

# **Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council and Cuckfield Parish Council**

## **Landscape Proof of Evidence of Louise Hooper,**

BA (Hons), L Arch, CMLI

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Appeal by Fairfax Acquisitions Limited and the Norris Family; Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RG17 5AG

**PINS Appeal Ref No.: APP/M3645/W/25/6002030**

**LPA Ref No.: DM/2023/2866**

May 2026

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# 1 Summary

## Baseline context

- 1.1 The Appeal Site sits between the two villages of Ansty and Cuckfield, adjacent to the HWNL. It lies to the west of the urban edge of Haywards Heath and to the north of Burgess Hill. The landscape is an undulating arable farmland of ridges, valleys and streams; large and small fields are interspersed with ancient woodland, ghyll woodland, deciduous and coniferous plantations. From the central ridgeline there are long views towards the South Downs National Park to the south and to the Grade I listed Cuckfield Parish Church to the north.
- 1.2 Despite the proximity of Haywards Heath to the west and Burgess Hill to the south, these surroundings emphasise the perception of the Appeal Site's rural setting and apparent remoteness from urban development.
- 1.3 The Appeal Site occupies a sensitive location adjacent to and within the setting of the High Weald National Landscape; it is located to the east of Ansty and to the south of Cuckfield; in terms of geology, landform, water systems, settlement pattern, routeways, woodland and field pattern the landscape components of the site are shared by those of the National Landscape.
- 1.4 I have assessed the site and consider that it is fully compliant with the required qualities and characteristics to be defined as a Valued Landscape, as summarised in Section 6 of this proof. I have referred to the factors identified in Table 1 of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (LITGN) 02/21<sup>1</sup> Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations (which supersedes Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition GLVIA3<sup>2</sup>), see Table 1.
- 1.5 In terms of the published context, my appraisal has shown the site and its setting to be strongly representative of National Character Area 122 High Weald, the High Weald

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<sup>1</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>2</sup> CD 17.3

Fringes Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area 10, the High Weald Forest Ridge.

### **Appeal scheme**

- 1.6 The proposed development comprises an outline planning application for 1450 homes, a 90-unit residential care home, a primary school, a SEND school, health hub, sports and community facilities. Three roundabouts are proposed to the north, west and south of the site to provide vehicular access.
- 1.7 Submitted parameter plans include residential development up to 4 storeys high, a local centre up to 15m ridge height, zones for other residential blocks, schools and woodland with main avenues, spine and street network.

### **Landscape and visual effects in the ES**

- 1.8 The Appellant has submitted an Environmental Statement (ES) which includes Volume 3, Landscape and Visual Impacts (LVIA), November 2023 and an Addenda to the LVIA issued in December 2023 and May 2024. This report was prepared by Fabrik, Chartered Landscape Architects, and follows the Guidelines for LVIA, Third Edition<sup>3</sup> which is the current guidance.
- 1.9 The Appellant has submitted eight Visually Verified Montages (VVMs) of the proposed development as existing and at Year 1 and Year 15.

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<sup>3</sup> CD 17.3

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 My name is Louise Hooper; I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and Principal of Louise Hooper Landscape Architect (LHLA). I hold a BA (Honours) in Landscape Architecture from Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh and the Edinburgh College of Art.
- 2.2 I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, the British organisation for landscape professionals including landscape architects and landscape planners; it was founded in 1929 and was granted a Royal Charter in 1997. I received my Chartered Membership of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) in 1984. My professional membership number is 12077. Louise Hooper Landscape Architect is registered practice number 23442.
- 2.3 I have over 40 years of experience in landscape architecture and landscape planning working in private practice and for local authorities.
- 2.4 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.
- 2.5 I was instructed to act as an independent expert on landscape matters by Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council ("ASPC") and Cuckfield Parish Council ("CPC2) jointly on 4th March 2026 for the purpose of the public inquiry.
- 2.6 Prior to this, I was instructed by ASPC and CPC in 2022 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed development and for the Parkland Reserve at Beechy Bottom. In 2024 I was instructed by ASPC and CPS to summarise the LVIA. I have subsequently visited the study area on several occasions, visiting viewpoints, walking and driving along relevant roads and footpaths in order to evaluate the site and its setting adjacent to the High Weald National Landscape.

2.7 My proof provides a description of the appeal site and its surroundings, the landscape and visual assessment, intervisibility between the appeal site and the National Landscape, the appeal site as a Valued Landscape and my conclusions.

## 3. Policy Background

### **NPPF<sup>4</sup> paragraph 189**

#### **The importance of the National Landscape and its setting**

3.1 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that:

*'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*

3.2 The NPPF continues to state that development within the setting of a National Landscape should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise impacts. Para 189 states that:

*'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'*

#### **Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

3.3 AONBs (National Landscapes) are protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act 2000).

3.4 Following amendments made by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, section 85(A1) CRoW Act 2000 imposes a general duty on relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or which affects, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty to "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty".

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<sup>4</sup> CD 6.1

- 3.5 In December 2024 Defra released Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes. This duty applies to local planning authorities making planning decisions as well as other public bodies.
- 3.6 The duty to 'seek further' is an active duty, not a passive one.
- 3.7 The new duty underlines the importance of avoiding harm to the statutory purposes of a Protected Landscape and also to seek to further its conservation and enhancement.
- 3.8 The duty also applies to functions outside the designation boundary which affect land within the Protected Landscape. Aspects such as tranquillity, dark skies or long views from and into the Protected Landscape may draw upon the landscape character and quality of the setting.

### **Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Policy**

- 3.9 Local Plan Policy DP16 relates to the HWNL and it states that:

*'Development on land that contributed to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into or out of the AONB by virtue of its location or design.'*

- 3.10 Policy AS3 of the Ansty Staplefield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan relates to development within the AONB. The policy states that development should:

- *'Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB area*
- *Demonstrate how it meets the objectives of the High Weald National Landscape Management Plan.'*

## 4 Context and Landscape Setting

4.1 In this section, I provide a broad assessment of the Appeal Site and its surroundings by reference to the following landscape character assessments:

- Natural Areas in England (Natural England 2014)
- West Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)
- High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30
- Mid Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2005)
- Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (2007)
- Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Assessment (2014)
- Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment (2012)

### **Assessment Methodology**

4.2 I have also made reference to:

- the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition<sup>5</sup> (GLVIA3)
- the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2024-01 <sup>6</sup>(LITGN 2024-01) Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3
- the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 <sup>7</sup>(LITGN 02/21) Assessing landscape value outside national designations.

### **Appeal Site**

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<sup>5</sup> CD 17.3

<sup>6</sup> CD 17.1

<sup>7</sup> CD 17.5

- 4.3 The Appeal Site lies adjacent to the High Weald National Landscape to the east of Ansty and to the south of Cuckfield; in terms of geology, landform, water systems, settlement pattern, routeways, woodland and field pattern the landscape components of the site are shared by those of the National Landscape as described in para 4.12 and 4.13 below.
- 4.4 The landscape is an undulating arable farmland of ridges, valleys and streams; large and small fields are interspersed with ancient woodland, ghyll woodland, deciduous and coniferous plantations. From the central ridgeline there are long views towards the South Downs National Park to the south and to the Grade I listed Cuckfield Parish Church to the north.
- 4.5 Despite the proximity of Haywards Heath to the west and Burgess Hill to the south, these rural surroundings emphasise the perception of the Appeal Site's rural setting and apparent remoteness from urban development.
- 4.6 The site is bisected by a ridgeline running from east to west from a high point of +/-78m aod on the western boundary to a low point of +/-39m aod on the eastern boundary. The Copyhold Stream and a minor tributary follow the lower slopes of this ridgeline before leaving the site and flowing in a southerly direction towards the River Adur which it joins near Burgess Hill.
- 4.7 Footpath (62CR) crosses the site following the main east west ridge, linking Ansty village with Copyhold Lane to the east. A network of footpaths and bridlepaths extends across the eastern part of the site leading north to Cuckfield.
- 4.8 The field pattern is intact over much of the site, comprising ancient and pre-modern assarted or planned fields, dating back to medieval times. This fieldscape of an intricate mosaic of small irregularly shaped fields often bounded by hedgerows, shaws or woodland is typical of the adjacent High Weald National Landscape.

4.9 The landscape pattern of the site is intact and its condition is good; it contributes positively to the setting of its surroundings and reflects the landscape quality of the adjacent High Weald National Landscape

4.10 The High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) lies to the west of the site and is visible from it, forming a key part of its rural setting.

### **Context and surroundings of the Appeal Site**

4.11 The Appeal Site sits between the two villages of Ansty and Cuckfield, adjacent to the HWNL. It lies to the west of the urban edge of Haywards Heath and to the north of Burgess Hill.

### **National Landscape Character**

4.12 It lies within the High Weald National Character Area (122), described as 'an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe.' Key characteristics include:

*' A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured rocks and ridges running east-west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill (ghyll) streams forming headwaters of a number of the major rivers; a dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber-framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier; ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and a dense system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edges with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes and tracks, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strip; an intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far-reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths; a strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural wooded*

*character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-side gill woodland... and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long-term management; extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws plus steep valleys with gill woodland; small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings ...; there is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry ..... There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today; an essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland; high quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham stone is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particular notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald.'*

- 4.13 Based on this description, I consider that the Appeal Site and its setting are strongly representative of the High Weald, representing many of the key characteristics. This character continues throughout NCA122, over and beyond the HWNL boundary and across the Appeal Site.

### **County Landscape Character**

- 4.14 The West Sussex County Landscape Assessment shows the site within the High Weald Fringes Landscape Character Area (HW4) which extends from Horsham in the west to Haywards Heath in the east. The overall character is described as '*densely-wooded southern flanks of the High Weald Forest Ridge...dissected by gentle gill streams. Includes the settlements of Cuckfield, Haywards Heath and Lindfield.*'

Key characteristics of the High Weald Landscape Fringes include:

*'A wooded, often confined rural landscape of intimacy and complexity partly within the High Weald National Landscape; south and east-draining gills and broad ridges sweeping gently down towards the Low Weald; long views over the Low Weald to the South Downs; significant woodland cover, a substantial portion of it is ancient, and a dense network of shaws, hedgerows and hedgerow trees; a pattern of small, irregular shaped assart fields and larger*

*fields; biodiversity is concentrated in the valleys....and woodland; a network of lanes, droveways, tracks and footpaths; dispersed historic settlement pattern; some busy lanes and roads including A and B roads; London to Brighton Railway crosses the area at Haywards Heath; mill sites, hammer ponds and ornamental lakes and ponds; varied traditional buildings built with diverse materials including timber framing, Horsham Stone roofing, Wealden stone and varieties of local brick and tile-hanging.'*

4.15 Historic features of HW4 include:

*'Much of the landscape is essentially medieval in origin; persistence of ancient woodland; line of Roman road; ancient routeways and droves; historic country houses, farmsteads and parkscapes; Wealden iron hammer ponds and mill sites; Cuckfield Park.'*

4.16 Biodiversity features of HW4 include:

*'A diverse natural history; species-rich gill and semi-natural woodlands; species-rich meadows and hedgerows; lakes, hammer-ponds, field and ornamental ponds.'*

4.17 Based on this description, I consider that the Appeal Site and its setting are strongly representative of the High Weald Fringes, representing many of the key characteristics. This character continues throughout HW4, over and beyond the HWNL boundary and across the Appeal Site.

### **District Landscape Character**

4.18 The Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment shows the site lies within LCA10 High Weald Forest Ridge within the High Weald Fringes and refers to the county level assessment for key characteristics and features.

4.19 Two Landscape Capacity Assessment were undertaken for Mid Sussex in 2007 and 2014. The 2007 study includes Area 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe which covers the northern part of the site; the 2014 study area was extended and Area 77 Ansty High Weald Fringe was among several areas added to cover the whole district. For Area 51 Copyhold High Weald Fringe the landscape sensitivity was assessed to be moderate and the

landscape value was assessed to be slight. For Area 77 the landscape sensitivity was assessed to be moderate and the landscape value was assessed to be moderate/high.

### **Parish Landscape Character**

4.20 The Cuckfield Parish Council Landscape Character Assessment covers the Cuckfield Parish and this includes the northern part of the Appeal Site referenced as Area 22, Highbridge to Copyhold Slopes; this area contains early post-medieval enclosure and medieval assarts, ancient woodland and lies close to the High Weald National Landscape. Much of the area is described as '*a rural landscape with historic time depth, of moderate value and substantial sensitivity*'. It was assessed to have moderate value and substantial sensitivity.

4.21 Based on this description, I consider the northern part of Appeal Site and its setting to be representative of the Parish Landscape Assessment, with many of its key characteristics.

## 5. High Weald National Landscape

### **High Weald National Landscape Management Plan**

5.1 The Management Plan is a policy document for the whole of the National Landscape and is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes of the protected landscape are met. The current HWNL Management Plan 2024-2029 involves 15 local authorities, local communities and stakeholders and covers five years of a 20-year vision.

### **Setting of the National Landscape**

5.2 The term 'setting' is defined in the High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2024-2029 as

*'areas outside the National Landscape where development and other activities may affect land within a National Landscape. Its extent will vary depending upon the issues considered, however, due to the high synergy in character between the High Weald National Landscape boundary and the wider High Weald National Character Area, land within the NCA should be considered as falling within the setting of the National Landscape.'*

5.3 The importance of the setting is further explained in the HWNL Management Plan 2024-2029:

*'It is not only development within the boundary of the High Weald AONB that needs to be informed by consideration of the Management Plan; national planning policy and guidance make clear that land within the setting of AONBs often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and here poorly located or designed development can do harm. This is especially the case where ..... the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary.'*

### **The core character components of the High Weald National Landscape and objectives**

5.4 The High Weald National Landscape Management Plan 2024-2029 includes a Statement of Significance which lists the core character components of the High Weald as:

- Natural systems (geology, soils, water and climate)
- Settlement
- Routeways
- Woodland
- Fieldsapes and heath
- Dark night skies
- Aesthetic and perceptual qualities
- Land-based economy and rural living

5.5 Objectives of the HWMP relevant to development in its setting are:

- **Objective DS1** Dark Skies to preserve the dark skies of the High Weald NL by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting.
- **Objective DS2** To protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution across the High Weald.
- **Objective PQ2** To protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.

5.6 These three objectives are relevant as they address elements and landscape characteristics which transcend physical boundaries. As a result, they are applicable to development not only in the HWNL but also within its setting. Light spill and light pollution extend beyond the original source of the light. External lighting, internal light

spill and highways lighting from development outside the HWNL such as the proposed development which is sited adjacent to the HWNL boundary would adversely affect the dark skies of the HWNL. This light spill would also affect wildlife and habitats within the HWNL.

5.7 Objective PQ2 seeks '*to protect the unspoilt rural landscape...valued views and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.*' There are valued views from the HWNL over the Appeal Site (see Figure 1); the proposed development would urbanise these views. The undulating rural landscape of the Appeal Site continues right up to the boundary of the National Landscape, contributing to the extent of green space, to the experience of rurality and tranquillity. The proposed development located adjacent to the HWNL boundary would adversely affect the experience of rurality and tranquillity by replacing farmland with an urban settlement with associated buildings, roads, noise and activity.

### **Intervisibility and setting of the High Weald National Landscape**

5.8 There is intervisibility with the site from the High Weald Landscape Trail in Cuckfield Park within the HWNL as shown in Figure 1.

5.9 There is intervisibility with the HWNL boundary as shown in ES Viewpoints 6 and 8 which give views across the northwest part of the Appeal Site, see Figure 2.



Figure 1 View south from a high point on the High Weald Landscape Trail in Cuckfield Park within the HWNL showing the approximate extent of the Appeal Site which would be visible (Source LHLA)



Figure 2 Viewpoint 8 from the ES taken from the HWNL boundary looking east across the Appeal Site

### Shared boundary of the Appeal Site and the High Weald National Landscape

5.10 The shared boundary between the Appeal Site & the HWNL is shown in Figure 3 below and extends for approximately 0.6 kilometres along the A272.

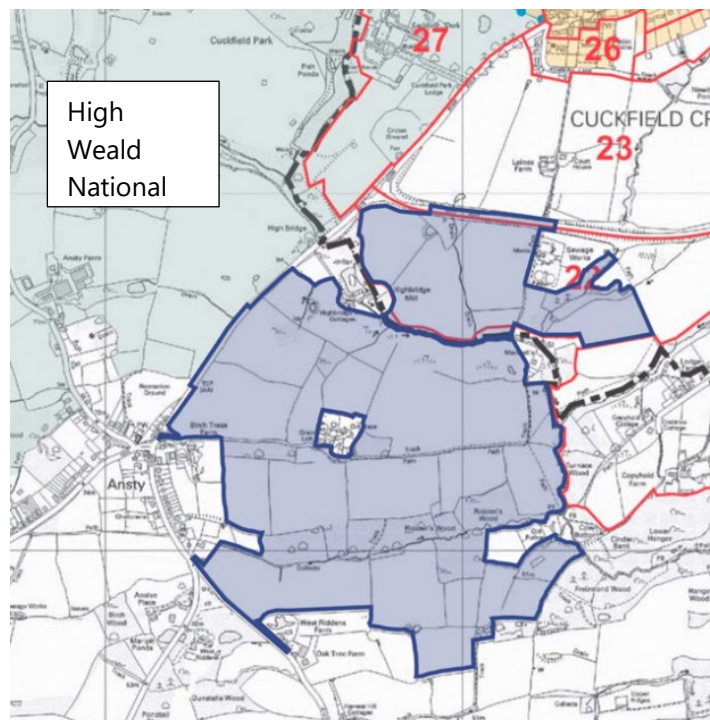


Figure 3 Location of High Weald National Landscape adjacent to the Appeal Site (Source: [mid.sussex.gov.uk](http://mid.sussex.gov.uk))

5.11 There is a continuum of landscape character which crosses this shared boundary as illustrated by the extent of the National Character Area 121 High Weald shown in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4 Extent of National Character Area 122 High Weald from Horsham to Hastings including the HWNL and the Appeal Site (Source: [naturalengland.org.uk](http://naturalengland.org.uk) elaborated by LHLA)

5.12 The continuum of landscape character across the boundary of the HWNL is referenced in the Management Plan:

*'due to the high synergy in character between the High Weald National Landscape boundary and the wider High Weald National Character Area, land within the NCA should be considered as falling within the setting of the National Landscape'*

5.13 A proposal for an extension to the High Weald AONB was made by Mid Sussex District Council in 1987 to the Countryside Commission (see Figure 5). The proposed extension covered 4 square kilometres including the Appeal Site. It was contiguous to the existing High Weald AONB, comprised land that was *'wholly of a landscape quality of national importance'* with *'no part...of an essentially different landscape type to the existing AONB'*, and with a geology identical to that of the adjacent AONB.

5.14 The A272 Cuckfield Bypass was opened in 1989 and passes through the northern part of the proposed extension. The reasons for the decision to refuse this proposed boundary extension were not recorded, but they were not based on landscape grounds.

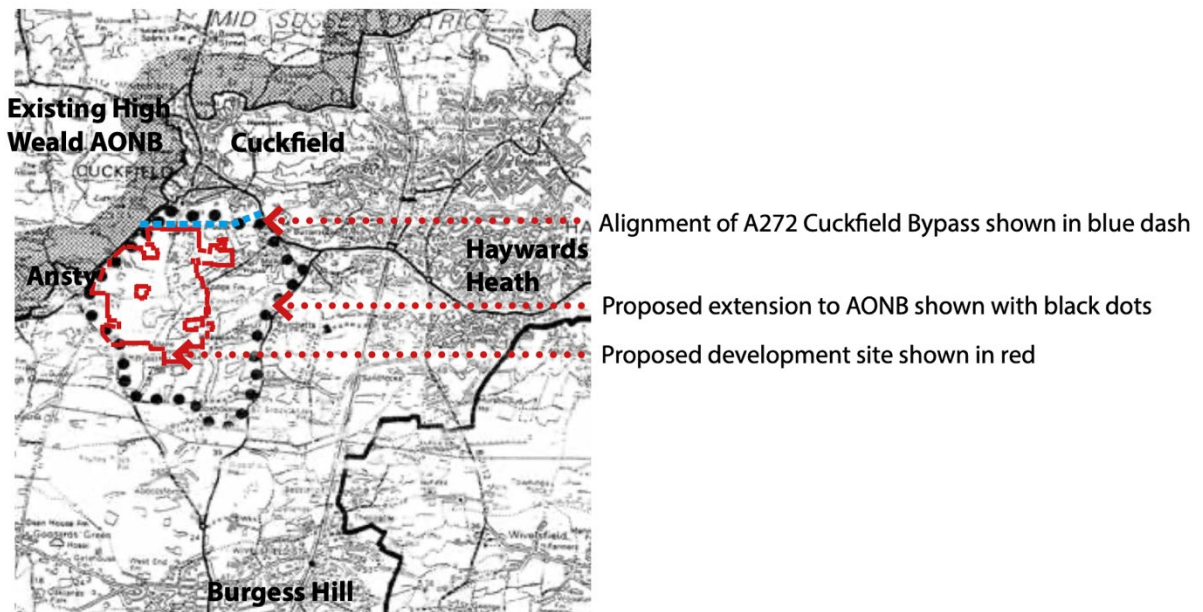


Figure 5 Proposed 1987 extension to the High Weald AONB (source: confidential, elaborated by LHLA)

## 6. Appeal site as a Valued Landscape

- 6.1 Landscape and visual assessment is the key process which informs a judgement on how valued a landscape is. An understanding of the inherent character of a site and the contribution it makes to the surrounding landscape character is part of the landscape assessment process which can appraise landscape sensitivity and landscape value.
- 6.2 Establishing the value of the landscape extends beyond designation. The relative value of a landscape will differ to different stakeholders: for example, a farmer may be concerned over the value of the soil, and the yields of his crops, a dog-walker may be concerned over the quality and quantity of local footpaths, a local resident may be concerned about outlook and tranquillity, and a visitor may be concerned over views, signage, carparks and access.
- 6.3 A living, working landscape can comprise agricultural, recreational, residential, working and transport activities. There are many layers of geology, hydrology, history and biodiversity required to create the complex landscapes we see today.
- 6.4 Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (LITGN) 02/21<sup>8</sup> '*Assessing landscape value outside national designations*' provides the most recent information and guidance on the judgement of landscape value, and the interpretation of the term 'valued landscape' as used in the (England) National Planning Policy Framework<sup>9</sup> (NPPF).
- 6.5 LITGN 02/21<sup>10</sup> is intended to supplement and complement existing guidance on landscape value found in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition<sup>11</sup> (GLVIA3) (Box 5.1).

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<sup>9</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>10</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>11</sup> CD 17.3

6.6 A Valued Landscape is an area defined in LITGN 02/21<sup>12</sup> as *'having sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes.'*

6.7 Table 1 sets out factors, indicators and evidence for an appraisal of the Appeal Site as a Valued Landscape. The site contains a number of key features which provide strong evidence for its definition as a Valued Landscape:

- Natural heritage
- Cultural heritage
- Landscape condition
- Distinctiveness
- Recreational opportunities
- Landscape quality and views
- Tranquillity and remoteness
- Function

6.8 Each of these assets has its own role in contributing to a Valued Landscape, so a ranking of priority or a scoring system would be unhelpful.

6.9 I consider that the appeal site meets all the criteria of a Valued Landscape, so should be defined as a Valued Landscape.

6.10 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF<sup>13</sup> states that:

*'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes....'*

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<sup>12</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>13</sup> CD 6.1

- 6.11 I have undertaken a review of the site as a Valued Landscape (see Table 1). I have used the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (LITGN) 02/21<sup>14</sup> 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' which provides the most recent information and guidance on the judgement of landscape value and the interpretation of the term 'valued landscape' as used in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.12 LITGN 02/21<sup>15</sup> was intended to supplement and complement existing guidance on landscape value found in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Third Edition (GLVIA3)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>15</sup> CD 17.5

<sup>16</sup> CD 17.3

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Indicators of landscape value</i>	<i>Evidence of landscape value</i>
<i>Natural heritage</i>	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological or other interest which contributes positively to the landscape	A landscape which contains valued natural capital assets which contribute to ecosystem services & a sense of place	There are four areas of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland within the site, typical of the High Wealden Ghyll Woodland; there is a continuous linear Priority Habitat for deciduous woodland and a recognition of habitats targeted for Lapwings and Brown Hairstreak within the site.
<i>Cultural heritage</i>	Landscape with clear evidence of historical interest which contributes positively to the landscape	Field pattern  Listed buildings  Historic routeways	Small fields typical of medieval High Weald landscape especially to northeast and southeast of the site;  There are a number of listed buildings adjacent or close to the site, mainly Grade II listed farmhouses and cottages dating from the 17 <sup>th</sup> century; Cuckfield Park is Grade II* listed and the medieval deer park originally extended over part of the site; Cuckfield Parish Church is Grade I listed and Cuckfield Conservation Area includes the church yard which extends to Newbury Lane.  PRoW 62CR follows a historic routeway visible on the 1897 OS map.
<i>Landscape condition</i>	Landscape which is in a good physical state (individual elements and overall landscape structure)	Condition of field and boundaries	Largely intact historic field pattern, traditional arable farmland, strong boundaries of woodland and native hedgerow to north, south and west, well maintained footpaths and bridleways, no visible litter or dog poo on well-trafficked PRoWs.
<i>Distinctiveness</i>	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	Makes a positive contribution to the local area	Makes an important contribution to the character of both Ansty and Cuckfield by providing a rural setting of undulating farmland and wooded ghylls
<i>Recreational &amp; amenity</i>	Landscape offering recreational opportunities	Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) connecting	A network of PRoWs cross the site from east to west, southwest to northeast and from south to north, connecting to the High Weald Landscape Trail via Newbury Lane to the south of Cuckfield.

		to High Weald Landscape Trail	
<i>Landscape quality &amp; views</i>	Landscape that appeals to the visual senses	Distinctive features and landform	The site blends seamlessly with the High Weald National Landscape immediately to the west and is representative of that outstanding medieval landscape.
<i>Perception (remoteness &amp; tranquillity)</i>	Landscape with a strong perceptual value such as distance from urban areas, tranquillity and dark skies	Peace and quiet, lack of urban features and remoteness	Despite its proximity to Haywards Heath to the east and Burgess Hill to the south, the site feels far removed from urban areas, offering rural farmland and woodland, peaceful walking with the sound of birdsong. There is some background noise from the A272 but this is quickly lost due to local topography and tree cover.
<i>Function</i>	Landscape with a clearly identifiable function	Elements contributing to the healthy functioning of the landscape	Site lies within the Copyhold Stream catchment area, healthy soils provide a carbon sink, food production, flood regulation, recreation including walking, equestrian, cycling and nature observation, ancient woodland provides rich biodiversity supporting a variety of species. Contains grade 1, 2, 3A and 3B farmland.

*Table 1      Assessment of the site as a Valued Landscape*

## 7. Assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the countryside

- 7.1 The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 100 ha<sup>17</sup> of unspoilt countryside, to be replaced with an urban development of 1450 homes, schools, a care home, streets, and community facilities.
- 7.2 Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (Agricultural Land Classification 1, 2 and 3A) covers 17% <sup>18</sup>of the site in current agricultural use with the remainder of the farmland Grade 3B. The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 77ha<sup>19</sup> of productive working farmland.
- 7.3 The historic field pattern of thick native hedgerows and wooded shaws enclosing irregularly shaped small and medium-sized fields typical of the medieval High Weald landscape and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings would be substantially lost as a result of the proposed development.
- 7.4 The inter-connected pattern of ancient woodland, steep sided ghyll woodland and shaws with numerous ghyll streams is irreplaceable; it would not be lost but it would be changed by the construction of a new network of roads and streets with bridges crossing over steep-sided valley.
- 7.5 The historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets, scattered farmsteads and medieval ridgetop villages typical of the High Weald landscape would be consumed by the proposed Ansty Garden Community of 1450 homes.
- 7.6 The existing rural setting of Ansty and Cuckfield villages would be replaced by a new and large urban area of housing, schools, care facility, roads and community centre with associated infrastructure, activity, domestic and street lighting and population.

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<sup>17</sup> CD 10.15

<sup>18</sup> CD 1.23

<sup>19</sup> CD 10.15

- 7.7 Ancient routeways in the form of ridgetop roads and tracks with a system of radiating droveways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edges with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks, a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes and tracks, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips would be replaced by a new movement network of avenues, bus routes, secondary and tertiary streets, pedestrian and cycle routes serving 1450 new homes, schools and a care facility.
- 7.8 The High Weald has the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe, with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, with an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier; the rural setting of these historic listed buildings is an integral part of their character, referencing their timeline and it would be substantially lost.
- 7.9 This is an intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far-reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Church towers and spires on the ridges are important local landmarks. Although key views and landmarks could be retained, the intimate scale of this landscape would be lost, as would the remoteness and tranquillity.



*Figure 6 Ancient woodland with bluebells (Furnace Wood)*



*Figure 7 Cuckfield Church spire is an important local landmark, seen here from the footpath crossing the site.*

7.10 The dark skies characteristic of this hidden and small-scale landscape would be replaced by the 'night light' of street lighting, domestic and commercial lighting and highways lighting generated by 1450 new homes, schools and a care facility.

7.11 Wildlife & habitats would be adversely affected by light pollution, noise, activity and proximity of the individuals, families and pets living and working in the proposed development.

### **Impact from proposed vehicular access points, cycle route improvements and pedestrian route improvements**

7.12 Three new vehicular access points are proposed to the Appeal Site from the north, the west and from the south. Cycle route and pedestrian route improvements are also proposed. These proposals include Cycle Improvement Plans, Toucan Crossings and

Cycle Route Enhancements. Cycle Route Enhancements are proposed along Copyhold Lane, along sections of the A272 and along part of the B2036 to the south of Cuckfield.

### **Northern vehicular access**

- 7.13 The A272 is currently an unimpeded route from Tylers Green in the east to a roundabout in the west (B2036 leading into Cuckfield) with well vegetated roadside boundaries and some earth bunding behind the southern verge. The development would introduce a new northern access roundabout together with a signalised crossing point for pedestrian and cyclists on the approach to the east.
- 7.14 There would be an adverse impact on the existing character of this road corridor due to the removal of vegetation to create the roundabout and visibility splays (especially on the eastern roundabout approach) together with changes to the road verge on the southern side to accommodate cycles and pedestrians. Fabrik 'Access & Movement Parameter Plan' drawing no D3012-FAB-00-XX-DR-Y-036 shows the existing footpath from Cuckfield retained with a non-signalised crossing of the A272 in its current location.



*Figure 8 View along the A272 looking east towards Tyler Green showing the location of the northern vehicular access with the Appeal Site to the right of the view*

## **Cycle route improvements along A272 with signalled crossing at northern site access and unsignalled, at grade crossing at B2036 Cuckfield roundabout**

7.15 The proposed cycle route enhancements along the A272 (Arden Cycle Route Improvement Strategy drawing no 2207280-SK03 Rev G and Cycle Route Improvement Plan 2207280-SK05 rev H) show a new cycle route of approximately 1.6 kilometres in length along the A272 from the existing Tyler Green roundabout to the existing Cuckfield roundabout with the B2036. This new cycle route would require the clearance of considerable roadside trees and vegetation, leading to a loss of rural character and the opening up of the site to views from the road.



Figure 9 View along the A272 looking west towards the Cuckfield B2036 roundabout showing the location of the northern vehicular access with a signalled crossing, the Appeal Site to the left of the view and the extent of the proposed cycle route visible along the A272.

### **Western vehicular access**

7.16 A new roundabout would be created on the western site boundary shared with the HWNL. In order to create the necessary visibility splays significant amounts of vegetation would be cleared on the approaches to the roundabout. In addition,

alterations to the landform would be required to accommodate the highway works. Views would be opened into the development on the eastern side on the approach to the roundabout and at the roundabout itself. There would be an adverse impact on the existing road character which contains mature trees and hedgerows.

### **Toucan crossing at western access**

7.17 A toucan crossing is proposed over the A272 close to the Western Access (Ardent drawing no 2207280-010C). This would include a combined pedestrian/cycleway crossing with visibility splays and would result in a loss of vegetation and earthworks due to the level change between the road, the HWNL and the development site. Highways lighting would be required. The HWNL boundary follows the northern side of the A272 so these changes would impact directly on the HWNL. There is a lack of detail and levels on the Ardent drawings so the full effects of this crossing are estimated.



*Figure 10 View of the A272 looking north-east towards the site of the proposed western roundabout; the High Weald National Landscape lies behind the kerb to the left of this view. There would be a significant loss of trees and roadside vegetation to construct the necessary visibility splays resulting in a substantial change to the existing rural character*

### **Southern vehicular access**

7.18 A new roundabout would be created to provide a southern access to the proposed development. There would be a substantial alteration to the existing character of this rural area due to vegetation loss caused by the formation of the roundabout and visibility splays and likely alterations required to the existing landform. Views into the development site would also be opened up and the existing rural character would be lost.



*Figure 11 B2036 looking south-east (away from Ansty) towards the site of the proposed southern roundabout; there would be a significant loss of trees and roadside vegetation to construct the necessary visibility splays resulting in a substantial change to the existing rural character*

### **Ansty village centre**

- 7.19 Proposed cycle connections in Ansty village centre at the A272 / B2036 roundabout (Arden drawing no 2207280-007D) show a new shared foot/cycleway to cross A272 to the south-west of the existing roundabout. The village sign and war memorial would be adversely affected, as would the character and setting of these village features.



*Figure 12 Ansty village centre which would be adversely affected by the proposed cycle route improvements*

### **Historic routeways**

7.20 Bridleway 67CR at the lower end of Copyhold Lane is a historic sunken lane passing through ancient woodland. It appears to be part of the Ardent Cycle Route and Pedestrian Route Improvement Strategy shown in Ardent drawings 220780-SK03 rev F and 220780-SK04 rev E which would result in changes to the morphology of the bridleway as well to the character and setting of the historic routeway.



*Figure 13 Bridleway 67CR at the lower end of Copyhold Lane is a sunken lane passing through ancient woodland*

- 7.21 PRow 62CR crosses the site from west to east; it is a historic routeway marked on the 1877 OS map. There would be substantial change to the rural character of this public right of way. This view, looking east, would be of housing in the future with a roadway in the middle-distance traversing north to south across the field. There would also be morphological change as the footpath itself would be hard paved with lighting.



Figure 14 Historic routeway PRow 62CR crossing the site.



Figure 15 Public bridleway near Copyhold Lane



*'The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'*

8.4 The HWNL Management Plan 2024-2029 defines the term 'setting' (see paras 5.2 and 5.3 of this proof) and states that:

*'land within the setting of AONBs often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and here poorly located or designed development can do harm. This is especially the case where .....the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. '*

8.5 The proposed development as shown on the latest Fabrik Landuse Parameter Plan drawing no D3012-FAB-00-XX-DR-Y-039 revision 13<sup>20</sup> would be less than 50 metres from the HWNL boundary in the northwest corner of the site, and approximately 75 metres from the HWNL boundary along the western site boundary to the north of Ansty

8.6 There is intervisibility between the Appeal Site and the HWNL, with visibility between the northwest part of the site and higher land in Cuckfield Park described in Section 5 of this proof (see Figure 1). From the shared boundary between the Appeal Site and the HWNL which follows the A272, there are open views into the site.

8.7 Intervisibility or reciprocal visibility is a tool used as part of a LVIA to identify visually sensitive receptors; in the case of the HWNL, its boundary along the A272 which is shared with the Appeal Site is particularly sensitive to change. This is an attractive road with roadside hedging and mature trees; a footpath along the northwestern roadside connects to two footpaths leading into the HWNL. Views to the northwest into the HWNL from the A272 are screened by trees and by rising topography, however there are good open views to the southeast across the northern part of the Appeal Site (See

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<sup>20</sup> CD 1.23

Figure 2). Visual receptors comprising pedestrians, walkers, drivers and passengers using or crossing the A272 would have a high sensitivity to changes to these views.

8.9 I consider that as the proposed development lies within the setting of the HWNL. In its definition of 'setting' the HWMP states that:

*'due to the high synergy in character between the High Weald National Landscape boundary and the wider High Weald National Character Area, land within the NCA should be considered as falling within the setting of the National Landscape.'*

8.10 Objective PQ2 of the HWNL seeks to:

*'protect the unspoilt rural landscape with its intrinsic sense of naturalness, valued views and the extent of green space which foster experiences of rurality and tranquillity.'*

8.11 As a result of the proposed development, the landscape character of the Appeal Site (which adjoins the designated area) would be transformed from an unspoilt rural landscape into an urban settlement; as a result it would no longer provide a contiguous rural setting to the HWNL.

8.12 Objective DS1 of the HWNL seeks to:

*'preserve the dark skies of the HWNL by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting.'*

8.13 This development would comprise 1.5 to 4-storey residential development, school buildings with ridge heights up to 10m and community buildings up to 15m ridge height. It would include street and domestic lighting and could also include sports pitch lighting. There would be light spill from domestic, community and educational buildings, sports pitches, street lighting and highways lighting. This light spill would affect the dark skies of the Appeal Site and due to its close proximity to the HWNL, it would also adversely affect the dark skies of the HWNL.

8.14 The proposed development would not comply with the Objectives PQ2, DS1 or DS2 of the HWNL Management Plan.

8.15 Local Plan Policy DP16 relates to the HWNL and states that:

*'Development on land that contributes to the setting of the AONB will only be permitted where it does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the AONB'.*

The proposed development would be visible from the High Weald Landscape Trail within the HWNL, as illustrated in Figure 1, changing the view from an unspoilt rural outlook to a view over an urban settlement; as such it would detract from the visual qualities of the AONB.

8.16 An essential characteristic of the HWNL is the dark skies. As described in paras 8.12 and 8.13, the proposed development would adversely affect this characteristic. By detracting from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the adjacent AONB the proposed development would not comply with Policy D6.

8.17 The proposed vehicular entrance to the west of the Appeal Site is through this vulnerable boundary shared with the HWNL; the resulting land-take, tree and hedge removal, the opening up of views into a new urban settlement with associated light spill and highways lighting would result in harmful landscape and visual effects; these are described in paras 7.12 to 7.18 of this proof. Due to the proximity of this entrance to the HWNL and the resulting adverse landscape and visual effects, they would harm the setting of the HWNL.

8.18 The loss of tranquillity and dark skies would be particularly apparent during the winter when the conditions of shorter daylight hours requiring artificial lighting at both ends of the day at a time of year when the filtering effects of tree and hedgerow screening are reduced by the lack of deciduous foliage.

8.19 I consider that these adverse landscape and visual effects would be harmful to the NL through their proximity to its boundary and that these effects would impact adversely on the rural landscape character, tranquillity and dark skies of the HWNL.

## 9. Urban Expansion and Perceived Coalescence

9.1 Ansty and Cuckfield are two neighbouring but physically separate villages in adjacent parishes. Each village has its own identity, history and character, both featuring on historic maps dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the John Speed Map of Sussex 1610 and the Mordens Map of Sussex 1763.

### **Population increase**

9.2 The 2021 Census recorded Cuckfield as having a population of 3,767; using the Office for National Statistics average of 2.35 residents per household, this gives an approximate number of 1603 households.

9.3 The 2021 Census recorded Ansty as part of the wider parish of Ansty, Staplefield and Brook Street with a population of 1746. Reference to the number of registered electors and the number of properties within the Limit of Built Development gives 102 properties within Boundary of Built Development for the village of Ansty with a population of 200-300 residents. The proposed development would have over 14 times the number of homes that currently lie within the Boundary of Built Development of Ansty.

9.4 The proposed development of 1450 homes and up to 90 residential care units would be many times larger than the existing small village of Ansty, and comparable in size to the existing village of Cuckfield.

### **Footprint increase**

9.5 A measurement of the footprint of the existing Boundary of Built Development of Ansty and that of the proposed development (taken from the Fabrik Land Use Parameter Plan dwg no D3012-FAB-00-XX-DR-Y-039) including zoned development plots and roads show an increase in size of footprint by a factor of approximately five.

### **Definition and policy**

9.6 Coalescence is defined by Central Bedfordshire Council as:

*'the merging or physical coming together of separate towns, villages or settlements to form a single, continuous built-up area. It is a key concern in land-use planning, as it often results in the loss of individual settlement identity, character and visual separation.'*

9.7 The prevention of coalescence is described in the MSDP Policy DP13 as:

*'The individual towns and villages in the district each have their own unique characteristics. It is important that their separate identity is maintained. When travelling between settlements people should have a sense that they have left one before arriving at the next.'*

*'Provided it is not in conflict with Policy DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside, development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements and would not have an unacceptably urbanising effect on the area between settlements.'*

*'Local Gaps can be identified in Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations Development Plan Document, produced by the District Council, where there is robust evidence that development within the gap would individually or cumulatively result in coalescence and the loss of the separate identity and amenity of nearby settlements. Evidence must demonstrate that local and national policies cannot provide the necessary protection.'*

9.8 Policy DP13 is complemented by Policy AS2 of the ASNP which states:

*'Development proposals are expected to demonstrate that they would not result in the coalescence with any neighbouring settlement either individually or cumulatively or result in the perception of openness being unacceptably eroded between the following areas: Ansty and Cuckfield.'*

### **Existing separation of Ansty and Cuckfield**

9.9 The two villages both border the HWNL and are currently separated by a tract of undulating farmland which shares the landscape characteristics of the adjacent HWNL. (see Section 5 and paras 5.11 to 5.13) This tract of farmland is approximately 1.5 km wide. This is illustrated in Figure 17.

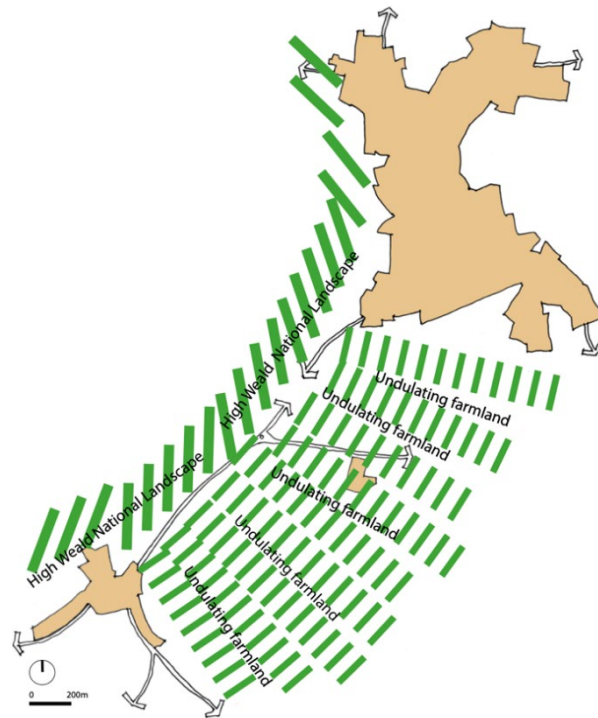


Figure 17 A swathe of undulating farmland currently separates Cuckfield and Ansty

### Reasons for coalescence

9.10 In my view, the proposed development of the Appeal Site would lead to the coalescence of Ansty and Cuckfield for several reasons, including the topography of the site, the loss of rural setting, the scale of the proposed urban expansion and the physical and perceived merging of settlements.

### Topography

9.11 The topography of the site consists of undulating ridges and valleys with steep-sided wooded ghylls typical of the High Weald. From a high point of approximately 78m aod near Ansty the land falls to a low point to the west of Copyhold Farm of approximately 39m aod. A central ridgeline runs from east to west across the site and the Copyhold

Stream and its tributaries run from northwest to southeast across the site (See Figure 18).

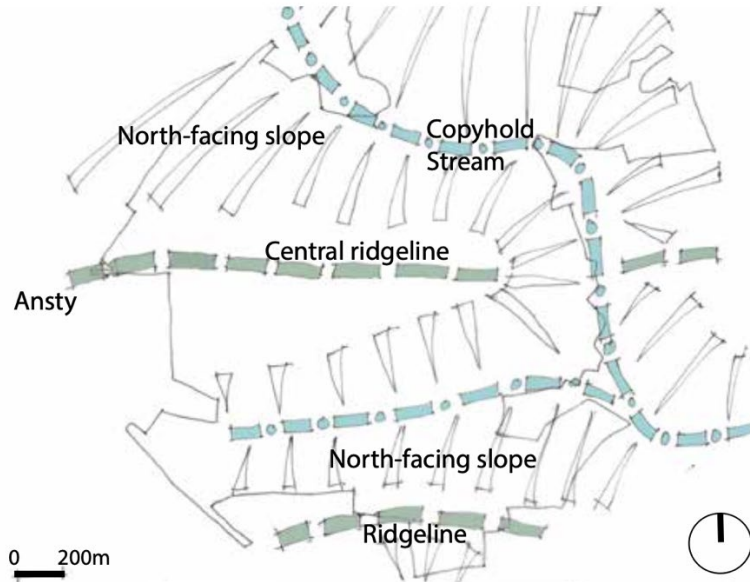
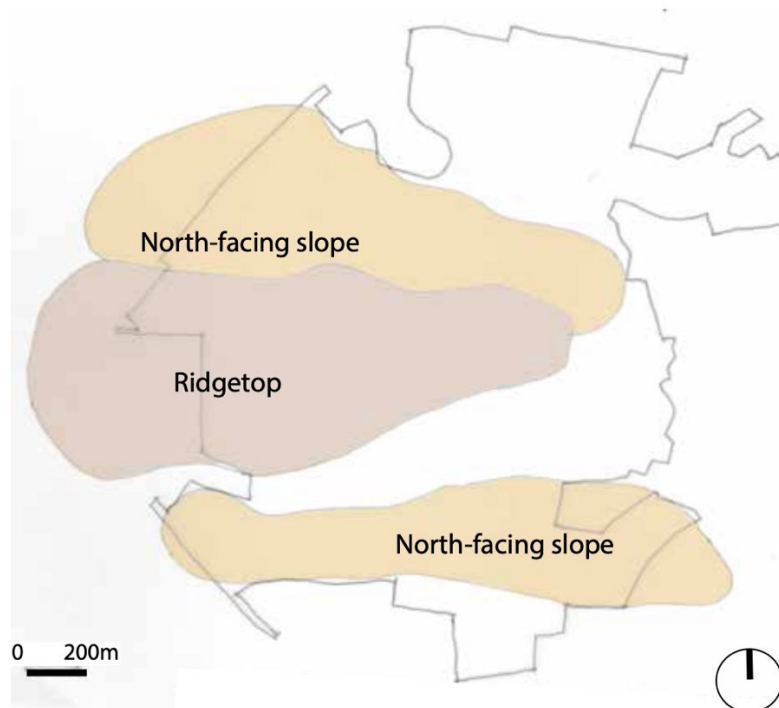


Figure 18 Landform of the Appeal Site showing the existing ridges and valleys

- 9.12 As a result of the site topography, the development located on ridgetops and north-facing slopes would be particularly prominent. The location of these north-facing slopes and ridgetops is shown in Figure 19.



*Figure 19 Location of dominant ridges & north-facing slopes*

9.13 The Fabrik Building Heights Parameter Plan (drawing D3012-FAB-00-XXDR-Y-040 rev 13) shows the proposed distribution of building heights throughout the site (See Figure 20).

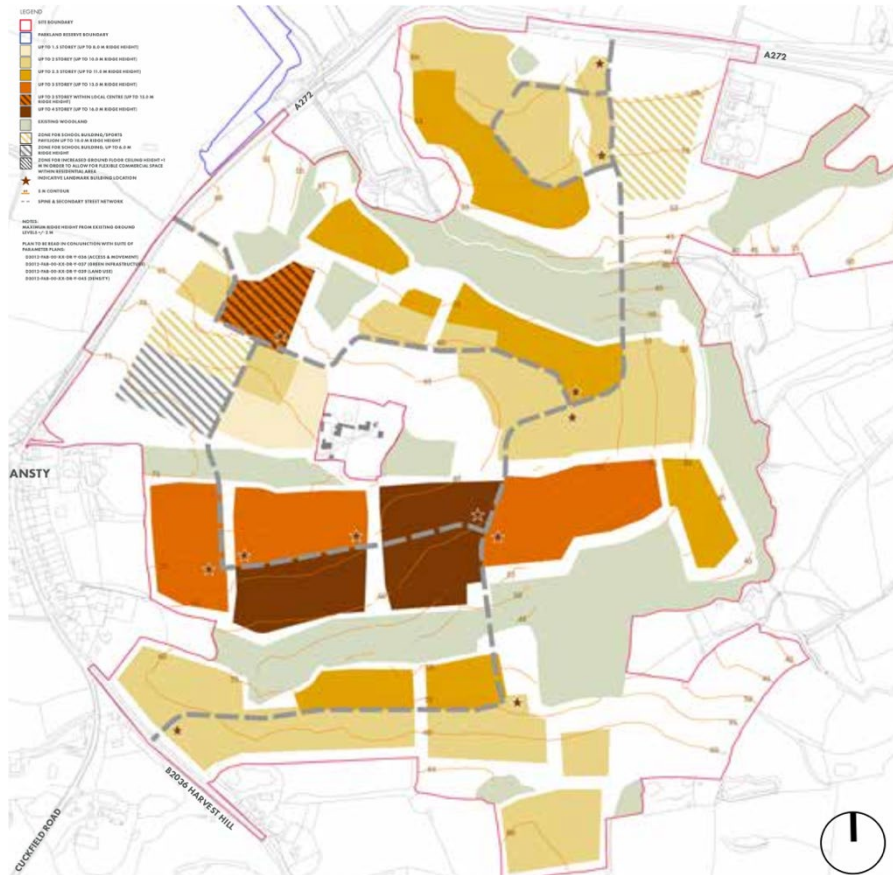


Figure 20 Fabrik Building Heights Parameter Plan Dwg no D3012-FAB-00-XXDR-Y-040 rev 13<sup>21</sup>

9.14 By overlaying the building heights parameter plan and the ridgetop and north-facing slope diagram, Figure 21 is produced which shows the distribution and height of key proposed development located on the most exposed and prominent ridgetops and north-facing slopes. Taking into account the light spill, particularly during the winter when short daylight hours and the filtration of trees and woodland would be least effective, as well as the physical massing of buildings, the proposed development in these locations would erode the perception of rural separation between Cuckfield and the Ansty Garden Community and between Ansty and Cuckfield.

<sup>21</sup> CD 1.23

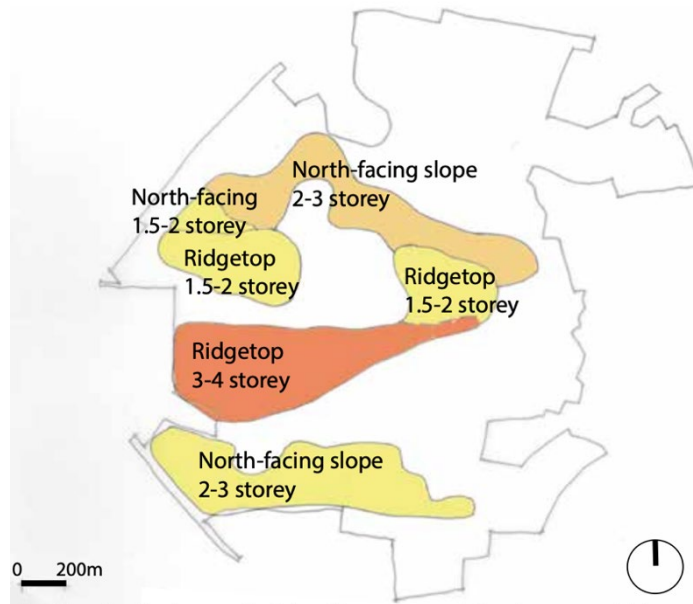


Figure 21 The distribution and height of key proposed development in the Appeal Site

### Loss of rural setting

9.15 Figure 22 shows a simplified view of the existing context of Ansty and Cuckfield with the High Weald NL providing the western backdrop for both villages with a broad swathe of undulating farmland separating the two villages.

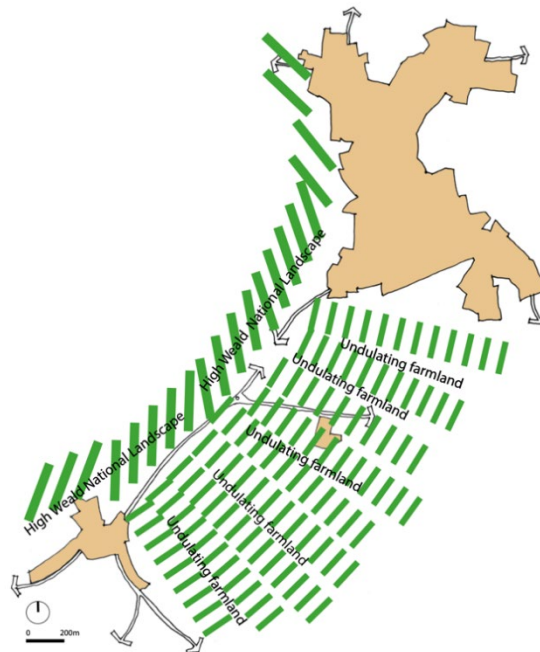


Figure 22 the HWNL provides the backdrop for Cuckfield and Ansty separated by a swathe of farmland

9.16 Figure 23 shows the context of the two villages with the proposed development. The HWNL would continue to provide the western backdrop for the two villages but the broad swathe of undulating farmland which currently separated the villages would be replaced by the urban continuum of Ansty Garden Village. There would be a loss of the existing rural setting and a loss of openness; the rural setting and openness would be replaced by urban expansion.

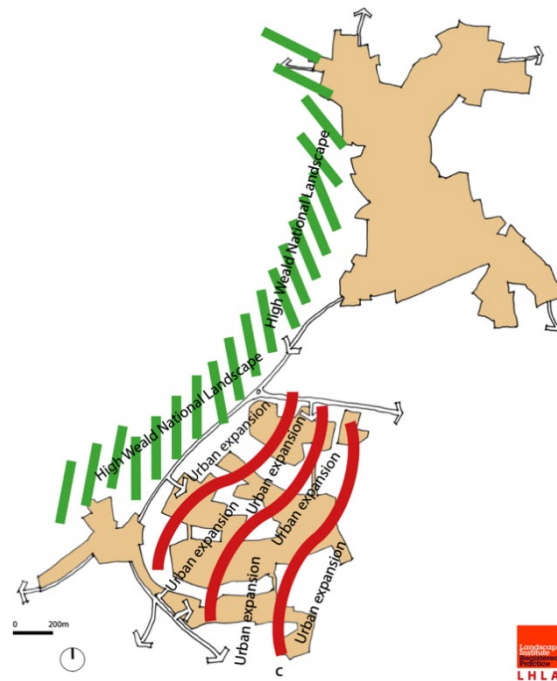


Figure 23 The urban expansion of the proposed development would replace the farmland currently separating Ansty and Cuckfield

### Scale of proposed development

9.17 The scale of the proposed development would dwarf the size and scale of Ansty by a factor of approximately 14 in terms of number of households and a factor of 5 in terms of footprint. This is illustrated in Figure 24.

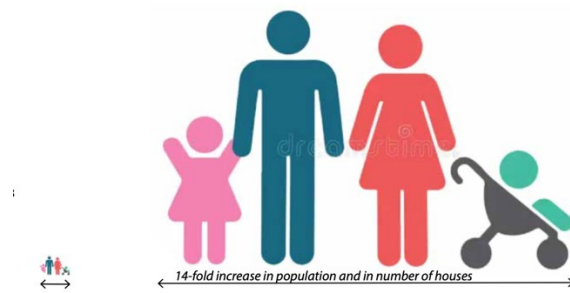


Figure 24 An indication of the scale of the proposed development as a factor increase

### Physical and perceived merging of settlements

9.18 Figures 25 and 26 show the existing limits of built development for Ansty and Cuckfield.

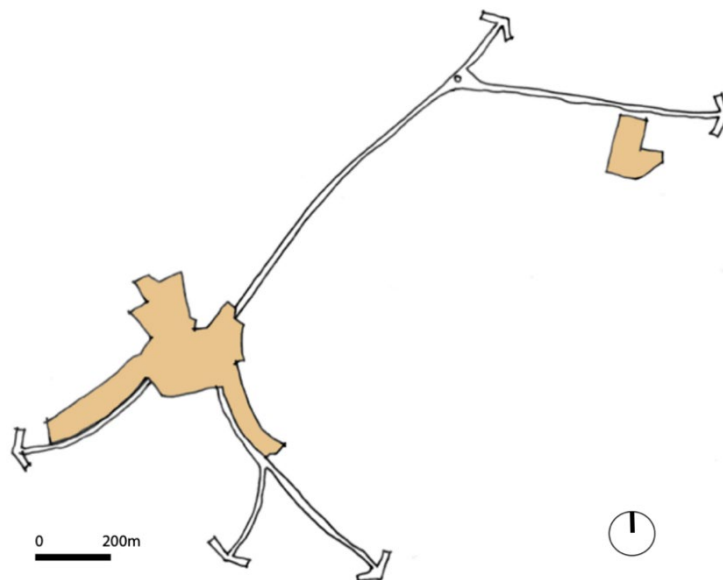
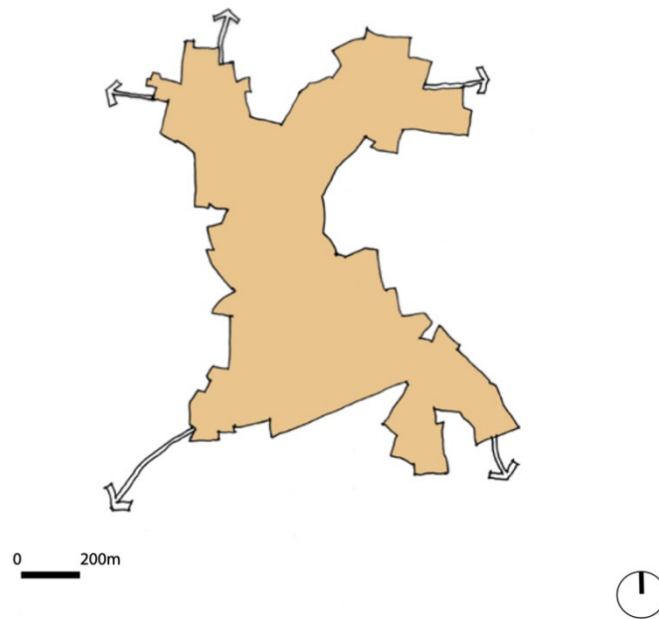


Figure 25 Ansty Limits of Built Development



*Figure 26 Cuckfield Limits of Built Development*

9.19 Figure 27 shows Ansty and Cuckfield with the addition of the proposed new development, highlighting the area where there would be a physical or close physical merging between the edge of the settlement and the proposed development. There would be a physical merging between the edge of Ansty and the proposed as highlighted by the red circles. The blue circles indicate a visual or perceived merging between Cuckfield and the proposed development.

9.20 From the southern edge of Cuckfield the proposed development, especially where it is located on exposed ridgetops or north-facing slopes, would be visible, resulting in a visual or perceived merging of the two settlements of Ansty and Ansty Garden Village.

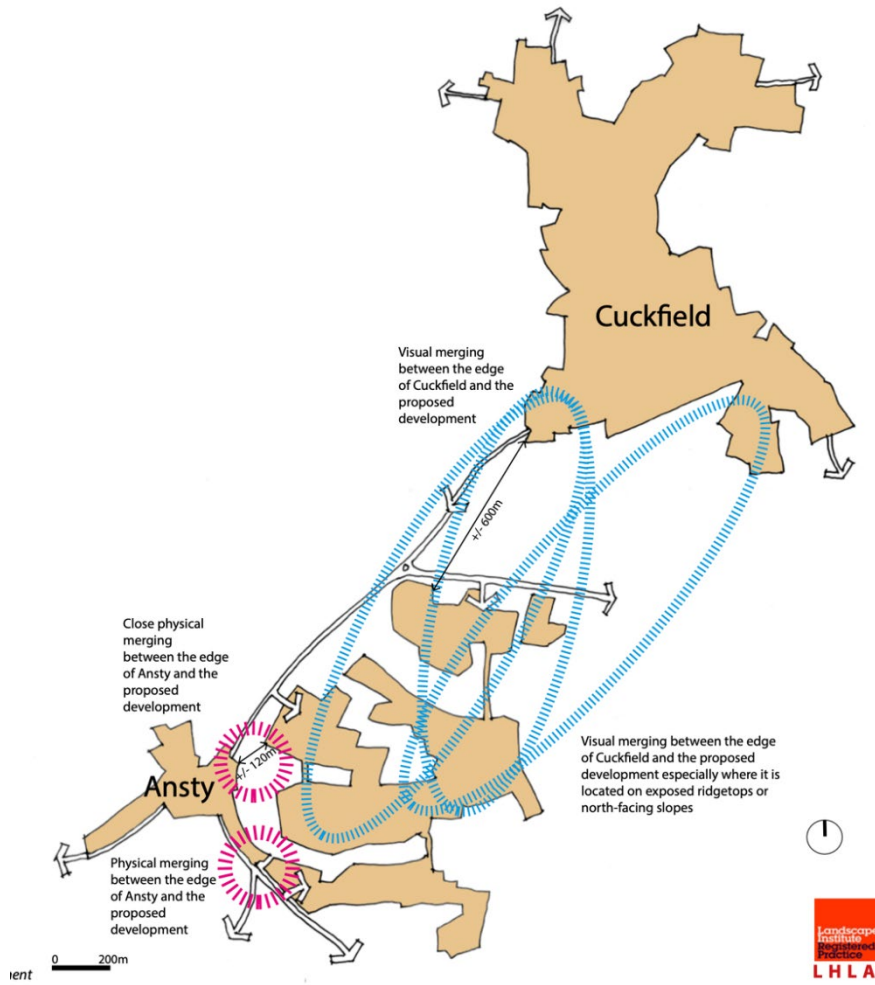


Figure 27 Physical and visual or perceived merging between Ansty and the proposed development and between Cuckfield and the proposed development

## 10 Appellant's LVIA

- 10.1 The Appellant submitted an Environmental Statement which includes Volume 3, Landscape and Visual Impacts, November 2023 and Addenda to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment issued in December 2023. and May 2024.
- 10.2 This volume was prepared by Fabrik, Chartered Landscape Architects, and follows the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition which is the current guidance.

### **Landscape Receptors and Value**

- 10.3 The Landscape Receptors are described in Section 4 of the Fabrik LVIA, p 14 -25 and summarised in Table 4.1 on p25. They are described under Contextual Landscape Receptors (elements outside the site boundary but within the Study Area) and Site Landscape Receptors (elements within the site boundary).
- 10.4 The HWNL is not included as a Landscape Receptor in either the text or the summary tables.
- 10.5 Table 4.1 Summary of Landscape Receptors (p25) does not include Topography or the 'Contextual Landscape Character' which are both described and assessed in the text.
- 10.6 Based on my assessment of the Appeal Site against established value criteria, and its important role within the setting of a National Landscape, I consider the value of NCA 122 High Weald to be of Medium-High Value rather than Low-High.
- 10.7 The High Weald National Landscape should be listed as a Contextual Landscape Receptor and I consider that it should be assessed to have a High Value.
- 10.8 A description and summary of 'Contextual Landscape Character' and 'Topography' are given in the text on p20 and p22 with an overall assessment of High and Medium/High Value respectively. These assessments do not appear in Table 4.1 Summary of Landscape Receptors on p25.

## **Landscape Impact**

10.9 An assessment of likely significant effects is given in Section 6 of the LVIA (p122-3) and Tables V3.2.1 and V3.2.2 both located in Appendix V3.2, p137-154. Residual landscape effects are described in Section 8, p125

## **During Construction**

10.10 Construction effects are described in Section 6.2 of the LVIA and Tables V3.2.1 and V3.2.2 (both located in Appendix V3.2).

## **Contextual Landscape Receptors**

10.11 The landscape impact of construction effects has been assessed as negligible for Cultural/Social Receptors, Perceptual/Aesthetic Receptors and NCA122. I consider that the magnitude of effects for these Receptors would be Low/Medium for Cultural/Social and Medium/High for Perceptual/Aesthetic Receptors and NCA122.

10.12 In all three cases the effects would be localised but with a high magnitude of change. I consider that the significance of effects during construction for these Receptors should therefore be Moderate Adverse for Cultural /Social and Major Adverse for the other two Receptors

10.13 The landscape impact of construction effects has not been assessed for the High Weald National Landscape or for Contextual Landscape Character or for Topography. I consider that the effects for these three Landscape Receptors would be localised but with a high magnitude of change and that the significance of effects should be Major Adverse.

## **Landscape Receptors within the Site**

10.14 The landscape impact of construction effects on geology and soils has been assessed to have a low magnitude of effect with moderate/minor adverse significance. Major site formation works would be required on site to construct level development platforms on an undulating site. Even without removing any material from site and

good site management, the disturbance to the soils within the site would be considerable with associated compaction, erosion, damage to soil health and loss of carbon storage. I consider that the magnitude of effect on geology and soils should be high and the significance of effects should be major adverse.

10.15 The landscape impact of construction effects on night-time character has been assessed to have a medium magnitude of effect with moderate adverse significance. During the winter months there would be lighting at both ends of the shorter working day. There would also be a likelihood of security lights on site after working hours, with resulting high magnitude of effects and major adverse significance on this dark unlit rural landscape.

### **During Operation**

10.16 This term refers to the time when the construction work on the Appeal Site has been completed and new residents and occupants have moved in to live and work permanently on site. The magnitude and significance of Landscape Effects are described at Year 1 (just after the construction works are completed) and at Year 15 when the proposed landscape works have matured, new trees and hedgerows have established and the scheme has 'settled down'. It is worth noting, however, that the project could be implemented in phases with the construction work extending over several years. Construction phases and operational phases could also be ongoing at the same time in different parts of the site.

### **Contextual Landscape Receptors**

10.17 Contextual Landscape Receptors include 'Cultural/Social Receptors' which are described as including Land Use, Built form/Scale/Mass/Height/Grain, Enclosure and Time Depth. The LVIA has assessed the magnitude of effect to these Receptors at Year 1 and Year 15 as Negligible and the Significance of Effects as No Change. There would be changes to these Receptors, particularly close to the site boundary from issues such as the perception of coalescence. I consider that the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and

at Year 15 should be Low and that the Significance of Effects should be Minor/Moderate Adverse.

- 10.18 For Perceptual/Aesthetic Receptors, the Magnitude of Effect is assessed as Negligible with No Significant Effects. I disagree with this assessment and consider that there would be a Medium Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15. The resulting Significance of Effect would be Moderate Adverse at Year 1 and at Year 15.
- 10.19 For NCA122 the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15 was assessed to be Negligible, with No Significant Effects. I consider that the Magnitude of Effects should be Moderate and Low/Moderate at Year 1 and Year 15, with a resulting Moderate Adverse and Moderate/Minor Adverse Effects.
- 10.20 Contextual Landscape Character, Topography and the High Weald National Landscape are all missing from the table; I consider that the Magnitude of Effect should be Medium at Year 1 and at Year 15 for Contextual Landscape Character, with Moderate Adverse Effects at Year 1 and Year 15. For Topography the Magnitude of Effects should be Medium/High and Medium at Year 1 and at Year 15 with resultant Major Adverse and Moderate Adverse Effects at Year 1 and Year 15. The Magnitude of Effects on the HWNL should be Medium at Year 1 and Low/Medium at Year 15, and with Moderate Adverse and Minor Adverse Effects at Year 1 and Year 15.

### **Landscape Receptors within the Site**

- 10.21 The Landscape Impact on Soils and Geology within the Site has been assessed as a Low Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15, with a resulting Minor Adverse Significance of Effect. As a result of the major adverse effects on Geology and Soils during construction, I consider that the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 should be Medium/High and at Year 15 should be Medium, with a resulting Significance of Effect of Major Adverse at Year 1 reducing to Moderate Adverse at Year 15.

- 10.22 For Perceptual and Aesthetic Qualities, the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15 has been assessed as Medium and Medium Low, and the Significance of Effect as Moderate Adverse and Moderate/Minor Adverse respectively. Since these qualities of the site would be transformed by the proposed development with an associated loss of remoteness, tranquillity and other qualities, I consider that the magnitude of effect should be High at Year 1 and Medium at Year 15 with a resulting Significance of Effect of Major Adverse at Year 1 and Moderate Adverse at year 15.
- 10.23 For the Site Character, the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15 has been assessed as Medium and Medium/Low, with the Significance of Effect as Moderate Adverse and Moderate/Minor Adverse respectively. Since landscape character of the site would be transformed by the proposed development, I consider that the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 should be High and at Year 15 should be Medium/High, with a resulting Significance of Effect of Major Adverse at Year 1 reducing to Moderate/Major Adverse at Year 15.
- 10.24 For Night-time Site Character, the Magnitude of Effect at Year 1 and at Year 15 has been assessed as Medium, with the Significance of Effect as Moderate Adverse. The change of character from a dark agricultural landscape to an urban area with 1450 homes and domestic light spill, schools and community facilities with associated lighting and a network of distributor roads with street lighting would result in a magnitude of effect of High at Year 1 and Medium/High at Year 15; I consider that the significance of effects should be Major Adverse at Year 1 reducing to Moderate/Major Adverse at Year 15.

### **Visual Impact**

- 10.25 An assessment of likely visual effects is given in Section 6 of the LVIA and of residual visual effects in Section 8 of the LVIA. Tables V3.2.1 and V3.2.2 (both located in Appendix V3.2) summarise these impacts.

10.26 The Visual Impact Tables include a section titled Transient from Public Rights of Way. These tables assess the magnitude and the significance of effect of the proposed development from footpaths and bridlepaths within and outside the site. Since these Visual Receptors would be users of the PRowS, either on foot, on a bike or a horse, they would be able to appreciate the landscape and the views. I consider that their Sensitivity should be assessed as High or Medium/High rather than Medium or Medium/Low as 9 of these Receptors have been assessed, with a corresponding increase in the resulting significance of effect.

### **Visually Verified Montages**

10.27 Eight Visually Verified Montages (VVMs) have been submitted, showing the existing view from selected viewpoints, together with the view of the proposed development at Year 1 and at Year 15; four of these VVMs were submitted at the request of Place Services.

10.28 VVM Viewpoint 2 (See Figure 28) shows the view from the B2036 leaving Cuckfield and approaching the roundabout with the A272. At Year 1 the proposed development is clearly visible against the skyline just beyond the roundabout.



*Figure 28 VVM Viewpoint 2 at Y1 approaching the A272 roundabout from Cuckfield (Source: ES V3)*

10.28 VVM Viewpoint 3 (See Figure 29) shows the view from the A272 on the western site boundary adjacent to the HWNL looking east across the site. At Year 1 the proposed development is clearly visible against the skyline. However, there is no attempt at

representation of the western roundabout and proposed site entrance in this location which would further open up views into the site.



Figure 29 VVM Viewpoint 3 at Y1 on the A272 close to the proposed Western Roundabout (Source: ES V3)

10.29 VVM Viewpoint 7 (See Figure 30) shows the view from PRow 72CR in the southeast corner of the site looking north to see the proposed development at Year 1 silhouetted against the skyline to the left of the view.



Figure 30 VVM Viewpoint 7 at Y1 from PRow 72CR looking north across the site (Source: ES V3)

## Mitigation

10.27 Mitigation measures are described in Sections 5 and 7 of the LVIA and the impact assessments include these measures.

## Cumulative effects

10.28 Cumulative effects are described in Section 9 of the LVIA and the closest consented development is the Burgess Hill Northern Arc which is approximately 1.5km south of the Appeal Site, for 3040 dwellings. The Northern Arc is assessed not to have any additional cumulative effects on the Appeal Site over and above those identified.

# 11 Conclusions

- 11.1 I consider that the proposed development lies in the setting of the HWNL due to its contiguous boundary, the shared landscape characteristics and qualities, intervisibility between the Appeal Site and the HWNL and the high synergy in character between the High Weald National Landscape boundary and the wider High Weald National Character Area, as described in the HW Management Plan.
- 11.2 In my view the proposed development would cause harm to the setting of the HWNL due to the loss of its rural setting, the light-spill and highways lighting that would result in a loss of dark skies, the change of view from an unspoilt rural outlook to a view of an urban settlement, the adverse impacts of three proposed roundabouts with associated land-take, tree and hedge removal and the opening up of views of the new urban settlement and the loss of tranquillity and dark skies, particularly in winter.
- 11.3 My evidence shows that the proposed development would result in physical and perceived coalescence between Cuckfield and Ansty, between Cuckfield and Ansty Garden Village and between Ansty and Ansty Garden Village. This is due to the existing topography and landform of the site, the scale and extent of the proposed development and the loss of rural setting.
- 11.4 I consider that the LVIA submitted by the Appellant has underestimated the magnitude of change and the significance of effects for some of the landscape receptors; I consider that the Visually Verified Montages are not representative of the effects of the proposed development. In particular, the visual and landscape impacts of the proposed site access points have not been presented.

# 11. Expert Declaration

## **Professional Details**

12.1 I am the Principal of Louise Hooper Landscape Architect (LHLA)

12.2 I hold a BA (Honours) in Landscape Architecture from Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh and Edinburgh College of Art.

12.3 I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute, the British organisation for landscape professionals including landscape architects and landscape planners; it was founded in 1929 and was granted a Royal Charter in 1997. I received my Chartered Membership of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) in 1984. My professional membership registration number is 12077 and LHLA is registered practice number 23442.

12.4 I have been in professional practice for 41 years.

## **Professional Appointment**

12.5 LHLA was appointed by Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council (ASPC) and Cuckfield Parish Council (CPC) to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the Appeal Site in April 2022. In March 2026 she was appointed to prepare a Proof of Evidence on Landscape Matters associated with Planning Inspectorate ref 6002030 for the refusal of an outline planning application for 1450 dwellings and a care facility with up to 90 beds by Mid Sussex District Council on land east of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex ref DM/23/2866.

## **Scope of Expert Report**

12.6 I have provided my professional opinion for the purpose of this inquiry, and I am aware of the role required by an expert in these proceedings.

12.7 My report has been prepared following my appointment as an independent expert by ASPC and CPC.

12.8 My instruction was received by email from ASPC and CPC on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2026 as a signed Letter of Appointment.

**Declaration and Statement of Truth**

12.9 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

**Louise Hooper BA (Hons) Larch CMLI**

**Chartered Landscape Architect**

**Principal, Louise Hooper Landscape Architect**