

# Outline Planning Application for Employment Development on Land at Ashford Road, Maidstone

## Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

On behalf of the Wates Developments Ltd.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Pegasus Group have been commissioned by Wates Developments Ltd. to prepare this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) in support of an outline planning application for a single warehouse/office building – with associated ancillary buildings and landscaping – on land at Ashford Road, Maidstone (refer to Figure 1: Site Location Plan). The layout of the scheme is illustrated on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Figure 2). This LVIA has been prepared and reviewed by an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect.

1.2. This LVIA and the development of the layout have been informed by Pegasus' pre-application advice.

## **Maidstone Borough Council Pre-application Advice**

1.3. A pre-application meeting was held on 4th March 2022 between the applicant team and Richard Timms (Planning Officer, Maidstone Borough Council). The focus of the discussion was to discuss the principle of a single B8 unit at the application site. The written feedback provided on 16th March 2022 notes (inter alia) that:

***“The proposed development would cause significant harm to the local landscape and the setting of the Kent Downs AONB...”***

***...I do not consider new landscaping could suitably mitigate this impact.”***

1.4. In response to the pre-application feedback received from Maidstone Borough Council, Wates have sought to develop the design of the scheme, including a reduction in the quantum of development and production of a robust landscape masterplan for the site.

1.5. The main objectives of the LVIA are as follows:

- To identify landscape elements associated with the site, evaluate their sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect the proposals would have on landscape elements.
- To describe the landscape character of the site and its surroundings, evaluate its sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect that the proposal would have on the local landscape character.
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e., people who would be able to see the development), evaluate their sensitivity to change and, taking into account the magnitude of change, assess the effect that the proposal would have on visual amenity. Residential visual amenity issue is excluded from this LVIA.



- To identify mitigation measures and opportunities for landscape character and visual amenity enhancement, in order to mitigate, offset or reduce the predicted adverse effects.

## Site Location

- 1.6. The assessment site (hereafter referred to as the site) is located at NGR TQ 82251 54732 (centre of site) at Junction 8 of the M20, east of Maidstone. It lies between the M20 (to the north) and Ashford Road – A20 (to the south). The village of Hollingbourne is located approximately 700m to the east beyond the M20 motorway.
- 1.7. The surrounding landscape exhibits a significant amount of built infrastructure in the locality. Immediately to the east of the site lies Junction 8 of the M20 which connects to a further major highway, the A20, both of which frame the site. Recently completed employment units and ongoing development at Woodcut Farm (Planning Ref. 21-506791) are situated immediately to the north-west of the site, off Ashford Road, and north of the M20 motorway is a motorway service area, known as Maidstone Services. Approximately 1km to the west of the site lies a large golf course and country club, known as the Tudor Park Marriott Hotel. Approximately 400m to the southeast of the site lies a further major hotel complex, the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel. Whilst the overriding character of the area is rural in context, the landscape is nonetheless a settled landscape which is punctuated with significant amounts of built infrastructure.
- 1.8. Figure 1 shows the location and extent of the site.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. The LVIA assesses the operational stage of the proposed development only, as the construction and decommissioning stages are of short and temporary duration. Any potential effects brought about by the construction and decommissioning stages are likely to be lower or similar to those assessed during the operational stage. The effects are therefore assessed at Year 1, immediately post-completion, and at Year 15 to take into account proposed mitigation and enhancement measures.

2.2. The LVIA has been undertaken with regards to the best practice guidelines within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Edition 3 (hereafter referred to as GLVIA3). The GLVIA3 states at paragraph 1.1 that:

***“...Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.”<sup>1</sup>***

2.3. The proposed scheme, however, is non-EIA development and in accordance with GLVIA3 clarifications the significance of effects is not assessed.<sup>2</sup>

2.4. GLVIA3 also states in paragraph 1.17 that when identifying landscape and visual effects there:

***“...is a need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional.”<sup>3</sup>***

2.5. GLVIA3 also recognises in paragraph 2.23 that:

***“...professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements”<sup>4</sup>***

2.6. All effects are taken as adverse unless otherwise stated. This LVIA should be read in conjunction with the supporting Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement (DAS) that accompany the planning application. The detailed methodology for this LVIA is provided

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 1.1, Page 4, GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Institute, GLVIA3 clarifications, <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/glvia3-clarifications/>

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 1.17, Page 9, GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 2.23, Page 21, GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition



in **Appendix 1**. The photographic evidence has been prepared with regard to the Technical Guidance Note 06/19 published 17th September 2019 by the Landscape Institute: *Visual Representation of Development Proposals*.<sup>5</sup>

2.7. A preliminary 3–5km radii study area has been initially identified to review the baseline condition and planning policies that may be relevant to the proposed development. This study area captures the nearby settlements and public vantage points that may offer views of or towards the site.

#### **Limitations/ Assumptions**

2.8. This LVIA has been carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in Appendix 1 and guidance within GLVIA 3 however the following limitations and assumptions apply: –

- It is not possible to access all private land and private residences to experience the exact nature of visual receptors and therefore some reasoned and qualitative assumptions have been made on the likely views from certain properties/locations based on the surrounding context, (presence of screening features such as mature trees, existing buildings etc.), the angle and aspect of windows, and the distance from the site boundary. Where views were inaccessible, the report always assumes a worst-case scenario.
- Certain assumptions have been made with regard to the layout and materials that are likely to be used for the development, when assessing the effects. Materials are likely to be selected to reflect the local context and from a palette of recessive colours, to deliver a modern, well-designed development that respects and relates to its setting.
- The Residual Landscape and Visual Effects of the Proposed Development take into account the growth of the proposed planting and in particular the proposed woodland and tree planting. Typical growth rates for this planting are drawn from published sources and assumes that the structural woodland and trees will be generally 8 – 12 metres high after 15 years.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS**

3.1. The proposed development involves the development of previously undeveloped land for the construction of storage and distribution floor space (Use Class B8) up to 116,120 sq. ft, with ancillary office accommodation; construction of new access road; provision of service

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<sup>5</sup> Landscape Institute, Visualisation of Development, [https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/09/LI\\_TGN-06-19\\_Visual\\_Representation.pdf](https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/09/LI_TGN-06-19_Visual_Representation.pdf)





yards and internal vehicle circulation, parking, and servicing areas; erection of perimeter fencing; associated drainage works, site levelling and landscaping.

- 3.2. The total planning application red line site area extends to 2.88 hectares. This includes all the land required for the development, i.e., for works, buildings, hardstanding, car parks, access road, plot landscaping as well as drainage measures, and perimeter and onsite landscaping.
- 3.3. Vehicle access is proposed from Ashford Road (A20) via a new road junction designed to provide effective HGV access onto the site.
- 3.4. Proposed landscaping will include the retention and enhancement of perimeter vegetation where possible together with new native trees, woodland planting, scrub and grassland.

## **Mitigation Measures and Enhancements**

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

### **Landscape Design and GI Objectives**

- 3.6. There are a number of relevant landscape and related GI design issues to be addressed by the proposed development. These can be summarised as follows:
  - Positively assimilating the proposed development within the landscape and landform; including for mitigating and minimising any potential adverse effects with particular attention to the interrelationship of building heights; plot levels; earthworks and conserved and proposed hedgerows, trees and planting areas;
  - Establishing and strengthening connections and green corridors; particularly around the site perimeter;
  - Securing and maximising biodiversity interest, through conservation, enhancement and creation of habitats and green spaces;
  - Establishing and managing a robust landscape framework to form an appropriate and cohesive “green structure” to the built development and create a suitable buffer to the neighbouring highways and land uses.
- 3.7. The key objectives of the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are to:



- Recognise and respect existing landscape character;
- Conserve and enhance landscape areas and features where possible as an integral and structuring part of the landscape framework;
- Create a high-quality new landscape framework, including woodland and structure planting, hedgerows, other mixed habitats, and open spaces to provide biodiversity enhancements;
- Provide significant new planting as part of a thorough and long-term approach to the growth and management of the overall landscape framework; and
- Minimise any potential adverse landscape or visual effects through the application of best practice design principles and careful attention to design through all stages of the development process.

### **Landscape and Green Infrastructure (GI) Proposals**

- 3.8. The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (refer to Figure 2), and Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application.
- 3.9. A strong landscape framework forms an integral part of the proposed development, comprising the conservation of existing hedgerows and trees where possible, reinforced by new tree, hedgerow and shrub planting and other habitats around the site's perimeter. Much of this new native planting will be important in mitigating and softening lower-level, close proximity, views of the proposed development from beyond the boundary.
- 3.10. Largely native trees and shrubs are proposed to reflect those in the existing locality. A mix of planting sizes and densities have been adopted to satisfy the differing objectives, principally those of providing amenity, increased biodiversity and a level of screening and filtering in the short and longer terms and of establishing well balanced woodland and planting habitats.
- 3.11. At a strategic level, the proposals reflect the broad stated aims and approaches outlined in the Natural England Green Infrastructure (GI) and the National, County and Borough based landscape character and GI guidance.
- 3.12. In summary the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme include the following components:
- Retention of existing perimeter hedgerows and trees where possible;



- The provision of circa 0.85ha (2.10 acres) of land incorporating retained and new landscaping – representing approximately 30% of the total site area.
- The provision of landscape buffers around the site perimeters. New tree, woodland and scrub planting – together with areas of species rich grassland – will be used within these areas to help minimise potential adverse effects upon the landscape and local views. The retained hedgerows and trees around the site perimeter adjacent to the A20, Ashford Road, the M20 Junction 8 approach roads and Musket Lane will be supplemented with additional tree, scrub thicket and structural woodland planting to enhance the boundaries. This planting will reinforce the woodland and scrub habitat linkages around the wider periphery of the site and help assimilate the built form into its surroundings.
- Setting back of the built elements from the boundaries of the site to create landscaped buffers between the proposed development and the adjoining highways, and the wider landscape to the south.
- A new road junction off the A20, Ashford Road is to be created to access the proposed development. Maintained grass verges and indigenous shrub planting will form the immediate corridor each side of the new road access with intermittent tree planting forming a habitat link with the proposed woodland/ scrub areas to either side.
- On plot tree planting, using heavy standard and extra heavy standard trees, will continue into the site and circulation areas where landscape treatment will become more ornamental in character adjacent to car parking and pedestrian accesses to provide a well presented and maintained landscape character associated with the office elevation of the proposed building.
- Vertical climbing plants – on a trellis system – will also be used extensively on the building elevations to soften the appearance of the building.

3.13. All of the landscape areas and features will be managed and maintained in the long term. This will be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan (LMP), to ensure the successful establishment and continued thriving of the landscape framework proposals.



## 4. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND ELEMENTS

4.1. The development proposals would change the character of the site from an undeveloped site to built commercial development with associated infrastructure including access roads, drainage measures, structural planting, and public open space. The loss of the existing open 'greenfield' use would be permanent and irreversible.

### **Existing Land Use/ Cover**

4.2. The site comprises an intensively managed field in arable rotation bounded by a mixture of hedgerows, scrub, tree belts and post and rail fencing. Narrow strips of grassland are located along the southern and western site boundaries, associated with the post and rail fencing.

4.3. This field has no internal hedgerows or standard trees that lie within the interior of the site. The existing perimeter hedgerows and trees can be retained and form an integral part of the landscape design as green infrastructure.

4.4. The ephemeral nature of the arable crop – with a lack of permanent internal vegetation – suggests a low susceptibility to change as such form of vegetation can be easily replaced in a relatively short period of time. In terms of its value arable land use is commonplace in the local area and characteristic of the local landscape, suggesting a low/medium value. Overall, the sensitivity of the arable land use is low/medium.

4.5. In terms of the arable land cover the proposals would bring about beneficial change with the ephemeral crop, that is being grown annually, replaced by permanent landscaped areas including amenity and species rich grassland, tree and hedgerow planting. The magnitude of change is considered to be medium with the effects medium beneficial.

### **Topography**

4.6. The topography of the site and its context is illustrated at Figure 3.

### **Context Landform**

4.7. The key elements in the study area are the lower-level rolling landscape associated with the valley of the River Len – a tributary of the River Medway – in which the site is located, in the context of and below, the steeper ridge lines of the Kent Downs AONB to the north and the undulating ground of the Greensand Ridge to the south.



- 4.8. In the context of the site the landform varies between 50 and 70m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with the river Len valley to the south-west located at approximately 30-40m AOD.
- 4.9. To the north, the land rises steadily up to approximately 200m AOD along the ridgeline of the North Downs. Consequently, views towards the site from this direction are generally from higher ground from where it is viewed within its wider context.
- 4.10. To the south of the site, the ground rises up to the Greensand Ridge which also affords elevated views over the lower lying site surroundings, and towards the elevated ridgeline of the Kent Downs AONB. Nonetheless, the Greensand Ridge topography is more undulating and views are more filtered and glimpsed as a result of localised changes in landform and vegetation patterns.

#### **Site Landform**

- 4.11. At a more localised level, the general aspect of the site is towards the west with the land generally falling back from the eastern boundary at around 56m AOD, towards the southwest corner – near Ashford Road – at around 50m AOD. To the south-west of the site the overall landform continues to fall in a south westerly direction towards the Len valley whilst immediately to the east and west the site is contained by two local ridge lines extending to 70m AOD in height. These ridgelines serve to screen the site from lower lying locations in the surrounding landscape to the south of the M20. The site falls within the same natural levels as the adjacent LOC8 employment units at Woodcutt Farm.
- 4.12. The susceptibility of the topography to the type of development proposed is considered to be medium, which combined with a medium value, would result in an overall medium sensitivity.
- 4.13. As part of the construction process, the site landform will be re-profiled and graded to create the required access roads and development plateaus. The proposed construction will remodel the existing landform to a form level plateau for the proposed employment building and associated areas of hardstanding/ parking. For the purposes of this assessment, it is understood that the finished floor levels for the employment unit will be established at 54m AOD. Although existing site levels will be altered to achieve the required development plateau the overall site levels will remain within the existing levels of 50m – 55m AOD.



- 4.14. Earthworks within the RPA's of retained trees and within 2m of retained hedgerows will be avoided wherever possible. Where this is unavoidable excavations will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines contained within British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations'.
- 4.15. The overall magnitude of change to the ground profile of the site would be medium, with a noticeable change across some parts of the site albeit, outwith the earthworks the gentle slope of the immediate site context down towards the south-west will be retained within the existing levels. With a medium sensitivity and an overall medium magnitude of change, the overall effect on the topography would be moderate (adverse) in terms of scale of effect.

#### **Trees, Scrub, Hedgerows, and other vegetation**

- 4.16. The site includes intensively managed arable farmland – with small areas of grassland associated with the post and rail fencing in the west of the site – together with fragmented boundary hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. There are no isolated trees within the arable field. The hedgerow vegetation represents a traditional but typical field boundary treatment.
- 4.17. The M20, Ashford Road and A20 road corridors to the north, south and east respectively include established tree belts and other scattered scrub and trees. This road corridor planting is considered to be fairly typical of highway planting and does not include any particularly notable or distinctive groups of trees.
- 4.18. The Arboricultural Assessment<sup>6</sup> submitted with the planning application details the results of the tree survey and further ecological details and information on trees and other vegetation are included within the Ecological Impact Assessment<sup>7</sup> – also submitted with the application.
- 4.19. In terms of susceptibility of the hedgerows vegetation this is considered to be medium to the proposals with this type of vegetation requiring some time to mature and establish as a landscape element. Trees, as a landscape feature are generally more difficult to replace and

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<sup>6</sup> Planning Submission (Arboriculture) (FLAC, January 2023)

<sup>7</sup> Ecological Impact Assessment (SLR, January 2023)



require longer time to establish, thus are judged to be of high susceptibility. Overall, the sensitivity of hedgerow vegetation is medium and tree vegetation high.

4.20. The proposals will include an extensive amount of new tree, hedgerow and shrub planting together with the retention of the majority of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Retained vegetation around the site will be protected throughout the construction phase and will be improved upon as a part of the GI proposals.

4.21. As stated in the Tree Report:

***“...the sole tree removal to facilitate proposals is a C category specimen (for BS5837 low quality and value) located in what will become the bell-mouth of the site access. The illustrative layout proposals include a planting package, which clearly outweighs the tree removal in numbers.”***

4.22. Except for this low-quality specimen none of the other boundary hedgerows and trees will have to be removed to accommodate the proposed development.

4.23. As part of the proposals the retained hedgerow network within and around the perimeter of the site would be improved, both in its condition and structure. Any gaps in the existing hedgerows would be planted up with a mix of native species and would include a considerable number of small native hedgerow trees such as Hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.). With the proposed development the retained hedgerows and trees would be allowed to grow higher and slightly wider. Furthermore, they will be supplemented with additional tree planting, which will ensure the succession of tree stock on the site. This strategy aims to improve the existing screening effect of the perimeter hedgerows and trees and to reduce visual impact on viewpoints in the wider landscape. The proposed mitigation and enhancement planting is depicted on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Figure 2).

4.24. Considering the retention and enhancement of the perimeter hedgerows and trees together with the extensive nature of the proposed planting, it is assessed that the magnitude of change upon the tree and hedgerow resource would be medium upon completion of the proposed development. Therefore, with a medium/ high sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change, it is considered that the proposal will result in a moderate (beneficial) effect on the tree and hedgerow resource of the site. Over time the maturing of the proposed landscaping will give rise to some increased longer-term benefits.



### Water Features and Watercourses

4.25. No water features currently exist within or adjacent the site and no new wetland habitats are proposed with the proposed development. Consequently, there will be no change with regard to water features within the site itself.

### Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)

4.26. There are no PRoWs within or adjacent to the site therefore there would be no direct effects upon these features. Impacts upon visual amenity for footpath users are considered below in Section 6.

### Summary Statement

4.27. The proposed development would result in both adverse and beneficial effects upon the landscape elements within the site as set out below.

**Table 1: Summary of Effects on Landscape Elements**

Element	Effect of Proposed Development
Land Use/ Cover	Moderate Adverse
Topography	Moderate Adverse
Trees, Scrub, Hedgerows, and other vegetation	Moderate Beneficial
Water Features and Watercourses	No change
Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)	No change

4.28. The development would alter the use of the site from arable farmland - with perimeter hedgerows and trees - to a new storage and distribution warehouse development with associated infrastructure including landscaped areas and new tree, hedgerow and shrub planting. The proposed development would result in a moderate (adverse) degree of effect with regard to land cover associated with the site. However, with regard to the tree and hedgerow resource the proposals would bring about a moderate beneficial effect. Regarding other landscape features, including water features and PRoWs, none of these are present within the site boundaries and the proposed development would not therefore give rise to any changes. Outwith the site boundary PRoW and water features would be retained and would not be directly affected.



## 5. EFFECTS ON DESIGNATIONS AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 5.1. Effects on landscape character and designations will arise either through the introduction of new elements during the construction and operational stage, that alter the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements in a particular type of landscape, or through visibility of the proposed development, which may alter the way in which the pattern of elements is perceived.

### Environmental Designations

- 5.2. Environmental Designations are identified on Figure 4.
- 5.3. The site itself is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations at a national level such as a National Park or AONB. However, the southern boundary of the Kent Downs AONB is located approximately 525m away to the north of the M20 motorway and the HS1 railway line. The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 forms the Statutory Management Plan for the AONB and notes on page 29 that:

***“The setting of the Kent Downs AONB is broadly speaking the land outside the designated area which is visible from the AONB and from which the AONB can be seen, but may be wider when affected by intrusive features beyond that. The setting of the Kent Downs is not formally defined or indicated on a map. The setting of the AONB landscape should be distinguished from the setting of listed buildings and other heritage assets (on which there is legislation and also policy in the National Planning Policy Framework and elsewhere).”***

***Proposals which would affect the setting of the AONB are not subject to the same level of constraint as those which would affect the AONB itself. The weight to be afforded to setting issues will depend on the significance of the impact. Matters such as the size of proposals, their distance, incompatibility with their surroundings, movement, reflectivity and colour are likely to affect impact. Where the qualities of the AONB which were instrumental in reasons for its designation are affected by proposals in the setting, then the impacts should be given considerable weight in decisions.”***

- 5.4. The Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee has prepared a ‘Setting Position Statement’ which provides helpful further advice supporting the vision, aims and principles of the Plan.
- 5.5. Due to the elevated nature of the chalk escarpment on the southern boundary of the AONB and the relatively low-lying position of the site within the vale to the south, there is the



potential for intervisibility between the high sensitivity of landscape of the escarpment and the site. The nature of these elevated views is discussed in Section 6 below.

- 5.6. A Landscape of Local Value designation defined by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Adopted 25 October 2017) covers an extensive area to the south of the site beyond the A20. Landscapes of local value have been identified and judged according to criteria relating to their character and sensitivity, however the site itself is not covered by this designation.
- 5.7. There are ancient woodlands to the north, particularly within the Kent Downs AONB. None of these will be physically impacted upon by the proposed development.

### **Historic Designations**

- 5.8. The Grade II\* Registered Park of Leeds Castle is located approximately 875m to the southeast of the application site. However, no intervisibility between the park and the site has been identified.
- 5.9. There are a number of Scheduled Monuments located within the study area – including the Medieval moated site of Ripple Manor 1.8km to the north-west and Leeds Priory approximately 1.5km to the south – however none of these will be physically impacted upon by the proposed development. Thurnham Castle Scheduled Monument is located approximately 3.6km to the north-west on the edge of the North Downs escarpment and within the Kent Downs AONB. Views from Thurnham Castle and its setting are considered within the visual assessment.
- 5.10. A number of listed buildings exist within the locality of the site (as illustrated on Figure 4) including Woodcut Farmhouse to the northwest, Mantels Farmhouse to the west and Old England Cottage to the southeast (all Grade II listed) as well as within the Eyhorne Street Conservation Area north of the M20. The impact on listed buildings is considered within the Heritage Assessment submitted with the application.

## Effects on Designations

- 5.11. The proposed development will not result in direct effects on the Kent Downs AONB or the Landscape of Local Value designation to the south of the A20. No other landscape designations will be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.12. The visual effects of the proposed development on relevant designated features have been assessed with reference to publicly accessible views from existing dwellings, roads and public rights of way which lie in close proximity. Heritage matters are considered in the Heritage Assessment prepared by others.

## Landscape Character

### National Landscape Character

- 5.13. At a national level, the site and study area are located within National Character Area (NCA) 120 – ‘Wealdon Greensand’. NCA 120 covers an extensive tract of land running parallel to the North Downs through Kent. The area is described as being made up of over one quarter woodland but as also containing areas of heathland, river valleys, farmland and fruit crops. The summary description notes that:

***“...eastwards from Dorking the character becomes considerably more urbanised, with many towns including Maidstone, Reigate, Ashford and Folkestone. The area forms a major transport corridor, with the M25, M20 and M26 motorways and other major road and rail routes all running through it.”***

- 5.14. The Key Characteristics for the NCA are:

- ***“A long, narrow belt of Greensand, typified by scarp-and-dip slope topography, including outcrops of Upper Greensand, Gault Clay and Lower Greensand. The Greensand forms escarpments separated by a clay vale: the overall undulating and organic landform – particularly in the west – gives a sense of intimacy to the landscape. Leith Hill in Surrey is the highest point in south-east England.***
- ***There are extensive areas of ancient mixed woodland of hazel, oak and birch, with some areas having been converted to sweet chestnut coppice in past centuries. These areas reflect the diverse geology, including the distinctive chalk grassland elements within the East Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the wooded commons (‘charts’) of East Surrey and West Kent, and conifer plantations.***
- ***Semi-natural habitats include: remnant lowland heathland, mostly concentrated in West Sussex, Hampshire and West Surrey; the***

wetlands associated with the River Arun in West Sussex; and unimproved acid grasslands found in commons, parklands, heathland and other areas of unimproved pasture.

- *Fields are predominantly small or medium, in irregular patterns derived from medieval enclosure. Boundaries are formed by hedgerows and shaws, with character and species reflecting the underlying soils. On the clay, hedgerows are dense and species-rich, with occasional standard oaks. On more acidic soils they generally consist of hawthorn and blackthorn, also with occasional oak trees, and often trimmed low.*
- *Agricultural land comprises a mosaic of mixed farming, with pasture and arable land set within a wooded framework. There is a fruit-growing orchard belt in Kent and also around Selborne in Hampshire.*
- *The rural settlement pattern is a mixture of dispersed farmsteads, hamlets and some nucleated villages. Large houses set within extensive parks and gardens are found throughout the area.*
- *In the east of Kent, the Wealden Greensand has a gentler and more open aspect than in the wooded west. This part of the area is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors such as the M26, M25 and M20 motorways and railway lines including the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1).*
- *The local built vernacular includes the use of Greensand, ragstone and, in the west, malmstone, bargate stone, plus dark carrstone patterned in the mortar between stones ('galleting') in Surrey, as well as timber-framing and weatherboarding.*
- *There are a range of historic landscape features, including field monuments, old military defences, prehistoric tumuli, iron-age hill forts, Roman forts, the Royal Military Canal, small quarries and relics of the iron industry (including hammer ponds). Sunken lanes cut into the sandstone are a historic and characteristic feature, as are older deer parks and more recent 18th-century parklands.*
- *Surface water is an important feature across the Greensand, with many streams and rivers passing through the NCA: the Western Rother, Wey, Arun, Medway and the Great and East Stour.*
- *The Greensand ridge meets the coast of Kent between Folkestone Warren and Hythe. While most of the coastal strip is now built up and protected by sea defences, the undeveloped sea cliffs at Copt Point provide important geological exposures, are designated for their nature conservation interest and fall within the Dover-Folkestone Heritage Coast."*

5.15. The southern boundary of NCA 119 – 'North Downs' is located to the north of the M20 and HS1 within the study area. This NCA forms a line of chalk hills running between Surrey and the

White Cliffs of Dover. It runs along the northern side of the Wealden Greensands, described above, providing elevated views over the surrounding countryside. The M20 runs along the southern boundary, cutting through the study area.

5.16. Key characteristics of the NCA which are apparent in the wider landscape of the study area, have been extracted from the published document and include the following:

- ***“Cretaceous Chalk forms the backbone of the North Downs. A distinctive chalk downland ridge rises up from the surrounding land, with a steep scarp slope to the south providing extensive views across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and across the Channel seascape to France.***
- ***Chalk soils are predominant across the NCA but the upper part of the dip slope is capped by extensive clay-with-flint deposits. Patches of clay and sandy soils also occur with coombe deposits common in dry valleys.***
- ***The area is cut by the deep valleys of the Stour, Medway, Darent, Wey and Mole. The river valleys cut through the chalk ridge, providing distinctive local landscapes which contrast with the steep scarp slope.***
- ***The south-facing scarp is incised by a number of short, bowl-shaped dry valleys, cut by periglacial streams and often referred to as combes. The undulating topography of the dip slope has also been etched by streams and rivers, today forming dry valleys, some of which carry winterbournes that occasionally flow in the dip slope, depending on the level of the chalk aquifer.***
- ***The footslope of the escarpment supports arable cropping, the dominant land use within the NCA. In the east, the richer, loamy soils of the lower dip slope support large tracts of mixed arable and horticultural production.***
- ***Woodland is found primarily on the steeper slopes of the scarp, valley sides and areas of the dip slope capped with clay-with-flints. Wellwooded hedgerows and shaws are an important component of the field boundaries, contributing to a strongly wooded character. Much of the woodland is ancient.***
- ***Ancient paths, drove roads and trackways, often sunken, cross the landscape and are a distinctive feature of the dip slope. Defensive structures such as castles, hill forts and Second World War installations, and historic parks, buildings and monuments are found throughout.”***

5.17. As the NCAs cover extensive areas of land, the details contained within their analyses should be considered in this context and scale and it is generally thought that they are too coarse and geographically too extensive to provide detailed information that would be relevant to

the site and the proposed development. For this reason, the descriptions of the national level NCAs have been reviewed to inform this LVIA but have not been assessed as a specific landscape receptor.

### **The Landscape Assessment of Kent (2004) – Kent County Council**

- 5.18. The Landscape Assessment of Kent was published in 2004 and draws together pre-existing landscape character assessments of the county and updates these to conform to the latest guidance using judgments based on condition and sensitivity to promote a vision for each identified area.
- 5.19. The site falls within the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' Landscape Character Area (LCA) defined by the assessment. To the north of this – between the M20 and the railway east of Maidstone (with the exception of an area of land to the north of the railway but outside the Kent Downs AONB) – lies the 'Hollingbourne Vale: West' LCA, with the 'Hollingbourne Vale' LCA occupying the scarp foot-slopes beyond. The southern extent of the study area – south of the A20 – is located within the 'Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone' LCA.
- 5.20. The extent of the Landscape Character Areas is illustrated in Figure 5.

#### Leeds-Lenham Farmlands

- 5.21. The Key Characteristics of the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' are listed as follows:

- ***“Undulating farmland development on well-drained sandy loams.***
- ***Small copses with heathy characteristics.***
- ***Historic parklands. Mineral extraction.***
- ***Transport corridor.”***

- 5.22. Landscape Condition is described as follows:

***“The small scale landscape pattern, which has areas of dramatic local relief, is fragmented by the CTRL. Road and rail transport corridors and areas of mineral extraction produce many large scale visual detractors. The visual unity of the area is significantly interrupted. Networks of semi-natural habitats are also physically fragmented – the remaining pockets of woodland and mature trees are vulnerable.***

***Heritage hedgerows are widespread, but many are unmanaged and appear redundant. Built form has a moderate positive impact on the landscape and***

***includes some vernacular housing, but some hamlets are now isolated by the transport corridors. The condition of the area is very poor."***

5.23. In terms of sensitivity the study notes that:

***"The inherent landscape characteristics are mainly historic, with more ancient overtones of woodland and highways. The effect of fringe development and physical fragmentation of the area has resulted in the loss of many of the distinguishing features, in particular highways and woodlands. The land form is apparent and views are intermittent. The sensitivity of the area is considered to be low."***

5.24. The recommended landscape actions for the area are:

***"Create a coherent framework for transport corridors using small scale copses and parkland features.***

***Create new settings for fragmented and isolated settlements so that they develop a new focus and identity, using small woodland and small scale land use with much enclosure by trees and hedgerows."***

#### Hollingbourne Vale West

5.25. The Hollingbourne Vale West character area is generally located "between the M20 and the railway east of Maidstone, from Newnham Court Farm to the watershed between the Medway and the Great Stour at Leadingcross Green. Also included is a small area on the chalk excluded from the AONB, north of the railway line, roughly from Harrietsham to Lenham".

5.26. Key characteristic features are noted as:

- ***"Undulating landscape on wet clay soils.***
- ***Small broadleaf woodlands and irregular pastures.***
- ***Infrequent settlement.***
- ***Small streams (the head waters of the river Len) draining west to Maidstone.***
- ***Chalk scarp dominating views to north".***

5.27. The condition of this character area has been assessed as 'poor' due to the presence of the major transport routes, as well as industrial and suburban development.

5.28. Although the woodland network remains strong, hedgerows are in decline. The sensitivity of the character area has been assessed as being moderate.

#### Hollingbourne Vale

5.29. This character area relates to the steep scarp slopes, and footslopes, of the downs between Boxley and the Stour Valley.

5.30. Key characteristic features are noted as:

- ***“Rolling landscape of mixed farmland overlooked by yew-dominated scarp.***
- ***Thick hedges along Pilgrim's Way.***
- ***Large, scarp-foot arable fields.***
- ***Historic springline villages”.***

5.31. The condition of this character area has been assessed as ‘poor’ due to the loss of hedgerows and trees and the presence of visual detractors including quarries and some ridgeline buildings. The sensitivity is considered to be moderate.

#### Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone

5.32. The Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone LCA forms part of the wider Fruit Belt landscape but is located south and east of Maidstone where most of the orchards are concentrated. *“The land is generally flat but descends into the steep valleys of the Medway and its tributaries the Len and the Loose. If anything distinguishes this character area from the others in the Fruit Belt it is this dissection of the landscape by these two streams.”*

5.33. Key characteristic features are noted as:

- ***“Mixed farmland deeply dissected by the Medway and its tributaries.***
- ***Residual orchards and shelterbelts.***
- ***Ragstone buildings and walls in villages, farmsteads and oasts”.***

5.34. The overall condition of this character area has been assessed as good and the sensitivity is considered to be moderate.

#### **Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (March 2012 – Amended 19 July 2013)**

5.35. The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies landscape types (LTs) and landscape character areas (LCAs) across the rural part of Maidstone borough (i.e. outside of





the main urban area of Maidstone). For each landscape character area, the assessment includes:

- a description of the landscape and its features;
- an assessment of its condition (ie the pattern of the landscape; the presence of detracting features; the state of the habitats and man-made elements within the landscape);
- an assessment of its sensitivity (ie the ability of a landscape to accept change without causing irreparable damage to the distinctiveness of the landscape; a measure of the 'sense of place'); and
- landscape management guidelines.

5.36. The site falls within LCA 49 'Leeds Castle Parklands' which forms part of the overarching 'Valleys' Landscape Type and incorporates the finer grain LCA 49-2 – 'White Heath Farmlands'.

#### LCA 49 – Leeds Castle Parklands

5.37. The Leeds Castle Parklands (LCA 49) are found to the east of Maidstone and include a portion of the Len Valley. The LCA is located to the south of the M20 and HS1 transport corridor and the western boundary is formed by Maidstone's urban edge. The eastern edge is defined by the urban edge of Harrietsham.

5.38. Key Characteristics are noted as:

- ***"Artificial landform as part of golf course at Leeds Castle***
- ***Historic Leeds Castle and surrounding parkland***
- ***Pocket of lowland dry acid grassland***
- ***Mature parkland trees including oak, horse chestnut and pine***
- ***River Len to the south***
- ***Severance caused by the M20, HS1 and A20"***

5.39. The landscape description for LCA 49 notes (inter alia) that:

***"Tree cover is scattered across the landscape, in the form of small blocks of mixed woodland, mitigation planting along transport corridors and ribbons of vegetation along the River Len to the south and other minor water courses. More significant woodland cover is concentrated around Leeds Castle and its surrounding grounds. Isolated oak, ash and pine trees feature in open***

*grassland and define the route along Broomfield Road, and blocks of mixed woodland give a mature parkland character to the landscape...*

*...Much of the valley comprises a narrow floodplain covered in dense alder carr with willow, elder, hazel and ash along the drier perimeter. A small amount of woodland is situated on the slopes above the floodplain on the northern side, where oak standards, hazel, alder and chestnut coppice form the canopy above bramble, bluebell, wood anemone and red campion...*

*The field pattern is very irregular because the landscape comprises a significant amount of open parkland, little arable land and is severed by major infrastructure routes...*

*...Although tree cover provides a sense of enclosure and restricts views, the major infrastructure corridor of the M20, HS1 and the A20 are clearly audible from the surrounding landscape and reduce the sense of remoteness. Where minor routes pass over or under the M20 and HS1, the size and dominance of the infrastructure becomes most apparent.*

*...Built development is sparsely scattered along the A20 and adjoining roads and to the east near Harrietsham. A notable amount of commercial development is situated along the A20, with a large hotel, caravan park, garden centre and car cleaning facilities. North of the M20, Eyhorne Street comprises a particularly distinctive settlement with exceptionally strong local vernacular, which is recognised as a Conservation Area..."*

5.40. The condition of the landscape has been assessed as moderate and the sensitivity as high.

#### LCA 49-2 – White Heath Farmlands

5.41. The White Heath Farmlands (LCA 49-2) are located to the east of Maidstone. The LCA forms part of the foreground setting to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) when viewed from the south. Old Mill Road lies to the east of the area and the M20/HS1 corridor borders the area to the north. Field boundaries border the area to the south and west, enclosing large parcels of arable land.

5.42. The Key Characteristics of LCA 49-2 are defined as follows:

- ***“Major infrastructure***
- ***Vegetation belts along the head of the Len valley***
- ***Urban influences including car dealership***
- ***Modern development”***

5.43. The landscape description for LCA 49-2 notes (inter alia) that:

*“Fields are large and are used for a mixture of arable and pasture land. There is little woodland vegetation throughout the area, although significant swathes of vegetation line the drains which form the head of the Len Valley and sections of gappy hedgerow and vegetation belts remain in places. To the north the landscape is heavily influenced by the M20/HS1 corridor, and traffic is both visible and audible. The busy A20, Ashford Road, also dissects the area in an east west direction, increasing the impact of major infrastructure and fragmenting the landscape. There is little development within the landscape, although a few modern properties and a car dealership are situated along the A20 which give a slightly sub urban character...”*

*...Views within the area are relatively open across the farmland, with the major infrastructure standing out. Views out of the area are limited, with the significant woodland block of Snarkhurst Wood to the north and dense vegetation along the River Len to the south. There are open views across slightly larger arable fields to the east, and glimpses of housing along Caring Lane to the east across subdivided fields and paddocks. There are wide views of the North Downs to the north.*

*The area is much influenced by the urban features, especially heavy road and rail infrastructure. The urban edge of Maidstone is not visible from within the area, although recent development along the A20 gives a slightly sub urban character....”*

- 5.44. The condition of this LCA is assessed as poor and the sensitivity as moderate.

#### **Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (January 2015)**

- 5.45. The stated objective of this assessment is to:

*“...assess the comparative sensitivity of the borough’s landscapes to development.”*

- 5.46. The landscape character areas used in this assessment are as defined in the published Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012 (excluding the Kent Downs AONB and urban area of Maidstone).

- 5.47. Within this study the ‘Leeds Castle Parklands’ are assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and sensitive to change.

#### **Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessments (January 2015)**

- 5.48. The application site is not assessed as part of this study, however the adjoining recently completed employment units and ongoing development at LOC8, Woodcutt Farm (Planning Ref. 21-506791) are situated within a site identified as ED-12 Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road



which is described as having moderate character sensitivity, high visual sensitivity and moderate landscape value.

#### **Site and Immediate Context**

5.49. The site is situated immediately to the south-west of Junction 8 of the M20, east of Maidstone. It lies between the M20 (to the north) and Ashford Road – A20 (to the south). The village of Hollingbourne is located approximately 700m to the east beyond the M20 motorway.

5.50. The local landscape of the study area surrounding the site includes the eastern fringe of Maidstone incorporating a significant amount of built infrastructure. Immediately to the east of the site lies Junction 8 of the M20 which connects to a further major highway, the A20, both of which frame the site. Recently completed employment units and ongoing development at LOC8, Woodcutt Farm (Planning Ref. 21-506791) are situated immediately to the north-west of the site, off Ashford Road, and north of the M20 motorway is a motorway service area, known as Maidstone Services. Approximately 1km to the west of the site lies a large golf course and country club, known as the Tudor Park Marriott Hotel. Approximately 400m to the southeast of the site lies a further major hotel complex, the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel. Whilst the overriding character of the area is rural in context, the landscape is nonetheless a settled landscape which is punctuated with significant amounts of built infrastructure.

#### **Landscape Sensitivity**

5.51. As advocated by the GLVIA3 the sensitivity of the landscape needs to be judged based on its inherent value and susceptibility to the type of development proposed.

#### **Landscape Susceptibility**

5.52. In LVIA, landscape susceptibility is the ability of a landscape to accommodate change without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation. Different types of development can affect landscapes in different ways; therefore, landscape susceptibility is specific to the type of development proposed.

5.53. The site and its immediate context lie within the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA – defined by the Kent Landscape Character Assessment – with the 'Hollingbourne Vale/Hollingbourne Vale West' LCA's directly to the north and the Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone LCA to the

south. As noted by the Kent Landscape Character Assessment the condition of the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA "is very poor" and "The sensitivity of the area is considered to be low." The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment identifies the White Heath Farmlands (LCA 49-2), in which the site is located, as being in poor condition and of moderate sensitivity.

- 5.54. The Kent Downs AONB is located approximately 500m to the north of the site beyond the M20 and Maidstone Services and a Landscape of Local Value designation defined by the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Adopted 25 October 2017) covers an extensive area immediately south of the site beyond the A20.
- 5.55. Notwithstanding, the site and adjacent land has been excluded from the Landscape of Local Value designation and the scale of the site is relatively small in the local landscape, comprising a single arable field bounded by perimeter hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. No internal hedgerows or trees are located within the interior of the site. Furthermore, it is heavily influenced by adjacent transport infrastructure – including the M20 and A20 – together with recently completed employment development at Woodcut Farm and neighbouring commercial uses forming detractors to character and tranquillity.
- 5.56. On balance, it is considered that the site and immediate context landscape, is of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed.

### **Landscape Value**

- 5.57. In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in LI TGN O2-21, and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.
- 5.58. Landscape Designations: The site is not situated within any areas designated in recognition of landscape quality or value at either a statutory national level (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks) or at a non-statutory local level (Landscape of Local Value). However, as noted above the Kent Downs AONB is located to the north of the site and a Landscape of Local Value designation covers an extensive area immediately south beyond the A20.
- 5.59. Natural and Cultural Heritage: The site is not covered by any designations for ecological, or archaeological interest. A number of listed buildings are present within the locality – including within the Eythorne Street Conservation Area north of the M20 – however, no listed



buildings are located within the site boundary. Ecology and Heritage matters are considered further in the Ecological Impact Assessment and Heritage Assessment prepared by others.

Landscape Condition: The site itself is intensively farmed arable land with fragmented field boundary hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees. The effect of fringe development and physical fragmentation of the local area has resulted in the loss of many distinguishing features. The land immediately to the north-west of the site is currently undergoing change as new employment development comes forward. As noted by the Kent Landscape Character Assessment the condition of the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA in which the site is located "*is very poor*".

- 5.60. Associations: The site has no known associations.
- 5.61. Distinctiveness: There are no rare features within the site. Landscape features are limited to the hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees along the majority of the site's field boundaries. The site is typical of its character area, which is characterised by a pattern of arable and pasture fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees together with the influences of major transport infrastructure and modern development.
- 5.62. Recreational Value: The site has no public access and there is no other recreational use within the site.
- 5.63. Perceptual: The site and its immediate context do not possess any notable perceptual qualities. It is perceived as an urban fringe agricultural landscape locally influenced by major transport infrastructure routes, and a significant amount of built infrastructure. It is neither wild nor particularly tranquil due to its proximity to the adjacent settlement edge.
- 5.64. Functional aspects: The site does not perform any identifiable function in terms of the healthy functioning of the landscape, it is not part of a flood plain and is not part of an identified green infrastructure network.
- 5.65. In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is of medium landscape value.

### **Landscape sensitivity**

- 5.66. The following conclusions on sensitivity are based on the description and justification presented above, balancing the professional judgements on value and susceptibility. Following a review of the types of impact on physical landscape resources, the conclusions on landscape sensitivity are then taken forward to address the impact and effect on landscape character.
- 5.67. Overall, the landscape analysis has determined that the site and immediate context landscape, is of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. In terms of "landscape value" the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium landscape value. Consequently, the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium sensitivity in landscape terms.

### **Effects on Landscape Character**

- 5.68. The effects on landscape character consider how the introduction of new elements may change the attributes of the landscape such as its scale and sense of enclosure but also the landscape pattern, and perceptual attributes or how the visibility of the proposals changes the way in which landscape character is perceived. Landscape character is defined as the:

***"Distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse."***

- 5.69. The immediate site context is currently undergoing change as a result of ongoing construction operations to the northwest. Change would continue as a result of the proposed development, and some of the openness would be lost. The character would change, with the loss of arable farmland to built development, and some landscape enhancement through the establishment of new landscaping including scrub, tree planting and areas of grassland, reinforcing existing landscape features. Notwithstanding, the overall character of the wider landscape context to the north of the M20 and south of the A20 would remain largely unchanged with the development as proposed.

### **The 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA**

- 5.70. The 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA encompasses a swathe of landscape extending east from the fringe of Maidstone towards Harrietsham and Lenham over a distance of approximately 8.5km. It is extensive in this context. The site itself forms a small part of this LCA within the study area and is located directly adjacent to Junction 8 of the M20 where



mixed land uses prevail including. Significant amounts of built infrastructure including road and rail transport corridors and areas of mineral extraction represent large-scale visual detractors within this area. The visual unity of the area is significantly interrupted.

- 5.71. The proposed development will have direct effects upon the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA altering the immediate context of the site as it changes from an arable field to employment development. Although the proposed development will inevitably change the character of the landscape locally, with the introduction of a new distribution/ warehouse building to the receiving landscape, this will be seen in context with the existing LOC8 employment units at Woodcut Farm and it will give rise to both adverse and beneficial effects. A number of important landscape features, including established perimeter hedgerows and hedgerow trees would be retained and incorporated into the development layout. The proposed development also includes areas of new green infrastructure which provide opportunities for locally distinctive habitat creation and enhanced biodiversity. Collectively all of these elements will constitute a low - low/medium magnitude of change within the LCA. With a low sensitivity and a low/medium magnitude of change, the proposals would result in a minor adverse effect on the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA upon completion. Landscape effects will reduce over time once the new tree planting and soft landscaping throughout the site has established, providing some minor beneficial effects for the area and helping to offset the adverse effects of the change of use.

#### **Hollingbourne Vale West and Hollingbourne Vale LCA's**

- 5.72. For the 'Hollingbourne Vale West' and 'Hollingbourne Vale' LCAs directly to the north, very limited indirect effects would arise primarily as a result of a change in outlook from these LCA's with potential glimpsed views of the upper parts of the new building.
- 5.73. The sensitivity to change of these LCAs is assessed as moderate. Due to the limited availability of site views the proposed development is likely to give rise to a negligible magnitude of change in outlook. Consequently, the degree of landscape effect is considered to be negligible for these LCAs upon completion.

#### **The 'Greensand Fruit Belt' LCA**

- 5.74. Similarly, for the 'Greensand Fruit Belt' LCA to the south, very limited indirect effects would arise primarily as a result of a change in outlook with the potential for glimpsed views of the upper parts of the new building from elevated locations.





5.75. The sensitivity to change of the 'Greensand Fruit Belt' LCA is assessed as moderate. Due to the limited availability of site views the proposed development is likely to give rise to a negligible/low magnitude of change in outlook. Consequently, for the Greensand Fruit Belt LCA the degree of landscape effect is considered to be negligible/low upon completion.

#### **The 'White Heath Farmlands' (LCA 49-2)**

5.76. The sensitivity to change for the 'White Heath Farmlands' (LCA 49-2) is assessed as moderate in the published Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment. The site forms a parcel of land located adjacent to Junction 8 of the M20 contained by the M20 and the A20 to the north and south respectively, whilst completed and ongoing employment development is taking place at Woodcut Farm immediately to the north-west.

5.77. Although the proposed development will inevitably change the character of the landscape locally it will give rise to both adverse and beneficial effects. There will be a partial loss of arable farmland, and the introduction of a new distribution/ warehouse building together with external hard standing – used for storage and the operation of the new employment unit. However, a number of important landscape features, including established perimeter hedgerows and trees would be retained and incorporated into the development layout. The proposed development also includes areas of new green infrastructure within and around the site perimeter which provide opportunities for enhanced biodiversity. The magnitude of change arising from the proposed development is considered to be medium with a partial loss of arable farmland within the LCA.

5.78. Overall, with a moderate sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change, the effect on the 'White Heath Farmlands' will be moderate adverse upon completion, this is likely to change to minor – moderate adverse once the new tree planting and soft landscaping around the perimeter of the site has established, providing some minor beneficial effects for the area and helping to offset the adverse effects of the change of use.

#### **Local Landscape Character**

5.79. As stated above, the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium sensitivity in landscape terms. The immediate site context is currently undergoing change as a result of ongoing construction operations to the north-west. Change would continue as a result of the proposed development, and some of the openness would be lost. The character would change, with the loss of an arable field, between the M20 and the A20 to built development,



and some landscape enhancement through the establishment of new landscaping including scrub, tree planting and areas of grassland, reinforcing existing landscape features. Notwithstanding, the overall character of the wider landscape context to the south of the A20 would remain largely unchanged with the development as proposed.

- 5.80. The proposed development will be perceived as a further extension to the existing built-up areas, and in particular the LOC8 employment development at Woodcut Farm, on the eastern fringe of Maidstone, however the retained hedgerows and trees together with the additional landscape proposals will help to soften the development in views from the surrounding visual receptors and will provide landscape buffers between the proposed development and the adjoining highways.
- 5.81. The magnitude of the landscape change arising at this localised scale will be medium/ high upon completion, yet it will not all be adverse. With the exception of a single tree which is to be removed to facilitate the site access, the conservation of the perimeter hedgerows and trees and the implementation of the on plot and perimeter landscaping including areas of scrub, tree planting and species rich grassland will offer some mitigation and beneficial change in landscape terms.
- 5.82. With a medium sensitivity and a medium/ high magnitude of change upon completion the resultant landscape effect of the proposed development upon the local landscape will be moderate adverse. However, this will reduce in the medium to longer term as the existing and new planting matures and is appropriately managed.

## 6. EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

### Representative Viewpoints

- 6.1. For the purposes of this LVIA, a series of 16 representative publicly accessible views from the area surrounding the site have been identified through desktop and field studies. These viewpoints are not intended to cover every possible view of the proposed development, but rather they are representative of a range of receptor types at varying distances and orientations to the site.
- 6.2. The effect on visual amenity considers the changes in views arising from the proposals in relation to visual receptors including residential properties, highways, PRoW, and recreational areas, and the effect on representative viewpoints.
- 6.3. The representative viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 6 (Viewpoint Location Plan). The representative viewpoints can be found at Appendix 2.

### The Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 6.4. A screened ZTV for the proposed development has been prepared to inform the visual assessment. The ZTV of the proposed development is the theoretical area from within which the proposed development will be visible. It is representative and is not an indicator of the significance of the visual effect. The ZTV is illustrated at Figure 7 and has been produced using multiple datasets to create a DSM (Digital Surface Model). These have been combined together accurately using ESRI GIS software. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) illustrates the theoretical extent of where the development may be visible from, assuming 100% atmospheric visibility, and includes the screening effect from vegetation and buildings, based on the data sets described above.
- 6.5. The ZTV of the proposed development is primarily defined by the topography surrounding the site, with existing built-up areas, woodland belts, hedgerows and trees also interrupting and screening potential views. The ZTV extends to varying degrees to the north, south, east and west of the site.
- 6.6. Locally, to the north, east and west, the ZTV is relatively contained by the nature of the topography and existing vegetation – particularly along the course of the M20/ HS1 corridor – together with built fabric on the settlement fringes. The completed and ongoing



components of the LOC8 employment development northwest of the site will further restrict the ZTV in this direction.

- 6.7. Longer distance views are possible at up to around 2.5km to the north and northeast and up to around 3.5km to the northwest, from the elevated chalk ridgelines and hills of the Kent Downs AONB. From the lower lying undulating landscape and foot-slopes of the North Downs escarpment – to the north of the M20/HS1 corridor – views are curtailed by the intervening landform and vegetation including significant areas of established woodland.
- 6.8. The ZTV extends southwards over areas beyond the Ashford Road (A20). Notwithstanding these parts of the ZTV to the south of the site will include some significant visual interruptions and 'barriers', where the undulating landform together with established vegetation and other features will limit many views towards the proposed development. This is largely the case with the settlements of Ashbank and Leeds although intermittent mid to long-distance views are available towards the site location from elevated areas in the surrounding landscape.

### **Photomontages**

- 6.9. In addition to the annotated representative viewpoints that support the baseline description of the landscape and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings, a series of 3 Photomontages for the proposed development have been prepared and are included at Appendix 3.
- 6.10. The Photomontages aim to simulate the likely visual changes that will result from the proposed development. They have been prepared in accordance with the latest guidance published by the Landscape Institute; '*Visual Representation of Development Proposals – Technical Guidance Note 06/19*' (September 2019), (subsequently referred to as TGN 06/19). Photomontages or Photowires are referred to in TGN 06/19 as 'Type 3 Visualisations'.
- 6.11. The proposed development illustrated within the Photomontages is based upon the drawings submitted with the application together with the finished plot and floor levels.
- 6.12. Photomontages have been prepared for each of the selected viewpoints and depict the scheme upon completion of all the earthworks, buildings and landscape proposals and after 15 years. The latter is used to convey the residual effect of the landscape and planting proposals after 15 years of establishment, growth and appropriate management.



## Visual Assessment

### Viewpoint 1: South-west from Maidstone Services access road / M20 Junction 8 roundabout

- 6.13. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents a relatively close-range view available from the access road to Maidstone Services. The view looks south-west across the roundabout towards the site location. A local ridge of high ground – cloaked in woodland – to the south-east of the site can be seen to the left of the view, however the site itself, which is lower lying is screened by intervening vegetation including well established highway planting associated with the roundabout junction.
- 6.14. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Road users – including motorists and pedestrians in this location are of low – medium susceptibility. The view is of low value – being of unremarkable scenic value heavily influenced by frequent passing traffic – resulting in a low sensitivity for road users.
- 6.15. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** There would be partial glimpsed views of the proposed development from this location including the upper elevations of the new warehouse building beyond the tree line, seen in the context of the existing highway infrastructure. However, operational activity at ground level and the lower parts of the building would be effectively screened from view. The proposed development would constitute a low/medium magnitude of change for road users.
- 6.16. **Visual Effect:** A low sensitivity combined with a low/ medium magnitude of change, would result in a predicted minor adverse effect for road users at this location.

### Viewpoint 2: South-west from Public Footpath KH184 – south-west of Hollingbourne Station

- 6.17. **Description of Baseline View:** This view looks south-west towards the site location from Public footpath KH184 to the south west of Hollingbourne Railway Station. The viewpoint is located south of the railway line and consequently outwith the Kent Downs AONB. A medium sized pasture field can be seen in the foreground bounded by well-established hedgerows and mature trees. A continuous tree belt is located at the far side of the field effectively curtailing views beyond the field boundaries in the direction of the site.
- 6.18. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of high susceptibility. The view is of medium value – being of moderate scenic value within an undesignated rural landscape – resulting in an overall medium/high sensitivity for footpath users.



6.19. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The site is effectively screened from view and any change arising from the proposed development would be negligible.

6.20. **Visual Effect:** A medium/high sensitivity combined with a negligible magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible level of effect for users of the footpath in this location.

Viewpoint 3: South-west from Public Footpath KH154 – north of Strickets Garden

6.21. **Description of Baseline View:** Taken from Public Footpath KH154 approximately 1.15km northeast of the site boundary this represents the view available to footpath users in the undulating low-lying landscape between the Maidstone Line railway and the foot slopes of the chalk escarpment on the southern boundary of the Kent Downs AONB. A large pasture field can be seen in the foreground bounded by the woodland blocks of Strickets Garden to the east and Snarkhurst Wood to the west. Between these two woodlands a channelled view is available to the distant horizon formed by elevated ground to the south of the Len Valley. The site occupies a low-lying location in the Len Valley – in the middle ground – and is screened from view by the intervening landform and vegetation.

6.22. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of high susceptibility. The view is of medium/high value – being of moderate scenic value within the AONB – resulting in an overall high sensitivity for footpath users.

6.23. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The site is effectively screened from view and any change arising from the proposed development would be negligible.

6.24. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a negligible magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible level of effect for footpath users at this location.

Viewpoint 4: East from Ashford Road (A20)

6.25. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents the view available to motorists when passing the site on the approach to Junction 8 of the M20. Motorists have relatively clear views of the site for approximately 300m when leaving the built up area of Maidstone – east of the LOC8 employment units – due to the increasingly elevated nature of the road on the approach to the motorway junction and a general lack of roadside vegetation. Clear views are available into the site beyond the post and rail fencing which defines the site boundaries adjacent to Ashford Road in the foreground. The site is bounded by established hedgerows and trees to the north and east where the M20 and junction approach roads are largely



screened by highway mitigation planting. This vegetation also screens the Maidstone Services area – which lies to the north of the motorway junction – and curtails views beyond the site in this direction. Nonetheless highway infrastructure associated with the M20, A20 and Junction 8 of the motorway – including overhead lighting columns – form visual detractors within the view.

6.26. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Road users in this location are influenced by existing urban fringe uses and transport infrastructure and are of low susceptibility to change. The view is of medium value – being of ordinary scenic value – resulting in an overall low/medium sensitivity for road users.

6.27. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The development would extend the existing built form of the LOC8 employment area further to the east and the new building would form a major change in the view for motorists using Ashford Road in close proximity to the site. On the approach to the motorway junction and further east along the A20 the visual effects arising will reduce as views will be more limited by the existing roadside hedgerows and trees. Similarly for motorist travelling west on the approach to Maidstone, once past the site itself views will be screened by existing vegetation and built fabric. Although there will be clear views of the new building upon completion when passing the site – and where available, open views across the site will be foreshortened – landscape planting around the site perimeter, and along the Ashford Road frontage will have been established providing an attractive edge to the development. For the stretch of Ashford Road adjacent to the site, with the clearest views, the visible extents of the proposed development would represent a high magnitude of change within the view.

6.28. **Visual Effect:** A low/medium sensitivity combined with a high magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate/major level of effect for users of Ashford Road when passing the site upon completion. With increasing distance from the site any built development and associated activity within it would be progressively more screened by intervening vegetation and built fabric.

Viewpoint 5: South-east from Restricted Byway KH641/ Woodcut Farm

6.29. **Description of Baseline View:** This view looks south-east across the LOC8 employment site towards the application site location. Two grass paddocks occupy the foreground which extend across falling ground to the lower level of LOC8 employment site where the



completed development along with ongoing construction activity is clearly visible. Beyond this the middle ground encompasses a partial view of the site location and the well treed landscape of the Len Valley. The M20 motorway is also visible to the left of the view against the backdrop of a wooded ridgeline. Longer distance easterly views are available to higher ground forming the distant horizon.

- 6.30. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Byway users in this location have views beyond the LOC8 site and the application site to relatively elevated ridgelines north of the motorway and east of the site. These ridgelines form a wooded backdrop to the LOC8 development and the site in the middle ground beyond which are long distance views to the distant horizon. Receptors at this location including pedestrians and motorists are therefore considered to be of medium/high susceptibility to change. The view is of medium value – being of medium scenic value – resulting in an overall medium/high sensitivity for Byway users.
- 6.31. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would extend employment development eastwards beyond the existing LOC8 site, and the upper elevations of the new building would be noticeable in the middle distance, albeit the proposed development would be seen in context with the existing and ongoing LOC8 development. The visible extents of the proposed development would represent a medium magnitude of change within the view seen against the backdrop of the local wooded ridgelines. Beyond these local ridgelines longer distance views towards the distant horizon would still be possible with the proposed development in place.
- 6.32. **Visual Effect:** A medium/high sensitivity combined with a medium magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate level of effect for users of Byway KH641 at this location upon completion.

Viewpoint 6: North from Public Footpath KH180 – off Old Mill Road

- 6.33. **Description of Baseline View:** This view is taken from Public Footpath KH180 – within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value designation – and looks northwest towards the site. A pasture field can be seen in the foreground extending across falling ground towards Ashford Road and the site. Relatively open views of the site are available which is seen in the middle ground adjacent to the recently completed LOC8 employment units. A series of lighting columns associated with Ashford Road and Junction 8 of the M20 are also visually prominent in the middle ground against a wooded backdrop formed by Snarkhurst Wood and extensive





planting along the course of the M20/HS1 corridor. This extensive planting effectively screens the Maidstone motorway service area which is located beyond the site and the M20. More distantly the rising slopes of the Kent Downs AONB escarpment are discernible extending up to the skyline.

- 6.34. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location experience relatively close views of the site, against the more distant backdrop of the Kent Downs AONB escarpment to the north and are of high susceptibility to change. Notwithstanding the LOC8 employment development can be seen in the context of this view together with the lighting columns along Ashford Road and clustered around Junction 8 of the M20 – forming evident visual detractors. The view is of medium/high value – being of medium/ high scenic value – resulting in an overall high sensitivity.
- 6.35. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** For users of this section of the footpath off Old Mill Road there would be a medium/high level of change upon completion of the proposed development. Views in the direction of the proposals will include a landscaped frontage to Ashford Road with the new building and associated areas of hardstanding set back behind retained and proposed vegetation. Nonetheless the upper elevations of the new warehouse building will be seen against the distant backdrop of the Kent Downs AONB escarpment (Refer to Appendix 3 – Viewpoint 6 Photomontage). The proposed building would sit in the middle ground and no higher than the existing lighting columns. The building at 15m in height has been carefully designed to ensure that it sits below the horizon and that the legibility of the Kent Downs AONB escarpment would remain with the scheme in place. It is anticipated that at the detailed design stage the use of colour render could assist in making the building recessive in local views. New tree and shrub planting, along the Ashford Road frontage will also assist with softening views of the ground level operational areas and the lower building elevations.
- 6.36. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a medium/high magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate/major level of effect for users of Public Footpath KH180 at this location upon completion.

Viewpoint 7: North-east from Public Footpath KH189 – north of Old Mill Farm

- 6.37. **Description of Baseline View:** At approximately 305m south of the site this represents a relatively close distance and heavily filtered/screened view from Public Footpath KLH189

which extends in a north easterly direction from Old Mill Farm across a ridge of moderately high ground before descending to meet the A20. The footpath crosses a large arable field which can be seen in the foreground, bounded to north by established vegetation, including a hedgerow and trees along the course of Old Mill Road, and the Biffa Hollingbourne site. Longer distance views beyond this extend to the ridgeline of the Kent Downs AONB which forms the distant horizon. The site which occupies lower ground is screened by the intervening landform and vegetation.

- 6.38. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location experience short-range views to the field boundary hedgerows beyond which are long range views to the higher ground of the AONB. They are of high susceptibility to change. The view is of medium value – being of moderate scenic value – with the Biffa Hollingbourne site forming a visual detractor – resulting in an overall medium/high sensitivity.
- 6.39. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** For users of this section of the footpath there would be a low level of change upon completion of the proposed development due to the extensive intervening vegetation which will largely screen the proposals. It is anticipated that there would be partial views of the upper parts of the new employment unit beyond the intervening tree canopies, however for the most part the development will be screened.
- 6.40. **Visual Effect:** A medium/high sensitivity combined with a low magnitude of change, would result in a predicted minor/moderate level of effect for users of this route at this location.

Viewpoint 8: North-west from A20

- 6.41. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents the view available to motorists on the approach towards Maidstone, and Junction 8 of the M20, from the east. The A20 enters a cutting on the approach to a roundabout which can be seen in the middle ground together with highway lighting columns and established tree and shrub planting on the embankments to either side of the highway. The site location, which is situated beyond the roundabout, is screened by the established roadside vegetation.
- 6.42. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Road users in this location experience short-range views along the highway corridor, however, longer range views are truncated by the roadside embankments together with established tree and shrub planting. As such they are assessed to be of low susceptibility to change. The view is of low value – being an unremarkable view along a major highway corridor – resulting in an overall low sensitivity.



6.43. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** For users of the A20 in this location there would be a low level of change upon completion of the proposed development due to the extensive intervening vegetation which will largely screen the proposals. It is anticipated that there would be glimpsed views of the upper parts of the new employment unit beyond the intervening tree planting, however for the most part the development will be screened.

6.44. **Visual Effect:** A low sensitivity combined with a low magnitude of change, would result in a minor level of effect for road users at this location.

Viewpoint 9: North-west from Public Footpath KH249 north of Ashbank

6.45. **Description of Baseline View:** This view looks north-west from a relatively elevated location on Public Footpath KH249 on the Len valley slopes north of Ashbank – approximately 1.19km to the south-east of the site. The foreground is dominated by extensive nursery planting which foreshortens views from the footpath, however longer distance views are available taking in the upper elevations of the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel and – more distantly – parts of the LOC8 employment units adjacent to the site. At a distance of approximately 4km the ridgeline of the Kent Downs escarpment forms a backdrop to the view. The site location is largely screened by intervening vegetation in the middle ground.

6.46. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and the view is of medium scenic value resulting in an overall medium/high sensitivity.

6.47. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposal would introduce a very low level of change in the view with potentially the upper parts of the warehouse building being visible in context with the existing LOC8 units. The proposals will appear as a minor component in the view at a distance of approximately 1.19km giving rise to a low magnitude of change.

6.48. **Visual Effect:** A medium/high sensitivity combined with a low magnitude of change, would result in a predicted minor level of effect for users of this route at this location.

Viewpoint 10: North from Public Footpath KH236 – north of Brogden

6.49. **Description of Baseline View:** This view looks north from an elevated location on Public Footpath KH236 to the north of Brogden within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value. A large arable field extending across falling ground can be seen in the foreground with belts of tree planting in the Len Valley visible at a lower elevation in the middle ground. Within this



wide-ranging view, built development – including the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel and the LOC8 employment units – is visible together with major transport infrastructure (M20 and A20). Snarkhurst Wood and other woodland belts and blocks, to the north of the M20, are also visible against the distant backdrop of the Kent Downs escarpment slopes. The site location is partially screened by intervening vegetation.

- 6.50. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and the view is of medium/high value resulting in an overall high sensitivity.
- 6.51. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposal would be noticeable within the view with the upper elevations of the warehouse unit visible above the tree line at a distance of approximately 1.2km (Refer to Appendix 3 – Viewpoint 10 Photomontage). Notwithstanding the scheme will be seen in context with the existing LOC8 units and adjacent transport infrastructure giving rise to a low/medium magnitude of change.
- 6.52. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a low/medium magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate level of effect for users of this route at this location.

Viewpoint 11: North-east from Public Footpath KH253 – off Caring Lane

- 6.53. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents the view available to footpath users to the east of Caring Lane. The foreground comprises undulating land occupied by pasture fields bounded by established hedgerows and mature trees. The lower lying Len Valley can be seen in the middle ground where Snarkhurst Wood contributes to the well treed character. Partial views of the M20 and existing LOC8 employment units are also available against the distant backdrop of the Kent Downs escarpment.
- 6.54. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of high susceptibility. The view is of medium/high value – being of moderate scenic value within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value – resulting in an overall high sensitivity for footpath users.
- 6.55. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The upper elevations of the completed warehouse unit would be glimpsed/partially visible in this view, seen in context with the LOC8 employment units at a distance of approximately 1.5km giving rise to a low magnitude of change in the view.
- 6.56. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a low magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate level of effect for users of Footpath KH253 at this location.



Viewpoint 12: South-west from Public Footpath KH142A – North Downs Way

- 6.57. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents a long-distance view – at approximately 2.6km from the site – from Public Footpath KH142A forming part of the North Downs Way. In the foreground the landform drops away sharply towards Little Allington and Hollingbourne which are located at the foot of the scarp slope within a well treed landscape. Extensive areas of woodland are visible in the middle ground including Snarkhurst Wood which occupies a low hill. The site is partially visible at a lower elevation in the middle distance, in context with the LOC8 employment units which are also partially visible. Expansive long-distance views are available beyond this across the wider landscape to the south of the Len Valley.
- 6.58. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of a high susceptibility to change – due to their location within the Kent Downs AONB – and the view is of high scenic value resulting in an overall high sensitivity.
- 6.59. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would introduce perceptible additional built form, adjacent to existing large scale employment units, in a wide-ranging panoramic view (Refer to Appendix 3 – Viewpoint 12 Photomontage). Although giving rise to a noticeable change the proposals would form a relatively minor additional element of built form in the long distance and wide-ranging panoramic view giving rise to a low/medium magnitude of change.
- 6.60. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a low/medium magnitude of change, would result in a predicted moderate level of effect for users of this route at this location.

Viewpoint 13: South-west from Public Footpath KH639 – North Downs Way.

- 6.61. **Description of Baseline View:** Taken from Public Footpath KH639 – part of the North Downs Way – at Broad Street Hill, this represents an elevated, long distance view towards the site. The view takes in a pasture field on the steeply falling scarp slope in the foreground together with the lower lying arable fields beyond the foot-slopes in the middle ground. Extensive tree cover, including Snarkhurst Wood can also be seen in the middle ground obscuring the site and the adjoining LOC8 development. This screening effect continues for some distance to the east and west on the North Downs Way. Expansive long-distance views are available across the wider landscape north of the Len Valley.



6.62. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Users of the North Downs Way in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and the view is of high scenic value within the Kent Downs AONB resulting in an overall high sensitivity.

6.63. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would be largely obscured by intervening vegetation from this viewpoint however it is anticipated that the upper elevations of the new warehouse unit would be discernible above the tree line albeit the magnitude of change in the view would be negligible/low.

6.64. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a negligible/low magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible – minor/moderate level of effect upon completion for users of Public Footpath KH639 at this location.

Viewpoint 14: South from Public Footpath KH638 – Cat’s Mount

6.65. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents a long-distance view – at approximately 2.78km from the site – from Public Footpaath KH638, near Cat’s Mount on the North Downs Way. The undulating footslopes of the escarpment can be seen in the foreground occupied by large arable fields and blocks and belts of mature woodland. High voltage overhead power lines and pylons traverse the undulating farmland from east to west forming a visual detractor. Extensive tree cover, including Snarkhurst Wood can be seen in the middle ground obscuring the site and the adjoining LOC8 development. Beyond this wide ranging long distance views to the horizon are available.

6.66. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and the view is of high scenic value resulting in an overall high sensitivity.

6.67. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would introduce perceptible additional built form, in a wide-ranging panoramic view. The site would be seen at a distance and is largely screened by intervening vegetation in the middle ground including Snarkhurst Wood. The proposals would form a very minor additional element of built form in the long distance and wide-ranging panoramic view giving rise to a negligible/low magnitude of change.

6.68. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a negligible/low magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible – minor/moderate level of effect for users of this route at this location.



Viewpoint 15: South-east from Public Footpath KH113 – White Horse Wood Country Park

- 6.69. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents a long-distance view – at approximately 3.99km from the site – from Public Footpath KH113 near the public viewing point in White Horse Wood Country Park, within the Kent Downs AONB. It is available to visitors to the Country Park looking south-east towards the application site. Although longer distance views towards more elevated land in the south-east are possible. The low-lying landscape in which the site is located is screened by the intervening vegetation.
- 6.70. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Footpath users in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and the view is of high scenic value resulting in an overall high sensitivity.
- 6.71. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would be imperceptible in the context of this view and consequently any change would be negligible.
- 6.72. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a negligible magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible level of effect for visual receptors at this location.

Viewpoint 16: South-east from Thurnham Castle

- 6.73. **Description of Baseline View:** This represents a typical view available for visitors to Thurnham Castle on a spur of the chalk ridge just off the North Downs Way. Views from the castle are variable but largely foreshortened by extensive vegetation in the locality. Nevertheless, in this case, where a gap in the vegetation occurs, a channelled long-distance view is possible across lower ground towards the south-east. The site itself, however, is screened by the intervening vegetation.
- 6.74. **Sensitivity of Visual Receptors:** Visitors to the castle in this location are of a high susceptibility to change and where longer distance views are available they are of high scenic value resulting in an overall high sensitivity.
- 6.75. **Predicted Magnitude of Change:** The proposed development would be imperceptible in the context of this view and consequently any change would be negligible.
- 6.76. **Visual Effect:** A high sensitivity combined with a negligible magnitude of change, would result in a predicted negligible level of effect for visual receptors at this location.



**Table 2: Visual Effects Summary**

Viewpoint reference	Receptor type and sensitivity	Magnitude of change		Scale of Visual Effect	
		Year 1	Year 15	Year 1	Year 15
1	Road users/ Low	Low/Medium	Low	Minor	Neg/Minor
2	PROW users/ High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
3	PROW users/ within AONB High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
4	Road users/ Low	High	Medium/ High	Moderate/ Major	Moderate
5	Byway users/ Medium/ High	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Moderate
6	PROW users/ High	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate/ Major	Moderate
7	PROW users/ Medium/ High	Low	Low	Minor/ Moderate	Minor/ Moderate
8	Road users/ Low	Low	Low	Minor	Minor
9	PROW users/ Medium/ High	Low	Low	Minor	Minor



Viewpoint reference	Receptor type and sensitivity	Magnitude of change		Scale of Visual Effect	
		Year 1	Year 15	Year 1	Year 15
10	PROW users/ High	Low/ Medium	Low/ Medium	Moderate	Moderate
11	PROW users/ High	Low	Low	Minor/ Moderate	Minor/ Moderate
12	PROW users within AONB/ High	Low/ Medium	Low/ Medium	Moderate	Moderate
13	PROW users within AONB/ High	Negligible - Low	Negligible - Low	Negligible - Minor/ Moderate	Negligible - Minor/ Moderate
14	PROW users within AONB/ High	Negligible - Low	Negligible - Low	Negligible - Minor/ Moderate	Negligible - Minor/ Moderate
15	PROW users within AONB/ White Horse Wood Country Park High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
16	Visitors to Thurnham Castle/ High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

## 7. RESIDUAL EFFECTS

7.1. The residual effects consider the effects after the incorporation of the mitigation measures. In the context of the landscape and visual assessment, many (primary) mitigation measures are incorporated as an integral part of the design and layout of the proposed development. These include attention to the siting, layout and heights of the proposed development and consideration of the earthworks and ground modelling proposals. All of these measures are therefore integral to the proposed development and have been assessed as part of the scheme.

7.2. The residual operational effects assessment considers the proposed development 15 years after full completion and commencement of operations.

### **Landscape**

7.3. In general, the landscape effects of the completed development will lessen over time with the successful establishment and maturing of the planting and other habitat creation measures. In addition to the beneficial effects arising from the proposed landscaping, the application of appropriate long-term management and maintenance operations to the existing conserved habitats, trees and hedgerows will also deliver some localised benefits.

7.4. The main benefits in landscape terms will arise from the maturing of the outer and perimeter landscape and planting proposals, including enhancements to the retained hedgerows and trees, which will assist in assimilating the landform and built development proposals.

### **Visual**

7.5. The successful establishment and maturing of the planting and habitat creation proposals, particularly throughout the outer and perimeter landscape areas will provide some valuable localised benefits to many of the receptors with views towards the proposed development.

7.6. The maturing of the landscape and planting proposals will offer the greatest localised visual benefits to those receptors generally closest to the main built development area including Ashford Road (Viewpoint 4), and users of Public Footpath KH180 off Old Mill Road (Viewpoint 6). At these locations, the maturing of the perimeter woodland and structure planting will assist in assimilating the proposed development with the existing surrounding landform and landscape setting and over time visual effects will be ameliorated.

## 8. LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

8.1. National and local planning policy is considered in detail in the Planning Statement that accompanies the Planning Application for the proposed development.

### **Maidstone Borough Local Plan (Adopted 25 October 2017)**

8.2. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan (MBLP) was adopted in October 2017 and details the framework for development in the Borough until 2031. The following policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:

#### Policy SP 17: The Countryside

8.3. Policy SP17 is concerned with development in the countryside and states that:

***“The countryside is defined as all those parts of the plan area outside the settlement boundaries of the Maidstone urban area, rural service centres and larger villages defined on the policies map.***

- 1. Development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they accord with other policies in this plan and they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.***
- 2. Agricultural proposals will be supported which facilitate the efficient use of the borough's significant agricultural land and soil resource provided any adverse impacts on the appearance and character of the landscape can be appropriately mitigated.***
- 3. Great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.***
- 4. Proposals should not have a significant adverse impact on the settings of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.***
- 5. The Metropolitan Green Belt is shown on the policies map and development there will be managed in accordance with national policy for the Green Belt.***
- 6. The distinctive landscape character of the Greensand Ridge, the Medway Valley, the Len Valley, the Loose Valley, and the Low Weald, as defined on the policies map, will be conserved and enhanced as landscapes of local value.***
- 7. Development in the countryside will retain the separation of individual settlements.***

***Account should be taken of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan and the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document."***

Policy DM30: Design Principles in the Countryside

8.4. Policy DM30 notes that:

***"Development Outside of the settlement boundaries as defined on the policies map, proposals which would create high quality design, satisfy the requirements of other policies in this plan and meet the following criteria will be permitted:***

- i. The type, siting, materials and design, mass and scale of development and the level of activity would maintain, or where possible, enhance local distinctiveness including landscape features;***
- ii. Impacts on the appearance and character of the landscape would be appropriately mitigated. Suitability and required mitigation will be assessed through the submission of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments to support development proposals in appropriate circumstances;***
- iii. Proposals would not result in unacceptable traffic levels on nearby roads; unsympathetic change to the character of a rural lane which is of landscape, amenity, nature conservation, or historic or archaeological importance or the erosion of roadside verges;***
- iv. Where built development is proposed, there would be no existing building or structure suitable for conversion or re-use to provide the required facilities. Any new buildings should, where practicable, be located adjacent to existing buildings or be unobtrusively located and well screened by existing or proposed vegetation which reflect the landscape character of the area; and***
- v. Where an extension or alteration to an existing building is proposed, it would be of a scale which relates sympathetically to the existing building and the rural area; respect local building styles and materials; have no significant adverse impact on the form, appearance or setting of the building, and would respect the architectural and historic integrity of any adjoining building or group of buildings of which it forms part.***

***Account should be taken of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines SPD. "***

Policy EMP1(4): Woodcut Farm, Ashford Road, Bearsted

- 8.5. Policy EMP1(4) relates specifically to the adjacent, allocated employment site at Woodcut Farm and sets out a series of design criteria which should be met for development within the allocated site. In terms of design and layout these include (inter alia):

***“...a spacious parkland setting for development through the addition of substantial internal landscaping which will be sympathetic to the site’s countryside context and which will help to break up the visual appearance of the development, in particular in views from the AONB...***

***The development proposals will respect the topography of the site by minimising the need for site excavation.***

***Landscape buffers of at least 35m in depth are established along the site’s boundary to the M20 including a new native woodland shaw at least 15m to Musket Lane, at least 25m to the A20 including a planted bund, and at least 30m along the western boundary, which will also to help secure the setting to Woodcut Farmhouse (Grade II listed) and the amenity of residential properties at Chestnuts and White Heath. Tracts of structural landscaping will extend into development areas of at least 15m in width.***

***An area of 9ha to the north and north-west of Woodcut Farm is secured as an undeveloped landscape area in the form of open woodland including the addition of a landscape buffer of at least 30m along the eastern boundary. Future management of this area will be secured by means of legal agreement and maintained in perpetuity.***

***Larger footprint buildings will be accommodated in the field to the east of the stream up to a maximum unit size of 5,000m<sup>2</sup> with building ridge heights not to exceed 12m. Units should be orientated end-on to predominant views to and from the AONB.***

***The development proposals are designed to limit their visual impact including through the use of curved roofs on buildings, non-reflective materials, sensitive colouring, green roofs and walls on smaller footprint buildings (500m<sup>2</sup> and below), and sensitive lighting proposals. Buildings should include active frontage elements incorporating glazing, and address both the A20 and M20. “***

- 8.6. As such substantial areas of mitigation landscaping have been provided as part of the now approved and largely completed LOC8 employment development.
- 8.7. In the context of the site and the proposed development the identified policy requirements relate to; high quality design, respect and sensitivity towards the local character and the Kent Downs AONB, including the settings of the AONB and the distinctive landscape character of the Greensand Ridge, and the Len Valley.



8.8. The proposed development and associated landscape framework proposals have been prepared with due regard to the relevant planning policy context as outlined above. Key considerations in this have been the potential effects upon landscape character and resources and the opportunities to enhance the landscape character and resources of the local area as part of the proposed development. Effective mitigation in the form of well planned, linked and useable green infrastructure will be an essential part of the development, both in terms of meeting policy objectives as well as ensuring new development is successfully integrated into its context.



## 9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Pegasus Group, on behalf of Wates Developments Ltd. and assesses the proposed development based upon the landscape proposals illustrated on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (refer to Figure 2), which seeks to successfully assimilate the proposed development into the site and the surrounding landscape.
- 9.2. The site is located adjacent to Junction 8 of the M20, east of Maidstone. It lies between the M20 (to the north) and Ashford Road – A20 (to the south). The village of Hollingbourne is located approximately 700m to the east beyond the M20 motorway.
- 9.3. The surrounding landscape exhibits a significant amount of built infrastructure in the locality. Immediately to the east of the site lies Junction 8 of the M20 which connects to a further major highway, the A20, both of which frame the site. Recently completed employment units and ongoing development at Woodcut Farm (Planning Ref. 21-506791) are situated immediately to the north-west of the site, off Ashford Road, and north of the M20 motorway is a motorway service area, known as Maidstone Services. Approximately 1km to the west of the site lies a large golf course and country club, known as the Tudor Park Marriott Hotel. Approximately 400m to the southeast of the site lies a further major hotel complex, the Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel. Whilst the overriding character of the area is rural in context, the landscape is nonetheless a settled landscape which is punctuated with significant amounts of built infrastructure.
- 9.4. Overall, the landscape analysis has determined that the site and immediate context landscape, is of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. In terms of "landscape value" the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium landscape value. Consequently, the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium sensitivity in landscape terms.
- 9.5. The proposed development involves the development of previously undeveloped land for the construction of storage and distribution floor space (Use Class B8) up to 116,120 sq. ft, with ancillary office accommodation; construction of new access road; provision of service yards and internal vehicle circulation, parking, and servicing areas; erection of perimeter fencing; associated drainage works, site levelling and landscaping.

- 9.6. The total planning application red line site area extends to 2.88 hectares. This includes all the land required for the development, i.e., for works, buildings, hardstanding, car parks, access road, plot landscaping as well as drainage measures, and perimeter and onsite landscaping.
- 9.7. Vehicle access is proposed from Ashford Road (A20) via a new road junction designed to provide effective HGV access onto the site.
- 9.8. Proposed landscaping will include the retention and enhancement of perimeter vegetation where possible together with new native trees, woodland planting, scrub and grassland.

**Effects upon landscape elements.**

- 9.9. The proposed development would result in both adverse and beneficial effects upon the landscape elements within the site as set out below.

**Table 3: Summary of Effects on Landscape Elements**

Element	Effect of Proposed Development
Land Use/ Cover	Moderate Adverse
Topography	Moderate Adverse
Trees, Scrub, Hedgerows, and other vegetation	Moderate Beneficial
Water Features and Watercourses	No change
Public Rights of Way (PRoWs)	No change

- 9.10. The development would alter the use of the site from arable farmland – with perimeter hedgerows and trees – to a new storage and distribution warehouse development with associated infrastructure including landscaped areas and new tree, hedgerow and shrub planting. The proposed development would result in a moderate (adverse) degree of effect with regard to land cover associated with the site. However, with regard to the tree and hedgerow resource the proposals would bring about a moderate beneficial effect. Regarding other landscape features, including water features and PRoWs, none of these are present within the site boundaries and the proposed development would not therefore give rise to any changes. Outwith the site boundary PRoW and water features would be retained and would not be directly affected.





### **Effects upon landscape character**

- 9.11. The immediate site context is currently undergoing change as a result of completed and ongoing construction operations to the northwest. Change would continue as a result of the proposed development, and some of the openness would be lost. The character would change, with the loss of arable farmland to built development, and some landscape enhancement through the establishment of new landscaping including scrub, tree planting and areas of grassland, reinforcing existing landscape features. Notwithstanding, the overall character of the wider landscape context to the north of the M20 and south of the A20 would remain largely unchanged with the development as proposed.

### **The 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA**

- 9.12. The proposed development will have direct effects upon the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA altering the immediate context of the site as it changes from an arable field to employment development. With a low sensitivity and a low/medium magnitude of change, the proposals would result in a minor adverse effect on the 'Leeds-Lenham Farmlands' LCA upon completion. Landscape effects will reduce over time once the new tree planting and soft landscaping throughout the site has established, providing some minor beneficial effects for the area and helping to offset the adverse effects of the change of use.

### **Hollingbourne Vale West and Hollingbourne Vale LCA's**

- 9.13. The sensitivity to change of these LCAs is assessed as moderate. Due to the limited availability of site views the proposed development is likely to give rise to a negligible magnitude of change in outlook. Consequently, the degree of landscape effect is considered to be negligible for these LCAs upon completion.

### **The 'Greensand Fruit Belt' LCA**

- 9.14. The sensitivity to change of the 'Greensand Fruit Belt' LCA is assessed as moderate. Due to the limited availability of site views the proposed development is likely to give rise to a negligible/low magnitude of change in outlook. Consequently, for the Greensand Fruit Belt LCA the degree of landscape effect is considered to be negligible/low upon completion.

### **The 'White Heath Farmlands' (LCA 49-2)**

- 9.15. Overall, with a moderate sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change, the effect on the 'White Heath Farmlands' will be moderate adverse upon completion, this is likely to change



to minor – moderate adverse once the new tree planting and soft landscaping around the perimeter of the site has established, providing some minor beneficial effects for the area and helping to offset the adverse effects of the change of use.

### **Local Landscape Character**

- 9.16. As stated above, the site and its immediate context is considered to be of medium sensitivity in landscape terms. The immediate site context is currently undergoing change as a result of ongoing construction operations to the north-west. Change would continue as a result of the proposed development, and some of the openness would be lost. The character would change, with the loss of an arable field, between the M20 and the A20 to built development, and some landscape enhancement through the establishment of new landscaping including scrub, tree planting and areas of grassland, reinforcing existing landscape features. Notwithstanding, the overall character of the wider landscape context to the south of the A20 would remain largely unchanged with the development as proposed.
- 9.17. With a medium sensitivity and a medium/ high magnitude of change upon completion the resultant landscape effect of the proposed development upon the local landscape will be moderate adverse. However, this will reduce in the medium to longer term as the existing and new planting matures and is appropriately managed.

### **Visual Effects**

- 9.18. A moderate/major degree of visual effect has been assessed for Viewpoints 4 and 6 which are representative of close-range views from Ashford Road and Public Footpath KH180 – off Old Mill Road – in close proximity to the site. A moderate degree of visual effect has also been assessed for Viewpoints 5, 10 and 12. These viewpoints represent elevated views for users of Restricted Byway KH641 near Woodcut Farm to the north-west, from Public Footpath users to the south within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value designation and to the north on the elevated chalk ridge within the Kent Downs AONB.
- 9.19. For these receptors – upon completion – the proposals would extend the built form of the LOC8 employment area eastwards in the view. However, the visible extent of the built development would be seen in context with the existing employment units and major highway infrastructure – including beyond the retained perimeter hedgerows and trees. Furthermore, the additional perimeter landscaping, including new tree and shrub planting, would assist with assimilating the proposals into the local landscape.



9.20. For users of other public rights of way, at lower elevations, site views are restricted by intervening landscape features including vegetation and landform.

### **Conclusions**

9.21. Overall, the proposed development will result in some significant landscape and visual effects upon initial completion, yet these will be largely confined to the site and more immediate surrounds. Other wider effects and influences will occur within the surrounding area, including the Kent Downs AONB to the north of the M20, and within the Len Valley Landscape of Local Value designation to the south, although the significance of these will generally be reduced. The most notable landscape effects will arise from direct changes to the landscape character of the site and visually the most notable effects will occur for a small number of visual receptors in close proximity to the site.

9.22. The proposed development would benefit from substantial maturing tree cover around the perimeter of the site and in the immediate vicinity, which would provide a significant degree of physical and visual containment for the building. Notwithstanding this benefit, it is proposed that the perimeter of the site would be designed to provide tree cover to enhance the degree to which the Development would be framed by vegetation as green infrastructure.

9.23. No internal hedgerows or trees are located within the interior of the site and the existing perimeter hedgerows and trees can be retained to form an integral part of the landscape design as green infrastructure. Only a small element of vegetation would need to be removed to accommodate the Development. It is intended that the Development would be framed with native trees and shrubs to create an attractive framework for the building. In overall terms, there would be benefits to the site in terms of landscape elements. The Development would inevitably involve the loss of an urban fringe arable field, but this is somewhat isolated in practical farming circumstances by the highway infrastructure alongside the site and the LOC8 employment scheme immediately to the north-west.

9.24. The proposed green infrastructure framework, including retained vegetation and new planting, will minimise the visual impacts of the proposed development and will also be used to improve upon the existing visual baseline.

9.25. Where visible from the Public Footpath off Old Mill Road to the south, the proposed building would sit in the middle ground and no higher than the existing lighting columns. The building at 15m in height has been carefully designed to ensure that it sits below the horizon and that

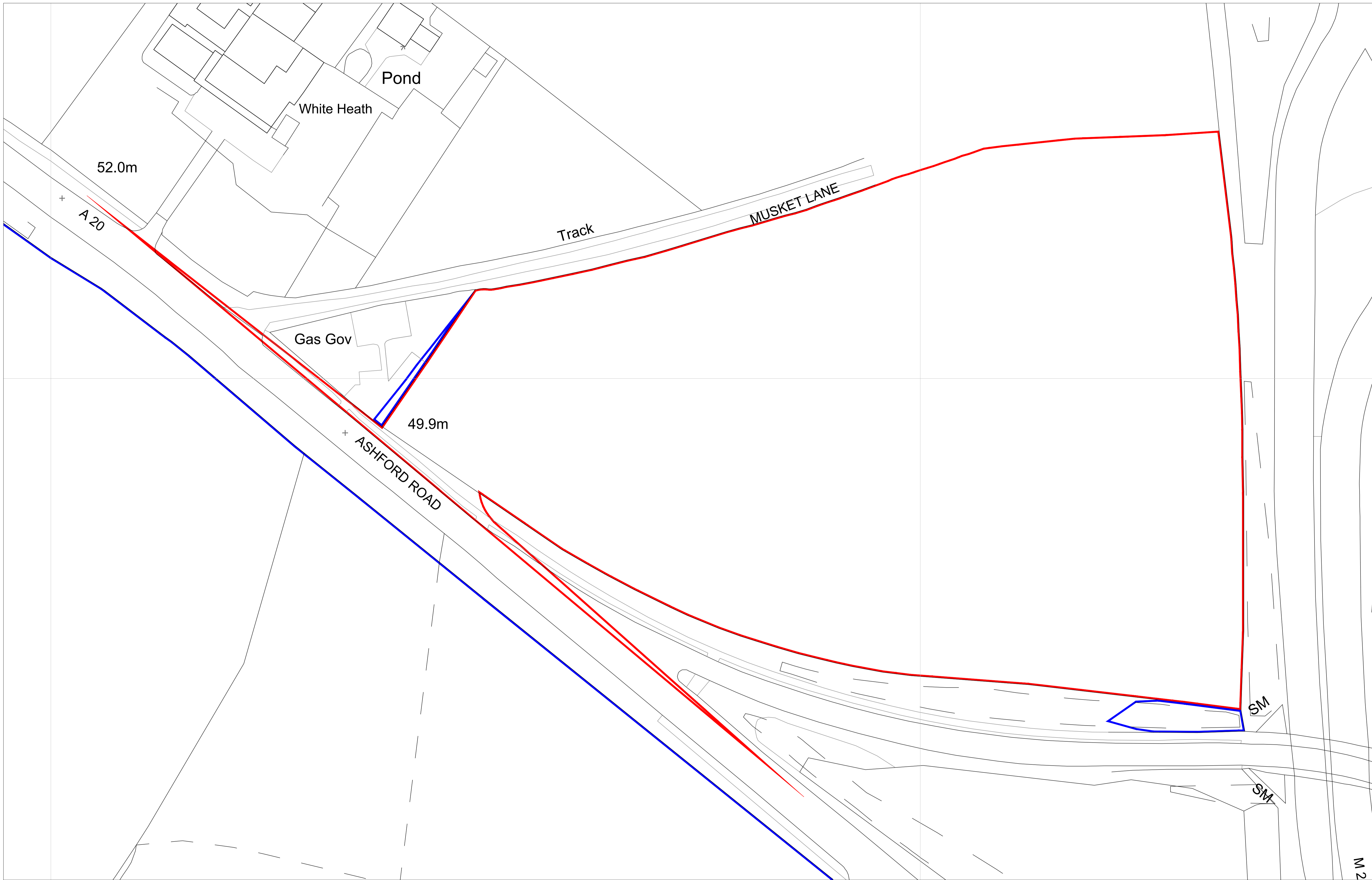
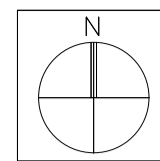


the legibility of the Kent Downs AONB escarpment would remain with the scheme in place. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the use of colour render could assist in making the building recessive in local views.

- 9.26. The approaches outlined above will mitigate against impacts upon views and will have the potential to create beneficial effects through the restoration and enhancement of the landscape structure of the area, in line with the recommendations of the published landscape character assessments and the prevailing planning policy.
- 9.27. In terms of planning policy, the proposal sits well beyond the Kent Downs AONB which lies to the north of the M20 motorway and Maidstone Services. The proposal also sits outwith and beyond the Len Valley Area of Local Landscape Value which lies to the south of the site and the A20. The site therefore does not fall within any statutory or non-statutory landscape protection designation. The special qualities that define the Kent Downs AONB would remain materially unaffected with the proposed scheme in place. The special components, characteristics and qualities of the Kent Downs AONB would also remain and prevail with the proposed development operational.
- 9.28. For the reasons set out above, the physical presence of the completed and operational development is unlikely to give rise to lasting significant adverse effects upon landscape or views. Over time it is anticipated that the maturing of the perimeter landscaping and structure planting will assist in assimilating the proposed development within the existing surrounding landscape setting and that overall landscape and visual effects would be reduced.
- 9.29. To conclude, despite the inevitable adverse effects of built development upon the local landscape character and on a limited number of visual receptors immediately adjacent or overlooking the site, it is considered that there would be no unacceptable adverse effects that should preclude the sensitively designed proposed development in landscape and visual terms.

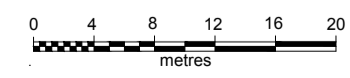


## Figure 1: Site Location Plan



Land off Ashford Road, Maidstone  
Location Plan

Scale 1:500 @ A1  
Jan 2023



 Application Boundary  Applicant wider ownership



## Figure 2: Landscape Masterplan



- KEY**
- Existing trees, hedgerows and vegetation to be retained - refer to tree survey
  - Proposed tree planting
  - Proposed structural planting
  - Proposed native hedgerow planting
  - Proposed scrub planting
  - Proposed native shrub planting
  - Proposed ornamental shrub/herbaceous planting with specimen shrub planting
  - Proposed amenity grass
  - Proposed long grass - e.g. Low Flowering Lawn Mix by wildflowerslawnandmeadow.com or similar approved by ecologist, planted at 3g/m2
  - Proposed bulb planting
  - Proposed green roof
  - Proposed climbers for screening along building facade
  - Potential solar arrays
  - Proposed permeable paving
  - Proposed bench / seat
  - Proposed picnic bench
  - Proposed EV charging points - refer to engineering plans by Ramboll
  - Proposed infrastructure for charging points - refer to engineering plans by Ramboll

**PROPOSED TREE PLANTING**

Species	Form	Girth	Height cm	Clear Stem	Root Condition
Acer campestre	EHS	16-18	400-450	Min. 200	RB
Carpinus betulus	EHS	14-16	350-450	Min. 200	RB
Corylus avellana (ms)	Multi Stem	-	250-300	-	75L
Fagus sylvatica	EHS	16-18	400-450	Min. 200	RB
Malus sylvestris	HS	12-14	250-300	Min. 200	RB
Prunus avium	HS	12-14	250-300	Min. 200	RB
Sorbus aria	EHS	14-16	400-450	Min. 200	RB
Tilia x europaea	HS	12-14	250-300	Min. 200	RB

**PROPOSED NATIVE SHRUB PLANTING MIX**  
To be planted 2/m<sup>2</sup>

Species	Mix %	Height	Form	Root Condition
Cornus sanguinea	20	60-80cm	Branched	B
Crataegus monogyna	50	60-80cm	Branched	B
Euonymus europaea	10	60-80cm	Branched	B
Rosa canina	10	60-80cm	Branched	B
Viburnum opulus	10	60-80cm	Branched	B

**PROPOSED NATIVE HEDGEROW PLANTING**  
To be planted at 7 per linear metre in triple staggered rows

Species	Mix %	Height cm	Root Condition	Habit
Crataegus monogyna	60	60-80	B	Feathered
Corylus avellana	20	60-80	B	Feathered
Prunus spinosa	20	60-80	B	Feathered

**SCRUB PLANTING**  
To be planted 1/m<sup>2</sup>

Species	Mix %	Height	Form	Root Condition
Cornus sanguinea	20	60-80cm	Branched	B
Crataegus monogyna	35	60-80cm	Branched	B
Euonymus europaea	10	60-80cm	Branched	B
Ligustrum vulgare	10	60-80	B	Feathered
Prunus spinosa	10	60-80cm	Branched	B
Sambucus nigra	10	60-80cm	Branched	B
Viburnum lantana	5	60-80cm	Branched	B

**BULB PLANTING**  
To be planted at 20/m<sup>2</sup>

Species	Specification
Crocus tommasinianus	5-6
Crocus 'Prins Claus'	5/+
Crocus speciosus 'Albus'	5
Narcissus 'Spring Dawn'	12/14

**PROPOSED ORNAMENTAL SHRUB/HERBACEOUS PLANTING**

Species	Height	Form	Root Condition
Bergenia cordifolia	-	-	3L
Ceanothus 'Blue Mound'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Ceanothus thyrsiflorus repens	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Cornus stolonifera 'Flaviramea'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Hebe 'Great Orme'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Hebe x franciscana 'Blue Gem'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Hebe 'Marjorie'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Hebe rakaiensis	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Hypericum 'hidcote'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Geranium macrorrhizum	-	-	3L
Liriope muscari	-	-	3L
Lonicera pileata 'Moss Green'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Pachysandra 'Green carpet'	-	-	3L
Prunus laurocerasus 'Otto Lucan'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Philadelphus 'Manteau d'Hermine'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Pittosporum tenuifolium 'Golden ball'	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Pittosporum golf ball	40-60cm	Bushy	5L
Potentilla fruticosa 'Pink Beauty'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Sedum spectabile brilliant	-	-	3L
Salvia nemorosa 'Amethyst'	-	-	3L
Salvia icterina	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Symphoricarpos x chenaultii 'Hancock'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Skimmia 'Kew green'	30-40cm	Bushy	5L
Verbena bonariensis	-	-	3L

**PROPOSED SPECIMEN SHRUB PLANTING**

Species	Height cm	Form	Root Condition
Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'	800-100	Branched	10L
Cornus stolonifera 'Flaviramea'	800-100	Branched	10L
Corylus avellana	125-150	Bushy 5 stems min	45-65L
Ilex aquifolium	800-100	Leader with laterals	10L

**CLIMBER PLANTING**  
To be planted at 2 per lin m along frame

Species	Height	Form	Root Condition
Hedera hibernica	150-200	Caned - Several shoots	10L
Parthenocissus henryana	100-150	Caned - Several shoots	10L

**STRUCTURAL PLANTING MIX**

Trees to be planted at 3m centres over understorey planting with breaks for specimen tree planting - refer to proposed tree planting - schedule

Species	Mix %	Height cm	Girth cm	Form	Root Condition
Acer campestre	10	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB
Fagus sylvatica	10	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB
Malus sylvestris	5	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB
Pinus sylvestris	5	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB
Prunus avium	15	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB
Tilia x europaea	5	300-350	10-12	Selected standard	RB

**Understorey To be planted 2/m<sup>2</sup>**

Species	Mix %	Height cm	Habit	Age + times	Root condition
Cornus sanguinea	5	60-80	Branched min. 3 breaks	1+2	B
Crataegus monogyna	25	60-80	Branched min. 3 breaks	1+2	B
Euonymus europaea	5	60-80	Branched min. 3 breaks	1+2	B
Ilex aquifolium	10	60-80	Branched min. 3 breaks	1+2	B
Sambucus nigra	5	60-80	Branched min. 3 breaks	1+2	B

Revisions:  
 First Issue: 12/12/2022 RVF  
 A - 11/7/2023 (LAB) Tree survey and substation location updated  
 B - 20/01/2023 (LAB) Permeable paving added  
 C - 13/01/2023 (LAB) Proposal updated to updated red line and proposed tree planting amended to south  
 D - 13/01/2023 (LAB) Potential solar arrays added to building  
 E - 01/02/2023 (LAB) Roof layout updated

**Illustrative Landscape Masterplan**  
**Ashford Road, Maidstone**

Client: Wates Developments  
 DRWG No: P21-3546\_06 Sheet No: REV: E  
 Drawn by: RVF/LAB Approved by: RVF/JE

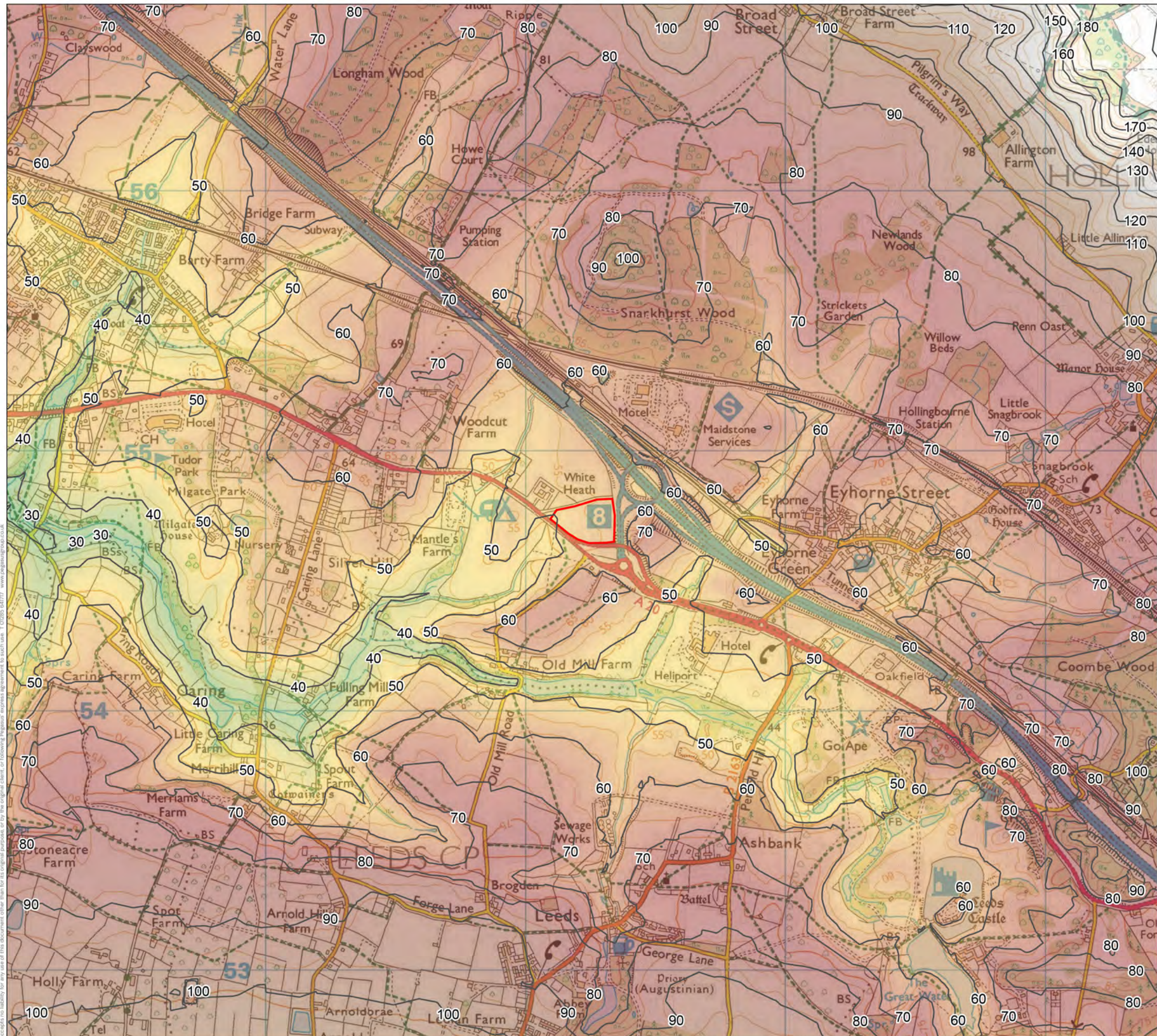
Date: 01/02/2023  
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## Figure 3: Topography Plan



**KEY**

- Site Boundary
- OS Terrain 5 (m)
- 100
- 30
- 10m Contour

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue 30/01/2023 SC

**Topography Plan**

Land at Ashford Rd, Maidstone

CLIENT  
 Wates Developments Ltd

0 ↑ 0.6 km

DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPROVED
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SHEET	REVISION
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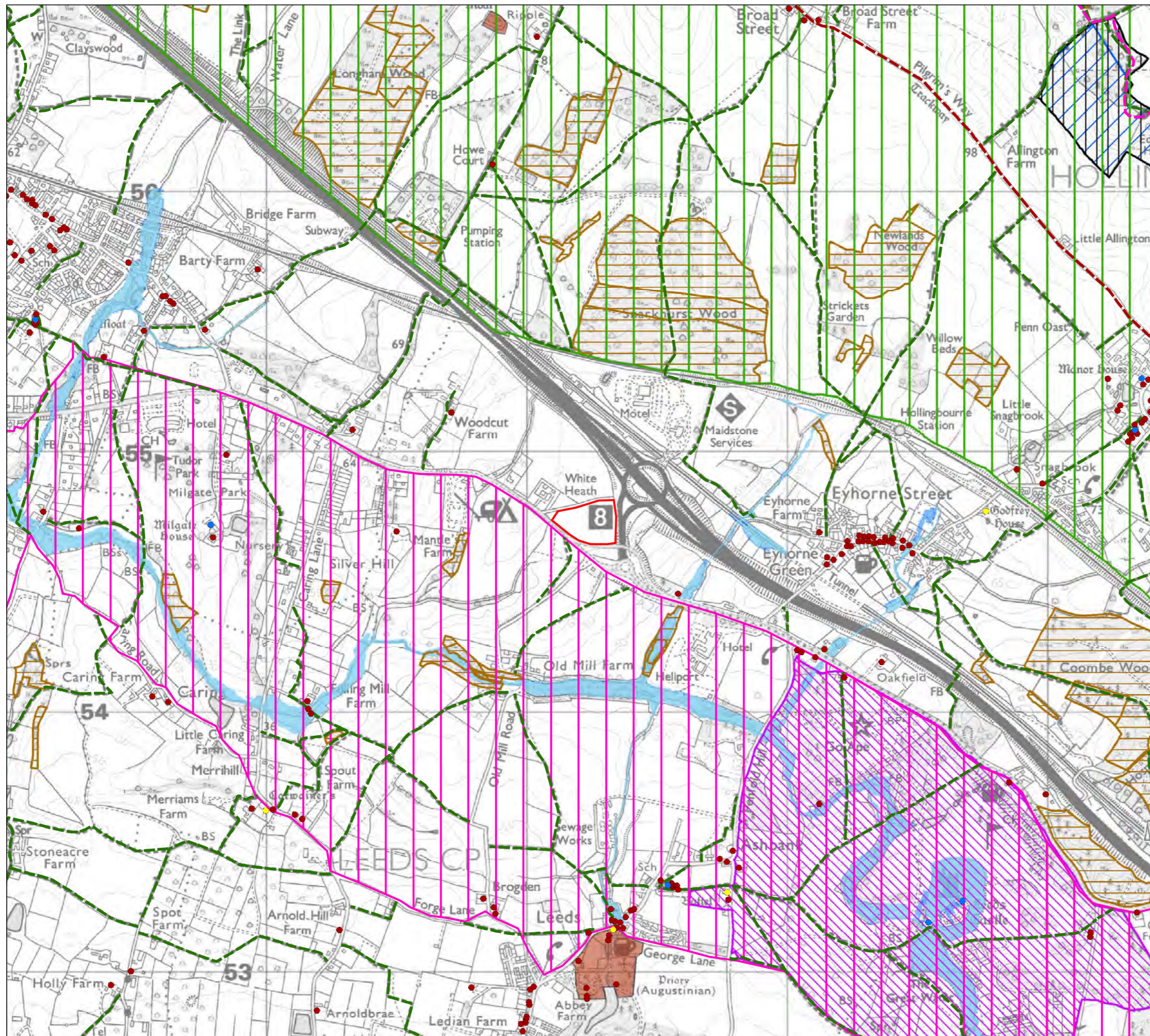
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## Figure 4: Environmental Designations Plan



**KEY**

- Site Boundary
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- National Trail
- Sustrans National Route
- Public Right of Way
- Landscapes of Local Value - Policy SP17
- Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Open Access Land / Registered Common Land
- Registered Park / Garden
- Scheduled Monument
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Ancient Woodland
- EA Flood Zone 3
- EA Flood Zone 2

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue 24/11/2021 AD

**Environmental Designations Plan**

Land at Ashford Rd, Maidstone

CLIENT  
 Wates Developments Ltd 0 0.6 km

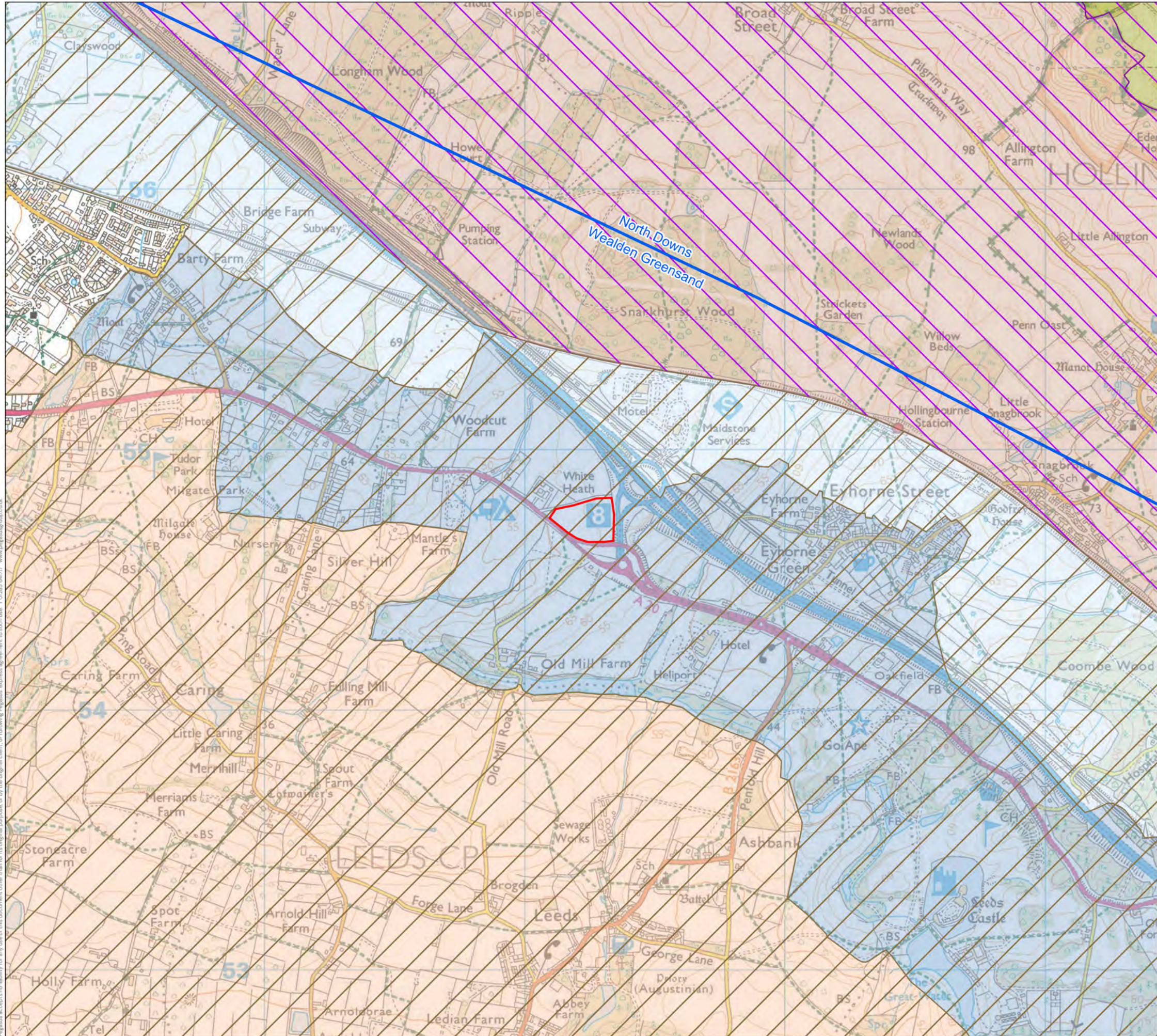
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DRAWING NUMBER  
 P21-3546\_01



## Figure 5: Landscape Character Plan



- KEY**
- Site Boundary
  - National Landscape Character Area
  - Kent Character Area – Regional (2004)**
  - Greensand Belt
  - Kent Downs
  - Kent Character Area – Local (2004)**
  - Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs
  - Greensand Fruit Belt – Maidstone
  - Hollingbourne Vale
  - Hollingbourne Vale West
  - Leeds-Lenham Farmlands

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue 30/01/2023 SC

**Landscape Character Plan**

Land at Ashford Rd, Maidstone

CLIENT  
 Wates Developments Ltd

0  0.6 km

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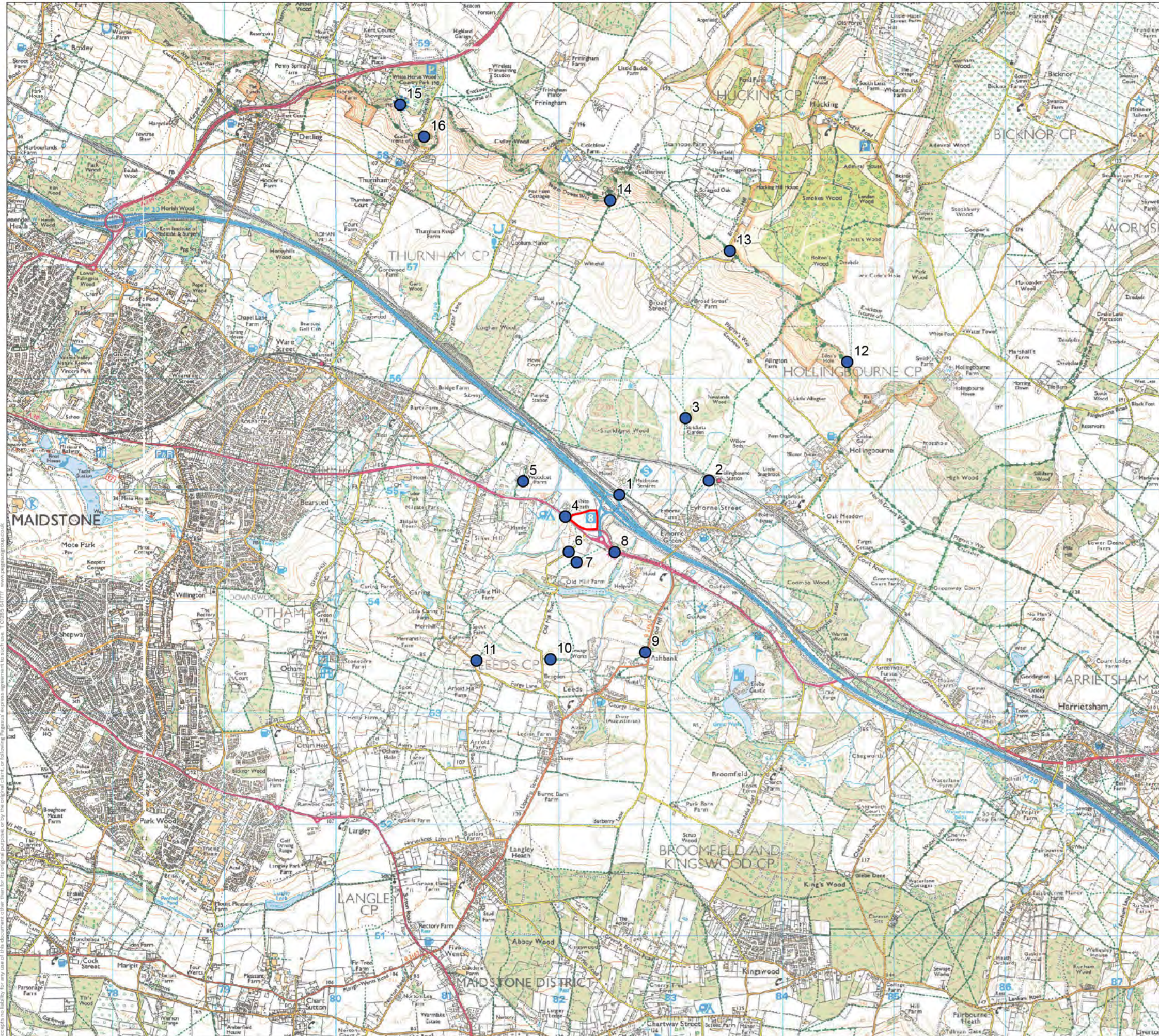
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## Figure 6: Viewpoint Location Plan



**KEY**

- Site Boundary
- Viewpoint Location

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: First Issue 07/11/2022 SC

**Viewpoint Location Plan**

Land at Ashford Rd, Maidstone

CLIENT  
 Wates Developments Ltd 0 1.5 km

DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPROVED
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 P21-3546\_04

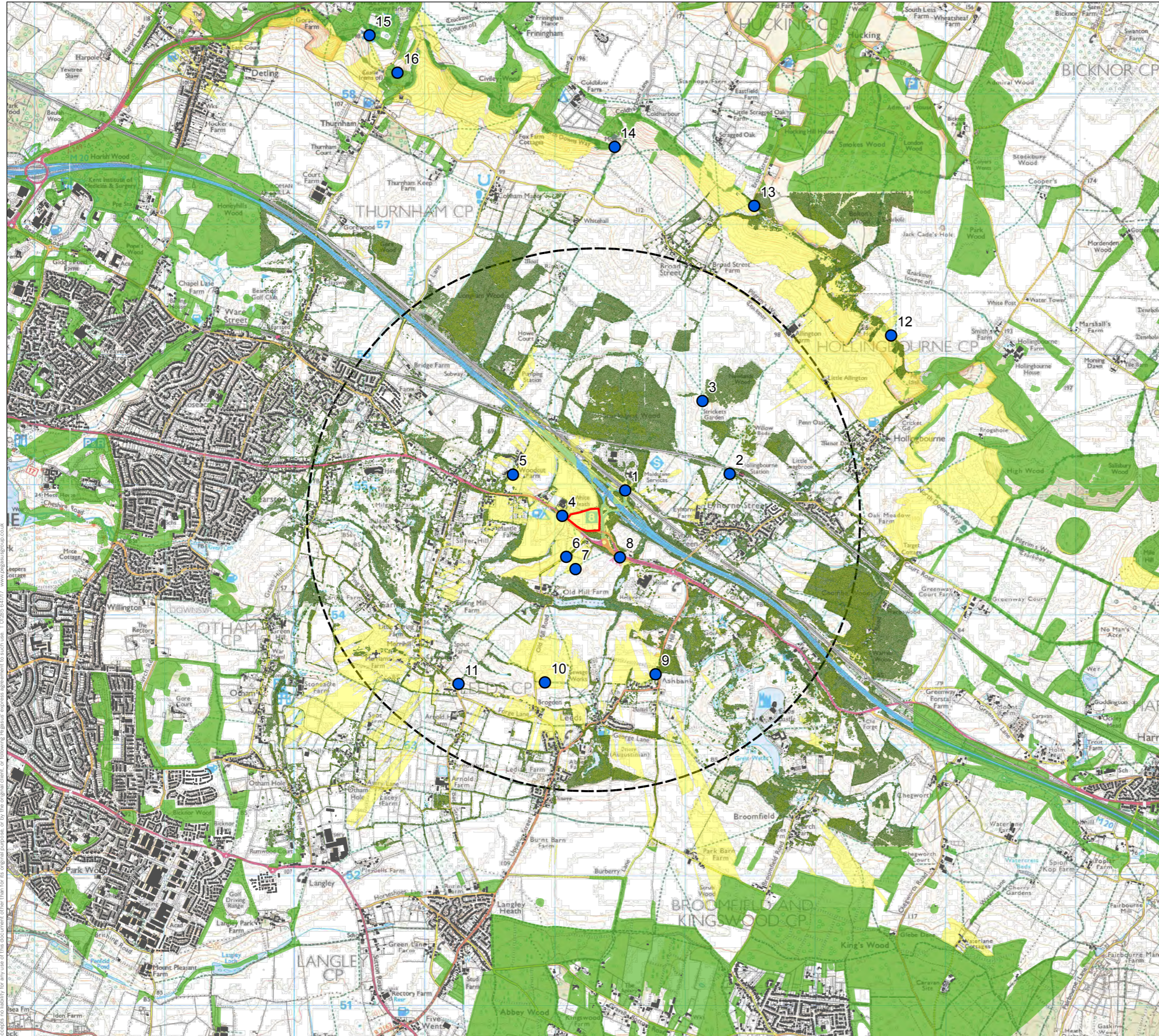


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## Figure 7: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) Plan



**KEY**

- Site Boundary
- 2km Buffer
- OS Local Woodland
- OS Local Buildings
- National Tree Map (NTM) Canopies (Vegetation above 3m) Dated 2020
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (15m Development Height)
- Viewpoint Location

Screened ZTV Production Information-  
 The ZTV has been produced using multiple datasets to create a DSM (Digital Surface Model). These have been combined together accurately using ESRI GIS software. The following datasets have been used to create the DSM-

- 2020 DEFRA LIDAR 1m resolution DTM has been used as the ground layer.
- Bluesky's National Tree Map (NTM) This is a detailed dataset covering England and Wales. It provides a comprehensive database of location, height and canopy spread for vegetation 3m and above in height. This is created from stereo aerial photography. Heights used within the model are the MEAN heights supplied with the dataset.
- OS Open Map Local Buildings. Indicative building heights are modelled at 8m
- Viewer height set at 1.7m (in accordance with para 6.11 of GLVIA Third Edition)
- Calculations include earth curvature and light refraction

N.B. This Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where the development may be visible from, assuming 100% atmospheric visibility, and includes the screening effect from vegetation and buildings, based on the assumptions stated above.

NOTES:  
 REVISIONS: A - (09/12/2021 AD) Re -run  
 B - (14/01/2022 AD) Re -run to 15m  
 C - (16/01/2023 CS) ZTV rerun

**Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility**

Land at Ashford Rd, Maidstone

CLIENT  
 Wates Developments Ltd ↑ 0 1 km

DATE	SCALE	TEAM	APPROVED
10/02/2023	1:30,000@A3	CS	JE

SHEET	REVISION
-	C

DRAWING NUMBER  
 P21-3546\_02



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# Appendix 1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

## 1. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken with regards to best practice, as outlined within the following publications:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition, 2013) - Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals (2019) - Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19;
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) - Natural England;
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment - To Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management (2019) - Natural England.

1.2 GLVIA3 states within paragraph 1.1 that *“Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.”*<sup>1</sup>

1.3 GLVIA3 also states within paragraph 1.17 that when identifying landscape and visual effects there is a *“need for an approach that is in proportion to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of the likely effects. Judgement needs to be exercised at all stages in terms of the scale of investigation that is appropriate and proportional.”*<sup>2</sup>

1.4 GLVIA3 recognises within paragraph 2.23 that *“professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. While there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgements”*<sup>3</sup> undertaken by a landscape consultant or a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).

1.5 GLVIA3 notes in paragraph 1.3 that *“LVIA may be carried out either formally, as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), or informally, as a contribution to the ‘appraisal’ of development proposals and planning applications.”*<sup>4</sup> Although the proposed development is not subject to an EIA requiring an assessment of the likely significance of effects, this assessment is also titled as an LVIA rather than an ‘appraisal’ in the interests of common understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> Para 1.1, Page 4, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>2</sup> Para 1.17, Page 9, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>3</sup> Para 2.23, Page 21, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

<sup>4</sup> Para 1.3, Page 4, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

1.6 The effects on cultural heritage and ecology are not considered within this LVIA.

Study Area

1.7 A preliminary 3-5km radii study area has been initially identified to review the baseline condition and planning policies that may be relevant to the proposed development. This study area captures the nearby settlements and public vantage points that may offer views of or towards the site.

Effects Assessed

1.8 Landscape and visual effects are assessed through professional judgements on the sensitivity of landscape elements, landscape character, visual receptors and representative viewpoints combined with the predicted magnitude of change arising from the proposals. The landscape and visual effects have been assessed in the following sections:

- Effects on landscape elements;
- Effects on landscape character; and
- Effects on visual amenity.

1.9 Sensitivity is defined in GLVIA3 as *“a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgments of susceptibility of the receptor to a specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”*<sup>5</sup> Various factors in relation to the value and susceptibility of landscape elements, landscape character, visual receptors or representative viewpoints are considered below and cross referenced to determine the overall sensitivity as shown in Table 1:

Table 1, Overall sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors				
	VALUE			
SUSCEPTIBILITY		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	High	High	Medium
	MEDIUM	High	Medium	Medium
	LOW	Medium	Medium	Low

1.10 Magnitude of change is defined in GLVIA3 as *“a term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent over which it occurs, whether it is*

<sup>5</sup> Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration.”<sup>6</sup> Various factors contribute to the magnitude of change on landscape elements, landscape character, visual receptors and representative viewpoints.

1.11 The sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptor and the magnitude of change arising from the proposals are cross referenced in Table 9 to determine the overall degree of landscape and visual effects.

2. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

2.1 The effects on landscape elements are limited to within the site and includes the direct physical change to the fabric of the land, such as the removal of woodland, hedgerows or grassland to allow for the proposals.

Sensitivity of Landscape Elements

2.2 Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape element and the susceptibility of the landscape element to changes that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.

2.3 The criteria for assessing the value of landscape elements and landscape character is shown in Table 2:

Table 2, Criteria for assessing the value of landscape elements and landscape character	
HIGH	<p>Designated landscape including but not limited to World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty considered to be an important component of the country's character experienced by a high number of people.</p> <p>Landscape condition is good and components are generally maintained to a high standard.</p> <p>In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and presence/absence of major infrastructure, the landscape has an elevated level of tranquillity.</p> <p>Rare or distinctive landscape elements and features are key components that contribute to the landscape character of the area.</p>
MEDIUM	<p>Undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside considered to be a distinctive component of the national or local landscape character.</p>

<sup>6</sup> Glossary, Page 158, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

	<p>Landscape condition is fair and components are generally well maintained.</p> <p>In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and presence/absence of major infrastructure, the landscape has a moderate level of tranquillity.</p> <p>Rare or distinctive landscape elements and features are notable components that contribute to the character of the area.</p>
LOW	<p>Undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside considered to be of unremarkable character. Landscape condition may be poor and components poorly maintained or damaged.</p> <p>In terms of seclusion, enclosure by land use, traffic and movement, light pollution and presence/absence of major infrastructure, the landscape has limited levels of tranquillity.</p> <p>Rare or distinctive elements and features are not notable components that contribute to the landscape character of the area.</p>

2.4 The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of landscape elements and landscape character is shown in Table 3:

Table 3, Criteria for assessing landscape susceptibility	
HIGH	<p>Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a low capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc.</p> <p>Nature of land use – landscapes with no or little existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed.</p> <p>Nature of existing elements – landscapes with components that are not easily replaced or substituted (e.g. ancient woodland, mature trees, historic parkland, etc).</p> <p>Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features, major infrastructure or industry is not present or where present has a limited influence on landscape character.</p>
MEDIUM	<p>Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a medium capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc.</p> <p>Nature of land use – landscapes with some existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed.</p> <p>Nature of existing elements – landscapes with components that are easily replaced or substituted.</p> <p>Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features, major infrastructure or industry is present and has a noticeable influence on landscape character.</p>

LOW	<p>Scale of enclosure – landscapes with a high capacity to accommodate the type of development being proposed owing to the interactions of topography, vegetation cover, built form, etc.</p> <p>Nature of land use – landscapes with extensive existing reference or context to the type of development being proposed.</p> <p>Nature of existing features – landscapes where detracting features or major infrastructure is present and has a dominating influence on the landscape.</p>
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2.5 Various factors in relation to the value and susceptibility of landscape elements are assessed and cross referenced to determine the overall sensitivity as shown in Table 1.

Magnitude of Change on Landscape Elements

2.6 Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of change on individual landscape elements within the site as shown in Table 4:

Table 4, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change for landscape elements	
HIGH	Total loss/gain of a landscape element.
MEDIUM	Partial loss/gain or alteration to part of a landscape element.
LOW	Minor loss/gain or alteration to part of a landscape element.
NEGLECTIBLE	No loss/gain or very limited alteration to part of a landscape element.

3. EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1 Landscape character is defined as the *“distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.”*<sup>7</sup>

3.2 The assessment of effects on landscape character considers how the introduction of new landscape elements physically alters the landform, landcover, landscape pattern and perceptual attributes of the site or how visibility of the proposals changes the way in which the landscape character is perceived.

<sup>7</sup> Glossary, Page 157, GLVIA, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition



### Sensitivity of Landscape Character

- 3.3 Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a landscape and the susceptibility of the landscape to changes that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 88-90 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.
- 3.4 The criteria for assessing the value of landscape character is shown in Table 2.
- 3.5 The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of landscape character is shown in Table 3.
- 3.6 The overall sensitivity is determined through cross referencing the value and susceptibility of landscape character as shown in Table 1.

### Magnitude of Change on Landscape Character

- 3.7 Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude of change on landscape character as shown in Table 5:

Table 5, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change on landscape character	
HIGH	Introduction of major new elements into the landscape or some major change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
MEDIUM	Introduction of some notable new elements into the landscape or some notable change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
LOW	Introduction of minor new elements into the landscape or some minor change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.
NEGLECTIBLE	No notable or appreciable introduction of new elements into the landscape or change to the scale, landform, landcover or pattern of the landscape.

#### 4. EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

4.1 Visual amenity is defined within GLVIA3 as the “overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.”<sup>8</sup>

4.2 The effects on visual amenity considers the changes in views arising from the proposals in relation to visual receptors including settlements, residential properties, transport routes, recreational facilities and attractions; and representative viewpoints or specific locations within the study area as agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

##### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

4.3 Sensitivity is determined by a combination of the value that is attached to a view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to changes in that view that would arise as a result of the proposals – see pages 113-114 of GLVIA3. Both value and susceptibility are assessed on a scale of high, medium or low.

4.4 The criteria for assessing the value of views is shown in Table 6:

Table 6, Criteria for assessing the value of views	
HIGH	Views with high scenic value within designated landscapes including but not limited to World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, etc. Likely to include key viewpoints on OS maps or reference within guidebooks, provision of facilities, presence of interpretation boards, etc.
MEDIUM	Views with moderate scenic value within undesignated landscape including urban fringe and rural countryside.
LOW	Views with unremarkable scenic value within undesignated landscape with partly degraded visual quality and detractors.

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<sup>8</sup> Page 158, Glossary, GLVIA3

4.5 The criteria for assessing the susceptibility of views is shown in Table 7:

Table 7, Criteria for assessing visual susceptibility	
HIGH	Includes occupiers of residential properties and people engaged in recreational activities in the countryside using public rights of way (PROW).
MEDIUM	Includes people engaged in outdoor sporting activities and people travelling through the landscape on minor roads and trains.
LOW	Includes people at places of work e.g. industrial and commercial premises and people travelling through the landscape on major roads and motorways.

Magnitude of Change on Visual Receptors

4.6 Professional judgement has been used to determine the magnitude change on visual receptors as shown in Table 8:

Table 8, Criteria for assessing magnitude of change for visual receptors	
HIGH	Major change in the view that has a defining influence on the overall view with many visual receptors affected.
MEDIUM	Some change in the view that is clearly visible and forms an important but not defining element in the view.
LOW	Some change in the view that is appreciable with few visual receptors affected.
NEGLECTIBLE	No notable change in the view.

5. DEGREE OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

5.1 The degree of effects are professional judgements based upon all the factors in terms of landscape and visual sensitivity and the magnitude of change arising from the proposals. The cross referencing of landscape and visual sensitivity and the magnitude of change determines the overall degree of effects as shown in Table 9:

Table 9, Degree of landscape and visual effects				
		Sensitivity		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Magnitude of Change	HIGH	Major	Major	Moderate
	MEDIUM	Major	Moderate	Minor
	LOW	Moderate	Minor	Minor
	NEGLECTIBLE	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

6. TYPICAL DESCRIPTORS OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

6.1 The typical descriptors of the landscape effects are detailed within Table 10:

Table 10, Typical Descriptors of Landscape Significance of Effects	
MAJOR BENEFICIAL	<p>The landscape resource has a high sensitivity with the proposals representing a high beneficial magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhance the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- enhance the restoration of characteristic features and elements lost as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development;</li> <li>- enable a sense of place to be enhanced.</li> </ul>
MODERATE BENEFICIAL	<p>The landscape resource has a medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium beneficial magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhance the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- enable the restoration of characteristic features and elements partially lost or diminished as a result of changes from inappropriate management or development;</li> <li>- enable a sense of place to be restored.</li> </ul>

MINOR BENEFICIAL	<p>The landscape resource has a low sensitivity with the proposals representing a low beneficial magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- complement the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- maintain or enhance characteristic features or elements;</li> <li>- enable some sense of place to be restored.</li> </ul>
NEGLECTIBLE	<p>The proposed changes would (on balance) maintain the character (including value) of the landscape and would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be in keeping with landscape character and blend in with characteristic features and elements;</li> <li>- Enable a sense of place to be maintained.</li> </ul>
NO CHANGE / NEUTRAL	<p>The proposed changes would not be visible and there would be no discernible change to landscape character.</p>
MINOR ADVERSE	<p>The landscape resource has a low sensitivity with the proposal representing a low adverse magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- not quite fit the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- be a variance with characteristic features and elements;</li> <li>- detract from sense of place.</li> </ul>
MODERATE ADVERSE	<p>The landscape resource has a medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium adverse magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conflict with the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- have an adverse effect on characteristic features or elements;</li> <li>- diminish a sense of place.</li> </ul>
MAJOR ADVERSE	<p>The landscape resource has a high sensitivity with the proposals representing a high adverse magnitude of change and/or the proposed changes would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be at variance with the character (including value) of the landscape;</li> <li>- degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements or cause them to be lost;</li> <li>- change a sense of place.</li> </ul>

7. TYPICAL DESCRIPTORS OF VISUAL EFFECTS

7.1 The typical descriptors of the visual effects are detailed within Table 11:

Table 11, Typical Descriptors of Visual Significance of Effects	
MAJOR BENEFICIAL	The visual receptor is of high sensitivity with the proposals representing a high magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a major improvement in the view.
MODERATE BENEFICIAL	The visual receptor is of medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a clear improvement in the view.
MINOR BENEFICIAL	The visual receptor is of low sensitivity with the proposals representing a low magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a slight improvement in the view.
NEGLECTIBLE	The proposed changes would be in keeping with, and would maintain, the existing view or where (on balance) the proposed changes would maintain the quality of the view (which may include adverse effects which are offset by beneficial effects for the same receptor) or due to distance from the receptor, the proposed change would be barely perceptible to the naked eye.
NO CHANGE/ NEUTRAL	The proposed changes would not be visible and there would be no change to the view.
MINOR ADVERSE	The visual receptor is of low sensitivity with the proposals representing a low magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a slight deterioration in the view.
MODERATE ADVERSE	The visual receptor is of medium sensitivity with the proposals representing a medium magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a clear deterioration in the view.
MAJOR ADVERSE	The visual receptor is of high sensitivity with the proposals representing a high magnitude of change and/or the proposals would result in a major deterioration in the view.

8. NATURE OF EFFECTS

- 8.1 GLVIA3 includes an entry that states *“effects can be described as positive or negative (or in some cases neutral) in their consequences for views and visual amenity.”*<sup>9</sup> GLVIA3 does not, however, state how negative or positive effects should be assessed, and this therefore becomes a matter of professional judgement supported by site specific justification within the LVIA.

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<sup>9</sup> Para 6.29, Page 113, GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition



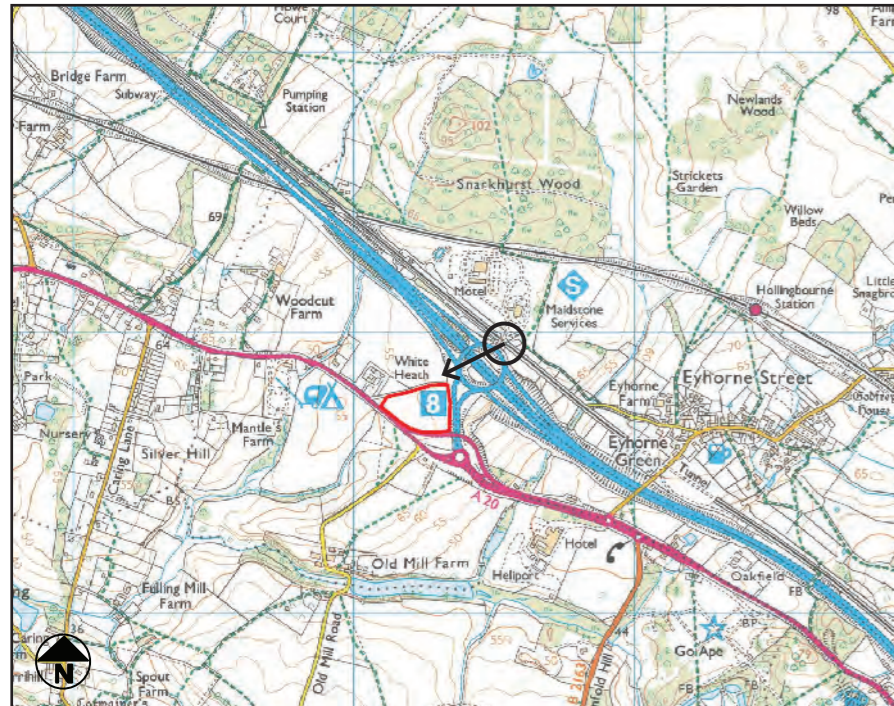
## Appendix 2: Representative Baseline Viewpoints





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 1

South west from Maidstone services / M20 Junction 8 roundabout



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 56m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 10:18	Distance from site	- 250m
OS grid reference	- 582539, 154956		





Approximate site location - screened  
by intervening vegetation

## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 2

South west from Public footpath KH184 - south west of Hollingbourne station



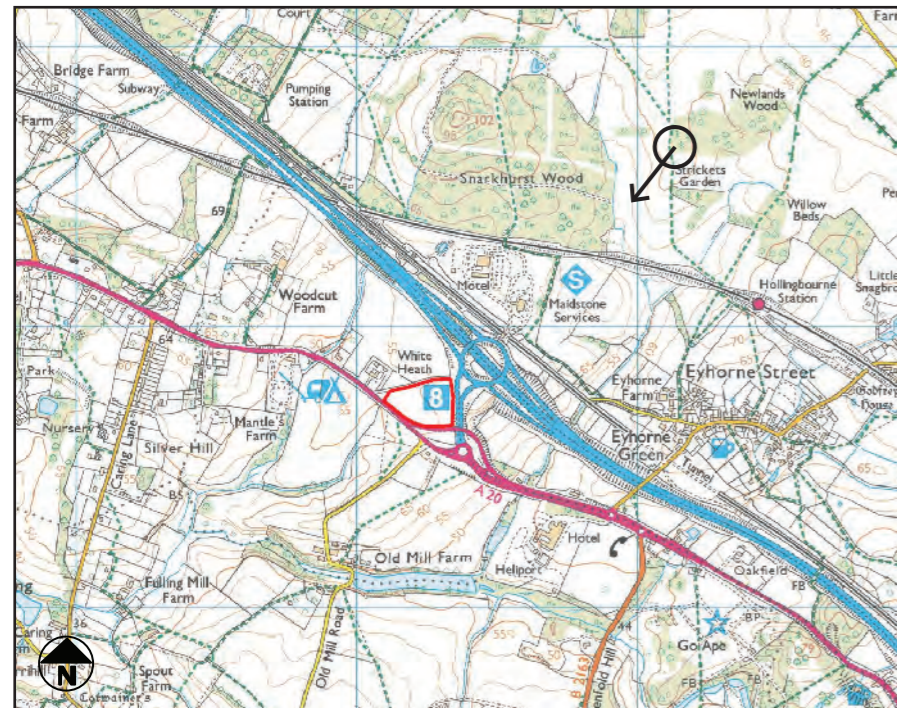
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 71m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 10:40	Distance from site	- 1040m
OS grid reference	- 583341, 155084		





### CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 3

South west from Public Footpath KH154 - north of Strickets Garden

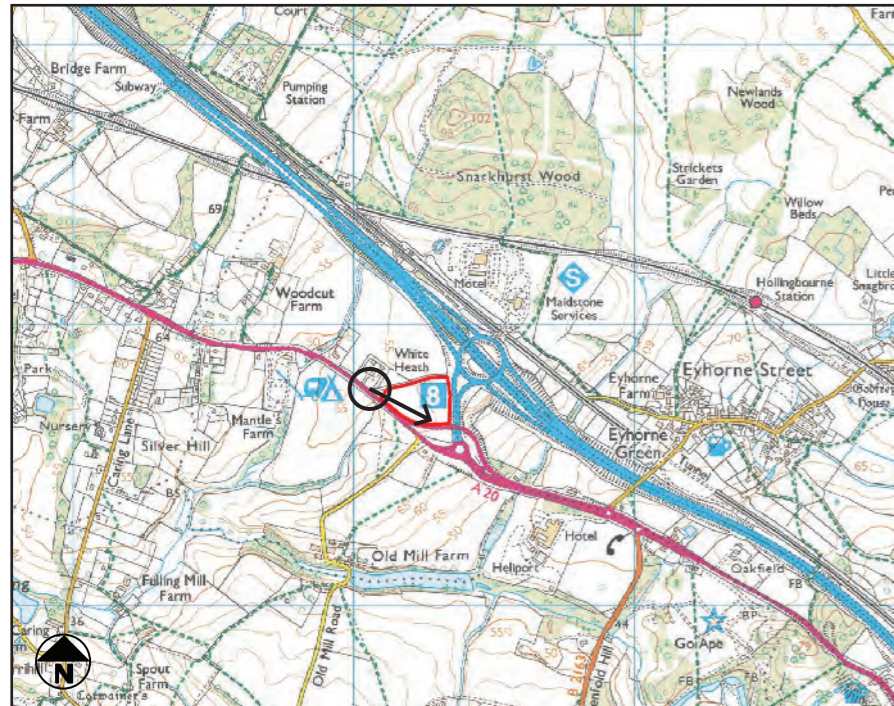


Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 78m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 10:56	Distance from site	- 1150m
OS grid reference	- 583133, 155643		





**CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 4**  
 East from Ashford Road (A20)



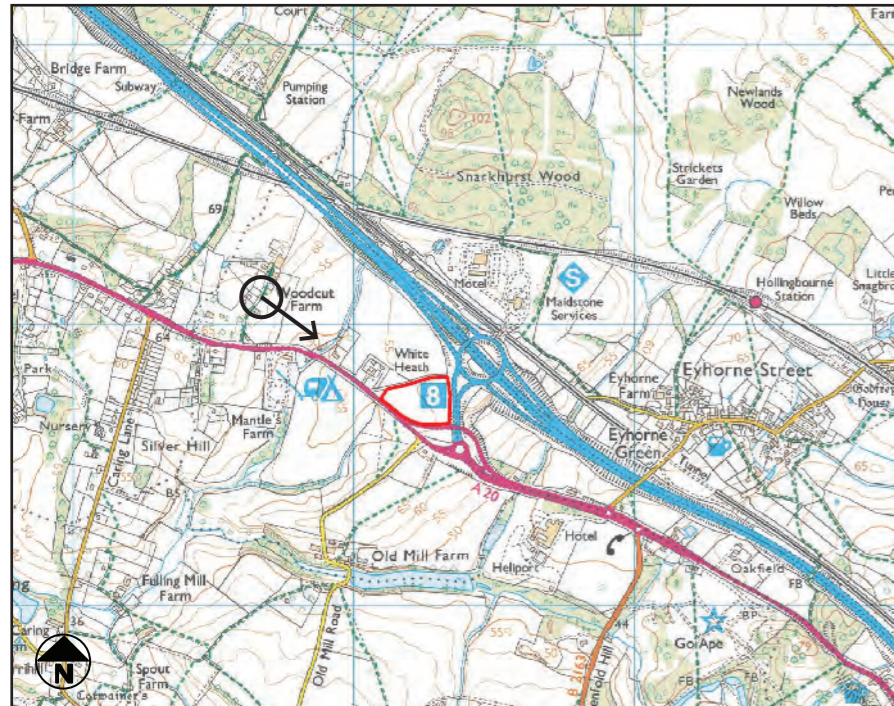
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 51m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 11:38	Distance from site	- 45m
OS grid reference	- 582055, 154761		





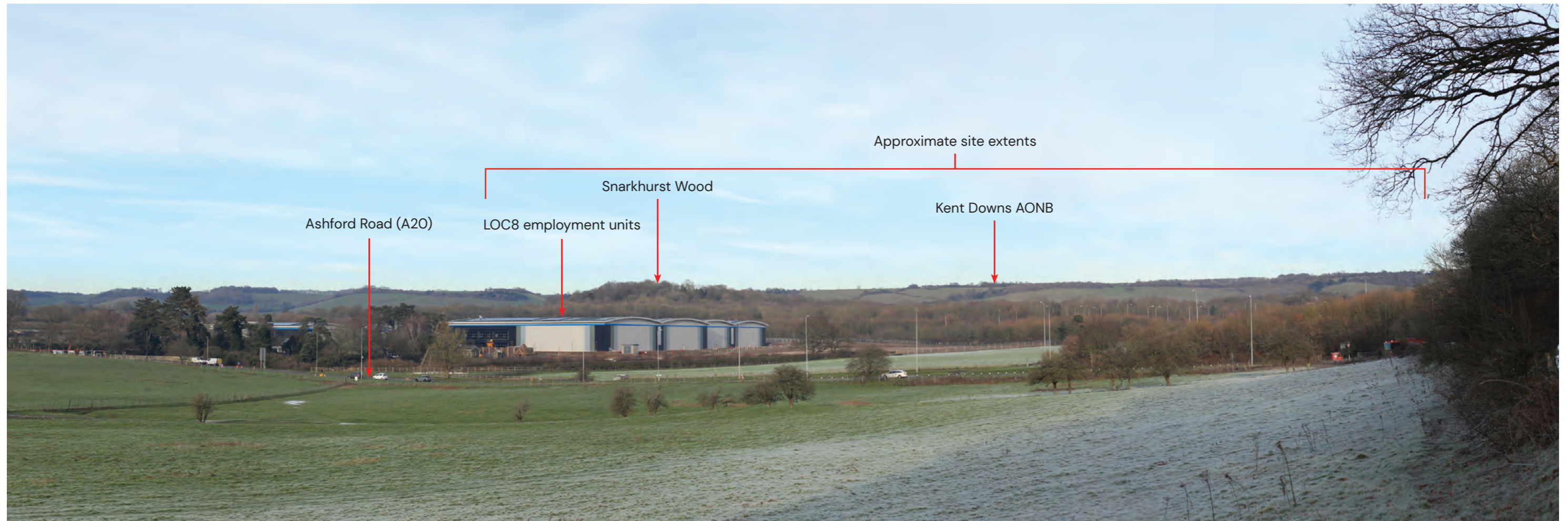
## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 5

South east from Restricted Byway KH641/Woodcut Farm



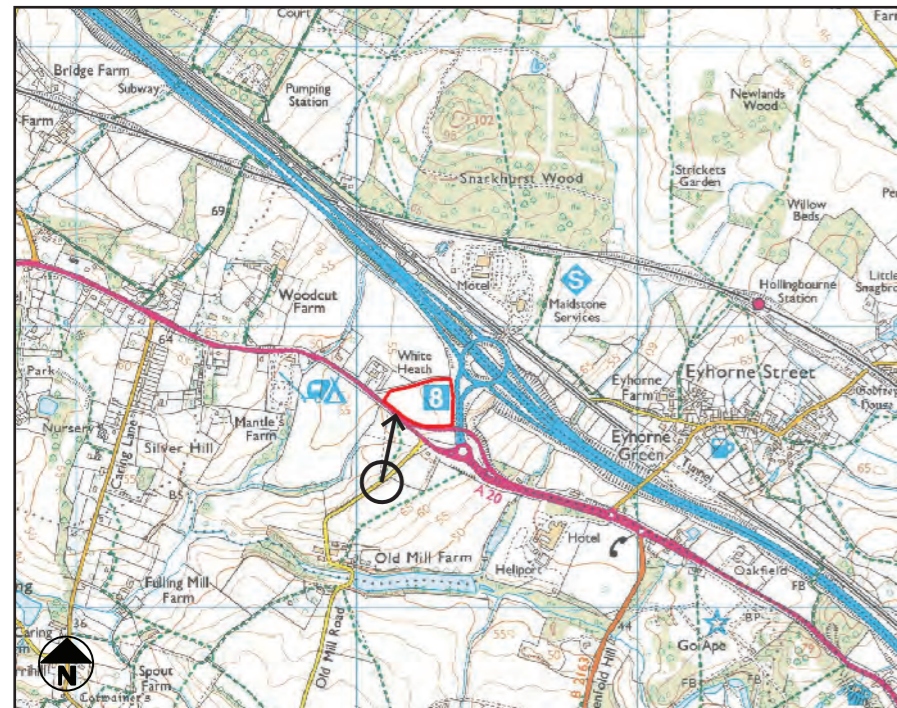
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 64m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 11:48	Distance from site	- 540m
OS grid reference	- 581677, 155077		





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 6

North from Public Footpath KH180 – off Old Mill Road



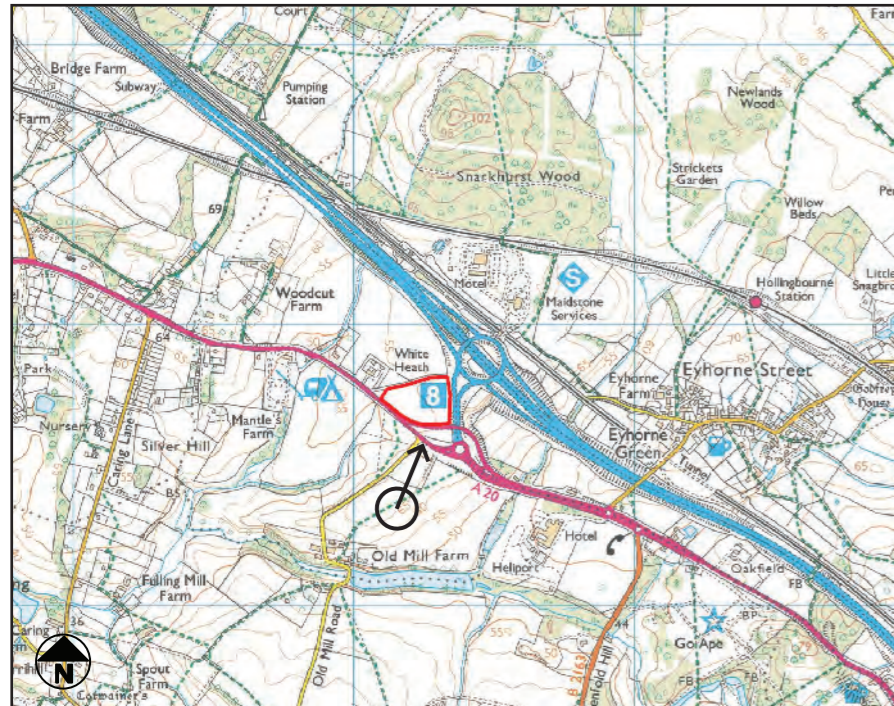
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 5D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 59m
Date & time of photograph	- 17/01/2023 @ 15:42	Distance from site	- 245m
OS grid reference	- 582086, 154446		





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 7

North east from Public Footpath KH189 - north east of Old Mill Farm



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 64m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 12:15	Distance from site	- 305m
OS grid reference	- 582157, 154352		





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 8

North west from A20



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 51m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 12:28	Distance from site	- 260m
OS grid reference	- 582498, 154442		

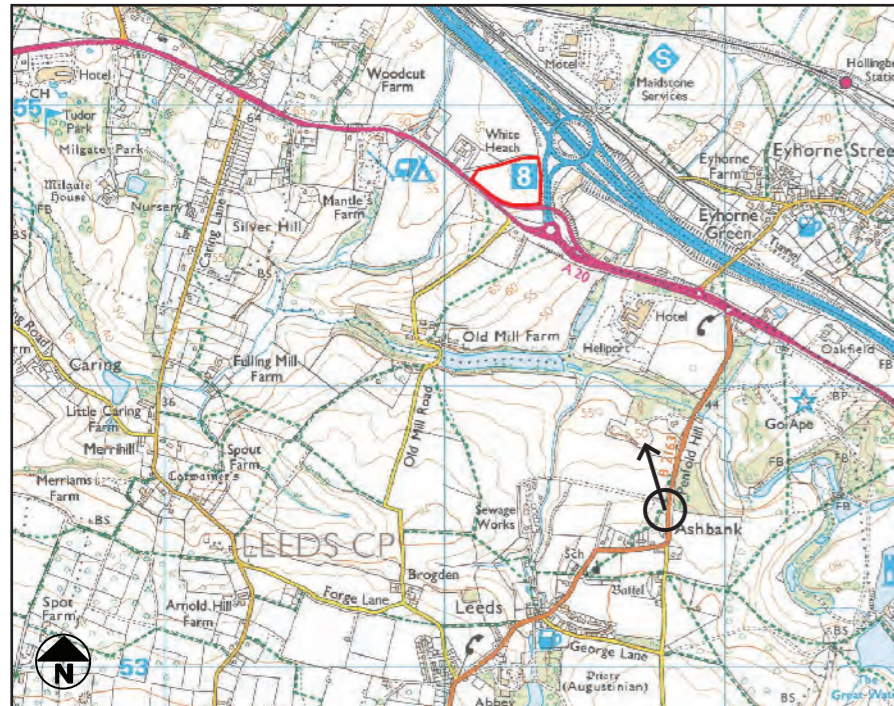






## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 9

North west from Public Footpath KH249 – Ash bank



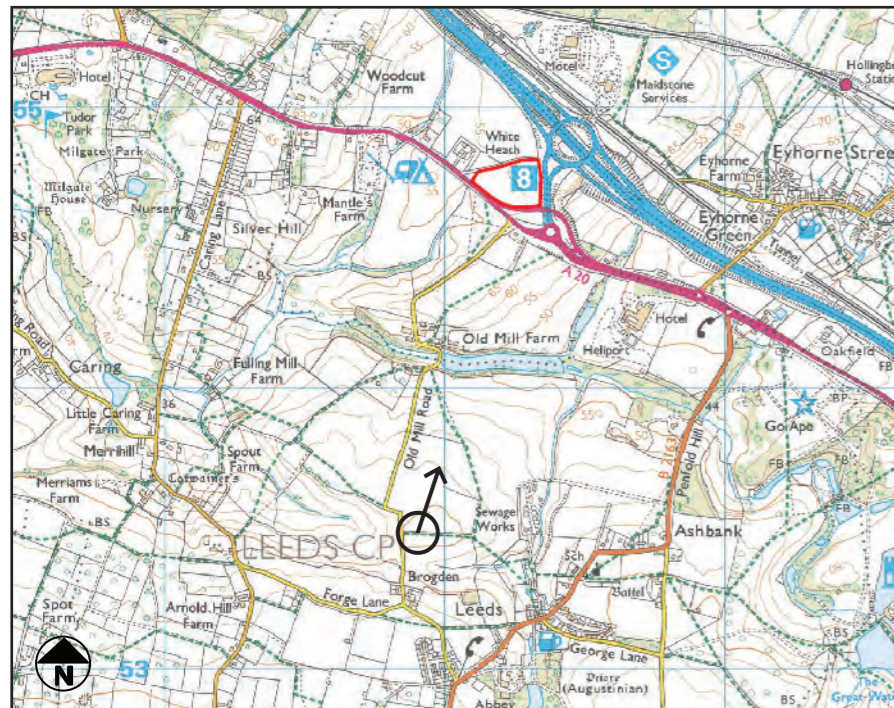
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 68m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 13:04	Distance from site	- 1190m
OS grid reference	- 582772, 153544		





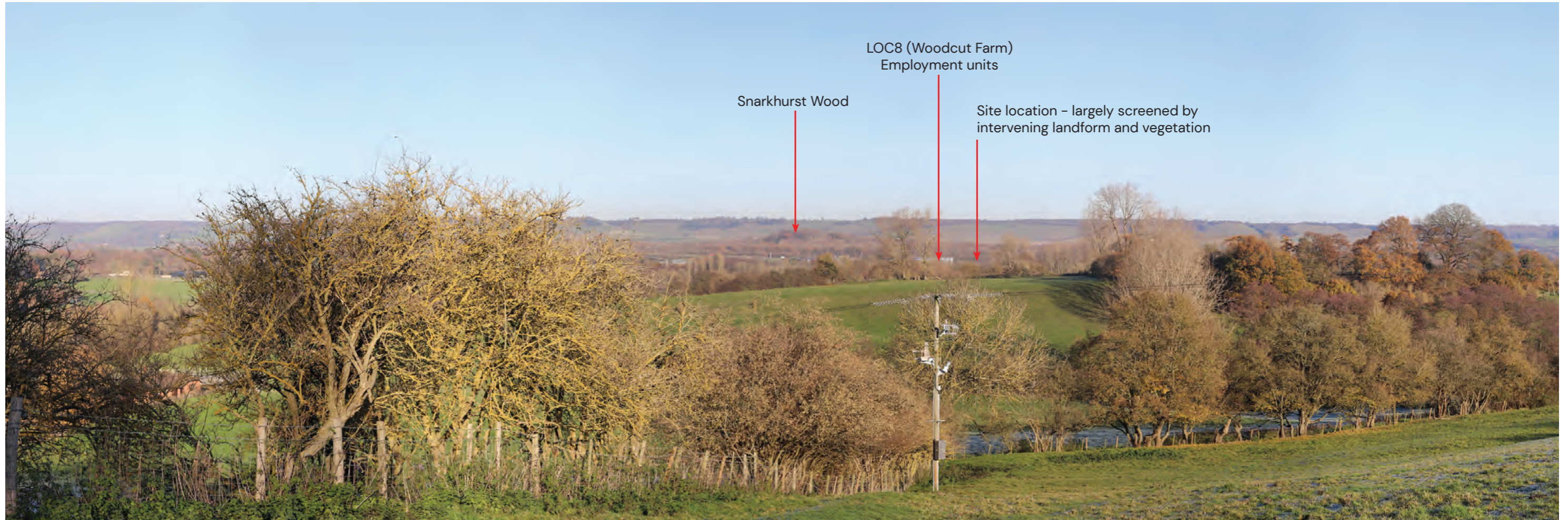
## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 10

North from Public footpath KH236 – north of Brogden



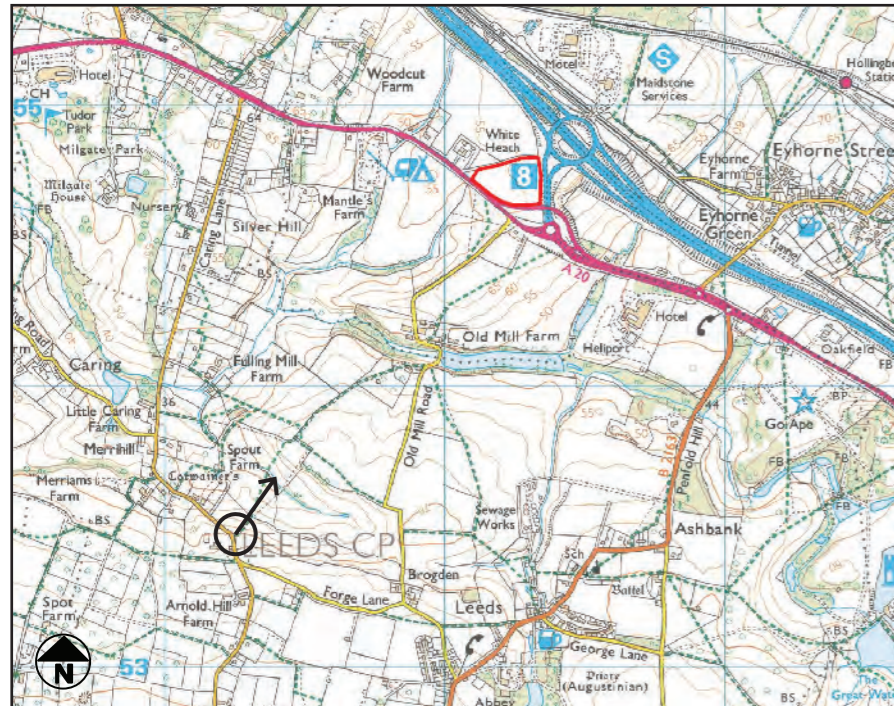
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 5D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 78m
Date & time of photograph	- 17/01/2023 @ 15:26	Distance from site	- 1210m
OS grid reference	- 581922, 153482		





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 11

North east from Public footpath KH253 – off Caring Lane



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 76m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 13:33	Distance from site	- 1515m
OS grid reference	- 581259, 153470		





## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 12

South west from Public footpath KH142A – North Downs Way



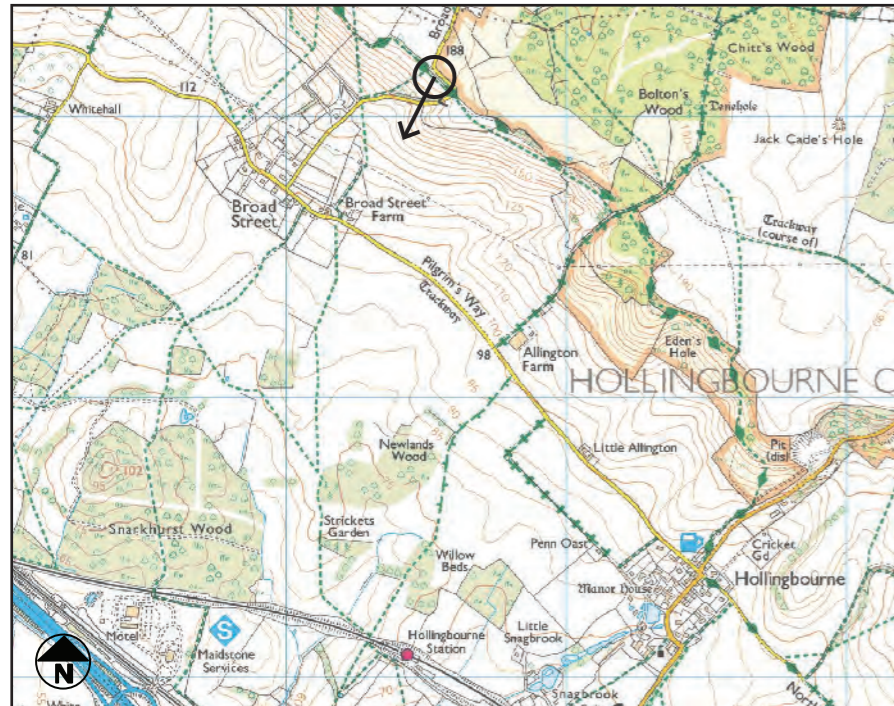
Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 5D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 184m
Date & time of photograph	- 17/01/2023 @ 14:51	Distance from site	- 2610m
OS grid reference	- 584581, 156146		





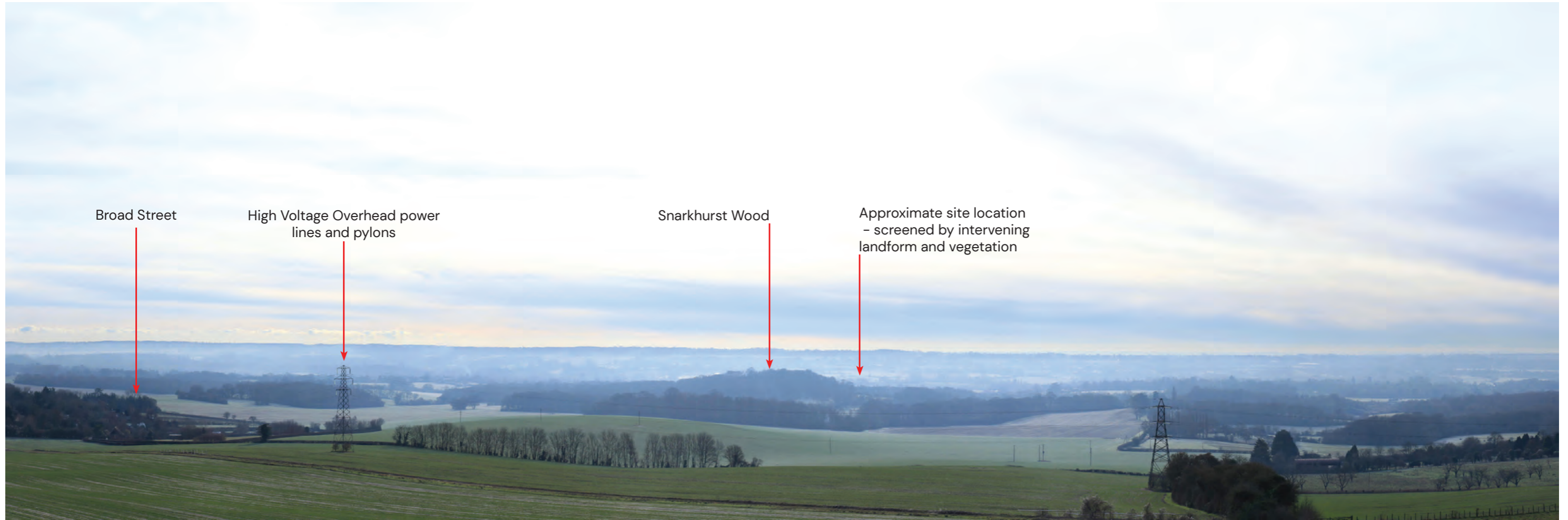
## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 13

South west from Public footpath KH639 – North Downs Way

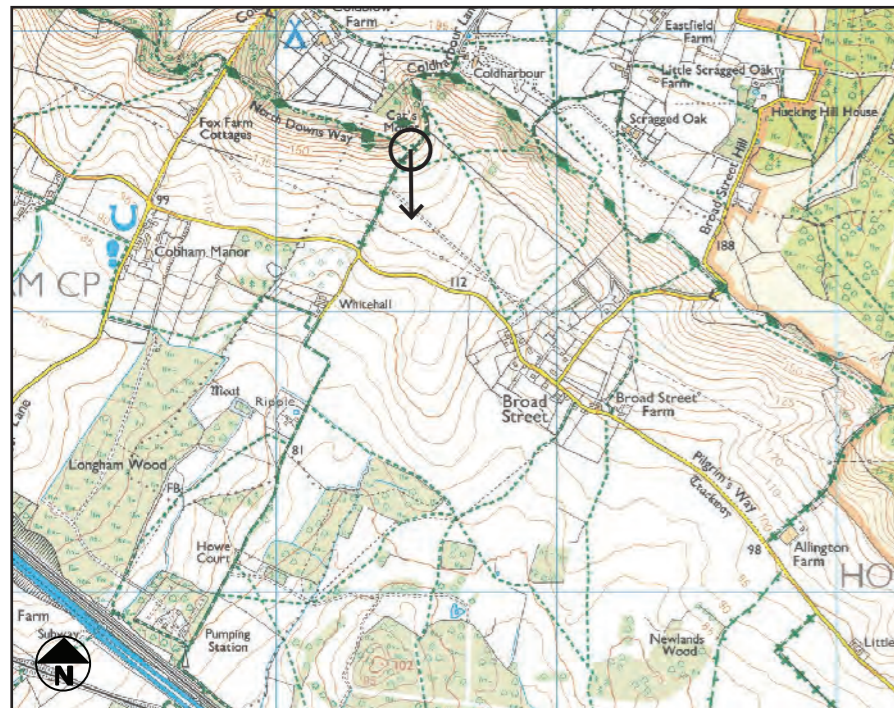


Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 5D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 184m
Date & time of photograph	- 17/01/2023 @ 14:09	Distance from site	- 2615m
OS grid reference	- 583530, 157142		





**CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 14**  
 South from Public footpath KH638 - Cat's Mount



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 5D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 158m
Date & time of photograph	- 17/01/2023 @ 13:49	Distance from site	- 2780m
OS grid reference	- 582458, 157595		





Approximate site location  
 - screened by intervening  
 landform and vegetation

## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 15

South east from Public footpath KH113 - White Horse Wood  
 coutry park



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 196m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 16:35	Distance from site	- 3990m
OS grid reference	- 580575, 158452		

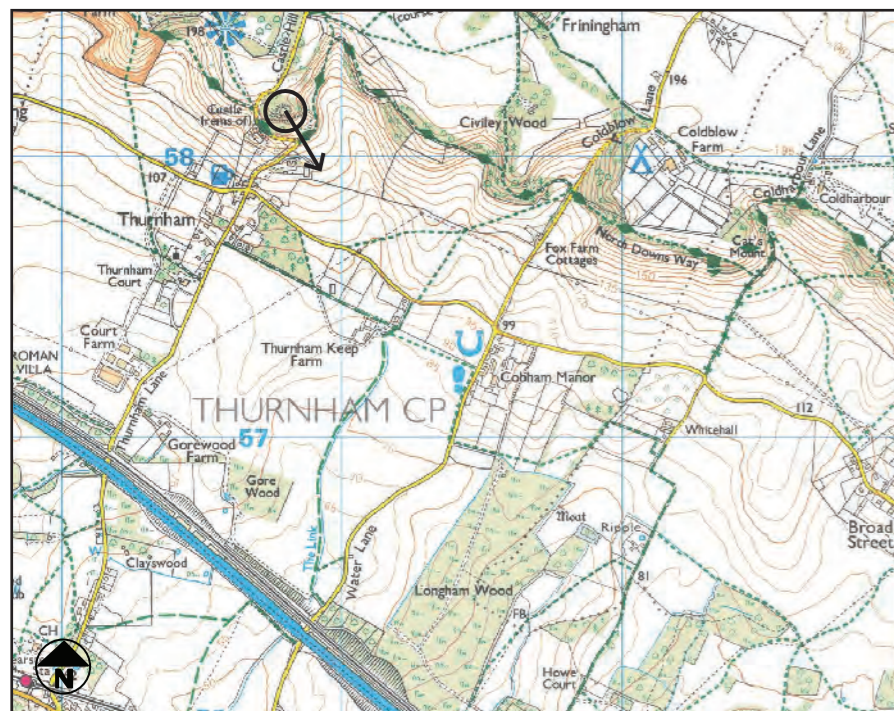




Approximate site location – screened by intervening landform and vegetation

## CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 16

Southeast from Thurnham Castle



Camera make & model	- Canon EOS 6D, FFS	Viewpoint height (AOD)	- 185m
Date & time of photograph	- 08/12/2022 @ 16:45	Distance from site	- 3645m
OS grid reference	- 580790, 158165		







## Appendix 3: Type 3 Visualisations (Photomontages)

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

**Cirencester**

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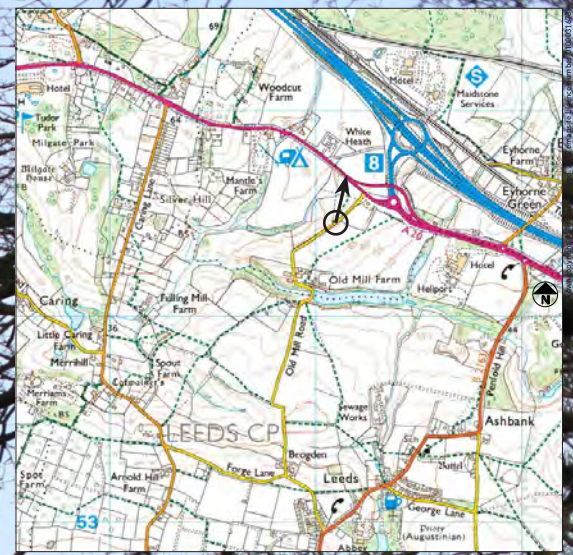


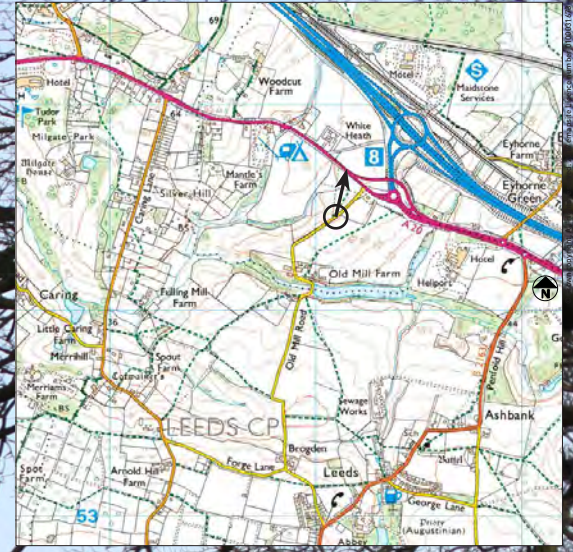
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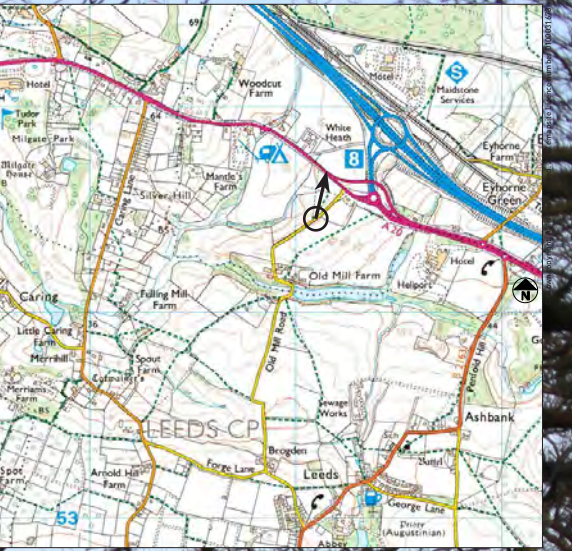
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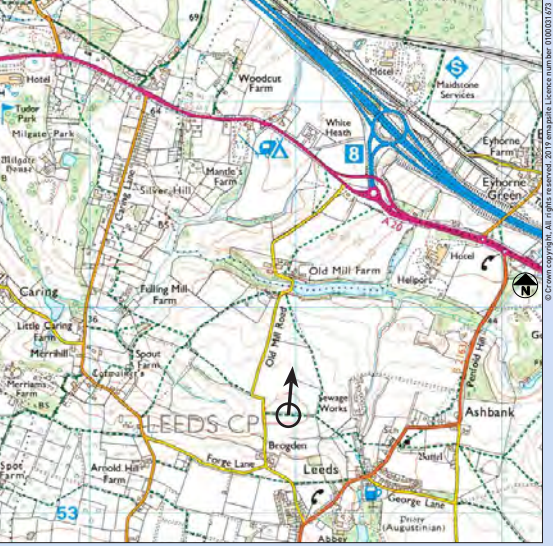


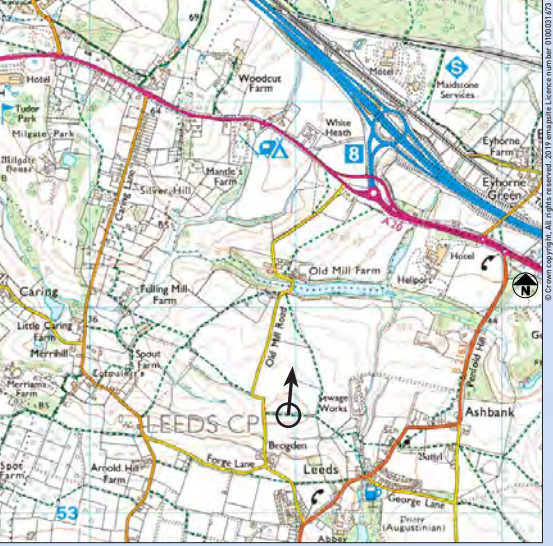
## Figure 4: Environmental Designations Plan



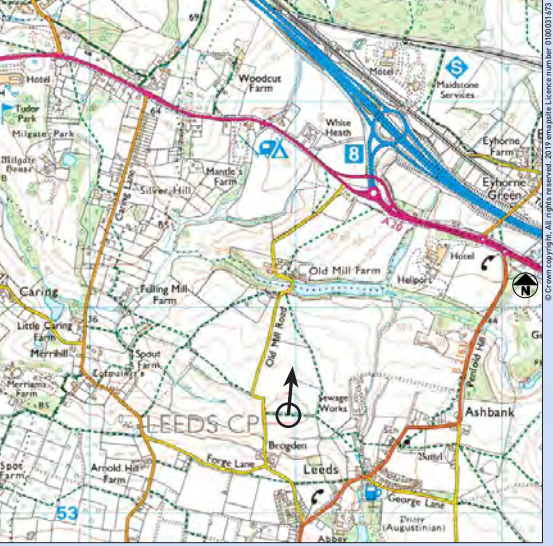


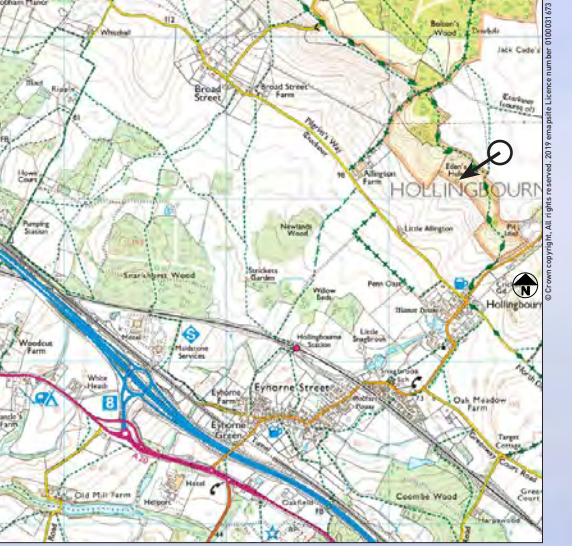


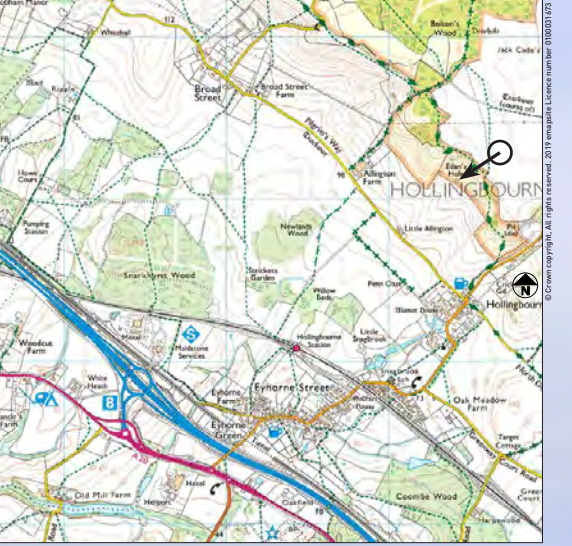














Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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