light screening purposes, trees, woodland and hedgerows should be of a size and species that will achieve this purpose.

Trees, woodland and hedgerows will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- incorporates existing important trees, woodland and hedgerows into the design of new development and its landscape scheme; and
- prevents damage to root systems and takes account of expected future growth; and
- where possible, incorporates retained trees, woodland and hedgerows within public open space rather than private space to safeguard their long-term management; and
- has appropriate protection measures throughout the development process; and
- takes opportunities to plant new trees, woodland and hedgerows within the new development to enhance on-site green infrastructure and increase resilience to the effects of climate change; and
- does not sever ecological corridors created by these assets.

Proposals for works to trees will be considered taking into account:

- the condition and health of the trees; and
- the contribution of the trees to the character and visual amenity of the local area; and
- the amenity and nature conservation value of the trees; and
- the extent and impact of the works; and

KEY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- any replanting proposals.

The felling of protected trees will only be permitted if there is no appropriate alternative. Where a protected tree or group of trees is felled, a replacement tree or group of trees, on a minimum of a 1:1 basis and of an appropriate size and type, will normally be required. The replanting should take place as close to the felled tree or trees as possible having regard to the proximity of adjacent properties.

Development should be positioned as far as possible from ancient woodland with a minimum buffer of 15 metres maintained between ancient woodland and the development boundary.”

Biodiversity

Policy DP38 aims to deliver on the following strategic objectives:

- 3 “To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and
- 5 To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure, green corridors and spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links and leisure and recreational routes.”

The policy states: “Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced by ensuring development:

- Contributes and takes opportunities to improve, enhance, manage and restore biodiversity and green infrastructure, so that there is a net gain in biodiversity, including through creating new designated sites and locally relevant habitats, and incorporating biodiversity features within developments; and
- Protects existing biodiversity, so that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Appropriate measures should be taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Unavoidable damage to biodiversity must be offset through ecological enhancements and mitigation measures (or compensation measures in exceptional circumstances); and
- Minimises habitat and species fragmentation and maximises opportunities to enhance and restore ecological corridors to connect natural habitats and increase coherence and resilience; and
- Promotes the restoration, management and expansion of priority habitats in the District; and
- Avoids damage to, protects and enhances the special characteristics of internationally designated Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation; nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Ancient Woodland or to other areas identified as being of nature conservation or geological interest, including wildlife corridors, aged or veteran trees, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and Nature Improvement Areas.

Designated sites will be given protection and appropriate weight according to their importance and the contribution they make to wider ecological networks.

Valued soils will be protected and enhanced, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, and development should not contribute to unacceptable levels of soil pollution.

Geodiversity will be protected by ensuring development prevents harm to geological conservation interests, and where possible, enhances such interests. Geological conservation interests include Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological

Sites.”

Character and Design

Policy DP26 states: “All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, 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;
- contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;
- 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;
- protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages;
- does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);
- creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;
- incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;
- positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;
- take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;
- optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.”

Other policies

Other policies pertinent to landscape and visual matters are listed below:

- Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities - sets expectations for delivery of sports pitches and play areas but does not quantify standards.
- DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets; and
- DP36: Historic Parks and Gardens.

REGULATION 18 MID SUSSEX DISTRICT PLAN 2021 - 2039 (CONSULTATION DRAFT, NOVEMBER 2022)

The Regulation 18 consultation draft of the Mid Sussex District Plan was published in November 2022 and sets out an updated vision for how Mid Sussex wants to evolve and a delivery strategy for how that will be achieved. Once adopted it would supersede the current District Plan. The emerging District Plan aligns with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and highlights a number of environmental characterstics and challenges and the relevant District Plan policies.

Protection of Designated Landscapes (e.g. AONB)

This is identified as a key strategy within the emerging plan aiming to meet Strategic Objective 3 - to protect valued landscapes and 11 - support Mid Sussex as a visitor destination. Emerging Policy DPC4: High Weald AONB is identified and is consistent with adopted policy DP16. Other emerging policies of relevance to this LVIA include:

- DPN1: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Recovery
- DPN2: Biodiversity Net Gain
- DPN3: Green Infrastructure
- DPN4: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- DPN5: Historic Parks and Gardens
- DPN8: Light Impacts and Dark Skies
- DPC1: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
- DPC2: Preventing Coalescence
- DPC3: New Homes in the Countryside

ANSTY, STAPLEFIELD AND BROOK STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015 - 2031 (ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2017)

The majority of The Site lies within the Ansty and Staplefield Parish. The Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan (ASBNP) forms part of the Development Plan for the local area. Policies relevant to The Site include the following:

AS1: New Housing Development

“The Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan area is subject to significant environmental constraints and as a result new housing should be focused within the Development Boundary of Ansty as identified in the proposal map. Other proposals for small scale housing development of up to 10 units, to meet identified local need will only be permitted subject to the criteria below and compliance with other policies within the plan, in particular AS2 and AS3:

- a The proposed development contributes to sustainable development;
- b Any application is supported by assessment of the environmental and visual impact of the proposal and include as necessary appropriate mitigation measures.
- c An application is supported by a robust assessment of the impact of the proposal upon the local highway network.
- d The proposal provides a mix of tenure types including private, social rented and shared equity (intermediate) to meet local housing need.

All other development proposals outside the Ansty Development Boundary will not be permitted unless:

- They comply with the countryside policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004 or the Mid Sussex District Plan once it is adopted; Or
- They relate to necessary utilities infrastructure where no reasonable alternative location is available.”

AS2: Preventing Coalescence

“Development proposals are expected to demonstrate that they would not result in the coalescence with any neighbouring settlement either individually or cumulatively or result in the perception of openness being unacceptably eroded between the following areas:

2.0

KEY LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Ansty and Burgess Hill
- Brook Street and Cuckfield
- Ansty and Cuckfield

Planning permission will not normally be granted for development which contributes towards the ad hoc or isolated development of dwellings outside the built up area, including infilling of built up frontages or linear development along roads.”

AS3: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
“Development proposals within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the neighbourhood plan area (as shown on the Proposals Map) must demonstrate how they address the requirements of the NPPF, policies of the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004 or the District Plan once it is adopted;

- conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB area; and
- demonstrate how they meet the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan; and
- for major development, proposals must include an assessment of:
 - a the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
 - b the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
 - c any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”

CUCKFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2011 - 2031 (ADOPTED MAY 2014)

The northern fields of The Site lies within Cuckfield Parish. The Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan (CNP) forms part of the Development Plan for the local area. Policies relevant to The Site include the following:

Policy CNP5: Protect and Enhance the Countryside
“Outside of the Built up Area Boundary, priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the countryside from inappropriate development. A proposal for development will only be permitted where:

- a It is allocated for development in Policy CNP 6 (a) and (b) or would be in accordance with Policies CNP 10, CNP 14 and CNP 17 in the Neighbourhood Plan or other relevant planning policies applying to the area, and
- b It would not have a detrimental impact on, and would enhance, areas identified in the Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment (summarised in Table 1) as having major or substantial landscape value or sensitivity, and
- c It would not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting of Cuckfield and
- d It would maintain the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points within, and adjacent to, the built up area, in particular those defined on Map 5, and
- e Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty it would conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty and would have regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

External Views
Although not specifically designated under a CNP policy, Map 5 within the CNP identifies a series of “external views” from the settlement to the wider landscape. Viewpoint 10 - Church and 11 - South Street East are identified as having partial views of the northern part of The Site on Map 5 in the CNP.

2.2.7 GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS / INFORMATIVES

HIGH WEALD AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019 - 2024

The High Weald AONB is described as: “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. Covering 1500 km² and close to London, this extensive area offers millions of people opportunity to experience the beauty of nature within a working countryside. It was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1983.”

The Management Plan coordinates policy and action, in order to: “Achieve the legal purpose of ‘conserving and enhancing natural beauty’ for the benefit of current and future generations.”

The plan describes the High Weald’s five defining components of character as:

- 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 inned river valleys.”

The Management Plan defines ‘Setting’ as: “The surroundings in which the AONB is experienced by people” and states: “The term ‘setting’ is used to refer to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within an AONB. Its extent will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB. Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB, and Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) emphasises that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside the AONB boundary.”

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (November 2020)
The Mid Sussex Design Guide has been produced to provide “clear design principles that aim to deliver high quality new development across Mid Sussex that is inclusive and responds appropriately to its context while prioritising sustainability in the design process. These principles are based on the policy framework provided by District Plan Policy DP26: Character and Design.” Landscape and green infrastructure provision are a key part of the Design Guide’s sustainability objectives:

- “Planning schemes around Green Infrastructure provision that is underpinned by: (a) healthy living and well-being principles; (b) helping to deliver a net gain in bio-diversity; (c) responding to the beauty of the natural landscape and ensuring that natural features are retained and enhanced; and
- Designing for adaptation and resilience to future weather events (drier/hotter summers and wetter/warmer winters).”

The Design Guide sets out a model design process, including information on landscape and settlement character and landscape designations within the District. It also sets out the expectations around how proposals should consider their landscape context in order to establish the structure of a Proposed Development.

High Weald Housing Design Guide (November 2019)
As The Site lies adjacent to the High Weald AONB, the above document is also pertinent. It notes that “delivering appropriate new housing development within the AONB, and on land that affects its setting, is a key part of local planning policy for the local authorities covering the High Weald and for qualifying bodies producing neighbourhood plans.”

The aim of the guide is to “ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity.” The guidance within this document should be considered alongside the Mid Sussex Design Guide.

PPG17 POS Assessment Update 2011/Mid Sussex Playing Pitch Study (August 2019)
These documents set out detail around expectations for Public Open Space and formal sports provision. More detail is set out in the landscape section of the DAS.

2.3 TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

The methodology for the LVIA is based on the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (third edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Routledge, 2013), which is considered best practice guidance for LVIA. Other Technical Standards and Guidance that this LVIA complies with include:

- TGN 06-2019 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (Landscape Institute, 2019);
- TGN 02-2021 Assessing landscape value outside national designations (Landscape Institute, 2021);
- TGN 2/19 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (Landscape Institute, 2019).

3.0

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A full detailed LVIA Methodology is set out in Appendix V3.1 describing the process applied and containing definitions of all criteria of relevance to this assessment. It is recommended that this is read in full or referenced for key definitions. A summary of the methodology used to determine the baseline and assess the landscape and visual impacts is provided below.

3.2 DETERMINATION OF THE BASELINE

Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. For example, often the assemblage of landscape elements contributes to informing the Zone of Theoretical Visibility and the degree of visibility from the range of visual receptors.

The baseline assessment describes:

- Each of the landscape elements which then collectively inform landscape character for the Site and its context;
- The character, amenity and degree of openness of the view from a range of visual receptors (either transient, serial or static views);
- The current and future baseline scenarios; and
- The value of each of the landscape and visual receptors.

3.3 PREDICTION METHODOLOGY

Landscape effects derive from either direct or in-direct changes to the physical landscape which may give rise to changes to the individual landscape components. This in turn effects the landscape character and potentially changes how the landscape is experienced and valued.

Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition, character and amenity of the view as a result of changes to the landscape elements.

The assessment of effects therefore systematically:

- Combines the value of the receptor with the susceptibility to the proposed change to determine the sensitivity of the receptor;
- Combines the size, scale, geographic extent, duration of the proposals and its reversibility in order to understand the magnitude of the proposal;
- Combines the sensitivity of the each of the receptors and the magnitude of effect to determine the significance of the effect;
- Presents the landscape and visual effects in a factual logical, well-reasoned and objective fashion;
- Indicates the measures proposed over and above those designed into the scheme to prevent/avoid, reduce, offset, remedy, compensate for the effects (mitigation measures) or which provide an overall landscape and visual enhancement;
- Sets out any assumptions considered throughout the assessment of effects; and
- Sets out residual effects.

Effects may be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) direct or indirect, residual, permanent or temporary short, medium or long term. They can also arise at different scales (national, regional, local or site level) and have different levels of significance (major, moderate, low, negligible or neutral / no change). Residual effects are those at year 15 considering any additional mitigation measures in place over and above those designed into the scheme and the maturation of the landscape proposals over that period of time.

The combination of the above factors influences the professional judgement and opinion on the significance of the landscape and visual effects.

The emphasis is placed on the narrative text describing the landscape and visual effects, and the judgements made about their significance, with tables and matrices used to support and summarise the descriptive text. The criteria and thresholds set out in the methodology are used to inform the assessment of effects. Ranges of criteria and thresholds are used in the assessment where appropriate, for example a National Character Area as a receptor covers a large geographic extent and may contain areas of low and high landscape value. Whilst the terms “low” and “high” are defined in the Methodology the assessment may consider the value of this receptor to be “low - high” to account for this variation. Whilst a “low-high” range is not specifically defined in the methodology, each of the thresholds and criteria are clearly explained, and therefore the logic to each range can be traced.

The cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with other committed developments will also be considered, as required by the EIA Regulations.

The combination of the above factors influences the professional judgement and opinion on the significance of the landscape and visual effects. The tables below summarise the methodology used to establish the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors, set out the criteria used to determine the Magnitude of Effects and then summarises the methodology used to combine the landscape/visual sensitivity of a receptor with the magnitude of effect to determine the significance of the effect. Full details on the criteria used to establish the value and susceptibility to change of landscape and visual receptors are set out in Appendix V3.1.

SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTORS

The assessment of landscape/visual sensitivity is combined through a judgement on the value attributed to that receptor (at the baseline stage) and the susceptibility of the receptor to the proposed change using the criteria as set out in Tables A1.3 and A1.4 in Appendix V3.1.

Table 3.1 below sets out the sensitivity matrix, with the sensitivity of receptor criteria set out as High, Medium and Low.

Table 3.1 - Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Matrix

		LANDSCAPE / VISUAL RECEPTOR SUSCEPTIBILITY		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
LANDSCAPE / VISUAL VALUE	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT JUDGEMENTS

The assessment of size / scale / geographic extent plus duration and reversibility are set out in Tables A1.6 - A1.9 (Appendix V3.1). These criteria are then combined based on the matrix as set out in Table 3.2 below, with criteria set out as High, Medium, Low and Negligible. Whilst it is acknowledged that these criterion differ slightly from that set out in Chapter 3 of this ES, the approach used is consistent with fabrik’s LVIA methodology, which accords with best practice guidance for LVIA set out in GLVIA3 and has been robustly interrogated through the planning process for a wide variety of schemes.

Table 3.2 - Magnitude Matrix

		DURATION AND REVERSIBILITY			
		LONG	MEDIUM	SHORT	VERY SHORT
SCALE	SUBSTANTIAL	HIGH	HIGH / MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW / NEGLIGIBLE
	SIZEABLE	HIGH / MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW / NEGLIGIBLE
	MODEST	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
	COMPACT	LOW / NEGLIGIBLE	LOW / NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE

3.0

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Sensitivity and Magnitude of Effect are considered alongside one another for each receptor, in line with Table 3.3 below, to draw conclusions on the significance of landscape and visual effects. The nature of the Proposed Development is a residential-led, mixed-use Garden Community with associated infrastructure, open space, sports facilities, community uses and landscaping. The significance of effects are considered at different stages of the project life cycle (e.g. during construction; at Year 1 of operation; and at Year 15 of operation).

The assessment of significance is subject to professional judgement and is rated on a scale of Negligible through to Major. Table 3.3 sets out a starting point for the assessment, it is important that a balanced and well reasoned professional judgement of these two criteria is provided with an explanation as set out in the detailed impact assessment tables in Appendix V3.2.

Table 3.3 - Significance Matrix

		LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
MAGNITUDE	HIGH	MAJOR	MAJOR	MODERATE
	MEDIUM	MAJOR	MODERATE	MODERATE - MINOR
	LOW	MODERATE	MODERATE - MINOR	MINOR
	NEGLIGIBLE	MINOR	MINOR - NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE

The judgement of significance indicates how important the effect is likely to be from a landscape and visual perspective. Effects of Major or Moderate significance are deemed 'significant'. These are highlighted in orange in Table 3.3 above. The lighter orange shade for "Moderate - Minor" effects highlights that effects within this category may either be significant (Moderate/Moderate-Minor) or insignificant (Minor) depending on the professional judgement applied. The significance of the assessment is described where necessary.

3.4 LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions will be made in relation to the assessment of effects:

- The assessment baseline year is 2023.
- Existing vegetation will continue to grow at rates typical of its location, species and maturity.
- For the visual assessment from residential properties, transport corridors and public rights of way, the receptor is a standing adult with an eye height of 1.75m.
- Visual effects are based on good visibility. Visual effects can be expected to vary, with poor visibility at times of low cloud, rainfall and at dusk. At these times a reduction in visual clarity, colour and contrast will be experienced. Reduced visibility will limit the extent of views, particularly long distance views. Therefore, the assessment of effects will present a worst case scenario, when the Proposed Development within The Site will be most visible.
- The visual assessment has been based on winter views only.
- The assessment is based on publicly accessible locations. Professional judgement is used to determine the likely effects from private properties.
- It is assumed that a CEMP will be required as a requirement of a Planning Condition. Construction effects have been assessed on the assumption a CEMP is in place.
- The Proposed Development within The Site is assumed to be built out in three phases, starting in 2025 and ending in 2032.
- A Scoping Opinion has not been sought from MSDC in relation to this LVIA or ES. The LVIA has therefore been prepared based on the scope and professional judgements made during the desktop and field based analysis of the Site and study area.

4.0

BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY RECEPTORS

4.1 BASELINE ASSESSMENT

4.1.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

The term ‘landscape’ commonly refers to the view or appearance of the land as perceived by people. Landscape applies to any natural, rural, urban or urban edge areas, in land, water and seascape areas.

Landscape character is the combination of both natural / physical, cultural / social and perceptual / aesthetic influences, which give rise to a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse and which define the ‘sense of place’. The landscape is not therefore simply a visual phenomenon.

The following sections set out the landscape character framework of the study area from the national level through to the district and parish scale based upon existing character assessments undertaken by Natural England, West Sussex County Council, Mid Sussex District Council and Cuckfield Parish Council. This character framework informs a professional judgement on the landscape value of each character area based on the methodology set out in Appendix V3.1.

National Landscape Character Assessment

The general character of the English countryside has been described at a national level by Natural England. The Site lies within the periphery of the area identified as NCA 122: High Weald, adjacent to NCA 121: Low Weald. The location of The Site in relation to these NCAs is shown on Figure 4.1.

The key characteristics of NCA 122: High Weald, pertinent to the study area described as:

- “A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber-framed buildings...
- Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips.
- An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths.
- Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long-term management.
- Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland.
- Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock

- grazing.
- A predominantly grassland agricultural landscape grazed mainly with sheep and some cattle.
- An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.
- High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials...”

The opportunities and landscape changes identified in the assessment pertinent to The Site and the study area are set out below:

- “Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets and contribute to biomass production.
- Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale, promoting benefits for water quality and water flow within all Wealden rivers, streams and flood plains by encouraging sustainable land management and best agricultural practices to maintain good soil quality, reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity and enhance sense of place...
- Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.
- Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, public understanding and enjoyment integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity, in accordance with the purpose of the High Weald AONB designation.”

Value: Low-High

County Character Assessment

The county level landscape character assessment was prepared and published in 2003 as part of the land management guidelines for West Sussex. The Site lies within the landscape character area identified as HW4: High Weald Fringes as shown on Figure 4.2. The key characteristics pertinent to the study area are described as:

- “Wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity partly within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- South and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down to the Low Weald.
- Long views over the Low Weald to the downs.
- Significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Pattern of small, irregular-shaped assart fields and larger fields, and small pockets of remnant heathland.
- Biodiversity concentrated in the valleys, heathland, and woodland.

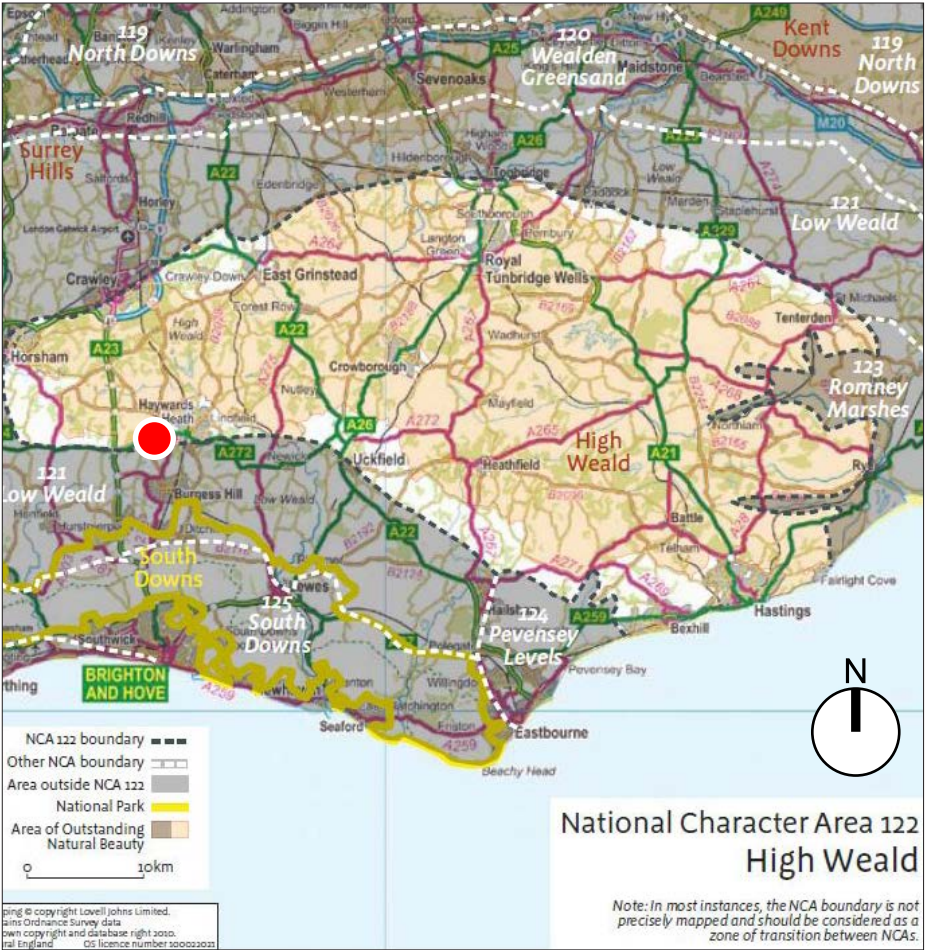


FIGURE 4.1 – EXTRACT FROM NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA MAP (NATURAL ENGLAND, 2013)

LEGEND

- APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION

4.0

BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY RECEPTORS

- Network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths.
- Dispersed historic settlement pattern... the principal settlements Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield and a few villages and hamlets.
- Some busy lanes and roads including A and B roads bounding the area to the west, and other roads crossing north to south, including the A23 Trunk Road.
- Mill sites, hammerponds and ornamental lakes and ponds.
- Varied traditional rural buildings built with diverse materials including timber-framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.
- Designed landscapes and exotic treescapes associated with large country houses."

The key issues pertinent to The Site include the following:

- "Decline in traditional woodland management techniques such as coppicing.
- Spread of invasive introduced species, particularly rhododendron and neglect of some parkland landscapes.
- Reduction of heathland to a few pockets due to cessation of grazing management and subsequent woodland invasion and woodland replanting.
- Continuing amalgamation of small fields with orchard, hedgerow loss and the ageing and loss of hedgerow and field trees.
- Visual impact of new urban and rural development...
- Increasing pervasiveness of traffic movement throughout much of the area, especially in the vicinity of Haywards Heath.
- Increasing pressures for a wide variety of recreational activities.
- Perceived increased traffic levels on small rural lanes 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".

Landscape and visual sensitivities are described as:

- "Woodland cover limits the visual sensitivity of the landscape and confers a sense of intimacy, seclusion and tranquillity.
- Unobtrusive settlement pattern in many parts.
- Older, small assart pastures contribute to the intimacy of the landscape.
- Important pockets of rich 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.
- 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...
- Legacy of designed landscapes and treescapes."

Value: Medium - High.

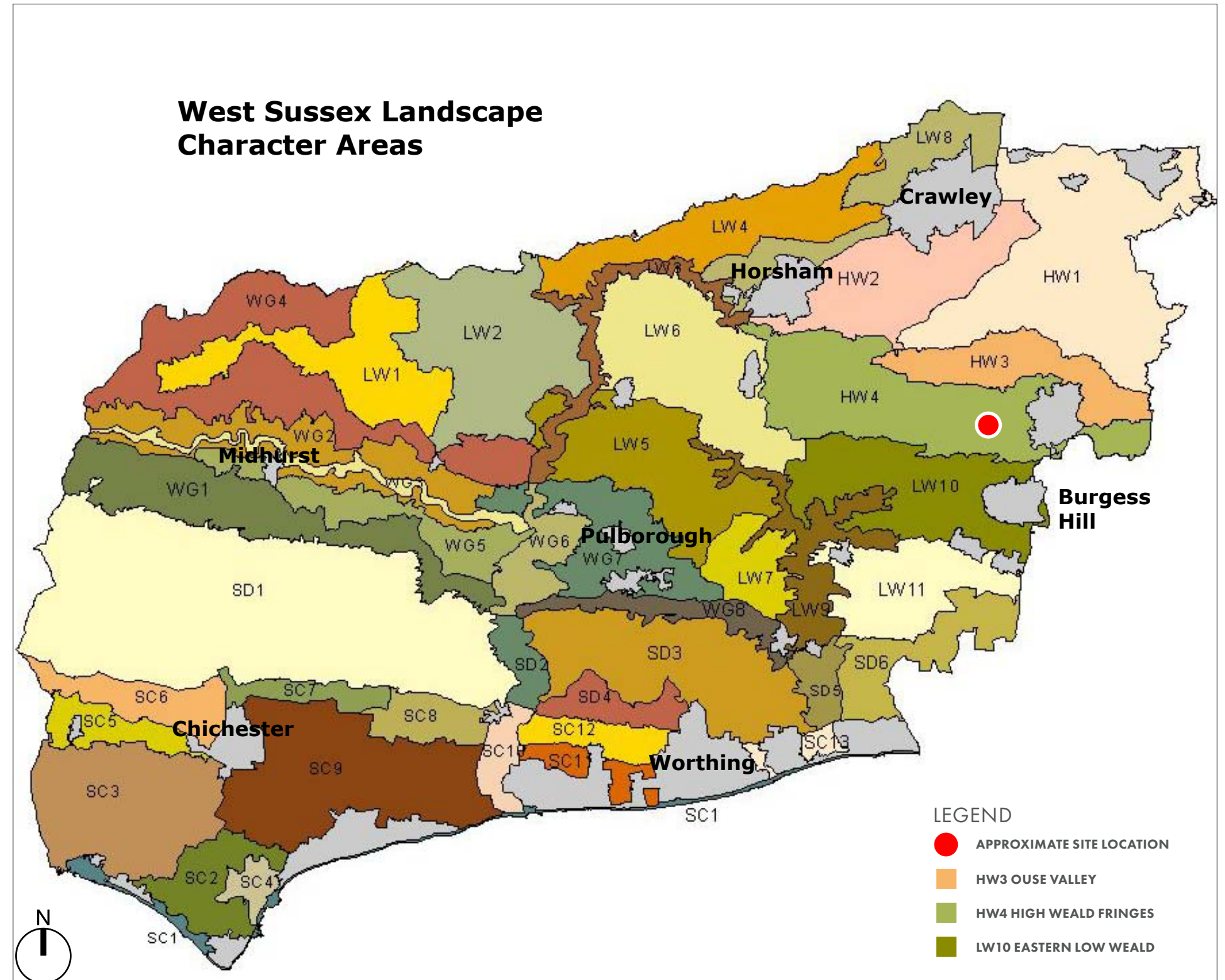


FIGURE 4.2 – EXTRACT FROM THE WEST SUSSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA MAP (2003)

4.0

BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY RECEPTORS

4.1.1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT CONTINUED

District Character Assessment

A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex was prepared and published in 2005. The Site and study area lies within the landscape character area identified as LCA 10: High Weald Fringes, the location of which is shown on Figure 4.3 opposite.

The LCA is summarised as: “densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald Forest Ridge, dissected gentle gill streams draining west to the River Adur and east to the River Ouse. Includes the settlements of Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield”. The key characteristics are described and are consistent with those described within the county level landscape character assessment.

In addition to the key characteristics, the settlement of Cuckfield is described as: “... a large, pretty village with a hilly, dog-legged main street, once separate from Whitemans Green to the north... but now joined to it by suburban development. Both villages were enlarged by small Edwardian developments. A small estate to the west and an area of large houses to the south were added in the interwar period, together with considerable ribbon development along Copyhold Lane and the Haywards Heath Road. There was much consolidation of the two village areas up to 1970. Since 1970, development has been modest, comprising some infill and minor extensions of the village edges and a recent redevelopment of the Cuckfield Hospital grounds. The village is by-passed by the A272, the spire of the church seen to good advantage across the undeveloped land north of the road.

A former medieval market town, Cuckfield has retained its character admirably, with a mixture of housing styles from many periods. These include timberframing and Wealden stone, exemplified by parts of the 15th Century Ockenden Manor (now a hotel), and by the elegant Georgian ashlar stone front of Marshalls. Examples of early Victorian architecture include the Tuscan porch on the front of the former Kings Head. The former Cuckfield Hospital (1843) north of the village has a long, classical frontage in brick, now the centrepiece of the new housing development in the hospital grounds.

The 14th Century parish church of Holy Trinity lies on the south side of the village, close to open, rising ground, nearly on the crest of the ridge, a church of nobility and substance. Its shingled spire is a landmark and, as noted above, particularly on approaches along the A272 from the south. Ockenden Manor also looks south down the slope, to Cuckfield Park, the Elizabethan brick house (later rendered) of Henry Bowyer with a small but elaborate brick gatehouse, the whole set in post-medieval parkland with an avenue of old limes from the gatehouse to the mansion.”

Furthermore, strategic gaps are discussed: “The County and District Council share long recognised pressures for development on open land between Haywards Heath and Lindfield, Burgess Hill, Cuckfield and Scaynes Hill and have designated this land as strategic gaps.”

Value: Medium - High.

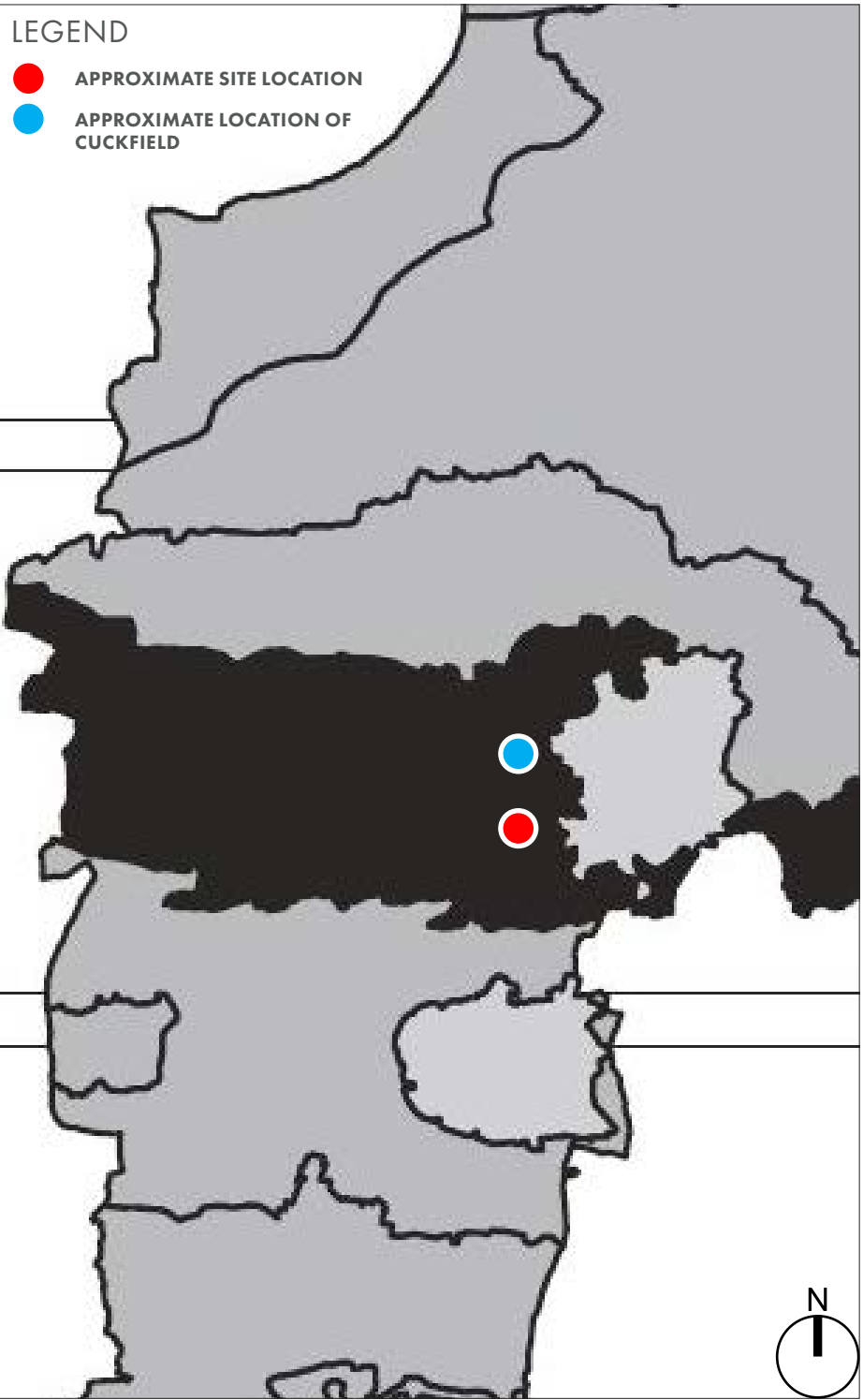


FIGURE 4.3 – EXTRACT FROM THE MID SUSSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT MAP (2005)

Parish Character Assessment

At the Neighbourhood level, the northern section of The Site and part of the study area lies within Landscape Character Area 22 Highbridge to Copyhold Slopes as identified within the Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment (Hankinson Duckett Associates - HDA, 2012). The other parts of The Site beyond the parish boundary to the south and west lie outside of the scope of this character assessment. Other parts of the study area to the north of The Site lie within other LCAs. Figure 4.4 on the following page illustrates the location of these character areas.

- The landscape analysis of Landscape Character Area 22 is described as:
- “Lower slopes of south facing topography falling from ridgeline to the north, towards significant watercourse to the south.
 - Continuation of landscape pattern to the north severed by A272 which forms the northern boundary of the character area.
 - Bounded by riparian vegetation along southern edge.
 - Farmed landscape, consists mainly of large arable and pastoral fields, but divided by vegetated watercourses and sewage works.
 - Surrounded by significant riparian vegetation, hedge along the southern side of the A272, with riparian vegetation and moderate field boundaries internally.
 - Detached from any significant settlement, with Cuckfield on higher ground, around ½ km to the north.
 - Public rights of way through the centre of the character area, forming part of rights of way network which links Cuckfield to the wider landscape to the south.
 - Vegetation, and higher surrounding topography which slopes down towards the character area, limit views of settlement and the South Downs.
 - Rural and relatively remote landscape, but tranquillity reduced by influence from A272 to the north of the character area, and sewage works towards the centre.
 - Not part of immediate southern setting to Cuckfield, but contributes to wider rural context.
 - No significant strategic separation function other than as part of wider separation between Cuckfield and low density dwellings to the southeast.”

The description of the character area goes on to state that Ancient Woodland is located within the centre of the character area, and that the area is within close proximity to the AONB to the west.

- The description of the character area's historic landscape characterisation states:
- “Contains early post medieval formal enclosure, and medieval assarts.
 - Low boundary loss recorded.”

Landscape Capacity is defined within the Cuckfield PC Landscape Character Assessment in paragraph 2.5.5 as: “the extent to which the landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on landscape character, reflecting the inherent sensitivity and value of the landscape.

Landscape capacity ratings range from Negligible to Very High. Character Areas which have a Negligible to Low/Medium capacity rating (i.e. those which have major or substantial sensitivity or value, or both), indicate that development would have a significant and detrimental effect on the character of the landscape. Any development in these character areas should only be on a very small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to the settlement or the wider landscape.

4.0

BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY RECEPTORS

Capacity is summarised within the Cuckfield PC Landscape Character Assessment for LCA 22 as: “A rural landscape with historic time depth and detached from settlement.” It is considered to be of “MODERATE value” with “SUBSTANTIAL sensitivity” and “LOW capacity”.

Value: Medium.

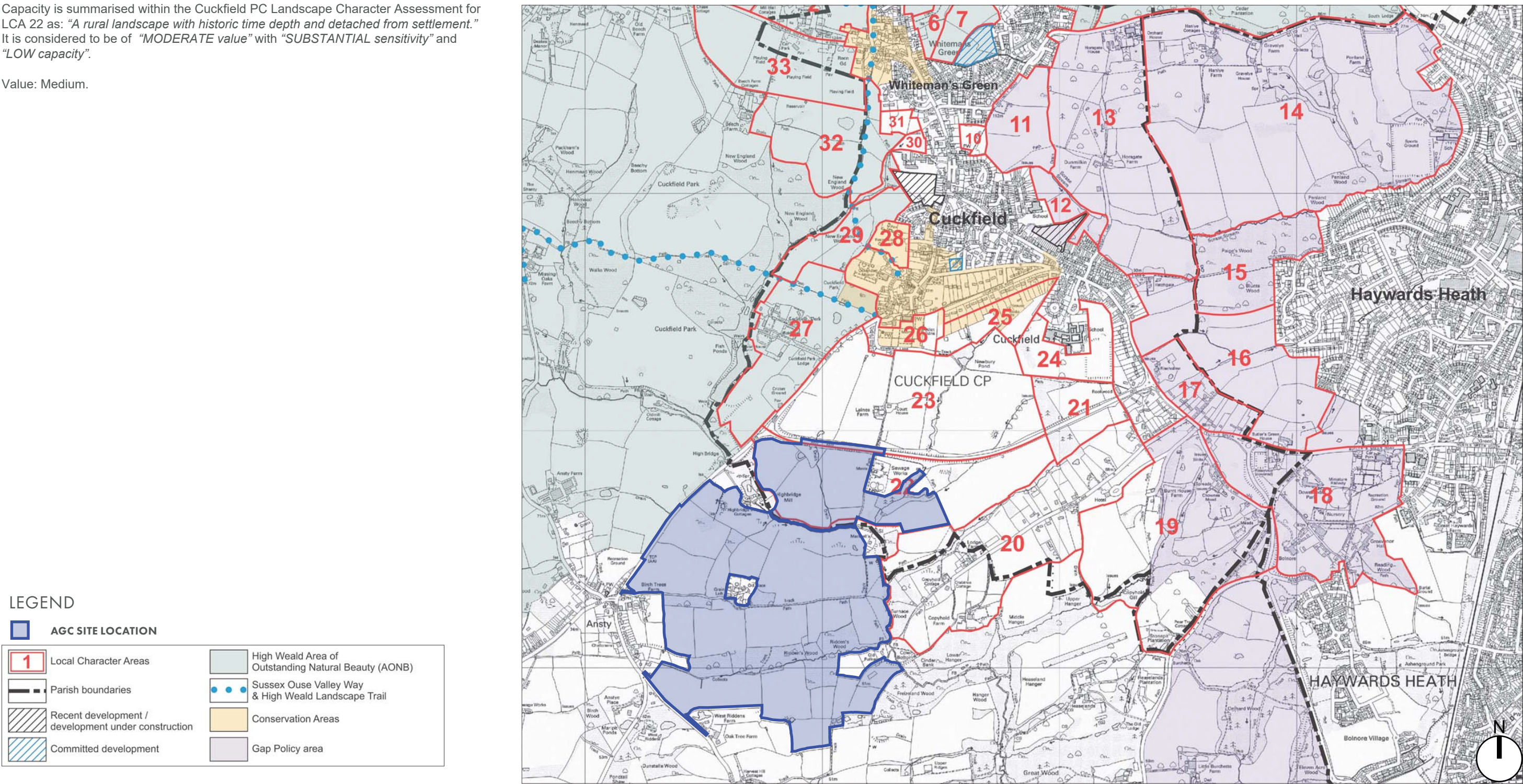


FIGURE 4.4 – EXTRACT FROM THE CUCKFIELD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT MAP (HDA, 2012)

4.0

BASELINE ASSESSMENT AND IDENTIFICATION OF KEY RECEPTORS

4.1.2 LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

In 2007 HDA prepared the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study. This defined 75 Landscape Character Areas (LCA) around a number of settlements and villages within the District and assessed the landscape value, sensitivity and capacity of each. Of the character areas assessed of relevance to the study area, the northern part of The Site lies within LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe alongside the north western part of the study area, as shown on Figure 4.5.

In 2014, LUC prepared an updated Capacity Assessment, which covered the remaining areas of the District that were not assessed in the 2007 study only. This led to the definition of five new Landscape Character Areas. The study area is partially covered by LCAs 49, 51, 52 and 77. The Site spans the landscape character areas identified as LCA 77 Ansty High Weald Fringe in the 2014 LUC Capacity Study and LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe, as shown on Figure 4.6.

LCA 77 Ansty High Weald Fringe

The key characteristics of LCA 77 Ansty High Weald Fringe, pertinent to The Site are described as follows in the 2014 LUC Capacity Assessment:

- *“Part of High Weald fringes on the edge of the AONB, forming a transitional landscape to the Low Weald.*
- *Gently undulating landscape with long views over the Low Weald.*
- *Wooded character with pockets of plantation and semi-natural woodland, substantial amounts of which are classified as ancient. Some woodland areas are designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance.*
- *Includes the southern part of Ansty village; much of the existing settlement is concentrated here, with scattered farms and manor houses elsewhere.*
- *Field enclosures form a mosaic, with a mixture of small irregular fields of medieval origin and some larger enclosures.*
- *Some farm buildings and residences are designated as Listed Buildings.*
- *A sense of intimacy and seclusion offered by the high woodland cover, although this is impacted in places by the presence of busy road routes including the A272 and proximity to larger settlements such as Cuckfield...”*

The key landscape sensitivities are identified as:

- *“Unobtrusive, scattered settlement pattern.*
- *Long views from open ground.*
- *Areas of valued semi-natural woodland cover conferring an intimate and secluded feel.*
- *Historic, small-scale field pattern defining much of the area, with an estate influence.*
- *Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, locally designated for their contribution to the District’s biodiversity resource.”*

The landscape value of this character area is judged as being moderate/high and the landscape sensitivity is judged as moderate in the 2014 LUC Capacity Assessment.

The capacity of LCA 77 is assessed as being of low/medium capacity (refer to Figure 4.7). The description of the rating states: *“A low/medium capacity rating 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.”*

However, para 3.15 clarifies the assessment, stating that: *“... It is important to note*

that these scores are only indicative of potential capacity and would need to be tested through more detailed assessment at the site-specific level when proposals for specific development locations are known.”

Value: Medium-High

LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe

The key characteristics of LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe, pertinent to The Site are described within the 2007 Hankinson Duckett Landscape Capacity Study as:

- *“Predominately pasture with mixture of horticulture, parkland and woodland.*
- *Significant vegetation provides enclosure to the south, areas of semi-open urban edges to the north.*
- *Contains low-density linear development through centre.*
- *Sits on general south-west facing slope.*
- *Mixture of periods.*
- *Generally low boundary loss.”*

The 2007 Hankinson Duckett Landscape Capacity Study identifies LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe as having a moderate sensitivity, slight landscape value and medium/high landscape capacity.

The description of the medium/high landscape capacity rating within the 2007 study states: *“Medium/High capacity identifies a landscape character area that has a generally lower sensitivity which could accommodate significant allocations of development, but which has specific considerations such as sensitive adjacent character area (e.g. within the AONB), separation between settlements or setting to settlements..”*

The 2014 LUC Capacity Study identifies LCA 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe as having a moderate sensitivity, slight landscape value and medium landscape capacity (refer to Figure 2.5).

The description of the medium landscape capacity rating within the 2014 study states: *“A Medium capacity rating indicates that there is the potential for limited smaller-scale development to be located in some parts of the character area, so long as there is regard for existing features and sensitivities within the landscape.”*

Value: Medium-Low

Primary and secondary constraints

In addition to the landscape capacity assessment, a range of primary and secondary constraints have been mapped relating to environmental designations by LUC. As shown in Figure 4.8, the majority of The Site lies outside of the areas where there are primary constraints. Primary constraints within the site are identified as areas of Flood Zone 3, PRowWs and Listed Buildings. Within the study area, primary constraints are identified as the AONB.

Furthermore, The Site lies within an area where there are secondary constraints - these include a buffer of 1km around the AONB and National Park. It is noted that the buffer zone is described as indicative only - paragraph 4.3 clarifies that: *“It should be noted that the buffer zones developed for the secondary constraints are indicative of the area where development may cause the most negative impacts, or where*

mitigation is most likely to be needed. In practice, each location for development would need to be assessed individually for potential effects on the environment and mitigation needed. For example, the effects on the setting of the AONB or on a listed building can vary markedly depending upon their context, from very localised (e.g. a few hundred metres in locations that are well screened; to many kilometres where vistas and views are important).”

Paragraph 6.11 goes on to state that: *“... Although these secondary constraints do not necessarily represent areas that cannot be developed, some are afforded protection under national policy, and often they represent areas where significant environmental impacts could occur, and where mitigation measures are likely to be required to avoid or reduce the significance of the impacts.”*

Paragraph 6.25 sets outs a series of mitigation measures that are likely to be needed for development to occur in areas which still have secondary constraints. Those relevant to The Site are:

- *“A detailed ecological assessment would be required to determine the existing biodiversity within potential development locations, its status and condition, and its potential in order to inform what mitigation measures would be required to safeguard and enhance the District’s biodiversity interest (such as areas of ancient woodland).*
- *Development would need to be designed to maintain or where possible enhance the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District.*
- *Development in the areas around some of the main settlements may need to avoid small areas of flood risk zone 2 and 3, and incorporate SuDS into new development to ensure that run-off is managed so that the risk of flooding is not exacerbated elsewhere.*
- *Development would need to protect and incorporate the National Cycle Routes and PRowWs, as well as existing open space, sport and recreation areas.”*