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Ashford Borough Council

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL
APPRAISAL**

APRIL 2017



Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal
for 4 Potential Housing Allocation Sites, M20 Corridor
and
Land off Pluckley Road, Charing

Land Management Services Ltd

April 2017



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1. Introduction

This document has been prepared by Land Management Services Ltd. for Ashford Borough Council, in order to provide a high level assessment of the landscape character and visual amenity context of four potential housing allocation sites along the route of the M20 corridor between Ashford and Charing. This Appraisal also considers a fifth site at Pluckley Road Charing, which is the subject of a planning application for residential development (Ashford Borough Council planning application reference 17/00303/AS).

The location of each site is shown in Figure 1. The sites were visited during March 2017. Representative photographs taken during the course of the site visits are included in the individual site assessments (Sections 4 to 7 of this report). This Appraisal is set out as follows:

Section 2 sets out the principal national and local landscape policy and designations relevant to the M20 corridor. This section is relevant to all 5 sites.

Section 3 describes and the national and county landscape character context for the M20 corridor. This section is relevant to all 5 sites

Sections 4 to 7 provide site specific landscape and visual appraisals for the individual sites. This section draws on the published Ashford Landscape Character Assessment and the site assessments. Based on the assessment of the anticipated landscape and visual effects, each site is given a rating of red, amber or green:

Green: site with limited landscape and/or visual constraints

Amber: site with moderate landscape and/or visual constraints

Red: site with high landscape and/or visual constraints

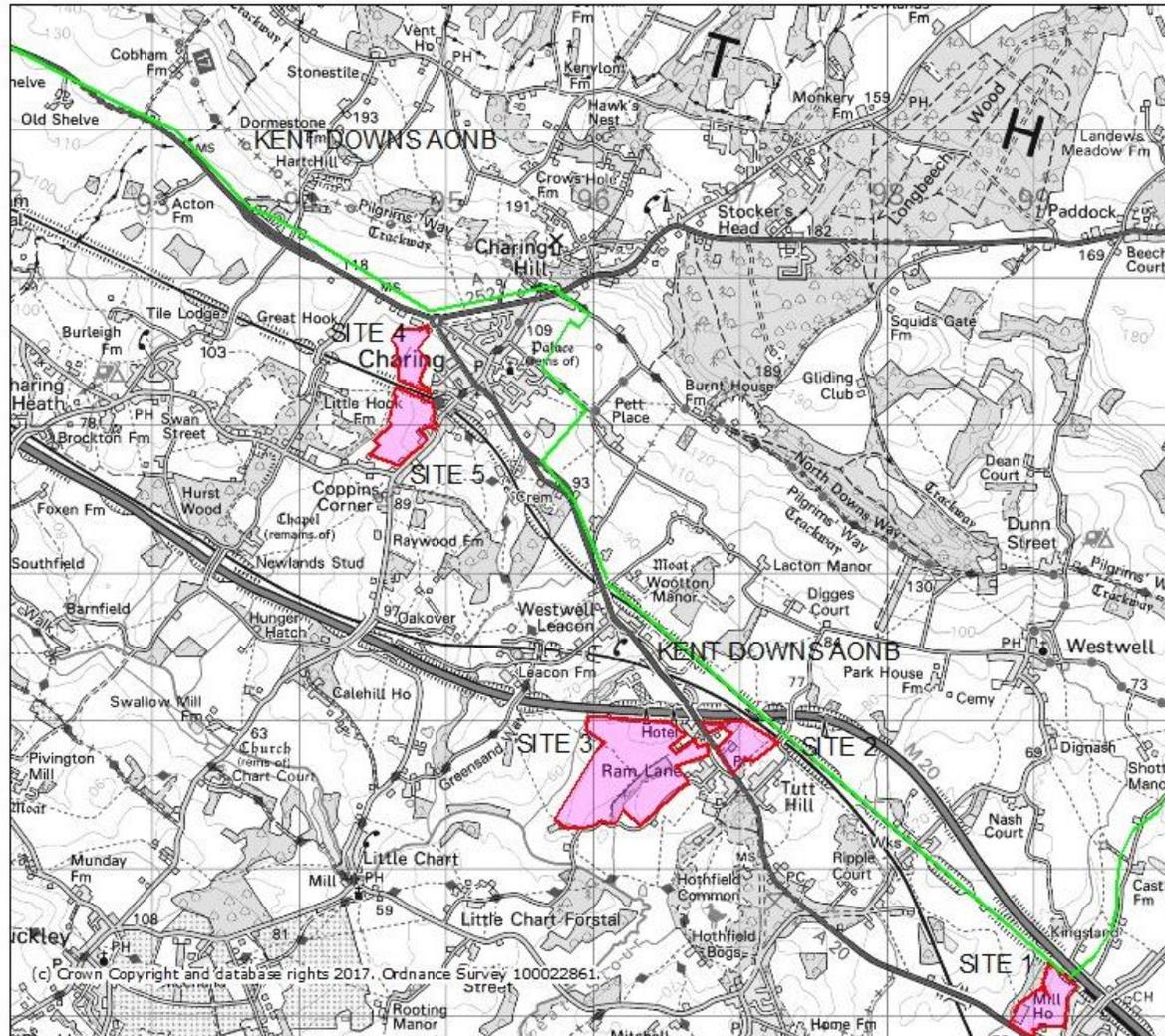


Figure 1: Location Plan– all sites

2. Landscape Policy Context

All sites fall under the jurisdiction of Ashford Borough Council. Landscape policy for the Borough is defined within a number of documents which form the current planning policy framework. The relevant documents are:

- National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2000 (saved policies)
- Ashford Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008
- Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD (adopted October 2010)

None of the sites carries any landscape or wildlife designations. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies within 500m (or less) of all five sites. The relevant policies from the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 are included below.

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant clauses from the NPPF include:

Core Planning Principles

17. Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles are that planning should: [..]

- *take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*

11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109. The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
- *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;*
- *minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's*

commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

- *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and*
- *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

115. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

116. Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- *the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- *the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.*

2.2 Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000 (saved policies)

The Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000 has been largely superseded by adopted documents in the Local Development Framework. However, as at April 2017 a number of saved policies remain in force, including:

GP12 To protect the countryside for its own sake, for its landscape and scenic value and for the important wildlife habitats it contains, and to respond to the need for carefully managed change to accommodate demands for agricultural diversification, tourism and public access to the countryside.

EN9 Development proposals which would damage significantly buildings, landscape features, or important views, which contribute to the settings and entrances of towns and villages will not be permitted.

EN10 In new developments proposed on the edge of existing settlements the boundary treatment should respect that which forms the settlement's established character, providing an appropriate transition to the surrounding countryside. Applications will need to demonstrate how this has been achieved.

EN11 Development which would fill in important open gaps between what are two distinct settlements will not be permitted.

EN32 Planning permission will not be granted for any development proposals which would damage or result in the loss of important trees or woodlands.

2.3 Ashford Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008

Policy CS1: Guiding Principles, states:

Sustainable development and high quality design are at the centre of the Council's approach to plan making and deciding planning applications. Accordingly, the Council will apply the following key planning objectives:

These include:

C. Protection for the countryside, landscape and villages from adverse impacts of growth and the promotion of strong rural communities;

Paragraph 6.33 refers to the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the Borough – the Kent Downs and High Weald, stating that:

development located outside an AONB but which would have a significant adverse effect on the setting of the AONB should also be resisted.

Policy CS6: Rural Settlement Hierarchy

This policy sets out the hierarchy of rural settlements outside the Ashford Growth area which are considered suitable for limited expansion and distribution of housing site allocations. Charing is included as one of a number of settlements classified as Tier 2 (rural services centres), with a proposed housing allocation as follows:

Phase 1 (2006 - 2013): 50

Phase 2 (2014 - 2021): 60

Land south of Maidstone Road, at the western edge of Charing and immediately to the east of site 4, formed Phase 1 of this allocation. This policy is developed in the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD (Section 2.4, see below).

2.4 Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD (adopted October 2010)

The rural sites which are the subject of this SPD are defined as *Biddenden, Bilsington, Boughton Lees, Brabourne Lees, Brook, Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Great Chart, Hamstreet, Hastingleigh, High Halden, Hothfield, Kingsnorth, Little Chart, Mersham, Newenden, Old Wives Lees, Pluckley, Rolvenden, Rolvenden Layne, Ruckinge, Shadoxhurst, Smarden, Stone, Tenterden, Warehorne, Westwell, Wittersham, Woodchurch and Wye.*"

The countryside is defined as 'all of the open areas that lie between the built-up confines of the rural settlements, including small villages and hamlets and / or other collections of individual dwellings or other buildings that do not constitute a rural settlement for the purposes of this DPD.

Under the settlement hierarchy set out in this DPD, Charing is identified as Tier 2 under the allocation of proposed development in settlements identified as rural service centres:

6.12 *By contrast, Charing enjoys the potential for more significant growth than either Hamstreet or Wye. Whilst the AONB frames the north of the village, there is land alongside the A20 to the east and west of the village which provides suitable locations for residential development. In particular, the land west of Tatchell Drive offers a major development opportunity through an extension of the site previously allocated in the BLP. Neither this area, nor the other proposed allocation south of the Arthur Baker playing field would*

have a significant impact on the setting of the village or the AONB and, with good design, could provide attractive residential environments within easy walking distance of the main village services.

Site specific policies within this DPD define policy with reference to identified allocated sites. Policy CHAR 2 - Land south of Maidstone Road, relates to residential development now constructed, but is of relevance to the consideration of Site 4:

Policy CHAR 2 - Land south of Maidstone Road

Land south of Maidstone Road is proposed for residential development. The site has an overall indicative capacity of 90 units. The site shall be developed in two phases with an initial phase of up to 55 units to be developed in Phase 1 of the DPD period (up to 2016) with a layout that allows for the possibility of further development taking place after 2016.

Development proposals for this site shall:-

- a) provide vehicular access to the site off the A20 Maidstone Road and also via the existing housing estate at Tatchell Drive, through Ruglys Way;*
- b) provide a safe and direct pedestrian and cycle route to the village centre;*
- c) retain existing woodland and individual trees and hedgerows, and introduce further planting to help soften any impact on the wider area beyond the immediate fringe of the village;*
- d) provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes as required by Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy;*
- e) provide affordable housing as required by Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy;*
- f) provide on-site equipped public open space, including play facilities, in accordance with 'saved' policies LE5 and LE7 of the Borough Local Plan 2000 or, any subsequent SPD superseding those policies;*
- g) provide a financial contribution towards the maintenance of the equipped public open space, including play facilities, in accordance with 'saved' policy LE9 of the Borough Local Plan 2000, or any subsequent SPD superseding that policy; and,*
- h) provide a financial contribution towards the provision of a new or upgraded pavilion at the Arthur Baker playing field.*

Supporting text highlights the potential for visual impacts on views from the Kent Downs AONB:

6.50 This site lies adjacent to a recent residential development that is accessed off Tatchell Drive. It is bounded by the A20 Maidstone Road, the Ashford to Maidstone railway line with open agricultural land to the west. The site includes a number of individual trees and hedgerows which form natural buffers to the surrounding open countryside.

6.51 Development here would be a continuation of Charing's existing built form and would not encroach into the more visually sensitive areas to the north and east of the village. The area to the north of the A20, however, is within the AONB so any development on this site

should be sensitive to the surrounding area. Development should retain existing trees and hedgerows and enhance these natural features with further planting to mitigate the visual impact of development here on the wider area. In addition, proposals should also reflect the 'design guidelines' set out in the Charing Parish Design Statement (2002).

Relevant topic policies include:

Policy TRS1 - Minor residential development or infilling

Minor development or infilling will be acceptable within the built-up confines of Tenterden and the following villages:

Aldington, Appledore, Bethersden, Biddenden, Boughton Lees, Brabourne Lees, Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Great Chart, Hamstreet, High Halden, Hothfield, Kingsnorth, Mersham, Pluckley, Rolvenden, Shadoxhurst, Smarden, Wittersham, Woodchurch and Wye;

providing that the following requirements are met:

- a) the development can easily be integrated into the existing settlement without the need to substantially improve the infrastructure or other facilities;*
- b) the proposal is of a layout, scale, design and appearance that is appropriate to the character and density of its surrounding area;*
- c) it does not result in the displacement of other active uses such as employment, leisure or community uses in the area; and,*
- d) the proposal would not result in the loss of public or private open spaces or gaps that are important characteristics of the settlement.*

Policy TRS2 - New residential development elsewhere

New residential development outside the built-up confines of Tenterden or the villages listed in Policy TRS1 will not be permitted unless it constitutes one of the following:-

- a) it is an agricultural dwelling, justified under PPS7, or,*
- b) it is a re-use or adaptation of an existing rural building of architectural or historic interest, justified under policy TRS13, or,*
- c) it is a replacement dwelling that is justified under policy TRS3, or,*
- d) it is a 'local needs' scheme on an exception site justified under policies TRS4 or TRS5.*

Policy TRS17 - Landscape Character and Design

Development in the rural areas shall be designed in a way which protects and enhances the particular landscape character area within which it is located, and, where relevant, any adjacent landscape character area.

Proposals shall have particular regard to the following:-

- a) Landform, topography and natural patterns of drainage*

- b) The pattern and composition of trees and woodlands*
- c) The type and composition of wildlife habitats*
- d) The pattern and composition of field boundaries*
- e) The pattern and distribution of settlements, roads and footpaths*
- f) The presence and pattern of historic landscape features*
- g) The setting, scale, layout, design and detailing of vernacular buildings and other traditional man made features*
- h) Any relevant guidance given in an AONB Management Plan or in a Landscape Character SPD*

Existing features that are important to the local landscape character shall be retained and incorporated into the proposed development.

For the purpose of this policy, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are to be treated as landscape character areas.

Policy TRS18 - Important rural features

Development in the rural areas shall protect and where possible, enhance the following features:

- a) ancient woodland and semi-natural woodland;*
- b) river corridors and tributaries;*
- c) rural lanes which have a landscape, nature conservation or historic importance;*
- d) public rights of way.*

2.5 Charing Parish Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (CPDS) (adopted April 2002)

In considering Landscape and Settlement, the CPDS includes the following within local recommendations:

- The compact nature of settlements should be respected and future development should not be allowed to sprawl further into the surrounding countryside*
- Preservation of locally cherished views, such as those to and from the Downs, and of the High Street and the church and its surroundings, should be given high priority at all times. They are among aspects most valued by those who live or work in the parish.*
- Change of use of agricultural land and woodland should be resisted in order to maintain the beauty of the landscape and the rural*

nature of the parish.

- *Where trees and hedgerows have to be removed, replacement planting and maintenance schemes should be carried out using native species whenever possible*

2.6 Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019

The AONB Management Plan includes policy on development within the AONB setting, defined as *land outside the designated area which is visible from the AONB and from which the AONB can be seen, but may be wider when affected by intrusive features beyond that.*

Views in and out of the AONB, especially from the chalk scarp ridge of the North Downs, are highlighted as an important contributory factor in AONB designation: *the long arc of the North Downs chalk ridge is the most dominant element of the AONB, consisting of the steep, south-facing scarp slope rising above the Gault clay vale below, the open expansive plateau tops and gentle dip slopes traversed by many hidden, dry valleys. Spectacular views are offered along the chalk escarpment across the Vale of Holmesdale, Low Weald, the river valleys and the towns below making the setting important to the enjoyment and purposes of the AONB.*

The importance of the Kent Downs AONB setting has been recognised in the AONB Management Plan 2009-2014. This included policies to protect the AONB from inappropriate developments in its setting unless they could be satisfactorily mitigated.

Relevant policies with reference to proposals within the AONB setting include:

SD8 Proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the AONB will be opposed unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

SD11 Where it is decided that development will take place that will have a negative impact on the landscape character, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB or its setting, mitigation measures appropriate to the national importance of the Kent Downs landscape will be identified, pursued, implemented and maintained. The removal or mitigation of identified landscape detractors will be pursued.

LLC1 The protection, conservation and enhancement of special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB will be supported and pursued.

3. Landscape Character Context

National Character Area (NCA) profiles prepared by Natural England define *areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries* and include a *description of natural and cultural features*. The 159 National Character Areas thus provide a source of environmental information of major landscape areas. All sites included within this Appraisal are located within National Character Area NCA 120 Wealden Greensand. This NCA forms a long, narrow curve across parts of Kent, parallel with the North Downs, Surrey, Hampshire and West Sussex. The key characteristics of this NCA are included in part 3.1.

The Landscape Assessment of Kent (Jacobs Babbie 2004) offers a county level landscape character assessment based on a subdivision of the landscape into more specific areas within the county of Kent. The five sites within this Appraisal fall within two adjacent areas defined by LAK. These are discussed in section 3.2.

Local landscape character assessment (LCA) for the area around Ashford is drawn from two studies conducted for Ashford Borough Council in 2005 and 2009:

- Ashford Landscape Character Study (Studio Engleback, 2005), an assessment of the urban fringe areas of Ashford
- Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (Jacobs, 2009), an assessment of the rural parts of Ashford Borough (excluding the AONBs). The ACLA identifies 33 distinct landscape character areas within its study area, i.e. *Ashford Borough rural areas, excluding the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the High Weald AONB and the urban fringe landscape which was covered by the Studio Engleback (2005) Landscape Character Study. The main purpose of this document was to ensure the continued protection of the countryside and its special landscape features and it will achieve this by providing the background evidence for policies TRS17 and TRS18.*

These LCAs form the existing evidence base and inform current policy, and offer a greater level of detail for more locally defined areas. The five sites fall within four separate areas. For clarity, the local landscape character appropriate to each site is discussed under individual site appraisals in sections 4-7. A summary of the landscape character context for each site is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Landscape Character Areas

Site	National Character Area	Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004)	Ashford Landscape Character Study (2005)	Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
Site 1 (off Sandyhurst Lane/Westwell Lane):	120 Wealden Greensand	Greensand Belt: Hothfield Heathy Farmlands	Hothfield Heathy Farmlands	N/A
Site 2 (A20 Hothfield east)	120 Wealden Greensand	Greensand Belt: Hothfield Heathy Farmlands	N/A	27 Charing Heath Farmlands
Site 3 (A20 Hothfield west)	120 Wealden Greensand	Greensand Belt: Hothfield Heathy Farmlands	N/A	11 Great Stour Valley (part) 27 Charing Heath Farmlands (part)
Site 4 (Maidstone Road, Charing)	120 Wealden Greensand	Greensand Belt: Hollingbourne Vale East	N/A	32 Charing Farmlands
Site 5 (Pluckley Road, Charing)	120 Wealden Greensand	Greensand Belt: Hollingbourne Vale East	N/A	32 Charing Farmlands

3.1 National Character Area 120 Wealden Greensand

All sites fall within the Wealden Greensand NCA. Key characteristics of the NCA as set out in the Character Area Profile include:

- *A long, narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand forms escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform – particularly in the west – gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape. Leith Hill in Surrey is the highest point in south-east England.*
- *There are extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch, with some areas having been converted to sweet chestnut coppice in past centuries. These areas reflect the diverse geology, including the distinctive chalk grassland elements within the East Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the wooded commons ('charts') of East Surrey and West Kent, and conifer plantations.*
- *Fields are predominantly small or medium, in irregular patterns derived from medieval enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows and shaws, with character and species reflecting the underlying soils. On the clay, hedgerows are dense and species-rich, with occasional standard oaks. On more acidic soils they generally consist of hawthorn and blackthorn, also with occasional oak trees, and often trimmed low.*
- *Agricultural land comprises a mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable land set within a wooded framework. There is a fruit-growing orchard belt in Kent and also around Selborne in Hampshire.*
- *The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area.*
- *In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26, M25 and M20 motorways and railway lines including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1).*
- *The local built vernacular includes the use of Greensand, ragstone and, in the west, malmstone, bargate stone, plus dark carrstone patterned in the mortar between stones ('galleting') in Surrey, as well as timber-framing and weatherboarding.*
- *There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands.*
- *Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.*

- *The Greensand ridge meets the coast of Kent between Folkestone Warren and Hythe. While most of the coastal strip is now built up and protected by sea defences, the undeveloped sea cliffs at Copt Point provide important geological exposures, are designated for their nature conservation interest and fall within the Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast.*

The eastern part of the NCA, in which the sites are located, is broadly described as:

Further east, into Kent and beyond, the dramatic, wooded topography becomes less distinctive: being less wooded, the landscape here does not afford such an impression of intimacy. The area is also more marked by modern human influence, with major towns such as Maidstone, Sevenoaks and Ashford, and numerous communication routes. Notable among the latter are the M25, M26 and M20 motorways, and other major road and rail routes. Generally, the Kent Wealden Greensand in the east is relatively more open with mixed farming.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity include:

SEO 1: *Protect and manage the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, conserving and enhancing historic landscape character, tranquillity, sense of place, and the rich historical and geological heritage of the Wealden Greensand. Enhance access provision where appropriate, to maintain public benefit from and enjoyment of the area.*

SEO 2: *Protect, manage and significantly enhance the mosaic and connectivity of semi-natural habitats within the mixed farmed landscape - particularly the internationally important woodland and heathland habitats - for the benefit of biodiversity, pollination, soil and water regulation, landscape character and enhanced adaptation to climate change.*

SEO 3: *Manage and significantly enhance the quality of the characteristic wetland and water environment of the Greensand. This will contribute to sustainable flood risk management, will benefit the regulation of water quality and water availability, as well as enhancing the sense of place, biodiversity, recreation and wetland habitat adaptation to climate change.*

SEO 4: *Plan to deliver a network of integrated, well managed green spaces in existing and developing urban areas, providing social, economic and environmental benefits, and reinforcing landscape character and local distinctiveness - particularly on or alongside the boundaries of the designated landscapes within the Wealden Greensand.*

3.2 Landscape Assessment of Kent (Jacobs Babbie for Kent County Council, October 2004) (LAK)

Although prepared some years ago, this document forms part of the evidence base for the Ashford Borough Council Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document adopted in 2011 and remains relevant to the sites discussed within this Appraisal.

The LAK offers a broad-brush, strategic approach [...] written with the intention that detailed local studies should be undertaken to assess site specific proposals. It identifies broad areas of Kent, subdivided into more specific character areas. Sites 1, 2 and 3 lie in: Greensand Belt: Hothfield Heathy Farmlands. Sites 4 and 5 lie in Greensand Belt: Hollingbourne Vale East.

Greensand Belt: Hothfield Heathy Farmlands (Sites 1, 2, 3)

Key points from the summary description include:

- *undulating landscape*
- *settlement scattered in villages such as Lenham and Charing Heaths, Tutt Hill and Hothfield, where 20th century development has enlarged but not overwhelmed the vernacular centres.*
- *Villages are connected by a winding network of tranquil lanes, often crossing north-east to south-west as in the Weald- the pattern of the old 'drove' roads.*
- *historic parklands, including Chilston Park, Hothfield Place and Godinton. [...] Now its northern part is severed by the M20, with its trees dying. Hothfield has lost part of its parkland character to cultivation and its mature trees are also declining. There is evidence that other parks existed in this area as well.*
- *small copses and plantations of chestnut coppice [...] Larger-scale woodland can be found, however, at Ashford Warren, Hothfield Common and Hothfield Lake*
- *Distinctive feature - heathland of Hothfield Common [...]. a small remnant of the once far greater extent of heathland that extended in the Greensand Belt in the past, as evidenced by many of the place names such as Lenham and Charing Heath and Hothfield.*
- *Farmed landscape divided for much of its length by the A20 or the M20, the latter crossing under the railway at Tutt Hill to avoid the Gault Clays. Whilst not highly visible in much of this undulating landscape, it is audible for many miles and intrudes on the tranquillity of the small lanes. This transport intrusion is compounded by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.*

Landscape condition is described as poor. *This landscape has a coherent pattern of small scale mixed use with notable heathy characteristics influenced by the sandy soils. The scale and pattern of the area is interrupted by motorway and rail link routes and by unsympathetic land uses and quarries. There are clusters of semi-natural habitats of high ecological importance, which include wetland, heathland and small pastures; there are also areas of intensive arable cultivation. Built development has a moderate positive impact, but landscape heritage features of woodland and field enclosures are poor.*

Landscape sensitivity is described as low. *There is a moderate sense of place, in many cases influenced by the heathland and parkland features. The time depth is mainly historic, although historic rural elements of woodland and field enclosures no longer contribute greatly to the local distinctiveness. Recent visibility is low as tree cover is intermittent over an unremarkable landform.*

Landscape actions: Create

Create woodland and regenerative scrub framework to transport routes, encouraging appropriate heathy species

Create a code of use and design for neglected land and for agricultural buildings

Link clusters of ecological importance to create semi-natural habitat frameworks

Create vegetative edges to enlarged settlements.

Greensand Belt: Hollingbourne Vale East (Sites 4, 5)

Key points from the summary description include:

- *gently undulating agricultural landscape punctuated by small woodlands and scattered settlement developed on the heavy clay soils.*
- *The Downs remain enclosing the landscape to the north but the lack of trees and hedgerows allows sight of the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link to the south. This enlarged transport corridor, exploiting the stable substrates beneath the clay, has a profound effect on the tranquillity of the vale on its northern boundary.*
- *Towards Charing the landscape becomes more varied with a mix of sheep-grazed pasture and arable fields divided by gappy hedgerows with scattered trees. Small broadleaf copses become more frequent once again, and the enclosure of the Downs is emphasised by extensive scarp-face woodlands.*
- *Charing and Lenham are both ancient villages that have developed at the scarp foot due to the line of springs that seep out from the junction of the chalk with the clay. The source of the Great Stour is found in this area at Tanyard Farm pond.*

- *South of Charing a pocket of this traditional character area remains between the motorway and the railway. Further eastwards the landscape becomes more remote with a rich and varied pattern of grassland, hay crops and arable fields.*

Landscape condition is described as very poor. The extensive loss of hedgerow and shaws in this large-scale arable landscape has resulted in an incoherent landscape, void of features, which no longer reflects the landform. There are some visual detractors associated with the trunk road, and a few due to unsympathetic farm buildings. The ecological interest is weak - there are a few small patches of wetland, some generative vegetation on the railway embankment and fragments of hedgerow.

Landscape sensitivity is described as low. There are few distinguishing features in the landscape which contribute to a local sense of place. The gently undulating landform is unremarkable within the area, although bounded by the chalk scarp to the north. Visibility is therefore moderate over the open landscape.

Landscape actions: Create.

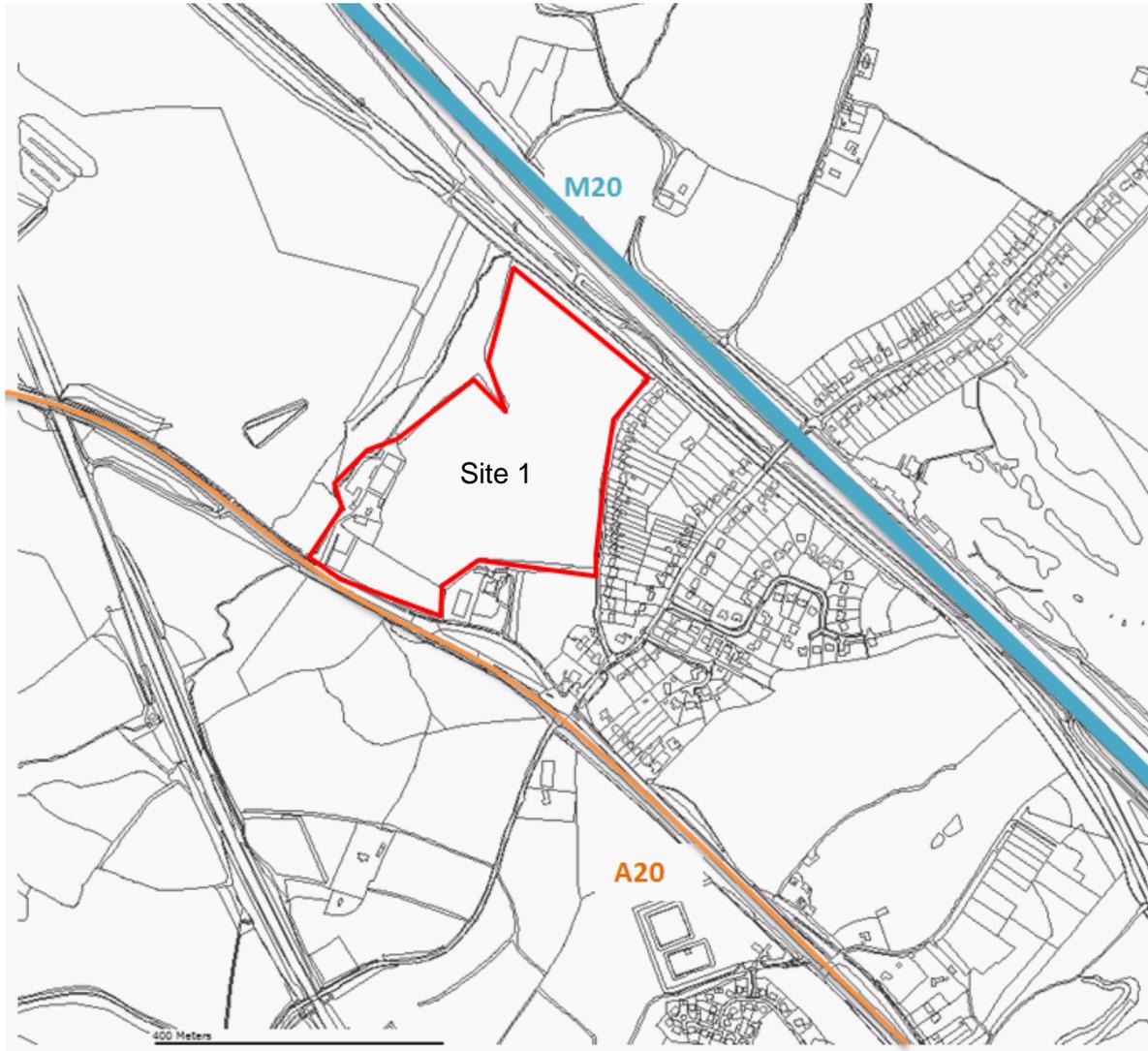
Create ecological interest by the sensitive management of some arable and pastoral farmland

Reintroduce shaws and riparian vegetation around streams

Create regenerative woodlands

Create a local design code for agricultural buildings

4. Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 1



4.1 Local Landscape Character Area (Ashford Landscape Character Study, Studio Engleback, 2005):

Hothfield Heathy Farmlands. The overriding feature for this character area is concluded to be its *variable topography, landuse and character. To [..] the south of the M20 are large gently undulating arable fields with thick hedgerows to lanes (probable old drove roads).*

4.2 Landscape, wildlife or other designations:

- two Grade II listed buildings located at the south western corner of the site (Hothfield Mill; Mill House at Hothfield Mill)
- Kent Downs AONB boundary lies within 0.5km of the site's northern boundary
- A woodland belt bordering the western site boundary is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (Woodland at Dennes Mill, Westwell, ref T151/06/07, TPO ref No. 1 1991)
- A belt of alder which forms a part of the woodland at the western boundary is identified as Ancient Woodland.

4.3 Public access:

No public access.



1/1. View (panorama) looking west across the site from Westwell Lane. The site comprises a typical open, arable field. The undulating landform is evident. A belt of willow and stream follows the western boundary. A woodland belt lies on lower ground beyond the western boundary. There are partial views of farmland and more distant wooded horizon to the west and south west. The roof and chimneys of Hothfield Mill/Hothfield Mill House and a barn of modern construction are partially visible behind vegetation at the south west corner of the site in the upper left hand part of the image. The barn is a detractor from an otherwise rural view. Development would potentially obscure all of this view.



1/2. View (panorama) looking north west across the site from Westwell Lane. The open character of the field, arable use and the undulating landform are typical of this Character Area. There are filtered views of farmland beyond the site and distant views to the Kent Downs AONB to the north. A barn of modern construction and listed buildings at Hothfield Mill are visible to the far left of the image. Development would potentially obscure much of this view, although the undulating topography may allow glimpses of the existing far horizon to the right.



1/3. View north along Westwell Lane. A mature, dense hedgerow to the left of the image marks the eastern site boundary. The existing suburban edge of mixed age and style and modern infrastructure are the dominant features in this view. Kent Downs AONB is partially visible at the far horizon.



1/4. View north across the site from the gated access from the lay by to the A20. A typical largely rural view of farmland interspersed with trees and copses. The mature oaks are a distinctive feature in this view. Existing development is partially visible to the right of the image, partially screened by trees. The modern stock fencing, gates and barbed wire are detractors from an otherwise relatively tranquil view. Kent Downs AONB is visible on the far horizon. Development would potentially obscure all of this view, but the oaks would remain partially visible if retained.



1/5. View west across the site from the south western corner off the A20 layby. A hedgerow separates the site from the A20 to the left of the image.

This gives way at the far end of the boundary to modern fencing. A tree belt is visible ahead at the site's western boundary, with filtered views of farmland beyond. The A20 is glimpsed to the left of the image. The modern fencing and gates, and proximity of the A20 have a marked influence on the character of this view. Development would potentially interrupt the view of the tree belt and higher ground beyond and would be visible from the A20.



1/6. View south from public footpath within the Kent Downs AONB. An open, expansive view towards Ashford (seen in the far distance to the left of the image) over the Low Weald. The view comprises mainly open farmland and fields divided by hedgerows and interspersed with small areas of woodland. Scattered development is partially visible, including Ashford and, in the foreground, the village of Westwell, but these form a part of the landscape rather than detract from it, and this remains a largely rural view. Existing development on Westwell Lane to the east of the site is discernible but not a distinctive visible feature. The site is partially visible immediately in front of this existing development. The topography of the site is such that development would extend the area of built development but this would not be overly prominent or out of character with the existing character of the view.

4.4 Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 1: conclusions

Site 1 is illustrative of some characteristics associated with National Character Area 120 (Wealden Greensand), specifically its use as an arable field and much of the boundary framework consisting of trees and hedgerow, reflecting the *mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable set within a wooded framework*, its open aspect, illustrative of the *gentler and more open aspect* of the eastern part of the NCA, size and irregular shape. There are a number of mature oaks towards the western part of the site which are an important contributor to rural character. Hothfield Mill and Mill House are Grade II listed. A further substantial property lies adjacent to the southern boundary, reflecting the dispersed pattern of rural settlement. At a local (county) landscape character level, the site again reflects some but not all of the characteristics associated with the Hothfield Heathy Farmlands as defined in the LAK. Typically, it features an undulating landscape, elements of scattered settlement and is bordered to the east by a narrow, winding lane with no through traffic.

The site's character and tranquillity are influenced partly by the levels of visual enclosure to the east and south, formed by its undulating topography, eastern boundary hedgerow and western tree belt, and by views of farmland and open countryside to the west and north (Views 1/1 and 1/3). However, it is more heavily influenced by the visual impact of and noise from surrounding modern infrastructure: the A20 at the southern boundary and, to a greater degree, the mainline railway (London-Ashford) and M20 motorway close to the northern boundary. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link and M20 run almost in parallel at this point and lie on lower ground north of the site. Both are prominent in views from the northern end of Westwell Lane and a significant detractor from the rural character of the local area.

Near views to the site are primarily from Westwell Lane (largely screened by a dense hedgerow) and from the A20 (transitory). There are distant views of the site from the Kent Downs AONB (view 1/6). Although occupying a small part of this overall view, development across the site would be visible from publicly accessible points within the AONB. The existing view is largely rural, with settlement visible in scattered form or on a small scale. There are views of taller buildings in Ashford, but the distance from the viewpoint mitigates their visual impact.

Development would potentially change significantly the character of the site by introducing housing and associated infrastructure into existing agricultural land. However, the site's proximity to major transport corridors already detracts from an otherwise largely rural character. The site is also bordered by residential development on Westwell Lane to the east, although many of these properties benefit from open rural views over the site. Near views of the site are limited to partial views from Westwell Lane and transitory views from the A20. Visual effects would potentially be more significant in distant views from with the AONB.

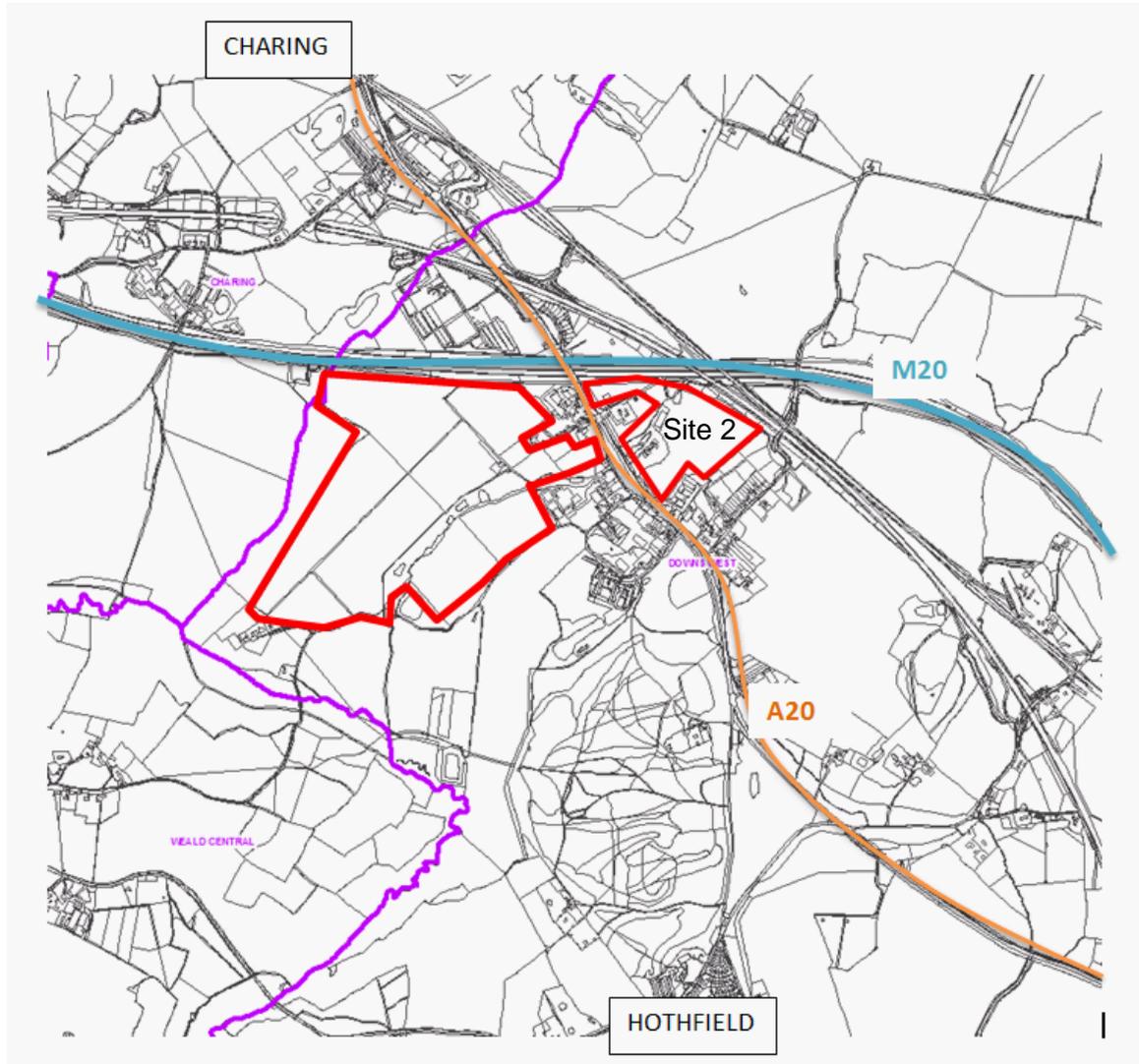
Development would result in a substantial extension to the existing residential development on Westwell and would affect the visual amenity of these properties. This is a site which is located between two major transport routes which detract from the rural character. It should be possible to retain the important boundary features and the mature oaks as part of any development proposals.

Conclusion:

Green: site with limited landscape and/or visual constraints.



5. Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 2



5.1 Local Landscape Character Area (Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (ACLA), Jacobs, 2009):

Site 2 (and a small area at the easternmost part of site 3) fall within:

27 Charing Heath Farmlands, the key characteristics of which are described as:

- Mixed farmland
- Varied field pattern
- Small woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice
- Pine woodland
- Mature isolated trees across pasture
- Heathland character with a significant amount of gorse and silver birch
- Sand extraction and reed filled ponds post extraction
- Major transport links

The description of this Character Area includes the following:

The land is under both arable and pastoral use, with open views across the mixed farmland where topography and vegetation allow. Occasionally, the North Downs are visually prominent in the north. Fields are irregularly shaped with pockets of pasture often situated around settled areas, and larger arable fields extending across more rural areas.

Enclosure is provided by small broadleaf woodland copses and plantations of chestnut coppice which are strewn across the landscape. Native hedgerows enclose fields in places where historic field patterns are retained and mature isolated trees are frequently scattered across pasture, providing a parkland character. Scatterings of tree and shrub vegetation often define the network of streams which run throughout the area. Arable intensification has led to the removal of traditional field boundaries in some areas, and enclosure is frequently provided by post and wire fencing. Predominant species scattered throughout the landscape comprise gorse and silver birch, reflecting the heathland character of the area.

Settlement is scattered across the landscape, with a number of farms positioned along the narrow lanes.

The landscape is dissected by the A20 to the east, which has a number of recent large scale developments including hotels and a nursery along its route. There is also the M20 to the south, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link lining the M20 for much of its length, increasing the width of the transport corridor. Whilst not highly visible from throughout much of the surrounding landscape, vehicular movement is extensively audible and the infrastructure intrudes on the small scale and tranquil character of the many minor lanes it runs beneath.

The Assessment concludes that this Character Area is of moderate sensitivity:

The heathland character is made prominent through the exposed areas of orange sand surrounding former mineral extraction works, and the predominance of gorse and silver birch. Much of the built development is traditional, respecting the local vernacular and creating a strong sense of place. Traditional buildings, including timber framed houses and oast houses, and the use of consistent materials, including Kent peg tiles, chequered brickwork and local stone provide strong local distinctiveness. Round headed 'Dering' windows are found throughout the area, providing a strong sense of place. The network of narrow lanes, often running through farmyards, provides a distinctly rural and tranquil character.

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve and improve the landscape, and include:

- *Conserve the foreground setting of the Kent Downs AONB*
- *Conserve the occasional open views of the chalk scarp to the north*
- *Conserve the specialised heathland character and habitats*
- *Conserve vernacular building styles and materials*
- *Improve hedged field boundaries by appropriate management and replanting*
- *Conserve and appropriately manage broadleaf woodland blocks and chestnut coppice*
- *Improve planting along water courses*
- *Encourage sympathetic culverting of water ways and the use of local ragstone and brick detailing*
- *Encourage appropriate fencing types*
- *Conserve isolated parkland trees amid pasture*
- *Conserve the pastoral landscape*
- *Encourage sympathetic field boundary pattern and reinstatement of historic boundary lines*
- *Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with transport infrastructure*

- *Encourage sympathetic redesign of former quarrying sites, with organically shaped water bodies and integrated vegetation which reflects surrounding semi-natural patterns*

5.2 Landscape, wildlife or other designations:

- None on site.
- Kent Downs AONB lies within 0.5 km of the site's northern boundary
- Hothfield Common SSSI and Local Nature Reserve lies within 0.5km south of the site
- 5 Grade II listed properties within 0.5 km south of the site

5.3 Public access:

Public footpath AW123 runs along the site's eastern boundary from the A20 north to Westwell Lane where it crosses the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.



2/1. View (panorama) looking east across the site from the A20. The site comprises a varied topography. The western boundary is formed mainly by the A20. An access road, visible towards the right of the image, and an area which appears to have been in use as a nursery, are outside the site boundary. This view is dominated by the urban road and roadside verges, with some evidence of development and associated car parking to the centre of the image. A belt of poplar trees and adjacent conifer belt screens the eastern part of the site from view. There are distant filtered views of the North Downs. Development fronting the A20 would be prominent but this is a busy road with residential development on the southern side of the road.



2/2. View (panorama) looking north across the site from the A20. Tree belts filter distant views of the Kent Downs AONB. The road is a dominant urban influence in this view. The access road to the right of the image and central area (occupied by a nursery) are outside the site boundary. The site's western boundary is formed by the section of the A20 in the immediate foreground. Development would be prominent and would potentially obscure all distant views and occupy a large part of this image, but this is a busy road with residential development on the southern side of the road.



2/3. View (panorama) north across the site from junction of footpath AW123 and the A20. The view comprises an undulating landscape of irregular shaped arable fields separated by managed shelter belts of alder/poplar. There are far reaching views to the Kent Downs AONB in the far distance, interrupted by a dense conifer belt in the near distance to the left of the image, which also partially screens a belt of mature poplars. The site occupies a large part of this view from the immediate foreground to the boundary vegetation in the middle distance. Development would potentially occupy all of this view, though may allow glimpses of the far horizon.



2/4. View (panorama) west across the site from the northern end of footpath AW123 close to the junction with Westwell Lane. A typical agricultural landscape of arable fields divided by managed shelter belts. A dense hedgerow marks the site's southern boundary and route of the footpath to the left of the image. To the right, modern fencing marks the site boundary with the wooded embankment of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to the north. The trees and conifer belt at the centre partially screen extensive distant views westwards towards the Weald. Scattered development is partially visible in the middle distance, including the hotel and pub off the A20 to the centre right. Development would potentially occupy all of the central part of this view, but may allow glimpses of the far horizon.



2/5. View west from footpath AW123 towards the site's eastern boundary, marked by a dense native hedge. The site is partially visible and occupies a large part of this view, running the length of the visible hedge on its western side. The tree belt and conifers on site dominate the upper right hand part of the image. Neighbouring land is in equestrian use, comprising paddocks separated by timber fencing. The undulating landform is evident. To the east (left of the image), existing residential development along Westwell Lane is prominent. There are extensive views of the distant horizon, partially screened by trees in the middle distance. Development of the site would potentially be partially visible in the right hand part of the image, above the hedge.



2/6. View south west from public footpath AW120 within the Kent Downs AONB. An open, expansive view across largely flat/gently undulating countryside towards the Weald. The view comprises mainly open farmland and fields divided by hedgerows and interspersed with small areas of woodland. Scattered development is partially visible, together with glimpses of traffic on the M20, which is largely contained within a cutting in the middle distance. The scale of the view and distance from the receptor means, however, that these elements are barely discernible and the views remains a largely rural one. The site is difficult to identify in this view and is largely hidden by woodland and landform to the right of the image.

Development is unlikely to be visible.

5.4 Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 2: conclusions

The site is physically contained on all sides by distinct boundaries formed by the A20 (west), the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (north) and land and properties on Westwell Lane (south east). The site has a varied character which can roughly be divided into an eastern and western section. Existing development in commercial use (former nursery and an area of vehicle parking) and a pond occupy a part of the site close to the western boundary along the A20. The western boundary then skirts an area in use as a nursery with an associated access road before rejoining the route of the A20. The mature poplars are a distinctive and important feature which contribute to views from the A20 and soften the impact of modern development and infrastructure.

The eastern part of the site is typical of the undulating landscape, open aspect and irregular shaped fields in arable use are characteristic of the eastern part of National Character Area 120 (Wealden Greensand). Local landscape character is in part reflected by the site's arable use and varied field pattern, open views where topography allows, visibility of the Kent Downs AONB, native hedgerows enclosing fields and by the proximity of major transport links. The proximity of the A20 and commercial development are typical characteristics which are highlighted in the ACLA and which have a distinct influence on the western part of the site.

The eastern part of the site has a more rural character, visually enclosed from transport corridors. The land rise steeply from west to east to a high point in the north eastern part of the site. Westwell Lane, to the east of the site, is typical of the *network of tranquil lanes crossing north-east to south-west*, but the audibility of major transport corridors is a detractor across the whole site: *there is also the M20 to the south, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link lining the M20 for much of its length, increasing the width of the transport corridor. Whilst not highly visible from throughout much of the surrounding landscape, vehicular movement is extensively audible and the infrastructure intrudes on the small scale and tranquil character of the many minor lanes it runs beneath.*

A public footpath runs the length of the site's eastern boundary from the A20 to the northern boundary with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Near views of the site are primarily from the footpath (eastern parts of site) and from the A20 (transitory) to the western areas. The site is potentially visible from some publicly accessible viewpoints within the Kent Downs AONB. From more distant viewpoints (c. 1km), landform and scattered areas of woodland around the site are likely to provide a full or partial screen (view 2/6).

Development of the site would change the character of this site, most notably in the eastern part, from rural to residential, with open farmland replaced by residential development, and of the footpath, which would follow a more enclosed settlement edge rather than an agricultural field with open views to the North Downs. Effects on the character and tranquillity in the western part of the site would be

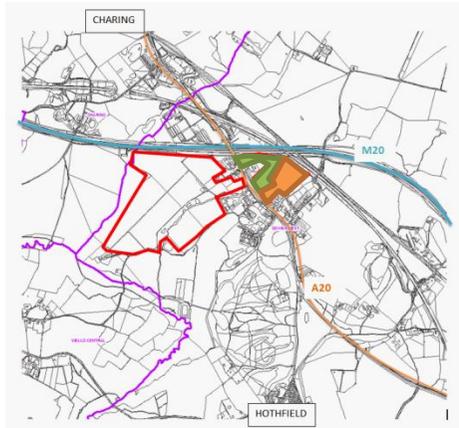
similar, but the significance of effects would be less significant due to the existing development, including commercial premises and car parking, close to and opposite the site, and the proximity of the A20. Adverse landscape and visual effects are likely to be most significant in terms of their impact on users of the footpath along the eastern boundary.

Development would result in the loss of internal areas of planting, notably the shelter belts in the eastern sections of the site.

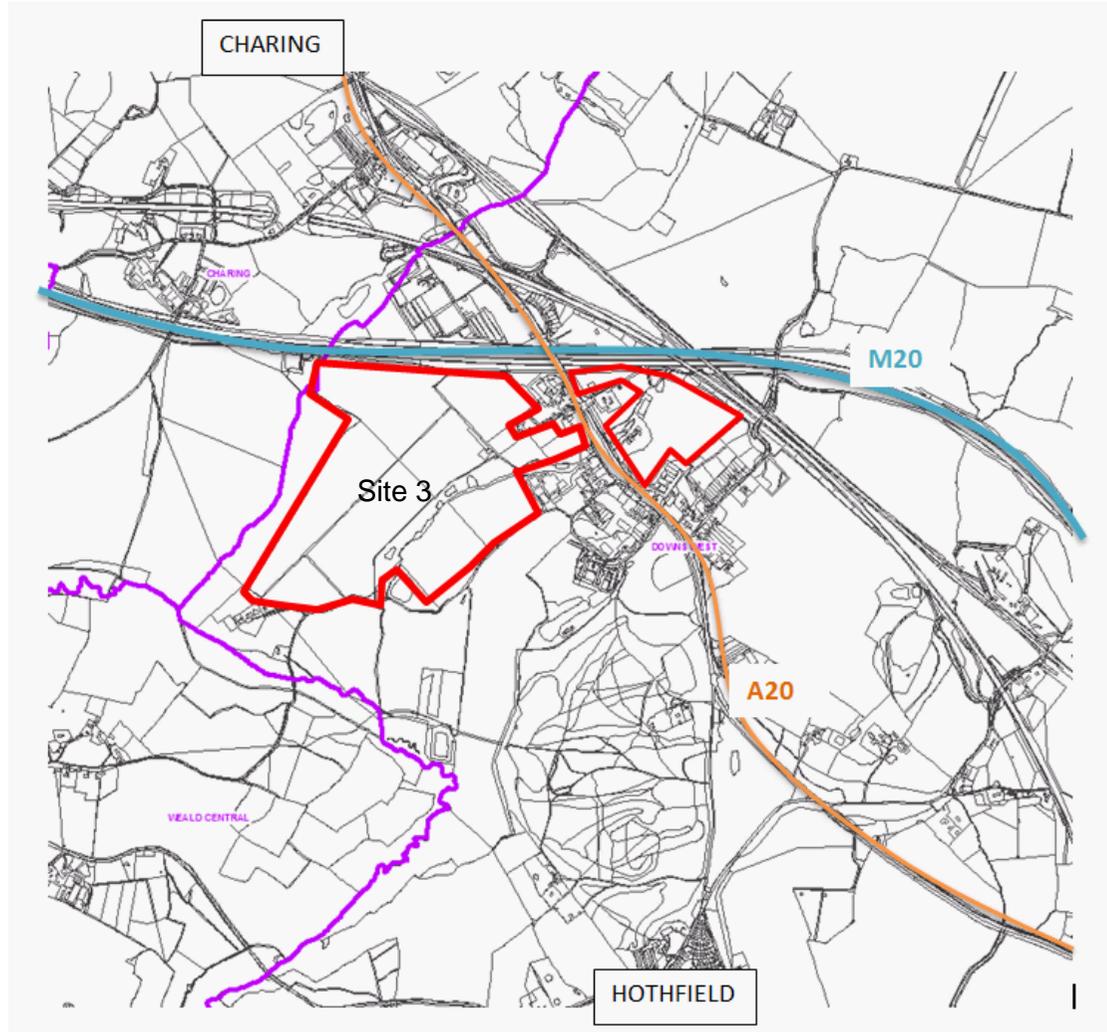
Conclusion:

Western area by A20: Green: site with limited landscape and/or visual constraints

Eastern area Amber: site with moderate landscape and/or visual constraints



6. Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 3



6.1 Local Landscape Character Area (Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (ACLA), Jacobs, 2009):

A small part of site 3 (at the eastern boundary) falls within **Character Area 27 Charing Heath Farmlands** (see site 2). The remainder lies in:

11 Great Stour Valley, the key characteristics of which are described as:

- *Valley containing the Great Stour River*
- *Willows, some pollarded along river*
- *Mature oak trees set within hedgerows and isolated within mixed farmland*
- *Subtle heathland characteristics including gorse and bracken*
- *Narrow lanes and ragstone bridges*
- *Well vegetated, species rich road verges*
- *Pastoral land use with dark patches of sedges*
- *Rectilinear field pattern divided by alder shelterbelts to the east*
- *Ragstone and chequered brickwork*
- *'Dering' windows*
- *Converted farm buildings*
- *Mills along the river*

The description of this Character Area includes the following:

There are long views along the valley of grazed pasture, and out of the area to the opposite arable valley side. Glimpses out of the area of the North Downs are available from some locations. The proximity to the Great Stour is highly evident, with narrow road crossings over the river via ragstone bridges, ponds wet within a pastoral landscape at Barnfield to the west and mills scattered along the course of the river.

Throughout the grazed pastoral valley floor, a number of mature isolated oak trees provide a parkland character. Willows, some pollarded, are strewn along the course of the Great Stour, and sedges and rushes reflect the low lying character of the riverside pasture.

Oak is a dominant species throughout the landscape, set within native hedgerows and scattered throughout the larger arable fields as well as within the pasture.

Some subtle heathland characteristics are evident, including gorse set within hedgerows and bracken integrated within road verges in places.

The valley topography provides a general sense of enclosure throughout the area. To the east, there is a strong rectilinear field pattern provided by a regular formation of nursery fields set within alder shelterbelts and tall hedgerows which are predominantly hazel.

Settlement comprises scattered clusters of farm buildings and small hamlets. A number of buildings are converted farm buildings, although some conversions slightly urbanise the traditional fabric of the buildings. Ragstone, hanging tiles and chequered brickwork are dominant materials.

Roads are very narrow with species rich verges containing bluebells, cow parsley, buttercups and red campion. The M20, aligned by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to the west, defines much of the northern boundary. Whilst not widely visible, the transport corridor is audible and forms a definitive boundary on the ground.

The Assessment concludes that this Character Area is of high sensitivity:

A number of key characteristics are very distinct, including the frequency of oak and willow trees, the narrow lanes with species rich verges, the use of ragstone as a building material and locally distinct 'Dering' windows. The dominant valley landscape, the rising valley sides and the intermittent tree cover provide high visibility.

The overall guidelines for the area are to conserve the landscape, and include:

- *Conserve the frequency of mature oak trees throughout the landscape, both within hedgerows and standing isolated within fields*
- *Plant new oak trees to ensure continuity of this key feature*
- *Conserve the riverside vegetation and characteristic willows*

- *Plant new willow standards along river to ensure continuity of characteristic vegetation pattern*
- *Conserve the rectilinear field pattern to the east and alder shelterbelts*
- *Conserve pastoral land use and avoid further arable intensification*
- *Conserve the narrow lanes with ragstone bridges and well vegetated, species rich verges*
- *Conserve vernacular style buildings and materials including ragstone, chequered brickwork and 'Dering' windows*
- *Avoid further modern development around Little Chart*

6.2 Landscape, wildlife or other designations:

- None on site.
- Kent Downs AONB lies within 0.5 km of the site's northern boundary
- Hothfield Common SSSI and Local Nature Reserve lies within 0.5km south of the site
- 5 Grade II listed properties within 0.5 km south of the site. A further Grade II listed building (The Mount) is located adjacent to the site's south western boundary. Hurst Hill Cottage (GII) lies some 100m to the south.
- The Greensand Way long distance path follows the route of Hurstford Lane approx 1km west of the site
- Tree Preservation orders are in place for:
 - Woodland located between the A20 and the eastern boundary (north of Old Lodge) (ref 9, 2016/ G1)
 - Alder belt within the site (TPO 14, 2006)
 - Alder belt (Kiln Field Alders) is classified as Ancient Woodland

Part of the western boundary lies within 0.5km of the Environment Agency Flood Zone 2 associated with the Great Stour.

6.3 Public access:

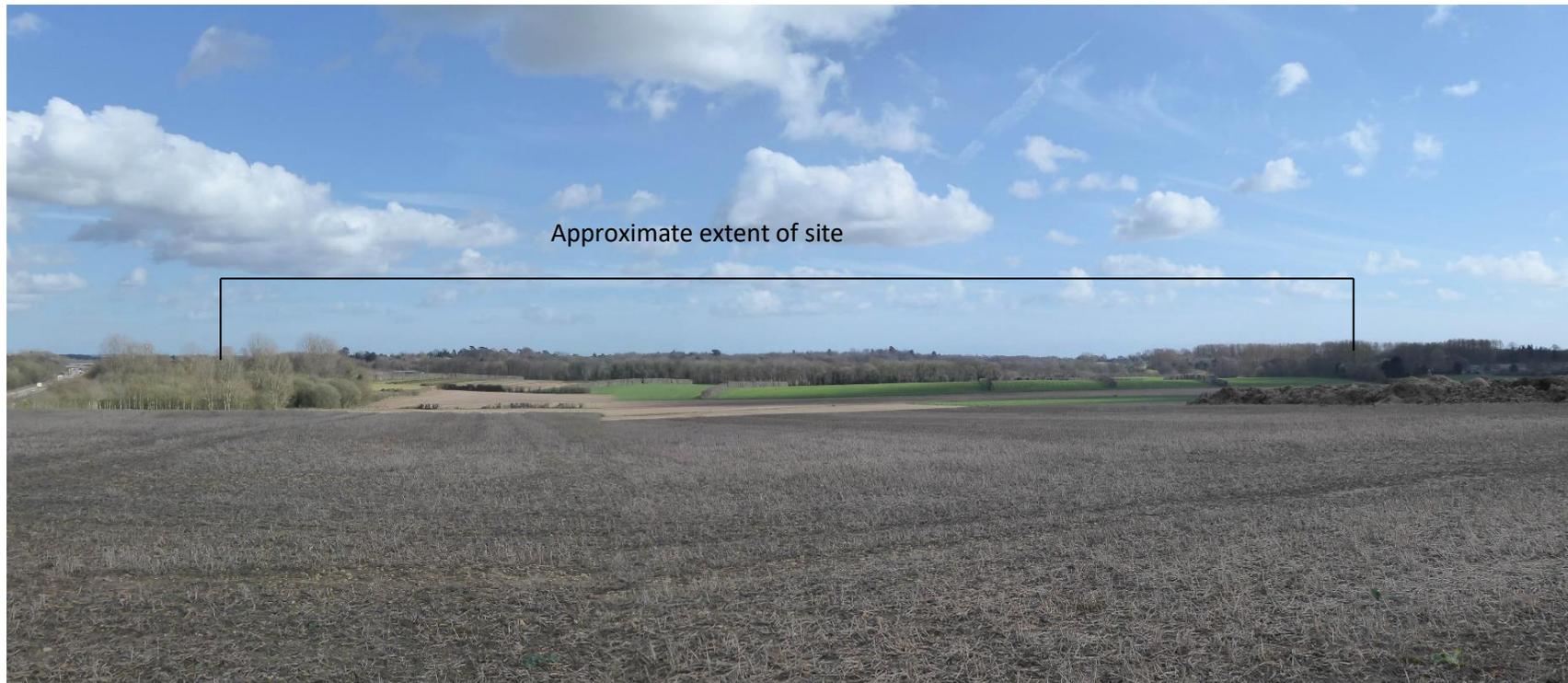
Footpath AW54 enters the site from the north west and crosses the central area to meet a second footpath (AW127) before bearing east on the south side of the tree belt and then turning south along a section of the site boundary to exit at Ram Lane. AW129 enters the site from Ram Lane approx. 100m further south, follows the western edge of the tree belt and emerges close to the pub and hotel just off the A20. This route was poorly marked at the time of the site visit.



3/1. View (panorama) looking west across the site from footpath AW127 close to the A20. The eastern end of the site comprises an irregular shaped area of grassland. The tree belt which occupies a central area of the site is visible in the middle distance. Existing commercial development in the form of warehouses is evident to the left of the image. The site appears unmanaged and includes dilapidated temporary/derelict structures, abandoned vehicles, rubbish and debris. Footpath access from this point is blocked by a locked gate. Development would potentially occupy all of this view although much of the land is in a degraded condition.



3/2. View (panorama) looking north towards the site from Ram Lane. A typical agricultural view comprising an arable field. Mature trees and small woodland areas are evident in the middle distance. Existing development at The Mount is just visible behind the tree belt beyond the arable field. Glimpses of existing development are also visible in the far distance towards the left of the image. The higher ground of Kent Downs AONB is visible at the far horizon. The site occupies a central area of this view to the right of The Mount and largely screened by the existing tree belt. Development would potentially be partially visible or glimpsed in the central part of this view.



3/3. View (panorama) south east across the site from Hurstford Lane (Greensand Way). An agricultural view dominated by fields under arable cultivation, surrounded by more distant areas of woodland. This is an open, far reaching view across the site, which occupies a large part of the central area of the image. Much of the site features rectilinear, evenly shaped and sized fields for arable cultivation, divided by shelter belts. The existing tree belt is visible towards the centre of the site. The M20, which borders the site to the north, is visible to the left of the image and is a heavily urbanising influence, with traffic noise highly audible. It is likely that development would be prominent across much of the central area of this view and would significantly change the character of the rural landscape.



3/4. View (panorama) west across the site from the junction of Ram Lane and footpath AW54. Characteristic rectilinear fields and shelter belts are the main feature in this view. A dense hedgerow forms the boundary with Ram Lane to the left of the image. Mature trees, tree belts and woodland are further key features and form the horizon in the middle distance. The route of footpath AW45 follows the site boundary marked by modern fencing beneath the belt of conifers. A typically agricultural view with no visible evidence of development. Although there is residential development under construction immediately to the south. Development would be prominent in this view.

6.4 Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Site 3: conclusions

The site comprises predominantly arable farmland with a discrete area of woodland, including a number of small ponds and a stream, at the centre. A small area of the site to the east, adjacent to properties off the A20, comprises an area of grassland with sections of boundary hedgerow (which appear unmanaged). Dilapidated/derelict temporary structures, abandoned vehicles and debris are prominent detractors in this part of the site. Much of the wider site features geometrically arranged fields and shelter belts associated with commercial horticulture/agriculture. The southern boundary with Ram Lane is marked by dense native hedgerow for most of its length. To the west the boundary has no physical structure but follows the extent of the commercial growing plots. It turns north at footpath AW54 to follow an existing track before meeting the M20 motorway, which borders the northern boundary. The eastern boundary runs behind existing development off the A20 and skirts the commercial nursery buildings to rejoin footpath AW54 out to Ram Lane. Land to the south includes existing development along Ram Lane, which features a number of traditional buildings. New development is under construction in Ram Lane adjacent to part of the site's south eastern boundary. To the south and west is open countryside with occasional scattered traditional buildings. To the north, the M20 forms a physical boundary. Land further to the north includes existing development along the A20 at Westwell Leacon, and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. The land then rises sharply at the scarp of the North Downs. To the east is an area of mixed residential and commercial development along the A20.

The undulating topography, open aspect (from the west) and native hedgerow bordering Ram Lane are characteristic of the eastern part of the Wealden Greensand NCA. The eastern and northern boundaries are heavily influenced by the proximity of major roads (A20 and M20). The eastern part of the site lies broadly within local landscape character area Charing Heath Farmlands. However, it has an enclosed character and largely flat landform (view 3/1) and few characteristics associated with this character area. The majority of the site lies in character area Great Stour Valley. It reflects some, but not all of the key characteristics, specifically the *rectilinear field pattern divided by alder shelterbelts; proximity to the Great Stour river with narrow road crossings; ponds, tall hedgerows predominantly of hazel*. The southern part of the site along Ram Lane is illustrative of a *general sense of enclosure* associated with the valley topography. However, the western area dominated by rectilinear fields has no physical boundary to the west and has a much more open aspect when viewed from the Greensand Way. Two public footpaths run directly through the central area of the site. .

The visual context of the site is varied. To the south and east the site is more enclosed and partially visible. Parts of the site are in a degraded condition. To the west, open land rises to a ridge at Hurstford Lane/Greensand Way which offers extensive views eastwards into the site. Near views of the site are primarily from the footpaths. The site is visible from Ram Lane to the south (view3/4). Further west along Ram Lane views are filtered by landform and existing vegetation (view 3/2). The site is highly prominent in views from Hurstford

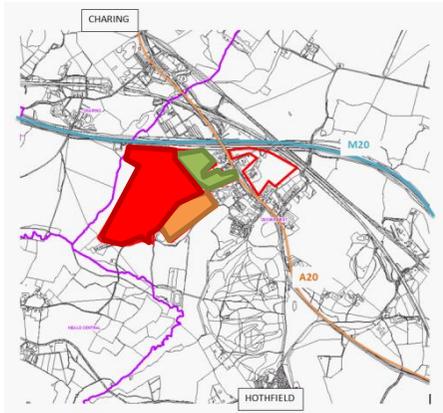
Lane/Greensand Way to the west, as part of expansive rural views. As is evident from view 3/3, there is potential for development on the central and western parts of the site to be widely visible from this viewpoint.

Development of the whole site would introduce a block of development on a scale substantially larger than surrounding existing development. It would potentially change significantly the land cover, land use and overall character of this site and the character of the footpaths, from rural to urban. Notwithstanding the existing influence of the M20, development would also be likely to change significantly the character of views from higher ground to the west (Greensand Way). The woodland belt across the centre of the site would screen development in the southern part of the site, and the more visually enclosed nature of this part of the site offers wider scope to mitigate potential landscape and visual effects. This part of the site is also influenced by the new development under construction at the south eastern boundary in Ram Lane, which would be expected to maintain an urbanising influence upon completion. The site is potentially visible from some publicly accessible viewpoints within the Kent Downs AONB. From more distant viewpoints (c. 1km), landform and scattered areas of woodland around the site may provide a full or partial screen (view 2/6). In conclusion, the visual effects of development are likely to be significantly adverse in the western part of the site, but less so in the area south of the tree belt.

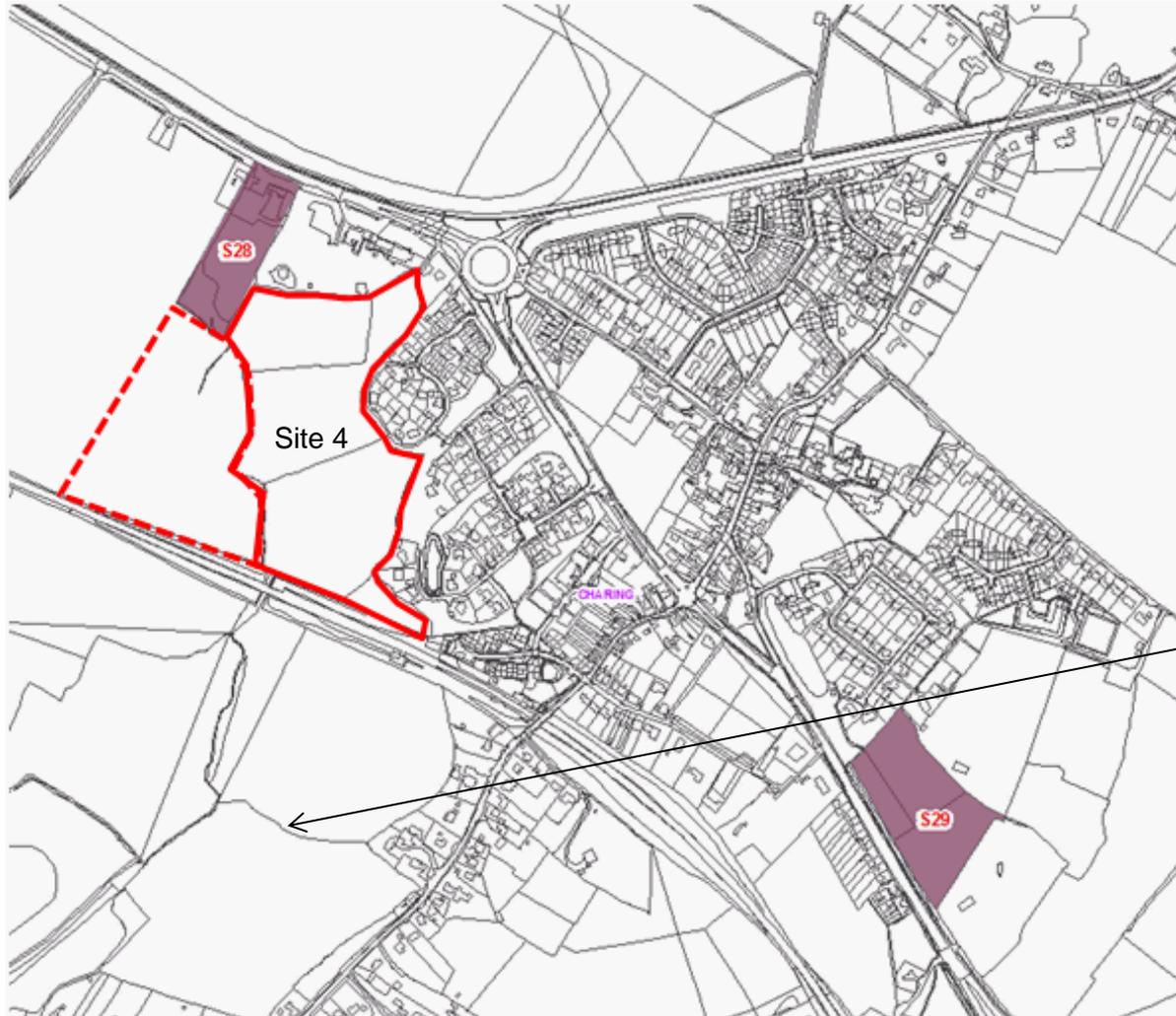
The retention of the river corridor would be a key consideration in any development of the site. Other features, principally internal shelter belts and hedges would be affected by development.

Conclusion:

Area east of tree belt and north of nursery: Green: site with limited landscape and/or visual constraints
Area south of tree belt by Ram Lane: Amber: site with moderate landscape and/or visual constraints
Area north and west of tree belt: Red: site with high landscape and/or visual constraints



7. Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Sites 4 and 5



7.1 Sites 4 and 5: Local Landscape Character Area (Ashford Landscape Character Assessment (ACLA), Jacobs, 2009):

Sites 4 and 5 fall within **Character Area 32 Charing Farmlands**, the key characteristics of which are described as:

- *Gently undulating landform*
- *Open views across arable landscape to the west with hedgerow loss*
- *Small woodland clumps and scattered farmsteads*
- *Narrow and deeply set streams, often marked by streamside native vegetation*
- *Railway line disturbs field pattern*
- *Use of local ragstone and flint within vernacular village centre of Charing*
- *Ragstone and flint Archbishop's Palace, and associated buildings and walling*
- *Recent development spreads out from the historic core of Charing*
- *Scattered farmsteads and large agricultural buildings*
- *Evidence of former quarrying activity*
- *Infrastructure routes of the A20 and railway line*

The description of this Character Area includes the following:

The topography is gently undulating, with panoramic views of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) visible from much of the area. Views within the area are restricted by built development within Charing and native deciduous woodland blocks to the east. To the west, views are more open across larger scale arable fields, punctuated by small woodland clumps and scattered farmsteads.

Enclosure is provided by native hedgerows which line minor roads and dissect fields in places. A degree of hedgerow loss has resulted in the use of post and rail fencing in some areas, and the line of the railway has altered historic field pattern.

To the east, the pattern of the landscape is much influenced by the urban edge of Charing and the route of the A20 in terms of field pattern and land use. Public open spaces and small fields used as arable land provide the immediate setting to Charing. An area of traditionally managed meadowland with layered hedgerows is located to the east of the church. To the west the landscape predominantly comprises intensively farmed arable land, although pockets of smaller scale pastoral land surround farmsteads, divided by post and rail

and post and wire fencing. Narrow and often deeply set streams flow through the landscape, often marked by streamside native vegetation. Land to the south east of Little Hook Farm appears to have been quarried, with remnant variations in topography and a small lake.

Charing comprises an ancient settlement which has developed at the scarp foot due to the line of springs that seep out from the junction of the chalk with the clay. The settlement is characterised by its vernacular buildings including timber framed houses, ornate brick gable ends and the use of local ragstone and flint within buildings and walling. The striking ragstone and flint Archbishop's Palace, and associated buildings and walling, is Grade 1 listed and dates back to the 12th century. In contrast, more recent brick housing is situated on the outskirts of the historic core of the village. Scattered farmsteads often comprise recent dwellings and large agricultural barns.

To the north, the busy A20 dissects Charing and continues along the northern edge of the character area along the foot of the Downs. The road is generally open with little highway vegetation and traffic movement is both audible and visible from the surrounding landscape. A railway line runs through the agricultural landscape, although this is not easy to discern from the surrounding landscape. However where minor roads cross its path, often via bridges constructed from red brick, the railway line and associated security fencing is evident.

The Assessment concludes that this Character Area is of high sensitivity:

Where they remain intact, hedgerows form distinct boundaries to the narrow lanes and divide some fields. The historic core of Charing, with its narrow streets and many vernacular buildings and use of traditional and local materials, provide strong local distinctiveness. However, more recent housing does not respect the local character and dilutes the sense of place. Narrow hedge lined lanes to the west form distinct and historic routes, running perpendicular to the raised ground across the Downs. Red brick bridges where the lanes cross the railway line provide a sense of continuity. The landscape is set within the foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Charing provides a distinct settlement of historic prominence, located along the Pilgrim's Way which runs along the North Downs from Winchester to Canterbury.

The overall guidelines for the area are to restore the landscape:

- *Conserve the rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB*
- *Conserve and restore vernacular building styles and materials*
- *Resist further expansion and development around Charing and the A20*

- *Conserve and appropriately manage woodland blocks*
- *Restore hedged field boundaries by appropriate management and replanting*
- *Avoid further arable intensification*
- *Encourage sympathetic field enclosure and restore historic boundary lines*
- *Encourage sympathetic fencing in association with the railway line*

7.2 Landscape, wildlife or other designations:

- None on sites.
- Kent Downs AONB lies within 0.5 -1km of the sites
- Numerous listed properties within 0.5 km east of the sites in Charing Village
- Archbishop's Palace Scheduled Ancient Monument approx. 500m to the east.
- Grade II listed building west side of Pluckley Road lies at site 5 eastern boundary. Two further GII listed buildings on east side of Pluckley Road.
- Pilgrim's Way/North Downs Way lies approx. 0.5-1km to the north at the base of Palace Scheduled Ancient Monument approx. 500m to the east.

7.3 Public access:

A public footpath AW35 enters site 4 from the south eastern corner by Hither Field and runs along the southern boundary before turning south through a tunnel under the railway embankment.

Footpath AW35 enters site 5 from the same tunnel and crosses a small corner of the site before exiting through the western site boundary and continuing westwards. A second footpath AW37 runs along the outside of the site 5's western boundary.



Site 4/1: View (panorama) looking west across the site from footpath AW35. An area of pasture dominates the foreground. The edge of the woodland belt at the south of the site is visible to the right. Recent development at the western edge of Charing is visible beyond the field boundary, which is formed of a gappy hedgerow and semi mature trees further to the west. The scarp of the North Downs is visible across the left and centre of the image. The residential edge of recent development influences the character of this otherwise largely rural, far reaching view. Development would potentially interrupt around 80% of this view.



Site 4/2: View (panorama) looking north across the site from footpath AW35. The view comprises an open field and boundaries formed of a mature hedgerow with some gaps, and occasional mature trees. The boundary vegetation filters views of recent development at the edge of Charing, which occupies the centre right of the image. The scarp of the North Downs is visible in the far distance. Development would potentially interrupt all of this view.



Site 5/1: View (panorama) south east from footpath AW35 across the site towards Pluckley Road. An open field dominates the view. Existing development of mixed age and style is visible on higher ground at the eastern site boundary, largely filtered by trees. A hedgerow dividing the site is visible across the centre right of the image. The southern part of the site, also comprising an open field, is just visible beyond. The existing building at the far right and distant hedgerow mark the site's southern boundary. A typical rural village edge view, relatively tranquil, although the rural character is partially compromised by modern fencing around the field boundary and modern development at the skyline. The village edge character is emphasised by views of distant woodland to the south and the landform which screens development further south along Pluckley Road. Development would potentially occupy all of this view, interrupt all distant views and significantly urbanise the character of the view.



Sites 4 & 5/1: View (panorama) south towards the sites from footpath within the Kent Downs AONB. The approximate extents of sites 4 and 5 are marked. An open, far reaching view across Charing and open countryside towards the Weald. The view has a largely rural character, with the settlement of Charing set among trees which filter views of existing development. The more recent development at the eastern village edge and along the A20 is visible. Site 4 is partially visible to the west of this. Site 5 lies to the south, partly on higher ground, and is more prominent. Development on site 4 would potentially be partially visible, but would be unlikely to change significantly the nature of the existing view or increase significantly the visible extent of the settlement. Development of site 5 would be prominent and would introduce a substantial block of new development which would create a substantially larger sense of settlement. The topography of the site is such that development is likely to be more prominent in this view than is the existing settlement.



Sites 4 & 5/2: View (panorama) south east towards the sites from footpath within the Kent Downs AONB. The approximate extents of sites 4 and 5 are marked. A similar view to 4 & 5/1. The view has a largely rural character, but the settlement of Charing is more visible from this viewpoint, especially more recent development at the eastern edge adjacent to site 4. As in viewpoint 1, development on site 4 would potentially be partially visible, but would be unlikely to change significantly the nature of the existing view or increase significantly the visible extent of the settlement. Development of site 5 would be prominent in this view and would introduce a substantial block of new development which would create a substantially larger sense of settlement.



Sites 4 & 5/3: View (panorama) towards Charing from footpath at the base of the scarp of the North Downs (within Kent AONB). The approximate extents of sites 4 and 5 are marked. An extensive open view across Charing and countryside beyond. The view has a largely rural character, but the recent development at the eastern end of Charing is prominent in comparison with filtered views of the remainder of the settlement. Development on site 4 would potentially be partially visible, but would be unlikely to change significantly the nature of the existing view or increase significantly the visible extent of the settlement. As in other viewpoints, development of site 5 would be prominent and would introduce a substantially larger sense of settlement.

7.4 Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment – Sites 4 and 5: conclusions

7.4.1 Site 4

Site 4 comprises largely flat, open grassland partially subdivided by mature hedgerows or copses. The existing edge of Charing follows much of the site's eastern boundary, partially separated from it by a gappy hedgerow. An area of old coppiced hazel and scrub lies at the south eastern corner of the site. There are also a few individual mature trees within the site. To the south the site is physically and visually enclosed by bordered by a watercourse and a railway embankment with associated security fencing. To the west is a dense hedgerow which separates the site from adjoining open countryside. To the north the site adjoins the rear of existing development along Maidstone Road. The site's landscape typically reflects some of the characteristics of the Hollingbourne Vale East character area: *a mix of sheep-grazed pasture and fields divided by gappy hedgerows with scattered trees; the Downs enclose the landscape to the north; small broadleaf copses are frequent.* These characteristics are also highlighted within local LCA, which also includes references to neighbouring development and infrastructure: *railway line disturbs field pattern; recent development spreads out from the historic core of Charing; infrastructure routes of the A20 and railway line.*

The dominance of the North Downs in views northward, and limited outward views elsewhere, are also characteristic: *panoramic views of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) visible from much of the area. Views within the area are restricted by built development within Charing and native deciduous woodland blocks to the east. To the west, views are more open across larger scale arable fields, punctuated by small woodland clumps and scattered farmsteads.* The site also exemplifies the impact of the A20: *the busy A20 dissects Charing and continues along the northern edge of the character area along the foot of the Downs. The road is generally open with little highway vegetation and traffic movement is both audible and visible from the surrounding landscape. A railway line runs through the agricultural landscape, although this is not easy to discern from the surrounding landscape. However where minor roads cross its path, often via bridges constructed from red brick, the railway line and associated security fencing is evident.* The sensitivity of views from the AONB is highlighted by the ACLA: *the landscape is set within the foreground to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Charing provides a distinct settlement of historic prominence, located along the Pilgrim's Way which runs along the North Downs from Winchester to Canterbury.*

Although currently undeveloped, and with extensive views of the North Downs, the site no longer retains a strong rural character. The proximity and visibility of existing development to the east, the railway embankment to the south and the audibility of road and rail noise are all detractors which increase the sense of an urban edge.

Visually the site is largely enclosed by vegetation and/or development to the east and west, by the railway embankment to the south and by existing development to the north, largely restricting publicly accessible near views to the footpath which runs along the site's southern boundary (views 4/1 and 4/2). The site is visible in more distant views from public footpaths within the North Downs (views 4&5/1/2/3). Its flat topography and location adjacent to existing recent development mean that the site is only partially visible in these views.

Development of the site would be likely to change significantly the character of the site and of the footpath by introducing built development and enclosing the footpath, thus removing wholly or in part existing views north. However, the site is already influenced by the proximity of residential development and infrastructure, and it is concluded that development could form a relatively natural extension to more recent development without significantly changing the character of the village edge. Viewed from the AONB, the site is a small, partially visible area adjacent to visible existing development. An increase in built form across the site (of a nature similar to existing neighbouring residential development) is unlikely to change significantly the scale of visible development or the character of the existing view. The landscape and visual effects of an increase in built development within the site on the setting of, or views from the AONB are therefore not considered to have significant adverse effects.

Development would result in the loss of some internal features such as the gappy hedges. It should be possible to retain the more significant individual trees and the area of scrub in the eastern part of the site as part of any development.

Conclusion:

Amber: site with moderate landscape and/or visual constraints



7.4.2 Site 5

Site 5 comprises two open fields in use as pasture, divided by a single dense hedgerow across the central part of the site from east to west. The site slopes east-west, rising from a hedgerow and watercourse along the western boundary to a ridge along Pluckley Road, where the site meets the rear boundaries of properties of mixed age and style which line the road. To the south the site is bordered by a hedgerow at the rear of properties along Charing Heath Road, to the north by the railway embankment, which separates the site from an area of grassland to the north and the western edge of the settlement of Charing (site 4). A footpath enters the site from the north by way of a tunnel under the railway embankment and crosses the north west corner of the site to follow the outside of the western boundary hedgerow, which separates the site from open countryside.

The site reflects characteristics of the Hollingbourne Vale East character area: undulating landform, pastoral land use and audible presence of transport corridors. Key characteristics described in local landscape character assessment are also present: *gently undulating landform; narrow and deeply set streams, often marked by streamside native vegetation; railway line disturbs field pattern; infrastructure routes of the A20 and railway line.* Other features, as described under site 4, are common to both sites: *views within the area are restricted by built development within Charing and native deciduous woodland blocks to the east; enclosure is provided by native hedgerows which line minor roads and dissect fields in places. A degree of hedgerow loss has resulted in the use of post and rail fencing in some areas, and the line of the railway has altered historic field pattern. To the east, the pattern of the landscape is much influenced by the urban edge of Charing and the route of the A20 in terms of field pattern and land use.*

The character of the site is largely rural. Development along Pluckley Road clearly indicates the settlement edge. Architectural styles vary from traditional to modern, and the rural character is partly compromised by unremarkable modern development on the skyline as seen from the footpath. However, more traditional styles sit within the village edge landscape setting, are set among mature trees and could not be described as an urban edge. Further south along Pluckley Road, vegetation and topography screen existing development as far as the existing house partially visible at the site's south eastern boundary.

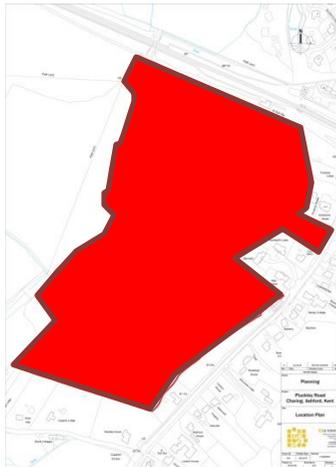
Visually the site is relatively enclosed. Views outward from publicly accessible points are limited by topography, vegetation and the railway embankment, with no views beyond the site boundaries north, east and south (view 5/1). From the North Downs, a large part of the site is visible beyond the railway embankment. The raised topography renders the site more prominent in these views than site 4 (views 4&5/1/2/3).

Development on this site would form a block which has no immediate relationship to the existing settlement edge and which would be of a scale which would significantly increase the size of the existing settlement. Unlike site 4, it would not form a natural extension to recent

new development within the area of the main settlement north of the railway line, but would alter the settlement pattern significantly by changing the nature of the existing village edge south of the railway line and introducing development in an area which is currently separated from the main settlement by the railway embankment. Viewed from the AONB, the site is a small part of a wide expansive view. However, its topography on a west-facing slope rising to the Pluckley Road ridge substantially enhances its visibility. Although the railway embankment forms a partial screen to the northern part of the site, almost all of the rest of the site remains clearly visible in views from the AONB. Development of the site would substantially increase the scale and extent of the settlement as viewed from the AONB. Topography is also likely to render development more visible in the long-term than other parts of the settlement, although this may be partially mitigated with appropriate landscape treatment. This appraisal concludes, however, that the landscape and visual effects of built development on the site are likely to be significantly adverse.

Conclusion:

Red: site with high landscape and/or visual constraints



8. Review of LVIA by fpcr for proposed development at Pluckley Road, Charing (site 5)

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was conducted in December 2016 by fpcr Environment and Design Ltd (fpcr) for Gladman Developments Ltd. with reference to proposed development at Pluckley Road, Charing comprising *245 new dwellings, a new access from Pluckley Road, and new green infrastructure including a new play area, allotments, balancing pond, footpath links and habitat creation areas.*

This appraisal includes a review of the LVIA conducted by fpcr and offers the following comments:

Methodology

The fpcr LVIA has been conducted in accordance with good practice as set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management).

The LVIA correctly identifies the relevant national, county and local character areas and designations for the site.

Landscape value

The LVIA includes as an assessment of the site's overall landscape value based on guidelines in GLVIA3 (Box 5.1, page 84). It concludes that *the site is considered to be of medium overall sensitivity and of medium landscape value. It is not designated and contains relatively few significant or particularly distinctive landscape features. It lies within the close context of the existing settlement edge of Charing.*

It is agreed that the site carries no landscape designations. However, the site does reflect elements of local landscape character and is considered to be important as part of the rural village edge setting of Charing. It is removed from the main village settlement by the physical and visual barrier formed by the railway embankment and would not form a natural extension to existing development.

The site is clearly visible in long-distance views from the Kent Downs AONB. As open countryside it contributes to the rural nature of the view which form the AONB setting.

Baseline visual assessment

Viewpoints:

The LVIA describes the visual amenity and appearance of the existing site by reference to a series of 26 selected viewpoints. This appraisal does not include an assessment of all 26 viewpoints. However, views from the footpath within the site (LVIA viewpoint 11) and from the North Downs (Viewpoints 24 and 25) appear to be correctly located on the basis of similar images taken for the purposes of this appraisal.

The images presented in the LVIA appear to take the form of a 180 degree panorama. This form of presentation tends to diminish the prominence of features such as individual buildings since it represents a far greater field of vision than can be perceived by the naked eye.

Baseline visual assessment:

The visual envelope (or Zone of Theoretical Visibility) indicated in Figure 6 of the LVIA is considered to be accurate. This appraisal considers that the most significant views are from the Kent Downs AONB. The LVIA visual baseline concludes *that there are views towards and from the Kent Downs AONB to the north of the A20. However from the AONB, and the North Downs Way/Pilgrims Cycle Trail, the site is seen in the context of the adjacent settlement.* This appraisal considers that the site, although occupying a relatively small part of the view, is more prominent than neighbouring settlement on account of the topography and is clearly visible as an area of open countryside.

Landscape and visual effects

The size of the site is such that the scale of proposed development (up to 245 dwellings) would form a substantial new area of built development which would change the character of the existing settlement, which is largely contained north of the railway line, and remove the sense of a settlement edge on Pluckley Road.

The LVIA concludes that *the site does not form part of the setting to the AONB as it is separated by both settlement and the strong line of the existing railway corridor.[..] The Kent Downs AONB covers a very wide area and the proposals effect [sic] a relatively small scale area. This in conjunction with the distance from the AONB, and the proposed landscape mitigation results in overall residual negligible effects on the AONB.* This appraisal considers that the site does form a part of the AONB setting as it is prominent in views across Charing from public rights of way within the AONB. The significance of effects on these views should not be underestimated. The change

in views as a result of development will be permanent, will create a sense of a larger settlement and introduce a greater urbanising influence. This appraisal considers that the overall residual visual effects would be likely to be at least minor adverse

LVIA Summary and conclusions

Among the conclusions drawn in the LVIA are that:

- *the site is represented by an agricultural landscape on the fringes of the settlement of Charing and its character is therefore inevitably influenced by its relationship with the urban edge. Various urbanising influences are present including Charing Station, platform, substation and railway, and to the east the adjacent edge of Charing. In overall terms, the development of the Site as proposed would give rise to residual moderate adverse landscape effects to the site and immediate landscape.*

This appraisal considers that the site is removed from the main settlement by the railway embankment and forms part of the rural southern village edge setting of Charing. Although there are urbanising influences in the form of visible and audible transport corridors, development along Pluckley Road is filtered by trees and is of varied age and style which suggests a largely rural edge of settlement. Despite the presence of some urban influences this remains a largely rural site.

- *the proposals are considered to have **minor adverse** residual effects on [Charing Farmlands] character area which includes land to the east and west of Charing*

This appraisal considers that the site reflects a number of elements of local landscape character and that the permanent change in land cover and land use and scale of development within the context of the existing settlement would be likely to give rise to moderate adverse effects.

- *The Kent Downs AONB lies 500m to the north of the site beyond the A20. The site is not visible from the lowest slopes of the AONB but becomes visible as the land rises up the ridge. The views out from the AONB look across the existing settlement of Charing, and the site is seen beyond this settlement. Views from the ridge are also effected by the east-west transport corridors of the A20 and M20. The site does not form part of the setting to the AONB as it is separated by both settlement and the strong line of the existing railway corridor. The significant proposed green infrastructure means that the proposals will be in accordance with the guideline for the AONB character area that suggests".....ensure any new development is integrated with hedgerow/hedgerow tree and copse planting". The Kent Downs AONB covers a very wide area and the proposals effect a relatively small scale area. This in conjunction with the distance from the AONB, and the proposed landscape mitigation results in overall residual negligible landscape effects on the AONB.*

This appraisal considers that the site does form a part of the AONB setting. It acknowledges the effects of existing transport corridors. However, views from the AONB are largely rural. The scale of the existing settlement, largely filtered by trees, is discernible within these views. The proposed development would potentially indicate a substantially larger settlement with development distinctly visible on the site. This appraisal concludes that the proposed development would potentially give rise to significant adverse landscape and visual effects on the AONB.