Gladman Developments Ltd.

Land off Fryatts Way, Bexhill-on-Sea

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

June 2021

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for the Bexhill-on-Sea development by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this LVA study is to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposals detailed in the planning application (9309-L-02 Development Framework).

1.2 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 60 years' experience of architecture, landscape, ecology, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

1.3 The site is situated on the north-west edge of Bexhill-on-Sea, adjacent to Highwoods Golf Club and Broad Oak Park recreational area located directly north-west and south-west of the site respectively. Residential development lies directly to the east of the site off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close. Residential development lies approximately 400m to the west of the site off Pear Tree Lane, north of Little Common.

1.4 Figures 1 and 2 show the location and context of the site.

Proposed Development

1.5 The Proposed Development is for a residential scheme on land off Fryatts Way, Bexhill-on-Sea. The site is approximately 11.29 ha and comprises development of circa 210 dwellings, proposed public open spaces including new shared paths and play area.

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2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

"Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity." (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *"Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)

2.4 The GLVIA3 states:

"LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone 'appraisal' of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development…

- *As a standalone 'appraisal' the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies".* (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)

2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the Proposed Development.

2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

2.7 GLVIA3 states that "*An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource"* (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).

2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

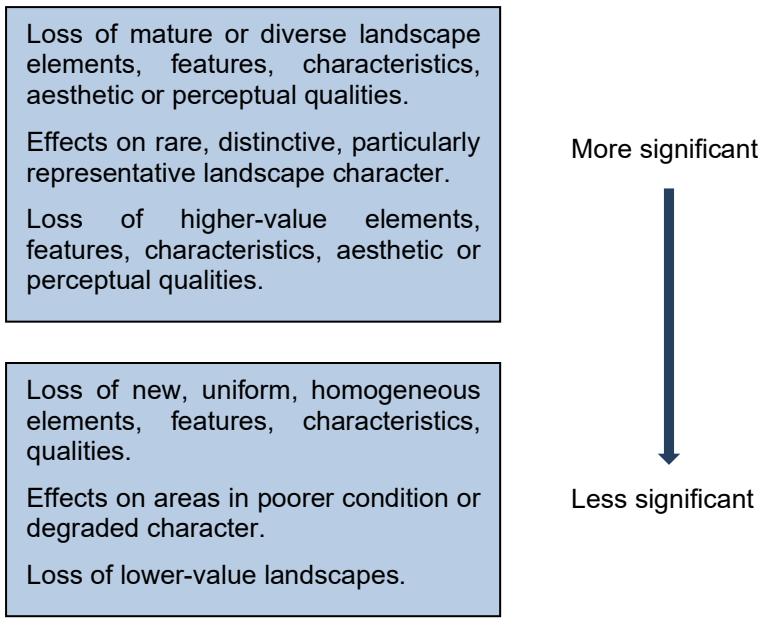
- Combined effects of these changes.

2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.

2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements.

2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).

2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document)



2.14 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Assessment of Visual Effects

2.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).

2.16 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)[1], or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site`s landscape and visual characteristics.

2.17 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.

2.18 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

"The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*

Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)

"Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the to the quality of working life)."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)

2.19 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.

2.20 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

- "*The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;*

[1] Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses*" (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).

2.21 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.22 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.

2.23 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;

- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view*. (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)

2.24 The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

2.25 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.

2.26 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:

- **Major**
- **Moderate**
- **Minor**
- **Negligible**

2.27 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019)

3.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policy and in combination these policies give the Government's vision of sustainable development. The NPPF emphasises the need for well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

3.2 Regarding landscape and green infrastructure, the Natural Environment section of the NPPF provides a policy context for the countryside and green infrastructure. The key objectives include protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

3.3 Paragraph 170 states at part a) that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and goes on to clarify that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. Part b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside".*

3.4 Paragraph 171 advises that:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries".

3.5 Paragraph 172 goes on to add:

"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".

3.6 The site is within an undesignated landscape with no special protected status. The character of the site and its immediate context is assessed within this report to help inform decisions regarding *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*". The potential to enhance green infrastructure networks is also considered.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

3.7 The PPG was first published on 6th March 2014 and is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

Local Planning Policy

3.8 The Development Plan for the Rother District Council is made up of various plans and includes the Core Strategy, the Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) Local Plan and Saved Policies from the Rother District Local Plan.

Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (proposed submission incorporating main and additional modifications and changes to the policies map – July 2019)

3.9 The Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) Local Plan sets out more detailed 'development policies' in order to assist in determining proposals and to identify specific 'site allocations' to deliver the agreed housing and other development targets.

3.10 The DaSA Local Plan supersedes all generic policies, relevant spatial policies from the 2006 Rother District Local Plan and a small number of Core Strategy policies.

3.11 Policy DEN1: Maintaining Landscape Character states that:

"The siting, layout and design of development should maintain and reinforce the natural and built landscape character of the area in which it is to be located, based on a clear understanding of the distinctive local landscape characteristics, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy EN1."

3.12 Policy DEN4: Biodiversity and Green Space states that:

"Development proposals should support the conservation of biodiversity and multi-functional green spaces in accordance with Core Strategy Policy EN5 and the following criteria, as applicable:

> *(ii) development proposals should seek to conserve and enhance: (a) The biodiversity value of international, national, regional and local designated sites of biodiversity and geological value, and irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees); (b) Priority Habitats and Species; and Protected Species, both within and outside designated sites...*
>
> *(iii) in addition to (ii) above, all developments should retain and enhance biodiversity in a manner appropriate to the local context, having particular regard to locally present Priority Habitats and Species, defined 'Biodiversity Opportunity Areas', ecological networks, and further opportunities identified in the Council's Green Infrastructure Study Addendum.*
>
> *(iv) larger developments of more than 2 hectares or 50 dwellings (whichever is the smaller) should produce a Green Infrastructure masterplan as part of their proposals.*

Core Strategy (adopted in 2014)

3.13 The Core Strategy sets the overall vision and objectives for development in the district up to 2028.

3.14 Policy BX1: Overall Strategy for Bexhill

"The overall strategy to deliver the objectives for Bexhill is to:

(ii) Develop local amenities, including support for community activities and facilities, learning opportunities, and improved sports and leisure facilities, including a new

leisure/swimming centre, and a network of accessible green space around the town, as well as by implementation of the Combe Valley Countryside Park;

3.15 Policy CO3: Improving Sports and Recreation Provision

"The provision of sufficient, well-managed and accessible open spaces, sports and recreation facilities, including indoor sports facilities, will be achieved by:

(ii) Allocating land for open space, sports and recreation purposes…

(v) Increasing access to the countryside by promoting improvements to the rights of way network, especially around the urban areas, particularly in reference to Combe Valley Countryside Park."

3.16 Policy LHN1: Achieving Mixed and Balanced Communities

"(iii) In Bexhill, contribute to increased provision of family dwellings, unless site circumstances make this inappropriate."

3.17 Policy EN1: Landscape Stewardship

"Management of the high quality historic, built and natural landscape character is to be achieved by ensuring the protection, and wherever possible enhancement, of the district's nationally designated and locally distinctive landscapes and landscape features; including

(v) Open landscape between clearly defined settlements, including the visual character of settlements, settlement edges and their rural fringes;

(viii) Other key landscape features across the district, including native hedgerows, copses, field patterns, ancient routeways, ditches and barrows, and ponds and water courses."

3.18 Policy EN3: Design Quality

"New development will be required to be of high design quality by:

(i) Contributing positively to the character of the site and surroundings, including taking opportunities to improve areas of poor visual character or with poor townscape qualities, and

(ii) Demonstrating robust design solutions tested against the following Key Design Principles as appropriate..: (a) Character, Identity, Place-Making & Legibility (b) Continuity and Enclosure (c) Quality of Public Realm, Ease of Movement, and 'Secured By Design' (d) Diversity (e) Landscape Setting of Buildings and Settlements (f) Design in Context (Understanding & appraisal of site and wider setting, and incorporation of existing site features into proposals) (g) Building Appearance & Architectural Quality (h) Sustainable Design and Construction."

3.19 Policy EN5: Biodiversity and Green Space

"Biodiversity, geodiversity and green space will be protected and enhanced, by multi-agency working where appropriate, to:

(i) Maintain and develop a district-wide network of green infrastructure where possible linking areas of natural green space;

(vii) Increase accessibility to the countryside from urban areas, especially in the Hastings and Bexhill fringes;

(viii) Ensure that development retains, protects and enhances habitats of ecological interest, including ancient woodland, water features and hedgerows, and provides for appropriate management of these features;

(ix) Require developers to integrate biodiversity into development schemes by avoiding adverse impacts from development on biodiversity or habitat, or where wholly unavoidable, provide appropriate mitigation against or compensation for any losses. In any event, developers will also be expected to consider and promote opportunities for the creation and/or restoration of habitats appropriate to local context."

Rother District Local Plan (July 2006)

3.20 All relevant policies have been superseded by the Core Strategy and Development and Site Allocations Local Plan.

Other Relevant Strategies, Guidelines or Documents

Green Infrastructure (background paper addendum 2016)

3.21 Read in conjunction with original Green Infrastructure study (2011), this paper identifies the approach to green infrastructure in Rother District, provides background evidence in support of Core Strategy, identifies key green spaces and potential opportunities for green infrastructure.

"Green Infrastructure should provide a network of interconnected habitats to enable dispersal of species across the wider environment. Open spaces within developments should be linked to biodiversity in the wider countryside, including on designated sites, BAP habitats and BOAs….

New developments should be designed to maintain existing Green Infrastructure and enhance/expand provision. In delivering biodiversity enhancements, measures should be taken to contribute to the Green Infrastructure network to maintain existing habitats and to reduce habitat fragmentation.

Production of a Green Infrastructure masterplan should be considered for large scale developments…."

3.22 The site is not covered by any specific Green Infrastructure strategies or policies outlined within the Green Infrastructure study.

Policy Summary

3.23 The planning policy context for landscape and visual related matters covers some broad considerations. The site does not fall within any national or local landscape designations. The application proposals will have due regard for the relevant policies above including ensuring there is sufficient open space provision and that the development respects the local landscape character of the area.

4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

National Character

4.1 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have been prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCAs defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics. Figure 4 illustrates the NCAs and other defined character areas within the context of the site.

4.2 At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 122 'High Weald'. The following extracts summarise the High Weald*:*

NCA 122: High Weald

4.3 *Summary*

"The High Weald encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape."

4.4 Key Characteristics include:

- *"Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wildflower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark…. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham.*
- *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.*
- *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.*
- *High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham Slate is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particularly notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald."*

4.5 The NCA profile includes four "Statements of Environmental Opportunity" (SEO). SEO1, 2 and 3 are relevant to the site proposals.

4.6 SEO 1:

"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.

- *Extending woodland around settlements and infrastructure developments….*
- *Maintaining and restoring links between woodland and other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows, traditional orchards and parkland) and species-rich grasslands and heathland outside the main woodland."*

4.7 SEO 2: the site's western edge is bounded by a stream.

"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 geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.

- *Controlling invasive non-native species, particularly along river banks, to reduce soil exposure and erosion.*
- *Buffering watercourses and reservoirs and restoring natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements and valuable agricultural land by regulating water flow.*
- *Exploring opportunities for landowners to work together across catchments to restore more natural river systems including wet woodland creation to deliver biodiversity, amenity, resource protection and flood control benefits."*

4.8 SEO 3:

"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.

- *Encouraging new developments to follow the vernacular of the area, using locally sourced materials and adhering to the principles of the High Weald AONB design guidance.*
- *Improving sustainable public access through the rights of way network, provision of visitor facilities, and access to and interpretation of important sites for geodiversity, biodiversity and heritage in order to increase the understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape, and of the history of use that has shaped the area."*

East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (updated in 2016)

4.9 The East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment was updated in 2016 to bring it in line with updates to the National Landscape Character Assessment. Each of the individual character areas, apart from the urban areas, has undergone a landscape evaluation outlining the current condition of the landscape and highlighting existing and future forces for change. A vision and strategy for each evaluated character area have been outlined and underpin proposed landscape management guidelines.

4.10 The site itself falls within the Bexhill (30) Urban Area for which there are no specific landscape values or sensitivities highlighted within the assessment. Little Common is located less that 1km west of the site and is noted to *"lack distinctive character"*. The town of Bexhill is noted to have been built on *"gently sloping ground"*. Many of the points included within the assessment refer to the seafront and eastern area of the settlement which are distinctly separate from the site.

4.11 The south eastern tip of the landscape character area South Slopes of the High Wealds (area 5) is located approximately 250m from the northern extent of the site.

South Slopes of the High Weald (area 5)

4.12 Key Landscape Characteristics taken from the LCA description include*:*

- *"An intricate small-scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows.**
- *The area falls gently southwards from the Heathfield Battle ridge to the Low Weald and Pevensey Levels.*
- *Wide views to the Downs from many areas.**
- *A sense of tranquillity and relative remoteness away from the main settlements and roads.**
- *Frequent scattered small woods and shaws, many of which are Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland.**
- *Ghyll woodlands in the many steep sided valleys which are a key characteristic of the High Weald.**
- *There is an abundance of hornbeam…. Other indigenous characteristic tree species are oak, ash and wild cherry. Beech and pine also feature locally….*
- *A close network of winding lanes with scattered settlements and individual dwellings often strung out along them, particularly on the ridges.*
- *Traditional building materials for the area are red brick, often laid as Flemish bond with blued brick ends, red tiled roofs and tile hung upper stories are typical. Oak timber framed and sandstone houses reflect the abundance of locally sourced timber and quarried stone. Flint is found in the south of the area, closer to the downs where it was sourced."*

* also listed as a Key Positive Landscape Attribute

4.13 Current condition states:

"This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and loss of landscape features. Ribbon development and roadside clutter has added to suburbanisation on the edges of villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact."

4.14 Key forces for change, present and future, relevant to the proposals include:

- *"Creeping suburbanisation and cumulative changes in the rural landscape. Increasing roadside clutter and village developments which are not in sympathy with local distinctiveness or vernacular architecture.*
- *Urban fringe influences around Heathfield and Bexhill…*
- *Increasing traffic on the A roads which cross the area and the main roads along the ridges and rat running on rural lanes.*
- *The associated infrastructure required for new development such as waste water treatment works.*
- *Demands for traffic calming and road improvements which could introduce increasing urban clutter to rural roads, villages and lanes."*

4.15 The Vision is stated as:

"A tranquil landscape retaining the strong rural High Wealden historic character. The secluded ghyll valleys and associated woodland conserved and enhanced. The unspoilt character of settlements and farmsteads retained and the distinct sense of place protected. The characteristic medieval field pattern with associated shaws and hedges conserved. Areas of semi-natural ancient woodland brought into positive management to ensure long term health and security."

4.16 The landscape strategy aims that have potential to be relevant to the proposals include:

- *"Plan for the creation of multifunctional green infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity and recreation offered by the rural lanes, rights of way network and extensive woodland.*
- *Integrate proposed and existing development into the landscape through planting of tree features and woodland to define the village boundaries with the countryside.*
- *Ensure that the design and layout of new developments respect the character and form of the landscape and existing settlements.*
- *Consider the potential to plan for recreational access in this character area identifying areas where public access can be encouraged whilst protecting other areas where wildlife conservation is the priority.*
- *Consider appropriate species for new plantings to maintain landscape character…"*

4.17 Guidelines for Managing Change state that *"Any new development should respect the key positive attributes in the landscape and should consider opportunities for proactively meeting the Landscape Change Strategy aims."*

4.18 The landform and intervening features within the landscape provide visual separation between the site and South Slopes of the High Weald Character Area.

4.19 Combe Haven Valley (area 10) and Pevensey Levels (area 25) fall within the assessment study area. There is no intervisibility between the site and these neighbouring character areas and it is considered that there would be no impact from the proposals upon these LCAs.

Designations

4.20 Figure 3 identifies the location of relevant designations within the surrounding area. There are no statutory landscape designations that cover the site or lie adjacent to it.

4.21 Several Listed buildings lie within the study area – There is no intervisibility between the site and these features and it is considered that there would be no impact from the proposals. Heritage matters are considered separately from this assessment.

4.22 Other environmental designations fall within the study area (Ref Figure 3) including Flood Zones 2&3 located directly west of the site. Landscape proposals will have due consideration for these areas.

Topography

4.23 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 5.

Context – Landform

4.24 The local context of the site is of an undulating nature. The local residential settlements at Bexhill-on-Sea including Old Town, Sidley, Glenleigh Park and The Highlands are broadly spread across areas of higher ground (circa 25-60m AOD), surrounding the lower lying Bexhill Down (c.10-20m AOD) sloping south to the coastal level (0m AOD). North of this grouping of settlements lies a separate ridge from Highwoods (c.30m AOD) east to Park Wood (c.45m AOD) reaching a local high point at The Thorne (c.50m AOD). The undulating nature of the local landform limits long-ranging views across the wider landscape.

Site - Landform

4.25 The site lies across a west facing slope on the edge of the ridge to the west of Glenleigh Park. The highpoint of the site lies in the north eastern corner of the site (c.37m AOD) with the low point to the western boundary (c.14m AOD).

Site and Immediate Context

4.26 An assessment of landscape character of the site and its immediate context has been carried out, providing a finer level of assessment than the published studies.

4.27 The site comprises three irregular-shaped fields with boundaries of predominantly mature deciduous trees and hedgerow or timber post and rail fencing. These fields are managed for grazing of horses with the northern and south eastern fields subdivided by post and wire fencing.

4.28 The site is overlooked by neighbouring residential dwellings backing onto the site off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close to the eastern boundary. A low mature hedgerow is present for the majority of this boundary though with breaks located at points where gaps between residential plots allow potential access to the fields from Fryatts Way. The southernmost gap shows evidence of frequent access into the south eastern field parcel of the site from Fryatts Way.

4.29 To the south of the site a mature hedgerow forms the boundary to a separate rectangular field parcel that separates the site from residential dwellings accessed off Concorde Close to the east and Deerswood Lane and Foxhill to the south. To the west of this parcel and directly southwest of the site lies Broad Oak Park. The park is accessed for recreational use and formed by an irregular-shaped field with mature trees and shrubs located to its boundaries and individual trees within.

4.30 Directly west and north-west of the site lies Highwoods Golf Course. The golf course is separated from the site by a mature line of trees and stream for a length that forms the site's western boundary.

4.31 To the north-east of the site a small parcel of land separates the site from the golf course and several properties accessed off Ellerslie Lane.

4.32 Several ditches follow the field boundaries within the site that lead into the stream to the west of the site.

4.33 Views are available north-west out of the site from higher ground. Views stretch across the neighbouring golf course to woodland on higher ground beyond. The site and its localised area is visually well contained with the nature of the landform and intervening features within the landscape limiting longer distance views out of the site.

Landscape Value

4.34 In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in the GLVIA3 (Box 5.1, page 84), and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.

4.35 Landscape Designations: The site and its wider landscape context (including its Visual Envelope) are not subject to any national, local or other landscape designations.

4.36 Landscape Quality (Condition): The site is currently used for grazing of horses leading to land of predominantly low ecological value. Mature trees and hedgerow are present within the site and form positive landscape features (ref application Arboricultural Assessment). Overall it is deemed that the landscape condition which makes up the site is of medium value.

4.37 Scenic Quality: Views out of the site to the wider wooded landscape are possible from some locations within the site. The internal trees and those located to the boundaries contribute positively to the scenic quality of the site and its context. The eastern edge of the site is affected by the neighbouring dwellings and garden features creating an urban edge quality to the site with some areas relatively unkempt. Views are predominantly well screened by intervening boundary features and woodland limiting longer distance views out of the site.

4.38 Rarity and Representativeness: There are no features of rarity noted to be present on site. The site is not considered to be particularly representative of the Landscape Character Areas that it falls within.

4.39 Conservation Interest: There are no identified features of heritage conservation interest on site or in the immediate context. The site contains a small variety of habitat features which are to be broadly conserved and enhanced. (Ecological and Heritage assessments have been carried out as part of the application.)

4.40 Recreational Value: The site itself does not have any recreational value in terms of access, however, the site lies adjacent to the Broad Oak Park recreation area and is visible from several public footpaths.

4.41 Perceptual Aspects & Associations: There are no notable perceptual qualities to the site, even at a localised scale and no relevant associations have been identified. The neighbouring residential area and highway routes effect the site's tranquillity.

4.42 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is of ***Medium*** landscape value.

Visual Baseline

4.43 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis.

4.44 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long-range views. The photographs were taken in December 2019 and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on these receptors.

4.45 'Photo Viewpoints', as referred to in this report are 'Type 1 Visualisations' or 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs', as referred to in the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19).

Photo Viewpoints

4.46 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the Proposed Development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figure 7-15 illustrate the photo viewpoints. They are briefly described below.

Viewpoint 1

4.47 This view is taken from Fryatts Way looking towards the site across a gap between dwellings No.25 and 27. The view looks beyond the area of land between the dwellings and across the north eastern section of the site. This section of the site is located on higher ground and allows views to extend to the wider context further west to a wooded ridge. This background view is in the context of the existing dwellings and mature trees to the site's eastern boundary.

4.48 The view is representative of users of Fryatts Way and helps illustrate the relationship between the site and dwellings adjacent to it.

Viewpoint 2

4.49 This view is taken from Fryatts Way looking towards the site across a gap between dwellings No.11 and 15. The view looks beyond the area of land between these dwellings and across the south eastern section of the site towards Broad Oak Park. The site and existing dwellings have a wooded backdrop visible in the view.

4.50 The view is representative of users of Fryatts Way and helps illustrate the relationship between the site (including the area of proposed vehicular access) and dwellings adjacent to it.

Viewpoint 3

4.51 Viewpoint 3 is taken from Concorde Close looking west towards the southern section of the site. Views of the vegetation along the site's boundary with Broad Oak Park look across the southern most section of the site.

4.52 The view is representative of users of Concorde Close and helps illustrate the relationship between the site and neighbouring dwellings.

Viewpoint 4

4.53 This view is taken from the public right of way Bexhill 26a. The route passes directly behind properties along Deerswood Lane and Foxhill and helps illustrate the relationship between the site and these dwellings. The view looks north across a field adjacent to the site into the site's southern field. The view illustrates the effectiveness of the existing boundary trees and vegetation at filtering views across the landscape. Dwellings along Fryatts Way and Concorde Close are visible within the image.

4.54 The viewpoint is representative of users of the public Footpath Bexhill 26a.

Viewpoint 5

4.55 Viewpoint 5 is taken from public Footpath Bexhill 26b where it passes through Broad Oak Park. The view looks north-east towards the site across the eastern section of the park with the boundary trees and shrubs present in the midground. The site is partially visible beyond the boundary features. Existing development off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close are glimpsed through gaps in the vegetation with dwellings at Foxhill and Deerswood Lane visible to the south.

4.56 The view is representative of users of both the public right of way and the recreation area more broadly.

Viewpoint 6

4.57 This view is taken from public footpath Bexhill 26b where is passes through the field located between Broad Oak Park and Highwoods Golf Club. The view looks north-east towards the site's western boundary.

4.58 The view includes the dense boundary vegetation of the adjacent field parcels and illustrates its effectiveness at screening views across the landscape.

4.59 The view is representative of users of the right of way.

Viewpoint 7

4.60 Footpath 26b continues north from Broad Oak Park into the Highwoods Golf Club grounds and Viewpoint 7 is representative of users of this section of the path. The view looks east across the edge of the golf club grounds where mature trees are present in the foreground. The view includes boundary vegetation that filters views further east.

Viewpoint 8

4.61 Viewpoint 8 is taken from within the Highwoods Golf Club grounds along the route of Footpath Bexhill 27 where it passes closest to the application site. The view is representative of users of the path and golf club grounds.

4.62 The site's western field is visible through gaps in the existing boundary vegetation that runs along the route of the stream that passes along the site boundary.

Viewpoint 9

4.63 This viewpoint is taken from a highpoint within the Bexhill Cemetery. The cemetery lies on a south facing slope. Views towards the site are across the cemetery and beyond to the Highwoods Golf Course grounds. Beyond this the view is wooded and includes the boundary trees within the site.

4.64 The view is representative of users of the Bexhill Cemetery.

Summary of Visual Baseline

4.65 The baseline analysis results in a number of reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:

- The visual envelope of the proposed site is limited due to the nature of the local topography and intervening landscape features including the woodland/vegetation along the local field boundaries and within Broad Oak Park;
- Close range views are relatively limited and are available for residential receptors neighbouring the site and users of local PRoW and highway network and recreational facilities;
- There is little opportunity to experience long distance views into the site due to the nature of the landform and intervening vegetation; and
- The site is often seen in the context of the existing development adjacent to the site.

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5.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

Introduction

5.1 The development proposals are described in the Design and Access Statement and other information accompanying the planning application. The existing landscape resource and the visual receptors and amenity of the site have been considered by the planning and design process and have informed the resultant scheme. This approach has entailed collaboration between landscape, urban design, ecological and other professionals. The landscape components of the scheme are an integral part of the proposals.

Landscape Design and GI Objectives

5.2 The key objectives of the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are to:

- Retain existing features including hedgerows and trees as far as possible;
- Provide visual softening to the proposed built form to help assimilate the Proposed Development into its landscape surroundings;
- Provide access to new recreational areas within the site; and
- Create opportunities to improve biodiversity through habitat creation taking advantage of the existing network of landscape features and topography of the site to help create wetland features.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) Proposals

5.3 The following provides an outline of the intended landscape and GI proposals as illustrated on the application Development Framework Plan:

- The provision of 4.39 hectares of land dedicated to landscape, GI, public open space, play and habitat related proposals – representing approximately 38% of the total site area;
- Landscaped buffers along the southern, western and northern boundaries to include new native structural planting, flower rich grassland, SuDS features (swales to northern, southern and central corridors and attenuation basins within the western open space);
- Central green corridors including retained mature trees with new amenity grassland areas alongside centrally located equipped play space;
- Landscape proposals within the residential area (mainly restricted to plots) with the street typologies allowing for new tree planting, incidental open space and SuDS features where possible; and
- New network of access paths to give all-ability access across new areas of public open space.

Landscape Management

5.4 All of the landscape areas and public open space features will be managed and maintained. This would be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (LMP), to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape proposals.

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

6.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from Proposed Development on the site. Schedules detailing these likely landscape and visual effects for the receptors are included in Appendices B and C respectively. Please refer to these in conjunction with the following descriptions.

Landscape Effects

Construction

6.2 All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to minimise any adverse impact on landscape character. Appropriate methods will be adopted to protect retained trees and vegetation based upon BS 5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

6.3 There will be disruption to the site's landscape during the construction phase, which will potentially include the erection of site hoarding. Protective fencing will however be utilised where required for retained hedgerows and trees.

6.4 The landscape effects during construction are assessed as being of a transient nature and, given that the timescales involved will be relatively short, this is considered to be of limited significance overall. Inevitably there will be some disruption to the site landscape and its immediate environs during this phase of works. Effects will be localised and limited in extent, resulting in a ***Major / Moderate Adverse*** landscape effect upon the site and immediate context during the construction phase, while effects upon the wider landscape are considered to be ***Minor Adverse / Negligible.***

Operation (following Completion)

6.5 The site is not covered by a national designation for landscape quality. It is not in or adjacent to either a National Park or an AONB. Direct effects upon the landscape fabric of the site are considered to be of localised and limited significance. There are some landscape features of local merit within the site, the majority of which are retained as part of the proposals.

<u>National level – High Weald NCA</u>

6.6 The proposed residential development will result in direct impacts upon the landscape character of the site however potential effects upon the wider landscape will be very limited. The new housing will occur within a very small area of 'High Weald' and will be adjacent to existing residential development east of the site along Fryatts Way and Concorde Close. Although agricultural land and some small sections of vegetation will be lost to development, the overall strategy will greatly increase the site's structural landscape features and biodiversity. The development will have a relatively limited influence upon the surrounding landscape given the site's level of physical and visual containment afforded by the localised landform, intervening vegetation and the existing residential context.

6.7 The proposals will provide opportunities to address the NCA SEO1, SEO2 and SEO3 by introducing new woodland planting to the settlement edge; linking existing woodland features; considering proximity to watercourses within the design proposals; reflecting local character and distinctiveness within the built form and landscaping; and increasing public open space accessibility. The resultant effect upon the NCA is assessed as ***Negligible***.

East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (Updated 2016)

Bexhill Urban Area (area 30)

6.8 The site forms a relatively small part of the Bexhill Urban Area. The site is considered broadly typical of the character area though the site is relatively well contained due to intervening landform and features within the landscape and the nature of the character area being predominantly of built urban form. Proposals will have limited influence upon the surrounding landscape. The new development is considered to result in a ***Minor Adverse*** effect upon the Bexhill Urban Area at year 15.

South Slopes of the High Weald (area 5)

6.9 The neighbouring character area South Slopes of the High Weald has limited relationship within the site due to intervening features and topography. Views towards the site proposals would be minimal and resultant effects are considered to be ***Negligible*** at year 15.

Site and immediate context

6.10 In terms of the site itself and its immediate context, the landscape effects will be similarly limited. Inevitably there will be some initial disruption to the local landscape (as with any greenfield development) with the Proposed Development altering the predominant use of the land from agricultural to residential use across part of the site. The vast majority of existing hedgerows and trees will be retained and enhanced. Across the site there would be new landscape planting and grassland that will contribute to the local GI network.

6.11 Existing landscape features include hedgerows and trees. These features would be retained, with exception of allowing for access proposals, and enhanced in line with local character.

6.12 Although the replacement of green fields with housing will have a notable effect on part of the site (c.42%), the proposed open space and new planting will help to balance the overall change across the site landscape and offset any short-term adverse effect.

6.13 Considering the above points and the beneficial effects of the area of new accessible open space it is considered that there will be a High/Medium magnitude of change, resulting in a ***Major/Moderate Adverse*** effect upon completion and potential to reach a ***Moderate*** landscape effect overall in the long term.

Visual Effects

6.14 The following provides a summary of the visual effects assessment included at Appendix C.

6.15 The Approximate Visual Envelope at Figure 6 illustrates the potential area in which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible at the year of completion. Visibility of the proposed built form within the Approximate Visual Envelope will vary as a result of elements within it such as vegetation, landform and buildings that either individually or collectively provide localised screening and/or filtering of the view.

6.16 Further opportunities for views of the proposed built form may potentially occur outside the Approximate Visual Envelope, although it is considered the built form would be difficult to distinguish on account of intervening screening elements and overall distance which would reduce perceptibility. It is considered that these views, within the overall LVA process, would not

give rise to any major change such that it would result in any marked adverse effects on these receptors.

6.17 The Visual Envelope of the Proposed Development is mostly restricted to the site itself, immediate residential area and neighbouring recreation areas (Broad Oak Park and Highwoods Golf Course). Any views available from the more distant locations are limited to small portions of the site.

Construction

6.18 During the construction phase, adverse visual effects will occur and these will largely reflect the actual extent of visibility of the site for the various receptors. Inevitably those visual receptors in closest proximity e.g. residents off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close and users of neighbouring recreation areas/routes will have views of construction activity to include vehicles and associated machinery, site compounds, and earthworks/ground modelling.

6.19 It is assessed that the overall visual effects during the construction phase would be over a relatively short duration (c 2-3 years) and consequently there would be a short-term effect as a result. Construction visual effects for receptors close to or adjacent to the site are considered to be up to ***Major/Moderate Adverse***, however, for less sensitive receptors and those at a distance from the site, visual effects are unlikely to be any greater than ***Minor Adverse.***

Operation (following Completion)

6.20 The impact of the Proposed Development and the consequential effects on visual receptors has been assessed. On completion, it is judged the Proposed Development would result in a ***Moderate / Minor Adverse*** effect on the immediate surroundings of the site, but a ***Minor Adverse to Negligible*** impact on receptors within the wider landscape due to the existing landform and intervening trees and hedgerows.

6.21 Fifteen years after completion, the site would benefit from an established and maturing landscape of habitats including structural planting and grassland. Visual effects would again vary depending on the sensitivity and location of the receptors, resulting in up to a ***Moderate Adverse*** effect on the receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site and a ***Negligible*** effect within the wider landscape. In the longer term, any adverse effects would continue to diminish.

6.22 The availability of open views towards the built form within the site are limited and broadly identified as being close to mid-range views including from some higher sensitivity receptors. Localised topography, vegetation cover and built development restrict visibility of the site from the majority of the wider landscape.

<u>Residential Properties and Settlement</u>

6.23 There are relatively few residential receptors likely to experience effects from the Proposed Development. The residents with most direct effects of the proposals would be residents within dwellings located directly adjacent to the site (to the east) and to a lesser degree those located further south of the site. Views would likely be available from some ground and some upper levels of the dwellings and would be screened to a degree by intervening boundary vegetation. Effects upon views are considered to be ***Major / Moderate Adverse*** during operation reducing to ***Moderate Adverse*** for those in closer proximity (off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close) and

Moderate / Minor Adverse during operation reducing to ***Minor Adverse*** for those further away (those at Foxhill.and Deerswood Lane).

Recreational Use:

6.24 Several PRoW within the local area have views towards the site from within the neighbouring recreational areas and agricultural land.

6.25 Footpaths Bexhill 26a and 26b pass through land south of the site and south west including through Broad Oak Park. Users of this route and the recreation area would have views toward the development. Views would be partially screened by the existing boundary vegetation for the majority of locations and also by planting proposed within the landscape buffers to the site's southern and southwestern edges. Effects upon users of the PRoW routes to the south and southwest and of Broad Oak Park are considered to be ***Moderate Adverse*** both at completion and in the longer term.

6.26 Footpath Bexhill 27 passes though Highwoods Golf Course located to the west of the site. Existing vegetation within the golf course and to the field boundaries helps screen views to a degree. Views would be softened also by the landscape proposals within the site. Effects upon users of the PRoW routes to the west and northwest and of Broad Oak Park are considered to be ***Moderate/ Minor Adverse*** both at completion and in the longer term.

Road and Rail

6.27 Close range views of the proposed access arrangement and associated landscaping will be available to users of Fryatts Way where a vehicular access point would be located. Views of the proposed housing will be possible with the development set back from the road beyond the existing housing. Resultant effects are considered to be ***Moderate / Minor Adverse*** reducing overtime to ***Minor Adverse*** in the long term with maturation of proposed landscape.

Night Time Visual Effects

6.28 The site is located adjacent to existing residential development. Street lights are located along neighbouring streets including both to the east and south of the site. The baseline night time landscape does include light spill from the urban area. The development proposals will inevitably result in an extension to the existing light spill, due to the new housing being lit, together with the new internal road.

6.29 Landscaping will help to filter and soften the overall appearance of the built form and assist in reducing the visual effects of increased light sources upon the surrounding landscape once the development is operational.

6.30 From a distance, it is considered that whilst there is likely to be some illumination from the development proposals (as with any new development) it will be observed against the existing light spill and individual light sources visible within the local settlements. Proposed new landscape planting within the development will help limit, filter and screen views towards individual light sources such as new street lights, car head lights etc. whilst the specification, positioning and control of new light sources will help to ensure that the lighting does not contribute to light spill on the night sky.

Cumulative Effects

6.31 In terms of cumulative effects, as other potential residential developments within the vicinity of the site come forward there is potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects. However, the degree of effect is likely to be contained and localised within the context of the wider landscape and visual receptors.

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7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This LVA has assessed landscape character and visual amenity, and the resulting landscape visual effects of the Proposed Development on the receiving landscape and visual receptors. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposed land uses and the parameters that are defined on the application's Development Framework (drawing 9309-L-02) and application material.

7.2 The site comprises three fields managed for grazing, influenced directly by the adjacent residential development. The landscape value of the site and its immediate context has been appraised (in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)) as ***Medium*** and it is not situated within a designated landscape at either a national or local scale.

7.3 The development proposals reflected in the Framework Plan have been sensitively designed with consideration given to the baseline information and findings of the LVA. The proposals have been designed to ensure that the development is set within a substantial Green Infrastructure network. A substantial portion of the site is proposed as Green Infrastructure (c.38%). The proposals would include new planting to enhance the existing boundary trees and hedgerows, amenity grassland, and new tree planting elsewhere within the site. Proposals would also include habitat creation including as part of the sustainable drainage strategy. These proposals would combine to create a high-quality development that would be successfully assimilated within its landscape context.

7.4 At a national level the site falls within The High Weald NCA 122. The proposals offer opportunities to contribute to the Statements of Environmental Opportunity set out within the NCA profile by enhancing the woodland planting within the site and making use of local vernacular characteristics within the detailed design proposals.

7.5 The site falls entirely within the Bexhill Urban Area LCA at a local level as set out within the East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment. The site is relatively well contained and proposals will have very limited influence upon the surrounding landscape. The Proposed Development will have an adverse impact on the site's landscape character though the site forms only a small portion of the borough LCA which is predominantly urban in nature. When considering the generous GI proposals and likely beneficial effects the new development is considered to result in a ***Minor Adverse*** effect upon the Bexhill Urban Area at year 15.

7.6 The site and its immediate surrounds are not subject to any local or national landscape designations and have been assessed in accordance with the GLVIA guidelines as being of ***Medium*** landscape value overall.

7.7 Although the proposals will undoubtedly alter the character of the site itself through loss of open space and minimal vegetation to allow for access, it is considered that the proposed residential development will not be out of scale or context with the nature of the landscape within which it is proposed to be located; within an area which is relatively well contained and subject to influences from the neighbouring development. The development of the site will include new landscape planting which will allow for enhancement of the existing boundary vegetation and a contribution to an increase in biodiversity across the site. The proposals afford opportunities to contribute to the distinctive character of the local area.

7.8 Visual receptors for the Proposed Development that have been identified include residents within close proximity to the site, users of the local highway network, users of public rights of way and users of the neighbouring recreational areas (Oak Wood Park and Highwoods Golf Course). Visual receptors are largely limited to those located close the site with more distant views being heavily screened by intervening features. Resultant visual effects are considered to be no more than ***Moderate*** in the long term.

7.9 Overall the site is considered to have capacity to accommodate a well-designed and considered development as set out within the application proposals.

Figures 1 - 12

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Site Boundary

Scale: 1:20000 @ A3

0 500m 1000m

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masterplanning ■ environmental assessment ■ landscape design ■ urban design ■ ecology ■ architecture ■ arboriculture

K:\9300\9309\LANDS\LVIA\9309 LVA Fig 1 Site Location.indd

client
Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
SITE LOCATION

N

scale
1:20000 @ A3

drawn
MW/LP

issue date
31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 1

rev
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Site boundary

Bexhill 86 — Public Rights of Way with reference

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K:\9300\9309\LANDS\LVIA\9309 LVA Fig 2 Aerial Photograph.indd

client
Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

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scale
NTS@ A3

drawn
MW/LP

issue date
31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 2

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Site Boundary

High Woods SSSI

Ancient Woodland

Flood zone 2
[Indicative only based on Environment Agency mapping]

Flood zone 3
[Indicative only based on Environment Agency mapping]

Listed Buildings

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3

0 500 1000m

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K:\9300\9309\LANDS\LVIA\9309 LVA Fig 3 Designations.indd

client
Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
DESIGNATIONS

scale
1:12500 @ A3

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MW/LP

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31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 3

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Site Boundary

National Character Areas (NCA)

NCA122 'High Weald' covers all mapping extents.

East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment
(updated in 2016)

Bexhill urban area (area 30)

Pevensey Levels (area 25)

South Slopes of the High Weald (area 5)

Combe Haven Valley (area 10)

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3

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client
Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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scale
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drawn
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issue date
31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 4

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Site Boundary

100m - 110m AOD

90m - 100m AOD

80m - 90m AOD

70m - 80m AOD

60m - 70m AOD

50m - 60m AOD

40m - 50m AOD

30m - 40m AOD

20m - 30m AOD

10m - 20m AOD

0m - 10m AOD

-10m - 0m AOD

Scale: 1:20000 @ A3

0 500m 1000m

N

client
Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
TOPOGRAPHY

scale
1:20000 @ A3

drawn
MW

issue date
31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 5

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K:\9300\9309\LANDS\LVIA\9309 LVA Fig 5 Topography.indd

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Site Boundary

Photo Viewpoint Location

KM 196 Public Footpaths/Bridleway with reference

A Receptor Location

A: Residents of dwellings backing onto site along Fryatts Way & Concorde Close
B: Users of road network east of site (Fryatts Way & Concorde Close)
C: Residents of dwellings at Deerswood Lane and Foxhill
D: Users of Broad Oak Park and PRoW to south-west of site
E: Residents of dwellings west of Broad Oak Park
F: Users of Highwoods Golf Club and PRoW Bexhill 27
G: Residents west of Ellerslie Lane
H: Users of Bexhill Cemetery

Approximate Visual Envelope (See Note)

Note:-
The Approximate Visual Envelope provides a representative boundary and representative area of visual influence. Within the envelope, existing landscape and / or physical features provide localised screening effects. Further distant views may occur outside the envelope boundary, although the effects of the proposed development upon these views is considered to be negligible as a result of the distance and intervening screening effects.

Scale: 1:5000 @ A3

0 100 200 300 400 500m

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masterplanning ■ environmental assessment ■ landscape design ■ urban design ■ ecology ■ architecture ■ arboriculture

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Gladman Developments Ltd.

project
Land off Fryatts Way
Bexhill-on-Sea

drawing title
VISUAL APPRAISAL

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scale
1:5000 @ A3

drawn
LP

issue date
31 January 2019

drawing / figure number
Figure 6

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Approximate location of site

Residential Dwelling
No. 25 Fryatts Way

Mature tree to
site boundary

Photo Viewpoint 1a: View west from Fryatts Way between No.25 & No.27

Approximate location of site

Mature tree to
site boundary

Residential Dwelling
No. 27 Fryatts Way

Photo Viewpoint 1b: View west from Fryatts Way between No.25 & No.27

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Photo Viewpoint 1a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:30
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 225 º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 1b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:30
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 312º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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rev
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Photo Viewpoint 2a: View west from Fryatts Way between No.11 & No.15

Photo Viewpoint 2b: View west from Fryatts Way between No.11 & No.15

Photo Viewpoint 2a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:35
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 270º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 2b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:35
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 60º
Direction of View: 343º, bearing from North

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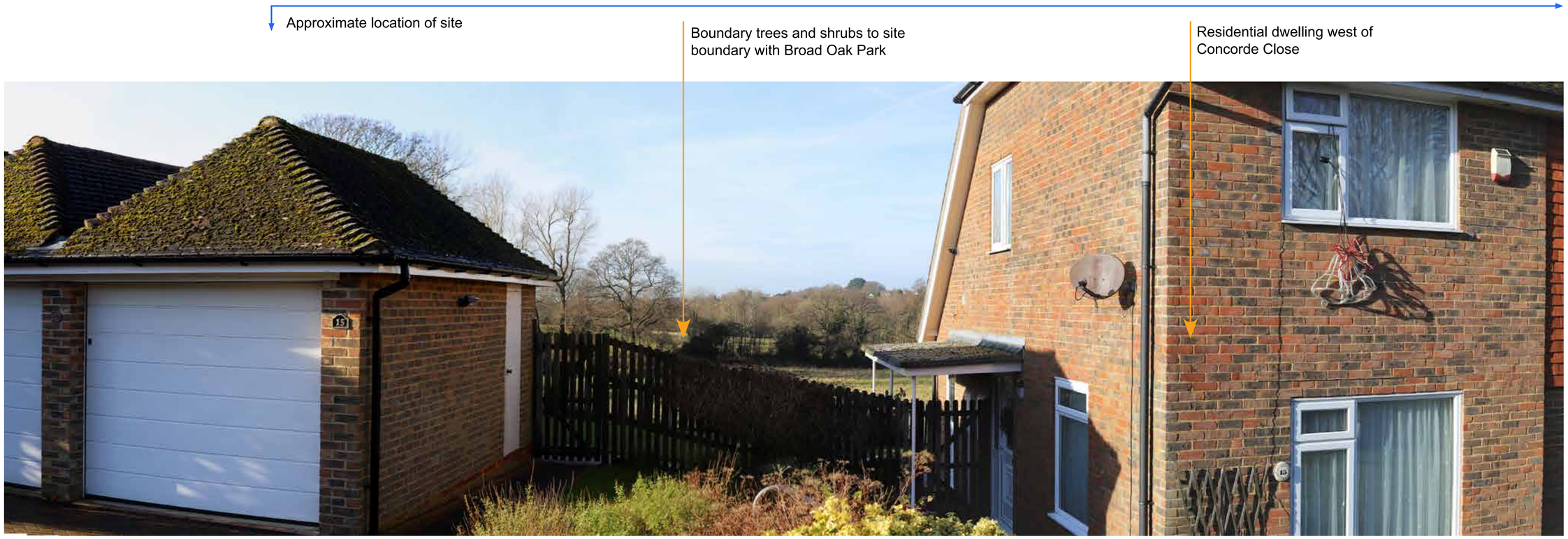

Photo Viewpoint 3: View north-west from Concorde Close

Photo Viewpoint 3
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:38
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 76 º
Direction of View:º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 4a: View north from PRoW Footpath 26a

Photo Viewpoint 4b: View north from PRoW Footpath 26a

Photo Viewpoint 4a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:45
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 278 °, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 4b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:45
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87°
Direction of View: 87°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 5a: View north-east from Footpath PRoW Bexhill 26b within Broad Oak Park

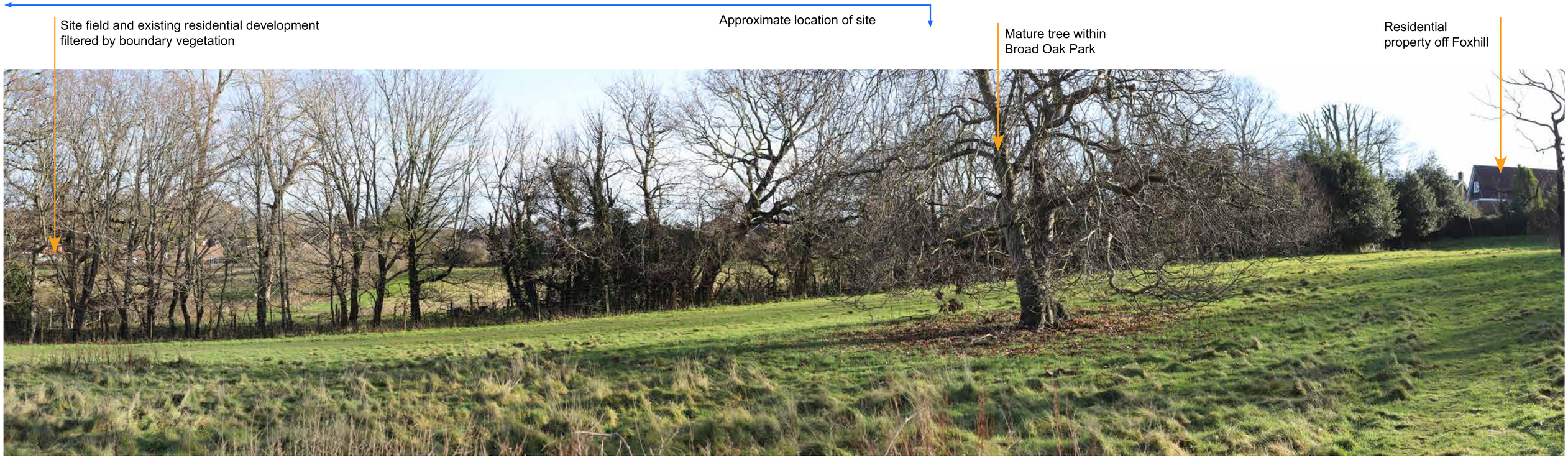

Photo Viewpoint 5b: View north-east from Footpath PRoW Bexhill 26b within Broad Oak Park

Photo Viewpoint 5a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:50
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 0º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 5b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:50
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 87º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Figure 11
rev
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Photo Viewpoint 6a: View north-east from PRoW Footpath Bexhill 26b

Photo Viewpoint 6b: View north-east from PRoW Footpath Bexhill 26b

Photo Viewpoint 6a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:53
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 43º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 6b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,11:53
Camera make & model, & sensor format: Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 73º
Direction of View: 80º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Approximate location of site

Mature tree within Highwoods Golf Club Grounds

Boundary trees/ vegetation

Photo Viewpoint 7a: View east from PRoW Footpath 26b within Highwoods Golf Club

Approximate location of site

Photo Viewpoint 7b: View east from PRoW Footpath 26b within Highwoods Golf Club

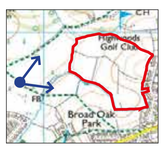

Photo Viewpoint 7a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,12:05
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 50º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 7b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,12:05
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 33º
Direction of View: 110º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 8a: View south-east from PRoW Footpath Bexhill 27

Photo Viewpoint 8b: View south-east from PRoW Footpath Bexhill 27

Photo Viewpoint 8a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,12:08
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 104º, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 8b
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,12:08
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 147º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Figure 14	-

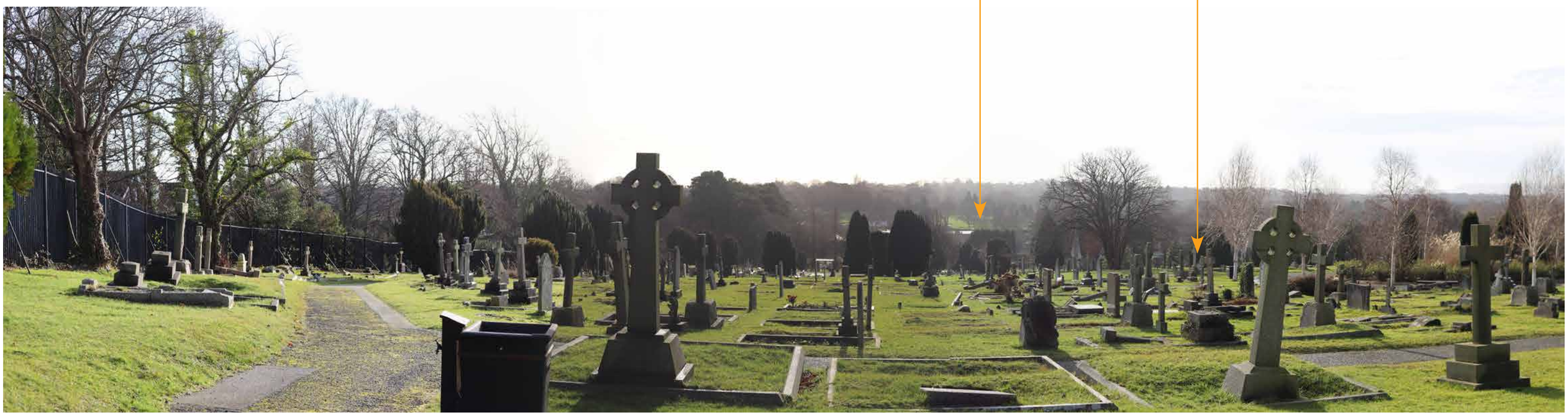

Photo Viewpoint 9: View south from Bexhill Cemetery

Photo Viewpoint 9a
Date & time of photo: 18th Dec 2019,12:40
Camera make & model, & sensor format:
Canon EOS 6D, FFS
Horizontal Field of View: 87º
Direction of View: 180º, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arms length.

Visualisation Type: Type 1
Projection: Cylindrical
Enlargement factor: 100%

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Appendix A: Landscape and Visual Appraisal –Methodology and Assessment Criteria

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Appendix A
Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Methodology and Assessment Criteria

Introduction

1.0 The methodology for the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) undertaken for the proposed development is detailed in the LVA report. The following information should be read in conjunction with this methodology.

1.1 As advised in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) (GLVIA3), the judgements made in respect of both landscape and visual effects are a combination of an assessment of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the landscape or visual effect. The following details the definitions and criteria used in assessing sensitivity and magnitude for landscape and visual receptors.

1.2 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as High/ Medium or Moderate/ Minor etc. This indicates that the assessment lies between the respective definitions or encompasses aspects of both.

Landscape

Landscape Sensitivity

1.3 Landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their 'Landscape Sensitivity'. This combines judgements on the value to be attached to the landscape and the susceptibility to change of the landscape from the type of change or development proposed. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.

1.4 There can be complex relationships between the value attached to landscape receptors and their susceptibility to change which can be especially important when considering change within or close to designated landscapes. For example, an internationally, nationally or locally valued landscape does not automatically or by definition have a high susceptibility to all types of change. The type of change or development proposed may not compromise the specific basis for the value attached to the landscape.

Landscape Value

1.5 Value can apply to a landscape area as a whole, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. The following criteria have been used to categorise landscape value. Where there is no clear existing evidence on landscape value, an assessment is made based on the criteria/ factors identified below (based on the guidance in GLVIA3 paragraph 5.28, Box 5.1).

- Landscape quality (condition)
- Scenic quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation interest
- Recreation value
- Perceptual aspects
- Associations

Landscape Value	Definition
High	Landscape receptors of high importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Medium	Landscape receptors of medium importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Low	Landscape receptors of low importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.

Landscape Susceptibility to Change

1.6 This means the ability of the landscape receptor (overall character type/ area or individual element/ feature) to accommodate the change (i.e. the proposed development) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline position and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. The definition and criteria for the assessment of Landscape Susceptibility to Change is as follows:

Landscape Susceptibility to Change	Definition
High	A highly distinctive and cohesive landscape receptor, with positive characteristics and features with no or very few detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features intact and in very good condition and/ or rare. Limited capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.
Medium	Distinctive and more commonplace landscape receptor, with some positive characteristics/ features and some detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features in moderate condition. Capacity to accept well planned and designed change/ development of the type proposed.
Low	Landscape receptor of mixed character with a lack of coherence and including detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features that may be in poor or improving condition and few that could not be replaced. Greater capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

1.7 The magnitude of landscape effects is the degree of change to the landscape receptor in terms of its size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the separate considerations of Scale or Size of the Degree of Change and Reversibility. The geographical extent and duration of change are described where relevant in the appraisal.

Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change

Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change	Definition
High	Total loss of or substantial alteration to key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements totally uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements that would be evident but not necessarily uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be obviously changed.
Low	Limited loss of, or alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements evident and/ or characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be perceptibly changed.
Negligible	Very minor alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be minimally changed.
None	No loss or alteration to the key characteristics/ features, representing 'no change'.

Reversibility

Reversibility	Definition
Irreversible	The development would be permanent and the assessment site could not be returned to its current/ former use.
Reversible	The development could be deconstructed/ demolished and the assessment site could be returned to broadly its current/ historic use (although that may be subject to qualification depending on the nature of the development).

Visual

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

1.8 Visual sensitivity assesses each visual receptor in terms of their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.

Visual Susceptibility to Change

1.9 The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of; firstly, the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and secondly, the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience.

Visual Susceptibility to Change	Definition
High	Residents at home with primary views from ground floor/garden and upper floors. Public rights of way/ footways where attention is primarily focussed on the landscape and on particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and/ or on particular views. Communities where views make an important contribution to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents. Travellers on recognised scenic routes.
Medium	Residents at home with secondary views (primarily from first floor level). Public rights of way/ footways where attention is not primarily focussed on the landscape and/ or particular views. Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes.
Low	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). Travellers on road, rail or other transport where views are primarily focussed on the transport route. People at their place of work where views of the landscape are not important to the quality of the working life.

Value of Views

1.10 The value attached to a view takes account of any recognition attached to a particular view and/ or any indicators of the value attached to views, for example through guidebooks or defined viewpoints or references in literature or art.

Value of Views	Definition
High	A unique or identified view (e.g. shown as such on Ordnance Survey map, guidebook or tourist map) or one noted in literature or art. A view where a heritage asset makes an important contribution to the view.
Medium	A typical and/ or representative view from a particular receptor.
Low	An undistinguished or unremarkable view from a particular receptor.

Magnitude of Visual Effects

1.11 Magnitude of Visual Effects evaluates each of the visual effects in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the Scale or Size (including the degree of contrast) of Visual Change. The distance and nature of the view and whether the receptor's view will be stationary or moving are also detailed in the Visual Effects Table.

Scale or Size of the Degree of Visual Change	Definition
High	The proposal will result in a large and immediately apparent change in the view, being a dominant and new and/ or incongruous feature in the landscape.
Medium	The proposal will result in an obvious and recognisable change in the view and will be readily noticed by the viewer.
Low	The proposal will constitute a minor component of the wider view or a more recognisable component that reflects those apparent in the existing view. Awareness of the proposals will not have a marked effect on the overall nature of the view.
Negligible/ None	Only a very small part of the proposal will be discernible and it will have very little or no effect on the nature of the view.

Level of Effect

1.12 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.

1.13 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following descriptive thresholds have been used for this appraisal:

- **Major**
- **Moderate**
- **Minor**
- **Negligible**

1.14 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

Appendix B: Landscape Effects Table (LET)

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APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	**Judged Sensitivity of Landscape**			**Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect**		**Description/ Notes**	**Overall Effect at Construction Phase**	**Overall Effect Upon Completion**	**Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion**
	Susceptibility to Change **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Landscape Value** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Overall Sensitivity** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project** **High** **Medium** **Low** **Negligible** **None**	**Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?** **Yes** **No** **N/A**		**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**
National Landscape Character									
Natural England, National Character Area Profile (NCA): 122 ‘High Weald’	There will be variation in susceptibility to change across the NCA. It is considered to be **Medium** at a local scale as there are no landscape designations on the site itself.	There will be variations in landscape value across the NCA but it is considered to be **Medium** at the local scale.	Medium	Construction: None / Negligible Completion: None / Negligible Year 15: None / Negligible Due to the scale of the development within the large NCA. No key characteristics will be lost.	No	The High Weald is a distinctive national character area within which the site forms a relatively small part. Change of the type proposed will go largely unnoticed as the type of landscape lost is abundant in the surrounding area. The agricultural land will be lost to development with removal of few trees to allow for development and access however a large area of Green Infrastructure will include areas of woodland and individual tree planting. The overall magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible – None (i.e., overall landscape receptor will be minimally changed/no change). The proposed development addresses the following: SEO1: Proposals will maintain much of the woodland and hedgerow features on site enhancing these in places to improve connections. There will be some limited loss to allow for access. New woodland planting will be included to the perimeter boundaries within landscape buffers. SEO2: A landscape management plan (LMP) will be implemented as part of ongoing site management. The adopted LMP will ensure control of invasive species. Landscape planting appropriate to t he wet habitat will be implemented. SEO3: With a high-quality design implemented the proposals will include materials sympathetic to the local landscape character. New access routes within the proposals will link to the existing network encouraging use of the local public rights of way to access local areas. There is potential for interpretation to be included within the proposals that encourage the appreciation o the local biodiversity and landscape history.	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA): County/District									

APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)

Landscape Receptor and Reference	**Judged Sensitivity of Landscape**			**Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect**		**Description/ Notes**	**Overall Effect at Construction Phase**	**Overall Effect Upon Completion**	**Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion**
	Susceptibility to Change **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Landscape Value** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Overall Sensitivity** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project** **High** **Medium** **Low** **Negligible** **None**	**Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?** **Yes** **No** **N/A**		**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**
East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (Updated 2016) Bexhill Urban Area (area 30)	There is variation in susceptibility to change across this broad area. Predominantly Low	There is variation in value across this broad area. Predominantly Low/Medium	Low	Construction: Low/Medium Completion: Low Year 15: Low	No	The Bexhill Urban Area contains a mixture of landuses and architecture covering numerous eras. Within the area adjacent to the site the built forms is predominantly of 1960's architecture lacking in distinctive local character. The proposals provide the opportunity for a high-quality built development. Should development incorporate local vernacular in a sympathetic way the new residential development could provide a positive extension to the existing built for of the Bexhill Urban Area.	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (Updated 2016) South Slopes of the High Weald (area 5)	There is variation in susceptibility to change across this broad area. Predominantly Medium	There is variation in value across this broad area. Predominantly Medium	Medium	Construction: Low/Medium Completion: Low/Negligible Year 15: Negligible	No	Although the South Slopes of the High Weald Character Area is generally unspoilt and tranquil the site proposals would be visible from only a very small portion of this character area and therefore likely only to have a proportionally limited effect upon the overall area. The existing development that forms the Bexhill settlement edge is already visible from parts of the South Slopes of the High Weald. Proposals include additional landscaping to the site boundaries which would enhance and further soften any new built form. Proposals will include new access routes and GI that would contribute to the overall network within the local area including that within the South Slopes of the High Weald.	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse/ Negligible	Negligible
Landscape Character: Site and Immediate Context									

APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	**Judged Sensitivity of Landscape**			**Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect**		**Description/ Notes**	**Overall Effect at Construction Phase**	**Overall Effect Upon Completion**	**Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion**
	Susceptibility to Change **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Landscape Value** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Overall Sensitivity** **High** **Medium** **Low**	**Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project** **High** **Medium** **Low** **Negligible** **None**	**Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?** **Yes** **No** **N/A**		**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**	**Major** **Moderate** **Minor** **Negligible** **None** **Adverse** **Beneficial**
Site and Immediate Context	Medium	Medium	Medium	Construction: Medium-High Completion: Medium-High Year 15: Medium	No	The site comprises agricultural land of overall relatively low ecological value. The field boundaries do provide some features of value which will be retained as far as possible (except to allow for access). The existing hedgerows will be enhanced and gaps planted up with native species to increase connectivity across the site and help provide additional visual containment – particularly to the north. Existing habitats will be enhanced, green corridors proposed to the perimeter and an area of larger open space within the west of the site will be landscaped in accordance with the local character including drainage basins. Access proposals will require removal of small number of trees currently forming the boundary vegetation within the site. It is considered that there will be benefits resulting from the proposed GI network proposals. The immediate site context would be changed as a result of the development where visibility allows. The addition of new built development will extend the current settlement and there will be a certain loss of openness. However, as a result of the reasonably enclosed nature of the site these effects will be restricted to the immediate context only. There will be landscape improvement and enhancement through new tree planting and grassland within the new green infrastructure framework. In broad terms, the overall character of the immediate context will remain; The GI proposals will lead to beneficial effects within parts of the site itself.	Major/Moderate Adverse	Major/Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse

Appendix C: Visual Effects Table (VET)

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APPENDIX C: VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE (VET)

Ref	Receptor Type, Location and photographs (including approx no. of dwellings where applicable)	Judged Sensitivity of Visual Receptor			Judged Magnitude of Visual Effects				Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion (Winter)	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion (Summer)
		Susceptibility to Change High Medium Low	Value High Medium Low	Overall Sensitivity High Medium Low	Distance from Site Boundary (or Built Development where stated) (approx. m/km)	Nature of View Full Partial Glimpse None	Is the View Temporary or permanent?	Size/Scale of Visual Effect (including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project High Medium Low Negligible/ None		Major Moderate Minor Negligible None Adverse or Beneficial	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None Adverse or Beneficial	Major Moderate Minor Negligible None Adverse or Beneficial
A	Residents of dwellings adjacent to site off Fryatts Way & Concorde Close Ref: VP 1, 2 & 3 (c 20 dwellings)	High	Medium	High / Medium	5-20m to Built Development	Full / Partial	Permanent	Construction: High / Medium Completion: High/Medium Year 15: Medium	VP1-3 are not representative of residents but help illustrate the relationship between the receptors and the site. Views towards the site are likely to include some from ground level as well as from vantage points at upper levels. Views currently look across the property gardens into the site where the existing grazing fields are visible in the context of the wooded surrounds. Construction processes would likely be visible during the construction stage including some dwellings experiencing traffic of access areas into the site. Proposed built development would replace existing views with new dwellings visible beyond garden features where properties would be likely to back onto the existing. Several dwellings positioned along the eastern side of Fryatts Way will have direct views of the access location area with effects being possible during construction and on completion. There is potential for maturation of proposed garden landscaping to soften views of the development overtime. Some dwellings would experience lesser effects where dwellings back onto proposed landscaped areas. Those with views of the main vehicular access area will experience views of the new road in the context of the existing residential development and road network. Proposed landscaping along the new road will help create a positive amenity to this area.	Major/Moderate Adverse	Major/Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse

B	Users of road network east of site (Fryatts Way & Concorde Close) Ref: VP 1, 2 & 3	Low	Medium	Low / Medium	5-20m to Built Development	Partial / Glimpse	Permanent	Construction: High / Medium Completion: Medium Year 15: Medium/Low	Some partial views are possible from the nearby road network (Fryatts Way and Concorde Close) through gaps between buildings. In places where gaps are larger more open views are available (ref VP 1 & 2). Views are of limited sections of the site in the context of existing residential development. Views extend beyond the higher eastern sections of the site to the wider wooded context. Construction processes would be visible during the construction stage including experience of traffic accessing the site via the road network. The existing views of fields would, broadly be replaced by views of the proposed dwellings and associated infrastructure and landscaping. Where landscaping proposals are visible there is potential for their maturation to soften views of the housing more so overtime.	Moderate Adverse	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
C	Residents of dwellings at Foxhill and Deerswood Lane Ref: VP 4 (c 20 dwellings)	High	Medium	High / Medium	40m to Built Development	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium Completion: Medium/Low Year 15: Low	VP4 is not representative of residents but helps illustrate the relationship between the receptors and the site taken from the adjacent PRoW. Views towards the site are likely to include some from ground level as well as from vantage points at upper levels. Views currently look across the property gardens and adjacent fields (including Broad Oak Park) towards the site where the existing grazing fields are visible in the context of the wooded surrounds. Intervening vegetation /trees currently filter views into the site. Construction processes would likely be visible during the construction stage. Proposed built development would replace existing views with new dwellings visible beyond landscaping proposals and adjacent field where properties would be likely front onto the southern edge of the site perimeter landscaping. There is potential for maturation of proposed landscaping to soften views of the development overtime.	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse
D	Users of Broad Oak Park and PRoW to south-west of site Ref: VP 4, 5 & 6	High	Medium	High / Medium	30-50m from Park area to Built Development 120-150m from PRoW to Built Development	Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium/High Completion: Medium/Low Year 15: Medium/Low	VP 4 is representative of users of Footpath Bexhill 26a. VP5 is representative of users of the section of Footpath Bexhill 26b that passes through Broad Oak Park and users of the park. VP6 is representative of users of the more western section of route 26b that links Broad Oak Park with Highwoods Golf Club. Users of these routes and the recreation area have views north and north-east towards the site. Views from the more easterly areas (route 26a) have more open views of the southern section of the site whilst users of the more westerly sections have views being more filtered and screened by the existing trees and vegetation located along the site's south western boundary. Existing views currently include the dwellings located adjacent to the site off Fryatts Way and Concorde Close - visible but filtered by existing trees and	Major/ Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse

									vegetation from western locations. Construction processes would be visible during the construction stage – less so from more western sections. Proposed dwellings would be visible beyond the southern field and landscape buffers from route 26a and filtered by existing vegetation from more westerly locations. Where existing trees and vegetation currently filter views additional landscape planting within proposed buffers along the south western and western perimeters of the site will further filter views. Overtime views will be further softened with maturation of proposed landscape.			
E	Residents of dwellings west of Broad Oak Park (c.5 dwellings)	High/Medium	Medium	High / Medium	300m from Built Development	Glimpse	Permanent	Construction: Low Completion: Negligible Year 15: Negligible	There is potential for views to be possible from dwellings located west of Broad Oak Park. Any views would likely be glimpse views only and from higher vantage points due to the intervening vegetation present at Broad Oak Park and to the property boundaries. Any views of proposals would be glimpses of the proposed dwellings beyond the landscape buffers to the southern and western perimeters of the site and likely to be further softened overtime with maturation of the planting.	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Negligible
F	Users of Highwoods Golf Club and PRoW Bexhill 27 Ref: VP 7 & 8	High	Medium	High / Medium	Min. 30m from grounds area to Built Development Min. 50m from PRoW to Built Development	Partial / Glimpse	Permanent	Construction: Medium Completion: Medium / Low Year 15: Medium / Low	VP 7 & 8 are representative of users of the public right of way that passes through the golf club. Users of the golf course would have more varying views towards the site including those more closely located to the site proposals. Views of the site from the golf club grounds and PRoW 27 are beyond the existing trees and vegetation that line the site's western boundaries and associated with the adjacent water course. Views of the proposed dwellings would be filtered by the existing trees and vegetation. Proposals include landscape buffers with attenuation and pump house within the western section of the site. Built form would be visible beyond these features and proposed landscape planting. Views would further soften over time with maturation of the proposed landscape planting.	Moderate Adverse	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Moderate / Minor Adverse
G	Residents west of Ellerslie Lane	High/Medium	Medium	High / Medium	50-100m to Built Development	Glimpse	Permanent	Construction: Low Completion: Negligible Year 15: Negligible	There is potential for views to be possible from dwellings located west of Ellerslie Lane. Any views would likely be glimpse views only and from higher vantage points due to the intervening vegetation present to the site and adjacent field boundaries. Any views of proposals would be glimpses of the proposed dwellings beyond the landscape buffers to the northern perimeters of the site and likely to be further softened overtime with maturation of the planting.	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Negligible
H	Users of Bexhill Cemetery	High/Medium	Medium	High / Medium	800m to Built Development	Glimpse/ None	Permanent	Construction: Negligible/None	There is potential for views to be possible from the northern sections of Bexhill Cemetery. Views are	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

	Ref: VP 9							Completion: Negligible/None Year 15: Negligible/None	distant and include existing built form. Any views of the development would be only glimpses of sections of the proposed built form and potentially imperceptible.			

Appendix D:

Extracts from High Weald NCA

Extracts from East Sussex LCA: Bexhill Urban Area (30)

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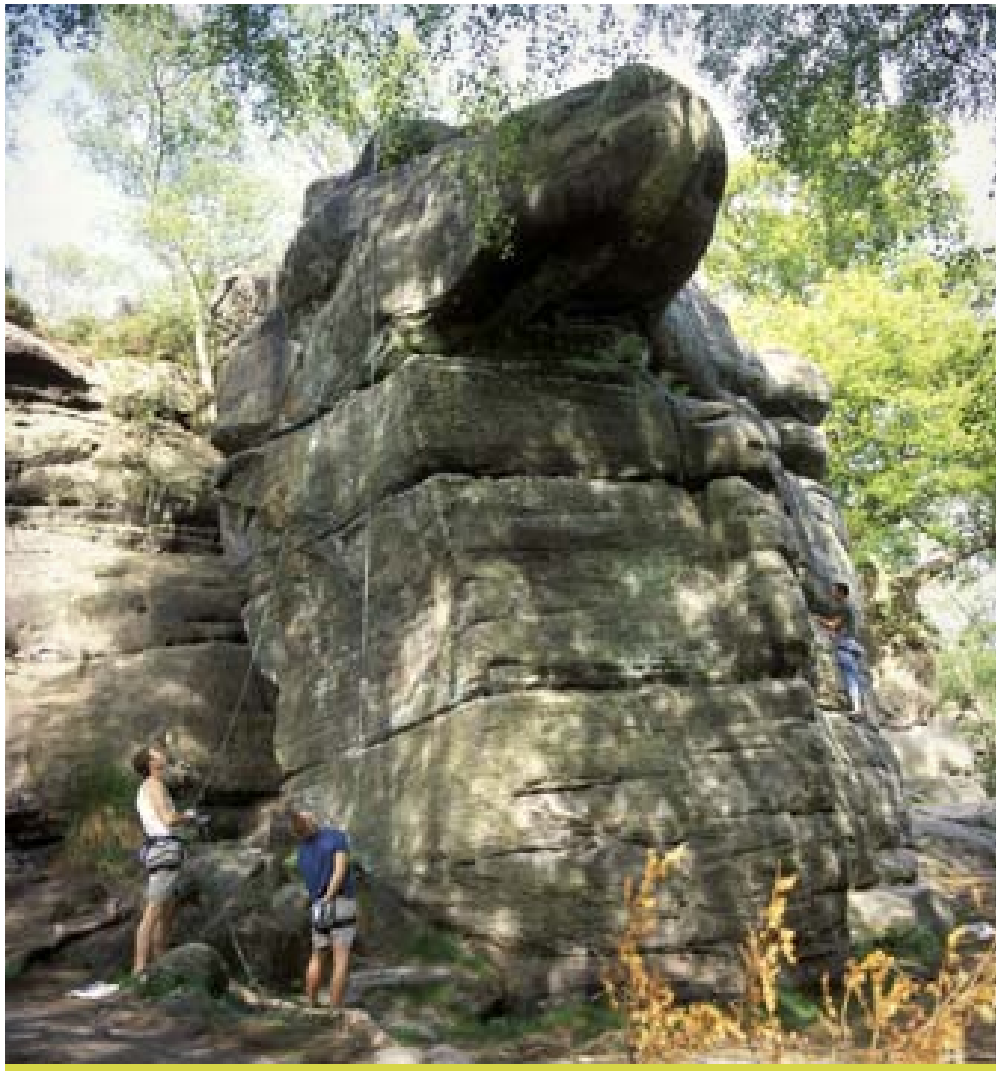
Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The High and Low Weald National Character Areas (NCAs) together form an area known from Saxon times as the Weald whose landscape is the product of transhumance (the seasonal movement of people and animals between the settlements on the borders of the Weald and its interior) and a traditional system of integrated farming and forestry. Early in its history the Weald was linked economically and socially with its more habitable fringes where farming was easier. A dense network of droveways connects the Downs and the Weald, a visible legacy of the seasonal movement of people and animals into the woodland to take advantage of acorns and mast (fruit of forest trees). Today these routes can still be travelled as roads and public rights of way. The wooded nature of these linear routes together with the wooded gills provides a high degree of interconnectivity to ancient woodland habitats across the High and Low Weald.

From vantage points in the surrounding North and South Downs NCAs sweeping views extend across the densely wooded countryside of the Weald, an area of heavy soils and the natural habitat of the oak. Views from vantage points within the High Weald extend along the low-lying clay vale of the Low Weald NCA which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald NCA in a rough horseshoe shape. To the south-west pocket of the NCA, there are views towards the low-lying wetlands of the Pevensey Levels, and to the south-east corner there are long ranging views across the flat topography of the Romney Marshes NCA.



Rock climbing at Harrison's Rocks is managed carefully to protect the friable sandstone rocks from erosion.

The sandrock geology of the High Weald, notably on the ridge top settlements, is shared with only the northern part of the Isle of Wight NCA and parts of Boulonnais and Pays de Bray in France. It comprises fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams which give rise to the headwaters and upper reaches of rivers, with those to the east of the area also providing historical trade routes for timber, iron and wool out to the coastal ports on Romney Marsh.

In the High Weald, where the rivers Rother, Brede and Tillingham originate, the impermeable clay and silt layers of the Hastings Beds give rise to rapid run-off and quickly responding watercourses following heavy rainfall. Maintaining flows in the Rother catchment is important due to the dependency of the Walland Marsh on water transferred into the Royal Military Canal from the Rother, and hence the High Weald and Romney Marsh are inextricably linked in terms of water resources.

The catchments of the rivers Cuckmere, Ouse, Adur and Arun drain south through deep valleys in the eastern chalk ridge from the High Weald via the Low Weald NCA, and the later via the Wealden Greensand NCA, into the sea along the south coast, passing through major coastal settlements.

The High Weald provides many services to adjacent populations, not only through the supply of drinking water, flood mitigation and carbon storage but also through extensive opportunities for a range of open-air recreational activities based around its distinctive character. Activities including walking the ancient routeways, off-road cycling in Bedgebury Forest and soft rock climbing at Harrison's Rocks provide benefits to the various towns that straddle the border between the High and Low Wealds, namely Crawley, East Grinstead, Horsham, Haywards Heath and Uckfield.

The High Weald has a wealth of ancient woodland.

Key characteristics

- A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east–west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers – the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway – which flow in broad valleys.
- High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances.
- 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 with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.
- 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. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham.
- 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.
- There is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry which started in Roman times, until coke fuel replaced wood and charcoal. There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today.
- Ashdown Forest, in contrast to the more intimate green woods and pastures elsewhere, is a high, rolling and open heathland lying on the sandstone ridges to the west of the area.
- An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.
- High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham Slate is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particularly notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald.

The High Weald today

The High Weald is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers 78 per cent of the NCA, reflecting the outstanding natural and scenic beauty of the landscape.

From a distance the appearance of the High Weald is one of a densely wooded landscape, although closer inspection reveals a patchwork of irregularly shaped fields and woods forming both open and enclosed landscapes along rolling ridges and within valleys. Along the ridgetop roads briefly glimpsed extensive views open up, stretching away over rolling ridges, punctuated by church spires far into the horizon, providing a contrast to the intimacy of the lush green valleys. Everything in the High Weald landscape is of human scale and its rich detail is best explored on foot, cycle or horseback along the myriad interconnecting paths and tracks.

Along the English Channel coast the High Weald gives way to eroded sandstone and clay sea cliffs around Fairlight and disappears under the urban areas of Bexhill and Hastings to the south-east. The eastern end of the High Weald is characterised by a series of broad, often flat-bottomed river valleys opening out towards the coastal levels of Romney Marsh between Tenterden and Fairlight.

Sandstone exposed as outcrops or along the wooded gills provides a nationally rare habitat and supports a rich community of ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The moist microclimate in these sites is vulnerable to climate change. Potential physical damage comes from the popularity of rock climbing although this is mitigated by guidance and support from the climbing community.

Traditional farmsteads are often glimpsed through a densely-wooded landscape.

The drained landscape of the eastern High Weald river valleys is the result of a thousand years of modifications and exhibits few of the features associated with healthy natural river valleys. It is grazed by high numbers of sheep. Upriver the gill streams and upper reaches function better but remain vulnerable to pollution from agriculture and domestic waste treatment.

The ancient routeway network in the High Weald is substantially intact but the archaeology associated with it, such as multiple ditches and banks, is vulnerable to physical damage and the ancient, laid coppice stools edging many sunken routeways present a challenge for highway maintenance.

Flower-rich grassland persists along road verges and what was common land represents a substantial refuge for populations of rare species, but both are vulnerable to insensitive management.

Loosely arranged traditional farm buildings are extremely prominent in the NCA with their distinctive steep, clay-tiled hipped roofs. The numerous footpaths, as they have done for centuries, take walkers straight through the middle of historic farmsteads with the characteristic timber-framed and weatherboard buildings either side.

Ancient woodland gill with carpets of bluebells and wood anemones in Spring.

The distinctive pattern of dispersed historic settlement survives although the character of farmsteads has changed with the widespread conversion of traditional farm buildings to dwellings and the associated disappearance of agriculture and industry from farmsteads. The changing character of the farmsteads and surrounding landscape through gentrification ultimately also leads to a changing character of wildlife in terms of the assemblage of species present.

Typically, towns such as Tunbridge Wells and villages such as Goudhurst are sited on the ridges, with a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads and hamlets covering the wooded valleys and field systems. Vernacular buildings have a strong local character influenced by a variation in locally available building materials, resulting in an abundance of weatherboard, brick, tile, and stone or rendered buildings. Local distinctiveness is marked by traditional vernacular building enhanced by stone church towers and spires located on ridges standing as major local landmarks. Within the forested ridges and ancient countryside, remnant hammer ponds constitute significant local features. These reservoirs have a distinctive branching or winding character as a result of their creation from small Wealden river valleys.

Woodland is extensive, covering 26 per cent of the area in a wide range of small wooded pits, linear gill woodland, farm woods and much larger wooded estates. Most of the woodland is ancient with carpets of bluebells and wood anemone in spring. Many of the woods were managed in the past as coppice with standard trees. The drier sandy soils were found suitable for pine plantations which persist within a patchwork of lowland heath and birch woodland Wild flower meadows are now rare but the medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick hedgerows and shaws (the narrow remains of woodlands cleared to form fields) survives and many fields

retain some permanent or semi-improved grassland, which in turn supports common invertebrates and small mammals. Local initiatives have increased the area of restored and created species-rich grassland but the decline of grazing threatens their long-term management. Buzzards and sparrow hawks are sighted frequently, but the loss of field barns and conversion of farmstead buildings have led to a decline in once-common barn owls.

The mosaic of small hedged fields and sunken lanes, together with the wooded relief and comparative inaccessibility, provides a sense of remoteness which is rare within lowland English landscapes. Despite it being relatively tranquil today, indications of the area's busy industrial past are everywhere, from the abundant timber-framed traditional buildings to the wharfs and harbours along the now-straightened rivers, and the charcoal hearths, pits and ponds of the iron industry are still visible in almost every ancient woodland. The High Weald is well known internationally as the location of the Winnie-the-Pooh stories set in Ashdown Forest, but many other artists and writers have been inspired by the landscape, including Rudyard Kipling and the Cranbrook Colony of painters. Visitors come from across the country and from abroad to experience the Battle of Hastings site, visit beautiful historic houses and gardens, and experience a unique mix of local cultural celebrations ranging from Sussex bonfire processions to Kent apple fairs.

River Brede flood plain.

The landscape through time

The High Weald forms the central part of a unique geological landform of sedimentary rocks, the Wealden anticline, which underpins the Greensand, Chalk and Wealden Clay to the north, south and west which surround the sandstones and clays which underlie the forested ridges of the High Weald. The Purbeck Beds which lie along the Battle Ridge form the oldest sediments, laid down in shallow lagoons at the end of the Jurassic Period (142 million years ago). Iron-rich clays and sandstones followed as the landscape changed to one of flood plains and rivers. The area gradually sank below the sea and around 75 million years ago the great uplift began, followed by compression which folded and faulted the strata. Subsequent weathering has cut through the strata, exposing the layers as sandstone ridges and clay valleys. The array of soils arising has shaped the Weald's social and economic history.

The central sandstone core is strongly dissected by many major rivers, the headwaters of which have cut numerous steep-sided valleys or gills, several of which are heavily wooded. The High Weald is underlain by the Hastings Beds which comprise interbedded sands, soft sandstones and clays which give rise to the high, broken ground. Although not exceeding 240 m above ordnance datum, the High Weald is a hilly country of ridges and valleys. Numerous major ridges run mainly east to west, for example the Ashdown Forest Ridge and the Battle Ridge. North-west of Battle, Jurassic Purbeck Limestone contains gypsum beds which continue to be mined.

With the rise in temperatures at the beginning of the post-glacial period, arboreal species expanded their range across the continuous land link to Europe, with birch and Scots pine being followed by oak, elm, alder, ash and lime.

Outflow from a hammer pond originating from the iron-age industry.

By the Anglo-Saxon period the natural woodland which had developed in the warmer post-glacial period had already been modified by the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic people. Some woodland clearance was under way in the Neolithic Period with bronze-age barrows indicating active communities in Ashdown Forest and the Roman interest in iron smelting which is suggested led to woodland clearance, which regenerated after their departure. However, it was the medieval practice of transhumance, coupled with the exploitation of the valuable resources of the forest, which substantially transformed the largely uninhabited Weald into the settled landscape seen today.

Clearance of the Wealden forest on a significant scale did not begin until the 9th century, reaching a peak in the 13th and 14th centuries. From the mid-14th century until the First World War, the High Weald was relatively unchanged and even today many of the traditional field patterns and woodlands associated with the essentially medieval landscape still remain.

The High Weald lies within one of the largest tracts of woodland in early medieval England. Linked place names such as -den, -fold and -ing as; distinctive curved boundaries aligned in a similar direction to roads and tracks; and the relationship between manors and their Wealden outliers provide us with tantalising clues to the process of early settlement in the area. By the 15th century the High Weald's characteristic dispersed settlement pattern based on small-scale family holdings was well established. Few farmsteads worked the land from villages, which mostly developed later as service centres founded on trade and craft.

Medieval farmers shaped the present-day landscape of small fields and scattered farmsteads, with woodland and shaws left among them. Gill woodlands on steep valleys were left unfelled due to the difficulty in extracting timber gill woodland, which made them more ecologically significant as a result. The river valleys and the higher, drier ridgetops were important lines of communication on which early settlements were located. The medieval pattern of dispersed farms, small hamlets and villages is associated with the practice of cultivating small parcels of land known as 'assarting' – which gave rise to the pattern of ad hoc rural settlement. These early, isolated agricultural settlements later evolved into the characteristic High Weald ridgetop villages such as Mayfield, Wadhurst and Hawkhurst.

The Weald was the premier iron-producing district during the Roman occupation and again in the 16th century, based on the blast furnace to make castings of cannon and facilitated by the expertise of immigrant French workers. Interconnecting chains of leats, dams and hammer ponds were constructed to provide a sufficient head of water for the forges. These consisted of a stairway of ponds created by damming a gill and produced a head of water which worked the bellows for smelting and the forges' tilt hammers.

From the 15th to the 17th century, the High Weald was the foundry of England. Extensive woodland management in the form of coppicing (for charcoal for the forges) accompanied the industry and little clearance was undertaken. The wealth generated by the iron industry funded grand houses and parklands, many of which still stand today, such as Gravetye and Great Shoesmiths.

Heathland was historically more widespread in the High Weald than it is today. Cessation of grazing together with new conifer planting has led to the loss of open heathland, the only sizeable heathland remaining in the High Weald being Ashdown Forest, a former Royal Hunting Forest. Open heathland was at least partly the result of unsustainable management, effectively where poorer populations in society would make use of a range of heathland products. This included using the heathland turf as fuel due to more expensive woodland being used by the iron industry. Since then the heaths and woods have been relatively fluid on those acid soils.

The small size of Wealden holdings, the importance of crafts to supplement the income from agriculture on poor soils, and the high economic value of timber for boats and buildings and in the iron, glass and cloth industries explain the continuing survival of more woodland in the High Weald than anywhere else in the country. Woods were enclosed and managed as coppice with standards producing wood fuel and construction timber. Large, widely spaced trees in hedgerows and parklands produced the curved and crooked boughs required for ship-building.

In the 17th and 18th centuries hop growing expanded, as did the extent of chestnut coppice for hop poles. For 500 years the rivers of the eastern High Weald were an important link for trade and war between the wooded interior and the seaports of Winchelsea and Rye. Wooden barges were still moving timber and goods from the interior of the High Weald until the end of the 19th century when the last barge, Primrose, was built.

As early as 1825 William Cobbett commented on the artificial landscapes of the new gentry spreading out of London, and the arrival of the railways in the mid-19th century brought further building and the growth of country houses and estates. The railways also made a significant impact on agriculture, opening up the London market for hops, fruit and poultry.

Until the 1950s the Weald was one of the slowest-changing regions in Britain. For 700 years prior to this time agriculture, the field shapes and sizes and the pattern of surrounding woodland and hedgerows hardly changed. Since then farming and forestry, always difficult on the poor soils, have been pushed further to the economic margins by soaring land values with significant areas of land now devoid of productive agriculture. The majority of farmsteads are now residential hamlets and the decline in grazing animals and the industry associated with them is a major threat to the long-term management of species-rich grassland and heathland. Commercial coppicing has declined drastically although the Weald's woodmanship has been kept alive and may enjoy a period of revival with the increasing demand for wood fuel and renewable timber supplies.

View of traditional oast houses in Roberts Bridge.

Ecosystem services

The High Weald NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each is derived from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural features) within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below. Further information on ecosystem services provided in the High Weald NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** This NCA produces some cereals, vegetables, soft fruit, lamb, game and some beef for local consumption. Despite growing interest in specialist and local breeds, numbers of livestock continue to decline.

- **Timber provision:** Despite the High Weald's long history of woodmanship, most timber is considered to be of low quality and only 15 per cent of the area of woodland is actively managed. . The area continues to provide oak for local construction, chestnut for fencing and other species such as ash and hornbeam for wood fuel.

- **Water availability:** The largest reservoir in south-east England, Bewl Water, is situated in this NCA, providing drinking water to Maidstone and the Medway Towns. Local villages and Hastings are supplied from Darwell Reservoir. Water is also supplied from aquifers in the Ashdown Beds.

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** The high level of woodland cover and large extent of undisturbed soils under ancient woodlands and permanent grassland mean that the High Weald NCA has a significant role to play in carbon storage and sequestration and subsequently climate regulation, which could be further enhanced by using more timber than other materials in construction.

- **Regulating soil erosion:** More than two-thirds of the NCA is susceptible to some form of soil erosion. The main soil type (loamy/clayey soils with impeded drainage, covering 62 per cent of the NCA) is prone to compaction and capping and slaking, leading to increased risk of soil erosion by surface water run-off, especially on steeper slopes. The freely draining, slightly acid loamy soils (4 per cent of the area) are at enhanced risk of soil erosion on moderately or steeply sloping ground exacerbated where organic matter levels are low and where soils are compacted.

Cattle grazing on parkland.

- **Regulating soil quality:** Soils of the High Weald are highly variable over short distances, making it easy to locally overdose with inorganic fertiliser and leading to damage through poaching or using heavy machinery at inappropriate times.

- **Regulating water flow:** There is a risk of fluvial flooding along the lower reaches of the rivers, but important for the High Weald NCA is appropriate management of the numerous gill streams and upper and middle reaches of rivers to mitigate flooding further downstream in adjacent NCAs. There are further opportunities in the valley bottoms to look at pushing flood flows out of eroded water courses onto grassland and woodland to help slow flood flows.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Sense of place/inspiration:** The harmonious mosaic of small mixed farms and woodland that makes up the High Weald is now considered to be a quintessentially English landscape, yet for many years, until the advent of turnpikes, it was better know for the poor state of its roads and less advanced agriculture. Its mix of wilder elements, reminiscent of the former forest, surviving amid a beautiful, small-scale landscape shaped by man has inspired many people such as the architect Norman Shaw, the artist William Hunt, William Robinson, who pioneered the English natural garden style, and writers such as Rudyard Kipling and AA Milne.

- **Sense of history:** As one of the best preserved medieval landscapes in north-west Europe, the High Weald has a strong sense of history, and this is enhanced by the many individual features such as Battle Abbey, numerous churches and chapels, an abundance of traditional buildings and the remains of the former iron industry. The High Weald is extraordinarily well documented through old maps but these and the great extent of undisturbed ancient woodland which has preserved features from many different time periods still remain relatively unstudied.

- **Tranquillity:** Buildings, tracks and the remains of industrial activities concealed by the High Weald's extensive woodland cover and overgrown hedgerows make the experience of this landscape today feel relatively tranquil, especially due to the close proximity of London and the busy coastal towns.

- **Recreation:** There is a dense network of public rights of way supplemented by many areas of accessible natural greenspace, mostly provided by the Forestry Commission and bodies such as the National Trust and the Woodland Trust. Ashdown Forest provides an extensive area of open access at the heart of the High Weald. Outdoor sports are well catered for with off-road cycling at Bedgebury Forest, watersports at Bewl Water and soft rock climbing around Tunbridge Wells.

- **Biodiversity:** The human scale of the High Weald's landscape allows everyone to experience a variety of habitats and wildlife at first hand. The sheer quantity of semi-natural habitat such as ancient woodland is not adequately represented in the extent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Although the High Weald's cold soils may not support the biodiversity hotspots found on the nearby Downs, its ancient countryside and small, mixed farms continue to be home to resilient populations and a high biomass of typical lowland species.

- **Geodiversity:** The High Weald's sandrock outcrops are important geological features and support nationally rare ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens, a living legacy from the climate most of Britain experienced around 4000 bc. The 6-kilometre section of eroding sea cliffs at Hastings provides one of the finest exposures of Lower Cretaceous, Wealden sediments in Britain. Their fossil plant material and non-marine animal fossils are some of the best examples of their type worldwide.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO1: 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.

For example by:

- Encouraging the sustainable management of woodland by developing local markets for wood products and the skills to deliver these sustainably.
- Ensuring that any increased woodland cover is informed by the historical nature of the area, and promoting small-scale woodland creation to buffer existing woods, enhance landscape connectivity and manage flood flows.
- Increasing the viability of woodland habitats for wildlife by determining the area of appropriately managed woodland necessary to link and enhance isolated habitats and species to provide better connectivity between woodlands and encourage species' resilience to climate change.
- Promoting sustainable woodland management techniques (such as coppicing, pollarding and wood fuel production) to increase carbon substitutions and sequestration and the resilience of tree species to climate change and disease.
- Establishing a long-term ecological monitoring and research programme to assess the management status of woodlands and the impacts of diseases such as ash dieback, climate change and pressure from deer.
- Working with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to continue support for the restoration of planted ancient woodland sites.
- Adopting a suitable distance (approximately 15 m) as a minimum buffer around ancient woodlands to protect them from damaging development or land management operations.
- Promoting and raising awareness of the archaeology and historic assets of woodland.
- Working with the High Weald AONB to promote the use of local wood products such as chestnut fencing and timber in housing developments and the use of locally sourced wood fuel.
- Promoting the High Weald AONB design guidance to contribute to improved design quality within the area.
- Extending woodland around settlements and infrastructure developments to filter light pollution and reduce sound pollution and the visual impacts of further urbanisation.
- Maintaining and restoring links between woodland and other woodland habitats (such as hedgerows, traditional orchards and parkland) and species-rich grasslands and heathland outside the main woodland. This will create a robust network of wooded and open semi-natural habitats that will benefit the internationally important populations of bats, as well as other species.
- Maintaining good pastoral land use and agriculturally productive fields, and using field margins and well-managed hedgerows to maintain ecological links across arable patches, reducing water flow and resultant soil erosion and providing benefits to water quality.
- Encouraging and supporting the appropriate management of lowland meadows by owners, including through local owners' groups, providing benefits for the local community, biodiversity, the landscape and soil quality.

SEO1 continued

- Maintaining woodland cover – which provides integrated benefits for soil quality, water flow, soil erosion, water quality and management of steep gill woodland – for example through coppicing, to reduce land slippage and tree fall entering watercourses.
- Work with Forestry Commission to explore the potential for bring two thirds of woodland back into active management with the potential for increasing 25,000m3 per year of confer sawlogs, 10,000m³ per year of broadleaved sawlogs and a further 110,000m³ of lower quality wood which could be used as woodfuel with an energy value of around 230,000 MWh.

SEO 2: 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 geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.

For example by:

- Working in partnership across sectors and National Character Area (NCA) boundaries to tackle the challenges associated with flood risk, pollution and low flows in order to safeguard surface water resources, especially those failing to meet Water Framework Directive objectives for good ecological status.
- Ensuring that sustainable water and land management strategies for Wealden river catchments are adhered to in accordance with the Water Framework Directive.
- Improving understanding of how to respond to and plan for climate change impacts and future consumer demands, and the interrelationships between supply and demand in adjoining NCAs, including the impacts of reduced water availability on important biodiversity sites.
- Buffering watercourses and reservoirs and restoring natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements and valuable agricultural land by regulating water flow.
- Drawing on best practice principles such as those developed by the Forestry Commission and Environment Agency on the Pickering Brook in Yorkshire and established under catchment sensitive farming initiatives. As well as building on and supporting existing stakeholder groups to help to deliver a good water environment across the High Weald, benefiting biodiversity and local communities.
- Encouraging sustainable water use by homes and businesses supplied from catchments and promoting sustainable drainage systems.
- Controlling invasive non-native species, particularly along river banks, to reduce soil exposure and erosion.
- Encouraging integration of environmentally sensitive water policy objectives through land management practices such as agri-environment schemes and water resource and land use planning to ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between water supply and demand.
- Exploring opportunities for landowners to work together across catchments to restore more natural river systems including wet woodland creation to deliver biodiversity, amenity, resource protection and flood control benefits.
- Working with the High Weald AONB to identify the potential of naturally functioning rivers and flood plains to regulate flooding, improve water quality, restore flood plain woodland and protect and enhance wildlife and fisheries.

SEO 3: 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.

For example by:

- Ensuring that the repair, restoration or conversion of vernacular buildings is carried out with due regard to their historical interest, using local materials and appropriate styles and techniques to maintain local distinctiveness, construction techniques and traditions.
- Encouraging new developments to follow the vernacular of the area, using locally sourced materials and adhering to the principles of the High Weald AONB design guidance.
- Working with local communities to encourage the continuation of traditional land management practices and land uses that are necessary to retain the landscape character and the sense of place in this area.
- Improving sustainable public access through the rights of way network, provision of visitor facilities, and access to and interpretation of important sites for geodiversity, biodiversity and heritage in order to increase the understanding, enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape, and of the history of use that has shaped the area.
- Ensuring that the repair, restoration or conversion of buildings provides additional opportunities for bird boxes and bat roosts.
- Supporting community growing schemes, social forestry enterprises and partnerships with local land businesses to encourage local markets and seasonal outlets, supplying local food and wood fuel and promotion of rural skills training.
- Conserving the cultural heritage of local authors and artists by maintaining the traditions that create the distinctive landscape and local sense of place.
- Promoting information about the historical development of towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads and their hinterlands including historical maps and accessible online information.
- Ensuring that the duty of regard is adhered to in relation to core components of natural beauty in the planning and development for towns and villages in and adjacent to the AONB.
- Exploring community initiatives to extend baseline mapping of the ancient routeway network to include public rights of ways, tracks and abandoned paths and to ensure community engagement in conserving and protecting ancient routeways.
- Undertaking archaeological research to better understand ancient routeways and their features in order to inform appropriate management.
- Working in partnership with highways authorities and communities to develop a design code for rural lanes promoting the use of characteristic boundaries and minimising the impacts of engineering and signage.
- Working in partnership with highways authorities and others to review and develop approaches to the management of roadside trees and coppice.
- Exploring initiatives that promote the contribution that ancient routeways make to a well-functioning ecological network.

SEO 4: 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.

For example by:

- Maintaining and enhancing the extensive rights of way network and open access land throughout the area, improving links to the Sussex Border Path, High Weald Landscape Trail and Weald Way and creating additional links to relieve pressure on sensitive areas through a network of greenspace and linear access.
- Increasing understanding and enjoyment through education and interpretation materials especially where this helps to promote the sensitive features of designated sites, ensuring that access balances recreational enjoyment with the protection of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic features.
- Integrating the management of resources for informal open-air recreation to facilitate 'green' use by residents and visitors and meet the need of less able-bodied visitors.
- Identifying and promoting viewpoints that enable appreciation and experience of the tranquillity and outstanding natural beauty of the High Weald landscape by people of all abilities.
- Supporting community initiatives that promote small-scale land management improvements and identify and conserve local features.
- Promoting sustainable tourism initiatives that target a broad range of visitors and, where practical, reduce car dependency, accommodating high visitor numbers while conserving the landscape, its biodiversity and tranquillity.
- Exploring partnership initiatives to disseminate clear environmental education messages to encourage integration of recreation and public enjoyment opportunities with conservation of the natural and historic environment, using key sites and areas as examples of best practice.
- Promoting sustainable transport, green tourism and natural health initiatives such as themed High Weald AONB short breaks.
- Supporting projects that contribute to the conservation and management of special qualities and locally valued features such as tranquillity and dark skies and historic features such as abbeys and hop gardens.

Additional opportunity

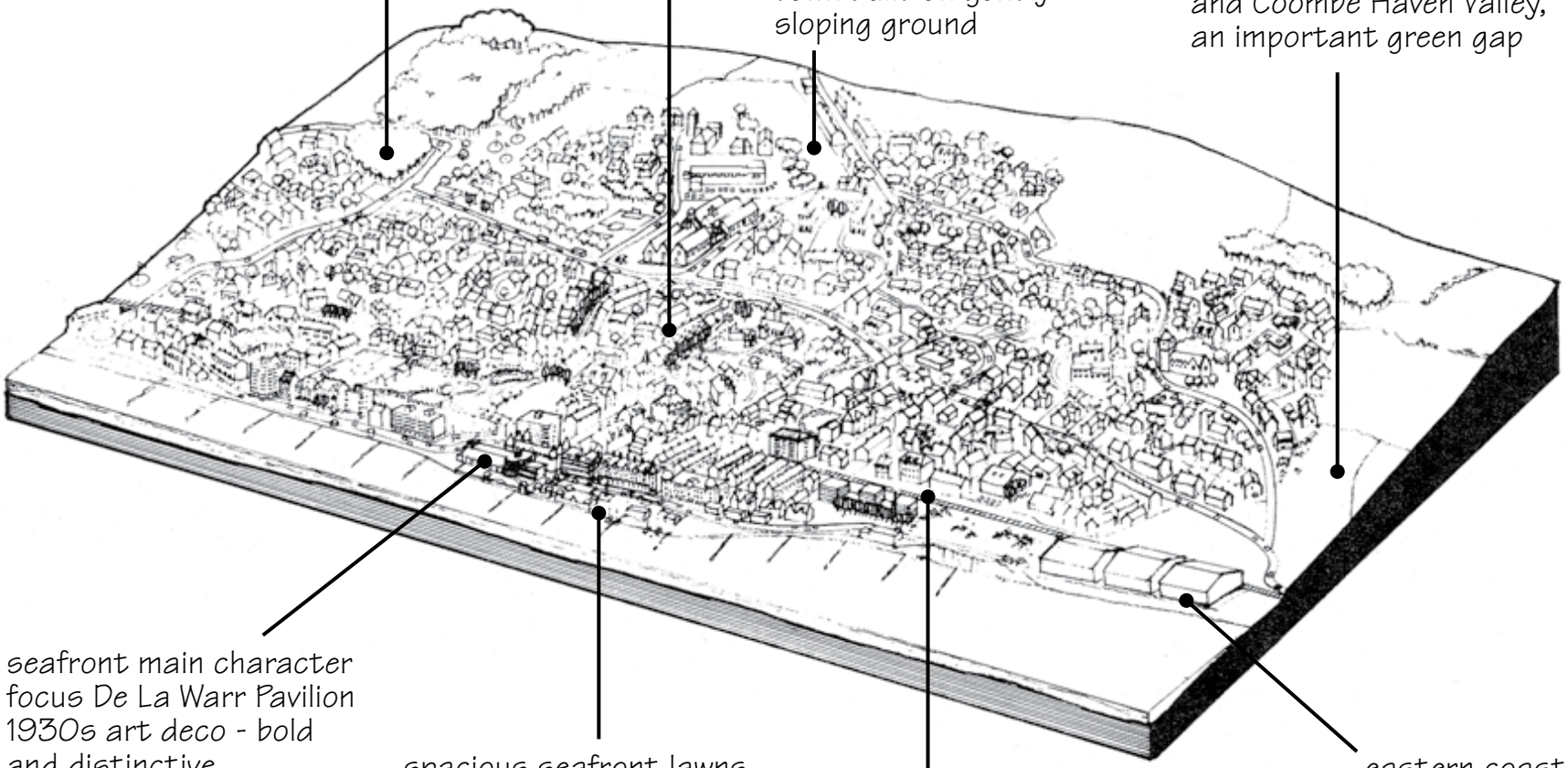
1: Protect and maintain the sandstone outcrops and other geological features of the High Weald to promote greater understanding of geodiversity and the contributions that they make to the cultural heritage of the area.

For example by:

- Maintaining nationally important geological features to ensure no loss to sandstone outcrops and promoting further understanding and appreciation of sandrock exposures, reducing threats and/or inappropriate use and management.
- Maintaining views of geological features and exposures and, where appropriate, improving access to cuttings, quarries and other exposures of geological features to enable improved understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity and sense of history.
- Maintaining the nationally important sandrock exposures to conserve the fern, moss and liverwort communities that they support and to protect their value as some of the most significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the AONB.
- Maintaining and enhancing all existing rock exposures and natural landforms that are important for understanding the origin and geological development of the High Weald.
- Helping to secure geological conservation as an integral part of the development process.
- Providing scrub control on exposed rock faces and outcrops of geological importance.

Sunken lane bank, with sandstone rocky outcrop at Brede.

Bexhill



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