

# Land to the rear of The Bulrushes, Coombe Hill Road, East Grinstead, RH19 4LZ

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Land Management Services Ltd

August 2026



## Introduction

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been prepared in relation to proposals for the construction of a single dwelling on land to the rear of Bulrushes, Coombe Road, East Grinstead (See Location Plan, Figure 1).

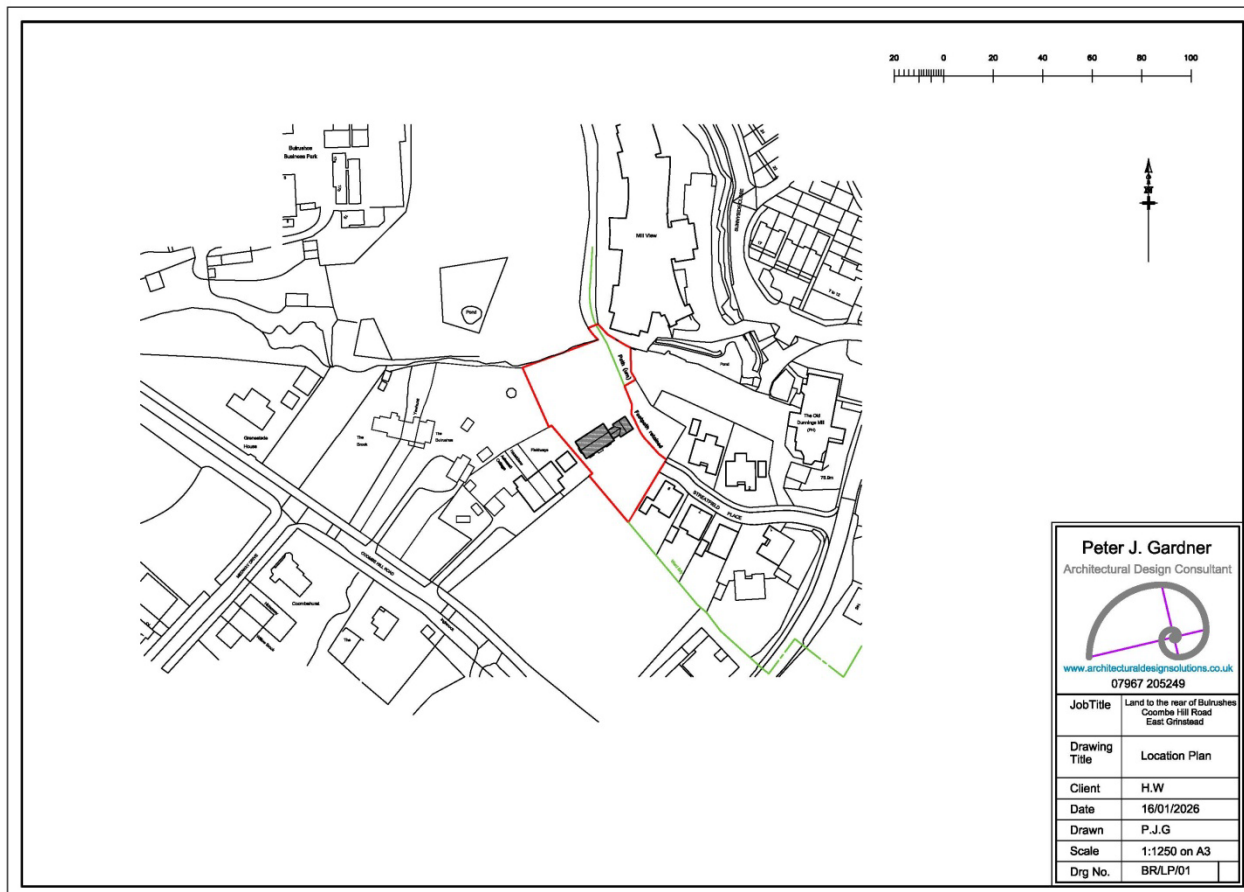


Figure 1: Location Plan

This Appraisal does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), but the appraisal and assessment methodology has been informed by our full LVIA methodology and current best practice and guidance for the preparation of LVIAs and LVAs.

The approach adopted is firstly to provide a description of the existing site and wider landscape and visual context by reference to published landscape character assessments and following site visits in order to describe the landscape character and visual qualities associated with the existing landholding. The landscape policy context to the site is also described. This has informed an evaluation of the proposals against the landscape and visual amenity baseline and policy context.

The whole of the site is located in the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB).

The Site was visited on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026.

## Landscape Policy Context

Local landscape policy is described in the Mid Sussex District Plan (2014 to 2031) and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (2016). The whole of the site lies within the High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) and Countryside but is bordered on two sides by the settlement boundary to East Grinstead. The HWNL is a national landscape designation which affords the highest protection in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Key policy extracts are included in Appendix 1 to this LVA.

The local plans also adopt the strategy, ambitions and objectives as described in the High Weald AONB Management Plan (2024-2029).

## Published Landscape Character Assessments

The Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessments are somewhat out of date. The original assessment dates from 2005 with a more recent Landscape Capacity Study dating from 2007. The Site lies within the Rockwood High Weald Character Area as described in the 2007 Landscape Capacity Study. The 2007 Landscape Capacity Study notes that the character area is of medium sensitivity noting that the character area as a whole is *semi-rural but significant intervisibility with adjacent settlement*. Since 2007 there have been changes to the built environment in the immediate locality of the site with the construction of Streatfield Place a residential cul de sac and the care home at Sunnyside Court/Mill View, which influence local character and site context.

## The Site: Landscape Character and Appearance

The site lies to the rear (north east) of a property known as Bulrushes located towards the eastern end of Coombe Hill Road. A number of views across the site and from the surrounding area are included in the visual appraisal below. The site comprises a small rectangular land parcel mostly comprising rough grassland and scrub. The land falls gently from south to north towards a shallow stream on the northern boundary. There are a number of larger mature trees on this northern boundary bordering the stream. The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by fences to gardens on Coombe Road and Streatfield Place respectively. A public footpath (Public Right of Way (PRoW 26aEG) runs along the eastern boundary. Beyond this path there is fencing mostly bordering the car park to the Old Dunnings Mill Public House Car Park.

Public Footpath 26aEG runs north west from Streatfield Place along the site boundary and then north bordering Mill View Care Home, before emerging into open countryside to the north.

The site is enclosed by the settlement edge to the north and east. In effect this boundary with residential properties also extends to the eastern boundary which borders rear gardens on Coombe Hill Road, including Bulrushes. There is open countryside to the north beyond the belt of trees and stream comprising mostly pasture with woodland. This wooded stream forms a natural boundary to the garden curtilages further west along Coombe Hill Road. There is a large group of commercial buildings (Bulrushes Business Park) set within the nearby fields to the north. The Business Park is enclosed by conifer hedging.

The site itself comprises an area of rough grassland and scrub. It is enclosed on three sides by residential/settlement land uses and as such has a strong settlement edge character. The boundary with more open countryside to the north is defined by a group of trees and stream, which forms a natural boundary to the garden curtilages on Coombe Hill Road. These are the only features which reflect key characteristics of the wider rural character of the surrounding countryside. The rural character of the countryside to the north is also influenced by the nearby Business Park enclosed by conifer hedging.

## Visual Appraisal

There are two PRow in relatively close proximity to the site from which views could potentially be obtained.

Footpath 26aEG runs north west from Streatfield Place following the southern edge of the settlement of East Grinstead.

Footpath 27EG follows Coombe Hill Road and then runs south along Medway Drive.

A series of representative views towards the Site from these Prows are included below. The Site location and the Viewpoints are shown on Figure 2.

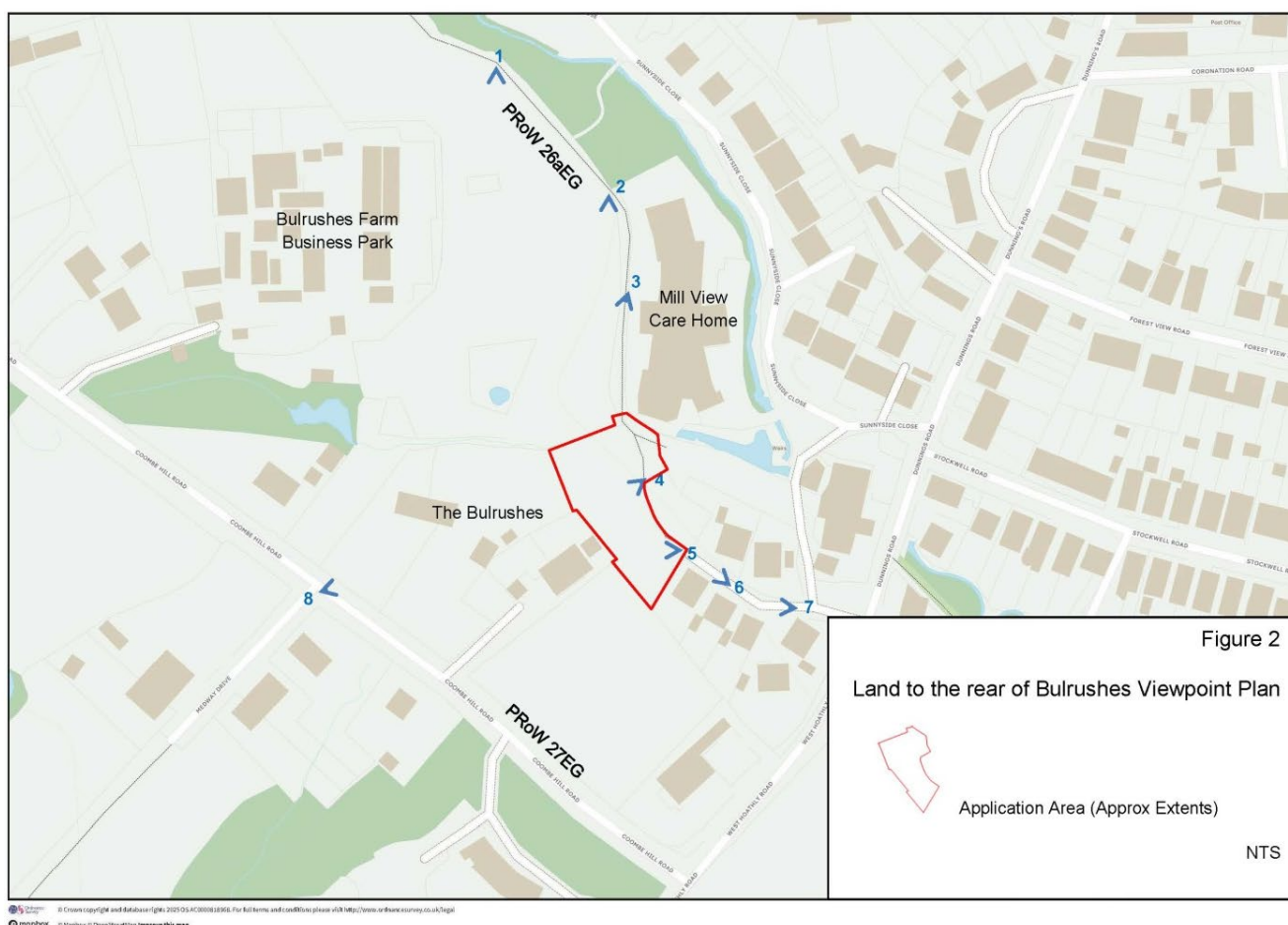


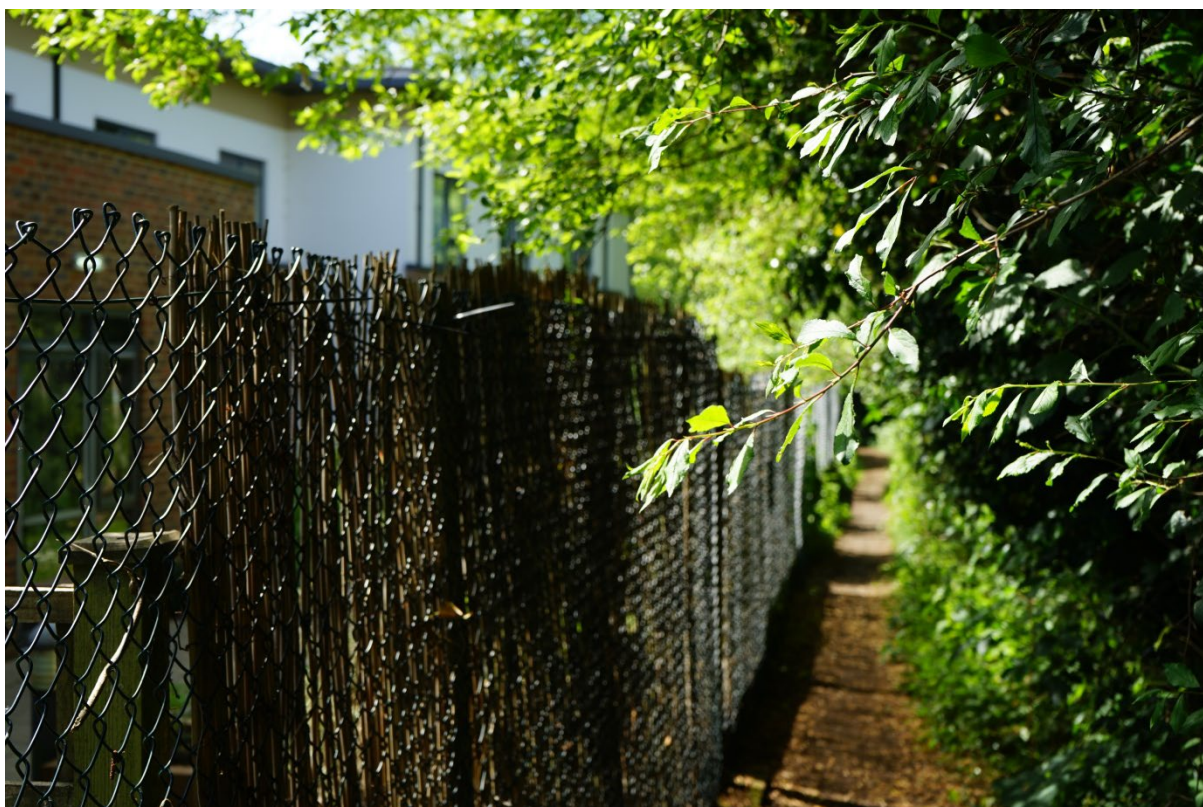
Figure 2: Location and Viewpoint Plan



Viewpoint 1: View south from Footpath 26aEG. The wooded boundary screens views to the site from the countryside to the north. Roofscape to properties on Streatfield Place and Bulrushes on Coombe Hill Road is visible in this view. The hedge to the Business Park is also visible in this view.



Viewpoint 2: View south from Footpath 26aEG at the point the path emerges into open countryside. The wooded boundary to the site largely screens views of the site itself. Properties on Coombe Hill Road can be glimpsed through the tree cover.



Viewpoint 3: View south from Footpath 26aEG at the point the path runs through a narrow corridor with Mill View Care Home to the east and a dense hedgerow to the east.



Viewpoint 4: View south west from Footpath 26aEG through the site boundary vegetation at the point where the path runs close to the eastern boundary. This is a partial view which currently includes rear fences and glimpses of other properties on Coombe Hill Road.



Viewpoint 5: View north west across the site from Footpath 26aEG at the point where the path leaves Streatfield Place. Houses and the garden fences to properties on Coombe Hill Road are prominent in this view.



Viewpoint 6: View north west from Streatfield Place close to the site southern boundary. The trees on the site northern boundary can be glimpsed beyond the hedgeline on the southern boundary.



Viewpoint 7: View west from Streatfield Place. From this location views to the site are screened by the existing properties.



Viewpoint 8: View east from Coombe Hill Road and Footpath 27EG. There are glimpsed views towards the site through the gardens on Coombe Hill Road, but the site itself is screened by the intervening vegetation.

## Overview Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

The land to the rear of Bulrushes comprises an area of rough grassland and scrub, with a small area of mature trees bordering the stream on the northern boundary. The site is enclosed to the north, east and south by domestic gardens and the car park to public house. The site borders the settlement edge to the north and east. These uses and the condition and appearance of the land give the site a strong settlement edge character. It is only beyond the northern boundary that the landscape changes to more open countryside with pasture and woodland. Even here the Bulrushes Business Park influences the character of the land.

Footpath 26aEG follows part of the northern boundary from Streatfield Place. The footpath follows the settlement edge where it runs through the site and further north running alongside Mill View Care Home. It is only to the north of the Care Home that the footpath emerges into more open countryside with views back towards Coombe Hill Road.

The Visual Appraisal demonstrates that the site benefits from a high level of visual enclosure. There are near views from Footpath 26aEG where it borders the site (Viewpoints 4 and 5) but in these views the land is always seen in the context of neighbouring residential development. There are more open views back towards Coombe Hill Road from Footpath 26aEG to the north (Viewpoints 1 and 2) but the visual appraisal demonstrates that the dense vegetation on the northern boundary provides effective screening in summer. In winter the views would be slightly more open, but at best these would be glimpsed views through tree cover. Existing dwellings on Coombe Hill Road and Streatfield Place are visible in these views even in summer.

The site is only perceived in limited glimpsed views from PRow 26aEG. In all of these views existing vegetation limits views to partial or glimpsed views and the site is always seen in a residential context. This reflects the description of the Rockwood High Weald Character Area in the 2007 Landscape Capacity Study of *semi-rural but significant intervisibility with adjacent settlement*.

## The Proposals

The proposals comprise the construction of a single detached dwelling in the central southern parts of the site (see Block Plan and Elevations in Figures 3 and 4). The proposed dwelling is of a traditional style with brick and tile finishes.

All mature trees on the site would be retained. A hedge and fence would be constructed along the western side of Footpath 26aEG.

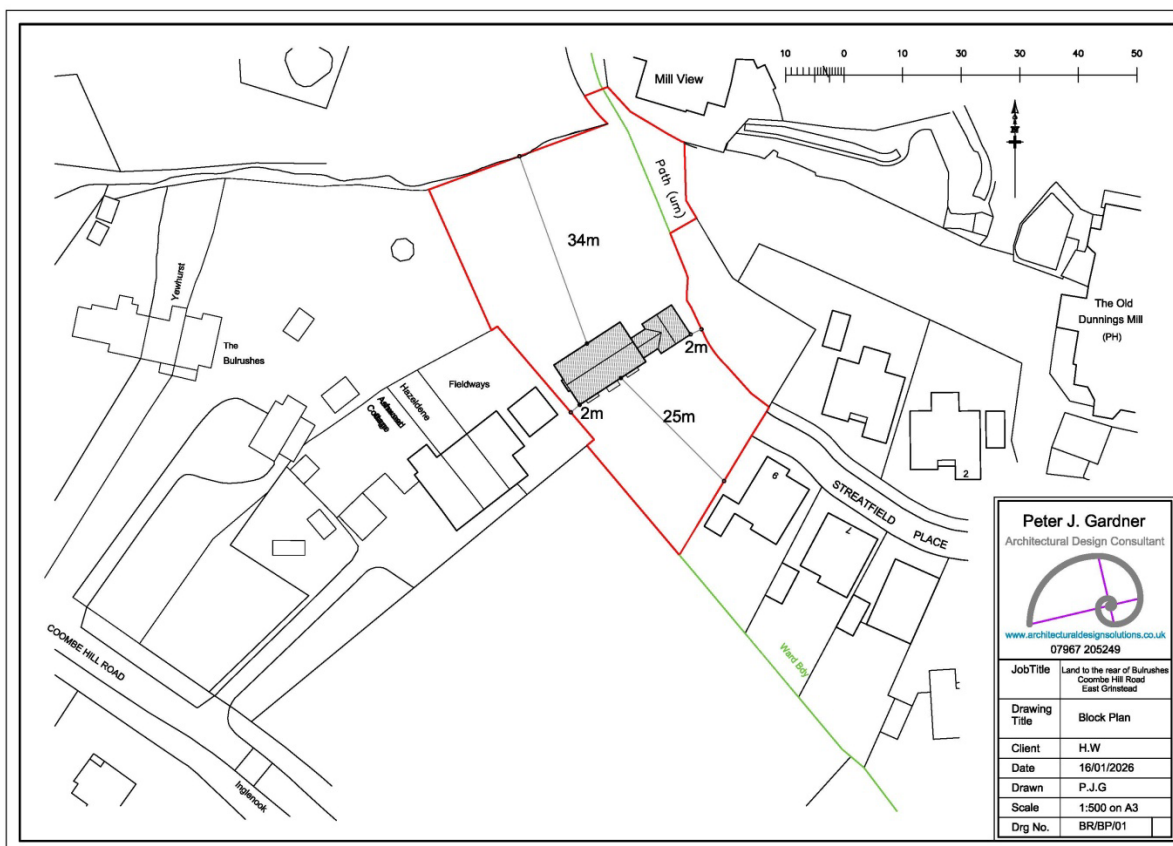


Figure 3: Block Plan



Figure 4: Proposed Elevations

## Discussion Landscape Policy Context

The landscape policy context as described in the NPPF, MSDC Local Plan and the East Grinstead Neighbourhood is set out in Appendix 1. The discussion below considers the proposed development against this policy context, informed by the findings of this LVA.

### ***N4 Protected Landscapes***

The proposed development is considered to comply with Part 1 of Policy N4 being *limited in scale and extent* and *sensitively located and designed* set into the settlement edge on a site which does not strongly reflect the *special qualities* of the HWNL.

### ***DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside***

The land to the rear of Bulrushes is located within a National Landscape. This Appraisal concludes that the site has a strong settlement edge character and does not reflect key characteristics of the wider countryside. This appraisal also concludes that the proposed development would only be glimpsed from very limited areas of countryside to the north and would always be seen in a residential context. It would not extend or alter the influence of built form on neighbouring land. It would therefore protect the visual qualities of the HWNL. The proposal would not extend residential development into countryside and would not impact on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

### ***DP15: New Homes in the Countryside***

This policy draws on the same principles as DP12 with regard to the protection of valued landscapes and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Regarding the specific bullet points of the policy this proposal does not constitute an *isolated home in the countryside* as it is enclosed by residential development on three sides and has a strong settlement edge character. The siting, scale and design of the house is considered to be *sensitive to the character of the area* benefitting from the mature landscape setting on the northern boundary which limits views to the proposed house from the wider countryside.

### ***DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***

This appraisal concludes that the site does not strongly reflect the natural beauty and scenic qualities of the National Landscape. The proposal would not affect:

- *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.*

The proposed house would be set within the existing patterns of settlement and residential development beyond the settlement boundary and would always be perceived in the context of the surrounding residential development. The proposals are sensitive to the local residential context, landscape character and local distinctiveness in terms of location, siting, scale and design. The land benefits from a mature wooded setting on the northern boundary which would be retained.

The proposals would not, therefore, detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the High Weald National Landscape.

Policy EG1 (untitled) in the Neighbourhood Plan is concerned primarily with 'major developments' in the National Landscape. The second part of the policy deals more generally with development in the National Landscape and requires:

- *The highest standards of Design are achieved;*
- *The natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced;*
- *The proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature in the landscape.*

*The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme would not negatively impact on the existing quality of the protected landscape and its setting taking account of locally important features. Proposals that have not fully considered and addressed the impact on the AONB will normally be refused.*

This appraisal concludes firstly that the site does not strongly reflect the natural and scenic beauty of the National Landscape and would not be obtrusive in the landscape. The proposals have been designed in a manner which is sensitive to the local settlement edge landscape setting to the site.

Policy EG2 concerns areas of development constraint. Although not a replacement dwelling, the proposals would comply with the principles of bullet point (1) of the policy in that because of the mature landscape setting, siting and location of the cottage it would be *no more obtrusive* than the derelict buildings to be removed. The proposals would not influence coalescence as set out in Policy EG2a.

### ***Planning Appeal Decision (Appeal Ref: 6003631)***

A recent Appeal Decision (4<sup>th</sup> June 2026) relating to neighbouring land at the Bulrushes is relevant to this LVA. The Appeal for construction of a single dwelling in the rear garden to Bulrushes was dismissed in part because of harm to the character and appearance of the HWNL. The decision does not identify specific harm to the landscape character and natural beauty of the HWNL, but draws in particular on the conclusion that the location was not *contiguous* to the settlement and did not *respect the existing pattern of development for detached dwellings within the surrounding area, which are set on larger plots with larger gaps between buildings.*

## **Conclusions**

The proposals are for a single traditional style dwelling located to the south west of Bulrushes. The site borders the settlement edge on two sides and is enclosed by dwellings and settlement edge on three sides. Only the northern boundary borders countryside and this boundary is defined by mature trees and a stream which create a strong degree of visual separation between the site and the wider countryside and forms a continuation of the boundary to rear gardens on Coombe Hill Road. The site mainly comprises scrub and is influenced by neighbouring development and as such does not reflect the natural beauty and scenic qualities of the HWNL. This appraisal demonstrates that the proposed house would be perceived as part of the existing pattern of residential development on the settlement edge and on Coombe Hill Road. It would be contiguous with the nearest areas of built development, principally on Streatfield Place.

The house would only be potentially viewed from short sections of Footpath 26aEG to the north and in all these views would be perceived in the context of existing built form set in a mature wooded setting and not in isolation in the countryside. This is not a part of the National Landscape which strongly reflects the intrinsic character and scenic beauty of the High Weald but is strongly influenced by the existing settlement edge. Nonetheless the proposed house would be sensitively located and designed such that it would be set into the local landscape without a need for substantial mitigation. As such the proposal is considered to be sensitive to the location within the HWNL, would not harm locally important landscape features and would conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

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## Appendix 1: Landscape Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework August 2026

#### N4 Protected Landscapes

1. Development proposals within Protected Landscapes should be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the Protected Landscape. Substantial weight should be placed on the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these areas, and to conserving and enhancing wildlife and cultural heritage in National Parks and the Broads.

### Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 to 2031

#### DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

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.

Evidence Base: A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex, A Strategy for the West Sussex Landscape, Capacity of Mid Sussex District to Accommodate Development Study.

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.

#### P15: New Homes in the Countryside

Strategic Objectives: 3) To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities; and 13) To provide the amount and type of housing that meets the needs of all sectors of the community.

Evidence Base: A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Sussex; Town and Parish Council submissions.

Provided that they would not be in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, new homes in the countryside will be permitted where special justification exists.

Special justification is defined as:

- Where accommodation is essential to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full time rural workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work; or
- In the case of new isolated homes in the countryside, where the design of the dwelling is of exceptional quality and it enhances its immediate setting and is sensitive to the character of the area; or
- Affordable housing in accordance with Policy DP32: Rural Exception Sites; or
- The proposed development meets the requirements of Policy DP6: Settlement Hierarchy.

Replacement dwellings in the countryside

Replacement dwellings in the countryside will be permitted where:

- The residential use has not been abandoned;
- Highway, access and parking requirements can be met; and
- The replacement dwelling maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the natural and/or built landscape particularly in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, especially if a significant change in scale from the existing dwelling is proposed.

#### **DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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.

Evidence Base: The High Weald AONB Management Plan.

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 and design.

## **East Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan (2016)**

### **Policy EG1 Protection of the High Weald AONB**

Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty planning permission will be refused for major development proposals unless the development is demonstrably required in the public interest and meets the exceptional circumstances criteria outlined in the NPPF.

Planning permission for other forms of development will be granted where the proposals are for the:

- (i) Conversion of redundant buildings;
- (ii) Replacement, on a like for like basis, of existing buildings; or
- (iii) Extension of an existing dwelling house, relate to agricultural development or some other minor recreational use;

Provided that for each of the above (i, ii and iii) all of the following criteria are met:

- The highest standards of Design are achieved;
- The natural and scenic beauty of the landscape is conserved or enhanced;
- The proposals do not result in an obtrusive feature in the landscape.

The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that the scheme would not negatively impact on the existing quality of the protected landscape and its setting taking account of locally important features. Proposals that have not fully considered and addressed the impact on the AONB will normally be refused.

### **Policy EG2 – Areas of Development Constraint**

Planning permission will normally be granted for the sympathetic conversion of redundant rural buildings, limited small-scale new development and extensions to existing buildings within the Countryside Areas of Development Constraint provided they comply with the following criteria:

- (1) In the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal is no more obtrusive than the dwelling it replaces and is of an appropriate design for its location and setting;
- (2) In the case of extensions, the proposal is subservient in scale and form to the original dwelling along with the coherent use of materials;
- (3) In the case of converted buildings, the new use has minimal impact on the openness of the countryside, in terms of the new curtilage, and parking; in the case of outdoor sport, recreation and community uses of land, the proposals support the objective of keeping land open;
- (4) The proposal comprises essential small-scale proposals for agricultural or sport and recreation such as pavilions and changing rooms; or
- (5) It is essential to meet specific necessary utility infrastructure needs and no alternative feasible site is available.

### **Policy EG2a – Preventing Coalescence**

Planning permission will not normally be granted for development which:

- (1) Results in the coalescence of East Grinstead with Crawley Down or Ashurst Wood;

- (2) Results in the perception of openness being unacceptably eroded within this area; or
- (3) 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.

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