

Land at Moat Road, Headcorn Landscape and Visual Appraisal Note edp5739_r001a

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal Note has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) on behalf of Catesby Estates Ltd (the 'Promoter') to support representations to the emerging Maidstone Borough Draft Local Plan. It sits alongside the Vision Framework produced by the Promoter and submitted as part of the wider call-for-sites submission and relates to a parcel of land (the 'site') comprising circa 7.26 hectares (ha) of agricultural land situated on the western side of the settlement of Headcorn in Kent.

1.2 The report sets out the findings of both desk and field-based studies in respect of landscape and visual matters, which have been undertaken to assess the suitability of the site in relation to its potential for residential development. The report is provided specifically to address the requirements of the Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) document 'Call for Sites, Submission Guidance', 'Supporting Studies' subsection which details the following in respect of the required 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (EDP highlight added):

"Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment – A landscape and visual appraisal should be submitted in all cases where sites are in, or adjacent to, sensitive landscapes (land with an international, national, regional or local designation). In other cases, submissions should include an assessment of viewpoints.

The reports should focus on a baseline study and identification of constraints and opportunities with an appraisal of direct and indirect landscape and visual effects and consider the potential for mitigation and enhancement. Visual assessments should establish where the site is visible from, who the receptors are, and the nature of those views and visual amenity.

The scope and content will vary on a case by case basis but should broadly comply with the principles of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA 3)."

1.3 Based upon these requirements an appraisal is justified on the basis that the site falls within an area identified as a 'Landscape of Local Value' on the MBC Proposals Map, as shown by **Image EDP 1.1.**

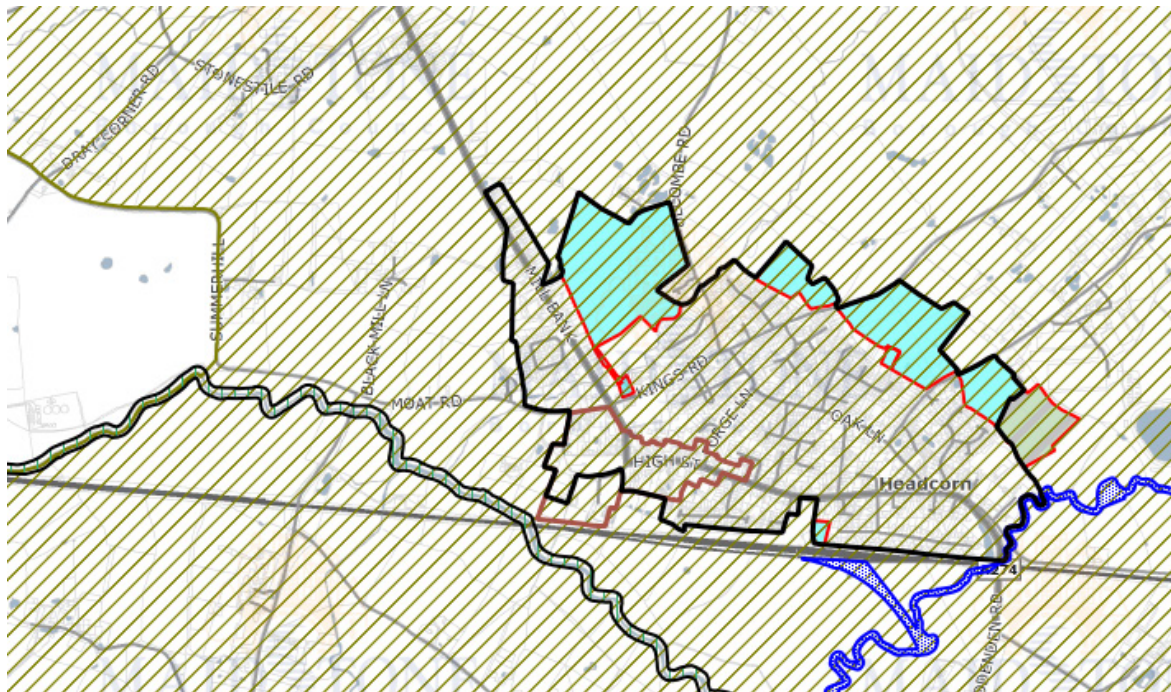


Image EDP 1.1: Extract from MBC Proposals Map. The green diagonal hatch represents the 'Landscapes of Local Value'.

1.4 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Shrewsbury, Cardiff and Cheltenham. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk).

2. The Indicative Proposals

2.1 The indicative proposals are set out in the accompanying Vision Framework, with key elements summarised below:

"The key opportunities for new development include:

- *the potential to create a high-quality sustainable residential development with a strong emphasis on good design and "place-making"*
- *the potential to integrate the development proposals within the existing village fabric*
- *the potential to provide new homes with a mix of typology, scale, mass and size, contributing towards an interesting street scene avoiding repetition, echoing the character and identity of the local area while meeting the needs of local people*
- *opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing*

- *opportunities to create appropriate and accessible public open space and green networks through the site*
- *opportunity to provide strong links to the local highway infrastructure network within the surrounding context*
- *providing attenuation features on the site to control the discharge of surface water run-off from the development offering betterment to the surrounding area.*

The adjacent masterplan illustrates residential development comprising 150 units. The configuration of housing blocks can be planned to reflect the local setting so the development integrates seamlessly into the site and local area.”

2.2 The Illustrative Masterplan is included within the accompanying Vision Framework document and the site boundary is illustrated on **Image EDP 2.1**.



Image EDP 2.1: The Site Boundary

2.3 As also set out in The Vision Framework document, the proposals incorporate a number of measures to ensure they take account of the surrounding environmental context. From a landscape and visual perspective, these aspirations have been informed by the work undertaken to produce this appraisal, with the key measures proposed reproduced below:

- *“an achievable, well-structured housing layout which uses the site’s natural features with key character areas throughout, creating a positive ‘sense of place’*

- *the majority of dwellings are up two storeys high, with occasional two and a half storey units to the lower parts of the site. Development is of a higher density at the central core and to a lower density along the peripheries. At the development edge, the majority of units are detached and set at varying orientations whereas the central parts of development feature a more formal pattern which comprises a larger number of terraced and semi-detached blocks.*
- *tree/hedgerow retention will be maximised wherever possible and enhanced through new planting which will soften the street scene. Retained trees and hedgerows contribute to the scheme while helping to integrate the development within its surroundings. In addition, densely landscaped buffers are proposed along the western edge and where the site abuts the electricity sub station, acting as both visual and acoustic mitigation.*
- *Publicly accessible open space will help the health and welfare needs of future occupants of the development. A large quantum of green space is situated to the west of the site which includes space for play whilst acting as a softer transition between built form and neighbouring countryside. Additional open space is situated to the south east which can accommodate attenuation.”*

2.4 The key features in terms of ensuring the development reflects the existing settlement pattern and protects the wider landscape from unacceptable change, are: (1) the way the development treats the western relationship with the open countryside through the incorporation of a wide landscape buffer; (2) the ‘fit’ of the development between the Bovis development to the north, the existing settlement edge and Moat Road to the south; (3) the plan to reinforce existing boundaries (particularly the western boundary) to retain the containment of the site; and (4) the consideration of ridge heights so as not to impact local horizons and views.

3. Planning Policy

3.1 Provided below is a consideration of the landscape-related planning policy, which is a critical first step in understanding and appraising the potential acceptability of the proposal.

National Planning Policy

3.2 A corner-stone of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ remains the achievement of sustainable development.

3.3 In broad terms, the NPPF requires that development proposals that accord with adopted policy should be approved without delay, and where no policy exists or is out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse effects of the proposal would significantly outweigh the benefits, subject to specific policies within the NPPF that restrict development (e.g. natural heritage and landscape designations). The principles of achievement of sustainable development should also

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government (February 2019) National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, London.

be carried forward into planning policy at a local level so that it is clear what constitutes acceptable development under the new guidance.

- 3.4 In relation to development and landscape, section 12 seeks to achieve well designed places, whilst paragraph 127 specifically states that development “*will function well and add to the overall quality of the area ...*” and “*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting*”.

Local Planning Policy

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017)

- 3.5 The site is located within Maidstone Borough, in Kent. The current statutory development plan for the site and its context is the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2017), which contains a number of policies relevant to the consideration of the site as a possible development site in landscape terms (emphasis added).
- 3.6 The most important Strategic Policy is **Policy SP17: The Countryside**: “*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.”

3.7 The policy also sets out at paragraph 4.105 that:

“In order to assist in the successful integration of new development into the countryside the Council will ensure LVIA’s are carried out as appropriate to assess suitability and to aid and facilitate the design process”.

3.8 Regarding Development Management Policies, those of relevance are detailed below:

- **Policy DM1: Principles of Good Design**, is in place to ensure developments reflect published landscape character assessments and other guidance relating to the protection and conservation of landscape;
- **Policy DM3: Natural Environment** aims to ensure that *“new development protects and enhances the natural environment”* by incorporating a wide range of measures set out within the policy; and
- **Policy DM30: Design principles in the countryside**. This relates to development outside of the settlement boundaries which should meet a number of criteria, as set out in the policy.

3.9 A number of other supplementary documents are relevant to landscape and visual matters, as summarised below:

- The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2012, amended 2013);
- Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment Supplement (2012);
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Sensitivity Assessment (2015); and
- Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study: Site Assessments (2015).

4. Landscape Character Considerations

National Landscape Character

4.1 At the broadest scale, the site lies within the Low Weald National Character Area (NCA 121). While the descriptions of this NCA provides a broad understanding that informs this study, given the size of the site and scale of likely effects, this is considered too broad-brush to provide a full understanding of the character of the site and its local context. For the scale of the development proposed it is considered that the description of landscape character undertaken at the sub regional level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline.

Local Landscape Character

4.2 At a local level, the site is characterised within the 'Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment' (2012, amended 2013), which provides a more detailed assessment of the landscape character of the site and its surroundings than the national level assessment described above. Its purpose is defined as follows:

"The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment identifies the features that give an area its 'sense of place' and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas. It provides technical information on landscape character which can be used for landscape design and management purposes. It also enables Maidstone's environment to be protected and enhanced by ensuring that any changes take place in a way that is sympathetic to the character of the landscape and make the most of opportunities to enhance it."

4.3 This assessment defines 7 Landscape Character Types (LCT) and 58 Landscape Character Areas (LCA) within Maidstone Borough. The site sits within the 'Headcorn Pasturelands' LCA (LCA43) and the key characteristics noted within the assessment include (with EDP emphasis):

- *"Low lying landscape which forms part of the Low Weald*
- *Reservoirs along the foot of the Greensand Ridge*
- *Drainage ditches running southwards towards the River Beult*
- *Enclosed pasture*
- *Sparse development with scattered farms and small hamlets*
- *Dominance of mature oaks within pasture and as mature hedgerow trees*".

4.4 The identified 'Actions' for the LCA are very generic and do not really take account of the need for development within green field sites, and do not, therefore, provide a great deal of guidance in this respect. They are defined as follows:

- *"Consider the generic guidelines for the Low Weald*
- *Conserve the abundance of oak as a dominant species, and plant new isolated oaks within pasture and hedgerows to replace ageing population*
- *Conserve the pastoral land use and resist conversion to arable land*
- *Conserve and enhance the small scale field pattern and sense of enclosure*

- *Conserve the largely undeveloped rural landscape and the remote quality of isolated farmsteads*
- *Resist infill linear development along Maidstone Road*
- *Soften the visual prominence of large agricultural barns through native planting*
- *Enhance habitat opportunities around water bodies and ditches by promoting a framework of vegetation in these areas”.*

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

- 4.5 In relation to landscape sensitivity, MBC have produced a landscape sensitivity assessment, defined on their website as follows:

“The Maidstone Landscape Capacity Study assesses the comparative sensitivity of the borough’s landscapes to development. The study excludes the general urban area of Maidstone and the nationally designated Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as these have protection through other policies, but includes the fringe landscapes of both areas. There are two parts to this report: a general sensitivity assessment and more specific site assessments.”

- 4.6 The study defines LCA43 as having a ‘high’ landscape character sensitivity, and a ‘moderate’ visual sensitivity. In summarising these aspects, the report cites:

“Landscape Character Sensitivity: High

Oak is notably dominant and the low lying landscape, with its ditches and ponds, provides a consistent pattern. There are some visual detractors, such as large scale barns, the busy Maidstone Road and recent linear development along its route. Habitat strength and connectivity are good with small scale hedged pasture with frequent ditches and water bodies. The traditional field pattern, mature standard oak trees, pastoral land use, isolated historic farm buildings and traditional buildings within the central core of Headcorn provide a strong sense of place. However there is a significant amount of recent and indistinct development which dilutes this slightly.

Visual Sensitivity: Moderate

Visibility is moderate. Whilst there are some long views across the Low Weald to the Greensand Ridge to the north, and open views of this landscape from the Ridge, intervening vegetation encloses many immediate views across the flat to very gently undulating landform.

The population is concentrated within the key settlement of Headcorn and along Headcorn Road/Maidstone Road. There are also scattered properties and farmsteads throughout most of the area. This means there are relatively low numbers of people in residential properties with

potential views of the landscape. There is a golf course and a well-developed footpath network. Overall there are moderate numbers of potential visual receptors.”

4.7 In summarising the sensitivity, the report states:

*“Headcorn Pasturelands is assessed as being of high overall landscape sensitivity and is **sensitive to change**.*

Development potential is limited to within and immediately adjacent to existing settlements and farmsteads in keeping with existing. Other development could be considered to support existing rural enterprises, although extensive, large scale or visually intrusive development would be inappropriate.”

4.8 With reference to the site, it is apparent that it fulfils the criteria of being ‘immediately adjacent to existing settlements’ and as was borne out by the field appraisal, could be brought forward without being ‘visually intrusive development’. On this basis – and despite the LCA being described overall as sensitive to change, there is scope to develop the site in accordance with the sensitivity assessment as published.

4.9 Looking to the specific site assessment carried out as part of this study (under reference HO 105), this provides a more detailed analysis, and concludes that the site has a moderate landscape sensitivity and a high visual sensitivity, leading to an overall landscape sensitivity of high. In summarising the opportunities and constraint, it states:

- *“Whilst located in reasonably close proximity to Headcorn centre, the site does not relate well to the existing settlement pattern to the east which forms a narrow and largely linear extension to the core of Headcorn*
- *Development generally undesirable, particularly on the higher, northern, part of the site where it would be highly visible from the Beult Valley”*

4.10 The analysis acknowledges that proximity to the existing settlement has a moderating influence on landscape character sensitivity (reducing it compared to the wider LCA) but considers that the elevated ground means there are extensive views to and from the higher northern parcel from the Beult valley to the south, and therefore, a high rather than moderate visual sensitivity. Overall, the capacity is considered to be ‘low’.

4.11 Having undertaken a review of the site circumstances and nearby visibility, this is not considered to be a correct analysis for the following reasons:

1. Whilst the site is relatively elevated, this elevation is not dramatic, and the northern parcel is not widely visible from the landscape to the south. **Photoviewpoints EDP 1 to 3** appended to this report illustrated views from this area and show how only glimpsed views of the site are available due to the heavily vegetated landscape and relatively flat topography. Also, were the northern site (and development on it) widely visible, then one would expect open

and expansive visibility of the existing settlement on the eastern boundary, which is not the case; and

2. In terms of proximity to the existing settlement, and the assertion that the site does not relate well to the existing settlement, it is notable that this sensitivity assessment was undertaken before the development to the north was consented and under construction. It is clear in the current form that the site is very well related to the existing settlement, both to the east, and now the north. The new development to the north has effectively extended the physical presence of the village, meaning that this site is much more logical in 2-dimensional terms, than was the case at the time the sensitivity assessment was written.

4.12 It is also notable that the two specific constraints identified are demonstrated herein to not actually be notable constraints to development on this site at all, assuming a sensitive masterplan response. Any sensitive response would follow the mitigation measures identified in the capacity assessment, as detailed below:

- *“Retain field and enclosure pattern*
- *Retain mature vegetation and TPO trees*
- *Respect the setting of listed building to south east along Moat Road*
- *Retain and respect the attractive, well treed, urban/rural interface along the urban boundary*
- *Respect remote, rural setting to Headcorn*
- *Respect rural, open views from public footpath that crosses site”*

4.13 Based on the review above, it is reasonable to conclude that the site actually has a moderate (rather than high) visual sensitivity owing to the lack of actual views where it might be openly visible, and that the moderate landscape sensitivity is substantiated through the presence of the new development to the north. A moderate landscape character and visual sensitivity would lead to a ‘moderate’ overall landscape sensitivity.

4.14 When combined with a moderate value, there results a moderate capacity for development, rather than the ‘low’ capacity stated.

Landscape Character of the Site

4.15 A site-specific assessment of the landscape circumstances of the local context has been undertaken by appropriately experienced Chartered Landscape Architects. This study has included a review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessments to enable EDP to prepare a description of the local landscape character, from which the following key points can

be drawn. The photoviewpoints provided should also be referenced as they illustrate the character of the site and surrounding area.

- 4.16 The site comprises an area of agricultural land directly adjacent to the northern parts of the western boundary of Headcorn. The site is split into two parcels of land, the northern of which sits adjacent to a Public Right of Way (PRoW), and beyond this the Bovis site currently under construction. The southern parcel sits adjacent to Moat Road and contains old farm buildings in its south-eastern corner and lies adjacent to an electricity substation in the south-western corner. A small hamlet at the northern end of Black Mill Lane contains the site to the west.
- 4.17 The site lies adjacent to open countryside (not purely open countryside given this hamlet) to the west, although there is a strong vegetated boundary comprising of outgrown hedgerows and mature trees which contains the site visually. **Images EDP 4.1** and **4.2** show the site in its current form. There is a PRoW which runs north from Moat Road, through the southern site parcel to the western site boundary.



Image EDP 4.1: The site's southern field, looking from the south-west corner, north-east towards the settlement edge. The edge of the substation is visible to the left, with the well-vegetated boundary running northwards beyond this.



Image EDP 4.2: The site's northern field, looking from the south-west corner, north-east towards the settlement edge.

- 4.18 As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, it is proposed that the site will be accessed from Moat Road, to the east of the existing access to the substation. **Image EDP 4.3** shows the existing substation and approximate location of the proposed access.



Image EDP 4.3: Looking along Moat Road, from the west, towards the substation and proposed site access point.

Interim Conclusions: Landscape Considerations

- 4.19 The site is within a landscape designated at the local level, although is broadly typical of the wider LCA. The site has been reviewed within the Council's sensitivity and capacity assessment and has been categorised as being of high sensitivity and low capacity. However, the analysis undertaken above shows clearly that due to changes in the baseline landscape in the time since

the Council's assessment was undertaken and following a review of the visual constraints identified as specific to the site, a moderate capacity is more appropriate.

- 4.20 Furthermore, the mitigation measures identified within the sensitivity and capacity assessment (and reviewed above) are able to be accommodated in large part through the sensitive masterplanning of the site. In particular, existing vegetation can, and will, be retained and enhanced, and the existing field 'forms', although absorbed within a residential development, will be retained and remain 'readable'.
- 4.21 The listed building to the south-east will be buffered from development by a large area of POS/SuDS, and the existing well-treed urban rural interface will be retained (in the sense that the vegetation will be retained), whilst a new interface created along the site's western boundary, which will be much more robust in stature and longevity, than the current interface.
- 4.22 This buffering will assist in retaining a strong rural setting to the village, whilst also protecting the visual and residential amenity of the occupiers of the dwellings at the northern end of Black Mill Lane. The masterplan has also sought to retain views from the (realigned) PRow which runs through the site, thus respecting this aspiration.
- 4.23 It is a consequence of the nature of the proposal that effects on the site would change the sites landscape character across a very discrete area. However, this effect is unavoidable when considering that there will be a change from open agricultural land to residential use. As outlined above, the site comprises a very small part of a much larger landscape/LCA, and changes need to be considered in this context. The changes predicted to occur on the characteristics that form the character of the site are described below and evaluated overall.
- 4.24 Given the existing land use, and despite the small-scale of the proposals, the increase in landscape features and the existing developed context, the proposal would result in a high magnitude of change to the site itself, which would inevitably give rise to an elevated effect. This is entirely due to the fundamental change of land use within the site, and the general acceptance of development over these timeframes, rather than a reflection of the development itself.
- 4.25 In terms of effects on the LCA, the immediate landscape context of the site will be subject to the greatest change in character when compared to the defined wider LCA. However, the effect on the landscape character of the wider LCA is predicted to diminish rapidly with distance due to intervening landform and existing landscape features, and also the scale of the proposals combined with their developed context.
- 4.26 Subject to the development of a suitable landscape mitigation strategy which addresses the aspirations of the sensitivity assessment, it is considered that the site offers the opportunity to provide a positive and logical transition between the existing urban edge – formed by the adjacent Bovis development and the existing settlement – and the landscapes to the west and south. The potential adverse effects of development within the site, upon the wider LCA, is moderated by:

- The retention and reinforcement of the important landscape features and characteristics, particularly those along the boundaries and running east-west through the site;
- The proposal for a landscape buffer along the western site boundary;
- The establishment of new planting within the site to enhance the landscape structure, and create a landscape-led development; and
- Integration with the developed context of the locale, particularly to the north and east, but also respecting those residences to the west.

4.27 In turn, these considerations would contribute towards compliance with local planning policy requirements and the aspirations of the MBLCA.

5. Visual Considerations

- 5.1 EDP has conducted an assessment of the views available to and from the site in order to ascertain the likely visual receptors for this assessment. A site walkover was undertaken, subsequent to desktop searches being used to identify the potential visual receptors and road and footpath routes.
- 5.2 In practice, like any site on the settlement edge, buildings and vegetation limit the views available, making this fieldwork essential to ascertain the likely 'actual' visual envelope of the site. This fieldwork concluded the following in terms of the extent of actual likely visibility of the site, and the receptors potentially affected.
- 5.3 Photoviewpoints representing the above receptors are presented at **Photoviewpoints EDP 1 to 6**, with the locations of these shown in context on **Image EDP 5.1**. The selected viewpoints provide a representative sample of locations from where the clearest views of the development are anticipated. They represent the range of visual receptors within the local context and are selected to inform the assessment of both landscape and visual effects, as described above.

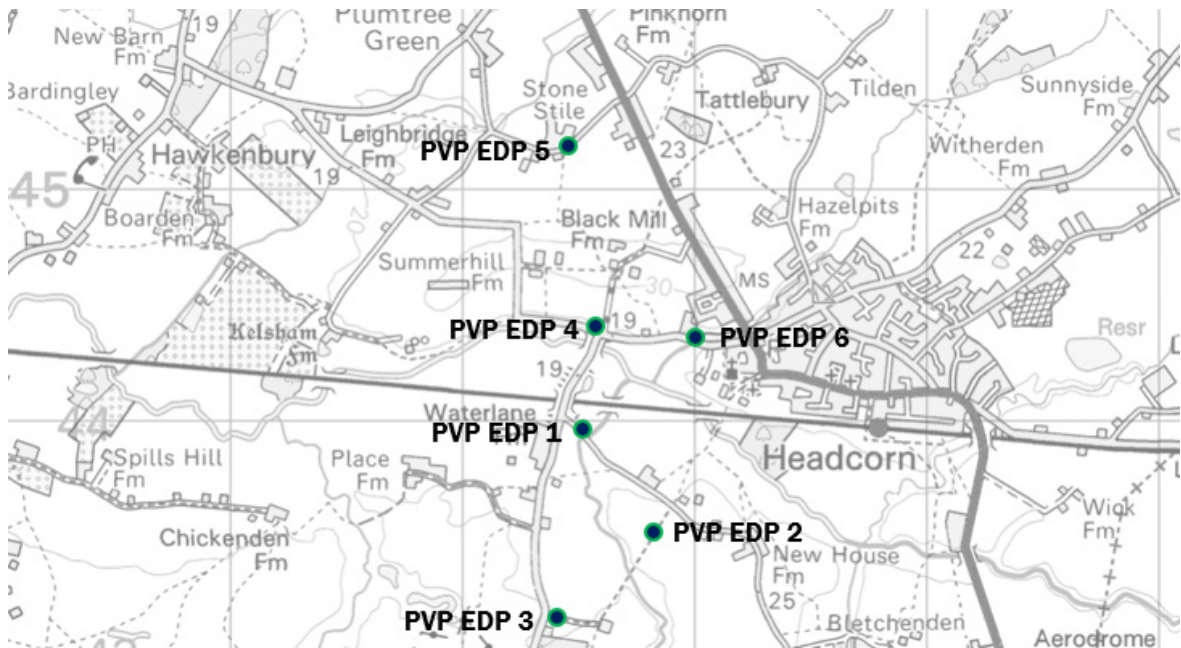


Image EDP 5.1: Photoviewpoint locations

5.4 To the north, the site is largely visually contained by vegetation aligning the PRoW and beyond this by the new Bovis development. The vegetation along this PRoW (as shown by **Image EDP 5.2**) is tall, double-lined, and provides an effective visual screen (particularly in summer).



Image EDP 5.2: View along the PRow running along the northern boundary.

- 5.5 Based upon the available views of the new Bovis development, it is likely that views of any development within the site would also be available, but that in the current context these views wouldn't be either out of character or prominent.
- 5.6 Further north, and as represented by **Photoviewpoint EDP 5**, there would be southward views from Stonestile Road towards the edge of Headcorn. As can be seen from this image, the new Bovis development is visible, although in the context of existing development along the eastern side of Maidstone Road. Due to the location of this new development, in juxtaposition with the site, it is likely that development on the site would be entirely screened. Indeed, this blocking of views would be applicable to the wider landscape to the north where open views are available – in this regard, due to the natural vegetation pattern of the Low Weald, and the relatively flat landscape, potential open views would either be foreshortened or unavailable due to intervening vegetation.
- 5.7 Other receptors to the north would include the new residences within the Bovis development; however, the context of these dwellings means that effects would only be limited.
- 5.8 To the east, the existing settlement of Headcorn would restrict the majority of views beyond the dwellings forming the eastern site boundary. With a sensitive offset, and appropriate landscape treatment as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, any changes would be notable in their magnitude (and be very different from the existing) but they would not be unacceptable in residential amenity terms. A few filtered views might be available from Bankfields, beyond the immediate site boundary, as shown by **Image EDP 5.3**. These changes would be entirely consistent with existing character and not lead to elevated effects.



Image EDP 5.3: View from Bankfields

- 5.9 To the west, the extensive site boundary vegetation (as shown on **Images EDP 5.4** and **5.5**) would screen the majority of views under summer conditions, although there would likely be some fragmented visibility in winter when trees are without leaf cover. A generous offset has been provided within the masterplan to ensure additional planting (and thus visual mitigation) could be established, meaning the level of change both near the site boundary (i.e. the dwellings at the northern end of Black Mill Lane) and also further afield would be extremely limited.



Image EDP 5.4: Western site boundary, northern field parcel



Image EDP 5.5: Western site boundary, southern field parcel

- 5.10 This boundary vegetation – and the proposed mitigation – would mean visual change on the PRoW which run west from the site boundary would experience fragmented views of the new settlement edge, but this would be heavily softened. In addition, and considering this change perceptually, the existing dwellings on the northern end of Black Mill Lane, and also (to a lesser degree) the new Bovis development, would serve to establish an element of urban character to this general locale.

- 5.11 Moving further west, the extent of vegetation, changes in topography (the ground dips beyond Summerhill Farm) and the impact of this in limiting views, would mean changes to the visual amenity of users would be at the lower end of the scale. A good demonstration of this is **Photoviewpoint EDP 4** which shows how the layering of vegetation can significantly limit longer range views when combined with gentle changes in topography.
- 5.12 To the south there is the potential for more open visibility due to the south-sloping nature of the site, which is something picked up within the Council's sensitivity and capacity assessment. However, as can be seen by **Photoviewpoints EDP 1 to 3**, the extent of vegetation within the Beult valley to the south, and the affect of this combined with the low-lying and generally flat topography, means that the site, and the existing settlement edge, is hardly visible, and certainly not openly visible from this area as contended.
- 5.13 There is a subtle rise in topography immediately south of the River Beult around New House Farm – with **Photoviewpoint EDP 2** providing the view from this area – but even here the site is only just visible among the existing vegetation and general landscape framework. Notwithstanding this context, it is likely that development on the site would be visible in some views, but importantly, such views (as per **Photoviewpoint EDP 2**) would also contain the existing settlement edge at Bankfields, thus reducing the relative sensitivity and level of effect experienced.
- 5.14 Beyond this slightly elevated area – and as shown by **Photoviewpoint EDP 3** – the extensively vegetated panoramas mean it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the site or the existing settlement edge. Visibility is likely to be greater in winter, although even then the layering of winter vegetation is still likely to have the effect of severely limiting views. This kind of view (given the prevailing landscape character) is very typical of the limited number of locations where views northwards are openly available, and during the fieldwork exercise it was difficult to identify many areas to the south of the site where change would be openly be experienced. This is partly due the limited extent of PRow which run through this area, in close proximity to the site.
- 5.15 When much closer to the site, and as demonstrated by **Photoviewpoint EDP 6**, there will be extensive change owing to the proximity of the site to the viewer. Within this view (and others like it), and despite the retention of the majority of the southern boundary vegetation, there will be considerable change likely to be experienced. This change will, however, be moderated by the large area of POS and SuDS proposed in the site's south-eastern corner, which will have the added purpose of aiding the integration between the urban and rural areas.
- 5.16 In summary, whilst development on the site would be visible within a discrete area, there are a number of specific reasons why this would be limited, and any change considered largely consistent with the overriding character:
- The dense boundary vegetation to the north, west and south provides a natural visual barrier which could be enhanced to provide year-round screening and visual integration;

- The site is located to take advantage of the visual and perceptual integration provided by the existing settlement to the west, and the new area of residential development to the north. This also serves the purpose of screening views in these directions; and
- Visibility to the south, whilst potentially available given the southerly aspect of the site, is limited through the overriding landscape character in this area. Many layers of mature vegetation, combined with the relatively flat topography, mean open views of the proposed development would be limited in extent and magnitude.

6. Summary of Landscape and Visual Effects

- 6.1 The landscape appraisal has considered the available published Landscape Character Assessments (at national and local scales), the Council's sensitivity and capacity assessment, EDP's own assessment of the character of the site and its landscape context, and a review of the landscape designations of a local, regional and national scale.
- 6.2 At the site level, the effects would be greater due to the fundamental change of land use, but it is an important consideration that the changes being broadly in character with the neighbouring (to the north and east) residential urban areas.
- 6.3 At a local level effects are considered upon the Headcorn Pasturelands; the assessment finding that although there would be direct changes to the site at an elevated level, the wider LCA effects would be to a limited proportion of the character area, and the location and nature of the proposals with respect to the key characteristics of this character area and the existing and adjoining urban area.
- 6.4 Potential visual effects have been considered upon a range of receptors local to the site, including users of local roads, cycle routes, footpaths, bridleways and those living in residential areas bordering the site to the north and east. The appraisal has been aided through the use of site visits and a range of assessment viewpoints as presented at **Photoviewpoints EDP 1-6**.
- 6.5 The assessment finds that whilst a number of visual effects at an elevated level are predicted, these are restricted to a very limited number of locations, and in very close proximity. It is only certain receptors within the residential areas to the east of the site, and those using a short length of the PRow which passes through the southern site parcel, where elevated effects are likely. Within the residential areas, the receptors are located within an existing urban area where additional development of this type and scale, although representing a change, would not be inappropriate.
- 6.6 Where effects are predicted along Moat Road, for both cyclists and motorists, it needs to be borne in mind that in the wider context of the route taken between the existing urban area and the wider countryside, the change to the route will be experienced in an area already the subject of a transitional experience from an urban to rural character.



7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal Note provides an appraisal of the landscape and visual matters relevant to the development of the site as outlined in the accompanying Vision Framework document. It demonstrates that there will be no notable long-term effects as a result of the proposals, and that the site could be accommodated into its context without elevated effects upon either the baseline landscape or visual resource, when considering in its broader context.
- 7.2 The proposals will result in some change and effect to receptors within a very close range (which is inevitable for any greenfield development location), but this change will be experienced within a location where recent residential development has desensitised these receptors, and also provided a developed context which appreciably affects the baseline and thus level of effect.

Photoviewpoints

(edp5739_d001a 24 May 2019 JTF/CJM)

- Photoviewpoint EDP 1** View from New House Lane, South of the Site
- Photoviewpoint EDP 2** View from PRow between New House Farm and Brook Wood Farm
- Photoviewpoint EDP 3** View from PRow West of Brook Wood Farm
- Photoviewpoint EDP 4** View from Junction of Black Mill Lane and Moat Road
- Photoviewpoint EDP 5** View from Stonestile Road
- Photoviewpoint EDP 6** View from Moat Road, approaching the Site from Headcorn

Photoviewpoint EDP 1: View from New House Lane, South of the Site



Photoviewpoint EDP 2: View from PRoW between New House Farm & Brook Wood Farm



Photoviewpoint EDP 3: View from PRoW West of Brook Wood Farm



Photoviewpoint EDP 4: View from Junction of Black Mill Lane and Moat Road



Photoviewpoint EDP 5: View from Stonestile Road



Photoviewpoint EDP 6: View from Moat Road, approaching the Site from Headcorn



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VP Location:	VP Bearing:	Distance to Site:	Date Taken:	Lens:
PVP 5: 582486, 145201 East	c607m	15/05/19	50mm	
PVP 6: 582991, 144371 West	c.10m	15/05/19	50mm	

date	24 MAY 2019
drawing number	edp5739_d001a
drawn by	JTF
checked	CJM
QA	LB

client	Catesby Estates Ltd
project title	Land at Moat Road, Headcorn
drawing title	Photoviewpoints EDP 5 and 6