

Land at Eyhorne Street, Hollingbourne

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

On behalf of Cantium Land & Development Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Align Landscape Planning are instructed by Cantium Land & Development Ltd to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of 17 dwellings at land to the east of Eyhorne Street Hollingbourne (the 'Site'). The site location is illustrated on the **Site Location Plan** (SLP.001).

1.2. Approach

- 1.2.1. The purpose of this assessment is to objectively assess the proposed development in the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy environment.
- 1.2.2. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will take the following format:
- Review of the site's context in terms of landscape related policy, existing landscape character and the receiving visual environment;
 - Introduction of the proposed development, including the proposed landscape strategy;
 - Assessment of landscape and visual effects upon the existing receptors / resource and in relation to landscape related planning policy; and
 - The conclusions of the assessment will be set out.
- 1.2.3. The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the methodology that is included in Appendix 1. The methodology has been developed in line with guidance within Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), prepared by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and the Landscape Institute (LI) in 2013.
- 1.2.4. A suite of plans and photographs have been prepared to assist the assessment within this LVIA and these are referred to within the text. The photographs are included within Appendix 4.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1. The Site

- 2.1.1. The Site lies immediately adjacent to the established settlement of Hollingbourne, which lies approximately 3km to the east of Maidstone. Hollingbourne lies at the foot of the Kent Downs, which rises to the north east of the settlement. The Kent Downs National Landscape designation washes over the landscape and settlement which lies to the north of the railway line.
- 2.1.2. The Site is located adjacent to the more contemporary part of the settlement, away from the two historic cores. Recent developments at Godfrey Meadow and Brickfields Close are located to the west and south west, respectively, while the post-war / late 20th century residential development at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close lying to the north. The Site is separated from these latter developments by the railway line which passes through Hollingbourne. The railway station lies on the opposite side of Eyhorne Street, to the west of the Site. The Site is shown within its wider context on the **Site Location Plan** (SLP.001).
- 2.1.3. The Site comprises an enclosed, broadly rectangular parcel of arable land, which extends to the south east of Eyhorne Street. The railway line lies to the north east of the Site, while Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland lies to the south east. Godfrey House, a Grade II* listed property lies to the south west of the Site, set within a mature landscaped plot. To the rear of the property, a paddock extends to the south east and abuts the southern extent of the Sites south western boundary.
- 2.1.4. The Site is broadly flat with mature hedgerows defining the north western and south eastern boundaries. The well-vegetated embankments of the railway define the north eastern edge of the Site. The south western boundary is defined by a mix of mature tree planting associated with the grounds of Godfrey House, and a length of post and wire fencing with some scattered scrub. The Site is not publicly accessible, although it is noted that Footpath KH198/1 lies just to the south of the Site, crossing the paddock, between Culpepper Close and Eyhorne Street. The existing components of the Site and its setting are illustrated on the **Site Context Plan** (SCP.002).

2.2. The Site's Setting

- 2.2.1. As noted above, the Site lies immediately adjacent to the established settlement edge and comprises an enclosed parcel of intensively farmed arable land. Eyhorne Street lies immediately to the north west of the Site and forms the spine of the settlement, extend north east from the M20 corridor. The road corridor is set slightly lower than the Site and this, together with the

- boundary hedgerow, creates a degree of screening, containing views into and across the site from the streetscene. An area of woodland extends to the north west of the road corridor, with the access to Hollingbourne Station, and its associated car park, running through this area. The route is lit, providing year-round pedestrian and vehicular access between the settlement and the station.
- 2.2.2. The railway line, which is elevated where it passes the Site, and its vegetated embankments define the north eastern edge of the Site and create a degree of separation from the post-war / late 20th century residential estates that lie to the north. The vegetation and elevated railway corridor also create a sense of enclosure and contain longer distance views to the north. A pedestrian tunnel under the railway lies to the east of the Site, providing access for Footpath KH198/1 which runs between the residential areas either side of the railway. Eyhorne Street passes beneath the railway line immediately to the north west of the Site, with the road connecting the settlement which extends to the north and south of the railway corridor.
- 2.2.3. The residential estates at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close lie immediately to the north of the railway line, occupying a parcel of land between Eyhorne Street and the railway. Residential development extends back from the road corridor, with Culpepper Close running broadly parallel to Eyhorne Street and extending to the south east. The Cardwell Pavilion and Lance Memorial Recreation Ground lie to the north of the residential estate, creating a defensible edge and separating this part of the settlement from the more established townscape around Upper Street which lies to the north. The development at Culpepper Close extends further east, along the railway corridor than the Site as can be seen on the **Site Context Plan** (SCP.002)
- 2.2.4. Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland lies to the south east of the Site, extending across a number of fields to the south. The Site is afforded a degree of separation from this area by a mature hedgerow and established trees. This planting also contains views into the Site from Footpath KH198/1 as one enters Hollingbourne Meadows from Culpepper Close, to the north. Hollingbourne Meadows is characterised by areas of long sward grassland through which a network of mown permissive paths has been established. Recent tree planting creates an avenue around and across the northern parcel and the existing field boundaries have been brought under a comprehensive management regime. Hollingbourne Meadows extends to the south west with the network of permissive paths connecting the adopted public rights of way that extend out of Hollingbourne to the east.
- 2.2.5. As noted above the Site abuts two parcels of land to the south west: a paddock used for the grazing of livestock and the plot associated with Godfrey House, a Grade II* listed building. The paddock extends to the south west of the Site and is characterised by improved grassland. Established hedgerows define the south eastern and south western boundaries of the paddock

creating a degree of separation from the wider Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland. Godfrey House comprises a large detached dwelling set within a mature landscaped plot, which fronts onto Eyhorne Street. The Heritage Statement which accompanies this planning application undertakes a detailed assessment of the property and the potential effects of development within the Site. A contemporary residential development, Brickfields Close, lies immediately to the south of Godfrey House, extending back from Eyhorne Street to create development at depth. The parcel of land to the south east of this development, which backs onto the paddock, is allocated for development within the Adopted Local Plan Review (site LPRSA204). Other contemporary residential development extends south west, along both sides of Eyhorne Street, towards the southernmost Conservation Area associated with Hollingbourne.

2.2.6. **Settlement Pattern** – Hollingbourne has an elongated and dispersed character, having grown along the Eyhorne Street corridor, with more recent developments extending between two historic cores. The settlement extends to the north east of the M20 corridor with an established core focussed along Eyhorne Street to the south west of the Site. This part of the settlement initially had a linear character, but more recent developments have extended the settlement back from the road corridor, to create development at depth, as well as extended the settlement along Eyhorne Street to the north east, towards the Site. The railway line splits the settlement, with the post-war / late 20th century housing at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close located on the opposite side of the railway line to the Site. An area of mature treescape and an arable field separate this more recent development from the more established properties around Church Green, Upper Street and Pilgrims Way. This part of the settlement is covered by a second Conservation Area and forms the northern extent of the settlement.

2.2.7. Godfrey Meadow and Brickfields Close represent some of the more recent additions to Hollingbourne and lie just to the west and south west of the Site, respectively. Both developments comprise a mix of contemporary detached and semi-detached dwellings which extend back from Eyhorne Street creating a sense of development at depth. Other recent developments existing within this southern half of the settlement, including the development at Grove Mill Place and Tile Fields Close. The more recent developments have been informed by the local vernacular and include a simple, sympathetic materials palette including red brick, pale render and hung tiles.

2.2.8. **Vegetation Cover** – Hollingbourne and the Site lie within a well-vegetated landscape, with significant tree cover associated with the settlement as well as larger blocks of woodland extending to the east and west. Mature hedgerows define the network of fields that extend out from the settlement. Within the context of the Site, the field pattern is small / medium scale, associated with predominantly pastoral land uses. To the north of the railway, and across the downland of the Kent Downs, the scale of the landscape increases where the prevailing land

use is arable and fields have been enlarged. The field pattern is generally irregular, even where field boundaries have been lost. The vegetation cover associated with the Sites boundaries and the wider setting creates a compartmentalised character, resulting in a sense of enclosure and a reduction in intervisibility within the lower lying landscape.

- 2.2.9. **Topography** – The Site, and settlement to the south of the railway line lies within a gently undulating landscape at the foot of the Kent Downs. The land rises to the north of the railway line, becoming steeper to the north of Pilgrims Way and forming the south facing scarp slope of the Downs. The undulating character of the Sites setting, together with the significant vegetation cover, contributes to the sense of enclosure within the localised landscape.
- 2.2.10. **Public Rights of Way** – The main body of the Site is not publicly accessible, however, Footpath KH198/1 crosses the paddock to the south west of the Site. The post and wire fence and scattered scrub which defines the southern part of the Sites boundary results in a degree of intervisibility between this section of the footpath and the Site. The footpath extends south west from Culpepper Close, passing under the railway and extending towards Grove Mill Cottage. Several other public footpaths extend out from the eastern side of Hollingbourne, creating links to Coombe Wood and across the M20 corridor, towards Leeds Castle. In addition, as noted above, there is a network of permissive paths across the landscape to the south east and south of the Site associated with Hollingbourne Meadows. These routes create links between the adopted public rights of way. The local public right of way network is illustrated on the **Site Location Plan** (SLP.001).

2.3. Landscape Related Policy Background

- 2.3.1. The Site is covered by the saved policies of the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Review (Adopted 2024).
- 2.3.2. The Site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations. However, it is noted that the Kent Downs National Landscape designation washes over the landscape to the north of the railway line. The transport corridor forms a defensible boundary to the designation which extends north across the scarp slope of the Kent Downs, towards the prominent ridge. While the Site lies outside of this designation, the setting of the National Landscape must be considered.
- 2.3.3. Policy LPRSP14(A) deals with the Natural environment, covering landscape, ecology, drainage and geology. The policy seeks to protect positive landscape character from inappropriate development and ensure that significant adverse impacts are avoided. The policy requires

proposals to take account of the published landscape character assessment and the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan.

- 2.3.4. It is noted that the Kent Downs National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee have prepared a position statement regarding the “setting” of the designated landscape (first published 2018, updated 2024). The position statement refers to Policy SD8 of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021 - 2026 which states:

“Ensure proposals, projects and programmes do not negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the Kent Downs AONB.”

- 2.3.5. The Position Statement then sets out a series of guidelines to ensure that the setting of the Kent Downs is conserved and enhanced, stating that:

“The best way to minimise adverse impacts on the setting of the National Landscape is through avoidance of harm in the first place by making sure that schemes conserve and enhance the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape. Many issues can be resolved through careful design and incorporation of appropriate mitigation and/or management measures, such as:

- **care over orientation, site layout, height, scale and massing of structures and buildings to minimise impact when viewed from the National Landscape;**
- **appropriate densities to allow for significant tree planting between buildings;**
- **consideration not just of the site but also the landscape, land uses and heritage assets around and beyond it;**
- **careful use of colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces;**
- **restraint and care over the installation and use of external lighting including street lighting, to prevent harm to the dark night skies of the National Landscape. Where essential, lighting should be well-directed and full cut off and of low level in form and lumen intensity;**
- **the grouping of new structures and buildings close to existing structures and buildings to avoid new expanses of development that are visible and out of context; and**
- **detailed mitigation and management measures, for example including native landscaping that is locally appropriate (and contributes to Biodiversity Net Gain) and noise reduction.”**

2.3.6. There are no heritage or ecological designations associated with the Site, although it is noted that the neighbouring property, Godfrey House, is Grade II* listed. The Heritage Assessment that accompanies this application assesses the potential effect of development upon this property. The Site is well separated from the 3 Conservation Areas associated with Hollingbourne.

2.4. Landscape Character

2.4.1. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as “...**an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors**”.

2.4.2. As set out within “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Christine Tudor, Natural England; October 2014) “**landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.**”

2.4.3. As part of the baseline assessment, published landscape character assessments have been identified and reviewed and these form the basis of the assessment of the landscape character of the site.

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

2.4.4. Natural England have prepared the Character Map of England which provides a broad assessment of landscape character at a regional level. The site lies within the “Wealden Greensand” national character area (NCA 120). An extract of the assessment is included within Appendix 2.

2.4.5. It is noted that the assessment identifies a number of key characteristics, including:

- **“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.**
- **Semi-natural habitats include: remnant lowland heathland, mostly concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and West Surrey; the wetlands associated with the River Arun in West Sussex; and unimproved acid grasslands found in commons, parklands, heathland and other areas of unimproved pasture.**
- **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.**
- **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."**

2.4.6. The regional assessment is useful in introducing the wider landscape character context in which the site is set.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

2.4.7. At a more local level, Maidstone Borough Council have undertaken the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2013) which forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. The Assessment breaks the Borough down into 7 landscape character types (LCTs) which are then sub-divided into 58 more localised landscape character areas (LCAs). The Site lies within the "Eyhorne Vale" LCA which extends between Hollingbourne and Harrietsham, covering the

landscape which lies either side of the railway, to the north of the M20. It is noted that the wider settlement to the south west lies within the neighbouring “Leeds Castle Parklands” LCA, while the historic core of Hollingbourne, to the north of the railway, is located within the “Thurnham Vale” LCA. The Site, and residential development associated with Troys Mead and Culpepper Close, are located at a pinch point between the two adjoining LCAs. An extract from the published assessment is included within Appendix 3.

2.4.8. The assessment identifies a number of key characteristics associated with the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA which include:

- **“Landscape to north of the railway line is situated within the Kent Downs AONB**
- **Mixed woodland belts and blocks**
- **Willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches**
- **Narrow lanes which generally run against the contours south west to north east**
- **Distinctive brick railway bridges**
- **Major infrastructure routes along the south western periphery”**

2.4.9. The assessment acknowledges the presence of the more recent housing to the north of the Site and the railway, but notes that the wider LCA is sparsely populated. The published assessment concludes that the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA is of High sensitivity. This is supported by the 2015 Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment. The Landscape Capacity Study echoes the findings of the Council’s character and assessment and concludes that the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA is sensitive to change. This does not preclude development, as much of the borough is identified as sensitive to change within this assessment, but means that any new development must consider the key characteristics and sensitivities of the receiving landscape.

2.4.10. The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment goes onto the set out a series of guidelines to assist the restoration and enhancement of this landscape, which include:

- **“Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vales (see below)**
- **North of the railway line, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint**
- **Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A**
- **Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB**
- **Conserve distinctive brick railway arches and maintain using like for like materials**
- **Avoid screening with coniferous planting**

- **Conserve characteristic oak, ash and beech hedgerow trees and isolated oaks within arable land, and plant new hedgerow trees and isolated specimens to replace ageing examples**
- **Conserve distinctive willow trees along watercourses**
- **Conserve the traditional setting of listed buildings and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting**
- **Avoid infill development and expansion across the downland at Harrietsham and Hollingbourne”**

2.4.11. For reference the guidelines for the Gault Clay Vales, which cover the wider landscape type include:

- **“Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB**
- **Conserve the species rich hedgerow boundaries and promote enhanced species diversity within hedgerows where this has been weakened**
- **Avoid the use of single species hedgerows and shelterbelts within this landscape, where species rich hedgerows are so prevalent**
- **Where possible, woodland habitats should be increased and the historic hedgerow network should be reinstated. Woodlands should be linked through replacing post and wire fences with species rich hedgerows**
- **Encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to increase invertebrates and farmland bird communities**
- **Encourage extensive grassland and crop management by use of Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship grants**
- **Encourage extensive grazing regimes to restore grassland present to semi improved and ultimately unimproved grassland**
- **Conserve and enhance, through appropriate management, existing lowland dry acid grassland. Refer to Maidstone’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1: 2009–2014 HAP 2 Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and Heath**
- **Encourage the extension of lowland dry acid grassland within opportunity areas identified within the Kent Living Landscapes data (Kent Wildlife Trust) and illustrated in Figure 8**
- **Conserve the undeveloped rural landscape, which forms an appropriate setting to the spring line settlements**
- **Consider views towards any proposals from the elevated North Downs scarp”**

2.4.12. These guidelines have informed the design development of the proposed layout and the landscape proposals.

Site-specific Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.4.13. A more focussed assessment of the localised landscape character of the site and its immediate setting has also been undertaken, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Maidstone Borough Council.
- 2.4.14. The Site comprises an enclosed parcel of arable land immediately adjacent to the established settlement of Hollingbourne. The Site lies within the context of the more contemporary parts of the settlement, with more recent developments located either side of Eyhorne Street to the west and south west of the Site. Development also lies to the north of the Site, with the development at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close extending to the north also further east than the Site. Hollingbourne has an elongated character, having developed sporadically along Eyhorne Street. Development within the latter half of the 20th and early part of the 21st centuries has filled in some of the gaps, between the 2 Conservation Areas at either end of the settlement. These more recent developments have also introduced a sense of development at depth, extending back from the road corridors. Residential land use is an existing component of the Sites setting, with the more recent additions complementing the local vernacular by adopting a simple palette of materials which reflect the more established properties within Hollingbourne.
- 2.4.15. The north western and north eastern boundaries of the Site are defined by established transport corridors which not only affect the perceived tranquillity of the Site and its setting but create robust and defensible boundaries. The elevated nature of the railway line, together with the well-vegetated boundaries creates a compartmentalised character and a sense of enclosure. This containment is reinforced by the established vegetation on the Sites south eastern boundary and the mature landscaped plot of Godfrey House to the south west. The well-vegetated setting of the Site reduces intervisibility with the wider landscape setting.
- 2.4.16. The railway line, and residential estates immediately beyond, separate the Site from the wider, rising landscape of the Kent Downs. The landscape becomes more open to the north, where a larger scale network of arable fields characterise the downland and steeper slopes of the Kent Downs scarp slope. The M20 corridor to the south of the settlement, separates Hollingbourne from the parkland landscape associated with Leeds Castle. The motorway, while not visually evident within the context of the Site is audible and reduces the tranquillity of the landscape setting.
- 2.4.17. This is a well-vegetated landscape with significant tree and woodland cover. This established vegetation assists the integration of the settlement into the wider landscape and while views of the existing built environment are possible from the wider landscape, seen in the context of the

rising landform to the north, the built form is not prominent and is nestled within the well-vegetated landscape at the foot of the slope.

- 2.4.18. As part of the landscape character assessment, there is a need to assess the susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity of the landscape resource. These assessments will inform the objective assessment of effects within Section 4.2 and ensure that a transparent and objective approach to the assessment is achieved. GLVIA3 defines landscape susceptibility, landscape value and landscape sensitivity, as follows:

“Susceptibility: the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences;

Landscape Value: the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons;

Sensitivity: a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”

Landscape Susceptibility

- 2.4.19. In terms of the susceptibility of the localised landscape receptor, the Site and its immediate setting are visually well-enclosed as a result of the well-vegetated landscape and the adjacent settlement and associated transport corridors. This enclosure reduces intervisibility with the wider landscape setting. The Site lies immediately adjacent to the established settlement which lies at the foot of the wider Kent Downs scarp slope, with residential developments located to the north, south west and west. The Site does not extend out into the wider rural landscape beyond the perceived settlement edge. The presence of Eyhorne Street, the railway line and M20 corridor reinforce the settled nature of the landscape and influence the perceived tranquillity of the Sites setting. Residential uses and contemporary development characterise this part of Hollingbourne and the localised setting of the Site.
- 2.4.20. The Site lies outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape, with the well-vegetated railway corridor creating a robust and defensible edge to the designation, physically and visually separating the Site from the wider, rising landscape to the north. The well-0vegegated setting of Hollingbourne and the Site ensures that views where the Site is seen in the context of the wider designated landscape are limited. Where visible, the Site is seen within the context of the wider settlement, with the properties on Troys Mead and Culpepper Close forming a backdrop and extending the perceived presence of Hollingbourne to the north and east of the Site.

2.4.21. The Site is not subject to any ecological designations and is well-separated from the Conservation Areas associated with Hollingbourne. It is noted that Godfrey House, lies adjacent to the Site, however, the listed property lies within an established landscaped plot which contains views into the Site from the house and ensures that the Site is not perceived as part of the wider landscape setting of the property. The Site is not publicly accessible and is separated from the wider Hollingbourne Meadows to the south east.

2.4.22. It is considered that the Site has the ability to accommodate sensitively designed residential development and has a **Medium** susceptibility to change.

Landscape Value

2.4.23. In terms of value, GLVIA3 identifies a series of criteria which are generally accepted as being appropriate indicators of landscape value. This is supported by the updated assessment within the Landscape Institute’s Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations. Table 1, below, assesses the landscape value of the Site and its immediate setting against the various criteria identified within the TGN.

Table 1: Baseline Analysis of Landscape Value

Value Criteria	Assessment
<i>Natural Heritage</i>	Medium / Low – The established boundary hedgerows are of some landscape and ecological merit. The majority of the Site, comprising arable land, is of limited ecological interest.
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	Medium - There are no heritage assets associated with the Site. It is noted that Godfrey House lies just to the west of the Site and comprises a Grade II* listed property which fronts onto Eyhorne Street. However, the property is set within a mature landscape plot and does not look out onto the Site or the landscape to the south west. Hollingbourne has 3 Conservation Areas, however, the Site is physically and visually well separated from these designations as a result of the compartmentalised and well-vegetated character of the landscape together with the intervening, more contemporary townscape to the north and south.
<i>Landscape Condition</i>	Medium – The Site and its immediate setting have evolved over the past 100 years, with the settlement extending north east along Eyhorne Street.

	<p>Contemporary residential development characterises the localised setting of the Site and adopts a sympathetic palette of materials which reflect the local vernacular. Historic field boundaries remain and are evidenced by the established hedgerows and scattered hedgerow trees.</p>
<i>Associations</i>	<p>Low – There are no known associations with the Site or its immediate landscape setting. The presence of Godfrey House is noted, however, the property is located within a well-vegetated plot with little / no relationship to the Site.</p>
<i>Distinctiveness</i>	<p>Low – There are no rare elements or features associated with the Site or its immediate setting that do not exist elsewhere within the wider landscape context. Similarly, there are no characteristics or features associated with the Site or its immediate setting that are considered particularly important examples.</p>
<i>Recreational</i>	<p>Medium – The Site is not publicly accessible, however, Footpath KH798/1 crosses the paddock just to the south west, with views across the Site from a short section of this route. There are several public rights of way this extend out into the wider landscape to the south of the Site from Hollingbourne. In addition, there is a network of permissive footpaths associated with Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland which extends to the south east and south of the Site.</p>
<i>Perceptual (scenic)</i>	<p>Medium – This is a settled landscape, with numerous human influences, notably the built form to the north, south west and west and the transport corridors which abut the north western and north eastern boundaries. The Site is separated from the larger scale, more open landscapes to the north by the well-vegetated setting and the residential estates on the northern side of the railway. Mature vegetation, together with the built environment and elevated railway corridor, creates a compartmentalised landscape and a sense of enclosure. The established vegetation contributes to a vegetated skyline in some of the more localised views. The compartmentalised character of the landscape ensures that views towards the Site are localised and there are few opportunities where the Site is seen against the backdrop of the elevated Kent Downs landscape.</p>
<i>Perceptual (wildness & tranquillity)</i>	<p>Medium / Low – As noted above, this is a settled landscape with the Site located within the settlement fringe of Hollingbourne. Development</p>

	<p>associated with the settlement extends to the north, south west and west. The road corridor, railway line and M20 influence the perceived tranquillity of the Site visually and audibly. Streetlights extend along Eyhorne Street and the access to Hollingbourne Station ensuring that the Site lies within a lit environment.</p>
<p><i>Functional</i></p>	<p>Medium – It is acknowledged that the Site lies within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, however, the well-vegetated railway line corridor creates a robust and defensible edge between the enclosed parcel of the Site and the wider elevated landscape that extends to the north. The Site does not form a key component to the setting of the wider designated landscape and is perceived within the context of the wider settlement to the north, north east and south. The Site itself has been intensively farmed, reducing the contribution it makes to the Green Infrastructure network of the borough.</p>

2.4.24. As an overview, it is considered that the overall value of the site, and the landscape in which it is set, is **Medium**. The Site and its immediate setting do not incorporate any features of characteristics that elevate it above ordinary countryside and it is considered that the landscape in which the site is set does not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of para 187a of the NPPF. The presence of the Kent Downs National Landscape to the north of the railway line is acknowledged, however, the Site is physically and visually separated from the designation and it must be accepted that if the Site and its setting shared the special qualities of the wider designated landscape they would have been included within designation.

Landscape Sensitivity

2.4.25. Overall, in terms of sensitivity, when the judgements of susceptibility and value are considered, it is concluded that the sensitivity of the landscape in which the site is set is **Medium**.

2.5. The Visual Environment

2.5.1. As part of the initial desk study a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis was undertaken to understand the potential visibility of the proposals within the wider landscape setting. This analysis is based on bare earth data, i.e. does not take into account above-ground features such as buildings, boundary enclosures or vegetation and, as such, represents a worst case scenario. However, it forms a useful tool to introduce the wider visual environment of the Site and informed

- the site visit. The viewshed analysis is illustrated on **Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan (ZTV.003)**.
- 2.5.2. The ZTV indicates that views towards the site are relatively localised as a result of the undulating topography of the area. Some longer distance views are theoretically possible from the rising landscape of the Kent Downs to the north and to the west of Leeds Castle to the south west. However, much of the area from which views are theoretically possible is not publicly accessible. Furthermore, as noted above, the ZTV does not include above ground features such as built form and vegetation cover. The site visit confirmed that, in reality, the well-vegetated setting of the Site significantly reduces intervisibility. Intervening distance also reduces the perception of the Site within the wider landscape when viewed from longer distances.
- 2.5.3. During the site visit, a number of key views were identified from publicly accessible locations which illustrate the Site in its localised and wider landscape context. The viewpoints seek to reflect the views of the Site by more sensitive receptors, such as walkers on the local Public Right of Way network, however, the viewpoints are considered representative and not exhaustive.
- 2.5.4. The viewpoints are illustrated on the **Viewpoint Location Plan (VLP.004)** within **Appendix 4**. The photographs were taken in April 2025. The day was bright with good visibility at longer distances.
- 2.5.5. The photographs were taken with a Canon 35mm equivalent digital SLR. The camera is a full frame sensor model so, in line with Landscape Institute TGN 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals, the photographs were taken at 50mm with a fixed focal length lens. The photographs are presented within **Appendix 4: Photographic Record** at a scale whereby they can be viewed at a distance of 260mm to represent the view from the particular location. The extent of the site is indicated on the photographs to assist the viewer's understanding of where the site sits within the context of the view. It must be noted that the photographs are illustrative and do not replace visiting the viewpoints in person.
- 2.5.6. As part of the baseline visual assessment, key receptors have been identified and this has informed the overall assessment of sensitivity of the view. Table 2, below, identifies the locations, receptors and sensitivities of the key viewpoints.

Table 2: Baseline Visual Assessment

Viewpoint	Location	Key Receptors	Receptor Sensitivity
1	Eyhorne Street, where it passes beneath the railway crossing, approximately 10m to the north of the Site.	Motorists & pedestrians	Medium
2	Eyhorne Street at the junction to the station car park, approximately 10m to the west of the Site.	Motorists & pedestrians	Medium
3	Eyhorne Street opposite Godfrey House, approximately 50m to the west of the Site.	Motorists & pedestrians	Medium
4	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows, approximately 45m to the south east of the Site.	Walkers	High
5	Footpath KH198/1, immediately to the south west of the Site looking north.	Walkers	High
6	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows, approximately 140m to the south of the Site.	Walkers	High
7	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows, approximately 330m to the south west of the Site.	Walkers	High
8	Footpath KH200/2, approximately 505m to the south of the Site.	Walkers	High
9	Footpath KH198, just off Culpepper Close, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 60m to the north east of the Site.	Walkers	High
10	Pilgrim's Way, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 840m to the north east of the Site.	Walkers & riders	Very High
11	Footpath KH142A/2, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 1,280m to the north east of the Site.	Walkers	Very High

2.5.7. As illustrated by the Photographic Record, views of the site are localised as a result of the topography, adjacent built environment and extensive vegetation cover that characterises the immediate setting of the site. The identified views illustrate the compartmentalised character of

the Sites setting which reduces opportunities for middle / longer distance views from the south, where the Site is seen against the backdrop of the elevated Kent Downs National Landscape (refer Viewpoints 6, 7 & 8). The presence of the elevated railway line and extensive tree cover to the north of the corridor contain views of the Site from the designated landscape to the north, including from more elevated areas on the Kent Downs scarp slope (refer Viewpoints 10 & 11). Section 4.3 of this LVIA assesses the potential effects of the proposals upon these views.

3. THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. The proposals comprise up to 17 dwellings with access taken from Eyhorne Street to the west. GDM Architects have prepared a detailed layout which has been informed by the various technical studies that accompany this application to ensure a high quality, landscape-led scheme is delivered. The layout forms the basis of the proposed landscape scheme and an extract is set out below at Figure 2.



Figure 1: Extract from the proposed Planting Plan

- 3.2. The proposals have been informed by the landscape and arboricultural assessments to ensure that appropriate offsets from the well-vegetated boundaries are achieved, with the development adopting a positive outward looking layout. This ensures that the existing boundary trees and hedgerows would be unaffected by the proposals and that the development does not appear to turn its back on the wider setting, avoiding the creation of a hard built edge defined by back garden fencing. The retention of the boundary planting ensures that the proposals would be introduced into a mature landscaped context from the outset, assisting their assimilation into the setting of the wider Kent Downs National Landscape and ensuring that a robust and defensible buffer between the proposed development and Godfrey House is maintained. The boundary planting would be reinforced with a scheme of native tree and hedgerow planting to ensure the long term vegetated setting of the Site. The species selected would complement the existing vegetation associated with the LCA to ensure that the proposals complement and reinforce the existing vegetated character.

- 3.3. The proposals would enhance the southern extent of the south western boundary, which is currently defined by gappy scrub and a post and wire fence. New native tree planting and a mixed native hedgerow would be established along this section of the boundary to ensure an appropriate interface between the proposals and the footpath to the south west is achieved as well as enhancing habitat connectivity between the established south eastern boundary and the vegetated boundaries of Godfrey House.
- 3.4. An area of multi-functional green space envelops the development, providing opportunities for play, informal recreation, SUDS and habitat creation. A gently meandering footpath runs through this space providing opportunities for informal recreation and play. The open spaces would incorporate a variety of landscaping, with more naturalised, native planting to the outer edges to create a high quality transition with the neighbouring land uses, and ornamental planting within the loop to create a high quality setting for the dwellings and a pleasant environment in which to live and play.
- 3.5. The landscape proposals have been developed in co-ordination with the project ecologists, Adonis Blue, to ensure that the proposed planting contributes positively to the creation of habitats and biodiversity. The arable nature of the current Site ensures that there are significant opportunities here to deliver notable enhancements in terms of biodiversity. Such enhancements would include species-rich, neutral grassland, seasonal wetland and native scrub planting to ensure an appropriate transition between the development and Hollingbourne Meadows. The landscape proposals would ensure that the 20% net gain required by the Maidstone Local Plan Review is exceeded, while the proposed hedgerow planting would result in a gain of over 670% of linear features.
- 3.6. The proposals would be set well back from Godfrey House, with an area of landscaped open space, which includes a SUDS basin, creating an appropriate buffer to the listed building and its well landscaped plot.
- 3.7. The proposals would also be set back from the north east and south eastern boundaries, ensuring that an appropriate offset from the railway line, and its associated vegetation embankments, is achieved, as well as a sympathetic landscaped transition between the development and the community woodland to the south east.
- 3.8. Access will be taken from Eyhorne Street on the north western boundary and would require the removal of a short section of the boundary hedgerow. The access has been located to minimise effects upon the trees on this boundary and it is noted that the hedgerow that would be affected is not particularly biodiverse. The proposals would establish a new, mixed native hedgerow behind the visibility splays, following the estate road into the Site. This would not only mitigate the loss on the road frontage but also create a high quality approach to the development which complements the well-vegetated character of the Sites setting.

3.9. A significant amount of work has gone into developing a sensitive scheme and the landscape proposals look to celebrate the development rather than hide it away from the wider landscape setting. The Design & Access Statement sets out that the proposals would incorporate a simple, recessive palette of materials that complement the local vernacular. Red brick, hung tile and natural timber weatherboarding are all characteristic of the local townscape, with properties adopting a mix of slate and clay tile roofs. The proposed built form would adopt a traditional form, incorporating features that are characteristic of the local area such as gable dormers, clipped gable roofs and exposed rafters. The proposals have been informed by the localise townscape which is characterised by a variety of traditional and more contemporary properties and adopted a sympathetic appearance to ensure that they can be successfully integrated into the receiving landscape and visual environment.

4. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. In line with the guidance in GLVIA3, it is appropriate to assess the effect of the proposed development upon the baseline landscape character and visual environment as identified in Section 2 of the LVIA.

4.2. Effect upon Landscape Character

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.1. With regard to the effect of the proposals upon the “Wealden Greensand” national character area (NCA 120), the Site lies within the settlement fringe of Hollingbourne, an established settlement within this character area. While the proposals would introduce built form into the Site, they would be located within a well-enclosed parcel of land within a distinctly settled landscape. Receptors are already aware of the settlement, which extends to the north, north east and south of the Site, and the sympathetic design of the proposals would ensure that the proposed development does not give rise to the perception of Hollingbourne extending out into the wider rural landscape or up the more sensitive slopes of the Kent Downs. The scale of the proposals, together with their location adjacent to established residential developments, would ensure that they do not give rise to the perception of an intensification of urban uses within the NCA. The proposals would not adversely affect the more rural character of this NCA which exists away from the established settlements.
- 4.2.2. The proposals would protect the key characteristics of the NCA and would not adversely affect the characteristic topography, land uses, vegetation cover, heritage or recreational aspects of this landscape. The proposals would not introduce any new or alien features into this landscape setting or compromise any of the existing positive characteristics or features. Nor would the proposals affect the ability to achieve the Statements of Environmental Opportunity identified within the published assessment.
- 4.2.3. Overall, it is concluded that the proposed development can be integrated without detriment to the character and qualities of the “Wealden Greensand” NCA. It is concluded that the effect of the proposals upon the NCA would be Neutral.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

4.2.4. As noted within Section 2, the site is located within the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA as identified within the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment. The published assessment identifies a number of key characteristics which define this LCA, as well as a series of distinctive features, and it is considered appropriate to assess the likely effect of the proposals against each of these to understand the overall effect upon the character area (refer Table 3 below).

Table 3: Effect on Published Landscape Characteristics

Key Characteristics of the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA	Effect of the Proposals
<i>Landscape to north of the railway line is situated within the Kent Downs AONB</i>	Neutral – The Site lies to the south of the railway line and would not adversely affect the perceived setting of the designated landscape. The Sites setting is already characterised by residential scale built form, with the development at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close defining the southern edge of the Kent Downs within the immediate context of the Site. Where visible from the south, the proposals would be perceived within the settled context of the lower landscape and would not adversely affect the rising downland or elevated ridge which forms a backdrop in middle / longer distance views.
<i>Mixed woodland belts and blocks</i>	Neutral / Negligible Beneficial – The proposals would not affect any existing woodland. While the proposed development would not include any woodland planting, it would include significant new tree planting that would contribute positively to the well-vegetated character of the LCA.
<i>Willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches</i>	Neutral – The proposals are located away from nearby drains and ditches and would not affect the perceived presence of willows along these features.
<i>Narrow lanes which generally run against the contours south west to north east</i>	Neutral – The proposals would maintain the enclosed character of Eyhorne Street where it abuts the Site. While it is acknowledged that the proposed access would require the removal of a short section of hedgerow, the proposals would

	incorporate replacement native hedgerow along the frontage and into the Site. The proposed built form is set well back from the road corridor and the meandering estate road ensures that views into the Site can be filtered by areas of native shrub and proposed trees. The proposals would ensure that the enclosed, sylvan character of the streetscene is conserved.
<i>Distinctive brick railway bridges</i>	Neutral – While there are two railway bridges either side of the Site, the proposals would not affect these features directly, nor would they harm the immediate setting or the public’s perception of the infrastructure.
<i>Major infrastructure routes along the south western periphery</i>	Neutral – The proposals are set back from the M20 corridor and would not elevated the presence of the motorway or railway line. The Site lies to the south of the railway, with the elevated, vegetated corridor creating physical and visual separation from the rising, designated landscape to the north.

4.2.5. As set out above, it is considered that the proposals would conserve the key characteristics and distinctive features identified within the published assessment as defining this LCA. Indeed, the proposals present an opportunity to enhance the well-vegetated character of the LCA through a comprehensive scheme of tree planting. While it is acknowledged that the wider settlement to the south west lies within the adjoining LCA, residential development associated with Troys Mead and Culpepper Close are within the “Eyhorne Vale” LCA. The proposals would not introduce new or alien components into this context, located adjacent to the established settlement, rather than the more remote landscapes to the south east.

4.2.6. The published assessment sets out a series of guidelines to conserve and enhance the character of the “Eyhorne Vale”. The proposals would be located outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape designation, to the south of the railway line. The proposals would be located within the immediate setting of the established residential development at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close ensuring that, where glimpsed, they would not be perceived within the undeveloped foreground of the scarp slope. The proposals would not adversely affect the public’s perception of the designated landscape in wider views from the south, or views from within the Kent Downs National Landscape looking out. Where visible in views from the south, the proposed roofscape would be glimpsed, nestled within a mature vegetated setting. Roofscape associated with the developments to the north already characterise these views and, as such, the proposals would not affect the qualities of these views. The presence of this existing

development, together with the compartmentalised and well-vegetated setting of the Site would ensure that the proposals do not give rise to the perception of Hollingbourne extending out into the wider landscape or be perceived as expanding development across the downland between Hollingbourne and Harrietsham. The proposals would conserve the perceived rural setting of the settlement.

- 4.2.7. The proposals would retain the existing boundary hedgerows, with the exception for a very short section to facilitate access. However, as noted in Section 3, the proposed landscape scheme presents significant opportunities to establish new, species-rich native hedgerows that would not only contribute to conserving the perceived field pattern but also mitigate for the loss on the Eyhorne Street frontage. The proposals would also include a comprehensive, site-wide management plan for the existing and proposed landscaping. This would ensure that the retained hedgerows are brought under an appropriate management regime to ensure the long term upkeep of these features.
- 4.2.8. The proposals present significant opportunities for enhanced landscaping across the Site including tree planting, seasonal wetlands and native, neutral grassland. The tree planting would reinforce the boundary hedgerows as well as creating spatial variety within the open spaces and placemaking within the development. The planting would incorporate a mix of predominantly native species with some ornamental trees amongst the dwellings. The proposals would not include any uncharacteristic conifer planting. The Site is currently under arable use and is of limited ecological merit. The proposals would look to establish areas of unimproved, lowland dry acid grassland which would contribute positively to the presence of this habitat within this part of the LCA.
- 4.2.9. As set out within the Heritage Assessment, the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the setting of Godfrey House. The property is not perceived from the wider setting and the mature, landscaped plot ensures that views of the listed building from Eyhorne Street are localised. The proposals would be set back from the road frontage, ensuring that the perceived setting of Godfrey House is not adversely affected.
- 4.2.10. As set out above, it is considered that the proposals would not affect the key characteristics identified within the published assessments or give rise to the perception of development extending out into the wider, more sparsely settled LCA which lies to the south east. The proposals would also comply with the guidelines set out within the published assessment.
- 4.2.11. It is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the loss of a small parcel of arable land and the introduction of a residential development into this well-enclosed parcel of land. However, the Site lies on the edge of the LCA, immediately adjacent to the established settlement of

Hollingbourne, which includes more contemporary development. The Site is well enclosed as a result of the adjoining transport corridors, built environment and mature vegetated setting, separating it from the wider landscape of the LCA which extends to the south east. While there would be some change within the context of the Site, this would not adversely affect the character, and public's enjoyment, of the wider LCA. Any perceived effects would be highly localised and would not affect the perception of this transitional landscape at the foot of the Kent Downs scarp slope. It is considered that the proposals would represent a negligible magnitude of change, resulting in a Negligible Adverse effect at Year 1. However, the comprehensive scheme of landscaping that would include new tree planting and creation of neutral grassland, would mitigate these initial negative effects ensuring that the proposals could be integrated into the "Eyhorne Vale" LCA without long term adverse effects. By Year 15, it is considered that the effect would be Neutral / Negligible Beneficial.

Site-specific Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.12. As set out within Section 2 of this LVIA, a more focussed assessment has also been undertaken looking at the localised landscape character of the Site and its setting, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England and Maidstone Borough Council. The assessment within Section 2 concludes that the overall sensitivity of the landscape receptor in which the Site is set is Medium.
- 4.2.13. The Site lies within a well-enclosed parcel of land immediately adjacent to the established settlement of Hollingbourne. The mature vegetation cover associated with the boundaries, together with the presence of the built up areas extending to the south north, north east, south west and west, and the defensible boundaries of Eyhorne Street, the railway line and Godfrey House, ensure that the proposals would not be perceived as extending the settlement out into the wider rural landscape. The well-vegetated, elevated railway corridor also physically and visually separates the Site from the Kent Downs National Landscape which extends to the north. The well-vegetated setting of the settlement, sat at the foot of the scarp slope, ensures that it is not prominent, with the built environment nestled amongst the mature treescape. The proposals would be introduced into a mature landscaped context from the outset and would maintain the character of the surrounding settlement.
- 4.2.14. Hollingbourne has an elongated, dispersed character with the Eyhorne Street and Upper Street Conservation Areas defining the southern and northern extents of the settlement, respectively. More recent developments have extended north east, along Eyhorne Street, with most development focussed to the south of the railway line. The developments at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close extend the more contemporary settlement to the north of the railway line but remain well-separated from the northern historic core. Brickfields Close and Godfrey Meadow

lie to the south west and west of the Site, respectively, and represent some of the most recent additions to the settlement, reinforcing the characteristic of the settlement extending along Eyhorne Street. The proposals would conserve this settlement pattern comprising a parcel of land which fronts onto Eyhorne Street, between existing residential developments to the north and south. The recent developments introduce development at depth into the streetscene, with properties extending back from Eyhorne Street. Again, the proposals would reflect this character, with the existing developments to the north ensuring that the proposals do not extend any further south east than the existing settlement envelope. It is concluded that the proposals would conserve the settlement pattern of Hollingbourne and would not give rise to the perception of the settlement extending out into the wider rural landscape beyond its established extents.

- 4.2.15. The proposals would reflect the density of the more recent developments within the localised townscape setting, ensuring that they conserve the urban grain of the settlement. The proposed properties would adopt a more traditional character and appearance, with the dwellings incorporating architectural features and a palette of materials that complement the local vernacular. The use of red brick, pale render, hung tiles and timber weatherboarding are characteristic of this part of Kent and the proposals would represent a complementary addition to the existing settlement.
- 4.2.16. As noted above, it is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the loss of an area of arable land, however, this is not particularly characteristic around the settlement edges, with land typically comprising pasture. The loss of the arable land would not affect the perceived character of the wider rural landscape, due to the compartmentalised character of the Site and its immediate setting. The proposals would not result in the loss of any trees and would require the removal of just a short section of hedgerow to facilitate the access onto Eyhorne Street. However, the proposals would incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping to mitigate the loss of hedgerow as well as ensure that biodiversity is enhanced. The creation of areas of neutral grassland would represent a positive addition to the localised landscape, creating seasonal visual interest as well as significant biodiversity gains. The proposed native tree, species-rich hedgerow and native shrub planting would also reinforce the well-vegetated character of the localised setting, enhancing habitat connectivity and assimilating the built form into the landscape.
- 4.2.17. The retained and reinforced south eastern and south western boundary planting would ensure that a sense of separation between the settlement and the Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland is maintained. It is acknowledged that the proposals would be glimpsed from some localised viewpoints within the community woodland, but within these views the proposals would be seen against the backdrop of the developments to the north and within the context of the wider settlement to the south. The presence of the settlement adjacent to the wider community

woodland will be reinforced as and when the allocated site (to the south west of the Site) comes forward. The proposals would not adversely affect the qualities, or the public's enjoyment, of Hollingbourne Meadows.

- 4.2.18. The proposals would not affect the perceived topography of the area and, given the compartmentalised character of the Site and its immediate setting, the loss of a small parcel of arable land, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, would not affect the rural character of the wider landscape. The proposals are located away from the elevated landscape, which rises to the north of the railway line, within a gently undulating topography at the foot of the scarp slope.
- 4.2.19. It is acknowledged that the proposals would represent a degree of change within the context of the Site itself as a result of the change of use. However, change need not equate to significant harm, and the proposals must be assessed within their context, rather than in isolation. Residential development characterises the immediate setting of the Site and the proposals would reflect the recent growth and settlement pattern of Hollingbourne. It is considered that the proposals would give rise to a medium magnitude of change at Year 1, within the context of the Site itself, resulting in an effect of Moderate Adverse significance. This is not considered significant. As the landscaping matures, including the areas of neutral grassland, this would assist the assimilation of the proposals, softening the perceived built edges, mitigating the low level loss of existing planting and delivering significant net gains in biodiversity. By Year 15, it is concluded that the effect of the proposals upon the landscape character of the Site would be Minor Adverse.
- 4.2.20. Beyond the boundaries of the Site, the compartmentalised character of the local landscape would ensure that the perceived effects are highly localised. Beyond the immediate setting, the undulating, well-vegetated landscape would ensure that change within the Site is largely, not perceived. Where the proposals are perceived, they would be seen in the context of the surrounding settlement, with the roofscape of Troys Mead and Culpepper Close located to the north and the recent developments on the eastern side of Eyhorne Street evident to the south. The proposals would not introduce any new or alien components into this landscape. As such, it is considered that the proposals would result in a low magnitude of change within the localised setting, where the proposed development is visible, equating to a Minor / Moderate Adverse effect at Year 1. As the proposed landscaping matures, it would assimilate the development into this landscape setting, reflecting the wider townscape, nestled within a mature landscaped context and would not appear prominent or out of character. The comprehensive landscape scheme would also enhance the well-vegetated character of Hollingbourne and its setting which would further mitigate the initial adverse effects. As such, by Year 15, it is considered that the

effect of the proposals upon the localised landscape setting would be Negligible Adverse / Neutral. This is not considered significant.

4.2.21. In conclusion, the proposals would conserve the key characteristics and distinctive features that define the landscape setting of the Site, as identified by the various published assessments. The proposals adopt a sympathetic and high quality approach to the layout and would include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which contributes positively to landscape character and biodiversity. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated in this location without any long term, notable adverse effects upon the “Wealden Greensand” NCA, “Eyhorne Vale” LCA” or immediate landscape setting.

4.3. Effect upon the Visual Environment

4.3.1. Table 4, below, assesses the effect of the proposed development upon the identified key views which are included within Appendix 4.

Table 4: Assessment of Visual Effects

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
1	Eyhorne Street, where it passes beneath the railway crossing, approximately 10m to the north of the Site.	Medium	Low / Negligible	<p>Negligible Adverse at Year 1</p> <p>Neutral / Negligible Beneficial at Year 15</p>
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the proposals would be largely obscured by the infrastructure associated with the elevated railway line. To the north of this viewpoint views of the proposals would be screened. As illustrated by this view, Godfrey House is not evident on the approaches from the north as one passes the Site.</p> <p>The proposed built form within the Site would be located off to the left of the view and would not be evident as one approaches this part of Hollingbourne from the north. The proposed access would be evident, with a short section of the existing hedgerow removed to construct the junction. However, the proposals would establish a new, species-rich hedgerow along the top of the bank, with an area of native shrub and tree planting behind, extending into the Site. As the landscape proposals mature they would reinforce the sylvan character of the streetscene and the sense of enclosure.</p>				

2	Eyhorne Street at the junction to the station car park, opposite the Site.	Medium	Medium	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location the proposed access would be evident in the foreground of the view, affording a framed view into the Site. The proposed north westernmost properties would be visible, but would be set back over 60m from this viewpoint, ensuring that they do not appear prominent or overbearing. The set back would ensure that the mature treescape associated with Godfrey House and the railway remain the key features, reinforcing the well-vegetated setting of the Site.</p> <p>The proposals include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which includes species-rich native hedgerows along the north western boundary and extending into the Site, as well as areas of native tree and shrub planting. As the proposed treescape matures it would filter views of the proposed built form and reinforce the sylvan character of the streetscene in this location. The proposals would not adversely affect the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape which lies to the north of the railway line, to the left of the view.</p>				
3	Eyhorne Street opposite Godfrey House, approximately 50m to the west of the Site.	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Adverse at Year 1
				Neutral / Negligible Beneficial at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the mature landscaped grounds of Godfrey House would contain views of the proposals from the outset. The presence of evergreen species within the gardens ensures that views would be contained all year round. The timber framed, listed property lies to the right of the view, with the substantial vegetation cover within the gardens of the north east of the house separating the dwelling from the proposed access onto Eyhorne Street, to the left of the view. The proposed access would be glimpsed but would not notably change the character or qualities of the streetscene. As the proposed planting matures it would reinforce the sylvan character of Eyhorne Street, mitigating any initial adverse effects.</p>				
4	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows,	High	Negligible / Low	Minor Adverse at Year 1

	approximately 45m to the south east of the Site.			Negligible Adverse / Neutral at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the dense nature of the planting associated with the south eastern boundary of the Site would contain views of the proposals from the outset, even during the winter. Some filtered, glimpsed views of the roofscape associated with the south easternmost properties would be possible during the finer upper canopies, however, the proposals would not break the vegetated skyline. The proposals would not affect the setting of Hollingbourne Meadows and the sense of separation will increase as the recent planting within the community woodland matures and reinforces the south eastern boundary of the Site. Furthermore, as the proposed planting within the Site matures this would reinforce the vegetated setting of the Site and further assimilate the proposals.</p>				
5	Footpath KH198/1, immediately to the south west of the Site looking north.	High	Medium	Major / Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Minor Adverse at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> The proposals would be evident within the context of this view taken from the footpath immediately to the south west of the Site. The open nature of this section of the Site boundary results in an increased degree of intervisibility. The proposals would be set back from this boundary with an area of landscaped open space defining the foreground and the proposed built form beyond. It is acknowledged that the proposals would change the view, although it is noted that residential built form is an existing component of the wider view, with views of the roofscape associated with Troys Meadow and Culpepper Close glimpsed beyond the railway corridor. The existing built form ensures that the wider settlement represents a component within the setting of the footpath.</p> <p>The proposals would reinforce this boundary with a new, species-rich hedgerow which extends between the mature vegetation associated with Godfrey House and the established hedge on the south eastern boundary, enhancing habitat connectivity and creating a robust and defensible edge to the Site. As the proposed planting matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the well-vegetated character of the Sites setting.</p> <p>It is noted that the rising landscape of the Kent Downs is not evident from this location and the proposals would not harm the perceived setting of the National Landscape.</p>				
6	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows,	High	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1

	approximately 140m to the south of the Site.			Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the proposals would be glimpsed in the middle distance beyond the south eastern boundary. The proposals would not appear prominent or overbearing and would not break the vegetated skyline created by the vegetation to the north of the railway line. As with Viewpoint 5, glimpsed views of the development to the north are possible and ensure that the settlement is an existing component of the view. The proposals would be set down in the view and would not compete with the rising landscape of the Kent Downs to the north. It is considered that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to the perceived setting of the National Landscape.</p> <p>As the proposed landscaping along the south western boundary and within the development matures, it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the well-vegetated setting of the Site and the community woodland. The proposals would be set well back from this location ensuring that the proposals would not affect the recreational qualities of Hollingbourne Meadows.</p>				
7	Permissive footpath within Hollingbourne Meadows, approximately 330m to the south west of the Site.	High	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<p><i>Assessment:</i> Similar to Viewpoint 6, the proposed development within the south eastern part of the Site would be glimpsed in the middle ground of the view, beyond the south western boundary. The proposals would not appear prominent or overbearing and would not break the vegetated skyline created by the treescape within the wider setting to the north. Indeed, the proposals would be nestled down in the landscape amongst the well-vegetated setting. Where visible, the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider settlement which is evident to the left of the view and also beyond the railway corridor. The existing development associated with Hollingbourne extends further east than the proposals, with the development to the south west of the Site located closer to the receptor. The proposals would not affect the public's appreciation and enjoyment of the wider Kent Downs landscape and would not affect the perception of the distinct landform of the scarp slope that forms the backdrop to the view.</p> <p>As the proposed landscaping within the public open space and along the south western boundary matures it would assimilate the proposed built form and reinforce the well-vegetated setting of the landscape which characterises the foreground of the Kent Downs.</p>				

8	Footpath KH200/2, approximately 505m to the south of the Site.	High	Low	<p>Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1</p> <p>Negligible Adverse at Year 15</p>
<p><i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoints 6 and 7, the proposals would be glimpsed at Year 1 but would be set down in the landscape, nestled amongst the established vegetation that characterises the Sites setting. Where glimpsed the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider settlement that extends to the left and right of the Site. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline and would not compete with the rising landscape which forms the backdrop to the view. The proposals would be perceived within the settled foreground and would conserve the undeveloped downland that emerges from the wooded lower landscape.</p> <p>As the proposed landscaping matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the vegetated setting of Hollingbourne. The proposals could be integrated without detriment to the setting of the settlement and the wider Kent Downs National Landscape.</p>				
9	Footpath KH198, just off Culpepper Close, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 60m to the north east of the Site.	High	No Change	Neutral
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location, the intervening elevated railway corridor would contain views of the proposals from the outset. The proposed built form is set back from the north eastern boundary and would not break the skyline of the view. The proposals would not affect the framed view along the footpath through into Hollingbourne Meadows beyond the railway. The proposals would not affect views out of the National Landscape from this location.</p>				
10	Pilgrim's Way, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 840m to the north east of the Site.	Very High	No Change	Neutral
<p><i>Assessment:</i> From this location within the National Landscape the proposals would be screened by the intervening treescape associated with the well-vegetated setting of the settlement. The settlement is an existing component of the view, with residential development glimpsed amongst the mature</p>				

<p>vegetation cover, but is not prominent. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline and could be integrated without detriment to the view or the public's appreciation and enjoyment of the wider setting of the National Landscape.</p>				
11	<p>Footpath KH142A/2, within the Kent Downs National Landscape, approximately 1,280m to the north east of the Site.</p>	Very High	No Change	Neutral
<p><i>Assessment:</i> Despite the elevated position of the viewpoint, located on the upper slopes of the Kent Downs, the intervening vegetation cover that characterises the settling of Hollingbourne contains views of the Site and would ensure that the proposals are screened. There could be a heavily filtered, glimpsed view of the proposed roofscape within the south eastern part of the Site, during the winter, however, this would be seen in the context of the wider development which lies to the north of the railway line. The proposals would not extend the perceived presence of the settlement and would not affect views out of the National Landscape or an appreciation of its wider setting. It is concluded that the proposals would conserve the special qualities of the National Landscape.</p>				

- 4.3.2. As an overview, the visual assessment demonstrates that the well-vegetated setting of the Site, when combined with the gently undulating landscape and the presence of development to the north and south west, reduces intervisibility and means that views of the proposed development would be localised.
- 4.3.3. The primary views would be from Eyhorne Street immediately to the north west (refer Viewpoint 2) and Footpath KH198/1 immediately adjacent to the Site (refer Viewpoint 5). The proposals would be visible from these locations and introduce built form into the context of the Site, but would be set back from the north western and south western boundaries with areas of landscaped open space defining the foreground and the proposed built form beyond. It is acknowledged that the proposals would change the views, although it is noted that residential built form is an existing component of the wider view, with views of the roofscape associated with Troys Meadow and Culpepper Close glimpsed beyond the railway corridor. The existing built form ensures that the wider settlement represents a component within the setting of the Site. The proposals would reinforce the boundaries with a new, species-rich hedgerow creating a robust and defensible edge to the Site. As the proposed planting matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the well-vegetated character of the Sites setting. As such, while there would be some initial notable adverse effects upon views from the footpath to the south, the settled and well-vegetated setting of the Site, together with the opportunities to landscape the proposals would mitigate the perceived adverse effects. As the landscaping

matures, the proposals would be assimilated into the receiving landscape and the initial adverse effects would be reduced. Any residual adverse effects would be low level and highly localised. The rising landscape of the Kent Downs National Landscape is not a component within these views and the proposals would not affect the perceived setting of the designation.

4.3.4. The proposals would also be visible from some middle distance views from the public right of way network to the south (refer Viewpoints 6, 7 & 8). The proposals would be glimpsed at Year 1 but would be set down in the landscape, nestled amongst the established vegetation that characterises the Sites setting. Where glimpsed the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider settlement that extends to the left and right of the Site. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline and would not compete with the rising landscape which forms the backdrop to the view. The proposals would be perceived within the settled foreground and would conserve the undeveloped downland that emerges from the wooded lower landscape. As the proposed landscaping matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the vegetated setting of Hollingbourne. The proposals could be integrated without detriment to the setting of the settlement and the wider Kent Downs National Landscape.

4.3.5. In terms of views out from the Kent Downs National Landscape, the mature vegetation cover and wider setting to the north of the Site would contain views of the proposals from the designated landscape (refer Viewpoints 10 & 11). The proposals would not affect the public's perception of the wider setting of the Kent Downs or their enjoyment of the designated landscape.

4.3.6. In conclusion, while the proposals would result in some short term, notable adverse effects, the enclosed character of the Site's setting ensures that these would be highly localised and limited to the immediate setting. The proposals would not give rise to any notable effects upon views from the wider setting and would not affect views towards or from the Kent Downs National Landscape. Furthermore, the sympathetic design and inclusion of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping would ensure that any initial adverse effects are tempered and it is concluded that the proposals would not result in any long term, notable adverse visual effects.

4.4. **Effect upon Landscape Related Policy**

4.4.1. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the Site and its setting, to the east, south and west, are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations. It is acknowledged that the landscape to the north of the elevated railway line lies within the Kent Downs National Landscape designation, washing over the historic core of Hollingbourne and the more recent additions at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close.

- 4.4.2. As set out in Section 2, there are no features or characteristics associated with the Site that elevate it above ordinary countryside. As such, it is considered that the site and its immediate setting, outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape, do not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of Para 187a of the NPPF.
- 4.4.3. Para 187b of the NPPF requires development to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without long term adverse effects upon those landscape receptors which characterise the site and its wider landscape setting. It is concluded that the proposals will not harm the intrinsic character or beauty of the countryside in which the site is set.
- 4.4.4. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, Policy LPRSP14(A) of the Adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review relates to the natural environment and is a multi-faceted policy covering landscape, ecology, drainage, pollution and soil quality. The policy identifies a series of criteria which new development should meet and Table 5 assesses the proposals against the landscape related criteria.

Table 5: Assessment of compliance with Policy NE4

Landscape related criteria set out within Policy LPRSP14(A)		Do the proposals comply?
1b	<i>developers will ensure that new development incorporates measures where appropriate to protect positive landscape character, including Landscapes of Local Value, areas of Ancient Woodland, veteran trees, trees with significant amenity value, important hedgerows, features of biological or geological interest, ecosystem services and the existing public rights of way network from inappropriate development and avoid significant adverse impacts as a result of development through the provision of adequate buffers and in accordance with national guidance.</i>	Yes – The proposals would not directly affect any of the identified positive landscape characteristics. It is acknowledged that there would be views of the proposals from a short section of Footpath KH198/1 to the south of the Site, however, the proposals would be set back from the south western boundary, beyond an area of landscaped open space. The proposals would reinforce the south western boundary with a species-rich hedgerow and native tree planting to ensure that significant adverse effects are avoided.

6c	<i>A landscape and visual impact assessment to take full account of the significance of, and potential effects of change on, the landscape as an environmental resource together with views and visual amenity.</i>	Yes – The initial landscape and visual assessment was undertaken at an early stage of the design development of the proposals to ensure that the emerging design was informed by the character and appearance of the receiving landscape. This initial work ensured that potential significant adverse effects were designed out and a landscape-led approach was adopted from the outset.
7	<i>Any required publicly accessible open space should be designed as part of the overall green and blue infrastructure and layout of a site, taking advantage of the potential for multiple benefits including increased physical activity, enhanced play, wildlife, sustainable urban drainage, tree planting and landscape provision. The form and function of green and blue infrastructure will reflect a site's characteristics, nature, and location.</i>	Yes – The proposals incorporate a network of multi-functional green spaces around the Site that would not only deliver informal recreation space but also SUDS features and habitat creation. The inclusion of a comprehensive landscape scheme would ensure that the proposals are integrated into the well-vegetated landscape setting of Hollingbourne as well as delivering the required 20% biodiversity net gain.
12	<i>Account should be taken of the council's Landscape Character Guidelines SPD, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.</i>	Yes – As set out within this assessment, the proposals have been informed by the guidelines set out within the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Assessment. The proposed development has also been informed by the guidance and requirements of the Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan and the supporting Position Statement on Setting.

4.4.5. As set out above, it is considered the proposals would comply with the criteria set out within Policy LPRSP14(A). It is noted that this is not a “no harm” policy and recognises that some development will give rise to adverse effects. The policy expects development to avoid adverse effects, where possible, and where this isn’t an option that any identified adverse effects are mitigated. As set out above, it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in some highly localised adverse landscape and visual effects. However, the proposed layout has been carefully designed to minimise these effects through the creation of a network of multi-functional,

landscaped green spaces, with the built form set back from the boundaries to ensure that as the landscaping matures it not only assimilates the proposals but also enhances the well-vegetated setting of the Site. The assessment concludes that any residual adverse effects would be low level and not significant.

Setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape

4.4.6. As noted within the baseline assessment, the Site lies outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape. However, national and local policy expects development outside of these designations to conserve the setting and natural beauty and it is noted that within the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update 2020, the study identifies development within the setting of the National Landscape as a force for change, stating that:

“...the greatest pressure is for development outside the AONB, but visible from it, or within the setting of the AONB when viewed from the south. This includes commercial development along the A20/ M20 corridor. There is also currently rapid expansion of settlements just outside the AONB (for example at Lenham, Charing and Harrietsham) which impact on the landscape and also on traffic levels.”

4.4.7. The Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan identifies a number of high level special qualities that define the overall Kent Downs, these include:

- Dramatic landform and views; a distinctive landscape character
- Biodiversity-rich habitats
- Farmed landscape
- Woodland and trees
- A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage
- The Heritage Coasts
- Geology and natural resources
- Tranquillity and remoteness

4.4.8. A detailed character assessment of the Kent Downs landscape has also been undertaken as part of the evidence base for the Management Plan. The assessment breaks the National Landscape down into a number of landscape character types which are then sub-divided into landscape character areas. The character area which defines the Kent Downs National Landscape to the north of the railway line and the Site, is identified as the “Detling to Eastwell” LCA within the wider “Hollingbourne Scarp & Vale” LCT. An extract from the assessment is included within Appendix 5. The assessment identifies a series of characteristics that define this part of the National Landscape and it is considered appropriate to assess the effect that the proposals could have upon these characteristics, and their perception from the wider setting, to

understand the potential effect of the proposals upon the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape. This assessment is set out below in Table 6.

Table 6: Effect of the proposals upon the characteristics of the “Hollingbourne Scarp & Vale” LCT of the Kent Downs National Landscape

Characteristics of the “Hollingbourne Scarp & Vale” LCT	Effect of the Proposals
<i>Underlying geology of Cretaceous chalk on the scarp, and gault clay in the vale. Also pockets of sand and gravel within superficial deposits</i>	Neutral – The proposals would not affect the underlying geology of the area.
<i>Landform comprises steep south-facing chalk scarp, often concave in profile, with lower-lying vale to the south. A series of dry valleys give the scarp a smooth, rolling profile.</i>	Neutral – The broadly flat Site would ensure that the proposed development would not require any significant ground remodelling that would affect the public’s appreciation of the distinct topography of the area.
<i>Springs emerge at the base of the scarp, at the junction of chalk and clay, feeding streams, ponds and wetland areas.</i>	Neutral – The proposals are not located near to any chalk streams and are set back from the base of the scarp slope. The proposals would not affect the hydrology of the area.
<i>Distinctive scarp woodlands with a high proportion of evergreen species. Rare box and yew woodlands in the west. Roadside and hedgerow trees add to the treed appearance of the Vale, particularly around villages</i>	Negligible Beneficial – The proposals would retain the key treescape associated with the Site and would incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping that would include the planting of a number of native trees across the Site, including within the boundary hedgerows. The proposed landscaping would ensure that the well-vegetated character of the area is enhanced.
<i>Distinctive field pattern of large regular fields within the most fertile agricultural land at the base of the scarp. Smaller and less regular field patterns around villages.</i>	Neutral – The Site is located away from the medium / large scale arable landscape that characterises the scarp slope. The proposals would be located within the well-enclosed parcel of the Site and would not extend beyond the established boundaries, ensuring that the perceived field pattern is conserved.

<p><i>Semi-natural habitats include chalk grassland, woodland and scrub on scarp, and ponds, streams and wetlands in vale.</i></p>	<p>Neutral – The Site is currently characterised by intensively farmed arable land. The boundary hedgerows form the only habitats of note associated with the Site. The proposals would establish new areas of species-rich grassland and seasonally wet basins.</p>
<p><i>Historic network of lanes and tracks, including the Pilgrims' Way which follows the scarp. Norman castle at Thurnham occupies a commanding position overlooking the vale.</i></p>	<p>Neutral – The proposals are set back from the Pilgrims Way which passes through the northern extent of Hollingbourne. The proposals would preserve the sylvan character of Eyhorne Street. The Site is located well away from the Norman castle at Thurnham.</p>
<p><i>Distinctive settlement pattern of attractive springline villages within the Vale, some of which have expanded into larger settlements. Numerous examples of vernacular buildings including houses, pubs, manor houses and churches.</i></p>	<p>Neutral – Hollingbourne has an elongated character with more recent developments extending along Eyhorne Street between the two Conservation Areas which define the northern and southern extents of the settlement. The most recent developments in Hollingbourne lie to the south of the railway, having extended the settlement north east along Eyhorne Street. Godfrey Meadow lies just to the west of the Site. The more contemporary development has introduced development at depth into the settlement pattern, with the properties extending back from Eyhorne Street. The proposals would complement the prevailing settlement pattern of Hollingbourne. The proposals would also adopt a traditional appearance and simple palette of materials that reflect the local vernacular.</p>
<p><i>A dense network of historic narrow lanes within the vale and running up the scarp. More recent transport routes include the M20 and HS1.</i></p>	<p>Neutral – The proposals would not affect the more established network of highways and would not introduce any new transport infrastructure.</p>
<p><i>A distinctive landscape composition formed by the contrasting patterns and visual interrelationship of scarp slopes, scarp foot and vale. Evergreen woodland looks particularly dramatic in winter.</i></p>	<p>Neutral – The Site lies in a well-enclosed parcel of land within the well-vegetated landscape at the foot of the scarp slope. The compartmentalised character would ensure that views of the proposals are limited and, where glimpsed, the proposals would be nestled within the mature treescape that characterises Hollingbourne and its setting. The proposals would conserve the perceived transition between the vale and</p>

	scarp slope. The proposals would also conserve the wooded character of the wider LCA.
<i>The scarp forms a key backdrop and skyline in views from the vale and from land to the south. From the scarp there are expansive views across Hollingbourne Vale towards the Weald and the Greensand Ridge.</i>	Neutral – As illustrated by the visual assessment, the proposals would not adversely affect views towards, and an appreciation of, the prominent elevated landscape which forms the backdrop to views from the south. The proposals would also conserve views out from the National Landscape from the elevated landform to the north of Hollingbourne. Any glimpsed views of the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider, established settlement which already characterises the foot of the scarp slope.

4.4.9. As set out above in Table 6, it is considered that the proposals would not directly affect the identified characteristics, as outlined above, and would conserve the perception of these special qualities, which define this part of the landscape designation, from the wider setting.

4.4.10. The published assessment includes a series of guidelines to inform the future management of the “Hollingbourne Scarp & Vale” LCT. These are primarily focussed on land within the designation, however, the guidelines also refer to development within the vicinity of the National Landscape and also the design of new development, stating that:

- **“When considering new development in the vicinity of the AONB, take into account the impacts on views from within the AONB, and how new development will appear in the context of the AONB (particularly in views from the south looking towards the AONB, and in views along Hollingbourne Vale). Use carefully-designed planting schemes and sensitive building design/ choice of colour to help integrate development into the landscape.**
- **Promote use of sympathetic local building materials, including red brick, tile hanging, weatherboarding, flint and ragstone.”**

4.4.11. The proposals have adopted a sympathetic layout, design and palette of materials to ensure that they reflect the wider settlement, nestled within a well-vegetated setting. The proposals comprise a comprehensive landscape scheme which presents opportunities for localised enhancements to the well-vegetated, enclosed character and to local biodiversity. The proposals would not affect the public’s ability to access the designated landscape from the wider setting and would not introduce any new or alien components into the approaches to the

designation, which are already characterised by residential built form on either side of the railway line.

- 4.4.12. Furthermore, a number of viewpoints within the visual assessment have been identified which afford views of the National Landscape from the wider setting, as well as some locations within the designated landscape looking out. The visual assessment identifies that the proposals could be integrated without detriment to views towards the National Landscape from the wider setting to the south as well as view from within the Kent Downs looking out.
- 4.4.13. As identified within Chapter 2 of this LVIA, the Position Statement of Setting, prepared by the Kent Downs National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee sets out a series of guidelines to assist the integration of development into the setting of the National Landscape. Table 7 assesses how the proposals have addressed these guidelines.

Table 7: Assessment of the proposals against the guidelines set out within the Kent Downs National Landscape Position Statement on Setting

Guidelines set out within the Kent Downs National Landscape Position Statement on Setting	Do the proposals comply?
<i>care over orientation, site layout, height, scale and massing of structures and buildings to minimise impact when viewed from the National Landscape</i>	Yes – The proposals have been informed by the initial landscape and visual assessment to ensure that they respect the wider National Landscape to the north. The proposals are located within a well-enclosed parcel, adjacent to the railway line and established settlement edge which extends to the north east and south west. The proposals would be set back from the boundaries of the Site to ensure that the mature field boundaries are maintained, while a comprehensive scheme of landscaping would reinforce these features. As illustrated by the visual assessment, the proposals would not affect any views out of the National Landscape.
<i>appropriate densities to allow for significant tree planting between buildings;</i>	Yes – The proposals would reflect the recent developments within the settlement, such as Godfrey Meadow, just to the west. The comprehensive scheme of landscaping would not only reinforce the boundaries of the Site but would also extend planting through the

	development to break up the built environment and assist with placemaking.
<i>consideration not just of the site but also the landscape, land uses and heritage assets around and beyond it</i>	Yes – As set out within the character assessment in Section 4.2, the proposals would respond positively to the receiving landscape character, retaining and reinforcing the well-vegetated character and introducing high quality, new habitats. Residential land uses already character the immediate setting of the Site and, as such, the proposals are considered appropriate in this location. A detailed Heritage Assessment has been prepared as part of the application. This concludes that the proposals would conserve the landscape setting of Godfrey House and would be well-separated from the wider Conservation Areas associated with the settlement.
<i>careful use of colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces</i>	Yes – The proposed palette of materials has been informed by the local vernacular and would include red brick, pale render, hung tiles and timber weatherboarding. The roofs would comprise a mix of clay tiles and slate. The proposals reflect the more established built form within the settlement and would complement the tones and colours of the wider landscape.
<i>restraint and care over the installation and use of external lighting including street lighting, to prevent harm to the dark night skies of the National Landscape. Where essential, lighting should be well-directed and full cut off and of low level in form and lumen intensity</i>	Yes – Any lighting would be minimal and would adopt modern lighting techniques to minimise light spill. It is noted that Eyhorne Street is already lit so the proposals would be introduced into an existing lit environment, however, the proposed development would manage any external lighting to ensure that the dark skies of the wider National Landscape are conserved.
<i>the grouping of new structures and buildings close to existing structures and buildings to avoid new expanses of development that are visible and out of context</i>	Yes – The proposals would be nestled within the well-vegetated landscape and would not give rise to the perception of Hollingbourne extending out into the wider landscape beyond its established extents. The proposals would not appear prominent or overbearing and would conserve the wider, undeveloped slopes of the Kent Downs.

<p><i>detailed mitigation and management measures, for example including native landscaping that is locally appropriate (and contributes to Biodiversity Net Gain) and noise reduction</i></p>	<p>Yes – As set out in Section 3, the proposals include a comprehensive scheme of landscaping to assist the assimilation of the proposals. The landscape scheme does not seek to hide the development but to create a high quality setting that contributes positively to the character and appearance of the receiving landscape. The proposals would deliver the 20% net gain in biodiversity required by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review.</p>
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- 4.4.14. The presence of the National Landscape designation does not preclude development and, as set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, conserving the special qualities of this designation.
- 4.4.15. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated into the receiving landscape without any notable adverse effects upon the character and appearance of the area. It is concluded that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. Align Landscape Planning are instructed by Cantium Land & Development Ltd to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of 17 dwellings at land to the east of Eyhorne Street, Hollingbourne (the 'Site').

The Site

- 5.2. The Site lies immediately adjacent to the established settlement of Hollingbourne, which lies approximately 3km to the east of Maidstone. Hollingbourne lies at the foot of the Kent Downs, which rises to the north east of the settlement. The National Landscape designation washes over the landscape and settlement which lies to the north of the railway line. The Site lies outside of this designation and is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations.
- 5.3. The Site is located adjacent to the more contemporary part of the settlement, away from the two historic cores. Recent developments at Godfrey Meadow and Brickfields Close are located to the west and south west, respectively, while the post-war / late 20th century residential development at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close lying to the north. The Site is separated from these latter developments by the railway line which passes through Hollingbourne. The railway station lies on the opposite side of Eyhorne Street, to the west of the Site.
- 5.4. The Site comprises a broadly rectangle parcel of arable land, which extends to the south east of Eyhorne Street. The railway line lies to the north east of the Site, while Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland lies to the south east. Godfrey House, a Grade II* listed property lies to the south west of the Site, set within a mature landscaped plot. To the rear of the property, a paddock extends to the south east and abuts the southern extent of the Sites south western boundary.
- 5.5. The Site is broadly flat with mature hedgerows defining the north western and south eastern boundaries. The well-vegetated embankments of the railway define the north eastern edge of the Site. The south western boundary is defined by a mix of mature tree planting associated with the grounds of Godfrey House, and a length of post and wire fencing with some scattered scrub. The Site is not publicly accessible, although it is noted that Footpath KH198/1 lies just to the south of the Site, crossing the paddock, between Culpepper Close and Eyhorne Street.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 5.6. The Site lies within a well-enclosed parcel of land immediately adjacent to the established settlement of Hollingbourne. The mature vegetation cover associated with the boundaries, together with the presence of the built up areas extending to the south north, north east, south west and

west, and the defensible boundaries of Eyhorne Street, the railway line and Godfrey House, ensure that the proposals would not be perceived as extending the settlement out into the wider rural landscape. The well-vegetated, elevated railway corridor also physically and visually separates the Site from the Kent Downs National Landscape which extends to the north. The well-vegetated setting of the settlement, sat at the foot of the scarp slope, ensures that it is not prominent, with the built environment nestled amongst the mature treescape. The proposals would be introduced into a mature landscaped context from the outset and would maintain the character of the surrounding settlement.

- 5.7. Hollingbourne has an elongated, dispersed character with the Eyhorne Street and Upper Street Conservation Areas defining the southern and northern extents of the settlement, respectively. More recent developments have extended north east, along Eyhorne Street, with most development focussed to the south of the railway line. The developments at Troys Mead and Culpepper Close extend the more contemporary settlement to the north of the railway line but remain well-separated from the northern historic core. Brickfields Close and Godfrey Meadow lie to the south west and west of the Site, respectively, and represent some of the most recent additions to the settlement, reinforcing the characteristic of the settlement extending along Eyhorne Street. The proposals would conserve this settlement pattern comprising a parcel of land which fronts onto Eyhorne Street, between existing residential developments to the north and south. The recent developments introduce development at depth into the streetscene, with properties extending back from Eyhorne Street. Again, the proposals would reflect this character, with the existing developments to the north ensuring that the proposals do not extend any further south east than the existing settlement envelope. It is concluded that the proposals would conserve the settlement pattern of Hollingbourne and would not give rise to the perception of the settlement extending out into the wider rural landscape beyond its established extents.
- 5.8. The proposals would reflect the density of the more recent developments within the localised townscape setting, ensuring that they conserve the urban grain of the settlement. The proposed properties would adopt a more traditional character and appearance, with the dwellings incorporating architectural features and a palette of materials that complement the local vernacular. The use of red brick, pale render, hung tiles and timber weatherboarding are characteristic of this part of Kent and the proposals would represent a complementary addition to the existing settlement.
- 5.9. As noted above, it is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the loss of an area of arable land, however, this is not particularly characteristic around the settlement edges, with land typically comprising pasture. The loss of the arable land would not affect the perceived character of the wider rural landscape, due to the compartmentalised character of the Site and its immediate setting. The proposals would not result in the loss of any trees and would require the removal of just a short section of hedgerow to facilitate the access onto Eyhorne Street. However, the proposals would

incorporate a comprehensive scheme of landscaping to mitigate the loss of hedgerow as well as ensure that biodiversity is enhanced. The creation of areas of neutral grassland would represent a positive addition to the localised landscape, creating seasonal visual interest as well as significant biodiversity gains. The proposed native tree, species-rich hedgerow and native shrub planting would also reinforce the well-vegetated character of the localised setting, enhancing habitat connectivity and assimilating the built form into the landscape.

- 5.10. The retained and reinforced south eastern and south western boundary planting would ensure that a sense of separation between the settlement and the Hollingbourne Meadows community woodland is maintained. It is acknowledged that the proposals would be glimpsed from some localised viewpoints within the community woodland, but within these views the proposals would be seen against the backdrop of the developments to the north and within the context of the wider settlement to the south. The presence of the settlement adjacent to the wider community woodland will be reinforced as and when the allocated site (to the south west of the Site) comes forward. The proposals would not adversely affect the qualities, or the public's enjoyment, of Hollingbourne Meadows.
- 5.11. It is acknowledged that the proposals would represent a degree of change within the context of the Site itself as a result of the change of use. However, change need not equate to significant harm, and the proposals must be assessed within their context, rather than in isolation. Residential development characterises the immediate setting of the Site and the proposals would reflect the recent growth and settlement pattern of Hollingbourne. It is acknowledged that the landscape receptor would experience some adverse effects at the initial stages, but these would not be significant. As the landscaping matures, including the areas of neutral grassland, this would assist the assimilation of the proposals, softening the perceived built edges, mitigating the low level loss of existing planting and delivering significant net gains in biodiversity.
- 5.12. Beyond the boundaries of the Site, the compartmentalised character of the local landscape would ensure that the perceived effects are highly localised. Beyond the immediate setting, the undulating, well-vegetated landscape would ensure that change within the Site is largely, not perceived. Where the proposals are perceived, they would be seen in the context of the surrounding settlement, with the roofscape of Troys Mead and Culpepper Close located to the north and the recent developments on the eastern side of Eyhorne Street evident to the south. The proposals would not introduce any new or alien components into this landscape. As the proposed landscaping matures, it would assimilate the development into this landscape setting, reflecting the wider townscape, nestled within a mature landscaped context and would not appear prominent or out of character.
- 5.13. In conclusion, the proposals would conserve the key characteristics and distinctive features that define the landscape setting of the Site, as identified by the various published assessments. The proposals adopt a sympathetic and high quality approach to the layout and would include a

comprehensive scheme of landscaping which contributes positively to landscape character and biodiversity. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated in this location without any long term, notable adverse effects upon the “Wealden Greensand” NCA, “Eyhorne Vale” LCA” or immediate landscape setting.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.14. The visual assessment demonstrates that the well-vegetated setting of the Site, when combined with the gently undulating landscape and the presence of development to the north and south west, reduces intervisibility and means that views of the proposed development would be localised.
- 5.15. The primary views would be from Eyhorne Street immediately to the north west (refer Viewpoint 2) and Footpath KH198/1 immediately adjacent to the Site (refer Viewpoint 5). The proposals would be visible from these locations and introduce built form into the context of the Site, but would be set back from the north western and south western boundaries with areas of landscaped open space defining the foreground and the proposed built form beyond. It is acknowledged that the proposals would change the views, although it is noted that residential built form is an existing component of the wider view, with views of the roofscape associated with Troys Meadow and Culpepper Close glimpsed beyond the railway corridor. The existing built form ensures that the wider settlement represents a component within the setting of the Site. The proposals would reinforce the boundaries with a new, species-rich hedgerow creating a robust and defensible edge to the Site. As the proposed planting matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the well-vegetated character of the Sites setting. As such, while there would be some initial notable adverse effects upon views from the footpath to the south, the settled and well-vegetated setting of the Site, together with the opportunities to landscape the proposals would mitigate the perceived adverse effects. As the landscaping matures, the proposals would be assimilated into the receiving landscape and the initial adverse effects would be reduced. Any residual adverse effects would be low level and highly localised. The rising landscape of the Kent Downs National Landscape is not a component within these views and the proposals would not affect the perceived setting of the designation.
- 5.16. The proposals would also be visible from some middle distance views from the public right of way network to the south (refer Viewpoints 6, 7 & 8). The proposals would be glimpsed at Year 1 but would be set down in the landscape, nestled amongst the established vegetation that characterises the Sites setting. Where glimpsed the proposals would be seen in the context of the wider settlement that extends to the left and right of the Site. The proposals would not break the vegetated skyline and would not compete with the rising landscape which forms the backdrop to the view. The proposals would be perceived within the settled foreground and would conserve the undeveloped downland that emerges from the wooded lower landscape. As the proposed landscaping matures it would soften the perceived built edge and reinforce the vegetated setting of Hollingbourne. The

proposals could be integrated without detriment to the setting of the settlement and the wider Kent Downs National Landscape.

- 5.17. In terms of views out from the Kent Downs National Landscape, the mature vegetation cover and wider setting to the north of the Site would contain views of the proposals from the designated landscape (refer Viewpoints 10 & 11). The proposals would not affect the public's perception of the wider setting of the Kent Downs or their enjoyment of the designated landscape.
- 5.18. In conclusion, while the proposals would result in some short term, notable adverse effects, the enclosed character of the Site's setting ensures that these would be highly localised and limited to the immediate setting. The proposals would not give rise to any notable effects upon views from the wider setting and would not affect views towards or from the Kent Downs National Landscape. Furthermore, the sympathetic design and inclusion of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping would ensure that any initial adverse effects are tempered and it is concluded that the proposals would not result in any long term, notable adverse visual effects.

Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 5.19. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the Site lies outside of the Kent Downs National Landscape. However, national and local policy expects development outside of these designations to conserve the setting and natural beauty of these designated landscapes.
- 5.20. The proposals have adopted a sympathetic layout, design and palette of materials to ensure that they reflect the wider settlement, nestled within a well-vegetated setting. The proposals comprise a comprehensive landscape scheme which presents opportunities for localised enhancements to the well-vegetated, enclosed character and to local biodiversity. The proposals would not affect the public's ability to access the designated landscape from the wider setting and would not introduce any new or alien components into the approaches to the designation, which are already characterised by residential built form on either side of the railway line.
- 5.21. The presence of the National Landscape designation does not preclude development and, as set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated within the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape, conserving the special qualities of this designation.
- 5.22. It is considered the proposals would comply with the criteria set out within Policy LPRSP14(A) of the adopted Local Plan Review. It is noted that this is not a "no harm" policy and recognises that some development will give rise to adverse effects. The policy expects development to avoid adverse effects, where possible, and where this isn't an option that any identified adverse effects are mitigated. As set out above, it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in some highly localised adverse landscape and visual effects. However, the proposed layout has been carefully

designed to minimise these effects through the creation of a network of multi-functional, landscaped green spaces, with the built form set back from the boundaries to ensure that as the landscaping matures it not only assimilates the proposals but also enhances the well-vegetated setting of the Site. The assessment concludes that any residual adverse effects would be low level and not significant.

5.23. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated into the receiving landscape without any notable adverse effects upon the character and appearance of the area. It is concluded that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

Conclusion

5.24. In conclusion, as set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals could be integrated in this location without long term adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character and visual environment. It is concluded that the proposals are supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

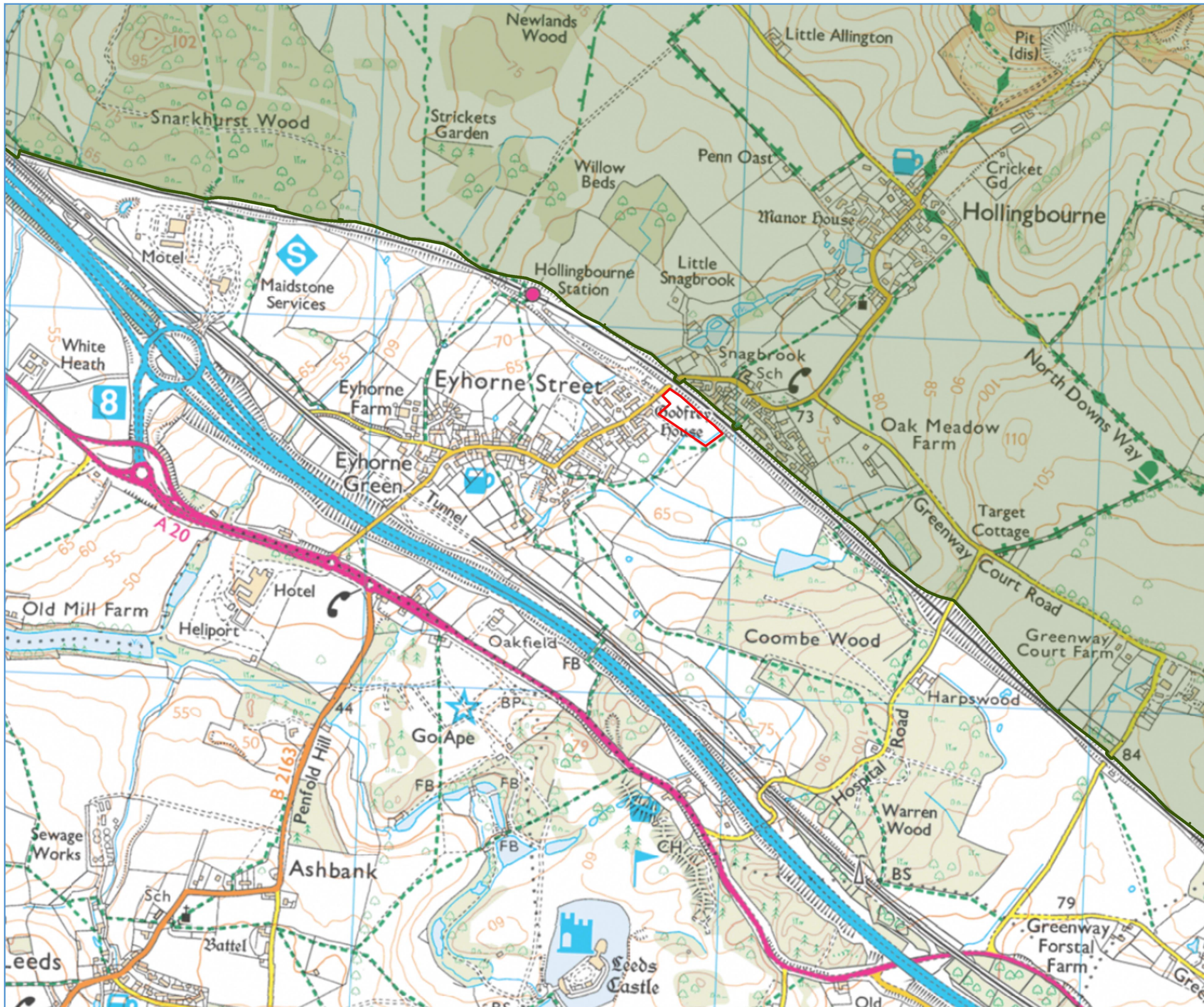
PLANS

Not to Scale



Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Kent Downs National Landscape



**Land at Eyhorne Street,
Hollingbourne**





Site Location Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1113.SLP.001 Rev. -
Date: May 2025 Drawn: AM

Not to Scale



Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Kent Downs National Landscape Boundary
-  Public Footpaths
-  Permissive Routes

Land at Eyhorse Street,
Hollingbourne

Site Context Plan


Drawing Ref: Pr-1113.SCP.002 Rev. -
Date: May 2025 Drawn: AM

Not to Scale



Key

 Site Boundary

 Areas from which the proposals would theoretically be visible (based on 10m building and bare earth data)



Land at Eyhorne Street,
Hollingbourne

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Drawing Ref: Pr-1113.ZTV.003 Rev. -
Date: May 2025 Drawn: AM



PLANTING SCHEDULE

Bioswale Mix			
Species	Specification	Density	Mix
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Clump	20m ²	20%
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Clump	20m ²	20%
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Full Pot: 5 buds	20m ²	20%
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Full Pot: 5 buds	20m ²	20%
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Clump	20m ²	20%

Euonymus Hedge			
Species	Specification	Height	Density
<i>Euonymus japonicus</i> 'Green Spire'	3L: Double Staggered Row	60-90cm	5m

Hornbeam Hedge			
Species	Specification	Height	Density
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	3L: Double Staggered Row	60-90cm	5m

Grass Mixes			
Type	Mix	Specification	
Flowering Lawn	Emorsgate EL1 Flowering Lawn Mix	Sown at 40kg / ha	
Wet Meadow	Emorsgate EMB Meadow Mixture for Wetlands	Sown at 40kg / ha	
Wildflower Grassland	Emorsgate EH1 Hedgerow Mix	Sown at 40kg / ha	

Shrubs				
Species	Specification	Height	Pot Size	Density
<i>Berberis 'Sunningdale'</i>	Full Pot	-	3L	5m ²
<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus repens</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	3m ²
<i>Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	3m ²
<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	3m ²
<i>Hebe albicans 'Red Edge'</i>	Bushy; 2/3 Breaks	10-20cm	3L	4m ²
<i>Hebe rakaiensis</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	5m ²
<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	3m ²
<i>Lavandula angustifolia 'Alba'</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	20-30cm	3L	6m ²
<i>Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote'</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	20-30cm	3L	6m ²
<i>Pyracantha 'Orange Glow'</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	3m ²
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	30-40cm	3L	5m ²
<i>Vinca minor</i>	C. Bushy; 3/4 Breaks	20-30cm	1L	10m ²

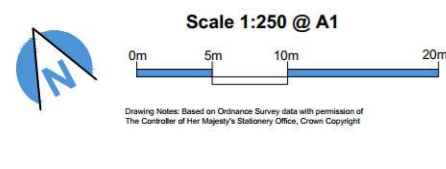
Native Shrub Mix				
Species	Specification	Height	Density	%
<i>Acer campestre</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	10
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	20
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	50
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	5
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	10
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	BR	60-80cm	5m ²	5

Trees			
Species	Specification	Girth	Height
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Amelanchier lamarckii</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Prunus amanogawa</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Prunus padus</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m
<i>Sorbus aria</i>	Heavy Standard; 175cm Clear Stem, RB	12-14cm	3.0 - 3.5m

Mixed Native Hedge				
Species	Specification	Height	Density	%
<i>Acer campestre</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	10
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	20
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	50
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	5
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	10
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	BR: Double staggered row	60-80cm	5m	5

Cornus Mix					
Species	Specification	Height	Pot Size	Density	Mix
<i>Cornus kousa</i> var. <i>Chinensis</i>	Bushy; 3/5 breaks	40-60cm	3L	3m ²	25%
<i>Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'</i>	Bushy; 3/5 breaks	40-60cm	3L	3m ²	25%
<i>Cornus stolonifera 'Kelsey Gold'</i>	Bushy; 3/5 breaks	40-60cm	3L	3m ²	25%
<i>Cornus stolonifera 'Flaviramea'</i>	Bushy; 3/5 breaks	40-60cm	3L	3m ²	25%

Species within shrub mixes to be planted in groups of 5, 7 or 9



Revisions		
Rev	Date	Comments
A	19.10.2025	Updated to new layout
B	24.10.2025	Updated to new layout

Based on GDM Architects 'Proposed Block Plan' drawing no. 4500-p004 Rev. A

Key

- Site Boundary
- Existing Vegetation
- Proposed Trees
- Proposed Native Hedge
- Proposed Ornamental Hedge
- Proposed Native Shrub
- Proposed Ornamental Shrub
- Proposed Bioswale
- Proposed Wildflower Grassland
- Proposed Flowering Lawn
- Proposed Meadow
- Proposed Wet Meadow
- Proposed Play Area

Eyehorne Street, Hollingbourne
Planting Plan
 Drawing Ref: Pr-1113.PP-005 Rev. B
 Date: October 2025 Drawn: AM

APPENDIX 1

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This methodology, and the assessment to which it applies, has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition – GLVIA3 (2013) - Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
 - Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) – LITGN-2024-01, published by the Landscape Institute (August 2024);
 - Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Technical Guidance Note 06/19), published by the Landscape Institute (2019).
- 1.2. The purpose of this methodology is to set out a clear and transparent approach to the assessment of landscape character and visual effects, in line with guidance set out by GLVIA3.
- 1.3. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and assessing how a proposed development could affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.

2. THE LVIA PROCESS

- 2.1. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. The process typically comprises:

Stage 1 - the baseline assessment;

Stage 2 - the description of the proposed development; and

Stage 3 - the assessment of effects.

- 2.2. This process seeks to provide a clear and transparent method that will assist in identifying the potential effects of a development on the receiving landscape and the visual environment.

Stage 1 - Baseline Study

- 2.3. The baseline assessment sets out the existing landscape character and visual environment conditions against which any future changes resulting from new development can be measured or predicted and assessed.

Landscape

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. Landscape related planning policy, including any landscape designations, is identified and outlined.
3. The landscape baseline is established through an initial desk study, which includes an assessment of published regional and local Landscape Character Assessments, where available, and subsequently a site visit to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor) to a change of the type proposed, at community, local, national or international levels, as appropriate.

Visual

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. The visual baseline is identified as the extent of visual receptors within the study area, and establishes the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals. The use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) models can be a useful tool, assisting in identifying the theoretical visual extent of a proposal, where appropriate. However, it must be noted that these are not definitive, and do not replace viewing the site “in the field” as set out in GLVIA3, but can assist in scoping out those areas where topography will contain views of a development. Photographs from the key viewpoints are taken and presented in accordance with best practice guidance, illustrating the baseline situation.

Stage 2 - Description of the Development / Design Proposals

- 2.4. The baseline study will highlight opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The various components of the proposals at

each phase of the development process, which will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape character and the visual environment, need to be identified. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design in response to the local landscape and visual environment.

Mitigation of landscape and visual effects

2.5. Paragraph 4.21 of GLVIA3 states that “*measures proposed to prevent / avoid, reduce and, where possible, offset or remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects, should be described*”. In practice, such mitigation measures are generally considered to fall into three categories:

- Primary measures, developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design;
- Standard construction and operational management practices for avoiding and reducing environmental effects;
- Secondary measures, designed to address any residual adverse effects remaining after primary measures and standard construction practices have been incorporated into the scheme.

Stage 3 - Description of Effects

2.6. The assessment should then identify the level of effect as a result of the different components of the proposals upon both landscape and visual receptors.

2.7. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.

2.8. The assessment will identify the type of effect experienced by the receptor, as set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Interpretation of Effects

Type of Effect	Interpretation
Direct	A direct effect will be one where a development will affect the character of a landscape or a view, either beneficially or adversely.

Indirect	An indirect effect will occur as a result of elements associated with a development, i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.
Short, medium or long term	This relates to the anticipated duration and magnitude of effects associated with a development. Within this assessment, the potential effects are typically assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 15, following completion of the development.
Temporary or Permanent	This relates to whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.
Beneficial or Adverse	<p><u>Beneficial effects</u> would typically occur where a development would positively contribute to the landscape character or view.</p> <p><u>Adverse effects</u> would typically occur where key landscape elements are lost, or the proposal detracts from the quality and / or character of a landscape or view.</p> <p><u>Neutral effects</u> can occur where changes neither add nor detract from the quality and character of a landscape or view.</p>

Assessing cumulative effects

- 2.9. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in combination with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint (in combination) and / or from a route where the viewer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or a different development (sequentially). The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and at which planning stage this is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments, and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined, should be included. The assessment of cumulative effects must be considered as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but does not have to be assessed as part of a non-EIA project.

Stage 4 - Significance of Effects (EIA only)

- 2.10. A final judgement on whether the effect is likely to be significant will be made, as required by the EIA Regulations. These conclusions should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects.

3. ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The purpose of the LVIA is to provide an objective assessment of the potential effects of the proposals upon the identified landscape and / or visual receptor. GLVIA3 states that *“Assessing the significance of landscape and visual effects is a matter of judgement. It is vital that the basis of such judgements are transparent and understandable, so that the underlying assumptions and reasoning can be examined by others”*.
- 3.2. This section sets out the basis for assessing landscape and visual sensitivity, the magnitude of proposed effects, and the overall assessment of significance.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

- 3.3. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as very high, high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the **susceptibility** of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the **value** attached to different landscapes by society.

Susceptibility of the Landscape Receptor

- 3.4. GLVIA3 defines the **SUSCEPTIBILITY** of a receptor to change as being the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue negative consequences upon the baseline situation.
- 3.5. A judgement as to the level of susceptibility (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) is made in relation to each criterion, and these judgements contribute to an overall judgement of susceptibility for the landscape receptor.
- 3.6. A landscape deemed to be highly susceptible is likely to be small-scale, with a mosaic of natural habitats and limited human influences, while a less susceptible landscape receptor is likely to be simpler, with noticeable human influences and fewer natural / semi-natural habitats present.

Value of the Landscape Receptor

3.7. Following the publication of GLVIA3, it is now generally agreed that the **VALUE** of a landscape receptor can be determined by a range of factors set out within Box 5.1 of GLVIA3. These include:

- Landscape quality (condition);
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity and representativeness;
- Conservation interests;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects; and
- Associations.

3.8. The Box 5.1 criteria are used to determine the value of landscape receptors. The resulting value levels under each factor are recorded, and an overall judgement of the level of value is reached.

3.9. A professional judgement as to how the landscape reflects or contributes to the various criteria is made which leads to an assessment of value in relation to each factor (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) and these judgements contribute to an overall judgement of value.

Overall Judgement of Landscape Sensitivity

3.10. Once judgements regarding the susceptibility and the value of the landscape receptor have been made, an overall judgement of landscape sensitivity is reached. The following table explains each threshold, and the factors that contribute to the degree of sensitivity.

Table 2: Definition of Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Landscapes which would have a high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes would have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, and a high sense of intactness, and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets and be designated as a World Heritage Site.

	Typical examples may be nationally or internationally designated, e.g., World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Heritage Coasts or National Landscapes.
High	Landscapes where there is a medium - high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes may be small scale, have a strong landscape structure, be relatively intact and contain features and / or elements worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a number of historic assets. Typical examples may be locally designated or within the immediate setting of National Parks, National Landscapes, World Heritage Sites etc.
Medium	Landscapes where there is a medium susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of medium value. Such landscapes will have good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or assets of cultural value locally.
Low	Landscapes where there is a low susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of low value. Typical landscapes will have some characteristics of interest, but human influences and some detractors will be present.
Negligible	Landscapes where there is little or no susceptibility to change, and which are of low value. Typical landscapes are likely to be characterised by extensive human influences, be of weak landscape structure, with intensive land uses present, and require landscape restoration.

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

- 3.11. As part of the assessment of visual effects, the sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity, and also the value attached to particular views. The sensitivity of receptors is categorised as very high, high, medium, low and negligible.

Table 3: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Viewers on public rights of way, within nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or National Landscapes, whose prime focus is on the high quality of the landscape around, and who are very aware of its value.
High	Viewers on public rights of way, whose prime focus is on the landscape around, or residential properties which lie immediately adjacent to, and look directly onto the development site. Examples may include users of the public right of way network (e.g., promoted routes, national trails, footpaths or bridleways), or the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views from which the proposals may be visible, and users of rural lanes and roads, including pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. Examples may include viewers within moderate quality landscapes and / or local parks or recreation grounds.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sports or recreation, whose prime focus is on their activity rather than their setting, or those passing through the area on main transport routes (A-roads, dual carriageways, motorways or the rail network), whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape through which they are passing.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and who are not susceptible to changes in the surrounding visual environment.

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT

- 3.12. The magnitude of change relates to the extent to which a proposed development will affect the characteristics and / or elements that define the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 4: Magnitude of Change

Magnitude	Effect Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of harm or improvement, such as the introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a landscape or view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of harm or improvement, or when constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view, or which constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view.
No Change	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change, due to the proposed development being totally compatible with the receiving environment or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD

- 3.13. To assess the overall significance of the effect, the magnitude of change is considered against the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor.
- 3.14. In formulating the significance of the potential landscape or visual effect, reasoned professional judgement, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development, is required. The matrix at Table 6 should be used as a guide for consistency rather than a prescriptive tool. Where the final judgement differs from the matrix, this will be supported by a clear explanation.
- 3.15. The significance thresholds are predicted as Substantial, Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Where there is no perceptible change in terms of the magnitude, regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be Neutral.

- 3.16. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects over time should be demonstrated at different stages (typically construction stage and operational stages year 1 and year 15).

Table 5: Significance of Effect

Significance	Threshold Definition
Substantial	A very high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view of national / international importance which has no ability to accommodate change.
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a high sensitivity landscape or view which has some ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that affects a landscape or view which may have the ability to accommodate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that has some effect upon a landscape or view which can integrate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view which has the ability to accommodate change.
Neutral	A significance of neutral occurs where there is no perceptible change, or where the proposals are considered compatible with local character or views.

- 3.17. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix provides a guide through determining the significance of the effect based on the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change, but it is not a prescriptive tool.

Table 6: Measuring Significance of Effect

		Sensitivity of Receptors				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ Neutral

- 3.18. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this methodology, and with regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (updated 2017), “significant” landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be of Substantial, Major or Major / Moderate significance, as set out within Table 6.
- 3.19. It is reasonable to say that, where development will result in substantial loss of or irreversible adverse effects over an extensive spatial area on features and / or aspects that are key to the aesthetic and perceptual character of nationally valued landscapes, these will be of the greatest significance. By contrast, effects which may be reversible or can be mitigated over a shorter duration, within a more restricted spatial extent, on features that contribute to but may not be key characteristics of a landscape which has some (or even limited) local value, are likely to be of lesser significance, depending on the circumstances.
- 3.20. Landscape and visual assessments must make a *professional* and *objective* judgement on the significance of the effect, and whether or not these are considered significant, providing reasoned justification as to how the conclusions have been reached.

APPENDIX 2

Extract from Natural England's Character Map of England –
"Wealden Greensand" NCA 120

120. Wealden Greensand

Supporting documents

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts
and data

Landscape
change

Analysis



www.naturalengland.org.uk



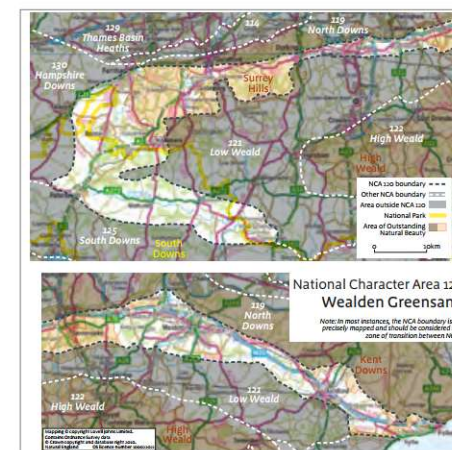
Summary

The long, curved belt of the Wealden Greensand runs across Kent, parallel to the North Downs, and on through Surrey. It moves south, alongside the Hampshire Downs, before curving back eastwards to run parallel with the South Downs in West Sussex. Around a quarter of the NCA is made up of extensive belts of woodland – both ancient mixed woods and more recent conifer plantations. In contrast, the area also features more open areas of heath on acidic soils, river valleys and mixed farming, including areas of fruit growing.

The area has outstanding landscape, geological, historical and biodiversity interest. Some 51 per cent of the NCA is covered by the South Downs National Park, Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Surrey Hills AONB – a testament to the area's natural beauty. The underlying geology has shaped the scarp-and-dip slope topography, with its far-reaching views, but it has also had a significant bearing on the area's sense of place: there are clear links between vernacular architecture, industry and local geology. The heritage assets provide vital connections to the NCA's industrial, military and cultural history, and include distinctive deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands. Biodiversity interests are represented by internationally and nationally designated sites alongside numerous local sites and other non-designated semi-natural habitats. The internationally designated sites include three Special Protection Areas (SPAs), two Ramsar sites and eight Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), representing the outstanding value and quality of the heathland, woodland, wetland and coastal habitats found within the NCA. In addition, fragments of acid grassland and parkland landscapes add to the overall diversity of habitats.

The south-western part of the area remains essentially rural, with only small market towns such as Petworth and Petersfield, but eastwards from Dorking the character becomes considerably more urbanised, with many towns including Maidstone, Reigate, Ashford and Folkestone. The area forms a major transport corridor, with the M25, M20 and M26 motorways and other major road and rail routes all running through it.

A short coastal stretch extends from Folkestone to Hythe, with a heavily developed hinterland: as a result, most of the coastline is protected by coastal defences. The exception is Copt Point, where the eroding cliffs are designated for their wildlife and geological interest. This part of the coastline is also part of the defined Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast. The coastline offers a contrasting recreational experience from that associated with the heathlands, wetlands and woodlands of the wider NCA.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

Development pressures are likely to pose significant challenges within the NCA, with increasing demands on water resources, the landscape, biodiversity and the sense of place. Well planned green infrastructure is likely to play a critical role in both new and existing developments, to bring about a range of economic, social and environmental benefits. The creation of resilient ecological networks will become increasingly important, especially as our climate changes. There are opportunities to strengthen the networks of semi-natural habitats – particularly wetlands, woodlands and heathlands – integrating them into the mixed farmed landscape and taking action to reduce further fragmentation.



Fields near Petworth, West Sussex.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **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.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The curved Greensand ridge partially encircles the adjoining Low Weald NCA, while its outer edge is rimmed by the chalk outcrops of the North and South Downs, and the Hampshire Downs in the west. The ridge affords far-reaching views over the Low Weald, South Downs and London. In Kent, the ancient coastline reflected in the Lympne Escarpment overlooks the Romney Marshes.

In the south-west the Western Rother joins the Arun, which drains south into the South Downs NCA and on to the coast. In the north-west the rivers Wey and Mole drain north through the North Downs, and into the Thames. Further east the River Medway drains north through the downs, via the Medway Gap, and into the Greater Thames Estuary. The source of both the Upper Great Stour and the East Stour is on the Greensand ridge: these two rivers join to form the Great Stour, which flows north-east through the North Downs and the North Kent Plain. The Kent Lower Greensand groundwater body is considered a major aquifer, important for public and industrial water supply both within and outside the NCA.

Although it is only a short section, the management of the coastal stretch between Folkestone and Hythe influences and is influenced by the coastal stretches in adjoining NCAs (North Downs and Romney Marsh). Sediment supply in the development and denudation of beaches has a critical influence on the rate of coastal erosion and coastal squeeze.

A major transport corridor runs through the eastern part of the NCA, including the Channel Tunnel rail link connecting Folkestone to London.



View north from the Greensand ridge across Thursley Common. The dry heath, dominated by ling and bell heather, supports a wide range of wildlife including uncommon reptiles and rare heathland birds.

Key characteristics

- 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.
- Semi-natural habitats include: remnant lowland heathland, mostly concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and West Surrey; the wetlands associated with the River Arun in West Sussex; and unimproved acid grasslands found in commons, parklands, heathland and other areas of unimproved pasture.
- 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.

Continued on next page...



Apple harvest at Blackmoor Estate, Hampshire.

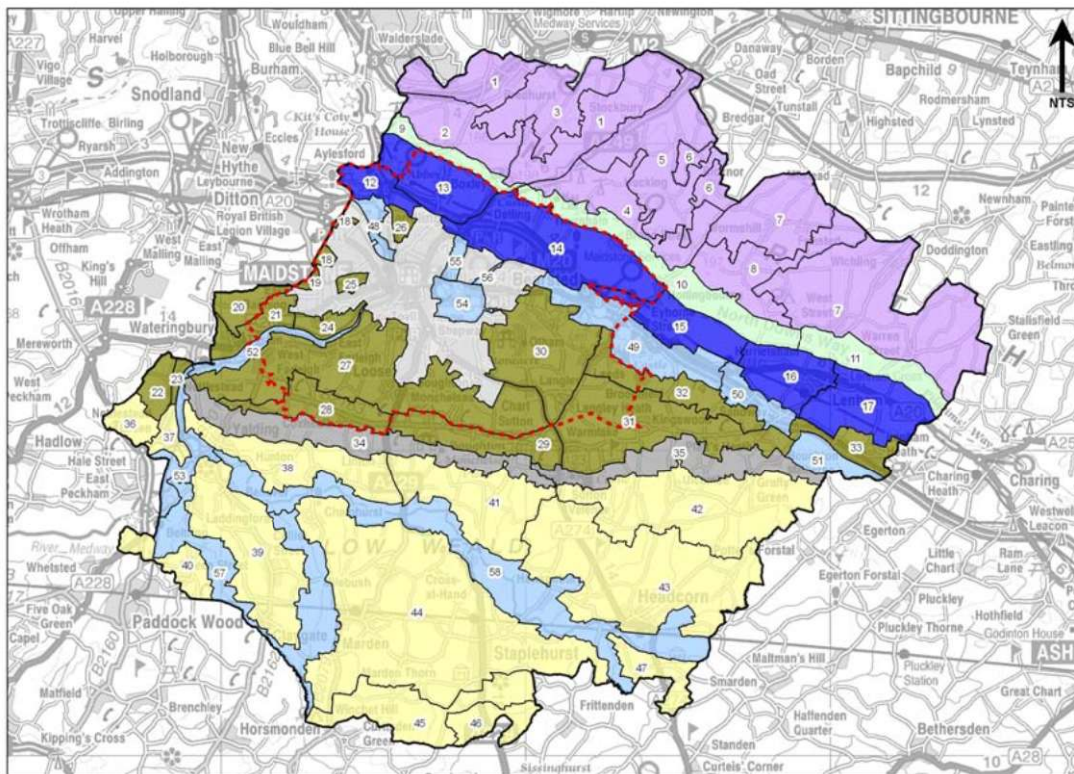
Key characteristics continued

- 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.

APPENDIX 3

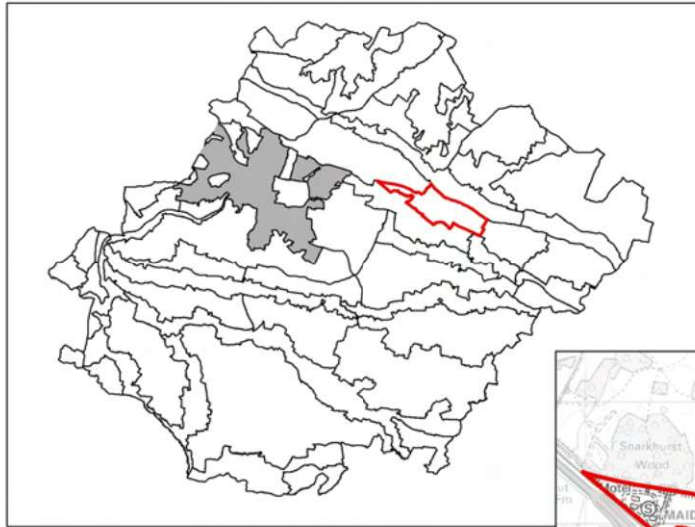
Extract from Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2013) –
“Eyhorne Vale” LCA 15

MAIDSTONE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

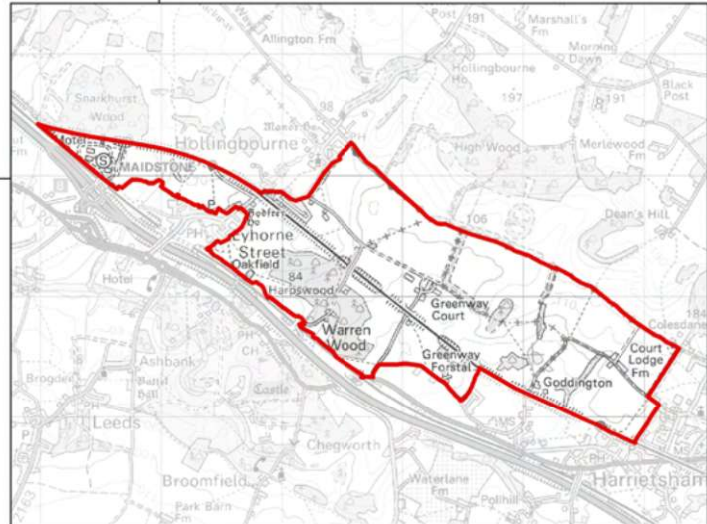


MARCH 2012
AMENDED 19 JULY 2013

15. Eyhorne Vale



 Borough Wide Landscape Character Area



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape to north of the railway line is situated within the Kent Downs AONB
- Mixed woodland belts and blocks
- Willow trees mark the location of drains and ditches
- Narrow lanes which generally run against the contours south west to north east
- Distinctive brick railway bridges
- Major infrastructure routes along the south western periphery

Location

15.1 Eyhorne Vale lies to the north east of Maidstone, and is partly situated within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The northern boundary is defined by the Pilgrim's Way, and the southern boundary largely follows the boundary between the Gault Clay and the Lower Greensand Folkestone Beds. Harrietsham forms the eastern boundary and Hollingbourne and Eyhorne Street are situated to the west.

15. Eyhorne Vale



LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

15.2 There is a significant amount of tree cover, provided by mixed native planting along infrastructure routes, strong vegetation belts and a collection of individual woods which form one large mixed ancient woodland tract to the south east of Eyhorne Street. Named Warren Wood, this is thought to have been a Medieval rabbit warren associated with Leeds Castle. The woodland comprises broadleaf species, scrub, sweet chestnut coppice and some evergreen pine, and is also designated as part of the wider Leeds Castle Estate Meadow and Woodland Local Wildlife Site for its large number of mosses and liverworts.

15.3 The field pattern is irregular, with pockets of small fields interspersed between swathes of larger scale and more regularly shaped fields. North of Eyhorne Street the intimate hedged field pattern forms a patchwork mosaic, divided by a series of vegetation lined drains which cross the landscape. Mature oaks and limes are dotted throughout the fields, often adjacent to dense vegetation belts and hedgerows. To the north and east, arable intensification has led to the removal of some traditional hedgerow boundaries creating a larger field pattern. Isolated oak trees often mark the former lines of enclosure, as well as standing proud within the remaining hedgerows. Occasional linear poplar belts suggest there were once orchards, but there is no other remaining evidence to suggest that this was so. Springs emerge from the chalk across the lower slopes to the south forming a series of small ponds and Goddington Lake, part of which is designated

as a Local Wildlife Site.

15.4 There is little concentrated development although a recent housing extension is situated north of the railway line and Eyhorne Street. A series of traditional isolated farmsteads are scattered across these lower slopes of the Downs, sheltered at the foot of the steep scarp face. Of particular note, north of Eyhorne Street, the late 16th century grade II* listed Godfrey House comprises a very distinctive timber framed building with ornate chimneys and diamond leaded windows. Converted oast houses and timber barns at Goddington, to the south, suggest that the landscape here was once used for hop production. Roads are narrow and enclosed by woodland or hedgerows, and generally run against the contours in a south west to north east pattern. To the north, the route of the Pilgrim's Way is defined by a fragmented ribbon of vegetation, running along the contours of the lower slopes.

15.5 The railway line to the north is not widely visible from the adjoining landscape, because it is set mostly within cutting and is enclosed by a mature vegetation belt. The narrow roads generally pass beneath the railway line through a series of distinct brick railway arches. Five Arch Bridge, visible from the immediately adjoining landscape, forms an impressive and distinctive landmark feature. As suggested by its name, five individual brick arches span the cutting, and brick parapets channel vehicles across the

15. Eyhorne Vale

bridge above. Along the south western boundary, HS1 and the M20 run broadly in parallel. Whilst together they form a major and widely audible transport corridor, they are set mostly within cutting and are not widely visible from the adjoining landscape. Whereas in other areas the landform is evidently artificial with prominent bunds, here the route is more subtly integrated within the landscape. Mitigation planting and well established woodland at Ash Shaw and Warren Wood further soften the degree of severance. Although motorway traffic is widely audible from the landscape to the north, degrading the sense of remoteness and tranquillity, it is only from the very periphery of the area that the scale of this infrastructure becomes visually evident.

Geology, soils and topography

15.6 To the south the solid geology is Gault Clay, which is overlain with seasonally wet

deep clay soils. To the north of the railway line, Lower Chalk is overlain with well drained siltier soils and drifts of head are scattered across the area. The landscape is undulating, forming the foothills of the North Downs scarp.

Views

15.7 Where woodland and other intervening vegetation allow, there are long panoramic views across the foothills of the elevated North Downs, which are well wooded in this part. From some unenclosed sections of the Pilgrim's Way along the northern boundary, dramatic views of the open downland landscape and across the Len Valley to the Greensand Ridge unfold. There is a deceptive amount of tree cover throughout Harrietsham, which only allows glimpses of roofs during summer and gives the impression that there is very little development to the south at all.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Condition

15.8 This is a landscape with a simple pattern and relatively few components, although the major infrastructure corridor along the south western periphery provides a degree of disruption. Although this corridor, and the service station to the north west, are generally well integrated into the topography and are not widely visible from the adjoining landscape, the audibility of traffic on the M20 has a major impact on the tranquillity of the immediate landscape. The ecological integrity is moderate because it is weakened by arable intensification with some large scale fields. Pockets of traditional small fields of pasture are enclosed by hedgerows and vegetation lined watercourses, and these provide good habitat connectivity with the significant tract of mixed ancient woodland. The cultural integrity is variable. Hedgerows are generally intact where they remain, although some mature hedgerow oaks appear to be in poor condition with some evidently dead branches. There is little built development, although some is in a poor state of repair. The infrastructure route of the M20 and HS1 locally degrades the adjoining landscape character and sense of place.

Sensitivity

15.9 The key characteristics within this landscape are often very distinct, and provide consistency throughout the area. Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks, remnant oaks along former boundary lines, the pattern of vegetation lined ditches with localised pockets of willow and the series of brick railway arches all provide local distinctiveness. Visibility is high. Although immediate views are sometimes enclosed by woodland and hedgerows, the landform evidently forms parts of the rising foreground of the Downs and there are extensive panoramic views of the higher downland landscape to the north.



15. Eyhorne Vale

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Condition Assessment	Good	Sensitivity Assessment	High
Pattern of elements:	Coherent	Distinctiveness:	Distinct
Detracting features:	Few	Continuity:	Historic
Visual Unity:	Unified	Sense of Place:	Moderate
Ecological integrity:	Moderate	Landform:	Dominant
Cultural integrity:	Variable	Tree cover:	Intermittent
Functional integrity:	Coherent	Visibility:	High

GUIDELINES - CONSERVE

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	IMPROVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & IMPROVE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	IMPROVE	RESTORE & IMPROVE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		



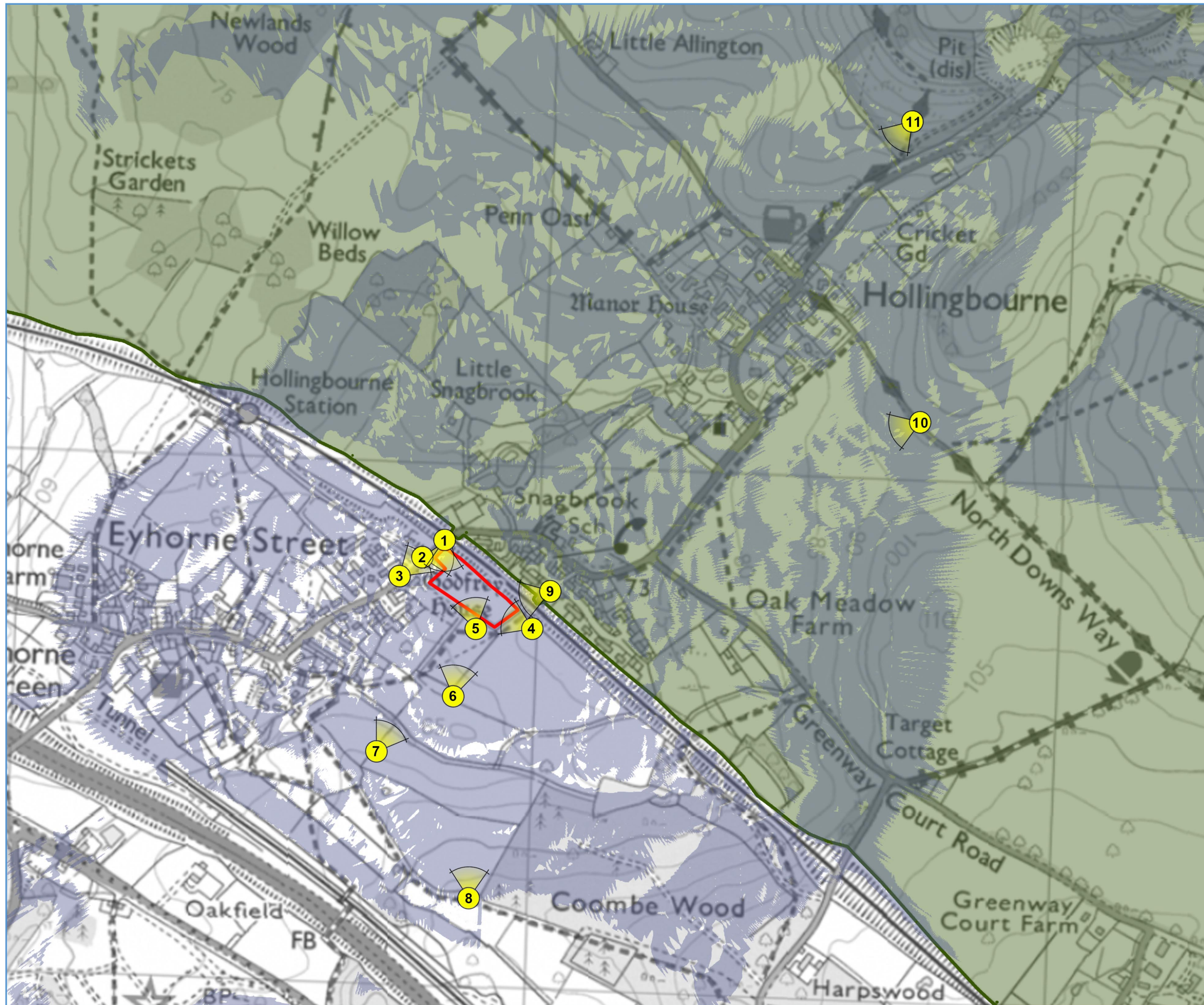
SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- Consider the generic guidelines for the Gault Clay Vales
- North of the railway line, the landscape is situated within the Kent Downs AONB. The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally important designation which offers a high level of development constraint
- Land management policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of this landscape are set out within the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014. Also refer to guidance documents referenced in Appendix A
- Conserve the undeveloped foreground and rural setting of the Kent Downs AONB
- Conserve distinctive brick railway arches and maintain using like for like materials
- Avoid screening with coniferous planting
- Conserve characteristic oak, ash and beech hedgerow trees and isolated oaks within arable land, and plant new hedgerow trees and isolated specimens to replace ageing examples
- Conserve distinctive willow trees along watercourses
- Conserve the traditional setting of listed buildings and soften the impact of recent farm buildings through native planting
- Avoid infill development and expansion across the downland at Harrietsham and Hollingbourne





APPENDIX 4

Viewpoint Location Plan (VLP.004) and Photographic Record

Not to Scale



Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Areas from which the proposals would theoretically be visible (based on 10m building and bare earth data)
-  Viewpoint Location
-  Kent Downs National Landscape

Land at Eyhorne Street,
Hollingbourne

Viewpoint Location Plan

Drawing Ref: Pr-1113.VLP.004 Rev. -
Date: May 2025 Drawn: AM



Viewpoint 1 - Eyehorne Street at railway bridge, north of the Site



Viewpoint 2 - Eyehorne Street opposite the north western boundary of the Site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.



North western boundary
of the Site

Godfrey House

Approximate extent of site

Viewpoint 3 - Eyhorne Street outside Godfrey House, west of the Site



Hollingbourne Meadows

South eastern boundary
of the Site

Approximate extent of site

Viewpoint 4 - Permissive path within Hollingbourne Meadows, south east of the Site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.

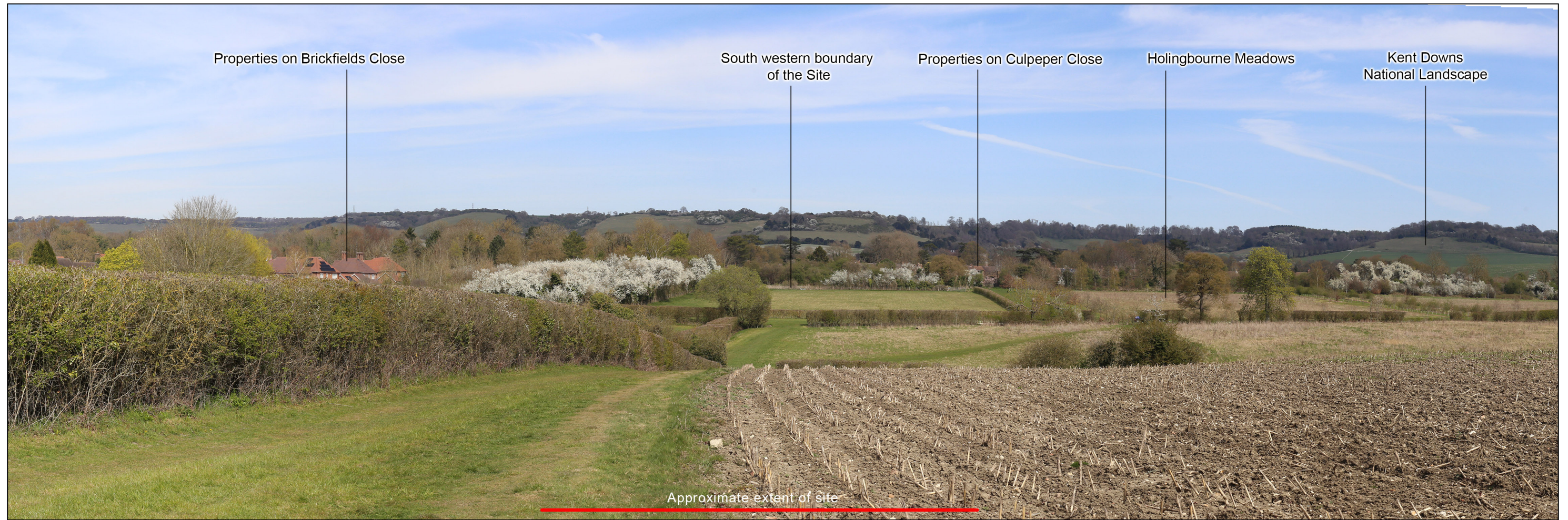


Viewpoint 5 - Footpath KH198, south of the Site

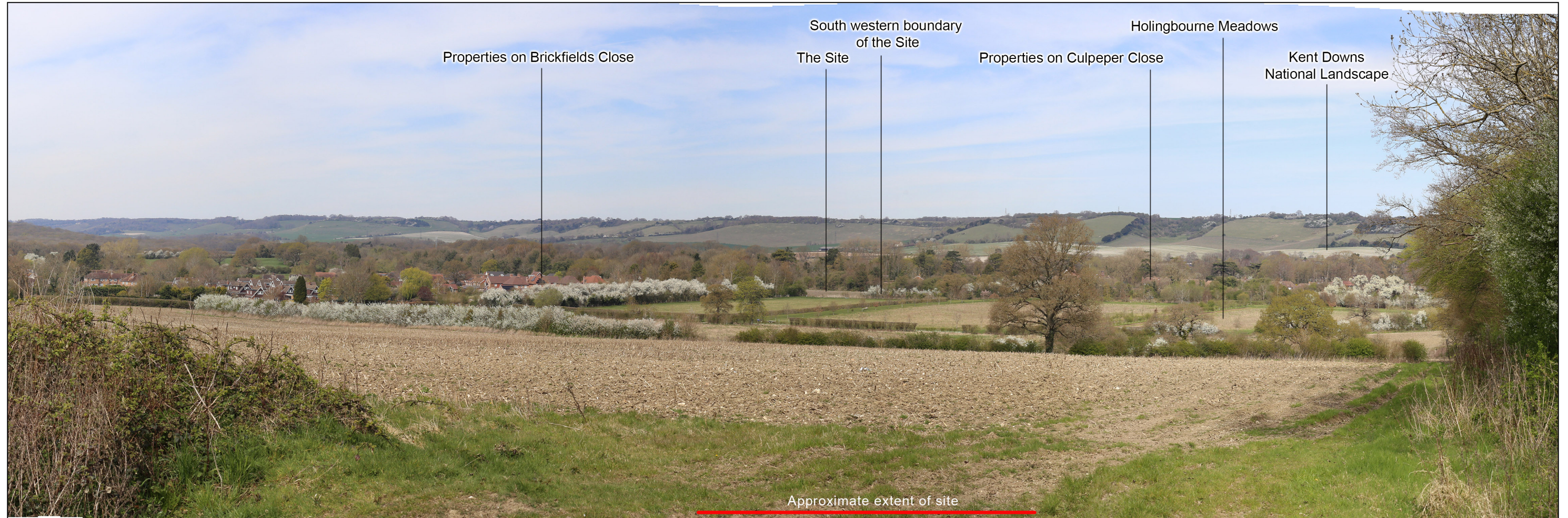


Viewpoint 6 - Permissive path within Holingbourne Meadows, south of the Site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.



Viewpoint 7 - Permissive path within Holingbourne Meadows, south west of the Site



Viewpoint 8 - Footpath KH200 next to Coombe Wood, south of the Site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.

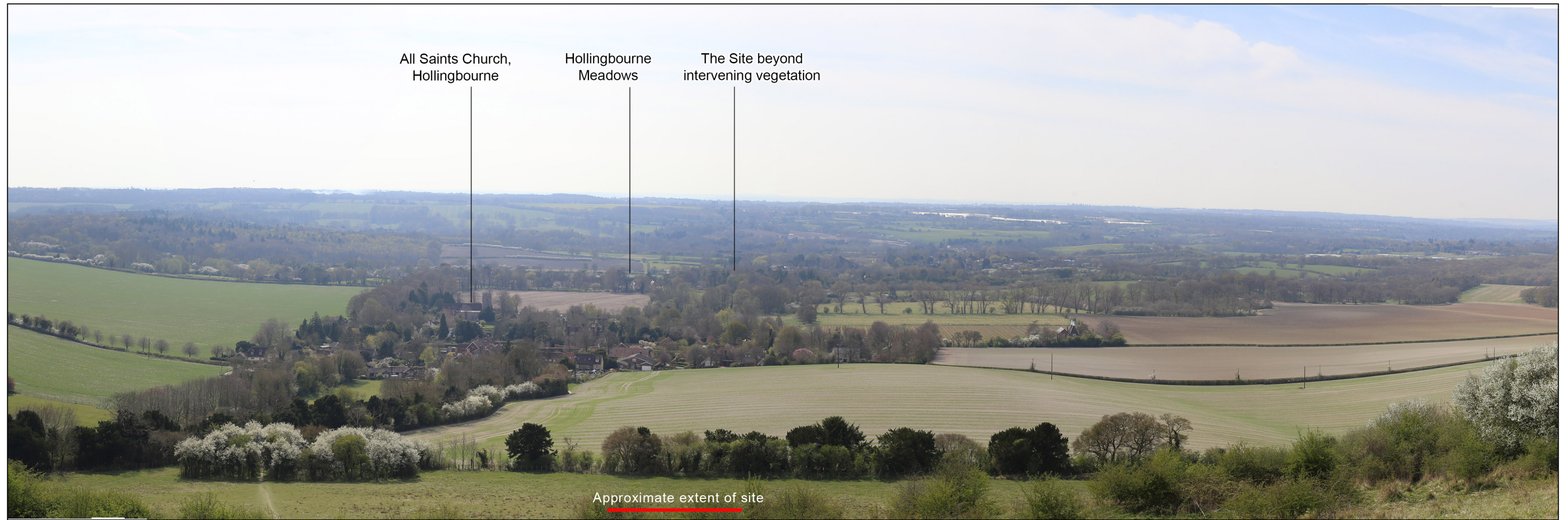


Viewpoint 9 - Footpath KH198, just off Culpeper Close, east of the Site



Viewpoint 10 - Pilgrim's Way south east of Hollingbourne, north east of the Site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.



All Saints Church,
Hollingbourne

Hollingbourne
Meadows

The Site beyond
intervening vegetation

Approximate extent of site

Viewpoint 11 - Footpath KH142A, within Kent Downs National Landscape, north east of the Site

Approximate extent of site

NOTE: PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CONTEXT ONLY AND SHOULD NOT REPLACE VISITING THE VIEWPOINTS IN PERSON TO ENSURE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT. Panoramas are created from multiple photographs which are stitched together in Adobe Photoshop. The photographs are taken using a digital equivalent of a 35mm camera in line with best practice and current guidance. The camera (Canon EOS 6D) is a full sensor DSLR model and, as such, the photographs are taken at a 50mm focal length using a fixed 50mm Canon lens. Images illustrate a horizontal field of view of 68° and, when printed at A3, should be viewed at a distance of 260mm curved through the same radius in order to most closely reflect the existing landscape context.

APPENDIX 5

Extract from Kent Downs AONB Landscape Character Assessment Update (2020) –
“Hollingbourne Scarp & Vale” LCA 2b

6.0 Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale

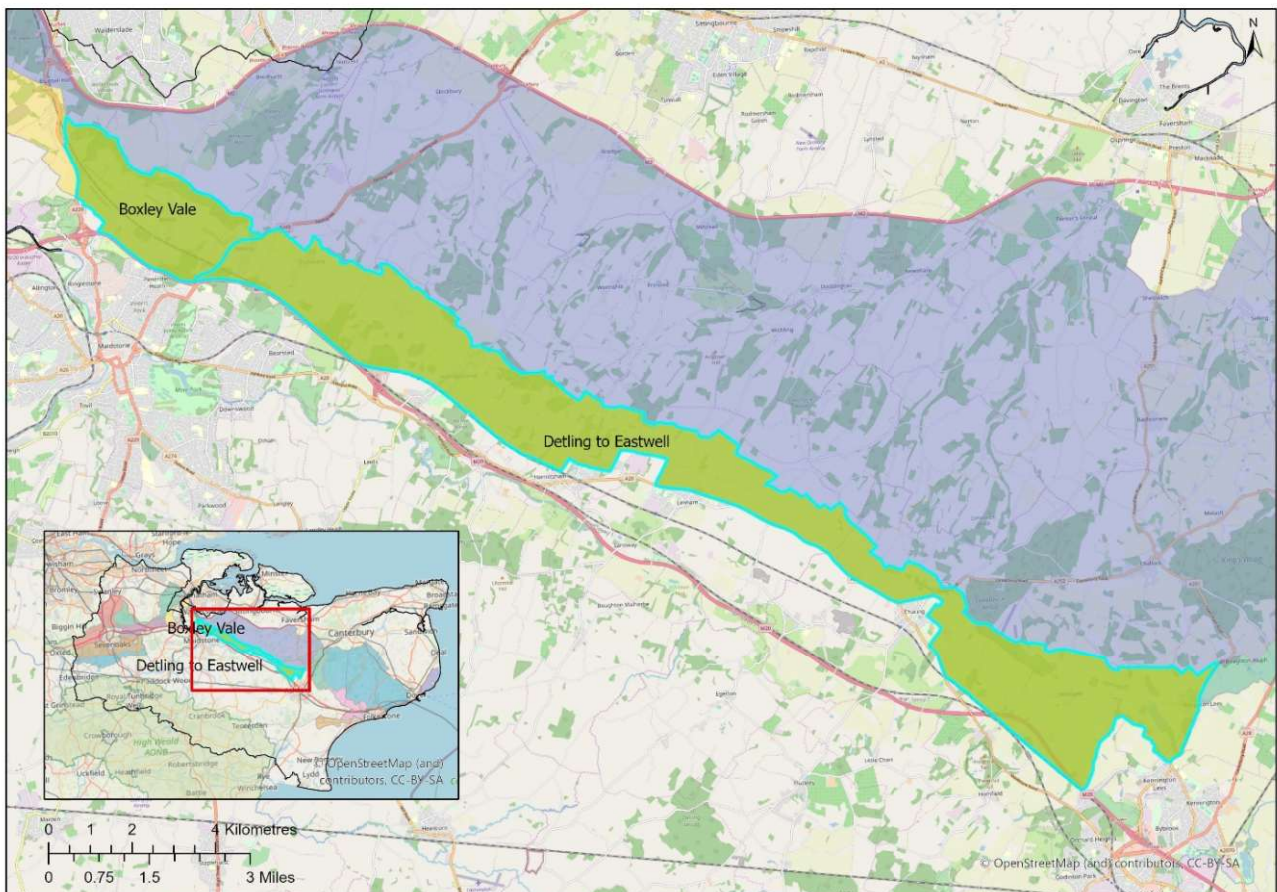
Landscape Character Area 2B

Landscape Character Type 2: Chalk Scarp and Vale

Districts/ Boroughs: Ashford; Maidstone

Landscape/Countryside Partnerships: None

Location and Context: This LCA comprises the chalk scarp and vale which runs between the Medway Valley (to the west) and the Stour Valley (to the east). The AONB boundary follows the southern edge of the LCA, whilst to the north is the Mid Kent Downs LCA, which forms the dip slope to this scarp.



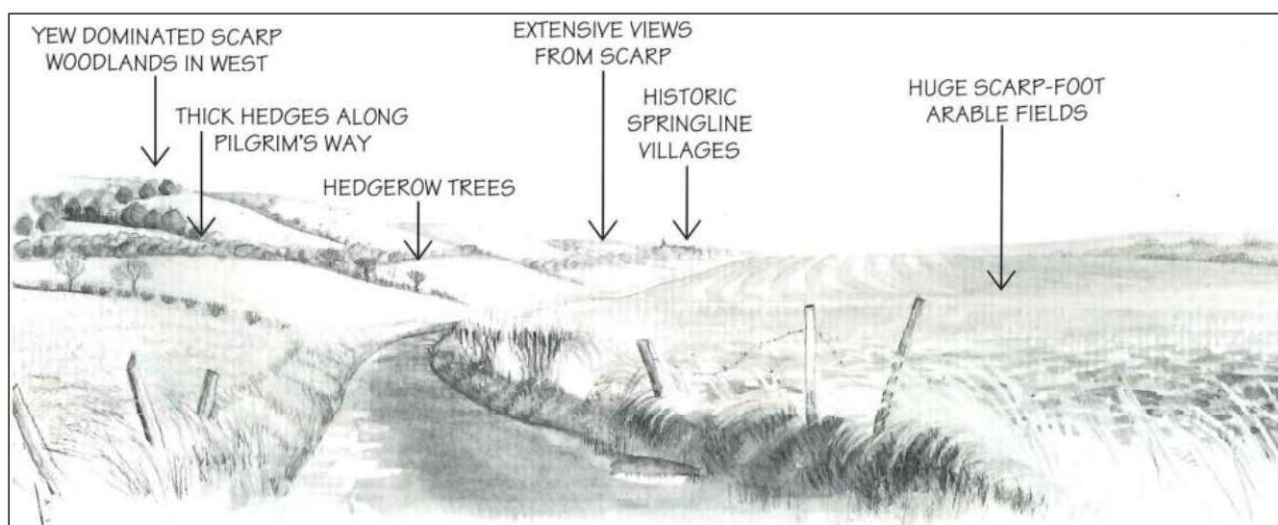
Location map for Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale LCA, also showing Local Character Areas of Boxley Vale and Detling to Eastwell



View of Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale near Thurnham

Summary Characteristics

- Underlying geology of Cretaceous chalk on the scarp, and gault clay in the vale. Also pockets of sand and gravel within superficial deposits.
- Landform comprises steep south-facing chalk scarp, often concave in profile, with lower-lying vale to the south. A series of dry valleys give the scarp a smooth, rolling profile.
- Springs emerge at the base of the scarp, at the junction of chalk and clay, feeding streams, ponds and wetland areas.
- Distinctive scarp woodlands with a high proportion of evergreen species. Rare box and yew woodlands in the west. Roadside and hedgerow trees add to the treed appearance of the Vale, particularly around villages.
- Distinctive field pattern of large regular fields within the most fertile agricultural land at the base of the scarp. Smaller and less regular field patterns around villages.
- Semi-natural habitats include chalk grassland, woodland and scrub on scarp, and ponds, streams and wetlands in vale.
- Historic network of lanes and tracks, including the Pilgrims' Way which follows the scarp. Norman castle at Thurnham occupies a commanding position overlooking the vale.
- Distinctive settlement pattern of attractive springline villages within the Vale, some of which have expanded into larger settlements. Numerous examples of vernacular buildings including houses, pubs, manor houses and churches.
- A dense network of historic narrow lanes within the vale and running up the scarp. More recent transport routes include the M20 and HS1.
- A distinctive landscape composition formed by the contrasting patterns and visual interrelationship of scarp slopes, scarp foot and vale. Evergreen woodland looks particularly dramatic in winter.
- The scarp forms a key backdrop and skyline in views from the vale and from land to the south. From the scarp there are expansive views across Hollingbourne Vale towards the Weald and the Greensand Ridge.



Sketch of Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale from 'The Kent Downs Landscape' (1995)

6.1 Description

- 6.1.1 This Landscape Character Area comprises the south-west facing scarp slope and the clay vale below, between the Medway and Stour valleys. The underlying geology is fundamental to the character of the area, and consists of the dramatic chalk scarp, with clay and sand deposits in the lower vale. The steep scarp of the downs overlooks a wide, rolling landscape of mixed farmland. There are a series of splendid sweeping views from the scarp over Hollingbourne Vale towards Maidstone, the Weald and the Greensand Ridge. The presence of the scarp provides a strong sense of place and orientation both within the Landscape Character Area and in views towards it.
- 6.1.2 The steeper parts of the scarp are predominantly grassland or woodland, although some parts have been ploughed in the late 20th Century. This has exposed the highly visible white chalk below the shallow, unstable soils. The scarp is particularly steep and undulating in the west, becoming gentler towards the east. The long history of exploitation of the chalk and sand is shown in the former quarries and deneholes which are dotted over the area. The chalk pits often form wildlife habitats, with some designated SSSI. Uncommon scrub species such as wild box and purging buckthorn may be found on the grassland of the scarp, for example around Thurnham. Woodland, plantations and hedgerow trees in the lower parts of the vale give much of the landscape a well-treed appearance. Springs occur at the boundary of the chalk and clay which feed surface ponds, streams and wetlands at the base of the scarp. Historically, these springs have been used to power mills, and also to supply water for osier beds on the valley floor.
- 6.1.3 The southern boundary of the AONB extends across the fertile strip of land along the scarp foot. The continual down-wash of soil from the scarp, combined with the sheltered aspect of the resulting fields, produces a belt of very productive agricultural land. For most of its length, the extent of this fertile strip is clearly evidence from the single-width and uniformity of the large, intensively cultivated fields which divide it up. Beyond this strip, the fields are often smaller and more irregular, with more trees and woodland scattered between them. Pockets of historic smaller fields and occasional orchards occur around settlements, along with some more recent subdivisions of land for horse-grazing.

- 6.1.4 The agricultural value of the scarp foot has long been recognised and exploited. The Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th Century show a pattern of large, regular fields similar to that of today, which are often divided by luxuriant hedgerows containing a range of native species. The mid-late 20th Century saw some parts of the scarp foot denuded of the few trees and hedges which formerly occurred there. This has produced vast arable fields that in places sweep up over the scarp onto the downland plateaux.
- 6.1.5 The natural fertility of the soils mean that this area has been settled for a long time. Prehistoric standing stones occur in the western part of the area, and evidence of a Neolithic long house was found during construction of a cutting for HS1 near Boxley. Archaeological excavations associated with HS1 also revealed a Roman villa and medieval settlement on the valley floor east of Detling. The Norman castle at Thurnham was constructed in a commanding position high on the scarp, with excellent views over the Hollingbourne Vale.
- 6.1.6 The scarp foot is characterised by the string of old-established villages, such as Hollingbourne, Boxley and Detling which have grown up along the line of springs that seep out from the lower levels of the chalk. Hollingbourne Manor is a good example of Elizabethan brickwork, and there are many other attractive houses and farms in and between the villages, often with chequered red and grey brick and clay-tile roofs. There are also several splendid churches, some isolated or standing on village edges. Substantial vineyard planting is increasingly apparent along the foot of the scarp.
- 6.1.7 The scarp contains a distinctive pattern of roads and tracks. Throughout much of the Landscape Character Area, the ancient track of the North Downs Way runs east-west along the top of the scarp, and the Pilgrims' Way runs parallel, halfway down. Both are lined with thick hedges for much of their length and evoke a timeless quality. Parts of the Pilgrims' Way may have ancient origins as an alternative summer route to the higher path along the top of the scarp. The sticky clay underfoot would have made it difficult to use in winter. Running perpendicular, up the scarp face, are a series of sunken lanes and tracks which are likely to have had their origins as drove roads for moving animals between the high land and the vale. Many of the historic springline villages have developed along these routes. More recent transport additions to the Hollingbourne Vale include the M20 and HS1 railway line with their associated tunnels, bridges and wires are often brutal interventions in the landscape.

6.2 Local Character Areas

6.2.1 There are two Local Character Areas within Hollingbourne Vale, largely distinguished by the extent of woodland on the scarp.

Boxley Scarp and Vale

6.2.2 Boxley Scarp and Vale Local Character Area lies to the north of Maidstone and is almost encircled by major roads. Nevertheless, this is an attractive and anciently settled area of countryside. The scarp woodlands have a significant amount of yew and some box, whose dark, evergreen foliage is particularly prominent in winter. Rose is present on woodland edges. The chalk grassland at Boxley Warren Nature Reserve contains many different species and the rabbit-grazed turf is springy underfoot and scented by the wild thyme and other herbs. However, the area is currently seeing declines in biomass and biodiversity. The place name Boxley ('clearing in the box') suggests box has been a dominant species in this area since Saxon times. To the west, the traditional large fields of the scarp foot are in evidence, but east of Boxley a series of small, hedge-lined fields are interspersed by attractive parkland. The striking stone walls around the site of the medieval abbey at Boxley in the west add to the strong, historic feel of the landscape.

6.2.3 Boxley is a springline village with many traditional buildings including a medieval manor complex adjacent to the church, a maltings and traditional cottages. Similar vernacular brick and timber-framed buildings are also found in the farmsteads scattered across the area. The poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson frequently visited Park House, and was inspired by this landscape when he wrote his poem 'The Brook'.

6.2.4 HS1 and main roads are prominent in some views, along with urban development outside the AONB. The noise and movement associated with the transport corridors also reduce the sense of tranquillity.



View looking towards the wooded scarp at Boxley Warren

Detling to Eastwell

- 6.2.5 This long, narrow Local Character Area runs from Detling in the west to Eastwell in the east, and includes the springline villages of Detling, Thurnham, Hollingbourne and Westwell. Further springline villages (Lenham, Harrietsham, Charing and Eythorne Street) are close to its southern boundary. Although these villages themselves are outside the AONB, much of their parishes lie within it.
- 6.2.6 In contrast to the dense woodlands above Boxley, much of this area has only an intermittent fringe of yew woodland along the scarp top and some scattered trees along field boundaries. Nevertheless, the scarp-top woodland and trees play an important role in creating a treed backdrop. Where hedges and trees extend down the scarp slope they reinforce the rolling pattern of the downs. Further east, there are larger blocks of woodland including Westwell Downs, and woodland and plantation associated with Eastwell Park. Ash Dieback is increasingly evident in these woodlands. The estate of Eastwell Park also contains a number of historic parkland features, including veteran trees and the ornamental Eastwell Lake - one of the largest waterbodies in this part of the AONB.
- 6.2.7 A strip of chalk grassland follows the top of the scarp for much of its length, and this has been extended through reversion of arable land, although some arable gaps remain. The lower slopes of the scarp, and the vale below, are mostly in arable use, and the line of the historic trackways which run east-west along the scarp are marked by horizontal lines of trees and hedgerows. A chalk cross carved into the scarp above Lenham as a memorial to those who fell in WW1 is a local landmark.



View looking east from below Thurnham Castle. The narrow belt of woodland along the top of the scarp can be seen on the left, with grassland below. The grassy fields, including the one in the foreground, have recently been reverted from arable.



Chalk grassland growing on an old chalk and sand quarry above Lenham



Clear chalk stream at Goddington near Harrietsham



Woodland with a high proportion of evergreen species, including yew and box, Boxley Warren Nature Reserve



Traditional buildings in the typical springline village of Hollingbourne



The Pilgrims' Way forms a hedged track between fields, and has a strong sense of timelessness.



Sweeping view from Boxley Warren across Maidstone towards the Greensand Ridge.

6.3 Landscape Condition, Sensitivities and Forces for Change

- 6.3.1 Parts of the Hollingbourne Vale suffered from the removal of hedgerows and shaws in the 1970s and 1980s, a fact which was noted in the 1995 and 2004 Assessments, along with the impacts of pylons, HS1 and the M20. The 2004 Assessment described Hollingbourne Vale as being in poor condition with weak ecological integrity and 'prairie' fields.
- 6.3.2 In the intervening years there have been several projects aimed at enhancing the structure and management of the landscape. Some have been funded through Higher Level Stewardship, and others through landscape schemes associated with the Channel Tunnel Rail link. These have included replanting and/ or gapping-up hedgerows, reverting arable land on the scarp slope to grassland, and linking patches of grassland along the scarp. However, some areas of large scale arable fields still remain, and the grassland along the chalk scarp is not continuous, being broken by busy roads and arable fields. Planting along the transport corridors has matured and therefore forms a more effective screen. Nevertheless, the local impacts of HS1 and the M20 are sometimes significant and noticeable in terms of noise, lights, structures and movement
- 6.3.3 Comparison of the photos from 1995 and 2017 shows considerable tree growth on the valley floor and sides. The sheds on the right of the 1995 image are now larger (although screened by a tree in the 2017 photo).
- 6.3.4 The location of the Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale on the edge of the AONB, and within a transport corridor, means that there is significant pressure for development in the immediate vicinity of the AONB and in its wider setting. Were this to go ahead it would impact on views from within the AONB looking out, and also threatens its tranquillity and rural character.
- 6.3.5 The prominence of the scarp landform makes it particularly sensitive to development, and the narrow shape of the Landscape Character Area means that it is vulnerable to fragmentation.
- 6.3.6 The numerous springs found within this Landscape Character Area feed a series of chalk streams which eventually run into the Medway or Stour. The springs and headwaters of these streams are vulnerable to pollution and variations in flow, which in turn impact on water quality downstream.



View towards the scarp with Chegworth Court Farm in the foreground in 1995 (above) and 2017 (below). The exact location of the original view is no longer on a public right of way.

Issue	Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts
Transport infrastructure	<p>The transport corridor containing the A20, M20, Maidstone-Ashford railway line and HS1 runs along the southern edge of Hollingbourne Vale. The A249 also climbs the scarp west of Detling, and the A252 climbs it west of Charing. These transport routes have localised visual and noise impacts and can be detrimental to the tranquillity of the area. They also function as a catalyst for development (see below).</p> <p>Most other roads within Hollingbourne Vale are narrow lanes or tracks and are often sunken and not suitable for heavy traffic, but can become rat runs, particularly when major roads are congested. Banks and hedgerows can be damaged by wide or passing vehicles.</p>

Issue	<i>Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts</i>
Development	<p>Within the AONB, main road corridors tend to be a focus for more urban fringe-style development such as garages and garden centres. These (together with suburban-style residential gates and curtilages) can have localised impact on the rural character of the area. Development pressure may lead to developments which do not reflect the form or style of older buildings, and therefore do not sit comfortably within the landscape.</p> <p>However, the greatest pressure is for development outside the AONB, but visible from it, or within the setting of the AONB when viewed from the south. This includes commercial development along the A20/ M20 corridor. There is also currently rapid expansion of settlements just outside the AONB (for example at Lenham, Charing and Harrietsham) which impact on the landscape and also on traffic levels. Other structures which may have a detracting impact on views include solar farms, polytunnels and quarrying infrastructure.</p>
Land management	<p>The landscape has suffered from intensive farming in the past, particularly loss of hedgerows and shaws, and ploughing of grassland. Whilst efforts have been made to restore the landscape in recent years, there are still areas where large arable fields dominate. These large fields lack character and visual interest, and are also less beneficial to wildlife. They can also lead to fragmentation of wildlife habitats such as woodland and chalk grassland. Soil compaction (leading to water run-off and flooding) can also be an issue. Lack of woodland management is a problem in some areas, and there are localised problems with predation from unsustainably large reared pheasant populations. Some woodland sites (including Boxley Warren and The Larches) are seeing declines in biomass and biodiversity.</p> <p>Future agricultural practices, cropping patterns etc. will depend in part on agricultural grant schemes, which are currently unknown. However, the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) offers opportunities to restore and reinforce valued characteristics of the landscape.</p> <p>There is a need to remove or find positive, sensitive new uses for agricultural buildings which can no longer serve their original purpose. New agricultural buildings tend to be larger, bland in design and constructed of reflective materials which make them more intrusive.</p> <p>Viticulture is an increasing land use in the Vale. There are opportunities to enhance the wildlife benefits of vineyards and mitigate the infrastructure associated with them.</p>
Water management	<p>Abstraction of groundwater affects surface water flows, which in turn affects water quality and habitats through drying out of streams, springs, ponds, seepages and marshy areas. Pollution levels are a concern, and agricultural chemicals, including nitrates, also affect water quality, although attempts are being made to reduce this. In addition, springs and the headwaters of chalk streams are particularly vulnerable to pollution from run-off from roads and development, and discharge from sewage treatment works. Ploughing of steep land, particularly where there are no hedgerows, can lead to soil erosion and run-off into rivers, particularly after heavy rain.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Landscape sensitivities and potential landscape impacts</i>
Recreation	<p>Illegal use of off-road vehicles on tracks (particularly the Pilgrims' Way) is a problem in parts of the area (especially around Boxley). Such use can lead to intimidation of legitimate users, and also damage the surface of the track and nearby land.</p> <p>Sub-division of land for horse-grazing is noticeable in some parts of Hollingbourne Scarp and Vale, particularly around villages.</p> <p>Increased use of 'keep out' signage and security measures can discourage legitimate countryside recreation.</p>
Loss of tranquillity	<p>The presence of traffic (both on main roads, and on lanes) is a particular concern within this Landscape Character Area. Places without traffic noise are relatively few. The wider impacts of loss of tranquillity on nature (for example reduction in bird and bat numbers) cause further detriment to the soundscape. Light pollution from surrounding roads and settlements is a further concern.</p>
Climate change, pests and diseases	<p>Climate change is likely to have a range of impacts on the area, including exacerbating the frequency and intensity of storms, and also longer drier periods. These will affect flooding, water quality, and the ability of various tree and plant species to survive. Warmer temperatures also enable new pests and diseases to thrive. Ash Dieback is already a concern, and will continue to affect woodlands and hedgerow trees over the coming years. There is further concern about other tree diseases in the area. Invasive species such as Japanese knotweed also threaten native vegetation on riverbanks.</p>

6.4 Landscape Management Recommendations

Aspirational Landscape Strategy

The strongly rural character of the area is retained, despite the pressure for development in the vicinity. Views from the scarp, and towards the scarp, remain free from large-scale development which has an adverse effect on the setting of the AONB.

Progress continues to be made on repair and enhancement of the landscape structure, including hedgerows, shaws and woodlands, particularly in areas of large arable fields where hedgerows have been lost, or where semi-natural habitats are fragmented. Habitat networks of grassland and woodlands are robust and well-managed. The distinctive woodland and grassland vegetation along the top of the scarp is thriving, and the skyline is clear of development. The water quality of chalk rivers and streams is high, and flows are as close as possible to their natural state.

Historic buildings and villages are well-maintained, and any new development is sensitive to traditional settlement character. The network of lanes and tracks- particularly the long distance footpaths- are enjoyed by legitimate users, and retain their timeless quality and magnificent views. The landscape and visual impacts of road and rail networks continue to be reduced.

Protect

- Protect the rural character of roads and tracks, and avoid the spread of linear development along road corridors.
- Protect skylines at the top of the scarp, avoiding structures which disrupt the undeveloped horizon formed by grassland and woodland.
- Protect the rural character of the scarp. The landform is prominent and particularly sensitive to development.
- Protect the settings of historic buildings and settlements, including farms. These include the wooded settings of many villages. Make sure that new farm buildings are sited and designed to blend into their surroundings, for example using recessive colours, stepped ridgelines and avoiding skylines.

Manage

- Manage farmland, particularly arable areas, to promote a network of hedgerows, hedgerow and in field trees and grassland strips. Promote good soil management to reduce surface water run-off.
- Continue to develop and link the grassland and woodland strips along the top of the scarp, including promoting the return of cultivated areas of scarp to species-rich chalk grassland.
- Manage woodland to promote age and appropriate species diversity, and also to encourage locally-distinctive woodland species such as box, yew and whitebeam. Promote new hedgerow/ roadside trees from existing hedge stock.
- Manage historic parkland and ensure that all parklands have a conservation management plan. Plant replacement parkland trees where necessary to ensure that they remain features of the landscape.
- Manage recreational routes to minimise conflicts between off-road vehicles and legitimate users.
- Continue to promote best practice with regard to management of land for equine use and enforce planning conditions and limit further development of equine management where a change of use is proposed

- Manage watercourses and ponds to improve water quality, enhance their biodiversity and (where appropriate) amenity value.
- Promote best practice in vineyard management encouraging wildlife rich grasslands in the vineyards, species rich hedgerows and carefully designed infrastructure where essential

Plan

- When considering new development in the vicinity of the AONB, take into account the impacts on views from within the AONB, and how new development will appear in the context of the AONB (particularly in views from the south looking towards the AONB, and in views along Hollingbourne Vale). Use carefully-designed planting schemes and sensitive building design/ choice of colour to help integrate development into the landscape.
- Promote use of sympathetic local building materials, including red brick, tile hanging, weatherboarding, flint and ragstone.
- Work with water companies and the Environment Agency to monitor pollution levels and water flows and to try and retain the natural conditions of chalk streams. Reduce abstraction from drought-stressed aquifers. Continue to encourage farmers, land managers, water companies, Highways Authorities and developers to reduce levels of water pollution, promoting a partnership approach. Consider increasing meadow 'buffers' alongside streams to help improve water quality and regulate flow.
- Work with Highways Authorities to reduce noise levels from traffic on main roads, and enhance the wildlife value of road verges without compromising safety.
- Promote retention of the area's narrow lanes, ideally keeping them to a single lane plus a footpath/ cycle lane.
- Work with utility companies to promote undergrounding of cables and removal of poles and pylons.
- Encourage partnership working between different Local Authorities, agencies and community groups to enable seamless working across the AONB.
- Within the setting of the LCA, work with Local Planning Authorities and designers to achieve the best possible landscape and ecological integration and minimal impact on views, with compensation achieved for any lost qualities.