

Appendix 2



**SHARPS HILL FARM,
QUEEN STREET, SANDHURST**

Proposed Residential Development

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

March 2022

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Appendix A ~ Methodology

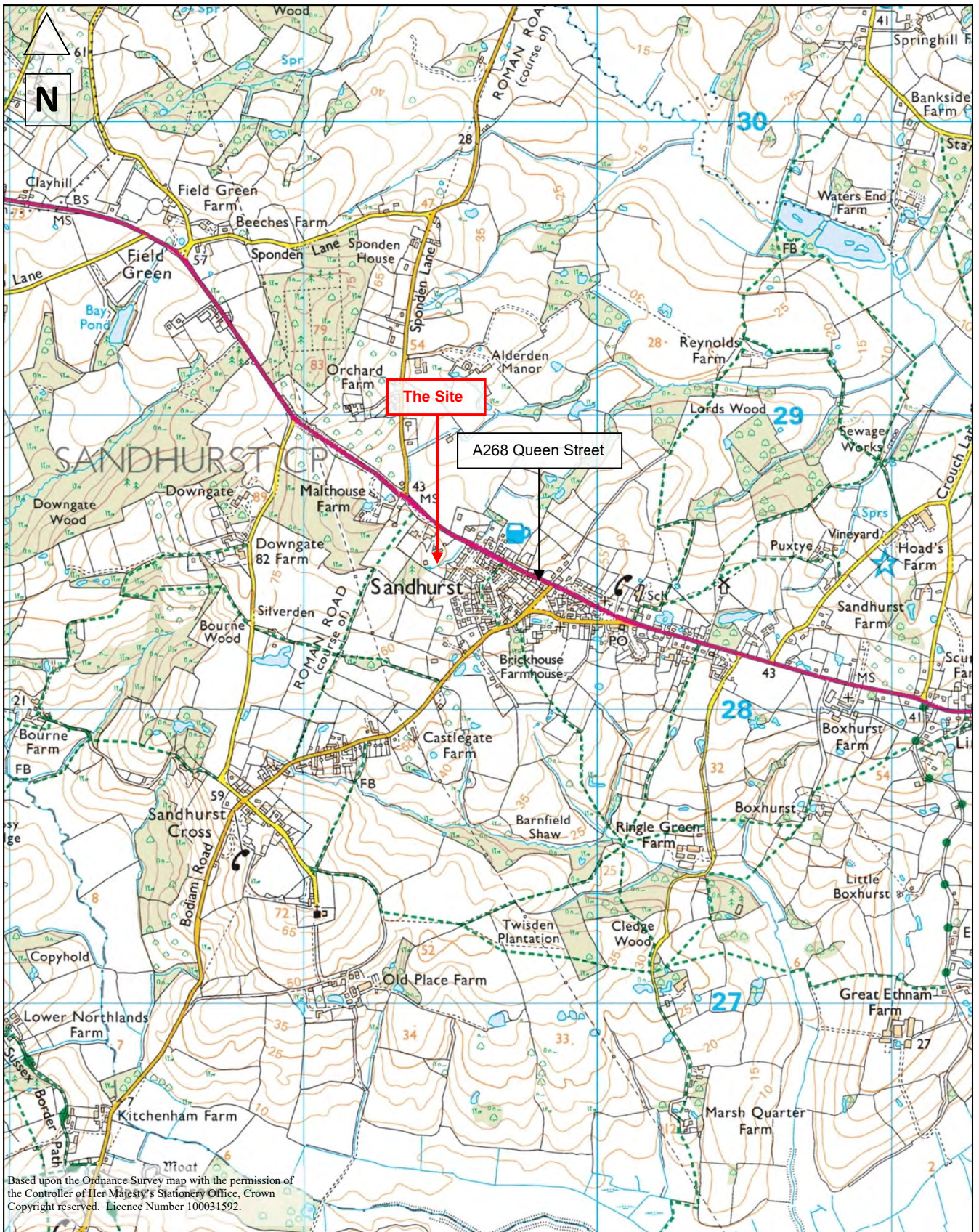
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1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 This report has been prepared in connection with the proposed development of 14 new dwellings on a site to the south of Queen Street, in Sandhurst, Kent. The site lies within the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC), and its location is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.1.2 The site forms the residential curtilage of the detached property of Sharps Hill Farm, together with two former paddocks which are now disused and becoming overgrown by developing scrubby woodland, and strips of woodland along the eastern and northern site boundaries. Access to the development would be from Queen Street, which runs along the northern site boundary, by means of the existing access to Sharps Hill Farm. The site is outside the Limits to Built Development as shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map, but adjacent to the edge of the settlement to the east, where it abuts the rear gardens of properties in Stream Pit Lane. The site is therefore in the countryside in planning terms, though it is also the subject of a draft allocation for residential development of 10 to 15 dwellings under draft Policy AL/SA2 of the October 2021 Submission Draft Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which washes over the settlement of Sandhurst and includes all of the houses within it. The site is around 170m from the Sandhurst Conservation Area, and separated from it by modern development along the south side of Queen Street. There are two Listed Buildings and also a Listed milestone to the west of the site along Queen Street.
- 1.1.4 An application for development of up to 31 dwellings on the site was made in May 2019, with the number of dwellings subsequently revised downwards (to 'up to 16') in discussion with TWBC officers. The application was recommended for approval by officers but refused by the Planning Committee in February 2021. A subsequent appeal was dismissed in November 2021.
- 1.1.5 The proposals have now been revised as part of an iterative process, with this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared in parallel with the revised proposals, such that the LVIA has informed the proposals, with the aim of securing the most appropriate development scale and form and minimising any adverse landscape and visual effects, and the LVIA then assessing the effects of the proposals (noting that the proposals are at this stage in outline only). The revised proposals have therefore



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been landscape-led in that the layout has been developed by the architect in accordance with a number of recommendations made by the landscape architect (JEC). The proposals have also been developed with regard to comments on the previous application made by TWBC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer, and in accordance with the recommendations for the site set out in the report by TWBC's landscape consultants HDA ('Tunbridge Wells - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites within the High Weald AONB, part 6.10: Sandhurst').

- 1.1.6 This report provides information on the character and quality of the landscape of and around the site and the likely landscape and visual effects which would result from the proposed development, in order to inform TWBC and assist with further consideration of the proposed allocation of the site for residential development. This is the first time that the proposals have been subject to a full LVIA - the previous application was accompanied by a document entitled 'Landscape and Visual Assessment' (an updated version was produced in October 2020), but while that document included some useful background information it did not (despite its title) include any meaningful assessment of likely landscape and visual effects.
- 1.1.7 The assessment of landscape and visual effects has been undertaken by Jon Etchells Consulting (JEC) - a practice registered with the Landscape Institute, with extensive experience of landscape design and the landscape and visual assessment of proposed residential developments at all scales, particularly in Kent.

1.2 Methodology

- 1.2.1 In landscape and visual assessments, a distinction is normally drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape, irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with public access). Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects (if, for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints), or few landscape effects but significant visual effects (if, for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties).
- 1.2.2 The methodology followed is as set out in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Landscape Institute ('the GLVIA', 1995, revised 2002 and again in 2013). The document 'Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002' (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage) also stresses

the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors. The detailed methodology used is set out in Appendix A.

- 1.2.3 The site visit was undertaken in February 2022, and photographs were taken from within the site and from publicly accessible points in the area around it. It has therefore not been possible to assess the site in the summer, when deciduous vegetation is in leaf and when views tend to be less open, but an allowance has been made for that in the assessment, based on observation of the vegetation within and around the site and on experience of how visibility and views can change with the seasons. The assessment has also been undertaken in conditions of maximum visibility, so it has been possible to consider the worst case situation in terms of potential visibility of the new development.

1.3 Structure and Coverage of this Report

- 1.3.1 Section 2 of this report describes the baseline situation in terms of the existing site and the character and quality of the surrounding landscape. Section 3 describes the proposed development in terms of the proposed dwellings and also the accompanying outline landscape proposals for the site. Section 4 sets out the landscape and visual effects likely to result from the development, and a summary and conclusions are provided in Section 5.

- 1.3.2 As noted above, there are two Listed Buildings and also a Listed milestone to the west of site, with the Sandhurst Conservation Area slightly further away to the east. This report does not consider potential effects on the setting of heritage assets, but it does consider views from the Listed Buildings and potential visual effects upon them.

2. THE BASELINE SITUATION

2.1 Landscape Context

Site Location and Boundaries

- 2.1.1 The site is on the western side of the village of Sandhurst, which extends to the east of the site along the A268 Queen Street. The form of the village is largely linear along the north side of the road, though there are some properties set behind the main line of houses along the road, and is more varied to the south of the road, with modern development in residential closes to the north of Bodiam Road, including the 1970s/ 80s housing development along Stream Pit Lane adjacent to the site.
- 2.1.2 The Limits to Built Development as shown on the 2006 Local Plan Proposals Map are tightly drawn around the curtilages of existing houses within the village and exclude some of the more outlying properties, including Pinyons opposite the site on the north side of Queen Street, the site itself and the existing property of Sharps Hill Farm within it (see Photograph 1) and the detached properties to the west of the site, which are (from east to west) the adjacent dwelling of Sharps Hill Oast, the Listed Building of Bayford House, a farm shop to the south of the junction of Queen Street with Sponden Lane, The Malt House (also a Listed Building), Malt House Farm and three dwellings further to the west. It can therefore be seen that, while the site is just outside Limits to Built Development on the Proposals Map, it contains one dwelling and there are a further 7 dwellings to its west, as well as Pinyons and other properties to the north of the site on the far side of the road, and the site therefore has existing dwellings to its east, north and west.
- 2.1.3 It is also worthy of note that the 30mph speed limit and village entrance signs on Queen Street are roughly in the centre of the curtilage of Bayford House, well to the west of the site (see Photograph 2). This indicates that the entrance to the village in terms of arrival was considered to be to the west of the site, with the site therefore within the village.
- 2.1.4 The site is broadly square in shape, with the curtilage of Sharps Hill Oast indented into its north western corner (see Figure 2): its boundaries are described below:
- The northern site boundary runs along the south side of Queen Street, and is marked by a low post and wire fence largely obscured by the generally dense vegetation within the site. There is a redundant timber field gate towards the eastern end of the boundary (see Photograph 3), and the existing access to the



Image date: April 2020

15 Photograph viewpoint and direction of view
 See Figure 3 for viewpoints 2, 23, 24 and 27 to 29.

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site is at its western end (see Photograph 4). Within the site along this boundary there is a band of dense woodland, with some tall mature trees including oak, sycamore and birch, with a partly evergreen understorey of laurel, holly, yew and hazel which forms a dense screen, even in the winter (see Photographs 5 and 6). Levels within the site slope up a steep bank to reach approximately 4m higher than the roadside verge around the existing dwelling, further restricting visibility into the site from the north (see Photograph 7).

- The eastern site boundary runs to the south west from Queen Street along the rear garden boundaries of houses in Stream Pit Lane, and is marked by a variety of garden fences and hedges (see Photograph 9). Here there is also a dense band of woodland within the site extending along this boundary, including some tall willows and conifers and an understorey of hazel, elder and goat willow.
- The southern boundary is marked by a low post and wire fence, with a dense group of trees including alder and willow with hazel and elder beneath inside the boundary in its eastern part. The boundary is more open to the west, with a line of brambles and some young self-sown trees along the fence line (see Photograph 10).
- The western site boundary is marked in its southern part by a 2m high conifer hedge which is largely obscured on the site side by a dense growth of brambles (see Photograph 11). Further to the north the boundary runs around the curtilage of Sharps Hill Oast and is marked by a 2m high trimmed conifer hedge (see Photographs 12 and 13). There is a break in the hedge line for the access to the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast (the access off Queen Street is shared with the access to Sharps Hill Farm), and along the western side of this shared access to the south of Queen Street there is a trimmed conifer hedge around 3m in height (see Photograph 4).

Existing Land Use and Vegetation Within the Site

2.1.5 As noted above, the site comprises the residential curtilage of Sharps Hill Farm, areas of woodland and also some overgrown and disused paddocks. The main features within the site (roughly from north to south) are:

- As noted above, just inside the northern site boundary there is a broad band of woodland which extends into the site for between around 15 and 30m. This includes a number of mature trees and a dense and partly evergreen understorey, and the southern part of the woodland is set on a bank which slopes up to the inside the site, with the result that there is a dense roadside

screen and no significant views into the body of the site from Queen Street, even in the winter (see Photograph 14).

- To the south of this band of woodland is the residential curtilage of Sharps Hill Farm, partly enclosed by a timber post and rail fence and with the gardens mainly to the west of the house (see Photograph 15). The house itself is a single storey relatively modern structure with brick and white weatherboarding to the elevations and a clay tiled roof - it is of no particular architectural interest or quality (see Photograph 1).
- To the east of the house is an area of rough grass which slopes down to the east, where there is an overgrown path which leads to the north east, to the field gate on Queen Street.
- To the east of the path there is a small pond overhung by trees in a low-lying area in the north eastern corner of the site, close to the rear garden boundaries of houses at the north end of Stream Pit Lane (see Photograph 16). A small watercourse runs to the north into the pond, close to the eastern site boundary, and then continues to the north beneath Queen Street.
- To the south west of the house there is a substantial timber stables building with a line of tall conifers just to its north (see Photograph 17), and a small timber shed and touring caravan to the west of the stables.
- The south western part of the site is more open and comprises rough grass with a variable covering of brambles (see Photographs 18 and 19). There is a large oak tree in the western corner of this area, and also a number of standalone mature trees to the south east of the main open area, including oak and alder and a white willow close to the southern boundary (see Photograph 20).
- The south eastern part of the site is more densely vegetated with young trees and developing scrub, including willow, hazel and elder.

The Surrounding Area

2.1.6 The area around the site is as follows:

- To the north of the site, on the far side of Queen Street, is the large detached property of Pinyons (which is outside the village Limits to Built Development) and also two adjoining properties to its east which are within the village boundary, with a line of detached properties on the north side of the road extending to the east

towards the centre of the village. To the north west of the site is an open arable field which extends towards Sponden Lane.

- To the east of the site is an area of 1970s/80s housing development fronting onto Queen Street and extending to the south along Stream Pit Lane and Poundfield Road. There is also a recently completed development of 8 dwellings on a contained site at the end of Old Orchard (permitted under application 19/00106/FULL) which has extended the settlement to a point due south of the site. Older properties within the Conservation Area are around 170m to the east of the site boundary and separated from it by the intervening modern development.
- To the south of the site are some small fields of pasture on rising land (see Photograph 22) - on the far side of the local ridge line to the south of the site there are some large agricultural storage buildings and a small touring caravan site at Oaklands Farm, located beneath an overhead high voltage electricity transmission line (see Photograph 23).
- To the west of the site are the detached properties noted above, extending towards and beyond the junction of Queen Street with Sponden Lane. Just to the west of Sponden Lane at the junction there is a small Southern Water pumping station within a fenced compound, and a large field containing polytunnels used for fruit growing, extending up the slope to the north west, with the line of pylons which runs to the south of the site continuing to the north at the western, higher end of that field.

Topography

- 2.1.7 The site slopes generally down from south west to north east, with a high point of around 57.8m AOD (above Ordnance Datum, or mean sea level) in its south western corner, sloping down towards the pond in its north eastern corner, where levels are around 46.5m AOD. The existing dwelling has a floor level of around 51.5m AOD, and to the north of the dwelling levels slope down within the band of woodland to around 47.5m on the roadside verge in the centre of the northern site boundary. Queen Street slopes gently up to the west, with a level of around 48.5m AOD at the point of the existing site access.
- 2.1.8 Around the site, the land continues to rise to the south west, and there is a local ridge of higher ground around 200m to the south of the site, extending to the west towards Downgate Farm, where there is a spot height of 82m AOD on Silverden Lane. The land falls to the south of that ridge line, such that there are no views to the site from the area to its south around the caravan site to the west of Bodiam Road. Levels also fall to the

north east along the line of a small watercourse, with a broad, shallow ridge to the west of that watercourse in the large arable field to the east of Sponden Lane. To the north west the land rises along the line of the A268, and the local topography in general is rolling, with a series of small scale ridges and hollows, and there are no significantly elevated areas affording longer views - the landscape is generally enclosed, both by the varied topography and the frequent hedgerow trees and small to medium sized blocks of woodland.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.1.9 There are no Public Rights of Way within or immediately adjoining the site, though there is a footway along the north side of Queen Street which extends to the west of the site, as far as the junction with Sponden Lane. The nearest public footpath to the site runs to the south west from Queen Street, just to the east of the farm shop, and continues up the slope of the local ridge line and beyond, where it meets another footpath running to the east towards Bodiam Road (see Figure 3). There are no views to the surface of the site from this route, even in the winter, but some of the trees along the southern site boundary and also the tops of some of the taller trees within the site can be seen, above intervening hedgerows. There are no views towards the site from the southern part of this route, as they are screened by the local ridge line.



1. View north west from within the site, showing the existing dwelling of Sharps Hill Farm. Note the tall and partly evergreen vegetation behind the house, which encloses the site to the north and west. Two images combined, February 2022.



2. View south east across the A268 Queen Street - the speed limit and village entrance signs are well to the west of the site, to the north of Bayford House. The white post which can just be seen on the far side of the road to the left of the sign is at the existing site access. February 2022.



3. View south across Queen Street to the northern site boundary, with the field gate which previously provided a secondary access to the site on the left of the view - the woodland along the north side of the site is dense with some evergreen species in the understorey and there are no significant views into the site, even in the winter. Two images combined, February 2022.



4. View south along the existing access, which also serves Sharps Hill Oast (visible on the right of the view) - the access would be widened as part of the development, with removal of some of the vegetation to its left. Two images combined, February 2022.



5. View west along Queen Street, with the existing access visible to the left of the car on the right of the view. Note the evergreen species (yew, holly, laurel and bamboo) in the understorey of the woodland along the north side of the site, which provides an effective screen even in the winter. Two images combined, February 2022.



6. View west along Queen Street from the north side of the road, opposite the north eastern corner of the site, showing the woodland belt which extends along the entire northern site boundary. Two images combined, February 2022.



7. View south across Queen Street just to the east of centre in the northern site boundary, showing the rise in ground levels within the site beyond the boundary trees, which further limits views into the body of the site. Two images combined, February 2022.



8. View east along Queen Street from the same point as Photograph 7, showing the eastern end of the woodland along the northern site boundary. Two images combined, February 2022.



9. View east in the north eastern part of the site, with a house on the west side of Stream Pit Lane visible through the intervening vegetation. The pond within the site can just be seen at the bottom of the view. Two images combined, February 2022.



10. View south east across the southern site boundary - the line of brambles and young trees is along the boundary, with the field to the south of the site partially visible beyond it. Houses in the recent development at the end of Old Orchard can be seen in the background through the trees. Two images combined, February 2022.



11. View north east from the same point as Photograph 10 - the field shelter indicated by the red arrow is in the northern corner of the south western part of the site, and part of the western site boundary runs to its left across the view, with the roof of Bayford House visible above the boundary hedgerow. The boundary continues to the right of the field shelter, where it is marked by a tall conifer hedge, and the upper part of Sharps Hill Oast can be seen above that hedge. February 2022.



12. View further to the east from the same point as Photograph 10, showing Sharps Hill Oast on the left, partly visible above the tall conifer boundary hedge. The trees on the right of the view are within the site. Two images combined, February 2022.



13. View south west from the western part of the site - the caravan is within the site, at the point where the western site boundary turns to run to the north west along the south side of the Sharps Hill Oast curtilage. Three images combined, February 2022.



14. View north from the north eastern part of the site, showing the field gate towards the eastern end of the northern site boundary and part of the dense woodland belt within the northern part of the site to either side of the gate. Three images combined, February 2022.



15. View east from within the garden to Sharps Hill Farm, showing the western gable end of the property. Two images combined, February 2022.



16. View north east from the north eastern part of the site, showing the existing heavily shaded pond. February 2022.



17. View west from the central part of the site, showing the timber stable block with a line of tall conifers behind it. Two images combined, February 2022.



18. View east from the same point as Photograph 10, showing the dense vegetation along the southern side of the site on the right of the view. Houses on Stream Pit Lane can just be made out through the trees to the left of centre in the view. Two images combined, February 2022.



19. View south east from the central part of the site, showing the dense vegetation in the southern corner of the site. Existing houses along Old Orchard and Stream Pit Lane can just be made out through the trees. Three images combined, February 2022.



20. View east from the same point as Photograph 19, showing some of the standalone trees within the body of the site. Three images combined, February 2022.



21. View east from just to the south of the existing dwelling within the site - houses along Stream Pit Lane can be seen through the trees along the eastern side of the site, towards the left in the view. Two images combined, February 2022.



22. View south west from the same point as Photograph 10 - the field to the south of the site can be seen on the left, with the hedge along its western side on the right of the view, and with part of the field to the west of the site just visible beyond that hedge on the right of the view. Two images combined, February 2022.



23. View north east towards the site from the public footpath to the south of the caravan site, on the far side of the local ridge line. The site is on the far side of the ridge and cannot be seen. February 2022.

2.2 Landscape Character

National Landscape Character

2.2.1 In terms of wider landscape character, the site lies in the north eastern part of the 'High Weald' National Character Area (NCA) - NCAs are identified by Natural England, and are described on their website as '*areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.*' The High Weald is a large character area, extending from Horsham and Crawley in the west to Tenterden in the east, and from Tonbridge in the north to Bexhill in the south.

2.2.2 Key characteristics of the NCA are stated to include::

- *'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.*
- *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.'*

2.2.3 Further description includes the following:

'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.'

2.2.4 The NCA Profile includes a number of 'Statements of Environmental Opportunity' (SEOs) which seek to guide future change. SEO3 is to:

'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.'

2.2.5 The NCA Profile also includes a series of 'Landscape Opportunities', which include the following:

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

County Landscape Character

2.2.6 Kent County Council (KCC) have published a landscape character assessment ('Landscape Assessment of Kent', 2004) for the county. This assessment divides the county into 114 separate landscape character areas, with the site being in the 'Bodiam: Lower Rother Valley' character area. The description of the Bodiam: Lower Rother Valley character area states that it is:

'... a landscape which lacks the cohesion of the smaller scale farmland of the High Weald, without taking on the great open horizons of the lower river levels.'

2.2.7 The characteristic features of the landscape are stated to be:

'Large scale landscape, wide views. Valley floodplain meets low wooded ridges. High hedges, unmanaged shaws, some trees and scrub on valley floor.'

2.2.8 The condition of the landscape is stated to be very good, with a high level of sensitivity, and the general landscape action for the area is to 'conserve', with one of the detailed actions being to:

'Conserve the historic vernacular buildings and ensure that new buildings and additions are sympathetic to the existing character.'

Borough Landscape Character

2.2.9 TWBC has produced the 'Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment' (2017), which divides the borough into 19 Character Areas, with the site shown within the 'Hawkhurst Wooded Farmland' character area. The Key Characteristics of the Hawkhurst Wooded Farmland area are stated to include:

1) Strong upland ridge of Tunbridge Wells Sand dropping to valleys to the north and south incised by deep narrow tributary valleys that join the Hexden Channel and Kent Ditch and ultimately flow to the River Rother.

2) Mixed agricultural landscape of small-scale pasture and medium-large scale arable fields, with larger rolling arable slopes to the valleys and occasional fields of orchards and hops.

Generally the area has a managed farmland character with a peaceful, rural ambience. Both arable and pasture farming is found in the area. The steeper areas contain small sheep grazing fields or paddocks to create an attractive rural scene of livestock grazing grassland with a backdrop of valley woodlands rippling into the distance. Arable farmland tends to occupy the larger fields on gentler slopes. In some areas hedges have been removed and replaced with post and wire fencing.

There is a relatively intact historic landscape pattern of medieval assart fields, generally medium in size, with irregular shapes and sinuous wooded boundaries. There are also some medium-large early post-medieval regular informal fields with mixtures of sinuous and straight boundaries bounded by hedges. Generally this creates a medium-large scale field pattern but with human-scale features such as field ponds and narrow lanes, churches and farmsteads creating a more intricately textured landscape pattern overall. There are occasional fields of orchards and hops, adding variety and interest to the area, such as between Sandhurst and Hawkhurst.

3) Wooded character arising from thick linear ancient ghyll woodlands, shaws, hedgerow trees and overgrown hedgerows.

4) Numerous rural lanes following a pattern of ancient routeways crossing north-south through the area and joining with the main east-west routeway following the ridgeline.

- 5) ***Ridgetop settlements, dominated by brick and weatherboarded buildings. An occasional windmill or church tower provide distinctive landmarks in mid-distant views. Small farmsteads line the minor ridges separating the ghyll valleys.***

- 6) ***A peaceful rural ambience with dark skies away from the main settlement of Hawkhurst.'***

2.2.10 Features and qualities considered to be of particular value within this character area are stated to include:

'The area lies within the High Weald/ Kent Downs AONB. The following key qualities related to the AONB are particularly valued:

- 1) *The scenic rolling hills and wooded ghyll valleys. The ridgelines and gently undulating hills permit intermittent and glimpsed views within the area, which occasionally stretch for considerable distances across the High Weald.*
- 2) *The pattern of dispersed historic farmsteads and hamlets and locally distinctive buildings which add important local character to the landscape and a sense of history.*
- 3) *Ancient routeways that form a clear network of rural lanes, footpaths and tracks, lined by ditches, hedgerows or woodland which add historic interest and local distinctiveness to the landscape.*
- 4) *Woodland - particularly ancient woodlands, ghylls and shaws. This is of value for many reasons including historic, aesthetic, biodiversity and recreation interest.*
- 5) *The relatively intact ancient landscape pattern of irregular medieval fields bounded by woodland, shaws and ghylls, closely related to the presence of historic farmsteads and the network of ancient routeways.'*

2.2.11 The stated Landscape Strategy for the Hawkhurst Wooded Farmland character area is as follows:

'The Character Area should be considered in the context of the High Weald AONB, particularly the role certain parts of the character area may play in the setting of the AONB. Protection of the valued features and qualities of the landscape should include appropriate planning to ensure any new development is appropriate in scale and character to the landscape context.

- 1) *Control further development proposals which could adversely affect the rural character of the landscape and tip the scales to a more urban character.*
- 2) *Limit new large-scale development wherever possible because it is rare within the area and has the potential to be highly visible on the ridge lines and intrusive within the quieter picturesque ghyll wooded valleys.*
- 3) *Avoid deterioration of the currently high quality built environment and vernacular heritage, particularly proximate to Hawkhurst.*
- 4) *Recognise the profile of the area as a linkway for recreational users and seek appropriate improvements through, for example, Section 106 agreements as appropriate.'*

Local Landscape Character

- 2.2.12 The area of and immediately around the site displays some of the characteristics noted in the above character assessments, in that it is at the western end of the ridge top settlement of Sandhurst with a further ridge line to its south west, there is a rolling landscape of fields and wooded valleys to the north of the A268 Queen Street, with relatively open views across it, but the site itself has a more enclosed character, with the tree-lined A268 and houses along its northern side to the north, the edge of the settlement to the east, rising ground to the south and a number of well-spaced detached dwellings to the west of the site. The site is generally screened and separated from the wider landscape around it, and has an enclosed, partly settled character (with one dwelling and a number of stables or field shelters within it) - the site is outside the settlement boundary but does not appear as part of the countryside in terms of its character or land use.
- 2.2.13 This assessment accords with that set out in the report by TWBC's landscape consultants HDA ('Tunbridge Wells - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites within the High Weald AONB, part 6.10: Sandhurst') which specifically considered the site, and which observed that:

'The site does not contribute to the locally valued features and qualities recorded within the district Landscape Character Assessment.'

'The site is small scale and enclosed from the surrounding landscape. It has associations with the existing dwelling and forms part of a transitional landscape between the existing edge of Sandhurst and the wider rural landscape.'

Existing Light Sources

- 2.2.14 There are some low key existing light sources in the area around the site - Queen Street is not lit as it passes the site or runs through the village, but there are lights on and within the houses to the north, east and west of the site and also elsewhere within the village, as well as lights on and within the existing dwelling.

2.3 Landscape Designations, Quality, Value and Sensitivity

Landscape Designations

- 2.3.1 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as does the entire settlement of Sandhurst. The AONB is a national level designation and covers a large area (1,450 square kilometres, spread over four counties), and the site is in the north eastern part of the designated area.

2.3.2 The AONB landscape assessment ('The High Weald: Exploring the landscape of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', published by the (then) Countryside Commission in 1994) divides the AONB into a number of distinct character areas, with the site being within the 'Lower Rother Valley' character area, reflecting the County landscape character assessment.

2.3.3 The High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2019 to 2024, describes the character of the AONB in the following terms (on page 8):

'At first glance the High Weald appears to be a densely wooded landscape but closer examination reveals a detailed agricultural tapestry of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads. Everything in the High Weald landscape is human scale. Wildflower meadows, alive with bees and grasshoppers, are now a rare delight, but the Medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick wooded hedges, remain. Extensive views punctuated by church spires can be glimpsed along the ridge-top roads. Around almost every corner a harmonious group of traditional farm buildings comes into view with their distinctive steep, clay tile and hipped roofs.'

2.3.4 The Management Plan notes under the heading of 'Legal Framework' on page 18 that, in respect of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000:

- *'Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.*
- *Section 84 confirms the powers of a local authorities to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB, and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.*
- *Section 85 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities '**...in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect land [in an AONB] to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty...***

2.3.5 The vision set out within the plan (on page 5) for the AONB landscape includes the following:

'Demonstrates a consistent approach to planning across the AONB, allowing for appropriate housing and economic needs of thriving communities and the land-based sector without compromising the characteristic historic settlement pattern.'

2.3.6 The Statement of Significance on page 23 of the Management Plan defines the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB and sets out its special qualities as follows:

'Despite its large size (1,500km sq.) and proximity to London, its landscape has remained relatively unchanged since the 14th century, surviving major historical events and social and technological changes. Its outstanding beauty stems from its essentially rural and human scale character, with a high proportion of natural surfaces and the story of its past visible throughout. The extensive survival of woodland and traditional mixed farming supports an exceptionally well-connected green and blue infrastructure with a high proportion of semi-natural habitat in a structurally diverse, permeable and complex mosaic supporting a rich diversity of wildlife.'

The natural beauty of the High Weald comprises:

- *Five defining components of character that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years.*

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

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

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

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

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

2.3.7 The vision under the heading of 'Settlement' (on page 31) is for:

'A landscape in which the distinctive and historic pattern of settlement is protected in a way that positively contributes to the natural environment and improves the connections between settlements and the countryside. Appropriately worded land use planning policies within relevant development plans allow for affordable housing and workspace for local needs while ensuring that settlements retain their distinctiveness and individual historic buildings, and conservation areas and buried archaeological remains are conserved and enhanced as appropriate.'

2.3.8 The 'top five issues' for Settlement are stated to be:

1. *Increase in greenfield development pressure for housing threatening the character of the AONB.*

2. *Generic layout and design of new housing developments failing to respond to, or reinforce AONB character.*
3. *Erosion of AONB character through suburbanisation, including pressure for residential intensification unrelated to land management outside of towns and villages, large/landscape-intrusive replacement dwellings, and smaller interventions, boundary treatments etc., which have a cumulative effect.*
4. *Declining housing affordability, including lack of social housing and key worker housing suitable for land-based workers.*
5. *Fragmentation and suburbanisation of historic farmsteads, and the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use with the loss of agricultural/economic functional relationship with land.'*

2.3.9 The three objectives for Settlement are stated to be (on page 33):

'S1: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.

S2: To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.

S3: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the High Weald in its scale, layout and design.'

2.3.10 The site is not in current agricultural use and its previous positive use was equestrian, but there are fields to its south west and west, so the sections of the Management Plan on 'Field and Heath' also have some relevance. The objectives for Field and Heath are:

'FH1: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.

FH2: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.

FH3: To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.

FH4: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.'

2.3.11 The High Weald AONB Unit have produced an advice note on 'Legislation and Planning Policy in the High Weald AONB' (October 2016, revised in February 2019), and this contains guidance on the landscape assessment of proposals affecting the

AONB, stating (on page 9) that:

'A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) which may accompany a planning application should distinguish between landscape impact at an AONB scale by reference to the Management Plan and impact on local landscape character.'

- 2.3.12 The advice note also includes a template which is intended to assist with testing development proposals against the objectives of the Management Plan, and this has been used as part of the assessment (see Table 4.1 in Section 4).

Landscape Quality, Value and Sensitivity

- 2.3.13 The area around (and including) the site is nationally designated for its landscape quality and value, and is in general of very high quality and value. It would also in general be highly sensitive to new built development, though all of the landscape character assessments reviewed above note the presence of buildings within the landscape as being characteristic of the High Weald, and also note the characteristic ridge-top location of settlements including Sandhurst.
- 2.3.14 Within that overall high quality, value and sensitivity, and using the definitions set out in Appendix A, the site itself has been assessed as of overall **medium landscape quality**. This is because, though it lies within the overall very high quality landscape of the AONB, it is currently disused with the former paddocks overgrown with brambles and scrub, it is enclosed by a band of woodland along the busy A268 to the north, by the edge of the settlement to the east and by adjoining dwellings to the west, and it has no significant visual connection with the wider AONB landscape.
- 2.3.15 In terms of the contribution which the site presently makes to the landscape of the AONB, that is largely limited to the visibility from the landscape around the site of the taller trees within it (particularly those alongside the A268 Queen Street which help to provide an attractive, green approach to the village from the west).
- 2.3.16 As noted in Appendix A, the concept of landscape value is also important, and is included in assessments in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. Factors such as cultural association, recreational use and intangible qualities such as wildness are important in terms of determining landscape value, but are not really applicable to the site (there are no Public Rights of Way through or close to the site, the footpath to its west is well screened from it, and the site is well screened from the Listed Buildings to the west and the Conservation Area within the village to the east),

so in this case the landscape value of the site can be taken to be represented by its landscape quality, and to be **medium**.

2.3.17 Landscape sensitivity is judged according to the type of development proposed. As noted above, the wider landscape around the site is highly sensitive, but the site itself would be of lower sensitivity to a limited and contained development of the type proposed - the site is enclosed by trees and woodland, a busy road, the edge of the settlement, other detached properties and rising ground, with no significant visibility from the wider AONB landscape. Where it may be partially visible, the new development would be seen in the context of existing houses within and to the west of the village. The site has therefore been assessed as of **low to medium sensitivity** to development of the type proposed.

Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

2.3.18 As noted above, the Sandhurst Conservation Area lies to the east of the site within the village, with its boundary around 170m from the site at its closest point. The Conservation Area is separated from the site by modern development, and there is no intervisibility between the site and the designated area. There are two Listed Buildings to the west of the site, Bayford House on the far side of Sharps Hill Oast, and The Malt House further to the west. Bayford House is well screened from the site by intervening vegetation and also by the property and garden vegetation of Sharps Hill Oast.

2.4 Visibility

2.4.1 Visibility of the site in its current form is limited by the band of woodland to its north (and also by trees and houses on the far side of Queen Street, which further limit visibility from the wider landscape to the north), trees within the site and the edge of the settlement to its east, trees within the site and also the rising ground to the south west and the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast and its garden vegetation to the west. The main points from which the site can presently be seen are therefore:

- From the north there are some limited and filtered views into the northern part of the site from Queen Street as it passes the site - these views are mainly in the winter, through the generally dense roadside vegetation, and are further screened by the steep slope which rises to the south within the site. There are also some views along the existing access at the western end of the northern site boundary, but the access is enclosed by tall conifer hedges, so there are no views into the body of the site. The properties along the north side of Queen Street (Pinyons and the houses to its east) are set back from the road and well screened by garden

vegetation, such that there are no significant views to the site from them, and the tall hedge and line of trees to the west of Pinyons forms a further line of screening such that there are no significant views of the site from the open field to its north west (see Photograph 24).

- From the east there are some filtered views into the eastern part of the site from the rear elevations and gardens of properties along the west side of Stream Pit Lane, mainly in the winter. There are also some views to the site above the roofs of those (single storey) houses from further to the east along Stream Pit Lane, which rises to the east - the existing dwelling on the site can be seen amongst the trees in these views (see Photographs 25 and 26).
- From the south there are some short distance but filtered views into the site from the adjoining field, though there is no public access to that field. There are no views from any further to the south, as the land falls away to the south of the adjoining field, on the far side of the local ridge line (see Photograph 27).
- From the south west there are some partial and filtered views towards the site from the public footpath as it rises up the local ridge line - in these views the upper parts of some of the trees along the southern site boundary can be seen, but there are no views into the body of the site itself (see Photographs 28 and 29).
- From the west there are some views into the western part of the site from one or two upper floor windows of the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast, above the tall conifer boundary hedge, but no views from ground level windows, and no significant views from any further to the west, as they are screened by the building and curtilage vegetation of Sharps Hill Oast.



24. View south in the direction of the site from Sponden Lane to the north of Queen Street - the site is roughly in the centre of the view but is well screened by the lines of trees and woodland to each side of Queen Street. Three images combined, February 2022.



25. View north west from Stream Pit Lane, at its junction with Tanyard - the existing dwelling on the site can be seen in the centre of the view through the trees and above the intervening bungalows. Two images combined, February 2022.



26. View north west from further to the west along Stream Pit Lane - part of the roof of the existing dwelling can just be seen above the intervening bungalow where indicated by the red arrow. Two images combined, February 2022.



27. View north in the direction of the site from the public footpath just to the west of Bodiam Road - the site is on the far side of the ridge and cannot be seen. Two images combined, February 2022.



28. View north east to the site from the southern end of the public footpath across the field to the south west of the site - part of Bayford House can be seen on the left of the view, with the cowl of the oast of Sharps Hill Oast also visible where indicated by the red arrow. The site is to the right of the arrow in the view and the tops of some of the trees along the southern site boundary can be seen above the intervening hedge, but the existing dwelling on the site cannot be seen. Two images combined, February 2022.



29. View east in the direction of the site from the public footpath across the field to the south west of the site - the conifer on the left of the view is in the south western corner of the garden to Bayford House, and the tops of some of the trees along the southern side of the site can be seen above the intervening hedge to its right. The roofs of some of the new houses in the recent development at the end of Old Orchard can be seen through the trees on the right of the view. Two images combined, February 2022.

2.5 Planning Context

National Planning Policy

2.5.1 The Government's national planning policy and guidance on various aspects of planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021). The NPPF states that *'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development'*, and that in order to do so, the planning system must perform mutually dependent economic, social and environmental roles.

2.5.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states (in part) that:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or*

change (such as increased densities);

- d) *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.*'

2.5.3 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states (in part) that:

'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland'.*

2.5.4 The wording '*in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan*' in Paragraph 174 a) was an addition made in the July 2018 update of the NPPF, and shows that firstly landscapes which have an identified quality in the development plan should usually be regarded as valued, and secondly that the protection to be afforded to valued landscapes will vary with their status, with statutorily protected landscapes (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks) receiving the highest level of protection, and landscapes recognised and protected by development plan policies protected at a lower level, but still above that of ordinary countryside. As the site is within the AONB, it is clearly part of a valued landscape in the terms set out in Paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

2.5.5 Paragraph 176 of the NPPF relates to protecting landscape and scenic beauty within designated areas (including AONBs), and the need to control major developments within such areas. Paragraph 176 states that:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

2.5.6 The supporting Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF (Paragraph 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721) states that:

'The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the

conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.'

- 2.5.7 Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act places a duty on 'relevant authorities' (in this case TWBC) to have regard to the statutory purposes of designation of areas including AONBs when making decisions which may affect them. That means that the relevant authority has to consider effects on an AONB or its setting in coming to any decision.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.5.8 The Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan was adopted in March 2006, with most policies saved following a direction from the Secretary of State in March 2009. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy in June 2010, three further policies (including Policy EN26 on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Policy EN27 on Special Landscape Areas) were superseded by policies in the Core Strategy, and the Site Allocations Local Plan was adopted in July 2016. The Local Plan Proposals Map shows the site as in the countryside in planning terms.

- 2.5.9 The Local Plan contains a number of relevant environmental policies, including the following:

POLICY LBD1 states that:

'Outside the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, development will only be permitted where it would be in accordance with all relevant policies contained in this Local Plan and the Kent Structure Plan 1996 and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan 2006 rural settlement and countryside policies.'

POLICY EN1 states that:

'All proposals for development within the Plan area will be required to satisfy all of the following criteria:

- 1 *The nature and intensity of the proposed use would be compatible with neighbouring uses and would not cause significant harm to the amenities or character of the area in terms of noise, vibration, smell, safety or health impacts, or excessive traffic generation;*
- 2 *The proposal would not cause significant harm to the residential amenities of adjoining occupiers, and would provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers of the development, when assessed in terms of daylight, sunlight and privacy;*

- 3 *The design of the proposal, encompassing scale, layout and orientation of buildings, site coverage by buildings, external appearance, roofscape, materials and landscaping, would respect the context of the site and take account of the efficient use of energy;*
- 4 *The proposal would not result in the loss of significant buildings, related spaces, trees, shrubs, hedges, or other features important to the character of the built up area or landscape;*
- 5 *There would be no significant adverse effect on any features of nature conservation importance which could not be prevented by conditions or agreements;*
- 6 *The design, layout and landscaping of all development should take account of the security of people and property and incorporate measures to reduce or eliminate crime; and*
- 7 *The design of public spaces and pedestrian routes to all new development proposals should provide safe and easy access for people with disabilities and people with particular access requirements.'*

POLICY EN25 states that:

'Outside of the Limits to Built Development, as defined on the Proposals Map, all proposals for development will be required to satisfy all of the following criteria:

- 1 *The proposal would have a minimal impact on the landscape character of the locality;*
- 2 *The development proposal would have no detrimental impact on the landscape setting of settlements;*
- 3 *The development proposal would not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape, amenity, nature conservation, or historic or archaeological importance;*
- 4 *Where built development is proposed, there would be no existing building or structure suitable for conversion or re-use to provide the required facilities. Any new buildings should, where practicable, be located adjacent to existing buildings or be well screened by existing vegetation; and*
- 5 *Where an extension or alteration to an existing building is proposed, it would respect local building styles and materials, have no significant adverse impact on the form, appearance or setting of the building, and would respect the architectural and historic integrity of any adjoining building or group of buildings of which it forms part.'*

2.5.10 The Local Plan 'Notes for Guidance on the Implementation of Policy EN1' include the following:

'Landscaping

- 4.23 *The location of a development proposal and the design of all associated surrounding spaces are regarded as an integral part of the acceptability of a scheme.*
- 4.24 *A poorly located or designed scheme will not be made acceptable through the inclusion of a high quality landscape scheme.*
- 4.25 *Development proposals should ensure that existing site features, such as individual, or groups of, trees, hedges, shrubs, field patterns, ponds or watercourses, are not only retained as part of the overall landscaping scheme but are supplemented, where appropriate, by additional planting. This will offer opportunities for habitat creation, and will also add considerable value to the appearance of the development.'*

2.5.11 The Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document was adopted in June 2010, and contains the following relevant policies:

Core Policy 4, Environment which states:

'The Borough's built and natural environments are rich in heritage assets, landscape value and biodiversity, which combine to create a unique and distinctive local character much prized by residents and visitors alike. This locally distinctive sense of place and character will be conserved and enhanced as follows:

1. *The Borough's urban and rural landscapes, including the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will be conserved and enhanced*
2. *The Borough Landscape Character Area assessment 2002 will be utilised to manage, conserve and enhance the landscape as a whole*
3. *A hierarchical approach to nature conservation and the protection of biodiversity and geodiversity will be applied across the sites and habitats of national, regional and local importance within the Borough. The objective will be to avoid net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity across the Borough as a whole*
4. *Opportunities and locations for biodiversity enhancements will be identified and pursued by the creation, protection, enhancement, extension and management of green corridors and through the development of green infrastructure networks in urban and rural areas to improve connectivity between habitats*
5. *The Borough's heritage assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, archaeological sites and Historic Parks and Gardens will be conserved and enhanced and special regard will be had to their settings*

6. *The positive management of heritage assets through partnership approaches and measures will be encouraged, including by the use of Conservation Area Management Plans*

The justification for the policy notes that:

'This Policy seeks to ensure that the delivery of new development (such as for housing, retail and employment) is balanced against the need to conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the Borough's natural and built environment, in terms of the intrinsic character and diversity of the landscape, its biodiversity and geodiversity and its heritage assets.'

Core Policy 14, Development in the Villages and Rural Areas - this Policy contains the following relevant parts:

6. *The countryside will be protected for its own sake and a policy of restraint will operate in order to maintain the landscape character and quality of the countryside*
7. *The interrelationship between the natural and built features of the landscape will be preserved, enhanced and, where necessary, restored, this being the principal determinant of the character and quality of the countryside'*

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 General

3.1.1 This report has been produced to consider the likely landscape and visual effects of residential development on the site, in order to inform TWBC and assist with their further consideration of the proposed allocation of the site for residential development. The report takes a fresh approach and considers the proposals as they currently stand. However, it is also relevant to consider some of the past context for development proposals on the site, as summarised below:

- The site is the subject of a draft allocation for residential development of 10 to 15 dwellings under draft Policy AL/SA2 of the October 2021 Submission Draft (and also previous draft versions) of the emerging Local Plan.
- An application for development of up to 31 dwellings on the site was made in May 2019, with the number of dwellings subsequently revised downwards (to 'up to 16') in discussion with TWBC officers. The application was recommended for approval by officers but refused by the Planning Committee in February 2021.
- There was one reason for refusal in the planning decision notice, which related to harm to the High Weald AONB and also to the nearby designated heritage assets.
- A subsequent appeal was dismissed in November 2021, with the Inspector considering that the proposals would *'have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the AONB and the countryside'*, and would also *'fail to preserve or enhance the setting of Bayford House and Sharps Hill Oast'*. The Inspector found that, although there would be some harm to the heritage assets, that harm would be outweighed by the benefits of the provision of new dwellings, and also found that there would be no harm to the setting of the Conservation Area.

3.1.2 The proposals have now been revised, with this LVIA report prepared in parallel with the revised proposals, such that the draft LVIA has informed the proposals, with the aim of securing the most appropriate development scale and form and minimising any adverse landscape and visual effects, and the LVIA has then assessed the effects of the development as now proposed (noting that the proposals are at this stage in outline only).

- 3.1.3 The proposals are now for 14 new dwellings, and the LVIA has been prepared on that basis, using the architect's Site Layout drawing (see Appendix B) as a guide to the likely form of the development. The draft allocating policy allows for up to 15 dwellings on the site, and if the layout were at some stage to be revised (within the same overall parameters and constraints) to provide 15 dwellings, that would not (given the well-enclosed nature of the site) be likely to lead to any change in the levels of effects set out in this report.
- 3.1.4 The recommendations made by the landscape architect (JEC) for the revised layout to take into account included that more of the trees within the site should be retained where possible (by reference to the previous Tree Survey and Report) with the layout designed around them, that there should be increased separation from the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast (by means of new tree planting and retention of existing vegetation), that there could be some low density development (perhaps of 1½ storeys only) in the western corner of the site, that the layout should be more organic (rather than with the dwellings arranged in straight lines as previously), that the new access should be aligned and planted (with retention of existing vegetation alongside it where possible) to minimise views into the body of the site, that there should be new hedge planting to the site boundaries where no hedges exist at the moment and that the existing areas of woodland and thicket within the site should be positively managed for their long term viability and nature conservation benefit (including some limited thinning and vegetation removal to allow more light to reach the pond).
- 3.1.5 JEC also recommended that the proposals should take on board the comments on the previous application made by TWBC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer and also the recommendations set out in the report by TWBC's landscape consultants HDA ('Tunbridge Wells - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Proposed Allocation Sites within the High Weald AONB, part 6.10: Sandhurst').
- 3.1.6 The landscape related comments made by TWBC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer (on the revised proposals, in December 2020) were in summary that:
- The LVIA submitted with the application was essentially a visual assessment only and did not address the Borough Landscape Character Assessment or the AONB Management Plan.
 - The reduction in dwelling numbers (to 16) went a long way towards addressing previous concerns, and that the proposals now had the possibility of being acceptable.

- However, the 'orthogonal layout' remained a concern as it did not respect the character of the area or respond well to the site.

3.1.7 The recommendations for the site set out in the HDA report included the following:

- A reduction in the number of dwellings (from the nominal 30 dwellings assumed for the purposes of the report).
- Retention of the trees along the northern and eastern sides of the site, together with the watercourse and pond in the eastern part of the site. It should also be possible to manage these areas to improve their quality and age structure, and the trees around the pond could be managed to allow more light to reach it.
- Retention and protection of boundary features.
- Retention of trees within the body of the site, where possible.
- Promotion of a soft edge to the south of the development, with the introduction of additional tree planting.
- The layout should respond positively to the existing settlement pattern of the village and the well-treed character of the site.
- Native hedgerows should be planted where opportunities arise.
- Development within the south western part of the site should not be high density, and any proposed dwellings here should be carefully designed.
- The setting of the nearby Listed Building (Bayford House) should be taken into account.

3.1.8 In response to the above, the main differences between the development as currently proposed and that previously refused are as follow:

- The proposed number of dwellings has now been reduced to 14 - that does result in a low overall density of development across the site as a whole, but reflects the significant constraints in terms of the extensive areas of existing vegetation which need to be retained. The reduction in the number of dwellings also assists with some of the other changes as noted below.
- The built development is now set back further to the south into the site, enabling full retention of the woodland belt alongside Queen Street which

(together with the change in levels) would effectively prevent any significant views of the new dwellings from the north, even in the winter.

- Three dwellings are now proposed in the south western part of the site - they would be well spaced and 1½ storeys only in height. There may be some partial and filtered views of the roofs of these houses from some stretches of the public footpath which runs up the slope to the south west of the site, but other existing houses are also partially visible (mainly in the winter) from parts of that route, including Bayford House, Sharps Hill Oast and some of the recently completed dwellings on the site at the end of Old Orchard to the south of the site.
- The proposed layout is now more organic and sympathetic, and is no longer orthogonal.
- The layout allows an increased set-back from the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast (and also, by extension, from the Listed Building of Bayford House, though there are no significant views to the site from that property), with an area of open space adjoining the northern part of the western site boundary.
- Significant areas of existing woodland, trees and developing scrub are proposed to be retained along the northern, eastern (including the watercourse and pond) and southern sides of the site, and these areas would also be managed (with appropriate woodland management, thinning and replanting) to maximise their nature conservation interest and long term viability. A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan would be produced to set out detailed arrangements for the future management of these areas, and access to them would be provided for the new residents.
- More of the standalone existing trees within the site are now proposed to be retained, including Trees 25 to 27 and 29 to 32 as numbered in the tree survey.
- There are also now clearer proposals for the location and extent of new tree and hedgerow planting.
- This LVIA has now been prepared to accompany the proposals - no full or detailed assessment was submitted with the previous application or was available to the Inspector determining the appeal. That is important, because the Inspector made some assumptions about levels of visibility and effects (for example that there would be views of the new dwellings from Queen Street and the footpath to the south west) which have not been borne out by the assessment set out in this report - there would in practice (especially with the

revised layout) be no significant visibility of the new dwellings on the site from Queen Street or the public footpath to the south west.

3.2 The Proposed Development

3.2.1 The proposals are shown on the architect's drawing reproduced in Appendix B, and the main features of the built development which are relevant to this assessment are:

- The new dwellings would be 2 storeys in height, apart from the three dwellings in the south western part of the site which would be 1½ storeys only. There would be 3 detached dwellings in this area, with one further detached dwelling adjacent to the new access; the remaining 10 dwellings would comprise five sets of semi-detached dwellings.
- Access to the site would be from Queen Street by means of the existing access, which would need to be improved and widened, but which would be designed to minimise any views into the site or of the new dwellings, with a curved alignment and the retention of existing planting alongside it, together with the provision of appropriate new planting. The access would then loop around the site with the new dwellings to its east and south, and the three detached dwellings at its western end.
- The design of the new dwellings - the proposal is for a high quality, traditional design in keeping with the local vernacular, and reflecting local architectural character.
- Materials for the new dwellings would be determined in detail as part of a condition on planning approval, but would be traditional and locally appropriate, and include plain clay tiles or slate for the roofs, red or yellow stock bricks for elevations, weatherboarding, traditional window styles in painted softwood and design features such as projecting gables, bay windows and dormers.
- Lighting - there are no detailed lighting proposals for the development at this stage, but any new light sources would be limited as far as possible consistent with requirements for safe and secure access, and any lighting columns would be as low as possible and use full cut-off lanterns.
- The pond would be retained, with provision for vegetation thinning to allow more light to reach it as summarised below. At the detailed design stage consideration would be given to incorporating the pond into Sustainable

Drainage (SuDS) proposals for the development, providing that would result in beneficial nature conservation effects.

- Rear garden boundary fencing would generally be 1.8m high timber closeboard fencing for security where the fencing does not run along the site boundaries. Garden fencing along the site boundary would be 1.2m high timber post and rail with stockproof fencing only, with a new native species hedgerow planted inside the fence line to form the long term boundary where there is no hedge at the moment (see below).

3.3 Landscape Proposals

3.3.1 There are no detailed landscape proposals for the site at this stage, but it is presently envisaged that the main features of the landscape proposals would be:

- Retention and protection (in accordance with BS5837) during construction works of all significant perimeter trees and areas of woodland, including those along the northern, eastern and southern site boundaries. Trees within the body of the site would also be retained where possible, as indicated on the architect's drawing. Some (generally poorer quality) trees would need to be removed, together with the developing scrub and brambles in the areas proposed for built development. Non-native trees (including the line of conifers to the south west of the existing house) would also be removed, but some of the existing conifers would be retained where they help to screen views from Sharps Hill Oast.
- Provision for the ongoing management of these retained areas, by means of measures to be set out in a detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan.
- Vegetation around the pond would be selectively thinned and cut back to allow more light to reach it, and investigations would be undertaken to determine whether any other interventions (such as dredging/ silt removal) would be beneficial.
- Provision of a new amenity/ open space area on the west side of the internal access, to create a focus for arrival and a central, communal green space which most of the new houses would look out onto.
- Planting of a new native species hedgerow along part of the southern site boundary as indicated on the drawing.

- New native species tree planting within the site where space allows and within the proposed amenity area.
- The use of low front garden hedgerows to define and enclose private space around the new houses.
- Species used would be native and locally appropriate, other than for some limited areas close to the new dwellings, where more ornamental species may be used in front gardens.
- The above proposals are at the moment in outline only, and detailed proposals would be prepared as part of a planning condition on approval.

4. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1 Landscape and Visual Change

4.1.1 Before considering the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, it is important to note the following important characteristics of both it and the surrounding landscape:

- The site is within the High Weald AONB, a nationally designated and generally sensitive landscape.
- However, the site is generally well screened and enclosed to the north, east and west by existing houses and garden vegetation or by trees and woodland, and there are limited and filtered views only from the south west. The new houses would therefore not be widely visible from public areas beyond the site boundaries, and where they are partially visible they would generally be seen in the context of other houses to the west and south of the site also being present in the view.
- The site is in the countryside in planning terms, but is not in agricultural use and does not appear as part of the wider, more open landscape further to the north and west. It is an area of enclosed land (in part already developed, as a result of the existing house and its garden), set against the edge of the village and with other properties to its north, east and west. The HDA report on the site produced for TWBC noted that:

'The site does not contribute to the locally valued features and qualities recorded within the district Landscape Character Assessment'.

'The site is small scale and enclosed from the surrounding landscape. It has associations with the existing dwelling and forms part of a transitional landscape between the existing edge of Sandhurst and the wider rural landscape.'

- The proposals are for 14 well-designed new dwellings incorporating elements of local vernacular design, which would not be out of keeping with the edge of settlement context of the site and the partially settled landscape noted by the AONB, County and Borough landscape assessments.
- The materials for the new buildings would be of good quality, locally appropriate and traditional.

- The new houses, while visible in some short distance views, would not in themselves be unsightly or intrusive - houses are commonplace features of the edges of settlements, and there are existing houses already present in the area around the site. Where visible, the new houses would generally be seen in the context of existing houses already being present in the view. For these reasons, the new houses would not appear out of place on completion of the development.
- However, the site is in the countryside and also the AONB, and is presently largely undeveloped; the proposed development would extend the settlement into what is at present a largely (but not wholly) undeveloped area, so some adverse effects may be expected from its development, as would be the case for any greenfield development. The extent and nature of those effects is considered below.

4.1.2 Bearing the above in mind, the degree of landscape change brought about by the proposed development would be limited by the relatively small scale of the development and its very restricted visibility, with no significant visibility from the wider landscape of the AONB, and by the retention of substantial areas of existing trees, woodland and developing scrub around the northern, eastern and southern sides of the site. On balance, while the area of the site itself would change significantly (from being an area of disused paddocks around an existing dwelling) as a result of its development for housing, the degree of change to the local landscape brought about by the proposed development would be **low**.

Visibility

4.1.3 The current visibility of the site has been described in Section 2.4 above. The new buildings would in principle tend to add to that degree of visibility, but the areas from which the development would be visible would not significantly alter (relative to the existing site) as a result of the proposals. The visibility of the proposed development would be as follows:

- From the north there would continue to be some limited and filtered views into the northern part of the site from Queen Street as it passes the site, mainly in the winter, but the new dwellings would be set well back into the site at the top of the bank which slopes upward from the road (in a similar location to the existing dwelling), and the existing woodland strip with its partly evergreen understorey would provide an effective screen even in the winter, such that any views of the new dwellings from the road would be insignificant. There would also be some

views into the site along the widened access at the western end of the northern site boundary, but due to its curved alignment and the retained and proposed vegetation alongside it there would be no views into the body of the site, and no significant visibility of the new dwellings along the access. There would be no visibility of the development from the properties along the north side of Queen Street, which are further screened by roadside and garden vegetation, and no views from the open field to the west of those properties or from the wider landscape to the north west of the site.

- From the east there would be some filtered views of the new houses in the eastern part of the site from the rear elevations and gardens of properties along the west side of Stream Pit Lane, mainly in the winter. There would also be some views of the new houses above the roofs of those (single storey) properties from further to the east along Stream Pit Lane, which rises to the east - the existing dwelling on the site can be seen amongst the trees in these views, and the new dwellings would have a similar appearance, but would be two storeys in height and spread more widely across the view.
- From the south there would be no views from any public areas - there is no public access to the field immediately to the south of the site, and the land falls away to the south of that field, on the far side of the local ridge line.
- From the south west there would be some partial and filtered views of the upper parts of some of the new dwellings on the site through or above intervening vegetation, mainly in the winter, from the public footpath as it rises up the local ridge line. In these views the properties to the west of the site can be seen to varying degrees, and the roofs of some of the recently constructed houses to the south of the site at the end of Old Orchard can also be seen through the trees in the winter.
- From the west there would be some views of the new dwellings in the western part of the site from some of the upper floor windows of the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast, above the tall conifer boundary hedge, but no significant views from any further to the west, as they are screened by the building and curtilage vegetation of Sharps Hill Oast, though there would be some limited views to the new dwellings in the south western corner of the site from upper floor windows of Bayford House.

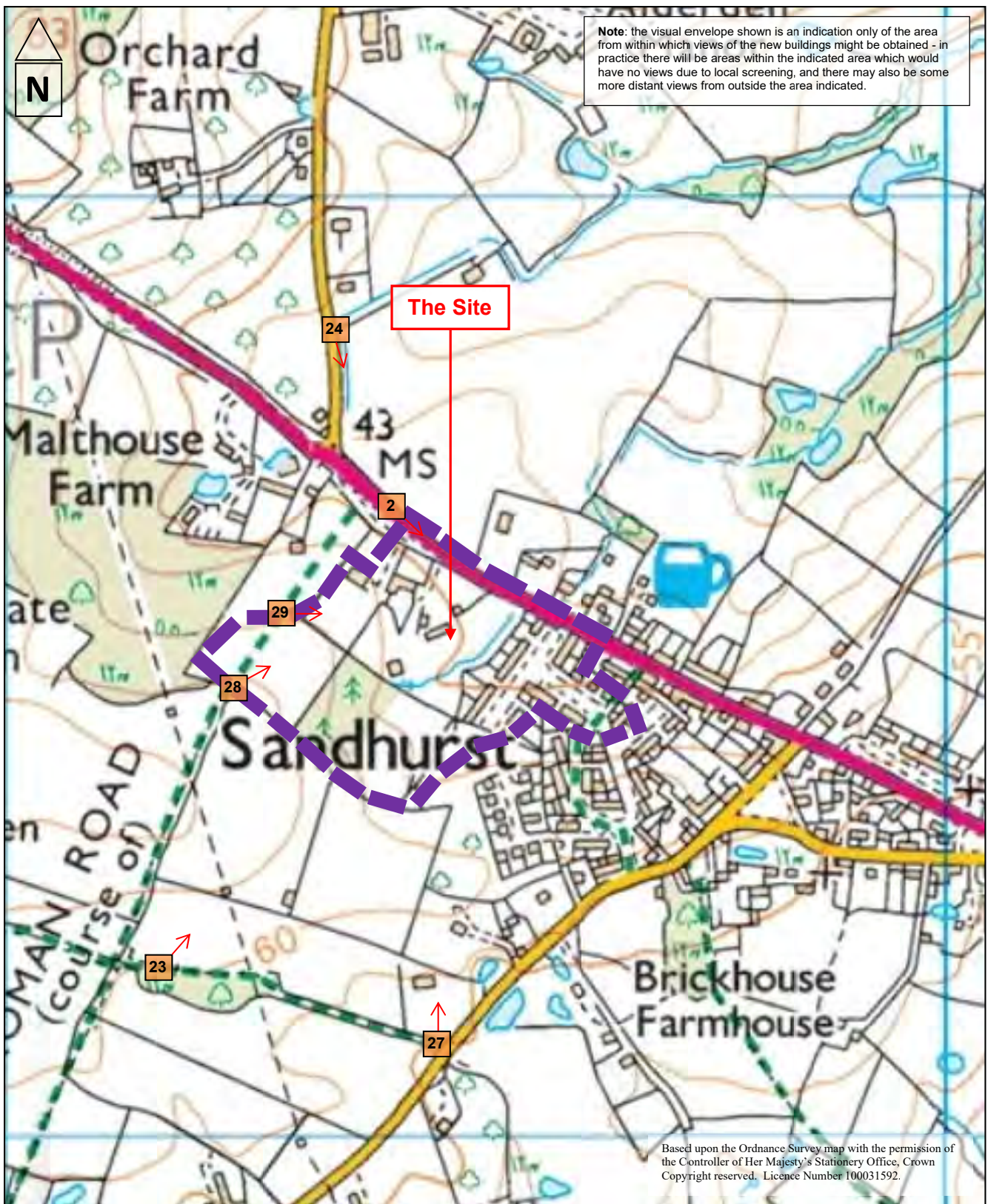
4.1.4 In general, the new dwellings would be visible from a very limited area only, with the most significant visibility in private views from properties close to the site to the east and west, and no significant presence of the new dwellings in public views other than from a


short stretch of Stream Pit Lane to the east. Where seen, the new houses on the site would generally be seen in the context of other houses along the edge of the settlement also being present within the view - the new dwellings would not appear discordant or out of place. Visibility would in general be limited to areas which already have some views of the existing houses around the site, or private views from those properties (see Figure 3). This conclusion differs to some extent from the views expressed by the Inspector for the previous appeal on the site in that he expressed concern about potential visibility from Queen Street and the public footpath to the south west, but the proposals are now different, and this assessment has shown that there would in fact be no significant visibility from those areas.


4.2 Landscape and Visual Effects

Landscape Effects

- 4.2.1 The landscape of and around the site has been assessed as of low to medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed. The degree of change brought about by the development would be low. With reference to the criteria set out in Appendix A, the anticipated overall effects on the landscape immediately around the site would therefore be **slight adverse** at their greatest, in the winter soon after completion. Effects in the summer and over time as the proposed planting matures would be at a lower level, and would be **insignificant**, as the proposals would not be discordant, would have limited effects on views, could be effectively mitigated over time by the proposed planting and would (see below) not have any significant effects on the wider AONB landscape.
- 4.2.2 The above initial effects have been categorised as adverse, as there would be some inevitable and in-principle harm as a result of the introduction of new buildings into what is presently a largely undeveloped site, but it should be noted that the new houses would not in themselves be unsightly or intrusive, and there would also be some localised benefits as a result of the improved management of the woodland areas and pond and the new perimeter planting.
- 4.2.3 The area over which these effects would be experienced is very limited - there would be no significant views, and no significant effects, beyond the area of the site itself, some of the existing properties along Stream Pit Lane (and also the road itself) to the east, the field to the south (which has no public access) and the field to the south west and a short stretch of the public footpath which runs across it - there would be no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB.



 Approx. extent of visual envelope

 Photograph viewpoint and direction of view.
See Figure 2 for remaining viewpoints

SHARPS HILL FARM, QUEEN STREET, SANDHURST

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Not to Scale

Effects on the High Weald AONB

- 4.2.4 The above assessment has shown that there would be some low level and localised effects on the landscape around the site, and that these would decline over time. The AONB is not a remote or unsettled landscape, and the development would represent a small incremental extension to the settlement of Sandhurst, itself entirely within the AONB. While there would be some low level and localised adverse landscape effects as a result of the development of a largely greenfield site, there would be no significant harm to the wider AONB landscape or to the special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty or landscape character of the AONB - the special qualities include *'dispersed historic settlement, ancient routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws, and small irregularly shaped fields'*, and the five components of the AONB character are stated in the Management Plan to be geology, landform, water systems and climate, settlement, routeways, woodland and field and heath.
- 4.2.5 The proposed development would not lead to any harm in those respects, and in terms of settlement the AONB Management Plan does include as part of its vision *'allowing for appropriate housing and economic needs of thriving communities and the land-based sector without compromising the characteristic historic settlement pattern.'* The Management Plan clearly recognises the need for new housing within the AONB, and the question therefore arises as to whether the proposal would compromise that settlement pattern. It could be argued that any new dwelling would change the settlement pattern in detail, as it would by definition involve an addition or extension to a settlement, or a new isolated dwelling. In this case the proposal is for a modest extension of the settlement to the west, into an area which is already partly developed and contains one dwelling, with other existing dwellings further to its west, so while the existing extent of the settlement would change in detail, the settlement pattern would not be compromised in any significant way.
- 4.2.6 Considering the objectives of the Management Plan in more detail, and using the assessment template set out in the advice note discussed in Section 2.3 above, the effects of the development would be as set out in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Assessment Against AONB Management Plan Objectives

Objective	Effects	Opportunities/ Mitigation
S1: To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.	The new dwellings within the site would have some limited views (until the proposed planting matures) and a sense of connection with the countryside to the south, but in general the site is enclosed and separated from the wider surrounding landscape. Access to the countryside would be unaffected.	The new buildings could utilise some elements of locally sourced timber in their construction, and could also include fireplaces/ log burners, with provision in the design for outdoor log storage.
S2: To protect the historic pattern of settlement.	The development would lead to a minor increase in the size of the settlement and its extension to the west along the south side of Queen Street, but there are already some houses along the north side of the road at this point and one dwelling within the site, so any change would not be great.	The proposed retention of trees and new planting along the southern side of the site could contribute to forming a clear and robust southern edge to the settlement at this point.
S3: To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald.	This would be largely a matter for detailed design, and could be controlled by an appropriate planning condition. There is a variety of built form in the existing properties adjacent to the site, and the better quality existing houses could serve as a benchmark for the detailed design.	Detailed design and choice of materials could utilise traditional local features and materials.
FH1: To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.	The site is not (and has not recently been) in agricultural use, so there would be no effects in these terms.	The small increase in local population would assist to a degree with potential demand for local produce.
FH2: To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.	The proposals would not change the existing field pattern, as the development would be contained within existing boundaries.	The site boundary to the south would be reinforced with new native species hedgerow planting.
FH3: To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.	There would be no significant adverse effects in terms of ecology, and some localised benefits over time as a result of the management of the woodland areas and pond and the proposed planting.	Proposals are in outline at the moment, but would include new tree and hedgerow planting, and provision for the future management of those new areas in addition to the existing woodland and other vegetation around the site, as well as management of the pond.
FH4: To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.	No known archaeological features would be affected. The site is within around 170m of the Sandhurst Conservation Area but the development would have no effects upon it.	The detailed design of the new houses could reflect some aspects of local vernacular design.

Notes:

1. The above is based on the Assessment Template set out in the AONB Unit Advice Note on Legislation and Planning.
2. See Section 2.3 for further details of the AONB Management Plan and Objectives.

4.2.7 The Management Plan also advises that landscape and visual assessments should distinguish between landscape impact at an AONB scale by reference to the Management Plan, and impact on local landscape character. Assessment of the Management Plan objectives has been set out in the above table, and any impacts at the scale of the AONB would be insignificant. Effects on local landscape character are set out in Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 above.

4.2.8 In summary, while there would be some inevitable (but low level and localised) landscape effects on the site and the area immediately around it, arising from the development of a presently largely undeveloped site, there would be no significant effects on the wider landscape of the AONB to the north and west or upon the character of the AONB - there would be some very limited landscape harm within the AONB, but that would not amount to harm to the special qualities of the AONB.

Visual Effects

4.2.9 Landscape effects are those affecting the landscape as a resource, while visual effects are those affecting a specific visual receptor. Visual receptors are normally taken to be people in their homes or in publicly accessible points, or moving along public highways or footpaths. Effects on receptors around the site would be as set out below:

- Properties to the east - there would be some short distance but filtered views of the new dwellings in the eastern part of the site from the rear windows and gardens of 4 or 5 properties along the western side of Stream Pit Lane - these properties already have some views of the existing dwelling on the site. The new dwellings would be partially visible through the intervening trees and above rear garden fences, and there would be low or medium degrees of change for these receptors of high sensitivity, depending on localised screening and the angle of view, resulting in **moderate to high adverse visual effects** for two of these properties and **moderate adverse effects** for the remainder. There would also be some much more limited and oblique views of the roofs of the new dwellings from 3 or 4 properties further to the east along Stream Pit Lane which are mainly oriented to the north or south (and not towards the site), and effects here would be no more than **slight adverse**.
- Properties to the west - Sharps Hill Oast adjoins the site to the west, with Bayford House further to the west. There would be some views of the new dwellings in the western part of the site from some of the upper floor windows of the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast, above the tall conifer boundary hedge, and possibly also some views of the roof only of the northernmost of the three dwellings in the western corner of the site from ground floor windows. There would be a low to medium degree of change for this receptor of medium to high sensitivity, resulting in **moderate adverse visual effects**. There would be some limited and oblique views of some of the new dwellings in the southwestern corner of the site from upper floor windows of Bayford House, which is further to the west and largely screened from the site by the building and curtilage vegetation of Sharps Hill Oast and the vegetation along the western site boundary. There would

therefore be **slight adverse effects** for this receptor of medium to high sensitivity.

- Public Rights of Way - there would be some partial and filtered views of the upper parts of some of the new dwellings in the southern part of the site through or above intervening vegetation from a short stretch of the public footpath which runs to the south west from Queen Street, as it rises up the local ridge line. In these views the properties to the west of the site can already be seen to varying degrees, and the roofs of some of the recently constructed houses to the south of the site at the end of Old Orchard can also be seen through the trees in the winter, so the change in the view would be negligible, resulting in **slight to moderate adverse visual effects** on receptors of high sensitivity, in the winter and for a short stretch of the route only.
- Local roads - there would be no significant views of the new dwellings on the site from Queen Street as it passes the site, due to the screening effects of the woodland vegetation and change in levels along the northern side of the site. There would also be no significant views of the dwellings along the widened access, due to its curved alignment and the retained and proposed vegetation alongside it. Non-motorised users of Queen Street would be of medium sensitivity, with motorised users of low sensitivity, but in either case the degree of change would be negligible, resulting in **insignificant visual effects**. There would also be some views for people moving to the west along the western part of Stream Pit Lane, above the houses on the western side of the north-south aligned section of that road. There would be a low degree of change for receptors of medium sensitivity, resulting in **slight to moderate adverse visual effects**.

4.2.10 As discussed for landscape effects, the above visual effects are those which would be experienced soon after completion of the development, and the effects would be expected to decrease over time.

4.2.11 In terms of the overall visual amenity of the area around the site, there would be limited effects only as the site is generally well screened and the development would not be discordant, so overall effects would be **insignificant**.

4.3 Effects During Construction

4.3.1 The above assessment of effects has been of the completed development. There may also be some additional effects during the construction stage, arising from the presence and movement of construction equipment and the exposure of soil during earthworks.

However, most of the construction activity would be screened by the woodland, trees and other vegetation around the site, and any additional effects would be for a limited duration only.

4.4 Night Time Effects

4.4.1 The above assessment of effects has been concerned only with those which would occur during the day. There would also be some effects at night, as the proposals would introduce some new light sources. However, there are already some low key light sources within and around the site, and the new development would not represent a significant increase in the amount of lighting visible from the wider landscape of the AONB. Night time landscape and visual effects would therefore be at roughly the same level as those set out above for the day time.

4.5 Planning Policy

4.5.1 Most of the planning policies set out in Section 2 seek as a minimum to prevent significant harm, and to provide enhancement where possible. It therefore follows that, as some low level and localised landscape harm would result from the proposed development, there would be potential for some conflict with the policies. Relevant policies are considered below, together with an analysis of whether or not the proposed development would be in conflict with them:

National Policies

4.5.2 There would be a low level and partial conflict with those parts of the NPPF which seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment, as some adverse landscape effects have been identified - a degree of landscape harm is largely inevitable for development on any largely greenfield site. However, the harm would be at a low level (initially slight adverse in the winter but insignificant in the summer), would affect a very limited area around the site, and would be minimised by the design of the development and by the landscape proposals, which would reduce the anticipated effects over time. There would therefore be no significant conflict with Paragraphs 174 and 176 of the NPPF, as the proposed development would not lead to any significant harm in respect of the special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty or landscape character of the AONB.

4.5.3 Paragraph 177 of the NPPF relates to major development within designated areas including AONBs - the question of whether the proposed development would qualify as 'major' in these terms is primarily a planning matter, but it can be noted that the TWBC planning officer's report for the previously refused application (for up to 16 dwellings) on

the site concluded (in its paragraph 10.41) that *'the proposed development does not amount to 'major' development in terms of [as then numbered] Paragraph 172 of the NPPF*.

Local Plan Policies

- 4.5.4 Policy EN1 sets out a series of criteria which must be met by all development proposals. The proposed development would meet these criteria, and there would be no conflict.
- 4.5.5 Policy EN25 sets out further criteria to be met by proposals outside the defined Limits to Built Development. Of these criteria, numbers 3 and 4 would be met, as there would be no significant effects in terms of the character of rural lanes and there is no existing building on the site suitable for conversion. There would be some potential for conflict with criteria 1 and 2, depending on whether the landscape effects are considered to be 'minimal' and whether they are considered to affect the setting of the settlement. In general, the landscape effects identified are at a very low level and are localised, and would also decrease over time, so could reasonably be regarded as minimal. There would be no harm in terms of the landscape setting of Sandhurst, as the site is well screened and has no significant visibility in views towards the settlement. Criterion number 5 does not apply.

Core Strategy Policies

- 4.5.6 Turning to the relevant Core Strategy policies, the proposals would relate to them as follows:
- Core Policy 4 seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape in accordance with the Borough Landscape Character Assessment. The proposals would not lead to any significant landscape harm and would provide some localised longer term benefits, so there would be no significant conflict.
 - Core Policy 14 again seeks to maintain the character and quality of the countryside, and to preserve and enhance the balance between built and natural. The proposal would therefore not be in significant conflict with this policy.
- 4.5.7 While not policy as such, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment does set out guidance in the form of a Landscape Strategy for each character area, and that for the Hawkhurst Wooded Farmland character area includes the following:

- ‘1) *Control further development proposals which could adversely affect the rural character of the landscape and tip the scales to a more urban character.*
- 2) *Limit new large-scale development wherever possible because it is rare within the area and has the potential to be highly visible on the ridge lines and intrusive within the quieter picturesque ghyll wooded valleys.*
- 3) *Avoid deterioration of the currently high quality built environment and vernacular heritage, particularly proximate to Hawkhurst.*
- 4) *Recognise the profile of the area as a linkway for recreational users and seek appropriate improvements through, for example, Section 106 agreements as appropriate.’*

4.5.8 This assessment has found that there would be no significant or long-lasting adverse effects on local landscape character, and the development would not be large scale or on a ridge line or within a ghyll valley. There would be no effects on the high quality built environment of the Sandhurst Conservation Area, which is around 170m to the east of the site and separated from it by modern residential development, and no effects on recreational use.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This report has been prepared in connection with the proposed development of 14 new dwellings on a site to the south of Queen Street, in Sandhurst, Kent. The site lies within the administrative area of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and is outside the Limits to Built Development as shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map, but adjacent to the edge of the settlement to the east, where it abuts the rear gardens of properties in Stream Pit Lane. The site is therefore in the countryside in planning terms, though it is also the subject of a draft allocation for residential development of 10 to 15 dwellings under draft Policy AL/SA2 of the October 2021 Submission Draft Local Plan.
- 5.2 The site forms the residential curtilage of the detached property of Sharps Hill Farm, together with two former paddocks which are now disused and becoming overgrown by developing scrubby woodland, and strips of woodland along the eastern and northern site boundaries. Access to the development would be from Queen Street, which runs along the northern site boundary, by means of the existing access to Sharps Hill Farm.
- 5.3 The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which washes over the settlement of Sandhurst and includes all of the houses within it. The site is around 170m from the Sandhurst Conservation Area, and separated from it by modern development along the south side of Queen Street. There are two Listed Buildings and also a Listed milestone to the west of the site along Queen Street.
- 5.4 An application for development of up to 31 dwellings on the site was made in May 2019, with the number of dwellings subsequently revised downwards (to 'up to 16') in discussion with TWBC officers. The application was recommended for approval by officers but refused by the Planning Committee in February 2021. A subsequent appeal was dismissed in November 2021.
- 5.5 The proposals have now been revised as part of an iterative process, with this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared in parallel with the revised proposals, such that the LVIA has informed the proposals, with the aim of securing the most appropriate development scale and form and minimising any adverse landscape and visual effects, and the LVIA has then assessed the likely effects of the proposals. The revised proposals have therefore been landscape-led in that the layout has been developed by the architect in accordance with a number of recommendations made by the landscape architect. The proposals have also been developed with regard to comments on the previous application made by TWBC's Landscape and Biodiversity Officer, and in accordance with the recommendations for the site set out in the report by

TWBC's landscape consultants HDA.

- 5.6 This report provides information on the character and quality of the landscape of and around the site and the likely landscape and visual effects which would result from the proposed development, in order to inform TWBC and assist with their further consideration of the proposed allocation of the site for residential development.
- 5.7 Landscape assessments for this area at all scales note the presence of built development and the importance of traditional building styles and materials to local landscape character. The site itself is generally screened and separated from the wider landscape around it, and has an enclosed, partly settled character (with one dwelling and a number of stables or field shelters within it) - the site is outside the settlement boundary but does not appear as part of the countryside in terms of its character or land use.
- 5.8 The site has been assessed as of overall medium landscape quality and value because, though it lies within the overall very high quality landscape of the AONB, it is currently disused and the former paddocks are overgrown with brambles and scrub, it is enclosed by a band of woodland along the busy A268 to the north, by the edge of the settlement to the east and by adjoining dwellings to the west, and it has no significant visual connection with the wider AONB landscape.
- 5.9 Landscape sensitivity is judged according to the type of development proposed. The wider landscape around the site is highly sensitive, but the site itself would be of lower sensitivity to a limited and contained development of the type proposed - the site is enclosed by trees and woodland, a busy road, the edge of the settlement, other detached properties and rising ground, with no significant visibility from the wider AONB landscape. Where it may be partially visible, the new development would be seen in the context of existing houses within and to the west of the village. The site has therefore been assessed as of low to medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed.
- 5.10 The main differences between the development as currently proposed and that previously refused are that: the proposed number of dwellings has now been reduced to 14, the built development is now set back further to the south into the site enabling full retention of the woodland belt alongside Queen Street, three dwellings are now proposed in the south western part of the site, the proposed layout is now more organic and sympathetic, the layout allows an increased set-back from the adjoining property of Sharps Hill Oast with an area of open space adjoining the northern part of the western site boundary, significant areas of existing woodland, trees and developing scrub are proposed to be retained along the northern, eastern (including the watercourse and pond) and southern sides of the site and these areas would also be managed to maximise their nature conservation interest and long term viability, more of the existing

trees within the site are now proposed to be retained, there are now clearer proposals for the location and extent of new tree and hedgerow planting, and finally this LVIA has now been prepared to accompany the proposals - no full or detailed assessment was submitted with the previous application or was available to the Inspector determining the appeal.

- 5.11 The change brought about by the proposed development would be limited by the relatively small scale of the development and its very restricted visibility, with no significant visibility from the wider landscape of the AONB, and by the retention of substantial areas of existing trees, woodland and developing scrub around the northern, eastern and southern sides of the site. On balance, while the area of the site itself would change significantly (from being an area of disused paddocks around an existing dwelling) as a result of its development for housing, the degree of change to the local landscape brought about by the proposed development would be low.
- 5.12 The anticipated overall effects on the local landscape would be slight adverse at their greatest, in the winter soon after completion. Effects in the summer and over time as the proposed planting matures would be at a lower level, and would be insignificant, as the proposals would not be discordant within the edge of settlement context, would have limited effects on views, could be effectively mitigated over time by the proposed planting and would have no significant effects on the wider AONB landscape.
- 5.13 The AONB is not a remote or unsettled landscape, and the development would represent a small incremental extension to the settlement of Sandhurst, itself entirely within the AONB. While there would be some low level and localised adverse landscape effects as a result of the development of a largely greenfield site, there would be no significant harm to the wider AONB landscape or to the special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty or landscape character of the AONB - the special qualities include *'dispersed historic settlement, ancient routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws, and small irregularly shaped fields'*, and the five components of the AONB character are stated in the Management Plan to be geology, landform, water systems and climate, settlement, routeways, woodland and field and heath - the proposed development would not lead to any harm in those respects.
- 5.14 In terms of settlement the AONB Management Plan does include as part of its vision *'allowing for appropriate housing and economic needs of thriving communities and the land-based sector without compromising the characteristic historic settlement pattern.'* The Management Plan clearly recognises the need for new housing within the AONB, and the question therefore arises as to whether the proposal would compromise that settlement pattern. It could be argued that any new dwelling would change the settlement pattern in detail, as it would by definition involve an addition or extension to a

settlement, or a new isolated dwelling. In this case the proposal is for a modest extension of the settlement to the west, into an area which is already partly developed and contains one dwelling, with other existing dwellings further to its west, so while the existing extent of the settlement would change in detail, the settlement pattern would not be compromised in any significant way.

- 5.15 There would be some visual effects for the adjacent properties to the east in Stream Pit Lane and for Sharps Hill Oast to the west, and also lower level effects for users of a short stretch of the public footpath which runs up the slope to the south west of the site. There would be no other significant visual effects, and all of the effects would be at a lower level in the summer and would decrease over time as the proposed planting grows up.
- 5.16 In policy terms, while there would be some inevitable, in principle harm in respect of some landscape protection policies, as would tend be the case for any proposed development of a largely greenfield site, that harm would be at a low level, would affect a very limited area around the site, and would be minimised by the design of the development and by the landscape proposals, which would reduce the anticipated effects over time. These low level adverse effects and the limited policy conflict that they involve would need to be weighed against the benefits of the proposals in providing new housing in the overall planning balance.

1 General

- 1.1 In landscape and visual assessments, a distinction is normally drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape, irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with public access). Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects (if, for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints), or few landscape effects but significant visual effects (if, for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties).
- 1.2 The core methodology followed is that set out in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment', produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and the Landscape Institute ('the GLVIA', 1995, revised 2002 and 2013). The document 'Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002' (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage) also stresses the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors. This document notes that '*Landscape is about the relationship between people and place.*'
- 1.3 Further information is set out in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', October 2014 (Christine Tudor, Natural England) to which reference is also made. This paper notes that 'Landscape' is defined in the European Landscape Convention as: '*Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.*'
- 1.4 The GLVIA guidance is on the principles and process of assessment, and stresses that the detailed approach adopted should be appropriate to the task in hand. It notes that professional judgement is at the core of LVIA, and that while some change can be quantified (for example the number of trees which may be lost), '*much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements*' (GLVIA, section 2.23), and the Landscape Institute's Technical Committee has advised that the 2013 revision of the GLVIA '*places greater emphasis on professional judgement and less emphasis on a formulaic approach*'. The judgements made as part of the assessment were based on the tables set out below.
- 1.5 Assessment of the baseline landscape was undertaken by means of a desk study of published information, including Ordnance Survey mapping and landscape character assessments at national, county and local scales.

2 Methodology for this Assessment

2.1 For the purposes of this assessment, the guidance set out above was generally adhered to, with the following specific refinements:

1. Landscape and visual effects were assessed in terms of the magnitude of the change brought about by the development (also referred to in the GLVIA as the '*nature of the effect*', though as effects are the end product of the assessment, rather than one of the inputs to it, the term change is used to avoid confusion) and also the sensitivity of the resource affected (also referred to in the GLVIA as the '*nature of the receptor*'). There is some confusion in the guidance about the term 'impact'; the overall process is known as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, but what is actually assessed is more usually referred to as effects, and the GLVIA does also use the word 'impact' to mean the action being taken, or the magnitude of change. In order to avoid this source of confusion, this assessment does not use the word 'impact', but instead refers to the **magnitude of change** caused by the development, which results (in combination with the sensitivity of the resource affected) in landscape and visual **effects**.
2. Landscape and visual effects have been considered in terms of whether they are direct or indirect, short term/temporary or long term/permanent, and beneficial or adverse. It is also important to consider the area over which the effects may be felt, and to note that effects will generally tend to decline with distance from the development in question, so the scale at which the judgement is made will affect the level of significance of the effects.
3. The **magnitude of change** will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change. It will also vary with factors such as the scale and nature of the proposed development, the proportion of the view that would be occupied by the development, whether the view is clear and open, or partial and/or filtered, the duration and nature of the change (e.g. temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous etc), whether the view would focus on the proposed development or whether the development would be incidental in the view, and the nature of the existing view (e.g. whether it contains existing detracting or intrusive elements).
4. In terms of **sensitivity**, residential properties were taken to be of high sensitivity in general, although this can vary with the degree of openness of their view (see Table 7 below). Landscapes which carry a landscape quality designation and which are otherwise attractive or unspoilt will in general be more sensitive, while those which are less attractive or already affected by significant visual detractors and disturbance will be generally less sensitive (see Table 4 below).
5. For both landscape and visual effects, the assessment is of the development **complete with the proposed mitigation measures**. Those measures are part of the proposed development, and there has therefore been no assessment of a hypothetical,

unmitigated development. However, as the mitigation measures involve planting, they will take time to become effective, and the assessment therefore makes allowance for this, considering an initial scenario in the winter of the first year after planting and then a future scenario where the planting has begun to mature.

6. The GLVIA suggests in section 3.32 that an assessment should distinguish between significant and non-significant effects (based on the fact that the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 require the assessment of '*direct and indirect significant effects*' on the environment). Where an assessment forms part of a wider EIA and is summarised in an Environmental Statement (ES), that judgment may be for the editor of the ES to make, but in an assessment which is not part of an EIA, it should be noted that the GLVIA makes it clear in section 3.34 that '*effects not considered to be significant will not be completely disregarded*', and therefore adverse landscape and visual effects of any level (other than no effect or negligible) should be carried forwards by the decision maker into the overall planning balance, as they still constitute harm (or benefit).

LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

7. **Landscape change** was categorised as shown in Table 1 below, where each level (other than no change) can be either beneficial or adverse:

Table 1 ~ Magnitude of Landscape Change	
Category	Definition
No change	No loss or alteration of key landscape characteristics, features or elements.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration (or improvement, restoration or addition) to one or more key landscape characteristics, features or elements.
Low	Minor loss of or alteration (or improvement, restoration or addition) to one or more key landscape characteristics, features or elements.
Medium	Partial loss of or damage (or improvement, restoration or addition) to key characteristics, features or elements.
High	Total or widespread loss of, or severe damage (or major improvement, restoration or addition) to key characteristics, features or elements.

8. **Landscape quality** was judged on site by an experienced assessor, with reference to the criteria shown in Table 2 below. **Landscape condition** (i.e. the physical state of the landscape, including its intactness and the condition of individual landscape elements) can have a bearing on landscape quality, as indicated.

Table 2 ~ Criteria for Determining Landscape Quality	
Category	Typical Criteria ¹
Very high quality	National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty standard - the area will usually (though not necessarily, especially for small areas) be so designated. It is also possible that some parts of designated areas may be of locally lower quality, if affected by detractors. Will generally be a landscape in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements.
High quality	Attractive landscape, usually with a strong sense of place, varied topography and distinctive landscape or historic features, and few visual detractors. Will generally be a landscape in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements.
Medium quality	Pleasant landscape with few detractors but with no particularly distinctive qualities. Will generally be a landscape in medium condition, with some intact elements.
Low quality	Unattractive or degraded landscape, affected by visual detractors. Will generally be a landscape in poor condition, with few intact elements.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given quality - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

9. The quality of the landscape is one element which goes into the consideration of **landscape value**, which also takes account of other factors, including rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreational value and perceptual aspects such as wildness or tranquillity - these are some of the factors listed for the consideration of landscape value in Box 5.1 of the GLVIA on its page 84.

10. Box 5.1 has come to be used as a default method for determining landscape value, and is frequently referenced. However, it should be noted that it appears in the GLVIA under the heading of 'Undesignated landscapes', and also predates the February 2019 NPPF, which states that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced '*in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan*'. This shows that landscapes which have statutory protection (i.e. AONBs and National Parks) or an identified quality in the development plan should be regarded as valued, and secondly that the protection to be afforded to valued landscapes will vary with their status, with statutorily protected landscapes receiving the highest level of protection, and landscapes recognised and protected by development plan policies valued and protected at a lower level, but still above that of ordinary countryside. It is also often useful to include some consideration of the function that an area of landscape may have in determining its value, for example if it plays a role in the separation and setting of settlements.

11. The GLVIA considers landscape value as a measure to be assessed in association with landscape character, in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. It is defined in the glossary of the GLVIA as:

'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.'

Landscape value was judged on site by an experienced assessor, with reference to the above discussion and the criteria shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 ~ Criteria for Determining Landscape Value	
Category	Typical Criteria ¹
Very High Value	Often very high quality landscapes, usually in good condition, with intact and distinctive elements. Will often (though not necessarily, especially for small areas) be a statutorily designated landscape with strong scenic qualities. May have significant recreational value at national or regional scale and include recognised and/or popular viewpoints. May have a strong functional element, for example in providing an open gap between settlements. May also be a rare landscape type, or one with strong wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.
High Value	Often high quality landscapes, usually in good condition, with some intact and distinctive elements. Will sometimes be a designated landscape with strong scenic qualities. May have significant recreational value at a local scale and include some recognised and/or popular viewpoints. May be a rare landscape type, or one with some wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections. May be a landscape of limited quality, but with a strong functional element, for example in providing an open gap between settlements.
Medium Value	Often pleasant, medium quality landscapes, usually in reasonable condition, with some intact or distinctive elements. Unlikely to be a statutorily or locally designated landscape, but may have some localised scenic qualities. May have some recreational value at a local scale or include some local viewpoints, or have a functional role, for example in providing an open gap between settlements. May have some wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.
Low Value	Likely to be a lower quality landscape, usually in poor condition, with few intact or distinctive elements. Likely to have limited recreational value at a local scale with no significant viewpoints. Few if any wildlife, cultural or other interests or connections.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given value - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

12. The assessment of landscape value is then carried forward into the determination of landscape sensitivity.

13. **Landscape sensitivity** relates to the ability of the landscape to accommodate change of the type and scale proposed without adverse effects on its character (i.e. its susceptibility to change), and also to the value of the landscape concerned. As noted in the GLVIA (section 5.39), sensitivity is *'specific to the particular project or development that is being proposed and to the location in question'*. Susceptibility is defined in the GLVIA as *'The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.'* Susceptibility is judged according to the criteria set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4 ~ Criteria for Determining Landscape Susceptibility	
Category	Typical Criteria ¹
High Susceptibility	A landscape with a low capacity to accommodate change, either because the change in question would be large scale and/ or out of character with the existing landscape, or because the landscape has little capacity to accept or absorb that change which would be poorly screened and readily visible. The change would conflict with the existing character of the landscape.
Medium Susceptibility	A landscape with a moderate capacity to accommodate change, either because the change in question would be generally in scale and/ or character with the existing landscape, or because the landscape has some capacity to accept or absorb that change, which would be partially screened. The change would conflict with the existing character of the landscape to some extent.
Low Susceptibility	A landscape with a high capacity to accommodate change, either because the change in question would be small scale and/ or in keeping with the existing landscape, or because the landscape has a high capacity to accept or absorb that change which would be well screened. The change would complement the existing character of the landscape.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given level of susceptibility - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

14. The judgement as to sensitivity combines judgements on susceptibility and value. A landscape of high sensitivity will tend to be one with a low ability to accommodate change and a high value, and vice versa. Landscape sensitivity was judged according to the criteria set out in Table 5 below, taking into account factors such as the presence or absence of designations for quality and the nature of the proposed change.

Table 5 ~ Criteria for Determining Landscape Sensitivity	
Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
Very High	<p>A landscape with a very low ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to a significant loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality.</p> <p>Development of the type proposed would be discordant and prominent.</p> <p>Will normally occur in a landscape of very high or high quality or value.</p>
High	<p>A landscape with limited ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to some loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality.</p> <p>Development of the type proposed would be discordant and visible.</p> <p>Will normally occur in a landscape of high quality or value, but can also occur where the landscape is of lower quality but where the type of development proposed would be significantly out of character.</p>
Medium	<p>A landscape with reasonable ability to accommodate change. Change would lead to a limited loss of some features or elements, resulting in some loss of character and quality.</p> <p>Development of the type proposed would be visible but would not be especially discordant.</p> <p>Will normally occur in a landscape of medium quality or value, a low quality/value landscape which is particularly sensitive to the type of change proposed, or a high quality/value landscape which is well suited to accommodate change of the type proposed.</p>
Low	<p>A landscape with good ability to accommodate change. Change would not lead to a significant loss of features or elements, and there would be no significant loss of character or quality.</p> <p>Development of the type proposed would not be readily be visible or would not be discordant.</p> <p>Will normally occur in a landscape of low quality or value.</p>

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of landscapes which may be judged to be of the given sensitivity - they are not intended to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

15. **Landscape effects** were determined according to the interaction between magnitude of change and sensitivity, as summarised in Table 6 below. As noted in the GLVIA (section 5.55):

'... susceptibility to change and value can be combined into an assessment of sensitivity for each receptor, and size/scale, geographical extent and duration and reversibility can be combined into an assessment of magnitude for each effect [i.e. magnitude of change]. Magnitude and sensitivity can then be combined to assess overall significance.'

Table 6 ~ Significance Criteria for Landscape Effects

Significance	Typical Criteria ¹
No Effect	The proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape • incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure that the scheme will blend in well with the surrounding landscape • avoid being visually intrusive and adverse effects on the current level of tranquillity of the landscape • maintain existing landscape character in an area which is not a designated landscape nor vulnerable to change.
Insignificant	The proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally fit the landform and scale of the landscape • have limited effects on views • can be mitigated to a reasonable extent • avoid effects on designated landscapes.
Slight Adverse	The proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape • will impact on certain views into and across the area • cannot be completely mitigated because of the nature of the proposal or the character of the landscape • affect an area of recognised landscape quality or value • would lead to minor loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some minor new uncharacteristic elements.
Moderate Adverse	The proposals are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • out of scale or at odds with the landscape • visually intrusive and will adversely impact on the landscape • not possible to fully mitigate • will have an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or value, or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements • would lead to loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some new uncharacteristic elements.
High Adverse	The proposals are damaging to the landscape in that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are at variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape • are visually intrusive and would disrupt important views • are likely to degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting • will be damaging to a high quality or value, or highly vulnerable landscape • cannot be adequately mitigated • would lead to significant loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some significant new uncharacteristic elements.
Major Adverse	The proposals are very damaging to the landscape in that they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape • are visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views • are likely to degrade, diminish or even destroy the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting • will be substantially damaging to a high quality or value, or highly vulnerable landscape, or would fundamentally alter a less valuable landscape • cannot be adequately mitigated • would lead to extensive loss of or alteration to existing landscape features or elements, or introduce some dominant new uncharacteristic elements.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which landscape effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied in full or literally in all cases.

2. Effects in the 'Major Adverse' category are unlikely to occur with most forms of development, but the scale set out above is intended to cover all potential forms of development in all landscapes, so this category is likely to apply only where the landscape is extremely sensitive and/ or where the development is at a very large scale or of a very intrusive nature.

Table 6 ~ Significance Criteria for Landscape Effects (continued)

Significance	Typical Criteria ¹
Slight Beneficial	<p>The proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fit the landform and scale of the landscape • will improve certain views into and across the area to a limited extent • can be effectively mitigated • remove small scale unattractive or discordant features • benefit an area of recognised landscape quality or value • would introduce some minor new or restored positive and characteristic elements.
Moderate Beneficial	<p>The proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fit the landform and scale of the landscape • will improve certain views into and across the area • can be effectively mitigated • remove significant unattractive or discordant features • benefit a landscape of recognised quality or value, or enhance vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements • would introduce some new or restored positive and characteristic elements.
High Beneficial	<p>The proposals provide significant benefit to the landscape in that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are in accord with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape • will improve important views • are likely to enhance a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting • will lead to improvement to a high quality or value, or highly vulnerable landscape • need no significant mitigation • would introduce some significant new or restored positive and characteristic elements.
Major Beneficial	<p>The proposals provide very significant benefit to the landscape in that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are in accord with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape • will improve expansive and/or fine and valued views • are likely to significantly enhance a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting • will lead to substantial improvement to a high quality or value, or highly vulnerable landscape • need no mitigation • would introduce some extensive or highly significant new or restored positive and characteristic elements.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which landscape effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied in full or literally in all cases.
2. Effects in the 'Major Beneficial' category are unlikely to occur with most forms of development, but the scale set out above is intended to cover all potential forms of development in all landscapes, so this category is likely to apply only where the landscape is extremely sensitive and/ or where the development leads to some major or widespread landscape improvements.

VISUAL EFFECTS

16. For **visual** effects, the GLVIA (in section 2.20) differentiates between effects on specific views and effects on *'the general visual amenity enjoyed by people'*, which it defines as:

'The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.'

There is obviously some overlap between the two, with **visual amenity** largely being an amalgamation of a series of views. This assessment therefore considers effects on specific views, but then also goes on to consider the extent to which effects on those views may affect general visual amenity, taking into account considerations such as the number of views within which the development may be present, the magnitude of change to those views, the discordance of the development, the relative importance of those views, and also the number and importance of other views in which the development is not present.

17. In describing the nature and content of a view, the following terms may be used:
- No view - no views of the site or development.
 - Glimpse - a limited view in which the site or development forms a small part only of the overall view.
 - Partial - a clear view of part of the site or development only.
 - Oblique - a view (usually through a window from within a property) at an angle, rather than in the direct line of sight out of the window.
 - Fleeting - a transient view, usually obtained when moving, along a public right of way or transport corridor.
 - Filtered - views of the site or development which are partially screened, usually by intervening vegetation, noting the degree of screening/filtering may change with the seasons.
 - Open - a clear, unobstructed view of the site or development.
18. For the purpose of the assessment visual change was categorised as shown in Table 7 below, where each level (other than no change) can be either beneficial or adverse:

Table 7 ~ Magnitude of Visual Change	
Category	Definition
No change	No discernible change.
Negligible	The development would be discernible but of no real significance - the character of the view would not materially change. The development may be present in the view, but not discordant.
Low	The development would cause a perceptible deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be discordant (or would add a positive element to the view), but not to a significant extent.
Medium	The development would cause an obvious deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be an obvious discordant (or positive) feature of the view, and/or would occupy a significant proportion of the view.
High	The development would cause a dominant deterioration (or improvement) in existing views. The development would be a dominant discordant (or positive) feature of the view, and/or would occupy the majority of the view.

19. **Sensitivity** was also taken into account in the assessment, such that a given magnitude of change would create a larger visual effect on a sensitive receptor than on one of lesser sensitivity (see Table 8 below). As discussed above for landscape sensitivity, the sensitivity of visual receptors is determined according to the susceptibility of the receptor to change and the value attached to the view in question, with higher value views being those from specific or recognised viewpoints or those from Public Rights of Way where users would be expected to be using the route with the intention of enjoying the views from it.

Table 8 ~ Criteria ¹ for Determining Visual Sensitivity	
Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
Very High	Visitors to recognised or specific viewpoints, or passing along routes through statutorily designated or very high quality landscapes where the purpose of the visit is to experience the landscape and views.
High	Residential properties ² with predominantly open views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from ground and first floors and from two or more windows of rooms in use during the day ³ . Users of Public Rights of Way with predominantly open views in sensitive or unspoilt areas. Non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside. Visitors to heritage assets where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience, or visitors to locally recognised viewpoints. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with predominantly open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside - e.g. Country Parks, National Trust or other access land etc.
Medium	Residential properties ² with views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from first floor windows only ³ , or an oblique view from one ground floor window, or may be partially obscured by garden or other intervening vegetation. Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views, in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view. Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas. Motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside.
Low	People in their place of work. Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which visual sensitivity of the given level may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied literally in all cases.
2. There is some discussion in the GLVIA as to whether private views from residential properties should be included within an LVIA, as they are a private (rather than a public) interest, but they have been included in this assessment on the basis that they are likely to matter most to local people. The appropriate weight to be applied to such views can then be determined by the decision maker.
3. When (as is usually the case) there has been no access into properties to be assessed, the assumption is made that ground floor windows are to habitable rooms in use during the day such as kitchens/dining rooms/living rooms, and that first floor rooms are bedrooms.

20. **Visual effects** were then determined according to the interaction between change and sensitivity (see Table 9 below), where effects can be either beneficial or adverse. Where the views are from a residential property, the receptor is assumed to be of high sensitivity unless otherwise stated.

Table 9 ~ Significance Criteria for Visual Effects	
Significance	Typical Criteria ¹
No Effect	No change in the view.
Insignificant	The proposals would not significantly change the view, but would still be discernible.
Slight	The proposals would cause limited deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, but would still be a noticeable element within the view, or greater deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.
Moderate	The proposals would cause some deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a sensitive receptor, or less deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be a readily discernible element in the view.
High	The proposals would cause significant deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a sensitive receptor, or less deterioration (or improvement) in a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be an obvious element in the view.
Major	The proposals would cause a high degree of change in a view from a highly sensitive receptor, and would constitute a dominant element in the view.

1. Note that the above criteria are indicators of the types of situation in which visual effects of the given level of significance may be expected - they are not intended to be definitions to be applied literally in all cases.

21. **Photographs** were taken with a digital camera with a lens that approximates to 50mm. This is similar to a normal human field of view, though this field of view is extended where a number of separate images are joined together as a panorama. Photographs were taken in February 2022, and visibility during the site visits was good (by definitions set out on the Met Office website, i.e. visibility was between 10 to 20km).

22. The Landscape Institute have produced guidance on the use of visualisations (Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals, September 2019). As its title suggests, this guidance is largely to do with how a proposed development is illustrated, but does also contain sections on baseline photography. Section 1.2.7 states that '*Photographs show the baseline conditions; visualisations show the proposed situation*', though it does then also go on to provide guidance for what it refers to as 'Type 1 Visualisations', which are in fact baseline images - 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs'. The detailed guidance for these images suggests that panoramic images should be presented at A1 size. As this guidance is extensive, and is intended for use where visualisations such as photomontages are also produced, it has been followed for this assessment in terms of its general recommendations regarding lens types, noting where images have been combined into panoramas and the use of annotations to describe the content of the photographs and the extent of the site within them, but not in terms of all of the recommendations for presentation of images. The photographs included within this assessment are intended as general representations of what can be seen from the viewpoints used, and are not a replacement for observing the site and the views on the ground - any decision maker making use of this assessment should visit the site, and the

photographs are simply an *aide-memoire* to assist consideration following a site visit, not a replacement for it.

23. A useful concept in considering the potential visual effects of a development is that of the visual envelope (or zone of visual influence, ZVI). This is the area from within which the development would be visible. Any significant visual effects will therefore be contained within this area, and land falling outside it need not be considered in terms of visual effects. The area from within which the various elements of the proposed development would be visible has, therefore, been estimated but it is possible that in practice some limited views of those elements may be obtained from more distant properties or from elevated, distant vantage points, above or through intervening vegetation, and such views are referred to where appropriate in the assessment.

APPENDIX B ~ ARCHITECT'S SITE LAYOUT

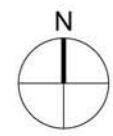
This drawing and the design are the copyright of ON Architecture Ltd only. This drawing should not be copied or reproduced without written consent.

All dimensions are to be checked on site prior to setting out and fabrication and ON Architecture Ltd should be notified of any discrepancy prior to proceeding further.

For Construction & Fabrication Purposes - Do not scale from this drawing, use only the illustrated dimensions herein. Additional dimensions are to be requested and checked directly.

Illustrated information from 3rd party consultants/specialists is shown as indicatively only. See other consultant / specialist drawings for full information and detail.

All aspects of the architectural design concerning fire performance / fire safety (whether or not illustrated / annotated) are to be considered as 'For Approval' only, irrespective of the drawing status / suitability.



Revision Note & Date		Rev. Date		Note		Amended		Checked	

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Client Details
JARVIS HOMES

Drawing Title
SKETCH SITE LAYOUT

BM Number	Scale	Date	Drawn	Checked
-	1:1000@A3	MARCH 2022	JR	RH

Drawing Status
DRAFT

Project No.	Drawing No.	Status	Revision
22.036	SK004	-	A

