

# Lewes Landscape and Visual Appraisals of Potential Development Sites in Lewes District

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Quality information

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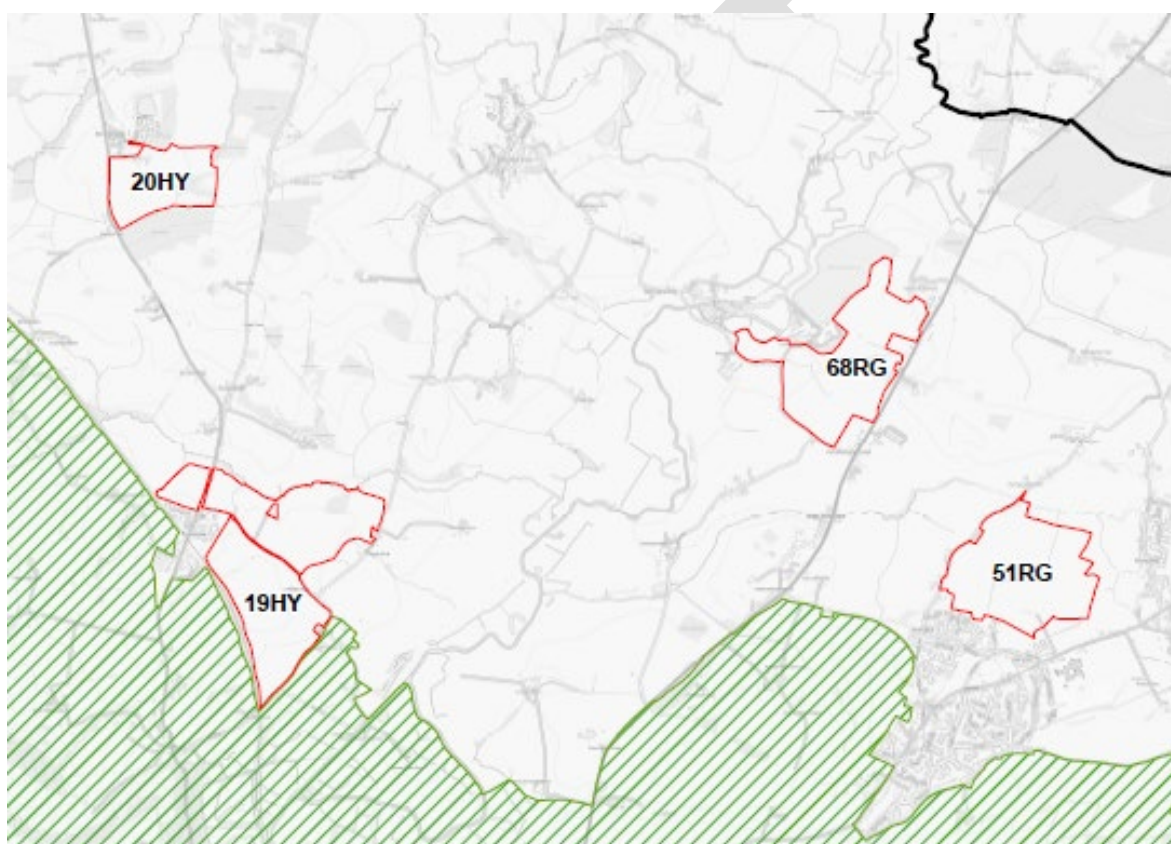
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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2024, Lewes District Council commissioned AECOM to undertake Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs) for four Sites within the district, outside of the South Downs National Park, in respect of either potential residential or strategic mixed use development types.
- 1.2 With reference to the following extract of **Figure 1: Site Context with Landscape Designations**, the four Sites are:
- 51RG Land north of Ringmer;
  - 19HY Land north of Cooksbridge;
  - 68RG Land to the West of the A46; and,
  - 20HY Land at Hewen Street Farm.



**Figure 1-1: Site Context with Landscape Designations, illustrating the four Sites (red outlines) and the boundary of the South Downs National Park (green cross hatch).**

- 1.3 The LVAs set out the existing landscape and visual context of the four Sites, through a combination of desk-based reviews and fieldwork to identify the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints of each Site. This seeks to guide any potential future development in avoiding, minimising or offsetting any adverse landscape and visual impacts. The LVAs have been undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects in accordance with industry accepted guidance.
- 1.4 With reference to Plate 1, Sites 51RG and 19HY were assessed within the Lewes Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, 2023<sup>1</sup> (LSA) undertaken for Lewes District (excluding the South Downs National Park) and where relevant, information from this study is utilised in the LVA, as well as the Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2023)<sup>2</sup>. At the time of undertaking the LVAs, the LSA and LCA form part of the evidence base supporting the emerging Lewes Local Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Lewes District Council (2023) *Lewes Landscape Sensitivity Assessment*. [online] Available at: [https://planningpolicyconsult.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LDC\\_PO\\_2023/consultationHome](https://planningpolicyconsult.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LDC_PO_2023/consultationHome)

<sup>2</sup> Lewes District Council (2023) *Lewes Landscape Character Assessment*. [online] Available at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk>

- 1.5 Landscape appraisal and masterplan work has been prepared for Site 51RG and part of Site 19HY by the respective Site promoters which has been reviewed as part of this LVA. An overview of the existing sources of landscape and visual information assessed by this LVA, in addition to the LVA baseline reviews, for the four Sites is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 Existing Site information reviewed within the Landscape and Visual Appraisals**

Site Reference	Included within Published LSA	Existing Site Information
51RG Land north of Ringmer	Yes	Vision documents (Thakeham – February 2024 and Taylor Wimpey – February 2024)
19HY Land north of Cooksbridge	Yes	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for part of the Site (11HY), vision statement and a sustainable growth options document
68RG Land to the West of the A26	No	Gladman 68RG submission to the Lewes Local Plan
20HY Land at Hewen Street Farm	No	Landowner submission to the Lewes Local Plan

- 1.6 As set out in the above table, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken by the Site promoter of part of 19HY; but the LVIA covers a smaller geographic extent of LSA 19HY. For the purposes of this LVA, the full extent of LSA 19HY is assessed, so as to reflect the 2023 LSA. This is also considered appropriate as the Site promoter's Growth Options document and Vision Statement considers the entirety of LSA 19HY.
- 1.7 As noted above, the four Sites are appraised in relation to either potential residential or strategic mixed land uses. Table 2 sets out the relevant Development Scenarios and Typologies for the above Sites appraised within this document.

**Table 2 Development Scenarios and Typologies**

Development Typology	Scenarios to be considered	Relevant LVA Sites
Large-scale residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height: Two storey residential dwellings (maximum height of 7.5m) and three storey residential dwellings (maximum height of 12m)</li> <li>Number of dwellings: 101 or more residential dwellings</li> <li>Density: 40 dph</li> <li>Other: The dwellings are assumed to have gardens and associated parking and infrastructure, open space and set within a new landscape framework. The activity and lighting which is common for the land use is also considered in the LVA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20HY Land at Hewen Street Farm</li> </ul>
Medium-scale strategic mixed-use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic mixed use: assumed to include residential development, educational infrastructure, small-scale office, light industry or small commercial units, retail and leisure space, set within new open space and a new landscape framework.</li> <li>Residential dwelling type and number: Two and three storey residential dwellings and up to 1,000no. residential dwellings</li> <li>Density: 40 dph</li> <li>Height: Maximum building height of 12m (for residential and mixed use)</li> <li>Other: The residential dwellings are assumed to have gardens and associated parking and infrastructure. The activity and lighting which is common for the land use is also considered in the LVA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>51RG Land north of Ringmer</li> <li>19HY Land north of Cooksbridge</li> <li>68RG Land to the West of the A26</li> </ul>

- 1.8 The LVAs will therefore form part of the evidence base for the new Lewes District Local Plan and will assist in guiding and informing spatial planning and potential allocation policies regarding future land uses for the four Sites in respect of landscape and visual matters. It is envisaged that, should any of the four Sites come forwards for development, they should be accompanied by their own LVIA's which should set out the specific mitigation and likely landscape and visual effects.

## 2. Summary of Policy Context

2.1 The following section summarises the policy context relevant for all of the four LVA Sites.

### European Landscape Convention

2.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC)<sup>3</sup> was introduced in 2007 and is the first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. This LVA responds to the ELC aims by *“informing decisions on where new development, and/ or changes in land management might be most appropriately directed/ located from a landscape point of view”*, as set out in the Natural England published guidance<sup>4</sup>.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>5</sup> was updated in December 2023. This document sets out the Government’s planning policies within England and their application. The NPPF sets out in paragraph 119 that *“planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”*.
- 2.4 NPPF Chapter 15 conserving and enhancing the natural environment sets out that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Paragraph 182 also includes for development within the setting of a National Park to be *“sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”*
- 2.5 At the time of undertaking the LVAs, consultation on revising the NPPF is underway (30<sup>th</sup> July to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024)<sup>6</sup>. Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy includes revisions for planning policies to identify sites for commercial developments which meet the needs of a modern economy, as well as the expansion of other industries of local importance. Proposed changes to NPPF chapter 12 are to remove the term ‘beautiful’. There are no proposed changes to chapter 15.

### Lewes District Local Plan

- 2.6 The Lewes District Local Plan (2010-2030)<sup>7</sup> was adopted in May 2016 and sets the long-term spatial vision for the district and will guide development and change up to 2030. It forms a planning policy framework to direct growth and change to appropriate locations and includes a range of policies to inform the location, scale and appearance of development.
- 2.7 The Lewes District Local Plan recognises the need to protect and enhance the character and quality of the District’s environment. Strategic Objective 6 of the Local Plan is concerned with future development, aiming *“to conserve and enhance the high quality and character of the district’s towns, villages, and rural environment by ensuring that all forms of development are designed to a high standard and maintain and enhance the local vernacular and ‘sense of place’ of individual settlements”*. Strategic Objective 8 states that development should be built in *“highly sustainable locations without adversely affecting the character of the area”*.

### South Downs National Park Local Plan

- 2.8 The southern part of Lewes District, excluding Peacehaven, Newhaven and Seaford, is covered by the South Downs National Park. The South Downs National Park was designated in 2010 (formerly the South Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), and accounts for approximately 50% of the district’s overall area.
- 2.9 The South Downs National Park Authority adopted their own South Downs Local Plan (2014-2033)<sup>8</sup> in 2019. The South Downs Local Plan objectives include conserving and enhancing the landscape, the large areas of high-quality and well-managed habitats and the villages and market towns of the National Park. It also notes that the South Downs National Park will: *“work positively and in partnership with other local authorities to ensure that development outside of the*

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe (2020) *Council of Europe Landscape Convention* (ETS No. 176)

<sup>4</sup> Natural England (2019) *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management*. [online] Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (2023) *National Planning Policy Framework* [online]. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

<sup>7</sup> Lewes District Council (2016) *Lewes Core Strategy: Local Plan Part 1*. [online] Available at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1832/Lewes-Core-Strategy-Local-Plan-Part-1>

<sup>8</sup> South Downs National Park Authority (2019) *South Downs Local Plan (2014 – 2033)*. [online] Available at: [https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD\\_LocalPlan\\_2019\\_17Wb.pdf](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD_LocalPlan_2019_17Wb.pdf)

*National Park does not have a detrimental impact on its setting or otherwise prejudice the achievement of the National Park purposes”.*

- 2.10 The South Downs Local Plan also sets out the purposes of the National Park, which are to “*To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area*” and “*To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.*”

## Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.11 At the time of undertaking the LVA, the following parishes surrounding the Sites have adopted or drafted Neighbourhood Development Plans and these have been reviewed in order to inform this study:

- Barcombe Final Draft 3 Neighbourhood Plan 2010 – 2030 (Draft)<sup>9</sup>
- Ringmer to 2023 Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted)<sup>10</sup>
- Hamsey 2014-30 Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted)<sup>11</sup>

- 2.12 These Neighbourhood Development Plans generally set out the need to conserve and enhance the natural environment and minimise the ingress of urban characteristics in favour of layouts, densities, materials and infrastructure which reflects the local vernacular. The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan<sup>10</sup> (of particular relevance to Site 68RG) notes that Barcombe Mills has high potential for recreational use, and has been used for recreational purposes previously, but public access has been lost.

<sup>9</sup> Barcombe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (2018) *Barcombe Final Draft Neighbourhood Plan 2010 - 2030* (2018) *Barcombe Parish Council*. [online] Available at: <https://www.wp.barcombepc.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Paper-2.-Draft-NP.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> South Downs National Park Authority and Lewes District Council (2016) *Ringmer to 2030. A Neighbourhood Plan for Ringmer 2010-2030*. [online] Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Ringmer-Made-NDP.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Hamsey Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (2014) *Hamsey 2014-30 Neighbourhood Plan*. [online] Available at: <https://hamseyparish.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HNP-27th-Nov-2014-Final-pdf.pdf>



## 3. LVA Methodology

### LVA Methodology Guidelines

3.1 The methodology for the LVAs follows best practice, and adheres to the following documentation:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) - Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)<sup>12</sup>;
- An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – Natural England (2019)<sup>13</sup>; and,
- Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 (2021)<sup>14</sup>.

### LVA Process and Study Area

3.2 The process for producing the LVAs for each of the Sites is set out as follows:

- Review of policy context of relevance to the LVAs;
- Review of relevant landscape and visual information from published studies, including published landscape character assessments;
- Setting out the landscape, visual and National Park baseline specific information for each Site (this has included specific representative viewpoints for each Site and shared representative viewpoints within the South Downs National Park);
- Setting out the landscape and visual sensitivity for each Site;
- Setting out key landscape and visual constraints and opportunities across each Site; and,
- Schematically illustrating the opportunities and constraints of each Site.

3.3 A landscape study area of 2km around each of the LVA Sites has been adopted. This is considered proportionate to understand the key potential landscape receptors within this area. Due to the context of the adjacent or nearby South Downs National Park and elevated land, a 5km visual study area has been adopted to review potential inter-visibility with the South Downs National Park and the identification of a range of people's views (visual receptors).

3.4 Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) were produced to inform the LVAs. The ZTVs use on-line data sources to theoretically illustrate the potential visibility of new buildings within the Sites from across the 5km visual study area. The ZTVs were generated using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 data, with woodland data (assumed to be 10m in height) from the National Forest Inventory and existing building data from Ordnance Survey Mastermap (assumed to be 7.5m in height). The inclusion of existing vegetation, buildings and landform is considered to be more representative of the 'reality on the ground', given the generally wooded character of the landscape. The ZTVs are only used to guide the fieldwork.

3.5 Site work was undertaken during June and July 2024 by Landscape Architects, to appraise the Sites and their surrounding context.

3.6 It should be noted that the LVAs are limited to reviewing landscape and visual matters and not the development potential of the Sites (i.e., the quantum and mix of future development) nor the detailed Agricultural Land Classifications (ALC). The LVAs will add to the previous LSA analysis and contribute to the evidence on which issues and mitigation are likely to be required if development is brought forwards at the Sites. LVIA's of a specific development proposal at each Site will need to be undertaken by the respective Site promoters as part of the planning application process along with a more detailed analysis of the ALC.

<sup>12</sup> Landscape Institute and IEMA (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). [online] Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical/glvia3-panel/>

<sup>13</sup> Natural England (2019) An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management. [online] Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/817928/landscapesensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscapesensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Landscape Institute (2021) Technical Guidance Note 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations. [online] Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

## Setting of the South Downs National Park

3.7 There is no defined geographic area which forms the setting of the South Downs National Park; however, for the purposes of the LVAs, the following criteria have been considered to establish whether a Site is within the setting and are accounted for in the appraisal.

- Inter-visibility – whereby if an assessment Site is visible from the designated landscape, or the designated landscape is visible from the assessment Site, then it may be considered to be within the setting. The degree of visibility, including distance and the composition of views, i.e., the context in which the Site may be seen is then considered in relation to the degree to which it contributes to the setting of the designated landscape;
- Landscape character – whereby if a Site exhibits the same or very similar landscape features as the designated landscape such that it may be the same landscape character, then it may be considered to be within the setting. The degree to which this character is influenced by distance and intervening features is assessed to refine the conclusion on the degree to which the Site contributes to the setting of the designated landscape. The landscape character also considered aspects of cultural or historic association between the Sites and the designated landscape; and
- Perception – whereby a Site may have different landscape features to the designated landscape, but due to similar perceptual qualities, e.g., dark skies, tranquillity, remoteness or wildness, maybe be considered to form part of the setting of the designated landscape.

## Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

3.8 In accordance with industry guidelines set out in paragraph 3.1, landscape and visual sensitivity is appraised separately to form an overall conclusion on the 'landscape and visual sensitivity' of a Site.

3.9 The landscape sensitivity of the Sites has been established through the review of landscape value (*the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities*) and landscape susceptibility to specific development types (*the ability of a landscape to accommodate change*).

3.10 Landscape sensitivity is based on the following criteria in Table 3. For further information on the landscape sensitivity criteria, refer to the Lewes LSA<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 3 Landscape Sensitivity Criteria**

Landscape Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility Criteria
Designations	Landform and Hydrology
Recreational	Landcover
Cultural Heritage and Association	Land Use, Scale and Pattern
Functional (ecology, green infrastructure and place making)	Settlement and Identity
Perception	Condition

3.11 In accordance with the guidelines set out in paragraph 3.1, visual sensitivity is based upon visual value (recognition of the view) and assessment of visual susceptibility (activity of a person and expectation of enjoyment of views). The criteria for visual sensitivity is set out in Table 4. For further information on the visual sensitivity criteria, refer to the Lewes LSA<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 4 Visual Sensitivity Criteria**

Visual Value Criteria	Visual Susceptibility Criteria
Designations	General visibility

Visual Value Criteria	Visual Susceptibility Criteria
Recognition and association	Skylines
Purpose of the view	Scenic quality
	Inter-visibility
	Receptors

3.12 The conclusions of landscape and visual sensitivity are defined using the ratings set out in Table 5.

**Table 5 Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Definitions**

Rating	Summary description
Very High	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are very susceptible to change and the Site is unable to accommodate the relevant type of development without significant adverse character change or adverse visual effects. Thresholds for significant change are very low.
High - medium	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are susceptible to change and / or its values are high. The Site is unlikely to be able to accommodate the relevant type of development overall or only in limited situations, without significant adverse character change or adverse visual effects. Thresholds for significant change are low.
Medium	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium and the Site may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some defined situations without significant adverse landscape or visual effects. Thresholds for significant change are intermediate.
Medium - low	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are resilient and of medium-low susceptibility to change and values and the Site can accommodate the relevant type of development in many situations without significant adverse landscape or visual effects. Thresholds for significant change are high.
Low	Landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are robust or degraded and are not susceptible to change and / or its values are low and the Site can accommodate the relevant type of development without significant adverse landscape or visual change. Thresholds for significant change are very high.

3.13 The ratings outlined in Table 5 have been allocated to reflect the context of the study area. The rating of Very High is given due to the potential relationship with the South Downs National Park, as nationally designated landscapes are afforded '*great weight*' in planning policy.

## 4. Relevant Information from Published Studies

4.1 The following sections sets out the relevant information from published studies in respect of the Sites.

### Lewes Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

4.2 At the time of undertaking the LVAs, the Lewes LSA<sup>15</sup> forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Lewes Local Plan. The study updates previous work undertaken within the Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority Capacity Study<sup>15</sup> as it reflects current pressures, includes defined specific sites and follows updated Natural England guidance for the assessment of landscape sensitivity.

4.3 As set out in the introduction, Sites 51RG and 19HY were included in the LSA. The LSA assessed the landscape and visual sensitivity of various land holdings across the district in relation to a range of development types.

4.4 The following conclusions were drawn for these two Sites:

- Site 51RG: Land north of Ringmer: Medium sensitivity to medium scale strategic mixed-use development meaning that *"landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are susceptible to change and / or its values are medium and the Site / parcel may have some potential to accommodate the relevant type of development in some defined situations without significant adverse landscape or visual effects."*
- Site 19HY: Land North of Cooksbridge: High-medium sensitivity to medium scale strategic mixed-use development meaning that *"landscape and / or visual characteristics of the landscape are susceptible to change and / or its values are high. The Site / parcel is unlikely to be able to accommodate the relevant type of development overall or only in limited situations, without significant adverse character change or adverse visual effects."*

4.5 Therefore, there may be some potential for Sites 51RG and 19HY to deliver medium scale strategic mixed-use development.

### Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority Landscape Capacity Study

4.6 The Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority Landscape Capacity Study<sup>15</sup> was published in 2012 and helped to identify where development could be accommodated within the district without unacceptably impacting on the landscape. The study focused on areas surrounding towns and villages where there were likely to be future development pressures.

4.7 Two of the Sites fall within the Site area assessed within the published study which are set out as follows:

- Landscape Capacity Study Site Cooksbridge B covers part of Site 19HY; and
- Landscape Capacity Study Site Ringmer B covers parts of Site 51RG.

4.8 For part of Site 19HY, the 2012 study concluded that it had a negligible to medium capacity to accommodate development. The 2012 study notes that *"the topography to the east of the village dictates that there is negligible scope for change without impacting on the landscape"*.

4.9 For part of Site 51RG, the 2012 study concluded that it had a medium capacity to accommodate development. The 2012 study notes that *"Capacity for change is limited to areas outside the National Park and land between the existing built up area. This latter option would retain development within the context of the village but would need a strong landscape structure so as to retain the sense of a gap in the built up areas north of Lewes Road"*.

<sup>15</sup> Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority (2012) Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority Landscape Capacity Study. [online] Available at: [https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/2200/LandscapeCapacity-Study-2012/pdf/Landscape\\_Capacity\\_Study\\_2012.pdf?m=638253772574500000](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/2200/LandscapeCapacity-Study-2012/pdf/Landscape_Capacity_Study_2012.pdf?m=638253772574500000)

## Conservation Area Appraisals

- 4.10 The Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>16</sup> and Ringmer Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>17</sup>, have been reviewed as part of the appraisal as Site 19HY is within close proximity to the Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area and Site 51RG is within close proximity to the Ringmer Conservation Area.

## South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis

- 4.11 The South Downs National Park Authority published the South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis<sup>18</sup> study in 2015. This document should be considered when understanding specific inter-visibility between Lewes District and the South Downs National Park.
- 4.12 From a review of the document and the fieldwork, there is only one viewpoint within the 5km study area which is relevant to the LVAs. This is:
- South Downs National Park View Number 13: Blackcap – the view is designated for views of The Weald to the north. Site 19HY is glimpsed from this viewpoint.
- 4.13 For context, the following are the other South Downs National Park Viewpoints within the 5km study but are scoped out of the LVA:
- South Downs National Park View Number 42: Balmer Down - the view is designated for its views to the south and the hills of the South Downs. Interfering landform and vegetation meant that no views of the Sites are possible from this viewpoint; and
  - South Downs National Park View Number 49: Mount Caburn – the view is designated for its views to the Ouse Valley and Firlie Beacon to the south and west to Lewes, which is not in the direction of the Sites.

## Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 4.14 Lewes District is a complex and diverse landscape, with local variation due to physical, historical and cultural influences (refer to **Figure 2: Landscape Character**).

### National Character Areas

- 4.15 The district is covered by two of Natural England's NCAs with NCA 121: Low Weald<sup>19</sup> comprising the north of the district and NCA 125: South Downs<sup>20</sup> comprising the south of the district. NCA 121 is described as a '*broad, low-lying clay vale, which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald*', whilst NCA 125 is underlain by a '*spine of chalk stretching from the Hampshire Downs in the west to the coastal cliffs of Beachy Head in East Sussex*'.

### County Local Landscape Character Areas

- 4.16 The East Sussex County Landscape Assessment<sup>21</sup> was published in 2016 and identifies 26 Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) and 13 urban areas. The Sites are located within LLCA 14: Western Low Weald The current condition of which is described by the published study as "*a largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. This is reflected in the southern part of the area which is in the South Downs National Park and is the setting for the downland scarp. The larger villages have some modern urban edges which intrude into the rural countryside. In areas with more intensive arable agriculture the hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been removed which detracts from the distinctive pattern and character of the landscape.*"

### District Landscape Character Areas

- 4.17 The Lewes Landscape Character Assessment<sup>2</sup> was published by Lewes District Council in 2023 and provides a te district level overview landscape character information, alongside national and county published Landscape Character Assessments. It identifies and describes variation in the character of the landscape and explains the unique combination of elements and features that make the landscape distinctive. It can be used as a framework to help protect, manage

<sup>16</sup> Lewes District Council (2009) Draft Hamsey (Cooksbridge) Conservation Area Appraisal. [online] Available at: [https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/1660/Hamsey-Cooksbridge-draft-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Hamsey\\_Cooksbridge\\_draft\\_Consevation\\_Area\\_Appraisal.pdf?m=1682434409420#:~:text=The%20Hamsey%20\(Cooksbridge\)%20Conservation%20Area,nearby%20settlements%20of%20Barcombe%20and](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/1660/Hamsey-Cooksbridge-draft-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Hamsey_Cooksbridge_draft_Consevation_Area_Appraisal.pdf?m=1682434409420#:~:text=The%20Hamsey%20(Cooksbridge)%20Conservation%20Area,nearby%20settlements%20of%20Barcombe%20and)

<sup>17</sup> Lewes District Council (2003) Conservation Area Appraisal – Ringmer. [online] Available at: [https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/1619/Ringmer-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Ringmer\\_Consevation\\_Area\\_Appraisal.pdf?m=1682435119540](https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/media/1619/Ringmer-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Ringmer_Consevation_Area_Appraisal.pdf?m=1682435119540)

<sup>18</sup> South Downs National Park Authority (2015) South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis. [online] Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Viewshed-Study-Report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Natural England (2013) NCA 121: Low Weald. [online] Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/12332031>

<sup>20</sup> Natural England (2015) NCA 125: South Downs. [online] Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/7433354>

<sup>21</sup> East Sussex County Council (2016) East Sussex County Landscape Assessment. [online] Available at : <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/landscape/landscape>

and restore the landscape and guide future development. It divides the district into seven Landscape Character Types (LCTs), not including the South Downs National Park, which are each sub-divided into 15 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). This provides a more local scale description of the distinctive features and characteristics of each of the LCTs and LCAs.

4.18 The four LVA Sites are located within LCT C: Western Low Weald. Sites 51RG, 68RG and 19HY are located within the LCA C2: Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge Western Low Weald. The key characteristics of this LCA are set out as follows for ease of reference, with the relevance to the specific LVA Site set out in the following chapters:

- *“Undulating landform between approximately +5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to +60m AOD and generally lower in the eastern part of the Landscape Character Area as the landform falls towards the course of the River Ouse.*
- *Higher areas of landform, including to the north of Plumpton Green and near to Little Norlington, allowing intervisibility with the wooded backdrop of the surrounding landscape and South Downs National Park creating localised areas of open character. The Landscape Character Area forms part of the visual, landscape and perceptual setting of the South Downs National Park.*
- *Localised reference to tributaries of the River Ouse, including the Bevern Stream, denoted by riparian vegetation such as willow and other mature tree vegetation on slightly lower ground in the undulating landscape.*
- *Vegetation cover consists of a mature network of trees including oak, hedgerows and hedgerow trees of variable quality and levels of management surrounding small to medium scale field enclosures, creating a semi-enclosed landscape. Typically, more defined hedgerows around arable field enclosures and more scrub-like hedgerows around pasture field enclosures*
- *Land cover of typically grassland with some scrubland, including in the western part of the Landscape Character Area near to Plumpton Green.*
- *Land use predominantly a mixture of pasture and arable agricultural use, including equestrian grazing near to Plumpton Green and South Chailey.*
- *Predominantly a mixture of unplanned and assart, enclosed agricultural land of ancient form and amalgamated, enclosed agricultural land of modern form.*
- *Barcombe Reservoir and associated pumping station, albeit not notable features in the landscape due to surrounding mature vegetation in close proximity.*
- *Linear two-storey residential development, predominantly brick and rendered, along the road network and several smaller concentrated areas of residential development, including Little Norlington and Upper Wellingham in the eastern part and Cooksbridge and Barcombe in the western part.*
- *Settlement areas and linear, ribbon development is typically located along the ancient drove road network, notably the A275 which continues into the South Downs National Park to the south, Spithurst Road and Town Littleworth Road.*
- *Contemporary development on the edge of settlement areas, including Gradwell Park on the south-western edge of South Chailey.*
- *Mixed development typologies interspersed in the agricultural landscape, including farmsteads, small-scale commercial and industrial built form and several small-scale solar farms in the eastern part of the Landscape Character Area.*
- *Winding road network, often tree lined but with some more open routes.*
- *Plashett Park Wood SSSI on the northern edge of the eastern part of the Landscape Character Area, including rare flora and fauna.*
- *Several areas of ancient woodland across the Landscape Character Area.*
- *Heritage associations include various listed buildings predominantly of linear development along roads through the Landscape Character Area, such as residential properties and farmsteads.*
- *Heritage associations include medieval ringwork at Clay Hill scheduled monument.*
- *Recreational access includes an extensive Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, including the Sussex Ouse Valley Way.*
- *Recreational route and including routes through and adjacent to farmsteads through the landscape. Linear strips of CRoW Access Land near to Barcombe and Barcombe Cross.*

- *Main transport routes are the A26 in the eastern part of the Landscape Character Area and the A275 and railway line in the western part of the Landscape Character Area which create localised audible and visual detracting features and decrease tranquillity in comparison to the more rural areas.*
  - *Varied lighting, with some settlements such as Plumpton Green not having street lighting, which aids in protecting the character of the night sky.*
  - *Distinctive view to singular wind turbine outside the study area on higher land near to Glyndebourne.”*
- 4.19 The 2023 assessment identified that the expansion of settlement areas will increase the urbanising influences of the generally rural character of the LCA. To prevent urbanisation and settlement sprawl, development should be limited, and designed to retain the rural character of the area, including avoiding development on higher, more visible areas of the Landscape Character Area.
- 4.20 The 2023 LCA recommends that new development should protect and retain existing vegetation across LCA C2, including ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas. This will also aid mitigation of any adverse impact to the South Downs National Park’s special qualities, including the setting and intervisibility with the National Park, with reference to relevant guidance and noting the importance of views from Blackcap.
- 4.21 The 2023 LCA goes on to recommend that the height, scale, massing and articulation of any new development to be of a similar character of the existing valued context via locally characteristic building forms, high quality detailing and sympathetic contemporary architecture. Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework as part of a wider blue green infrastructure strategy and should avoid coalescence with existing settlement areas and consider the cumulative impact of additional renewable schemes within the landscape. Reinstatement of historic field boundaries where they have been lost to amalgamation and retain the ancient field pattern within future development.
- 4.22 Site 20HY is located within LCA C1: Wivelsfield, Newick and Chailey Western Low Weald. The key characteristics of this LCA are set out as follows for ease of reference, with the following chapter setting out the specific reference to Site 20HY:
- *“Undulating landform between approximately +10m AOD to +65m AOD. Localised high points including to the south-east of North Chailey, offering extensive views of the surrounding landscape and distinctive views towards Grade II\* listed St Peter’s Church in Chailey to the south. Falls in landform generally occur where tributaries from the River Ouse meander through the landscape, including the Pellingford Brook in the northern part, often denoted by mature vegetation including willow in a distinctive silver colour.*
  - *The course of the River Ouse forms the north-eastern boundary of the Landscape Character Area, with flowing water audible from beyond the riverbanks when in proximity to the river, such that in combination with riparian vegetation including willow and alder, there is the perception of the river. Various other hydrological features across the Landscape Character Area, including small to medium sized ponds, weirs and springs off the Longford Stream at Newick Park.*
  - *Vegetation cover consists of varied sizes of woodland blocks, typically medium to large-scale, which creates a sense of enclosure as long-distance views towards rising landform outside the study area are restricted or channelled. Waspbourne Wood is a notable for its extent across the Landscape Character Areas.*
  - *Vegetation cover also includes tree-lined field enclosures, some hedgerows and hedgerow trees in varied condition. Ancient woodland scattered across the Landscape Character Area.*
  - *Fields are generally small to medium-scale and irregular, notably small-scale surrounding pockets of development; many of which are formed from woodland clearance and often bounded by remnant woodland strips known as shaws creates a well-established green infrastructure network.*
  - *Mixture of assart, enclosed agricultural land of ancient form, amalgamated, enclosed agricultural land of modern form and planned, enclosed agricultural land of pre-modern form.*
  - *Land use includes a mixture of arable and pasture agricultural use.*
  - *Residential development consists of the edge of settlement areas include Newick, Wivelsfield Green and South Chailey, as well as two-storey dwellings in a linear and ribbon pattern along the winding road network. Smaller settlement areas include Chailey and Spithurst, which are nucleated and linear settlement patterns respectively.*
  - *Settlement areas and linear, ribbon development are typically located along the ancient drove road network, notably the A275 which continues into the High Weald AONB to the north, Spithurst Road and the A272.*
  - *Residential dwellings typically built of brick, with some other materials including flint walling within Chailey.*



- *Farmsteads interspersed in the landscape, typically with large-scale buildings.*
- *Sheffield Park Station and associated railway line and business park in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area, create urbanising features in the local landscape due to some containment by mature vegetation.*
- *The southern part of the Chailey Common SSSI and LNR extends into the Landscape Character Area.*
- *Extensive recreational access provided by the PRoW network, including the Sussex Border Path and Sussex Ouse Valley Way recreational routes and including routes through and adjacent to farmsteads through the landscape. Various pockets of CRow Access Land, including to the north of Newick and north-east of South Chailey.*
- *Chailey Link Walk promoted by local community which is a way-marked circular walk linking North and South Chailey.*
- *Heritage associations include Theobalds Bridleway which is an ancient route and a patchwork of medieval assart fields and hedgerow boundaries. Various listed buildings, including Grade II\* St Peter and St John The Baptist Church to the north-west of Wivelsfield, and a scheduled monument at Waspbourne Farm in the northern part. Registered parks and gardens at Newick Park.*
- *Associations with designed landscapes surrounding large residential estates, including a conifer tree-lined avenue near to Lunces Hall in the western part of the Landscape Character Area.*
- *Electricity pylons and overhead lines result in a detracting feature in the northern part of the Landscape Character Area with a widespread urbanising influence.*
- *Located within the edge of the Ashdown Forest, designated as Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) protection zone in which new residential development would need to mitigate potential harm due to increased recreational pressure.*
- *Main transport routes are the A275 and A272, which create localised audible and visual detracting features.*
- *Beyond the detracting features, settlement areas, linear development and winding road network, there are areas exhibiting a highly rural and tranquil character due to containment from mature vegetation and woodland cover.*
- *Sounds associated with road and railway noise and tree movement in the wind.*
- *Intervisibility with the High Weald AONB to the north and the South Downs National Park to the south, from higher areas of the Landscape Character Area. The Landscape Character Area forms part of the visual, landscape and perceptual setting of the High Weald AONB."*

- 4.23 The 2023 assessment identified that the existing vegetation plays an important role in visually and audibly containing settlement areas and other detracting features maintaining the generally rural character of the LCA. To prevent urbanisation and settlement sprawl, development should be limited, and designed to retain the rural character of the area, including avoiding development on higher, more visible areas of the Landscape Character Area.
- 4.24 The 2023 assessment recommends that new development should protect and retain existing vegetation across LCA C1, including tree lined field enclosures, ancient woodland and on the edge of settlement areas. This will also aid mitigation of any adverse impact to the South Downs National Park's special qualities, including the setting and intervisibility with the National Park, with reference to relevant guidance and noting the importance of views from Blackcap.
- 4.25 The 2023 assessment goes on to recommend that the height, scale, massing and articulation of any new development to be of a similar character of the existing valued context via locally characteristic building forms, high quality detailing and sympathetic contemporary architecture. Any new development should be set within a robust landscape framework as part of a wider blue green infrastructure strategy and should avoid coalescence with existing settlement areas and consider the cumulative impact of additional renewable schemes within the landscape. Reinstatement of historic field boundaries and enhancement of shaws where they have been lost to amalgamation and retain the ancient small to medium scale field pattern within future development are recommended.



## 5. Landscape and Visual Appraisals

5.1 The following chapter sets out the landscape and visual appraisal for each of the four LVA Sites.

### Site 51RG: Land north of Ringmer

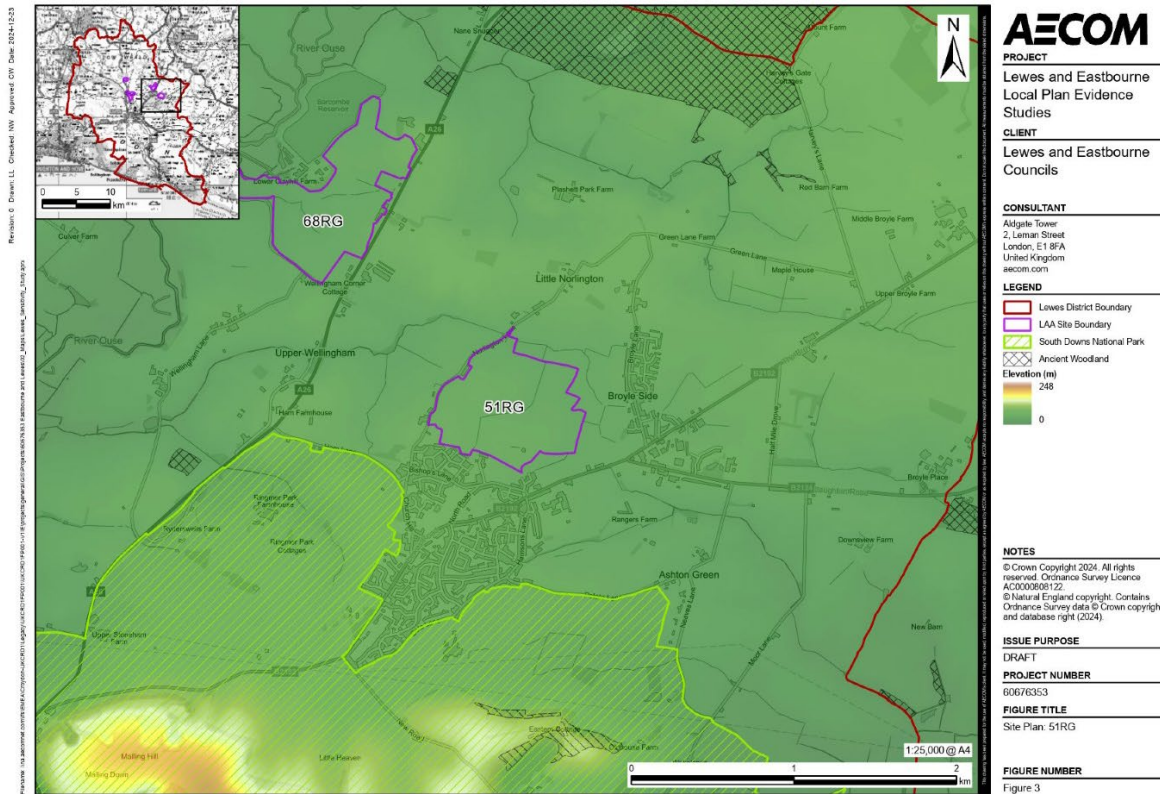


Figure 5-1: Site 51RG Context

### Overview

5.2 Site 51RG covers gently rolling and low-lying land, to the north of Ringmer and to the south of Norlington Lane, comprising medium and large-scale fields, divided by hedgerows and mature trees. The land use is agricultural with an isolated farmstead, Norlington Farm, situated adjacent to the southwest of the Site. Within the southeastern section of the Site there is a secluded electrical substation at Lower Barn East with an access track leading to it from the B2192. This is the only built form within the Site.



Figure 5-2: View looking north across the central part of Site 51G from RIN/15/1 footpath

## Relevant Planning Applications and Permissions

5.3 At the time of the LVA, the following planning permissions are in the study area:

- **W/21/0694** | Erection of 68 dwellings, with associated access, drainage, parking, landscaping and infrastructure works | Land Opposite Bishops Close Ringmer East Sussex. Located adjacent to the southern Site boundary. Allowed on Appeal 13th November 2023
- **LW/21/0937** | Outline planning application for up to 100 residential dwellings (40% affordable) and the provision of community facilities to include an artificial turf football pitch, tennis courts, cricket nets, outdoor gym, play area, skate park, parking area and public open space (All matters reserved except for access) | Land At Broyle Gate Farm Lewes Road Ringmer East Sussex. Located approximately 150m to the south east of the Site boundary, on the far side of Lewes Road (B2192). Allowed on appeal 21 November 2022.
- **LW/23/0268** | Erection of 2 No. two storey semi-detached dwellings | 2 Norlington Villas Norlington Lane Ringmer East Sussex BN8 5SH. Located approximately 50m to the south west of the Site boundary. Planning permission granted 11 October 2023.
- **LW/24/0056** | Erection of 2no. detached dwellings with car parking, and creation of a new access via Bishops Lane | Land Adjacent To 1 Trinity Field Bishops Lane Ringmer East Sussex. Located adjacent to the southern Site boundary. Planning permission granted 16 June 2024.

5.4 From the above appeal decisions and permissions, it can be concluded that the future baseline for the Site would have a stronger relationship to built form immediately to the south as the settlement pattern of Ringmer would extend further to the northeast. Views from the residential and recreational receptors on the northern edge of will have more screened views towards the Site due to the new intervening development. There will therefore be a more developed context to the Site and study area.

## Relationship to Published Landscape Character Assessments

5.5 Landscape Character information is set out within **Figure 2: Landscape Character**.

5.6 With reference to the following chapter, Site 51RG is located within the following published Landscape Character Areas:

- Natural England's National Character Area 121: Low Weald<sup>19</sup>;
- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016)<sup>22</sup>, Local Landscape Character Area 14: Western Low Weald; and
- Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (2023)<sup>23</sup> Landscape Character Area C2: Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge, Western Low Weald (LCA C2).

5.7 The key characteristics for LCA C2 are set out within Chapter 4 of this report. The Site is representative of LCA C2 in that it comprises an undulating landform, arable agricultural land use and includes recreational access across the Site. The Site also contains mature trees along field boundaries.

## Context of the South Downs National Park

5.8 LCA J1: Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes as identified within the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment (2020)<sup>23</sup> extends around the south-west, southern and south-eastern edges of Ringmer. Key characteristics of LCA J1 relevant to the Site include *"visually dominated by the steep Chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic"*.

5.9 The published landscape character assessment sets out forces for change for LCA J1. Those relevant to the Site include pressure for residential and renewable energy development outside of the National Park and that this could result in adverse effects on views from the LCA. The published LCA also notes that development outside of the National Park may impact on tranquillity of LCA J1.

5.10 The published LCA sets out development considerations, including the use of planting to mitigate visual impact of development and considerations of how development outside of the National Park will affect views to and from the adjacent scarps and downs.

<sup>22</sup> East Sussex County Council (2016) 14. Western Low Weald. [online] Available at: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/xzrl0mb/area-14-western-low-weald.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> South Downs National Park Authority (2020) South Downs Landscape Character Assessment [online] Available at: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/10736-%E2%80%93-South-Downs-LCA-Front-End-report.pdf>

## Landscape Susceptibility

### Landform and Hydrology

- 5.11 The Site is relatively low-lying, featuring a gently rolling landform. The elevation decreases from approximately +20m AOD at the southern edge of the Site to approximately +15m AOD across the northern section, eventually reaching around +12m AOD at the northern edge, adjacent to an unnamed watercourse. The northwestern part of the Site, near Norlington Lane, falls within flood zones 2 and 3.
- 5.12 A drainage ditch crosses the central part of the Site in a stepped alignment, roughly dividing the Site from east to west. This ditch connects to the unnamed stream to the north, flowing from the northeastern edge and continuing to the southwest boundary.
- 5.13 The overall susceptibility of the landform across the Site is lower due to the gentle rolling pattern of landform, but the susceptibility is higher in relation to the drainage ditch and the lower lying flood zones.

### Landcover

- 5.14 The land cover consists of agricultural fields where pasture and arable crops are separated by hedgerows. Hedgerows vary in condition being either tall and dense on the roadside edges and sparse with gaps along the field boundaries which reduces the susceptibility to new development. Some new planting was visible during fieldwork relating to filling in existing gaps within the hedgerows, assumed to be part of the mitigation associated with the construction of residential properties on the southwest boundary of the Site adjacent to the Diplocks Industrial Estate.
- 5.15 Along the central field boundary, hedgerows are absent, increasing field size/scale which reduces the susceptibility to development. Scattered mature trees are present, mainly located in the western and northern fields. A concentration of coniferous trees surrounds the substation to the southeast.

### Land Use, Scale and Pattern

- 5.16 The landscape pattern is formed by large-scale fields and is comprised of managed agricultural land which has evidence of some human activity. The exception is in proximity to Norlington Farm, where the field size is smaller. The Site consists of Grade 3 (Good to Moderate Quality) agricultural land.

### Settlement and Identity

- 5.17 The southern part of the Site exhibits stronger connections with the residential land uses in Ringmer due to clear inter-visibility and the proximity to residential development under construction or recently completed at the time of undertaking the LVA, which reduces susceptibility, in comparison to the northern parts of the Site which are further from existing residential land uses.
- 5.18 There is also the perception of residential land uses bordering the western edge of the Site including individual properties along Norlington Lane, several of which are listed buildings, increasing the susceptibility of the western part of the Site due to being part of the perceived setting to these buildings. The wider landscape features linear development along roads and clusters of housing. There is less of a perceived connection with residential land uses at Broyle Lane, due to the intervening fields, vegetation patterns and distance.

### Condition

- 5.19 The fields and vegetation are considered to be in a fair condition overall, although there are patches of scrub and unmanaged vegetation and some gaps within the hedgerow, notwithstanding evidence of recent new planting.

## Landscape Value

### Designations

- 5.20 The parcel is not covered by any statutory or local landscape designations, which are indicative of recognized landscape value.

### Recreational

- 5.21 Parts of the Site are publicly accessible through the local PRoW network, which connect the Site to nearby settlements of Ringmer, Broyle Side and Little Norlington and to the wider countryside. The main concentration of PRoW is in the southeastern part of the Site, with several routes crossing between existing residential areas. There are three PRoW which extend northwards from the housing estate off Bishops Lane on the southern boundary of the Site. They include the western RIN/22/1, central RIN/15/3, and eastern RIN/16/3, which cross the Site respectively. This results in a recreational value, notably within the southern part of the Site.



## Cultural Heritage and Association

- 5.22 The southern part of the Site contains evidence of ancient enclosed agricultural land, as recorded in the East Sussex Historic Environment Record, reflecting its historical context, which increases value.

## Functional (ecological, green infrastructure and place making)

- 5.23 The Site is not covered by any ecological designations. The ditch and unnamed stream are likely to provide some ecological diversity within the Site, resulting in a higher value, whereas the arable fields are considered to be common features within the landscape resulting in a lower value.
- 5.24 In respect of green infrastructure, the key vegetation structure is associated with the field boundaries and individual mature trees, with the ditch and northern part of the Site considered to have a stronger functional potential with the unnamed watercourse which flows to the north of the Site and across the northwestern part of the Site.
- 5.25 In respect of place making, the Site is not covered by any policies relating to strategic gap or green wedges. The Site forms the immediate rural setting to the northern part of Ringmer. However, the field pattern to the north and east of the Site is generally of a smaller scale and irregular pattern, such that the perception of the Site is one where the historic field pattern has been eroded and the Site is of a different character in comparison to the rural land adjacent to Broyle Side. The physical divide between the Site and Broyle Side is the unnamed watercourse and its plains to the north-east of the Site.

## Perception

- 5.26 The Site is perceived in relation to existing residential land uses, notably the settlement of Ringmer. Proximity to the local road networks which serve Ringmer, Norlington, Little Norlington and Broyle Side, especially near the B2192 to the south of the Site, diminishes tranquillity and remoteness across the southern part of the Site and reduces landscape value. Across the northern part of the Site, at distance from Ringmer, there is an increased perception of tranquillity and remoteness which increases landscape value.
- 5.27 Norlington is perceived as separate from Ringmer when travelling along Norlington Lane due to the intermittent settlement pattern, with the clearer demarcation of leaving and arriving at Ringmer due to road signage between Norlington Farm and residential land uses at Byron Close.

## Visual Susceptibility

### General Visibility

- 5.28 From the wider study area, the Site is visible to varying degrees from the western edge of Ringmer and PRow across the northern part of the study area, due to the low-lying position of the Site and undeveloped intervening land. The extent of vegetation across the intervening fields is the main influence on whether the Site is visible or not.
- 5.29 From the South Downs National Park, the Site is visible from the ridgeline near Glyndebourne at Old Windmill Post and Saxon Cross, where it seen as part of the rural landscape extending between Ringmer and Broyle Side, which increases the visual susceptibility of land within the Site at distance from Ringmer.
- 5.30 In closer proximity to the Site, the Site is visible from the residential properties along the northern edge of Ringmer, as well as individual properties adjacent to Norlington Lane. The southwestern part of the Site is less visible from properties on the northern edge of Ringmer, due to localised variation in landform and vegetation patterns, reducing visual susceptibility.
- 5.31 From the PRow within the Site, there are close range and open views across the Site to both Ringmer and Broyle Side, as well as longer distance views of the South Downs National Park scarp slope, which increases visual susceptibility from along the PRow.

### Skylines

- 5.32 Due to the low-lying nature of the Site, it is not considered to form part of the skyline when viewed from the wider study area and elevated land within the South Downs National Park. This reduces visual susceptibility.

### Scenic Quality

- 5.33 The scenic quality of the Site is lowered by the large-scale field pattern and intensive agricultural land use. The scenic quality is also reduced along the southern edge of the Site due to the visible influence of adjacent residential development, including glimpsed views of vehicles on the B2192 and Norlington Lane. However, the wooded backdrop and skyline to the north of the Site and views of the South Downs National Park scarp to the south of the Site contribute to the wider scenic quality.

## Inter-visibility

- 5.34 The screened ZTV **Figure 3a: Key Visual Receptors (Site 51RG)** shows that the theoretical visibility of development at the Site extends in all directions surrounding Ringmer and on higher land within the South Downs National Park to the south and west. Fieldwork revealed that, despite the Site being enclosed by residential development and boundary vegetation, there is still some visibility from the surrounding landscape, including from the South Downs National Park, though less than indicated by the ZTV.

## Visual Value

### Designations/Visual Setting

- 5.35 The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan 'A Neighbourhood Plan for Ringmer 2010 – 2030'<sup>10</sup> recognises the landscape around the settlement of Ringmer as being visibly connected to the South Downs National Park. Views of the South Downs National Park are possible from beyond Ringmer and there are glimpsed and some framed views to a wooded undulating landscape north and east from within the Site, which increases the visual value.

### Cultural Association

- 5.36 There is no apparent reference to views of the Site in published studies, literature and art, aside from those identified in the LVA, which reduces the visual value.

### Purpose of the View(s)

- 5.37 Due to the proximity of the South Downs National Park, there is a sense of place, however the Site is unlikely to be specifically visited for the view, although views may be valued locally.

## Key Visual Receptors

- 5.38 The following key visual receptors are set out below with reference to representative viewpoints chosen to inform the LVA and are set out within **Figure 3a: Key Visual Receptors (Site 51RG)**:

- Recreational users within the South Downs National Park;
- Recreational users of the local PRoW network;
- Road users of the B2192; and
- Residential receptors from The Barn along the B2192.

## Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint Reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 1:</b> Old Windmill Post	E: 0.0597398° N: 50.8821070°	Local highpoint along the PRoW RIN/23/1 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north. There are partially screened views of the Site from this location.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 2:</b> Saxon Cross	E: 0.0530362° N: 50.8759931°	Local highpoint along the PRoW RIN/21/3 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north from along Week Lane. There are partially screened views of the Site from this location.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 3:</b> Mount Harry	E: -0.0363671° N: 50.8931042°	Local highpoint along the HAM/16/3 public bridleway on northern scarp of the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north. There is no view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>

Viewpoint Reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 4:</b> Blackcap	E: -0.047288° N: 50.895639°	Representative View 13 within the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis.	This is a natural observation point with good views over the dip-slope to the coast and over The Weald to the north. There is no view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>51RG Viewpoint 1:</b> Little Norlington Lane PRoW	E: -0.0118625° N: 50.9211596°	Representative of views from RIN/10/1.	Views are limited to overgrown vegetation, creating a visual canal along the footpath. No view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>51RG Viewpoint 2:</b> Broyle Gate Farm	E: 0.0681208° N: 50.8963417°	Representative of road users of the B2192 and residential receptors from The Barn.	Along the B2192 mature hedgerows prevent views to the north. There are open views of the Site, seen across medium sized rural fields.	<b>Residential, Transport</b>
<b>51RG Viewpoint 3:</b> Lower Barn East PRoW	E: 0.0615940° N: 50.8978908°	Representative of views from PRoW RIN/15/1.	Views encompass relatively flat rural expanse surrounded by boundary vegetation. Wide angle open views from within the Site boundary looking across exposed large-scale fields.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>51RG Viewpoint 4:</b> Broyle Lane PRoW	E: 0.0701619° N: 50.9021014°	Representative of views from PRoW RIN/16/3.	This viewpoint provides views scrubby pasture across a medium scale field which is surrounded by mature boundary planting. There are partially glimpsed views of the Site through gaps in boundary vegetation which seasonally may become more visible with a density change in vegetation. The South Downs National Park is visible in the background.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>51RG Viewpoint 5:</b> Norlington Lane PRoW	E: 0.0555858° N: 50.9021059°	Representative of views from PRoW RIN/12/1.	There are panoramic views across a large-scale agricultural field bounded by mature hedgerows and individual mature oak trees. The Site would be seen within a small horizontal extent above the boundary hedgerows. The extent of the views would be determined by the ridgelines of any development on the Site.	<b>Recreational</b>

## Review of Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal

- 5.39 The LSA<sup>1</sup> notes that new planting along the northern edge of the Site should also be considered to aid in improving the connectivity with vegetation along the watercourse north of the Site boundary. Development should be concentrated along the southern and western parts of the Site, and appropriately integrated into the landscape, in keeping with the character of development along the settlement edge, including lower density, retention of open spaces and retained and enhanced edge vegetation to provide appropriate screening.
- 5.40 Taller massing should be located adjacent to Ringmer in the southwestern part of the Site and lower density development across the central part of the Site and towards its northern edge. The relatively level part of the Site is considered to be more appropriate for development than the falling landform towards the watercourse on the northern boundary.

## Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

### Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 5.41 The Site was assessed in the LSA<sup>1</sup> as having a **medium sensitivity** to medium scale strategic mixed-use development.

- 5.42 From the above LVA review, and in respect to landscape sensitivity, this is varied due to the mixed condition of the landcover and lower where there is a stronger relationship to Ringmer, across the southern part of the Site. The sensitivity is higher in relation to the recreational value of the Site and at distance from Ringmer, across the northern part of the Site, where the perceptual aspects of value are also higher.
- 5.43 In respect of visual sensitivity, the Site is visible to varying degrees from the surrounding landscape which results in aspects of higher value, but the sensitivity is lowered due to the Site not forming part of the skyline and no apparent references to views of the Site in the published studies.
- 5.44 The Site therefore becomes more sensitive to the type of development proposed at distance from Ringmer and in the northeastern parts of the Site. There are also localised areas of higher sensitivity along the western edge of the Site, due to the potential setting of listed buildings and Norlington. The drainage ditch, whilst an engineered feature, is of higher sensitivity due to the potential functional value. The fields in the northeastern part of the Site and to the east of the ditch more visible in views from the South Downs National Park than other areas of the Site and therefore of a higher visual sensitivity. In combination with the distance between these fields and Ringmer, their flood zone status and functional value with the watercourses, such that these parts of the Site are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.
- 5.45 In closer proximity to Ringmer and the new housing developments north of Bishops Lane, where the land is lower lying and less visible from the South Downs National Park, the **sensitivity is low**, noting that there is a higher recreational value due the number of PRoW in the southeastern part of the Site.
- 5.46 Due to the balance between these higher and lower sensitivity parts of the Site, the Site remains within the overall **medium sensitivity** as set out in the LSA.

### Key constraints and opportunities

- 5.47 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key constraints:
- The Site forms parts of the rural setting to Ringmer and Norlington, with the northern part of the Site forming the plains of an unnamed watercourse;
  - Mature vegetation on the Site boundaries and mature trees within the western and north-western Site which contribute to the Site's ecological value and aesthetic appeal;
  - Existing ditch across the central part of the Site, which provides a physical divide as well as opportunities for biodiversity;
  - Inter-visibility with the South Downs National Park;
  - The existing electrical substation with the Site boundary;
  - Intermittent close-range views from local road networks, PRoW network and residential receptors;
  - Longer range views from Broyle Side and PRoW in the study area; and
  - Close range views from the PRoW which cross the Site and the recreational value from these PRoW.
- 5.48 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key opportunities:
- The residential context of Ringmer immediately to the south of the Site, including residential development under construction which demonstrates this part of Ringmer is able to accommodate change. Future development at Ringmer is most likely to extend northwards, across the Site due to the constraints of the extent of the South Downs National Park to the south of Ringmer and Broyle Side to the north-east of Ringmer;
  - The pattern of development in the wider landscape includes linear development and clusters of development alongside roads, so development within the western and central part of the Site has the opportunity to align with this wider pattern, and would be seen in this context from elevated views from the South Downs National Park;
  - The Site contains larger open fields with no rare or distinctive landscape features, such that the fields are less sensitive to mixed-use development due to reduced requirements for altering landform or removing existing vegetation;
  - Opportunity to utilise the eastern and northern land parcels for new green and blue infrastructure, with new woodland planting, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), and/or improving recreational opportunities, so as to enhance the existing PRoW network;
  - Opportunity to enhance the recreational value and biodiversity value of the existing ditch across the Site; and

- Opportunity to introduce high quality architecture, set within a new landscape framework, so as to raise the design standards of the area and create a new northern edge to Ringmer.

### Concept Landscape Strategy

5.49 Following a review of the baseline desk-based research, fieldwork and identification of key constraints and opportunities across the Site, **Figure 4: Concept Landscape Strategy (Site 51RG)** has been produced which shows a concept landscape strategy. The following points relate to the concept landscape strategy:

- Built development should be avoided within the northern and eastern parts of the Site due to the functional role of this landscape and rural nature. Development should also be avoided along the western edge of the Site due to proximity to Norlington;
- There is opportunity to implement health and wellbeing amenities such as a linear POS along the watercourse, recreational areas, sports pitches, wildlife corridors, allotments, SUDs basins, a community orchard, new broadleaf woodland planting and other ecological interventions;
- Built development, notably non-residential land uses, should be concentrated to the west of the watercourse, with taller structures and denser development massing located adjacent to the existing settlement edge in the southwestern parcel of the Site;
- Enable intervisibility from the Site towards the South Downs National Park via the arrangement of new streets and new open spaces;
- Ensure the retention and expansion of the landscape buffer surrounding the existing electrical substation to screen views and improve cohesiveness across the Site;
- Strengthen the vegetative boundary along Norlington Lane to assist in retaining the rural character; and
- High quality design with building materials reflecting the valued vernacular, as well as contemporary solutions such as green roofs, and set within a new green infrastructure framework to include substantial new planting, so as to soften views from elevated land within the South Downs National Park.



## Site 19HY: Land north of Cooksbridge

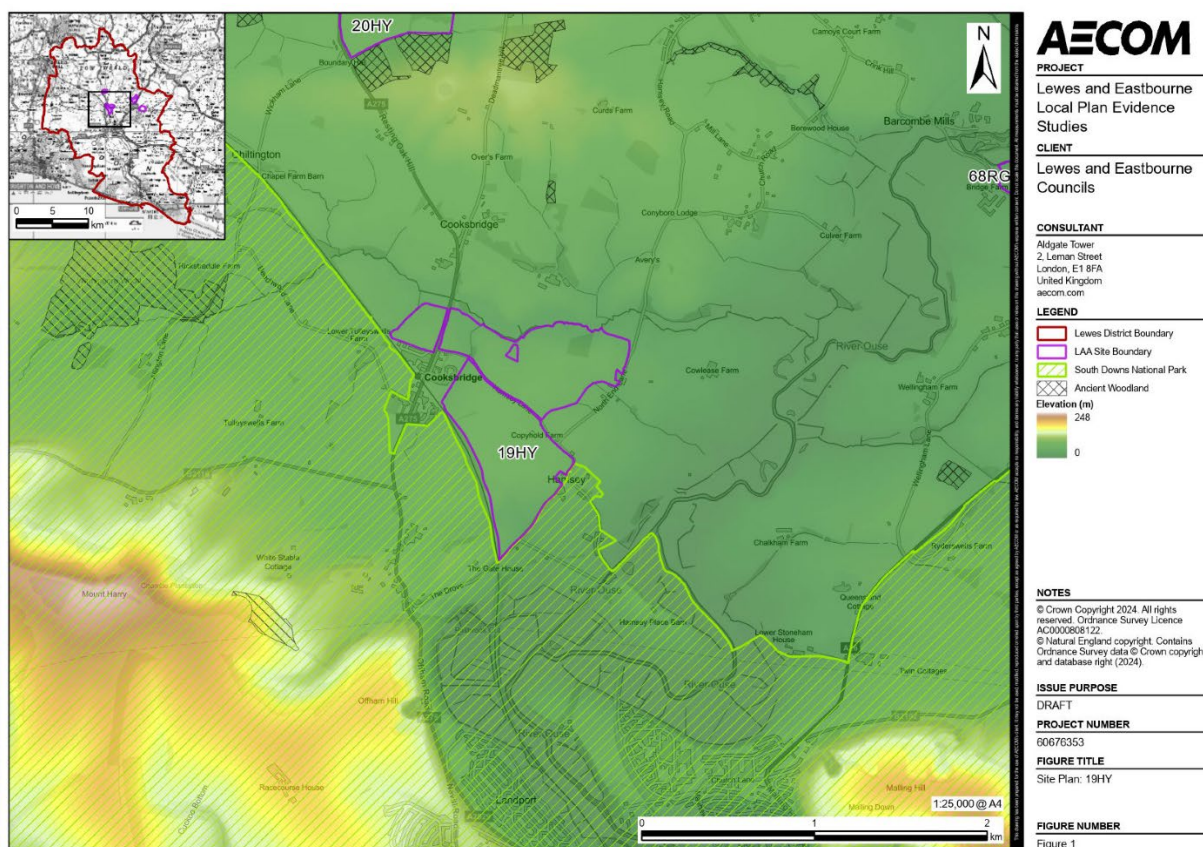


Figure 5-3: Site 19HY Context

## Overview

- 5.50 The Site covers land to the north, east and southeast of Cooksbridge. The Site is bound by Cooksbridge and a railway line to the south and an unnamed watercourse to the north. The majority of the Site lies to the east of the A275, with a small part of the Site to the west of the A275. The northwestern edge of the Site is within close proximity to the Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area and the South Downs National Park extends to the south of the railway line and to the southeast of the Site, around Hamsey House.



Figure 5-4: View south to Cooksbridge across Site 19HY from HAM/1/1 footpath

## Relevant Planning Applications and Permissions

5.51 At the time of undertaking the LVA, there were no relevant planning applications or extant permissions within 1km of the Site.

## Relationship to Published Landscape Character Assessments

5.52 Landscape Character information is set out within **Figure 2: Landscape Character**.

5.53 The Site is located within the following Landscape Character Areas:

- Natural England's National Character Area 121: Low Weald<sup>19</sup>;
- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016), Local Landscape Character Area 14: Western Low Weald<sup>22</sup>; and
- Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (2023)<sup>2</sup>, Landscape Character Area C2: Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge, Western Low Weald.

5.54 The key characteristics for LCA C2 are set out within Chapter 4 of this report. The Site is representative of LCA C2, in that it comprises an undulating landform with hedgerows and mature trees in varied covert across the Site. The Site comprises arable agricultural use. The main transport routes of the A275 and railway line create localised audible and visual detracting features and decrease tranquillity either across the Site or are adjacent to it. The Site lies in close proximity to linear two-storey residential development, predominantly brick and rendered, along the road network and several smaller concentrated areas of residential development of Cooksbridge in the western part.

## Context of the South Downs National Park

5.55 The Site lies adjacent to the LCA J2: Adur to Ouse Scarp Footslopes as identified within the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment (2020)<sup>23</sup> Key characteristics of LCA J2 relevant to the Site include:

- *"Visually dominated by the steep Chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic;*
- *A well-developed network of rights of way ... provide opportunities for countryside access; and*
- *Hedgerows with mature hedgerow oaks link closely with the woodland, forming an interlocking network that is of high biodiversity value as well as creating a sense of seclusion and enclosure".*

5.56 The study sets out forces for change for LCA J2. Those relevant to the Site include pressure for development which may reduce rural character. The study also specifies the importance of conserving the settlement pattern of nucleated villages as well as noting that development outside of the National Park may impact on tranquillity of the LCA.

5.57 The study sets out development considerations, including the use of broadleaved woodland planting to mitigate visual impact of development and considerations of how development outside of the National Park will affect views to and from the adjacent scarps and downs.

## Landscape Susceptibility

### Landform and Hydrology

5.58 The Site forms part of a valley, with the landform rising from approximately +10m AOD along the northern edge of the Site, adjacent to the unnamed watercourse, to high points of +19m AOD adjacent to Cooksbridge, +29m AOD adjacent to Hamsey Lane and +35m AOD adjacent to the railway line in the southern part of the Site. This more elevated and complex landform in the southern part of the Site increases susceptibility. Flood Zones 2 and 3 cover the northern boundary of the Site, which also increases susceptibility.

### Landcover

5.59 The majority of the landcover consists of grassland, interspersed with hedgerows containing mature trees and linear tree belts. Vegetation density and condition across the Site vary with some areas that are densely vegetated and well-maintained, whilst others appear relatively sparse with gaps. In certain locations, hedgerows are absent, and fields open up to the local lane network. Notably, there is a medium-scale woodland block in the northeast part of the Site, along with individual mature trees within the field enclosures which increases susceptibility. The northern part of the Site also consists of flooding grazing marsh, also increasing susceptibility in this part of the Site.

### Land Use, Scale and Pattern

5.60 The land use on the Site is primarily agricultural. It consists mainly of Grade 3 agricultural land, with a smaller area of Grade 4 land in the northeastern corner. The landscape features irregularly shaped fields at a variety of scales. In certain



areas, field boundaries have been removed or eroded, resulting in amalgamated fields with remnants of previous field boundary vegetation.

### Settlement and Identity

- 5.61 The western parts of the Site adjoin Cooksbridge, creating both physical and visual connections with the settlement. Recent development along this edge has further strengthened Cooksbridge's influence on the Site. Visually the remainder of the Site is screened from Cooksbridge by boundary vegetation, limiting visual connectivity with the settlement. The A275 road intersects the western part of the Site, although it is partially concealed by mature vegetation along the eastern edge of the road.
- 5.62 Within the Site, there is one isolated farmstead, reflecting its primarily agricultural land use and contributing to an overall undeveloped and open character. The sewage works in the northern part of the Site is excluded from the Site boundary, but results in a localised industrialised/infrastructure change in character.
- 5.63 Hamsey, situated to the southeast of the Site, and North End to the west, have a limited influence on the character of the Site, due to screening by mature vegetation. The Site's southern boundary is defined by a railway line, which is in cutting.

### Condition

- 5.64 The fields and vegetation exhibit an average condition. There is evidence of past field boundary removal and some poorly maintained vegetation. Additionally, visible management efforts include replanting hedgerow gaps along Hamsey Lane and The Drove which increases susceptibility to development.

## Landscape Value

### Designation

- 5.65 The Site is not covered by any statutory or local landscape designations; however, the Site is within close proximity to Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area and the southwestern and southeastern boundaries are adjacent to the South Downs National Park which increases landscape value.

### Recreational

- 5.66 The Site is publicly accessible through the local PRoW network, which connect the Site to nearby settlements and the wider countryside. The PRoW HAM1/1 and HAM1/2 runs north to south through the Site joining to Hamsey Lane. PRoW HAM/8/2 connects the Site to Cooksbridge. The Cooksbridge 'Rail to Ramble' crosses the Site via PRoW HAM/12/1 and alongside the railway line on the western boundary of the Site. The Lewes 'Road to Ramble' crosses the southernmost part of the Site, which increases recreational value.

### Cultural Heritage and Association

- 5.67 The southern part of the Site shows evidence of ancient enclosed agricultural land, as documented in the East Sussex Historic Environment Record. This historical context contributes to its cultural or associative value.

### Functional (ecological, green infrastructure and place making)

- 5.68 The southeastern part of the Site serves a functional purpose by forming the rural setting to Hamsey and the physical separation between the settlements, which increases the landscape value. Additionally, the Site contributes to the rural character to the north and east of Cooksbridge.
- 5.69 The vegetation patterns provide potential functional connections with the watercourse along the northern boundary of the Site. The northwestern part of the Site, adjacent to the A275, is currently open land that separates development within the Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area from Cooksbridge, which increases landscape value.
- 5.70 Across the northern edge of the Site is alluvial grazing marsh due to the combination of seasonal flooding and drainage ditches, which increases the landscape value.

### Perception

- 5.71 The Site is perceived as part of the agricultural landscape surrounding Cooksbridge. The Landscape Character Area, in which the parcel is situated, aligns with the surrounding agricultural landscape and can be perceived in this context from the South Downs National Park. While tranquillity remains relatively high across the Site, it is slightly reduced in the western part near the A275 and Cooksbridge which reduces landscape value. Additionally, a sense of remoteness diminishes around Cooksbridge and specific areas close to the railway line south of Hamsey Lane. The sloping topography of the Site contributes to its influence from nearby settlements within the broader landscape.

## Visual Susceptibility

### General Visibility

- 5.72 Although mature vegetation partially screens views of the Site from Cooksbridge, there are areas of less dense vegetation or gaps that allow views into the Site from residential properties and the school grounds on the northern edge of Cooksbridge. The eastern part of the Site retains an open character, allowing clear views from PRoW HAM/15/1. From the elevated land near the railway line, there is direct inter-visibility with Hamsey which increases susceptibility.
- 5.73 The southeastern part of the Site is visually enclosed when seen from HAM/8/2 footpath by the topography, however the Site is open and exposed when viewed from The Drove and Ivors Lane in the southeast. The northern part of the Site sits lower in the landscape and has pockets of wooded areas, with a higher degree of visual enclosure and as such there is little inter-visibility with Cooksbridge, which decreases susceptibility.
- 5.74 There are limited views into the Site from North End Lane, on the northeastern edge of the Site.
- 5.75 From within the South Downs National Park, the Site is seen as part of the land separating Cooksbridge and Hamsey. There are views to mature vegetation along boundaries of the Site and within the Site itself. Overall, there is a distinct visual connection between the fields in the southern part of the Site and Ivors Lane, as well as between the fields in the western part of the Site and Cooksbridge.

### Skylines

- 5.76 In views west to east across the Site, the skyline remains relatively uninterrupted but is occasionally punctuated by mature hedgerow trees due to the low-lying nature of the Site. Looking north to south, the rising land in the southern part of the Site forms part of the skyline, which increases susceptibility.

### Scenic Quality

- 5.77 The eastern part of the Site experiences minimal influence from existing development and thereby a higher scenic quality. Perceived vehicle movement from Cooksbridge and the A275 decreases towards the east, primarily due to intervening vegetation and the Site's topography. Along the western boundary of the Site, there is perceived movement of trains along the railway line, visible in both short and long-range views. The presence of trains reduces the overall tranquillity across those parts of the Site in proximity to the railway line and lowers the scenic quality.
- 5.78 The overall open character of the Site allows for extensive views southwards and eastwards toward the nearby settlements of Hamsey and North End, which occupy prominent locations. Additionally, the scenic quality is enhanced by the dramatic rise of the South Downs National Park to the south and the surrounding agricultural landscape context.

### Inter-visibility

- 5.79 The screened ZTV (**Figure 3b: Key Visual Receptors (Site 19HY)**) shows that the majority of theoretical visibility of development on the Site is to the east of the Site and across higher land within the South Downs National Park to the south and west of the Site. Fieldwork demonstrated the ZTV to be widely accurate with regards to visibility to the east and west and south and that the field edge vegetation adjacent to the watercourse in the northern part of the parcel limits inter-visibility to the north of the Site. Inter-visibility is relatively higher to the south, southeast at Hamsey, and west of the Site due to more elevated land.

## Visual Value

### Designations/Visual Setting

- 5.80 Views within the Site are highlighted in the Hamsey Cooksbridge Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>16</sup> as '*key views and vistas*.' These identified views are from Cooksbridge Farm southwest towards the South Downs National Park and across the Site, as well as views to the south from the PRoW HAM12/1 west of Hamsey Manor, which increases visual value.
- 5.81 In the southern and eastern parts of the Site, large-scale field enclosures and sloping landforms contribute to an open landscape character, allowing for high levels of inter-visibility with the South Downs National Park. Additionally, glimpses of wooded hills are visible in long-range views to the west. From the northeastern part of the Site along the northern skyline, there are extended views of the High Weald National Landscape.

### Cultural Association

- 5.82 There is no apparent reference to the view in published studies, literature and art other than the views identified above from the Conservation Area Appraisal.

## Purpose of the View(s)

5.83 Due to the proximity of the South Downs National Park, there is a sense of place and the referencing the Hamsey (Cooksbridge) Conservation Area Appraisal it is likely that the Site location would be visited for the view, which increases visual value.

## Key Visual Receptors

5.84 The following key visual receptors are set out below with reference to representative viewpoints chosen to inform the LVA and are set out within **Figure 3a: Key Visual Receptors (Site 19HY)**:

- Representative receptors in the area encompass users of the local PRoW network;
- Travellers on the A275 road, travellers using the local road network and residents;
- Residential receptors are found within Cooksbridge, the hamlets of Hamsey and North End, and from isolated farmsteads to the north;
- Receptors at Hamsey Community Primary School lies adjacent to the northwest of the Site within Cooksbridge; and
- Users of the railway line, which runs along the western boundary of the Site. Train passengers are likely to glimpse both the Site and the South Downs National Park, allowing for direct landscape comparisons, albeit fleetingly.

## Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint Reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 1:</b> Old Windmill Post	E: 0.0597398° N: 50.8821070°	Local highpoint along the RIN/23/1 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north.  There are no views of the Site from this viewpoint.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 2:</b> Saxon Cross Wood	E: 0.0530362° N: 50.8759931°	Local highpoint along the RIN/21/3 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north from along Week Lane.  There are no views of the Site due to vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 3:</b> Mount Harry	E: -0.0363671° N: 50.8931042°	Local highpoint along the HAM/16/3 Bridleway on northern scarp of the South Downs National Park	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape to the north.  There are no views of the Site due to vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 4:</b> Blackcap	E: -0.047288° N: 50.895639°	Representative View 13 of the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis	This is a natural observation point with good views over the dip-slope to the coast and over The Weald to the north.  Views of the Site are possible; however, they are filtered by development north of the train station and by existing mature boundary vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>

Viewpoint Reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>19HY Viewpoint 1:</b> Resting Oak Cottage	E: 0.014252° N: 50.918040°	Representative of views from HAM/6/1 public footpath	This view looks across the rural landscape, with fields and woodland visible. The South Downs form a visual backdrop for a gently undulating landscape.  This viewpoint shows a small visible extent of the Site, which is seen within the wider context of the South Downs National Park.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>19HY Viewpoint 2:</b> Hamsey Lane PRoW	E: 0.000775° N: 50.902439°	Representative of HAM/3/1, HAM/3/2, HAM/1/2 AND HAM/1/1 public footpaths	This view looks across the gently undulating rural landscape from a local high point.  Views of the Site are prevalent across gently undulating landform where the South Downs National Park forms the backcloth of the view.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>19HY Viewpoint 3:</b> Ivors Lane	E: 0.001059° N: 50.894217°	Representative of residential receptors along Ivors Lane	Views down Ivors Lane lead to undulating arable land. Dense woodland belts divide large scale fields.  From this viewpoint there are wide angled open views of the Site across large and expansive arable fields.	<b>Residential</b>
<b>19HY Viewpoint 4:</b> Cowlease Farmhouse Along Sussex Ouse Way	E: 0.015776° N: 50.905532°	Representative of views from HAM/14/1 public footpath	This viewpoint showcases views across a large-scale arable field with a densely vegetated boundary. The South Downs escarpment is visible in the background.  No view of the Site due to vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>

## Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

### Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 5.85 The Site was assessed in the LSA<sup>1</sup> as having a **medium sensitivity** to medium scale strategic mixed-use development.
- 5.86 From the above LVA review, and in respect to landscape sensitivity, this is varied due to alterations in landform, with higher susceptibility in relation to more elevated landform, in comparison to lower lying and less undulating land. The susceptibility is also lower for those parts of the Site in closer proximity to existing settlement patterns, with the landscape sensitivity increasing from northwest to east across the Site overall.
- 5.87 In respect of visual sensitivity, this is generally high, as there are close range views for residential receptors along Ivors Lane and in relation to longer distance views from the South Downs National Park, but lower in relation to more limited views from North End Lane. The visual value is also higher in relation to the identified views within the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 5.88 Therefore, the **high sensitivity** relates to the southwestern part of the Site, which is on elevated land which is visible from the South Downs National Park. The **low sensitivity** relates to the north and east of Cooksbridge due to the close relationship of fields along the settlement edge to land use in Cooksbridge and the railway line as well as the existing nucleated settlement pattern of the village.
- 5.89 Due to the balance between these higher and lower sensitivity parts of the Site, the Site remains within the overall **medium sensitivity** as set out in the LSA.

### Key constraints and opportunities

- 5.90 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key constraints:
- Intervisibility and proximity to the South Downs National Park, including from the Blackcap Viewpoint;

- The Site is located between the residential areas of Cooksbridge and Hamsey and North End and forms part of the respective settings to these areas as well as the physical separation;
- Proximity of the Site to Hamsey (Cooksbridge) Conservation Area;
- Undulating and elevated land which is less able to accommodate change in relation to the type of development proposed;
- High recreational value due to the PRoW across the Site;
- Close range views from residents, local roads and PRoW, within and bordering the Site;
- Watercourse and floodplain in northern part of the Site;
- Noise from railway line in the western part of the Site;
- Site is bisected by roads and therefore not a continuous area of land;
- Existing watercourse and the tract of rare alluvial grazing marsh in the northern part of the Site; and
- Cooksbridge is a small-scale settlement, nestled within the landscape and clustered around the railway station, such that any new development is less likely to inherently reflect the existing settlement pattern.

5.91 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key opportunities:

- The residential context of Cooksbridge immediately to the south-west of the Site, the railway line and local road networks, provide an existing developed context and framework for new development at the Site;
- The woodland across the northern part of the Site provides a high degree of enclosure in relation to land across the northern part of the study area;
- Whilst visible in views from the South Downs National Park, the western part of the Site is seen in the context of existing development patterns;
- Aspects of remoteness and tranquillity are already reduced due to the existing road and railway line;
- The pattern of development in the wider landscape includes isolated pockets of settlements of development so development within the western part of the Site has the opportunity to align with the wider landscape pattern, including from elevated views in the South Downs National Park; and
- Mature vegetation in the surrounding landscape offers context to potential landscape planting on the Site to assist with the softening of any new development in the wider landscape, noting that this will not be possible from elevated views in the National Park.

## Concept Landscape Strategy

5.92 Following a review of the baseline desk-based research, fieldwork and identification of key constraints and opportunities across the Site, **Figure 5: Concept Landscape Strategy (Site 19HY)** has been produced which shows a concept landscape strategy. The following points relate to the concept landscape strategy:

- Built development should be avoided within the eastern and southern parts of the Site due to high sensitivity;
- Development should include open green spaces strategically placed to allow framed views of the South Downs National Park from the key viewpoint set out in the Hamsey (Cooksbridge) Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>16</sup>;
- Creation of a new woodland belt to create a settlement edge which links to pockets of mature woodland and would physically and visually contain new development in the western part of the Site;
- Opportunity to link development to Cooksbridge via active travel routes to promote sustainable travel options and improve local connections to the train station;
- Opportunity to use the eastern land parcels for POS, new woodland planting, SUDs, and/or improving recreational opportunities;
- Built development should be concentrated in the western part of the Site adjacent to the A road, with taller structures and denser development massing located adjacent to the existing settlement edge;
- Opportunity to enhance and retain the tract of rare alluvial grazing marsh to the north, potentially integrating this with a SUDs scheme or a POS which links to the wider PRoW network and establishing a series of robust wildlife corridors;

- Retain channels of view from existing dwellings to maintain their long-distance rural views, also allowing intervisibility within the Site towards the South Downs National Park;
- Ensure the retention of the landscape buffer surrounding the existing sewage works to screen views and improve cohesiveness across the Site, noting that this should be replaced with native vegetation where possible;
- Implement strategic ecological enhancements such as woodland belts, wildlife corridors, allotments, SUDs basins, a community orchard, new broadleaf woodland planting and other environmental interventions;
- Strengthen the vegetative boundary along The Drove, North End Lane, Hamsey Lane and the A275 to retain the rural vernacular;
- Taller massing would be most appropriate near Cooksbridge, with the scale and density of new massing decreasing away from Cooksbridge;
- Any development proposals should maintain and enhance the functional landscape gap between Cooksbridge and Hamsey as well as Cooksbridge and North End; and
- High quality design which incorporates building materials which reflect the valued vernacular and set within a new green infrastructure framework.

DRAFT



## Site 68RG: Land to the West of the A26

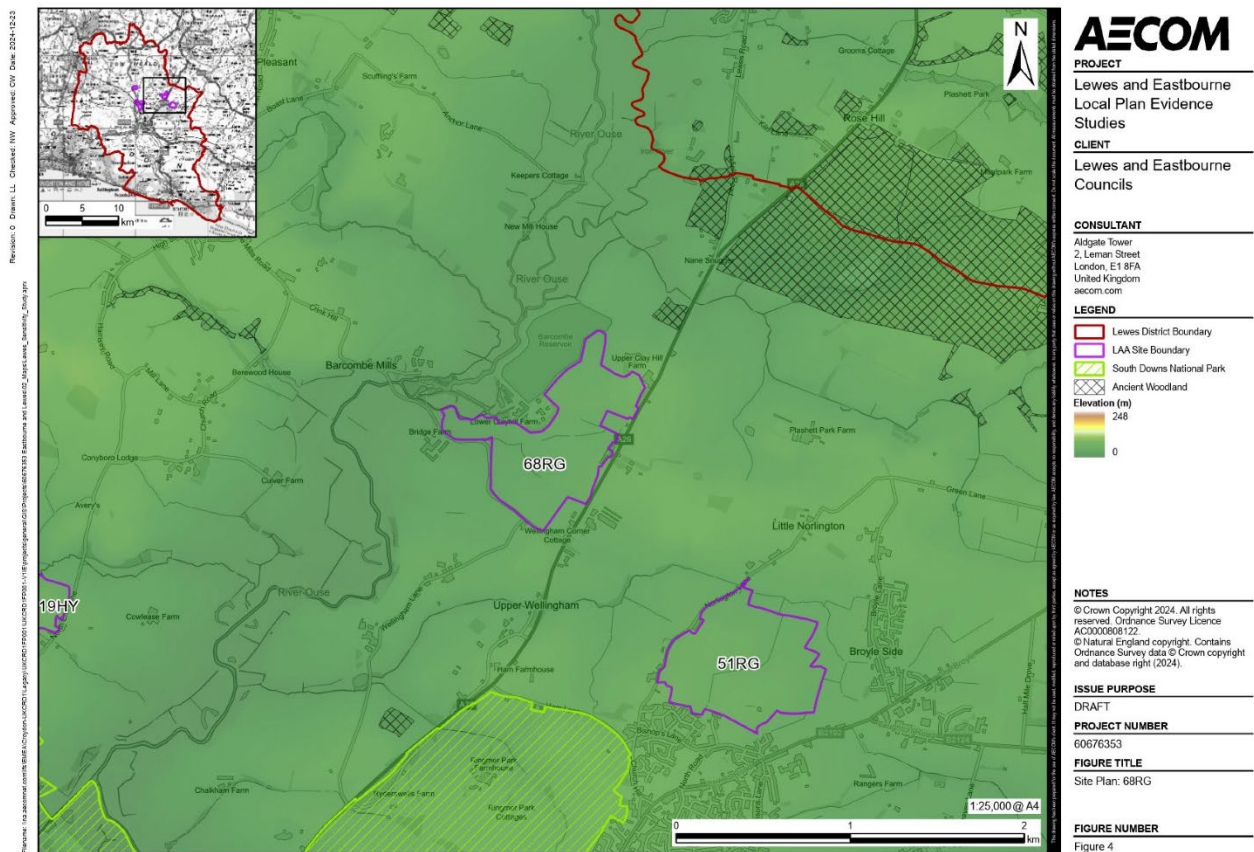


Figure 5-5: Site 68RG Context

## Overview

- 5.93 The Site covers land to the south-west of Barcombe Mills, between the River Ouse and the A26. The Site is bordered by Barcombe Reservoir and a water treatment complex to the north-west, fields to the north, the A26 and fields to the east and Barcombe Mills Road to the south and west. It consists of gently rolling low-lying agricultural land across the central and southern parts of the Site, with a more elevated area across the north-east part of the Site, between the pumping station and Upper Clay Hill Farm. The Site consists of a mixture of small, medium and large-scale fields, which are divided by ditches, hedgerows and mature trees.



Figure 5-6: View looking north across Site 68RG from Barcombe Mills Road

## Relevant Planning Applications and Permissions

5.94 At the time of undertaking the LVA, the Site is within close proximity to the following relevant planning permission and application:

- **LW/24/0343** | Approval of Reserved Matters including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale, relating to outline approval LW/20/0011 - for demolition of existing commercial/agricultural buildings and construction of new office/light industrial workshops (B1) and 53 dwellings, including new Site entrance and A26 right turn lane | Averys Nurseries Uckfield Road Ringmer East Sussex BN8 5RU. Located adjacent to the Site on the eastern side of the A26.
- **LW/24/0216** Outline application for demolition of existing buildings, erection of new employment/commercial units and up to 43 residential dwellings and other associated works with all matters reserved apart from access to the site. Merlins, Uckfield Road, Ringmer, BN8 5RU. Located on the eastern side of the A26. Application currently under consideration.

5.95 From the above, it can be concluded that the future baseline for the Site may present a more developed context for both the Site and the study area. Additionally, the Site will have a stronger relationship with the built form immediately to the east, thereby reducing its susceptibility.

## Relationship to Published Landscape Character Assessments

5.96 Landscape Character information is set out within **Figure 2: Landscape Character**.

5.97 The Site is located within the following Landscape Character Areas:

- Natural England's National Character Area 121: Low Weald<sup>19</sup>;
- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016)<sup>22</sup>, Local Landscape Character Area 14: Western Low Weald; and
- Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (2023)<sup>2</sup>, Landscape Character Area C2: Barcombe, Plumpton and Cooksbridge, Western Low Weald.

5.98 The key characteristics for LCA C2 are set out within Chapter 4 of this report. The Site is representative of LCA C2, in that the Site comprises small to medium scale agricultural fields which gently undulate. The Site contains a network of trees and hedgerows of variable quality which creates a semi-enclosed landscape. Although forming the western boundary of the Site, Barcombe Reservoir and its associated pumping station, views are filtered due to surrounding mature vegetation. The Site is set within a local context of mixed development typologies, with residential, agricultural, small scale commercial and light industrial built form present. The main transport route of the A26 creates localised audible and visual detracting features and decrease tranquillity across the Site. To the south of the Site, Barcombe Mills Road is characteristics of the local winding road network. The Site contains a PRoW directly linking to the visitor car park for the Sussex Ouse Valley Way.

## Landscape Susceptibility

### Landform and Hydrology

5.99 The Site forms part of a valley associated with the course of the River Ouse, with the landform falling from approximately +20m AOD in the northeastern part of the Site, adjacent to Upper Clay Hill Farm, towards the reservoir and the River Ouse at +5m AOD at the western edge of the Site, which increases the landscape susceptibility. The westernmost fields lie within flood zones 2 and 3 due to being within close proximity to the River Ouse. Ditches extend along some of the field boundaries within the lower lying parts of the Site, also increasing susceptibility.

### Landcover

5.100 The predominant landcover is arable crops, divided by ditches and hedgerows featuring mature trees and linear tree belts. The density and condition of boundary vegetation across the Site is varied, the northern boundary consists of a dense hedgerow to the west as well as large distance of no vegetative boundary to the east. The eastern boundary comprises a densely vegetated shaw which separates the remainder of the Site from the A26 road corridor. Along the southern boundary hedgerows are missing, resulting in an open boundary transition with the local lane network which decreases susceptibility. The western edge of the Site is well vegetated with mature vegetation, with minimal fragmentation to its structure and a higher susceptibility. The central area of the Site contains an intricate pattern of small-scale fields, all of which are separated by mature hedgerows with boundary trees. Therefore, susceptibility is higher in relation to this vegetation.

### Land Use, Scale and Pattern

5.101 The Site is used for agriculture. The majority of the land is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land (Good to Moderate Quality), with a smaller section of Grade 4 (Poor Quality) located in the southwestern part of the Site.

- 5.102 The landscape is characterised by irregularly shaped fields of varying sizes. In some areas, field boundaries have been removed or eroded, resulting in larger, amalgamated fields with remnants of the original boundary vegetation. The central area of the Site contains an intricate pattern of small-scale fields, all of which are separated by high quality mature hedgerows with boundary trees which increases landscape susceptibility.

### Condition

- 5.103 Overall, the fields and vegetation exhibit average condition, showing signs of lost field boundaries and hedgerow fragmentation. However, the Site is generally well managed and in good condition.

### Settlement and Identity

- 5.104 The Site itself does not contain any dwellings or built form, however there is a dwelling and a small business complex at Upper Clay Hill Farm, to the immediate north-east of the Site. Residential dwellings are linearly located along the A26, and small-scale residential development, a petrol station, and garages border the south-east edge of the Site. To the south of the Site lies The Old Dairy, an isolated farmstead, and light industrial sheds are located to the south-west. To the west of the Site, is a water treatment complex and Barcombe Reservoir. The reservoir itself is contained by mature vegetated earth bunds, composing a more naturalised setting, however the treatment works and perimeter security fencing erode the naturalised character to a more engineered environment.
- 5.105 Whilst the Site is open in character, it is very closely related to existing residential, commercial and light industrial land uses, which detract from its rural character and therefore the Site is less susceptible to future development. This will further be the case with the construction of residential land uses at Averys Nurseries.

## Landscape Value

### Designations

- 5.106 The Site is not covered by any statutory or local landscape designations. Adjacent to the Site is Lower Clayhill, a Grade II listed building. The Site's eastern edge is formed by the A26. Barcombe Reservoir which borders the Site to the west is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.
- 5.107 The Site is not covered by any landscape designations, which is an indication of lesser value.

### Recreational

- 5.108 The Site is publicly accessible through the local PRoW network, which connects to the visitor car park which serves the Sussex Ouse Valley Way Long Distance Path, as well as to local settlements such as Barcombe Mills, Little Norlington and Ringmer. Recreational value is higher within the centre and along the western boundary south of the water treatment complex due to public accessibility from the PRoW. As no public access is permitted across the rest of the Site, there is no recreational value.

### Cultural Heritage and Association

- 5.109 There is no recognised reference to the Site with regard to published studies, literature or art and is considered of a lower value.

### Functional (ecological, green infrastructure and place making)

- 5.110 The Site is not covered by any ecological designations. The ditches are likely to provide some ecological diversity within the Site, resulting in a higher value, whereas the arable fields are considered to be common features within the landscape resulting in a lower value.
- 5.111 In respect of green infrastructure, the key vegetation structure is associated with the field boundaries and individual mature trees, with the ditches considered to have a stronger functional potential due to the proximity to Barcombe Reservoir and the River Ouse to the west.
- 5.112 In respect of place making, the Site is not covered by any policies relating to strategic gap or green wedges. As the Site is semi-enclosed by vegetation, its contribution to the wider rural setting of the area is reduced.

### Perception

- 5.113 The Site is perceived as part of the rural and agricultural landscape between the A road and Barcombe Mills. Whilst the land use is rural, the perception of the Site is influenced by surrounding land uses, such as the A26 and the water treatment works, which are audibly and visually detracting which reduces the sense of remoteness and tranquillity of the Site. Therefore, the Site does not exhibit the landscape and perceptual context of the South Downs National Park, and therefore susceptibility is reduced.



- 5.114 The Landscape Character Area, in which the Site is located, does not align with the landscape and perceptual context of the South Downs National Park in parts, as confirmed by fieldwork. Road noise is evident across much of the Site reducing the sense of tranquillity, and along the northwestern edge, the sounds of the reservoir and water treatment works are evident, all of which weaken the rural character of the Site.

## Visual Susceptibility

### General Visibility

- 5.115 There are open views across the Site from the PRoW which dissects the Site centrally from east to west, as well as long distance views of the South Downs National Park to the south. There is a small business complex at Upper Clay Hill Farm visible to the north due to its elevated position in the landscape. The Site is screened from the A26 by vegetation along the eastern boundary of the Site which contrasts the open views from Barcombe Mills Road. Although adjacent to the Site there is limited intervisibility with the reservoir and the water treatment works. There is no intervisibility between the Site and the nearby settlements of Barcombe and Barcombe Cross to the west.

### Skylines

- 5.116 The skyline remains relatively uninterrupted, occasionally punctuated by mature hedgerow trees and a single set of wooden pylons with associated overhead lines and Upper Clay Hill Farm. Due to the low-lying nature of the Site, it is not considered to form part of the skyline.

### Scenic Quality

- 5.117 The presence of Upper Clay Hill Farm to the northeast, and residential developments lining the A26 to the east detracts from the overall quality of the view. To the southwest, light industrial built form is prominent within the landscape from non-publicly accessible areas, reducing the perception of an undeveloped rural landscape. The western edge of the Site is influenced by the reservoir and its associated pumping station which are clearly audible and visible from a non-publicly accessible area in the northwestern corner. The visibility of the water treatment works is lessened from the PRoW.
- 5.118 From publicly accessible locations surrounding the Site the visibility of the Site is varied and limited due to the intervening topography and mature vegetation. Whilst in the surrounding landscape, topography and a mature wooded backdrop contribute to the visual enclosure of many parts of the Site, and these features also limit the wider scenic quality.

### Inter-visibility

- 5.119 The screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (**Figure 3c: Key Visual Receptors (Site 68RG)**) indicates that the majority of the Site's theoretical visibility is within 1 km of its boundary. The ZTV suggests that views are likely from all directions, including higher land within the South Downs National Park to the southwest. Fieldwork demonstrated that intervisibility with the South Downs National Park was less than anticipated by the ZTV. Due to the Site's general containment by the reservoir's surrounding bunds and mature vegetation to the north, east, and west, it is considered to have a low contribution to the wider landscape in terms of inter-visibility.

## Visual Value

### Designations/Visual Setting

- 5.120 The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan 'A Neighbourhood Plan for Ringmer 2010 – 2030'<sup>10</sup> recognises the landscape around the settlement of Ringmer as being visibly connected to the South Downs National Park. Views of the South Downs National Park are possible from beyond the settlement edge of Ringmer and there are glimpsed and some framed views to a wooded undulating landscape north and east.

### Cultural Association

- 5.121 There is no apparent reference to the view in published studies, literature and art, and therefore its value is lower.

### Purpose of the View(s)

- 5.122 Due to the proximity of the Sussex Ouse Way, a visitor car park is located within close proximity to the west of the Site. Although recreational users are able to access the Site along PRoWs from the car park it is unlikely that the Site is specifically visited for the view. The small-scale rural landscape's sense of place is weakened by surrounding development, including roads, the light industrial units and the water treatment works complex, reducing its value.

## Key Visual Receptors

- 5.123 The following key visual receptors are set out below with reference to representative viewpoints chosen to inform the LVA and are set out within **Figure 3c: Key Visual Receptors (Site 68RG)**:

- Users of the local PRoW network;
- Vehicle users along the A26, Wellingham Lane and Barcombe Mills Road and residents;
- Residential receptors from dwellings along the A26 to the east of the Site, some of which form the Site's eastern boundary;
- Users of the small development to the north of the Site and the light industrial units to the south west and those accessing the South East Water pumping station are likely to view the Site; and
- Recreational receptors within the South Downs National Park may also have glimpsed views of the Site.

## Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 1:</b> Old Windmill Post	E: 0.0597398° N: 50.8821070°	Local highpoint along the RIN/23/1 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views, of which there are glimpsed views of the Site, however these are heavily screened by vegetation within the wider landscape.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 2:</b> Saxon Cross Wood	E: 0.0530362° N: 50.8759931°	Local highpoint along the RIN/21/3 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views, of which there are glimpsed views of the Site, however these are heavily screened by vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 3:</b> Mount Harry	E: -0.0363671° N: 50.8931042°	Local highpoint along the HAM/16/3 Bridleway on northern scarp of the South Downs National Park	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 4:</b> Blackcap	E: -0.047288° N: 50.895639°	Representative View 13 of the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis	This is a natural observation point with good views over the dip-slope to the coast, and north towards the High Weald National Landscape. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>68RG Viewpoint 1:</b> Barcombe Reservoir	E: 0.0454674° N: 50.9175173°	Representative of views from BAR/24/1 public footpath	Along the PRoW views are limited to the River Ouse and the footpath. There are no views of the Site due to the reservoirs earth bunds and dense vegetation surrounding Barcombe Reservoir	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>68RG Viewpoint 2:</b> Norlington Lane PRoW	E: 0.0538411° N: 50.9020479°	Representative of views from RIN/10/1	From this locally elevated viewpoint there are wide-angled, open and long-distance views across a large-scale agricultural field bounded by mature hedgerows and individual mature oak trees. The South Downs National Park is visible in the distance. Views towards the Site are glimpsed and screened by a barn and mature vegetation.	<b>Residential, Transport</b>
<b>68RG Viewpoint 3:</b> Sussex Ouse Way at Barcombe	E: 0.0208922° N: 50.9128681°	Representative of views from BAR/LB001/1 bridleway and BAR/16/1 public footpath	This viewpoint provides views over a small field to a dense boundary hedge/scrub which is punctuated by mature oak trees. Views behind the hedge/scrub is limited to tree canopies and a hill ridgeline. There are no views due to the surrounding landform and vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>

Viewpoint reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>68RG Viewpoint 4:</b> Clayhill House Motte	E: 0.0575799° N: 50.9088912°	Representative of views from the Sussex Ouse Valley Way, the Barcombe Walk, and BAR29/1	Views over a large-scale agricultural field bounded by mature hedgerows and trees provide a densely wooded backdrop to the view.  No views of the site likely or if visible, restricted to a partial / glimpsed view.	<b>Recreational</b>

## Setting of the South Downs National Park

- 5.124 The Site lies near to the LCA J1: Ouse to Eastbourne Scarp Footslopes as identified within the South Downs National Park Landscape Character Assessment (2020)<sup>2</sup>. Key characteristics of LCA J1 relevant to the Site includes “*visually dominated by the steep Chalk scarp to the south, which forms a backdrop to views. Impressive panoramic views from adjacent scarp and downs reveal a pleasingly balanced woodland and farmland mosaic*”.
- 5.125 The 2023 study sets out forces for change for LCA J1. Those relevant to the Site include pressure for residential and renewable energy development outside of the National Park and that this could result in adverse effects on views from the LCA. The study also notes that development outside of the National Park may impact on tranquillity of the LCA.
- 5.126 The 2023 study sets out development considerations, including the use of planting to mitigate visual impact of development and considerations of how development outside of the National Park will affect views to and from the adjacent scarps and downs.
- 5.127 Due to the distance from the South Downs National Park, the limited intervisibility and the weakened sense of place, the Site does not exhibit the landscape and perceptual context of the South Downs National Park.

## Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

### Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

- 5.128 The Site was not reviewed in the Lewes LSA<sup>1</sup> as it was not part of the scope of that assessment.
- 5.129 From the above LVA review, the landform susceptibility is higher across the more elevated northern parts of the Site, whilst lower across the southern parts of the Site. The recreational value is higher along the southern part of the Site due to the existing PRow, with the southern part of the Site exhibiting a stronger perceived relationship to existing settlement patterns and therefore a lower susceptibility.
- 5.130 In respect of visual sensitivity, the value is lowered due to no apparent references to views of the Site in published studies and that the Site is unlikely to be visited specifically for the view. The sensitivity is higher across the more elevated parts of the Site.
- 5.131 Therefore, the north-eastern part of the Site, adjacent to Upper Clay Hill Farm, is considered to be a more sensitive part of the Site due to its locally elevated position with long distance inter-visibility towards the South Downs National Park, resulting in a **high-medium sensitivity**. The north western land parcel, adjacent to Barcombe Reservoir is considered to have a **medium** sensitivity as there are open views from Upper Clay Hill Farm, as well as the proximity to the reservoir, which is a LWS. The south and south-eastern parcel of the Site is considered to be the least sensitive part of the Site, with a **medium-low sensitivity**. This part of the Site is set within a relatively low topographic position within the local landscape with a strong vegetative boundary along the A26 to the east. The existing dwellings to the east, and the light industrial units to the south set precedent for development, reducing the sensitivity. The southwestern parcel of the Site, situated within the flood plain, is within close proximity to visitor car park to access the Sussex Ouse Valley Way. The recreational value of this area increases the sensitivity of this part of the Site, which is considered to have a **high-medium sensitivity**.

### Key constraints and opportunities

- 5.132 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key constraints:

- Intricate landscape pattern found centrally within the Site as well as mature trees and other vegetation along field boundaries, are important features that must be preserved. These elements contribute to the Site's ecological value and aesthetic appeal;
- The Site is glimpsed from elevated vantage points in the South Downs National Park, as confirmed by fieldwork, affecting recreational users' views. The visual relationship with the National Park must be carefully considered in order to preserve the area's scenic quality;
- Visual and audible disturbance from the water treatment complex to the west;
- Area of seasonally wet flood zone in the southeastern corner;
- Road noise along A26 to the east and Barcombe Mills Road to the south; and
- Views into the Site from dwellings along the A26.

5.133 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key opportunities:

- The Site is visually well contained within the wider landscape, such that the influence of the water treatment works and reservoir is limited to the adjacent areas. The Site falls within part of the landscape where the character, landform and rural perception has been degraded by the development.
- The pattern of development in the wider landscape includes linear belts of development and pockets of development alongside roads, such that development along Barcombe Mills Road would be compatible with the wider pattern, including from elevated views in the South Downs National Park;
- Mature vegetation in the surrounding landscape offers context to potential landscape planting on the Site to assist with the softening of any new development in the wider landscape, noting that this will be possible from elevated views in the National Park;
- The Site's broader, open fields to the south provide a less sensitive location for development, as there are minimal existing landscape features; and
- The mature vegetation within and around the Site provides the opportunity to integrate development.

## Concept Landscape Strategy

5.134 Following a review of the baseline desk-based research, fieldwork and identification of key constraints and opportunities across the Site, **Figure 6: Concept Landscape Strategy (Site 68RG)** has been produced which shows a concept landscape strategy. The following points relate to the concept landscape strategy:

- Ensure a vegetative buffer between development and the dwellings located along the A26;
- Built development should be avoided within the northeastern part of the Site, and restricted or avoided within the central land parcel to retain the intricate landscape pattern;
- There are opportunities to implement health and wellbeing amenities such as POS, recreational areas, sports pitches, wildlife corridors, allotments, SUDs basins, a community orchard, new broadleaf woodland planting and other ecological interventions;
- Built development should be concentrated within the southern part of the Site, near to Barcombe Mills Road, with taller structures and denser development massing located outside of the flood zone in the southwestern corner adjacent to the existing light industrial units;
- Opportunity to enhance and retain the watercourses which dissects the Site, creating SUDs schemes;
- Enhancing the local PRoW network by creating new routes through the Site, potentially exploring opportunities in relation to Barcombe Reservoir's Local Wildlife Site, as well as linking to the wider PRoW network and establishing a series of wildlife corridors;
- Retain and enhance long distance views towards the South Downs National Park to the south;
- Ensure the retention, expansion and seamless integration of the landscape buffer surrounding the existing electrical substation to screen views and improve cohesiveness across the Site;
- High quality design with building materials reflecting the valued vernacular and set within a new green infrastructure framework; and
- Strengthen the vegetative boundary along Barcombe Mills Road to help retain the rural vernacular.

5.135 In conclusion, Development should include structure planting , to reduce the influence of built form on the local landscape context and integrate any development into it. . The green infrastructure network on and surrounding the parcel should be protected and enhanced to strengthen the local network, where possible. Where field boundary vegetation has been lost and the condition of vegetation is fair, this should be reinstated and improved where possible. Adjacent vegetation should be protected by ensuring development is offset in relation to root protection areas.

DRAFT



## Site 20HY: Land at Hewen Street Farm

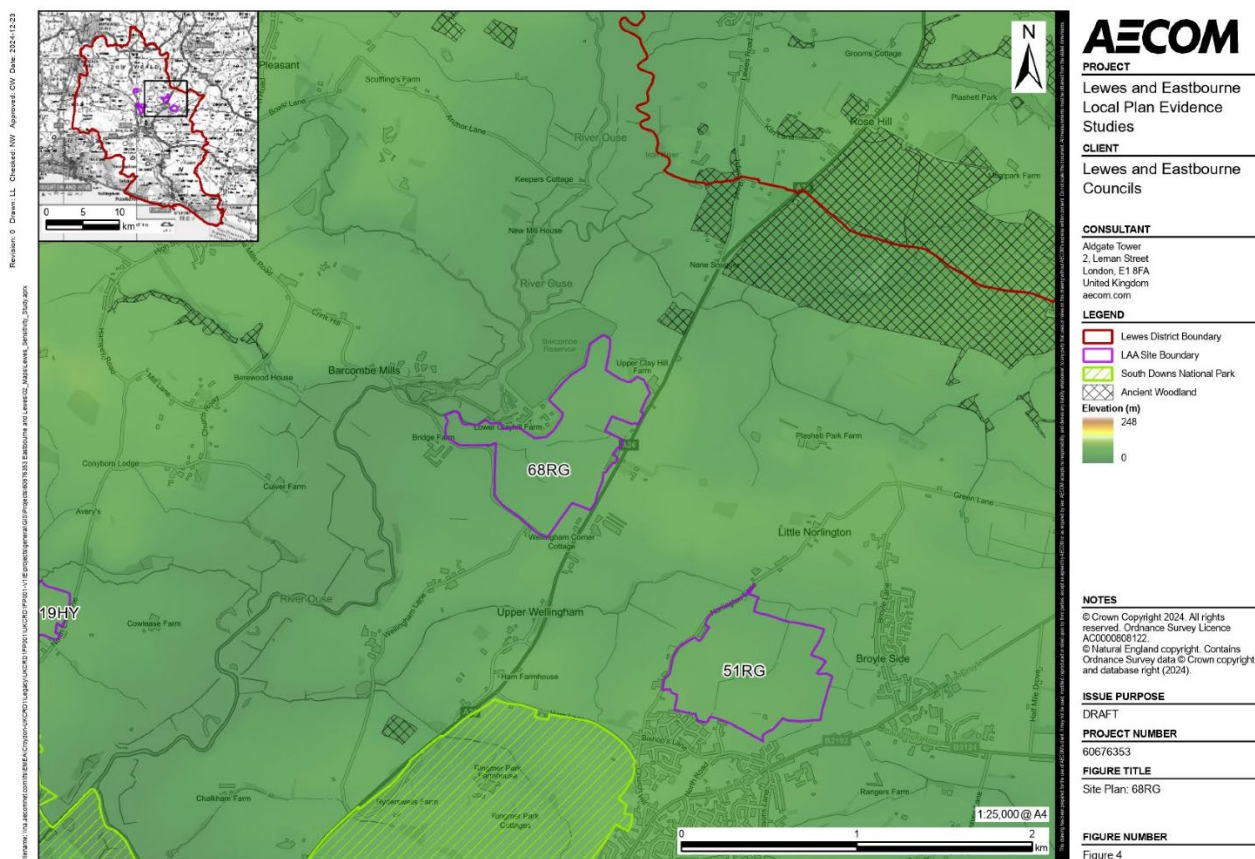


Figure 5-7: Site 20HY Context

## Overview

5.136 The Site includes Hewen Street Farm and covers agricultural land to the east of the A275 and to the south of residential land adjacent to Old Brickworks Lane, Kiln Wood and fields. The Site is bordered by Four Acre Wood and fields to the east. To the south, the Site is bordered by public bridleway (HAM/4/1) and Folly Wood.



Figure 5-8: View south across the west of Site 20HY from a private road towards Hewen Street Farm

5.137 The western and central part of the Site comprises two large scale fields divided by a hedgerow with mature trees. The eastern part of the Site consists of a smaller scale field and woodland. There is a single dwelling in the northwestern part of the Site (Hewen Street Farm).

## Relevant Planning Applications

5.138 At the time of undertaking the LVA, the Site is within close proximity to the following relevant planning applications:

- **Planning Application LW/21/0022 – Status: Approved:** Conversion of redundant farm buildings to five dwellings with associated elevational changes. Hewen Street Farm South Road South Common South Chailey East Sussex BN8 4QD. Located within the Site boundary.

5.139 From the above approved permission, it can be concluded that the future baseline for the Site would have a stronger relationship to built form immediately to the north as the planning applications pertain to the existing farm buildings as part of Hewen Street Farm and sit within the boundary of the Site.

## Relationship to Published Landscape Character Assessments

5.140 Landscape Character information is set out within **Figure 2: Landscape Character**.

5.141 The Site is located within the following Landscape Character Areas:

- Natural England's National Character Area 121: Low Weald<sup>19</sup>
- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016)<sup>22</sup>, Local Landscape Character Area 14: Western Low Weald; and
- Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (2023)<sup>2</sup>, Landscape Character Area C1: Wivelsfield, Newick and Chailey Western Low Weald.

5.142 The key characteristics for LCA C1 are set out within Chapter 4 of this report. The Site is representative of LCA C1 in that it has a generally rural character due to containment from mature vegetation but is in the context of the A275 road network. The Site is in agricultural land use and includes, and is in the context of woodland blocks, some of which are ancient woodland.

## Landscape Susceptibility

### Landform and Hydrology

5.143 The landform falls consistently from the southern edge of the Site, at approximately +35m AOD to the northern edge of the Site, at approximately +29m AOD, such that the susceptibility is lower, due to the consistent pattern of gently sloping landform.

5.144 The Site contains a series of drainage channels along the field boundaries and an old access track which runs along the northern edge. There are three small ponds in the southeastern part of the Site and a large pond situated to the east adjacent to Hewen Street Farm. A watercourse flows alongside the eastern boundary of the Site between Four Acre Wood and Folly Wood. The Site is considered to be more susceptible to development where the small ponds exist in the southeastern and northern parts.

### Landcover

5.145 The eastern part of the Site contains a legume sward established under a five-year rural scheme (as informed by the landowner), along with tree cover. This area includes a mix of young and mature trees, creating a small, wooded section that gradually transitions into an open space with more scattered, newly planted younger trees. This vegetation cover is likely to support a biodiverse environment and increases the susceptibility to change. Hedged field boundaries are present within the Site with a central spine of containing mature Oaks running north to south.

5.146 The central and western parts of the Site are open in character, due to the arable land use and there is a limited vegetation cover, with the exception of a tall established hedgerow adjacent to the A275 and a central hedge dividing the two fields. The openness and lack of vegetation result in this area of the Site being less susceptible to residential development.

5.147 Folly Wood lies immediately to the south of the Site, part of which is designated as Ancient Woodland, both Kiln Wood and Four Acres Wood are classed as ancient woodland. The combination of the woodland and trees in the southeastern part of the Site along with the woodlands to the north and south results in a high degree of enclosure in relation to the wider landscape. The presence of the surrounding woodlands and existing wildlife corridors linking the southeastern part of the Site increase the susceptibility to change.

### Land Use, Scale and Pattern

5.148 The Site comprises large and medium-scale fields, creating an agricultural pattern typical of the wider landscape and reduces the susceptibility to change. The land use on the Site is primarily managed pastureland as part of a five-year rural regeneration scheme which is Grade 3.

## Settlement and Identity

5.149 The new small-scale development Old Hamsey Estate lies to the north of the Site adjacent to Old Brickworks Lane. The presence of the A275 road on the western edge provides direct links to the village of Chailey to the north and Cooksbridge to the south. There are a low number of residential properties adjacent to the A275 between the Site and these villages, such that the settlement pattern is characterised by development either adjacent to the A275 or in close proximity to it. The Site contains Hewen Street Farm in the northwestern part of the Site which has additional planning applications granted on it, including an access track from the A275. The accumulation of built form to the north of the Site reduces the susceptibility to additional development, particularly in the western part of the Site due to proximity.

## Condition

5.150 The fields and vegetation appear in good condition, due to the management regime; however, there is overgrown vegetation towards the southeastern edge of the Site with the occasional gap in the mature vegetation. The mature hedgerow along the western edge of the Site parallel to the A275 is in good condition with few gaps in the vegetation. The overall good condition of the land due to positive management and biodiverse vegetation cover to the east, increases the susceptibility to change.

## Landscape Value

### Designations

5.151 The Site is not covered by any statutory or local landscape designations, indicating no designation of value.

### Recreational

5.152 The Site is not publicly accessible which reduces the recreational value, however, it is adjacent to public bridleway (HAM/4/1), which borders the southern boundary of the Site and provides access between the A275 and Deadmantree Hill.

### Cultural Heritage and Association

5.153 There is no recognised reference to the Site with regard to published studies, literature or art and is considered of a lower cultural value.

### Functional (ecological, green infrastructure and place making)

5.154 The Site contains mature vegetation alongside the A275, along the hedgerow dividing the fields and a wooded area in the southeastern part of the Site; all of which offer connectivity of habitats and green infrastructure and contribute to the function and ecological systems in the area. The Site is a small but integral part of the functional rural landscape between South Chailey and Cooksbridge, thereby increasing its landscape value.

## Perception

5.155 The Site is perceived from the PRoW adjacent to the southern edge of the Site as a tract of rural land which is well enclosed from the wider landscape due to the woodlands to the north and south of the Site. The height of the hedgerow adjacent to the A275 limits any perception of the Site for vehicle users. The Site comprises small woods and hedgerows which enhances the scenic quality. There is some tranquillity and a sense of remoteness from within the eastern part of the Site, but it is less tranquil within the western part of the Site where the traffic of the A275 is audible resulting in a medium perceived value.

## Visual Susceptibility

### General Visibility

5.156 Views from within the Site are mainly limited to short-range due to the height and density of surrounding woodlands. There are partial open views, from the north looking to the southwest, where the South Downs National Park can be seen on the horizon. To the southeast, Folly Wood interrupts the views, contributing to the seclusion created by the presence of Kiln and Four Acre woodland to the north and east. The wider views of the Site are mainly screened at ground level and at an elevated position by the surrounding woodlands and intervening vegetation leading to a decreased susceptibility to change.

### Skylines

5.157 Due to the low-lying nature and enclosure of the Site, it is not considered to form part of the skyline and has a low susceptibility to change.

### Scenic Quality

5.158 The Site has a medium scenic quality, characterised by high-quality pastureland which is secluded by woodland. Views towards the South Downs National Park to the southwest of the Site provides additional visual interest.



## Inter-visibility

- 5.159 The screened ZTV (**Figure 3d: Key Visual Receptors (Site 20HY)**) shows that most of the theoretical visibility of development on the Site extends to the north, west and east of the Site, along with higher land within the South Downs National Park to the south and west.
- 5.160 Based on fieldwork, the ZTV appears to suggest higher visibility, as the Site is well screened from the wider landscape. This is due to the limited number of PRoWs surrounding the Site and the presence of substantial woodlands. The main visibility is primarily from the local PRoW. The public bridleway along the southern boundary is surrounded by dense planting, which limits views of the Site in summer, though visibility may increase during the winter months. Given the Site's containment by mature vegetation to the south, its contribution to the wider landscape in terms of inter-visibility reduces susceptibility to change.

## Visual Value

### Designations/Visual Setting

- 5.161 The parcel is not covered by any planning policies or designations relating to views specifically, which reduces the visual value. Views towards the South Downs National Park are from the Site only and there are no views from the South Downs National Park towards the Site resulting in a lower visual value.

### Recognition and Association

- 5.162 There is no apparent reference to the view in published studies, literature, or art resulting in a lower visual value.

### Purpose of the View(s)

- 5.163 While the views may be valued locally, the containment by woodlands and the short extent of views from the PRoW due to intervening vegetation result in a lower value.

## Key Visual Receptors

- 5.164 The following key visual receptors are set out below with reference to representative viewpoints chosen to inform the LVA and are set out within **Figure 3d: Key Visual Receptors (Site 20HY)**:
- Users of the local bridleway (HAM/4/1) immediately to the south of the Site and surrounding PRoW network
  - Vehicle users along the A275 road and residents; and
  - Recreational visitors to the South Downs National Park have no clear views towards the Site from elevated vantage points due to the positioning of established woodland belts that screen the Site.

## Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 1:</b> Old Windmill Post	E: 0.0597398° N: 50.8821070°	Local highpoint along the RIN/23/1 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 2:</b> Saxon Cross Wood	E: 0.0530362° N: 50.8759931°	Local highpoint along the RIN/21/3 within the South Downs National Park.	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>

Viewpoint reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 3:</b> Mount Harry	E: -0.0363671° N: 50.8931042°	Local highpoint along the HAM/16/3 Bridleway on northern scarp of the South Downs National Park	This viewpoint provides a natural vantage point from which to experience wide-angle long-distance views across Lewes and the Ouse Valley towards the High Weald National Landscape. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>South Downs Viewpoint 4:</b> Blackcap	E: -0.047288° N: 50.895639°	Representative View 13 of the South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis	This is a natural observation point with good views over the dip-slope to the coast, and north towards the High Weald National Landscape. There is no view of the Site due to topography and intervening vegetation.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>20HY Viewpoint 1:</b> North of Folly Wood	E: -0.0118625° N: 50.9211596°	Representative of views from and users of Bridleway HAM/4/1 to the Site.	In summer, with full leaf cover, this viewpoint provides only a glimpsed view through dense vegetation from the public bridleway.  The visibility of the Site would increase in winter conditions when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>20HY Viewpoint 2:</b> Hewen Street Farm Drive	E: -0.0146449° N: 50.9241782°	Representative of views from the dwelling to the north to the Site.	This view consists of open views across the Site's agricultural fields looking north to south with the interruption of Folly Wood to the southeast and long distant views to the South Downs National Park to the southwest.	<b>Residential</b>
<b>20HY Viewpoint 3:</b> Galleybird Hall	E: -0.0011047° N: 50.9229750°	Representative of views from the residents of Cooksbridge Road.	This viewpoint provides a vantage point from across the field from Cooksbridge Road. There is no view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Residential and Transport</b>
<b>20HY Viewpoint 4:</b> Wickham Barn	E: -0.0218692° N: 50.9188853°	Representative of views from the PRow SJW/2/1 elevated across to the Site.	This viewpoint is taken from a local highpoint, with land rolling down towards a densely wooded horizon. There is a small, framed view of the Site between canopies of trees forming a small part of the overall horizon view to the northeast. The grain stores (part of the farm buildings at Hewen Street Farm) are just visible.	<b>Recreational</b>
<b>20HY Viewpoint 5:</b> Balneath Barn	E: -0.0060825° N: 50.9349118°	Representative views from the Bridleway CHL/54/3 from the north across to the Site.	This viewpoint is taken from a PRow to the north of the Site. There is no view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational and Residential</b>

Viewpoint reference	OS Location	Reason for Selection	Relevant Information	Receptor Type
<b>20HY Viewpoint 6: Oldbarns Farm</b>	E: -0.0244401° N: 50.9326694°	Representative views from the PRoW CHL/1/2 from the northwest across to the Site.	This viewpoint is taken from a PRoW to the northwest of the Site. There is no view of the Site due to intervening vegetation and local topography.	<b>Recreational</b>

## Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

### Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

5.165 The Site was not reviewed in the Lewes LSA<sup>1</sup> as it was not part of the assessment scope.

5.166 From the above LVA review, the landform susceptibility is generally low, due to the consistently sloping landform, whilst the susceptibility of landcover is higher in the eastern parts of the Site, as well as in the north-eastern parts of the Site, due to the proximity to ancient woodland. The landscape value is lower due to the Site not being covered by any designations, nor being publicly accessible. The perceptual aspects of value are also lower in the western part of the Site due to the proximity to the A275.

5.167 In respect of visual sensitivity, the value is lower as the Site is not identified in relation to views and the overall visibility of the Site is localised, being mainly from the PRoW along the southern edge of the Site. The visual sensitivity is also lower because the extent of visibility across the Site is generally short in range.

5.168 Therefore, the Site presents varying degrees of sensitivity, with the western and central parts of the Site of **lower sensitivity** and the eastern parts of the Site of **higher sensitivity**.

### Key constraints and opportunities

5.169 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key constraints:

- The mature vegetation along the Site's boundaries, including the ancient woodland as well as the mature trees within the Site, are important features which require any development to be suitably offset from in respect of their root protection areas and advice from Arborists;
- The vegetation cover in the eastern part of the Site and dividing the two fields in the western part of the Site has a functional value and should be retained, with development offset accordingly; and
- There are close range views from the PRoW along the southern edge of the Site, which need to be considered in any future development.

5.170 The landscape and visual analysis, including both fieldwork and desk-based research, has identified the following key opportunities:

- The Site is located adjacent to existing and proposed residential land use and therefore consolidated to a part of the landscape where development adjacent to the A275 would reflect the existing settlement pattern. Development at the Site can therefore integrate and be perceived as a logical extension to existing development to the north of the Site;
- The larger, open fields in the western and central parts of the Site are less sensitive to residential development, as these parts of the Site are commonplace fields and the existing hedgerow could be retained and enhanced within the layout; and
- The visibility of the Site is limited from the wider landscape, including from along the A275 due to the height of the existing roadside hedgerow.

## Concept Landscape Strategy

5.171 Following a review of the baseline desk-based research, fieldwork and identification of key constraints and opportunities across the Site, **Figure 7: Concept Landscape Strategy (Site 20HY)** has been produced which shows a concept landscape strategy. The following points relate to the concept landscape strategy:



- Integration with the new development to the north of the Site via reflecting architectural designs, providing new access linkages and co-ordinated open spaces;
- Protect mature vegetation and trees on the Site to preserve ecological value and enhance aesthetic appeal and opportunities for biodiversity;
- Manage dense woodland areas to maintain high biodiversity value, including an appropriate stand off from the Ancient Woodland to the south;
- Reroute part of the bridleway, or provide additional access, through the Site to create a safer corridor for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders, with mitigation planting to preserve its secluded character;
- Utilise existing and new strategic planting to enhance ecological corridors connecting Folly, Four Acre, and Kiln Woods, promoting biodiversity;
- Develop the southeastern portion into a recreational space that enhances biodiversity and provides ecological and community benefits;
- Focus residential development in the western and central parts of the Site, which are less sensitive in landscape and visual terms;
- High quality design with building materials reflecting the valued vernacular and set within a new green infrastructure framework; and

5.172 The mature vegetation surrounding the Site provides a natural context for potential landscape planting. This vegetation can be enhanced to soften the impact of new development, assisting into blending into the wider landscape.

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